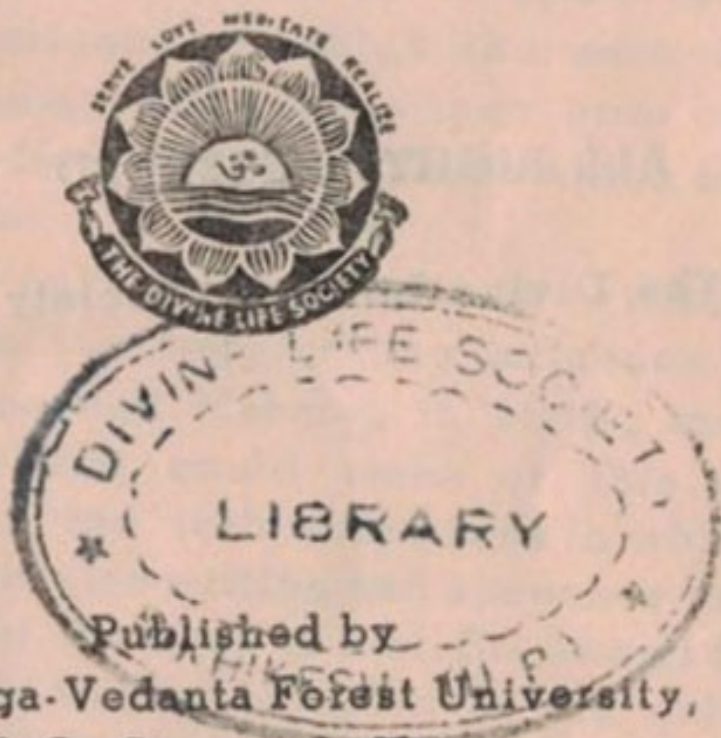


Life of Swami Venkatesananda

*Souvenir published on the occasion of
the celebrations of his 34th Birthday*



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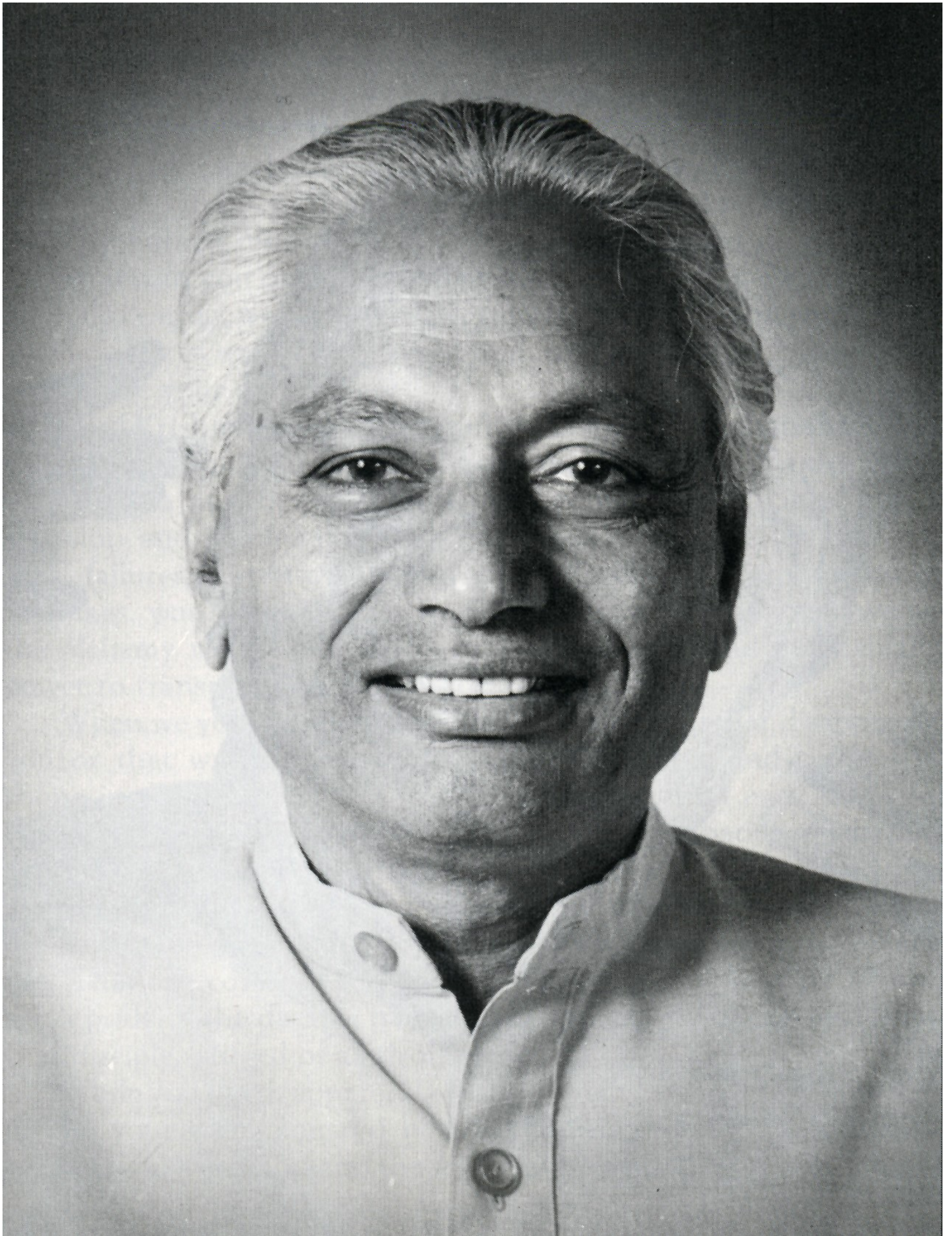
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S. PARTHASARATHY 1942



When he was working in the A. R. P. Department, Madras.



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Parthasarathy

Parthasarathy (as Swami Venkatesananda was called before he entered the holy order of Sannyasa) was born to the pious and noble parents, Sri Srinivasan and Srimati Lakshmi Devi, in a village called Koil Venni in Tanjore District, South India, on 29th December 1921. Many incidents happened in his childhood and boyhood which reveal his inborn divine qualities. The boy's mind began to turn to devotion and love towards Lord Venkatesa of the famous shrine of Holy Tirupati. When Parthasarathy was a boy of twelve years, he came across books written by Swami Sivananda who was destined to become his spiritual Master and Living God. In course of time Parthasarathy held a responsible position at Delhi as a personal assistant to highly influential Secretary to the Government of India. But the call of the spirit was irresistible. His contact with Swami Sivananda through books had developed into contact through frequent letters. Then it flowed into regular visits to the holy Ananda Kutir, whenever Parthasarathy managed to get leave from his office duties. The personal contact with the Master soon overwhelmed Parthasarathy and he cut off all bonds that bound him to the secular life, renounced a promising career and offered himself as a dedicated Sevak (servant) at the lotus-feet of his Divine Master Swami Sivananda.

Coming thus into the spiritual fold of Swami Sivananda at a very young age, Parthasarathy took to the renunciate in the year 1945 when he resigned the excellent position he was holding. He came with the specific intention of placing himself entirely at the service of Gurudev's Universal Spiritual Mission, with intense devotion, utter dedication and unparalleled spirit of service. He soon made himself indispensable to worshipful Gurudev, especially, in his global spiritual dissemination work. From early 1945 up to the time when he breathed his last, his entire life was whole-souled absorption in the sublime good work of Gurudev Sivananda. Parthasarathy was ordained as a monk on 8th of September, 1947, the sacred Diamond Jubilee of Sri Gurudev. He became Swami Venkatesananda.

The Swami was a versatile personality. He placed his great talent in the service of the holy Master. He was one of the pillars of the Divine Life spiritual movement. At a certain period he was the very right hand of worshipful Gurudev. Such was the great confidence reposed on him by worshipful Gurudev, that every morning, when Gurudev stepped out of his little cottage on the banks of the holy Ganga, he would first go directly to Swami Venkatesananda's room situated right in front and sitting there, he would many a time consult him and seek his opinion on matters concerning Jnana Yagna (dissemination of spiritual knowledge) and publishing activities of the Society and at times on other important matters as well.

He was a tower of strength to Sri Gurudev during the latter's unique "All India Spiritual Awakening Tour of 1950" which had electrified the entire nation and powerfully stirred up the spiritual consciousness of millions of people creating a wave of religious awakening and inspiration throughout the

country. Gurudev declared about Swami Venkatesananda: "He is the Crest-Jewel of my Mission. He is the resplendence of my work. Will I see anyone else shine brighter than him! Surely none have I seen so far. He is a tower of strength to me and my Mission." During the tour he took down notes of every word spoken by Sri Gurudev at each center and has brought a voluminous work "Sivananda's Lectures: All India Tour."

He came especially to work vigorously in the correspondence section of the Ashram. One can say that volumes of typewritten material connected with correspondence is to be turned out, even during night hours by this Swami. The entire career of his in the Ashram was devoted to writing, recording of Gurudev's speeches and editing the day-to-day messages and conversations of Gurudev which he did to the point of perfection and perhaps most of the Sivananda: Day-to-Day that we have these days recorded are the works of Swami Venkatesananda, principally. After tireless service and winklessly working in the Ashram for Sri Gurudev's glory, his main mission was to bring glory around the aura of Gurudev's Centre, The Divine Life Society, which task he fulfilled very commendably. He has produce a superb work entitled "Gurudev Sivananda" which is not merely a detailed biography of Swami Sivananda but also an authentic record of the history of the Divine Life Society, - a reference book involving great labour.

The Indian devotees in South Africe, headed by Swami Sahajanandaji Maharaj, required a powerful spirit of the Divine Life Society to enthuse them and Swami Venkatesananda was the man chosen by Sri Gurudev for the fulfilment of this Mission there. Thus in 1961 Swami Venkatesananda was deputed to South Africa, where he did a marvellous work. Reports came from there Swami Venkatesananda shook the whole of South Africa and he hoisted the banner of Sri Gurudev's Mission. After working there for some years, he moved to other countries - Mauritius, Madagascar, and some countries in Europe, - and later on to the East, particularly to Australia. Most of his later days were spent in South Africa only, where again he did vigorous literary work, writing and compiling excellent text books on philosophy, Yoga and scriptures. He produced more than 50 books covering a wide range of subjects pertaining to philosophy, religion, metaphysics, ethics, self-development, spiritual Sadhana (spiritual practice), the different Yoga paths, Gurudev special teachings, comparative religion, psychology and the different scriptures like the Ramayana, Srimad Bhagavata Purana, Yoga Vasishtha, the Gita, the Devi Mahatmya, etc., the very latest volume being a compilation of the teachings of Lord Buddha, entitled "Buddha Daily Readings." No other single disciple of worshipful Gurudev has made such an admirable, substantial contribution on such a scale to the great Master's world-wide spiritual ministry of the present-day mankind. The crowning glory of his contribution was the spade-work he prepared of the "Complete Work of Swami Sivananda" in 18 volumes, of which 6 volumes have been printed under the auspices of the Birth Centenary Celebration by the Divine Life Society, Freemantle Branch of Australia.

A scholar without ostentation, a writer without pedantry and a speaker without idiosyncrasies, Swami Venkatesananda has made himself lovable and valuable to all. As an exponent of Yoga, as an Organizer of Bhajan (singing of the Lord's Name) Group, as an inaugurator and promoter of a Society Branch, as an editor and prolific writer of many books, as a versatile genius, he always carried distinction in serving the cause of the Society in many countries of the world.

The great saintly soul passed away on the 2nd of December, 1982 at the Sivananda School of Yoga, Johannesburg, South Africa. In the special services offered at the Rishikesh Ashram, Swami Chidananda paid the following tribute to him:

"I offer my homage to the sacred memory of our departed brother Revered and Worshipful Sri Swami Venkatesanandaji Maharaj whom his own pre-monastic, earthly, physical mother used to regard as younger brother of Chidananda-like Rama and Lakshmana. He was unparalleled and versatile genius, Chronicler-Editor. I pay my reverential homage and my most loving prostrations and adorations to one who had become in many ways an integral part of this Ashram, a part of our very lives and, as such, he is within the hearts of all those who have been closely moving with him, and in the hearts of all of us enshrined as an inseparable part of our inner being. He had the rare capacity of endearing himself to everyone, to children, to his equals, to the venerable old and to everyone. He is the universal being. He was in harmony with all. The part that he had played in Jnana Yajna work or the dissemination of spiritual knowledge by teaching and preaching the spiritual culture of India, the knowledge of Vedanta and the science of Yoga to the people all over the world, is something unequalled. He was a tower of strength to Gurudev and one of the greatest contributors in his World Awakening Mission, both from the Ashram and later throughout the world after Gurudev's physical passing."

Sadasiva – A Tribute

On December 29, 1921, into a middle-class Brahmin family, in Meena Lagnam, Tanjore District in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, during pouring rain, Parthasarathy was born. The star Poorvashada was ascendant on this last Amavasya day of the dark lunar fortnight of the month of Margashirsha. His parents were Srinivasan and Lakshmi Devi. His name honours Krishna and his parents, householder devotees of Lord Venkatesa, offered his prasada to all. There was strong Venkatesa-influence in Swamiji from birth.

The child cried not at all and was largely raised by his aged paternal grandfather in their Tamil-speak household until schooldays in Madras. Following his grandfather's death when he was seven, Parthasarathy took to devotion of Lord Venkateswara (Venkatachalapati), including strict fasting on Saturdays, and went to his temple at Tirupati in the Tirumalai Hills frequently, where He received the sacred thread.

Parthasarathy had been attracted to the teachings of Swami Sivananda since the age of 13, when He began daily sadhana of yoga asana, pranayama, japa, and meditation and started a correspondence with the Master. He first visited Rishikesh in October 1944 with office colleagues and thereafter whenever He had leave from His government position. Swami Sivananda instructed Him to come to live permanently at the ashram after a few more years living in the world. When His mother suggested marriage, He rejected it with great resolution. Parthasarathy came to live at Sivanandashram only eight months later.

Swamiji wrote, "I clearly see Gurudev's mighty divine hands 'obstructing and saving' me in a thousand ways..., almost from my childhood."

Just prior to taking sannyas, then - Parthasarathy noted, "Ananda Kutir is my abode. Sri Swami Sivananda is my mother, father, friend, philosopher, and guide. He is my Master - I have only one Guru, and He is God on earth."

At Sivananashram, Swamiji became expert at yoga asana, bandha, particularly nauli, and mudra, and could hold these postures for 30 minutes. He could float in Mother Ganga in matsyandrasana (fish posture) and padmasana (lotus posture) without movement. In fact, his humble cottage was called Ganga Kutir. Excelling in equanimity, "showing absolute indifference to both praise and censure," and scholarship of the Bhagavad Gita and Yoga Vasistha, Swamiji became an expert pujari in two years at Sivanandashram before taking sannyas on the 60th Sivananda-jayanthi September 8, 1946 from the Master.

On his All-India Tour in 1950, Swami Sivananda traveled 7,775 kilometres in India and 318 kilometres in then Ceylon in 61 days, addressing 144 lectures, and receiving 35 pada-pujas. All these events were recorded, frequently from memory, and edited by Swami Venkatesananda in cars and, often, the latrines of moving trains, in several book volumes in 1951 and 1952, published at Rishikesh.

Every three days, Swamiji sent eight to ten typed pages to Sivanandashram so that those not on tour could feel a part of it. Back at the Ashram, Swamiji often typed in the dark for eight hours at a stretch...with carbon copies! He alone typed all the Master's personal correspondence, 1,200 letters a month, for Sivananda's signature.

There is also a chapter by Swami Venkatesa Himself, an allegory of His Guru as Avatara Purusha, "God in human form, whose every breath is Dharma." The avatara influences all to righteous living and thinking.

Master Sivananda accepted sannyas in 1924 from His Guru, Vishwananda Saraswati, with whom the Master spent only a few hours. By 1936, when He founded the Divine Life Society, He was widely known as a Jagat-Guru.

Swami Sivananda distributed all his spiritual teachings, which He called the Yoga of Synthesis, for free and all these works were typed and edited by his closest disciple and personal secretary, the true sevaka, Swami Venkatesananda Saraswati Maharaj, starting in 1946 with the Sivananda-Gita. In all, 296 books by Swami Sivananda were published; most are still available today and widely read by spiritual aspirants.

Swamiji's complete devotion and surrender to the Master are exemplified by a small anecdote. Sivananda asked Swamiji to prepare an article for "Women's Light and Guide". To do so, Swamiji dressed Himself as a woman, styled Himself "Venkateswari," and had His picture used for the cover in complete humility.

Swami Venkatesananda writes, "Even if birth after birth, I live to serve as Gurudev's slave, I cannot repay the debt I owe."

Swami Sivananda called Him "Crest-Jewel of my Mission, the resplendence of my work - will I ever see anyone shine brighter than He, Swami Venkatesanandaji? Surely none I have seen so far." One cannot imagine higher praise from one's Guru.

The book includes tributes by numerous god-men, including Sri Ramakrishna, Ramaswamy, numerous Sivananda swamis, including Krishnananda, Vishnudevananda, Omkarananda, Sadananda, Narayananda, Ramananda, Atmaswarupananda, Harisharananda, Chidananda, Turiyananda, and Swamiji's own father, Srinivasan.

Brother-Swami Vishnudevananda wrote most movingly: "Really, he is the pet child of Gurudev. His main Sadhana is seeing the greatness in others _ not only in all human beings but in animals and birds."

Swami Omkarananda wrote in fulsome tribute that Swami Venkatesa was "the one great flawless medium for the flow of Sivananda's Light, Peace, and Grace, into all mankind." Swami Sivananda encouraged Swami Omkar to write Swami Venkatesa's biography, though he never did, blaming his own "personal indolence". However, Omkar wrote a pamphlet on Swamiji prior to this volume which seems to have been lost. Pity. The Master told Omkar Swami, "Venkatesa is a tower of strength to me, and the very life of my mission."

Brother-Swami Saswathananda notes “Never before...have I seen a young man with so much devotion to God and Guru.”

Brother-Swami Chidananda praises Swamiji’s “one hundred percent harmony and attunement with Gurudev.”

Swami Vishnu recounts Swami Venkatesa’s embrace of homoeopathy under renowned Doctor-Mahatma Swami Achintyananda. “His very presence is a glory to his Guru Maharaj.”

However, by far the most moving tribute comes from the Master himself. Sivananda calls Swami Venkatesananda “the ideal of a sadhaka” and conferred Venkatesa’s title, “Siva-Pada Renu”, “dust of Siva’s Feet”.

Swamiji’s entire life was always Siva-Pada-Renu. “He shines like the sun.” In this lovely, little book, Siva’s light is reflected by the full moon who is Swami Venkatesananda.

Flowers offered at the Guru’s Feet

Sadasiva

Swami Lakshmi Ananda - A Tribute

Guru brahma guru vishnu gurur devo maheshwara
Guruh sakshat parabrahma tasmai sri gurave namah
Guru Brahma

'Guru is Brahma the Creator'

From people scattered allover the world, Swamiji created a 'family' of seekers, dedicated to His work and the search for truth; through His devotees He created Trusts to publish His books, every page of which is illumined by His wisdom and His own unique way of presenting the Eternal Truth. Revered Swami Jnanananda once remarked: "His lectures flowed like the Ganges"; and, like the Ganges, each time the 'water' was fresh and new, with his own unmistakable flavour.

In Mauritius and Australia, ashrams were created with his own special touch the murtis and statues were placed outdoors in the garden so they were always surrounded by fresh flowers; he didn't like to see flowers plucked unnecessarily. In Mauritius there are Sivananda schools, Sivananda roads and streets and a beautiful Sivananda stamp.

It is said in the Varaha Purana, Part 1, Chapter 58

Mata 'ntara pravistanam api bhaktir bhavisyati

'All people from all over the country and abroad, people belonging to different faiths, too, will participate in Lord Venkatesa's festivals and will develop devotion to Him.'

Swamiji was the instrument in making this possible. In his centres all over the world there are murtis of Lord Venkatesa, and Venkatesa Puja is done regularly.

Swamiji 'created' the idea of satsang without a master present, so that wherever he was, satsang in the various centres would go on just as if he were there. His wonderful translations of the major Indian and Buddhist scriptures, presented as they are in the unique form of daily readings, made this possible as also the fact that he never allowed his personality to intrude into the satsang atmosphere so that there was no feeling of loss when he was not there; but, of course, when he was present there was that extra light and inspiration which was an inseparable part of him!

Swamiji rarely gave instructions or made requests .except about mundane day ..to ..day matters; but he would drop a hint. If we picked up the hint the full unstinting flood of his attention would be there. Not the smallest most insignificant factor would be overlooked. (If we did not pick up the hint his love was unchanged. If we tried but did not succeed, or abandoned the project, there was never the slightest reproach or disappointment. It might have worked out it didn't; he dropped all thought of it.) For instance, when we were planning to present Swami Madhavananda with a cake at his birthday satsang, Swamiji wanted to know every detail of the planning of the actual cake making; he supervised the construction of the frame which supported

the cake; he supervised and made suggestions for the decoration, candles, etc; he taught us a chant and made us rehearse it several times (with much laughter); and we had to rehearse also the carrying of the heavy cake, planning the easiest route to the Samadhi Hall. He worked out the timing so that we arrived. at the most appropriate moment, he organised a messenger to keep us informed of the events in the satsang and he checked that the person who was deputed to light the candles had a fresh dry box of matches. He asked us to dress in our best clothes for the event, he even arranged us in order of height shortest at the front and he made the whole proceedings such fun that we felt as if it were our birthday celebration! (If the cake toppled and the decorations caught on fire it was because of our incompetence at carrying out his instructions, not because of any oversight on his part.)

Sometimes, however, his grace alone enabled things to happen. For instance, in 1971 he dropped a suggestion that Perth should have an ashram. When the idea was taken up his grace enabled the Sivananda Ashram in Perth to grow and flourish, so that in a few years we have a magnificent building, a beautiful big new hall and a press all of which grew without drives for funds, and seemingly without much effort.

Gurur Vishnu

'Guru is Vishnu the Preserver' in all His aspects:

As Krishna the irresistible delighter of hearts Swamiji's love flowed unstintingly to all; and, as in the case of Krishna, his 'lilas' sometimes bewitched, bemused and confused us. His wisdom, laughter, humour, thoughtfulness, compassion and that particular 'something' that radiated from him delighted all who knew him. In those whose hearts were troubled he created peace and acceptance. No-one could remain in his company for long without feeling their worries fade into insignificance and then one wondered what the problem had been!

Like Krishna, what he was in essence was hidden from all. The longer one knew him the more one realised that one knew him not at all. He made everyone feel special, yet no-one was special to him; or everyone was!

As Rama the embodiment of righteousness all the virtues effortlessly had this abode in him. His loving care and foresight towards all his friends never failed. He did nothing that was not for our ultimate good, even if at the time it seemed to our small minds to be incomprehensible. Mostly we discovered his wisdom only in retrospect. If we had problems and wrote to him about them he usually answered promptly, though sometimes he would give no written reply but the answer would come without the need for physical communication from him, transcending time and space. Often before even mailing the letter the answer would come in some mysterious way either in a letter that day from him, from a chance conversation, from a passage read at satsang or a sudden inspiration in meditation.

Swamiji gave us lots of work to do once we had shown that we were eager to serve him, and the only reason he created the work was to enable us, through

service, to be on the same 'wave ..length', so that communication was possible. He could have easily had his books professionally typeset and beautifully printed, but that would have meant that so many people would not then have had an opportunity to serve him while he travelled extensively. But with the bookwork we were always kept busy in his service and in tune with him. What blessings he showered on us through this bookwork! We were (and are) constantly dwelling on his thoughts, constantly feeling his presence, and at the same time slowly growing in spirituality while becoming familiar with the scriptures and philosophy of yoga.

As Venkatesa the destroyer of sins he looked at us 'through the corner of his eyes' (only with love). And even without complete surrender to him his compassion protects us so that our troubles come only to 'thigh level'. We do not drown in our troubles. (Lord Venkatesa, after whom Swamiji got his sannyas name, is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. There are two extraordinary features - the face is covered and one hand points to the feet while the other gracefully rests at thigh level which denote that God can only look at his devotee through the corner of his eyes, and if one surrenders to Him one's troubles come only to thigh level.)

Gurur devo mahesh warah

'Guru is Maheshwarah (Siva), the destroyer or redeemer.'

Swamiji destroyed all our misconceptions and illusions; he had none of his own. If one were to say (with a long face), "Swamiji, I am disillusioned," he would be delighted: "Wonderful. That is the best thing that can happen. Throwaway all your illusions and look for the Reality." He constantly saw the Reality behind the names and forms; his every action flowed from that realisation. He lived in that Reality.

The aspect of Rudra was seen very rarely. Only if someone was misguided enough to try to manipulate him or do something against Swami Sivananda's mission, was this aspect manifested (and his 'hiss' was something terrible to witness!), but if he was misunderstood or badly treated there was no reaction except perhaps a gesture of absolute humility and self..effacement. He could be a very stern disciplinarian, but it was always what the recipient needed for his spiritual growth, never because wamiji was angry.

Guruhsakshat parabrahma

'Guru is verily the supreme Brahman Himself'

We saw the beauty of his form; we basked in his love and laughter; we were stimulated by his wisdom and clarity of thought; we were enchanted and delighted by his play on words to make obscure spiritual concepts clearer; but in all that, we glimpsed only a ray of his Light, and only occasionally were we aware of the depth of the Ocean that he was.

Tasmai sri gurave namah

'Prostrations to that Guru.'

May our hearts be purified that he may dwell there always.

1. Publishers' Note

The man-of-God is a philosopher's-stone that transforms all base metal that comes in contact with it into the nobler metal. While, in the life of every great saint, there have been instances of such transformation, it might be said with certainty that it is Swami Sivananda to whom could be ascribed the glory of inviting people sunk in the mire of materialism and sensual pleasures, and of transforming them, by patient, loving and kind methods, into sadhakas and spiritually aspiring souls.

One such instance is portrayed in this volume. It is the story of Swami Sivananda's cosmic love that rejects none, invites all to share the nectar of divine experience of which the sage is full, and protects them, with the strong arm of His Self-realisation, from the pitfalls with which an aspirant's path is beset.

Swami Venkatesananda is one such soul that came within the transforming influence of Swami Sivananda, in 1945; and what Swami Sivananda could make of this aspirant is portrayed in the following pages in which are published the articles written and speeches delivered by disciples and devotees of Swami Sivananda, during the occasion of the celebration of the 34th Birthday of Swami Venkatesananda at Sivanandashram, on the 26th and 27th December, 1954.

The enlightening words of Swami Sivananda, uttered during the Birthday Celebrations, are worth being engraved upon the heart of every seeker after Truth.

P.O. Sivananda Nagar

March 8th, 1955

2. The Ideal of a Sadhaka

Speech delivered by Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj on the 26th December 1954, at Sivanandashram, Rishikesh, for the celebration of the 34th birthday of Swami Venkatesanandaji

To have such a fiery renunciation and the spirit of service, what is it due to? There are people of 50 and 60 who do not get such ideas. What is it that made Swami Venkatesananda renounce the world and adopt this life? That is, I think, good samskaras and virtuous qualities. He had been a Sanyasi in the previous birth, leading the divine life, leading a Sattvic life on the banks of the Ganges, studying the Upanishads, Brahma-Sutras and Gita. I am not saying this to glorify him; but to point out to you that he is an example before you. Everyone of you should, in this life, try to do virtuous deeds, practice Ahimsa, Satyam and Brahmacharya, to have aspiration - intense aspiration and burning Vairagya. You may not have it; but you will have to cultivate it by Satsanga, study, enquiry into the nature of the Self, reflection. That is your foremost duty.

These people may or may not deliver lectures. Look at Sri Krishna Ashram of Gangotri; the very life of such people you will have to watch - their simple food, simple living, their love of Japa, Kirtan and meditation, and their Vairagya. Vairagya is the greatest wealth, the real wealth, which weans the mind away from the objects of the world, which is a strong weapon to cut off all the attachments that you have for the world. For such a man of Vairagya, there is no world. No object of sense-enjoyment can attract him. When you become a District Judge, you rejoice; when you get a little thing of this world, you rejoice; when you have accumulated a little bank balance, you rejoice; but look at these people - they know that you cannot have eternal satisfaction in these objects, but that you can have it only in the Atma, the Innermost Self that resides in the chambers of your heart.

Jyotishamapi Tat Jyotih Tamasah Paramuchyate

Jnanan Jneyam Jnanagamyam Hridi Sarvasya Vishthitam

These things of the world do not attract them, because they have got the spiritual wealth of good Samskaras, through enquiry and reflection. You must possess Vairagya which will lead you to the attainment of the Atma, the inexhaustible spiritual wealth.

But you do not have aspiration! The mind is full of evil tendencies. You may be endowed with a little talent; and you will be puffed up. The mind is veiled. There is Avarana. In spite of your intellectual faculties and talents, you will not be able to understand and realise the Universal, Cosmic, Supreme Being, whose nature is Satchidananda. You can get many Oxford University

graduates, but not many Jivanmuktas who have realised the Self - that is the supreme veiling power of Maya. You know - yet you will not be able to understand it! There is something beyond these senses, mind and intellect - the Supreme Soul, full of Bliss, the Only Reality! How many educated people have understood this, and are trying to realise it? How many have got ever an aspiration to realise it? That aspiration is the real wealth.

Aspiration. Renunciation. Meditation. These will make you a king of kings, emperor of emperors Kaupenavantah Khalu Bhagyantah. Very few have realised this, and very few are attempting to realise this. Because, they are satisfied with the little toys of this world. They have not got the supreme subtle Vichara-Buddhi which is the greatest wealth of man. That comes through selfless service, study, meditation, enquiry, Satsanga. Nobody wants this! How many people want the wealth of the Atma ? How many are attempting to possess these qualifications which are necessary?

How many intellectual people try to sit in Padmasan and do Japa and meditation? People do not know what Padmasan is. They do not know what Prana is, nor the relation between Prana and the mind and the will. They want to become scholars. Their mind will run in that direction only. Their goal is an American degree. If a doctor becomes an 'America- returned' specialist, he will get Rs. 32 as his visiting fees. God has given you an intellect. You must understand the magnitude of human suffering. What is the nature of this world? What is the mind? Ask yourself. Then only will you become a great man. He is a great man who tries to possess Vairagya, who tries to practice the Sadhana-Chatushtaya. Equip yourself with Viveka, Vairagya, Shat-Sampat and Mumukshuttwa. What is Viveka? People do not know. They will deliver lectures on engineering. Maya will make your mind work along the external grooves. It is its duty. Maya hides the real and makes the unreal appear as real. So, you want only external things.

Ye hi Samsparsaja Bhogah Duhkha-yonaya Eva Te
Adyantavantah Kaunteya Na Teshu Ramate Budhah

The pleasure that is derived through contact of sensual objects is verily the womb of pain. You will have to meditate upon this; then only will you get the discriminating intellect, which will make you bold with the power that is born of the wisdom of the Self Cultivate discrimination and dispassion. That only will make you bold. Otherwise, moving along the sensual grooves, you will lose everything.

God has given you this chance -this human birth - to rise above sensual things and to realise the goal of life. How many of you are attempting to do so? Mere study of the scriptures will not do. You can talk. But, have you got that

burning Vairagya, the burning aspiration, which Lord Buddha had, which Raja Gopichand had? Then only can you become the king of kings. If you do not attempt to possess these, then you fail in your duty.

