

CONVERSATIONS WITH SWAMI TURIYANANDA

Recorded by Swami Raghavananda and translated by Swami Prabhavananda

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The spiritual talks published below took place at Almora in the Himalayas during the summer of 1915 in the ashrama which Swami Turiyananda had established in cooperation with his brother-disciple, Swami Shivananda. During the course of these conversations, Swami Turiyananda describes the early days at Dakshineswar with his master, Sri Ramakrishna, leaving a fascinating record of the training of an illumined soul by this God-man of India. His memories of life with his brother-disciples at Baranagore, under Swami Vivekananda's leadership, give a glimpse of the disciplines and struggles that formed the basis of the young Ramakrishna Order. Above all, Swami Turiyananda's teachings in the pages that follow contain practical counsel on many aspects of religious life of interest to every spiritual seeker.

Swami Turiyananda spent most of his life in austere spiritual practices. In 1899, he came to the United States where he taught Vedanta for three years, first in New York, later on the West Coast. By the example of his spirituality he greatly influenced the lives of many spiritual aspirants both in America and India. He was regarded by Sri Ramakrishna as the perfect embodiment of that renunciation which is taught in the Bhagavad Gita

Swami Shivananda, some of whose talks are included below, was also a man of the highest spiritual realizations. He later became the second President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

The conversations were witnessed and recorded by Swami Raghavananda.

June 1, 1915. It was morning.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "At one period of my life I used to live continually in an ecstatic state. Then the Lord suppressed this mood."

DISCIPLE: "Why did He suppress such a wonderful mood?"

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "You know that in our country if a young child is very handsome his mother sometimes draws black marks on his cheeks so that people will not be envious of him. Perhaps in the same way the Lord suppressed this ecstatic mood in order to protect me from the envy of others.

"Troubles exist as long as we live in the domain of thought. There is no peace until we transcend thought itself. When one kills the mind, the senses come under control. What does it mean to kill the mind? It is to detach it from sense objects. The enlightened person has their senses under perfect control. 'The tortoise can draw in his legs: the seer can draw in his senses. I call him illumined.'" The Swami closed his fist to illustrate how the enlightened soul draws in the senses.'

"Even a mind that knows the path can be dragged from the path; the senses are so unruly. But one who is wise controls the senses; the person recollects the mind and fixes it on Me. I call such a person illumined.' As long as one expects happiness, one stays restless. But the enlightened soul 'knows bliss in the Atman [the Self within] and wants nothing else. Cravings torment the heart; he renounces cravings. I call such a person illumined.' Craving for happiness brings suffering in its wake.

"The illumined soul keeps himself detached from the mind and intellect and directs them to work, whereas the ordinary person identifies himself with the mind and intellect."

DISCIPLE: "I would like to live a contemplative life."

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Everybody works. The important thing is to awaken the Divine Mother within oneself. Of course you must also work. You may even have to go through drudgery if the Lord commands it. But never work for name and fame! You have renounced all that! Ah, what a wonderful spirit of self-surrender Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) had! When he was seriously ill at Rishikesh and we, his brother-disciples, were watching over him, sad at heart, he said: 'Mother, if it is your will, let me die.'

"Although the Lord made us his instruments and engaged us in his work, at least ninety per cent of our mind dwelled in him."

June 2, 1915. There was a reading of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Turiyananda remarked: "He who places too much emphasis upon diet is a fanatic. As one grows spiritually, one overcomes this tendency. Is our Lord only the Lord of the Hindus?"

"God and mammon cannot be served at the same time. Those who try to compromise are still very much attached to the world. If you want to realize God, renounce all worldliness.

"Why should you care about public opinion? Good people never criticize others. It is only the wicked who speak ill of their fellow men. Ignore them! The idea of doing good to other people! First help yourself! The illumined souls alone are the true benefactors of this world. They know what is good for mankind. Having attained knowledge, they work for others. "You must rub your hands with oil before you break open the jackfruit."

June 3, 1915. There was a reading of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Turiyananda observed: "The study of the scriptures is important. It engages the mind in holy thoughts. But in a higher state even study is a distraction. When you are established in contemplation, it is best to let the mind be absorbed in a single ideal. At one time, when I was staying in the Himalayas, I used to study the Upanishads for eighteen to nineteen hours a day and to meditate on their truth. Through the grace of the Upanishads I had revelations.

"At the Baranagore Monastery we used to study scriptures and philosophy a lot. Swami Abhedananda particularly engaged himself in much study. Swamiji did too and also meditated many hours. We all practiced great austerities. Sri Ramakrishna made us do it. Then we attained the bliss of liberation while living through the Master's grace. Free as the air we have lived—depending on none, feeling no lack, without cravings, fearless! Yes, we know the joy of liberation! We used to wander from place to place, depending entirely on the Lord. We would beg for alms when we were very hungry. Wherever it got dark we made our home. What freedom!"

June 7, 1915. SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "A modern commentator on the Vedanta Sutras has made the remark that liberation cannot be attained by worshipping the personal aspect of God, that such worshipers after death only go to higher planes of existence. To realize one's true nature is to attain liberation. Certainly this realization also comes to the devotees of the personal aspect of God whenever they wish to erase their sense of individuality. However, although they realize their union with the Chosen Ideal, they usually prefer to keep a sense of separation and live as servants of the Lord in order to taste his bliss. God reveals himself to his devotees both as personal and impersonal. Look at our Master. He attained everything by worshipping God as personal. He used to say, 'He who has perfected himself by worshipping the Lord in one aspect knows all his aspects.'

"You must struggle to meditate and to become deeply absorbed

in Him. Try to develop intense devotion to God throughout your life.

“You have to admit this truth: As long as you have physical consciousness, the Lord is the master and you are his servant. When you think of yourself as an individual soul, you are a part of Him. And when you realize that you are the Atman, the Self, you are He. In that state there is no sense of ego.”

There was a reading of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Shivananda remarked: “Ah, those days at Dakshineswar were like heaven itself!” He continued with a description of Sri Ramakrishna’s daily life:

“From morning till one in the afternoon everyone was busy picking flowers and making other preparations for worship until the poor were fed. In the meantime, Sri Ramakrishna would discuss spiritual subjects and the devotees listened to him with rapt attention. Even fun and jokes were related to God. There was no other topic. Everything culminated in his samadhi [transcendental state of consciousness]. After lunch, Sri Ramakrishna used to rest for a short while. Then again he spoke on spiritual matters. At vesper time he used to go to the temple of Mother Kali and fan her a little. He would become God-intoxicated and return to his room reeling in a state of ecstasy. He used to ask us, who were practicing spiritual disciplines under his guidance, ‘Tell me, do you feel divine inebriation when you meditate mornings and evenings?’ At night, Sri Ramakrishna slept very little. He used to get up and wake those who were sleeping in his room, saying, ‘Don’t sleep too much! Wake up and meditate!’ Again he would lie down a short while, then rise before dawn and chant the sweet name of the Lord. The others would sit and meditate in their own ways.

“May your hearts be filled with devotion for our Lord!”

June 10, 1915.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “You have to ascend to the highest peak of renunciation in order to realize the Atman.”

June 11, 1915. It was noontime. Swami Turiyananda observed: “Is it easy to guard the mind from distracting thoughts? It demands heroic effort. Distractions constantly try to enter your mind and to take possession of you. Layers upon layers of rubbish are in the mind. What good is it merely to close eyes and ears?”

In the evening, Swami Shivananda mentioned a devotee. He prayed for him: “Mother, may he not go away empty-handed! Give him a grain of your grace! He came to your devotees.”

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'I cannot stand anyone calling me guru. It irritates me. Who is the guru? Satchidananda [God] alone is the guru.' the external guru shows the path; the inner guru quickens the spirit. Ordinary men who pose as gurus do not know this and ruin themselves by feeding their egos."

June 13, 1915. Upon returning from a walk, Swami Turiyananda said: "A. wants to study raja yoga in a hurry. We have given our life-blood to this task! As long as I can remember, I have devoted myself to nothing else, and yet—how far am I from attaining purity of heart! Still there is anger and envy! Make me, O Lord, thy servant's servant's servant!"

Swami Turiyananda was lying down and I [Swami Raghavananda] was fanning him. Swami said: "Never let egotism control you. It ruins a man. He loses all discrimination—just like a drunkard. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'Water does not accumulate on high ground.' An egotistic man holds his head high." Swami Turiyananda lifted his head to illustrate.

Swami continued: "Strong is the person who is elastic like steel and does not break. Strong is the person who can live in harmony with many people and heed opinions differing from their own.

"Swamiji said at one time: 'As long as you have been born on this earth, leave an impression on it.' At the Baranagore Math he remarked: 'Our names will be recorded in history!' Swami Yogananda and some other brother-disciples made fun of him. Swamiji retorted: 'You will see if I am right or not! Vedanta is the only religion convincing to all. If you don't listen to me, I will go to the quarter of the untouchables and teach them Vedanta!'

"To preach religion is to give something tangible. it is not like teaching a class from the pages of a book. Religion is something that is transmitted. Hence, before you can give you have to earn.

"Never take pride in the thought that you have controlled your passions. If you do, they will become active again. Always pray, 'Lord, protect me from passions!' As long as you live in a physical body so long passions will exist, but through the Lord's grace they will remain dormant and won't overpower you."

While we were walking, Swami Turiyananda told me a secret of meditation, which is to watch the mind when one passes from the waking state into dream, from dream into deep sleep, and back again from deep sleep to dream and waking. Swami: "I used to try to keep conscious in the dream state. I was able to do so, but I could not

watch the mind in deep sleep. I would lose consciousness immediately.

“There are certain obstacles to mediation: laya, vikshep, kashai, rasaswad, and sama. Laya is a state in which the mind is lazy, inert, and goes to sleep. Most people make no effort to progress beyond this state. In vikshep, the mind becomes restless and distracted. Kashai is a state of mind in which the spiritual aspirant finds meditation distasteful; but people should persevere in their practices. In rasaswad, one feels joy in meditation and does not wish to progress to a higher state of consciousness. Sama is a state of equilibrium without any thought of God.”

June 15, 1915. After a reading of The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Shivananda told the story of a dying magistrate who kept repeating, “Punish the rascal! Give him twenty lashes!” Even at the last moment the magistrate’s mind was dwelling on his profession instead of God. Then Swami Shivananda remarked: “the last thought determines the next birth.”

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “How inspiring is the Gospel! It always seems new. As one reads it, one feels like calling on the Lord.”

Later in the day, Swami Turiyananda and I were walking. Swami said: “What good is work if the mind is not united with God? It is simply drudgery! Without devotion to the Lord, life is dry. We read in the Upanishads how one should be absorbed in the consciousness of Brahman [the all-pervading spirit].”

June 16, 1915. During the morning there was a reading of Swamiji’s Raja Yoga. Afterwards, Swami Turiyananda commented: “Raja yoga is a great science—the science of the mind. What a wonderful analysis of the mind it is!”

In The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, the Master had remarked that one cannot attain God through work. But he had pointed out that if an aspirant works in the proper spirit an earnest desire arises to find Him, and that when this desire becomes intense he reveals his grace.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “Can God be attained by a little cursory study or meditation? One must have intense yearning for the Lord! Life must seem unbearable without his vision! Sri Ramakrishna said to us: ‘Just because I had that yearning, the Divine Mother took care of all my needs and provided this Kali Temple and Mathur Babu [son-in-law of this temple’s founder; a great devotee who provided for the Master and served him].’ The heart must burst with longing for God. Then one attains everything.”

June 18, 1915. We were reading the following aphorism in Raja Yoga: "By giving up even these powers [of omnipotence and omniscience], the seed of evil is destroyed and liberation follows."

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "This is devotion, and this will save you! It is the devotee alone who can renounce enjoyment and psychic powers. Other people fall prey to these. There is no other way to liberation but devotion to God. Do you understand?"

SWAMI SHIVANANDA: "What more is needed when the mind becomes absorbed the moment you meditate on the lotus feet of the Lord?" As he uttered these words, his face became flushed with spiritual emotion. When he returned to the normal plane of consciousness, he sang a song of Ramprasad expressing the idea that devotion is the root of all spiritual attainment. He continued: "Sri Ramakrishna prayed at one time, 'Mother, you revealed yourself to Ramprasad. Why won't you reveal yourself to me?' All of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings are of devotion mixed with knowledge."

June 20, 1915. It was morning. Swami Turiyananda was singing: "Ah, when will dawn that blessed day when tears of joy will flow from my eyes while I chant the name of the Lord?" Then the Swami turned to us: "Do you ever weep for God? How wonderful is the state when the name of the Lord brings tears to the eyes!"

SWAMI SHIVANANDA: "When I first began to visit Sri Ramakrishna, I often felt like crying. One night at Dakshineswar, by the bank of the Ganges, I wept to my heart's content. In the meantime the Master had been asking for me. When I returned to his room, he said: 'You know, if you weep before the Lord, your tears wipe out the mind's impurities of many births, and his grace immediately descends upon you. It is good to weep before the Lord.'

"Another day I was meditating at the Panchavati. I was absorbed. Sri Ramakrishna was returning from the pine grove. When he looked at me, I began to sob. The Master stood beside me without uttering a word. A thrill went through my heart, and I began to tremble uncontrollably. Later I followed the Master to his room. He remarked to someone about my weeping: 'These are no ordinary tears; they are tears of ecstasy.' Then he made me sit near him and gave me something to eat. It was so easy for him to awaken the kundalini [spiritual energy] in us—without even a touch, just by his presence."

