

# MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly  
with the divine life and sayings of  
Sri Anandamayi Ma

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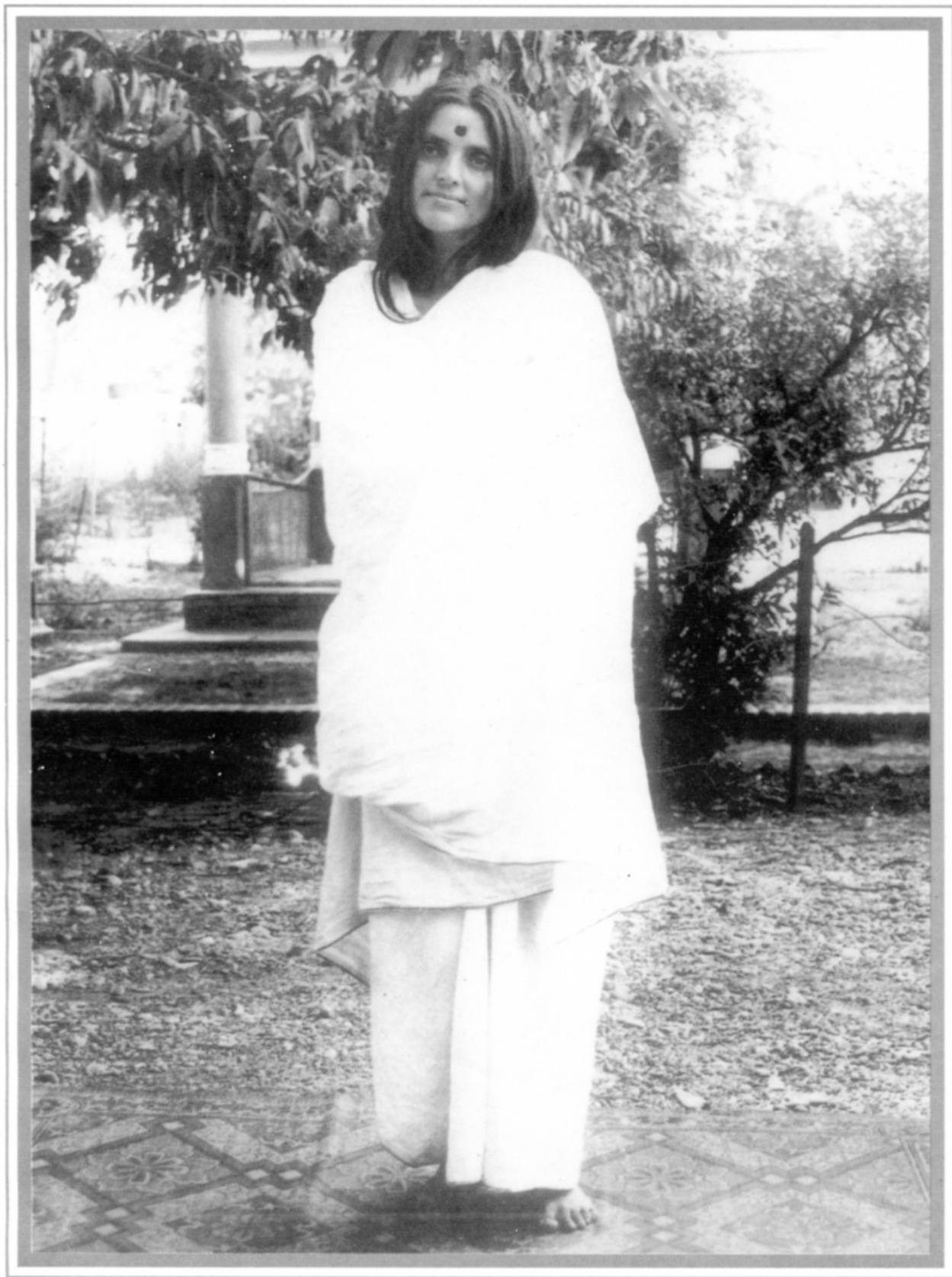
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## MATRI VANI

Without fail pray to God. He drives away all sorrow.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rest assured, the Will of the Almighty reigns supreme. At all times rely wholly on Him.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is man's duty ever to meditate upon the One Reality.

\* \* \* \* \*

He should let his thoughts dwell on God as much as possible. His feelings are fine and he expresses them in beautiful, sweet-sounding words. But does he practise *japa* and read the Gita regularly ? He would do well to devote some time daily to the study of Scriptures.

\* \* \* \* \*

Such is the Will of the Almighty. Verily, whatever comes to pass is an expression of His Will. Abiding in patience perform your duty. Depend on God absolutely and hold Him in remembrance—Him and Him alone !

\* \* \* \* \*

It is possible to practise God's Name even under the most adverse circumstances. He causes everything to happen and hence is ever near.

\* \* \* \* \*

Silent Japa should be engaged in at all times. One must not waste breath uselessly : Whenever one has nothing special to do one should silently practise *japa* in rhythm with one's breathing—in fact this exercise ought to go on continually until doing *japa* has become as natural as breathing.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is of great value to read sacred texts and books of wisdom. Speak the truth. Bear in mind that God's Name is He Himself in one form — let it be your inseparable companion. Try your utmost never to remain without Him. The more intense and continuous your efforts to dwell in His Presence, the greater is the likelihood of your growing joyful and serene. When your mind becomes quite vacant atleast try to fill it with the awareness of God or His contemplation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let the thought of God remain with you and do service with the conviction that while serving whomsoever it may be, you are serving the One, who alone exists.

\* \* \* \* \*

When there is constant effort to grow into awareness of THAT which IS, there is hope that in time this awareness may become permanent.

\* \* \* \* \*

Always keep yourself in a state which is favourable to the contemplation of the Divine. Thus the right sustenance for the mind will be provided.

\* \* \* \* \*

One should attempt to dwell in the thought of the Supreme without a break. Then only full enlightenment may come.

\* \* \* \* \*

Put your trust in God and let your mind be engaged in *japa* and meditation.

\* \* \* \* \*

At every moment sustain the flow of His Name and the consciousness of His Presence. Never be without Him.



## GLIMPSES FROM MATAJI'S LIFE

[Continued from before]

In 1918 Bholanath was transferred from Ashtagram to Bajitpur and Mataji went to join him there. Bajitpur has acquired a new importance today as the place where Mataji manifested Herself in the role of a *sādhaka*.

