

# MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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Vol.-4

July, 2000

No. 3

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## MATRI-VANI

In god's creation the possible becomes impossible and the impossible possible at all times.

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I am not going anywhere : I am always here. There is no going or coming—all is Atman.

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Every body's satisfaction is my satisfaction, every body's happiness is my happiness. every body's misery is my misery.

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Become drinkers of nectar - all of you- drinkers of the wine of immortality. Trade the path of immortality, where no death exists and no disease.

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When you feel power within yourself, when new light dawns on you from within, the more you can keep in concealed in utter calm and stillness, the more it will grow in intensity. If the slightest opening appears, there is always the fear it will escape.

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Sustained effort ends in effortless being - in other words, what has been attained by constant practice is finally transcended, and then spontaneity comes.

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One must not allow oneself to be caught by the lure of super normal faculties. Suppose one has acquired the power that whatever one utters becomes true or whatever one desires is fulfilled. What of it ? This is only a stage. By using such powers to destroy or improve people one may become arrested on that level instead of progressing towards the ultimate. To get entangled on the level of these powers is a waste of energy. Having acquired them one must not lose sight of the Supreme goal of human existence, but strive unceasingly after self - realization. Failing to do so will create obstacles and may result in a fall.

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Question- What do you think of all these new people coming to see you almost daily ?

Answer : Nobody is new. They are all familiar to me.

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You and I are two persons and yet you and I are one... and yet between the two of us, this also is my self : there can be no question at all of duality. Attachment and hate arise out of the sense of duality.

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Question -We listen to so much that is beautiful.

Answer : Beautiful ? As long as you make a distinction between beautiful and ugly, you have not listened.

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"We understand" - that is useless, for he who understands and what is understood have remained separate.

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Question- - - and some we forget .....

Answer - Forget ? Forget the forgetting; death must die.

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Question - What is the easiest way to god ?

Answer- Profuse tears.

Question - And if tears donot come ?

Answer - Then you should seek the company of those who shed tears, namely in satsang This is the easiest way to God, through love and devotion.

## ON ANCIENT SIDDHESWARI & SHAHBAG

—As personally related by Ma

(Translated from the original diary of Prof. A.K. Dutta Gupta in Bengali)

Since my meeting with Ma in Dhaka I used to visit Ma both morning and evening. In the morning I used to spend with her an hour or two after my college works. The morning visits were specially delightful as then she had few visitors. I could hear many topics from her blessed mouth. Some times she referred to events of her early life; sometimes again she would come out with her instructions. On some days while talking she seemed to have passed under a divine inspiration - her face flushed crimson, eyes bright, radiant and fixed, but not set on some earthly object. Words of high moment would be coming out of her mouth with an unlaboured ease like the gushing out of a fountain - their potency was self-evident. Her transfiguration on such occasion cannot be put into words - one must be on the spot with an eye on her to realise it.

One morning Ma passed on to the events of her life at Shahbag.

"Then we were putting up at Shahbag. During my stay there, I occasionally visualised the picture of a place while cooking. It was just the picture of Siddheswari temple of Dhaka. But I did not know it then. But as often as I saw it, I had a feeling that it represented Siddheswari-tala. Sometimes I asked Bholanath about the location of Siddheswari-tala in Dhaka, but he had no idea. One day he took me to a place, thinking it might be Siddheswari-tala, but it did not tally with my vision."

"At this time Baul Babu (Baul Chandra Basak) frequently came to Bholanath. In the evening we used to go to Ramna Kalibari to be present at the arati. Baul Babu who used to be with us, sometimes set out towards the east, as we left for home. In those days the east was a fearful woodland, but Baul Babu was a brave man, and he picked his way through the dark forest fearlessly. One day Bholanath asked him where he went through the forest so late at night. At that he said that it was to the Siddheswari's place. Hearing that I said, "Siddheswari's place—here?" He said, "Yes, it is here. I shall one day conduct you there." Then one night he took us to the Siddheswari's place. The moment I was there, I found it tallied with my vision to the minutest detail - the selfsame temple and the banyan tree. I went up to the tree and took my stand nestling against it. The visit over, we returned to Shahbag."

"One day at noon I was tucking up my belongings as if in readiness for an outing. The journey's end was not yet clear to me, but I was putting in order the things to be left in the house while the others I wanted to take with me were tied into a bundle. At this time Bholanath came up and said, "What is it now ?" I said, "Let us go to the Siddheswari's place." Bholanath made no objection. It was afternoon when we reached there, and just then I had an idea: I must live there for a week. When I disclosed it to Bholanath, he said, "How can it be ? I shall not be able to stay with you. How can you stay alone ?"

"At that time Bholanath was acting as a care-taker of the Shhabbag garden. He had to give directions to the labourers right in the morning. So it was not possible for him to stay away from the garden at night. But I said, "Why I cannot stay alone, I shall be with Ma\*. What is there to fear ?" So Bholanath gave in. He would go to Shhabbag in the evening, left directions for the morning work of the labourers and slept at night in the "Bhoga room" of Siddheswari Bari. I stayed in the small room behind Ma's image in the temple. My days and nights passed in an ecstasy the nature of which was not clear to me."

"When Baul Babu heard that I was to have a week-long stay at the Siddheswari temple, he had the pre-sentiment of something supernatural going to occur there. So he posted himself at the temple gate to keep vigil like Nandi, so as to miss nothing happening there. Thus passed six days and six nights. On the seventh night it suddenly struck me that I must leave the temple. I rose and came out. The day was dawning. Strangely enough, Baul Babu, who had been keeping whole night vigil so long, was fast asleep at the moment. There had been a downpour towards the early morning and it was still raining a little. Not a soul except Bholanath was awake. I hinted at him to follow me and he did so. Coming out of the temple, I made my way through the jungle behind the temple. a little way onwards, I changed upon a clearing, I walked round it and then set upon the spot. By then the rain had stopped. Seated as I was, I began to press the ground with my right hand. The soil was firm enough, but the more I pressed it the more it yielded till my whole arm passed underground. At this Bholanath was frightened and said, "Come now, let us move away from here." Hearing this I took out my hand. At once a broad stream of water gushed out like a fountain from the dent, the pressure of my hand had made. It was not rain water, for it was warm and stained red. It reddened my conch-shell

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\* The idol of Kali enshrined in the Siddheswari temple. It was a very desolate place, with a five head seat (Panchmundi Asana for occult practices of Tantriks). Its celebrity as a siddhapeeth dated back to a long past.

bangles. The stain remained for about seven days. Bholanath was sole witness of the whole thing."

All Ma did then was to direct that the place should be fenced off. Sri Pran Gopal Bose (D.P.M.G. of Dhaka and a disciple of Balananda Swami of Baidyanath Dham) had paid for the fence construction. Later Sri Shashanka Mohan Mukherjee (Akhandanandaji) acquired it on lease and built there an ashram.

That was Ma's first ashram at Dhaka. I heard that even after the construction of ashram, the site of the 'depression' was left intact and Ma used to sit there frequently engrossed with divine inspiration. Later on an image of Siva was enshrined there.

The spot is wholly sequestered and favourable for religious practices. Those who are acquainted with the past history of this place, will perhaps be able to have an idea of the significance of the spot and also of the unusual behaviour of Ma on getting here. The sequence of the strange events beginning from the vision of this place flashing across Ma's mind's eye, her leaving the temple at the dead of night and resorting to the wood-land in foul weather—all would make no sense except in context of Ma's being in some way specially related to this place. These cannot be dismissed merely as just passing whims, as they clearly point to a past nexus, though it is beyond us to ascertain it definitely. As for Ma, she preferred not to be communicative.

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One morning I followed Ma to Shahbag.

Shahbag was once the luxury apartment of the Nawabs of Dhaka, located on an extensive piece of land to the west of the Ramna ground, it abounded with fruit and flower trees. It enclosed a number of brick-built structures of different sizes. The dancing hall paved with stone, was specially attractive. adjoining to it was an extensive pond, encircled by a charming garden growing both indigenous and exotic flowers. The garden was quite extensive and most of it was marred by rank growth of bushes for lack of proper maintenance. Only a small portion was being carefully tended by the people of the Nawab's lineage. It was not open to the public, but Ma had a free access to it. She was held in high esteem by all who knew her, whether Hindu or Muslim. Ma showed me around the place. When Baba Bholanath was in charge of the garden, Ma used to reside here. She pointed over to me the room she had been staying, the place where Kirtans were arranged and also the section where Kalipuja was performed.



The Shahbag had within it the tomb of a Muslim fakir. The tomb was in a room, secured by a lock from outside, but the lattice-works at intervals permitted a glimpse within.

