

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly
with the divine life and sayings of
Sri Anandamayi Ma

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MATRI VANI

You go on insisting that the mind must be dissolved. But do not forget, it is this very mind which is the *Mahayogi*, yes indeed, the sublime yogi.

* * *

When you have surrendered yourself to the Guru, he may do anything, subject you to no matter what trials, yet you still regard yourself as a tool in His hands.

* * *

This body tells of yet another aspect – Can you guess what it is ? Just as Beloved is the Self, so destruction is also He Himself, and like wise in that which is destroyed. This is so where the Self is and nothing but the Self.

* * *

When the Ultimate Reality has been attained, there can be no question of either the super-normal or of deviating or not deviating from Reality, what is meant by "*Videha – Mukti*."

* * *

The progress of the disciple continues up to where the position of a teacher is held. If the teacher is in the state of *ajnāna* and the question is asked by one who also is in ignorance how can there be even an expectation of the revelation of real Knowledge ? All the same a discussion that aims at elucidating Self-realization will naturally be helpful and beneficial.

* * *

At that moment you come to understand the real nature of the inner guru, He dwells within and works from there.

* * *

Again, who is it that guides me from out side ? It is also He, for verily there is no other.

* * *

A knot means resistance, Hence, so long as the ego persists, there will be clashes at times.

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When impersonal work is being carried out and watched as by a spectator, a deep Joy surges up from within,

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If you can become so completely concentrated in any one direction that you cannot help acting along that line, wrong action becomes impossible.

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You should understand that one who loves God is but out to destroy identification with the body.

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Action dedicated to God is alone true action, all the rest is useless and therefore no action at all.

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To let the mind dwell on sense objects still further increases one's attachment to them. When intense interest in the Supreme Quest awakens, ever more time and attention will be given to religious thought.

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For him whose one and only goal is the ocean itself no one has remained for whose sake he looks back.

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By regarding all manifestations as the Supreme Being, one attains to communion that leads to liberation.



CONVERSATION WITH WESTERN DEVOTEES

[Thirteen]

—Vijayananda

1) Ma and her disciples

Q : Who is Guru?

V : There is only one Guru, God. Ma often used to say that, but only now I completely realize what it does mean. Physical Guru may have defects, the body always has defects, but the Guru is an instrument, a canal of the Divine. There are bad conductors, good conductors and super-conductors. Ma was a super-conductor.

Q : Does this view help the disciple not to see the guru in a personal way?

V : Ma said that even if a disciple should fall in love with the guru, if the latter is a sadguru, he would be able to transform this love and to redirect it towards the Divine.

Q : Was Ma imparting instructions through discourses ?

V : No, Ma did not make speeches, but she used to give clear-cut advice individually during private interviews. By the way, they could also give practical suggestions to people; if they were able to catch them, they could escape the result of a bad karma of the past, an accident for instance. Ma could also make disciples' *kundalini* ascend and descend in a single look, in quite informal a way and without appearing to do so. Sometimes, it was important to be able to take down those who had been awakened too quickly and could not face the sudden inflow of energy.

Q : Could Ma perform miracles with everyone ?

V : No. The one who performs the miracle and the one who receives it must be in perfect harmony like a couple of dancers. Even with Christ, it was like this. Those who had no faith could not be saved. When Ma was old, I had a dream, but those images which I saw were as vivid as in reality. I was with a group of visitors, mainly foreigners, on a verandah in charge of keeping Ma's door, and she passed by. I asked them, Did you see Ma ? They answered me, No. When Ma was young, everyone was enthralled by her contact. Afterwards, she was more inside and only those who had intensity and great faith could perceive her power directly.

Q : Could Ma have stayed longer in her body ?

V : Yes, of course, but she was fed up. People had not enough intensity to make her stay.

Q : Yet, crowds seemed to have been galvanized during her kirtans!

V : It was excitement, not real intensity.

Q : Some people say that Ma was a tantric.

V : Tantra corresponds to the worship of Divine Mother. How could she have worshipped the Divine Mother, while she was herself this Mother ? From another viewpoint, for Ma as well as for any advanced sadhaka, all the paths merge in one single Yoga, the synthesis of Yogas if one can say. This is a total Yoga where all the ways are understood and integrated. Only in the beginning are the paths separate.

Q : Was it often that Ma was cured by herself ?

