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Just as there is a veil of ignorance for the individual,
so there is also a door to Knowledge.

MĀTRI VĀNI

Samsāra (the world) means the abode of uncertainty and doubt. The clown who mistakes his role for reality—yet is only dressed up as a clown. This is why it is called '*Sang-sāra*'.*

• •

The whole of Manifestation is but a display of God's divine power—He Himself as *vibhūti*. The non-dualists speak of the one Self (*Ātmā*) again who manifests as duality? None but He—the One. It is impossible that some realization or other should not occur while treading the spiritual path.

* * *

Forgetting that God is the one Beloved (*Ishṭa*) men give their love to sense objects. To love anything that is not God means to divide one's devotion between two (*do-ishta*) and this makes one wicked (*dushta*).

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To be born as a human being is a rare boon. If, in spite of having obtained this great opportunity one does not give time to the contemplation of one Beloved, one will have

* A play upon words that cannot be rendered into English. *Samsāra* the world, the round of births and deaths. *Sang* clown, *sāra* essence. Man thinks of himself as a separate individual (*jīva*) actually he is *Siva* disguised as a *jīva*. So long as he does not wake up to this fact the round of births and deaths continues for him,

to ask oneself : What have I been doing ? To neglect the contemplation of Reality means to take the road of death.

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Who is called a friend ? He who makes you turn your mind towards the Beloved, he is your supreme friend. But a person who diverts your thoughts away from Him and tempts you to progress in the direction of death, he is your enemy, not your friend. Try to correct yourself. The man who makes no effort to improve himself is in fact committing suicide. The enjoyment of sense objects acts as a slow poison that opens out the path leading towards death. This is why, as a human being, it is man's duty to tread the path of Immortality.

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What does *Ātmā darśana*, the direct perception of the Self mean ? The seer, the seen and vision—where these three are realized as modifications created by the mind, superimposed on the one all-pervading Consciousness, this realization is called *Brāhmīsthiti*. Where there is no question of action, there is *Ātmasthiti* (one is established in the Self). And for those who worship God with Form, *Ātmadarśana* means to perceive Him everywhere. Just as it is said : "Wherever my glance falls there Krishna appears." If anything is perceived that is not Krishna, one cannot speak of true vision. In perfect all-embracing *darśana* the Beloved stands revealed.

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Knowing the Mother means realizing Her, becoming the Mother. 'Ma' means *Ātmā*, Ma means 'maya' all permeating. Pervading Himself by Himself, reposing in Itself —this verily is THAT.

Conversations with Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma

RECORDED BY PROF. B. GANGULY

Translated from Bengali

Ranchi Ashram, 1st June 1965.

Question : What is the advantage and the special result of meditating in a cave ? Does a cave represent the mother's womb or the cave in the human heart ?

Mataji : Meditating in a cave enhances single-mindedness. The outer cave is a symbol for the inner cave. The home of the householder should be provided with a retreat like a shrine room to be used as a cave. In order to destroy the curtain of ignorance, a place that is curtained off to serve as a cave will have to be set apart in every home. Behind the curtain one should meditate and outside of the curtain perform service. *Grihastha Ashram** signifies a condition in which the householder is not aware of strain or toil. He must serve his family, regarding every member as a manifestation of the One. Work for your little daughter with the idea that she represents *Kumārī*, the Virgin Mother of the Universe and for your son looking upon him as Gopal, the child Krishna. By taking care of his wife the husband serves but Lakshmi, the Goddess presiding over home and hearth; and the wife should worship the Lord of the world in her husband. One's parents are to be revered as spiritual preceptors, one's younger brothers as Gopalas, one's younger sisters as Gouris, the big brothers to be respected as fathers and one's elder sisters as mothers. If one is able to serve everyone with this attitude of mind, how can family life be an impediment to *sādhana* ? Wherever you may find yourself, acts of service will help you to fulfil yourself, to attain to perfection. And

* A play upon words : *shrama* means strain, toil, labour. *Ashrama* absence of these.

in addition to engaging in service, a special place and time should be reserved for the worship and contemplation of God in solitude. All the rest of the day try to sustain the remembrance of His Name or of a *mantra*. Wherever you may be, the way to the revelation of God lies there itself. For the *brahmachāri* and *sannyāsi* it is most congenial to practise meditation in seclusion in a cave. Depending on one's capacity and stage the place of practice, the *sādhana* and the state of achievement vary.

Question : Are the *Vānaprastha** and *Sannyāsa Ashrams* appropriate under modern conditions ?

Mataji : One should try to live every *Ashrama* (stage of life) according to the injunctions of the *Sāstras*. The *Vānaprastha* and *Sannyāsa Ashrams* are difficult ones. Everyone should do as much as he can.

Question : The *Sāstras* prescribe that a man should retire to the forest and adopt the *Vānaprastha Ashram* after he has completed 50. How can this rule be followed in our times ?

