

for building the Ashram are looking after it, and will continue to do so."

29th August, 1939.

Sri Sri Ma's Ashram at the village of Kheora was ceremonially inaugurated on Tuesday, August 29th, 1939. From there Sri Ma visited Sultanpur, Comilla, Chittagong, Vidyakut, etc. and eventually landed at Dacca for a day only, on Sept. 13th, 1939. On hearing this, I at once went to the Ashram. There, a brief conversation concerning Sobha Ma's meeting with Ma at Comilla ensued.

Tatwa Jnana (Knowledge of the Real)

I asked Ma, "To have a genuine desire and to simulate a desire is surely not the same thing. I at first misunderstood what you were saying. I noticed another thing: whenever you asked Shobha Ma a question on any essential truth, she would reply without any hesitation so that one could not help being impressed or amazed.

Mataji: When a subject is discussed, it is better not to refer to any particular person and whatever I say now should also not be construed to refer to any particular person. You should specially keep this in mind!

You were talking about answers to questions on essential truths; do you know how this takes place? Even in the material world you may have noticed that when someone acquires special proficiency in any particular subject, he can talk at length on other similar subjects. If he is thoroughly acquainted with a certain aspect of some branch of knowledge, he can talk on other branches in a balanced way. The same applies to the knowledge of essential truths.

Knowledge (*jñāna*) may supervene in three different ways. One possibility is to acquire knowledge by the study of Scriptures. Another way is to have certain inner experiences during these studies. As one progresses and has more and more experiences, one's understanding of the Scriptures starts undergoing all kinds of changes. These changes can be of endless variety.

There is yet another kind of knowledge which is not based on the study of Scriptures and the like. This is Self-revealed. Just as the juice of ripe fruit flows of itself so this knowledge reveals itself. These three types of knowledge just mentioned cause different kinds of *bhāva* (attitude of mind and heart) and different behaviour. By observing the attitude of mind and the conduct of persons who have acquired knowledge, it can be understood whether their knowledge is based on the Scriptures or on their own inner experience.

The same applies to *samādhi*. People frequently say, "so and so goes into *samādhi*." So I should like to ask what are the characteristics of *samādhi*? Only by watching the symptoms of the body one cannot decide on the type of *samādhi*. Someone may have closed his fists and it may be impossible to open them even by force. In another case perhaps one hand is lying crosswise on the other. In a third case, may be, the feet are crossed, or else both hands and feet are static in a crossed position. But just by noticing all this one cannot know whether it is a *samādhi*.

I: Ma you made us understand at Navadvip that if someone by the force of some *bhāva* closes his fists in the intensity of feeling and loses outer consciousness, then this is not a case of *samādhi*. If one tries to hold on to any one *bhāva* by force this may happen. Here desire and passion are still present, so it cannot be termed as *samādhi*.

Mataji: Yes, but do not belittle such a state. It is no mean achievement to curb all worldly thought and concentrate only on a single type of *bhāva*. By holding on with intensity to this *bhāva* for some length of time, one can slowly proceed towards fulfilment. You must have observed food being cooked in steam. This process is somewhat similar. If one notices that while boiling something in steam, the steam is not being dispersed away, then one understands that the food will be boiled on its own, and the more it is boiled the more will its colour change. Likewise, if by forsaking all other thoughts, someone remains absorbed in one particular type of intense feeling (*bhāva*) then he is gradually transformed both within and without. By remaining in such a state for some length of time, he will eventually attain perfection (*siddhī*).

I: Does one retain any knowledge of the outer world when in a state of *samādhi*? Once, when explaining to us the state of *samādhi* you said that, supposing you were conversing normally and felt the urge to answer a call of nature; then suddenly a state of *samādhi* supervened and you lost consciousness of this. Three or four hours may have passed in such a state. Later, when you returned to your normal condition you again felt the call of nature with the same intensity as before the *samādhi*, not more, not less. But during those three or four hours that had elapsed in *samādhi*, did you retain any knowledge of the outer world?

Mataji : You have referred to the urge of nature calls. During *samādhi* bodily urges are in abeyance. Everything is thrown up and one merges into Oneness. Later after having gradually become completely still, the previous state may again be resumed. This may be repeated several times. You may perhaps have noticed that I went to the toilet. There the state of *bhāva* supervened and all outer things were forgotten. Later, when the extasy became subdued, I may have relieved myself, but subsequently on a return to the *bhāva*, outer things were stopped.

I : Ma, you have described what was happening inside your body. What I should like to know is this : Suppose you are lying in a state of *samādhi* and we start crying in fear because your *samādhi* does not seem to end. Would you in your state of *samādhi* be aware that we were weeping ?

Mataji : In that state there is no question of duality. All is merged into ONE. Everything is contained in the One—the fragments and the whole exist simultaneously just like water and its waves.

I : Ma you said that knowledge can come about in three ways : through a study of scriptures, through a combination of study and inner experience, and through direct vision. Can somebody who has not attained to any of these types of knowledge, take part in discussions on the essence of things ! Suppose he remembers his former birth, can he give instruction on spiritual truth ?

Mataji : The remembrance of previous births can be of very many kinds. There is infinity in everything. Somebody may be able to tell about his father, mother, country, and so on of his previous birth. He may relate several incidents which can

be proved to have actually happened. Others may have retained the knowledge acquired in a previous birth. Suppose someone has by spiritual practices attained to a certain realm (*loka*) and become closely connected with its Gods and Goddesses ; he may then be reborn retaining the knowledge of all this, and be able to converse on vital matters of truth in accordance with it. How can one explain the different kinds of states that may be attained ! Everything is of infinite variety.

At this stage there was an interruption to Mataji's talk as many ladies had come to perform their *praṇāmas*. The small room could not accommodate all the people, so Ma went to the Kirtan Hall. There I asked :

“Ma, some people believe you to be totally perfect. Yet they cannot understand why you do not always answer their questions to their satisfaction. Why is this so ?

