

Ananda Vārtā

A quarterly journal dealing mainly with the divine life and teachings of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee and with other religio-philosophical topics.



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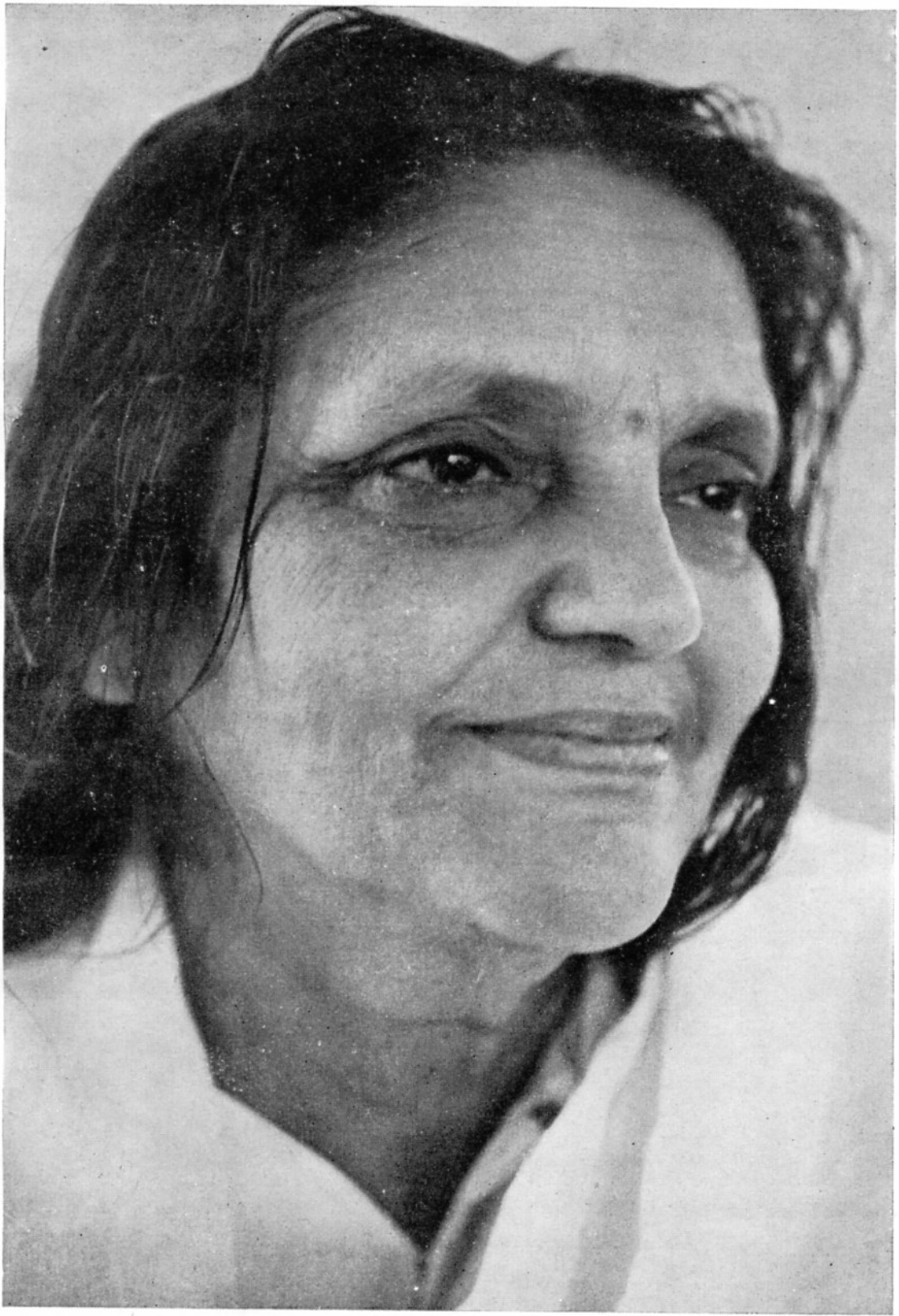
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The ONE who is the Eternal, the Atman,
He Himself is the traveller on the path of Immortality.
He is all in all, He alone is.

MATRI VANI

Even on this thorny path the Guru is constantly holding your hand and leading you towards the One. Remember, this is the actual truth !

Occasionally to mistake marsh-gas for real light is but natural. Albeit, it is He alone who manifests in all forms. The path that brings full and unobstructed Enlightenment must be pursued with the utmost concentration, at every moment, and to the limit of one's capacity. Where He manifests as the pilgrimage undertaken for the sake of Supreme Union, there is hope of its being crowned with success.

