

Shyam Ki Meera

By

Swami Girishananda Saraswati

Mangalacharana.

*Shaantam shaashvatamaprame `yamanaghām nirvaanashaantipradam
brahmaashambhufane `ndrase `vyamanisham ve `daantave `dyam vibhum,*

*Raamaakhyam jagadeeshvaram suragurum maayaamanushyam harim
vande `ham karunaakaram raghuvam bhoopaalachudaamanim.*

*Varhaapeedham natavaravapuh karnayo karnikaaram vibhrad vaasash
kanakakapisham vajayantim cha maalam,*

*Randhraanve `noadharasudhayaā poorayangopavrindairvrindaaranyam
svapadaramanam praavishad geetakeertih.*

*Sacchidaanandaroopaaya vishvatpatyaayahe `tave `
Taapatrayavinaashaaya shreekrishnaaya vayam numah.*

*Yam pravrajantamnupe `tamape `takrityam dvaipaayano virahakeetara
aajuhaavaah,*

*Putre `ti tanmayaā taravoabhine `dushtam sarvabhootahridayam
muninmaanatosi.*

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: 1 :

I prostrate before my revered Sadguru, Swami Akhandananda Saraswatiji Maharaj.

This is the Kali Yuga, the age where Dharma wanes and wrong-doing increases. If there is any person in the Kali Yuga in whose life Shri Krishna manifested in many forms, it was *bhaktimati* (one who is filled with bhakti) Meera.

I used the words 'in many forms' because we have heard that poison turned into *amrita* (the elixir that bestows immortality) in Meera' life. A black snake turned into a garland, or a Saligram (a round stone worshipped as Bhagwan Vishnu), and a lion became Nrisimha Bhagwan Himself! These things happened in the Kalikaal, in the present age of Kali. They are real incidents.

Meera's extraordinary life gives us faith. People say, 'This is the Kali Yuga; it is very bad.' This Yuga of Kali is only five thousand years old. It is in this Yuga that great saints like Tulsidas, Surdas, and *bhaktimati* Meera have been born at about the same period, some five hundred years back. If Bhagwan can come into their lives in so many forms, it gives us faith that He can also come into our lives if we make a wholehearted effort. And, He does come!

Our Jhunjhunwalaji will not accept this readily, because he does a lot of reading. It is good to read, but it is essential that there is a harmony between the *buddhi* (intellect) and the *hridaya* (heart). A person whose heart is dominant is more likely to have faith than a person who is predominantly an intellectual. An intellectual believes after having obtaining knowledge, whereas a person who has faith believes before he gets the knowledge. This is the difference.

I may have spoken about this before – a Sant (Mahatma) named Nandakishoredas lived in Vraja – the region round Vrindavan – some two hundred years ago. He was simple-hearted and extremely trusting. He believed anything anyone told him. The word ‘disbelief’ was not in his dictionary. He was sent to his Guruji’s ashram. He was given the *se`vaa* (rendering service) of taking the cows to graze. He was not good at reading or writing, but he had great love for Bhagwan. This is why he was given to work of looking after the ashram’s cows.

Nandakishoredas was called ‘Bhondu bhagat’ – the stupid bhakta – because he believed whatever he was told even jokingly. He told his Guruji, ‘I will obey your command, and take the cows out to the forest, but how will I get Bhagwan?’ He had left his home and family to come and stay at the ashram in the hope of obtaining Bhagwan.

Guruji said, ‘Look; I have given you a task by which you can meet Bhagwan.’

‘How?’

‘Shri Krishna also takes cows to graze,’ explained Guruji. ‘You will be going to the same forest. You will surely meet Him some day, somewhere.’

The Guruji said this to divert the boy, but he took Guruji’s words to heart. He thought about them continuously. Every morning he set out eagerly, thinking, ‘I will meet Gopal today!’

Bhagwan abides in all hearts. He saw the longing in Bhondu bhagat’s heart. He saw the prema the boy had for Him. ‘Let Me do some *leelaa* (frolic; play) with this boy,’ He thought.

Bhagwan Shri Krishna came with some cows one day. The boy saw His sublime beauty and the radiant *gwaala baala* (cowherd boys) who were with Him. Bhondu bhagat asked Thakurji, ‘Who are you?’

‘I am Gopal. I graze cows.’

Bhondu bhagat believed whatever he was told. He said, ‘Oh, so You are Gopal! Guruji has told me, “Gopal goes to graze cows.” We can be friends, because we have the same occupation.’

Bhondu bhagat shared the food he had brought with Gopalbhaiya. He had a hearty appetite, and the food wasn't enough. He told his Guruji, 'Please increase the quantity of food for me to take.' Guruji gave instructions for him to be given more food. Bhondu bhagat set off happily the following day.

However, Balaramji came with Krishna, and the food was short again. Then, Shridama and Madhumangal started coming, too. Guruji kept increasing the quantity of food, and it continued to be insufficient.

'Has Bhondu's appetite increased so much, or is Bhagwan actually coming?' wondered Guruji. 'We should find out.' He said, 'Bhondu, bring your Gopalbhaiya here, to the ashram tomorrow. We will give Him a feast. There, you can only offer the few things you take with you.'

'Yes! Oh yes!' cried Bhondu bhagat joyfully. 'I will bring Him!' The boy had full faith. 'He is my friend; why won't He listen to me?'

He went to the forest and met Thakurji.

'Where is the food, Bhondu?' asked Thakurji.

'I have not brought anything today,' said Bhondu bhagat. 'Guruji has said that You are to come to the ashram for a feast.'

Bhagwan Shri Krishna hesitated. He knew that Guruji's hriday was not as pure as Bhondu's. Bhagwan did leela with Bhondu with anand, but felt reluctant to go to the ashram.

'Go and bring Guruji here,' He said. 'I do not feel like going to the ashram.'

Can you imagine what Nandakishoredas said? He threatened Gopalbhaiya!

'I have told Guruji that I will bring Gopalbhaiya. If You don't come with me I will break off my friendship with You!'

This simple boy is threatening to break off his friendship with Bhagwan! My brother, if you break off this friendship, who will be harmed – you or Bhagwan? What a simple-hearted, straightforward boy Bhondu bhagat was!

Bhagwan said, 'No! No! Please don't break our friendship. I will go with you.' He went with Nandakishoredas to the ashram. Thanks to his disciple, Guruji

obtained Bhagwan's *darshana* (to see a revered object). He was overwhelmed. This happened just two hundred years ago.

Meerabai lived five hundred years ago. How did she get such simple *vishvaasa* (staunch faith)? It is difficult to say how a person can get such vishwas. It can be due to the *saadhanaa* (effort for spiritual progress) of several lifetimes, or by the Guru's *kripaa* (compassion; Grace), or by the special *kripa* of the Ishwara. To pinpoint the exact cause is not possible.

Shri Radha Baba Maharaj stayed at the Gita Vatika at Gorakhpur. He said, 'I cannot say how this special *kripa* is bestowed, or by what *saadhana* (method for spiritual progress), but when it is showered on a person, he begins to experience Prabhu in a special way. Prabhu begins to bestow *kripa*. I don't know how this happens.'

The *jeevana* (life) of Meera as a historical figure is known to all of you. Her father's city was Medata, and her in-law's lived in Mevad – at Chittoda. The extraordinary bhakti in Meerabai's life is described:

Ane'ka janmasansiddhih yaati paramaam gatim.

(*Gita* 6. 45)

(A Yogi gets the ultimate success after several births of doing *sadhana* that makes him free of all *paapa*.)

Ane'ka janmasansiddhi – all the Mahapurushas (great Saints), who are seen to be very simple-hearted and straightforward, have attained this stage after doing *sadhana* for Bhagwan over several lifetimes of doing. The elevated state of simplicity and pure-heartedness comes in this final birth of theirs. For them the cycle of rebirth ends in this birth.

I have read about Meerabai and also heard about her from Sants (Mahatmas), that she lived in the Dwapar Yuga. (The cycle of Time is divided into four Yugas – Satya, Treta, Dwapar, and Kali.) Her name was Madhvi *sakhi* (*sakhi* means a friend, of the feminine gender). She was born in Vraja – the region around Vrindavan. The family she was married into lived in the same region.

Madhvi's parents were *dharma-nishtha* (having strong faith in Dharma). She was married to a *gopa* (cowherd) called Sundar, who was a *sakhaa* (friend, of

the masculine gender) of Shri Krishna, and lived in Nandagaon, the village of Nanda Baba – Shri Krishna’s father. In earlier times, marriages were arranged when children were very young. Then, there was a ceremony called *dvigamana* – gauna – when the bride went to her husband’s house, when the couple was older. The elders present would know of this, but youngsters may not.

When it was time for Meerabai to go to her husband’s house, her mother spoke seriously to her. ‘You are going to Nandagaon. I have heard that Nanda Baba’s son lives there. He is very *natkhat* (naughty). He teases everybody. Anyone who gets caught in his lures is lead into doing things that are contrary to Dharma. So, be very careful when he comes. Don’t even look at him. He has many methods of enticing girls. If a girl refuses to look at him, he plays the flute. If she refuses to listen to the flute, he dances.’

Our Ramaji behaves with great decorum, but this Thakur of Vrindavan entices people! Many people come to Vraja. Very often they tell me, ‘Maharaj, I was a Rama-bhakta’. Or, they say, ‘I was a bhakta of Shivaji,’ or, of Durgaji. I ask them what they mean by saying ‘I was’. They say, ‘Now, my *mana* (emotional mind) goes more towards Banke Bihari (Shri Krishna’s Mandir in Vrindavan).’ I tell them, ‘You have accomplished your goal. This has been Shri Krishna’s *svabhaava* (nature) since ancient times.’ It is quite true that whoever stays in Vraja belongs to Vraja! This is the *mahimaa* (greatness; glory) of Vraja. It is also the ambience of Vraja.

Shri Maharajji – Swami Akhandanandaji – told us about a Sant who had come from Ayodhya. He was a Rama-bhakta. He came to Vrindavan in the month of Shravan (monsoon) to see the Raas Leela (enacting of Shri Krishna’s dancing with the gopis of Vrindavan). Watching this sublime Raas Leela, he became a Krishna-bhakta. He did not go back to Ayodhya.

One day the Sadhu had a dream. At that time he was living at Shri Udiya Babaji’s ashram. In his dream he saw Bhagwan Rama sitting at Court. He asked His Ministers, ‘Ramdev had gone to Vrindavan to see the Raas Leela many days ago. Find out where he is, and why he has not come back.’

One person told Bhagwan that Ramdas had become a Krishna-bhakta and was living in Vrindavan.

‘Oh, Shri Krishna dares to corrupt My bhakta! Come, let us go in a cavalcade and attack Shri Krishna!’ It is a fact that the Mahatma got this dream. The cavalcade of Shri Rama came to Vraja with all pomp and glitter. He is the Sovereign Monarch, after all!

Bhagwan Shri Krishna asked, ‘What is Your command, Maharaj?’

‘You have enticed My bhakta!’

Shri Krishna said, ‘Please take Your bhakta back. I will make more bhaktas.’

The Sadhu woke up at this point. My Guruji, Pujya Swami Akhandanandaji told us that the Sadhu became a Rama-bhakta again. This was a rare case. Such things are not common. Ramaji came and saved His bhakta!

Many of you would be going to Vrindavan. Shri Krishna will surely entice you one day! He tries a lot to entice me as well, but my Ramaji has protected me so far; I also stay at Vrindavan!

Meerabai’s mother had said, ‘You are going to Vrindavan. Be wary of this son of Nanda Baba. If he comes to you, don’t look at him. If he plays the flute, don’t listen. If he dances, keep away.’

‘What will happen if I look at him, or hear his flute?’ asked Meera.

‘Your *dharma-karma* (right actions; worldly duties) will be lost,’ said her mother. ‘You will become incapable of carrying out your household tasks. So, be very careful.’

‘All right, Ma. I will be very careful.’

It is said that people do anything in the name of prema or in the name of bhakti. Meerabai’s role was fully Dharma-nishtha – adhering to instituted Dharma. Bhakti comes into a person’s life only if he is firmly established in Dharma, and a person does not get the anand of Gnan (spiritual knowledge) in his life until the foundation of bhakti is solid in his heart. This is the *krama* (serial order) of bhakti. The first floor will not be stable – and the second floor will be even more unstable – if the foundation and ground floor are not strong.

Meerabai’s Dharma-nishtha should be seen in the form of Madhvi sakhi. Madhvi sakhi left her parents’ home and came to Nandagaon. Bhagwan Shri

Krishna got the news that a new *jeeva* (Atma attached to a body; an individual) has come to Nandagaon. It has always been Shri Krishna's nature to make people His bhaktas.

Meerabai's husband, Sundar, was Shri Krishna's sakha. Shri Krishna asked Sundar, 'You have got married, and come back?'

'Yes,' replied Sundar.

'Then let Me get a darshan of your wife.'

'Yes; why not? Go and see her, Kanhaiya.'

Kanhaiya was very young – hardly seven or eight years old. As soon as Madhvi sakhi heard Shri Krishna's name, she pulled down her *ghunghata* (the part of the sari that covers the head, and is pulled down to hide the face). She carefully covered her hands and feet with her sari. 'Ma had told me to be wary of this *laalaa* (son) of Nanda Baba, whose name is Krishna,' she thought. 'He has met me on the road even before we've reached our house!'

Krishna tried to talk to Madhvi, and to see her, but the advice given by her mother ensured that Madhvi sakhi neither looked at Him, nor spoke to Him. She did not even let Him see her face. She hid behind her sari; her Dharma-nishtha was very strong.

Do you know, Bhagwan had to say, 'I am trying to look at you and talk to you just now, and you are avoiding Me. A time will come when you will try to see Me. Very well; you have Dharma-nishtha. You have faith in what your mother and father have told you.'

Bhagwan Krishna tells Arjuna:

*Sarvadharmaan parityajya maame `kam sharanam vraja,
aham tvaa sarvapaape `bhyo mokshayishyaami maa shuchah.*

(*Gita 18. 66*)

(Give up all your worldly duties and take refuge in Me alone. I will liberate you from all sin. Do not grieve.)

‘Arjuna, let go of all Dharma (worldly duties) and take *Mysharana* (refuge). Your Dharma is to obey the command I am giving you now.’

Here, bhagavan Shankaracharya has written in his commentary, ‘*Sarva dharmaan* is to give up all Dharma. Who is to give up Dharma? Only a person who adheres to Dharma can be told to give it up. What is the need to tell anyone to give up Dharma unless he is holding on to it?’ Shankaracharya Maharaj has explained that this *upade`sha* (teaching) is given only to a person who clings to Dharma, who accepts Dharma. Only such a person can climb over the staircase of Dharma and come on to the path of *sharanaagati* (complete surrender to Bhagwan; taking refuge in Bhagwan).

The present state of our society and country is well known to all of you. An outcry is raised if anyone talks about Dharma. ‘This is *saampradaayik* (religious) talk!’ they say. Most people don’t even know the meaning of the word ‘Sampradaya’. Only a small percentage of people know what it actually means.

The meaning of *sampradaaya* is – *samyak pradaana*. It is the *vidyaa* (knowledge) that is given by a Guru to the disciples in an unbroken tradition. It is, *sampradaaya samyak pradeeyate` ane`na iti sampradaayah*. To give fully, is Sampradaya.

Do you know what Shankaracharya bhagavan has written? He has stated that a person who has not received teaching through the tradition of a Sampradaya should be dismissed as a fool, no matter how learned he may be. He has used the words ‘*moorkhavat upe`kshaneeyah*’ – dismissed as a fool!

The purport is that our country and our Sanskriti (traditional culture and wisdom) are great. The teachings of our Shastras and Dharma are wonderful. Sadly, it seems Prabhu’s wish that they be neglected for some time, but I feel that Prabhu’s wish is going to be positive in future, because the *kaala-chakra* (wheel of Time) keeps revolving. It is natural that the good goes up at times, and down at times.

Dharma is that, which does *dhaarana – poshana* (sustains – nourishes) of all, gives scope to all. Meerabai’s life had great Dharma-nishtha. Those who do not know the Shastras don’t know the meaning of the word ‘Dharma’. They don’t

know the meaning of the word ‘Sampradaya’, or what Sanyas (taking the vow of renunciation) means. They say, ‘a certain person had taken Sanyas from politics,’ or, ‘a certain person has taken Sanyas from sports’. Oh, is Sanyas a word to be used so lightly? The meaning of *sannyaasa* is: *sarva – tyaaga – samyak – nyaasa* – to give up everything, and deposit the self totally in Bhagwan. That is Sanyas! Unless a person studies our ancient books of knowledge, how will they know the gravity of these words?

The greatness of Meerabai’s life was not only because of her bhakti. Keep this in mind. Her foundation was solid. Her faith in Dharma was staunch. She had reverence for the feet of her mother and father. This is the preliminary step of our Sanskriti – *maatride`vo bhava, pitride`vo bhava, aacharyade`vo bhava* – your mother is a Devta, your father is a Devta, the Teacher who gives you knowledge is a Devta. This was the foundation of Meerabai’s life. She had so much faith in her mother’s teaching that she did not talk to Shri Krishna, in spite of His cajoling her repeatedly. Her life started from the life of Madhvi sakhi, and reached the supreme state of bhakti.

Shri Krishna tried for many days, to make Madhvi sakhi His friend, but she resisted. It is possible that her mother had not recognized that Shri Krishna was Bhagwan incarnate. Meerabai came to realize this when Shri Krishna lifted up the Giriraj Parvat (mountain), and all the people of Vraja – including Madhvi sakhi – rook shelter under it. In spite of not wanting to look at Him, Madhvi sakhi saw the little finger of His left hand, on which Shri Krishna held the Giriraj.

At that time it was raining so heavily that all the people looked round in fear. Madhvi sakhi got a glimpse of Shri Krishna’s little finger and fell into a faint. Gradually, she got a darshan of His whole hand, and then His face. She tried very hard to talk to Shri Krishna, to no avail.

Madhvi sakhi used to talk about Bhagwan Shri Krishna with Sundar. Bhagwan said, ‘Madhvi, now you will have to take another birth in the Kalikaal, to spread the principle of My bhakti. Then, I will give you darshan whenever you wish.’ This was Bhagwan Shri Krishna’s *aashirvaada* (blessing). Whether it was the result of Meerabai’s sadhana, her Dharma-nishtha, or the bhakti of her parents

– Madhvi sakhi had been born in the Yadu vansha – the lineage of Shri Krishna's ancestor, Yadu – her next birth was in the form of Meerabai.

As I was telling you, the exceptional people that are seen – whether it is Paramhansa Shri Ramakrishna, Meerabai, Goswami Tulsidasji, or any other – give us the hope that we, too, can progress on the path of bhakti. However, it must be remembered that it is not the sadhana of one birth; it is the sadhana of several lifetimes.

You may say, 'What if I don't succeed in this lifetime?'

Arjuna had asked Shri Krishna, 'What will happen if the body dies before my sadhana is completed?'

Bhagwan replied, '*Shuchenaam shreemataam ge'he' yogabhrashto abhijaayate*'. Arjuna, don't worry – if the body perishes before the sadhana is completed, it is My responsibility to take care of the person. His next birth will be in a wealthy family who has a pure lifestyle.'

This is what happened to Meerabai, Sant Tulsidasji, and other great Mahapurushas (Saints). Therefore, Bhagwan does the *vyavasthaa* (arrangement) that in this birth we continue the sadhana we had not been able to complete in our previous life.

Can there be anyone in this world who is capable of making such a *vyavastha*? The work that was not completed in one lifetime starts in the next at the point it was left in the previous life! It may be social work, business, family matters, or any other. Do you have the power to make such an arrangement? Please say 'yes' or 'no' at least! Bhagwan, however, has this arrangement. Any progress we make on His path is our Safe, because He ensures the carry forward of our account! It is His *pratignaa* (vow; pledge). It is so simple; so straightforward!

Someone told my Guruji, 'Maharaj, it is a very difficult task to do bhakti.'

Maharajji said, 'Look, my brother, it is a matter of the individual's *abhyasa* (habit; practice). Somebody finds it difficult to do bhakti and somebody finds it difficult to do business. Both are experienced.'

A *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) who is *sarala* (without artifice) will find himself in a fix if he tries to do business in present times. Circumstances are such that

money has to change hands to facilitate any business. You would all understand this very well! Perhaps you need to do this. If not, it is very good.

My Guruji, Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj said, 'Look; if someone tells me to ride a bicycle I will not be able to do it. I will fall down, because I do not have the practice. Yet, youngsters ride bicycles easily, even letting go of the handlebars at times. It is easy for them, but very difficult for others.'

So, give a little time for Bhagwan. You spend fifteen – or even twenty – hours for your *vyavahaara* (worldly interaction), but how much time do you give for Bhagwan? Bhagwan accepts it if you give much less time – He is ever ready to give you Grace marks! However, if we do nothing at all – if we don't write anything in the answer sheet – how will we get Grace marks? A student gets Grace marks if he writes what he can, and still does badly, just missing pass marks. So, we should at least start writing!

At first it seems that we are doing a lot and Bhagwan is doing nothing. That it is very difficult. However, if you get the *kripa* of a Sadguru (an enlightened Mahatma who accepts you as his disciple), you can experience Bhagwan's *kripa*. You will understand how much more Bhagwan does for us. Then, prema for Bhagwan increases, bhakti increases.

Do a mother or father ever think, 'I will do what is good for my child only if he does my *seva*'? Parents certainly feel happy when a child does something for their comfort, but the parents' effort for the child's welfare is constant and unconditional. When worldly parents are so benevolent, how much more would Bhagwan do for His children? You can try to do His *seva* and see for yourself.

Pravachana (spiritual discourses) are a help. It is our task to do this work of Bhagwan. The task of serving Bhagwan has been allotted to us. Pujya Rotiram Baba would change his name and go off to another place when too many people began to crowd round him. He had many names; Naga Baba, Mastaram Baba, Avadhoot Swami, etc, apart from Rotiram Baba. His actual name, given when he took Sanyas, was Shri Ganesh Puriji Maharaj.

When people asked Rotiram Baba why he had changed his name to Rotiram Baba, he said, 'Yes, there is some meaning behind this. *Roti-raama* means a

dog. For a dog getting a roti (unleavened bread) is the biggest work. It is the same for me.'

'How, Maharaj?'

'I eat your rotis. What does a dog do? He barks when the Master is sleeping and sleeps when the Master is awake. This is what Mahatmas do. We eat your rotis. We go on barking till you wake up. We will go to sleep when you wake up, because our work is done.' What amazing interpretations the Mahapurushas give! What strange names they give themselves!

This is the task of the Mahapurushas, the Sants; but it is not possible that everybody who listens to pravachans will improve. Shri Rama did not succeed in improving all people, Shri Krishna did not succeed, nor did the Sants. My Guruji, Swami Akhandanandaji did not succeed, neither did any of the many other Mahapurushas who had lakhs of followers and devotees. A good many people certainly obtained great benefits, but it is not that everyone changed.

If we truly want some spiritual progress in life, we should begin our sadhana. Try it and see. I suggest you start with half an hour, but give priority to this half-hour. Don't make any compromise. When people compromise with their sadhana, it is their greatest weak point. Many people make a compromise only regarding their sadhana, not for other things! If some important matter comes up they give up their *maalaa* (ritual chanting using prayer beads) or *paatha* (reciting devotional passages), or Bhagwan's seva-puja. They tell the Punditji, or someone else, to do it on their behalf.

Do you send your Punditji to sit with the relatives who comes to visit you? Do you send your Punditji to entertain a business contact? If we can't keep aside a half-hour for Bhagwan, and then say, 'Maharaj, it is very difficult,' it is like appearing in an examination without attending a single class or reading a single page on the subject! You say it is very difficult. Is the learning difficult, or is it you who is creating difficulties? It is you who make the subject difficult!

Similarly, the path to Bhagwan is not difficult – it is we who create difficulties. What is our priority? When a person begins to get experiences – he does not know how it happens – Bhagwan's kripa begins to be experienced.

So, Madhvi sakhi was reborn in Medata as Meerabai. Her *daadaa* (paternal grandfather) was Rao Dudaji. Youngsters will say ‘grandfather’! Just a little while ago I was talking to Batraji, and a lady came to say something. She called me ‘Uncle’. I told her, ‘I will not talk with you. The word “uncle” is meaningless. It can mean the brother of either parent, or the father of a friend, or any elderly gentleman. English does not have the specific words that instantly explain the relationship, as Hindi does.’

Meerabai’s Dadaji was a great bhakta of Bhagwan Chaturbhujnath (the four-armed Lord Vishnu). The *sanskaara* (subtle subconscious impressions) that come from *parampara* (a traditional handed down from one generation to the next) are very strong. Dudaji had many sons, including Viramdevji and Ratansinghji. Meerabai was Ratansinghji’s daughter. Her mother was Kunvaribai, also called Bhabhiji.

Do you know which day Meerabai was born? She was born on the Sharad Purnima – the day of the year when the full moon is brightest. This is no mere coincidence; it is Bhagwan’s leela. Sharad Purnima is the day of Bhagwan’s most sublime leela – the Raas Leela. And it is also the day on which Meerabai was born.

It is believed that Narsi Mehta, who was born in Gujarat in this very Kali Yuga, was Muchakunda who lived in the Dwapar Yuga. He was also told by Bhagwan to come back to this earth in the Kali Yuga, and spread His bhakti. If Bhagwan wants that people should walk on the path of bhakti, He also makes the necessary arrangements! He sent Tulsidasji, Meerabai, Narsi Mehta, Surdasji, Nandadasji, Kabirdasji, our Swami Akhandananda Saraswatiji, Pujya Swami Ramsukhdasji Maharaj, and others.

People say, ‘It is very difficult to find true Sadhus.’ Is it that you don’t look for them or is it that you have no real urge to find them? Both are possible. So many Mahapurushas have come before us; even now there are many we can go to. At least look for them! Very often it happens that a Mahapurusha is in our life, but we don’t consider him to be a Mahapurusha. And, if you don’t consider him to be a Mahapurusha, there will be no *bhaava* (feeling of reverence and love); there will be no *shraddhaa* (faith). You will not obtain the

benefit of his proximity. *Aatma-kripaa* (the Grace of the Atma within) does not happen.

You will observe that Bhagwan Shri Krishna lived with Devki-Vasudev for many years. When He went to Kurukshetra at the time of the *Surya grahana* (solar eclipse) He met several people. He met Sants. He praised the Sants wholeheartedly. However, when Vasudev-Devki met the Sants, they bowed down and asked, '*Karmanaa karma nirhaaraah* – Maharaj, how can we become free from *karma-bandhana* (the bondage that is a result of our actions), while doing karmas? How can we obtain Bhagwan? Please explain this to us.'

Shri Krishna was standing right there. He heard His father asking the Sants about how to obtain Bhagwan! The Sants stared at Vasudevji in amazement. What is this man asking? Naradji began to laugh. The very man in whose house Bhagwan had been living for so many years was asking how to obtain Bhagwan! What an irony! The Sants kept silent. What were they to say?

Naradji understood the situation. 'Don't be astonished, Sants,' he said. 'Bhagwan lives in Vasudevji's house, but he does not consider Shri Krishna to be Bhagwan. To him, Shri Krishna is just his son. He is not aware that Shri Krishna is Bhagwan incarnate.'

Perhaps this was Bhagwan's leela, or it was His prema. That is another matter. Later, the Sants said, 'Vasudevji, the Bhagwan you are talking about has been living in your house for years, as your son.'

Now, Vasudevji was astonished. 'I am in search of Bhagwan, and Bhagwan is in my house!' It is possible that something similar is happening in your life. A Sant is living close to you and you look elsewhere to find a Sant!

A lady used to visit my Guruji when he came to Mumbai. One day her son came with her. He bowed down and said, 'I am going to the Himalaya in search of a Sant. I am looking for a Guru.' Maharajji smiled. He said, 'Go; come back when you have completed your search.' The young man went to many places. He met many Mahatmas. Ultimately he felt satisfied when he came to Maharajji. It is ironic that he told Guruji that he was in search of a Sant! Where is our *vishvaasa* (staunch faith) in our search for a Sant?

Vasudevji understood that Shri Krishna was Bhagwan Himself. The following morning, when Shri Krishna came to bow down to him as was His daily routine, Vasudevji folded his hands and said, 'Kanhaiya, You are Bhagwan. You have been doing such a leela that I failed to understand this.'

'Yes, Baba,' said Shri Krishna. 'It is true that I am Bhagwan, and that I have been doing a leela. That is why you could not recognize Me.'

Devki Maiya's agnan was not removed. She said, 'Kanhaiya, I have heard that You are Bhagwan?'

'Yes, Maiya, that is what people say.'

'If You are indeed Bhagwan, bring back my six sons who were killed by Kansa soon after their birth.'

The six sons of Devki were in the Kingdom of Bali. Shri Krishna went there and brought them back alive. He presented them to Devki. They came, drank her milk, and were liberated from the *shraapa* (curse). They went back to their own realm.

Devki Maiya developed *vairaagya* (detachment) from them. 'Oh, this is the state of this world! What are these worldly relationships? The ones for whom I gave trouble to Kanhaiya became Mukta as soon as they drank my milk, and left immediately! They did not linger with me for even one moment. Bhagwan is my son; I did not ask Him for the upadesh of Gnan, or for *vairagya*!'

This is the bitter truth. Please don't feel offended – this is the *svaroopa* (essence; true form) of worldly relationships.

Devki Maiya got *vairagya* from this world, and prema for Shri Krishna arose in her heart. If you develop a relationship with Bhagwan, everything will remain evergreen; whereas worldly relationships can break any time. This is the reality. What I say in this hall seems perfectly true, but as soon as you go outside, people will say, 'This is the way Babajis (Sadhus) talk! They have ruined their own family lives and now they want to spoil ours!' May you be happy in your family life!

Naradji was given a *shraap* because he exposed the faults of worldly life, and youngsters got *vairagya*. Jara and Daksha both gave him the *shraap* that he

could not stay in any one place for longer than two *ghadee* (forty eight minutes). ‘Then, you cannot convert anyone into a Babaji!’ This was the purpose of the shraap.

Let us come back to our subject. Meera was born on the day of Sharad Purnima. An amazing thing happened that day. Nature manifests some unusual signs whenever a special person is born. In olden times it was the custom to beat a *thaali* (metal plate) like a gong, at a new birth in the family. I doubt if this is done any more – probably people don’t even know of this old custom! In any case, people no longer use metal plates; they use china, and glass will break if beaten. That will be inauspicious! Earlier people used brass or copper. These metals were considered to be *shuddha* (pure, according to the Shastras). The resounding sound it made was very nice to hear.

When Meerabai was born it so happened that they forgot to beat the thali in their excitement. Do you know what happened? The thali began to make the sound by itself! People were amazed. ‘What is happening? The thali is sounding by itself! That means, someone very special is born!’

Tears of love filled the eyes of Rao Dudaji. ‘It seems Chaturbhujnath has accepted my bhakti. He has sent this baby girl to our house – she is the swarup of bhakti! This can be the only reason for the thali to sound without being beaten!’

Strange happenings were a common feature since the time Meerabai was born. When Meera was a little older, the *naamakarana sanskaara* (the ritual of naming the baby) was done. Rao Dudaji had given her the name ‘Mihira’, but it gradually changed into Meera.

The practice was to get the baby’s birth chart made by a competent *jyotish* (astrologer). The astrologer foretold that Meera would be very *yashasvinee* (famous for her good qualities). The names of both her families – father’s and in-laws’ – would shine with glory because of her. She would be *bhaktimati* – her mind would always be focused on Bhagwan. She would be a *yoginee* (a lady devotee who is constantly attached to Bhagwan), and she would have total *vairagya*. The astrologer revealed all this at the time of Meerabai’s birth.

There is no doubt that Jyotish is our Shastra. Even when Raja Parikshit was born the astrologers had described what his life would be like. It was the same with Meerabai. In present times, however, I recommend that you be very careful about consulting astrologers. They start to talk about *graha* (planets that are in an unfavorable position) as soon as they see a horoscope, and the *grahas* become a lifelong bane! Advertisements of expert astrologers who promise a quick solution to any and all problems are seen everywhere, on hoardings, TV, and in the print media, giving the degree and contact number of the astrologer. Had problems been so easy to resolve, no one would have had any problems at all! What do you say?

The science of astrology is authentic. However, please listen to this very carefully: my Guruji used to say that both astrology and the Vastu Shastra (the science of auspicious architecture) are prominent among the fraudulent activities that prevail these days. The role of Vastu is actually twenty per cent in our life. I have seen a number of wealthy families who had their kitchens, front doors and other rooms broken and changed at the advice of the Pundits, but the strife at home continued as before.

Oh, my brother, is it possible that everything will become favorable by just adhering to Vastu? Make your attitude favorable. Let your activities be auspicious. Do Bhagwan's *aaraadhanaa* (loving worship). Do some *daana – dharma* (give in charity – undertake some religious rituals). Everything should be seen in perspective. Had Vastu been the solution for everything that goes wrong in life, everyone would have been *sukhi* (happy and contented). Then, what about *praarabdha* (favorable and unfavorable situations that are a result of past karmas)? What about our Karmas? What about our sadhana?

Anything you bring into your life should be done after giving it proper thought. Our Maharajji was highly learned in the Jyotish Shastra. So was Puja Ramkinkarji Maharaj. Yet, both these Mahapurushas said, 'Do the *bhajana* (loving meditation) of the one who controls the planets! There is no need to get involved with what astrologers say!'

To get some ritual done for *graha-shanti*, for quieting the adverse influence of planets is one thing – it gives some income to the Pundits! Guruji also said, 'Of all the eminent astrologers at present, about fifty per cent can tell you about

your past, and something about your future, but they cannot give you any solution to your problem.' In that case, what is the use of consulting them? The issues that will cause you worry after a year or two will create a tension in your mind straight away. So, the wise thing is not to get involved with astrologers.

The astrologer told Meerabai's family about the things that were to happen in her life. Her family felt very happy. Meerabai grew a little older. When she was about six months old she began to cry one day. She would not stop crying. Her mother tried everything, but nothing worked. She refused to drink milk or be diverted with a toy. Her mother tried to rock her to sleep, but she continued to cry. What were they to do?