V : Once a doctor had prescribed her high doses of turmeric (*haldi*, a yellow powder which is the basis of curry). Afterwards she developed a sort of paralysis in the legs and told me, *I think this because of the excess of turmeric*. At that time, I could not agree with her, because it was not in the knowledge of western medicine that excess of Vitamin-A contained in big quantity in turmeric could give peripheral neuro-pathy, i.e., paralysis. It was discovered only later.

Q : Was not there many jealousies around Ma ?

V : Yes, many, but she saw in all that the *lila*, the play divine.

Q : Do you think that the disciple can become completely independent from the guru one day ?

V : Jayananda, the young American who at the beginning was with me near Ma, told me a story that first I found stupid, but that later I found very deep. A small boy had total confidence in his father; one day, he put him on the table and told him, *jump into my arms !* The child said, *but I will fall!* The father answered : *Don't you trust me ? Come! Jump!* He jumped, the father moved back and the poor child fell on the floor. The father said, *It was to teach you that you should not trust anyone except yourself!* Likewise, Ma could be very hard with me; but one time nevertheless, she gazed at me with a great love, as if I was her only beloved on earth. It was because she was taking the *bhava*, the mood of Dr. Pannalal, who liked me very much and saw in me the model of mystical love.

To a young woman who went through a phase where she was strongly criticizing her guru :

V : If you want a perfect guru, take a photo and she will tell you what you want to hear; but with gurus in flesh and bones, you find shortcomings in them at every corner. How many times I was crossed with Ma !

Achim, a former German disciple of Ma, told us during an evening satsang of his first meeting with Ma : *'It was Christmas eve in 1969 in Nitaida's house in Kankhal (the kernel of the present-day ashram), I was waiting with a friend to see Ma, I had come from Rishikesh for that. Many people were present, and we were told that we would be called. Melita Maschmann, a German lady living near Ma, came and asked us whether the brahmacharis knew our names. We answered negatively, she started laughing and said, 'You believe in Santa Klaus!' and went away. Two minutes later, a brahmacharini came at the door, pointed out both of us in the crowd and introduced us near Ma. It was our first private audience with her.'*

Vijayananda adds that in Bhimpura in 1980, the same kind of episode also occurred. Melita had announced that Ma was much too sick to see anyone, and soon afterwards, as if to contradict her, Ma called Vijayananda and the visitors.

On the occasion of Gurupriya's Didi's birthday centenary, who had been Ma's assistant during most of her life, Vijayananda was asked to say a few words on her.

V : I used to speak very little to women, thus I have seldom been in contact with Didi. What I can say is that she worked for Ma ceaselessly, she slept very little. A divine incarnation does not come alone, but with an entourage who helps him or her in his or her mission. Didi's role was to protect Ma, she was the mount, Ma's *vahan*, like the tiger is Durga's mount.

2) Ma and Vijayananda

Q : Did the effect of your first meeting with Ma last ?

V : This extraordinary bliss that I felt the first night after meeting Ma lasted for a year and a half with the same intensity; afterwards, it became more quiet.

Q : Have you been helped by the fact that Ma was a woman and was considered as the mother ?

V : Yes, in this sense that I detached myself completely of the need of other women. However, I did not see her as a woman, not even as a body, right from the beginning I saw the divinity as well as the guru in her.

Q : It must have been difficult to renounce all of a sudden when you met Ma.

V : Quite the opposite, it would have been difficult not to renounce everything once I met her.

Q : Should we test the Guru ?

V : We should pull the string to see whether it breaks. I did this often with Ma, and the string held well.

Q : Is it possible to see Ma in the subtle body ?

V : For the first time in Raipur (near Dehra-Dun) in the beginning of my stay with her I felt her presence which was extremely strong. Then in Almora in 1954, I saw her image as well. At that time I was upset because she had asked me to stay a full year far away from her physical presence. I knew it was she anyhow because of the intense bliss which overwhelmed me. Indeed, she was both outside and inside. This phenomenon happened so that she might teach me a lesson : *I am Omnipresent, you need not be despaired by my departure !*

Q : Can we see the subtle body of the guru in our dreams ?

V : Generally speaking, no. For years, I was dreaming of Ma every night, but it was my mind which was playing back memories. Sometimes, nevertheless, she appeared to me with great intensity: then, we could say that it was Ma's subtle body. The main element is formless, this is the awakening of *kundalini*. It is an intense impersonal force which is later dressed with the *samskaras*, deep conditionings of the *sadhaka*.

Q : Once Ma left her body, were you still able to communicate with her subtle body ?