Kirtan and the reading of scriptures had always affected Her strangely, and sometimes no outward stimulus was necessary to bring about these states of *samadhi*. Nevertheless up till then such occasions had been rare and far apart and could be explained away somehow or other; whereas at Bajitpur Mataji's ways and activities became increasingly those of a *sādhaka*. She would enter into a *samādhi* in the midst of household work. On his return from office Bholanath often found Her lying on the kitchen floor, the food half cooked or burnt. She would be oblivious of the world and he could do nothing with Her, until of Her own accord She would come back to normal.

He naturally did not understand this aspect of Her at all, but wisely let Her alone.

At the end of the day's work She would thoroughly clean Her room and surroundings, and when Bholanath settled down for his rest, She would sit in one corner of the room in an easy posture.

Bholanath then saw Her going through various yogic postures, *asanas* and *mudras*. Some he recognized, but most of these processes in their variety were quite beyond his comprehension.

He was amazed, enthralled and awed, but never frightened or repelled. It was apparent to him that these notions were gone through automatically, as if they were happening to Her. Referring to the spontaneous nature of these *kriyās*, Mataji later said, "If I tried to help my limbs while performing an *āsana*, the sequence of movements would automatically receive a set-back".

During these periods of *sāadhanā* Mataji was oblivious of everything. Even acute physical pain did not affect Her. She often got scorched by kitchen fires. Sometimes when engaged in complicated yogic postures Her long black tresses would get entangled with Her limbs and Her hair often got torn out by the roots.

The *sāadhanā* mostly took place at night, but Mataji's person was changed during the day also. She seemed remote and far away. Her constant companions,

puzzled and apprehensive, began to avoid Her. They regretted that so charming and lovable a young girl had become possessed by evil spirits. This opinion gained ground and Bholanath was variously advised to consult doctors and *ojhās*\*. Feeling helpless in the face of strong adverse criticism as well as sincere friendly advice Bholanath finally called in one or two *ojhās*. They however could not 'cure' Mataji. The last man experiencing the manifestation of a strange power in Mataji's presence advised Bholanath against this treatment.

A doctor of medicine, Sri Mahendra Nandi, after seeing Mataji told Bholanath that She was in an exalted spiritual state and should not be exposed to the gaze of the vulgar. Bholanath was glad to follow this suggestion.

On the full moon night of August 1922, at midnight, Mataji all by Herself, went through the actions of a spiritual initiation (*Dikshā*).

There were no external accessories, and She Herself was the *Guru Mantra*, and *Ishta*. For the next five months Her *sādhana* assumed a more concentrated form. Sometimes after pronouncing the mystic syllable *Om* She would recite *mantras*, although She had no previous knowledge of Sanskrit and mystic *mantras*.

One day She told Bholanath that he would be initiated on a particular day which she stated.

On that day Bholanath with a vague idea of avoiding anything that might happen, hurried off to his office without even taking his breakfast. At the appointed time however Mataji sent for him. When Bholanath replied that he was busy and could not leave the place, Mataji sent word to him that if he did not come home immediately, She would go to the office. Not daring to risk this, Bholanath reluctantly came home. Mataji asked him to bathe and change his clothes and then to sit down. Thereupon Mataji uttered some mystic *mantras* and gave him spiritual instructions.

Bholanath, of course, had never looked upon Her as his wife, but from that moment She actually became his spiritual preceptor. Yet outwardly Her manner towards him did not change at all. She remained the affectionately dutiful wife till the moment of his death in 1938. Bholanath never had occasion to disapprove of any of Her actions. In fact She rarely did anything without his consent.

Just before his death, he openly called Her 'Ma' and asked for her *prasād*. Up till then only consideration for appearances had kept him from acknowledging himself as a child before his Mother. The proximity of death broke down all false barriers. A few moments before he left this world, Mataji blessed him by thrice

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\* . Men who drive out evil spirits.

passing her hands over his body from head to foot. The great physical agony which he was suffering then disappeared entirely and he died in peace with Mataji's hand resting on his head.

From the month of December, 1922 Mataji became *mauna* (completely silent) for three years. Sometimes she would draw a circle around herself and utter a few *mantras*. After this She spoke for a little while and again turned silent. There were no rules or fixed times for these occasional interruptions of Her silence.

Mataji, referring to this period of Her life, said that the question of *sādhanā* did not arise for Her, since She did not need realization. It was just that for a short period the ways of *sādhanā* manifested themselves in Her body.

There was however no element of pretence or make-believe in this. For the time being She was as truly and completely a *sādhaka* as She had been a child in Her parent's house and a housewife in Her husband's.

She has said that the ways of *sādhanā* are of infinite variety and each way has innumerable aspects. All these became a living experience to Her when She played the role of a *sādhaka*. She went through countless forms of worship, not only the various Hindu forms, but non-Hindu rites and ceremonies as well. In her character of a *sādhaka* the minutest detail of each faith was revealed to Her in its true significance.

Later on in Dhaka She once recited the *Namāz* also in one of Her transcendental *bhāvas*. A Mohammedan gentleman who happened to be present declared that he had never witnessed a more correct rendering of the *namāz*.

Bholanath lost his post in 1924 and came to Dhaka to look for work. Unable to find employment he was on the point of sending Mataji home, when She told him to wait for another three days. Within that time he was appointed manager of the Nawab's Shahbagh gardens. He remained in this position for four years.

Mataji gradually began to be known widely and very many people came to see Her daily. But She was still the retiring young wife and kept Her face a little veiled. Men found it difficult to approach Her and were obliged to worship Her from a distance. If Bholanath asked Her to speak to anyone She would do so, but not otherwise. The women of the neighbourhood, however, loved to gather round Her.

Sm. Gurupriya Devi (who now is known as 'Didi'), saw Mataji at Dhaka for the first time. Didi has been Her almost constant companion ever since. Bhaiji (Sri Jyotish Ch. Roy), the greatest of all Her devotees, also met Her at Dhaka.

Didi, who saw Mataji work, says that all Her movements were very brisk, neat and economical. She would compress a great deal of work into a very short period of time. She never put off anything to be done later. She could competently deal



with unexpected tasks or unexpected guests without getting flustered, and of course no one has ever seen Her getting annoyed or irritated even in the face of severe provocation. The inimitable perfection of human qualities in Mataji worked in themselves to make Her unique.

