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*Courtesy : Sri Sadanand, Bombay*

*Just as there is a veil of ignorance for the individual,  
so there is also a door to Knowledge.*

## Matri Vani

The man who is a seeker after Truth shall find his own true Self within himself through his Guru's instructions. In the mantra bestowed by the Guru, the Guru Himself is indeed present. You may see His body die, but the Guru never leaves you. When you are crying your heart out for the loss of His physical frame, why then do you put obstacles in the path that He has chalked out for you? Verily, the Guru is one.

\* \* \*

If a person decides to shape his life according to someone's directions and then again acts according to his own sweet will, this, from one point of view, creates a hindrance.

\* \* \*

It is a matter of rejoicing that he wishes to join the Ashram. The moment his desire to do so is genuine, he has already as good as entered the Ashram.

\* \* \*

About health and ill-health this body does not say anything. The real supreme and universal remedy for all ills is to abide in the constant remembrance of God. Put your whole trust in Him.

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Man's life must be turned towards the realization of Truth. The Lord is Love. So as to find this Supreme Refuge;

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suitable practices and activities have to be adopted at all times.

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The moment that has passed, returns not. Time must be used well. Only when spent in the effort to know "who am I?" has it been used well.

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If one is to attain to the Immortal, it is helpful to look for THAT in everyone and everything. The search after Truth is man's duty, so that he may advance towards Immortality.

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## Conversations with Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma

RECORDED BY PROFESSOR B. GANGULY

*Ranchi Ashram, 7th May, 1965.*

*Question* : Some live in the Ashram and some outside; are they all of the Great Mother's kith and kin or are some closely related and others more distantly ?

*Mataji* : Mother Kali is here\* in front of you. Does she belittle anyone ? Why do all come to the Great Mother ? Because all are alike to Her, all are Her kith and kin. But Her children ought to be aware of this !

*Question* : I always feel that everything in this world is fruitless and senseless—like in the workshop of a ghost. How can one escape from the grip of that ghost ?

*Mataji* : Who is the ghost ? What is the work of man in the world ? The ghost exists only because you think it does. Otherwise every man (*jīva*) is Siva, every woman Gouri. When you are yearning to do *sādhana*, you cannot remain without it. Even within the workshop of that 'ghost' you will very well be able to enter the current of *sādhana*. Depending on your interest, you will give preference to some work or other. On the spiritual path one has to fulfil one's duty. The Lord of Men comes in the guise of every human being to accept service from you. The housewife should regard her husband as an embodiment of the Lord and serve him with this attitude of mind. The small daughters of the family ought to be cared for as incarnations of the Virgin Mother and the sons as so many little Gopals who are in need of your love and affection. Why do you call this "the workshop of a ghost ?" Carry out all work as God's service and there will

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\* There is a Kali temple in the Ranchi Ashram.

be no such thing as a "workshop of a ghost." The Ashram of the householder is a field of service and every service should be performed as the worship of God. Let the husband adore his wife as Lakshmi, the Goddess who presides over the home. Then you will see how full of happiness and joy life becomes.

To be able to keep up this attitude of serving God in all your actions, you must at fixed times of the day retire to your shrine-room for meditation, prayer, japa, the reading of scriptures and so forth, just as a clock has to be wound regularly. In this manner you will gradually come to do all your work as a divine service.

*Question* : I am aware of the fact that I am unable to attend to my duty. Is this a sign of spiritual progress ?

*Mataji* : Do you feel that you are unable to attend to it or have you not the power to overcome the obstacles that are in the way ? The sense of want or insufficiency is salutary, for it awakens the remembrance of God and therefore helps one to advance.

*Question* : If I commit anything wrong, this is, according to the *Sāstras*, due to some evil mental dispositions (*samskāras*). Now the question arises : from where did the first evil disposition come ?

*Mataji* : All *sādhanas* are practised in order to discover this. Start meditating and invoking God's holy name and you will find that one day the reply to your question will come to you of itself.

*Ranchi, 8th May, 1965.*

*Question* : For the last thirty years I have kept *satsang*, yet my mind is not at peace. Like an ox that turns the wheel of an oil-mill I revolve and revolve. How can I find peace ?

*Mataji* : You have indeed kept *satsang*, but you have not reflected upon what you have been told. You have

listened to words of wisdom, yet have not acted according to the injunctions of the wise; you have not thought deeply, not contemplated as advised. How will you win the Guru's grace ?

*Question* : Why should the wise not let me have a share of what they have earned ?

