

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

[Translated from original talks in Hindi during Samyam Saptahas]

Where is not God ? When was not God ?

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God has provided you with hands to do the worship of the Lord, mouth to praise the name of the Lord, eyes to see the image of the Lord, ears to hear the words of the Lord, feet to do the *parikrama* of the Lord. What are you waiting for now ?

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There is no place where Lord's Name cannot be remembered. Lord's Name purifies all the impurities.

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In your Guru keep the thought of God and in the image of worship do not see the same as stone but as form of Lord.

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Never discuss the limitation of your Guru. In your Guru keep the thought of God and not of human being.

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Even in denying the presence of the Lord you are always affirming the presence of Him.

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The one who sits in a *kona* (corner) has found the *trikona* (triangle/three worlds).

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When the realization of God dawns, wherever you are there the God resides.

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The difference between *Jiva* and *Jivanmukta* is like clear and dirty water.

* * *

When asked why does everyone love you, Ma says The relationship of Atma (soul) is there so you love this body. This body will stay where you keep and how you keep, eat what you serve. Those who have no one everyone becomes theirs. This body has nothing of its own.

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To make an effort to sit regularly and remember the Name of the Lord is *tapasya*.

* * *

Japa is that which becomes a part of your being, without which you cannot live.

* * *

When asked a number of times how to attain His realization, Ma repeatedly says.....Follow the advise of your Guru. If Gurù has not been found then repeat the Name that you like best.

* * *

Try to observe *samyam* once in a month or once in fifteen days or once a week. Whatever service you perform do it with the thought of serving the Narayana.

* * *

If you keep your *Iṣṭa* with you constantly *ānista* (harm) will keep away.

* * *

Real *Pranava* occurs when there remains no difference between a male and a female, when everyone becomes one, when all the *granthis* (knots) are open. When that is attained then the real *Pranava* takes place.

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Ashram is one where there is no *shrama* (work). No sooner you enter it the feeling of God's presence should be felt.

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Don't do business when taking the Name of God. This is the only place where you have to love God for God's sake.



AHETUKI KR PĀ

[EXCERPT FROM MATAJI'S TALK ON GRACE]

[TWO]

Suppose a man follows his own specific path, which happens to be the worship of a deity, who actually is present as that particular deity ? Certainly the One, who is the formless Self ! Consequently, just as the formless Self is He, so is the concrete object of worship. One who, by the method of *Vedānta*, has become fully established in the Self, may also find the Supreme Reality in the *vigraha*, just as water is contained in ice. He will then come to see that all *vigrahas* are really spiritual forms of the One. For what is hidden in ice ? Water of course. Where He is present as the All, in that ice there are stages of melting, like solid and semi-solid ice. But in the pure Self, the question of stages cannot arise. Although ice may be melting, yet it had become ice, and the possibility of its existing as such again is there. Consequently, for Him who Himself manifests in the form of ice, there can be no question of the eternal or the non-eternal. Hence one speaks of *dvaitādvaita*, signifying that dualism and non-dualism are both facts—just as you are father and son all at one. How can there be a son without a father, or a father without a son ? In this way one sees that neither of the two is less important than the other and that here, there can be no distinction between higher and lower; there is only equality sameness. However, there is a place where one can actually speak of higher and lower states. Each of the two standpoints is complete in itself. (No simile can be applicable in every detail, therefore take note only of that much for which it is intended.) Thus : both water and ice partake of the nature of eternity. Likewise, He is as indubitably with form as He is without. When with form — which is compared to ice — He appears in the guise of countless shapes and modes, each one of them His own Spiritual Form (*Cinmayī Vighraha*). Depending on one's avenue of approach, prominence is given to one particular form. Why should there be so many different religious sects and subsects ? Through every one of them He gives Himself to Himself, so that each person may advance according to his individual uniqueness.

He alone is water as well as ice. What is there in ice ? Nothing but water. According to *dvaitādvaita*, duality and non-duality are both facts; expressed from

this position, there is form as well as freedom from form. Again, when saying there are both duality and non-duality, where does this kind of statement hold good ? There is certainly a level where difference and non-difference are perceived simultaneously. In very truth, He is as much in difference as He is in non-difference. Look, from the worldly point of view, one quite obviously assumes that there are differences. The very fact that you are endeavouring to find your self shows that you accept difference, that, in the manner of the world, you think of yourself as separate. From this standpoint difference undoubtedly exists. But then the world is inevitably heading towards destruction (*nāṣa*), since it is not the Self (*nā Sva*), and He (*na Śa*). It cannot last for ever. Yet, who is it that appears even in the guise of the ephemeral ? Ponder over this ! Well then, what goes and what comes ? Behold, it is movement as that of the sea (*samudra*), He expressing Himself (*sva mudra*). The waves are but the rising and the falling, the undulation of the water, and it is water that forms into waves (*taranga*)—limbs of His own body (*tār anga*)—water in essence. What is it that makes the same substance appear in different forms, as water, ice, waves ? This again is asked from a particular plane of consciousness. Reflect and see how much of it you can grasp ! No simile is ever valid in all respects. What lesson have you actually derived from it ? Find Out ! What you thought of as with-form you have understood to be formless. However, the realization of Truth cannot come through this process of speculation—this also you will certainly come to see.

The aforesaid implies that He eternally manifests, displaying form and equality, and yet is without form and quality; and still further, that the question of attributes and attributelessness cannot arise since there is solely the One-without-a-second. You speak of the Absolute as Truth, Knowledge, Infinity. In pure advaita no question of harm, quality or predication—be it affirmative or negative—can possibly arise. When you say : "This indeed is He and that also is He", you have limited yourself by the word 'also' and as a result assume the separateness of the thing referred to. In the One there can be no 'also'. The state of Supreme Oneness cannot be described as "THAT" and also something other than "THAT". In the attributeless *Brahman* there can be no such thing as quality or absence of quality; there is only the Self alone.

Suppose you hold that He is with quality, embodied. When you become wholly centred in the particular form you adore, then formlessness does not exist for you—this is one state (*sthiti*). There is another state where He appears with attributes as well as without. There is yet another state where difference as well as non-difference exist—both being inconceivable, where He is quite beyond thought.

Besides, one can take the stand of the Vedic *Karmakāṇḍa*. This and all that has been said above, is within the Supreme State, of which it is said that even though the Whole is taken from the Whole the Whole remains unimpaired. There can be no additions and no subtractions; the wholeness of the Whole remains unaltered. Whatever line you may follow represents a particular aspect of it. Each method has its own *mantras*, its own methods, its beliefs and disbeliefs—to what purpose ? To realize Him, your own Self. Who or what is this Self ? Depending on your orientation, you find Him, who is your own Self, in the relation of a perfect servant to his Master, of a part to the Whole, or simply as the One Self (*Ātma*).

Look, if one believes in *Svayam Bhagavān*, His Divine Power (*Śakti*) is already taken for granted. Here you distinguish between *Bhagavān* and *Bhagavatī*, between God as male and His Power as female. Yet from one standpoint there is no question of male or female, while from another the Divinity is conceived as divided into these two aspects. The Eternal Virgin (*Kumārī*) does not depend on anyone, She is the One Itself as POWER. Where the Supreme Reality is conceived as *Śakti*, it is recognized as Pure existence (*Satta*) —with form or without form,—power alone constituting its Essence. This represents yet another standpoint. When *bhāva* (the mood to create) manifests as *krīyā* (action); then only can form emerge. This also is a way of seeing it. Further, if you think of *Bhagavatī* Herself as *Śakti*, there are untold manifestations of Her Infinite Power. Again, *Mahāśakti* is the root-cause of everything—of creation, preservation, dissolution. Just as in the case of a tree boughs and branches spring forth from its root, so all kinds and orders of deities, angels, archangels, and so forth, come into being as the manifestations of that Power.

The specific character of *Śiva* is a transcendence of all change and mutation, symbolized by a *Śiva* (corpse), which signifies that in the death of death lies. Immortality, namely *Śiva*, where creation, preservation and dissolution occur, He is present as becoming and He Himself preserves the universe as what is called *Mahāviṣṇu*. As regards the various cosmic positions, He is indeed in all of them, manifesting Himself in the diverse ways, and as the formless. In each of them all the rest are contained, and in this multiformity behold the One ! When you gaze at one form you cannot see any other, but in each of the form All is present, and every form reveals the One. In the void there is fulness, and in fulness the void. There are possibilities of every kind and description, but the root is the One, the Great Light. He is infinite. Even when speaking merely of one path—how can the end of it be found ? Yet, when the individual is unable to proceed any further, then there seems to be an end.

What is Pure existence (*Satta*) ? The Self, the Supreme Spirit, call it what you will. That which you variously name as God (*Bhagavān*), Divine Majesty, Glory or Splendour,—is only He, the One. Very well, God is immutable, the non-doer (*akartā*), since He does not act. Only one who engages in action may be described as the doer of that action. Since He Himself is present in all causes and effects, how can one speak of Him as controlling or not controlling them ? Thus, here He is actionless. But where His *māyā* is, where the display of His Divine Power and Majesty is perceived, and where nature functions according to fixed laws, who manifests there ? The One of course, Mutable and immutable—these onesided views of yours, belong to the veil of ignorance. You speak of Him as the doer or non-doer, trying to limit Him to the one or the other. From your angle of vision it is but natural to perceive differences. He is whatever you take him to be; you see Him according to your way of thinking, and as you portray Him, so He is.

As long as the curtain, the veil of ignorance exists, one is bound to see and hear in this restricted way. Until the obscuration is removed, how can one expect the revelation of Truth to occur in its entirety ? When the veil is rent asunder, the fact will be disclosed that even the rending of the veil, in fact all that exists or occurs anywhere, is but He Himself.

