

Ananda Vārtā

A quarterly journal dealing mainly with the divine life and teaching of Mata Anandamayi and with other religio-philosophical topics

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Mātri Vāni

No attempt is futile, everything serves a purpose. Suppose you are travelling somewhere by railway. In order to catch the train, you will first go by boat from your village to Dacca, then descend from the boat with the help of a stick, and get into a horse-carriage that will reach you at the station. Although your aim is a journey by train, you cannot say that the boat, stick, horse-carriage and so forth are of no use. Similarly, you should understand that everything you do in order to realize God is helpful. Nothing at all is wasted. By whatever name you may invoke God, your effort will be crowned with success. The main thing is to cling to the Name with constancy.

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Just try to keep the kite of your mind tied to the string of God's name. If it is fixed in this manner your

thinking will some day or other get under your control. Although restlessness is the nature of the mind, yet to become still is its *dhārma*. In order to make it calm, you will have to be centred in something. In order to find a job you look to some person or other for support, you go to a particular place. Similarly, in order to be liberated have recourse to the Name.

* * *

Children of tender age do not want to learn to read and write because they prefer to play. If little boys and girls are to be taught reading and writing, they will have to be persuaded to learn; so also, to begin with one has to repeat the Name forcibly. Constant practice is needed. Look, when dirt accumulates on a vessel, it has to be scrubbed and polished to become shiny. Rubbing it just once will not make it clean. In order to light a match, friction is necessary, one cannot be sure at what instant fire will blaze forth. With the repetition of the Name it is also similar. By sustained practice success will be accomplished. Become wedded to the yoga of practice.

* * *

One should never tell a lie. God is Truth. By speaking the truth under all circumstances a state of integrity comes about naturally. No untruth should ever come from one's lips. If truth is the fulcrum of one's life all virtues will develop spontaneously.

* * *

In order to find a *Sadguru* genuine endeavour is needed. When your aspiration becomes pure, you are bound to find a *Sadguru*. Look, when a child keeps on crying, "Ma, Ma !" writhing with pain, can the Mother remain unmoved? She will hasten to him with great alacrity. Pine for a Guru with equal intensity and he will most certainly come to you.

From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the July 1972 issue.)

(1936.)

As mentioned earlier, Mataji, accompanied by Viraj-mohini and Kamal, left Serampore for an unknown destination on August 3rd, 1936. Bholanath was in Calcutta, Bhaji in Solon, Didi in Vindhyachal and Swami Akhandananda in Kishen-pur. Letters expressing anxiety, bewilderment and concern were exchanged hurriedly but the incredible news was confirmed again and again. Mataji had left without taking with her even one change of clothes. Her sole possessions were a *lota** and a narrow strip of a blanket.

What puzzled everyone most was, why Mataji should travel around in the manner of a mendicant *sādhu* when there were hundreds of people eager to do her slightest behest. What purpose could this incognito journey serve? Gradually the devotees were led to deeper understanding of Mataji's personality because they were compelled now to contemplate the meaning of her actions. The significance of her statements about herself began to emerge with greater clarity. "I am a bird on the wing," she says very often, implying that she has no permanent home and is free like a bird to choose temporary halting places. She also says, "Just learn to accept whatever comes to pass according to the scheme of things. God's way alone is operative

* *Lota* Vessel for keeping water.

in the world, so whatever happens, happens according to His Will."

A close examination of Mataji's actions reveals the fact that there is an underlying motivation to go forward to meet the basic need of people. The men and women with whom she thus casually comes in contact may appear to be strangers. They may not perceptively add to the bulk of devotees, yet they are not less important to her than the closest companion of many years' standing. Many volumes may be filled with the accounts of incidents of such casual meetings, due to which the lives of men and women have undergone radical transformations. Many people suffer from a haunting sense of the meaninglessness of life. They do not consciously seek a religious solution for their inarticulate problem. When such lives are irradiated by the compassionate understanding of Mataji, nothing may be visible on the surface. People do not talk of such experiences. It is more than likely that Mataji would not have met the vast number of people she has, if she had not gone to them, when they were unable to come to her.

When asked the reason for her ceaseless travels, Mataji at times replies, "I do not go from one place to another. It is God's garden in which I stroll around to see how the various trees and plants are faring."

This analogy explains to some extent Mataji's way of life. The gardener is near at hand. If the plants are drooping he renders help, if they are flourishing he takes delight in their blossoms.

This picture is yet not too apt. It does not allow for Mataji's unique way of participating in the affairs around her,

She remains untouched, it is true, but she is not aloof. It may be said that she ceaselessly, untiringly seeks to awaken the higher faculties in human beings so that they may fulfil their destiny which, according to Mataji, is the Realization of Truth. The appearance of her untouched aloofness comes about because she does not exhort or make a mission out of this—in fact she does not need to do so as her very presence raises man beyond himself. To be aware of her presence is to open oneself to a new dimension of life.

These and many other facts of her personality became clearer as news of Mataji began to trickle in from various parts of the country. Someone would recognize her and write to another about her visit. Whoever heard anything about her would at once communicate the news to others in Dacca, Calcutta, Vindhya-chal, Solon, Simla and other places. Slowly a picture began to emerge of Mataji's incognito travels. The gaps were later filled in by Virajmohini.

From Serampore Mataji went to Puri. No accomodation was available at any of the inns so they took shelter on the open veranda of a *dharmasālā*. At Serampore railway station a devotee had given a costly *sāri* for Mataji to Virajmohini. This she had bundled up with her own couple of *dhotis*. Now, before going out with Mataji to see the temples in the city, she entrusted this meagre baggage to the occupants of the adjacent room, a family from Orissa. When, on returning, to the *dharmasālā*, Virajmohini went to fetch her belongings, the pilgrims asked her whether she would sell the decorative *sāri* to them and for what price. Virajmohini replied that she would not sell it and that she did not know the price as it was a gift. The pilgrims tried in vain to persuade her, arguing that Mataji would not wear the

sari as she was dressed in white. When Mataji heard about this, she asked the pilgrims to accept the *sāri* as a gift. They at first declined but were not proof against Mataji's sweetly persuasive requests. They took the *sāri* and bought for Mataji a white *dhoti* such as she was in the habit of wearing. In this way Mataji acquired a change of apparel.

In the evening Mataji went out for a stroll on the sea-shore. A boy came up to her and asked : "Aren't you the Mother of Shahbagh ? I have seen you in Dacca." Later in the evening, on her return to the *dharmasālā*, Mataji remarked, "I see Makhan Babu looking around with a lantern in his hand." After some time Makhan Babu actually appeared at the *dharmasālā* carrying a lantern and was not a little surprised to hear that Mataji had been expecting him. The boy who had met her on the sea-shore had informed him of Mataji's presence at Puri.

The next day, Makhan Babu took her to visit Sri Shyamdasji. Now this incident in a most remarkable manner came to the knowledge of Didi at Vindhyachal, where she met a nephew of Sri Mahesh Chandra Bhattacharya.* This gentleman lived in Puri and was a close associate of Sri Shyamdasji. He related to Didi : "I was in Puri when Mataji visited the venerable Vaisnava *sādhu* Sri Shyamdasji but unfortunately could not have her *darśana*. Shyamdasji is an old man of about eighty, and rheumatism has made him almost a cripple. About three months ago he had heard someone talk of Anandamayi Ma. Since then

* A very devout and venerated person of Vindhyachal. His house is just adjacent to the grounds of Mataji's Ashram at Vindhyachal. This house is called "Bhajanālaya" and used only for devotional purposes by the family and is available to Mataji's guests whenever she visits Vindhyachal.

he had an overwhelming desire to meet her. He would constantly talk about this and even expressed the wish to go to Dehradun to see Mataji. I used to visit him quite often. I have known him for the last eighteen or twenty years and never before heard him express strong likes or dislikes of anything. I was surprised to see him in the grip of this burning desire. I said to him, 'you have known great ascetics and are living in the holy city of God. Why should you become so eager to see Mataji? Besides you barely have the strength to go to the next room—how can you dream of undertaking the long journey to Dehradun?'

“Shyamji listened to all this in silence and did not argue about it anymore. About six weeks later I happened to visit him again. He greeted me with joy and said happily: ‘Do you know, I have had Mata Anandamayi’s *darśana*; she came right here to my room!’ ‘Why did you not send for me?’ I asked. He replied; ‘I was too overwhelmed to think of anything at that time. She stayed with me for a few minutes only.’ I was happy that the old man’s wish had been fulfilled. When I went to look for Mataji, I was disappointed to find that she had left Puri.”

From Puri Mataji went to Bhuvaneshwar and a day later left for Agra visiting many places on the way. From Agra she proceeded to Mathura. Neither Didi’s brother Biren Mukerji who lived at Agra nor Narsing Chatterji at Mathura knew that Mataji had come and gone.

Pilgrims are permitted to stay at *dharmasālās* for three days only. On leaving the *dharmasālā* at Mathura, Mataji persuaded Kamal to return to Calcutta. She asked him to take away with him a few utensils that Virajmohini had purchased at Puri. The three of them walked to the station. After Kamal’s

departure, Mataji and Virajmohini went and sat on the banks of the Jamuna. Since more than a year Mataji was eating on alternate days only. This was the day when she would eat. Virajmohini procured a few fruits and started feeding Mataji. It was a strange spectacle. Passersby stopped and in no time a crowd collected to see the odd sight of a lady with uncovered head and loose hair being fed like a child by another woman. A few laughed and Mataji smiled with them enjoying their amusement.

Evening closed in. There was nowhere to go. Pointing to a spot by the wayside, Mataji asked Virajmohini, "Can you spend the night here?" Just then a Kashmiri lady greeted Mataji with great excitement. She pronounced herself blessed to have found Mataji in this most unexpected manner. Mataji and her companion were taken to a temple and made comfortable. But the very next day they left for Vrindaban and put up at the *dharmasālā* of the Raja of Burdwan. The manager Sri Yogendra Babu, was known to Mataji. He made her welcome. In obedience to her *kheyāla*, he did not persuade Mataji to stay on but accompanied her to the station and purchased tickets for Agra. At Agra Mataji asked Virajmohini to buy tickets for Etawah. While they were changing trains at Tundla Junction, a young man greeted Mataji, saying that he had seen her at Sultanpur and begged her to come with him to Sultanpur. Mataji said they were going to Etawah, but the young man insisted on getting their tickets changed for Sultanpur. Strangely the young man was not to be seen at Allahabad Junction where they had to change trains. Mataji and Virajmohini entered a ladies' compartment. At Pratapgarh a Muslim lady got in. In India people are expected to exchange information

about each other. A barrier of silence is considered discourteous. So people do not hesitate to greet strangers or talk to them. After settling in, the Muslim lady asked Mataji, "How many children have you?" Mataji smiled: "I am myself your small child. How can I have children of my own?" The Muslim woman took this seriously and started a friendly conversation. Virajmohini had purchased a toy from a vendor at a station. Mataji had been holding it in her hand for some time. At the parting she gave it to the lady, saying: "Children give their toys to their parents for safe keeping—please keep this for me!" The woman had become so attached to Mataji during this short while that she wept at the parting. She left her address with Virajmohini and requested Mataji to visit that part of the country again. At Sultanpur Virajmohini, with Mataji's permission, went to inform Dr. Rama Sharma, the sister of Dr. Sharda Sharma (Sevaji) of Dehradun.

In this and similar ways Mataji visited various places. She went up to Nainital, as far west as Amritsar and Lahore, she visited Garhmukteshwar near Meerut, the holy forest of Naimisharanya near Lucknow, Barabanki, Bareilly, Fyzabad¹ and also Deoghar which is not very far from Calcutta. In some towns the local devotees were to their great joy apprised of Mataji's presence by Virajmohini, as for example Maharattanji in Bareilly and Dr. Pitamber Pant at Etawah. At other places like Fyzabad people came to know about Mataji's arrival accidentally. But mostly Mataji was able to move about freely at her own *kheyāla*. Virajmohini narrated later that, although most of the time she did not know from where the next meal would come, they were never inconvenienced for the lack of food, shelter or money.

