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To invoke THAT, to be constantly intent on realizing it, is man's duty. At All times in Her arms, in Her embrace—within the Mother. On finding the Mother, everything is found.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

I love because I must love  
I know not why I love  
Love is all Japa and Tapa  
Love is real Sadhana

—Shree Shree Sitaramdas Onkarnath

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# ANANDA VARTĀ

*The Eternal, the Ātman—  
Itself pilgrim and path of Immortality  
Self contained—THAT is all in One.*

Vol. XXXX

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No. 3

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God is complete. Thus for full revelation One has to go to Him. Only because of the nation of God's absence is there sorrow in the World. Where God is manifest there are no 'two'—sorrow has no place.

—Shree Shree Ma Anandamayi

He saw God in everything and in loving everyone he loved God or in loving God, he loved everyone.

—Shree Shree Sitaramdas Onkarnath

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## Matri Vani

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

\* \* \*

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

\* \* \*

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

\* \* \*

Go forth to realize God— try at least. This is the genuine madman. Madman (pagol) means pawa gol, peye gele achieved ; signifying unlimited enlightenment. When one becomes obsessed by this madness, the madness after the world of duality takes flight. Some people are crazy over another's body. By this sort of insanity, falling a prey to infatuation (moha) and delusion (maya), one ruins

one's body. Turning into a maniac after God will not spoil one's body.

\* \* \*

Using power is a very different matter from coming about spontaneously, of its own. If power is used deliberately, the 'I' remains and consequently a downfall may result from it. Whereas in the case of a spontaneous occurrence this is not so.

\* \* \*

Infatuation (moha) causes entanglement while the love of God (prema) leads to Self-revelation. Having become involved in moha, weeping and regret is bound to follow.

\* \* \*

He who is the Supreme Friend never deceives. From the worldly point of view, a son may be disowned, but that Friend can never be given up.

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## Reminiscences of Anandamayee Ma\*

### 9. The Arrival of the Mother at Ranchi and the Establishment of Ranchi Ashram.

Professor Bireswar Ganguly, D. Litt

( *Continued from previous issue* )

Tantric Yogiraj Sri Sri Pagal Baba of Ranchi Mukteshwardham used to say that Ranchi would be considered as a renowned place of pilgrimage in the *Kali Yuja*. The name Ranchi indicated *Radha Chinmayee Shakti* ( Ran = Radha, Chi = Chinmayee ). In the midst of the beautiful natural surroundings of Chotanagpur, at this spiritually surcharged place of Ranchi, Premavatar Swami Yogananda had established Brahmacharya Vidyalay and Yogada Math—the first monastery of Yogada Satsang Society, in the 1930's. It is here at Movabadi Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, Swami Vishuddhananda, the former President of Ramakrishna Math and Mission had performed his spiritual practices for many years. Eight or ten kilometres west of Ranchi, at a place called Kamre, by the side of a small rivulet the renowned Hatha Yogi, Swami Sachchidananda Saraswati had established his ashram and had become famous for curing

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\* Translated by the author from *Ananda Varta* (Bengali ed),  
October, 1990.

incurable diseases of innumerable devotees by his yogic powers. Dr. Theos Bernard<sup>1</sup>, an internationally renowned American Yogi, had learnt Hatha Yoga and Tantra Yoga from Sri Sri Pagal Baba in 1936 at this very place of Ranchi, the centre of *sadhana*.

The first arrival of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee, the incarnation of the Divine Shakti of Brahma, at Ranchi took place a little before 1934, along with Swami Yogananda in the Yogada Brahmacharya School<sup>2</sup>. The second arrival of Sri Sri Ma at Ranchi took place on 29th December, 1953. At that time I was a lecturer in the Ranchi College. I had the first encounter with the Mother on the Saraswati Puja day of 1951 at Patna while I was a lecturer in the B. N. College and subsequently, I had the good fortune of receiving the Mother's grace and blessings. On instructions from the Mother, I used to explain Srimad Bhagavat Geeta in Bengali and Hindi in spiritual gatherings every Sunday evening at the residences of devotees of Mother, by turn, in 1952 and 1953. It was in such gatherings that we used to discuss the proposal of inviting the Mother at Ranchi.

Dr. Sachin Sen and Mrs. Sen, Mr. and Mrs. Lalu Sen, Mr. and Mrs. Satya Sen, Mr. Debipada Sen,

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1. Vide : Theos Bernard : (i) *Hatha Yoga*, (ii) *Heaven Lies within Us*, (iii) *Penthouse of the gods*, & (iv) *Tibetan grammar*.

2. Vide : Paramahansa Yogananda : *Yogi Kathamrita*, P. 613 (Bengali ed. of *An Autobiography of a Yogi*).

The exact date of their arrival is not mentioned. But perhaps, it was not 1934, for I was present as a boy in 1934.



Mr. Janaki Prasad Sahu, Dr. Priya Ranjan Ghosh and others used to participate in the discussion. Dr. Ghosh was the latest addition to the group. He was a handsome well-to-do bachelor with western manners and dress. He had acquired substantial wealth as the best dental surgeon of Ranchi in the post-war II period. He constructed a new building on the main road at Ranchi for opening his chamber. However, we never gave him a long rope. When a few of us decided to participate in the Durga Puja ceremony at Allahabad in the presence of the Mother in 1952, we ignored Dr. Ghosh, inspite of his expressed curiosity. Of course he was present at Allahabad ahead of us.

I realised on that day that he was a silent devotee, who avoided publicity. After returning from that Durga Puja we made it a practice to have the weekly spiritual gathering in the chamber of Priyada's new house. The rear portion of the house had been rented out and Priyada used to reside in the house of Mr. Lalu Sen. His old dental clinic was located in a rented building on the main road.

On 27th December, 1953 I received an unexpected telegram from Gurupriya Didi, stating that Mother would arrive along with five attendants, at Ranchi on 29th December, and that after informing other devotees, proper arrangement should be made for the stay of Mother and party.<sup>3</sup> So long we had been procrastinating in the matter of invi-

3 Vide : Gurupriya Devi : *Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee*, Vol XI, Pp. 179-80.

ting Mother to Ranchi for fear of heavy expenses to be incurred on the boarding and lodging of a large party, accompanying Mother. But lo ! Mother was so merciful that She was coming without any formal invitation from us. I informed Sachin-da, Lalu-da, Priya-da, Janaki Prasad and others and began preparations for the stay of Mother, Gurupriya Didi, Swami Paramananda, Udasji and the other two attendants. I proposed to make arrangements for their lodging in the premises of Chotanagpur Girls' High School and for the *Satsang* (spiritual gathering) in the Ranchi College hall. For it was a convention that Mother never stayed in the residence of a house-holder. However, ultimately Sachin-da, Priya-da and others made arrangements for their lodging as well as *Satsang* in the new house of Priya-da. At this I was displeased at the outset.

Sri Sri Ma, Gurupriya Didi, Swamiji and two other attendants reached Muri Junction Station from Jamshedpur on 29th December and from there they were brought to Ranchi by motor car. As soon as Mother arrived at the verandah of the new house of Dr. Ghosh, She asked, "Whose house is it" ? When She was told that it was the house of Dr. Priya Ranjan Ghosh and the rear portion had been rented out, She hesitated for a few seconds and then entered the chamber hall of the house for the *Satsang*. The room was packed to its full capacity and there was a holy atmosphere created by devotional music. That very year I had been married in the month of February, but I

failed to see Mother along with my wife, Nupur prior to Her arrival. It seemed that Mother was pleased after seeing Nupur and talking to her. Then She told me, "Nilmani, you did not come to see this body along with your Nupur (anklets) and hence this body has come to see what sort of anklets you have worn,—worldly consort or spiritual consort."

All of a sudden we heard that Gurupriya Didi had made arrangements for Mother's retirement at night in the car garage of Priya Dham of Debabrata Mukherjee (Khoka Babu) in the nearby Peppe compound. Mother spent the night of 29th and daytime of 30th December in Priya Dham and then started for Muri Junction by car in the evening to catch the Howrah Express train for Calcutta. On way to Muri, Gurupriya Didi asked me as to why I had not gone to Muri Junction the previous evening for receiving Mother. I tried to explain the reason that Mother's stay had been arranged in the residence of a house-holder against my wishes. Didi replied, "That is why Mother slept in the garage of Priya Dham. However, inscrutable are the ways of Mother. Priya Ranjan has already made a proposal for converting his house into an *ashram*". I was surprised to learn this. In spite of my strong desire and efforts for being a *sannyasi* (monk), I had ultimately to marry and this anglicized but silent Bengali devotee of Mother would perhaps turn mendicant before marriage due to the unexpected grace of Mother. Later on we learnt that Priya Ranjan had really

executed a gift deed of his house, at Calcutta, in favour of Anandamayee Sangha for establishing an *ashram*.

It is written in Scriptures that the heart is purified through charity and this was amply demonstrated in the change of life-style of Priya Ranjan. He accepted the *Vanaprastha ashram* (retired life of a *sadhak*), instead of entering into *grihastashram* (life of a married house-holder). He made a gift of his dental clinic to his younger brother and gradually retired from all duties of worldly life. At the outset, he stayed in the Ranchi *ashram* for a few years and made some sort of provision for his pension from house-rent of a certain part of the house and then began wandering with Mother. After Her *mahasamadhi*, he began permanently staying in the monks' cottage of Kankhal *ashram* for spiritual practices.

Our Sunday *Satsanga* gathered momentum after the establishment of the Anandamayee Ashram at Ranchi. I was associated with this *Satsanga* upto 1961 on the specific instruction of Mother. Then on 16th September, 1961 I was transferred to Patna. From 1954 to 1961 Mother used to come to Ranchi Ashram along with Her big party once or twice every year. Of course, Mahatmas (saints) like Hari Baba and Avadhootji used to accompany Mother. Sometimes Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj also used to come. Gradually the number of devotees and the size of the crowd began growing. In 1954 Durga Puja was performed in the presence of Mother at the Ranchi Ashram with due pomp and

splendour.\* Gurupriya Didi arrived at Ranchi on the 23rd September. Mother arrived at Ranchi from Puri via Jamshedpur on the 26th September at about 7-30 p. m. There was a flood of joy in the Ashram as soon as Mother arrived.

On the 29th September, after 10 a.m. Mother visited the *ashram* of Tantric Yogiraj Pagal Baba of Mukteshwardham, along with a few devotees in two motor cars. There was a basketful of fruits and sweetmeats to be distributed in the *ashram*. Gurupriya Didi could not accompany us, as she was busy in the *ashram* for making preparations for Durga Puja, to be held from 3rd October. Sri Haraprasad Mukherji, Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax of Ranchi made a tape-recording of the conversation between Mother and Pagal Baba. Pagal Baba was senior to Mother in age and was suffering from cataract of both the eyes and impairment of hearing. He was seated in the posture of a tiger inside the temple of Mukteshwar Shiva. Mother visited all the twenty seven temples of Mukteshwardham and the first statement made by Mother before Pagal Baba was : "Baba, this small girl of yours has come to see you after hearing from Gopi Baba (Mahamahopadhyay Gopinath Kaviraj) and Nilmani that you are ill. They have built an *ashram* here, where Durga Puja will be performed. When you recover from your illness, please pay a visit to that *ashram*." Pagal Baba replied, "No,

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4. Vide : Gurupriya Devi : *Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee*, Vol XI, Pp. 239 & 241 : Also see *Ananda Varta* (Beng), Nov, 1954.

