

The ONE who is the Eternal, the Atman,
He Himself is the traveller on the path of Immortality.
He is all in all, He alone is.

MATRI VANI

He who is your Guru is the Guru of the whole world
and the One who is the Guru of the whole world is your
Guru. Strictly avoid the company of those who awaken doubt
in your own Guru.

If you want to find peace you must devote a good deal
of your time to the particular practice that helps you to
sustain the contemplation of God.

This body always maintains that there is only one Self ;
therefore how can the question of separation or distance arise
at all ?

There are various modes of living : one is in the Ashram of the householder ; another to do service regarding whomever one serves as a manifestation of the Supreme Being ; a third way is to fix Self-realization as the one and only goal and advance towards it with uninterrupted speed and determination. Everyone chooses one of these modes of living in keeping with his inclinations and bent of mind. God Himself will take care of everything that concerns a man who puts his whole trust in Him.

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Is it possible to train someone to be a *Brahmachari* ? It is a person's nature that makes him a *Brahmachari*. Everyone is born and acts according to the dispositions and tendencies acquired in former births.

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In times of adversity and distress as well as in times of well-being and good fortune try to seek refuge in the One alone. Keep in mind that whatever He, the All-beneficent, the Fountain of Goodness, does, is wholly for the best.

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Everyone runs after happiness and enjoyment. Yet supreme happiness and bliss are ever '*there*' and nowhere else.

That which is eternal must be revealed and then the question of going or not going in search of anything does not arise.

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Truth itself will assist in every way him who has gone forth in search of Truth.

“Misfortune must not be looked upon as a disaster: it would be a sin to do so, for Who sends the misfortune? What *He* does is all beneficial. Under no circumstances, however adverse, should man accept defeat.”

“Ma”

Conversations with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

RECORDED BY PROFESSOR B. GANGULY

(Translated by Atmananda)

(6)

Priyadham, Ranchi

19/5/1958.

Question : Are happiness and sorrow experienced even after one has attained to the knowledge of Reality ?

Mataji : Two things cannot simultaneously be in the same place. When the knowledge of Reality has dawned, happiness and sorrow are no longer experienced.

Question : Can the Bliss of Supreme Reality (*Brahmānanda*) be experienced at all ?

Mataji : It is direct Knowledge.

Question : If an Enlightened-one dies in pain or distress, will he be liberated even so ?

Mataji : Where Enlightenment is there can be no question of pain, distress or death.

Question : To what level does faith belong ?

Mataji : To the realm of the mind ; everything that concerns the life of man is of the mind. However, when one penetrates to the root of things, there is only the ONE and He alone.

Ranchi Ashram,
10/5/1958.

Question : How can the macrocosm be contained in the microcosm ? The *S'āstras* declare that it is so.

Mataji : Have you no faith in the *S'āstras* ? Can anything exist that is not contained in the macrocosm ? Everything is contained in everything—materially speaking as well as in a subtle sense.

Question : Is it possible to have a vision of the Lord in His Universal Form (as described in the 11th chapter of the *Gītā*) ?

Mataji : Most certainly. First become Arjuna and then you will see. Anything is possible in God's Kingdom, even the impossible becomes possible ; on the other hand the possible also becomes impossible.

Question : What actually does microcosm signify ?

Mataji : Just as one distinguishes between three kinds of bodies, namely material, subtle and causal, so one may speak of three different microcosms. It is you who exist in

the limitation of the body and also as the all-pervading Self. To know oneself means to know the microcosm and through it to have knowledge of everything in the whole universe.

Question : The Lord's Universal Form as described in the Gita is extremely terrifying. How can a human being behold it ?

Mataji : In God's Creation everything may become possible by God's Grace.

Question : If one realizes that craving and attachment are at the root of all troubles, does this indicate that one's creative Power (*Kundalini*) has been awakened ?

Mataji : Just as it is quite unmistakable when one's hunger has been appeased, so also when the power of *kundalini* has been awakened there is no room left for a question.

Question : Does a person in whom *Kundalini* has been awakened not sleep anymore ?

Mataji : Only full awakening is real awakening, that is to say, right up to the thousand petalled lotus at the crown of the head. The vibration that is felt on occasions from the base of the spine upwards does not signify a complete awakening. If trembling etc. is experienced in consequence of a partial rousing of the *Kundalini*, this is not its full revelation, but only a glimpse as it were. One must try to preserve perfect calm. The eight *sattvic* signs or other bodily phenomena exhibited, have by no means in all cases the same significance.