About the fakir, Ma said, "I saw the fakir for the first time when I was at Bajitpur and saw him again when I came over to Shahbag. His appearance at Bajitpur seems to have been motivated to drag me here." The fakir had been dead long before the time Ma was speaking of; so Ma's meetings with him must have been at a non-corporeal level. Ma continued, "At the first meeting, he seemed to me to be an Arab saint, though at the time I had no idea of a country called Arabia and its location. When I said to Bholanath about my vision of an Arab saint, he was somewhat surprised and said, "You should have been visualizing Hindu deities instead; what vision is this ? It makes no sense." When later, on my coming to Shahbag I saw the tomb, I learnt on enquiry that an Arab fakir had been here for a while and then gave up the ghost. The members of the Nawab's family had high regard for him and so he was buried within the garden. On both occasions when I saw him, he was attended by a disciple. At times, scent of incense used to come out out of this bush."

Ma standing by the fakir's tomb, told me as follows:

"One day Kirtan was on in the dancing hall, when I fell into a trance and got out of the room. Finding a Muslim standing a little way off, I signed to him to follow me and he did so without a word. I came with him to the tomb. He helped me unlock the door and once I stood on the south of the tomb while he took his stand on the north. Thus positioned I lost all power of voluntary movement and my body spontaneously broke into various postures that the Muslims make when at Namaz and out of my mouth sounds streamed out... I had no knowledge what they meant. After a time, all these came to an end and I left the room. Some days after when this event got into circulation, Princess Pyaribanu's son, daughter-in-law, daughter and son-in-law came from the Nawab's palace and insisted on my showing them perform the Namaz. I told them that I did nothing voluntarily, all that happened was spontaneous. I shall not be able to repeat them. But they did not leave it at that, and accompanied me to the tomb. I fell into a trance again and the gestures and the sounds were repeated. Listening to them Pyaribanu's daughter-in-law said, "These are all Quranic texts that she is uttering."

The discussion on Shahbag ended here.

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## CONVERSATION WITH WESTERN DEVOTEES

( EIGHT )

— Vijayananda

**Note :** In Page 8 of April, 2000 issue there remained some errors for which the Editorial Board is sincerely sorry.

The correct rendering would be as under :

**Question :** What is the rapport between Karma and free will ?

**Vijayananda :** Whatever happens to us is the result of our own Karma. But the Karma we produce is not due to the act itself, but due to the *bhava* (mental attitude) with which the act is done. And we are free as regarding the *bhava*. For example a mother may beat her child with anger or punish it through love to correct his weaknesses. But once we have launched a Karma wave, we cannot stop it. It is like when you throw a stone in a lake, you are free to throw the stone, but you cannot control the ripples produced by the stone in the water.

### **Yoga and vairagya (Renunciation)**

**Q.** Isn't the seclusion of a yogi an escape from the world ?

**V-** In the mind of the yogi, the seclusion is always temporary : it is the time taken for attaining a certain level of consciousness. After that, he returns to the world. For him, the people of the world are really escaping. They are escaping from themselves, trying to lose themselves in activism in women, in politics. They are avoiding the main questions, like what is the origin of suffering, how can it be ended, what is the meaning of life. The yogi faces these questions and faces himself.

Q. What do you think of the Hindus, who according to the traditional system take 'sannyas' at retirement ?

V. There is theory and practice. Theoretically, each stage of life has its value in leading to Realisation—the *Brahmacharya* (before marriage) for the awakening of *kundalini*, the *Grihastha* (married state) for devotion to others, the *Vānaprastha* (life in the forest together for a couple) and the '*sannyās*' for renunciation. In practice, though, those who take *sannyas* when retiring, or just before death, are not true sannyasis; but as it is their tradition, and they firmly believe that they will facilitate their liberation in following this path, it must have some positive effect.

Q. What is the rapport between renunciation and death ?

V. Renunciation in yoga, is really the death of all attachments, the death of the ego. Physical death does not cause much fear, because it is only the death of the body. But yogic death provokes terror, because it is the end of everything. In "The Lotus and the Robot" Arthur Koestler exclaimed, "But Yoga is thanatophilia!" He was right : but only, being right, in his case, had just one result - to make him afraid.

### Yoga and the west

Q. In these forty years during which you have seen Westerners come to India in search of yoga, what in your opinion are the main defects in their approach ?

V- Firstly, they have very strong egos. Secondly, they want immediate result. They do not have the patience to do long, sustained '*sadhanas*'. Thirdly, as soon as they have had two or three spiritual experiences, they want to open centres and start teaching.

Q. What do you think of the profession of teaching 'hatha-yoga', which seems to be more developed in the West than in India ?

V- If the teacher is content with teaching a technique for the development of the physical well-being it is fine. But if he behaves like a guru, letting others believe that he can take charge of their lives, it is not right. There is the story of Ramakrishna, who, one day heard a toad groaning desperately. He saw that it was wedged tightly into the mouth of a serpent. When he passed by that place again, an hour later, he again heard that groaning; on coming closer he saw that the toad was too big for the small serpent. Both were on the point of death. From this incident, he derived the image of the true master who, like a big serpent; 'swallows' his disciples in a gulp. As far as Ma was concerned, she believed that one could not

give spiritual teaching without having attained Realisation, or at least not until having attained savikalpa samadhi (the state of complete concentration on a given form). This does not prevent a practitioner of yoga from giving spiritual advice to those who ask for it, on the condition that he has the honesty to say when he does not know any more, and that he clearly states the fact that he is not a guru. It is true that authentic gurus, like Ma Anandamayi, Ramana Maharishi and Ramakrishna, often denied being gurus, out of modesty. But the ordinary teacher of yoga is not a guru, either in appearance or in reality, and he should be very clear about this fact.

Q. Can one say that a guru psychoanalyses his disciples ?

V- At one point of time, after fifteen years in India, I had thought of returning to France for practicing a kind of yogic psychoanalysis with patients. A fellow doctor had already proposed to me to use his practice. But finally I realised that it was not possible. The mind is a closed world, even the guru cannot penetrate it. It is up to each individual to do his autoanalysis through meditation, keeping in mind the fact that mental structures are made up of a very specific substance which increases and develops in the exact proportion in which one pays attention to it. It is not thus a question of letting oneself get involved in structures finally unreal, as is often done in psychoanalysis, but rather a matter of returning to the root of the mind. All that a guru can do, is to bear witness to fact that there exists something beyond the mind, and to enable the disciple to attain it by giving him the necessary energy in the course of his practice of sadhana.

Q. Can the *sadhaka* concentrate on curing the bodies and minds of others, as some healers and therapists of the West do ?

V- No, it is not recommended in Yoga, because it involves the utilisation of *siddhis* (powers), which results in a loss of psychic energy and a regression in the sadhana. Besides, from a yogic point of view, in seeking to cure people, one prevents them from going through their karma. Ma often prescribed village remedies to some of her followers, but it was definitely the fact of being in touch with her, through the medium of the remedy, that was the cause of the healing. The Realised Being does not have to concentrate on acting upon others - it comes spontaneously. Everything around such a Being becomes intensified. It is the intensity of the desire to be healed, experienced the patients who approach such a Being that cures and heals them. I often noticed this with Ma; it was also what Christ said, "Go, your faith has saved you !"

**Q** Does the vow of the *bodhisattva* mean that one has to go out on a mission into the world ?

**V-** No, it is a very exalted vow : to do one's sadhana intensely, without concerning oneself with preaching, upto the moment when one reaches the doors of Realisation, that is the *savikalpa samadhi* (with form) just before the *nirvikalpa samadhi* (without form). At that moment one takes the vow to come back to the world in order to help others. Of course, one can object to the fact that Buddha sent out to preach those monks who had not attained realisation. One can criticize this idea of *bodhisattva* from another point of view: in the traditional Indian conception, the universe is cyclical, and there will always be beings to liberate. The *bodhisattva* thus makes the vow to never be liberated, something which goes against the very path shown by Buddha. And then, when the sadhaka is at a certain level, he begins to ask himself, "Who is to be liberated ? Who is there to be liberated ?" As a Zen master said, "The *bodhisattvas* should wash their heads with the fresh water of Zen". Nonetheless, *the vow of the bodhisattva* is an exalted one.

**Q.** What is the difference between the materialistic and positivist thought that is generally present in the West, and the traditional thought that is prevalent today in a number of Hindus, who seem to know how to juxtapose it with economic development ?

