

# Matri Satsang

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

( Translated from Bengali )

( 21 )

Ahmedabad, May 10th, 1957.

*Question* : Who is under the influence of *māyā* ?

*Nataji* : He who asks the question.

*Question* : Who is it that asks the question ?

*Nataji* : The person who lacks knowledge of Reality : the individual ( *jīva* ) whose vision is obscured by a curtain asks the question. The curtain is oneself, the questioner oneself, oneself playing with oneself — one's own pleasure. One cannot acknowledge the existence of God and also of the person who lacks Knowledge, the two cannot exist together. "*Ekam Brahman dvitiya nāsti*" : Where there is "only one Brahman and no second" who is the curtain ? In essence you are THAT which is beyond *māyā*, but today you believe yourself bound by *māyā* and it is this belief that constitutes the curtain. Try to realize your true Being. Only then will you be beyond *māyā*. "Wherever a *jīva* is, there is Śiva, and wherever a woman, there is Gouri." Solely the *Atmā* everywhere ! So long as the curtain is not lifted, questions will not cease to arise.

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\* *Māyā* The Supreme Divine Power by which the One conceals Itself and appears as the many.

In course of conversation Mataji said ;

World means that which is in constant flux and thus illusory. This pandal in which you are sitting now will not remain here to-morrow — therefore it is transitory. Just as a tree did not exist earlier and will not be in existence much later, thus it is impermanent. Why do you not aspire towards Truth and Eternity ? According to the doctrine of *Vedānta* or *Advaita*, name and form are regarded as illusory. To think of name and form as separate from That which Is — this indeed is false. In the case of a living *vigraha* (Concrete External Presence as Form) there is no transitoriness. You are true, enlightened, the *Atmā* (Self), beyond all names. You are the *Atmā* Itself, free, Knowledge Itself. So long as God has existed, *māyā* is also in existence. But God is beyond *māyā* — just like the eternal relationship between water and ice. Exactly as ice is nothing but water, so *nirākāra*, the Formless, and *sākāra*, God-with-Form, are one and the same.

Evolution in nature means becoming, step by step. You dwell in the world of nature (*prākṛit jagat*) where one views everything according to the spectacles worn over one's eyes. So long as one lives in the realm of form and quality, one is bound to be subjected to the opposites of happiness and pain. In the world of nature there does exist this interplay between joy and sorrow. The Lord stages a play, Himself playing all the parts. The world is created by a mere stroke of God's imagination. In the Upanishads it is explained that the mouth does not eat, the feet do not walk — He alone exists. He transcends *māyā* and yet appears subjected to *māyā*. He is playing according to His will.

Try to become singleminded, mindless as it were. You can either take the path of *neti, neti*, "not this, not that," or the path of "Thou art this, Thou art that." He who takes care of everybody is the one and only Brahman. Rāma, Krishna, Kālī, all represent the same Being, everything is contained in each. If you look upon a tree as divine, God will be revealed even there. Where is God not? The One-With - Quality (*saguna*) becomes Himself the quality. For the sake of His play He assumes the guise of *māyā*.

Perfect vision denotes omniscience, while happiness that depends on anything is bound to change into sorrow. When a child is born, everybody rejoices, but when he dies, there is grief. If happiness is derived from wife, son, home or anything of the world, distress will follow without fail. Where complete independence of circumstances is, there alone can be perfect happiness. When the relationship of a servant to the Lord has been established, this indeed is happiness. *Vigraha* (Concrete External Presence as Form) means acceptance in a special form. Essentially Hari (God) and the *jīva* are not separate. Looked at from a certain angle, who is it that is born? There is in fact no birth. To acknowledge birth is to bow to ignorance. All worldly relationship, be it that of friend or foe, is based on one's attitude of mind.

Human birth is extremely difficult to obtain. If man so wills, he can get rid of the veil of ignorance in his lifetime and realize God. The desire to know God is the natural desire of a *jīva*. A human being does not want to remain ignorant because in reality he is the embodiment of Knowledge, of Peace. You do not relish falsehood, you crave for truth -

since you are in fact Truth in essence. Tread the path leading to God, His grace is pouring forth perpetually. The reason why you are not aware of it, is that you are holding your vessel it upside down and so His grace continually flows away. Keep your vessel the right side up and it will fill to overflowing.

