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YOGI

RAMSURATKUMAR

*The Mystery of Becoming God*

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR BHAVAN

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नादेवो देवं अर्चयेत्

*Nādevo devam archayet*

Only God  
can praise God

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR BHAVAN

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## Notice

When it is not otherwise stated, the words of Yogi Ramsuratkumar quoted in the various chapters were taken from the following Internet site: <http://pages.intnet.mu/ramsurat/>

The website was created by C.C. Krishna, one of Yogi Ramsuratkumar's disciples and the founder of an Ashram in Mauritius Island, the *Yogi Ramsuratkumar Bhavan*.

All the pictures shown in this book come from the same.

## *Acknowledgements*

All my gratitude and my deep love go to Yogi Ramsuratkumar, the true Author of this book.

My thought, filled with intense love, also goes to *Bhārata Mātā*, great Mother India, the cradle of human spirituality. In India, I was taught to live the *Sanātana Dharma*, the eternal cosmic law of harmony. In India, I understood that «in the *Gospel* there is much more than Christian religion itself has ever discovered», as the Benedictine monk Henri Le Saux wrote.

## *Preface*

When reading Olga's book, the thought came again and again: «Really, Father has done it!». After the last word, this little one knew such a joy! The perfect book for the West!

First, there is no self-projection but humility runs everywhere... And it is not another 'biography', but God's Lila. Then, Olga's vision and understanding is so large. The work tends also towards the reunion of both East and West at the highest level, which is: *'My Father alone exists'*. She is able to show, through quotations of Western scientists and searchers, that modern science will end in what the Rishis of yore had discovered, lived and expressed, the Universal Consciousness of which our Master Yogi Ramsuratkumar is a perfect incarnation. Above all structured religions, she goes up to the level of true wisdom, Sanatana Dharma, Vedanta. And there, we can see and feel Yogiji's presence, doing Father's cosmic work, even through the smallest gestures. We can feel His greatness, His wisdom, His Love, His tenderness for everybody, like the Sun that shines equally for everyone. In the same way, we watch the Western mind, doubting, striking, kicking but nevertheless approaching its true Mother, even if it does not know, Bharat Mata, and at the end discovering that nothing is possible without 'absolute faith and total surrender', that the truth is beyond mind.

The seeker comes to understand that his head has to be cut, like the boy who afterwards becomes Ganesh, and that, only then, it is possible to enter the temple of ourselves and go forward to unite with God! Let's have our head be cut by Him!

Father has done it. We are not the doers, let us be instruments in His hands and let us rejoice because, at last, this great book is now here for everybody to become aware that "beggars like this come rarely," and let us chant the name of God:

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR  
YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR  
YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR  
JAYA GURU RAYA!

*(Gaura) Krishna  
13th December, 2007*

*"Whatever exists is one life.  
Unity! Nothing is separate, nothing isolated. This beggar is related to the Sun, to the Moon, to the Infinite Cosmos. This beggar is not limited to this point."*

## ***Introduction***

«It is very hard to find a real *Guru*. It is still very hard, even once you find a *Guru*, to approach him. It is still harder, even if you approach him, to receive his grace» (*Nārada Bhakti Sūtra*, 38-42).

These words have resonated in India for millennia. They were ascribed to a great *rishi*, a sage from the mists of time, whose name was Nārada, and who was said to be no less than Lord Brahma's son.

Yet, such a rare grace has been granted to us – to my friends and co-researchers Giulia Barletta and Verena Hefti, and to me – without any effort. It has been literally poured on to us. What was hard, however, was to realize that we were so blessed.

Another ancient Indian scripture, the *Ribhu Gītā*, a collection of teachings given by Lord Shiva to his devotee Ribhu on Mount Kailās, states: «Such a *jñāni* (sage) is rare to find through searching, among millions of people (...). To find and to gain access to the sacred presence of such a *jñāni* is the luckiest of opportunities that one could ever obtain in this world» (Ch. 19, from verses 10 and 11).

We were received by a *jñāni*, a *mukta-purusha* (a Realized, an Enlightened One) more than once. But, although we did know the literal meaning of these Sanskrit words, we were unaware of the depth and vastness of what we were experiencing.

Sri Rajneesh, a well-known modern Master, said: «You may pass by a Tilopa, a Buddha, a Jesus, without even perceiving their presence»<sup>1</sup>. In the Sixth century, speaking about Bodhidharma, the Indian sage who brought Buddhism to China, the Emperor Wu admitted bitterly: «I came across him, but I did not really meet him»<sup>2</sup>. And Sri Rajneesh explains why you may miss the opportunity of meeting a Master – in the true, deep sense of the word: «You may miss it in banal ways: just by remaining absorbed in trifles, in mental garbage; by going on questioning inwardly [and I add, also outwardly] the pros and cons; in the meanwhile, the oasis will soon vanish»<sup>3</sup>.

In our case, the ‘oasis’ has not vanished in the real sense of the word. We encountered it, no question – but without any merit on our part. Simply because he, the *jñāni*, the saint, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, took such care of us that we were compelled to love him. But only after long time and much effort, we became aware of him.

One day in 1992, a friend, V. Ganesan, sent us a letter from India. Speaking about Yogi, whom we had met a few months before, he wrote: «You are fortunate indeed to have a blessed place in the sacred heart of this

*Mahātmā* [great soul] living in our midst in Tiruvannamalai. I am happy you are thus continuously blessed!» Obviously, the letter pleased us enormously – to the point that we have kept it under a picture of Yogi, in our meditation room. It gave us an enormous delight, perhaps even some banal, fatuous pride. But not the slightest flash of awareness. A saint had granted us a corner in his heart – and we were taking it as something ‘just a little special’, as if we had conquered that shrine of love in the heart of a king. And yet, we knew that in India a saint is a person who has awakened in himself/herself the immensity of human essence; someone who has excavated in the depths of the mystery we all carry in our innermost core, till he or she has reached the Truth; someone who is no longer «a skin-encapsulated ego», as the American philosopher Alan Watts used to say, but has become Infinity, has merged into the Cosmic Consciousness. A Hindu saint is all this.

So, we had a place in the heart of a Hindu saint: a being who had merged with the Cosmic Consciousness, who had become ‘one with God’, and therefore *was* God. The problem was, however, that as Westerners, we presumed to *understand* God through our everyday rationality, or even through a somewhat more intense effort – the effort you would make to understand a philosopher, a scientist. Only much later, did we discover that «the words spoken by a scholar must be understood; the words of your Master must not be understood: you have to listen to them as you listen to the wind in the forest, and the sound of the river, and the song of the bird. They will

awake something in your heart, something beyond any knowledge»<sup>4</sup>.

Another Indian friend, S. Parthasarathy, who had the privilege of living for many days, over the course of several years, in close contact with Yogi Ramsuratkumar, tried to further clarify that concept: «The *mahātmās*, the *yogis* are always in the highest conscience. They are above, above all thoughts, deeds, and words. We will not be able to comprehend their real nature». About a great *rishi*, Shuka Maharaj, the *Upanishads* say: «The universe is his. Nay, he himself is the universe». In the *Mahābharata* there is an even more clarifying story about this saint, when he was only a sixteen-year old boy: «Vyāsa, his father, called him, “Shuka, my son, where are you?” The trees everywhere in the forest started vibrating, “I am here, I am here, I am here”»<sup>5</sup>.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar was a *mahātmā*, a *mahāpurusha* (indwelling form of God: Cosmic Man, in whom all reality is recapitulated), a *rishi*, like Shuka. He too was one with the universe, with the Supreme Being. We know he loved and still loves us, even if he shed his body. We also loved and still love him, despite our doubts. We can affirm that. However, we wasted most of the luckiest opportunity of our lives, allowing perplexities to crush us at the slightest provocation. As if we were, or understood more than a saint, as if we were able to judge his conduct, his deeds. We put more energy into doubting than into trusting: in nearly everything we saw or heard, we remarked the negative aspects – almost al-

ways and immediately. So, we started off on the wrong foot. In our defense, we can say that this attitude is deeply rooted in us as Westerners: we belong to the civilization of criticism, not of acceptance. And criticism, which originally meant ‘to discern’ (from ancient Greek: *krínō*), nowadays has become mainly «finding fault; censuring; disapproval» (*Webster’s New Universal Dictionary*).

On the contrary, India has taught acceptance (not to be confused, in this case, with resignation). According to Sri Rajneesh, a disciple should become like a child, «without the tiniest particle of doubt»<sup>6</sup>: he or she should harbor only feelings of trust and love. Tilopa, one of the most renowned *mahāsiddhas* (great Masters of perfect capabilities), taught that one has to become like a bamboo cane: hollow, empty inside. Only then, such an immense gift, the grace of a *Guru*, «who has reached the highest state of consciousness», can be received.

This book is the story of Yogi Ramsuratkumar’s greatness and of our narrow-mindedness. Of his infinite compassion and of our hard-fought transformation. We do hope this story, interwoven with wonders but also with mistakes, may help others to reflect and understand.

## Notes

- 1 Rajneesh, *Tantra: la Comprensione Suprema*, Bompiani, Milan 1980, p. 17. (*Tantra – The Supreme Understanding*, Poona 1975).
- 2 Arena L., *I Maestri*, Oscar Mondadori, Milan 1995. p. 69.
- 3 Rajneesh, *ibid.*
- 4 De Mello A., *Il Canto degli Uccelli*, Ed. Paoline, Milan 1987, p. 19. (*The Song of the Bird*, Lonavla 1982).
- 5 Swami Krishnananda, «May the Bell Ring», in *What is Enlightenment*, Moksha Press, Lenox, Massachusetts 1995, Vol. 4, N. 2.
- 6 Rajneesh, *ibid.*, p. 14.

# I

## «Father Will Do»

I must confess I felt utterly unfit for the task Yogi Ramsuratkumar had entrusted me with – to write a book about him. It was the first time I was caught by this sense of inadequacy. To speak about a man who has become one with God? Try to imagine what it really means. Common words are not sufficient. Neither is common mind.

My first reaction, though, was one of explosive joy. Everybody was saying: «Oh! You are so blessed!» It was a huge privilege, an honor – and much more.

Ma Devaki, the closest devotee and attendant of Yogi Ramsuratkumar and the ‘Mother of the *ashram*’, was the one who made the suggestion. It was March 2000. We were all sitting under a shelter, near the School of the *Vedas* (*Pāthashālā*), a building still under construction at that time. Yogi had given this structure very special consideration. «It is the Heart of the *ashram*», he would say, and every day he would spend many hours blessing it with his presence. That morning he was there, as usual. He had sent for us. At first, when Ma Devaki mentioned the possibility of a book about

him, he did not seem to share her idea. He commented: «What is there to say about this beggar?» (He almost always called himself by this name, rather than by the pronoun 'I'). Ma Devaki explained that I was the right person for the task. Ultimately, he accepted with fatherly compliance.

All day the people in the *ashram* congratulated us. For them we were 'The Three Italian Sisters', as Yogi had nicknamed us. They knew we had always done everything together – journeys, research, books. Hence, all the three of us were automatically involved in this new spiritual adventure: to write a book about Yogi Ramsuratkumar.

Of course, we three were on cloud nine. But after a while, all of a sudden, we became aware of the task, and were overcome with terror.

How could we write about Yogi Ramsuratkumar as we did with the peoples and the landscapes of Nepal, Tibet, and Hawai'i? What do we know about God? How can a human being merge with the Cosmic Consciousness? And once this gigantic goal is achieved by him, what is the influence exerted by such a God-Man in guiding the destinies of the world? Just by uttering these words and acknowledging each one of them, we shuddered. We were overwhelmed by a sense of incompetence. How could we chronicle the life and cosmic work of a man who had become one with God?

Considering such an undertaking seriously, we realized that we were not able to come up to the expectations.

For millennia, Indian philosophy has taught that we all harbor a divine spark in the depths of our beings; and that the chief aim of our lives is to nurture this spark until it flourishes and expresses itself. It is one thing, however, to read these metaphysical statements, to listen while somebody is speaking about them, and to enjoy the idea that we are God. But it is totally different to document the experiences of a man who has become God – wholly, completely. Yogi would explain that he, as an individual, died in 1952, precisely because he fully merged with the Divine. In the *Bible (New Testament)*, apostle Paul said: «...I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me» (*Galatians 2,20*). So, there is nothing to be astonished about: also for the Western world these words are not new. What matters is to go to the very end of the process. Jesus declared: « Let one who seeks not stop seeking until one finds. When one finds, one will be disturbed. When one is disturbed, one will be amazed, and will reign over all. » (*Gospel of Thomas, Saying 2*).

Yogi Ramsuratkumar reached the very end of the process: «he reigns over all». And now I – we – have the task of speaking about him, who is not what one sees (because that does not count), but what is invisible, what is beyond, the Great Beyond.

No, we are unable to do it. Therefore, when he again sent for us to give us his blessings before

we returned home, we confessed our inadequacy. We were sitting under the same shelter. When someone mentioned I was going to write a book on Bhagavan (a title of great respect, used for a human being who has merged into the Divine Consciousness), I took my courage in both hands and declared my – our – incapacity: «Bhagavan, one of your *shāstras* (sacred texts) says: “Only God can praise God”. Obviously, I am not qualified. I am very sorry, but I am obliged to decline this task». Everyone looked at me in disbelief, as if I had lost my mind. They immediately undertook a campaign to convince me – until I could no longer refuse. So, I asked Yogi: « Bhagavan, should I write this book? » Yogi raised one hand: « Father will do », he answered. All I could do was to bow to his wisdom.

But what did it actually mean – Father will do? As soon as Yogi Ramsuratkumar’s *darshan* was finished (*darshan*, view of a saint, encounter with a *Guru*), we started debating this response. «Perhaps the book is meant to be a *sādhana* (spiritual discipline) for you», Giulia suggested. « This might be the reason why you have to write it ».

We decided to go to a quiet place to think. We climbed along a path on the slopes of Arunachala, the sacred hill of this region, the dwelling place of many ascetics and sages throughout the centuries. At our feet, we could see the town of Tiruvannamalai with its imposing stone temple, laden with years; then, as far as our eyes could see, was the plain dotted with other lonely

hills. On our initial visit – about twenty years ago – we wondered why only Arunachala was considered so sacred. After all, it is neither particularly beautiful nor very high (less than 1000 meters – about 3000 feet). Nonetheless, it is a cornerstone of these people’s beliefs: it is thought to be the earthly manifestation of Lord Shiva. Every full moon hundreds of thousands of pilgrims come here from all over India to make the *giri pradhākhina*, a walk round the mountain in prayer and meditation.

On our first visit, those many years ago, we were not impressed. We remember we met an old man who from time to time whispered with immense devotion: «Arunachala». We asked him why. «It is a name of God», he explained. But his answer did not strike.

As time went by, we began to know this mountain, to ‘feel’ it. And we eventually admitted it has something special. Even if one does not consider its scenery at all, it undoubtedly attracts. Moreover, strange, inexplicable phenomena happen here. A friend living in Tiruvannamalai, Easwardasa, told us that one night the hill was floodlit for some fifteen seconds. Even while relating the incident, which was witnessed by other people near him, he got goose pimples out of emotion. Another episode: in the early Nineties, a Swiss lady and an Italian friend of hers climbed Arunachala and got lost. While they were trying to find the right path, it rapidly began growing dark, as it happens at these latitudes. In order not to worsen their situation, the two ladies decided

to stop and await dawn under a small tree. During the night, the Swiss lady who remained fully awake, experienced an incredible vision: the slopes of the mountain appeared to open, and in the gap she saw revealed a city with many lights and fountains. Later she was told that the great saint Ramana Maharshi had experienced a very similar vision many years before.

Another remarkable incident occurred to the three of us: one day, about ten years ago, we were in a quiet place on the hill, when all of a sudden we heard a choir of voices that were chanting an indescribably soft, celestial melody. In that place there were neither sounds nor echoes coming from the town; nobody was there, and certainly there were no radios around. Nevertheless, we could hear a music – almost a Gregorian chant, but much much more delicate, more heavenly. Frankly speaking, we are not fanatic about angels, we never talk about them. Personally, I do not even know whether I believe in their existence. That day, however, we all were literally stunned, overwhelmed by what we heard. We whispered to one another: « It must be a choir of angels... a choir coming from eternity... ».

When we went back to town, we related the event to our friend Ganesan – a grandnephew of Sri Ramana Maharshi – who immediately rejoiced: «I am happy, really happy that Arunachala gave you the gift of this experience». Somebody else told us that a somehow similar phenomenon had happened to two Indian devotees of Bhagavan Ramana many years before: all of

a sudden, while they were silently contemplating the sacred slopes, they both heard a prolonged sound, like a deep pervading OM, that filled the air. They stood in overwhelming awe. When the phenomenon was over, they went and talked to Bhagavan about their experience. He calmly answered: «Yes, yes, it happens».

Commenting upon the story, Ganesan added another clarifying quotation of the Maharshi: «The whole world is condensed into this Hill. People think it to be an insentient Hill. It is the Self itself in the shape of the Hill».

So, in need of solitude for clarification about the task of writing the book, we again climbed Arunachala. We were upset. We sat down, we meditated, we discussed. We tried to give ourselves some encouragement by repeating a stanza of a chant composed by Ramana Maharshi for Arunachala:

*«In this unloving self,  
Thou didst create  
A passion for Thee.  
Therefore,  
Forsake me not,  
Arunachala.»*

I considered my love for Yogi Ramsuratkumar, and did realize mine is the usual, selfish human love. When I need his protection, I feel myself connected with him, I chant his Name. But when it is he who is request-

ing something of me, I hold back. As Saint Peter did with Christ, will I also betray him «three times before the rooster crows»?

«The *Gospel* is beautiful also for these revelations», we remarked to one another. «It shows that Jesus accepted everyone: good people, disbelievers, those who fear, those who hold back and betray». This made me hope that Yogi too might accept me, despite my doubts.

While we were musing over this subject, we saw a man coming towards us along the path. He was almost totally naked, and held only a jug in his hand.

«It's a *sādhu*», we grumbled. «Of course, now he will beg for alms». We were in such a negative state that even this encounter bothered us.

The *sādhu* approached, looked at us. We slipped some rupees into his hands. And he bestowed his gift upon us: a smile full of peace.

It was only an instant of peace, embedded almost miraculously into the whirl of my mind, which immediately resumed: «Father will do... alright... but when I am sitting at my desk, with the blank sheets of paper in front of me, who will actually create the text?» It seemed impossible that Father would really do everything in my place, in our place. Rajneesh would

encourage people like us: «The secret is to have faith. Believe in the impossible, and it will become possible».

It took me a whole year to grasp this truth, a whole year wasted because I did not have the courage to believe, I was not open to faith, unable to surrender. In the meantime, Yogi Ramsuratkumar became ill. But this fact did not melt my resistance. On February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2001, he left his body.

When Ramana Maharshi was reaching the end of his earthly life in 1950, he pronounced the following words for the centuries to come: «People say I am going away. I am not going away. I am here. Where could I go?»

Here – the universe. Yogi Ramsuratkumar, like Ramana, is here. That is to say, everywhere – now more than ever. And he has taken me by the hand. So, in faith I have started to write this book. Day after day, I am understanding that it is true: Father will do.

Father is doing.

## 2

### «All Great Saints Have Been Beggars»

Yogi Ramsuratkumar said: «The whole of humanity exists because of the *sādhus*. (...) At least one Realized Soul should always exist». A *sādhu* (from the Sanskrit root *sādh*, ‘to arrive at the goal’) is a person who renounced the world with the aim of becoming one with the Divine. In India, there are hundreds of thousands of *sādhus* who wander all over the huge subcontinent, living on alms. They own nothing, not even their roots. They eat when (and if) someone remembers to give them something. They do not care about their survival, about a minimum of comfort, or the slightest safety. At least in principle, they harbor only one aspiration within themselves: a yearning for God.

Traditional India respects them: «In Europe» as Yogi Ramsuratkumar pointed out «people gather around a successful businessman. But in India, people gather around a God-realized saint. That is the glory and the greatness of India. Here we do not adore the rich, only the saintly». A French orientalist, Patrick Ravignat, confirms these words: «For the majority of the Indians it is

more rewarding to have one of these nameless vagrants in their families than a politician or a movie star». An increasing number of modern people, however, even in India regard them as useless individuals (sociologists affirm they are a burden for the community). According to the Western perspective, *sādhus* are not only parasites but also lunatics, or maybe even crazy people. «For our mentality», the French orientalist continues «it is more bearable to know we have to maintain a criminal in prison for years than to feed these asocial beings: as a matter of fact, a delinquent fits in a thought structure which is familiar to us, because we know that the satisfaction of his desires was the cause of his actions; on the contrary, it is impossible for us to understand a solitary saint»<sup>1</sup>.

Actually, among the many wandering *sādhus*, saints are very rare: because everywhere sanctity – the true one – is very rare. For many years, Yogi Ramsuratkumar was one of those *sādhus* until he became one of those few genuine saints: one of those beings to whom all of humanity owes its existence, as he himself emphasized.

Is this statement difficult to accept? Everything in Yogi Ramsuratkumar shatters the barriers of normality and is hard to believe. Our path towards him and with him has always been studded with amazement and bewilderment, with questions for which ordinary people have no answers.

There is a significant tale by Herbert G. Wells, *The Country of the Blind*<sup>2</sup> that parallels the perceptions of most of us in relation to an exceptional being such as Yogi Ramsuratkumar. We are like the people described in Well's tale: people who lived in a remote area of the planet and who had been characterized by congenital blindness for many generations. Nobody had eyes. One day, there arrived among them a young man who, to his 'misfortune', was able to see. So, everyone became suspicious. According to them, he talked nonsense: he could not be but an eccentric, most probably a psychotic. Local doctors examined him: they touched his face, discovering those strange things the young man called 'eyes', and diagnosed the phenomenon as an «unknown facial disease». The seeing person could not be accepted in the country of the sightless: he was forced to flee in order not to be blinded.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar could see Reality, that is to say the *noumenon*, what is hidden beyond appearance (phenomenon), beyond sensible experience. On the contrary, what our eyes see is only *māyā* (appearance, illusion), *līlā* (cosmic play). All Yogi's devotees will recall Bhagavan sitting with us or walking among us, and all of a sudden looking up, and after a few seconds bursting into laughter. He laughed heartily. We had the feeling that he saw something none of the devotees was able to perceive. Maybe he was noticing, again and again, the absurdity of what the so-called normal people considered to be real – as happened to the young man in the tale, whose eyes were diagnosed by doctors as being a dis-

ease. Most probably Yogi understood our thoughts, and perceived the emptiness of all of us who were there – so amusing in our certainty of existing, of being important, each one in his or her own way.

Confronted with such abnormal behaviors, scientists have expressed some dramatic evaluations. For example, the great German sociologist Max Weber defined the mystic yearning of unification with God as a ‘crypto-sexual desire’. Another contemporary German scholar explained: «The so-called ‘religious’ or ‘mystical’ forms of experiences are permanent fantastic-hallucinatory reenactments of early traumas. (...) The creating of consoling symbols are attempts to integrate the dissociated personality structure. Mystical experience is an attempted self-therapy that is successful in some aspects, but often fails»<sup>3</sup>.

The world-famous American psychiatrist Oliver Sacks diagnosed the complex and splendid visions of Hildegard of Bingen, a saint of the Twelfth century, as due to headache: «A careful consideration of these accounts and figures leaves no room for doubt concerning their nature: they were indisputably migrainous»<sup>4</sup>.

In the West, only a very few scholars recognize that spirituality is not synonymous with psychological disease. Stanislav Grof, co-founder of transpersonal psychology, is one of these avant-garde scientists. He points out: «Many (...) religious and spiritual personages, such as the Buddha, Jesus, Ramakrishna, and Sri Ramana Ma-

harshi have been seen as suffering from psychoses, because of their visionary experiences and 'delusions'. Similarly, some traditionally trained anthropologists have argued whether shamans should be diagnosed as schizophrenics, ambulant psychotics, epileptics, or hysterics. The famous psychoanalyst Franz Alexander, known as one of the founders of psychosomatic medicine, wrote a paper in which even Buddhist meditation is described in psychopathological terms and referred to as 'artificial catatonia'»<sup>5</sup>.

This severe lack of understanding is due to various and complex reasons. At least one of these reasons is easy to understand: in every society, a person who does not fit the rules as defined by the community is automatically considered suspect and ostracized. Once, the renowned psychologist and philosopher Erich Fromm, whom we had the privilege to interview several times in Locarno (Switzerland) in the last years of his life, said: «You see, what the people of a certain culture *love* to do, is regarded as good; on the contrary, what they *do not love* to do, is judged as evil. Good and evil are only ideas, a matter of opinions».

These words might appear paradoxical, but in our small way we can confirm them with an example which, to us, seems clarifying: in the late Seventies, during one of our research expeditions, we visited the Asmat, a tribe living in Irian Jaya (Indonesian New Guinea). Until shortly before our arrival there, the Asmat were notorious headhunters and cannibals (Michael Rockefeller was

killed and eaten by them in 1961). Headhunting was such a cornerstone of this society that a man could not marry until he was able to produce as a dowry a considerable number of skulls of enemies he himself had killed. Only in this way he could demonstrate he was a man to be respected, a warrior. As far as cannibalism is concerned, this practice was originated neither by hunger nor by gluttony: it had complicated magical and ritual meanings.

When the Indonesian colonial government outlawed these cruel customs, it was compelled to use drastic steps in order to eradicate them (the individuals who had practiced headhunting and cannibalism were publicly hanged every time they were caught). The Asmat did not understand these severe prohibitions. For them to kill and to eat members of neighboring tribes were not evil actions, but a demonstration of bravery and a means for acquiring the energy and courage of their enemies in a magical way. If a woman became aware that her husband no longer wanted to participate in yet another headhunting expedition, she would despise and blame him: «You are not a man, you are just a piece of meat!»

When we asked for permission to remain longer (after the departure of the other five members of our group), in order to continue our anthropological research in the region, the authorities forbade it.

- «Why?» we inquired regretfully.
- «You would be killed and eaten as soon as your friends leave».

- «Are you sure? All the Asmat we have known were always ready to help us. Why would they suddenly wish to do us harm?»

- «For them it would not be ‘evil’. It would merely be a normal behavior».

