

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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*Ma in the late thirties standing inside the precincts
of the ancient temple of Patal Devi in Almora.*

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MATRI VANI

Is not everything God's creation ? Things are different for different people. It is well to remember that what looms as a formidable problem may at times be resolved in a very easy way and so the further question may arise : Was it after all but a trifling problem ? The Creator of all things alone knows how to appraise it, He alone knows what is great and what is small.

* * * * *

In whatever condition God may keep man at any time, he must remain content. He should wholly rely upon God and let mind be occupied with *Japa* and meditation. It is when one's desires remain unfulfilled that one feels disappointed or frustrated. The only desire to be cherished is that His will may be done. Let him say to himself : "I shall call out to the Almighty, for no matter what He does, He does it for the best." To live in this spirit is man's duty as a human being. One has to aspire at the realization of Truth.

* * * * *

How can this little girl possibly leave her father ? Even if he pushes her far away this obstinate little girl will still be with him. The father will have to realize that such is the nature of his little daughter : in fact all her father's qualities are to be found in her, and he should make her use these very qualities in the service of her ailing father.

If one feeds upon the things that aggravate the disease, is it not natural that the illness should grow worse ? Medicine will have to be taken and also a change of air will be beneficial.

* * * * *

By doing service heart and mind are purified — be convinced of this ! To engage in service is a very powerful *sadhana*, do not become impatient. Rather serve your people with the utmost calm and have a kind word for everyone. Whenever you do or say anything wrong, beg to be forgiven and try your best not to let a similar error occur in future. Even though others may be unjust to you, you yourself should neither do nor say anything unseemly.

* * * * *

Worldly occupations and business are bound to cause worry, it cannot be otherwise. The only way to meet it is by endurance, endurance and more endurance. He who can endure wins in the end. One has to dive down among the

waves of the sea and rise up again. The talents and the work God has entrusted to you are meant for His service and for nothing else — bear this in mind !

* * * * *

Man must behave as a hero. During spells of misfortune he must abide to fortitude and patience. Time never stands still.

* * * * *

Suicide is a most heinous sin. To whom belongs the body that you speak of destroying ? Is this the way a human being talks ? For shame !

* * * * *

To indulge in what seems pleasurable means to choose that which appears lovely on the surface and therefore attractive. Yet unlawful, ill-fated and degrading actions that give expression to one's animal nature lead to misery. The rules and regulations pertaining to the householder's period of life (*Grihastha Ashram*) have to be observed as fully as possible. To live up to the highest ideals seems irksome at first, but ultimately brings real well-being and peace. One must learn to find enjoyment in the Sublime — then only does one deserve to be called a human being. Having been blessed with a human body it is only right that one should behave in a fitting manner. Why give way to animal instincts ?

If you cannot sustain *Japa* at all times, at any rate complete two rosaries twice daily, morning and evening. The search after Truth is man's real vocation.

* * * * *

To a human being the most noble, irreproachable line of conduct is alone acceptable. If anyone strives to mould his life accordingly it is a matter of great rejoicing. In the case of a woman it means preserving her integrity and purity by being completely faithful to her husband. Not to let even her glance fall on any other man must be her endeavour. Only actions that kindle man's Divine nature are worthy of the name of action, all the rest is non-action, a waste of energy. Any pattern of behaviour that fails to quicken the Divine in man should be eschewed, however enticing it may be, but any thing that helps to awaken man's inherent Divinity must be resolutely adopted as one's own, even though seemingly uninviting. Man's calling is to tread the excellent path that leads to Immortality. What appears pleasing to the senses later develops into a hot-bed of poison, generating inner turmoil and disaster, for it belongs to the realm of death.

* * * * *

Force of character is man's great strength. If he uses it in his dealings with the world he will indeed be victorious along most lines.



PAGES FROM
"Ma Anandamayee Prasang"
by
Prof. A. K. Dutta Gupta
[Translated from Bengali]

Dehradun, Kishenpur Ashram, 19th May, 1941

When I came to Ma this morning, I found Sri Prajnanananda Brahmachari and a few others with Her. The question of looking up for an auspicious moment for a journey arose.

Ma asked the Brahmachari : Baba, when starting on a journey, when and under what circumstances should one choose an auspicious moment ?

Brahmachariji : When a journey is undertaken for a particular object, such as for the realization of something keenly desired, then one should choose proper time. But when a journey is undertaken without any desired objective, then this is not necessary.

Ma : Suppose someone wants to realize God and leaves for a remote place to practise sadhana, should he make sure that the time of his departure is auspicious ?

Brahmachariji : For a journey undertaken for the realization of Supreme Truth, there is no particular moment set apart as being auspicious. For such an objective all times are good .

Ma : When someone wishes to become a *sannyasi*, he carefully looks for a proper moment and distinguishes between auspicious and inauspicious dates and hours. Yet the only reason for embracing *sannyasa* is the realization of God.

Brahmachariji : Yes, there is a definite ruling that before being initiated into *sannyasa* a propitious time has to be ascertained. But this is for *vividisā sannyasa* which is a sort of preparatory *sannyasa* to make one-self ready for the real, genuine *sannyasa*. In short, so long as one is governed by the *gunas* (attributes of nature), one will have to consult the almanac to ascertain a propitious moment.

Ma supported this and said : To find out the auspiciousness of a particular time or moment arises in a man's mind so long as he is bound by *samskaras* and *gunas*. When he becomes free from these such things become unnecessary.

Seed mantra and God's name

In the evening the sky was overcast and it seemed as if the Mussoorie hills were covered by a dusty cloth. Lightning flashed from time to time but it had not yet started to rain. As there would be no outing in the evening and we would thus be able to spend the whole time in Ma's presence, I went upstairs and sat down before Her.

After keeping silence for a while, I asked : "Ma, would you care to discuss the question of *diksha* (initiation) also today ?"

Ma : If anything comes out from within, I will.

I : At the time of initiation we find that Guru gives a seed mantra to some and only God's Name to others. What is the reason for this differentiation ? Is there any difference between the potency of the *bija* mantra and that of the Name ?

Ma : From one point of view I would say that there is no difference between a seed mantra and that of a Name. A *bija* mantra charged with power as well as a Name charged with power will be instrumental in leading the disciple to the Supreme state. Just as a seed contains a tree, so does a tree contain the seed. He who has received a Name will in due course also receive the *bija* mantra. But the Guru differentiates between bestowing a *bija* or a Name according to the inner qualifications of the disciple and according to his dispositions (*samskaras*) brought over from former births. However, many believe that a seed mantra is more potent than a Name. The Name is suitable for all and everyone, whereas the seed mantra is to be used when a certain stage has already been reached. The Name is often a well-known one whereas the seed mantra is kept always concealed. That is why some people who have previously received a Name and later been initiated by a *bija* mantra, consider this a special favour and feel satisfied. But looked upon from the standpoint of the ultimate result, it must be said that the Name and the seed mantra are one.

I : What actually are the various mantras ?

Ma : Well, well ! Do you not yourselves declare that what saves (*trān karā*) a person from the clutches of his mind (*mana*) is called a mantra (*mana trān*) ?

I : How were all the mantras created ?

Ma : All this is written down in your religious text books.

After saying this much Ma spoke a little more and then kept silent. Thereafter other topics came up for discussion. As Sri Prajnanananda Brahmachari was present, Ma asked him to elucidate the subject of creation of mantras. He did speak on this issue; but nobody was fully satisfied with what he said.

As the weather became bad, many of those who had come from the city started leaving, others went downstairs. Ma then reverted to the question raised by me and said :

"Look, words do not always come out from my mouth. Be it due to the presence of certain people or because of the atmosphere, words sometimes dry up. But do not think that I do this purposely. All this happens spontaneously."

"As to the question of the creation of mantras you have raised, from a certain point of view there is no such thing as creation. Everything is already present, so why talk about creation ? Yet, from another viewpoint, you may say, creation does take place, both old creation and new creation have taken place and do take place even now. This means looking at the same issue from various angles just as the sea is full of waves as well as quite motionless. The same thing may be simultaneously steady and yet restless. Creation is also like that."

"A mantra consists of sounds. The *nāda* or *Omkāra (Pranava)* is the root of creation. You call it the *Sabda Brahman (eternal sound)* don't you ? The waves and the sound that arise from the vibrations or tremors of the Supreme Being (*Parama Sattā*) are the beginning of Creation. The mantra and its presiding deity are also created out of the *nāda*. Within your own Self are contained all mantras and deities and everything else. What you hear about different abodes, different worlds and different levels is all contained within this body. it is said, is it not ? "What is not contained in the microcosm is not present in the macrocosm." Viewed from this angle, all mantras are eternal. On the other hand, by different juxtapositions of various letters, new mantras can be created ."

In this manner Ma started to enlarge on many subtle issues, most of which were beyond my comprehension and I realized that I had raised a topic without being competent to do so.

20th May, 1941

Driving across the hills with Ma in the afternoon, Ma pointed to the scenery around us and said :

"Behold, how beautiful all this appears. ! Everything is present, yet is also absent. You are sitting in front of me, I can turn my face towards you, yet not see you at all. It is the idea which creates. (Turning towards me) You raised the subject of creation of mantras the other day, didn't you ? Together with the creation of the human mind, there have been the creation of ways and means to be also delivered from the mind (*mana trāna*). How wonderful is God's dispensation ! Furthermore, there are different stage of creation. At a certain stage there is no creation, at another

it certainly exists. There is yet another level where creation exists and is also non-existent, both simultaneously. All these are different experiences on different levels of *sadhanā*."

"You maintain, don't you, that one cannot escape from the effects of *prārabdha karma* (Portion of past action that is bound to fructify in the present birth). Yet there is a certain state in which even *prārabdha* is destroyed. Once the flame of Knowledge has been lit, how can the effects of *karma* remain undestroyed ? But such a state is most difficult to obtain."

Soon after the conclusion of this topic we returned to the Ashram. Ma sat down on the front veranda and we went off to perform our evening prayers.

Later on after coming to Mataji we found Her sitting on the eastern side veranda of the Ashram. We also squat there. Prof. Shyama Charan Babu also was amongst us. He asked Mataji why She had been laughing so excessively the day before.

Mataji : Both laughing & crying are indeed the same with this body. You saw me laughing only at the time of reading. In the evening also I laughed heavily on hearing the sounds coming out of the water-tap in the Ashram yard. You must have noticed that when a water-tap is turned, air often comes out of it with a hissing sound. Yesterday evening the tap of the Ashram yeard was emitting a similar sound. When I heard it I was almost convulsing with laughter. This is because there are some screws loose somewhere in this head. Again, when Swamiji was reading at night, a slight touch of his hand turned the book-stand upside down. This gave me more fits of laughter. But the incident itself was nothing to laugh about. That shows that laughter comes out of this body without any apparent reason. Anything may give occasion to a fit of laughter. Any attempt to check it at that time has the effect of only pouring oil into fire."

