

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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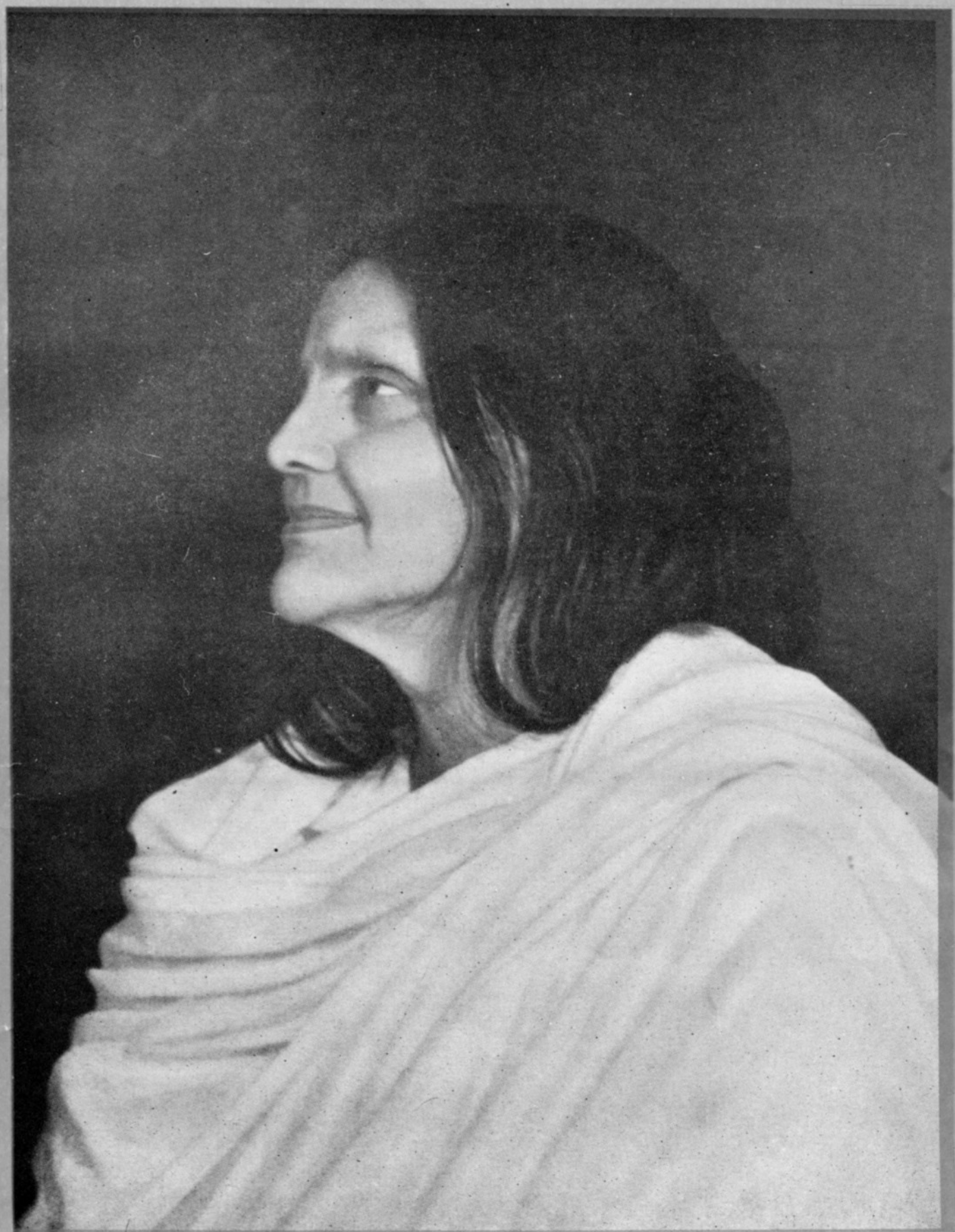
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MATRI VANI

What is it that has to be attained? You will have to become conscious of your Self in its entirety, Nay, you will have to rise beyond consciousness and unconsciousness. The revelation of That what is wanted.

* * *

It is thou that criest out helplessly in distress, and it is Thou Thyself that art the way and the Goal.

* * *

Man should bind himself and, fixing his gaze on the One, advance along the path. Whatever ties, bonds or restraints he imposes upon himself should have for aim the Supreme Goal of life. With untrammelled energy one must forge ahead towards the discovery of one's own self.

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To find fault with others creates obstacles for all around : for him who criticizes, for him who is blamed as well as for those who listen to the criticism.

* * *

Vedanta actually means the end of difference and non-difference. Differences do indeed exist on the path, but how can there be a difference of Goal ?

* * *

Peace reigns where no coming exists and no going, no melting and no burning. Reverse your course, advance towards Him—then there will be hope of peace.

* * *

Even if you donot feel inclined to meditate, conquer your reluctance and make an attempt. By your tenacity you will gain strength and be moulded. Make up your mind that however arduous the task, it will have to be accomplished.

* * *

The sense of separateness is the root cause of misery, because it is founded on error, on the conception of duality. That is why the world is called *du-niya* (based on duality).

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Man thinks he is the doer of his actions, while actually everything is managed from "There"; the connection is "There", as well as the power-house. Yet, people say : 'I do'. How wonderful it is !

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Really speaking all work is your work — only how can you understand this ? Indeed the whole world is yours, of your Self, your very own.

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What will be the result of your surrender to Him ? None will seem alien, all will be your very own, your Self.

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It is the perception of the world based upon the identification of yourself with body and mind, that has all along been the source of your bondage.

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A time will come, when this kind of perception will give way before the awakening of universal consciousness, which will reveal itself as an aspect of Supreme Knowledge.

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As the individual self becomes gradually freed from all fetters, which are nothing but the veil of ignorance, it realizes its oneness with the *Paramātmā* (Supreme Spirit) and becomes established in its own Essential Being.



GLEANINGS FROM "IN ASSOCIATION WITH SRI MA"

—Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

Meeting with Yogiraj Swami Vishuddhananda Paramahansa

Dhaka, Ramma Ashram, 14th December, 1935 :

Having completed my college duties, when I went to the Ashram at about 10 A.M. Ma was sitting inside the Nam-Ghar, but seeing me She came out instantly and sat down in the open, outside the ashram under a tree.

I bowed down to Ma, sat near her and said—

"Ma, please give me the account of your meeting with Baba Bishuddhananda."

Ma said, 'When this time I was coming via Varanasi, I met Babaji, but not for long. May be for half an hour or an hour at most. Gopi Baba took us there. Going there, I sat by Babaji. He had already arranged a seat for me. You know the way I speak. I pressed Babaji with a child-like importunity, 'Baba, they say you have shown magical feats to many. Do show me a few, will you?'

Babaji said, 'You are sitting quietly. Have you discovered any secret?'

I at once posed as a little girl and said, 'Baba, I am your daughter. What do I know? Shall learn what you would please to teach. Teach me all your secrets?'

Babaji then called Jyotish to him and showed him a crystal which he had made out of the petals of a flower. He also produced a number of scents. When Babaji was demonstrating these things I clapped and said, 'Baba, I can make out what you are doing. But I shall not divulge it. Then all will say to me, Ma, do tell us the secrets of Babaji. If I do so, Baba would strike me on the head with a cudgel.'

Babaji said, 'Beti (little girl) what is there that I can show you? You know all. I am demonstrating only to others.'

Next he brought some sweets and offered us to eat. He fed me and I also did the same with him. Babaji said, 'Beti, remember me. Never forget me. And whenever you come here make sure to meet me.'

Before I left I said to Gopi Baba, 'You see, Babaji is deluding you all with these demonstrations. You should not allow him to delude you. Try to elicit from him the other things that he has within him.'

Seeing that it was close to 12 noon, I took leave of Ma with these words, 'Ma, now I shall get up.'

Ma : Always try to rise. Never go down."

I smiled and said to myself, 'Ma, so be it with your blessings.'

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Sri Subhas Chandra Bose comes to Ma

Calcutta, 20th October, 1938.

In the morning I came to learn that Ma was going to Dakshineswar by car. I also soon boarded a bus together with one of my friends. On arriving at Dakshineswar¹ we found that Ma was staying in Sri Sarada Ma's² cottage and Ma's *bhoga* (meal) was being prepared.

We were wandering about at random. After sometime we were called to have *prasada* of the goddess Kali. We all sat down on the veranda. Just then Sri Subhas Chandra Bose arrived to meet Ma. He also partook of the *prasada* along with us on the veranda.

After the meal, the Manager of the Dakshineswar mandir took Subhas Chandra to the *Panchavati*³ and other places of interest. We also accompanied them. It was nearly 3-30 p.m. when we beheld Mataji proceeding to the *Panchavati*. An asana was spread for Sri Ma on the platform below the pipal tree. We all sat around Her. Subhas Chandra tendered his pranama to Ma and sat right in front of Her. Some time passed in silence. Neither Sri Ma nor he spoke a word.

Then Bhupati Babu introduced Subhas to Ma.

Ma : I met your brother at Ahmedabad.

Subhas : So you had been to Ahmedabad ?

Ma : Yes.