Let us go back to India – to our *sādhus*. When we, members of our welfare society, meet one of these odd beings who appear dirty, poor, unconcerned about today and even more about tomorrow, it is obvious that we are confused, bewildered. Unlike the Indians, we do not know how to categorize such an individual: is he demented? Someone has refined this label with a literary touch, by calling *sādhus* ‘divine madmen’. But the label does not really help us to understand them. Of course, *sādhus* do not harm anybody. According to the values of our affluent society, though, they live in a miserable way. And this by their own choice. So, we consider them abnormal and view them with suspicion. Normality is good, abnormality is not. Yet, for at least eight centuries of its history, Christian civilization had its own ‘*sādhus*’, its own hermits, by the thousands. The well-known ‘Fathers of the Desert’ (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century) were among the most extreme and heroic. One example: Saint Simeon the Stylite (390-459) spent about forty years of his life – confined of his own free will – on the top of a column, and would eat only when someone sent some food up to him in a basket. Saint Benedict (6<sup>th</sup> century), the founder of probably the largest, most branched and glorious monastic order of the Catholic Church, lived for years in a cave. Saint Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) had a hard naked stone as

his pillow. Jesus Christ himself said: «The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head» (*Matthew* 8,20). Therefore, Yogi Ramsuratkumar had good historical motives to affirm: «All great saints have been beggars». This is true for the East and also for the West. But today we Westerners have forgotten.

There is a further fundamental reason why the West has great difficulty in understanding the Eastern approach to reality, even if we more and more often sense its depths. Western science has been in strong conflict with Eastern spirituality and the descriptions of reality carried on by Asia, since time immemorial. Stanislav Grof, as a strong proponent of the new scientific paradigm, deplors: «According to Western mainstream academic science, only matter really exists. The history of the universe is the history of developing matter. Life, consciousness, and intelligence are more or less accidental and insignificant epiphenomena of this development. They appear on the scene after billions of years of evolution of passive and inert matter in a trivially small part of an immense universe. It is obvious that in a universe of this kind there is no place for spirituality»<sup>6</sup>.

On the contrary, Indian Masters – as mentioned before – have always taught that «Man is essentially of immaterial nature» (Paramahansa Yogananda). «Human being is in part physical, but mostly spiritual» (Eknath Easwaran). «Consciousness is the only reality» (Nisargadatta). «Look! Everything has Buddha nature» (Buddha Sakyamuni). «*Sarvam khalvidam brahman*, all that

is, is *brahman*» (*Chāndogya Upanishad* III, 14,1). «Father alone exists. Nothing else, nobody else. All is pervaded by my Father» (Yogi Ramsuratkumar, 1992). Yogi had this concept so much at heart that he repeated it over and over again, on many occasions, over the years, with few variations which did not modify its essential meaning; they only clarified it. For example, on December 5<sup>th</sup> 1995, on the day of *Dipam* (the festival of lights), he was in the hut behind the *Pradhan Mandir* (the principal temple in the *ashram*) with a few close devotees, during the 'breakfast *darshan*'. Our friend Krishna reported us that Yogi Ramsuratkumar said: «My Father alone exists. Nothing else, nobody else. Past, present, future, anywhere, everywhere. Nothing separated, nothing isolated. All in Father, Father in All». Yogi repeated this seven times. Once he added at the end: «*Advaitam*, pure unity». Twice he said, also at the end: «One without a second». After that, he added: «*Dipam* [light] is inside, outside. All pervading. Absolute unity».

Such a world vision – it is useful to underline this point – thoroughly transforms the logic of existence. Let us try to see in what sense:

- God is all; therefore, if man considers himself apart from God, he is mere illusion. The *Ribhu Gītā* offers a very significant comparison in this regard: the illusion of silver created by the mother-of-pearl is no self-existing reality. The silvery glittering exists because there is the mother-of-pearl, which is its basic reality.

- If God is all, and our only reality is in him, the meaning and the aim of existence must be the search for the Divine. Old Cheng, a sage who lived in China many centuries ago, warned: «If you do not merge into the Original Spirit, even if you have reached peaks of spirituality, sanctity, and science, your life, oh bold heads, will not be other than a frivolous amusement». Old Cheng's statement is validated by an astonishing sentence of Ramana Maharshi. When he was requested to give his judgment about the deeds of Gandhi who had accomplished his extraordinary political action precisely in those years, Ramana remarked: «Mahatma Gandhi has surrendered [in other words: he had no more ego which could interfere between himself and the Divine]. That's all that matters». In the eyes of this *jñāni*, of this true sage who viewed history from heights much above the flow of time, the independence of India, obtained through Gandhi's heroic sacrifices and efforts, was only a secondary episode. An episode that belonged to history, not to eternity.

- If the search for God is the aim of one's existence, then it becomes possible to understand the 'divine madmen' who forsake everything, care for nothing, and focus solely on that one goal. We, who do not focus on God – we are the true madmen. This is indeed *the* sin. Yogi Ramsuratkumar said: «Remembering my Father is life. Forgetting my Father is death».

- Even the concept of sin, however, must be revisited. Yogi did not like the term 'sin'. He explained: «Calling a man a sinner makes him weak. There is no 'sinner'. Everyone is 'divine'». He also said: «Everything is perfect because everything happens by the will of my Father. So, nothing is wrong in this world. Everything is perfect».

It is surely difficult to agree that nothing is wrong. Even to Yogi the so-called sinners did several evils. But, consistent with his principles, he never complained. He bore insults and even beatings with total acceptance, as if they were gifts from Father. One of these attacks is described by Perumal Sadaiyan, a staunch devotee and author of a book on Bhagavan, *Treasures of the Heart: The Unforgettable Yogi Ramsuratkumar*: «When we neared the place we saw quite a crowd there. One man was brutally beating up Swami [a title of respect meaning 'lord', 'spiritual guide'] and others were watching the spectacle complacently (...). All [Swami's] newspapers had been scattered. His green shawl had been flung on one side. The ruffian was trying to snatch Swami's coconut shell bowl. Swami was holding it very firmly. The ruffian was also berating Swami in a foul language, showering insults and abuses (...). Swami stood there bruised and bleeding all over and yet said: "Let this be for me alone". I was immensely angry to hear this. "What is this, Swami? You tell us to let go of the rogue. If we let him off he will come again!" Swami: «Let him come. We shall bear it. Let us do Father's work»<sup>7</sup>.

However, Yogi's behavior was different if anyone else was harmed. In this case, Bhagavan could also get angry. S. Parthasarathy, who – as already mentioned – is a great devotee of Yogi, referred an incident that he himself witnessed, and which assists us in unraveling the subtle terms of the problem: «One of his devotees, a housewife, wrote a letter to Swami narrating the tortures she suffered through her husband and her in-laws. Swami was keeping the letter in his hand. The next day Swami got a telegram: the devotee had committed suicide. Then also, Swami continued to hold the letter in his hand. The whole day he did not talk to anyone. I was baffled because I did not know anything about the devotee, her letter, and the news about her death. After a week, the devotee's husband and her in-laws came to Swami. After Swami made them sit, he started to shout: «This beggar knows everything. You need not lie to this beggar. This is the letter this beggar received from her. She wrote everything. This beggar knows you people killed her. And you people are thinking that with the help of the rich you can escape from the court of law. But this beggar says: You cannot escape from my Father's Court of Law. My Father will punish you, I assure you. My Father will torture you». After saying all these things, Swami asked me to show them the gate. They silently ran away».

Therefore, at a higher level – the one of Yogi Ramsuratkumar – what is generally called evil, violence, abuse, has its cosmic function. On the contrary, wicked behavior among people cannot go unpunished. It is not easy, though, to draw accurate conclusions. Questions

and dilemmas pile up. C.G. Jung, one of the fathers of Psychology, suggested: «We must search in the most obscure corners and take our courage in both hands, in order to shake the prejudices of our times, if we intend to broaden the foundations of our knowledge»<sup>8</sup>.

Taking this remark as a starting point, it may be useful to briefly reconsider the word 'sin', which has been so abused in Christian civilization. In the Hebrew language, 'to sin' means 'to miss the target'. Probably, in remote times, the idiom was used in a practical sense, in hunting or fighting. As a matter of fact, in the Greek version of *Luke's Gospel* the author employs the term *hamartía*, from *hamartánō*, 'to fail', 'to miss', 'to remain deprived of', but also 'to go astray'. Therefore, in both cases, the two words acquired also an ethical significance: to miss the true meaning of life, to deviate from what we were born for. This is sin, the real sin.

And that is why in Greek, 'repentance' is *metánoia*, that is 'total transformation of one's mind': in other words, a rebirth, an entirely different perception of life.

In order to become a true *sādhū*, the person needs a *metánoia*, a thorough change that enables the individual to take the supreme decision of his or her life: to leave all behind and go in search of God. Jesus said (*Matthew*, 19,21): «If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me». (Religions may be

different, but the core of them – if one looks under the mere surface – is the same). As we shall see later, Yogi adopted this supreme decision – to be perfect.

- However, if ‘sin’ does not exist on a metaphysical level, what is evil, then? Does it exist in and for itself, or is it an illusion too? An answer comes from Chishti, a Sufi (Muslim mystic) who lived in Ajmer, Rājasthān, between the Twelfth and the Thirteenth centuries: «Two things exist: good, and what has still to become good, Reality and pseudo-reality». Consequently, good and evil are not two separate worlds: evil is not something else from good, but simply a temporary absence or reduction of good, a disharmony that, in the evolution of the universe, cannot but transform itself into harmony. Another Master said: «Evil is but a shadow, a lesser light».

Again, Yogi Ramsuratkumar is very clear in this respect. When someone asked him about the nuclear weapon race in which the world’s great powers are engaged (atomic bombs, H bombs, and a consequent, possible planetary destruction), Bhagavan said: «It is only my Father who comes in the form of these weapons. These bombs have been put in this world only because of the grace of my Father. It is all decided by Him». So, even what in human eyes appears as the most tragic evil, ultimately is nothing but good: it is God’s grace. Undoubtedly, that is hard to accept. For someone it will be most upsetting. But it is necessary not to forget: we ‘do not see’. What do we know about the meaning and the destiny of the universe?

- Therefore, if evil is also a *līlā* (cosmic play), a fraction of time in *samsāra* (cosmic flow), what about the devil? Is it an illusion too? «Generally, Swami never said anything about the evil forces, at least not to me», our friend Parthasarathy underlined. «His being was always with his Father».

Also the distinguished Zen scholar Robert Linssen does not seem to attach importance to a hypothetical Lord of Evil as a real entity. Linssen has an interesting answer in this connection: «Satan represents the sum of the forces which resist the renewal of life»<sup>9</sup>.

As we can see, the devil, so greatly emphasized in our Western culture, appears in quite a different dimension in many Asian civilizations: of course, also in their interpretations there are negative forces that interfere with good, but the accent is not on them. The focus is always and forever on the Divine, at least according to Realized Souls.

Here, the loop along which the talk on *sādhus* has taken us, has somehow reached the end. Let us recapitulate: God is all. We have to search for him. The undertaking is hard – to the point that between God and us there seems to be a barrier, the symbol of evil itself. The time for succeeding in opening our eyes to awareness is long. Only a few can make it. Yogi Ramsuratkumar did succeed. We, children of every-day life, must try to understand at least this – with humility.

Yogi said: «I am infinite and so are you and so is everyone, my friend. But there is a veil, there is a veil. Do you follow me? You can see only an infinitesimal part of me».

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## Notes

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YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR BHAVAN

### 3

## *In Search of a Living Master*

*To see an Incarnation of God  
Is the same as to see God himself.  
God is born on earth as man  
in every age.*

**Sri Ramakrishna**

We already had a Master, in the beginning of the Nineties – one of the most wonderful Masters of India, Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. He had ‘arrived’ to us several years before, through mysterious ways. But we did not have the chance to know him during his earthly life.

For us, Bhagavan Ramana has always been *Appa-Amma* (father-mother), as many devotees in Tamil Nadu consider him, since he is near us with the special tenderness that was characteristic of him in life and that was not simply fatherly.

In those years, however, we had the strong desire (maybe the necessity) of truly encountering a Realized person – a living saint. We wanted to see him, speak and listen to him, sit near him, be blessed by him.

*Appa-Amma*, ‘the Divine Father and Mother in One’, did not make us wait too long. One day, in August 1990, we were in London for the inauguration of the «Ramana Maharshi Foundation, U.K.». On that occasion, we finally met V. Ganesan. As he knew India’s spiritual world very deeply, we put him the question we had at heart: «We would love to meet a living Master. Do you know a genuine one?»

«I will introduce you to a great saint who lives in Tiruvannamalai» he immediately answered, and talked about Yogi Ramsuratkumar. That was the first time we heard his name. Ganesan added: «Wait a moment: I am going to bring you two articles published about him. I have them in my room, in the suitcase. I can lend them to you while you are here». A couple of years later, during a visit to Italy, he told us: «That time, before leaving from Tiruvannamalai for a journey through various countries of Europe and the United States, Yogi had suggested me: “Take those articles with you: they might be useful to someone”. In fact, they were useful to you – to nobody else, although I met so many people during my long trip». So, Yogi Ramsuratkumar already knew about us, even before we had heard his name.

More than one year elapsed. In October 1991 we were finally able to go to Tiruvannamalai. As soon as we saw Ganesan again, we reminded him of his promise. He sent a person to inform Yogi. The saint inquired about the length of our stay. «Twenty days», he was told.

«Then, there is time», Yogi answered laconically. Every morning, our reliable messenger went to him, to find out whether that was the right day, but he always came back with the same verdict: «Not yet».

We were aware that *Gurus* often have strange behaviors. Thus, we were neither worried nor disappointed. We were trustfully waiting. People in Asia say that Masters often display unforeseeable and difficult-to-accept behaviors in order to test the aspirant disciple's sincerity and seriousness. It is a many-century old tradition. One example: when Annamalai (who was to become a sage), in his young age was in search of a Master and approached Seshadri Swami in Tiruvannamalai, the latter welcomed him by insulting him: «Imbecile! You have come to Tiruvannamalai! What an idiot! Why have you come here?» Young Annamalai was deeply disappointed and worried: «I said to myself: I must have committed a very bad sin if a saint is insulting me like that. I thought he had cursed me, and so I started crying»<sup>1</sup>. Seshadri Swami's attendant was moved to pity. He explained to Annamalai: what he had just received was a very auspicious welcome. Actually, Seshadri Swami had blessed him – in his own way.

Luckily, this was not our case. If we had ever received such a treatment, we would never have recovered from the shock. Yogi Ramsuratkumar, being a sage, knew that, so he did not apply it to us (these were not his manners anyway, as far as we know).

But he made us wait. Not on a whim, at least that we could grasp. We simply did not know the cause of the delay. Only after several years did we find a possible explanation, thanks to two other incidents, incomprehensible to only a superficial evaluation.

The first one: for some time in the past, Yogi Ramsuratkumar used to take tea together with a few devotees. He himself would distribute the cups, placing them more or less near each person – at random, we all would think: that is to say, without any particular attention to a very precise order. One evening, a devotee unconsciously moved the cup he had been given. He drew it about an inch closer to himself. Yogi instantly stopped and said to the man sharply: «What? You moved that cup! Don't you think this beggar knows what he is doing? You have spoiled this beggar's work!»<sup>2</sup>.

I must confess that when I read this episode, I reacted very negatively within myself. I thought it was an exaggerated behavior, or, even worse, an exhibition of power. And this, despite the fact that, by then, I already knew Swami well: I had personally experienced his compassion and his greatness. But I could not help my reaction: I was caught, as usual, by the necessity of framing the whole story within the limits of a rational explanation.

The second incident: one day, an Indian friend who is an ardent devotee of Yogi Ramsuratkumar (he wants to be anonymous; so I will call him briefly X), was

going to Tiruvannamalai. He was given a sealed letter for Yogi from Ra. Ganapathy, a famous Indian writer. When X arrived at the *ashram*, he sat down in the first row, in front of the Saint who asked him: «Any news from Ra. Ganapathy?»

*X*: «Yes, Bhagavan, he gave me a letter for you».

*Yogi*: «Where is it?» X handed the letter to Yogi.

*Yogi*: «You can go and sit there». Then Yogi gave the letter to Ma Devaki, and requested that she read it, but nobody could hear anything of what was read. Then Yogi called another person and they spoke together. The second person explained to X that in the letter the writer was asking Yogi whether X could receive a very important nomination. The person read the letter to X, then asked him: «What do you say?»

Very rightly, X answered: «Is Bhagavan asking me whether I am to accept this nomination or not? It is he who has to decide that. He knows».

*Yogi*: «Ooohh! OK. X can accept the nomination. There is no objection from this beggar». After that, Yogi blessed X.

Once more, the episode puzzled me. It seemed absurd to me. Why did Yogi behave in such a wavering, inconclusive, almost not alert way? Yet, by asking X whether he had some news from the writer, he was

clearly more than aware – to the point that he knew about the existence of the letter before anybody had mentioned it to him. I puzzled over this story for a long time. I talked about it with Giulia and Verena. We compared the first and the second incidents thoroughly. After a while, Giulia suddenly had an insight: «It seems to me that the report about the teacup demonstrates that every inch of space has its own importance, its own meaning. The second report may prove that also every fraction of time has its own weight. Nothing happens by chance. Everything must occur at the right time and in the right place. What do we actually know about subtleties, which belong to higher planes of awareness? Maybe Swami had seen that the exactly auspicious moment to approve the nomination of X had not yet arrived. So, he was just taking time. How? By having the letter read more than once, by repeating the questions. In brief, by protracting the scene up to the ‘right moment’. Only then, he could really bless X’s new important task».

The explanation appeared very acceptable to me. Yogi had ‘reasons’ that our reasons could not understand, I commented, paraphrasing the French philosopher Blaise Pascal. That is why we had to await our much-longed-for encounter with him: for us too there was a right moment – which arrived two days before our departure. Yogi’s message was: «They may come this afternoon, at four o’clock».

Ganesan sent someone to accompany us to San-nidhi Street, where Bhagavan was living in those days:

the name Sannidhi literally means ‘proximity (to God)’, probably because the street leads to the great temple dedicated to Arunachalesvara, the Divine Lord Arunachala (one of the names of Shiva). Actually, it is more a side road than a street – it is rather narrow, very crowded and noisy, with an open sewer flowing near the house where Yogi lived. The house had a closed gate and, behind it, a heavy wooden door which was open. The person who had accompanied us, spoke with a boy who was Swami’s attendant. The boy reported to Swami that we were there. He let us enter at once.

The saint was sitting in a corner, where the room – a sort of verandah, hardly lit – narrowed to form a kind of short corridor. As soon as he saw us, he raised an arm and blessed us. We prostrated at his feet. He told us to sit down in front of him, side by side, along the small corridor. We sat a few centimeters from him, in silence. After a while, Yogi asked us, in English: «Do you know my name?»

«Of course!» we answered in unison.

«What is it?»

«Ramsuratkumar», we answered like three elementary-school pupils, proud to show they knew the lesson.

And he: «My name is Yogi Ramsuratkumar. Anybody may be called Ramsuratkumar. Only this beggar is Yogi Ramsuratkumar<sup>3</sup>».

Another long silence followed. We did not know whether we were allowed to look at him and to put questions. We just tried not to make any movement, in order not to do anything wrong. Meanwhile, Yogi was blessing us, raising his right hand in our direction. From time to time, he looked up with great attention – with real interest, I should say. Then he laughed, and laughed, so much that we too were affected. We could not help laughing also. After a while, an Indian lady came in. She had a small bucket full of milk. The saint drank all of it. The lady sat down a little farther from us, towards the entrance door. After a few minutes, Swami told her to chant. The woman had a very beautiful voice. She chanted a rhythmic tune that contained only these few words:

«*Yogi Ramsuratkumar,  
Yogi Ramsuratkumar,  
Yogi Ramsuratkumar,  
Jaya Guru Raya*».

Pretty soon, we too started chanting. We repeated the chant for a long time. Yogi was teaching us his *mantra* (a form of prayer). As it is said in more specific terms, «he was giving us his Name» – that is, a form of initiation. However, we were not aware of the importance of the moment.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar lit up a cigarette. In dismay, I thought: «O my God, I am allergic to smoke. Now my eyes will start watering, and I'll start sneezing». However, none of those predictions became true. Inexplicably, the smoke did not bother me at all.

Time passed. The Indian-style sitting position began to be painful for me. I tried some very slow, imperceptible movements, in search of some relief. But with scant success. Meanwhile, three or four tiny little mice had come out – very pretty mice, nevertheless, mice. They climbed Yogi's clothes, roaming up and down him, on one shoulder, on an arm, in his lap, here and there on the floor. The saint did not seem to notice them. He simply let them go. And they were perfectly at ease. On the contrary, we were observing Swami's little friends with much concern: should they have come upon us or should they have decided to explore Giulia's bag which had been left open in a spot we could not reach, how would we have reacted? In a somehow similar case, the English poet John Donne rebuked himself: «I neglect God (...) for the noise of a fly...». To me, a few little mice were enough to neglect the great opportunity I had been presented: to be in front of a God-man, an experience I had pined for.

More time passed. In a corner, on the left, I could make out a huge heap of dried flower garlands – the offerings of previous devotees. From the road, muffled noises could be heard: the echoes of many voices, of shrill trumpets, of ancient sounds. There was nothing in

that scene which could remind me of our world, of the end of the Twentieth century. I was immersed in a fragment of the distant past. «I am in Marco Polo's era», I thought almost in a dream state. For some moments, I indulged in that feeling: I liked to look around with the eyes of Marco Polo.

Nine years later, in February 2000, on the day we saw Yogi Ramsuratkumar for the last time, Bhagavan suddenly inquired, addressing himself specifically to me: «What did Marco Polo say about India?»

«I don't know...», I answered, a little surprised by that strange question.

After a little while, Yogi returned to the same subject and insisted: «About Southern India, about these places, what did Marco Polo write?»

«I really can't say, I am sorry, Bhagavan», I excused myself. «Marco Polo's book is difficult to read, because it is written in an archaic Italian language. I read it only here and there, very long ago. I do not remember it well».

Yogi looked at me for some seconds, but I continued not to understand. After more than one year (in March 2001), when I succeeded in melting much of my resistance, I had a sudden insight that struck me like lightning: Yogi Ramsuratkumar had perceived that reverie of mine – which was not as strong a sentiment as

fear or yearning. It was just a fleeting thought, which passed through my mind. A fantasy without any importance. Nonetheless, even that had been 'seen' by him, who was one with All.

Let us now return to the magic moments in Sannidhi Street, during our first visit.

Yogi was the image of the perfect Indian sage: a noble, intense face, with a white, thick beard, a powerful build which emanated great energy – not just physical. He was the embodiment of bliss. People thought of him as a God-man, yet he was absolutely simple, unassuming. He wore a turban. Several *malas* (rosaries) were hanging on his chest. The thumb and the forefinger of his left hand moved unceasingly, by habit, accompanying the *namajapa* (recitation of God's name) on the beads of an imaginary rosary. There was, however, an even more impressive characteristic: Yogi's smile, as luminous as the smile of a child – indescribable, unforgettable. I am only able to say: a smile that radiated pure joy.

«Do you want to go away?» the saint asked us after about two hours during which we had been sitting in front of him, without speaking. We were not able to utter a reply. Not even the thinnest voice came out of our mouths. I only looked into his eyes – just that one time in the whole two hours – and slightly shook my head, signifying: «No, please».

He immediately reassured us: «Then, stay longer».

We all chanted again. He smoked, and went on blessing the three of us, quite frequently. From time to time, other devotees entered the room. Each one had something to ask him. Yogi almost always answered: «My Father blesses you». Later we were told by someone that the sentence meant: everything will be alright. The persons who heard that answer thanked him intensely, and walked away happy and safe. A few days after, someone who knows Swami well, explained to us: «These Enlightened Souls do not talk just to say something kind. Each single word uttered by them is *truth*. So, if he says, “My Father blesses you”, it is sure that everything – health, family, work problems – will be alright».

Another hour or so had passed by. The saint said: «Now this beggar will leave you». We prostrated in front of him. He blessed us again, and saw us off.

It was dark outside. We took a taxi and went straight back to Sri Ramanasramam where we knew Ganesan was waiting for us. Our friend was worried: «You are very late!»

- «We were with Yogi until ten minutes ago».

- «Did you like the visit?»

- «Immensely».

- «At what time do you have to go again, tomorrow?»

- «We do not have to go again».

- «Of course, you do».

- «No, we have no appointment» we remarked, following the cliché of our Western minds.

- «Now the way is open: you have to see him again».

- «Are you sure?» we inquired, afraid of making a blunder with Yogi.

- «Definitely», Ganesan answered firmly.

- «Then, please, explain to us: may we look at Swami's face? May we speak to him freely?»

- «You *must* look at him! Observe every detail, each of his gestures. All in him is important, all has its weight. And tell him whatever you feel. Ask him questions. Don't be afraid».

- «May we also tell him about our spiritual doubts?» I specified.

- «Of course. Everything. More than if you were speaking to me».

The next day, in the afternoon, we went back to Sannidhi Street. In front of Yogi's house, there was a long line of devotees who were waiting in the pouring rain. We lined up too, but we were a little bit discouraged. After a couple of minutes, Yogi's attendant appeared at the gate. He saw us, went back inside, and immediately reappeared, signaling us to come forward.

We entered. Yogi Ramsuratkumar was sitting in the same place. In the room, there were other people already sitting, but 'our' three places were free: Yogi was waiting for us. Giulia was moved: how was it that we were receiving so much love from a saint?

After a few moments, one of the devotees (maybe with a bit of emphasis, but we are not sure of that, because we were excited for being there again) explained to Bhagavan that he had come from Calcutta, and that his journey had been very long. «These three ladies come from Italy», was the saint's comment. «It's a matter of interest». Verena was deeply affected by this sentence: since then, she has quoted it on many occasions in her life. It's a matter of interest – it is a question of intensity, everything depends on what we feel for somebody, for a subject, for a research, for God.

Yogi asked the same devotee: «Don't you have a *Guru* in Calcutta?»

- «Yes, I have», the man answered, and told his *Guru's* name.

- «Then, why don't you follow him? Why do you need to visit this beggar?» The conversation ended there.

We all chanted again the same *mantra* of the previous day. Although the tune was very simple, I could not keep it in my mind. Probably Yogi Ramsuratkumar knew even that.

Once the chanting was over, I finally found the courage to speak to him – the *satpurusha*, the cosmic being, the indwelling form of God, who was in front of me. It had always been a dream of my life, since I was a child, to sit at the feet of an old sage, «a man of perfection», who could explain everything to me. «Bhagavan», I started «I have a problem: I would like to love God more. But my rationality prevents me doing so. I continuously find ambiguities and motives for wavering. So, I become indifferent. Doubts, always doubts. I am not able to believe. I am ashamed of this faith which is not faith – of this intermittent faith».