V : I am often asked this. I am in contact with Ma as an Omnipresent and formless Consciousness, but not as a subtle body. Before, Ma could awaken someone lukewarm whose demand was not so serious, but now this demand must be intense and then it will get its answer. Ma's photos for instance also help.

Q : Why did you spend so much time near Ma ?

V : In fact, I am the Westerner who stayed the longest time near Ma with the exception of Atmananda, who worked a lot to translate Ma's private interviews with foreigners and the books. Several times I tried to go back to the West but things did not materialize. Ma wanted me to stay in India, while she used to let other Westerners go away. I had definitely a strong link with her.

3) Ma's teaching

Q : Why was Ma attracting less people than other gurus or religious leaders involved in large-scale social work ?

V : Ma had a very high spiritual level. She spoke of Self-realization and of renouncing the world. That did not attract crowds like helping people and performing social service. Ramakrishna said there were few people in the shop where diamonds are sold while there are plenty in the vegetables one.

Q : Why there were not more realized people around Ma ?

V : The vocation of a sage like Ma is not to 'give' realization to such or such disciple. In any case, a disciple who gets a complete realization is very rare. Even around Buddha, it seems that only two of them have got it. Great souls come to put into the current as many people as possible. After, their devotees cannot come or fall back. Even if they do not reach realization in this life-time, they can merge into Ma's cosmic form at death or obtain rebirth in superior worlds. And this question has another aspect : should there have been a great number of realized disciples around Ma, they would have stayed within themselves and who would have preached Ma's teaching ? Perhaps they would also have fought with each other for Ma's succession. She wanted probably that her advanced disciples reach the direct realization of the union of *samsara* (the world) and *nirvana*, which means the *sahaja (spontaneous) samadhi*, without risking leaving the body for good during a *nirvikalpa samadhi* (a state of complete enstatis with loss of consciousness of the outer world) which is too long. Moreover, a disciple feels that he or she is realized when he or she has attained his or her guru's level. When the Guru is Ma Anandamayi, it takes time.

Vandana Mataji is a nun in between christianity and hinduism; she was a disciple of Father Le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda) and currently lives in Rishikesh a semi-eremitic life. She came with a small group to Kankhal and asked Vijayananda to speak of Ma to them.

V: (After a long silence) : Silence is the best way to speak of Ma. In this manner, her presence is realized.

FIRST DARŚANA

—Sri Hari Ram Joshi

It was on the memorable Jhanda Mela (Annual Flag Hoisting) day in March, 1933, just four days after the Holi festival, that I decided to go to village Raipur with a couple of friends for the *darśana* of Mataji who had been staying there since about ten months. In the outskirts of the village we met an old woman who told us that Pitāji* and his attending Brahmachari (Kamalakanta) had gone to Dehradun to see the Jhanda Mela at Gurudwara Ramrai, and that Mataji was in the *dharamśālā*. We thereupon decided to go there for Her *darśana*. In front of the Śivalaya there was a cemented raised platform under a mango tree. We saw a grave, fair, and saintly looking person sitting on that platform reading a book. He wore spectacles and was dressed in a white dhoti and a white woollen shawl. I took courage and enquired from him about Mataji who was reported to be mostly in *samādhi*. He was pleased to inform me that Pitāji had gone to Dehradun and that Mataji could be seen in the *dharamśālā*, a few steps above the temple, after Her coming out of *samādhi*. I then asked him what had brought him to the Raipur temple, whether he was one of Mataji's devotees. He smilingly told me in a sweet voice that he was Jyotish Chandra Roy from Dacca, Personal Assistant to the Director of Agriculture, Bengal Government and had come for Mataji's service, having taken four month's leave from his office. As I found out later, he was popularly known as 'Bhaiji'.

Bhaiji stated further that Mataji, Pitāji and he had left Dacca very suddenly after the completion of Mataji's 36th birthday celebrations at the Ramna Ashram. They had reached Dehradun on June 7th. The following morning they had shifted to Raipur. He then enquired about myself. I told him that I was posted in Dehradun as Inspector of Co-operative Societies since September, 1930, and that on November 30th, 1931, I had lost my wife who had left behind two sons, aged six and two years. About two hours passed in this conversation. My companions became impatient to return to Dehradun. I suggested to them that if they wished, they could go back in the two tongas we had left behind in the village outskirts, but as for myself I would leave Raipur only after having Mataji's *darśana*. I accompanied them to the tongas. When I returned to the temple, Bhaiji took me to Mataji, the Divine Universal Mother, who was sitting on a mat in a corner of the *dharamśālā*,

* Baba Bholanath. Mataji's worldly husband.

wearing a white dhoti, covering Her head in the customary manner. I paid my respectful homage by *sāṣṭāṅga ḍaṇḍawat praṇāma*¹ and placed before Her as my humble offering a dozen sugarcanes which I had purchased at Raipur as I had forgotten to bring offerings from Dehradun. Bhaiji conveyed to Mataji in Bengali all he had heard from me about myself. Mataji did not talk to me directly on this occasion. She only smiled when I placed the sugarcanes before Her. Bhaiji gave me a few as *prasāda*.

