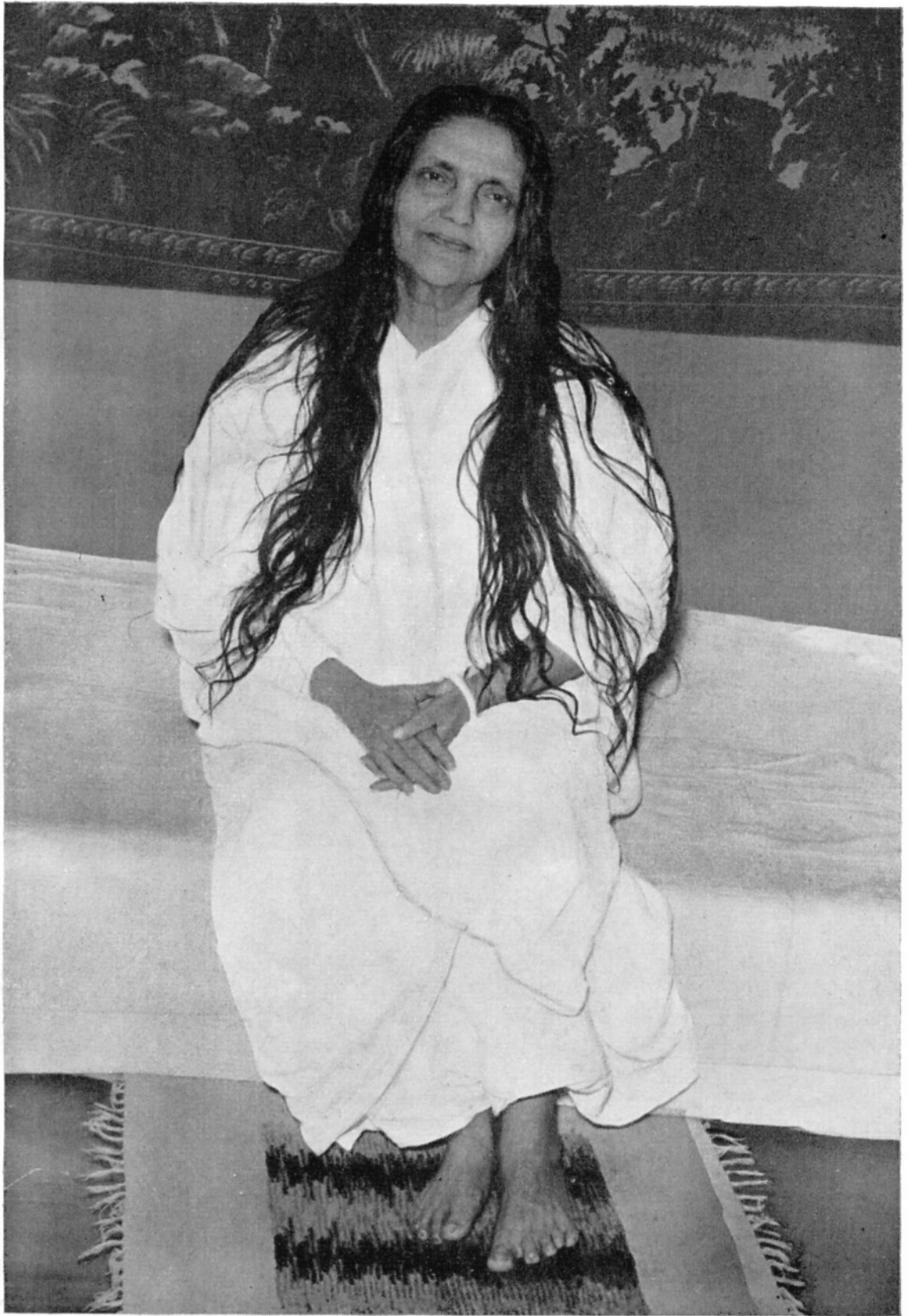


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—Poona, June, 1960.

*The ONE who is the Eternal, the Ātman,
He Himself is the traveller on the path of Immortality,
He is all in all; He alone is.*

Matri Vani

If you are able to love God really—this is the consummation of all love.



By whatever means anyone may desire to realize God, all are seeking Him, and Him alone. Differences are merely of the path. HE is the One to be found, He the One to be known. To know or find Him means to know one's Self, to know or find one's Self means to know Him. He May be invoked from anywhere, by anyone, under whatever circumstances; for He is everywhere, pervading all. One should constantly pray for the knowledge of Him, for the realization of Him.



In search of the inner Guru one seeks and accepts a spiritual guide. With single-minded devotion one must advance on the path. Whatever takes one nearer to God, no matter from what source it may come, should be adopted. A person who desires God as his one and only goal is bound to find a path. He Himself will reveal Himself.



Man as man must cultivate that which aids the Supreme Quest. It is the Lord who inspires the prayer and it is He who hears it. Ever strive to keep your mind centred in Him.



In worldly life man is subjected to calamities and may go astray. The only expedient for deliverance from such calamities is the Revelation of the Self within oneself.



To associate with pilgrims on the path to Self-realization means to open oneself to good sense, to right discrimination. But taking a wrong path leads to distraction and restlessness.

Philosophy of Education

SRI U. C. DUTT, M. A.

Science is a systematic enquiry into laws and principles governing some facts or phenomena of nature. It deals with a part of nature. Philosophy is an attempt to know the universe as a whole. It deals with Reality itself and nothing less. Indian Philosophy or Darshan means direct vision of Truth—result of intuition. While interpreted intellectually, it takes the form of a reasoned account and looks like philosophy. Philosophy determines the aims and purpose of life, and education is the practical method by which it is realized. According to Sir John Adams education is the dynamic side of philosophy. It is the practical means of realizing the ideals of life. James Ross says that philosophy and education are like the two sides of a coin, the former is the contemplative side, while the latter is the active side. Nunn observes, "Educational aims are correlated to ideals of life." The relation between the two is so close that Dewey does away with the line of demarcation and writes: "Philosophy is the theory of education in its most general phases." It is a fact that men live according to their notions of life and the world. 'It is impossible to live without a metaphysic.' The choice is between a good metaphysic and a bad metaphysic as Aldous Huxley puts it. Education is, after all, a preparation for life on which all such theories are based. So life is moulded on one side by philosophy and on the other by education.

The philosophical basis of theories of education are Idealism, Realism, Naturalism and Pragmatism. All systems of education in the East and the West are prompted by them.

IDEALISM IN EDUCATION

Idealism offers a spiritual conception of the world. If materialism reduces mind to matter, idealism resolves matter into mind or spirit. It regards mind as prior to and more important than matter. The world is grounded in Mind which is conscious and self-conscious.

Of the two worlds with which we are concerned, the world of ideas or experience is more in tune with ultimate Reality than the physical world. 'Mind, reason, intelligence, personality, values, moral and religious ideals are the real entities. Physical forces are secondary.' Man is superior to Nature. So for educational purposes the humanities or the studies concerning man himself are more important than the study of positive science.

All seers and prophets are idealists. The Rishis of the *Upanishads*, Buddha, Christ, Mohammad, Shankaracharya, Ramanuja, Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Tulsidas, etc. are all idealists with individual variations. Idealism has different shades. So in the West, Plato, Barkeley, Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer represent different types of idealism standing on the common ground that idea or spirit is the real stuff of existence. This doctrine held the field of education everywhere till the sixteenth century. The Brahmanical, Buddhist and Islamic education in India, and Plato, Quintilian, Loyola, etc. in Europe gave prominence to idealism. The highest ideal to be attained in life is the True, the Good

and the Beautiful. This idea of the *Upanishads* is echoed by Plato when he talks of the 'Form of the Good' and 'the Supreme Beauty' as identical and 'as the goal of our spiritual pilgrimage.' Idealism in education leads finally to Self-realization through a process of gradual self-expression.

REALISM IN EDUCATION

Realism asserts an extra-mental reality which is outside and independent of the mind, and knowledge is an exact copy of this reality. In line with this thought there is a realistic movement in education. It appears as a reaction against the courses of studies that have become bookish, subjective, abstract and abstruse. All real knowledge is considered to come through the senses and experience. So the Realist 'stressed the value of direct studies of men and things' and 'sought to displace literary and linguistic by scientific studies, that is to say, studies of real things by the inductive method.' (Ross). Realism gained importance in an age of scientific achievement since the seventeenth century. It took the specific form of a scientific technical or practical training. It turned from the subjective study of Man to the objective study of Nature.

Long ago India was proud of Realists who built systems of Philosophy like Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Mimamsa, Jainism and Buddhism of the Vaibhashika and the Sautantrika schools. All of them propounded and preached Realism, but unlike Materialism showed the way to liberation from the bondage of life. The same doctrine has taken a materialistic turn in the West perhaps as protest to dry schola-

sticism and religious persecution. In fact Realism is not the same as Materialism. The former recognizes matter as different from mind or spirit, while the latter reduces everything to matter.