1. Not in this order. Many places she visited twice.

From Deoghar they went to Tarapith and Mataji sent word to her people to come and join her. Within a few days Tarapith was teeming with devotees from Dacca, Calcutta and Jamshedpur. Accompanied by a host of people, Mataji left for Dibrugarh. At Naihati the men and women from Calcutta and Jamshedpur boarded a south bound train, while Mataji with her depleted party went on to Amingaon where they crossed the river by steamer-ferry and arrived at Pandughat.

While Mataji and her companions were sitting in the train they saw a small boy with books under his arm walking along the railway track. Mataji leaned out and asked the boy to come in. He entered the compartment and readily answered Mataji's questions. His name was Mukul Datta. His father was employed in the Railway department. Mukul was going to school in Gauhati. A few more school-children climbed up into the compartment. Mataji became great friends with them. The next station was Gauhati, so they could stay for a short while only. Mataji said to them, "Would you not like to think of God a little every day? Tell me, which of His many Names do you like best?"

Some answered, "Hari", some "Lakshmi", a few said "Siva" and others "Saraswati." Two boys said, "Allah", Mataji then spoke to all of them: "As soon as you get up in the morning you must wash and clean yourselves. Then write in a new copy-book God's name of your choice seven, ten or twelve times (according to age) and then take your breakfast. After that sit down to your studies. When the copy-book is full, put it in the river saying a prayer to God. Then start a fresh copy-book. What do you say? Will you be able to do it?"

The children enthusiastically agreed to do as she had told them. Mataji gave them whatever fruits and sweets she had with her. They painstakingly took down her address in their exercise-books. At Gauhati they had to leave the train. Three or four of them walked back from a little distance and told Mataji that they would see her on her return journey from Dibrugarh. They said they lived near the railway station and if anyone shouted their names they would hear.

Mataji arrived at Dibrugarh. Bholanath, Swami Akhandananda, Didi and few others were with her. Mataji visited Shillong and many other places in Assam. Before his retirement from Government service Akhandananda had been posted in some towns of Assam as Civil Surgeon. Many of the officers were known to him. Some of his younger colleagues were amazed to see him in the garb of a *sannyāsi*. After seven days Mataji returned to Pandughat to catch the steamer ferry. Virajmohini, who had gone to see her daughter and son-in-law, was waiting for them at Pandughat. She said, "When I arrived here, a dozen children came running up to me thinking Mataji had come. When I told them that Mataji was expected from Shillong by the motor route, they assembled near the bus stand. They would run to scrutinize passengers as they descended from cars and buses. They were there most of the day." On hearing this, Bholanath and Akhandananda went to look for the children. But it was dark now and the steamer was about to leave so they could not go very far away from the river bank. When it was time to board to boat, Mataji beckoned to a young man standing at a little distance. When he came near, she asked; "Do you know Mukul Datta?" Surprised he said, yes, he did. Mataji then said: "Will you tell him and the other

little boys and girls that we looked for them but could not wait to see them as we have to leave now." The young man promised to deliver the message.

Mataji came to Rajshahi for one day. From there she went to Jamshedpur and then to Nawadwip on December 20th, 1936. From there Bholanath, escorting Mataji's parents, went on a pilgrimage to Dwarka. Mataji had been constantly on the move from the day she left Serampore nearly five months earlier. Now at Navadwip she settled down for a comparatively long stay. Many devotees from Culcutta, Dacca, Jamshedpur, Serampore, Rajshahi and other places came to spend the Xmas vacation with her. Mataji would visit temples and various renowned ascetics with her retinue of men, women and children. Sometimes they would all go out in a fleet of boats on the Ganges. The local people in their turn came to pay their respects to her and listen to her replies to their questions. One day a *sannyāsi* asked her: "The different statements of the Scriptures are not readily reconcilable. How should we know which to follow for spiritual progress?"

Mataji : All statements made in the Scriptures are correct. *Sādhakas* have tried to express the truth which they realized through their *sādhana*. But how much, after all, can be told or recorded? The Scriptures are like a railway time-table. The time-table enumerates the names of the stations through which you have to pass in order to arrive at your destination. But we get no idea of the places by reading their names in the time-table. Moreover not all the places through which the train must pass can be mentioned. Similarly the Scriptures do not exhaustively describe the world of *sādhana*. They refer to important landmarks only. Reading the time table cannot sub-

stitute for travelling through the places mentioned therein. Similarly one must engage in spiritual practices to find out about what is written in the Scriptures. What you see as irreconcilable contradictions are different perspectives only. This is why I say, what is written in the Scriptures is right, and what is left unwritten is also right."

"What exactly is one to do?"

Mataji : In order to attain to Liberation it is man's duty to follow the path indicated by the guru. When a beginning has been made, all that is necessary for him comes about naturally and spontaneously. For example, you want to go to the Ganges. You do not know the way and ask someone who does. He will give you the directions. If you forget them or begin to go astray, other wayfarers will put you right. The person who first instructed you need not come with you the whole way. You will get help from others proceeding by the same route. The important thing is to make a beginning. Help comes automatically.

Nawadwip is a holy city where Lord Gouranga * was born in the year 1486. The city is full of temples and replete with memories of the *līlā* of Sri Gouranga. *Kirtana* is the life-breath of Navadwip. When walking in the main streets one can almost incessantly hear the melodiously sung names of the Lord, rising and falling in waves as one passes or approaches the vari-

* Lord Gouranga, also known as Sri Chaitanya Deva or Mahaprabhu, the great apostle of Vaiṣṇavism, taught the path of divine love for the realization of God. He spent much of his life in a state of God-intoxication and experienced many transcendental *bhāvas* (moods) that also caused certain transformations in the body.

ous temples. Many Vaisnava ascetics of renown live in Nawadwip. One of them, Lalita Sakhi, was held in great respect by the local people. Mataji visited him one day. He made Mataji and her large crowd of devotees welcome and answered questions put to him by some of the men in Mataji's party. Everyone was greatly impressed by his utter devotion and the quality of his living experience of Vaisnava ideals. He said to Mataji : "Ma, I heard a rumour that you had left Navadwip. I confess to a feeling of hurt that you should have gone away without meeting me."

Mataji smilingly rejoined : "How can a daughter go away without paying respects to her parent !"

Many of the professors from Dacca, Rajshahi and Serampore had collected round Mataji. Among them were Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta, Atal Behari Bhattacharya, Girija Shanker Bhattacharya, Triguna Banerji. Every day they would have discussions with Mataji. Somebody one day raised the question whether *Krishna Līlā* was to be considered an actual event or of divine and transcendental nature (*prakrita* or *aprakrita*).

Mataji : If you say *līlā* you have to concede that it is divine. It is said that only those who have attained to a state of liberation have the capacity to listen and to understand accounts of the divine *līlā* of Sri Krishna. But this is not so. Those who are liberated were once under bondage. Thus *līlā* is for those who have never known bondage. In *līlā* there is One Actor only. He alone is the entire cast, comprising the *gopikas* (milk maids), the *gopālas* (cowherds) and also the accessories, such as music and so forth. *Līlā* can be truly understood by Him alone who is established in the One. Radha and Krishna are not two but one. Therefore it can be nothing but *Līlā*.

Question : Does liberation come about through active *sādhana* or is it due to Grace ?

Mataji : Action is required at first; endeavour calls forth Grace.

Question : But I fail to understand the exact relation between effort and Grace. We are required to make an earnest effort to come closer to God. Then where does Grace come in ?

Mataji : The aspirant finally reaches a state where he realizes that there is nothing else except Grace. This cannot happen while man thinks of himself as the 'doer'. Therefore one must make an effort. Since one engages in all sorts of efforts for worldly things, should one not engage in *sādhana* for God ? It is true that Grace comes of itself. But this has to be realized.

One day, while walking down a street, Mataji suddenly entered the City Police Station. The Officer-in-Charge, Naresh C. Banerji, hurriedly came out and greeted her. He made arrangements for her to sit on a platform built under a tree. After some conversation Sri Banerji said to Mataji : "I heard that you had visited Lalita Sakhi because he wanted to have your *darśana*. I said to myself : 'I shall also pray silently and see whether Ma answers my prayer.' I am blessed indeed that you have come here !"

A passerby, seeing Mataji and her party in the Police Station, exclaimed, "Look, Anandamayi Ma and her people have been arrested by the police." Mataji smiled and remarked, "I had stolen the attention of the Officer-in-Charge for a few minutes, this is why he has brought me here."

(To be continued)

The Portable Paradise*

Kamakhya Prasad Roy

I see a flower. It does not see me obviously as I myself do. But it transmits of its joy and fragrance. And within the shortest time I can conceive of, it has already communicated its message to me. I feel a wonderful happiness to be a partaker of the abundance of life with which the flower seems to be overflowing.

What a mysterious rapport my heart feels for this dumb little being! Is there anything else in this world of living creatures, which in an instant can give me so much through the medium of words, gestures or signs? I doubt.

My life rolls on in my daily round of work. I have intense feelings of pain and pleasure, hunger and satisfaction, in fact of the varying sensations of the pairs of opposites my flesh is exposed to.

My effort through this 'work' does not proceed by a very easy path, rather it has to negotiate—I daily realise—around uneven and winding treks.

At times, as I am passing through the positive aspect of a particular pair of sensations, I naturally feel elated, and the moment it is otherwise, my heart sinks in despair.

* The title of this essay has been borrowed from Paramahansa Yoganandaji's reference to Mā in chapter 45 of "Autobiography of a Yogi."

“What a gathering of tragic events this life is,” I start meditating, “as compared to the one of complete repose in the case of the flower !” This meditation keeps my heart swinging like a pendulum, between my two fits of passion—one of my heart’s craving and the other, of the body’s demands.

The result of this meditation in me is the ultimate release of human potential through various arts and literature of the individual and of the race, the community, in the projection of a stalwart who appears to be the fulfilment of the collective thinking and longing of the age.

The process of individual meditation belongs to the realm of creative activities, by which he generally attempts to discover, what he would have loved to see and achieve. Yet there is a subliminal current of such sentiments working through him, that aspires to share with the whole community of men the treasures of his own find. The individual then ceases to be an isolated being and begins to feel his kinship with the entire mankind, and all corners of the globe become his own habitat. ‘Foreign’ and ‘distant’ then are two words that no longer convey their worn-out meaning to him. He is then prepared :

“To be a sailor of the world bound for all parts,”* and, no more content with the little things around him, he speaks out such gracious words that well up from within himself,

“It is not enough to have this globe or a certain time,

I will have thousands of globes and all time.”*

Analyzing the subtle difference between this passive joy experienced though the medium of Nature—as we have tried to

* From “A Song of Joy”—W. Whitman.

describe in the instance of the flower—and that of our individual personality, a deeper and more sustaining joy of our own creation, Tagore holds to the following very interesting thesis in the course of his lectures delivered in America.*

“The revelation of unity in its passive perfection which we find in nature is beauty; the revelation of unity in its active perfection which we find in the spiritual world is Love.”**

Tagore, we know, is a legendary figure—though almost of the contemporary world—in whom one finds a complete fusing of the rationale with emotional temperament. The following passage quoted from the same source, we believe, will amply justify our claim to that effect :

“Beauty is the harmony realized in things which are bound by law. Love is the harmony realized in wills which are free.”
(Page—101)

Freedom of will then, is the guiding principle that determines or at least aids in the determination of the spiritual fulfilment of man in and through his ‘love’.

Further tracing the course of this interdependence of ‘freedom’ and ‘love’, the poet presents an immensely interesting point in his enlightened discourse :

“In man,” he says, “these centres of freedom have been created,” and obviously by man’s personal efforts. And finally we find him pronounce such bold words as these, “The creation of

* Published in a book under the title “Personality” by Messrs Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London.