At my first *darśana*, Mataji's enchanting and smiling face transformed my mind altogether and brought me the firm conviction that what I had believed to be impossible to be achieved by anyone, namely, the state of '*sthitaprajñā*' (perfect sage) as described in Chapter II of the Bhagavad Gītā, She actually was in that very exalted condition. This, I must say, was a great inspiration to me as I had no preconceived notions about Her spiritual attainments, not having heard from any quarter anything about Her *sādhana* and supernatural powers.

I returned to Dehradun late in the evening and related to my mother all about my visit to Raipur, assuring her that on the following Sunday I would try to take her for the *darśana* of the Great Saintly Lady. This rather surprised my mother as she was under the false impression that ever since the death of my wife I had, in all probability, developed atheistic views.

The following Sunday, instead of taking my mother to Raipur, I suddenly decided to visit Mussoorie to find suitable agents for the disposal of the sugar that was being manufactured in the open pan sugar factory at village Badripur (Dehradun). On reaching Landour Bazar, Mussoorie at about 9 A.M. I was amazed to see Bhaiji in front of the Mansaram Bank, coming from the opposite direction of Santana Dharma temple. After paying my respects to him, I told him that he should have informed me before coming to Mussoorie as he had promised when I had met him at Raipur. Bhaiji thereupon remarked that the ways of the Divine Mother were quite peculiar. She had no pre-conceived plans for Her movements from one place to another. On leaving Raipur, She had ordered him to go straight to the Kālī Bari *dharamśālā* at Dehradun and from there the following morning to Mussoorie on the way to Uttarkashi. It was because of this that no message about their sudden move from Raipur to Mussoorie could be conveyed to me. He then took me to the Sanātana Dharma temple *dharamśālā* and introduced me to Pitāji who was standing at the gate. Pitāji embraced me and immediately took me to Mataji.

1. *Sāṣṭāṅga ḍaṇḍawat praṇāma* Obeisance by full prostration.

At this second meeting, Mataji addressed me directly in Hindi. She first asked what had brought me to Mussoorie and then intimated to me that She and Her party were to leave the following morning for Uttarkashi. I was also told that at that moment they were going to the hill top of Landour Bazar (Depot), from where the whole Himalayan range including Badrinath could be seen. I decided to accompany them. Mataji then wanted to know what I would do with the sample bags of sugar I had brought to Mussoorie. I told Her that the sugar would go with them for their use on their way to Uttarkashi.

Before we left for the Depot I consulted Bhaiji about the coolies, pack-ponies and dandies required for their journey, and detailed instructions were given to my friend, Sri Jamna Datt Sanwal of the Mansaram Bank, for making all arrangements. Mataji was then bare-footed and so I tried to persuade Her through Bhaiji and Pitāji to use a dandi for visiting the hill top. Two dandies were also arranged for Pitāji and Bhaiji. Mataji at first declined to get into the dandi but Pitāji and Bhaiji finally persuaded Her to do so. On reaching the Depot I ordered from Military Dairy two seers of fresh cow's milk and offered them to Mataji, who sipped only a little of the boiled milk after considerable coaxing, and the rest was distributed amongst all those sitting around Her. She then asked me to sing some songs. I obeyed, though I was not a singer nor did I have a sweet voice. However, it appeared to me that Mataji was listening with great interest. Late in the evening we came back to Sanātana Dharma temple and Sri Sanwal told me that he had made all necessary arrangements for the journey of Mataji and Her party to Uttarkashi. I then sought Mataji's permission to leave for Dehradun on foot as the motor road would have already been closed. Mataji advised me to pass the night in Mussoorie, but as I had not informed my mother I decided, though reluctantly, to walk down to Dehradun at that late hour. This time I was promised that Mataji would certainly give me timely information on Her return from Uttarkashi. In the meantime I should be on the look-out for a suitable place for Her stay in Dehradun proper or nearabout.