Very well, the many creeds and sects serve the purpose that He may bestow Himself on Himself along various channels—each has its own beauty—and that He may be discovered as immanent, revealing Himself in countless ways, in all shapes, and in the formless. As the Path, He attracts each person to a particular line, in harmony with his inner dispositions and tendencies. The One is present in each sect, even though in some cases there appears to be conflict among them, due to the limitations of the ego. This body however, does not exclude anything. He who follows one particular creed or sect, will have to proceed right up to the point where all that it stands for is known to him in its entirety. When advancing along one line, in other words, when adhering to one particular religion, faith or creed—which you conceive as distinct and as conflicting with all the others—you will, first of all, have to realize the perfection to which its Founder points and then, what is beyond, will of itself become revealed to you.

What has just been explained, is applicable in the case of each of the various sects; yet it is of course true that, if one remains satisfied with whatever can be achieved by following one line, the Goal of human life has not been attained. What is required is a Realization that will uproot conflict and divergence of opinion, that is complete and free from inherent antagonism. If it be anything less than that, it means that one's experience is partial, incomplete. In the event of true Realization,

one can have no quarrel with anyone—one is fully enlightened as to all faiths and doctrines, and sees all paths as equally good. This is absolute and perfect Realization. So long as there is dissension, one cannot speak of attainment. Nevertheless, one should undoubtedly have firm faith in one's *iṣṭa* and pursue one's chosen path with constancy and single-mindedness.

As to the fruit of action, just consider, where—along whatever line of approach—effort is sustained without a break and with undivided concentration on the one Goal, who will thus be revealed ? He, the Invisible One ! But even in action as such, the Perfect One stands Self-revealed. This is the real significance of each action, of the striving, which is the innate characteristic of the individual. Man's true nature prompts him to do actions that give it expression, his true nature awakens in him the urge to perform actions of this type. Man's true nature, *Sva, Svayam Ātmā*—call it by any name—it is the Supreme, I myself.

CONVERSATION WITH WESTERN DEVOTEES

—Vijayanand

(SEVEN)

Yoga in its hindu framework

Q. What is the rapport between Karma and free will ?

V. Karma does not signify fatalism. On the contrary, the notion of Karma means that one is fully responsible for whatever befalls one. The supreme lesson is to accept what is, without reacting. But it is a very delicate lesson to teach: if one says this to the ordinary man he will become lazy, and will only aggravate his state. By 'action' Hindus often mean 'action' for a result, either religious, social, or for the physical wellbeing. Action which is completely disinterested, unselfish, does not create Karma. Free will exists in the 'bhava' or the mental attitude with which an act is accomplished. It is the 'bhava' which created future Karma - that is the Karma which we are obliged to undergo; but if we can undergo this Karma with an indifferent mind, we do not create new Karma.

Q. Who has the qualifications to become a guru ?

V. He who leads a pure life.

Q. Do you think that, taken as a whole, Indian gurus are credible ?

V. It is not very difficult to become a guru in India, you know, One must have a gift of the gab, a head for business, and - this is important - an orange robe, if possible, and a beautiful greying or white beard like mine.....

Q. What is the importance of this transmission from guru to disciple, which is a basis of Hinduism and of Yoga ?

V- The advantage is that the flame of spiritual experience stays alive.

Q. Is the Bhagvad Gita to be read at four levels, from the most exoteric to the most esoteric, like the cabbalists say about the Bible ?

V. No, the message of the Gita is very clear. There is no esoterism in it. Of course, different schools of thought can have different interpretations, but not so different in reality. When Krishna says, "Whoever worships me and concentrates his thoughts on Me.....", the Vaishnavites interpret 'Me' as a personal God with all his attributes, while Shankara and the Vedantis interpret it as the 'Self' beyond all attributes.

Q. Can one ask a guru about his personal life ?

V. That depends on the guru. If he still has an ego, he might feel ill at ease. But if he has no ego any more, how can he feel uneasy about personal questions, because at the stage where he is, there is no 'person' any more? That was the case with Swami Ramdas. You could ask him any question about his private life. He always answered you simply, like a child.

Q. What do you think of what a guru once told me - "I do not concern myself with '*shaktipat*' (the descent of power brought about by a guru). I do not transmit power to my disciple" ?

V. If he does not transmit power, it means that he is not a guru.

Q. Sometimes, a 'mantra' that one recites constantly, is associated with events in life that are not positive. Would it not be useful to change the 'mantra' from time to time, in order to liberate oneself from all associative memory ?

V- No, because when you recite a 'mantra' in a state which is negative like anger, this mantra cuts the chattering which is at the basis of the anger, thus cutting away the anger itself. In this way, there are no negative associations. In my opinion, the main action of the 'mantra' is to put an end to this chattering, so that the more profound zones of intuition can be attained, and the awakening of Kundalini facilitated. The 'mantra' is not just a practice for old ladies and illiterates; it can lead to Realisation if it is practised with intensity and '*vairagya*' (detachment). The only time that tradition recommends that a mantra be changed is at the time of taking '*sañyas*'.

Q. The constant recitation of the same 'mantra', the continuous concentration on the same goal, can these not make the mind dull ?

V. No, because to maintain that level of concentration, one needs intelligence. Someone, who is stupid, is always distracted, and cannot really maintain the concentration. The intelligence of the illiterate sage can, of course, come from the traditional education he has received orally; but it comes, above all, from the awakening of the 'Kundalini'. It is this awakening which really and immediately confers to the mind of the '*sadhaka*' its acuteness.

Q. In the path of yoga is a guru and initiation indispensable ?

V. That is the rule. The sages who have had neither one nor the other, are exceptions which prove the rule. In fact, in the initiation to *sañyas*, which is the ultimate initiation, the guru prostrates himself before the disciple to show that they are equals, that they are the same. Afterwards, theoretically, they do not need to see

each other again. Practically, however, they often stay in touch, as the new 'sañyasi' has not yet attained the level of vedantic unity where is his guru. In yoga, the guru is the top of the pyramid of the manifest. He is the last bridge which will lead to the non-manifest.

Q. Ma was not in favour of 'sadhakas' preaching, unless they were professional monks, and needed it to earn their living. Why ?

V. It is better not to brain wash people. One should rather wait for their demand to 'give to eat to him who is hungry, and to drink to him who is thirsty'. Then, if one poses as a preacher, sooner or later, there is the temptation of wanting to be taken for a guru, before having the competence for it, something which would be very harmful, as much for the 'sadhaka' as for his prospective disciples.

Psychology and sadhana

Q. Some people say that the spiritual field is beyond the emotional and intellectual fields. What do you think?

V- It is true, but one cannot directly enter the spiritual field. One has to proceed from where one is, from what one knows, that is from the emotional and intellectual fields. 'Jnana' (knowledge) and Bhakti (love) are complimentary to each other. At the end of the road, the two paths merge, but from the beginning it is better that they are associated with each other, in one way or another. Love and devotion without knowledge can lead to an emotional maladjustment which can go to the extent of madness. Knowledge without devotion is dry intellectualism. It is an error to teach the practice of knowledge without a trace of devotion, as some teachers in the West tend to do. One must not destroy emotions. Within a '*bhakta*' hides a '*jnani*', and within a '*jnani*' is hidden a '*bhakta*'.

Q. What is the role of emotion in 'sadhana' ?

V- They are important. They give impetus to 'sadhana'. They just have to be controlled, sublimated, and directed onwardly. What is the root of emotion? It is the intense desire for happiness, which is itself a reflection of the 'Self'. From one purification to another, this emotion can lead the 'sadhaka' to the Self.

To a 'sadhaka', who, before leaving for sañyas, explains some of his recipes for meditation and asks for his opinion, Vijayananda replies :

"Meditation is like a battle, you know. One makes a lot of good plans in advance, but in reality, in action, what one had foreseen never happens. One has to keep finding solutions from one move to another."

Q. Is there place in Yoga, for going beyond a repetitive mental state in order to achieve change?

V- In psychology, one is against a repetitive state of mind, and one seeks change. In Yoga, there is only one real change- Realisation. From another point of view it can be seen that the state of the mind, if one observes it attentively, is never exactly repetitive, it is always changing, fundamentally impermanent. And even if one has the impression that it is repetitive, where is the harm? One can use the insight, that this repetition produces, to disidentify oneself completely from it, and to be absorbed in that which is beyond the mind. In its search for the pleasant and its attempt to escape from the unpleasant, the mind is like a small fly constantly knocking itself against the same window-pane. The role of spiritual effort is to take this fly through the door which had always been wide open, but which it had been unable to see. Spiritual effort creates suffering, not just for the sake of suffering itself, but to stimulate consciousness. When suffering has been able to come back to the surface, when it can no longer be avoided by an escape into false happiness, the individual is forced to ask himself why he suffers; he thus finds more rapidly the cause and the remedy of this suffering. Frustration is inevitable in 'sadhana', but it is temporary. As for the body, its desires and fears creates a constant agitation.

Q. If one wants to rid oneself of some repetitive thoughts that disturb meditation, thoughts of attachment or of anger, for example, how can it be done?

V- Observe, and then return to the body. There is no disturbance of the mental state, that does not have its origin in bodily discomfort. This discomfort involves a disturbance of '*prana*' or energy, which in turn, is projected as mental images of fear or desire. If you calm the body, you remove the main link in this mental chain. For leading the mind away from the body, the techniques of concentration like the observation of respiration, and the 'mantra' are very useful. But when one is well established in observing the disidentification from the body and from the mind, he does not need these techniques.

