

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

VOL.-10

January, 2006

No. 1

BOARD OF EDITORS

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MATRI VANI

Verily, abounding sorrow is the essential characteristics of life in this world.
Fix your mind upon God.

* * * * *

Ishwara, the Lord of the world is not a thing to be perceived by the senses or grasped by the mind. By contemplating the Divine peace is won. God Himself draws you towards Him.

* * * * *

Never let your mind be idle: endeavour to keep it concentrated on the Eternal.

* * * * *

In all matters without fail depend wholly upon God. To Him you should submit your heart's petitions and yearnings. Your whole life will have to revolve round Him, you have no other resource; on your own you are utterly helpless, for are you not His creature ? Whatever He does is all for the highest good. You certainly are not in a position to choose what seems best to you. Why should He permit you, who are the off-spring of the Immortal, to stray towards that which is of death ?

* * * * *

You may deem yourself fortunate, for as you yourself say, God has rescued you from the jaws of death and preserved you to this day. Place your reliance on Him alone. The sufferings and obstacles bred of desire which you encounter, even these should be welcomed as in fact the doing of His merciful hands. To become agitated is of no avail. If you must be impatient, be impatient for God; cry "To this day I have not received any response from Thee and invaluable time has been spent in vain". Do not let your mind and body be tormented with restlessness induced by worldly longings.

* * * * *

On hearing the news of someone's death, Mataji had the following conveyed to the bereaved : "Such is the law of worldly existence. You must dwell in fortitude. Surely, you have realized by now what is the true nature of the world ? Peace can be found only by directing one's mind towards God. The more time you devote to *Japa* and meditation - whether so disposed or not - the greater the likelihood of your obtaining deliverance from your grief."

* * * * *

To perform one's duties is a good thing. At the same time one has to be mindful of man's real Duty.

* * * * *

Since everything belongs to Him alone, there is no other means but to lie prostrate at His Feet. If there is to be anxiety, it must be solely for Him.

* * * * *

Under all circumstances depend on God."Of Him is all that need be said, the rest is vanity, woe." Wherever you may find yourself and in whatever condition, appeal to Him. In this way only, you may expect peace.

* * * * *

Set your mind on God. Whatsoever He, the Fountain of Goodness, does is the very best that could have happened.

* * * * *

Placing your trust in your Guru practice the *Seed Mantra* you have received from him and contemplate the Beloved (*Ishta*). It is imperative to have firm faith in one's particular *Ishta*. What is the use of seeking initiation again and again ? Rather is it not of the utmost importance to strive strenuously after the full revelation of the form under which He has manifested Himself to you ?

* * * * *

Whenever practicable seek *satsang* - the company of Sages, Saints and seekers after Truth.

PAGES FROM
"Ma Anandamayee Prasang"

by

Prof. A. K. Dutta Gupta

[Translated from Bengali]

About Bhaiji & Mataji's father

16th May, 1941, Kishenpur Ashram, Dehradun

Ma : The spiritual stage that can be reached by one through regular worship and adoration can also often be attained even through the compassionate glance or touch of a *Mahapurush*. In such cases no outward act of worship or the like is needed. But this does not mean that those who possess the inherent tendency to perform puja, will be asked to remain idle. For them it is better to progress through worship and adoration. God's grace does not wait for anything. This is why it is said that all things are possible at all times. Through this body too God's grace has often been manifested. But such manifestations have occurred in a perfectly natural way, not in response to anyone's request or entreaty.

The trouble which started in Jyotish's* family life was also due to an event of this kind. The day I gave Jyotish my golden necklace to be used as a sacred thread, from this very day his life started changing radically. As soon as he received the necklace, all the outward signs of a true Brahmin, such as eating only food cooked by himself, etc. began to manifest. Noticing all this, his wife could no longer tolerate it. An intense feeling of opposition was aroused in her. This is what usually does take place. When husband and wife do not think and feel on the same lines there is bound to be this kind of trouble. If one can't be in tune with the other's feelings and ways, then severe opposition is the result and at every step one tends to put obstacles into the other's path. This feeling of defiance gradually becomes more and more intense. This sort of things also happened in the case of Jyotish.

"On learning from Jyotish of his wife's behaviour, I often used to exhort him to try and explain everything to her. But although he tried his best to follow my advice, this had the reverse effect. Jyotish would tell me : "Ma, what is the use of

* Late Jyotish Chandra Roy, commonly known as Bhaiji, one of Ma's top, most and very early devotees.

trying to explain to her ? In response to every such attempt she only assumes an even more rough attitude."

"Soon after obtaining my necklace, Jyotish's desire to receive the sacred thread became more pronounced. He duly donned the sacred thread and with great zeal and enthusiasm started performing his daily practices with the help of a Brahmin pundit. In this way the bonds of his life as a householder gradually loosened. He did of course continue with his official duties and thereby maintained his family, but all this was done in a spirit of complete aloofness. His attitude of mind was quite divorced from his outer life. During this period he used to walk with me in the morning, in the Ramna ground and talk about his inner life in great detail."

"Now see the fun of it all ! Although his spiritual progress gave rise to a wild rage and resentment in his wife, which alienated her from her husband, yet how can the influence of *satsang* go in vain ? Due to her association with Jyotish, nobler qualities such as faith and trust in God were slowly kindled in her. Consequently she also took on as her Guru Bhagavan Brahmachari and began to carry out all his instructions with the utmost faith. Some of you must have observed how Jyotish's wife reposed implicit faith and confidence in her Guru."

I : Ma, I have heard that Jyotish dada relinquished on the shores of lake Manas Sarovar the necklace he had received from you.

Mataji : Yes, I shall tell you what exactly happened. On way to Kailash, when we were nearing the lake, Jyotish, Bholanath and others reached about two hours earlier than Swami Akhandananda and myself. Immediately on arriving there, Jyotish was gripped by an irresistible urge for total renunciation. Without telling anyone he went all by himself, bathed in the Manas Sarovar lake and after offering oblations of water to the gods, he adopted *vidvat sanyasa*.* The thought that before anyone arrived to prevent him, he would disappear and hide himself in some cave in the mountains round the lake and spend the rest of his life there.

"But before he could carry out his plan, Bholanath arrived and found him completely naked on the shores of the Manas sarovar. Jyotish did *pranama* to Bholanath and disclosed his heart's content to him. But Bholanath would not let him go anywhere in this way, made him put on clothes again and brought him to me. I returned with Jyotish to the lake, where he made me sip nine mouthfuls of water. This seems to have been a part of the rituals for taking *sanyasa* . Thereafter he laid the golden necklace and his sacred thread at my feet and said : "Ma, please

*. There are two types of *sanyasa* : *vividisa sanyasa*, which is preceded by a sense of detachment from the world, and *vidvat sanyasa* which is *sanyasa par excellence*, preceded by Realization of THAT.

give me permission to depart for the distant hills so that I can live all by myself in one of the solitary caves." He seemed to feel no hesitation or sorrow for leaving me. At that time his deep inner conviction was : 'Ma is not confined within any particular body, but is omnipresent, everywhere in the whole universe. So it is impossible to forsake Ma under any circumstances.' I picked up the gold necklace and the sacred thread and putting them into Jyotish's hands, I said : 'For the time being let them remain with you.'

"Then I began strolling with him on the shores of the lake. All of a sudden some *mantras* started coming out of my mouth. On hearing them, Jyotish at once understood them and started repeating them in japa. Jyotish's condition then was such that he felt not the slightest attachment for anything at all. In that condition the body does not remain for long because there is nothing more to be done. Subsequent to this, Jyotish's last illness was a mere pretext."

"Jyotish had developed certain powers already before he took *sanyasa*. He used to say sometimes that he could even depart from his body at will. But such a death would have been self-willed, whereas his leaving the body as it actually took place was quite natural. Already much earlier he had a desire to leave his body. In fact once when he was critically ill at Tarapith this was due to some such resolution on his own part."

Ma was at this juncture taken away for Her meal, the discussion was stopped and we came downstairs as well.

In the afternoon when we again assembled near Ma, She resumed the topic of Jyotish dada of Her own accord.

Ma : I had already explained that Jyotish's condition was such that it was no longer possible for him to retain his body. On the way back from Kailash, he soon fell ill. He was treated by a good doctor in Almora, but this did not lead to any improvement in his health. He gradually became very weak. In due course, he had no longer the strength to even get up from bed and his speech also became indistinct. But just before his death this feebleness disappeared and he uttered quite clearly several words in quick succession. On noticing this some people thought that his condition had changed for the better and that his life could be saved. But others were of the opinion that this change was nothing but the dying embers of a fire bursting into flame before being extinguished for ever. The doctor also noticing the deterioration of the patient's pulse, went to the adjoining room and started crying.

The doctor was a Muslim, but the way he served Jyotish both medically and as a nurse was something very rarely to be seen. He used to come frequently to

examine Jyotish's condition, and often helped him also to pass urine and stool. He never took a farthing for his treatment. One day, everybody present compelled him to accept payment, because genuine expenditure for medical attention was widely believed to often lead to success. The money was given to him through Jyotish's hands. He did accept the money, but before leaving, he quietly put it again under Jyotish's pillow.

Meanwhile, Hari Ram Joshi and others present, realizing that Jyotish's end was imminent, said to him, "Bhaiji, please give us some advice !" Jyotish then spoke quite distinctly : "*Ma and I are one, we are all one.*" Then he repeated his *sanyasa* mantra, and uttering the name '*Ma*', he breathed his last. Although a number of people were present there, nobody except Khukuni (Gurupriya Didi) could hear the *sanyasa* mantra.

A little before his demise I asked Jyotish to take off the gold necklace and his sacred thread. But they were under his clothes and it was not possible to remove them. So it was cut open with a pair of scissors and they were taken out of his body.

I : Why did you ask him to remove the necklace and the sacred thread ?

Ma (smiling) : There was no particular reason for this. Jyotish had already previously relinquished them, and it was only due to my request that he had agreed to keep them. So before his passing away I took these things back in order to relieve him from all responsibility. Of course, many people naturally surmised that had they not been taken away, they might have been the cause of Jyotish's further bondage. But in reality this was not so, because Jyotish's condition was such that none of those things could have created any bondage for him.

I : When Jyotish dada said just before leaving : "Ma and I are one, we are all one," what exactly did he mean by this ?

Ma : He had then realized the oneness of all and everything.

I : Does this mean Self-realization ?

