

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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MATRI-VANI

Let His Name be ever with you ; imperceptibly, relentlessly, time is creeping away.

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At all times endeavour to sustain the contemplation of God and the flow of His Name. By virtue of His Name all disease become ease.

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Human birth—does it not ordinarily mean experiencing desire, passion, grief, suffering, old age, disease, happiness, pain and so on. Yet it is man's duty to bear in mind that he exists for God alone—for His service and for the realization of Him.

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How can one be a human being without fortitude ? To attain Truth one has to endure all hardships, ever abiding in patience. It is the obstacles that give birth to patience. Write to my friend and tell him that he must become a traveller on the path upon which Peace is found.

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A pilgrim on the path of Immortality never contemplates death. By meditation on the Immortal, the fear of death recedes far away; remember this: In the measure that your contemplation of the One becomes uninterrupted, you will advance towards full, unbroken Realization.

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On the journey through life in this world nobody remains happy. The pilgrimage to the Goal of human existence is the only path to supreme happiness.

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To remain calm and at peace under all circumstances is man's duty.

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First of all, it must be made clear that it is the action of the Guru's power which induces the functioning of will-power; in other words, this will-power may be said to derive from the power of the Guru.

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Divine Happiness—that which you call *Parama sukhadham*—is pure, unalloyed bliss, happiness in its own right.

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By doing service with the feeling that one is serving the Supreme Being in everyone. The desire for God-realization is obviously not a desire in the ordinary sense. 'I am Thy instrument; deign to work through this Thy Instrument'. By regarding all manifestation as the Supreme Being, one attains to communion, that leads to liberation. Whatever work is undertaken, let it be done with one's whole being and in the spirit: "Thou alone workest", so that there may be no opportunity for affection, distress or sorrow to creep in.

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Abandon yourself to God in all matters without exception. "May He do as He pleases with me, who am I but a creature in His hands" — this should be your attitude of mind.

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Everything becomes smooth once the blessing of His touch has been felt.

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Depend on Him absolutely. In whatever circumstances you may find yourself, sustain the remembrance of Him alone. Let this be your prayer: "Lord, Thou hast been pleased to come to me in the form of sickness. Grant me the strength to bear it, gird me with patience, and give me the understanding that it is Thou Who art dwelling with me in this guise.



CONVERSATION WITH WESTERN DEVOTEES

[FIVE]

—Vijayananda

Q. How did your relationship with Ma unfold during the course of the thirty years or more that you knew her ?

V- At the beginning for nineteen months, I was constantly with her, except for one day. We often travelled together at night in the same compartment, or in the same car. The English have a saying - 'Familiarity breeds contempt'. In my experience with Ma, it was the opposite. At the beginning, when we were in the same compartment, I had the habit of occupying the upper berth, above Ma. But once I understood better who she was, I used to lie down on the floor. We had a very simple relationship. We used to eat together. But after some pandits remarked that this contravened the rules, we discontinued the practice. In the initial years I did not speak Hindi, and my communication with Ma was always silent. I asked her questions, and received her replies, all within myself. I also learnt through direct observation.

The first few times, when I had to leave Ma for a long period, were terrible. One day, during one of these difficult periods, I wrote to her, half jokingly: "Ma, this is very hard, can't you do the sadhana in my place ?" Perhaps she did not sense the humourous tone of the question, and she replied - "A sadhaka should first of all master patience. With the help of patience, he should enter within himself."

At certain times, Ma let some tension develop between us, no doubt to lessen attachment to her as a person.

At the beginning when I wished to perform the '*kriyas*' (yogic practices), she sometimes gave me very complicated ones to perform. Later, when it seemed as if I was no longer interested, she smiled - "I know what you want". What I wanted was her '*Shakti*', the direct transmission of her power, and she gave it to me in abundance.

Q. What was the life-style of Ma like ?

V- It was a very normal life-style. When she was young, she used to go through states of ecstasy and of '*samadhi*', which was, doubtless, in response to the demands made by the Bengali public, who loved such things. But all through the years that I knew her (since 1951) she had a very normal demeanour. She had a very distinct way of doing things. Whenever she was in the presence of pandits or

mahatmas, she used to make them answer the queries of people, instead of providing the answers herself. I had never seen her directly provoking the least suffering among her devotees. Indirectly, yes, she could provoke very strong

reactions. She had the capacity of reversing the negative attitude of people towards her, in the twinkling of an eye. For example, one of the sons of a senior Indian official was not interested in the gurus. When Ma visited his family, he did not even wish to go and see her. At his family's insistence, he agreed to go and greet her. The meeting left deep impression on him.