In Europe, the Medieval period was the dark age which was intellectually barren. The old ideals could no longer satisfy the demand of life. There was a wide gap between education and life. So the land had to accept and reject many ideals and doctrines one after another from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. They are Monasticism—living in monasteries in seclusion under religious vows, Scholasticism—schoolmen dealing in logical subtleties and grammar-grinding. Renaissance—revival of art and letters under the influence of classical models, Humanism—devotion to human interests and welfare in the light of Greek and Roman Culture. Reformation—movement for reform of abuses in the Roman Church establishing Protestant Churches. Then came the scientists like Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton, Bacon, etc. who ushered in a new era of Science and Realism. Scientific investigation and emphasis on intellect and reasoning helped to remove superstitions and widen the narrow outlook of life, particularly in the 19th. century. A thorough examination of human intelligence and reasoning and a vast experience of life has led to the discovery of their limitations of intellect. So in the present century a synthetic view of life has been developed, which has combined intellect and intuition, rationalism and mysticism, spirit and matter, knowledge and devotion, the spiritual and the mundane. The search is after a complete view of life in which Idealism has been wedded to Realism. Long ago this view was taught

in India by the *Upanishads*, the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata* and in the present age this supreme truth of life has been revived by Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Tagore, Gandhi, Tilak and Sri Aurobindo.

NATURALISM IN EDUCATION

Metaphysically, Naturalism is another name for materialism. It believes that life evolves out of non-living matter and that mind also evolves from complex living organisms. Life is an aggregate of physical and chemical forces. Mind is a by-product of the brain. There is no supernatural power like God or supermental reality like the Soul. In education Naturalism means something else. It is a broad mode of thinking rather than a clear-cut doctrine. It is an education according to nature. It is an attempt to go back to Nature by rejecting the well-established, stereotyped and artificial systems of training. Change becomes inevitable where the spirit of a movement disappears leaving the dead forms behind. A new movement comes as a protest and sweeps away the old paraphernalia. Rose observes : "Historically, naturalism was a reaction against the pedantry into which the humanism of the Renaissance had degenerated. That fine movement was itself a reaction against the arid, hair-splitting logic of medieval scholasticism, beginning as the study of man himself through the medium of the literature that embodied the spacious lives of ancient Greece and Rome; it became in its decay a mere study of books and of linguistic forms."

The most prominent naturalist is Rousseau whose methods were naturalistic but his aims idealistic. His

naturalistic education was preparatory to aesthetic, moral and religious training. He considered human institutions to have been one mass of folly and contradiction. So he prescribed : "Reverse the usual practice and you will almost always do the right."

"God makes all things good, man meddles with them and they become evil; so you must make your choice between man and the citizen. You cannot train both". (Rousseau). Naturalism believes in man's evolution from lower to higher forms of life. Barnard Shaw goes further and 'takes education as a man's deliberate effort to accelerate the pace of evolution itself, to achieve racial improvement more quickly than would otherwise be the case.'

Naturalistic education is based on the nature of the child which is believed to be good. Children should be treated as Wordsworth's "trailing clouds of glory" coming from heaven. It is the child rather than the teacher, the book or the school that occupies the central position. Child-psychology will guide child's education and childhood is playhood. Here nature refers to the nature of man and not to external nature. Pestalozzi, Herbart and Froebel tried to work out the implications of Rousseau and make his vision concrete. The play-way in its various forms is the general method of creative education. It has been developed in infant schools by Montessori. The psychological movement gained much impetus from the work of eminent psychologists like McDougall and Freud. Naturalism is a modern educational movement. Idealism and Realism have no quarrel with the psychological methods employed by Naturalism.

Even in ancient India the spirit was caught. Students had to live in a hermitage in the lap of Nature far away from cities. They were in close touch with nature and received individual attention and guidance from the teacher in every sphere of life. The Gurukul system was perhaps the beginning of the Naturalistic movement.

PRAGMATISM IN EDUCATION

Pragmatism is a doctrine that estimates any assertion solely by its practical bearing upon human interests. James, Schiller and Dewey are the chief exponents of Pragmatism. Knowledge is derived from pure experience which gives not only impressions, but also relations among them. Mind and matter are not different in essence. Stuff of pure experience becomes subject and object in different contexts. It is a form of Radical Empiricism.

The world is real, but it is not perfect or complete. The world is plastic and is to be moulded to human needs and purposes. Evil is real and positive. It has to be conquered by human spirits in co-operation with God.

The world is always changing and growing. Time, evolution, progress, freedom, chance, etc. are real. Human minds have real freedom, the power of creating new values and realizing new purposes. They are not mere channels through which Divine Energy flows.

God is finite and not the Absolute. "He is the ideal tendency in the world." He is free, but limited by the world and the finite spirits. In co-operation with finite beings, He conquers evils. God exists and the soul is immortal, other-

wise life would be full of discord. These beliefs have pragmatic value. They promote and elevate our life. Religion works, so it is true. Whatever is workable and useful is true.

Pragmatism does not admit any eternal truth or ideal. Truth changes with the changing conditions of life-time, place and environment. Progress depends on this dynamic aspect of truth. Life is a laboratory in which new ideals and values coming automatically are experimented upon. Every individual accepts what is good or useful to him. A thing or action is judged by the good or bad result that follows. Knowledge results from action which is primary. Pragmatism glorifies man who by his power alters the environment according to his needs and thereby solves his problems. It is the latest movement in education started by John Dewey.

According to Pragmatism man is a social being. So education must increase social efficiency and social welfare. Anything opposing it should be eliminated. Biologically, a man has to adjust himself to the ever-changing environment and the ever-increasing complexities of life. Education should aim at realizing this end. A child will create values through various modes of activity, physical, intellectual, aesthetic, moral and religious. "Such activities, however, are pursued not for their own sakes but only with reference to human needs." (Ross). Education on this line makes the child a seeker after truth and becomes real when it enables him to create values for himself. An ideal should grow from inside, it should not be imposed from outside. The teacher's duty is to guide the inner tendencies and impulses of the taught so that his personality may grow freely along his own line.

The Project Method of Kilpatrick is based on the Pragmatic view of life. In education a project is a purposeful activity carried to completion in a social environment. It involves purpose, planning, activity and utility. The Dalton Plan is based on this method.

Based on radical empiricism or sense-experience, Pragmatism is quite consistent with the modern spirit of Scepticism, Agnosticism, Positivism, Activism and the like. Some of its good features are the dynamic character of the world, freedom of human minds and their creativity, positive existence of evils and their conquest by human effort. Many other theories are untenable. Life, individual and racial, commands and covers a vast experience. Besides sense experience it has highly intellectual, intuitive and mystical experiences. The experiences of the race or humanity are there to guide the child who can save much time and energy without having recourse to experiments at every step. If the child has to find out every ideal for himself, he or she will remain a child all his or her life. Again a teacher of the Idealistic school does not impose an ideal on the student. He sets up some typical ideals evolved by humanity before him so that he may feel drawn towards anyone of them due to an inner urge and affinity or inborn tendencies and peculiarities. In fact every child is born with an ideal in its germinal form. It takes a definite shape and an active form coming in contact with an external pattern. This method does not retard, but accelerates progress.

Experience can guide only particular truths. It cannot give universal truths. The idea of a finite God co-operating with men in fighting out evil is belittling to God. Intelligence

is not a mere instrument of adapting the organism to the environment. It is contemplative, appreciative and creative. Ideas are not mere plans of action. They are also representations of reality. Intelligence can grasp reality through ideas. Workability is the tentative test of truth. It shows the way to truth but cannot constitute it. Pragmatism gives a partial view of reality. (Sinha).

Pragmatism reflects the American way of life. Active, practical, earthly, facing new problems and adapting to changing conditions people of the New World without any past tradition to tie them down, found this doctrine quite suitable. Certainly there is one good point. No preconceived notion should find place in education or life. This is what the Vedanta teaches. The mind must be purged of all notions and impressions and made a void for the reception of Truth. Creation of new notions or concepts may lead to novelties, but not to Truth that is universal and necessary.

New Diary Leaves.

ATMANANDA

(9)

Vrindaban, 28th January 1962.

In reply to a question, Mataji pointed out the importance of what one thinks at the moment of death. For, just as a leech does not leave its place without hooking on to something else, so the soul at the time of leaving the body hooks on to some kind of new existence according to the state of mind of the dying person. But at that moment one has no control over one's thought. It will automatically dwell where it usually dwells. This is why one has to practise the Presence of God while one is well and fit, so that the thought of God may come spontaneously when one is ill and weak. To illustrate this fact, Mataji told two stories :

“An old woman who had spent many years of her life selling oil, was about to die. Her relatives had assembled round her and were urging her to repeat “Rama” or “Krishna.” But the dying woman was only half conscious and her power of hearing was impaired. To the shouting of her children and grand-children : “Repeat the name of God,” she kept on replying what she had been used to say to beggars who came to her shop begging for oil : “Not a drop will I give, not a drop.” Saying this, she passed away.

