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

## MĀTRI-VĀNI

The Wise keep on declaring and the *Sāstras* also say that if someone is engrossed in the quest of the Supreme, it can never be that he will not find. Constant effort; so long as you have not reached, do not relax your effort. Is not God, Who is Truth Itself, within you? Therefore do not abandon meditation, the contemplation of your Self. Being your very own, it is destined to be found by you. This is bliss and nothing but bliss. Where then are gloom and dejection? HE alone IS.

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To tread the path that leads to the realization of one's Self and cannot be relinquished, this is *dharma*. For every individual the road to Illumination is different. Wherever you may be, from there itself start advancing. For there is only He and no other. He Himself is holding you. He never, never forsakes you. Again, the practice (*kriyā*) that aims at the realization of God is called *dharma*. That which distracts one from the remembrance of God or Truth is *adharma*. There is but one *dharma*.

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Man is born in order to exhaust his karma, he is also born to exhaust the cycle of birth and rebirth. The man of supernormal power, that is to say in whom divine power has been awakened, he can also himself change his karma.

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The Guru manifests from within. When real, genuine search supervenes, real Enlightenment is bound to come. It cannot possibly be otherwise. HE Himself, having appeared as the Guru, reveals Himself or is being revealed.

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The way to God-realization is straight and simple indeed. The mantra which the Guru communicates is certainly the most excellent one. If the mantra received from one's Guru is repeated in the right manner, realization is bound to occur. How wonderful God's dispensation is! When the power transmitted to you by the Guru begins to function, action will not bear fruit anymore. If one enters fire one will of necessity be burnt. Although all names and forms are His, the One is yet again without name and form. For the man who loves the Name, God is truly present in all names and forms. And for the person who feels drawn towards the Absolute, He is beyond name and form.

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Never attempt to do barter with God, do not foster the mentality of a merchant or trader. "For so many years I have practised meditation and yet reached nothing!" This is not the attitude to be taken. HE is the breath of your life, the Self of yourself. HE is one with you.

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The Name and the One Whose name it is are identical: For He Himself appears as Name. The letter (*akṣara*) is indeed God's own guise. When the name becomes alive, it is as when a seed is sown the tree grows out of it. If the name that appeals most to any particular person is constantly repeated, one arrives at the realization that all names are

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His names, all forms His forms. Furthermore, that He is without name and form will also by and by come to light.

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In wealth and property there is certainly no peace. What then does give peace? My own true nature is Peace, Knowledge, Divine Consciousness—unless and until this is realized, how can there be peace? In order to find your Self you must become revealed to yourself. How beautiful!

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## Conversations with Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma

(TRANSLATED FROM BENGALI)

*Ranchi, June 7th, 1965.*

**Question :** If a householder devotee is in trouble, is it right for him to pray to God for redress ?

**Mataji :** Various attitudes may be taken. There are those who have dedicated themselves entirely to God. They say : "My Lord, whatever you may do, howsoever you may keep me, it is all right." According to the state of people's minds their conditions differ. Some are at a stage at which they just cannot help praying. Others, when visited by trials and misfortunes feel disappointed with God and drop their religious practices. On the other hand there are persons who turn to God more eagerly when in sorrow. And some remember Him with greater fervour when they are happy. In all circumstances He is the great Healer. Therefore many are moved to appeal to Him in trouble. Then again a state comes when one does not anymore feel the inclination to pray to Him for relief in adversity, pain, ill-luck, and so forth. To invoke God is always good. For whatever reason you may pray, from whatever motive—at least start praying to Him ! Be it for alleviation of distress or for Enlightenment, be it even for wealth and possessions. The Wise ever live in the remembrance of God.

*June 8th, 1965.*

**Question :** Someone who is a *karmayogi*, who believes in the path of action, says, there is no need of God, Guru, the company of saints and sages, and so forth. Is this correct ?

**Mataji :** The Sankhya philosophy also is of a similar opinion. The existence of God cannot be proved by the mind. You concentrate on God in order to transcend the

individual mind .When the Lord Buddha was asked whether God existed or not, He kept silent. One will have to accept whatever anyone advocates, in the light of his particular state, *sādhana* and experience. Each one's practice depends on the stage he has reached and on the nature of his particular line of approach. Where the question of belief and explanation arises, there it is like this. When a salt doll enters the sea, it is dissolved and mingles with the water. In the state beyond mind and intelligence there is no reply. There—about what is one to speak and who speaks ? There, I do not see any others, I do not go anywhere, do not accept anything from anyone, do not eat anyone's food. There is no question at all of talking. Whether you call it inert or undecaying—everything is all right. Here to ask questions or not to ask is equal. To be satisfied by knowing this from hearsay will not do : the progress of one's *sādhana* will thereby be arrested. One must experience this for oneself. Someone told the following incident :