Q. Do you think that Ma changed in over the years ?

V- I found that with age she became more serious. I asked her, "Ma, why aren't you like before ? Have you changed ?" She answered, "I haven't changed, but it is this body which has grown old. "

Q. Did you personally choose to wear the saffron robe by yourself ?

V- No, Ma gave it to me. I did not take the vows of a swami, because I wanted to remain free.

Q. Did Ma give you your name ?

V- Yes, it was in 1951, some months after my arrival. We were in a place situated above Rishikesh. One fine day, Ma named the place "Ananda Kashi", the owner of the property "Anandapriya", and me "Vijayananda."

Q. How would you describe your relationship with Ma ?

V- She was for me, a father, a mother, a beloved, everything together, and much more. I had felt that from the very beginning.

Q. Did Ma teach you 'hatha-yoga' ?

V- I practised 'hatha-yoga' during the early years of my sadhana. I was able to do almost all the postures. I had a neighbour who was very good at it, but I did not learn from him, I learnt it from books. From time to time I used to show Ma the postures, and she sometimes corrected me. Ma had a great deal of energy. When she walked, one had to run to keep pace with her, when she swam, she swam like a fish. But at the end, while leaving her body she had difficulty in moving from one place to another, and she had to be taken in a chair.

Q. Did you have a very personal relationship with Ma ?

V- Yes, especially in the beginning. Afterwards, it was a more impersonal relationship, though it was just as intense. I had also noticed that when my mind

was well, Ma used to be cold and distant; but when my meditation was not going too well, she was warm and gentle. Meditation ultimately leads to a realisation of the impersonal, but a personal relationship helps a great deal in achieving that stage.

Q. What can the guru give, techniques or power ?

V- The guru gives a power. He can help in the awakening of the 'Kundalini', but this is only one stage of 'sadhana'. He cannot give Realisation, but he can help to overcome the obstacles which veil this Realisation, already present within us.

Q. One day, when you had wanted to leave Ma and return to France, you met her. Finally, you stayed on. Was this not an excessive attachment to the physical form of Ma ?

V- It is true, that at that time I used to be very attached to Ma's physical form. I must have had need of this attachment. But Ma liberated me from it. When a real guru creates an attachment for a specific reason, he also has the power to liberate you from it.

Q. What is the meaning of "surrender to the will of the guru" ?

V- With Ma, I tried to respond immediately to the slightest of her suggestions. In this way one could be liberated from certain consequences of his previous acts. If one didn't obey, Ma used to say - "Yes, this is also right, do as you think best." But, at that moment, one had to suffer the 'karmic' consequences of one's acts. In fact, for me, it was never a question of obedience, because obedience pre-supposes fear, to a greater or lesser extent. What I felt towards Ma was love and veneration. I was thus able to follow the practical advice she gave me from time to time, even though, sometimes, this advice did not correspond to the real situation. On the other hand, I never surrendered my freedom of mind to her. This kind of surrender was not in my nature. What I was seeking from Ma, was the direct transmission of a power that would help me in my 'sadhana', and this she gave to me in abundance.

Q. Did you invoke Ma during your 'sadhana' ?

V- Rarely, I did not want to cause her any inconvenience even at a distance. I chose to go to the limits of my own possibilities. Although one can call to the guru before reaching his limits, the determination to find his way is important. Evidently, it is the reverse for those who follow the path of *Bhakti*. They see God everywhere. It is God who does their 'sadhana' for them, all that they have to do is to pray to him all the time. The goal is the same, but the path is different. Now that Ma has given up her physical form, she is completely one with the divine power. I ask her

questions from time to time. I generally get the answers, either immediately, or in the days that follow. But I did not do it too often, because as they say, one should not 'try God too much'.

Q. Was Ma conscious of helping others ?

V- I do not know. She used to be in a very elevated state of being, and the simple fact of her paying attention to a person, and listening to him, resulted in circumstances turning out for the better for him. This could be at the material level, or at the level of the physical health of the person, but it was above all, at the level of his inner evolution, often almost experienced inwardly, Ma's action was like that of a King. It is enough for the King to tell his major-domo that a stranger was his friend, and everything is provided for the said friend: lodging, food, service, etc..... Can one say that the King is conscious of all the details?