«Ooohhh!» Yogi exclaimed, and touched his beard. Then he turned his attention to another person who put to him a totally different question: it had something to do with a bicycle. But none of the three of us understood what they were saying, although this conversation was also in English. I was disappointed. Why did he not

take care of my problem? Then, Yogi asked the other devotee very distinctly: «When you were learning to ride the bicycle, did you fall sometimes?»

- «Yes, of course, Swamiji» (*ji* is more or less equal to 'sir').

- «Then, with time, you would fall less and less...»

- «It's true...»

- «... because you had learnt how to master the art of riding a bicycle».

- «Yes, it is so, Swamiji».

- «However, the fact that you had fallen several times did not take you away from your wish or from the necessity of riding a bicycle...»

- «No, definitely».

Yogi turned his look towards me too, and continued to speak to both of us. Now, I began to understand: Bhagavan had used a 'parable', and he was giving an answer to the devotee, to me, and to those who will come in future centuries. He said: «One must not get discouraged, if one falls. It may happen. Then, when one learns more, mistakes become less and less frequent. In the beginning, one may also feel tired. It is normal. Then what does one

do? Does one abandon the bicycle, saying: “It is not for me”? Surely not. If one is tired, there is a better remedy: accept being tired, take a rest. Have a seat and take a rest. After a while you will be able to take to the road again, with greater vigor». He looked at me and said: «Also doubts must not be faced with anxiety and stress. Take a rest. Doubts will eventually be solved». He did not make me feel guilty for my unsteady, staggering faith. He did not give me a sermon, a telling-off. «Take a rest». His compassion has consoled me since then.

Much later, we learned that Yogi Ramsuratkumar would always have special understanding for the people who did not succeed in their spiritual practice, for the ones who had no energy to carry on their austerities. Our friend Parthasarathy reported: «He would encourage these people, and bless them in order not to let them feel guilty. He would shower his love on them abundantly, if out of desperation for failing in their *sādhanas*, they blundered. For example, once, a great devotee of Swami, after he was initiated and had done severe penance, was unable to progress on his spiritual path. He went back to his old vices: he again became an alcoholic and a womanizer. Not only that, but once, in his vexation, he consumed a lot of whisky and went to Swami, taking a prostitute with him. He knocked at the door of the house in Sannidhi Street so forcibly that Swami himself got up from his seat to see who was there. The devotee abused Swami with filthy language. I was there and was very angry with that man, but I had to be silent as Swami received him and the girl with great love. He made them

both sit, inquired of the girl about herself and her family. Then he asked her to light *agarbathis* (perfuming sticks), again and again. He himself was giving her the sticks». In Hindu religion, this ritual is performed by very pure souls, called *pujaris*, and should be done with great devotion. Swami made that woman perform the holy work – Yogi Ramsuratkumar like Jesus: the same compassion. In the meantime, he devoted himself also to the desperation of the other so-called sinner: the devotee who had lost his path. Parthasarathy continued his description: «Swami listened to him with great attention, even if the latter hurled imprecations. He touched the man in various parts of his body with great love and compassion. Then, the man started weeping and spoke of how he had tried to concentrate on Swami and how his mind had tricked him and taken him to his old habits. When he completed his confession, I saw that Swami was shedding tears too. Then Swami became all serious and started blessing the devotee in such a powerful way that his intoxication vanished. When he left, he was a totally changed person. After this event, I met him several times. He was a peaceful and blissful man having no aim other than his *Guru*, Yogi Ramsuratkumar».

It had become dark again. Before taking leave, we prayed Bhagavan to bless us once more: «Tomorrow we are going back to the West, to a world which is difficult from the spiritual point of view». The saint lavished his grace upon us, as he had done the day before.

He smoked again, looking at others and, from time to time, at us, always very intensely. When we left his house, we remained silent for the whole way back to Ramanasramam, so overwhelmed were we with peace and joy.

Ganesan was waiting for us once more. He wanted to know everything, in every detail. «I am happy to see you happy», he commented. «It is not always easy to approach a *jñāni* [a sage], you know? Westerners especially are often disappointed. For instance, Yogi smokes. This shocks them. Many say: “What? A saint who smokes?”».

- «No, we were not shocked. We think we understood: for him, cigarettes are like a ‘fire’ through which he purifies his devotees’ negativities».

- «Yes, he has three very personal ways for healing the problems of people (every saint has his own methods). Yogi Ramsuratkumar works through his touch, by which he cures most physical problems; second, by giving the person something to drink. In this case, karmic affectations are worked upon [*karma*, the effect of accumulated actions in lives, past and present]. Finally, Yogi helps through smoking. When a person says to him: “Bhagavan, I have a problem”, and Yogi ‘sees’ this problem is generated by the person’s mind, he starts smoking. While doing so, he speaks with other people, then solicits the first devotee: “So, you have a problem...”».

Another friend explained to us some time later: «Cigarettes in Yogi Ramsuratkumar's hands function as Vedic *homa*, the sacrificial fire. Through that fire Swami reduces a great part of his devotees' problems to ashes».

As planned, the next day, at dawn, we left Sri Ramanasramam for Europe. Ganesan accompanied us to Chennai. But before leaving Tiruvannamalai, he took us once more to Sannidhi Street. «It is too early!» we protested, being afraid to disturb Yogi at six o'clock in the morning.

- «Don't worry», he tried to reassure us, and started knocking at the door.

- «He must still be sleeping» we insisted, as we did not see anyone about. Ganesan went on knocking more and more vigorously. We were in anguish: we feared the reaction of our saint who had left us with so much love. It seemed to us we were taking undue advantage of his patience. Finally, Yogi arrived: he had no turban, and had clearly awakened just a moment before. Nonetheless, he had his indescribable smile of joy and innocence on his face. Ganesan asked him to bless us again. And he immediately welcomed us into his house, and blessed us profusely.

Only now, we are somehow able to perceive how much of this experience we did not grasp at that time.

And we are aware that there is infinitely more that remains unknown.

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## Notes

1. Godman D., *Annamalai Swāmī: Une Vie après de Rāmana Maharshi*, Editions Nataraj, Falicon 1996, p.34.
2. Hilda Charlton, *Saints Alive*, <http://www.hildacharlton.com/>
3. Yogi himself explained the meaning of the name Ramsurat-kumar, as our friend Parthasarathy told us: *Ram* (Rama) is a name of God; *Surat* means 'passion'; *Kumar* stands for 'son'. Hence, the whole name means 'passionate son of Rama'. The term *Yogi* means 'one who is united (with the universal soul)', 'ascetic'.

## 4

### *To Become A Saint: What Does It Mean?*

*As flowing rivers disappear into the sea,  
losing their names and forms,  
so a wise man, freed from name and form,  
attains the Purusha, who is greater than the great.  
He who knows the Supreme Brahman  
verily becomes Brahman.*

**Mundaka Upanishad III, ii, 8-9**

*What am I: I am Brahman!  
Yes, I am Brahman, I am!  
I verily offer myself in oblation!  
Svāhā!*

**Mahānārāyana Upanishad 157-158**

Who was Yogi Ramsuratkumar – ‘this beggar’, defined by reliable sources as «one of the holiest men that Mother Bhārat has given birth to in the modern period»<sup>1</sup>? Who was this enigma, more than once despised, chased away, and beaten up – who, nevertheless, had found the ‘kingdom of heaven’ within himself? A Tamil proverb affirms that it is very difficult to find the source of a river and the origin of a *rishi* (a sage, ‘the one who sees’, from the Sanskrit root *drish*, ‘to see’). Actually, it would not be hard to determine what Yogi Ramsuratkumar’s personal data were and how his earthly life went on, year after year. But is it really

‘historicity’ that counts in the existence of a saint, of a spiritual giant?

Yogi never talked about his biography – especially about the time before his Realization. It is known that he was born on December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918, in a village near Benares. His original name was Ram Surat Kunwar. Since he was a child he had searched for the company of sages, on the banks of the Ganges.

Once, a friend of ours, Pankkajam (who used to lead the daily *bhajans* in the *ashram*), made a tour in that area, and wrote an accurate list of all the villages between Benares and Allahabad. Back in Tiruvannamalai, she read the list to Yogi in the hope he would point out which one was his native place. Pankkajam uttered each name as if it was a question, and every time she inquiringly looked at the saint, waiting for a sign, a hint. But the saint remained silent, motionless. Finally, our friend asked him, a little disappointed: «Please, Bhagavan, won’t you tell me which of all these names is the right one?»

«Pankkajam», he answered «this beggar forgot the name of the village where he was born». It may seem a witty answer, in reality it is a lesson: a man who no longer belongs to time, does not belong to space either. He is in the Cosmic Consciousness. This is what counts, nothing else.

Even from a worldly level, however, what is a biography that tracks the life of a person step by step?

Leon Edel, a theoretician and master of the biographical genre, asserts: «It is a predatory activity». This idea is confirmed by the Anglo-American poet W.H. Auden: «My life is ‘non-essential’: the reason for which you are interested in my biography is given by my works, thus it is in them that you can find the ‘me’ you are looking for»<sup>2</sup>.

We agree with this statement thoroughly: therefore, we will merely report a small number of incidents of Bhagavan’s life, those which really can be of help in understanding him.

To begin with, it may be useful to know a couple of facts, although absolutely irrelevant for Yogi Ramsuratkumar: he got a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Allahabad, and a Bachelor of Teaching degree at the University of Patna; he taught History and English in a high school, where he was the headmaster. He knew Bihari, Bengali, Urdu, Hindi, Sanskrit, and of course English. Therefore, he was not naive or inexperienced. He had a distinguished position. But he left everything because of his yearning: to overstep the veil that does not allow anyone of us *to see*, even if we look, and *to hear*, even if we listen.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar had three great Masters: Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, and Swami Ramdas. About them, he said: «This beggar was not as impressed with Swami Ramdas as he had been with Ramana Maharshi and Aurobindo. This beggar was not able to



(from left to right: Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Maharshi and Papa Swami Ramdas.)

understand Ramdas at that time. He understood immediately that the other two Masters were spiritual giants. With Ramdas, however, it was different. It was a kind of reaction... He was living luxuriously, and people were serving him like a king»<sup>3</sup>. Then, young Ramsuratkumar decided to go up North. But two meaningful events occurred, as he himself reported: «On April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1950, when this beggar was moving somewhere in the Himalayas in search of Masters, Maharshi passed away. In the same year, on December 5<sup>th</sup>, the other great Master Aurobindo also passed away. This beggar felt a sort of restlessness, that he had lost the golden opportunity of keeping company with those two great Masters». It is an important detail, that is why we report it: it shows that it is absolutely human to miss the opportunity of truly encountering a great Master, and to go instead in search of who knows what, who knows where. It happened to Yogi. It may happen also to all of us. But the mistake is not necessarily an abyss. God – the Cosmic Consciousness – does not condemn. God understands.

The disciple in search of a living Master went back to Swami Ramdas, who, as Yogi himself explained, «this time turned out to be an entirely different person. At the very first sight, Ramdas could tell a number of intimate things about the life and the mission of this beggar which nobody but this beggar knew. Not only that, but the Master started to take special care of this beggar». In that moment, the disciple recognized Ramdas as a «really great sage», and he felt him as his Master. He

asked for initiation and obtained it. «Ramsuratkumar seated himself on the floor before his spiritual Father and proceeded to repeat after him, syllable by syllable, the ancient and sacred *mantram* then given over to him to be his path inward to the Divine.

*OM SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI JAI RAM»*

Swami Ramdas said to him: «Go and repeat this *mantram* day and night, all the twenty-four hours»<sup>4</sup>.

The mysterious and immense power of the Divine Name is stressed by all the great religions, from one corner of the world to the other. Ramdas wrote: «Name is God Himself. (...) The mind itself is transformed into God by the power of the Name. He who takes refuge in the Name can work wonders. (...) The writer can vouch for it from his own experience that the Name by itself without any other *sādhana* can grant one the fullest vision of God»<sup>5</sup>.

Clearly, the task imposed by Ramdas was very hard, and Yogi Ramsuratkumar confessed: «[Ramdas] gave the command to repeat this *mantra* day and night, all the twenty-four hours. This beggar could not do that. He was trying to do so. He made me repeat the *mantra* as far as he could. Within a week, what he did I do not know, this beggar passed away. What remained was the all pervading, eternal Truth of my Father. He alone exists, inside, outside, everywhere, eternal, eternal, eternal». Some time later, he specified: «This beggar died

in 1952, at the lotus feet of Swami Ramdas. He killed him. He killed him. From that time, my Father alone exists. This beggar does not exist. (...) Devaki, my Father alone exists, nothing else, nobody else. Only the One. Krishna, Rama, Shiva are just forms and names. My Father alone exists. (...) There is no seer, there are no things to be seen»<sup>6</sup>.

In those days and nights, our Yogi, like anyone who walks along the path towards Realization, must have had a number of experiences that are unimaginable for us. These experiences, as he himself affirmed, canceled his identity to the last crumb. They left him totally empty. «The heart of Enlightenment is space» affirmed Shāntideva, a Buddhist saint who lived in the Eighth century.

Then, what is the next step? What happens when the Divine vortex enters the finally cleared inner space of a human being? How does the irruption of Infinite into finite manifest itself?

A powerful, symbolic, and poetic description of a possible encounter with God – only an encounter, not an absorption, a merging – is found in the *Bible*. Prophet Elijah lived this spiritual experience: «A very powerful wind went before the Lord, digging into the mountain and causing landslides, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the windstorm, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. After the

fire, there was a soft breeze». (1. *Kings* 19,11-12). The Lord was in that gentle breeze. That is to say, before meeting God, it is necessary that man be shaken by something like a cataclysm, he must be crushed. But the moment of the encounter itself is pure bliss – «a soft breeze». The *Bible* continues: «[Elijah] covered his face with his robe»: Hebrew religion affirms that nobody can see God. On the contrary, India teaches that the highest, the most perfect experience is precisely the one of total unity, when the individual soul (*ātman*) merges into the Absolute (*Brahman*). At that point, however, one cannot see the Absolute, one *is* the Absolute.

Once, a devotee of Ramana Maharshi asked his Master: «Please, Bhagavan, help me to see God». The Maharshi answered: «I can help you to be God, not to see God». Another devotee prayed: «Let me see your true form». And Ramana disappeared. In the place where he had been sitting, there was now only emptiness. The no-form. «There are no things to be seen», Yogi explained. There is *Shūnyatā*, the Void, Buddha Shākyamuni would teach.

Descriptions, however, rarely deal with the very moment of irruption. Probably words are not enough. Maybe the heart cannot bear the memory. The ones who lived this experience, usually do not talk about it. Even if they are expressly requested to describe their feelings, their attention seems to shift spontaneously to the after-irruption.

In this regard it may be interesting to briefly follow the specific example of a devotee whom Yogi himself brought to Realization. His name was Murugeshan. He was a very rich young man, a friend of Parthasarathy. He died from a heart attack when he was only forty-five. Despite this fact, a month before Murugeshan passed away, Swami succeeded in making him achieve the supreme benediction. Parthasarathy told us: «Murugeshan was a man of vast knowledge, and sharp and sensitive mind. He had many so-called vices, which he did not hide to anybody, even to Swami. From the beginning, Swami never bothered about Murugesshji's habits<sup>7</sup>. He only showered his love on him, initiated him with his Name, and enlightened him with the highest knowledge of God.

The last time Murugesshji was with Swami was in 1984. I was with them. We spent three days together in a lodge (Sivakasi Nadar Chatram). Swami did not permit anybody to disturb us. All the time he was concentrating on Murugesshji. Then Swami relieved us. On the way, we did not utter a single word to each other. There was a natural silence within and without us. When we reached the moment we had to part for our places, Murugesshan exclaimed: "What happened to me? I have become a stranger to myself. There is a total silence. I can sense I am not here. There is nothing within and without". After this, he remained in his body exactly one month during which time he was always alone, saying nothing to anybody. He used to sit beneath a *pipal* tree in his home garden. He was so indifferent to the outside world that

nothing could disturb him. He was totally merged with the being of Swami. All his gestures and movements resembled Swami so naturally. I say with all certainty, it was not at all an imitation or duplication. He had become totally one with Swami. After Murugesan passed away, Swami stated: “Murugesaji is worshipping. He has realized my Father”».

Also our friend Parthasarathy was initiated by Yogi with his Name. He wrote to us: «In 1977 I stayed with Swami for more than twenty days. In the daytime, he would ask me to sing songs composed either by me or by others. Late at evenings, he made me chant his Name, and this chanting went on for the whole night. Once, around 2 a.m., while I was reciting the *mantra*, Swami suddenly got up from his bed and sat down before me. He stared at me. I stopped chanting and fixed my eyes on his feet, without any thought. Swami said: “Parthasarathy, repeat what this beggar says”. Then he began to chant “Yogi Ramsuratkumar”, pronouncing the *mantra* word by word with great seriousness, and I followed him. He repeated the chant three times, and I repeated it after him. Then he went back to bed, asking me to go on chanting<sup>8</sup>. At about 4 a.m., he told me to go to the lodge where I had my room, to take rest, and to come back to him in the evening. So I did, but for the whole day I was unable to sleep, to eat, to think. The thought process was totally absent. There was no me, you, others. Nothing was there. But the sensation was neither blissful nor dreadful. The *mantra* was just

emanating from the physical frame. There was nothing, nothing except a deep void. Silence».

Parthasarathy also reported us what Yogi had told him about his own experience: «After he was initiated by Swami Ramdas, this beggar became mad. He was not himself. He became totally mad. He did not know what he was and where he was. Sometimes he would weep and other times he would laugh and laugh. This beggar was completely possessed by my Father».

The hinge of the matter is: what is the meaning of «completely possessed by Father»? It is a statement we cannot read with only half our mind. We must stop and analyze it, because it contains a mystery that is flabbergasting, a *mysterium tremendum*, as the ancient Romans would say. Man is born with a potential that makes us shudder at the very thought: he is *capax Dei*, capable to become God. In the *Qur'ān*, there is a passage that lapidarily expresses human being's enormous metaphysical responsibility – the duty of discovering who he or she is, and the possibility of transcending human condition and achieving a higher status – even higher than the one of angels. But Allah seems to be somehow astonished while he utters these words: «Surely we offered the trust of our secrets to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused and feared from it. Man has taken it upon himself. Surely he is overconfident and insane»<sup>9</sup>.

On the contrary, India is not amazed. She has been teaching this path for millennia: how to be consciously God. The rest is illusion.

Christianity too affirms: «Christ became man in order for man to become God»<sup>10</sup>. For all religions, man reaches his human fullness and perfection solely if he realizes what he potentially is: a divine, cosmic man, a *purushottama* (supreme spirit). Exactly what Yogi Ramsuratkumar became. And before him, countless other Enlightened beings, from Buddha to Ramananda, Manikkavacakar, Vallalar, Mirabai, Anandamayi Ma, Satya Sai Baba of Shirdi, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Ramdas, Nisargadatta Maharaj... «*Bhārata Mātā, Loka Guru*» Yogi used to say, «Mother India is the abode of Masters... Our country is to produce sages. Our work is not to produce engineers and computer scientists... For thousands of years, producing sages has been our only aim. When we know that our goal is God, why should we hanker after other things and waste our precious time? ... Becoming a scientist or an engineer is all secondary. The most important thing is God-realization».

Let us go back to our topic, to the fact that the abyss between the Divine and the man Yogi Ramsuratkumar was cancelled. Where there was a human being, since Realization there has been God, who totally possessed him. But what does this mean, in practice? In front of a God-man someone may want to know for what precise reason he is God; if he says or does anything that

seems strange, a person has the right to understand why that fellow man is to be considered a Master to follow blindly. After all, there is a fundamental rule, which nobody can disregard: «Beware of false prophets».

In the case of Yogi Ramsuratkumar, this danger does not exist. Yogi Ramsuratkumar is not a 'false prophet'. He was recognized as a perfect sage not only by common people, but also by other sages. Shankaracharya Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati, the great saint of Kanchipuram Kamakoti Pitam, declared: «He is the son of the Sun». In other words, he is the son of light, a metaphor for the Divine (it is not by chance that in many spiritual traditions the deification of man is called Enlightenment). Once, somebody pronounced Yogi's name in front of Koti Swamigal, a saint who lived in the district of Coimbatore, in a small village called Puravipalayam, and who had thousands of devotees. As soon as the Swamigal heard this name, he exclaimed as in a trance: «*Avatāra Purusha, Avatāra Purusha*» (Cosmic Man, Divine incarnation)<sup>11</sup>. Uttered by such spiritual personages as Paramacharya Chandrasekharendra Sarasvati and Koti Swamigal, those definitions are like a seal of approval, an '*imprimatur*'. It is not justified to doubt the sanctity of Yogi Ramsuratkumar. *Jñānis* (sages) recognize one another through *jñāna* (true knowledge, realization of one's true nature). They do not need, as all common people do, to guess the authenticity of an enlightened person from the miracles he has performed. A *jñāni* cannot be mistaken in his judgment.

We, however, have decided not to be satisfied and silenced by this '*imprimatur*'. We want to understand the reason why a *jñāni* cannot be wrong. Our attitude may seem arrogant, even blasphemous to Indian eyes. But we need to understand – to understand before accepting. Yogi Ramsuratkumar sometimes behaved in ways that were incomprehensible to us (we already spoke about some of them; about others we are going to speak in a following chapter). Personally, I suffered more than once because of those weird incidents, as I was not able to explain them. And it was not sufficient to repeat to myself: «How do you dare to doubt?» Perplexities were there and worked negatively. For this reason I decided to scrutinize this problem closely – a problem that is mine, but can also be of other people – so that it may be solved, up to where it is humanly possible. After all, isn't this need for understanding also a yearning? Isn't it an answer to the exhortation of the *Vedas*, «Search and find him»?

Therefore, let us try to enter the heart of the great mystery: we already wrote that a Realized person is someone who has merged into God. That is to say, dissolved in the light of the Cosmic Consciousness (*Caitanya*). It is an unfathomable concept. But, again, let us not be only astounded. What does this merging imply, in practice? What is actually modified in a specimen of the *Homo sapiens* species when the latter is transformed into a *Purusha*, a *Homo Maximus*, an *Anthropos Téleios*, a Whole Man?

The answer is one: his awareness totally changes. Consequently, his way of perceiving reality is thoroughly modified. All of a sudden, there is a new vision of the world, «a vision outside the cage», as Aurobindo would say.

One perceives that everything is part of a unified cosmic energy field. Individual limits disappear, or better, they expand to the point that they coincide with life itself. There are no more distinctions between ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’, ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘above’ and ‘below’. It is a kind of all-embracing perception. Comprehension is free from any dependence, or intrusion of mind. To know, to understand, to realize are no longer processes. They are instantaneous, global events. Consciousness does not ‘approach’ things any longer, it is no longer a mechanism that receives the outer world and elaborates it. It is not even precisely right to say that the enlightened consciousness, by wiping out all barriers, ‘becomes’ the objects, our fellow creatures, the happenings. It *is* directly and thoroughly the thing itself; it *is* the other, any other; it *is* the world, without any gap, any difference, any hierarchy, a gigantic oneness where – as Yogi Ramsuratkumar often repeated – only Father exists, that is the Universal Consciousness.

The human being who merged into this Oneness, is All. He knows every detail of totality, from atoms to people, from a blade of grass to the stars. He sees all, because he is all: he is me, and therefore he knows my thoughts; he is the rock, the bricks, the cement: that is

why Yogi could tell engineer Mani how to solve very specific structural problems during the construction of the *ashram*. And Mani obeyed him without the slightest objection: he knew that his professional knowledge was acquired through books, his academic training, his experience, whereas Bhagavan's certitudes were inherent to the very components of the construction.

When we look at something, we divide our action into a subject and an object (we and the thing we are looking at). We divide the thing because we analyze, catalog, label it. In order to know something we need to section, to split into segments: theory, practice, names, forms, quantities, qualities, genders, colors. A *purusha* knows because he *is* – no cognitive stages to go through. He looks at the birds flying in the sky, and he *is* them. We cannot be those birds, because we are afraid of losing our identity. We cling to it, we are engulfed by it. We cannot be the other, any other. Nor can we understand how Yogi Ramsuratkumar was able to be a flight of birds, a brick, a tree, and the world.

In the Cosmic Consciousness, time does not exist – obviously. Therefore, it is clear why Yogi could foresee the future. Once he explained to Ganesan: «It is as if you were reading *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare and have reached the end of the second act. This beggar read the whole book, so he knows the plot in every detail». A person's life, or the history of a nation, the past, and the future – all is there, condensed in one second, the eternal

present. «Almost a memory in advance», Aurobindo explained.

The same is valid for space. Consciousness is nonlocal. Or better: it is nonlocal when mind ceases to lay a veil of unawareness and separation on reality. A *jñāni* as Yogi Ramsuratkumar can ‘hold’ in his hand the whole world like a crystal sphere. Just because, as we already pointed out, his consciousness *is* the world – hence it is everywhere in the world. But also for another profound reason: our planet is all connected (actually, the connection is even more extended: it embraces the universe uninterruptedly). There is a web of invisible threads connecting the most distant and different circumstances, people, and events. «The smallest circumstances... together», as specified by Satprem, Aurobindo’s and Mère’s famous French disciple. «You drop something, and over there, in the Bering Strait, an iceberg slowly glides, and this man prepares his coup d’état, and that one revises the 229<sup>th</sup> page of a book – everything is connected. Without logic... or with... an inconceivable logic»<sup>12</sup>.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar never spoke diffusely about this topic. However, from short, almost casually uttered sentences, we sense that his consciousness, his being, his presence were nonlocal. «This beggar is not limited to this body», he said while he was speaking about faith (obviously, people took that sentence for granted: when one prays to Yogi, he listens, even if he is far. But if the statement is framed in this new light, it acquires quite

another dimension, vigor, and concreteness). In a different context, Yogi Ramsuratkumar declared: «We work from one spot, taking into consideration the entire cosmic movement». For him the Earth, the universe were «a spaceless space where everything is together»<sup>13</sup>, where everything has a precise function, and where invisible threads constantly help «the work of Father» – those same invisible threads that, as the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno wrote, connect a man to the infinite universe and numberless worlds (this holistic conviction, among other assertions, brought the unlucky thinker to be burnt at the stake in Rome, as a heretic, on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1600).