*Mataji* : So you wish to enjoy the fruit of another's labour ? So long as you do not meditate and act upon what you have been told, how can the path open out for you ? If you practise whatever *sādhana* that suits your temperament and is within your capacity, your inner power will develop and increase. God is the Life of life, the Self. There is only one Life, one Self. In order to realize, to know it, you must resort to the spiritual exercise that appeals to you from deep within you. What have you done to find Him ? How much work you do for worldly ends, how much trouble you take. But you sit down idly over the fact that you have forgotten your true nature—that you are the Atma, that you yourself are Peace. Have you made a sustained effort to realize this ? Start right now some spiritual exercise for the purpose of this revelation. God has given you so much capacity to work. Dedicate at least a little more time to Him ! And all the work you do in the world, lay as an offering at His feet. Regard yourself as His manager, don't feel that you are the boss. As the Lord's manager, serve Him in every human being. In your home there are the Goddess Lakshmi, Kumari Devi and Balgopal. Do service to them, do not neglect them, and you will be at peace. And whatever time you can spare, morning and evening, sit in solitude in your shrine-room and contemplate God's divine form, meditate on Him, worship Him. Start today, do not waste any more precious time !

*Question* : Mataji, will I have the vision of God by virtue of the *sādhana* I am practising ?

*Mataji* : He does not reject or refuse anything. Whatever you offer to Him He will accept. In whatever way you

approach Him, He will respond. All *sādhana*s are different paths that prepare you for the realization of Him.

*Question* : Man's life is conditioned by his *prārabdha karma*. Where does free will (*puruṣkāra*), come in ?

*Mataji* : You must use your free will to find the Supreme. The practice (*kriyā*) by which you advance towards Him (*Puruṣottama*) that exactly is called *puruṣkāra* (free will or the power to decide for oneself.) By God's grace even your destiny may be modified. If a devotee has firm faith that his *prārabdha karma* can be changed by God's grace, then this may become possible. There certainly are laws in God's creation, yet nothing is impossible for Him. If you think that God's grace is also within destiny, this is so for you. If on the other hand you are convinced that God is more powerful than destiny, then He may do anything at all for you. He provides for the worldly as well as the spiritual needs of His devotees.

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## From the Diary of a European

MELITA MASCHMANN

( *Translated from German* )

( 3 )

*Varanasi, October 1963.*

Yesterday most of us left by bus for Varanasi. The rest of the party will follow today with Mataji. Only very reluctantly I left Vindhyachal. There, the foreign country with all its strangeness became familiar to me. This may sound paradox, yet is a fact.

Early morning I ascended to the roof of the Ashram where I had spent many mornings all by myself. I wanted to bid farewell to everything that had been within my horizon here. After a little while I heard the sound of quiet, regular breathing from the tiny room on the roof. Through the open door I saw Mataji lying fast asleep. Perhaps she had fled up here to escape the commotion of packing down below. I have often heard it said that she does not sleep as we do, but nobody has yet given me a satisfactory explanation of this. May be I was deceived by appearances, but what I saw was the deep, relaxed sleep of a person whose perfect inner peace was expressed in the delightful harmony of her features.

I stole away on tiptoe and sat down in my place on the roof. If God were a mighty magician and granted me the fulfilment of a wish—if he had asked me at that moment, “Where would you like to be?” ( How many times had I not imagined this as a child ! )—I could only have replied : “Exactly where you have put me.”

After the quiet of Vindhyachal, Varanasi seems pandemonium. What a jumble of people, cars, rikshaws, cows, camels, and again people, people, people.

We have to get down in a main street. A narrow lane leads to the Ashram. But here what a relief: the Ganga. Oceanic expanse, serene streaming, promise of calm.

The Ashram is situated right on the bank of the Ganga. This is the far end of the town. The building is rectangular, opening towards the Ganga. The main tract which runs parallel to the river is three-storied, with verandas in every storey. The left wing, at right angles to it, accommodates the *Kanyapith*, a residential Girls' School for religious education. In the right wing there is a small hall downstairs and on the first floor the two temples with a large veranda that protrudes far into the courtyard in the manner of a balcony. Besides these there are a few small rooms in which Swamis live. All the three buildings have extensive roof-gardens. Above the temples there is a tall, pointed tower, surrounded by four smaller towers at the corners. The courtyard is enclosed by the buildings on three sides and by a low wall on the riverside. Here there are shady bushes. In the centre, under a roof, is the well arranged place for the fire sacrifices.

Behind the back-wall of the main building there are several other lower houses, also belonging to the Ashram. There is also a second courtyard. In a low annexe food is prepared; another one contains the office and the library of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. Leaving the Ashram and crossing the narrow lane, one finds a large rectangular platform on which a *satsang* hall is to be built (the original hall that was right on the bank of the Ganga had to be demolished after a high flood). On one side of the hall-to-be a large temple is under construction. Beyond the platform there is a small house, which Mataji's brother has built for himself and his family.

Having passed through the teeming, tumultuous lanes one is surprised to find here such an imposing and extensive project. This Ashram with all its annexe build-

dings is regarded as a spiritual centre by Mataji's devotees who live scattered all over North and Central India.

Our Ashram family of Vindhyachal has in a trice multiplied by ten. I hardly see a familiar face among the crowd that constantly waits for Mataji. My companions of Vindhyachal have become almost invisible, as the large Ashram provides shelter for all of them, while at Vindhyachal they had to remain in the open most of the day. Mataji has disappeared into her room. Even the door to the veranda in front of her room is either locked or strictly guarded. If this were not so, people would at all times try to force their way to Mataji.