Q. Do you think the guru can take on the 'Karma' of his disciples?

V- Certainly. It happened very often in the life of Ma. Either she directly took the sickness of a disciple, in a milder form, on to herself, or she cured the disciple without being visibly affected herself. The psychic power of sages is very strong. It cannot be disturbed by disciples. Once, at Benares, I had had, for some days, a rat-bite which had got infected. I tried not to let Ma see it, but Atmananda, who used to be with Ma, denounced me. Once Ma looked at it, the infection practically disappeared within twenty four hours.

Q. Why doesnot there seem to be any great spiritual figure in Ma's immediate surrounding?

V- Arnaud Desjardins also once asked me this question. They say that in Buddha's entourage, there were also only two disciples who succeeded in attaining it. In my case, at the end of a year in India with her, I asked her if I could meditate alone. But she kept me by her side for two more years, before letting me go for one year of solitary meditation, and after that for about twelve years of meditation in the Himalayas. Ma didn't need a second person. Whatever she had to do, she did alone.

Q. When you travelled with Ma, did the people around realize that they were with an extraordinary being?

V- Yes. Ma was very beautiful, but more than that, she used to be in a state of intense joy, and she communicated this joy to those who approached her. It was the

usual kind of joy; it was a joy without any excitement, experienced with a complete control of oneself. There were many ways of meeting and discovering Ma. One day, we took someone who had had a fracture, to a well-known surgeon in Calcutta. When the surgeon saw Ma, he must have thought that she was the wife of one of the members of the group, and asked her to go out ! She left. Later, someone explained to him that she was the 'Ma Anandamayi'. He finally became one of her most faithful devotees.

Q. Did Ma show that she could read the minds of her visitors when she met them, or did she just ask those questions which one normally asks while wanting to know something about a stranger ?

V- She asked absolutely ordinary questions. Ma was most simple and natural in her contact with people, and therein lay her greatness. It was after having met her and through its effect that one realized fully her power as a sage.

Q. Ma used to take onto herself the emotional state of the people in order to free them from it. But doesn't everyone who enters into a relationship, take on the emotional state (*bhava*) by simple imitation, without being able to liberate him ?

V- No, unless one is very enamoured of a person, one does not take on his emotional state. Rather, one is either constantly opposing it, or trying to defend oneself from it. One has to be a sage like Ma, to be able to take on completely the emotional state of someone else.

Q. What did Ma see of the interior world of her visitors ?

V- She used to see the emotional state, the fundamental '*bhava*', but not the details of their minds. Sometimes in case of an emergency, she could change their '*bhava*' for a while, but it was upto the visitors or disciples to understand the functioning of their own minds, and to change it in a more durable way.

Q. Did Ma sometimes ask her disciples, "What am I, in your eyes ?"

V- No, she used to immediately sense the opinion that people had about her. For example, I considered her as my guru, and with me she always behaved like a guru; quite a few times she used to make clear allusions as to what she was. She often said, "As you play the instrument, so you will hear the sound." If, for example, there were some parents who had lost a child to whom they had been very attached, Ma really used to become that child : she suddenly had the face, the voice, the gestures of a child; something which affected the parents very deeply.

Q. You say that sometimes Ma was 'too nice'. What does that mean ?

V- In her speech, she was always very kind. But, in reality, if one did not do as she had suggested, then, sooner or later, he was to suffer the consequences. Not because she had a wish to punish, but because she could see clearly in advance the false step which one was about to take, and she tried to prevent one from taking it. She responded to one's emotional state, but when one went to see her, it was not easy to change that state, even if one wanted to.

Q. Did you ever have doubts about Ma ?

V- Never any doubts about the fact that she was a fully realised being. Once I went straight to Ma and complained, "Ma, you have created a barrier between yourself and occidentals," I said. "There is no question of a barrier," she answered, "You and me, we are one. This (pointing to her body) is only an appearance. I am *Omnipresent*."

Q. How did Ma view the differences between the main religions ?

V. Once at Vrindavan (Krishna's village, and an important place for the followers of Vaishnavism), I acted as the interpreter between her and a monk. When asked, "Do you not find it tiresome when people of other religions come and argue with you ?" she said, "According to me, the differences between christianity, Hinduism and Islam are like the differences between different sects."

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IMPRESSIONS OF ANANDAMAYI MA

—Richard Lannoy

(FIVE)

If I had to find one word with which to describe the most out-standing characteristic of Anandamayi Ma's teaching it would have to be 'inclusiveness'. But to account for why I find this word the nearest approximation possible I would have to make my reply inclusive too !

