

MA ANANDAMAYEE
AMRIT VARTA

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

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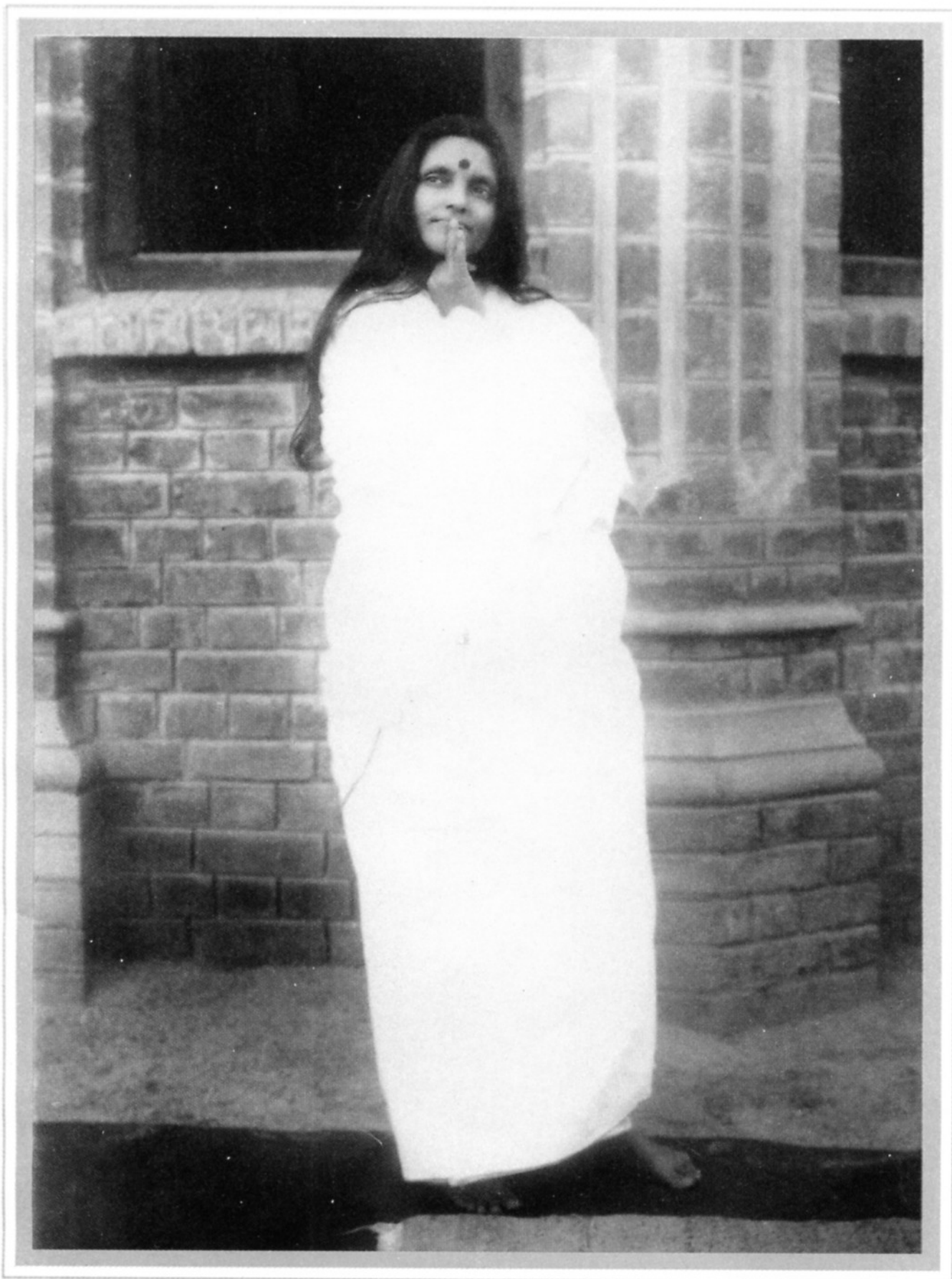


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MATRI VANI

Without fail pray to God. He drives away all sorrow.

* * * * *

Rest assured the Will of the Almighty reigns supreme. At all times rely wholly on Him.

* * * * *

It is man's duty ever to meditate upon the One Reality.

* * * * *

He should let his thoughts dwell on God as much as possible. His feelings are fine and he expresses them in beautiful, sweet sounding words. But does he practice *Japa* and read the *Gita* regularly ? He would do well to devote some time daily to the study of the Scriptures.

* * * * *

Such is the Will of the Almighty. Verily, whatever comes to pass is an expression of His Will. Abiding in patience perform your duty. Depend on God absolutely and hold Him in remembrance — Him and Him alone !

* * * * *

It is possible to practice God's Name under the most adverse circumstances. He causes everything to happen and hence is ever near.

* * * * *

Silent *Japa* should be engaged in all times. One must not waste breath uselessly: whenever one has nothing special to do, one should silently practice *Japa* in rhythm with one's breathing — in fact this exercise ought to go on continuously until doing *Japa* has become as natural as breathing.

* * * * *

It is of great value to read sacred texts and books of wisdom. Speak the truth. Bear in mind that God's Name is He Himself in one form - let it be your inseparable companion. Try your utmost never to remain without Him. The more intense and continuous your efforts to dwell in His presence the greater is the likelihood of your growing joyful and serene. When your mind becomes quite vacant, at least try to fill it with the awareness of God or His contemplation.

* * * * *

Let the thought of God remain with you and do service with the conviction that while serving whomsoever it may be, you are serving the ONE who alone exists.

* * * * *

When there is constant effort to grow into awareness of THAT which IS, there is hope that in time this awareness may become permanent.

* * * * *

Always keep yourself in a state, which is favourable to the contemplation of the Divine. Thus, the right sustenance for the mind will be provided.

* * * * *

One should attempt to dwell in the thought of the Supreme without a break. Then only full enlightenment may come.

* * * * *

Put your trust in God and let your mind be engaged in *Japa* and meditation.

* * * * *

At every moment sustain the flow of His Name and the consciousness of His Presence. Never be without Him.

* * * * *

Accepting all conditions of life — whatever they be — as His gift, abide in fortitude and do service.

* * * * *

Endeavour to keep your thought centred at all times on the Divine Name or Form that appeals to you most. Let your mind be turned exclusively towards God — then, and then only, may you hope for peace.

* * * * *

How can a man who is harbouring thoughts of suicide expect to become a sannyasi ? The idea of suicide does not even enter the mind of those who consider themselves candidates for sannyasa. A spirit of extreme self-denial and renunciation is the attitude that affords the greatest aid towards this exalted state. Vow to be truthful in speech and refrain from letter-writing. Do not talk to women nor allow your gaze to rest on them.

* * * * *

To live in the joy that springs from the mind's constant occupation with things divine is man's duty. Thinking of anything other than God is what creates sorrow. Be it *mantra japa*, be it meditation, worship, the perusal of sacred texts, the simple awareness of God or alike, be it kirtan or religious music — all these are different modes of the Divine Presence. One should always remain engaged in one of them, make it a point never to be without Him. Bear this in mind ! This is what this little child requests from Her friends and also Her fathers and mothers.



PAGES FROM
"Ma Anandamayee Prasang"

by

Prof. A. K. Dutta Gupta

[Translated from Bengali]

17th May, 1941, Kishenpur Ashram, Dehradun

I started the discussion with Ma.

I : Ma what is meant by *mantra chaitanya* ?

Ma : Well, suppose I call you, saying "Baba", you immediately respond ; because the name and he whose name it is, are not separated. Thus, if one calls someone by his name, the holder of the name will reply. So also, if by repeating the mantra the deity of the mantra or one's *Ista Deva** is clearly perceived, then the mantra is said to be alive (*Chetan*). This is what is called *mantra chaitanya*.

I : What is this clear perception of the deity of the mantra of *Ista Deva* ? Does the *sadhaka* look upon his *Ista* as distinct from himself, or does he see himself within his *Ista* ?

Ma : Although to start with the *sadhaka* sees himself as separate from his *Ista Deva*, yet when the essential meaning (*tatwa*) of the mantra or of the *Ista Deva* becomes revealed to him, then the *sadhaka* realizes himself to be within this *tatwa*. This is why it is said, is it not, that one has to become one with the deity, one is worshipping. By worshipping his *Ista*, the *sadhaka* thus worships himself, in other words, the *Ista* and the *sadhaka* become one.

I : I have heard it said that when a *sadguru* gives initiation, he makes the mantra alive (*chetan*). But our experience is, although we repeat the mantra in *japa*, no revelation of the *Ista* takes place. Are we then to understand that our mantra has not been rendered powerful to arouse our consciousness ?

Ma : No, why should this be so ? There are various kinds of *diksha*. There is a type of initiation by which the disciple is radically transformed instantly. As soon as this type of *diksha* is received, the physical body of the disciple merges completely in the five elements and he attains full Self-realization. This is called Supreme *Diksha*.

*. Principal deity of a *Sādhaka*

"Initiation by a *Mahapurusha* or *sadguru* may be called a special type of *diksha*. Here the Guru bestows the mantra upon the disciple after infusing his own power into it. As a result of such an initiation the disciple gradually gets free from his *samskaras* and realizes his True Self in due course. To become thus liberated from one's accumulated *samskaras* takes time. Some people are of the opinion that a disciple can attain liberation within at the most three births. Even if the disciple is not conscious of the power of the mantra, yet it does its work within him. That is why it is said that when a *sadhaka* has taken refuge in a *sadguru*, whether he exerts himself or not, his progress cannot be stopped. All the same, if after receiving the *mantra* he faithfully performs his spiritual exercises, he will be able to advance speedily."

"There is yet another kind of *diksha*, which is a sort of normal initiation, such as *diksha* from the family guru. Now the family guru may not possess the inner power with which to bestow the *mantra*, nevertheless every *mantra* has its own inherent power. Because every *mantra* is in itself fruitful. At some time or other, one may become illumined by the constant repetition of the *mantra*. Because the power inherent in the *mantra* can lead him onwards. But this process is very slow indeed."

"Apart from this, there is also scope for repeated initiations, one after another. For instance, a Guru may give *mantra* to his disciple, by the recitation of which progress up to a certain stage is made; then, to induce further advancement, the Guru may give him another *mantra*. In this way, before being ready for the ultimate *diksha*, several preliminary initiations may be given. Such initiations by successive stages may also spontaneously arise within the disciple in course of time, that is to say, the very first *diksha* given by the Guru can by itself provide all that is necessary to lead the disciple onwards from one stage to another."