"Once in Dhaka Ashram there was a *Kirtan* going on . The *Kirtaniya* was singing in an inspired mood. His face was overflowing with tears. The listeners were all visibly moved. Though the singer had plenty of emotion, his literary attainments were no better than those of this body. While thus singing he mispronounced a word. Though the slip was slight and did not affect the emotional flow either of the singer or of the listeners, it made me laugh. Khukuni tried hard to keep me quiet. She whispered to me that it would hurt the feelings of others. But it was all in vain. They then were compelled to remove me to some other place. Even there I was rolling with laughter. This may give you some idea as to the nature of my laughter."

"It is not that this body laughs only when there is something humorous. It is almost shaken with laughter even when there is little or no occasion for it. Even at

the sight of people's grief this body has often burst into laughter. Those who are unacquainted with the vagaries of this body may very well be offended. They may think that I simply laugh at them, which would be far from the truth."

"Sometimes it so happens that the incident which seems to move this body into laughter is not the real cause at all. Some incident of the past or future might occur to me and give occasion to such laughter.



THREE THINGS

Three things to respect :

Old age, religion and law

Three things to love :

Purity, honesty and hard work.

Three things to admire :

Beauty, intellect and character

Three things to cultivate :

Courage, cheerfulness and contentment

Three things to maintain :

Promise, friendship and affection.

Three things to avoid :

Smoking, drinking and gambling

Three things to control :

Tongue, temper and temptation.

Three things to watch :

Speech, behavior and action.

Three things to prevent;

Laziness, false hood and slang.



GLOBALIZATION OF APPLIED VEDANTIC SOCIALISM

— Prof. Bireshwar Ganguly

The three highest values of human civilization are ancient Indian Vedantic humanism, modern western democracy and socialism. If we add to these three values of life the acceptance of a scientific temper of mind along with the achievements of scientific technology for mass production of cheap consumer goods for the masses and the mass communication of ideas through the modern electronic media, we get five trusted methods of establishing a common global civilization based on *daivic* (divine) qualities of character for the benefit of mankind in the twenty-first century at the threshold of the third wave of human civilization.

Though the Chinese and Muslim civilizations are still to be convinced about the ultimate benefits of democracy, there is no doubt that the Christians of Europe and America and the Hindus of India have successfully accepted the democratic form of governance. It is now to be considered as to which variety of socialism will be universally acceptable and beneficial in the long run. Marx and Engels classified socialism into two major categories, viz. Utopian and Scientific. After World War I scientific socialism assumed two important forms, viz. revolutionary communism of Russia and evolutionary or parliamentary democratic socialism of the Fabian variety adopted by Great Britain and India specially after World War II.

The pre-Marxian Utopian socialism of Sismondi, Saint Simon, Proudhon etc. could not strike roots in Europe, but the revolutionary socialism of Lenin did work as an experiment in the Soviet Union from 1917 to 1990. It failed because of the inherent contradictions of communism as a dictatorial method of governance in a God-less society of aimless, materialistic people. Parliamentary socialism of the Fabian variety also worked with tolerable success in U.K. and India from 1951 to 1990, but was swept under the carpet by the cyclonic storm of the so-called globalization in the 1990s. The new world order is groping for a new ideology, which can combine the best values of democracy, socialism and scientific technology in a globalized world, hankering for peace, rationality, humanism and tolerance.

We have seen that the perennial philosophy of Vedanta alone can accommodate all the above values without hurting the feelings of followers of any religion.

The applied or practical aspects of the perennial philosophy of Vedanta in its *Leelavadi* variety (not *Māyāvādi* variety of Shankarāchārya) were developed in two ways by Swami Vivekananda in the nineteenth century and Mahatma Gandhi in the twentieth century. While the former laid stress on religious tolerance and social service, the latter laid stress on political action. Both were Vedantic socialists, but the Utopian socialism of both opened the doors for experiment with socialism in a modern world while keeping the highest values of life in tact.

The Perennial Philosophy of Vedanta:

Vedanta offers the perennial philosophy of the Hindus, which has universal application for the whole of humanity. According to Aldous Huxley, at the core of the perennial philosophy the following four fundamental doctrines are found :

- (i) The phenomenal world of matter and of individualized consciousness the world of things and animals and men and even gods is the manifestation of a Divine Ground within which all partial realities have their being, and apart from which they would be non-existent. This Divine Ground is called Brahman, whose creative, sustaining and transforming aspects are manifested in the Hindu Trinity of Brahmā, Vishnu and Maheshvara.
- (ii) Human beings are capable not merely of knowing about the Divine Ground by inference; they can also realize its existence by a direct intuition, superior to discursive reasoning. This immediate knowledge unites the knower with that which is known.
- (iii) Man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego and an eternal Self; which is the inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul.
- (iv) Man's life on earth has only one end and purpose : to identify himself with his eternal Self and so to come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground (*Paramātman* or *Brahman*).

The Upanishadic aphorisms such as *Tattvamasi* ('Thou art That') or *Aham Brahmāsmi* ('I am the Brahman') or 'All this manifested universe is nothing but Brahman', categorically establish this monism of Vedanta. It is on the basis of this perennial philosophy based on Vedanta that, after realization of God, an ancient sage declared'. Hear, O children of immortal bliss ! Even you that reside in higher spheres ! I have found the Ancient One, who is

beyond all darkness, all delusion; knowing whom you shall be saved from death over and over again.

Māyāvāda* Versus *Leelāvāda : One who believes in absolute monism of Shankaracharya and feels a congenial atmosphere in the *Sāmkhya sādhanā* of *Māyāvāda* cannot logically be confined to household duties of *Grihasthāshrama* and undertake *Karmayoga*, based on *Varnāshrama Dharma* of *Sanātana Hindu Dharma*. He can at best undertake the work of a preacher and perform self-less social services like the monks of Buddhism, Christianity or the Ramakrishna Mission of Hinduism. The practical Vedanta of Bhagavad Geeta logically belongs to householders like Prince Arjuna, who was exhorted by Lord Krishna to perform his functional caste duties of a *Kshatriya* in a detached manner in the spirit of surrender to God. This is in fact the practical Vedanta of *Nishkāma Karma Yoga* even for house-holders for all functional castes. Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission for carrying the banner of Vedanta as taught in the Geeta for whole-time sannyasis, who engage in selfless social services in the Ramakrishnaite spirit of serving humanity as the manifestation of divinity (*Shiva Jñāne Jiva Sevā*). Mahatma Gandhi divinised political and social activity by applying the principles of practical Vedanta as found in his '*Geeta Mātā*'. Geeta being the best text on *Leelāvādi Vedānta*.

The Integral Vedantic Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda, the greatest disciple of Paramahansa Sri Ramakrishna and the first great preacher of Vedanta to the Western world in the 19th century was of the firm opinion that Hinduisim is based on the philosophy of Vedanta as found in the Upanishads and specially in their best commentary, the Bhagavad Geeta. Vivekananda affirms that in the Upanishads, we have both *Dvaitavāda* and *Advaitavāda*. In his words : "Shankaracharya committed the mistake in supposing that the whole of the Upanishads taught one thing, which was Advaitism, and nothing else; and wherever a passage bearing distinctly the *Dvaita* idea occurred, he twisted and tortured the meaning to make it support his own theory. So with Ramanuja and Madhvacharya, when pure Advaitic texts occurred." (*Swami Vivekananda, The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Mayavati Memorial ed. Vol III, P. 4,39*)

In his lecture on Vedantism, delivered at Khetri on 20th December, 1897, he reconciled the dualistic, qualified monistic and Advaitic theories by saying that "each one of these was like a step by which one passed before the other was

reached; the final evolution to Advaitism was the natural outcome, and the last step was 'Tattvamasi.' (*Ibid. P. P. 438-439*)

Thus we see that Vivekananda was a supporter of all the three varieties of Vedanta, for he admitted a variety in religious experiences, as found in the life and teachings of Chaitanya, Tulsidas, Nanak, Kabir and Sri Ramakrishna, which are termed as 'Vernacular Vedanta' by Dr. R. K. Das Gupta. (*Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture. Kolkata 29, April, 2003, p-171. Advaita Ashrama. Calcutta 14, 1989.*)

In 1896, Swami Vivekananda went to London and declared Advaita Vedanta as the new religious philosophy which will satisfy the rationalists : "The salvation of Europe depends upon a rationalistic religion and Advaita, the non-duality, the oneness, the idea of Impersonal God is the only religion that can have any hold on the intellectual people." (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol 2, p-139, Mayavati., ed, 1976.*)

Again in India he reiterated: "It seems to us, and to all who care to know, that the conclusions of modern science are the very conclusions the Vedanta preached ages ago; only in modern science they are written in the language of matter. Thus there is another claim of Vedanta upon modern western minds, its rationality, the wonderful rationalism of Vedanta. (*Ibid. Vol 3, P. 185, Mayavati. ed, 1979.*) He interpreted in clear, rational language, in his lectures delivered in London, some of the basic ideas of Advaita Vedanta :

- (i) The Absolute has become the relative through space, time and causation. The relative space-time reality is, in fact, nothing but the Absolute itself. Everything, therefore, is God or Absolute, in essence.
- (ii) The Absolute cannot be two. It is one. Therefore, there is always a deeper underlying behind everything in this universe. This One of Unity has been described by the monistic Vedanta Philosophy as Advaita (nondual : *a = not, dvaita = two*).
- (iii) Matter is a form of energy. Mind is matter, only finer. Consciousness creates or projects mind and matter, the mental and the material universe. Consciousness is the primary cause behind all creation. All forces are expressions of one single force, *Prāna* : and all matters are derived from one basic matter *Ākāsha*, Both are projections of the Absolute.
- (iv) The microcosm, the smallest particle, contains potentially the macrocosm, the universe, inside itself. Man, the microcosm, therefore, contains within himself, the potentiality of the Infinite Godhead.

Vivekananda dreamt of a complete man, and said : "Would to God, that all men were so constituted that in their minds all these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion and of work were equally present in full. That is my ideal, my ideal of perfect man." In 1896, he said in London : "In Shankaracharya, we saw tremendous intellectual power, throwing the scorching light of reason upon everything. We want today that bright sun of intellectuality joined with the heart of Buddha, the wonderful infinite heart of love and mercy. This union will give us the highest philosophy. Science and religion will meet and shake hands." Romain Rolland found in Vivekananda's universal Gospel the fulfilment of purely rational aspirations of the west, and wrote, "Europe and Asia are two halves of the soul. Man is not yet. He will be". (*Aldous Huxley : 'Introduction to the Bhagavad Gita : The Song of God', Translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, Sri Rama Krishna Math, Mylapore, 1945, pp. 10-11.*

[To continue]

THE DIVINE MOTHER

— Dr. Premlata Srivastava

[Continued from before]

Multifarious Ways of Matri-Lila

There is always a curiosity in the general group of devotees about Sri Ma's superhuman qualities and the incidents that focus on these aspects. These qualities were all the time evident in Her. Her aura of spirituality always put the lesser mortals on path to peace and spirituality and gave new meaning to life.