Nowadays Western science is finally starting to discover the hidden aspects of reality – to the point that the language of some physicists echoes that of mystics and sages. It is true that most of them firmly underline that science and mysticism deal with two profoundly different dimensions of existence; therefore, any attempt to see parallels is not correct because, as the great British physicist James Jeans pointed out, «all the pictures which science now draws from nature (...) are mathematical pictures. (...) They are nothing more than pictures, fictions if you like. (...) Science is not yet in contact with ultimate reality»<sup>14</sup>. It is interesting, however, to go through a few concepts of the new science: the words used for describing recent scientific acquisitions have reminded me more than once the words of Yogi Ramsuratkumar, Sri Ramana Maharshi, or others.

Werner Heisenberg, one of the fathers of quantum physics, wrote: «The world appears as a complicated tissue of events, in which connections of different kinds alternate or overlap or combine and thereby determine the texture of the whole»<sup>15</sup>. That's to say, the material universe is now more and more seen as a dynamic web of interrelated events. And these assumptions find amazing manifestations in our life: for example, the meteorologist and mathematician Edward Lorenz discovered what he named the 'butterfly effect', according to which, «if a butterfly flaps its wings in Tokyo, then a month later it may cause a hurricane in Brazil»<sup>16</sup>. At the same time, neurology is demonstrating that consciousness is not what the old scientific paradigm has always affirmed – a product of the brain. Apparently, consciousness is nonlocal: it is spread in the whole body, and perhaps even outside. From another point of view, the research on holography is proving that nonlocality is actually the quality of everything. «In a holographic universe the very idea of location is delusion», the Italian psychologist Filippo Falzoni Gallerani pointed out to us, in a private communication.

Always in regard to the intriguing topic of nonlocality, «quantum physicists promise to transform our notions of relationship» writes the well-known scientific author Danah Zohar, who continues: «Things and events once conceived of as separate, parted in both space and time, are seen by the quantum theorist as so integrally linked that their bond mocks the reality of both space and time. They behave, instead, as multiple aspects

of some larger whole, their ‘individual’ existences deriving both their definition and their meaning from that whole»<sup>17</sup>.

What creates fragmentation – sustained the world-renowned physicist David Bohm – is thought, that «is breaking things up into bits which should not be broken up. (...) Thought is creating divisions out of itself and then saying that they are there naturally. (...) What we are doing is establishing boundaries where really there is a close connection»<sup>18</sup>. Even the famous matter-mind binomial, he specified, is not at all a binomial but a *continuum*: the first term (matter) is a coarse form of consciousness; the second term (mind) is a subtle form of matter.

But there is more: being a subatomic physicist, David Bohm realized that at the matter level, there are two distinct orders: an ‘explicate’ order (the one of Nature laws) and an ‘implicate’ order that is enfolded in matter. Ordinary human consciousness follows only the ‘explicate’ order, because it is accustomed by a sort of ‘collective agreement’ to filter and to eliminate all the potentials and the vast ‘landscapes’ that are distinctive of its ‘implicate’ nature. For instance, as Filippo Falzoni Gallerani explains, «we are so deeply accustomed to believe that it is possible to see only through our eyes, that even in the physical world we preclude ourselves from the complete range of our perceptive capacities. There are proofs that our senses have fallen victims of this censorship (...). Recently, David Eisenberg, a

member of the staff of Harvard Medical School, published a report on two sisters from Beijing, of school age, who are able to 'see' well enough through the skin of their armpits. In Italy, the neurologist Cesare Lombroso studied a blind girl who could see with the tip of her nose and the lobe of her left ear. In the Sixties, the Soviet Academy of Science made a research on a Russian countrywoman, whose name was Rosa Kuleshova, and who was able to see photos and to read newspapers with her fingertips».

So, reality is not solely the one we have accepted to see. It is unfathomable. It has dimensions which were unsuspected by the West until recently. Even matter, commonly considered heavy, opaque, inanimate in itself, is actually much more subtle and puzzling. David Bohm was convinced that the distinction made by mainstream science between 'animate matter' and 'inanimate matter' was only an abstraction. According to his opinion, a more appropriate description would be: «In the universe everything is alive»<sup>19</sup>.

In the year 2000, the English-American physicist Freeman Dyson, in his speech for the acceptance of the Templeton Prize, specified: «Atoms are weird stuff, behaving like active agents rather than inert substances. They make unpredictable choices between alternative possibilities (...). It appears that mind, as manifested by the capacity to make choices, is to some extent inherent in every atom».

It may be stimulating to compare these statements with the ones of Indian sages. Once, Ramana Maharshi was asked: «Are also plants alive?» Sri Ramana answered: «Even the stone slabs where you are sitting are alive». In more recent times Nisargadatta Maharaj stated: «All life is conscious». Then, one of the devotees who were listening to him, asked: «What about stones?» «Also stones. Alive and conscious», Nisargadatta specified.

We have already seen how Yogi Ramsuratkumar never ceased to reiterate: «Only my Father exists [that is the Cosmic Consciousness]». This was not just a figure of speech. It was his living principle. Once, on the Great Arudra Darshan Day (when Lord Shiva ecstatically danced for the delight of his beloved spouse Parvati and his intimate disciples), Yogi was sitting as ever in his dirty rags under the great *ashvattha* (*pipal*) tree, in the temple. Ma Devaki told us that she was suddenly prompted by a deep inner urge. She found herself begging him to dance, by saying: «Will not Shiva here dance for us today?» Bhagavan smiled and said: «Yes, why not?» and then, typically, he began to talk of other things with the devotees around. After a little while, the *ashvattha* tree leaves started swaying in the breeze. «See, Devaki, Shiva is dancing», was the saint's comment. A few minutes later, a millipede crawled nearby, moving its many little legs in perfect order. «You see, this is Shiva dancing», Yogi repeated. Then, a flight of birds crossed the sky. Again, Yogi exclaimed: «See the dance of Shiva!

How beautiful it is!... Shiva is dancing all the time... This beggar doesn't exist».

On another occasion, Yogi said to Parthasarathy, in a casual way: «For this beggar, this is God, that is God, everything is God. When this beggar sees Parthasarathy, he sees only his Father, God. Not Parthasarathy». Another time, he reiterated: «You can call him Jesus, Buddha, Rama, or Krishna, as you like. But God is one, that is my Father. My Father alone exists». «In this universe everything is connected, the sun, the moon, the stars, that tree, that stone, you and this beggar. All is one»<sup>20</sup>.

Words change, but the core of the concept remains; all the sages, the *jñānis*, who have seen the depths of reality, say the same thing. And now, even if occasionally, Western science is beginning to grasp these truths. Of course, sages do not need confirmation from science. But we, common people, may be helped by these scientific discoveries and new theories: they show us that *rishis*, *purushas*, Indian saints have seen clearly.

«Emancipation was not the end for this beggar, it was the beginning for him», Yogi Ramsuratkumar said. It was the beginning of a long journey. Yogi continued to explain: «After nearly two months with Ramdas, this beggar wanted to prolong his stay at Anandashram. Thrice this beggar approached Swami Ramdas and every time he was refused. The last time the sage exclaimed:

“There are a number of people who can be fit for *ashram* life. We don’t want any more of such people”».

So, Yogi Ramsuratkumar was obliged to go away. When he was taking leave of his Master, Ramdas asked him where he intended to go. «To Tiruvannamalai», Yogi answered<sup>21</sup>.

It took him seven years to reach his goal. He wandered all through India, from the southernmost tip to the most northern regions. We do not want, however, to linger on that period – probably a time of savoring the new, incredible state of consciousness he had reached. A time for silence. For prayer. And also a time of many hardships. There are already several publications dealing with this part of Yogi’s life. Personally, we prefer to touch upon only a few, meaningful events. We think it is more essential to focus our research on Yogi Ramsuratkumar’s work – the visible mission that he was assigned to carry out among human beings, and an invisible, subtler task he was meant to perform in the universe.

\* \* \*

Sometime in the summer of 1959 (end of May or beginning of June), Yogi Ramsuratkumar finally arrived in Tiruvannamalai, where he remained forever. The first years were very harsh. «Psychologically and physically, he suffered a lot» our friend Parthasarathy explained to us. In those years, in Tamil Nadu there were frequent

political upheavals. A few political parties wanted to impose Hindi as the official language of the State, and obviously the local population reacted violently to this perspective, showing resentment towards anyone speaking Hindi. Yogi used to express himself exactly in that language and in English; he knew only broken Tamil. Consequently, people who heard Swami talking in Hindi became angry and abused him. Swami bore it all silently. On several occasions, the most radical extremists beat and even tried to kill him on the road with trucks and jeeps running at high speed. Parthasarathy related a moving detail to us: «When we – Swami, Murugesan, and myself – were walking together on the road he would catch hold of our hands, and if any vehicle horn sound was heard, he would jump with us to the extreme side of the road».

Ma Devaki, who spent so much time close to Yogi Ramsuratkumar, was able to add more details about the hardships Yogi would suffer: «Bhagavan himself told me that some miscreants would throw stones at him, calling him ‘madman’ teasingly. Sometimes they would beat him up until he fell unconscious. In the backyard of his Sannidhi Street house, in the nights, they would scatter plenty of small glass pieces on the pathway to his toilet. Early in the morning, while going to the toilet in the dim light of his torch, Swami happened to walk over them, hurting his feet, which would bleed. So, he would clear the whole place, only to find the whole thing repeating itself again, the morning after».

For eighteen years, Yogi Ramsuratkumar had no home in Tiruvannamalai. He often spent his days sitting under a *punnai* tree (Alexandrian laurel), at the backside of the railway station. Other times he would mingle with the crowd of *sādhus* hanging about in the big Arunachalesvara temple. Our friend Pankkajam found him here. She had come from her home in Vellore, with the specific purpose of finding him. She had heard about him. «He is a saint», she had been told. Therefore, she decided to go with a few friends to Tiruvannamalai to see him. It was not difficult to identify that strange being in his worn clothes, wearing a turban, with several newspapers, a stick, a coconut bowl, and a fan (that's why local people called him *Visiri Samiyar*, which in Tamil means 'the *sādhu* with a fan'). People say that the fan was given to him by another famous saint, Swami Gnanananda Giri of Tapovanam *ashram*, not far from Tiruvannamalai. Apparently, eight months before passing away, Gnanananda Swami said to Yogi Ramsuratkumar: «With this I pass you my power». Parthasarathy, however, refuted this version: «It is only an imaginary story. What I can say is that in my presence Bhagavan vehemently affirmed that Swami Ramdas was his Master, and not Gnanananda Swamigal».

Ma Devaki added: «Bhagavan said countless times: “Swami Ramdas killed this beggar and Father entered him, giving him this madness. Ever since, Father has been controlling this beggar's every thought, every word, every gesture”. So, there's no question of anyone else passing power to him». Anyway, Yogi always used

to take the fan with him – to the point that it has become one of his symbols.

*“On a typical road in Tiruvannamalai, holding His fan and His coconut bowl.”*



Thus, it was not difficult for Pankkajam to recognize that very special beggar. Together with the friends who accompanied her, she approached and greeted him, and tried to start a conversation. But the beggar kept silent. After a while, her friends became bored: «We are going for a drink», they said to Pankkajam, and left. Immediately after, the *sādhū* started talking. Only a few words, as sages do, but each word was a drop of gold that Pankkajam treasured in her heart. «Come whenever you wish», Yogi said to her at the end. And Pankkajam went to see him again and again, more and more often, until the day she remained in Tiruvannamalai – to be constantly at the saint’s feet.

The very first person to discover that under the worn and dirty clothes of Yogi Ramsuratkumar a *jñāni* was hidden, was Pandit T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, a famous devotee of Sri Ramana Maharshi, and himself an advanced soul. Probably sometime in 1960 or 1961, Iyer started telling people: «This young man is not an ordinary person. Don’t be deceived by the appearance of this person. He is a *siddha puruṣa* [*siddha*, perfect, accomplished. From the Sanskrit root *sidh*, to attain]».

Also a few priests of the Arunachalesvara temple recognized him as a *mahātmā*, noticing some similarities with Sri Seshadri Swamigal.

Then, one of the first persons to become a devotee of Yogi Ramsuratkumar – perhaps the very first one – was Perumal Sadaiyan, a prosperous merchant who

owned a shop just opposite the Arunachalesvara temple. The encounter happened around the year 1964: one evening, when all the shops were closed, he was sitting alone, looking at the mighty *gopuram* (temple tower), and the sacred hill of Arunachala behind it. «Suddenly» Perumal wrote in his book, «at the feet of the tower, I saw a streak of something like a beam of light, swift and sudden like a lightning, transforming the evening for a moment. It was a human form moving towards me. (...) He held a palm-leaf fan and four or five newspapers in his hands»<sup>22</sup>. That human form was Yogi Ramsuratku-mar. Gradually Perumal understood who that beggar really was, and became immensely devoted to him. Finally, he himself turned into a *sādhu*.

Also Rajamanickam, a businessman, owner of two industries, was among the first devotees of Yogi. He was encouraged by Gnanananda Swamigal to go in search of the new saint in Tiruvannamalai – where he was sometimes nicknamed ‘Ram Ram Swami’ for his habit of continuously reciting the name of Rama. Rajamanickam met him, and soon became such a staunch devotee of the saintly man that he brought a lot of people from his own community – the Nadars – to his feet. Later, he decided to go on a long tour from Madras to Kanyakumari, at the southernmost tip of India, to speak about the living saints of Tamil Nadu, one of whom, of course, was Yogi Ramsuratkumar<sup>23</sup>. Meanwhile, Visiri Samiyar or Ram Ram Swami – whatever name people liked to call him – continued to live his humble life. During the day he stayed under the *punnai* tree. In the eve-

ning he walked to Sannidhi Street, to the *Theradi Mandapam* (a small temple next to which the chariot for the processions is stored), meandering for more than three kilometers through the roads of the town, while his friends – among whom was Perumal – carried the gunny-sacks containing his poor belongings. Once they had reached the *Theradi Mandapam*, the saint would sit on one of the many steps of the building. His friends and the growing number of devotees would seat themselves around him. When the shops near the *mandapam* closed, at about ten o'clock in the evening, Swami moved again: he had the habit of spending the night in a passageway in front of a shop, where there was a platform that he used as a bed. At five o'clock in the morning he would get up. One of his assistants would bring him some coffee. Then, he resumed his meandering walk through roads and lanes, back to the *punnai* tree. If devotees began to gather around him, Yogi would speak, explain, and laugh with them, as usual. If no one came, he would ask his assistants to chant his Name. «The assistants used to sing in such a harmonious way that I still hear them in my ears» Parthasarathy, who met the saint in 1976, said to us.

When a devotee brought some food, Swami would share it with the other visitors. If there was nothing to eat, Swami would stay hungry. «But he would send his assistants to eat something in the Rajini Café where he had an account (financed by the offerings of the devotees) for just this purpose», Parthasarathy explained.

Once, while wandering near the Dakshinamurti Shrine with Perumal, Yogi Ramsuratkumar showed his friend a little hut. «Look, Perumal» he said, «this is where this beggar stayed».

«I looked through the window into that room», Perumal wrote later in his book. «What I saw made me shiver. (...) Many black scorpions of the most poisonous kind were scuttling about. There were red scorpions also moving about with chameleons and other reptiles. There were several clusters of white ants (...). On a bundle of papers and old clothes, a small snake was moving about. (...) My mind was disturbed by a number of thoughts: “Such a great man had to live in such a dwelling! (...) A rare and great man, not being understood by foolish people who beat and tortured him (...)”. “Let us go” Swami said. My eyes were filled with tears (...), whereas his face was saturated with love»<sup>24</sup>.

The sight of that saintly man without a fixed abode, obliged to move around from one part of the town to the other, according to daytime and nighttime, obviously worried his devotees who loved him so much. Consequently, five of the most well-off among them, including Rajamanickam, worked out a concrete solution: on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1977, they bought him the house in Sannidhi Street, right in front of the *Theradi Mandapam*. Although the dwelling was chosen with the saint's consent, it was not until six months after the purchase that he took up permanent residence there.

In that house, Yogi Ramsuratkumar lived for seventeen years<sup>25</sup>.

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## Notes

1. Rangarajan V., *Glimpses of a Great Yogi*, A Sister Nivedita Academy Publication, Madras 1988, p. XIII.
2. Auden, W.H., summarized by Hillman J. *Il Codice dell'Anima*, Adelphi, Milan 1997, p. 223. (*The Soul's Code. In Search of Character and Calling*, Warner Books, 1996).
3. Wadlington T.C., *Yogi Ramsuratkumar, The Godchild, Tiruvannamalai*, Diocesan Press, Madras 1979, p. 35 and 39.
4. Wadlington, *ibidem*, p. 55 and p. 56.
5. Ramdas, *In Quest of God*, and *The Life Divine, passim*, Anandashram.
6. Yogi Ramsuratkumar relates his initiation in a DVD video produced by the Yogi Ramsuratkumar Bhavan, Mauritius. Order address: gaurakrishna@hotmail.fr
7. It is interesting to note that in India and in the countries under its cultural influence (Tibet, Nepal, etc.) morality has nothing to do with wisdom. Parthasarathy explains: «Wisdom is recognized not for the presence of some specific behavior, but in spite of any behavior». According to Sacred Scriptures, saints can be lascivious, quick-tempered (for example Marpa, Milarepa's Master); they can even show an incomprehensible demeanor (for example Padmasambhava, one of the historical founders of Tibetan Buddhism; he is called the *Guru Rimpoche*, the 'Precious Master', and is extremely venerated in Bhutan). If your mind is not contaminated – the Scriptures continue – you will realize that these special individuals are saints. Parthasarathy goes on to explain: «Krishna was an *avatara* (the eighth incarnation of Lord Vishnu), yet he was the perpetrator of several transgressions towards girls and even

spouses of other men. Nevertheless he is called *purna avatara* (total, complete incarnation)». According to the Indian point of view, improvement of the character affects only the psyche: therefore, it is a tiny, marginal step. On the contrary, Realization is the total eradication of the individual from the restricted state of his or her human condition. From that moment on, whatever a *guru* or an *avatara* performs, is done from an arcane, superhuman sphere. The purpose of their every single action is to give relief to others, to devotees, to humankind. Even behaviors that may not be correct in our eyes are, in reality, lessons.

8. Recently, laboratory experiments have proved that a prolonged, monotone chanting, or a rhythmic drum beating stimulates the temporal lobes of the human brain, where apparently there is an area which neurobiologists Michael Persinger from the Canadian Laurentiana University, and V.S. Ramachandram from the University of California in San Diego, have defined «divine center» or «divine module». This proves that for thousands of years India's sages (and of other Asian countries) knew that a way of helping the neophyte to reach Realization is the constant repetition of a *mantra*, because this sound, and the way it is devised, activates the human resources that make transcendental experiences possible. The two researchers discovered that this spiritual center, situated between the neural connection of the temporal lobes, increases its activity when stimulated: it can provoke a deep ecstatic rapture, a sense of connectedness with the Whole, a vision of reality where there are no divisions, no differences, and no limits. The presence of a 'divine center' in the neurological structure of our brain proves that, as human creatures, we have a biological, inborn ability to live mystical experiences; we are able to ask 'fundamental questions'; and we are responsive to a more extensive meaning of life (Danah Zohar, Ian Marshall, SQ – *Spiritual Intelligence. The Ultimate Intelligence*, New York 2000).
9. *Qur'ān*, XXXIII, 72, translated by S.H. Nasr, in *Ideali e Realtà dell'Islam*, Rusconi Editore, Milano 1974, p. 25. (*Ideals and Realities of Islam*, London 1974).
10. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* I,9; Atanasius, *De incarnatione verbi* LIV; Gregory of Nazanzus; ST. Gregory the Theologian; etc.

11. Kamalan V., *Yogi Ramsuratkumar le Tout-puissant* in *Rama Nama* (Yogi Ramsuratkumar Bhavan, Mauritius), N. 80, p. 18.
12. Satprem, *Mother or the New Species*, vol. 2, Institute for Evolutionary Research, New York 1983, p. 408.
13. Satprem, *ibidem*, p. 410.
14. Sir Jeans J., *The Mysterious Universe*, quoted in Wilber K., *Quantum Questions*, New Science Library, Shambala, Boston and London 1985. p. 9.
15. Heisenberg W., quoted in Capra F., *The Web of Life*, Doubleday, New York 1996, p. 30.
16. Cohen J, and Stewart I., *The Collapse of Chaos: Discovering Simplicity in a Complex World*, Penguin Books, New York 1994, p. 191.
17. Zohar D., *The Quantum Self*, Flamingo, An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, London 1991, pp. 17-18.
18. Bohm D., *Thought as a System*, Routledge, London and New York 1994, pp. 3,4,6.
19. Briggs J.P., Peat F.D., *L'Universo oltre lo Specchio*, Red Edizioni, Como 1998, p. 139. (*Looking Glass Universe*, New York 1984).
20. Coquet M., *Yogi Ramsuratkumar, le Divin Mendant*, Editions A.L.T.E.S.S., Paris 1996, p. 186.
21. Rangarajan, *ibidem*, p. 31.
22. Perumal Sadaiyan, *Treasures of the Heart: The Unforgettable Yogi Ramsuratkumar*, published by the author, Tiruvannamalai 1998, p.1-2.
23. Rajamanickam spoke principally about Gnanananda Swami, Athi Parasakthi Mayamma, Kasavanampatti Swamigal, Nainar Swamigal and, as already pointed out, Yogi Ramsuratkumar.
24. Perumal Sadaiyan, *ibidem*, p. 13.
25. It was Yogi's will that the house be registered in Rajamanickam's name, who had contributed 25% of its purchase price. After his death, his children – who have great faith in Yogi Ramsuratkumar – transferred the property to the *ashram* (to the construction of which they contributed with several lakhs of rupees).

## *The Ashram*

«My Father blesses all those who enter this *ashram* and nobody leaves empty-handed. My Father will look after their welfare. That is the truth». These words, uttered by Yogi Ramsuratkumar, have the power of a testament.

«Everyone entering the *ashram* can experience this truth», explained the devotee from Chennai who humbly wishes that his name not be mentioned in the book. «It is not necessary to be Hindu to perceive that one breathes an incomparable, indescribable atmosphere immediately after crossing the gate. Yogi Ramsuratkumar *ashram* is... what can I say?... like Rome, like Mecca: a sacred place that catches you. Personally, as soon as I start walking along the entrance drive, I feel an extraordinary vibration, an energy that pervades my whole body. I think this is because Yogi is blessing me. Other people may have a different explanation. But I am sure I have never experienced such a feeling in other *ashrams*».

Yogi Ramsuratkumar repeatedly affirmed that in his *ashram* there is something unique. In his own words:

«This *ashram* is different from all the other *ashrams*. The whole cosmic work will be done from this *ashram*». This is certainly no boastfulness. We know that Yogi lived and worked on infinitely higher levels of consciousness, and if this truth is not perceived, it demonstrates only one thing: the total inability of common man to understand, once more, what it means to be a true saint, a *jñāni*, a *siddha purusha*.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar did not want an *ashram*. His devotees requested it, but he resisted the idea for a long time. They begged him: the number of people wanting to see him was increasing dramatically, it was no longer possible to have them waiting in line along Sanidhi Street, in the scorching sun, in the pouring rain. Moreover, the place where Yogi received visitors, in the house where he lived, was far too small. The situation really called for the creation of an *ashram*. And so, Yogi accepted – out of infinite love and compassion for the many who needed him.

Then, the fund-raising ‘mission’ followed: S.P. Janarthanan of Bangalore, along with Ramamurti of Virudhunagar, Ragunath of Pondicherry and S. Parthasarathy toured all the places in Tamil Nadu for one year to collect the necessary money. «Even small amounts were received», Parthasarathy explained to us. «All was used to purchase the land for the *ashram*». The expenses for the traveling, lodging and food were borne by the participants to the mission. Finally, they collected more than 60 lakhs of rupees. «The whole credit should

go to Sri S.P. Janarthanan», Parthasarathy specified. «Only due to his selfless hard work, today we are able to see the *ashram*».

In May 1993, the land was bought: 4.5 acres (about 18.000 square meters) in Agrahara Kollai, in the plain south of Arunachala – more precisely, only 3.5 acres were purchased at first; 0.80 acres were purchased the year after. When Yogi officially set foot on that ground, the old president of Sri Ramanasramam, T.N. Venkataraman, welcomed him, and together, hand in hand, they walked among the crowd. Sri Ramanasramam's priests performed various rituals. Yogi was be-decked with flower garlands. The ritual called *pada puja* (worship of the lotus feet) was performed: milk, turmeric water, curd, honey, and a mixture of fruits with jaggery called *panjamirtham* (from *panja*, five, and *amirtham*, nectar), and then sandal paste, sacred ash, rose water, tender coconut water, and so on, were poured in succession upon the divine feet after washing them every time and worshipping them with prayers. *Āratī* (the fire-waving ceremony) was also performed each time. People around him were chanting his Name. And he – the honored and celebrated saint – was there, bewildered, looking somehow lost. The men in charge of the ceremony seated him and placed an imposing, splendid white-flower tiara on his head. Devotees, one after the other, by the hundreds, touched his feet. Hours went by. The chanting went on and on. And Yogi let everything happen – with love and humility. Sometimes he seemed lost

like a child. The next moment he was blessing the onlookers, with endless patience, as usual.

On October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1993, the first boundary stone of the *ashram* was placed: a square monolith in the north-eastern corner of the estate. Before it was fixed into the ground, Yogi touched it all over, in order to charge it with his positive energy.

Finally, on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 1994, the foundation stone was laid<sup>1</sup>. It was an auspicious day, carefully chosen: it was the full moon in the sign of Pisces. The *Ganapati homa*, the sacrificial fire in honor of Ganesh (*Ganapati*), the god of beginnings, was lit at about 3.45 a.m. – the most auspicious time. Swami Satchitananda, from Anandashram (Swami Ramdas' *ashram*) personally fixed the stone. At his side, there was Yogi Ramsuratkumar, surrounded by many well-known personalities, among whom, again, the president of Sri Ramanasramam, and Swami Chakrananda of Sri Ramakrishna Math of Trivandrum.

After the rituals, the speeches began – many speeches, because many were the illustrious guests. Swami Satchitananda, who had known Yogi for many years, spoke about him at length, and with intensity. Among the thoughts he shared, one was particularly memorable for us: «Yogi was so free like the air. Now by starting the *ashram*, he is caught. No longer can he be that free». Yogi was aware that he had let his wings be clipped. It was the gift of himself to humankind.