June 21, 1915:

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Whenever Swamiji used the pronoun

'I,' he was identified with Brahman and used the word from the nondualistic standpoint.

"You can exercise free will in two ways, either by identifying yourself with him or by surrendering yourself. As long as you keep yourself apart from God, you have no freedom of the will.

"It is harmful to spiritual growth to think that one knows everything. Self-confidence means faith in the Atman."

In the evening, while taking a walk, Swami Turiyananda said: "Character is the essential thing in spiritual life."

June 23, 1915. At noontime, after his rest, Swami Turiyananda remarked: "One must have the faculty of love. How intensely I loved when I was a young boy! I had made up my mind to become a monk, but I used to weep at the thought of having to leave my brothers. I was so deeply attached to them. When I came to Sri Ramakrishna, he easily severed all ties of attachment.

"Once the Master asked B.: 'Whom do you love most of all?' The answer was: 'Well, sir, I don't think I love anyone.' At this the Master exclaimed: 'Oh, what a dry rascal! Fall either into one pit or the other—into the pit of filth or into the pit of gold!' But who is fool enough to want to fall into the pit of filth?"

"I never had any doubt about the existence of God."

June 24, 1915. It was morning. Swami Turiyananda, while taking his bath, talked about the days at the Baranagore Monastery when Sri Ramakrishna's disciples were still young boys: "Swami Abhedananda used to avoid all types of work. He would shut himself in a room and engage himself in study and meditation. He used to say that he did not wish to work. Sometimes he would observe complete silence and not talk for days on end. Some of us used to be angry with him for that. But Swamiji said: 'You people are jealous! You can't bear that somebody is doing something to improve himself. He is not lazily idling his time away. What if he doesn't work! Never mind, you don't have to work either! I'll do everything!'"

"The worship of a man as man, without the awareness that he is God, does not lead to liberation any more than the worship of departed ancestors or spirits does. Even if you worship an illumined soul, you do not reach enlightenment unless you are conscious of his divinity, although you will imbibe his characteristics to some extent, such as purity and dispassion."

SWAMI SHIVANANDA: "That also is no small matter."

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "But if you worship a divine incarnation, whether or not you are aware of his divinity, he will reveal his Godhead to you. But remember, this applies only to the divine incarnations.

"The gopis, [shepherdesses of Brindaban], for instance, were transformed and attained liberation although they had approached Sri Krishna with lust. One gopi was locked in a room by her husband. Through her pangs of separation from Sri Krishna she was freed from evil, and through the bliss she received by meditating on him she also went beyond good, and attained liberation.

"There is a state of divine love where you forget the Lord's power in order to feel greater intimacy with him. That state comes after God-realization. But the gopis were no ordinary human beings. Their bodies were made of spirit.

"Through the grace of Sri Ramakrishna we can understand Jesus and appreciate the teachings of the Bible.

"Continence is the most important practice in spiritual life. One who practices chastity easily attains devotion and knowledge. Lust is born in the mind. One who is freed from passions transcends this world."

In the afternoon, after a reading of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Turiyananda remarked: "They say that from the Word evolved this universe. But this is only true if by the Word you understand that pure Consciousness whose symbol it is. When we think of the universe, we are awed by its vastness. Yet when we analyze, what is the universe but touch, taste, smell, form, and sound?

"If you say that stubbornness is strength, I cannot agree with you. Stubbornness merely hides one's weakness. Real strength is the capacity to yield when necessary and to resume one's position without compromising the ideal."

June 26, 1915. At lunchtime Swami Turiyananda observed: "Do not forget the ideal for which you have renounced the world. It is good to analyze occasionally if you are progressing in your spiritual life."

June 27, 1915. SWAMI SHIVANANDA: "Sri Ramakrishna did not initiate disciples like an ordinary guru. He used to awaken our spiritual consciousness. He would draw something on the tongue and one would immediately have some ecstatic experience. One day,

when I returned from prostrating in the Kali Temple, the Master remarked: 'You belong to that high spiritual realm whence manifest name and form.'"

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Whoever approached the Master once could not even think of going to any other holy man."

Later in the day, Swami Turiyananda remarked: "I had intense longing to attain liberation in this very life. Now of course I do not care whether this body lasts or not."

June 28, 1915.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "We have seen with these eyes. We have heard with these ears. When we came to Sri Ramakrishna he made us feel that God-realization was within our grasp. Yet occasionally we would become discouraged and worry whether our lives would pass without our reaching the goal. Then, in the course of time, the Master did everything for us."

June 29, 1915. Swami Turiyananda was quoting from a song about Sri Rama: "'There is none second to Him. He is all in all. He is my only refuge.' When you come to this realization then you will have achieved something. The ordinary person depends on many things—on wealth, on friends, or on their own intelligence. But there is no security in anything but God."

"Let nothing stand between you and the Lord. The Lord had freed the gopis from all bondages except shyness. Finally he freed them from this last limitation. If the Lord finds that his devotee has difficulty renouncing a certain attachment, he himself takes it away. 'O Lord, you steal away all that I had hidden deep within my heart.' 'If you desire to cross this ocean of worldliness, O man, renounce all cravings.' "

While walking, Swami Turiyananda said: "The Master used to tell us: 'First tie the knot of nondual knowledge in the corner of your cloth; then do as you please. And adore Him.'" That is to say, know Him to be your innermost Self—the life of your life, the eye of your eye—and realizing this, devote yourself to Him.

To pray, 'Lord, give me this, give me that,' does not lead to liberation. True devotion does not arise so long as the slightest desire is left in the mind."

My Master [by Vivekananda] was read.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Can a person rest contented without

struggling to know if there is a Reality behind this world appearance, that there is a God, One who never dies, One who is the infinite mine of bliss—a bliss compared to which these sense pleasures are simply playthings?”

“Just see! God to us is merely a word. What will a few minutes of meditation and japam [repetition of the Lord’s name] do? Let your heart burn away with yearning for God! Feel that life is not worth living without him! Then he will reveal himself! As the poor man longs for wealth, as the lustful man longs for a woman, so must the devotee long for the Lord.”

“Surrender yourself to God. You call him omnipotent and omniscient. Why then should you hesitate to take refuge in him? But surrender yourself sincerely. Don’t rely upon your own strength while chanting his name. There is no deceiving God. He knows everything. ‘Thou art the agent, I am the instrument. Thou art the operator, I am the machine.’ To feel this sincerely is the alpha and omega of religion. Swamiji used to quote the Bible: ‘My God is a jealous God.’ If you are attached to anything or anyone else and do not renounce all for him, you cannot find him.”

June 30, 1915. It was morning.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: Who wants God? Practically nobody. Everyone wishes to be free from suffering and to find happiness. Pure devotion without any ulterior motive is very rare.

“I knew a man who used to say he wanted nirvana. One day he asked me if he should marry again. You see, when there is an earnest longing for nirvana, even to be the emperor of emperors is a trifling thing. The very desire for nirvana brings such tranquillity to the mind. How can anybody then think of marriage!”

July 1, 1915. SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “Whenever Swamiji used the pronoun ‘I,’ he was referring the universal Self. When we say ‘I,’ we are identified with the little self—with the body, mind, and senses. Hence we should think of ourselves as servants and devotees of the Lord. The very utterance of the word ‘I’ would take Swamiji beyond body, mind, and senses. This was his normal state of consciousness. But this mood, ‘I am he,’ is not possible for us. So we have to say, ‘Thou and Thou alone,’ in order that we may forget the little self and be united with the universal Self.

“The real devotee thinks in terms of ‘Thee’ and ‘Thine.’ The devotee always feels, ‘Lord thou art all in all; everything belongs to thee.’ Where is the difference between his dualism and the nondualistic standpoint? But when a devotee thinks of ‘me’ and

'mine,' and separates himself from God, that kind of dualism is harmful to a person's spiritual growth. Such an aspirant remains deluded. Sri Ramakrishna used to repeat, 'Not I, not I, O Lord! Thou, thou alone! I am thy servant.' A devotee must completely renounce the ego."

DISCIPLE: How can we get rid of anger, jealousy, and other passions?"

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Just analyze yourselves—why should you be angry or jealous? Who are you to punish another? Learn to punish yourselves. But never say that you have conquered lust and other passions. If you do, they will be aroused. Pray to God that they may remain dormant.

"Divine love must awaken within your hearts and be intensified and crystallized. Then only the vision of God will open up. Take for instance the life of Gopaler Ma [a woman disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who had the continuous vision of Gopal, Lord Krishna as a child]. She used to see Gopal accompanying her and gathering fuel for her. And Sri Ramakrishna used to have visions of Ramlala [the Child Rama] walking and playing with him.

"Intense devotion to God is the important thing in spiritual life. What does it matter whether you worship him as formless or with form?"

July 2, 1915. SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Eating, sleeping, fear, copulation—these are the common characteristics of man and beast. We differ from the beasts in that we can discriminate between right and wrong. If one lives on a low plane of consciousness, one finds pleasure in the senses. With spiritual growth, one experiences happiness in subtler things. Then the person no longer finds enjoyment in the gross. Most people live the lives of beasts—drinking, hunting, running after a mate. If one cannot rise to a higher plane of consciousness, human birth is wasted.

"Meditate! Meditate! Be absorbed in His consciousness! If you can think single-mindedly of the Master for five years, you will achieve everything. Then it does not matter where you live. East and West will be the same to you. Know that God alone is real. Nothing else matters."

"There is the ocean of infinite existence, infinite consciousness, and infinite bliss, seemingly divided by the stick of an ego which lies upon it. This ego is the first-begotten son of desire. Our cravings alone keep us separated from God. Sometime or other we must be freed from them. Root out all desires and call on Him! If He wills that

the body should die, let it die while chanting His name! By worldly standards a man may be great. But he too in some life or other will have to renounce everything for God.

“An enlightened being, who has seen God and been freed from cravings, again engages in work for the good of others. You also may work, under the direction of illumined souls, because selfless work will help you grow spiritually. Actions performed in the spirit of nonattachment do not create bondage. They stop the wheel of karma. Pray to Him: ‘O Lord, I want you alone. You are my all in all. May I always think of you. Do not engage me in actions that may make me forget you. Wherever you may keep me, may I remember you.’ But if you say ‘Lord, give me this and do not give me that,’ then your prayer is selfish. When you want to do one thing and not another, you permit your ego to control you. Always pray that you may have devotion to the lotus feet of the Lord and that you may have the society of the holy.”

July 4, 1915.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “One must have the inner conviction that whatever happens in this world happens by His will. Success and failure come by His will. The achievements of so many clever people in this world have come to naught! Everything is His will! Do you think the Ramakrishna Mission will last forever? It will degenerate in time, and the Lord will have to incarnate again.

“Sri Ramakrishna did not have much regard for people who were immersed in sex. He used to say that they had lost all substance. The Master used to keep everything in his room in perfect order. Every object had its proper place so that even in darkness he could find what he wanted. An orderly mind is as necessary as external order.”

“Prejudiced people will listen only to one side of a story. Swamiji had an open mind. He would take every point of view into account. He had a generous and forgiving heart.”

July 5, 1915.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “Repression is bad. Let the mind wander wherever it pleases. Let it experience. At long last it will tire and return to God. If you repress it, its cravings will grow strong. But keep watch over your mind and intellect. Try to unite them with the Lord.”

DISCIPLE: "Why doesn't the mind have a natural tendency toward the divine?"

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Everybody wants this to happen spontaneously. The mind will long for God in time. But first struggle; be watchful. Later on your mind will become your guru.

"That which is good and pure in you is God. That which is evil in you is your ego. The more you think of him, the more he will increase and you will decrease. Some people are secretive. They raise a wall around themselves. That is bad. Without being sincere and open-hearted nobody can find God."

July 6, 1915. It was morning. A devotee had written a letter asking the following question: "Is it possible for a person in the world to attain samadhi?"

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "The worldly man engages himself in sexual intercourse. That, indeed, is his bliss of samadhi! If he doesn't, his wife thinks she is losing her husband. Such is the world! She will beat the children and go around with a long face. Seeing all this disturbance, what can the poor man do?

"What a troublesome world this is! How sex creates one bondage after another! But again, there are women who are aids to their husbands' spiritual progress. Such women are born as parts of the Divine Mother.

"There are spiritual families in this world although they are very rare—the family of Balaram Bose, for instance. Every one of his people is conscious that God comes first. What is worldly life? To be attached to the world and its objects. Spiritual life in the world means keeping the mind in God and performing one's duties without attachment."

July 7, 1915.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: " 'He is the doer, I am His instrument.' The more you become established in this idea and renounce the thought of 'me' and 'mine,' the greater will be your attainment of peace."

July 9, 1915.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "The personal God, that is to say, God with attributes, through his maya [power] first created Brahma. From this first-begotten son down to the stone, all are within maya, although the expression of power differs. The personal God and the

impersonal Brahman are not two but present different aspects of one and the same Reality, just as a snake presents different aspects when lying still or crawling."

"Some Vedantists consider the personal God also within maya. They do not believe in worshipping him or in his saving power. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that those who accept only the impersonal aspect are very one-sided."