Ma : This sort of question has already been raised. After his death, a lot of people have asked me whether or not Jyotish had attained Self-realization. At that time I did not give a clear reply, but from what I had said they gathered that Jyotish had indeed attained *Nirvana* . I first spoke to Gopinath Kaviraj about Jyotish's ultimate state. Later, I spoke to one or two others, now I am telling you : I have seen Jyotish three times after he left his body. On those three occasions I saw him in three entirely different forms.

"The first time his appearance was just like what I had noticed on the shores of Manas sarovar -- he was in a state of total renunciation (*vairagya*), the place was

just like that, with an expanse of a plateau and distant hills in the background. Jyotish was running quite naked towards the hills. This body was standing there, and though Jyotish passed quite close by, he paid not the slightest attention to it. Even when he turned his head slightly and looked in the direction of this body, his gaze was not focussed on anything. He was entirely possessed of the idea to find sanctuary in a cave of the distant hills."

"When I was travelling in the Narmada valley, I saw Jyotish for the second time. On that occasion I saw him as a body of light. At that time the wife of Gangacharan Babu* was with me. She could not see Jyotish, yet she told me : "Ma, I feel that Jyotish is here. He used to love me very much, perhaps this is why I am sensing his presence." I of course did not reply to her words, but on looking round I saw Jyotish standing nearby, on one leg, with the other leg bent behind.

"The third time I saw Jyotish, his appearance was quite different. It was neither like the first time when he seemed in a human body of flesh and blood, nor a luminous body like on the second occasion, but it appeared somewhat like a cloud of smoke. If you had seen it, you would not have been able to know what you saw, but I realized that Jyotish had arrived in that particular shape. He was proceeding slowly and slowly to merge with this body, but I forbade him, saying : "There is a *kheyala* that so long as this body exists, one has to communicate with it separately." He nodded in acquiescence. Later he very gradually mingled with the atoms and sub-atoms of this body. Thus, Jyotish's deep aspiration was fulfilled."

"When he saw me for the first time, I used to remain heavily veiled and speak only very rarely after drawing a circle around myself. On the first occasion when he met me, he saw me seated in *siddhasana*, fully veiled. He could not see my face, except only small portions of my hands and feet. Even so, he resolved : "*I shall end up myself under these very lotus feet.*" And this actually came to pass.

Ma : A similar series of events occurred also after the death of the father of this body. Jyotish died in August of that year, and merged with this body on the 12th Agrahayan (approximately 27th November) of the same year. And your *Dadamashai*** merged with this body on the 5th Magh (approximately 20th January 1938).

"You will remember that your *Dadamashai* accompanied us to the Narmada valley and returned to Calcutta from there. At that time this body had no intention to visit Bengal. But see how events actually came to pass ! Due to Bholanath's

*. Late Gangacharan Dasgupta was a relation of Bhaiji and a very old devotee of Ma.

*. *Dadamashai*, mother's father is called in that manner by Bengalees.

urging, I had to go to Tarapith agan. In the meantime your *Dadamashai* fell seriously ill. On seeing his condition, Jatish (Guha) and others came to Tarapith to take me back to Calcutta. I told them that I would go to Calcutta on a certain day, but they held that according to the doctor's opinion, *Dadamashai* would not last till then. So they insisted on my going to Calcutta with them. I told them that I would not enter the house and that I would come away after seeing him only from outside. This is what actually happened. After seeing your *Dadamashai* from the courtyard on arriving at Calcutta, I immediately went to the Birla Mandir in Ballygunge."

"The following day we were to return to Tarapith. Before our departure, the next morning, I again went to visit your *Dadamashai*. A number of house-holders were also staying in the same house. In the morning they had all lit their kitchen fires, and when I arrived, the yard was full of smoke. You know very well that up to then your *Dadamashai* had looked upon this body as just his daughter and nothing more. But that day I noticed a change in his attitude. Lying on bed he was trying to catch sight of this body. In the gloom he could not perceive anything, yet kept on crying, "Ma, Ma", while straining to catch a glimpse of me. It was the moment of our farewell. All were trying to make me eat something, so nobody noticed the changed attitude of your *Dadamashai*."

"After this we returned to Tarapith. When we were in Burdwan, waiting for a train connection to Kashi, I asked Swami Akhandananda to go with certain instructions and see your *Dadamashai*. Had he started in time, he would have been able to see your *Dadamashai* before he passed away. Of course, he had been given an indication that there was a possibility that they might never meet. For some reason or other, Akhandananda could not reach Calcutta in time. On arrival at Kashi, we heard the news that your *Dadamashai* had expired. It was then realized by all that the day I had previously fixed for visiting him in Calcutta from Tarapith was the day of his passing away."

"After that, I caught a glimpse of your *Dadamashai* in January, 1938. I saw him in an extra-ordinary form. His appearance was that of a naked fakir with a turban tied round his head. See, how significant is all this ! When alive he often used to threaten all when in a temper, "What do I care ? I will put on a turban and go off in some direction or other." Form time to time he had had a desire to become a fakir, hence his appearance seen by me was that of a fakir. But the nearer he came to me, the more did he resemble like a smoky cloud. Later he slowly and gradually merged with this body."

"Don't think that only those known to you have merged with this body -- others unknown to you have also attained that state."

May 17th, 1941

In the morning I went and sat down near Ma and resumed the discussion which had taken place day before yesterday. I asked : "Ma, you have mentioned that Jyotishdada and *Dadamashai* both have merged in your body. What exactly does "merging" mean ? Did they entirely lose their own identity (*satta*) ?

Ma : What do you mean by "their own identity" ?

I : Was there a complete disappearance of the individual identity that was Jyotish ?

Ma : Had there been any thing left, how could he be considered to have merged completely ?

I : Why ? To merge and yet remain separate, can this not happen simultaneously ? Cannot a being remain finite and be infinite at the same time ?

Ma : To be both finite and infinite simultaneously, this is called total merging. This in fact is realization of the self. In that condition one cannot define what remains and what does not remain. In such a state everything exists and yet nothing exists.

I : Does this realization of the Self supervene after one realizes Divinity (*Iswaratva*) ?

Ma : Certainly. After becoming established in Divinity (*Iswaratva*) that is to say, realizing the significance of creation and destruction, of the power of divine compassion and suffering, the attainment of the Supreme Self ensues. But how long this divine state lasts depends upon the the upward progress of the *sadhaka*.

I : You had mentioned yesterday that not only those known to us had merged with your body but that others, even unknown to us, had also done so.

Ma : Quite right.

I : Well, if they were unknown to us, were they known to you in their physical bodies ?

Ma : They were not .

I : Then why did they merge with you instead of with their own *Ista Deva* ?

Ma : To merge with one's *Ista Deva* is all that matters. Did they not merge with their *Ista Deva* ? *In Him also I exist, just as their Ista Deva exists in me.* I already explained to you that at all times everything exists everywhere.

[To continue]

TO REMEMBER ME

— Robert N. Test

The day will come when my body will lie upon a white sheet neatly tucked under four corners of a mattress located in a hospital busily occupied with the living and the dying. At a certain moment a doctor will determine that my brain has ceased to function and that for all intents and purposes, my life has stopped.

When that happens, do not attempt to instil artificial life into my body by the use of a machine. And don't call this my death bed. Let it be called the bed of life, let my body be taken from it to help others lead fuller lives.

Give my sight to a man who has never seen a Sunrise, a baby's face or love in the eyes of a woman. Give my heart to a person whose own heart has caused nothing but endless days of pain, give my blood to the teenager who was pulled from a wreckage of his car, so that he might live to see his grandchildren play. Give my kidneys to one who depends on a machine to exist from week to week. Take my bones, every muscles, every fibre and nerve in my body and find a way to make a crippled child walk.

Explore every corner of my brain. Take my cells, if necessary, and let them grow so that some day, a speechless boy will shout at the crack of a bat and a deaf girl will hear the sound of rain against her window.

Burn what is left of me and scatter the ashes to the winds to help the flowers grow.

If you must burn something, let it be my faults, my weaknesses and all prejudice against my fellowmen. Give my sins to the devil. Give my soul to God.

If by chance you wish to remember me, do it with a kind deed or words to someone who needs you.

If you do all I have asked, I will live for ever.

●

MA ANANDAMAYEE-

A CONFLUENCE OF GĪTĀ AND CHANDĪ

—Prof. Bireshwar Ganguly

Mā Anandamayee is a unique phenomenon of India's cultural history. She is the epitome of the spiritual culture of the last five thousand years of Indian history after the advent of Lord Krishna, the plenary incarnation of God and the preacher of *Shrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*, the greatest scripture of Hindu religion. The supernatural powers, as exhibited in the life of Lord Krishna cannot be emulated by ordinary virtuous persons, aspiring for liberation, but the ideal of the *Parābhakta Sthitaprajna* (a devotee of steady wisdom and ecstatic love for God, who is always busy in the welfare of suffering humanity, as preached in Gīta) can be accepted as the highest ideal of *Yoga* (self discipline) for the realization of God. And Mā Anandamayee represents this ideal in the highest degree, but her unique motherly personality represents something more than the synthesis of Gīta. For She also represents the synthesis of *Durgā Saptashatī Chandī*, the best scripture of the *Tāntric* tradition of Hindu *Sādhana* (technique of self-realization).

The three best scriptures of *Sanātan* (perennial) Vedic religion based on the Vedas and known as Vedānta. are known as *Prasthān-traya*, viz. (a) *Shruti Prasthān*, represented by the Upanishads, (b) *Nyāya Prasthān*, represented by *Brahma-Sutra*, and (c) *Smṛiti Prasthān*, represented by *Bhagavad Gītā*.

Gītā not only gives the essence of 108 Upanishads, but also offers a summary of practical Vedānta, which can be applied in day-to-day life. However, religion or *yoga*, as a scientific technique of self-realization finds its detailed practical note in *Tantra sadhana*, which was pre-Vedic in origin, but post-Vedic in codified literature. Maharshi Veda Vyāsa compiled *Brahma Sutra* and *Gītā* (a part of *Mahābhārata*), as well as *Bhāgavat Purān*, *Devī Bhāgavat Purān* and *Markandeya Purāna*, in which *Chandī* appears as *Devī Māhātmya*. *Gīta* and *Chandī* are complementary treatises on integral yoga.