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1. Dakshineswar—a place near Calcutta, renowned for the famous temple of Goddess Kali, where Sri Ramakrishna did his *sadhana*.
 2. Sri Sarada Ma, consort of Sri Ramakrishna, popularly known as "Sri Ma".
 3. *Panchavati*—a grove of five sacred trees viz, Banyan, Pipal, Asoka, Bel and Amlaki, which is considered a congenial place for meditation. Sri Ramakrishna is said to have done *sadhana* on this spot.

Again silence.

I indicated to Bhupati Babu to ask Subhas whether he wished to put some questions to Ma. He said he had no questions. Again silence. Sm. Bhramar sat next to me. At her insistence I at last had to introduce some topic.

I said : Ma, can one realize God by service to one's motherland ?

Ma : (to Subhas) Baba, do please tell us whether God can be found by service to one's country.

Subhas : Am I in search of God? (Every body laughs).

Ma : (smiling) So, what is it that you pursue ?

Subhas : But that question was not addressed to me ?

Ma : It was raised in connection with yourself. (glancing at me) Was it not ?

I : Yes, Ma.

Ma : (addressing Subhas) : Now please reply. Well, why do you serve your motherland ? What do you gain by it ? If you explain to them the merits of doing so, they will all start serving their country. Nobody does anything unless he profits by it. You give such eloquent lectures, so do now speak, please.

Subhas (smiling) : But I have not come here to deliver a lecture. I derive great happiness from serving my country, that is why I do it.

Ma : Is this happiness perpetual ?

Subhas : The meaning of the word 'perpetual' is not easy to understand.

Ma : That which remains all the time is perpetual. There is perpetual happiness in carrying out the dictates of one's true Nature (*svabhāva*). If service is performed in the right spirit, lasting happiness may be found. Is this so with you, Baba ?

At this point Ma was interrupted by a lady who started talking about her own problems. I gathered from what she said that she was a teacher of the Calcutta Corporation School. She would from time to time in her dreams obtain glimpses of Sri Krishna and also His instructions. She had come to Sri Ma today also in obedience to His direction. It was her belief that Sri Krishna would perform some work for the world through her. However, off and on she would feel afraid and desperately lonely. So she implored Sri Ma to help her.

Ma said : Since you are receiving His instructions, where is the need of help ? If you rely solely on God, everything will be all right.

(Addressing Subhas) : Baba, won't you say something ?

Subhas : I have not come here to speak, I am here to listen.

Ma : If this is so, will you then listen to what this little girl has to say ? Will you do as I tell you ?

Subhas : I cannot promise, but I shall make an attempt.

Ma : Look, all work performed in connection with worldly affairs is prompted by want (*abhāva*). Certainly when this want has been fulfilled one feels happy. But remember, the happiness obtained from accomplishing worldly work merely keeps the sense of want awake. Suppose you feel the need to acquire something and to fulfil this need you start on a certain course of action. As a result of your efforts you get rid of this want and therefore are full of joy. But along with this joy some other need will arise. This is, why I say that all actions connected with worldly affairs belong to the realm of want (*abhāva*). But by following the dictates of one's true Nature (*svabhāva*) perpetual joy will result. You say it makes you happy to serve your motherland. To serve one's country is of course very good. Your heart is noble, very large, try to make it even larger. If you serve your country without enthusiasm, this will be work prompted by the sense of want and the happiness derived from it will not be lasting. But everybody desires unbroken joy, the joy that is endless. If you follow the dictates of your true Nature (*svabhāva*), this will lead to permanent joy and you will become established in bliss. Now you may well retort : What is the use of bliss for myself alone when the whole world is full of gloom ? The answer to this is that if permanent bliss is realized, it will be communicated to others.

Subhas : What exactly does '*svabhāver karma*' mean ?

Ma : Action as such arises out of want (*abhāva*) because without a sense of want there is no action. However, action that leads to permanent bliss can be called '*svabhāver karma*', action prompted by one's true Nature. *Svabhāva* is that which is man's own through all eternity. Because the kernel of perpetual bliss lies hidden within yourself. You desire this permanent bliss. You cannot want anything that is not already potentially within you.

Subhas : Is everybody's *svabhāva* the same ?

Ma : Yes, all mankind basically desires constant happiness. In this whole universe there is but ONE without a second. When people serve others it is ultimately for their own Self. Happiness is derived from serving others because in essence all are one.

Subhash : You say that the true Nature of all is the same, but the Gita states : *Sreyan svadharmā vigunah paradharmā bhayāvahah*. "Better death in the discharge of one's own duty; the duty of another is full of danger."

Ma : What actually is *svadharma* ? The *dharma* of your true Nature is your *svadharma*. *Sadhana* is performed in order to fulfil one's *svadharma* (one's real duty). This body has no learning, so it speaks in an incoherent fashion. The effort to realize your inherent wealth *sva dhana* I call *sadhana*. The words of the

Bhagavad Gita are infallible indeed. To attain to the *dharma* of one's *sva bhāva* is the aim of mankind.

Subhas : But it is also true that different people have different natures. Nobody knows where his real duty lies.

Ma : Even though people's dispositions and inclinations (*samskāras*) vary, there is one *dharma* for everyone. Truth is one.

Subhas : But one cannot know by one's own efforts how to proceed.

Ma : Having started working in this direction, if you continue steadily, everything will fall into place. Then, whatever tendencies (*samskāras*) have been lying dormant in each person are aroused. Look, children do not feel inclined to study. But if for some time you compel them to pursue their studies, you will observe that each child does well in a different subject. One may excel in English, another in mathematics. So also when people start on this quest, it is seen after some time that they are advancing each according to their inherent dispositions.

Subhas : But you have not yet indicated a definite path.

Ma (smiling) : You will have to set to work. You must resolve : 'I will study.'

Myself : Ma, your reply is unclear. You say everybody desires uninterrupted happiness. Subhas babu finds happiness by serving his country. So should we understand that by serving one's motherland one can attain to perpetual joy and to God-realization ?

Ma : The service must be done with one's whole being. One must see to it that really genuine service is performed.

Subhas : There is a particular method for doing service. It is difficult to find the correct method.

Ma : The difficulties of choosing the right path are considerable and on the path the maximum toil is required. But just as you acquire knowledge, if you firmly make up your mind to study, so if you are totally and completely determined to realize THAT, you are bound to find the right path.

Subhas : While groping in darkness it is difficult to find the correct path.

Ma : Yes, but one has to start walking in darkness. Don't you call faith blind ? Taking recourse to this blind faith one must begin one's work. Later everything will be understood. When children start learning, do they understand anything ? Yet by protracted study knowledge supervenes.

Subhas : All the same, if the correct path is known, precious time can be saved.

At this stage the lady teacher from the Corporation School again volunteered : "If all of you permit me, I think I can explain the matter."

Ma : All right, do !

Now the lady started talking on work free from desire for results as expounded in the Gita. But Ma interrupted her, saying : "O Ma, all this is very well known to him. (Subhas Bose).

Whether due to these frequent interruptions or for some other reason, the conversation between Subhas Bose and Ma did not gather any momentum. We all felt somewhat frustrated.

Before leaving, Subhas asked Sri Ma : "For how long will you be here ?

Ma : Nothing has yet been decided This body has not been keeping good health for some time. Before coming here from Hardwar, the doctor examined this body and said travelling was not advisable. Later when the trouble subsided somewhat, the journey to Calcutta was undertaken. There is some talk no

w of proceeding to Dhaka. They so very kindly take care and look after this body, so I have put the full responsibility on them.

These words Sri Ma uttered like a little girl in broken sentences. How sweet this sounded I just cannot convey.

Subhas Bose tendered his *pranama* and took his leave. A little later Sri Ma also was taken away from the *Panchavati*.



"Even though the Goal is the same, the paths taken by different people are of great variety. Some choose the path of knowledge, others of seva. But the objective is the same."

—Ma Anandamayee

CONVERSATION WITH WESTERN DEVOTEES

[Twelve]

—Vijayananda

DETACHMENT

Q: What is to be said to those - at present many in the West-who don't have the slightest idea about the importance of detachment?

A: At their own level, people in the world are right when they say that religion is a load of rubbish, for they do not feel anything when they meditate; and the sadhakas are right when they say that the world is rubbish, because they do not feel anything when thinking of or looking at worldly pleasures.

A young French man had tried to go into a one month retreat with only one book, Freud's 'Interpretation of Dreams' and had attempted to dive into the realm of sleep. He had lost himself in it, had stayed three months in a psychiatric hospital and had been intelligent enough to realize that he needed expert advice to explore his inner world. He had come to India, including Kankhal, where he had done six weeks of a sustained and balanced sadhana. He asked : Does detachment not lead to depersonalization?

A: Look at me : I am perfectly detached and yet perfectly grounded.

Q: Should the guru push his disciples towards renunciation?

A: If someone asks a guru, 'should I renounce the world?' his answer will almost always be, 'No'. The one who has the true spirit of renunciation does not ask questions; for him, this is obvious, he quits the world as someone would run away from a burning house.