Rao Dudaji was on his way to the Mandir. He decided to take Meera with him, hoping to divert her. 'Look, this is Thakurji', he said. The child – only six months old – began to stare at the *vigraha* (idol) of Chaturbhujnath Bhagwan. Can you imagine the scene? She stopped crying. She became utterly quiet. Since that day the household learnt the trick of making Meera quiet. Whenever she cried, or seemed restless, they would either take her to the Mandir to get the darshan of Chaturbhujnathji, or arrange for a *sankeertana* (singing devotional songs).

So Meerabai – whose life was full of such extraordinary bhakti, about whose birth you know, and who merged physically into the image of Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan at Dwarka – was no ordinary bhakta!

There have been only two people who have physically merged into Bhagwan's *vigraha*. One was Meerabai, and the other was Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu who merged into the *vigraha* of Shri Jagannathji at Puri. Both of them disappeared – their gross physical forms, made of the five elements – merged into the images of the Bhagwan they loved and worshipped.

A couple of years passed. Meerabai was about three or four years old. Sants and bhaktas were frequent visitors at their palace. Rao Dudaji would invite people who went to Pushkar. When Sants are invited frequently it creates sanskara in the children, which give great benefits. Earlier, it was the custom of Rajas and Maharajas to invite Sants and Sadhus to their palaces. They would do Satsang (give spiritual discourses). Kirtans (singing devotional songs) were held. These activities left an indelible impression on the hearts of the young.

People have forgotten how to give sanskaras these days. Parents are too busy. How much time do parents give to their children? Grandparents do give more time, but there are many families where the grandparents live separately. People keep an ayah for the baby, or give a bottle of milk, when the baby is hungry. The little one has no option. He drinks milk from a bottle and lies in his bed. Won't he believe the bottle of milk to be his mother and father?

Rao Dudaji would call Sants, organize Satsang, and have kirtans. Once, a Sant from Vrindavan came to their palace. Meerabai was about four years old at that time. The Sant would do puja of his Thakurji early morning. Meerabai would get ready early morning. She would come and sit with him, and watch him do the puja. She would keep looking at Thakurji. While doing puja, the Sant's body would thrill with love for Bhagwan. Tears came into his eyes.

Meerabai watched, and felt very happy. 'What is all this?' she wondered. She asked the Sant, 'Whose puja are you doing?'

'I am doing Bhagwan's puja,' he answered.

'The Bhagwan in our Mandir is very big,' said Meera, 'but your Bhagwan is small.' Please remember that Meerabai was just four years old! The vigraha of Chaturbujnathji was a large statue; the vigraha worshipped by the Sant was a small *moorti* (idol) of Shri Krishna. 'Santji, our Chaturbujanath is very big and your Bhagwan is very small. Is Bhagwan big and also small?'

'No, Meera,' explained the Sant. 'Bhagwan is not big and small. These murtis are a *prateeka* (symbol). Bhagwan is everywhere. Puja is done in one *prateek* to develop *bhava* in one place, and then spread everywhere. This is the purpose of the method of puja.'

Meerabai asked another question. 'When Bhagwan is everywhere, why do we do puja of only one murti? Why not of a building or a tree?' The Sant's eyes were opened! Such questions from a four-year old child? It is natural for children to ask questions. Today's children also have questions. They also ask why we do puja of one murti, when Bhagwan is everywhere. Such questions don't arise in our minds because we have *shradhhaa* (faith) in the murti. When Bhagwan is everywhere, we can do puja in a stone, tree, or a building. They are all symbols.

The Sant explained, 'They are all a prateek, but it is important that a *bhaava* (feeling of love and bhakti) is created. If we begin to do puja of a tree with the feeling that it is Bhagwan, and it has to be cut down for some reason, it will create great distress. If we do puja of a building and the building has to be demolished, it will upset us terribly.'

What a beautiful answer the Sant gave to Meera! He said, 'The prateek should be such that out bhava increases; it does not reduce.'

I will tell you of an incident that will make you laugh. It is written in our Shastras that a wife should consider her *pati* (husband) to be Bhagwan. This is the Dharma for a wife. I was staying with a family once. Everyone was in a light-hearted mood. The husband said, 'Maharaj, you are aware of everything that goes on in people's houses these days. The wife does not listen to her husband.'

I told the wife, 'You do Bhagwan's puja. This is your husband. You should also pay attention to him. You see Bhagwan in a murti – why can't you see Bhagwan in your husband?'

Do you know how she responded? 'Maharaj,' she said, 'the murti stays quietly in one place. My bhava for the murti grows because Bhagwan is always smiling and silent. He does not keep rebuking me and telling me what I should do and what I should not do! God knows what will happen if I consider my husband to be Bhagwan! I am harassed enough as it is, without believing him to be Bhagwan!' She also had a valid point.

This is why a *vigraha* is made a prateek in the beginning, when a person starts on the path of bhakti. Now, just think a little – how often do you change the *poshaaka* (dress and ornaments) of the murti? There will be some people present who change it once a week, and some who change it once a month. There will even be some people who don't change it at all! I can hear some people laughing!

So, what is the purport of this question? If you consider a person to be a prateek instead of a *vigraha*, and you do his seva-puja so erratically, will he be pleased or will he be displeased? Tell me! He will be displeased. If you don't give him food and clothes every day, he will be displeased. And if he is

displeased, your *bhagavad-bhaava* (the feeling that this is Bhagwan) will disappear. This is why a *vigraha* is made a *prateek* of Bhagwan. He is happy if you change His poshak and He is happy even if you don't. He is happy if you offer food, and He is happy even if you don't. This is Bhagwan's *svabhava*.

The Sant gave a very logical explanation to Meera about why only a *vigraha* is used as a *prateek*. This is why an effort is made to first see Bhagwan in one place. Initially Bhagwan should be seen in a place where *shraddha* continues to grow; it does not reduce due to some reason.

Meerabai was very happy. She said, 'Please, will you give me this *prateek*? Please give it to me. You live at Vrindavan, so you can get another for yourself. Please give this one to me.'

The Sant had developed a great *prema* for his Thakurji. He always kept Thakurji with him. He told the little girl, 'Meera had you asked for anything else, I would have given it to you, but I cannot give you this *vigraha*. It is my *praana* (life spirit), it is my *jeevana* (life).'

Meerabai was disappointed. 'Very well; this is his Thakurji, his Bhagwan. It is his wish,' she thought. She went back to her room, feeling disheartened and sad. Early next morning, she came to the Sant's room as usual. She watched as he did *dhyaana* (meditation) etc, and how he got so much *bhava*. Also, how tears fell as his heart filled with love for Bhagwan.

If your *bhava* is created properly – this is a matter of *bhava* – and the *puja* is done lovingly, you will get *romaancha* (a thrill of love; curling of body hair) as soon as you touch the *vigraha*. If the *bhava* is strong and the *puja* is done lovingly, you will feel that Thakurji is saying something to you. You feel He is giving you some indication. This feeling comes as soon as you touch the *murti*.

When Meera saw this condition in Santji, she felt very happy. She would think, 'It is such a beautiful *bhava*!' That day tears rolled down the Sant's face when he completed his *puja*. He said, 'Meera, Thakurji gave me a dream.' Meera looked at him anxiously. 'What dream did Thakurji give you, Maharaj?' she asked.

'Thakurji told me today, what you told me yesterday.' Meerabai was surprised to hear this. 'What did Thakurji say, Maharaj?' she asked.

'Thakurji told me, "Santji, I am very pleased with your seva. You do My puja with great love. However, now I want to take seva from Meerabai for some time. Please give Me to her.'" Saying this, the Sant began to weep.

Just think of the *saubhaagya* (great good fortune) of a person who Bhagwan comes to, at His own wish! We people go to Bhagwan. Bhagwan was so pleased with Meerabai that He told the Sant to leave Him with her. He wanted to receive her seva. 'I am very pleased with you, but now I wish to stay with Meera.' This is what He told the Sant. The Sant wept as he held Bhagwan's *vigraha* close to his heart. Then he gave it to Meera.

Meera took the *vigraha* tenderly. It seemed as though a beggar had been given great wealth. She held Shri Krishna's *vigraha* close to her heart. She covered it with her hand to shield it from the hot sun, as she walked towards her room. Just imagine how much *bhava* she had – that little girl of four years! She wrapped Thakurji with deep *prema*, *bhava*, and *aasthaa* (belief in Bhagwan), as thought she had been given something beyond price!

Her mother asked her what she was hiding. Her *sakhis* asked her. She kept saying, 'Not now! Not now! I am going to the *mahala* (palace).' When she reached her room, she spread a new *odhnee* (a garment used to cover the upper half of the body) on a *choki* (low table), and seated Thakurji on it.

This little girl was only four years old. Her actions speak of her *bhava*. What kind of clothes do we get for ourselves, and what kind for Thakurji? What kind of food do we order for ourselves, and what kind for Thakurji? Thakurji wants only *bhava* – He does not want your food or your jewelry. He wants the *prema* in your heart.

Meerabai was telling herself, 'I will ask Dadaji to get a gold *singhasana* (throne) made for Thakurji. I will ask him for a silver *choki*, a *chandana* (sandalwood) swing, and clothes made of velvet.' Meera was lost in *dhyana* of Thakurji. She would start singing *bhajans*. She spoke to Him lovingly. 'You are not feeling bad that Santji has given You to me, are You?' This is written in the books on Meerabai. I have read them. 'I won't be able to do Your seva the way he did. Are You remembering him? Are You missing his seva?'

Meera's mother, Rani Kunvari, stood outside the door, listening to her daughter's voice. 'There is nobody else in the room. Who is Meera talking to?'

she wondered. She went in, and saw Meera was talking to Thakurji. 'I really don't know what has happened to Dudaji – he makes this little girl sit with Sants. My daughter is only four years old, and she is talking to Bhagwan's *vigraha*.'

Meera was saying, 'You are not feeling bad, are You? You are not missing Santji, I hope. I will bathe You nicely. I will make You wear nice clothes. I will feed You well, and I will make You sleep beside me.' Meera always slept with Shri Krishna's *vigraha* beside her on the bed.

When Dudaji heard about all this, he came and told Meera, 'I have heard that you have got Thakurji.'

'Yes, I have!' said Meera excitedly. 'Santji gave Him to me, Dadaji.'

Dudaji said, 'Meera, tell me what seva I can do for Thakurji.' He loved his granddaughter very much.

'Yes Dadaji, I will tell you.' There is no *nishkaamataa* (absence of personal desire) here. Meerabai had no *nishkamata* for Thakurji! 'Dadaji, I want a silver choki and a gold singhasan for my Thakurji,' she said. 'I also want a chandan *hindolaa* (swing), silver utensils, and a gold *thali* for His food.'

'I will get everything made, *be'taa* (child). If there is anything more, please tell me.'

'Dadaji,' said Meera, 'I did not ask Santji about Thakurji's name!'

'Bhagwan has many names,' said Dudaji. 'What name am I to tell you?'

'We must have a name for Him, Dadaji, otherwise how am I to call Him?'

Do you know what Meera told her Dadaji to do? She said, 'Please start to tell me His names one by one. I will call Him by the name I like.'

Now, Dudaji began to recite Bhagwan's names.....Murlidhar, Nandanandan, Bansuriwala, Gopal, Govind.....he went on. When he came to 'Giridhar', Meerabai said, 'Enough! Stop!' What made her stop at this name? (Giridhar means, the one who holds up a mountain.) This was the name with which Madhvi sakhi's *bhava* had begun. This is why Meerabai stopped at this name. You can see that all Meerabai's *pada* (compositions) have the name 'Giridhar'.

Meeraa ke` prabhu giridhara naagara is a famous bhajan.

Bhagwan gives names to all; who did Bhagwan's *naamakarana* (giving the name)? It was Meerabai, a little girl of four! And, this little girl sings bhajans to Bhagwan. Dudaji sits there and listens to her. It was a beautiful bhajan. Meera's jeevan was beautiful and sublime.

Baso me`re` nayanana me`n nandalaala, mohanee moorati saanavri soorati, nayanaa bade` vishaala.

(Please abide in my eyes, Nandalal! Your face is captivating. Your complexion is dark and Your eyes are large.)

Adhara sudha rasa muralee raajata ura vajantee maala.

(The nectarine sweetness of Your lips flows through the flute that rests on Your lips. You wear a long, multicolored garland.)

Kshudra ghantikaa kati-tata sohe`, nupura shabda rasaala.

(Small bells decorate Your waistband. The sound of Your anklets is sweet.)

Meeraa ke` prabhu giridhara naagara, bhagata bachhala gopaala.

(Meera's Prabhu is Giridhar, a courtly person who loves His bhaktas the way a cow loves her calf.)

Baso me`re nayanana me`n nandalaala.

This is a four-year old girl describing Bhagwan! From the way she describes His form and apparel it seems as though she is getting Bhagwan's darshan. The words are beautiful. The name 'Giridhar Nagar' is included. She had just experienced that the Thakurji of Vraja left the Sant, and come to live at her home! The reason is the *laalasaa* (longing) of Meera's heart, for Bhagwan. What she experienced emerged in her bhajan. How beautiful are the words *bhagata bachhala gopaala* – Gopal loves His bhaktas the way a cow loves her calf!

This was Meerabai's first pada. It was an outpouring of her heart. Dudaji was wonderstruck – such a beautiful bhajan coming naturally to a child who is just four years old! He gave thanks to Thakurji. 'Prabhu! You have done a great

kripa! You accepted my seva and sent this bhaktimati girl to be born in my home. This child will do the *uddhaara* (salvation) of my *kula* (lineage)!' Dudaji bowed at the feet of Thakurji.

Tomorrow we will talk about how Meerabai's life progressed.

Bhaktimati Meera's life is an *aadarsha* (ideal; exemplary life) for bhaktas even today. People sing her bhajans lovingly. I believe that a couple of movies have also been made on her life. Let us take our *chitta* (mental inclinations) to her once more. Her life was sublime. She was respected in every field. We enrich our own lives by talking about her. Let us strive to progress on the path of bhakti she showed.

Thakurji came to Meerabai's home at His own wish. This is a wonderful, divine happening. It was the first *upalabdh* (achievement; obtaining something important) in her life. Bhagwan told the Sant, 'I will stay with Meera, and accept her seva.' There are very few, extremely rare people who are so blessed!

There was a *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) in the days of my Guruji. He had taken *deekshaa* (formal initiation on the spiritual path) from some other Sant. After he came to Guruji, Swami Akhandananda Saraswatiji, he would say, 'Maharajji may not accept that he is my Guru, but I feel I am his *che'laa* (disciple).' To have such simple, natural faith is a great thing. If a Mahapurusha feels that you are his own, you can take it that your life is free of all cares. This is the kind of feeling Hanumanji got, when Shri Janakiji blessed him. Even Hanumanji did not have that jeevan from the very beginning that bhaktimati Meera had. He got it when Sitaji blessed him, saying, '*Karahun bahuta raghunaayaka chhohu* – now, Ramaji will love you a lot.'

Hanumanji felt very happy when he heard this. He said,

Aba kritakritya bhayaun mein maataa, aashisha tava amogha vikhyaataa.

'Now, I am fulfilled, Mother, because your ashirvad is infallible.'

The prema of bhaktimati Meera had for Bhagwan was inborn. However, Bhagwan didn't only give prema; He said, 'I want to stay with Meera.' He came Himself to her.

Other people are given the names of Bhagwan, but who gave Bhagwan His name? It was Meera! Even Dudaji could not do it, even though he was Meerabai's grandfather! He was a learned Mahapurusha. He was extremely

valorous, but he did not say anything before Meera. He waited for her to say what she wanted him to do. This is the *prabhaava* (influence; effect) of bhakti! It is amazing when we remember that Meera was just four at that time!

Dudaji Maharaj had a simhasan of gold made for Meera's Thakurji. He also had silver utensils and a gold thali made for *prasaada* (food offered to Bhagwan and then distributed as a blessing). He got a sandalwood swing made for Him, and silken garments. Meera would dress her Thakurji tenderly, with great love. She would talk to Him lovingly.

I was very amused when I read one thing: Meera would occasionally ask Thakurji, 'I hope You are not missing that Santji? You stayed with him for so many days. He did Your seva with such love!' See the *bhaava-raajya* (world of love) of this little girl. She was asking a *vigraha* whether He was missing the Sant, and whether He was happy to be with her! She spoke lovingly to Him. Whenever Rani Kunvaribai heard Meera talking to Thakurji, with no one else in the room, she felt wonder and unease. 'What has happened to this girl?' If a person talks to a murti this way, worldly people think that he has a loose screw! When you start doing bhajan, and people start commenting, 'this person has a loose screw', you can take it that your bhajan has a depth of feeling. A loose screw means a kind of madness. Unless there is a touch of madness for something, the person does not get success.

We have all kinds of people – businessmen, industrialists, officers, and others in different fields. They all know that success is not achieved unless the person has a certain amount of madness. Madness is needed for worldly achievements and also for unworldly achievements.

Meerabai's mother began to worry when she saw the way her daughter behaved. 'It seems she has gone mad! She talks to herself all day long!' This is what Rani Kunvaribai thought, but Meerabai was in a world of her own. Her seva of Giridharlalji went on all day, from early morning to night. She made Him sleep beside her on her bed at night, because He was so small. She felt she had to protect Him from any kind of discomfort.

Meera's father, Ratansingh, did not go to Meera's room when Dudaji was there. This was the respectful custom of that time. Dudaji had great bhakti. He and Meera were on the same wavelength. They spent most of the day together

in Meera's room. Ratansinghji hardly got even a glimpse of his daughter! One day, before going to bed, he told his wife to call Meera. 'Where does she stay all day? What does she do? I don't know anything!'

Meerabai had gone to bed, taking her Giridharlalji with her. Rani Kunvaribai told her, 'Pitaji (your respected father) is remembering you.'

'Has anything happened?' asked Meera.

'If he is calling you, there must be some reason,' replied her mother.

'Mataji (respected mother), you please ask Pitaji, and tell me in the morning.' This was a four-year old girl telling her mother what she should do. Rani Kunvaribai said, with some impatience, 'What important work do you have just now, that you can't come to your father?'

'My Giridhar Gopal has gone to sleep,' explained Meera. 'He will wake up if I get up. His sleep will be spoilt.' Just imagine the feeling this child had for Thakurji! This was no ordinary human being – a four year old having such extraordinary bhakti!

Meerabai's mother went to her husband and told him what Meera had said. What else could she do? Meera was not prepared to go to leave her Thakurji. The mother did not fathom the depth of Meerabai's bhakti. A mother has *vaatsalya* (motherly love) for her children. Ratansinghji, however, felt a deep joy. 'No matter,' he said gently, 'just think – has anyone ever got the prarabdha to have a daughter like Meera? This is Bhagwan's special kripa on us. Meera has such prema for Bhagwan at the age of four – you have no need to worry about her! It does not matter if she does not sit with me. Her uddhar will be done by the one with whom she sits!' Such was the extraordinary jeevan of Meerabai.

Dudaji had more leisure, since both his sons – Viramdevji and Ratansinghji – were learned and powerful. One day, he told Meerabai, 'Let us go for Dakorji's darshan.' (Dakorji is a town, some distance away, named after the famous Mandir of Shri Krishna, called Dakorji.) Preparations were made for the journey. They were a Royal family, after all! Meerabai, her mother, and several others travelled by chariots and other modes of travel.

When they were close to Dakorji, they came to a small river. It was decided to put up the tents and stay there that night. Meerabai watched for a while, and then went towards the river. The water was very pure – there was no pollution in those days! Seeing the blue hue of the water reminded Meerabai of her Giridhar Gopal. She gradually became immersed in dhyana. Meerabai's two *purohita* (Brahmin priests who did the ritual worship) would tell her about Shri Krishna's leelas every day. They had also told her that His form was blue.

People began to look for Meera. They saw her sitting there, immersed in dhyana – with a black cobra sitting, shading her head from the sun with its hood! The cobra slid away as footsteps approached. The people came closer and saw Meerabai looking at the blue waters, lost in thoughts of Shri Krishna.

‘We did not think of Bhagwan even when looking at His vigraha,’ they thought. Meera’s was the highest level of prema. She thought of Shri Krishna when she saw the blueness of the river, and went into Samadhi.

When Dudaji saw Meerabai in this condition, he felt a surge of deep happiness. He called out her name softly, to bring her back to external awareness. Then he noticed a Mahapurusha standing on the opposite bank of the river. This was Sant Nivrittinathji Maharaj. This was not the brother of Sant Gnaneshwara; it was another Sant of the same name. He was an Acharya (Master teacher) of Yoga Vidya (the science of the practice of mind control that bestows supernatural consciousness and powers). Dudaji took Meera and crossed across where the water was shallow.

Nivrittinathji asked Meera, ‘What are you doing, Beti (daughter)?’

Meerabai told him, ‘I learn singing and I practice a little Yoga’.

Dudaji said, ‘Maharaj, her teachers have told me that they have taught her everything they know. There is nothing more they can teach her. Even at this age, this child is at a stage where she needs expert Acharyas for Yoga and music.’

Meerabai asked, ‘The blueness of the water vanishes when the water is more in volume and depth. Why is Bhagwan described as being blue?’

Nivrittinathji said, 'This is Bhagwan's svabhava, Beti. He is *neelavarna* (blue-hued), but when He comes in the form of a jeevathe blueness disappears.' Meerabai's questions were startling. Nivrittinathji felt amazed to hear such questions from so young a child. 'Where does Bhagwan stay, Maharaj?'

'He stays everywhere,' he answered.

'Then why do people go to *teertha* (holy places), Maharaj? When Bhagwan is everywhere, He is also in our house. He is also in all people. What is so special about tirthas?' Meerabai's questions were earnest questions. There was a *jignaasaa* (wish to know) in her. It was not *kutarka* (mere argumentativeness). Today's youngsters also ask, 'Why should we go there to do darshan, when Bhagwan is everywhere?' Meerabai had the same question.

Nivrittinathji gave a beautiful answer. 'There are some *divya* (divine) *leelaa* (play) done by Bhagwan in tirthas, and the *paramaanu* (particles) of those leelas linger in these places. A feeling of bhakti arises in the hriday when people go there, and the hriday becomes *shuddha* (unsullied by worldly thoughts).' Actually, only those places are called tirthas, where Bhagwan has done some leela, or where some Sant-Mahapurusha has lived. Tirtha means that, which has the power to enable a person to cross over the ocean of this *samsaara* (interactive world). It is written in the Shastras that if there is a Mandir where Bhagwan's seva-puja is not done properly, Bhagwan leaves it. Only a stone murti remains, which is of no importance.

You all live in Delhi. Many of you would be going to Vrindavan or Girirajji. Those who go with a feeling of bhakti would be getting the feeling that your faith is strengthened. I also stay at Vrindavan and experience this. Prema for Shri Krishna will begin to manifest in your hriday if you spend some days at Vrindavan, with a sincere wish to obtain His bhakti. There have been many Sants who lived at Giriraj (the area round the Govardhan parvat that Shri Krishna had held up for a week, to protect the people of Vraja). Your sadhana will begin to manifest, if you spend some days there with a *nishchhala-bhaava* (pure love for Bhagwan, unsullied by worldly considerations). This is because the particles of the Sants' *tapasyaa* (asceticism) still linger there, in spite of the change of time.

I would go so far as to say that you can go with any bhava – I do not mean any bad bhava – but if you go with the idea of enjoying the lassi (sweet buttermilk) and *chaata* (savory snacks) in the stalls that line the path to Banke Bihari's Mandir, even that will benefit you. A number of people tell me, 'Maharaj, we got great anand when we did Banke Bihari's darshan, but we got even more anand when we drank the lassi outside! There is no place in Delhi where we get such delicious lassi!' So, even if you go for the purpose of enjoying the lassi and chat, Banke Bihari will catch hold of you one day, and draw you towards Him!

Thus, tirtha means that, which takes you forward on the path to Bhagwan. A Sant is one who takes you forward on the path to Bhagwan. 'This is why we should go to tirthas,' explained Nivrittinathji to Meera.

You can go to the places where Bhagwan had done leelas. You can go to Gangotri, Badrinath, Vrindavandham (*dhaama* means a place of pilgrimage). All these places are quite close to Delhi. I would even suggest you go just to Rishikesh. Go a bit higher, where there are no crowds. Sit by the bank of the Gangaji. If you do even a little sadhana, you will feel an inner support if you sit there for a while. If you need to make a concentrated effort to do your sadhana here, at home, you will find it much easier to focus your mind there.

Go to Vrindavandham. Go to Badrinath or Gangotri. Go to Uttarkashi. I have myself experienced that the *mana* (emotional mind) is more *e'kaagra* (single pointed; focused) in these places.

The point is, what is your purpose when you go to these places? If you go with the thought that they are picnic spots, you will not experience any increase in your bhakti. You will have no time to sit in solitude and think about Bhagwan. You will go in a hurry, do Banke Bihariji's darshan, have some refreshments, perhaps meet some acquaintance, and rush back in the evening. That is certainly better than not going at all, but if you want the rasa of the place, you should go with some time in hand. If there are any Sant-Mahatmas there, you should sit with them. If you don't know of any Sant-Mahatma, you can just sit on the *parikrama maarga* (the path that encircles the Giriraj). People go round the Giriraj as a form of worship. Or, you can sit in the lowland beside the mountain, or in the Nidhivan.

You people must have gone to Nidhivan. If you haven't, I suggest you definitely make a plan to go. This is the place where even today, it is believed that Thakurji comes and does the Maha Raas. He dances with thousands of gopis at night. You will see an amazing sight. I have seen it myself! The monkeys go out of Nidhivan at night, in a disciplined line. Nobody is allowed to stay at the Nidhivan at night. The monkeys of Vrindavan are so aggressive that nobody would even try to send them all out of any place in Vrindavan. The monkeys themselves come out at twilight. It is believed that Bhagwan's divine leela takes place there at night. No worldly being is allowed to be present. You can go and sit there at any time in the day. The vibrations there have an effect.

However, the point is that you need to go there when you are not in a hurry, holding your mobile to your ear! You carry the burden of the world on your head! Shesha Bhagwan (the divine serpent who carries the earth on his hood like a mustard seed) is carrying the weight of the world, but you people also put up your *laathi* (sticks, the way the gwala baal put up their lathis, thinking they were helping Shri Krishna to hold up the Govardhan parvat)!

'Maharaj, I have no time!' This is what people say. Shri Krishna would leave everything, but He would not leave His *baansuree* (flute). Today's individual can leave everything, but not the mobile! People will have their mobiles even here, though on silent mode. They keep them on the bedside table at night. Mobiles have indeed become a necessity these days, but I don't think they are of vital importance all the time.

These days, the mobiles have many new features, like the internet and others. People tell me, 'Swamiji, you should also get them.' I tell them, 'I don't want to give my life to downloading free messages. The ting-ting-ting goes on all day long. In my opinion, eighty per cent are useless messages. A lot of time is wasted in reading and deleting them.'

Dudaji had taken Meerabai and others to Dakorji. Meerabai asked him, 'We have Thakurji at home. Why shouldn't we stay there? Why should we go to a tirtha?' Nivrittinathji gave her a beautiful answer. He said, 'Your sadhana will gain strength when you go to a place where Bhagwan's divya leela took place. Go there with a heart that is free of guile. If you meet poor people, help them.'

Give them clothes, give them food, and give them medicine. Don't go there as a master; go as a *se'vaka* (one who serves).'

You may have heard of this incident – the Maharani of Jaipur had come to Vrindavan. A number of her staff walked ahead of her, telling people to move aside, leaving the pathway clear for her. 'Who is coming' they asked.

'The Maharani of Jaipur is coming!'

The sweepers were sweeping the road at that time. They said, 'There are only two Ranis here – Radharani and *mehtaraanee* (a woman who sweeps). There is no other *raanee-vaanee* in Vrindavan!'

If you go there as a Maharaj, wanting to show off your worldly status, you will get fame. Bhagwan is a *kapla-vriksha* (wish-fulfilling tree). He will give you *yasha* (fame). If you go as a great *daana-daataa* (giver of charity), your name will be printed in the popular papers. You will get honor.

However, when Akbar went to Meerabai, did he go as a Badshah, or as a *se'vaka* (servant)? How did he go? When he went to Tansen's Guru, Haridasji, he went as Tansen's sevak. Only then did he get the rasa of hearing Haridasji sing Bhagwan's bhajan. Akbar got romanch when he heard the fervor of Haridasji's bhakti. His heart melted.

The stream of Gnan and bhakti flows downwards. If you go to a Sant – or to a tirtha – with humility and shraddha, you will come back enriched. This is why Nivrittinathji told Meera, 'This is how we should go to a tirtha.' Meerabai felt very happy that Dudaji had brought her to Dakorji.

Nivrittinathji was very pleased with Meerabai. He was impressed by the quality of her questions. 'Beti, what is your name?' he asked.

'My Dadaji has given me a very short name – Meera.'

'What is your Dadaji's name?'

'He is the Crown of the Rathods, Rao Dudaji Maharaj.'

This was the etiquette of introducing a respected person. Today, if we ask someone their father's name, they say the name as though speaking about their sevak! Please don't be offended by what I say, but there should be

respect for others, whether it is the husband, father, or grandfather. We should refer to them respectfully. This is the sanskara.

Nivrittinathji was pleased. He told Meerabai's grandfather, 'Dudaji, this is not an ordinary girl. She is very special. She will make your *vansha* (lineage) famous. She will make it shine!'

Dudaji requested Nivrittinathji for a competent teacher for Meera, because the teachers she had did not have the ability to teach her anything more. 'If you give her the teaching she is eligible for, I will be very grateful,' he said.

'I am going to Pushkar, and you are at Dakorji just now,' replied Nivrittinathji. 'On my way back, if the Ishwara so desires, I will come to Medata.'

Later, Meerabai asked Dudaji to tell her the story of Dakorji. 'Dakorji is Dwarikadheesh (the King of Dwarka), isn't He?' she asked. 'He lived at Dwarka; how did He come here?' Meera's questions were beautiful. Dudaji derived great pleasure in answering them, because he was, himself, a great premi of Bhagwan.

'There was a bhakta here, who went to Dwarka for Dwarikadheesh's darshan on every *e`kaadashee* (the eleventh day of the lunar calendar). He was an ordinary man; a farmer. He went by bullock cart. He spent ekadashi at Dwarka, fasting and doing *jaagarana* (staying awake at night as worship). He took prasad on *dvaadashee* (the twelfth day of the lunar calendar) to do *paaraayana* (end the ritual of the fast), and brought back some prasad back to Dakorji for others. He followed this routine for years, until he became old. Then he found it increasingly difficult. This is the *dharma* (law) of the *shareera* (body).

1. *Jaayate* - being born.
2. *Asti* - to exist.
3. *Vardhate* - to grow.
4. *Viparinamate* - to change.
5. *Apakshyati* - to decline.
6. *Vinashyati* - to be destroyed.

(*Nirukta 1. 1. 2*)

These six dharmas (natural behavior) are attached to every shareer. All beings are born, they grow, they change, they deteriorate and then – ‘*Govindaaya namo namah*’ – they are offered up to Govind. People fear this. No matter how many discourses we hear on the Gita and the Bhagwat.

Vaasaansi jeernaani yathaa vihaaya navaani grihnaati naroparaani.

(*Gita 2. 22*)

(Just as a person discards the old clothes to put on new ones, the jeeva discards the old body and gets a new one.)

People become grave as soon as ‘*Govindaya namo namah*’ is mentioned, or they fall silent. Oh, the *vastra* (garment) is changed, my brother. Bhagwan says, ‘Your garment has become old. I am changing it for you. I am giving you a new garment.’ However, what worries people is the thought of giving up their worldly attachments. ‘I have worked so hard to build up all this. This is my business. This is my family. I will have to leave it all.’ It is this that worries people.

‘The bhaktaraj had grown old, but he had great prema for Dwarikadheeshji. When he went on his last visit to Dwarka, he did jagaran, but fell asleep before dawn. He dreamed of Dwarikadheeshaji. “Bhaktaraj,” said Bhagwan in the dream, “when you go back tomorrow, take Me with you on the bullock cart.”

“Maharaj – I? There are so many great *pujaaree* (priests who do the formal worship) here. This is such a beautiful Mandir! What will the pujaris do to me if I take You away? How can I do Your puja as beautifully as they do?”

Dwarikadheesh said, “I have no need of a beautiful Mandir, or beautiful puja. I want a beautiful hriday, which you have. I will go with you.”

The bhakta was wonderstruck. It was a dream that came just before dawn, and it was a dream of Bhagwan. It is written in the Shastras that if a person gets a dream after four a.m. it should be considered to be true. The mana does not have the capacity to bring Bhagwan into itself. The mana is a result of Prakriti (Nature; the Ishwara’s power of Creation), and Bhagwan is beyond Prakriti. Other dreams are a result of the mana, but dreams about Bhagwan, or an *aadhyaatmika* (pertaining to spiritual matters) Guru, are not the result of

Prakriti. They are a result of kripa. It is their *karunaa* (compassion) when they come in a dream.

The Brahmin bhakta got up, filled with wonder and joy. Bhagwan had said, "I will go with you. Take me with you in your bullock cart."

"Even if I do what Bhagwan has said, how can it be managed?" he thought. "These *pandaa* (priests) will never allow me to take Thakurji. They will beat me. I am alone. I will go in a bullock cart; they have big chariots and horsemen at their disposal."

Dudaji was narrating the history of Dakorji to Meerabai. Many of the people sitting here would have gone to Dakorji, but perhaps you don't know the story of how Dwarikadheesh went there.

'The bhakta said, "Whatever happens, I will do what Bhagwan told me to do. He has made me the *nimitta* (instrumental factor), but it is He who does everything."

As long as there is the feeling, "I will do this", a person remains caught up in worry. As soon as the bhakta felt that Bhagwan has given the dream, and He will arrange everything, he became free of tension. He saw the doors of the Mandir were open. He picked up the *vigraha* and placed it in his cart. He covered it with some cloth he had. He prodded the oxen to go at a brisk pace.

Half an hour later, the pujari came to the Mandir. He got a shock when he saw that Bhagwan's *vigraha* was not there. Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan had disappeared!'

In any case, it is Bhagwan's svabhava to run away! He does not like to stay at one place for long. He went from Vrindavan to Mathura, and from Mathura He went to Dwarka. Now, He was going from Dwarka to Dakorji, and that, too, in a bullock cart.