Mother, I can not go anywhere any more. I am centred here near Mukteshwar for attaining Nitya Niranjana." On hearing this Mother began laughing and said, "Baba, how can Mukteshwar be confined to a place? He is self-luminous and immanent everywhere, inspite of being transcendental." A girl of Anandamayee Ashram sang a devotional song there and after that all the assembled devotees were served with *prasad* of fruits and sweetmeats. Then we took leave of Pagal Baba.

On that day (29. 9. 54) after the evening *bhajan-kirtan* (devotional songs and chanting of God's names), many questions were asked to Mother. One devotee (perhaps Mathuranath Banerji) asked a question to Mother, "Mother, is the power any *mantra* (divine code sound) real or potent?" Mother replied with a smiling face and resolute voice, "Yes, of course. Its effect is sure. The effect of pronunciation also is certain." There was again another question, "Is it necessary that the *mantra* should be pronounced correctly?" Mother replied, "In some cases there is a specific vibration of the correct pronunciation. In such cases the result will follow from the rhythmic vibration of pronunciation. However, if some devotee makes an incorrect pronunciation, but mutters the *mantra* with devotion, then he will get the result of his devotion. For a full and complete effect, the *mantra* should be pronounced correctly as well as muttered with faith and devotion."<sup>5</sup>

5. *Ananda Varta* (Beng), Nov, 1954. P. 224.

Durga Puja was performed with proper decorum and gaiety from 3rd to 7th October under a canopy, as by then the permanent Kali temple with its assembly hall had not been constructed. In the evening of *Vijaya Dashami* day (7th October) Mother distributed fruits and sweetmeats as *prasad* to all devotees present and showered Her blessings on them. Mother and party left for Varanasi on the 8th October.<sup>6</sup>

It was during that Durga Puja, on the *Mahanavami* day, Mother was gracious enough to give me the final *diksha* (spiritual initiation) along with my wife, Nupur in the room, where Brahmachari Makhan Bhai used to stay later on.<sup>7</sup> (It was by mistake, 1955 was printed instead of 1954 in the *Ananda Varta* of October, 1988).

The eight-metalled Kali image of exquisite beauty, modelled by Nitai Pal was installed in the Kali temple, under Mother's instructions and in Her presence on the Kali Puja day of 1955.<sup>8</sup> At the outset the image was placed temporarily in the northern room of the present Ashrama building, facing the south.

Later on when the new temple and assembly hall were constructed on the land south of the main Ashrama building, under directions from and in the holy presence of Mother, the blue coloured

6. Gurupriya Devi : *Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee*, Vol. XII, P. 1.

7. *Ananda Varta* (Beng ed.), October 1988, P. 320.

8. Gurupriya Devi : *Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee*, Vol. XII, P. 320.

stone image of *Dakshina Kalika* was permanently installed in the temple. On 8th November, 1955 Mother started for Ranchi from Rajgir via Patna and arrived at the Ashram in the morning of 9th November. On 13th November Kali Puja was performed according to scriptural rites and with due pomp and splendour. *Kali Puja* was performed by Brahmachari Kusum-da (Nirvanananda). The speciality about his Puja was that he was alternately worshipping the stone image of Kali and the living Goddess, Mother.

On 19th October, 1956 Lakshmi Puja was performed in the Ranchi Ashram in the presence of Mother with due pomp and gaiety.<sup>9</sup> Prior to that Mother and Gurupriya Didi could not bring the image of Lakshmi with them, as the son of Nitai Pal failed to deliver the same in time. Hence I had to overstay at Calcutta to escort the image of Lakshmi Devi and I reached Ranchi with the image in the morning of 19th October.

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9. Gurupriya Devi : *Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee*, Vol XIII, Pp. 185-186 & 188. Also see *Ananda Varta* (Beng), February 1957, P. 346.



# Sai Ram Sahay

M. Rama Rao

## PART—I

### NO DIVINITY WITHOUT PURITY

I am a simple and humble devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba. He is, for me, a Guru, Guide and God i.e. all in all. If I write about him with good words it may be considered as an exaggeration. So I am quoting the opinions of eminent people.

Arthur Osborne, a Westerner has written a book. He has named it as the Incredible Sai Baba and the life and miracles of a modern-day saint.

Writing a foreword to that book Swami Rama Das of Anandashram writes about Sai Baba that He is a saint of the highest spiritual eminence. He further says : Sai Baba is a most potent spiritual force that moulds and transforms the life of spiritual aspirants who seek his guidance and blessings even to this day.

The author, Sri Arthur Osborne, has done an invaluable service to the seekers of Truth in the West by presenting this book to the world. He has, in a spirit of love and devotion to Sai Baba, related the most important events in his life which stand out in bold perspective, conveying to the heart of the reader the pre-eminent glory of Sai Baba. Sai Baba's divine personality seems to have captured

the heart of the author and he writes about him with such a spontaneity, giving details of the life and miracles culled from various sources, that he cannot but create in the heart of the reader a wave of admiration and devotion for this great spiritual master.

Ramdas earnestly wishes that this book should be in the hands of every spiritual aspirant and, for the matter of that, everyone, whether he is a believer or non-believer, so that he can know how God reveals Himself in the form of a unique and fully inspired saint of Sai Baba's stature. Sai Baba's sayings are quite original in their import and expression. The last quotation from Baba's sayings, as mentioned in this book, has charmed Ramdas and he will end this short foreword by giving it here : 'I give people what they want in the hope that they will begin to want that I want to give them'. (Ramdas)

Writing a foreword to the book 'Life of Sai Baba' Volume II by H. H. Narasimha Swamiji, founder President All India Sai Samaj, Madras, Sri B. N. Datar, then Home Minister, Govt. of India writes as follows :

It is to me, as it will be to other readers, a matter of great spiritual satisfaction to know how these direct disciples of the Saint came under His influence and protection and achieved blessedness.

Sri Sai Baba never believed in what can be called a formal initiation. I know, however, from the experiences of many including that of my

humble self, that, in fact, there is such an initiation, though of an imperceptible but highly effective type. The moment you go under His influence you become a changed man and are ever convinced that all your burdens are borne by him, that you feel so light on account of His guidance, and that, at the same time, so purposefully united with Him, and through Him, with the Higher Forces that are working in the universe for the uplift of mankind.

I deem it a privilege to confess that I have learnt many new and stimulating things from a perusal of this great publication. It has in a way strengthened the impressions that I have formed from Gandhiji's writings on spiritual matters.

I, therefore, very gladly recommend this book to all those that seek Divine Light and guidance.

Sri R. R. Diwakar, the then Governor of Bihar also writes : "I have your two letters from Madras and also the second volume of the life of Sai Baba."

It is only recently that hagiology is being studied rationally and scientifically. Otherwise it was a matter of 'take it or leave it'. Those who had faith believed everything blindly. Those who were sceptic scoffed both at the faith and the object of faith.

Today, I think it would be unscientific to reject anything simply because it has not yet been explained or it is not obvious. Books such as 'Man the Unknown' by Dr. Alexis Carrel have opened the eyes even of the most critical people

to the unknown powers that lie behind man's apparent consciousness.

From that point of view the publication of authentic lives and incidents that have taken place in connection with saints is a first step towards trying to understand the sources of saintly power and saintly achievement. The two volumes, therefore, Om Shri Sai Baba should be welcomed by all those who are interested in "Man the Unknown".

H. H. Swami of Rishikesh Swami Siwananda also says :—

"Sai Baba of Shirdi is held in the highest veneration by millions of people throughout India. He did not believe in salvation through the study of sacred books through theories, dogmas or even by reasoning. He said that the greatest achievement worth striving for with all our might is to become one like God. That is freedom and that is salvation. By his profound spiritual life, ascetic simplicity and enduring grace and charm he exerted a dominating influence on those around him and the same influence is exercised over a vast circle of devotees even today."

All this life's activities constituted a continuous, lofty 'loksangraha' by first conferring temporal benefits. He drew unto Himself countless souls caught up in Samsara and then later opened their eyes to the true meaning of life, infused viveka and vairagya into them and brought about their spiritual awakening. He was a Sadguru who through His highest Paravairagya and Maya-Tyaga, made

people realise the transitory nature of human life and the worthlessness of earthly objects. He slowly drew them from their deluded pursuit after the merely Preya vastu and induced and inspired them to strive for their Parama Sreya. i. e. Atma-Sakshatkar.

He continued this glorious work until the last moment of the Divine Life that He lived in the sacred hamlet of Shirdi. Though outwardly a mere and sometimes crazy looking fakir clad in rags and living upon doles of food collected during his regular daily round of Bhiksha yet, in fact, He was really a Jivanmuktha Maha Purusho and a Sage in Sahaja Avastha. As such He is in a state of Oneness with God and thus, even after casting aside the outer physical form, Sri. Sai Baba continues His sublime work of Lokahita in an invisible form through His Abode at Shirdi."

As aforesaid in the book of the Incredible Sai Baba it is as noted below. The book is an account of the strange life and amazing powers of Sai Baba, one of the most unusual of India's holy men.

Sai Baba never wrote a book, never even read one and yet learned scholars sat at his feet. He lived in a Mosque and yet his Hindu disciples outnumbered his Muslim ones. He taught them all according to their own faith, yet made them live at peace together. He taught through symbols and through a wild profusion of well attested miracles.

Although Sai Baba died in 1918, he still has countless devotees throughout India to whom he

appears in dreams and visions and whose prayers are answered as miraculously as when he was alive.

This is cent per cent correct as I have personal experience of dreams and visions.

The untiring efforts of Sri. B. V. Narasimha Swamiji have introduced Sai Baba to millions of unknown homes in South India. Sri Narasimha Swamiji is a unique combination of lawyer, legislator, transformed ascetic and founder of a great institution, the All India Sai Samaj, Madras.

He sent his trusted disciple Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji, to Bangalore to propagate Sai Cult in Karnataka. Swamiji opened our eyes to Sai Baba. The Trinity Sai Baba Sri Narasimha Swamiji and Radhakrishna Swamiji are guiding in our spiritual 'Sadhana'.

I have been lovingly blessed by the above Trinity, a contented and comfortable life at the ripe age of 85, but at times, I don't find a single pointed mind to Sadguru Sai Baba, thereby I have no complete peace of mind. In my self-enquiry Baba inspired me as noted below :

### **In search of God (Baba) O !**

My beloved Sai Baba ( Master or God ),  
I searched you in Mandir, Masjid and Kaba.  
In search of you I visited holy church and  
Himalaya and holy rivers Ganga and Krishna,  
and also Godavari and Kaveri,  
At last I searched at my Venkatgiri,  
And your holy Shirdi and Kashi.

But, alas ! I did not find you even in your  
Dwarakamayi,

In vain I wandered here and there.

My mind became sore.

As disappointed cried and cried more.

For help, bursted with loud voice.

Immediately, compassionate

Master Sai Baba Lovingly, said,

“You can’t find in those places where you  
searched me.

I am living in your heart.

As unseen and unknown, because I have been  
Surrounded by your enemy of vices such as lust,  
anger, hatred ;

Unless they are suppressed and subdued ;

And their wall which has stood in between you  
and me

Is demolished you can not find me, within or  
without you,

In those places where you have searched me in  
the past

If my name and form are kept constantly in  
your mind

A clear way would be found to locate me  
within your heart there ;

And in other places hereafter.