You forget this truth. It is difficult to give up, to renounce these sensual objects. But, if you are sincere, the path will be easy. It is easy for those who resort to Satsanga, who close their eyes and make a little enquiry: 'What is this world, what is the goal of life, what is mind?' Only such enquiry will lead you to everlasting peace. Very few people do this. You will have to generate these Samskaras now, just as Venkatesananda did - and so he has come here. This clearly proves there is rebirth. You come down here with your Samskaras. You wanted to become an engineer. God has given you birth that will enable you to fulfill your ambition. But this will not give you satisfaction. In your old age you will suffer from all sorts of diseases and lead a miserable life. Your mind is full of evil Vasanas. How many selfless acts have you done?

How many people try to do selfless service? All are selfish. Close your eyes and practise self-analysis and find out for yourself what are the various kinds of impurities that are lurking in the mind, and are the good qualities that you are possessing.

Amanitwam, Adambhitwam, Ahimsa, Kshantirarjawam, Acharyopasanam, Soucham, Sthairyam, Atmavinigraha, Indriyartheshu, Vairagyam, Anahamkara eva cha, Janmamrityujaravyadhi, Duhkhadosa-anudarshanam. Are you trying to cultivate these virtues? Even to possess one virtue, and give up the little tea-habit, how difficult it is. How many good acts have you done today? Which evil quality is troubling you? You must know. That is the thing which will make you a real man, a Superman.

How many of you are keeping the spiritual diary? What is your spiritual progress, compared with the previous years? These are the things that matter. He is the greatest man, a real sovereign and emperor who is striving to answer these questions. He may not possess any wealth or treasury; but he who possesses dispassion, discrimination, serenity, spirit of selfless service, spirit of sharing with others what he has, he is the greatest man. Man is generous to himself. He can spend any amount on the saree of his daughter; but his heart is very small, because he has not cultivated the spirit of charity. He cannot share with others what he has. He closes the doors and takes first-class Bourn-Vita.

To his friends he may give a little. To servants he will not give even water. Such is the nature of the great man who has got a number of factories. Analyse yourself. You have a small heart and a small intellect. Your world

consists of only yourself and 4 or 5 relatives, and perhaps a few friends who will help you when you are in difficulties. No. You must have a large heart. You must become one with the entire mankind. You must share with others what you have. Every day, as soon as you get up, ask yourself: 'How many good actions was I able to do yesterday?', and resolve to excel the previous day in doing good to others. Thus would you evolve rapidly.

Practise patience, tolerance and endurance. These are the qualities you will have to develop. Then you can become fearless. Venkatesananda has practised these already; so they have become the basic traits in him. If you cultivate these qualities and acquire the spiritual wealth, whatever you want, God will give you. Spiritual wealth alone will make you king of kings. You will be freed from all sorrows when you see the One Common Consciousness everywhere. You must have Sarvatma-Buddhi. Then you will be free from sorrow, pain and delusion. Then you will enjoy supreme satisfaction, perennial joy and immortality. That is the goal.

The little sensual pleasure is no pleasure at all. When there is a patch of eczema, you scratch yourself and seem to enjoy it. Later it bleeds, and you suffer from intense pain. Similar is the case with the pleasure derived from sensual objects here. You must have a bold understanding to ask yourself: 'Is this really pleasure?', and arrive at the conclusion that it is no pleasure at all. Study the phenomenon of deep sleep; that itself will give you the knowledge that you can get real joy and peace only when you go beyond the objects of this world. In deep sleep, there are no objects, and there is no objective enjoyment. Yet, you enjoy great bliss and peace there. You say, 'I slept well ; I enjoyed my sleep; but I did not know anything.' In spite of the absence of the sensual objects, you got the homogeneous experience of bliss. This joy is not to be had in the sense-objects. The third cup of milk produces retching and vomiting. If it is really pleasure-giving, it ought to give you that homogeneous experience, eternal and everlasting. It is only to the dull-witted, gross persons that the worldly objects appear to be pleasurable. For a man of discrimination, it is no pleasure at all.

Real happiness you can have through meditation, with a pure, concentrated mind, filled with Sattwa. People may write articles and theses ; but how to convert Rajas into Sattwa? No one knows this.

Nobody practises introspection. As soon as you get up, you put on your suit and go to office. In the evening you go to the club and at night go to sleep. Where is time for you to introspect? Only regular and systematic introspection will enable you to control the mind; and only he who has controlled the mind will be able to enjoy real happiness. Only when the mind

is filled with Sattva you can have concentration of mind. In a Sattvic mind alone does real Atmic enquiry arise. He alone can discover the answer to the question: 'What is my real essential nature?'

Are you the body? No. The body is a perishable object made of five elements; so you are distinct from the body. Similarly, you are not the Prana, and you are not the mind, either. In dream, the idea of the body does not exist, and yet you exist; in deep sleep even the mind vanishes, and yet you exist. When there is great fear or shock, the mind does not function. Therefore, it cannot be the ever-intelligent Atma. These are the enquiries that you should pursue.

Regular introspection, Japa, Kirtan, meditation, Atmic enquiry - only these will make you strong and really wealthy.

It is your important duty to try to realise the Self in this life itself. This is your foremost duty. This only can remove your worries, cares, anxieties, and make you blissful at all times, under all conditions, and all kinds of environments.

Meditation is very difficult. Before attempting to meditate really, you should equip yourself with the virtues enumerated under Yama-Niyama. Be truthful. Practise non-injury. Practise Brahmacharya. These are all the things that you will have to cultivate, little by little. If you are earnest and sincere, everything will become easy.

Have a program of life. Know what is the real goal. Do not imagine, 'When I retire I will be able to do Japa and meditation.' When all your energy is squeezed out, you will not, in your old age, be able to sit even in Padmasana for a few minutes. When you are young, you must meditate, and practise enquiry. Study Yoga Vasishtha, Vivaka Chudamani. Yoga Vasishtha will raise you to supreme Brahmanhood and make you the real king of kings. He who is full of desires is a beggar of beggars; he is a slave of the senses, slave of the Indriyas, slave of emotions. Try to rise above all these and then you can attain to the realisation of oneness or unity, and realise the fearless Atman.

The Atman is fearless. There is no anxiety, no worry, no misery in the Self, where there is neither east nor west, neither south nor north. In the Self there is neither hunger nor thirst, no old age or death; no Tuesday or Monday. He is Sat-Kama and Sat-Sankalpa. Only if you attain this Atman will you be free.

That is your essential nature. Tat Twam Asi, you are That, my dear children.

But the realisation of this Truth - Tat Twam Asi - is not so easy. By selfless service you will have to purify your mind of the dirt which has accumulated in it; and then steady the mind through Upasana, and through the Grace of the Lord the veil (Avarana) will be removed. This, our Venkatesananda has done.

When we celebrate the Birthday of Venkatesananda, we are celebrating the Birthday of the Supreme Being. We worship, we remember the One Common

Consciousness which, through the veiling power of Maya, appears as all these-like the blueness in the sky, like a snake in the rope. You will have to enquire. You have been overwhelmed by these little appearances, by these names and forms. There is an ocean of peace, Satchidananda, behind these.

Eko Devah Sarvabhuteshu Gudhah.

That One Supreme Consciousness is hidden in all these beings like butter in milk. He who is able to see the one Light of lights, he alone really sees.

Otherwise he is blind. Study the Upanishads, Atma-Bodha, Tattwa-Bodha.

Cultivate reverence to teachers, reverence to saints, reverence to Sadhus.

They only can redeem you. The Sanyasin is Sakshat Narayana Himself. He who is able to infuse into you discrimination, has placed you under a debt of gratitude to him, which you cannot repay in millions of lives. Your mind runs along the sensual grooves. He who is able to turn your mind away from the

sensual grooves, you cannot very easily repay the debt you owe him. He who is able to infuse into you a little aspiration and to turn your mind slightly from the sensual objects, you cannot repay without Sadhana the debt you owe him.

Such are the people who wear this Glory to the worthy children of Sankaracharya, Dattatreya, Sanaka, Sanandana and Sanatkumara. He who is not able to understand the one all-pervading Presence, whose mind runs along sensual grooves, is a burden upon earth however great he is intellectually, and however wealthy he may be. He who is not filled with discrimination and dispassion is a burden upon earth. But he who is able to turn the mind from the sense-objects, who is devoted to the Omnipresent Indweller, is a saint. He is a saint who has understood the real significance of the Four Mahavakyas: Prajnaram Brahma, Aham Brahmasmi, Tat Twam Asi, Ayam Atma Brahma. You are not this small being of 5' 4", with all sorts of cravings, Vasanas and Trishnas - these have made a beast of you. But Tat Twam Asi - thou art That, Satchidananda Atman. Only he who has not understood this runs after the sensual pleasures which appear to taste like nectar in the beginning, but eventually turn out to be poisonous.

Understand the magnitude of human suffering. Understand what this world can give you - only a little sensation, titillation of the nerves. If you waste your life in these little things, how foolish you are! You have forgotten the goal of life. One anna of pleasure is mixed with fifteen annas of pain. Can you recognize this a pleasure?

So many virtues have to be cultivated. So many scriptures have to be studied, not only for the sake of knowledge and understanding, but for the sake of practice. Remember:

Vihaya Kaman yah Sarvan Pumamscharati Nihsprisah, Nismamo
Nirahankarah Sa Shantimadbighachchat
Indriyartheshu Vairagyam Anahamkara eva cha, Janmamrityu-Jaravyadhi-
Duhkha Doshanudarshanam.

Are you keeping these as your ideals before you? He who is free from cravings and temptations, he alone will enjoy peace. Your endeavour must be daily to find out how much Ahamkara and Mamakara have you got? You will have to repeat these formulas every second and annihilate desires, Ahamkara and mineness. Then you will enjoy real peace.

Are you attempting all this? Have you got this ideal before you? What are the obstacles? When you want to eradicate I-ness and mine-ness, you must feel within and have devotion to the ideal of Atmic realisation. Keep the goal always before you. Then comes control of Indriyas. The man who has controlled the Indriyas gets Supreme Peace. This is the real science. This is the Brahma Vidya taught by Uddalaka to Svetaketu, by Yajnavalkya to Maitreyi. These Upanishadic truths must enter your very bones and nerves. Then you will have selflessness, egolessness, desirelessness, Vasanalessness, Trishnalessness. Then only can you be called a human being.

God has given you a chance. When you have strength, knowledge, beauty, health, etc., and when you have been provided with books, teachers - everything, if you do not attempt for Self-realisation, then God is not to be blamed.

People have begun to ask: 'Where is God?' He is everywhere. It is absurd to ask for proof of the existence of God. Who created the mind with its several faculties? Who pumps blood in your heart? Who causes the peristaltic movements? He is the All-pervading Essence. He is hidden in all these things like oil in the sesamum seed, like butter in milk, like electricity in the wires. God is Swatah-Siddha. The mother says: 'Here is your father'- you do not ask her for further proof. Similarly, you will have to repose faith in the words of the scriptures and the sages. God is everywhere. He is in the Light, in the Sun, in the Moon, in the Stars, in every speck of creation.

He who is sincere, who has aspiration, he will realise God. Every man is selfish. Therefore, Shastras say that you must do charity. By charity you purify yourself and you recognise the all-pervading Atman. You grow in unity and oneness. Charity gives rise to knowledge of the oneness, the unity of Consciousness.

There is time yet, if you start doing the right thing from this very moment. But you must apply yourself seriously to Sadhana. How many of you are getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning and contemplating upon questions like: 'What

is the world in Infinity?' If you are attempting to have the knowledge of Infinity, will you waste your time in reading newspapers? No. Even an attempt at the realisation of the Self raises you to Brahmaloaka. Actual realisation takes you beyond sorrow, once for all: Tarati Shokam Atrnavit. Such a man becomes Brahman Himself: Brahmavit Brahmaiva Bhaveti. He enables others to cross the ocean of Samsara: Sa Tarati sa Lokan Tarayati. All sorrows are banished from you even when you think of the Atman: Ahamatma Nirakarah Sarvavyapi Swabhavatah.

Do you get this knowledge in your Universities? You should exert yourself to acquire this Brahma Vidya. That alone can make you bold. The whole wealth of the Lord belongs to you. All divine Aiswaryas, all Siddhis and Riddhis roll under the feet of the sage of Self-realisation. That you should attempt to become. Repeat formulas like:

Ahamatma Nirakarah Sarvavyapi Swabhavatah;
Jnana-mritam Suddham Atindriyoham.

Even the mere repetition of these formulas makes you fearless and helps you to cross this ocean of Samsara.

There are three kinds of impurities in the mind. One is Mala (dirt) which is removed by the practice of Karma Yoga. The other is Vikshepa (tossing of the mind) which is removed by Bhakti, and the third is Avarana (veil of ignorance) which is removed by Jnana Yoga. Thinking, willing, feeling - all these must be developed harmoniously; then only will there be integral development. That is your duty.

You should not merely study the scriptures and deliver lectures; but you should also discipline the mind. Whatever the Gita teaches, you should put into practice. Simply lecturing on Brahma Sutras will not do. If you are not given due respect and honour, you will lose your balance of mind. Not only study and lecturing; you should introspect, analyse and find out what virtues you should develop and what defects you should get rid of. That leads to Brahma Jnana - not mere study. Develop humility. Cultivate the spirit of selfless service. You must watch for opportunities. If a man is lying down on the roadside, hungry and thirsty, you must run to him with a cup of milk. Otherwise your study of Brahma Sutras is useless. You should not bring in Vedantic arguments to support your Vedantic indifference here! One man said to the other, 'My house is on fire; please come and help.' The latter replied, 'Well, friend, this world is unreal. Where is house, where is fire?' This is sheer foolishness. The world is unreal. For whom? For a Jivanmukta. If sugar is a little less in coffee, you will know whether the world is real or unreal

for you. It is only when you discipline yourself through untiring selfless service that Atma-Jnana will arise in you.

Venkatesananda is not a small boy. All the Ashram work he is doing. I must tell all this, so that other people may be inspired to emulate his example. He has not uttered a single word that could displease me. If I want to get some work done urgently, the next morning it is ready; he would do it sitting up the whole night. He has no ego. He will never say, 'This is not good.' He is pleasing in manners. We should always try to please everybody. People generally bring in the story of the donkey, the old man and his son, in support of their argument that it is not possible to please everybody. This is wrong. I always try to please everybody, whatever be the nature of people. When a man comes to me, I find out what is good in him and try to please him. Though it may not always be possible, you must try to please all to the maximum extent open to you.

One old man wants to take Sanyas. He is still postponing it. 'You have got Moha for your son,' I said. 'Yes, I have,' he says. Look at the force of Samskaras. He who is living with Sanyasins in this birth will gather sufficient Samskaras now to take Sanyas in the next birth. One girl has come here; she has taken Sanyas. I thought she won't be able to pull on and, therefore, refused to give her Sanyas. The Sanyas-spirit sometimes comes and goes. She observed Satyagraha; she did not take food for three or four days. Her mother came to me and said: 'Give her Sanyas.' Her father also blessed her. Then I gave her Sanyas. Such is the force of good Samskaras. It won't allow you to lead a worldly life. When spiritual Samskaras begin to take effect, it is like the atom bomb bursting.

Venkatesananda's letters are full of honey. Our Professor Swami Sadananda is a great critic, and he is all-appreciation for Venkatesananda's letters. They are preserved in the iron-safe by those who receive them. He does not even prepare a draft; he sits at the typewriter, and the letter is at once ready. No stenographer will be able to compete with him. Many are coming; but if I say one thing, they will write something else. That is one kind of 'stenography'. But Venkatesananda, even if he hears once, it is quite sufficient for him; he will reproduce the speech beautifully. He has a very acute grasping power; there is no confusion in his brain. But for him all that I say, not only I, but many others like Dr. Graham Howe, Prof. Burt, Sri Satchidanandam Pillai, Major-General A.N. Sharma, and others who have delivered lectures here - would have been lost. He is a man to be adored.

I told Venkatesananda, when I was at Roorkee: 'Do not always refer to me as Gurudev, in your talks; just say Swamiji, that will do.' He said: 'If I say

Swamiji, it does not express the Bhav of my heart; it creates an illusion of equality with Gurudev.' Then I allowed him to continue to refer to me as Gurudev.

The work he does, other people won't be able to do. So many books and pamphlets are coming out of the press - all through his work only. He has written my day-to-day talks in Four Volumes, yet to be published; he has also written my life-sketch. He has also written the 'Bhagavad Gita for Students' which is very much appreciated by all. He has performed much austerity, Tapas, in previous births also; and he has rendered selfless service to Yogis, sages and great people. This has taken the shape of his talents, his kindness, good qualities and good Samskaras. I have seen people here, when they have a little talent, their head swells. Whoever may come, I make him a lecturer, the cashier and most important man, in order to encourage him, the new inmate. But some people's heads swell. Venkatesananda is not like that. He is humble and egoless. Similarly, Swami Chidananda also; therefore, everybody loves him.

He, Swami Chidananda and the others, are the people to continue the work of the Divine Life Society. Every man is useful; and Venkatesananda is useful in his own way. Just as in the body there are so many cells, tissues, etc., and life is sustained by their harmonious working. Similarly, if all of you work harmoniously, together, you can do grand service to the world.

He is overworked, and there is nobody to help him. The work he does is very great. During the All-India Tour, Venkatesananda was working day and night. He was given a small room in the Tourist Car. He had not even a proper place to sit and work. Yet he has produced the huge volume 'Sivananda's Lectures: All-India Tour'. But for him this book would not have come out at all.

Saradananda also contributed a lot to this book. He used to ascend trees and buildings in order to take photographs. He is also working in his own way; and he is a genius. Thus is the work carried on by all these people. May God bless them all with health, long life, peace and Eternal Bliss.

3. In His Foot-steps

Sri Kamalamma, following that of Swami Sivananda.

The lion is the king of the jungles. When the lion roars, naturally, all the petty inhabitants of the jungle lie down low on the ground. The voice and the echo penetrate not only the very heart of the jungle, but every nook and corner of it. For the time being all the other animals are paralysed with fear. They dare not even move. Such is the tremendous roaring of our Majestic Lion Swami Sivananda, our great Master, whose den is Ananda Kutir in the Himalayas. His majestic roaring of the Vedanta silences all the 'beasts' of vices lording over the hearts and minds of men. But this silence is a short-lived one. It exists only so long as the voice is thundering. Then again, slowly, the beasts rise up. They are up once again - monsters working havoc, dragging every human being into the jaws of death.

Can the sweet music of our Eternal charming Sivananda penetrate into the hearts of vicious selfish people whose minds are filled with vanity, egoism, pride, selfishness and a thousand other vices?

The mind and heart should be cleansed of all impurities. Swami Sivananda asks us to give one-tenth of our income towards charity. A man is prepared to spend and waste a fortune on his wife's amusements and fancies and on his children, but where does he have the heart to contribute even a small sum towards a good cause, even if it be to save one from death? Such are the selfish, the mean, the heartless. Yet they call themselves noble men. Where is the nobility? Swami Sivananda says, 'They have a small heart'.

The world looks down on a Sadhu or a Sannyasin who, in the eyes of the world, is a beggar going about from place to place. He really depends wholly on God's mercy and love, doing good to humanity, offering up his very life as Prasad to God, for the benefit of the world.

Swami Sivananda says that these are the very people who save men that are rushing headlong to their ruin, their destruction. These Sadhus are verily the saviors of the world. It is they who divert men from the path to destruction, men who, like the waters running at their full speed into the ocean, are seen to be running towards death. It is they who save them by diverting the channels of their minds from evil to good, from selfishness to selflessness, from impurity to purity, from the path of death to the path of Divinity. The good they do to one and all is indeed great. Even in millions of lives one will hardly be able to repay even an atom of the debt that one owes to them.

They are the kings of kings. They are the saviors of mankind. So, how great should be our reverence towards these saints. But for them the world would be in a state of chaos. Swami Sivananda says, 'Who tries to think about his

own faults? Do men ever think what good actions they have done each day? How many vices have they eradicated, and how many virtues have they developed?' This human birth is very precious. This birth is given to us to know God and to be free, ever enjoying the eternal bliss. One cup of milk will do; the second cup loses its taste. The third cup produces nausea. One gets sick of it. Such is this world! Drink that nectar, that which you could be eternally drinking and enjoying. Instead, you run after the cheap pleasures which give you momentary sensual gratification, and then bring only pain. Just as a man suffering from itches derives some pleasure in scratching himself, there is an apparent pleasure in sense-contact. Such are the pleasures of the world. Swami Sivananda says that all men here are slaves, slaves of slaves, ever slaves of the mind and the senses. All are beggars. He exhorts us to do Sadhana and get rid of this slavery. He says that we should get up early in the morning and do Japa, meditation. We have to be good, and to do good. Do not be selfish. Speak a few words. Speak sweetly. Speak gently. Speak truthfully. Share with others what you have. Do not live for yourself alone. Live to serve God, by serving humanity. Give away one-tenth of your income towards charity. This will purify your mind. Thus you become blessed.

My Pranams to my own Father, whom I have found at last, though in this old age of mine. I wish to serve my Father to the utmost of my capacity, though I am poor and weak.

My heart and soul and body are Thine, I completely surrender myself at Thy Lotus-Feet.

4. The Yoga Vedanta Forest University

The Yoga Vedanta Forest University

Ananda Kutir Rishikesh Himalayas

Tat Twam Asi

Whereas, by the Grace of God, the Fountain of Eternal Bliss, and by the Will of the Almighty, it has been recognized that Prapatti-Murti Sri Swami Venkatesananda is worthy of being awarded the sacred title of Siva-Pada-Renu (Sivananda Pada Renu), in appreciation of meritorious services rendered in the field of dedicated Guru-Seva and dynamic dissemination of spiritual knowledge and Sivananda's message of Divine Life, and a firm devotion to Truth, Love and Purity, I hereby make this award in token of such recognition, with my best wishes and devout prayers to the Lord to bless the recipient hereof with health, long life, peace, prosperity, Eternal Bliss, success in all undertakings, Vidya, Tushti, Pushti and Divine Aiswarya.

This 26th Day of December, 1954.

Swami Sivananda

Chancellor

5. The Beloved Brother

Ramakrishna and Sri Rajagopal

We send our humble Pranams to our beloved brother Swami Venkatesananda, on the happy occasion of his birthday. He is our Light and guide. He is like the Mariner's Compass and Light-House to us. We cannot express how grateful we are to our brother, for his teachings to us, in the form of Lord Krishna, in his most inspiring 'Bhagavad Gita for Students'. These rare teachings of his would greatly benefit the younger generation of this holy land. More than this, we had the good fortune of getting the blessings of Gurudev Swami Sivananda. Our Gurudev, with his supreme kindness, has given us his Upadesh and conferred on us titles and presented us with medals for the humble services which we rendered while we were in the Ashram. We anxiously look forward to the Summer Vacation, to run up to the Ashram and spend the leave with our dear brother and Gurudev.

Blessed are we to have such an illustrious brother. We pray to the Almighty God that He may bless Swami Venkatesananda with sound health and long life.

6. A Cheerful Monk

P. S. Varadaraja Ayyar

If monkhood assumed the form of a cheerful youth, it is Swami Venkatesananda. Ever attentive to the call of duty, Swami Venkatesananda goes about his task with a smile that is infectious. He has a gift for brilliant conversation and sparkling wit, and can keep the gravest company aglow with merriment. The rigorous discipline of an ascetic life has failed to freeze the genial current of his soul.

Like his master, he combines the wisdom of a sage with the simplicity of a child. A scholar without ostentation, a writer without pedantry, and a speaker without idiosyncrasies, the Swami has made himself lovable and valuable to all those that have anything to do with him. To his master, Swami Venkatesananda is an invaluable treasure. As an exponent of Hatha Yoga, as a speaker on Bhakti Yoga, as an organizer of a Bhajan group, as an inaugurator or promoter of a branch society, or as the editor of the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University magazine, he always carried distinction in serving the cause of the Society, in any of its many-sided activities. His versatility, magnetic personality and genial temperament should arouse the emulative spirit of many a young novice in the Abode of Busy. To any old man wanting a treatment for rejuvenation, I would recommend spending an hour in the company of Swami Venkatesananda, in preference to the painful injections of Dr. Voronoff.

I wish the Swami all the best on his entering the 34th year of a very useful life, and many more happy years to follow.

7. The Self of Siva

Swami Sivananda-Krishnananda

Revered Swami Venkatesananda in the self of my Gurudev. The whole world is indebted to you, for the blessed ones like your noble-self sanctify our earth from time to time: Teerthee-Kurvanti Teerthani. All talk about such a noble soul like you in terms of praise as a Yogi or a great person will be a poor estimate of the sublime and supreme achievements that you have made, because one who has become identical with the divinity becomes immanent as well as transcendent.

Verily, you have become identical with Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati. It will be sheer injustice to say that you are a very great Sannyasi, serving the Guru at his feet and sharing in his glorious mission. The fact is that you have no longer maintained or reserved your individual identity as a Sevak or a Sannyasi or as a self-controlled Yogi. Every aspect of your life, every thought of your mind, and every work that proceeds from your hands is that of Sri Swami Maharaj. It is not Swami Venkatesananda as a separate entity in the capacity of a disciple or a servant that is working out the Divine plan of Sri Swami Maharaj. It is not Swami Venkatesananda of a human stature who has been accomplishing the task of a radiator or a gramophone record of Sri Swamiji Maharaj. Again it is not Swami Venkatesananda who can be given the honour of being the voice of Swami Sivananda Maharaj.

Is it right if we say that what Lord Ganesha was to the great Vyasa in recording down his immortal work or what blessed Ananda was, to keep on the torch of Buddha's illumination eternally kindled; that Swami Venkatesananda is to the great mission of the philosopher-saint Swami Sivananda Saraswati? To judge and analyse the relative phenomenon of Swami Venkatesananda's life and work in terms of a servant and an ardent disciple and an efficient instrument will be to underestimate his true position and value.

Then what exactly is the personality of Swami Venkatesananda? He has become identical with Swami Sivananda Maharaj. He is beyond the limiting functions of time, space, and causation. His mission or his achievements are his clock, calendar, etc. Every moment of his life is lived in tune with Sri Swami's mission, and there arises no need to say that he has all his senses under control, because he has no senses of his own. Just as we have in the Upanishad the illustration of salt dissolved in water; and the father asks: 'Which part of the water, say my son, is not saltish?', and the son replies, 'Father, every part of the water is saltish and not a drop of it is unsaltish.' Yes, every part, may it be physical or spiritual, is Sri Swami's immanence.

Those blessed ones who feel by the virtue of the knowledge of the Supreme, we shall become the Supreme, rightly and justly value and examine the life of Swami Venkatesananda. It is not because Swami Venkatesananda eats what we eat or wears what is worn by every common man - it is not for that that Swami Venkatesananda is loved by all. It is for the mere fact that his entire personality has become identical and is in a state of merger with our revered Gurudev, the divinity incarnate, that we see in him no other than our Gurudev.

Wherever the ailing body of Siva moved, there moved Swami Venkatesananda; wherever the healthy Gurudev went, with him went, too, Swami Venkatesananda. How can a body remain in parts at two different places? The symphony of Swami's divine music plays in Venkatesananda's fingers and he sounds the rhythm of Gurudev's holy sermon. He is not merely the Voice of Sivananda, for this will be to charge him with imitation. He is Siva himself. It is in this spirit that we the members of Siva's home of fraternity introspect on the life and work of Swami Venkatesananda and on his philosophy.

The Blessed One said at his last moment to Ananda. 'Beloved Ananda, I have told you what I should: you are the light, life and the path, Blessed Ananda, you have to cover up this long distance by yourself.'

Swami Venkatesananda embodies in himself this independent spirit of evolution. The long and weary journey of existence on this earth he feels he has to cover up independently, but, nevertheless, he is ever conscious of the pains, sorrows and turmoils of the existence. He has transcended the plane of discursive consciousness where we mortals are, and has become one with the all-blissful Saint Siva. Then the philosophy of Siva has become his philosophy, the religion of Siva is his religion, and the mission of Siva is his mission. He is the material as well as the efficient cause for effecting the spiritual awakening in the hearth and home of mankind. He has no philosophy independent of that of Siva; he has no existence independent of Siva, who is his own self.

But in this relative plane, the parts of the Cosmic Being play in a mysterious manner. In the drama of life he plays the part of a king and a servant, great and small, the saint and the sinner, of Guru and disciple. Even as it is said: 'My dear son, He is Prana when he breathes, he is ear when he hears, he is mind when he thinks, and so on'. These are but names due to His functions; but people do not realise that the description is ever incomplete. The Self of Siva has penetrated into the entire body of Venkatesananda. up to his nails'. It is our rare privilege to have participated in these sacred celebrations, not merely to eulogise a personality, but to meditate upon true spirituality,

divinity, personified in the form of Swami Venkatesananda, the self of Sri Gurudev.

It is our prayer to Swami Venkatesananda to grace us with his choicest and profound blessings, so that we too may become one with our Gurudev in form, knowledge and spirit.

8. A Benediction

Sri Swami Venkateswarananda, Arogya Asramam, Adyar, Madras

We have had the pleasure of knowing Swami Venkatesananda from the date of Sadguru Swami Sivananda's visit to Arogya Asramam. Swami Venkatesananda is a worthy son of a worthy father and his motto is 'service above self'; and 'There is no religion higher than Truth.' He is a fulfillment of the saying: 'Be old when young, if you want to be young when old.' He is also a rare specimen giving meaning to the proverb: 'Affected simplicity is refined artfulness.' He is in the considered opinion of persons like us 'Young in age, but old in wisdom.'

Divinity must have been his heredity. One should be surprised if such a good soul has not made remarkable progress spiritually and morally too. His writings on varied subjects and his editing the 'All-India Tour' volume of Swami Sivananda bear ample testimony to his industry, intellect, intelligence and intuition. Sadhus like Venkatesananda are in fact iron pillars of the Divine Life Mission in general, and dissemination of spiritual knowledge in particular. He, after graduating himself brilliantly, has made considerable sacrifice for one thing, when compared with which, everything on earth is nothing. He has remarkable enthusiasm for work, and he is a Nishkama-Karma Yogi, in the strict sense of the term.

May he live long, and may all his goodwill become God-will!

9. Pen Portrait of Swami Venkatesananda

Swami Omkarananda

A little above medium height, broad chest and shoulders, strong frame, a fine nose, fair complexion, sparkling eyes - this is, in a phrase of the Upanishads, the material sheath of Swami Venkatesananda. He is as brilliant intellectually as he is wholesome in emotional expression; and, as though to balance his less-noticed deep devotional nature there are in him a few heterodox propensities. He is witty and boisterous too, but these and similar other qualities of his, evidence his liveliness and sanity. No doubt he is childlike - he is childish too; he cannot strike a pose; he cuts capers - but all these stand as testimonials to the absence of snobbery and his simple and unassuming nature. Quickness of grasp, ever jolly moods, a disposition to oblige, an endearing mode of speaking, strict and immediate obedience to Swamiji, are some of the special characteristics of our comely and most sociable editor of the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University Weekly.

This loving and lovable personality is a picture of boldness, originality and optimism. None is a stranger to him; only two-minutes' talk and a look at his winning smiles - you are his dearest friend.