This body, being a mere child, calls everybody father or mother. You have deigned to give her *darśana*. You must all try to realize your Self. This body does not exhort you to forsake your homes and families and live in the forest. Wherever you may reside is the abode of God. Do not consider yourself the master of your house, merely its manager. There is no knowing when the call may come for a manager. God is present within everybody. We are all His servants, the managers of His temples. By all means continue to do service in the householder's *āśrama*. Serve your son as Gopal, look upon your wife as an embodiment of the divine Mother. Ever keep the name of the Lord in your mind; anything else that you may do apart from this, will not give you complete peace. You must attend to the work of your *Atmā*.

At the request of a devotee, Mataji related the following story :

Once upon a time there was a great King. He was pondering over four questions : "Where does God reside ? What does He eat ? When does He laugh ? What does He do ?" The King broadcast all over his domain that anyone who could answer these questions would receive substantial reward. On hearing this, all the learned men of the country started exercising their brains in the hope of winning the reward, but none was able to satisfy the King, who became

extremely disappointed, wondering how his problem could be solved. All over the country there arose endless discussion concerning the answers of the King's questions. In the meantime word of these interminable arguments came to the ears of a very ordinary, simple and poor peasant. He was tilling his soil, but interrupted his work to ask passers - by what they were discussing so ardently. They laughed at him saying : "Of what possible use can this be to you ?" But finally, on noticing his earnest zeal, they told him the King's questions. At once the peasant started laughing : "This is no big task," he said, "come along, I shall provide the replies to these questions." The peasant regularly used to attend *satsang*\* and his knowledge was therefore quite extensive. The people were amazed at his remark. They suspected him to be crazy and said : "What sort of replies can you possibly give ? Where big scholars have failed, what hope is there for you ? Go and get on with your own work !" But responding to the peasant's persistence, the crowd at long last consented to take him along to the King. -

Everybody felt highly amused when the very ordinary peasant, attired in his dirty clothes, appeared in the King's assembly. The King smiled at what seemed to be a joke. But he was just and intelligent. He called the peasant and bade him sit down. The crowded assembly of erudite pandits were watching this unique scene with rapt attention.

The King asked his questions and the peasant smilingly started to reply with great simplicity. In answer to the question : "Where is God ?" The peasant exclaimed : "Oh

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\* *Satsang* Religious meeting with discourses on spiritual topics,

King, first tell me where God is not ?” On hearing this the King began to ponder deeply and at once it became clear to him that actually God existed everywhere. In reply to the second question the peasant explained that God eats the ego. If He did not devour the ego, how could any spiritual practice ever be successful ? Just as the mother-cow licks clean the dirt on the body of its new-born calf, so does God consume the ego with its unclean attributes. In reply to the question : “When does God laugh ?” the peasant said that when the *jīva* is confined in his mother’s womb, he is subjected to dire suffering and remembers the misdeeds of his numerous earlier births. So he starts praying to God with a penitent heart, beseeching Him to extract him from his dreadful confinement, and he promises that he will from then on worship God with great zeal. But as soon as he emerges into the realm of *māyā* he forgets all this and once more gets enmeshed in its toils and keeps on dancing to the same tune. So, at the time the child comes out of the womb, God laughs because He knows that the human being will not be able to keep his lofty promises.

When satisfactory replies had been provided to three of his questions, the King became exceedingly pleased and asked the fourth question, “What does God do ?” The peasant said : “Oh King, the answer to this question cannot be given so easily, this is a very serious matter. Something special will have to be done first.”

The King was favourably disposed towards the peasant and therefore agreed. “I am ready to carry out whatever you demand.” Thereupon the peasant said : “Kindly leave your seat and occupy mine and I shall sit in yours !” The King

complied with this request. Thus he sat in the peasant's place while the latter ascended to the King's gorgeous golden throne beset with jewels and started singing in great ecstasy. Then he spent a long while in deep contemplation. This seemed a most peculiar spectacle to all present. At last the King exclaimed : "Now you must provide an answer to the fourth question !" The peasant : "But I have already done so !" The King failed to understand, so the peasant clarified. "See, this is what God does. He continually turns things upside down. He changes a King into a pauper and glorifies a beggar into a King. Just as you have now occupied the seat of a poor, humble peasant and I, the insignificant peasant dressed in torn and dirty clothes, am sitting on your exalted throne. This is what God does all along." With this reply the King was thoroughly satisfied and deeply pleased.