* * *
Who belongs to whom in this world ? By exhausting one's particular *karma*, everyone must endeavour to bring to

completion his life's pilgrimage. What you are experiencing, is the usual state of affairs on the journey through life; therefore do not allow yourself to be so very agitated! If, due to attachment to those with whom one has been united in this world of coming and going, one is utterly immersed in the sorrow of bereavement—how can the pilgrimage along one's own Path become fruitful? With unbounded vigour and energy one must forge ahead towards the revelation of one's true Self. Travellers on the Supreme Path must strive to complete their journey; Self-realization is its purpose and goal.

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It is only natural that ever more bliss should be experienced while practising yoga. So long as the ONE has not been revealed, distractions will come. But the Guru alone can point out whether one is proceeding in exactly the right manner or not. Transformation means that worldly interests have lost their hold. To the extent to which one becomes indifferent to worldly pursuits will one progress towards real bliss.

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In every home God is present in an infinite variety of guises. For the very reason that one has entered life, one has to quit it again—be it sooner or later. While living as a householder, this terrible, smarting pain is unavoidable; it is similar in every family. Does any balm

exist to soothe this burning agony, save to take refuge in Him, from Whom all beings emanate, by whom they are succoured, and in Whom they ultimately are absorbed.

Worldly life is indeed a battle-field. By becoming conscious of one's spiritual wealth one must strive to emerge victorious from the battle.

“A person who knows that he is ignorant must be credited with having most certainly attained to some measure of knowledge.”

“Ma”

Essential Unity of All Religions

(DR. M. HAFIZ SYED, M.A., PH.D., D. LITT.)

The word 'religion' by latin derivation means something that binds. Religion is essentially that something which binds together the hearts of all men, without distinction of race, creed, caste, colour or sex ; binds them all to each other with the golden thread of universal brotherhood ; binds them to the heart of that universal God, who is the very principle of Life, of Consciousness, of Being, in everything. It is that which binds the hearts of men to all ideals.

It is the conscious or unconscious recognition of the fact that the spirit of man extends beyond the present moment, extends from the past through the present into the future.

Wherever there is common feeling, wherever there is *esprit de corps*, however narrow, there we have the very spirit of religion, though restricted ; there we have, although limited, the manifestation of the Unity of the Self, the Supreme Spirit, which alone binds together many selves into one organic whole.

Sympathy, fellow-feeling, love, the sensing of the common Self of all in all, is the one bond that holds together individuals, families, tribes, nations, races.

Just as hate is the one sharp edged instrument that sunders and scatters them apart. This love for all living things is the very essence of religion. Such universal love is the first and last manifestation of God, who is the universal, immortal Self. It is this which triumphs eternally over death, hate and evil. All association, all co-operation of any kind, is the product of this fellow-feeling.

It is possible to see and feel the Self in all men, whatsoever their creed or colour. If a common country, a common language, a common spirit, a common colour of skin make such strong bonds, how much stronger should be the bond of the common Life in all men ! When the Universal Spirit of all men is recognized and realized by all men, then shall we have reached the stage of humanism, the federation of all the nations. That is the ultimate stage of religion.

Every religion tells its followers (a) what to think or believe, (b) what to desire or feel, (c) and what to do.

Under the sub-division of knowledge every religion teaches the existence of One Supreme Spirit. The nature of this Universal Spirit hidden in the heart of every living being is described in almost the same terms in the teachings of every religion, the Vedanta of Hinduism, the *Rahasya* teachings of the Buddha and Jina to their Arhat disciples, the Gnosis of the Christians, the *Tasawuf* of Islam.

Another belief common to all religions is the belief in worlds beyond this one.

Yet another common belief is the existence of various grades of spiritual beings, dwelling in and governing the different worlds. Finally all religions teach, more or less clearly, that the human soul, being a portion of the Divine Being, has emanated from it and will go back to it some day, after passing through various experiences of good and evil, virtues and joys, sins and sufferings, in various worlds.

It may be borne in mind that without true religious feeling, without spiritual earnestness and purity of character, without benevolence and philanthropy, no nation can attain to real civilization.

Hatred ceases never by hatred, between men as between nations, but it ceases wholly and only by love. Righteousness must prevail in the end in the relationship between men and between nations. Blessed are the peace makers, who studiously promote peace and love amongst all, within their own homes as well as within and between all other homes. Whatever induces moral and friendly relations between single individuals or between nations is of the very essence of universal religion. It enables men to realize in life the common Self of all.