DISCIPLE: "My concept of God is very vague."

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "It is not possible to have a clear conception of God all at once. Listen to our words. Reflect on them. Then one day in a flash of illumination you will realize for yourself the truth you have been hearing about. We also had to pass through some doubts regarding our ideas of God. Studying the scriptures, we became more confused. Then Sri Ramakrishna taught us the truth which we later experienced for ourselves in a burst of realization. Now we are established in it."

"When we studied the scriptures we thought that the attainment of nirvana was the supreme ideal. Afterwards, when we came to Sri Ramakrishna, I was struck dumb when I heard the Master chastise us for holding this ideal. He called it low. But I had great faith in his words. So I proceeded and later realized the truth of his teaching."

"The love of God that comes after samadhi, after realizing God's true nature, is devotion mixed with knowledge. There is a higher state than this in which pure devotion and true faith arise spontaneously. This state is beyond the faculty of reasoning."

July 18, 1915. During the reading of a lecture by Swamiji I was watching Swami Turiyananda. Tears of ecstasy were rolling down his cheeks. After a while he began to talk: "You are all highly educated boys. You have renounced the world. But what are you doing? Days, months, and years pass by, while you are idling away your time. Where is that yearning for God? Don't you remember how Sri Ramakrishna used to weep, 'O Mother, another day is gone and still I have not seen you'? You have become dry! You have lost your spirit! 'Who is dead-while-living? One who does not long for the truth of God.' Swamiji once said 'At the age of twenty-nine I finished everything.'"

"But why should I blame you? You follow our example. We are not struggling hard. We say that we have become old and diabetic. Nonsense! These are our excuses. What we have seen in Swamiji! During his last days, when he was hardly able to breathe, he would

still roar: "Arise! Awake!' But we are giving excuses."

"The body will surely die. Let it die while working for the good of mankind. What is the truth? Rousing the divinity within yourselves and in others. Knowing that to be true, wake up, struggle, forget everything else! Struggle now or never! But I can see that you have a desire for name and fame. That won't do. Because you have university degrees you want to be somebody in the Order. You have not yet learned to be instruments in the hands of the Lord. Do you think everybody can be a Vivekananda?"

July 24, 1915.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "C. is restless. Why doesn't he go to Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda] in Bhadrak? It seems he is waiting for Maharaj's return to the monastery. Maharaj hides his spiritual power. He won't let himself be caught easily. But if you surrender yourself completely to him surely he will reveal God to you. He has that power. He is the embodiment of devotion. Since his boyhood his life was molded by Sri Ramakrishna himself. He is his eternal companion. You have read that in M.'s Gospel. C. should go to Maharaj and open his heart to him. Then Maharaj would be interested in him. But C. stays away. What can anybody do about it? If he really longs for the truth of God, let him have the benefit of Maharaj's holy company for some time. Then he may go wherever he pleases and pray and meditate."

DISCIPLE: "C. wanted to know if he should go and practice austerities in Uttarkasi."

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Yes, that's good! I give him permission. If you wish, you also may go. Live by the bank of the Ganges and weep for the Divine Mother. Pray to her: 'Mother, I don't want anything but you.' Prepare your mind now to live a contemplative life. Work and preaching will come later."

July 25, 1915.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Has it been revealed to you what the purpose of this human birth is? Sri Ramakrishna's life is an example for us. The Master had the vision of the living Mother of the Universe and entered into an intimate relationship with her. He surrendered himself to her. But once the Master told us, like a child, that he did not always obey her."

"If you want to catch fish, first you must throw bait into the water. Then you will see the tail of a fish, the fish will swallow the bait, and gradually you will haul it in. Afterwards you make fish curry,

eat, and are satisfied.”

“D. has written that he is unhappy. You see, he wants to be somebody. He doesn’t want to work under another’s direction. But let him first be worthy of leadership. Why is he unhappy? It’s his own fault. Why doesn’t he struggle to follow the ideal? He has read the teachings. Let him practice them. What else? What is spiritual attainment—growing two horns and a tail? No, no! We understand the whole situation. He is unhappy because he does not want to work under somebody else.”

DISCIPLE: “No, sir, he is just asking your help because he has not had any spiritual experiences.”

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “What kind of help does he want? There must be self-effort. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: ‘Struggle a little! Then the guru will help you further.’ From our own experience we can confirm that if you move one step toward God, he will take ten steps toward you.”

DISCIPLE: “But if the Master wished, couldn’t he transform and elevate anyone’s consciousness?”

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “Yes, he could, but only of those who had some substance in them. The Master used to say about some people, ‘They won’t achieve much in this life.’ Unless there is self-effort, nothing can be accomplished. The illumined souls show us the path. Isn’t that a great help? But we have to walk it. If you open your hearts to us we can show you the path, because we have walked the path.”

DISCIPLE: “We don’t understand our own minds.”

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “We can help you there. But you must have the desire to control your minds.”

“Once a king came to a holy man and said: ‘Holy sir, please help me control my mind. I am so immersed in worldliness!’ The holy man replied: ‘Know this world to be ephemeral. See its worthlessness, and your mind will become detached from it.’ Then the holy man held on to a pillar and asked the king to release him. The king answered: ‘Why don’t you just let it go?’ Then he understood.”

“The plate of food is set before you, but you keep your mouth closed. Do we have to force the food down your throats? This lethargy is a disease of the mind! You may ask, ‘Does not the Lord do everything for his devotee?’ The point is, first become a devotee,

then he will do everything for you. But devotion is not to be had so easily. You have to surrender yourself completely to him. If you can't do that, weep before him and say, 'Lord, I have no devotion. I have not found you.' People shed jugfuls of tears for riches. Learn to weep for him! Unless you do, why should God do anything for you? He does not care if you don't care. If you can feel restless for God, know that he is very near. Then you don't have to wait long for his vision. Analyze your mind! Find out if you really want him!"

"E. has some self-control. He controls his lust. But he does not spend his time in prayer and meditation. He does not direct his mind toward God. Therefore his passions found expression in other channels."

"Sri Ramakrishna once told me to increase my lust. I was shocked. Then the Master explained: 'What is lust? It the desire for fulfillment. Desire fulfillment in Him and intensify that desire!' Then the lust for flesh left me."

"F. did not practice meditation or japam. He believed only in work. Yes, he gave me personal service. But what of that? You may be sure that through the Lord's grace I can take care of myself. I don't need anyone to serve me. But what could I do? Kedar Baba left him with me. I often told F.: 'Why do you live like this? Work, any servant can do for four rupees a month!' At first I tried my best to bring him out, but I failed. He did not open his heart to me and continued to live within his own shell."

"Generally, the tendency of people is to try to display their good side and to hide their shortcomings. Those who can confess their faults openly before others overcome them quickly. But it is not so easy to admit one's defects. Know that those who do so have some substance in them. G. was very frank. He used to speak openly of his faults and so got rid of them."

"Try to make everyone your own, and they will be your own. Be like a little child. If someone tells a child that a certain person is his brother, he will believe it. The more you approach the Lord, the more sincere and openhearted you will be. Our Master was the embodiment of frankness."

Swami Turiyananda wrote to the boy who had complained that he was unhappy. The substance of his letter follows: "If you are unhappy because you have not found God, then the more you intensify this unhappiness the more grace you will find descending upon you. But if you are sad for any other reason, shun that unhappiness with great care because it will be an obstacle in your path."

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Those who worship the Lord only in a picture are just ordinary devotees. But those who see him in all beings are the best of devotees."

"Sri Ramakrishna once told Swami Abhedananda: 'There is a class of holy men who meditate in a cave. When they have realized their true nature, they give up their bodies.' But that kind of ideal is not of this place. Such holy men consider everything as maya and completely renounce it, even the vidyamaya [that which leads toward God]. One who has realized the personal God can also realize the impersonal if he or she chooses. For that person also the 'knots of the heart are rent asunder' and he or she knows the true nature of the Atman. But the devotees of the personal God do not want nirvana. They are not afraid of living in the world for the good of others."

"In the dice game of pasha the inferior players protect their pieces and try to end the game quickly. But the experienced players are not afraid. When they are in a position to win, they hold back for the fun of prolonging the game. The Master considered nirvana a lower ideal. He made us realize that there is a higher goal than gaining salvation for oneself."

Swami Turiyananda mentioned a certain individual who used to criticize the conduct of others. He remarked "Always finding fault! He never sees the good in anyone, which shows that his mind is very impure."

"A devotee feels sometimes that the Lord is pleased with him and at other times that he is displeased with him."

"Sri Ramakrishna used to say that he could not even look at an egotistic man."

July 29, 1915.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Why should you not attain God? Surely you will, else why did you come here? Weep before him! Don't let him rest! Pray to him: 'You are the Inner Ruler, and you know my heart. Don't you see that I want you? Reveal yourself to me!' But how many can do that?"

July 30, 1915.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "One day Sri Ramakrishna talked about his disease. He was asked if he felt pain in his throat. The Master answered: 'What foolishness! The body does not become spiritual. It is the mind that becomes holy!'"

“One may have Spartan fortitude, be able to bear physical suffering patiently, and may hide their suffering. That is nothing. But when one knows that the pain is of the body, not of the Atman, ‘then he keeps his mind detached from disease and suffering and he lives immersed in the consciousness of God.’”

“Repression of passions is bad. Unless the mind is directed toward a high ideal, they will find expression through other channels. Place your mind in God, then all evil will fall away by itself. That is what is meant by self-control; it arises from devotion to the Lord. Feel that you are a child of God! Why should his child be lustful? Or take the attitude: ‘I am pure! I am awakened! I am free!’”

“To stand on your own feet means to stand in union with God, to find your strength in Him—not in the little self who is a university graduate!”

“Ishwarakotis or ever-free souls are those who do not merge in nirvana but live as eternal companions of God. Generally, people try to exhibit their good side. They want to make a good impression instead of trying to be good themselves. The first thing we learned from Sri Ramakrishna was to pay no attention to the opinion of others. He used to say: ‘Spit on public opinion! Look toward God and try to please him!’ Swamiji was like that.”

While he was cutting up vegetables, Swami Turiyananda remarked: “Work is worship. Every action must be done perfectly like a sacrificial rite. It is only when actions are performed in this spirit that character is formed. But is it so easy to build character?”

“When I was a young boy, I noticed how my older brothers changed in character after they married. They lost their nobility. Women make men worldly; that is why I hated them. When I came to Sri Ramakrishna, he helped me overcome that feeling.”

“Vishnu [a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna] used to meditate very deeply, but as soon as the Master touched him, he would wake up and gaze at him. Nityagopal [a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna] used to live in ecstasy all the time. The Master used to tell him: ‘Don’t be so intense! You have to keep your mind down enough to live with other people.’ Nityagopal attained a very high state. His body would become luminous. It seemed that he had no tamas [lethargy] in him. In his company I learned forbearance. We used to pass the whole night meditating and chanting the Lord’s name—sometimes in Beadon Square Gardens, in the College Square, in some other park of Calcutta, or at Kalighat. The Master used to say that Nityagopal had attained the state of paramahansa [the highest state of

consciousness]. I tell you frankly that at any time I can raise myself to that state and forget the world."

"People are always seeking advantages for themselves. For hundreds of births they look for their own comfort. What is liberation? It is to be free from this self-seeking."

"Is it so easy to live a pure life in God? One has to live very carefully. Keep your eyes wide open! Learn forbearance! If somebody harms you, do not retaliate or hold any resentment. You are saved if only you can keep your mind engaged in lofty thought."

August, 1915.

We read some portions from the life of Sri Chaitanya [great Bengali saint of the 16th century]. Swami Turiyananda commented on his intense longing for Sri Krishna and his attainment of union with him: "That kind of madness for God is possible only in a divine incarnation, not in an ordinary man. What pangs of separation from him, what yearning Sri Chaitanya suffered! As if he would die without the vision of God! Sri Chaitanya is the full incarnation of divine love. Ah, Sri Chaitanya! Lord! Lord!"

August 20, 1915.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Mind, intellect, and ego are in flux. One must learn to transcend them. Go beyond, and live as the witness! In the relative plane, one who has knowledge also has ignorance, one who is good also is evil. One must transcend both ignorance and knowledge."

"Meditation begins when the meditator, the process of meditation, and the object of meditation have become one. When japam has become automatic, that is to say, when a part of the mind continually repeats His name, then you are progressing in japam. The important thing is to forget the ego."

"The mind that becomes elated also is subject to depression. Don't identify yourself with either! Go beyond! In the game of hide-and-seek the children are 'safe' when they touch the granny. Touch the granny—that is to say, somehow touch the feet of the Lord. Then you are no longer subject to the opposites of life"

"One by one a man adds adjuncts to himself. He becomes the father of a son. The son grows up, marries, and the man has a daughter-in-law, and so forth. He forgets what he really is. There is a saying that with seven imitations the original is lost. When you free

yourselves from all adjuncts and meditate on your true nature, then you realize that you have always been Brahman. This world, this maya, is created by the waves of your own mind."

"At one time I had the vivid and direct experience that every footstep of mine was taken through the power of the Lord and that I had no ego left. I lived in that state for some time."

"Don't expect anything from anyone! Learn to be the giver! Otherwise you will become self-centered. That is the teaching in the family of Ramakrishna. I have seen so-called holy men who thought that they had become detached from the world and would have nothing to do with others. They were dry."