Sri Ma's Advaita philosophy encompassed a plethora of mood and sentiments in her association with the Almighty. If Her superhuman qualities were seen sometimes it was an overflow of Her majestic superhuman actions happening normally all the time through Her divine presence. Sometimes it so happened to inspire Her devotees or to guide them of better and pure thinking.

Ma said¹ while progressing on way to sadhana it is but natural to attain Divine powers. The results of such experiences are awe-inspiring. If such divine powers are exhibited with the sole intention of self-glorification, then it is dangerous for the aspirant, as powers are lost by misuse. But if still one proceeds further on sadhana as ego melts away, so also the attitude of self glorification goes away and at this stage the question of downfall of the *sadhaka* doesn't arise. The stage can be assessed on seeing".

When asked how could you cure all the diseases? Ma said² "There had never been an attempt to display these powers. Nothing deliberate. Sometimes mere touch, glance or just giving a flower or anything else would cure, but at other times, even if tried it would not happen. When this body became a *sadhika* all this had happened".

Further She said "Many such divine powers were displayed, many a times unknowingly or even without prior thinking, sometimes with a mixed feeling of knowing or not knowing it. It so happened just spontaneously, automatically; as many a times a mere touch has cured the disease, so it can be cured this time also. And with this if touched the patient will be cured of his disease. At other times the patient was touched with the knowledge that he will be cured by this. Now these divine powers have gone in to the nature. A person who expects this body to be

always supernatural in its dealings will be disappointed. This little girl acts according to Her "*Kheyal*".

"Once Bholanath was repeatedly requesting me to cure one person of his disease. The man came himself. At that time Kirtan was going on. He was asked to roll on floor, which he could not, nobody even helped him. The patient died returning home. So if God is unwilling, no one can help".

"It happened many a times that there was no introduction, no one even asked for the internal communion, which is with all, it works".

There were incidents when Ma would leave behind a cloth or something else or Ma would inflict wounds on Herself and the patient would be cured³.

There are endless incidents of worldly achievements by Sri Ma's grace.

About fortune prediction Ma once said it involves many factors and so there are different types of fortune tellers. Some are spontaneous, while some bring in an element of doubt. Some may try to develop their skill of forecasting, but cannot and without acknowledging its use, use their will-power making blunders. But those who look at future as divinity, do not err. Careful pondering can help to fathom such situations, exposing the abilities of exponents.

Ma once said that a lady visited Her. As a customary welcoming Ma was about to apply vermilion on the lady's forehead, the lady retorted, "apply vermilion only if you think I will never be a widow". Then Ma told her that it will not be proper. Imagine the plight of that unfortunate woman who would have to live in sorrow even before the fate willed her so. The lady who put the poser was now convinced of Ma's logic. Obviously it takes a lot of courage to accept the vagaries of fate. So nobody likes to know their destiny."

Sri Ma's staunch devotee Bhaiji and Didi in their respective books have vividly discussed Her various superhuman powers. Almost all Her devotees recount incidents of Her superhuman powers that were really astonishing.

An anguished call of a devotee never goes unresponded by the merciful Ma whose benign look is ever focussed on the welfare of all. May be sometimes we fail to perceive it. A youth visited Ma to know Her views on Man's service to God. He was first sent to Baba Bholanath. But Baba's answers did not satisfy the youth. Then he was asked to go to Bhaiji. At that time many needy people used to see Bhaiji for getting some job. He was not in need of a job, hence he did not see him. So he offered peranam to Ma and left the place disappointed. Ma sent him a green coconut full of water. The youth refused to accept it. On being persuaded by Bholanath that the coconut is symbolic of Ma's blessings, the youth politely declined it saying he did not desire worldly well-being or prosperity. On devotee's

request he said, "I have not yet finished my daily sandhya-puja and and taking it back home I will be forced to tell of all the happenings here". The youth left without accepting it.⁴

After his departure, Ma asked to cut open the green coconut (*daab*). This was done and surprisingly there was not a drop of water inside. The devotees concluded that as the youth has spurned the blessings of Sri Ma, she has attracted the entire coconut water subtly. How unfortunate the youth must be for ignoring Ma's blessings.

As the Kalki Puran says "The Lord (Sri Hari) doesn't give to others, nor his devotees ask for anything, but the mutual love and association is enduring and unending."

Ma was once in Vrindavan. Accompanied by Pushpa didi and Dr. Panna Lal, She visited Hari baba's ashram. Ras lila was in progress there. The day's theme was Radha's dream in which for the first time She saw Sri Krishna. She was yet to see Him in person or even hear about Him. The divine presence in the dream kindled the love in Her for Sri Krishna. She was lost in His thought. Seeing Her in this state Her friend, Chitrlekha started drawing the portraits of several men. As soon as She saw Sri Krishna's portrait She cried, He is the man. That was for the first time She heard the name 'Sri Krishna'. At once She become one with Her lord. His name resonating through Her body and soul. Sri Radha's exalted emotional expressions were enacted through Ras-lila that day.

While the episode of Ras lila was being enacted, Pushpa didi noticed Ma's lips were trembling, Her face radiating, flushed and became red. Only after sometime Ma became normal. Ma went to Shri Haribaba and said, "She was not feeling well and would like to go". Hari Baba touched Her hand and found it was ice-cold. Dr. Panna Lal, too noticed this change. Ma later said "Toady this body somehow could control the changes, as suddenly the kheyal came that here big advaita sadhus were sitting, no such thing should happen here. Only then this body returned to normal."

In 1955. Shri Narasimha Chatterji was then the District Magistrate of Mirzapur. Ma was at Vindhyaachal ashram. Shri Chatterji went to pay Her a visit. It looked as if She was waiting for him only. Immediately She took him to the western verandah of the ashram and pointing to a site below (20ft ×16ft) Ma said, "Underneath this are lying innumerable idols of gods and goddesses who are stifled and should be taken out. Can you do something?" 'Yes' he said. Labourers were pressed into excavation work. It was an arduous task. Removing huge stones was strenuous and as the work went on the labourers were restless and thought their efforts would go waste. But Shri Chatterji had full faith in Ma's words. He ordered that the work be

continued and soon one by one about 100 idols, some of them very heavy were discovered. The news of the excavation spread like wild fire. People from far off places thronged the site to witness Ma's miracle. Ma watched the scene casually.

One evening at Vrindavan ashram in 1955 Ma was taking a stroll near the Sadhu Kutias when a body in human form suddenly emerged out of a stone and paid obeisance to Ma. With clasped hands Ma stood still. Soon the body disappeared. A devotee, Sri Deen Bandhu Parikh who witnessed the scene, queried Ma about the person. What transpired between them is not known. But Deen Bandhu built a cottage in that very place and pledged his whole life in the service of God leaving the material world.⁵

There is another old incident when both Bholanath and Bhaiji were alive. Ma accompanied Bholanath on his annual visit to Tarapith, the temporal seat of Taradevi, where another famous devotee Bama Kshepa practised *Tantrik sadhana* there.

It was cold winter night. Around 3'0 clock Ma suddenly got up and started walking out this way that way until she stopped at the courtyard of some one. Some devotees followed Her. Ma squatted on the cold ground and starting singing "*Harinam*" (Hymns). At that late hours of cold winter night, from the lips of the compassionate Universal Mother how blissfully melodious those hymns would have been can only be imagined !

Probably woken up by Her singing, a man with a lamp in hand came out of the hut. He did not utter a word and returned back to the hut. In a couple of minutes two or three persons brought a middle-aged man from the hut, physically lifting him. The man was paralytic and had been immobile for some years. He was made to sit on the ground near Ma. Soon, this man, who had lost his speech, started crying 'Ma, Ma, Ma' and joined Ma in singing hymns. After he sang for some time, Ma asked him to go back. Lo and behold ! The man who was totally paralysed for years, started walking all by himself and returned to his hut.⁶

In 1951 Ma's birthday was being celebrated in Punjab at Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Ambala and other places. During its conclusion Ma requested Swami Avadhootji to arrange for meals for the poor and the neey. He arranged the function at Ambala's leper asylum and also took Ma there. 'Among the ashram's lepers was a brahmin well-versed in Vedas who recited from the holy scriptures. Avadhootji remarked to Ma, "Why was such an enlightened brahmin be cursed by a deadly disease". Ma had a 'kheyal' she suddenly embraced the leper brahmin and held both his mangled hands. Days after the incident, Avadhootji wrote from Punjab about

the published reports in newspapers of how the poor brahmin leper was completely cured after Ma touched him.⁷

On a Ramanavami day at Varanasi ashram Ma was distributing oranges to those assembled. Everyone present got the fruit, the women with kids got two oranges. More and more people came along to have oranges from Ma's blessed hands and She gave it to everyone. Only what was surprising is that Ma gave hundreds of them from only two small baskets. Such miracles were part of Ma's nature. There was a similar incident in 1971 at the Prayag Kumbha. A devotee brought some fruits (Ber) and offered it to Ma at the camp. Ma asked to distribute among all. Everyone got his share though those assembled far outnumbered the number of fruits in the basket.

A lady once presented a basket full of fruits. Ma asked a devotee to distribute them. The devotee thought they are not enough for those present and wanted the fruits to be cut into pieces for fair distribution. But Ma said there was no need to do so. The devotee followed Her instruction. At the end there was only one fruit left and two people to share it. Ma commented "He is only One, wherever, think of only One." And suddenly the lady who brought the fruits pointed out that she was given two fruits. Now Ma said, "You know where the one was missing". So, again everyone got one fruit.

Ma was to proceed to Vindhyachal from Varanasi by train. But someone arranged a car and Ma delayed the departure. Meanwhile, She was informed that at a nearby Jain Dharmashala, a Jain sadhu was breathing his last. "Come, lets go to see him, quick", said Ma. On reaching there, Ma saw the sadhu and asked Didi to put Ganges water into his mouth. She then asked for the quilt covering him to be removed. There was a cloth tied around his waist. Ma Herself untied the knot and touched his 'umbilicus'. Then came the end. Indeed, he must have been a great soul to be fortunate to have Ma's divine touch just before his end. Is it not that by untying that knot Ma disentangled a soul from the cycle of rebirths? And may be She delayed Her journey to Vindhyachal only for this task. If She had taken the train, She would not have been here.

It is said that the sight and touch of Ma gave the effect of enlightening to many a sinful souls, towards the path to salvation.

A twenty year youth at Sri Ma's ashram was proving to be a big nuisance by his dishevelled behaviour. Everybody complained about his behaviour and all ashramites were unanimous that he be turned out. After listening to all Ma gravely said. "If nobody wants him here then he needs me most. Can a sick child be left or

discarded as such ? Will it do any good to him or to the world ? How can he be left to be deserted in the world ?"

The inmates were moved by Ma's sense of deep love and had nothing to say in reply. The youth remained in the ashram and grew up as an esteemed devotee.