*With Swami Satchidananda from Anandashram the day of the inauguration of the Ashram*

The speeches went on. When finally it was Yogi Ramsuratkumar's turn, the saint, reserved, unassuming as always, declared: «This beggar is not made for speeches. He can only say my Father blesses everyone here». Not a single word of self-satisfaction. Nor of self-pity, even though there were plenty of reasons for it. He was only obeying his Father. Indeed, he had always explained: «Father distributes duties. To Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Bhagavan Ramana, Swami Ramdas, Sri Aurobindo, he gave the duty of teaching. To this beggar he has not given that duty. (...) To this beggar, Father has given the work of alleviating the suffering of others».

On another occasion he had said: «I do not seek happiness. I only want to do my Father's work. If even one being has benefited from my life, that is enough. It has been worthwhile». Up to now, thousands of people have benefited from this *ashram*<sup>2</sup> – even I, as I will report in a later chapter.

The *ashram* started growing. Yogi Ramsuratkumar blessed all the building material. The devotee who wishes to remain anonymous described: «Swami would sit for hours where the builders were at work. Each single brick was intentionally seen by him, looked at with great intensity. Everything was purified of possible negativities; everything was charged with love, peace, and bliss. Yogi walked everywhere in the *ashram*. There is not an inch that did not come into contact with his sacred vibrations. That's one reason this *ashram* is unlike any other

*ashram*. Literally, every atom was spiritually charged and radiates sanctity».

In July 1997, when the so-called ‘Meditation Hall’ was completed, on the floor above the huge, circular atrium preceding the *Pradhan Mandir*, Ma Devaki asked Bhagavan for permission to go and have a look at it. Swami seemed to answer vaguely: «We shall see». Some days after, he said: «Devaki, get ready. You wanted to see *upstairs*. We will go now».

Ma Devaki collected the baskets she usually carried, and asked excitedly: «Bhagavan, are we really going to see the Meditation Hall?» (She had noted that Yogi had used the word ‘upstairs’, and was somewhat surprised).

The saint immediately specified: «You call it so. My Father doesn’t call it so».

«Then, what is it?» she enquired.

«We shall see» Bhagavan repeated.

«When inside the new place», Ma Devaki narrated us later «he asked me to choose a place for him to sit. There, he sat and began to smoke silently, while he sent us to look around first, and then to sing some songs».

When they went back to the *Pradhan Mandir*, Yogi Ramsuratkumar explained emphatically: «Devaki, the whole *ashram* is *Dhyān Mandir*. Anyone who is entering the *ashram* is in *dhyān* (meditation). No doubt. It may not appear so. People may not know it. But it is so. My Father says everyone who comes to this *ashram* is blessed – is in *dhyān*. The whole *ashram* is *Dhyān Mandir*».

Once Yogi said to our friend Parthasarathy: «This place is the Temple where my Father, my Father alone lives». Then, he added: «Parthasarathy, you should compose songs dedicated to this place». Parthasarathy, who – among other things – is able to write music and to sing, immediately accepted the suggestion. In the first days of December 2000, he sang one of his compositions in front of Yogi who was already very ill, but still able to enjoy music. The following is the first part of the song, translated from Tamil:

*Yogi Ramsuratkumar Yogi Ramsuratkumar  
Yogi Ramsuratkumar Ashram is the Temple!*

*The Temple stands majestically on the southern side of Arun-  
achala*

*It is the Temple of Yogi Ramsuratkumar,  
The Temple showers the supreme wisdom in deep silence  
The Temple shows the Absolute with intense serenity.*

*The Temple relieves all the weakness with Nama  
The Temple removes all the wickedness with Nama Melody  
The Temple showers torrential Bliss and Bliss  
My Guru's Temple is the deep void of the sky!*

*My God's Temple severs the cycle of birth and death  
My Lord's Temple stabilizes life by forgiving the sins  
My Guru's Temple merges one with the Brahman  
That's why Yogi Ramsuratkumar's Ashram is the Temple!*

Many of our Indian friends assured us that this 'ashram-temple' has an incredibly strong and positive energy field: it is sufficient that devotees enter its sacred premises to receive the same benefits they would get from a *darshan* of the holy Master, regardless of the fact that he is no longer visible on this Earth.

«But it is necessary that the ones who come have an open heart, ready to receive» our friends underlined.

«Is it not always like that?» we provoked them intentionally, to make them comment further.

«Many, especially Westerners, come with a judgmental attitude» they bitterly answered. We could not deny this: they were right. We ourselves overheard a fellow countryman speaking about the *ashram* solely in negative terms: «It is a megalomaniac construction... A cathedral in the desert».

We tried to make him understand that, first of all, a great saint such as Yogi Ramsuratkumar cannot be a megalomaniac. It is a contradiction in terms. Secondly, why do we Westerners use this despising expression – 'a cathedral in the desert' – only in the case of elaborate structures built in recent times by civilizations different than ours? Wasn't the abbey complex of Cluny, France

(10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century), which included the biggest and most beautiful church in the whole Western Christianity (surpassed only by Saint Peter's in Rome much later) also a 'cathedral in the desert'? The place where the abbey was founded, in Bourgogne, had been inhabited in Roman times, and was abandoned later. Yet, in exactly that spot, in the nothingness, this gorgeous abbey, a masterpiece of Romanesque art, was built – and from there the most extraordinary spiritual adventure of the Middle Ages took off, and for a few centuries the abbey became the light of Western civilization.

Another example: the splendid and monumental gothic cathedral of Châtres (one of its front towers is more than 115 meters high!) was built during the Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries in a small town, already famous in those times (but also Tiruvannamalai is famous in India for the presence of Arunachala, and all the saints who dwelt on its slopes). Despite the fame of being a sacred place, however, medieval Chartres must have appeared as a bunch of little houses. Even now, its population does not exceed 45,000 inhabitants (compared to the 250,000 inhabitants of Tiruvannamalai).

Why has no one objected to these and countless other monumental buildings in the West, whereas criticism flares up, immediate and pitiless, against an *ashram*, definitely remarkable, such as the one founded by Yogi Ramsuratkumar? Is it perhaps because – romantically – we like to think of the Indian as still living in a hut, and we do not wish him to come out of it? Or is it because the

*cliché* we have of an Oriental sage characterizes him as ragged, filthy, living in a crude shelter, better yet if near a forest, with only wild animals for company?

For many years Yogi Ramsuratkumar was poor, ragged and dirty (but, according to everyone, his body emanated a scent of sandalwood); as we have seen, he only ate what was given to him as alms; he lived in the shelter of trees or in shacks where scorpions and snakes crawled. Then he was recognized for what he really was: a saint. People started gathering around him. And they wanted the *ashram*. And he was inspired to build an imposing *ashram*: with the *Pradhan Mandir* (the main building, also called Auditorium) which can take in 4,000 devotees; with the School of the *Vedas* (*Veda Pāthashālā*, from the Sanskrit words *pātha*, learning, and *shālā*, place) which consists of a library and the accommodations for the scholars who will come from all over the world to study *Sanātana Dharma*, India's great religion and philosophy.

«What exactly do you mean by *Sanātana Dharma*?» we asked a Brahmin. The man gave us an answer we will never forget: «*Sanātana* means eternal, primeval. *Dharma* is the law: the cosmic law, which pervades the universe. Nothing would occur without *Dharma*: the wind would not blow, flowers would not blossom. *Dharma* is behind everything: it rules the movements and paths of the stars in the sky, and the life of every being on the Earth. Therefore, to be in the *Sanātana Dharma* means to live within the harmony of

the universe». (The word *dharma* comes from the Sanskrit root *dhr*, from which the noun *dhruva*, terrestrial pole, terrestrial axis, derives. Hence, in the very root of the word we can see the idea of a ‘pivot’ around which everything revolves).

The first to discover the depths of *Sanātana Dharma* were the *rishis*, India’s most ancient sages, who – as recent revolutionary archaeological findings reveal – lived during the Sarasvati civilization, at least 8,000 years before Christ. It was in those remote days that *rishis* mentioned *Sanātana Dharma* for the first time, and composed the *Rig Veda*, the most ancient sacred text of the whole of humankind (followed by three more recent *Vedas*).

So, for more than ten thousand years, an uninterrupted chain of *rishis* produced the wonder of antiquity and continuity of Indian civilization, in a land very rightly called *Bhārat Mātā*, Mother India, the mother of spirituality<sup>3</sup>.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar, a modern *rishi*, carried on this tradition which has never faded: he embodied it in his own being, attaining oneness with the Cosmic Consciousness, like the Vedic *rishis*; and he gave it a concrete form through his *ashram*, building a structure devoted to the study of the *Vedas*. Here, as we have already mentioned, experts from all over the world will have the possibility of getting together and of consulting fundamental volumes. Yogi named the School of *Vedas* ‘Ma

Devaki Veda Pāthashālā' in honor of his closest devotee and attendant. He considered the *Pāthashālā* «the Heart of the *ashram*». He explained: «It is the most sacred spot. Those who go around this building are blessed». In there, scholars will explore the very heart of India, which is – after all – the heart of man: the origin of sacredness, the mystery of life, and the infinite dimensions of our essence.

In the library, as a protection to these extremely subtle and profound studies there is now a statue of Yogi Ramsuratkumar in a standing and blessing position. A few of his devotees wanted it – carved by a special artist in a special material. We were requested to select both in Italy, the Mother of art, as they said. We were astonished: while in America Italy is famous for its food and for the elegance of its fashion, in India our country is appreciated as the homeland of artists such as Michelangelo. We must confess: this fact gave us great joy.

«What kind of marble did Michelangelo use?» we were asked.

«Carrara marble» we answered.

«Then the statue portraying Bhagavan will be in Carrara marble, carved by an Italian artist».

Again, the task we were given was not an easy one: it was not sufficient to find just any Italian artist. He had to be a spiritual man, so that in the stone he could not

only carve Yogi's physical shape but, above all, the vibrations of his divine energy. At last, we found the right person in Milan: his name is Mauro Baldessari. And after some difficulties, also the right block of marble was found: of a very pure white color, practically perfect. From it a statue was born, a statue which moved all the devotees.

Unfortunately, Yogi passed away a few days before the finished statue was brought to the *ashram* in March 2001. But before dying, the saint gave very precise instructions as to where to place it: in the library of the *Veda Pathāshālā*. Today it stands there, white and intense – the heart of the heart of the *ashram*.

There is also another statue featuring Yogi Ram-suratkumar. «It is cast in five metals»<sup>4</sup>, C.C. Krishna from the *Bhavan* of Mauritius Island clarified to us. While the Indian sculptor Sri Rajagopal was working at the statue in the *Darshan Mandir*, nobody could enter. Bhagavan, however, asked Krishna to go in and film the making of his statue. It was November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1995. These shootings are the only existing document of the event<sup>5</sup>. «Sri Rajagopal is one of India's best artists» Krishna explained. «He is also the creator of the statue of Ramana Maharshi placed on his *mahāsamādhi* (grave), in Sri Ramanasramam».

Sri Rajagopal's statue had a great luck: Yogi himself was present when it was installed, on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1996. Krishna narrated: «It was during the afternoon *dar-*

*shan*. All of a sudden, at about 17.10, Yogiji stood up alone, blessed people, and went out. The car arrived with Chettiar<sup>6</sup>, a staunch devotee, and the sculptor Rajagopal. Yogiji asked for the statue to be brought inside the *Pradhan Mandir*. Fifteen workers carried it and installed it above the *likhita japa* (written *japa*<sup>7</sup>) in the middle of the *Mandir*». Then the ritual of *prānaprathishthā* (literally, ‘introduction of breath’, that’s to say the vivification of the sculpture) was performed. Bhagavan was totally absorbed in his divine work. Nobody is able to understand the depth of what he was accomplishing through his extreme concentration. From that moment onwards everything seemed to be in the statue. Since its installation, Yogi’s *darshans* ended.

Bhagavan sat in the *Pradhan Mandir* with the so-called ‘Sudama Sisters’ (see chapter 7, note 2), in the little hut near the statue. Devotees could go round the statue, have a quick *darshan* of Bhagavan, and then go to the *Dining Hall* to sing *bhajans*. Those wishing a personal interview were allowed to have one, on request. So, it was not as if Bhagavan stopped giving *darshans*, but he no longer sat among the devotees for two hours (in mornings and afternoons), lingering to bless the people, to dispense *prasād* (his grace-imbued gifts), while smiling to everyone with his infinite compassion. Probably, because he was aware that his end was near, he focused himself totally on the statue in order to transfer his energy into it.

The song that Parthasarathy composed for the *ashram* (mentioned a few pages ago) finishes with a

meaningful stanza devoted to the great importance of this sculpture: a value which is neither aesthetic nor material, but exclusively spiritual. As we understand from our friend's words, the bronze image has become a receptacle, the continuation in times to come of Yogi's power.

*My Guru's Statue is the Temple's Sanctum Sanctorum  
My Guru's Statue showers its grace on those who Worship  
My Guru's Statue is the form of cosmic truth  
And one who walks around the statue  
Will open his soul to Holiness.*

It is obvious that in order to accomplish this almost alchemical process, Yogi Ramsuratkumar did not have much time for anything else – not even for his devotees. He was taking care of their future: he wanted to leave them something tangible. That is why, as Krishna, who was in the *ashram* during those months, told us, «none of the devotees was called into the hut outside the *Pradhan Mandir*, where Swami used to have his breakfast at 7 a.m.». Only occasionally, Yogiji met this or that devotee, while sitting in a chair near his statue (1998), or near the entrance of the building (1999), or – when the construction of the *Veda Pāthashālā* started (end of February 2000) – under the *Parnashālā*, a thatched shed facing the work in progress.

In this place, he received us too. «He doesn't smile any more», we immediately noticed with deep regret. It was only six years after the foundation of the *ashram*.

As we already remarked, people often ask: «What's the need of such a big *ashram*?» Visitors are unable to concentrate on Yogi's sanctity: they prefer to entangle themselves in negative dissertations, because they do not know the whole truth. Speaking of the *Pradhan Mandir*, Bhagavan said: «This hall looks so big now, but one day it will not be enough. There will be people standing outside».

Ma Devaki pointed out to Krishna, in the very presence of Bhagavan: «You know, Krishna, Bhagavan said that this is not an *ashram*. It is a spiritual center that will eventually become one of the greatest spiritual spots on the whole planet, and will radiate its energy all over the Earth. Bhagavan specified that this will happen gradually, as time goes by, without people being aware of it».

«This beggar has been assigned a great mission», Yogi Ramsuratkumar revealed. «This beggar does his work in every step he takes. He gives advice or help to those few people who come to visit him. But, as a general rule, his real work goes unnoticed». He was referring to the work which had to be accomplished through him and which absorbed his days and a great part of his nights. Engineer Mani told us: «Swamiji gets up at 2.30 a.m., in order to pray. I too must get up at 4. Sometimes I don't want to. Then I think of him who is more than eighty years old, and yet does not fail. For our own good, for the future of the Earth».

In those days, I was unable to understand: I was among the ones focusing on criticism rather than on Yogi's unfathomable mystery. I wished the saint could devote more time to me. I needed relief from him, and I was afraid he was not going to help me. He had already healed me a first time, as I will explain in the next chapter, giving me all his time and attention. Now, after five years, I had other problems, and I was hoping for a new miracle. I did not realize that Yogi was not only giving me the relief I was searching for and that I still enjoy. He had also made an extraordinary exception in my case: he had inserted me, like a parenthesis, into his cosmic work.

For what reason did I not understand, at that time? I could have lived each of the moments spent with him as a unique gift – a gift from the Cosmic Consciousness. On the contrary, I brooded: «Why so much time devoted to things? Aren't people more important?»

I judged, ruminated over, doubted. Overwhelmed by tempestuous feelings, I was searching for answers that did not come.

They have bloomed right now, while I am writing this chapter – in calm and detached pondering.

My ego wanted Yogi for itself.

Yogi, instead, was giving to me, and to others – and to the peoples to come. He was working for us in the present, but also for the world of tomorrow.

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## Notes

1. Yogi always wore the rope which was used to make the measurements for determining the precise spot where to locate the first stone of the *ashram* main building. Sometimes he wore it on his left arm or shoulder, other times hanging from his neck.
2. The *ashram* also provides important social services: once a day, per Yogi Ramsuratkumar's specific wish, *sādhus* and *sannyāsins* (from the Sanskrit 'the one who has thrown down', i.e. the person who has renounced to all the goods and comforts of life) are given a simple but healthy meal for free. Still by order of Yogi, the poorest receive a daily meal, as long as funds allow.  
On every second Sunday of each month, there is a medical camp on the open area right outside the gates of the *ashram*. There are 10 to 15 doctors who come from all over Tamil Nadu to serve in the medical camp. Part of the medicines is provided by donors. The rest required by the patients is purchased by the *ashram*.  
Yogi gave also orders to build a guesthouse just outside the *ashram*. Ten cottages are on the inside premises, mostly inhabited by people working permanently for the institution, while two or three are at the disposal of guests who stop there for a short time.
3. To deepen the subject on *Sanātana dharma*, visit the website <http://pages.intnet.mu/ramsurat/GauraKrishna/English/sanatan>

[a.html](http://pages.intnet.mu/ramsurat/GauraKrishna/Veda.html). To know more about *rishis* and *Vedas*, go to <http://pages.intnet.mu/ramsurat/GauraKrishna/Veda.html>

4. According to Indian tradition, the five metals (*panchalohas*) are gold, silver, copper, iron, tin. Gold and the other metals, at a particular ratio, when melted together, get a rare character of absorbing, retaining and radiating the energy which has been powered into the statue by chanting Vedic verses, by doing specific rites (*homa*), and also by worshipping the sculpture itself. The head portion of Swami's statue was molded with *panchalohas*.
5. This film is now available in DVD, released by the Yogi Ramsuratkumar Bhavan (<http://pages.intnet.mu/ramsurat/CDRom.html>).
6. Lakshman Chettiar and his wife Acchi, very spiritual and generous people, contributed to the making of the statue.
7. Devotees use to write *mantras*. Here, it was *Aum Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram* and *Yogi Ramsuratkumar Yogi Ramsuratkumar Yogi Ramsuratkumar Jaya Guru Raya*.



*In one of His typical expressions, so dear to His devotees.*



*Blessing people. It is interesting to note that He has a cigarette on His lips and a matchbox in His left hand. For Him cigarettes functioned as Vedic Homa, the sacrificial fire: this was one of His ways to reduce a great part of His devotees' problems to ashes.*



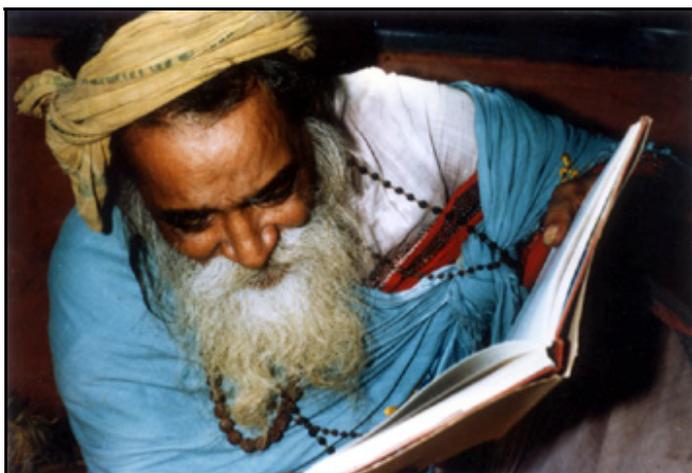
*Yogi Ramsuratkumar had also very young devotees who had the privilege to spend hours near Him.*



*Taking His meal, as usual from a Banana-leaf dish*



*Bhagavan in the middle of devotees,  
in a mandapam in Tiruvannamalai*



*Reading the book 'Guru's Grace'  
of Mataji Krishnabhai of Anandashram*



*Engaged in the works of the Ashram*



*On the 30<sup>th</sup> November 1994, while devotees were chanting Gu-runama, Yogiji pleasantly accompanied the rhythms with His hands.*



*During the celebrations of His Jayanti in 1994  
in the Svagatam Mandir*



*Blessing the huge devotees' assembly during His Jayanti's celebrations on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1994*



*With the Sudama Sisters,  
from right to left: Ma Devaki, Rajalakshmi, Vijayakka, Vijayalakshmi*



*With the present Shankaracharya, Swami Jayendra Sarasvati, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1995*



*Yogiji in 1997, seated at the entrance of the Pradhan Mandir, where He received the devotees at that time.*



*On the day of His Jayanti in 1998*

## 6

### *Miracles*

*He was a man like yourself and myself.  
But only to sight and touch and hearing;  
in all other ways he was unlike us.  
He was a man of joy; and it was upon the path of joy  
that he met the sorrows of all men. (...)  
He saw visions that we did not see,  
and heard voices that we did not hear; (...)  
oft times he spoke through us to races yet unborn. (...)  
He loved us with tender love. (...)  
You and I could approach with a cup and drink there from. (...)  
And he would laugh with all the fullness of his heart.*

**Kahlil Gibran, *Jesus Son of Man***

It is in this way that we experienced Yogi Ramsu-ratkumar. Exactly in this way. In him, we saw the same joy that Kahlil Gibran imagined in Jesus' eyes. The same tender love. The same readiness to help. Personally, I can say I drank from the chalice «filled with him».

It was 1995. I arrived in India in a wheelchair. For at least a year, I had been barely able to move around: my right knee, which Western medicine had failed to cure,

was totally blocked. I could not bend it at all. When I no longer held out any hope – I do not mean to go back to normality, but just to improve a little – I decided to ask for help somewhere else. «I'm going to India», I said to my doctor. «I want to see my Yogi. He is my last hope».

«How can you go to India in this condition?» he asked me, sincerely worried.

«I don't know, but I want to try». And so I left Italy, as always together with Giulia and Verena, and this time also with Miti, a friend with whom we have shared many splendid moments of our lives. As soon as we reached Tiruvannamalai, everyone I met encouraged me: «Pray to Arunachala, pray to Yogi Ramsuratkumar. You will see you'll recover totally».

«Totally?» I answered in disbelief. I would have been happy with any improvement.

«Sure» was everybody's spontaneous reply, as if they were saying the most obvious thing in the world. «Yogiji will heal you».

An American devotee, Michael Siciliano, told me Swami had fully liberated him from a serious dysfunction of his hip from which he had suffered for years. «Ever since he touched me, I have been fine» he said, and immediately after, he stressed: «Go to him. You'll see by your own experience».

I went to Yogi Ramsuratkumar, in his *ashram* which was under construction. That day, the saint was receiving devotees in a big unfinished circular hall (*Svagath Mandap*). The place, the crowd, the organization, everything was so different from the atmosphere of the house in Sannidhi Street, where all was so simple and immediate. Only Yogi was the same – the same readiness to help, the same indescribable smile.

He arrived in a cream-colored car, with his assistants, Ma Devaki and Vijayalakshmi. We had met neither of them yet. Ma Devaki was a beautiful, gentle, dignified lady in her forties, with a heart full of compassion. She has inspired us with courage since the first moment we saw her. About Vijayalakshmi I will speak later on. Here I can only anticipate that she is a person of great love.

As soon as we could, we asked Mani (the engineer of the *ashram*), who was also a sort of bodyguard of Swami, for permission to approach the saint. «He knows about our arrival», we explained. «We wrote him a letter from Italy».

Yogi Ramsuratkumar was amiable, as usual: «How long are you staying in Tiruvannamalai?» he asked after a brief, affectionate conversation.

«Twenty days, Bhagavan».

«Then, come here at least once a day».

So we did, with inflexible discipline. Sometimes *darshans* took place in the huge *Svagath Mandap*<sup>1</sup>, conceived as the future imposing entrance to the *Pradhan Mandir*, some other times (but less often) in the so-called *Darshan Mandir*<sup>2</sup>, a small building with granite walls and a roof made out of dry grass grown on the slopes of Arunachala. This building was my favorite. In a way it reminded me of Sannidhi Street, where Bhagavan used to sit close to us. In the big hall, on the contrary, he was on a sort of platform, at the end of the room, so far away that he looked small. We think he too felt that separation. As soon as the chanting was over, he would come down among the devotees, mingle with us, bless every one profusely, dispense *prasads* (flowers, petals, garlands, fruit), and he would smile – a smile filled with unspeakable love that overflowed us all. It was the most intense moment, the one we three treasure in our hearts and which gives us the same emotion every time we think of it: an immense joy, now mixed with immense nostalgia.

*Darshans* lasted about two hours, most of which were devoted to chanting *Nam bhajans*, the hymns with the divine Name. Swami, as we already pointed out, loved music. So, in addition to the usual chants, new compositions were often tried out.

While the chanting was going on, I observed Yogi, and more than once I realized he glanced at me, and then with his hand he drew some signs on his own right knee, as if he was writing something. Even if from afar, I followed

those movements: I think he was writing the name of Rama in Sanskrit:

राम । राम । राम.

Then I felt that, by looking at me, he was transferring the blessed energy of that Name upon my knee which was getting better day after day. Nevertheless, I was still walking with difficulty and with the aid of a stick.

One day, on the path to the *ashram* we met a beautiful lady who later became our friend, Pankkajam. Like everyone else, she encouraged me. She told me that Yogi would certainly solve my problem. Then, she added: «Just a few days ago, he healed a woman affected by a cancer in three parts of her intestines. She was supposed to undergo a surgery, but her son implored her: “First let me take you to Yogi Ramsuratkumar. He already knows about you”. So, they went to see the saint. Swami received them immediately. He did not touch her at all. He took a rope, tied three knots, and cut the rope in three pieces, devoting some time – but not too long – to this task. After that, he gave the three segments to the woman. “You can go now”, he dismissed them. Mother and son went away. But the woman was disappointed: “He didn’t even touch me” she complained. “What have we come here for?”

On the day of the operation, she went to the hospital. The doctors made the usual last clinical tests. And they were stunned to discover that the cancer was gone, it had disappeared from one day to the next».

«We shouldn't get excited in front of a miracle», our friend Ganesan stated. «We should enjoy its beauty». Like the beauty of a flower, of a sunbeam filtering through the leaves in a forest. Flowers and sunbeams are part of nature, as miracles are part of Yogi. And Yogi did not even want to be thanked for them. When devotees started to do so, he immediately stopped them: «No! Father!... Father!...», and he raised his hand towards the skies to point to the true author of everything.