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One of the things that I appreciate immensely is that in Mataji's circle no false gesture exists and no artificial pathos. Of course, there does not seem to be any genuine pathos either, or at any rate not noticeable for me. It may well be that the religious poetry which is often recited contains pathos. But this I am unable to judge since I do not understand the language. The manner in which it is rendered does not sound in the least effusive. The same holds good for the style in which the *pūjās* are performed here: the movements of the priests are unaffected, sober and to the point. It is of course true that the numerous symbolic actions keep the *pūjāries* so fully occupied that there are, as it were, no gaps that would have to be filled in with empty gestures.

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Yesterday I paid a visit to Sri Gopinath Kaviraj. He had permitted me to do so. His house lies in a small garden. No sooner has one crossed the gate than one enters into an area of silence which encloses this unusual man in ever more silent concentric circles. A vigorous dishevelled palmtree, underwood grown wild and covered with white blossoms. On the terrace a small fire, tended by a servant who, without a

word, points across his shoulder to the entrance of the house. A lofty, dark corridor, a steep staircase, everything quite undecorative and austere. The study of the wise man, more a cell than a room: books, magazines, manuscripts are towering on all four sides of the couch on which he is seated. He points to a low stool: "Sit down!" But I prefer to settle myself on the floor. Quite effortlessly: several minutes of silence. At long last he begins to talk about the essay in which I have described my first encounter with Mataji. Great hushed appreciation. Then again silence, which this time is interrupted by myself. I ask whether I may explain to him where, at the time, I believe to stand spiritually. He nods and listens to me with half closed eye-lids. Occasionally a smile of consent flits over his face.

When I tell him that I have really no special desire to converse with Mataji, he opens his eyes in astonishment. "This is excellent," he remarks softly, "do not talk to her. Gaze at her and seek the contact which is beyond words." I then ask him whether I should meditate although I seem to have no gift whatever for it. "It would be of great help to you." We remain silent for a while, then he asks me to come again after a few days. He would then give me some practical hints. Without a word he folds his hands, a remote smile, a hardly perceptible bowing of his head, I am dismissed. After getting up, I remain standing for a moment. This room with its bare walls and its mountains of books seems more familiar to me than any of my own rooms have ever been. The sage on his couch, with his scanty silver hair and the heavy eye-lids was at one time my father or will some time be my brother. I know nothing about his life and yet seem to know all.

While riding on a rikshaw through the crowded streets, I have the physical sensation as if everything I see around me were not outside but within myself. The skin that confines my body seems infinitely widened and encloses all this as well.

I suddenly recall the peculiar sensation I had a year ago after my first *daršana* of Mataji. I felt as if my heart—the physical heart—were growing to double its size. For days I could feel it expanding slowly. It was a sensation that caused pain and bliss at the same time.

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This morning I got up very early to go to Sarnath, one of the holiest places of Buddhism. Here the Lord Buddha "set in motion the wheel of *dharma*". He preached for the first time after gaining illumination. I hire a rikshaw. It takes about an hour to get to Sarnath. We at first traverse the city. It is early dawn but the streets are already full of life. Then, gradually houses become fewer. Fields and fallow land, behind walls neglected gardens of old manor houses. A flock of goats by the roadside, donkeys loaded with bundles of dirty linen, peasants carrying milk to town; off and on we meet a monk walking with vigorous strides. Then the road becomes empty.

When I enter the holy district I am completely alone. The sun rises from behind a small grove, wild pigeons are cooing in the tree tops, and a strange perfume overpowers me with impetuous sweetness. I take off my sandals and leave them on the way.

Scattered over an extensive tract of grassy land are the ruins of several temples, stupas, monasteries from early Buddhist times. Before the first monasteries were built during the reign of King Ashoka (three hundred years before Christ), this was a large jungle inhabited only by ascetics and wild beasts. The first five disciples of the Lord Buddha were practising rigorous austerities here. Gautama had been one of them and had left. When after several years he met them again, Buddhagaya lay behind him; as a living man he had reached Nirvana. The ascetics recognized him as the Enlightened one, the Buddha, and became his first disciples.

The awakening landscape is full of a secret expectation. I can hear its voice with the naked soles of my feet, while I slowly wander round the excavations. With the entire surface of my body I hear the soundless jubilation that tells of the undying presence of the Enlightened-one. He is here, in the shade of the old trees, in the moss that grows over two thousand years old walls, in the slumber of the temple ruins, in the air that vibrates with the prayers of countless pilgrims.

Buddha, the Enlightened-one who concealed God. Was this silence his greatest sacrifice, his holy super-human renunciation ?

But are not silence and speech the same—at the height to which He had ascended ?

I lie down under a tree. Like a purple silk scarf a broad flag of flowering bougainvillia winds round the branch above me.

Thick white cobwebs are lying in the grass, spread all over, like pages of a book—the teaching of the Enlightened-one that has here been put into words for the first time, is later carried into the whole world as scripture. The sun sparkles in the cobwebs that are studded with dew-drops : the unspeakable is reflected in the revealed word.

