

Man must go out in search of That which is concealed behind the world. He should choose an abode that will make it easy for him to proceed to his true Home.

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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

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AN APPEAL

SHREE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE CHARITABLE SOCIETY, established in 1973, through the divine direction of **JAGANMATA SRI SRI ANANDAMAYEE MA**, is engaged in managing the institutions like "KANYAPITH" at Varanasi, "STIPEND FUND" at Varanasi, "VIDYAPEETH" at Kankhal, "KARUNA" at Varanasi, "MATA ANANDAMAYEE HOSPITAL" at Varanasi, "PUBLICATIONS DIVISION" at Calcutta, with its Head Office at Matri Mandir, 57/1, Ballygunge Circular Road, Calcutta-700 019. To run the activities of these institutions an amount of Rs. 12.00 lakhs is needed yearly.

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Debabrata Pal
General Secretary

Prof. Gopal Mitra
President

Sri Sri Ma's Utterances

The Second World War was going on. A devotee of Ma had written the following words in a letter to Her : “Ma, we are mortified by the horror of the war. Now please stop your *lila* of destruction.”

Ma dictated the following in reply : “Write to Baba,” She said, “Lord, you have manifested yourself unto yourself in the form of prayers and wails ; in response to your own prayers, you yourself will stop your destruction — *lila* manifested in the form of mortification in fear of unknown death. Verily, everything is present in oneself. One has to realize just oneself. Say ‘oneself’ or ‘one’s self’. One has to be released from the state of being bound within a particular boundary. Wherever you are, in whichever circumstances, you should concentrate on the lotus feet of the Guru. Just rely on Him. Just try to carry out, with uninterrupted attention, the instructions given by the Guru. Do not damage the power of your brain by turning chicken-hearted, falling into the grip of weakness, getting lost in talks about such states, developing a weak heart, palpitation, etc., and giving up food and sleep. Be heroic, and in whatever form He appears, it is a manifestation of Him alone : to sustain this idea without a break, you should take shelter of the Mother Maha Shakti.”

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A lady had written from a distant place, "My husband is aged and almost bedridden I myself am looking after him like a child."

Ma in Her reply dictated the following: "Ma, only service — only relying upon His Holy Feet. Tell Baba that he should devote his time only to the remembrance of God, taking refuge in His Name, studying holy scriptures, talking about noble themes, meditating on the Ishta, doing japa and so on."

* * *

One day, Ma was heard singing a lyric composed and set to tune extempore by Herself. She was singing with a smile:

"Where else will you go ?

All is His ; all belongs to Him alone, in truth.

He is the Essence of all essences,

He alone ferries all to the shore."

Ma in those days showed a great indulgence towards Mukti Baba*, by calling him "Baba, Baba," every now and then. Whatever Baba said, Ma would agree with it. She behaved as if she were a very obedient daughter to Baba.

One day, Mukti Baba and a few of us were sitting near Ma. Suddenly, Ma said to Mukti Baba, "Baba, today you alone were sitting as three persons !"

Mukti Baba: When ?

*Mukti Baba—An aged *sannyasi* of Sri Ramakrishna Mission. Later he became a permanent resident of Sri Sri Ma's ashram.

Ma : Just at that time when you were sitting alone in this room. I saw three persons sitting in a row. Also in the past, Baba was a *sadhu* ; he is not a *sadhu* for the first time in this birth. One of them had a loin-cloth, not saffron-red. Another one had put on saffron clothes, like the ones he wears now. That other form, clad in *gerua*, had a little child seated near him. The *sadhu* was fondling the child with great affection. Akhandanandaji was also sitting there.

Mukti Baba : Who was that little child ?

Ma : Myself. You know what the matter is ? The affection you were showing to the child, that too, was with an attitude of reverence. You were taking power from the child in that manner. In fact it was not fondling, you were actually receiving power.

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One day, Ma was talking about Her illness during Her stay in Dhaka. In that context, Ma said, "Look, someone had said that at that time this body would meet the end. And a rumour had also spread that Anandamayee Ma was about to quit Her body. For they had seen that I had been taken out of the room and lain in the verandah.

I myself had said, 'Take me to the verandah'. After that, I told them to set my body and limbs in different postures, sometimes in the form of various *asanas*, sometimes I asked them to twist the hands and feet in such a way that the body took a ball-like shape. And you know what I saw happening ?