Mataji : (laughing) Look, you say, whosoever is completely perfect, why should he not be able to answer all questions at all times ? Actually if somebody is perfect in all respects, he is able to divulge all truths, whatever anyone may think. But it may also happen that he does not like to hurt the feelings of anyone present. Then again he may adapt what he says to the grasping capacity of the people present. There are various aspects to this problem. But for this body there is no confusion : whatever has to happen is happening. This body has no particular specified mood (*bhāva*). At times certain truths may be voiced by this body, but it is not at all concerned whether it satisfies people or not. At other times this body does not

like to speak in any way that would hurt someone's feelings. Whatever is meant to happen does happen through this body. Where is the confusion in this ?

I : Everything is confusing. (Everybody bursts into loud laughter.)

Mataji : If someone believes that I at times do not reply because I am unable to do so, why should I mind it ? I have no objection to anything you may say about me.

I : Well, Ma, what is the harm in there being a bit of ignorance together with perfection ? Do not Knowledge and ignorance together make up wholeness ?

Mataji : Of course, there may also be a bit of ignorance within perfection, but do you know in what way ? This slight ignorance is completely under the control of the Perfect One, whereas the ordinary human being is subjected to ignorance. One who is perfect is not subservient to anybody or anything.

A number of similar subjects were then discussed. In the evening many visitors came to the Ashram. Manindra Babu, the Deputy Magistrate, asked some questions on the present state of the country. He said : "Ma, where will the oppression and injustice that can be observed in our country, end ? The nation seems to be heading towards destruction. What is the means to save it ? I do not want to say anything about myself, but what can be done to save the country or the nation ?"

Mataji : This is just the present way of this country. Such is the world—*duniya*, based on duality. There is bound to exist side by side joy

and sorrow, truth and falsehood, war, dissention. At times there is peace, then again upheaval : like the waves which continuously rise and fall,

You have said, you do not seek anything for yourself, but this is not quite correct. You have identified yourself with the country so that its travails have become your own. Thus whatever you say about the country is also what you say about yourself. If you can merge yourself in something still bigger, such as the whole world, you will come to realize that these wars and dissensions are all part of the Almighty's *līlā*. Sorrow and distaster come into being and are again driven away. It is He who is awakening in you the intense desire to change the state of affairs. Because He now wants things to change He has aroused these feelings in you and in many others. If you look upon everything in this detached manner nothing will upset you anymore.

Mataji continued to converse in this way until late at night,

(To be continued)

Someone asked Mataji: "Have you seen God?" Mataji replied without the slightest hesitation: "Why, indeed, He is always visible. Yet again, who sees whom, since all are He. In very truth, nothing exists apart from God."

Reflections on Sri Ma's Lila

Acharya Gita Banerjee

(Translated from Hindi)

Mahaśaktiswarūpa, Ma the Supreme Śakti Herself, is now, in Her unmanifested Being, residing in every heart. She has ever existed, exists now, and will exist through eternity.

Some people feel puzzled about Ma ending Her mysterious *lilā* in Her divine body by showing illness. Sri Ma's whole life had been of such matchless, unsurpassed beauty, hence it was expected that She might leave in some glorious fashion. A certain mahātmā left his body by a yogic *kriyā*; another one by performing *prāṇāyama*; a great yogi's body remained fresh for many days—while with Ma none of this could be observed. Those who were near Her were of course prepared for Her departure from the material world, but why did the majority who were far away not feel anything special at the time of Ma taking *mahāsamādhi*, why did they not receive a last message from Ma? These and similar questions are being asked.

In reply, it seems best to quote Sri Ma's own words. She has repeated innumerable times: "For this body the question of coming and going does not arise at all. This body neither comes nor goes anywhere. It does not eat anyone's food nor wear clothes given by anyone. The whole universe is this body's home. All of you are my fathers,

mothers and friends. There is only one all-encompassing Ātmā—ONE-without-a-second. Where can this body go? There is no space for it to move or even turn over. Even if pushed away, it is still there.”

These sayings make it clear that Sri Ma is omnipresent. In actual reality She permeates everything.

Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj writes in one of his books about a young gardener who by yogic practices in a former birth had acquired the capacity to move at will from one realm (*loka*) to another. One day, Kavirajji took the young man to Ma. Some devotees were sitting around Her. One of them said to him: “We hear that you are able to travel to other *lokas*. Please do so in Sri Ma’s presence!” The youth said: “Ma, I am going to Brahmaloaka, do come and join me, please!” Mataji replied with a smile: “Baba, when you go to Brahmaloaka you will see that Ma is present there also. For this body there is no need to travel from one place to another.” When the young man arrived at Brahmaloaka by his yogic power, he was struck with amazement to find Ma there.

This incident shows that Sri Ma is everywhere simultaneously. There can be no question of Her moving from one place to another. Concerning one who does not feel: “I am leaving the body and going somewhere else”, the question “why did She not give us any indication that She was going” has no meaning. According to what Sri Ma clearly

said, She has not gone anywhere. We must try to firmly establish this conviction in our minds.

Sri Ma harbours no desire. Since She has no mind, from where can desire arise? Ma is always in a state beyond the mind. A mahātmā may decide: "I shall leave my body in such and such a manner"; or "I will give up the body to the five elements by this particular method." But in Sri Ma there is no desire or wish. She is eternally reposing in Her own essential Being (*svasvarūpa*).

Who is called a world-teacher (*jāgat guru*)? A yogi attains to his goal by practising yoga; the devotee becomes one with his Beloved by intense devotion; the vedantist comes to realize the oneness of the individual with the Supreme Ātmā by the contemplation of the Brahman; and He who is fully enlightened as to all methods is called a World-teacher. In Sri Ma are fully revealed the yoga of the yogi, the adoration of the devotee and the realization of Oneness of the Vedantist. Consequently Sri Ma cannot be compared to any yogi or mahātmā. A yogi may of course leave his body by a yogic kriyā. But Sri Ma was not bound to any particular line or method. Therefore the question: "Why did Ma leave Her body the way She did?" is out of place.