«Let's not talk about miracles», suggested another devotee, whose name is unknown to us. «Let's talk about grace, the grace of God». It was divine grace that straightened a child's leg, another person told us. The leg was so malformed that the child could not stand on it. The child's parents brought him to Yogi who healed the leg in such a perfect way that after a while neither the father nor the mother were able to remember which had been the crippled limb. Obviously, when the parents saw the miracle, both of them prostrated themselves in front of the saint and started expressing their gratitude to him. But, again, the holy man raised his hand and exclaimed: «No!... Father!»

We could report countless wonders performed by Yogi Ramsuratkumar – always humble and reluctant to

accept credit. Dramatic incidents, like the ones just described, and simpler cases as well, that can't but surprise. Mani, the engineer, told us: «Two years after I was assigned the task of building the *ashram*, I became exhausted. I couldn't carry on. I felt sick. So, I went to Bhagavan and spoke with him about my problem. Yogi gave me two gooseberries to chew. I was instantly healed».

And Ganesan was also unwell for some time. Yogi 'prescribed' him to drink a glass of buttermilk a day. Ganesan fully recovered. After some time, he complained of symptoms that were totally opposite to the previous ones. Again, he asked Yogi for help. The saint 'prescribed' the same medicine: buttermilk. «Bhagavan» Ganesan wondered, «how can buttermilk work for two opposite diseases?»

Yogi looked at him with a warm, fatherly expression: «Ganesan, it's not the buttermilk!...».

Is it the power of suggestion? Maybe. But then what can we say about the following incidents? It was Parthasarathy who shared with us the story of these painful moments of his life: «I was twenty-eight when I had a total breakdown, both personal and professional. Moreover, I lost my head for a girl who completed my ruin, psychologically and financially. A friend suggested me to go to Tiruvannamalai and speak about my troubles to a beggar who was surely a sage. His name was Yogi Ram-suratkumar. So I did. Immediately after that, though, my

misfortunes increased: the girl I loved left me for a wealthier man. In my job, I went bankrupt and was put in jail. I was desperate, but also very angry. I had convinced myself that the beggar of Tiruvannamalai had cast a spell on me. I went in search of him. I was wild at him, yet in the depth of my heart I felt bound to that strange being. When I found him, I realized that he already knew everything – even what was still to happen. He told me not to worry because there would be “no case in the court” (he used exactly the same legal expression uttered later on by the judge to settle my case). I didn’t believe him, and decided to commit suicide. I swallowed two bottles of pesticide, and then I laid down on the bed in a room I had rented in a lodge. I was waiting to die. The morning after, however, I woke up still alive. Nothing had happened, not even a slight stomachache. I eliminated the poison, which was completely non-digested. That beggar must have had a hand in it, I thought.

I was frightened: who was that man? Would he always decide in my place? Therefore, would there be no more freedom for me? I rushed out in search of him. And suddenly, there he was, running towards me, full of love. He had stopped the poison. He wanted me alive. “Don’t worry”, he said again. “Everything will be for the best”. He was right: shortly after, I made up with my wife and now I am happy. And I’m also well off again. Exactly as Swami had predicted.

These happenings were a shock, an awakening. From that moment on I've been totally devoted to Bhagavan, mentally and spiritually».

As a matter of fact, the greatest miracle that Yogi Ramsuratkumar kept constantly doing was his subtle influence in the transformation of his devotees' entire beings and personalities. For him, enlightenment was the aim, not less. As we saw in a previous chapter, he brought Murugesan to the highest, final goal. But he also planted the seed of it in many other devotees.

Yogi's feeling in this respect is confirmed by the following episode: one morning, Bhagavan, Ma Devaki and a few close devotees were in the little hut near the *Pradhan Mandir* having breakfast, when the conversation focused on miracles. Ma Devaki asked Swami about materializations. Swami explained: he had not been given that work by Father. Some *mahātmās* – he specified – may initially perform this kind of wonder for instilling faith. But he advised those present not to aim at ten *paisa* in a rupee. If he wished, they also could materialize. That, however, was not the point. He directed his devotees to concentrate on the full rupee, not on a small part of it.

Another confirmation comes from Ma Devaki herself who shared with us the memories of her very first encounter with Bhagavan: «For quite sometime, in the Eighties, I had been in search of an enlightened *Guru* like Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Ramana Maharshi. I also

went up to the Himalayas every year, hoping for some miracle-man who could perform the miracle of my own transformation. But nothing happened to me despite the fact that some great souls granted me their *darshans*. When I went and knocked at the door of Sri Bhagavan in Sannidhi Street, on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 1986, little did I know about the momentous turn of events waiting for me! The very first appearance of him at the doorstep of Sannidhi Street shook the depths of my being, and tears began to stream down helplessly. He took my two friends and me right inside the house and made us sit in a row. He sat in front of me, and addressing himself to me in particular, he asked: “Can this beggar do anything for you?” He did it so gently, so tenderly that something stirred deep within me and I managed through all those tears to say, “I want to see God...”. That’s all!

As if he had just heard the funniest joke ever, he began to laugh – pearls of laughter cascaded and filled the air with such richness that instantly everybody broke into smiles too, except me. I felt like a worm and thought I had committed a blunder. I began to sob. Then, all of a sudden, he stopped his laughter and said: “Devaki is a pure soul. She will see God. Devaki is a pure soul”. He repeated this sentence again and again. Then, Swami’s face turned a radiant red, eyes glowing like jewels. He raised his hand up in benediction, accompanying his gesture with a loud ‘HUM’ sound. The whole atmosphere became intense. All thoughts vanished and tears stopped. I felt a strong current passing through me, shaking my whole body. My entire being got centered on him – him,

the sole Divine Presence. A beautiful peace and bliss descended on me. When I came out, it wasn't me anymore!

This state of peace was to last for another fifteen days – day and night. All my faculties had sharpened, and nothing good or bad could touch this peace. A period of intense activity also started. Strangely, things seemed to get done by themselves and much better than ever before! It felt as if at once I was doing nothing and everything! But then, this state began to fade out, and the old inadequacies began to rear their heads. Yet, nothing was ever the same again!»

Ma Devaki shared another episode with us, this time very strange: «For a certain period, every time I visited Bhagavan, he kept talking about the Berlin Wall separating Eastern and Western Germany. He would be smoking very much. After fifteen days, the news splashed all across the world: the Berlin Wall had come down.

Years later, after the *samādhi* of Bhagavan, two Germans visited the *ashram* and came to see me. They told me that the removal of the Berlin Wall was due to an odd accident: a few politicians were speaking in a live TV-program, when one of them, a powerful guy, got a written message which he completely misinterpreted. In front of the TV-cameras he announced that the wall was being taken down. Actually, the message was not at all about the wall, but because it was announced over TV, thousands of people in Berlin rushed to the wall, and

started to destroy it, tearing it down. No one could stop the crowd. The two Germans assured me, “it could only be the miracle of a saint”. I was not particularly astonished, because I had seen Bhagavan taking up other national and international ‘projects’, and smoke over them».

Almost every devotee of Yogi Ramsuratkumar had wondrous stories to tell us. I listened to them with interest, but I remember that I didn’t go into ecstasies. For some reason it was very easy for me to follow Ganesan’s exhortation: «We shouldn’t get excited in front of a miracle. We should enjoy its beauty». Quite frankly, I did not think much about my knee. I was more enthusiastic for the immense love that sparkled from each gesture, each word, and each smile of the saint, than about all of these stunning miracles. Now, remembering those moments, I realize that I was absolutely calm; I had no expectations, as if I were in Tiruvannamalai not to await a miracle like other people, but in order to conduct an anthropological study, as I had done many other times in many other places. I dutifully respected my appointments in the *ashram*, every morning or afternoon<sup>3</sup>, I joined in the chanting of the other devotees, but frankly speaking I cannot say that I was praying to Yogi, invoking his name, focusing on his help. I am probably an unrepentant rationalist: I am unable to be overwhelmed by mystical currents, although in my heart I would like to. My head has always prevented me from any ‘Pindaric flight’ – even in such compelling moments.

The days passed. My knee was improving, but it was far from being back to normal. Two days before our departure, at 9 a.m., on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1995, we called on our friend Ganesan, in his house in the outskirts of Tiruvannamalai. «How are you?» he immediately asked me.

«Better, but not well» I answered.

«Did you tell Yogi about it?»

«No, I didn't».

«Did you remind him that you are going away in two days?»

«No».

«Then, this morning, before the chanting starts, tell him» he urged me.

«I can't. How can I possibly do that?»

«You get up and tell him».

«I would never dare to do such a thing in that huge, crowded hall. I'm too shy».

«In that case, go and talk to him privately».

«Mani would prevent me from approaching Bhagavan, as he always does with anyone trying to go near Swami».

«You must find a way to inform Yogiji that you are on the point of leaving, and that you aren't well yet» our friend said, stressing each word. «You can't waste this chance». I told him I would obey, but in my heart I knew I would keep silent.

At 10 o'clock, we were in the *ashram*. As soon as we got there, we found good news waiting for us: that morning we were going to chant in the *Darshan Mandir*, not in the huge hall.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar was already sitting in his usual place.

We went in and were about to sit down, when he asked me: «When are you leaving?»

«In two days, Bhagavan».

«How are you?»

«Better, but not well».

«Come here, near me» he said, and immediately added: «Take your little chair» (since the first day, I had asked for permission to use a folding chair which I had

brought with me from Italy, as I could not sit down on the floor in the Indian style).

«I can't sit on a chair near you, Bhagavan», I said hesitantly.

«Why?» was his surprised answer.

«Because I would be sitting on a higher place than you» (in India, as a sign of respect, one may not sit higher than a Master). Swami made a small gesture with his hand, meaning: «It is not important», and helped me to place the chair near him. Then, with a very light touch he put his hand on my knee. Maybe two or three minutes passed. Our friend Miti told me later on that I had a radiant face. But, to tell the truth, there were no particularly blissful feelings inside me. I was just watching. Yogi asked Ma Devaki for an ashtray and his cigarettes, and started smoking – with great attention, at least so it seemed to me. I remember I thought: «This confirms what we knew: through the 'fire' of his cigarette, he is purifying me». Five or six minutes passed. The saint asked his assistant for a glass of milk and coffee. Ma Devaki poured it at once from a thermos. Bhagavan drank a little of it and gave me the glass. «Drink the rest» he invited me. Later on, Ganesan explained: «It was a purification of your past lives. You'll never be the same».

«Yogi Ramsuratkumar will never leave you», another devotee added.

Parthasarathy was even more precise: «It was a form of initiation: our *Guru* poured his love, his grace upon you. If his love is there, all good can happen. Without his love, nothing is possible».

The saint put his hand again on my knee, with great care. He never massaged it, he just touched it gently. After a few seconds, he invited me to try to walk. I got up without any effort and started walking. At first I was a little insecure, then my movements became easier and easier. After a few more moments, I could pace around without any pain or difficulty. «Go down the steps outside the door» Yogi exhorted me, and told Ma Devaki to stay near me. I reached the top of the steps, and panicked: it was more than a full year since I had last bent my knee. I was afraid to try, especially without my stick, or an arm to sustain me. «Go down», Ma Devaki urged me.

«I can't...», I answered terrified.

«Go down», she insisted with greater emphasis. But I could not move. «Bhagavan is looking at you.... Go down!» Ma Devaki implored.

At that point, I was caught by a feeling of desperation mixed with anger. I thought: «OK, if I smash my face, *he* will have to repair it, in addition to the knee». I stepped down. My knee bent. Unbelievable! There was only a slight 'click' inside. No pain. No stiffness. It was normal, smooth, and healthy. Actually, more healthy than

my left knee. I went up and down the steps several times. Then I went back to Bhagavan, singing and dancing. Yogi laughed. He was amused. «How do you feel?» he asked me.

«Perfectly alright... This knee is twenty years old again, and now it is the left knee that seems to be old...». I was happy. Swami laughed. He was happy too. Giulia told me afterwards that, in her seat, she was weeping, overcome by emotion. Verena confessed she was biting her lips furiously, in order not to show she was going to cry too. Miti could not believe her eyes. «I had never seen such a thing!» she told me. «I was overjoyed, but more than that I was flabbergasted».

I prostrated myself in front of Swami – effortlessly. «Thank you, Bhagavan! Thank you...», but the saint interrupted me. «No!» he said to me, as he always said to all the people saved through his miracles. «No!», and he raised his hand, pointing above. «Father!» he uttered inspired.

Shortly after, he got up and went away with Ma Devaki and Vijayalakshmi. He blessed us all, with his intense face full of love, and smiled at me with tenderness. The tenderness of God.

Once Yogi left, Rajeshwari, a caretaker of the *ashram* and a perfect, motherly helper of people needing special treatment, concluded the *darshan* session performing the *āratī*, a rite of worship with fire. This time

Rajeshwari gave me the plate with the burning camphor, looking at me with a smile full of joy. With her help, I performed all the required symbolic gestures. At the end, the devotees who were in the small *mandir* crowded around me: some of them congratulated me, some smiled, many gently touched my hand, my shoulder, my arm, my knee, perhaps my feet too, I do not remember. What I do remember was their great devotion. It seemed as if they were touching a holy relic.

More than twelve years have elapsed since that day. My knee still works. Only once, after I had been back in Italy for some time, it blocked for just a moment. I was terrified. I can still see the scene very clearly in my mind: I was walking on an overpass, which sloped down slightly towards the street below. Suddenly, in the articulation of my knee I felt stiffness and pain. I shouted: «Yogi Ramsuratkumar!» I called out loud to him, as if I was calling someone passing down there, at the end of the road. And the knee immediately unblocked. A few months later I read that Yogi had assured his devotees: «If you have a problem to which you feel you may succumb, you have but to call my name once and Father himself will come». And also: «If at any time you require this beggar's help, shout this beggar's name, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, and this beggar will certainly be there»<sup>4</sup>.

I shouted his name, unaware that Swami had made this promise. I shouted his name only once, with all my being. With dismay, with desperation. I must have

vibrated in the right way, I do not know. I only know that my knee recovered.

Ganesan told of another episode similar to mine: a friend of his, Anuradha, had to go to China shortly before the Tien-an-men incidents. As usual, before any trip, she went to greet Swami to whom she is deeply devoted, and to be blessed by him. The saint advised her that if she happened to be in a difficult situation, she needed only chant his name. Anuradha left. After a while, all hell broke loose in China (Yogi must have foreseen it). The danger was great. She wanted to hasten to the airport, but she did not know what to do. She was upset and started chanting «Yogi Ramsuratkumar». Immediately a taxi appeared from somewhere, stopped near her, and the driver asked her: «Do you need a cab, madam?»

Was it a coincidence, both in Anuradha's and in my case? Perhaps. Who can say? Personally, I am more inclined to believe in Yogi's immediate help. The other explanation seems to me a way of trivializing the events – all these events.

Our Master, Sri Ramana Maharshi, said: «As soon as a devotee turns in prayer to a *jñāni*, the automatic divine activity begins to work» (Sri Ramana pronounced the last part of this sentence in English). Hence, according to the words of someone *who knows*, there is a divine activity which is automatic, that is to say, it cannot but respond to the prayer. We find the same concept in Christianity. The Orthodox Christian theologian Pavel Nikola-

jevič Evdokimov, in his book *The Knowledge of God*, wrote: «The name of God is epiphanic: it implies the real, immediate Presence». Therefore, it is sufficient to invoke a name of God, no matter which one, and «the automatic divine activity begins to work». «Call my name but once and Father himself will come». «Shout this beggar's name, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, and this beggar will certainly be there».

This is a mystery witnessed by many people, in many religions. It seems to me that it is not possible to dismiss it by using the word 'coincidence' – a word that in this case is not adequate to describe the vastness of the problem.

And not even the other so often-mentioned word – suggestion – can give a clarifying explanation. I do not think that the readers, who have followed the story of the healing of my knee with some attention, can explain it as simply the power of suggestion. I was not open to psychological suggestion. On the contrary, I was too cold, too cynical, too much an anthropologist, and too tenuous a devotee. The only strong sentiment I felt inside myself – and I am ashamed of it – was the one I had on the top of the famous steps: an absurd sentiment, almost of anger. Against whom? Against the very one who was helping me. And he, the saint engaged in my healing, surely perceived that illogical, paradoxical, unfounded outburst of mine. In spite of that, he went on with his work of compassion. Quite a different thing from a God conceived as a bookkeeper, who meticulously keeps the ac-

counts of our good and bad deeds, and spends his eternity sorting out souls either for paradise or for hell.

The behavior of that God-man, of that Christ of our days, was overflowing with love – unconditional, unrestrainable love. While I was unable to understand anything, Yogi Ramsuratkumar was nourishing me with his love. He asked nothing in return, not even my gratitude – not even my respect. The power of suggestion arises when a person gets excited, elated. I was busy at being an anthropologist. How could I generate so profound a power capable of renewing me?

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## Notes

1. The wall separating this huge hall from the *Pradhan Mandir* was constructed as a temporary one, meant to be demolished once the whole building was finished. Its function was only to prevent cement and dust from entering the *Svagath Mandap*, where Bhagavan used to sit on a platform (during the whole 1995 and the first part of 1996), doing so much of his work. In November 2000, however, after Yogi returned from the hospital where he had undergone a surgical treatment, he did not permit the wall to be demolished. One day he came out in the chair, stopped near the statue, and started asking people around him (Ma Devaki, Vijayalakshmi, Rajmohan, Anand, Anjaneyalu, Anjani Kumar) for their opinions: how they suggested to connect *Svagath Mandap* with *Pradhan Mandir* without removing the wall. Yogi said: «There should be no destruction at all in the *ashram*. Whatever has been built,

will remain». So, each one proposed something. Finally, Bhagavan agreed to remove two glass doors upstairs and build a staircase from there into the Auditorium (*Pradhan Mandir*) – which from the beginning Swami wanted as one continuous structure without any compartments.

2. The *Darshan Mandir* was built by a contractor, Anjaneyalu, at his own expenses. Anjaneyalu was a great devotee of Sri Ramana Maharshi (he built almost all the buildings in the Sri Ramanasramam). He became an ardent devotee of Yogi Ramsuratkumar because of Ganesan and Anuradha, and won the confidence of Swami. He was the founding trustee of the Yogi Ramsuratkumar Trust.
3. *Darshans* took place daily, from 10 to 12 a.m., and from 4 to 6 p.m.
4. *Yogi Ramsuratkumar Souvenir*, Yogi Ramsuratkumar Trust, Tiruvannamalai 1995, p. 413 and p. 50.

## *Surrender, The Ultimate Miracle*

«The most important, the most essential thing in one's life is to have faith in God, an absolute faith. If we do not have *Guru bhakti* and faith in God, everything we do is futile. If we have *Guru bhakti* and the blessings of our *Guru*, this is more than enough, it is more than we can ever obtain in this world».

With these words, Yogi Ramsuratkumar expressed himself one day, regarding faith. On other occasions he added: «This beggar is always with the devotees who have complete faith. Only faith is important. If faith is there, this beggar is always there».

«Where there is faith, there is no fate».

«Renunciation is not giving up anything, nor is it to accept anything. It is just changing your attitude toward the world. My Father alone exists, no one else, nothing else».

From these affirmations expressed by Yogi Ramsuratkumar, the concept is clear: faith can do

everything, it obliterates even *karma*, destiny. The ancient Greeks called destiny *anánke*, necessity: a necessity so inflexible that even the gods were unable to change it. On the contrary, according to Indian tradition there are no obstacles to faith. Faith moves the mountains, as Jesus said. There is only one condition: it must be total.

We Westerners, however, who for centuries have been imbued with the idea that human beings are different from any other being because we are endowed with rationality; we Westerners to whom philosophy has taught that man's true realization can only happen in the realm of pure rationality, how can we generate blind, total faith? How can we surrender? Faith is a gift, it is said in the West. What does it mean? Personally, I cannot be contented with «pious but meaningless sentences». Faith must be such an immense concept that to have a real idea of it, it is necessary to turn our usual parameters of comprehension upside down.

I am pondering Yogi Ramsuratkumar's phrases, reported at the beginning of this chapter. For me, to understand them means to scrutinize them solely with my mind – with pure logic. I know this method is not correct when one roams in the field of metaphysics. But what other way is available?

One day, while in Tiruvannamalai, we (Giulia, Verena and myself) decided to conduct a survey: what is the meaning of faith for the Indians? Our friend

Parthasarathy expressed himself very clearly: «True faith is surrender, the total eradication of the ego, the complete annihilation of one's self and the subsequent merging with the Beloved One. When this happens, it happens only once in a lifetime: after that, there is nothing left of the individual, of the world. Only Father is there».

This is the faith of Saints, the surrender experienced by Yogi Ramsuratkumar, who – as Ma Devaki narrated to us – often said: «This beggar doesn't ask Father *why*. This beggar simply obeys. Father knows. He runs the whole universe». But we Westerners fly at much lower levels. What kind of faith can a poor soul like me generate? Jesus said: «If you had faith the size of a mustard seed...» (*Lk. 17,6*). «If you had» means that we don't have faith – not even as big as a tiny little seed of a petunia flower, as this is the size of a mustard seed, which many of us may never have seen. India, on the contrary, speaks about *total* faith. How does an average Hindu – a poor soul like me – perceive this request?

«Do you have faith in Yogi Ramsuratkumar?» we asked Kannan, one of the guardians of the *ashram*.

«Yes, of course», he answered with a bright smile.

«What does it mean for you to have faith? Can you explain it to us?»

«I don't know... I can only say I am a mirror: I reflect Bhagavan's will. I believe in him and that's it».

«Will you give us a real example, so that we may understand better?»

«Yes», he replied with another big smile. «Once my wife said to me: “You are always near Yogiji. But Bhagavan has never granted me a private *darshan*. Ask him to call me”. I explained to her: “If I asked Swamiji to bless you, this would show that I have no faith in him. I know that Swami sees everything, knows everything, even this conversation of ours. Therefore, there is no need to talk to him. If I did, it would mean that I don't fully believe in his divinity”. One day elapsed: I spent it near Bhagavan, as usual. But I didn't say anything to him. Four more days passed by. On the fifth day, Yogiji arrived as always, at seven o'clock in the morning. Right in front of the gate of the *ashram*, he told the driver to stop the car and called my wife. She looked around her and asked: “Who, me?” “Yes, come here”, Yogi answered. My wife approached him with her hands joined in prayer. Bhagavan took her hands in his, smiled at her, and inquired about her health. Then he wanted to know her name.

In the evening, I related to Yogiji what had happened. And I finished with a sentence full of awe: “Bhagavan, you really know everything!”

“It is Father’s grace” was his comment. After a little while, he added: “Anyone who asks from his heart will be given much more than he desires”».

I also have reasons to believe in Yogi Ramsuratkumar – more than Kannan and his wife. Nonetheless, I cannot help but asking questions to myself. Every little pretext becomes cause for doubt. I remember once, while Yogi was passing in his car – the only daily form of *darshan* that devotees could receive from him in his last months of life – a small, poor Indian woman tried to approach him and to give him a little note. Immediately Mani pushed her back, harshly reproaching and humiliating her in front of the long line of devotees. Who knows what was written on that small piece of paper, I thought with great pity. Who knows where that poor woman had come from. Who knows with how much expectation, anxiety, and hope she had been waiting for that moment. In a more or less similar incident, Ramana Maharshi acted differently: in the last hours of his life a devotee quickly slipped a small note on the bed where the saint was laying, and left. Ramana took the note, read it, and asked for the person to be brought back to him. The attendants obeyed: they found the man and delivered him into the small room, as if he were a criminal. The Maharshi looked at him with a smile full of love and nodded assent. The man had written: «Bhagavan, save me».

Why didn’t Yogi Ramsuratkumar react in the same way? Why didn’t he call that woman back and

accept her little, pathetic note? This incident (and a few others) was enough to shatter my faith. For days, I discussed it with Pankkajam, who tried to explain to me: «If a devotee has surrendered his or her mind to the Master, this means that he or she doesn't judge any longer what is right and what is wrong. The disciple is here only to receive what comes from the Master».

«Yes, but how is it possible to achieve this?»

«It is necessary to transform oneself into a void».

«Okay, but how is it possible to achieve this?» I repeated, almost with desperation.

«In the ocean» she answered with kindness «there is salt and there are pearls. Look for the pearls. Forget about the salt. Do not allow yourselves to be distracted by anything. You have come to Tiruvannamalai for one purpose. Focus on this purpose. Pay no attention to the rest».

«How is it possible to pay no attention to the rest, to what happens around you, in front of your eyes?»

«Simply by focusing on one single thought: Yogi Ramsuratkumar. No other thought».

In a book written by Rajneesh, the Master who had the gift of explaining in a very simple way, I read: «To have faith is not to believe: it is to love». I love

Yogiji – this, for sure. And I think I love him immensely. However, I can't stop asking myself questions, if there are questions. I must understand. Then (perhaps) I will believe.

After all, this diatribe about the primacy of faith upon reason or vice versa is very old. It began at least in the Fourth century B.C. with Aristotle, who said: «Whoever wants to understand has to believe». The discussion went on: in the Fourth-Fifth century A.D. Saint Augustine coined the famous principle *crede ut intelligas*, believe so that you can understand. Even if this principle became the orthodox code for many centuries, the problem never ceased to trouble Western minds. In the Twelfth century, a great scholar, Abelard (1079-1142), claimed: «*Intelligo ut credam*, I must understand in order to believe; *inquirendo, veritatem percipimus*, by asking questions we reach the truth». By disposition, I belong to Abelard's party. Deep inside myself, though, I know: Abelard was wrong. All that belongs to divinity is beyond rational thinking, beyond words. This was underlined to us by a devotee we met in the *ashram* and whose name we forgot: «If everything we know can be grasped by our mind and expressed verbally, we know very little».

Ma Devaki tried patiently to undo my mental knots about faith: «Sri Aurobindo defined faith “the intuitive knowledge of Truth”. The disciples of an enlightened *Guru* should believe intuitively that their *Guru* is verily God. Whatever he says or does is

absolutely right. Because an enlightened person ever lives in utter surrender to the Divine Will, ever lives in Divine Spontaneity, ever in obedience and servitude to Divine Command».

A fitting but dreadful example of utter surrender comes from Yogi Ramsuratkumar himself. Ma Devaki and Vijayalakshmi told us about it.

Vijayalakshmi: «Bhagavan narrated to us that soon after he left Anandashram in 1952, he had an accident. He was on the train, proceeding to Tiruchirapalli-Srirangam. At Erode railway station, Father commanded him to get off the train, which he did. He was crossing the rails when he saw another train coming towards him. One of his feet was caught under the railway lines. His instinct was to run away, but his inner prompting – actually, Father – commanded him to stay, which he did. Then, the train knocked him down: his left knee was badly wounded, and the toes of his left foot were severely injured».