"Alternately, the Guru can himself appear and by initiating the disciple again and again, take him along the path of progress by stages. The fact that the Guru himself may no longer be in the body cannot be an obstacle to successive initiations step by step, because a Guru can never die. At the appropriate time and as necessity arises, he can always manifest himself to the disciple."

18th May, 1941

In the afternoon, sitting near Ma, I again raised the topic of *diskha* which was discussed yesterday.

I said : "Ma, yesterday you divided initiation into three categories, namely Supreme or Ultimate initiation, medium initiation and general initiation.

Ma : Yes, this division was more or less according to final results obtained through initiation. *Diksha* may of course be of many types.

I : What is meant by *sabija diksha* (initiation with seed mantra) and *nirbija diksha* (initiation without seed manta) ?

Ma : This may also be called initiation without form (*nirākāra diksha*) and initiation with form (*sākāra*). Or one may also look upon the former as initiation without a seed mantra by which the disciple gets rid of his conditioning and is established in the Supreme state. Here all the inherent *samskaras* of the disciple are washed away and obliterated and he is established in his true Self.

The Ultimate aim of initiation by obtaining the seed mantra is also the same; but here the disciple is guided through stages by worshipping a form or deity to the final stage.

I : If all *samskaras* are extinguished entirely through initiation without *sabija diksha*, how can then the relationship of Guru and disciple be established ?

Ma : In what is called the Supreme State or Self-realization, nothing at all is destroyed. I have already explained to you that in this exalted state it cannot be said what remains and what does not remain.

I : Ma, so far as this state of realization of the Infinite is concerned, we cannot form any clear idea of anything in particular. So it is better to deal with one aspect at a time. I understand that everything is possible in the state of Self-realization. But leaving this aside, please do tell us something about how successive generations of Gurus are established. Is there no *samskaras* at the root of this creation of a traditional order ?

Ma : I have said that in some people a lingering desire for acquiring reputation or praise remains dormant and later this trend may manifest in various ways. It may also happen that whatever is caused by *samadhi* is present in a person, yet none of it is exhibited outwardly. All the inward action of *samadhi* is quietly taking place, yet it cannot be perceived outside; that is to say, the body is not in any way incapacitated and lying motionless due to *samadhi* as is ordinarily the case.

"On the other hand, such bodily signs are indeed exhibited. The reason for this is that his desire for acquiring some status and praise, which is present in a subtle way, results in outward manifestation of *samadhi* or exhibition of supernormal powers (*vibhuti*). Although one may not be least aware of such feelings within, yet they do exist and are manifested in such a way so that people may pay homage and respect. But if someone has not the least ambition of this kind, then although he may acquire any number of supernormal powers, yet there will be no outward sign of it at all."

"Similarly, from a desire for name and fame an *acharya* or a particular sect of *acharyas* may come up. Alternately, someone may be an *acharya* or guru spontaneously by his inner qualification."

I : It appears that if someone becomes an *acharya* by his inner qualification, probably no separate sect or community is thereby created ?

Ma : No, why not ? By this type of *acharya* also a sect may be created. Look, if everything could be achieved by one mantra and by one particular *bhava*, why should there be so many different mantras ? The reason is that at different times, due to the individual needs of persons, *acharyas* have come into being to elucidate different paths that lead to liberation. This is why there are now so many sects and religious communities.

I : Does the status of an *acharya* correspond to a particular level of existence ?

Ma : Yes, some may attain to a certain status and become qualified to act as *acharya*. But this does not mean that they remain *acharyas* for all times. They may progress from this level to a still higher one. Then someone else may also become qualified to take their place.

I : Can it not therefore be construed that *diksha* without seed-mantra means an initiation through which the seed of such a *diksha* is not passed on through a succession of disciples ? And a *sabija diksha* is initiation, the seed of which is passed on through a succession of disciples ?

Ma : Yes, this also may be possible.

During our conversation a few ladies and gentlemen arrived, so our talk came to a halt. It looked as if one of the new arrivals was very unhealthy. His relatives as well as he himself started talking to Ma about his illness. He was afflicted with a pain in his chest, which troubled him a lot. He had consulted any number of doctors and taken diverse medicines but there was no improvement.

After recounting all this to Ma, he ended by saying : "Ma, now I am appointing you alone as my physician."

Smilingly, Ma repeated the words : "I am appointing you alone as my physician." Then after remaining silent for a while, She said : "Look, this body cannot prescribe any other medicine save one : The panacea for all ailments is the Name of God. You must repeat His Name, take refuge in Him alone, and all your diseases will be cured. The illnesses and afflictions that people suffer are the result of their own previous actions. Your past actions were such that due to them your illness cannot be cured and you do not derive any benefit from medicines. Often it can be observed that some people continue to commit evil deeds, yet do not suffer any setback. Even if one does not immediately undergo any suffering as a result of

such misdeeds, yet the consequences remain suspended. The balance sheet of evil deeds is stored away in minute details and the results have to be experienced in due course."

"All this suffering from disease or grief you must look upon as God's grace. He has created us and sent us to live in the world; and having arrived here we have completely forgotten Him. So, from time to time He inflicts pain on us to draw us back to Him. In His presence there is supreme peace and supreme joy. He is constantly attracting people towards Him, so as to bestow on them this peace and joy. Those who are guilty of evil deeds He attracts towards Himself by inflicting pain again and again. And those whose previous actions were just, He attracts them towards Himself with love and compassion without causing them any pain. Thus all the sorrows and sufferings you behold in the world are an expression of His Divine Mercy, because it causes people to develop aversion to worldly enjoyments and turn their minds towards Him."

"Again consider, you are now worried about your bodily ailments and are most eager to find out ways and means to cure them. But supposing this particular illness is cured - what then ? If one ailment disappears, some other disease might afflict you after some time or perhaps some other sorrow might come upon you. Such is the very nature of the world. This is why I constantly insist that you should continuously call out to God and endeavour to realise Him. Once you have attained Him, no sorrow or suffering can possibly approach you. You will then abide in eternal peace and joy."

Ma now asked him : Have you taken *diksha* (initiation) ?

Gentleman : No.

Ma : Have you ever recited God's name ? Have you ever read religious books, such as the Ramayana or the Mahabharata ?

Gentleman : No, I have heard of them, but not read them.

Ma : Well, what sort of work appeals to you ?

Gentlemen : I like most of all to look after my worldly possessions, but often even this does not seem attractive to me. Due to my illness I cannot do justice even to this work.

Ma : Baba, I am going to give you a few directions and asking you to endeavour to follow them. I am not asking you to follow these instructions in order to raise any false hope. You should try to follow them only because it is the *Kheyal* of this daughter of yours. Twice daily, before meals, you must repeat the Lord's Name. Not for very long, just one hour or half an hour a day will suffice. You may take whichever Name you like best, but it must be the same Name each day before

meals. At other times you may choose any other God's Name. And every single day you must read some portion of a sacred book, whether it be Ramayana, Bhagavata or Mahabharata. If any day you find that you cannot spare the time due to some pressure of work, then just to observe the rule, you may read at least one line or even a few words. Do not allow the rule to be broken ! If due to illness you feel quite unable to read, then (glancing at his wife) you, Ma, must read aloud and let your husband listen. Do not stop reading even if he falls asleep. You should read for as long as it is the usual rule. You are his wife, his companion, joined to him before the Lord (*dharma patni*), so you must help him to fulfil his religious duties. If you do not help him in this, what is the use of being his wife ?"

"You must keep your mind on God. How can this be done ? You must hang pictures of God in various forms on the walls of the room in which you stay, and glancing at them from time to time, you should think : "These are all the likenesses of God." Further, keep photos of great beings in your room and when you gaze at them and read the life stories of those great men you may feel : "Oh, how many hardships have these mahatmas undergone in order to realize God !" Then the desire will awaken in you also to do likewise. Besides that, it is also good to keep pictures of saints and sages in your house because this will exercise its influence on you. Considerable inspiration can be derived from their sight and touch."

"Furthermore, when you go out, whatever you behold, you should regard as an image of God. Suppose you see a beautiful flower, try to imagine : "Oh, here is my Lord, blossoming forth in the guise of this lovely flower. "If you do not perceive all this in such a way look at it with greed or desire, there is danger of your mind being soiled and hence a process of cleansing and purification will be necessary."

"At first all this repetition of the Lord's Name and reading of spiritual books may not be to your liking, but inspite of this you must try to do with great regularity."

Ma said all this in such a sweet compassionate manner that all who were present were simply charmed while listening to Her. The gentleman who had come to get some medicine for his various ailments also appeared to be highly satisfied when he departed.



THE DIVINE MOTHER

[Continued from before]

—Dr. Prem Lata Srivastav

Dhaka—Siddheshwari

While returning from Ramna Kali Mandir with Ma and Bholanath, Baul Basak used to go somewhere else frequently. On Bholanath's asking Basak said he frequented the Siddheshwari temple. Ma indicated to keep quiet as Bholanath glanced at Her for Her reaction.

One night, Baul Basak took them to Siddheshwari. To reach that place at that time one had to tread through rough, uneven roads, to reach the ancient temple. A huge Peepal tree lay uprooted in front of the temple, exactly the same landscape as Ma had once envisioned at Bajitpur. On Her visit, Ma touched the tree and after darshan of Siddheshwari Kali, returned back with Bholanath.

That day onwards, Ma frequently visited Siddheshwari. Sometimes bhog was also offered to the deity.

Ma said, "One afternoon this body was packing things for a short journey somewhere, though I knew not the destination. While I was putting together the articles of daily use, Bholanath dropped in and asked me : "What are you doing?" I said, "Let's go to Siddheshwari." Bholanath didn't object. So we went to the temple that afternoon. There, I had a *kheyal* that I would stay there for 7-8 days. When I expressed my desire to Bholanath, he said, he would not be able to stay because of his duty in Shahbag gardens. I said, "That's not a problem. Siddheshwari Ma is with this body."

Bholanath acceded to Ma's request. Ma's father used to stay with Her during daytime, while Bholanath used to stay with Her over night. Happiness knew no bounds as they sojourned at the Siddheshwari temple.

Before dawn, Ma used to bathe and enter the temple. And then, she would be there the whole day and night, without drinking a drop of water or eating a morsel of food. Baul Babu, who taught in a local school during day time, would bring fruits after nightfall for puja. Baul braved the muddy pathway, following rains, singing in praise of Goddess Kali all the way to bring those offerings for puja. These were offered to the deity which were later distributed as *prasad* at midnight to the devotees present at the temple. Initially, Ma Herself used to make the offerings.