**V-** There is a big difference. The Westerners are intellectuals who believe that one can solve all religious and philosophical problems through discussions on the concepts. To the traditional person, this attitude seems strange. In the spiritual and philosophical teachings he receives, he sees scientific truths that he can trust for the reason that they have been experienced by millions of people before him. His only task is to verify and realise them through his own experience. Imagine that you went to a research chemist and asked him, "What would've happened if Lavoisier had made a mistake in the enunciation of his laws?" He would look at you in amazement, and would doubtlessly reply, "Don't ask me useless questions ! Just tell me what you want me to produce for you....."

**Q.** What do you think of spiritual masters who give initiation in the name of ....., like the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission give initiation in the name of the sage of Dakshineswar, and the Christians in the name of Christ? Do they have the entire power of a spiritual master who derives his authority from his own realisation?

**V-** That is the question to be asked.

Q. In your opinion, what type of meditation can be developed in the West, in the long term?

V- A type of meditation which is independent of any religious context, like the 'Who am I', or that which Krishnamurti teaches. It should be a teaching which is practised and lived, not just read. In this sense, the function of the guru would retain its importance in the West. The Krishnamurti of the discourses criticised gurus, but the private Krishnamurti behaved exactly like a true Indian guru, constantly sending the people back to themselves. Should it be a centre for this kind of meditation in the West, there would not be any need for rituals or religious activity.

Q. Is there any real difference between the 'Self' of Vedanta and the vacuity of Buddhism ?

V- It deals with the Supreme state which words cannot express. All that one can say like Ma is "Jā tā", "It is, what it is !"

Q. Is there a moment in *sadhana* when it is good to take the decision that Buddha took at Bodhgaya - to sit, and decide not to get up before attaining realisation ?

V- One has to be ready for it. One day I took this decision. It was when we were with Ma at Rajgir (high place of Buddhism), I had been very impressed by the example of Buddha, and took it into my mind to follow this example. Without telling anyone, I sat down in my room; after some time Ma came into the room, began talking of trivial things to my room-mate, walking around me, in short, doing everything she could to distract me. Usually, when she saw someone in meditation, she withdrew without disturbing the person. Finally, even though I had decided not to move, I had to get up and greet her. Some time later I tried again, and Ma again prevented me from it. When one has a 'sad-guru', he keeps a watch on him and lets him know whether or not he is ready to make a start.

Q. Some people say that guru and disciple can communicate internally, even at a distance. Is this a myth or is it a reality that you have experienced ?

V- I have experienced it many times with Ma. For example, sometimes, when we were sitting face to face, I decided to see if she could perceive the questions that I was asking her. I used French, a language which obviously she did not speak. In the minutes that followed, in the course of her conversation, she answered very

the minutes that followed, in the course of her conversation, she answered very specifically and exactly, either immediately afterwards, or after some time.

To give another example - I was in my hermitage in Dhaulchina. One morning, no sooner had I sat down to meditate, than I had the intuition that I had to go immediately to the ashram at Almora (about 20 kms away). As quite a bit of the journey had to be done on foot, I had to go down to the village at Dhaulchina to get some porters. As soon as the arrangements were made, I left for Almora. Hardly had I arrived at the ashram at Almora, than I heard a voice speaking French. It was a Frenchman who had been sent by Ma, and he knew no other language except French. Naturally, I attended to him immediately. The next day (or the day after, I don't exactly remember), I received a letter from Ma, addressed to Almora (she knew I was in Dhaulchina), asking me to look after the Frenchman and to give him all the help necessary. It often seemed to me that I received an internal impulse coming from Ma, but it was difficult to be absolutely sure. Maybe it was the creation of my own mind; but like in the case I have just cited, the relationship with Ma was incontestable. One could write an entire book on it. A *sadhaka*, who is beginning to learn how to calm his mind, can very well experience it.

## IN THE COMPANY OF HER PARENTS.....

### [AN ACCOUNT OF SRI MA'S VISIT TO HER BIRTH PLACE AND OTHER ANCESTRAL PLACES]

Ma once set Her foot at Her maternal uncle's house, in the village of Sultanpur, and along with it at Kheora and Vidyakut too. Ma's father, mother, Bholanath, Swami Akhandananda, Gurupriya Devi and also some others accompanied Her. To reach houses in those villages from a railway or a steamer station, during rainy season, there was no alternative other than of going by a boat. In other seasons, conveyances, such as palkis (palanquins) and the like were available. Whenever Ma was taken anywhere during rainy season, it was only by boat that they reached the ghat of the house.

At Kheora was Ma's father's maternal uncle's house—the place where the form of Ma had appeared first. When the party arrived there, the entire population of that small village was already present. Besides, it was surprising that from many small neighbouring villages too, the villagers had arrived in groups by boat for Ma's darshan. There were so many pinnaces and small boats that it seemed as if there was a fair of boats too. And, of course, where Ma was, at that place, there was continuous *kirtan* without break, and a vast concourse of people had assembled as though a great festival was on by itself. A poor country, as it was, after collecting whatever the pecuniary condition of the people permitted, they had come with so much earnestness to offer that to Ma. Some had brought the favourite light repast of the villagers—*talgolā* (a thin paste made from palm fruit juice) and *narikelkhora* (coconut kernel scrapings) mixed with thickened milk and sugar—while others had come with sweetmeats made out of thickened milk cast into some shape; sweetmeats from coconut kernel scrapings made into balls or cast in various other designs; and coconut kernel finely sliced like cumin-seed into different varieties, beautifully cut. Like these, there were numerous other varieties. Then there were fruits from someone's tree and vegetables from a garden of another. Still others came with *dheki-sāk* (a kind of pot-herb), inside stem of a plantain tree, plantain flowers, or even a little milk or butter milk and the like. So many other items and of still more varieties were brought by them, each according to his capacity.



This fair, or this great festival, continued for several days. Ma was taken sometime to one house, sometime to another, and sitting in open fields, various queries were made on spiritual subjects. Again, sitting at night too, there were talks on the Supreme Objective and whatever little receptacle one had, one got it filled there. Ma too poured Her grace on them, as it were. The places where Ma used to roam about in Her early years, the families to whom She had brought joy through Her love and fond liberty, the old men and women among them who were still alive then, on having Ma amidst them, had talks with Her with tears rolling down, as if without an end. As for those who had fondled Ma, taking Her in their laps, an overflow of devotion and reverence from them was, as if, flowing like a stream in those places. Whoever was present at that time—all of them—experienced the divine glory sustained by bhajan and continuity of kirtan without break, resounding in that entire atmosphere. Trees, creepers, leaves, a tank nearby—all of them, it appeared, were participating in that festival. There had never been anything of that stature before in these viliages. Someone perhaps even cried aloud with a scream; so many diverse forms were there at that time. Ma too, it was noticed, was in a highly animated mood, with a sweet pattern of movement and healthy body. What little Ma took of whatever eatable was offered by any one out of love, was taken with love and joy. This sort of feeling for Ma, the way they had Ma among them in Her early years and today, they had this great Ma—who aroused this exalted emotion in them ? It is known only to Him whose action it was !

When the time of departure of Ma came, all, in a body, flooded with tears, started with Ma for the ghat of the boat. At the time of farewell, when Ma boarded the boat, what a sight it was of sorrow and tears in so many Hindus and Muslims, without exception of any caste or class.

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Vidyakut had been the ancestral abode of Ma's father from generation to generation. It was a flourishing village inhabited by many noble families of learning. There were many learned pundits too at that time; and more than three hundred houses of near relations. Here too that fair of rejoicing grew still more in intensity. People had come from neighbouring villages also for Ma's darshan. Ma was taken from house to house and with what reverence and devotion, *bhog* and the like were offered to Her. Educated people of the village and pundits assembled and sitting with Ma, started asking questions on various spiritual subjects, including the area of non-dualism too. On receiving today from the lips of one, who had no education and whom they had fondled by taking Her in their laps and on

their backs during Her temporary visits to Vidyakut in Her childhood, such simple and easy answers to their abstruse questions on profound spiritual themes, they were charmed and felt very proud recalling that She was one of their own. (Moved emotionally), some of them had even tears in their eyes. Kheora is Ma's birthplace, the place of Her childhood *lila* and Vidyakut Her father's home. In the latter too Ma had done *lilas* in plenty. Having touched the dust of this holy land in this environment, they, who had accompanied Ma, felt themselves blessed.

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Now came the turn of Sultanpur. In this very place, there had been the home of Ma's maternal uncle, Sri Rama Kanta Bhattacharya. What a phenomenal living form of the aspects of the ideal of a *rishi* it was that existed one day in this sacred place ! In later years (in his lifetime itself), there had been the advent of Ma, and in this very house were revealed so many heart-gladdening ways of Her childhood *lilas*. Our Ma, of course, belongs to the line of this family too. This, the great advent, a flashing touch of it was granted to the people of this village at this time through Her *Kheyala*.