** From chapter “the second birth”—Page-101/2

the natural world is God's creation, we can only receive and by receiving it make it our own. But in the creation of the spiritual world we are God's partners." (P. 101/2)

Yet, for the unfoldment of the best creative faculty in man, one's "consciousness," he holds, "has to be made clear of all mists of delusion, will has to be made free from all contrary forces of passions and desires and then we meet God where He creates.....He gives us from his own fulness and we also give him from our abundance." (Page-102)

And thus the stage is prepared for the climax of the human drama to be reached in man's willing surrender to the infinite," which according to the poet is the precondition for the 'union' quoting his inimitable words—for "Gods love (to) fully act upon man's soul through the medium of freedom." (P.-105)

Blessed is the age that evolves stalwarts of the stature of a Vergil, Dante, Goethe, Whitman, Tagore or a Tolstoi and their like—who serve the purpose of keeping the flame of human aspiration burning by repeatedly presenting the near-ideal archetype in and through their own life and work. And, immensely blessed is the age of a Socrates, a Buddha, a Christ, a Chaitanya Deva or a Rāmakrishna—who by their mere presence help removing the accumulated dross of the age that thwarts and stays the march of human progress to his much coveted goal of life. In fact, what Swami Vivekānanda once spoke at Los Angeles about Jesus Christ, in one of his inspiring lectures "Christ, the Messenger" in these words : "Little men like you and me are simply the recipients of just a little energy. A few minutes, a few hours, a few years at best, are enough to spend it all, to stretch it out as it were, to its fullest strength, and

then we are gone for ever. But mark this giant that came; centuries and ages pass, yet the energy that he left upon the world is not yet stretched, not yet expanded to its full. It goes on adding new vigour as the ages roll on"—the same holds good in respect of the other giants we have just mentioned.

We shall now make a modest attempt to outstretch what little we can, of the eternal theme of human aspiration that in this very age of ours is once again represented in the unbelievably rare personality of Sri Sri Mā Anandamayi of Bengal. Needless to say, she does no more belong to one particular place or people. We shall presently see that no one nation or race has any exclusive claim on her, for, being truly the fulfilment of the highest and noblest ideal of mankind, as conceived and adored through the ages, she can but belong to the entire mankind as such—guiding and inspiring them universally by the glorious example of all that she stands for.

What the Chinese erudite scholar Dr. Chou Hsiang Kuang, Ph. D. (Delhi), a professor of the Allahabad University at that time (in 1960) wrote about Mother in an interesting article "Mother Anandamayi : A Votary of Divine Love,"* is very significant. "The present age, in which scientific invention is becoming a menace to culture and civilization, needs the healing influence of a religion of unalloyed love and devotion," thus begins Dr. Kuang in his well-written article depicting a faithful, loving portrait of Mother, as he had come to know her during his considerably long contact (he had his first darśana of Mother at the Raipur Ashram, Dehra Dun in Januray 1946.) Then giving illustrations and descriptions of various occasions he had

* Ananda Vārtā, May, '60—Vol, VIII/1, Page; 31/32

the privilege of watching Mother closely and having first-hand knowledge about her profound ways of ministration and her spiritual influence on the enormously large number of admirers and devotees drawn from diverse nationalities, races and religions that are found to gather around her at every place all the time, he observes, "I felt that she is a mother, full of love and tenderness. Yes, Mother is the embodiment of *bhakti*, is intense love for God. When a person attains to it, he or she loves all, hates none; he or she becomes fulfilled for ever. This love has no motive and seeks no reward; because so long as worldly desires endure, that great all-embracing love does not come." Dr. Kuang lastly sums up his observations thus : "Today the power-intoxicated, war-thirsty spirit of the devil is roaring aloud, shouting its battle-cry, menacing not only to destroy the civilization of the world but also to lay axe to the root of the entire human race. We do want a teacher who can give us Faith, who can show us the straight way to the new Heaven and the new Earth of our fervent hopes."

He finally concludes, "Mother Anandamāyī is the Mother of Supernature and the pilgrim of Eternity, *the great power and personality that the time and spirit has evolved out of the labour of the ages.*"

Another gentleman, Mr. K. G. Ambegaokar, I. C. S. (Retd.) writing about Mother in the same year for Ānanda Vārtā observes : "Sri Sri Anandamayī Mā, who is generally referred to lovingly as 'Mā' or 'Mātāji' sometimes employs the following simile, when asked what it means to realize God, "To a person who has never eaten a *rasagulla* (a Bengali sweet); it is impossible to convey by words an exact idea of its taste'. I find

a similar difficulty in expressing what I feel about Mā in a way that would give a clear picture of her to those who have never met her." He is also of the opinion that, "there is such an aura of love, light and laughter about her, she moves in such a rarified atmosphere, surcharged with goodness and godliness that one instinctively and involuntarily feels that one is in the presence of Divinity."*

Again, speaking about this spiritual aura around Mother, which irresistibly influenced all her companions and visitors, even during her stay at the Shahbag Gardens, Dacca (1924-26), Dr. (Miss) Bithika Mukerji of the Department of Philosophy, B.H.U., writes : "In Her presence the adventure of the spiritual life acquired new dimensions and a unique significance. For many it became the most worth-while pursuit of human existence."†

As we go deeper and deeper into the fathomless beatitude and felicity which is experienced in the immediate presence of Mother, we shall come to realize that the remarks of Dr. Kuang, that such a powerful and supernatural personality must have been evolved by the "Time and Spirit out of the labour of the ages," has not been exaggerated in the very least.

Richard Lannoy, an artist of scholarly disposition, gifted with a noble soul, we know, came to Mother in the early fifties. This English gentleman of quick understanding as well as fine intellect devoted himself to the laudable venture of portraying profiles of Mother not in any pastel or other painting materials,

* Ananda Varta, Nov. 1960-Vol. VIII/3, Page : 116/17.

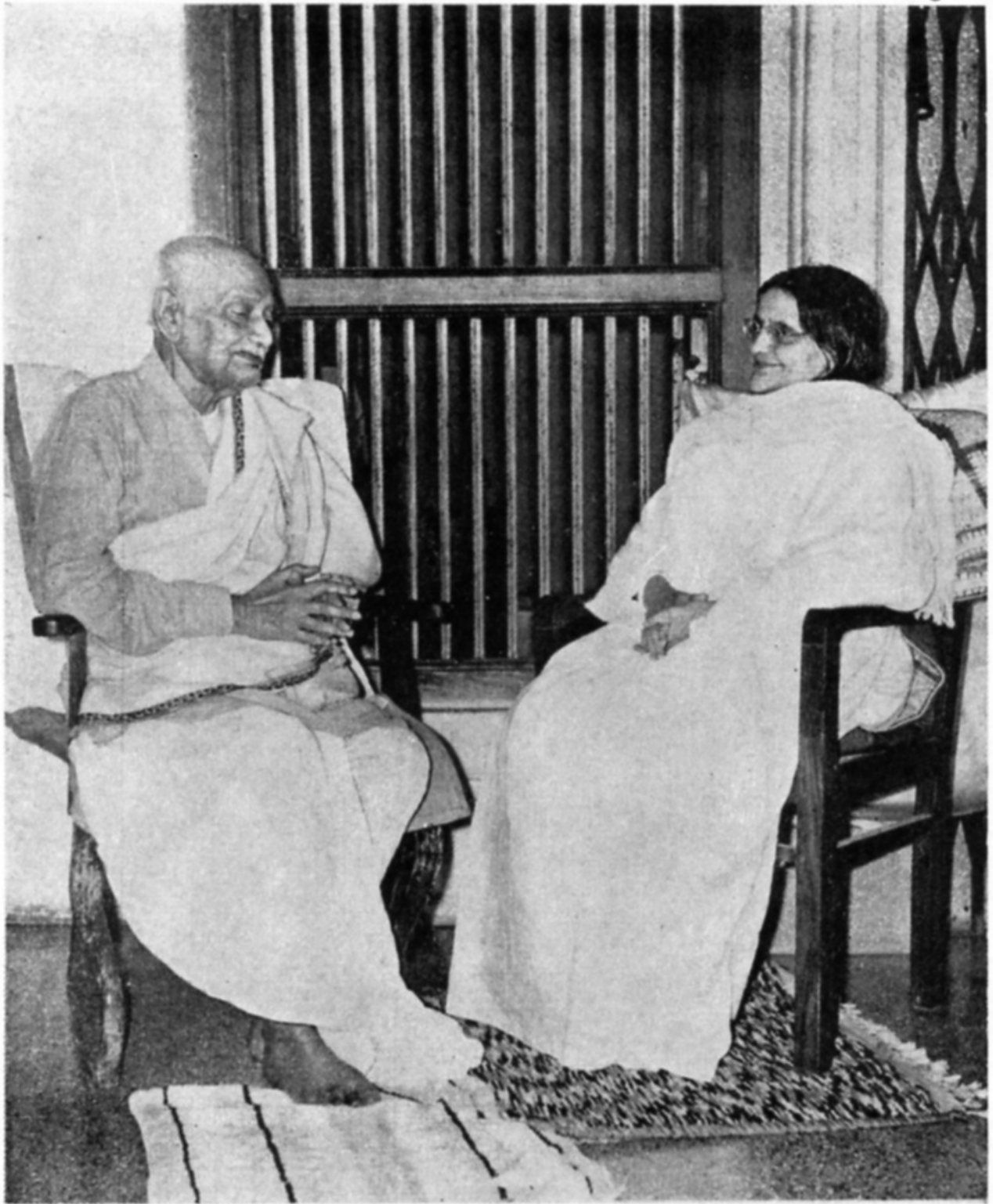
† "From the life of Sri Anandamayi Ma," Page : 64.

but simply with the help of his commendable pen in the pages of "Ānanda Vārtā."

Writing on Mother in one of these articles 'Reflections from Europe,' † against the background of the crisis of religion in the west, while tracing the sources of this malady, R. Lannoy meaningfully refers to Mataji's wonder-working influence on the lives of people seeking guidance from her. We have here on record the result of his serious study, as quoted from the same source (page 91-92) :

"There is a terrible crisis of religion in the west, because we have failed to maintain its vitality in the face of modern civilization. As a result we feel impoverished and empty within, for the signs, symbols and wonders that inspired our forefathers have mysteriously lost their potency and we must plot new maps for new territory conquered by the mind. We have lost the power to abide in the solitude of the soul and to find contentment at the source of life, for this instinct has been smothered or disturbed by the stress of life today. There is no meditation now in the west such as could create Chartres Cathedral in the 13th century. Through tragedy, heroic struggle and 'quiet desperation' western man may indeed still grow to his full stature, and by a miracle many do achieve serenity. Sheer effort has led western man away from the profound riches of the soul and from the noblest in his traditions to a condition of separateness, of individual isolation. Significantly enough the most universal sign of a need for religion and an attempt at least to supply a substitute is maintained by the much increased aware-

† Ananda Vārtā, May 1956-Vol. IV/1.



Varanasi

Ma with Mahamahopadhyaya Sri Gopinath Kaviraj

November, 1972

ness in the west of great religious works of art. The need is there but a way to find serenity is very sorely needed."

Further, summing up his scholarly observations in respect of this crisis, this gentleman continues :

"No corner of the modern world has felt the absence of this great crisis, but India is fortunate in that Sri Anandamayi Mā lives there, offering welcome and abiding contentment to whomsoever feels an inner need for Her help. To those for whom this world is an almost ineradicable distraction that has split man in two and divided him from himself, by Her simplicity and compassion She presents the supreme challenge. She guides, she inspires, she helps one to cease from shirking one's true responsibilities; above all she leads us to fundamentals, to sincere humility without which there is no beginning. For those who are afraid of life, afraid of God, afraid of religion, she guides them by the supremely beautiful example of her own pervasive joy. She begins by offering happiness but *She also promises man his birth-right—Realization of Self.*"

This is precisely the feeling shared by many of the countless children of Mother coming from abroad. About the crisis—so aptly analyzed and discussed above—we may add that the mind and soul of eastern man is equally fraught with the danger of total collapse of the values cherished and idealized so long, in the face of the desperate onslaught of the waves of distraction that have long started breaking on his shores, almost threatening to tear him to pieces. Let us at least confess with an open heart that, we, all of us—both in the west, as well as in the east, sail by the same boat, so far as the 'fundamentals' of life are concerned.