The Essence of the Gītā :

According to Lord Krishna, *Purushottama Paramātmā* is the highest, absolute and monistic Reality, which has two aspects within it, viz. (i) *Kshara Purusha* or *Aparā Prakṛiti* or *Kshetra* or the physical and subtle universe (including mind, intellect, will and ego) and (ii) *Akshara Purusha* or *Parā Prakṛiti* or

Kshetrajna, which includes innumerable individual *Jīvātmās* (souls). As mortal life in the world is full of suffering, *jīvātmās*, feeling the pangs of the bondage of lower nature (*Aparā Prakriti*) should strive for liberation or Self-Realization or God-Realization, not by forsaking works of life, but by performing the duties of one's profession and station in life in a detached spirit of sacrifice of egoism and fruits of work at the feet of God. Hence the prescription of Krishna to aspirant souls like Arjuna is a combination of *Jnāna Yoga* (knowledge), *Karma Yoga* (action) and *Bhakti Yoga* (devotion). The synthetic *sādhana* (yogic technique) of the *Gītā* is one step ahead of the Upanishads and is universal in its application for the whole of humanity.

The Essence of the Chandī :

Mahādevī Durgā or Chandī is the dynamic but, conscious aspect of the static, but conscious Shiva, both of which are inherent in *Parama Shiva* or *Parama Brahma*. However, the creation, maintenance and destruction of *Jagat* (innumerable universes) is carried on by Durga with the seal and sanction of Shiva. *Jīvātmās* (individual souls) can get liberation from the bondage of *Māyā* (lower *Prakriti*) by yogic *sādhana*, as well as worship of God as Mother, so that by the grace of Goddess Mother, the obstacles to yoga or demoniac forces like lust, anger, covetousness, infatuation and jealousy are destroyed. The struggle of Chandī is applicable both to the cosmic world for maintenance of divinely ordained balance as well as to the individual *sādhaka's* *yoga-sadhana* for raising the *Kundalini Shakti* (primal energy) from the *Mulādhāra* (solar plexus) to the *Sahasrāra* (cerebral plexus). Action, devotion and knowledge of the science of yoga, — all three are essential in *Tantra Sādhana*; Prayers, rituals and icon worship are also essential ingredients in this *sādhana*.

Devī Sukta of Rig Veda :

The following English translation of *Devī Sukta* of the Rig Veda reveals the nature of Goddess Durgā, or God as Mother or Brahman with His *Shakti* (energy which is conscious) according to the *Āgama (Tāntric)* monism of *Chandī (Devī Māhātmya)*. The Absolute Brahman of the Upanishads is the same as *Purushottam Paramātmā of Gītā* and the Mahādevī or Durgā of *Śrī Śrī Chandī*.

Devī Sukta (Hymn to the Goddess) :- (Rig Veda, Mandal 10, Sukta 125)

"I roam about in the guise of (eleven) Rudras and (eight) Vasus. I travel in the forms of (twelve) Ādityas and all Viśwadevas (gods). I sustain Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Agni and (two) Ashwini Kumārs, (1)

I preserve Soma, the destroyer of foes (demons). I sustain Twastā (Vishwakarmā), Pushan and Bhagadevas. I bestow the fruits of sacrifice to sacrificers, who have plenty of sacrificial materials, and who offer Soma (nectar) to the Gods. (2)

I am the embodiment as well as empress of the universe. I arrange for the wealth needed for the sustenance of devotees. I have realized Brahman as identical with my Self. I am the chief among the heavenly deities. I dwell in all creatures in diverse forms. Divinely oriented gods perform their duties for my sake. (3)

Whoever breathes, eats, sees, hears, does so due to my seal and sanction and with energy bestowed by me. Those who know not my real nature, remain in pitiable mortal condition, for they see multiplicity in unity. Listen to me my dear friends, I am delivering the message to be derived by innumerable strenuous efforts. (4)

I am myself giving the message of absolute Brahman, for I am that Brāhman, whom all mortals and gods worship. I bestow results of self-knowledge and supernatural powers to those whom I want to protect. I create Brahmā, the creator, as well as the Rishis and the wise. (5)

For destroying demons, inimical to God, I fasten the string to the bow of Rudra, the destroyer. I fight for the protection of virtuous devotees. I envelop the earth and the sky as the indwelling spirit. (6)

I have given birth to Brahmā, the highest creator. My womb is the vast ocean of knowledge eternal. I am immanent in all universes. The heavens above and the earths below are filled up by my perennial seeds, and the whole creation is sustained by me. (7)

I float like free air on the earths, sky and stellar systems of the universe after creating them from my womb. However, I transcend the physical and astral worlds as eternal Brahman. though I am immanent in them." (8)

This *Devi Sukta* or the hymn to the Goddess Durgā (*Chandī*) is meeting ground of the Vedic and the *Tāntric* traditions of ancient India. It occurs as the 125th hymn of the 10th chapter of the Rig Veda, the oldest among the four Vedās, codified about 5000 years B.C., and constitutes an essential part of the recitation of the *Durgā Saptashati Chandī* (*Devi Mahatmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna*, compiled later by Maharshi Veda Vyāsa).

Surath, the King, and Samādhi, the merchant, worshipped the icon of Goddess Durga (*Chandī*) for three consecutive years by muttering this *Devī Sukta*, according to the instruction of Medha Rishi and got back their kingdom and liberation

respectively. This hymn was revealed to Vāk, the self-realized daughter of Ambhrin Rishi, who identified herself as the Divine Mother as well as *Brahman*, just as Mā Anandamayee identified herself as *Purna Brahma Nārāyana* as well as *Mahādevī Durgā*.

Mother's Realization :

Once in 1922, at the age of 26, when Nirmala Devi (later known as Ma Anandamayee) rose from her *nirvikalpa samādhi*, Baba Bholanath (her husband and the first initiated disciple) and Nishi Kaviraj, asked her, "Who are you"? Slowly came the sweet reply, "*Purna Brahma Nārāyan*." Then Baba Bholanath asked her, "If you are *Purna Brahma Nārāyan*, then who am I?" Mother replied emphatically, "*Mahādeva*". Baba Bholanath asked her again, "If I am *Mahādeva*, then who are you?" Mother's mystic but unequivocal reply was, "The same, *Mahādeva* as well as *Mahādevī*".**

Śrī Rāmakrishna and Ma Ānandamayee:

As the *Gītā* is a unique synthesis of *Vedānta* and *Vaishnavism*, *Chandī* is a unique synthesis of Saivism, *Shākta-ism* and Patanjali's *Rāja yoga*. If Swami Vivekananda is taken as a model of the synthesis of Yoga in the modern age, Śrī Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Ma Anandamayee can be safely taken as the unique models of the *Gītā* and the *Chandī* put together, with the following differences:

- a) Śrī Rāmakrishna appeared in a male body and Ma Anandamayee appeared in a female body.
- b) Śrī Rāmakrishna had several gurus (spiritual preceptors) and demonstrated intense *sādhana*, according to techniques of *Tantra*, *Vedānta*, *Vaishnavism* and *Rāja Yoga*; whereas Ma Anandamayee had no *guru* at all and did not practise any method of *sādhana*, though, of course, some yogic practices and symptoms were automatically revealed through her body from time to time in her youth.
- c) Though Śrī Rāmakrishna was a realized soul, he used to pose like a child before Goddess Kālī and instructed his devotees and disciples to surrender to God (or Goddess) as pure and simple children. Ma was not only an epitome of motherly love for her devotees, but also behaved like mother even to icons of Rāma or Krishna, and always identified herself, though most humbly and sweetly, with Goddess Kālī, Durgā, Lakshmi and Saraswati.

** Vide : (i) Brahmacharini Kumari Chandan—Swakriya Sarasāmrita (Bengali), Vol. IV. P. 117. 1983. (2) Mātri Darshan (Bengali), by Bhāiji (Jyotish Chandra Roy), 1937, pp. 46-52 for spontaneous hymns like *Devī Sukta*,* coming out of Mother's mouth after her *samā dhi* trances.

Differences apart, the similarities are however striking indeed. Both were *parā bhakta* (supreme devotees) after attaining *Brahma Jnāna* (self realization) like Shuka Deva, son of Vyāsa Deva. both practised and preached synthesis of all religions and all methods of *sādhanā*. From this point of view even spiritual giants like Bhagavān Buddha and Bhagavān Śri Chaitanya fall short of this integral view, for Buddha was an atheist and Chaitanya represented only Vedānta and Vaishnavism, but not Tantra. Without intense faith in God, no religion has survived among the masses in India. And without the practical science of *Tantra Yoga*, no religion will be acceptable to the scientific mind of the twenty-first century.

According to *Brihadāranyak Upanishad*, there are two aspects of Brahman, viz. *Avyakta* (transcendental) and *Vyakta* (immanent). The latter is also *Satyam* (truth), but the former is *Satyasya Satyam* (the truth of truth). *Moksha* means liberation of the *Jīvātmā* (individual self) from the bondage of the *Vyakta* and merging in the *avyakta*. According to the *Gītā*, *Purushottam Paramātmā* (God) has two powers to create the universe, viz. *Parā Prakriti* (the sum total of conscious *Jīvātmās*.) and *Aparā Prakriti* (the objective world, including mind, intellect, will and ego). Modern science deals with the latter, and spiritual science deals with the former and the technique of self-realization or God-realization. Enlightened Rishis and Yogis specialised in the science and art of self-realization. Examples of such enlightened souls are Vyāsa Deva, Shuka Deva, Yājñavalka, Janaka, Vāk, Gārgi, Buddha, Patanjali, Shankarāchāryā, Rāmānujāchārya, Śri Chaitanya, Śri Ramakrishna, Śri Aurobindo, Śri Ramana Maharshi, Swami Vivekānanda, Swami Yogānanda, Mā Ānandamayee and a host of other ancient, medieval and modern saints. The truth, enunciated in the Vedānta, *Tantra*, Vaishnavism, and Rāja Yoga is not dependent on any particular scripture or particular prophet, unlike that of the Christianity or the Islam. The tradition of self-realization in India is eternal and perennial. Every human being is potentially divine and has the capacity of self-realization. Rāma, Krishna, Buddha, Shankara, Chaitanya, Rāmakrishna and Ma Anandamayee are the ideals not only for Hindus, but also for the whole human race. Hinduism is a universal religion and Mā Ānandamayee is an epitome of Hinduism in all its dimensions. The ills and evils of our modern materialistic civilization, boasting of achievements of science, can be cured only by recourse to the practice of spiritual science and that is the relevance of the advent of Ma Anandamayee in the twentieth century.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

— P.C. Mehta

[Continued from before]

Mahāyāna Buddhism :

The first council of the disciples of Buddha called elders, met at Rajagṛha near Magadha. About a hundred years later, a split occurred at a second council in Vaisali. The liberal group accepted relaxation in the severity of monastic vows, but the orthodox prevailed. However, the liberal gained a large following. They held their own council called '*Mahasangha*' or the 'Great Council', which separated from the main body. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, in the first century AD, this movement developed into *Mahāyāna Buddhism*. In the first century A.D., Hinduism regained its intensity, early Buddhism declined, and *Mahāyāna Buddhism* evolved when the Guptas came into power.

