

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

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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Ananda Vārta

A quarterly presenting the divine life and teaching of SRI ANANDAMAYI MA and various aspects of Universal Dharma.

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Mātri Vāni

(Dictated by Sri MA as letters in response to devotées' requests for personal advice and guidance.)

God fulfils a Truth-seeker's desire. Appearing in the form that is longed for He does what is needed. It is He who kindles the mind's desire and He Himself fulfils it. It is incumbent on man to sustain the living remembrance of God, to keep the mind safely protected within the sphere of Reality by the regular performance of japa and meditation. In order to remain steadily in an atmosphere of spirituality and truth, endeavour to let the mind ever be wedded to Reality-directed activity.

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In his Cosmic Form (*viśvarūpa*) all forms (*sarvarūpa*) of God are contained. Tread the path to the revelation of the One Essential Form (*svarūpa*).

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Advance briskly in the direction from which the road to Self-revelation (*svarūpa prakāśa*) opens out. The seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling of the material world are not helpful on the pilgrimage of life. What can be had within this world you have

already seen in great detail to your cost. No more allow your mind to proceed in that direction.

In this chimerical realm of coming-going on and on, no one belongs to anyone—and yet you crave it on and on ?

* * *

The more one advances towards the Divine the less prominent the actions that cause anguish and distress—remember this ! Worldly undertakings do give temporary happiness—with agonizing sorrow sneaking behind like a shadow. Become a pilgrim on the path to Self-realization !

* * *

Perform service regarding everyone as God's manifestation—this becomes then service to the One. All are God's creatures—He accepts your service in this manner.

* * *

Even if you are unable to sit for very long practising japa or meditation, you should keep Him drawn to yourself by remaining day and night, throughout the twenty-four hours, filled to overflowing with the awareness of His presence, so as to be kept away from all worldly attractions.

* * *

Whatever is done by anyone from anywhere for the revelation of THAT which is beyond - transcending everything - aiming at the One, it all reaches There. It is in fact He who does it, who causes it to be done— He Himself is the mantra as well as the Goal. Just as the actor, the activator, the action and its aim are one indeed. This must come to light so that the triad (*triputi*)—actor-action-acting—may be obliterated.

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The day that is gone never returns. Invaluable moments are gliding away. While there is yet time turn to the Timeless One (*Dīnanātha*). In old age with its infirmity and lassitude, *Hari Nāma* does not readily flow; such is the work of time. What can be done at that late hour ?

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A mother may not display her affection outwardly, yet she is and will ever remain your real mother. Even though you may want to push God the Mother aside, She never goes away.

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Whatever *sādhana* or worship the Guru prescribes for the removal of the mind's veil of ignorance, in that current a human being must at all times remain fully immersed.

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Pervading the whole universe there is one Ātmā. To receive a touch of the revelation of this fact be a pilgrim on the Path.

* * * * *

Write to her : "This body is always with her. One should open one's heart to God and endeavour to take it far granted that whatever happens is for one's best—whether we understand or not."

* * * * *

If one is to find the way to *Paramartha* (the supreme object of life), one must never be tempted by worldly happiness. The path of dharma is difficult. The only thing to be done is to surrender yourself at the feet of the Lord. So long as the mind dwells on worldly happiness and comforts, one cannot feel even the slightest touch of God. As long as the heart is not weeping for God, how can one hope to get even a glimpse of an experience of Him? He who is truly yearning for God, the more time he can devote to the repetition of his mantra, to meditation, singing the praises of God, reading sacred books, the greater the possibility of receiving a touch of God and of progressing. One must always try and try again and not even give time to wonder where there are results or not.

Mātri Satsang

[14]

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

[Translated from Bengali]

Ardha Kumbha Melā

Triveni, Prayag (Allahabad)

From January 14th to February 19th, 1948, the late Dr. Pannalal, an eminent devotee of Mataji, had made excellent arrangements for *Mātri Satsang* at the *Ardha Kumbha* in Prayag, at the confluence of the three rivers Ganga, Jamuna, Saraswati. I am trying here to report on the satsang of the morning of January 14th. I have endeavoured to keep as far as possible to Mataji's own wording but I cannot guarantee that each and every word which emanated from Mataji's lips has been put down. Just as people store away the waters of the holy Ganga in accordance with their individual capacity, so have I tried to retain everything I possibly could of the immortal words flowing from Mataji's lips. I crave forgiveness at the lotus feet of the all-merciful Mataji for any mistakes that may have crept in.