Several times in the course of Her life, symptoms of serious illness could be detected and on occasions Her body seemed even lifeless. In response to our ardent prayers Ma had directed Her *kheyāla* towards Her body and for the sake of Her devotees had effected again and again

complete cures without the help of medicines or doctors.

For Ma to be embodied or not makes no difference at all. Solely for our welfare She assumed a human form. This time Ma's *kheyāla* had completely been withdrawn from Her body. The Mahant of the Nirvani Akhara beseeched Her again and again : "Ma, do make your body well !" But Ma persistently replied : "Baba, there is no *kheyāla*." To Sri Sankaracharya of Sringeri Math, Mataji had said : "Baba, all that you perceive is due to the pull of the unmanifest." Ma practically stopped eating, even drinking and hardly talked. She was all the time lying down in Her own *bhāva* (mood). She gave Her body up into the hands of Mother Nature (*prakriti*) and so it followed its own course. Ma had always said : "*jo ho jaye*" (Let happen what may !") And thus what was to happen came about. Ma's actions were never prompted by desire or volition, She had no preference. And so the body acted as bodies are apt to do.

Now someone may ask : "Why did Ma remain in this condition without even drinking water for 3½ months ? She could have finished everything within 3 days." Here again Ma's maxim "Let happen what may" holds good. The body remained as long as it could and when it was ready to go, it went. Sri Ma's body was certainly not an ordinary one. Dr. Mathur, and other physicians as well, declared that medical science has no explanation for this mystery. No one can remain without food

and water for so long. Ordinarily, without drinking water for 5-6 days maximum, the tongue dries up and starts to protrude and the whole body shrivels up. Whereas Sri Ma lived without food or water for 105 days. Whatever tiny quantities of water or juices were administered were vomited. How did Ma keep Her body in a natural and unspoiled condition for so many days? Thus we see the play of the supernatural even in Her so-called ordinary-manner of discarding Her body.

Never in all Her life Ma had of Her own volition displayed supernormal powers or performed any miracles. Everything happened spontaneously. So the body also ended in a similar way.

Many years ago Mataji had told Gurupriya Devi that Her body would end in the most ordinary of ordinary ways—and this came to pass. Mataji had said: “This body is inseparably connected with trees, plants, leaves, even insects and flies.” Sri Ma is ordinary as well as extraordinary. Therefore it is irrelevant whether Her body was discarded in the ordinary or the most extraordinary fashion. Ma had no *kheyāla* to remain in the body, otherwise She could have kept it for much longer.

People may ask: “What is this *kheyāla* of Ma?” In reply it might be said that the combined Will power, the creative Energy and the knowledge of the Supreme who enacts His *līlā* in numberless universes, manifest as Sri Ma’s *kheyāla*. By this *kheyāla* Ma had the power to transform the whole universe.

Once someone asked : “Ma, why did you incarnate in a female body and not in a male one.” Ma replied : “Because there was no *kheyāla*. Had there been the *kheyāla*, it would have been a male body.” At another time Ma replied : “Certainly !” to the question whether She could produce a microphone if She had the *kheyāla*.

The *līlā* of One who is the Ruler of the whole universe, by whose *kheyāla* the universe can come into being, can be sustained and destroyed cannot be understood by the mind. Gurupriya Didi used to say : “Why Ma does anything is beyond our power of comprehension. Ma alone knows Her reasons for it.”

For Ma there is no cycle of birth and rebirth. Those who attended the Samyam Mahavrata in 1981 will remember how Swami Svatantrānanda asked Ma : “Please tell us who you were in your former birth !” Ma replied with stress : “ज न मे” (*ja na me*). Then She clapped Her hands and laughed like a child, saying : “Now try to grasp this, Baba !” Those who were present will surely not have forgotten Ma’s lovely, mysterious countenance at that moment. What Ma had uttered may perhaps mean : “For me there is no birth” or “I am not limited” or “There is no I for me” or “Birth is not for me.” Ma had often declared : “This body was not born, this body did not come into being due to *prārabdha* karma. You all have wanted it and so you have it now for some time.” From this it is evident that for Ma there is neither birth nor death. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj said : “Sri

Ma is neither a *sādhaka* (aspirant) nor a *siddha* (perfected being) because for Her there is no cycle of birth and rebirth. *Pūrṇa Brahma Nārāyaṇa*, the Supreme Himself, has appeared in the world for the welfare of all beings.”

Mahamandaleshwara Sri Swami Vidyanandaji of Kailashashram, Rishikesh, said : “For many centuries there has been no incarnation of such stupendous spiritual power.” Many wise and learned men feel convinced of this fact.

Of course, one may say, for us ordinary human beings who have no realization of supreme knowledge, Ma came into being and also left Her body : From the worldly point of view Ma’s body was tired and worn out and so She gave it rest for ever.

Sri Ma’s *līlā* is subtle and it is beyond our understanding why She discarded Her body the way She did. So let us leave it at that.

Why did Sri Krishna make the hunter’s arrow the cause for ending His *līlā* on earth ? Why did Sri Rama drown his body in the river Sarju ? Why did Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Sri Ramana Maharshi suffer and die of cancer ? There are no answers to these questions. Our knowledge is limited and so these queries arise in our hearts.

Let us set our minds at rest, surrendering wholeheartedly at our Mother’s lotus feet. She gave many directions to us Her devotees that will help us on our difficult journey towards our Goal. If we are able to carry out Her injunctions with tenacity and devotion, we may be confident that

Ma will continue to convey Her blessings and Her advice to everyone of us.

Mahamandaleshwara Swami Vidyanandaji said :
“Ma has showered so much love on you all, has blessed you with Her touch and given you priceless directions and instructions ; She gave so much of Herself that you should all feel overwhelmed.”