Q. Can one observe the mind directly?

V- It is very difficult. It is better to be supported by 'mantra' or by the attention to breathing, and to observe the mind from the corner of the eye as it were. The mind is like a child: if a child sees that you are watching him, he starts playing a game just to attract. The meditator will believe that he has found the way, when all he has found are his own footprints; like a traveller lost in the desert thinks that he is on the right path, when all he is doing, is going round and round.

Q. What can make a 'sadhaka' take his 'sadhana' seriously, apart from having suffered, or actually suffering at a particular moment?

V- A deep understanding of the futility of the world, of its evanescence. Nothing is permanent. You love a woman, she leaves you. You succeed in marrying her, she ages and becomes ugly. Many people realise the truth as they grow older, but since they do not have knowledge of anything other than their world, they cannot see light at the end of the tunnel; they become depressed, pessimistic and bitter.. The 'sadhaka' sees light at the end of the tunnel. He realises that there is something permanent, which is beyond all change, and which cannot be cut, broken or destroyed.

Q. Isn't there a risk of people becoming discontented and getting hurt by the detached attitude of the yogi ?

V- Yes, that is always possible. Take the case of Didi, for example. Although she had been very close to Ma, being her chief assistant in all practical matters all her life, she used to lament for being distant and unapproachable to Ma. With Krishnamurti it was the same. A sage cannot be entrapped in a cage of personal relationships which is synonymous with duality, exclusivity, jealousy, and sometimes emotional inversion, that is, a rapid passage from love to hate. A sage can be very close to you, concerning himself with the smallest details of your life and then become totally inaccessible.

Q. Do you remember the names of the people who come to see you?

V- No, not really, because in fact, I respond to their states of consciousness. They find an echo in me. If the people could have modified these states of consciousness, they would have received different answers. But it is not easy to change one's state of consciousness.

Q. Do you practice any particular yoga with your dreams?

V- What ordinary people consider as reality is actually a dream. The dream is thus a dream within a dream. What is important is to arrive at reality. Evidently, sometimes, while meditating one is in a state between slumber and wakefulness, with images of dreams re-surfacing. But it is a conscious process, which is different from that of night dreams. I do not attach any special importance to such dreams. From time to time I hear music, sometimes I dream of Ma, but in the morning I forget the content of dreams, only remains an affective impression. It is merely an additional manifestation of mental activity.

Q. What attitude does one adopt towards memories which resurface during meditation?

V- If they are memories, that are common-place, drop them. If they are memories that cause discomfort or fear, it is better to face them. The best, of course, is to have a blank mind.

Q. What do you think of the story of the guru, who made his disciple swallow a kilo of 'rasgullas' (an Indian sweet) to free him from the craving for sweets?

V- I remember that story: it must be understood and interpreted correctly. The disciple had a small craving for 'rasgullas' (nothing very serious, and a great deal of fear, fear of falling into the sin of greediness. This fear intensified his desire, because our desires are always made up of a complex fear-desire, the fear and the desire mutually intensifying each other. The guru saw this and liberated the disciple from fear by allowing him to satisfy a small desire. But, for the people of the world the proportion is exactly inverse: they are full of great desires, and have very little fear about them. If they try to exhaust their desires by satisfying them, they will only open the door to greater desires, and will never be able to extricate themselves from this vicious circle. By trying to satisfy their desires, they will only be adding fuel to fire. Ordinary people think that the yogi 'tightens his belt'. They cannot imagine that there exists a happiness far greater than that which they experience in satisfying their desires. What they can do, is to wish for the yogi the only kind of happiness they know. But he does not need their wishes. He is like the mother of the family in the following story:

The mother of a family received a sadhu and fed him with a lot of affection. To thank her the sadhu said— "I wish you to have ten sons". "No, no!", exclaimed the mother immediately, "please takeback your blessing. "What! you dare to refuse my blessing", shouted the sadhu and went away furious. On the way he complained about it to a villager. The villager then explained to him - "Your hostess already has twelve handsome sons. Blessing her with ten sons was like saying that two were going to die soon".

Q. Is it normal to protect oneself when one does 'sadhana'?

V- Yes, because one becomes very sensitive. The guru does not need to protect himself. He is there for everyone. It is his role to take on the 'karma' of people. But the 'sadhaka' at certain stages of his practice, attains such sensitivity that he reacts physically, in the form of brief illnesses, to the physical and mental disturbances of those that approach him. It is normal for him to protect himself. The rules of purity followed by the Brahmins were nothing but to protect the people who were engaged in intense 'sadhana'. But nowadays the majority of them do not practice intense

'sadhana', and their rules resemble a battallion which protects a bank whose coffers are empty.

Q. How can a person become one with someone else without taking on the other's faults?

V- It is not a question of a yogi becoming united with some one else, either physically or psychologically. It is a question of becoming one with universal consciousness.

Q. There are numerous experiences and 'sadhanas' possible— sounds, lights, the contemplation of God in a specific form, the observation of breathing, cutaneous sensations, the question, 'who am I?', the 'mantra'. What is to be done?

V- It is not good to do too many 'sadhanas' at a time. it is better to adhere to a single one. But through this 'sadhana' you can have different types of experiences which come naturally; for example the experiences of sound and of light if you practice observation of breathing etc.....Many experiences may come about spontaneously, which is good. This does not mean that you are mixing up the 'sadhanas'.

Q. Why does solitude cause some 'sadhakas' to lose their reasons?

V- Because solitude intensifies everything. One must have a very firm mind to be able to bear solitude. What causes loss of reason in a hermit is mainly fear. There are sounds around him which he interprets as a menace. From one menace to another, he creates for himself a complete paranoid delirium. Besides the fear, there is the risk of enclosing oneself in a completely imaginary system. There are also the demons that can possess one when he is in a weakened or drowsy state. I have gone through all this, and hear again, the important thing is not to be afraid, and not to create any relationship with the adversary. To try to fight and chase away the adversary only accentuates his reality. One must remain completely calm. As for me, I love danger; all my senses are alert, it is an awakening.

Q. Does the 'samadhi' correspond to a state of drowsiness?

V- No, it is neither sleep nor torpor. It is a state of intense '*ananda*' (happiness) without any loss of '*chit*' (consciousness). It is a state of hyper-consciousness. True samadhis, however, are very rare.

(To be continued)

VEDANTA AND TANTRA

— Prof. Bireswar Ganguli

[Five]

The Theory of creation in the Upanishads :

In the first and second *mantras* of the first chapter of *Aitareyopanishad* (of the *Rig veda*) we get a glimpse of the evolution or creation of the universe (*jagat*) from God. *Paramatma* or Godwilled that the different *lokas* (worlds) be evolved from Him and within Himself.

ॐ आत्मा वा इदमेक एवाग्र आसीत् । नान्यत् किञ्चन भिषत् ।
स ईक्षत लोकानुन सृजा इति ॥ १ ॥

"Before the manifestation of the universe, *Parāmatmā* was the only Reality, except whom there was none else. He willed that the worlds be evolved".

स इमाल्लोकानसृजत । अम्भो मरीचीर्मरमापोऽम्भः ।
परेण दिवं द्यौः प्रतिष्ठान्तरिक्ष मरीचयः पृथिवी मरो या अधोस्तात्ता आपः ॥ २ ॥

"Willing thus, *Paramātma* created *Ambha*, *Marichi*, *Mara* and *Apah*."

According to Vedic definitions, *Ambha* means *Svargaloka*, *Maharloka*, *Janarloka*, *Taparloka* and *Satyaloka*, *Marichi* means *Bhubarloka* comprising all stars, suns and moons in the sky and *Mara* means *Bhurloka* or *Prithvi Tattva*, consisting of all physical planetary systems. The underworld below the earth is known as *Āpah* or *Pātāl loka*.

After this the creation of *Brahmā*, the creating power of *Brahman* (God) and other *Lokapatis* (Governors of the inner government of the universe) as well as five senses of knowledge, five senses of action, five subtle elements, *prāna* (life or energy), mind, intellect, the different species of animals upto man and food for all animals are described.

The eighth *mantra* of the first part of the first *Mundaka* (chapter) of the *Mundakopanishad* (of the *Atharva Veda*) describes how from the ascptic will of God, physical matter, life, mind and the worlds were created.

तपसा चीयते ब्रह्म ततोऽन्नमभिजायते ।
अन्नात् प्राणी मनः सत्यं लोकाः कर्मसु चामृतम् ॥ ८ ॥

The *Praśnopanishad* (of the *Atharva Veda*) gives a more detailed description of creation, in reply to the first question :

भगवन् कुतो ह वा इमाः प्रजाः प्रजायन्त इति ॥ ३ ॥

"Sir, from which ultimate cause all the creatures come into life ?"

The fourth *mantra* gives a significant and synoptic reply.

प्रजाकामो वै प्रजापतिः सं तपोऽतप्यत स तपस्तप्त्वा स मिथुनमुन्यादयते ।

रयिं च प्राणं चेत्येतौ मे बहुधा प्रजाः करिष्यत इति ॥ ४ ॥

"God, in the form of *Prajāpati Brahmā* performed the ascetic will to create, and created the first couple of *Prāna* and *Rayi* (life-energy and physical matter or atomic elements), so that the twin principles of life (Sun) and matter (moon) could create the multifarious universe with innumerable creatures." Life is the male principle of consciousness and matter is the female principle of name and form. In reply to the second question the superiority of *Prāna* over all other subtly as gross elements is established *Prāna*, being the energy (*Śakti*) of *Brahman*, has been highly praised in the fifth chapter of the *Chhāndogya Upanisad* and in the second and sixth chapters of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, which has gone to the extent of calling *Prāna* as *Satyam* (real), though *Brahman* is '*satyasya satyam*' (the truth of truth or reality) (vide, II-iii-6).

In reply to the sixth question, the *Praśnopanishad* has stated that God is the Supreme Person, who has sixteen *Kalās* (constituents), and these are also existent in each body.