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Ahmedabad, May 11th, 1957.

*Question* : What is the difference between happiness caused by sense objects and happiness from within ?

*Mataji* : The answer is contained in the question. If you had found true happiness ( *paramānanda* ), would you inquire about it ? Śiva kept poison in his throat, he did not eject it. When pleasure is taken in worldly things, questions are bound to arise and one is gradually drawn towards death. *Paramānanda* is happiness not caused by anything extraneous ( *parānanda* )\*. *Paramānanda* bestows *Brahmānanda*, the bliss of Reality and nothing else.

\* A play upon words ; *param* supreme, *par* other.

*Question :* By what expedient does one become God-like ?

*Mataji :* There is no expedient for achieving this. If it could be brought about by any process, one would have to admit that God is subservient to action, Just as the sun shines but is covered by clouds. The grace of the Guru is necessary to lift your veil of ignorance. Thus there is a means to achieve this and yet there is no means. All the power that is within you must be utilized for the realization of God. You yourself have to do this, nobody else can do it for you. If you eat, your hunger will be appeased but if someone else eats, your hunger will not be stilled. So long as there is a sense of distance (between man and God), you must yourself attend to your own work. Obey the commands of your Guru.

*Question :* Do those who live continuously near you receive more grace than others ?

*Mataji :* In God's grace there is no differentiation. Just as a mother looks upon all her children with equal affection and care. She gives food to the child who needs it. If anyone suggests that the mother shows partiality, this is not correct. A mother's attention is equal in all directions.

Do not ask God for anything. "Oh Lord, I want only Thee alone, I do not know what is beneficial or harmful for me, so do exactly as Thou deemest right."

He who is wise walks warily. Who is nearer than others to God ? The whole universe is God's own realm. Proximity merely refers to a state of the mind. If the body is engaged in God's service and the mind busy with worldly affairs - how can this be called proximity to God ? On the other hand, if

someone stays far away, yet keeps His mind concentrated on God, this constitutes true service. This is being akin to God.

*Question* : God showed partiality when He saved Prahlad and destroyed Hiranyakashipu.

*Mataji* : Everyone speaks according to his point of view. When the mind is prone to partiality it will be seen as you state.

*Questioner* : He saved Prahlad and killed Hiranyakashipu !

*Mataji* : But after destroying his body, where did He send him ? (Everyone laughs loudly.) Whatever God does is just and right.

In course of further conversation Mataji said ;

Is there any class or caste distinction in the *Ātmā* ? By God's grace the sage Valmiki attained such a high state of Realization; even though reciting "MARA MARA" ( the reverse of RAMA ) he realized Rama through the Lord's grace.

*Question* : But Valmiki had to work hard to become a Rishi !

*Mataji* : So will you have to work equally hard. (Everyone laughs.) Well, is this not true ?

*Question* : If Valmiki had not made such strenuous efforts, would he have obtained God's grace ?

*Mataji* : I make allowance for everybody's opinion.

*Swami Madhava Tirtha* : One must be fit to obtain God's grace.

*Question* : Please prove beyond doubt that Valmiki became a Rishi by God's grace !

*Mataji* : This body maintains that so much power is inherent in Rama that the feat was achieved.

*Question* : Why was his body later devoured by white ants ?

*Mataji* : It was Rama's will – God's pleasure.

*Question* : Then the question remains wide open for further clarification.

*Mataji* : You will have to accomplish your own work yourself because you have the power and capacity to act. In this world of humans it is the play of action that predominates. He who is bound is the *jīva* (individual) and that which is subject to continuous motion is the world. If you are after sense objects it lies in their nature to enslave you. But the nature of the Lord's name is to burn whatever has to be burnt and to melt what has to be melted. The fact that Valmiki could take God's name so fervently was entirely due to God's grace. You are *Ātmārāma*, a *Rishi*. The practice that will bring to light your Rishihood is potentially present within you. Tread the spiritual path, the path to God; by treading it Rishihood will gradually be attained. God resides within each person – in this there is no differentiation between man or woman, no caste distinction. Everything is already contained within you, but you will have to perform some spiritual practice. The inherent power that lies dormant within you must be awakened.