'The Mandir officials were in a panic. They searched frantically. They sent out chariots and horsemen on all the roads leading out of Dwarka. The bhaktaraj kept urging his bullocks to keep up their pace. He was anxious to reach Dakorji and hide Thakurji somewhere. He heard the sound of horses galloping on the road behind him, and wondered what to do. Then he saw a bavali.'

Do you know what a *baavalee* is? It is a well that has steps on the wall by which we can descend to the water.

‘The bhakta thought of hiding Thakurji in the bavali. He hid Thakurji in a niche in the wall of the bavali, and went back to his cart. “If they ask me, I will say that I don’t have Thakurji with me,” he planned.

The horsemen galloped up to him. ‘Where is Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan?’ they demanded threateningly. “Tell us at once!”

“I have not brought Him,” said the bhakta.’

When Thakurji is so skilled at telling lies, His bhaktas will also learn from Him!

“Oh! You have not brought him?” jeered the horsemen threateningly.

What had happened is that a piece of Bhagwan’s *peetaambara* (yellow stole) had got caught on the side of the cart. The zari (golden braid) on it was shining in the sun. “This zari that is shining – is it from your father’s pitabar?” thundered the horsemen. “Where is Thakurji? Tell us at once!” They began to beat the bhakta. The bhakta was a true bhakta. He did not tell them anything.

The bhakta remained silent, but a voice came from the bavali. “Oh, foolish men! The person you are beating is My beloved bhakta. He has done no wrong. I have come with him at My own wish. Six months from today you will get another *vigraha* from this bavali. Take that to Dwarka and establish it in the Mandir. It is My intention to stay at Dakorji, with this bhakta.”

This is how Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan came to Dakorji, and was established here by that bhakta. Later, Rajas-Maharajas had a beautiful Mandir made for Him. Even today, people come here to get His darshan.’

Dudaji narrated this story to Meerabai. She listened to it with full attention. Then she asked another question. ‘Dadaji, did that bhakta truly get Bhagwan?’

Just see the longing in Meera’s heart! We people keep hearing that this Mahatma got Bhagwan, and that bhakta got Bhagwan. Pujya Swami Akhandanandji Maharaj got Bhagwan’s darshan, Pujya Ramsukhdasji Maharaj got Bhagwan’s darshan, and so did many other Sants, including Pujya Radha Baba. Even today, bhaktas get Bhagwan’s darshan. However, do we even get

the kind of longing that makes us ask a Sant, 'Did you get Bhagwan's darshan? How did you get it? Does it really happen that a person gets His darshan? Can a person actually meet Him?'

Nivrittinathji said, 'Yes. Bhagwan does meet us. Thakurji came Himself, sitting in the bhakta's bullock cart.'

Meerabai's next question was even more direct. 'That bhakta got darshan. Have you also got Bhagwan's darshan?'

How is a Sant to say, 'I have seen Him'? Nivrittinath hesitated, and then he said, 'Yes. By His kripa I have had this experience a few times, through the method of Yoga sadhana.'

'How does kripa happen?' asked Meerabai eagerly. Since Nivrittinathji had said that he got Bhagwan's darshan by His kripa, Meerabai wanted to know how kripa is obtained. Listening to these amazing questions of a girl who was just six years old, Nivrittinathji looked at Dudaji. Both felt elated. 'Kripa is bestowed by *samarpana* (total surrender), Meera,' said Nivrittinathji. 'If the jeevan is truly surrendered to Bhagwan wholeheartedly, the person gets the *anubhooti* (experience) of kripa. Kripa is there, but the anubhuti is missing. When our life is surrendered to Bhagwan, the anubhuti begins.'

'Please teach me Yoga,' pleaded Meerabai. 'Please take me on the path to Bhagwan's kripa.'

'Very well, I will come,' promised Nivrittinathji. Meerabai and Dudaji went to Dakorji, did darshan, and returned to Medata. Nivrittinathji went to Pushkar and came to Medata. He began to give lessons to Meerabai in Yoga, *aasana* (Yogic postures), *praanaayaama* (breath control exercises), etc, according to the system of *ashtaanga* (of eight parts) Yoga. Meerabai was seven years old when she began to learn Yoga seriously.

As these lessons continued, a Sant from Vrindavan came to Medata. His name was Biharidas. He was very learned in the science of *sangeeta* (music). Dudaji invited him to the palace. When he saw the quality of Meerabai's voice, her skill, and depth of feeling, he was greatly impressed.

A good voice and a good knowledge of sangeet are not so rare; what is rare is to have bhava in addition to these. Then, it becomes something very rare. It was this combination in Haridasji's bhajans that made Banke Bihari manifest. Giridhar Gopal manifested when Meerabai sang. It was through the medium of sangeet that they manifested. Sangeet is Sama Veda. There is no need to criticize sangeet. The question is: who is the sangeet for? Is it for your own pleasure, or to give pleasure to others? Or do you sing out of love for Thakurji?

Surdasji sang the pada of Thakurji's *shringaara* (the way He was dressed and decorated) every day, after the *Shringar aarati* (worship with a lamp) of the *Shringar Darshan*. (There are seven darshans in a day, when people are allowed to come into the Mandir at Nathdwara, where Surdasji sang his pada.) He was blind, but the way he described Thakurji's *shringar* made people wonder about him. 'Is he actually blind? Is someone informing him about which dress we plan to make Thakurji wear that day?' wondered the Goswamis (the pujaris who did Bhagwan's puja). 'We should test him to see whether he has some *daivee shakti*(divine powers),' they decided.

How should Surdasji be tested? One day, they did not make Thakurji wear any clothes. They decorated Him only with flowers. No garments, no jewelry!

Surdasji sang the pada of Thakurji's *shringar*.

*Aaja hari de`khe` nangamanangaa, foolana ke` shrinagaara viraajata,
chhabhi ke` uthata tarangaa. Aaja hari de`khe` nangamanangaa.'*

'Today Thakurji has worn no clothes. He is wearing only flowers. His dress is flowers and His ornaments are flowers, and His beauty is extraordinary!'

This bhava is marvelous! It is no ordinary bhava.

When Bihariji heard Meerabai's bhava, and her mellifluous voice, and skillful rendering, he agreed to give her further instruction in sangeet. This is how Meerabai got two *shiksha-guru*(teachers of two subjects); one for Yoga and one for sangeet. She was just seven when she started these serious lessons.

One day, Meerabai saw a *baaraata* (the wedding procession of the bridegroom going to the bride's house for the marriage ceremony) in their city. In those days, the bridegroom came on either an elephant or riding a horse. Being the

wedding of the daughter of the Nagar Seth – the wealthiest man of the city – the barat came in considerable pomp. In Rajasthan, the bridegroom is called the *beenda*. The binda was sitting on an elephant, accompanied by others on elephants and some riding horses.

A Mahatma I know used to joke about this. ‘Do you know why the binda is made to ride on a horse?’ he asked. When asked for the answer, he would say, ‘This is the last chance given to him – if he wants to escape from the shackles of marriage, he can turn and gallop away. Once he enters the house of the bride, there is no escape for him!’ I found this very amusing.

The barat is a traditional custom. This binda came on an elephant. It was a very splendid barat – there were carriages, elephants, horses, and beautiful decorations. The Ranis and Maharanis stood on the palace roof to watch. Meerabai was with them, watching with great interest. She asked her mother, ‘Who is the person sitting on the elephant?’

‘It is the binda,’ answered her mother. ‘He is getting married today.’

‘So much pomp and show!’ exclaimed Meerabai. ‘Such decorations! So much preparation!’

‘All this is done for a wedding,’ explained her mother. ‘And then, this is the wedding of the Nagar Seth’s daughter, so everything is done more lavishly.’

‘Does the binda of every girl come to take her?’ asked Meerabai.

‘Yes. The binda comes to take her.’

‘Will a binda come to take me, also?’

‘Yes, of course he will.’

‘Who is my binda?’ asked Meerabai. Her innocent question brought a smile to her mother’s face. Her seven year old daughter wanted to know who her bridegroom was, and when he would come.

‘How can I know from now, Meera?’ asked Rani Kunvaribai. ‘You are still very small. There is a lot of time before we need to think about it.’

The child became adamant. 'Tell me who my *dulhaa* (bridegroom) is!' she insisted. 'Ask your Dadaji,' replied her harassed mother. Perhaps this was Bhagwan's leela. Meerabai became frantic. She lay down on the floor, as children do in a tantrum. 'Tell me now – who is my *dulha*?' she cried repeatedly.

Mothers often say something just to quiet a child. Rani Kunvaribai pointed to Giridhar Gopal's *vigraha*. 'This is your *dulha*,' she said.

'Really, Ma? This is my Giridhar Gopal!'

'Yes,' said her mother. 'It is He who is your binda, your *dulha*. He will come to take you.'

Meerabai became *bhaava-vibhora* (overcome with emotion). Her whole body tingled with romanch. This relationship was ages old!

Preeti puraatana lakhe` na koyee.

(Nobody realizes that this relationship of love is ancient).

It was a relationship from her previous birth. Tears of joy flowed from Meera's eyes. 'What has happened to Meera?' wondered her mother. 'She became quiet as soon as I took the name of Giridhar Gopal. She has become *romaanchita* (filled with ecstasy). She has gone into a trance.'

Meera looked intently at Giridhar Gopal. 'Giridhar Gopal is my *dulha*! I will get married to Him! He will come and take me!' Meera's heart was overflowing with joy. After this, if anyone spoke of her marriage, she would stop them. 'Is *vivaaha* (marriage) done twice? Is it with one, or is it with many?'

Her mother was deeply perturbed. 'What a mistake I made by telling Meera that Giridhar Gopal is her *dulha*!' she thought.

'You only told me that He is my *dulha*!' said Meera to her mother. 'He is my *pati*. Then, how can you talk of my marrying anyone else?' The matter was allowed to be forgotten for the time being.

Meera's studies continued. I have read about this in books. Meera used to sit in her room and do *Yoga sadhana*. *Ashtanga Yoga* includes *yama* and *niyam* (restraint of the mind and body, and self-imposed disciplines), *asana*,

pranayam, *dhaaranaa* (concentrating the mind on one object), *dhyaana* (meditation) and Samadhi (losing awareness of the external world).

These days, only asana and pranayam are taught in Yogasana. People don't bother about yama and niyam. The fact is yama and niyam are the bedrock of Yoga. They give strength, and uphold the rest. Yama consists of *satya* (truthfulness), *ahimsaa* (non-violence in thought, word and deed), *brahmacharya* (celibacy), *aste'ya* (not taking anything that belongs to someone else), and *aparigraha* (not accumulating anything you don't need).

Your asana and pranayam won't be fully successful until yama and niyam come into your life. All these were present in Meerabai's life. Ishwara *praanidhaana* (surrender to the Ishwara) was also there, and so was bhakti for the Ishwara. She sat in an asana – Yoga is helpful in doing dhyana of Bhagwan – and in bhakti. It is also helpful in Vedanta. Yoga keeps the body healthy – this is the physical benefit. Yoga also makes the mana single-pointed. The Yoga that is advertised – *aantara kumbhaka* (holding the breath after breathing in), pranayam, and *bhraamaree praanaayaam* (pranayam while walking) are very helpful. You people may know this; perhaps you practice it. A person whose mind is very restless can make it focused instantaneously by doing antar kumbhak. You can try it and see for yourself. A person who is under a lot of stress will find relief by doing bhramari pranayam. He will feel light and tranquil.

Meerabai's sadhana was Yoga combined with bhakti. It was not only Ashtanga Yoga; it was also Bhakti Yoga. Do you know what this resulted in? It resulted in the *kundalinijaagarana* (the awakening of the Kundalini Shakti – also called the Serpent Power – being awoken. This is a subtle force that lies coiled at the base of the spine. It is activated by the practice of Yoga sadhana. It rises up along the spine, crossing over the six centers of subtle energy, till it comes to the crown of the head, giving wonderful experiences and supernatural powers). Meerabai achieved this when she was a child of seven, by combining bhakti with Yoga, and doing Bhagwan's dhyana.

Now-a-days we see hoardings advertising people who guarantee Kundalini jagaran in three days! I feel astonished! It seems like a medical test that can prescribe a treatment for instant relief!

Doing this remarkable sadhana Meerabai's body rose up from the mat she was sitting on. Nobody else was present, so there is no way of knowing how long her body remained suspended in air. When she did not come out of her room till late the following morning, people went in to call her. They saw her sitting on the mat, immersed in a Samadhi.

Nivrittinathji was summoned urgently. So was Biharidasji. This seven year old girl had been in a state of Samadhi all night long! Her face was serene and full of joy. Nivrittinathji understood what had happened. He told Dudaji, 'Please don't be agitated. A great success has come into Meera's life today. Her Kundalini has been aroused. This *odhanee* (stole worn on the upper half of the body) is hanging from that hook in the ceiling. This shows that Meera's body had been lifted up. She was wearing that odhni, and when her body reached the ceiling, it got caught on that hook. It remained there when her body descended.

Nivrittinathji was a Yogi. He grasped the situation when he saw Meerabai on the ground, in this condition, and the odhni stuck on the ceiling. He knew that when Kundalini jagaran is achieved the body rises. Meerabai, being a little girl – much lighter than an adult – would have been lifted much higher.

Meerabai was brought out of her Samadhi by doing kirtan in the room. Gradually, she returned to external awareness. Nivrittinathji gave instructions for her hands and feet to be massaged. 'She has been in a Samadhi for a long time. Unless this is done, she may fall when she tries to get up,' he explained. His instructions were followed implicitly.

When Meerabai's condition returned to normal, she went to Nivrittinathji, and bowed down at his feet. She had been in a state of Samadhi, so she had not done Giridhar Gopal's seva for two days.

Do you know what Meerabai said about this?

Meerabai said, 'Gurudev, you have taught me beautifully. By your kripa I obtained success in Yoga sadhana. However, I feel wretched that because of this Samadhi I could not do my Giridhar Gopal's seva for two days! Now, please do kripa on me that I do not get into such a state of Samadhi.' This was Meera's jeevan!

If we people succeed in some dhyana, we immediately talk about it. 'Maharaj, I am going into a Samadhi. I will emerge after four hours.' Oh, if you go into a Samadhi you are doing it for your sadhana. What is the need to publicize it? Why do you advertise your achievement? It is to show off to the public, isn't it?

These incidents show us what Meerabai's jeevan was like. It shows us what her bhakti was like. She pleaded with Nivrittinathji, 'Please do kripa on me that I don't go into a Samadhi that prevents me from doing Thakurji's seva. Who would have given my Thakurji His bath? Who would have offered Him *bhoga* (food)?' This, in spite of the fact that Meerabai had many sakhis who served her. Seeing Meerabai's mental state, Dudaji had appointed a number of *se'vikaa* (lady attendants) to look after her every need. And, when Nivrittinathji saw Meerabai's state, he had told Dudaji to allocate a separate room for her, and to organize a Mandir for her Giridhar Gopal.

Dudaji had a Mandir built in the middle of a garden. It was called 'Shyam Kunj'. It was a beautiful Mandir. Meerabai spent most of her time there. She would go and sit in the Mandir, doing dhyana, or singing bhajans. Sitting there, she would go deep into meditation. It would be a sleep-like state. It is not that she fell asleep; it was like being lost in a day dream. This is called *bhaava-raaja* (dream world).

What did she see in her bhava-rajya? The Dwapar Yuga appeared before her. She was going with her pot, to fetch water from the Yamunaji. Meera saw this scene in her day dream. She got the recollection of being Madhvi sakhi in her previous birth. She saw herself sitting on the bank of the Yamuna, doing dhyana of Shri Krishna. Shri Krishna came up quietly and stood behind her. She saw His reflection in the water – Madhvi sakhi did not see Him; she saw only His reflection in the water. She became so agitated that she jumped into the Yamunaji. She did not remember that this was Shri Krishna's *pratibimba* (reflection of His image); that the *bimba* (form) was behind her. Had Shri Krishna not been standing behind her, how could He be reflected in the water?

When Meerabai jumped into the Yamuna, Thakurji also jumped in. He brought her out. Meerabai was not conscious of being in the Kali Yuga. She felt she is in the Dwapar Yuga. Thakurji filled the pot with water from the Yamuna and gave it to Meerabai. He comforted her. Then He asked, 'Why did you get so

agitated? I was standing close to you.' Thakurji held Meera close to His heart. Meerabai became *kritakritya* (fulfilled). She kept savoring the anand of that experience for many days.

Meerabai's time was spent mostly in Bhagwan Shri Krishna's seva. The time for the celebration of *janamaashtamee* (Shri Krishna's day of birth, according to the lunar calendar) was approaching. All the Mandirs were being decorated for Janamashtami. Chaturbhujnathji's Mandir and Shyam Kunj were decorated elaborately, because Meerabai said, 'Seven Janamashtamis in my life have passed. I feel certain that Thakurji will come on this Janamashtami. He came on the *ashtami tithi* (the eighth day of the lunar calendar), and this is the eighth Janamashtami in my life.'

Meerabai was preparing things in her Mandir. Do you know what happened there?

Nivrittinathji, Biharidasji, and Dudaji were in the Mandir of Chaturbhujnathji. Meera said, 'If Thakurji comes, I should also be ready to receive Him. I should dress nicely, because if my Giridhar Gopal comes, He will wonder, "What sort of a bhakta is she? What is she doing?"'

Meerabai put on a beautiful yellow sari. She dressed up so beautifully that she looked as though she was the fair-complexioned Radha Rani incarnate! When Biharidasji saw her, he instantly thought of Radha Rani. He prayed, 'O Kishoriji, please do kripa on this little *balikaa* (little girl) of Yours. Please fulfill the bhava she has, so that she meets Thakurji.' If ashirvadspour out of a Sant's hriday, they are always fulfilled.

Baba Biharidasji told Meera, 'Meera, it is Janamashtami. I know you are making preparations at Shyam Kunj. We are not able to go there just now, but it is my wish that you come to the Mandir of Chaturbhujnath, and sing a pada for Him. After that you can go back to Shyam Kunj. Whatever you experience there is between you and Thakurji.'

'All right,' said Meerabai. 'I will first sing a bhajan at your Mandir, and then go to Shyam Kunj. When it is time for Thakurji to come, I will be sitting there.'

Baba Behardasji's eyes became moist. 'Yes, you should stay there at that time. That is your jeevan.'

Meera sang one pada. She sat with her tanpura. Nivrittinathi was her Acharya for Yoga, and Baba Biharidasji was her sangeet Guru. Tears of prema came into the eyes of both as she sang. They felt romanch seeing this bhaktimati balika.

Meerabai sang.

E`ree mein to pre`ma deevaanee me`ro darda na jaane` koya.

(Oh, I am maddened with prema; nobody knows my pain,)

Soolee oopara se`ja hamaaree sovana kisa vidhi hoyo.

(My bed is on the gallows, how is it possible for me to sleep?)

Gagana mandala para se`ja piyaa kee kisa vidhi milanaa hoyo.

(My husband's bed is on the clouds in the sky; how is it possible for us to meet?)

Ghaayala kee gati ghaayala jaane` ki jina ghaayala hoyo.

(Only a wounded person knows the pain of a wound.)

Jauharakee gati jauhara jaane` ki jina jauhara hoyo.

(Only the pyre for committing suicide knows what happens when the pyre is lit.)

E`ree mein to pre`ma deevaanee me`ro darda na jaane` koya.

Darda ki maaree vana-vana doloun.....

(I wander in the forests, filled with pain).

What heart-rending anguish there is, in this pada of this eight-year old balika! If you understand the words, you will surely feel it.

Darda kee maaree vana-vana doloun, vaidya milaa na koya.

(I wander in the forests, filled with pain. I could not find a vaidya to cure me of this pain)

Meeraa ke` prabhu peera mite` jaba vaidya saanvariya hoyo.

(Meera's pain, Prabhu, will go when the vaidya is my dark complexioned husband.)

E`ree mein to prema deevaanee me`ro darda na jaane` koya.

Meera sang this pada. Baba Bihardasji, Nivrittinathji, and Dudaji sat there enthralled. Tears streamed from their eyes. This extraordinary balika and her extraordinary bhava! Meerabai also became a little relaxed. Her fingers wandered on the strings of the tanpura.

Baba Biharidasji said, 'Beti, you have done what I told you to do. Now, you are to go to His Mandir, whose birth tithi it is, and who is your *aaraadhyā* (the form you worship), who will come today, on Janamashtami.'

Meera's life was such that her Gurus – of Yoga and sangeet – and her Dadaji, Dudaji, were all deeply moved. Filled with joy, they told her to go for the seva of her Thakurji. Meera went to Shyam Kunj. Her sakhis had prepared everything beautifully, the way preparations are done to welcome Thakurji. This bhava is the *abhivyakti* (expression) of your hriday. I have seen it in many places. Perhaps I have spoken about it to you before.

A Bhagwat was to be held at the house of a very big industrialist. He told me, 'Maharaj, I want to hear the Bhagwat from you, and no other. However, I do not celebrate *nandotsava* (the celebration of Shri Krishna's birth at Nanda Baba's house) and other occasions. I do not like all the singing and dancing for Bhagwan.'

I told him, 'Forgive me, but don't you have singing and dancing on your children's birthdays? Don't you invite musicians for the parties you give on your wedding anniversary?'

'Yes, I do.'

'Tell me,' I said, 'do you consider the birthdays of your children more important than the manifestation of Thakurji?'

The gentleman gave another argument.

'Is it written in the Bhagwat that Thakurji's birth should be celebrated in this manner?'

I told him, 'It is not possible for you to do what is described in the Bhagwat! The Bhagwat says that people picked up lumps of butter and threw them on each other in joy. They sprinkled *gulaala* (a deep pink powder thrown when playing Holi) on everyone. They spattered *chhaachha* (buttermilk) all round. Singing and dancing, the gopas and gopis doused Nanda Baba with *maakhana-misri* (butter – candy sugar). Can you do all this? '

This is written in the original Bhagwat – you can pick it up and read it for yourself.

Then I told the gentleman, 'If you don't celebrate the Nanda Utsav, you will have to hear the Bhagwat from someone else. I will not do the Bhagwat for you.' After this, he was convinced of the importance of these celebrations.

What I wish to say is that sangeet is for Bhagwan, and the *utsava* (celebration) is for Bhagwan. If there is an aversion for this in your *chitta* (mental inclinations), you have either not reached that state – just as Meerabai had – when she was Madhvi sakhi – held herself back from meeting Bhagwan. Don't dance because of your so-called beliefs, but then, don't dance at parties either, if you feel so reticent. But – why should there be any reticence about celebrating Bhagwan's festival? This is the way you can give expression to your *bhava*.

Shyam Kunj was beautifully decorated. Bhoga was spread out in gold and silver salvers. *Bandanvaara* (festoons made of flowers and leaves) were put up on all sides. Garlands were put up. The floor was sprinkled with scented water. Meerabai's sakhis were grown up ladies; she herself was just eight years old. She was dressed in a yellow *ghaagharaa* (elaborate skirt) and *chunaree* (a garment worn over it). She was wearing beautiful ornaments. When she walked she seemed to be a gopi going to meet Thakurji.

Meerabai's mind was immersed in bhajans. She sang in solitude. When she had sung at the Mandir of Chaturbhujnathji, there were many others. Baba Biharidasji was there, Nivrittinathji was there, and Dudaji was also present. Here, there was only Giridhar Gopal and Meera, and two or three sakhis. She went on singing until midnight. At times she forgot a line of a bhajan, and at times she forgot to play the tanpura. She was overwhelmed with emotion at times. Then she collected herself and began to sing again.

Just imagine that *bhaava-dashaa* (state of overwhelming love)! There is such a *rasa* (sweetness) in just imagining Meerabai's state! She did not realize when midnight came until she heard the cannon being fired in celebration, the drums being beaten, and calls of 'Jai! Jai!' (Glory to Shri Krishna!) All these are announcements, welcoming the advent of Shri Krishna.

Meerabai had been at the Mandir of Shri Chaturbhujnath at nine o'clock. After that, she had come to Shyam Kunj. She did not know how three hours had passed, doing bhajan, until she heard the clamor at midnight. '*Chaturbhujnath kee jai! Thakurji kee jai!*' (Glory to Chaturbhujnath! Glory to Thakurji!)

Then, Meera thought, 'Oh! It is time for Thakurji to come, but He has not come to my place.' She felt acute distress. She began to call out, 'O Giridhar Gopal! Will this Janamashtami also pass empty? Won't I get Your darshan? Is it that You have not accepted this sevika of Yours? O, my Giridhar! You are the aradhyा of my jeevan; won't You give me darshan even on this Janamashtami?' Saying this, Meera went into a semi-conscious state.

Do you know what happened at that moment? A brilliant light, like the combined effulgence of the sun and moon, appeared before Meerabai. Before getting a darshan of Bhagwan, there is a darshan of divine brilliance. If you begin to get a darshan of effulgence when you do bhajan or dhyana, you can take it that you are coming close to getting Bhagwan's darshan.

This bright light came, and Meerabai's Giridhar Gopal appeared in it. His blue form was lustrous, like a sapphire. He was wearing a yellow stole, and He had a bansuri in His hand. He was smiling at Meerabai.

Say: '*Bhaktavatsala bhagavaana kee jai!*' (Glory to Bhagwan, who loves His bhaktas with a motherly love!)

Meerabai was in *bhaavaave`sha* (a frenzy of love). The amazing thing is that she alone got Bhagwan's darshan. This was also an extraordinary leela of Bhagwan. Meerabai was getting Bhagwan's darshan while she was lost in emotion. Her face had a *masti* (unrestrained joyfulness). She was smiling, because she was getting the darshan of Thakurji, whose hands and feet are like the petals of a lotus flower, whose *shreevighraha* (beautiful form) is blue, like a sapphire, whose yellow stole shines so brightly that it shames even the

combined brilliance of the sun and moon. Meerabai was looking at His bewitching smile and intoxicating eyes.

Meera was telling herself, 'It is difficult to decide which is more powerful of the two – His smile or His eyes!' What bhava this eight year old girl had, wondering whether Shri Krishna's eyes were more captivating than His smile! 'It is difficult for me to decide!' thought Meera.

Each leela of Thakurji is wonderful. Meera was His, from the very beginning. On this day, after getting His darshan, she became His completely. She surrendered herself to her Giridhar Gopal totally.

Even today, bhaktas and Sants get Bhagwan's darshan, you know. However, it is only for a few minutes. Do you know how long Bhagwan gave darshan to Meerabai? Thakurji manifested at midnight, and He was with Meerabai up to the Brahmamuhurta, which means, four o'clock in the morning! The reason is that Meera was not a person of the Kali Yuga; she was Madhvi sakhi of the Dwapar Yuga. She had spent a big portion of her life with Thakurji. On this day, Thakurji stayed with Meera for four hours, giving her darshan of many leelas. She alone knows what all she saw that night!

Thakurji said, 'Meera, why do you get so distressed? I am with you all the time. I keep looking at you, and take care of you.' Meera's body was beyond her control. Thakurji took His bansuri in His left hand, and caught Meera's hand with His right hand. He drew her close. They became two bodies with one *praana* (life spirit). The consciousness of the *de'ha* (body) and *de'hee* (the owner of the body) disappeared.

It was like the *milana* (meeting) of Bharat and Rama, of Thakurji and Kishoriji, of Shakti and Shaktimaan (power and the one whose power it is). They are said to be separate bodies with one spirit. Meera never knew how these four hours with Thakurji passed, because her form was *divya* (divine). So was her *antahkarana* (subtle body). Both had become divine.

Bhagwan's *shareera* (form; body) is not *paanchabhautika* (made of the five elements of earth, water, fire, air and space). Meera's shareer had also become *sacchidaanandamaya* (filled with Sat = pure existence, Chit = pure

consciousness, Anand = pure joy). This is why they did not remain two entities; they merged into one divine form.

Thakurji stayed with Meera till the Brahmamuhurta. After that, she got such a bhavavesh that she went into a Samadhi. As it is, she had the practice of Yoga. She got such a beautiful darshan of Bhagwan, and she got His divine touch. This sent her into a Yoga Samadhi.

Nivrittinathji came early morning to Shyam Kunj. He was accompanied by Baba Biharidasji and Dudaji. He understood what had happened. Actually, he had understood what was likely to happen, the previous evening, when Meerabai has sung a bhajan in the Mandir of Chaturbhujnath. Her bajan had moved everyone present. At that time he had thought, 'Thakurji may or may not manifest here, but He is sure to manifest at Shyam Kunj today.' He saw the *maadakataa* (intoxication) on Meera's face. He saw the masti on it, and the serene joyfulness that made her face glow. Baba Biharidas mentally bowed down to Radha Rani. He said, 'Merciful are You, Radha Rani! You granted my prayer and made this balika meet Thakurji! You gave His darshan to Meera! Nobody can obtain His darshan without Your kripa!'

Baba Biharidasji felt elated. Then Dudaji asked, 'Will this balika remain seated in Samadhi?' Just imagine the scene – an eight year old girl in a deep Samadhi! Dudaji could not understand what he should do or not do. Had Baba Biharidasji and Nivrittinathji not been there, nobody would have been able to understand what had happened.

Biharidasji said, 'She is getting Thakurji's darshan in Samadhi. This Samadhi will not break on its own. It is not a Samadhi of Yoga; it is a Samadhi of Yoga combined with Bhakti Yoga. We should all do Bhagwan's kirtan. It is only through kirtan that this Samadhi will break.' They began to sing Bhagwan's sankirtan. Gradually, Meera opened her eyes.

Do you know what Meera asked when her eyes opened? She asked Baba Biharidasji, 'Who are you? Are you in a bhava?' Then she asked Nivrittinathji, 'Who are you? Why are you both standing here? Where did my Shyam Sundar go? He was with me till now. Where has He gone, leaving me here?' Tears flowed from Meera's eyes. Baba Bihardasji stroked her head lovingly. He

consoled her. 'Beti,' he said, 'He comes and He goes, and He comes again. Come back to your natural state.'

Meera was in such a frenzy of emotion that she did not even recognize her Gurus! Sankirtan commenced again, and Meera slowly regained external awareness. Now, Dudaji felt convinced that Meera's coming into his family was a sign of Chaturbhujnathji's kripa. 'Meera is His kripa personified!' he thought. He felt a deep happiness.

The news of Meerabai's state spread all in palace. The sankirtan continued. Our time is over for today. Tomorrow we will talk about Meera's marriage and what happened when she went to her *sasuraala* (in-law's place). She had to suffer a lot, so we won't dwell on it. After that we will talk about her going to Vrindavan, and what happened there.

We gather again to talk about *bhakti-svaroopaa* (the essence of bhakti), bhaktimati Meera. This is a topic that benefits me as well as you; because my time is spent in *chintana-manana* (pondering – reflecting) and *adhyayana* (reading) about her. I begin to realize the greatness of Meerabai's jeevan. It is only Bhagwan's kripa that a person can get such a jeevan.

Yesterday we saw Meerabai getting Bhagwan's darshan on the festival of Janamashtami. This was the eighth year of her life. Some thought should be given here – this balika got Bhagwan's darshan when she was right years old. And, how many years of our life have passed without His darshan? Darshan will be given when there is an intense desire in us. When we come to a Katha – Satsang, or sit in dhyana – puja, there is certainly some desire for Him in us, but the fact is, it is not as strong as it needs to be. If the priority of our life becomes obtaining Bhagwan, we can also succeed in getting His darshan.

One Sant used to say, 'If someone tells me that he has a desire for Bhagwan, but Bhagwan does not meet him, I refuse to accept it. Because, if a person truly desires Him more than anything else, what *vyavasthaa* (arrangement) does Bhagwan have, to not meet His *pre'mee* (one who loves Him)? Why won't He meet His bhakta? Even today there are many Sants in Vraja who get Bhagwan's darshan. The fact is the desire should be intense.'

One gentleman told my Guruji, Swami Akhandanandji Saraswati in Kolkata, 'Maharajji, I have the wish for Bhagwan's darshan, but I don't get His darshan.'

Maharajji told him something very interesting. He said, 'You have the *chaaha* (wish), but it is not *kaafee* (enough).' This has a double meaning, because *chaaha* can also mean *chaa* (tea) and *kaafee* can also mean coffee! That means, the wish is there, but it is not strong enough for obtaining darshan! Then Maharajji asked the gentleman, 'How many times in a day do you think about why you don't get Bhagwan's darshan, or why He doesn't meet you?'

Bhagwan gives darshan even today! My Guruji got darshan. The Nritya Gopal Bhagwan, who is ensconced in our Mandir at Vrindavan, is the form in which He appeared before my Guruji.

Bhaktimati Meera's biography is different from all others. We have been talking about it for the past two days. She got Bhagwan's darshan when she was eight, on the eighth Janamashtami of her life. This is the real purpose of celebrating Janamashtami. We celebrate Janamashtami every year, and we do so with great zeal. That is something to be glad about. We should certainly celebrate it joyfully. However, we should check to see how much we have progressed towards Shri Krishna, how much our prema for Him has increased, and how much our longing for His darshan has intensified.

Do you get romanch when you do Bhagwan's kirtan? Do tears come into your eyes when you hear His Katha? Does your throat get choked with emotion when you talk about Him? If so, you are progressing on the path of bhakti. If not, your effort is too little. You need to try harder.

One member of Meera's family asked her, 'You get such bhava; why don't we get bhava like yours?'

Meera gave a beautiful answer. 'If you empty yourself and sit, only then can bhava come into you. How can anything enter if there is no place within?'

So, there should be some place for Bhagwan. There should also be some time for Bhagwan. There should be a place for Him in your hriday and there should be place for Him in your home, and you should also have some time for Him! If these three things come into your life, we people do not accept that Bhagwan doesn't come! He went, Himself, to Meerabai, and said, 'I will stay here.' So, how can it be that He doesn't come, if we yearn for Him with all our heart?

After bhaktimati Meera had celebrated Janamashtami successfully, Baba Biharidasji told her, 'Beti, your study in sangeet is complete. Now, I long to go back to Vrindavan.'

When a Sant parts from a bhakta, he feels intense pain. Meerabai began to weep. She was filled with bhava. She caught Baba Biharidasji feet, and said, 'Baba, I got anand when I sat with you. How will I live if you go away?' Baba said, 'Meera, if you want, I will stay back until your birthday.'

The festival of Janamashtami was over. Meerabai had been born on the day of Sharad Purnima, when the full moon is brightest in the whole year. Sharad Purnima comes some six or eight weeks after Janamashtami. Baba stayed back.