इहैतःशरीरे सोम्य स पुरुषो यस्मिन्नेताः षोडशकलाः प्रभवन्तीति ॥ २ ॥

"That Supreme Person resides in the body of every being, who has also those sixteen constituents or *Kalās*".

स प्राणमसृजत प्राणात् श्रद्धां खं वायुर्जोतिरापः पृथिवीन्द्रिय ।

मनोऽन्नमन्नाद्वीर्यं तपो मन्त्राः कर्म लोका लोकेषु च नाम च ॥ ४ ॥

"God created at the outset *Hiranyagarbha*, the original source of all life, and then by infusing faith in life, gradually allowed the evolution of ether, air, fire, water and earth in their subtle forms, and then the four inner faculties of mind, intellect, ego and memory and the five sense organs and after that foodstuff, semen, the power of penance, the alphabet (seeds of sound), causes of action and the different *lokas* or planes of existence of life were created." This gives a

comprehensive picture of the *Brahmānda* with its sixteen constituents, e.g. *Prāna*, *Śraddhā*, *Panca mahābhuta*, *Panca jnanendriya* and four *Antahkaranas*.

Creation according to Bhagavad Gita :-

The first *sloka* of the fifteenth chapter of Gita describes the creation of the everlasting Pipal tree of the universe. The tenth *sloka* of the ninth chapter describes how with the seal and sanction of God, nature carries on the function of creation. In the thirteenth chapter the nature of *Kshetra*, the field of action of *Kshetrajna* (Soul) is described. The seventh chapter describes the *Parā Prakriti* (life principle) and the *Aparā Prakriti*, consisting of mind, intellect, ego and the five subtle elements of ether, air, fire, water and earth. The third *sloka* of the fourteenth chapter describes how God, as father or creation, impregnates *Mahat Brahma* (Nature), who is the mother of creation. Sloka 16 of chapter VIII describes how a *Jivātmā* may rise upto *Brahmaloka*, but may have to come back to the earth, after the expiry of the results of virtuous deeds, but no such return is inevitable, if a true devotee of God reaches His *Paramadhāma*, that is the *Prakrityanda* of *Tantra Sastra* or even *Māyānda* or *shaktanda*. Such a cosmic vision of the *Brahmānda* and the worlds beyond can be obtained from 18 *Purānas* and 64 *Tantras* also in great detail.

Evolution according to Śākta and Śaiva theory :-

We have already got a glimpse of the process of creation according to *Vedānta* and *Tantra*. However, a brief encounter with the categories of *sāṃkhya* philosophy and *Kāshmiri Śaivism* will help in understanding the nature of the *samsāramandala* as described by Acharya Gopinath. The analysis of Nature and its evolution according to *Kāshmir Śaiva* philosophy (based on *Śivasutra* of *Tantra*) is more comprehensive than any of the six systems of Indian philosophy. It is a system of ideal monism founded by Vasugupta in the ninth century. Its central position is that there is only one ultimate principle, but that this principle has two aspects, one transcendental and the other immanent. Its analysis of the process of cosmic evolution postulates 36 categories (*tattvas*). What the other systems assume, *Kashmir Śaivism* explains, for it shows the origin of spirit and matter; it discusses the nature of the ultimate principle and it explains the cause of the initial impulses in Nature. The 36 *tattvas* of Kashmir śaivism include the 24 *tattvas* of *Sāṃkhya* philosophy and the twelve additional categories above *Purusha tattva* (*Aham*) and *Prakriti tattva* (*Idam*) are : (1) *Parā samvīt* (*Paramaśiva*) (2) *Siva tattva* (3) *Sakti Tattva* (4) *Sadāśiva* (5) *Isvara* (6) *Sadvidyā* (7) *Māyā* (8) *Kāla* (9) *Niyati* (10) *Rāga* (11) *Vidyā* and (12) *Kalā*. From *Prithvi* to *Mahat* of *Sāṃkhya*, the *tattvas*

(elements or categories) are *aśuddha* (impure or gross), from *Purusha* to *Māyā* the elements are mixed (*śuddhā-śuddha*) and the categories from *śadvidyā* to *śadāsiva* they are pure (*śuddha tattva*). Creation or evolution takes place from *śiva tattva* and *śakti tattva* down to *prithvi tattva*. Hence the practical process of *sāadhanā* for liberation should start from the withdrawal of impure and mixed elements and end with the final realization of one-ness with *Parama śiva* or *Para Brahma* of Vedanta.

Conclusion :-

The *Purusha Sukta* and *Devi Sukta* of the *Rigveda* are the connecting links between the *Veda* and *Tantra*. A glimpse of the '*Sahasra Sirsha Purusha*' can be obtained from the *vishvarupa* of *Gita* and the meaning of '*dasāngulam-atyatisthat*' can be understood only from the picture of *samsāramandala* in higher tantra *śāstra*. The *pañchāgni vidyā* and the Vedic eugenic science, as mentioned in *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad* can never be fully understood without reference to practical *tantra*. *Tantra* worships *śakti* which leads to liberation and modern science tries to enslave *śakti*; hence all the evils of an *āsurik* civilization. The only formula for saving modern humanity from the brink of annihilation can be found in a happy blending of Vedantic ideals and Tantric *sāadhanā*.

The *Rātri-sukta* of the *Rigveda* (X-127) also gives a description of goddess *Kali* in the form of the dark night which ushers in *usha*, the harbinger of light and enlightenment. The *Devi Sukta* of *Tantra* and *Chandi* (*Durgā Saptaśati*) give a much greater detail of the nature and power of Goddess *Durgā* (*Chandi*, *Kāli* etc.) According to Sri Ramakrishna, *Brahma* and *Kāli* are the same, the former term signifies the transcendental aspect of God and the latter term the immanent aspect. Sri Ramakrishna attained self-realization through the *divyācari* (*Śattvik* and pure) worship of the icon of *Kāli*, but he was very critical about the *Vāmācari* (*tāmasic* or sensuous) methods of worship. Swami Vivekananda decried *Vāmācari tantrasāadhanā* of Bengal and exhorted the youth to "read the true sastras, the Vedas, the *Gita*, the *Upanishads*", in his reply to Calcutta address at Sobhabazar¹. *Vāmācari Tantra* was as much the cause of the downfall of later Buddhism, as that of medieval Hinduism. Shankaracarya and Sri Chaitanya had revived Hindu religion through their propagation of monistic vedanta and qualified monistic *bhakti* (devotion) movements respectively. The sheet anchor of Hindu religion being the *Bhagavad Gītā* according to all *ācāryas*, saints and prophets of India, the synthesis of *yoga* has to be sought through the *Gita*. However, those intellectual aspirants, who are of *sattva-guna* (of pure and virtuous nature) and who want to reconcile

1. Sri Ramakrishna Kathāmrita, Vol. V, App, PP. 150-151.

religion and modern science, may seek refuge in *divyācāri tantra sādhanā*, as propounded by Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ma Anandamayee and Mahamahopadhyay Gopinath Kaviraj. *Sādhan Samar* by Brahmārshi Satyadeva, *Japasutram* by Swami Pratyagatmananda Saraswati and *Tantrik Guru* by Swami Nigamananda are three very good texts on the *divyācāri* method of *Tantra-sadhana*. Of course, wherever there is any doubt or conflict regarding the *Tantrik*, *Vaishnava* or *Hatha-yogic* methods of *sādhanā* reconciliation has to be sought in *Bhagavad Gita*, which is the most authoritative text of practical Vedānta.

I have tried in this brief essay to project a synthetic vision of the theoretical side of *Vedānta* and *Tantra* and have by passed the traditional controversy regarding the monistic, qualified monistic and dualistic schools of both the systems of philosophy, for there are many texts on them for the beginners.

THE SECRET

The whole universe is sacred.

It is a miracle of light and motion

that our minds are yet too small and slow to grasp.

All life is sacred.

It is the striving of Being to know and

appreciate Its Own Beauty.

All love is sacred.

It is the fusion power of the universe—

its focus and its ultimate secret.

And those who would receive its deepest blessing

must cling to nothing else.

—Michael Allgaier

LOVE

—Devyani H. Desai

Let me be yours,
Body
Mind
And soul,
Attuned to your will,
Take away everything I have,
Obliterate my ego
Like the petals of a flower fall off,
Leaving only the stalk.
Purify my love,
Unconditional surrender,
I am yours for ever.
I donot understand you
And yet you are the very breath of my life.
The essence lighting up my soul,
Hold me in your arms,
Embrace me.
Let me weep at your feet,
Show me what I am,
Oh ! light of my life,
Please be my only true love,
For on the road to eternity
We are bound together FOREVER.

●

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

—P.C. Mehta

[Four]

1. Polytheism (Poly-more, theos-god); belief in many gods, in the Vedas :

The hymns of the Rg. Veda are addressed to various 'Devas' or gods called angels in western terminology. The word 'deva' means the 'shining ones'.

The earlier mantras reveal worship of conscious entities as being the essence or source of the various powers of nature like Fire (*Agni*), Wind (*Vayu*) and the Sun (*Surya*) and many others. As gods and angels they are the emanations of the One '*Brahman*'. The physical aspect of them that we experience are only their outward body. They are as much, one Supreme God's creation as human beings are.

The polytheism of the Vedas is not a denial of the one God but recognition of the fact that God's multifarious forms and names did not run counter to His one undivided and Supreme Majesty, but added to his splendour and richness and provided avenues of worship, for the many occasions in the life of a people at different levels of spiritual growth. It is also a recognition of the fact that in creation there are subtler existences wherein reside gods and angels, whom it is possible to propitiate as well as sport with, for favours or help in worldly life as well as for final emancipation.