In the course of doing puja, a man was performing the ceremony of instilling life into an earthen pitcher. All of a sudden the pitcher began to talk and related to him the story of its life. "When I was still earth I was lying somewhere and people came and walked on me. Then someone eased himself over me. I bore everything. One day a man came with a spade and broke me up. This also I endured. He put me into a basket, carried me away on his head and deposited me in some place. A little later he took a stick and beat me mercilessly. After putting cold water on me he went away. For a short while I felt at peace. But he returned again and kneaded me first with his feet and then formed me into a ball with his hands. Thereafter I was put on a potter's wheel. I was turned round and round and by the potter's hand moulded until I became a pitcher. Carefully he placed me on the ground. For a few days I was exposed to the sunshine. Sometimes I had to bear extreme cold and sometimes scorching heat. Then I was

put on a fire. What a huge fire it was and how terribly the flames burnt! When I had been baked red and hard and solid, I was carefully taken off the fire and put away. One day I was carried to the market together with other pitchers. Those who wanted to buy me took me up and banged me hard. Finally someone bought me for money and took me away. And now I am sitting here, filled to the brim with Gangeswater. Look, if you can develop similar patience and forbearance your life will become a vessel for the sacred waters of the Ganges. Be enduring as earth. Then you also will be worshipped by the people. Divine Life will be awakened in you."

(Translated from Hindi)

Vrindaban, August 1967.  
 Question : Mataji, please give us a talk !

Mataji : Here, there is no question of giving talks. Here all are one *ma* : Just as one's hand is one's own, so one speaks to oneself. For all are one. One must transcend talk and no talk. One should speak about that which takes one beyond the opposites of talking and keeping silent. And what is that? The remembrance of God. Practise *japa*, the name, a *mantra*, whatever anyone has got. *Ah-g-ara* (the letter or syllable) is that which is indestructible\*. Keep that *ah-g-ara* always with you. Practise the awareness of God, contemplate Him so that He may be revealed to you. Don't allow the mind to remain vacant. Otherwise, just as water leaks out of a vessel with a hole, so if the mind is left to itself, the really important thing leaks out of it and the mind turns to vain matters instead of to Him. God is Truth. One should seek *satsang* and read sacred books. Whatever the Guru instructs must be followed.

\* *Ah-g-ara* means 'letter' as well as 'indestructible'.



## From the Diary of a European

MELITA MASCHMANN

( IX )

( Translated from German )

*Ahmedabad, 1st December 1963.*

Mataji's complete gesturelessness ! The only 'gesture' that she makes is that of the Indian greeting : the raised folded hands. With this gesture she does not only greet but also expresses a request and thanks.

The richness in gestures of all religious ceremonies of all civilizations. As for instance in high mass or *pūjā*.

I remember one evening at Varanasi, when Mataji stood before one of the Ashram temples while a *pūjā* was performed there. I was reminded of it when I saw her stand near the fire sacrifice that was celebrated by several priests today. She stood perfectly still while the priest was going through a worship full of gestures. He is a quiet old man, slender and delicate and very reserved. I have often listened to the language of his gestures. It sounded serious and dignified, convincing even for me although I could not understand their meaning.

And yet: when Mataji watched him that day, the poverty of the language of religious gestures struck me with cutting clarity. The *pūjā*—that is to say the divine presence—was not in the worship of the priest but in Mataji's motionless being.

While she stood near the fire sacrifice today, only watching, without any active participation, it overwhelmed me : In her there is Reality, Being of a different order, a different density or quality from that of the priests and all the others who were standing around.

*Poona, December 1963.*

I have the impression that here Mataji is sometimes being left alone in a sense, although many people crowd

round her. Probably she is a responding spirit. When faced with sincere searching after truth or the longing for God, she flashes light—suddenly all fatigue is forgotten—and then it may happen that a current of spiritual intensity forces its way out with great power. But when there is no call that really touches her, she may occasionally sit in front of us like a rock. Of course this happens only very rarely.

I remember one morning in the train after a whole night's travelling, Mataji was sitting on her bed. She had a fear-inspiring expression of unapproachability. I experienced this with Mataji only on that single occasion. Her beautiful, sensitive face all of a sudden appeared as if carved of stone. Her features looked angular and seemed armoured with impenetrability. Her expression was not to be unriddled. As far as I could see, it neither showed anger nor pain nor impatience nor disgust: only immeasurable distance, inaccessibility, remoteness.