GLEANINGS FROM "IN ASSOCIATION WITH SRI MA"

—Sri Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

Dhaka, Ramna Ashram, August, 1939

How to still the Mind. :

Pramatha Babu : Please tell us how to get rid of our doubts!

Ma : Have I not already told you to start your work with whatever your Guru has bestowed upon you. Quite often it is asked, how can the mind become still through japa ? Everyone is anxious to have peace of mind, because without stilling the mind *ananda* is not possible.

I have already explained to you that Guru mantra and Ista are one. To contemplate the Guru or the Ista and to perform Mantra japa amounts to the same because the Name and the Named are identical. So start by repeating the mantra received from your Guru. During this japa meditate on the image your Guru has indicated to you or on your Guru's photo. Where exactly should you concentrate during meditation ? It is good to concentrate in the heart because this is the place where joy and sorrow arise. However, if your Guru has instructed you to concentrate on anyone of the six *chakras*, (along the meridian of the body as explained in the Yoga sastras) it is a different matter. You will concentrate in whatever spot that the Guru has indicated. You may have read about the *chakras* that are situated in different locations of the body, and how each *chakra* has a different shape and a special presiding deity. This body has not studied anything, but it speaks on this subject because it has actually and quite clearly seen all this. By meditating on these different *chakras*, various states or spiritual experiences may be the result, But let us leave all this now.

You will start your meditation by imagining your Guru or Ista enthroned in your heart. There is yet another reason for concentrating in the heart. If you want to grow a tree out of a seed, you bury the seed under the earth and go on watering it. Due to your care and through the strength of the soil the tree grows out of the seed. Why do I stress the strength of the soil ? Because in order to produce a tree out of a seed, good earth is necessary. Even though the tree grows upwards, its roots remain underground, and it is the roots that constitute the life of the tree. Because it is seen that however many branches and twigs may be chopped off, the tree does not wither since its roots are intact. To enable the tree to grow you water it

regularly. This water you pour at its bottom surface, not directly into the roots. The water reaches the roots and helps the tree to grow. Similarly, the roots of this body-tree of ours lie in the head while the branches are down below. The heart is the foundation of this tree and any nourishment given here will reach the roots. For this reason one should meditate in the heart.

A devotee : Where exactly is the heart ?

Ma : The heart is everywhere in the hands, in the feet, in every part of the body. Yet, when we speak about the heart we normally understand the place (pointing to her chest). This is where one should concentrate while meditating.

Now, what should you do when sitting down for meditation ? Whether it is the Guru or the Ista, whom you have placed on the pedestal in your heart, contemplate His form. But during this meditation you find that your mind cannot remain steady. You cannot keep your mind fixed in one place even for a minute. This is why I advised that after placing your Guru on His seat in your heart, watch your breath moving in and out. It is this breathing that enables us to remain alive. However different human beings, animals, birds, etc., may be in species and also each creature from the other, in this respect, as far as *prāna* (life) is concerned, they are the same, Because they all remain alive by breathing. Hence, enthrone your Guru in your heart and contemplate Him as pervading the whole universe through *prāna*, the breath of life. The Guru is all-pervasive. So one should perform japa of the mantra received from the Guru and simultaneously watch one's breathing.

Everybody can do this. But the practice of japa in rhythm with one's breathing should be done on the advice of the Guru. If it is done merely because one has read about it in a book, there is the possibility of the brain becoming over-exerted. All the same, in many cases it is seen that by this practice the japa fits in naturally with the rhythm of the breath. In such cases there is no danger.

For performing puja you have seen how people mould an earthen image and then instil life into it by some special rites. Consciousness (*caitanya sattā*) exists everywhere. It is equally present in every creature (*jiva*) as well as in earth. But because we do not realize that living consciousness is also present in clay, we mould an earthen image and then instil life into it through some special ceremonies. Similarly, enthroning your Guru in your heart, think of Him as pervading everywhere as the life-force (*prāna*) and engage in your japa while watching your breath moving in and out.

The benefit derived from watching the movement of one's breath while practising japa is that the mind becomes somewhat calm. Whether it is a picture or an image, the mind cannot concentrate on it for any length of time. But because

breathing implies movement it is a little easier to tie the restless mind to it. In a similar fashion, to make a restless child remain quietly in a room, one has to provide the kid with a toy.