At this stage, someone entreated Mataji ; “Ma, do please let us listen to *Rāma Nāma*.” Everyone eagerly joined in this prayer. In response Mataji started singing the name of Rama. So sweet and beautiful was the kirtāna, as if Rama Himself were present on the spot. All become welded into one, as it were, and sang in unison with Mataji.

*Question* : Without the worship of God with form (*sākāra*) and attributes (*saḡuṇa*), is it possible to obtain a glimpse of the One devoid of form and attributes (*nirākāra nirḡuṇa*) ?

*Mataji* : *Nirākāra* and *sākāra* are one; like water and ice – both are water, aren't they? Whatever path anyone may choose he will reach its goal, whether proceeding along the path of *dvaita* (duality) or *advaita* (non-duality).

*Question* : The Upanishads state on the one hand that God has created the world; elsewhere they also assert that the world was never created — all is *māyā*. What then is the truth?

*Mataji* : Where the world is perceived, there creation exists; but in the state in which it is not seen, there the question of creation does not arise.

*Question* : Who is responsible for committing sin, the *Ātmā* or the *jīva*?

*Mataji* : Is the *Ātmā* in bondage? Where “mine” and “yours” is, there indeed are ties. Your home is the same as mine – there simply is no other place to go to.

*Question* : Is the light (*prakāśa*) of the *Ātmā* like sunlight or like the light of wisdom?

*Mataji* : You mean different or identical? It is the same, but there are various methods of explaining this.

*Question* : What then is it in essence?

*Mataji* : In essence there is nothing at all. What is, is. Whatever you say, so it is. If you go by what is visible, then such a vision does exist. If you maintain there is nothing concrete in what you see, then this also is true. Thus, there is both “yes” and “no” – it is and it is not and neither is it nor is it not.

*Swami Madhava Tirtha* : He is said to be indescribable. The real truth is that He alone IS. From where will a “second” arise? “There” everything is possible.

*Questioner* : Then it is better not to ask any questions at all.

*Mataji* : But you will not be able to refrain from asking questions.

*Question* : Why has God created this world ?

*Mataji* : It is His pleasure. Merely by His imagination the universe has been created.

*Question* : What is the reason for being unable to desist from asking questions ?

*Mataji* : Where ignorance is, questions are bound to arise. He who has passed his exams has no further questions; similarly a fool who does not study has nothing to ask. Questions arise in those who try to assimilate knowledge. It lies in the nature of a human being to desire wisdom, peace, happiness. Thus it is natural for him or her to ask questions.

*Question* : Can the Self (*Ātmā*) be realized through the *sādhana* of devotional music ?

*Mataji* : If music reveals itself as the essential Being of the One ( *Svayam Gītasvarūpa Prakāśa* ) then this is certainly possible. But if music is resorted to merely to become famous, then this is quite a different matter. Whatever goal is pursued with constancy will be reached.

*Question* : What comes first, form or formlessness ?

*Mataji* : The form is you.

*Swami Madhava* : Form means Mukundbhai, and formlessness means you.

*Question* : How can one ignore form and proceed towards formlessness ?

*Mataji* : If you advance along the path of *Advaita* the covering screen will gradually vanish – the curtain will be torn asunder. The unveiled One is Self - revealed,

*Question* : Have you seen Sri Krishna ? What is His real form ?

*Mataji* : Leave this body out of it ! If you worship God-with-form, concentrate on the form, looking upon it as a manifestation of the One, so you may merge with your Beloved.

You cannot describe the loveliness of a flower, however much you may try. Similarly you cannot explain the exact taste of a delicious sweet because words cannot express it.

*Question* : First show me God, then I shall worship Him.

*Mataji* : So you will start doing *sādhana* only after God appears to you ? In order to find Him you must pray and serve Him. Never give up your worship and adoration until you realize Him. Proceed exactly as the Guru instructs you.

*Question* : The Guru utter such beautiful words; why does God not speak ?

*Mataji* : This is why you must take on a Guru. The instructions showing man the path of service to God have to be obeyed. If they are carried out to the full without reasoning, then God cannot help but become accessible to the seeker. God is ever Self-revealed. All these people are God's own *vigrahas*, God's concrete external Presence as Form.

*Question* : How can one avoid the distress caused by a calamity ?

*Mataji* : Listen to the advice of your Guru. By doing so, what is to be destroyed will be done away with and what can never be destroyed, namely God, Truth, THAT will be revealed to you.