That Buddha attained enlightenment is a fact. His teachings merely point out a way for others to reach enlightenment. The wisdom to be gained is a new dimension of consciousness, in the words of '*Dhammapada*', of 'Self as the lord of self'. He has also laid emphasis on Man working out his own salvation through diligence. Thus Buddha sowed the seeds of illumination in his followers which matured in due season and brought about enlightenment in his worthy disciples.

As Dr. D.T. Suzuki says, 'The life of Buddhism is the unfolding of the inner spiritual life of the Buddha himself, rather than his exposition of it, recorded as the 'Dharma' in Buddhist literature'.

No matter how appropriate these words are, enlightenment being always outside the dualities of the mind, is not something which can be imprisoned within the limits of concepts and therefore cannot be conveyed by words. The maximum that words can do is to point to an occurrence which has to be accomplished. Slavish adherence to words or dead letters would never catch the moving, living, vital spirit behind what is said.

Enlightenment is not a monopoly of anyone or any particular culture but springs from the most inner recesses of creation and manifests in evolving Humanity. A living organism does not remain static but flowers after its own pattern through the original impetus received by it. It is a growing, ever green and ever expanding tree

and with its contact with other cultures, it continues to add many more dimensions to its splendor.

Buddha's followers attained enlightenment and in the process came across truths beyond the spoken words, but contained within Buddha's enlightenment and these blossomed into The *Mahāyāna* school, which flourished from about the first century A.D. onwards

The fundamental ideas of the *Mahāyāna* are expressed in the *Mahāyāna-Sutras* also called *Vaipulya-Sutras*. They are in the form of instructions given by the Buddha.

The *Hinayānists* believed only in the impermanence of all things, while the *Mahāyānists* added that they were also non-essential, of an indefinable character and void at the bottom.

All the *Mahāyāna* Sutras preach the doctrine of essencelessness or voidness of all appearances. Thus the doctrine of *Sunya-vāda* was accepted by all *Mahāyānists*. It did not originate with Nagarjuna. Nagarjuna emphasizes it with great skill. The highest knowledge which is *Pranā-pāramitā* (i.e. wisdom that has gone beyond, or wisdom of the other shore) is this knowledge that everything is pure void. The *Prajñāpāramitā-Sutras* express this insight with remarkable terseness.

The other common feature of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism is that knowing that all appearances are void and that there is neither bondage nor liberation, the Bodhisattvas vow to help mankind to reach Nirvāna.

In India two *Mahāyāna* schools are known :

- i) *Yogācāra* also called *Vijnānavāda* or *Tathāta* philosophy.
- ii) The *Sunyavāda* or *Mādhyamika* philosophy.

Both these schools are idealistic.

The *Vijnāna-Vāda* or 'The sole reality of ideas' : (also known as '*Yogācāra*' or *Vijnyāptmatra* of Asanga or Vasubandhu), as propounded by Ashvaghosa in his *Tathāta* philosophy.

The famous exponent of *Vijnānavāda*, was a Brahmin named Asvaghosa, who flourished in about 100 A.D. He was the saintly preceptor of King Kaniska and a celebrated poet. Before being converted to Buddhism, he used to travel in India defeating Buddhists in debate.

Asanga was the next eminent proponent. He lived in 300 or 400 A.D. Asanga wrote a book called *Yogācāra-bhūmi-Sāstra* on *Vijnānavāda* i.e. the sole reality of ideas. It is likely that due to this book, *Vijnānavāda* came to be called *Yogācāra* also. Vasubandhu was a younger brother of Asanga. He was converted from

Sarvastivādā, into *Vijnānavāda*. he is the well-known commentator of a number of *Mahayāna Sūtras*. Vasubandhu's *Abhidharma-kosa*, with his own commentary is a great authority on this school as well as on the entire Buddhist doctrine. Another important work on this school is the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra*. It is so called because the teaching there is fictitiously represented as having been imparted by Buddha to Ravana of Lanka.

In explaining *Vijnānavāda*, Asvaghosa differentiates two aspects of the Soul, (i) *Bhuta-Tathata* or the aspect of 'Thatness' and ii) *Sansāra* or the cycle of birth-death-rebirth. As a result, *Vijnānavāda* came also to be called the *Tathāta* philosophy of Asvaghosa. It is the most representative form of *Vijnanavada* philosophy.

i) *Bhuta-Tathāta* is *Samatā* or oneness of all things also called *Dharma-dhāu*. It is uncreate, without attributes and uninvolved in duality. This *Bhuta-Tathata* holds all things within it. In its aspect as holding all things within it, it is called *Tathagata-Garbha*, or *Tathāgata-womb*. It is Reality.

ii) From this '*Tathāgata-Garbha*', or '*Tathāgata-womb*' issues forth, due to lack of enlightenment, the relative subjective mind called *Alaya-Vijnāna*, which is *Sansara*.

Alaya-Vijnana is the the mind in duality in which there is the subject-object split. This occurs due to ignorance or *Avidyā*. *Avidyā* is due to *Smṛiti* meaning remembrance of former *Vāsanā*, which is one's conditioning with its cravings and graspings along with unconscious memory of them from beginningless past lives. Thus the origin of this consciousness is from *Vāsanā*. Man forgets that he partakes of *Bhuta-Tathāta* and wrongly identifies himself with this *Smṛiti*, which becomes the center through which he acts. This center becomes the subject. It is then that, in that part of the mind which has become the object, all things appear under the forms of individuation, bringing about the birth of an objective universe. Under the theory of *Alaya-vijnāna*, the existence of matter is denied and things are analyzed as complexities of perception, the mental phenomena which we mistake for outer reality is attributed to the Absolute Mind. If we could disintegrate or dissolve this *Smṛiti*, the signs of individuation would disappear and there would be no objective universe.

Alaya-Vijnāna, along with its modes have no reality and therefore they constitute neither unity nor plurality. This *Tathāta* being existent and *Alaya-Vijnāna* being non-existent cannot form a duality.

At the level of *Alaya-Vijnāna*, when the mind is divided between '*Smṛiti*' as the subject and the responding objective universe, non-enlightenment takes place as follows :

- i) At this stage the person is totally identified with *Smṛiti* which is his personality or ego.
- ii) This total identification with one part of the mind which is *Smṛiti*, in turn creates the subject-object split in the mind, which is responsible for the formation of an objective Universe which comes into being only on account of the coming into existence of the beholder.
- iii) Being affected by the external world, the *Smṛiti* which is the subject, becomes conscious of pleasant and unpleasant sensations.
- iv) It begins to retain the sensations sequentially.
- v) This experience results in clinging to pleasant sensations and avoidance of unpleasant ones.
- vi) By thus clinging, the mind creates names, ideas and definitions called *Sanjna* with which to identify the objects of attachment and rejection.
- vii) This results in *Avidyā-karma* or ignorant action which perpetuates the cycle of birth-death-rebirth and the resultant suffering.
- viii) All the phenomena have arisen from *Avidyā* which does not exist.

The *Tathāta* has no attribute and as soon as it is understood that the Reality is outside the subject-object split in the mind, it can be pointed out only as 'Thatness'. It cannot be comprehended by the particularizing consciousness, which springs from identification with *Smṛiti*, which itself is a part of *Alaya-Vijnāna*. Therefore, in pointing it out, we have to point to the supramental level where there is neither subject nor object nor the duality of existence and non-existence. It cannot be done either by positive or negative affirmations. This is done by calling it *Sunyatā* meaning non-existence of phenomenal world of perceiver and perceived. *Sunyatā* is this 'void' where the illusion of creation has ended.

At the *Alaya-Vijnāna* level, *Tathāta* reflects imperfectly as *Prajnā* (wisdom) and *karma* (activity). When the ignorance is overcome, through the purification of the mind, the *Vijnāna* mentality is as it were tranquilized and the modes subdued. In that state one comes to enlightenment and steps outside the pale of birth-death-rebirth.

When through *Cetovimutti* or complete extinction of *Citta*, there is no identification with the *Alaya-Vijnāna* mind, the modes are obliterated (burnt through *Jnāna* or wisdom or dissolved through *Bhakti* or devotion and there is an end of *Avidyā*. It is then that the pure and genuine wisdom of the *Dharma-Dhātu* which is *Tathāta* will manifest itself as *Dharma-Kāya*.

Thus *Tathāta* is the reality within the Soul. As the *Avidyā* veils it, there springs forth the observer *Smṛiti* and the objective universe. Nevertheless, *Tathātā* exercises a constant pull for the elimination of *Avidyā* or ignorance. This urge to liberation is aided by the compassion of all the Bodhisatvas and Buddhas who foster non-attachment and not particularizing. When this *Avidyā* is removed, *Tathāta* radiates in all its glory.

By annihilating *Avidyā*, one abides in *Tathāta* to realize that all the modes of *Alaya-Vijnāna* including *Prajñā, Karma*, enlightenment and non-enlightenment are non-existent.

To abide in *Tathāta* is *Nirvāna*. As such the *Nirvāna* of the *Tathāta* school seems to point to an absolute Reality akin to the Reality propounded by Sankaracarya in Advaita Vedanta. In 'Nyaya Manjari', Jayant Bhatt claims that in addition to the particular egos, *Yogacaryas* also believed in an Absolute consciousness or Universal Self. The *Lankāvatāra-Sutra* (300 A.D.) which is considered to be an early work of the *Vijnānavādins* describes the ultimate reality as *Sunyatā* or a void in one place, as *Tathāta* in another place and as *Tathāta-Garbha* elsewhere.

Thus according to *Yogācāra*, knowledge points to no external object whatsoever.

There is only the self which is *Smṛiti* conceived of as a fleeting center or swiftly passing stream just as in *Hinayāna* Buddhism.

There is no knowledge that does not refer to an object and there is no object that can be conceived of except as known. This association between them, shows that there is no need for treating them as distinct and therefore the so called external reality may well be regarded as an aspect or form of knowledge itself.