Mataji : When do people retire nowadays ? At 55 or 58 or 60. Well, then at least at the age of 60 they should abandon their worldly life and, freeing themselves from their ties, live in an Ashram. Why be attached to what has been left behind ? If at 55 the spirit of renunciation comes over you, retire and become a *Vānaprasthi*.

Question : What is the path of a *Rishi* (*Riṣipanthā*) ?

Mataji : For the offspring of a *Rishi*—his sons and daughters—for them is the path of a *Rishi*. The wife of a *Rishi* is called *Riṣi patnī* and his son *Riṣi bālaka*. What is meant by *Rishi* you can find out from the *Sāstras*. You should study and perform the duties of a *Rishi*. The founder

* *Vānaprastha Ashram*, the third stage of life, in which the householder is expected to leave his family and retire to the forest for meditation in solitude. *Sannyāsa* is the fourth stage of complete renunciation.

and ancestor of every family (*gotra*) was a Rishi. You are all descendants of Rishis. The *Grihasthāshram* should be lived in accordance with the rules of the path of a Rishi, in obedience to the *Śāstras* and to *Dharma*. If a householder abides by the laws of conduct laid down in the *Śāstras*, then by the grace of God he will automatically reach the goal of life. Where action is not spontaneous there is trouble and friction. Whatever action or event comes about without difficulty, should be understood as happening spontaneously. In this there is no toil or strain, no craving, it happens by God's Will.

Question : What do you mean when you say 'Ashram is a condition in which there is absence of strain or toil?'

Mataji : Where restlessness, desire and trouble are, there is strain and toil. If the Ashram is lived in keeping with its innate rules, there will be none of these. The strenuous striving towards Self-realization is not felt as strain, it is *tapasyā*. Strain implies the awareness of discomfort. Even if by *tapasyā* the body is subjected to discomfort, mind and heart are full of enthusiasm and joy. To realize God means to realize one's Self. How can there be strain while engaging in the essential thing for oneself? The *sādhana* that is practised so that the *Ātmā* may be revealed will not be felt as strain or toil. To do *tapasyā* is your self-expression ; in order that this may become evident, the *tapasyā* must be free from strain, must be easy and natural. If I work at the bidding of another, it may seem a drudgery to me, but if I do my own work, prompted by my own desire, how can this be wearisome? Self-realization, in other words, God-realization is one's own work, the endeavour to find one's Self is one's own natural endeavour. The states of a *tapasvi*, *sādhaka* or *yogi* are states of the effortless play of the Self.

Question : Can the action of the *Sushumna* be compared to pumping air into a tube ?

Mataji : You are referring to our talk about the tube the other day.* According to the line along which a person practises *sādhana* will be his realization ; by attending to the work of one's true nature one attains to eternal union. The man who becomes united to Him is styled a yogi. To prepare oneself for that Sublime Touch is the purpose of *sādhana*. By practising or listening to the name of Hari or doing *japa*, the rhythm of one's breath is regulated, *prāṇāyāma*† comes about spontaneously, there is repose, natural ease, no difficulty, no illness. The rhythm by which mundane work is achieved causes disease, sickness, worry ; it does not bring about rest, ease and equilibrium. If you remain steeped in the current of worldly activity there will be physical creation, worldly knowledge and worldly interest. This is the current of constant wanting, not the current that leads to God-realization. In a life full of desires there is no room for Him, no current that leads to God. Passion and craving provide man with a 'return-ticket'—that is to say, he is bound to come back to this world of misery. Desire for sense objects—for that which is full of poison—leads to death. The rhythm of breathing that it produces causes coming and going, one is forced to be reborn. The man who does not want this, drops the misconception that God is far away and finds his Self to be nearer than the nearest—he indeed is extremely fortunate. The rhythm of the breath must be changed. If one practises *sādhana* following the Guru's instructions, the breathing changes of itself. Be it the name of Krishna or Kali or any other of God's names, its constant repetition will transform the breath. When this has been achieved the *mantra* becomes alive effortlessly.

Once Prangopal Babu took a photo of this body and showed it to Balananda Brahmachari. Afterwards he took this body to Deogarh to the Brahmachari's Ashram.

* See November 1966 issue of Ananda Varta, PP. 103-104.

† Breath control.