In January, 1926 Kirtan was performed at Shahbagh during the solar eclipse. Mataji was sitting with the women in an adjoining room. Gradually Her eyes closed and Her body began to move in rhythm to the Kirtan. Slowly and shakily She stood up. It was obvious to all that She could not control Her movements and was oblivious of Her surrounding. Mataji had a beautiful and graceful way of wearing Her clothes so that no part of Her body except Her face, hands and feet was visible. But now She did not seem to be aware of the fact that Her clothes had become disarranged. Didi and others, seeing Her strange condition, tied up Her sari. Didi writes, "It looked as if Mataji's body was being wafted by the wind. Sometimes She fell and got up in the same rhythm without appearing to be hurt. In this manner She entered the kirtan room and fell down in the centre of it. A strange effulgence enveloped Her body, which in the lying posture began to revolve at a tremendous speed. I tried to hold Her but found it impossible to check that force. Mataji's body moved like a dry leaf in a strong wind .... After a short while She sat up and slowly Her body regained its normal condition." This was the first time that Mataji's '*bhāva*' was publicly seen. Witnesses say that the variety of Mataji's '*bhāva*' was infinite and indescribable. The learned realized that this was the ideal '*bhāva*' described in the *Shāstras* and except in the divine personality of Sri Gauranga had never been manifested in any other mortal body.

It became increasingly difficult for Mataji to carry on Her house-work. Didi and others helped Her with this. She had always personally looked after Bholanath, but now all work seemed to fall away from Her.

All changes came about in Her spontaneously, so no one could take exception to this new phase of Her life.

Mataji also followed various rules in the matter of diet. For days, She would eat only three morsels of food once daily. Then again She began taking boiled rice just nine grains in number. At another time Her meals consisted of whatever one person could give Her in one breath. On two occasions She remained even without water, once for 16 and at another time for 23 days.

Throughout these fasts Her manner was normal and She did not seem to feel the effects of these vigorous observances.

Visitors began to take up much of Her time. At Bholanath's repeated requests She started mixing with people and talking to them. The women folk surrounded Her during the day and the men after working hours.

At that time manifestations of certain miraculous powers became so natural to Her that people were led to take them quite for granted.

Many approached Her to get their sick cured by Her healing touch. While others came to seek spiritual solace. Her words and advice had a living reality and power, not easily to be encountered elsewhere. Every individual found his true worth assessed and his questions dealt with accordingly.

Mataji started travelling about a little and in 1928 came to Benares where for the first time She sat in an open assembly and answered questions on spiritual matters.

Mataji had never studied the *Shāstras* and whatever She said was from Her own direct knowledge. As such the inner realities of spiritual life became invested with a forceful and convincing character all their own. She seemed to be fully versed in the *ssādhanā* of every faith and creed.

In fact She said that books and scriptures could not give even one thousandth part of all that is involved in the paths of *sādhanā*.

In 1932 Mataji left Bengal and came to Uttar Pradesh with Bholanath and Bhaiji. Arriving at the Howrah Station they saw a train just about to leave. Mataji asked Bhaiji to purchase tickets up to the terminus. The train just happened to be the Dehra Dun Express and so they travelled first to Dehra Dun. From there they proceeded to Raipur, a village near Dehra Dun. Mataji told the villagers that Bhaiji was Her spiritual son. They led the lives of mendicants, putting up in a room near an ancient Shiva temple, which protected them neither from the sun nor the rain. This marks the starting point of Mataji's endless and tireless peregrinations throughout India. There were no fixed plans. No arrangements were made beforehand and frequently She and Her companions started off even without money or other necessities. Sometimes She would come to the station and board the first train that happened to arrive. She would stop and make friends with people in the most unlikely of places.

Except for Her strikingly unusual personality, Mataji's demeanour had acquired its normal aspect. She mixed with people easily and freely and quickly picked up the language and customs of the provinces She passed through.

Harakumar's prophecy was nearing fulfilment. Men, women and children of all classes and castes from all over India, professing different faiths and different creeds surrounded Her day and night.

Once someone asked Mataji, "Don't you ever get tired of us ? All outsiders surrounding you day and night ?"

Mataji answered, "I would, if there were any 'others' for Me. One does not feel annoyed with oneself."

In 1937 Mataji accompanied by a few went to visit the majestic Mount Kailash. Near 'Manas Sarovar' Bhaiji was overcome by a spirit of supreme renunciation. *Sanyasa mantras* spontaneously issued from Mataji's lips.

On their way back Bhaiji passed away at Almora. A beautiful ashram has grown up around his *samādhi*. Bhaiji's devotion and renunciation will ever be a source of inspiration to those who would follow the 'razor's edge' path to self-realization.

After returning from the mountains Mataji went on an extensive tour to Gujarat and the surrounding provinces.

Since then She had visited even the southernmost point of India twice and travelled all over India extensively.

The haphazard method of Her travels had undergone a change later on. On some occasions Her itinerary was fixed up as long as six months beforehand.

She occupied an unique place in the spiritual life of India, but She did never claim any such position for Herself. In fact She refused to sit even on a higher level than the humblest of sadhus in saffron clothes.

She said, "Though this body has aged, I am really a tiny little girl, and beg you all to love and remember me as you would love your own daughter. All young people are my friends, their parents are my parents; as such I am entitled to the affection of all."

She dressed in complete white. Her soft black hair fell over Her shoulders or was sometimes tied in a knot on Her head.

She had no particular message to give to the world, since all messages were Hers. There was no special truth for Her : She, for whom All is truth and Truth is All, cannot accept one and discard another.

To Mataji came he who was highly spiritual and also the complete unbeliever, the old on the verge of departing from this life and the young on its threshold. All differences and distinctions found their true worth in Mataji's understanding. No aspect of life, from the utterly superficial to the most significant, was without meaning to Her.

In fact Her message had all the variety and iridescence of life itself and its elusiveness too, so that any reproduction of it can scarcely retain its peculiar consistency and flavour.

Perhaps there is one unifying principle underlying the diversity of Her message:—"Rise from the ephemeral to the Everlasting".



## RAMAYANA—THE SONG OF LIFE

—Dr. I. Panduranga Rao

[Continued from before]

The way *Rāma* tries to pacify his angry brother *Lakṣmaṇa* not to blame *Kaikeyī* for the tryst contemplated by her with destiny. When *Lakṣmaṇa* expresses his strong feeling that his injustice done should not be tolerated, *Rāma* tells him that in his view there is absolutely no difference between ruling *Ayodhyā* and living in the forests, and expresses his hope that the forest life may perhaps prove to be more satisfying as there can be wider openings there for serving humanity and promoting the basic values of truth and justice.