Ramakrishna tells a story connected to this : a wife tells her husband : 'I am afraid that my brother may become a renunciate; he trains himself to do more and more spiritual practices, gradually decreases his food intake, sleeps less and less.' 'Do not worry', says the husband, 'he doesn't have the true spirit of detachment'. 'What do you know about it?' replies the wife. 'See, this is the true spirit of detachment'. The husband takes his dhoti (a long piece of cloth worn around the waist), tears it into two parts and puts it as the brahmacharis do, and then goes away never to return.

Q: Do you think that at the time of death, special practices of concentration are needed, or is it better to be completely detached?

A: The Masters who take the lotus pose or try to bring the *prāna* out of the *sahasrāra* show by this very fact that they are not realized. The realized sage's energy is everywhere. He does not have to take out his *prāna*. One Upanishad says of such a sage : '*Na tasya utkramante*', 'he is the one out of whom *prāna* does not leave'. Ramana Maharshi's or Ma Anandamayee's passing away have not been spectacular; nothing occurred. The dead leaf simply fell from the tree.

ACTION, COMPASSION

Q: Is it possible to reach realization simply by serving humanity?

A: No, we can purify our mind, obtain good *karma* and go for some time to heavens, but we will have to be reborn. As for the sage, he is completely free; he can take a new birth out of compassion, as states Ma Amritanandamayee, or out of play (*lila*). Or else he can choose not to be born again, because he is fed up. (With a smile) I am afraid it is the case with Ma. Then, he or she becomes merged in the universal Consciousness. The compassion of a perfect *jnani* is spontaneous, while that of a *bodhisattva* comes from a vow, hence from a will and this very fact creates a *karma*.

To a young woman who is unsure of her willingness to start a *sadhana* leading to detachment:

V: You must ponder, take a firm resolve and harmonize intellect and heart. Then, a genuine intensity will appear, and what was a snowball in the beginning will become an avalanche. When you start working seriously, powers come to help you. When I was in France, I had already enough intensity to weep when simply hearing the word 'guru'. Mrs. Blavatsky says in 'The Voice of Silence' : 'It is the boldness of the heart which enlightens the way'.

Q: Is it indispensable to leave the world to obtain realization?

A: There are two points of view. The practical one, according to which leaving the world is very useful for a *sadhaka*, helping him to reach a good spiritual level. Afterwards, he can come back to it because he is very strong. There have been schools in India, Theravada Buddhism, Vijnanavada and a few late Vedantic schools as well that used to teach the notion of the complete unreality of the world. This attitude can be useful for some time to the *sadhaka* to develop a spirit of detachment; but this is not the position of Mahayana

Buddhism which believes that the world (*samsara*) and *nirvana* are one. Neither is it the case in the path I follow, Vedanta, which states that the world is not real since it is not pure Consciousness. As a substance, it is as real as water, but as a movement it is as transitory as the wave; but even there, it cannot be said that it is completely unreal; we just do not understand where its reality lies. It is said in Katha Upanishad : 'What is here is over there, what is over there is here; he who sees a difference goes from death to death.'

Q: Can't we see a touch of sentimentalism in those who say : 'I want to save the world', even if this looks nice socially?

A: The *jnani* is quite beyond that. Ma has never said she wanted to save the world, but all the same she has helped a great number of people. Genuine compassion is spontaneous, it is not in words but in actions.

YOGA AND THE WEST

Q: Vijayananda, for forty years now you have been seeing Westerners on a spiritual quest passing through India; in your opinion, what is the main obstacle which impedes their progress on the Path?

A: They do not understand the utility of detachment. They make me think of the monkey in the story : a trap has been prepared for it : It consists of a cage whose bars are just far enough apart for its hand to sneak in and to grasp a banana inside; but when it wants to remove its hand with the banana, it is unable to do so. Then, the monkey hunter can take his time to arrive. The monkey, too greedy to give up its prey, let itself be caught by the scruff of the neck and says: 'Even if I loose my freedom, I will keep the banana!' At this juncture, the hunter strikes the monkey's elbow with a stick, and it has to loose its hold; thus, it has lost both its freedom and its banana.'

Q: What is in your opinion the main difference between East and West in their approach to the Absolute?

A: First, there is the duality between God and the creature which is fundamental in the West and which is much attenuated in the East : for instance every Hindu knows that God is inside him and that He is not different from his innermost Self. On the other hand, in the West, people are influenced by the Greek philosophy and they believe that they can reach the Absolute by discussion. In India, discussion is secondary. It is acknowledged that some sages have reached the Absolute and can give practical means to achieve it, and that's all. Yoga is a science : if one repeats the same experiment in the

same condition, he will have the same result. We have already said beforehand that one reason for the relative absence of sages in the West is that Westerners do not have the capacity of spontaneous trust which could enable them to blossom. This is why Jesus could not perform miracles in Nazareth. People would not trust him as a sage or as a divine incarnation, because they only projected an ordinary man - their former neighbour-on him.

A student from Paris : 'Is there not a contradiction between Art and Realization?'

V: No, they only are different stages. Beauty is an attribute of the Divine, its search can lead towards Realization. When a genius is inspired, he is inspired by this very reality. I mean that for a genius, not for an ordinary artist.

Q: Spiritual teachers, who are not realized, think that they however render service to others by guiding them. Is it right?

A: It is true that in the West, still more than in India, many teachers think so. They give up an intensive practice to perform what they think to be a service; some even say that they have received from their spiritual master the order to do so. But they help by words; should they have a superior level of realization, they could help many more people more efficiently.

Q: Is objectivity in relationships possible?

A: My first guru in France, who was a psychiatrist, used to say a Vedantic truth very well in his own way: 'Everyone hallucinates in his small corner.' In this sense, the world is a huge asylum.

To a student from Paris who has got a catholic education and who complains of a 'small voice' which persecutes him:

V: It is your interest, your negative concentration on it which gives it strength. This type of concentration-the endeavour not to think-is easier for the mind than the positive concentration itself. Do you know the story of the lover who comes to a magician asking for a spell to get back his beloved. The man of the art told him: 'Recite this formula, but over all, do not think of a monkey while reciting it'. Needless to say, the very fact of trying not to think of a monkey makes him think of it.....The best is to remain indifferent, to have no interest at all in this negativity. If you do not succeed in it, you can recite a formula which is dear to you. 'I greet you, Mary...'for instance.

Q: How to get rid of the negativity?

A: Think that you are the Self which does not move.

Q: But practically?

A: You must repeat, repeat, repeat.

Q: Is it self-persuasion?

A: Yes, somehow. But since this is something true, something real, it is permissible to persuade oneself in this direction.

Q: Is it not strange that the Self, which is nearest to you, is also the most difficult to observe.?

A: The Self is the one who sees. Observing one's own eye is difficult. Speaking of this, there is the well-known story of ten people crossing a river. Eventually, they want to count themselves to know if everyone has reached safely, but at every try they can count only nine of them, until a passer-by arrives and says to the one who has just counted his friends: 'You are the tenth'. Being conscious of the Self is difficult, but not impossible.

Q: What is the meaning of suffering?

A: It wakes us up : the most difficult people to awaken spiritually are those who pretend to be happy. We can see this for instance with couples who pretend to be happy for the show when they are in society, but in reality they are not much so. They can barely do anything but constantly tolerate the other's defects and resign themselves to it.

Q: How to explain the paradoxical energy which comes to people when they go beyond their limits?

A: Many people, when they go beyond their limits, have a cosmic force which comes to help them, be it called the 'Power of the other' or Kundalini, be it thought of in the upper or in the lower part of the body. One cannot reduce these phenomena, or ecstasies, to a mere chemical secretion. Wanting to explain everything through chemistry is a XIXth century vision. The fact is that we are connected to the outer world, we are not isolated. Now, this notion is emerging, even in science.

A Californian psychotherapist, who has strong mystical characteristics, but at the same time some difficulties to remain balanced, says all of a sudden in the conversation: 'I feel I am becoming crazy!'

V: Become crazy for God!

Q: I feel to weep.

A: Tears are pearls; weeping for God purifies.

Q: I feel I am a pregnant woman.

A: Be pregnant with the God-child.

Q: I feel I am shrinking : soon nothing will be left of me.

A: That is the best; when nothing remains, you will see God.

A young woman disciple of Ma : 'Are not wounds from the past the greatest obstacle in sadhana?

V: Let the past be healed by itself. When you succeed in really being in the present, you succeed in 90% of your sadhana.

To an elderly Western man who complains of the immorality of today's youth:

V: In the Hindu scriptures, it is said that in Kali Yuga (the worst of the four eras, usually associated with our times), people die younger and younger; but at present, people die older and older. This means that we are coming back to Satya Yuga. I do not believe that our epoch is Kali Yuga.

Q: Do you believe in the possibility of a Christian Vedanta?

A: Looking for a Christian Vedanta is somehow an impossibility, because Christianity is dualist and Vedanta non-dualist. However, Ramana Maharshi was right when he was advising Christians to meditate directly on 'I am who I am'. This definition of God by himself is pure Vedanta. The very word '*Yahwe*' contains past, present and future. From another point of view, the Western system has its advantages as well : frankly dualist for the people, and with a non-dualistic tendency for mystics. In any case, a mystic who has a true realization, whatever path he may follow, cannot speak of it. Vedanta is not a description of reality, it is simply a path to reach it. By focussing on the Self, on the *mahāvākya* (a 'great utterance' such as 'You are That') as a kind of mantra, one experiences Reality, but it is not a description.