In this hour it is also reflected in me : as a speechless exultation of gratitude for all the friends of God whose feet have ever touched the earth—for those whose name I know and for the untold nameless ones. Remain with us, take your abode among us—without you there would be everlasting night.

It is nearly midday when I return to the Ashram. Mataji is sitting in the narrow court-yard of her brother's house in front of the shrine in which her brother is performing a *pūjā*. The courtyard is packed. I remain standing at the entrance. A quarter of an hour later, Mataji beckons to me to join her.

Under the tree under which I was lying at Sarnath,

I have picked up a flaming red-yellow pod from which the seeds had fallen. I take it with me because it is so beautiful. Now I offer it to Mataji. I request someone to tell her that I found it in Sarnath. "Regard it as a symbol of something that I want to strive for with your help. Mataji, I wish to become emptied of all karmic seeds, just as this shell has been emptied of seeds." With great care I let the pod drop into Mataji's hands. Reverence makes me too timid to touch her.

Smilingly Mataji looks at my gift while she loudly repeats my words in Bengali. Suddenly she puts the pod into her left hand and stretches out her right one towards me. Among Hindus it is not customary to shake hands. I have never seen Mataji do so. She gives me her small, delicate hand as one would give a flower to someone. I am so surprised that I hesitate to grasp it. Finally I dare to cautiously touch only the upper parts of her fingers and to hold her hand for a few seconds as if it were some venerable and precious jewelry. It occurs to me that I should like to touch it with my forehead, but immediately I feel ashamed of such a crude impulse, and very carefully I return what has been lent to me for a few moments.

Later several people come and ask me to shake hands with them. What they seek is surely the indirect touch of Mataji's hand.

*(To be continued.)*

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# A Little Anthology

## I

### ON PRAYER

*In the beginning there existed God, the source of Light. He was the one Lord of all created beings. He upholds this earth and the heavens. He it is to whom we shall offer our prayers.*

*He, Who is the giver of spiritual knowledge and giver of strength, Whom the world worships, Whose command all learned men obey, Whose shelter is immortality. Whose shadow is death—He it is to Whom we shall offer our prayers.*

—*Rig Veda*

Prayer is an essential part of the practice of religion. Its power is irresistible ; prayer reveals the life of human beings. All the thoughts that arise in your heart should be offered to God. Pray for his aid with all earnestness and in a spirit of self-surrender.

—*Mataji*

You are all He. To realize this is the common aim of you all—the one real end of this human existence. When God puts you in situations in which you are forced to remember Him and to pray to Him earnestly, to take you to His holy feet, is He not kind ? Is He kind when he gives you some transient bubbles of this world which bring pain and misery ? He does grant these things also when you pray for them. But He warns you at the same time : “You have asked for the perishables, but you cannot have permanent happiness from them. Pain, anxiety and sorrow are always associated with them. Seek for the Eternal ; seek for me alone. I am *Satchi-dānanda*, infinite existence, consciousness and bliss.” So, pray for his grace and vision. You are already free and



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immortal. Pray to him to give you this knowledge, to give you this realization.

*Swami Ramdas*

The whole business of spiritual growth is a development of your conscious realization that thought is the beginning and end of your life, whether it be spiritual or material. In the negative experience where man has refused to look deeper than his five senses and has indulged his appetites, he is bound to meet the full realization of his failures, whether it be in defeat or violence, sickness or despair. And you who have endeavoured to seek your life within, will find that your realization cometh in the awakening to the beautiful and freeing knowledge that the thoughts of your inward selection, that is, what you choose to entertain will be "made flesh." Believe this; choose your thoughts with wisdom and make your own declaration, for this is a high form of that misunderstood word, 'prayer'. Prayer has always been a cup held up to be filled.

—*Anonymous*

One may attribute the various forms and aspects of God that are current in society to imagination and may have no faith in them. Yet God will shower his grace on a person if he believes in a divine power that creates and directs the world, and prays with a distressed heart : "O God, I do not know Thy real nature. Deign to reveal Thyself to me as Thou really art."

—*Sri Ramakrishna*

Prayer that craves a particular commodity, anything less than all good, is vicious. Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view. It is the soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul. It is the spirit of God pronouncing his work good.

—*Emerson*

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The deepest and the most earnest prayer that has ever risen from the human heart has been uttered in our ancient tongue : *O Thou self-revealing One, reveal Thyself in me.*

The real misery of man is in the fact that he has not fully come out, that he is self-obscured, lost in the midst of his own desires. He cannot feel himself beyond his personal surroundings ; his greater Self is blotted out, his truth is unrealized. The prayer that rises up from his whole being is therefore, "Thou, who art the spirit of manifestation, manifest Thyself in me". This longing for the perfect expression of his self is more deeply inherent in man than his hunger and thirst for bodily sustenance, his lust for wealth and distinction. This prayer is not merely one born individually of him; it is in the depth of all things, it is the ceaseless urging in him of *avibh*, of the spirit of eternal manifestation. The revealment of the infinite in the finite, which is the motive of all creation, is not seen in its perfection in the starry heavens, in the beauty of flowers. It is in the soul of man. For there Will seeks its manifestation in will, and freedom turns to win its final prize in the freedom of surrender.