A *sattvic* disposition is of the utmost importance. To the degree that desire, passion, anger have diminished, one may take it that one has progressed in one's *sadhana*. Tranquillity is not inertia: from real calm will arise one-pointedness knowledge, bliss and peace.

Question : Why is one not always full of bliss while engaged in *japa*, meditation or other spiritual exercises ?

Mataji : When the object of one's supreme desire has been realized, then only there is bliss. By the sustained practice of *japa* a state is reached where one feels that the mind has become one's obedient servant, then there is the bliss of attainment, the bliss of visions and similar experiences. But one cannot keep up this condition at all times and therefore bliss is not felt.

Question : What should one do in order to be always supremely happy ?

Mataji : One has to be constantly engrossed in *japa*, meditation, contemplation etc. You want to enjoy worldly happiness and at the same time experience the bliss of Reality—how can you have both ? The mind is roaming in all directions and so what can be the result of a little *japa* done by fits and starts ? By the *yoga* of sustained and regular practice the mind must be made one-pointed.

A South Indian Mystic

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India is rich in sacred lore, saints and seers. Unlike the West, in India philosophy and religious life are blended together. The mystics of India have lived and experienced philosophic truths. South India or *Dravida Des'a* has a proud record of saints and their sayings and songs, so much so that the *Bhagavatha Mahatmya* narrates that the Damsel of Devotion had her birth in *Dravida Des'a*.

South Indian mysticism flows into two streams, devotion to God Siva by the Nayanamars and devotion to God Vishnu by the Alwars. The sixty three Nayanamars and the twelve Alwars have been canonized and worshipped in the South Indian shrines. Their devotional outpourings have been collected and chanted in the temples. The devotional literature of the Nayanamars is called *Tevaram* and has influenced the Saiva Siddhanta school of philosophy. The devotional songs of the Alwars, collected and known as '*Prabandham*,' treated as *Dravida Veda*, moulded the thought of Sri Ramanujācharya in formulating Visistadwaitic Philosophy. His thought has enriched the devotional life and literature of India.

The credit of rehabilitating Hindu faith and religion goes to the Nayanamars and Alwars and due to the upsurge of

devotional life in the South, the Buddhist and Jaina creeds fled from these parts. The Nayanamars and Alwars did much to popularize temple worship, and their devotional outpourings enriched the religious literature of South India. They lived between the 2nd and the 9th centuries A. D.

Vipra Narayana, one of the Twelve Alwars, was a Brahmin by birth and lived at about 700 A.D. at Thirumandam, a village 5 miles from Kumbakonam. Though deeply learned, he developed devotion for God and the Divine Preceptor Sri Visvaksena initiated him. As he was a great devotee he is called *Bhaktisvara*. Because of his humility and devotion to Godmen or Bhaktas, he is called Thondar adipodi Alwar or Bhakta Anghri Renu. His devotional life had a brief romantic interlude and therefore has been a popular theme for drama and the screen.

Narayana Alwar, deeply devoted to God, led a detached, dispassionate and dedicated life. He left his village and settled at Srirangam, the centre of Vaishnavite devotion in South India. The life of Malakara, narrated in the *Srimad Bhagavata*, impressed him. He tended a garden of flowers and *tulasi* plants and supplied flowers and garlands to Sri Ranganātha as his *malakara* or florist. Daily, before dawn he would stand with his offerings before the bed chamber of God Ranganātha and sing *Suprabhatam*, to awaken Him. It is called *Tiruppalli Yellichi* (*prabodhaki*). The Alwar sings,

“Oh, Ranga, be pleased to awaken and receive
worship from thy devotees, who have

thronged here. The Sun has risen,
dispelling the darkness of the night.

Indra and other devas are waiting for you.

Narada and Thumburu are here to sing ;

Awake, and bestow Thy grace on all.

Let dark ignorance flee.

Heavenly Beings wait to sing and play on their
musical instruments. Awake, receive
their homage and worship.

Thondar adippodi waits on you with
flowers ; confer Thy grace,

make him fit to be a devotee of Thy devotees."

While the Alwar led a God-intoxicated life, *prarabha*
karma schemed to lead him astray. The obstacles to a godly
life are many and one must be a hero to be able to reject
worldly life and sense attractions. Two damsel sisters of easy
virtue happened to pass on the road side of the Alwar's
garden. The fine fragrance of the flowers drew them there.
They saw a handsome youth watering the plants, reciting
God's name. He was oblivious of his surroundings. The
elder sister remarked to the younger that the youth was
possessed of dispassion and detachment. The younger girl,
called Deva Devi, replied by vowing that if she failed to tempt
the youth to return to worldly life, she would serve her sister
as a slave.