Revealed as the Mother of the Universe before the world, Ma arrives today in this very village at this very auspicious moment within the view of the villagers. The journey started from the ghat of the boat and ended at that house of Ma's maternal uncle, which had been the scene of so many joy-giving *lilas* of Ma. None of the uncles of Ma were present there that day in their gross forms. In this super festival of the fair of rejoicing, how could their absence be made up now. In the pure heart of Ma's youngest maternal uncle, there were till his last moment, in illumined wakefulness and in numberless forms, the sacred pictures of affectionate, reverential devotion towards Ma, covering Her childhood *lilas*, specially in this holy place—where the parts fill up their respective places, there is the unbroken whole of non-picture picture\* . Therefore, their participation today is also in their appropriate *svarupa*—this is what occurs in our heart.

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The question arose as to how the wives of respectable families of the village and infirm old people could have darshan of Ma. Would it be manageable to take Ma walking along the main road of the village ? At that time, sometimes, Ma used to be

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\*. There cannot be any objective picture of the unbroken whole, i.e., no-pictures, but when, again, imagined at the mental level, there is a picture, which is only a reflection of the mind, i.e., a picture.

a little in a tender *bhava*. Therefore, how could She be taken walking over such a long distance. At the sametime, all the people of the village had an intense longing to have Ma's *darshan*.

As a solution to this problem, a bedstead was decorated and something like a 'throne' made on it. And then a prayer to Ma, "Ma, be gracious enough and take your seat on it". Though Ma continued raising objections and offering resistance, yet, in the face of ardent solicitation of the villagers, these objections too had, as if, no place. In response to their appeal, submission and prayer, Ma was obliged to sit on the 'throne'. And immediately and enthusiastically, with joy and delight, the villagers placed the bedstead on their shoulders and marched forth with Ma.

Though it was noticed that Ma was in a tender *bhava* quite often, yet Her movement from place to place continued even in that condition. It could not be said with certainty whether at this time She had Her eyes closed or open. Then, it would also not occur always in Ma's *Kheyala* to say clearly even 'yes' or 'no'. Many have witnessed that (in Ma) eating, behaviour, keeping clothes on the body in order, etc., were aspects (of life) that were missing in that period—never were they noticed to be (attended to) precisely in the normal way. If Ma had Her present *bhava* at that time, we are not sure whether She could have been made to sit on the 'throne' like this. Of course, one cannot say what might have been the *bhava* of Ma in response to the feeling of the devotees. In Ma, of course, it is noticed that everything is possible. Even so, Ma did get down once, in between, from the bedstead afterwards and walked too a little distance for a while. It was, however, a long distance to cover, and on the way, mud and water had accumulated at places due to rain.

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There was that small girl, whose figure, a centre of attraction—restless with laughter and radiant with surging joy—had one day touched the heart while appearing in the sweet form of childhood *lila* in the view of all. And today, that very one, the Self in the Self with innate beauty was here too, one did not know, in what (a majesty), before the people of this village. In this form, Ma is in this village, but where have we even the ideas and the language to describe that (which is before us). Whom did the villagers see and with what eye, it was, as if, even they were not aware of. Moreover, despite their impatient eagerness, as to how and in what way best *darshan* could be had, that too was, as though, not being achieved. There were countless people on the road, and an incredibly heavy rush. Apart from this, some people had climbed up trees, and others, whoever could, had

occupied every little space in any way possible, so that there was, as if, not the least gap left anywhere. In whichever direction one looked, there was a stream of people, everyone of whom had his eyes fixed in that one direction only.

Newly married women of respectable families, all in veil, had, as if, lost even their normal way of shyness and went running along through any opening available as each could manage. Their movement aimed at that single object only with all eyes turned in the same direction. It was a big village through which the route of the journey had been divided into a few sections for spectators, that is, each section earmarked for a particular class of spectator.

In that way was the journey commenced with Ma. Remaining in front, the *Kirtan* party continued singing together in one melodious tune :

By the mouth, all of you, that sweet Name say;  
In the ear they may hear, sing in such a way.  
Go to *jiva* door to door, give the Name thus away;  
*Hare Krishna, hare Krishna,*  
*Krishna Krishna hare hare.*

Besides this name and the like, so many other names too were sung with metrical composition. In the presence of Ma, one did not know how the emotional excitement of the villagers and simultaneously the melodious sound of *kirtan* carried away everyone, whoever was present, in the stream of nectar. The question of getting and of not getting whom cannot arise, and after having whom, how there was then, the *jhankar* (resonance) of billows of *bhava* in every heart, and how the people of the village got the touch of the *Kheyali*, (He only knows)\* !

What to say only about this village, there was from far-off places too, a continuous stream of spectators forming a vast concourse. There was no arrangement like that of posts and telegraphs here. How, then, with a lightning speed, did this news reach remote corners ! And who it was that had attracted and brought here children, old persons and young men and women, indeed, all, without their knowledge ! (It was) that small girl, who had been in this very village on so many occasions. This is the place of which every particle of dust had become sacred and blessed by the touch of the feet of Ma in the form of a child, where that girl of restless *lila* had moved about freely, in play everywhere with harmonious participation in a joyful mood. How to be a witness and recipient, even at this time,

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\*. When considered from the point of view of the Supreme Reality, there is no question of any objective experience. That is why the question of getting and of not getting does not arise. But when the figure is looked upon as an object of Supreme Love, then there is also the having of that object. *Kheyali* is the one who has the *Kheyala*.

of that sacred wave of *lila* in its new form and new rhythm—that is why there was this outburst of emotion ! What they got and what they saw—that was, indeed, a matter of their heart and experienced in their heart only !

Whatever it was, after going round in this way, while moving slowly with Ma, they returned to the house of Sri Nishikanta Bhattacharya, eldest son of Ma's maternal uncle in about four to five hours. A big crowd had already assembled in the house where a great festival had been on with resounding *kirtan*, etc. and a fair of rejoicing well set in. Making this house the centre, the entire village was beside itself with the preparation of a joyous celebration. Maunds and maunds of rice, pulses, vegetables, spices, etc., had been collected here, one did not know from where and through whose inspiration, then cooked and followed by distribution of *bhog-prasad*, through an excellent orderly arrangement for its acceptance by all in a spirit of fellow-feeling among them.

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Among the people belonging to different particular religious sects, there was talk like this (about Ma) : "Rama or Krishna or Mahaprabhu—who is it in this form ?" In another place, those of the *Shakti-cult*—the worshippers of *Shakti*—talked thus : "Is She *Siva*, Mother *Durga* or Mother *Kali* too in human form ? If not, who is She ?" Only those who could not understand anything more than this, talked like that. After all, they were villagers of those days, who knew nothing much about spiritual side.

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Like an ordinary child, there had been the childhood *lila* of Ma in the midst of all. Now, again, in these very three places, She is having Her movement of activity, specially while going round from door to door. Compared to present days, however, Ma was not at all known so much at that time to the masses like this.

When, during Her childhood *lila* and in Her own *bhava*, with the expression of great joy, Ma used to roam about from house to house, door to door, then, at that time, whether an old man, an old woman, a daughter-in-law, a daughter or a child of the same age-group, in fact, none at all felt happy if, on seeing Ma, that person were not to call and talk to Her a little. In this context, why only in every house and at every door, but on every corner of the houses of all, She had Her jurisdiction—an open door and the liberty to play and laugh. In every family, so many children are there, but surely, none is of this kind. (In the circumstances), should we not understand that the shoot of the spiritual condition that was planted in every heart

through Her play, has bloomed in this form today ? Occasionally, some unusual manifestation too occurred in Ma in their midst even at that time.

It was a welcome inspiration under which Ma was taken to Her birthplace Kheora and other places at that time. Had She not been taken thus, then for the old men and women—many of whom had been eye witnesses of Her childhood *lilas* and had also narrated so many stories of Her early days when She was a child—could there ever have been such an opportunity again. Ma's stay for a limited time in these places was, as if, only to grant Her *darshan* to the fortunate villagers without any distinction of caste and colour. There was never to be this kind of *darshan* in this way again in future. So the timely *darshan* in this manner was a fulfilment of their good luck. Being Ma-centred and in the context of Her *darshan*, the mutual meeting and association of the people of all these three villages and of other villages too was, as if, the last such a get-together. Even at that time, they were living in the homesteads of their forefathers in lineal succession and many of them belonged to distinguished families. Today these are all matters of imagination. After the partition of the country, this region was initially in East Pakistan and now it is in Bangladesh.\*

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\* Extracts from the famous book on Ma "*Svakriya Svarasāmrita*" (Eng. edn.); printed with the kind permission of Sri Virajanandaji Maharaj, the publisher.

# THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

— P.C. Mehta

[ five ]

## The world according to the 'Mantras':

- 1) Pleuralism or the belief that the ultimate entities are many.
- 2) Realism or the belief that matter is as real as spirit or mind.
- 3) The physical universe or any part thereof is not considered unreal.
- 4) The world is three-fold;
  - i) The Heaven (*Dvau*)
  - ii) The intermediate region (*Antariksa*) and
  - iii) The world of mortals (*Prithvi*).
- 5) Gods are in charge of the formation of a suitable world based on the collective karmas of people who would inhabit it and its governance and fitting individuals therein according to their karmas.
- 6) Gods maintain physical order through upholding '*Rta*' or moral order. They are involved in the many activities required for maintaining the world order. They are in charge of the destinies of men. They are powerful. They are in a position to help man, both in worldly matters as well as in directing them towards heaven and from there to emancipation. As such man's ability to approach or propitiate them is recognized.
- 7) In maintaining the world order, there is interdependence between gods and men. The world and men would prosper if men supported the gods by righteous behavior.
- 8) Gods are righteous-minded and therefore to get their help or favour, man lead a morally pure life.
- 9) Gods are both just and loving and man's relation to them is of a personal nature where man looks upon them as father, brother or guide and gods respond accordingly with love and understanding.
- 10) The prayers of men to the Gods is for worldly prosperity, such as, for the grant of sons, cattle and wealth as well as heaven. This shows their preoccupation with everyday worldly life. It also shows the absence of '*bhakti-marg*' or the cult of devotion for '*Mukti*'.

- 11) Since creation itself is the result of Purusa's sacrifice, sacrifice is the key to regeneration. Vedic religion is interpreted primarily as a religion of ritualistic sacrifice.
- 12) The soul is considered immortal.
- 13) There is no mention of transmigration, but there is the belief that the soul could be separated from the body and exists after death.
- 14) The purpose of life is to reach heaven.
- 15) After death the soul of the good and pious goes to heaven where man leads the life of joy with the gods. There the conditions for coming to eventual liberation are favorable.
- 16) The fate of the souls of the wicked is not clearly mentioned, but when mentioned at all it is supposed to be consigned to the 'house of clay', an abode similar to Greek Hades and the Hebrew Sheol.

#### Aim of life:

The aims of life were three namely,

- i) '*dharma*' or religious merit,
- ii) '*artha*' or prosperity and
- iii) '*kāma*' or pursuit of pleasure.

'*Artha*' and '*kāma*' were subordinated to '*dharma*'. Through '*dharma*' the original Vedic view held out the attainment of heavenly happiness, without the possibility of rebirth, as the final goal of man's earthly life.

Liberation or '*moksa*' means release from the empirical state of '*sansāra*' or the recurrent round of birth, death and rebirth. In the old works, such as the '*Nyaya-Manjari*' of Jayant Bhatt as also '*Apastamba Dharma Sutra*', there are some passages which indicate that belief in the ideal of *moksha* was not all prevalent.

The ideal of '*moksa*' or release, though not customary, was there, but not during life. During life, man's actions had to be in conformity with *dharma* so that they could lead him to heaven on death; where besides leading a life of joy with the gods; since the environments were better suited for his progress, he was expected to rise to higher states of existence, without returning to the world of mortals, until at last he found release from the cycle of births, deaths and rebirths. The final ideal of man which is complete liberation, where the diversity of the world ceases to be, can be attained only hereafter.

While in the body, the diversity of the world, does not cease to appear. The maximum that a man can achieve is to be free from the belief in the ultimacy of diversity. According to the earlier Vedic belief this is the condition of *Jivan-Mukti*



i.e. liberation while still alive. (Contrast this view with the later view after the Upanisads).

When in the end a person who has reached this stage is separated from his physical body, he becomes *Brahman* itself. That is *Videha-mukti* or final release i.e. release without the body.

Thus the final goal of man, as it was understood in the earlier stages of the Vedic period was *Krama-mukti* i.e. the progressive realization of release or '*moksa*'.

### The way to "*Krama-Mukti*" :

is by following the path of *dharma*, which includes the following.

- i) Living a strictly moral life.
- ii) Leading the '*Pravrtti*' i.e. activist way of life as taught in the Brahmanas.
- iii) Worshiping the gods.

'*Prajāpati*' represented the highest conception of unitary godhead in the later Mantras and Brahmanas.

Observing the ceremonial or ritualistic life was considered necessary for attaining the goal of life. Rituals and sacrifices were considered to produce meritorious *Karma*.

Through rituals, people purified themselves, obtained proximity to the powers of the unseen worlds, personified as gods and received their blessings for prosperity in this world as well as for final liberation.

The whole creation is an act of sacrifice. Based on the law of affinity, since what is in the macrocosm is in the microcosm, the rituals perpetuate the sacrifice. The lower nature or the insufficiencies in man are sacrificed, so that he is filled up with the perfections of the gods.

### Ritualism during early Vedic period:

Ritualism is the domain of the *Brāhmanas*. In the Rg. Veda the conception of '*Brahman*' (neuter) remains closely associated with sacrifice. Therefore, Yaksa (600 B.C.) as well as Sayanacarya (1400 A.D.) have interpreted Vedas from a ritualistic point of view. *Brahman* is described as '*Svayambhu*' (self-born) and the paramount existence in the Universe. It is only in the Satpatha Brahmana that *Brahman* is regarded as the Supreme Principle, which is the energy which created the gods.

The purpose of ritual sacrifices was to support the Gods and thus to support the cosmic order as well as to invoke them, to obtain their blessings in the attainment of eternal values or to gain their favour for success in life here as well as hereafter.

The texts are extravagant in promising the sacrificer fulfillment of his wishes for cattle, progeny, prestige, power, health, long-life etc.

While invoking the gods to attend the sacrifice, there is great emphasis on *Agni* and *Soma*, the two deities having ritual significance. They are praised for their capacity to inspire Vedic hymns in the *RSI*. Through the insight thus inspired, the *RSI* is enabled to grasp the correlations of the physical and moral order that goes to constitute the *Rta*, which itself is said to have a luminous nature. The goddess 'Vac' or speech, is thus the crystallization of the vision which inspired Vedic utterances.

As the main aim of life was attainment of heaven, without the possibility of rebirth and ultimate emancipation, for a *grihasta* or house-holder, the whole year was punctuated by religious ceremonies. To start with, it appears that the prayers which were accompanied by simple gifts like grain and ghee were uncomplicated. In course of time, this simple form of worship got elaborated into complicated sacrifices which only professional priests could officiate at. In the later hymns there are allusions to rites lasting long periods at which several priests were employed by the sacrificer.

*Rg. Veda* became the province of *Hotr* priests, who were the pourer of oblations and invoker of gods through the mantras. 'Hotr' means 'pouler'.

*Sama Veda* being a collection of *Rg. Vedic* hymns, set to melodies ('*Samanas*') for use mainly in the soma sacrifice and sung by the '*Udgata*' priest, who concerned himself with proper sound.

*Yajur Veda* was a collection of '*Yajus*', selected sacrificial Mantras, culled out mainly from the *Rg. Veda*, plus certain sentences to be repeated by the '*Adhvaryu*' priest who concerned with the appropriateness of Mantras in the ritual. He was the master of ceremonies.

The *Atharva Veda* assumed responsibility for overseeing the entire ritual performance and counteracting any mistake by the other priests by silent recitation of Mantras from the *Atharva Veda*. Their priests were called '*Brahmanas*'.

The other '*Samhitas*' or books developed around the concerns of specialist ritual priests. As specialization increased each priest took on three main assistants.

Some of the objects of rituals may be viewed as under:

- i) To obtain proximity with the gods for their help in worldly matters as well as for reaching heaven and thereafter for liberation.
- ii) Rituals and sacrifices were also necessary, for rituals are '*durita-ksaya*' or a remedy for sin or a means to purify the heart, which leads to emancipation.
- iii) During the *Brahmana* period, there was the fear of *punarmrtyu*, that is second death in heaven on the expiry of religious merit. Ritual was considered

necessary to conquer death and escape from *punarmrtyu*. into immortality through the knowledge of the cosmic connection underlying ritual, (see the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad*). Thus death, heaven and immortality as well as the knowledge of the cosmic connection underlying ritual become the pivotal factors in rituals.