All the saints and the scriptures say that God  
resides in the cavity of all His creatures ;

In Sri Sai Satcharita, Baba said to a devotee  
Cholkar :

“My abode is in your heart and I am within  
you. Worship Me always, who is seated in your

heart as well as in the hearts of all beings. Blessed and fortunate indeed is he who knows Me thus."

A question generally arises why God is not seen and known when he resides in our heart ?

To know and see anything we have to take the help of our mind, senses and spirituality, but they are over-powered by inner six enemies who block the senses and mind treading the spiritual path.

Nana Saheb Chandorkar was a staunch devotee of Baba but he had some what egoistic mind regarding his education and social position as Deputy Collector. Baba helped Nana temporally and spiritually. I am quoting Baba's ministration to Nana Saheb.

The most essential part of man's nature is the ego. But in his endeavour to derive the best out of his physical life, a man's ego ordinarily runs riot and manifests itself in anti-social and anti-moral ways. Lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride, and jealousy, are all the various manifestation of this ego, and each of these has to be put down, and danger of allowing free scope to these must be rubbed into the soul of the disciple so that he may become a fit person to attain life's goal.

Regarding this, much instruction has been imparted openly and in hidden or mysterious ways by Sai Baba to devotees like Nana Chandorkar, and we shall do well to study the way in which the lessons were taught while benefiting by the lessons themselves. But before proceeding to deal with



each of them, we must remember that we are dealing with human nature, and that the so-called Shadripus, (i.e. Six Enemies) namely, Kama, or Lust, Krodha or Anger, Lobha or Greed, Moha or Delusion, Mada or Pride, and Matsarya or jealousy are evils mostly from the standpoint of the sadhaka aiming at crossing samsara and reaching a perpetual state of perfect bliss. But to ordinary men who have very little hope or chance of attaining the high goal, namely, perfect Santi and Mukti, complete freedom from all these six enemies is an impracticable ideal. And perhaps for the continuance of society and the species, absolute freedom from the first two or even the first three is not desirable. Kama and Lobha are desires for external objects which are generally needed by an individual in the circumstances in which he is placed and, therefore, it is wrong to totally suppress attachment to external objects so long as a person wants to retain a body and live in the world. Attachment is called 'Kama' when it is directed to the satisfaction of the sex urge, but the satisfaction of that urge is ordained by God as part of the work of created beings to continue the species. Hence Lord Krishna says, in the Gita, that the attachment to the opposite sex for purposes of sex gratification, if limited to those lines which Dharma draws, is divine : and God himself is that love, sex-love.

Dharma Aviruddho Bhuteshu

Kamosmi Bharatarshabha.

This means, 'O' Bull amongst the Bharata clan, I am the sex urge when it does not conflict with

Dharma'. The royal Raghu line is praised thus "Prajayai Griha medhinam" i.e., having sex relations to continue the lineage: Readers will note that a total exclusion of sex contact or sex urge for all is not proper and will do no good. On the other hand, an attempt to achieve what is in the circumstances impossible or impracticable will result in numerous evils.

Similarly about Krodha: Krodha is the manifestation of the excessive vigour of the ego when it tries to assert itself against obstacles to the gaining of desired objects, services, etc. As objects are desired and have to be acquired in worldly life. Krodha or a resolve to overcome obstacles must be there for the temporal welfare of beings. See Gospel i.e. B. C. S. 313.

313. \*Baba said:—'Yama Niyama: Restrain Lust—wholly in respect of others' wives and partly in respect of your own. Enjoyment of marital pleasure is permissible. But be not enslaved by it. Mukti is impossible to persons addicted to lust. Lust ruins mental balance and strength or firmness. It affects the learned also. Unruly buffaloes are controlled by tying a log to their neck as a clog to their movements. Viveka (i.e. prudence or discrimination) must be tied to one's mind when sex attracts. Desires must be controlled. You must master them and not be their slave (Vijitatma, Jitendriyah).

Yet you can (and must) use them, the inner enemies, within limits:—e.g. Besides Kama for the wife, have Krodha (anger) against unrighteousness,

Lobha (greed) for Harinama, uttering God's name. Moha (fondness) for Mukti (salvation), and Matsarya (hatred) for evil action. Have no Mada (pride).

So long however as the sex urge and the anger urge are pulling at a person, there is no Scanti or perfect poise, no buddhi or perfect satvic understanding of things as they are, including the Self, and they are therefore obstacles to his spiritual advance. No self-realisation is possible when sex urge, self-urge, and other urges are ruining the equilibrium of the Self. As for Lobha etc., they are obviously violations of social rules and common wisdom. It is good to desire well being but bad to be greedy. Hence Lobha—greed is bad. To desire under wrong ideas is Moha (delusion). This is bad. Mada is pride, conceit, vanity, or other kindred states and obviously implies very wrong and improper valuation of oneself and consequent wrong behaviour towards others. Matsarya (jealousy) is the worst of these six mental upsets, and the reasons are those which are set out in BCS 225.

### LUST

With these prefatory remarks, we shall begin with lust, and see how Baba inculcated truths about lust, and made Nana Chandorkar absorb them. Nana was a very respectable, married gentleman, having children and having family traditions and a position to maintain. Further, his training had given him excellent qualities of self-restraint and propriety

of behaviour. So, he was not ordinarily what one would call a lustful, lewd, or lecherous person. He was on the other hand a very properly behaved and excellent head of a family. Yet, the saying goes 'Even an elephant may slip'. Baba, who was watching Nana wherever he was, and at every moment, noticed that he needed to be taught and trained in the matter of lust also.

When these enemies raised their ugly heads in Nana's mind, Baba drew Nana's attention to any lapse, reprimanded and corrected him.

(Life of Sai Baba written by Sri B. V. Narasimha Swami, Volume II).

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*Isvara*, the Lord of the world is not a thing to be perceived by the senses or grasped by the mind. By contemplating the Divine, peace is won. God Himself draws you towards Him.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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# The Key to Self-knowledge

Dr. K. M. P. Mohamed Cassim, Ph. D.

We are all aspiring for happiness. The question is whether it can at all be attained by the mind. The mind is apt to mistake mere pleasurable sensations for happiness. And yet we find from experience that although gratified desire produces such sensations they only intensify the desire for further similar sensations. The most important fact that we must understand is that we cannot have real freedom by indulging in emotional excitements. If we observe our minds we will find that innumerable desires rush in, in confused manner. The best method to eliminate the contradictory emotions is to watch the activities of our minds with meditative awareness. We must also understand our mental reactions and psychological conflicts all the time, by the simple method of self-observation. Further, to watch slowly the inflowing breath brings not only harmonization of mind, but also vitality and strength to our nervous system which keep our physical bodies healthy, pure and clean.

The process of divine healing is purely a spontaneous act which takes place quietly and sweetly when we are in deep silent meditation in tune with that Cosmic Consciousness of Divinity. The healing aspect of prayer can be conceived not by mere intellectual ability, but through the commu-

nion with that Supreme Power which operates full of spiritual magnetism. The physical light that we see through our eyes can be defined, but the Divine Illumination which we intuitively perceive while we are in deep contemplation could not be described. By turning our minds towards the Divine Light we can actually transform and spiritualize the material aspects of life. To dwell in the abode of meditation is the only ladder that will lead to liberation and happiness.

The fundamental problem is that we cannot run away from our own mind which is the real culprit. The mind can be understood and unconscious desires can be exposed only when we are confronted with tempting circumstances. At this juncture an aspirant must understand his reactions by watching the sensational activities of the mind silently. This quiet passive concentrated awareness is meditation and this detached observation provides the spiritual life to go beyond the mind. Worldly outward attraction cannot touch our minds if we constantly adopt the method of self-observation. The disturbing elements of distracted thoughts are completely negated by the process of self-knowledge which means our mind is always magnetized through spiritual divine vibration. It is very important to ask ourselves why our mind is so much distracted. The distraction is due to the contact of sensations that the physical world provides. The inter-action of matter and mind is the main cause for the conflict and the mind is much excited by the pleasure that it derives in its relationship with the material world.

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The mind is always attracted toward outward sensations because the mind is extremely mechanical in following the habitual excitements which produce in the end dissatisfaction. To contact Reality the mind must be still and in this process of silencing the mind alone we can attain happiness.

It is very necessary that we should have the ability to discriminate between the real and the unreal. We must also have the spirit of renunciation which does not mean dissociation from people and things. Asceticism is really an attitude that holds that everything is permeated by the Godhead. When human energy goes out into different directions in the form of thirst for gratifications, it inevitably leads to frustration and sorrow. When life is viewed merely from biological stance it is only a story of birth, disease, old age and death. The biological and conditioned man is the victim of bondage and ignorance when he is not enlightened. Needless to say, that craving is the failure of the mental state to rest on the absolute Reality owing to the ignorance brought on by psychological impressions due to attachment. Attachment is always the autodefensive reflex of an unconscious fear. Any attitude of dependence is an obstacle to the attainment of Absolute. Self-contemplation is essentially divergent by turning inward away from the flux of phenomena by putting aside all worldly desires. The necessity of observing our mind all the time is strongly stressed because of the fact that by this self-awareness alone can we unfold the entire layers of our mental make-up and thus pave the

way for the attainment of transcendental state which is the key to open the treasure of SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

The secret of pure life consists in constantly discovering the inner workings of the mind and this state of self-observation is possible by keeping our minds clean without desires. The main defect in man is his inability to implement his decision of spiritual importance in his day-to-day affairs. The mind is the chief cause for all worries and tribulations as the tendency of the mind is to chase the sensual objects for its satisfaction and then after enjoyment the very same mind will put contradictory question and opposite suggestions. Man is leading a horrible and terrible life, not due to lack of understanding, but because he is unable to get away from worldly temptations. The possibility and the utter necessity to unfold the life in totality comes only when we are confronted with various problems and sufferings. During this period of spiritual test, our task is to maintain the stability of mental equilibrium.

The main cause for the contamination of one's heart is not only the utter ignorance of spiritual living, but also the wrong attitude of clinging to carnal pleasures. One should not forget the important point that just as food is indispensable for keeping the body healthy and fit, in a similar manner meditation is also essential for the purity of the soul. It is to be realized that the physical body by itself has no validity or utility without the cooperation and co-ordination of the soul energy.



Needless to say, the nature of the physical body is such that it deteriorates in course of time but we must keep our minds absolutely clean and calm. Through meditation alone we can purify our minds. When our physical bodies and mind are purified by constant meditation, then they become good and useful instruments to express the divine energy. The beauty of mental health consists in liberating our minds from the clutches of emotional complications. To live in the state of higher meditation is really a great service to humanity because of the fact that this state emanates the sweetness of serenity and spiritual magnetism for the good of all.

By meeting people who are also interested in the pursuit of Reality, we can develop and broaden our knowledge in the path of Self-realization. The magnetic vibration one feels in the presence of an advanced soul is very inspiring and helpful to merge deeply into meditation. The secrets of inner spiritual mysteries are revealed to us in contemplation and that wisdom will guide us all. When one is in deep meditation, one is extremely sensitive to external influences, but the mind is not distracted by the attraction of sensual pressure because of the spiritual magnetism one draws while one is in meditation. Any movement from outside has not the power to disturb the person who is well attuned in meditation. Life is such that we are unable to predict anything definitely. But every major change in life is for good and one has nothing to worry or bother mentally. A sad state of affairs is that many people give top priority in the matter of providing

all their bodily requirements, but neglect completely the needs of the soul and spiritual comforts.

