



Swami Muktananda Giri

Courtesy : Sri Sadanand, Bombay.

In Memoriam

SRI SWAMI MUKTANANDA GIRI

[May, 1877 = August 9th, 1970]



Sri Swami Muktananda Giri, "Giriji" as Ma used to call her, our revered and beloved Didima, took *Mahāsamādhi* on August 9th at 1-30 a. m. in Mataji's presence at Hardwar, deeply mourned by all who knew her. We had hoped that she would remain with us for a whole century, but Divine Dispensation willed otherwise. It was Giriji's wish to retain her body only so long as she would not be bed-ridden or too frail to travel with Mataji. Her wish was fulfilled. Her passing was as simple, peaceful and inspiring as her whole life.*

Mokshada Sundari Devi, as her parents named her, was the offspring of a highly respected Brahmin family of East Bengal, which had produced a number of saintly and learned persons. She was the eighth child of her parents. Her father, a *kulaguru*, had many disciples; her mother was also deeply religious. Mokshada was one of those extremely rare souls that are born saints. She was a quiet, gentle child, fond of solitude. There were no negative sides to her character that had to be overcome. She never knew what it was to be angry, greedy or jealous. Neither did she ever quarrel with anyone or tell a lie. She attended school only for a few years. Yet she possessed a natural gift to express her spiritual aspiration and her love of God in poetry. From her early youth to her last days she used to compose many beautiful songs and lyrics. Both her parents passed away before her childhood was over.

At the age of twelve, she was married to Sri Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya, an equally saintly person, much loved and respected for his honest, upright nature and his integrity. Ascetic by inclination he had little interest in the affairs of this world. He also was an inspired singer. Soon after the birth of their first child, in 1893, he took his wife and daughter to his mother at Kheora and left home to live a life of renunciation. The child died at the age of nine months. After more than two years of absence, friends of the family found him in his place of retreat and persuaded him to return and to resume once more the responsibilities of a householder. However, a sense of detachment remained with him throughout his life.

* Her departure is described in detail in *Mātri Līlā'* of this issue.

In 1896, their second child, Nirmala Sundari Devi, our Mataji, was born. It is in the fitness of things that Mataji should have chosen such an extraordinarily saintly couple for her parents. Didima, not only a model of all the gentler human virtues, was also wise by nature and intuitively knew what was best for her children. Thus, Nirmala was never slapped or even harshly rebuked. She grew up happily, unaware of the fact that, as far as material needs went, her family was poor. Mokshada, always working hard, kept her humble cottage spotlessly clean and orderly. Every guest was served as Nārāyaṇa, while she herself went without food on many occasions. Complete trust in God, one of the main features of Mokshada's character, gave her the fortitude to bear with equanimity and patience all the hardships and bereavements of her family life. Nirmala, while still a child, helped her in her own unique way to get over the loss of three young sons who passed away in quick succession. In later years, Mokshada also had to mourn the death of two daughters. Her youngest son, Makhan, has survived his mother.

When Nirmala had become Sri Anandamayi Ma, recognised as a Divine Incarnation by an ever increasing multitude of devotees and admirers, some of them of very high standing, Didima's life naturally became easier and her privations gradually ceased. Anyone else would have succumbed to the temptation of feeling proud and superior to others. Yet Didima proved herself perfectly equal to the changed circumstances of her life. It never even entered her mind that she occupied an elevated position. She remained her simple, humble self, full of calm and dignity, whether in the company of villagers or great scholars and rulers of the world.

After Dādāmaśai* had passed away in 1936, Didima felt that she should become a *Sannyāsini*, mainly in order to be able to spend the rest of her life close to Mataji. In April 1938, she received full *sannyāsa* from the great Swami Sri Mangal Giri Maharaj at Hardwar. This kind of *sannyāsa* is hardly ever given to women. In fact, she was the only

* Mataji's father was called "Dādāmaśai" (grand-father) by Mataji's devotees.

woman to whom he gave *sannyāsa*. Her guru called her "Swami Muktananda Giri".