In the simple terms of her life story, she had passed level by level, through the entire gamut of spiritual development by the age of 30, from childhood piety to humble religious ardour, to worship of gods, recitation of God's name and service to others in the name of God, to visionary experience, to meditation, to initiation, to glossolalia and prophetic utterance, to the practice of advanced Yoga at the highest levels of perfection, to ecstatic rapture, Kirtan and the dance of the *bhakta*, to *samadhi*. In addition, she had emerged as an exponent of contemplative, esoteric or mystical religion, through direct experience and personal awareness, where the inward sense of the self is one with the feeling of the external world.

At the latter end of the process, her teaching became like the delta of a great river system, an infinity of tributaries, each one flowing towards the unanimity of the human spirit. In short, she encompassed the particularistic states and stages within a unitive whole. She carried with her, as she raised awareness from one level to the next, all those who retained their divergent *beliefs*, but she then reached beyond these surface differences to the transcendental unity of *all* religions. It was not just a matter of mouthing platitudes about 'the oneness of all religions', she gave detailed instructions to people of different faiths and at different stages of development, which were precisely in tune with their ownself in tune with their own particular situation. Her teaching certainly did point to the unity hidden beneath all the outer symbols, affording a glimpse into a universalistic stratosphere without departing from down-to-each detail. She was always precise, never vague.

She was the unassuming country girl from a dirt-poor village home, who became the cynosure for all eyes. Yet still she would say : 'I am always the same !' Anne Bancroft puts it beautifully : 'All of us sense a timelessness dwelling in our heart, an essential core of being *which does not change*. Thus Mataji, who seems to have known herself to be total timelessness, always responded from this essence to same essence in the situation.' While she knows exactly who and where she is—I

am always the same'—we don't know that we also are where she is ! There is no need for us to 'become' liberated : we are already free. Most graphically she shows us how to find this out for ourselves. The clarity of the way she does this is revelatory. 'I do nothing of my own volition'. Nothing ? Surely this is a trife remark—or mediumistic ? It is nothing of the sort. If we could only realize it, she is saying, she can do nothing by her own volition and *nor can we*. All action is His action.

Bhaiji puts it this way : "Her life is an eye-opener to us all. She shows by her everyday activities how we can link every minute detail of life to the Infinite and how we can cultivate a new outlook in our relations with men and make this world a place of new joy and hope and peace She has devoted herself wholly and completely to the good of the world. All living beings are her own kith and kin. "If you think that there is something peculiarly my own, I must tell you that the whole world is my own."

Here is a strangeness, an indefinable rarity, an uncanny ineffable quality which comes so near the limits of the recognizably human as to call for a revision of what we mean by that very word 'human'. Some would undoubtedly find her behaviour very strange, and her freedom to behave strangely, both audacious and disturbing. She was, throughout her life, in every domain, the acme of effortless perfection. Were it not for her lifelong exertion, for the good of all, this perfection would be insufferable. And 60 years of total accessibility must surely have been unendurable had not she herself sustained a marvellous balance between effort and effortlessness. "There are no others. All others are like the tint of this body."

Douglas Harding, who met Anandamayee Ma, told Anne Bancroft that the essence of her life and doctrine was 'to care and not to care.'

"She was totally detached from what was going on and paradoxically totally united with it. And these two are both necessary, for if you have one without the other—look out ! She was free of the world in the sense that her essence was the source of the world and she was not limited by its products or involved in them. Intrinsically she was freedom itself—that was one extremely important half of the truth. The other half was that she was so involved in everything. To be totally separate from everything, to be space for it, capacity for it, is to be it. Paradoxically if one is free of a thing, one is free to be it. She exhibited this paradox—to be free of the world is to be the world. To be free of grief is to be grief. A woman came to her who lost her son and they sat together weeping for hours and then the woman went away comforted. At the same time her teaching was totally uncompromising

when it came to the essence of things, very tough, but absolutely gentle and generous with people's efforts."

In a letter she sent to a group of *sadhikas*, Anandamayi Ma reveals her own high-energy inclination :

"Those who are pilgrims on the path must develop great inner strength, energy, mobility and swiftness, so that their lives may become beautiful, to fill their new life with a new current. It will not do to sit down and ride in a rickety, jolting bullock-cart. At all times, the mind must be intensely vigorous, energetic and alert—then only can you forge ahead with great speed. Remember that every person has to mould his or her own life. Accept cheerfully whatever He may bestow on you or take away from you."