In deep sleep we are aware of some inner urges, but we have no control over them because we have not properly penetrated into the working of our unconscious minds. It is very essential to observe the emotional modes of our minds if we want to master the devil of deception. It is a tedious task to observe our mental activities during sleep because that state of unconsciousness suggests its incomplete impressions as a dream. The psychological hindrance is to realize the dream, but we normally identify ourselves as actors and thus we are affected by the consequences of the dream. The simple truth is that the stability of mental alertness is lost while we experience the dream and in which state the dreamer is unable to observe his thoughts correctly without deception. Alertness of mind with sensitiveness opens the avenue to continue further in the discovery of unconsciousness.

Another problem which we are facing is attraction and repulsion. As we are unable to free ourselves from this dualistic complex which distracts us, we must choicelessly observe our minds in the mirror of relationship. Let us realize the fact that the most useful lesson one can learn by undergoing bitter experiences repeatedly in life is that nothing in the world can produce real happiness except one's own mind which is purified through meditation.

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# Sufism : A Spiritual Science

Dr. K. M. P. Mohamed Cassim, Ph. D.

It should be clearly understood that there are two kinds of happiness, one kind derived from sensual pleasures which may arise from perceiving an enchanting object, a captivating sound, an enticing smell, a delicious taste and a thrilling bodily enjoyment. The fact remains that everything experienced by the senses is miserable. The other kind of happiness is spiritual liberation that is realised through meditation. A purely intellectual comprehension of the divine life is not possible because it is not within the scope of mere logic. Spiritual life should never be thought of as an austerity, a kind of self-torture, something grim and painful. But, on the contrary, spiritual life finds its expression in joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and reverence for all.

The purpose of Sufism is to gain Self-knowledge through direct perception. Sufism is a practical science of life, which opens direct experience to the field of Absolute Reality as well as of the different levels of spiritual consciousness. The Sufi way of meditation refines the nervous system in a gentle way thus removing all mental strain and leads to Supreme Consciousness. Spiritual freedom does not mean refraining from the responsibilities of life, but rather giving all aspects of practical life they are due while spontaneously maintaining the medi-

tative awareness as separate from activity. Since our mind is fickle and unsteady, Sufism gives definite method, the practice of which brings it under control and thus enables us to cultivate and enjoy evenness of mind in higher consciousness.

Many people advocate the material mode of life because they think that through material prosperity all happiness could be achieved, but actually it is not so. Although we get more and more comfort and pleasure, we are still not happy or free. On the contrary, our problems have increased. The simple fact is that when sense-desires are continually gratified naturally the mind becomes poorer and more disturbed. Further, the mechanism of the mind is more thirsty, more craving and clinging towards sensual gratifications. The other extreme consider that spiritual life means to give up their work and responsibilities, renouncing the world and refusing to face what is arising in their lives. In fact, the world cannot be renounced since the human relationships and life-situations reappear in different forms wherever we go and problems cannot be escaped by isolation. We have to accept life as it is ; life has both good and bad, conflict and pleasure. In fact, we can learn more from pain than from pleasure because without conflict we may just continue to sleep in life without spiritual awakening ; so any unpleasant experience can be used as a teaching to bring wisdom. So it is not by avoiding suffering but by going through it and working through it that we discover something very important in life.

Sufism stresses the importance of mental purification because it is the confused mind that prevents the beauty of intuitive awareness. Mental disorders are closely connected with emotional distortions which obscure creative intelligence. Fear, anxiety, guilt, envy, grief and pride of any kind are major mental and emotional barriers that have to be eliminated or rather flushed out of the human system through self-discipline. It is very essential that, to be aware of our spiritual nature we must have the capacity to rise above without identifying ourselves with the mental or emotional processes and this constant conscious awareness of the super Consciousness is meditation. The true goal of spiritual liberation consists in living on a higher divine plane in which state one is not influenced by desires and does not recreate new desires as a result of thought or action. It is to be understood that by not being influenced means that one is not inwardly touched by the working out of the residue of past impressions. Enlightenment means not only mastership or total understanding of life, but also one lives with the awareness of pure consciousness although involved with mental activity.

To progress towards spiritual life does not mean to be selfish or to be aloof from society. It means to abolish confusion and bring about clarity of mind ; until this is achieved within the individual it will not be possible to bring about a new order to society. Without first reforming oneself within it is impossible to change society radically, because disorder and chaos in the world are nothing but

the reflections of the chaos in each one of us. To establish one-self in silence is not a simple matter. The greatest patience and perseverance are called for. Ordinarily we do not even observe the flux of thoughts crossing the mind. In meditation, particularly in the beginning stages, it is not that more thoughts rise, but we become aware to them. Whatever is hidden comes to the surface and this is the proper time to deal with them and still the mind by practising choiceless awareness. When we can look towards the cause and origin of our thoughts, it ceases and dissolves by itself.

Spiritual life signifies a simple, easy and unstrained method of living with a proper sense of values without giving undue importance to worldly activities. The best and harmonious relationships are based on non-attachment when we do not need others for our happiness or support. If we can be alone then only are we free from ego wanting. In that state we do not carry anything with us and we do not look back or forward and this is the stage of freedom from experience and non-experience. Further, in this state we can live our life every moment in appreciating full and at the same time we can leave it when the particular experience is finished.

Sufism is not a set of codes or tenets, but a way of life being from the beginning to the end a matter of spiritual experience. Sufism is a practical way of living avoiding the extremes of self-indulgence and asceticism leading to an awareness of divine centre. Sufism declares that the destiny of man is

divine perfection and that spiritual liberation to be achieved by going beyond the mind into the integral light of the immeasurable Godhead. According to Sufism the best form of prayer is to remain in perfect peace avoiding even mental activity, because such profound inner calmness will ultimately make our being merged with Allah—the Omnipresent. Sufism teaches the technique of *Fana* which means not only erasing the already existing impressions on the subconscious mind, but also the method of performing action without attachment so that no further impression is added to the subconscious mind. When once this method of doing actions without attachment is mastered, many of the causes for the emergence of psychosomatic ailments disappear. An analysis of the causes of diseases reveals that a suppressed emotion is more dangerous and that emotional disturbances are due to conscious subconscious conflict. Therefore every action done with attachment produces an impression on the subconscious mind. This is the psychological weight that is to be removed by leading a life of purity.

Our life is a contradiction, one desire in opposition to another desire, one pleasure pulling us in one direction and another pleasure pulling us in another making our life contradictory and confused. We cannot separate ourselves from the world because we are the world. To change the world we must change ourselves and to bring about an orderly change we must understand the cause of the disorder that exists in us. We have nothing more to do than to have the capacity to observe

the cause of disorder with inner freedom since most of us are very heavily conditioned due to various circumstances. The fundamental question is whether it is at all possible for the human mind to uncondition itself so that it can be free. Sufism says that it is possible for the human mind to be free of its conditioning through the technique of Fana only when our thought-waves have been stilled and the mind has been cleared of all its impressions. Fana implies a state of mind that does not depend on another psychologically and is not attached to any person which does not mean that there is no love. We must realise that pure love is not attachment ; it signifies a mind that is uncorrupted without any sense of fear or conflict. Fana is to be simply aware of what is going on here and now and to find the capacity to live fully in the present without being swayed by the past or the future.

The best way to attain the state of Fana is by following the path of meditation with self-knowledge. The beauty of Fana emerges when the dying of the ego has taken place. Fana is not a nothingness but a state, a reality that is when all our false values and desires are reduced to nothing. To keep our mind in a state of emptiness is very indispensable so that we can contact and radiate spiritual magnetism. The wonderful capacity of divine consciousness comes into operation only when we abide permanently in the state of Fana and by living in the highest state of Fana, we spontaneously become a divine channel for the promotion of wisdom, unity and universal brotherhood.



In Fana we not only transcend the mind, but also we touch the Cosmic Consciousness which gives us the blessing of bliss and divine guidance to shape our life in such a way as not to deviate from the spiritual path. The more we go into deeper meditation the more we appreciate the beauty and usefulness of spiritual life. The divine contentment that we inwardly feel when we are in meditation is really a secret and sacred experience that sustains us and strengthens and stabilises our divine life to which we are happily dedicated.

Our life is very complex and to understand the state of Fana we need to observe closely the structure of our mind. Since we are heavily conditioned, we are not free to understand the depth of mind. We have to find out how to die psychologically or inwardly because Fana means that the past must completely come to an end. We must die to all our pleasures, to all the psychological memories we have cherished, to all the things we hold dear and every day, so that our mind is always fresh and pure with meditative awareness.

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# With Mataji on the Bank of the Gomati River\*

Krishnanath

In the February 1961 issue of *Ananda Varta*, an account was given of the *Samyam* and *Bhagavat Saptahs*, held from 23rd October to 4th November 1960. The functions were an uplifting spiritual experience, but still left a sense of disappointment in my mind; for my expectation that in Naimisharanya, being an out-of-the-way place, there would not be so many people and it would therefore be possible to have more intimate contact with Mataji, had not been realized. We could see Her sitting on the dais for long hours and occasionally had the good fortune of having her *darshan* from somewhat nearer in Her cottage, but the informal atmosphere that I longed for was impossible. It was rumoured that after the two functions, Mataji was likely to shift from Naradananda Ashram to some cottage on the banks of the Gomati. Many of those who had come, would have liked to stay on, but they were discouraged from doing so by the dismantling of the tents, the severing of electric connections and the cessation of feeding arrangements. All this was costing a lot of money and could not be maintained any longer. It was also made clear that Mataji wanted to be left alone after the strenuous time during the two *Saptahs*.

\*Reprinted from *Ananda Varta*, November, 1961 issue.

So, with a heavy heart, I was resigning myself to leave, when I learnt that Dr. Pannalal, one of Mataji's oldest devotees, was to be favoured with some accommodation and that Mataji had indicated that I could share it. If you wish for anything from Mataji very strongly, how readily and kindly She grants it! For three days Dr. Pannalal and I stayed together in the Prakash Kutir of Naradananda Ashram—a cottage which had been previously occupied by Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, who seemed to have left in it an impress of his spiritual practices. When Mataji shifted to the cottage on the Gomati bank, Her host there, Shri Prag Narain Saigal, was so kind as to lend us his own big tent. And so it happened that I was fortunate enough to get another fortnight with Mataji, in just the conditions I had longed and prayed for. Not only were there hardly any outsiders, but even most of the Ashramites had been sent away one by one to their various places, and after a time only a handful of them were left. So there was nobody to keep a record of 'this solitary stay of Mataji in the most charming surroundings' (to quote from '*Matri Lila*'). It may not be out of place, therefore, if I narrate some of my recollections of this very happy period of my life.

During the three days that Mataji was still at Naradananda Ashram, we heard on the verandah of Her cottage the tape-recorded discourse of Swami Chetan Giriji who also gave one more talk on the *Kenopanishad*.

Mataji's silvery laughter is known to everybody,

but I have never seen Her so convulsed with laughter as on one occasion. During the *Saptahs* a large number of dogs had gathered round our camp. They used to fight ferociously for leavings of food outside of the cook-house. One day, while we were sitting round Mataji on the verandah. I heard a loud bang outside, and Mataji was laughing away with a most amused expression on Her face. One of the dogs had thrust its head into a big earthen pot ; it was stuck there and the dog, while running blindly, had hit against a wall ! The dog was now running even faster in fright, with the rim of the pot like a collar round its neck ! It was only when somebody hit the rim and broke it that the dog ceased its antics.