"O my mind, dwell within yourself! Do not roam without! Assimilate this spirit! Give your mind to God alone! That is why you have become monks. Weep before Him and pray: 'Lord, may I love you wholeheartedly!' Sri Ramakrishna used to teach us: 'Work with your hands, but let your mind remain at His feet.'"

SWAMI SHIVANANDA: "Organized group living usually fosters tendencies toward sectarianism, institutionalism, and rivalry in leadership. Then all spirituality is lost. But where a strong spiritual current flows, such tendencies of degeneration cannot develop any more than scum can grow on a flowing river. You see, we keep ourselves aloof from everything. Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda] also keeps himself detached."

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Do you know why I was so successful in America? Swamiji spoke highly of me to some of the people there, and so naturally they had faith in me. When someone believes in you, you must live in such a way as to increase that person's faith. Otherwise, disastrous results may follow."

"You have to transcend both good and evil. However pure the mind becomes, you are not safe until you have transcended the mind itself. The sword must touch the touchstone before it turns into gold. Know that your true nature is beyond both good and evil."

"The personal God is not the end. He is still an aspect. One has to go beyond all aspects. True devotion comes after union with God. In the plane of relativity, one who is pure in heart is also impure."

"The Lord is not partial. His grace falls equally upon saint and sinner just as rain falls equally on all the land. But only the ground which is cultivated reaps a good harvest. If you ask why some feel His grace and others do not, the only answer is ignorance. And there

is no answer to the why of ignorance.”

“If somebody claims that he is God’s favorite, he bases this attitude on his perception of the Lord’s grace. But that is not the universal experience.”

“There is also the theory that the Lord keeps some in bondage and gives liberation to others. Who can understand the mystery? Only those who see the one Brahman everywhere, they also sees his grace in everything, even in great disaster.”

“Another theory maintains that all blessings come from God, and all evil and suffering are the results of one’s karma. This attitude is helpful in ultimately freeing oneself from ego.”

“Don’t hide anything from us! Know that just by being clever you cannot find the truth of God. The crow thinks he is very clever, but he eats worms. We see everything so clearly that sometimes we shrink from our own insight.”

“Don’t you see how rotten this world is! How rare is selflessness! Selfishness and self-advertisement are rampant everywhere! How little of the mind is given to God and how much of it to the world and its objects! Unless you have dispassion toward the world, you cannot attain knowledge or devotion. But remember, it is also true that the world is real because God is real.”

“If somebody hurts you and you retaliate, you hurt yourself more. You become as evil as that person. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: ‘He who curses another and holds resentments cannot attain liberation.’”

DISCIPLE: “Some people believe that unless you live in a group, envy, anger and jealousy remain hidden within you. One realizes that one has these passions when one lives in a group.”

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “Why so? Why analyze and see the evil? Move toward the Lord! Through his grace you will be freed from all passions.”

“See the attitude of man! How he looks upon woman. He sees in her only an object to gratify his lust. He wants to possess her completely—body, mind, and heart. What ignorance! Man does not realize that the woman also is an individual just as he is. She also has a right to her own free will. It is gross selfishness to want to possess her and to think of her as an object of enjoyment. It brings great suffering in its wake. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: ‘Lust and greed are at the root of worldliness.’”

Swami Prabhavananda, the founder of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, had the privilege of associating with him on a number of occasions. He said that the Swami was powerful like a lion, and at the same time a loving and affectionate teacher. He tells the following incident about Swami Turiyananda, which took place shortly after Swami Prabhavananda had joined the Ramakrishna Order.

“On my way to the Himalayas I stopped in Benares. There I fell ill with chicken pox, and Swami Turiyananda would not let me proceed to Mayavati. I had a high fever. Every day the Swami used to come, sit on my bed, and put his hand on my forehead. I begged him not to visit me because I was afraid he might catch the disease, but he came nevertheless. One day he said to me: ‘Ask a boon!’ So I told him: ‘Maharaj, please do me the favor and don’t come and sit on my bed any more.’ He seemed disappointed, and said: ‘Oh why did you ask for that!’ But he respected my wish. From that day on he would visit with me, talking from the door. After the healing process had progressed and I had taken my first bath, I went to the door of Swami Turiyananda’s room and bowed down to him. Many people were visiting him, and I did not want to enter and risk infecting others, as that stage of chicken pox is very contagious. But the Swami insisted that I come in. The crowd stood aside for me, and Swami Turiyananda addressed them: ‘Anyone who is afraid of contagion may leave.’ No one dared to move. Then Swami Turiyananda placed his hand on my shoulder and said, ‘Abani, where is there no contagion? But through the Divine Mother’s grace, fire loses its power to burn and water loses its power to drench.’”

The spiritual talks of Swami Turiyananda which follow probably took place in Almora or in Benares between 1915 and 1917. They were witnessed and recorded by Swami Raghavananda, a disciple of Swami Brahmananda, who died on June 10, 1957. Swami Raghavananda first came in contact with many of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna as a college student. After passing his M.A. and law examinations, he joined the Ramakrishna Order in 1913 at the age of twenty-five. He assisted in the preparation of the authorized Life of Swami Vivekananda and later was editor of the journal Prabuddha Bharata. In 1923 he sailed for the United States where he preached Vedanta for four years. On his return to India he spent some time with M., the author of Sri Ramakrishna’s Gospel. The rest of his life was passed mostly in the Himalayas in intense spiritual practices.

Swami Turiyananda frequently quotes from the Gita and the Upanishads in these conversations.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “The wise do not teach spiritual precepts unless they are asked to do so; they hide their wisdom.

They impart knowledge only when there is genuine earnestness in the seeker. They do not enter into arguments. Spiritual teachers are like physicians: First, they have to diagnose at the disease of the patient, then they administer the medicine."

"You think it is enough to understand intellectually that the world is unreal. That is not right. Once you have accepted this truth mentally, you must actually apply it in your life. Then only will you get immediate results."

"You feel that living on alms is not important for a monk. But remember, it is great training to free a person from pride or egotism."

"Remember how Sri Ramakrishna took a rupee in one hand and mud in the other, and then threw both away! Isn't that a unique example? Think of the effect! The action immediately created a permanent impression in his mind. He was not satisfied with practicing discrimination only mentally. In the Upanishads we read: 'Perform austerity only after formal initiation.'" The commentator explains that spiritual disciplines are not effective unless formal vows are taken by the religious aspirant."

"Therefore I say: First detach yourselves completely from all worldly things. A piece of gold remains gold, whether it lies in mud or anywhere else. Similarly, once you have realized God, it does not matter where you live. But if anybody claims that one can be transformed without total renunciation, that person is a liar. 'By renunciation alone one attains immortality.' Know this: 'You cannot find the All unless you give up all.' With firm determination, like Nachiketa, you have to face death itself."

"Keep watch over yourselves! Struggle to improve yourselves and do not try to reform others. Stick to your own ideal!"

"At one time I felt so near to realization of the Absolute that with a little more struggle, perhaps for a year or so, I would have attained that Reality. But then a great desire arose in me to cultivate the devotee's attitude toward the personal aspect of God, so I went to Vrindaban. I used to ask the religious aspirants in that city about their visions and spiritual experiences. Only Gangamata satisfied me. She taught me this truth: Associate with holy people, and never give expression to your own spiritual mood."

"When I was your age, I was an extreme Vedantist. My one idea at that time was to attain nirvana. I used to consider that the supreme goal. But Sri Ramakrishna scolded me again and again, and gave me another ideal. He pointed out that the path of knowledge

was not my way. He made me a devotee instead. But if I wish I can reach the Absolute. I still remember the occasion when the Master disciplined me."

November 20. The conversation turned to Nag Mahasay [a great household-disciple of Ramakrishna, whom Swami Saradananda had visited on his deathbed].

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Swami Saradananda wrote to me: 'Nag Mahasay was greater than any of us monks. I saw him go into nirvikalpa samadhi again and again. Signs of ecstasy were visible on his body. He came back from nirvikalpa to normal consciousness, and then finally gave up in body in samadhi.'"

"Mr. X has a very suspicious mind. He never sees good in anyone."

"Give up the idea that you are a man or a woman. Think of yourself as the Atman [God immanent]. While I was in the West, the idea of sex was completely erased from my mind. I did not see any difference between men and women."

"Nothing matters as long as your conscience is clear. We know that there is a Being above us who knows the truth from the untruth."

"I spit on name and fame! What good are they? In a few days you are dead and gone!"

November 22.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "I don't think I ever slept longer than three or four hours a night. The first part of the night I used to pass in meditation. Then I decided that sleep was a great obstacle. So I used to sit up and watch my train of thought. As a result, my mind began to discriminate continuously between the Eternal and the non-eternal. And then I could not sleep any more. I thought to myself: Am I losing my mind? I began to pray that I might sleep. But within me there was a current of joy as if someone was saying, But didn't you want to discriminate like this? Then, for about a year, I regularly sang the following song: 'O Mother, make me mad with love for Thee. What shall I do with reasoning or knowledge?' This soothed my mind and brought me back from the realm of the Absolute to the personal aspect of God. If I had had a little more patience, I would have been merged in the Absolute."

"You see, I took a vow that I would not lie down on my bed. Whenever I felt very sleepy, I used to keep on sitting and doze a

little. Others thought I went to bed and slept all night, but I sat up and meditated."

"From my early boyhood days I never could stay in bed when there was a little light in the sky. There is no doubt that I was a yogi in my past birth."

"When I was a boy I believed only in self-effort. My attitude was: It is I who have created this world. By my own will I was born, and by my own will I shall go beyond birth and death. This was my firm belief. In those days I would not have listened even if Brahma and Vishnu had told me otherwise."

November 23.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "I have meditated much on the teachings of the Gita, which contains the essence of all scriptures. Sri Ramakrishna said about me that I was a monk according to the precepts of the Gita.

"This world is a slippery place. Unless one is careful one is apt to fall. If you control the tongue and the sexual instinct, you will live happily wherever you may be. How often one sees that people cannot live together in peace! They speak ill of one another or quarrel. And how many control the sex instinct?"

November 24. His life in the Shanti Ashrama, near San Francisco.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "While I was in the West, the Lord made me do his work. I felt that I was but an instrument in his hands. Whenever an inquirer came and asked a question, I used to see the face of the Lord, and the answer seemed to come directly from him through my lips. And the seeker would leave satisfied."

"I taught a class on the Gita there with great enthusiasm. At the Belur Math I also used to teach the Gita. I would explain one verse and remain absorbed in its meaning for a long time. Once a well-known scholar came and asked me many difficult questions about Vedanta, and through the Lord's grace he received simple solutions to his problems."

"At the Shanti Ashrama, people with strong individualities and different natures lived together harmoniously. I had to look after them for almost twenty-four hours a day. They had regular work to do, study class twice each day, four times meditation, and the rest of the time I used to converse with them on God. Early in the morning I would go to each cottage and wake everyone by chanting OM, OM. I

gave impartial love to all."

"Have confidence in yourself! The mind must be made steady. Analyze it and find out if it wants what is right or if it is only trying to deceive you. As you continue to analyze in this manner, you will gain confidence in yourself. But remember, you cannot really do the Lord's work unless you control your senses."

November 27.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "During meditation some try to make their minds a blank. But how is that possible? The mind is teeming with desires and cravings. As soon as you drive one thought out, many other thoughts crowd in. Only people who are inclined toward atheism follow such a course. The best way is to develop love for God by meditating on him constantly. In this way the mind is purified of all cravings."

November 28.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA to a monastic disciple: "You are living within your shell. Expand! See yourself 'in all beings and all beings in your Self.' Expand until you reach the goal, which is to see the Self in all."

"You must feel that the person who blames you is yourself and the person who praises you is also yourself. You won't lose your good qualities just because somebody speaks ill of you. So let them criticize. 'This truth I have learned, to remain undisturbed by the praise or blame of others. I shall remain undisturbed by the praise or blame of others. I shall gaze at your face, O Lord, and try to walk the path of righteousness.'"

"It is no good making a show of humility in order to impress other people. Some persons externally appear very humble, but inside they compare themselves with others and feel superior. This is another form of egotism. They are only concerned about the good opinion of other people."

November 29.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "The bank of the river Narmada is a peaceful place where many yogis live. They are genuine holy men and live in great austerity. When I was staying there I used to practice breathing exercises, because I had heard from Sri Ramakrishna that one should perform such practices while living on the bank of the Narmada. I used to do these exercises three times a day. My health was better there."

"At one time I thought I would spend the rest of my days by the Narmada, but then I decided to go to Rishikesh. First I went to Ujjain. I became sick and was unconscious for three days. When I regained consciousness, I saw a doctor sitting at my bedside. From Ujjain I went to Ajmir, then to Pushkar, and finally reached Vrindaban, where I stayed for six months. From Brindaban on my way to Hardwar and Rishikesh, I saw the Ganges at Roorkee. I was so attracted by the river that I felt like diving into it. I accompanied several holy men on this trip—men of great renunciation. After I reached Rishikesh, I went on a pilgrimage to Badrinath."

"The practice of excessive physical mortification and of harming the body in any way stems from *tamas* [delusion]. People may point out that Sri Ramakrishna used to rub his face against the ground and thus mortified his body; but he was in an ecstatic state at that time. His yearning for God was so intense that he completely forgot the world and his own ego."