Wherever this body was taken it made no difference to the states that manifested at all times. Didi and others observed that this body was uttering *mantras* quite distinctly. Whether it was sitting or conversing with someone, the 'Sivoham' *mantra* was spontaneously repeated clearly. For a long time this went on secretly. Only later it was noticed. The reason why this is disclosed here is to illustrate that this body being pure notwithstanding its living in the *Grihasthāshrama*, the rhythm of the breath being in perfect harmony with the movement of the mind, *prānāyāma* and spiritual experience (*anubhūti*) occurred of themselves. By effort real *sādhana* cannot be done. Through the action of the life-force, light, *mantras* and so forth manifest. Depending on the tendency of anyone's mind he will proceed in a certain direction and live his life in the world accordingly. The vibration of the life-force is conditioned by the *saṁskāras* of every particular person. Everyone's *prānāyāma* is different. The man who is fortunate, whose *saṁskāras* are excellent, does not require a 'return ticket' any more. In order to change the rhythm of the breath one has to resort to sustained practise. One should begin by the repetition of any one of God's names that one prefers. By treading the path that the Guru points out, the breath will be altered and thereby also the bent of one's mind. The moment this is achieved the *sushumnā* will become active in the twinkling of an eye, just as when air is suddenly pumped into a tyre (tube). So long as these things do not happen of themselves, one will have to go on striving. Everyone will understand what refers to the specific line of approach along which he proceeds. The type of meditation that suits a particular person may also reveal itself. So long as this does not occur there are difficulties, struggle, the impression that one is not getting anywhere, that one is incapable of achieving. The exact path one has to take is recognized when the time is ripe. Just as when water is poured out somewhere and finds the proper way to descend and join a stream. So long

as the water does not mix with other water one will have to keep on pouring. If in between it dries up, no harm has been done. Who can tell at what moment a flood will burst forth? At some time or other one is bound to be blessed by a touch of one's true being. How union is achieved is full of mystery. The current that leads to it is fourfold. One part is unmanifest and three parts are manifest. By the action of *prānāyāma* and by *dhyāna* (meditation) the three manifest parts will have to be joined to the unmanifest. By one's own particular *kriyā*, by the repetition of a name, by *prānāyāma* one will have to unite with that current. By selfless service done with the conviction that all are but manifestations of the One, man may also become united to Him. One has to proceed with great regularity and constancy. So long as that spontaneous revelation does not occur, one will have to apply oneself. There was One. He divided Himself in order to create the world. He has always been within you. What is in the microcosm is also in the macrocosm. Thus you have to exert yourself in order to realise your Self. The Lord is manifested in every creature. To find God means but to find one's own Self. Therefore one has to tread the path with steadfastness. All spiritual paths are right and open out towards liberation. HE is free and thus the road to him leads to freedom. You have grasped, haven't you, that all are contained in the One and the One is present in all.

From the Diary of a European

MELITA MASCHMANN

(VII)

(*Translated from German*)

Varanasi, November 1963.

By the end of this week we are to go to Bombay. This must have become known to Mataji's devotees, for the rush of those who are asking for private interviews is growing from day to day. I cannot imagine how Mataji is able to cope with it. When I leave the Ashram late at night, so many are still waiting that she cannot possibly attend to them all, even if she does not rest for a minute. And when I arrive early morning, thirty or fifty are sitting there again.

Moreover, Mataji's health seems to be anything but stable. One should like to save her from exertion. But though there be a hundred people who are ready to put back their own wishes, there are still more demanding her attention. I do not believe that Mataji is immune against suffering, at least not against physical pain. Some people declare that she is—but so many things are said about her. Perhaps she does not suffer in the sense that no suffering can interrupt her consciousness of absolute Oneness with Supreme Reality. Once she told me: "There is only one evil, and that also is not real but an illusion of *māyā*: to be without God." Thus she is convinced that nobody and nothing can in point of fact be without God. Yet our ignorance makes us think that we are apart from him and this is how we suffer from the only existing evil: presumed absence of God. This suffering Mataji certainly does not share with us. But we see her body grow older and sometimes in pain.

Today at *darśana* time Mataji was in an inward turned mood and did not speak. In such moods she appeals to me more than ever, which may possibly be due to the fact that I do not understand her language. Two *pūjārīs* were sitting near her, facing the temple and praying in an undertone. An old, tattered woman forced her way to the front and squatted on the floor close to Mataji. Although it was obvious that Mataji wanted to listen to the *pūjārī's* prayers, the old woman talked loudly to Mataji for nearly twenty minutes, gesticulating with hands and feet. It was impossible for Mataji to move away even two inches and one could see that the complete lack of consideration on the part of the old woman was irksome to Mataji. Nevertheless she did nothing, or at least nothing effective to get rid of the intruder. She listened to her and smiled indulgently. A few times she raised her folded hands in supplication: Namaste, go now! But the old woman showed no inclination to leave Mataji alone. Her voice became ever louder and livelier, and Mataji smiled with ever more kindness. The scene was annoying as well as moving and funny. Once Mataji's glance fell on me. It seemed to say: "Look, this is how they are—like children, are they not? Thinking only of themselves. But one has to love them!"