Mataji is seated in the satsang tent. Her devotees are anxiously waiting to hear Her words of wisdom. Dr. Pannalal comes forward to introduce a judge of the Allahabad High Court to Mataji.

Dr. Pannalal : Mataji, this gentleman is a judge of the High Court here. He will be on pension in the near future.

Mataji : Try to obtain the real pension - the pension from God's own government.

Dr. Pannalal : Which government is this ?

Mataji : The Government of all "This". He by whom it is manifested is the real Governor.

Judge : First one must be in service. Then only can one receive a pension.

Mataji : Yes, of course, one has to be in service first in order to be entitled to a pension.

Judge : I have found a doctor. Narayan is my Guru.

Dr. P. : I have told him to obey the Guru's instructions blindly.

Mataji : Yes, try to follow your Guru's instructions without exercising your critical judgment. Before taking on a Guru, one should judge fully, from all angles. But once a Guru has been accepted, his instructions must be obeyed implicitly. When a young girl is to be married, we search for a suitable bridegroom all over the country. But when, after a thorough investigation, the wedding has been accomplished, the bride has thereafter to spend the rest of her life serving her husband. Once the wedding has been performed, can this bond ever be broken ? Likewise, if after the Guru has initiated his disciple, the latter says : "It is true that I have received initiation, but I have derived no benefit therefrom," then I will declare that true initiation has not taken place.

Dr. P. : If after taking on a Guru, there are no improvements, what then ?

Mataji : Then the real wedding has never been performed. Here 'wedding' means receiving the mantra from the Guru. The mantra did not prove as potent as it should have. Sometimes it even happens that after the wedding the bridegroom runs away !

Question : I have chosen a Guru after a great deal of deliberation but so far I do not seem to have progressed. I have not accomplished anything in spite of following the Guru's advice. Under these circumstances should I take on another Guru ?

Mataji : If you have come to the conclusion that another Guru is necessary then it must be clearly understood that you have not been properly initiated, that your marriage has not been executed rightly. Else why should thoughts concerning another marriage now arise ? Many people assert that the Guru has performed the initiation but no significant results have followed. In the course of your sādhanā a deep yearning for God or Truth is most important. If after initiation such a yearning arises this is a good sign. Just as when residing in a foreign country one does not feel at ease, this is a sign of anxious yearning (for one's real Home).

Question : My husband went abroad long ago. No news has been received from him. How many letters have I not written but no reply has come. Under these circumstances, should I not take on another spouse ?

Mataji : A certain mahātmā used to live on the banks of the Ganga. Some distance from the mahātmā's hut there was a small village. A woman lived there whose husband had been abroad for some years. The marriage had taken place when

the wife had been a little girl. Now she was fully grown up. There was no news of her husband, so she began to wonder whether she should not marry again. Gradually her mind became quite agitated. Finally she went to consult the mahātmā who came out of his hut which was a little distance from where the woman was standing. He held a drinking vessel which dropped from his hand and broke. The mahātmā looked pointedly towards the broken vessel. The woman approached the mahātmā and asked : "Maharāj, what is the trouble?" The mahātmā said : "My drinking vessel has broken to pieces." The woman : "Maharāj, shall I bring another one?" The mahātmā : "No, thereby I shall not recover the vessel which is broken." On hearing these words of deep import, the question agitating the woman's mind was immediately solved thus : "I have once for all received a husband; even if he does not come it is not right to take on another one." On reaching this conclusion the woman returned home and started performing spiritual exercises as enjoined by the mahātmā. So, whether the Guru comes or not, whether you attain to the vision of God or not, once you have received the Guru's instructions, you must regularly perform some spiritual practice or other. The Guru is indeed constantly with you in the form of the mantra he has bestowed on you. With its help you must continue your sādhana.

Question : When the husband has gone to another country, why does he not return even after many letters have been written to him?

Mataji : The worldly husband may not care for you, but God, the divine Husband, is constantly concerned with your welfare.

God's attention is ever and always focussed on you. He himself inspires you to behave as you do.

Question : In what way can complete self-surrender be achieved ? How can the ego be destroyed ?

Mataji : You ask how your ego can be annihilated ?

(Mataji keeps quiet for some moments, then questions the enquirer) :

Pitaji, you have studied the *Śāstras* (Hindu scriptures) and other books of wisdom thoroughly. Why don't you yourself reply ? This body does not know anything. I am only a little girl.