Since objects are mere states or forms of the mind, they are a product of the self and consists of an aggregate of mental states. Thus the objective world is nothing else but ideas.

This doctrine is known as *Vijnāna-vāda* or the sole reality of ideas, since the doctrine reduces all external reality to thought without any objective counterpart.

The assumption of these forms by the mind is due to *vāsanā* or the revival of former impressions left on it by previous experience, and the diversity of perception is explained by the nature of the revived impressions.

To the question as to how the original impression came about if there was no external object, the answer given is :

- i) To consider mental impression as traceable to an external object, is to beg the very question at issue.
- ii) the impressions being beginningless, they have no origin in time and cannot be considered as having a beginning in time.
- iii) Since impressions in the mind are not always caused by an object in the so-called outer world, there is no reason for such an assumption. One sees a ghost when there is none in the objective world.
- iv) So, even if we assume a beginning to any series of impressions, it would not establish the existence of a real object some time in the past.

In other words, according to *Yogācāra*, in the series of knower, known and knowledge, knowledge is the sole truth and there is neither the knower nor the known. It is only a succession of ideas. Through association with one part of the series, the mind creates the knower and then the other part becomes the known. Thus, man lives within the subject-object split. This is due to *vāsanā* left behind by past experience. At no stage the experience is due to an external factor. Thus the ideas signify nothing but themselves. *Yogācāra* believes in nothing but these ideas which is *vijnāna*. Hence *Yogācāra* is also called *Vijnāna-vāda*.

Their reasoning is as follows :

i) In dreams experience arises without corresponding objects and internal thoughts appear as external. Our experience of the world is likewise.

ii) Cognition becomes aware of itself. In self-cognizing cognition, we have a case in which what is known is identical with what knows. Same is the case in all experience. All knowledge is thus self-knowledge and the distinction felt between *jnāna* and content is a delusion.

iii) There is *sahopalambha-niyama* or invariable association existing between cognition and its contents. Since thoughts and things always appear together, there is no need to assume that they are distinct.

iv) The so-called objects are seen to impress different persons differently and even the same person at different times, a circumstance which would be inexplicable if the objects were real.

The *Yogācāra* view explains the whole of the external world as a creation of the mind and thus abolishes distinction between the *sva-laksana* and *sāmānya-laksana*. The only reality admitted is *vijnāna* which is internal. The subject and object are only aspects of *vijnāna* or knowledge itself. By some amongst its adherents an absolute *vijnāna* -series was postulated of which everything was regarded as an

appearance. Thus we find the doctrine described as *vijnānadvaita* and classed with monistic doctrines like the *Ātmadvaita* of Sankara.

This doctrine is usually compared with 'subjective idealism' or 'subjectivism' in modern philosophy and the comments offered are as under :

- i) If there is only subjective experience and no external object, there is no difference between waking experience and dreams.
- ii) Unless we compare our experience with another experience which is true and not an illusion, how do we call one true and another false. Thus we call a dream as false by comparing the dream experience with waking experience.
- iii) Since all experiences are on the same level as dreams, the distinction between truth and illusion is abolished.
- iv) Therefore, to call our experience of diversity as false, we have to refer to another truer experience. *Yogācāra* will then have to admit either that
 - i) there is a higher kind of knowledge which is not false or
 - ii) that waking experience itself is true.

If neither view is acceptable to *Yogācāra*, their position becomes untenable.

- v) Further, as consequence of rejecting external objects, the subjectivist must deny the existence of all selves besides his own, for, if there is no reason to believe in external physical objects, there can be none to believe in other people except as part of his dream. The doctrine is thus reduced to solipsism or the theory that there is only a solitary self and that everything else is mere fancy.
- vi) Such a theory vitiates all the assumptions of practical life and ends all philosophical controversy.

The doctrine has to be understood through the meditative way dealt with earlier.

[To continue]

THE DIVINE MOTHER

—Dr. Prem Lata Srivastav

[Continued from before]

Shahbag leela :

Bholanath was a disappointed man in Dhaka when his mission to get a job in that city failed to materialise. When he decided to return to Bajitpur, Ma intervened. Since she was observing maun those days, through gestures, she indicated Bholanath to wait for three more days.

How prophetic was Ma's intervention!

Within the next three days Bholanath was appointed the supervisor of the beautiful vast garden of Shahbag, the traditional resort of Nawab Gani Mian of Dhaka. The estate was part of the property in share of Nawabzadi Pyari Banu. Rai Bahadur Yogesh Chandra Ghosh was a trustee of this estate, and he had heard about Ma and Bholanath from his son-in-law, Bhudeb Basu. Pyari Banu later became devotee of Ma and had many exciting experiences of Sri Ma's spiritual power. She and her family were at times miraculously saved by Ma from imminent danger and troublesome situations.

On his appointment on 17th April, 1924 Bholanath and Ma shifted to a three-room cottage inside Shahbag gardens. Adjacent to their residence, was the famous dancing hall of the owners, the future venue of Sri Ma's many spiritual divine *leelas*.

After their arrival at Shahbag, Ma appeared to be a picture of great serenity and tranquility along with the usual reticence. Various metaphysical manifestations and spiritual sayings were in evidence during those days. Ma, still abstained from speech, which started at Bajitpur. She remained in 'Samadhi' for most of the time. Hence, Bholanath invited his nephew Ashu, widowed sister Matori and his son, Amulya, to stay with them at Shahbag and manage the household work. Janaki Babu and Bhudeb Babu had also come from Bajitpur to Dhaka. Through these people, and some eye-witnesses, spread the words of Ma's super-natural *leela*. Soon well-educated and learned established citizens of Dhaka gathered round Her with their families, and remained life long devotees of Sri Ma.

She was now manifesting Her spiritual power before scores of devout followers, as the Mother of the Universe. This image of Ma was seen so frequently that in no time, she became famous as the "Mother of Shahbag".

The garden of Shahbag, located near Ramna's race course, was spread over a huge area. It had all the varieties of plantations. Ma often used to mention about a Madrasi mango tree, which didn't normally grow in Bengal. The leaves of this particular tree used to eject a kind of honey. Once, Ma asked for a bowl to be kept below that tree. Soon, the bowl was full of honey. There used to be also a jackfruit tree in the garden, which produced fruits round the year. Ma said, people used to liken these trees to Mahatmas, deeply engrossed in their sadhana. She would frequently walk about this side of the garden. She would also frequent the Ramna Kali Mandir, also located nearby, where she sat with Bholanath for hours together. She met many subtle corporeal beings at that place. Where, she told us later, many great Mahatmas lay buried.

Ma has said, "While cooking meals, during the stay in Shahbag, often the landscape of a particular place used to emerge before this body's eyes. It was the perspective of Dhaka's Siddheshwari Mandir but then this body did not know its location. Neither did Bholanath."

Sri Baul Basak, a childhood friend of Bholanath, used to visit them frequently. A devout worshipper of Kali, he spent nights singing hymns in praise of Kali. At Ramna Kali Mandir, Baul Basak had his first 'darshan' of Ma.

It was in December, 1924, when Jyotish Chandra Roy (Bhaiji) had his first 'darshan' of Ma at Shahbag. During the first meeting itself with Ma—the embodiment of the Supreme—reminded him about his previous birth by saying, "You should always remember that you are a real brahmin. This body has an inseparable connection with you through the string of *Bhagavat bhava*".

The sole aim of Bhaiji was to bring the devotees, saints, recluse, mahatmas, the needy and distressed closer to Ma, enable them to repose their respect, trust, and faith on Her. Bhaiji was convinced that Ma's only food for survival in this world of ours, was the selfless propensity, love, and devotion of Her followers.

In December, 1925 or January, 1926, Dr. Shashanka Mohan Mukherjee visited Shahbag for Ma's darshan. So overwhelmed was he, that on the next day, he came again, this time with his daughter Adarani Devi (Guru Priya Didi). A retired Civil Surgeon, Dr. Mukherjee had an imposing personality and military manners. He was a very established name in the society. But he parted with all this gradually for a gruelling sadhana. With the blessings of Ma. Dr. Mukherjee later became Swami Akhandananda Giri after the spiritual ordeal.

Shri Guru Priya Devi (Didi) later came to stay with Ma, and devoted her life in the service of Ma in many roles—sister, friend, attendant and what not. Didi became Ma's companion during Her *leela* on earth from the moment of her first darshan till the moment her body permitted, Didi would always be in the service of Ma and Her devotees. She deserves all praise.

Now, Shahbag was generally seen crowded by Her devotees. From common people to the respected and established persons—whoever came in contact with Ma, lent himself at Her service forever. Ma had a magnetic attraction. Traditionally, the people of Dhaka enjoyed organising kirtans. The tradition was so strong that later devotees also followed it. They would encircle Her and dance to the tune of kirtan, khol and kartal. When the recital peaked, Ma would ecstatically, looking upwards as if looking for someone in the endless blue, join the followers. She would turn Her hands, lift Her body upwards to dance to the tune of kirtan. The devotees had the feeling of having touched and seen the inaccessible and the invisible God.

Bholanath's nephew, Ashu, who was staying at Shahbag those days, also enjoyed the kirtans. Sri Ma's stoic disciple, Biren Mukherjee, who was conspicuous for his resounding voice and continuous singing capacity at kirtans, once asked Ashu, "For Ma's darshan, we come from faraway places and you despite the proximity to her, continue to be evasive. Come, and take the path of renunciation."

Kirtan recitals were held every evening in Shahbag. Kirtans were also held occasionally, during *Purnima* and *Amavasya*. Ma said, "wherever kirtans are held in great fervour, many spectacular changes do happen there." In the garden of Shahbag, where Ma lived, the wood of two cyprus trees turned into sandalwood. Not only the aroma of sandal which purified the environ around, the wood also had many other properties. Ma's devotees took some branches of these trees to Kashi Ashram. Interestingly, the leaves, flowers etc. of cyprus tree had remained the same, only the wood had changed.

Ma says, 'whether Hindu or Muslim, or believers of any other religious faith in the world—all are same, They all worship God and seek His blessings. Kirtan and Namaz are one and the same, indistinguishable from each other.'

This is Ma's message to Her children.

The number of Ma's devotees shot up in no time, and Bholanath's job was to manage them. Women devotees usually came in the afternoon, and directly went to have Her darshan. Ma would welcome them with great care, talk with them about their family etc. Men, however, were in a way screened by Bholanath before getting entry.