With his fertile imagination, eye for detail, and command over good English, this expert stenographer can give you any number of brilliant and illuminating pages on any subject, or a report on any event, within a given time. He has, in an appreciable measure, a knack for discovering the soul of goodness even in things evil and transforming a profane subject into a spiritual one. Though a bit untidy where his own personal things are concerned, he is incomparably active, day and night, in the sacred service of his Master.

This young Swami, whose dispassion is commensurable only with his wisdom, throwing aside a most successful lucrative career, and rejecting the vulgar, yet dear to the popular view, prizes of life, has whole heartedly consecrated his youth, his talents, his genius, his life, in the divine service of the great World-Teacher, Swami Sivananda. Within a short span of a few years, to the astonishment of the old disciples of the Swamiji, he has become the right-hand of Swamij - the indispensable limb of any great hero.

Swami Venkatesananda is so able, so intelligent, so efficient, and so rich in experience that he is a holy-wish-fulfiller of Swamiji; he is Swamiji's Chintamani. Is there a work that is to be done forthwith, and is it of great importance, then it is to Swami Venkatesananda that Swamiji entrusts it. This central pillar of the society is all things to its Founder-President; he is

Swamiji's strength, and his quite indispensable staff at the Ashram and abroad.

Without him, Swamiji would not think of moving out. He is so completely in tune with the Spirit of Swamiji, and has, to a great extent, imbibed many of the excellences of Swamiji, that one might unmistakably say that he speaks for Swamiji and that Swamiji thinks and acts through him.

Venkatesananda is an enviable flute in the sacred hands of the greatest Sage of our times, that has purged itself of all the dross of the thoughts of self, emptied itself of personal welfare and unhealthy earthly ambitions. Few are fortunate as he is, literally to dance to the tunes of the holiest of holy men. Human nature is so bad to the core that man's ego aggressively shows its ugly head in all his physical and psychological expressions and activities. Swami Venkatesananda stands for complete self-surrender to the Guru; he is an exemplar of unquestioning obedience to the Guru; he would have none of his own thoughts, words and deeds vitiated by egoism and by the play of personal will and idiosyncrasies. He is the most blessed 'empty' medium through which is coursing the will of his Master. Every act of such a soul rendered in the great Cause of his Masters Mission is purely selfless and phenomenally successful.

This short note on Swami Venkatesananda was published in 1950. Since then he has grown much in inward greatness, outward achievement and also in importance.

10. A Living Manuscript

Prof. Pushpa Anand, M.A. Dehra Dun

An ardent lover of preserving Gurudev's thoughts of precious pieces of world literature in the form of books of all times, Swami Venkatesananda is the dearest and rarest in the eyes of his Master, with whom he is established in silent communion, once for all.

When Gurudev set on tour all over India, Venkatesananda was flying on wings of agility, vigilance, intelligence, lest any voice of Gurudev's throat should go unheard by his ears. He gave life to his Masters silent actions as well. There is hardly anyone who is not impressed by his intelligent thoughts, which one can see his facial expression in tune with, and which are appearing in his mind from time to time even when he seems to be sitting quiet.

How soothing is his voice. He learns songs quicker than one does in imagination, and surprises all when he sings them modified. Give him an instrument to play upon, he will exhibit his talents by making his fingers compete with strings or notes, whatever they be.

Very consoling is his wit and comforting his humour. He renders grief-struck hearts gay, composes the hard-pressed and enlivens the sad ones. His playful moods and child-like pranks speak out his innocence of mind.

Ever restrained at heart, yet giving free vent to his devotional interests vested in Gurudev, he can certainly be said to be second to none in glory. May he live long.

My salutations at the feet of his Gurudev, and then at his feet, who is today a living manuscript of his Master Sri Swami Sivananda Maharaj.

11. The Sun-Flower

Sivananda-Shanti, B.A., B.T. Dehra Dun

What can be said of such a good soul like him. Words fail to describe him, and his virtuous qualities. His name was 'Partha-Sarathi'. It means Krishna the God, and also one who directs Arjuna in the great war of the Mahabharata. So he is none in the Ashram; there is not a single man who does not take his consent. But see the peculiarity. Krishna directed only Arjuna, but he directs the whole Ashram with goodwill and a cheerful face.

I was deeply impressed by his services. He has left no stone unturned in helping the needy. He loves Gurudev with heart and soul. So whatever he does, is all for his Master. There is no individual interest. In the month of July, when his holiness was on bed, he was on feet. He rested not for a single minute. The sleep was postponed by him for days and days together. But still he was alert and fresh and participated in the Ashram's activities.

He appreciates the good qualities in others and wants to take them into him, just to please his Lord with virtues. The symbol of his room is 'Khut Khut'. He types throughout the day and night. He is an expert in his work. The long speeches and articles which are given to him in the evening, he will return to you in the morning, not only typed but with addition and subtraction.

By his great services towards his visitors and fellow-beings, and his deep love for his Master, he glorified the wondrous works of God Almighty.

There is no ego in him. He respects his elders with folded hands and prostrations, which shows the quality of humility in him.

He is the editor of the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University Weekly, in which you find all information about the Ashram and its activities. It shows his presence of mind.

He has a dynamic and commanding personality. He has a radiant and innocent face. His smiles are rare and lasting. Every drop of his blood is pure and sincere.

There is unity in diversity in his character. On one hand you will find him a quiet saint, but on the other hand you see that he cracks jokes with everybody. Swami Venkatesananda is like a Sun-Flower in Siva's garden. As by the law of nature, the Sun-Flower always has its face towards the sun; so is the case with him. His sun is Gurudev; where the Gurudev is, there he is. He never misses his Master at any time.

Now I shall end this article with prostrations and salutations to such a high soul like him. May the showers of blessings of God be on him throughout his life, and I wish him every success and happiness in his future undertakings.

12. The Crest-Jewel

Editor 'Divine Life'

Indeed, there is no higher compliment that a Guru can bestow on his disciple than what Swami Sivananda has said of this illustrious aspirant: 'Crest-Jewel of my Mission, the resplendence of my work - will I ever see anyone shine brighter than he, Swami Venkatesananda? Surely none have I seen so far'.

To Swami Sivananda, in his great Jnana Yajna, Swami Venkatesananda has been a tower of strength, at once lustrous and full of splendour. His capacity for untiring work is flabbergasting, his devotion to Guru matchless and unswerving, his understanding deeply penetrating, profound and perspicacious, and his unflinching adherence to the principles of divine life is simply awe-inspiring and worthy of emulation.

It could be said without any exaggeration that no single individual has proved himself to be of such priceless worth in revealing to the world the personality of Siva and disseminating his teachings to such a wide extent and within so short a period - he joined Swami Sivananda in 1945 as Swami Venkatesananda.

13. The Ideal Student

Sri V. Ganesh.

Ever with devotion replete,
Serving the Master's feet,
Is of course without question
Swami Venkatesa - in Siva's mission.
Every chance he would snatch,
Every method he would hatch,
To broadcast the Divine message,
Of Siva, the Himalayan Sage.
A wonderful worker-good guide,
At Guru's Feet, mentally abide;
Swami Venkatesa enjoys Bliss
In Master's universal service.
An orator so inspiring,
A writer so untiring,
A staunch, steady student
Of Siva - the great mendicant.
May Swami Venkatesa live long
To relay Siva's sweet song
Of Truth, love and meditation,
And the blissful God-realisation.

14. Sivananda, the Divinity Personified

Swami Venkatesananda

It is indeed difficult to appreciate a divine personality during the period of His presence amongst us. Very few recognised Lord Krishna as a divine being when He was 'alive'. This vision to recognise the Avatara is itself His Gift to those few whom He chooses for fulfilling His purpose.

Who is an Avatara-Purusha?

Avatara itself means 'descent'- a descent from the Supreme Seat of Godhead. It is as though God gives up His Param Dhan, in answer to the prayer of the devout, and descends into the realm of the humans, in human garb, to live as a Man amongst men, and thus to lead men along the Divine Path, to the Goal of human life, God-realisation. Avatara is willing and voluntary subjection of God to the laws that govern human beings, over which ordinarily He has transcendental control.

The Avatara-Purusha may not be conscious that He is the Supreme Being. Lord Krishna was fully conscious of His Divinity. Yet this Poornavata, too, following the laws of physical being, took food, drank to quench thirst, rested, slept, etc. Lord Rama seemed to be not conscious at all. Whether it is conscious pretence or an unconscious, momentary, identification with the role assumed, it matters very little. The momentum given to the Avatara by Himself is supremely divine. The 'content' of the Avatara is exceptionally divine. And, the Avatara achieves the purpose surely and certainly, whether or not the consciousness of Godhead persists. The charm of the Lord's Lila is none the less for the seemingly momentary unconsciousness of His Ideality. Consciously or unconsciously, the Avatara for the time being becomes almost entirely human (e.g., Sri Rama). But, as the Divine Birth is with a purpose, He is not lost in the human garb. There apparently seems to be a dual current in Him - one, the divine which is very much more manifest in the Avatara-Purusha than in others, and the other, the human. Inasmuch as there is a very great proportion of the Divine in the Avatara, it rules the human aspect also. The human qualities, too, have the colouring of the Divine. Therefore, we find ethical perfection and moral excellence, as well as an abundance of Daivi Sampatti, in him.

If an Avatara-Purusha is a man amongst men, how shall we recognise Him?

When you look for an Avatara, do not search for supernormal, superhuman, features - e.g., Narasimha Avatara, or for miracle-making. If only miracle making and supernormal features were to be the marks of an Avatara, then we ought to regard the ten-headed, twenty-handed Ravana, with powers over

cosmic beings like the sun and the moon, Kubera and even Lord Siva, as an Avatara, in preference to Lord Rama. On the contrary, we consider that Ravana was a demon.

If you reflect for a moment on the Nine Avataras, you will see that the days of Freak Avataras are past. The Fish, the Man-Lion, the Dwarf, yielded place to Rama, the pious and virtuous man, and Krishna, the cowherd. They were both as human as they were divine. It is, therefore, essential that we are not deceived by the human qualities of an Avatara. Lord Krishna was as fond of butter as any child today. Sri Rama was as much grieved at the loss of His wife as any loving husband would be today. In fact, even here the Avatara-Purusha has His own Divine Purpose. By such manifestations of human weaknesses, He gives His devotees opportunities galore to adore Him in a variety of ways. How many Bhaktas have entered into Bhava Samadhi singing the glory of the childhood pranks of Lord Sri Krishna! To what heights of poetic ecstasy Valmiki has risen in describing the pangs of separation from Sita that Sri Rama suffered! No action of an Avatara-Purusha is, therefore, ultimately without significance.

An Avatara is to be recognised by His Deeds. Has He fulfilled the Lord's Promise - Dharmasamsthapana? The more effectively this has been done, the greater are the chances that man is an Avatara.

A man may be ethically perfect, a very good man - but he is only a saintly person, not an Avatar, unless he influences the world and causes righteousness to be established in the world. It happened in the case of Lord Rama that His mere conduct came to be regarded as a salutary influence which, without His having to preach, profoundly influenced humanity. However, but for the fact that He killed Ravana, the greatest perpetrator of Adharma, and established the Rama Rajya, the perfect Government based on righteousness, He would not have been considered an Avatara. Dharmasamsthapana had to be done; that has ever been the criterion of an Avatara.

Take the case of Harischandra. If personal moral excellence alone were to be the criterion for Avatahood, he ought to be an Avatara. But, not so; though he placed himself as an eternal example of a perfectly truthful man, he had not done any Dharmasamsthapana, as Lord Krishna and Sri Rama had done. The case was different with Lord Sri Krishna. Any ignorant man can pick holes in His Conduct. But, besides destroying all the Asuras, He has given to humanity the priceless spiritual treasure, the Gita, which shall remain as a beacon-light of Dharma for all times to come. Therefore, He is considered an Avatara, not because He held up the Govardhan mountain with His little

finger, not even because He had four hands and weapons (conch, discus, etc.). Another Rakshasa had exactly the same form and he impersonated Krishna Himself! Dharmasamsthapana was the criterion.

Without Dharmasamsthapana, mere moral excellence or even Self-realisation would make one only a saint. There is this essential difference between an Avatara-Purusha and a saint. An Avatara-Purusha is God-in-human-form. A saint of God-realisation is a Man with God-consciousness. In the former case, it is one of Descent. In the latter case, it is one of Acent. The former is God descending upon us as a ready-made Siddha-Purusha. The latter is a Sadhaka who has achieved Siddhi through great effort - Tapasya and Sadhana. An Avatara-Purusha, too, may indulge in Sadhana and seem to strive for Siddhi, but it is only because

Yadyadaacharati Sreshthah Tattadevetaro janah

Sa Yat Pramaanam Kurute Lokastadanuvartate

The populace is guided by the great man's conduct; the principles enunciated by him are the path which mankind treads.

The Avatara-Purusha, like Lord Krishna, feels 'Mama tartmaanuvartante' - the people will follow My Path, ignorant of the fact that He is an Avatara; they would try to imitate His actions and come to grief. They would expect Siddhi to drop into their lap without effort. In order to prevent this general degeneration, the Avatara-Purusha exemplifies in Himself the conduct that He has come to preach. He indulges in Tapas and Sadhana, too. But in the case of a saint, years of toil are a necessity. It is the ease with which the Avatara-Purusha ascends to the top rung of Perfection that makes Perfection itself seem natural to Him, which He need no more struggle to maintain, as in the case of a saint who has to be chary till Videhakaivalya is attained. The Path and the Culmination are not new to the Avatara-Purusha and, therefore, He walks with firm though rapid and seemingly light steps. He is bold and definite about the Path and the Goal, when He speaks of them to others. The saint speaks on the authority of scriptures. The Avatara-Purusha is Himself the authority, though He might, to justify His human garb, extol existing scriptures. A saint strives to root himself in Dharma. An Avatara-Purusha Whose very breath is Dharma is here to establish that Dharma in the world. Therefore, an Avatara is to be recognised by this one acid - has he striven for Dharmasamsthapana, has he worked for the solidarity of the world, has he done anything to lead humanity along the path of righteousness? If so, to what measure ? The greater the intensity of his Dharmasamsthapana, the more surely is he an Avatara, and the greater manifestation of God he is. As Lord Krishna not only established Dharma in His own time by the destruction

of the Asuras, but gave the Gita for all time to come, He is considered a Purna Avatara.

In the light of the foregoing, there can be very little doubt that Sri Swami Sivananda is an Avatara of the Lord. He embraced Sanyas after a fairly long period of strenuous - in his 'untiring selfless' - service to the suffering humanity in Malaya; he appeared to be a novice in the Nivritti Marga at the fairly advanced age of 38. But, with an ardour that was the envy of fellow-Sadhakas who were more youthful, and with a spiritual pace that would prove to be too rapid even for more energetic people who renounce the world earlier in life, in the full-bloom of youth before spending any energy in any worldly pursuit - however good and noble, he ascended the summit of Sadhana. His seniors-in-the-Path stood aghast watching this new recruit to the Order march swiftly past with meteoric speed, reach the Summit and smile at them with compassion and humility; they bowed to Him and said: 'He is not a man.'

Siva had embraced Sanyasa in 1924; in 1936 he was widely known as a Great Yogi, a Siddha-Purusha, a Jagat-Guru. He had already come to be regarded as a Spiritual Guide. He founded the Divine Life Society in 1936 in order to serve humanity more systematically - His service has been none other than Dharmasamsthapana. The rapidity with which the Divine Life Mission has grown during the past just over a decade is common knowledge. People who visit the Ashram after an interval of a few years are amazed: 'You have created a heaven in what was a forest.' 'Swamiji entered Rishikesh in 1924 with only a Kowpeen; by his mere Satsankalpa he has created around himself a great institution within so short a time.' 'Surely only Iswara could do all this.' - these expressions have often surged up from the heart of the most distinguished visitor to the Ashram. Those who are nearer to him, who work under his guidance, are often amazed at the way he conducts the affairs of the world-wide institution of which he is the founder. Its very existence is a miracle to them. Financial experts think that the institution should have been wound up long ago. Yet see that it is flourishing from glory to greater glory every day. These are all miraculous features, superhuman features, no doubt. But the crowning glory, however, is that to Siva all these - the institution, the Ashram, the material resources and the man-power - are but instruments with which to carry on His Mission - Dharmasamsthapana. I will sell the buildings. 'I will lead you all to the Kshetra for Bhiksha, and thus eliminate our expenses on food. But dissemination of spiritual knowledge must go on.' - these very words have been heard from His lips very often, specially when financial

crises have threatened to wipe the institution out. Dharmasamsthapana is Siva's life-breath.

If we pause and think for a while, we shall at once discover the divine wisdom that should have prompted him to write in simple English. It is through this foreign language that we received the alien culture. Every Indian is aware of this. And it is in order to counteract this influence alone are our leaders struggling to supplant it with Hindi. Siva has short-circuited the problem itself. 'If English is the language that turns the head of our youngsters, offer them the best spiritual thought in that very language!' It is the English-educated men and women of today who are drifting away from the path of righteousness, often in spite of themselves. Dharmasamsthapana should naturally direct its endeavours towards them. And, that is exactly what Siva is doing. To bring these English-educated round to the path of righteousness is his mission. It is these English-educated people who mislead the good people, and spread Adharma. Siva works amongst them. Thousands and thousands have been transformed. Countless young men and women have been rescued from the clasp of Adharma, and Dharma has been restored to them and so to the land. If we closely analyse Siva's method of work, we shall find that he has placed his books - the spiritual sentinels - at every portal through which Adharma could invade man. Dharmasamsthapana has been the one all-consuming end and aim of Siva.

The All-India Tour furnished ample proof that Siva was the very embodiment of Dharmasamsthapana. He has made it clear at the very outset of the Tour that He was undertaking it in order to serve humanity, to disseminate spiritual knowledge. At every centre people witnessed one heart-rending miracle: Siva's body is weak, his throat had become extremely sore, his vocal chords had all but broken, yet Siva smiled brilliantly - defiantly as the doctors called it, and as he faced every audience he joyously served them with the richest food for their soul. Listeners might have got tired going from one function to another and sitting up listening to Siva's lectures which were throughout thrilling and charming. But Siva was fresh as a morning flower, even when he was running a temperature. A dynamic spiritual propagandist like Goswami Ganesh Dutt Ji admitted and admired it. The organisers and the people sitting around Siva on the dais were often nervous at the extraordinary strain that Siva was imposing on himself; but Siva himself had no thought for the throat. The Divine Will-to-Dharmasamsthapana was the Master and his body the servant. It had to obey. And it did obey.

It was, again, this Will-to-Dharmasamsthapana that attracted millions to him, millions who had never before met him: nor even heard of him. They were

there because the Divine Will had to be done. He made them sing the Lord's Name. He talked to them in their own language - in a language simple enough for them to understand. He made them sing his instructions. This is a very important point to note. Dharmasamsthapana is not done by merely lecturing to those whom you wish to transform! They may forget all that you say, before they leave the Hall. Siva had adopted a very novel method. Often learned Pundits and great men who came to hear Siva expounding Advaita Vedanta were surprised to see that he started singing 'Eat a little, Drink a little, Talk a little, Sleep a little' with a seriousness that they could associate only with Veda Mantra. They were perplexed when Siva asked the audience to repeat this peculiar Kirtan, after him. Little did they know what a profound influence it had upon the audience. The very novelty of the song nailed it to the heart of the listeners.

Children memorised it and began to sing it from that day - because they liked the song, whether they grasped the meaning or not. Visitors to the Ashram after the conclusion of the All-India Tour have uniformly admired Siva for his novel Kirtan. They now admit that these songs had had a most profound influence on the people. Similarly with the other songs - 'Song of Eighteen Itis', 'Song of Govinda', 'Song of Instructions', etc. A saint would feel nervous to sing such songs in public lest his reputation should be affected! An Avatara-Purusha knows that they and they alone would serve His purpose, viz., Dharmasamsthapana.

He whose very life-breath is Dharmasamsthapana, as Siva's is, is none other than an Avatara-Purusha.

15. The Spiritual Cupid of Siva

Dr. Ishar Singh, M.B. B.S. Dehra Dun

There is Shivpuri. The Ganges is roaring nearby. Siva lives in Ananda Kutir. See the crowd of Jivas going towards it. They look tired and exhausted, due to their worldly woes and long journey. They want to meet their beloved Siva, but their energy is failing. Their faces are gloomy. Men and women, young and old, are all moving on and on. Lo! At last the gate is within sight. They have stopped to take a little rest.

Ha-Ha-Ha! What is this noise ? This is not the sound of Siva's drum. See that figure standing at the gate of Ananda Kutir. The sound is like a shower of arrows, but no physical arrows are visible. Oho! Now I understand. He is Siva's cupid and is the cause of this sound. See that handsome, healthy, happy, humorous, hopeful, humble, heroic, honeyful youth. His body is bow and his smiles and words are arrows. Lo! He is hurriedly showering tactfully showers of health, humour, hope, humbleness, heroism and honey, on woeful worldly Jivas. See, they are getting energy, life, joy and hope. His arrows have hit at their hearts. See them running towards him. He is handy to all and greets all with open arms and is bewitching all. He has totally ignored their vices and is bringing out every atom of virtues in them. He even puts virtues into them which they have none. Further he magnifies their virtues to the size of infinity and calls them God. So he has removed all negativity from them and given them positive charge and optimism. Jivas look happy and hopeful now. Look, he has captured their hearts and is passing them on to Siva. One by one, he is leading all inside, where they meet Siva.

Again he has returned to the gate. Another crowd of Jivas has come and he has started his operation again. This job he continues. He is clever to hide himself under the name of 'Swami Venkatesananda.' He is a 'must-see' Sanyasin at the gate of Ananda Kutir, before you meet Siva. He is a young rose in the garden of Siva. Glory to the ever smiling active cupid Swami of Siva, for his noble task of uniting Jivas with Siva.

16. The Versatile Nature of Swami Venkatesananda

Sri Swami Vishnudevananda

Swami Venkatesananda is one of the few fortunate souls who have earned Gurudev's fullest blessings and Grace. Really, he is the pet child of Gurudev. His main Sadhana is perceiving the greatness in others. He sees the greatness not only in all human beings, but also in animals and birds. It will be a scene for us to see and enjoy when he plays with a monkey, dog, cat or a cow. He moves closely with big officers and immediately plays with a Tonga-driver or a scavenger. He is very friendly with sick persons and mad people. He makes friendship with everybody at the first sight. Two of the great qualities of Gurudev-humility and seeing only good in others are inborn in him. Gurudev prostrates himself first to each and everybody including his disciples, servants and children, before they prostrate themselves before Gurudev. But Swami Venkatesananda completely surrenders himself to all those who meet him, by catching hold of their feet and feeling the Lord in those visible forms. He is really practising the Gita Sloka: 'Yo mam pasyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi pasyati' to the very letter.

During his childhood, many astounding things happened. One day his mother narrated to me an incident which happened when he was about four years old. He is the only child in the family and one day his mother and grandmother prayed for getting a female child for them. The moment they prayed like this, the boy who was playing outside suddenly started weeping and vomiting foams as if the body had an attack of a fit. They were perplexed and ran with the child to a Fakir immediately. The Fakir repeated certain Mantras with sounds ending like 'Fhu', looking at the child. The boy started laughing at the Fakir who repeated 'Fhu'. The Fakir noticed nothing wrong with the child and thought that the lady brought the child to test his spiritual powers and sent them away without any further treatment. From that day, they never prayed for another child, for the fear of a relapse of the fit. When they returned home, the mother gently asked the child why he so suddenly laughed at the Fakir. The boy said laughingly that it was funny to see the old man making the sound 'Fhu' while looking at him. His mother felt that he was not an ordinary child.

Swami Venkatesananda was responsible for the biography of Gurudev and of many other disciples, and for the voluminous edition 'Sivananda's Lectures'. The entire manuscripts of this volume were typed in the running train while Gurudev had a tour in India and Ceylon in 1950. He has so carefully noted thousands of highly inspiring events of Gurudev's life, his activities,

conversations with students and with visitors, that the book when published will be a real boon to the whole world.

Swami Venkatesananda is an expert in Yogic exercises also. His Asans were filmed for exhibition by the Calcutta Tamil Sangham. Once he won a prize from Gurudev for standing on Sirshasan and Sarvangasan for half an hour at a stretch. He became a votary of the Homeopathic system. Swami Achintyananda, an expert Doctor-Mahatma, once treated Swami Venkatesananda for a chronic trouble and he found the efficacy of the system. Now he has undergone a training from the Mahatma. He has successfully treated many serious cases. It will be funny to see that he has experimented with many Homeo medicines, making his body the laboratory. He administers medicines to the patients with a smile, joke and Name of God, to make the patients feel better in the very first dose itself. He has an enchanting voice to sing his favourite Ramayana. He can nicely imitate the songs and Bhajans of experts in the music world. His very presence is a glory to his Guru Maharaj the Divine Life Society and the world at large. A few seconds in his company will convince you of the truth of my statement. May he live long to inspire the world.

17. Fiery Determination

Sri Venkateswaran, Calcutta

Salutations and adorations unto the Lotus Feet of Sadguru Sri Swami Sivananda and His Right Hand, H.H. Sri Swami Venkatesananda.

Just as the squirrel which carried little bits of sand at the time of Sethu-Bandhanam by Lord Rama, this humble self has been highly blessed to have been a silent witness when Sri Parthasarathy - Swami Venkatesananda's Poorvashram name, renounced his beloved mother, father, step-mother, brothers, sisters, a promising official career in the Central Government in New Delhi, and a number of friends and relatives, on a sacred Ekadasi Day - Sunday, 2nd September 1945. Before that, my holy acquaintance with Parthasarathy was during one Sivaratri Puja and two Bhajana meetings held under the auspices of the Divine Life Society, New Delhi. Sri Bhagawan declared in the Gita 'Mayaivaite nihatah purvameva Nimittamatram bhava savyasachin'. Sri Gurudev has blessed me with such a great rare opportunity. Once, after reaching Sri Gurudev's Lotus Feet, Sri Parthasarathy signalled me that I can intimate his friends in Delhi about the step he had taken. From that day onwards, I had to face accusation and criticism from my South Indian friends. His father rushed to Rishikesh and returned disappointed. Then his mother went to Rishikesh and stayed there for about two months to persuade Parthasarathy to return. In spite of her threatening to drown herself in Ganga, Parthasarathy was unswerving and unflinching in his devotion to the Lotus Feet of Gurudev, and his mother had to return to South India. Parthasarathy faced several attempts to scare him away from Sri Gurudeva, and has come out successful. He even told Gurudev that he will rather wander in the Himalayan regions getting Shiksha if available, and accept Sannyas from the hands of Sri Gurudev at the latter's sweet will and pleasure, or drown himself in the Ganga, than go back to job and family, if so commanded. Such was his fiery determination. No Sannyasi has met his own near relatives and friends constantly and frequently like Swami Venkatesananda, in the prime of his youth. I am sure that this kind of Vairagya could not have been attained in this birth alone.

'Bahunam janmanam ante jnanavan mam prapadyate
Vasudevah sarvam iti sa mahatma sudurlabbah.

Not only has Swami Venkatesananda stood all kinds of test in the path of his renunciation, but has made his mother, father, step-mother, and the whole family to become devotees of Sri Guru Dev. It is easy to be detached in out-of-the-way places like Vasishtha Guha, Badrinath, Uttarkashi, etc., but not in Sivanandashram which has become a modern world-centre visited every day

by hundreds of people. Swami Venkatesananda has, without a tinge of attachment, his mother permanently staying at Ananda Kutir. He must have been a Yoqa Bhrashta and a great Yogi in previous births; otherwise without some misery or calamity, such Vairagya cannot dawn in a well-to-do, promising and ambitious youth. A man who renounces the world is said to redeem twentyone generations in his family, past and future. The present-day materialistic man will not accept this theory. Before our very eyes, we see Swami Venkatesananda redeeming his whole living family, friends and relatives and bringing them all unto the Lotus Feet of Gurudev, without tears and heart-breaking. This is a greet achievement of Swami Venkatesananda. I adore Swami Venkatesananda as Lord Ganesha incarnate on the banks of the Holy Ganga, to write the great modern epic 'Sri Swami Sivananda's All-India and Ceylon Tour Lectures Volume.' He has great memory and grasping power and has been able to record verbatim every lecture made by Sri Gurudev, single-handedly, in spite of strenuous and continuous travel for two months, from 8th September to 8th November, 1950. He has become the Chronicler of Sri Guru Dev's day-to-day Upadeshas and activities. Sri Gurudev has tested him thoroughly and initiated him into the Order of Sannyas, on 12th September 1947, immediately after Gurudev's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. Gurudev told that He should see Parthasarathy smiling and serene even when slapped with shoes, and then only he would give Sannyas. Venkatesananda has proved equal to all tests by his adamant devotion to Sri Gurudev and has become one of the chief disciples of Sri Gurudev.

Sri Swami Venkatesananda is always child-like, innocent and full of humour. He expressed to me on 2nd September, 1945, when he left New Delhi: 'I am worshipping Lord Venkateswara of Tirupati daily, and feel the same deity in the human form of Sri Venkateswara Iyer, taking me to the Lotus Feet of Sri Gurudeva'. It is also significant that he has assumed the name of Sri Venkatesa as his Sannyasa Ashram name. When first he came to Ananda Kutir, he was wondering at the sight of the small kutirs. Sri Gurudev remarked: 'What are you seeing here; these kutirs are meant for people like you.' From that time onwards, Parthasarathy felt: 'Ananda Kutir is my abode. Sri Swami Sivananda is my mother, father, friend, philosopher and guide. He is my Master.' Thus he developed intense Vairagya in the midst of so many friends, and at last took me, an absolute stranger, into confidence, when he took the final step of renunciation.

Sacred Bharatavarsha is highly blessed with such great sons like Swami Venkatesananda, to hold the Torch of Divine Knowledge from the heights of

the sacred Himalayas, like the Great Sun whose rays penetrate every nook and corner of the world.

I prostrate myself unto the Lotus Feet of Sri Gurudev to bless this humble self and each and every one of us to become glorious like Swami Venkatesananda and his other illustrious disciples.

18. Who is Venkatesananda

Sri T. B. Ratnachalam Ayyar, B.A. L.T.

I consider it a very high honour to be asked to write a few lines about His Holiness Sri Swami Venkatesananda Maharaj, to be included in his Birthday Souvenir. When a similar appeal was made to me in connection with the Birthday Souvenir of His Holiness the Great Swami Sivananda Maharaj, to be published in September, 1952, I did not respond to it realizing my utter unworthiness even to write about that great and venerable master of humanity. There is some such feeling even today, but I have made bold to attempt this work, because, after all, I am not going to write much about Swami Venkatesananda, but I am going to write about what little I know of my beloved pupil S. Parthasarathi. He himself has written to me that, whatever he may be for others, to me he is ever a loving and devoted disciple, and this after being recognised as one of the leading disciples of Swami Sivananda himself. What a remarkable humility only worthy of such a great soul. Again in presenting a copy of 'Sivananda's Lectures, All India Tour', the Master himself has written in his own handwriting, 'Guru Dakshina from your disciple Swami Venkatesananda, Sri Parthasarathi. Is not a school-master an enviable parson? Is he after all, a neglected creature that many think he is? Who can say he is, in the light of the testimony given above? At any rate it has been my proud privilege to be associated with and win the love and recognition of Sri Parthasarathi for the past twenty years.