The place on the Gomati was a kind of small hermitage. Taking advantage of an old *ghat* (stone-steps leading down to the river), Shri Saigal had built alongside, a row of five small huts, like hermit cells, with a somewhat larger cottage at one end on a slightly higher ground, and a double-roomed cook-house at the other end. He had created these for the benefit of visiting *sadhus*. Mataji occupied the bigger cottage, while Gurupriya Didi and the Ashram girls were given the cells. Soldaries (small tents) were provided for the *sadhus* of the Ashram who had remained behind, while some of them continued to stay in Naradanda Ashram, which was not far off. Besides our little hermitage, there were, further away, other temples and Ashrams built by famous saints, who had resided here in the past. The surroundings

were very picturesque. On one side was the winding river with its broad sandy basin, its banks dotted with these Ashrams ; there was a railway bridge at some distance over which trains could be seen, and heard whistling and rattling twice a day. On the other side of our camp there was a small hillock called the *Hanuman Tila*, with a temple on top, containing a huge image of Hanuman (about 18 feet high) carrying on his shoulders Rama and Lakshmana, whom he had rescued from *Patala* (the under-world). This hill was said to be the fort of King Virata at whose court the *Pandavas* had resided in disguise during the final year of their exile, which they were required to pass incognito. There are images (rather crude) of the five Pandavas and Krishna in one small house, and of Draupadi in a separate little hut ; but these are obviously of recent origin. There is a cave with an image of a smiling Hanuman in front, which is said to have a subterranean passage leading from the fort to some distant place. The rest of the hill is wooded and some of the trees seem to be very ancient.

A few people occasionally dropped in to have Mataji's *dars'han*, but on the whole it was a very peaceful fortnight. For the first few days Mataji suffered from acute pain in Her joints. It looked like the result of the strain of the previous fortnight, but I suspect it was due to the troubles of other people She must have tried to lighten. But apart from taking it somewhat easy, Mataji showed no outward signs of what She was suffering, and in fact seemed very relaxed and jolly.

It was on the 6th of November that Mataji moved over from Naradananda Ashram to the Gomati bank. On that day *Akhanda Kirtan* for twelve hours was arranged at Mataji's instance at Chakra-Tirtha by the *Pandas* of the place. Mataji was present there during the closing hours, when quite a large crowd had gathered.

The first evening Mataji made a tour of inspection round the camp on the Gomati bank. When She came to our tent, Dr. Panna Lal was in a half-dressed condition and to the amusement of the people following Mataji, he simply prostrated himself before Her in that state. What Mataji noticed was not his scanty clothing, but the lack of a *durrie* (covering) on the floor in the front portion of the tent, which was then promptly supplied. What touched us was the way She looked over everything, the little cells, soldaries and the cook-room, to make sure that everyone was comfortable. She was here truly like the mother of a small household. Throughout the stay we all felt as if we were members of one family. It was so cosy and comforting to sit around Her mornings and evenings on the verandah of Her cottage. At night, when it was cold, some of us had the privilege of sitting inside the cottage near Her during the nightly *bhajans* and the 15 minutes *mauna*. How our silent meditation was helped by Her close proximity! But at other times also one felt Her presence, even when one was nowhere near Her.

Though Mataji had cured me of my habit of smoking, I was still fond of my cup of tea in the

morning, which Dr. P.'s bearer faithfully provided regularly. It was a welcome warming up after the cold night and before the dip in the cold waters of the Gomati. The bathing in the river was invigorating and refreshing. After *puja* and breakfast in our tent, Dr. P. and I would wander for about half an hour over the hill or visit the nearby Ashrams and temples. At about 10 A. M. we used to join the very attenuated party for the daily recitation of scriptures on the parapet round a tree between the small huts, which also had a small shrine of Shiva. After the recitation, the *Bhagavata* used to be read and expounded by Brahmachari Kantibhai. After his departure, Brahmachari Kusum was entrusted with this task. This would finish by 10-30 or 11, when it was time for Mataji to come out on the verandah of Her cottage, where we would gather round Her. One day, when for lack of time Kusumda had omitted the reading of the *Bhagavata*, the very first question Mataji asked was, whether the *Bhagavata* had been read. Thus it was made clear that even when She was not present, nothing was hidden from Her. There was another instance of this supernatural perception of Hers. Dr. P. and I, while wandering round, had discovered, at some distance from our camp, another broken down *ghat* and a big tree with a large parapet round it. We thought it would be an ideal place for meditation and decided to sit there every day between 3 and 4 P. M. The very first day, Mataji told us in the evening that She had seen us going with our *asanas*. Then She went on to say

that it was a *tapobhumi*, a specially favourable place, and that we should do a lot of meditation ( खूब तपस्या करो ). This was a great encouragement to us.

The conversations that took place on Mataji's verandah every morning and evening were very informal. We all felt instinctively that there was no need to ask questions. Generally Dr. P. reminded Mataji of some incident of Her life, or of a story She had previously told and She would repeat these to us. (I will recount some of the stories later). In addition, Mataji made Dr. P. read to us *Naimisharanya Mahatmya*, a book on Naimisharanya, which one of the *pandas* had brought. Dr. P. also expounded the *Narada Bhakti Sutra*, which contains not merely very illuminating aphorisms, giving a most delightful exposition of the path of devotion (*bhakti*), but is also a lyrical composition written in very poetical language. Dr. P. after giving his own explanation, would every now and then appeal to Mataji, who added Her illuminating comments.

In the evenings Mataji sometimes walked a little near Her cottage. One evening a flock of birds flew over our heads in formation and Mataji asked Dr. P. how many birds there were in the flock. He quickly answered, 'Thirteen'. The flock wheeled round and again passed over us. Some of the people present tried to count. Some counted twelve and others fourteen. Mataji said, thirteen was right, and asked Dr. P. if he had actually counted them. Dr. P. admitted that he had given a num-



ber which just came to his mind. Mataji then told us that She had thought of the number 13 and that sometimes others spoke out Her thought. On another occasion—namely after the *mauna* in Her cottage—She asked what Avadhutaji had said. As She did not indicate to what incident She was referring, we did not know what She meant. She then repeated the question, adding, we had all been there, could no one remember it? Then Kusumda came out with Avadhutaji's remark about कुतर्क (wrong reasoning) and the illustration he had given of how someone had tried to disprove God's greatness by asking: "Can He create something greater than Himself?" and then saying: "If He could, He would no longer be the greatest and if He could not, that also would prove that He was not so great." This was the remark that Mataji was referring to. Perhaps She tries from time to time to see which one of those round Her is capable of being a receptacle of Her thought-transfers.

Another thing I have realized during this stay was that Mataji like other great prophets and saints, often speaks in parables. She Herself told us the story of a rich man, whom She had advised to 'keep his mouth sweet'. When he met Her again after a year he complained that he had not yet had any experience of God even though he had followed Her advice of always keeping a piece of sugar candy ( मिश्री ) in his mouth. The only way in which he had benefited was the disappearance of his cough and cold. This man had taken Her literally and not understood that She was asking him to repeat

God's name constantly. Another advice Mataji gives is, 'go and sit under a tree'. Here the tree is a symbol of someone who gives solace without making any distinction. What is meant is that one should seek the company of *Mahatmas* or *Sadhus* and, of course, ultimately of God, who drops the fruit automatically into one's lap. She once explained the allegory in the *Gita*, about this life being an Ashwattha tree with its roots above and branches below ( ऊर्ध्वमूलम् अधःशाखम् ) by asking, "Is not your head, which is the seat (*mula*), of your consciousness on the top? You get your knowledge through your brain, just as water reaches the tree through its roots and that too not directly, but through the soil." At the end of our stay, when I told Her that I was returning to Bombay, She said, "How long are you going to remain in a *dharamsala* (caravanserai)? You must now go home". I thought at first that I was being asked to renounce the world at once, but later, in another connection, She explained that what She meant was that one should not remain attached too long to worldly activities and possessions, but turn one's mind to God, one's real home.

It is well known that Mataji has never been to school to learn Grammer, but She has evolved Her own practical etymology. Her derivations of words are quite unorthodox and yet bring out their meaning in a new way that hits you in the eye. Thus, according to Her, *Visaya* (object of sense), is *vis hai*, and so She calls it 'slow poison'—one of the English expressions She is fond of using. Similarly

She explains *vasana* (desire) as 'vasa na' where God does not dwell'. She adds : "When you cling to your desires you cannot reach God. Therefore give up those vain passions, which lead you away from God to the realm of death." One day a Brahmachari said to Mataji : "How can we love whom we have never seen ? Therefore we first of all want God to give us a glimpse of Himself." Mataji's reply was that this was *durbuddhi* (literally 'wrong idea') which She defined as *durbuddhi*, 'thinking that God is at a distance' and this is what leads to *durgati*, (literally, misfortune) meaning, according to Her, *durgati* 'going away from Him instead of realizing Him.' How beautifully this expresses the truth that God is within ourselves ! Ma went on to say that if one could not visualize a particular form of God, one should look upon the letters of the *mantra* itself as representing God. In Sanskrit the word for the letters of the alphabet is *aksara*, which also means 'imperishable' and is in this sense applied to *Parabrahma* in the *Gita*. The term '*mantra*' is ordinarily derived from *mannat trayate*, 'that which protects by contemplation,' but Ma's derivation is *man tera* 'My mind is Thine—complete surrender !

Occasionally outsiders who came to see Mataji asked questions. A few of those, together with Her answers, may be quoted here. A student wished to know how to find time for *japa* (silent repetition of God's name), without interfering with his studies ; Ma said, "Spend less time in chatting and thus you can save at least ten minutes in the morning and ten

in the evening.” A man asked ‘how to get rid of *kama krodha* (passion and anger)’.

“By repeating God’s name”.

“Even when one is impure?”

“Yes. God purifies everything.”

One man, who said he was employed in the Railway, wanted to know a simple way of reaching God without having to spend time on *japa*, *dhyana* (meditation etc.)

Mataji : “Keep *Satsang*, meet saints.”

“If even that is not possible?”

“Then read *Sadgrantha* (good religious books).”

He asked how he was to earn his livelihood if, in pursuit of God, he left his job. Ma said, “God provides.” Then She told a story of two friends who tried to test the truth of this belief by meditating in the jungle. After several hours, one of them got hungry and seeing no prospect of food coming to him, went back to town and had a hearty meal there. Then, feeling sorry for his friend, he took some food to him to the jungle where he was still sitting and meditating under a tree. To his taunt that God was not providing any food for him, the friend replied that God had already sent some through the doubting friend himself.

The gentleman who was questioning Ma continued to express his disbelief and some of us were feeling annoyed at his conceited way of talking, but Mataji gave him *prasad*, spoke sweetly to him and asked him to try.

One old lady wanted to know how to find the Lord. Ma said : ‘Do *puja*’. The lady replied, she

did not feel interested in puja and would rather do *japa*, but found that her mind would not settle down to it. 'Compel your mind,' said Mataji. The lady had come to stay in the camp, and another day asked, which was better *jnana* or *bhakti*, since each was being praised at different times. Narayan Swami replied : 'They go together and one follows the other.' Mataji said : 'Try *bhakti* first', but the woman said जी नहीं लगता (I have no aptitude). Ma said 'Then first practise *Guru bhakti*.' Another day again the lady asked similar questions and from something that Didima said I realized that she was no idle questioner, but an earnest seeker who was finding it difficult to concentrate. Ma advised her to reserve a special place for meditation and to sit there doing *japa* for not less than half an hour at a time ; if she felt sleepy she should refresh her eyes with water. The sweet old lady ultimately said she wanted Mataji's blessing.