In the beginning itself, Ma had warned Bholanath, "Before you open the door of your house for the entire world, think twice. Afterwards, you would not be able to stem the tide of humanity". But Bholanath was a warm-hearted person, perhaps, he had an inkling that he would not be able to restrict such a forceful personality to mere domestic chores.

While strolling in Shahbag one day, Ma happened to see a mausoleum there. They were tombs of two Fakirs—Guru and his disciple - who had come from Arabia to Dhaka, Subsequently when their bodies were laid "to rest, the Nawab family which respected the Fakirs, built the tombs there.

Interestingly, during Her stay in Bajitpur, Ma is said to have enquired about the Arab country, as if, Fakir Saheb (the Guru) had visited Bajitpur to invite this body to Shahbag." At Shahbag too, the two met on the spiritual plane.

One day, kirtan was being held at the dancing-hall of Shahbag. In the midst of kirtan, in a sudden change of mood, Ma rushed out and beckoned to Mohammad Zainuddin, a friend of Bhaiji. Ma hurriedly went to that mausoleum and read namaz in exactly the same way as a devout Moslem would. The Maulavi Saab was astonished to see Her gestures and the distinct and correct pronunciation. That was a thursday, the day lamps were lit there and *batasa*, (sugar puffs) were offered to the tombs. But by mistake this tradition was broken that day. Therefore, on Ma's request, the Maulavi later completed the ritual and offered *batasa* to Ma as *prasad*. Ma opened Her mouth and accepted from him.

Meanwhile another surprise was in stock. During Durga Puja, 1926, professional photographer, Shashi Bhushan Das Gupta came to Shahbag and wanted to take Sri Ma's photographs. But nobody could tell him Ma's whereabouts. At the end of search Ma was found lying in samadhi in a dark room. Assisted by Bholanath and Bhaiji Ma came outside and the photographer exposed eighteen plates. On developing the plates it was found that surprisingly only a ball of light was visible on 17 plates with no figure. Only the last plate showed Ma with a semicircular light on Her forehead and Bhaiji standing at Her back, while Bhaiji was much behind the range of the camera.

Explaining the above point later Ma said, "when this body was lying in a dark room the whole room was flooded with light radiating from it. When this body was taken out for photograph, the whole body was engulfed by a very bright light. This may have spoiled the first few plates. This light began to diminish gradually until it remained concentrated on the forehead only. "This body had a *kheyala'* that Jyotish (Bhaiji) is standing behind."

Bholanath's interest and the devotee's request prompted Ma to do Kalipuja in Shahbag in November, 1925, As the word spread, devotee's delight knew no bounds. On the Kalipuja night, all articles for puja were properly placed before the image of Kali. Ma sat on the mat meant for the Pujari and then quietly lay on the floor. After sometime, she was in trance, spontaneously pronouncing the mantras, and offering the sacred flowers, bel leaves and sandal paste both to Herself and the Kali's image.

That was an unusual Kalipuja, many people had a chance, on this occasion, to have darshan of Ma as Kali. Naturally, this Kalipuja became a subject of much discussion. Soon the 'Mother of Shahbag', was now famous as 'Mother of Dhaka'.

In 1929, a few internationally acclaimed philosophers who came to Dhaka to attend the National Philosophical Congress, met Ma at Shahbag. The meeting lasted three hours in Bholanath's presence. According to witnesses, questions on almost all aspects of philosophy and religion were promptly answered by Ma without any hesitation. Her answers were to the point, and bore the character of spiritual, independent thought. All those present on that occasion were simply moved by Ma's range of knowledge, the manner and power of expression.

To the question that how could she answer such questions without studying philosophy, Ma had said, "Life is like an epic novel. One who goes into it's great depths, cannot remain untouched with the facts of science, philosophy and the related subjects."

After this successful meeting and discussion, even common people began recognising Ma as an outstanding personality.

***Mahabhava* during kirtans**

The play of sadhana through kirtans was, revealed in Her ever since Her childhood. It was Her father, a natural singer, who taught Her to sing in praise of Hari when she was still a child. But the effects of kirtans on Her body were witnessed from Ashtagram days.

Recollecting the '*Mahabhava*', Ma said, some carpenters used to live near our house in Ashtagram. They specialised in making boats. They worked during the day and after nightfall, they sang kirtans. A cluster of bamboo trees obstructed the sight of their house. Nevertheless, we could hear their kirtans."

"This body would lose all senses once it heard the kirtans. Even a look in that direction filled this body with immense happiness. There was a boy from the family, who used to visit us. He would dance and sing kirtans when told. This was one of Her kheyal. In this way, many varieties of Kirtans at many places effected

this body to lose all senses. Initially, efforts were made to conceal this reaction. Later, when ecstasies grew more intense, they couldn't be controlled. Except Bholanath, none could hardly know about these developments." This too was a '*kheyal*' of Ma.

Initially, Bholanath was cautious to keep the matter secret. When kirtans were held in the courtyard, he would not allow Her to come out of veil. "Completely overwhelmed, this body would turn topsy-turvy inside the house. At times this body reacted and responded even to ordinary kirtans. However, sometimes even the most ritualistic kirtans would fail to affect this body."¹

When the Gagan kirtan group sang at their place one day, sitting on an elevated seat, Ma went to Her trance inconspicuously. Later, the group could not be offered meals as it was spoiled by dog. When Ma did not regain consciousness even the next day, Bholanath invited the same group again to do kirtan. Hours after the recital began, Ma returned to the material world.

Ma's experience during kirtan once described by Herself i—

"This body became as it were, identified with the Kirtan. If any body has *bhava* during kirtana that would be of a different type. The reason is this—such *bhava* is mixed with actions and so it is tinged with a trace of worldly emotions. But the *bhava* experienced by this body had nothing to do with any action. The conclusion is that here the worldly side is totally closed. And the feeling of joy here is to some extent, something unique."²

On the request of devotees, on the occasion of *Uttarayan Sankranti* (16 January 1926) and solar eclipse, Ma presented Herself in the first public kirtan ever. A massive crowd which had gathered on that occasion, had the privilege to watch Ma's body glow with '*Mahābhava*'. It is said, the illumination and ecstasy was somewhat similar to what happened in the case of Gouranga Mahaprabhu.

The venue of this kirtan was the ball-room of Shahbag. *Bhog prasad* after the kirtan were to be distributed. The recital began at 10⁰ clock in the morning. Ma with other ladies was inside Her house, (adjacent to the dancing hall) wherefrom she could hear the melodious tune of hymns. Suddenly, she reached as a gust of wind in the dancing hall. The constant devout music had motivated Her, peaked Her to a kind of illumination, happiness and state of ecstasy as seen never before. The public was simply amazed to see 'Ma' in that divine composure (*Mahābhava*).

1. Matri Darshan—Bhaiji, page 38

2. Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Prasanga—Sri A. K. Dutta Gupta, A.V. Vol. 3, p. 88

Kirtan over, Ma Herself distributed the prasad. Bhaiji has written that Her versatility and dexterity in distributing the prasad in a splendid manner projected Her as if 'Mahalakshmi' Herself has landed on this earth.³

The instruments-khol, kartal etc-which were played during the kirtan on the day of solar eclipse, were kept at Shahbagh. One day, Ma suggested that they may be used every evening during the prayers. Thus the tradition of daily kirtan started with Bholanath, Ashu and Amulya promptly acting on Her suggestion.

Variations in Ma's manifestations during the ecstasies were evident. Sometime *mantras* would be pronounced immaculately. However, not necessarily Ma was overwhelmed by each and every kirtan recital. During such occasions, when Ma entered into such divine trances, as Mahābhava Bhaiji's vivid description of Ma on one such occasion goes like this—

"Suddenly Her (Ma's) body sank down flat to the ground and began to roll on it. Then she slowly rose and stood on Her two big toes. Both hands were raised straight up, Her head slightly tilted to one side and a little backwards, and Her radiant eyes stared with a steady gaze towards the far end of the sky. A little later she began to move in that posture. Her body appeared to be filled with a heavenly presence. She was not at all aware of Her clothes hanging lossely on Her person. No one had the strength to stop Her force. Her whole body danced on with measured beats in a most delicate way and reached the place where kirtana was going on; Her body then quietly melted down, as it were, on the floor. Led by some mysterious power it rolled on like the dry leaves of a tree moved slowly by a gentle breeze. After sometime while still lying on the floor, very soft sweet musical strains came from Her lips "*Hare Murare Madhukaitabhare*"—after sometime she was again in Her normal self. Her glowing face, Her sweet ineffable looks, Her soft, tender voice, brimming over with divine emotion all reminded the assembled crowd of the image of Sri Chaitanya Deva as described in his biographies. All the physical changes observed long, long ago in Sri Chaitanya Deva (1485-1533) manifested themselves again in Her person on that occasion.⁴

Sri Sri Ma's *Samadhi Bhāva*

Apparently Ma's period of sadhana extended for six years from 1918 to 1924. However as regards Ma's *Samadhi Bhava* it has happened to Her even before and after this period also. Not that, she had *Samadhi Bhava* during the early years also which diminished afterwards. She was always in *Sahaja samadhi*. She has

3. Matri Darshan—Bhaiji, p. 37

4. Mother as revealed to me—Bhaiji, p. 36-37

explained that "your strong desire to see this body in states of samadhi causes it to manifest at times. A call in full intensity for this body, reacts and its physical expression will invariably follow."

Even in Her childhood, she went into a trance. Even then Her body loosened when she heard the melodious kirtan held in the neighbourhood. Didima would shake Her out; what people then thought was slumber or childish pranks. After she passed through rigorous of sadhana and turned distinctly ecstatic then people related to the unusual events of the past.

In the later years also Ma's samadhi came to light during Ma's Birthday celebrations, when mahatmas requested Her to come to the place of puja. She would go into samadhi and remain in that state for hours together.

In the earlier chapters of her book Didi has given detailed and excellent description of Ma's various ecstasies. Didi was amazed to see Her in such ecstasies. It is a common knowledge that Arjuna a was frightened to see Sri Krishna's *Virat Swarup* and requested Him to be again as his childhood friend. We too like Ma in Her usual motherly way.

Bhaiji has given splendid details of Ma's *samadhi bhav* in his book 'Mother as Revealed to Me'—

"Like the waning Sun, Ma's normal behaviour and manners transformed slowly, She would gradually turn breathless and speechless. With Her eyes closed, Ma's face would lit up by a bright auspicious glow, the whole body would cease to move. The pores of Her body emanating unique radiance. It appeared that Ma was sinking deep into Her samadhi. This went on for hours....."