"To practice spiritual disciplines in a haphazard, lazy way means that there is not that earnest desire to attain God. Practice must be performed with eagerness, in a systematic, orderly manner. One must not be guided by mere emotion but use one's intellect as well."

"While I was traveling, many a time I saw wild animals on the road. They would notice me and then walk away. This is how the Lord protects his children."

"When we took *sannyas* [the final monastic vows of renunciation] and uttered the prayer 'Free from ignorance, the root of all evil, may I realize myself as the light of pure consciousness, the self-luminous Brahman,' how our minds were exalted! All physical consciousness had vanished. The body was inert. But, you see, one must first have that inner renunciation before one takes the formal vows. *Sannyas* does not mean just wearing an ochre cloth."

"The more dispassionate you become, the happier your life will be. That is to say, with dispassion comes immediate peace. Cravings only lead you to sorrow and misery."

"There is nothing worse than a guilty conscience. What relief and what peace there are in the knowledge that one is free from guilt!"

November 30.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "From my boyhood on I had a longing for freedom. I used to feel that I must not depend on anyone for

anything, that to depend on others is misery. I told myself: 'Why should I depend on others? I am neither blind nor lame.' Sometimes we saw Swamiji [Swami Vivekananda] doing every detail for himself. But there are others who only talk about such things; they never lift a finger. How difficult it is to recognize the ego and to control it!"

"Keep holy company! It does not matter if you get specific instructions or not. A casual remark from the lips of a holy man can drive away your ignorance."

"I am telling you the truth when I say that I am in my own element when I live on alms, having only one piece of cloth, and passing my days meditating and singing the praises of the Lord. I don't care for comfort and luxury. The greatest joy is experienced when the mind is completely absorbed in the Lord. You see, my wants are few, so I am not dependent on anybody. I lived that kind of austere life for many years, and I experienced supreme bliss."

"Learn to grow love for God. Take delight in thinking of Him. Then dispassion, discrimination—all the virtues—will come to you naturally. Let the current of your thought go to Him always. Feel that you have no other refuge but God. I spent much time alone, practicing spiritual disciplines day and night. I used to chant prayers, meditate, and study. In the mornings I used to study the Upanishads, in the afternoons the Bhagavatam. Without such practices the character is not molded."

"When I returned from the West, the news of Swamiji's death was such a great shock that I felt I should also die. I left everything, went straight to Vrindaban, and stayed there for three years. Krishnalal [Swami Dhirananda] was with me. I disciplined him a lot, which directed his mind toward worship and meditation. What is meditation? It is to erase all cravings from the heart. Generally, people seek their own advantage—what they can get out of life. To renounce that is liberation."

"A real scholar is he who has all kinds of information but interprets his knowledge in a new light. He has an opinion of his own."

"O Lord, thou the supreme goal of all, I have no other support. Thou art my only refuge!' God does not reveal himself until we take complete refuge in Him. As long as you have any other hope, you have no need of God, so he keeps away from you."

November 3.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Always be sincere and speak the truth

frankly. In order to save their skin some people don't tell the truth. But that is not right. Those who plan and scheme get caught in their own net."

"Forgiveness is a great virtue. Learn to make everybody your own. Look upon all with an equal eye. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'God in the lustful, God in the hypocrite,'—and he would see God in everybody."

November 4.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "To seek one's own advantage is not sattva [purity]. Sattvic people are above thoughts of advantage and disadvantage. They keep their equanimity in the midst of happiness and sorrow."

"A person who fears that work may create difficulties and involve him or her in discord with others, and therefore tries to avoid work, is tamasic [deluded]."

"I used to have one fault: When I met people I would first see their weaknesses. From the standpoint of a spiritual aspirant this is wrong, although from a worldly point of view it may be all right. I used to meet many strangers, and there was no opportunity to associate with them intimately. But from a single clue I could read the character of an individual, good or bad; and I was usually correct in my judgment. Later I overcame this fault. It was my habit from childhood to analyze my mind and study its weaknesses."

"Swamiji at one time told me: 'Live the ideal life. The Divine Mother has shown me that by doing so you will accomplish a hundred times more good than I.' I didn't believe it. But then in all seriousness I plunged into the Lord's work and the work succeeded. If I had not associated with great souls like Swamiji and others, what would I have been but perhaps a wandering monk? I would have had some sort of realization, no doubt, but not what I have today."

DISCIPLE: "But, sir, isn't realization the supreme goal? Is there anything beyond it? You seem to make a difference between realization and your state of attainment."

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Yes, there is a difference. There are degrees of realization. A rose is a rose, but there are four-petaled and hundred-petaled roses. Is there no difference? Swamiji gave us a higher ideal than realization for oneself; it is to expand the consciousness until you see yourself in all beings, and all beings in yourself."

“His heart is with Brahman, his eye in all things sees only Brahman equally present, knows his own Atman in every creature and all creation within that Atman. that yogi sees Me in all things, and all things within Me. He never loses sight of Me, nor I of him. He is established in union with Me, and worships Me devoutly in all beings. That yogi abides in Me, no matter what his mode of life. Who burns with the bliss and suffers the sorrow of every creature within his own heart, making his own each bliss and each sorrow: him I hold highest of all the yogis.”

“Your idea of spiritual life is to meditate all the time with closed eyes: ‘Keep away from me! I want to meditate! No, no, no! that is not the ideal. Meditate with eyes closed and also meditate with eyes open. See Him everywhere! Your idea stems from selfishness. You are retiring more and more into your shell and becoming increasingly self-centered. You are afraid of failure and criticism. That is not right. You have to expand. You won’t sacrifice yourself for anything and yet you expect to have spiritual realization. Is that possible? Engage yourself now in the Lord’s work. Sacrifice yourself! Then divine visions will come to you, and you will reach the ultimate goal.”

November 6 or 8.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “Prana [the vital energy, of which breath is a manifestation] is the first cause of person's downfall from the Truth. It is breathing that makes the mind restless. We have seen that when the mind has become calm after some time a subconscious impression suddenly rises to the surface; the mind comes down from its stillness with a breath, and one regains consciousness of the external world. But Sri Ramakrishna could rise above the vital energy in his meditation. His breathing would cease. One must rise above the vital energy.”

“It is better to be deceived by others and yet to remain unsuspecting of people. If one suspects others, one loses strength of character. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: ‘When the goal of spiritual life is reached, there remains only compassion in the heart.’ The illumined soul has compassion for every creature.”

The Swami spoke of Swami Brahmananda’s intense dispassion.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “Sri Ramakrishna said, ‘Know that Rakhali [Swami Brahmananda] has intense renunciation. His father is rich; he does not go to him. He lives here, gathers fuel from the woods, and cooks his simple food.’”

“When Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda] and I were in Vrindaban, he had only coarse bread to eat. He would dance in

ecstasy, and say: 'How can I express my joy to you?' I used to think that he was suffering from want of good food."

November 10.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Continence is the essence of spiritual life. 'Of all austerities, the practice of continence is supreme. He who practices it is verily a god, not a man.' The illumined knowledge of Brahman comes naturally to a person who practices continence for thirty-two years. He who wastes this energy falls from the spiritual path and becomes dissipated."

December 15.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Don't fritter your days away without an ideal. Always keep your ideal before your mind's eye and analyze how far you are progressing towards it."

December 16.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "I never depend on any human being. My only refuge is the Lord. If I were to depend on anyone, I would have to be afraid of him. I would rather put a knife to my throat than be afraid of a person. But the Lord always protects me; he does not let me depend on anyone but himself."

"How to reach union with God? It becomes possible if for some time one can keep the mind absorbed in him. This is to say, your mind has to be raised to the plane where God dwells; then you will see him. Don't let your mind think of anything but God. If you don't talk, don't study any books, but keep your mind continuously in the Lord, then very soon you will be united with him. But every individual's spiritual realizations are limited by his capacity. He can go so far in one life and no farther."

The Swami mentioned a boy whom he had seen only for a short time, and said that it would not be possible for him to progress any more in this life.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "It is not so easy to become a holy person. The ego must be annihilated. When it comes to receiving, be the last; but when it comes to giving, be the first."

December 2.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "You must love the Lord. You may say, I don't know how to love Him. But surely we know how to love! We love objects; we love riches; we love honor—all these things we know

how to love.”

“If your mind dwells in God, He dwells in your mind. If you are indifferent to Him, He also will be indifferent to you. If you call on Him, he will remove all the obstacles in your path.”

“Devotees do not pray for the vision of God. They only ask for devotion; they want to love Him. Whether He reveals Himself or not they leave to His sweet will. Arjuna prayed to Sri Krishna: ‘If you find me worthy of that vision, then reveal to me, O Master of yogis, your changeless Atman.’”

“Do we really want God? We may think so, but our minds are somewhere else. Yet sometimes God awakens that desire for Him in us. Have you ever become absorbed in meditation, forgetful of everything else, even of yourself? As long as you are not able to become absorbed in God, find out what the obstacles or distractions are. Struggle against them, and no matter where your mind wanders, keep watch over it. Do we really want God? You have renounced the world, no doubt. But why? Because you felt that there was suffering in the world. We are just seeking our own comfort. Where is that yearning? ‘If my mind does not become absorbed in the lotus feet of the guru, life itself is in vain.’”

December [?].

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “There is a type of nondualism which does not believe that the creation is real. According to this school of thought the universe never has existed, does not now exist, and never will exist. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that this kind of philosophy can only be practiced in a mountain cave. It is to meditate on the true nature of the Atman.”

“Sri Ramakrishna did not allow everybody to practice the nondual aspect of meditation. What good is it to proclaim that you are one with the Absolute unless the universe has vanished from your consciousness? Sri Ramakrishna used to say: ‘You may say that there is no thorn, but put your hand out—the thorn will prick, and your hand will bleed.’ But with regard to Swamiji, Sri Ramakrishna said, ‘If Naren says that there is no thorn, there is no thorn; and if he puts out his hand no thorn would prick it, because he has experienced his unity with Brahman.’ When Swamiji used to say, ‘I am He,’ he said so from his direct perception of the Absolute. His mind was not identified with his physical self.”

“Generally, people are fully convinced of the reality of this world only with their lips they assert that it is unreal. The owner and his garden, the Creator and his creation—thus should they look upon

God and his universe with the attitude of devotees.”

“But there are some individuals who practice the ideal of union with Brahman and don’t talk about it. A gentleman does not go about announcing that he is a gentleman.”

“There is a state of attainment which we find mentioned in the Gita: ‘He knows bliss in the Atman and wants nothing else.’ How can there be any pride when one has experienced the illumined knowledge of God? A spiritual aspirant should try to feel that he is already liberated.”

“‘I have no other refuge but God.’ This must be our attitude. But how difficult it is! The rascal ego keeps cropping up. Only when we have received blow after blow, the ego perhaps loses its hold on us.”

“The control of the passions is a necessary practice of austerity, but genuine control does not come until one has the knowledge of God. When one has attained union with Him, the mind no longer runs after flesh; the craving has completely disappeared. ‘The abstinent run away from what they desire. They carry their desires with them. When a person enters Reality, that person leaves desires behind them.’

“The root of religion is to have firm faith that there is a Reality behind this world appearance. As long as a person is in ignorance and still asserts that or he or she is one with the Absolute, they actually identify themselves with their own ego, not with Brahman. They do not know that there is a Reality beyond their little selves. They are really a kind of atheist.”

“In spiritual life, through the practice of meditation and prayer there comes first a feeling of the presence of God. Then arises the struggle to reach Him.”

“All people are slaves to nature. Some have a natural tendency toward inertia, others toward activity. Nature makes us helpless, and helplessly under her rule we sometimes act, sometimes become silent and lazy, and sometimes go to sleep. Nature controls us instead of our controlling nature. It is just as if a minister had usurped the king’s throne. I used to weep and pray that I would not remain under the control of nature. First be a witness to the workings of nature. Then try to realize the Reality that is beyond nature.”

“From my boyhood on I used to feel that a power was always protecting me, just as a child, learning to walk, is protected by its mother. I felt that I would fall if it were not for that protection behind

me.”

“What people call conscience or the voice of God is the power of the guru. As a general rule, people make the mistake of killing their conscience, otherwise this power would guide everybody.”

“Be true to yourself, then you will attain everything. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: ‘Make your lips and your heart the same.’ That is to say, be sincere in every way. It is difficult to be sincere, but people think it is very easy.”

December 5.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: “When I used to meditate in Sri Ramakrishna’s presence, I experienced a sensation in my spine and would feel an energy rising. The body was like a desert land. The guru gave the holy name of God, and through its power the desert was transformed into a beautiful flower garden. Life was aimless. Since the guru touched me I have had an ideal to live for.”

“As long as your mind dwells on anything other than God, you cannot become a knower of Brahman. ‘Realize that pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat—all are one and the same. Then go into battle. Do this, and you cannot commit sin.’ Do you know why people commit sin? A worldly person won’t stop at anything in order to gain some selfish end. But when they become selfless, they remain unchanged in pleasure and in pain. If we can renounce the sense of ego, then only do we overcome misery. Blessed is one who is happy in his renunciation. He or she finds joy in doing things for others.”

“The householder also has to renounce eventually. ‘By renunciation alone immortality is attained.’ The object of passing through married life is gradually to learn self-control, then to renounce altogether.”

