

By Madan Mohan Sastri.

1.

I am writing of the time when I was only fourteen years old. I had been to the Punjab, and those belonging to my maternal uncle's family came to receive me. They took me on horse-back to my destination. I had my Thakur Ji (an image of the Deity whom I worshipped) with me. Those who accompanied me galloped their horses. My horse also followed theirs closely. I was not an expert rider. Hence I had not gone far before I fell down from my horse. A canal was running swiftly close by. My Thakur Ji dropped there-into.

The first thing I did on recovery from the fall was to search for my Thakur Ji. I tried my level best to recover the lost image, but to no purpose. I grew impatient. Those who were escorting me tried their best to comfort me, but in vain. Finding their remonstrances fruitless, they dispersed to their homes, and I, on my part, proceeded to my maternal uncle's. I, however, sorely missed my Thakur Ji. I began to weep in despair like a helpless creature. I felt little inclined to eat or drink. The whole of my maternal uncle's family was greatly distressed to find me in that plight. When they pressed me to take some food, I told them plainly that I would not take any food so long as I did not get my Thakur Ji back.

My parents also arrived in the evening. They comforted me when they found me weeping, and forced me to take some milk. A few draughts of milk passed down my throat with great

difficulty. It was evening now and I wept myself to sleep.

I saw in a dream a comely figure approaching with my Thakur Ji in its hands. It was heard saying, "Just see if the image is yours." I took my Thakur Ji and was beside myself with joy. When, however, I woke up, there was neither the figure nor Thakur Ji to be seen. I was seized with remorse and despair.

The next morning, about two hours after sunrise I got the news that my Thakur Ji had been found. At the time my Thakur Ji dropped into the water, the canal was in a flood, which, however, subsided later on. A woman, with one of her sons, went to the canal to wash her clothes. The report of my Thakur Ji having been lost and my crying over the loss was already in the air. The boy found the image by the side of the canal. His mother took the image from him and lost no time in sending the same to me.

The joy that I felt on recovering the lost image can better be imagined than described. I duly worshipped the deity, partook of the food offered to Him and was gratified. I am afraid my sending an account of this incident to the press may not expose me to His displeasure.

2.

About sixty years ago, one Babu Shiv Dayal came to Benares from the Punjab with his wife. Reaching there, he made up his mind not to leave Benares, the abode of salvation, at any cost and to make their both ends meet

as it pleased the Lord. He purchased a small house in the locality known as Nichi Brahmapuri and began to transact ordinary business there. He led an honest and simple life in a spirit of dedication to the Lord and spent a good deal of his time in remembering Him.

One night, Lord Sri Krishna appeared before him in a dream and spoke to him thus: "My good fellow, I reside in a wall of your house. There is a drain close by, and I cannot bear the stench coming from it. Please take me out." No sooner did he see the dream than he woke up and looked up to find that the charming figure had disappeared. The wonderful dream filled him with great curiosity and his mind was engaged in speculations of various kinds. As soon as the day dawned he approached some learned men and consulted them on the point. One of them said in reply, "Dream is after all a dream and one cannot say with certainty what it signifies. Of course, you may pray to the Lord before you go to sleep to-night, and, if you happen to behold a similar dream again, we shall think over the matter." The Pandit probably discredited Shiv-Dayal's story and dismissed the simple man with this evasive reply.

The latter, however, acted according to the Pandit's advice. He prayed to the Lord with a clean body and a pure mind before he went to sleep, and beheld the same dream over again. The Lord appeared before him in the same captivating form and said, "Why do you consult others? Is it in vain that I call upon you to do as I bid?"

Shiv Dayal was now fully convinced. He started up from his bed and spent the night with great difficulty, thinking all the time of the Lord. As soon as it was day-light he called a few labourers

and got them to start pulling down the building. This seemingly insane conduct of his exposed him to the adverse criticism and even ridicule of his neighbours. In the meantime, as a labourer gave a stroke with his spade to one of the walls, a beautiful gold image of Sri Krishna, which was stuck to a lump of mortar, fell down all of a sudden from the wall. Several men, women and children were present on the spot at that moment. A young daughter of Shiv Dayal, Munna Devi by name, was also present there. Her eyes fell on the image sticking to the clod and she at once cried out: "Look here, daddy, what is this?"

Shiv Dayal's joy, at the sight of that gold image, was unbounded. His heart was filled with love, and tears of joy streamed from his eyes. He removed the coating of mortar from the image, called some learned Pandits and, after due worship, had the image installed with due ceremony in one of the rooms of his own house. From that very day the husband and wife devoted themselves whole-heartedly to the service of the Lord. They spent most of their time in talking of and worshipping the deity.

Now, by grace of the Lord, his business also began to flourish. He became the owner of considerable wealth in no time. He had the house rebuilt after a new design. The couple now passed their days in procuring and preparing different dresses and other requisites for Thakur Ji according to the varying seasons of the year. Their faith in the Lord grew so intense that they consulted Thakur Ji in all matters and obeyed the latter's orders throughout.

Whether in weal or woe, they always carried out His behests, spent their whole life in the service of the Lord and derived peace therefrom.