“The following actually occurred in your Ashram at Varanasi. The aged mother of one of the Ashramites had come to spend her last days in the Ashram. She used to at-

tend to her *pūjā* and *japa* with great regularity from early morning until nearly midday, without eating or even drinking a drop of water. She would then cook her food, eat and scrub her vessels. Towards evening she got busy again with her *sādhana*. After some time she fell ill and was confined to bed, but continued with her *japa* all the time. Whenever some food or drink was brought to her, she would indicate by signs that she had not finished her *japa* and could therefore not take anything. Finally she breathed her last, with her fingers in the correct position for doing *japa* according to the prescribed rules. The people who took her body to the burning-ghat related that, when it had burnt to ashes and only the bones were left over, even then the skeleton remained in the same position, until at last the arms crossed over the breast. The people present declared that they had never before witnessed anything of the sort."

Later Mataji spoke about the close connexion between the kind of food a person eats and the quality of his mind. This is why it is so important for a *sādhaka* to avoid *tamasic* food, such as meat, fish, eggs, onions, garlic, etc. Unless one partakes of *sattvic* food it will be difficult to develop a *sattvic* mind.

For *pūjā* people often wear silken clothes. Human magnetism is always oozing out and a constant exchange takes place. During prayer and meditation the activity of the magnetism is more powerful. Silk prevents it from being dissipated. For a similar reason one has to sit on an *āsana* for meditation. *Kushāsa* preserves the magnetism well and so does deerskin. Deerskin is not as a rule used by householders, but only by *brahmacharis*.

Hardwar, 6th March 1962.

A couple who recently lost their son, have come from Calcutta. They wanted to know what was the sense of a child dying before he had lived his life. Mataji replied : "Everything happens according to one's *karma*. It was your *karma* to serve your son for a few years, and his *karma* to accept your service. When it was over, God took him away. It is all God's Play. Some flowers fall off without bearing fruit. Similarly the child was given to you by God for a time. This is the way of the world. There is bound to be loss and bereavement."

The bereaved father : From where is one to take the strength to bear all these troubles and tribulations ?

Mataji : Remember that the *Ātmā* of the child and your own *Ātmā* are one. The *Ātmā* was neither born nor will it die, it eternally *is*. The body, like a worn garment, falls away. Endeavour not to be attached to the body and not to cry for it. Cry for God alone. Remember Him, repeat His holy Name, contemplate Him, and regularly read scriptures, such as the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Srīmad Bhāgavata*, the *Rāmāyana*, and so forth, and you will feel comforted. Your grief will become much lighter. Let your life be a dedicated life. The householder's *ashram* is also an *ashram*. Blows come in order to remind you to turn your mind to that which is Real. Someone who had lost all his six sons, found much solace in reading the *Bhāgavata*.

Hardwar, March 1962.

Now-a-days many interesting letters arrive from abroad. An American couple wrote to Mataji. They had heard about Her from a devotee who had recently stayed with Mataji and on returning to U.S.A. showed them Her photos and tape recordings of Her voice. Their letter contained snaps of their three little daughters, seated in meditation in the lotus pose. One of these little girls felt so attracted to Mataji that she declared, her one and only wish for her forthcoming seventh birthday was to go and meet Mataji. Since it was impossible for the parents to take their daughter to India, they requested Mataji in their letter to send a birthday message to the child. They also mentioned that she seemed to be specially fitted for the spiritual life and had already declared that she would get married to none save God. Mataji gave the following reply : "How beautiful the pictures of my friends are ! Immersed in meditation—moving indeed to look at.

"At the very moment my friend had the desire to come, she did come and she met her friend. My friend should keep this in mind. In order to realize this fact, man engages in hundreds of *kriyās*, practices, meditation and so forth. 'This friend is with her friends at all times.' Man's duty as a human being is to be a pilgrim on the path to the Supreme. One who can be wedded to God has indeed fulfilled the purpose of human existence."

After some time another letter arrived from the couple to thank Mataji....."The whole family is benefiting by Mother's message.....Our daughter told us that she had indeed met Mother during her birthday meditation. She told us this in a matter of fact fashion."



The following is quoted from a letter by a European gentleman, who has been in correspondance with Mataji for some time.

“.....You say : ‘He who seeks will no doubt realize Him and one who realizes Him goes beyond death.’ Mother Divine, can you guess the awful pain of a man who has sought for 37 years and has found nothing but despair. I write this letter with the tears of agony. My heart is crushed, my soul is burning like a fire. I spread myself on the ground and await death. I would become a great saint and you see what I have become. I cannot understand why I am always thinking of Anandamayi. She can give me only words on a sheet of paper. Words cannot help a man who has sought for 37 years and has no strength to go forth.....”

Mataji’s reply : “This time also Mataji says : If some-one really and truly seeks God, he will certainly find Him. You say you have sought for 37 years—does He always reveal Himself within a specified number of days, months or years ? He is eternal, ever present, everywhere, in everything—He alone IS. The first step on the path to this realization—be it induced by something read in a book or by direct word of mouth and accepted—the first step is the manifestation of unbroken endurance and never ending patience. My father, who is also a small child, it is only natural that fatigue and despair should overwhelm you, for this road is extremely difficult. So long as one’s feet have not been set on a smooth and simple path, the condition in which you find yourself at present is natural, this is also a state that may occur on the

path. This small baby says, do not long for death, while you are travelling on the path to conquer death. You are out to find immortality and yet awaiting death. Of course, to look forward to the death of death is very good. One who goes out in search of Truth, for the realization of Truth, must walk with firmness, wide awake and full of vigour. Yes, it is true, this little baby* can send you only a few words. But through these words can be found the way to the realization of *Sabda Brahman*,† *Akṣara Brahman*,‡ provided someone is actually a traveller on the path. Pilgrims on the path of the Supreme must endeavour to be receptive. Only that which is all the time falling away has to be relinquished. To the limit of your power try not to give way to despair and to remain at every moment an aspirant towards Self-realization. The duty of a pilgrim is to aspire constantly at Him who is beyond everything, who is at the same time in all forms, qualities, moods, and modes of being, and yet eternally beyond, who is all in all, the SELF of the Self. When the desire that lies at the root of all yogic practice becomes self-revealed, then He is found.”

* Mataji often refers to Her own person in this way.

† *Sabda Brahman*—The eternal sound that is the first manifestation of the Supreme Reality and lies at the root of all subsequent creation.

‡ *Akṣara* means indestructible as well as letters of the alphabet.

With Mataji at the Hardwar Kumbh and in Dehra Dun.

BY KRISHNANATH.

(2)

I had heard Swami Paramanada say one day that in connection with the Kumbh and in honour of Mataji one of the biggest organizations of *Sannyāsis* at Haradwar, the *Niranjani Akhaḍa* had proposed to arrange for a public procession with Mataji on the back of an elephant. I had also observed Brahmachari Nirmalananda going into a huddle with a local *Sādhu* over the details of the arrangements. Then one day a neighbour in the *dharamśālā* brought a leaflet with Mataji's photograph, making the announcement about the procession.

According to it Mataji was to be taken in a welcome procession on April 12th, starting at 9 A. M. from *Sati Kunda Kanya Gurukul* via Kankhal, reaching the *Niranjani Akhaḍa** at twelve noon. Thus on that day we followed Mataji's car along the improvised hill-side road and arrived at the *Kanya Gurukul* at about 9 o'clock. After a short visit there Mataji came out. A caparisoned elephant knelt down and a ladder was fixed. Swami Paramananda and Nirmalananda climbed to the silver howdah and took their places at the back. The Swami held a long-poled parasol (*chhātra*) and the Brahmachari a chowrie (*chāmar*). Mataji had some difficulty in taking the last step

* An Akhaḍa ordinarily denotes a Gymnasium where wrestling is taught, but in Hardwar different religious institutions style themselves as Akhaḍas and among them the *Niranjani Panchayat* occupies a high place under the protocol.

which was rather steep but managed somehow to clamber into the throne-like seat in the front of the howdah. The mahout goaded the elephant to heave up and we saw Mataji enthroned high up like a Queen or a Goddess. Some of us were wondering whether we should get into our cars to follow the procession, but when the procession got formed we all automatically filed into it on foot. It was headed by a horseman with a drawn sword, followed by two silver palanquins, then a bag-pipe band, then the Ashram girls and ladies, then a very long orchestral band (I think three bands had joined forces), then we men led by two Rajas who were both conspicuous by their straw hats, then the elephant led by an ash-besmeared *Vairāgi* holding a *Trisul* (trident), the cavalcade of cars and buses bringing up the rear. From the front to the rear, the procession must have been over two furlongs long and it wound its way majestically along the thoroughfares and some of the crowded localities of Kankhal. Large crowds everywhere, on the way-side, on verandahs, ridges and house-tops were greeting Mataji who was swaying in the howdah with a beatific countenance looking very dignified and graceful. We who were walking just in front of Her elephant could not avoid the temptation of turning back again and again to look at Her and in order to face Her and to have longer Darshan we very often walked backwards. I saw that the elephant was every now and then raising its trunk towards the mahout who would lean forward to touch the curled tip. Someone explained to me that the elephant was picking up and passing to the mahout money in notes which people on the road were throwing in front of him or giving to the *Vairāgi* leading him who would then place it in the elephant's trunk. It was quite an amusing sight and

must have been also very profitable. When we were nearing our destination, the *kīrtana* party of the Ashram, led by Vibhuda and Hiruda got down from the bus with their musical instruments and started singing *bhajans* and dancing in front of Mataji's elephant. In this manner we arrived at the crowded entrance to the Niranjani Akhāḍa. Mataji got down and was welcomed. For a while we sat in the pandal where Mataji was being entertained with *bhajans*. Then Mataji's car came to the front and She drove away. The other cars had all got scattered about. Some of the Ashram ladies could not find theirs and had to pay exorbitant rates for rickshaws to take them back. In spite of eating a lot of dust on our way back we were quite hungry when we reached the Ashram rather late for the midday meal. However "we were all feeling very happy that we had been able to join that grand procession of Mataji, which will always remain with us as a cherished and treasured memory. I thought that my coming to Hardwar was worth-while for this alone.