Questioner : Our knowledge is confined to what can be told, written down, or studied. What real knowledge is, we do not know.

Mataji : There is a kind of *sādhanā* in which everything is surrendered at the feet of the Lord. Simultaneously with such self-offering the destruction of egoism takes place, or vice versa, when egoism is uprooted then everything is automatically surrendered at the feet of the Lord.

Question : Is egoism annihilated first or does the act of self-dedication come first ?

Mataji : If the ego remains, then who will surrender ? A human being may try to surrender by his own effort. But it may also happen that no effort is required for this surrender; the act of self-dedication comes about of itself. When egoism is uprooted then surrender follows as a matter of course. Thus, self-dedication and the destruction of egoism occur simultaneously, don't they ?

Question : When discriminating between the effort to surrender and spontaneous surrender, surely effort is made by the ego. Cannot spontaneous self-surrender come about through Grace ?

Mataji : Spontaneous surrender is certainly the result of Grace itself. He who dedicates himself entirely can make swift progress in his sādhanā. Whatever one considers to be one's own, should be laid down at the feet of the Lord. At every moment of your life, in the execution of each duty, whenever your intelligence is exercised, so long as there is identification with the body, you should be imbued with the spirit of self-dedication in all your activities. Whichever path a man adopts in order to realize God, he should be engrossed in following this path throughout the twenty-four hours. This applies to any method he may choose, be it Self-enquiry according to Vedānta or the path of self-offering. Strict truthfulness is necessary on each and every path.

Take any particular road. If there is true love for it then detachment follows of itself. Detachment means the full awakening of discrimination. When the fire is lit, what happens ? One becomes completely detached even from detachment. Renunciation itself is renounced—that is, renunciation reveals itself. Renunciation by effort and spontaneous renunciation are two entirely different things. So long as renunciation does not come about of itself, do not relax your efforts at relinquishment. Whatever work you undertake, do it in a spirit of complete self-surrender or as a means to Self-knowledge. Do not stop striving so long as God is not realized, so long as Self-revelation does not occur. Forge ahead steadfastly and do not cease in your efforts until complete

Self-knowledge (*Atmājñāna*) is achieved. You should take the road that leads to unbroken (*akhaṇḍa*) God-realization. Can a hungry person be satisfied until he has had a proper meal? So also should you not rest until you have realized Him. To yearn intensely for Him is fitting. Unless the fire of divine agitation is ignited one cannot take to this path. You must be determined not to waver from the path until you have attained to the unbroken realization of Divinity. It is necessary to feed the body regularly with the correct food; food means whatever is absorbed into oneself. Sleep is also a kind of food; seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling constitute food for the sensory organs. The average *sādhaka* should advance while providing regulated and controlled intake of all necessities. The middle road is right for aspirants in general. The case of exceptional devotees is altogether different.

Question : Self-dedication is possible only so long as one remains in the realm of intelligence. But there comes a stage when intelligence ceases to function. What is to be done then?

Mataji : Does the intelligence become numb or inert (*jaḍa*)?

Question : No, it becomes extinct (*laya*).

Mataji : The intelligence can become extinct in various ways. I am not now speaking of a condition in which illumination takes place. So long as illumination does not supervene, the intelligence can only become extinct by sinking into inert oblivion. When there is no light and enlightenment has not occurred this is a sign of becoming buried in complete ignorance. Where there is no consciousness one is submerged in insensibility. For instance when waking up from sleep one

may experience great joy, but this joy is not the bliss of Brahman. Thus, this is also a kind of hunger.

Question : Although not the supreme bliss of Brahman, yet it must surely be at least a reflection of it ?

Mataji : The joy derived from deep sleep is bliss under cover of ignorance. Suppose you sit in meditation. You reach maximum concentration and are not aware of external matters. When rising from such a meditation, you feel a sense of intense inner joy. But until and unless full Enlightenment has taken place, it is important to understand that nothing has been achieved.

Question : But I get totally drowned in such a state. Who is there to understand and what is to be understood ?

Mataji : It is very harmful to be in an unconscious state. You have been caught in inertia. To become immersed in insensibility is not desirable. How can you continue to live in a state where the mind cannot become enlightened ? Inertia has seized and reduced you to submission, This is why it is said in our scriptures that real skill leads to well-being (*kuśal*).

Questioner : (Quoting from the Gita), “Yoga is skill in action (*Yoga karma sukauśalam*)”.