On the two last evenings at Varanasi, one of the Swamis is good enough to reply to some of my questions. He is a learned man with a sense of humour and his piety does not prevent him from being friendly to everyone. He explains to me with a considerable display of scholarly erudition that why Mataji does not sleep the way we sleep. Her body, so he says, does of course rest, but her consciousness is ever fully awake. His argument was so complicated that I am unable to reproduce it. Consciousness here meant, not what we usually call consciousness, but rather a state of Illumination. I wanted to know how this could be proved. The Swami related to me of a sceptic with whom he had a similar discussion a few years ago. On

three successive nights the gentleman suddenly noiselessly approached Mataji's bed in order to find out how she was sleeping. Every time she would raise her head from apparently deep sleep and greet him with "Namaskar."

The second thesis of the Swami : Mataji is all-knowing. I ask : how ? Reply : Where the oneness of the *Ātman* and *Brahman* is realized, there is also the omniscience of the *Brahman*.

If Mataji is all-knowing, she must for instance be able to develop the formulaes of the theory of Relativity ?

Mataji knows whatever she *wants* to know. I guess that those formulaes belong to the things she does not care to know. Why should she ?

I am eager to have a proof for the declaration that someone who lives in our midst in a human body can be all-knowing ! The Swami says : "You might think of Christ. He is a good example. But I remember the following story : A Raja was sailing on the Ganges. At that time a famous Mahatma lived on the banks of the holy river. He was a very fat man who used to swim for hours. He liked to lie on his back in '*śavāsana*' (the so called 'dead pose') and let himself be driven by the current. One day, the swimming Mahatma passed close to the Raja's boat. The Raja was under the impression that it was necessary to save the 'drowning' man. With great difficulty the Mahatma was dragged into the boat. It amused him to play the role of a drowning person until he felt the planks under his feet. Then he jumped up and laughed. The Raja liked the joke and made friends with the Mahatma. He showed him his costly, jewel-beset sword, which the Mahatma cold-bloodedly threw into the river. When the Raja screamed with rage, the Mahatma dived in to the water and soon returned with two swords minutely resembling one another. "Which of them is yours ?" he asked. But the Raja was unable to recognize his own sword. "Here," said the Mahatma laughing, do you

see this tiny fissure! Ask your armourer! This is your sword."

So far the story. The interesting thing is that it was related to me to prove the Swami's thesis of the omniscience of an Enlightened Being.

I question the Swami about the traditional paths to Enlightenment and he explains to me the various types of *yoga*. A remark by the way: It usually happens that persons who set out on their spiritual pilgrimage under the guidance of a Master or Saint, first of all have the impression of getting worse ethically instead of improving. This experience is a necessary part of the process of their inner purification. In connection with *bhakti yoga* the Swami tells me the following story: "A King was being tyrannized by a powerful poisonous snake. When finally he despaired of being able to defend himself, he appealed to Sri Krishna for help. Sri Krishna stepped on the snake and trod about on it so violently that it very nearly swooned away. But the snake begged for mercy: 'Do not kill me. The creator of the Universe has brought into being also me. It is not my mistake that I can produce nothing but poison. I surrender to Thee unconditionally,' No sooner did Sri Krishna hear this, than he transformed the snake into a lovely bird which did no harm to anyone." The Swami interprets the story as follows: "The King is yourself. The snake is your ego with which you are unable to cope by yourself. Sri Krishna is your *Iṣṭa* (Beloved Deity) who helps you to conquer the ego. As soon as it has surrendered to Him, He changes it into a gentle and beautiful being."

Incredible, how certain processes in the human soul have remained the same during the last five thousand years. Or, incredible, with what precision and plasticity the *Rishis* translated their realizations about the human psyche into poetic language.

Today I came late at *daršana* time. Mataji was already seated on her stool in front of the temples. I found a place from where I could see only her back. But I had a clear view of the people who sat at her feet. Amongst them were two Europeans, Svedes, I am told. An elderly man and a young one. Impressive to watch their eyes. To compare the expression of their eyes with that of the other people. Something that I have often noticed : the Indian look is receptive, the western look active. The Asiatic look takes in, the European one grasps at the world.

The two Svedes were naturally 'inquisitive.' They wanted to penetrate—to them very likely unknown—the phenomenon of the Indian saint, tried to examine it with their eyes. The other people present had no such intention. They desired to open themselves to holiness in order to partake of it. Even when disregarding these different suppositions, in the way of looking the essential difference of East and West is revealed. Indians often fluctuate between the two types of eye expression. I noticed this especially while coming by boat from Europe. On the other hand, some apparently completely westernized Indians have nevertheless the "Indian look." Their eyes on occasions acquire the western scientific attitude of focussing on a particular object, but in their background the Asiatic visionary gaze is preserved.

I am afraid of hasty generalizations and crude simplifications. What I note are only my preliminary impressions. We Europeans seize the world with our look, we use our eyes as tools to discriminate, to examine and arrange. We concentrate on particulars because only the particular allows of minute investigation. The world is full of objects for our inquisitive eyes that carry out the preparatory work for our brains and hands.