The next day, the 13th of April, was the great day for *Kumbh Snān* (bathing in the Ganga). We were staying at a distance of about one mile from the Brahma Kunda where it is considered most holy to bathe on the occasion, though the Ganga flows through the whole of Hardwar. Since all vehicular traffic had been banned and the crowds were terrific, there did not seem to be any possibility of going there. My neighbour in the *dharmasālā* asked me to join him in the early morning as he was venturing forth on foot with a big stick in his hand, but I had demurred and contented myself with a swim on the deeper side of the river beyond the bridge. Hardly anyone was bathing there and I enjoyed my swift dive in the cold water and came out

feeling all aglow. The auspicious time for bathing was said to be after noon, so after twelve I again accompanied some of the ladies who went a little beyond the steps of that Ghāt where we generally bathed; I thought it was very brave of them because the current here was strong and almost swept me off. By about five o'clock, hoping that the crowd would have thinned, we walked towards the bridge in order to go to the Kunda but just as we started we saw some volunteers running that way. A telephone message had been received from the Brahma Kunda that the crowd there was getting unmanageable and the situation dangerous. So we decided to turn back.

We were spending the evening somewhat disconsolately, when we heard that Mataji had gone to the *ghāt* (our usual bathing place). We found that She was sitting there on the steps with the Ashramites all round. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj had also joined. After a while we realized why Mataji had come. Adjoining was a *Smashān* (cremation) *Ghāt* and some volunteers brought a body for cremation. While there had been no casualties as a result of the rush at the Brahma Kunda, the head of the volunteers who was an old man had collapsed while standing on duty and died of heart failure. It was, I believe, for attending his cremation that Mataji had brought us all to the *ghāt*. As we watched the flames rise, some of us started chanting the *Mahamantra*, in quite a different way than the usual—a doleful tune like a dirge for the departed soul, a tune that has haunted me ever since.

The day had thus ended and there did not now seem to be any hope of Kumbha Snān at Brahma Kunda. Mataji

had said that those who felt capable of doing so could go there, but otherwise bathing in the Ganga anywhere else was all right and in view of our experience all day we had given up the idea of venturing there. After dinner, we went to join the usual evening Kirtan in the hall of the temple. I found that Mataji had come to sit in the Śiva temple. She asked some of the Ashram girls whether they would like to go for *Snān* and on their responding eagerly told Sri Sahai and me, who were nearby, to lead the party. Mataji arranged for a small force of volunteers to escort us, and all those who wanted to go were marshalled into a long line of two abreast. There were not only the Ashram girls, but elderly ladies like the Rani of Sherkot and several visitors including the Raja of Amb, about fifty in all. Thus we were marched over various bridges and brought to the holy Kundas. We were halted at the Kunda just before the Brahma Kunda and asked to bathe there because it was less crowded. But the Ashram girls who were in the front protested and said that having come all that way they would like to bathe in the Brahma Kunda. Some people at the back called Sri Sahai to give instructions, but I was by now in a sufficiently adventurous mood to support the girls and we marched on. It was however worse than we had imagined and once we got into the crowd there was no way of keeping together. There was such a crush that all one could do was to have a quick dip, make a short prayer and offering and come out. In all that confusion, the Sahais managed to send their servant to get our tins filled with *Ganga-jal* (water) to carry home. He took a long while and by the time we came out we could not see the rest of the party anywhere. Luckily old Yogeshji came look-

ing for us and said they were all waiting outside on the footpath. Somehow we were again all safely marshalled together and marched home with the volunteers. On reaching the Ashram, we saw Mataji sitting on the dais in the hall, sprinkling people with *Ganga-jal*. We then learnt that after we had left the Ashram, Mataji Herself had been taken to the Kunda in a car by the Police Inspector and She had actually been there when we were having our dip, though we did not know it. I have related the whole incident in some detail to show how, with Mataji's favour, one can get or do what seems impossible. We were able to bathe in the Brahma Kunda at the most auspicious time of about 9.45 p. m. in Mataji's presence (though unknown to us) in spite of what seemed most insuperable obstacles. Thus we were able to achieve the main goal of the pilgrimage to Har-dwar for Kumbh.

As I have stated earlier, Sadhus and Mahatmas from all over India had congregated and pitched their camps in different places. It was a great chance for meeting saints and I now wish I had been more enterprising and gone round to see some of them. Only one night some of us had walked to nearby tents and ventured into the camp of Tanpurewala Baba of Pandharpur. Here the typical Maharashtrian Kirtan was going on, but the Baba was inside the tent. He came out and talked to us and on being told that we were with Mata Anandamayi, he said he was coming to see Her one day. I have already referred to his visit on the 14th night.

On the 14th evening Mataji went to the camp of Swami Naradananda of Naimisharanya. As it was not far off, I had started walking with some of the Sadhus from our

Ashram and had an uplifting conversation on the way with Nirmalananda. At the place where we had to turn was the camp of Yogesh Brahmachariji of Calcutta, with a book-stall exhibiting a number of his publications. Thinking that Mataji would halt there, we waited looking at the books but the car passed on without stopping, with the result that by the time we arrived at Naradanandaji's tent, it was packed and the Sadhus and I had to stand on the outskirts. But Naradanandaji's men came to receive us and made us sit behind Mataji. Naradanandaji spoke about Ma and then his main disciple eulogized Her. There was some singing and one person recited a special poem he had composed about Mataji. Naradanandaji pressed Swami Paramananda to speak, referring to him as having the same devotion for Ma as Hanuman had for Rama. But the Swami who never speaks in public did not open his mouth and Mataji said on his behalf that his message was 'silence.' Then Mataji was requested to sing a bhajan and She sang a little to the great delectation of everybody.

Mataji was leaving for Dehradun on the 15th, and as I was in no hurry to return home, I thought it would be a good chance to be with Her a little longer in quieter surroundings. Swami Parammanandaji said I could be accomodated in Dehra Dun and could go in the bus along with the Ashram people. We reached Dehra Dun Ashram about 12:30 noon and as instructed by Swamiji I approached Sadhanda for accomodation. He showed me one corner of a room in the Ashram itself as a temporary asylum, saying that Mataji would decide finally on Her arrival in the evening. The room was fairly big and had one *takhat* (wooden bed), which was already occupied by Mr. Ghosh from Ma's Agarpara Ashram;

there was also the luggage of one or two other persons. As it was *Ekadashī* (eleventh day of the Hindu month) I was wondering whether I would get any food which could be eaten that day, but the Ashram had some ready and Sadhanda who was looking after me, had me served and gave me also a little drinking water of which, he said, there was a great shortage. After the meal I unrolled my bedding on the floor in the corner allotted to me and rested for a while. For the evening wash I was directed to a canal, to which one had to go downhill by a cobbled rugged path but the cool water was very refreshing. Mataji arrived somewhat late—it was almost night time—but She immediately bestirred people to make arrangements to get water. I heard Her enquiring if I had been accommodated. The neighbour of mine in the Dharamśālā, Dr. Das Gupta, also arrived the next day to share the room with us and we were five of us there.

Thus began my stay of about ten days in ideal circumstances in Mataji's Ashram. The birth-day celebrations in May were still far away and it was the lull before the furious activity of the Utsava I was getting advantage of. Some of the overflow from Hardwar had come over but most of those people left soon, one by one and ultimately only two of us remained in the room, I having elevated myself to the *takhat* for a bed. The shortage of water was first alleviated by getting it in fire brigade lorries, and afterwards even the taps started functioning. For some days I kept on going to the canal for my bath but for the last two days I could bathe in the Ashram. I was all the while feeling that I was having a glorious time, being priveleged to put up in a room just below the one Mataji was occupying on the first floor, and getting

Her Darshan for two to three hours every morning and evening.