Mataji : The yoga of skill in action, this is what works. You all know what is written in the *Śāstras*. If you allow your mind to be lost in torpor, this is tantamount to its being paralyzed.

Question : How can we be delivered from such a situation ?

Mataji : Think of a *saṁnyāsī* who after taking *saṁnyāsa*

discriminates between the real and the unreal and then sits down to meditate. Likewise those who practise mantra japa must have a clear knowledge of its meaning.

Ultimately one has to progress beyond the *śabda* (word, sound). In the meantime the “word” is your constant companion. What is *śabda* ? It is a form of light.

Question : Light ? Does it then lead to revelation ?

Mataji : What is a letter (*akṣara*) ? Light. Why ? You yourself are light. Who are you ? Can you exist without sound (*śabda*) ?

Even in the event of Enlightenment, sound is not absent. Whenever there is friction the display of light can be perceived. What is vibration ? Light Itself. *Akṣara* (what cannot be destroyed) is also Light Itself. Form is also light in essence. If there is *ātmājjyoti* (the Light of the Self), why should there not be the light of sound (*śabdajyoti*) ?

Question : Does sound become extinct in *samādhi* ?

Mataji : Sound merges into *Mahājjyoti* (Supreme Light). Try to go even beyond light. Where actually do light, bliss, dejection, extinction, agitation, exist ? The *Atmā* has been called “*Mahājjyoti* (Great Light). What do your scriptures say ? (Everybody starts laughing.) This is why one should have recourse to the *Mahāvākyas**. These *mahāvākyas* are purely vibra-

* *Mahāvākya* “Great sentence” a supreme utterance fixing the nature of Self and Reality in a *sādhaka*’s awareness. “That art thou” “All this is Brahman”, etc. were revealed in vedic times and have been passed down through the ages as a means to awaken the disciple to the most universal Truth.

tion. In order to establish consciousness devotees take refuge in the *mahāvākas*. The *sādhaka* who aspires to Self-realization meditates on "I am Brahman." This awareness or inner recollection should be kept burning continuously like a fire. If it becomes extinct in unconsciousness then the door to inner light will be closed. This light is present within you. What is hidden inside has to be revealed. To reveal means to become manifest outside. If you become a prey to unconsciousness, the door leading to inspiration, to mantras, *mahāvākya*s and the like is shut for you. When there is torpor, dullness, insensibility, how can revelation come about? Recollection, awareness, remembrance of TRUTH which IS, must be constantly kept alive so as not to become submerged in insensibility. If one remains wide awake what will happen? Ah! What can be revealed? You yourself are indeed Revelation. When meditating your one and only purpose must be Self realization, Self-knowledge. Whatever you come to know through discrimination or discussion you should keep alive in your mind. This is the only means to drive away the dark clouds of ignorance.

No sooner had Mataji stopped talking than a certain gentleman said :

"Mataji, a rule has been made here to the effect that whoever uses Bengali as the medium of expression has to pay the penalty of distributing rasagollas.

Mataji : If I have to provide rasagollas, then I shall ask you, *Pitaji*, to bring them.

Once I was travelling by rail. I forbade those who were with me to buy a ticket for myself. So I boarded the train

without ticket. After a few stations the checker came. I said : "Pitaji, why don't you get me a ticket and then you can check it yourself." On hearing this the poor man let me travel without a ticket. Later he took me to his home to give me food and moreover presented me with clothes to wear.

In this vein discussion continued. In the course of it Sri Haribabaji Maharaj arrived with his devotees. With great care Mataji and Her people arranged for him to be seated. Thereupon he suggested that those who had experienced any miraculous incidents in connection with Ma should relate them. Since everyone remained silent, Sri Haribabaji asked Dr. Pannalal to speak. But Dr. P. hesitated, saying : "I have been trying to collect such articles but upto now only Kantibhai* has sent me one. So I suggest that he should speak." Dr. P. and Sri Haribabaji kept on insisting but Kantibhai felt very shy. In the meanwhile a sister devotee named Sm. Kamalabehn started relating her own experiences.

(To be (continued))

* Kantibhai was the original name of Swami Bhagavatananda.

My First Darsana* of Anandamayi Ma

Anil Ganguli

It was one of the coldest nights in Northern India on January, 31st 1947. The Delhi-Calcutta Express was about to leave Delhi Junction. As I had no reservation, I was frantically rushing from one end of the platform to the other in search of accommodation. The porter led me to a vacant compartment and there was nothing to indicate that it had been reserved. So, I took the earliest opportunity of occupying one of its berths and lay on it, dead tired. It happened to be an upper berth—a fact which eventually proved to be of great significance.