How do Sants stay back, Maharaj? Is it by shakti, or is it by prema, or is it by *sampatti* (wealth)? What holds them? It is prema; it is bhava.

Once, when I was in Mumbai, the Trustees of an organization asked me to give talks for one month at their institution. I told them, 'I will not be able to give you a whole month. Keep the program for fifteen days.' The manager showed some displeasure. 'Maharaj!' he said, 'Sants phone us, asking us to have their pravachan. And here, we are inviting you, and you are saying "no"?' I told him, 'I will tell you something – those who phone and ask for their pravachan to be arranged, are not Sants. They may be very learned, they may be good speakers, they may be professors, but they cannot be Sants. No Sant will ask anyone to have his pravachan. He will give discourses if there is a genuine *shrotaa* (one who listens with a wish to understand); otherwise, he will sit by himself humming Thakurji's names.'

Sants are obtained by bhava. They are obtained by prema. Baba Biharidas stayed back. When Meerabai's birth date came, it was celebrated with great zeal. However, in this world there is meeting and there is parting. What I mean is that when people meet with their shareer, they also have to part. *Sanyoga – viyoga* (meeting – parting) is always there.

Baba Bihardasji gave Meera his ashirvad as he was leaving. What ashirvad did he give? He said, 'Beti, Kishoriji will fulfill your every wish. It is essential to have Radha Rani's kripa if you want to obtain Bhagwan Shri Krishna. You cannot obtain Him unless you have Radha Rani's kripa.'

Kishoriji is seen in many forms. She is seen as Mother, as the Acharya, and as Shakti. What will remain, if Shakti is removed from the Shaktimaan (the one Shakti belongs to)? Nothing! Shakti is Kishoriji, and Shri Krishna is Shaktimaan. This is why they are called two forms with one prana. Kishoriji is called 'Ma' because her nature is compassionate.

A Mahatma in Vraja used to joke about this. There are many people who live in Vraja, whose actions are improper. Even in the times of Shri Krishna there were such people. There are always some good people and some people whose actions are not good. This Mahatma said, 'Kishoriji does kripa even on them. She does not send them out of Vraja. She gives some of them a birth as a dog, or a bird, or something else, in Vraja. Their *karma-fala* (fruit of their

actions) is ended here. She keeps them in *Hersharaṇa* (shelter; protection). Whatever the form may be, she keeps them in Her sharan forever.'

This is the nature of a mother. For example, a mother does not tell her child to leave the house if he develops some wrong habits. It is the same with Radha Rani. This is Her swarup. It is the swarup of a mother.

Baba Biharidasji blessed Meerabai. If blessings pour forth spontaneously from a Sant's hriday, you can take it that your mission is fulfilled. Thakurji abides in the hriday of a Sant. That is why people bow down again and again to the Sants. 'Maharaj, please give us ashirvad.' The Sants do not ask Bhagwan for anything for themselves, but if some *sankalpa* (resolve; wish) arises in their hriday for someone, it is always fulfilled.

However, there should be *vive'ka* (discrimination; decorum) even in this. The shrotas here are very *prabuddha* (wise; knowledgeable). They are very careful. In some places the shrotas are so brash that they almost knock over the Sant when they rush to do pranam. They come from behind and catch the feet, thinking that doing pranam will bring them good fortune, never mind what happens to the Mahatma! Shrotas should not be so lacking in vivek.

As he prepared to leave, Baba Biharidasji asked Meera, 'Beti, do you want to send any message for Thakurji?' Meerabai said, 'Baba, please tell my pranam to Thakurji. Please tell Him to call me as quickly as possible, for His seva.' This was the prayer of a girl who was just nine years old!

Some twelve or fourteen years ago I had done a Katha at a town near Jabalpur. A lady used to come every day to listen to the Bhagwat. She was originally from Vraja, having come here when she married into a family that lives here. Her bhava was clearly to be seen. Occasionally she got romanch. Tears would flow from her eyes. On the last day, she came to me. She was weeping as she told me, 'For various reasons I have not been able to go to Vrindavan. When you go there, please convey my pranam to Banke Bihariji.' Some fourteen years have passed, but the expression on her face when she said this, is still vivid in my mind. 'Please convey my pranam to Banke Bihariji. So many years have passed and I could not go to meet Him.' This bhava is bhakti, and it is this bhakti that takes you to Thakurji. Meerabai also sent this message through Baba Biharidasji. If this bhava comes into our hriday, our life is fulfilled. I was

reading Meerabai's biography today; it reminded me of this lady I had met fourteen years ago.

Meerabai said the same thing to Baba Biharidasji. 'Please offer my pranam at Banke Bihariji's feet. Ask Him to call me to His feet as soon as possible.' Her only goal, since childhood, was to meet Bhagwan. Baba Biharidasji left Medata, carrying her message with him.

The day of Guru Purnima came. Meerabai saw people doing puja of their Guru. She went to Dudaji, since he has always supported her and helped her in every way. He was a bhakta of Chaturbhujnath. Other family members could not understand Meera's mental state. Even her mother felt troubled by her habits. 'How did my little daughter become involved with Babajis from such an early age? She keeps their company, and also does various asanas! Does she want to become a Yogini (lady Yogi)?' Meera's mother did not approve of Meerabai's lifestyle!

This is the natural attitude of this world. People don't go on the path to Bhagwan, and if somebody in the family does, they say, 'What has happened to him?' What they mean is, 'Is that person influenced by some *bhoota-pre'ta* (ghost – spirit), or has he become mentally unstable?' Nobody asks, 'What has happened to them' about the people who are engrossed in this *samsara* (interactive world). They ask this only about those who stay at home doing Bhagwan's bhajan and kirtan, and do bhakti!

I am much older now, but there was a time when people would ask, 'Maharaj, had something happened at your home? What made you leave home?' What they mean is nobody leaves their home unless he is driven out. Do people leave home only if there is some misfortune? People also leave their homes because of prema for Bhagwan, or by the kripa of a Mahapurusha. However, this point is not easily noticed.

It was time for Guru Purnima. Dudaji was always very supportive of Meerabai. She told him, 'Dadaji, it is Guru Purnima today. Everybody does the ritual worship of their Guru on this day. Who is my Guru?'

Meerabai's cousin, Jaimal, who was the son of Meerabai's uncle Viramdevji, spoke up, 'You have a Guru, Meera! Baba Biharidasji and Nivrittinathji, from whom you learn sangeet and Yoga, are both your Gurus.'

'Please be quiet!' Meerabai told him. Dudaji explained, 'Jaimal, they are her *shiksha guru* (Acharyas who teach some subject). A *deeksha guru* gives spiritual instruction. He is separate. Shiksha can be acquired from many. Duttatreya took teaching from twenty four Gurus. Even today, people have many different Gurus to teach them different things. However, remember, the *diksha Guru* is only one, not many.'

There can be several Gurus who teach different things, but the present state of our *sanskriti* (traditional culture) is not worth talking about! I did a Katha at Jabalpur on one occasion. A lady came to my room, visibly moved. She caught my feet and said, 'Maharaj, I will take Guru dakshina only from you!' Have you understood? Her *bhava* was very pure, but was it *diksha* she wanted or was it *dakshinaa* (*dakshina* is a monetary gift given to a Brahmin or a Monk)? She did not know the difference between 'diksha' and 'dakshina'! The Guru gives *diksha* and the disciple gives *dakshina*! The lady said two or three times, 'Maharaj, I want to take Guru *dakshina* from you.' I couldn't help smiling. The others present also started laughing. I told her jokingly, 'I will certainly give you Guru *dakshina*, but let *Guru Purnima* come. I will give it to you on that day.' The lady felt startled, wondering what she had said. The others explained the matter to her. This is the level of awareness about these matters. However, what is, is. Society will surely progress gradually. The people here are working towards it.

Meera said, 'Dadaji, please tell me, who is my Guru?' Whose name was Dudaji to give? He said, 'Beti, you can do Bhagwan's puja until you get a Guru. Or, you can do the puja of Vyasaji. A person who does not have a Guru can do the puja of his *Ishtadev* (chosen form of worship), as a form of the Guru. Or *Maharshi Vyasa*'s puja can be done, since this festival started for him. This is why *Guru Purnima* is also called *Vyasa Purnima*.'

Meerabai, however, was not prepared to make any compromise. 'I want a Guru', she insisted repeatedly. She felt desperate. What was Dudaji to do? It is

not that he could bring any Sant and tell Meerabai to take diksha! He tried his best to console Meerabai, but she became increasingly agitated.

Meerabai began to think of Bhagwan. She went into a sleeplike trance. In her trance she saw a dream. She dreamt that Maharaja Yudhishtira was having his Rajasuya Yagna. The question of whose puja should be done the first was raised. The system is that the most respected person present should be chosen for this honor.

All the people present began to ponder on this, because several great people gathered there. Vasishtaji was there, Vasudevji was there, and other great Maharshis, Devarshis, Rajarshis, Brahmarshis, great warriors, the Saptarishis, and other Mahapurushas were present. If there is only one Mahatma in a group of people, they can say that that Mahatma should be the first person to be offered the puja. However, when there are many Mahatmas in a gathering, who will say which is greater and which is smaller? '*Ko bada-choota kahata aparaadhoo*' – to say that one Mahatma is greater than another is an offence. The people didn't know what to say.

Then Sahdev – the son of Jarasandha – spoke. Bhagwan Shri Krishna has killed Jarasandha, but He had not touched Jarasandha's Kingdom. He had crowned Sahdev as the Raja. This was the amazing swarup of Bhagwan Krishna. Sahdev stood up in the assembly. 'Don't you all know who the greatest Mahapurusha is?' he asked. 'It is Bhagwan Shri Krishna! He arranges everything in the right way. His eye is never on anybody's property. He killed the wicked, but never touched their possessions. My father was wicked, so He killed him, but He made me the Raja.'

Sahdev's words elicited immediate applause. People called out 'Jai! Jai!' and 'Sadhu! Sadhu!' thus expressing their approval. This is where '*krishnam vande jagat gurum*' (I salute Krishna who is the Guru of the whole world) becomes famous. Shri Krishna is the Guru of the whole world. He is the Guru of all the *kalaa* (skills; arts). He is the *aadiguru* (original teacher) who can teach everything. He can teach us *dhyana*, *Yoga*, *Gnan*, and *bhakti*, of course, but He can also teach *raaja neeti* (statesmanship), *koota neeti* (diplomacy) and *chhala neeti* (politics). He can teach *nritya* (dancing), and He can also teach us to steal!

He is the Guru of all kalas – *akhila kalaadi guru* – the original teacher of all kalas! Bhagwan Shri Krishna did not steal anything by which anyone suffered. The persons from whom He stole waited eagerly for Him. ‘He will come again today.’ Well, my brother, is there any thief for whom you wait eagerly? Bhagwan used butter as an excuse to steal the *chitta* (mental inclinations) of the gopis.

People were shouting, ‘Shri Krishna Bhagwan ki jai!’ when Sahdev proposed that the first person for being offered puja to should be Shri Krishna.

Meera felt very happy when she saw that dream. ‘I was looking for a Guru,’ she said. ‘My Giridhar Gopal is Himself, the Jagat Guru!'

It was another matter that Shishupal and some others objected to Sahdev’s proposal, but all others were in full support of Sahdev. They did Bhagwan Shri Krishna’s puja first, as the Jagat Guru, and the most revered person present.

Meerabai’s dream vanished at this point. She said, ‘My Giridhar Gopal is the Jagat Guru, of course; He is also my husband and my aradhya. However, today I am making a sankalpa before Him.’

What sankalpa did Meerabai make?

She said, ‘Whichever Mahapurusha comes to my place today, on this day of Guru Purnima, I will accept that my Giridhar Gopal has sent him here in the form of my Guru. I will take Guru diksha from him.’

Having made this resolve, Meera sat down and began to sing bhajans. She was waiting for her Giridhar Gopal to send a Mahapurusha! Ten o’clock passed, twelve o’clock passed. Meera sat in Shyam Kunj before her Thakurji. She had not eaten anything, not even had water. Her mother kept coming, trying to persuade her to have something. ‘I will not have anything now; I will eat and drink after my Guru comes and I do his puja. I have told my Giridhar Gopal. He will send my Guru today, from somewhere or other.’

Bhagwan is ‘*kartum akartum anyathaakartum samartha*’ – He has the capacity to do anything that is possible and even that, which is impossible! Meera sat there, singing a bhajan. It was a beautiful bhajan.

Mohe` laagi lagana guru charanana kee.

(I have a longing for the feet of my Guru.)

Charana binaa mohe` kachhu naheen bhaave`,

(Nothing appeals to me till I get my Guru's feet,)

jaga maayaa saba sapanana kee.

(this world is an illusion like a dream.)

Bhavasaagara saba sookha gayo hai,

(The ocean of this world has dried up,)

fikara naheen mohe` taranana kee,

(I am no longer worried about how I will cross over it,)

Meeraa ke` prabhu giridhara naagara,

(Meera's Prabhu is Giridhar Nagar,)

Giridhara naagara, natavara naagra,

(Giridhar Nagar is Natavar Nagar – the hero most refined!)

aasa lagee guru charanana kee.

(I hope I will get my Guru's feet!)

Meerabai says that the *bhava-saagara* (ocean of this world) ceases to be seen as soon as we have the experience of Bhagwan Shri Krishna. A person isn't even aware of having crossed over the ocean of this world. Her feelings are sublime!

Meera sat in Shyam Kunj before her Thakurji who is *kartum akartym anyatha* *kartum samartha*. He came, Himself, to Meera's house. Why would He deny Meera her wish for a Guru? Meerabai had said, 'Thakurji, I want a Guru, and I want him today!' She was like an impatient child. She became insistent before Thakurji that day, and this is what is called bhakti!

Our every action should be attached to Bhagwan. If we have prema it should be for Bhagwan. If we become insistent for something – like a spoilt child – it should be with Bhagwan. If we become displeased about anything, it should be

with Bhagwan. Many bhaktas quarrel with Bhagwan, don't they? Didn't Narasi Mehta get angry with Bhagwan at the time of his daughter, Nanibai's *bhaata* (a function when the bride's family gives gifts to her in-laws)? Bhagwan deliberately delayed in coming with the gifts, to tease Narasi Mehta! Narasi Mehta told Bhagwan, 'I have been calling You since so many days, but You didn't come! You came only when my daughter was about to kill herself! Couldn't You have come earlier?'

This is what Bhagwan wanted to hear! He enjoys listening to a scolding from His bhaktas now and then! Tell me, isn't that true? Do you people want only prema from your premi, or do you enjoy an occasional tiff with your loved one? The fact is that both are needed. Combined, they enhance the joy of a relationship. If all our relationships get attached to Bhagwan – if you are displeased, it is with Bhagwan; if you are pleased, it is with Bhagwan; if you do puja, it is His puja; if you quarrel, it is with Him! That pleases Bhagwan. He enjoys it!

Meera became stubborn that day. 'Thakur! I want a Guru today!' She knew that He is Himself, the Jagat Guru, but she said, 'Send me my own separate Guru today!' And, as soon as her bhajan ended, Sant Raidasji wandered into Medata by Bhagwan Shri Krishna's kripa. He simply walked naturally into the town in the aimless wandering of a Sadhu. Rao Dudaji welcomed him with all respect. He was a great bhakta of Sants and Mahatmas. As soon as he learnt that Meerabai wanted a Guru, he went to Raidasji and brought him to the palace.

Raidasji was a siddha Mahapurusha. Meerabai came and did pranam at his feet. Her eyes were filled with tears of prema. She knew that he had been sent by her Giridhar! She placed her right hand on his right foot and left hand on his left foot as she did pranam. After prostrating, she told him of her anguish.

'Maharaj, my mantra diksha is not yet done. I wish to take mantra-diksha from you.' (A Guru gives a special mantra – words that contain subtle power – suited to the disciple, when giving diksha.) Raidasji asked, 'Did you get Thakurji without mantra *japa* (ritual chanting)?'

This was extraordinary! The rule is that a person first gets a Guru, then the Guru gives mantra-diksha, and then the person gets Thakurji. And, what

happened in Meerabai's life is that she got Thakurji first, then Thakurji sent her her Guru, and then mantra-diksha was given after that. What an extraordinary jeevan was Meerabai's! Every aspect of it is astounding!

Raidasji said, 'Thakurji is sitting in your Shyam Kunj, and you are singing with great prema.' He recognized her emotional condition because of the words of her bhajan and the feeling with which she sang. Meera's body had romanch, and her eyes were filled with tears of prema. Her heart was filled with joy. Her face became rosy when she looked at her Giridhar Gopal. Sant Radasji observed all this, and wondered what he should say. He asked her, 'Why do you want a Guru?'

'I have heard that there is no *uddhaara* (deliverance) without a Guru,' said Meera. 'What is the meaning of *uddhar*, Beti?' asked Raidasji. 'The one who does *uddhar* is sitting in your house. You have obtained Him.'

Meerabai said, 'I have a feeling that if you give me a mantra today, I will do japa of the mantra, and Thakurji will come to me for always. At present, He comes only rarely. So, please do *kripa* on me, and give me mantra-diksha.'

Sant Raidas gave her the diksha of a Krishna-mantra. He gave it along with the *beeja mantra* (an unfailing means). These mantras are not to be spoken publicly. These days it has become a common practice for some Mahatmas to have an audience of a thousand or more people. A form is given to each person to fill up. After that, the Mahatma says five or ten mantras on the microphone, and tells his audience to choose any one of them that appeals to them. The Guru does not meet the disciple, and the disciple does not get to talk to the Guru, and the mantra is given! This practice is not right. People make a large number of disciples to fill their Registers. 'I have so many disciples,' they say. Do you know how *pavitra* (pure; unsullied by worldly considerations) is the relationship of a Guru and disciple? Goswami Tulsidasji has written:

Harayi shishya dhana shoka na harayi, so guru ghoru naraka mahan parahi.

(A Guru who takes his disciple's money, but doesn't remove his sorrow, goes to a terrible Hell.)

A Guru takes dakshina from his disciple. He takes seva from him. If he does not have the capacity to make the disciple obtain Bhagwan – meaning, if he does not remove the sorrow from the disciple's life – where does he have to go? Don't be afraid to complete the sentence! Any person who indulges in wrong-doing has to go to that place! What can you do about it? That Guru has to go to Narak! Just think – how can a Guru who is destined to go to Narak do the *kalyana* (liberation) of his disciple? The Guru will get the fruit of his karmas, but what will the poor disciple do? He won't go to Narak with his Guru, but neither will he obtain Bhagwan. How can the disciple get Bhagwan when even his Guru did not succeed in obtaining Him? How can a person who has not been able to free himself from worldly shackles free anyone else?

Sant Raidasji was a siddha Mahapurusha. He gave Meera the diksha of a Krishna mantra. Knowledgeable people will understand the *madhura bhaava* (romantic love) Krishna mantra. It is just as well if the uninformed don't understand! Meera prostrated full length before Sant Raidas. She offered him flowers and fruit and a full meal as dakshina. In those times the Sant – Mahapurushas did not accept money.

Meerabai reached the age of eleven or twelve. The elders began to talk about arranging her marriage. Marriages took place at an early age in Rajasthan in those days. The gauna too place later. Meerabai felt acute distress whenever the topic of her marriage was raised. She would sit before her mother, Rani Kunvaribai, and her father Ratansighji, and weep. 'Ma, it was you who told me that my dulha is Giridhar Gopal. Ma, do you want me to get married a second time?'

What was her mother to say? Meera had been very small, and had become childishly persistent about being told who her dulha was, and Kunvaribai had said this to quiet her. She did not know that Meera's relationship with Giridhar Gopal was centuries old!

Meerabai said, 'Ma, can any mother get her daughter married twice?' Ratansinghji was compelled to remain silent, because Rao Dudaji was the head of the family. Knowing Meera's feelings, he had told everybody that her marriage would be arranged only when she herself, wanted it. This was the command of Rao Dudaji.

Ratansinghji said, 'Meera, your marriage will be arranged only if you agree, not otherwise.' Meera ran to Shyam Kunj, to her Giridhar Gopal. 'Giridhar,' she wept, 'even an ordinary pati of this world will not want his wife to marry a second time. Will You, Giridhar Nagar, want it? Will You accept my getting married a second time? You cannot accept it, Giridhar Gopal! If you do, I will believe that You have not accepted me. This situation would not have arisen had You accepted me! Why should a marriage proposal come for me? How could it come?' Meerabai wept uncontrollably, holding the feet of Giridhar Gopal. The marriage was postponed. The proposal that had come was dismissed.

However, it was Bhagwan's wish that Rao Dudaji's prarabdha ended. He called both Meera and Jaimal. 'Beti, he said, 'both of you put on your Court garments and come.' He looked at them both. Then he told Meera to sing a bhajan. Meerabai was singing a bhajan as Rao Dudaji took his last breaths, thinking of Chaturbujnathji. Such were the Mahapurushas in Meera's family!

Dudaji had understood that it was time for him to leave this mortal world. That is why he called both his grandchildren. In due course, Jaimal became a famous warrior, and Meera became a famous bhaktimati. Dudaji's sons were gathered round him during his last moments. He told them, 'Viramdev, Ratansingh, future generations may forget your great valor, but Meerabai's story will never be forgotten. History will not erase the story of her life. Our family has received Chaturbujnathji's kripa in the form of Meera. Take care of her. Nobody should force her to do anything.' Dudaji departed from this world with these words.

You understand that there is a difference in the level of understanding certain matters. Dudaji realized what Meera was; the others did not. They had a deep love for her, but they did not understand the *bhaavanaa* (feeling) she had for Giridhar Gopal. Nor did they understand her relationship with Bhagwan. They thought, 'Meera is a princess of a Royal family. She has reached the age of fourteen or fifteen. She spends all her time with such a great Mahatma, singing at times and dancing at times. She does Yogasana and sometimes becomes unconscious for Bhagwan. This gives a bad name, not only to her, but it also spoils the reputation of the image of the clan of Rathods.'

This is where the mistake is made. If a member of the family starts to go towards Bhagwan, and his family members begin to consider him a slur on their good name, it does a lot of harm. It is a great mistake in their life. So, we should be very alert about this. It is very difficult to understand. People begin to think, 'What has happened to him?'

Proposals began to come. Viramdevji's wife, Girijabai, was from the Royal family of Chittod. Seeing Meera's beauty and her accomplishments, she felt that her marriage should be arranged with the Royal family of Chittod. She proposed that Meera should be married to Bhojraj. He was the eldest son of her brother Rana Sanga. He was a skilled warrior and a handsome man.

A proposal was sent to Bhojraj's family. By a coincidence, Bhojrajji was at Medata at that time, having come to visit his aunt, Girijabai, who was now the Maharani of Medata. The proposal was welcomed eagerly, because Rana Sanga's family wanted the princess of Medata to come into their family. It would enhance the prestige of the Royal family of Chittod. It was a very favorable proposal.

When Bhojrajji heard that he was to be married to Meerabai, he went to Shyam Kunj. He saw Meerabai sitting there with her *e'kataaraa* (an instrument with one string), singing praises of Shri Krishna. Her body showed signs of romanch. Her eyes had tears of prema for Shri Krishna.

An inner conflict arose in Bhojrajji. This is a conflict between the *mana* (emotional mind) and the *buddhi* (intellect). On the one hand his *mana* said, 'if I get married to this bhaktimati Meera, who is so strongly inclined towards Dharma, it will give me uddhar.' On the other hand was the thought, 'She will be singing bhajans all day long! She will remain engrossed in Giridhar Gopal's seva. What will people say, if I marry her?'

Remember, when you go on the path to Bhagwan, you have to give up thinking about what people will say, because this world does not allow anyone to escape from it easily! If someone places obstacles in your path even if you do a good thing like going towards Bhagwan, how can you believe him (or her) to be your very own? Even if they are a part of your family, and you stay together, these people are not your own.

Bhojraiji's dilemma went on for a while. Ultimately, his buddhi told him that if Meerabai gives her consent to the marriage, he would marry only her, and no one else. Bhojraiji knew that Meera was not willing to get married. 'If Meera agrees to marry me, I will not impose myself on her; I will stay with her like a friend. I will also become a sevak of Giridhar Gopal, and attain uddhar.' Bhojraiji was a noble person with lofty ideals. He overcame his dilemma and took a noble decision.

There are dilemmas in everybody's life. There are many people whose mana says, 'I'll go to the Katha today'. Then it says, 'Today is a holiday, so let us go for an enjoyable outing.' Then it says, 'Let us watch a movie', or, 'it's best to go to a friend's house.' Doesn't the mana get divided in itself?

It is possible that your mana doesn't face this dilemma, since you are among those who come to the Katha every day. However, the conflict between the mana and the buddhi is a common phenomenon.

And, which is the victor in this conflict? If there is *saadhanaa* (effort for spiritual progress) in your life, and you do Satsang regularly, the buddhi will rule over the mana. And, if sadhana and Satsang are weak in your life, it is your mana that will prevail. 'This Satsang is a daily activity; let us enjoy ourselves today. We'll go out, eat some tasty food, meet friends, and go to a movie!' The tussle between the mana and buddhi goes on.

Pujya Rotiram Baba used to say, 'The Mahabharata war happened only once in history, but the inner Mahabharata happens daily.' Who is this Mahabharata between? It is between the mana and the buddhi. The food for the buddhi is Satsang and sadhana. The food for the mana is worldly pleasure and convenience. Now, it is up to you to increase the nutrition of the one you wish to strengthen. Give one wrestler a diet of almond *halwa* (a rich sweet dish) and the other a diet of spinach, and let them fight it out after one month! Which warrior will win? The one who has feasted on almonds, of course! Now, think for yourself, how much nourishment you are giving to your mana and how much to your buddhi.

Satsang, sadhana, and unselfish service – not service rendered for any worldly benefit – nourish the buddhi. And, what nourishes the mana? To get good clothes good food, a good mobile, a good T.V., a good watch – all the aids to

worldly pleasures are food for the mana. So, Maharaj, see for yourself which one you are feeding. That is the one who will win in this tug-of-war.

Bhojrajji's family was, after all, a family of refinement, culture and nobility. He had lofty inclinations. His decision was guided by his buddhi. He decided to be a friend to Meerabai, if she gave her consent to this marriage. He would not impose upon her in any way.

Meera, too, had to take a decision, since Dudaji was no longer there for her. Her engagement was done. Wedding preparations were completed. The barat arrived. And, do you know on which day Meerabai's marriage took place? It was on the *akshay tritiya* – the third day of the lunar month of Vaishakh, which is considered extremely auspicious. It is on this date that people are allowed to get a darshan of the feet of Banke Bihari. Meerabai's barat came on this auspicious day.

One more incident took place. Giridhar Nagar is unique! In the night that came between the *dvitiya* (second date) and *tritiya*, Giridhar Gopal came to Meera in a dream. And, in what form did He come? He came dressed as a *dulha*! What a *jeevan* Meerabai's was! What *karunaa* (compassion) Bhagwan showered!

'Meera, don't be worried,' said Thakurji. 'There will be no second marriage. You will see that your cherished desire will be fulfilled. The ashirvad given by Sant Raidas and Baba Biharidas will be fulfilled. Your first marriage will be with Me, according to the *vidhi-vidhaana* (rules and rituals of the Shastras).'

Giridhar Gopal arrived as the *dukha*. And, it is not that Thakurji came only as a dream or a *bhava*. It cannot be called wholly a dream, because early morning Giridhar Gopal was in Shyam Kunj, in the form of a *vigraha*, but Meera's room was full of all kinds of gifts that are normally sent to the bride by her in-laws. There was a great deal of jewelry, made of gold, pearls and diamonds. There were beautiful rich garments and all kinds of other things for her use. All this was found in Meera's bedroom, when people woke up on *akshay tritiya*.

Meera's dream broke early morning. She did not want the dream to break! 'The barat has people of Dwarka and people from Vraja. Bhagwan Shri Krishna is the *dulha*!' she dreamt. And, Bhagwan Shri Krishna loves to be the *dulha*! The Bhagwan Meera had loved since early childhood was always dressed like a

dulha! It is written in the Bhagwat – *varhaapeedam natavaravapuh karnayoh karnikaaram* – Shri Krishna came wearing a peacock feather on His head and karnika flowers on His ears. The Lord came as the greatest dancer.

Bhagwan Shri Krishna is always dressed as a dukha! Who knows which bhakta will call out any moment, asking Him to come and be wedded to them? According to the Bhagwat Shri Krishna was married to sixteen thousand one hundred and eight wives! Maharajji used to joke that these were the wives everybody knows about; who knows how many more there were! Meerabai's marriage is not among them; nor is the gopis'.

Bhagwan accepts some through the medium of bhava, and some through the medium of dreams. Whichever bhava a bhakta calls Him with, He comes. The first night of akshay tritiya was the golden day of Meerabai's life. Her marriage with Giridhar Nagar was accomplished that night. Meera was full of joy. When she woke early the next morning, her sakhis – Mangala, Champa and Mithula – saw the huge array of gifts in Meera's room.

Some people were asking me how I can remember all these names. I told them that this is my job – to remember and narrate!

So, the sakhis saw the lavish gifts that are sent for the bride by her in-laws. They saw the *sindoora* (vermilion applied to the center parting of the bride's hair, by the bridegroom at the time of the marriage ceremony) in Meera's hair. They saw that *mehndi* (henna) had been applied on her hands. Tears of prema came into their eyes. They had served her for years and loved her dearly. They understood who had put the sindur on Meera's maang, and who would have put mehndi on her hands. Had any professional woman come to apply the mehndi? 'You are *dhanya* (worthy of all praise), Gopal! You can even put mehndi on a person who calls You! You can put sindur on their maang! You can get married to her!'

This is Bhagwan's swarup. This is Shri Krishna's swarup. Now, even after this, if people say that Bhagwan doesn't do kripa on us, and He doesn't come to meet us, what is anyone to say? Meerabai was filled with happiness because the marriage had been done.

Bhojrajji came with a huge barat. All kinds of gifts came for Meerabai. Everything was done with great zeal. Only two people knew their secret – Meerabai and Bhojraj. See Bhagwan's kripa and karuna! This is another form of His kripa. Bhojraj had told Meera from before, 'Meera, don't worry. Your family members want you to marry me, isn't it? You are not to worry about anything. I will stay as your shield and protect you. I will stay as your sevak. This social bondage is merely a formality.' This was the promise Bhojraj had made to Meera before the wedding.

When it was time for the *fe'raa* (when the bridal couple go round the sacred fire) there was a dilemma. Should the feras be done with Bhojraj, or with Giridhar Gopal? Meera was Meera, after all! She did the feras holding Giridhar Gopal. As the pundits directed, sometimes Meera was in front as they went round, and sometimes Bhojraj was in front, but Giridhar Gopal was always held close by Meerabai.

Bhojraj's younger brother was Ratansingh. This was also the name of Meera's father. The one who gave trouble to Meera was Vikramaditya. It was he who troubled her most, after Bhojraj's death.

Meerabai's wedding with Bhojraj was done lavishly and zealously. Her mother and father were both very happy, because Meera had consented to what they wanted. Nobody except Giridhar Gopal knew about the understanding between Meera and Bhojraj. This is Bhagwan's kripa! Many people say, 'How could Meera do this?' Oh, it was not Meera who did anything; it was Thakurji who got everything done! Thakurji changed Bhojraj's buddhi, to be the kind of husband Meera wanted, and gave Meera the kind of seva she wanted. Thakurji sent her the *vara* (husband) suited to her needs. The barat returned to Chittod with Meera.

When Meerabai arrived at Chittod she was welcomed with all the rituals and elaborate customs of welcoming a Royal bride. Meerabai sat down, placing Giridhar Gopal next to her, and Bhojraj sat beside Him. Ratansingh told Bhojraj to move closer to Meerabai, as the puja of the bridal couple was to be done. Bhojraj said, 'I am sitting next to her; how much closer am I to sit?'

Ratansingh said jokingly, 'This Thakurji is sitting between Meerabai and you! Are you her pati or is He?'

Bhojraj said, as though jokingly, 'Her pati is Thakurji, of course! I am merely her *totakaa* (an earthen pot kept to ward off evil)!' This reply is written in the books on Meerabai. 'Her real pati is Thakurji; I am just sitting in the form of her pati.' Ratansingh did not understand the truth of this statement. He thought Bhojraj was joking, the way people crack jokes at weddings. The words were true, however. Bhojrajji had promised Meerabai, 'I will help you in every kind of seva. I will not touch you without your permission.' What leela Thakurji does! If He can inspire a person like Bhojrajji, what can't He do? The wedding celebrations extended over several days, after which Meera went back to her routine of offering bhoga to Giridhar Gopal, making Him bathe, dressing Him up, making Him go to bed on time, singing and dancing before Him, etc.

In due course, Meerabai's *nanad* (husband's sister) Udhabai, and *saasa* (mother-in-law) came to know that although Meerabai claimed that she did not know singing and dancing whenever there was a social function at home, she sang and danced beautifully before the *vigraha* of Giridhar Gopal. The ladies of the family tried repeatedly to persuade her to participate in the singing and dancing at family functions, but she always excused herself.

Udhabai and her mother began to resent this. This is a very old phenomenon – the problems created by the *saas* and *nanad*; it is not just a problem in these times! Sometimes, it is the *bahu* (daughter-in-law) who is the problem. I ask the ladies present not to feel offended by what I'm saying. It was here, in Delhi, that someone asked me, years ago, 'Swamiji, do you know the meaning of the word "saas"?'

I told her, 'I don't know. You tell me.'

She said, 'A *saas* is one who won't let the *bahu* take *saansa* (breath)!' She meant that a mother-in-law never lets the daughter-in-law sit in peace! That doesn't mean that all mothers-in-law are troublesome; some of them are very caring.

However, for Meera it was a very real problem. Her husband was happy with her. He cooperated with her in her seva of Giridhar Gopal in every way. Then, why should anyone else mind? Ratansingh and Vikramaditya both resented Meerabai's behavior. Fortunately, Rana Sanga had no objection whatsoever. He was Bhojraj's father, and a great bhakta of Bhagwan. He had said that

Meera had done the uddhar of the Rathod family of Medata up to now, and now she would do the uddhar of the Sisodia family of Chittod. This was the bhava Rana Sanga had.