The middle of the head* was splitting open under the skin like a door. After such *kriyas*, there was a change in that state. This body, too, somehow stayed on."

Mauni Ma was a saint of a quite high spiritual level. She had Ma's vision in various forms. Once when a devotee queried Ma about a particular yogic kriya, Ma said, "Go to Mauni Ma. If you go to Mauni Ma, it will be coming to me. Is Ma separate from this body?"

In one form or another the grace of the Guru must be obtained. Until the Guru is found it is man's duty to invoke and try to realize God by looking upon all forms as His Form, all names as His Name, and all modes of being as His.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

*The middle joint of the skull, called Brahma-randhra, is said to be the door through which the soul of a realized person escapes at the time of death.

Samyama Vrata : Its Observance in Calcutta in 1953 and 1959

Anil Ganguli

(*Continued from previous issue*)

The next *Samyama Mahavrata* to be observed in Calcutta in Ma's presence was fixed for the second week of November, 1959 at the newly founded Ashram at Agarpara. By that time this annual ritual had gained all-India recognition and celebrity. The regular *Vratīs* hailing from different parts of this sub-continent had ceased to be mere beginners in the practice of austerity and meditation ; they could be regarded as veterans in this spiritual discipline. There were also additional recruits from year to year. Our guests included a large number of men of light and leading who were enthusiastic supporters of the *Vrata* and sincere devotees of Ma. Besides, there were some great Mahatmas who added to the value of the function by their presence and by their eloquent discourses.

Ma arrived in Calcutta on the 5th of November, 1959 and straightway started supervising the arrangements made for the occasion. Not a single item of importance escaped Her attention — the pandal, the dais, the space to be reserved for different classes of participants, the pictures and the

placards with mottoes to be hung on the walls, accommodation for guests, arrangements for the preparation and distribution of *prasad* and even for the availability of the waters of holy Ganga.

A spacious pandal had been erected on the extensive lawn of the Ashram, overlooking the Ganga, the sacred river being visible from every seat assigned to the *Vratīs*. The decoration, in Santiniketan style, was simple, graceful and dignified, the atmosphere serene and congenial to meditation.

The usual programme of the *Varta* was strictly followed day after day. Swami Vishnu Ashramji, a well-known *Mahatma* of Northern India, delivered a series of lectures on the meaning and effect of *Samyama Vrata*. Swami Sharananandaji of Vrindaban, a blind *Mahatma*, who had accepted his physical handicap as a gift of God, talked with conviction on the supreme value of self-surrender and unshakable faith in God. Dr. Nalini Kanta Brahma made a deep impression on the audience by his piteous appeal to the Divine Mother on behalf of the suffering millions of India heading towards a catastrophic end. It was time, he said, that the demons, out to crush righteousness, should be subdued. There was a ring of sincerity in his invocation which brought tears to the eyes of many of the listeners. Then Professor Tripurari Chakravarti spoke of the lofty ideals of the *Mahabharata*, Dr. Roma Chowdhury on the message of *Ananda*, as explained in the Upanishads and Professor Gauri Nath Sastri on Sri Krishna's lila and on the *Bhagawata*. Sri Jogesh Brahmachari, a senior

Mahatma, who had been in close touch with Ma since the twenties of this century, narrated interesting episodes of Her early life and extracted from Ma witty answers in reply to his challenging questions. Professor Arun Prakash Banerjee, a worthy disciple of Rabindra Nath Tagore, asserted with confidence that he did not believe in book learning and that the Mother cult was the most suitable *sadhana* for man to pursue. And then, there was Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, a giant in the field of scholarship and spirituality who spoke little and proved Carlyle's observation : "Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves." Thus, the *vrata* provided a forum for speakers representing different schools of thought. It was a grand success from intellectual, cultural, religious and spiritual points of view. Each speaker made his contribution in his own way, and with consummate skill. Ma was, as it were, the limitless ocean into which flowed from different directions so many rivers originating from different sources and carrying messages from different angles of vision. Ma, the common object of adoration for all, was available in the pandal practically throughout the week.