The people among whom I am living here do not experience the world in this subject-object relationship. Their thinking is based on the idea that all is one—namely

the One Brahman. This does not permit of a distinction between subject and object. What the eyes of these people perceive is not the particular object which they want to grasp and master and therefore regard inquiringly. If all is Brahman, it can only be illusion to believe we have a separate I. And where no I is there is also no subject that faces the objects of the world.

The gaze of the Asiatic Sage sees nothing but the Brahman. His eyes are windows through which the light penetrates to his soul. They are not 'hands' to grasp at the world. Even the unenlightened Indian has this manner of looking, which does not grasp but takes in. The world is felt to be a surging whole. It flows into his vision. The Indian optic is focussed on the forest and not on particular trees. One can do this consciously with one's own eyes, make them receptive (physically) by eliminating their 'piercing' through the particular object. In certain situations this takes place automatically. I believe, whenever we forget our I.

It seems to me that Mataji's glance is on occasions not receptive; namely whenever she puts on the 'search-light.' But then she just makes the light flow. It flows through her, issuing from the mysterious source that is behind her.

(To be continued.)

A Little Anthology

II

ON GRACE

O Thou glorious Lord, O Protector of vows, determined am I to master the lower self. Grant unto me the necessary strength and make my effort fruitful. Leaving untruth, may I realize Truth through Thy grace.

—Shukla Yajur Veda Samhita

You want to know whether grace is without cause or reason? Certainly. For grace is by its very nature beyond cause and reason. When working one reaps the fruit of ones actions. If, for instance you serve your father, and he being pleased with your service gives you a present, this would be called the fruit of action. But the eternal relationship that exists by nature between father and son surely does not depend on any action.

The supreme father, mother and friend—verily, God is all of these. Consequently how can there be a cause or reason for His grace? You are His, and in whatever way He may draw you to Him, is for the sake of revealing Himself to you. The desire to find Him that awakens in man—who has instilled it into you? Who is it that makes you work for its fulfilment?

—Mataji

Our mind turns towards God only by His grace. It is His grace that makes us yearn for him...

Our ego-sense makes us think we can attain Him by our sādhanā. But we soon realize our helplessness and know that our efforts are by themselves of no avail. Then we surrender to Him and depend on His mercy. Thus we need His grace at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. Grace is all in all.

—Swami Ramdas

He that attributeth any good unto himself hindereth God's grace from coming unto him, because the grace of the Holy Spirit ever seeketh an humble heart.

If thou couldest but perfectly annihilate thyself, and empty thyself of all created love, then might I even hold Myself bound to overflow into thee with great grace.

—*The Imitation of Christ*

There are two powers that alone effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour: a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers.

—Sri Aurobindo

However much you may try, without God's grace nothing can be attained. He cannot be attained without divine grace. But divine grace descends not so easily. You shall have to banish your ego completely from the heart. If you have the egotistic feeling "I am the doer," you can never see God... God never appears in the heart of him who thinks himself to be the doer.

Through His grace He reveals Himself. He is the sun of Knowledge. One ray of His has brought the power of understanding to this world. On account of it we have the power to know each other and to acquire various forms of knowledge. We can see Him only if He turns His light on His own face.

—Sri Ramakrishna

Practise meditation sincerely and you will understand His infinite grace.

—Sarada Devi

Divine Grace is essential for Realization. It leads one to Realization. But such Grace is vouchsafed only to him who is a true devotee or a *yogin* who has striven hard and ceaselessly on the path to freedom.

—Ramana Maharshi

And no doubt in His graciousness God gives us His gifts, even in intermittent communion, and touches us into flame, far beyond our achievements and deserts. But the hunger of the committed one is for unbroken communion and adoration, and we may be sure He longs for us to find it and supplements our weakness. For our quest is of His initiation, and is carried forward in His tender power and completed by His grace.

—Thomas Kelly

This Self cannot be attained by study of the scriptures, nor by intellectual perception, nor by frequent hearing (of It). He whom the Self chooses, by him alone is It attained. To him the Self reveals Its true nature.

—*Katha Upanishad*

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The Message of The Gita

JAINATH KAUL, M.Sc.

We are all engaged in the exciting adventure of rebuilding our ancient land with resurgent youthful vigour. While we do this with the clear objective of adequately fitting our country into the modern world of atomic power and space travel, we should not only catch up with the technically advanced countries, but, in the process, also build the Indian superstructure of progressive scientific, technological and industrial activity on our own foundations. Divorced from our moorings, we shall be a poor imitation; deeply entrenched in our own soil, we shall grow into a mountain of godly strength—a source of the highest inspiration for the pious and the peaceful, and a tower of terror for the vicious and the violent. There is incomparable vitality and a constructive unifying force for all mankind in the Indian thought and way of life, which has enabled it to absorb shocks from wave after wave of foreign invasions and influences, and survive them. It is necessary for each one of us to hold on to our own, and not to exchange the essentials of our practical idealism, which is based on eternal values, for the superficiality of materialism in the justifiable race for economic prosperity.