Now consider something else : the waves that arise in water are nothing but water. Yet, because of their movement they appear to be separate. The same substance is simultaneously quiet and in motion, broken into parts and unbroken. This constitutes the ceaseless *lila* of the universe. Beyond that there is a state where there are neither water nor waves. This is the unmanifest (*avyākta*).

If you concentrate on the waves for sometime you will find that they are nothing but water. In the same way if you continue for some length of time to carry out your japa while concentrating your restive mind on your breathing or on your Guru in the guise of *Prāna*, you will find that your mind has become calm, and the consciousness (*caitanya sattā*) that is always present within you becomes revealed of itself. Once this revelation has taken place, there is an end to doubts.

Another advantage of carrying out japa in rhythm with your breathing is that it can be performed everywhere at all times. Inhaling and exhaling continues without a break; so all you have to do is to perform your japa in rhythm with your breathing. There is no need to keep a picture or photo in front of you. Besides, people proceeding by whatever path, whether that of devotion or dedicated action or knowledge, can carry this out. To imagine one's Guru to be the life force (*prāna*) of all creatures is helpful on the path of knowledge. To enthrone his Guru or Ista in one's heart is helpful on the path of devotion; the performance of japa and the like is an aid on the path of dedicated action. So you see, this method of sadhana will suit aspirants regardless of the path they pursue.

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In the evening I returned to the Ashram and found Ma seated on a cot on the veranda of the Siva temple. Speaking to an old man, She remarked : " Baba, do keep a piece of sugar candy in your mouth ."

The old man : Are my words so very harsh ?

Ma : (smiling) Not that. When you keep a piece of sugar candy in your mouth it will melt slowly and keep your mouth sweet. That is to say, if you do not keep your tongue idle but engage it constantly in japa, you will get the taste of its sweetness. Otherwise a "return ticket" has to be taken -- one has to come back again and again.

Addressing another person, Ma said : "Here we are staying in a *dharmasala*, this is not our real hearth and home. If it were, could we be forced against our will to leave it ? When the call comes we cannot delay even for an instant, neither do

we get the opportunity to make preparations. As we are so we have to quit. This is why I request you to try and follow a path by which you can return to your real home and not have to wander from one *dharmasala* to another again and again.

Pointing towards an aged lady, Ma said : "Ma, with your Gopal remain inside your room and shut the doors. This is the way to peace. One by one you have lost all your teeth, now you are toothless (*bedanta*)*. If you cannot stick to your Gopal, you will have to return again and become toothless once more.

Another lady : Ma, cannot bear the worries and troubles of my household any longer. There is constant unrest:

Ma : No, you are still liking it, otherwise how could you live in it ? Once a house catches fire, can one remain in it ? One has to run away with great speed. Since you are still living in it, it appears that although there is some trouble, yet you are still fond of your home.

Dhaka, August 20th, 1939.

Sadek Khan, the Personal Assistant of the Commissioner, called on Ma along with two other Deputy Magistrates. Ma was told that when She had been to Coxbazar, Sadek had been the Sub-Divisional Officer there.

Ma told him : "Baba, just as you receive a pension for working in your job, there is also a pension on this path. In your present position, however much you may earn, you will never be able to satisfy all your wants. World means *duniyā* i.e. based on duality. Therefore, there is happiness and sorrow, light and darkness, virtue and sin. The one is never without the other. Happiness is followed by sorrow and sorrow again by happiness. Therefore you must try to become established in your true Nature. When this is achieved you will find Supreme Peace."

Then the senior District Magistrate, Manindra Babu arrived. When he was introduced, it was mentioned that he was unmarried and was practising yoga.

Ma asked him : "Baba, so you have not tied a garland round your neck and are practising yoga, hathayoga or rajayoga or some other yoga ?"

Manindra Babu : Not hatha yoga; I practise raja yoga. Previously I could be at it for long hours and liked it a lot; but now, due to laziness, I cannot do very much.

Ma : Laziness is certainly an obstacle, an enemy. Well, has this yoga that you practise become natural to you ?

Manindra Babu: I do not understand it. Often it seems to have become natural to me, yet at other times I doubt whether this is so .

[To be continued]

* **Bedanta** -- toothless & Vedanta Philosophy, a play upon words.

FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

[Continued from before]

—Sri P.C. Mehta

The Puranas:

In Sanskrit, 'Purana' means 'ancient story'. Traditionally, the origin of 'Puranas' is attributed to the recitals of '*pariplava-ākhyāyanas*' or recurring narrations or stories told during intervals in long 'yajnas' or sacrifices. Yajnas sometimes lasted for years. The beginning of these Puranas are traced to '*ākhyāyana-bhāga*' or narrative portions of Vedic rituals. There are eighteen Puranas. Though the stories found in them are very old, the Puranas themselves are later in date than the two epics. Authorship of all eighteen Puranas is attributed to the sage Vyasa. Literally 'Vyasa' means an author or writer. As such, 'Vyasa' may not be the name of the author. According to Amarasimha, the author of the Amarakosa (6th century A.D.), Purana as a written work is expected to deal with *panchalaksana* or the following five topics: i) *sarga* or primary creation of the categories ii) *prati-sarga* or secondary creation with the categories which includes world cycles iii) *vamsa* or genealogy of the gods and Rsis, iv) *manvantaras* or the 'Manu-periods' of time each under a 'Manu' or primal ancestor and v) *vamsānu-charita* history of the royal dynasties. Purana literature has considerable influence on popular Hinduism.

Among the Vaisnavite Puranas, the Visnu-Purana and Bhagavata -Purana are the most renowned. There are important Saivite-Puranas also.

1. The Visnu-Purana:

The Visnu-Purana is one of the oldest. It's likely date is fifth century A.D. Vaisnavites regard it as foremost. It contains the five topics expected in a Purana.

The Visnu-Purana has six books.

Book I contains ideas of time in traditional Hinduism: It opens with i) A hymn glorifying Visnu ii) Thereafter there is an account of the creation of the world. Hindu thought views time as cyclical. . Therefore there is a description of the small and great cycles of time. A *maha-yuga* or cycle of time consists of four small cycles called *yugas*.

First is the *Satya-yuga* (or *Krita-yuga*), the Golden Age of the world. In this 'Yuga' or time period, there are no vices in the human race. All live in harmony and therefore happily. There is no disease and deterioration of the sense-organs in old

age. All the needs of people are fulfilled by mere wish. Therefore, labour or exertion as we know is unknown. The length of this yuga is 4,800 divine years. A divine year is equivalent to 360 human years.

Next is the *Tretā-Yuga*. In this period, there is some decline in human righteousness. Men begin to act from selfish motive and seek reward. As a result Vedic sacrifices become necessary. This yuga endures for 3600 divine years.

The third is the *Dvāpara-yuga*. In this era righteousness declines by half. This brings about diseases and calamities. Human suffering increases. This period lasts 2,400 divine years.

The fourth and last yuga is the *Kali-Yuga*. Righteousness has decreased by three-fourths. As a result there is extreme human suffering, with anxiety, disease, hunger and fear characterizing this epoch. It is 1200 divine years in length.

After this, the cycle repeats beginning with the Golden Age. Each *Mahā-Yuga* or great cycle of yugas is 12,000 divine years. One thousand of these maha-yugas make a *Kalpa*, which in human years comes to 4,320,000,000. This is a day of god Brahma, the creator. Brahma has a night of equal length, which is *Pralaya* or the dissolution. When Brahma's day again dawns, the universe is recreated and repeats the same cycle of *yugas* and *maha-yuga*, until another *kalpa* is completed. God Brahma has a life of only 100 Brahma years. After this time, another individual of good karma from *sansara* becomes a Brahma. Time is infinite; no one can count the number of *kalpas* that have gone by or to come in the future.

A wise man is weary of endlessly going round the wheel of time. He desires freedom from the rounds of birth-death and rebirth. He wishes *mukti* or liberation and to join Visnu and the 'Muktas' or those that have come to *mukti*.

There is another theory of yugas, which is likely to be of later origin. It divides the *kalpa* into 14 *manvantaras*, with each *manvantara* lasting 306,720,000 years. This makes a *kalpa* 4,294,080,000 years long. This is 25,920,000 years less than the *kalpa* of 4,320,000,000 years; noted above. The writers of the Puranas were aware of this discrepancy and therefore added 1,851,428 years to each *manvantara* of 306,720,000 years, which multiplied by 14 yields the figure 4,319,999. For absolute accuracy they added further minute periods.

Each *manvantra* has its 'Manu', or forerunner of the human race. We are now in the Kaliyuga of the seventh *manvantara*. This yuga began after the death of *Krishna*, as described in the Mahabharata.

In Book I is also a flood story involving the Manu of the present *manvantara*. There is also a myth of the churning of the ocean. The story of Prahlada's devotion to Visnu is also there and then there is the myth of Dhruva, the Pole Star.