Deva Devi schemed how best she could seduce Vipra
Narayana to a sensuous life. She approached him in the garb
of an ascetic, feigning dispassion and abhorrence of the world.

She implored him to allow her to stay in the garden and attend to the flower beds and to his personal service. A true devotee of God is guileless and kind to all. The Alwar, simple and childlike, pitied her and allowed her to remain in his garden. A crisis came into his life.

Some time passed. One evening, a heavy gale broke out and rain poured down in torrents. Deva Devi was drenched and stood shivering in the cold night. Vipra Narayan saw her plight and his scruples were overpowered by pity for her. He invited Deva Devi into his hut and gave her dry clothes. Even Viswamitra, prince among *tapasvis*, succumbed to the charms of Menaka. The charms of Deva Devi ensnared the Alwar and he gave himself up to her completely. His mind deserted God Ranga. In his abasement Deva Devi triumphed, puffed up with pride, and vanity she began to spurn his advances. The ever merciful Goddess Sri Ranganayaki saw the miserable plight of the Alwar and interceded on his behalf, imploring Ranganātha to save the devotee. God had declared that none of his devotees would go to perdition.

"Name Bhaktah Pranasyati"

On one occasion Deva Devi turned Vipra Narayana out of her house. In vain he pleaded with her. He went and sat on a neighbour's pial, Deva Devi in his thoughts. Sleep deserted him. God's ways are mysterious. Rangadas, a messenger with a golden goblet met Deva Devi and delivered it to her as a present from the Alwar. Her renewed solicitations brought the Alwar again to her. But the spell of darkness began to run out and the dawn of Divine awakening was near.

The next morning, the temple priest discovered the loss of the golden goblet. When it was found in the house of Deva Devi, she and the Alwar were taken into custody.

Deep distress and anguish sharply reminded the Alwar of his fall. In remorse, he wept for Sri Ranganātha. The King of that place dreamt that the Alwar was innocent. God admonished him to release His devotee, Deva Devi was transformed and became a devotee of God. Narayana Alwar on release from custody, hastened to Sri Ranganātha, gratitude and devotion welling forth from his heart. He sang a garland of 45 verses in praise of sri Ranganātha, called *Thirumalai* (sacred garland) in Tamil. It is sweet with the fragrance of devotion and is sung daily, before sri Ranganātha at Sri Rangam as a part of the temple ritual.

“Oh Ranga : Thy devotees sing Ranga, Ranga, to save people, though sinners, who utter Thy name, from Yama and his forces, You abide for ever betwixt Kaveri waters.

Oh Ranga : Achyuta : I enjoy to drink the nectar of Thy beauty. Thy body shines like a mount of emeralds, lips, coral-like, lotus-like eyes, Lord of cows and cowherds, beauty's feast.

I do not care for Indraloka, I seek not another human birth. The Veda says human life lasts a hundred springs, of which half go in sleep, and the rest in youth, old age, sickness.

Oh Ranga ; You are ever ready to redeem. Alas, leaving Thy service, life is wasted in misery and servitude to the senses ; but we are saved by uttering Thy name.

Oh Ranga ; I am Thine. I forsook Thee for a life of idle pleasures till your grace rescued me and revived devotion to Thee. O Mind, how can you forget Him and His Grace.

O Lord : I know not austerities, *sadhana*, or devotion ; I appear as a thief, fool, ensnared by damsels ; shameless am I. But You are Gracious : You are my life, my *Antar-atma*.

Though a sinner, I shall serve Thee and none else. In Trivikrama Avatara, saints and sinners came under Thy foot. To save cows and cowherds, You held aloft Govardhan Mount. Why have you delayed to rescue me ?

Devotees have no caste. If a learned Brahmin reviles a devotee, he is no better than a *chandala*. Siva, Brahma, performed austerities to know Thee. They failed to serve.

But you saved the elephant Gajendra. Save me. Oh Ranga : you rescue me. This composition may have defects, nevertheless, it will please You.

The above verses are, in substance, the prayer of the Alwar to Sri Ranganātha. The Alwar lived for 105 years in deep devotion practising *Yoga*. The life of the Alwar exemplifies that a spiritual aspirant should be careful in the choice of his company and that God's grace rescues and redeems devotees even when they lapse. He is '*patita pavāna*' who declared in the Gita that none of His devotees will perish. That is the glory of God Ranganātha, who feigns to be asleep but is ever alert to save all from the ills of worldly life, and to lead them to Life Divine.