“Sri Ramakrishna used to pray: ‘Mother, may these children of mine surpass me in spirituality.’ There is a saying: ‘Welcome defeat at the hands of the son or disciple.’”

“When I was twelve or thirteen years old I saw Sri Ramakrishna, my guru and Chosen Ideal, getting down from a carriage. He was reeling in divine intoxication. He reminded me of what I had read about Sukadeva—how some worshipped him with flowers and he was smiling, while others threw stones at him and he was smiling.”

“When I was practicing austerities at Langal, I became very ill.

I was suffering from the last stages of anemia. But I was not anxious whether the body would survive or not. My mind was so absorbed in God that I did not care. Through the Lord's grace I experienced many spiritual truths. Now, it seems, they are hidden."

"Try to surrender yourselves to God, and he will do everything for you. God and humanity—there is a separation. Let your tears wipe out that separation. He will take you to himself. He is like a magnet drawing iron filings. People do not feel God's attraction because of their evil deeds. 'How hard to break through is this My Maya, made of the gunas. But one who takes refuge within Me only shall pass beyond Maya.' So you see, everybody can take refuge in God and attain supreme illumination. Then why don't people do it? 'The evil-doers turn not toward Me. These are deluded. . . .'"

"What is samadhi? It is to raise the vital energy [prana] upward."

"There are some great souls who are not concerned with their own happiness or suffering, but keep themselves busy doing good to others."

"Meditation has to become natural. This means that the presence of the Lord is immediately felt in the mind, and he appears living, speaking."

"Swamiji was an example of loyalty to his guru. There was power in Swamiji's words because his heart and lips were one. He always held firmly to the truth."

"Craving for enjoyment has to be fulfilled, otherwise seeds of desire remain."

Swami Turiyananda has been called an embodiment of the teachings of Vedanta. His faith in God and self-surrender to him were an inspiration to all who came within the orbit of his influence. Swami Pavitrananda, head for part of the Vedanta Society of New York, tells that the Swami had such a capacity to detach his mind from the body that on several occasions when he had to undergo operations, he was able to do so without the benefit of an anaesthetic.

Swami Turiyananda's natural inclination was toward meditation and character-building rather than public work. His training of monastic recruits was strict or affectionate, as the case warranted. If necessary, he rebuked the novices severely. He disciplined one of

them, now a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, by not talking to him for several days. On the other hand, his loving kindness is remembered by all who were privileged to associate with him.

The spiritual conversations which follow were given for the greatest part in the ashrama at Almora in the Himalayas in the year 1915. Although Swami Turiyananda addressed them to monks, who used to come to him for informal gatherings, these talks on the religious life will be of interest to all spiritual seekers, who may recognize in them the inspiration which stems from personal realization of the Divine.

January 21. SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "There are three steps to spiritual realization: hearing the truth, reasoning upon the truth, and meditation on the truth. What is hearing the truth like? It is like listening to music as the deer does, fascinated by it. He is completely unaware of the hunter aiming at him. To meditate on the truth is to become absorbed—like the legendary cockroach, which gives up its own nature and becomes a caterpillar by constantly thinking of a caterpillar."

"Meditate! Meditate, and you will reach spiritual heights. You see, we [the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna] have attained our state through meditation. Constant meditation is going on within us; this means that the current of our minds and our will is in Him. While I am talking to you, the meditation continues. Each one of us is bound to Him. We have no life apart from the Lord. He who is earnest is sure to become united with Him."

"I have met some holy men in my life who are very learned, but they never show their learning. Outwardly they live like ignorant men."

"When a monk goes out for alms, he has to show some of his learning and power, like a prostitute. To live on alms is a sort of profession. And you have to accept alms as if you were like anybody else.

"How to live the life of a monk is beautifully explained by Manu in the sixth chapter of his book. One is charmed by his teachings: 'A holy man should live outside of a village. He should only go out for alms in the afternoon. He should always chant the name of the Lord. While walking, his mind should be absorbed in a spiritual mood. He should not speak with anyone. After receiving alms he should return to his hut.'"

"A holy man is he who does not keep his senses engaged in objects; he has transcended them."

"We are much indebted to Gopal Da [Swami Advaitananda], because we learned the secret of work from him. He was organized and concentrated in everything he did. And he was very methodical in his habits. Until his last day he regularly practiced meditation."

January 22. About the after-life.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Immediately after death a guide comes from a certain plane to take the spirit there. Among the many spheres, there is the realm of the fathers, the realm of the gods, the realm of death, and the realm of Brahma. According to the spiritual development of an individual, the person goes to a particular realm. But you know, everything is in the mind. Take a person's life on earth: If their heart is pure and if they are desireless, they find heaven everywhere. All planes are the same to them. 'Gold remains gold, even if it lies in the mud.'"

"Swamiji used to say: "Even he who has seen only a spook is more spiritual than book-learned pundits.'"

"Take complete refuge in God. Call on him. Then all your worldliness will be wiped out."

"What is after-life? There is the body, but without bones and flesh."

January 23.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "First be well balanced and calm; then you can help others. If you are tottering yourself, how can you expect to lift others up?"

"It is not good to feel free in the sense that you think you can do whatever you please."

"Seeking for praise is a great obstacle in spiritual life. Some people believe that it does not make any difference what they really are as long as others think well of them. They keep their faults hidden. But this is the attitude one should cultivate: 'I must purify myself! I must be good! I don't care what others may say about me!'"

"The Lord knows our inmost heart. Of this we must convince ourselves first and then turn our gaze toward him. Thus only does man become fearless."

"I used to consider myself a follower of the path of knowledge. I used to study the scriptures, and think: 'I will attain samadhi [union

with God] immediately.' After I came to Sri Ramakrishna I learned what spiritual realization means and what samadhi means."

January 30.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Try to follow an ideal in everything. No part of our life is in vain. What is the purpose of life? It is to reach perfection. But in everything you must follow an authority. As a rational being you cannot say: 'I eat, drink, and make merry.' Such a life is the life of a brute."

"'Be a devotee, but don't be a fool!' You must be alert in everything. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'Look at me! The Divine Mother has placed me in such a state that I can hardly keep clothes on my body, and yet I am not forgetful.' The Master told us: 'He who is careless is foolish.' In our scriptures too we read that a careless person gradually degrades himself. Always be on your toes!"

"To be a man is to be alert, conscious. If you become unconscious, then be unconscious with full consciousness [in samadhi]—like Sri Ramakrishna. He used to lose external consciousness in ecstasy when someone sang a devotional song. But even a slight mistake in the music would cause him pain and bring him back to ordinary consciousness."

"Struggle to keep yourselves awake and watchful; then it will become a habit with you. Be alert! Discriminate between good and evil. Then go beyond good and evil."

"There must be some ideal, standard, or criterion by which you can guide yourself. Otherwise your life will be aimless. Every day make the effort to reach your ideal."

January 31.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "There is an indivisible, changeless Time—that is Brahman. What is known as divisible time exists only in the mind. Annihilate the mind, and time stops. The whole phenomenal universe is in the mind; everything exists for the moment—now is, then is not. But beyond these changeable phenomena there is an unchanging Witness. He is the one immutable Reality, lending an appearance of permanence to the changing phenomena."

"There are some great souls who live in that indivisible, changeless Time. To them this whole universe appears momentary and unreal. Swamiji [Swami Vivekananda] dwelt in that state much of the time. But you see, we normally live on this relative plane. Maya

[the Cosmic Illusion] is such that though you drive it away, it comes back."

"Once I was sitting on the bank of the Ganges, meditating. I lost external consciousness. It was about three o'clock in the morning when I came to. Someone said: 'Let us go home.' These words were like a stunning blow to me. You see, I had no home at that time, and I realized that the desire to go home had come from my own mind. Through practice of discrimination I understood that birth, lineage, race, and country are all figments of the imagination. Then I took a vow to erase all such ideas from my mind. This little incident made a deep impression on me."

"At one period I used to bathe in the Ganges at half past three in the morning. One day I noticed something like a thick rope floating in the water; it was moving in the opposite direction of the current. I watched carefully and then saw a crocodile give a lash with its tail. I ran back to the bank. But I despised my behavior and began to consider: "What, you think you are the Atman, birthless, deathless, and now you run away from death?" After I discriminated in this manner I dived into the water and faced the crocodile. I was determined not to run away even if the crocodile should try to kill me. But from within myself a voice said: "Look here. You are not acting from knowledge of the Atman. You have not yet attained that state. You are letting yourself be guided by your willful ego. This is nothing but rashness." You see, I was nervous at the time. If I had had the realization of the Atman, I would not have been afraid; I would have faced the crocodile calmly. But I did not run away, although I understood that I was acting impulsively and was not yet free from fear. Thus did the Lord teach me."

"Sri Ramakrishna's example solved all the problems of my own life. I have no problem left to solve. While I was in the West, whenever anyone asked me a question, I used to look at the person, see his problem, and the answer would immediately come to my mind."

"At one time I liked the philosophy that everything is in a state of flux, but then I realized the fallacy of it; I felt that there must be a permanent substance to witness the changes."

"One looks on the phenomenal universe as real unless one finds something higher. Why don't we understand the truth that this world is unreal? Because we are attached to it."

"I used to ponder over all these philosophies. Then I realized that love for God is the only point that matters. After studying and discussing philosophy I came to the conclusion that one-pointed

devotion to the supreme Atman is the one important thing."

"Sri Ramakrishna's life had two aspects. You must try to understand both. If you accept only one aspect there will be misunderstanding and confusion. For instance: The Master used to give presents to musicians who played for him. When he had nothing else to offer them he gave away the very cloth he was wearing. Was not that an example of supreme renunciation? On the other hand, when that same Ramakrishna did not receive the customary food offering from the temple, he anxiously inquired about it and asked Swami Yogananda to go and get it."

"Swami Yogananda asked: 'Why bother?'"

"The Master rebuked him: 'Oh yes, I know you are a man of great renunciation. You don't care!'"

"How to reconcile these two attitudes? Of course Sri Ramakrishna did not take a morsel of that food offering himself. He had it brought for distribution among the devotees."

"One day Sri Ramakrishna told Yogananda: 'Be a devotee, but don't be a fool! When you want to buy something, go to different shops, compare the prices, and take the best and the cheapest. If you save money this way, give that money to the poor.'"

"There is another instance. When Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda] found a pice that someone had lost, and showed it to the Master, the latter said: 'Why did you take it? You don't need it. Why would a person who doesn't want any fish go to the fish market and haggle about prices?'"

"How can you reconcile these contradictory attitudes? One time Sri Ramakrishna apparently behaves like any other worldly man, carefully calculating about everything. Then again he exemplifies the ideal of renunciation. You see, he was a man of principle. He represented an ideal [householder or monastic] in whatever he did. And this is what I would call a perfect soul."

"If an ordinary man gets a little renunciation, he completely loses his head. The worldly man, on the other hand, is very grasping. . . . As we associated with Sri Ramakrishna, our eyes opened. He showed us the ideal life by his own example."

"When the Marwari devotee Lakshminarayan offered Sri Ramakrishna ten thousand rupees, the Master fell unconscious. Regaining consciousness, he told the devotee to get away from him. When Lakshminarayan suggested giving the money to Hriday [Sri

Ramakrishna's nephew, for the Master's use] instead, the Master exclaimed: 'Oh no! He will accept it in my name, and I can't bear the thought of possessing money!'"

"The devotee remarked: 'Ah, I see. You have not yet overcome the idea of acceptance and rejection.'"

"The Master simply replied: 'No, I haven't . . .'"

"I have somebody to look after me. I know that for a fact. So I do not worry. This is neither imagination, nor poetry, nor romanticism—it is really true. I see my Protector as I see you before me. I willfully try to do wrong, but He won't let me. He is protecting me. Can you understand this? But one must not talk about such things. Ego, ego! Vanity! Very bad!"

February 7.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Some holy people, while eating, really feel that they are offering sacrifice to Brahman [the all-pervading Spirit] in the form of the vital energy. Any other attitude is brutish. Such people feel light in body; others carry a heavy weight."

"There are yogis who can cure any kind of physical disease. I firmly believe that if I made the attempt I could get back my youth. But that would be small-minded. You cannot keep the body forever. Everyone knows that, so why waste your energy to prolong the life span? Furthermore, everything happens by His will. Why assert yourself? It only increases your sense of ego. Great suffering is in store for the man who takes his own responsibility and does not surrender himself to God. You see, I don't feel responsible for myself, and therefore I enjoy the fun."

"How people worry about wealth! You boys have renounced everything. You know that the Lord supplies all the necessities of your life although you own nothing. But as a general rule, people seek the power of wealth. The divine Mother does not let them know that she alone protects—because they are attached to possessions. She shows them the play of wealth."

"Kali Maharaj [Swami Abhedananda] at one time used to catch fish, reasoning that the Atman is immortal—it neither slays nor is slain. Learning of this, Sri Ramakrishna sent for him. He told Kali Maharaj: 'What you are saying is true. But at your state of development, before you have realized the Atman, it is not good to discriminate in that way and kill any creature. You should know that realization of the Atman is a state of attainment beyond all logic and reason. He who attains that state feels compassion for all beings. A

holy man is freed from all samskaras [tendencies of the mind], but the thought-wave of compassion stays with him to the last moment of his life. Never give up the ideal of a holy man!"