All of us who were staying in the Ashram were looked after by Mataji with loving care. She used to make a round of all the rooms and we kept ours neat and tidy for Her inspection. One day She did not come down as She was not very well, and I went upstairs to do my *pranāma*. She enquired after my health and I mentioned about feeling feverish. That afternoon I felt better and went to town to do some shopping. When I returned I learnt that there had been some commotion because Mataji had inquired how and where I was and nobody knew what had happened to me. As a rule Mataji used to come down every morning and sit in the courtyard on the veranda of the Siva Mandir and we sat in front of Her. She was always particular to see that none of us were in the sun. Bhajans were sung but very often we just sat, quietly looking at Her and basking in Her presence. One day I noticed a *takhat* being made ready for Her in the open but covered space between the Siva Mandir and my room. Later on it became clear why She had chosen this place that day. The thread ceremony of two boys was being performed that morning and they and their parents and other relatives had been invited for lunch at the Ashram. So Mataji kept on sitting there till after 1-0'clock and, after they had taken their food, presented each of the boys with a copy of the *Gitā*. The idea of selecting this corner was to have as much shade as possible for those who sat in front of Her. Mataji used to find different places like this to sit in. At the other end of the courtyard is a parapetgirt mango tree and one evening Mataji, while walking under it, pointed out that there was honey dripping from its leaves. She plucked a leaf and gave

me to taste and it was covered with honey. That night Mataji sat on the parapet of the tree and said it was *Madhuvan* मधुवन, (allusion to the garden where Krishna used to meet Radha). On the full moon day it was a wonderful sight at night sitting in front of Mother in the courtyard and getting a view of the moon between the spires of the two temples, which are close to each other on two sides of the angle of a rectangle with a ॐ sign in the middle. Every evening the *Śiva Mahimna Stotra* used to be recited near the Śiva temple and then *Arati* was performed after which we sat round Mother listening to *bhajans* till silence time. Once there was the reading of the whole of Tulsidas's *Rāmāyana* from beginning to end continuously for twenty-four hours. There is a beautiful refrain in which all present would join; it runs like this 'मङ्गलभवन अमङ्गल हारी, द्रवहु सो दशरथ अजिर बिहारी', meaning. 'Home of good luck and destroyer of evil, may the one (i. e. Rama) who plays in the court-yard of Dasharath have compassion on us, be kind to us.' There were relay parties to relieve the Shastri who did most of the reading, but he read through the night. When it was nearing completion at about 11 o'clock next morning, Mataji came down and joined in the Finale.

So time passed quickly and imperceptibly. The episode of my *mala* (string of beads) is worth relating. Some years ago I had been present for *Śivarātri* at this very Ashram when the all-night *pujā* was performed of the seven *Śiva Lingas* which were installed in the temple the next day. The main *Linga* is dedicated to Mataji's husband, Bholanath, and one of the others named कीर्तिश्वर was for the young son of Rameshwar and Leila Sahai, who died in Paris in 1957, while working with the Atomic Energy Commission. Curiously

enough I was the only relation who could attend his cremation in Paris, being in Europe at the time and I was also present at the Bhāgavata Saptah held for him in Vrindaban in Ma's Ashram. Along with several other people who took part in the *Sivaratri Pūjā*, I had been favoured by Mataji with the gift of a *rudrāksha mālā* (necklace made of Rudraksha beads). This *mālā* had got broken at Naimisharanya in 1960 and at the instance of Mataji I had got it repaired by Sadhanda. Now in Dehra Dun it again broke, and Sadhanda being at hand, I naturally thought of approaching him. But the matter was not so easy. First I had to get the special kind of red thread manufactured by J. B. Coates, but Sadhanda knew a shop in Dehra Dun which had it and I was able to get it. The next hurdle was a thin enough needle which was not available and Sadhanda said he would have to take the beads to Banaras to have the aperture widened. Ultimately however he adopted the device of stiffening one end of the thread with gum and using it in place of a needle. Then the beads had to be carefully cut away from the old string one by one and for this it was necessary to have a fresh unused blade. I managed to produce one. The operation of stringing was however quite a complicated one. After watching Sadhanda for some time I tried to put in one bead but it got knotted very loose and I had to give up. Sadhanda finished it in record time to be ready on the evening prior to my departure. It had then to be washed in Ganges water and dried. After that I had to find a chance to put it in Mataji's hand before using it. I did not want to do this publicly, but that evening, as if to oblige me Mataji left the courtyard and started walking round the corridor of the temple where I could quietly approach Her.

The day I was leaving, I was afraid I might not be able to see Her so early in the morning but just as I was rushing to the staircase I found Her descending it! Dr. Pannalal had asked for accomodation for him for the month of May for attending the *Janmotsava*. We had not yet succeeded in providing it and Mother said if it had been arranged and I could have stayed on, it would have been nice. In any case, not being too well and having work in Bombay, I had to go then but Mother gave hope of my returning by saying, : 'योगायोग होगा तो आजाओगे'— 'if it is so ordained, you might come back'. In fact I was able to make a second trip and attend the birthday pūjā of Mother on the night of the 22nd of May.

—*"Man's true nature flows towards God alone."*

—*Sri Anandamayi Ma*

Alvar Saints of South India

T. KRISHNAJI

Nammalvar is the most popular and highly esteemed among the twelve Alvar saints of South India. Not only as a saint, but also as a great poet he is supreme. He is considered the "central luminary" or the 'soul' of the twelve Alvar saints. Venerated as a great Alvar, and adored as a great Teacher, "*Acharya Satakopa Desika Varam*", he is called Satakopa, since he at birth, overcame *sata vayu* which veils spiritual knowledge. The sacred symbolic feet of God placed on the head of the worshippers as a mark of blessing in South Indian Vaishnava shrines is known as "*satakopam*" after the Alvar. The *Bhāgavata Purāna* anticipates the advent of the Alvar, when it refers (cha. xi. v. 38-40) to the birth of saints devoted to Narayana, on the banks of the sacred Tamraparni river in Dravida Desa. Visvaksena, the Divine Preceptor and commander, is said to be born as Nammalvar to propagate devotion to God Vishnu.

"*Vishnu Bhakti pratistaratham, Seneso avatarishyati,*" The inspired utterances of the Alvar in Tamil echo vedantic truths and are treated as "*Dravida veda saram.*" The Alvar is known by many names, such as Maran, Parankusa, Satakopa, Vakulabharana and Nammalvar. He is a Divine Child whom God claimed as His own, we claim him as our saint and so he is called Nammalvar, or "Our Alvar."

Only few details of his life are known, and even those are shrouded in mystery. The time in which the Alvar lived

has been a moot point among scholars. Gopinatha Rao fixes the date of the Alvar round about 789 A. D., Sri T. G. A. Iyengar about 728 A. D. while Dr. Krishnaswami Iyengar places him between 500 and 700 A. D. Since definite data are lacking, all opinions are but tentative. It is said that Thirumangai Alvar, the last of the twelve Alvars lived between 660-765 A. D. and that he had introduced, in Srirangam Temple, *Adhyayana Utsavam*, for which Nammalvar's image was brought and *Thiruvoimoli* recited. Madhura Kavi who lived 50 years after his guru left the body, was not alive then. Taking these circumstances into account and allowing sufficient time for public esteem for the Alvar to grow, it may be assumed that the Alvar lived at about 600 A. D., if not earlier.

At Kurugur, a village on the banks of Tamraparni river, resided a Vellala (belonging to the fourth caste) a Chieftain and his wife Karinatha Nayaki or Udaiyanangaiyar. She hailed from South Malabar. They had no offspring and therefore offered prayers to God in the temple at Tirukurungudi. In due course, Karinatha Gayaki gave birth to a beautiful male child who was named Maran. The babe was unlike others and behaved in a strange way. It would neither suck, nor weep, nor sleep. It remained in a state of trance like a born Yogi. The parents became apprehensive about its life and thought it best to surrender the infant to the care of God. They left the child in front of the Temple of Adinatha. The child crawled into the hollow in the trunk of a tamarind tree nearby, and remained there in a state of *nirvikalpa samādhi*, without any food or sleep, radiating spiritual glow for 16 summers, until his chosen disciple Madhura Kavi Alvar was drawn to his feet.

Madhura Kavi was the son of the Brahmin Narayana Dikshitar, who lived at Tirukkolor, a village on the bank of the Tamraparni river. After completing his studies, he left his village and went on a pilgrimage to North India. One night while staying at Ayodhya, he perceived a blazing light in the Southern sky as if beckoning to him to move South. He followed the trail of the light southwards, visiting on his way Venkatam and Sri Rangam. When he reached Kurugur, the mysterious light vanished from his sight. When Madhura Kavi reached the temple of Adinath, his eyes met with a strange phenomenon. He beheld a youth sitting in *padmāsana*, with the *jñāna mudra*, absorbed in *samādhi*, blissful and radiant. He recognized in him his Guru, offered him obeisance and sang the following prayers ;

Padmasanopa vistam, vara pada yugale nivista chaitanyam Para Tatva Bodha Mudram, Parankusam vande.