Wonderful leelas came into Meerabai's life at times. Bhojraj was amazed to see them. One day, Meerabai was singing bhajans before Giridhar Gopal. She became so lost that she became oblivious of everything. She was about to fall from the balcony of the palace. What was Bhojraj to do? He was confused. He had given his word to Meera that he would not touch her without her permission. Unless he prevented her, she would fall from the balcony; she could even be killed by the fall. Bhojraj faced an inner struggle. Meera was in a trance – he could not stop her by calling out. Nor could he ask her permission to catch her!

Meera was in a trance. Bhagwan had come to meet her, and now He was leaving. Meera could not bear the thought of His going – she wanted to follow Him. She fainted. She was on the edge of the balcony. The parapet was very low. She was on the verge of falling when Bhojraj caught her. He lifted her in his arms and carried her to her room, and lay her down on her bed. Mangala and Champa had come to Chittod with Meera. He asked them to start doing sankirtan.

Do you know what Bhojraj said, when Meerabai regained consciousness? He said, 'Meera, today I touched you without your permission. Please forgive me.'

'What are you saying?' asked Meerabai. 'You did not touch me intentionally; you did it out of helplessness. Thakurji purposely arranged for you to get married to me. He has tied us in a matrimonial bond. For you, there is no *maryaadaa* (boundaries of decorum). Please don't worry.'

'Meera,' said Bhojraj, 'I feel that because of your karuna-kripa I will get uddhar.'

Meerabai was embarrassed. 'No-no! Don't say that! I should be doing your seva. I feel embarrassed that I get so immersed in Giridhar's seva that I am unable to do your seva. Please tell me what I should do.'

Bhojraj asked Meerabai, 'Meera, is Bhagwan *nirguna-niraakaara* (without attributes – without form), or is He *saguna – saakaara* (with attributes – with

form)?' He accepted Meera as his Guru. He wanted to place his head at her feet, but she stopped him. 'No-no! Please don't do that! I will gladly tell you everything I know.'

'Then tell me, is Bhagwan nirguna-nirakara or is He saguna-sakara?'

'He is both, Maharaj. He is nirguna-nirakara as well as saguna-sakara. Nirguna-nirakara is like water, and saguna-sakara is like ice.' She explained the matter in such simple terms! It immediately removed all confusion between Bhagwan's nirguna-nirakara and saguna-sakara forms. Water has no attributes or form, but it can be frozen in containers of different shapes and it becomes a square or round block of ice. However, is the ice separate from the water? It is water that has acquired a form. The water is formed according to the *bhava* of the person who puts it into a container of his choice.

Meerabai said, 'When a premi bhakta moulds the shape in his *hriday*, and wants to bring Bhagwan in that form, the nirguna-nirakara Paramatma takes on the form created in the *hriday* of the bhakta and comes. He becomes saguna-sakara.'

These answers are so simple because they are the answers given by her personal experience. The answers given in our Shastras are very difficult. What is the nirguna-nirakara? What is the saguna-sakara? That, which is attached to *maayaa* (the Ishwara's power of illusion) and *avidyaa* (nescience; believing the transient to be the *Satya*) is saguna-sakara. You all read the technical language of the Shastras and a host of other books on Vedanta, but the example of water and ice is so simple that it can be grasped by anyone.

Bhojraj asked another question. 'Meera, have you ever had Thakurji's darshan?' This is the influence of association. It is the same Prince who was renowned for his valor and skills as a warrior. Because of associating with Meerabai he was now colored in the hues of bhakti. He asked Meerabai, 'Have you ever got the darshan of Thakurji?'

Meerabai became grave. She asked, 'Should I reply to your question of whether I have ever had Thakurji's darshan, or should I tell you how many times I have had His darshan? If someone has a true desire for Thakurji, it is not possible that He doesn't come! His *kripa* is infinite! This Giridhar Gopal

came to me on His own. He has come to me many times in my dreams, and He has come many times in my bhava-rajya.'

Then Meera told Bhojraj about that incident.

Meera was very wise. She was also a bhakta of Bhagwan. She had brought with her the jewelry Bhagwan had given her at the time of her marriage. She also had the jewelry given by Bhojraj's family. Meera told Bhojraj, 'Giridhar Gopal married me the night before our marriage ceremony. He gave me many gifts.'

'In a dream?' asked Bhojraj.

'I cannot say whether I was dreaming or awake, because I could not see Him later. If I say it was a dream – where did all these things come from?'

'Oh, so many items came for you? Show them to me.'

Bhojraj began to look at all the things Thakurji had given Meera. The gifts given by the Chittod family seemed poor beside the ones given by Giridhar Gopal. Bhojraj felt a deep happiness. He was deeply moved. Again, he tried to bow down at Meera's feet, but she stopped him. 'You are not to do this!' she said. 'Even if it is a superficial maryada, Bhagwan has sent you as my pati. You must not bow down to me.'

After some time Bhojraj went out on a battle and was badly wounded. Rana Sanga died, due to causes that do not concern us. These were matters of the Rajputs, and we are in the stream of bhakti. Meera nursed Bhojraj herself. When he sensed that his time was up, he asked Meera something. You could say he prayed to her for something.

Before that, he called his younger brother Ratansingh. 'It seems to me that this body will not linger long. I want you to be careful that Meera faces no discomfort. Look after her in every way. Serve her to the best of your ability.'

Then Bhojraj told Meerabai, 'Meera, will my life end without my getting Bhagwan's darshan? You were given His darshan so many times; won't you plead with Him for me? Won't you pray to Him even once, for my sake?'

Meera had been engrossed in his seva up to this time. She became grave when she heard these words. She picked up her ektara and sat before Thakurji.

‘Prabhu, he has never asked me for anything in his life, He has always helped me. Now, please hear my prayer, please give him Your darshan before he leaves his body.’

Meera’s bhajan ended. A wonderful light filled the room. Bhojraj was lying on his bed, wide awake. In the center of the light Bhojraj saw a vigraha manifest. He was a rich dark blue, like sapphire. Thakurji was smiling at Bhojraj.

Boliye` bhaktavatsala bhagavaana kee jai!

Thakurji looked smilingly at Bhojraj. ‘Maharaj, you have done Meera’s seva.’ Just see Bhagwan’s svabhava! He said, ‘That seva was not Meera’s seva; it was My seva. You have pleased Me by doing her seva, Bhojraj. That is why I came before you immediately, when Meera asked Me to come. You are to come to Mydhaam. There is no question of your going anywhere else.’

Bhagwan put His hand on Bhojraj’s head. Meerabai was singing a bhajan, and Bhojraj gave up his mortal body and went to Goloka – the realm of Shri Krishna.

Meerabai was not particularly distressed by the death of Bhojrajji. Her in-laws had been displeased by her bhajan-sankirtan, as it is. Meerabai did her duty in all the rituals that followed, but showed no signs of grief. The people of Chittod were very upset. ‘Our Prince has gone – her pati has gone – and she does not even cry! What kind of a *bahu* (daughter-in-law) has Bhagwan sent to us?’ they said.

They began to make plans to harass Meerabai. However, why should we begin talking about that today? I had thought, earlier, that I would finish this topic today, but now one more day will pass before we come to Meerabai’s jeevan in Vrindavan and Dwarka. Hers was a beautiful jeevan. It should be heard and emulated. We will complete it in the next three days.

Yesterday I told you how bhaktimati Meera's marriage with Bhojraj was done, and how she accepted him so that he could protect her. He gave full support to Meerabai as long as he lived. Thanks to Meera, Bhojraj got Bhagwan's darshan before he died. This is why it is said that if there is one bhakta in a family, Bhagwan gives uddhar to twenty one generations of that family. That means, ten previous generations, and ten future generations, and the generation of the bhakta.

So, if a son of yours becomes a bhakta of Bhagwan, twenty one generations of your family will benefit. This is written in the Bhagwat. Is it a profitable deal or is it a bad bargain? Well? Will you make your son a Babaji now? I know you won't give any answer, you will laugh! And, if I persist, you will tell me, 'Babaji, there is no room in our house for you to eat here!'

This is the *pratignaa* (vow) Bhagwan made to Prahlad. 'Prahlad, I bestow uddhar on twenty one generations of the family that has a bhakta like you. I do this unconditionally.' So, tell me, isn't it an advantageous bargain? And tell me, should it be done or not? It should be done, but people won't do it. They will not teach Sanskrit to their children. They won't let their children go on the path of Mahatmas. If some youngsters get attached to the path to Bhagwan, they will do everything they can to prevent it. 'Is this any age for spending time with Mahatmas?' they say.

Oh, if they don't go now, do you think they will go in their old age? Nothing new is undertaken in old age. Only those who have done Satsang when they are still young avail of it when they become old. This is Bhagwan's Maya. He has created this world, and He also knows how to run it! It is only from pravachans that a person gets to understand these things. However, how would the world go on, if everybody went on the path of bhakti? Everyone is nodding in agreement! However, 'tvadeeyam vastu govinda tubhyame`va samarpaye` (I offer up to You, Govind, that which is Yours). I am offering up your own subject – of worldly considerations – to you. It does not apply to our house (the Sants)! Bhagwan's Maya is very hard to overcome.

Bhojrajji obtained Bhagwan's darshan through Meerabai's intervention, and he went to Bhagwan's dhaam. Ratansingh became the King after him, and then

Vikramaditya after him. Both Vikramaditya and Udhabai disapproved of Meerabai's bhajan and devotion to Giridhar Gopal. They would carry gossip about her to Meerabai's saas. There was an incident that upset these people even more.

There was a city called Saharanpur, somewhere near Bhilwada. It was ruled by a Nawab. He heard about Meerabai's great bhakti. He came to Chittod disguised as a Hindu. He saw how she lived. When he heard her sing bhajans with her ektara, he was so moved that he placed a fabulous diamond necklace at her feet.

'There is no need for this,' said Meerabai. 'Thakurji does not want diamonds and jewelry. He wants the bhava of your hriday. Please take back this necklace.'

'This is the bhava of my hriday,' pleaded the Nawab. 'Please do kripa on me and accept it. The bhava of the hriday has to be expressed through some object, isn't it?' Seeing his deep sincerity, Meerabai did not have the heart to reject his offering to Bhagwan.

Many people say, 'I have a lot of bhava for Bhagwan.' If you have a lot of bhava, how does it manifest? Are you doing anything for Bhagwan? Are you getting a Mandir made for Him? Are you getting a *poshaaka* (dress) made for Him? Do you offer bhoga to Him? You say the bhava is there in your hriday, but are you doing anything that will please Him?

Bhagwan is hungry for bhava, but there is another hunger in you. To say that Bhagwan wants only bhava is to be clever in evading your own responsibility to make some offering. Bhagwan will be satisfied with your bhava if you truly have nothing else to offer, but if you have the means to make some offering and yet offer nothing, how will the bhava in your hriday be revealed? The fact is, when a person has love for someone, how can he stop himself from offering some object or seva?

The Nawab pleaded, 'My hriday will not accept my not offering anything. Please do not reject this offering.' After such repeated urges, Meerabai gave in. 'Very well. Keep it at the feet of Giridhar Gopal. I have no need for it.'

Udhabai went and reported this to Vikramaditya. 'All the maryada of our Royal lineage was destroyed today!' she said heatedly. 'Up to now it was one thing; Meerabai sang bhajans with the Sadhus. She also danced before Thakurji. Today, however, she accepted a fabulous diamond necklace from a Muslim Nawab!'

A matter can be presented in many ways. The word for malicious gossip-mongers in Sanskrit is *soochaka*! The job of the soochakas is to talk about one person to another to make mischief. They take no fees for this work; they take great pleasure in it, especially when it results in misunderstandings and quarrels. The people who listen to gossip derive equal pleasure. They may not listen to the Katha with so much interest, but when it comes to listening to some gossip about a neighbor, they even forget hunger and thirst! Neither heat nor cold affects them. They ask, with great interest, 'What happened after that?'

Such things happen to all bhaktas. Why does it happen? It is because Bhagwan wants to show the true face of this *sansaara* (interactive world) to His bhaktas. The hriday of bhaktas is very tender. They believe others to be as clean-hearted as themselves. So, Bhagwan alerts them once in a while. 'O Bhaktaraj! Stay in the world, but stay as belonging to Me. Don't stay in the world as belonging to the world, because this world will never belong to anybody.' Bhagwan keeps showing this truth to His bhaktas. He alerts His bhaktas through the medium of such incidents.

Meerabai's prarabdhas were not the cause of her facing such misfortunes. Her previous birth was that of Madhvi sakhi, who was a bhakta of Bhagwan. And in this life, Meera was His bhakta from the very beginning. Therefore, she did not have any prarabdha that would give dukha to her.

It is written in the Bhagwat that dukha has two causes. One is prarabdha – the fruits of deeds done in the previous birth – and the other is Bhagwan's kripa. How can we tell which dukha is due to prarabdha and which due to Bhagwan's kripa? The answer is, if the dukha results in the person getting caught in the sansara, you can take it that it is caused by prarabdha. And if the dukha results in the person turning away from the sansara, and going on the path to Bhagwan, you can take it that Bhagwan has sent it as His kripa; it is not dukha

caused by prarabdha. Such dukhas do come in life. The bhaktas who are present will also have experienced it.

Vikramaditya was told by Udhabai, 'Maharaj, Meerabai has accepted a diamond necklace from a Mussalman! This has stained the honor of our Royal family, and of Chittod!'

If you look at it from a worldly viewpoint, what Udhabai said is quite true. This is the viewpoint of worldly people. What can we do about it? Vikramaditya thought. 'It has become necessary to do something drastic now.' He called the Raj Vaidya (the Court physician). 'I want a *visha* (poison) that is so deadly that even two drops of it on the tongue will cause instant death,' he said. Vaidyas have detailed knowledge about *visha* and *amrita* (nectar). The Vaidya brought a very potent poison and gave it to Vikramaditya. Vikramaditya sent it to Meerabai, through a Brahmin called Dayaram Panda. The Vaidya had reiterated to Vikramaditya that just two drops of the poison were fatal to anyone who drank it. 'There is much more than two drops in the phial. There is no chance that any person can live after taking two drops of this poison.'

Dayananda Panda was not told that what he was carrying was deadly poison. He was told, 'this is the *charanaamrita* (water with which the feet of Bhagwan's vigraha have been washed) of Jagannath Bhagwan.' When he went to Meerabai's apartments, he found her with Mangala, Champa and other sevikas. Ever since Bhojraj's death they had been very watchful that no harm should come to Meerabai. They knew that the Royal family was against her, and may plot against her at any time.

Champa told Meerabai not to drink the liquid. 'It does not look at all like charanamrita,' she said. 'Please examine it carefully.' Meerabai smiled. 'Champa,' she said, 'you become suspicious whenever anything comes from the Royal family. Why don't you have faith in my Giridhar Gopal? Since His name is attached to the liquid, it has become charanamrita for me, even if it is not really charanamrita. Don't be worried.'

Udhabai was standing at the back of the room, watching everything. It was she who had gone and complained to Vikramaditya. She was waiting to see what Meerabai would do. Meerabai poured the poison into a small bowl, and placed it before Giridhar Gopal. She said, 'Prabhu, this has come to me as

Yourcharanamrita. Whatever it may be, You know best.' Saying this, she began to drink the poison. She drank the whole bowl. What an amazing thing! Udhabai saw that nothing had happened to Meerabai!

Udhabai suspected that some mistake had been made somewhere. She did not feel that this was Bhagwan's power, that He could turn poison into nectar, and nectar into poison! This is called 'kartum akartum anyatha kartum', but how would Udhabai understand this? She thought that maybe the Raj Vaidya had played a trick. She went to Vikramaditya and said, 'Bhabhi drank the liquid with great pleasure. Then she danced before Thakurji and sang bhajans.'

Vikramaditya was furious. He sent for the Raj Vaidya. 'Treachery with me? You had said that two drops are enough to cause death, but the person did not die in spite of drinking the full bottle! What kind of poison did you give?'

The Vaidya said, 'Maharaj, it could be some *daivee shakti*(divine power), because the poison I gave was absolutely genuine. It was deadly. I have no doubt about this.'

Vikramaditya was in a rage. When a person is in a rage it is impossible to guess what he will do. Vikramaditya told the Vaidya, 'There are two drops left in the cup. If what you say is true, drink them and show me!' He never paused to think that Vaidyaji would die if he drank the poison! He could have had it tested on a bird or dog, the way the food of important people is tested these days.

Please don't take this in the wrong spirit. Earlier, people offered bhoga to Bhagwan, and then ate the food as Prasad. And, who is food offered to first these days? It is given to a dog! I found out about this when the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Vishnukant Shastri came to our Ashram at Vrindavan. He was a very noble Mahapurusha. He used to come to visit Maharajji. When his food came, his Security-In-Charge said, 'We will feed some of it to a dog first.' Vishnukantji rebuked him. 'This is an ashram! It is the place of my Guruji! There is no need for you to check the food here! Please wait outside the ashram.'

When we asked what the problem was, we were told that this is the rule for all important people. You people would know whether this is true or not! Thus,

earlier, people offered food to Bhagwan before eating, and now, see the state of our Bharatiya Sanskriti (Indian culture)!

Had Vikramaditya been more level-headed, he would not have made the Raj Vaidya drink the poison; he would have tested it on some animal. However, he was in a blind rage. He told Vaidyaji, 'You drink it and see! You have deceived me!' Vaidyaji was greatly distressed. He knew that he would die if he drank the two drops. He pleaded with Virkamaditya, but in vain. People become obstinate and unreasonable then they lose their temper. What was he to do? It was the command of his King.

As soon as Vaidyaji drank the two drops, he fell down dead. His family members began to weep. Udhabai saw both incidents. Before reading this book, I was under the impression that Udhabai had been against Meerabai all her life, but it is written in Meerabai's biography that she became favorable to Meera after this incident.

Udhabai had been witness to both incidents – she saw Meerabai drink the poison and live, and she saw Vaidyaji drink it and die. She advised his family, 'If you want Vaidyaji to be brought back to life, take his body to Meerabai.' And, do you know what happened when they did so? Meerabai prayed to Giridhar Gopal, 'Giridhar Gopal, so many people will suffer if Vaidyaji leaves this world. If You want to take him, please take me instead. Please summon me to Your feet Giridhar Gopal. Please give life back to Vaidyaji.'

The kirtan was going on. Nobody noticed when Vaidyaji came back to life and sat up. Udhabai saw this. She was filled with wonder. After this incident her whole attitude towards Meerabai changed. She became completely favorable. This is the power of bhakti! If we are true to Bhagwan, if we have true bhakti, and if our adversary genuinely believes that he is justified in opposing us – provided he does not resort to unscrupulous plotting – even our opponent will become a bhakta.

Perhaps you have heard about this incident. There is a magazine called 'Sarita' that is inclined to be critical of Sant-Mahatmas and the Sanatan Dharma. They once printed something against my Gurudev, Pujya Swami Akhandanandji Maharaj. When the learned scholars of Vrindavan saw this, they came to Shri Maharajji in a deputation. 'Maharajji, how can they print such things about

you? We wish to take legal action against this magazine. We will file a defamation suit.'

Do you know what Maharajji said? He said, 'Do the case later on. It doesn't matter what they have written. Just tell me, have they given my name and address correctly or not.' See the viewpoint of the Mahapurushas! The people confirmed that the name and address given were correct. 'Then, don't file any case,' said Maharajji. 'There is no need to start a dispute.'

'What will be achieved, then?'

'People who are not my bhaktas will also read the article. They will want to find out about this Mahatma called Swami Akhandananda who lives in Vrindavan, about whom such things are written. They will say, "Let us go and see what this Babaji is like." The *naastika* (atheists) will also read the article and come to find out about me. Once they come, they will not remain antagonistic; they will go back as my bhaktas. Thus, Sarita is doing my propaganda. There is no need to react.'

Where there is *sachaayee* (righteousness) there is no fear. As they say, '*jaadoo to vah jo sira chadakara bole*' – magic is that which leaves us enthralled!

When this aspect of Meerabai was revealed, Vikramaditya was even more enraged. He made another attempt to kill Meerabai. He had a trapped lion brought in a cage, and placed the cage at the entrance to Meerabai's apartments. The door of the cage opened to the door of Meerabai's rooms. Meerabai was in her puja room. The lion stood at the door and roared. I had not known of this incident before I read Meerabai's biography. The sevikas were petrified when they saw the lion. But Meerabai felt no fear. 'Only the skin is that of a lion,' she said. 'The one inside is my Thakurji.' This is the *nishtha* of bhakti!

Meerabai said, 'Champa, Mangala, don't be afraid. Nrisimha Bhagwan also came in the form of a lion. Get the items of puja. My Giridhar Gopal has come to my house in the form of Nrisimha today!' She did puja of the lion. He accepted her puja and licked her feet affectionately. Then he bowed down to her and went out of the room. Once outside Meerabai's rooms, he reverted to

the ferocious nature of a lion. He killed the men who had captured him and escaped to the forest.

Vikramaditya felt that this was some power of magic that Meera possessed that enabled her to control the lion. She even did puja of the lion! Udhabai understood that it was Bhagwan's shakti that was in Meerabai, but Vikramaditya was not able to understand this. He continued to try to find new ways by which Meerabai could be destroyed.

One day, the *daasee* (maid servants) informed Vikramaditya, 'It seems there is a man in Meerabai's room. We have heard voices and laughter.' Vikramaditya thought that this was the perfect opportunity to catch Meerabai red handed. He ran to her room with a naked sword in his hand. The room was locked from inside. Meerabai's sevikas were waiting outside. Vikramaditya kicked at the door. He shouted for it to be opened at once.

Meerabai called from inside, 'Who is it?'

'Your *kaala* (death) is at the door! Open the door immediately!'

Meerabai opened the door. Seeing Vikramaditya with a naked sword in his hand, she asked, 'Lalji (he was her younger brother-in-law), has anything happened? What brings you here so late at night with your sword in your hand? Have you just been woken?'

Not bothering to explain, Vikramaditya said, 'I will show you!' He began to search the room. 'Was there a man in your room?' he asked.

'Yes, there was,' she answered.

'Voices were heard,' he said, 'and sounds of laughter!'

'Yes, someone was with me. He was getting ready to go to sleep when you came. He went away because you came – I don't know where He went.'

When Meerabai said this, Vikramaditya felt certain that there had been some man enclosed with Meerabai. Meerabai realized that Vikramaditya had jumped to the wrong conclusion. She said, 'Lalji, the man who was here cannot be obtained by the power of the sword; He is obtained by the power of kartal and

bhajan. No matter how thoroughly you search for Him with the strength of your sword, you will not find Him.'

Vikramaditya looked everywhere, but how could he have found the One who was with Meerabai? His whole approach was wrong! What was he to do? He went back to his own rooms fuming with anger.

Meerabai picked up her kartal and began to sing a bhajan. It is a beautiful bhajan, very well known – I am sure you have all heard it. The bhajans attached to the incidents in Meerabais' life are very moving.

Paga ghungharu baandha meeraa naachee re`;

(Meera danced with dancers' belled anklets tied to her feet),

mein to apane` naaraayana kee aapa hee ho gayi daasee re`.

(I myself became the servant of my Narayana.)

Paga ghungharu.....

Loga kahe` meeraa bhayee baanvaree,

(People say that Meera has become mad,)

saasa kahe` kula-naasee re`.

(her saas says that she is destroying the lineage.)

Paga ghungharu.....

Jahara kaa pyaala raanaa ne` bhe`jaa,

(The King sent a bowl of poison,)

peevata meeraa haansee re`.

(Meera smiled as she drank it.)

Paga ghumgharu.....

Meeraa ke` prabhu giridhara naagara sahaja mile` avinaashee re`.

(Meera's Prabhu is Giridhar Nagar, who met her naturally. He is eternal.)

Paga ghungharu

In spite of living in such adverse circumstances Meera experienced Bhagwan's proximity. This was the source of her anand. Her enemy sent a lion, and she said, 'Nrisimha Bhagwan has come.' They sent poison, and she accepted it as Bhagwan's charanamrita. When Vikramaditya came himself, Meera was doing leela with Thakurji. She was playing with Him. She was so full of joy that even Vikramaditya's drawn sword could not mar her happiness.

You would have experienced this for yourself – when you mana is happy and tranquil, it does not get effected by hurtful comments. On the other hand, if you are already irritated you react sharply to the slightest adverse comment. This is the power of the mana. Why wasn't Meerabai's mana affected in spite of so many adverse incidents? It is because her mana was always with Giridhar Gopal.

Vikramaditya made another attempt to kill Meerabai. All his attempts were made to put an end to her life. His fourth attempt was to send two deadly cobras to her. All of you probably know of this incident. Meerabai's biography is indeed beautiful to read. That is why Dudaji had told Ratansinghji and Viramdevji, 'People will forget the stories of your valor, but the story of Meerabai's bhakti will never be forgotten.'

Vikramaditya sent Meerabai a box with snakes in it. The message sent with it was that it contained Shaligram Bhagwan (a round stone worshipped as Bhagwan Vishnu), and a garland for Meerabai. The box was very heavy – at least ten kilos. The sevika who brought it thought, 'Shaligram Bhagwan can't be so heavy; neither can a garland weigh so much.' When she wanted to lower the box from her head, she found it very difficult. The cobras inside were full grown and very heavy.

Meerabai's sevikas, Champa, Mangala and others were always suspicious whenever anything came from the Royal family. When they saw the difficulty the sevika faced when lowering the box from her head, they guessed that it could not contain only Shaligram Bhagwan and a garland. They suspected foul play. They looked at the box carefully. It was just like the boxes used by snake charmers for keeping snakes in. It was made of bamboo cane through which snakes could neither bite nor escape. Champa made a sign to Meerabai and

said, 'Bai, don't open this hastily. I suspect that it does not contain Shaligram Bhagwan; it contains something else.' 'Why are you always afraid, Champa?' asked Meerabai. 'Don't you know my Giridhar Gopal? Don't you know His power? The person who has sent this, sent it with the message that Shaligram Bhagwan is in this box. He has come here to us. You mustn't worry. If Meera opens it, He will come out in the form of Shaligram Bhagwan.'

A lady called Shyam Kuvaribai was with them. She was a family member, and she was very fond of Meerabai. She told Meerabai, 'You please don't open the box. Let me open it.' As soon as she opened the box, two large cobras raised their heads. Some of the sevikas fainted and some began to scream and shout for help. However, it had no effect on Meerabai's *chitta* (mental inclinations).

We people think we are great bhaktas and gnanis. The test comes when we face a crisis. If we see a snake – oh, forget a snake! If children from affluent families see even a cockroach or a lizard in the bathroom, there is a great hue and cry! I remember an amusing incident. A girl, who was graduating in the U.S. saw a cockroach in the bathroom and phoned her father in India. 'Please stay on the line till it gets out of the bathroom,' she pleaded. Oh, even if he stayed on the line, what could a man in India do to protect her from a cockroach in America? Cockroaches don't bite. They can easily be swept away or picked up with a piece of cloth and thrown out. The behavior of such youngsters is laughable!

It is in a crisis that we come to know how much nishtha a person has. It is very easy to say, 'I am the Brahman; I am not the *de'ha* (body)', but when confronted with a snake, does the person have *brahma-bhaava* (feeling of being the Brahman) or *de'ha-bhaava* (feeling of being the body)? Well? We have to run away! We feel scared. The body begins to shake in fear. This is *deha-bhava*. Like Prahlad, Meerabai saw Bhagwan's presence in all beings. Not only did they see Bhagwan's presence in all beings, they demonstrated it with by the strength of their faith.

The fact it, they were snakes; there was no Shaligram, and no garland. The sevikas lay unconscious. It is written in Meerabai's biography that one snake glided towards Meerabai and coiled itself round her neck like a garland. It turned into a garland. The other snake lay inside the box with its hood raised. It

turned into a Shaligram. When this leela was done, Meerabai woke the sevikas. 'Get up. There are no snakes here. There is Shaligram and a garland. Get the items for His puja.' Then the puja of the Shaligram was done.

The soochakas were watching all that was happening. They saw one cobra turn into a garland and the other into a Shaligram. These incidents in Meerabai's life are more appealing because they happened in the Kali Yuga. They are not stories about the Dwapar, Treta, or Satya Yuga. Meerabai was born in times known to us, in Medata, in Rajasthan. These incidents have been recorded.

When this news reached Vikramaditya he was beside himself with anger. He decided to kill her himself. He took up his sword and went to her rooms. He attacked her with his sword. Do you know what leela Bhagwan did? Every time Vikramaditya thrust his sword at Meerabai, it passed through her body as though passing through air. Meerabai's body became divine. Vikramaditya struck at her repeatedly, but not a single drop of blood was spilled, not a scratch on her body!

Another leela took place after this. Vikramaditya stood before Meera in helpless fury. He saw two Meeras standing before him. Which was real and which an illusion? He looked to his right and saw two Meeras to his right. He looked to his left and saw two Meeras. He looked behind and saw two Meeras behind. Wherever he looked, he saw two Meeras! When Giridhar Gopal can assume multiple forms, He can certainly create multiple forms of His bhaktas, too!

Vikramaditya became nervous when he saw so many Meeras on all sides. He ran out with his sword.

And, do you know the comment he made? He did not say that Meera is bhaktimati, and Bhagwan has done great kripa on her that the blows of his sword could not cut her body. This is the characteristic of the Atma.

Nainam chhindanti shastraani nainam dahati paavakah.

(Gita 2. 23)

Bhagwan has explained the characteristics of the Atma in the second chapter of the Gita. The Atma can neither be cut by weapons nor burnt by fire. Water

cannot wet it, nor can air dry it. These characteristics of the Atma were seen in Meerabai's body, because the body had become divine. Vikramaditya could not understand that this is the divinity of bhakti. He went out of the room and told people, 'Meerabai is a magician. Just as a magician's body is not cut by a sword thrust through it, and he can assume different forms, Meera is also skilled in the arts of magic. Chittod must be saved from her. She knows how to mesmerize a lion, and control cobras. She can digest poison. Her body is untouched by the blows of a sword.'

Hearing about all this from her sevikas Meerabai felt that Vikramaditya's hatred had crossed all limits. When the adversity is at such an extreme level, it becomes an obstacle in doing bhajan. Just see Meerabai's *sahana-shakti* (power of endurance)!

People tell me, 'Maharaj, we do bhajan.' If you do bhajan, how much do you tolerate? If you keep quarreling with people over trifling matters, it shows that your bhajan-sadhan is very weak. How do you get the time for quarreling? If someone says something hurtful, let it enter through one ear and go out of the other. You remain occupied with your bhajan. He is just talking, isn't he? He is not beating you!

Meerabai was subjected to all this. If today's bhaktas had to face what the bhaktas of those times faced, they would start to quarrel with Bhagwan! 'I do japa of so many malas to please You, why should this happen to me?' If they do two malas a day, and they get fever one day, they will blame Bhagwan. 'I do two malas every day; why should I get fever?' Of, this is the *dharma* (essential nature) of the body. It comes to all beings.

It is written in Meerabai's biography that if you face a lot of opposition, and people are unable to understand your bhajan-pujan, you should not stay in that place for long. Meerabai decided she would not remain at Chittod. But where was she to go? She was a bahu of a Royal family. If she were to go and stay outside the palace it would damage the reputation of the family. Meerabai did not want to be the cause of sullying the name of the Royal family of Chittod.

Meerabai wrote a letter to Tulsidasji, and sent it with a Brahmin called Sukhram. Tulsidasji was living at Chitrakoot at that time, and she sent the letter

there. She wrote, 'My mana is attached to Thakurji's bhajan-pujan, but still, people continuously create obstacles for me. You are like my father, so please give me your advice.'

Meerabai was thirty years old when she wrote this letter. She had been married when she was fifteen or sixteen years old. Her husband had lived for four or five years after her marriage. The rest of her life was spent facing severe adversities created by her family. She endured many unfavorable events. When she could no longer endure their attacks, she wrote this letter to Sant Tulsidasji. 'You are like my father. Please tell me what I should do now.' Tulsidasji did not tell her to leave Chittod and live somewhere else. He wrote a pada in response to her letter. It is a beautiful pada.

Tulsidasji Maharaj was a Ramabhakta, so it is natural that he writes about his Ishta (chosen form of worship). When Tulsidasji Maharaj had gone to Vrindavan, the Goswami (priest) there had taunted him. 'Is there something lacking in Ramaji's durbar that you have come to Krishnaji's durbar?'

Even today you can see the place at Gnan Gudadi where Shri Krishna became Ramaji. Didn't He become Ramaji? Tell me! He did. Oh, my brother, Ramaji became Krishna, so what is so surprising if Krishnaji becomes Ramaji? The Goswami taunted Sant Tulsidasji, 'Is there some lacking in Ramaji's durbar that you have come to the durbar of our Shri Krishna?'

Tulsidasji had no feeling of the two being different, but when it became the question of nishtha, he told Shri Krishna:

*Kahaa kahoon chhabi aapa kee bhale` bane` ho naatha,
tulasi mastaka taba nave jaba dhanusha-baana lo haatha.*

'Your beauty is beyond description, Nath. You are my Prabhu, but these people have been sarcastic. They taunted me and challenged my nishtha. So, I will bow my head to You when You hide Your flute and hold a bow and arrow in Your hand.'

Shri Krishna's vighraha hid the flute, and a bow and arrow appeared in His hand. Tulsidasji bowed lovingly at His feet. This is a true incident in Tulsidasji's life.

Tulsidasji wrote a pada in response to Meerabai's letter. Listen to it carefully.

Jaa ke` priya na raama vaide`hee tajiye` taahi koti vairee sama yadyapi parama sane`hee.

If even the people are dear to you, give them up if they stop you from doing Bhagwan's bhajan.

Oh, what is that premi worth, if he places obstructions in your bhajan? It may be said, 'Maharaj, you have written this; it is very easy to write these things, but please give us some examples. Has anyone actually done this before? Has anyone cut off relations with their relatives who tried to interfere in their bhajan?' The answer is, 'I will tell you who all did it.'

Tajyo pitaa prahalaada, vibheeshana bandhu, bharata mahataaree.

Prahlad gave up his father, who wanted him to stop doing Bhagwan's bhajan. Vibhishan gave up his brother Ravana, because he placed obstacles in his worship of Ramaji. And Bharat gave up his mother because she was the cause of Ramaji being banished to the forest, resulting in the death of Dashrath.

Then Tulsidasji wrote about relationships that are even harder to break.

Bali guru tajyo, kanta vraja-banitana.