The heart of the Indian heritage, handed down from generation to generation, since times immemorial, which determines the Indian way of life, is, that no activity, whether in art or literature, law or politics, industry or any other field of human endeavour, is an end in itself but is meant to subserve the ultimate objective of life, namely spiritual perfection, and that the right royal road to it lies through dedicated disinterestedness, love of excellence in the chosen field of activity, and rejection of all that is selfish and narrow. Many men and women in our country have not only

understood this clearly, but have tried to live up to it religiously in their big and small spheres of work. In our own times, Mahatma Gandhi provided an outstanding example of this approach to life. He had thrown himself completely into the struggle for Indian independence, and yet he never looked upon his work as an end in itself, but only as a means for reaching the greatest spiritual height of Self-realization. This way of thinking and living takes into full consideration the all important and yet universally ignored phenomenon of death, which makes a mockery of all temporal knowledge and experience, possessions and attachments.

In this background, the *Shrimad Bhagawad Gita* has a special significance, for in this universal guide of just 700 *slokas* (couplets), set out in 18 chapters, is contained all that is vital for a clear understanding of the highest level of development for a human being, and the road that takes one to it. The Gita caters equally to the needs of the beginner, the average and the highly advanced in the scale of evolutionary growth.

The central teaching of the Gita is action, but action which leads to freedom, and not to bondage. In fact, in the Gita, the word used is कर्म (*Karma*), which means correct or positive action—action which leads the individual spirit towards freedom from the bondage of matter. That the term *Karma* excludes negative action, or action which increases bondage, is brought out clearly by the fact that negative action is given a status similar to that of inaction or zero action, the words used being विकर्म (*Vikarma*) and अकर्म (*Akarma*) respectively. This means that the terms *Karma* and action are not equivalent, as the latter includes both positive and negative actions. And, when the Gita exhorts the aspirant to action, it is calling him to do only such actions as liberate him and not those that bind.

Now, how does action create bondage, and how does it lead to freedom from the shackles of matter? All action,

which is performed to subserve the narrow interests of the ego increases bondage. A man takes illegal possession of some land. The rightful owner is enraged and kills him. This killing will bind the killer because the motive of the murder is the possessive attachment to a piece of land. It is *vikarma* and not *karma*. On the other hand, if the same action takes place on the battlefield and the killing is done in defence against aggression, it is *karma* because the hero is not actuated by an ego-centric impulse but by the call of a soldier's duty regardless of personal gain or loss. Therefore, if an action is done to serve one's narrow selfish interest out of greed, lust, egoistic impulses for domination, or personal attachment, it is not *karma* but *vikarma*. On the other hand, if it is done through disinterested service for a higher purpose, it is *karma*. But the ability to determine what constitutes positive action at any time, and what is more important, to act according to what one considers right, requires not only a certain degree of purity, which enables one to look at things purely objectively, but also a habit of doing right regardless of consequences in terms of the interests of the ego.

For the habitual performance of *karma* a certain nobility of character is required. The Gita classifies humanity into two groups—those possessing दैवी संपदा (*daiivī sampadā*), or divine properties and others with आसुरी संपदा (*Āsurī sampadā*), or demoniacal properties. The whole of the sixteenth chapter of the Gita consisting of 24 couplets is devoted to a description of these qualities. Those possessing the former proceed to freedom, while others continue with the fetters of their bondage from birth to birth. Some of the principal qualities of those possessing the *daiivī sampadā* are fearlessness, philanthropy, self-restraint, straight forwardness, vigour, purity, peacefulness, compassion, uncovetousness, self-sacrifice, rectitude and absence of anger, pride and fickleness. The *Āsuras*, on the other hand, are hypocrites, arrogant, harsh, egoistic, insolent, unscrupulous, greedy and lustful.

The setting of the Gita is the battlefield of Kurukshetra, with the army of Arjuna, the warrior prince, who is blessed with *daivi sampadā*, facing the more numerous *āsuric* forces of Duryodhana. The divine dialogue which the Gita covers, is a result of the refusal of Arjuna to fight his seniors, teachers and close relations who are arrayed against him in battle. He feels that killing these people for a kingdom for himself is wrong because it would serve his own selfish ends. But Sri Krishna, the divine Master, reads the real cause of his refusal. Arjuna, the invincible warrior, is shirking from the soldier's duty on a battlefield out of personal attachment to his near and dear-ones. This attachment has clouded his vision, although there is nobility even in this attachment, for he has placed the interest of others above his own. But the path of duty is difficult. Arjuna realizes that he is confused and implores the Lord to guide him. A series of questions and answers, which reveal the highest wisdom of India, follow, and Arjuna is finally satisfied. His vision becomes clear and he fights. The battle is fiercely fought, and in the end the divine conquers the demoniacal. It is ever the same story—whether it is Rama versus Ravana, or the Allies versus Hitler—सत्यमेव जयते (truth or the divine alone triumphs).