Sri Ma’s last instructions was : *“Let everyone concentrate on his spiritual practice wherever he or she may be.”* This is Her injunction for all times.

Ma has not gone anywhere. She ever IS—here and now. If we can follow Her directions faithfully, Ma’s divine Grace will be showered on us. We shall be blessed with inner vision and behold Her matchless beauty, feel the sweetness of Her touch and receive Her guidance within our hearts.

May we all be able to carry out Sri Ma’s injunctions to the letter. This is my prayer at Her lotus-feet.

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

—The Imitation of Christ.

The Heritage of the Hindus

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the last issue)

The heritage of the Hindus is particularly rich in the possession of sacred literature. The concept of the "sacred" is very close to the Hindu way of thinking. It is concerned with the trans-natural dimension of human life. It inspires *sāadhanā* for reaching beyond the realm of ignorance, which is the world, to that liberating knowledge which dispels all dualities. To raise the everyday ordinary consciousness to the contemplation of a region which is of the nature of Truth, Goodness, Beauty (*satyam śivam sundaram*) lies at the heart of all modes of *sāadhanā* which have come to prevail with the Hindus.

The Hindus work with the idea that the presence of God is all-pervasive, constant and yet amenable to invocations if He, in His boundless mercy were to choose to manifest Himself in answer to man's ardent prayers, at any place and at any time. The Hindus surround themselves with symbols which evoke God remembrances. The concept of pervasive sacredness may be compared to the all-enveloping sunlight which nevertheless shines especially in a mirror so that it stands out as a focal point of rare brilliance. Thus, the Hindus are devoted to their holy rivers ; the sacred mountain-sites to which pilgrimages are made ; temples which

enshrine beloved images of God and the numerous festivals which create an atmosphere of joyous celebration of sacred moments of Divine manifestations.

The repository of all utterances regarding that which is of supreme value in human life is, of course the Vedas. After the Vedas are placed the Smritis are the written (or spoken) discourses of enlightened rishis, who have been vouchsafed a vision of Truth. They also contain divine messages given by God in special situations and to worthy recipients, etc. The Gita in the Mahabharata, Smritis in the form of Puranas and Itihasas detail the interplay of the divine and the mundane. God is never absent from the heart of man, but man does not know that he entertains this exalted presence within the texture of his being, as it were. How can he be made aware of his ignorance as well as his blessedness ?

Just as a fowler, or a hunter, entraps his preys by using as decoys, birds and beasts of the same species, so does God ensnare human hearts by assuming human forms from time to time.* Unless man can understand what he experiences, he cannot rise above his human condition. Therefore, God, in his boundless compassion for his creatures comes among them again and again and gently draws their attention away from the world and towards His own redemptive form. His concern makes Him suffer along with His creatures time after time because He is not with them to condemn, or judge, or pronounce

* From Tiruvarutpayam by Umapati Sivacarya

You have whispered urgently, so many times
 'Do not go that way', but unheeding,
I have strayed,
 So you have run after me to win me back
 Again and yet again....."*

The personalised Form of God, as Rama, Krishna, Durga, Ganesha, etc., so dear to the heart of the Hindu is called the '*Iṣṭadevata*'. To one's *Iṣṭa* may be addressed songs, such as given above, or the more usual prayers and verses of praises known as *stuti* or *stava*. The Puranas and the two epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (Itihasas in Sanskrit) are the sources of inspiration for this very unique mode of relating to God. He who is transcendent is captured within the heart of man as the in-dweller the *Iṣṭa*, the most precious possession to whom a life of *sādhanā* is dedicated.

The Agama and the Tantra

The Hindu Sacred literature is classified into two major groups as stated earlier, that is, Sruti and Smriti. It may be said that in between the Vedic corpus (known as Nigama) and the Smriti prasthanas, comes that body of texts which are called Agama and Tantra. Their authority is considered to be on a par with the Vedas. The terms agama and tantra are used almost simultaneously in the tradition. These volumes comprise of the spoken words of God in the three major forms as

* A rather free translation of the well-known Bengali song beginning '*ami to tomare cahini jibane*', etc by Rajanikanta Sen.

Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahma. These texts are answers to queries put to them by a worthy questioner. The Devi herself assumes the role of an interlocuter, in her great concern for suffering humanity and seeks to show the path of beneficial sādhanā for the seeker after knowledge. Sometimes, the roles are reversed, because, in the ultimate analysis Śiva and Śakti are One only. With the Saivagamas and Tantra, may be listed the Vaishnava Agama also.

The agamic and the tantric texts are of the nature of revealed Truth. God Himself is the great Teacher, who imparts the supreme knowledge regarding the ultimate state of Bliss to His divine Śakti for the benefit of mankind. Agama therefore is said to be pauruṣeya (Truth revealed by God), whereas Nigama (Veda) is apauruṣeya (that is Truth itself).

The boundless cosmic panorama of the Vedic spirituality is set within the horizon of the worshipper and the worshipped in the Agamas. The mode of teaching by dialogue of the Vedas is transformed into the concept of initiation by the Guru (*dīkṣā*). The 'Mahāvākyas' of the Upanishads, which were to be heard, meditated upon and realised as Truth, yield place to the seed mantra which is related to a mode of sādhanā to be followed as a way of life.

It must be noted here that these differences are not real but mere distinctions only. Various modes of worship are given in the Vedas and all Agamas are stated in the form of dialogues. The mantra is at the heart of Vedic literature as well as at that of

the Agamic texts. The tradition of the Guru and the worthy disciple also comes from the Vedas. The real difference is in emphasis only. The Vedas are independent of time, space and objectivity: "a splendour of Words, which have neither beginning nor end, which is ever present in the cognizance of the One who knows."