"There are people who worship God in order to gain power—occult power, for instance. But we want the sweet and loving aspect of God. Those who seek power feed their ego—the ego, which causes all the suffering in the world."

"Narada taught constant recollectedness of God. Let no other thought or desire enter your heart. Let the current of your mind run to God, smoothly, like oil poured from one vessel into another."

"At one time I felt that my life was unbearable because of my sense of ego. How was I to get rid of it? By committing suicide? Of course not! But this very thought—how to overcome the sense of ego—made me restless. Then it disappeared. This was a sort of crisis that I passed through."

"Spiritual growth is a gradual process. Practice the disciplines patiently and make them habitual in your life."

"Manu has written that if a brahmin or a brahmachari [a novice] wakes up after sunrise, that is a sin which has to be expiated. I don't think that I ever woke up after sunrise. For a time I practically gave up sleep altogether. I used to practice spiritual disciplines constantly and I never suffered from drowsiness."

"This world is a bad place. But if one does not worry about himself but thinks of others and acts accordingly, one finds some meaning to this life"

"In one of his letters Swamiji wrote: 'When I go for alms, I give people something in return.' Give and take—that is the motto for a monk. Monks who live only for themselves and don't even practice spiritual disciplines are impostors."

"Sanatan Goswami, a well-known disciple of Sri Chaitanya, had admitted his defeat in a debate with a scholar and wrote a certificate to that effect. Jiva, Sanatan's brother-disciple, defeated this scholar in turn and took the certificate away. Learning of this, Sanatan excommunicated Jiva for his egotism, and Jiva practiced austerities to purify himself. Rupa Chaitanya, another of Sri Chaitanya's disciples, said that the duty of a devotee of God is to have compassion for all creatures. Sanatan used to take a glass of buttermilk as his sole daily food, and chanted the name of the Lord all day long. Haridas, one of his brother-disciples, would not break his fast until he had repeated the Divine Name three hundred thousand times. But you know, these

were not ordinary human beings. It is not possible for average people to practice spiritual disciplines to this extent."

"We have seen Swamiji meditate the whole night, then early in the morning he would take his bath; and people did not know anything about his austerities. I never saw Swamiji sitting idly; he either studied or conversed on God or meditated."

"One day Swami Shivananda sang a devotional song to Sri Krishna. While listening, I began to weep and went into ecstasy, and Swamiji did too."

"To live the ideal life is our only purpose. The truth of the Upanishads is to be attained. The Truth is, and it must be realized in one's own Self. Swamiji did that. Of course, the one Truth is perceived in many ways, according to the capacity of the individual."

"To be completely selfless—that is the ideal which everybody understands. Selfishness is the root of lust. Lust will decrease as you become unselfish. People become restless by thinking of themselves. The more you renounce your ego the greater will be your spiritual unfoldment. Cling to your little self and you will remain little."

"Many people think, first let circumstances become favorable, then they will practice spiritual disciplines. But conditions will never be ideal. You must begin your spiritual struggles wherever you are and under whatever circumstances you find yourself."

"Worship the Lord! Make it a regular routine in your life to worship him. Wake up early in the morning. First worship the Lord, sing his praises, and then only attend to your other duties."

"There are two selves, as it were. One is impersonal, the unchanging Reality. The other is the so-called individual self, identified with many adjuncts [body, mind, senses, possessions]. It is the individual self that is born, grows old, and dies. The impersonal Self always remains the witness. As long as one is identified with the adjuncts, one cannot realize the Impersonal. Free yourself from these limitations and realize the Absolute!"

"The cause of human bondage is the sense of "me" and "mine." Renounce this sense of possession and you become liberated."

"Sickness, mental laziness, doubt, lack of enthusiasm, sloth, craving for sense-pleasure, false perception, despair caused by failure to concentrate and unsteadiness in concentration: these distractions are the obstacles to knowledge."

"Sickness. Mental laziness: The laziness of mind and body. You don't want to do anything. The mind is depressed. Doubt: doubt whether you will succeed or not. Lack of enthusiasm—always afraid to act. You have to be full of energy to achieve anything! Sloth. Craving for sense-pleasure: The mind does not wish to give up its distractions; it knows that they are bad and yet cannot give them up . . ."

"Ram Maharaj [a disciple of Swami Brahmananda] never gave lame excuses. Whatever work he undertook he would do with a perfectly concentrated mind. Unless one is sincere one cannot grow spiritually."

"To be successful in work one first has to plan the work carefully and then do it. How can it succeed without organization? In every act you must keep perfectly calm. Many times in the process of performing one right action we make ten mistakes."

"What are the effects of meditation and japam [chanting the name of the Lord]" They make the mind strong and pure. One attains sincerity of purpose. One is the same inside and outside. For several years I used to sleep only two hours a night. I never had any headaches. In the morning I used to sit for four or five hours, meditate, chant, and study at one sitting, and then do the worship, and then cook. I would eat very little and so never felt drowsy or lethargic."

[undated]

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "One who has only attained the Impersonal and has become merged only in the Absolute, is one-sided. The Jnani [follower of the path of knowledge] is afraid of being born again, of becoming deluded again. But a real knower of Brahman, an 'expert player,' is not afraid. On the other hand, one who has only realized the personal aspect of God, and not that absolute Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss beyond all ideas and emotions, that person also is one-sided."

"In one of the Puranas [narratives amplifying the scriptural truths declared in the Vedas] it is written that even when this whole universe is dissolved, the divine forms remain. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that there are places in the ocean where the ice never melts. It seems to me that this is a state in which one worships God in his eternal form after the realization of both his personal and impersonal aspects. Here the ice does not melt because the rays of the sun do not enter. We never knew of these things until we came to Sri Ramakrishna."

DISCIPLE: "But there must be a supreme goal There must be an end to all this!"

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "He is the goal. But what is He? He is with form; He is without form; He is personal; He is impersonal—and something more. One who knows Him, knows. A person who lies under the tree in which the chameleon makes its home knows that it has more than one color."

"'What is known as the nondual Brahman in the Upanishads is a ray of light from His Body.' [A Vaishnava saying.] This is sectarianism. Swamiji used to make fun of this kind of attitude."

"In the beginning of monastic life do not accept gifts from just anyone. If you do, it is only natural that you will be influenced by that person. You will lose your independence. Who can accept gifts from others? One who feels no obligation, whose mind is not affected. One will accept the gift as coming from God himself. Of course you may accept gifts from good people, who would not interfere with your independence or try to control you."

"How many want the truth? Very few can bear the full light of truth; most people close their eyes and try to reject it. They want a comfortable religion. We all want comfort and happiness for ourselves. There is nothing wrong with that. I don't mean to say that we should court misery. But our attitude should be: Let happiness or misery come; I want the truth. How many feel this way? Only a few great souls seek truth for its own sake."

"As a general rule, spiritual aspirants stop after having reached a certain level of growth. They remain satisfied with what they have attained and do not struggle for greater unfoldment. Only a highly spiritual soul can understand the workings of the mind. The mind plays tricks on us and deludes us in many ways. If someone points out the fallacies, we make excuses."

"We do not realize how much self-love there is within us. To become humble—not outwardly for show, but inside, in spirit—is very difficult. One who has genuine humility is truly a man of character. Think of Sri Ramakrishna, how humble he was! When a visitor who came to the temple garden mistook him for a gardener and ordered him to pick a flower, the Master humbly fulfilled the request."

DISCIPLE: "Should we humble ourselves before everybody?"

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Yes, see the Lord in everybody, and be humble before Him. Learn to see God in all."

DISCIPLE: "Then one has to rise above social etiquette?"

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Forget your social etiquette! Follow the truth! The mind is so crooked Butter is mixed with buttermilk. To make the heart and the lips the same is not so easy."

"We read page after page of scriptures. How much do we actually assimilate in our lives? Sri Ramakrishna once said to Girish Ghosh: 'What are you talking about the knowledge of Brahman! Sukadeva only saw and touched the ocean of Knowledge. Lord Shiva drank only three handfuls of its water and became unconscious.' Girish Ghosh clasped his head and exclaimed: 'Say no more, sir! My brain is reeling.' Try to understand this. Try to understand Girish Ghosh also. What a great mind he had. And how he could assimilate spiritual teaching! With us it enters one ear and goes out the other. Think of Suka! How great he was! He did not want to be born in this world because he realized that it was illusory. "And he only saw and touched the ocean of Brahman! And Lord Shiva is the God of gods. He could only sip its water three times! How true! One's head would reel to think of it!"

In the Swami's room everything was kept in perfect order.

Swami Turiyananda remarked: "That's good. There is no disorder outside. In the same way, see to it that there is no confusion in your mind. Your mind must be so disciplined that you can concentrate it on a particular thought any time you wish. When your room is properly arranged, you can find any object you want even in the dark. Your mind must be organized just as well as your external life. Anything else is a weakness of character."

"When I was young I disliked to think that I would grow old. I thought I would rather die than face old age. But later I learned to surrender myself to the higher will."

"These days I get agitated when I talk on spiritual matters. The reason is that my nerves are not as strong as they used to be. The mind, however, remains calm. Years ago I had great powers of explaining spiritual truths. If somebody asked a question, I immediately saw the whole character of the person, the cause of their question and their motive in asking it. And my answer would come like a flood of light."

"What is the way to overcome this world? Control your senses. Until you attain self-mastery, the problems of life remain unsolved."

"'A doer of good never comes to grief.' The spiritual struggles that you undergo are never in vain. Even if you do not attain the

highest in this life, you carry your spiritual gain with you to the next life. Don't you see that there are people who from childhood are devoted to God and live without worldly cravings? On the other hand, there are some who may be learned but live like worms in filth. Without the control of lust nothing can be achieved. Look at Swamiji! What was his power? He was free from lust. He lived among beautiful women, yet there was dispassion in his heart."

"One must rise even above spiritual emotion; one must go beyond the personal aspect of God and reach the impersonal. You have not reached the end until you have attained the Absolute. Those who worship Ramakrishna, however, easily pass from the personal to the Impersonal."

"Everyone is doing the Lord's work—even the ant. What is ignorance? It is not to be aware of this. This ignorance does not leave us because our sense of ego is so strong. Rid yourself of the ego, and He comes to dwell. You cannot serve both at the same time"

"In the Chandi, the Divine Mother says: 'I abide in all mothers as mother-love. That is why mothers feed their hungry children. And it is I who feed them.' Do you remember what Swamiji wrote to us in one of his letters? 'Brothers, fear not. It is all His work. Who are we but His servants?'"

DISCIPLE: "Of what value is it to hear the sound OM in meditation?"

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "The mind becomes absorbed. That is all. And if you keep your mind absorbed in that sound, it becomes steady and concentrated."

November 12.

Swami Turiyananda: "In deep sleep as well as in samadhi the objective world is not experienced. But in samadhi there is full consciousness."

"The wish to retaliate is a very worldly desire. Look at Sri Ramakrishna—how people criticized him! Yet he bore it ungrudgingly. Forbearance must be our ideal. How long do we live in this world? Only a few days. So, why bother to avenge ourselves?"

"While we were in Meerut with Swamiji, a number of devotees came to visit us. Swamiji asked me to speak to them. Although they were householders, I stressed the ideal of renunciation and dispassion. After they left, Swamiji said to me: 'Brother Hari, do you think everybody is like you? Can everyone let the Divine Mother dwell

constantly within the lotus of his heart? Let these people keep forgetful a little while longer and enjoy life.”

“Ignorance [avidya] is to identify the Self with the individual self. Knowledge is to identify the Self with the Atman; this is absolute truth. To identify the Self with body, mind, and senses is a relative truth. And to identify the Self with wife, children, house, etc. is complete delusion.”

“The ripe ego—the ego which considers itself to be a child of God—ultimately becomes merged in God. It becomes ‘Thou.’ The unripe ego is the great obstacle to Knowledge. Practice incessantly to keep the mind fixed in God.”

This is the final installment of the spiritual talks of Swami Turiyananda (1863-1922). They were witnessed and recorded by Swami Raghavananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order who died in June, 1957. These conversations were held most likely in 1915 in the Order’s Almora ashrama in the Himalayas. They are translated from the original Bengali by Swami Prabhavananda and were originally published in the July – August, 1958 issue of Vedanta and the West magazine.

Swami Turiyananda was such an austere soul that Sri Ramakrishna, his spiritual teacher, looked upon him as the embodiment of that renunciation which is taught in the Bhagavad Gita. When Swami Vivekananda was about to come to America on his second visit in 1899, he requested Swami Turiyananda to accompany him and assist him in his work in this country. At first Turiyananda, inclined toward a life of meditation exclusively, was averse to embarking upon public preaching. When all arguments failed, Swami Vivekananda embraced his brother-disciple and pleaded: “Hari-bhai, I am laying my life down inch by inch. Won’t you help a little?” This settled the matter. Swami Turiyananda came to the United States, where he established the first Vedanta retreat—the Shanti Ashrama, in the San Antone Valley of Central California. Several persons, who visited the site of this retreat fifty years later, have reported that a wonderful spiritual atmosphere still pervades the place where for two years Swami Turiyananda lived and inspired a group of students to devote themselves exclusively to the ideal of God-realization.

Ujjvala (Ida Ansell), a disciple of Swami Turiyananda who followed him to the Shanti Ashrama, has given several instances of the Swami’s individual lessons and instructions that would come spontaneously at any time of the day.