We had the good fortune of having Ma's *darsana* during the periods of silence every day. "The present state of the world and the whole of life", observed Soren Kierkegaard, "is diseased. If I were a doctor and were asked for my advice, I should reply : Create silence" (N. Y. Times Magazine, April 6, 1954). Indeed, silence is more eloquent

than words. The profoundest item of the *Vrata* was the period of silence observed in Ma's presence four times daily. Many of the *vratis* who practised meditation with closed eyes felt that they got more out of this silence than from all the other items of the programme combined. Some specialised in making the best of the unique opportunity for Ma's *darsana* during the whole period and the communion thus established was more valuable to them than anything else. One devotee tried both—*darsana* with his open eyes and *japa* with closed eyes. His experience was that each was better than the other and it was difficult to choose between the two.

The foregoing pages give some idea of the wonderful *Vratas* observed in Calcutta in 1953 and 1959. Let me now place before the reader the gist of certain memorable utterances that emanated from Ma in certain sessions elsewhere.

At Naimisaranya I ventured to ask Ma whether the seclusion of one's *puja* room at home was not more helpful for concentration than the uncertain surroundings of a crowded pandal. From practical experience, I knew of two potential sources of distraction in congregational *dhyana* : *Vratis* with bad throats, trying in vain to suppress frequent fits of cough and secondly, those with aching joints, pressing (or pushing) neighbours on either side for extra space in addition to what is enough for an owner of a pair of normal knees. Ma said, in reply to my question, that much depended on the mental state of every individual *sadhaka*, adding that, as a general rule !

“By meditating in a group, especially in the presence of Mahatmas, the less advanced are helped by those who reach greater depths in their meditation since the *prana* (life force) is the same in all beings.”

The seventh *Samyama Vrata*, observed in New Delhi, was one of the most wonderful and harmonious gatherings. On the last day Ma made certain observations somewhat to the following effect :—

“While *Samyama* (self-discipline) does not actually bring about Self-realisation, since He is Self-effulgent and no effort can take us to Him, yet for the purification of body and mind, self-restraint, *satsanga* and the activities practised during *Samyama Varta* are imperative. All these combine to harmonize a human being so as to attune him to the Divine. If you are observant you will notice that everyone here looks different from what he looked a week ago and you will also find that every *Samyama Varta* seems easier than the one before and takes you a step further. The restricted diet and sleep, the life that you lead during these gatherings are an aid to meditation and self-discovery”.*

In 1973, I had the good fortune of participating in the *Samyama Mahavrata* observed in Vrindaban. This sacred place is wonderful. It has a tradition of complete self-surrender. Its sacred temples, holy men and drooping trees seem to invite the visitor to accompany them to the Lord. In its serene atmosphere one breathes, as it were, vibra-

* *Ananda Varta*, Vol. V/4/296

tions of self-less love for God. The Anandamayi Ashram at Vrindaban has, over the years, acquired a special sanctity with its images of Gouranga and Nityananda, of Chhalia Krishna and Ananda Radha and of another pair of Radha-Krishna, besides six Siva Linga. In course of the few years preceding 1973, this Ashram had been graced by Ma's august presence off and on, sometimes for long sojourns. She had inspired so many *Satsangas* in the hall of the Ashram, including a record number of *Samyama Mahavratas* (1964, 1966, 1967, 1969, 1971 and 1973).

Samyama Mahavrata is usually unique everywhere. The 24th session, observed at Vrindaban in 1973, seems to have excelled all others. On the last day of the *Vrata* this time, we had the rare fortune of a special *darsana* of Ma who then seemed to be "God-in-man one with man-in-God". The inter-play between Ma's Outer Manifestation and Inner Being seemed to have reached the game of perfect synthesis. The former was in the role of a loving human Guru giving Her helpless 'children' theoretical lessons, accompanied by practical demonstration ; the latter, ever in unison with the One, was apparently oblivious of our separate existence. Strangely enough, the spiritual guide in Ma declared that She was a beggar woman and asked the *Vratists* for alms : "Fix a definite time every day for praying to God and let that period be dedicated to Him for the rest of your life". This saying combined in itself the humanity of a 'beggar', the assertiveness of a Guru and the affection of a

mother. And what was the prayer to God to be like? Ma set a model for our benefit:—"Lord, I am Thine. Thou art my refuge. Have mercy upon me and show me the path to Thee". This is the English translation (as far as a translation of Ma's sayings is practicable) of the text of the wonderful prayer we heard from Anandamayi—a prayer from Ma to Ma. There was a deep meaning underlying it. And the sound emanating from Ma had a message deeper than the sense conveyed by the three sentences uttered by Her. It travelled beyond the boundaries of words—its appeal was not to the brain but to the core of one's being. Ma, as revealed that midnight in the background of the *Samyama Vrata*, was a sight for Gods—Her face, aglow, Her eyes half-closed, Her body still as a statue, Her hands folded. Ma seemed to be completely merged in Herself, taking no notice of the presence of anyone of us and yet residing in all. Each of us felt Her presence within ourselves according to our own lights.