Vasanta Panchami of 1947 was being celebrated at Vrindavan. Haribaba's disciple Manohar, who was always ridiculed for being an idler, gave Ma Rs. 3 which he had earned by his day long labour, for *bhog. Tahri* (rice cooked in ghee with vegetables) was prepared in a small vessel and Manohar pleaded Ma to distribute it Herself. Oriyababa announced it was Lord Jagannath's *prasad*. And, as Ma said later "this announcement passed like an electric current and this body started distributing *bhog prasad* moving involuntarily."

The mouth of the small vessel containing the *bhog prasad* was partly covered with a handkerchief and was held by a devotee. Everybody present came running to Ma to get a spoonful of that *maha prasad* from Ma's hands. Sri Haribabaji's hands were not clean, so he opened his mouth and Ma dropped *prasad* in it. Hari baba also wanted to reciprocate but could not as his hands were not clean.

Later when Didi was to feed Ma, She suddenly remembered that Haribaba wanted to put *prasad* into Her mouth but he could not do so. She hurriedly went to the kitchen where the vessel was kept for cleaning. Only one glowing particle was sticking to the vessel. Ma went to Haribabaji with *prasad* vessel and asked him to put that single glowing grain into her mouth and said later, "That grain of rice was like a beacon of light. Baba had desired that not a grain of that *maha prasad* be wasted."

Dr. J. K. Sen, the renowned doctor of Delhi in those days, had built an annexure of two rooms specially for Ma within his residence at 48, Hanuman Road, New Delhi. So, Ma's devotees had a place in the city where they could gather and seek Her blessings. Various functions were held at this place and from time to time Ma was seen here in Her glorious moods.

It was here in 1948 that Ma's birthday was being celebrated. Saints and seers had assembled and people would throng for the satsang held thrice a day. Once during a morning satsang, a man looking like an insane and in a strange costume entered the place. First he went to ladies side and shouted that all women should cover their heads. No one paid heed to his order. Then he went to Ma and told her the same thing. Ma complied and signalled the ladies present to follow Her. The intruder, with a triumphant smile, went to the men's enclosure and sat there. After some time he shouted that he is leaving. Ma sent him an orange. But the deranged

person reacted angrily and threw the fruit aiming at Ma and hurting Her. This created a flutter in the crowd assembled, but Ma sat unperturbed.

But two of Her devotees grabbed the deranged person and dragged him out, one of the devotees even hit him. Later Ma called the two and disapproved of their act, and said "You can not stop anyone from coming to this body. And you had no right to hit him. If that man wanted to return my offering he was free to do so." She told these two devotees to atone for their act by keeping fast the next day. The one who hit was told not even to drink water for the whole day.

And the following day, the man who had hit Ma with the orange, attended the satsang again. On that day he was well dressed and looked totally normal. That streak of madness had disappeared. He sat through out the satsang, later met Ma and on Her request stayed on also for lunch. Ma said afterwards, "His act of hurting this body shocked the man so much that it restored his sanity and normaly". Ma would always say: "If you are angry, have it on this body, then you will not be able to keep it for long."

If someone cries for Ma in desperation, Ma would reach that person without fail.

Some 40 years ago, at Varanasi, Ma was attending a satsang in a school building. Everyone was engrossed in the kirtan when Ma suddenly got up and walked out to the gate. Two devotees followed Her. As She reached the gate, She saw another devotee disembarking from his car. Ma asked him, "Will you drop us at the railway station?" The devotee drove Ma to the station. There She asked for train tickets to Sarnath. She was told there was no train for Sarnath till the next day. But Ma insisted for the tickets. In a few moments a train arrived and Ma alongwith the two devotees boarded it. She ignored the devotees' pleadings that it was a mail train and would not stop at Sarnath. The train did stop just before Sarnath for signal and Ma with her attendants got down.

Neither She nor the two following Her knew the way to Birla Dharmashala where Ma wanted to go but Ma kept walking: On reaching there Ma straight away went to a room where an old and ardent devotee, a distressed widow Maharatanji was present. The poor lady crying and calling 'Ma'. On seeing Ma in person, Maharatanji could not control her tears. They were tears of joy of prayers being heard. She had been wrongly informed that Ma would then be at Sarnath. On reaching there she was told Ma was not scheduled to visit there. The crestfallen devotee was caught in a helpless situation as the train had left and there seemed no way to reach Ma. Totally disturbed she started crying in despair, when Ma

presented Herself before her. "Now stop crying, I am here", She told her. Was it telepathy that took Ma to attend an anguished call ?

In association with invisible souls

Various Gods and Goddesses, invisible souls of long departed sadhus and seers and other souls were in communion with Ma. Sometimes She would acknowledge them, outwardly or at other times communicate with them and deal with them in the same way as She would with Her other devotees. She had Her own way of communication even with plants, birds and other creatures.

Ma said, "The happenings of the invisible world can be reflected in the living world also. The body which you see here can also transcend to the other invisible world. If this is a dream, then everything in the world is a dream. They come to this body as you all, and sit as you people, and their presence can be felt by touch also. They spend hours together as there is no time limit for them.

Once, while resting in Almora ashram Ma said She could not sleep, "This body's ears are buzzing with the sound of drums and cymbals. They are (pointing to subtle bodies) singing and dancing encircling this body. The occasion was the acquisition of the property on the bank of the Ganga for the Varanasi ashram in 1944 which was once the abode of saints hundreds of years ago.

Ma once said, "the departed souls usually appear only in relevant contexts. Often these formless souls ask for something as you people ask, so the rest and the sleep is not in the way as it appears, but unlike you people they are not so restless all the time, neither they make counter-arguments. If the discussions are going on smoothly, you can take it for granted that the spirits are participating and cooperating. They are as much a reality as you all around this body."

In response to their prayers for spiritual initiation Ma would sometimes advice to offer in their names sanctified leaves of tulsi or bilwa with the mantra written on it by sandal paste into the Ganga.

On being queried by Didi about the shapes of these invisible souls Ma replied, "Some like the living beings have hands and legs, while the presence of others, can just be felt by their touch, utterance, smell or many other ways. You may not believe this as you can't see them because you live at a different plane. After years of perseverance doctors have invented the microscope to see the invisible beings. So also it can be understood likewise. sometimes you may see this body here, but at the same time it can go to other world also in another form."

Soon after the completion of Savitri Mahayagna at Varanasi in January, 1950, one night everyone was fast asleep. Around 1 A.M. Ma got up and went outside.

Didi and a few others followed Ma. They returned after some time. Ma asked if they could hear anything. Ma informed them that the invisible souls were performing a yagna on the bank of the Ganga and had invited Her. Many times one could feel the smell of incense while none burnt it. Many invisible souls help in different ways.

In the summer of 1957 Ma was indisposed at the Dehradun Ashram. Hearing this Gopi Nath Kaviraj from Varanasi, Yogi Bhai from Solan, Haribaba and Avadhootji from Vrindavan, all reached Dehradun. One night when Ma's condition had worsened, it is said that even Yogi Tailang Swami, who had left his body some sixty years ago, also came and squatted by Ma's bedside. Spirits of many great departed souls also visited Ma that night and prayed for Ma's recovery. It is said, Ma started recovering from that night.

Gurupurnima of 1958 was celebrated at Solan. As recounted by Ma later, the soul of Bholanath's brother, the late Revati Mohan, stood on the way through which Ma was to pass. As She approached She involuntarily uttered the *Mahamantra* (Hare Krishna. Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Ram Hare Ram, Ram Ram Hare Hare). The soul had waited for long 40 years to hear this holy mantra from Sri Ma's lips. Who knows when, where and in what ways Ma will shower Her blessings on somebody !

Yogibhai and his wife, Rani Shashi Prabha, had a desire to build a cottage at a solitary place at the top of the idyllic hills of Shimla and dedicate it to Ma. But before they could fulfill their wish, in March 1948 Rani Shashi Prabha died at the young age of 45. Yogibhai who had now taken the path of celibacy and religious pursuits strived to fulfill his wife's cherished desire and built an imposing structure in Shimla and invited Ma to grace it.

While staying there, one morning around 8'0 clock when Ma was alone in Her cottage in Her serene, sweet, anguished voice she was found singing, "Come my beloved Cheliya, Banwari". The melifluous tone was enriched by the agony of separation. The undulation of the voice were akin to crystal clear water freezing into ice of solid shapes and again melting away into water, as formless. It was a voice that could enchant any human being and the tune was movingly heart-rendering. The words of the song were each like a ray of light dancing around the Holy Mother. The sentiments were piercing each and every molecule around in the search of Lord. Ma at once realised that it was a divine voice whose ephemeral melody would soon evaporate in the din of this material world, let this be preserved for

some time, before it could be heard no more. With Ma's *kheyal* Didi came, who understood Her and called Bibhuda to listen and memorise that voice and tune. It was like chasing a mirage. With great effort. Bibhuda somehow managed to catch the tune but was restrained by Ma to render it in public. Bibhuda later mentioned that, whenever he tried to sing that tune his throat would choke and he would be moved to tears.

Ma said that it was "the anguished call of Radha away from crowds and commotion, Radha in a solitude had expressed her love for Krishna and the pangs of separation through this soul rendering song."

In 1958, Ma suddenly transported Herself bodily, along with Her bed and things in Her immediate vicinity, into ethereal world. This happened at Solan where Her birth anniversary celebrations had just ended. Yogibhai had made excellent arrangements. After lunch Ma was having a siesta. Ma later said, "If any of you had entered this body's room in the afternoon, you would not have found it there. This body was away somewhere with the bed."

That Ma travelled into the other worlds, though Her body remained here, was known by now. For the Solan incident Ma said, it was not a wonder, "If a small thing can disappear, a big one too can travel in the same way. Everything that was in touch moved alongwith this body."

Such incidents of Ma's interaction with the occult world are innumerable.

[To continue]



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1. Shri Shri Ma Anandamayi Prasang by Amulya Kumar Dutttagupta.
 2. Shri Shri Ma Anandamayi by Prasang Amulya Kumar Dutttagupta.
 3. Matri Darshan by Bhaiji, p. 107.
 4. Ananda Varta April 1970, p. 83.
 5. Ananda Varta, January 1972, p. 58.
 6. Puratan Smriti by Swami Narayanand Tirtha.
 7. Shri Shri Ma Anandamayi Prasang by A.K. Dutttagupta.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

[Continued from before]

—P.C. Mehta

Pramānas:

The Buddhists recognize only *pratyaksa* or 'perception' and *anumāna* or 'inference' as the two *pramānas* and brings *śabda* or verbal testimony under inference. In this respect this view tallies with *Vaisesika*.

Buddhists differ in their view of 'perception'. It is chiefly on the basis of this difference that Buddhism is divided into four schools.

In the *Sautrantika* view the validity of perception cannot be absolute because it postulates the external world as a mere hypothesis which therefore carries no certitude with it. Only in the *Vaibhasika* school which admits that external objects are real and are directly known that perception can claim any ultimate logical value.