To convince *Sītā* that she should stay back looking after his old parents and not risk her own comforts by accompanying him to the forests, he presents several arguments. But the noble lady, stronger than *Rāma* in her determination to stay where *Rāma* is - come what may, prepares herself for the forest-life leading the path of *Rāma*. She promises that she will not be a burden to him nor will she pose any problem to him. Ultimately *Rāma* fails in his attempts and *Sītā* succeeds in getting his whole hearted consent. This again confirms our thesis that *Rāmāyaṇa* is a co-ordinated march of *Rāma* and *Sītā*. It is not merely *Rāmāyaṇa*, but *Sītāyana* as well, and *Vālmīki* known for his economy of words has combined the two in one by his skillful coinage of the word '*Rāmāyaṇa*' as title to his wonderful work—highly suggestive, though very simple.

The way how *Rāma* takes things in a sportive manner trying to mitigate the negative aspect of all that happens can be seen in almost all the events that follow his major decision to start a new life with new challenges. The whole *Ayodhyā* wants him to stay back. *Vasiṣṭha* too tells *Kaikeyī* in categorical terms that no nation is worth its name if it is not governed by *Rāma* and even the forest becomes a nation if it is manned by *Rāma*.

न हि तद् भविता राष्ट्रं यत्र रामो न भूपतिः । तद्वनं भविता राष्ट्रं यत्र रामो निवत्स्यति ॥

[वा० रा० २.३७.२९]

na hi tad bhavitā rāṣṭraṁ yatra rāmo no bhūpatiḥ ।

tad-vanaṁ bhavitā rāṣṭraṁ yatra rāmo nivatsyati ॥

[vā.rā.2.37.29]

The helpless King *Daśaratha* suggests that he should be discarded as insane and taken into custody and *Rāma* should succeed him by general consent. *Sumantra* tells *Rāma* that his horses refuse to go back without *Rāma* in the chariot. Finally, even after *Rāma* settles down at *Citrakūṭa*, *Bharata* approaches him with the citizens of *Ayodhyā* at his back and persuades him again and again to return to *Ayodhyā* and accept the position which rightly belongs to him. But *Rāma*, who moves in this mundane world making Truth (*satya*) and Righteousness (*dharma*) as his two feet, stands firm on his decision to spend the stipulated period of 14 years in the forests as desired by *Kaikeyī*. He presents his view-point in a refined and sophisticated language without offending any one. It takes some time for him to convince his brother *Bharata* that the ends of justice will be met by acting according to the wishes of his father. Finally he succeeds in evolving a formula which satisfies the requirements of truth and justice in letter and in spirit. According to the solution he offered, neither *Rāma* nor *Bharata* will be designated as ruler, but *Bharata* will look after the welfare of the people in *Ayodhyā* by acting as a trustee and *Rāma* will have a wider jurisdiction beyond the boundaries of *Ayodhyā* and ensure proper administration of justice where injustice dominates. All the sages attending the summit-meet at *Citrakūṭa* unanimously agree to this and *Bharata* too accepts it on the condition that he will carry out the orders of his brother *Rāma* exactly for 14 years and then hand over the Kingdom to him. He takes the sandals sanctified by *Rāma* and instals them on the throne. Virtually the governance is in the hands of the sandals and *Bharata* operates on their behalf. All that happens at *Citrakūṭa* speaks volumes about the cultural ethos of the two princes and presents an ideal for all the practitioners of public administration for all time to come.

The real problems and adventures start after the *Citrakūṭa* event. Just before entering into *Daṇḍaka*, the trinity- *Sītā*, *Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa* meet the sage *Atri* and his noble wife *Anasūyā*. This meeting is also highly significant as it fortifies the party against all adversities that they may have to face in their forest life. Profusely blessed by the old lady *Anasūyā* whose spiritual powers get transmitted to *Sītā* through the gifts presented by her. The events upto this point only prepare the necessary back-ground for the virtual march of *Rāma* which starts from the moment they set foot in the *Daṇḍaka* forest. What we mean by saying that *Rāmāyaṇa*, the March of *Rāma*, is a song of life, finds ample illustration as *Rāma* advances in the forest area. A mysterious chain of events seems to have been planned by some divine hand in such a way that the real purpose of *Rāma's* exile gets served. *Rāma* rises to the occasion at every step and acts according to the sound advice of his inner voice without caring or even thinking of the consequence.

He does this with immense faith in the providence which *Vālmiki* calls *yadṛcchā* (यदृच्छा). He has firm conviction that nothing can go wrong as long as we do not go wrong in our thoughts, words and deeds. It is this inbuilt rhythm of all his actions that makes his march a song of life.

What is strange about the March of *Rāma* is that even the demons who attack later become his admirers and help him in his further course of action. For instance, *Virādha*, the first demon to attack him as soon as he enters the forest realises in no time that his encounter with *Rāma* has resulted in his redemption from an old curse and he is now back to his original form. He then tells *Rāma* that sage *Śarabhaṅga* has been waiting for him. When *Rāma* meets *Śarabhaṅga*, he finds *Indra* there. But *Indra* disappears on seeing *Rāma*. *Śarabhaṅga*, in his turn, tells *Rāma* that another sage *Sutīkṣṇa* has been waiting for him. Again at the instance of *Sutīkṣṇa*, *Rāma* meets *Agastya* who directs him to make *Pañcavaṭī* his residence for the time being. All the time *Rāma* has been searching for a suitable place for him to stay. Every sage offers him his own hermitage. But *Rāma* wants a place which can serve his purpose. Only those who know his purpose can direct him in this matter. Ultimately *Agastya* does it. But he also tells *Rāma* that it shall be his moral responsibility to keep *Sītā* happy by fulfilling all her desires. Surprisingly, this is the constraint which compelled *Rāma* to run after *Mārīca* and this resulted in the abduction of *Sītā*.