Another lady asked : 'What should a person do if she did not understand the *Gita*, *Bhagavata* or the *Puranas* ?'

'She should approach God directly ; pray and repeat God's name.'

'Is not a Guru necessary ?'

'Yes. A Guru will appear when necessary ; in the meanwhile make God your Guru.'

A man posed the problem : 'What is better, *par seva* (service to others), or *bhajana*, (singing God's name) ?'

Mataji : 'It is wrong to look upon service as *par seva* ' ; that only enhances the ego. You must

look upon everyone as God, (*Tat*) and thus do only His service.

‘Should one get up while doing worship, if a person in dire distress wants help ?

‘Look upon the needy person as God and there will be no problem.’

A Police Inspector said he had to beat people in order to detect crimes and asked what he should do about it. Mataji requested me to reply. I said it was wrong to beat. “Then how is he to detect the criminal ?” asked Mataji. I said there was a science of criminology, fingerprints and other clues by which crimes were detected in other countries, where the Police did not resort to beating to extort confessions. The Inspector exclaimed it would take many years for our country to progress to that stage. For us there was no other way. He also felt that it was not he who did the beating, but some power within him. Ma said, अपना कर्मफल तो भोगनाही पड़ता है meaning that he could not escape the responsibility for his actions.

On new moon day, when lots of people had come to bathe at the Chakra Tirtha, Mataji told us to go there and see *Bhagavan* (God) in the guise of the crowd. So Dr. Pannalal and I walked to the sacred pool, and looking with the vision suggested by Ma, we were truly touched by the sight of hundreds of men, women and children milling around and bathing. They had come walking, some as far as forty miles. We saw two boys measuring their length by prostrating themselves on the ground and proceeding in this manner towards the pool. Ano-

ther interesting feature were the *Pandas* (Priests) sitting all around the tank either on small cots or just squatting on the ground with a basket in front of them in which the pilgrims deposited their clothes and belongings. They were given *kusha* grass to sprinkle water as offering to God, and on returning after the bathe they placed in the basket as a reward to the priest whatever they had brought, mostly handfuls of grain or vegetables from their own farms. Whenever I shall in future see crowds at holy places, I hope I shall remember not to get annoyed, but to look upon them as manifestations of God.

During the *Samyam Saptah* one gentleman used to ask Mataji if She saw any divine beings in the air. Ma never satisfied this person's curiosity, but those of us who remained behind on the Gomati bank had the privilege of hearing some of her experiences in that sphere. On the night of the 19th November, Ma told us in Her cottage after the *mauna* that immediately after the *kirtan* was over, She first heard a kind of throbbing sound which gradually became louder and turned into a chant— 'परमेश, शरणागतं शरणागतम्' and then gradually faded off. She repeated the tune several times, but unfortunately when, the next night, She asked us to reproduce it, nobody could remember it precisely and She would not sing it again at the time (though afterwards I found that Sri Shobhanda had learnt it and sang it once or twice). It was suggested that the correct words might be शरणागतम्. Mataji at once agreed to this. She explained that somebody had chanted this hymn in the ancient days, and it had remained in the air.

(To be continued)

# Plants and Indian Rituals and Customs

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## Abstract

The note deals with the role of various plants and plant products in various Indian customs and rituals from ancient days to the present time. It emphasises the supreme role of flowers in the worship of deities and details its advantages. It also mentions the various restrictions on the use of plants and plant products and flowers in the worship of deities besides mentioning the special affinities of certain deities towards the offering of plants, plant products and flowers. It concludes with the sanctity and the grandeur of plant and plant products in human life.

### (i) Vegetation and its grandeur in ancient literature

In ancient Indian literature plants have been associated with rituals and customs in all the religious ceremonies starting from one's birth till his death and all the yajnas throughout. Leaves, flowers, fruits and wood of many plants held sacred find mention in our holy scriptures in connection with one or the other custom or ritual throughout our life. According to Dharma Sastra felling or damage to such trees is punishable. Orchards and gardens associated with worship were mostly



raised in the temple precincts and trees held sacred were planted in Temple surroundings as per Matsya Puran.

The plants supply the basis of our material wealth and enter into the daily life of our people in supplying tools, implements and material for the thousand and one rites and ceremonies that make up our social and exoteric religion. As per Smritis, a large part of the vegetable kingdom provides chief contribution in the performance of yajnas and various other utilitarian, economic, social and religious antiquities and performances.

In the ancient India Rishis, saints and even the common men were attracted towards the naturalness, beauty and grandeur of the vegetation. Without plants no religious ceremonies would be performed. Timber of plants like 'Ashwatta' (*Ficus religiosa*), 'Udamber' (*Ficus racemosa*) etc. is taken to be greatly pious and is used for making utensils for 'puja'.

Similarly the green leaves, the twigs and the growing tips of green plants like 'am' (*Mangifera indica*), 'Ashwattha' (*Ficus religiosa*), 'Palash' (*Butea monosperma*) are greatly used in constructing welcome arches, decorative canopies and buntings etc. during various social and religious functions. 'Palash' (*Butea monosperma*) has been assigned great sanctity and its leaves, flowers, branches and timber etc. are used in various religious ceremonies and 'yajnas'. Planting of trees like *Ficus* spp. was common along roadside for shade. Watering of all trees particularly 'am' (*Mangifera indica*) pleased the 'pitras' (our fore-fathers).

According to Mahabharat and Vishnu Dharma-Sutra planting of trees gives great rewards and the plants should be brought like one's own children. According to Mahabharat plants have been grouped under trees, climbers spreading with the help of trees, Ballari (climbers spreading on the land, gulma (shrubs), twaksar (thick and strong bark but hollow wood and bamboos) and ghas (grass, kusha, durba).

According to Sastras—planting of trees like 'Amblika' (*Emblica officinalis*), 'Darim' (*Punica granatum*) etc. is very sacred and grants one prosperity, good wife and absolution from sins.

As per Bhavisha Puran one who plants one 'nim' (*Azadirachta indica*), ten 'imli' (*Tamarindus indica*), three 'kapith' (*Limonia acidissima*) 'bel' (*Aegle marmelos*), 'Amlaka' (*Emblica officinalis*), five 'am' (*Mangifera indica*) does not go to hell (Narak).

### (ii) Sanctified Trees

Plants have been associated with customs and rituals in all religious ceremonies starting from one's birth till his death. Such sanctified plants can be divided under two main groups :—

- (i) Plants for worship for one's own wishes,
- (ii) Plants, leaves, flowers and fruits for worship of God (Devtas).

Five such trees according to the sastras held most sacred and worshipped are called 'Pancha-mangdal'. They are :—

1. 'Am' = *Mangifera indica*

2. 'Ashwatta' = *Ficus religiosa*
3. 'Vata' = *Ficus bangalensis*
4. 'Palash' = *Butea monosperma*
5. 'Udamber' = *Ficus racemosa*

Another such tree is 'Shami' (*Acacia suma*) or (*Prosopis spicigera*) used greatly in yajnas.

Above sanctified trees are greatly planted in temple precincts. The devotees from time immemorial worship these trees for grant of one's wishes. 'Vat vraksha' (*Ficus religiosa*) has been called 'Shyam vat' by Kalidas and Bhaubhut. It is also called 'Akshai bat' at Allahabad Fort. 'Amlika' (*Emlica officinalis*), 'am' (*Mangifera indica*), 'belwa' (*Aegle marmelos*), 'nim' (*Azadirachta indica*) etc. are also worshipped by the devotees during different fasting festivals for granting long life, long happy marital life, good marriage partners and a dutiful child.

### (iii) Plants for worship of God

Our holy scriptures have associated worship of deities (Devatas) with use of many plants held sacred and also their leaves, flowers, fruits, wood and smoke.

Various kinds of flowers ('pushpas' or 'sumans') as given in Simriti Chandrika are the greatest media of worship for Indian deities (Devatas).

Sandal (*Santalum album*) and 'agaru' (*Aguilaria agallocha*) yield highly scented woods which are used in religious rituals and 'Dev puja'. Scented drug plants like 'dalchini' (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*), 'lavanga' (*Syzygium aromaticum*), 'pattrak' (lekhpatra) (*Betula utilis*), 'Kesar' (*Crocus sativus*),

'Khus' (*Vetiveria zizanioides*), 'Musta' (*Kyllinga monocephalla*), 'Kapur' (*Cinnamomum camphora*), 'Ela' (*Elettaria cardamomum*), 'Rochma' (*Operculina turpethum*), 'Atamasi' (*Nardostachya grandiflora* or *Cyprus stoloniferus*), 'Chor' (*Angelica glauca*) etc. according to *Sbastras* are used in worship of Lord Ganesh, Shiva, Vishnu and Shakti.

According to '*Smritiya Chandrika*', paste of 'kapur' (*Cinnamomum camphora*), 'agaru' (*Agularia agallocha*), 'kasturi' (*Hemidesmus indicus*), 'chandana' (*Santalum album*) and 'kakkol' (*Lavunga scandens*) is used in worship of deities and its application brings success, wealth, health and proximity to deities and grant of wishes. Incense of vegetable origin is burnt during worship of deities.

According to '*Krit Kalpatru*' offering of various kinds of flowers bestows various kinds of rewards to the worshippers. 'Malti' (*Aganosma dichotoma*) flowers bring proximity to the deities. 'Karvir' (*Nerium indicum*) flowers bestow good health. 'Mallaka' (*Jasminum sambac*) flowers when offered bring all sorts of comforts. Flowers of 'pundarik' (*Nelumbo nucifera*), 'kabjak' (*Rosa moschata*), 'nil kamal' (*Nymphaea stellata*), 'bilwa' (*Aegle marmelos*), 'ark' (*Calotropis gigantea*), 'bakul' (*Mimusops elengii*), 'kim shuk' (*Butea monosperma*), 'ashok' (*Saracaasoca*), 'japa pushpas' (*Hibiscus rosa sinensis*) are greatly used in worship of deities for grant of success, peace, wealth, health, issues etc.

**(iv) Special affinities of various deities for different flowers, leaves and plant products.**

As already mentioned flowers excel most of the media of worship of deities. But according to Dharma Shastras and holy scriptures, various deities have their own choice, liking and affinities for such floral and vegetal offerings. The choice also varies with the object behind worship, occasion for worship different festivals and fasts. With the mode and object of worship offering of various floral and vegetal parts also varies.

'Sharda Tilak' prescribes that the forehead of the deities should be decorated with flowers. Dharma Shastra prescribes that for the worship of Lord Vishnu, leaves of Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*), belwa (*Aegle marmelos*), amlika (*Emlica officinalis* or *Tamrindus indica*) and bhringar patra (leaves) (*Eclipta alba*), flowers of malti (*Aganosma dichotoma*), Mallika (*Jasminum sambac*), Yuthica (*Jasminum auriculatum*), Gulab (*Rosa damascena* and *Rosa alba*), Kaner (*Narium indicum*), Kubjak (*Rosa moschata*), Karnikar (*Pterasperrum acerifolium*), Champa (*Michelia champaca*), Tagar (*Ervatemia divaricata* or *Valeriana jatamansi*), Ashoka (*Saraca asoca*), Tilak (*Woodlandia tinctoria*), Kamal (*Nelumbo nucifera*) and other highly scented flowers are taken to be excellent for offering.