The Agamic Purusa is also beyond the touch of mortality because He is never considered to be an *avatāra*. Śiva and Narayana are true and pure forms for the devoted worshipper who meditates with one-pointed concentration on his *Iṣṭadevata*. Knowledge is the goal for agamic worship as well as Vedic spirituality.

The crucial difference between the Veda and the Agama is the recognition of the important role of time as a category of existence. The time-process brings about changes which reduce some modes of *sādhanā* to the sphere of impracticality. The wheel of time in its circulation obscures certain things of erstwhile importance and brings up to prominence other significant features of the tradition. It is time that the Vedic tradition is ever present as the foundation for Indian spirituality; together with it other modes of *sādhanā* have come into prominence in our time which so pervade and permeate the Hindu ethos, so that we do not make distinctions anymore between that which is Agamic or Tantric or Pauranic. This comingling is permissible because the goal of human life remains the same, namely, Self-realization.

(To be continued)

Guru Darshan

Acharya Satish Chandra Mukhopadhyay

(Continued from the last issue)

PART III

The experience of *Guru Darshan* comes therefore at a developed stage of the spiritual life of the *jīva*. In other words there could be no *Darshan* unless the *jīva* had done with his previous experiences of *achit paralokas* in his invisible *achit sukshma* bodies. These previous experiences may have to be repeated times without number, followed by experiences on the physical or human plane, through a series of incarnations. The fact of the matter is that the *jīva*, as long as he is a fettered soul, could have no idea of the higher *chit* i.e., spiritual plane of life, for the latter transcends the *achit* or mental plane in which the *jīva* functions. Experiencing life on the invisible *sukshma* planes is therefore a necessary preliminary. So also the experience of life on the physical or human plane is equally necessary, as a factor in the onward march of the fettered soul. But the final goal of the upward evolutionary process is the discovery of the *chit* or spiritual world in which all real, eternally-existing spiritual entities live and move, and from whence they supervise and regulate the movements and life of the lower *achit* world, functioning as spiritual lieutenants of the Supreme Being, the

Supreme Governor of the world of fettered *jīvas* and matter.

To sum up therefore,—the essential thing to remember is that there is a *chit* world, a *chinmaya* world, i.e., a spiritual world, inhabited by Rishis, Saints and Sages, who do not put on any gross material bodies, but who live only in their spiritual or *chit* or *chinmaya* bodies, i.e., bodies which never die nor fade. Another point to remember about them is that they have the power of wearing at their option a material i.e., *achit* body, *sukshma* or gross, just to make themselves visible to those who can only recognise material entities. And so if Shree Sat-Guru Deva should choose to come down to you or me in His Spiritual or *Chinmaya* Body, we may in all probability fail to recognise Him to His *Chinmaya* body. But I do not feel quite competent to pronounce a final word on this point. All that I can say is that I have heard from Shree Sat-Guru Deva that the *Chinmaya* Body is most brilliant and dazzling, and even so fascinating that it makes the observer forget everything else. Now, I have seen Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva several times in my dreams when He wanted to answer any unspoken prayer of mine. But I have not seen Him in His *Chinmaya* Body, but only in such body as I could recognise, namely, the body in which I saw Him when he was here with us and talked to us, His disciples. If He had appeared before me in His *Chinmaya Rūpa*, in His Divine *Sat-Chidānanda* Form, I do not know if I could at all make Him out as Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva.

In this connection I shall do well to narrate a particular incident in my life in which Shree Sat-Guru Deva played a most significant role. This happened when he was still in body and flesh, and very probably some time during 1894-95. Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva had left 14/2, Sitaram Ghose Street, Calcutta, and gone to Vrindaban and left me to live in the house in question. I used to put up at night in the particular room which He occupied, and used to sleep on a bare blanket spread on the floor of the room very near to His *Āsana* (seat). Everything else in the room belonging to Shree Sat-Guru Deva was kept intact in their old places so that when Shree Sat-Guru Deva, as He intended, would come back and occupy the room, He would find the room as if He had not left it for anywhere else.

One night it so happened that when I was sleeping, I saw in my dream that a Great Soul came to give me some spiritual instruction, including a *Shakti* Mantra which, if I accepted, would make me a *Mukta-Purusha*, i.e., would release me on the instant from the bondage of *Sansārik* life, the bondage of *achit* matter. One peculiarity of His appearance was that he looked extremely ugly and even dark in skin. Nevertheless, I felt at the time of the vision that He was a Great Soul ; and I fully believed that if I accepted the spiritual instruction that He gave me at the time, I would forthwith become a freed man, a *Jivanmukta Purusha* in fact. Nevertheless, I did not feel inclined to accept His instructions ; for the thought came to me at the

time that I must depend upon my own Lord, Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva, for my spiritual emancipation, and not upon anybody else, however high in spiritual status. So, I had not the slightest hesitation in rejecting His offer.

But while I rejected the Great Soul's proffered aid, I felt not a little perturbed in my mind at the thought that this offer should at all have come to me. For there was my suspicion that Shree Sat-Guru Deva might have deliberately laid a trap for me ; and that I might have been entrapped. My fear was that, in the circumstances, I might have left the protection of Shree Sat-Guru Deva in favour of the newcomer, who had promised me immediate release from the bonds of *Samsāra*. The fact was that I was intensely longing for my release from the bondage of *Samsārik* life, which was so long in coming. But even so the thought came to me in my dream that I could not leave the protection of Shree Sat-Guru Deva for the sake of immediate release, and place myself under the protection of another high Spiritual Being, who had promised me immediate *Mukti*. Nevertheless, I felt a real grievance against Shree Sat-Guru Deva in that, because of my very intensive desire for the attainment of *Moksha*, I had been placed under circumstances which might have ended in my leaving Him in favour of another high-souled personage, who was in a position to give me the kind of aid I thought I needed.

As I have said, the particularly difficult situation in which I was placed raised a strong feeling in my

heart against Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva, for it was clear to me that the situation could never have arisen unless He had wanted it. The vision was soon over, and I immediately rose from my bed—the hour was one A.M.—with the definite intention to pen a strong letter of indignation at the sorry pass into which He had led me, and into which I might have fallen. The letter was written in hot haste, and I proposed to post it the very next morning.