We may thus see that the Hindu Vedanta, the Christian Gnosis, and the Muslim *Tasawuf*,—which teach that the spirit in all is one and the same, and that therefore men should and ultimately must love each other—are not the vain visions of idle dreamers, but the most practical of all practical politics. The answer of all religions to the question: “what

to feel ?" is : "Feel love for each and every living creature". The second part of the book of every religion is called ethics. The third part is the answer to the question 'what to do'. It may be named the manual of special rites, ceremonies and sacraments, of special directions for conduct in life, both individual and collective.

Each religion has a set of sacraments—some fewer, some more numerous—which may be divided into (1) ante natal, (2) post-natal and (3) post-mortem, connected with the three main events of life, viz. birth, marriage and death. The purpose of all these is to purify and consecrate the grosser and subtler bodies, inhabited by the soul, in such a manner as to make its life here and hereafter more elevated, richer and nobler, and enable it to attain to ever greater and greater perfection and communion with God and men.

In modern times people are unfairly indifferent towards the religion in which they were born, failing to study it seriously and to act up to its ideals. The spirit of true religion is lacking everywhere. That is the real cause for the degeneration of mankind. Leaving religion aside for the time being, we must say we are not sufficiently rational in our outlook on life. If we had looked at the passing events of our own life, and at the nations around us in the light of reason and past experiences, we should have moulded our life and attitude to other nations more justly and generously than we had done upto now. We have to outgrow our animal tendencies and become convinced that we are more spiritual than material.

That alone would guarantee our friendly and harmonious relation with one another.

True spirit of science leads us to the same goal of mutual goodwill, co-operation and friendliness. It has been acknowledged from all quarters that matter is a unity. In spite of its multifarious forms it is truly one ; so we must work for others with as much interest as we work for ourselves. This is the way to peace and harmony.

“Let ‘I cannot’ be eradicated from your vocabulary. Time is gliding by swiftly : for a few days only lasts this reunion with friends and kinsmen. Gather up your possessions, brother, no one accompanies you on your final journey.”

“Ma”

Raja Yoga or the Path of Mind Control

SWAMI SIVANANDA, RISHIKESH

Raja Yoga means 'King of Yogas'. It aims at controlling all thought-waves or mental modifications. *Raja Yoga* is suitable for men of mystic temperament with a leaning towards the occult. A serious practice of *Raja Yoga* can be thought of only after you have purified your mind and have gained some control over your senses and appetites.

The eight limbs of *Raja Yoga* are *Yama* (self-restraint), *Niyama* (religious observances), *Āsana* (posture), *Prāṇāyama* (restraint of breath), *Pratyāhāra* (abstraction of the senses), *Dharaṇa* (concentration), *Dhyāna* (meditation) and *Samādhi* (super-conscious state).

Yama and Niyama.

Yama is the practice of non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing, celibacy and non-covetousness in thought, word and deed. This is the foundation of Yoga.

Niyama is the observance of the five canons—internal and external purity, contentment, austerity, study of religious books, and worship and surrender to the Lord.

Impure motives, lack of celibacy, over-eating, indolence,

over-sleeping, false fears, building castles in the air, allure-ment of minor supernormal powers like clairaudience and clairvoyance are all obstacles on this path.

Asana and Prāṇāyama.

Any comfortable and steady pose is Āsana. A steady pose gives concentration of mind. If you have mastery over the *āsana*, then heat and cold and all other pairs of opposites will not disturb you. You must be able to sit in one position for three hours at a stretch. The pose becomes steady by thinking of the Infinite.

There are some *āsanas*. such as Śirshāsana and, Sarvangāsana, that are very useful for the preservation of good health and Brahmacharya (celibacy).

Prāṇa is energy, it is life-breath, it is the life-principle. When *prāṇa* vibrates, the mind begins to think. *Prāṇa* is expended in thinking, willing, acting, talking, etc. The excess of *Prāṇa* is stored up in the brain and nerve centres.

If you can control *prāṇa*, you can control all the forces in the universe.

Prāṇa manifests as motion, gravitation, magnetism, electricity. The knowledge and control of *prāṇa* is what is really meant by *prāṇāyama*. *Prāṇāyama* removes diseases of the body, steadies the mind and purifies it. It strengthens the intellect and augments intellectual capacity. It

increases the power of memory. When you practise *Pranayama*, you will have to be careful about your diet: you should avoid over-loading the stomach and should take light, easily digestible and nutritious food. You should be moderate in copulation.

Pratyāhāra and Dharaṇā.