Be that as it may, we shall now try to understand something of the grace of Mā Ānandamayī, that works slowly and imperceptibly to help man regain his lost territory of the long-forgotten paradise, which—

“ was a place
Chosen by the sovereign planter when he framed
All things to man’s delightful use.”*

“*She sees the indwelling Self in all.*” this was the main theme of the late Dr. M. Hafiz Syed, M. A., PH.D., D. Litt. of the Allahabad University at that time, in his article “ĀNANDAMAYI MĀTĀ”† The relevant portions are quoted below as an instance of the supreme ways of Mother’s subtle working to rehabilitate her erring children in their native moorings of the soul :

“She is one with the Supreme Reality and she sees One Life vibrant in every atom. She sees the indwelling Self in all. Once she is reported to have said, ‘Everybody’s satisfaction is my satisfaction. Everybody’s happiness is my happiness. Everybody’s misery is my misery.’”

Dr. Syed further comments, “While sitting in one place She is capable of knowing what is happening in other places. She knows where her presence is urgently needed and which soul is crying for her help and guidance. Outflows Her grace to bring relief and solace to the distressed. Most of Her work is done in silence which is more eloquent than the discourses of learned men.”

* Paradise Lost (Milton)—Book iv/690-92

† Ananda Vārtā, Aug. 1956—Vol. iv/2, page 169,

This venerable old gentleman concludes his brilliant eulogy in the following words — which reveal the depths of his understanding of the supreme divinity that Mother graciously manifests in her mortal frame; “ The best thing for us would be to surrender ourselves to Her and let Her utilize us in any way she likes. We must merge our will in Her will, because she has merged hers in the Divine.”

(To be continued.)

**LORD, make me an instrument of Thy peace !
Where there is hatred, let me sow love,
Where there is injury, pardon,
Where there is doubt, faith,
Where there is despair, hope,
Where there is darkness, light,
And where there is sadness, joy.
Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled
as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And in dying that we are born to eternal life.**

Prayer of St. Francis

Old Stories Retold

By A. M. Gupta M. A.

Kriṣṇānanda

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Bengal were fruitful in many ways.

Navadvīpa or Nadia was the centre of culture, the heart as it were, from which flowed new ideas and thought-currents in diverse directions.

Mention may be made of a few young scholars who propagated thoughts and ideals moulding the culture and civilization of Hindu-Bengal :

Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma was an elderly pandit, a profound scholar proficient in almost all the contemporary branches of learning. One of his students was *Rāghunandan Bhattacharya*. This young man later became the law-giver of Bengal and is better known as *Śmārta Rāghunandan* whose 'Smriti' (code) largely governs the lives of orthodox Hindus of Bengal even at present. Another, *Rāghunath Śiromani* was the author of *Didhiti* the famous work on *Nyaya*. Yet another was *Gaurāṅga*, nick named *Nimai Pandit*, known in history as Bhagwan Sri Kriṣṇa Chaitanya.

In the old story given below, mention will be made of yet another couple of scholars *Kriṣṇānanda Āgamvāgisa* and his brother *Mādhavānanda Sahasrakṣa*, both erudite and religious minded.

Kriṣṇānanda, the author of 'Tantrasara' was a Śakta and had chosen Śakti or *Kālī*¹ for his *Iṣṭa*.² *Mādhavānanda* was a Vaiṣṇava, his *Iṣṭa* being *Kriṣṇa* or *Viṣṇu*.³

The Śaktas and Vaiṣṇavas, at least a majority of them, were tolerant of each other. But there must have been exceptions also, for dogmatism dies hard and creeps in unawares even in the hearts of scholars.

Mother's Love—the Harmoniser

An old story aptly illustrates how the dogmatism of the *Āgam Vāgiṣa* was cured. It has already been stated that the *Āgamvāgiṣa*'s brother *Mādhavānanda* was a *Vaiṣṇava*. He worshipped *Gopāla*, the child-*Kriṣṇa*. Both the brothers, Śakta *Kriṣṇānanda* *Āgamvāsa* and *Vaiṣṇava* *Mādhavānanda* *Sahasrakṣa*, lived in their common ancestral homestead but did not refrain from having a fling at each other whenever an occasion arose.

Once a bunch of bananas was ripening in the orchard and the brothers looked and longed. Each thought within himself: "I shall offer these fruits, when ripe, to my *Iṣṭa*."

One day *Kriṣṇānanda* went out on business to a neighbouring village, *Mādhavānanda* in the meantime, plucked the fruits and kept them hidden in the chapel. When *Kriṣṇānanda* returned home he found that the fruits were gone. He at once surmised that it was his brother who had appropriated the bananas.

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1. *Iṣṭa* the freely chosen ideal for worship or adoration.
 2. *Sakti* or *Kālī* the primordial Mother power worshipped by Śaktas.
 3. *Viṣṇu* is God-Eternal in his aspect as Preserver and Sustainer. The worshippers of *Viṣṇu* are *Vaiṣṇavas*.

Annoyed beyond measure, he searched for his brother just to give him a bit of his mind. As he looked for him everywhere in vain, he became all the more cross. He forgot, perhaps, the teachings of the scripture; "His wisdom is steady whose senses are under control." (Gita-II-61)

After a while he peeped into the chapel through the window. What was his surprise to find Kāli, his *Iṣṭa* sitting on the throne of the Deity with Gopāla on her lap and lovingly feeding him. She tasted a bit of the banana and put the rest into Gopāla's mouth in the most affectionate manner !

This opened the eyes of Kriṣṇananda and he learnt the beautiful lesson of the harmony of all faiths.

Mother Is Waiting

Elwood Decker

Just around the corner
Where there is no pain

Just around the corner of the Heart
Our Mother is waiting

Just around the nearest corner
There is the Dearest Mother

There where we can find Her
She is waiting-waiting-waiting

To sing us a Lullaby
A Lullaby of Beauty

A lovely, lovely blissful Lullaby
For Peace instead of sleep

A Darling, Darling Mother
We can keep, keep, keep!

Mother waits for us in unexpected places. On my way to and from the health store I was mildly interested in passing a construction site, to watch a wrecking crew tear down the old one-storey buildings previously for sale. The junk piled up, was sorted, and gradually hauled away. Once I even stopped briefly to look at a pile of twisted pipes. Then the heavy machinery came to dig out a huge, impressive cavity...before all the debris had been removed. Trucks constantly hauled out the dirt. It

was not the most pleasant route to the health store for a slow-moving pedestrian, at the mercy of the dust, but it was so much more interesting.

Finally the Reward came. It was a Magic Moment before the working crews arrived. I made an unusually early trip to the health store. The contractor was alone in the expansive excavation, symbolizing the intimate, magnetic relation of creative man with abundant earth. The unwanted junk was all gone. Everything was fresh...but rough and rich with the jagged, crumbling, monumental masses of soil, spilling from the precarious cliffs...and perfectly contrasting the thoughtful, straight, trough-like hollows dug into the depths for cement and supporting structure. Their purposeful, zigzag patterns left powerful, irregular protuberances. Below them the trenches extended at various, measured levels sometimes like stairways. It was all earth, yet sharply contrasting the measurable and the immeasurable. Suddenly I realized it was living sculpture...perfect in its Balance of thought and feeling...full of a quality of significance that had not happened before and could not be kept long in the mounting complications of a multitude of materials to come, increasing activities, and overwhelming processes that would inhibit the charm of the bare earth.

In fact, that very same afternoon when I came back to explore the entire form with a camera full of colour film, I was astounded at the changes going on. Already an assistant had spread out lumber along all the edges, but fortunately the effect was still profoundly simple and beautiful.

The one roll of film worked well as far as it went, but it was too late and too little to catch the Magic Mood of the early

morning...Friday morning, July 21st, 1972...that was it, and no other time before or after. I missed it because I went home, had a leisurely lunch, and doodled away a few hours of precious time before returning. Had I hurried back with 3 or 4 rolls of film in the morning, I would have had enough to prepare my consciousness for an adequate creative response. Though I missed *that*, I didn't altogether miss the Magic of at least a heightened all-over perception of the Big Moment itself. I learned something. When Opportunity Knocks, open *wide* the door.

We are all learning the same lesson: to be *wholehearted enough* to see and Share our Universal Opportunities. The concentration of attention is a gift we children are graciously allowed to offer...our little gift in exchange for the Infinite Blessing of our Universal Mother... however we choose to experience it...as Beauty, Love, Truth, or whatever Attribute preferred.

The block-long construction site could not be seen from a single vantage point as an actual solid object, even if it were motionless. Only as a well-chosen synthesis of various viewpoints could it be imaginatively grasped as a complete form. The time for seeing was limited. It was not only a thing, but a rapidly changing event. Only the camera could see fast enough, but to see with sufficient comprehension required more film than I had brought along. The contractor could keep in touch with the all-over nature of the project that interested *him* by simply referring to his plans. He was constantly thinking ahead, while working directly with immediate changes. So was everyone else closely involved. Their progressive interest was toward finishing the job. Even an all-over sense of the many interacting phases of the construction was of vital importance only to the contractor.

I was a mere outsider with an extremely limited interest in the transient sculpture of a momentary phase in the event at a time when the richly rhythmic earth still had an equal share in the design. Yet I felt a kinship with the contractor. We both shared an attention to the wholeness. He preferred it finished. I preferred it unfinished. Art is found more often at the beginning than at the end of man's affairs. There is rarely a finished building worth taking a second look at, if you are *really interested* in great modern architecture...yet the magnificent earth is always ready for anything. Beauty Lingers at the beginning...Waiting for Recognition. Mother Nature normally gives us a head start. Not every garden is well designed, but every flower is.

“Let ‘I cannot’ be eradicated from your vocabulary. Time is gliding away swiftly : for a few days only lasts this reunion with friends and kinsmen. Gather up your possessions, brother, no one accompanies you on your final journey.”

—Anandamayi Ma

Yoga for Spiritual Progress

Swami Manuvariyaji

That from which all beings take birth, by which they live, towards which they move and into which they merge—that is the Supreme Reality.

The Spirit is Self-luminous, Self-creative, Uncreated and ever present. It is beyond time, space and causality. There is no place where it is not; no time when it is not.

He is the ruler of past and future; he is ever present behind all thought and activity of man, whether in the waking state or in the dream state.

The Upanishads declare that Self-knowledge, the knowledge of the inmost Reality in us is alone spiritual knowledge. It is this knowledge which confers spiritual freedom on man. The Isha Upanishad speaks of the divinity of man and nature and of the spiritual oneness of all existence. Everything is divine in essence. God is in the hearts of all beings. Man has to live and function in this world, seeing God everywhere, in everything, and to spiritualize all activity.

The Kathopanishad, giving an exposition of the nature of the Self or Ultimate Reality, points out the limitations of logical reason in understanding the deeper spiritual reality which is imbedded in the heart of every being.

These Upanishadic truths are outpourings from the hearts of perfected souls who had a vision of Reality face to face. The teach-

ings of the Upanishads are there for anyone to accept and live up to. The Upanishads urge every individual, every earnest seeker, to march ahead and progress on the moral path, to scale the heights of spiritual Truth, to know the nature of Reality that is in the hearts of all beings, to become free from the bondage of matter and to attain to spiritual illumination, which confers on man eternal peace, eternal happiness and eternal blessedness.

What are the steps that lead to this state of Bliss? Is there a path to attaining the knowledge of Reality? Yes, *jñāna yoga*, *karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga* and the eightfold yoga of Patanjali. All over the world Maharshis and Saints have shown various paths at different times. Truth is one. The wise speak of it variously.

All yoga is in its nature a new birth out of the ordinary, mentalised, material life of man into a higher spiritual consciousness and a greater, diviner being. The process of yoga is a turning of the human soul from the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in outward appearances and attractions of things to a higher state in which the Transcendent and the Universal can pour itself into the individual mould and transform it. The mental energies, the heart's emotions, the vital desires, the physical being have to be compelled into the right attitude or trained to admit and respond to the right influences. The inner guide, Jagadguru Sri Krishna, concealed within us, destroys our darkness by the light of His knowledge. He discloses in us, progressively, His own nature of freedom, bliss, love, power, immortal being. By pouring his own influence and presence into us, he enables the individual being to attain, to identify himself with the Universal and Transcendent.