Sometimes, while *ārati* is being performed, Mataji seems transported into a contemplation that also takes her far away from the here and now of outer circumstances; but then she remains open to us, so that—provided our eyes are not blind (which unfortunately is often the case) we can catch a reflection of the light radiating from her. That morning in the train she appeared completely walled up in her terrifying unapproachability. Even the movements of her eyes, her arms, her head, seemed empty, as if occurring merely on the surface. Their impulses did not seem to emerge from the centre of her being.

For about two seconds I stood on the threshold of her compartment, then I fled. But soon I returned, sat down in front of her compartment and remained there for a long time. Mataji saw me, but whether she was aware of me I cannot say. I returned to her because I felt that wishing to be in her presence only when she emits serenity and kindness, was wrong. God alone knows what was hidden behind the impenetrable surface of her appearance.

One thing is certain : what takes place within Mataji is far more incomprehensible for us than we realize when we are daily with her. Even when she appears quite 'open' to us, we can only by the vaguest intuitions touch the outer fringe of her being.

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*Calcutta, December 22nd, 1963.*

The journey from Bombay to Calcutta has taken us 58 hours what with trains running late. For the first days of her sojourn, Mataji is the guest of a wealthy family of devotees. Their property is situated in a quiet street. Behind the house a small pandal has been erected. In a thatched garden-house Mataji receives people for private interviews. Multi-coloured electric bulbs have been fixed on bushes and trees in the garden, the tent is profusely decorated with flowers and garlands. Already the first evening two or three hundred men and women gather and everyone is eager to welcome Mataji with ardent veneration. Gradually the enthusiasm rises to such a degree that Mataji can hardly cope with the situation. From all sides simultaneously people are trying to embrace her. Never before have I witnessed Mataji allowing her devotees to get physically so close to her. She sits laughing amidst the impetuous throng and indefatigably distributes blessings by the touch of her hands. Occasionally she catches hold of a head with both her hands. Then again she caresses the face of an old woman ; with a humorous expression she pulls the hair of a boy kneeling before her, all the while making jokes with everyone at the same time.

Then an old gentleman starts a discussion about religious problems. A fencing with repartees ensues, interrupted by crackling volleys of laughter. Someone whispers to me that the old man is a hard-boiled atheist. In the midst of all this hilarity Mataji's face suddenly turns serious. She shuts her eyes and remains silent. It takes some time until

the stillness emanating from her penetrates to the farthest corner of the pandal. Then only Mataji begins to talk. For a long time she speaks with great intensity, at moments almost vehemently. From the fact that she repeatedly addresses the old gentleman I conclude that she is out to shake his atheism. He listens quietly and attentively, without ever uttering a word. Occasionally remarks are thrown in by the congregation, but Mataji dismisses them with a gesture of her hand. This also, I have never before noticed with her. Usually she at once responds to exclamations from the audience, but here the welfare of the one is at stake.

After Mataji becomes silent, the hostess celebrates *ārati* to offer the homage of all of us to the revered guest. Mataji's head is slightly tilted to one side. From her expression we can guess that she at once becomes absorbed in deep contemplation. Strange, how strikingly she now resembles the pictures from her youth. Again and again there are moments when her age appears to be blotted out. One senses the agelessness of the spiritual power functioning through her and giving the appearance that even her body is not threatened by the decline of old age. It seems endowed with the pliability, elasticity and charm of unimpairable youth.

Even the next morning this youthfulness is still very tangible. Narayana Swami reads from a sacred book and comments on it. Mataji interrupts him frequently with great vivacity and soon an animated discussion is in full swing.

*Calcutta, December 25 th, 1967.*

Mataji with her 'retinue' has moved into one of the liveliest business streets of the city. The family of a merchant, in whose compound the ceremonial recitation of the Bhagavad Gita is to be performed, has invited Mataji to grace the function with her presence. One can hardly

imagine how, in the narrow space between his house and his neighbour's, our host has succeeded in putting up a pandal to seat about a thousand people. Behind the pandal there is a courtyard in which a small cottage for Mataji has been specially constructed. The entrance to the courtyard has to be constantly guarded against the multitude of persons clamouring for private interviews with Mataji. She does not seem to have a minute's quiet throughout her stay.

Every morning a few chapters of the Gita are recited by all present. In the afternoons and evenings learned men comment on what has been read. In between Mataji receives on some days the *pranāmas* of innumerable people. At times the rush is really terrific.