The one God is both form and spirit as well as immanent and transcendent. He is everything. As such at subtler level of existence, His various powers and attributes which are His conscious energies do not assume the kind of separation and crystallization that we are used to, at the physical level. These celestial beings being at a much purer level of existence are protean i.e. take on diaphanous subtle bodies, according to the need of the moment. Furthermore, His various aspects are capable of separation as well as union.

As such the Vedic gods do not occupy a definite position or play a well defined role but merge in each other according to the god which is adored. The adored god is supreme and assumes all powers while he is worshipped and others sink into insignificance. This trait is described as henotheism or kethonothoism by Max Muller; 'a belief in single god, each in turn standing out as the highest', or polytheism in appearance but monotheism in reality, (see '*Vedic Mythology*' by Mc donell).

The following are the important deities of the Rg. Veda.

i) Indra :

Indra is the foremost of the Vedic gods. Maximum number of hymns are addressed to him. He is associated with creation and rain. All gods are upholders of 'Rta' meaning 'moral order'. Physical order in the universe is maintained because gods who are righteous minded uphold the moral order. Indra is pre-eminent amongst them. He is also the god of valour. He is uncommonly fond of the 'Soma' drink.

Indra's myth in the Rg. Veda concerned with creation tells us that before the universe was created the waters of chaos were enclosed by the demon 'Vritra' (enclosure). Indra is the 'liberator of the waters by slaying this demon. It is this singular conquest that created order out of chaos or being ('Sat', analogous to 'Rta') out of non-being ('Asat') and opened the cosmic and earthly space for 'freedom of movement' ('Varivasa') by gods and men.

'Adityas' were the powers of good while Vritra and other 'danavas' were evil. The Adityas were the sons of goddess 'Aditi'. Among them were 'Indra, 'Varuna' and 'Mitra'. Through drinking 'soma', Indra swelled to enormous size, which enabled him to separate 'dvau' or heaven, 'antariksa' or 'mid-region' and 'prthvi' or earth. Thus the three worlds were created.

On thus becoming the protector of the gods against the evil ones, 'Tvashtri', the artificer of the gods, forged the weapon 'vajra' or thunderbolt for him. Strengthened by drinking 'soma', with thunderbolt he battled with an enormous serpent, called 'Vritra' or enclosure lying at the base of the mountain and slew him as well as his mother 'Danu'. Out of the mountain shattered by Indra, there flowed the cosmic waters pregnant with the Sun. Man is enclosed in a mountain of seven locks. *Indra* is the wielder of the thunderbolt that awakens the dragon (*kundalini*) coiled at the base of this mountain, thus releasing the energy that breaks through the seven doors and brings freedom of movement or enlightenment to the prisoner. It begins with 'Usas' or dawn and culminates in 'Surya' or full sunlight.

With the three worlds and the sun, a pathway was created for the sun to travel. In the newly created order in the universe, particular deities were given functions to perform, presided over by 'Varuna', the chief preserver of 'Rta' or moral order.

ii) Agni :

Agni is the sacrificial fire. As such he is the messenger as well as mediator between gods and men. He is a very important deity. He exists in all the three worlds of heaven, *antariksa* and earth. He is a friend and protector of the house-

hold. Rg. Veda begins by adoring 'Agni-deva', foremost in the sacrifice and the bringer of prosperity.

iii) Soma :

'Soma' is the god who animates the juice of the divinized plant of '*amṛta*' or '*immortality*', possibly the hallucinogenic fly agaric mushroom, which were ritually extracted during '*Vedic*' and '*Brahmanic*' sacrifices. Heavenly '*Soma*' is the energy which descends as '*Sakti-Pat*',

'*Soma*' sacrifice involved the pressing and offering of '*Soma*'. '*Soma*' sacrifice would include animal sacrifice along with many sub-rites. The most basic of the '*Soma*' sacrifice was the '*Agnistoma*', i.e. 'in praise of the Agni', which was a four-day rite culminating on the concluding day with '*Soma*' pressings in morning, afternoon and evening and sacrifices of two goats.

The entire book IX of the Rg. Veda is devoted to this god and offering the drink to Indra. In later Hinduism, Soma got identified with moon.

iv) Varuna :

Varuna, the great sky-god of ancient Indo-Iranians, is the guardian of the '*Rta*', the moral order which is responsible for preserving physical order in the universe. He is omniscient and is described as ever witnessing the truth and falsehood of men, as being 'the third when two plot in secret'. He is not only aware of the inmost sin of man, metes out punishment for evil deeds, but is also beneficent and will graciously forgive the sinner, if he be truly penitent. 'Set us free from the sin we have committed' is the refrain of every hymn addressed to *Varuna*. The hymns to Varuna are the loftiest in the Rg. Veda, though few in number. He is also the god of the waters.

v) Mitra :

Mitra is the guardian of vows and compacts. Varuna and Mitra are both sons of Aditi, mentioned under Indra. They are the chief Adityas or sons of Aditi. Mitra as one of the sun gods of Rg. Veda is identical with Mithras of Zoroastrianism and of importance in the Roman pantheon.

vi) Surya :

'Surya' is the Sun-god. He has several other names. He is '*Tri-Vikrama*' i.e. who has taken three strides; which probably refers to the rising, culmination and setting of the sun. He is '*Savitar*', the stimulator and life-giver. He is the '*Logos*'. Creation is enclosed in his cosmic form. He is the sustainer of life and all

pervading. '*Visnu*' literally means 'the pervading'. '*Visnu*', the Supreme God, is the sustainer in the trinity and represented in the mantras as one of the solar deities. As such it was the worship of Sun which gradually transformed into the worship of '*Visnu*'. Pushan is another name of the Sun god. He protects travellers and reclaims lost cattle.

vii) Usas :

'Usas', the lovely goddess of dawn, clad in a garment of light, is inner renunciation, the precursor of enlightenment. She is followed by the Sun of self-knowledge. Her sister is Night. Charming lyrical hymns are addressed to her.

viii) Asvins :

Asvins are horsemen, who are allies of Indra. They drive across the sky in a three-wheeled chariot. They heal the sick and offer other help to people. They are also known to Zoroastrianism.

ix) Rudra :

Rudra is a Vedic god, older than both Prajapati and Brahma, Prajapati being found only in the later Vedic period. In the early Vedic hymns we find '*Rudra*' (literally meaning 'howler' as well as 'fearsome'), as 'the embodiment of the destructive powers of nature who went around spreading devastation with the assistance of Maruts or storm-gods, represented by his sons'. Being god of destruction, he was feared. Destruction is the beginning of creation. They alternate each other. Truly divine power fulfills a function, but in itself is not malevolent. In view of his severe character, he was invoked in early times in his aspect as '*Siva*' i.e. auspicious. In this double construct of Rudra-Siva he was the object of both love and fear. The hymns devoted to him in the Rg. Veda are few, but some of the features associated with *Siva* in later times are there; e.g. mountains as his dwelling place, he having braided hair and wearing a hide as well as his detached bearing. In later stages, he is represented both as the patron of and a pattern for ascetics. He is the possessor of important herbs which he gives to his devotees. Sometimes he is identified with Agni.

x) Maruts :

Maruts are the storm gods. They are the sons of Rudra. They accompany Indra by riding in chariots behind him.

xi) Dyaus and Prithvi :

Dyaus-Pitar is sky-father. In pre-historic times he was the sky-father of the Aryans, with Prithvi on earth as his wife.

xii) Vāyu :

Vayu is the god of wind.

xiii) Yama :

The first man to die became Yama, the god of death. He rules as King in the heaven of the Fathers. In Zoroastrian religion also he is called 'Yama'

xiv) Vāc :

In the '*Devi-Sukta*' of the 'Rg. Veda' (X. 125), we find goddess 'Vāc' i.e. words or dialect identified with the primal energy of life and considered as the enlightened daughter of the seer 'Ambharina'.

xv) Rudra, Visnu and Aditi :

Rudra, Visnu and Aditi formed during the Vedic times, the three branches of *Rudras*, *Vasus* and *Ādityas* ('*Ādityānām Vasunām Rudriyānām*', Rg. Veda 10-48-11). In later Hinduism, they came to represent the three Gods of the *Saiva*, *Vaisnava* and *Sākta* persuasions as *Rudra* (or *Siva*), *Visnu* and *Aditi* (or *Sakti*).

The conditions of life were the result of the 'karmas' of the doer and not at God's behest. He was the father figure and his many emanations which interwoven in the daily life of a people were worshipped for guidance, worldly gains, freedom from karmic bondage as well as the consequences of evil karmas and to attain heaven. Reaching heaven was the goal of life. Liberation became the goal of life during the Upanisadic times and 'bhakti-marg' or the way of devotion came into prominence during the post-Vedic period.

2. Krama-Mukti and Sadyo-Mukti :

We have seen the reason for the fluidic position held by Vedic Gods. Thus, early enough it was recognized that there was One Creator who could be approached from a monotheistic point of view or in a polytheistic manner by regarding his many aspects as separate consciousnesses or distinct gods. In the Hindu faith this position holds true even today.

This knowledge unfolded on the following two distinct lines.

i) The first one was the original Vedic view which held out the attainment of heavenly happiness as the final goal of man's earthly life and not emancipation; (See the old works, '*Apastamba Dharma Sutras*' and '*Nyaya-Manjari*' by Jayant Bhatt). This was possible by worshiping the Gods, through rituals and sacrifices and leading a strictly moral life. Emancipation was considered a gradual process to

be attained after reaching heaven, where the conditions for coming to liberation were favourable. This was called '*Krama-Mukti*'. In other words '*Krama-Mukti*' was possible by living a life which was in harmony with the evolutionary Divine will.

ii) The other view developed during the Upanisadic times, resulted in the recognition of total identification of *Atman*, the essence of man, with *Brahman*, the fundamental substratum of all creation and the way to Self-Realization through '*Jnana*', with emancipation or '*Mukti*'. Brihadaranyaka Upanisad says: 'When all the desires of the heart are destroyed at the dawn of knowledge of *Brahman*, the mortal becomes immortal; then man attains *Brahman* even in this life. And as the slough of a snake lies cast away on an ant-hill, so lies the body. The spirit, disembodied and immortal, becomes united with *Brahman*'.