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The Fundamental Principles of the Dhyana School in China

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Buddhism is both a religion and a philosophy, based upon the doctrine of Gotama, the Buddha. Dhyana Buddhism is a school of Mahayana Buddhism, first founded in China by Bodhidharma of the Liu Sung Dynasty (420-478 A. D.). It aims at immediate insight into the nature of Reality. The aspirant climbs with empty hands from the level of 'everyday life' to the heights of spiritual Enlightenment. The experience of *dhyana* unites the knower, the known and the act of knowing into one. Oneness is to be achieved by passing through the diversity of the many. Through ignorance to Enlightenment, through life in its infinite aspects to the Source of life is the way of *Dhyana*. It is at once a way of approach and a way of rejection. "Among men reject none among things reject nothing, this is called comprehensive intelligence."

The successors of Bodhidharma were Hui-K'o, Seng-t'san, Tao-hsin, Hung-jan and Hui-neng. Hui-neng was recognized as the 6th Patriarch of the Dhyana School. Since then the Dhyana School has been divided into the Southern and Northern Sects, the former led by Hui-neng and the latter by

Sheng-hui who was a staunch advocate of the doctrine of "Watching over the Heart." The Southern Sect again was split up into five sub-sects and each sub-sect has its own methods of teaching, but their fundamental principles are not so different from one another. In the following I shall point out three important principles of the teaching :

(1) **Emphasis on Self-dependence rather than on another's Strength.** Bodhidharma, the father of Dhyana Buddhism in China, had not made the long journey in order to get involved in academic discussions, nor to gain favour among the famous. His teaching is enlightenment of the heart and beholding the Buddha-nature within oneself. It goes straight to the Ocean of *Sarvajña* (Ocean of Buddha-wisdom). It is quite clear that the Dhyana School does not depend on any support or crutch and will not accept assistance either from the Buddha or the Dharma or the Sangha for the attainment of Buddha-hood. All that is necessary is to reveal your own Buddha-nature, which is eternally present. No one can add anything to it, no one can take anything away from it. From the ancient patriarchs up to this day and in the Twelve Divisions of the *Tripitaka*, not a single word is said about it. The *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sūtra* states : "The Norm has no analogy, since it is not a relative term." The 6th Patriarch Hui-neng also said : "Within yourself you can see the *Buddha* who is the manifestation of the essence of the mind, which is not to be sought without ; know your own heart by yourself, see your own inner nature by yourself, ignorance manifests as the individual and Enlightenment as the Buddha ; if you say you take refuge in the Buddha, do you know where he is ?

Hereafter let the Enlightened One be your teacher." The Dhyana Master Hsuan-an said: "This gate is beyond the Vairocana Stately World, and much superior to the convenient gate leading to truth by Śākyamuni. From this very moment to the future, it does not allow you to have a sight-perception of a single thing." There is a *Kung-an* (a problem given to a Dhyana student for solution) showing the idea that we must depend on ourselves and renounce the strength of another.

Once when the Dhyana Master Ma-tsu was to commence lessons in the Dharma-hall, he kept silent for a little while. At that moment the Dhyana Master Paichang took away the mat lying in front, while Ma-tsu also descended from the upper seat to the hall. Such an incident happened. It is indeed due to this that the teacher had this pupil. All the protests and thoughts, all the instructions and words, were gathered in the centre of wordlessness.

Chih-hui was asked by a monk: "How to walk on this smooth Road?"

Chih-hui answered: "If I point it out, you will wander here and there."

It is quite clear that no one can describe to another the state of Enlightenment; each one must achieve it by himself.

(2) **Emphasis on Practice rather than Knowledge.** The doctrine of Dhyana Buddhism came down to the present day in a direct line, generation after generation. Although

it is transmitted directly, it has nothing to do with "teaching and learning." Therefore when Bodhidharma came from India, he simply declared, "Directly pointing to one's own soul, my doctrine is unique and is not hampered by the canonical teachings ; it is the absolute transmission of the 'Seal of the Buddha-heart.' The great truth of Dhyana Buddhism has nothing to do with letters, words or *Sutras*. It only asks you to grasp the point directly and to find your peaceful abode." There is a Kung-an mentioned in our Dhyana Buddhist records which corroborates this idea :

Shen-chen saw his fellow-student reading *Sutras* while a bee was creeping over the paper-window. Thereupon Shen-chen said : "The world is so vast, be pleased not to creep there but wish to study the writings of the ancients ; I don't think there would be a date for him to enlighten ?" His fellow-student therefore requested Shen-chen to preach Buddha-Dharma and then the door to Enlightenment opened for him.

