

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

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.

* * *

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

* * *

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.

* * *

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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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

* 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.

* * *

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

*. 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,

*. 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.*

* 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.