Then some respectable ladies and gentlemen appeared on the scene. One of them told me that the compartment had been reserved for Ma Anandamayi and convinced me that the porter had misled me. I realized that I had landed myself in trouble. I had no doubt that law, equity, convention - everything was against me. I deserved to be turned out of the compartment as a trespasser. But I was not. I overheard the sweet voice of a Bengali lady: "Leave *Baba* (the poor child) alone; he is so tired." I could not see the lady, but was agreeably surprised and deeply touched by the sympathetic tone of her voice. The sense of the words uttered by her was comforting, the sound simply captivating. My first

* *Darsana* literally means sight or vision. One speaks of having *darsana* of a saint or deity which means "to be blessed by his sight and presence".

impulse was to be chivalrous and to leave the compartment. But expediency prompted me to pretend that I was sleeping, and I did fall asleep within a few minutes. I did not bother myself about my fellow passengers; nor did they bother about me.

My sleep was, from time to time, disturbed - not by any human agency, but by dreams. Again and again I saw visions of Puri. Incidentally, Puri is closely associated with my spiritual life. In 1928, a Mahātmā gave me *aiṅśa* (initiation) in the temple of Lord Jagannatha at Puri. I was not a willing party to the ritual and it made no impression on my mind. At that time I belonged to that group of serious students of Presidency College who believed in living an ethically clean life of austerity, service and sacrifice, but were sincerely of the opinion that too much of religion had resulted in India's downfall. It was out of this conviction that I had, on principle, ignored my initiation into religious life, but faithfully stuck to my idealism.

Early next morning I awoke, refreshed. The glow in the eastern sky indicated that sunrise was near at hand. I was lying on my upper berth and the lower berth on the opposite side was occupied by a lady. We were lying diagonally opposite each other. This was a strange coincidence.

And what did I see at this first sight? An exquisitely beautiful and radiant face of a motherly lady with a pair of sparkling eyes; a cluster of black, silken hair overflowing her pillow and swinging in rhythm with the movement of the train; her body wrapped up to the neck in a spotlessly clean, white sheet. I felt that a pencil of rays linked, as it were, the

eyes of that motherly lady with mine. Her gracious gaze was focussed on me. That gaze seemed to penetrate into every fibre of my being. It was so loving, so soothing, so purifying ! Later I was told that she was Ma Anandamayi and that by such a gaze she often makes, as it were, an X-ray examination of a person's personality. Be that as it may, I seemed to read a mystic message in that gaze - a message of warm welcome from a mother, ready and willing to take charge of a forgetful child. I have no language to describe the ethereal charm of the motherly lady's face and its serenity. Within a few seconds I was almost unconsciously transported into a mood of adoration and worship. My eyes were automatically closed in silent salutation.

After some time I recovered from this almost bewildering effect of the first contact. I then opened my eyes, but found the Mother's face covered up. I was disappointed. I came down from my upper berth and wanted a seat on the lower berth just below mine. Part of it had been occupied by an old *samnyāsini*. She looked the very picture of peacefulness. As I came to know later, she was Didima, the mother of Ma Anandamayi. Evidently, Didima was then immersed in japa. She did not speak to me but made a kindly gesture, offering me a seat on her berth and sprinkling holy Ganga water on my head. I appreciated Didima's courtesy, but frankly speaking, I did not like the freezing temperature of the drops of water that moistened my forehead on that cold winter morning.

Soon I discovered to my dismay that my fellow passengers were all ladies and I was the only male in the compartment. I felt extremely embarrassed. Barring the sound of

the rolling stock, pin-drop silence prevailed in the compartment. Didima suddenly gave me a mild note of warning that her belongings were not to be touched. I was not quite conversant with the sanctions and inhibitions governing the orthodox Hindu way of life. I felt uneasy in the company of my fellow passengers, evidently conservative in their outlook. I concluded that discretion would be the better part of valour. So, I packed up my bedding and prepared myself for a change of compartment.