The first alternative is suited to normal worldly people, while the second is suitable to the very earnest. Both positions hold good even today.

In the later hymns greater emphasis appears on i) Monotheism ii) Monism and iii) Ritualism. Monotheism and monism are often found mixed up.

3. Monotheism:

[Mono means one and theos means God—meaning that there is only one Supreme God, who is the creator of all. Here, there is no notion of a common power which works in all or which is immanent. God is only the creator of all].

In the later Mantras and Brahmanas the highest unitary Godhead is addressed as '*Prajapati*'. He is described elsewhere as born of Rta, the principle of righteousness which rules the world. In course of time, other names are used for the Supreme God and in the Upanisads, the term '*Brahma*' is used in place of '*Prajapati*'.

4. Monism:

[Monism is the doctrine that there is only one ultimate substance or principle which is the basis of all].

The earlier hymns also regard the world, as a transformation of a single primordial immanent substance or cause which unfolds itself as the universe in all its diversity. This idea of immanence is often found blended with the other thought of monotheism stated above, that there is one Supreme God, who is the creator of the world. Thus in hymn 121 of book X of the Rg. Veda, it is said of *Prajapati* that 'He is all and everything'. That is, the Supreme God is regarded not merely as a creator, externally related to the world, but also as constituting its very substance, as the monistic principle does.

5. Pantheism:

[Pantheism is the belief that God is not a personality but a sum of all beings, things, forces etc, in the universe. Here there is no notion of God transcending the sum of all things].

The monism of later Mantras and Brahmanas is often represented as pantheistic; but this is an incorrect view, because the monism of this period connotes not merely immanence but also transcendence. However, in so far as it does connote immanence, it has given rise to some later philosophies.

Brahman's quality of immanence as well as transcendence is very clear from the famous 'Purusha Sukta'- 'The hymn of The Great Being'. At one place it reads; '*Sa Bhumim visvato vrtva atyatisthat dasāngulam*', Having covered the world all around, in the length of ten fingers, He yet transcends it on all sides, or 'Having covered the world on all sides, it extends beyond it the length of ten fingers'.

Though Upanisads will be dealt with a little later, here are a few passages which clearly establish Brahman's quality of immanence as well as transcendence, thus negating pantheism.

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanisad is explained its transcendental nature. This is the *Brahman*, 'without cause and without effect, without anything inside or outside'.

Brahman's quality of immanence is explained in the Mundaka Upanisad. Formless, that Self-luminous Being exists within and without, higher than the highest. From Him issues life and mind and senses—ether, air, water, fire, and the earth. Heaven is His head, the moon and the sun are His eyes, the quarters His ears, the revealed Vedas His speech, His breath is the air, the universe is His heart and the earth touches His feet. He is the innermost self in all beings. He who knows Him hidden in the shrine of his heart cuts the knot of ignorance even in this life. Self-luminous, ever present in the hearts of all, is the great Being. He is the refuge of all. In Him exists all that moves and breathes. Adorable is He. He is the supreme goal. He is beyond the known and beyond the knowable. He is Self-luminous, subtler than the subtlest; in Him exist all the worlds and those that live therein. He is that imperishable Brahman. He is the life-principle; He is the speech and the mind; He is the Truth; He is immortal. He is to be realized. Attain Him O friend.'

Katha Upanisad says. '*Atman is Anoraniyām* i.e. subtler than the subtle and *Mahato mahiyām*' i.e. greater than the great and is dwelling in the hearts of all. As fire, being one, assumes different forms according to what it burns, so the Atman existing in all, though one, assumes different forms according to whatever It enters. It also exists without'.

6. The famous 'Suktas':

The '*Purusha Sukta*', (R.V.X. 90), the '*Nāsadiya Sukta*', (R.V.X. 129) and the Hymn to '*Hiranyagarbha*' or the 'Golden egg', (R.V.X. 121).

7. The 'Purusa Sukta' or 'The Hymn of The Great Being': (R.V.X.90)

A free translation:

- (1) *A thousand heads hath Purusa, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet, covering the world all around, in the length of ten fingers, He yet transcends it on all sides.*
- (2) *This Purusa is all that is and includes within Himself all that has been and all that is to be; though He is the Lord of immortality He manifests as and pervades in temporal creation.*
- (3) *This creation in time is His Majesty; yet, greater than all creations is Purusa. All creatures together are but one-fourth of Him. three-fourths of Him is eternal and celestial.*
- (4) *Three fourths of Him being unmanifested in creation is above and beyond involvement. One fourth of Him (after absorption for a kalpa) on being reawakened into creation became the immanent principle within both animate and inanimate objects.*
- (5) *From this primordial Purusa arose the self-conscious 'Virāt Purusa' or the Great Being, who has the entire creation as his body. From Himself this 'Virāt Purusa' metamorphosed as jivātmā of Gods and men and others. He then issued forth from Himself Earth and the five mahābhutas and created various bodies for the jivātmā to dwell in.*
- (6) *This 'Virāt Purusa' who is the reservoir of all jivātmās and who is the recipient of all oblations offered in sacrifice, through the sacrifice of creation brought into actuality, curd, ghee, animals, including those which move in or with the wind, those which sway in a forest or in urban areas.*
- (7) *This 'Virāt Purusa', who is the reservoir of all jivātmās and who is the recipient of all oblations offered in sacrifice, through the sacrifice of creation brought into existence Rg. Veda, Sam Veda, the various hymns, Atharva Veda as well as Yajur Veda.*
- (8) *From the sacrifice of creation of that 'Virāt Purusa' arose the various animals like horses, those having upper and lower rows of teeth to eat, cows, goats and lambs.*
- (9) *That 'Virāt Purusa' who is the reservoir of everything and through whose sacrifice anything can be brought into creation came into manifestation at the start of creation. The Prajāpati, various gods and accomplished Rsis*

sprinkled water on him and through various sacrifices and oblations assisted in the great task of creation and manifestation.

[It was from 'Purusa', that the goddess 'Viraj' was born, ('Viraj' has within it the notion of the evolving universe and means 'that which extends and dominates afar'.) From 'Viraj' 'Purusa' unfolded in an evolved condition ready for creation. Purusa then became the offering in a primeval and exemplary sacrifice performed by the gods and from his dismembered body there arose the elements of the phenomenal creation.]

- (10) *When the gods and seer Rsis attempted to visualize this 'Virāt Purusa', how did they comprehend him? What did they compare his mouth with? Similarly with what did they compare his hands, thighs as well as feet?*
- (11) *His face was the Brahmins, his hands the Kshatriya (or warrior) kings, his thighs the Vaisyas and feet were the Sudras.*
- (12) *The Moon soared from his mind, the Sun from his eyes, from his ear sprang up air and (prāna or) life, from his mouth sprouted forth fire.*
- (13) *From his navel issued forth the sky, from his head the heaven, the earth from his feet, from his ear the directions and the gods and Rsis imagined the various subtler realms as emanating from the various parts of his body.*
- (14) *When the various parts of the 'Virāt Purusa' got endowed with their presiding deities, the gods made mental offering of the 'Virāt Purusa' as their sacrifice, for extending the outward creation. At that time they regarded spring as their ghee, autumn as the firewood and summer as the oblation.*
- (15) *The mental sacrifice performed by the gods, was enclosed in seven boundaries and in it the oblations were twenty-one and the 'Virāt Purusa' was regarded as the animal of sacrifice.*
(The seven boundaries are the five elements, viz earth, water, fire, air and sky, plus mind and buddhi : the twenty-one oblations are the twelve months, five seasons, three subtler worlds and the Sun. This is the perennial sacrifice.
- (16) *The Devas worshiped the sacrifice-oriented god through mental sacrifice. Therefore, the rituals of their ceremony were the first ones. By performing them, the propitiators reach heaven where reside the sages who have reached there through performing such sacrificial rituals. There also reside other gods who have reached there prior to the beginning of this creation as well as those gods who have come into existence along with the present creation.*

8. **The 'Nāsadiya Sukta' or 'The Hymn of Creation' :** (an extract)

*Then there was neither Aught nor Nought, no air nor sky beyond.
 What covered all? Where rested all? In watery gulf profound?
 Nor death was then, nor deathlessness, nor change of night and day.
 That One breathed calmly, self-sustained; nought else beyond it lay.
 Gloom hid in gloom existed first-one sea, eluding view.
 That One, a void in chaos wrapt, by inward fervour grew.
 Within it first arose desire, the primal germ of mind,
 Which nothing with existence links, as sages searching find.
 The kindling ray that shot across the dark and drear abyss—
 Was it beneath? or high aloft? What bard can answer this?
 There fecundating powers were found, and mighty forces strove—
 A self-supporting mass beneath, and energy above.
 Who knows, who ever told, from whence this vast creation rose?
 No gods had then been born—who then can e'er the truth disclose?
 Whence sprang this world, and whether framed by hand divine or no—
 Its Lord in heaven alone can tell, if even he can show.*

[By J. Muir, taken from 'Outline of Indian Philosophy, by M. Hiriyanna.]

9. **The Hymn to 'Hiranyagarbha' or the 'Golden egg':**

Before the universe became manifest, there was manifest 'Hiranyagarbha' or the 'Golden egg'. He being manifest, became the One Lord of the manifested universe.