The secret of success in yoga is to regard it not as one of the aims to be pursued in life, but as the whole life. Our whole being—soul, mind, reason, heart, will, life, body—must consecrate all its energies so entirely and in such a way that it may become a fit vehicle for the Divine. Thus our limited outward-looking ego is to be exiled and God to be enthroned in its place as the ruling Inhabitant of the nature. To live in God and not in the ego. To act in God and not in the ego.

The goal of life is Self-realization. All systems of Indian philosophy have one goal in view, the liberation of the soul through perfection.

The word 'yoga' means union between *jivātmā* and *Paramātmā*, (individual soul and Supreme Soul). We come across the term in the Vedas and Upanishads. Vedanta and yoga go together in Bharat. Vedanta supplies a conception of reality and yoga is the actual practice to reach that reality. Practice is the essence of spiritual life. Yoga is more than an intellectual conception of truth; it is perception (*darśana*) of truth.

Let us try to understand clearly what the great seers, teachers and Rishis of the past have taught us. One must practise and reflect upon as well as study the concepts of yoga scattered in the philosophical literature of Bharat, and become familiar with the spiritual discoveries of our own time.

There is a general misconception that yoga is based on Patanjali's book. This is not true. Patanjali was not the founder of yoga but its important systematizer. His view is dualistic and he advocates an ascetic attitude. For a broader and more

positive expression of yoga, we must go to the Upanishads and the Gita.

People often make sweeping generalisations such as "the West is materialistic and the East is aesthetic and spiritual". Truth is not so simple. There are obvious distinctions between races and nations, between cultures and civilizations. But these differences are not fundamental. We are all the manifestations of One Life. There is a universal march of life towards light and freedom. People and races, cultures and civilizations contribute at different periods of history. To-day's civilization is the creation of the people of the world.

Wherein lies the essence of civilization? In its spiritual outlook, its conception of human nature and freedom, human destiny and relationships. I hope, in times to come, the world, now torn by wars, will be the home of a common humanity and civilization. National prejudice and racial differences will die their natural death.

The Vedic Rishis and Seers realized their deep bond with humanity. The sufferings of mankind moved their hearts. They wanted to help man to find freedom. They examined life and sought its meaning and true goal. They saw its tragic reality, its illusions, sorrows, fleeting joys and sufferings. They experienced Truth through inquiry, practice and revelation. They realized the Self and suffering dropped off like a ripe fruit. The great teachers declare that they have known the great Person, luminous like the sun, beyond darkness, and through Him have conquered death. This divine Self dwells in the hearts of men framed by thought, intelligence and mind.

This Self, hidden in the hearts of men, cannot be known by one who is dull or restless, who is not disciplined and self-controlled. Nor can it be known by much learning or reasoning. It can be known through yoga. *Śrāvana*, *manāna* and *nididhyāsana* are the three basic steps laid down by the Upanishads to this Self-realization. Spiritual life is not intellectual death; but when we have passed beyond all knowing, we shall have Knowledge. Reason is a help, yet also a bar. For the thinker, God is in the heart; for the knower, the Divine is everywhere.

Many misconceptions prevail regarding the attitude of yoga towards the world and worldly values. The world is the manifestation of the Divine. He who lives and works in tune with the Divine lives a true life.

A true life is a life in which action and contemplation blend. A life of contemplation without action is incomplete. We need both power and vision to make life meaningful. The Upanishads picture life as a pilgrimage into the heart of the Eternal. Man has both the divine and the demonic (*Sura* and *Asura*) in him. A constant Kurukshetra is being waged for ever on the anvil of his heart between the forces of light and the powers of darkness. A true and meaningful life is one which is lived in harmony with our inmost Being. The civilized man of to-day suffers from the repression of the divine in him.

The young all over the world should grow up in innocence in a healthy atmosphere for they belong to the future; they are children of immortality. Parents and teachers who guide them at home and school, inculcate in them right values, habits of self-control and self-discipline! Without such discipline they will not be able to make proper judgement in life.

Yoga does not advocate unnatural suppression of sex; for a normal love life is an essential condition of growth and proper manhood and spirituality. Sex is neither wrong nor sinful. But under its influence people often lose sight of the higher function and promise of life. It is for this reason that people fear sex.

Yoga is not the cessation of human relationships. It is a new relationship through knowledge, strength and freedom. It is a relationship that brings joy rather than sorrow. So long as we have not discovered our Self, our relationship with the world is imperfect and the cause of unhappiness.

Yoga is not the denial of true personality. It rejects the illusion of our separate individuality. When one knows one's true essence, body, mind and intellect are seen as instruments of the Divine in us.

Yoga philosophy and Hindu religion do not preach a kind of selfish self-absorption, ignoring one's duty and obligation to one's neighbour. In no other religious literature of the world do we find such a universal concern with humanity and society as in the Gita. The Divine works in us and through us in the world at every moment. Man's life and progress depend on society, and a person who does not repay his debt to society by selfless service is like a thief. Action with vision is the teaching of the Gita. Mahatma Gandhi's yoga was the yoga of action, to find God through selfless service to man. Yoga is not aloofness from the world but disinterested activity without caring for the fruit of action. In the Hindu tradition it is believed that the Divine dwells in the heart of man and the ultimate fulfilment of life lies in the realization of this truth. Hinduism is properly the name

of a society not a religion. The Hindus call their religion मानवधर्म or सनातन धर्म (MANAVDHARMA or SANATANDHARMA).

In the widest sense all life is yoga because the same secret urge for the manifestation of Truth lies behind all activity. But only a few people follow the goal with vision, while many grope in the dark. Knowingly or unknowingly, we are all seeking the same ideal. Yoga is therefore both the means and the end, the way and the goal.

Now I shall speak of *hatha yoga* which developed as a branch of *rāja* and *dhyāna yoga*. *Hatha yoga* is a system of health and hygiene involving both body and mind. It is a perfectly practical system of self-culture. One can attain harmonious development of body, mind, intellect and soul by the practice of yoga. *Sad kriyas, āsanas prāṇayama, mudras, bandas*, exercises in concentration and meditation, constitute *hatha yoga*, which leads to the awakening of the *kundalini śakti* and ultimate union with God in *Samādhi*.

Hatha means force. The idea behind *hatha yoga* was to create the physical conditions for superconscious awareness. The *hatha yogī's* original aim was to achieve *samādhi* for Self-realization by a long, complicated process of physical training, cleansing, and fasting so that the mind could be more easily withdrawn and made perfectly calm.

In the course of time *hatha yoga* came to be developed in an extraordinary manner for the physical power and benefits it brought. Many who were attracted to it lacked high spiritual motive and understanding. Divorced from its spiritual motive, it became an elaborate technique of gaining control over the body and its functions. Through long practice and devotion, some

acquire a mastery over the body and preserve youthful health and vitality for a long time.

They can perform marvellous feats which astound people, such as remaining buried under the earth for several days, stopping heart-beats, swallowing nails, glass, poison, and so forth. Spirituality has no relation with such unholy practices. People who perform them are generally crude, lacking in perfection and purity of motive. Sensationalism and exhibitionism are far removed from the true spirit of yoga.

Spiritual teachers do not approve of the more extreme practices of *hatha yoga*. But the simple principles and practices of *hatha yoga* are excellent for preserving youthfulness and health, improving bodily functions and recovering lost powers. They improve internal organs viz. liver, pancreas, intestines, heart, lungs, thyroid and parathyroid at the roof of the neck, adrenals in the spleen, pituitary and pineal glands in the brain, which play a very important part in the economy of nature in maintaining health in the metabolism and structure, growth and nutrition of different kinds of cells and tissues of the body. Combined with the practice of meditation, *hatha yoga* is the best form of physical culture and hygiene for civilized man.

Hatha is considered to be a compound word formed of two syllables *ha* and *tha*; *ha* means the moon (*ida nādi*) and *tha* means the sun (*pingalā*). *Hatha yoga* aims at balancing and harmonizing the sun and the moon, the *prāna* and *apāna*, for higher contemplation.

Yoga is both power and knowledge. But misconception about power is all the more unfortunate in the case of those who seek spiritual freedom.

To find Truth we must become one with it in the supreme silence of contemplation. When through *samādhi* man experiences the unity underlying the plurality of forms then, in the words of the Upanishads, the knots of his heart are sundered, all his doubts vanish, and his actions cease. He whose self is united with the Spirit by the practice of yoga sees the Spirit in all beings and all beings in the Spirit. The Spirit is infinite; manifestation is finite.

Modern man suffers from the repression of the Divine in him. He is out of touch with Reality. He lives in false hopes and unjustifiable dreams and is bound in slavery to one thing or another. There can be no solution to the tragedy and enigma of existence, no redemption from evil and no realization of our idealistic aspirations, unless we find a higher truth. Yoga is the search for and the realization of this truth. And the highest truth of life is Self-realization.

Now let us listen to Sri Krishna on true yoga; "No one who has not renounced the egotistic purpose ever becomes a yogi. Save the self by the Self. The Self alone is the friend of self and the Self alone is the enemy of self. The yogi whose mind is controlled and concentrated on the Self is likened to a lamp which is without a flicker in a windless place. Supreme happiness comes to the yogi whose mind is peaceful, whose passions are at rest, who is stainless and one with the Divine."

Is it essential to give up our social duties in order to plunge into meditation in some mountain cave or cottage on the Ganges? This sort of renunciation is no true yoga or *sannyāsa*. For in truth it is in action, disinterested selfless action, that the way to yoga lies.

Before I conclude, one word of warning; those who seek after psychic powers or the sweet-sounding consolations of religion had far better leave the whole thing alone or they will wreck their lives and perhaps those of others as well. Yoga should be undertaken for the sake of Truth.

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“To cry out to Him is never in vain. So long as no response is received, the prayer must be continued. It is but the Self that calls to Itself, and none other than the Self that realizes Itself. By ceaseless prayer He who is whole is found. One’s own Self (*Ātmā*), the Life of one’s life, the Beloved of one’s heart is the one to be eagerly sought. How many times have you not come into the world, craving and experiencing its fleeting joys and sorrows. The prayer, the invocation of Him, by which the opposites of renunciation and enjoyment are blotted out, this invocation has to become most dear.”

— Anandamayi Ma

The Concept of Dharma in the Mahābhārata

TRIPURARI CHAKRAVARTI

The *Mahābhārata* is a veritable encyclopaedia of Indian culture. Next to the Vedas, it is the most valuable book of the entire literature of ancient India. Venerable for its antiquity, it is one of the most inspiring monuments of the world. It is an inexhaustible mine for the investigation of the religion, mythology, legends, philosophy, law, customs, and political and social institutions of ancient India. It is a national epic, with tales from different parts of the country worked into a single whole. It conserves in a collected form all the old beliefs and traditions of the Hindu race. As a matter of fact, it is so comprehensive in its scope that there is a saying that what is not in the *Mahābhārata* is not to be found in the land of the Bharatas, or India. The *Mahābhārata* deals with the four objects of human life or *puruṣārthas*, namely, *dharma*, *artha* or wealth, *kāma* or desire, and *mokṣa* or salvation. In one sentence it may be called a book of life embracing all possible human activities.

But in spite of its vastness, comprehensiveness, and complexity, there is one formative and uniting impulse which pervades the entire book. This is *dharma* or the moral law which sustains the whole of creation. *Dharma* is the bond which keeps society together. The discovery of this wonderful truth, of this moral

law, is the greatest discovery of man. Moral law exists and functions. Morality is not ambulatory. "The eternal truths and rights of things" Froude observed, "exist, fortunately, independent of our thoughts or wishes, fixed as mathematics, inherent in the nature of man and the world. They are no more to be trifled with than gravitation." The *Mahābhārata*, in page after page, testifies to this fact in glowing terms, and proclaims that opinions may alter, manners may change, creeds may rise and fall, but the moral law or *dharma* is written on the tablets of eternity. It teaches that right and wrong are real distinctions. It teaches further that truth or righteousness always triumphs. Bishop Stubbs said in his inaugural address before the University of Oxford in February 1867, 'Success is certain to the pure and true : success to falsehood and corruption, tyranny and aggression is only the prelude to greater and an irremediable fall.' Occasionally, no doubt, truth seems to suffer; vice is placed upon the throne and virtue on the scaffold. But Maharṣi Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, the author of the *Mahābhārata*, proclaims in a trumpet voice : "By unrighteousness man prospers for some time, gains what appears desirable, controls enemies, but finally perishes at the root." The voice of the *Mahābhārata* is India's authentic voice, and this lesson, namely, the downfall of unrighteousness, has been powerfully emphasized in its pages. The book is from this point of view a preceptor of prudence, wisdom, right conduct and right action.