The morning came but my indignation had cooled down; and I felt very sorry that I had penned such a strong worded letter to One who was my All-in-All. My repentance was sincere and the letter was not posted but torn to pieces.

But the sequel is worth narrating. In the course of another month Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva came back from Vrindaban and put up in the old premises, and I had to live elsewhere very near to His house. Then some little time after His return, I went and told Him all that had happened. He told me that the immediate offer of Mukti came from a *Bhagavat-Parshad*, i.e., one who was a Personal Attendant on the Lord. He had the Power of offering immediate *Mukti* to me, and so, if I had not declined His offer, I should have been released on the instant. He told me also that there were *Mahapurushas* who have such power and who are so very kind to aspiring *sādhakas* that they spend some three or four hours every morning looking about for such *sādhakas* and offering their help to them. Their usual hours are 1 A.M. to 4 A.M. He told me that I had done the right thing in reject-

ing His offer, for I was destined for a higher spiritual Status than that of mere *Moksha* or liberation from the bondage of matter. That destined status for me was the attainment of *Bhagavat-Bhakti* and *Prema*.

Shree Sat-Guru Deva told me further that *Moksha* or liberation from the bondage of matter was not a very high or even a very desirable status. For there are *Mukta-Purushas*, who although they have freed themselves from the bonds of *prakritik* matter, and are therefore free from the trials and tribulations of life to which *baddha-purushas* or fettered souls are subjected, are yet far from having *Bhagavat-Darshan*. For which reason, He told me in so many words, such emancipated souls felt extremely miserable ; and He made the matter quite graphic by comparing their misery to the misery undergone by jackals who had gone mad. Then He further told me that between *Nirvāna-Mukti* or emancipation from *achit* bondage, and the final state of *Bhagavat-Darshan* leading to *Bhagavat-Prema-Prāpti*, there were no fewer than sixteen stages to be negotiated. So it came to this that although *Moksha* or liberation from the bondage of matter, from the bondage of *Prakritik Shakti*, was indeed a very great thing, still it fell very far short of the ultimate Goal of life, the Goal *Panchama Purushārtha* as it is called, the Goal of *Bhagavat-Prāpti*, the Goal of *Bhagavat-Darshan*, the Goal of *Bhakti-Prema*,—the Goal of Loving Devotion and Allegiance to the Lord.

I was satisfied that I had done the right thing

in not accepting the spiritual recipe offered by so great a Divine Personage as my visitor on that night. I had further related to Shree Sat-Guru Deva the very ugly and even black appearance of the visitor. It was so very black and ugly that I had even felt repelled by His sight in the vision. In reply Shree Sat-Guru Deva told me that every *Bhagavat-Parshad* has a most beautiful and even fascinating appearance ; and this particular visitor had one such. But the fact was that, out of sheer *Kripā* (grace) for me, He had put on a kind of ugly appearance which had repelled me from Him. If he had put on His usual appearance such as belongs to a *Bhagavat-Parshad*, I should have been so overpowered by the beauty and fascination of His Body that I would have lost all power to remember Shree Sat-Guru Deva. The putting on of a black appearance was therefore an act of *Kripa* on His part.

So, here we have evidence that the *Chinmaya* appearance of a *Bhagavat-Parshad* is most beautiful and fascinating. And so it appears that if Shree Sat-Guru comes and puts on His *chinmaya* robes, it would not be possible for his disciples to make Him out as Shree Sat-Guru Deva. Probably that is the reason why when in my dreams I have had vision of Him, I had vision of Him in the character in which I could recognise Him.

*Ajata and the Vivarta in Vedanta

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Introduction

The main principle of Vedānta is *Ajāta*—and also *Vivarta*. In reality, *Ajāta* and the *Vivarta* both are one. The difference is only superficial.

A piece of rope is lying in dim light. A person comes along and fears it is a snake. Another person says it is merely a streak of water. A third person considers it to be a piece of thin wood. The fourth thinks it is a mere crack in the floor. The perceptions vary and the inferences vary even more. In substance, it is only a piece of rope. This is *Vivarta*.

Let us now see what *Ajāta* is. Light is switched on. One knows at once that it is nothing but a rope. There never was a snake, or a streak of water, or a piece of wood or a crack in the floor. None of these things ever existed. There always was and is even now only a piece of rope. Nothing else came into existence or was ever born there. This is *Ajāta*.

The difference between the two—*Ajāta* and the *Vivarta*, is only in the manner of description. It is a difference of emphasis and not of substance. There is no conflict between the two. In fact, they complement each other. One emphasises the ignor-

*Note : With all copyrights reserved to the author.

ance or the mistaken inferences from the perceptions of many of us. The other emphasises the reality, the substance. The conclusion of both is one (एकमेवाद्वितीयम्). There is only One, nothing else. Vivarta first describes the various perceptions of the people. Then it reasons them out and tells us that they are mere appearances, wrong inferences from imperfect perceptions (प्रतीतियां) because of the darkness of ignorance. Open the eyes in the light of knowledge (ज्ञान प्रकाश). There will remain then only one everlasting entity—the one and only substance (तत्त्व). Ajata starts with the light of knowledge, with the everlasting substance and says there is the one and only one and nothing else. Ajata says “Do not let the darkness of ignorance come near you”. There are many appearances and perceptions. The sky appears to be blue. The rays of the sun falling on sand create an appearance of water. But nobody who knows will draw the inference that the blueness or the sky of the water in the sand is real. In spite of the appearances and the perceptions the truth remains what it is—the truth itself.