On occasions, she would offer the *bhog* and turn ecstatic, either in a sitting posture or lying down. Then suddenly she would stand up and announce, the *bhog* (to Siddheshwari Kali) has been offered and it's ready for distribution. There were also occasions when local priests would bring flowers, sandal paste etc. Ma would sometime offer them to Kali, sometime throw them upon Herself. Pujas were performed in unusual ways, until Ma said to Bholanath : "I am not able to continue it this way. You have the *mantra* (Bholanath was initiated). You offer the *bhog* instead."

Ma remained at the Siddheshwari temple for seven days at a stretch. "When Baul Babu learnt about Ma's sojourn at Siddheshwari for a week, he anticipated some miraculous incident will happen. Therefore, he stationed himself in front of the temple in the evenings as a watchman, like "the Nandi," looking for some unusual event to unfold. Six days and nights passed. On the seventh day at dawn-break, Ma in Her own *kheyal* came out of the temple. Baul Babu, who stood guard for the last six nights, was fast asleep. It was drizzling outside, following heavy rains in the night. Bholanath was awake. Ma gestured him to follow Her, and walked into the jungles behind the temple. After walking for a while, they found a clean place. Ma went round this place before squatting down, facing south. Bholanath sat nearby.

The drizzle had stopped. Ma was sitting, stotras started coming out of Her mouth as this was usually the way she resumed speaking after *maun*. She pressed the soil with Her right palm at the place where She was sitting. Incredibly the soil layers gave way to Her palm, then the entire arm upto armpit entered the earth. Bholanath got frightened and in a reflex action, Bholanath jerked Her arm out of the earth. The moment he forced Her hand out, a jet of reddish hot water sprang out of the same spot.

This was not rain water. It was hot and red in colour, which even coloured the white bangles. Visibly scared, Bholanath said to Ma, "Let's go away from here."

Ma asked Bholanath to put his hand also on the same spot. Together, they covered the spot with some soil and returned to the temple. Baul Babu, upon learning what had happened, cursed himself for his sleep. Ma requested Baul Babu to protect the spot.

Later bricks were put around the holy spot to make roughly a square-metre *vedi* (altar), raised half-a-metre above the ground level. That spot was the real Siddheshwari Peeth, was reflected later from Ma's words.

The discovery of the Siddheswari Peeth was a significant and unusual event, the news of which spread like a wild fire to become a common knowledge soon. This spot, the Siddheshwari Peeth thus came to light through Ma in 1924. It is said that a saint called 'Sumeru Van' had established a Kali temple at this place. In ancient days, many saints, sadhakas had meditated here. And it was inferred from Ma's talks that Bholanath was also one of them.

In April 1925, erecting a room for Ma on the holy ground, then fenced with bamboo sticks, was contemplated. Ma was in favour of an ordinary hut with earthen walls. Shashanka Babu took the initiative. In just seven days, it was ready. On the appointed day, amidst kirtan, Ma and Bholanath moved into this hut. Kirtan, as part of the celebrations, was held the entire day and night.

This place became Ma's *Adi-Ashram*—the first, where in the spring of 1926, Bholanath organised the first Basanti Puja.

Frequently, Ma used to sit on the holy vedi. She would squeeze and reduce Herself and manage even to lie down on that tiny vedi. One day, devotees were scared to see Her shrunk so much that only the clothes were visible, not Ma's body. However, they took a sigh of relief when they saw to their amazement, a slight movement of the clothes as Ma's body gradually expanded and finally, she sat up.

In this context, Ma said later :

"As the kites fly with the help of a string, yogis with their respiratory system and embellishment ties, are capable of disappearing from public eyes."

One day on this holy vedi Ma appeared to embody the spirit of Joy. This sight of Ma prompted Bhaiji to suggest:—"From today we will call Her 'Ma Anandamayee.'" Bholanath seconded the proposal.

Bholanath and then Shashanka Mohan and Didi deeply meditated at this holy place of Siddheshwari, which on occasions was the venue of deep religious answers to many unsolved, oblique references provided by Ma.

One day, during the course of such a discussion, Ma said:

"Whoever has come here, should get ready. So far, nothing has happened. The digging, with a spade, has just begun. An unknown amount of suffering is to be endured, many storms are to be faced. In those blows of storm, the one destined to wither will fall and the one destined to survive, will stay on.... There is no room here for petty quarrels and jealousies."

One day, Ma looked at the devotees present and said:

"I am seeing, everything is one and the same. The One, who is the embodiment of soul, the embodiment of knowledge and wisdom, how can there be two ? There is only one soul, encompassing the whole universe."

Siddheshwari Ashram Kalipuja (1926)

One day, while going somewhere with Bholanath, Ma envisioned an image of Kali, walking about 18 foot above ground in the ethereal sky. She was eager to come into the lap of Ma. A garland of hibiscus flowers lay on Her neck. But there was no image of Mahadeva below Her feet. Ma said nothing, but lifted Her left arm in the direction of Kali.

It was time for Deepavali, when devotees expressed their desire to hold Kalipuja. Bholanath asked Ma for Her permission. Ma didn't reply but Bholanath sensed that Ma's reaction was positive. It was just a night before the Kalipuja, when the image makers would have sold all the images. Wherefrom the image will be procured ? What will be its size ? These were natural questions that one would be faced with, a night before the Kali puja. Perhaps, due to Ma's *kheyal* only, Bholanath had an inkling that Ma raised Her hand twice that day and so he decided to measure Ma's height in sitting posture. Ma was then in samadhi, Somehow, they managed to put Her in sitting posture. Raising Her hands, Bholanath measured the height to two arm's length.

It was 11 o'clock at night. Even then they found an image of exactly the same size with an image-maker, who had made only 12 images. Eleven of them were made on order. And the 12th he made out of his own will. When Ma saw the image She said, "this was the colour of the image I had seen." Instead of the usual black, it was dark bluish black.

This Kali puja was performed in Siddheshwari ashram with great fervour. The lucky and the privileged devotees had a glimpse of Ma as Goddess Kali during this occasion.

The time for the final *ahuti* was imminent. Ma was in samadhi; but at the right moment, she gestured with her hand to keep it in abeyance. The fire was kept glowing. After sometime, awakened from Her samadhi, she piously touched the fire. She advised for the careful protection of the sacred fire. By asking not to give *purnahuti* did she not initiate for the great Savitri Mahayagna in future ? Perhaps, only Ma knew about it.

Niranjan's wife, Binodini, brought all the offerings to be made during the immersion of the image of Kali. After the *darshan* of Kali, Binodini, crying humbly said to Ma that, she could not bear the fact that this image would be immersed.

Ma said, "When this kind of thought has come to your mind, it appears that this image wants to stay with us. Let it be kept properly and regular puja be arranged."

Later on the image was shifted from one place to another, four times. The fifth time and the last time, it was shifted to the cave of the Ramna ashram, Dhaka. Ma arranged to offer a garland of hibiscus flowers to this image daily. The day it was not offered to the image, Ma would Herself accept it in a miraculous way instead, to maintain the routine.

In 1938, after Ma's birth celebrations, this image was last worshipped and thereafter the doors of the cave were sealed with cement and bricks as directed by Ma.

Talking about this Kali puja's background, Ma said: "Truly, like an infant jumps into her mother's lap, the image of Kali jumped to this body's lap. I too, cajoled her, as if she was a kid. This was a human body, which was fondling, the *Brahmamayi* Kali, like an infant."

She further said: "This body had seen Kali on move, without splendour of the Shiva below her feet. "This Kali image had the splendour of the Primordial God (*Ādyā-Shakti*). The Kali which came to Ma, was not the awe-inspiring, pitch-black Kali which reigned supreme, philandering on the bosom of the *Mahākāl* (an epithet of Shiva) terribly destructive manifestation. Instead, she was the soft, sweet dark blue, *Shyāmā*, the traveller in the ethereal. Ma saw Kali without Shiva. Do you know why ?

"The kind of feeling and **ecstasy you people** bring in to this body reacts to that only. These emotions are manifested from inside this body."

The sacred fire of *yagna*, lit during the Kalipuja, continued to glow under the direction of Ma, who delegated this responsibility to the brahmacharis of the ashram. Ma instructed them that in case of difficulties to keep this sacred fire glowing, they should follow a particular ritual to rekindle the fire. Whenever such problem arose, the Fire God (*Agnideva*)—himself appeared before Ma. Ma used to tell about the same. Later, on the basis of time calculations the presence of *Agnideva* ever remained burning, without a break.

Keeping this sacred fire burning, oblations were offered by *Kali-mantra* and *Gayatri mantra*. Along with this sacrificial fire and the gods and goddesses who emerged from it, Ma was worshipped as its living embodiment.

In May, 1929, when Ma was staying at Uttama Kutir in Dhaka, Bholanath had already decided to dedicate his life in kirtans and meditations. Besides, two-three people also joined him to spend the rest of their lives under the blessings of Ma. For them, Ma was an ideal, an eternal source of energy, knowledge, wisdom and sacrifice. But how and why ?

For 15 days, Ma used to serve and drink the dirty water of the Dhakeshwari pond, the rest 15 days she drank the water of tender cocoanuts.

She would take only as much as three fingers could hold from the food cooked in the ashram, or fruits from trees inside the ashram premises. Sometimes Ma would take 8-10 morsel with the help of a small spoon out of the handful of puffed rice mixed with water. The devotees would spend day and night together in puja, yagna, kirtan and reading religious scriptures. She thus showed the way one could remain in *Bhagavat bhava* all the 24-hours in service of God.

At times She would not eat anything and consider the oblations offered to the sacred fire as having taken Her meals. When the fire would become very faint, Ma would attract it Herself with the '*Prānāgni*' of Her body and protect it. At that moment if anybody was found drowsy while doing '*japa*', Ma would wake him up with a pallied alarm. Her actions reflected meticulous way of doing things.

During one *amāvasyā* in Shahbag, Ma asked Didi to bring the sacred fire. Playing with the pot of fire in Her hands, She said, "What do you look ? This sacred fire will be utilised in *mahāyagnas*".

After the establishment of the new ashram at Ramna, Dhaka, *Agnideva* was installed in the premises. Seeing the all-pervasive effect of this fire, Ma said :

"Why *Savitri Māhayagna* alone ? We can hold—*Vishnu yagna, Rudra yagna*—many *yagnas* with this sacred fire."

On some other occasion, she was discussing with Acharya Batuda (Agniswata Shastri) on the naming of this sacrificial fire, She suddenly said: "By whatever name you wish to call this fire, but can we not call it—*Vishwaroop* ?"