Q: Do we find among biblical saints the same will to go beyond the body as is found in Yoga?

A: Yes; for instance, the version of Rabbi Akiba's death, I prefer, is the following: he has been captured by the Roman and sentenced to death; the punishment consists in being torn to shreds with iron combs. During this torture, his surrounding disciples were asking him: 'How can you be so shining? You have made so much good in your life; how aren't you resentful to God, who has abandoned you in this manner? The Rabbi answered by taking the daily Jewish prayer: "Shema Israel" : "Today is the most beautiful day in my life. I knew I was loving God with all my heart (*Levaha*), with all my power (*meodeha*), but was not sure to be able to love Him with all my vital being (*nefesh*); now, I know that I am capable of it.'

Q: What do you think of the link relation between celibacy and religion in the West?

- A:** There were great men like Tolstoy who used to preach celibacy. One day he was asked: Should everybody follow your advice, would not the human species be extinguished? He answered ; 'There will always be enough idiots to have children.' In spite of this opinion, we may wonder if the weakening of the Catholic Church in the long run does not come from the fact that this elite has no progeny, unlike the Reformed Church for instance. In this sense, the brahmanical system where one first gets married to have children and then only later renounces the world may be healthier; but this is a mere hypothesis, those phenomena are difficult to prove.
- Q:** After forty-five years in India, do you feel you are a Hindu?
- A:** When will human beings understand there is only one religion, that of man? The various religions are merely sects, and these sects create wars.
- Q:** Could the solution be a return to the religion of nature? As a hermit you spent seven years in the solitude of the Himalayas fully surrounded by nature and facing a scenery of year-around snow; what do you think about this?
- A:** There is no reason to be attached to nature as such. Natural beauty is a reflection of the Supreme Beauty, its silence an echo of the Supreme Silence. What attracts us in nature is a mirror-like effect, but we should not take the reflection for the real thing. In this sense, there is no reason to come back to the cult of nature found for instance in animism.
- Q:** Do you think that the Song of Solomon and its spiritual teaching may be useful to people who follow an Eastern spiritual path?
- A:** Yes, for instance, one night, the lover comes to the door of the beloved; she is not ready and makes him wait; so that when she opens, he is no longer there, and she has to go out in search of him. As many others, I have often lost chances that Ma was offering me. When God's or guru's grace occurs, we should not let the opportunity go away. Just before this episode, the beloved say: 'I sleep, but my heart is awaken. This is a hint to the state of meditation.
- Q:** Can Bhagavad Gita help us in understanding what can be genuine spiritual teachings?
- A:** In the last chapter of the Gita (XVIII-63), Krishna says : 'I have revealed to you the Knowledge, the mystery of mysteries. Ponder deeply on this, and do as you like.' Yet, Krishna was both guru and God. He could have easily said, 'Obey me, if not I will send you to hell'. But left the freedom to his disciple and told him : 'Do as you wish'.
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PURNA . BRAHMA NARAYANI

—Antonio Eduardo Dagnino

Om Ma

With tenderness,
with the longing of the blazing day
for the cool, infinite night,
with the humility of the earth
open to the rains :
With pleasure and pain as altar,
and the accumulation of past actions
good or bad, conscious or unconscious
as ghee to be poured in the sacred fire;
With passion as the flames
and the mysterious unfathomable mind
as the wind that feeds the flames;
With the whole of life
the throb, the pulsating energy,
the wonderful diversity of forms and beings,
the toil, the contradictions, the battles,
as the sacrificial field,
with Time as priest
and Death as witness :
I adore you,
I exalt you,
I fall at your all-pervading feet.

With fear of losing what is left of my old self,
and yet desperate to melt that ugliness
in your light.

With fear of dying finally
to the torturing egotism that limits love
and shuts me off from your beauty,
and yet desperate to see with your eyes.
With fear of never being able

to purify wholly what obscures virtue,
 and yet certain that without virtue
 there can be no joy.
 With fear of smallness, limitation, guilt;
 self-created prisons
 that have to be burnt
 by the fire of your transcendental inspiration.
 With fear of myself—
 I offer myself in sacrifice.

MA IS OMNIPRESENT

—A devotee

On the eve of 2nd January, 2001 I met a Canadian lady with her husband in the lawns of the International Guest House in Kankhal. She was about 60 years of age. I asked her, "When did you meet Ma?" She then told me as under—

She had a dream about a lady in white clothes whom she had never met and the lady was saying to her with open arms, "Come here." After a few days she had the same dream. She ran towards her and the lady embraced her. Then the lady in white clothes fed her like a mother and she felt that while sucking the milk light was entering her body. As she told me this the Canadian lady's eyes were overflowing with tears of joy. She said that she wondered who the lady in white was and where she could find her. After a few days something astonishing happened. She went to somebody's house with her friend and saw the photograph of the lady who had appeared in her dreams. She enquired who the lady was and was told that she was Ma Anandamayee. She then started searching about Ma on the internet, but was unable to get further information. She enquired from one of the bookstores and was given the address and phone number of the Varanasi ashram from one of Ma's books. From there she called the Varanasi ashram. Sri Panu Brahmachari attended her phone call and when she told him that she wanted to visit Ma's ashram he advised her to first go to Kankhal Ashram and meet Swami Vijoyanandji. She has now met Swamiji and Swamiji has told her in details about Ma and has advised her to study books of Ma.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

[Continued from before]

—P.C.Mehta

1. Historical :

The Vedic period ended at about 487 B.C. being the date of *mahānirvāna* of Gautam Buddha. To this period belong the revealed literature called 'Sruti'. Then started the Sanskrit or classical period. The first part of it known as the 'early post-Vedic period', lasted till the beginning of the Christian era. The latter part of it is described as 'the age of systems'.

The exact interval between the close of the Vedic period and the beginning of the period of the systems is uncertain. But without doubt a considerable time has elapsed. Jacobi places 'Mimamsa sutra' about 300-200 B.C. the 'Vaisesika sutra' about 100 B.C. and the 'Nyaya sutra' a little later.

This period of interval was a period of great intellectual stir both in India and Greece. It marks the beginning of western philosophy. During this period two divergent thought currents, one having its source in the Vedas which is called orthodox and the other independent of it, which is called heterodox, have through their interactions on each other, brought about richness and variety to Indian philosophy. Both the schools barring materialism have i) *Moksa* or liberation as the goal of life and ii) asceticism as the life style to achieve it.

We now turn to the growth of Indian thought between the close of Vedic period and the beginning of the age of the systems. Though heterodox thought patterns existed from early times, they now emerged with greater emphasis and formed definite schools of thought to contend with. The rift between orthodox and heterodox thought patterns has never since been fully mended.

The heterodox systems are i) materialism ii) Jainism and iii) Buddhism. Jainism and Buddhism preached only the exoteric teachings which were appropriate for the listeners of the time. So far, Hinduism had laid greater emphasis on esoteric teachings and as we saw, while dealing with the Upanisads, this teaching was secretly imparted only to pupils of tried character and jealously guarded from the unworthy. Now the time had come for greater emphasis on exoteric teachings suitable to the masses. This was provided by the Mahabharata. It contained the

exoteric Hindu teachings in substance, if not in form and was available to all. The declared teachings of Jainism and Buddhism were realistic. As we saw before 'pluralism or the belief that the ultimate entities are many and realism or the belief that matter is as real as spirit or mind, are not unknown to the Upanisads taken as a whole. They are not prominent, but appear as reminders of the various angles covered in the Vedas'. Now Hinduism gave greater emphasis to realism and the cosmic or *saprapanca* aspect of absolutism, thereby ushering in well defined theism.

Thus the two notable features of this period common to both orthodox and heterodox schools are that the teachings were realistic and made available to all without distinction of caste or sex.

The chief sources of information for this period are :

- 1) For heterodox opinion they are Prakrit including Pali and Ardhamagadhi literature as well as what is found in the Sanskrit writings.
- 2) As regards orthodox thought they are :

i) some of the minor *Upanisads*, ii) the three classes of *Kalpa sutras*, being *srauta*, *grhya* and *dharma*, in which the ritualistic aspect of the Vedas is dealt with in short aphorisms. Their aim is the systematization of ceremonials, iii) the older sections of the Mahabharata is a store house of post-Vedic mythology and doctrine and human wisdom. Its drawback is that therein the orthodox and heterodox doctrines are mixed up, iv) the *Bhagavad Gita* and v) the *Markandeya Purāna*.

Before we go further, let us look at the Smriti literature and the Puranas.

2. The Smriti literature :

The word *Smriti* in Sanskrit means 'that which is remembered' in contradistinction to *Sruti* or that which is heard. We have dealt with these terms before. The *Sruti* is of the utmost holiness because it is thought to have been supernaturally revealed. All of the Vedas, inclusive of the Brahmanas, Āranyakas and Upanisads, is *Sruti*. *Smriti* is next in holiness and includes the entire body of sacred tradition, what is remembered by human teachers. In the *Smriti* are included the six *Vedāngas*, meaning 'limbs of the Vedas', the most famous *Manu-Smriti* or the laws of Manu, the two great Epics, being the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the Puranas and the literature called *Niti sāstras*, being literature dealing with worldly wisdom, such as the book of fables, known as the *Panchatantra* and the well-known *Artha-Sāstra* of Kautilya, which is a work on the science of polity.