Worldly life is no doubt a battle-field. By becoming conscious of one's spiritual wealth one must strive to emerge triumphant from the battle.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Sai Ram Sahay

M. Rama Rao

My Pilgrimage

Part—I

The pilgrimage is one of the ways, of God's worship and seeking His grace and blessings. A question may arise why should we go on pilgrimage and worship other Gods abandoning our own Istadaiva. (Chosen God). Lord Krishna says "even those who worship other deities are really worshipping me (Istadaiva) (Gita Chp. 9 V. 23). But any worshipping must be with faith. Let us know what is meant by pligrimage. Swami Dhireshananda say as follows :

A sacred place of Pilgrimage

Swami Dhireshananda Ramakrishna order

(a) Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna Deva said, know for certain that God is manifest in the place where many devotees perform austerities, japa, meditation and earnest prayers for years, with the noble intention to have the vision of the Lord. Divine thoughts get crystallized there, as it were, out of their devotion. Therefore it is quite natural that in these places the devotees easily become absorbed in meditation on God and enjoy His vision.

Countless devotees, saints and realized souls, from time immemorial, have visited these holy places intending to see God. They renounced all their worldly desires, and came to these holy places

to pray with all earnestness to the Lord. As a result, God, though He exists equally at all places, is particularly manifest at these holy places of pilgrimage. (Dakshineswar Kali temple) for instance, is such a place, although there are numerous Kali temple, in the country).

Temples remind us of God and divine inspiration grows within. For those who have devotion already, visits to holy places increase that devotion in them. But those who are unfortunately devoid of devotion, how much can attain there? The place where the devotees discourse on Him is charged with divinity. The Lord's presence can be palpably felt there, and all the places of pilgrimage congregate, as it were, in such place.

Visiting holy places and service to the Lord constitute an important aspect of spiritual practice. This is a means to calm down the turbulent mind. In his life of Sri Chaitanya Deva, Murari Gupta writes, 'So long as the turbulent mind does not become tranquil and pure, the spiritual aspirant should go on visiting holy places. Just as a traveller takes shelter in a favourable place, similarly a spiritual aspirant after his mind become calm, being freed from all the impurities, will go to Puri Dham or to any such holy place, and spend his days in meditation and reflections on God.

In the beginning the aspirant goes to various places of pilgrimages, and later settles down at a place, and becomes engrossed in meditation. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Deva spoke about bahudak and kutichak monks. Some monks visit

many places and drink water there. The Master referred to them as bahudak. And some after visiting many holy places, attain peace of mind, and build up a cottage and meditate there. They are referred to as a kutichak. The results of a pilgrimage can be directly felt. It is seen that many people struck by miseries, have attained peace after visiting holy places. In a place of pilgrimage seekers of truth assemble around the saints and sages in order to satisfy their queries, and there they worship the various gods and goddesses with devotion. Such a place must also be beautified with lakes and rivers. Monks assemble at such holy places ; one can enjoy their holy company.

(Prabuddha Bharata, August—1987)

In Bhagavadagita and Uddhavagita Lord Krishna says :—

“Arjuna, I am the self sealed in the heart of all beings—(Ch, X—V. 20)

“O. Uddhava I am the self of all creatures, their friend and lord, I am all creatures and the cause of their birth, life, and death”. (Chap. XI —V. 9)

He also says he is mighty elephant Airavata, celestial cow Kamadhaneu, serpent Vasuki, Naga, Ananta, river Ganga (Ganges), the tree Ashwatha, the bird Garuda, the mountain Meru etc., in Bhagavad gita and Uddhava gita.

In Bhagavad gita (Chp.—IX-V. 23) He also says :—

“Even those devotees who are endowed with faith, worship other Gods, worship me alone ; O son of Kunti, though in a wrong way.