In Gautami Tantra, Mahabharat and Sridh gautam smriti, Lord Krishna has shown special endearment for the offering of flowers of Kumud (*Nymphaea pubescens*), Kaner (*Nerium indicum*), Mallika (*Jasminum sambac*), Jati (*Jasminum offici-*

nale var. grandiflora), Champa (*Michelia champaca*), Nanda vrata or Tagar pushpa or Vishnu braksha or Bhagvat vraksha (*Ervatamia divaricata*), Plash patra and Plash pushpa (*Butea monosperma*), Durva (*Cynodon dactylon*), Bhringol (*Eclipta alba*).

Leaves of Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*), flowers of Kamal (*Nelumbo nucifera*), Champa or Swarna pushpa (*Michelia champaca*) are greatly endeared to Krishna.

Goddess Lakshmi has special liking for Kamal (*Nelumbo nucifera*).

Flowers of Karvir (*Bauhinia variegata*) and Japa pushpa (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) should invariably be used in the worship of Goddess Durga. For worship of Sun, flowers of Ark (*Calotropis gigantea* and *Calotropis procera*), Plash (*Butea monosperma*) Ashok (*Saraca asoca*) and Japa (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) are mostly used.

Flowers of Ark (*Calotropis gigantea* and *C. procera*), Datura (*Datura innoxia*, *D. stramonium*), Nirgundi (*Vitex nigunda*), Harshringar (*Nycthanthes arfortistis*), Banduk (*Ixora coccinea* or *Petapetes phonica*), Japakusum (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*), August (*Sesbania grandiflora*) Kanera (*Nerium indica*), Durbakur (*Cynodon dactylon*), Tambul patra (*Piper betele*), Kush (*Desmostachya bipinnata*), Pungi phal (*Areca catechu*) and Bel patra (*Aegle marmelos*), Rice (*Oryza sativa*) intermingled with Kumkum (Red Vermillion) are chief media for worship of Lord Shiva.

In worship of serpents, 'Nag devta', flowers of Karvir (*Nerium indicum*), Jati pushpa (*Jasminum*

officinale var. grandiflora) and other scented plant products are used to remove fear from serpents.

For Kamdev puja, fruits of *Mangifera indica* ('am' manjari) are used.

(v) **Flowers and plants associated with fasts, festivals and penance**

In Hindu culture and religion there is a great vogue of fasts, festivals and fasts for penance. 'Phalhar' (fruit diet) plants and vegetable products are basis of such fasts and of festivals.

On occasion of various fasts and festivals a variety of flowers, plant products are utilized in worship as well as in form of 'phalhar' eg. Til (*Sesamum indicus*) in Makar ki Sankranti; Amlaka (*Emblica officinalis*) is worshipped on Amlaka Ekadashi and its fruits eaten. On Kushmandashmi flowers of Petha (*Kushmand*), *Benicasa hispida*) are offered to Shiva and Lakshmi. On Bakula Amavasya — flowers of *Bakula* (*Mimusops elengii*) are offered to Pitras and so on.

Penance for sins has been sought through the use of plants and floral parts, etc. during such fasts. Pushpakrachha—decoction of various flowers are taken during the fast. Similary Phalkachha—fruit juice Parharachha—juice and decoction of leaves of various plants are taken for certain periods during such penance fasts.

**(vi) Restrictions and restraints associated in use of flowers and floral offerings to deities.**

Flowers are greatest media of offerings during worship from ancient to present time.

Flowers are offered to increase virtues, to forsake sins, to get best rewards, to remove poverty, to achieve peace and happiness, to add fortune, grandeur, greatness and strength.

But there are many restrictions banning the use of certain type of flowers in worship.

The following types of flowers should not be used in 'puja' or worship of Deities :—

1. Flowers eaten or destroyed by insects
2. Faded or dried flowers
3. Torn, cut or damaged flowers

NOTE : But cut and broken parts of Bel patra (*Aegle marmelos*), Pan (*Piper betele*), Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*), Amalak (*Emblica officinalis*, *Tamarindus indicus*), Khadir (*Acacia catachu* and *Uncaria gambier*) leaves can be used in offerings (Sharda Tilak).

4. Flowers not fully bloomed
5. Flowers damaged by rats
6. Flowers borrowed from others
7. Flowers obtained through others
8. Stale and not fresh flowers
9. Hairy flowers
10. Flowers touched by low and unclean inferior person
11. Flowers trampled or touched by foot
12. Flowers with pungent or harsh smell
13. Flowers brought from gardens dedicated to others deities



14. Flowers fallen on ground

15. Flowers stolen from elsewhere

The following restrictions should also be followed invariably.

1. No leaf flower or fruit should be offered in reverse position [not applicable to the leaves of 'Bel' (*Aegle marmelos*) ] and pushpanjali.

2. No bud except of Champa (*Michelia champaca*) should be offered to any deity.

3. Plucking of flowers is prohibited afternoon bath.

4. Offering of Kumud (*Jasminum multiflorum*), Katki (*Pandanus tectorius*) to God Shiva ; offering of Dhatura (*Datura stramonium* and *D. innoxia*) to God Vishnu ; and offering of flowers of Ak (madar) (*Calotropis gigantea* and *C. procera*) to Shakti or Devi and offering of flowers of Tagar (*Ervatamia divaricata* or *Valeriana jatamansi*) to God Sun ; offering of Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*) to Ganesh ; offering of Durva (*Cynodon dactylon*) to Goddess Durga are prohibited.

5. Offering of flowers of August (*Sesbania grandiflora*), Dhatura (*Datura innoxia* or *D. gigantea*), Patal (*Stereospermum sauveolens*), Punnag (*Calophyllum innoxium*), Yuthic (*Jasminum auriculata*), Nagindi (*Vitex negundu*), Japa (*Hibiscus rosasinensis*), Karnikar (*Pterospermum acerifolium*), Ashok (*Saraca asoca*), Shalamal (*Salmalia malabarica*), Kakubh (*Terminalia arjuna*), Kovidor (*Bauhinia variegata*), Akol (*Prunus domestica*), Nil (*Indigofera tinctoria*), Ak (*Calotropis procera* and *C. gigantea*), Pichumand

(*Azadirachta indica*) should not be used in worship of Lord Vishnu (*Vaishnava Parva*).

6. Flowers kept or fallen on the leaves of Ak (*Calotropis sp.*) should also not be used in the worship of Lord Vishnu.

### (vii) Concluding remarks

Plants, their wood, flowers, fruits and other plant products have been used in Hindu religious rituals and customs since ancient days and continue to be used even today. One cannot but recognise the intimate connection between the vegetable world and human life. The plants supply the basic of our natural wealth and enter into the daily religious life of our people in supplying the basic necessities of our rites and ceremonies in all religious practices and yajnas. Flowers from time immemorial have been supreme among all offerings in religious rituals during worship of deities.

Til, Tulsi, Durva and Belwa patra are other plant ingredients in common use throughout our religious customs and rituals.

Plants have throughout provided inspiration to the humanity through their manifold utilitarian and bio-aesthetic aspects. The divine tree of Kalpa Vraksha gave a religious sanctity and divine status to the tree so that the humanity may not destroy it in the time to come.

# Ma—The Eternal Friend

'Bishuddha'

A famous Mahatma had said, "Just as the earth provides for each plant the substance necessary for its growth, so does Anandamayee Ma guide every aspirant according to his individual uniqueness." It was the experience of thousands that she had the right word at the right time for every seeker after Truth. Ma has said, "As you sound this body, so you will hear."

Ma used to address the girls of the Kanyapeeth as 'friends'. All of us students has serial numbers for our desks and clothes etc. Ma, therefore, had the serial number 'I' as the chief Kanya amongst us. On a summer morning in Kishanpur (Dehradun) Ma, instead of putting on her usual clothes after her bath, donned a robe (like a long frock) and came downstairs. I was attending on her at the time. She said, "Now I am going to play with my friends, so I have dressed like them too" and she smiled like a beautiful little girl at me.

One Summer, in Varanasi, I was preparing the evening 'tiffin' for the girls with some ordinary sour mangoes. I added salt, sugar, green chillies to the peeled mangoes. Then I tasted it and found it to be very good. I immediately took one dish of the mangoes to Bunidi asking if I could offer them

to Ma because they were so tasty. Bunidi took me to Ma's room and said, "Ma, Bishuddha has brought some mangoes for you." Ma expressed great pleasure at the sight of the dish as if she had been waiting for it. She ate a little of it and said it was tasty. Then she said, "This body as a child used to mix sour mangoes like this and used to enjoy the dish." Bunidi thereupon tasted a little of the prasād and exclaimed that the mangoes were too sharp and sour Ma ! Next day Ma ordered two baskets of sweet mangoes and had them distributed to us in her own room, saying—"My friend has fed me, so I should also feed them."

One day a party of 20/25 students with their teachers came for Ma's darshan at Varanasi ashram. They recited some Sanskrit hymns in front of Ma. The teachers asked Ma a few questions. Ma then asked Dadabhai (Gurupriya didi) to fetch some kismis (raisins) from the puja-room of the Kanya-peeth. Dadabhai knew that the girls offered only sugar puffs (batasa) in puja which was kept in a receptacle as prasād to be distributed to chance visitors. She tried to give a hint to Ma, that there would be no kismis but batasa only. But since Ma insisted on the kismis, Dadabhai approached the girls and made enquiries believing that when Ma had expressed a kheyāl for kismis than they must be available. This turned out to be the case. A rich devotee had recently given a large amount of raisins for the daily puja to the girls of the Kanya-peeth. So a sufficient amount was given to Dadabhai as prasād to be distributed amongst the visiting

teachers and students. After they had gone Dada-bhai questioned Ma, "Ma, I was to sure that there would be no kismis. How did you know, so that you insisted?" Ma smiled and said, "Khukuni, the girls offer kismis to me everyday, and I take, so I know."

Ma was tender as a flower ; but at times could be hard as a thunderbolt. Ma had occasion to take some girls to task one day. The girls immediately started to cry. Ma then spoke sternly, "All of you have come here to me ; if you do not try to improve yourselves, if you do not think that Ma is my very own and that she can say anything which is good for us, then what is the use of joining this institution? There should be no quarrelling amongst yourselves. You should obey the elders and observe all the rules of the ashram. In case of wrongdoing, punishment is to be accepted. "Ma was very clear regarding the nature of punishments also. According to her more hours of japa, or mauna or to be kept standing or to be given one vegetable only with the main meal were some instances of punishment. One day Ma was passing through the verandah of the Kanyapeeth, Varanasi. She saw quite a lot of rice grains in the drain. She stopped and made enquiries. One of the inmates due to inexperience had washed away a lot of the grains. Ma said that the anna (rice grains) which was given in charity should never be carelessly wasted. She warned that she would eat of those rice grains lying in the drain if any such future occasion arose. This was a salutary lesson for the careless one.

We remember many occasions when Ma supervised the serving of delicacies to Kanyapeeth girls. It was an experience of a Mother's love for us, she created a family atmosphere in the Kanyapeeth which was quite unusual and rewarding for all of us.