3. The Vedangas :

The six Vedangas or 'the limbs of the Vedas' are i) rituals, ii) phonetics, iii) grammar, iv) etymology, v) metrics and vi) astronomy. Learning on these subjects

was an integral part of the study of the Vedās and provided for by the Vedic schools. These schools developed manuals of study on each of these subjects, in a *sutra* form, that is in short aphoristic style for easy memorization. Of the six Vedangas, for an understanding of Hinduism, the Vedanga of rituals, called the *kalpa-sutrass*, is most important. We shall deal with them in due course.

4. Dharma-Sāstras : Laws of Manu :

The Dharma-Sastras are instructions in the sacred law and belong to the Smriti literature, but not to the Vedangas. The Dharma-Sastras are later in date and longer than the Dharma-Sutras, which are a part of the Vedangas. The Dharma-Sastras are in a versified form. Of the Dharma-Sastras the Manu-Smriti or the laws of Manu is the most famous work. It was put into its final form about the second or third century A.D. It contains a philosophy of the *varnas* or classes and *asramas* or stages in life, similar to what is in the Dharma-Sutras, but in addition there are other significant moral teachings. Most interesting of these, from our modern point of view, are the verses that deal with the treatment of women.

By and large, women occupy an honorable position. This will be seen from the following passage : 'Where women are honoured there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured no sacred rite yields rewards'. In other places, we read that a wife should rise before her husband, go to bed after him and do some chores for him. In childhood she should remain subject to her father, in youth to her husband and if her husband dies, then to her sons, thus she would never be independent. But another Smriti work, the Mahabharata, says that, 'Wife is half the man, the best of friends, the root of the three ends of life and of all that will help him in the other world.....Even in the grip of rage, a man will not be harsh to a woman, remembering that on her depend the joys of love, happiness and virtue; for woman is the everlasting field, in which the Self is born'.

5. The Epics : The Ramayana :

The Ramayana is an epic poem, divided into seven books, written by a single poet Valmiki. Except for books I and VII, the Ramayana was probably completed a little before the Christian era. Books I and VII appear to be later interpolations, which are considerably after the epic as will be seen.

The epic story begins in the city of Ayodhya which is about 125 miles north of the present Varanasi. Rama or Ramachandra is the eldest son of *Surya-Vamsi* (of the Solar-dynasty) Dasaratha, the King of Ayodhya. He is happily married to beautiful Sita, who is the daughter of King Janaka, the ruler of Videha. Rama is named heir to the throne. When this is announced, the King's other queen Kaikeyi

demands redemption of a boon the King had earlier promised her; and asks for the banishment of Rama and the installation of Bharata, her own son, as the heir apparent. Against the wishes of both the King and Bharata, Rama, who was always a model of virtue, voluntarily goes into exile, in order that his father might keep his promise. The King Dasaratha dies heart-broken and instead of becoming king, Bharata assumes the role of regent, awaiting the return of Rama from exile.

Laksmana, the younger brother of Rama, elects to accompany Rama and Sita in exile. All the three dwell together as forest hermits. While living in the forest, Rama vanquishes many demons. Finally, Ravana the demon king of Lanka decides to avenge his demon kinsmen and abducts Sita while Ram and Laksmana are away on a hunting trip. Ravana forcibly carries Sita to his island palace in Lanka.

After searching everywhere, greatly distressed Rama and Laksmana secure the help of Sugriva, the monkey king, and his general Hanuman. With the help of Hanuman, Rama triumphs over Ravana and his demon hosts in their citadel in Lanka. Because of the help rendered by Hanuman to Rama in this war, Hanuman is a much-loved deity in Hinduism and all monkeys are held in esteem.

Rama being the model of righteousness, was required to live by high social standards. As such, though knowing Sita's innocence and purity of character, because Sita had lived in another man's house, instead of happily reuniting with Sita, Rama rejects her. Thereupon to prove her innocence and chastity, Sita undergoes an ordeal by fire which Agni, the fire-god, refuses to burn her. Thereafter, Rama, Sita and Laksmana repair to Ayodhya where Bharata voluntarily hands over the throne to Rama. It is claimed that the original ending of the story depicts Rama and Sita living long and happily thereafter.

The seventh and the last book of the Ramayana, which is a seemingly later interpolation, shows a different and unhappy ending. Unlike Rama, simply on the ground that Sita has lived in another person's house, the people of Ayodhya hesitate to accept her. In spite of his love for Sita, Rama places dharma, meaning 'social conscience' in this context, above his own knowledge and his and Sita's happiness and banishes her.

With absolute obedience as befits an ideal wife, with no anger but silently suffering, Sita takes refuge in sage Valmiki's forest hermitage. There she gives birth to twin sons, Lava and Kusa. Rama later finds Sita and acknowledges Lava and Kusa as his two sons. Weary Sita, though loyal and devoted to the last, calls upon mother Earth to take her away. Earth cleaves and absorbs Sita. Shortly after, Rama dies and returns to his *Visnu-Swarupa* or his universal Visnu form. The sage Valmiki writes Ramayana. In this seventh or last book and in book I, which is also a later addition, Rama is described as an *avatara* of Visnu.

For Hinduism, Rama and Krisna are the two principal *avataras* or descents of Visnu. Symbolically all the descents represent the ever-recurring tussle between the powers of good and evil. Rama is *dharma* incarnate and Sita, who is revered as an *avata* of Visnu's consort, Laksmi, is the ideal of the Hindu wife, always obedient and faithful to her husband, always solicitous for his welfare, even to the point of giving up her life for him. In the Ramayana, *dharma* or moral duty as a major goal in life, overrides *artha* which is pursuit of wealth, honour and fame and *kama* or pursuit of pleasure. Rama and Sita are the divine examples of *dharma*.

6. The Epic— Mahabharata :

Mahabharata means 'the narrative of the great battle of the Bharatas.' The Bharatas, were a people whose territory was located in the upper Ganges Plain and around the Jamuna River. They are mentioned in the Rg. Veda. In the Brahmanas we come across 'Bharata', the eponymous ancestor of the Bharatas. Around 1500 B.C., amongst them, a family feud arose between two noble families of Pandavas and their cousin the Kauravas; who were the descendants of the great *Chandra-Vamsi* (of Lunar-Dynasty) King Santanu, and the ruler of Hastinapur for possession of a kingdom in northern India. This battle ended in almost complete annihilation of the leading clan of the Bharatas. Bards composed and sang poems about the history and glory of this clan and the cataclysmic war. Then an unknown poet combined these songs into a heroic poem of 90,000 stanzas. That is Mahabharata. It is said that there is no human situation which is not covered in the Mahabharata. Its study is both entertaining and informative.

The most important section of the poem is the Bhagvad-Gita, a philosophical dialogue on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, between Krisna, the eighth incarnation of Visnu and the Pandava hero Arjuna, on the meaning of life. Although this work is *Smriti* and not *Sruti*, it is the New Testament of Hinduism. Barring the Upanisads, there is no more important religious work in Hinduism. The greatest philosophers, notably Sankara and Ramanuja, have written commentaries on it. Being central to Hinduism, we shall deal with the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita, separately, after a proper ground-work of Hinduism is established.

[To be continued]

FIRST DARSHAN

—Shraddha Davenport

(II)

Suktal

Soon all the rushing stopped and at last we were on the plane, on our way to India — to Mother.

I had always thought that if I could only see Her once I would be satisfied and could go on with my life. How strange....I did not know that SHE is my life.

As we flew over India, I looked down at "her" and a great love came pouring from my heart. As we stepped down from the plane in New Delhi I felt at home for the first time in this life. Such bliss to come home when I did not even know that I had one.

Our dear Swami Nirmalananda was already with Mother in Suktal, a small Village about two hours' drive north of Delhi, on the holy Ganges river. But before he went to Suktal he had arranged for a wonderful friend of his, Mr. Shyamlal Sharma, who lived in Delhi, to meet us at the airport.

Sharmaji was so very kind. He took us shopping in Chandni Chowk, old Delhi, where we got suitable Indian-style clothing, and then to his home where we met his charming wife, three beautiful daughters, and a handsome son. They insisted that we spend the night. We were given beds in the living room and slept very well.

At the first light of morning we were gently awakened by the soft tinkling of puja bells and the delicate aroma of incense in the air. Ladies in neighboring houses were worshipping in their household shrines. We arose and stepped to the front window where we could hear distant chanting. Completely spellbound, we stood silently listening as the chanting drew nearer. Then we saw in the dim morning light an ochre-clad sadhu leading a small group of people as they walked down the narrow dirt road singing God's Name.

And so began this most important day of my life, November 7, 1970.

After bathing and dressing, we went with Mr. Sharma by car to Suktal. He was afraid that the driver would not find the village if we went alone. On the way we stopped at a fruit stand and purchased apples and oranges to offer to Mother when we arrived.

Without telling each other, we were both thinking that the fruit looked so good. I thought how nice an orange would be, and my husband though how nice an apple would be. Of course we did not take

It was 3:10 p.m. when we first saw Suktal, but we were not to see Mother so easily.