When She returned to this world from Her ecstasies, the breathing slowly returned to normal and the body reactivated to regain the normal self.

Ma has described Her experience of samadhi as follows:

"It is a state beyond all conscious and supra-conscious plane—a state of complete immobilisation of all thoughts, emotions and activities, both physical and mental—a state that transcends all the phases of life here below. What you call *savikalpa samadhi*, is also but a means to reach that final objective, it is only a passing stage in your sadhana."

"Deep concentration on any one of the five elementals of sense—sound, touch, smell, taste, and sight, derived chiefly from air, earth, water etc. leads a man to merge his identity into it and as concentration deepens, the body as it were gradually freezes with it. Then that special object of sense pervades his whole being and his ego gradually dissolves in it and coalesces with one universal entity.

When this condition settles down, the consciousness of One Universal Self too melts away, and what then remains is beyond words, expression and experience."⁵

Ma explains samadhi as follows:

'The consummation of action and feeling may be called samadhi. It is a state where the question of knowledge and ignorance does not arise. A stage comes when the *sadhaka* realises that he is one with his object of contemplation. From that plane he may again comeback to the ordinary level of self-consciousness. This type of samadhi also must be transcended. The ultimate state, being unparallel, cannot be explained or expressed in any language. It is solely a matter of direct experience."⁶

When Ma was requested to throw light on Her experience in intense samadhi, She said:

"When you sit in this room, you look out of the door and windows when they are open, and see many things outside. If they are closed, you cannot see those things. During such experiences, this body too feels that all outlets are closed, all connection with the world is stopped....When you drop a handful of loose soil over the still water in a pond, you see how beautifully it spreads over. This body too enjoyed similar feelings on those occasions."⁷

She further explained this situation, saying She felt a subtle flow of vitality running through Her body, inducing each and every particle of Her body. Whatever things this body saw and touched, it felt in oneness with all of them. This body retained no identity of its own in this situation."⁸

[To continue]

5. Mother as Revealed to me—Bhaiji, p. 68.

6. From the life of Sri Anandamayee Ma—Bithika Mukherji, p. 63

7. Mother as Revealed to me — Bhaiji, p. 41

8. Matri Darshan—Bhaiji, p. 70.

MA ANANDAMAYEE - BEYOND IMAGINATION

—Sri S.K.Bose

The author first met Anandamayee Ma some time in the year 1947 at Satya Gopal Geeta ashram in Allahabad in the presence of Sri Gopal Thakur. She was talking in a very simple language, enquiring about the welfare of many, including myself ! Her words (*Kemon achhis*) touched my heart as if my nearest relation was asking. I was unable to move from there. It seemed some unknown force of *Love* was preventing to leave the place. The feelings are now expressed by Jean Herbert, who although did not understand her spoken words, yet realized the fragrance of her marvellous love and expressed in appropriate language—"Seeing the radiant face of Anandamayee, a supreme spiritual personality, and hearing her laughter, somehow I guessed that she is an incarnation of joy. Touched by the caress of her glance, I simply realized that her heart is overflowing with love".

Later, I had many opportunities to witness assembly of intellects, advanced spiritual sadhakas and theologians sitting at her feet discussing about the Formless, which is attributed and un-attributed. It was an informal and homely gathering. Everything seemed to me friendly and congenial. All of a sudden her smiling face and pleasant look turned towards me with attraction which I felt even at that tender age. Realizing 'Herself' as one of my nearest persons I felt like talking to Her. But my voice was choked due to nervousness. Sri Ma looked at me. Br. Bibhuda, sitting by the side, made the situation lighter by whispering "only look at the face of Ma, You will get all answers". Later I realized that talking to Ma - a supreme spiritual personality—demands tremendous stability and courage. Even understanding real meaning of her simple expressions were very difficult. A French disciple sitting quietly there to whom someone asked, "You don't understand anything of what Ma says"? His reply at once was, "who does"? This reply is truly correct. Meanwhile someone casually expressed to Ma what are you thinking when sitting in silence ? She turned Her attention with an immediate response, "Nothing, nothing at all. Mind is absolutely clean of thoughts (*Jhārā Ponchhā*)".

One can never realize this state of mind unless degrees of randomness of thought-clouds and desires are totally eliminated. Once this condition is fulfilled, the process of meditation is triggered. "Since whatever we do or achieve is through mind (Osho)".

Anandamayee Ma in several occasions expressed, "'State of meditation is not to be achieved. It is your hidden spiritual treasure to be made known by emptying your mind from thoughts". It is a state of clarity of mind which is all the time restless, in confusion. More scientifically, meditation is inversely proportional to mind overpowered by thoughts and desires. In a state of nothingness as it is with Anandamayee Ma mind remains fully relaxed free from bondage, from delusion. 'A state of zero entropy', with no restlessness due to thought-clouds. Once the mind becomes clear then you see your Self in the Mirror. This crucial moment comes of itself and one should be fully prepared for absorbing the spiritual power of his Guru. Then only the vision becomes sharp, penetrating with absolute clarity and the soul no more remains captive in the clutches of the materialistic world. "Remember, real vision is that where the wish to see anything more vanishes for ever, to hear that - which when heard, the desire to hear anything, is for ever silenced".

Aim should therefore be to make desperate efforts to drive away thoughts and desires of the materialistic world, yet remaining conscious and alert from inside. Ramana Maharshi called it, "wakeful thoughtlessness". One needs to be conscious of this all the time even if he is engaged in office or at home. The very first principle therefore is to realize that, meditation is not something to be achieved, 'to be resolved and recognized". Just as fire is enveloped by smoke, just as mirror is covered by dust, just as an embryo is covered by the womb, so is the *Atman* is covered by thoughts and desires (Bhagavad Geeta). "What is wanted is genuine awakening after which nothing remains to be achieved", expressed to one devotee by Ma.

Atmananda got unique opportunities to witness many private and open interviews with persons of varying educational and spiritual background. In all the cases She responded in appropriate words appealing to each person's nature and feelings. Once in response to a question posed jointly by Dr. Panna Lal and a foreign devotee Anandamayee Ma expressed, "It is also true that there is no necessity to pray, because He is with you all the time without characterizing the instructions probably given by his Guru". But it is to be kept in mind, "to surrender fully to the Supreme Power in the first instance and only then the power will compel you to do what is required to be done to uncover the '*Atman*'".

In the simple language of Sri Ram Krishna, "God has brought us on this earth and it is He and His duty to be with us all the time and look after us. However one cannot experience this so long as he is in the process of knowing the 'Self'".

Kamala Sahai wanted to know how does one know that he has surrendered? Ma's reply was, "When you are hungry and eat, you are satisfied and so you know

that you have eaten, just so when you surrender, you are satisfied". Subsequently, Ma smilingly turned Her face towards Sri Gopal Thakur and whispered, "The words came out of its own probably because his Guru has given similar instructions to the foreign devotees". Gopal da simply nodded and smiled.

Recapitulating all these heavenly events I personally feel that I am fortunate enough to have '*darshan*' of Anandamayee Ma, went nearer to Her, talked, obtained blessings and spiritual strength to lead a noble life right from my early educational to research career.

"Pray, not your desire may be done, but 'His'.

Think of him at every breath, since he breathes through you"

Jai Ma

URGENT CIRCULAR

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**—MANAGING EDITOR
"MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA"
SHREE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE SANGHA
BHADAINI, VARANASI-221001**

FROM NOTES TAKEN IN SRI MA'S PRESENCE

--- "Kirpal"

Kumbh Mela, Allahabad, 21st January, 1971

Q : Why does not everyone appear as a form of God ?

Sree Ma : God Himself has said I am within everyone; and everyone is within me. Meditate on God. Speak the truth, think of the Truth. Follow the true path. What will happen ? That you are the son of Immortality will be revealed. Therefore one must obey the teachings of one's spiritual master.

A Sadhu : please bless me that our love and devotion to God increases.

22nd January, 1971

Sree Ma : One must be friendly towards everyone and talk politely. God who has arranged for your milk before your birth will definitely provide food for you. Therefore, you should not worry or do any fraud.

There is no guarantee of our breath. Everything will remain here. Only the repetition of God's name, meditation and the worship of God will accompany one. The world, from where uncertainty and suspicion arise.....and one forgets the Divine Father, the Divine Mother and one is absorbed in play. To draw one towards Himself, God sends sorrow and unhappiness. Then one feels God is far away. To realize the Eternal Father; Mother, Husband, one must make an effort. No one can relieve your happiness.

If one has the earnest desire then God will provide your food and clothes at your doorstep. By the repetition of God's Name, even for a while, you will never suffer want. You will receive the entire wealth.

You have turned your face aside from God and indulging in play of the world. What should be done ? You must follow the rules and regulations of the *Brahmacharya ashram*: the *Grihasth ashram* . You must follow the rules of that state. Your wife is the Divine Lakshmi, you must serve Her, and the child, the Divine child.

Only in the human form is it possible to attain God. That you will pray to God and God will not listen to your prayers; that is not possible.

Whatever path you follow for the realization of God; your unhappiness will vanish, God Himself will guide you.

OUR SIXTH TRIP TO INDIA

— Shraddha Davenport

It was November 18, 1978, when our sixth journey began. As usual, the dream time between those pilgrimages to Mother started melting away when the giant airplane lifted us from within that dream. By the time we touched India's sacred earth it was, once again, as though we had never left. The familiar sounds and smells that existed nowhere else in our world once again created that atmosphere wherein we awaken and our souls are nourished. It must be like that for creatures who hibernate during certain periods, or the caterpillar coming out of its cocoon of sleep and metamorphosis—a more conscious birth than the one that began this life.

We had received Mother's permission to join Her at the remote ashram of Bhimpura. We had never been in that area before and looked forward to the opportunity of being in a quiet place with Mother. Our friend Bhakti was travelling with us.

Getting to Bhimpura was not so easily accomplished due to airline over-booking, delays causing missed connections, and the wait in Delhi to be reunited with our luggage which had gone on to Hong Kong without us.

Our reservations to Bombay with connecting flight to Baroda had been missed. It was not difficult to get to Bombay, but the next daily flight to Baroda was booked solid. Our only chance was to go to the airport at flight time and hope that four people would not show up to claim their seats that day. We were numbers two, three and four on the standby list. By Mother's grace there were exactly four people who did not claim their seats on that flight. We were very relieved and finally climbed aboard.