Some may raise objection for thirathyatra where people blindly dip in rivers and worshipping god and goddess and they consider Pilgrimage as waste of money and energy and no baneful of spirituality is derived from it. I can say that some moral codes for those who undertake such journeys are prescribed and strictly observed to please God.

Better explanation may be given in the following discourses from the Vedanta and the West delivered by Veer Sanyasi Swami Vivekananda in Sanfransisco, on 29th May, 1900.

Thoughts on the Gita

If a great man who has attained peace of mind and freedom ceases to work, then all the rest without that knowledge and peace will try to imitate him, and thus confusion would arise.

“Behold, Arjuna, there is nothing that I do not possess and nothing that I want to acquire. And yet I continue to work. If I stopped work for a moment, the whole universe would be destroyed. That which the ignorant do with desire for results and gain, let the wise do without any attachment and without any desire for results and gain.”

Even if you have knowledge, do not disturb the childlike faith of the ignorant. On the other hand, go down to their level and gradually bring them up. That is a very powerful idea, and it has become the ideal in India. That is why you can see a great Philosopher going into a temple and worshipping images. It is not hypocrisy.

Later on we read what Krishna says, “Even those who worship other deities are really worshipping me. It is God incarnate whom man is worshipping. Would God be angry if you called Him by the wrong name? He would be no God at all. Can’t you understand that whatever a man has in his own heart is God—even if he worships a stone? What of that!

We will understand more clearly if we once get rid of the idea that religion consists in doctrines. One idea of religion has been that the whole world was born because Adam ate the apple, and there is no way of escape. Believe in Jesus Christ—in a certain man’s death! But in India there is quite a different idea. There religion means realisation, nothing else. It does not matter whether one approaches the destination in a carriage with four horses, in an electric car, or rolling on the ground. The goal is the same. For the Christians the problem is how to escape the wrath of the terrible God. For the Indians it is how to become what they really are, to regain their lost Selfhood.

On the above facts if we go on pilgrimage with a little and pure faith it will lead us to higher spiritual path.

I had to undertake pilgrimage to Dharmashala and Kukke Subrahmanya on 28th Dec. 1991.

I am a humble and simple devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba.

Bhaktapant :—Once it so happened that a devotee by name part a disciple of another guru had the good fortune of visiting Shirdi. He had no mind

to go but by the persuasion of his friends and relations he agreed and took permission of his own guru at Virat and left with the Party for Shirdi. They all went to the Masjid. The place of Baba's stay. All were pleased seeing devotees worshipping Baba but Pant suddenly got a fit and fell senseless (Perhaps he might have thought at that moment to make Baba his guru). With Baba's grace he regained his consciousness. Baba knowing that Pant was a disciple of another Guru assured him fearlessness and confirmed his faith in his own Guru and addressed "Come what may, leave not but stick to your Bolster (supportive Guru) and ever remain steady always with him". Pant knew the significance of Baba's remarks and he never forgot His kindness in his life.

So I went to Sai Mandir and on 27th Dec. '91 took permission mentally from Him and my guru Radha-krishna Swamiji.

If I mention in short a comparative life story of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sai Baba, it will not be out of place.

**SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA
AND
SRI SAI BABA OF SHIRDI
THE IDENTITY OF THEIR MISSION**

P. S. Narayana Rao
Bangalore

An ardent devotee of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa who studies the life and mission of Sri Sai Baba cannot but be struck by the perfect identity in respect of their outlook on life and their contri-

tribution for the re-vitalisation of religious faith. Both came upon the Indian horizon when Nastikya (atheism) raised its head and had begun to eat into the very vitals of religious faith. Both were known for their abiding interest and love for the suffering beings. Both stood for the fundamental unity of all religions. Both entered now and then the realm of Brahman and would with considerable difficulty come down their ecstatic heights into the humdrum earthly plane. Both were known for their constant communion with the Supreme.