While Mataji is subjected to such a "mass-*pranāma*," often the superpersonal in her existence can be clearly observed. The homage which by most is directed to her person—for people love her—she receives as a representative of the Godhead. HE is then present in her. Everything that makes for the very personal charm of her behaviour recedes into the background. Her face is strangely 'emptied' on some of those occasions, it shows no personal reactions. The God in her does not express any like or dislike, no moods, no desires. Of course, now and then there are also "mass-*pranāmas*" when one feels that Mataji cannot or does not want to deny to her devotees her personal attention, tenderness and cheerfulness. She then does not vanish behind the representation of the Godhead, but 'remains' with us with all her personal charm.

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Yesterday, while sitting among the crowd waiting for Mataji, I had a talk with a distinguished elderly Indian lady who related to me how Mataji had saved her son from enslavement by a dangerous vice. She did not disclose the nature of the evil, but I had the impression that the young man

must have been addicted to drink or drugs. She said : "He always wanted to shake off the bad habit but had not the strength to do so. One day, Mataji said to him : 'Listen, I know how difficult it is to break a habit of this kind. Therefore I am not asking you to relinquish it altogether. My request is : promise that you will never give into it in my presence.' My son gave his word. From that day Mataji appeared before his mind's eye every time he was about to give in to his craving. This helped him more than all the doctors ; he got over his vice."

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It often happens that someone says to me : "What a pity that you have come to know Mataji only now. During the last few years she has become 'so 'normal'. Nevertheless she is still highly attractive to thousands, although there is really nothing very special about her. Formerly she would often go into *samādhi* or *bhāva* or work miracles. Already many years ago, when we were afraid that, she might stop talking altogether or not return from *samādhi*, she told us : "Don't you worry, a time will come when I shall be so ordinary that you will be amazed." Of course, she is even now very, very far from ordinary, although she does not show any ecstatic states.

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Today I was standing near the bookstall outside of the *satsang* tent. Suddenly, emerging from the twilight of the back-ground, Mataji advanced towards us with quick steps, heading a group of *sādhus*. It was like a dream. The people who stood around fell at her feet. I remained standing. For a second I had a sensation as if I were at the seashore. I saw a large, luminous wave coming towards us and was wondering why all the others threw themselves on the ground. Everything in me waited with hushed jubilation to be swallowed up by the wave.

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Across the stooping backs Mataji smiled at me. At that moment I understood what a tremendous power accumulates in the joy of those who see God. Not only Mataji's face, but her entire body radiated this overwhelming joy. Joy that draws its sustenance from the dust of the road, from the voice of a beggar, from the fragment of a passing conversation, from the greeting of a child--from everything, for all is God.

I ran out into the street behind Mataji and watched her disappear into a black car and drive away. The dream-like quality of the situation could again be distinctly felt. It was bewildering and at the same time also strangely comical: a mighty blazing fire slips into a car and rolls away.

When I returned to the bookstall, an old gentleman who daily comes dressed in a snow-white European suit, said: "What really is it that is so fascinating in her?" "God!" I blurted out. The old man nodded. After a little while he remarked: "Yes, God, who loves Himself in enlightened souls. In them alone resides all the peace of the world. It is those souls that save the universe from annihilation."

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## Sacred Places of Kashmir, Jammu and Ladhak

A devotee.

(Continued from the previous issue)

### ANANTA NĀG

यस्येदं क्षितिमण्डलं भगवतोऽनन्तमूर्तेः सहस्रशिरसः ।  
एकस्मिन्नेव शीर्षणि ध्रीयमानः सिद्धार्थ इव लक्ष्यते ॥\*

[This world resting on one of the heads of the thousand-headed god Ananta is looking like a grain of mustard.]

Ananta Nāg is a sacred town, the distance of which by road from Srinagar is about sixty kilometers towards south-east. It owes its name to the famous spring sacred to the great serpent god called Ananta Nāg. The sacred spring issues from the foot of the tableland to the west of which the town is situated.

There is a temple of Shiva in the midst of the spring at Ananta Nāg.

At a distance of about one hundred metres east of Ananta Nāg there is another spring called Sonar Pukur, in the neighbourhood of which there are two more springs called Sulik Nāg and Mulik Nāg which are also regarded as sacred.

### ARPHAL

Arphal village is about eleven kilometers from Tral by road and twenty-one kilometers from Tsurus (or Sursu). It is picturesquely situated on the left bank of the stream called Chulabul Nala.

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\*Srimadbhagavatam, fifth skanda, twenty-fifth chapter, second sloka.



There is a very sacred spring on the right bank of the stream, to the west of the village. Its crystal clear water gushes out from a cleft at the foot of the Mainzawan mountain. The pilgrims perform *śrādhā* (obeisance to the departed parents and relatives) here. The pilgrimage to Amarnath is regarded as complete after these religious observances at this place for the peace and upliftment of the departed souls.