- iv) As we have seen, the entire creation is a result of *Purusa's* sacrifice. This sacrifice which is unending, is His great act of love and good-will. Therefore, sacrifice at every level, is the key to regeneration.
- v) Identification was another motif of *Brahmanic* thought in emphasizing the ritual system. What is in the macrocosm is in the microcosm. Mantras, recitations, chants, acts, ritual implements, the place of sacrifice etc. are identified with those of the universe and the self. The sacrificer is identified with *Prajāpati*. The '*Purusa Sukta*' solemnizes the cosmogonic sacrifice by gods of the *Purusa*. Accordingly, the *Purusa* in his aspect as *Prajāpati* or the creator or the Lord of creatures, is himself the sacrificer as well as the sacrificed and thus personifies the nondualistic concept of sacrifice. Through sacrifice, *Prajāpati* makes the beings go forth from his dismembered body. In this way, the sacrificer through identification with *Prajāpati*, consolidates the ritually organized universe in himself.
- vi) *Prajapati* identified with the highest and most general categories came to the fore as the creator god. By dividing up himself, he created all beings and the universe. After this 'creation', *Prajapati* was exhausted. He then reintegrated himself to prepare for a new phase of creativity by means of a rite. By identifying himself with *Prajapati*, a sacrificer may temporarily reintegrate within himself what has been disintegrated, and thus restore oneness and totality in himself and the universe.
- vii) To obtain '*Sakti-Pāi*' or the descent of purifying and uplifting energy which takes place during rituals. This energy in itself is considered *Soma-Rasa*, by some.

(For the importance of '*Yajna*' or sacrifice, see also Gita III, 9-10-11--12).

### **Brahmanism:**

The rituals are laid down in the '*Brahmanas*' and they go so far as even to subordinate the earlier '*Mantras*' to them or to sever them from their original meaning or context. It is this stage in the development of Indian religion that is described as '*Brahmanism*'. Its characteristic mark is the acknowledgment of the Vedas as divine revelation.

**Hinduism:**

Vedic religion blossomed to include Saivism, Vaisnavism and Sakti worship, along with the worship of many deities of post vedic origin and growth; all of which claiming vedic authority. It is this much developed and wider phase of vedic religion which is termed 'Hinduism'.

**Rta.— its three meanings:**

The purpose of all the gods was the maintenance of cosmic order. This was not merely

- i) maintenance of physical order, but also implied
- ii) upholding of moral order or saving the world from moral chaos.

The one idea is implicit in the other; meaning that there is order in the universe, because its control is in righteous hands. Both these ideas are embodied in the term *Rta*, which the gods are supposed to uphold. From this beginning, came a significant shift in the spirit with which rituals were undertaken and offerings made to gods. Now, it was to compel or coerce the gods to do what the sacrificer wished. This change in spirit is explained by some scholars as turning priest and prayer into magician and spells.

The better view seems to be that it denotes faith in the efficacy of Vedic prayers and not the potency of the priests. This corresponds with the unqualified reverence which came to be shown to the whole text of the Vedas by the adherents of the various orthodox doctrines.

- iii) It was believed that the expected result, whether here or hereafter would automatically follow the scrupulous carrying out of every detail connected with the various rites. It is this observance of ritual correctness that constitutes the third meaning of the word *Rta*. Ritualistic exactness thus comes to be placed on the same level as natural law and moral integrity.

To judge from extant works, ritualism in this extreme form appears to be the predominant teaching of the later Vedic period. This does not mean that the rituals were unnecessary or mere superstition. It is the overemphasis on the ritualistic exactness which is criticized and not the rituals. The word '*Rta*' is now obsolete in Sanskrit, but the idea is covered by the word 'dharma'.

The meaning of 'dharma' and the details of ritualistic sacrifices as they developed in later Hinduism are dealt with at the appropriate place.

[To be continued]

## THOSE WONDERFUL DAYS.....

— Rajkumari Indira Devi, Mandi

**To my little sisters in Kashi —**

In 1951, I spent ten days in your Kanyapeeth. I was only twelve years old then, the same age as some of you are now.

Those few days spent with Shree Ma, are amongst the most precious memories of my life.

Some night Shree Ma would sleep on your verandah out in the open, and we would spread our mats around Her bed and go to sleep.

Early morning we would awake to the sounds of *arti* in the Gopalji mandir.

One day Shree Ma asked some of the girls to perform yoga asanas for us. Having just arrived from school in Europe I was most impressed.

In the evenings Shree Ma would take Her walk on the beautiful terrace over looking the Ganges. People would come for *darshan* and gather around watching silently as Shree Ma took their garlands and walked up and down with such grace.

Once Shree Ma took us on a barge down the Ganges. What a sight! The Mother Divine seated at the head of the boat and all of us down the length of the barge on both sides singing bhajans and doing kirtan. An unforgettable experience.

Everything comes to an end and so did our wonderful never to be forgotten days spent with Shree Ma in Kashi 48 years ago.

Jai Ma!

*Pune, June 26, 1999.*

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## ON SRI ORIYA BABAJI MAHARAJ & HIS PRECEPTS

(Compiled & translated from Hindi by Sm. Jaya D. Kania)

Sri Oriya babaji Maharaj, one of the most celebrated saints of Vrindaban during the forties, with whom Sri Anandamayee Ma also came in close contact, was born in Puri (Orissa) more than 125 years back, as per Indian Calendar on *Bhādra Krishnā Saptami*, *Vikram Samvat 1932*.

The boy was named "Āarta trān" by his father, Sri Vaidya nath Mishra. Unlike other children he was not at all fond of play and was also rather physically weak. Till the age of 12 he studied Oriya, arithmetic & basic Sanskrit. His family did not want him to study further, but he wanted to. So, without telling anyone he left his home. The boy, who was ascetic by nature, thirsted for real knowledge and desired to become a *sādhaka*. In the course of this intense search, suffering hardships, he wandered in many places as a poor mendicant and came in contact with many great saints. As a result he gradually attained the highest stage of *sādhanā* after traversing a long and strenuous path.

As he was warned by some astrologers that his life-span was rather short, he decided to embrace *sanyāsa* and thus became Dandi Swami Sri Purnananda Tirth. But even thereafter he was known to all, as "Sri Oriya babaji". Day & night he meditated on the eternal questions : "Who am I ?" and "What is this world ?" Away from people he used to remain immersed in *samādhi*.

As he wished to live in holy Vrindaban a small ashram was established there later on, which is still very well-known as 'Sri Oriya baba Ashram' near Davanal Kund in Vrindaban. In this ashram, where bhajan, Kirtan and spiritual discourses were regular features of its daily routine, also lived the great saint Sri Hari babaji Maharaj for many many years and was visited by Sri Anandamayee Ma almost daily at the earnest request of Sri Haribaba for attending the daily satsang during her frequent visits to Vrindaban. The ashram was indeed always full of joy.

Gradually Sri Oriya baba's physical condition worsened and one day when he was sitting in the *Satsang* one half-crazy man suddenly came from behind and hit Babaji thrice on the head. Babaji neither struggled for life nor uttered a single word in protest. Pronouncing the *Pranava mantra* he breathed his last very peacefully.

Thus at the age of about 73, on *Chaitra Krishnā Chaturdashi, Vikram Samvat 2005* one of the greatest saints of the last century passed away from this world after leaving an indelible imprint in the spiritual history of India.

### A few precepts of Sri Oriyababa :

(i) A lot of harm is done by talking and hearing about other's faults and the tendency of fault-finding. When one keeps on thinking of faults, one develops the tendency of seeing faults only. This is the biggest fault of all. One should avoid contact with people of this type. Not only this. One should not even read books of this type either. Truly speaking, one should have nothing to do with either faults or virtues. Let us only hear and speak of the attributes of God.

(ii) The devotee's suffering disappears due to the power of devotion. Because devotion is like an ignorant child. God Himself takes away the suffering of the devotee, who is devoid of desires. However, the person who has *jnāna* continues to bear the suffering. He is not worried about how to be rid of it, because in reality he is a mere observer. He is in no way related to happiness or suffering .

(iii) Attachment and spite are like three carved lines—(a) a line drawn on a stone (b) a line drawn on sand and (c) a line drawn on water. Attachment & spite harboured by a worldly person is like the line carved on a piece of stone, which cannot be erased even in life time. Attachment & spite found in a devotee is similar to the line carved on sand. The moment the whirlwind of love starts blowing the line on sand disappears. And the attachment and spite of those who are *Brahmavettas* (who have the knowledge of the Brahman) is similar to the line drawn on water. The moment this line is drawn it disappears. Similarly, the feeling of attachment & spite in the heart of the one who has the knowledge of the *Brahman* cannot exist even upto the next moment.

