

By Hanuman Prasad Poddar.

Many a distinguished saint and scholar of wide reputation has taken the trouble of writing or dictating answers to these questions. There is, therefore, very little scope for a man like myself to write on the subject. It is needless to write anything on the first three questions, firstly, because only those who have realized God know the real nature and essence of God, and even such persons find themselves unable to describe it in so many words. Secondly, these questions have already been dis-

cussed at length in the *Isvaranka* as well as in the several answers received thereto. Thirdly, I do not find myself competent to answer them. As a matter of fact, such questions do not arise at all when considered from the point of view of realisation. Moreover, every exposition of God is incomplete. That aspect of God which lends itself to description is much inferior to what He really is. For how can one describe Him who is beyond the range of intellect, mind and speech? His Impersonal aspect is a matter of reali-

zation only. His manifest, personal form, on the other hand, is so enrapturing and maddening that even wise royal sages like Janaka feel drawn towards it and cannot contain themselves. When Raja Janaka saw Sri Rama and Lakshmana for the first time, he addressed the following words to Visvamitra:—

कहहु नाथ सुंदर दोउ बालक ।
 मुनि-कुल-तिलक कि वृष-कुल-पालक ॥
 सहज विरागरूप मन मोरा ।
 यकित होत जिमि चंद चकोरा ॥
 इन्हि बिलोकत अति अनुरागा ।
 बरवस ब्रह्मसुखहि मन त्यागा ॥

“Tell me, my Lord! whether these pretty boys adorn the family of some sage or they are born of royal parents. My mind, which is naturally detached from this world, is drawn towards these youths as the *Chakor* bird is drawn towards the moon. Their very sight fills me with love, so much so that I feel inclined to forego the bliss arising out of the union with *Brahma*.”

I shall therefore refrain from writing on the first three questions and make bold to write something in reply to the fourth. Every living being perceives the existence of the Lord, who is an embodiment of truth, knowledge and bliss combined, at every step and every moment. Everything derives its existence from Him. A sentient being who is endowed with the sense of hearing and seeing can never deny His existence, and one who does so only raves and indirectly proclaims His existence.

Similarly, in spite of His being nothing else but an embodiment of truth, intelligence and joy, we feel His mercy quite as much as we feel His existence, at every step and every moment, nay,

in whatever situation we may be at present. Through His grace we have such unusual and remarkable experiences in our lives as, when given publicity, would inevitably result in giving rise to misgivings in the minds of the general public due to their ignorance. The divine and miraculous experiences gained by the lovers of God through His grace are said to be so mysterious, so subtle, and so profound that they can neither be proved by argument nor comprehended by ordinary intellect, nor again need they be disclosed to others. Notwithstanding all this the revelations are so true, so evident and so real that one who has experienced them perceives them quite as plainly as one does one's own self, even though they may not have the means to convince others of the same or demonstrate their reality to them. A man, for instance, gets from some one, in a secluded place, the fruit of immortality. He eats it and, while relishing its exquisite flavour, becomes immortal. He may not be able to prove this fact by arguments and reasoning; but this does not falsify his experience, nor need he convince others of its reality and obtain a testimonial from them to this effect. The spiritual life of His devotees is full of many such mysterious revelations, which they experience through His grace. But they remain sealed letters except to themselves and their Lord. The Lord says:—

साधवो हृदयं मह्यं साधूनां हृदयं त्वहम् ।
 मदन्वसे न जानन्ति नाहं तेभ्यो मनागपि ॥

“The saints represent My heart and I do theirs. They know none else than Me and I know none else than them.” The more one realizes His mercy the further he penetrates into the realm of his mysteries. But remember:—

भगवदरसिक रसिककी बातें

रसिक बिना कोउ समुझि सकै ना ।

"Only those", says the poet Bhagavatarasika, "who are immerse in Divine love, can get an insight into the secrets of such people."

What am I to write about these secrets? I can only submit that it will always do good to our souls to have full faith in the veracity of such miraculous incidents of the lives of those lovers of God who are endowed with divine virtues, inspired as they are by His kindness. The Lord's mercy makes itself visible even in a tangible form in objects of worldly enjoyment. They, however, are labouring under a great delusion who think that His mercy lies only in the acquisition and preservation of worldly objects such as men, money and honour, and not in their want and loss. As a matter of fact, it operates in both ways. Often in our life we are face to face with occurrences which appear to us for the time being very terrible, unwelcome, painful and contrary to our expectations. On such occasions we begin to curse the Lord, out of ignorance, like Narada. It is only when the ultimate result of the occurrence becomes manifest to us that the darkness of our ignorance is dispelled and our mind gets illumined by the flash of Divine Mercy. Our whole frame begins to reverberate with sincere gratitude to the Lord and our mind gets absorbed in His thought. Truly speaking, such incidents as are unwelcome in the eyes of one who is given to the enjoyment of worldly pleasures constitute a flash of divine mercy, serving as a light-post on the road to God-realization, and are conducive to the best interests of the aspirant.

Times without number in our life the Divine Mercy manifests itself through

incidents which are welcome or otherwise to us in their result. Innumerable incidents of this nature have occurred and are still occurring in my life. I do not, however, remember all of them in the first place, and I am not inclined to publish all those that I remember, nor do I consider the time and place opportune for the same. I would narrate below only three stories of my narrow escapes from death, which furnish a clue to His existence.