As regards perception, the *Yogacara* may be placed on the same footing as the *Madhyamika*, because it also refuses to recognize external objects. While the *pramāna* of 'inference' is of a provisional value for all the four Buddhist schools, as we saw or *Madhyamikas*, 'perception' is also of a provisional value.

We have seen that the *Cārvāka* rejects the *pramāna* or 'inference' on the ground that there is no warrant of assuming the validity of inductive truth.

As regards 'inference,' according to Buddhist doctrines, relations are all false and inference which is based upon a relation cannot be valid. Even according to the realistic schools, the *pramāna* or inference has reference only to *sāmānya-laksana*, because *sva-laksanas* are objects of *pratyaksa pramāna*. Therefore, inference has no final validity. Dinnaga (of Vaibhasika school) says, 'that the whole process of inference refers to what is imposed by thought and has no relation to external reality'.

However, Buddhists admit the principle of the uniformity of nature in the two spheres of i) *tadutpatti* or causal sequence and ii) *tadātmya* or necessary co-existence. As such *vyaptis* or relationships which emerge from the sphere of causation and those that emerge from the sphere of identity are accepted as valid. Under the first they accept causal connection and therefore maintain that an effect cannot come into being without its cause. It is thus that we associate smoke with fire. Under the second, there is an inner necessity connecting the two terms. Thus there is a constant relation between genus and species, which may be made the basis of valid inference. Here through inner necessity the predicate is found in the subject.

Buddhistic criterion of truth:

Buddhistic criterion of truth, emerges from their view that knowledge has only empirical value. It has no metaphysical value. Therefore, that knowledge is true which confirms the expectation it raises. Therefore, practical verification becomes necessary. If through verification what was expected from that knowledge is proved possible, then that knowledge is true. The peculiarity of Buddhistic view lies in the fact that the practical verification can only be approximate on account of their theory of momentariness. What needs to be verified passes away by the time verification takes place and what is verified is the next in the corresponding series. Therefore, verification is approximate verification, which of course is adequate for all practical purposes. In 'inference' the objects are of *sāmānya-laksana*, which are held to be unreal. Thus not only the ultimate significance of knowledge is little but its practical value is indirect.

Even in this restricted sense, knowledge may not be valid. A person may see blue instead of black because of some defect. Inference may also go wrong. Therefore, the knowledge gained through *pramanas* has to be verified. Therefore, in the doctrine all knowledge is described as presumably wrong and needs validation by an external circumstance.

What then is the distinction between *kalpanā* or ideal constructions and error, since both are unreal ? *Kalpanās* are the forms of the mind, the frame in which mind fits reality. As such they are necessary conditions of perception and are always found where perception is. *Kalpanās* are classifiable into definite groups. Errors are occasional and affect only individual percipients.

According to all Buddhist schools, common knowledge contains elements which are superimposed by the mind. Thus the general features like cow-ness have no objective reality, but are due to the nature of thought. In the *Yogacāra*, the whole of the physical world is considered illusory. The *Madhyamika* extends this principle to all experience. Thus the difference between the four schools on the nature of reality is minimal.

There is much agreement between the *Vijnānavāda* and *Madhyamika* schools. Both consider the phenomenal objective universe as the product of illusion or *Māyā*. There is no external world. The external world is the imaginary creation of mind.

For the *Sunyavādins*, the Truth is absolute silence. Therefore, there is no philosophical discussion. When they engage in philosophical discussions, they start at the position taken by the contender, to help him come to a right insight about appearances which is that phenomena are false or mere illusory or *Māyā* and

therefore non-existent. In his commentary on 'Vedanta-Sutras', Sankara refers to a now-lost Upanisad, wherein Baskali asks Badhva to expound the nature of Brahman. Badhva does so by keeping silent. When Baskali asks again and a third time Badhva replies, 'I am teaching, but you do not follow. The self is silence, *Upāsantoyam ātmā*. This view denies the term *vidyā* to empirical knowledge, which from the ultimate standpoint, is not knowledge at all, but only a sort of *avidyā* or ignorance. *Vidyā* is that through which we become Brahman.

The *Madhyamikas* reply to the apparent process of *sansār* going on is that change cannot be attributed to what is permanent. As regards ephemeral factors, they maintain that short-lived phenomena are destroyed the moment they appear and therefore, there is only succession of events but no continuity and therefore, no process anywhere.

Since phenomena do not exist, the wise do not trouble about their truth or falsehood or their origin or extinction. For the wise there is no *karma*, good or bad, and no *sansār* or cycle of birth-death-rebirth. *Karma* with its cycle of birth-death-rebirth and the resultant suffering are for those who do not discern the falsehood of appearances.

We said when commenting on the doctrine of *Syādvāda* in Jainism, that the very notion of relativity implies an absolute standard by which we judge. For the same reasons *Madhyamika* cannot speak of a realm of relativity without recognizing absolute Reality.

If according to the *Madhyamika* school, all that can be said about the Ultimate Reality is that it is *sunya* i.e. a void, then this void underlies and embraces all empirical phenomena, which in its essence is also a void or like a shadowy substance.

Thus there is this paradoxical identification of *sansār* i.e. the ever perishing world of becoming with *Nirvāna* i.e. extinction or total release. To a person established in *Sunya sansār* and *Nirvāna* do not present two distinct categories.

By explaining the phenomena of consciousness of diversity through *vāsanā* in the mind, the *Vijnānavādins* are recommending removal of the veil which conceals *tathāta*. By emphasizing the essencelessness and indefinableness of all phenomena, the *sunyavādins* are forcing a leap from duality to *sunya*.

These two approaches are aptly depicted in the following anecdote.

The fifth Patriarch of the Zen sect Gunin (Hung-jen, died A.D. 675) was, like his successor, a manual worker and no scholar. One of his monk disciples Shen-hsiu, who claimed to have understood the faith in its purity, summed up the teaching in the following stanza:

*"This body is the Bodhi-tree;
The mind is like the mirror bright;
Take heed to keep it always clean,
And let no dust alight."*

Another disciple of the fifth Patriarch, Yeno (Hui-Neng, pronounced Wei-Lang in Shanghai dialect), wrote in answer the following stanza:

*"There is no Bodhi tree;
The mirror bright is no where shining:
Since all is void,
Where can the dust alight?"*

This stanza in reply breathes the spirit of nothingness and was regarded by the fifth Patriarch as setting up the expression of Zen faith. Hui-Neng, (Yeno), therefore succeeded as the sixth Patriarch and his is the orthodox expression of the Zen faith. He in fact is so important that he is considered the founder of the Zen faith. Both schools of Zen, i.e. Rinzai and Soto, descended from him. (This quotation is taken from one of the books by D. T. Suzuki).

***Nirvāna* as the goal means identifying with the Absolute, and not annihilation.**

The goal of the seeker is to realize the unreality of the world, through contemplative experience and to find his identity with the Absolute. The *Yogacara* school concentrates on the practical side of realization of *Nirvāna*.

They emphasize,

i) *Yoga* and (ii) *Dhyana* i.e. meditation.

We may, therefore, conclude that, for *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, the goal of life is finding one's identity with the Absolute and not annihilation as it is sometimes attributed to *Hinayāna Buddhism*.

While the *Hinayāna* school retains the ideas and discipline as originally found, *Mahāyāna* persuasion has profoundly advanced both in doctrine and practice, though retaining the original bases.

The doctrine of 'Ksānabhanga vāda' or momentariness:

We saw that the distinctive features of primitive Buddhism are :

i) that everything is *samtana* or in a flux and ii) everything is *samghata* or an aggregate and lacking self. These features receive greater emphasis as time goes by and get formally enunciated.

The view that a changing object persists amidst varying features does not commend to the Buddhist. He maintains that change is total. The ordinary view of change is based on the supposition that 'Being' may be related to 'Becoming' while the Buddhist denies 'Being' and the only reality is 'Becoming'. Change is not only total, it is perpetual. This follows from the conception of reality which is that it consists in causal efficiency or the capacity to effect something. According to Buddhism a series never ends but may be transformed into another as in the case of a seed becoming a shoot. Certain exceptions are admitted, one interesting one is the cessation of the ego-series called *prati-sāmkhya-nirodha*, when an Arhant dies and attains *nirvāna*. Here the question arises as to whether the final member of the ego-series is real or not. Since it gives rise to no successor, it is not causally efficient and cannot therefore be real. And if that is unreal, it must follow that the next previous one is unreal and so on backwards until the whole series disappears as illusion, with the result that either the ideal of *nirvāna* should be given up as never achievable or the ego-series representing the aspirant for *nirvāna* should be admitted as absolutely non-existent.

We find these and such other arguments advanced in Hindu philosophical works against the Buddhistic doctrine of momentariness. The chief argument to refute momentariness is that what we call 'present' is scientifically a 'duration'. The 'duration' may be of any breath, it is never a mere instant. The Buddhists suppose that what is given in perception is the instantaneous present. The Buddhist does not admit time as a reality. It is therefore not legitimate to speak of any 'instant'. But he accepts a momentary state as representing the ultimate stage, which is instantaneous present. This for the Buddhist is the ultimate minimal real. This absolute instant is an ideal of thought and not existent. The theory of momentariness thus becomes unconvincing. From the history of Buddhistic doctrine it appears that Buddha did not consider things as momentary. He called them only impermanent. It was his followers who in later times devised this theory of momentariness.

[To continue]



OUR SIXTH TRIP TO INDIA

—Shraddha Davenport

[Continued from before]

With Mother in Morvi State

On December fourth 1978 Kamal accompanied us and made sure that we got on the right bus which would take us to Rajkot. On that bus we met a sweet young couple from Bombay, and when we arrived in Rajkot the young man found a taxi that would take us on to Morvi. It took about one hour of bumping up the road to reach our destination.

Morvi, like Baroda and Bhimpura, is in Gujarat State, but unlike the latter two, Morvi is in the peninsula. It is located about one hundred miles south of the Pakistan border and approximately twenty-five miles inland from the Gulf of Kutch. We found that area to be very interesting, but with a different feeling than any other part of India in which we had travelled.

The Bhagawat Saptaha was being held in memory of the late young Maharaja of the local royal family. He was the last male heir of their line and had been killed recently while in England. His mother, the Maharani of Morvi, had requested Mother's presence at the Bhagawat Saptaha which was held on the grounds in front of the 'New Palace.' A large pandal had been erected there for the function.

The New Palace was a grand structure, built upon a very large property. It had been constructed for the young Maharaja and was not quite completed when he died. The Maharani maintained residences in several other countries as well and was rarely in India. Her brother, Mr. Jhala, had come to Morvi from his home in Poona to assist with the preparations.

As none of the family was living in the New Palace and no ashram of Mother's was nearby, it was difficult for those responsible to coordinate all the details and needs for such a large undertaking.