Batuda was amazed to hear this statement. He conceded that in the *shastras*, (the religious scriptures,) he had read *Vishwaroop* as one of the name of *Agni Deva*.

At different ashrams of Shree Ma, especially in Kashi, Naimisharanya and Kankhal, this sacred fire remains lit with *havana*, supported by Gayatri mantra, being performed daily even today.

During the Kali puja celebration in 1929, Shree Ma had a divine *kheyal* for an idol of Ma Annapurna. As the *kheyal* dawned, so its implementation also followed. With Bhajji and other followers taking initiative in establishing an ashram at Ramna Dhaka arrangements were also made to instal the idol of Ma Annapurna in its premises. First, an idol was made of silver. A year later, on the request of devotees, another idol made of *ashtadhatu* (combination of eight different metals), replaced the silver idol.

The idol was made of *ashtadhatu* as per the divine *kheyal* of Ma. Ma gave all Her gold ornaments, silver utensils etc for the making of this pious sculpturing.

Everything was done under Ma's direct supervision. The image was crafted with the best possible mixing of the metals to make it more beautiful. Ma herself often visited the sculptor, with Bholanath or Bhaiji, to give instructions.

Thus Ma described in short—

"Devi Annapurna squatting, her right foot resting on her left thigh. She would have a bowl in her left hand. She would distribute food with a spoon, with her right hand. The left hand would have Trishul, as well as the bag for alms, Annapurna is being asked for alms by Shiva with both hands stretched—this is the *bhava*. Slightly above, on the left of Annapurna, is the image of Kali—in the ethereal space; no Shiva under her feet. Only the Shiva of Annapurna will remain."

On May 2, 1929, Ma formally came with Bholanath to live in the newly constructed Ramna ashram in Dhaka. Construction of the Annapurna temple also began. Bhaiji had the job of organising the ashram work, which he did with great sense of responsibility. With Sri Ma in his heart, with the support of Her divine power, Bhaiji could easily accomplish the task of building the ashram. Behind this pious, selfless accomplishment was his will power and complete devotion in service of Ma. He could easily befriend himself and get close to Ma's other devotees whom he regarded as his own people.

In 1932, during the birth celebrations of Sri Ma, at *Brahma-muhurta* the idol of Devi Annapurna and other idols were consecrated in Ma's divine presence, by none other than Bholanath. They were installed in the newly-constructed temple as *chal moortis* (can be moved if necessary).

During this occasion, *Tithi Puja* of Ma, revolved round Ma Annapurna as the central deity. Baba Bholanath did all the puja rituals. From 2nd May to 23rd May, 1932 for 21 days at a stretch the celebrations continued.

The pujas, kirtans, havans and prasad distribution went on without any break for 21 days considering Ma and Annapurna the same. The devotees got Ma seated upon the round platform at Panchavati, and offered their love, respect and faith at the feet of Sri Ma. During this period all the Ashram inmates, the brahmacharis, the householders and those absorbed in meditation were all content with even small amount of food that remained after offering to the sacred fire. On the last day, according to the ritual of Annakut, bhog offering to Ma constituted more than 108 different items.

During this time, the old very renowned *mahatma* Sri Ram Thakur visited Ma. He prostrated before Ma, She stood before him with folded hands. This brew some resentment and protest among his followers. When Sri Ram Thakur learnt about this, he said— "I have prostrated before the person who deserved to be given that

respect". The news also reached Ma, who smiled and said— "Baba's revered feet are always on the head of this small girl."

Dhaka's devotees were pained and disturbed when Ma suddenly left the city. They met Sri Ram Thakur, then in Dhaka on a visit, and disclosed to him their plight. Sri Ram Thakur explained: "By building a temple of Ma Annapurna, She has installed Herself forever amidst you. You must see Ma Annapurna as Ma Anandamayee."

In 1944, on the bank of the Ganga in Kashi, began the construction work of a large ashram. By the turn of events, Ma's *kheyal* led to the shifting of the deity of Ma Annapurna and other idols to Kashi Ashram. Ma Annapurna had to come to Kashi, the holiest of the holy places in the universe. With her arrival came up a splendid temple on the bank of the holy Ganga. Shri Manmohan Ghosh was the main contributor in designing this temple, which was constructed like the Dhaka Annapurna Mandir. In 1950, after Deepavali, on the auspicious occasion of Annakut, Ma Annapurna's idol together with other idols were consecrated once again in the newly-built temple in Kashi.

According to Ma's directions, even today *bhog* is regularly offered to Ma Annapurna as per a very systematic schedule. Besides special pujas during Purnima, Amavasya, and Annakut with 108 preparations, there is specific arrangement for *bhog* offerings on all seven days a week.

Who is this Kali near Ma Annapurna ? *Kālā-kāl*, *Mahākāl* the manifestation of terrible destruction, the primordial Goddess of Shakti. To escape from the destructive *kāl*, one has to take refuge in the lap of soft-sweet loving Ma. Whether for this reason alone, was the descent of *Shyama* ? Who is She, in whose fold even *Mahākāl* wants to go ? Whose power has made *Mahākāl* the master-destroyer of the universe ? Therefore, Ma Annapurna is flanked by Mahadeva and Ma Kali. Beyond time or *Kāl*, is infinite happiness and peace. That's why this *mantra*, *japa*, *tapa*, and meditation are in practise.

Kali is *Mahashakti*. Kali symbolises beings. Ma Kali wishes to be in the form of that *Parāshakti*. If we also sacrifice our lust, ambition, greed and clean out and purify to dedicate ourselves at the feet of Ma, we would also be able to get the blessings of Ma as Ma Annapurna.

MY EXPERIENCE OF ANANDAMAYEE MA

—Antoinette Ford

I had recently returned from the Phillipines after receiving initiation of *Kriya Yoga*. It was a transitional period in my life when so many things were changing — including my spiritual path. I was going through a process of complete surrender and I was afraid of making mistakes as a result of this. So, many times I would pray for Ma's guidance.

After praying a few times, however, I was not certain that She was receiving them, but I left it to God and thought nothing more of it.

Several weeks had gone by, and by now, as a result of my surrendering I had begun to incorporate a few techniques for healing and releasing layers of *Karma*, but I had not heard of such practices, so I felt insecure about where my path of surrender was leading me.

Never the less, my heart told me to just let go all my fear and to have faith that I was being guided. So, I let go, and just used whatever techniques moved my heart.

One such technique involved the practice of meditation in music. I compiled tapes of all the music that I loved, and when I would begin my meditation I would listen to this music, and always associate the joy that arrived from listening to the music with God.

However, on one such afternoon, while listening to my music, I was feeling such joy that my body began to rejoice by dancing throughout the room, and as this happened, a blue light enveloped me and in the center of this light I saw Ma. She was dancing and rejoicing too! I was so surprised because I did not believe that my practice of devotion was worthy of Her Presence, but She reminded me that all the paths are holy, and as I realized this Her wings of light faded away and I concluded my *japa*.

ON THE DIVINE LEELAS

— Prof. Bireshwar Ganguly

I visited Mā Ānandamayee Āshram in Varanasi during the Durgā Pujā holidays of 1951. On the Navamī Pujā day, we went to witness the evening *ārati* of Goddess Durgā at the residence of Pataldā*, an earnest devotee of Mother, in a few motor cars, along with Mother, after the evening *ārati* of the *āshram* was over. At the end of the *ārati*, a relative of Pataldā asked Mother, "Mā, are the episodes of the killing of Mahishāshur and others, as parts of *Durgā Pujā*, historical facts or only the figments of imagination of the Rishis?" Mother turned grave on hearing such a question, Her face began glowing with a divine crimson aura and She uttered in a firm tone in an aphoristic language of ancient seers, "The divine play of Goddess Durgā did take place, is taking place, shall take place in future and is a part of Her eternal manifestation. *"Hoyechhe, Hochche, Habe, Hoy"* (in Bengali)

That is to say, the divine play of the Goddess Durgā is certainly not the figment of imagination of the Rishis; rather the divine play did take place in a previous cosmic cycle in some part of the infinite universe, is now also taking place in some part of the universe, and shall take place in subsequent cosmic cycles in this or some other universe, and the spiritual battle between gods and demons rages always in the subtle body of the *shakti-sādhaka* (a yogi who aspires for the power aspect of God).

Later on, I consulted Mahamahopadhyay Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, the greatest of India's indologists of the twentieth century, on the meaning of Mother's aphoristic utterance and also studied *Durgā Saptashati Chandī*, *Devi Bhāgavatam*, *Sādhan Samar (Devi Māhātmya)* of *Brahmarshi Satyadeva* and *Tāntrik Vāngmayme Shākta-Drishti*, a Hindi treatise on *Tantra*, written by Dr. Kaviraj. I shall note down below the essence of knowledge gathered by me on the above subject.

"Did Take Place". The story of worshipping Goddess Durgā by Surath, the King and Samādhi, the merchant, is narrated in *Shrī Durgā Saptashati Chandī*, a chapter of *Mārkandeya Purān*, written by Śri Veda Vyāsa. King Surath of the Chaitra dynasty was the ruler of a kingdom during the overall reign of *Swarochisha*

* . Sri Satyendra Kumar Basu, a prominent resident of Varanasi, popularly Known as 'Pataldā'.

Manu, the second *Manu* (Emperor of men) of the world. By the grace of Goddess Durgā he got back his kingdom and in the next incarnation, he was born as *Sāvarni Manu*, the son of Sun-god, and was the eighth *Manu*. From this account it is clear that the mythological story of Chandī does not belong to our historical period of only five thousand years. According to Hindu mythology the four cyclical cosmic periods of *Satya*, *Tretā*, *Dwāpar* and *Kali Yugas* repeat themselves endlessly. According to ancient Indian astrology we are now passing through *Kaliyuga* with the cosmic cycle of *Shvetavarāhakalpa* and the seventh *Vaivasvata Manvantara*. The duration of *Svetavarāhakalpa* is of 432 crores of years. Out of this long span, only 197,29,49,071 years have elapsed. The span of *Kaliyuga* is 4,32,000 years and only 5090 years of this *yuga* (cycle) had elapsed by 1951. When the cycles of the four *yugas* revolve 71 times, then it is called the *manvantara* or the reign of one *Manu*. In this way when 14 such *manvantaras* are over, it is called the end of a *Kalpa*. One such *Kalpa* is equivalent to one day of *Brahmā*, the creator. The longevity of *Brahmā* extends over 100 years according to this calculation. Out of this astronomical time only 50 years have elapsed and his age now is 51 years, we are now passing through the 20th four-yuga cycle out of the destined 71 such cycles, Within this cycle again, the *Satya*, *Tretā* and *Dvāpar yugas* are over and the first part of the primary transition period of *Kaliyuga* is just running. According to other epics, *Lord Kalki*, the last incarnation of *Vishnu* (God) shall take place at the end of *Kali-yuga*. However, the narration of the incarnation of *Lord Kalki* during some previous *Kalpa*, is found in *Kalki-Purān*. Hence we see that the present historical period comprises only a few seconds in the time frame of ancient Hindus. We have to understand the implication of the aphoristic utterance of Mother in the background of this comprehensive astronomical time canvas.