One time Ujjvala prepared to take notes of Swami Turiyananda's class talks, sharpening a pencil with a dull knife. The result was a jagged, unsymmetrical point. Just then the Swami walked by, picked up the pencil, and remarked: "That is a sample of your work!" With the same knife he carefully whittled the jagged wood to a smooth sharp point. Handing the pencil back to Ujjvala, he said: "Make every act an act of worship. Whatever you do, do as an offering to the Divine Mother, and do it as perfectly as you can."

Another day Ujjvala was weeping because she could not persuade the other students to comply with the Swami's wishes for stricter observance of economy.

"Swami, they simply won't understand!" she sobbed.

"Never mind, you did your best; that is enough," he consoled. Then he added, "If I wept every time they don't understand, I should be weeping all the time!"

Ujjvala said that Swami Turiyananda was able to perceive the state of one's mind instantly. One morning he came when she was a little discouraged. "Whether you know it or not," he thundered, "you are the Mother's child! Then, gently, "But if you know it, you lose all fear, all doubts vanish, and all the knots of the heart are rent asunder."

One afternoon, Swami Turiyananda and Ujjvala just happened to meet. He asked her: "Ujjvala, are you deep or shallow? Do you live and die in words, or do you live and die in principles?" Before she could think of an answer, he added: "In matters of opinion, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand firm as a rock." And Ujjvala later commented: "That was all, but he had given me in a moment guidance for a lifetime."

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "Swamiji used to say: 'The mind has to be made malleable like clay. Just as clay sticks wherever you throw it, so the mind must be made to dwell upon whatever object you concentrate it.'"

"While I was in the Jagannath temple at Puri I suddenly heard a strange sound, and an ecstatic feeling filled my heart. I felt like walking on air. The noise was like thunder, and from within it came a sweet sound—and something more which I cannot describe. I felt another power drawing my mind, and I became absorbed. Then I realized that I had heard what is known as anahata, the unstruck sound."

"Sri Ramakrishna used to appear like a drunkard when he talked to the Divine Mother: 'Do not give me the knowledge of Brahman, Mother! I don't want it! I spit on it!' I was an extreme Vedantist at that time and his words shocked me profoundly. I thought to myself: 'My goodness! What can be greater than the knowledge of Brahman?'"

"The causal bliss is our wine. Drinking wine in the ordinary sense is a bad habit. Man will do anything under its spell."

"There are two creators: one is God, the other is man. God creates this world. This is the universal creation, and man is recreating it with his individual attitude. For instance, God has created woman, and man looks upon woman with different attitudes—as mother, or wife, or daughter. It is not possible to live in this creation without a particular attitude toward it. You may say, 'Why, I can remain indifferent to any object in this creation.' But is not indifference also a particular attitude?"

"There are two viewpoints regarding injury that may be done to use by others. If somebody harms us, the right attitude is to think that this is the effect of our own past karma. Why create new karma by reacting to it? The other attitude is that of the worldly man: 'I must retaliate, otherwise you will do me greater harm in the future.'"

"The nature of an illumined soul becomes like that of a child. There is no ulterior motive behind his actions. He is content to remain wherever he is but again, if somebody invites him to go somewhere, he goes. His bondage to the world is broken. But worldly men are stubborn. They must have their own way."

"At one time I traveled toward the river Narmada alone. I did not keep any money with me. Wherever I got tired, I used to stay and rest. But on my travels I always had some particular place of pilgrimage as my destination. I was very happy and peaceful at that time—completely forgetful of the world. I had no other aim but to realize God. I used to pass my time in study or meditation. Then Swamiji called me back to Meerut where he was staying. Again we met in Delhi—about seven of us. Maharaj asked me to go to Jwalaji, so I went there with him. Then I went to Bombay via Karachi, where I met Swamiji again."

"I have had great blessing: I have had good health; the Lord purified my mind; and I had great forbearance."

"Rama was recognized as a divine incarnation only by a few seers like Vasishta. There is a story that Rama once approached several sages, who were knowers of Brahman. They said: 'Who is

Rama? We only know the Rama who delights the heart—the Atman—and that is what we meditate upon.’ Rama simply smiled and went away.”

“Know that all forms of God are the forms of your Chosen Ideal.”

“Swamiji surely has not merged himself in eternal union with Brahman. He is an ever-free soul. He will be born again and again to do the work of the Lord.”

“Those who have attained illumination or are highly advanced spiritually—in what state do they exist after death? Endowed with knowledge and devotion they live in the company of God and enjoy his bliss. In the world, for instance, a powerful man has his associates with him. In the same way, the devotees live in the company of the Lord. Wherever the Lord is, there are also his devotees.”

“But then, what about union with Brahman? There is the eternal union with Brahman, and there is also the divine play of the personal God. It is just like the ocean—underneath a few feet of water the ocean is one, calm, deep, and unrippled; while the waves are playing on the surface.”

“Shiva, Shiva, Shiva! By worship of Shiva one can attain to lofty spiritual heights. But if it is not done properly, one may lose one’s mind.”

“A man in Benares used to worship Kala Bhairava, an attendant of Shiva. He was about to lose his sanity when Swami Shivananda advised him to worship Shakti [the Mother aspect of God] along with Kala Bhairava. And thus he became well. One should worship Shakti along with Shiva.”

“There was a blind man in Etwah. He was a great devotee of Shiva and the Divine Mother. His one desire was to go to Benares and see Shiva in the Vishwanath temple. At that time there was no train or other transportation to Benares. And since the man was blind, how could he make the pilgrimage on foot? He used to sing songs to Shiva and express his great sorrow at not being able to go to Benares. One day he did regain his eyesight. With great joy in his heart he went to Benares and saw the Lord of the Universe in his temple.”

“Once a singer came to Sri Ramakrishna. He sang one song about Shiva after another. The Master went into samadhi at the very first song and remained in that state of consciousness for a long time. Seeing him absorbed like this, we thought we should ask the singer to stop. Suddenly the Master woke up from his samadhi, and said to

the singer: 'Oh, I can't stand any more! Sing songs of the Divine Mother!' As the Master listened to the songs about the Mother, his mind returned to the relative plane. Later he remarked that he had been in a very high state of consciousness."

"Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'When I see a man and his wife seated together, sometimes I feel, "Ah, how deluded they are!" At other times I think, "There is Lord Shiva with Mother Parvati.'"

"I like the rainy season very much. I like to walk in the rain all by myself. Also, I like to meditate while it is raining. Rain is conducive to yoga."

One day we were looking at the sunset. Swami Turiyananda remarked: "Blessed are our mind and intellect that they see in this sunset the glory of the Lord."

"When I first met Sri Ramakrishna and saw his spiritual moods—his devotion and his samadhi—I knew I had found someone who lived the ideal. I felt as if I had come home at last, and I thought, 'If there is anything to be attained in life, it is God.' We must attain to such love for the Lord that there is not even any consciousness of one's body left."

"The truth that you hear about is to be assimilated. Be pure as snow, and let your faith be as firm as a rock!"

"One day I saw Sri Ramakrishna wave a fan before Mother Kali in her temple. He was singing:

Awake, O Mother!
Long hast thou been sleeping
In Thy primal abode
In the lotus of the muladhara.
Awake, O Mother!
Perform Thy own true function:
Pierce the six centers of the spirit
And unite Thyself with the great Lord Shiva
In the thousand-petalled lotus
In the center of the brain.
Thus, Mother, wipe out my sorrow,
Thou who art purest consciousness.

"The Master told Swamiji: 'Whenever you begin to sing, the Mother wakes up and listens to your song.' "

"Weak-minded people cannot control their spiritual emotions; their nerves become overstimulated. But those who have a strong

body and strong nerves control their emotions. When Swamiji's spiritual emotions were aroused, outwardly he would be calm."

"One day, in Madras at the Castle Karnan, Swamiji was singing a hymn to Sri Rama. After a while his gaze became fixed, he went into ecstasy, and tears of joy began to flow.

When I first arrived at the Advaita Ashrama in Benares, I saw Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda], Baburam Maharaj [Swami Premananda], and Swami Turiyananda seated together. At noon I went to visit Hari Maharaj [Turiyananda]. It was a Saturday.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "When one attains the vision of God one grows neither horns nor a tail. The inner nature becomes transformed, the inner vision changes; outwardly everything remains the same.'

"Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'I am not asking those boys to renounce the world, but let them live in the world with divine knowledge. First let them discriminate between truth and untruth, between the eternal and the non-eternal; then let them live in the world.' "

SWAMI TURIYANANDA mentioned Swami X—and remarked: "He has some desire to do the work of the Lord. But Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'First earn something, let it accrue in value, and then spend.' "

Another day we went to visit the Kedarnath temple. After the worship we sat for meditation in the portico.

SWAMI TURIYANANDA: "One can become absorbed in meditation easily here because many have meditated in this place."

"As long as we can keep our gaze fixed on the Lord, we shall be walking on air, as it were. No thorn can prick our feet."

"When a man like Swamiji says, 'I am Brahman,' he is immediately freed from physical consciousness, and when we say, 'I am Brahman,' we immediately feel weighed down by two hundred pounds of flesh."

"When I was ready to do the Lord's work, there came the call from Swamiji."

"One has to be as deep as the ocean, and calm—neither elated

nor depressed."

" 'In one form the Lord hurts me and in another form that same Lord nurses me.' One must learn to see His hand in happiness and in misery. But this is possible only for those who have traveled the whole path and reached the goal. You must walk the whole path. Do not fall by the wayside."

"Occult powers belong to the realm of prakriti [primordial nature]. They have nothing to do with the Atman. Through the practice of austerities and concentration powers are gained. They have nothing to do with the knowledge of God. There are two opinions in the matter: One is that with knowledge powers arise. The other opinion is that they may or may not arise. A knower of God understands that all actions are performed by prakriti. 'I' [the Atman] am unconcerned. Happiness and misery are experienced in the body. 'I' am beyond. The gunas [attributes of Nature] are working on the gunas. The Atman is beyond action. The knower of God sees inaction in action. In his case inaction is not laziness. Laziness is tamas [lethargy]. These truths are taught in the Gita."

"Swamiji was not only a knower of Brahman but he was a great yogi. His spiritual powers were obtained through yoga. Was anyone more perfect than he in meditation?"

"There are evil tendencies in the mind, but we have to rise above them. We must keep our minds fixed in God. Struggle, struggle! Realize something! See Him, attain Him! Then do as you please. If a monk thinks he has to be somebody and becomes self-centered, he is in great spiritual danger. Renounce the ego! Fix your gaze on the Lord!"

"Sri Ramakrishna used to scold anybody who was careless. Carelessness is a defect of character. The Master was never slow in anything, but at the same time he did not like to hurry or bustle."

"Once I got a thorn in my leg, and the leg became infected. I suffered unbearable pain, became angry at the Lord, and chided him. Then I repented, thinking that I had no forbearance. At Ujjain, where I was practicing austerities alone, I fell very sick and became delirious. But never in my life did I feel that I was helpless."

"When I was your age I had a very strong will. I was detached; suffering, misery, and disease could not approach me. How many days I passed lying under a tree, and the mind never craved pleasure or comfort! Freedom, freedom—that was my watchword! My ideal was to delight in the Self—to be desireless, to be free from possession, free from the law of karma. When your body is young

and your mind is strong, it is then that you have to struggle. When you are old you cannot accomplish anything”

“I used to be opposed to reading books or newspapers; then Swamiji told me to be up-to-date.”

“It is fanaticism to think that we have nothing to learn from the West. We must stand firm in our own culture and at the same time learn from others. Read the Mahabharata and you will find that in India in ancient times people had the same virtues that they presently have in the West; now they are forgotten. We have to learn these same virtues again. The feeling that we have nothing to learn from others and can isolate ourselves has arisen from weakness. Swamiji used to say: ‘Our downfall is due to isolation.’ ”

“How Socrates drank the hemlock with a calm, peaceful mind! There is no death to the soul! How can one overcome the fear of death? Only when one has some sort of spiritual realization. Then he knows that he is not the body, and that the body is subject to birth, growth, and death. Life can be compared to the burning wick of an oil lamp: it dies every moment. Life is another name for death. You lose one body and get another, as it is taught in the Gita:

Worn-out garments
Are shed by the body:
Worn-out bodies
Are shed by the dweller
Within the body.
New bodies are donned
By the dweller, like garments.

“ ‘A network of words is like a dense forest which causes the mind to wander hither and thither. Therefore, those who know this truth should struggle hard to experience Brahman.’ [Shankara]. But does this mean that there is no need for study? Surely study helps to clear the understanding and to keep the mind engaged in good thoughts. Otherwise the world will be a lazy people’s club! Those who have realized God do not have to study any longer. But those who have not yet had the vision of God—they must study.”

“Sri Ramakrishna used to tell a parable about a man who had received a letter from his village home asking him to send certain things to his kinsmen. ‘How long does one care for such a letter? So long as one does not know the contents. Once he knows the contents, the next step is to put forth the necessary effort to procure the articles. Then the letter can be thrown away. Similarly, the sacred books tell us only the way to God, the means for the realization of God. That being known, the next step is to work one’s way to the

goal. Realization is the goal.' How the Master in the deepest way solved the problems of spiritual life!"

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