With this introduction, let us now look at some of the couplets of the Gita which help to bring out its message clearly :

1. अन्तवन्त इमे देहा नित्यस्योक्ताः शरीरिणः ।
अनाशिनोऽप्रमेयस्य तस्माद्बुध्यस्व भारत ॥

(The physical bodies of all are mortal, but the indweller is eternal, indestructible and boundless. Therefore, fight, O Arjuna.)

2. अथ चेत्त्वमिमं धर्म्यं संग्रामं न करिष्यसि ।
ततः स्वधर्मं कीर्तिं च हित्वा पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥

(But if you will not fight this righteous warfare, then casting away your duty and your honour, you will incur sin.)

3. कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूमा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

(Your business is with *karma* only, never with its fruit, so let not the fruit of *karma* be your motive for *karma*, nor should you get attached to inaction.)

4. तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।
असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ॥

(Therefore, constantly perform *karma* without attachment, for, by performing *karma* without attachment, man reaches the Supreme.)

5. सक्ताः कर्मण्यविद्वांसो यथा कुर्वन्ति भारत ।
कुर्याद्विद्वांस्तथासक्तश्चिकीर्षुर्लोकसंग्रहम् ॥

(As the ignorant act from attachment to action, O Arjuna, so should the wise act without attachment, desiring the welfare of the world.)

6. मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किञ्चिदस्ति धनंजय ।
मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ॥

(There is nothing whatsoever apart from me, O Arjuna. All this is threaded on Me, as rows of gems on a string.)

7. तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्यसंशयम् ॥

(Therefore, at all times remember Me and fight. With heart and mind set on Me, without doubt, you will reach Me.)

To my mind, the last two of the couplets given above contain, in essence, the message of the Gita. The last but one conveys the truth which all self realized saints have experienced and declared, namely, that there is nothing else in this world except God—the uncreated, indestructible, all-pervading, unmanifested, undifferentiated, immutable oneness of existence, consciousness and bliss. Those who experience this as a living reality find it as the core of their innermost being. Therefore, in this couplet, Sri Krishna is

not referring to Himself as a single ego-based finite unit of creation, but as the infinite *Ātman*, which each one of us is in truth.

And the last couplet gives the final directive. Remember always the infinite power (as Sri Krishna, as Christ, as divine Mother, or in any other form, or as the Absolute) and perform *karma*. He who does this is a *Karma Yogi*, and his life is proceeding on the right track.

It would be apt, in this context, to conclude the discussion with a quotation from a recent speech of our President, Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan. Inaugurating the Bhavan International at Bombay last February, the world famous philosopher-statesman said, "Science looks at the periphery of the world, the outside things, the variety and multiplicity of the universe. But the centre of being from which all those things come, from which they arise, that must be felt only by solitary meditation.... And, if you have disciplined yourselves, if you get rid of your anger, your hatred, your pusileanimity, your pettiness when you deal with people ; if you are able to do that sort of thing, you see God face to face."

Long Have We Wandered

MARK HALPERN

Long have we wandered, O Thou Mighty Spirit of Love
and Truth,

Far have we strayed, far from Thy Healing Light,

Now we want Thee and Thee alone, for Thou art all...

In Thee we find all that is most True and Beautiful
and Good :

In Thee we find all that we have ever lost,

Increased a thousandfold, never to be lost again.

In Thee we find all that we have been seeking through
the ages—

Seeking for it blindly in all our sorrows and all our joys ;

Hoping to find the Eternal Infinite Imperishable One

In the fleeting, illusory multiplicity of earthly things,

Which must have an end, having had a beginning.

But now we know we shall find that for which we have
been searching;

Searching for it futilely among the baubles of worldly
vanity.

We shall find the Pearl of Great Price.....

Divine Consciousness...

The Peace that passeth all understanding.....

In Thee and Thee alone, O Thou Mighty Spirit of Love
and Truth.

And we shall find it to be more wondrous far

Than anything we ever have dared imagine in our most
hopeful dreams.

For Thou art ever waiting with patient Understanding ;

Ready to flood us with Thy Divine Healing

Once we tire of our childish toys and come to Thee,

For when we surrender ourself to Thee,
Thou sendest Thy bounteous Love to us,
Greater far than ours by infinite measure ;
So that it floods our being
Till we needs must pour it out to all who live in the
world,
Yet the more we give to others, the more Thou givest us ;
For Thou hast become the fountain of Selfless Love
within us,
The Eternal Fountain of Love Divine,
Out of which we shall drink for evermore
And never thirst again.....