(a) There was a terrible earthquake in Assam in the year 1896, when I was about four years old. My grandfather, Kani Ramji, resided in Shillong, where he carried on business. My mother having passed away while I was yet a baby, my grandmother brought me up. My father was in charge of the business that we had in Calcutta. Her affection for me and the privations and hardships she suffered for my sake can never be recompensed by me, even though I were to serve her in thousands of my lives. I did not realise this while she was alive, and it is futile to repent now. Those whose parents still survive should think themselves lucky in being able to serve them, and should spare no pains in enjoying the pleasure of serving them to the utmost of their capacity. Otherwise they will have no alternative left but to repent, like myself, afterwards, being deprived forever of the privilege of serving them bodily. Now let me come to the point in hand. I used to live in Shillong with my grandmother. One of my aunts (father's sister) was also there. She had a daughter and a son who were about my age. We three played together. On the day of occurrence our neighbour, Bhajanlal Srinivas, held a feast on the completion of some vow. We had been invited thereto. Both of my

aunt's children refused to go; so I went there alone, while they were left in the house. At about 5 P. M. I dined in the kitchen behind the godown of Sri-jut Bhajanlal. Coming out of the kitchen, I was just entering the godown when the earth began to quake violently. I gave a shriek and a shower of stones fell on all sides. In course of a few minutes the whole building collapsed. I was buried under the debris; but to my great astonishment I was surrounded on all sides by a huge pile of stones. A wooden plank rested on the stones, and on the plank there was another colossal heap of stones.

I was thus pent up in a dark cavern, as it were, and I cannot say how air could find its passage thereinto. Anyhow I did not die. The tremor's having subsided, there was a heavy shower of rain, and in the meantime a godown in the neighbourhood caught fire. There was great bustle and excitement all round. Nobody knew who had been buried and who had escaped. My grandfather commenced a search for us three. Both of my aunt's children were discovered dead under a heap of stones. My elder aunt's grandson, Sri Ram Goyanka, who was a bit older than myself, was also found dead. My grandfather approached the godown of Bhajanlal Srinivas in quest of me, loudly calling me by name. I heard his voice. I was a small child, and was crying bitterly, terrified as I was. I do not know what unseen power prompted me to cry out at the top of my voice, "I am here. Pray take me out." The heap of stones piled over me was removed. As soon as I was out, I ran to the lap of my grandfather who hugged me close to his bosom. Both of us burst into tears, although his tears had a deeper significance. The grandmother was still praying (for my life) to Sri

Hanumanji, who granted her prayer. The grief at the loss of my aunt's children was mitigated to a certain extent for a moment.

Ever since then stone houses in Assam have fallen into disuse and have given place to those made of tin and wood.

(b) In 1919 I was living in Bombay. I had my board and lodging at the house of my uncle, Sri Lakshmi Chand Lohia, who occupied the bungalow of Pandit Shivdatt Rai, Vakil, at Santa Kruz on the B. B. and C. I. Railway, at some distance from Bombay. One dark night, at about eight, I got down from the local train at Santa Kruz. At present this station has been provided with two platforms. At that time, however, there was only one. There was no light at the station, nor was the engine fitted with searchlight. I had to cross the railway line to reach Pt. Shivdatta Rai's bungalow. I committed a fatal blunder in attempting to cross the line just before the engine. The local train stops there only for a minute. I was new to the place and thought I would be able to cross the line before the engine was in motion. No sooner did I step into the line than the engine started. But through His instrumentality and prearranged plan some unknown person pulled me forcibly by the hand, so that I stumbled on the next line and the train ran past me swiftly. Three events took place simultaneously—my attempting to cross the line, the departure of the train and my being pulled by that unknown person. The delay of a second or two only would have brought me under the wheels of the engine and crushed me to pieces. The all-merciful Lord, however, had already made necessary arrangements to save me in that dark night by posting a

man on that spot. I was trembling like an aspen leaf. My heart was too full with gratitude for my kind Master who had thus saved me. Tears were streaming from my eyes. I noticed, in the dim light at the station that my saviour was a young Mohammedan gentleman of the Bohra community who was smiling and saying, "Never make such a mistake in future. The Lord has saved you this time." I greeted him and expressed my gratefulness to him without speaking a word. I had fallen on stone pebbles beside the line; but to my great astonishment I received no hurt except that a stone had just scratched my right foot. I ran home and began to remember Him out of gratitude.

(c) In 1926 I was going from Bombay to attend the anniversary of the Rishikul Brahmacharyasram at Lachhmangarh (Jaipur) which has been founded and is being run by Seth Lachi Ram Churiwala. At Ahmedabad I caught the Delhi Express and occupied a second class compartment. A young Brahman boy who was going to join this institution was also travelling with me. We were occupying opposite berths. Next morning, at about five, a T. T. E. (Travelling Ticket Examiner) got into our compartment at the Beawar station. He took his seat on the berth whereon I was lying, just close to my feet. I had woke up. Considering it bad manners to remain lying, while a gentleman was sitting at my feet, I got up. While I lay down my head rested

close to the third window from the entrance. Now that I had got up, that window had no one beside it. I sat close to the second window while the T. T. E. sat beside the first. All the three windows were shut and I was talking to the T. T. E. In the meantime a great noise came from behind and the Brahman boy, who was lying asleep on the opposite berth, gave a shrill cry. We were taken aback. Turning round we found that a big stone had struck against the window pane which had broken into pieces and the latter had been scattered all round. A small piece had struck against the boy's head, which made him shriek. Had I kept lying down, my head would have rested near the window and would have no doubt been smashed by the stone and glass. My Saviour, however, brought the T. T. E. to my compartment and prompted me to get up, and thus saved my life. This incident took place between the Makre-ra and Sardhana stations near Ajmer. The T. T. E. informed me that such incidents were very common there. He had the compartment swept at Ajmer, and by his being there I was also saved from being charged with the offence of having broken the pane. It is nothing short of impudence on my part to record incidents from my own life in reply to the questions framed by myself and published in the magazine edited by me. I was reluctant to do so, but have done so at the wish of my friends. I crave the indulgence of learned scholars and readers for this.