It was in 1934 when he was studying in the fourth form at the National High School, Mannargudi, that I came in contact with him. Even at first sight I began to love him. A bright young boy, with a prepossessing appearance, he drew my attention when I went to his class for the first time. When I asked him who he was, he told me that he was the son of Mr. N. Srinivasan, an old pupil of mine, employed in the Madras Corporation, and that he was living with his uncle at Serangulam. His mother too, he said, was not with him. My heart went out to him for he had not the privilege of living with his parents in the most impressionable period of his life. I felt very sorry for him and for his poor father, too. Here was an attractive intelligent young boy, on whom any parents would dote, compelled by circumstances to live away from them. I had some heart-to-heart conversation with him, in which he revealed his goodness, innocence, love and affection. I was naturally drawn nearer to him and began to take a lively interest in his activities. I believe he thought I supplied a want and gave him my love of which he was badly in need. Here is an extract from one of his letters written some time after he left school.

'I find you are the only gentleman who cares for my welfare more than anyone else at Mannargudi or Srangulam. You know from your personal knowledge of myself and my conduct towards you that it is no exaggeration on my part to say this. There is no word in my vocabulary which can adequately describe your sympathy and kind regard towards me.'

So we had many opportunities of coming into close contact. He would not talk about things that would ordinarily interest a student. He would not discuss the lessons, games, sports and other activities of the school. He would only speak about God, spirituality, religion, the Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Vivekananda and such other topics. He was certainly possessed of abilities of a high order. He was very good at English and, as his English teacher, I had a partiality for him and being a lover of books, myself, instilled in him a love for reading general literature which he developed later on at Madras by spending about six hours a day at the Connemara Public Library. He did not do full justice to his school work, and no wonder he was not considered brilliant in those days. Nothing remarkable could be recounted about his school career. He passed pretty high in the S.S.L.C.Public Examination, 1937. But he did not enter the portals of a University. After leaving school he went to Madras and passed the shorthand higher grade examination in 1939 with credit. He had already passed while at Mannargudi the Typewriting higher grade examination in 1938. He worked as a steno-typist at Madras for some time. Afterwards he went to Calcutta and then to Delhi. Of his success in the shorthand examination he writes the severest ordeal for becoming a steno-typist:

'Out of 125 candidates who appeared for the examination through Madras only 15 were sent up. Out of 5 candidates from my Institute - and all excluding me have got an experience of 5 to 10 years in the shorthand higher grade examination itself - I who appeared for the examination for the first time was the only candidate to pass. The potentiality of His Grace and the blessing of kind-hearted men like you is such.'

While at Madras he seems to have been quite happy; a want that he had felt throughout his school life was supplied, secondly facilities there were for developing the taste he had for study and for extensive reading. Here are extracts from his letters:

'I have been bestowed with the rarest gift of having got a kind-hearted, sympathetic, Godlike, broad-minded, - there is no end of attributes - step-mother whom I would rather prefer to call mother. The pity is she does not know how to ill-treat. So she cannot be accredited with much credit. So indescribably kind! But for her ...'

'But at the same time I feel the imperative necessity for keeping the flame that you kindled bright. And here again you have done me an everlasting good for which I cannot but thank you from the very depth of my heart. I mean the interest you have created in me for study, for extensive reading ... I remember that that was the date when I avowed myself to assiduous study and that flame that you kindled has not died away yet, and I am sure it would grow brighter and brighter; for you had taken sufficient care to set it ablaze ...'

But he had his own regrets.

'Just now I feel how marvellous would have been the effects of your moulding if only I had the good fortune of having your product a little bit trimmed up and developed and thus completed your manufacture - I mean if only I had stepped into the portals of the college when I came out of the High School. Unfortunately it is a bit raw and is like an 'A' class locomotive unfashionable and a little not 'up-to-date', I do not say 'out-of-date' - and I may add not full and filled to capacity. But past is past, and I have to put up with it to an extent ...'

Then I had my regret, too. When he was in the sixth form, I instinctively felt that he was going to make a mark in life as a brilliant lawyer, or an erudite professor, or an able administrator. I felt sorry later on that my beloved pupil had to be content with being a steno-typist, though a first-rate one. But God in His infinite wisdom and mercy planned otherwise. He has made him much greater and much more useful to humanity than any of his friends or admirers could ever have wished. Parthasarathi came under the influence of a great soul, Swami Sivananda Saraswati, a few years ago. And today he is 'one of the foremost of his disciples and the most biassed Gurubhai who has endeared himself to Sri Gurudeva by his unparalleled devotion to Him and dedication to His Divine work.'

After Parthasarathi left school, I had the pleasure of enjoying his company only on a few occasions. We met at Madras twice, at Delhi once, at Ananda Kutir on the 7th May, 1930, and at Tanjore on the 7th October, 1950. He had no time to talk to me at Tanjore, but we spent a whole day together at Anancia Kutir. I was kindly introduced to Sri Gurudev who showered his benediction upon me. I was further presented with a few books by His Holiness and I constantly read them and derive solace from them.

I go to Delhi at least thrice a year and though Swami Venkatesananda has warned me that I should never return from Delhi without running up to Rishikesh, I have not found it possible to go there even once these four years. But I hope to have the pleasure of being there on the 26th December, really an auspicious day - and participate in the Birthday celebrations. I am looking

forward to the day when I can offer my humble pranams to Sri Gurudeva and receive his blessings.

I wish to end this short article with another extract from a letter written by Swami Venkatesananda on the 16th January, 1931, which gives an insight into the humility that is characteristic of him, his true reverence for his Gurudev, and his thirst for God.

'How kind I seem to have had all the best of life here, a teacher who takes a life-long interest in the student (like you), a step-mother who would love her step-son more than her own - Rukmini, and on top of all a Guru who would love, serve, and adore his own disciples - like my Gurudeva. The very thought of these rare gifts of God impels me to greater activity in search of Him who could make the impossible come to be. And, coming to think of it, it would not be a wonder if He, without any qualification on the part of His devotee, chooses to reveal Himself. 'God is Love'.

19. Swami Venkatesananda

Sri Swami Sadananda

In September 1945 came a young man to the presence of Swami Sivananda, from Delhi, with a fixed resolve to become Swamiji's Sevaka. I am using the word Sevaka and not disciple because from then up till now that young man wants to be only a Sevaka. We know he is more than a disciple - he is the right hand man of our Guru. But in Venkatesananda's mind, no such consciousness has yet dawned, and I am sure it never will. When he left Delhi, he was holding a decent job in the Imperial Secretariat, with a salary of which any young man could be proud. There were also excellent prospects of promotions to posts of higher status and salary. But Sri Parthasarathy, as Swami Venkatesananda was then called, had long decided that his was to be only a life of Seva or service to Sivananda, and not one of power, position, prestige or worldly prosperity to himself.

When he resigned his job, he had not completed his 25th year - the age which is prescribed as the limit for entry into Government service - but a dozen years before that, little Parthasarathy had heard of Swami Sivananda and developed a desire to come to him. He was only 13 years old then, and he could not command courage enough even to mention this desire of his to his parents. He passed the School Final Examination when he was 14 or 15. One would have expected such a brilliant lad to have entered college for University education; but Parthasarathy had already decided that his service was to be for a saint and not for the Government. So, he spent some years earning a salary, though there was no need for it, because his father was holding a very good job in the Madras Corporation, and qualified himself as a steno-typist, Precis-writer, and what not. It is surprising that his inclinations led him that way, though he could by no manner of means have guessed that these were what were needed when he came to serve Sivananda. One cannot help seeing the hand of God even in this, for it was God alone that could know that a few years of such training were needed by young Parthasarathi before he could place his services entirely at the disposal of our Gurudev. The beauty of it is that even the last job that he held in the Imperial Secretariat was that of Personal Assistant to one of the most prominent officials in the Government. So, he was qualifying in that way also to become what he is now, the Personal Secretary to our Swamiji.

It is one thing to be an officer in Government service and quite another to be in the active service of Swami Sivananda. The nature of work in the latter case demands not merely intellectual capacity, but a very high degree of physical fitness. To serve Sivananda satisfactorily, one has to be disease-proof, nay

more - one must have the capacity to get on without food or sleep for a day or two, and also the capacity to eat and digest any amount of food at any time without due notice. The body must be able to bear any strain that may be brought to bear upon it. God has endowed Swami Venkateananda with these qualifications. He has a fine physique. Though not very tall, he is not short by any means. He has a robust build, yet a smooth skin. He is an attractive personality. His features are well-formed, and he is so made as to be very agile and active. Quite naturally and without much effort, he has made himself a proficient in Hatha Yoga and there is no Asana or Mudra or Bandha which he cannot display to perfection. It is especially in Nauli that he has surpassed all others, because he is able to move his abdominal muscles not only from side to side but also from top to bottom. More wonderful still is the way in which he keeps himself floating in the Ganges without making any movement of his limbs. He also knows the tricks relating to the movement of his muscles (biceps or triceps, etc.) called muscles control. In short, he has been gifted with a physical condition that is just suited for maximum intellectual service for Swamiji.

Analysing the qualities of Swami Venkatesananda, we can divide them into two groups, viz., (1) those that go to make up his character, and (2) those that are helpful for the efficient performance of the tasks assigned to him. When we speak of the former, that which strikes me as the most pronounced trait in him is his absolutely unruffled temper. Whatever happens to upset him, he will never lose his balance. One may go to any length to insult him, he will move away without a wrinkle in his face. This equanimity of his is due to his unshakable resolve which must be mentioned as another quality of his. When he has come to a decision about what he should do, he does not care for anybody's opinion. He will carry the thing through and, in doing it, he will conserve all the energy at his disposal. It is for such conservation of energy that he never loses his temper. It is a matter of common experience that the person who has no control over his temper, will be losing his energy tremendously. Swami Venkatesananda knows this very well and acts upon that knowledge. Because of his proper mental control, his judgments of men and things do not go wrong. In fact he evidences a wonderful capacity that way. But because he is never impulsive, his face will never betray his thoughts. He can go on judging people, estimating them at their proper worth, without their ever suspecting what he is doing when he is carrying on a conversation with them. Even in the matter of anticipating future events, his commonsense serves him well. He is very shrewd in the calculation of chances. Sometimes it would be difficult to foresee what would happen. But

Venkatesananda usually comes out correct in his judgment about what may happen. Another of his traits is his fertile imagination. This enables him to have broad views. He can easily get over the ordinary limitations which trouble common people. He has a broad outlook. That helps him to forgive, forget, look at the good and reject the evil.

Passing on to the qualities which are helpful to him in carrying out his work, we come to his unrivalled equipment as a steno-typist. His ability as a stenographer is peculiar. There are many who are experts in writing fast, and without mistakes. But they will not be able to write for a long time. In the case of Swami Venkatesananda, he is accurate, fast and what is more, he can go on taking notes continually for eight hours at a stretch. His vast knowledge of all branches of spiritual literature is a great help to him in stenography. As for typing, his execution is perfect. The outstanding merits are neatness and correctness. He can type in the dark and automatically his hand will be inserting the papers and carbon sheets.

The next thing to note is his untiring energy - his brain never refuses to function however long it is taxed and on whatever subject it is exercised. But for this quality of his, it will be impossible for him to carry out the work that Swamiji gives him. The main work he does is correspondence. It is enough if Swamiji gives him some suggestions indicative of what he desires should be written. Venkatesananda has sufficient grasp of the subject and also of Swamiji's nature and modes of thought to do everything necessary without further instruction. He has developed a good style of his own. It is simple, to the point, and crystal clear. When a description has to be given, he can do it in a very attractive way. His observation is keen and he knows what exactly is the striking feature of any scene that is witnessed. His ability as a reporter is marvellous, and the account that he gives in the Forest University Weekly of what transpires in the Ashram is brilliant. He knows how to economise words and yet to preserve all that has to be preserved in the narration. He is up-to-date in information. He has to be and he has the capacity to be.

But the most praiseworthy quality is his memory. There are thousands of tit-bits to be kept in the fore-front and not one item will be forgotten by him. He can be surpassed in this respect only by Swamiji himself. We have yet to see another so good in remembering every detail about everything.

Over and above the work that is assigned to him by Swamiji, Venkatesananda finds time in maintaining a daily chronicle of all that transpires in the Ashram. This record is bound to be of immense historical value in the future. I have read portions of it here and there and I must express my admiration of the style of writing. His words flow freely; there is great coherence in the

thoughts and the general effect created in the reader is that he is witnessing the things that he is reading about. Venkatesananda is also good in writing dramas. When he has time, some fine productions will come out of his pen. As a man, he is loved by one and all. It is especially the children that take a fancy to him. He never tires of playing with them. He is a bit of an artist, too. He is more than a novice in music. He is greatly interested in handling musical instruments. He has good knowledge of homeopathy, and has perhaps effected some good cures.

The last and the best thing that can be said of him is that he lives only to serve Swami Sivananda. In him we find a living commentary on the maxim: 'Service to the Guru is worship of the Lord.'

20. Early Life of Sri Parthasarathy

*After countless sorrows suffering
In Vanni, the village of my birth;
All Karmas to Thee offering,
I salute Thee, the Lord of the Earth.*

In the year 1922 A.D., on Thursday, the Second day of January, at 1.15 p.m., in Dhanur Rasi, Meena Lagnam, and when the star Poorveshadha was in the ascendent, the subject was born.

There was in the village named Koil Vanni, in Tanjore District, a high class Brahmin, under the name of Tuppil Krishnamachari. He had a single child, but a beloved daughter. This girl was born to him in his old age, when he was 63, as a result of earnest penance and prayer offered to the Lord. Greatly sorrowing that he had no male issue, this worthy Krishnamachari earnestly prayed to the Lord to grace his daughter at least with a son, so that, seeing this boy in his lifetime, he may pass his last days in peace and happiness. In his 80th year, through the grace of the Lord, this worthy man's daughter, Srimathi Lakshmi Ammal, gave birth on the above mentioned auspicious day, to a beautiful boy who is the subject of this reverent life-sketch. That day was the extremely auspicious day of Hanuman Jayanti, and was the last day of the dark lunar fortnight of the month of Margazhi (Margasirsha).

The child's birth was attended by certain significant and peculiar circumstances. Unlike ordinary children, the baby never cried when it was born, but lay silent. Moreover, it lay on its side; and at the time of its birth it was raining torrentiously. The factors seemed rather striking to the observant eye of the wise grandfather who is said to have remarked to the medical man attending to the delivery, 'Well, doctor, this baby seems to be not an ordinary child. Usually the Jiva is seen to wail bitterly at the fact of its having entered in the vexing bondage of Samsara. But to this child birth does not appear to be a bondage, but rather a condition about which he manifests no fear or sorrow. I feel that this is perhaps some free, emancipated soul come down to this earth plane to serve mankind and work for the welfare of humanity. Indeed, this dark and rainy day is just like that auspicious one upon which the Blessed Lord Sri Krishna took Avatar. I foresee a great and an exceptional future for this fortunate grandchild of mine.' The advent of this baby boy in his household devoid of male issue for such long many years, now filled Krishnamachari's heart with unprecedented joy. He regarded the child with a unique affection and brought him up with great love.

One day, when the child was 3 years old, the grandfather took him with him to the local temple. There the boy, seeing the image of the celestial mount of

Lord Vishnu, the holy Garuda, turned to the grandfather and asked him who this was. Upon the grandfather's replying that it was Sri Garuda, the sacred mount on which the God Vishnu rode in the heavens, the boy quietly returned home. But reaching home he mounted upon a hay-stack under which some grain was stored, and getting atop he assumed the posture of the Garuda-Vahana that he had seen in the temple, and in that posture began to call out repeatedly, 'O Lord, Come to me. O Lord, Come, come.' At that time the elders were not at home. Their immediate neighbour, a gentleman named Soundara Baja Iyengar, heard this voice of the child incessantly calling God to come, and being wonder-struck, he hastily called both the mother and the grandfather of the child and pointed out to them what was going on. Thus the child was precocious and very intelligent from his early age. This brought out another interesting incident which took place about this time. Pechi, the servant-maid of the neighbouring household, once lured the child and removed the golden bracelets that adorned his wrists. The servant-maid thought that this little child would fail to understand the true significance of her stealthy action. But little Parthasarathy straightaway went up to his grandfather and dragged the latter to the place where Pechi, the servant-maid, sat winnowing rice in the interior of the neighbour's house. Upon being questioned, the maid vehemently denied any knowledge of the bracelets. The boy thereupon went up to her and laid his hand upon the little tobacco-pouch tucked up at the waist in the folds of the lady's saree, where he had seen her secreting it. The ornaments were immediately discovered there and the woman caught red-handed. At the time of this incident the child was barely 3 years of age.

Krihnamachari, the grand-father, was a very charitable man and gave alms froly to all supplicants at his door. But, however, he observed one procedure, viz., that to disabled beggars like the cripple, the blind, the sick, the dumb and the lame, he gave large alms, and to the healthy and able-bodied supplicants, he gave less comparatively. Everyone in the household, including the little Parthasarathy, knew this practice. Once it so happened that an able-bodied but blind beggar stood at the door and called for alms. Now little Parthasarathy had not seen a blind man before. He was now in a dilemma. Here was an able-bodied man and yet something seems to be very much wrong with him. So, how to classify him was the problem. Unable to solve this, the little boy ran up to his grandfather who was engaged in the daily worship at that time, and with both his eyes totally shut, the little boy began to ask, 'Thatha, there is a man with his eyes like this. How much rice should

be given to him?' The grandfather replied, 'My dear boy, that man is blind and therefore he cannot work. He should be given a good measure of rice as alms.' The child was now 5 years old, and reluctantly the grandfather allowed him to be taken to his paternal house at Madras where the father was in service. He was put into school and grew up into an intelligent student. Here, too, his early traits of devotion to God and precocious wisdom continued to manifest. Everyday he was in the habit of taking one anna from his father to eat ice-fruit, but it was seen that Parthasarathy invariably went to his mother and got another half anna in addition to the one anna received from his father. Armed with his cash, he would straightaway go first to the nearby temple of Panduranga and offer half anna there. Then coming out, he bought an ice-fruit for himself. The temple priest, noting how the boy invariably put half anna before the deity daily, reported the fact to the mother. Upon being questioned by his mother as to why he daily put half anna at the temple, the boy Parthasarathy promptly replied, 'Why mother, should not Panduranga also have ice-fruit for himself?' This reply made her marvel at the child's extraordinary way of thinking. The boy felt the deity Panduranga as a living personality. It was almost as though he had been a companion to the Lord when he sported as Sri Krishna in sacred Brindavan.

The boy also showed a rare courage and presence of mind as is evidenced from the following incident. One day, while the mother sat in the kitchen, cutting vegetable, a huge venomous snake was seen to have crept along the rafter directly overhead where she sat. It closed its fangs upon a hapless rat that happened upon the rafter. Thus with the rat in its mouth, the fearful serpent dangled from the rafter above the head of the lady, who, oblivious of this, proceeded calmly with her vegetable cutting. The little lad who was about 6 years old at that time, happened to enter the kitchen and took in the situation at a glance. The precocious intelligent mind saw at once that to raise an alarm would more likely than not, throw the mother into a panic, which might endanger her very life. Therefore the boy quietly advanced to where his mother was sitting, wrapped his arms round her in a tight hug and silently began to drag her away from that place. Not a little surprised by his somewhat unexpected, strange behaviour, the mother allowed herself to be dragged away without protest, for she knew the resolute and the insistent nature of the boy. When he thus dragged her about 10 yards away from the dangerous spot, the boy silently pointed out to the mother the deadly snake overhead. She promptly fell down in a faint at the very spot, overcome with terror at her narrow escape. Thereupon little Parthasarathy quickly rushed up to his grandfather and brought him to the spot where the snake was hanging and his

mother lay in a faint, and thus averted what might have otherwise ended in a dire tragedy.

When the boy reached the age of 7, a bereavement occurred, that was to awaken him rudely to the evanescence of this earthly life and the transitory nature of human relationship. Parthasarathy's beloved grandfather passed away. His death deprived the young boy of one who had lavished his affection and loving care upon him from the day of his birth. Yet, with a fortitude and emotional restraint, marvellous in a lad of his tender age, the boy Parthasarathy accompanied the bier to the cremation ground and set fire to the remains with great composure. Though young, he was obliged to perform these last rites, according to Sastric injunctions, for the grandfather had no male issue, and young Parthasarathy happened to be the only male in the family direct in the line.

During the period that followed after his grandfather's death, Parthasarathy's mind, deprived of that object upon which his mind was so long centred, began to turn in devotion and love towards another quarter, viz , the Divine Deity, the Lord Venkatesa of the famous shrine of Holy Tirupati. Devotion to the Lord Tirupati Venkatesa began to be a dominant passion of his life during this period.

A picture of the Lord became now his constant, inseparable companion. Frequently he began to go upon pilgrimage to the holy shrine of Venkatesa on the sacred Tirupati Hills. Often he importuned his mother and went away to Tirupati very frequently. He prayed to the Lord Venkatesa without fail. He strictly observed fast on Saturdays to propitiate the Lord. At this stage the boy was invested with the sacred thread. From the date of the Upanayana Samskar he began to perform the Sandhya with unerring regularity. Not a day passed without his repeating the Gayatri Mantra with great devotion and faith. So strict was he in devotion that at the time of Sandhya and prayer he observed the vow of silence and would not answer even if he was called to take his food. He observed the traditional orthodox practice and would never eat anything in hotels and such public places. He avoided articles like onion and garlic that were not acceptable to orthodox people.

We now come to a turning point in this young seeker's life. One day the boy came across books by Swami Sivananda who was destined to become his Spiritual Master and his living God. Parthasarathy was fascinated by the books. He got Rs. 7 from his mother and promptly purchased a number of his books. From that very day onwards, a new phase opened up for him in his life. He began to practise Yoga Asanas and Pranayama every day. Japa and meditation became a part of his daily routine. He began to read the Sivananda

literature with avidity. It may be said that the young boy now got initiated into the life spiritual through the soul-elevating and life-transforming books of the sage and seer of Ananda Kutir, Siva, the awakener. He now commenced his life of earnest aspiration and spiritual quest. Daily Sadhana became habitual to him. He was gifted with a very sweet voice and was a keen lover of music. Thus he came to delight in singing the name of the Lord and beautiful Bhajans and Sankirtans.

When he reached his 18th year, he entered service. After a couple of years' service at Madras, better prospects opened up before him at Calcutta and he became absorbed into Government service there. His mother went along with him to keep house for him at Calcutta. One day she raised the topic of his marriage and suggested that she would welcome the prospect of having a daughter-in-law in the house. Extraordinary was the young man's response to this suggestion put forward by her, a response that showed the extraordinary devotion and love he cherished for his mother. Parthasarathy said, 'Mother, listen. Now I love you with all my heart. You too love me in the same way. But if I take a wife, then see what will happen. My love will now become diverted towards her and thus divided between you and her. This is a prospect I least desire. I wish to have whole-soul devotion and love for you always. I do not want to repeat the story of our neighbour Mr. X, who began ill-treating his mother after the entry of his wife in the home. I pray you never raise this topic again. I have no wish to marry.'

He won the hearts of the officers under whom he served, who loved him and admired him. They soon managed to have him transferred to the Capital of India. At the central Secretariat at Delhi, Parthasarathy held a responsible position as a Personal Assistant to a highly influential Secretary to the Government of India, whose regard and confidence he won by his sterling qualities and eager and industrious service. With an income of over Rs. 300 per month he yet lived a life of simplicity and generosity. He had a very tender heart and extremely charitable disposition. He helped his mother and gave away a lot in charity to others who were in need.

But the call of the spirit was irresistible. Not even the glamour of a life in the Capital could hold back this spirited young soul from its quest of the Divine Ideal. His contact with Swami Sivananda through books had developed into contact through frequent letters. From there it flowered into regular visits to holy Ananda Kutir whenever Parthasarathy managed to get leave from his office duties. The personal contact with the master soon overwhelmed the youth, and in 1945 we find him cutting off all bonds that bound him to the

secular life and renouncing a promising career, offering himself as a dedicated Sevak at the Lotus-Feet of his Gurudeva, Swami Sivananda.

21. As I Observed

Swami Narayanananda Saraswati

Swami Venkatesananda is a great man of a very high order, and yet his heart is as pure and simple as that of a child. Whatever may the Shastras say about the signs of greatness, it is through sheer good fortune that one can find such a beautiful combination of head and heart with childlike simplicity. From my own acquaintance with him, I could make out that he was an incarnation of real greatness. Whenever I drew near him, I could realise such a peculiar unity between intellect and feelings that I had no other desire but to look at him and listen to his instructions. Similar was the desire in every other visitor, too, as I observed. What else can there be that is so much expressive of greatness? He is quite averse to popular fame. I had occasions to come in touch with many great men, but I felt his company extremely wonderful. How and with what endeavour could this greatness be achieved? If this were comprehensible, and if it were possible to act up to this method with ease, probably our mind would run after it.

22. Swami Venkatesananda

Indrajit Sharma, Simla

God's special grace has actually descended in an ample measure on those fortunate ones who step out of the glittering mansion of worldly delusion and mundane pomp and show. It is said in our sacred books that only one whom God chooses finds Him. It is not everybody that can aspire for God-realisation. The law of Karma also is an important factor to be reckoned in connection with the spiritual unfoldment of an aspirant. Only those who had done meritorious services and performed severe penances in their past births deserve God's special grace on their onward march to the peak of perfection. But one should not fatalistically be rooted in the lagoon of inertia and let life get rusted and spoiled thereby. Dynamic and intense useful activity is the symbol of life.

Spiritual path is the most difficult of all the paths. Spiritual journey is the most tiring of all the journies in the world. But unlike other worldly destinations where one feels fatigued and morose after the end of the journey, the destination or goal in spirituality, when reached, gives unparalleled peace, bliss and comfort. Discipline in military, even in any advanced country, falls into insignificance before the spiritual disciplines and restraints. Discipline in other compartments of life may be relaxed at times, but there is absolutely no relaxation in spiritual discipline; or rather relaxation in the latter spells peril and doom.

I am glad to note that Swami Venkatesananda whose birthday we have the privilege to celebrate today is a lucky person chosen by God for the highest prize of Moksha. I can say with all the knowledge about the Swami that he is a sincere and hard working aspirant. His aspiration for achieving God-realisation is admirable. It is really significant to note that he is exercising a continuous restraint over his lower emotions and instincts. He has got emotions, of course, but those have been rarefied, refined, and properly cultured. I found him at times immersed in an ocean of spiritual emotion.

Another lesson that we can learn from the life of my Gurubhai Swami Venkatesananda is the power of concentration which he possesses in plenty. It is reported that during the All-India Tour in 1950, undertaken by our Gurudev Siva, Swami Venkatesananda had sometimes to work in latrines in the running trains. When Swami Sivananda used to thunder forth his inspiring messages before the packed houses, it was Swami Venkatesananda who quickly took down notes of his immortal words and later on edited them and prepared a monumental work, entitled 'Sivananda's Lectures - All India Tour.'

Yet another good quality in him is his sense of dedication to the responsible tasks that are assigned to him. He works with tremendous speed to execute and finish the work on hand. This is a rare quality and is a sign of progress and prosperity. But one must always be dedicated to noble and humanitarian causes, and not otherwise. We must also emulate Swami Venkatesananda in adopting this quality in our own life.

An observing eye cannot fail to find an indefatigable worker in his person. All the time he is usefully engaged in some constructive work.

He is really a pillar of the Divine Life Society. He has added many feathers to the cap of the Divine Life Society. He has taken pains to establish goodwill and the prosperity of the Society to a great extent.

He is a humorous Swami and keeps his company happy and enjoyable. But at the same time he is very serious, and does not believe in cracking foolish jokes. Sometimes he expresses highly philosophical thoughts which should be recorded for the guidance and instruction of posterity.

Swami Venkatesananda is full of Guru-Bhakti. Sivananda's heart has been captured by his high class devotion to Guru, God and Guru's Mission. Swamiji calls him 'Venkates' out of love for him. Now let us also fall in love with this young but enterprising devout Swami, and lovingly address him as Venkatesa, henceforward, in the few more lines that follow.

Venkatesa is a talented editor and knows intuitively what makes the magazine or book look more beautiful, more impressive, more inspiring and last, but not the least, more salable. I simply love the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University Weekly so ably edited by him. I have preserved every copy of this little lovely weekly since its very inception. I wait anxiously for every next issue of the weekly.

Venkatesa is a medium-sized bespectacled young man, with broad shoulders, expanded chest, red cheeks and a little raised big head. He enjoys good health. He is a master of Yogic exercises. His voice is sweet and behaviour pleasing.

He loves simplicity. This is a quality found in every great man, and Venkatesa is no exception. He is simple in everything that he does.

What I have liked most in him is his love for and devotion to Siva. It simply passes beyond my understanding to note his overwhelming love for Siva.

When Siva was sick in July 1954, I happened to be there. I was spell-bound to personally witness his devotion to Swamiji. I have got no exact comparison to make in this respect. But all I can say is that his Guru-Bhakti is a phenomenon worth witnessing and worth emulating to boot.

Venkatesa is a dexterous writer and tactful speaker. He has spoken in a number of important functions. I can testify to his good command over the English language. His writings are generally very impressive and inspiring. I wish him all success in his literary career under the divine protection of Gurudev Sivananda Maharaj.

In the end, I wish Venkatesa Swami many happy returns of the day, and pray to God with all earnestness and sincerity at my command to bless him with health and long life. May he shine like a sun.

23. Story of Venkatesananda

Sri N. Srinivasan

*'Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness in the desert air.'*

The fragrance of the flower that was born on the 2nd January, 1922, in a remote village in Tanjore District, was smelt by Gurudev Sivananda at Ananda Kutir. Even before the flower could give its fragrance in its birth-place, Swamiji, by his mystic power, drew the flower while in bud, and planted it in his Ashram, to give fragrance not only to him but also to several thousands of his devotees. If Gurudev's Kripa had not fallen on this flower, it would not have given such sweet fragrance and in an unknown corner it would be wasting the nice smell.

The Divine child, christened Parthasarathy, was born in the most sacred month of Margasirsha in 1922, in a village in Tanjore District.

Fondled by the dear old paternal grandmother, and brought up by the great disciplinarian, Sri Ramanuja Iyengar (paternal uncle), the boy developed divine qualities like Dhruva and Prahlada.

The boy was simple, humble and nobility-personified, and knew not mischief. Even at the age of 12, he began to write to Gurudev Sivananda, beseeching him to accept him as his disciple and guide him in the spiritual path.

While at Madras, he walked up the sacred Tirumalai Hills, times without number, to have Darshan and blessings of Lord Venkateswara.

After a short service in the A.R.P. and in the Supply Department of the India Government at Calcutta and New Delhi, his official career was given a go-by.

When the Divine Call came, like Siddhartha, he moved to the Saint's Abode of Bliss, early in September 1945, and fell at the Lotus-Foot of his Gurudev.

Blessed by his Gurudev, Swami Venkatesananda shines in the Crest-Jewel of Siva, along with the Kohinoor of the Mission, Swami Chidananda, and other gems.

Divine Parthasarathy is now driving the Chariot of Sivananda.

May the Lord Venkateswara bless his Bhakta with sound health, to serve his Gurudev Siva ind through him the world at large. Glory to Guru-Bhagavan Jaya Sivananda.