If we carefully observe the various factors which contributed to this tragic event of *Sītā's* abduction, we find that every body went wrong except *Rāvaṇa*. Even *Mārīca* could not gather courage to refuse to cooperate with *Rāvaṇa*. In spite of a word of caution from *Lakṣmaṇa*, *Rāma* wanted to take a chance and finish the deer once for all. No doubt, he did it, but at what cost? Even *Lakṣmaṇa* lost his patience and deserted *Sītā* against the orders of *Rāma*. And *Sītā* too took fancy in the golden deer which she wanted to present to *Bharata* and the old ladies on return to *Ayodhyā*. *Jaṭāyu* who voluntarily took the responsibility of guarding the cottage in the absence of *Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa* could not save her though he made the highest sacrifice for her. Thus the whole thing went against the bright side of things and what was to happen did happen in spite of all precautions and resources. This is where *Rāma* feels convinced that there is divine hand behind certain events which ultimately result in the general good though some people have to suffer for some time. This is how he reacts to the adversities in life. The real song of life, according to him, comes out of stresses and strains when they become unavoidable.

*Rāma's* alliance with *Sugrīva* is another mystery in the March of *Rāma*. It was *Kabandha* who suggested this to *Rāma* after his hands were cut off by the two

princes. Like *Virādha*, he too regains his original form and predicts that *Rāma* will certainly get *Sītā* back with the help of *Sugrīva*. However, it was *Hanumān* who played a significant role in locating *Sītā* and uniting her with *Rāma*. More than half the battle was fought by *Hanumān*. The way *Hanumān* conducts himself in his relations with *Rāma* is superb and *Rāma* appreciates it.

The matchless magnanimity of *Rāma* is the most important factor which contributes to the epic grandeur of his personality. When he hears *Hanumān* for the first time, he recognises his great potentiality through his introductory words. He tells *Lakṣmaṇa* that here is an individual who has cultivated humility from *Rgveda*, sincerity from *Yajurveda* and substantial learning from *Sāmaveda*. With immense confidence in him, he gives his ring to *Hanumān* to be handed over to *Sītā* as a token of identification. When he comes back with solid evidence of having seen *Sītā*, he embraces him. This cordiality continues till the end when *Sītā* presents a golden chain to *Hanumān* at the time of the coronation ceremony in *Ayodhyā*.

*Rāma* maintains remarkable balance while dealing with intricate problems. He entertains *Vibhīṣaṇa* without any hesitation, inspite of adverse opinion expressed by most of his counsellors, including *Sugrīva*. He declares that it is his policy to provide shelter to any body who approaches him with a sense of insecurity. He even goes to the extent of saying that he is prepared to entertain and pardon even *Rāvaṇa*. In fact he does it in the battle-field when he sees *Rāvaṇa* for the first time confronting him. At the first sight, he admires his august personality and the radiance in his face. But the next moment, he pities him for having downgraded himself by committing a heinous crime. Then he makes up his mind to teach him a lesson. *Hanumān* carries *Rāma* on his shoulders while *Rāvaṇa* drives in his chariot. When *Rāvaṇa* hits *Hanumān* with a terrible arrow, *Rāma* destroys *Rāvaṇa's* chariot and the charioteer completely and then attacks *Rāvaṇa* himself with a piercing arrow which makes *Rāvaṇa* faint on the spot and the bow in his hand suddenly drops down. *Rāvaṇa* nearly collapses and is almost finished. Then *Rāma* tells him not to strain further and asks him to go home, take rest and come back with new equipment later. This was worse than death for *Rāvaṇa*. But the magnanimity of *Rāma* lies in letting his enemy go. It requires a large heart to pardon an avowed and unpitiable enemy like *Rāvaṇa* having caught him utterly helpless. The reason is that *Rama's* real intention was not to kill *Rāvaṇa* but to make him realise what a cowardly act he has done. He would have even pardoned *Rāvaṇa* on the battle-field itself if only *Rāvaṇa* had chosen to ask for it. This single instance is enough to appreciate the mental harmony *Rāma* maintained. This is the SONG OF LIFE.

Sometimes some doubts arise in the minds of some people about certain actions of *Rāma*, which superficially appear to be unsound and even unjustifiable. For instance, the killing of *Vāli* was condemned by *Vāli* himself. The elaborate explanation was offered by *Rāma* to the complete satisfaction of the victim. *Rāma* did not run away after killing *Vāli*. On the other hand, he promised to carry out the last wishes of *Vāli* and kept his promise with additional benefits. Similar doubts are still expressed about the fire-ordeal to which *Sītā* was subjected. *Sītā* herself challenges this strange attitude of *Rāma*. *Rāma* keeps quiet and looks down with burning anguish within. *Sītā* understands the heart of *Rāma* and *Rāma* knows how to communicate to her. It is very difficult for any third party to understand the language of their hearts. The whole misunderstanding between them just vanishes when *Rāma* takes *Vaidehī* into his lap while taking their seats in the *Puspakavimāna*. *Sītā* feels shy to sit so close to *Rāma*. On the way *Rāma* gives a running commentary of all the places they see from above and the various events connected with those places. This relieves *Sītā* of all her tension and she suggests to *Rāma* while over-flying *Kiṣkindhā* that we should take the ladies of *Kiṣkindhā* also with us to the capital city of *Ayodhyā*. Perhaps she was suddenly reminded of her fancy for the golden deer which has created all the story. *Rāma* readily accepts this suggestion and this adds amusement and music to the return journey. This is how *Vālmīki* hints at the light vein that *Rāma* and *Sītā* sometimes indulge in.

Humour and entertainment are ingrained in the two characters - *Rāma* and *Sītā*. If *Rāma* had not thought of talking to *Śūrpaṅakhā* in light vein and making her run from pillar (*Rāma*) to post (*Lakṣmaṇa*), things would not have taken such a serious turn and the *Rāmāyaṇa* would not have assumed the form of the March of *Rāma* singing for itself. *Rāma* indulges in a similar joke with the old brahmin who approaches him for some gifts at the time of his exile. As a preparation for their journey to the forests, they were giving away all their material possessions to the needy and dear ones. In this context when the poor old brahmin approaches *Rāma*, he tells the brahmin to throw a stick as far as he can and he will get as many cows as can fill the area covered by the stick. The old man demonstrates his strength with a nervous mind. Then *Rāma* tells him that whatever is left with him now will be his property. The old man is overwhelmed with joy on this compassion shown to him. This is how *Rāma* sometimes behaves like an average youth. It is this human and humorous element in *Rāma* and *Sītā* that makes their co-ordinated March (*Rāmāyaṇam*) an amusing and alluring, yet highly exhilarating, SONG OF LIFE.