A Benignant Power

The *Mahābhārata* has an enduring and abiding message that righteousness is a benignant power. It is conducive to the welfare of society. *Dharma* is an emanation from the compassio-

nate nature of the supreme Reality, and, as such, it promotes the happiness of all. Unrighteousness or *adharma* arises out of the greed of human beings fighting among themselves for worldly possessions, and it leads to the destruction of the social order. So *adharma* is man-made and it ends by destroying man himself. The supreme duty of man therefore is to take note of this law of righteousness and to shape his conduct accordingly. *Dharma* must find adequate expression in the daily lives, in the constant behaviour of human beings. It fulfils itself in many ways through various injunctions. There is no particular path which alone can ensure the operation of this law of righteousness. Any activity of human beings which promotes the welfare of men belongs to the sphere of *dharma*. Thus, according to the *Mahābhārata*, our social, political, cultural, and intellectual activities are all intimately associated with *dharma*. *Dharma* is an all-embracing and all-pervading force which sustains and maintains the social order. Not a single activity or impulse of our lives can be divorced from *dharma*.

This being the case, the duties, obligations, and injunctions of *dharma* in the *Mahābhārata* have been manifold, and different characters and personalities in the *Mahābhārata* have exemplified this truth in different ways. But one thing is certain. No person has succeeded in doing violence to this principle without inviting disaster. *Dharma* has meant ruin and destruction for those who have tried to subvert it; on the other hand, it has given protection to those who have sought its shelter. In this it has been no respecter of persons. Justice is the handmaid of *dharma*, and it always exacts the price of our ignorance, perversity, and confusion. Justice is a power and if it cannot create, it will at least destroy. Instances are many in the *Mahābhārata*.

where, the course of justice being blocked, it took revenge by destruction. For justice is blind to the wounds of retribution. This truth has become manifest in a number of cases in the *Mahābhārata*. Gandhari and Vidura, Sri Kṛṣṇa and Yudhisthira, Kunti and Draupadi have illustrated by their utterances the all-pervading power of *dharma* or justice in diverse spheres of human activities.

Vidura—Dharma Personified

Vidura in the *Mahābhārata* is the personification of *dharma* and the idea of justice. He is the very embodiment of the *Mahābhārata* ideal of perfect righteousness, and his is India's most authentic voice. Vidura's conception of justice, however, does not lie merely in propounding canons; he is a person who by his character and conduct always gives a lead to others for fearlessly pursuing the path of honesty and rectitude. The author of the *Mahābhārata* mentions, again and again, that education fulfils itself in character and conduct (शीलवृत्तिफलञ्चतम्). Vidura is a standing example of this dictum. There is no dichotomy between his learning and character (ब्रह्मिन्नश्च तच्चरित्र) and therefore he has been held in such high esteem throughout the great epic. He sprang from a low origin; his social status was insignificant. He was a *kṣatta*, born of a Sudra woman; but his education, upbringing, character, and discipline made him one of the foremost personalities of the *Mahābhārata*. He could not tolerate any injustice in society, whether done by individuals or by the State. He was frank and outspoken in raising his voice of protest against manifest wrong and was no respecter of persons in fixing guilt. In the *Sabhaparva*, we find Draupadi tortured and dishonoured in an open assembly by Duryodhana, Duhsasana, and other mem-

bers of the Kuru family. Bhisma, Drona, Kṛpa, and other elders looked on, remained quiet, and did not utter a single word of protest against the enormity of the crime. They were afraid; they did not have the courage to point out that an injustice was being done to Draupadi. They feared that they would thereby incur the displeasure of the State. But Vidura, as an individual, had no doubt or hesitation in the matter. He did not falter or equivocate. Although he was a salaried servant of the State, he rose from his seat and with uplifted hands warned the entire assembly as to the dire consequences that would follow from their silence and inactivity (68. 58).

No doubt or hesitation afflicted his mind or clouded his sense of duty. He was also equally emphatic in pointing out the clear duty of the entire assembly in the present crisis. He sternly rebuked the members present by saying that their silence in the face of a manifest injustice was definitely undermining the moral foundation of the State and society. Moral order depended upon justice, and if justice were not allowed to function, then the future of society would be doomed. Lowes Dickinson says, 'Justice is a power, and if it cannot create, it will at least destroy. So that the question for the future is not, shall there be a revolution, but shall it be beneficent or disastrous?' Vidura had no doubt that justice suffered (पीडयते) in that crisis and justice was bound to exact the price of the confusion and perversity of the members of the Kuru Court. Vidura at the same time laid down an important dictum that a person in distress who approaches an assembly with an appeal for justice must not be looked upon as insignificant, weak, and helpless; on the other hand, he should be regarded as somebody with a flame of fire in him. This fire can only be quenched by the proper administration of justice. If

the members of the assembly remain silent, they become guilty of conniving at the wrong that is happening before their eyes. Their silence is tantamount to their acquiescence in the wrong. If, however, the members of the assembly deliberately utter an untruth or give a wrong turn to the question, then certainly the entire assembly becomes guilty of perpetrating the misdeed. Half of the demerit accruing from the untruth will fall to their share (अनृते या फलाव्याप्तिस्तस्याः सोऽर्धं समश्नुते) (*ibid.*, 68. 60-64).

Vidura was thus expounding the doctrine that justice and moral susceptibility were inherent in human beings, and said that the members of the assembly must recognize these qualities as ornaments of the State and the bonds of society. Vidura asked Dhṛtarāstra to banish his son Duryodhana for all the sins that he was openly committing, and he implored him, again and again, to win the confidence of the Pandavas by fairness and regard for justice. Otherwise Vidura had no hesitation in predicting that the ruin of the entire Kuru dynasty was inevitable (द्रु दंकुर्णा भविता विनाशाः). This sane advice of Vidura fell on deaf ears. Dhṛtarāstra was blind from his very birth; he was blind to the faults of his sons through his extreme weakness and excessive fondness for his children. He was deaf also when anybody gave him good advice against the faults of his sons. The *Mahābhārata* is full of the lamentations of the old king, but it should not be forgotten that these lamentations were the natural and inevitable consequence of his lack of judgement and want of foresight. The great epic proclaims, in no uncertain voice, that the root cause of the ruin of the Kuru family was the stupidity of Dhṛtarāstra who always consulted Vidura on all critical occasions, but never acted according to his advice.

When the five Pandava brothers and Draupadi were about to undertake their journey into the wilderness, Vidura, in the presence of all, uttered his blessings. He said that success to the pure and true was certain. He therefore asked Yudhishthira not to be depressed or downhearted, because Yudhishthira, in spite of his defeat in the game of dice, and in spite of the loss of all his worldly belongings, yet possessed the greatest thing in life, namely, *dharma*, and the courage to suffer for a just cause. Such suffering ultimately helped human beings. Vidura could therefore foretell the ultimate victory of the Pandavas, and he said that he would live for the day when the Pandavas would return to their kingdom with all their glory and prestige undiminished.

(*Ibid.*, 78. 21).

After the departure of the Pandavas to the forest, Dhṛtarāstra became somewhat nervous and disconsolate. He sent for Vidura and sought his advice again. Dhṛtarāstra said that Vidura alone possessed wisdom and sagacity, that in this family of royal sages he was the only one respected by the wise (प्राज्ञसम्मतः). Vidura, as usual, tendered the same advice, namely, the chastisement of Duryodhana and others, repentance for past sins, and the sending of an invitation to the Pandavas to come back from the forest and enjoy their own kingdom again. This advice only served to irritate Dhṛtarāstra, who peremptorily asked Vidura to leave. Vidura was not embarrassed in the least. He knew that he was giving his advice for a just cause. He immediately went to the forest to meet Yudhishthira and offered him the same advice—the advice which he has given, again and again, throughout the game of dice, namely, the necessity of preserving patience and courage in the midst of a

crisis; and the unwavering fortitude to suffer for the sake of justice. Yudhisthira and his brothers felt once more inspired after listening to these words of Vidura.

When the Pandavas returned after having spent thirteen years in the wilderness, and demanded the restoration of their paternal inheritance, Vidura came forward to support the just demands of the Pandavas. In the open Kuru assembly of Hastinapur, he raised his voice in favour of a just deal. He implored Dhṛtarashtra, again and again, to be kind and just. He administered a sharp rebuke to Duryodhana for his unrighteous conduct, and warned him that the result of his policy would be a terrible calamity, in which everything would be lost. Vidura's prophetic words were not heeded by Duryodhana, and the tragedy of Kuruksetra became inevitable.

After the Kuruksetra War, in which the entire Kuru family was annihilated, Vidura did not desert the old and helpless king Dhṛtarashtra. He remained a faithful companion, friend, philosopher, and guide to the blind and infirm king. In the midst of desolation and despair, his words were of inspiration and encouragement. He stood by Dhṛtarashtra throughout the remaining years of his life, following him even when Dhṛtarashtra embraced a life of renunciation and went to the forest. Vidura felt that this was justice. He was a friend in need, and for the sake of his master and benefactor, he was prepared to undergo suffering and make the supreme sacrifice.

Sri Kṛṣṇa Upholds Dharma

The doctrines that had been propounded by Vidura in the Kuru assembly at Hastinapura were once more re-emphasized by

Sri Kṛṣṇa before the same assembly on a historic occasion. Sri Kṛṣṇa had approached Dhṛtarāstra and Duryodhana with definite peace proposals on the eve of the Kuruksetra War. Duryodhana, however, contemptuously turned down these peace offers and threatened to arrest and detain Sri Kṛṣṇa as a hostage. Finding that the members of the assembly were silent and did not utter a word of protest against the conduct of Duryodhana, Sri Kṛṣṇa sternly rebuked them for their failure to rise to the occasion and perform their just duties. He was enunciating the fundamental doctrine that an unjust act should evoke a spirit of protest from those who happen to witness it. Before the very eyes of the assembled members injustice was being perpetrated. A manifest wrong was being committed by a haughty and arrogant king. The silence of the members of the assembly and the absence of the spirit of protest were nothing short of a crime. The members were guilty of criminal negligence of duty through their timidity and inaction. Sri Kṛṣṇa had no hesitation in declaring that the conduct of the Kuru elders constituted a grave dereliction of duty (महानयमतिघ्नमः). And he predicted great disaster (विमर्दी भविता महान्). He also pointed out that it was essential in the interests of social well-being that a manifest wrong or injury to a good cause must not be allowed to happen before the eyes of an honest individual or in an open assembly. The indifference to or connivance at the perpetration of a wrong is tantamount to the suicide of those who look on and do not strive their utmost to prevent it. Sri Kṛṣṇa had no love or respect for a cloistered or hidden virtue, which did not come out into the open to meet its adversary. Such a virtue, he said, always led to ruin and destruction, just as a torrential river carried away by its strong current the trees and houses standing on its banks. Before he

left the Kuru Court, he therefore, gave a final warning to its members. He said that he was not concerned so much about the conduct of Duryodhana, which was reprehensible enough; he was more vitally interested in the attitude of the members of the assembly towards the wrong, which was being connived at. Here undoubtedly Sri Kṛṣṇa was laying down a dictum of inestimable value that, in social affairs, an honest individual must always protest against a social wrong. Silence in such a case becomes tantamount to acquiescence in the crime, and such silence, or the absence of protest, brings about disaster in the long run.