Ma Devaki: «I was horrified, while Bhagavan described the accident. I asked him in agitation: “Why, Bhagavan, didn’t you try to get away?...” He answered with his voice choked by emotion: “No, Devaki, Father did not permit it”».

This is utter surrender – something that is beyond human understanding. All our efforts to frame it in psychological theories or logical patterns are misleading

– therefore, useless. Lao-tzu said: «When you are speaking about Tao, it is not about Tao that you are speaking». That is why, when a Zen Master was asked to give a definition of Zen, he took off his sandals, put them on his head, and walked away – to break all logical patterns and to show that any verbal explanation is inadequate.

Rajneesh would repeat to his disciples: «Rational mind is only a toy. Discussions are childish. Life flows without discussions. Truth does not need proofs. It needs your heart (...), your love, your confidence, and your openness to receive. (...) You must feel like a hollow bamboo cane: if you are hollow there is the required space, for the seed to germinate». The disciple must become like a child. Also Jesus said: «If you do not become like children you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven». Rajneesh makes it even clearer: «The child holds his father's hand and goes wherever the father goes; he goes without believing and without doubting». Believing and doubting belong to the world of opposites. In the case of God and the Master – who, after all, are one and the same – we should be able to trust, to have confidence.

In the ancient Hebrew language the word 'faith', *'emunah*, meant 'certainty'. From *'emunah* the term *amen* derived. *Amen* ends Christian prayers: in ancient times, it was translated «So it is». Then, certainty faded out and *amen* became just a hope, a wish. In Italian, it became: «*Così sia*, may it be so»<sup>1</sup>.

«Do not discuss» Rajneesh continues, «do not go on reasoning, do not debate»<sup>2</sup>. It is all true. But I can't. «Don't struggle, be confident, surrender», someone else said to me. Instead, I struggled for the whole year 2000: I questioned, analyzed, and had doubts. Of course, I was grateful, enormously grateful to my Yogi for the miracle he had bestowed upon me and that is lasting still now. But I pretended to ignore his divinity.

Then, in February 2001, shortly after Yogi passed away, the veil was torn, thanks to Vijayalakshmi – or, better, thanks to Bhagavan's compassion that sent me so humane a person, capable of communicating: exactly what I needed. Vijayalakshmi is a very refined lady, gentle, cultured, and yet very humble in her heart. So humble that I had never noticed her before. Until that moment, I didn't even know her name. To her I owe my transformation.

Vijayalakshmi understood that I was going mad. She asked whether she might talk with me, and came to the cottage where I resided in order to do so.

«What's the matter?» she asked me with a motherly voice. My answer was almost aggressive: «If you really want to know, I must tell you the whole truth. Otherwise, we are both going to waste our time».

«Alright, I will listen» she said with great love.

I began to list my complaints, starting with the episode of the poor woman and her little note. «I was shocked», I said bitterly. Then, with renewed vehemence I added: «Is this compassion?»

Vijayalakshmi began to disentangle my knots calmly: «There are two possible explanations: either Bhagavan was not aware of it...»

«...but Mani was yelling like a devil!»

«Ah!... Mani always yells!... We don't even notice it anymore...»

«...or?»

«Or the episode, exactly the way it happened, was just what that woman needed. We can't know this»<sup>3</sup>.

«It is true» I agreed, «it seems that often a saint will display strange behaviors». And I quoted a passage from Hilda Charlton's book, *Saints Alive*: «To be yelled at by a saint, to be pelted with a stone by a yogi, is to have your *karma* wiped out. It is pure grace».

Vijayalakshmi smiled: «In this regard, I can give you a strange but interesting example concerning Bhagavan himself. For some time, when we were living in the house called Sudama<sup>4</sup>, a man used to come every morning to beg for alms. We women – Ma Devaki, Rajalakshmi, the others, and myself – urged him kindly

to go to the *ashram*, because there he could receive everything he wished. But the man continued to knock at the gate insistently, told lots of stories, and did not want to leave. One morning Bhagavan was near the gate; he asked him why he constantly stopped by our house instead of going to the *ashram*. And the man started telling all his stories again. At that point Bhagavan exclaimed: “Drop dead!” and went back into the house...».

«...what?» I interrupted her, completely flabbergasted.

«Yes, yes, he said exactly those words. It was terrible...».

«And how did the man react?»

«He went away, pacified».

«Pacified?»

«Yes, when he left he looked more calm than usual. Pacified, as I said. Clearly that was what he needed».

I was speechless, for two reasons: because that man went away, content with being cursed; and, more than that, because Bhagavan could even make a positive use of a curse, in the right moment and in the right way. I began to understand how narrow our patterns of action

and reaction are. And how incalculably more extensive the horizons of a saint are.

Ma Devaki reported me that Bhagavan himself had told her more than once: «Sometimes Father commands this beggar to act in strange ways, which would shake the faith of anybody. But Father commits no mistakes. He loves us all, and protects us. Whatever he does is good for the individual and good for the entire cosmos. Father's ways are mysterious». From time to time Ma Devaki pestered him for some explanation, which might throw more light on the matter. But all he would say was: «Oh, you don't know the whole truth. My Father never commits any mistake». Ma Devaki concluded: «Always, sooner or later, in the light of events, I understood he was right. Enlightened persons always think big and act big – beyond our fragmented understanding».

Despite these words, I continued my discussion with Vijayalakshmi, and resumed voicing my doubts: «Isn't it possible that often the explanations people in India try to give for the behaviors of these *jñānis* are somehow far-fetched? May I tell you something that has just happened to me?»

«Of course» Vijayalakshmi replied, rather intrigued.

«This morning I visited a small temple dedicated to another saint. His name is Vallalar<sup>5</sup>. The building

consisted of a single room where one could barely stand. In the middle of the room, there was a *Ramalingam*, covered with flower petals. The guardian-priest, a Hindu with blue eyes and a roaring voice, was enthusiastic to give me his explanation of Vallalar. The more he spoke, the more he shouted. He shouted so much that the walls were reverberating and my diaphragm was vibrating. At a certain point, a little jasmine flower that was on the *Ramalingam*, slowly drifted down, and fell on the floor right near my feet. Immediately the guardian-priest became incredibly excited. He wanted to make me believe that the flower had fallen on that very spot by the grace of Vallalar, as a sign of his blessing. Maybe he even believed what he was saying. He seemed sincerely happy for me. To his eyes, this was almost a miracle. But, clearly, there was nothing mysterious: the flower had fallen because of the vibrations».

Vijayalakshmi looked at me with affection: «I agree», she replied «the vibrations might have been the cause. Why, however, don't you leave the door open to other possibilities? Why do you want to flatten reality? Perhaps the two explanations can coexist».

I was taken aback. I recalled a sentence I had read in a book of psychology: «We Westerners are affected by a terrible lack of symbolic imagination». At that moment, I fully understood the meaning of those words. Our civilization is deeply conditioned by physical reality. We ignore the connection with a more extensive wholeness, we do not have an attitude that strains toward the

'beyond'. I felt the duty to inform Vijayalakshmi of the victory she had gained in the discussion: «I like this perspective of yours» I admitted smiling, «it is consistent with the many levels of truth that form the structure of reality». But immediately after, I was again caught by my gloomy list of complaints: «Last year (February 2000), immediately after our arrival in Tiruvannamalai, Bhagavan granted us a long *darshan*. You were there too and could see: he was full of love, cared for us, and blessed us. And he cured me again».

I had written a letter to Bhagavan from Italy informing him that my health was not good: this time I had problems in my backbone, in my ankle, and I suffered severe pain caused by a hiatal hernia. As soon as we arrived at the *ashram*, Yogi called us, and made me sit beside him; he looked at my ankle, passed his hand along my back, touching each vertebra with great care, and pausing in correspondence with my stomach. Then, he caressed each finger of both my hands for a long time. He touched my fingernails one by one. In the depth of myself, I was feeling a strong current of peace and bliss. I was in such an ecstasy that I took his left hand in mine and lifted it gently to touch my forehead, leaving it there for a few seconds, immersed in an ocean of love. I don't know if I had the right to do what I did, whether Indian protocol and tradition allowed me to do so. In that moment, I was not able to think about rules and regulations. I only know that I was experiencing an infinite outpouring of love and peace, never lived before. And at the same time I was receiving, receiving, receiving. The frus-

trations of a lifetime were being straightened out, the emptiness was being filled, and everything I desired was being given to me in an everlasting moment – not by society, not by an emperor: by a man who was one with God.

No, I am not able to adequately convey my feelings during those instants. The only thing I can say is that now, while I am writing these words, I am overwhelmed by emotion – for that immensity.

«Yet, two or three days later» I resumed my conversation with Vijayalakshmi, «I was once more in misery: the ankle was swollen and aching like never before, and the stomach was painful too. I was crushed. Pankkajam sent a message to Bhagavan through his driver, Ravi. She informed him that I needed his help. The answer came promptly: “This beggar has already seen Olga nicely. This beggar spent so much time with her...!” I sank from paradise to hell. Why such a severe, unconcerned reply? Everyone knew that Yogi spent as much time as possible keeping track of the construction of the *Veda Pāthashālā*. Aren’t the ailments, the sufferings of human beings more important than material things?»

Also on this occasion Vijayalakshmi was not discouraged: «I know what you felt. I know that sense of frustration, of complete rejection. It happened to me too, when we lived in Sudama. For a whole year, Bhagavan ignored me. I cooked for him, I worked inside the house.

But for Yogiji it was as if I were not there at all. He didn't even look at me. It was a terrible torture...»

«...and this is compassion?» I interrupted her.

«Yes, it is compassion» she answered with conviction. «With that attitude the Master is attempting to destroy the devotees' ego. It's the biggest gift he can give us. At that time, my ego demanded much attention from Bhagavan. I was acting like a spoilt child. His compassionate severity stripped my ego of many of its delusions, and its *vikshepas* (inattention, projections, confusion). Thanks to that, newer levels of consciousness surfaced. From my experience, I can say Bhagavan gives whatever is required when we require it. An Eighth-century Tamil saint sang: "Oh God, you know what we need and supply it when we need it". That is absolutely true of Bhagavan. When I was suffering because I thought he was ignoring me, actually his grace alone, his mercy alone, his kindness alone were at work to help me».

A few months after this conversation, the devotee from Chennai who wants his name to remain anonymous, reported to me a similar episode: «I became acquainted with Yogi Ramsuratkumar thanks to the words of a family friend. I went with my parents to Tiruvannamalai specifically to see him. He received us amiably, he asked us to tell him about our lives, he put lots of questions to us, he even asked where we had left our sandals and where we had parked our car. After that, we visited

Yogiji many more times, and spent several hours with him. Yet, once, when I went to see him by myself, he left me outside the door of the house in Sannidhi Street. He asked my name from inside. Even after I told him who I was it seemed as if he didn't remember me. So, I reminded him my parents' names. He asked me where we lived; he wanted to know the name of the town where we resided. Only then, did he open the door and let me in. I got the shock of my life, my entire spirit sagged, and my ego was pounded and crushed into powder. Bhagavan knew everything about my family and me, we had told him everything. That time, in order to reach him I had traveled for four hours on a bus and I had walked for two kilometers. And he didn't even recognize me, leaving me outside the door, waiting, as if I were a total stranger, or worse, as if I were a suspicious individual, someone to avoid. I was dumbfounded, distressed. I was not able to reconcile the immense care and benevolence that Bhagavan had shown us previously, and the fact that now I was a perfect stranger to him. Only after a long period of anxiety and much reflection, and after witnessing on many occasions the infinite compassion that Bhagavan bestows on all his devotees, I finally understood. That incident was another proof of his compassion. He had shattered my ego out of compassion, to help me move forward on the Path to the Self. He had shattered me with grief in order to let faith explode in me later on. His behavior, which at first upset me and made me go adrift for a long time, was actually a gift inspired by his love».

The *Guru* does nothing for himself, everything is for us. The desperation we experience, the resentment we feel towards him, and the estrangement we ourselves bring about, all these emotions are natural and necessary stages in the progression towards faith, and are guided by his concern for our growth. It is not a typical feature of Yogi Ramsuratkumar or of Indian saints in general. Zen Masters are famous for their compassion which, to our eyes and our ears, seems madness, inhumane inflexibility, even cruelty. Master Isan, who lived around the Twelfth century A.D., pushed the 'Great Doubt' of his disciple Kyogen to the point that he didn't want to have anything to do with his Master anymore. He left the monastery and worked as a guardian by the burial place of another saint, Echu. In the meantime, the Great Doubt increased and Kyogen's heart and sensitivity were strained in anguish. Any occurrence, even the most trivial one, could trigger an 'explosion' inside him. In fact, one day a pebble rolled against a bamboo cane, making a little noise. For Kyogen this was the turning point: «Isan's compassion is greater than my parents' compassion», he shouted full of joy. He had reached Realization.

In my case too the joy is great. I have finally understood, and now my faith begins to blossom. *Intelligo ut credam*. I still belong to Abelard's party, but I painstakingly walk step by step towards confidence, towards faith.

«Don't reject anything because everything is *Brahman*» Rajneesh taught. «Every time you condemn or judge someone or something, remember: you are judging and condemning *Brahman*. You must say to yourselves: may I never reject *Brahman*». Deep inside I still feel the difficulty of not judging and condemning: the world is so full of ugliness. But Rajneesh underlines: «I am not saying that you are not right. You can be right – *but this is not important*. What is wrong is your critical judgment»<sup>6</sup>.

Every time I think about Yogi Ramsuratkumar I should remember the affirmation made by Anthony De Mello, the Jesuit priest who taught Western and Eastern wisdom in Mumbai: «Realized persons are a law in themselves: they know exactly what they have to do»<sup>7</sup>. Yogi Ramsuratkumar is a law in himself. Jesus, Buddha, Lao-tzu, Ramana Maharshi, Ramakrishna... all of them are a law in themselves, even if we are not able to understand them, very often.

On the other hand, who among us can understand, for example, the physicist Erwin Schrödinger when he explains quantum physics, or the physicists David Deutsch, Andrei Linde, Alex Vilenkin, Leonard Susskind, Alan Guth, and many others, when they hypothesize a multiverse instead of just one universe, that's to say an infinite number of universes containing all possible combinations of realities, even the ones where we ourselves are multiplied into infinite, more or less identical copies, or where we are left out. The

astronomer Chet Raymo admits that very few scientists comprehend quantum physics – and he is not in that number.

Yet we, common people, accept those abstruse theories. It does not cross our minds to disapprove them, to have reservations about them. We just accept the fact that Schrödinger and his colleagues know much more than we do. And how much more does a saint know, a true saint? So, why do we arrogate the right to criticize their actions, their words, and their behaviors?

«Leave the dictator who abides in you, the tyrant who is in you» De Mello said to his followers. «You thought you were lambs, didn't you? But you and I are despots»<sup>8</sup>. It is the problem of one's «intolerable conscious personality», the ego that wants to be right, that prefers to outshine God, in order to assert its own existence – the same ego that Bhagavan is trying to silence in me, if not to make it melt away completely.

There is an extraordinary historical example that shows the vanity and foolishness of the ego: in ancient Greece, a citizen of Ephesus named Herostratus wanted to become famous. So, in 356 B.C. he set fire to the temple of the goddess Artemis and destroyed it totally – only to oblige history to hand down his name. But Herostratus was not a rare egomaniac. As a matter of fact, the largest part of us sets fire to his or her inner Temple day after day, for reasons that are even more

trivial: for stubbornness, for vexation, for vindictiveness, for the conviction of being better than others.

Jalal al-Din Rumi, a great Islamic mystical poet who lived in the Thirteenth century, wrote: «O Lord, save us from what our hands might do». In the same epoch, Dogen, a famous Japanese Zen Master, explained how to escape from the ego-trap we set for ourselves: «When you let go, the *Dharma* fills your hands». «When you let go» means when you do not cling to your ego anymore, when you become aware that «God is the sole doer and we are only instruments in his hands» as Papa Ramdas always repeated. Ramana Maharshi used an extraordinary analogy to make people understand how vain everyone's bustling about is, in order to get this and that. He said: human beings are like the figures that decorate a *gopuram* (tower-shaped structures above temple entrances). They seem to carry all the weight of the building on their shoulders. But this is not true. Actually, it is the earth that holds the foundations and sustains the tower. The sculptures are only a part of the tower. The same can be said about a man who claims to carry the sense of action upon him.

If we understand this with all our beings – and not only with our minds – if we succeed in perceiving that «only Father exists, nobody else, nothing else», then we are ready for the leap: surrender happens, we let go with confidence – and everything, the world, reality, ourselves, change.

Also the essence of prayer changes. The word ‘prayer’ comes from the Sanskrit root *prach*, which means ‘to ask’. Therefore, the intrinsic concept of the verb ‘to pray’ is ‘to ask for something’. In effect, what do we do, in general? We ask the heavenly world for protection, support, safety, help. We have our ‘personal program’ and pray to God to fulfill our requests. Rajneesh, with his usual clear-sightedness, puts his finger on the sore spot: «If God pleases you, you believe in him; if he doesn’t, you immediately declare that he does not exist. You make him be real only in so far as he does as he is told to»<sup>9</sup>. Terrible words, which show how many of us are ‘men with little faith’. That’s to say, with scarce capability to surrender.

The devotee who has faith does not ask. Parthasarathy wrote to us: «I feel that we need not pray to Bhagavan, as he creates the situation to produce the problems and again it is he who comes as the solution to them. He gives whatever we require to realize him. Sometimes we require pain to remember him, and some other times we require joy to be in tune with him. But we cannot decide when, or what we require. Wisdom is to accept anything that comes – good and bad, because both are, in the last analysis, what is best for us»<sup>10</sup>.

I think it is interesting now to go one step back in our narration and resume a subject we already dealt with briefly: every time we visited Yogi Ramsuratkumar we saw many devotees prostrating themselves in front of him and imploring him for the grace to heal them. Often

Bhagavan uttered the words «My Father blesses you», which meant that the devotee was going to recover. Other times, Bhagavan advised the person to consult a doctor. Parthasarathy explained to us: «I often witnessed that Swami directed people to doctors out of immense compassion. Those people, I know, were doubting creatures: they had little faith on Swami that he could cure any diseases. Hence, out of his boundless compassion, Swami directed those people of little faith to doctors, and cured them with his hidden energy through medicines prescribed by doctors. Swami's work is to remove the pain of devotees in different ways, and finally bring them to the path of faith». This is a splendid, esoteric explanation that requires a very high degree of awareness. But not everyone can grasp it.

Someone else in the *ashram*, less inspired, told us: «When Bhagavan sends a person to consult a doctor, it means that he or she can't be healed». Vijayalakshmi, however, specified: «This did not drastically mean that the person would not be healed. Many factors must be taken into consideration: a very important one is whether the healing would really be the person's highest good on his or her spiritual journey». Bhagavan used to say that nobody of us knows the whole truth. Who knows which is the vaster meaning of a disease?

Vijayalakshmi continued: «Anyway, even when a person was directed by Bhagavan to a physician, it is important to remember that it was Bhagavan who healed, not the physician or drugs. When, in May 2000, one of

the doctors attending on Bhagavan advised immediate surgery, Bhagavan said: “Do you think doctors cure patients? No, it is only the power of the Father that cures”».

As we can see, Hindus think that if a saint has not cured a person, that person for some reason is not to be cured. On the contrary, we Westerners think that the saint was not able to perform the miracle – in other words, he did not succeed.

I must admit that I had this thought when my ankle started swelling and my stomach was in so much pain, although Yogi had intervened only two days before. I was caught by a preposterous doubt: maybe Bhagavan has become too old and too weak; he does not have the strength to influence matter anymore. Now I know how much I did not understand in those days. The power of miracles does not belong to the man who is in front of us. It is God’s power. That is why, when someone wanted to express his or her gratitude to Swami for a miracle he had just performed, he would raise his hand and say: «No, (not me). Father». There are no miracles that a *jñāni* cannot perform. But a real *jñāni* not only performs miracles: he also knows which miracle is for the benefit of the spiritual life of the receiver and which would prevent it or, in any case, would be of no value.

Let us go back to Parthasarathy’s letter. In the final part, we read: «Wisdom is to accept anything that comes». As a matter of fact, India witnesses her

calamities without being overcome by desperation. India is not indifferent, as it is often said in the West. She simply lives her grief with «sorrowful, meditative serenity» – the serenity that comes from the wisdom Parthasarthy is talking about.

This very special friend of ours composed a chant dedicated to Yogi Ramsuratkumar, in which he expresses what faith means to him:

*If your work is still pending through me,  
Let my being do it alone.  
If there is no work for me,  
Let my body perish on earth.  
Till my last breath is in this body,  
Let my being chant thy name alone.  
Oh my Swami in the form of Annamalai,  
Shower thy grace by destroying me!*

Another more complete, more heroic surrender is possible: the perfect surrender of Yogi Ramsuratkumar, where sanctity permits the complete merging of human being into the One. In that moment, man dies to himself. Yogi said: «This beggar died in 1952 at the Lotus Feet of Swami Ramdas». But what is the actual meaning of this death-in-life? Yogi explained: «This beggar has no mind. So, this beggar has no plans. This beggar cannot even pray. Every thought, every word, every gesture of this beggar is controlled by Father who runs the whole cosmos». Rajneesh says something similar: «The Master does not exist as a Presence but as an Absence. There is no mind inside him. There is no ego inside him. The

Master has become a vehicle, a means. He seems like a flute. (...) He is like a tree that grows without doing anything. There is no effort, no ego that works. It happens»<sup>11</sup>.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar also 'happened'. When he still lived in Sannidhi Street, he said: «This beggar has not built an *ashram* or temple. This beggar has not written any books either. There's nothing about this beggar's life that's inspiring. But he has left a Name for mankind. Out of his love, Father has given a Name – the Name Yogi Ramsuratkumar – to humanity, for its benefit». «This beggar's Name is in the sky». «This beggar's Name can be heard in the sky».

Yogi Ramsuratkumar 'happened' – out of Divine Spontaneity. While he 'happened', the *ashram* carrying his name was founded. Yogi did nothing to have it. It was created out of Father's will.

May Father's grace preserve it for generations to come, perfect as it was founded and left by Yogi Ramsuratkumar – a tangible demonstration that surrender is the ultimate miracle.

## Notes

1. «In the *Bible* the term *Amen* is used mostly to confirm the truth and the trustworthiness of a statement. It may be found at the beginning or at the end of a sentence. In this respect it reminds the Sanskrit *mantra* AUM (OM) which shares several aspects with the Hebrew *Amen* (...). As far as I know, up to now it has not been possible to demonstrate an etymological connection between *Amen* and AUM (OM). There is, however, a psychological affinity between these two primary terms» (Arnold Bittlinger, *Padrenostro*, red edizioni, Como 1996, p. 45 and 41).
2. Rajneesh, *Tantra. The Supreme Understanding*, Poona 1975, *passim*.
3. When C.C. Krishna read the manuscript of this book, he suggested another possibility: «Dear Olga, how do you know that Yogiji did not see in the heart of that poor Indian woman, even without reading her paper? How do you know that, in spite of Mani pushing her back, he did not answer her?» I would have never thought of such an explanation. This shows the superficiality of my faith.
4. The so-called 'Sudama sisters' were Vijayalakshmi, Devaki, Rajalakshmi, and her sister Viji. They were the owners of the Sudama house, which now belongs to the *ashram*. Regarding them Yogi said: «This beggar needs someone to take care of him. Devaki and the Sudama sisters are taking better care of this beggar than he deserves. This beggar cannot live without them.»  
Yogi lived in this house for almost seven years, from 1994 to 2000. He went to stay there because he was sick. Today no one lives in Sudama: the house is abandoned. The name Sudama (or Sudhama) derives from a poor Brahmin who went to Krishna to beg. On seeing Krishna, however, his mundane problems just vanished from his mind. But knowing his poverty, after Sudama left, Krishna materialized the basic comforts for his family, even before he reached his house.

The house in Sannidhi Street has been turned into a museum (open for some time in the morning and the same in the afternoon).

5. Vallalar (Ramalingam Adigal) was a famous saint poet from Southern India (1823-1874). In his early years he was a Shaivaite, but later he tried to develop a universal faith, based upon three aspects: the infinite love of God-Father for us; the spiritual unity of all humanity; a boundless compassion for every form of life. The saint did not retire in a secluded place; he lived like an ordinary person among ordinary people. He ended his earthly life by yogic means, leaving no trace of himself: he changed his body into a subtle, invisible, deathless entity.
6. Rajneesh, *ibidem*, *passim*.
7. De Mello A., *Messaggio per un'Aquila che si crede un pollo*, PIEMME Editions, Casale Monferrato 1995, p. 98. (*Awareness*, New York 1990).
8. De Mello A., *ibidem*, p.101.
9. Rajneesh, *La Dottrina Suprema*, BUR, Milan 1983, p. 45. (*The Supreme Doctrine*, Poona 1974).
10. When Parthasarathy says that «there is no need to pray» he refers to the request-prayer, the prayer that comes from the Sanskrit root *prach*. In fact, Parthasarathy, like the majority of Yogi Ramsuratkumar's devotees always recites the *mantra* that Bhagavan gave him personally, and that keeps him constantly connected with the Divine. Obviously, this is not a distinctive trait of Yogi's devotees alone: every day, devotees of Asiatic religions (from Hinduism to Tibetan Buddhism, to Japan's Pure Land Buddhism, etc.) recite their *mantras*, hundreds, thousands of times. Also Apostle Paul exhorted Christians to do the same: «Pray unceasingly», he said. The Islamic mystic J. Rumi specified: «You must pray until even your toes are soaked with prayers». The invocation of the Divine Name generates the remembrance of God, awakening man from the sleep of forgetfulness. In 1961 Krishnabai, the Mother of Anandashram, proclaimed the *Ramnam Mahāyajña* (the Great Sacrifice of the Name of Rama) for World Peace. The repetition of the name can be done by reciting, chanting,

or also writing the *mantra* in notebooks, which are sent to the Anandashram, or to the Sister Nivedita Academy, or to the Yogi Ramsuratkumar Bhavan (Mauritius). The *Mahāyajñā's* purpose is to recite the *mantra* 155 billion times (15500 crores). Every month, only within this World Peace prayer, Lord Rama is invoked about 220,000 times. Monthly reports of the chants are published in *The Vision*, the magazine of Anandashram, and in *Rama Nama, The Vedanta Magazine* (in French), published by the Yogi Ramsuratkumar Bhavan in Mauritius.