LAMENT OF THE EGO

—Michael Allgaier

We are shadows,
Floating through a dark and windy night,
Alone and hidden from the stars.
And when the sun arises,
We shall fade away.
But let your tears flow gently.
Sufficient to have floated freely
And, though dying, to have welcomed dawn.

VEDANTA AND TANTRA

(Three)

—Prof. Bireswar Ganguly

The Philosophy and Science of Tantra Shāktism

From time immemorial, dating to about five thousand B.C., there were two parallel traditions of spiritualism, viz. the Vedic and the Tāntrik. The bases of the Vedic tradition were the four Vedas and more than one hundred Upanishads, culminating in *Bhagvad Gitā*. Whereas the bases of Tāntrism were innumerable Tāntrik texts, starting from the *Devi Sukta* of *Rig Veda*, and culminating in Durgā Śaptasati Chandi of Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna. The Vedas were recognized mainly as *Nigama Sāstra*, based on deduction from revealed knowledge, and the *Tantras* were recognized mainly as *Āgama Sāstra*, based on induction or practical methods of Yoga.

It is not easy to define *Tantra*. Among the many meanings of the word *Tantra* (root *tan*, extend, continue, multiply), one concerns us particularly that of 'succession', 'unfolding', 'continuous process'. Thus *Tantra* would mean what extends knowledge (*Tanyate, vistārayate Jnānam anenaiti tantram*). Tāntrism gradually came to designate a great philosophical and religious movement, which assumed a pan-Indian vogue from the sixth century onward. In ancient and medieval India, Tāntrism was popular not only among philosophers and theologians but also among ascetics and *yogis*, who were active practitioners of spiritual life. In the words of Mirce Eliade, an eminent authority on Indology, "In a comparatively short time, Indian philosophy, mysticism, ritual, ethics, iconography, and even literature are influenced by tāntrism. It is a pan-Indian movement, for it is assimilated by all the great Indian religions and by all the 'sectarian' schools. There is a Buddhist tāntrism and a Hindu tāntrism, both of considerable proportions. But Jainism too accepts certain tāntric methods (never those of the 'lefthand') and strong tāntric influences can be seen in Kashmirian Śaivaism, in the great *pancarātra* movement (c. 550), in the Bhāgavata Purāna (c. 600) and in other Visnuist devotional trends."¹

There are generally two types of knowledge, viz. philosophical and scientific, the former being mainly deductive and the latter being mainly inductive, though

1. *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, Bollingen Princeton, 1973, pp. 200-201.

both the logical methods are used in both the studies. Western philosophical as well as scientific knowledge is wholly based on reasoning, whereas ancient Indian philosophical knowledge also relied on intuition and revelation. *Vidyā* or spiritual philosophy deals with the 'subject' of knowledge and *avidyā* or science (both natural and social) deals with the 'object' of knowledge. Monistic vedanta attempts to understand the 'subject' (*Adah*) by the logical process of *neti neti*, not this, (*Idam*) to assert the existence of the 'subject'. Tāntric monism being integral monism, takes up both the 'subject' and the 'object' and arrives at the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality by unravelling the mysteries of the apparent phenomenal body as well as the external world. Philosophical knowledge is sythetic, whereas scientific knowledge is analytical. Modern scientific knowledge attempts at an exploration of the *jagat*, world; vedantic knowledge, attempt to understand *Atman*, consciousness, and Tāntric knowledge is a bridge between the objective world and the subjective *Brahman* or *Atman*.

Dr. Balajinnatha Pandita has beautifully summarized the subject-matter of Tāntric science and philosophy in the following manner :

"The academic development of both *Śaivism* and *Śāktism* has its roots in *Āgamic* scriptures, called *Tantras*. The Theistic absolutism of monistic character is the main metaphysical principle of the Tāntric monism and is also the innermost secret of the higher theological pursuit of the Tāntrism. Higher Tāntric philosophy sees the only basic source of all phenomena in the infinite, all-perfect and pure absolute consciousness having perfect Godhead as its essential and basic nature. Such pure consciousness, is an absolutely monistic reality without having any internal variety or *svagataveda*, as propounded by philosophers like, Ramanuja All phenomena, that appear anywhere, enjoy their basic existence within such absolute consciousness, the divine power of which (consciousness) is their internal form. Such divine and infinite consciousness is playful by its basic nature. Its divine playfulness keeps on vibrating inwardly and outwardly