The Mother had in the meanwhile uncovered her face and was sitting on her berth, tenderly looking at me. The train stopped at a wayside station and I tried to leave the compartment. But the Mother would not let me go. She gently asked me, "where are you going?" Instead of replying to her question, I simply apologized to her for my "trespassing" into a ladies' compartment. She uttered two words in an East Bengal dialect "*Ashaw, bawshaw* (come, sit)", and offered me a seat just beside her. We sat fairly close to each other and my right arm accidentally came into direct contact with her left arm. My whole system thrilled with a peculiar sensation of joy and peace. I forgot, for the moment, that I was a grown-up male and a complete stranger. I was being transported, as it were, to a new sphere.

The Delhi Express moved on slowly. Sitting so close to the Mother, I had the delightful feeling that I was being caressed by my own mother. Her very presence inhibited speech. It was a unique experience indeed : For some time there was no exchange of words between us until she broke the silence. She asked me several questions of a personal

nature in the manner of an inquisitive stranger—my name, occupation and residence; also details about my family, the purpose of my visit to Delhi and so forth. I answered fully each and every question, naively assuming that I had thereby given her much information about myself. I could then hardly imagine that she knew more of me than I did myself. In fact, my knowledge was limited to my conscious mind whereas she could, as I have since convinced myself, read the sub-conscious too, and even more.

We talked on all kinds of subjects. Religion or spirituality did not figure prominently in the conversation. Occasionally, our talk was being enlivened by the intermittent intervention of a middle-aged lady with an impressive appearance and of an imposing personality. She was Sri Gurupriya Devi (popularly known as Didi, that is to say, elder sister), the great author of the invaluable literature published under the caption of “*Sri Sri Anandmayi Ma*”. I was not interested in her books. What really pleased me was her kindly offer of *Prasāda* (sacramental food) as I was very hungry. But there was a snag in the offer : Didi added that she was waiting for me to change my clothes before I took *prasāda*. I told her that I was not in the habit of changing in the morning. I added that I should be much obliged if I got some food from her, otherwise I would order breakfast elsewhere. My apathy to *prasāda* was bad enough. My attitude was worse still. Didi looked sullen. The Mother, however, seemed to be indulgent. She observed that the rules regarding changing of clothes were not for me. This one gesture from her was enough to make Didi all smiles and she gave me *prasāda*. I appreciated the Mother’s “liberal” outlook and enjoyed the delicacies received from Didi.

Our conversation, temporarily interrupted by the *prasāda* episode, was resumed by the Mother. Without any preamble she asked me to sing a song. Unhesitatingly I at once sang a song by Tagore. And then I had an unprecedented experience - she seemed to be pleased with my performance and asked me to sing more songs. For a normal listener one musical recital by me would be boring enough.

By that time I had become very free with the Mother and felt like addressing her as “*Ma*”. Incidentally, I told her that there was a pathetic story which spoilt my prospect of becoming a great musician. The Mother expressed her curiosity to hear the story, but Didi suddenly rushed in for a private interview with her. During the confidential conversation Didi’s “whispering” was loud enough to outvoice the noise of the running train and her points ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous. The Mother’s replies were terse and cryptic. But the dialogue, thanks to Didi, seemed to be never-ending. As the Mother’s destination was not far ahead, I was impatiently longing for an opportunity to talk to her. My wish was fulfilled quite unexpectedly. The Mother abruptly and unceremoniously cut short Didi’s private and turned to me for my “pathetic story”. I told her that a connoisseur of music who regularly used to listen to my voice-training practice, once wondered whether I thought that my song was in tune with my stringed instrument. Hearing my confident answer in the affirmative he remarked in despair, ‘well, if that is your assessment, I am afraid music is not your line’. Thereupon I bade good-bye to music.

I had previously narrated this sad experience of mine to several persons. Every listener enjoyed the fun, laughed at

my cost for a few seconds and there the matter ended. But the Mother's reaction was simply amazing and almost terrifying. An insignificant event, or rather an adverse opinion, had spoilt the doubtful prospect of my becoming a great musician. This fact proved hilarious enough for the Mother to create a scene. She suddenly burst into loud laughter which continued until she was half exhausted. After a short pause, she started laughing again and would not stop until she was almost out of breath. This fit of laughter went on relapsing at short intervals. The Mother's face turned red, tears rolled down her cheeks and at times she seemed to be almost reaching the point of suffocation. All this was terrifying beyond measure. Didi sternly stared at me with a look of concerned consternation and I was made to feel that I was responsible for the mischief. I failed to realize how I was at all to blame. I never had the faintest idea that the simple narration of my discomfiture could possibly lead to such a serious climax. I had a mixed feeling of embarrassment and apprehension of an unforeseen calamity. I was disgusted with myself for my decision to continue travelling in the ladies' compartment. I learnt from practical experience that the Mother was absolutely unpredictable.