As Yogi Ramsuratkumar pointed out, it is not important which one of the many names of God is pronounced: «It can be *Om Namashivaya* or *Om Namō Narayana*, it can be Rama, Shiva, or Krishna, any name will help. It is not important what divine form you prefer to worship. The important thing is to remember the Lord – in any name and any form (...). If anybody believes that only the name of this beggar is important, he or she commits a great sin». To his devotees he suggested: «Remember this beggar's name at least once a day. My Father will not send you away empty handed».

11. Rajneesh, *ibidem*, 1983, p. 61-62.

## *The Cosmic Work of Yogi Ramsuratkumar*

विश्वंभरो विश्वमान्यः विश्वसेवा परायणः ।

*viśvambharo viśvamānyah  
viśvasevā parāyanah*

He sustains the universe,  
He is respected by the universe,  
He is in selfless service of the universe.

**Yogi Rama Surat Kumara Sahasranama Stotra  
(Hymn of the Thousand Names  
of Yogi Ramsuratkumar)**

Yogi Ramsuratkumar's greatest commitment was to the harmony in the universe. This became increasingly manifest at least in the last seven years of his life. He worked for this goal day after day. He passed away in agony thinking of this – harmony in the present, harmony in the future, harmony among peoples, among religions, harmony in the whole cosmos. «It is not important to have the same beliefs» he used to say. «What counts is harmony. We have to work for harmony».

During the celebrations for his 79<sup>th</sup> birthday, harmony was the basic theme of the day. Yogi wanted a musical poem to be repeated several times. It had been com-

posed in Sanskrit by the Paramacharya of Kanchi, and had been previously sung at the United Nations' seat in New York. Yogi had it translated and chanted over and over again so that the people present could 'absorb' it. He asked some devotees to comment upon it. C.C. Krishna was one of those devotees. To him we owe the text:

*Cultivate friendship, which will conquer all hearts.  
Consider others as if they were you.  
Give up war, give up competition.  
Abandon aggression which is an error.  
Respect our Mother Earth,  
Always ready to satisfy our demands.  
The Lord, our Father, is full of compassion for all.  
Be gentle and generous towards the peoples of the world.  
May all the peoples be happy and prosperous.*

Yogi Ramsuratkumar, like Jesus, was convinced that we should love our fellow creatures as ourselves. Western culture has always reacted badly to this idea. Its philosophy separates individuals from each other, it does not unite them. It has stirred competition, not fostered love. It has alienated man from nature, convincing him that human primacy justifies the exploitation of the Earth, it has made him believe in a so-called Western superiority that has induced him to look at the rest of humanity with little or no respect. And all that, in defiance of Christ's teachings. Sigmund Freud, a typical son of our civilization, declared – as a scientific claim – that it will never be possible to love our fellow creatures as ourselves.

On the contrary, Yogi Ramsuratkumar not only loved and, through his behavior, taught others to love all mankind as ourselves – without any distinction of race, creed, class, sex, or merits for good conduct – but he loved and taught others to love animals and plants too, because all is One. He used to say to Ma Devaki: «In this cosmos, everything is linked: the sun, the moon, the *champak* tree over there, this wall, this flower, you, these people and this beggar... Everything, everyone is linked with each other. It's all one Mind. It's all one life. Total, indivisible, *advaitam*, unity...».

Pankkajam told us that once, when Yogi lived in Sannidhi Street, she brought him a package of cookies from Bangalore – cookies that were particularly good (and expensive). Swami was very pleased and ate a couple of them; he offered a few to her, and then started giving the rest to a dog he called Sai Baba. Finally, he asked Pankkajam: «Don't you feel bad about this beggar?»

«Why should I? Once I gave the cookies to you, they are yours, Swami. You can do whatever you like with them».

«Oh! You put it in this way... But this beggar says: try to see this beggar also in Sai Baba».

Pankkajam underlined that Yogi never referred to the animal as 'this dog'. He always called him by name. And in this regard, she reported another beautiful episode to us: «One day Bhagavan was sitting in the open air,

within the *ashram* compound. In front of him, a short distance away, there was a brown-and-white dog. Swamiji said to a worker nearby: “Call my friend!” The worker turned around, looking for a person. But Yogi specified: “Call *that* friend”, and he pointed to the dog. The worker gently pushed the animal towards him.

“What’s his name?” the saint asked.

“He has no name, Bhagavan”.

“Then his name will be Ramu”, Yogi decreed. Names, however, are generally to be given to dogs when they are puppies, otherwise the animals do not get accustomed to their sound. On the contrary, Ramu immediately understood, and he would come at once, if he heard his name. Not only that. He always waited for Yogi’s arrival, he followed him around, and remained near him for hours».

Plants were Bhagavan’s friends too. Vijayalakshmi told me that when old trees had to be chopped or big branches cut in Sudama garden, Bhagavan always asked that they be left alone. «They are living beings: they want to live» he would say. «They are living beings: they suffer too».

«At Sudama there is a gooseberry tree», Ma Devaki referred. «He would call it ‘holy’, and spend hours under it, touching it, hugging it, stroking it tenderly now and then».

There is a custom in Southern India: when the fruit on mango trees is ripe, the local people beat the branches in order to make the fruit fall. Naturally, along with the fruit many leaves and twigs also fall. Vijayalakshmi described Swami's sadness every time he saw a majestic tree being mangled in this way. «He couldn't prevent it», she explained. «But he would walk up and down in the garden with evident suffering». Also mango trees were him.

Everyone should feel respect and friendship for a mango tree, for a *cham-pack* tree, for anybody and anything. Universal harmony does not leave out anything: it connects mango trees to grass, to us, to the stars. Yogi Ramsuratkumar was working for this – one moment with a gesture, the next moment with a simple, casual sentence. He made people live the One, he did not preach it. His love was expressed in this way too: by suffering with a suffering plant, and helping Pankkajam (and the other devotees, by the thousands) to perceive that it is possible to be happy with a dog which is happy eating a cookie. For, as a matter of fact, there is no barrier dividing human beings from plants and dogs. We humans have created the barrier, for the simple fact that we have imagined its existence. We have imposed these limits on ourselves. Yogi had gone beyond restrictions, classifications, and fragmentations. He worked «at every step», as he himself underlined, in order to spread harmony in the world, and to spread it even when he would no longer be on Earth in a visible form. He stated:

«When this beggar gives a word, it (harmony) will take place. (...) But a rare few times, it may fail, due to some sudden disharmony somewhere in the Cosmos. But the failure is then only for its greater good. The failure is only apparent».

At this point, we may think about our poor planet, scourged daily by the winds of violence and by ravaging folly. Where has harmony gone, provided it ever existed among human beings?

Yogi Ramsuratkumar was adamant: «If one has unshakable faith, failure too will work for good, greater good». And he spoke of an unrecognizable Earth, in a few decades. An Earth united, with no frontiers, no passports. With a different awareness. In young people glimmers of this change are already visible, he said. It is true: there is the spark of an unusual ecological spirit, there are signs of a vaster sense of union, a yearning (though sometimes confused) for transcendence, a search for spirituality no longer identified with religions. «I am not religious, I am spiritual», we often heard young people affirm in America. This new way of perceiving reality is generated by a joyous openness of one's own being. Should it become a widespread sentiment, this new attitude would automatically imply the overcoming and the disappearance of any fundamentalism and the creation of a religion of the Earth and of humankind. From that moment on, man would no longer kill in the name of God. Life would be valued; others, all the others, would be cherished – from rocks to mango trees, to the

neighbor next door and the one who lives much farther away. People who are spiritual are already able to do that, it is natural, spontaneous for them.

Perhaps, in his vision of the Earth of the future, wonderful and pacified, Yogi Ramsuratkumar foresaw a spiritual world, no longer attached to the labels of religions or ideologies. «*Advaita*, pure unity», he used to say. Which does not mean a uniform, flattened world. On the contrary, there would be a mature mankind that would at last accept and sustain, as never before, racial and cultural diversities. It would *accept*, not just tolerate them. Tolerance, if considered in depth, is an ambiguous concept: it contains a hint of superiority. It bears, it does not meet with open arms. *Advaita*, a spirituality without barriers, would generate «an overflowing sense of interconnection, an ecstasy of unity», as astronaut Edgar Mitchell said he experienced in Space, when from up there he looked at the planet Earth, with no boundaries, no conflicts – a whole thing, our thing, to love.

In this ecstasy of unity, the spirituality of the future would be – and could not but be – *Sanātana Dharma*, the universal law, the «eternal Cosmic Order», that would guide human actions in a smooth, spontaneous way, as an inner law, a law of harmony, in the same way as it makes the wind blow and the flowers bloom. A utopia? Perhaps not. It may be a possibility for tomorrow – the other possibility being extinction. If the latter tragic possibility does not prevail, we shall owe it to sages like Yogi Ramsuratkumar. For this reason, Yogi affirmed he

had «a great mission». And he added: «This beggar's body lives only for Father's work». He specified that it was something incomprehensible for common devotees, a subtle, but very essential work, that remained unknown to most people.

Ma Devaki told us that in the house in Sannidhi Street, on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1992, the saint explained: «People think Yogi Ramsuratkumar is only from here to here (pointing to his head and feet). Where is Yogi Ramsuratkumar? He is here and there and everywhere. He is in all of you, and all of you are in him».

In the garden of Sudama, in April of the same year, he confirmed: «There is no place where this beggar is not».

These are wonderful but debatable phrases. Someone might not accept them. Yet, if one browses through the sayings of other saints in the world, one will find the same statements. The Muslim mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi, who belonged to a different religion (Islam), to a different country (Turkey), and to a different epoch (the 13<sup>th</sup> century), wrote:

*You say you see my mouth, my ears, my nose,  
But they are not mine.  
I am the life of life.  
I am that cat, this stone, nobody.  
I have thrown away duality, like an old rag.  
I see and know all the epochs and worlds.*

In 1993, before the construction of the *ashram* – it is always Ma Devaki who gave us these accounts – Yogi Ramsuratkumar repeated the same concept which is so hard for the lay man to understand, but of primary importance: «All of you are in me. I am in all of you. There is nothing else and no one else. I am here, there, everywhere, all pervasive. No one is separate. No one is isolated. It's all one life, indivisible, total – subtle, subtler, subtlest, gross, grosser, grossest».

Nowadays even science, in particular quantum physics, seems to approach the same incredible truth. Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, in *QS – Spiritual Intelligence: The Ultimate Intelligence*, explain that, according to quantum theory, everyone of us is like a wave on the 'lake' of void. So, as one cannot trace a borderline between the waves and the lake, it is impossible to trace a distinct line between us and the other 'waves'. We are in you, in every creature, and even in a speck of dust, in trees, in rocks, in the stars, and all that is in us.

We Westerners need these confirmations from science. They reassure us. It is as if now, just because quantum physics asserts the same things sages have affirmed for millennia, we acquire a 'license to believe': scientists say this, so we believe it; therefore, we can believe the same affirmation if it is made by Yogi Ramsuratkumar and many other *jñānis* like him. On the contrary, it would be right to think the other way round: science sustains this, but science has limits. *Jñānis*,

instead, have reached a condition where there are no limits any longer.

Let us proceed with the sentences of Yogi Ramsuratkumar, chronologically noted by Ma Devaki. In February 1994, the saint uttered a statement the vastness of which we shall never be able to fathom: «I am the Cosmic Controller. I run the whole cosmos». Then he added: «But this beggar cannot speak this language to everyone, only to a few friends».

I do not know how many times I read this sentence, trying for a whole day to get to the heart of it. I pondered, I meditated. But I am still at the surface of it. However, I have sensed a few connections I would like to share.

Starting point for this analysis: Jesus said something very similar: «Anyone here with two ears had better listen! There is light within a person of light, and it shines on the whole world» (*Gospel of Thomas*, Saying 24). Therefore, we had better listen to the ‘person of light’ Yogi Ramsuratkumar. His statement, which may seem extreme at first sight, must contain ‘light’.

Second point: it was Yogi’s habit not to speak in the first person. Not being an ‘I’ any longer, he could not ascribe to his own person the actions for which he was only a channel. Ma Devaki told us that Bhagavan often used to say: «This beggar has no mind. So this beggar has no plans». It was Someone else who acted through

him. And in front of that Someone else, he called his body 'this beggar'. But in the quotation we are analyzing, Yogi says unexpectedly: «I am the Cosmic Controller». And he reasserts: «I run the whole cosmos». It appears more than ever clear that it is not Yogi speaking. This time Yogi is not there at all, not even as 'this beggar'. We do know he repeated countless times: «This beggar does not exist. Yogi Ramsuratkumar is not the name of this beggar. It is the Name of the Father». But here, all of a sudden, the pronoun 'I' springs up. The assertion that follows has a biblical resonance. It reminds the words of God himself: «I am that I am» (*Exodus* 3,14). It is the Great Mystery that expresses itself directly. There is no longer a man, not even a crumb of him.

Let us go back to the analogies with Jesus. He said: «I am the light of the world» (*John* 8,12). «All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me» (*Mt.* 28,18). Very likely, the pronouns 'I' and 'me' do not refer at all to the historical man Jesus. While he was pronouncing those phrases, Jesus – as Yogi Ramsuratkumar – was cancelled out. After all, he himself stressed: «The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own initiative, but the Father residing in me performs his miraculous deeds» (*John* 14,10). God, not the man Jesus. God, not the man Yogi Ramsuratkumar. Jesus and Yogi Ramsuratkumar are names of God.

Of course, Yogi immediately added a second part to his statement: «But this beggar cannot speak this language to everyone, only to a few friends». We find the

same caution in Jesus: «You have been given the opportunity to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but they [the Pharisees] have not» (*Mt.* 13,11). To the Pharisees, but actually to people in general, he explained very openly why he was so cautious: «If I have told you people about earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?» (*John* 3,12). It is the usual, ever-present problem: human beings tend to judge. Substantially, to misunderstand.

«Yogi Ramsuratkumar is a big zero» Parthasarathy helped us to understand. «And at the same time, he contains everything». This big zero was carrying on the work of the One. Unceasingly. Before anything else. In a personal letter to us, dated June 7<sup>th</sup> 1995, Ma Devaki wrote that the saint had specified: «Father's work is more important than the *darshans* of this beggar». What was Father's work, substantially? Most probably to preserve the Earth, to prevent its being blown up because of men's stupidity – or, better, for their egos' stupidity. Yogi continued this effort until the very end of his life. He used even the excruciating pain of his disease for balancing the disharmonies created in the universe by humankind.

For a long time, he did not let out anything about his illness. «Doctors said he carried the disease for ten years or so, without revealing it to anyone» was the report of Rajmohan, the young man who spent 98 days in the hospital attending to Bhagavan with Ma Devaki and

Vijayalakshmi<sup>1</sup>. Yogi did not attach any importance to his body, to the point that he did not want his devotees to inquire about his health. I remember it was difficult for me not to ask him anything, when in February 2000 I saw him again, after five years, and found him awfully aged and with a greatly pained look. I was there to be healed by him again. He inquired about my health, and wanted a detailed description of my physical problems. But about him, nothing. His body was an appendix, or perhaps even less: a zero. Why should one bother about it?

From June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2000, Yogi Ramsuratkumar began to get fever continuously. He could not walk anymore and stopped returning to Sudama in the evenings. He remained in the *ashram* day and night, bedridden.

Then, in mid July came the news: he suffered from a carcinoma in the urethra, and had to undergo surgery in Chennai. His first reaction was negative: he did not want to go to the hospital. «These people do not understand», was his short comment. Parthasarathy went to pay him a visit immediately: «I was able to see Swami's determination to drop his physical frame». But devotees prayed to him, implored him. Even some *mahātmās* were called to try to convince the saint. Krishna Premi Maharaj sent Bhagavan a letter. With roundabout expressions, he gently requested that Bhagavan accepted treatment and surgery, as his body, in truth, belonged to his devotees, and hence it was to be left to them to give medical attention and care. «When I

read it out to Bhagavan», Ma Devaki explained to us «he merely listened and did not answer. Then I begged him for a reply to be sent back, hoping secretly that he might relent. But all he said was: “Rama”».

«Beautiful!» I whispered, when I heard these words about a month after Yogi had passed away. I was dazzled by the greatness of his behavior.

«Yes, dear Olga», Ma Devaki answered, still worn out by the immense sorrow and the numberless days and nights of continuous care at Bhagavan’s bedside, completely oblivious of herself. «It was at once beautiful and sad: beautiful because such a reply could come only from the mouth of a *Mahāpurusha*, and sad because it dashed all our hopes at that time».

Other *mahātmās* sent letters, blessings, medicines. Krishna Premi Maharaj went personally to Bhagavan, to try a second time. Swami Shuddananda, the grandson of Swami Ramdas, even brought a homeopathic doctor to Yogi. But he remained unconvinced. Only out of great compassion, did he finally agree to go to the hospital. On August 17<sup>th</sup>, at 12:00 a.m. he entered the Sri Ramana Surgical Clinic in Thiyagaraya Nagar, Chennai. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, he underwent a successful surgical operation. He had radiological therapy and other specific procedures. On November 12<sup>th</sup>, Rajmohan wrote to us, with great relief: «Now he is almost back to his old, normal health». On November 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 16.30 Bhagavan again entered his *ashram*. Rajmohan informed:«After

overcoming a slight physical discomfort for the first three days, now he is perfectly alright, and in good health».

But the joy felt by everyone was not to last. In January 2001, there was the relapse, followed by the tragic beginning of the end. Vijayalakshmi told me that Swami did not take any sedative. «Why, Bhagavan, so much pain?» she queried him. Yogi explained to her that his suffering was for the purpose of balancing the disharmonies in the world. He specified: «Disharmony is only a part of the vaster harmony». Ma Devaki put Yogi the same question, when he was in the hospital: «Why, why all this suffering for you, who has lived in God all the time?» He answered: «Father wants this beggar to suffer for the sake of cosmic balance». So, never, not even during those atrocious days, was his vision of universal good blurred. But the Earth was in need of a sacrifice: his sacrifice.

While Ma Devaki and Vijayalakshmi were talking to me, I could not help thinking of Jesus who died on the cross for the sins of the world, as the tradition says. Now I think I see the meaning of this Christian explanation in a new light: Jesus, as Yogi Ramsuratkumar, had to re-balance disharmony in the vaster harmony.

On January 18<sup>th</sup>, about one month before the end, Yogi asked for Parthasarathy. «Swami had not been speaking to anyone for quite a long time», our friend reported. «But suddenly, that day, he repeated my name several times. People around him, inquired whether he

wanted to see me. Swami replied: “Yes”. I rushed to Tiruvannamalai on the same day. When I met Swami, he was in great pain and had his eyes closed. When he was informed that I was there, he opened his eyes and slightly raised his hands to touch me. I put my hands in Swami’s and he gently pressed them, and smiling, he whispered: “Thank you, Parthasarathy”. Then, again, he closed his eyes».

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, Yogi underwent dialysis. The specialists, however, were pessimistic. Bhagavan did not respond to any stimulus.

Ma Devaki related: «Just a few days before his *Mahāsamādhi*, when he was still talking a little, now and then, a friend Bhagavan loved very much had come to see him. I promptly informed Bhagavan: “So and so has come”. Suddenly, he opened his eyes and looking in my eyes, spoke to me with clear voice: “I am so and so, I am everyone, everything, here, there, everywhere. I alone exist”. He closed his eyes again, as before. Very soon after, he stopped talking completely. The doctors suspected that probably Bhagavan was not fully conscious. I began feeling terrible. I felt like dying too. I kept crying and crying, sitting in a corner across the room. Suddenly Bhagavan, still with his eyes closed, raised his hand, and gestured to me to come near. When I was near, he held my hand in his and patted it reassuringly. The rest of his body was still, his eyes were always closed. He was conscious all the time, until the

very end. He was only withdrawn – he, the very personification of the Cosmic Consciousness».

A few more days passed by. Again, Ma Devaki shares with us her memories: «The day before his *Mahāsamādhi*, he called me: “Devaki”, like in the olden days. When I touched his hand, I burst out into sobs».

Yogi’s conditions continued to worsen. In his book *Amarakavyam. Biography of Yogi Ramsuratkumar*, Parthasarathy took note of every detail of those painful moments: «On February 20<sup>th</sup> in the early morning, exactly at 3 o’clock Yogi exhaled his last breath. The doctors tried to revive him by giving heart massage, but without success. Finally the doctors announced the passing away of Yogi at 3.19 a.m. of February 20<sup>th</sup> 2001»<sup>2</sup>.

While Jesus was dying on the cross, the Scribes and the Pharisees mocked him: «He saved others, but he cannot save himself!» (*Mk.* 15,31). Someone might think the same about Yogi Ramsuratkumar: he healed so many people, why did he not heal his own disease? Bhagavan Ramana was asked something similar, during his last days. Not out of mockery, but out of love: «Bhagavan, you must continue to give us *darshans*». After a while the Maharshi commented: «I have said, “Give up your *dehātma-buddhi* (identification with the body)!” They now want me to cling to the body».

Like Ramana and Jesus, Yogi Ramsuratkumar knew why he was dying. Jesus said: in order to fulfill the Scriptures. Meaning: in order to save the Earth. The same is true for Ramana Maharshi, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, and many saints like them. They lived to help. They died helping.

Shortly before leaving this world, Ramakrishna who suffered from a throat tumor<sup>3</sup>, had a vision of the Divine Mother who explained to him the reason for his pain: since he had purified many people troubled by lots of ailments, he had transferred their negative *karmas* upon himself. Something very similar was said of Jesus: «He took our weaknesses, and carried our diseases» (*Mt.* 8,17). Yogi Ramsuratkumar did the same.

Once I listened to the sermon of a famous Catholic priest in Milan, Italy. I remember he repeated continuously and broken-heartedly: «I too contributed to killing Jesus». I did not grasp the meaning of that statement. I was not able to understand it for years. Then, all of a sudden, it has become clear: I too contributed to making Yogi die in the way he died. He took my *karma* upon himself, he took my physical problems and those of thousands of other people upon himself. He did it silently, while no one of us realized his sacrifice. And silently did he work for the Earth, so that it would not succumb to human carelessness and foolishness. Jesus is invoked in Latin as «*Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi*, Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world». Lamb of God, or sacrificial creature – that is what Jesus

was, but also what Yogi Ramsuratkumar was, and many other Enlightened ones. They were born, they lived, and they died to be lambs of God – and of humankind.

Jesus as Yogi Ramsuratkumar. In these pages we saw how many analogies link them. The famous Catholic theologian Raimon Panikkar wrote: «Jesus was Christ, but Christ was not only Jesus». Christ is also Buddha, Lao-tzu, Tilopa, Naropa, Milarepa, Dogen Zenji, Hakuin Zenji; he is Jalal al-Din Rumi, Hallaj, who was flagellated, beheaded, and then soaked in raw petroleum and burnt to ashes, because he had dared to tell his experience:

*«I saw God  
with the eyes of my heart.  
I asked: "Who are you?"  
He answered: "You"».*

Yogi Ramsuratkumar is Hallaj, Adi Shankara, Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi, Ramdas, Jesus, and countless other ‘Sons of Man’, many of whom have not entered History (for instance, some very special shamans, unknown to us, who lived in the tundra, in the Great Plains, in deserts, in forests, or on some remote island of the Pacific Ocean), but they all have realized the merging into the Cosmic Consciousness.

In this regard, the American scholar John White pointed out: «The Aramaic term for the Greek word ‘Christ’ is *M’skekha* from which we get ‘messiah’. It is a title, not a last name, and although it is conventionally

translated as ‘anointed’, it really means ‘perfected’, ‘enlightened’, or ‘the ideal form of humanity’. Thus, Jesus was a historical person, a human being; but Christ, the *Christos*, is an eternal transpersonal condition of being to which we must all someday come. Jesus did not say that this higher state of consciousness realized in him was his alone for all time. Nor did he call us to worship him. Rather, he called us to follow him, to follow in his steps, to learn from him, from his example, to live a God-centered life of selfless compassionate service to the world as if we were Jesus himself»<sup>4</sup>.

The German mystic Meister Eckhart, who lived between the Twelfth and the Thirteenth centuries, affirmed with great courage for his epoch: «In each one of us the Son of God becomes man, and the son of man becomes God». Raimon Panikkar is even more clear: «Every being is a *christophany*»<sup>5</sup>. In simpler words, we all contain within ourselves the transpersonal potentiality that will take us one day to become Christ. This is so true that Jesus himself declared: «The person who believes in me will perform the miraculous deeds that I am doing, and will perform greater deeds than these». How could he have spoken like that, if he and only he was God and to all of us only the role of poor sinners was reserved?

So, everyone will become Christ. Yogi Ramsuratkumar is already Christ. There is no need to convert the world to Christianity.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar loved as Christ did. He died in agony, as Christ did. «I was the witness for the suffering of Swami's body till the final minute», Parthasarathy told us. «And I witnessed Swami's complete indifference to his body. He was alert and filled with serenity, peace, and bliss». Once more like Christ, who could forgive the people who had nailed him to the cross, right in the moment he was dying.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar is the Son of Man. And he is the Son of the Father. He is a Christ not yet twisted by centuries. We can only hope that time and human beings will never distort his legacy.

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## Notes

1. Together with Ma Devaki, Vijayalakshmi, and Rajmohan, other staunch devotees assisted Yogi during his ailment: Anand from Kerala, with his gentle smile, Parthiban, Naresh, Ravi the driver, always mild and benevolent. There was Sri Sakthivel. There was Sri G. Swaminathan, who had spent several months with Swami in the house in Sannidhi Street.
2. S. Parthasarathy, *Amarakavyam. Biography of Yogi Ramsuratkumar*, Fine Arts (P) Ltd, Tiruvannamalai, n.d., p.257.
3. Strangely (or perhaps not), several *jñānis* died of cancer: besides Ramakrishna (1836-1886), Ramana Maharshi (1879-

1950) had a carcinoma on an arm, Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) a tumor of the prostate, Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897-1981) of the throat. Also J. Krishnamurti (1895-1986) and Mataji Krishnabai (1903-1989) died of cancer.

4. White J., *Jesus, Evolution and Future of Humanity*, in 'Human Survival and Consciousness Evolution', edited by Stanislav Grof, State University of New York Press 1988, p. 124-125.
5. Panikkar R., *La Pienezza dell'uomo: Una Cristofania*, Jaca Book, Milan 1999, p. 40. (*The Whole Man: a Christophany*).

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR BHAVANI

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