Draupadi condemns violation of Dharma

Draupadi is another great character of the *Mahābhārata*, who by her utterances reinforces the same doctrine. In the *Virataparvan*, we find Draupadi was grossly insulted by Kicaka, the commander-in-chief of the Matsya State. Draupadi sought the protection of the Matsya Court in order to escape Kicaka, but nevertheless the arrogant commander-in-chief gave her several kicks in the open assembly. Draupadi in tears asked for justice, but justice was not forthcoming. The king as well as the members of the assembly remained completely silent. They had not the courage to condemn the conduct of Kicaka or even to utter a mild word of protest against his heinous offence. Draupadi however, was unafraid. Before the whole assembly she rebuked the king saying: 'O King, your conduct towards Kicaka is utterly unworthy of your royal office. Such behaviour befits barbarians and not an assembly. Such a state of affairs brought disgrace to the entire assembly; Draupadi said, दस्युनामेष घर्मस्ते न च संसदि शोभति (*Virataparvam*, 17:31). She did not remain satisfied by rebuking only the king; she had

equally strong words for the members of the assembly, who by their silence and inaction practically supported what was happening before their eyes. She warned them about the consequences of this conduct : सभासदोऽप्यन्नर्मजय एनं पयुं पासते—'a courtier who worships him (such a king) also becomes unrighteous.' Draupadi thus preached the necessity of protest on the part of individuals and an assembly against an act of injustice. 'Protest becomes a duty, even a religious duty' and failure to perform this duty in the face of a crisis always undermines the social order and social well-being. Draupadi certainly recollected on this occasion her insults at the hands of Duhsasana in the open Kuru assembly at Hastinapura. She spoke then with great firmness about the necessity of condemning vile deeds in unmeasured terms. On that occasion also she was greatly pained and surprised that the reprehensible conduct of Duhsasana received no condemnation from the members of the assembly who remained silent. Draupadi therefore concluded that Duhsasana's action had the approval of the entire assembly. She said, addressing Duhsasana :

न चापि कश्चित् कुस्तेऽत्र कुत्साम् ।
ध्वं त्वदीयं मत्तमभ्युपेताः ॥

(*Sabhaparvan*, 67, 39)

Gandhari's Insistence on Justice

Gandhari more than any other person in the great epic, kept her faith in the moral order or justice undimmed; and in the hours of supreme crisis in her life, she always unhesitatingly sacrificed narrow, personal, selfish interests, and embraced the cause of virtue and righteousness. This she did even at the peril of herself and the fortunes of her family. She kept aloft

the standard of dharma and asked others to act in the same manner. After the terrible disaster of the Kuruksetra War, in which she lost all her hundred sons and other near relations, Gandhari stood firm and maintained her unflinching faith in the triumph of justice, and she boldly expressed her feelings to that effect.

Gandhari gave birth to one hundred sons but these sons did not fulfil the expectations of their virtuous mother. She never approved of the conduct of her sons towards their Pandava cousins, and often appealed to her husband to check their evil propensities. In the game of dice at the Court of Hastinapura, Yudhishthira gambled away his all; he lost his kingdom, fortune, his brothers, and even his dear wife. There was great jubilation at the court, in which the old king Dhṛtarashtra also joined. But there was one person in Hastinapura on that day, who was stricken with great grief. It was Gandhari. On seeing the base and unjust conduct of her sons and the unmerited sufferings of the Pandavas, she approached her husband and asked him to express his firm disapproval of the conduct of their wicked sons. She went even a step further and peremptorily told her husband to banish Duryodhana, who had become a disgrace to the whole Kuru family.

As a mother, Gandhari never allowed her love and affection for her sons to get the better of her judgement and wisdom. Her voice throughout the *Mahābhārata* is the voice of warning to her sons, who were treading the path of error and injustice. Her constant exhortation to Duryodhana was to make up the quarrel existing between the Kauravas and the Pandavas and to find a formula of peaceful and amicable settlement. When Sri Kṛṣṇa

came to Hastinapura on the eve of the Kuruksetra War as a plenipotentiary of the Pandavas with specific peace proposals, and when these proposals were being contemptuously rejected by Duryodhana, Gandhari, throwing aside all hesitations, appeared personally in the Royal Court of Hastinapura and sternly rebuked Duryodhana for his wayward conduct. She plainly told her son in the midst of the entire assembly that the wages of sin was death. She also said that war would not solve away problems; on the contrary, it would lead to further complications. So her definite and emphatic advice to her son was to restrain his greed and desist from war.

Duryodhana, however, had no respect for the sane words of his mother and adopted war as an instrument of his policy. After the outbreak of the Kuruksetra War, which lasted for eighteen days, Duryodhana used to visit his mother every day before going to the battle-field in order to seek her blessings. The pathetic prayer of Duryodhana was that his mother should wish victory for his cause :

शिवमाशंस मे मातुर्दुःखमानस्य शत्रुभिः ।

अस्मिन् ज्ञातिसमुद्धर्षे जयामम्बा ब्रवीतु मे ॥

(*Striparvan, 14.8*)

But in spite of his repeated entreaties, Gandhari always uttered the highly significant words before Duryodhana that there was a power that makes for righteousness, and righteousness always and invariably triumphs. After the conclusion of the war in which all her sons were slain, Sri Kṛṣṇa, after pacifying Gandhari, asked her permission to go away immediately to save the Pandava princes from impending danger. She quickly asked him to depart and save the Pandava princes

from this disaster; such was her composure in the midst of a terrible calamity, and so great were her sense of duty and her affection for the Pandavas.

Virtue will triumph

The *Mahābhārata* has an enduring and everlasting message for mankind across the reverberating corridors of time. That message is the need for an abiding and abounding faith in the triumph of virtue and righteousness. The victory of moral law is inevitable. Gandhari and Vidura, the two most outstanding characters in the great epic, have testified to this fact again and again in the pages the *Mahābhārata*. They were great seers, persons with vision, who could see the existence of a moral order in the universe. They kept faith and were not dismayed by the crumbling ruins of a mighty power strewn like a vast heap of futility. They did not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in man or the moral order of the universe. Sometimes, no doubt, *dharma* seems to hide its face, but nevertheless it most unexpectedly returns and, as Milton has observed in *Samon Agonistes*, 'to his faithful champion hath in place bore witness gloriously.' The uncontrollable intent of *dharma* shall prevail; it is bound to prevail.

The author of the *Mahābhārata* ends his great work by issuing a clarion call to duty and it is our duty to broadcast to mankind, in this hour of its need and its peril, the luminous message of Maharsi Kṛṣṇa Dvaipayana : Dharma is eternal; pleasures and pains are but momentary. Therefore *dharma* should not be given up for the sake of any desire, gain, or profit; it should not be abandoned out of any fear or even for the sake of protecting one's earthly existence.

Maharsi Kṛṣṇa Dyaipayana Vyasa tells with considerable pain that he has cried himself hoarse, urging the people to follow the path of *dharma*. He proclaims that with uplifted hands he asks everybody to follow the path of rectitude, but nobody listens to him. *Dharma* is the giver of all that we need. So why should we not dedicate ourselves to its service? Let not this lamentation of the great poet of India remain a futile cry in the wilderness.

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“Only by taking refuge in Him can sorrow be removed. The troubles and difficulties encountered as the fruit of one’s own actions are but the grace of God. If one accepts them as such, one will progress towards one’s real welfare.”

— MATA ANANDAMAYI

Splinters from Naimisharanya

K. G. Ambegaokar

It was in 1960 that a Samyam Saptah was held in Naimisharanya for the first time at the invitation of Swami Naradanda who has his Ashram there. This is a holy place with several temples amongst which the best known are those of Lalita Devi and one with a huge image of Hanuman carrying Rama and Lakshman on his shoulders. There is a circular pond called Chakra Tirtha, a dip in which is considered meritorious. The place is also famous for the 88000 Rishis who did penance there in ancient times and listened to the 18 Purānas from Sukdev. It was because of this that Sri Mata Anandamayi had the idea of building a Purāna Mandir here. I remember that on that occasion Mataji wanted a Purāna to be read but curiously in this birth-place of Purānas it was not to be found and had to be got from Sitapur or Lucknow. Now the temple is a reality with all the 18 Purānas in it and the images of Veda Vyasa on one side and Sukadeva on the other. An Ashram has also been built for Ma. It was decided to hold the Durga, Lakshmi and Kali Pūjā celebrations at this Ashram this year. The Durga Pūjā was financed by Sri Shailendra and Srimati Kalpana Ghosh, and it is about this Pūjā that I wish to give some of my impressions.

Our party arrived from Lucknow partly by car and partly by bus. We were lucky enough to have accomodation in the Government Inspection Bungalow which is on the main road.

The Purāna Mandir was about a mile from there but we had not only our car but also that of a Bengali couple who came to occupy the second room in the bungalow.

Our first concern was to do obeisance to Mata Anandamayi. We could only see her from the door of her room, sitting on a wooden couch and one of her eyes seemed swollen. We were told that Ma was not keeping good health but from the next day we found her very active, going about everywhere and also sitting in the pandal for hours.

The pandal was put up next to the mandir with a dais on which the image was installed and āsanās were kept for the Mahatmas. The image was a large elaborate construction with all sorts of decorations. In the middle was a tall figure of Durga with one foot on her lion and the other on the Mahishasura whose head she had cut off but out of whose neck the demon was emerging. On two sides were slightly smaller figures of Lakshmi and Saraswati. The last figure was very white, the other goddesses had wheat complexion. At the end of each side were Ganesh and Kartikeya. All the figures were extremely beautiful and I was told that an artist from Calcutta had been specially called to make them. There used to be most elaborate Pūjā lasting for about two hours every morning, and one was held at midnight at the conjunction of the eighth and ninth day of the Indian month. On the afternoon of Dasehra the image was taken to the Gomati for immersion and it was quite an effort to move that huge structure.

There were the usual discourses but not many Mahatmas had come. Naradananda came one day and spoke a little. The savant, Tripurari Chakravarti, with his vast knowledge of the

Mahābhārata and the Purānas explained the origin of Naimisharanya and some episodes from the epic. Brahmachari Nirmalananda used to speak for about an hour in the evening; his discourses were always sweet and instructive. Chhabi Banerji, the radio singer, sang bhajans during the Pūjās and Ma Herself led the chorus for nearly half an hour one day.

Mataji was in very good mood all the time. As usual people crowded round her and jostled each other to do *pranāma* but she was always her unruffled, smiling self. She used to sit on the dais for some time and then come out and occupy the *takhat* which was kept for her just below the dais. She suffers from allergy to flowers and we had been warned not to offer her garlands. But some people still persisted in giving garlands and once when this was happening and Udas was chiding them, Ma asked her to let the people do what they liked. One day Mataji brought a bowl of sandal paste and started applying it to everybody's forehead. For some time I kept sitting in the hall but somebody said that was not the way to get the sandalwood paste and then I too joined the crush and got my forehead marked. Actually this process went on for quite a long time and everyone of the hundreds of devotees got the paste from Ma's fingers. At the end of the function Ma gave sweets to everyone with her own hands; this distribution to so many people was quite an arduous labour.

The attendance was large, and feeding such a concourse must have been a difficult task but it was very satisfactorily performed under the able supervision of Swami Swarupananda who saw to it that everyone was served and that the three sittings were arranged quickly one after the other. Luckily

there were also a number of efficient volunteers for serving the food which was always good and plentiful.

On the last day my wife and I, like many other devotees, did Pūjā of Ma and she was so gracious as to put her hand on my head. How ecstatic I felt. That feeling lasted for hours. Before leaving we had a private interview and Ma gave appropriate advice to each one of us.

The whole Durga Pūjā function was an extremely happy and sacred affair which has acted like the charging of the spiritual battery and we must prostrate ourselves before Ma for the favour she showed to all of us on this occasion.

"I searched, but I could not find Thee; I called Thee aloud, standing on the minaret; I rang the temple bell with the rising and setting of the sun; I bathed in the Ganges in vain; I came back from Kaaba disappointed; I looked for Thee on the earth; I searched for Thee in the heaven, my Beloved, but at last I have found Thee hidden as a pearl in the shell of my heart."