The subjective self-awareness, shining as pure 'I' is said to be inwardness and an objective awareness, appearing as 'This', is meant by outwardness. Such double-edged awareness, illuminative I-ness and this-ness, is appearing in the multifarious forms of 'this-ness' and its such static aspect is termed as *Śivahood*. The natural playfulness of such pure consciousness manifests the divine activities of cosmic creation, preservation and dissolution of the objective phenomenon, as well as the self-oblivion and self-recognition on the part of the subjective phenomenal beings. Such playful aspect of the absolute consciousness is termed as its *Śaktihood*. The absolute consciousness is thus both *Śiva* and *Śakti*."²

2. 'Philosophy of Saktism' in *Navonmesa* (M.M. Gopinath Kaviraj Smṛiti Granth). Varanasi, 1987, p. 129.

Thus we see that the noumenal aspect of the monistic absolute consciousness is termed as *Śakti*. Therefore, *Śiva* and *Śakti* are not at all any mutually different entities, nor is any of them different from *Parama Śiva*, the monistic Absolute of Tāntric śaivism or Kashmiri śaivism. Śaktism and śaivism move together hand in hand both in their metaphysical formulations as well as yogic rituals, as śaktism has adopted the philosophy of śaivism and śaivism has adopted the theological practices of śaktism. A *śaiva yogi* or a *tāntrik sādhanaka* (practitioner) becomes fully satisfied on realizing himself as none other than God Himself. He has to practically realize the three divine powers, known as *Ichhā*, *Jñāna* and *Kṛtyā shakti* of *Śiva*. The *Trika* system of practical śaivism recognizes the whole *samsāramandala* (phenomenal universe) as consisting of *Śiva*, *Śakti* and *Nara (Jivātmā)*. *Śiva* descends to the position of *Nara* through His extrovertive movement on the outward path of His *Śakti* and *Nara* has to ascend to the pinnacle of Sivahood by the means of his introvertive Yogic march through the inward path of *Śakti*. Dr. Pandita rightly observes :

"All deities right from *Sadāśiva* to petty *grāmadevatās*, who are worshipped by *śaiva* aspirants in the practice of *śaiva* theology are the outward manifestations of the different *śaktis* of *Śiva* and their worship is thus the worship of *Śakti*. *Śaktism* is thus an integral part of *Śaivism*. It is on such account that many *śāktas* of the present age count *śaiva* works like *Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta and *Spanda Kārikā* of Bhatta Kallata as works on Śāktism. Most of the *mantras* used in the theology of Saivism are *śākta* in character and so is the worship of *Śricakra*, the tantric diagram representing the whole system of the hierarchy of Tāntric deities. The highly sophisticated Tāntric *sadhana* by means of five *Makāras* is essentially *śāktic* in character and so are all the rituals connected with *dikṣā* and other theological performances of monistic śaivism discussed in detail in *Tantrāloka*."

(To continue)

I LOVE YOU

—Devayani Mehta

A precious treasure,
A priceless love,
Pure,
Sublime,
Selfless,
Perfect,
Words defilest,
Why am I still left
Seeking,
Wanting,
Wavering,
Groping in the dark ?
You will never desert me.
Your laughter fills me,
I can hear you within me
Whispering within the silence of my soul.
My Guide,
Support,
Mother,
Father,
Friend,
Lover,
I am afraid to talk about you

Lest you escape the secret confines of
My heart.
I am a fool
Blinded by delusion.
Give me eyes
So that I can see.
Let me cry for you
For nobody can do for me what you do.
I donot deserve you.
I can feel you
Guiding me
Every second,
Your inspiration
Ever present within my thoughts,
Actions,
Words,
Deeds,
Holding my hand.
I am your little child. Carry me,
Show me eternal love.
Impure as I am,
Can I say the three words,
"I Love you" ?

"BEHOLD, NOW AND ALWAYS ONE WITH THE ETERNAL ATMAN, I AM EVER THE SAME"

– K. Satyanarayan Rao

It is now 17 years since our Blissful Ma had cast off her physical form. The physical form was only a vehicle to commune and commingle with her devotees. However, this world is subject to the change and like everything else, her saga of 'leelas' too began to draw to a close; the signs were alarming, intake of nourishment ceased during the last one year, her physical frame showed signs of steady decline. However, some of her ardent old devotees thought them to be the usual passing clouds. But when the visiting Shringeri Pontiff too ventured to request her to make a special *sankalp* to get well, She replied, "Baba, there is no illness at all here; what you are witnessing is merely the pull of the unmanifest".