At some distance to the rear of the New Palace was a large concrete area like a tennis court. There was also a tired seating structure of cement running along the side of the court. It was shaped like very wide steps and at the top, the steps descended on the opposite side in like fashion. On that side a small pandal had been erected which enclosed the steps within it. Behind this area stood a small two-storey building which appeared to be almost a clubhouse for the use of the tennis

players. However for the Bhagawat Saptaha it served as housing for Mother and some of the ashramites. There was another building nearby that was used for the brahmacharini's quarters.

When we first arrived there was some confusion about where we were to stay, but after one night in a remote guest house we were shifted to one of the most interesting places that we have ever stayed. As the name "New Palace" implies, there was an "Old Palace." The Old Palace was across the river from the New Palace, and was its opposite in almost every way. It appeared to be ancient, and its construction was reminiscent of a medieval castle, though not so much in size as in style.

One section of the building was kept more or less as it had been when it was inhabited. It was there we were situated for the balance of our eleven days in Morvi.

Coming into the big gate off a street in the business district was like stepping into another world or, more correctly, another time. There was a large lotus pond in the center of the courtyard where one single lotus blossom was floating. It must have been beautiful at one time. There were palace structures on either side of the yard. Occasionally peacocks would fly up on the roof and stand silhouetted against the sky as they called to each other. To the left was a wide walkway which led into an adjoining courtyard, then a more narrow path into yet another courtyard. All were surrounded by walls and palace buildings. It was in that farthest section, on the second floor of the building, that we were housed.

Our corner room had a windowed turret overlooking the street on the left and the long sloping bank leading to the river on the right. It was comfortably furnished with big soft beds and a good table for our puja.

To reach the bathroom we had to walk through a very long room which had photographs and large paintings of the family members covering the walls on both sides. We could sense a presence in the Old Palace that was really quite peaceful and did not seem to mind being there.

In the hallway stood a former Maharaja's favourite hunting dog. Preserved by the art of taxidermy, he stood faithfully guarding the past.

When Melita, Patrick and Jean Claude (a French violinist) arrived, they were given rooms down the hall from ours.

Inside the main gate, across from the lotus pond, was a building used as an office by the caretakers. From those kind souls we received *chai* in our room every morning.

Bhaskaranandaji said that we were to take our meals at the New Palace. That turned out to be a very special treat. We are both fond of Gujarati food and the dishes served there were delightful.

Our first darshan of Mother after arriving in Morvi was as She was seated downstairs in the building provided for Her. When we went in to do pronam I was shocked to find Her looking so tired. I had never seen Her look more exhausted. Because of Mother's condition we did not get to see Her very often. On the second day there was on darshan at all.

On that day, as we walked across a field by the New Palace, I ran into a pipe sticking about six inches up to the grounds. I bruised and skinned my left ankle, twisting it as I stumbled. It is peculiar how I always seem to hurt that same ankle and foot.

The next day as we stood talking near the front of the New Palace, a lady wearing a long white dress and a simple brown shawl stepped out onto the side porch not far from where we stood. She sent a man to invite us inside. He said that she was the late Maharaja's mother and had requested that we come in to speak about our experience of Mother.

We were shown into a comfortable room where the Maharani sat with one of her daughters. She was very gracious and easy to talk with. Like any mother she was heartbroken at the loss of her son.

At her request I told of how I had first seen Mother in a dream. Then she shared a most unusual and terrifying experience which she had just the previous night. In a dream she felt the whole palace shake. She thought that someone or something had come to the front gates of the palace and had grabbed it and was violently shaking them. It was so real to her that she sent a servant to check the gate. Later, in the morning, Mother sent for the Maharani and told her that She had seen a creature like a lion. It was devouring everything. Mother screamed for it to go away.

I asked the Maharani if Mother had any comment on that. She said that Mother told her some evil was eating up the men of the family and Mother told it to go away. Her husband, his brother, and her son had all died in young age. The beautiful Maharani had seen suffering in her life. I was pleased to meet her, awed by her experience, and filled with compassion for her sadness.

That evening we stood below Mother's window hoping to see Her. We were delighted when She pulled back the curtain from the large double windows of Her upper room. She was seated there upon Her bed and we could see Her quite well. She smiled so sweetly and we were grateful to have the opportunity for darshan. In the little pandal Swami Satchidanandaji started reading from the Ramayana. Mother

motioned for everyone to go in and listen as he read. She closed Her curtains, for no one was willing to leave Her.

After the reading Mother opened Her curtains and also the large window which were hinged like shutters. We gathered beneath those open windows and She lovingly sat with us for about one hour. The sun was setting as she bade us goodnight.

The Bhagawat Saptaha began the next day, December seventh. We watched as the Pandit and the Srimad Bhagawat arrived. They were greeted by Mother and the family, then escorted into the big pandal. Mother entered from the side and took Her seat on the platform to the Pandit's left. The Maharani sat on the floor beside Mother and the young raja's photograph was placed near the Pandit. A puja was performed and then the Pandit spoke for an hour.

I was able to sit in the front on the ladies' side, not far from Mother. She looked right at me and smiled. Later as kirtan was sung She lightly clapped Her little hands and graced me with another smile as I joined Her in clapping. After that lovely time with Mother, Satya and I met by where we had left our shoes. We were given prasad and asked if we needed a ride to the Old Palace. Happily accepting, we were directed to a funny old bus. There were only two seats in it—one for the driver and one just behind him, facing the back of the bus. Two side doors and the rear end were wide open.

About fifteen children climbed in through the rear and rode as far as the dining area. There a bunch of women piled in for a ride to their homes near the old palace. They were very sweet and when we got out at the palace gate some said, "Goodnight" in English. That was unusual in Morvi, as English was not as widely spoken here as in other parts of India where we had been.

There was no transportation to be found the next morning so we decided to try crossing on a foot bridge which was suspended over the river between the old and new palaces. The distance was not bad, but the swaying motion caused my injured ankle to twist too much so I could not go that way again.

Our friend Madhavananda arrived in Morvi that day and we had our afternoon meal together.

After 5:00 p.m. we saw Mother briefly as She got into a car accompanied by Udas.

Rajesh Patel was outside near Mother's building and we got a chance to have our first real visit with him.

Mother's car returned and She went into the pandal for the daily program but She did not stay long.

We spent some time talking with Bhaskaranandaji before returning to our room for the night.

The next day we waited near Mother's building until She came out, and followed as She was taken to the Pandal. Inside I got a spot close to the front and sat for some time, just content to be near Mother. Suddenly a little girl next to me made a gesture in front of me and a lady on my other side quickly moved. Then I saw a small snake move swiftly past her, and all the women started getting up. Some men came and caught the snake. They put it in a little brass pot. I heard that Mother said not to harm it, but I do not think that it survived.

After that incident I waited outside for Mother, then followed as She went to the little pandal in the rear. There we could sit very near Mother while Swami Satchidananda read from the Ramayana. Afterward Mother told Bishuddha to recite from what I took to be the Gita. As Bishuddha recited, Mother looked at me for a long time. I felt in such a high mood that I could not even smile as Mother's eyes penetrated into my heart. Satya sat near me and Mother looked at each of us in that long special way. I cannot possibly describe those eyes and can only hint at how they have affected me.

Another girl also recited for quite some time. It was so lovely because Mother continued to look at us during the recitation. As Pushpa began to sing, Mother spoke a few words to Bhaskarananda. Then, as we pronounced, She went to Her room. We just stood there for a while, not wanting to go, then slowly we left the empty pandal so intoxicated that we could not have moved quickly even if we had wished to.

The little pandal was being prepared for a special puja when we arrived there the next day, December tenth. The steps had been covered with cloth and a beautiful long altar had been created. In the center was Lord Narayana's picture and on each side were nine lotus (pots), representing the eighteen chapters of the Bhagavat Gita. There were leaves and a coconut in each pot. Bhaskaranandaji was assisted by Bishuddha in preparing for the Gita Jayanti which he would perform.

Mother arrived in a car accompanied by the Maharani. She carefully examined the altar before taking Her seat. Satya took movies as Bhaskarananda did the puja. Mother sat with us for about an hour and a half. She seemed to feel a little better that day. After the puja everyone gathered around Mother giving gifts to Her and receiving prasad. Some ladies of the family had brought many photos of Mother and asked Her to "autograph" them. Graciously She marked all of them.

There was a little box with four sweets in it kept near Mother. She said for me to take it and give to the Westerners. The only ones there were Jean Claude, Satya,

and myself. One piece was left over so I decided to give it to the first Westerner of our group that I saw.

When Mother left the pandal, we walked to the dining area, had a delicious lunch, then went to the Old Palace for a short rest. Patrick came to our room, so I gave the last piece of Mother's prasad to him and asked him to share it with Melita.

That evening the Pandit came to the little pandal and spoke on the Gita. Mother came and sat with us for about an hour. She was very animated and appeared to be in better health. We were each given yellow handkerchiefs and prasad. The girls sang and the darshan was wonderful.

When Mother went out of the little pandal I followed Her. She went into Her building and sat just inside the door on the left side. I walked to a spot where I could see Her and She greeted me with folded palms. Bishuddha came and told me that Mother said I could come to the door and pronam. I joyfully hurried to her door where two young men that I did not know threw their arms out in front of the door and, blocking my way, shouted "No ! No !" I said that Mother had sent for me, but they would not relent. Finally Mother or one of the girls made it clear to them and they stepped back, but not very far.

I bowed at Mother's feet and then She asked in English, "Husband?" Quickly I went in search of Satya but could not locate him. After running around all over the grounds like a mad woman, I checked the little pandal for the third time and there I found him talking with devotees. I told him that Mother had called for him. He rushed to where She had been patiently waiting all that time and bowed at Her feet. Mother then summoned Jean Claude.

When he came to bow before Mother the two young men who had tried to block me told Jean Claude, "Don't touch!" Just as Mother stepped back into the room, She imitated the two men's English, saying, "Don't touch." Everyone laughed. We did not stay for the evening meal and just took tea in our room.

We had acquired a dependable rickshaw driver for our two trips to the New Palace and back each day. As we came to the gate to meet him the following morning we saw a car just leaving with Mother in the back seat. Later we learned that She had come to see a temple on the Old Palace grounds.

After the morning program Mother went to Her room and we watched as Her bedding was brought outside and spread in the sun. I was delighted to see the white wool blanket which we had given to Her. We had talked about it earlier and I wondered if She was still using it or it had been left in Bhimpura. We were very happy to see that She was using it.

Rajesh was arranging the things in the sun when I noticed a strand of Mother's hair on the white blanket. I asked Rajesh to please let me have that treasure and he kindly complied. Of course I still have that precious gift.

Mother did not come out again so we returned to the Old Palace. Satya assisted Madhavananda as he moved into the room next to ours and we all retired for the night.

When we came to see Mother the next morning Bhaskarananda told us that She would not be out until in the evening.