Swami Muktananda Giri already possessed the qualities required of a *sannyāsi*. First and foremost she was self-effacement personified. Her compassion knew no bounds; it encompassed the righteous as well as the wicked. Unaware of her own needs, she was in the habit of giving away whatever she got. Neither did she find fault with anyone. She was always quick to discover some good quality even in persons whom nobody else would tolerate. She seemed desireless, with the exception of one desire: to be at all costs with Mataji. To the last day of her life she was ever ready to sacrifice the most elementary needs and comforts so as to be able to travel about with her beloved daughter.

In the early days, Bholanath and Bhaiji had given initiation to devotees who asked for it, since Mataji does not do so. Bhaiji passed away in 1937 and Bholanath in 1938. Thereafter Giriji began to act as the Guru of all who wished to take mantra *dikṣā*. Several hundreds of men, women and children must have received initiation from her in Mataji's presence in the course of all these years. By and by Giriji also became the *Sannyāsa Guru* of most of the *sannyāsis* and two *sannyāsinis* belonging to our Ashram.

Thus it may rightly be said that, not only during Mataji's childhood, but also during the 32 years of Giriji's life as a *Sannyāsinī*, she played a very important and unique part in Mataji's *lilā*. Giriji became the almost constant companion of Sri Sri Ma and in her selfless, unassuming manner was of invaluable help and assistance to her. All the thousands of Mataji's children loved and revered her as their spiritual grand-mother. Mataji alone knows how the painful gap created by Didima's departure from this earth is to be bridged.

One thing is certain: Didima has not left us. Although she has discarded her body that had served her well for nearly a century, she is here with us. We feel her presence tangibly wherever we may be and we may be sure of her readiness to help and bless us at all times. May we ever remain worthy of her benediction.



Swami Muktanandaji in mahāsamādhi

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Sitting on the grounds of the Ashram at Poona

Courtesy : Sri Sadanand, Bombay.

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

Mātri Vāni

Happiness that depends on anything or anyone turns into sorrow when that particular thing or person is out of reach. Everything in this world is transitory. So also worldly happiness : it comes and the next moment it is gone. If permanent, abiding happiness is to be found, That which is Eternal will have to be realized.

* * *

The One Who is your Guru is the World-teacher, and He Who is the World-teacher is your Guru. He is of infinite forms, of infinite manifestation, and of infinite non-manifestation; in the shape of the Guru, the *Iṣṭa*, the mantra is He and no other. Wherever mind and heart may turn is He, the all pervading Self (*Ātmā*) : He reposing by Himself within Himself. In order that this Reality may become manifest, that it may be grasped, there are various paths. Again, grasping means holding on to one's own Self. On the other hand, there is no question of grasping or not grasping. This, verily, is the Realization that is wanted.

* * *

When in association with great souls—saints and sādhus—you are striving to embrace the highest and to relinquish ephemeral pleasures, it is not proper to criticize any practice (*kriyā*) those great-ones may engage in. Whatever they say should be accepted without argument. To speak of falsehood or error where they are concerned is an offence on your part and positively harmful. Are not all those whom you are judging in this manner your own people ! So long as one's true Being has not been realized, everyone should be treated as one's very own Self. Try to find God in everyone. This is the attitude to be cultivated. Good and evil are all within the One who pervades the entire cosmos. Therefore, the duty of those who have gone out to realize Truth, is to regard everything that saints and sādhus undertake

being first, one cannot become a superman. By following the social and moral laws, human qualities are gradually developed, after which, when one becomes interested in the spiritual quest and the mind has been purified by divine contemplation, one may go beyond illusion and grow into a superman. The endeavour to fulfil his real want is characteristic of man; to be established in his true being is the mark of the superman. Man's task is to satisfy his want by awakening to his true nature; the superman's task to become perfected in his true being, which implies renunciation and all-embracing Love. First of all try to be a real human being.

27.

The Supreme is Joy itself. This is why the goal of life for all created beings is Joy (*ānanda*). At all times give and receive happiness, hear and see the delightful; thus you will be able to live blissfully. Gloom is the token of death, none in the entire universe welcomes it. If dejection does steal into your heart, drive it away by force. Say to yourself: "Why should I, who am a scion of Joy Supreme, feel down-cast?" Does a rich man's son ever exhibit his poverty? Even though his parental wealth may have been lost, he will rest content in himself, for he knows that he is the offspring of a distinguished family. And you, whose inner treasure is quite intact—ought you to pass your days like beggars? Can anything be accomplished without keeping one's backbone erect? Do you not see with how much energy the people of the West talk and act! They have put their heart and soul into securing the physical welfare of the world, and all affluence and every comfort is in the palm of their hands. For ever banish from your heart anything in the nature of fear, anxiety or despondency. Where joy, enterprise and diligence are, there the Supreme Energy (*Mahāśakti*) Itself is present. Learn to see God in all worthy undertakings of mankind. If you can do this, you will pass from the material world of *karma* to Reality, the Brahman, which is identical with the realization of Supreme Bliss (*Paramānanda*).