The narrator of the *Durgā Saptashati Chandī* epic is *Medhā Rishi*, a realised soul, and the audience consists of *Surath*, the King and *Samādhi*, the merchant. King *Surath*, after losing his kingdom and the merchant *Samādhi*, after being persecuted and banished by his kinsmen came to a jungle to commit suicide there. However, on hearing the glory of Goddess *Durgā* from *Medhā Rishi*, they performed *Durgā Puja* on Her image in the month of *Chaitra* (March-April) consecutively for three years, according to rituals prescribed in scriptures and got Her blessings, as a result of which King *Surath* regained his kingdom in that life and in his subsequent incarnation became *Manu*, the emperor of the world, and the merchant, *Samādhi* got *moksha* (liberation) at the end of his life. For, Goddess

Durgā, the universal energy of *Brahman* (God) is capable of bestowing both pleasures of life and liberation. It is with the help of Her energy, God creates the universe as *Brahmā*, sustains it as *Vishnu*, and destroys it as *Rudra*. During the *Tretā-yuga* of the present *Kalpa* and present *Manvantara*, Lord Rāma had performed *Durgā Pujā* during the *sharad* season (autumn) to assassinate the demon King Rāvana, and this tradition has been maintained by Bengali Hindus since the Bengali Prince, Vijay Singha returned from Sri Lanka after his victory during the medieval period on the Vijayā Dashami day of autumn.

In the first chapter of the *Durgā Saptashati Chandī*, we come across the narration of the assassination of two demons, viz. Madhu and Kaitabha, as part of the glory of Goddess Durgā, described by Medhā Rishi to Surath and Samādhi. When, after cosmic dissolution, Lord Vishnu, the sustainer of the universe, was in deep slumber, Madhu and Kaitabha were born out of the ear-wax of Vishnu and they began obstructing the work of Lord Brahmā, the creator. Hence Brahmā invoked Vishnu's energy, *Yoganidrā Mahāmāyā*, who aroused Vishnu, who in turn killed them.

In the second chapter of the *Chandī* we find how the gods were banished from their kingdom of heaven by the powerful titans and how the soldiers of Mahishāshur were killed by Goddess Durgā, who was pleased by the prayers of the gods, who had individually bequeathed their arms to Durgā to constitute the collective strength of the Divine. The third chapter describes the assassination of Mahishāshur along with all his generals. The image of Durgā Devi with ten hands, who had killed Mahishāshur, is worshipped in autumn. In the fourth chapter, the collective prayer of the gods to Goddess Durgā, after the annihilation of Mahishāshur, is stated. In the fifth chapter there is the episode of the demon king Shumbha, who sent his emissaries. Chanda and Munda to Ambikā Devi with a proposal of marriage, after he had learnt about the beauty of Her from his emissaries, who, of course, had to return without any success in their mission. The sixth chapter describes the killing of Dhumralochan. The seventh chapter describes the killing of Chanda and Munda. The eighth, ninth and tenth chapters describe respectively the assassination of Raktaveeja, Nishumbha and Shumbha. After all the major demons had been annihilated, the gods went to Goddess Durgā and prayed to Her in the famous invocation to *Nārāyani*, who blessed the gods, and

this narration finds place in the eleventh chapter. The twelfth chapter describes the glory of reading and practising the tenets of *Chandī*. In the thirteenth chapter we find how Durgā Devi blessed Surath and Samādhi. In the *Devī Bhāgavat* also we get description of the emergence of *Kaushikī Devī* from the Divine Deity *Bhagavatī*, who also assumed the forms of *Kālīka Devī*, *Durgā Devī*, *Shatākshi Devī*, *Shākambhari Devī*, *Mahāgauri Devī* and *Mahālakshmi Devī*.

"Is Taking Place and Shall Take Place". The above-mentioned war between the gods and the titans, the incarnation of the Divine Goddess, the re-establishment of the kingdom of gods after the defeat of the demons have been taking place since time immemorial in different universes and different *Kalpas* (cosmic cycles) and are also taking place now in some other *Brahmānda* (universe) and shall take place in future also somewhere or the other. How can the all-powerful Divine Deity, who can do or undo anything at will anywhere in the universe, and who is full of mercy and compassion for Her creatures, stop short of creating life in this tiny earth of ours? In the milky way of our galaxy there are innumerable solar systems and as in each solar system there are three planes of existence. e.g. *Bhuloka*, *Bhuvaloka* and *Svarloka*, so also above the solar systems there are the supra-mental planes of *Mahaloka*, *Janaloka*, *Tapaloka* and *Satyaloka* (*Brahmaloka*). According to the vast literature on *Tantra sāstra*, each *Brahmānda* (universe) is the playground of nature or matter and beyond the material plane there are subtle planes of anti-matter, known consecutively as *Prakrityānda*, *Māyānda* and *Shaktyānda*. The Lord of *Brahmānda* is *Brahmā* and His energy is *Sarasvatī*; the Lord of *Prakrityānda* is *Vishnu* and His energy is *Lakshmi Devī*; the Lord of *Māyānda* is *Shiva* and His energy is *Kālī*, and the Lord of *Shaktyānda* is *Ishvara-Sadāsiva* and His energy is *Maheshvarī Paramā Prakriti*. *Paramashiva* of *Kashmir Shaivism* is transcendental above *Sadāsiva* or it may be said that He inheres within Himself *Brahmā*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*, as well as the playgrounds of their consorts. e.g. *Sarasvatī*, *Lakshmi* and *Kālī*.

In the dialectical theories of evolution of Hegel and Marx, there is equal importance of the forces of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. Similarly the gods and titans represent the dialectical contradictory forces of thesis and anti-thesis and as a result of their conflict the synthesis of creation proceeds in the cosmic process of evolution. In the different mythological epics, the symbolic episodes make an

attempt to prove that ultimately the forces of divinity, manifesting devotion to God, welfare of all beings and co-operation of individuals in society, triumph over forces of the undivine demons, manifesting the nature of atheism, selfishness and violence. In the epics of *Chandī*, *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata* it has been proved how in the process of cosmic evolution, out of the conflict between the thesis of divine forces and the anti-thesis of undivine forces, the former wins ultimately for the establishment of the gnostic collectivity. The symptoms of divine nature are manifested in the formula of action of 'maximum good of the maximum number' reconciled with enlightened self-interest. The symptoms of undivine nature are manifested in the formula of action of 'self-aggrandisement through the torture of others'. Of course finally there is the triumph of the divine nature— 'there is victory, where there is *dharmā* (righteousness)' — "*Yato dharmastato jayah.*"

"It Does Happen": The *sādhana* (spiritual practice) of *Shrīmad Bhagavad Gītā* is meant for devotees of God, who can perform duties of life without desire and attachment and it appertains to the mental plane. Whereas the *sādhana* of *Chandī* is meant for devotees of the Divine Mother, who aspire for salvation and who can sublimate the gross desire and gross matter to the supramental plane. Brahmārshi Satyadeva of Allahabad, in his priceless treatise on "*Sādhana Samar (Devi Māhātmya)*" has explained the symbolic significance of the annihilation of Madhu-Kaitabh, Mahishāshura and Shumbha-Nishumbha in volumes one, two and three respectively. In his spiritual explanation he has proved that the battle of gods and demons or the conflict of moral and immoral forces goes on always in the subtle body of *divyāchāri sādhanas* (divine yogis). The *Sādhana Samar* is a superb exposition of the integral *yoga* of *jnāna* (knowledge), *bhakti* (devotion) and *karma* (duty or action). It explains how the knots of ignorance are torn asunder, how the *sādhaka* tastes the bliss of liberation in life, being established in truth, energy and joy. It further explains how the *Kundalini Shakti* (primal energy) of the *Tantra-yogi* is aroused from *Mulādhāra* (solar plexus) for reaching the *Sahasrāra* (cerebral cortex), where there is the union between *Shiva* and *Shakti* (universal consciousness and individual consciousness) and how, in this inner pilgrimage of the individual consciousness, libido, anger, greed, infatuation, egoism and jealousy are conquered.

In the first part of *Chandī* we get the description of the death of Madhu and Kaitabh, that is the mastery over the feelings of pleasure and pain, which means that *Sanchiyamān Karma* (new activity born of desire) is put to an end. In technical language, this means the arousal of *Kundālīni* through *Mulādhāra* and *Svādhīsthāna chakras*, whereby the knots of *Brahmagranthi* are unravelled. In the battle of *sāadhanā*, this is the first victory. In the second part of *Chandī* we get the description of the death of Mahishāsura, that is mastery over libido or control over passion. When passion is destroyed *Sanchita Karma* (seeds of accumulated desire of past lives, which have not yet sprouted) is annihilated. In this stage the *Kundalinī* passes through *Manipura* and *Anāhata Chakras* and the knots of *Vishnu granthi* are unravelled. In the third part of *Chandi*, there is the description of the death of Shumbha and Nishumbha, that is the mastery over the consciousness of "I-ness" and "My-ness". When the *sadhaka* crosses this stage, his *Prārabdha Karma* (seeds of past actions, which have borne fruits in the present life) is also destroyed and he becomes a liberated soul. In this stage. the *Kundalinī* passes through *Vishuddha* and *Ājnā Chakras*, that is the knots of *Rudra Granthi* are unravelled. As a result of this there is union between *Shiva* and *Shakti* in the *Sahasrāra Chakra* and the *sādhaka* experiences *Nirvikalpa Samādhi*, and when he is in wakeful consciousness, he behaves like a *Sthitaprajna* (one whose mind is always in equilibrium, e.e. a liberated soul). This condition is termed as 'liberation in life' and '*Brahmanīrvāna* after life.' This is also called monistic liberation or *Brāhmīsthiti*, by attaining which, the *Jīvātmā* (individual soul) realizes that the concepts of *Mā* and *Guru* are the same and he himself becomes *Ānandamaya* or *Ānandamayee*.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

[Continued from before]

— P.C. Mehta

The Mādhyamika or 'The middle-path' principle of Nagarjuna (100 A.D.): Which is Sunya-vāda i.e. 'The doctrine of the void' or Nihilism.