This Divine child Parthasarathy underwent many trials and tribulations like Dhruva and Prahlada early in life, but by Guru Kripa crossed all obstacles, and now shines like the Pole Star in the Abode of Bliss of Gurudev Sivananda.

With his genial temperament and endearing personality, the young Swami captivates the minds of all those who come in contact with him. He has earned the approbation of his Gurudev who describes him as 'The Crest-Jewel and the Resplendence of my Mission.' Who else can shower better laurels on Swami Venkatesananda than those of his most revered Gurudev? Gurudev Sivananda is his God.

Swami Venkatesa in his book 'Bhagavad Gita for Students' says: 'I have only one Guru, and he is God on earth, the truest embodiment of the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita.' If every Gurubhai lives up to this ideal, there would be no doubt that this Bharata-Varsha would become Heaven on Earth.

Though Swami Venkatesananda is always by the side of his Gurudev, he has not forgotten his mundane Poorvashram father. As the proverb goes that the thread which binds the flowers would also give some smell, he has made his father rise up in the spiritual plane. Gurudev has showered his choicest blessings on Srinivasan by awarding several titles and also the rare gift of giving his own name to be prefixed to his disciple's name. Swami Venkatesananda has thus, like Prahlada, got salvation to his father. Which son will do this in this Kali Yuga? He has injected Guru Bhakti into his father. Whenever Srinivasan hears the name or sees the picture of Gurudev, he sheds Ananda Bashpa. He has enshrined Gurudev in his heart. To him also, like Venkatesananda, Gurudev is everything. Gurudev has blessed him with peace and bliss. Recently Sri Venkateswarananda of Arogya Ashram, Adyar, while having a jovial talk with Srinivasan, said: 'Swamiji has unbounded affection towards you, and your Guru-Bhakti is also very great. I wonder whose affection is greatest', The answer was: 'Certainly Gurudev's.' Who can fathom Guru Kripa? In Srinivasan's case, whether he deserves it or not, he gets it through the instrument of Swami Venkatesananda.

Swami Venkatesananda has not forgotten his brothers and sisters. When his father asked him to guide his brothers in the right direction by writing to them, in 1952 Venkatesananda gave his brother Ramakrishnan lessons on the Bhagavad Gita, which were printed by the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University, and copies of which were sold out and distributed by Gurudev within a short time. Boys who read this book will certainly improve a lot and go in the right path to prosperity and Immortality. His brothers have been greatly benefited by his books and letters of advice, and they anxiously await the summer holidays to run up to the Ashram to spend their time with their beloved brother. These boys have been so nicely trained by Venkatesananda to serve Gurudev. They have also received the blessings of Gurudev, and they are today very proud of their brother.

The blessed father of Swami Venkatesananda, after the celebration of Gurudev's birthday at Madras on the 16th September 1954, rushed to the Ashram to pay his respects to and to receive the blessings of Gurudev. He heaved a sigh of relief when he saw his Gurudev in normal health after his serious illness. After paying his respects to Gurudev, he said that Sri Seshachalam Chetty of Curzon & Co., Madras, had come to Rishikesh for going to Badrinath and that he was also thinking of making the trip to Badri the next day along with Sri Chettiar. At once Swamiji blessed him and said: 'Yes. You can go with Sri Chettiar. This is a very pleasant season. May God bless you.' At that time Sri Krishna Iyer of Madurai was present. Swamiji said: 'Krishna Iyer, you have company. Why not you, too, go? You can take Vijayalakshmi also with you'. In spite of heavy going, en route to Badri, due to unprecedented rains, the party had a wonderful trip and Darshan of Lord Badri Narayan, and without any mishap returned to the Ashram in good health and in record time. All these would have been impossible but for the grace and blessings of Swamiji.

On return from Badri, Srinivasan stayed in the Ashram for about a week during Durga Puja. On the 8th October, 1954, when he had the good fortune of performing Pada-Puja to Gurudev, he requested Gurudev to place his Lotus-Foot on his head and bless him, to which Gurudev reluctantly yielded. The thrill and joy Srinivasan felt at this time is indescribable. Who will have this rare fortune? Who is the Moola Karta for all these ? He is none other than the beloved Swami Venkatesananda who has brought glory to his father and other members of his family.

Avatara Purushas and other Bhaktas, like Sri Rama, Krishna, Prahlada and Dhruva have suffered a great deal in their early ages. If these Avatara Purushae had not thus suffered, they would not have attained Godhead and redeemed the world from Himsa and Adharma. Swami Venkatesananda stands a comparison in this respect. May Gurudev Swami Sivananda's grace be upon him always. May he be blessed with sound health and long life to serve Gurudev, is the prayer of all on this happy occasion of his 34th Birthday.

24. A Small Tribute to a Great Man

Dr. Sri L. Mirchandani, Delhi

Those in the know of things affirm that Swami Venkatesananda is of inestimable service to Sri Swami Sivananda in his Jnana Yajna. A peep into his paper-strewn room amply justifies this opinion. Indeed it is no easy task to edit Swamiji's innumerable works, and any one else would have developed a furrowed brow and a sour countenance. Not so Swami Venkatesananda. His ever bright and cheerful face invariably brings to my lips the words 'Samtushtah Satatam Yogi'. Yet it is not the complacent placidity of tamasic origin. At every function of the Ashrama you find him silent and dynamic. I often wondered at this combination of activity and peace till I dubbed him as 'Yatatmavam'.

Those of us who have read his book 'Bhagavad Gita for Students' have a clear picture of him, for the little book portrays his brilliant, dynamic and friendly nature very accurately.

There is no doubt that men like him are bound to make a mark in the spiritual world when their days of apprenticeship in the form of sincere service at the feet of a great sage are over.

May God bless him.

25. First Among the Foremost

Sri Swami Omkarananda

The Perfect Instrument.

Our attempt here is to reveal to the readers some of the reasons that evoked from the very depths of the heart of the divine Master, this utterance of a rousing nature: 'Will I ever see anyone shine brighter than he, Swami Venkatesananda? Surely, none have I ever seen'.

A Hercules in the difficult task of unquestioning and sleepless obedience to the Will of the Master, in tremendous mental energy, in tireless work and patient endurance, Swami Venkatesananda has engendered in the divine Master, a strong and undying feeling that, were the gigantic machinery of the world-wide organisation of the Divine Life to cease to function today, the Master would, far from giving a respite to his Work of universal compassion and service take the world through the sole instrumentality of Venkatesananda, into a greater and more powerful spiritual transformation. And, who amongst us is so dull-witted in an ordinary psychological understanding as to have utterly failed to perceive in the triumphant atmosphere about our Divine Master, a clue that Venkatesananda is for the Master, the one great flawless medium for the flow of his Light, Peace and Grace into all mankind?

He then is the perfect instrument whose lines of activity are in perfect accord with the ways of the Will of our incarnate Godhead. Unprejudiced thought would tell us that he put his hand to no task that was not dictated to him by the Master, either directly or indirectly; and, beneath that never-dying exterior of sportiveness, playfulness and 'saintly foolery', there smoulders and burns in him the fire of the Prophet of Devoted Discipleship.

None of the foremost disciples of Swami Sivananda had succeeded in rising to the levels of his self-oblivious absorption in the endless service of the Master. Neither in fiction nor in real life have we ever seen a being so recklessly disinterested in itself; it is a being that has entwined the Lotus-feet of the Master with its life; and with the fastidious band of a scrupulous builder, dedicated every part of its energy to the Master; what is more, for the Master's own sake. Where we seek the Grace of the Master and Salvation, he seeks nothing short of the Service and the Self of the Master.

Our Master has a constitutional incapacity to be partial in the distribution of his overwhelming Love and, there is nothing in the dynamic expressions of the Love of the Master that could contradict the individual feeling in everyone of us, that the Master loves him or her the most. But, an element of partiality is introduced into his universal compassion, by the uncommon merits of

some of the agents that receive it. The matchless excellences of Swami Venkatesananda as a disciple have acquired for him the largest measure of the Love of the Master.

Therefore it is that Swami Venkatesananda comes nearest to the heart of the Master; and therefore, too the Master, whenever he speaks of Venkatesananda, is softly constrained by the pull of the disciple to melt His impersonal personality into touching personal tones, into a quite human voice, into a great endearing concern, into the most sacred intimateness. To illustrate this we would present to ourselves but one example.

One day, four years ago, I was summoned from my room into the presence of the Master at his modest cottage. As the hour was odd, I rushed to the Master in a state of nervous eagerness. The Master was alone; and I saw the countenance of this incarnate Godhead suffused with a sentiment eminently human. The scene His Presence created, and the feeling it engendered in me are not describable; and in defence of this inability, I bring here the words of Ruskin: 'I do not think this is my fault, nor that of the English language, for I am afraid no feeling is describable.' But, I distinctly remember the words that emerged into the scene almost in a whisper from the sacred lips of the Master, 'Omkar Swamiji, please write a biography of Swami Venkatesananda'. He is a tower of strength to me and the very life of my mission.' Mustering a little of the inner courage, in tones almost inaudible, I whispered back, 'Yes, Swamiji.' At that the scene shifted. I was given a few pieces of apple and sent back. To this day my own personal indolence has never granted me the necessary period of time to write the biography. But this article written at the request of Swami Dyananda, the present Press Manager, for the 34th Birthday of Swami Venkatesananda, goes out to the reader as my apologetic effort.

Triton Among Minnow

A prodigious capacity for secretarial work, many personal powers, peculiarly proper to the running of the Mission, and an inborn ability strengthened and heightened by self-annihilation and egolessness, to dance to the tunes of the divine Master, have exalted Swami Venkatesananda to the Status of the Triton among the minnows of the foremost disciples of Swami Sivananda.

Not unoften did we express our wonder at an almost incredible force and quickness in Swami Venkatesananda, to materialise every 'divine whim' of the Master; and, nothing is more eloquent on the importance and value of the great volume of his work, as the most envious fact that while every one of the foremost disciples of the Master goes to Him to seek His Presence and submit to Him the results of their individual selfless service, it is to the workhouse of Swami Venkatesananda that the Master pays an everyday pilgrimage.

Ten young graduates of extraordinary ability would not be able to substitute Venkatesananda, much less rise up to the 'expectations' of my Work' - was of the nature of a characteristic utterance with the Master, during the early days. And this reiterated expression was never a rhapsodical utterance, but a much reasoned observation made after a prolonged period of experiment and trial with the abilities of many brilliant young men. But, much of the many-sided Herculean ability of Swami Venkatesananda is to be attributed to the Power of the Master himself, as it is qualified by a strong and ineradicable feeling in him, of total dependence and reliance on the Grace of the Master. Besides offering to the Master, many personal powers peculiarly proper to the running of the Divine Life Mission, the spiritually susceptible self of Swami Venkatesananda, has absorbed into itself in a large measure some of the 'abilities' of the Master.

Perhaps it is never in good taste to recount here the many items of work that crowd his daily routine and throw him into a whirl of activity that yields to the Master and the Mission, magnificent results. Wherefore, we sum up his place as the Triton among minnows, with the reflective thought that while some monks feel perfectly satisfied with the rendering of a little service to the Master, and sink the of their ample leisure in cultivating their taste for castle building, and visualise before themselves exquisite scenes of the pomp and greatness that are to be theirs in times to come, Swami Venkatesananda is the one 'impetuous' spirit that even while it chances to slip into a frivolous talk with us, evidences that his brain is selectively occupied with a mighty idea that is intimately bound up with the spread of the Message and the Light of the Master. His being is cast into a huge column of fiery service; and were one of the many illuminating instructions irradiating from the bright being of Swami Venkatesananda, to come as a beam of light to govern our young but utifiuitlul lives, it would come through 'sages' like George Bernard Shaw, with this flash of brilliance:

'This is the true joy of life - the being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one, the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown to the scrap-heap; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish clod of ailments and grievances.'

Twins In Mind

It is supposed that the associative tendency of the mind of the reader, would by no stretch of imagination, lure him into drawing a line of even a ghost of resemblance between the phrase, 'twins in mind', here coined to express a new phenomenon, and the 'split-personality' brought into vogue by Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, or the 'split-off consciousness' employed

by James, or Bleuler's schizophernia and Kraeplin's dementia praecox. The phenomenon here presented is something either altogether unknown to humanity or as yet never been recorded within the higher psychological or parapsychological literature of the world. As we proceed on with the subject, the phrase gains greater and greater clarity.

The argument from the observations made during a 9-year psychological study at close quarters, of the perfect harmony in the essential nature constituting the complex phenomena of thought-activity in Swami Sivananda and Swami Venkatesananda, engendered especially with regard to the spread of the Divine Life Mission and Message, is that the consciousness of the Master has transformed this disciple in many respects so as to make him its twin in mind. The two 'minds' are exceedingly alike in all the characteristics of the nature of their thought, though with a special reference to the performance around the world of their many-sided work of the dissemination of spiritual knowledge, enlightenment and peace.

Swami Venkatesananda is so gifted mentally that to translate himself into the thought of the Master, lies eminently within his power; besides this native endowment, this spiritual aspirant of psychic sensitivity, offers to the Master an inner state made up of intense Faith in the Master, of an active awareness of the all-pervading Presence of the Master, of an attunement to the very spirit and mind of the Master. It is this, more than anything else, that explains the astonishing capacity in him to read a day earlier the thought the Master would think in regard to the Mission, tomorrow, do unasked a deed the Master would ask him do the day-after. On many occasions he had startled us by anticipating the thought of the Master. For reasons of space, we would consider here only one instance.

Extreme physical exhaustion on a typhoid bed of anxious hours, has given to the long-drawn and feebly expressed words of Swami Sivananda, a beauteous and dignified distortion of classical excellence. As we shall see, such phrases as 'His Master' are voiced by our divine Master as 'His Majesty'. Except his own mind, no one would make any meaning of these apparently intelligible but totally unintelligible syllables in these phrases; but, Swami Venkatesananda would understand them all, and do it by the aid of the power the Master has endowed his susceptible noetic faculty with, much better than the one who uttered them. There arose in the mind of the Master on the sick-bed an urgent thought that one of his Hindu tan Records produced by his Master's Voice, now in stock with us, should by tomorrow's mail be despatched to one of his devoted German disciples at Nuremberg. Therefore, the ailing Master tells Swami Venkatesananda, who is by the sick-bed, 'His

Majesty' - and that is all. To everybody, it is quite clear, that by themselves these two words make perfect sense, but none of us can say as to what exactly they are, and much less, what they intend meaning. Much to our astonishment, he replied to the Master: 'Yes, Swamiji, the record has been well-packed and mailed to the party this morning.' Precisely here it is that Swami Venkatesananda excels everyone of us. He has not only correctly interpreted to himself that the phrase 'His Majesty', a majestic distortion, means 'His Master's Voice record', and supplied to himself the rest of the sentence, but also did the deed. Instead of assembling here many such cases, we may proceed to understand a few generalised conclusions drawn from them.

To assume the point of view of the divine Master on almost every matter, is for Swami Venkatesananda a sleight of the hand. The tentacles of his operative mental consciousness spiritualised by a continuous thought of the Master and his Mission, are so sensitive and so well-tuned to the inaudible rhythms of the Guru and God, that they grasp the very 'gestures' of his Presence, and interpret their hundred nuances. We have in this first among the foremost disciples of the Master, an extraordinarily gifted, most reverential, and therefore, the greatest explorer of the Mind of the Master. Great men may think alike; but Venkatesananda thinks the very thoughts of the Master in regard to the Work that the Master would ask him to do. It is almost by an instinct that he knows the present unexpressed intentions of the Master, and by intuition his thoughts to be born. The very ideas of the Master are conveyed to the consciousness of this devotee-disciple who has established the strongest relation with the Master in thought and feeling. This 'mad' Lover of the Thought of the Master is indeed blind in his ways, especially so in the eyes of men who are dominated by egoistic rational tendencies, by an unenlightened critical temper, by personal will, preference and opinions. Coleridge has 'heard of reasons manifold', 'why love must needs be blind,' but the best of all reasons he holds is that the eyes of the lover are in his mind; and it is this best of all reasons that defends the 'blindness' of Swami Venkatesananda. His eyes are in his mind and his mind is lost in an intense thought of the Master. While we are tyrannised by the limited powers of our own minds and ruled by the impulses of a blind will, he is the one being whom the Thought of the Master rules. Therefore it is that he is given the gift of thinking the thought that the Master thought of thinking.

'I am of the same mind as Thou art' says Epictetus in his Discourses, and we are provided a happy illustration of an identical truth in the mind of Swami Venkatesananda in its relation to that of the Master. Countless thousands

have caught a little of the bliss and grace and peace of the divine Master through this young man whose words of wisdom written in the letters and messages signed by the Master, are indistinguishable from the Master's own. This is not all though he took no notes, when the Master speaks for an hour and quarter; he reproduces the entire speech, word for word, and this was to the Master in the earlier days a constant source of apparent amazement.

Few facts concerning the Master and Swami Venkatesananda are so noteworthy as this 'identity in their minds.' The mind of Swami Venkatesananda is in full possession of the leading ideas of the Prophetic Soul of the Master; he is equally aware of the manner and methods in which these ideas have to be given expression to. These few fundamental ideas of the Master with regard to the Mission and Work, have struck deep roots in him and grown into his convictions; any enactment of these convictions results in bringing into being conventions at the Ashram. Were he to say that you are a Bhakti Bhushan, you may be sure that the Master would give you that title twenty days later; and if he said you are a Kaviratna, be sure you were so addressed by the Master, five years ago. If the Master would, two hours later, express specific pleasure at your presence as an act of encouragement to a greater expression and exercise of your talents, you would be sure to find a reflection of that pleasure of the Master an hour earlier, on the visage of Venkatesananda.

As Swami Venkatesananda worships the Master more by Service than by the devotion of the heart and an intense yearning for his Light, there is in him a conscious powerful aspiration to establish permanent contact with, and know fully from second to second of the psychological time, the contents of that portion of the externalised consciousness of the Master that runs the Mission of Lokasangraha, and serve Him with a greater power and to a greater perfection. By virtue of total self-annihilation he is the one disciple who has fully opened himself to the action of the divine influence of the Master. And who knows the divine Master, the performer of many miracles, our incarnate Godhead, the Master who is already a great legendary figure, may, by one single inner touch, transform Venkatesananda into a spiritual being of mighty powers, who would 'bestride the earth' like a spiritual Colossus.

First Among the Foremost

This last sub-heading of the lengthy article gives us our own honest and deep-felt view of the place Swami Venkatesananda occupies as the First among the Foremost disciples of Swami Sivananda, and crowns it with the Master's own judgment on the matter, made rhetorically in a very moving tone. The moving nature of the common sentiment is attributable to the action on us of the

power that our and our Master's gratitude for Venkatesananda - the gay and inestimably valuable phenomenon that he is - has gathered.

Specially during the last six years, I have always observed with a strong sense of self-reproachment and penitent thought that whether the Master is wading through a cheering, excited and unruly crowd, or walking in the dark, down the rugged road of the hill of the Ashram or in a weak state of physical indisposition - he is never sure of his foot when his hand is on our strong shoulders, whereas he walks blind-folded when he rests it for support on the shoulder of Swami Venkatesananda. This indeed makes all the difference 'between' us and that blessed being; and, in this 'betweenness' there are worlds and worlds that keep us away from the great importance he holds in the eyes of our Master. It is else the width of this difference that overrules our wills, throws us into the shade of comparative obscurity, and determines his supreme place among the foremost disciples of Swami Sivananda.

But, this is not the only instance that makes all the difference to our Master, between Swami Venkatesananda and us. There are hundreds of more striking instances than this one that easily suggested itself to us; and, all these instances greatly redounding to the immeasurable merit of Swami Venkatesananda have formed the intimate knowledge of those few whose lives are lived at the heels of the Master. And, if there is any shred indicative of honesty in the collective soul of our beings, and if that shred is strong enough, it would certainly constrain and coerce us into supplying an early answer concerning Venkatesananda, to an eager and questioning public - questioning because bewildered by the sight of too many foremost disciples of Swami Sivananda - in these memorable words of Saint John uttered with regard to Jesus the Christ: 'He it is, who coming after us is preferred before us, whose latchet we are not worthy to unloose.'

A stern renunciation of a noble bachelor's purpose full of silver and gold and the luxuries of a well-sophisticated life, every unit of a hot-blooded youth's energy and power, an utter emptiness of heart a perfection of humility, the strength of an unused brawn, a brilliant brain, a never-begging-brow crowned by personal peace and undying happiness, and above all, a life of amazing activity wound around the Lotus-feet of the Lord Master - these and many more rare flowers of rarer hues Swami Venkatesananda has offered at the altar of our Master.

The world of temptations proffered him the strongest invitations; and, the power of the pull of his devotion to the Master, resisted nothing so heroically as temptations. In feeble strength the lures of the world are yet lingering somewhere before his vision; but his vision is in his mind, and his mind is in

the Master; and this spiritual psychological fact mails him against every weakness, and leaves him in a luminous light of the thought that is intimately bound up with the Work of the Master. The being of his young energy has been lifted up into an integration with the divine Power of the Master. There is no merit in us which is not in him, and there are many merits in him which are not in us; and, therefore it is that we gladly yield to him the supreme place that his excellences, not easy of acquisition for us, have won for him in the mission, life and estimation of the Master.

A current platitude contends that comparisons are odious; but if comparisons would serve to enlighten us to the exact nature of certain aspects of the deep and close relationship of Swami Venkatesananda with the Master, we may hold, in all soundness of judgment, that he is to Swami Sivananda what Ananda was to Buddha and John to Jesus. Where we claim the Master to be ours, Venkatesananda is the only disciple whom the Master claims to be his where we are, beneath hundred veils, always self-esteeming and highly pretentious concerning our worth to the Master, he is the only worker of whom the Master is secretly very proud. When our presences 'fade like the air', when everyone of us is forgotten by the Master, there would graciously emerge in the memory of the Master the radiant name of Swami Venkatesananda, in all its splendour.

Before retiring in the plenitude of his powers, from London and the stage, the last thing that Shakespeare abjured through the medium of the last of his characters, Prospero, was his magic that has presented to humanity his immortal poetry. The last thing to be dissolved in transcendental peace by our Master, before he makes his irrevocable crossing of the threshold of Nirvana on which, according to a legend, Gautama the Buddha continues to stand to receive into His Light, the last of the crawling creatures from this world of woes, would be the magic wand in his hands, Swami Venkatesananda, through whose instrumentality the Master has smoothed out the furrows of suffering on the face of thousands of pale pieces of humanity, and spiritually enlightened thousands more.

An indefatigable toiler in the valleys of the Life and Mission of the Master here below, Swami Venkatesananda is also the towering peak that has shot up its piercing head through the proud and arrogant heavenly clouds, into higher regions where it has the horizonless stretches of inward joy of an intense awareness that it is being perpetually bathed in the white radiance of the snows of the Grace of Sivananda; on the other hand, we are dizzy little modern ascetic skylarks propelled by our own feeble strength, singing and soaring, soaring and singing into the splendour of final nothingness. But there

is no reason, even on the strength of our personal observation and knowledge, to interpret and expound 'Venkatesananda' in a figurative language proper to his inward greatness.

Nor do we need to discuss in restrained terms or in Chesterton's simple language of surprize and paradox, the greatness and importance of Swami Vekatesananda; for, our efforts are silenced when we recall to memory the deep moving words of our Master: 'Crest-Jewel of my Mission, the resplendence of my Work, will I ever see anyone shine brighter than he - Swami Venkatesanand ? Surely, none have I ever seen'.

And who amongst us will fail to feel in these terms and tones, the warmth of the human blood in the divine veins of the Master, and contrast the comfortable experience with the far-fetched mental touch of the coldness of the celestial Ichor supposed to flow in the veins of the gods of Greeks and Romans?

26. Homage to the Birthday Child

Sri K.S. Ramawamy Sasiri

I regard my contact with Swami Venkatesananda as one of the high-lights and special joys of my life. He has done yeoman's service for the succes of the Sivananda Mission and the production of th3e Sivananda literature. Many venerable Swamis have done such work for many many years and he has steadily and surely and successfully borne his past in such a work. To mention only a few of his activities: he is the author of the excellent work 'Sivananda Lectures : All-India Tour' which is a magnificent record of His Holiness Swami Sivananda's great purifying and spiritualising march all over India and Ceylon in 1950. He is the editor of the 'Yoga-Vedanta Forest University Weekly', published at Ananda Kutir, week after week. His 'Bhagavad Gita for Students', which was published in 1952, is an admirable clear and concise and comprehensive presentation of that great scripture.

He is the life and soul of the Ananda Kutir activities and he is a loyal and devoted disciple of His Holiness Swami Sivananda, and has helped very much to popularise and broadcast and spread the gospel of that unique spiritual genius.

Swami Venkatesananda was born in a prosperous Erahmia family and held a high office after receiving high education. But he felt an inner call to renounce everything and go to the great Master. Immediately he left his office and all the comforts of life, and went to his Master and assumed the geraa robe and merged his personality in the radiant spiritual personality of his Master. His parents are blessed in having such a spiritual son; and the world is blessed in having such a young and devoted brother who lives only for its welfare. May he live long and serve his Master and Motherland and Mankind.

27. Amor Vincit Omnia

Sri Swami Sagwathananda, Ananda Kutir

Sri Swami Venkatesananda is a brilliant and dynamic young Yogi who was not content to remain long satisfied with worldly prosperity and honours, but was prompted by the divine will to resign a lucrative official career and to come to his mentally-chosen Master, the world-famous modern Yogi and great benefactor of humanity, to become the disciple of His Holiness Sri Swami Sivananda, in order to re-orientate the rest of his life and outlook and to seek the Master's guidance in his onward march towards Godhead.

Venkatesananda came to this Abode of Bliss in 1945, and has been practising constant self-analysis, discipline, prayer, study and selfless service. He spends all his energy in typing Sri Gurudev's manuscripts and other articles which go to relieve the sufferings of thousands in the world. His magnetic personality has drawn the friendship and brotherly affection of each and every individual residing in the Ashram, as well as of the passing visitors Sri Gurudev and others greatly appreciate his extra-ordinary talent in writing and understanding of things properly.

Never before do I remember to have seen a young man with so much devotion to God and Guru, so full of love for the fellow-aspirants and kindness to all other living beings of Gods creation. He is full of educative humour and he has got a peculiar way of winning the hearts of others, out of his outpouring love and kindness. One great quality I found in him is that he is very happy always. He first greets others by touching their feet with reverence and divine Bhav, without thinking of their rank, nationality, caste, creed or colour. He embraces everyone with full-hearted love and regard. He never cherishes ill-feeling towards anyone. If at all anybody shows any ill-feeling or hatred towards him, he simply goes and touches his feet and begins to pour out his humorous words, indirectly, before him, and makes the man laugh. He neither speaks ill of others nor pays heed if anybody speaks ill of a third person. He is very simple in his dress and food. He never seeks honour, name, fame and superiority. It is a natural tendency in him to glorify others and try to bring out their good name into the forefront.

Venkatesananda is the right hand of Sri Gurudev and his Divine Mission, and a pillar of the Divine Life Society and its network of institutions. He watches all the Ashram-activities as a silent witness, and goes on working untiringly day in and day out. He is a talented writer, an eloquent speaker and a wise adviser for the Divine Work. He is the able editor of the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University Weekly. He worked single-handed and whole-heartedly to bring out the Commemoration Volume of the epochal All India-Ceylon Tour of our

revered Master, Sri Swami Sivananda Maharaj. In brief, he is the champion of Sri Gurudev's Divine Life Mission.

Work is his constant companion; prayer is his bosom-friend, and seclusion is his supreme abode; and he is well contented with whatever circumstances he may be put in. It is very difficult to give an appropriate picture of the life of this most efficient dynamic young sanyasin.

Born and brought up in a respectable family of Vaishnava Brahmins, and having undergone the course of modern English education, he fitly combines in himself the lofty dignity of spiritual idealism and the social sense and understanding of human realism. When he beautifully blends together, in his life and writings, wisdom and love, spirituality and humanness, refinement and humour, dispassion and service, he really mirrors in them the life and precepts of his Master. Swami Venkatesananda is an interesting and entertaining humorist, who is unpretentious in his thoughts, words and deeds, who would not express more or less than what he thinks and feels, who lives what he is. He has a peculiar knack in grasping the spirit of the minds of people and in approaching human nature in a manner befitting it. He portrays in himself the aspirations that direct themselves to the practice of the Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita - 'Samatvam Yoga Uchyate' and 'Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam'.

Yoga is that great art of activity based on the consciousness of the harmony and evenness of existence. Equanimity is the foundation of the Yoga of action. To live in the world and yet be out of the world, to worship the God Eternal in the temple of this temporal tabernacle, to reflect the characteristics of the Infinite in the finite, to be a man of society and yet aim at union with the Godhead, is not easy. Hard indeed is the task of reconciling the relative with the Absolute and this it is that Swami Venkatesananda is attempting to achieve in his life. Indefatigable and intensely devout, the revered Swami is indeed a paragon of an aspirant in the field of spiritual activity. A kind heart and a clear head, a giving hand and sweet speech give meaning to the central person of Swami Venkatesananda, a philosopher, a religious contemplative a man of action and a centre of love, all in one. He is a friend of all creation; he conquers all things by love born of wisdom; and this love expresses itself as service.

May God grant him a long life with good health and enthusiasm to work for the welfare of the suffering millions, in which our revered Master is already engaged.

28. A Tribute

Florence La Fontaine Randall, Ph. D., Indiana USA

Dear brother,

As you may know, I take a heartfelt interest and concern in all the work of your marvellous powerhouse in India, world-renowned, carried on magnificently by the cooperation of you and your brother workers, guided by the infinite light of our beloved master Sivananda.

Please accept my kindest personal felicitations for your so happy day of the 26th. I know one's birthday means a lot. The older we get, the more we value it, as well as the keener insight into life, both its pains and joys. I myself am almost to the end of my 30's, close to 39. So I know you might be contemplating more deeply the golden years of the 30's, precious, young and energetic.

I also take this opportunity to thank you personally for your fine work which results periodically in the various publications I have had the honour and happiness to receive from time to time.

I am well aware of the glorious genius developed in the hands of Siva. We young people are most fortunate to have the chance to know him thus. Often as I lift my eyes over my office window and gaze across the gentle hills to the east of me, I think what a wonderful thing it is in this modern age, we have young people in India dedicating their lives and education in trying to make the world better and helping the confused humanity, amok in the Western world of far too much money and idle pleasures.

The comparisons of personalities of East and West are as different as the night and day. How little we really know of India and her gorgeous classical appeal and manifestations of religion, philosophy and culture.

I admire your beautiful country and its great thinking leaders like Siva and yourself. Though the hands of time may pass down the valley of a thousand yester-years and tomorrows, one thing is sure - the immortal fingers of India that move its delicate tracery of genius spiritually towards that eternal goal, will never perish or die in power.

As of old so shall it always be in the new. India will ever remain powerful in her classic beauty and immortal philosophies incarnate. Those fortunate enough to embrace the holy grace of thy friendship and goodwill, plus the spiritual teachings have no reason to fall short of the identical idealism of the East and all it stands for.

I wish thee on thy happiest of days now and always the best of good health, the infinite courage and strength to carry on your noble work, and the

happiness of living daily as the most coveted vessel of election known to mankind, a true pearl from the strand of Sivananda's love, to wind itself around the troubled world until within its dazzling sphere the lost and the damned will find new hope and eternal peace with God.