Madhura Kavi was anxious to talk to him and in order to arouse the Alvar from *samādhi*, he made some noise. The Alvar opened his eyes and saw in his presence his chosen disciple, Madhura Kavi. Madhura Kavi, himself a scholar and poet, put to the Alvar a recondite question, soliciting elucidation,

“Oh Guro ! When a *jiva* enters *achit* or *prakriti*, on what does he feed and wherein does he rest ?”

The Alvar answered: “That will he eat and there will he rest.” Perhaps Madhura Kavi’s poser related to the subjective view based on the fact that the Alvar remained without food and rest, and the Alvar answered it from the objective view point, that God is all. He is “*amudam*” or *amritam* for the devotee and everything is in Him. For a *bhakta* God

is all and there can be no other experience. Madhura Kavi was impressed with the wisdom of the Alvar and dedicated himself completely to the service of his Guru. He effaced his own personality and merged into the life of the Guru. Though a scholar and poet, he sang 11 verses in praise of his Guru only. He had expressed his desire to see God Krishna, but after meeting his Guru, he declared: "I know of no other Divinity: singing the songs of Nammalvar, I wander forth." The Guru is God for him, and we are indebted to him for taking down, preserving and propagating the holy wisdom of Nammalvar.

With the advent of Madhura Kavi, the yogic life of Nammalvar gave way to a life of devotion and *parabhakti*. Nammalvar exhibited intense longing and ardent devotion for God Krishna. He was soon blessed with a beatific vision of God Vishnu. In the heights of ecstasy, the Alvar sang and danced. This reminds us of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. In the wake of God-intoxication and deep devotion, Vedic truths came out of his mouth. Devotional longing expressed itself in bridal mysticism, in the language of a love-sick mistress awaiting the return of her beloved. In short, the Alvar's life exemplifies the experience of vedic and philosophic truths. His contribution to *Divya Prabandha* is rich with about 1300 verses in a total collection of 4000 verses. The four works of the Alvar are, *Thiruvirattam*, *Thiruvasiriyam*, *Peria Thiruvandadi*, and *Thiruvoimoli*. *Thiruvirattam* comprises 100 verses, and the Alvar takes the role of a love-lorn mistress suffering separation from her Lord. Her pangs and pining are described vividly by her maid. In *Peria Thiruvandapi*, the Alvar expresses his devotional fervour to God. His exultation is such that he says: "The

delight in singing the glory of God is greater than life in Vaikunta." In his God-consciousness, he sings : "He has now entered my heart and is not leaving it anymore,"

The greatest work of the Alvar is *Thiruvoimoli* or 'Sacred Utterances' comprising about 1100 verses. It is regarded as the magnum opus of all Vaishnava religious literature. It is a composite work of *bhakti* and *jñāna*. Though it is mainly a devotional poem describing the vision of God, *Bhāgavat Anubhāva*, and not a systematized scheme of philosophy, it furnishes material for a scheme of devotional thought called *Artha Panchaka*, propounding five essentials of religion, viz. the nature of the Ultimate and of the jiva ; *bhakti* and *prapatti* as the means ; the obstacles which are the ego and possessions ; and the final *purushārtha* or the Becoming. The Alvar expresses his passion for the Absolute or Krishna in *madhura bhāva*. He offers his prayers to 36 manifestations of God as worshipped in some Vaishnava shrines. The opening verses of *Thiruvoimoli* echo Upanishadic truths and the Alvar's experiences of the omnipresence of God.

"He Who is Bliss, dispelled ignorance and
Bestowed knowledge and devotion, Lord of Devas ;
He drives away all misery. Oh Mind,
Worship the lotus feet of the Lord.
When Mind gets rid of impurities, His knowledge blooms.
Mind cannot grasp nor eyes see Him, Peerless,
Eternal and Supreme, *Jñāna* and *Ānanda Swarūpa*,
He creates all and is immanent and transcendant.
Creating *pancha bhūtas*, life and matter, He
absorbs all, unblemished. Extolled by the Vedas.

He is the inner Being of all Gods who are sought after by devotees. Devas too do not know Him who is *antaryāmi* and all in Him.

He is, whether one affirms Him or denies, He pervades all, both good and evil.

He is not far nor near, everywhere is He.”

Often the Alvar expresses his ecstatic love for God in the language of bridal mysticism and allegory, the imaginary mother bemoaning the lot of her child (the Alvar) who is madly in love with her Lord, Srī Krishna, and who sees nothing but forms of her beloved Krishna. Sri Aurobindo, the poet, philosopher and mystic of modern times translated some verses of *Thiruvoimoli*. A few of them are quoted here :

1. “Seated, she caresses Earth and cries,
‘This earth is Vishnu’s’
Salutes the sky and bids us :
‘Behold the Heaven He ruleth’
Or standing, with tear filled eyes
Cries aloud : O sea-hued Lord,
All helpless am I, my friends ; my child
He has rendered mad.’
2. Or, joining her hands, she fancies :
‘The sea where my Lord reposes’
Or hailing the ruddy Sun, she cries :
‘Yes, this is His Form.
Languid, she bursts into tears and
Mutters Narayan’s name.
3. Knowing, she embraces red fire, is scorched
and cries : ‘O Deathless !’
And she hugs the wind :

'Tis my own Govinda' she tells us.
 The rising Moon she showeth
 'Tis the shining gem-hued Krishna'
 Or eying the standing Hill, she cries :
 'Oh come High Vishnu.'
 It rains, she dances and cries out,
 'He hath come, the Lord of my love.'

4. The soft limbed calf she embraces, for
 'Such did Krishna tend,
 And follows the gliding serpent, explaining :
 'That is His couch.'

.....

All Gods and saints are Krishna-
 Devourer of Infinte Space ;
 And the huge, dark clouds are Krishna ;
 Or the kine, they graze on the meadow
 And thither she runs to find Him
 The Lord of illusions, He makes
 My dear one pant and rave."

Thiruvoimoli. 4-4 (Arya 1915. 16. P. 123).

The above lines reflect the God-intoxicated life of Namalvar. To read them thrills our very being, and it is no wonder that *Thiruvoimoli* has been treated as a scripture by the Vaishnavas. Sri Ramanuja desired to write a commentary on it, but for want of time, he delegated the task to someone else. Several elaborate commentaries on *Thiruvoimoli* exist. It became so famous that God in a temple is referred to as "*Thiruvoimoli Deva*" in an inscription of 1000 A. D.

It is generally believed that the songs of the Alvars moulded the thought of Sri Ramanujāchārya in formulating a system of theistic philosophy called *Visistadvaita*. But it is a debated point even among Vaishnavas, whether and if so to what extent, Sri Ramanuja found material for his philosophy in the *Divya Prabandham*. No doubt Sri Ramanuja had a foundation of rich thought from preceding Acharyas such as Dramida, Tanka etc. But the Alvars were the products of the early *Bhāgavata* religion. They were not only illustrious devotees of God, but had actually experienced His Grace. The noble lives of the Alvars and their sacred utterances must have profoundly impressed and influenced the mind of Sri Ramanuja who in his devotion to God belongs to that illustrious band of the devotees of God, called Alvars.

Nammalvar has sung praises on 36 shrines and shows profound knowledge of ancient scriptures and also of worldly ways. Therefore I am inclined to believe that he, in the company of Madhura Kavi Alvar, must have visited the shrines and gone about propagating *bhakti marga*. His life has been an inspiration to posterity and his sacred wisdom is a guide and solace to South Indian life. His vision of God is cosmic : he sees him even in a Jain, Buddhist, etc. and as such is free from sectarian bias and bigotry. *Bhagavān's* words in the Gita "*Yo mām pasyati sarvatra*" (Gita 6-30) and "*Vasudevah Sarvam*" (Gita 7-19) find in Nammalvar an illustrious example of such a spiritual life.

Nammalvar lived a brief life of 35 years only. After blessing Madhura Kavi Alvar to live long and propagate *Thiruvoimoli*, he left for *Parama Padam*. Madhura Kavi

Alvar lived for another 50 years, singing the glories of his Guru and of *Thiruvoimoli*. He erected a shrine for Nammalvar with regular worship. The village of Kurugur was renamed Alvar Thiru Nagari.

Madhura Kavi Alvar is the greatest example of *Guru Bhakti* and a model for the emphasis given in Vaishnavism to *Achārya Bhakti*. Nammalvar who had the vision of "*Vasudevah sarvam*" is a rare type of "*Mahātmā*." However, a type of devotee disciple like Madhura Kavi Alvar seems to be rarer still; we thus bow our heads to both the Alvars and offer our homage and obeisance, for their memory is sanctifying and their wisdom illumines the spiritual path.

"If SADHNĀ is one's purpose in life, one must not allow it to become shrivelled and emaciated."

— *Shri Anandamayī Ma*

Great Thoughts.