The chief exponent of the Madhyamika school is Nagarjuna, who was probably a pupil of the famous Asvagosha (100 A.D.). Nagarjuna's *Mula-madhyama karika* with the commentary of Chandrakirti is a very important work. Another important work is *Sata-sastra* or *Catuh-sataka* of Aryadeva, a pupil of Nagarjuna.

The doctrine of the *Mādhyamikas*, is *Sunya-vāda* i.e. 'The doctrine of the void' or Nihilism.

The *Mādhyamika* or *Sunya* or void means *Nih-Svabhāvatvam* that is everything lacks a *svabhāva* or essence or true nature of its own. We commonly believe that we get into touch with reality through knowledge. However some reflection shows its *nihsvabhāva* or hollowness. Objects have no intrinsic character. Similarly, *vijnāna* or consciousness is also devoid of self-essence. This view is exactly opposite to the view of *svabhāva-vāda* materialists. Therefore, though knowledge serves the purpose of empirical life, it has no metaphysical significance. All knowledge whether perceptual or inferential is relative and none is absolutely true. There is neither inner nor outer reality.

It denies the reality of both (i) the external objects as well as (ii) the self. The **notion** of things, physical as well as psychical, is riddled with contradictions and is indetnabile. In his *Karika* Nagarjuna reviews some concepts like motion and dismisses them as utterly unintelligible. Things cannot be accepted as real because they are void at bottom. Therefore all experience is delusion.

It denies the *Paramārtha-satya* or true reality. It does not deny the *Samvrtti-satya* or relative truth including the subject and object relationship to appearances. Therefore, it does not imply pure negation.

Mādhyamika believes in no reality whatsoever and is therefore described as *sunya-vāda*. The *Mādhyamika* or *Sunya* system holds that since the so-called essence of things depends on many conditions, everything lacks a *Svabhāva* or essence of its own. If a thing has no essence or existence of its own, we cannot ascribe the existence of other things to it. If we cannot assert anything positive of anything, we cannot assert anything negative of anything.

When we say that fire burns, we assume that the essence or property of fire is to burn. However the burning takes place only when some other conditions are satisfied, e.g. the wood is dry or there is no rain. If burning was the essence of fire it would exist independent of other conditions. If the essence of something depends on the fulfilment of many conditions, how can it be called its essence ?

Nagarjuna's Karikas or verses were commented upon by his disciple Aryadeva, who also wrote three further books. It was also commented upon by Kumarajiva (383 A.D.), Buddhapalita and Candrakirti (550 A.D.).

Aryadeva says in his *Hastabalaprakaranavrtti* : Whatever depends for its existence on anything else may be proved to be illusory. All our notions of external objects depend on space perceptions and notions of part and whole and should therefore be regarded as mere appearances. Knowing therefore that all that is dependent on others for establishing itself is illusory, no wise man should feel attachment or antipathy towards these mere phenomenal appearances. In his *Cittavisuddhi-prakarana*, he says: 'Just as a crystal appears to be coloured, catching the reflection of a coloured object, even so the mind though in itself colourless appears to show diverse colours by colouration of *Vikalpa* or imagination. In reality the *Citta* or mind without a touch of *Kalpanā* or imagination in it is pure reality'. (quoted from 'History of Indian Philosophy' Vol. I, by Prof. S.N. Dasgupta)

Self according to Sunya-vāda :

It is by the *Samanvaya* or amalgamation of the four elements, *Ākāśa* or space and *Vijnāna* or consciousness that a man is made. Since all of them have no essence, it is by ignorance that they are thought and attachment is generated for them.

When we look within, we do not find any self, we find only the five *Skandhas*. Therefore, there is no self which undergoes changes. Further, change for the self would imply giving up one characteristic and taking over another. If the self is a unity, how is that possible ? If the self is capable of altering its characteristic, then

that would imply that the self is other than that characteristic and therefore that characteristic is other than the self. Thus it denies the reality of self.

The effect of Sunya-vāda on Causation or the doctrine of 'Pattica-Samuppada':

Nagarjuna in his work *Mādhyamika-Kārika*, recounts the doctrine of '*Pattica-Samuppada* or dependent origination.

Mādhyamika points out that the notion of an object originating is inconceivable. Since phenomena has no essence, they are neither produced nor destroyed. They are mere illusory appearances. We regard an object as existent prior to originating or we regard it as non-existent prior to origination. In the former case, it does not require to be produced, it is already there. In the latter case, it is impossible to produce it because nothing cannot be made to become something. Though the view of causation differs in other schools, all of them believe in things originating. The *Madhyamika* denies in the possibility of origination itself. The very first verse of Nagarjuna's *Kārikā* tries to unsettle the notion of things originating by subjecting it to the test of negative logic. 'Nothing exists anywhere, whether we conceive of it as born of itself or of others, or of both or of no cause whatsoever'. Thus the notion of causation is an illusion and since the doctrine of Buddha admits nothing that is uncaused, the whole universe must be illusory.

Therefore, when the doctrine of *Pattica-Samuppada* is described as 'this being that is', what is really meant is that i) phenomena follow each other in a sequence without any causal connection between them and (ii) there is no essence or true nature in any phenomena. For the same reason we cannot affirm *saṃsār* or process to appearances simply because they do not originate or disappear.

This doctrine therefore refers only to appearances due to *avidyā* or ignorance. That alone may be said to be the true essence of anything which does not depend on anything else. Therefore, the only un-dependent self-existing reality is '*Nirvāna*'.

What is Ultimate Reality or Truth, if phenomena is non-existent.

- (i) One view is that the ultimate Reality is a *sunya* or void. This denial of all consciousness or states of consciousness by calling it *sunya* is itself a state of consciousness.
- (ii) The other view which is modern relies on the following *Mādhyamika* definition of Ultimate Reality.

*Na sat nāsat na sadāsat na capyanubhayatmakam,
Catuskoti-vinirmuktam tattvam mādhyamika viduhu.*

"It neither is' nor 'is not 'both is and it not', nor 'neither is nor is not' ".

Thus according to *Mādhyamika*, the Ultimate excludes all predicates, including that of **non-existence**, and has to be viewed as beyond all conception and being beyond duality, it is inexpressible.

It is therefore not a question of being nothing, but of being ineffable: as said in the Taittiriya Upanishad, *Yato vaco nivartante aprāpya manasa saha-*(from where speech reverts back along with the mind, unable to fathom it).

Secondly, negation of everything without implying a positive ground or *avadhi* (awareness not dependent on senses or mind) is inconceivable.

According to this interpretation, the doctrine ceases to be finally relativistic, for it accepts an absolute, though it may regard it as altogether transcendent.

Nagarjuna's approach to Nirvāna or liberation:

Nirvāna is described as 'the final extinction of all *klesha* or suffering' ? If there is no process and no *sansārā* or the wheel of birth-death-rebirth, with its suffering, what is *nirvana* ?

Since for *Mādhyamikas* phenomena is an illusion, for them *nirvāna* means the awareness of the absence of the essence in all phenomena resulting in the ending of the *Prapanca Pravritti*; that is the seeming activity of phenomena. The state where the *Prapanca pravritti* has ended, cannot therefore be indicated either as positive or negative. At that level phenomena cannot be considered as existent or non-existent. At that plane, there is no bondage or emancipation. Nagarjuna, says that 'There is neither being, nor cessation of it; there is neither bondage, nor escape from it'.

We have seen the following positive way.

- (i) to come to enlightenment, man has to positively remove the layers covering his true identity or
- (ii) the Spirit, which is self-evolving, and which is in the form of a bud with a teleological urge to grow into self-awareness, aids the process through positive action.

In either case the result is achieved through yogic course of discipline, the steps for which are the same as mentioned under the two-fold discipline in the Upanisads and *silā* and *samādhi* in Buddhism.

We have seen the Theravada Buddhist meditation stages as i) *Appana samādhi*, (ii) *Dutiyam-Jnānam*, (iii) *Upekkhū* and (iv) *Ekaggatā*. In '*Lankavatāra-Sutra*' which is considered an early work of the Vijnānavādins, the meditation practice and stages are as follows:

(i) *Bālopacarika-dhyāna*

This first stage meant for the beginners called *Sravakas* is to stop them from conceptual comprehension of everything around them and to enable them to come to direct perception. This is done by meditating on the momentary, defiled and woeful nature of everything and concentrating upon the no-soul doctrine called *Pudgalanairātmya*. This is practiced also by the Pratyekabuddhas.

(ii) *Arthapravicaya-dhyāna*

This is meant for the 'sadhaka' or the practitioner to grasp in depth the nature of all things directly. Here there is already a consciousness developed that there is no self and no essence to this or the doctrines of others, including their so-called *dharmas*.

(iii) *Tathata-lambana-dhyāna*

Here the mind is led to enter *Tathāta* or 'Thatness' i.e. the state which is uninvolved in duality. This is done by the *sādhaka* or the practitioner realizing through meditation that the appearances including the thought that there is no self, are imaginary.

(iv) *Citta-vimukta-dhyāna*

This is meditation which is detached from the mind. Here the mind having entered *Tathata*, the non-essentialness and voidness of all phenomena is realized. In this higher *Nirvāna*, all *vāsanās* are burnt or dissolved and the mind ceases to create duality and thereby a *māyic* universe. There is no cycle of birth-death-rebirth.

In the lower step called *Nirvāna*, as a result of complete realization of the momentariness and anguish of all things, the *sādhaka* or the practitioner remains in a state of unattachment. As a result, he lives outside karmic bondage and therefore outside the wheel of birth-death-rebirth.

The negative approach:

We have seen above the following negative way.

To come to enlightenment, man has not to do any positive act of removal but to drop the veil of ignorance by realizing that the lower self prevents finding one's identity because the individual will hold it together.

Therefore, the way does not lie in effort at removal of the coverings, but in dropping the desires, graspings and cravings or letting go the mischief maker which is *Tanha*. The moment this is done, man naturally arrives at his own true Self.

Nagarjuna's approach:

Nagarjuna suggests a third approach when he says that 'There is neither being, nor cessation of it; there is neither bondage, nor escape from it'.

There is no veil covering the true identity of man. Man is already in a liberated state. He does not see it. It is possible for him to see his true Self and come to enlightenment in an instant; if he totally understands his own mind.

This understanding can come from constant and choiceless awareness of the psychological processes within the man, in short from self-knowledge. When enlightenment comes, it comes in a flash. It is not gradual.

In this third approach the way is most important. It lies in the perception of the duality or the subject-object split within the psyche and the recognition of its non-dual character and thereby ending the ego.