This time Didi came to my rescue. She gently suggested to me that the mischief could be remedied only by offering prayer to the Mother. I considered it worth while to experiment. With all the sincerity I could command I prayed to God (and not to the Mother as advised), that nothing untoward might happen to the strange lady. Instantaneously the Mother's alarming symptoms disappeared. She again became as charming as before—a gentle smile replaced her roaring

erratic laughter. A possible calamity was averted. Was it due to my prayer? I preferred to explain it as a coincidence.

The train stopped at an important station, Fatehpur, if I remember rightly. Several devotees forced their way into our compartment and prostrated themselves before the Mother. I then thought it was also my duty to do so. As the train left the station I bowed to the Mother in reverence and was about to touch her feet when Didi stopped me in a peremptory manner. Her firmness suggested that my conduct had been objectionable. I could not understand why. Incidentally, it is the time-honoured custom of Hindus to touch the feet of a superior person as a mark of respect for him or her. I did not know if there was any particular reason for not touching the Mother's feet. I imploringly looked at the Mother, expecting support from her. Had she not already saved me out of several awkward situations? But even the Mother let me down this time. In fact, she seemed to approve of Didi's objection. She would not permit me to touch her feet. I felt hurt. Have I not begun inwardly to regard her as my mother? What does she mean by depriving a child of its natural right and privilege to touch its mother's feet? Anyway, I quickly finished a formal salutation from a distance and immediately thereafter I left the Mother's berth and shifted to the berth on the opposite side.

Lest the unpleasant episode should leave any trace of bitterness in my mind, I turned to nature's beauty for solace. I looked at the extensive fields and the limitless sky for the "healing touch of nature". Nature, however, failed to assuage my aggrieved heart. The more I tried mentally to move away from the Mother, the closer I felt drawn towards her;

and this was so in spite of her apparent apathy. It was a mystery to me. I felt distressed by these conflicting emotions. But the cloud of my mind vanished and my heart leapt with joy when suddenly the voice of the Mother reached my ears—“Why not come to this bench?” I looked at her and noticed an apparently mischievous smile on her face. I came back to the Mother and she resumed talking to me, as if nothing had happened in the meantime. This was enough for me to forget my childish pique.

Now I found the Mother in a serious mood. She started with a question; “Do your people expect you to be back home tomorrow?” I replied, “No, Ma, they do not”. “That’s all right”, observed the Mother. I failed to understand the implication of such a remark. Her second question was; “Is anybody expected to receive you at the Railway Station?” I said, “No”. The Mother repeated her first remark: “That’s all right”. I was unpleasantly surprised because a repetition of the same remark seemed to confirm her apparently unsympathetic attitude. A mother who attracts and repels, alternatively, seemed an enigma to me. Indeed, her “That’s all right” remained a mystery to me for the time being. Within a few minutes, however, I discovered that it had a deep significance for my future life.

The train stopped at Allahabad, the Mother’s destination. I was about to bid her good-bye, when she said in East Bengal accent “*Lamo*” (get down). I was puzzled. I did not follow as to who was being addressed. The Mother smilingly looked at me and said, with a strong accent in East Bengal style, “*Laimya paro* (do get down)”. Didi explained to me that a lower berth from Allahabad to Calcutta had already been

reserved for me by the next convenient train and that I was to break my journey at Allahabad for a few hours. All this had been inspired by the Mother and arranged by Didi without my knowledge. I helplessly saw my luggage being carried to the platform by two bright-looking boys who had come to receive the Mother at the Railway Station. I got down, as desired. I had no option in the matter. The Mother asked me to get into her car. I did so and sat by her side. Our destination was the confluence of the Ganga and the Jamuna. *Ardha Kumbha Mela*, a periodical congregation of saints and sages, was going on there. The "Ma Anandamayi Camp" consisting of a large number of tents, had been set up for the occasion under the supervision of Dr. Pannalal, I. C. S., since deceased. The assembly of holy men in the sacred place on that auspicious occasion was a sight for the gods to see.