Extracts from KASHFUL-MAHJUB, the oldest Persian treatise on Sufism, by Abul Hasan al Jullābī al Hujwiri of Ghazna, 1071 A. D.

Trans. R. A. Nicholson

On Poverty

“God.....has exalted-Poverty and has made it a special distinction of the poor, who have renounced all things external and internal, and have turned entirely to the Causer; whose poverty has become their pride, so that they lamented its going and rejoiced at its coming, and embraced it and deemed all else contemptible.

The form of Poverty is destitution and indigence, but its essence is fortune and free choice, He who regards the form rests in the form and, failing to attain the object, flees from the essence; but he who has found the essence averts his gaze from all created things, and in complete annihilation, seeing only the All-One he hastens towards the fulness of eternal life. The poor man has nothing and can suffer no loss. He does not become rich by having anything, nor indigent by having nothing: both these conditions are alike to him in respect of his poverty.....it is unlucky for a dervish to have property: if he ‘imprisons’ anything for his own use, he himself is ‘imprisoned’ in the same proportion. The friends of God live by means of His secret bounties. Worldly wealth holds them back from the path of quietism.

.....this world and the next weigh less than a gnat's wing in the scales of the poor man's (*fakīr's*) poverty : he is not contained in the two worlds for a single moment.

.....Poverty is the separation of the heart from all but God.....When the heart is cleared of all except God, poverty is not better than wealth nor is wealth better than poverty. Wealth is abundance of worldly goods and poverty is lack of them : all goods belong to God : when the seeker bids farewell to property, the antithesis disappears and both terms are transcended."

Meister Eckhart: "Sayings." (Translation by C. de B. Evans).

"Who so has three things is beloved by God—the first is riddance of goods, the second of friends, and the third is riddance of ego.

As long as ye desire to fulfil the will of God and have any desire after Eternity and God—so long are ye not truly poor. He alone has true spiritual poverty who wields nothing, knows nothing and desires nothing. (Blessed are the poor in spirit).

The soul God's kingdom dawns in, who is conscious of God's fulness (or noughtness), her none durst council nor instruct. She is by it instructed and assured of life eternal here and now. Unknowing is thy chief perfection and thy highest activity. In this God-conscious state the soul perceives how near God is in all His fulness and noughtness...I am as certain as I live that nothing is as close to me as God. God is nearer to me than I am to my Self. He is near but I am far (in consciousness).

We lose our life to find our Being. If the soul knew her Self, she would know all things. That man knows God aright who is equally aware of Him in all things. To serve God in fear is good, to serve in love is better, but he who is apt to behold God in fear and hate does best of all. Ego-emptiness is God-fulness.

Seek nothing at all, not understanding, nor gnosis, nor piety nor inwardness, nor peace. The really virtuous man does not want God. He makes no plans, he sets no store by things, he is not attached nor detached, he knows neither pride nor humility. The smallest creaturely image that ever takes shape in thee is as big as God. How so? It shuts out the whole of God. As soon as the image appears, God disappears—and as soon as the image fades, God comes (into our awareness). When we see God in His Light it happens in private, safe from the slightest intrusion or sediment of creaturely things. Then we have immediate knowledge of eternal Life. Atoned and radiant in awareness, the soul may be purely alone, receptive and with nothing flowing into her, but sheer divinity flowing into Itself. By purity she has discovered her capacity.”



When I pray for naught, my prayers go for naught.

When I pray for naught, I pray as I ought.

When praying for someone I pray at my weakest,

When praying for no one I pray at my strongest;

And when I want nothing and make no request,

I am praying at my best.

“The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo here ! or Lo there ! for behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.”

Jacob Boehme :

“When thou canst throw thyself into That where no creature dwelleth, though it be but for a moment, then thou hearest what God speaketh. It is in thee. And if thou canst for a while but cease from all thy thinking and willing, then thou shalt hear the unspeakable words of God. Blessed art thou therefore if thou canst stand still from self-thinking and self-willing and canst stop the wheel of thy imagination and senses. Since it is nought indeed but thy own hearing and willing that do hinder thee, so that thou doest not see or hear God. Only when thou art quiet and silent—then art thou as God was before nature and creature—before ever thine own willing and own seeing began to blur to thee the Light of the Real, the Unseen, the Eternal.”

Conversations with Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma

PROFESSOR B. GANGULI

(Translated by Atmananda)

(11)

Ranchi Ashram,
24-5-1958

Question : What can the Great Mother give to the individual ?

Mataji : The spirit of motherhood : the Mother gives Herself. She loves, protects—does everything. What is there that She cannot give ?

Question : Can She bestow on the same person liberation as well as worldly supremacy ?

Mataji : Yes, She can.

Question : Is there such a thing as rebirth ? Does God really exist ?

Mataji : Can a matriculate have the knowledge of an M. A. ? Father, go on studying and you will know.

Question : Since the world can be explained by environment, heredity, in other words by science, what need is there to believe in God ?

Mataji : All those explanations are but relative not complete or exhaustive.

Question : In the atomic age the world with all its creatures will be destroyed by war. Is it possible to save it by spiritual means ?

Mataji : Whatever is to happen will happen. Why worry about it ? He who does everything will do the needful. You are also one of His manifestations, and are able to concern yourself with this kind of thing. But how much can you effect by your concern ?

Question : Will there be war again ? Atomic war ?

Mataji : To try and get information about the future from this body is futile. God does not allow the ordinary person to know all about the future, because it would harm him. He gives knowledge and understanding according to His own measure. Thus you will get to know exactly as much as is necessary for you.

Question : Why was Arjuna frightened when he had a vision of the Lord's Universal Form ?

Mataji : The Lord Himself granted Arjuna divine sight to make the vision possible for him. He gave him the power to see as much as was necessary for Arjuna. But Arjuna did not have the vision of the Self (*Ātmā darśana*) and therefore he was afraid. God is of infinite forms and there are infinite visions of Him.

Question : If God is the fountain of goodness, why should there be so much fighting, cruelty and sin ?

Mataji : He is goodness as well as evil. He is everything. He Himself stages a play with Himself. Whatever is necessary in order that His Play may be accomplished to the full, that He does.

Ranchi Ashram,

25-5-1958

Question : Is it possible for a man engaged in *sādhana* to see God by direct perception ?

Mataji : While advancing towards Calcutta, it cannot be seen. At the end of your journey there will be Calcutta. Similarly God will be found at the end of *sādhana*.

Question . Can He be realised through *sādhana*.

Mataji : He cannot be.

Question : Is it possible to perceive God right here, as one sees a human being ?

Mataji : Yes, really and truly. He can be seen.

Question : What is your experience in this field ?

Mataji : Really and truly, I have said it. He is ever Self-revealed. By *sādhana* one can only remove the veil of ignorance.

Question : Again, please say, have you really seen Him ?

Mataji : It has already been said : He who is within you, who is manifested in your shape, truly I see Him. "Wherever a man is, there is *Śiva*, and wherever a woman there is *Gauri*." He and He alone is. Nevertheless, you may express it in any way you please.

Question : Which is the easiest way to the realization of God—*kīrtana*, *mantras*, *yoga* or the repetition of a Name ?

Mataji : The way which the Guru points out for anyone is the easiest way for that particular person.

Question : Is it possible to practise *sādhana* without having recourse to a Guru ?

Mataji : Your question and the reply given show that you are a seeker resorting to a Guru.

Question : In the *Bhagavad. Gitā* Sri Krishna says : "Whenever there is decay of righteousness. O Bhārata, and there is the exaltation of unrighteousness then I Myself come forth." Why then—although in our age there is decay of righteousness—should there be no Advent of the Lord ?

Mataji : God spoke the truth. He has certainly come. Those who can see are seeing.

Question : Why is there so much violence in Pakistan ?

Mataji : All happens according to His will. He is violent with Himself. There is no doubt some beneficent purpose behind it.

Question : When the deity is in one's own home, why should one have to go to a place of pilgrimage for His *darśana* ? Does it really help ?

Mataji : One goes because one does not feel satisfied at home. Besides, it occurs at times that some-one derives distinct benefit from visiting places of pilgrimage.

Question : Where exactly is the mind ?

Mataji : "Roots above, branches below." Its root lies in the brain, yet it also permeates the whole body. In deep sleep one communes with one's own Self. After sound sleep,

body and mind experience a sense of well-being, although on waking one cannot tell where one has been while asleep. Only when the veil has been lifted and one's vision is therefore unobstructed, then one knows where one had gone : for a short span one had reposed within one's Self during sleep. The centre of the mind lies in the brain, although it is scattered everywhere in the body.

Man alone has the possibility to become fully conscious. The animal has merely the capacity to enjoy and suffer, while man can do this as well as practise *sādhana*. The purpose of *sādhana* is liberation. Man has the opportunity for both, worldly experience and liberation. In order that man may awaken to full consciousness he has from his childhood on infinite possibilities for inquiry, for the acceptance of countless preceptors. Yet the Guru may also be revealed within. If there are queries, the necessity for an outer Guru arises. It is man's nature to ask questions and to feel happy when they have been replied to. What can be grasped by the intelligence, is all within the realm of the mind. The mind is indeed scattered all over. It has to be collected and placed into the head. Therefore one has to concentrate and sit in meditation.