If you get a Guru who stops your bhajan saying, 'I am Bhagwan. There is no other Bhagwan' – there are such people, you know! I won't name them. So, if you get a Guru who hinders your bhajan of Bhagwan, give him up the way Bali gave up his Guru for stopping him from giving daan to Vaman Bhagwan. The gopis of Vrindavan wanted to go to Bhagwan Shri Krishna's Raas. Their husbands tried to stop them. They did not listen to their husbands. They went to Shri Krishna.

The question is raised, that when all these people flouted their close relatives for Bhagwan, was the result beneficial or was it harmful? Tulsidasji says: *Bhe` saba mangalakaaree* – each and every one of them benefited. Prahlad, Vibhishan, Bharatji, Bali and the gopis of Vraja all derived great benefits. They obtained Bhagwan.

Naato ne`ha raama ke` maniyata suhrida suse`vy a jahaan laun.

What a beautiful pada this is! If even one portion of it comes into our life, it will become the lifestyle of a bhakta! With whom is your *naataa* (relationship) and your *ne`ha* (affection)? Through whom should we interact in this world? We should live in this world with a relationship of Bhagwan. Whoever is Ramaji's is yours, and whoever isn't Ramaji's isn't yours either. Whoever is Krishnaji's is yours, and whoever is not Krishnaji's is not yours. What a lovely aphorism!

Anjana kahaa aankhi jehi foote` bahutaka kahaun kahaan laun?

Why should you put the *anajana* (lamp-black applied to the eyes) that harms the eye instead of being good for it? What more am I to say?

*Tulasee so saba bhaanti paramapriya suhrida praana se` pyaaro,
jaate` hoy a sane`ha raama pada e`to mato hamaaro.*

The person who takes you forward on the path to Bhagwan is your dearest friend, your brother, your mother and father, and Guru. This is my opinion.'

Tulsidasji wrote this pada and sent it to Meerabai. It is a famous pada, of great use to bhaktas.

Many people ask, 'What should we do, and what should we not do?' Oh, associate with those who help to enhance your bhakti! Do the activities that help bhakti to grow. Do everything that strengthens your prema for Bhagwan. Don't do anything that results in the reduction of your prema for Him. It is a very straightforward method. It is a simple formula. If you wish to advance on the path to Bhagwan, guide your jeevan accordingly.

When Meerabai received Tulsidasji's reply, she took her principal sevikas with her on the chariot and left Mevad. They first went to Pushkar, and stayed there for some days. Soon after Meerabai's departure Bahadur Shah attacked Chittod, causing a great deal of destruction. It is true that Bhagwan does not forgive those who hate and harass His bhaktas.

There is a description that when Meerabai was leaving, Vikramaditya came and asked her to forgive him. It was he who had sent her poison to drink. He had sent a lion and deadly cobras to kill her. His asking for forgiveness was just diplomacy in order to create a good impression before the people. He knew

that Meerabai would not return to Chittod. The people would think he was truly repentant. We all know that there are such people. They do all kinds of wrong things, then they go up to the stage, hands folded in false humility, and ask for forgiveness for the mistakes they made! They want to be popular with the public.

Meerabai had just reached Pushkar when Mevad – Chittod – was attacked. Many people were killed and much property was destroyed. Meerabai did not stay long at Pushkar because it was close to Medata. If you are serious about your sadhana it is better to be at a distance from your family and relatives. No matter how good they are, you will keep getting news about them – both good and bad – and this affects the mana. This is why it was said, earlier, that a Sanyasi should stay five hundred kilometers from the home he has left. And this was at a time when there were no air planes! Today, five hundred kilometers is nothing. The purport is that a Sanyasi should not have a close connection with his family. If, after becoming a Sanyasi he keeps close contact with his family members, keeps them with him and gives them money, it is a *dosha* (fault; offence). I am sorry if any Mahatmas find this offensive, but it is written in the Shastras that this is not right for a person who has taken the vows of renunciation.

Meerabai was not a Sanyasini, but still she found her bhajan being disturbed. She left Pushkar and came to Vrindavan-dhaam. She took a small house with two rooms and a verandah. She stayed in one room. Kesar and Mithila stayed in the other room with their husbands, and her dasi, Champa, stayed in the verandah. Champa had not married. Meerabai the five of them lived peacefully and happily. In spite of being born in, and married into wealthy Royal families Meera had no great comforts, and no big palace. She slept on the floor. She had brought a beautiful Mandir for Giridhar Gopal, and did His puja with great love.

One day Meerabai came to know that a great Mahapurusha – Jeev Goswamiji Maharaj – lived at Vrindavan. Jeev Goswamiji Maharaj was of the sect of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, and he was also of his family. He used to experience Bhagwan and get Bhagwan's darshan. He was a great *virakta* (one who has renunciation for worldly matters).

Shri Jeev Goswami had started an anushthana, and he had taken a vow to not meet any lady till the anushthana was completed. Meerabai was not willing to wait. 'I meet him after the anushthana is over?' she asked. She went to his place. 'I want to meet a Mahapurusha like him', she said. The sevaks told her that Jeev Goswami was not meeting any ladies for the time being. Meerabai said, 'I know about this. Please make a request on my behalf. Please tell him that I have heard from Sants, and also read in the Shastras, that there is only one *purusha* (man) within the boundaries of Vraja, and that is Shri Krishna. All others are the result of Prakriti (Nature; the Ishwara's power of Creation). They are all in sakhi-bhava. They are all gopis. It is only today that I heard that there is some other purush in Vrindavan, apart from Shri Krishna! I want to do the darshan of that other purush.'

As soon as this message was conveyed to Jeev Goswamiji, tears ran down his face. 'This is no ordinary lady,' he thought. 'She has risen above the relationship with the body. The feeling of *stree-purusha* (woman-man) has ended for her.' He told the sevak, 'I will definitely meet her.'

The sevak called out to stop Meerabai from leaving. Jeev Goswamiji Maharaj left his bhajan and came out of his hut. He wanted to bow down to Meerabai, but she bowed down to him. They talked about Bhagwan with great love. Jeev Goswamiji Maharaj told Meerabai the *svaroopa* (essence; true form) of Bhagwan's prema. 'Meerabai,' he said, 'I had heard about you. Today I am *dhanya* (blessed) to get your darshan.'

The Vrindavan we see is the *aadhibhautika* (made of gross matter) Vrindavan. Within it is the *aadhidaivika* (divine; subtle) Vrindavan in which the Maha Raas is done even today. Thakurji plays His flute even today. The leelas of Kaliyadaman, when Shri Krishna subdued the serpent Kaliya, and lifting of the Govardhan Parvat are done even today. He takes the cows to graze in the forest even today! This is the divine adhidaivik Vrindavan.

Jeev Goswamiji said, 'Meera you have entered this divine Vrindavan, which is why you have these divine experiences.' They did Satsang for a long time. Then Jeev Goswamiji returned to his bhajan and Meerabai went to her house.

We meet again, to talk about bhaktimati Meera's *paavana* (purifying) life. Even today, bhaktas and Sants talk about it and listen to her *charita* (lifestyle and character). It helps us to progress on the path of prema for Shri Krishna. This was the wonderful pattern of her life. Bhaktimati Meera left Chittod and came to Vrindavan. She had written a letter to Goswami Tulsidasji, who wrote back saying that a person should give up the place and people who obstruct his bhajan. Having received this message, bhaktimati Meera left for Vrindavan.

This morning we saw an aphorism about the many difficulties that come into the life of bhaktas, and what they do to cope. The thought comes to people who do Bhagwan's bhajan, 'Why does suffering come to me when I do so much bhajan?' It can be one of two reasons. One is the prarabdha of the *shareera* (gross physical body) that moves steadily towards destruction, and by which the person is purified. Inner purification is necessary to be able to go to Bhagwan's realm. The other reason is that it is a part of Bhagwan's leela that prompts you to let go of worldly matters and go on the path to Bhagwan.

One Sant gave the example of two children playing with toys. The mother wants to take one of them for his bath. She wants to bathe and dress him and feed him. The child is engrossed with his toy and refuses to go. What will the mother do? The ladies here will be able to answer. The mother will take the toy away from the child. She may even give him a gentle smack if he becomes obstinate. Won't she do this? However, she does this to the child she wants to pick up and put in her lap. So, if Thakurji takes away your toys you must understand that it is Bhagwan's kripa when you face trouble even though you do bhajan-pujan. If worldly people harass you, you should understand that your Thakurji wants to draw you towards Him. He wants to pick you up and take you onto His lap. Many Sants have experienced this.

There was a Sindhi bhakta at out Guruji's ashram in Vrindavan. His name was Gehiramji. He had come from Lahore, in Pakistan. He had been a wealthy industrialist, but his factory shut down due to some reason. He was a very noble man, but not only did his factory close down, every business venture he tried also failed. He decided to give up business and come and settle in Vrindavan. He was one of the inner circle of Bhakta Kokil, one of the great

luminaries of Vrindavan in those days, along with my Gurudev, Pujya Akhanadanandaji, Swami Hari Babaji Maharaj, and Pujyaa Anandamayi Ma. They were such Mahapurusha that just their darshan gave kalyan. Gehiramji obtained the Satsang of these Mahapurusha. When there was kirtan, he would pick up kartal in his hand and dance joyfully. He told my Guruji, 'Shri Banke Bihari has recognized me.'

'What is the proof?'

'I used to think that I never cheat anyone, I never make anyone suffer, I have never taken things from people – I have only given. Then, why does my business keep failing? Whatever I take up shuts down. But now I know that had my businesses not been a failure, I would never have come to Vrindavan. I would never have obtained the true anand of life. This is why I have realized that my factory did not shut down because of my karma. Banke Bihar had it shut down to call me to Vrindavan!' He was always full of joy.

People are not clapping! Perhaps you are afraid that Banke Bihari will have your factory closed! Remember, Banke Bihari does not have everybody's factory closed; He makes many flourish! Dhruvji had asked for wealth; he had asked for the throne. Who gave it to him? Bhagwan gave it. Would Dhruv have got the throne from his father had he not done Bhagwan's *aaraadhanaa* (worship)? That would never have happened. Bhagwan gives His *sakaama* (with worldly desires) bhaktas and *aarta* (distressed) bhaktas what they ask for.

However, Banke Bihari sometimes snatches away the toys of His *nishkaama* (without worldly desires) bhaktas who ask for only Him, and His prema, and His *rasa* (sweetness). If someone's toys are taken away when they do bhajan, don't be dukhi. Think that Banke Bihari has recognized you! Has He recognized you or not? Don't answer! It's all right! Is there danger in being recognized by Banke Bihari? Banke Bihari gives good fortune to all. He will give what you desire. If you want only Him, He will call you to Himself.

Just this morning someone asked me, 'Why did so much suffering come into Meerabai's life? She was doing only good things. Such suffering has probably not come into most people's lives. It would have been another matter had she behaved badly with some people, or done things that were wrong.' This is the

Ishwara's leela. It was His kripa, and Meerabai went where Thakurji wanted her to go, to Him.

Where did Meerabai come to? She came to Shridhaam Vrindavan. Shri-dhaam means Kishoriji's dhaam, where Radha Rani resides. This Vrindavan is Kishoriji's dhaam. Nobody can enter or live here without Her kripa; and nobody can obtain the experience of Banke Bihari without Her kripa either. That is why the Sants don't say just Vrindavan; they say Shridhaam Vrindavan. Shri means Kishoriji, Shri Radha Rani – Her dhaam, Vrindavan. And, this Shri Vrindavan dhaam is *divya* (divine) even today.

Our Maharajji used to say, 'I do not give parvachans with the hope that people will improve. I give them because I enjoy it. If people improve it will bring them good fortune. If they don't, it is Prabhu's wish.' People who give discourses with the hope that people will improve will only face disappointment. For example, a request is made every day before the Katha starts, that people should put their mobiles on the silent mode, but there are always some people who don't comply. They will not improve. If I were to allow it to irritate me, it would only make me dukhi. The Mahatmas say, 'This world is like a dog's tail.' Some of you would have understood the reference. If a dog's curly tail is kept in a straight hollow bamboo for a month, and then the bamboo is removed, the tail will curl again at once! This is why the Sants say that the world is like the tail of a dog. No matter how much we explain about the benefits of spirituality, only those who want to improve will improve. The rest will go on their tortuous way. That is all right; that is also an anand. My time is well spent and your time is well spent. It is a worthy effort of the good people who organize the Katha, and work for its success.

Shri Vrindavan dhaam is divya even today. You will say, 'that is the experience of the Sants.' I can tell you that even I have had some experiences – not many, but some. When I came to Shridhaam Vrindavan I heard talk about bhakti. I had come from Puja Rotiram Baba who was a Vedanti. He taught only Vedanta. So, I was habituated to listening and reading about Vedanta. My brain was trained to be sharp, so I could grasp the subject. Not only that, I was also able to explain it to others.

After coming to Vrindavan I didn't even know when prema for Thakurji was roused in me! If you start to live in Vrindavan and are not alert about this, prema for Thakurji will creep into your hriday without your knowing how or when it happened! It creeps in wherever it finds an opening. That means, the door to your house (hriday) is open, and there is some room inside. There should be some room in your hriday, and your mind should be open to Bhagwan. You will not have to call Him; He will slip in unobtrusively. Just stay at Vrindavan and see! Stay for a year or even six months! I speak from personal experience, and this is also what the Sants say.

However, don't go to Vrindavan with pride of your position or wealth. Go with humility. Talk about Bhagwan, listen to Kathas, and do seva of Sants. You will tell me that there are also some wrong types to be found there. Oh, there were wrong types even in the time of Shri Krishna. Consider them to be His dependants, and bow to them. Don't quarrel with them. If you stay in Vrindavan for one year – or in the low land near Girirajji – I can tell you from my own experience that bhava for Bhagwan will begin to manifest in your hriday. This is the *mahimaa* (glory) of Vrindavan, and it is true even today. However, the question is how you live.

This is the divya Shri Vrindavan dhaam. Thakurji will want to call His bhaktas to a place that is good. He called bhaktimati Meera here. People who live within easy reach of Vrindavan are very fortunate. You can even go there after you are fifty or sixty, but it will happen when Kishoriji's kripa is there. Now you will ask, 'How can we get Kishoriji's kripa?'

Kripa will come when your hriday is *sarala* (straightforward; without guile). It should not be devious and artificial. There should be no deceit in your heart. Bhagwan accepts everything, but there are two things He does not accept. One is *abhimaana* (pride and vanity) and the other is *chhala-kapata* (deceit-trickery). Regarding other faults, if there is *lobha* (greed) in your life, Bhagwan will either make you free of it or else He will give prosperity. If there is anger in your life, Bhagwan will remove it. If you have desires Bhagwan will either remove them or fulfill them.

However, if you have pride, arrogance, or vanity Bhagwan will not accept you. Nor will He accept you if you have any kind of deceit. So, open your hriday to

Thakurji, and to your Guru, without pretense. Even if you don't open your hriday they will know what is in it, but it will be received in a different way if you say it yourself.

Bhagwan called bhaktimati Meera to Shridhaam Vrindavan. Meera got down from the chariot as soon as they reached the boundary of Vrindavan, and did *shaashtaanga pranaama* (prostrated full-length) to the *raja* (dust) of Vraja. And, some people go in their V.I.P cars right up to the gates of Bihariji. They force their way through the crowds. It is one thing if a person is physically handicapped, but as far as possible, don't cause discomfort to anyone in Vraja.

I go to many Mandirs in Vrindavan. People offer to arrange for a V.I.P darshan. I did accept the offer once, but felt great distress when I saw the Police tell the people who had stood for up to four hours in a queue, to wait on one side, while someone shows his importance by getting darshan without waiting. What do you think – will Thakurji be pleased with you if you do this, or will He be displeased? He will be displeased! Even though I come often to Vrindavan and go for darshan, I don't go to Banke Bihari on the days when there are huge crowds. It is not possible to do darshan properly amidst such pushing and shoving. People ask me, 'Maharaj, won't you go for darshan today?' I tell them, 'Banke Bihari will meet me when He is less busy. He is very busy today. So many people are going to Him today. I will go another day.'

When Meerabai came to the boundary of Vrindavan – not Vrindavan proper – she got down from the chariot and did shastang pranam in the dust of Vraja. As soon as her body touched the Vraja-raja she got romanch. She felt like a person who has come home after wandering for a long time.

Which is our real home? It is Bhagwan's house. It is Shri Vrindavan dhaam, it is Chitrakoot, or any other *teertha sthaana* (holy place). Or, if your seva-puja is good, your own house can become Bhagwan's house.

Bhaktimati Meera's bhava changed as she reached Vraja. After coming to Vrindavan she lived with great *tyaaga-vairaagya* (renunciation-detachment). The fruit of bhakti is not to accumulate a lot of comforts and conveniences. What is the fruit of bhakti? You listen to, and read, in the Shrimad Bhagwat that Gnan and Vairagya are the sons (fruits) of Bhakti. We do Bhagwan's bhajan, but if Gnan about Bhagwan's swarup is not in our hriday, and if there is

no vairagya for the sansara, it means that our bhakti has yet to bear fruit. Success is yet to be achieved.

Bhaktimati Meera lived in a little house that had two rooms and a verandah. She stayed in one room, her married sakhis stayed in the other, and her unmarried sakhi – Champa – stayed in the verandah. The Maharani of palaces stayed in Vrindavan, living in great simplicity. And, it is in a simple life that anand abides.

If you become involved in many activities when you want to do bhajan, and keep a lot of possessions, then – Vrindavan has another side to it. The Thakur of Vrindavan is the Prince of the *chora* (thieves) and *jaara* (lovers). If someone keeps lots of valuables in Vrindavan, He gets them robbed! Shri Udiya Babaji Maharaj went so far as to say that whoever comes to Vrindavan dhaam has something stolen at least once! Why is that? It is the svabhava of Vrinadvan's Thakurji; it is nobody else's fault. If there is nothing else, maybe the slippers or shoes will get stolen. Of all those who have gone there, some would have experienced this, and others will experience it in future. This is the mahima of Vraja. It is rule of this dhaam! So, if you want to live in Vraja and do Bhagwan's bhajan, live with simplicity the way bhaktimati Meera did. Her life is a shining example.

Shri Jeeva Goswamiji Maharaj broke his rule, to meet Meerabai. He addressed her as 'Ma'. How old was Meera when she came to Vrindavan? She was thirty or thirty one years old. Many great Sants came to do pranam to her. They also called her 'Ma'. Why? It is because she had taken the *aashraya* (shelter) of Kishoriji. Kishoriji is everybody's mother, so it is natural that Her power came into Meerabai. Meerabai lived there peacefully. One day she saw Champa – her unmarried sakhi – get up at midnight. She was weeping, rolling on the floor as though in great pain. She was saying, 'Oh Shyam Sundar! Oh Kishoriji! How much longer must I stay away from You?'

Nobody knew who Champa's parents were. She had come to Shyam Kunj one day, when a festival was being celebrated. Champa participated in it. She was just five years old at that time. The people tried their best to find out where she had come from, and who her parents were, but they could get no

information whatever. Meerabai was six years old at that time. She asked Champa, 'What is the name of your mother? And of your father?'

'I don't know,' said Champa. Later, people tried to arrange a marriage for her, but she said, 'I will go away if you try to arrange my marriage. I don't want to get married; I want to do Meerabai's seva.'

Bhagwan Shri Krishna had sent Champa to look after Meerabai. She was the same Champa who was one of the principal sakhis in Bhagwan Shri Krishna's leelas. She had accepted a gross human form and come to serve Meera.

Champa got up at midnight. She used to sleep in the verandah outside Meerabai's room. She was a sakhi of Bhagwan's *nitya parikara* (eternal household). Her name was Champa even in the Dwapar Yuga. Just imagine! Where will you get such a Thakurji? He sent a sevika to Meerabai when she was just a little girl. Champa wept sometimes, when she was alone, asking Shyam Sundar and Kishoriji how much longer she would have to be separated from them.

Once Meerabai's other sakhis, Kesar and Mithila, saw Champs in this state. They saw her weeping, rolling on the floor, calling out to Shyam Sundar and Kishoriji. They told Meerabai about this. They had seen romanch in Champa's body, and tears in her eyes. Her body had become rosy. Meerabai did not understand that Champa belonged to Shyam Sundar's parikar, but she did understand that Champa was a special person and that Bhagwan had sent her.

That day Champa was overcome by emotion. She was beautifully dressed. The way Bhagwan's sakhis are dressed. Meerabai had put Thakurji to bed and had gone to sleep. Champa called, 'Meera! Get up!' Normally she addressed Meerabai as 'Baiji' or 'Maharaniji', since she was a sevika. Meerabai was surprised to hear Champa call her by her name. Meerabai got up. She saw Champa's divya form, divya ornaments and divya garments. 'What is it, Champa?' she asked. 'Thakurji's summons has come for you in the middle of the night.' Even Champa's voice was different. Her form and ornaments and garments all seemed different. Both the other sevikas and their husbands were fast asleep.

Champa took Meerabai to Nivritti Nikunj. Two sakhis were standing on guard. One of them was called Rupa. Champa told her, 'I was to bring Meera – Madhvi, isn't it?' Meera was astounded to hear this. Why was Champa calling her Meera and also Madhvi? She had no recollection of being Madhvi sakhi in her previous birth. When Rupa took both of them inside, she said, 'Kishoriji was remembering both of you. She was asking why you haven't come yet with Meera.'

You should read each sentence, each incident, and understand the effect of staying in Vrindavan. Bhaktimati Meera stayed there, so Kishoriji thought of her. Thakurji thought of her, and sent His sevika to go and bring her. Rupa told them, 'You delayed a lot. Kishoriji and Thakurji asked about you both repeatedly. They said, "Champa hasn't come yet".' Just imagine – a person Thakurji thinks about, and waits for! Bhaktas wait for Thakurji, and here, Thakurji is waiting for His bhakta!

This is the life of bhaktimati Meera. Champa takes her inside the *nikunja* (arbor), and starts calling her Madhvi. Meerabai is overcome with bhava. She thinks, 'This Vrindavan I'm seeing today – the creepers and trees – I have never seen them like this before.' It was five years since Meerabai had come to Vrindavan. She had not seen such creepers, trees, the sandy bank and limpid waters of Jamunaji. She felt great wonder. 'What realm is this?' she wondered.

This is the divya Vrindavan where Thakurji does His leela even today. Even today He takes the cows to graze. Meerabai goes there. She sees Kishoriji and Thakurji in the *kunja* (arbor). All the sakhis are engrossed in seva. As soon as Meera came near, Thakurji smiled and said, 'Madhvi! You have come!' Just imagine the scene. After such a long period of separation bhaktimati Meera is standing before Thakurji. The darshans she had up to now, had been either in her dreams or in a trance, for a little while.

Meera said to herself, 'I have reached His nikunj today. Kishoriji is here, Thakurji is here, and the sakhis are here.' As soon as Bhagwan smiled at her and said, 'Madhvi, you have come', her body began to tremble with love and happiness. She felt romanch. Tears flowed from her eyes. This was a bhakta who had been separated from her aradhyta for a long period of time, meeting Him at last! And, her aradhyta called her lovingly! Bhaktimati Meera – or

Madhvi, whichever you prefer; Bhagwan had called her Madhvi – hugged Bhagwan's feet. She held both His feet close to her heart. Bhagwan Shyam Sundar's lotus-like hand stroked her head. It was a divine scene. Tears of prema came to Kishoriji's eyes and the sakhis' eyes, seeing the meeting of Madhvi and Bhagwan Krishna.

This is the divya prema where everyone is a premi, and there is no self-interest in anyone. When one bhakta meets another premi, all other bhakta feel happy. This is called prema. It is a divine prema when they all want that everybody should be attached to Bhagwan. What you call love in this world is not prema; it is self-interest, it is desire, because strife begins as soon as there is a clash of interest. Whether it is your father, husband, or friend, if they love someone more than you, will you feel pleased or will you be displeased? You will feel displeased. So, do you have prema for him, or is the prema because he looks after you? This is prema founded on self-interest. Please don't be offended. You have to live with them. Your activities are connected to them. So live with them, but don't live with the thought that you belong to them. Live as belonging to Bhagwan.

Bhagwan has given you a family. He has given you duties and obligations. Carry out your duties as obeying the Ishwara's command. Do you know what the Ishwara's *aade`sha* (command) is? Until when are you bound by these duties towards your family? It is actually up to the age of fifty, but you can extend it up to the age of fifty five or sixty at most, in these times. After sixty you should hand over your responsibilities to your children and increase your sadhana. If even after fifty five or sixty years you hold on to worldly responsibilities, you are not obeying Bhagwan's injunction. It is your own craving, your own desire, your attachment to this world. It is your possessiveness. You can call it what you like.

The sign of living or belonging to Bhagwan is whether your life is attached to Bhagwan or whether it is attached to this world. The lives of the Pandavas were attached to Bhagwan. When Bhagwan departed for His realm, Yudhishtira crowned Parikshit. Parikshit's marriage had not taken place till then. It was done later. You can pick up the Bhagwat and see. Immediately after Bhagwan Shri Krishna left this earth, Yudhishtira Maharaj decided that since Bhagwan had gone from this world there was no purpose in living in it

any more. He placed Parikshit on the throne and left. Parikshit's marriage took place after the Pandavas had left this world.

It is written in the Shastras, and we accept it – that all responsibilities should gradually be handed over to the children once they are married and settled. However, people are not able to let go. This is the cause of their problems.

We don't live in this sansara with the feeling that we belong to Bhagwan; we live believing that we belong to the sansara. And remember, if you get a jolt even today, from someone you are close to, you will think, 'I gave up everything for him, and this is how he behaves with me!' The behavior is not as hurtful as the betrayal. You spoilt your health, left your sadhana, left your puja-paath, and this is the result you get. Keep in mind – this is the inevitable result of belonging to this world.

Our Maharajji asked this question to a Mahatma. He was travelling by train once. He did not have a reserved seat, so he sat on the seat near the feet of a man whose seat was reserved. 'The man did not want me to sit there. He kept prodding me with his feet. I also made up my mind that I would not budge, no matter how he behaved.' Maharajji remained sitting there till the train reached his station.

When Maharajji met Bhikshu Shankaranandaji, who was a great virakta, *fakkada* (uninhibited) Mahatma, he asked, 'Maharaj, I did not get up, but I did feel bad that the man kept kicking me.' Do you know what reply Bhikshu Shankaranandaji gave? He said, 'If someone goes and sits on a pile of rubbish – or next to a dustbin – will garlands be thrown on him, or will rubbish be thrown? Rubbish will be thrown. If you sit in your shareer you will have to endure the *maana-apamaana* (respect-insults) of the shareer. Where were you seated at that time? Who did the man kick – your shareer or your swarup? No blow can reach the Atma.'

So, if you experience betrayal in this world, and then say that this world is a big cheat, are you the only person who has had this experience? Oh, the Mahatmas have been saying this for ages. It is also written in the Shastras, but you don't believe them. Then, what can anyone do?

I am not saying that you shouldn't stay in this world. And, who will feed you if you don't stay in it? I also know full well that you won't give it up even if I were to tell you to! Many Mahapurushas came, spoke about this, and left, but nobody gave up this world. So, stay in it, but not as belonging to it; stay in it as belonging to Bhagwan. And, after a certain age, increase your sadhana gradually as your children mature and become self-reliant. This will result in both you, and your children being sukhi.

Pujya Rotiram Baba often said that when there is a child in your house, who calls you 'Baba' – meaning, when your son gets a son, what does the child call you? He calls you 'Baba'. And, what do you call me? You call me 'Baba'! So, the word Baba means a grandfather and also a Mahatma, isn't it so? At least say, 'yes, it does'! And, the one who has come to your house calls you 'Baba' several times a day. Rotiram Baba used to say, 'Bhagwan has given you a green signal, that it is time for you to become a Baba.'

I had asked Kalyandasji Maharaj, 'Maharaj, Bhagwan has given the green signal long ago, then why don't people become a Baba?' Kalyandasji Maharaj has a good sense of humor. He told me, 'Oh Swamiji, you must understand one thing in this.'

'What is that, Maharaj?'

"The son's son says "Baba – Baba" in the morning. In the evening, the daughter comes, bringing her son. The daughter's son says, "Nana – Nana", meaning, no, don't become a Sanyasi.' (The mother's father is called 'Nana'.) This is just a joke about people not turning towards Bhagwan more seriously as they age.

Let us return to Meerabai. Bhaktimati Meera came to Bhagwan's lotus-like feet. Go with your emotions as you hear these words, then you will get the rasa. You will get anand. Bhaktimati Meera is sitting, holding Bhagwan's feet. She has romanch in her body. Kishoriji is smiling at her. Bhagwan Shri Krishna strokes her head again and again, with His hand. He consoles her and holds her close to His heart.

Then Bhagwan gave her the darshan of many leelas. Do you know how long this phase continued? It continued for five years. Every night Bhagwan would

send for bhaktimati Meera. She got a darshan of the Maha Raas at times, and sometimes she got the darshan of the cheer-haran leela, when Bhagwan stole the gopis' garments. Some days she got the darshan of Kaliya-daman, and some days she got the darshan of Bhagwan stealing butter. Sometimes she got the darshan of Bhagwan's daan leela. Bhagwan takes daan from the gopis, saying, 'You are passing by this place. You have to pay tax to Me because I look after this place.' Did He have any need for daan? He, who is the *daataa* (giver) of everything, asks for daan! From whom does He ask? He asks from the gopis, the ladies of Vraja. What He wants is prema, not daan. If you offer ten million rupees at His feet, but you don't have prema, it is worthless for Him!

Duryodhana me `vaa tyago saga vidura ghara khaayo.

(Shri Krishna disdained the expensive dry fruits offered by Duryodhan, because he had no prema for Bhagwan. He ate leafy vegetables at Vidura's house, because Vidura had prema.)

Bhagwan called Meera 'Madhvi' sometimes and sometimes He called her 'Meera'. He told her, 'Meera, Champa will now stay with Me, because she becomes agitated if she is separated from Me.' Now, bhaktimati Meera found out who Champa was. Champa had been with Meera for thirty years. She had come to Meera when she was five years old. She returned to Bhagwan's household.

Bhaktimati Meera was now thirty five years old. Bhagwan's premis are dhanya. They serve Him lovingly, carrying out whatever duty He gives them. Nobody gets even a hint of it. Champa had lived as Meerabai's dasi, as her sevika.

Oh, why do you feel anxious that if you get engrossed in bhajan, and don't associate with people, you won't have anybody to help you when you are old? If you become Thakurji's there will be so many people to look after you that even your family members will be left behind. Become Thakurji's; become Bhagwan's.

There were so many people to look after Pujya Swami Ramsukhdasji. Were they his family members? There were so many people to look after Pujya Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj. Were they his family members? People felt blessed to get an opportunity to do some seva. When I think about it now, I

feel like laughing – you people will also laugh when you hear this. When Maharajji's health began to deteriorate some of us did some anushthanas for his good health. Swami Sevanandaji and I both did some anushthanas. And, I'll tell you what we did – we asked Maharajji to tell us which anushthana would be the most effective for his good health. He did such leela – all Bhagwan Krishna's *guna* (qualities) were seen in him! He showered kripa on everyone. He would tell us which anushthana we should do, how it should be done, and the benefits that would accrue. We would do the anushthana for a month or two months, and then ask, 'Maharajji, has it benefited your health?' He would say, 'Yes, it has.' In fact there were no visible benefits. He accepted our seva to benefit us. He made us dhanya!

We used to recite passages from the Ramayana by rote, near Maharajji. However, he told me, 'You are not to come for the paath. You must concentrate on your studies. There are many others for doing paath. I want you to study. If you need to go abroad for studying, I will send you abroad. Study as much as you can.'

One day Swami Govindanandji called me. The person whose turn it was to do paath had not come due to some reason, so Govindanandji told me to do the paath. Maharajji was lying down in his room; the paath was done in the room just outside, with the door open. As soon as I started the paath he recognized my voice. He called out, 'Girish?' 'Ji?' I went to him. 'How is it that you are here?' he asked. 'Who called you to do paath? You are to concentrate on your studies.' I pleaded with him. 'Maharajji, the person whose turn it is has not come, so Swami Govindanandji called me.' He did not say anything more to me, but he told Govindanandji, 'Govindananda, Girish has to concentrate on his studies. He is not to be given these tasks.' He had so much karuna! When we insisted on doing an anushthana for his good health, he would give his consent, and tell us which one to do!

A person feels dhanya to get a chance to do seva of the Mahapurushas. A person who is not attached to Bhagwan can keep sevaks or nurses. If he is very fortunate, his children will do his seva, but this is very rare in present times. Children today will arrange for every convenience for their parents. They will keep servants and maids and nurses, but they don't have time. However, if you once become Bhagwan's – whether you have children or not – He sends so

many sevaks that you cannot even take so much seva! This is the fruit of becoming Bhagwan's.

Meera never knew that the one who did her seva for thirty years had been sent by Bhagwan. Now Bhagwan told Madhvi sakhi that henceforth, Champa would stay in His seva, because she had endured *viyoga* (the pain of being separated from Him) for thirty years. 'She used to get My darshan occasionally, in *bhava*. Otherwise, she would weep on the terrace, thrashing on the floor in distress. I knew this, but I also knew that nobody else can do your seva as well as her. This is why I sent her. Now, she will always be with Me. Henceforth, Lalita sakhi will go every day, and bring you to see My leela.'

Lalita sakhi is one of the principal members of Bhagwan's parikar. Haridasji was an Avatar of Lalita sakhi. It was by his sadhana that Banke Bihari manifested. This same Lalita sakhi went daily to bring Meerabai to participate in Thakurji's Raas Leela. How beautiful would that life be! It was not a life of the Dwapar Yuga; Meerabai lived in the Kali Yuga, just five hundred years ago. After five o'clock in the morning, someone would bring Meerabai back to her house. Meerabai would spend the whole day doing darshan of the leela in her heart. If anybody came in, she would ask, 'Has Lalita sakhi come?' All her time was spent waiting for night to fall, and for Lalita sakhi to come and take her to Thakurji.

One more thing is mentioned here. Suppose it is the Kaliya daman leela, and Bhagwan shows it at night time, is it that this leela took place at night? The answer is, 'No'. When Bhagwan showed this leela to Madhvi, she saw it as though it was during the day. This was not in the *bhautika* (gross) *loka* (realm); it was in the *aadhidaivika* (divine) *loka*.