Once we accompanied Ma to Patna. From Patna Ma and three of us went by car to Rajgir. It was a memorable journey. We squeezed ourselves at her feet in the back of the car. Ma went on telling us her reminiscences of her previous visit to Rajgir. When the driver stopped the car, we got down and walked along the country road with Ma. Some one had given a big basket of lichis. Ma gave us great pleasure by sharing the summer fruit with us. During the journey we came across one bridge which had suffered a slight damage in an accident the previous night. The police manning the bridge allowed the vehicles to proceed in a single slow moving line. When our turn came, Ma spread out her arms and held us in her protective embrace throughout the time it took the car to go past the danger zone. There was no danger of our falling out of the car and over the bridge, but we did enjoy the experience of Ma's care and concern.

On the New year's day (Baisakh, 1) Ma was in Varanasi. I stayed awake the whole of the previous night making a specially long and thick garland with white fragrant mogra flowers. Ma came to our puja room on that day and graciously accepted puja of the girls. She looked pleased with the beautiful garland. When she was garlanded with

it she drew in all of us within its circle and thus we (approximately 25 of us) were united together in a circlet of flowers. Ma said with a smile, "My friends have tied me with flowers !"

We were fortunate to have Ma as our true friend and also the most loving mother possible. Such experiences were made possible by Gurupriya Didi, our Dadabhai. She was most indefatigable about collecting funds, clothes, utensils etc, for the little girls living in the ashram. She taught us to take care of Ma's personal things and also how to be of service to her. Dadabhai's attitude of awe and reverence for the least of Ma's kheyal and her meticulous rendering of service was the example for us. If Ma was pleased with us, she would be so proud. Another affectionate person was our beloved Didima. She was as if love personified. She gave initiation to the girls of the Kanyapeeth. She was soft, patient, gentle and concerned about everyone of us. We treated her like a beloved grandmother. We played holi with her, and listened to her songs and stories. Everyday she blessed us when we did pranam to her and gave us a little bit of sweets.

I feel thrilled whenever I think of my days in the Kanyapeeth ; as if we were forever bathing in the confluence of the three sacred rivers—the tridhara of Ma—the Ganga, Didima—the Saraswati, and Dadabhai—the Yamuna.

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# My First Meeting\*

Pandit Jiyalal Kaul Jalali, M. A.

*And it was at Dehradun Sri Ma* had wished it and Chitraji had informed me. The immersion ceremony of the sacred ashes of my dear wife, Dhanavati, my life's partner, at Hardwar was over and the next day on June 15th, 1967, we drove into the Ashram at Kishenpur. Sri Ma was at Kalyanvan. She was expected back from Sri Hari Baba's every moment. My daughter Uma, better known as Didi, had come a day earlier. Somaji and I had a wash and then waited in the hall of audience cooling our uncoolable impatience. Half an hour later the sounding horn, the loud whispers, the automatic rising up of the Ashramites, callers and others indicated that Mataji had returned. She did not come straightway into the hall. She had given time to some 'waiters'. Our impatience grows more and more intense ; and lo ! the Divine Ma robed in spotlessly clean white, with shining black hair falling from her uncovered head on either of her shoulders, slips in noiselessly amidst bowing heads and folded hands. We raise our eyes ; there Sri Ma is seated on her white *asana* on the wooden couch (with a vacant *asana* on her right meant for her own revered mother), and the first meeting begins.

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Followed by my two daughters and two grandsons present our humble offering of love and devotion. Surprisingly, Śri Mataji interests herself smilingly in the little Kashmiri saffron and *kasturi* and at her bidding two open mouthed glass phials are fetched. She has by then separated the *kasturi* on the silver plate. Now with the end of her *sari*, she cleans the inside of the phials, and the incense is 'stocked' and 'kept with *adar*' as Mataji would say. It at once reminds me of Sri Krishna's "*Patra ram pushpamphalam toyam yo me bhaktya prayachhat tadaham bhaktyo-pahritam ashnamī prayataatmanah*". I am spell-bound by the super-physical and physical effulgence mystically radiating and elevating spiritually. It is a joy, an inexplicable ecstasy. I feel myself diving in and out like the great Markandeya roaming in the spiritualized labyrinths of the *Balamukunda's* unfathomable depths of universality on the huge Ashvatha tree rising out of the depthless Ocean of Eternity.

I am a Kashmiri. Kashmiris have been Mother or Sakti worshippers. Siva come later, and Siva-Sakti worship dominated. A few years ago, a devotee of Swami Ram Krishna Parmahansa had wanted me to take initiation. Mother worship as a Kashmiri Brahman was in my blood: So it was nothing new to me. But physical time wheels on, and today something impels me. I owe it to my own revered mother, Devamali, that I have been fortunate enough to meet many saints, *fakirs*, *yogis*, *sanyasis* and other spiritual persons and mystics.

Black magicians, necromancers, *jafaris* and *tantric* athletes, I have come across plenty of them. And if my mother were living today, she would have seen something ecstatic, something quite different. I wonder why we should not have known Sri Ma then : Spiritual search would have ended. But there is nothing that is not bound and circumscribed by time physically—time, the infinite infinity of the seeker.

I am not recording impressions with the idea of compassion. An obstreperous poster from Kerala advertising Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian as the Kalki Avatar of the Hindus had amused me, when I had seen it reproduced in the "Organiser of Delhi". Then I had come across a pamphlet dealing with a great soul, Meher Baba, as "the Avatar of this age" and his injunction "to surrender to ME completely echoed the divine words of Lord Krishna's "*Sarvadharmā parityaya mamekam śaranam vraja*". I had in the meanwhile read of some other saints and yogis these two or three weeks before going to Dehra Dun. But when I found myself in the super-physical presence of Mataji, I forgot myself in the infinity of Love and Peace. Sri Ma invited me to tell my tale and she listened to me and my daughters with an affectionate smile rippling on her sweet lips, a smile which a mother alone can smile, with an inviting patience, replying calmly in terms of physical *sadachar*, physical norms of domesticity, and self-surrender.

In the late afternoon, in the same hall, women and men gather, some offer garlands and bouquets

which are touched and returned : Other offerings are distributed among those present. Sri Hari Babaji of Vrindaban is expected. A chair with a footstool is decked up for him. In the big audience Mataji enquires about Didi. The women are singing *bhajans* and reciting hymns to the accompaniment of music until Hari Babaji is ushered in. In the interval I had bought a few books on Ma. There was a foreigner among the audience called Uma. Hari Baba's party gave an elevating demonstration of prayers and *kirtana* in Sanskrit, explained in Hindi by the Babaji himself. We were all standing. Sri Ma who had received him was also standing until Haribabaji bade her to take her seat. When it was done Babaji and party left the hall.

With *Mataji's* permission I took leave the next morning, a changed man. I felt the divine presence of Ma, all through. "Have you had your *diksa*" asked Neogi, "or are you still thinking about it?" I did not want to tell him that without formal invitation, my initiation had already taken place. The aura of peaceful light and calm radiance beaming from the very presence of Ma was enchanting and captivating. With a woman's frame, a mother's face, but a maiden's physicality, the inveterate smile invariable, talking in Bengali, but in Hindi with non-Bengalis. Her effulgence is so pervading that the longer you stay, the longer you taste the nectar of her speech, of her very presence, you forget in the affectionate atmosphere of motherhood all your uncertainties and doubts,

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woes and sorrows; riddles and puzzles for they have been all answered and solved. Her greatness is too great for me to describe. Ma is all Power, all Light and all you want.

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Just as without the help of teachers and experts one cannot become proficient in the worldly knowledge that is taught in universities, so the sublime knowledge of the Absolute does not come without the guidance of a competent Guru. To find Him is the problem, whether it be for spiritual progress, liberation, or any other matter, however insignificant it may seem.

Sri Sri-Ma Anandamayi

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# Aspiration

Nihar Ranjan Chakraborty

Death ! You have the right  
Upon my physical body.

Your destructive weapons —  
Desease, accident and oldage  
None can destroy me ;  
Because I am son of the eternal—  
Body is not the final—  
As you think to be.

Accrossing all jurisdictions  
That those you have  
I will long to live after death.

I am traveller of the past  
To the infinite future  
That is to come ;  
I am also unbound  
By the present handsome.

I have my philosophy  
I can create,  
Where necessary  
I do innovate.

I will exist beyond death—  
There is no modification ;  
Everlasting truth—the eternal  
Is my home identification.

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# Ashram News

## **Kankhal**

On 13th April, 1993—Tuesday, on the occasion of Sannyas Utsav of 1008 Shree Shree Swami Muktananda Giri Maharaj, Special Puja Kirtan were performed. On this occasion a Sadhu Bhandara was also performed.

The 98th Birth Anniversary of MA was celebrated with great enthusiasm from 2nd May to 9th May, 1993. During this week-long festival, various special pujas were performed including the recitation of Sri Sri Chandi, Shree Srimat Bhagavat Gita, Ramayana, Matri-Chalisa and Hanuman Chalisa—fruits and sweets were distributed among the patients of various hospitals and among the poor. Special Puja, Yagna, Arati were also performed at Anand-Jyoti Pitham.

## **Matri-Mandir—Calcutta**

The 98th Birth Anniversary of Ma was performed at the Head Office of the Society at Matri-Mandir, 57/1, Ballygunge Circular Road, Calcutta-700 019 from the evening of 8th May, 1993 Saturday to very dawn of 10th May, 1993 Monday with great grandeur. On this occasion Special Puja, Kirtan, Yagna, recitation from Vedas and other scriptures were performed. On the evening of 9th May, renowned singer and a devotee of Ma, Shri

Ram Kumar Chattopadhyay sang some devotional songs. More than a thousand devotees attended the functions. On 9th May after puja, kirtan and arati, prasadam were distributed among the devotees who attended the function.

The Sannyas Utsav of 1008 Swami Muktananda Giriji and the 98th Birth Anniversary of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee were performed with deep devotion and solemnity in various ashrams at Dehradun, Varanasi, Calcutta, Ranchi, Vrindaban and others.

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### PROGRAMME OF CEREMONIES JULY '93 TO NOVEMBER '93

1. Guru Purnima — 3rd July, Saturday
2. Shree Shree 1008 Swami Muktananda Giri's (Didima's) Tirodhan Tithi — 25th July, Sunday
3. Jhulan Ekadashi — 28th July, Wednesday
4. Shree Shree 1008 Swami Mounananda Parbat Maharaj's Tirodhan Tithi — 30th July, Friday
5. Jhulan Purnima — 1st August, Sunday
6. Rakhi Purnima — 2nd August, Monday
7. Janmastami — 10th August, Tuesday
8. Shree Shree 1008 Swami Gurupriya Nandaji's Tirodhan Tithi — 24th August, Tuesday
9. Shree Radha-Astami — 23rd September, Thursday

## Obituary

An ardent devotee and one of the favourite sons of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Capt. Hiren Bhattacharji (youngest brother of Buludi of New Delhi) left his mortal coil on April 16, 1993 and took eternal rest in the lap of our Divine Mother. He was one of the seniormost and renowned pilot of the Indian Airlines. There were number of occasions in his perilious service career of thirty-seven years when he could escape the jaws of sure death through direct 'Kheyal' of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee. Even by Mother's infinite grace his "Asthi Visarjan" and "Sradh" ceremonies were performed most wonderfully in the sacred waters of the Ganges and "Anand Tirtha Ghat" respectively near Mother's Ashram at Kankhal.

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