Matri Lila

(July 15th—September 30th, 1962)

We have already reported that Mataji stayed in the Kishenpur Ashram near Dehradun from April 15th until July 18th. On the 17th *Guru Purnima* was celebrated. It marked the second climax of Mataji's sojourn, the first having been Her birthday in May. From early morning until late at night, devotees came—some from considerable distances—to pay homage to Mataji and to offer large and small gifts to Her and to Didima, as customary on that auspicious day. At midday Mataji went to Kalyanvan for a short function. Even there people followed Her and did *Pūjā*, while She sat in Her room there for about an hour.

On July 18th Mataji left for Kankhal, only to return to Kishenpur on the 20th. But the crowd had left with Her and now followed a quiet and comparatively restful period up to August 6th. Mataji remained in Her room a great deal and came out to give *darśana* twice daily only, namely at midday and after 6 p. m., usually on the veranda upstairs. The devotees of Dehradun felt proud and happy that after a prolonged stay with large crowds and functions, Mataji had chosen Kishenpur for a rest and was able to have it. On August 6th She motored to Kankhal. However she was back again in Kishenpur for *Jhulan Purnima*, arriving on the 14th and leaving on the 16th. The *Jhulan* celebrations started on *Jhulan Ekadasi*, which fell on the 11th. A profusely decorated swing had been put up and several

images of Sri Krishna and Radha were placed on it every evening, *pūjā* and *kirtana* was performed daily in front of those images. On the 15th collective midnight meditation was held in Mataji's presence on the platform in front of the two temples, in memory of the August fullmoon night in 1922, when Mataji, all by Herself, went through the actions of a spiritual initiation. There was no Guru except Herself. At the same time She was also the neophyte, as well as the *Iṣṭa* and the *mantra*. With this event Her *Līlā* of *sādhana*, which had already begun since She came to stay with Bhola-nath at Bajitpur in 1918, became intense and extremely concentrated. At an incredible speed She went through countless and varied spiritual practices. All this was unsought by Her and occurred spontaneously as everything in Her life.

Since the festival of *Raksha Bandhana* also falls on *Jhulan Purnima*, people brought bracelets made of silk thread and tied them round Mataji's wrists from early morning till late at night. Mataji in turn distributed these bracelets to everyone approaching Her that day and the next, and finally sent some to the girls of the *Kanyapith* at Varanasi and also to Didi, who happened to be in Delhi for reasons of health.

On the 16th Mataji returned to Kankhal. However, in the afternoon of the 18th She quite unexpectedly turned up at Kishenpur by car, remaining for 3 hours only. A very old and aged devotee, residing at Rajpur, was in a precarious state of health, and Mataji's short visit was mainly for his sake. In spite of his years, his condition has since then improved to some extent.

Janmastami, Sri Krishna's birthday was celebrated in the small Ashram at Kankhal in the night of August 23rd. A number of people came from Dehradun & other places to be present on this joyful occasion. Fortunately the weather was dry and so the *satsang* could be held in the open courtyard the Ashram being too small to accommodate all the guests. A number of Europeans and Americans were present, as had been the case also on Gurupurnima and even more on Mataji's birthday night. Mataji was visible the whole evening and night up to 2 a.m. Sri Krishna's birthday, like Christ's, is observed at midnight. A solemn *pūjā* took place accompanied by beautiful and delicate music. As customary, many had observed a more or less strict fast throughout the day. At nearly 2 a. m. *prasāda* was served to them and all. That holy night was followed by *Nandotsava* the next morning, a festival to commemorate the hilarious joy of the cowherds of Gokula over the birth of Sri Krishna. The person in charge of Kankhal Ashram dressed up as a *Gopa* (cowherd) balancing on a yoke two large earthen pots filled with curd, and came out dancing and singing. Mataji was in a great mood as always on that day. She led the kirtan for quite a while, at the same time putting first sandalpaste and then curds on everyone's forehead. Later She with Her own hand, put curds into the mouth of everyone present. Even Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, who had remained in his room, was not spared. To finish up She distributed baskets full of fruits.

The new Ashram at Kankhal was inaugurated only recently at the great desire of a sincere devotee of Mataji, Sri Nitai charan Basu Mallick of Calcutta. The gentleman has

been living the life of a *Vanaprasthi* at Kankhal for many years past and because of his great devotion for Mataji, he has donated a part of his property named 'Santi Niketan', with the purpose of establishing an *ashram* there for the benefit of *Sadhakas*.

On September 4th, Mataji returned once again to the very fortunate Kishenpur Ashram, remaining there until the 12th. This summer the people of Dehradun have been greatly blessed since Mataji spent full four months in their midst. On the 12th night, Mataji boarded the train to Delhi where She arrived on the 13th morning.

During Mataji's stay at the Kalkaji Ashram several hundreds of people used to come every evening for her *darshan*. The rush of devotees was sometimes even unmanageable. Among the prominent persons who came to meet Mataji, mention may be made of the following: Sm. Raihana Tyabji, Sm. Tarakeshwari Sinha, H.H. Maharani Saheba of Jodhpur, Mr. & Mrs. Bhagwan Sahay (Chief Commissioner, Delhi), Mr. M. Rahman (Deputy High Commissioner for Pakistan) with his wife and Prof and Humayun Kabir with his wife & daughter.

After a stay in Delhi for twelve days Mataji travelled to Allahabad on the 25th, staying for three days in the Ashram of the late Sri Gopal Thakur, as She does every year before Durga Puja. From there She proceeded straight to Calcutta, reaching on the 29th September morning, first day of *Navarātri*. A new *satsang* hall has been completed in the compound of our Agarpara Ashram and will be inaugurated during these festive days. *Durga Pūjā*, however, will be

celebrated in the presence of Mataji in the residence of a devotee in Calcutta proper.

For Diwali Mataji is due at Ranchi where *Kālī Pūjā* will be celebrated in the newly built temple in our Ashram on the night of the 27th October. The Samyam Mahavrata will be observed this year at Pilani in Rajasthan from Nov. 5th to 11th. Invitations for both the functions have already been sent to all members of the Sangha and subscribers of "Ananda Varta".

Notes and Comments

Our readers will nodoubt be interested to learn that we recently received almost simultaneously two books, widely different in every respect, but dealing with the same subject, namely, Ashrams, sages, saints and yogis. This is surely not a coincidence, but much rather indicative of the interest the West is taking ever more in Indian wisdom.

The one book is a symposium in German, called, "*Hohlen, Kloster, Ashrams*" (Caves, Convents, Ashrams) edited by Dr. Ursula von Mangoldt, published by O. W. Barth, Weilheim, Oberbayern. It consists of essays by various authors, attempting at acquainting the German-speaking world with the foremost saints and sages of our times and with their Ashrams. The successors of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda at Belurmath, etc, Swami Purushottamananda of Vasisthagupha, Sri Sai Baba of Shirdi, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Swami Ramdas and Mother Krishnabai, Sri Aurovindo and Mata Anandamayi have been included. The last two essays deal with Ten Buddhistic monasteries in Japan.

The second book, in French, is by Arnaud Desjardins, who has made a name for himself by the extra-ordinarily beautiful and impressive films he took of Indian Saints and Sages (Mataji, Swami Sivananda, Swami Ramdas and Krishnabai). The film drew enormous crowds in Paris and North Africa and was also shown in the French Television and reviewed in a number of French newspapers. The book "*Ashrams, Les Yogis et les Sages*" (Published by La Palatine, Paris—Geneva) is an account of Mr. Desjardin's

two trips to India, describing his experiences at the Ashrams of Swami Sivananda at Rishikesh, Śwami Ramdas at Kanhangad (S. India) and last not least, it contains two remarkable chapters on Mataji and Her teaching, quoting widely from "Matri Vani," "Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma", "Sad Vani" and "Ananda Varta" in excellent French rendering. We hope to publish some parts of the chapters on Mataji in English translation in "Ananda Varta". Arnaud Desjardins, being an outstanding artist in photography, it is not surprising that the few illustrations in his book are of a rare beauty, that make his book covetable even to those who cannot read French.



We feel it our duty to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of the following journals regularly for our Ashram library, in exchange of which copies of "Ananda Varta" are also sent :

BENGALI—Himadri, Devayan, Sudarshan, Srinnantu, Pathshala, Vasudeva, Sangathan, Tasmai.

HINDI— Kalyan, Divyajyoti, Gita Dharma, Karmayogi, Yoga Vedanta.

ENGLISH— S. R. F. Magazine, Vision, Peace, Divine Life, Indian Journal of Psychiatry, East and West Series, Prerana, Religious Digest, Yoga Life, News from Israel, Yogoda, Kalyan Kalpataru, Decision.

TAMIL— Light Divine, Sri Viswamimamsa.