(iv) The most important aspect of worship is the sentiment. If the worshipper happens to love God in any other form but that which is his or her chosen form this *bhāva* (sentiment) will become the chief obstacle in his or her path of worship. As a chaste lady does not even wish to look at any other man, but her husband, even though the other man may be extremely handsome, strong and of a sweet temperament. Similarly, a devotee will not wish to look at any other form of God, however attractive it may be, if the same is not the form of his chosen deity. This is what is termed as *nischalā bhakti* (Firm faith).

(v) As a result of constant practice of repeating God's Name one realizes that it is sweet. As the person who meditates on God experiences such miracles, like divine scent, divine vision etc. Similarly, these experiences can also be had through repetition of God's Name. If there is a sincere desire for having a vision of God, He will instantly grant His vision. If a person has faith, God's vision can be had only by repetition of His name. The person who does a lot of work can also do a lot of *bhajan*. He who cannot do any work, cannot do *bhajan* either. Yes, if one gradually increases his daily *bhajan*, work will decrease of its own. If you love doing *bhajan* very deeply you can also leave your house and do *bhajan* in solitude. In reality none can create any obstacle in practicing *bhajan*. First one should try to practice *bhajan* daily for some time and also practice *gunānuvāda* (adaptation of virtues) for some time. This will result in attachment to *bhajan*.

(vi) One may come across a lot of people who may have the knowledge of the *ātmā*, but someone whose beloved is the *ātmā*, is very rare to come across. The meaning of *jnāna* is to know, but even though one has knowledge, but not love, then what is the use? We find that on seeing a person full of *jnāna* (knowledge) one may not be attracted to him. But a person who is full of *prema* (love) at once attracts. Hence, we come to realize that the main manifestation of God is love. God himself gives real knowledge to those who seek Him earnestly. There is no doubt about this. That is why it is very necessary that both the *jnāni* and the *bhakta* should not be devoid of love.

A *jnāni* first experiences *tapa* (asceticism). Then comes *jnāna* (knowledge). A *bhakta* (devotee) first experiences *bhakti* (devotion), then *prema* (love) and then *tapa* (asceticism). As a result of constant remembrance love is generated and then naturally the mind recedes from everything else.

(vii) The main duty of a *bhakta* (devotee) is to develop that *bhāva* (sentiment) whereby he can worship the deity in his mind only— perform *mānas puja*. The main principle of a *bhakta* is *prema*.

Those who bodily serve their *gurus* are of course privileged to attain that mental stage where they can do *mānas puja*. *Seva* (service) alone can give firmness to the mental state of a devotee.



## RECOLLECTIONS

[Translated from Bengali]

-Brahmacharini Chandan

At the time of construction of our Naimisharanya Ashram in the year 1961, when excavation was started, it was noticed that on the site on which the present Ashram has been built, there lay hidden, as it were, in the womb of an unknown past, the history of two cultures in two successive layers. It seems that the plot on which this Ashram stands today is the *Tirtha Kshetra* (place of pilgrimage) of the same ancient Naimisharanya, which was narrated in *Srimad Bhāgavat*, was the scene of activities of Shri Rama and Shri Balarama, and also where Shri Krishna's *lilā* was revealed through description by Shri Suta. Again, it was here that, in response to the prayer of Saunak Rishi, Shri Krishna's self-revelation took place in the form of words (*Srimad Bhāgavat*), in the presence of eighty-eight thousand rishis.

Also, in this very Naimisharanya, it was found in 1960, when our annual function of *Samyama Vrata* was held there, that a particular *Purāna* (one of the Hindu scriptures) required for recitation and commentary on it (for the assembled devotees), was not available there. This circumstance provided the antecedent for coming into existence of this Ashram site, and the *raison d'etre* for construction of this Ashram. The articles found during excavation at that time included items of antique earthenware, made with artistic skill, which are not seen in the modern age.

The location of the site of the Ashram upon these two layers of past cultures must have a special significance, for, who otherwise, did this particular form of manifestation take place. While it is heard that no image of *Purāna Purusha* has been found installed anywhere, all the same he has now become self-revealed here in the form of this *vigraha*.

He who is aimed at in holding the *Samyama Vrata*, is He the super-cause in this—only He knows ?

Ma says (while pointing towards Her own body), "Oh ! it is the one *Atman*, indeed, with all; surely the one *Parabrahma Paramatman* only". Again, it occurs in my mind that the same Supreme Ultimate *Mahayoga* itself must be responsible for bringing into light this place and situation.

It was through a shower of grace that I had the privilege of taking the sacred-thread, performing *Narayana Puja* and getting initiated into *Gāyatri-Purascharana*

The auspicious occasion for this initiation was the *Paush Sankrānti* i. e., 14th January 1973. And it was our Ashram at the great *Tirtha Kshetra* (place of pilgrimage) Naimisharanya on the bank of the sacred river Gomati which was selected as the site for the completion of this ritual through the compassion and blessings of our supremely adored Shree Shree Ma. For this reason, under the instruction of Ma, two new pukka *kutiās* (brick-built cottages), provided with all kinds of good arrangements too, were built under a tree. Udasji was also a co-performer of this ritual; the second *kutiā* was meant for her.

Since very ancient times in the unknown past, this great *tirtha* Naimisharanya has continued to be the sustainer of an uninterrupted stream of spirituality. It was this very place where the *Ashwamedha Yagna* was performed by Shri Ramachandra, where he had met *Lava* and *Kusha* and where the heart-rending tragedy was enacted of Sita's entry into *Pātālā* (nether world). Again, it was here that King Virat had his palace and the five Pandavas had lived incognito. Also, in this very *tirtha kshetra*, in response to the prayer of Rishis, *Shrimad Bhāgavat*, comprising the *lila* of Shri Krishna, was related for the first time by Shri Suta, eighteen *Puranas* were written by Shri Vyasa, etc. So, this was indeed the right place where in that unbroken flow of spiritual stream I too had the good fortune of performing a very pious ceremony.

## SRI MA WITH SRI MOHANANANDA MAHARAJ

—Arun Kumar Sengupta

Suddenly Sri Ma has come to Deoghar and has taken shelter in some dharamshala. On receiving the news Sri Mohananandaji Maharaj soon brought Ma to Sri Balananda Ashram and arranged everything for her to stay in the 'Kamdhenu Mandir'.

Sri Mohananandaji came to Ma and prostrated before her on the ground and offered with great devotion a beautiful garland, flowers and sweets. He exclaimed—"You have remembered the son at last" and insisted that Ma should stay for a few days. "You should not be in a hurry to go from here," Mohananandaji remarked, "You have come here after eleven years. You came to Deoghar before also, but you did not come to the Ashram."

Sri Ma very sweetly told—"You know well that this girl is not normal, never proceeds in a planned way. You have arranged a lot for this girl. But when this girl will depart it can't be said."

Mohananandaji then started some discussion with Ma. He asked, "What is the way to fix the *prāna-vāyu* ?

Sri Ma replied—"Prāna-vāyu has also waves. Watching the movement of the mind, mantra and the breath should be united. You see, trees, plants, creatures, beasts all are grown up with the help of this *prāna-vāyu* and they are also nurtured by the mixture of this only. The most important point is where is the source of this *prāna-vāyu*. Where there is no *spandan* (movement), that eternal peace is there. Why there is a quest for the same ? This is the nature of all beings. Everything is one and everyone is a traveller on the same path."

Mohananadaji questioned,— "He is eternal. If one tries to find Him, his journey will also be eternal. Is it not ? Where is the end of the journey ?"

Sri Ma observed—"You should never think of these things. The endless also lies in the end. You will find everything in the endless. The word 'eternal' is also eternal. This can never be explained through words."

Sri Ma continued—"Worship of God is also eternal, when you talk about eternal, where is eternity revealed, can you tell me ? When you feel it is eternal then

you have attained eternity and you will be successful in your journey. You are eternal yourself. You are the **One**. If this body touches your hand, leg or any part of your body, you will tell that I have touched you. How is your body formed, no one can tell."

Sri Ma continued—"Can you tell me exactly the details of what you have done in your childhood ? You cannot tell all that you have done in the last five years. Can you exactly remember what happened yesterday or even this morning, even five minutes before ? In your body so many things are constantly happening, will it be possible for you to give all the details ?"

Further—"First you try to know yourself, Baba, you are one—You are eternal. You are also in so many forms. You have been watching many things, where there is no conflict between the form and the formless. Everything is one. The only duty is to know yourself."

Sri Ma continued—"You are a sadhu. Sadhus are ever trying to find the oneness. This can only be attained through the blessings of the Guru. Then you will realize what is the Supreme and what is not, what is endless, what is eternal. So long as you are in this world, all these questions will come to your mind. This is quite natural."