रामायणं नमस्कृत्य नमस्कृत्य परायणम् ।  
 वानरं च नरं नारीं ततः शुभमुदीरयेत् ॥  
 शुभकृत् शुभमाप्नोति पापकृत् पापमश्नुते ।  
 परं रामपदाभ्यासे सर्वं पापहरं शुभम् ॥

rāmāyaṇam namaskṛtya namaskṛtya parāyaṇam ।  
 vānaram ca naram nārīm tataḥ śubhamudīrayet ॥  
 śubhakṛt śubhamāpnoti pāpakṛt pāpamaśnute ।  
 param rāmapadābhyāse sarvaṁ pāpaharam-śubham ॥



*"May our tongue be devoted to the utterance to Thy glories,  
 Our ears to hearing Thy stories,  
 Our hands to Thy service,  
 Our mind to meditation on Thy feet,  
 Our heads to bowing to Thy Abode,  
 And our sight to seeing the wise and  
 the good who are Thy body".*

—Srimad Bhāgavata

## WHAT MOTHER MEANS TO ME

—Dr. Padmanabham, I.C.S. (Retd.)

Genius is of many kinds. History has records of men who dominated their age by sheer weight of their personality. There were leaders of men who swept across continents, founded and destroyed empires, and have shaken society to its foundations. Asia remembers with a shudder the turbulent violence of the Mongol conquerors and even today the word Jengis Khan sends a shiver down the spines of millions of human beings. Then there were men of great intellectual genius who changed the course of history by their deeds. The discoverers of the laws of nature and the inventors of machines, men like Al Beruni, Leonardo Da Vinci, Roger Bacon, and others belong to this class.

Then there is the third group of leaders of humanity whose achievements cannot be assessed by the standards applicable to normal beings. These are the men and women who have devoted their lives to the pursuit of the Ultimate Reality—the substratum behind the universe, and who by their gentle lives and kindness have impressed themselves deeply upon the memories of men and will live as long as and longer than records of history. The Buddha, Christ, Shri Chaitanya and Bhagawan Ramakrishna belong to this class. It is to this hierarchy of genius that our Mother also belongs.

It is very difficult to define a mystic. In a book I read recently the writer has attempted a definition more or less as follows :

If you tell me you know, but that you cannot explain to me how you know, then your experience may be termed mystical.

The definition is very inadequate as it lays emphasis on only one aspect of mystic experience, namely, the fact that it can be tested only subjectively. The category of proof or of validity of mystic experience lies outside the course of normal experience. A mystic is not great by reason of conformity with any of accepted tests of greatness. For instance, a mystic need not be an intellectual genius or even a very highly intellectual person. The mystic need not be popular. Men do not necessarily line up on thousands to see a mystic pass from one place to another. The mystic does not care for popularity. he derives satisfaction in full from his own inner experience and it renders him indifferent to the praise or lack of it from his

fellow beings. There are, however, certain characteristics common to all great mystics and I should like to briefly refer to them in connection with our Mother.

Firstly, the mystic is essentially a very simple and childlike person. His mind does not move in the tortuous labyrinths of fabrication and invention, and therefore the mystic generally is very truthful and reacts like a child regarding questions addressed to him. In the case of our Mother, I am sure all her devotees will bear me out when I refer to her startling simplicity and childlike reaction to her surroundings. I have seen her taking off a heavy garland put round her neck by her devotees and transfer it to the person of a little child who happened to be in the vicinity. Those of us who have had the privilege of sitting with her on the rare occasions when she refers to problems of the world will remember her extremely native and direct replies to questions and childlike acceptance of facts. She had the child's sweetness without its pettishness and obstinacy.

I remember an occasion when the author of this article was asked by Mother at Madras to drive her along the Beach Road, while she plied him with questions about the aquarium which she referred to as a place where beautiful and many coloured fishes had been collected for exhibition. It is this characteristic simplicity that puts one at ease in Mother's presence. This quality has been noticed also in the case of the other two great mystics who have lived in our country in the last few decades Shri Rama Krishna and Shri Ramana Maharshi.

The other characteristic of the great mystic is an absence of normal emotion (at least it appears to be an absence of emotion from the outside). The mystic appears to be indifferent to the things which agitate us and make us unsettled in mind. He faces joy and misery with perfect equanimity of temperament; neither can a tragedy shake him nor can great success turn his head. He derives solace or satisfaction from some source other than this our world of experience. Consequently, he appears to us Godlike and in some cases a self-centred being.

In the case of Mother, the statement is not entirely correct. The Mother cannot be said to be devoid of emotion. I have seen her eyes light up with joy at the sight of a child. I have also seen her coldly indifferent to ostentatious wealth or its display. I have had also the privilege of sitting in the presence of Bhagawan Shri Ramana Maharshi on many occasions, but I have felt that in his case there was a barrier of reserve beyond which one could not pass. He seemed as fundamental and immovable as the peaks of the Himalayas and one felt a sense of majesty and spiritual power. In the case of Mother we are conscious of more tenderness and kindness, and while absolute '*viragya*' was also there she seemed nearer to us.

Those of us who attended the installation of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's *murti* at Vrindaban will remember the energy and enthusiasm displayed by Mother. She did not seem to be in the same place for more than a few minutes at a time, but was directing scores of working people, setting things right when they had gone wrong, advising devotees and in general she radiated kindness all round. By a piece of great good fortune, the *murtis* of Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Nityananda installed by Mother seem to pulsate with life and those of us who saw the expression in their eyes will carry the memory of the ineffable sweetness and mystic vision in them all our lives. In Mother's own words, "They have *Jeeva bhāva* in them".

The author of this article was informed of an occasion when Mother listened in absolute silence for several minutes to a certain person who was trying to teach her duty; while he went on upbraiding her for going about from ashram to ashram, instead of sitting like a tortoise at one spot, she continued to smile and when he even told her that he himself was a highly evolved soul and he did not feel the need for rushing about, she had no comment to make. This amazing gentleness and simplicity recall an incident in the life of Lord Buddha, who was once reviled and insulted by several monks, but only smiled and blessed them. Does not the Dhammapada lay down :

*"Nahi vairena variniha samantiha kadāchana,  
Avairena cha samantiha saddhammo sanātanah."*

"Hatred is not quenched by hating but hatred ceases by love, this is the ancient law".

From what I have seen of Mother she did not encourage profitless discussion and this was a characteristic shared by Bhagwan Shri Ramana Maharshi as well. The mystic realization of the Absolute seems to be intuitive and not intellectual and wordy argument and analysis are abhorrent to him (or her). In the words of the carpet maker of Baghdad :

"Myself when young did eagerly frequent  
Doctor and Saint and heard great argument about it and about,  
But ever more came out by the same door as in I went".