—Tagore

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## Tinge of Hindu Philosophy in Chinese Religion

PROF. A.N. GHOSE

The general religious faith of China is an admixture of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Confucianism is an orthodox state religion and Taoism is higher idealism for the attainment of ultimate Reality. As we know, the founders of the current Trio Faith are Confucius, Lao-tsze and Gautama Buddha, who represent the three combined tastes of Chinese Religion : sweet (Confucius), saline (Lao-tsze) and sour (Buddha). In other words, Chinese religion is a mixture of three Ss, sweet, sour and saline.

Taoism (i.e. the religion of Tao) is the most ancient religion of China. The "Tao" of China corresponds to the "Brahman" of Hindu Philosophy ( Upanishads, Vedanta etc. ). This Tao conception (i.e. the monotheistic conception of God or ultimate Reality or Consciousness) influenced the common religious faith of Confucianism which was adopted by all shades of people, the sovereigns and the commonality. The preacher of this popular state religion, Confucius, was definitely influenced by Lao-tsze, the founder of Taoism and writer of the Chinese Vedanta 'The Tao Teh King.'

Confucius was an idol to royal personages. I cannot resist from describing here some passages as regards the position of Confucius in the official circle of China :—

"At the present day, he is worshipped twice a year on certain days in the middle months of Spring and Autumn. Then the emperor goes in state to the Imperial College in Peking, and performs his homage, and presents the appointed offerings before the spirit tablets of Confucius and four of his most famous disciples. These are the words of the principle prayer on the occasion :—

"In this month of this year, I, the emperor, offer sacrifice to the philosopher Kung (Confucius), the ancient

Teacher, the perfect Sage, and say : O Teacher, in virtue equal to heaven and earth, whose doctrines embrace the past and the present, Thou didst digest and transmit the six classics and didst hand down lessons for all generations. Now in the second month of Spring (or Autumn) in reverent observance of the old statutes, with victims, silks, spirits and fruit, I offer sacrifice to Thee. With these are associated the philosopher Yen, Continuator of Thee ; the philosopher Tsang, exhibitor of Thy fundamental principles ; the philosopher Tsze-sze transmitter of Thee and the philosopher Mang, second to Thee. Mayest Thou enjoy the offerings." So is the sage Kung who was unreasonably neglected when alive, now unreasonably worshipped when dead."\*

The ethics of Confucius prevailed all over North China, whereas the idealism of Lao-tsze was the sun of South China. Confucius and La-tsze were the heavenly sages of China and though Confucius was very junior to Lao-tsze, they never differed and both had co-operative views for the good of the country. People say : " Work means Confucius, meditation and the rest mean Lao-tsze. Confucius worked for man, society and state whereas Lao-tsze dreamt for 'something unthought of' beyond the horizon of human thinking. Confucius wanted to give shape to an organized society where men must respect their elders and parents and worship their 'settled' spirits in heaven, whereas Lao-tsze was dreaming of the interrelationship between *Ātmā* and *Paramātmā*, individuality and the entirety, part and the whole, the limited and the unlimited."

We may say that the religion which had its universal hold in all ages was Taoism, called by some scholar, the outcome of Indian Vedanta. He goes to the extent of remarking that Lao-tsze came to India and was influenced by the thoughts of Indian philosophy. It is a well-known fact that many kinds of crude beliefs, superstitions, enchantments,

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\* 'The Religions of China' by James Legge, Page 148.

sorceries etc. enter into the minds of crude people in all ages and thus Taoism also was overshadowed by such spirit conceptions. There is a class of believers who say that Chinese religion is nothing but superstition and display of magic and enchantment. It is found in literature that the founder of the Chin dynasty, Shih Hwang Ti, who waged a fierce war against the memory and the followers of Confucius, had sent an expedition in quest of Fang-Lai, the isle of the Immortal and to bring for him the Herb of Immortality. This superstitious faith was the inversion of Buddhism, which entered China from India in 65. A. D. In matters of Trinity conception (Three precious Ones) both Buddhism and Taoism were alike. The Buddhist Trinity consisted of Intelligence (*Buddha*), Law (*dharma*) and Church (*sanga*) whereas the Taoist Trinity is San Ching (the perfect Holy-one, the highest Holy-one and the greatest Holy-one). Taoists began to lay stress on the selection of burial grounds for the dead, as badly buried bodies would inflict harm on the descendants. They had their hell and purgatory (chamber of horrors). The Taoist *pusa*, the Ruler of Infernal Regions, is an abbreviation of the Sanskrit *Bodhisattva* who grants Intelligence to the sinner, by means of which, he attains Buddhahip after only one human existence. The purgatory is under the control of the Infernal Majesty Ping Tang and is a huge construction, subdivided into 16 wards. In the sixteenth section, the sinners "are tortured by venomous snakes ...." The Taoists believed more in their magical powers than in the evil spirits\* and demons.