An extract from the hymn is as follows :

1. *In the beginning rose Hiranyagarbha,
 Born as the only lord of all existence.
 This earth he settled firm and heaven established:
 What god shall we adore with our oblations?*
2. *Who gives us breath, who gives strength, whose bidding
 All creatures must obey, the bright gods even;
 Whose shade is death, whose shadow life immortal:
 What god shall we adore with our oblations?*
3. *Who by his might alone became the monarch
 Of all that breathes, of all that wakes or slumbers,
 Or all, both man and beast, the lord eternal:
 What god shall we adore with our oblations?*

4. *Whose might and majesty these snowy mountains,
The ocean and the distant stream exhibit;
Whose arms extended are these spreading regions:
What god shall we adore with our oblations?*
5. *Who made the heavens bright, the earth enduring,
Who fixed the firmament, the heaven of heavens;
Who measured out the air's extended spaces;
What god shall we adore with our oblations?*

(R.V.X. 121. From R.V. by Kaegi)

The fourth line of each verse 'What god shall we adore with our oblations?' is important. Swami Prabhavananda of Sri Ramakrishna Math says, "In the original Sanskrit, there is the word '*kasmai*' at the end of each verse. Professor Max Muller has translated the word as, 'who is the god to whom we should offer our sacrifice?' And he has entitled as 'Hymn to the Unknown God'. But Sayana renders the word differently. He declares that '*ka*' means unknown; that is, whose true being remains unknown and unknowable. Secondly, '*ka*' denotes the one who desired the creation or manifestation of the universe. Third, the word means one who is the source of happiness. Thus, the following three renderings of the last sentence are possible:

- (i) Unto Him whose being is unknown and unknowable, we offer our sacrifice.
- (ii) Unto Him who desired that this universe be created, we offer our sacrifice,
- (iii) Unto Him who is the source of happiness, we offer our sacrifice.

(To be continued)

FROM THE DIARY OF DIDI GURUPRIYA

It was the month of January, 1937. Ma was in Navadweep, the famous place of Gauranga Mahaprabhu. Gurupriya didi writes in her diary.

'Last night Ma gave Hiran didi and Baby didi detailed advice about kirtan. At the Dhaka ashram ladies gather every sunday to perform kirtan. Ma said, "It is good to sit with eyes shut and meditate for a few minutes before and after the kirtan. After the meditation following the kirtan, before going home, you should reflect amongst each other as to what thoughts entered each one's mind during the meditation." Further she said, "If you all go round calmly in a circle looking upwards, while singing kirtan, a special *kriya* occurs in the body."

This morning, Prabuddhananda Swami wanted to speak to Ma alone, so he went into the room and shut the door, much to the chagrin of all other devotees, who did not want to let go of Ma even for a moment. Some of them stood against the door and demanded, "Open the door at once, otherwise we will break it. This is most unfair. You have imprisoned our Ma." Finally Prabuddhananda Swami was compelled to open the door and he begged forgiveness with folded hands. Ma was made to sit on the verandah of the dharmasala, which over looked a large compound on the bank of the Ganges. Ma sat surrounded by a big crowd. A person asked, "Ma, can every thing be achieved by the Name ?" Ma replied, "So long as name and form exist, the Name is all in all. Look, once you get into the river, the current will take you towards the sea without your doing anything. But before that you have to take the Name. You are all able to do other work using your intellect, but when it comes to this you say, 'we shall do whatever God makes to do'. This is not right !"

Someone said, "Ma, I shall get up now". Ma replied, "Get up, but watch out, do not bend. I say all should get up." Ma often said this.

Ma was speaking to Prabuddhananda Swamiji about "the scene and the seer". Ma said, "If you are advised to relinquish the scene and focus your attention on the seer you have to understand this to mean that you have to go beyond the gross scenes of this world; for if you think over this you will find that in fact the scene cannot be relinquished altogether. Because even if someone controls his vision or stops it, the scene still remains. The world of duality and scene exist only when they are thought to exist, Therefore, it is apparent that whoever visualises the Brahman does so only with the help of his ego and intellect."

Then the topic of desire came up. Ma said, "Everyone tries to reach the state of desirelessness. So long as you have your own desires you have no peace. Peace

can be attained only when you mingle your own desires with His will. Then all his desires become yours and no agitation arises any more from desires."

Ma went to the bank of the Ganga with the devotees. In the boat she listened to personal problems of each devotee. When Prankumar Babu and his wife were conversing with Ma, the boat had gone far out into the river. Another big boat carrying some policemen was approaching from the ghat. When the big boat came abreast of Ma's boat the boatman of the big boat called out saying, "Move your boat to one side. The Hakim's boat is coming." But the boat man knew not that the small boat before him carried some one who was the Hakim's Hakim, and that it was for her darshan the Hakim was arriving with family in the big boat. The gentleman was a police officer of Krishnanagar, who had come for Ma's darshan on hearing about her. They were all very humble and devout people. Their boat reached the ghat as Ma's boat touched the shore. They expressed great joy on getting Ma's darshan right there. Ma returned to the dharmasala with all her devotees.

January 15th, 1937.

Today a large number of people came for Ma's darshan. Ma sat on her bed and talked to all the people. Ma was speaking to a university Professor, Jeevan Shankar Yajnik, saying, "Study some of that knowledge also. Just as you have passed B.A. and M.A. here and have become a professor, so should you be there also." Yajnik replied, "But my mind refuses to be steady. If the mind got happiness I could have sat." Ma replied, "How much time have you spent in your life-time studying ? Just think it over. And what is *tapasya* ? I say everything is in topsy-turvey fashion." Saying this, Ma continued with joined palms, "I say nothing. I only say what you make me speak. *Tapasya* means '*tāpa sahan*'. (To bear the "Tapa"-the burning of the worldly action). Even if the mind does not want to, you must try. Whatever trouble you take is itself *tapasya*. If there were no trouble then the value of *tapasya* would not be known. When the trouble is not experienced any more the mind begins enjoying bliss of its own accord and then there is no talk of *tapasya*, because *tapasya* has ended. Look, children are naturally attracted towards playing, but they are forcibly made to sit and study. Yet their minds do not concentrate and only after they are made to study regularly as a routine do they start liking studies. After that they do not need to be forced. They themselves begin studying regularly because now they cannot remain without studying. They know that if they do not study they will fail in the examination and they do not like failing." Finally Ma said with folded hands, "Look Baba, this is the prayer of this little girl, that you must give a little time everyday to Him and gradually increase this time." Yajnik was greatly pleased by Ma's words and touched her feet and did pranam before leaving.

ON MEDITATION

—T.K.Ghai

There are many schools of meditation prevalent since the time immemorial in Hinduism. One must always remember that meditation is a very personal practise. Meditation is a method to feel the presence of and realization of God. Meditation is not an object of achievement. Very often the devotee gets stuck in the pleasant experiences of meditation. When this happens, the devotee needs the guidance of a Guru. If the devotee does not do this, he himself may be responsible for stopping his spiritual journey.

First of all, one must understand that meditation is not done, it happens. Meditation that happens is "Sahaja" meditation or self-driven meditation. This type of meditation lasts for how many minutes or hours is not important : what is important is what is its result and impact on life. In the beginning the devotee has to sit regularly and meditate. Afterwards this happens by itself. This is an inward journey of the devotee. In this journey, there are no participants other than the devotee and God. There is no place for a third person. Guru is extremely important in this inward journey. Let us see how Guru sows the path of meditation to his devotee and illuminates this path by his own power and grace and makes this difficult path easy. The Guru inspires the disciple to walk on this path. When the devotee learns to walk on this path, the Guru enlightens the devotee on knowledge and devotion, because without devotion, knowledge is dry and incomplete. Now the devotee has to walk on this path alone. The Guru's help will always be available in case of difficulty—this should always be remembered. What will the devotee do now for God realization ? He will start his inward journey after remembering and offering prayers to his Guru. This will help him reach his final destination. Guru has shown the way. The devotee has to follow the path, all the time & regularly. In meditation, regularity and a fixed time is very essential. The devotee must practise regularly even if he cannot immerse completely or whether he derives any pleasure from it or not. Shree Shree Ma always emphasized the importance of meditation. Ma used to say by contemplation on God and meditation the divine power comes in human beings. Realization of God does not take place without meditation. With appropriate practise meditation happens easily.

When meditation starts to happen, one can see the influence on the devotee's life. 5-10 minutes of true meditation can provide the devotee peace & freshness for

the whole day which money can seldom buy. Meditation not only influences the spiritual life of the devotee but also influences the nature of the devotee. When the inherent nature of the devotee moves upwards & enters purity and becomes "satvic" then one should understand that God is giving the beautiful result of meditation.

The softness of the heart and eyes is the first result of meditation. The devotee's heart is full of peace whether he is in or out of the house. His heart is with God all the time. The turmoil within his heart of thoughts, dilemmas and discussions come to an end. When the heart is full of peace and stable, one should realize that God is pulling the devotee like a small child. Meditation done with heart and continuous practise and Guru's grace turn the emotional meditation into unduality. This is the last stage. After that only God's grace.

God Himself is peace & pleasure. If one has to realize Him, reach Him, then one must plunge into the sea of His devotion. One cannot realize if he stands by the banks. If one wishes to experience the ultimate happiness, he has to jump into the sea of love with the help of a Guru.

Lord Krishna has said in the Gita that a devotee with knowledge is dear to me. The knowledgable devotee will meditate with devotion in his heart. He will attain knowledge from his Guru. The Guru will take the devotee on the path of enlightenment on which he himself has walked. One must have full faith in his Guru and belief in his word, because God says — "The believer gets knowledge."