It has been recorded about some of the great mystics that on rare occasions they have even displayed flashes of temper. For example, the Buddha upbraided the Emperor of India for directing and conducting animal sacrifice. Christ drove out the money-changers from the temple with whips, I do not know whether in the case of

Mother there had been any occasion for a display of temper, but all the time I have had the privilege of coming into contact with her she seemed to me the very personification of kindness and sweetness. Even when she had to brush aside a stupid or pointless question, it was done with such grace that there was no sting or painful memory left behind.

It is said that for a proper perspective about a great person nearness in time is a barrier, i.e. it is only across the vista of ages that you can properly estimate the genius of a great leader. If this be correct we are not in a proper position to assess Mother's greatness. It is doubtful whether anyone could even estimate adequately her spiritual genius except another great mystic like Ramana Maharshi or Bhagwan Shri Rama Krishna. But judging from one's limited opportunities and with the facilities at one's disposal, I am convinced that Mother will leave her name on the pages of history associated with a fragrance that will live for many many ages.

**"I say unto you that I am a little child of yours and you are my parents. Accept me as such and give me a place in your hearts. By calling me as 'Ma', you keep me at a distance. Mothers have to be revered and respected. But a little girl needs to be loved and looked after, who is dear to the heart of every one. So, this is my sole request to you all to make a place for me in your hearts."**

**—Ma Anandamayee**

## The Message of the *Bhāgavata*

—Dr. S. K. Maitra

In *Sāndilya Sutra 2 Parā bhakti* or primary devotion is defined as attachment to the Lord ("सा परानुरक्तिरीश्वरे"). In order to meet the objection raised by Patanjali's *Yogasutras*, namely, that any attachment is a *klesa*, *Sāndilya Sutra 21* asserts that the objection of Patanjali applies only to worldly objects and not to attachment to God.

The *Nārada Sutras* define *Bhakti* as "love for the Lord" ("सा तस्मिन् परमप्रेमरूपा"). This is practically the same as the definition of the *Sāndilya Sutras*, but Rūpa Goswami in his *Bhaktirasāmrtasindhu* makes a distinction between attachment and love, giving the latter a higher place than the former. He has, in fact, given an ascending series of sentiments in which love occupies the highest place, and has identified *parā bhakti* with it.

In the *Bhāgavata*, after a description of inferior types of *bhakti*, namely, *sāttviki rājasiki*, and *tāmasiki bhakti*, the highest type of *bhakti*, called *nirguna bhakti* is described as follows :

“मद्गुणश्रुतिमात्रेण मयि सर्वगुहाशये  
मनोगतिरविच्छिन्ना यथा गंगाभसोऽम्बुधौ ॥  
लक्षणं भक्तियोगस्य निर्गुणस्य हृदाहतम् ।  
अहैतुक्यव्यवहिता या भक्तिः पुरुषोत्तमे ॥

Bh. iii 29. 11-12

"The sum and substance of which is that *nirguna bhakti* is *bhakti* in *Purusottama*, which is not tainted by any worldly purpose (*ahaituki*) and is not obstructed by anything (*avyavahita*). It is that which arises spontaneously in the heart on hearing legends about the Lord and which flows freely like the waters of the Ganga into the sea. The *Bhāgavata*'s definition of *bhakti* is practically the same as that of the *Sāndilya* and *Nārada Sutras*, but it stresses two important characteristics, namely, that it should be untainted by any worldly motive (*ahaituki*) and that it should be unimpeded (*avyavahita*).

But although the *Bhāgavata* gives practically the same definition of *bhakti* as the *Bhaktisutras*, yet its attitude towards *jnana* and *karma* is, as we have seen, far more liberal than that of the latter. For instance, it does not hold the view of the

*Bhaktisutras* either that knowledge is not the cause of devotion but can at best be regarded as auxiliary or accessory to it, or that devotion can never produce knowledge.

One of the most beautiful things which we find in the *Bhāgavata* is its conception of the society of *bhaktas* with God as their head. It occurs in the speech of Lord Kṛṣṇa in answer to Durvāsa's earnest appeal to Him to save him from the attack of *Sudarsana Chakra*. The Lord tells him that He is powerless, being Himself in a state of bondage to His *bhaktas*, and then follows a description of His relationship with His *bhaktas*, which we give below in the original :

“अहं भक्तपराधीनो ह्यस्वतन्त्र इव द्विज ।  
 साधुभिर्ग्रस्तहृदयो भक्तैर्भक्तजनप्रियः ॥  
 नाहमात्मानमाशासे मद्भक्तैःसाधुभिर्विना ।  
 श्रियं चात्यन्तिकीं ब्रह्मन् येषां गतिरहं परा ॥  
 ये दारागारपुत्राप्लान् प्राणान् वित्तमिमं परम् ।  
 हित्वा मां शरणं याताः कथं तांस्त्यक्तुमुत्सहे ॥”

Bh. 9.4.63-65

["I am dependent upon my *bhaktas* and have no independence, O *Dvija*. My heart is in the possession of my faithful devotees, and I am the beloved of my *bhaktas*. I have no desire for anything, not even for salvation, apart from My devotees, O *Brahmana*. How can I think of abandoning those who have given up their wives, sons, their dear lives and even their wealth to take refuge in Me ?"]

It is a wonderful conception, in which there is perfect comradeship between God and man and perfect equality between man and man. Can any communist society come anywhere near this conception of perfect equality and universal brotherhood under the fatherhood of God ? In fact, it is a sort of Divine communism, based upon the principle of love. Man is brought into intimate relationship with God, and at the same time he does not lose his individuality. Man's love for God is fully reciprocated by God's love for man. A faint echo of this we find in Spinoza's conception of the intellectual love of God, wherein Spinoza has said that man's love for God must mean also God's love for man.

The beauty of the whole thing is that the *Bhāgavata* is in a position to maintain this relationship between God and man without deviating an inch from the standpoint of absolute monism. It does not believe in any kind of qualified monism. In the very first book it has stated very clearly that its standpoint is that of absolute monism :

“वदन्ति तत् तत्त्वविदस्तत्त्वं यज्ज्ञानमद्वयम् ।  
ब्रह्मेति परमात्मेति भगवानिति शब्द्यते ॥”

Bha. I. 2-11

("Those who know the ultimate truth declare it to be the principle of non-dual knowledge, called *Brahman*, *Pāramātmā* or *Bhagavān*").