Sri Ma was smiling, looking at Sri Mohananandaji, who also naturally felt very much elated to listen to all these from one, who was deeply admired by the great sage, his Guru, the celebrated Sri Balanandaji Maharaj.

## FROM NOTES TAKEN IN SRI MA'S PRESENCE

—'Kirpal'

11-5-1959 — 9 P.M. — Kishenpur Ashram, Dehradun

Sri Ma sitting on the tiled verandah of the Ashram Shiva Mandir.

Sri Ma—The lord's door step—excellent.

Sri Jogesh Brahmachari—Yes, when God is present, why do we have to exert ourselves ?

Sri Ma—God Himself is doing His own work for Himself. God does not work for anyone. God works for Himself and in Him is contained everything.

Sri J.B.—The world is God's creation.

Sri Ma—God within Himself.

Sri J.B.—Mine ?

Sri Ma—Where mine and Him exist, here it is so.

Sri J.B.—Are we all God ?

Sri Ma—God alone exists and no other.

Sri J.B.—The clouds contain water and when they descend there is only water.

Sri Ma—Water is there. The *atma* alone is there and nothing else. When there is the veil of ignorance there is high and low, clean and dirty.

A gentleman comes in front at this stage and says to Ma, "I have to return home."

Sri Ma—Very well said. When the thought arises in one, "I have to return to my own home", he starts on the path. "I have to return to my own home," and hence the urgency. An excellent statement. And everyone has to return to his "own home". How long will you reside in a *dharamshala* ? There is a limit to your stay. There can be no extension either way.

Sri Ma—Someone asked this body, Where is your home ? This body answered—'*Brahma Nagar*.' They thought that it was the name of some locality. Then they asked, "Who lives in your home ?" This body answered, "Atmananda" (Divine Bliss). That is the absolute truth. Those who proceed on the journey, that I have to go to my home, the journey to realize one's own self. Whatever path they follow, there is only the One

Brahma and no other. The Lord is the Master and I am his servant. The Lord is *Purna* and I am a part. By whatever path one must proceed.

Sri J.B.—To reach one's home one needs God's help.

Sri Ma—God is with you at every step. For those who undertake the journey, it is a beautiful and miraculous fact that God is ever with them. Where God Himself is, no harm can ever affect them. Sometimes one gets entangled. But those who are absolutely one-pointed and their only aim is to attain God realization, God is ever with them.

(To be continued)

"If some particular name sticks to a mind, whatever name he may happen to hear seems to him to be the same name. He gets the ring of that one name in all the names. Once it gets assimilated with the mind, the man rises to a higher level."

—Ma Anandamayee

## BLESSED DAYS IN BHIMPURA

– Claude Portal

Since my first *darshan* of Ma in April, 1978 I have come to India once or twice a year, many times to attend Samyam Saptaha, last November once again, but the experience of the 13 days spent in Bhimpura after Samyam has been something special in many respects.

In Bhimpura the Narmada river is flowing perfectly still, peaceful, but full of power, giving the same feeling as the ocean : greatness, nobility, touch of infinity, but while the ocean waves may give an image of the everchanging world, the Narmada gives total peace, the fullness of peace, stability, permanence.

The life all around the ashram seems to belong to eternity. The houses with their thatched roofs and their earth-ground, the village ladies with their children walking down to the river bank to fetch the daily water and climbing back with huge pots full of water on the top of their heads, the bullock-carts strolling along, the whole scenery must have been the same 5000 years ago.

The ashram buildings are nicely spread out in the garden ornamented with very nice pink and white bouganivillias and plenty of different sorts of trees. A special blessed time of the day was when Swami Bhaskarananda took me for his daily promenade along the sand lane girded with oleander trees or across the lemon tree orchard and the sacred panchavati (a place meant for meditation surrounded by five specific trees).

The ashram life is very simple, and appears to be a true a-shram (without tension) place. Everyone is moving freely, following his own sadhana. All things seem to adjust, adapt and accommodate softly in a simple and genuine way with people.

The whole place is permeated with peace and Ma's presenee. Swami Bhaskarananda is full of affection, love and sweetness, smiling to all. Blessed were the mornings when Swamiji was distributing some morning prasad happily and joyfully called, "Morning Glory".

On the way to Bhimpura I wished I could learn some harmonium playing, I was delighted to get a positive response from Br. Yogananda, and I am very grateful to Brahmachari who taught me some basic tunes sung in Ma's asbram. All the same Kanubhai, assistant to Swami Bhaskarananda, was very helpful in all matters, answering all my questions about detailed history of the places around, about

Indian cooking and recipes for *sabji*, *brahma-khicheri*,... solving tooth-ache... During week-ends there were a few visitors who brought some prasad which added to the pleasure of our good daily simple food.

The feeling of being at home is something all of us have experienced. When in Ma's presence we had the "full feeling". In Bhimpura ashram this time it was a great experience to me : first of all to be given a room inside the ashram, to share Ma's prasad with the usual residents, to visit and sit in Ma's room, in a word to be accepted as an ordinary ashram member ! It took me some days to discover the freedom, and some more days to enjoy the feeling, after the confirmation it was really so in this ashram. That feeling of being at home, that freedom in my mind were very significant and favourable to my Bhimpura experience.

The ashram daily life is given two main periods for satsang, one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon, reading sacred texts. But on the second day, Swamiji told me : "This is Greek and Latin for you !", and he sent me on pilgrimage in the morning to one of the temples along the river, in the afternoon I used to sit either in Ma's room or outside under the venerable banyan tree in Dakshina Murti, where Ma used to sit.

Visiting the different temples happened to be an ever-new daily experience. I was walking alone along the earthen countryside roads with the feeling Ma was leading my steps in order to offer my homage, salutations and adorations to each and every representation of the manifestation of the Lord in this area.

One of the most unexpected adventure was the visit to the Vedavyas temple located on one island of the Narmada and to the Anasuya temple lost in a countryside village. I was invited to join three ladies who had plan to visit these places. After a long drive, sitting next to the rickshaw driver, we reached a village, were led by some young girls to the river side and shown the temple on the island, quite soon a man came down from the river bank, he was the pujari of the temple; he kindly showed us the way across the river bed, with water up to the waist we crossed the strong current, safely reached the island and had the darshan of Vedavyas. In the Anasuya temple we were told that in this very place, Anasuya and Atri, the parents of Dattatreya, did tapasya and this very Anasuya blessed Ram and Sita, we were very moved to be in such a sacred place and in close contact with the roots of the Hindu religion.

Another day I visited the Trikamji temple in Chandod, where Ma stayed in 1937, as shown by some exhibited pictures in the hall. I enjoyed the darshan of



Trikamji and felt very much blessed to be in this place and even more so, when very kindly invited to take Vishnu's prasada as lunch.

I used to sit early morning under the banyan tree from which one dominates the river. To be a witness of the morning sun rising from the distant hills over the river was everyday a unique show of God's glory, the rising sun reflects himself in the million wavelets created by the breeze at the Narmada surface and million sparks blossom at every instant just like millions of oil lamps put up by the pilgrims and floating on the river in a huge fantastic arati.

It was a wonderful experience to hear the pujas celebrated all around : in Ma's room, in the Hanuman temple, in the nearby Ramakrishna and Radha-Krishna temples and at the same time to witness the Lord's omnipresence revealing Himself in His creation, celebrated by the five elements in their fullness, all around present, permeating one another, revealing the Lord's glory in a huge cosmic puja.

This environment opens up the meaning of pujas and rituals as an homage from man to the Divine, an offering of the creation to the Creator, a way to celebrate the eternal link between creation and Creator, man looking for his sanctification by reuniting in his consciousness his constituting elements to their cosmic dimension as the Lord's body, looking for the union between Earth and Heaven and searching for the touch with the One. The puja appears as a punctual expression of the Reality which is permanent, immanent and transcendent.

The beauty of the scenery, the sun rising in full power, the greatness of the river, the sweetness of the air, the joy of the birds singing, the all-pervading peace, everything was felt as a touch of 'Ma' Herself in one of Her infinite aspects or forms, as if everything was giving its best, itself, to manifest 'Ma', one could then experience Ma's saying : "The ceaseless, never-ending current of Divine Mercy ever flows forth, bathe in this current", and be one with the glory of the Lord.

By the history of the places, the celebrations in the temples along the river, the presence of many renunciates as well as through life itself, *Bhimpura is one of those wonderfully blessed and holy places, which gives you the feeling of a touch with the roots of India, a taste of fullness. "Purnam adam, purnam idam..."*.

Jai Ma !