I stayed at Allahabad as the Mother's guest for about eight hours. She introduced me to Dr. Pannalal, who treated me with paternal care and accommodated me in his own tent. Then he told me in detail his rich experience of spiritual pursuits and read out portions of his book 'Ma Anandamayi'. Suddenly Dr. Pannalal stopped and took me to the dining place where we had *prasāda*. The food served there was more delicious than any I had ever tasted. What added to its charm was the fact that the Mother herself served one of the items and smilingly told me that I should not feel shy nor hesitate to ask for more if I wished. Her hospitality was unexcelled. It deeply touched my heart.

After *prasād* Dr. Pannalal again took me to his tent and enlightened me on certain points raised by me. He genuinely tried to be helpful to me. From his experience he warned me

against a strictly rationalistic approach and advised me that in the spiritual field there was no alternative to faith. Though not fully convinced by his argument, I was touched by the ring of sincerity in his words which seemed to carry conviction. His views were supported by some elderly devotees, benefited by their long association with the Mother. I was much impressed by the narration of the experience of these venerable persons as recipients of the Mother's grace. It set me thinking from a new point of view.

Commencing from my entry into a ladies' compartment, followed by my vision of Puri in dreams, a series of "coincidences" occurred, each preparing my mind for the climax yet to follow. The time for my departure was drawing nigh. The sun was sinking down to rest on Ganga-Jamuna's breast. Its mellowed rays were reflected on the Mother as She was proceeding from her tent to ours. Her face, as I had seen it at dawn, had been charming; what I saw at dusk was majestic.

The Mother came right up to me and blessed me by touching me. Then She uttered certain words which touched my soul. These words are too sacred to be repeated and too personal to be disclosed. They shook the foundation of my so-called rationalism. They showed me light and kindled in me a new type of spiritual aspiration. My initiation, treated under the cold shade of neglect since 1928, was revitalised. I became inspired to be true to the Mahātmā who had given me initiation. I realized, for the first time, that I should have at least made an honest experiment on the path shown by him instead of rejecting it straight away. The Mother's glance at me filled my heart with regret for opportunities lost in the past and with hope for a bright prospect in the future. Better late than never - this was the soul-stirring message I received from the Mother. And this was the beginning of a new chapter in my life.*

* This article is based on the writer's diary published in Bengali in Volume I of *Ananda Vartā* about twenty-five years ago.

Tagore's Exposition of the Philosophy of Ancient India

Dr. Byomkesh Chakravorty, Ph. D.

Rabindranath's '*Shantiniketan*' is a collection of essays, written in Bengali and numbering more than one hundred and fifty. Originally published in seventeen volumes, they were afterwards compiled and published in two volumes by Visva-bharati Publishing House, Calcutta. These essays can be counted among the gems of Bengali literature. Unfortunately, most of them have remained untranslated into any other language, so far as I know. In the simple and inimitable style of the poet, they give a beautifully lucid exposition of the philosophy of ancient India. In this article I shall make an attempt to give the substance of Tagore's two essays in Bengali, entitled *Visva Bodha* and *Karma Yoga*.

In his essay '*Visva Bodha*' (Universal Consciousness) Tagore writes :

Every nation has its own idea of human excellence. Physical strength, or intellectual brilliance, or moral purity have been recognised as the chief factors of greatness and all the efforts of each nation have been directed to produce the best men of its conception. Ancient India also had her own ideal of human greatness. Those who were regarded as the greatest men in Ancient India were the Rishis.

Who were the Rishis? Neither rich nor powerful, they had realised the Universal Self in their minds and hearts and visualised Him in the outside world of action. They had realised His presence everywhere. It is, therefore, clear that India considered the highest fulfilment of human life to be not the amassment of riches, the acquisition of power, but entering into close communion with the Universal Self and thus realising the identity of the individual and the universal.

Man is great not because he can plunder and destroy, nor because he can earn and hoard, nor even because he can invent and discover, but because he can make all his own. Man's knowledge is limited; his power is circumscribed; but the expansion of his Self knows no frontiers. The greatest men of the world have realised in their consciousness the unity of mankind. They have emphatically declared that all human beings, great or small, high or low, enemy or friend, are their kith and kin. They have realised universal consciousness and have reached the goal of human life.

Some of the modern philosophers of Europe think that the Brahman of Indian conception is merely an abstract being; that the Infinite is based on a complete negation of everything in the universe. In other words, He exists nowhere except in philosophical speculation. This is, however, not the true philosophy of India. Indeed, the philosophers of other countries have not dared to go as far as the Rishis of ancient India in emphasising the supreme need of realising the Infinite among all the objects of the universe.

The message of the Upanishad is :

Iśāvāsyamidam sarvam yat kiñcha