28.

Since one cannot see oneself with one's own eyes, one should listen eagerly when others point to one's mistakes. This is an aid to self-scrutiny; whereas hearing one's praise does nothing but harm.

in quest of Truth, as the various manifestations of their *Ishta* or Guru. This is the spirit to be adopted.

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Thou art mother, Thou art father, Thou art friend and beloved, everything art Thou alone; where this is so, there is only one single universal ashram. Here, there can be no question of boundaries—it is limitless. Duality creates conflict. It is the veil of ignorance that causes blindness.

Sad Vāni

Reported by "Bhaiji"

(Continued from the last issue.)

16.

You are given to much discussion about sattvic food. For this body sattvic food means to nourish oneself with divine thoughts and emotions and to abide in the awareness of Truth or God. If once a day you eat perfectly pure food but remain engrossed in worldly thoughts all day and night, of what value can sattvic food possibly be to you? Within the mortar of the mind, pound the medicine of God's Name or of Self-enquiry with the honey of pure aspiration and partake of it. In this way the opportunity for right diet as well as the necessary ingredients for making it effective will be provided from within.

At all times let your objectives be noble, give your whole attention to whatever you undertake, and your mind and body will then develop the qualities you are trying to create by sattvic food.

Anything taken in through the senses is food, therefore be watchful and see that you do not become addicted to what you absorb into yourself. Strive always to keep your appetites under control.

17.

Essentially there is only one inner Call. All the various methods of the different religious sects are solely for the purpose of answering this Call. Once man awakens to it there is no more need to cry out again and again. Truly speaking it is not you who call Him, but He who calls you. In the hushed silence of night the sound of distant temple bells and conches can be clearly heard; through intense and undivided devotion to Him the hunger of the senses is stilled, and His call will find response from your inmost depths and reverbrate through your whole being. Then and then only will true prayer spontaneously flow from your heart. This divine Call is bound to come to everyone. Śiva, the Eternal Spirit has resolved Himself into *jīvas*, sentient beings,

and every creature has to become reconverted again into Śiva. Just as water freezes into ice, and ice melts into water again, so this play of transformation of Śiva into *jīva* and *jīva* into Śiva goes on and on through eternity.

18.

In this world one cannot afford to ignore anyone. Every human being has a claim to some measure of respect and support from every other. No one has the right to believe that he is of greater importance for the maintenance of order in the universe than anyone else. Without a ruler a country cannot be governed; on the other hand there can be no ruler without subjects. Each one is progressing continually on the path of action that has been assigned to him by the Creator. Therefore, to consider oneself great and others small because of any merit or position of prestige one may have acquired, is a serious mistake. Rather than regard this vast universe as a conglomeration of countless particles, look upon it as one indivisible cosmos, and all distinctions between high and low will then disappear. A man who respects himself will have even more respect for others. Without respect reverence cannot develop, and without reverence love will not awaken; when love is wanting the Lord of Love recedes into the far distance and no amount of effort will bring Him near.

19.

All creatures are fundamentally one, for the whole universe is a manifestation of the One. A man who hears the word 'Himalaya' without having actually set eyes on the mighty range, will be under the impression that it is but a single mountain, whereas once face to face with the Himalayas he will realize that they consist of hundreds upon hundreds of peaks, stretching over hundreds of miles, with milliards of trees, animals, birds, insects, with streams and waterfalls. Similarly, the farther one advances or the deeper one penetrates on the path of *sādhana*, the more clearly will be perceived the One revealed in the many and the many in the One. In actual fact we are always with the One, but distracted by the many we forget Him. Step by step we learn to walk, mouthful by mouthful we satisfy our hunger; single letters are composed into words, groups of days form a month, and months added together constitute a year.