The Samyam Saptaha (week of penance), which is celebrated by Mother's ashram each year at this time, had been going on since November fourth-three days before we arrived. The function was usually held in a different location each year. This year it was not in Her ashram, but in that of Sri 108 Swami Vishnu Ashramji Maharaj.

As part of the program, each day after discourse and satsang there was an hour of meditation from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. We had arrived just after the doors and window shutters had been closed for that meditation. A young man, stood guard at the door. He told us that the doors would be opened at 4:00 p.m.

The thought that filled my mind was, "Here I have come from halfway around the world to see Mother. She is just on the other side of that door, and still my waiting has not yet ended."

Sharmaji said we should go and visit the beautiful Sukdeva Temple which dominates this small village. So that is what we did. As we climbed the many steps to the top, Sharmaji told us the story of this temple which was built around the largest tree I have ever seen in my life.

It was under this very tree that the great king Parikshit, grandson of Arjuna and ruler of all India, attained liberation.

The great king had been hunting in the surrounding forest when he became very thirsty. As he searched for water he found the well known saint Shamika sitting in deep meditation. His mind and body perfectly still in realization of his oneness with Brahman, he was in samadhi. The king did not recognize the saint's condition, and asked him for a drink of water. Shamika, in the state of samadhi, did not see or hear the king. The king, thinking that he was being ignored, became very upset. He noticed a dead snake lying nearby and in anger he picked it up, hurled it around the neck of the saint, and left.

Saint Shamika had a son who was born with great power. This son, Shringi, found the dead snake hanging on his father's neck and, learning of the king's insulting act, furiously cursed the king, saying that in seven days the king would die of snake bite. When the saint returned to ordinary consciousness, he learned what had happened and heard what his son had done. Though he was very saddened at his son's actions, he could not revoke the curse.

After returning to his palace, the king began to regret what he had done and prayed that karma for this deed would come upon him directly so that he might never do such an ignoble act again. Presently he heard of the curse placed upon him by Shringi. Accepting this fate as a blessing, he renounced the material world, all of his possessions and powers, then went to sit on the banks of the Ganges with the resolve to fast on to death. With undivided devotion he fixed his mind on the feet of Lord Sri Krishna.

Many great sages and rishis gathered there and heard the story of King Parikshit, Suka, the divine Son of Vyasa, who wandered about on the earth at will, arrived in their midst. The king bowed before him, knowing him to be the greatest of the great, and then in complete reverence asked that blessed one two questions: (1) What should a mortal do at all times and under all circumstances? (2) What is the duty of a man who is about to die ?

Asking this Parikshit sat at the feet of the Divine Suka, on the south bank of the sacred Ganges, Sri Suka responded by teaching him that wisdom which grants liberation. In seven days Sukadeva had completed his teaching and the royal Parikshit was in the state of *nirvikalpa samadhi*, in union with Brahman, completely liberated. The curse was fulfilled when a snake came and bit the king. But he had already left his body. The narrative of Sri Sukadeva in those seven days was from the holy book, the *Srimad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāna*, composed by his father, Vyasa.

When we reached the top of the temple, which was all open except for the shrines, we could look out beyond the tree and see the Ganges winding through the open country side. The temple priest gave us his blessing and put tilak on our foreheads. Then it was time to go back to the satsang hall to see Mother.

What a lovely way to calm our minds and put us in such a perfect mood for our first darshan of Sri Ma.

Soon we were standing on the porch in front of the shutters. Then someone opened the shutters and I could see Mother at the far end of the large hall. There was a long platform at that end and several sadhus were seated upon it. Mother was also seated there on the end to my left. A large crowd sat in the hall women on the left and men on the right. Then the double front doors were opened and we moved just inside where we knelt, gazing at Her as the haunting bhajan—'He Pita-He Hita' was sung by Brahmchari Vibhuda.

There were double doors all along the right wall, and the porch continued around that side of the long hall. Those doors were also opened. Mr. Sharma said, "See who is here!" We looked to our right, and there coming down the porch was

Swami Nirmalananda, smiling as he came to greet us. Then a man told us to come with him. I did not want to leave, but did as I was told. We were taken along that side porch to doors that were just across from where Mother sat. There we had a much better view of Her. My joy was complete as I knelt with folded palms. Tears of happiness ran down my cheeks as I smiled and said to myself, "It's really happening. I am really here. This is the greatest moment of my life and I know It." As I looked at Mother with Her beautiful little hands together in namaste, I thought she was greeting someone behind me until my husband told me otherwise. Then She took one corner of the yellow towel which lay around Her throat to wipe a tear from Her eye. Now my own tears came in a torrent.

After some time everyone arose and stood as Mother went out a door near where She had been sitting. Then someone told us to come to the front—that Mother was coming out to greet us.

We could not believe it. But there She was, seated in a tiny pandal in front of the satsang hall. We hastened to Her feet, prostrated, and offered the fruit which we had brought.

Mother gave my husband an apple and me an orange—just as we had wished. Then She asked, "Did you have a comfortable journey?" I said, "Oh yes, thank you." She smiled at us so sweetly the whole time She was there. Then She went to Her room.

We met Brahmecharinis Chitra and Atmananda. I felt as though I had always known them. Everyone was so kind to us.

Mr. Sharma had to return to Delhi and we were shown to our "Swiss Cottage" tent situated on adjoining property. There was just enough time to drop our things there before going to evening satsang.

Dear Chitra had reserved special kusha grass asans for us very close to the front where Mother sat. The ladies seated by me were very concerned for my comfort and Chitra kept looking to see if I was all right. Mother often looked at me and smiled. Each time I cried and smiled. Again, She wiped a tear from Her cheek. After satsang we all stood as Mother moved towards the side door. The lady at my side pushed me gently forward until I stood right next to Mother as She passed. I dropped down and softly touched Her little foot. I have no words to tell what I felt for Her.

Outside I met my husband and Swami Nirmalananda. The three of us went to our tent in the compound where many like it had been erected to house those devotees attending the Samyam Saptaha.

Our tent was very spacious and had three separate rooms. The interior walls were paisley print. There was a small front room for cooking, a large middle room which had straw upon the floor and was furnished with cots, a table, and chairs. A small back room was the bathroom. Bricks had been laid in the sandy earth to make a platform where one stood while bathing-which was done by pouring large eufuls of water over oneself. A shallow trench had been formed to drain the water away and absorb in into the ground. Hot water was always available by the bucketful just a few sttaps from our tent. Laundry was also done on the brick platform, and hung to dry on the tent ropes.

We at the ashram. Seated on the concrete floor under the beautiful clear blue sky, we listened to the birds singing as we were served rice and dal khichuri with aloo (potatoes) and cauliflower in curry sauce piled high upon leaf plates. I was in heaven. The food was wonderful, but I had almost no appetite. Atmanandaji kept trying to get me to eat, but Mother was giving me oranges every day and that was all I wanted. Several times Chitra brought Mother's prasad to our tent.

Daily Mother would gaze at us and fill our hearts with Her smiles. I was so intoxicated with Her grace. I had never known such joy could exist in this life.

My husband walked down to the Ganges one day and bathed in her sacred waters, but I never left the compound and ashram. On another day as I was standing in front of the satsang hall. Chitra came and gave me a pair of Mother's little slippers. What a treasure!

Whenever Mother came outside to visit a shrine or to be shown something on the grounds, we would follow along with Her as did anyone else fortunate enough to be there. That also was a perfect opportunity to take movies.

I will always remember that dear lady who so kindly loaned her little wind-up movie camera to us.

[To be continued]

PAGES FROM THE DIARY OF DIDI GURUPRIYA

[Translated from Bengali]

Matri-lila at Navadveep—30th December, 1936

Ma has been at Navadveep for more than ten days past. Discussion was going on this morning about the *lila* of Sri Krishna.

On being asked by someone whether the *lila* was *aprākrit* (divine) or *prākrit* (worldly) Ma observed — "When it is called *lila* it is implied that it is *aprākrit*. The state of the rishis is higher than that of the *jivan muktas*. Without attaining the state of *jivan mukti* one does not have the right to even listen to the *lila* of Sri Krishna".

Then the topics of Radha *tatwa* and Gopi *tatwa* come up. Ma said—"The *rishis* themselves became the *gopis*. They became a part of the *lila* and therefore had no bondage. "Again—"Sri Krishna and Radha were not different and Radha was the main *gopi*. Therefore it can be seen that Krishna was Radha and at the same time he was also the *gopi*. And this is Vedanta in itself." So saying Ma began to laugh.

A certain gentleman asked — "Ma, is *sadhana* dependent on *karma* or on *Kripa* ?

Ma—"First of all action is necessary. Only when there is action is grace bestowed"

Question—"Then there is nothing called *kripa* ?"

Ma—"As the *sadhaka* does *karma* he reaches a stage when he realizes that nothing can be done without His *kripa*. As long as the ego sense remains one cannot understand what *kripa* is. When the mind gets purified one begins to understand His *kripa*. Only then does the *sadhaka* realize that everything is being done by the *Purusha*. That is to say, what ever the *Purusha* does, whatever the Supreme *Purusha* does, happens."

Question—"What then is *ahetuki Kripa* (grace without cause)?"