Birth and early life : In this context, it would be appropriate to consider the historical background of the two saints. This is however available almost to the point of exactitude in the case of Sri Ramakrishna. But it is to some extent inadequate and inexact in the case of Sri Sai Baba. Thus, the exact date of birth, parentage, place of birth, the family background and the spiritual inheritance in the case of Sri Ramakrishna are recorded by chroniclers, whereas there is absence of such detailed information in the case of Sri Sai Baba whose birth and early life are shrouded in mystery. However, on the available evidences, and from the casual utterances of Baba himself, who was reticent in parting with such information, biographers of Baba have made a most reasonable estimate of the year of his birth, as well as the place of his birth and parentage. Be that as it may, it should be noted that it is secondary in its importance compared to the great saint's work of spiritual ministrations. While Baba is worshipped by the countless devotees

as the Avatara of Lord Dattatreya, Sri Ramakrishna is hailed as the Avatara of Sri Gadhadhara, i. e. Narayana.

Sadhanas : Despite their god-hood, both the Avatara purushas underwent a rigorous course of Sadhanas in their early life. It is well known how Sri Ramakrishna started with the worship of the Divine Mother and realised Her as a living reality. Then he practised the several forms of Bhakti Yoga-Dasya, Sakhya and Vatsalya Bhavas and found that each united him with the Supreme. Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual Sadhanas, went later beyond the frontiers of Hinduism. He yearned for God realization through Christianity and Islam. He practised the methods of worship and prayers according to the two religions. He met face to face Lord Jesus Christ appearing before him in the Panchavati garden and entering his heart. He similarly had the darshan of the Great Prophet Mohamad Paygambar, appearing to him in the twilight of the serene and secluded Panchavati, entering his heart as did Jesus Christ. Sri Ramakrishna had already realised the ultimate reality according to the Tantrika Marga and the Advaita Marga.

The result of these Sadhanas was that Sri Ramakrishna was able to establish the fundamental validity and the universality of the different religions which according to his experience are "the different paths leading to the same goal". Although such details of Baba's Sadhanas are not known, it is clear that he practised Yoga, the path of Bhakti as well as the Advaita Marga. His respect for Islam

was because of his being brought up by a Muslim couple in his infancy, while according to his own statement he was born of Hindu parents. This contact he had with the Muslims gave him opportunities to know their religion thoroughly, enabling him to establish the great truth that both the religions lead to the same goal. Although he did not have any occasion either to study Christianity or to follow it in practice, his attitude regarding the religion was one of the respect.

Devotees of various Denominations :

What is of greater consequences is the contribution of these great saints, with their experience and background of the universal religion, to the cause of spirituality. While Sri Ramakrishna used to say repeatedly, "water is called by one as pani, as Tala by another and as water by the third, water as such will not alter its characteristics in the least. In the same manner call God as Rama, Krishna or Allah. All the names describe the only one God, the creator. This means, that the different religions are after all the different paths to reach the Supreme Reality. Likewise, are after all the different paths to reach the Supreme Reality. Likewise, Baba would tell his devotees, that "Rama and Rahim are the same".

Just as Sri Ramakrishna embraced the tenets of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and other religions, and has as his disciples, votaries of the diverse denominations, Baba also established the fundamental validity and unity of all religions and had

devotees flocking to him, belonging to several religious faiths. The annual festivals of Ramanavami conducted with great eclat and pomp at Shirdi have proved to be a convincing testimony to Baba's catholicity. This great event compares very favourably with the annual celebrations of the birthdays of Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohamed, Krishna and the Acharyas of Hinduism at every centre of the Ramakrishna Mission throughout the world. Thus, both the Avatapurushas lived for the unification of the diverse religious faiths. The spiritual and the social consequences of such an outlook among the populace are most significant : disharmony is replaced by harmony, discord by concord, hatred by friendliness, cruelty by sympathy and love.

The emphasis on the universality of the teachings of the various religious denominations was most needed and crucial in the respective times of the two great saints during which our great nation appeared to have been badly mutilated on account of religious fanaticism and attempts at religious conversions. Both Baba and Ramakrishna had identical views in respect of bringing together our people speaking different dialects and practising different religious faiths. So what the latter started in his life time, was continued by the former after the latter's Maha Samadhi in 1886.

Mission of both the saints : The stress on the development of a universal and catholic outlook by both the great saints was based upon a common mission : God realisation. The means for according to both were renunciation of Kama and

Kanchana (lust and wealth). Sri Ramakrishna constantly stressed on tyaga of the worldly pleasures and realisation of the supreme, whether through Bhakti or Jnana or Karma Margas. This mission of Sri Ramakrishna bears perfect identity to that of Sri Sainath. The purpose of Sri Ramakrishna was to set people on the Dharmik path and the path of God realisation. Tirelessly, he would continue his ministration to the scores of devotees flocking to Dakshineswar. In an identical manner, Baba would affectionately instruct the devotees to think of Allah (the Supreme Lord) who is the protector and preserver of every being born into this world.