Taitriya Upanishad speaks of five *Koshas* (पञ्च कोष). To come back to the serpent once again. “The serpent is gross (स्थूल). It eats and drinks. Its body is *Annamaya Kosha* (अन्नमय कोष). It moves. This shows that there is *Prāṇamaya Kosha* (प्राणमय कोष) in it. It becomes angry. It hisses. This indicates the *Manomaya Kosha* (मनोमय कोष) in it. It is pleased. Like the face of the Vina player, its body appears to be dancing. This shows the *Vigyāna-*

maya Kosha (विज्ञानमय कोष) in it. Sometimes it lies happily as if it were sleeping. This indicates the *Ānandamaya Kosha* (आनन्दमय कोष) in it. What is a *Kosha* (कोष)? It is a scabbard. Ātman is the sword. These are all the scabbards of Atman. This is a mode of explanation, by which even one of medium intelligence can understand easily. In *vivarta* the *Koshas* have a great importance for explanation of something very subtle. Gradually, *Vivarta* takes us to Brahma and the oneness of Ātmā and Brahma (ब्रह्म पुच्छं प्रतिष्ठा). The substance of everything we see, we perceive, is Brahma.”*

Ajata starts with Brahman. Where is the serpent? There is nothing but the rope. Then where is the *Annamaya Kosha*, *Prāṇamaya*, *Manomaya*, *Vigjānamaya* or *Ānandamaya Kosha*? None of them are there. The rope alone is there. Similarly Brahma alone is. There is a perception of a snake. But really it is only the rope. An appearance is there. Let there be an appearance. Merely because it is perceived, appearance alone is not the truth. In spite of the various appearances and perceptions Brahma remains Brahma and will remain so. An appearance or a perception by itself is no proof of its truth. If it had been so, all that one sees or perceives in a dream would have been true, the colour of the sky would have been in fact blue.

Even to a scientist as to a child the sky appears to be blue. But the scientist knows that the sky is not blue. Its blue colour is a mere illusion and not the truth. Vedānta calls it *Mithyā* (मिथ्या). The

*From a speech by Swami Akhandananda,

appearance or perception may be there, but it is really false. This is *Mithyā* (मिथ्या).

Acharya Shankara says "Brahma is *Satya*, the world is *Mithyā* (ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या)". First Brahma has been pronounced as true (सत्यम्) and the world as *Mithyā* (मिथ्या) Why? The various appearances and perceptions of the world are *Mithyā*. These appearances and perceptions (प्रतीतियां) are really called the world (जगत्). In fact Brahma alone is true and the world is nothing but its *Mithyā* appearances and perceptions.

Brahma is *Ajāta*, unborn, because mere appearance or perception of something does not mean that it is born. A thing appears or is perceived and then it disappears. Like a streak of lightning in the sky. This is not so merely in the case of lightning. It is the same with sun, the moon, and fire also. They appear and are perceived. But what is the truth which appears in the lightning, in the sun, in the moon and in the fire? It is Brahma. It is because of its radiance that all these are perceived. *Katha Shruti* says "तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वम् तस्य भाण सर्वमिदं विभाति" "Because of its radiance all this appears and is perceived. Because of its light all these reflect light."

It is in the sun. The same Brahma is in the eye. All of them are the reflection of one and the same source of light. Here, we find the unity of *Ajata* and *Vivarta*.

The most well-reasoned and brief explanation of *Ajāta* is to be found in the *Māndukya Shruti* with the *Gaurpāda's Kārikā*. The *Māndukya* is the

smallest *Shruti* consisting of only twelve mantras which cover merely half a page. But it is said that it alone is sufficient for Self-realisation by a proper *adhikāri*, who is qualified to understand and imbibe the teachings of the *Shrutis*. Such is this *Shruti* of only twelve mantras. The very first of these mantras specifies Ajata. “ओमित्यक्षरमिदं सर्वम्” ॐ, this letter, alone is all this. Then we have a clear explanation of this. What is उपन्याख्या (*Upavyākhyā*)? It is a detailed innermost explanation from very close quarters. Whatever was, is and will be is *Onkār* alone. And whatever is beyond the past, present and the future is also OM (ॐ) *Yachchānyat Trikālatītam Todapyonkarmeiva* (पञ्चान्यरात्रिकालातीतं तदप्योङ्कारमेव).

In the very next mantra whatever remained has been said. *Sarvam hyetadbrahma* (सर्वं ह्येतद्ब्रह्म), “whatever there is, is Brahma.” There is nothing else. *Ayamātmā Brahma* (अयमात्मा ब्रह्म). “The soul, the *Ātmān*, is also Brahma.” This is a *Mahāvākya* (महावाक्य) measuring a sentence of very great import. Then it says that the *Ātmā*, the soul, has four *pādas*, phases.

In the next three mantras, that is the third, fourth and fifth, the three phases or *pādas* (पाद) have been described. They are the waking (बहिप्रज्ञ), the dreaming (अन्तःप्रज्ञ) and the deep sleep (प्राज्ञ) phases of one’s life. In the sixth mantra the deep sleep phases, the *Prāgya Pāda*, has been compared to Sarveshwara, the Overlord of all. In the seventh mantra the all knowing, *Turīya* (तुरीय) has been discussed. In the eighth mantra the three phases

(*Pādas*) of Ātmān and the three *Mātrās* (मात्रा) of Om have been compared and in the ninth, tenth and eleventh respectively each one of the phases or *pādas* (पाद) has been compared to each one of the three *Māntrās*. The conclusion has been given in the twelfth mantra. How brief and how good is the conclusion "*Amātrashchaturtho avyavhāryah prapanchopshamah shivoadwaita evamonkāra ātmaiva samvishatyātmanātmānam ya evam veda*" (अमात्रश्चतुर्थो-
ऽव्यवहार्यः प्रपञ्चोपशमः शिवोऽद्वैत एवमोङ्कार आत्मैव संविश्यात्मनाऽत्मानं
य एवं वेद ॥ १२ ॥). *Amatra* (अमात्र) that is the fourth phase is *Turiya* (तुरीय) *Atman*. It is beyond transaction or behaviour (अव्यवहार्य), Cessation of manifestation, final beatitude, non dual in reality, *Onkāra*. He who knows thus the *Atma* enters by *Atmā* into the *Atmā*.