Another—"Does this *ahetuki Kripa* occur from our side or from His side ?"

Ma—"From His side."

We have observed on many occasions that Ma replies differently to different people on the same subject.

31st December, 1936

Ma was talking in details about her childhood. As she was describing the past incidents so nicely that we could see them almost happening before us.

Someone told Ma about this and She promptly remarked—"Truly as I talk about those days I completely get into the mood of that role and therefore I am able to speak in that manner."

Ma continued—"When I was first sent to school the school teacher was the grandfather of this body. He taught me the vowels just once and somehow they were instantly committed to memory. The same day the consonants were also learnt by heart. In this manner everything happened spontaneously. I went to school only frequently for it was far away and also my younger brother was unwell for sometime. Because of these reasons this body attended the classes very irregularly. The surprising fact was that though I studied very little everything turned out fine when I recited my lessons before the teacher. Once I opened a book and looked at a poem I learnt it by heart that very moment. I cannot explain why and how all this happened.

"One day an Inspector of Schools came for inspection. He opened one book and asked me to recite that very poem which I had learnt. I rattled the same at once." So saying, Ma began laughing again like a small child.

Ma continued—"What to tell ! Just as *asanas* and *mudras* occurred spontaneously so also the reading, counting and multiplying. Then for the sake of reputation the teachers promoted four of us from the infant to lower Primary class. I often missed the school. But when I went to the school after a gap of many days I found that the other girls had learnt quite a lot. The teacher then taught me all those lessons to bring me on par with the others. So, see how by His will studies somehow went on well.

"Another amusing incident. Mother of this body had told me to pause at a comma and at a fullstop. Accordingly I used to read all the sentences in a full breath till a comma or a full stop was reached. If I ran out of breath midway I used to start all over again from the beginning. All this was only because of the instructions given by the mother of this body." On hearing this all began to laugh aloud and Ma also joined in the laughter. I commented—"It appears that *prānāyāma* had begun right then."

While describing further anecdotes from Her childhood, Ma remarked—"Whenever a sorrowful expression was needed that mood was manifested fully in the whole body and when shyness was needed a shy mood was fully exhibited."

Ma continued—"This body did not have such intelligence. So during my childhood I was called a 'simpleton'. Every one called me simple and straightforward."

1st January, 1937

Today a woman came to take Ma to the ashram of Sevadasi Ma* . As soon as Ma reached the ashram of Sevadasi Ma she embraced our Ma and escorted her to the temple and made Ma sit. The ladies there told us that from the age of 22/23 years Sevadasi Ma stopped eating anything. She did not even drink *charanāmrit* (water offered to God during puja) but only sprinkled it on her head. In between she used to lie down in *bhāva* for two or three days at a stretch.

While conversing with Ma, Sevadasi Ma said—"Once the Lord had told me 'I have shut all your external doors and have taken your responsibility.' I have also surrendered all my responsibilities unto Him and am waiting for that great moment. In one single day all my eating and drinking ceased and I never go out of the ashram without orders from Sri Krishna. I heard the news of your arrival here but I could not go. Day before yesterday I received the orders, "The body in which I reside has come. Go yourself and bring her here with due respect". Therefore I had gone to you last night. You are Sri Krishna Himself. All this time I had *darshan* of the Lord in His subtle body, today Sri Govinda Himself has arrived. Now you must stay in your temple. I won't let you go."

Hearing this Ma laughed like a child and said, "This day I have heard that Govinda lives in this body. Well, Ma since when has Govinda come into this body?"

Sevadasi Ma—"Since birth. Today Govinda has come and I will not let Him go." So saying she clung tightly to Ma. Then they started Kirtan and requested Ma also to sing. The Kirtan gradually gathered tempo. Sevadasi Ma embraced our Ma so tightly that it was difficult for us to let her loose the same. Gradually Seva dasi Ma was somehow made to release her hold and she lay on the ground. Ma stood up and every limb of Her body began to dance in tune with the Kirtan. Everyone who noticed were enthralled at the wonderful sight.

Ma indicated that every one should lift their hands and dance. On Her inspiration all the devotees present started dancing extatically. Kirtan went on for a long time. As soon as Ma got ready to leave, Kirtan was stopped. But Sevadasi Ma won't allow Ma to leave. Ma said to her—"I will not leave you and go. Only allow

* A lady *sādhikā* who was well-known in Navadveep those days.

this body to leave. You understand everything." On hearing Ma's words Sevadasi Ma allowed Ma to leave after all.

From Sevadasi Ma's ashram Ma went straight to Sri Bansidhar Babaji* who lived in a house near by. Ma was told that Babaji would not be available at that odd hour. Because he used to keep his door shut most of the time and could be seen only during morning hours. But Ma said —"Let us go. Even if we donot meet babaji we shall atleast have a look at the place."

When we reached the place we heard that babaji had shut the door just sometime back and he would not now open the door. Ma said nothing and kept strolling outside the door. Within a few minutes we found babaji opening the door much to the astonishment of all present there. Ma went and stood near the window. We found that babaji's face was turned towards the idols of Radha Krishna & Bal Gopal installed inside his hut. Babaji was seen preparing tobacco for the deities and after offering to them he started taking it himself.

Ma asked us to take the Name of God very softly. When the devotees started singing nama kirtan as per Ma's instructions babaji turned his face and gazed at Ma and promptly looked away. We all were very much astonished.

Ma kept standing without uttering anything. Devotees around Ma complained that they were not able to hear anything from babaji. Ma promptly remarked—"Stay quietly and listen with attention." Strangely enough in a short while babaji took a deep breath and uttered—"Hari ! Hari !" Ma soon exclaimed—"Now let us go. Baba has spoken the true words— 'Hari Hari'. What else will he say ?" So saying Ma left the place with all of us.

2nd January, 1937

A large number of people have come for Ma's *darshan*. During the conversation that followed Ma remarked—"We are all seated here, someone comes and someone goes away : all this is like a dream."

Then the topic of Ma's early days at Shahbag came up.

Ma said—"So many kinds of dietary patterns were followed by this body during those days. Some days only three grains of rice and on other days nine grains were taken; and then for several months no food at all."

Ma continued—"A very small brass pot was purchased during last visit to Varanasi. A little rice and a few finely chopped vegetables used to be boiled in that small pot inside the vessel along with rice which was cooked in the sacrificial fire at

*. Sri Bansidhar babaji — a very old vaishnav sadhu who practised sadhana very rigourously and observed silence. One of the most celebrated vaishnav sadhus in those days.

Shahbag for Bholanath & Kulada brahmachari. During the day time this body did not take anything; only in the evening the contents of the small container were taken by this body. This rule also went on for several months. But it is not that this body observed those rules out of its own will. This body only behaved in that pattern."

At night after the Kirtan was over, Ma sat down on her *asana* and started singing very sweetly :

"Who is this new yogi who has entered Navadveep,
What beauty of form
It has made me mad.

What a sweet voice this yogi has,
Never have I heard such a voice,
The sound of this voice raises a flood in the holy Ganga.

How charming is this youthful yogi
donning only a loin cloth and
begging bowl in hand,
I know not for the love of whom.

When he says 'Rā' tears flow down his cheek,
When he utters 'Dhā' he rolls on the dust.
Never have I seen the like of this in the three worlds.

Say, say, O friend ! What has happened to me ?
My eyes are enthralled beholding the yogi's form,
My life bird is ensnared in the yogi's love-cage,
My life bird will fly no more.

My feet will not stir homeward, caught in the yogi's love cage,
I have surrendered my life at the yogi's feet,
I shall go back no more, here I have come once
and I shall go with the yogi.

I shall follow the yogi and beg for food
remaining with the yogi for ever."

The whole surrounding was simply enraptured to listen to Ma singing the song in such a superbly melodious tune.

[To be continued]

ĀNANDAM IN THE UPANISHADS

We are taught that *ānanda* is found at the innermost core of man's personality corresponding on the one hand to the uppermost layer of the Vedic altar and on the other to the heaven of the gods. As the innermost reality of man it is identified with Brahman, which is also *defined as satyam, jñānam and anantam*. This reality and experience of *ānanda* is therefore characteristic of Being in its very source, when it has not yet been concretised into the dispersion and plurality of forms, mental or physical: *yad vā aniruktam tad ānandamayam*¹. That is why *ānanda* is called *brahma-yoniḥ*². Bliss is, therefore, connatural to man, not a mere form, superimposed on his inner core, an alternative to an equally superficial *dukhha*. This experience of bliss is correlated to the sense of interiority and to the experience of non-duality³. It also has an intimate relation to *manas*, its abode, although of itself it is beyond the intellectual life of man and akin to the concepts of immortality, unmanifested, pacified (*amṛtam, avyaktam, Sāntam*).

The notion of *ānanda*, under the guise of *lilā*, often enters into the later accounts of the relative activity of God. This play, sport, implies full spontaneity, complete facility, joy, and lack of purpose, if purpose means a desire of something not possessed by the agent. *Lilā* is found throughout the later history of Indian philosophy and religion, and continues to bear the connotations of *ānanda*, but used only in relation with the creative activity. Thus it is that even in our times, Tagore, the poet who insists so much on the *lilā* of creation, when speaking as a philosopher, seeks to express the creation of the world in terms of *ānanda*.