आब्रह्मभुवनाल्लोकाः देवर्षिपितृमानवाः ।  
 वृष्यन्तु पितरः सर्वे मृतमातामहादयः ।  
 अतीतकुलकोटिनां सप्तद्वीपनिवासिनाम् ।  
 मया दत्तेन तोयेन वृष्यन्तु भुवनत्रयम् ॥\*

“May the people of all regions beginning from Brahma to this universe, the gods, the sages, the forefathers, and all men, the fathers and grand-fathers, the mothers and grand-fathers from mother’s side, all be propitiated. May all people of the three worlds, the people of the seven islands, beginning from crores of generations in the past, be propitiated with this water offered by me.”

At Narastan, which is also a picturesque village, situated about six kilometers north-east of Arphal and sixteen kilometers in the same direction from Avantipura, there is an ancient temple in ruins. The ancient name of the place is Narayanasthan, which indicates that the ancient temple was sacred to Narayana.

### AVANTIPUR

Avantipur is at a distance of about thirty kilometers south-east of Srinagar City. It is midway between Ananta Nag and Srinagar. In ancient times there was a city here called Avantipur. It was founded by the great king Avanti-varman (855–883 A.D.) of Kashmir.

There are ruins of two ancient temples in and near Avantipur. They were dedicated to Vishnu called Avanti-

\*Sacred words for offering water to all departed souls.

swamin and Shiva called Avantishwara. One of them is on the bank of the river in the village and the other at Jaubyor to the north of Avantipur. Both the temples were constructed by Avantivarman. They were destroyed by the iconoclast Shikandar-But-Shikan (1394-1416 A.D.).

### BARAMULA

वाराहं रूपमास्थाय महीं सवनपर्वतान् ।  
उद्धरत्येकदंष्ट्रेण तस्मै क्रीडात्मने नमः ॥\*

“I bow down to the Lord in the form of a Boar, who assuming this form lifted with his one tusk the earth with its forests and mountains out of the ocean.

Baramula is a town on the right bank of the sacred Jhelum (ancient Vitastā) river situated at a distance of about fifty kilometers north-west of Srinagar. It is identified with the ancient place called Varāhamula.

In ancient times there existed a famous temple of Adi Varāha, the Boar incarnation of Vishnu, at Baramula. This ancient shrine was destroyed by Shikander-But-Shikan (1394-1416 A.D.). It is now identified with Koti-tirtha at Baramula where there is a large emblem (Linga) of Shiva. It is said that the god Vishnu incarnated as the great Boar at Baramula.

### BARSHALO

Barshalo is a village on the right bank of the river Chenab situated between Doda and Kishtwar in Kashmir valley. It is about twenty-two kilometers east of Doda.

There is a noted shrine of the goddess called Barshala in the village.

न मन्त्रं नो यन्त्रं तदपि च न जाने स्तुतिमहो  
न चाह्वानं ध्यानं तदपि च न जाने स्तुतिकथा : ।

\*The Mahabbarata, Shantiparwan.

न जाने मुद्रास्ते तदपि च न जाने विलपनं  
परं जाने मातस्त्वदनुशरणं क्लेशहरणम् ॥\*

“O mother ! I do not know any sacred words, symbols and hymns. I do not know any meditation, praise and how to call thee. I do not know thy signs and how to lament before thee. I know only how to take shelter in thee, which relieves me of all pains.”

### BHANIYAR

Bhaniyar is a village on the right bank of the Harpetkai stream situated at a distance of about three kilometers from Naoshera in Kashmir.

There are remnants of a sacred shrine near the village. It is still visited by the pilgrims.

### BHARIANGAM

Bhariangam is situated to the east of Achhibal which is about eight kilometers south of Ananta Nag in Kashmir valley.

There is a sacred spring in the village.

आपो हि ष्टा भयोभुवः  
ता न ऊर्जे दधातन  
महे रणाय चक्षसे ॥†

[ O waters, you are the source of happiness, so bestow strength on us, endow us with vision, great and beautiful. ]

### BHAVAN

Bhavan is situated at a distance of about sixty-four kilometers south-east of Srinagar. The place is also called Mattan, a corruption of Martanda which means the sun.

The spring of Bhavan is sacred to the sun-god.

It is said that the sun was born here.

\*Devyaparādhakshamāpanastotram by Shankaracharya.

†Rig Veda X, 9,1.

Bhavan is a noted place of pilgrimage in Kashmir. People on certain months of the Indian leap year visit this sacred spot and perform religious ceremonies (*śrāddha*) for the benefit of the departed souls.