Psychosynthesis and the Ishopanishad

PROF. BIRESHWAR GANGULY

IV

In the first two mantras of the Ishopanishad we have already considered the central philosophy of this Upanishad, which is in tune with the central theme of the *Srimad Bhagavat Gita*, the most popular scripture of the Hindus. From the third to the fourteenth mantras, to be dealt with in this section and the next, we get the synthetic knowledge of the Upanishads and Tantras as also of the integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in his *Life Divine* and *Synthesis of Yoga*.

असुर्या नाम ते लोका अन्वेन तमसावृताः ।
तास्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥३॥

“Sunless are those worlds and enveloped in blind gloom whereto all they in their passing hence resort, who are slayers of their souls.”

—Sri Aurobindo.

“*Āsurya* is the name of the *lokas*, covered with blinding darkness. To them they go after death, the men who kill *Ātmā*.”

—Satyananda.

Comment :—In this mantra the fate of men in bondage who deny the existence of the soul and live a materialistic life on the vital plane, is being described. After death they are born again as beasts, insects or demons, who are devoid of the power of discrimination between good and bad and are slaves of blinding passions. The light of knowledge and the attainment of bliss is denied to them. The sun here symbolizes light of knowledge and joyful life. But by ‘sunless’ we may also understand lower worlds, like *Pātāl*, *Rasātāl* etc which the physical rays of the sun cannot penetrate. There are fourteen *bhuvanas* or *lokas* in the *Brahmānda*, according

to Hindu scriptures. The earth is called *bhūloka*. Seven *lokas* including the earth and above it, both physically as well as psychically, are sunny lands and the seven *lokas* below it are sunless. In the scheme of evolution and devolution each soul has to pass through incarnations in different *lokas* both sunless and sunny. Human life on earth is located at the junction of sunny and sunless incarnations. Hence so much importance is given to human efforts for liberation into the higher planes of consciousness, which are attainable both in this life as well as in the life beyond death. The four *turiya lokas* above, e. g. *maha*, *jana*, *tapah* and *satyam* (or *Brahma-loka*) are abodes of liberated souls till the period of *Mahā pralaya* (macrocosmic dissolution) or of individual *Brahma-nirvāna* (final merging with *Nirguna Brahman*).

Before the synthetic philosophy of the Ishopanishad is clearly stated, the Rishi mentions the nature of the *Ātman* and the behaviour pattern of the *Ātmajñāni* (liberated soul) in five mantras, viz, from the fourth to the eighth as follows :—

अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो नैनदेवा आप्नुवन्पूर्वमर्षत् ।

तद्भावतोऽन्यानस्येति तिष्ठत्तस्मिन्नपो मातरिश्वा दधाति ॥४॥

“One unmoving that is swifter than Mind, that the Gods reach not, for It progresses ever in front. That, standing, passes beyond others as they run. In that the Master of Life establishes the waters.”

—Sri Aurobindo

“Unmoving and one, swifter than the mind, the Devas do not get It, as It moves before (them). Running, It surpasses others. Non-moving, *Mātarishvā* places all *Karma* in it.”

—Satyananda

Comment :—Here the apparently dual nature, viz, static and dynamic, of the *Ātman* or *Brahman* is described. The static aspect is *Nirguna Brahman* of Vedanta, *Akshara Puruṣa* of *Srimad Bhagavat Gita* and *Śiva* of *Tantra*

Sāstra. The dynamic aspect is *Saguṇa Brahman* of Vedānta, *Keṣhara Puruṣa* of *Srimad Bhagavat Gita* and *Sakti* of *Tantra Sāstra*. The one absolute Reality, inhering these two aspects, is *Para Brahman* of Vedānta, *Puruṣhottama Paramātman* of *Srimad Bhagavat Gita* and *Parama Śiva* of Kashmir Saivism.

It is due to the existence of the *Ātman* and due to its seal and sanction that *Mātarīśvā*, the life force establishes the flow of life and its manifestations throughout the whole universe.

तदेजति तन्नैजति तद्दूरे तद्वन्तिके ।
तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥५॥

“That moves and that moves not ; that is far and the same is near ; That is within all this and That is outside all this.”

—Sri Aurobindo

“It moves, It moves not ; It is distant, It is near ; It is within all this and It is outside all this.”

—Satyananda

Comment :—The same as that for the previous *mantra*. This apparent duality is perceived by the mystic and it is resolved when there is liberation.

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।
सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥६॥

“But he who sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self, shrinks not thereafter from aught.”

—Sri Aurobindo

“He, who sees all beings in *Ātmā* and *Ātmā* in all beings, does not therefore speak ill.”

—Satyanada

Comment :—The person, who has realized his Self, has attained liberation, has seen God, seen the whole universe pervaded by *Ishā* (*Ātman* or *Brahman*) and hence he is not afraid of anything, cannot speak ill of anybody, cannot hate