Many great Sants came for Meerabai's darshan, but she would be in a state of *bhaavaave`sha* (being overcome by *bhava*). You people will tell me that this is written about bhaktimati Meera, but no one has actually seen it. Shri Vishnu Hari Dalmiya had come here yesterday. His brother has come today. There are others present, who go to Gorakhpur quite often. They were bhaktas of Pujya Shri Radha Babaji Maharaj, who lived at the Gita Vatika in Gorakhpur. He was a great Mahapurusha. I have seen the state of *bhava* in his life. It was just like the descriptions of Meerabai's life.

I had gone for Shri Radha Baba's darshan once. To the best of my recollection it was in 1991 – 92. This was before I began to give pravachans. I had completed my formal studies. I had an urge to get the darshan and association of Sants. I went to many different places for this, because Maharajji's jeevan-leela had ended.

When I reached there, I saw people telling Radha Baba about Bhagwan's leelas, and doing kirtan, as they tried to divert his mind and feed him. He did not eat himself. When I went and sat there, he said something. I did not find anything illogical in it. People had warned me that he may say anything or say nothing. Seeing me, Baba said, 'He is well-built and hefty. He seems to be a Pundit. He has a thick *chotaa* (tuft of hair on the crown of the head worn by Brahmins).'

I told him, 'Maharaj, I am still studying. I have come from Vrindavan dhaam.'

His face brightened at the name of Vrindavan. 'Vrindavan?' he asked. 'What are you studying?'

'I have studied *vyaakarana* (Sanskrit grammar), the Laghusiddhanta Kaumudi, and the Siddhanta Kaumudi.'

Baba did not look pleased. 'Even donkeys like me have studied vyakaran!' he said. These are the very words he used! I said, 'Maharaj, apart from vyakaran I studied a little Vedanta, a little Nyaya and a little Mimansa. Now I have started to study the Bhagwat.'

'This is a good thing you have started,' he said. 'Study the Bhagwat. It is only through the Bhagwat that you will attain the goal of your life.'

I sat there for a while. Then I said, 'Baba, how can we get Bhagwan's *anubhava* (experience)?' He said, 'Be 'taa (son), even I have not got anubhav. How can I tell you how it is obtained?' This, in spite of the fact that he had – and continued to have – many experiences of Bhagwan. 'The day you begin to experience that Bhagwan is showering kripa on you, you can understand that you will begin to get His anubhav very soon. As long as we feel that Bhagwan is not doing anything; that we are making all the effort, it is a very preliminary state. When you experience that the child is not doing anything, it is the parents who are doing everything – this should not be mere lip service, it must be felt – then, you can think that you have come close to Bhagwan.'

After a while a gentleman who was Baba's bhakta came there. Baba was in a state of maha-bhava, like what you have just heard about Meera. Baba picked up a stick and threatened the man. I had understood that Baba was in a world of his own. People had warned me, 'Baba's mental condition is not stable.' They knew that Baba could threaten or beat anyone at any moment. Baba's bhakta ran from there. Baba chased him for half a kilometer before coming back.

Some fifteen or twenty minutes later Baba asked about the same bhakta. 'That man hasn't come for many days,' he said. I was astonished to hear this. Baba had just driven the man away, and now he was asking why he had not come for many days.

People told Baba, 'Baba, he had just come. You drove him away with a stick. The poor man ran away in a fright.'

'Oh, was it him?' asked Baba.

'Who did you see, Baba?' asked the people. Do you know Baba's bhava was?

'I thought it is Akrura who has come, wanting to take my Balaram-Krishna to Mathura,' said Baba. 'That is why I picked up my stick and chased him out of the boundary of Vrindavan. I never saw that man.'

Thus, even today we see such Sants. We saw Pujya Radha Baba just twenty years ago. If the same maha-bhava came to Meerabai five hundred years ago, you should at least have faith that such things do happen. They happen when someone gets a divya jeevan.

The same thing used to happen to bhaktimati Meera. Sometimes, when her sevikas brought her food she would say, 'Oh, Lalita, you have come very late today. Didn't Thakurji remember me today?' Kesar and Meerabai's other sevika were with her. Champa now stayed with Thakurji. The sakhis who were with Meerabai were very perturbed. 'What has happened to Maharaniji? She was not in such a state in Medata or in Chittod. We don't know what happens at night, but she is in bhavavesha all day. She is not even aware of them when Sants and Mahatmas come to meet her.' The sakhi did not know how things would turn out.

Many years had passed since they came to Vrindavan. Bhagwan had given Meerabai the darshan of His leelas for five years. A person's life changes if he gets the darshan of even one leela; Bhagwan gave bhaktimati Meera the darshan of all His leelas, one by one. Lalita sakhi came every night to call Meerabai. Meerabai would go with her. She would become Madhvi sakhi and participate in Bhagwan's leelas. Then she would be brought back before dawn. She participated in Bhagwan's leela at night, and remained in a bhava-dasha all day. She was in a world of her own. Five years passed in this manner.

Then, Shri Krishna said, one day, 'Madhvi, I am telling My Yoga-shakti to bring you back to awareness of the outside world.'

Meera folded her hands and asked, 'Why, Prabhu? I have no wish to return to being aware of the outside world, to leave Your feet, and leave Your leela. Why do You want to send me back to that state?'

Shri Krishna explained, 'Madhvi, it is for *loka-kalyana* (the good of the people). At present you can't say anything to anyone. You don't speak even if someone asks you something. People think that you are not in your senses. The question of your life being fulfilled does not arise; it is already fulfilled. However, others should also get kalyan. When you are in a state of outer awareness you will be able to answer their questions about sadhana, that people place before you. Your answer will benefit them. Sants will come to ask about sadhana. They will get kalyan by getting your answers. Your *yasha* (good name; fame) will spread. This will please me.'

'Prabhu, yash is a very dangerous thing.'

There are three *ghaati* (perilous slopes that lead to disaster) in the life of a Mahapurusha: *kaanchana* (gold), *kaaminee* (woman) and *keerti* (fame; a good name). Kanchan is the first danger. Kanchan means wealth. If a person gets trapped in the allure of wealth, the two others dangers still remain. If he crosses over kanchan, then comes the danger of kamini. If the sadhak is a man, kamini means a woman. If the sadhak is a lady, kamini means a man. This is the next pitfall for a sadhak. The third risk is that of keerti. 'People should, at least, consider me to be a virakta. They should believe that I am a *tyaagee* (one who gives up worldly assets), a great Sant.' This is the pitfall of keerti, or yash.

Madhvi said, 'Prabhu, this is the most dangerous pitfall. In this, our reputation lies in the hands of other people. We feel happy if they believe us to be a bhakta, and unhappy if they don't. All my time will be wasted in this. When will I think of You? When will I do bhajan? I do not want to be famous.'

Bhagwan smiled. 'Madhvi, you do not want to have yash, but I want you to have yash.' This is Bhagwan's leela. He wants His bhaktas to get glory. 'Madhvi, don't worry. I will protect you. Yash will not create any obstacles in your jeevan. So, stay in outer awareness, in order to benefit people.'

Madhvi caught Bhagwan's feet. 'Prabhu, not for loka-kalyan – that is for You to do, Prabhu, not for me to do. I will certainly stay in a state where I can interact with people, but it is to obey Your command, not for loka-kalyan.' See the viewpoint of a bhakta! 'I do not want to leave Your bhajan, to do loka-kalyan.'

And, what about the loka-kalyan done up to now? Bhagwan Rama came, Bhagwan Krishna came, Bhagwan Buddha came, bhagwan Shankaracharya came, Shri Ramanujacharya came, Shri Vallabhacharyaji Maharaj came – was loka-kalyan achieved? Tell me, how successful was it? It was not fully successful. Had loka-kalyan been achieved, you and I would not be sitting here today! We would have been in Goloka, or Saket loka, or Shiva loka! We would have been in Bhagwan's dhaam, isn't it? The fact that we are sitting here means that our kalyan is yet to be done. Whether it is me or you, and whatever the reason may be, there is some *aparaadha* (offence) or other in our life, some karma, because of which we have been born.

Bhagwan told Lalita sakhi to reach Meerabai to her house. Meerabai came to a state of being aware of the outside world as soon as she went into her house. Sants and other bhaktas had been talking about Meerabai's bhava-dasha for the past five years. She had not recognized anybody during this period. Many great Sants would come for her darshan, bow down to her, and go. Meerabai was not in a state to do Satsang, but the Sants considered themselves to be dhanya to get her darshan and ashirvad. Many of them took the dust of her feet. They said, 'What was achieved by the dust of the gopis' feet is achieved by the dust of Meerabai's feet.' At Bhagwan's wish, Meera now lived in a state where she was aware of her surroundings.

You all know that Tansen was a great musician at Akbar's Court. He was also a great bhakta. I don't know the age of Tansen given in the history books, but it is written here that he was thirty five or thirty six when he went to meet Meerabai, and Akbar was twenty five. It may be some years less or a little more, but in bhakti it makes no difference whether a person is twenty or fifty years old.

Akbar told Tansen, 'Tansen, I have heard that there is a Maharani of a noble, Royal lineage, who had everything, but she left everything and is now living in Vrindavan. The bhajans she sings are wonderful. She has a voice of exceptional sweetness. In spite of her princely background she does Khuda's bhajan and kirtan in Vrindavan. She has no interest in the world. Is it possible to get her darshan?'

'Yes, Maharaj, it is possible for you to get her darshan,' replied Tansen. 'But if you go as Akbar you may not get her darshan.' Tansen was very intelligent. If Akbar went as the Badshah, his Army and retinue would go with him. This would be a nuisance for Meerabai.

Please don't feel offended, but it is a disturbance for a *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) when a lot of people begin to get attached to him. Why is that? It is because people get upset when they are told that the sadhak wants solitude. And, it is not possible for a sadhak to do sadhana in a crowd.

Akbar had once insisted to Haridasji to allow him to do some seva. Haridasji observed that Akbar was very proud of his great wealth. However, out of compassion he gave Akbar a darshan of the divya Vrindavan. In it, one portion of the *ghaata* (concrete steps leading to the edge of the river) of the Yamunaji was broken. The ghat was studded with precious gems. Haridasji said, 'Akbar, if you want to do some seva, get this ghat repaired.' Akbar had never seen such gems like those that were imbedded in the ghat. He fell at Haridasji's feet. 'Forgive me,' he said. 'Even if I use all the wealth I possess, it is not possible for me to repair this ghat.'

Tansen warned Akbar, 'If you go as Akbar, you may not get Meerabai's darshan.'

'Then how should I go?' asked Akbar.

‘Come as a sadhak. Come in simple clothes.’

‘But will I be safe?’

‘Only you and I will go,’ said Tansen. ‘We will surely get darshan if we go as simple bhaktas. We will surely get Thakurji’s kripa.’ Akbar again expressed his doubts about the advisability of going without his bodyguards. ‘Maharaj,’ said Tansen, ‘you just said that such a great Maharani lives in a house of only two rooms. Are there any security arrangements for her in Vrindavan? She has two sevaks and two sevikas to attend to her needs. The Thakurji who protects her will surely protect you if you go to meet her. Why are you afraid? Let us go without fear.’

Great things can be achieved if there is someone who gives the right advice. These days, the people who give advice are not able to guide others properly, whether it is the society or the family. The deterioration we see today is because of the very people who are supposed to give us advice that will benefit us!

*Sachiva vaida guru teena jaun priya bolahin bhaya aasa,
raaja dharma tana teena kara hoyi be`gahi naasa.*

(When the Minister, Vaidya, and Guru are too scared to give the right advice, the King, Dharma and body are destroyed very fast.)

It is my hope and my belief that things will improve.

Thus, Tansen advised Akbar to stop worrying about his safety. He knew that even if there is any danger on the path of going to Thakurji, it is removed because of Thakurji’s compassion. Tansen and Akbar came to Meerabai’s house dressed as simple bhaktas. Akbar had taken some gifts with him. ‘I am going to a Mahapurusha, so I should take some offering. Moreover, the offering should be in keeping with my position,’ he thought. He did not take fruits or flowers; he took a diamond necklace. The seva should be in keeping with the means of the giver. People go to a Mandir where ordinary people offer ten rupees. If a wealthy person feels that this is enough, since others are also giving ten rupees, Bhagwan will not accept the seva of a stingy person. He will accept the seva when it is given lovingly, with generosity.

Bhaktimati Meera was doing Thakurji's seva when Akbar reached her house. Meerabai's sakhis were with her. One had a *dholaka* (two sided drum) and the other had *manjeeraa* (cymbals). Meerabai had started a pada. Tansen signed to Akbar to sit down quietly, and not even do pranam, or ask any questions. He conveyed that this lady was such a bhaktimati that she would not sing for anyone except her Thakurji. No other considerations would influence her. Meerabai picked up her tanpura.

Tansen – the raja of *raaga* (specific modes of Indian Classical music) – also sat down to listen. Meerabai was sitting before her Shyam Sundar, singing a beautiful pada. Just see the scene in your mind's eye; you will be filled with anand! How beautiful her life was! There was no Royal household and no Raja. She lived in a small house in utter simplicity. She had just two sevikas who accompanied her on the *dholak* and *manjeera*. She strummed her tanpura and began to sing a bhajan. She was filled with prema for Thakurji. And, who were listening to her that day? It was Akbar and Tansen! Meerabai, however, had no hint of this. She believed them to be simple bhaktas. Meerabai sang:

Aali ree mhaane` laage` vrindaavana neeko.

(Oh, Vrindavan seems very attractive to me.)

Ghara-ghara tulasee thaakura poojaa, darashana govindajeeko.

(Every house has a Tulsi plant. Thakurji's puja is done in every home. I get the darshan of Govindji.)

Aali ree mahne`

Niramala neera bahata yamunaa ko, bhojana doodah dahee ko.

(The limpid waters of the Yamuna flow gently. Thakurji is offered milk and curds.)

Aaali ree mahne.....

Ratana simhaasana aapa viraajein, mukuta dhare` tulasee ko.

(You are seated on a gem-studded throne. Your crown has a peacock feather in it.)

Aali ree mahne`

Kunchana kunjana firata raadhikaa shabda sunata muralee ko.

(Radhika wanders from bower to bower, hearing the sound of Your flute.)

Aali ree mahne`

Meeraa ke` prabhu giridhara naagara bhajana binaa nara feeko.

(Meera's Prabhu is Giridhara Nagar. The life of a person who doesn't do bhajan is insipid.)

Aali ree mahne` laage` vrindaavana neeko.

What is Vrindavan like? There is a Tulsi plant in every house, and Thakurji's puja is done in every home. You too, can make your home Vrindavan. Plant a Tulsi shrub, offer bhoga to Thakurji, and try to please Him in every way, as Meera did. Thakurji is ready to come anywhere. It is not that He won't come to our house, but you must have space for Him in your hriday, and you must have bhava for Him.

Meerabai describes what she sees. She first described Vrindavan, and then she described Thakurji. She described Him with her divya bhava. She described His throne, studded with rubies, and then the peacock feather in His crown. Well, my brothers – a throne studded with rubies, and a peacock feather for the Crown – it doesn't match! However, why does Thakurji have peacock feathers in His crown? To Him, peacock feathers are more precious than a ruby-studded throne, because they are feathers from Radha Rani's pet peacock. Thakurji always wears them on His head.

Meerabai described Thakurji's ornaments after describing Vrindavan. As she sang, she began to get the darshan of a leela of Thakurji. It is a divya leela. Meerabai saw that Thakurji was hiding, and Kishoriji was looking for Him. Thakurji is *leela-dhaaree* (one who does leela). He played His flute for a moment, and Kishoriji running towards the sound. Whether the leela actually happened or not, only Thakurji knows, but Meera was getting this darshan in a state of bhava, and she sang about what she saw.

Meerabai was describing all these things. Akbar and Tansen sat there, enthralled. Tears flowed from Tansen's eyes. Akbar also had romanch in his body. The hriday from where the music flowed was where Thakurji and Kishoriji were seated. That music went into Akbar's heart. He was also overcome with emotion as he sat there listening. Meerabai concluded by explaining the goal of life, the essence of life. The last line of the bhajan is: *bhajana binaa nara feeko* – the life of a person who doesn't do bhajan is insipid.

Meerabai's bhajan ended. She had romanch in her body. Akbar was filled with bhava. And, what about Tansen? He was the most gifted musician of that time, but on this day, he got a glimpse of musical talent combined with bhava. All three were immersed in bhava. We will leave them in that state. A small portion of Meerabai's life remains to be discussed. That will be done tomorrow.

Bhaktimati Meera is a shining example of bhakti for Shri Krishna in this *kalikaala* (the period of Kali Yuga). We enter into Bhagwan's leela and Katha, with our *mana-buddhi-chitta* (emotional mind – intellect – mental inclinations) through the story of Meerabai's life. By listening attentively our mana, buddhi and chitta are with our ears, and then we will come to the right conclusion through the buddhi, and store the memory of the Katha in our *antahkarana* (fourfold mind composed of the mana, buddhi, chitta and *ahankaara* – the subtle pride of individuality). It is accepted that ahankara is not permissible in a Katha. Of the four parts of the antahkarana the first three – mana, buddhi and chitta – should be present in Bhagwan's Katha, but ahankara (the fourth part) is forbidden. It is said repeatedly that if we sit in the Katha with any kind of pride, the Katha will not be so successful in changing our life. Ahankara can be for anything – it can be the pride of learning, position, wealth, competence or Gnan. Many people even ask questions only to show how learned they are!

One gentleman asked a question to my Guruji at Vrindavan. It took him fifteen minutes to explain his question. Guruji smiled and said, 'Have you come to hear, or to be heard?' People come to the Katha with different purposes in mind. This Katha, however, has been organized with genuine affection. Actual *shrotaa* (earnest listeners) came here. The crowds are less, the shrotas are more.

Pundit Ramkinkarji Maharaj's Katha was going on at Vrindavan. It was the month of Shravan, during the rainy season. A power cut occurred during the Katha. This is a very common problem in Vrindavan. There was a delay of some five or seven minutes before the generator was started and the power restored. When Ramkinkarji started the Katha again, he commented, 'The shrotas have remained; the crowds have gone.' If a person has come with a genuine interest in the Katha, can't he sit for five or seven minutes without the Katha and the lights? If not, it means that he has come out of curiosity, or just come casually, not out of real interest. Here, I experience anand, because the people who come are genuinely interested. The fact that most of you have been coming daily shows your genuine interest. It is a pleasure to speak when people listen with pleasure.

We are talking about bhaktimati Meera, who lived in this Kalikaal, when righteous people are few and wrongdoing increases. By the Ishwara's kripa, the state of society will improve in future. Yesterday we had come to the point where Akbar and Tansen were sitting with bhaktimati Meera in Vrindavan. Meerabai sang the bhajan, *Aali ree mahne` laage` vrindaavana neeko*. Meerabai was lost in the bhajan and she was getting Bhagwan's darshan simultaneously. She was seeing Bhagwan's leela.

The result of this was a concentration of *saattvika* (of the Sattva guna, the lofty tendency that gives peace and right thinking) *paramaanu* (particles) in the air. These Sattvik paramanu came into Tansen's life. There is nothing surprising in this. What is surprising is that the Sattvik particles also came into Akbar's life! Akbar's hriday became *pavitra* (unsullied by worldly considerations). This is the mahima of bhaktimati Meera. Akbar listened to the bhajan. He told Tansen, 'You also sing bhajans beautifully, but I don't get such rasa from your bhajans.' Tansen said, 'Maharaj, I sing for you, whereas Meerabai sings for her Giridhar Gopal. Naturally there will be a difference.'

If you do something with the thought of pleasing some individual, your goal will be to give him pleasure. When you sing for Thakurji you will experience a different kind of happiness. When Thakurji is in the *vaanee* (speech) and in the hriday, and His leela is going on before your eyes it will be like the effect of the bhajans sung by Haridasji, Meerabai and Surdasji. These people obtained Bhagwan through their bhajans. They made *sangeeta* (music) their sadhana.

Akbar told Tansen to ask something. Tansen asked, 'How can we get kalyan?' Meerabai smiled. 'When the Raja works as the sevak you can understand that good work is being done. It does good to the people and to the Raja, both. It gives kalyan.'

Akbar and Tansen were amazed to hear this. How could Meera know that the Raja had come as a sevak? Tansen had come as the Guru, and Akbar as his sevak. There was such depth in Meerabai's words! A Raja should consider himself to be the servant of the people. That will uplift the whole Kingdom. This is what Meerabai told them.

Meerabai gave some upadesh to Tansen. The words were meant for Akbar; Tansen was just the *nimitta* (cause). She said, 'When a Raja gets a Kingdom, he

should consider it the *dharohara* (inheritance, to be held in trust) of the Ishwara. The Raja shouldn't consider it his personal property.' This is something to be thought about seriously. Meerabai was not only a bhakta. She had a clear understanding of how a Kingdom should be run, and how society should be maintained. So, if a Raja considers the Kingdom to be the property of the Ishwara, and himself to be its caretaker, it will be an excellent realm. The wealth of the Nation belongs to its people. This is the right attitude for a ruler.

Meerabai spoke about two things more. 'A Raja should not become intoxicated with praise. Praise can be deserved and it can be false. If the praise is deserved, the Raja should consider it to be Bhagwan's kripa that he did things that were good and right. If the praise is false, he should be wary of the flatterers. People who flatter lead you to your downfall. Meerabai also said that a Raja should not insult the advisors who are his well-wishers, even if they oppose his wishes and speak the bitter truth. It is the Dharma of a Raja to listen to good advice, not to dismiss those who give it.

Unfortunately people who rule often behave as though the country is their personal property. Tell me; doesn't it seem like that at times? And, people suffer unless the leaders are committed to doing what is best for the country.

Akbar was astonished when Meerabai explained the qualities an ideal Raja should have. He asked Tansen whether Meerabai had understood who he was, because Tansen's question had been about kalyan, and Meerabai's answer was about the Dharma of a Raja. Tansen said, 'Ma, how is it that you are giving an upadesh on Raja-Dharma?'

Meerabai said, 'Even I am surprised. I have never spoken on this before.' Akbar told Tansen, 'Nobody except the two of us know that I have come to Vrindavan with you.' Ultimately, Tansen told Meerabai, 'This is Badshah Akbar, and I am Tansen, the Royal musician of his Court. I can't understand how you knew this, because nobody except the two of us knew that we planned to come here.'

'There is a third, who knows about everyone,' said bhaktimati Meera. 'He stays in my hriday. He is my Giridhar Gopal. You have forgotten that there is One from whom nothing is hidden.'

If people accept even this one statement – that Bhagwan sees and knows everything – it will curtail injustice and *adharma* (that, which is contrary to Dharma) substantially. People listen and understand, but they don't believe. They think, 'Nobody is looking. Let us do what we want. Later on, we'll see!' They even say, 'Who has seen Narak and Swarga (Hell and Heaven)? It is a story cooked up by Babajis!'

When leaving, Akbar offered the diamond necklace he had brought with him. Do you know what Meerabai said? She told him, 'This is the property of your people. Please use it to help the needy. Giridhar Gopal has no need for it.' How disciplined Meerabai's life was! Bhaktas are not *naasamajha* (foolish; lacking in wisdom). They are not *avyavasthita* (disorganized; scatter-brained). The twelfth chapter of the Bhagwat Gita describes the qualities of a bhakta. One of them is *daksha* (skillful; adroit). Daksha means *kushala* (deft; dexterous). A bhakta is very skillful in Bhagwan's seva and also in vyavhar. It is another matter that bhaktas generally stay aloof from vyavhar. Akbar and Tansen bowed down to Meerabai and took their leave.

Bhaktimati Meera lived in Vrindavan for many years. Then, Champa came to her again one day. Bhagwan had sent a message with her. Champa bowed down to Meerabai and said, 'I have come with a message from Prabhu.'

'Yes? What is Prabhu's message?' asked Meera eagerly. 'Does Prabhu really think of me?'

Every true bhakta feels that he is insignificant and Bhagwan is great. Bhagwan had showered great kripa on bhaktimati Meera. He had given her His darshan many times. Yet she asked Champa, 'Does Shyam Sundar, my Giridhar Gopal, indeed think of me?'

Champa said, 'Meera, Shyam Sundar thinks of you every day, when the Raas Leela begins. Sometimes, tears come to His eyes, when He thinks of you. Not only does He think of you, He says, "In spite of Madhvi not wanting it, I have kept her in the sansara for loka-seva." Today, He thought of you and He has sent a message for you.'

'Tell me, what is the message?' asked Meera eagerly.

‘Prabhu said, “Tell Madhvi that her time in Vrindavan is almost over. She should get ready to go to Dwarka now.”’

‘Why am I to go to Dwarka?’ asked Meera.

Champa began to tease her lovingly. She said, ‘Thakurji has said, “Tell Madhvi that she had got married to Me before the ritual ceremony with Bhojraj.” A wife should stay in her husband’s house. Vrindavan is nor Dwarikadheesh’s house; it is the house of Vrindavan Behari. Which is the house of Dwarikadheesh? It is Dwarka!’

Meerabai also started smiling. It was true that Giridhar Gopal had married her as Dwarikadheesh. ‘Very well,’ she said. ‘I will obey Thakurji’s command.’ Meerabai lived at Vrindavan for twenty five years, doing Thakurji’s Satsang, and thinking of Thakurji’s leelas. Many experiences of Thakurji took place in her life. She savored the rasa of each one. Not only that, the Sants of Vraja also obtained the rasa. They got the anand of Meerabai’s Satsang.

If a Sant stays in a place it benefits many people. It is true that there are many kinds of Mahatmas. Some give pravachans and some don’t. They do Bhagwan’s work in other ways. Some don’t go anywhere. There is a Mahatma who lives at Girirajji. He is very simple and straightforward. He is happy doing bhajan. I meet him whenever I go to Girirajji. He has a self-imposed rule to not go out of the boundaries of Vraja. I once told him, ‘Baba, if you don’t go out of Vraja, how will people get the benefit of your insights and your ashirvad?’ It would give kalyan to many people if you went out of Vraja.’

This Mahatma is so simple hearted that he said, ‘Look, my brother, Bhagwan does the same as the mother and father do.’

‘What do you mean, Maharaj?’ I asked.

‘When a child is *naalaayaka* (useless; good for nothing), the parents do not send him out to work. They send the child who is *laayaka* (competent). You people are layak, so Bhagwan sends you out of Vraja. I am nalayak, so He doesn’t send me. He knows I can’t achieve anything.’ He actually believed this; it was not to evade the issue. He said again, ‘I cannot give pravachans, I cannot do a Katha. I am Thakurji’s nalayak child, so He doesn’t send me outside, He keeps me close.’

There are such genuine Sants even today, in Vrindavan, in Vraja, Girirajji, Uttarakhand, etc. However, if you go there in a hurry to rush back as quickly as possible and then say that real Mahatmas are no longer to be found, who is to blame?

Mahatmas have neither the time nor the inclination to leave their Bhagwan and come to meet you! If you can't take time from your worldly activities for Bhagwan – for going to a Mahatma – would it be right for a Mahatma to leave Bhagwan, and leave bhajan, to give time to you? Certainly not!

Rotiram Baba used to tell us a story about a Mahatma who did pranam to a *grihastha* (married householder). 'Rama! Rama! Rama!' said the man. 'What are you doing Maharaj? I will get *paapa* (sin).'

'Why do you do pranam to me?' asked the Mahatma.

'Maharaj, you are such a great tyagi. You have renounced the world, and do Bhagwan's bhajan. I should definitely do pranam to you. It is my Dharma.'

The Mahatma smiled. He said, 'I gave up the world for Bhagwan. The world is small and Bhagwan is great. I gave up something small for something great. You, however, have given up Bhagwan for the world. You gave up the great thing for the small thing. Are you the greater tyagi or am I the greater tyagi? I bowed down to you because I accept that your tyaga is greater than mine.' The man understood the Mahatma's indication.

Kabirdasji has written:

Jina khojaa tina paayeyaa gahare` paanee paitha,

mein bapuraa boodana daraa raha kinaare` baitha.

(Those who sought it, found the treasure in the deep water. I foolishly remained sitting on the bank, afraid I would be drowned.)

It always happens that there are times when there are more good people and times when there are more wicked people. This is the law of Nature. It is the wheel of Time. You should never think that there will be a time when there are no good people, or no wicked people. Both types will remain. Prakriti – the Ishwara's power of Creation – is made of the three *guna* (tendencies) of Sattva,

Raja and Tama. Sattva guna gives peace and right thinking. Raja guna gives restlessness and strong desires. Tama guna gives sloth and deluded thinking. This is why there are different kinds of people. Some people have a predominance of Sattva guna, some of the Raja guna and some of the Tama guna. The numbers keep fluctuating.

If you actually want to obtain the benefits of Vrindavan, keep some time in hand to stay there. Go to Girirajji. Walk around. Find out who are the Mahapurushas who live there, immersed in the anand of Bhagwan's bhajan. Sit with them. However, you must keep in mind that they will not meet you at your convenience. They may be busy doing bhajan, or puja, or some serious reading, or even resting. If so, the Mahatma will not come out to meet you. You will have to await his convenience if you are genuinely eager to meet him. Even today, there are genuine Sants and Mahatmas living there.

The life of a Sant is a different life. Their anand is different. We get a different rasa in their company. Why? Because it is Bhagwan who is evident in the form of a Sant. Bhagwan is present in everybody's hriday – yours, mine and everyone else's – but He is not evident. In a Sant's hriday, however, Bhagwan reveals Himself. That is why rasa flows continuously from the Sants. Anand spreads all around, wherever he goes. It is anand when a Sant talks, it is anand when he walks, and it is anand when he sleeps.

In my life I have experienced Shri Maharajji – Pujya Gurudev, Shri Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj. His every action was filled with anand. Whatever he did was filled with joy. Once, on a celebration of Guru Purnima, Maharajji was giving a pravachan. People were sitting there, listening to him. Suddenly, a man stood up. He had a loose screw in his head! He interrupted the pravachan with a question, 'Maharajji, what does *guru-ghantaal* mean?' The first offence was to disrupt a serious pravachan. The second was to ask a meaningless question. Had it been any other Mahatma, he would have been greatly displeased. He would have rebuked the man and asked him to leave the hall. Do you know what Maharajji said? He stopped the pravachan, looked at the man and smiled. 'Guru ghantal is someone like you. Now, sit down.' The man sat down and the pravachan continued. There were no more interruptions!

It is one thing to give a pravachan, and another thing to experience rasa in life. Rasa flows from the hriday in which prema for Thakurji has manifested. It comes from Thakurji being revealed in the hriday. We people have seen several incidents in Maharajji's life. He converted strange questions into anand.

There was a Judge Swami at our ashram. He had been a Judge at a Court in Delhi before he took Sanyas. During one of the Question – Answer sessions, he asked Maharajji, 'Maharajji, is there any question to which you don't have an answer?'

Just see the tricky question he asked! If Maharaji said that he had an answer for any question, it would sound as though he was proud of his knowledge. If he said that there were questions he could not answer, it would not be true. Mahatmas have wonderful responses! Maharajji said, 'Judge Swami, this is the one question to which I have no answer!' This answer also indicated that he had the capacity to answer all questions! What a life of anand was his! Anand sparkled in his life!

When our Nritya Gopal Mandir was being built, a whole slab of concrete fell, after the hall was complete. Pujya Swami Omkaranandji – Mahantaji – was in charge. Maharaji was in Mumbai at that time. Funds were tight in those days. Swamiji was devastated at this setback after all Maharajji's efforts for the Mandir Hall. He was too upset to even eat anything. Madhavji was living at Vrindavan at that time. He phoned Maharajji and informed him of the situation. Maharajji said, 'Call Omkarananda to the phone. I want to talk to him.' As soon as Mahantji picked up the phone, Maharajji said, 'Oh, Omkarananda! Nritya Gopal Bhagwan may not have felt satisfied with the Hall. He keeps doing *nritya* (dancing). He must have lifted up His foot and kicked the slab! Why have you not eaten? Go and have your food. The Hall will be built again. It will be built again; it will be even better.'

It is very easy to say '*Brahma satyam jagat mithya jeevo brahmaiva naaparah*' – everything is a form of Bhagwan. But, how many actually feel this?

Seeyaa raamamaya saba jaga jaanee, karahun pranaama joree juga paanee.

(I have understood that this whole world is a form of Sita-Rama. I bow down to it with folded hands.)

This is easy to say. It is a great good fortune if one has the chance to see someone who lives with this feeling, like my Gurudev Puja Swami Akhandanandaji, Puja Rotiram Baba, and others. I have met such Mahapurushas. You people would also have met such Sants, in whose life every incident takes on a form of anand. Thakur has manifested in their hriday. They are anand-swarup – they are the essence of bliss!

Giridhar Gopal manifested in bhaktimati Meera's life in the same way. Whoever met her went back with some of the particles on her intense bhakti that floated around her. Even a person like Akbar, who ruled India so sternly and harassed so many, bowed his head before her. He came away after getting a valuable teaching from her. On the way back, Akbar told Tansen, 'How did Meerabai get such lofty knowledge about Raj Dharma? She has been immersed in bhakti since her childhood.' He was amazed at her wisdom.

Bhaktimati Meera prepared to leave Vrindavan to go to Dwarka. Why? It is because Prabhu had given this *aade`sha* (command; order). A bhakta's life is to obey the order given by Prabhu. Bhakti means doing what Bhagwan wants. If Prabhu were to give you an adesh, 'Go and live in Vrindavan. Your work here is done,' what will you do? Will you obey Him or will you think about what to do?

A *bhagavat-samarpita jeevana* (a life completely surrendered to Bhagwan) is to think about everything as Bhagwan's leela, as Bhagwan's adesh, and the adesh of the Guru. Meerabai had no urge to live at Chittod, or Medata, or Vrindavan, or even to go to Dwarka. 'My bhakti will be to stay where my Thakur wants me to, and do the seva He wants from me. This is my sadhana.' This was the decision of bhaktimati Meera.

Champa brought Bhagwan's message to Meerabai. It was His adesh that Meera was to go to Dwarka. Meerabai had one chariot and a limited amount of baggage. She had stopped at the boundary of Vraja when she had come to Vrindavan, and walked to Vrindavan. When going to Dwarka, she went on foot all the way. Do you know why she did this?