Pratyāhāra is abstraction or withdrawal of the senses from their objects. *Pratyāhāra* checks the outgoing tendency of the senses. The practice demands considerable patience and perseverance. It gives tremendous power. During the course of the practice you will have to withdraw the mind again and again from the sense-objects and fix it on the object of contemplation. The Yogi who is well established in *Pratyāhāra* can meditate quite calmly even in the battlefield while countless machine-guns roar in a continuous stream.

Dharaṇā or concentration is centering the mind on one single thought. During concentration the mind becomes calm, serene and steady. The various rays of the mind are collected and focussed on the object of meditation. There will be no tossing of the mind. When there is deep concentration, you will experience great joy and spiritual intoxication. You will forget the body and your surroundings.

Concentration increases by curtailing wants and desires, by observing silence for one or two hours daily, by practising *Pranayama*, by prayer and by increasing the number of daily sittings in meditation. You must always try to be cheerful and peaceful.

Dhyana and Samadhi.

Meditation (*Dhyana*) follows concentration. The mind dwells on God alone during meditation. Deep meditation cannot come in a day, a week or a month. You will have to struggle hard for a long time. Gradually you will enter into deep meditation and *Samadhi*. You will have to pass through the six stages of meditation and finally you will enter into perfect *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, a superconscious state. The perception of form will totally vanish. The meditator and the meditated will become one. You will attain the highest knowledge and supreme, eternal peace. This is the goal of life. This is the aim of existence. This is the final beatitude of life. You will be absolutely free from pain, sorrow, fear, doubt and delusion. You will experience: "I am the Immortal Self. All indeed is God. There is nothing but God." You will feel that the whole world is nothing but Pure Consciousness. Tables, chairs, men, women—in fact all things will appear to contain this consciousness just as vessels contain their contents. You will feel that the Lord is sporting in all things as this Pure Consciousness. You will actually lose the sense of perceiving the material nature of things around you. This rare experience will give you great bliss.

May you all attain success in Yoga and enter into *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* or the Blissful Union with the Lord by controlling the mind and the senses and practising regular and constant meditation.

Prajna—The Light of Intuition

PROFESSOR MADAN GOPAL, M. A. (ALLD.), B. LITT. (OXON),
C. P. E. S. (RETD.)

(Continued from the last issue.)

Prajñā is a feeling for Truth, which arises in us from within, giving us a sense of the truth-value of any statement or thought that we consider. It is known that sometimes people have a faculty for judging character correctly, so that when they meet a person, they perceive immediately whether he has certain qualities or not. But if you ask them how they arrive at this judgement, they are unable to explain it clearly. They feel it as a sort of inner perception, and when that feeling is present they know that they have reached the truth. A story might illustrate this. It was related to me by a friend in whose veracity I have complete belief. A South Indian lady, who was a doctor by profession, came to Mount Abu for a holiday and there met a *śadhu* to whom she became devoted. She used to visit him daily. One day, to her horror, she read in a newspaper that a certain young man, a student in a Madras College, had been drowned whilst bathing in the sea. His name was that of her brother and every particular agreed with him ; so she naturally thought that her brother had been drowned. She decided to return to Madras at once, but before starting went to say good-bye to the *śadhu*. He received the news with complete calmness, smiled and said that there must be some mistake and that he felt sure that

her brother had not been drowned. He advised her to ascertain the truth by telegram. The reply confirmed that her brother was quite safe. She was astounded and went to the *śādhū*, wondering how he could have known the actual facts at such a distance. The *śādhū* simply answered: "I felt that the statement was not true".

Such instances could be multiplied. It is a well-known fact that spiritually advanced people develop a kind of inner sense, which immediately tells them whether a thing is true or not, even though they can give no detailed reason for it. This quality or power, which is at the basis of all genuine and lasting spiritual experience, deserves to be carefully investigated.

Modern psychology has come to know something of this power, but is puzzled as to its real nature. This faculty of rapid judgement baffles any scientific analysis, and cannot easily be connected with either the intellectual or the physiological make-up of those who possess it. Sometimes intuition of a high character may be exhibited by a person with comparatively poor intellectual equipment; and sometimes it may be seen to be accompanied by morbid symptoms or an unbalanced material life. But this is not always so and intuition is seen at its best when both intellectual and moral qualities are well developed. Here in the East this power is well known to the yogis, and is cultivated by appropriate physical and psychical exercises. Briefly, since the central manifestation of *prajñā* is through the "heart-mind" or the mind purified by appropriate emotion, the foundation of this function is a truly ethical life. It is the harmony of all life,