This shows that if we want to learn the truth of Dhyana Buddhism we shall never achieve it ; for the truth is not in a book. We should lay emphasis on practice rather than on theory. The Dhyana Master Yi-chung also said : "If you constantly seek an interpretation of sentences, it is like your looking towards your native place from far, far away." So we shall have to find out some other way of achieving Buddha-hood. The following Kung-an has given the answer to it :

A monk was asked by the Dhyana Master Chao-chow :
 "How many volumes of *sutras* can you read in a day ?"

The monk answered : "Sometimes seven or eight, at other times I am able to read *sutras* covering ten volumes."

Chao-chow said : "Acharya, you don't know how to read *sutras*."

The monk said : "How many volumes of *sutras* can you read in a day ?"

Chao-chow said : "I only read one word a day."

What Chao-chow said about his daily reading of one word did not mean the word in the canon but reading one's original nature styled by Hsin—"Essence of mind." Therefore there is in the Dhyana School a method of attaining to Enlightenment by meditating on wordlessness. It is recognized as a path for seeking the great truth of Dhyana Buddhism. In short, the great truth of Dhyana can be revealed only to those who have fulfilled the conditions for its realization. A teacher may hint at the way or help to guide a pupil, but the work as well as the accomplishment are the pupil's.

(3) **Emphasis on Surpassing Sagehood rather than Dwelling in it**—In the Dhyana School the enlightened person himself knows that he is enlightened ; all the same he will not forsake this world but live in it, so as to do service for the improvement and welfare of all living beings and make valuable contributions to human society.

The Dhyana Master Hwang-po while on a sight-seeing tour at Tien-tai met a monk on the way. They seemed to be old friends and had an amusing conversation. As they were

proceeding they saw a stream in floods. Hwang-po took off his bamboo hat and made his stick stand up in the stream. The monk crossed over the water and looked back to Hwang-po, saying : "Come on, come on". Hwang-po said : "You are a person who has no regard for others. Had I known this earlier, I would have cut off your shin bone."

The monk said with admiration : "Indeed, he is one who obeys the Mahayana Doctrine of the Buddha."

The man who has attained to perfect Enlightenment will understand that he and all living beings are one. He cannot remain aloof when seeing others suffer. Therefore such beings renounce the lofty heights of their sagehood and descend to manhood to save mankind from this world. At that time, the Enlightened one who enters into the *Rūpadhātu* will not be deluded by it ; when he enters the *S'abdadhātu*, he will not be deluded by it ; when he enters the *Rasadhātu* he will not be deluded by it and when he enters the *Dharmadhātu* he will not be deluded by it either." (See Records of the Sayings of Lin-chi.)

The layman remains in the layman's region due to his delusion ; later, due to his wisdom he enters sagehood ; and then he again enters laymanhood out of compassion and fellow feeling. He who at the time of delusion is moved by desires will not be moved by desires at the time of awakening ; and when he enters the world at the time of compassion, he will turn to the Ultimate ; to attain to the Ultimate is to attain to the truth of *Dhyana*.

Prajñā—The Light of Intuition

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The psychology of a spiritual experience remains one of the most difficult problems to be tackled by the human mind. In the first place, the processes involved even in the early stages take place in a region of the *psyche* that has yet been only partially explored. Then the phenomena, as experienced in the depth of the psyche, can be interpreted variously according to the mental and emotional equipment of the *sadhaka*. There are so many systems of *yogic sadhana* each with its own philosophic affiliations and each with its own *mythology*. Therefore, it is exceedingly difficult to lay down any clear scheme according to which these experiences can be evaluated. All the same, in the setting of Modern Knowledge, it is also necessary to give its proper place to mystical experience, however elusive that may be.

Epistemology, the theory of knowledge, occupies a central place in modern philosophy ; but it is conditioned by the experience of the European psyche, which has so far confined itself to the exploration of the outer worlds. Some thinkers admit the possibility of higher experiences but are puzzled by them. The well-known Professor Jung, in spite of his deep sympathy for *yoga* and inner vision almost shrinks away in horror from their full implications. The idea of the