In Baroda some very kind people assisted us in locating a car for the last leg of our journey. It was about a one-hour drive through the lush green countryside to a small village called Chandod. Chandod is situated on the peaceful and most holy Narmada river. The Bhimpura ashram is a short distance downriver and sits high above the Narmada's bank. There is a rough and bumpy dirt road from Chandod to Bhimpura which our driver traversed very carefully. When I think of rural India, the simple spiritual heart of the land, I see Bhimpura in my mind.

Little thatched grass huts were strewn along dirt paths sheltered by stoic banyan trees. Oxen, cattle, and goats roamed freely. Beautiful monkeys were playing along the river bank and among the banana trees where the peacocks' shrill cry made me

aware that they can, indeed, fly. Small chipmunks were darting among the trees and imperious crows with lusty voices expressed their critical opinions about almost everything.

Arriving at the ashram, we saw Swami Satchidanandaji, Dasu and Dr. Triguna Sen. Then Mother came out accompanied by Bhaskaranandaji and Udasji.

Mother walked near where I stood as She proceeded toward the ashram's great banyan tree. Around that tree was concrete platform where Mother's asana had been prepared for Her.

She was so beautiful, sitting there high above the shimmering Narmada. The sky was clear and blue behind the spreading banyan tree whose branches and leaves sheltered Her from the bright sunlight. Mother kept looking at me and graced me with Her sweet smile. My heart had longed for that moment, and how perfectly it was framed by Bhimpura. We were sent to the Ganganath Temple Ashram about a fifteen minute walk down the narrow dirt road, where rooms were available for our use. Gadadhar, Melita, and Patrick (a doctor from Europe) were also staying there.

The rooms were clean and the view was beautiful. The ashram, consisting of several buildings, had a nice ghat on the river and tropical garden on the other side. In the temple was a shrine for the fire god, Agni. An open hall held pictures of many saints. Among them was Sri Aurobindo who, we were told, had spent some of his early years in a dark solitary underground room below the Saraswati Temple situated near the Ganganath Temple. (It is said that the ideal life of a sadhaka is to do sadhana on the banks of the Narmada, then to pass the last days in meditation by the Ganges).

There was a long narrow room near the kitchen where we were served well-prepared meals daily. Opposite the other building, but also on the Narmada, was a large two-storey house where the Mahant of this ashram lived. He was a very kind sadhu, whose gentle nature was reflected in that beautiful place which was open to all who came there.

Bhakti's room was next to ours with a connecting door between as well as doors leading outside onto a large balcony where clothes lines awaited our laundry.

All three of us were exhausted from the four-day ordeal of impeded travel. During the first three days there one or two of us would be forced to stay in our room to rest. And Mother would always ask about the missing one.

One Morning Bhakti and I went to ashram early. Satya was not feeling well, but said he would follow a little later. She and I sat beneath Mother's banyan tree near the Shiva Linga installed there. The peaceful beauty of Bhimpura seemed to slowly

and gently untie all the knots in my being. Looking down at the holy Narmada, I watched as a sailboat silently glided by.

Mother was resting, so we visited with Bhaskaranandaji. He told us that many great sadhus and rishis had done their sadhana on the bank of the sacred Narmada. Everything about that area vibrates with the devotion of their lives. It is as though the place itself is in a state of meditation.

There was a delightful young man at the ashram whom we enjoyed and always looked forward to seeing. His home was in Nadiad. The Samyam Saptaha had been held there from November seventh to November fourteenth at the Sri Sant Ram Samadhi Mandir. While Mother had been in Nadiad, that young man, whose name was Rajesh Patel, had been granted the rare privilege of travelling with Mother for some time. Because he was planning to come to America soon, he was granted that singular boon and allowed to perform service for Mother.

As we waited to see Mother that day, Rajesh brought a special prasada for us. We greatly enjoyed the chopped fruit mixed with small peppers which he told us that had been prepared according to Mother's instructions. Normally he was kept quite busy and had little time for conversation. Only later in our trip did we have more opportunities to talk with him. Then we discovered that we had first met Rajesh in 1970. During the daily program in Suktal, sandalwood tilak was placed upon the foreheads of all the devotees seated in the hall. This blessing was bestowed by a lady to the women and by a young boy to Satya and the other men gathered there. That boy was Rajesh. He had come to attend the Samyam Saptaha with his parents and two brothers, all devotees of Mother.

Later I asked the ashram girls what Mother ate in those days. They told me that She took a little vegetable juice and some dal rice, but in very small amounts.

Satya arrived, bringing our gifts for Mother, and soon we were allowed to go upstairs to the porch in front of Mother's room. There were large windows on the front side of Her room. She sat just inside on Her wooden bed which was covered with a white sheet.

We approached the front window and pronounced. Mother looked at me and asked "Accha?" I said, "Thik hai, Ma." Then we moved to the side window so others could pronounce. Vasu took our gifts for Mother. Among them was a small white pure wool blanket with fringe on both ends. Mother asked who brought and was told that we had. I was delighted that She had shown interest in it.

After a while we were asked to leave. Reluctantly we pronounced, said goodnight to Mother, and walked across the porch toward the steps. There we were treated to

a panoramic view of a gorgeous sunset silhouetting the trees against the glistening Narmada and highlighting the Ganganath Temple where we were staying.

Downstairs we were very happy to find our friend from the Kumbh Mela, Dr. Shelat. He had just arrived from Ahmedabad. We had a brief visit and were pleased to learn that he would still be at the ashram the next day.

As the light of the day was slowly leaving Bihmpura, we walked down the dirt road toward Ganganath Temple and our evening meal.

While we were eating we could hear the voices of many people chanting and loud beating sounds. Melita asked the cook what it was and he told her that it was the people of his nearby village. They were doing a Puja, "inviting" the snakes that were there to please go out from the village and into the forest.

From the center of the village they started chanting and beating on the ground with sticks as they expanded their circle out toward the forest. It was a rather wild and frightening sound. If I had been a local snake, I feel sure that I would have been among the first to accept the "invitation."

What a wonderful day it had been !

In the morning I washed our clothes and hung them to dry in the hot sun. Sat, a had put water in two large buckets, covered the water with dark plastic, and placed them in the sun. After about one hour the water was just right for bathing. If it sat in the sun for three hours it would be so hot that we had to add cold water before using it.

Kamal, whose home was in Baroda, had arrived for the day. He came to Ganganath Temple and joined us for lunch. Then as we were leaving for Mother's ashram we were greeted by Dr. Shelat's smiling face. He had come to meet us. We walked along the winding dirt road together, full of joy to be in that wonderful place with Mother, removed from time and worldly care.

Bhaskaranandaji greeted us with a story which sent my heart reeling. He said that during the previous night, at about 2:00 a.m., Mother had said, "Bring Shraddha's blanket." She used it for cover as She lay upon Her bed. For several years I had searched for just the right blanket for Mother but without success until finding that one just before our trip. Not only did She actually use the blanket, but remembered me in doing so. I was ecstatic !

Then beautiful Hansa, a very sweet girl in Mother's ashram, called me to follow her behind the kitchen. She gave me prasad (water) from the meal which Mother had just taken. She allowed me to call Satya, Bhakti, and then Dr. Shelat, who all received Mother's prasad.

Soon we were permitted to go upstairs to Mother. We stood at the side window, very near where She sat. Mother asked if we were all well. I said, "Thik hai Ma." Then I asked a lady inside the room to ask Mother how She was feeling. Mother replied that She was not feeling well. I felt sad and helpless, knowing that She, who always enquired as to our well-being, was Herself not feeling well.

The electricity was out and as the sun set some one brought a candle to light Mother's room. She looked so beautiful in that soft glow. Mentally I told Her of my love for Her and of what She is to me. Each time I talked to her in my mind, She looked at me very intently. Some were inside the room talking with Mother. Many times She would turn and look at us as we stood by that side window. She sat with us for a long time, but still did not want to leave when the time came to do pronam and go downstairs.

Dr. Shelat would be leaving the next morning, so we had a farewell visit with him. Then with the aid of our torches we walked back to Ganganath Temple.

The morning routine was pretty well set. We had tea and fruit or perhaps biscuits, then I did the laundry. There was a narrow ledge which ran along the side of our room with a door leading out onto it. The ledge overlooked the garden on that side of the ashram. I put my wash basin and a bucket of rinse water on the ledge. Sitting in the doorway, with my feet on each side of the basin, I washed our daily clothes. It was a good arrangement as I could dump the used water into the thick foliage below.

Satya was in charge of our water purification program. He filled a large plastic jug with water, then treated it with iodine tablets. After about 30 minutes, he then ran that water through a charcoal filter and into a second plastic jug for storage. The iodine destroyed any bacteria. But tasted terrible. The filter removed the iodine so the water was then good for tea or cooking. We used that system on all of our trips and never had any serious illnesses.

At darshan time, which was only once a day at 5:00 P.M., we found that three busloads of school children had come to see Mother. They were very orderly as they filed up the staircase in line, pronamed, received prasad and then came downstairs. Satya went up and took some movies of them as they met Mother.

Bhakti and I had not gone up yet and were given Mother's prasad. I was unable to call Satya as he was on the roof with Mother and the children. When we joined him there were very few people sitting before Mother. Her wooden cot had been placed on the porch just in front of Her window. Large grass mats were on the porch floor for the devotees' use. A beautiful young girl was near Mother and as she sang very sweetly for Mother, I remembered a phrase which Hemantbhai had

taught me: "Kokila Kaikarav," the voice of a nightingale. Mother listened as the girl sang, then spoke with her in an animated way and patted her arm. The girl was shy but her radiant face showed the joy she experienced in singing for Mother. Satya had been taking movies of that sweet play but then Mother put Her towel over Her Head and made motions like holding a moving camera. Of course he immediately quit filming and put his camera away.

Bhaskarananda told him that Mother had said, "He is always taking movies." She had explained that when there was some event it was all right to take movies, but when we were just sitting together he should not be doing so. Naturally we were sorry to have less movies, but in another way I was glad. It seemed a shame that so much of his darshan was with a camera between his eye and Her direct presence. Mother had established a compromise.

We sat at Her feet in the dim evening light for a long time. She looked at me with lingering sweetness. I was content. When Mother arose to go inside, She sent special prasad to Satya. We pronounced and went downstairs. Bhaskaranandaji gave us some mail which had arrived for us. After a short visit we walked to Ganganath for our evening meal and then to bed.

[To continue]