When finally, the ominous day, the 27th August, 1982 arrived, we all felt crushed, except perhaps, the stout-hearted sanyasins who could absorb its impact. Devotees in general felt disheartened and wondered whether Ma had slipped away into some oblivion, called 'The unmanifest'. But thanks to the dedicated band of sadhus, the 'Light' was not allowed to be extinguished. We owe it to Mother's grace, that a galaxy of sanyasins always rallied round her devotees to enthuse them restoring their faith in the ultimate goal. Considering the grand scale on which Ma had interacted with the sadhu mandalis and mahatmas across the country, from east to west, north to south, it appears that her 'Advent' was primarily to rejuvenate and inspire the sadhus and sanyasins, to rise to greater efforts to stem the tide of Western materialistic influences. Although large number of house-holder devotees flocked to her darshan and succour, it was the sadhus, simple and erudite, ones alike who benefited the most, for they were very dear to her in a special way, and she always showed great deference and respect to ochre clothes.

If I adore Mā today as the Supreme Soul, I owe this view to the deeply perceptive views expressed by a great sanyasin, Swami Yogananda in his Autobiography. He has included therein a small chapter on "The Bengali Joy-permeated Mother", and in just 3 paras, verily 3 nuggets of gold, packed a revelation that is humbling as well as perennially thought provoking. Recalling his visit to her in Calcutta in 1936, he refers to the joyous welcome received from her -- - "Baba, you have come ! I am meeting you for the first time after ages. Please come", saying so she held him by the hand and led him. After this mere '*darshan-sparshan and sambhāshan*' he could observe, "I had instantly seen that the saint

was in a high state of samadhi, oblivious to her outward garb as a woman, she knew herself as the changeless soul, and from that plane she was joyously greeting another devotee of God!"

Immensely moved, he invites her to his Ranchi Ashram, which she visits shortly thereafter. Yogananda gently pleads with her to tell him about herself, and finally she yields to his pleas, and says— "Baba, there is very little to tell! This consciousness here has never associated itself with this temporary body; Before I came on this earth 'I was the same', As a little girl, 'I was the same'. I grew into womanhood, but still 'I was the same'. When the family in which I had been born made arrangements to have this body married, 'I was the same'. When the husband of this body, maddened by passion, murmuring endearing words, tried to touch this body, he received a shock and swooned, and on regaining consciousness pleaded for forgiveness; even then 'I was the same'. And Baba, in front of you now, 'I am the same'. Ever afterward, though the dance of creation change around me in the hall of eternity, 'I shall be the same!'"

These divine utterances shed a marvellous and humbling effect on the venerable yogi who went on to observe, "I had found many men of God-realisation in India, but never before had I met such an exalted woman saint..... The closest of dear freinds, she made one feel, yet an aura of remoteness was ever around her —the paradoxical isolation of Omnipresence. I marvelled to see that whether amidst a crowd, in a train, feasting or sitting in silence, her eyes never looked away from God. Within me, I still hear her voice and echo of measureless sweetness; "Behold, now and always, one with the eternal Atman, 'I am ever the same'.

The respect and adoration Ma evoked amongst the stoic, austere sadhus, who had given up their hearth, home, kith and kin, in their search of the Almighty, is an experience not to be missed. Once, on my first visit to Kankhal Ashram, I had stopped the cycle rickshaw to enquire with an old sadhu standing by the road, the way to 'Anandamayee Ashram'— as I put it. Smiling broadly, the Swami corrected me — "Mā's ashram ? Mā's ashram, is it not ! Just go straight along the same road for another 10 minutes, you will reach the place". I moved on, but much chastened by the loving stress on the word 'Mā' by the sadhu; The difference between my matter-of-fact 'Anandamayee Ashram', and his lovingly stressed 'Mā's ashram', came forcefully to me as I moved on. I never made that mistake again. That sanyasin had given up his own natal mother, who had borne him, in search of the real meaning of his life, only to find his 'Mother' once again. The 'Divine Mā' herself also residing in her own chosen place, Kankhal, in Haridwar.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

[TWO]

—P.C. Mehta

1. The origin of the Vedic religion:

Little is known about the origin of the Vedic religion or the Aryan people who were the originators of it. The Indo-European languages also called the Aryan languages may have been evolved among the tribes of the Russian and central Asian steppes. During the second millennium B.C. some of these tribes migrated to Europe as founders of the Greek and other European civilizations, while others went to Asia Minor. Some of them called the Indo-Europeans divided into those who settled to found the Persian culture and those who entered India about 1500 B.C. These Aryans were semi-nomadic barbarians, fair and tall. They were mainly pastoral and did some farming. They had a tribal organization and used horses and chariots.