Book II contains ideas of Space in traditional Hinduism:. According to this account :

- i. The earth has seven continents, each surrounded by an ocean.
- ii. Bharatvarsha or India is situated in Jambudvipa, the continent in the center of the earth.
- iii. In Jambudvipa, Bharatvarsha is the most desirable region for rebirth, being a land for the practice of karma-yoga. The other regions are for enjoyment. After many thousands of rebirths living beings may get birth in Jambudvipa, where it is possible to attain liberation. The gods acknowledge that even for them it is a great blessing to be born here.
- iv. Mount Meru, is the tallest mountain at the center of the earth. It is therefore in the center of Bharatvarsha. Its peak is so high that it touches the sphere of the stars. The dwellings of the gods are on the slopes of Mount Meru.
- v. There are also six subtler regions where live angels or gods.i) The lowest region extends from the earth's lower atmosphere upto the sun. ii) Next is 'Svarga', which is higher and the home of Indra and many other gods. Then there are four higher worlds where very superior intelligence dwell. iii) In the third subtler region, saints live for an entire kalpa. iv) The fourth subtle world is peopled by the patriarchs and progenitors of mankind. v) Next is the pure-minded world of austerity, where live the ascetics. And in the last Brahmaloaka live inhabitants who are nearing liberation. They live with the god Brahma until the end of his period of existence and then are united with the Ultimate Reality or Visnu.
- vi. Beneath the earth are the seven regions of Patala. There live the Nagas or serpent deities. These are pleasant regions. The sage Narada visited these places and reported that Patala was more pleasant than Indra's Heaven!
- vii. Below Patala are the twenty-eight 'Narakas' or hells, ruled by King 'Yama'. Here sins are punished with tortures appropriate to the seriousness of the crime. After the punishment is endured in accordance of the law of karma, the person is reborn.
- viii. The 'Ananta' or endless serpent 'Shesha' of 1000 heads, from whose mouths issues forth the venomous fire, which at the end of a kalpa, takes the form of Rudra to destroy creation; is at the base of this universe supporting it. He is all-wise and is worshipped by the gods and the sages.

Book III gives an account of the Manus of the previous six *manvantaras* and the succeeding ones. We are at present in the seventh *manvantara*, presided over by

the Vaivasvata-Manu. About half of book III is concerned with rituals, ceremonies, and ashrams, and the duties of each *varna* or class.

Book IV gives the genealogical lists of the ancient royal families of the Solar Dynasty, who trace their origin to the Sun-God, and of the Lunar Dynasty, who trace their origin to the Moon-God. Occasionally, in between these lists, we find a story about one or another of these kings. Such is the famous tale of King Pururavas and his beloved nymph Urvasi.

Book V tells the enchanting tale of Krisna. It covers his youth as the divine cowherd, his heroic exploits in maturity and finally his death by being shot in the heel by a hunter, after which he unifies with Visnu.

Book VI is important for its description of the dissolution of the world. Three kinds of dissolution are described:

- i) **Incidental dissolution**, meaning the destruction of the creatures, but not the substance of the world;
- ii) **Eternal dissolution**, which is the resolution of all the elements of the world into their primitive source, *Prakriti* or primal matter, which occurs at the end of Brahma's life, when the souls who have not attained *Moksa* go comatose retaining their karma and are reborn again in the next cycle of existence; and
- iii) **Absolute dissolution**. Herein is individual ego-annihilation and the end of a person's *sansāra*. This takes place with the ending of a person's *karma*. Absolute dissolution is *Moksa*.

Yoga according to the stages mentioned in the Yoga system, is recommended for attainment of absolute dissolution. Here, *samadhi* which destroys forever the false separation between the individual and the universal spirit, is union with Visnu. Thereafter, one lives eternally as part of Visnu.

At the end of this Purana, it is said that whoever hears the reading of this work will be free from the contamination of Kali-yuga and his sins. Whoever hears or reads this Purana with intense devotion acquires the perfection of Visnu.

'*Smriti*', which includes Puranic literature as well as the Bhagavad-Gita, could be heard or read by Sudras and women. These scriptures would reveal the path to *Moksa* to these groups excluded from the study of *Sruti*, which are the Vedas.

2. The Bhāgavata-Purana :

Scholars claim that Bhagavata-Purana has evolved in three stages The very old material was developed into a Maha-Purana or great-purana during the early Christian era. The Alwaras, who were the Tamil Bhakti-Saints, and who flourished