रश्मिन्तं सुसुहन्तं देवासुरनमस्कृतम् ।

पूजयस्व विवस्वन्तं भास्करं भुवनेश्वरम् ॥\*

“Worship the sun rising with all his rays, the lord of the universe, the creator of light, who hides other lights by his splendour, who is ever active and to whom both gods and demons bow down’.

The ruins of the famous temple of Martanda (Sun) are at a distance of about two kilometers south-east of Bhavan.

### BHUMZU

Bhumzu is situated on the left bank of the Lidar river at a distance of about two kilometers north of Bhavan and ten kilometers from Ananta Nag.

There are very old artificial caves at Bhumzu which are regarded as sacred. In one of these there existed a temple of Kāla Deva. Two temples at the foot of one cave have been converted into Muslim Ziarats. The larger temple has been identified with the temple of Bhimakeshava (Vishnu) built by Bhima Shahi of Gāndhāra\*\*, the maternal grandfather of queen Didda who ruled in Kashmir in the later part of the tenth century A.D.

### BIJBIHĀRA

यन्नाम जन्तुरवशोऽपि गृणन् कदाचित्

यामी न याति भयदामिह यातनालिम् ।

तस्मै जरामरण जन्मभयातिगाय

गन्धर्वगीत यशसेऽस्तु नमः शिषाय ॥†

\*Valmiki's Ramayana, VI, 107th chapter.

\* Modern Afghanistan.

† Shri Namashivastakam—stotrarnavah.

I bow down to Shiva, the remover of the fear of old age, death and birth, whose praise is being sung by the Gandharvas, and by uttering whose name even on very few occasions and that also unknowingly, man is saved from moving towards the fearful and painful realm of Yama (Death) ”

Bijbihāra is a town on the left bank of the sacred Vitasta ( Jhelum ) river situated at a distance of about ten kilometers from Ananta Nag and about forty-six kilometers south-east of Srinagar. The town was originally founded by King Vijaya (80—72 B.C.) of Kashmir.

At Bijbihāra there is a noted temple built by a former Mahārāja of Kashmir in 1871 A.D. The temple stands near the site of an ancient and famous temple dedicated to Vijayeshwara (Shiva) of which the origin is lost in antiquity. This temple was finally destroyed by Sikandar. But Sikandar, who on a second visit to this place it is said, discovered among the ruins a slab of stone on which the following sentence was inscribed in Sanskrit :

विस्मिल्लाहि मंत्रेण नाशयन्त विजयेश्वरः ।

It means that the temple of Vijayeshwara will be destroyed by uttering the sacred words of Bismillah. It may be noted that while beginning any difficult task the Muslims utter the word “Bismillah”. On seeing this inscription understanding its meaning Sikandar's heart was full of remorse realizing that he had become nothing but an instrument in the hands of time.\*

### BUNIAR

Buniar is a village on the Jhelum Valley Road situated at a distance of about twenty-two kilometers west-south-west of Baramula.

There is a very ancient temple supposed to have been originally built in the fifth century A. D. The emblems of

† A type of semi-celestial beings.

\*\* See Archaeological remains of Kashmir by Pandit Anand Kaul.

† Sri Ramacharitamansa by Tulsidas.

Shiva (Shiva-Linga) are installed in the temple. According to Major General Cunningham the temple was originally dedicated to the goddess Bhawāni and Buniar is a corruption of Bhawānipur.

भवानीशङ्करौ वन्दे श्रद्धाविश्वासरूपिणे ।

याभ्यां विना न पश्यन्ति सिद्धा-स्वान्तस्थमीश्वरम् ॥\*

“I bow down to Bhawani and Shankara, who are embodiments of faith and confidence, without which even the sages do not realize the God residing within each one's own self.”

### CHIMRAY

उपेमि बुद्धं सरणं धम्मश्चापि अनुत्तमम् ।

सङ्घञ्च नरदेवस्स गच्छामि सरणं अहम् ॥\*\*

“I take refuge in the Buddha, the highest dharma. I go to take refuge in the Sangha\* and the god among men (i.e., Buddha).”

Chimray or Chimre is an ancient village between Tikshay and Zingral in the Ladhak area of Kashmir. It is about ten kilometers north-east of Hemis Gompa which is about thirty kilometers below Leh, the capital of Ladhak.

There is an ancient Buddhist monastery at Chimray.

### GANDARBAL

Gandarbal is a sacred lake on the north-east slopes of the Harmukh mountain situated at a height of about 12,000 feet above sea-level. In order to reach this lake one has to travel a distance of about fifty-six kilometers towards north-west from Srinagar. The lake is about two kilometers long and two hundred metres wide.