God love and bless you forever.

Your sister.

29. Behold the Man

Sri Swami Ramananda, Ananda Kutir

Vina Venkatesam na Natho na Nathah,

Sada Venkatesam smarami smarami;

Hare Venkatesa praseeda praseeda,

Priyam Venkatesa prayachha prayachha.

Mysterious is the Lord; mysterious are His ways. He has sent Swami Sivananda to this world for spreading the 'Divine Life' in every nook and corner of it. Swami Sivananda has been supplied with the best equipments, the best men, the best place and the best of everything. Of the rarest young men surrounding Swami Sivananda, Swami Venkatesananda has a very distinct place.

Swami Venkatesananda is a brilliant young person full of enthusiasm, Guru-Bhakti, earnestness, zeal, devotion, cheerfulness, humour, rare ability, humility, simplicity, sincerity, absence of vanity, non irritability, nobility, veracity and serenity. He works day and night, untiringly, to serve the Guru and his Mission. He edits the wonderful 'Yoga-Vedanta Forest University Weekly.' He looks after a major section of Swami Sivananda's correspondence and messages. He is the professor of 'Practical Sadhana' in the unique Yoga-Vedanta Forest University. He looks after the main printing work, so dear to Swami Sivananda. He is the chronicler of Swami Sivananda. The day-to-day activities and instructions of Swami Sivananda have been (and are being) written down by him. He is the personal secretary to Swami Sivananda.

He is a rare specimen of Swami Sivananda's make-up. He has got a many-sided (or all-round) development. He is a practical Vedantin following the Kevala Advaita Philosophy of Sri Sankaracharya. He is an ardent devotee of Lord Venkatesa - Venkatachalapati of Tirupati. He has his daily worship, etc. He is an ideal Karma-Yogin, doing all kinds of work, without any distinction whatsoever. He is a gifted writer. He is a great Yogi, an adept in Yoga Asanas, Bandhas, Mudras, Pranayama, Nauli, etc. He is a good songster, fond of Bhajan and Sankirtan, and is able to play on some musical instruments, also. He is very humble and will - as does Swami Sivananda - salute everybody, first. His humorous nature will make all laugh away their worries and sorrows. He is very social and moves very freely with all people. There is no one whom he hates or (having come into contact with) does not serve in some way or the other. He is a good organiser. Even though he has not got any medical degrees, he treats patients successfully, homeopathy being his hobby. He is a fast stenographer. He has vast imagination, a keen memory, sharp intellect and power of observation. He observes fasts and Vratas regularly. He

is an able speaker. He is a good friend of all. He is able to give sound advice to people. He is a good Sannyasi and an ideal Sadhaka. In early youth he renounced a promising job, and everything against the great dissuasion of his parents - who are now the most obedient servants of Swami Sivananda, to serve Swami Sivananda and his mission.

During the famous All-India Tour of his great Master, Swami Venkatesananda did yeoman's service. He was always with Swami Sivananda, attending every function, and against odds (and mostly in fast-moving trains) typed all the lectures of Swami Sivananda as well as of the other important persons, along with a very fine and picturesque narrative of the tour.

It is the 34th birthday of such a wonderful personality that is being celebrated by his Guru-Bhais and admirers on the 26th December, 1954. But the celebrations will have meaning only if all try to become so many Venkatesanandas, by sincere efforts. May the Universal Being manifested as 'Siva' bless him with many happy returns of the day, for serving the Guru and his Mission.

30. From the Acorn to the Oak

Sri Bhimananda Shastri, Rishikesh

Swami Venkatesananda Sarasvati is a real resplendent Guru-Bhakta and a true seeker after Truth. He leads a stoic, perfect, happy, pure, saintly divine life. Blessed are the parents and the people among whom such a beneficial and benevolent, benign and kind writer and orator, affectionate and beloved, respected and praised, silent and peaceful, tolerant and patient, humane and compassionate, intelligent and thoughtful, Jnana-Ratna lives today Bharatavarsha is proud of such great souls.

It is, therefore, a rare and extraordinary privilege given to me to convey my best wishes in a law written words on the holy and auspicious occasion of the birthday of Swami Venkatesananda Sarasvati, the foremost disciple and obedient Bhakta of the modern world-famous Self-realised Yogi and Advaita Vedanta philosopher, H.H. Sri Swami Sivananda Sarasvati Maharaj, the saint of the blissful abode of Anarda Kutir, on the right bank of the Holy Mother Ganga at Muni-ki-reti in Tehri-Garhwal State.

The Vedanta philosophy declares that the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman Itself. But, it is not an ordinary, easy joke to know Brahman or God. It is a very difficult task, even like walking on the razor's edge. Only real yearning, skilful, prudent, resolute, patient, tolerant, dynamic, energetic and diligent seekers and aspirants, devotees and Sadhakas can take up and pursue such a difficult path to the ultimate Goal of life.

I have been busy reading and learning the descriptions in the ancient Shastras and sacred lore, hearing and listening to the inspiring, powerful and potential and soul stirring Adhyatmik speeches of saints and sages, and I have learnt that the aim of life is not merely eating, drinking, laughing, gossiping, sleeping and making merry, but that life has got the aim of seeking after the ever-shining effulgent Ultimate Truth concealed within us.

What then is Truth? Is not this whole phenomenal world Truth? We see it, enjoy it. We live on this earth. We are seeing these objects; hence is this not Truth? No, dear brother, this world is not really Truth. This is changing and perishable. All the Shashtra declare that the entire universe is nothing but a mere dream. Just as we often see various kinds of dreams, we are seeing this world, too. As soon as we get up from the bed and leave it, the dream vanishes. The dream was caused by the mind. Similarly the whole world is the creation of the cosmic mind. Man becomes what he thinks intensely. If a man wishes to realise Truth, he should shut the world out of his mind. Therefore it is that the sages declare that truth is attained through meditation and

renunciation. It is such a path that Swami Venkatesananda has chosen to tread.

The dawn of Life

After many a devotional practice and unbroken austerity, the parents, Sri Srinivasan and Srimati Lakshmi Devi, were blessed with a happy and pretty child on a glorious day when the breeze was cool and the atmosphere full of fragrance, when the birds were twittering in the air, when peacocks were busy dancing under the grove of mango and jackfruit trees, when the shepherd boys were piping under the palm and coconut trees, and the farmers were singing songs melodiously, in a remote village, Koilvanni, in the Tanjore District, in Dakshina Bharata.

The parents were devotees of God, God-fearing, cultured and rich; hence there were no wants. They paid their full attention to bringing up the newborn infant. The father had the boy christened Parthasarathi, a good and sweet name. As all of us know well, Partha means the great Mahabharata-warrior, Maharathi Arjuna, and Sarathi means Charioteer; and Parthasarathi is Lord Krishna. Swami Venkatesananda has in him an Amsha of Lord Krishna.

You feel that every Amsha of the Lord is the Lord Himself. Suppose you are thirsty and you drink 'Ganga-Jal' in a glass. You have really drunk Ganga-Jal - water of the Ganges. There is still a lot of water in the Ganges. Yet, the glass of water that you drank was also Ganges water. Similarly, though God is not exhausted by these sparks emanating from Him, the sparks are the manifestations of God Himself. In fact, each and every Jiva is nothing but the same Almighty Lord.

Parthasarathi grew up day by day as Chandra does, regaining the Kalas day after day, in the Shukla-Paksha, so that the Full Moon could help the living beings with its sweet rays. It is our belief that all living beings depend upon the elixir or nectar from the moon, and the moon waters the earth with the soft dew. As the moon is beautiful and attractive, similarly the boy was handsome, lovable and worthy of admiration, hence almost all the villagers, neighbours and kith and kin came there to pay their homage and best wishes. Being well-off, the parents of Parthasarathi distributed sweetmeats and Prasad of Lord Venkateswara. The parents were glad and offered prayers to their Ishta-Devata.

The boy was still tiny and was not able to express words; but he tried to utter the Names of the Lord. Soon the boy was initiated into the worship of Lord Venkateswara. He used to go to worship Lord Venkateswara on the Tirumalai

Hills. He offered devout prayers to the Lord, and would not eat anything till his prayers were over.

Education

The parents initiated the boy into the Hindu religious tradition. He was taught how to read and write. Thus five years of his life went by. Then the parents decided to send him to the school. The father after reciting the holy Mantras, took the boy to the school; here he was initiated into the Alphabet. After his completing primary education, Parthasarathi was admitted into the National High School at Mannargudi. Here, in the public examination, he secured good marks in all the subjects, specially in English, Sanskrit and Mathematics. He was proficient in writing essays and was an influential speaker at the debating club.

One day the English teacher put him a rather complicated question: 'What do you know about the Himalayan University? Was Rama Tirtha right in replying to a questioner in America that there existed a mystic University in the Himalayas where the Ganga is a Professor carrying the Divine Message to the people of the plains?' Brilliant and resplendent, Parthasarathi got up and began to answer: 'Sir, Swami Rama Tirtha was quite right. He meant to say that the source of the entire knowledge, especially the Vedanta philosophy, is the Himalayan mountain-range from where it proceeds as the Ganga, and spreads out in the whole world. Of course, it is not a man-made University; nevertheless, knowledge flows with the never-ceasing and gently-flowing Mother Ganga. There are no Professors there, sir, like you; but the Ganga is the preceptress who initiates and teaches the oriental people.' The teacher was immensely pleased with this answer.

Since the teacher loved him affectionately, he allowed young Parthasarathi, even when he was a boy of 12, to read the books of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Sivananda in the Library of a local Cooperative Bank. From that age, Parthasarathi began to read various kinds of religious books and obtained spiritual knowledge.

But that did not appease his spiritual hunger; it rather fanned the inner flame. There was urgent need of a real spiritual guide. Therefore, he began to correspond with Swami Sivananda.

After the High School Examination, Parthasarathi took up the most difficult art of shorthand and typewriting; and very soon got complete mastery over it.

When I implored him to say something about his own past life, Venkatesananda replied: 'There are countless creatures like me in this universe. I have nothing particular to tell about my life which is not applicable

to the life of every other living creature. However, there is just this one simple fact that, after leaving school, I began to read the soul-stirring and elevating books of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Sivananda. Besides these, I used to worship Lord Venkateswara, do Japa and observe some Vratas like fasting on Saturdays.' By these words of his, the reader might feel that there are millions of souls like him. But, no; he is really a great soul; he was so even when he was still a student. Even at that time he wanted to give up the world, and therefore wrote a letter to Swami Sivananda in 1937, craving for his permission to come to Rishikesh, and join his Ashram. Swami Sivananda, however, advised the young man to wait a little longer and to do Japa and Kirtan at home. 'I have no Ashram; I myself live on Kshetra Bhiksha', wrote Swami Sivananda.

Employment

After passing several examinations in Shorthand, Typewriting, Book-Keeping, etc., on the advice of his father, Parthasarathi worked in several offices, and lastly served in the A.R.P. Office in Madras. He did his work efficiently; but his heart was set on a higher purpose. 'What is the use of all this service? This service will not lead me to my goal,' Parthasarathi used to reflect often. As soon as he was transferred to Calcutta, he began to correspond with Swami Sivananda once again. Then he was transferred once again to Delhi. He was a new-comer to the Delhi Secretariat. Yet, his desire to take a few days' leave and visit Rishikesh was very great. At that time, the relatives of the officer under whom he was working, who, incidentally, were good devotees, wanted to visit Haridwar and Rishikesh. Parthasarathi accompanied them on this trip to Rishikesh - and this was in October, 1944. He met Swami Sivananda. Swamiji asked him: 'What is your name?' Parthasarathi gave his name. 'Oh! You are Parthasarathi from Delhi?' Swami Sivananda at once recognised him. Soon after this, Parthasarathi returned to Ananda Kutir and stayed on for a week, during the Christmas of 1944. On the day of his departure to Delhi, he expressed to Swamiji his admiration of the Ashram, and Swamiji at once remarked: 'Then, stay here itself.' Parthasarathj could not; but though he returned to Delhi, his heart was still at Rishikesh.

Renunciation

Like the Buddha, Parthasarathi renounced a prosperous worldly life; and like Sankara he renounced very early in his life, when he was yet a Bala-Brahmachari. He left Delhi and came to Rishikesh, and with the permission of Swami Sivananda, joined the Ashram to lead an ascetic life. For two years he led the life of a Brahmachari and Sadhaka. He did almost all the services connected with the Ashram. He got up at 4 am. daily, bathed in the Ganga,

and worshipped Lord Vishwanath at the Mandir, where he was a Pujari, too ; he did his Guruseva and also Japa, Kirtan and Bhajan.

After two years of austere life, he was initiated into the holy order of Sanyas, on the auspicious occasion of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of Sri Swami Sivananda. He is one of the first batch of disciples who received Sanyasa-Diksha on the Birthday of Swami Sivananda. Thus did Parthasarathi become Swami Venkatesananda Saraswati.

As A Writer

Sri Swami Venkatesananda is a lucid and good writer. He has written and edited several books, such as Bhagavad Gita for Students, Swami Brahmananda's Lectures, Swami Satchidananda's Lectures, Swami Vishnudevananda's Lectures and above all Sri Swami Sivananda's Lectures during his All India-Tour. He has written the life-sketches of Swamis Krishnananda, Chidananda, Satyananda Paramananda, Narayanaranda, and many others; he is never tired of writing life sketches. Perhaps he will write my life-sketch, too! He has written many essays on his Gurudeva. I have read some of them especially that in 'Uttara Yogi' which is fascinating, it touched my innermost soul.

He is an extraordinary writer. Whatever he writes is solid and inspiring. In his book 'Bhagavad-Gita for Students', he writes: 'I have only one Guru and He is God on earth, the truest embodiment of the teachings of Bhagavad Gita'. I visualise that he will write many more books on Yoga and Vedanta, for the sake of the suffering humanity.

As An Editor

Because he is a good writer, Swamiji has appointed him the Editor of the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University Weekly. He edits the journal very well. He compiles and edits all the soul-elevating writings and articles of Sri Swamiji Maharaj and other writers. I cannot say whether he is a re-born Rishi or Jnani, because his motto is to propagate the knowledge of Vedanta among the people. He wants to spread Jnana throughout the world.

He is a real servant of the world. He serves suffering humanity by giving it the injection of spirituality, or the Divine Life Teachings of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

In conclusion, I wish to say that my dear friend and companion, the seeker after Truth and Guru-Bhakta, Swami Venkatesananda, is a humble saint. He is a fully blossomed aspirant after the ultimate Reality. He is an exemplary Sadhaka, a ripened yogi.

I should not fail to pay my homage to the parents of Sri Venkatesananda: for they, though he was the only son of his mother, have permitted him to pursue the Nivrutti Marga, and have not put obstacles on his path. This indeed is a rare parental love.

My humble prayers to the Almighty arise from the bottom of my heart, that Sri Swami Venkatesanandaji may be blessed with good health, and a long life of Guru Seva and service of humanity.

31. The Spiritual Luminary

Sri Om Narayanananda, Madras

Prostrations and adorations to the feet of Sri Swami Venkatesananda, the devotee of Lord Venkatesa, an embodiment of love, affection and modesty, whose life was spent and is being spent in the region of spirituality, who is the right hand of Sri Swami Sivananda Maharaj, the glory of the Ashram, an unfailing guide to millions of aspirants, a blend of the East and the West, and a sheet-anchor to unified, dynamic, synthesized, sublimated, non-sectarian practical Hinduism.

Swami Venkatesananda has just completed the first one score and 13 years of his sublime life of universal service and spiritual ministry.

India's ancient history records the case of the king who kept one of his hands on burning charcoal, while he was discussing metaphysical problems with a learned Brahmin. Swami Venkatesananda is really the 20th Century replica of such a person. He is an embodiment of benevolence and politeness.

Always smiling, never frowning, he is essentially a man of peace. His utter simplicity, and integrity command respect, while his radiant smile incites all immediately to prostrate themselves before his holy feet. His adorable simplicity and quick grasp of things places him on a par with those blessed ones that are at peace within.

He possesses, in a remarkable degree, the sterling qualities of head and heart, i.e., spontaneous and unrestrained love, nobility, humility, mercy, patience and a spirit of self-sacrifice.

Venkatesananda, born of a noble family, well educated, hails in the spiritual realm, even at this age, and goes to prove his inborn saintliness and resplendent spiritual aptitude. Undoubtedly he is an example of simple living and high thinking.

The poor and the rich, young and old, national and international, the worldly and the spiritual - all those who come to the Sivanandashram, situated right on the banks of the Ganges, and pay a visit to the pivot of the Ashram, Swami Sivananda Maharaj, who, for the past quarter of a century, has worked unsparingly for elevating mankind and alleviating misery, through the inspiring life-giving doctrine of Vedanta, by teaching the noble tenets of selfless service, universal love and charity, will never fail to notice Swami Venkatesananda, for he is the right hand of Swami Sivananda. Wherever Swami Sivananda goes, wherever Swami Sivananda lectures, wherever Swami Sivananda sits, Venkatesananda's presence will always be there. He is the very shadow of Swami Sivananda.

Saints are generally of two kinds all the world over. There are saints who transcend the world and live more or less perpetually in an ecstasy of Bliss, having a direct vision of the Absolute Spirit. They occasionally come down to give us the glad tidings of what they have seen and experienced in the transcendental state, start a great movement of spiritual revival, and affect a change in the spiritual history of the nation to which they belong.

But there are also saints who remain in the world, going through the humdrum of life and its vexatious experiences, but having a steady vision of the ultimate ends of life, fight incessantly with evil, and both by precept and example promote the cause of truth, love, peace and holiness.

Swami Sivananda is a saint belonging to both the classes, and viewing from an angle it would be clear that a member of the second class of saints is Swami Venkatesananda. When I said 'viewing from an angle', I mean 'in the capacity of an agent.' It is a well-known fact that the act of the agent is an act of the principal. What the principal commands, the agent obeys and carries out. Swami Sivananda, the principal, through the agent Venkatesananda, spreads his gospel and noble tenets all over the world.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Venkatesananda is the Kaliyuga-Avatara of the Lord of the Seven Hills, in view of his universal love and selfless service.

Countless grateful souls who come to the Ashram to see Swami Sivananda Maharaj look up to Venkatesananda, as their guide, friend, philosopher, and well-wisher. His services to the Ashram are beyond my capacity to describe. If I may be permitted to say so, with utmost respect to the revered sage, I would say, 'He is a master of all arts and Jack of all trades'. A few minutes back he could be found at the Forest University, giving suggestions; a few minutes after he will be in the Viswarath Mandir, praying to the Lord; a little after he will be in the printing press correcting proofs; in the photo-studio, selecting pictures and photos; by the side of Swami Sivananda, ardently listening to his precepts; by the side of guests who visit the Ashram, talking with them in a sweet and simple manner; and in a short time he will be seen busily engaged in replying to the spiritual souls all over the world. This goes to prove without controversy that he is a Jack of all trades, but with mastery over them.

Above all this, his art of stenography contributed very much for the successful bringing out of so many volumes of Swami Sivananda's literature, his teachings and precepts in the form of leaflets, bulletins, etc

His writings and contributions to the society's monthly journals, on various subjects, reveal his great abilities. These facts go to prove that Venkatesananda is a master of all the arts of practical life.

His abiding love can be yours at a mere glance at him; his services are yours for the mere asking; and his advice is always available to the seeking world. Every inch of him is a man exceedingly humane. Every atom of his being is Sannyasa itself. A great part of the responsibility of the world-wide organization of the Divine Life Society lies on his broad and powerful shoulders.

If Swami Sivananda is considered as a tree of spiritual knowledge, Venkatesananda is water and manure for its growth. If Swami Sivananda can well be compared to a philosopher, Venkatesananda is an aid to spread the philosophy of the philosopher. If His Holiness is compared to a musician, Venkatesananda is considered as the amplifier of the music of the musician. Ripe with his fruitful and lofty ideals, Sri Swami Venkatesananda is at peace with himself and is one of the happiest of men.

Prostrations to the blessed feet of Swami Venkatesananda, the pure and holy prism which radiates in splendid and brilliant colours the supreme light.

Prostrations and adorations, again and again, to Venkatesananda, who is living in the sacred environments of Ananda Kutir, where every ripple of the Ganga, every rush of the forest wind, and the very soil of the Himalayas, gives a thrill characteristic of the ancient Tapasya and Dhyana.

I pray, again and again, to the Lord to give this renowned sage long life, peace and plenty. I once again pray to the Lord Tryambakeswara to bestow on this dynamic spiritual soul radiant health and supreme joy.

32. The Good Soul

Swami Atmaswarupananda

I heartily join in the Birthday Celebrations of Swami Venkatesananda. He is very simple and social. He moves freely with all people. He has got a good personality, with a smiling face and a musical voice. He practises the precept: Adapt, Adjust and Accommodate. He can get on well at any place. He belongs to the category of high class intellects. His articles in many books, journals, magazines, etc. are very fine, precise and appropriate. He has written about great personalities, devotees and the Ashramites in a clear and befitting manner, without any reservation. He is a good critic. He is personal assistant to our Gurudev. He is a good writer and correspondent. He is a good organiser also. He is a powerful speaker. He is an expert in Asanas. He has a pure mind. His heart is very liberal. His mind is receptive of all noble things. He has a childlike Bhava. He freely mixes with people. He sings melodiously, and also dances.

He enjoys Gurudev's Grace to a great extent. To my mind he may become second Krishnananda. He is always contented with anything, just like Lord Venkateswara.

My silent prostrations to him. May the Lord bless him with long life, good health and peace.

33. An All-Round Personality

Sri Vedanand Jha, M.A. L.B. Chapra

Swami Paramananda's kind invitation to lay my humble flowers on the auspicious occasion of the descent of the spirit as Swami Venkatesananda gave me unalloyed joy at the very idea. Wishing to imbibe the very qualities in which he excels, I had occasions to learn and was very much impressed by the humility and self effacement of this young exemplar of qualities divine. Before meeting him in person, I used to picture the editor of the Forest University Weekly as an august personage, sober as the head of the Department of any University. But, lo, when I find him gay and frolicking, unassuming and easy, as a student in his teens, the contrast makes me ponder: 'Is he really the editor of a weekly teeming with articles of unequalled philosophical import?' But that he is.

And even as a press-reporter he sits down to note most of the important speeches of which there are many in the Satsangas of Gurudev. Considering the frequency of the speeches, their speed and variety, and the faithful manner in which they are later reproduced, as well as the clarity of thought and purity of heart behind his own expressions, one cannot but judge this ideal example of alertness and good sense as one beautifully shaping in the pattern of the Master.

It is this setting which creates joy and satisfaction amongst the fellow brothers of this young prodigy. He has drunk deep the nectar from the fountain of Bliss and expresses it in his own life as purity, cheerfulness and humility, and a ready humour, making himself loved by each and everyone in the Abode of Bliss. It is not for nothing that Gurudev has showered his Kripa on this luminary of the Vaishnava family of the south, one of the foremost of his disciples.

To me he has endeared himself specially by transmitting messages as if from Gurudev. Inadvertently I had got a few letter-heads printed with the Divine Life Society's Crest. He vaguely remarked about the impropriety of such a step and when I pointedly asked him next time about it, he said: 'It referred to an American lady who was almost a crank.' I had, however, got my lesson.

In spite of all the responsibilities he has shouldered, I found him washing dishes after a small feast in the Kutir, with a seriousness of application and alacrity fit for any job of importance, pointedly shaking me out of my vanity of high and low, good work and bad work. Such instances are many in his daily routine, indicating the heights of spiritual grandeur which proximity to Gurudev has conferred upon him.

His lucid, simple and direct style, and an intimate knowledge of men and things, have made him a great exponent and speaker about the Ashram events and personalities. No work is complete without a contribution from his facile pen, portraying exactly the merits of its author. He has written not only the 'Bhagavad-Gita for Students', but the monumental volume 'Sivananda's Lectures All-India Tour'; in addition to his multifarious responsibilities, He has indeed been a tower of both strath and splendour in the grand Spiritual Mission of Swamiji. His capacity for untiring work is astounding, his devotion to his Preceptor matchless and unswerving, and his unflinching adherence to the principles of Divine Life is worthy of emulation. He has done much to spread widely the effulgent personality of Swami Sivananda and the inwardness of his teachings.

One can thus see that he is cent per cent correct in comprehending the mystic formulae of Gurudev, so humbly and ably expounded by him in his brief autobiography published in the Forest Weekly on the occasion of the last birthday celebrations of Gurudev. Those that have come near him in one capacity or the other cannot but wish him, this blossoming rose in the garden of Swami Sivananda, a long life and a perpetual good health for the benefit of humanity. Praise be to the Almighty for presenting this gift to us all.

34. The 34th Birthday of Swami Venkatesananda

The 34th Birthday of Sri Swami Venkatesananda was celebrated on the 26th and 27th December, 1954. The elaborate programme of the grand celebrations commenced with Brahmamuhurta prayer offered en masse by the Sanyasins and Sadhaks of the Ashram, for the health and long life of Venkatesananda. This was followed by an informal party organised by Sri Swami Madhavananda, Secretary of the Divine Life Society. At 9 am. the inmates went in procession from the Viswanath Mandir to Swami Venkatesananda's Kutir, and, after conducting Sankirtan for a while on the Ganga Kutir verandah, went to the Diamond Jubilee Hall, accompanied by Sri Gurudev and Swami Venkatesananda. Sri Gurudev himself, lending a hand to carry Swami Venkatesananda's portrait taken out on this occasion, reminded all of the glorious example of Lord Jesus who took a delight in serving and adoring His own disciples.

At the Diamond Jubilee Hall there was music and then Pada-Puja in which Swami Venkatesananda's mother, and also Dr. Adhwaryoo of Patan, joined. This function was movie-filmed by Sri T. S. Sitapati Iyer of Calcutta. Ayushya Homa was performed in the Viswanath Mandir for the health and long life of Swami Venkatesananda.

Soon after this there was the Birthday Dinner at Sri Gurudev's Kutir, in which Sri Gurudev and the Mahatmas of the Ashram took part.

The evening Satanga had been organised by Sri Swami Paramananda, to include several interesting items. After the Bhagavata-Katha by Sri Ayakudi Venkatarama Sastriar, Swami Vishnudevananda piloted the 'aeroplane' which represented Swami Venkatesananda who is descending from heaven to serve Sri Gurudev. The aeroplane moved forward towards Sri Gurudev and showered flowers at His Feet. Swami Paramananda unveiled a wonderful 'statue' of Swami Venkatesananda, prepared by Swami Vishnudevananda. Immediately Swami Venkatesananda himself introduced the statue to the audience in a humorous autobiographical speech, published in the Souvenir. The effigy was a conical basket clothed in cloth and coat; over this a pumpkin with the eyes, nose, and mouth 'carved' on its surface had been placed to represent the head. This head bore an artistic turban, also. Inside the basket was a typewriter with a lovely small statue of Sri Gurudev Himself placed over it.

Swami Venkatesananda's speech was followed by his own love-offering of various articles to the senior Mahatmas of the Ashram.

Then, Swami Chidananda read and presented to Swami Venkatesananda the Birthday Address. This was followed by Sri Gurudev's conferment of the sacred title of 'Siva- Pada-Renu' upon Swami Venkatesananda; and then the various presentations were made. Sri Yogi Gauri Prasadji's written speech was then read, and Dr. Sri Adhwaryoo also delivered a short but sweet speech. Sri Vasanta, daughter of Dr. K.C. Roy, of the Ashram, and Sri Shanta, Sri Swami Sankarananda's Poorvashram daughter, gave dance performances. Mrs. Padmavati Roy and Srimati Yashoda Devi, as also Sri Kumari Swarna of Chandausi, Sri Tara Devi of Swarg Ashram - all of them sang songs eulogising Sri Gurudev and Swami Venkatesananda. Then Sri Gurudev delivered a thrilling lecture published in this volume. This concluded the first day's celebrations.

On the second night, after the Bhagavata-Katha, a number of senior Mahatmas of the Ashram delivered thrilling speeches, all of which have been published in this Souvenir. On subsequent nights Sri Sita Devi, Gangiah, Sri K.V. Rajamani Bhagavatar, and Sri Swami Nadabrahmananda sang songs composed in honour of Swami Venkatesananda's Birthday.

We take this opportunity of conveying our grateful thanks to all those who took part in the celebrations at the Ashram, to those who have contributed articles for this Souvenir, and all the great ones whose blessings alone crowned the function with success.

To Sri Gurudev, for his most inspiring address, the entire Sadhak-World and all humanity at large owes a deep debt of gratitude. That single soul-elevating address has amply rewarded our efforts at the celebration of the Birthday of Swami Venkatesananda.

35. Address

Presented to Prapatti-Moorti H. H. Sri Swami Verkatesanandaji Maharaj on the Occasion of his 34th Birthday celebrations, 26th December, 1954, by the Students of the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University.

Glorious and Beloved Gurubhai,

Namo Namah Shri Guru-Padukabhyam.

Our worshipful adorations and silent prostrations to your holy lotus-feet. Indescribable is our extreme good fortune in getting this unique opportunity of offering our deep reverence and heartfelt homage to your sweet self, due to the auspicious occasion of your joyous Birthday Celebrations. Rare is our blessedness that we are thus enabled to give expression to some little part at least of the affection, admiration, the reverence and love that we cherish for thee, who art one of the foremost among our group of seeker-disciples at Divine Master Siva's Sacred Feet. More is our elation from the knowledge that this felicitation offered unto your revered self will fill Sri Gurudev's heart with overflowing joy, for thou art the apple of his eye and the darling of his divine heart. Well merited indeed is this unique and peerless place that you have obtained in his heart, for by the magnitude of your all-absorbing love and devotion to him and your superlative, whole-soul dedication at his feet, you have forged an unseverable link of eternal spiritual love with Gurudev. In the completeness of your self dedication, you have totally lost yourself and gained the living light and radiance of Gurudev Siva's Spirit within the inwardness of your consciousness. You are now perfectly in tune with our blessed Master through a marvel of spiritual attunement, whose harmony is complete and the like of which cannot be seen in any other person besides your adorable self.

Venerable Vibhuti of Sadguru Siva! We salute thee as an embodiment of Guru-Bhakti and the highest exemplar of lofty Guru Seva. To you, Divine Gurudeva is your life's all-in-all. You have no other interest in your resplendent life than Guru Bhagavan and the furtherance of his world-awakening spiritual mission. More than any one else, you are over intent constantly on finding out ways and means and ever new methods for furthering the life-transforming Divine Work of Sri Swamiji Maharaj. In this work you have succeeded most wonderfully and thus it is without the least exaggeration that Gurudev has spontaneously referred to you as, 'The Crest-Jewel of my Mission, the resplendence of my work', adding, 'Will I ever see any one shining brighter than he? Surely none have I seen so far.' Thus it is that our deep reverence and love for your noble self has in it an element closely akin to the holy sentiment than we bear towards Sri Gurudev Himself.

Beloved Venkatesananda! Amongst us, Sadhaks, gathered at the divine feet of our Lord and Master, you have revealed yourself to be a true saint and a godly being. Thou art verily the rose and the lotus, as it were, amongst the fragrant spiritual flowers that have been made to blossom in the Divine Garden which Sivas Abode of Bliss verily is. Fully absorbing the radiant rays of the highest Realisation from Sadguru Siva's constant contact, thou hast now become thyself a resplendent Jivanmukta, sporting by Bhagirathi's bank as a carefree child whom the Divine Mother Maha-Maya has left free from nescience-net. Thus the world beholds you as a free spirit of pure, childlike nature, ever full of fun, frolic and mischief.