Knowledge and meditation complement each other. The result of detachment will come at an appropriate time. The result of meditation is detachment. Easy or effortless detachment by which one starts to detach oneself from the world effortlessly. God's divine presence will be felt as the mind detaches itself from the world. As the mind detaches from the world, the continuous & without disturbance streams of God's love and divine presence will be felt. One must be with it. This is his spiritual duty.

Once the posture is established in meditation, it is not necessary that meditation can be done with eyes closed. Meditation can be done continuously during the day even with eyes open. Such a meditation is the ever present connection with God. We can be involved in any activity, the heart is with the Divine. In God lies happiness and divinity. The climax of meditation is that the devotee cannot separate himself from God even for a second. He is sure to get the result of devotion towards God.

मन सागर संसार में, तरंग तरंग नित होई ।

चरण कमल नित ध्यान में, तरंगातीत मैं होई ॥ १ ॥



SAVED FOR LIFE

—Asha Saini

The following is a narrative of a recent near-death experience that our gracious Ma rescued me from.

On February 14, 2000 I was to embark on a brief car trip out-of-town. After finishing my morning sadhana and doing pranam to Ma I heard a voice inside of me speaking a distinct clear instruction, "Drive carefully today". With these words I saw an image in my mind of the main highway I was to take that day, Hwy 19. I closed the temple door and reassured myself that Hwy 19 is not a very busy, nor dangerous highway, and that I should not worry unnecessarily (needless to say, I realized later that this 'confidence' was just my ego trying to act smart). As I left the temple I again heard that voice inside, saying, "drive carefully today." Puzzled by this, I mentioned to my husband that I would try to drive carefully on my trip. He looked out the window, as did I, examining the snow and road conditions and he said, "there is hardly much snow on the roads. Which way are you going out today, anyway?" I told him that my business work would take me on Hwy 19 about fifteen to twenty miles outside of Madison, WI, where we live. Seriously thinking about this he said, "Hwy 19 is not a heavy traffic area, and besides it's usually kept well cleared of snow during the winter." Upon hearing this I felt fairly reassured, and later that day I proceeded on my trip.

As I journeyed along Hwy 19, the message I had heard earlier that morning forced me to remain cautious as I drove. After driving along a 65 mph speed zone for some time, I entered a reduced speed zone with a speed limit of 45 mph. Because I was trying to be especially cautious on that day, I promptly reduced my speed to about 40 mph. But suddenly, out of nowhere, I saw a huge semi-truck start to pull out in front of me, travelling in a path perpendicular to mine. The driver of this truck was trying to get onto the highway from an intersecting side street, but rather than waiting for the traffic with the right of way to clear, he seemed to be trying to cut straight into the on-coming traffic (which included me ! In fact, my car was the leading vehicle of this on-coming traffic !). Because of the length of his truck, he needed to make a very wide turn, so, despite the fact that he clearly did not have the right of way, he proceeded to drive his truck straight out until it filled the entire width of the highway.

Now, with this huge truck suddenly just 20 feet away from me, blocking every inch of space for me to pass through, I was forced to make a split-second decision : how do I save myself ? This looked impossible. I was trapped with no clearance on any side. I slammed on the brakes as hard as I could. The only small space I could see as my car kept moving forward was in the far-left lane out of which the truck was pulling out. I swerved over to that side of the highway and my car screeched to a halt, inches away from the tail-end of this huge truck. It all happened within a matter of seconds. As the truck slowly moved on, my heart pounded against my chest and I was amazed that I escaped that near-collision completely unscathed.

What a wonder !! Who on earth can do this other than HER ? This was a stark revelation to me of Her imminent presence, and a reminder of the truth of Her words that say, "I am with you always." It was such a deeply humbling experience that would lead anyone to call out with gratitude, "Thank you MA for keeping watch over your children !!"

FROM NOTES TAKEN IN SRI MA'S PRESENCE

—'Kirpal'

Kishenpur Ashram, Dehradun, May, 1959

- Pandit Sunder Lalji— In the Srimad Bhagawat the mother is young and the sons Jnana (knowledge) Vairagna (renunciation) are old.
- Sri Jogesh Brahmachari— When Bhakti (devotion) arises, real knowledge and renunciation appear.
- Sree Ma— This body does not usually comment on the holy scriptures and teachings of the saints. Sometimes there is a response and a reply is given.
- Pt. S.L.— Sri Hari baba (the renowned saint of Vrindaban and Bandh) had said that *sat* (true) *sang* (association) with holy saints and reading of scriptures and godly pursuits alone are sufficient.
- Sree Ma— What is satsang? It is to remain in the presence of God by whatever means.
- Pt. S.L.— Who is a holy person? One who has attained the revelation of God.
- Sree Ma— Where the scriptures and God's name is recited there God Himself is present. What is truth (*satya*)? God alone is the manifestation of truth. God Himself is enshrined in the Holy scriptures. By participation in such gatherings the divine traits appear and that is the Supreme Path.
- Pt. S.L.— What should be one's attitude?
- Sree Ma— One should have the inner purity, the true spirit, for God Himself is Truth incarnate. The absolute purity of the mind.
- Q. What are the signs of attainment?
- Sree Ma— To practice the presence of God means to perform those actions which lead to God realisation. But God is ever present. By practising the teachings of the holy

scriptures and revelations of the divine saints one achieves fulfillment. But the practice must be performed continuously. There should be no lapse. By regular practice and remaining in the company of the holy and the wise one finally achieves. Therefore, it is said that satsang alone is sufficient. Definitely there is hope that the divine tendencies will appear. If one partakes of food can one's stomach remain empty ? After drinking water can one's thirst remain ?

Pt. S.L.—

The water must be available as also the thirst.

Sree Ma—

Baba, the water is present, but where is the thirst ? The food is available, but the hunger is absent. Because of the weak digestion the hunger is absent. Where is the desire for food (spiritual hunger)? If there is longing for food, food is definitely available. In the kingdom of God food is there in abundance. When the earnest desire arises, it is fulfilled.

Q.

On meeting one's own tears appear. Our heart should be purified by your presence. You are God Himself ...

Sree Ma—

This is a small child. When you call out earnestly to the Divine Mother, "Where are you", the Mother appears.

Q.

Ma calls us 'father' (Baba)—

Sree Ma—

Who but the father can give the divine teachings ?

Q.

Where is the Divine love we are trying night and day ? We are sitting near you.

Sree Ma—

It is God's play, in whatever way He does.

Who has put the garland around your neck ? Why has it been given ? The intensity of your faith in God is revealed in your discourses and God cannot but help putting the garland around your neck. For God's devotee, God appears and the garland is bestowed. To strive for God by whatever path is fruitful. It is said that by *shatru bhāva*, a feeling of deep anger, one attains to God in three births and by the attitude of devotion as God's friend, in seven births. This body says, keep your mind concentrated on your Lord in whatever way, as a friend or an enemy, for all are

God's own children and God blesses them all. For God there are no differentiations, for there is God alone and no other. By whatever path God accepts them as His own. It is all within God's play. To each His own path. By whatever way God plays. Why does God play in diverse ways, that is God's discretion. God accepts and liberates all by whatever path. Try to come close to God by any means. Do not pretend to be an enemy or a friend. You must be a true enemy or a true friend.

SPECIAL CIRCULAR

Those subscribers, who have not yet sent their subscription for the current year 2000, are specially requested to send the amount either by M.O. or Bank draft as early as possible to enable them to receive the journal without any break.

—Managing Editor

ASHRAM NEWS

Bhimpura—

The Ashram has been quite active from Nov.'99 to March, 2000. Samyam Saptaha was enthusiastically observed for the first time in this ashram. Earlier it was held in Gondal, Nadiad and Badrikashram in the august presence of Shree Shree Ma. This one on the bank of Narmada was of special significance because almost 60 people participated, and everyone somehow felt that the proceedings of the entire programme was inspired by Shree Shree Ma Herself. Zest and strength of the 'Vrat' multiplied manifold with the presence and blessings of Swami Bhaskaranandaji. In keeping with the methods and ways shown by Shree Shree Ma, beginning with Vedic chanting, the programme was absolutely packed till the 'Mauna' at night. Vrat'is attended the meditation from 8 to 9 in the morning and from 3 to 4 in the afternoon. Scholarly lectures on the 'Kathopanishad' by Swami Nagesh Puriji, the discourses full of anecdotes by Pandit Hariprasadji on the 'Gita' and the discourses by Br. Yoganandaji on the 'Sunderkand' were specially noteworthy. What has caught special attention this time is that all the 'Vrat'is considered it an integral part of the 'Vrat' to participate in voluntary services like cooking the food and even cleaning of utensils; and this may turn out to be a trendsetter for the future. Devotees and 'Vrat'is alike, all have in one voice, expressed their desire to hold such a 'SAMYAM SAPTAHA' every year in Bhimpura.

'Gita Jayanti' was celebrated by group-chanting of six chapters of the Gita daily for three days and all the 18 chapters on the final day, which was the Jayanti day. Swami Bhaskaranandaji and Nirvananandaji remained present. Special pooja of Gita was performed. From Dec. 20 to 31 lectures on the Gita were delivered by scholars.

The advent of the new millennium was celebrated through midnight meditation in Shree Shree Ma's room. In the first week of Jan-2000, Gita Jnana Yagna was organized. A 'Shat Chandi Yagna' was performed by an Ahmedabad devotee. On the 10th Saraswati Pooja was performed and at noon Shree Shree Ma's statue was installed in the Ashram hall. All those present, without any exception, experienced Ma's presence and Her Grace in some way or the other. Almost 400 devotees participated. From 13th to 20th, a Bhagavat Saptaha was organized. In March the Maha Shivaratri Pooja was performed by devotees throughout the night.

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PANU BRAHMACHARI
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