When Bhagwan Shri Krishna went from Mathura to Dwarka, do you know how He went? Did He go on a chariot or did He go on foot? He had gone on foot. He had run away from Mathura to divert the enemies from attacking Mathura and save the people who lived there. Bhaktimati Meera said, 'When my *sarvasva* (all-in-all), my *praana-vallabha* (the beloved of my life) went on foot, I will also walk from Vrindavan to Dwarka. I will not go in a chariot.' This Rani, who lived in luxurious palaces, went on foot, accompanied by her sevaks and sevikas.

It took Meerabai four months to reach Dwarka. She did bhajan, kirtan and Satsang on the way. Why did the journey take so long? It is because Satsang started whenever she met any Sant or bhakta. There was no fixed program such as we have, to stay in one place from the twenty second to the twenty eighth of a month, and then go to the next place for a fixed number of days. The Sants had no such tight schedules in those days. *Ramataa yogee, be'hataa paanee* (a Yogi lost in Bhagwan and a flowing river go where they please) is a common phrase. Meerabai broke her journey for ten or fifteen days whenever she met a Sant or bhakta. She left the place very soon if she did not find any.

Rotiram Baba used to tell us that in earlier times Sants went mostly to villages; they hardly went to the big cities. Now, they go more to the cities. Times change. A Mahatma was leaving a village after spending a couple of days there. The people of the village were not nice people. Mahatmas endure everything peaceably. They never stay long in any one place, in any case. Before leaving, the Mahatma gave ashirvad to the villagers, telling them to stay peacefully in the village. His disciple was with him. He felt that the Mahatma had given a very good ashirvad.

The people in the next village were bhaktas. They had prema for Bhagwan and were also involved in welfare activities. The Mahatma spent three nights there. When he left, he told the people, 'Be happy. Go out and spread all over the country.' The disciple was surprised to hear this. He said, 'Maharaj, I didn't understand the ashirvad you gave. You told the quarrelsome people to stay in their village, and you blessed the good people by telling them to move out and spread all over the country.'

'My brother,' explained the Mahatma, 'if wicked people spread all over the country they will create trouble wherever they go. Good people will spread

goodness, and the whole country will benefit. This is why good people should be encouraged to go out of their villages. They will benefit people wherever they go.'

The lives of the Mahatmas were such that they travelled on foot from village to village. That was a different anand altogether; a completely different rasa. Pujya Rotiram Baba used to talk about it. He also travelled on foot in sparsely populated remote areas almost all his life. He went more to the *apavitra* (impure) places. His physique was muscular, like Hanumanji's. He used to say, 'Dayalu (meaning, compassionate – this was his way of addressing people), I once reached a place in the region of Chambal, which is notorious for dacoits. I decided to spend the night there, so I sat down under a tree. There were some men close by, grazing cattle. They soon went back to their village. I don't know what they told the villagers, but a little later, the men of the village came out in strength, carrying rifles and guns. They took up positions surrounding me. They must have thought I am a dacoit in the garb of a Sadhu! They surrounded me, coming closer to tighten the circle. I understood that they had misunderstood the situation. I felt no fear, but waited for them to come close enough to talk. The head of the group came nearer. I said, casually, 'Why, Ramprasad, why are you moving about with guns?'

Rotiram Baba paused. A smile flitted across his face. Then he said, 'Dayalu, just see Bhagwan's kripa! It turned out that the name of the man was actually Ramprasad! Now, my *siddhi* (supernatural power) flashed in their minds. The man placed his gun at my feet and prostrated before me. He said, "How did you know that my name is Ramprasad, Maharaj?" I told him, "I just uttered the name unknowingly." He said, "No, no! You are a siddha Mahapurusha!"'

Rotiram Baba was, in fact, a siddha Mahapurusha. 'Then, Dayalu, they took me to their village and did my seva with milk and curds and almond *halwa* (a sweet dish) with great prema. They did so much seva that they refused to let me leave! I left after ten days!'

If villagers get bhava they do seva with great zeal and care. They have integrity and sincerity. Just a few years back I had done the *parikramaa* (going round a holy place as a form of worship) of the Narmadaji by car. It took us twenty one days in all to go from Amarkantaka to Bharuch. If you ever find the time to do

this parikrama, I urge you to definitely undertake it. Eighty per cent of the people I met were untouched by the influence of Kalikaal. There was no sign about what Kalikaal is! The village people were so simple and straightforward! Whenever we stopped, they would come out of their small houses and say, 'Maharaj, please rest a little at our house. Please accept to have a meal with us.' There was no worldly consideration in their heart.

On one occasion we had taken some food at the house of an elderly lady. We stopped at her place on the return journey, and I presented her with a shawl. (We had carried some items with us. We were twenty five people travelling in five cars.) I told her, 'Ma, be happy always. My ashirvad is with you. We will meet again.'

Do you know what she told me? She said, 'You also be happy. My ashirvad is with you.' I remember it clearly, even today – what a simple, straightforward hriday she had! She blessed me and told me to be happy always! All these things are worth experiencing. Most of the area in Madhya Pradesh is forested area. I had not experienced anything like this before doing this parikrama.

It took Meerabai four months to reach Dwarka. Whenever she met good people, Satsang would commence. They would talk about Bhagwan, about Shyam Sundar's leelas. If anybody asked a question about Shyam Sundar's Katha bhaktimati Meera would get engrossed in talking about Him. Her mind, body and heart were filled with Shyam Sundar.

Meerabai reached Dwarka. She went to the Dwarikadheesh Mandir and bowed down to Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan. She found a good place to stay, because her fame had already spread everywhere. The people of Dwarka knew that Meerabai's was an extraordinary life.

Almost every evening bhaktimati Meera would go to the Mandir, do the darshan of Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan, and then sit by the sea. Why did she sit by the sea? Bhagwan Giridhar Gopal's body is blue, and so is the sea. Looking at the sea, Meerabai's bhava for Thakurji manifested more strongly.

There was another reason as well. Meerabai's longing was even more wonderful. She felt, 'This Dwarka was built later.' All of you know this. Bhagwan Shri Krishna's Dwarka had sunk into the sea. Meerabai sat on the sea

shore every evening with the thought, 'Who knows when my Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan will decide to give me a darshan of the original Dwarka. It is under the sea. He can come out and give me darshan any time.'

Meerabai sat by the sea one evening. There was a soothing sea breeze that lulled her companions to doze. Bhaktimati Meera saw a *bhaava-drishya* (something sublime seen in a trance). Meerabai saw that a sakhi had come to call her. It was a beautiful scene. The outer world vanished. She could no longer see her sevaks and sakhis. It is possible that some of the people sitting here have experienced some divya darshan. May Bhagwan bless you with one in future. When a person gets a *bhava drishya* he is aware of only himself and his Thakur, and nothing else, even if he is awake. At that time, there is no *jaagrita* (waking state), *svapna* (dream state) and no *sushupti* (deep sleep state). A divya darshan takes place in a state that is beyond these three normal states.

Bhaktimati Meera could no longer see the world around her. She saw a beautiful sakhi had come to call her. 'Oh, Madhvi! Madhvi!' Meerabai remembered the leelas she had seen at Vrindavan. Thakurji had told her that she had been Madhvi in her previous birth. Meerabai thought, 'It seems a message has come from Thakurji. This is His messenger.' Before the sakhi came close Meera saw the golden walls glimmering under the sea. She saw large doors made of silver. A beautiful Dwarka appeared on the sea. The sakhi said, 'Oh, Madhvi! Bhagwan Dwarikadheesh is thinking of you today.'

'Bhagwan is thinking of me? Is He really thinking of me?'

A bhakta finds it difficult to believe that Bhagwan thinks of him. When the only desire of a bhakta is to obtain Bhagwan, he finds it difficult to believe that Bhagwan thinks of him.

The sakhi took bhaktimati Meera to Dwarka, where she met many other sakhis. It was a wonderful scene. The *vaibhava* (grandeur) of Chittod was nothing compared to the *vaibhav* of Dwarka. Meera went further. She saw Vaidarbiji, meaning, Laxmiji in the form of Rukminiji. Rukminiji is from the Kingdom of Vidarbha, so one of her names is Vaidarbhi. Vaidarbiji was seated on a Royal throne. Dasis were fanning her. Bhaktimati Meera bent to bow down to her, but Rukminiji got up and embraced her. 'No, no!' she said.

‘Bhagwan has thought of you and sent for you today. In any case, He remembers you every day.’

‘Did He really think of me? Does Shyam Sundar truly remember me always? Has He accepted me? If He has accepted me.....’ If Bhagwan accepts someone as His own, it is the supreme achievement of that person’s life.

Rukminiji said, ‘Meera, not only has He accepted you, His voice gets choked whenever He speaks about you.’

‘Why is that? I am only obeying His command.’

‘Yes, you are obeying His command, but just as you can’t bear to stay without Him, He can’t bear to stay without you.’

Bhagwan has said, in the Gita (4. 11): *Ye` yathaa maam prapadyante` taanstathaiva bhajaamyaham.* (I worship the person who worships Me with the same feeling he has for Me.) This is Bhagwan’s svabhava. It is our mistake is we feel, ‘I do Bhagwan’s bhajan, but He does not look after me.’

Pujya Radha Babaji has written another point in his book. He has stated, ‘It is Bhagwan’s vow – *Ye` yathaa maam prapadyante` taanstathaiva bhajaamyaham*'. What does this mean? It means that if you take one step towards Him, He will take one step towards you. How long is your step and how long is His step? Who will get the greater benefit – you, or Bhagwan? Bhagwan’s step is so huge that He can measure the seven *loka* (realms) in one step! So, take one step towards Bhagwan, and Bhagwan will come close to you. This is what Bhagwan means.’

And, if you offer up to Him all that is yours, He will give you everything that is His! Who will benefit more? You will! So, will you offer up to Him all you possess? It is difficult to say ‘Yes.’ It is difficult to believe this. The thought is always there, ‘What if I give, but He doesn’t?’

In ‘Satsang Sudha’, Pujya Radha Baba has written something very logical. ‘Bhagwan has said this in the Gita. This is His pledge. He will behave with you the way you behave with Him. If you give Him all you have, He will give you all He has.’ If you don’t believe this, look at the lives of Meerabai, Tulsidasji, Kabirdasji and others. More recently, the lives of Pujya Swami Akhandanandaji

Maharaj and Pujya Swami Ramsukhdasji Maharaj also prove this point. They gave Bhagwan everything they had – their *loka-paraloka* (this world and the other realms that would be the fruit of their good deeds). This is the proof before us.

Bhaktimati Meera said, 'Oh, Bhagwan has thought of me! He has accepted me as His own! What a great kripa of His it is!' The sakhis bathed Meera and dressed her up beautifully. She was about fifty six years old at that time. She had spent twenty five years at Vrindavan.

On this day, Meera enters the palaces of Dwarka. The Sants say that her body of fifty six was transformed into the form of a sixteen year old girl. This is the state in which a person enters Bhagwan's divya world. This is why, in the pictures of Bhagwan Rama and Bhagwan Krishna, they never have a moustache or beard. They are in an eternal *kishore avasthaa* (youthful state) of sixteen years. Sometimes some artist paints a moustache out of ignorance. Later on, he laughs at his own foolishness! It is a matter of the artist's imagination. One artist did not paint Bhagwan's *charana* (feet). He said, 'If I don't give Him feet, He won't be able to go away. He will always stay with me.' In bhakti it is *bhaavanaa* (the feeling) that is the main factor.

In Dwarka, bhaktimati Meera was transformed into a sixteen year old girl. A form composed of the five elements is of no value in Bhagwan's divya realm. We have only two examples in history – Meerabai and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu – whose *paancha bhautika* (of the five elements) bodies were transformed into divya forms. This has not happened to anyone else, even though there have been many Mahapurushas. Bhakti is an extraordinary sadhana.

Rukminiji felt very happy to see Madhvi. When He sent the sakhi to fetch Meerabai, Thakurji had told her to bring Meerabai, and have her bathed and dressed up with divine garments and ornaments. Meera donned the divine garments and jewelry that are worn in Bhagwan's leela. Here, she was called Madhvi by everybody. All the sakhis of Vraja were here, in Dwarka – Lalita, Champa, Vishakha, and others. Not only the sakhis, Shri Krishna's sixteen thousand one hundred and eight wives were also there. The eight Pataranis (principal Queens) were included – Rukminiji, Satyabhama, Kalindiji, Mitravindaji, Satyaji, Bhadraji, Laxmanaji and Jambavatiji. All the Pataranis

came and sat with Meerabai. 'Your swarup is very beautiful. So is your jeevan,' they said.

Meera felt embarrassed. 'All the Ranis are praising me. I don't know what Shyam Sundar has told them about me,' she thought. Most people – when someone praises them – say 'It is all Bhagwan's kripa'. In their heart of hearts, however, they feel that they have indeed done something to deserve the praise. Sometimes, it even happens that if no one talks about the work they have done, they begin to talk about it themselves!

Rotiram Baba used to tell us a story about an old woman. This old woman had a gold ring made. A diamond was studded in the ring. She put it on her finger to show it off, but nobody in the village said a word about it. Ten days passed, fifteen days passed without anyone commenting on it. The woman felt so frustrated that her beautiful ring had not even been noticed that she set fire to her hut. When the hut was on fire the village people came running to help put it out. The woman pointed out to them where to throw the water. One person noticed the ring shining in the light of the flames. 'Mother, your ring is very beautiful! When did you get it made?' he asked.

'Oh! Had you asked me earlier, I would not have set my house on fire!' she exclaimed.

A person is saved from the desire for praise only by Bhagwan's kripa. The result of fame is very difficult to shed. Even Mahatmas fall prey to it, leave alone the grihasthas. Mahatmas speak of all noble things in their pravachans, when sitting on the stage. Everybody praises them. The organizers praise them and the audience praises them. Everything goes well. However, if somebody of the organizing committee were to make a disrespectful comment when welcoming them, or before, and then gives the mike to the Mahatma saying, 'Please give the pravachan – that is when the caliber of the Mahatma's bhakti and sadhana is revealed.

Such incidents happened three or four times in the life of my Gurudev. Some people had organized a pravachan with the intention of insulting him. They invited him to a *sabhaa* (conference), and insulted him publicly before giving him the mike. Maharajji did not say a single word in response. He started his

pravachan with his *mangalaacharana* (auspicious opening shlokas), 'Vishvam darpana drishyamaana nagaree tulyam', and then gave the pravachan. He went back to his seat after completing the pravachan. What was the result? The audience turned against the organizers. They quarreled with them for their disgraceful behavior. This is what a Mahapurusha's life is like.

There was a Mahatma in Vrindavan. One of his disciples was an elderly lady. I have seen her. I also know the Mahatma but I won't to name him. The lady used to come to Maharajji's Satsang every day. Her Guruji found out that this disciple of his goes to listen to Swami Akhandanandji Maharaj. One day, when she went to meet him, he asked her, 'You go to his Satsang; why don't you come to my Satsang?' The lady said, 'I enjoy that Satsang because I understand what Maharajji is saying. I don't understand your pravachan because I don't understand Vedanta.' (Maharajji was speaking on the Maha Raas at that time.)

When the lady went next to meet her Guruji, the Mahatma made her take Gangajal and tulsi in her hand. He told her, 'Make a *sankalpa* (formal resolve; pledge) that after today you will never go to Swami Akhandanandji's Satsang.'

The lady was very intelligent. She took the tulsi and Gangajal in the cup of her hand, as directed by her Guruji. Do you know what sankalpa she made? She said, 'After today I will never come to your Satsang. What will you do?'

The Mahapurushas who are *poorna* (complete within themselves) never bother about such things.

Here was this one Mahatma who stopped people from going to Maharajji's Satsang, and here was this other Mahatma, my Guruji! The matter did not end there. That Mahatma sent a message to my Guruji. 'Please don't spoil my bhaktas.' Guruji said, 'Look, my brother, I do not ask anyone to come. If someone comes, I don't send them away. You please stop your bhaktas from coming to my Satsang. Tell them not to come to listen to me. However, if someone comes, and asks some question, I will not send them away. It is my duty to answer.' This is the life of a Mahatma.

Bhaktimati Meera felt very embarrassed, because everyone who saw her praised her, whether it was Jambavati, Satyabhama, Mitravrinda, or another of

Bhagwan's Pataranis. 'You are very beautiful. Your *saubhaagya* (good fortune) is very beautiful, and your voice is very beautiful!'

'Madhvi asked, 'How do you know so much about me?'

'There is some One, who tells us! He is Thakur, you know! He, who is your *pati* (husband), is also our *pati*. He is everybody's *pati*. He is the actual *pati* of all.'

What is the meaning of 'pati'? The word *pati* means: *paati rakshati iti pati* – a person who protects his wife from every problem is called a *pati*. The words of Sanskrit are extremely well-defined. People who translate them into English often find it difficult to find an exact equivalent. 'Husband' does not give the exact connotation as 'pati'.

Cultural and traditional differences also play a role. The exact relationship explained in a single word is not there in the English language. For instance, they use 'uncle' and 'aunty', whereas we have words like *tau* and *chaachaa* for the father's elder and younger brother, *mausee* – *mausaa* for the mother's sister and her husband, *buaa* – *foofaa* for the father's sister and her husband, etc. The Hindi word *joothaa* – meaning something that has been touched by an unwashed hand of a person who is eating – has no English equivalent. There are many such examples. We need to remember how rich is our cultural heritage and language.

Dwarikadheesh's Pataranis told bhaktimati Meera, 'Our *pati* is also your *pati*. It is He, who told us about you.' They took Meera to a separate room. It was beautifully decorated. It had a *hindolaa* (swing with a broad wooden seat). Sevikas stood there in pairs. Meerabai was asked to sit on the *hindola*. Everything was beautifully arranged. This is Bhagwan's *vyavastha* (arrangement). It is Giridhar Gopal's organizing. It is Dwarikadheesh's management!

A little later, Meerabai heard cries of 'Jai ho! Jai ho! *Dvaarikadheesha bhagavaana keejai!*' (Hail to Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan.) 'My *aaraadhyaa* (object of worship) is coming! My Thakur is coming!' thought Madhvi. Thakur had made such meticulous arrangements – He had sent for Meera, had her welcomed by His Pataranis, instructed for her to be bathed and dressed up,

and then asked to sit in a separate room. Thakurji came in. Madhvi jumped down from the hindola and put her head on His feet.

Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan said, 'Madhvi, you are very dear to Me. You obeyed every command I gave.'

What is the meaning of doing the seva of the aradhy? It is to be obedient. Seva is when you don't follow your own inclinations; you do what your aradhy tells you.

Aagnaa sama na susaahiba se`vaa. (Ramcharitmanansa)

(The best seva is to obey Thakurji.)

'You have lived the way I kept you, Madhvi. You stayed where I kept you. You are very dear to Me.'

Madhvi said, 'Prabhu, how much longer will I have to stay in the outer world?' Even if it is Bhagwan's command, there is always a *laalasaa* (longing) in the hriday of a bhakta to be with Bhagwan always. Just imagine the mental state of those who have not the slightest interest in this world – for whom this world has no importance – and still they stay in it! Why? Because it is Bhagwan's command. It is the wish of their Thakur. Meerabai asked Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan, 'How much longer will I have to stay outside?'

'You don't have to stay long in the outside world,' said Bhagwan Dwarikadheesh. 'You can take it that it will be for five or seven days more; no longer.'

Meerabai was overjoyed to hear this. She began to dance with joy. Only a short time of separation from Bhagwan was left. Shri Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan placed His hand on Meera's head. Meerabai felt sleep overcoming her. Then she found herself back on the sea shore where she had been sitting, in the evening of the previous day. It was like coming out of a trance in the evening and come out of it next morning.

Meerabai has said, 'Bhakti is very easy in the beginning, but when the hriday is colored in its hue, the result is that the bhakta becomes incapable of vyavhar.

All awareness of the body gets lost, awareness of the family vanishes, the bones become weak, and there is pain in all the nerves.'

Just think of it! Meera had been sitting by the sea in the evening. The whole night had been spent in her being lost in a trance. Her sevikas were trying to bring her back to outer consciousness, but Meerabai found greater joy in this state of external unawareness. When she became conscious of her surroundings, she began to call out, 'Where did Dwarka go? Where did Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan go?' The sevikas said, 'You are sitting in Dwarka, by the sea.' Meerabai, however, was still in a world of bhava. The sevikas managed to take her home.

On the other front, Akbar attacked Mevard and Chittod. He conquered the Kingdom. The people of Mevard and Chittod felt that this misfortune was the result of the way they had treated Meerabai. They repented bitterly.

We must be very careful that we never commit an *aparaadha* (offence) against any bhakta, knowingly or unknowingly. Bhagwan says, 'I forgive the offences done against Me, but I do not forgive offences done against My bhaktas.' This is written clearly in several places in our ancient books. There are many examples of this.

If you hear of someone doing bhajan, why should you bother whether it is genuine or hypocrisy? If you assume it is not genuine and insult the person – and if your assumption is wrong, and the bhajan is genuine – it will be an offence. So, if you see someone doing a *maalaa* (chanting with prayer beads), have a little *shraddhaa* (faith) in his sincerity. If you cannot have faith, maintain a little distance from him.

Why should you do that? It is because Bhagwan never forgives anyone who does an *aparadh* against His bhaktas.

Chittod had come under Muslim rule. The people all felt that this was the result of Meerabai's being insulted. 'Let us go and ask for Meerabai's forgiveness. Let us try to bring her back to Chittod,' they said. A group of Rajput (warriors) from Chittod, and two Rajpurohits (Royal priests) went to Dwarka. They told Meerabai all that had transpired in Mevard and Chittod and

Medata. This was Bhagwan's wish. The people told Meerabai, 'We ask for your forgiveness.'

Meerabai said, 'There is no question of forgiveness because I don't know of any aparadh that you have done. If you have been responsible for any incident, it has only helped me to come closer to Bhagwan Krishna, and that is not an aparadh. It has helped my life to progress in the right direction. Therefore, there is no question of any aparadh. There remains the question that I should go back.'

Meerabai gave a beautiful and logical answer to this as well. She said, 'Since there is no question of any aparadh, there is no question of forgiveness. Now, regarding my coming back, please think about this from the viewpoint of *bhagavat-drishti* (Bhagwan's viewpoint). If a person lives in Bhagwan's dhaam and does His bhakti, is it right to ask that person to leave Bhagwan's dhaam and bhakti?'

What do you people think? It is absolutely wrong. If your heart is engrossed in Bhagwan's bhajan – or if a relative of yours lives in some tirtha, and doesn't want to come back to his home – they should never be pressurized to leave the place of their choice. In fact, you should do their seva by rendering what service you can.

'Even from this viewpoint, I should not go back to Chittod,' said Meerabai. From the *vyavahaarika* (related to worldly interaction) Meerabai said, 'I am married to Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan. It is better for a daughter-in-law, or daughter, to stay at her husband's house after her marriage, or is it better for her to stay at her father's house?' The Rajpurohits had no answer to this question.

Meerabai said, 'I am living at my pati's place. Why do you want me to go back to my father's place? He, who is the pati of the whole world, the Master of the whole world, is my pati. Why do you want me to leave Him and go to my father's house?' Nobody had any answer to this point.

What did the purohits do? Both the purohits started a fast. This is what the people of this world are like. When Meerabai was living in Chittod they did not

let her live in peace. Now that she was living in Dwarka they wanted her to leave Dwarka. This is the world! It has not spared even the great Mahatmas. You can save yourself from this world only if you do bhajan and live in the *sharana* (refuge) of Bhagwan.

There is one point written in the Bhagwat. When did Bhagwan feel most *prasanna* (pleased)? It was when the *manushya* (human being) was created. However, who is Bhagwan most wary of? It is the human being!

It is also written in the Bhagwat that Bhagwan is most wary of humans because He knows, 'This is the only *jeeva* (being) that has the capacity to beguile even Me.' and, humans do try to outsmart Bhagwan!

You will ask, 'How is that possible?'

I will tell you a story. A Punditji decided to do a *paatha* (recite) of the Ramayana at a Mandir of Hanumanji. The Mandir was in a forest. Very few people went there. The Punditji did the ritual recital during the nine days of Navaratri of Chaitra (the lunar month that comes around March-April) ending on Ramnavami, the birth date of Shri Rama. He did the daily paath with great bhakti. Tears came to his eyes when he chanted the verses about Bharatji that are filled with pathos.

Bhagwan was very pleased to hear the paath. He told Hanumanji, 'This Pundit is doing such a beautiful paath, he should be given some dakshina.'

Hanumanji said, 'Certainly he should, Prabhu. It is Your adesh! I will give him eleven hundred rupees on Ramnavami.' Hanumanji said this when a Sethji (wealthy businessman) came into the Mandir for darshan. Punditji could not hear this conversation between Bhagwan and Hanumanji, but Sethji could hear it. This was Bhagwan's leela. The Seth understood that Hanumanji would give eleven hundred rupees to the Punditji on the concluding day of the paath. The Sethji did darshan and came out. He told the Punditji, 'You do the paath beautifully. I will give you a dakshina of five hundred rupees on Ramnavami. However, there is a condition. The condition is that whatever dakshina you get will be given to me.'

The Punditji was delighted. He thought, 'Nobody else has come until today. Today, Thakurji has sent this Sethji. No one is likely to come.' He agreed gladly. The Sethji was happy at the thought of giving five hundred and getting eleven hundred rupees.

On Ramnavami, the Sethji arrived in good time. The Punditji concluded his paath at twelve noon. Sethji offered bhoga to Bhagwan, and give five hundred and one rupees to the Punditji. Punditji gathered up all his things and prepared to leave. When Sethji saw that the Punditji was about to leave, he thought, 'Hanumanji had said that He will give eleven hundred rupees to the Punditji, but He hasn't come! He, being Bhagwan, told a lie! It is one thing for a businessman to tell lies, but how can Bhagwan tell lies?'

Sethji told Hanumanji's vigraha, 'Two days ago You had said that You would give eleven hundred rupees to this Punditji on Ramnavami. I was here. I heard You! Being Bhagwan You told a lie!' Hanumanji remained silent. It was His vigraha, after all!

The Sethji was so angry at the thought of losing five hundred rupees instead of gaining six hundred that he slapped Hanumanji's vigraha! Hanumanji Maharaj would not let go of his hand. Sethji's hand was stuck to His vigraha. Sethji said, 'You have already made me lose five hundred rupees – now, let go of my hand at least!'

Hanumanji said, 'Who will give the remaining six hundred rupees to the Punditji? I deliberately made you listen to the comment! I knew you would offer the Punditji five hundred rupees with the thought of gaining six hundred. Now, phone your son and tell him to go to the Punditji and give him six hundred rupees. Only after that will your hand be freed.'

There was no way out for Sethji. He had to phone his son. The son went and gave six hundred rupees to the Punditji. Only then did Sethji's hand get unstuck from Hanumanji's vigraha.

What is the message of this story? Whether it is an example, or a joke, or a true story is another matter. This is a common example given by Mahatmas to explain how human beings use their brains to try to outsmart even Bhagwan.

Don't they? Do you people also try? Please don't, else's you'll get stuck like that Sethji! Bhagwan is the smartest of the smart, and yet He remains wary of humans.

The two Rajpurohits were fasting. 'We will take no food or water if you don't agree to come back with us,' they told Meerabai. They had no answer to the two excellent arguments given by Meerabai for not leaving Dwarka. Her reasons were:

1. I am living in a tirtha. My bhajan-pujan is going on very nicely here. It is not appropriate that you want me to leave Dwarka and go back with you.
2. I am living comfortably in my husband's house. Why do you want to take me to my father's house?

The Rajpurohits had no answer, but they sat obstinately in a fast of protest. This continued for three, four, five, six days. Meerabai thought, 'What is happening? If these two Brahmins die because of their fast, it will be a great aparadh. And, Prabhu, I don't want to leave Dwarka. Prabhu! You are *kartum akartum anyathaa kartum samartha* – nothing is impossible for You. Please find a solution.'

Meerabai took the whole group with her and went to Dwarikadheesh's Mandir. She prayed to Bhagwan. It was the time of the early morning Mangala *aarati* (worship with the lamp). Everybody was given Prasad. Meerabai asked the Goswamiji who was in charge of the Mandir, 'I want to go into the *garbha-graha* (sanctum sanctorum) and pray to Bhagwan.' Goswamiji knew about Meerabai's life. He said, 'Who can place any obstacles for you? Please go in.'

Meerabai went into the *garbha-graha* and prayed. 'Prabhu! I am in such a fearful situation. I don't want to leave You and go, but these two Brahmins have been fasting for the past five days. Today is the sixth day that they have not touched food or water. Please do kripa on me, Prabhu! Please rescue me from this situation.'

Meerabai stood there for a little while, praying. Suddenly the room was filled with brilliant effulgence. It was so dazzling that it seemed as though the sun

and the moon had come inside the chamber. It was impossible for anyone to keep their eyes open. Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan emerged from His vighraha.

Boliye` dvarikaadheesha bhagavaana kee jai!

Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan manifested and said, 'Madhvi, I had told you that only five or seven days of separation were left. Today is the sixth day. The obstinacy of these people induced Me to call you early. Come with Me today itself. If you don't remain here, the Brahmins will automatically stop fasting. They will have no option but to go back.' Bhagwan embraced Madhvi. They both merged into the vighraha of Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan.

It is the most amazing incident of Meerabai's life that she physically merged into Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan. When people regained their faculties they began to look for Meerabai. It was seen that a corner of Meerabai's odhni showed hanging from Bhagwan's vighraha. The head priest was a great bhakta of Bhagwan. He said, 'Oh, can't you see with your eyes open? See this – it is the edge of Meerabai's odhni. Isn't this what she was wearing?' Everybody recognized it. They understood the miracle that had happened.

Thus, bhaktimati Meera merged physically into the vighraha of Bhagwan Dwarikadheesh forever. She became one with Bhagwan. She entered His divya loka. She became part of His eternal leela, one of His group of sakhis. And now, bhaktimati Meera will never come back to this mortal world.

All the people present bowed down to Dwarikadheesh Bhagwan, and returned to their homes. The world went on, as it always does. Great Mahapurushas come into it and leave it. As long as they are in the world they create an impression on the people. Their influence lingers for a while after they leave, and then it wanes. This is how the world goes on, and the one who runs it is Thakurji.

So, we are not to worry about it, but we should certainly try our best to keep it in the right track. I can tell you about my personal reaction. Whenever there is some misfortune I don't get worried. I try to use the shakti and buddhi Bhagwan has given, to try to improve the situation. The situation may not be as bad as it was, but still, we pray to Bhagwan that the years ahead bring us

into the Satya Yuga and be free of the Kali Yuga. Even today we see that the majority of people have *aasthaa* (belief, faith) in Bhagwan, in bhakti, and have great reverence for Meerabai.

The fact that you got anand in this pravachan is seen plainly. I myself obtained great anand. I thank Jhunjhunwallaji for selecting this as the subject. This pravachan gave me the opportunity to do some reading on Meerabai's life, and prepare to sing some of her padas for you. I have derived great benefit from it. Your listening with such prema is Bhagwan's kripa.

It is my *praarthanaa* (prayer) to Bhagwan that the right perspective for Dharma, Artha and Kama remains awakened in you. When all three are maintained in the right balance in life, it leads to an orderly life, an orderly society and an orderly Nation. The swarup of a Raja should have these three *guna* (attributes). It is a well-known adage – *yathaa raajaa tathaa prajaa* – the *prajaa* (populace) will be as the Raja is. That is what society will be like.

And, everything will surely be good, because this is where Bhagwan comes when He takes an Avatar. If Bhagwan takes an Avatar anywhere in this world, it is only in our Bharatvarsha (India). This is such a pavitra bhoomi (pure land); it is the bhoomi of Mahapurushas. It is the Country of Bhagwan. It is His place, His leela-bhoomi. Bhagwan takes care of it Himself. However, the shakti He has given to us must be put to use for His work.

Bhagwan Krishna had lifted the Govardhan Parvat, but the gwala baal had helped to support it by holding it up with their *lathiyaas* (canes) to the best of their ability. Bhagwan, Shri Krishna, is our aradhya, and we are all His gwala baal. The shakti we have been given is to use well, for spreading Dharma and bhakti, and for the good of the country. Bhagwan will do the rest.

We will conclude with this pada of Meerabai.

Paayojee maine` raama ratana dhana paayo.

(Oh, I have obtained the wealth of the priceless gem of the name of Rama.)

Vastu amolaka dee me`re` sadaguru kirapaa kara apanaayo.

(My Sadguru has given me an invaluable object. He did kripa and accepted me.)

Paayojee maine`

Janama janama kee poonjee payee jaga mein sabhee khovaayo.

(I got the accumulated riches of several births, and lost everything of this world.)

Paayojee maine`

Kharachata na khootai yaako chora na loote` dina dina badhata savaayo.

(This wealth is not depleted by spending, nor can it be stolen by thieves. It increased by a quarter every day.)

Payojee maine`

Sat kee naava khe`vatiyaa sadaguru bhavasaagara tara aayo.

(The boat is the Satya and the boatman is my Sadguru. This is how I crossed over the sea of this world.)

Payojee maineq.....

Meeraa ke` prabhu giridhara naagara harasha harasha jasa gaayo.

(Meera's Prabhu is Giridhar Nagar. I have sung His praises joyfully.)

Paayojee maine` raama ratana dhana paayo.

And, what is the special factor of this wealth that Meerabai got? There are so many problems in earning and preserving worldly wealth, and even in giving it. The wealth Meera refers to is anand to earn, anand to preserve and anand to give.

Meerabai says, '*Sat kee naava khe`vatiyaa sadaguru*' – here, Satya means honesty; it does not mean the Paramatma. The first requisite on the path to Bhagwan is to be honest, to be free of guile or deceit. That is what Meerabai is

telling us. Build a boat like hers. Your Sadguru will come as your boatman and row you across the *bhavasaagara* (the sea of this world).

In the last line bhaktimati Meera says that life should become simple and filled with anand. A person needs to consider many things when he leads an artificial or complicated life, but when he adheres to the truth there is no need to make intricate schemes for worldly gain.

Arjuna means straightforward – *sarala* – simple. If a person's jeevan is simple and uncomplicated it is a jeevan of anand. It is the simple, joyful life of children and Mahatmas. This is what Meerabai says in the last line of this beautiful pada.

Boliye` vrindaavana bihaarilaala kee jai! Jai jai shree radhe`!