Both Sai Baba and Ramakrishna never founded a new religion. But both gave renewed faith to every one to continue the tenets of one's own religion. The devotees of both belong to various religious denominations. There are Hindus, Muslims, Christians in the main. The devotees of both have acquired religious catholicity and an outlook of universal brotherhood. May the Blessings of both the avatara purushas protect humanity for all times to come ! May every one attain the highest spiritual goal through their Grace. (From the book Samarpana).

Sai movement was here and there and in a nook and corner in south of India. A devoted great man Sri B.V. Narasimha Iyer of Salem brought it out and spread. His life, in short is noted below.

Salem to Shirdi would have seemed a far cry in the second decade of this century, if it had occurred to any body to link the two places.

Around 1918, when Sri Shirdi Sai Baba attained mahasamadhi, it would have surprised and probably irritated Sri B. V. Narasimha Iyer, leading lawyer of Salem, freedom fighter, and legislator, if anybody had suggested that he should go on a pilgrimage to Shirdi. Perhaps the lawyer would have shot back : "Shirdi ? Never heard of Shirdi. Where is Shirdi ? Who is the presiding deity there ? And why should I go there even if I wanted to go on a pilgrimage ?" Anyway Sri Narasimha Iyer was too busy to think of pilgrimages, as all his time and talents were engaged in his professional work and public activities. Among his contemporaries in Salem were stalwarts like Sri C. Vijayaraghavachariar and Sri C. Rajagopalachari. Like them he was active in the town's civic, social and cultural life. Sri Iyer was a member of the Indian National Congress and a great admirer of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the stormy petrel of Indian politics. In 1917 he was chosen as a member of the three-man delegation appointed by Annie Besant's Home Rule League to go to England and present India's case for freedom. Members of this team were detained at Gibraltar and sent back to India on the orders of Britain's war-time cabinet. Twice he was elected to the Madras Legislative Council, in 1914 and again in 1920. There he exposed the inequities of the alien rule with eloquence.

(To be continued)

Botanic Terms and Expressions in the Vedas and Ramayana (Balmiki) and their Significance

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Abstract

A large number of Botanic terms and expressions find mention in the vedic literature dating back to 1500-2000 B. C. as well as in the Balmiki 'Ramayana'—the great epic of the Hindus composed some times from 200 B. C. to 200 A. D. Such terms and expressions contains information regarding many scientific matters. The present study is a brief analysis of such terms and expressions found scattered in the Vedas and the Ramayana (Balmiki) and their monumental significance in the History of Botany and Indian Medical Science.

(i) Introductory

The Development of any scientific thought in India is inseperable from the growth of religion and philosophy of the Indian soil. The Vedas are commonly understood to be the most ancient genuine compositions of India, dating back to 1500 B. C. and thereabout containing only religious teachings and spiritual prayers. Similarly the Ramayana (Balmiki) is the great epic of the Hindus,

composed sometimes from 200 B. C. to 200 A. D. This is no occasion to enter into the controversy regarding period of the composition of these two great Hindu Scriptures as various authors have put forward different views to determine the same.

The present study is an attempt to show that apart from the information regarding the cultural, spiritual and philosophical status of the vedic era (1500-2000 B. C.) and the Ramayana period (200 B. C. to 200 A. D.) these great works reveal astounding achievements of the Indians in the various realms of the natural science in those antique days. These great works are neither chronological history, nor they are books on science and so far as the question of solid proofs or archaeological evidence is concerned, no architecture, no coin, or no manuscript of these periods are available. But fortunately the above monumental literature is so fairly reliable and exhaustive that it has thrown a flood of light on various branches of science especially the Botany and the Indian Medical Science.

In these works scientific thoughts have been conveyed throughout in the spiritual background. The hymns in these great works being poetic in nature and figurative in form have mostly been confined to the intellectuals only. Consequently Science as it is in these works have not been fully discussed and disclosed.

(ii) Botany and Medicine in Vedas

The Vedas are collections of traditions, precepts and advice as well as of abstract metaphysical spe-