The discipline lies in meditation accompanied by strict moral life and involves hard work, but without psychological effort.

It has to start at the supramental or non-dual level; so much so that Soto Zen sect of *Mahayāna* Buddhism claims that there is no gap between practice and enlightenment.

Here is an anecdote which throws light on this approach.

The fourth Patriarch was 'Tao-hsin' who attained his own liberation in a famous dialogue. He came to 'Seng-t'san' and asked:

"What is the method of liberation ?

'Who binds you?' asked Seng-t' san.

'No one binds me', said the pupil.

'Why then', said the master, 'do you seek liberation?'"

This was enough for Tao-hsin, who in that moment saw.

There is another parable which goes as follows: there was a lion cub, which was brought up by a heard of goats. The lion cub therefore began to behave like a goat. One day he saw his own reflection in a pool of water and immediately realized that he was a lion. From that moment, he was the king of the forest.

As in other systems of yoga, morality plays a high part in this system also.

Madhyama-pratipāda or the Middle-Path Principle & the two levels of truth :

We have seen above that *Mādhyamika* or *Sunya* or void means *Nih-Svabhāvatvam*, that is everything lacks a *svabhāva* or essence of true nature of its own. Thus all forms of knowledge and phenomena are false. Since they are false, they do not exist.

The Middle Path (*Madhyama-pratipāda*) doctrine establishes two levels of truth, (i) the Supreme (*paramārtha-satya*) and (ii) the conventional (*samvrtti-satya*) and claims that the *raison d'etre* of each is contingent on the other. Supreme means insight into the transcendental realm i.e. *Sunyata*, where all opposites are dissolved, while Conventional means insight into the phenomenal realm i.e. the realm of *pratiya-samutpada* or dependent causation.

The phenomena, lacking essence is neither existent nor non-existent. They cannot be called either *sāsvata* or eternal or *asāsvata* or non-eternal. They hold only *samvrtti-satya* or relative truth. They do not have *Paramārtha-satya* or true reality. They are therefore *Mādhyamika* or occupy a middle position.

The Middle Path principle does not consider opposites as forms of dichotomy. They are complementary entities constituting an organic whole.

The ultimate truth or *Paramārtha-satya* is transcendent where all opposites are dissolved. It cannot be labelled either as positive or negative. Being neither, it is *Mādhyamika* or holds 'the middle-path'.

Both for *Samvrtti-satya* and *Paramārtha-satya*, *Sunyata* or void, is the core and both hold a middle path. This doctrine is, therefore, called *Mādhyamika* or the middle doctrine of *Sunya-Vāda*.



BRING ME HOME
(A song)

MATAJI,
HEAR MY PRAYER.
IN MY HEART
YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN NEAR.
I AM YOURS.
HELP ME NOW.
FILL MY HEART
WITH YOUR LOVE.
SEND YOUR GRACE.
SEND YOUR JOY.
SEND YOUR PEACE.

YOU ARE ALL
THAT I HAVE.
BE WITH ME,
EVER THERE IN MY THOUGHTS.
HELP ME LIVE
JUST FOR YOU.
FILL MY HEART
WITH YOUR LOVE.
SEND YOUR GRACE,
SEND YOUR JOY,
BRING ME HOME.

BRING ME HOME (×3)

OUR SIXTH TRIP TO INDIA

[Continued from before]

— Shradhā Davenport

The next day brought rain, so I had to hang the laundry in a vacant room next to ours. It rained all day and Satya cooked a lovely pot of potatoes, tomatoes, okra, and little green peppers, I had been fighting off a cold for several days and did not think there was much chance of seeing Mother, so we stayed in that day.

It was still cloudy when we awoke the following morning. We had tea, cocoa, and cookies while watching little birds that came into our room, unafraid, and ate the cookie crumbs we had put out for them. After lunch we had nice warmbaths, then went to the ashram about 4:00 p.m.

It started raining again. We stood beneath the great banyan tree, looking at the river until the rain got quite heavy. Then we took refuge in the hall below Mother's room. When rain stopped, we went outside to a nearby shrine of Sri Hanumanji where Dasu had the village children gathered in Kirtan. The children always gravitated to Dasu as his playful nature made him like one of them. But beneath that playful veneer we saw a very serious bhakta of Mother who, even in play, was teaching the children to call God's Name.

At last we were allowed to climb those stairs that brought us to Mother. She was seated in Her room with our blanket covering Her feet and legs. When She saw me standing at Her side window, She lifted the corner of the blanket to show me that She was using it. My heart nearly burst with joy as I felt the embrace of Her compassion. Mother turned to face some devotees on the other side of the room, so Satya and I moved around the corner and stood in Her open doorway. From that place we could see Her very well. For about one hour we were blessed to be near Her. I always enjoyed watching Her expressive little hands, so beautiful and graceful. Then Her door and windows were closed as She retired for the evening.

The next day would be my forty-ninth birthday. I went to sleep hoping that Mother would bless me with a short private for the occasion.

When we arrived at the ashram that day we received prasād from Mother's plate, then went upstairs to see Her. Bhaskaranandaji had told Mother that it was my birthday. She greeted both of us with presents, a lovely piece of white cotton fabric for Satya and a sheer white sari for me. We were granted a brief private, but some questions She would not answer. They were things dealing with this *māyā*.

Mother said that those things were interesting but that we should turn our minds to the spiritual.

One thing which I asked, and Mother did answer, was prompted by a story I had read. A young woman, after being seriously injured, was in a deep coma. Her body was made to function by artificial means. Without being attached to certain machines she could not breathe and take nourishment. She had been in that vegetative state for about two years with the body slowly withering and no hope of awakening. I asked Mother, "What is the state of the *jiva* in such a case?" Mother replied that only a small portion is still there. I had the impression that it must be like a thin thread still connected, but She did not elaborate.

After darshan and our private, Bhaskaranandaji told us to see Swami Paramanandaji before we left the ashram. We went to Swamiji's room near the banyan tree. He invited us to come in the morning at 8:30 a.m. when the inauguration of Mother's new house was to commence. We were also invited for the feast which was to follow. He said to tell other Westerners of the program and that they were also invited. Back at Ganganath temple as we sat for our evening meal with Bhakti, Melita and Patrick, we informed them of Swamiji's invitation to the celebration the next day.

It was very hot and humid. Even after a cool bath, it was hard to sleep. But that was a small price to pay for those wonderful days.

We awoke early on that first day of December and were at the ashram a little before 8:30 a.m. The new house which had been constructed for Mother was a graceful little cottage situated next to the hall. To me, its most appealing feature was that it was on ground level. It always hurt me to watch as Mother painfully climbed the stairs to Her second-floor quarters. There were several rooms in the house which had a ramp at the entrance in stead of steps. A concrete porch ran across the front with an ornamental iron gate enclosing it. Some of the ladies had decorated the entryway with traditional designs and a festive mood filled the atmosphere. Some people had come just for the occasion and all were engaged in the preparations. Mother's wooden bed had been placed in front of the house. She sat there, the center of all that went on around Her. We were very happy to have opportunity for *darshan* and Satya took some movies.

A couple of cars arrived carrying local V.I.P.'s. It was time for the ceremony. Mother stood and leaned upon Udasji and Bhaskaranandaji for a moment. Then She moved with great difficulty due to pain in Her knee. Conch shells were blown and some one beat upon a thali (metal plate) as she entered the house. There was a surge of people at the door as Mother entered. Bhaskaranandaji, who was assisting

Mother silently and with a powerful look simply turned the palm of his hand toward the crowd for a split second and the rush melted into order. I was thrilled to witness that scene and see something in him that is very rarely shown. Inside, Mother was seated and a puja was being done.

After some time a bus full of men who were devotees from Sri Sant Ram Samadhi Mandir of Nadiad arrived. As previously mentioned, that was the site of the Samyam Saptaha and Mother had been there just before She came to Bhimpura. The men who came were all happy for the opportunity to have Mother's darshan again. We were impressed by the light and joyful feeling which surrounded them.

Other people came by boat and on foot from Chandod. Many sadhus had been invited for a *bhandara*. Most of the people went into Mother's house. The westerners were not permitted to go in at that time, so Melita, Patrick, Bhakti, Satya and I went to stand near a window of the room where Mother was seated. On that side of the house the earth sloped downward, away from the building. The place where we stood was a little below the window, but Mother's seat was right next to it and we could see Her very well. Mother turned and looked out at us. She smiled sweetly, as though She was pleased that we were there. That loving look filled my heart and we were thrilled by Her tender regard. Often she turned to look at us as we stood there. Soon the others left for a while, but Satya and I stayed beneath Her window. Mother kept looking at us. We stood there for a long time as a Gita Path and other scriptural readings were being done.

Suddenly Mother held a garland up to the window. We went forward as She threw one and then another. She held up four fingers, then threw the third and fourth garland into our waiting arms. She held up two fingers to signify that two garlands were for us and then holding up two more fingers, pointed towards Ganganath Temple to indicate that the other two were for Bhakti and Melita. We nodded that we understood. After a little while Mother stood, then went walking through the house, we slowly moved up to the front and talked with some of the devotees there. Bhakti and Melita came and we gave them their garlands from Mother.

As we sat beneath the lofty banyan tree, we were served a feast on woven leaf plates. There was khichri, spicy fried potatoes, two or three different vegetables, puris, curd, dal, some kind of sweet and a lovely pot of khir. After so much food we needed the little walk back to Ganganath temple. I did a few chores, bathed, and took a short rest. Then it was time to return for darshan.

When we arrived Mother was still in Her new house. Some people were going in and when we saw Melita enter, we followed her. The house was lovely. Mother

sat in the main room which was of a good size. After we pronounced to Her, She gave each of us *prasad* (nuts and raisins) with Her own hands—a very rare treat in those days. We all sat near Mother as the men from Sant Ram Mandir sang lovely bhajans. With genuine respect and affection they came for Mother's blessings before returning to Nadiad. After their departure Mother sat with us for a few more minutes.

When Mother got up to leave, we moved slowly behind Her. At the doorway She paused, turned back towards us, and said for us to stop there. As She faced us, She did something with Her hands that, to me, looked like an *arati*. Who can know that blessing She bestowed upon us as we stood before Her that enchanted day in Bhimpura.

Outside, Mother walked to the Hanuman shrine just beyond the ashram gate. Dasu was there with the children doing kirtan. She stood with them for a few minutes, then walked towards the area near the banyan tree. There She was shown a new concrete seat which had been formed around a mango tree. After that I watched with tortured eyes as She slowly climbed the long stairway to Her second-floor rooms. I was told that Her new house was not yet ready for Her use.