For many it is difficult to understand correctly a very brief book like the *Mandukya Shruti*. So, *Gaurpāda* wrote the gloss on it to explain its real purport. There is a difference between a gloss (कारिका) and a commentary (भाष्य). A gloss (कारिका) explains in great detail the main purport of a work. The commentary (भाष्य) explains the whole work but not in such great detail. *Māndukya Shruti* is so brief that it has become an accepted practice to read it only with its gloss (कारिका).

What is the purpose of a *shruti*? Let us discuss it. There is a diseased person. He becomes healthy on the extinction of his disease. Similarly a person sick of the worldly troubles becomes happy and free from sickness on the cessation of the idea of

truth of these worldly manifestations when he becomes established in the one and the nondual. This realisation of the nondual is the purpose. Then he becomes *Swastha* (स्वस्थ). *Swa* (स्व) means self. So is he when he is established (स्थ) in the self, he is *Swastha* (स्वस्थ) free from disease and happy.

How can the worldly manifestation cease for one? It is caused by ignorance (अविद्या). Ignorance (अविद्या) can be removed only by knowledge (विद्या) just as darkness is removed by light.

This knowledge (विद्या) is supreme knowledge (परा विद्या). It is also called *Brahma-Vidyā* (ब्रह्म विद्या). *Brihadaranyaka Upanishada* (बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद्) says, “*Yatra Vānyadiva syāttatranyo anyapashyedanyo anyat-vijāniyāt* (यत्रवान्यदिव स्यान्तप्रान्योऽन्यत्पश्येदन्योऽन्यव्वजानीयात्) where there is, as it were, another, one can see another, know another”. Before that it has said “*Yatra hi dwaitmeva bhavati* (यत्र हि द्वैतमिव भवति) where it is as if there was another”. There, we have all the trouble, unhappiness. “*Yatra Vāsya sarvamāt-māirabhuttatkena Kam pashyet Kam vijāniyāt* (यत्रवास्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत्तत्केन कं पश्येत् कं विजानीयात्). Where everything became the *Ātmā* for him, whom one may see when one may know. *Brahma Vidyā* seeks to explain this unity, this nonduality.

This is the purpose, the object of *Mandukya Shruti*. To explain this there are four chapters in the *Karika*. The first is the *Agama Prakarana*, the chapter dealing with the main *Shruti*. It discusses *Onkāra* and explains that the *Mandukya Shruti* teaches nonduality. In the second chapter called

Vaitathya Prakāśana (वैतथ्य प्रकरण) the *Karaka* reasons out the unsubstantial nature, *mithyātva* (मिथ्यात्व) of duality. In the third chapter, *Adwaita Prakarana* (अद्वैत प्रकरण) the truth of nonduality has been reasoned out. In the fourth chapter called the *Alātshānti Prakarana* (अलात् शान्ति प्रकरण) the contrary doctrines have been demolished by the reasoning of these doctrines themselves and *Adwaita* has been established.

Gaurpada himself says “*Na Kaschinjāyate jīvah sambhavo asya na vidyate etaduttaman satyam yatra kinchinna jāyate*” (न कश्चिञ्जायते जीवः संभवोऽस्य न विद्यते एतदुत्तमं सत्यं यत्र किञ्चिन्न जायते). No *Jīva* is born because this is not possible. This is the real truth that nobody, nothing whatsoever, is born.

We will study and discuss the *Mandukya Shruti* with *Karika* in the first volume of this book, which will also explain the rational background and soundness of *Ajāta*.

A detailed and well reasoned discussion of *Ajāta* is to be found in the *Yogavashitha*. It is said that a daily study of *yogavāshishtha* is the easiest practice for acquiring *Brahma Vidyā*. This is really true. *Gyāna* or knowledge really means “to know”. What leads to the knowledge of the Self is alone a good practice for the acquisition of knowledge. Some people say that the principal hearer of the discourse of Rishi Vashishta was Rāma Chandra, who was highly qualified for the acquisition of knowledge (अच्चतम् अधिकारी), and that the discourse cannot be properly understood by anybody and everybody. But we should not forget that the

audience did not consist of Rāma Chandra alone but of many others in the gathering including gods, who are sensual by nature. For Sri Rāma Chandra a brief exposition of the truth in a few chosen words would have been sufficient. Vashishthaji entered into such a detailed exposition, with various reasonings, illustrations and stories so that it may be intelligible to the common man. We will study and discuss Yogavashishta in Volume III (Adhyaya 3) of this book.

Before that in Volume II (अध्याय २) we shall study and discuss the ten or eleven major Upanishads in the first chapter or *Pada*, some of the minor Upanishads like the *Kaivabya*, the *Kaushitki*, the *Tejbindu* and others in the second chapter or *Pada*, the *Brahma Sutra* in the third chapter or *Pada*, and Shrimad Bhagwadgitā in the fourth chapter or *Pada*. Thus the second volume (अध्याय २) will deal with the Prasthānatrayī (प्रस्थानत्रयी) of Vedanta. In this volume we shall see how the Vivarta and the Ajāta unite to form one whole. We shall see how one can start with the perceptions of the common man and arrive at the same truth which has been called the *Ajāta* in the *Karika*.

The third Volume (अध्याय ३) will along with Yoga Vashishtha discuss some other Gitas like the Avadhuta Gita, the Ashtavakra Gita, the Shiva Gita, the Anu Gita, the Rama Gita, the Rāmāyaṇa like the Adhyātmā Rāmāyaṇa, of which Rama Gita is a part, Tulsidas Rāmcharitmānas, and Shrimad Bhagwat. Amongst these books the Avadhuta Gita also contains a very good exposition of *Ajāta*.