Laughter and pranks are ever flashing forth from your sparkling, vivacious personality, which is clear as crystal in innocence, simple as a flower and filled with fragrance of divine virtue. You have a tender heart overflowing with compassion. Your humility and simplicity are almost divine in their perfection. Equal vision and the spirit of loving brotherhood spontaneously well forth from within thee, and shower upon all, great as well as small, in a nectarine rain of pure Vishwa Prem. You literally live Sri Gurudev's divine dictum, 'See God in all faces,' and constantly practise his teaching, 'Work is worship. Serve the Lord in all.'

Thrice Blessed Gurubhai Saint that thou art, the bonds of Samsara no longer exist for you, for thou hasn't obtained inward experience of the highest Truth through thy unparalleled Guru Bhakti.

Your life is, therefore, transfigured with the knowledge of Truth; hence it conforms to the classical scriptural description. You laugh as a child, or play the clown and appear filled with humour and full of fun. You can see no evil in the world. To you everything is good. Nay, everything is God. And your perception is as if through a spiritual magnifying glass, which sees each speck of good magnified into mountains of sheer godliness.

The Divine Life Society and the entire aspirant world owe you a debt of gratitude which can never be repaid. You have been a veritable Power-House of perennial, inexhaustible energy to Sri Gurudev's Loka-Sangraha through spiritual dissemination. By your initiative and original thought, you have opened up numerous channels and avenues of conveying in more and more effective manner the Divine Wisdom Nectar of Sadguru Bhagavan. The Jnana Yajna Library and the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University Weekly owe their origin to you. The publication Department is, to a very great extent, kept up by your ceaseless, silent work by day and by night. The world has witnessed your miraculous hand of dynamic service, whereby you immortalised the epoch-making All India Tour of Swamiji Maharaj in 1950 when

Bharatavarsha was stirred up into a new wave of spirituality from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin.

Blessed is the mother and blessed the father to have thee as their child.

Blessed are we all to have thee as our worthy Gurubhai, for in you we have an ideal to emulate and thus elevate ourselves. We find words are too inadequate. With love and joy in our hearts, we bow low in silent reverence at your holy feet and feel blessed by this act. We pray that your saintly hand of blessing may ever be upon us in Ashirvad, that we may strive with success to be worthy servants of our Great Master, whose unremitting service is thy very life-breath.

Upon this most auspicious and blessed occasion of your Birthday, we most earnestly pray that the grace of God and Gurudev may ever be upon thee in abundance and bestow upon thee health, long life, joy, blessedness and the Supreme Bliss of the highest Divine Perfection – Kaivalya.

Prostrating ourselves again and again at your holy feet,
Ananda Kutir,

P.O. Sivananda Nagar, 26th Dec., 1954.

We remain,

Thy humble Gurubhais.

The Students of the Y. V. F. University

36. What I am

Sri Swami Venkatesananda's speech after the unveiling of the effigy of Swami Venkateananda, by Swami Paramananda. The effigy has been described in the Birthday Report.

Now that at Sri Gurudev's Holy Command, Swami Paramananda has been gracious enough to unveil to your astonished gaze the statue of Swami Venkatesananda, I have been asked by the Chairman of the Birthday Celebration Committee to introduce to you the person whose statue you see before you. But, before doing so, I would ask you to repeat with me a few Guru Stotras and also sing a few Guru-Kirtans:

Brahmanandam Parama-sukhadam Kevalam Jnanamurtim
Dwandwateetam Gagana Sadrisham Tattwamasyadi Lakshyam
Ekam Nityam Vimalamachalam Sarvadhee Sakshibhutam
Bhavateetam Trigunarahitam Sadgurum Tam Namami
Chaitanyam Saswatam Santam Vyomateetam Niranjanam
Nadabindukalateetam Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah
Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnur Gurur Devo Maheshwarah
Guruh Sakshat Param Brahma Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah
Dhyanamulam Guror Murtih Pujamulam Guroh Padam
Mantramulam Guror Vakyam Mokshamulam Guroh Kripa
Om Namah Sivanandaya Gurave Satchidananda Murtaye
Nishprapanchaya Santaya Niralambaya Tejase
Guru Maharaj Guru Jai Jai Para Brahma Sadguru Jai Jai
Guru Maharaj Guru Jai Jai Sivananda Sadguru Jai Jai

Again before telling you who this Venkatesananda is, I would ask you to consider a very important significance of today's celebration: it is the Ayudha Puja of Gurudev's Mission. You might interpret it as you like, but I mean by it the day that comes after the worship of the Nava-Shaktis. We have celebrated the Jayantis of the Nava-Shaktis of the Divine Life Mission - Paramananda, Chidananda, Narayanananda, Krishnananda, Saradananda, Satyananda, Poornabodhendra, Govindananda and Satchidananda. And we have celebrated the birthday of Vijayalakshmi to represent Vijaya-Dasami.

The statue before you is an instrument which has been produced by the magic of Sri Gurudev. You remember that Swami Chidananda characterised Sri Gurudev as a sculptor who could shape beautiful monuments that would for ever stand as soul-awakening inspiration. This statue before you reminds you of another important aspect of Gurudev. It shows you that he is a magician, too. This Venkatesananda is nothing but this Magician's Mango. You now realise the difference, too. The statue is made out of solid stuff by the

sculptor; the mango is produced out of the thin air; it dangles in front of you in all its tempting colours and curves, and then vanishes. More of it in a few minutes.

I shall for a brief while take you off the topic of the moment to listen to my answer to a sincere devotee of Gurudev who questioned me yesterday about Gurudev and myself. I do not know if there is a Hindi or English equivalent to this marvelous expression in Tamil which means: 'Saving a soul by voluntarily going out and obstructing its evil ways, and preventing it from getting lost.' This seems to be illogical. It escapes our severe reasoning about deserving and desiring, seeking and finding. Since the expression is current in the South, you might feel that the South Indian gods have their own ways and are partial to some. No. There is one Upanishadic Mantra which justifies such a seemingly partial behaviour on the part of the gods and saints. And that is: Yamevaisha Vrinule Tena Labhyah. Not by learning, not by Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana, but by him on whom the Divine Grace descends is obtained Atma-Jnana. There can be only one reason why Gurudev should have chosen this most unworthy child to shower His Grace upon; and that is to show to the world that Grace, like Love, has no eyes and is blind, or perhaps to put it a little more conventionally - Grace is beyond reason and logic. While Divine Grace might follow the routine course of descending on those who deserve it, it might at times choose to descend on the undeserving, if only to show that it is omnipotent and is bound by no laws. Sri Gurudev's Grace has demonstrated to you that even I could be here and even into me a little bit of that Grace could be poured.

Not only that I do not deserve it, but I have not even sincerely desired it. And, yet, when I look back on the years gone by, I clearly see Gurudev's mighty divine hands 'obstructing and saving' me in a thousand ways, positively guiding me in a thousand ways, almost from my childhood, in how many forms has he come to teach me. Through how many events has His Divine will worked to 'obstruct and save' I shall only lay before you a few of them.

The first Upadesa of Gurudev was transmitted to me very early in life, by my mother who, for this purpose, was none but Gurudev Himself; for you will at once see that this is today the greatest Upadesa of Sri Gurudev. It was told me in the form of a short story. It is this.

Once Lord Vishnu was reclining on His serpent-couch with Mother Lakshmi at His Feet. Suddenly He got up and ran out of sight. In a minute He returned to His bed. Lakshmi asked Him: 'Lord, why did You run out like that? And why have You returned so soon, if you had a purpose to fulfill?' Lord Vishnu smiled and replied: 'Devi, I went out on a purpose, no doubt. A bhakta of

mine was walking alongside the bank of a lake. A washerman had spread clothes on the ground, to dry. The bhakta trod over them. The washerman got angry and ran towards the bhakta to beat him. I thought it was my duty to protect the helpless devotee. So I got up and ran. When the bhakta saw the washerman coming to beat him, he too took up a stick and began to fight. Since he felt strong enough to deal with the washerman, himself, I thought I need not go and so returned.' The moral of the story is clear: Bear insult; bear injury. This is the condition prerequisite to receiving His Help. What Sri Gurudev told me through my mother and in the form of this story, years ago, he repeated soon after I joined the Ashram, as though to confirm that it was he and not the mother or anyone else who taught the lesson.

The second Upadesa came through my schoolteacher, Sri TB. Ratnachalam Iyer. This time it was in the form of an experience as also a story with its moral. We used to have what was known as 'Library-class' in those days. We were given books to read. I used to complete one book every week without fail. One week I had not been able to complete the book. Sri Ratnachalam fined me; and only me, though there were a number of others who had not read their books and were habitually lax in study. I wept. Taking pity on me, the teacher told me a story to justify his conduct.

A beggar lived on alms collected in a particular village. In that village there was a heartless woman who habitually scolded him and refused to give alms. And, there was another pious woman who regularly gave him alms. One day, it so happened that, when the beggar called, the pious woman was busy with household work and failed to turn up. The beggar got angry. He shouted: 'That noble woman who never gives me alms has refused today also - no wonder. But you, wretched woman, who used to give me alms every day - why have you refused today?' The teacher explained the moral. When a good man sins, the loss is greater than when a wicked man does so. Therefore, saints and wise men always chastised the pious men and prevented them from slipping back into evil ways; and they often seem to be oblivious of the wickedness of confirmed men of evil. This principle I have seen illustrated in the every-day actions of Sri Gurudev. It was he who taught me the lesson, through my school-teacher.

The third Upadesa came through my step-mother. That was in the form of a practical demonstration of another object-lesson. Far from being hateful as the proverbial step-mothers are expected to be, she was over-kind towards me. Even if I was in the wrong, she would not utter a single unpleasant word. Later, when I specifically asked her, she explained: 'If I scold my own son, he may take it in the proper light and may not feel it so much. If I scold you, on

the other hand, you might be hurt. Therefore, in order not even to give you the least cause to be hurt, I did not mind whatever you did.' Here, again, were words which Sri Gurudev has been repeating day in and day out. Never hurt others' feelings. We have Sri Gurudev's own glorious example. If there is the least chance that what you say might offend someone, better do not do it. Who, but Sri Gurudev Himself could have given me this great Upadesa?

The fourth Upadesa came through a god-mother whom I met here itself - Sri Leela Deviji. It was in the form of a laconic question: 'What for have you come here?' She used to ask this question playfully. But when, some time later, Sri Gurudev himself repeated the question, not only to me but to others also at the Ashram, and at hundreds of meetings throughout the All-India Tour, I realised that it had a spiritual significance. It was a question that inspired and awakened us from slumber. Here again the Upadesa was Sri Gurudev's, but was conveyed through one of the many forms he had assumed in order to 'obstruct and save' me.

You will readily see that all these are important teachings of Sri Gurudev. And you will also see that they have been so nicely graded that one follows the other.

When the time was ripe, he made me read his writings; that was way back in 1936. I wrote to him and even got permission to renounce the world and join the Ashram. But it was not to be. The Instrument had to be put through some more grinding process. So varied were the experiences, so often had the baby-soul reached the precipice too dangerously close. But the choti (tuft) was ever in Gurudev's hands. The choti which he caught hold of in 1937, he cut in 1945. These intervening years had revealed to me so many latent vicious Samskaras that I could hardly believe myself that one morning I was prostrating myself at Sri Gurudev's Holy Feet, to remain near Him for a considerable time. People very often quote the example of Rogue Ratnakar and Jagai Madhai. They were exceptions. But, as a rule, such a revolution does not take place in man's inner nature.

You may quote Gita's famous verse: 'Api Chet Suduracharo Bhujate Mam Ananya-Bhak'. I have great faith in the Gita; and am fond of it. Therefore, do not take it a miss if I translate that half of the Sloka - 'If your aunt grows a moustache you can call her uncle'. The student of the Yoga Vasishtha might assert that anything can be achieved by Purushartha. A Bhakta might say that Rama-Nama will instantly purify the Antahkarana. But a wicked man who has sincerely tried to remove one little evil trait in him, knows what it really is. Even in the case of Valmiki, Jagai-Madhai and Mary Magdalene I would ask you to remember that it was not so much their will-power or determination

that transformed them, as the grace of saints and sages. The grace of saints and sages, I humbly admit and assert, can work wonders. It is the magic of that Grace alone that has created this mango of Venkatesananda.

I am sure now that in no other institution in the world would they have permitted me to live for more than a few days - or till such time as I begin to manifest some of the natural evil tendencies. With Gurudev, the compassion is limitless. Lord Sri Krishna assured Moksha even to women, Vaisyas and Sudras. And here is His re- incarnation who has come to offer Moksha to sinners, straightaway, without even waiting to reform them very much. Into their ears he pours the Lords Name; into their hearts he pours his own divine love. Wonder of wonders still, through their hands he serves the world. What more cunning method can you think of?

Thus does Gurudev effect a surreptitious but rapid transformation. He tolerates everyone. He loves the wicked man perhaps more than he loves the saintly. At the same time, he makes everyone do the Divine Will. This constant flow of Divine thoughts through their being converts them. Here it is not their will-power that works, but the Will of Gurudev. Therefore, it is possible that even a wicked man may be transformed. That is Venkatesananda, the effigy standing before you.

Let us take a closer look at the effigy. The pumpkin head is removed; and the basket representing the trunk is also lifted; what remains is a typewriter with Sri Swami Sivananda's statue on it. Now you have understood the secret. Why has Sri Gurudev showered His 'obstructing and protecting' Grace upon Venkatesananda? Because Venkatesananda is a type-writer - a typist. Venkatesananda is at best inert substance. Whatever good is there is nothing but the Divine Will of Sri Gurudev. I crave for your Blessings to let this magical product of Sri Gurudev sing His Glories so long as it is allowed to dangle before you all.

Glory to the Magician! Glory to Gurudev, the Almighty Lord, the maker of our beings, the moulder of our destinies.

37. The Inner Man

An Address delivered by Sri Gauri Prasad, Retired Judge, Swargashram Sri Swamiji Maharaj and fellow Sadhaks of Sivananda Ashram.

In the lovely spiritual garden of the Divine Life Society we witness time after miracles being performed to the great Glory of the Divine Life Society and to the great Joy of its Sage Founder. In this heavenly spiritual Orchard, its Saint Gardener is able to bring together rare specimen of spiritual seedlings who, under his divine guidance, are nursed on right principles of highly ethical and spiritual value and they bud so rapidly and blossom forth into such beautiful flowers of exquisite divine nature so suddenly that the Master Gardener himself feels at times astonished at the miraculous transformation that takes place under his own benign fostering care.

One such spiritual miracle is our Sri Swami Venkatesananda Maharaj, the famous chronicler-editor of the renowned 1950 All-India Tour volume of His Holiness Sri Swami Sivananda Maharaj.

Who could imagine that a young man doing so well and markedly rising and flourishing so well in his own worldly official career would give it up so abruptly and take a leap to plunge himself headlong in the unfathomable Ocean of Divine Energy and come up so quickly to the surface of the Divine Life wholly transformed into a full-fledged Sannyasi of such divine splendour and spiritual eminence. It is said that by churning the Ocean of the Divine Maya, Sri Bhagavan was able to separate the nectar from the poison.

Similarly, the sage and saint of Anarda Kutir by his one short spin of the Eharatavarsha was able to bring out from the spiritual coral islands of that unfathomable Ocean of Divine Chit-Shakti such spiritual Jewels as our Sri Swami Chidananda and Swami Venkatesananda. No doubt that spiritual spin was so vehemently whirling and of such hectic and overwhelming a nature that any person of less substantial and ethically weaker nature would have been blown into ashes and reduced to nought. Yet our jolly Swami Venkatesananda took to that spin as a spiritual cradle of his infant soul and remained swinging in it until he could rise awakened to the full height and glory of that Divine Spiritual Mission and come out of it as a Crest-Jewel of such spiritual lustre and brilliance the like of which Swamiji Maharaj himself had not seen till then.

Spiritual development so effective, so far-reaching and complete as to turn our whole physical nature into a perfect divine instrument and enable us to lead a thoroughly Divine Life is indeed the summum bonum of all human efforts on this earth-plane. But when we look with great admiration and

reverence at such a rapid and thorough transformation of an ordinary human like into a sublime Divine Life and adore it, we should not stop thinking about it any more. We should rather closely look for the basic inherent good qualities which constituted the main causes of that happy and glorious transformation, and try to understand and follow the process by which it had been achieved.

On an earlier occasion, similar to the present one, I had taken the liberty of saying a few words about the aim and object of human life on this Globe, and I had ventured to state that while animal and vegetable kingdoms grow by competition, rivalry and self-seeking, human beings grow by co-operation, renunciation and self-sacrifice. I had further suggested that one could profit by the experience and life of those who were showing an ever-increasing consciousness of the divinity or unfoldment of the Self in them. We have to understand and follow the basic nature of the process of such a Divine Life. While action is a common inherent quality of all Nature in the Universe in human life, we have to gain mastery over our lower nature and transcend it. The Gita says, 'By work the votary doth rise to Saint'. One beautiful contrivance in the Divine Government of the Universe is that our very fetters in course of time help us in obtaining our freedom.

Karma, which is a source of bondage, if done desirelessly and egolessly, becomes in course of time a means of our Liberation or Moksha. But even after gaining that liberation, a true Yogin says, 'I shall, though my deed is done, live for the good of the world'.

We should not entertain the notion that to become a saint is to become dead to the world. How selfless work leads to saintship and how sages serve the world is demonstrated by the daily activities of our Saint Sage of Ananda Kutir. The Puranic stories that the gods danced in the sky and filled the earth with showers of flowers, that the winds blew sweet odours and the trees put forth flowers, even out of season, when the Great Rama, Krishna, Buddha or Christ were born, are not mere poetic fancies. They all embody the truth, though in a figurative way, that the Universe is thrilled with Joy at the birth of its greatest Saviour.

One atom can never move without dragging of the rest of the world along with it, and no man can ever become a sage without proportionately raising the whole world. Therefore, to develop ourselves to the utmost is the highest service that we can ever do to the universe.

The sympathetic relief of physical suffering is very good; to elevate man's moral nature and widen his mental horizon is still better. But best of all is to become yourself the spiritual pabulum by which humanity lives.

The life of our young, sweet, smiling and jovial Swami Venkatesananda is becoming such a sweet, flavoury and spiritual tonic food for humanity that if we feed our lives constantly with its guiding principles, we would become not only spiritually strong, but immortal and eternally blissful, transcending all barriers of time and space.

But before we attempt to take to it, let us closely examine the stuff of which it is made. The first is his strong Will, the steel frame of his Life Divine. What is the nature of this Will and how does it work? It is a Shakti, not a Vasana, it is not Cheshta even; these two are the negation of Will. Will is not desire but a power or Shakti. It is not Cheshta which implies a sense of weakness and an attitude of struggle and labour to produce an effect. Will is indeed the Executive Power of an Individual Soul. It is the organ of the living Master of the physical body. This Shakti is situated or has its centre in the Sahasradala, just above the crown of the head and from that seat of activity it works. It works through Buddhi for thought and knowledge, through Manes for sensations, through Chitta for emotions, and through the Prana for enjoyment. Though it is a Prime Minister of the Jiva-Atma, it can function perfectly only when it works directly in each organ according to the capacities of the organ.

There are two causes of weakness, error or failure in working our emancipation. First, the contusion of the organs. If the Prana interferes in sensation and emotion and thought, then a man becomes the slave - anisha - of the Prana, i.e. to say of the desires. If the Chita interferes with sensation and thought, then they are falsified by the emotions like love, hatred, pity, revenge. etc. So if the Manas interferes with reason, the man mistakes his sensations for just ideas or true arguments. If again the reason, imagination, memory and logic interfere with Knowledge, the man is debarred from higher Knowledge. Finally, if even the Buddhi interferes with the Will, the man is limited by the power of his limited Knowledge, instead of moving nearer to Omnipotence. In brief, if a machine or instrument is used for a work for which it is unfit, then it either cannot do that work at all, or it does it imperfectly. In short, Dharma-Sankara is created. The will, therefore, should keep itself apart from all other organs. It may be asked why does a man allow it? Because of Ajnana or Avidya. It is his inability to recognise his own true divine nature, position and authority.

Various methods are used by Yogins to recover the power of the Will, the Prime Minister of the Atma. The Hatha-Yogin uses the Prana and the body; the Raja-Yogin uses the heart, Manas and Buddhi; but even this is not the

best, it is only a second-best, and entails much struggle, failure or frequent disappointment.

The Will is only perfect in its action when it works apart from all these, straight on the subject from its seat in the Sahasradala without effort, without emotion and eagerness and without desire, in an egoless manner. The axiom being each function to itself, and Will is its own function.

Will always obeys the Ishwara, but it acts in itself and by itself. It has to use the other organs but should not allow itself to be used by them. Our young Swami has begun his divine life with the right Knowledge of the different parts of the human machine, their nature and functions, the nature of the Will and the nature of the Ishwara. This knowledge need not be perfect in order to begin; but he has got the elementary Knowledge which has given him such a good start. The Will, when it begins to act, is hampered by the Swabbava. Therefore, until you are able to act on the Swabhava, you will not or should not bring your Will to bear on life. We have to remember that the word 'Swabbava' means one thing in the highest spiritual nature and takes quite another form and significance in the lower nature of the three Gunas. Our lower nature is a mixed weft of Knowledge and ignorance, of truth and falsehood, of right and wrong, of finding and losing, of sin and virtue. It is the Will-force of the spiritual nature in man that is always looking for self-expression and self-finding in all these things - the lower Swabhava. The Swabbava of lower nature opposes the perfect action of the Will, because the human lower nature is imperfect, only partly evolved. The Yogin wants to evolve his Self rapidly and with great success, but the imperfect Swabhava says, 'I do not wish to be perfect. I am accustomed to my imperfection and find it easy and comfortable.' So, the Yogin, by his Will-power, seizes hold of the Swabhava and removes the obstacles in the way of its own perfect development and action. The will has to assert its omnipotency to act as commanded by the Purusha - the Jivatma. We have to understand that the Will is the Shakti in action and there is only one Shakti Kali herself, who is God manifesting as Divine-Energy.

Our young Sri Swami Venkatesananda made his Will, as divine energy, seize hold of his own old Samskaras or Swabhavas which he found as obstacles in the way of making rapid progress. As he had come suited and booted from New Delhi to take his Sannyas, he first discarded his shoes; he stripped his pair of feet naked; but they would not co-operate, they got angry and became troublesome with blisters on their face. But our Swami, with the power of his strong will, persisted and eventually brought them under complete subjugation. He now walks barefooted with perfect ease in all reasons of the

year, hot or cold. In fact, to him and to Swami Chidananda, putting on shoes appears now fettering the natural liberty of their feet, the basic part of their two legs which they wish to be ever active and moving to do their loving human Seva. So have they done away with their clothes. No unnecessary vesture is allowed to load their physical bodies; not even an unrequisite internal nourishment is taken to hamper their mental, ethical and spiritual activities. In short, this strong Will is used by our humorous Swami Venkatesananda, both as a power of defense against the asuric elements in our lower human nature, and also as a divine energy to do Divine Work and lead a Divine life dedicated wholly for the uplift of mankind; in other words, he is endeavouring to govern his actions by the essential law of his higher nature, which is at its core the pure quality of the spirit in its inherent power of Conscious Will and in its characteristic force of action.

His other great equipment for leading a pure Divine Life is his Shraddha. It is another subtle effective power which is not easy to understand, and is often misunderstood. Shraddha or Faith is the outcome of that concentrated will of devotion. In a man which moves him to make sacrifices and to surrender himself to an other higher power. The Gita says: 'Shraddhamayoyam purusho yo yach chraddhas sa ova sab - (XVII:3). This Purusha or Soul in man is, as it were, made of Shraddha, a faith, a will to be, a belief in itself and existence, and whatever is that will, faith or constituting belief in him, he is that and that is he. The soul's faith, not a mere intellectual belief, but its concordant will to know, to see, to believe and to do and be according to its vision and knowledge is really ones Shraddba. Faith is the pressure of the Spirit on humanity, as Dr Radhakrishnan has aptly put it.

It is for this reason that the faith of each man takes the shape, hue and quality given to it by his stuff of being, his constituting temperament, his innate power of existence. In our young Swami Venkatesananda this faith and will is turned in all his inner and outer self, nature and action towards all that is highest, most divine most real and eternal in the spiritual mission of his Guru Deva Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, whom he adores and worships as God-incarnate. One instance will illustrate this view-point. Shortly after his arrival our young aspirant Swami was assigned the duty of conducting daily Poojah, both in the morning and evening, in the Vishwanath Mandir. Without thinking or questioning to himself how it will help him in making any progress in spiritual life, he devoted himself whole heartedly and with all the Shraddha-bhava he could summon to the unusual task. He carried it on not for a week or two or for some months, but for nearly two years, with a regularity, with a piety, with full observance of all rules and rituals which not

only impressed everybody but made them recognise in him a model Pujari. Whatever he undertakes to do himself or is called upon to do by his Guru Deva, he does with all his mind and heart, sparing no trouble to himself. On the lower plane, his Shraddha consists of doing work not dictated by desire, but by the law of right living or by his essential nature, his knowledge, his ideal and the truth he sees.

On the higher spiritual plane they are dictated by the Will of his Master and done with the mind in Yoga, i.e., as a worship without any personal attachment either to the action or to the fruit of action. In short, the Sannyas he has taken is based on the Sattwic principle of renunciation, i.e., not to withdraw from action but from the personal demand, the ego factor behind it. Another striking characteristic feature of his spiritual life is his great power of observation, of distinguishing the real from the unreal, of the essential from the non-essential, and in this he is aided by his power of concentration of mind which he can bring to bear on any event or on any object of ethical or spiritual importance.

Our Swami is also a great wielder of pen and a famous well-recognised Chronicler and the Editor of the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University Weekly. As an Editor, he displays at times to what height his master mind can rise.

It is known that our Swami is not much interested in the Vedantic way of thinking and reasoning. Yet, when Dr. Burt, a noted professor of Western Philosophy, gave a series of lectures on that philosophy, our Swami was able to faithfully reproduce their substance in such a methodical, systematic and lucid manner as to impress everybody that the Swami himself possessed a very comprehensive knowledge of that philosophy. Endowed with such rare basic qualities of good heart and spirit, it is no wonder that he was able to astonish everybody including his own Gurudev, by his rapid transformation into a true Sannyasi and make his life really Divine in all its bearings.

But in spite of his being so serious, so sincerely earnest and so truly ascetic in living a genuinely Divine Life, our Swami is still able to retain the full humour of a worldly life in all its glory, and wear a look so carefree and light-hearted to all outward appearances. But a keen observer will not fail to notice that his mind and heart feels pathetically horrified when he comes across an asuric display of life and rejoices whole-heartedly in coming into contact with a truly virtuous life, and he is ever prompt to applaud and adore it wherever he finds it. So he has this inherent saintly quality of pathetically overlooking the vices and adoring the virtues in a human being.

To such a saint and sage in rapid making we wish to pay our humble tribute of great admiration and reverence and love. May the Almighty bless our young Sri Swami Venkatesanandaji Maharaj, with long life, peace, Tushti, Pushti and divine Aishwarya and Kaivalya Moksha.

38. Swami Venkatesasanda

A speech delivered by Dr. Adhvaryoo Patan

You all know the story of the four blind persons and the elephant. Just as none of those blind persons could give a perfect description of the elephant, in the same way, I can only describe some aspects only of the personality of Swami Venkatesananda, from the experiences which I have had from my few visits to the Ashram.

You will agree with me when I say that Swami Venkatesananda bears an impressing personality and that a smile is always interwoven in his expression. His capacity to work is something outstanding. Gurudev once told me that during the All-India-Ceylon Tour of 1950, he was busy whole day taking notes of every word that dropped from Swamiji's mouth, and that he was busy for the greater part of the night, too, reproducing the same words on the typewriter. That magnificent volume of the All-India tour owes its existence to Swami Venkatesananda.

Humility, which is the trait of all the disciples of Gurudev, is outstandingly prominent in Swami Venkatesananda.

Those of us who had the privilege to see him working during the recent illness of Gurudev must have noticed the strain to him, as if he was really ill. There could not be any better example of Guru Bhakti.

Lastly, he has shown his greatness when he said that Gurudev's Grace has been bestowed on him without any rhyme or reason. By these words he has shown the greatness and deservedness that he possesses, and this alone has won Gurudev's Grace for him.

Gurudev has paid due compliments to him when he said that 'He is a tower of strength to me and to my mission'. Would I not be correct if I say that Swami Venkatesananda is not only a tower of strength to Gurudev and his mission, but to the whole of India - rather to the whole humanity.

39. Swami Venkatesananda

Gist of a speech delivered by Sri Swami Sadananda

Swami Venkatesananda is noted for his untiring energy for work. It is absolutely impossible to find another to work as continuously as himself without even the least appearance of exertion. Even the best stenographer would require rest. In the Legislative Council one would take shorthand for some time and then another would continue. Here he alone is available for the purpose, and lectures will go on for five or six hours. I have never seen him feeling tired in doing work. I have seen him using his typewriter in a wonderful fashion. Even when there is no light at all, he can insert carbon papers properly and can feel when the paper is about to finish. I have myself dictated and he has done the work in such circumstances. That is ability. God has given him sufficient energy to carry out His task. I think a human being requires ordinary amenities. Swami Venkatesananda does not even go to the latrine when he does work. That is Ekagrata, a most wonderful thing that has to be achieved in Raja Yoga. He does not think of anything else when engaged in work. After the work is over, he lies down and falls asleep. Nothing can disturb his sleep. Only then you can understand his fatigue.

Another point to be noted is his unrivalled loyalty to the Guru - unimaginable loyalty. You cannot find many as loyal to Guru as he. When he thinks of Swamiji, he thinks of him along with the mission that Swamiji is having in his mind. Therefore, all the things that he is receiving from Swamiji are intertwined with the vibrations that Swamiji is emanating for the good of this world.

Swami Venkatesananda has got a very sharp intellect. He can penetrate it to any subject in no time. A stenographer in a commercial office may feel out of place if he goes to another office. It will require time for him to learn his new work, because his mind is not capable of adjusting itself. A sharp intellect is needed. That Swami Venkatesananda has. Whatever be the subject, whether it is new to him or old, he will be familiar with it in half a minute. Whether the lecture is in Hindi, or Tamil, Saiva Siddhanta or Vaishnavism, he will be able to take down notes in English. He is very quick to understand things and to note them down.

His will power is unshaken. He has got a very strong will. When he takes a decision, nothing can change it. When he has formed an opinion, nobody can alter it. And it will be an opinion always of our Swamiji. Nothing can shake him. Apart from that, when he decides upon pursuing a course of discipline for himself, he will do it with a will which nobody can equal. When he came here in 1945, he decided to lead the life of a humble Sevak. He came here to

be a Sevak and his ideal is to remain for ever as a Sevak. He came here to practise Karma Yoga. If any cow had scattered its dung anywhere near the temple, he would quietly remove it. Many people, when they do these things, would like themselves to be seen by others. But Swami Venkatesananda used to do such work whether he was being observed by others or not. When I came here with a heavy box, it was he who carried it to the Yoga Sadhana Kutir. When I was here, I had asked a friend of mine at Delhi to send me certain things. Swami Venkatesananda had to go to Delhi to settle his affairs and on his return he carried my things also with him. From the railway station he did not engage a tonga to carry these things. He himself carried them on his head. He had settled up his affairs and was bringing so much money with him. The whole of it he handed over to Swamiji. He did not spend any money out of it, for he felt the money belonged to Swamiji, and he carried my things himself on his head. That is willpower.