An annual fair is held here on the eighth day of Bhadra (August-September).

\*Sri Ramacharitamanasa by Tulsidas.

\*\*Dhammapadathakathā.

†Buddhist Church.

## GANESHBAL

सर्वविघ्नविनाशाय सर्वमङ्गलहेतवे ।

पार्वतिप्रियपुत्राय गणेशाय नमो नमः ॥

[ 'I bow again and again to Ganesha, the favourite son of Pārvati, who destroys all obstacles and is the cause of all good'. ]

Ganeshbal is a village on the right bank of the sacred Lidar situated at a distance of about five kilometers south of Pahalgam in Kashmir. The ancient name of the Lidar river is Lambodari. Sri Ganesha is called Lambodara, which means one having a large belly. The Lidar river is sacred to Ganesha.

At Ganeshbal there is a sacred rock in the midst of the torrent of the Lidar. This rock is an image of Lord Ganesha.

Sikandar But-Shikan, it is said, tried to break this sacred rock. When he struck the knee of the image with a hammer, blood gushed out of it. On seeing this horrible sight, the iconoclast got terrified and thereafter desisted from further destruction of temples and images of gods\*.

## GATA

Gata village is at a distance of about three kilometers north of Bhadarwah situated on the road to Doda, near the left bank of the river Neru. Bhadarwah is about two hundred kilometers east-north-east of Jammu by road.

There is a noted temple of Sri Vāsudeva at Gata. There are other temples also.

कृष्णाय वासुदेवाय हरये परमात्मने ।

प्रणतक्लेशनाशाय गोविन्दाय नमो नमः ॥

'I bow again and again to Krishna, Vāsudeva, Hari, the supreme soul, Govinda, who destroys the pains and sorrows of his devotees'.

\*See Archaeological remains of Kashmir by Pandit Anand Kaul.

## Sri Thirumangai Alvar

T. KRISHNAJI

Thirumangai Alvar is the last of the galaxy of the twelve Alvars, who dived deep into the depths of bhakti and found the grace of Lord Narayana. He belongs to the heroic type among God's devotees. Though he strayed into evil ways, the '*Ahaituki Kripa*' of God is illustrated by his life. God is "*Patitoddhāra*" and *Patita Pāvana*". In the Gita (Ch. 9,30-32) *Bhagavan* declares that in spite of evil conduct or *durāchāra*, He saves if one has devotion for Him. Ajāmila, a sinner, was redeemed by the unconcious utterance of God's name. That is the glory of God and His Name. It is the glory of His devotee as well.

Thirumangai Alvar lived from 660 to 765 A.D.

Avinadudayar was a Kallar chieftain, owing allegiance and paying annual tribute to the Chola King. Being of a Saivite persuasion, he lived at Thirukkuriyalur (Kamalapuram). He was blessed with a son, named Nila, who after his change to Vaishnavism took the name of Thirumangai Alvar. Nila was a precocious lad. Quickly he learnt all the arts and excelled in physical and military prowess. Famous for his valour, he was a terror to his foes. He was known as Parakala. After the death of his father, Nila was recognized as the local chieftain. Prof. Varadaraja Iyengar is of the opinion that Nila was a hereditary King of Alinadu, Mangalnadu, Mangai and Kuraiyalur and a feudatory chief of Pallava Malla of Kanchi.\* Probably he was a feudatory chief of both the Chola and Pallava Kings. Nila had wealth, power, valour and youth, and he had desperadoes as his companions. So he led an unrestrained life of amours and pleasures.

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\* Vide Journal of Indian History, Univ. of Travancore Vol. 126. p. 131.



A celestial nymph took human birth and was found by a Vysia near a lotus pond in Nagapatam. Being childless, he was happy to adopt the child. He brought her up as his foster-daughter, naming her Kumudavalli, and she grew up in devotion to Lord Vishnu. The charming maiden was noted for her beauty, wit, and religious devotion. Nila came to hear of her beauty. He lost no time and went to see her himself. He brought rich presents for Kumudavalli and her father and offered to marry Kumudavalli. She, however, declared that she had taken a vow to marry none but a Vaishnava who would agree to feed 1008 Vaishnavites for a whole year. Nila was ready to do anything to please Kumudavalli and agreed to comply with her vow and wishes.

He hastened to a Vaishnava Nambi, received the sacrament and change of faith to Vaishnavism by having *Pancha Samskāras* or five essentials according to its creed. *Pancha Samskaras* comprise 1. *Tapta*-imprinting or branding *Sankha-Chakra* on the shoulders. 2. *Pundra*-12 *namas* or *tilaks* over the body. 3. *Mantra*-initiation into any Vaishnava *mantra*. 4. *Yaga-Ārādhana* or *pūjā* of Saligrama or idols. 5. *Nāma*-Vishnu's name in any form. Nila was then called Thirumangai Alvar, as he happened to be the King of a place called Mangai.

