

*O Ocean of Compassion,
You are affectionate towards the devotees!
Your Feet are the Eternal Support!*

Even in those days, Sudhamani's mind was so enraptured that it instantly soared to the heights of divinity when moved by any heart-capturing sight or song. One day while returning home after making some purchases at the market, she heard the melody of a devotional song coming from far off. Attracted by the song and in a semiconscious mood, Sudhamani turned and walked in the direction of the singing. The lament was rising from the house of a Christian family where someone had died that day. The relatives were sitting around the body, singing hymns in a tone full of sorrow. The child's heart was immediately moved, and she became lost to the world, standing motionless in a God-intoxicated mood. Her eyes were closed, and tears rolled down her cheeks. The purchased goods fell from her hands, and the people gathered there did not know what to make of the unknown girl's sudden transformation, mistakenly thinking that she, too, was moved by the death of their relative.

A half hour passed before Sudhamani partially regained her normal consciousness. Picking up the fallen packages, she hurriedly continued on her way home, but too late. Damayanti was waiting for her angrily, and, in a fit of fury, chastised Sudhamani and beat her severely. The little one was still in an indrawn state and received Damayanti's harsh treatment silently and untouched. What external force can distract a mind which is absorbed in God?

Besides her exceptional brilliance, undaunted cheerfulness, exemplary devotion and poignant singing, Sudhamani was known most of all for her loving compassion for the poor and needy. Although she did her best to serve and please her mother, Damayanti, hot-tempered by nature, never hesitated to punish her harshly for any imagined fault. The particular justification for Damayanti's aversion to little Sudhamani was her dark complexion. Moreover, Damayanti would sometimes catch the little one sneaking off with butter, milk and curd, just like the notorious butter thief, Sri Krishna. What Damayanti didn't discover for some time was that the food was being offered to starving families which Sudhamani had befriended.

Unnoticed by others, the child would surreptitiously slip out with milk and curds, after replacing the pilfered quantity with water. When discovered, she invariably received a painful beating. Often her compassionate tendency was exploited by her brothers and sisters who would also steal food, but for themselves, and then accuse Sudhamani. Though she knew who the real thief was, she never uttered a word, but silently endured the harsh blows rained on her by her mother.

When Sudhamani came to know of any family which was starving, she would pilfer money from her mother's little collection box, so that the necessary purchases could be made. If this were not possible, she would obstinately pester her father until he gave her a bit of money. When these two means failed, then she would take raw foodstuffs from her own family's meager store-room and give them to the family in need.