Another thing is his absolute indifference to praise and censure. Censure nobody would brook, but he is absolutely indifferent to censure. This indifference to censure is very difficult to obtain.

Another point I have noticed in him is his unerring judgment, of situations and persons. He is always correct in arriving at a judgment of a situation or person. The right judgment comes to him. Nobody will know the judgment formed by him, because he does not reveal it, except when responsible people ask for his judgment.

Swami Venkatesananda has been very useful to Swamiji and to us. We have no place in this world to go to and think of except as part and parcel of Swamiji's mission. Those who have come here to stay have no business to think of anything else than allegiance to Swamiji, for they live only for his mission. I merely want to emphasise the fact that we ought not merely think of our allegiance to Swamiji; if we want to benefit from his presence, it is for the purpose of co-operating with him in his work that God has sent us here today. The degree of success that we are likely to achieve in the part we have to play in our association with Swamiji depends upon the complete emptying of our heart, purging it of all the narrow, individual, local, Ahamkaric ideas. In that respect our leader is Swami Venkatesananda. It is only he who has laid aside completely all that belongs to himself, so that every vibration coming from Swamiji might enter into him, animate him, motivate him, infuse him with energy to carry out the part that he has to play.

Again another point that we have to learn from him is that when he has laid himself aside, so that his heart might be filled with Swamiji's vibrations, he has acquired the highest position in the matter of cleansing his heart. That is,

he has succeeded not merely in understanding the mind of Swamiji, but in receiving vibrations directly from that very source from which Swamiji is drawing his vibrations.

One member of our Ashram, Swami Omkarananda, has written a pamphlet about Swami Venkatesananda. In it he says that Swamiji's and Venkatesananda's are twin-minds. I go a little further. Supposing it is a twin mind, what would happen would be that Swamiji would be receiving direct inspiration from God, and therefore the plan will be in Swamiji's mind and without talking to Venkatesananda, he would be communicating it to Venkatesananda. But what I mean to say is that when Swamiji gets his vibrations directly, he spares himself the trouble of planning it for himself, quietly switches on to Swami Venkatesananda so that the planning is done by Swami Venkatesananda. That is why his letters are as brilliant as when Swamiji writes.

When the vibrations are received in anybody's mind, they are subjected to certain limitations. Human mind is a complex of intellect, emotion and will-power. These three are the limitations. In space and time, the higher vibrations are limited by the above three factors of the individual, however high a level these three factors may have reached. Therefore, the full force of the vibration would not be there in the mind after it has been received. From Chit-Sakti, it is given in a reduced form. And when it is transmitted there is a still further reduction. Therefore, when Venkatesananda receives the vibrations, he will be receiving them with less force. Swamiji quietly switches on and therefore Venkatesananda receives the vibrations without any reduction in force. It is not transference of vibration from one mind to another, but the switching on of the vibration from the source itself.

If I would be permitted to draw a simile, Swamiji represents the Sun and Venkatesananda the Full Moon. Just as the Full Moon takes the lustre direct from the Sun and gives it to us, Swami Venkatesananda takes light from Swamiji and gives it to us. When Swamiji went on his tour in 1950, he took away brilliant youngsters from the Ashram, and we, old people, remained here. We were so anxious to know what was taking place outside. And we continued our Satsang with even greater desire than ever before, yet we were feeling that we did not have the happiness of knowing what was happening there. But every three days, Venkatesananda's report would come. It would be from eight to ten pages of typed matter. The whole audience would read them. Thus, we were having the vibrations of Swamiji indirectly like the light of the Full Moon.

I regard our Sivanandashram as a spiritual power-house. A spiritual power-house has two functions. To generate the power here and also to transmit it to other parts. And therefore these two functions have to be discharged. First of all there should be generation of power. Of course, we know that all power comes from Swamiji. But even if it comes from Swamiji, there must be a base upon which the power can be centered. Unless we have a bulb, we cannot have light. There must be dynamos and turbines, but the mightiest of all turbines in our electric house is Swami Venkatesananda. It is he who assists even in the generation of power, for there is switching of energy direct from the source. At the same time he is also the chief instrument for distributing the power to all parts, not only in India, but in the whole world. We know that he is the mightiest of turbines. But the people in foreign countries may not know that he is the person.

Therefore, I believe that he is like a diaphragm in a wireless set or telephone or radio. Supposing the diaphragm goes out of order in your radio, it will be of no use. He is the diaphragm in the wireless set of Swamiji, because he gives the proper tone to the messages and letters. The diaphragm in the transmitter of Swamiji is Swami Venkatesananda. Because, the manner in which knowledge has to be presented is looked after by Swami Venkatesananda. The manner in which he discharges that duty discloses that he is working as the agent of Swamiji directly, and indirectly of the Lord. Swamiji lives only for the purpose of establishing peace in the world. Only the person who enjoys peace can give peace. The administrators in foreign countries do not enjoy peace, and what is the use of some administrators joining together and talking about peace? Ultimately it can come only from people like Swamiji.

There are many other things also in Venkatesananda. I am only giving you a warning: his occasional ebullitions of comical extravagances ought not hide him from the reality which he is. That is what I want people to understand. He is a natural humorist. Therefore, he will be going on playing like a child. But we should remember that the child is only his outer surface, and inside him there is God Himself.

40. Some Prominent Features

Sri Swami Harisharananda

Swami Sadananda said that Venkatesananda can type without light. That is no wonder. Here in Sri Swamiji's Ashram, everything is done that way. The press is working without paper, the kitchen without provisions, the treasury without cash, the entire Ashram without money. From the day Swamiji Maharaj came to Rishikesh till today he has been going on in this manner, without keeping any money with him, spending that very day whatever comes on a day. It is a miracle that everything grows near him - the number of inmates, income, work and expenditure, too.

Whose 34th Birthday are we celebrating today? Not Venkatesananda's, for Venkatesananda was born in September, 1947. Not even Parthasarathi's, because Parthasarathi ceased to exist as such, in September 1947. But if it is anything, it is Parthasarathi plus Venkatesananda's 34'th Birthday, because it was Parthasarathi who was born in 1922.

There are some unique features in Parthasarathi's birthday. He was born on the Amavasya day, the dark day; and you know that it is from that day that the Sukla-Paksha or the bright fortnight commences. Darkness is ignorance; to remove this, the light of Knowledge is necessary. On this day, therefore, a light is born, to remove the darkness which was prevailing at that time.

'Parthasarathi' is Sri Krishna's Name. Sri Krishna's work was to drive the chariot of Arjuna, during the Mahabharata war. Here, too, our Parthasarathi is driving this Divine Life chariot. He has done everything that lies in his power to enhance and spread the glory of Sri Swamiji Maharaj and the Divine Life Society. You know that it was Lord Sri Krishna who protected and sustained the chariot of Arjuna, though it was burnt by the arrows of the enemies. Similarly, our Parthasarathi will guard the Society against all sorts of obstacles and impediments.

The value of Swami Venkatesananda lies in not what he appears, but in how really useful he is. This fact is illustrated by a parable. A tailor was at work. He took a piece of cloth and with a pair of shining, costly scissors, he cut the cloth into various bits. Then he put the pair of scissors at his feet. Then he took a small needle and thread and started to sew the bits of cloth, into a fine shirt. When the spell of sewing was over, he stuck the needle on to his turban. The tailor's son who was watching it asked him: 'Father, the scissors are costly and look so beautiful. But you throw them down at your feet. This needle is worth almost nothing; you can get a dozen for an anna. Yet, you place it carefully on your head itself. Is there any reason for this illogical behaviour?'

'Yes, my son. The scissors have their function, no doubt; but they only cut the cloth into bits. The needle, on the contrary, unites the bits and enhances the value of the cloth. Therefore, the needle to me is more precious and valuable. The value of a thing depends on its utility, son, not on its cost price or appearance.'

Similarly, there are two classes of people in the world - those who create dissensions and disharmony, who separate man from man, and those who bring about peace and harmony, who unite people. The former are generally the rich people, powerful politicians and kings; the latter are generally the poor devotees of God, the penniless wandering monks, the mendicants. The Lord makes use of both to carry on His function of providing the field for the evolution of individual souls. He throws down on the dust the mighty kings and millionaires who create wars and disharmony; and He keeps the poor, pious devotee over His own head. In His eyes the scale of values is entirely different. Swami Venkatesananda is a unifying factor like the needle, and his value is inestimable. His appearance is one, his reality another.

Swami Venkatesananda is very intelligent and shrewd in managing affairs and presenting things. He will not present even facts in an unpleasant way. Listen to a parable: Raja Ranjitsingh was blind in one eye; one eye-ball had been removed. Yet, he was a powerful ruler. It occurred to him that he should have a life-size painting of himself hung in the Durbar Hall. He announced a rich reward for the painter who would do the work satisfactorily. Many painters applied for the commission. He entrusted the work to a very famous painter. This painter thought that though the Raja had only one eye, he would like the painting to look beautiful and whole and therefore he painted as though the Raja had two beautiful eyes. 'What have you painted?', roared Ranjitsingh, 'this is not my portrait at all.' And he ordered that the painter be imprisoned. The work was entrusted to the next best painter. This man had heard about the fate of the previous painter. Nervously he accepted the job. He painted an almost life-like portrait, exactly as the Raja was, with one eye blind. When the Raja saw it, he turned away in disgust: 'Oh, it is horrible to look at. Put this fellow in jail.' He, too, was jailed. The work was again entrusted to a third painter. He was on the horns of a dilemma. He had heard what had happened to the previous painters. He prayed to God for a way out of this danger. He received Light from Above. He set to work. He painted an action-picture in which Ranjitsingh was shooting a lion. The lion was trying to pounce upon him and he was aiming the gun at the lion. Naturally the eye with which he could see was taking the aim, and the other was therefore

closed. The painter had presented the truth, without offending the aesthetic sense of the Raja. The Raja rewarded him with costly presents.

Always use your intelligence and be tactful. Even if you have to tell an unpleasant truth - and you cannot keep quiet, tell it in such a way that it may be pleasant to all concerned. Then you will be successful, without swerving from truth, and truthful without courting failure. Swami Venkatesananda possesses a tremendous knack in presenting truths in a pleasant way.

Swami Venkatesananda is an ardent devotee of Sri Swamiji Maharaj. He is to some extent like the Pandit who praised as well as censured brinjal in front of the king. A king held a brinjal in his hand, and as he was in a pleasant mood, began to admire its beauty. The Court Pandit was with him. The king said: 'Oh Pandit. How beautiful is this brinjal.' 'Yes Maharaja,' replied the Pandit, 'Look at its lovely colour. It is like the color of the peacock's neck. How can I adequately describe the beauty of the grand cap that the brinjal wears on its head? It is like a splendid crown that a Raja wears on his head. So lovely. So lovely.' The next day the Raja ate a dish prepared of brinjal and got stomach-ache. He remarked 'Oh. This brinjal is very bad.' The Pandit joined in the discussion and said: 'Certainly, Maharaj, it is very bad. Therefore its name is Begun - without virtue, and has ugly colour and has a nail driven on its head.' The Maharaja was amused. He asked, 'Oh Pandit. Yesterday you extolled the greatness of the brinjal. Now you have begun to condemn it outright. How can you do so?' The Pandit replied: 'Maharaja, I am your Majesty's humble servant and not the servant of the brinjal. You admired; so I admired. Now you are condemning it, so I also condemn it.'

Swami Venkatesananda is all 'Yes' to Sri Swamiji's 'Yes', and 'No' to Sri Swamiji's 'No'. Great surrender indeed.

Venkatesananda always speaks sweetly; he displays great tactfulness in speaking to others. He never utters harsh words. He nicely adapts himself to people and circumstances. He is ready to play any role assigned to him by Sri Swamiji. He dressed himself as a lady and assumed the pen-name 'Venkateswari' for the purpose of writing an article in 'Women's Light and Guide', in which his picture is printed in a woman's dress.

He always tries to unite people and to bring about peace. Thread and needle, borax and saint always bring things and people together; shovel, axe and evil-minded men separate people and bring about disharmony. Venkatesananda belongs to the former category.

He is patient, tolerant, forbearing and humble. So he is regarded as great.

41. Our Guide

Gist of a Speech delivered by Swami Chidananda

Ever since Sri Swami Venkatesananda came here, my feeling towards him has been that of an elder brother. I have great regard for many of my Gurubhais. I have respect and reverence to a good number of them, and have got an admiration for several of them, and in my heart of hearts I worship them. I always consider myself as a speck at their feet. This is all due to the Grace of Gurudev.

Yet, a peculiar affection and love which partakes of the element which a brother has to another brother has been always a special feature of my attitude towards Venkatesananda, and due to that I was in a fix as to how I was responsible to make an address. This brotherly feeling that I have for him is because I often consult him. Sometimes I do not find solutions to some problems. Then it is to Venkatesananda that I go for suggestion, and suggestion of an extraordinary nature. I would ask him: 'What do you think Swamiji's opinion will be on this?', and if he says, 'This will be Swamiji's opinion', I would straightaway act accordingly. If he says, 'Keep quiet', I would keep quiet. If he asks me to do something else, I would do something else. This has always been my attitude.

The reason is I have a feeling that he is more in close harmony with Gurudev, due to constant close contact, and due to various circumstances. Some of us are, in this respect, unfortunate; we are so near to Gurudev, yet so far, and at times due to external state of affairs, we have to do certain things which may not be cent per cent according to Gurudev's way of thinking and feeling; and sometimes we may do things in a way in which he would not want us to do; and sometimes we may fail to do something, which he would have us do in a particular way. But the unique good fortune of Venkatesananda's position is that he is out of this 'janjat'. Therefore, he is in a position to have hundred per cent harmony and attunement with Gurudev. Therefore, I run to him when I do not find solutions to various problems, and one sentence from him is sufficient to determine my course of action.

Therefore, it has been a period of joy to me all these two days when we have had an opportunity granted by Gurudev of expressing what we feel about our peerless, gifted and talented brother, who may be young from the point of view of age, and young from the point of view of seniority, due to entry to the Ashram - young but venerable. He is young, yet adored.

Venkatesananda's laughter and gait behind it have got a very deep spiritual basis. He laughs and plays and makes funs. You all attribute it to his human nature. This is true, but is not the whole truth. The other part of the truth is

that he is able to give full expression to the joy of the Spirit. Some people smile and laugh for a while; after that the old samskaras again make their countenance depressed. But that is not the case with Swami Venkatesananda. The reason very few people know. He is saturated with the spirit of the Yoga Vasistha. This spirit of the Yoga Vasistha Gurudev puts in a nutshell. 'Nothing exists, nothing belongs to me. Immortal Self I am.' and that, 'There is no world in the three periods of time'. I know that Venkatesananda has fully absorbed the essence of the spiritual truth which is the heart of the Yoga Vasistha. It is only when you take things to be real that everything becomes important, you become serious, but everything is a matter of laughter to him, because nothing exists. He is always based upon that. There is nothing in the world that exists in the three periods of time. Then why worry? Laugh and be happy. That is spiritual consciousness. But no one knows this. It is spiritual 'do not care'. This is his inner basis. Do not take him to be a merry-going ordinary being. But every speck of his inner consciousness is made up of this brick that everything is a matter for our laughter. There is only one real thing. He has studied the Yoga Vasistha very deeply.

And in the Ashram he is a peace-maker. Wherever there is a little friction between two departments, he will go and cement it. He will see that all people are amicable with each other. He is constantly a peace-maker. He is able to do it because a spirit of friendliness and brotherhood is there.

There are other instances where he imposed austerities upon himself.

Gurudev used to come to the library in those days. He once saw

Venkatesanandaji's bed in the library. He was lying down on the floor. Only one bit of Kusa Asan was there. It was winter. If his head was on the Asan, his body would be on the floor. If his legs were on the Asan, his other parts would be on the floor. Gurudev was surprised to see his austerities. One of the ways in which Swami Venkatesananda has tried to evolve himself was self-punishment. He used to impose upon himself rigid self-punishment for failure to do Sadhana. I have got great love for Swami Venkatesananda and love for his determination.

42. Sivananda – Venkatesananda

Swami Turiyananda

An inexpressible bliss-giving vast expanse of dedication to the Master, devotion to the Masters duty, dexterity in the expression of the wisdom of the Master's heart's intuitive experiences, of immeasurable dimensions and inestimable magnitude, beautifully and artistically presented in the form of a shell by an unseen Divine Hand, tactfully fished out by one no less than the Supreme Consciousness in the form of Swami Sivananda, Swami Venkatesananda symbolizes in every inch of his being and personality an ideal that is there not to be appreciated, praised, adored and rewarded, but to be copied and actualised in our day-to-day actions.

'Ashcharyo Vakla Kushalo-sya Labdha,
Ashcharyo Jnata Kushalanushishtah'.

So declares the Kathopanishad. If the Upanishad can speak in that tone, then we are left with no word or expression to describe this wonderful versatile disciple of our Gurudev. We can only say that the Guru, Sivananda, himself is manifest in the form of Swami Venkatesananda; for the latter embodies the characteristics of the former. Ultimately, we have to understand that only that Supreme Consciousness has come into this world in the form of both the Guru and disciple, as Sivananda and Venkatesananda for our benefit.

May that Supreme Consciousness, manifest as Sivananda-Venkatesananda, shine for many many years to guide all humanity and confer Moksha on every being.

43. Dhruva-Tara of Sivananda Jagat

Sri Sivananda-Padasevak

Of a minimum of about 1200 letters (excluding those relating to the other Departments not directly connected with Swamiji) which Swami Sivananda Maharaj receives monthly for his personal consideration, a few pertain to aspirants of the Saiva faith, a few to the Vaishnavas, a few to the Saktas, a few to the Buddhists, a few to the Jainas, a few to the Christians, a few to the Mohammedans, a few to the Parsis, and so on, in the world of existing faiths. But all these persons accept the authority of Sri Swami Sivananda. The universal love and indisputable approbation he gains is due to the fact that he is a pukka Saiva to a Saiva, a staunch Vaishnava to a Vaishnava, an ardent Sakta to a Sakti worshipper, a rigid Christian to a Christian, a stiff Mohammedan to a Mohammedan, a cleanly Parsi to a Parsi, a first-rate Jaina to a Jaina, a front-ranking Buddhist to a Buddhist, an open-hearted Sikh to a Sikh, and so on. A realised soul's nature it is to be such.

Quite early in life, a young man in service, belonging to the Dravidian Vaishnava Brahmin community, found out through books and correspondence that Sivananda Maharaj is another Ramanujacharya, and took resort in him. This youth is none other than Parthasarathi Iyengar. Parthasarathi means 'Charioteer of Partha - Arjuna, i.e., Sri Krishna. How wonderful is the name. How deftly he is charioteering the modern Arjunas through his vehicle, The Forest University Weekly. He was born on Thursday, by 1.15 pm., on Amavasya with Purvashadha constellation in ascendance. in the Dhanur Rasi, Margali of Durmati Samvatsara. The Bhakti instinct that is naturally predominant in a Vaishnava, somehow drew Parthasarathi aside from the world and made him cling to the lotus-feet of Ramanuja in Sivananda Maharaj. But lo! The moment he clung fast to Him, he turned into a Saiva, a Sakta, a Ganapatya, a Saura, and so on, to ultimately shine as a blend of all the various existing faiths.

O Destiny! Am I to call thee cruel or kind? No, I do not decry thee. How nice art thou to present this soul as an instrument for the betterment of the world, through the unique and unitary Sivananda.

Swami Venkatesananda is extremely silent in speech, humble in manners, loving in temperament, devotional in frame of mind, dignified in writings, thorough in his dealings, and perfect in his entrusted tasks. He is not garrulous in any way, nor is he self-exhibiting in the matter of his superfine attainments on the intellectual plane. Undoubtedly he is one of the few best brains of the Ashram. Likewise he is one of the brilliant souls that would surely draw the attention of even casual visitors, without any self-

advertisement. His sole and singularly inspiring message to the world under the guidance of his Guru is: 'Swakarmana Tamabhyarchya Siddhim Vindati Manavah'. (XVIII.46)

To him, Seva of Guru is Archana of Govinda. That is why he hunts Swamiji Maharaj with his bow and arrow - the shorthand note-book and the pencil - and compresses his Guru breadthwise in unknown strokes, and releases Him at large for the benefit of the world to effect an ideal inner transformation.

Though a Vaishnavite, Swami Venkatesananda repeats Siva Stotras, Devi Stutis, etc, without any bias or prejudice. What a nice lesson he teaches to all his brethren. Spiritually he is very catholic; not conservative. He is a good Yogabhyasi and a good Sankirtanist. Not only is he a Sankirtan-Premi, but a votary of histrionics. He is also a staunch Gita-Pracharaka. He is an advocate of Surya Namaskara. He delights in seclusion and silence, and so he remains unbefriended in his Kutir. The absolute ascetic indifference which he normally has, has induced in him a sense of non-attachment to all things. He has no idea or notion of brother, father, sister, mother, etc. To him, all are the Pancha-Bhautika symbols of God. Even if his own mother has been living in the Ashram in which he lives, he has evinced no special affection for her. He treats her as he treats others.

Truly Swami Venkatesananda is the Dhruva-Tara (Pole Star) of Sivananda-Jaqat (World of Sivananda). May Lord Venkatesa bless Swami Venkatesananda ever. May the Universal Guru, Sivananda, guide his disciple Venkatesananda and his fraternity ever.

44. The Wisdom-Moon

Sri S.N.V. Naidu, Bhairavati, Mysore

Two remarkable days in my life are the 7th of September 1941, and the 7th of September 1945.

The 7th day of September 1941 has given me a new life. Having an interest in spiritual life, worshipping Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and studying his messages, I was searching for a Guru to guide me. Accidentally on the above-mentioned day, Sri Jagannata brought me to Rishikesh and showed me, my Guru, the eminent saint Sri Sivananda Saraswati.

Sri Gurudev with affection put spiritual ideas into my heart. I cannot forget the days spent there reading the Bhagavad Gita with many inmates of the Ashram, near the feet of Gurudev.

Having stayed there for some time, I came back to my native place, and again went to Rishikesh with my family, on the 7th of September 1945. I feel that Jagannata who had brought me to Rishikesh before, to show my Gurudev, brought us again to the same place now to show us another sacred man who is a devout adherent of Gurudev.

Who is now renowned by being celebrated his birthday by the same Ashramavasis - Swami Venkatesananda - had with great enthusiasm taken part in the birthday celebrations of Gurudev on that day, wearing only a towel on his body.

I do not know why I, who dislike friends and too much of talking with others, wanted his relation even at the moment I saw him. His childlike heart, philosophical thoughts and sincerity have increased my ambitions. Within a couple of days we two understood each other and a close contact was formed. One night I went to the Bhajana Mandir, where he resided. The doors of his room were closed. He was praying before a picture of his Ishtadevata. I stood there for a while, feeling both amazement and pleasure, seeing him through a window of that room. I immediately remembered Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and felt very glad, for the scene I saw was as it is described in his life history.

Having spent six months as six days with this sacred man, near the feet of the Sadguru, in the holy and peaceful surroundings of Rishikesh, we left that place with tears.

Let us pray to God to bestow long life and efficiency on this Wisdom-Moon, Sri Swami Venkatesananda, illuminated by the Knowledge-Sun - Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati, to regenerate human beings by spraying Jnanamrita on them.

45. Mere Words or Mystic Formulae?

Swami Venkatesananda

What a wealth of spiritual wisdom it is that our Gurudev Sri Swami Sivananda Maharaj poured into our hearts on the night of the 26th December, 1954. It was not the celebration of one man's birthday. Time will reveal that it was the glorious birthday of thousands of aspirants all over the world, who would have the rare good fortune of reading the sage's stirring speech that night. For animals would be 'born' as men, men as supermen, and supermen as gods, if only they devoutly study every word uttered by the sage, and act up to it. That way the day was blessed indeed.

Never has the sage wasted a word. His are not mere words but mystic formulae that penetrate the deepest recesses of man's heart, and there work wonders.

'Do not give her the sari she asks for; she will not look at you from today. Such is the love you pine for.' - these were the first words of soul-elevating Upadesh I received from Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, though they were addressed to a friend along with whom I had gone to the Delhi Railway Station in 1944 to meet His Holiness who was then proceeding to Bombay to record some of his songs on the oramophore. I felt they were shafts directed straight at my heart.

For in that heart dwelt inordinate lust, inordinate desire for worldly enjoyments; they were severely injured by these flaming words from the sage's lips. If Satan himself had created a human being out of his own image, the result could not have been better than I. The triple-gates to hell - lust, anger and greed - were all of them ajar to receive me; but from the fourth side, Swami Sivananda's divine hand was pulling me up and away, restraining me from entering the hell. Where even Chaitanya Mahaprabhu could have been defeated, my Gurudev has succeeded. I am a breathing miracle of Sivananda.

Then, in the same year, I attended the Christmas Sadhana Week, at the Ashram. I do not remember much about what took place during those seven days of my stay here. On the last day, when I was about to return to Delhi, I expressed my admiration of the Ashram atmosphere. Like a thunderbolt came Gurudev's words: 'Stay here, then! I have built it only for you all.' The longing for sense-pleasures was so great in me that even these words, and the mighty sage's Sat-Sankalpa, could not immediately affect me. But Gurudev had succeeded in raising a counterforce.

How I joined the Ashram scarcely eight months later is a miracle. No one who had been acquainted with me in Delhi, Calcutta or Madras, and with my

sensuous nature could have helped expressing abhorrence at the very idea that I could be allowed to enter the Holy City of Rishikesh, much less the highly spiritual atmosphere of an Ashram. Yet, Gurudev needed only such souls for reclamation.

During the first weeks of my stay at the Ashram, I earned undeserved praise for my love of seclusion; but little did these great ones realise that I was literally ashamed to look at the pure, holy and saintly faces that encountered me everywhere in this holiest place upon earth, and preferred to chew my cud in privacy. But Gurudev would not allow this, either.

'What will you gain if you go on typing like this all day and night? It is not for that you have come here. You must do Japa, meditation and Swadhyaya; you must get up at 4 am. and conduct Sadhana classes. Then will you evolve nicely', and threw me into a cauldron of trial and temptations - there to be boiled into a pulp to enable him to mould me as he liked. So, there I was literally caught up in hot waters where I least expected them, and throwing up my hands in abject despair, I prayed to Gurudev to protect me with the robes of a monk.

His reactions were different: 'When I hear that Parthasarathy was nicely beaten with shoes and he laughed, and then alone will I give you Sanyas.' By Gods Supreme Mercy, soon opportunities presented themselves where I could attempt to cultivate this virtue. It was not easy. Because, the sinful heart was sensitive, too. And, my uncontrollable temper would rise even against well-merited reprimand.

Gurudev's compassionate heart would not wait till his condition was fulfilled before granting the boon. On the 12th September, 1947, in commemoration of his Birthday Diamond Jubilee, he, out of his supreme compassion, brushing aside all objections, initiated me along with eleven other resplendent highly evolved souls, into the Holy Order of Sanyas.

Worldliness might be hidden in the holy garb, but it is certainly not washed out of the inner personality except by the Waters of Divine knowledge. The garb Sri Gurudev bestowed upon me certainly protected me from further deterioration, but the inner unregenerate nature persisted, though to a lesser extent. Moreover, there is this additional hurdle that a neophyte has to face in an atmosphere of holiness - he is apt to recline and relax, in the complacency of having renounced Maya. One fine morning came Gurudev's stern warning: 'Do not think that just because you have come to Rishikesh you have gone above Maya. The realm of Maya does not end with the other bank of the Chaudrabhaga. Even on the summit of Mount Kailas you will find the same Maya the same currents of Raga-Dwesa operating. Beware.' Well, that

alerted me to a certain extent. But Gurudev was quick in pointing out the positive way: 'Here I have created for you the best field for quick evolution. Do Japa on the Ganges bank. Go to the Mandir and attend the Pujas. Go to Bhajan Hall and do Kirtan. Work, work, and work. Serve the sick. Study books in the Library. Do not join with the tall-talkers and gossip-mongers. If you are to evolve, you will have to guard yourself against all these. If you do not, than even here you will continue to be the same man.'

One day three people were sitting on a verandah in the Ashram and talking. It was past midday. Gurudev was coming towards the office for distributing his sacred Prasad. In those days, he himself used to take a round of the Ashram at noon, distributing fruits, curd, butter, etc., to the inmates. The embarrassed disciples hurriedly stood up. With a mischievous smile in his eyes, Gurudev remarked: 'When three people sit together ...' and looked at all. They blinked. He himself completed the sentence, '... they talk ill of the fourth man.' Then, after giving the Prasad, he said: 'Avoid this and then you will have more time for work and Sadhana.'

Even when the holiness of the atmosphere, the kindness of the other highly evolved Sadhaks of the Ashram, and Gurudev's watchful mercy, again and again prevented my inner worldliness from manifesting itself in its own crude form, I found that it had its own modifications and appeared in mysterious ways. There arose, for instance, inordinate ambition for this or that, it does not matter. Bubbling enthusiasm often resulted in uncalled-for interference in the affairs of others. This in turn resulted in disharmony and restlessness. Gurudev must have been silently watching for an opportunity to correct his child. How patient and loving he is. When an opportunity did present itself, Gurudev remarked in a very mild and loving manner: 'Do not interfere in the affairs of others. This tendency to interfere is innate in man. If you are intent on your own progress, you should not interfere in the affairs of others.' And, thereby, wrought another miracle.

By all this I do not claim that the sores of viciousness have been completely healed, Gurudev's compassion and His Divine Words which have been to me more than Mystic Formulae have definitely been able to achieve great wonders and much transformation. Often have I wondered if this Almighty in human form could not have said: 'Be thou healed of worldliness and arise victorious as a divine being', and thus divinised me entirely. He could have, however base I was. In fact, he did say once: 'I will give you whatever you want.' He said it while handing me sweet Prasad; but the Divine Light in his eyes had a different message. It was as though at that moment I had brought

myself to ask for Moksha, he would have bestowed it upon me then and there. But I did not and that, too, I consider was his miracle.

If many great vicious traits still persist in me, I consider that even that is his will. For, it is the presence of these in me that enable me to appreciate truly the spiritual greatness of the other disciples of Sri Gurudev and to look upon them all as Divine Personages, walking divinities upon earth; and to continue to serve Gurudev as an insignificant speck of dust ever aspiring for a corner of Gurudev's shoes. Even if birth after birth, I live to serve as Gurudev's slave, I cannot repay the debt I owe to Gurudev for this supreme gift of His Flaming Words of Divine Light. The indebtedness, the bounds of even expression, when I remember what Gurudev said on a significant occasion, when all but His Almighty Will would have thrown me down the steep precipice of great downfall: 'For the past twenty-four hours at least I have been constantly thinking of your welfare.' What an ocean of compassion he is.

To the Light of His Words I bow in all humility and reverence.