One of the most interesting discoveries one makes when studying the Upaniṣadic texts in detail is the fact that the same metaphysical conceptions emerge again and again in different speculations and in different settings, thus showing the basic consistency of the archetypal apprehension of reality in India. The speculations on deep sleep, like those on Yoga, will insist that perfect *ānanda* is experienced only in the state of perfect unification when man recovers the sense of wholeness (*kṛtsna*), which corresponds to the true and absolute state of man, his "heavenly state" beyond the reach and apprehension of the *vijñānamaya puruṣa*. Although the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad postulates a fourth state of man, the *turiya*,

1. Ś. B. 82.3.11.

2. Tait. Ār. 10.63.1.

3. Tait. Up. 2.6-8.

apparently beyond the scope of *ānanda*, most Upaniṣadic speculations relate the experience of bliss with that of the *aśabda*, *amūrta*, *akāla* aspects of Brahman, the ultimate experience of non-duality.

The philosophical speculations on the sexual experience scattered in the Upaniṣadic and pre-Upaniṣadic literature focus on the unity and return to the original wholeness of man of which the division of sexes is already a departure. It is this wholeness that explains the bliss of non-duality that one can recapture in the reconstitution of the full man through the sex embrace. This experience is also referred to the *manas*, and yet conceived as beyond the normal processes of thinking, beyond the concrete experience, *asarīvidā iva*.

The imaginations and aspirations of man are projected into the life beyond the life of heaven. What is of importance to us is that in all cases the theme of *ānanda* is central, although played in different keys. In this way *ānanda* not only is found at the source of man's being but also becomes the focal point of man's aspiration, the goal of his striving for total liberation. Originally related to the experience produced by the soma drink, *ānanda* is found in the Saṃhitās to be the characteristic of the heavenly realities to which the Vedic ritual leads us. This characteristic continues in the eschatology of the Upaniṣads, which add the awareness—often expressed in mythological ways—that man needs to be transformed into a new reality before he can enter into the fullness of *ānanda*. Thus bliss is found to be the characteristic of the gods, of their abode and of the Absolute Freedom itself, the state beyond all duality.

The metaphysical reflections found in the Upaniṣads and other Vedic literature confirm the basic intuitions of the previous speculations. Bliss supposes fullness of being, infinity, not being bound by any form, and yet having the full consistency of Reality, because "established on its own greatness"¹. It is at the same time the object of all desires. It is in the perfect concentration of being, in the perfect experience of *advaita* that bliss is to be found. This is why we cannot be surprised if the Upaniṣadic seers make the bold and unhesitating affirmation that *ānanda* is Brahman and Brahman is *ānanda*, an affirmation already prepared in the Brāhmaṇas and other pre-Upaniṣadic literature which speaks of *ānanda* in relation to well-being, prosperity, fullness and completion. In this aspect of fullness and non-dispersion must, mysteriously, be sought the reason for the fact that *ānanda* is

1. *Mait. Up.* 2.4., 6.28, 38. Cf. *Ch. Up.*, 7.24.1.

also the very root and explanation of that sharing of being which is found in the Upanisads : *tasyaivā nandasyā nyānbhūtāni mātṛām upajivanti*¹ .

It would be interesting, but beyond the scope of this study, to further investigate the importance of the idea of *ānanda* in later Indian tradition. We know that for the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems, so deficient in their metaphysical understanding of reality, *ānanda* can only be conceived as an accidental pleasure or *sukha*, in no way related to the core of Being or to the state of liberation. The same could perhaps be said, to a lesser extent, of the Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems, although a deeper study would here be necessary, especially in some of the developments of Yoga, when it comes under the influence of *tantric* and *bhakti* currents. The study of the great āchāryas of the Vedānta tradition and their disciples would surely lead us to a re-capturing of the central importance of *ānanda* in the most important and most enduring of the Indian religious and philosophical trends, and one would have to analyse the reason for the fact that this concept becomes all-pervading in later Upanisads² and continues quite prominent in the great traditions of *bhakti*, like for example, the pratyabhijña school of Kaśmir Śaivism :

*sugirā cittaharaṇyā paśyantya dṛśyamānyā
jayaty ullāsitānandamahimā paramēśvaraḥ/*

The supreme Lord conquers! The splendour of his bliss is made to shine forth by Paśyanti, the good word, which as soon as seen captivates the mind?³

We notice therefore that the systems and traditions that gave importance to the notion of *ānanda* are precisely those that have been kept alive and have grown in the course of the history of Indian thought and religion: such are the different forms of *bhakti* cults, the *tantras*, the different Vedānta schools, for even the *kevalādvaita* tradition has kept, on principle, the primacy of the three elements the formula *saccidānanda*. On the other hand, the schools that have minimised the importance of *ānanda* are precisely those that have practically ceased to exist as autonomous movements, even if they have powerfully influenced Indian thought and have left in it the permanent insights of their wisdom. In this way *ānanda* vindicates in later history its importance for Indian thought. This concept corrects in part the danger of a dry agnosticism in the Indian tradition. The search for the absolute is indeed a way of knowledge, or mostly so, already in the Upanisads, and

1. *Br. Up.* 4.3.32.

2. Cf. for instance the Sāmarahasyopaniṣad or the Nṛṣinhottāratāpaniyopaniṣad, where hardly a page can be found which does not contain several mentions of the word *ananda*!

3. *Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa*, *Stavacintāmaṇi*, 1.

often later on. But the ultimate end of that search is not a mere intellectual vision, not even a pure merging of the knower and the known or the pure light of self-consciousness: there is there also what we might call a meta-intellectual element, there is bliss, *ānanda*, which can never be reduced to philosophical categories. This does not mean, indeed, a duality in the absolute, but a certain overflow of Being into light and joy. In this way the Absolute of the Vedānta philosophy becomes a religious goal to be attained and in a certain way attracts the religious dynamism of the seeker* .



**"Once the fire of the Knowledge of Reality is kindled
it can reduce everything to ashes within a split second.
Thereafter there is no more coming and going."**

—Ma Anandamayee

* . Extracts from the book "Bliss in the Upanishads", published by Oriental Publishers, Raj Niwas Marg, Delhi-7

FROM NOTES TAKEN IN SRI MA'S PRESENCE

—'Kirpal'

4-6-59

Q : Some steals some jewels from a temple —

Sree Ma : It is God Himself in the form of the thief. In all forms is God Himself and there is no other. Sometimes the thief is caught and sometimes not. Whatever happens is God's play. It is God playing with Himself. Then sometimes the thief is caught and also punished. All possibilities are within His power.

Q : Is God present in each and everyone ?

Sree Ma : Where is the place where God is not present ? God is here and is also there. Make efforts to recognize God. By constant effort what will happen; renunciation will occur. God is always with you, practice asanas, physical control, japa, practice the Name of God, the reading of the Holy Scriptures; the singing of the Holy Names of the Lord. By any means to realise the One, who is one's own within.

To sit in a certain particular posture, asana and the mind fixed on the Lord, that is the path, that is the meaning of renunciation. Beyond that a stage occurs wherein between renunciation and *bhoga* (enjoyment) there is no difference. One's own self is revealed. You practice certain *Kriyas* (yoga) so as to realize the essence of renunciation. He is self-revealed. God is ever revealed. This is revelation and this is darkness. To remove the darkness, renunciation has to be practised. This is achieved by God's grace. By not treading this path you cannot achieve. As you go to school and college you sit in a certain way to read and write. You practice discipline. The disciplines for an engineer, doctor, teacher are different. In the military & police the dress, the styles are appropriate to each, they are different to achieve the ultimate in that profession. In the same way, on the path to achieve the Supreme Reality there are different disciplines. To sit in a particular manner, to practice the control of the breath, *prānāyāma*, *āsana*, postures conducive to attain the Ultimate. These are the disciplines to try and remove the veil. There are many different paths—these disciplines must be practised. There is Raja Yoga, Japa Yoga and Kriya Yoga. But it must be practised. In the world you perform various functions. There is pride, anger, ego. Unless you rise above these traits, until you travel beyond these prejudices how is it to be achieved ? That path is made possible by the teachings of the holy saints.

You are endowed with the strength to achieve. If it were not possible for you to do so, but you have the ability to work. First the cleaning *kriya*. The *karma* is to be dedicated to God. If you realize your strength to achieve in God's direction, then you will not follow the path of non-achievement, i.e. worldly matters. Non-action means what is not fruitful, coming and going that it entails. The fruitful path is whatever action is done for the realisation of God, action that gives self-fulfilment. But what is done for the enjoyment of the body, that is non-fulfilment. You want to achieve the highest goal of God realization and those disciplines give a sense of *ānanda*, Supreme Bliss. The worldly joys are transient, these are everlasting happiness.

A certain person used to abuse and taunt Sant Kabir. One day the man died. Sant Kabir started crying. One asked—"Why are you crying?" Sant Kabir said—"My washerman (*dhobi*) has died. By abusing me he helped me so that no sin could touch me and keep me away from the path of sinning."



"The One is constantly leading human being towards Himself. Everyone will at sometime or other reach the Supreme Goal, because this is man's destiny."

—Ma Anandamayee