He hurried back to Kumudavalli and gave her a solemn assurance that he would carry on the *Tadiya Ārādhana* feeding 1008 Vaishnavas daily. The marriage took place. True to his promise and as a Vaishnava he carried on the mass feeding with religious zeal. Hinduism extols *anna dāna* (gift of food) as the greatest charity. None but the poor and hungry will participate in any public feeding. The Mahabharata says that feeding godmen is greater than the worship of God.

“*Ārādhanaṁ sarveshāṁ, Vishno ārādhanaṁ param  
Tasmāt parataram proktam Tadiya ārādhanaṁ Nripa.*”

The Alvar gave up his wayward life and devoted himself to

the feeding of Vaishnavas. He spared no pains and did not grudge the expense. Kumudavalli, his wife, instilled into him the spirit of faith, fellowship and service to God and men. Love, human or divine, easily breaks the shell of the human ego.

When gradually the wealth of the Alvar got depleted, he utilized the funds reserved for payment to his suzerain, the Chola King. When he thus failed to pay the tribute, messengers from the Chola King came demanding it. The Alvar entertained the messengers to rich dinners and sent them away with promises. The Chola King dispatched a military force to extract payment. But the Alvar was a match for any army, he defeated and they had to flee. Then the Chola King himself came with his troupes. Though the Alvar was strong enough to beat him into retreat, he pondered over the situation and over the fact that the Chola King was his Suzerain and should be respected, so he appeared before him and made promises. The King was not content with mere words. He insisted on prompt payment. The Alvar was put into custody. He did not worry about his personal discomfort but was deeply distressed at the interruption of *Tadīa ārāḍhanā*. In his plight, he addressed prayers to God. Lord Varada Raja of Conchi responded to his prayers and in a dream disclosed to the Alvar a treasure trove on the banks of the Vegavathi river in Conchi. The Alvar pleaded with his guards to take him to Conchi, promising payment of all dues. He found the treasure and paid all dues to the Chola King, who felt reverence towards the Alvar as one "chosen of the Lord Varada." The Alvar returned home with surplus wealth and carried on the Vaishnava feeding with even greater zeal.

When all the riches were exhausted by public feeding, the Alvar fell into gloom. He belonged to the Kallar community, noted for robberies, and so he thought that he might continue the feeding with stolen wealth. Together with his desperado companions he took to highway robbery. Public

# GRAPHIC PICTURES

of some

Holy places connected with the Life

of

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee

at

## TARAPITH

*—By courtesy of Sri M. K. Thacker*

*Dhanbad*

## TARAPITH

Tarapith, a tiny village in West Bengal, situated at a distance of about 230 Km. from Calcutta, has been acclaimed from the olden times as the foremost place for *Shakti-sadhana*. Thousands of devout men and women visit the famous temple of Tara Ma every year and are immensely benefited by the powerful spiritual vibration which pervades the whole area.

It was this holy place where Mataji came for the first time after leaving Dacca by the end of 1929. Sri Bholanath, who was advised by Mataji to proceed to Tarapith all on a sudden, practised *sadhana* in Tara Ma's temple and attained the state of a *Siddha*. Mataji also arrived a few days after and stayed in the old Shiva temple for some time. The account of her stay in Tarapith is still fresh in the minds of many old villagers, who are still alive. It is learnt that Mataji used to wander about all alone in the country side throughout the day. Village women, who had already been much attracted by her personality, used to feed Mataji with great loving care. She was looked upon by the village folk as the *Bhagwati Mā* (Divine Mother).

Mataji and Bholanath visited Tarapith almost every year till February, 1936 and stayed there for varying periods. Many simple village people, particularly late Jatin Panda and his whole family, honoured them both and looked after their physical comforts. Many a supernatural incident and interesting anecdote relating to Mataji, Bholanath and Bhaiji is even this day remembered by the local people.

It was in the precincts of the famous Tara Ma's temple that the *Upanayana* (sacred thread ceremony) of Didi Gurupriya and Marani, Bholanath's adopted daughter, was held in February, 1936. The simple marriage celebration of Marani was also performed here under Mataji's instructions.

Several years after through the ardent zeal of late Jatin Panda and a few other devotees of Mataji a plot of land was acquired in front of the Tara Ma's temple and a Shiva Mandir was constructed. Lately a small Ashram has also been established there through the untiring efforts of a number of Mataji's devotees.

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