From Morvi Mother would go to Bombay and then continue on to Poona for a few days. We had permission to follow Her there. The Maharani's brother, Mr. Jhala, offered to arrange for our plane tickets from Rajkot to Bombay and a car to drive us to Rajkot at a fair price. We were most grateful as those bookings were hard to accomplish even if you knew how. Madhavananda would be traveling with us when we leave Morvi on December fifteenth. We had only to wait for tickets and pray that they actually manifest.

That evening in the big pandal a very large replica of Mount Govardan had been made and was covered with little cups of fruit and sweets. A picture of the little black Krishnaji was enshrined at the mountain's top. It was very nicely done. The crowd was so great that we only stood on the side and watched as Mother arrived and later as She left the pandal.

We visited with Rajesh, who by that time we were calling by his more familiar family pet name of "Raju". That day and on several other occasions we sat upon the tiered seats beside the tennis court as we visited with Raju. It was refreshing to meet such a young man whose greatest interest was God. Another rare quality was that he was unhesitatingly open and truthful. We always enjoyed the chance to talk with him.

Back in our room Satya made one of his wonderful vegetable soups. Jean Claude and Madhavananda had chai with us while Satya cooked, then we all enjoyed big bowlfuls of the delicious soup before retiring.

Mr. Jhala had told Satya about a large celebration which the family was sponsoring the next day. There was to be a group wedding ceremony where many local couples would be united. Mr. Jhala asked Satya to take photographs of the event. I was not feeling well that day so Satya went alone to the New Palace. He took about two rolls of pictures during the ceremony and later those color slides were sent to the family. Our airline tickets had arrived that day and were given to Satya. We were very relieved to know that we could meet Mother in Bombay and then continue with her to Poona without any delay.

On December fourteenth we were privileged to witness a remarkable occurrence. By Mother's grace we "happened" to be in the front courtyard at noon when Her car arrived at the Old Palace. She was accompanied by several ashramites, some family members, and a brahmin priest.

(The following details were told to us during the event by Dr. Triguna Sen. We were most grateful to him, as otherwise we would have missed the wonderful story behind what we witnessed.)

In a secluded area off the central courtyard there was a small family temple with a little stone Devi enshrined within it. A woman came daily and offered flowers and incense to the Devi. That was all that was done. Every day it would be noticed that the Devi's sari was wet, but no one could find the cause of it. When Mother came to the temple a few days before, She told the reason for that mysterious occurrence. She revealed that the little Devi was crying because no one ever came there and Her tears were making Her sari wet. Mother said that a Shiva linga should be installed and a havan performed. She said that a brahmin priest should then do regular worship.

All of Mother's preliminary instructions were followed as we watched. Satya took movies during part of the ceremony which required two and a half hours to complete.

The little Devi could be seen from outside the temple where we stood. I have often thought about that little stone Devi who cried, and of the Only One who could perceive Her tears.

We went to the New Palace that evening, and after the Srimad Bhagawat Mother was asked to come to the little pandal for a while. She said that She would if the people went there and sat. Sri Tanmayanandaji led kirtan as we all waited to see Mother. Soon She came and sat for a few minutes. We all had the opportunity to pronam before She went back to Her room.

Then we walked to the dining area for our evening meal. Afterward we got our last ride to the Old Palace in the funny old bus. I packed most of our things as our car was scheduled to come for us the next morning at 10:00 a.m.

[To continue]



MA ANANDAMAYEE : THE VEDANTA PERSONIFIED

—Dr. Rakesh Kumar

Ma Anandamayee was an enlightened soul by birth. Her self-knowledge did not arise under the impact of any external factor. It was always there as an integral part of Her intrinsic power and it did never require any effort on Her part. It seemed that such self-knowledge and divine grace used to come naturally to Her from within.

Several devotees of Ma tried to see Her from different angles, having different viewpoints about Her. However, the fact remained that She presented Herself the same way as Her devotees wanted to see Her. She saw no differences which had to be cemented. She set forth some basic qualities and ideas for all the people on the path to God-realization. She used to say that She did belong to everybody without making any discrimination. She had no discriminatory attitude towards Her devotees or to the common people treading on the path to God-realization. She awakened the longing for the quest for truth and sustained faith of all in the ultimate realization. Time and again Ma emphasized the point that we must attach ourselves to those actions, thoughts and situations which are conducive for attaining to God. In a sense She suggested Her devotees to be cautious and careful while proceeding towards the ultimate goal of God-realization.

Those who are prompted by a deep yearning for the vision of the Supreme, they can do so only by the grace of God. The only acceptable attitude of mind is to take refuge in patience. She advised again and again that one must never lose hope and courage. Let our action and thought be centred in God and in Him alone.

Ma Anandamayee emphasized that the love of God is alone desirable for a human being. It is due to the fact that He has nourished us with the nectar of mother's milk. In all matters we must depend upon God. We have no other resort as almost our whole life revolves round Him. In Him no want of any kind exists, no pain, no agony, no anger. In Him is all attainment, the complete sense of fulfillment, rest, repose and tranquility. We come across an usual tendency of the people to run after worldly things. However, by the practice of *vairagya* and *abhyasa* we can overcome such tendencies and be able to realize the futility of the process of unlimited desire and other worldly achievements.

Swami Vivekananda, a great Hindu monk of the 19th century, said that Vedanta and modernity have close and intimate relation and proximity to each other. It is the need of the hour to view and observe the process of desire in its proper perspective.

With the help of the Vedantic ideals we may be able to understand the aspects of other religions and appreciate each other. Ma Anandamayee has emphasized more or less the same thing. She often put stress to follow the path of universal religion. She did never favour any one religion. Rather She advocated in favour of all religions. Being a realized soul from birth She was able to know about all religions with their diverse facets and distinct approaches to human life.

Ma Anandamayee appeared to be fully aware of the trends and the main concerns of human beings. She revealed the fact that only one sided prosperity of any kind cannot be the sole concern of the human mind. People usually strive hard to get certain things in life. Ma emphasized that allround prosperity is needed for everybody. And it can only be possible through the principles as enunciated in our Vedantic philosophy. Ma put stress on this fact that, life being a way of fulfilment, should not be allowed to stagnate at any stage, rather it should incorporate all the purposes of our life. But there must be certain restraints in the process of fulfilling our purposes. Sometimes, we feel very much satisfied in what we possess, while at the next moment we feel desirous of several other things. We should cultivate a habit to be satisfied and contented all through. However, Ma did not say only this, rather She went to the limit of encouraging all for much more contented conditions of life. She put stress on certain spiritual methods through which we may be able to attain the ultimate goal of human life.

However, the basis of all *dharma* is love and compassion. All the great luminaries of the spiritual world, like, Mahavir, Jesus, Buddha have been so kind and compassionate and so full of love that they have been a source of inspiration for all mankind. Our usual way of life which is restricted to certain aspects of life must seek a release. It must combine with eternal principles of *dharma*, as enunciated in the ancient texts. On account of the growing emphasis on value orientation, we have to incorporate certain ideals in our day-to-day life. We come across a certain degree of devaluation and decadence of ethical values in all spheres of life. Hence, we have to overcome this sort of problem and only then we can do something positive and be able to bring allround peace and prosperity in human life. Moreover, Ma emphasized both the method spiritualistic and the philosophical to incorporate in our life. She encouraged all of us to follow the methods and perform all kinds of rituals which are suitable for all.

There is no hard compartment for anyone to follow certain methods of sadhana. She considered the fact that all methods are different paths leading to the ultimate realization of God. However, the Vedantic approach to life does not necessarily turn a man into a monk or a sannyasi. Ma always emphasized this point that the

challenges have to be met and solved through direct and practical approach. All deeds which are relevant for virtuous life must be based on the ideals of Vedanta. At the same time, it is also necessary to know the ways and means by which its application in practical life is possible. It is desirable to develop an attitude so as to follow the ideals of Vedanta in practical life.

According to Srimad Bhagavad Gita this attitude of mind has been supported not only by the Yoga of Knowledge (*Jnana yoga*) but also by the Yoga of Action (*Karma yoga*) (sloka-II-39). Such an attitude results in fearlessness. It means even a little practice of such methods protects us from great fear and danger (sloka II-40). Our action and thought must have a co-ordination and compatibility. It means action must be performed with the right attitude, for '*yogah karmasu kaushalam*' that is the right technique of action equivalent to yoga. This right technique does not mean merely efficient performance of work without devotion to God. Rather, according to Ma action can be converted into 'Karma Yoga', only by having faith in and devotion to God and by surrendering the fruits of action at the feet of God*.

As human mind grows up to different levels of consciousness it requires different types of philosophy and ideals suited to its level of development and competence. Ma laid great stress on a two fold application of vedantic ideals in practical life. We can adopt and do so by arousing man's faith in Him and by serving man in the spirit of serving God. Thus, the basic ideals teach us to know ourselves and to have faith in ourselves. It means one must have faith in the universal Self that is within one's own self. It implies the very simple meaning that love for one's higher Self means love for all. She laid great emphasis on the propagation of the message of universal love to mankind.

In fact, *Karma yoga*, *Jnana yoga* and *Bhakti yoga*, all the ways of spiritual life, find their best exponents in Her. She knew, the value of each, the relation of one with the other. She recognized the different grades of spiritual advancement and yet She was emphatic about the universal and integral self revelation of God. She reconciled all conflicts in Her own inimitable way saying that, "behind all varieties and diversities one truth shines in its own glory and adds strength and vigour to every position." *

The conflict, bitterness and strife are growing and engendering these days all around us. It is due to our lack of sympathy and a sense of oneness. We have to

* Vide: Acharya Bireswar Gangopadhyaya, *Practical Vedanta from Sri Krishna to Ma Anandamayee*. Chapter xiv on 'Ma Anandmayee on Karma Yoga'. Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Mumbai, 2003 A.D.

* Ibid, 'Sayings of Ma Anandmayee on God, Man and Sadhana, pp. 8-10

develop self-knowledge to overcome such things. There is one Self which is love and wisdom eternal and we shall share it if we know it in the proper spirit. Discord, disharmony and hatred are bound to disappear like mists before the light of the Sun of knowledge. The principles of goodness, unity, integrity and love will reign and dominate all its thought and activities.

Ma Anandamayee remained uniformly cheerful, good humoured and more than willing to shoulder other people's spiritual burden. Her serene and equable temper was never disrupted by even unfair treatment at the hands of others. Her boundless compassion overflowed for the concerns for others. She always had the aura of perfectibility all around her. Moreover, She endeared herself to everyone who came in touch with Her. Ma used to say, "*Sadhana* by which man endeavours to attain self-realization are of endless varieties and each variety has innumerable aspects. All these revealed themselves to me as a part of myself". When She was engaged in *sadhana*, everything was revealed to Her by Her own *kheyala*. She appeared, at times, fully aware of the doctrinal differences, never confusing one with others in her conversation with all the learned people. She had not performed any *sadhana* as is generally understood, yet she could speak with authority on all aspects of religious and spiritual quest for enlightenment. Indeed, She was a fully enlightened soul and at the same time an epitome of Vedanta and universal religion.