These Aryans who invaded India came upon a highly developed civilization which is called the Harappan or Indus valley culture. The religion practiced by these indigenous people still remains obscure but from the archaeological remains and what we know of other civilizations of the period, it appears that the country was ruled by priest-kings and the fertility cult was popular. Mother goddess figures, a three faced horned male god sitting in a yogic position, seen on steatite seals from Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa and a male god surrounded by four animals, the elephant, the tiger, the rhinoceros and a buffalo with two deer at his feet seen on another seal, suggest the worship of mother goddess and the prototype of Shiva as 'Pasupati' or the Lord of beasts and the archetype of Yogis. These Aryans assimilated the civilization of the local vanquished people in their own.

David Frawley suggests the other view that there was no Aryan invasion of India. He agrees with Renfrew that the Indus Valley civilization was in fact Indo-Aryan, even prior to the Indus valley era. The main Vedic era began, after a great deluge, which destroyed an earlier decaying culture, by the people who were saved from the flood. Some of them were in the Himalayan river valleys from where they descended down on the plains of India. The Vedic culture was said to have been founded by the sage Manu between the banks of the Saraswati and Drishadvati rivers. It was from here that the civilization radiated westwards into the middle east. Thus at the dawn of human history, Vedic culture appears to be a common spiritually based Indo-European culture founded by the saints and sages of yore.

This ancient culture was rooted in yoga and control of mind and not on technology. Thus the origin of human culture as a whole is based on spiritual knowledge and values and not on materialistic considerations or pursuits.

The early people living on the banks of the river 'Sindhu', called 'Indus' in English, which is now in Pakistan, were the Vedic people. Their earliest scriptures are the Vedas. Vedas are the wisdom of their saints and sages acquired in meditation at a profound level of awakening. These Vedic people were fire worshippers. The researches of J. M. Chatterjee suggest that they believed in one formless God, whom they called 'Asura Varuna', who was addressed also as 'Asura-mahat' or the great amongst the asuras. He was the guardian of 'Rta' or the moral order. At that time the word 'Asura' was a term of respect and did not denote demon as it does now. Therein a sage 'Brihaspati' introduced the so called polytheism and idol worship on the ground that through creation, the formless God had taken many forms and therefore He could be propitiated through His many attributes in diverse forms, as well as the one formless God. This position endured till 3500 B.C. In 3500 B.C. came Maharatu Zarthostra, who started a movement to go back to the old order when only a formless God was worshiped. This divided the people. The followers of Zarthostra migrated to Iran and were called Zoroastrians. The formless one God, the great amongst the Asuras, came to be called Ahurmazda from the Sanskrit Asura Mahat. He was no other than Asura Varuna. As their scripture they took 'Chhand-upastha', meaning some of the hymns of the Vedas, which name got changed to "Zend-Avastha", The 'Zend-Avastha' is identified as 'Bhargava-samhita', which is a portion of the 'Atharva-Veda'. The one formless Vedic deity has affected the Greek religion by Varuna being worshipped by the Greeks as Ouranos and considered as the ancestor of Zeus, (see 'Vedic Mythology' by Macdonell). The concept of one formless God in Judaism, Christianity and Islam is also traced to this early Vedic concept.

The Zoroastrians who migrated to Iran, began to call the people on the banks of the river Sindhu as 'Hindus' because in their grammar the word 's' changes into 'h' when pronounced. The name 'Hindu' is very old and appears as 'Indu' in the records of the ancient Chinese pilgrims who visited India. Slowly the whole country began to be called Hindustan meaning the place of the Hindus. Thus, it will be seen that the word 'Hindu' does not bear cultist or sectarian overtones but merely denotes people living in a particular region. It includes Jains, Buddhists and also Sikhs.

From even a casual reading of the early history by various scholars, difficulty in dating is apparent. As such there is considerable room for unbiased research in the field of ancient religions and the cradle of ancient civilization.