But this is not the Taoism as expounded by Lao-tsze. I remember his slogan when he says, "I do good to others who do harm to me." He says: "The three items most valuable in life are (1) Piety (2) Broadmindedness and (3) Humi-

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\* Ref. to evil spirits (*pret*, *bhut* etc.) of Hindu faith, Jin or nymphs of Muslim and Christian religions etc. Even now, we hear of evil spirit influence amongst the simple villagers.

lity." He used further to say to Confucius : "I get disturbed when you speak of helping others and of preaching religious slogans. Why are you particular about the miseries of others ? Is it not crying in the wilderness ? Can you revive a dead man or remove misery ? Why do you then wail ? Man does not grow out of his fame or position. A duck need not take a bath to become white." So, it is God's blessing which counts.

The Tao conception of God sounds almost like our Upanishad or Vedanta conception. It is found in Yuen Tao Huin (Quintessence of Tao-religion) that "Tao is world-pervading but worldly man does not know anything about It. It is not perceptible, being very subtle. It is to be realized by pure mind. Tao does not grow high if heaped together ; it does not lower down if spread out ; no addition makes It bigger, neither does It decrease if something is abstracted from It. No rubbing reduces It. It has form but It is formless (Nirākara). It has no name but it the source of all names. Heaven and earth are working by Its power. The outside world is *māyā* and is Its outer manifestation. It is not guided by matters or time. It does not work but It is the Father of storm and rain and the cause of thunder, lightning and cloud. Nature is changeable and moving in Him like a wheel. Tao is higher than the sky, touching mountains, and deeper than the earth touching the bottom of the ocean. Belief in Him is cessation of miseries. Forgetting Tao means unhappiness even if a man possesses learning and wealth. He says : "God is present in all beings, but He Himself is void of *gunas* or forms. Tao has not grown out of anything but I am confident He is the Father of God. He was existing before God. The Christians or the Mussalmans do not believe in anything higher than God. But Taoism and Vedanta go beyond the conception of God."

The Tao sages are almost like the yogis of India, wearing yellow caps (yellow cloth of Indian *yogi*, or *sannyasi*), keeping long hair and nails, residing in lonely hills and caves

and living upto very old age (upto 300 years). To attain Tao is Union with Him which brings salvation. Like Vedanta, it says that one who knows Brahman, becomes Brahman. He is all happy; pleasure or pain, fire or water cannot harm him who is a Taoist (Ref. Gita). Life and death is the same to him. He is all serene, carefree in the midst of care. He can play on his fiddle when Rome burns. To him, any creature is God (*Jīva* is *Shiva*). He believes in the Immortality of the soul and in re-birth. Tao is *Sat-Chit-Ānanda*. Father Wiser, a French missionary, has written: "Taoism is an overflow of Upanishad-truth."

The book Tao-Teh-King has been translated into various languages of the world, e. g. Latin (by Roman Catholic Missionaries), French (by Stanislaus Julien) English (by Chalmers, James Legge etc.), German (by Prof. Max Muller, Viktor von Strauss, Reinbold von Plankner) etc. and Tolstoy wanted it to be translated into Russian.

Lo-tze was a single, prideless, lonely Tai Sung (superman), inspired by Tao, which is an ultimate conception of Truth or Reality that the Orient is still struggling to attain.

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## The Quintessence of the Yoga Vāsistha

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*Padma-Bhusan*

### IV

#### **The World as an Unreal Appearance.**

The test of reality is eternal persistence. All forms, however, persist temporarily. They, as such, come into existence and pass out of it. How therefore, can, they be regarded as real in the true sense of the term. But we cannot either say that they are unreal, because they partake of reality, however little it may be, as they persist for some time at least. They may not be absolutely or fully real, but they are not totally unreal as long as they persist for some time. A new category is required to comprehend this fact of the forms being neither absolutely real nor absolutely unreal, but persisting for some time. Vasistha calls such things *mithya* (not true) *avidyā* (that which exists not eternally), *māyā* (that which is not) and *bhrama* (delusion), etc. Appearance is the best philosophical term to express the idea behind these terms. There is another sense in which Vasistha regards the objective forms not as realities but as appearances. As he is an idealist, to him nothing of the objective world is real, apart from its appearance in the mind. The reality and existence of every world and every object is only relative to its experiencer. It is nothing to another percipient, like the vision of a ghost; like things in the experience of a hypnotised person—V.5,9; IV.45,46; III.6,64; III.65.5; III.44.27.41; VIa.114,20; III,5.4.21; IV.1,2,12.III.67.76; IV.41.15).