However, the best way to understand Ma Anandamayee is not to compare Her with any of the other luminaries in our spiritual world. The recognition that She gained in Her own life time was just by Her presence. She fully understood the existential implications of the present age of technology and by Her way of being in the world put it in a correct perspective for those who wished to see beyond it. At the same, She enjoyed the state of *Sahaja Samadhi* in her own way. After all, Her instructions are of universal type, meant for everyone. Her words illumined the minds of so many great people and influenced their lives in many ways. We are inclined to feel that by such efforts we should only sing hymns to Her glory and uplift ourselves towards greater perfection. At the same time, it would be a way of linking ourselves and our grateful souls to Her Grace at every moment of our lives.



ABOUT THE "*Seat of the Siddhas*" — THE SIDDHESHWARI ASHRAM

To countless devotees of Shree Ma the "Siddheshwari Ashram" in Dhaka, now in Bangladesh, is a highly sanctified "*Seat of the Siddhas (enlightened souls)*". The ashram plot at Siddheshwari, which was once a part and parcel of the most ancient temple in the city of Dhaka, the renowned temple of Goddess Kali, is intimately connected with multifarious *sāadhanā lilās* of Shree Ma's early life. This is the place where according to Shree Ma's categorical declaration great saints and sages have appeared after every five thousand five hundred and five years. This is the only temple in present day Bangladesh which stands today with dignity and pride being the only one which has not been damaged or razed to the ground due to communal vandalism. This also is the sacred place where Baba Bholanath attained Ultimate Realization in his previous birth. Almost adjacent to the renowned Kali temple stands this highly sanctified area, where many a supernatural *lilās* of Shree Ma were divulged before the world at large. This is the place where in a divine atmosphere Shree Ma was named for the first time as "Shree Anandamayee Ma" by the paragon of Her devotees, Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy (Bhaiji).

The sole object of setting up a small hut here in early March, 1926 as per Ma's Divine wishes was just to preserve and protect the unique sanctity of this place, which in later years attained the unique distinction of being the very first ashram in Shree Ma's name in the whole of undivided India. Through the Divine *Kheyāl* of Ma the very first Vasanti Puja was also performed in this small hut in early 1926, which special puja is now being performed in the holy Varanasi ashram on the bank of the Ganga without any break for more than sixty-two years past. It is also worth mentioning that this is the place where the birthday celebration of Ma was also held publicly for the very first time in May, 1928. Innumerable are the details of all the supernatural happenings in this very old and unparalleled ashram of Ma. Although Ma's Divine presence is still felt there very vividly. Ma in Her physical frame stepped into this holy ashram for the last time in April, 1946.

The tiny hut which was built over this highly sanctified place through Ma's wishes in the early 1926 was subsequently converted into a two roomed small bamboo cottage with a small 21"×21"×21" (high) *puccā vedi* (altar) over the very

spot where occurred many inexplicable miraculous incidents during Ma's solitary *sāadhanā* in the divine presence of the Goddess Kali. Subsequently through Ma's own *kheyāl* a *Siva-linga* was also installed through the hands of Sri Bholanathji over this holy *vedi*.

Really bad became the days for this unique ashram after the partition of the country. Number of devotees visiting the place decreased drastically, communication system with the rest of India was almost snapped. Extending financial assistance from India became a practical impossibility. Due to lack of supervision and maintenance the two-roomed cottage gradually became worn out. Then came the devastating Liberation War in 1971, during the course of which hundreds and hundreds of temples were razed to the ground by the frenzied vandals. It is a sheer miracle - sheer grace of Goddess Kali—that in the midst of all these barbarous happenings the ancient temple of Ma Siddheshwari, the seat of the *Siddhas*, stood there undamaged with the Divine Kali Mata standing as the Protecting Guardian of the city of Dhaka. The small ashram, of Ma, situated just behind the temple, also stood there, although in a very pitiable condition. On being informed about all these happenings Shree Ma's apt remark was: "So long as sin does not creep into these places Ma Siddheshwari will maintain them".

During the next two decades condition of the ancient ashram became further worse, with only one or two devoted hindu families just trying their best to anyhow save this hallowed place from total dilapidation .

Then some totally unforeseen incident suddenly happened. Through the voluntary intervention of a very staunch devotee of Ma, Sri Amal Roy, a high official of the Govt. of India, who happened to be the boyhood friend of Gen. Ershad, the then Martial Law Administrator of Bangladesh, the General very kindly arranged to get our dilapidated Siddheshwari ashram totally reconstructed in no time on the same pattern as it then stood. It later on transpired that the father-in-law of Gen. Ershad, who was then the most powerful leader and head of Bangladesh, happened to be a frequent visitor to Ma in Dhaka in those early days ! Mysterious are the ways of Ma !

Soon thereafter under the auspices of Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha, the central body in Shree Ma's name, a new *Shiva linga* was re-installed over the holy altar with regular seva-puja commencing again from that day. It is also significant to note that after Shree Ma's physical disappearance the attraction for this "holy seat of the *siddhas*" has suddenly increased. Not only the number of local visitors have

gone up, but almost a regular flow of devotees from all over India and even from distant countries like France, Germany, England, U.S.A., Canada has begun. Even such persons, who had never have the fortune of meeting Ma in person, have gone to visit that place from distant lands, just only hearing about the super-natural incidents which once occurred there in the divine presence of Ma.

As during the last twenty three years no repairs work could be undertaken and due to change in the road level etc. major renovation of the main shrine as well as of the adjoining *satsang* room and maximum possible utilization of the extremely limited ashram area have become very much necessary, at the pressing demand of the local devotees reconstruction work has already commenced and is likely to take a period of about six months to complete the proposed work, the rough plans of which are also being put along with this: Special care is being taken that the sanctity of the shrine will be very strictly maintained and regular worship of the *Shiva-linga* will not be hampered even for a day.

The estimated expenditure on this project will be around Rs. 15. lakhs. Devotees of Ma who may be sincerely interested in this noble work may send any amount either by Bank draft, cheque or Money order in the name of "**Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha**" to any of the undermentioned addresses as per their convenience. It is necessary to specifically mention in the accompanying letter that the amount is for "**Siddheshwari Ashram Development Fund**" :

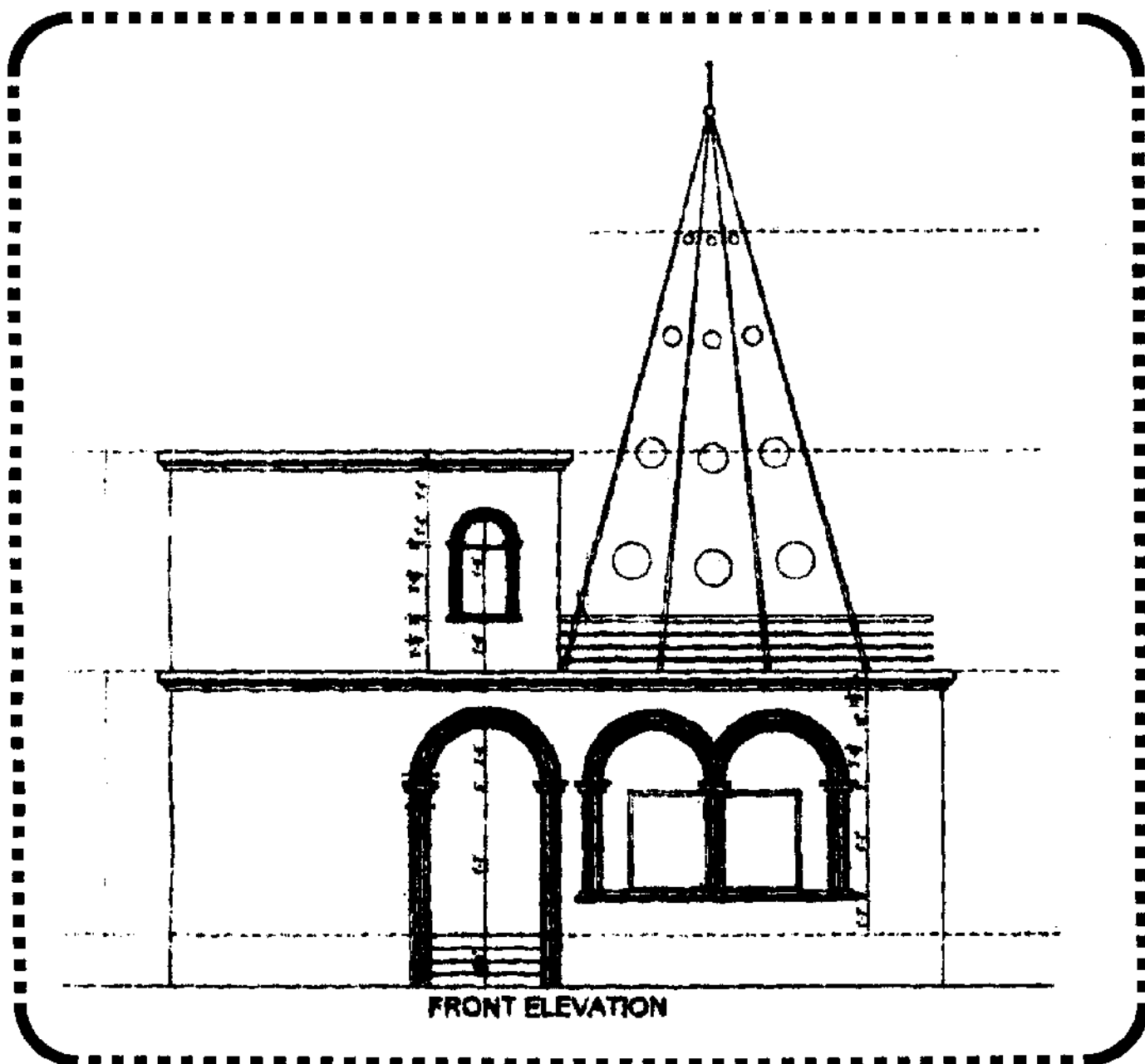
1. General Secretary,
Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha,
P.O Kankhal, Hardwar - 249408.
2. Secretary,
Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha,
Bhadaini, Varanasi - 221001.
3. Mr. Jayanta Bhowmick
Secretary, Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram,
13, Siddheshwari Lane, Dhaka - 1217, Bangladesh.
e-mail : <jayanta@envoy-group.com>

For any further details devotees may please contact any one of the persons mentioned below :

1. Sri Panu Brahmachari
Ma Anandamayee Ashram.
Bhadaini, Varanasi-221001.

2. Sri Swapan Gangulie
"Kripa Bhawan",
Plot Y-20, Block E.P., Sector-3,
Salt Lake Electronics Complex,
Kolkata - 700091.

Front view of the Siddheshwari Ashram after total renovation



PLAN OF THE RENOVATED SIDDHESHWARI ASHRAM