The principle of absolute monism is also stated very clearly in the following verse which occurs in connection with Lord Kṛṣṇa's advice to Devahūti.

“आत्मनश्च परस्यापि यः करोत्यन्तरोदरम् ।  
तस्य भिन्नदृशो मृत्युर्विदधे भयमुल्लवणम् ॥”

Bha. III 29-26

("He who makes a distinction between *Ātman* and the world—for such a man, who sees difference, I, as Death, create a terrible fear").

The same principle of absolutely unqualified monism appears also clearly in the words addressed to Lord Kṛṣṇa by Mahādeva, when requesting Him to show His *mohinirupa* :

“त्वं ब्रह्म पूर्णममृतं विगुणं विशोकमानन्दमात्रम्—  
विकारमनन्यदन्यत् ।  
विश्वस्य हेतुरुदयस्थितिसंयमानाम्  
आत्मेश्वरश्च तदपेक्षयानपेक्षः ॥”

Bh. VIII 12-7

("You are *Brahman*, the Perfect, the Immortal, the Attributeless, Pure Bliss, the Unchanging, the Identical as well as the Different, the Cause of the Origin, Preservation and Dissolution of the universe, the Indwelling Spirit which controls, while remaining Itself quite detached.")

So also the principle of absolute monism appears clearly in the famous hymn addressed by Brahmā to Lord Kṛṣṇa :

“एकस्त्वमात्मा पुरुषः पुराणः  
सत्यः स्वयं ज्योतिरनंत आद्यः ।  
नित्योऽक्षरोऽजस्रसुखो निरञ्जनः  
पूर्णोऽद्वयो मुक्त उपाधितोऽमृतः ॥

Bh. X 14-23



("You are the One, the *Ātmā*, the Eternal *Puruṣa*, the Truth, the Self-luminous, the Infinite, the Origin, the Indestructible, the Repository of Infinite Happiness, the Attributeless, the perfectly Non-dual, free from all attributes, immortal".)

Innumerable other verses can be quoted in support of the view that the standpoint of the *Bhāgavata* has thus shown very clearly that a *Bhakti Dharma* can very well be constructed on a foundation of absolute monism. It is a very wrong idea that it must necessarily rest upon a dualistic basis.

It may be objected, however, that if *Bhakti Dharma* is based upon absolute monism, how is it that the *bhakta* maintains his separate individuality and is not absorbed in the Absolute. The answer of the *Bhāgavata* is very striking. It says that although it is open to the *bhaktas* to claim complete absorption in God, yet they willingly abrogate this right for the sake of enjoying the privilege of serving God. This is repeated in several verses in the *Bhāgavata*. For instance, in verse 13 of the 3rd *Skandha*, it is clearly stated that even if a *bhakta* is given *sālokya*, (the privilege of living in the same *loka* with God), *samīpya* (the privilege of living in the vicinity of God), *sārūpya* (the privilege of possessing the same form as God) and *aikya* (union with God), he does not accept them but prefers to remain a servant of God. It is therefore not due to any weakness of his or of any fundamental difference between him and God, that the *bhakta* does not get complete union with God, but it is solely due to his own preference for a state where he can serve God. This is in contrast to the position assigned to him in Rāmānuja's system where, on account of a difference which cannot be annulled; it is not open to man to claim complete union with God.

The same idea of the voluntary relinquishment of his right to enjoy union with God by the *bhakta* in order to be able to serve Him, is stated clearly in *Bhāgavata* xi. 20.34, which runs as follows :

“न किञ्चित् साधवो धीरा भक्ता ह्येकान्तिनो मम ।  
वाञ्छन्त्यपि मया दत्तं कैवल्यमपुनर्भवम् ॥

("The devotees of Mine, who take refuge in Me alone, never express any desire for obtaining *kaivalya* (complete mergence in God) or freedom from the cycle of birth and death, even if these things are offered to them.

Excactly the same thing is also stated in ix, 4. 67, which runs as follows :

“मत्सेवया प्रतीतं च सालोक्यादिचतुष्टयम् ।  
नेच्छन्ति सेवया पूर्णाः कुतोऽन्यत् कालविद्रुतम् ॥

("By virtue of their serving Me. it is known to them that they can have *sālokya*, etc., for the mere asking, but they who are full of service do not want them, not to speak of other things which are temporal").

This is a grand conception—this idea of a voluntary relinquishment by man of his right to complete union with God which at one stroke removes the difficulties which stand in the way of restoring to man his individuality without deviating an inch from the standpoint of absolute monism. The *Bhāgavata* does not deny man the privilege of being completely united with God, losing his name and form, as a verse of the *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* says. But it says that those who are believers in the path of *bhakti* are not attracted by the prospect of being absorbed in God and prefer to enjoy His company and the privilege of serving Him. Thus, by a voluntary relinquishment of his inherent right to be one with God, man can enjoy the *bhakta's* paradise, which is to serve God and live in perpetual comradeship with Him.

Looking at the matter from the other side, it appears that God's relationship with His *bhaktas* is different from His relationship with other men. This does not mean any special favour shown to them; it means only giving men what they are fit for. In the Gita also the Lord says :

“ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तंस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।” (IV. 11)

("However men approach Me, even so do I welcome them" - Annie Besant's translation).

It cannot be said that giving the *bhaktas* the privilege of enjoying His company denotes conferring upon them a higher privilege than is enjoyed by others. From the strictly metaphysical point of view, the privilege of being completely united with God, which is what the followers of the path of knowledge aspire to, is higher than that of enjoying His company. God, therefore, cannot be charged with partiality if He gives His *bhaktas* the right to enjoy His company and serve Him. He only gives them what they aspire to and what they deserve. It does not mean giving them a more favourable treatment than is meted out to others.

Of course, it means that God is looked upon as *Purusottama*, and not as *Aksara Brahman*. This is a legacy which the *Bhāgavata* has got from the Gita. The *Bhāgavata's* conception of God as *Purusottama* or as *Bhagavān* follows the lines of the Gita's conception of Him, as depicted in its fifteenth chapter. It has only dotted the i's and cut the t's of that conception. God as *Purusottama* sheds His awful aloofness and comes into direct relationship with the world. The further delineation of the different types of relationship with different kinds of being, according to their needs, is only a matter of detail.

I shall end up by the description of an ideal *bhakta* as given in the *Bhāgavata*. The ideal *bhakta* is no other than Ambariṣa, son of Nābhāga. In the description of