We said goodnight, reluctant to let that beautiful day slip away. But it was not ours to hold.

When we came to the ashram the next day, Hansa gave us *prasad* from Mother's plate. Then we stood near the kitchen. We could see Mother through the side window of Her upstairs room. We could not see Her clearly, but just knowing that She was within view pacified us. Soon we were allowed to go upstairs. How lovely Mother looked in the soft evening light. Some people were in Her room and we watched as She spoke with them. A private was scheduled, so we were asked to go downstairs.

Panuda was in the courtyard and we told him of our travel plans. Mother's program was taking Her to Morvi for a Bhagavat Saptaha and we had received permission to follow Her there. A taxi was already booked for our trip to Baroda the next day. The day after that we would go by bus to Morvi.

Dasu had all the village children and adults gathered around the little Hanuman shrine singing kirtan. I stood with my tape recorder and captured those sweet sounds for some time before we had to leave.

We felt sad as we walked down the dirt pathway that night, thinking it to be the last time we would do so. At Ganganath temple we packed most of our things before going to bed.

Kamal was coming with our car in the morning and would accompany us to Baroda around noon. We enjoyed his company and friendship. His help was a real blessing on this trip and on previous trips when we had met him at Mother's feet.

In the morning we finished packing our things. When Kamal arrived with the taxi we loaded the luggage and drove to the ashram to see Mother. While waiting for permission to go upstairs, we had the chance to visit for a few minutes with friends who would not be going on to Morvi.

When Udas called for us to come up, we found Mother sitting with Swami Virajanandaji at Her feet. We were told that he was checking certain details with Mother for a book he was writing. They were in a room next to the one where we usually saw Mother. There was a large window in that room too, and we stood on the walkway gazing at Mother. We offered garlands to Her and received Her blessings for our trip. There was always a sadness about leaving Mother's presence even when I knew it was only for a brief period. An empty feeling came into my heart that would stay there until my eyes beheld Her again.

[To continue]

●

*"Am I the ocean ? It is too small,
A dream dewdrop on the azure blades of space.
Am I the sky ? It is too small,
A lake in the bosom of eternity.
Am I eternity ? It is too small,
Framed in a name.
In the vast region of namelessness I love to dwell,
Beyond limits of dreams, names, conceptions.
I am what I am always—
In the ever-present past,
In the ever-present future,
In the ever-present now."*

—Paramahansa Yogananda

MA ANANDAMAYEE : AS REVEALED TO ME

— Dr. Rakesh Kumar

Indeed, the advent of Ma Anandamayee on this earth is one of the most important events in the spiritual history of India. However, it is very difficult to know about Ma Anandamayee fully and completely. In order to satisfy our urge and passion to know more and more about Her we can only have some glimpses of Her playful roles and worldly activities performed in the Kali yuga. Unlike an ordinary human being, She was able to perform worldly activities without taking much trouble. Being an *Avatāra* of the Supreme power, She could be able to display Her playful roles very easily.

In fact, Ma Anandamayee was an enlightened soul from the very beginning or by birth. It is rather more astonishing that She was a *Swayamsiddha*, means self-enlightened even without the help of a guru. It is true that She belonged to the Kheora village in Tripura but She was popular among the people across the whole country. She got Her self-initiation at Bajitpur on the day of Purnima at the early age of 26 in 1922. There were several manifestations of *asana*, *Pranayama* and *mantra uchcharan* in her state of ecstasy. She had no experience of sadness ever in her life. Her self-knowledge was so immense that there was no question of any deviation from her self-conscious state even for a single moment. Her self-knowledge did not arise from any external factor outside of Herself. It was always with Ma as a part of Her nature. It is rather more interesting that Her knowledge was always in its fullness requiring no effort on Her part nor any grace from the above to bring it into greater perfection.

Undoubtedly, Mother was a *Sthitaprajna* from the very beginning. She obtained the state of *Sthitaprajna*, as described in the second chapter of the Srimad Bhagawad Gita. In fact, She was a superb and a charismatic personality. She was not only the epitome of Hindu sadhana, rather She was also an epitome of universal religion. She represented the galaxy of the great *Avataras*. So many great men and women came over here in this world for the welfare of mankind in between the period starting from Lord Krishna to the period culminating in the twentieth century of Ma Anandamayee. In the intervening period several luminaries like Lord Buddha, Adi Shankaracharya, Lord Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa appeared in the spiritual world. Though Ma Anandamayee did not have any spiritual or religious teacher and did not practise any formal sadhana. Being a realized soul

from Her very birth She advocated all methods of sadhana. However, the philosophical, mystic, ritualistic and mythological aspects of religion are so diverse in nature and there seems to be no unity in this sadhana aspects of religion. It is only in Hinduism that diverse methods of sadhana have been synthesised under the one banner of Vedic religion or *Sanatana Dharma*.

It is a fact that our Hindu scripture like, Srimad Bhagavad Gita and the Puranas not only permit the devotees or yogis to practise either of the diverse methods but also to have a synthetic sadhana of all the diverse methods. However, Ma Anandamayee emphasized on not merely the synthetic sadhana of Srimad Bhagavad Gita but also went to the extent of permitting *Tantra sadhana*. Thus, She has encouraged all the devotees, irrespective of caste, sect and religion to practise their own methods of sadhana and *dhyana*. It is so because of the fact that all methods are different leading to the realization of one God or the Supreme authority of the entire world.

Sri Ma Anandamayee was the ideal being of the people of all religions, sects, castes, creeds and communities. In fact, She had cast away all the desires of mind, satisfied in the Self alone. She did never hanker after happiness and her mind was not shaken by any kind of adversity. She was free from affection, fear and wrath. She felt everywhere unattached, not pleased at receiving any thing good nor vexed at evil and above all She was freed from the notion of 'mine' and 'yours'. She was tranquil and fully surrendered to the Will of God and She had known Brahma in reality. Perhaps, she descended to this world to present to mankind the model of the best type of *Sthitaprajna*.. Thus, She was an epitome of the divine soul with an ever smiling personality. Furthermore, She was the epitome of *Sanatana Hindu dharma*, the universal religion in all its aspects of Vedanta, Vaishnavism and *Tantra sadhana*. Moreover, Ma Anandamayee was the living image of a long period of five thousand years of spiritual life of the vast majority of people across the world.

Ma Anandamayee also descended to this world from the supramental plane to present to mankind the model of the best type of *parabhakta* of the divine soul. We come across in Her personality the equilibrium of the compassion of Lord Buddha, the absolute monism of Adi Shankaracharya, the *parabhakta's* ecstasy of Lord Chaitanya, and the *sarva-dharma samanvaya* of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Thus, She was a mani-folded personality combined in one.

The concept of *sarva-dharma samanvaya* is one of the basic aspects of our culture. Ma Anandamayee has always emphasized upon this, to follow the path of universal religion so that we may be able to lead a happy and prosperous life which is based on dharma. She also advocated in favour of the Hindu culture and of the

Sanatana dharma which encompasses all other cultures of the various countries across the world. Several writers, critics and philosophers have shown the fact that our culture is so rich and diversified in nature that it has nothing to learn from others.

It is a fact that the more we indulge in our passion the more unbridled they become. The great men and women have always emphasized and set a limit to our indulgences in worldly passions. It is so because of the fact that they knew very well that happiness is largely a mental condition. Ma Anandamayee has also shown us more or less the same thing. She warned us several times that if we set our heart upon worldly pleasures we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre. She has advised us time and again that we should only do what we could do with proper zeal, courage and honesty.

In the western countries the people have made wonderful discoveries in the material science and in our country we have made still more marvellous discoveries in things of religion and culture. Thus, we have learnt a lesson from our culture to be satisfied in what we possess. However, Ma Anandamayee did not say only this much. She went to the limit of attaining the *bhāvātita* condition, free from the ripples of thought, desire and passion. However, it is very difficult to attain such a height of spiritual level in human life. In true sense this is the state of *samadhi* that signifies *samādhāna* or completion of every sort of activity and thought, It can only be attained through regular, rigorous and constant practice of spiritual methods as enunciated in the scriptures It is indeed a fact that spiritual values are real and eternal values which can bring peace, prosperity and happiness to all the mankind. Such spiritual practices help all human beings in getting full satisfaction from within. It aims at ensuring that devotees get physically invigorated, mentally rejuvenated, culturally enriched, spiritually elevated and feel proud within themselves.

However, there has been certain suspicion in some corners that the spiritual values can elevate always in the absence of other factors and other conditions of life. This is totally an erroneous view. Such eternal and real values can be both sustainable and obtainable for the moral and spiritual progress of the entire mankind. Thus, we should not stick to such erroneous views of life. Moreover, the main thesis of the philosophy of life lie in the co-ordination between material prosperity and spiritual upliftment of all human beings. Such ideals can only bring allround prosperity and equality among all human beings without any discrimination and obtain the ultimate goal of life.

Sometimes, devotees of Ma Anandamayee say that She welcomed all faiths as true paths to God. However, the fact was that She saw no differences which had to be cemented. Purity of heart, speech, action and thought was ever the ideal which She set forth for all the people on the path to God realization. While speaking to the people She showed Herself to be fully aware of the trends and the changing situations of the time. With great humour and a sense of understanding, She could always bring them around in accepting Her request to begin the search for Him, who remains hidden in the cave of the heart. She used to say that She did belong to everybody, irrespective of caste, colour and creed. She emphasized this point time and again that God is as much present in the world given over to scientific research as was in the age of mythology.

In Ma Anandamayee's personality we verily come across a world teacher, a *Jagadguru.*, who not only awakened the longing for the quest for the truth but also enkindled and sustained faith in its ultimate realization.

At times, we may feel somewhat depressed in Her physical absence, but She will remain for ever in all of us in the various forms of Her immortal words. She used to say that 'Ma' is here, what is there to worry about ? Therefore, there is no need to be fearful in any situation, even in Her physical absence. It is quite obvious that even today She is present among us in some way or the other. There is only the need to feel Her presence and accept Her blessings in various forms available to us. It is so because of the fact that under no circumstance, however adverse, should man accept defeat. At the same we must be very much careful for our main concerns and do the duty entrusted by the Almighty. When the time comes we will be able to know how much progress we have made.

Thus, we should continue to live the wordly life in God-remembrance and complete the journey of hundred miles in the spiritual world. Without a sense of keen interest and desire for Ma Anandamayee's grace real performance of any kind is not possible. Thus, in joy and sorrow, in happiness and misery we must cultivate an interest and desire to call out Her name and thus be able to win Her grace and divine dispensation.