### Acosmism

In itself, the Absolute Reality is, according to the Yogavasistha, above all changes, above all distinctions and differentiations, and above all relations. All differences and distinctions are within it, yet in itself as a whole, it is the distinctionless and homogeneous Substance. All the opposites self and not-self ; subject and object ; being and non-being ; one and many ; consciousness and unconsciousness ; rise and fall of individuals and world-processes, etc-negate each other, balance each other, fuse with each other, neutralize each other into a zero, void, (*shuniya*) a total blankness, which is at the heart of both the opposites, neither of which as such forms the content of this timeless and spaceless Reality. Thus the *samsāra*, creation, world, individuals, objects, bondage and freedom, etc.; all, as such, are absent in the Absolute considered from its own point of view, because their existence as forms is relative to some particular kind of consciousness apart from and outside of which they are nothing. They are all like dream-objects which have no existence apart from their being perceived or imagined by some mind. Production or origination of anything is meaningless for the Absolute and from the Absolute point of view ; for the Absolute everything is ever negated. The Absolute is everything as well as its opposite, and so nothing as such. There is no individuality, no world, no creation, no movement, no bondage or freedom from the absolute point of view. Acosmism is the Ultimate and Highest Truth, which can be realized by everyone, when one ceases to be interested in the relative, particular and finite appearances. (Vasistha-darsanam, pp. 168 178).

### The Ultimate Source of Happiness.

All creatures, says the author of the Yogavasistha, strive for Happiness (VIa. 108, 20). But they seek for it in wrong places. They are under the delusion that they can be happy through worldly prosperity and possessions. All kinds

of worldly enjoyments and sense-pleasures have the seeds of pain and sorrow hidden within them. No increase in our wealth, possessions and objects of enjoyment ever causes our thirst for happiness to be satisfied. Even a flood in a mirage river will not quench the thirst of a thirsty man. No amount of dream-wealth will ever allay the suffering of a poor man. (V. 49. 6-7 ; V. 9. 41 ; VIB. 93. 39. 73. 75. 78 ; V. 9. 52 ; VIa. 78. 8 ; IV. 46. 3-4). The real source of happiness is elsewhere. It can be easily found by carefully observing the conditions under which we feel happy or miserable. Things as such, are neither pleasant nor painful, agreeable nor disagreeable. It is our own attitude towards and our relation with them that make them appear so. The same object may be pleasant, painful or indifferent to different persons, and to the same person at different times. If we hanker after some object, contact with it is pleasant and the pleasure decreases in proportion as our hankering for it diminishes in intensity. The contact with an object which is not desired by us is felt indifferently. Whereas it will be felt as positively painful in case we have an aversion for the object. From these facts Vasistha concludes that pleasure, pain, agreeableness or disagreeableness of objects depend on our own desire or aversion and not on the objects themselves (VIa.44.2; VIa. 120,18-20; VIa. 44.4). Really speaking the rise of a desire in us for something and its persistence for some time are themselves a painful experience, our obtaining the desired object is pleasant only because it relieves us from the pain of an unfulfilled desire. So attainment of the objects of desire is only negatively pleasant. In reality therefore, the presence or absence of desire are our worldly pain and pleasure. (Vib. 36. 24; VIB. 68. 31). But if desire is absolutely and permanently eradicated from the mind by right methods, there will not only be freedom from pain, but there will also be an experience of a peculiar and abiding joy or Bliss, which only those who have experienced know and which cannot be experienced as long as hankering for objects continues. (V.74

24,50) "The joy of desirelessness is much greater than and superior to that of ruling over an empire, of the company of one's beloved of Heaven, and that experience by Vishnu" (V. 74,44). This joy is really the bliss inherent in the Absolute Reality, which is our very Self. The Absolute Self is the real home of abiding and unconditional happiness. It is the bliss itself which all of us are consciously or unconsciously seeking (V. 51,70,72,69). A glimpse of this joy can be had when the mind is at peace, when it is not functioning in its usual way of thinking of this or that object, but is calm and quiet. (VIa. 44,26,27).

### **Bondage and Liberation**

Inspite of thus ever living in the ocean of Absolute Bliss, we are at the mercy of external objects for happiness. Inspite of our own Self being the fountainhead of joy, we are seeking for it in the objective world. This is our trouble. This is what is called bondage (*bandha*) by Vasistha. (II.2.5; V.13.20; III.1.22). This, however, is only one aspect of our bondage, which assumes different forms in our cognitive, affective and conative nature. When we are bound, we are bound in all our being. In fact, we are ever one with the infinite and absolute Reality, yet at the present stage of our evolution we do not know that (IV.12.2) we are in reality omnipresent and unlimited, thus we feel finite, limited and weak (IV.27.22,23,25). Bliss is our very being yet we desire this or that object (IV.27.18); VIa,10.8), thinking wrongly that it will bring happiness to us (IV.12.12); our abiding essence is the Reality behind everything, yet we take it to be the ego (VIa.99.11); everything is within myself and myself is within everything, yet I limit my interest (IV.27.25) to this or that object, prefer this or that, attach myself to particular things and actions, possess something and reject another. No form is real, yet we take everything to be real. All these are so many aspects of our bondage, release from which is called Liberation (*Moksha*), which

consists in the conscious realization of our being identical with the Absolute and in freedom from limitations of all kinds. It is the same as the dissolution of the mind or the individuality (VIb.38 32.) ; as indifference to objects of enjoyment, and desirelessness (VIb.38.32.) ; as dropping down from the world of consciousness (III.21.11) ; as freedom from ignorance about the Self (VIb.20.17). This experience (Moksha-liberation) can be realized even while one is alive, for we are one with the Absolute, here and now.