— HAZRAT INAYAT KHAN

Mātri Līlā

(September 15th—December 31st, 1972)

On September 19th, Mataji arrived in Varanasi from Hardwar. On the 22nd she suddenly left with only three companions, without disclosing her destination. Afterwards it became known that she had gone to Rajgir for a couple of days' rest. Mataji returned to Varanasi on September 26th and from there proceeded to Naimisharanya on October 1st, reaching at about 11 a. m. the next morning. The same day a newly built cottage in our Ashram grounds was ceremonially opened in Mataji's presence. Mataji sat in the still very damp house for two hours which had an adverse effect on her health. This gave her the chance to rest alone in her room until midday the next day, when some guests arrived unexpectedly from Poona. At once Mataji was again up and doing. After thirteen months of *mouna*, Mataji is now talking freely. In fact she is very communicative, as if to make up for her long silence. Mataji had already pronounced a few words in Bombay and Ahmedabad. Gradually she began to speak in full sentences. At Kankhal, on September 18th evening, before boarding the train for Varanasi from Kankhal, she for the first time since August 18th, 1971 talked for perhaps half an hour at a stretch to a few people who had gathered on her veranda, relating about the high flood just before the Samyam Vrata at Naimisharanya in 1960, how the water miraculously subsided in no time so that, against all expectation, our function could be held as scheduled. Mataji mentioned many details in connection with

that very sacred place of pilgrimage and then invited the people present to come to Naimisharanya for Durga Puja, not heeding the hardships they might have to put up with in that out of the way village.

After Mataji's arrival at Naimisharanya on October 2nd, portions from the Ramayana were recited daily from 6-11 a. m. under the tamāl tree near Mataji's cottage. In the evenings, *satsang* was held regularly in the same place in Mataji's presence.

One day, when Mataji got busy getting a place under a tree cleared, she discovered a Siva Linga in an empty flower pot. The Brahmachari who stays at Naimisharanya had found it somewhere and kept it there. Mataji had the linga placed under a beltree and along with Durgā Pūjā, Siva Pūjā was performed there every morning. Last year also, when Durgā Pūjā was celebrated in great style in our Ashram at New Delhi, Siva Puja was performed as well, due to the following incident : The night before *Mahālayā*, one of the Delhi devotees had dreamt that Lord Siva had given her a mantra and a sacred thread and told her : "I have come to stay at the Anandamayi Ashram for a month with my whole family".

This year *Mahālayā* (the beginning of *Nava Rātri*) fell on October 7th*. Durgā Pūjā was celebrated on a much smaller scale than last year at New Delhi, yet for Naimisharanya it was an outstanding event of great magnitude. Over and above the large number of devotees who had gathered from Lucknow, Delhi, Varanasi, Calcutta, Bombay and other places, villagers from the whole surrounding area flocked in spectacular numbers.

* See also "Splinters from Naimisharanya", the article preceding 'Mātri Līlā' in this issue.

They had never before witnessed a Durga Puja as it had last been performed in Naimisharanya in the hoary past by a Rishi. In addition to the Pūjā, there was *satsang* every evening and Professor Tripurari Chakravarti delivered a lecture daily in Mataji's presence. Once the Brahmacharis of Naradanandashram were entertained to a feast.

On October 22nd Lakshmi Pūjā was celebrated in the same pandal in the usual manner. The electricity failed that evening and Mataji (who invariably sees a blessing in disguise in whatever may or may not happen) remarked that Lakshmi Devi must have wanted her pūjā done in the old style in such an ancient place.

Soon after, Mataji went to Varanasi for about a week, returning to Naimisharanya on November 2nd.

On November 5th, Kālī Pūjā was celebrated during Diwali night. Mataji took very active interest in this function also and on this occasion related several remarkable incidents that had occurred in connection with Kali Pūjās performed at Bajitpur and Dacca in the nineteen twenties in Bholanath's presence. The day after Diwali, *Annakut*, the festival of plenty of Goodess Annapurna was observed and that day Mataji visited Naradananda Ashram.

From Naimisharanya Ma went straight to Kankhal, alighting there on November 8th early morning. A number of American devotees, who had come across the ocean to take part in the *Samyam Mahāvratā*, were already in Hardwar and received Mataji at the Railway Station. Mataji stayed in our Ashram at Kankhal for three days, and on the 11th she and everyone else shifted to Surat Giri Bungalow at Sri Girishananda

Ashram, Kankhal, where the 23rd *Samyam Mahāvratā* was observed from November 13th to 19th. Mahamandaleshwar Sri Swami Brahmananda, the successor of Sri Swami Maheshwarananda, is the head of this very extensive and beautiful Ashram which comprises a hall that can seat about 800 people and a number of large buildings where most of the *vratīs* could be accommodated very comfortably. A minority stayed in neighbouring ashrams. The whole site is directly on the Ganges and singularly well suited for a function of this kind. Needless to say it was a grand success. Sri Ram Panjwani was responsible for all arrangements which were quite excellent.

The talks were extremely interesting and enlightening and there was lovely music as well. Sri Swami Akhandananda of Vrindaban expounded Upanishads every morning and gave another discourse in the evening. When he left on the fifth day, Sri Swami Vishnuashram of Suktal took his place. Our gracious host, Swami Brahmananda also talked daily as well as several other brilliant speakers, mostly Mahamandaleshwaras of Hardwar and Rishikesh Ashrams. Sri Swamis Chidananda and Krishnānanda of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh delivered extremely fine talks in English to the great delight of our brothers and sisters from abroad who could not understand a word of Hindi. Dr. Roma Choudhury, Vice-Chancellor, Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta spoke in English and then in Bengali.

This time about thirty *vratīs* hailed from foreign countries, most of them from the U. S. A. and a few from France, Germany, Switzerland and Australia. On the eve of the *vratā*, Mataji distributed Sanskrit Bhagvad Gitas with English translation to them and at the end of the week "*namāvalis*" (scarfs

with sacred names printed on them) as a souvenir of this memorable gathering.

Mataji was more active than ever and everyone could have *darśana* to their hearts' content. On most days she sat in the hall for about ten hours, that is to say, practically through the entire *satsang*. In between she attended to hundreds of people and saw to everything—here, there and everywhere. It was really miraculous. One day, during the interval at midday, Sri Sitaramdas Onkarnathji with his party suddenly arrived. Mataji welcomed them with enthusiasm and asked the famous saint to give a short address straightaway. During "*Mātri Satsang*", the last half hour of the daily programme, Mataji replied to questions very generously and with her delightful sense of humour and two or three times she sang. At the end of the midnight meditation on the last day, Mataji with her own hands distributed fruits and sweets to all *vratis*.

After the completion of the *havan* and after partaking of the feast on November 20th, many *vratis* left for their respective home, others stayed on in Hardwar while Mataji returned to our Kankhal Ashram for a few days. There also she had an extremely busy time with any number of private interviews and other things that required her attention. One morning Mataji, accompanied by a large party, visited Sri Sivananda Ashram at Rishikesh for a few hours. On November 24th, she motored to Dehradun where she spent two hours at Kalyanvan and two hours at the Kishenpur Ashram, boarding the train to Lucknow the same night.

On the 25th morning a large number of local devotees came to the Railway Station at Lucknow to pay their respects

to Mataji. From there she drove straight to Swadeshi House, Kanpur, where she was the guest of the Jaipuria family. Very few local people knew of Mataji's arrival and so at last Mataji had the opportunity to rest after the extremely hectic weeks at Naimisharanya and Hardwar. Every day for some time Mataji would stroll about in the beautiful gardens of Swadeshi House. In the evening there were discourses on the Ramayana and *kirtana*. On November 27th, Sri L. N. Misra, Central Minister for Foreign Trade came for Mataji's *darsana*. He sat for some time in the morning *satsang* and then had a private talk with Mataji. Sri Raja Ram Jaipuria took great pains to make Mataji and her party feel comfortable and at home. After three calm and quiet days, Mataji left Kanpur on November 28th, reaching Varanasi the same night.

At Varanasi *Satsang* was held daily with discourses, songs and film shows. Swami Nirmalananda of Sri Anandamayi Monastery, Oklahoma, U. S. A. had come with four or five of his Brahmacharis to join the *Samyam Vrata*. They had followed Mataji to Varanasi and one night showed coloured films and slides of their Ashram. Mataji watched with full attention. One evening they performed *pujā* and *ārati* and offered a garland of one thousand and eight red and white chrystal beads. On December 6th evening the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Sri Kamalapati Tripathi came to our Ashram to release the newly published Hindi book "*Tantra Sahitya*" by Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj. There was an impressive function in the hall of Gopal Mandir in which Dr. G. Kaviraj was given an ovation in Mataji's presence.

From December 7th to 15th, a Bhagavata Saptah was

held arranged by Dr. Premlata Srivastava in the sacred memory of her father. The famous expounder of the Srimad Bhagavata, Sri Lalit Goswami of Allahabad officiated, reciting in Sanskrit in the mornings and explaining in Hindi every afternoon. Quite a number of guests had arrived from Calcutta and other places. Twice the world famous musician Ravi Shanker and his party came for Mataji's *darsana* and had lunch in the Ashram.

As soon as the *Bhagavata Saptah* was over, *Gita Jayanti* started. Every morning the *Bhagavad Gita* was chanted in chorus, followed by discourses on the *Gita* and *kirtana* in the afternoon. The *Jayanti* ended on December 17th with a grand *Puja* of Sri Gopalji and distribution of *prasada* to everyone present by Mataji Herself. On the 16th there was *abhisheka* of Gopalji, on the 18th *Rudrabhisheka* and on the 20th *abhisheka* of Annapurna performed with great pomp and splendour after an interval of twenty-five years. The Annapurna temple had recently been white-washed and painted and the deities had been accommodated in the *Chandi Mandap* in the meanwhile. Now they were re-installed in their own temple. Thus, all through Mataji's sojourn at Varanasi, everyone was kept busy in joining one function after another. Off and on Mataji was not too well, but then again extremely active and in a jolly mood.

On December 21st, Mataji left for Kanpur, alighting the same evening at the Ashram built for Her by Sir Padampad Singhania near the beautiful Radha Krishna temple. Two years ago as well as last winter Sir P. Singhania had arranged for a large gathering of a fortnight's duration in which

Sri Swami Akhandananda would give discourses on the *Srimad Bhagavata*, *Srimad Bhagawat Gita*, *Ramayana*, *Upanishad* for five hours daily in Mataji's august presence in a pandal of imposing size before an audience of thousands. This year also a more or less similar religious festival started on the 25th. On the 23rd our Delhi Kirtana party arrived and started the same evening a *Nama Yajna* of *mahāmantra* that continued uninterruptedly until after sunset the next day. A smaller pandal had been specially erected for this purpose on the Ashram lawn. Next to it a tent had been provided for Mataji in which she could rest during the night while the ladies were keeping up the kirtana, circling round the traditional circular altar. Early morning the men took up and continued all day long. Mataji was in an excellent mood and joined the kirtana actively for fairly long spells both during the night and the next day, singing and dancing Herself most animatedly. The *kirtana* of our Delhi party is always specially inspiring and creates a wonderful atmosphere of *bhakti*, *ānanda* and *Bhagavta prema* (divine love). When Swami Akhandanandaji saw how actively Mataji took part in the *kirtana*, even he felt moved to join in. At the end Mataji sang "*dharo lao*" as she usually does on these occasions and distributed *prasada* with full hands.

Swami Akhandananda's health is unfortunately not very satisfactory and he therefore talks for one hour in the morning on the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Upanishads* and holds discourses on *Krishna Lila* for two hours every afternoon. Devotees from all over India as well as two or three from foreign countries are present at Kanpur, enjoying the inspiring discourses, Mataji's excellent mood and the generous hospitality of the Singhanian family.

Mataji is expected to leave for Delhi on January 8th, to attend a function arranged by the devotees of Sri Haribabaji who took *mahasamadhi* just three years ago, in January 1970. From Delhi Mataji is to proceed to Nainisharanya and remain there over *Sankranti* (January 14th). On *Vasant Panchami* day February 8th, *Saraswati Puja* will be celebrated in Mataji's presence at the residence of Sri Rameshwar Sahai, Retired Conservator of Forests, at Lucknow. From there Mataji is expected to travel to Poona for another *Bhagavata Saptah*.