### **The Way of attaining Liberation**

According to Vasistha, there is no other way to attain Liberation than Self-knowledge, as our bondage consists in the ignorance of the fact that we are here and now the Absolute. Liberation cannot be attained by living in a forest, undergoing penances (VIb. 199.30), performance or renunciation of any kind of actions, undergoing any disciplinary practices (VIb.199.31), pilgrimage, distribution of alms, bath in sacred rivers, learning, performance of duties, riches, friends (V.3.8.), fasting (III.6.4), Scripture, words of a teacher, worship of any personal God (VIb.176.26) etc. etc. Knowledge alone is the means of Liberation (III.7.17.11.11.36 ; V.83.18 ; V.13.89). The saving knowledge consists in the realization that Brahman is the only reality ; that everything is Brahman ; that nothing other than the Brahman is real ; that the Brahman is the very Self of us (V.79.2.3.;VIa.190.5). This knowledge can be acquired only through one's own thinking and effort. Nothing else will bring right knowledge home to anybody III.69 ; VIa 1184 ; V.12.8;V.5.6). To think correctly, the mind is to be purified ; purification of mind is effected through the study of philosophical works, association with the wise and cultivation of virtue (V.5.5; V.21.11). No Shastra or Scripture can make us realize the Self, if we do not make our own attempts along the right interpretation of our experience, and thereby have the direct intuition of the Self

(VIb. 197.18; VIb.41.15). The Scripture and the words of great teachers have value only so far as they suggest to us the existence of the Self, the Absolute, of which we, at the present stage of our knowledge, are not fully aware. (VIb. 197.19.21.25.29).

### **Need of Self-reliance and Self-effort**

Wisdom or Self-knowledge cannot be acquired by one who does not make earnest effort to acquire it, but merely depends on fate or God to bring it about. Vasistha is a great opponent of the belief in Fate or Destiny and the first thing that he taught Rama was that he should be self-reliant and earnest in determining his own destiny by his own efforts. "He thinks that every individual is wholly responsible for what he is. He believes in complete self-determination and the strength of every individual to overcome his miserable plight or to achieve anything he wants in the realm of the world or in the Kingdom of Heaven. Fate, for him, is not a reality other than the results of our own previous actions, which every person is bound to have, but is at the same time quite free and strong enough to modify by his present efforts". (Attreya ; The Philosophy of the Yogavasistha, p. 128 ; Vide also Atreya : Vasisthadarsanam. p. 20-24).

### **Worship of a God not necessary for Self-realization**

Devotion (*bhakti*) for or worship of any personal God is not of much use in attaining Liberation. Nobody can confer Liberation as a boon on anybody, unless the latter deserves it by his own right. No other agency than our own, than that of our own purified mind, can show us the Absolute, which is our very Self." One is one's own friend or enemy. If one does not save oneself there is no other remedy. (VIb.162.18) Gods like Vishnu or Shiva, however propitiated and pleased, cannot bestow Self-knowledge on one who does not think for himself. (IV.43.10). God,

according to Vasistha should not be sought elsewhere; He resides within every one (III.7.2). The God residing within the temple of one's own body is the same as is immanent in Shiva, Vishnu, the sun and Brahma (III).7.4)." Those who, leaving the God residing within their own heart, worship other gods, are like those fools who, having thrown away the precious gem that was in their hand, run after ordinary glass-pieces." (V.8.14) The best way to worship the real God residing within the temple of our own body is Self-knowledge and Self-realization." The artificial and showy ways of worshipping God are only for the ignorant and for those whose minds are restless and not matured" (VIa.30.5). And "devotion for Gods like Vishnu is invented only to put on the right track those fools (*murkha*) who run away from study, effort and thinking." (V.43.20).

### **Renunciation of Active Life not necessary**

Performing or giving up any kind of action, whether it be religious, moral or worldly, is immaterial for attaining liberation. It is foolish to believe that action can be given up. Life is action, thought is action. As long as one continues to be an individual and is thinking and living, one is doing some action. Renunciation of activities is therefore impossible and so is not required for attaining liberation (VIa.28.8.6; VIb.2.34.31.35.42.43). The root of action is desire or will. That is to be cut off. Personal desire and will are to be given up and not actions. (VIa.2.44; VI.38.4). For Self-realization, one has not even to go to a lonely place in some forest, renouncing worldly duties and activities. The busy home-life is an obstruction to Self-realization. It is the culture and refinement of mind which is needed more than renunciation of worldly life. (VIb.3.26.38).

