

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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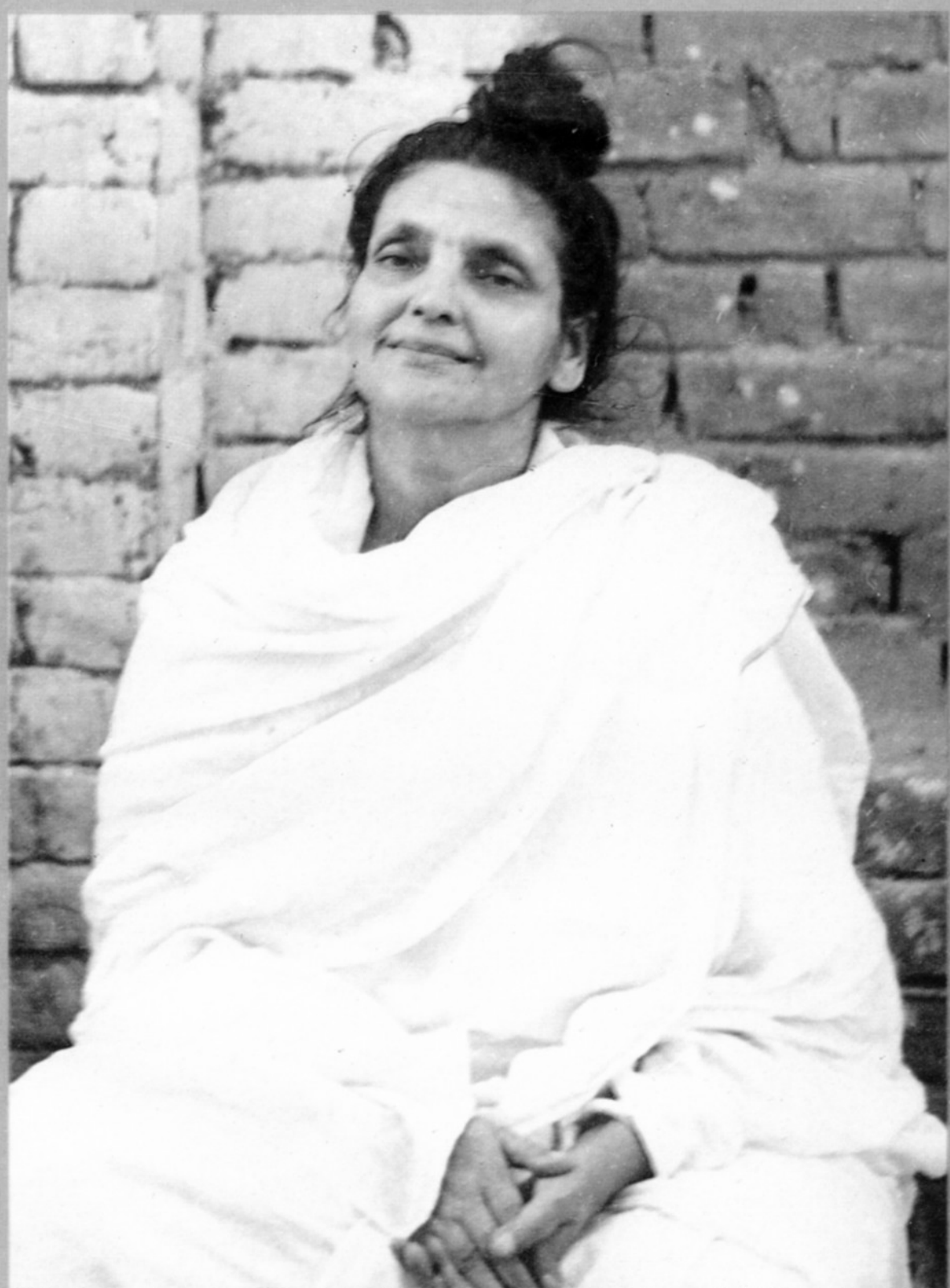
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MATRI VANI

If you are not seeking God, you might, at your own sweet will, throw anything whatsoever away—why only the Sacred Thread ? The desire to obey impulses of this kind will most certainly arise in those who do not aspire after God for His own sake, who do not love Him; for it is their attitude towards life, their natural bent. If you have the power to destroy, why have you not by this time done away with all the obstacles that are hampering you ? Nobody of himself has the power to lift as much as a blade of grass. It is His Will, the Almighty's Will, that alone prevails. At times, it is true, man is made to suffer, yet thereby also He, the Fountain-of-Goodness does what is for the best; but to realize this is perplexing for the average person.

To be without a Sacred Thread, without the *Gāyatri*, is inauspicious, may be harmful for a Brahmin. To what extent are you able to judge which is the right path for you ? All-beneficent is everything that He does, Who is Goodness Itself.

On Him is all that need be said, the rest but vanity, woe.

* * * * *

Mataji sent the following message to someone who had discarded his Sacred Thread out of grief over the death of a beloved member of his family :

So you have cast away your Sacred Thread ? Well, well ! Of course you are bound to do what gives you peace of mind. In this world when a man dies his wife does not accompany him, neither does the husband go with his nearest and dearest when they depart from this world ? Surely, this is self-evident ! Everyone has to live his life according to the results of his past actions.

Now that this misfortune has befallen you, have you given up eating, have you renounced your wife and children, your friends and relatives ? Have you left off wearing clothes, or sleeping, or talking to people ? It is true that you have been plunged into a sea of misery. But what possession of yours has gone with him who died ? Only just your Sacred Thread ? Your parents' gift of love and esteem, so precious as an aid on the way to the Eternal Goal of human life ! If to-day you resume the Sacred Thread in honour of him who has left this world, it will keep his memory alive in your heart. You had accepted it for his sake, this symbol of all that is an aid towards immortality. To discard the Sacred Thread, once it has been

assumed, is a matter of deep regret for the ordinary man. Surely you could keep it as remembrance of him who has passed away !

One should not pray to God for any prson; all prayer has to be solely for That, which when it is found; the wearing of the Sacred Thread is also meant for this purpose.

* * * * *

Yes, if you can observe silence and be in harmony with everyone all around, it will be excellent. Try to remain without the help of signs and gestures for as long as possible.

* * * * *

A rosary that is to be used for *Japa* must be knotted according to the prescribed rule.

* * * * *

Such, mother* , is the innate tendency of a man of the world. To sin knowingly is detrimental indeed.

* * * * *

At one time you emphatically declared that if only you could secure suitable employment, you would, in a right royal manner, cultivate the spiritual side of life along with material comforts and pleasures. That you have kept your word as to worldly enjoyment is more than obvious ; but in what dark cave, in what inaccessible abyss, have you hidden away the tender plant to spiritual aspiration ? When will you start making an effort to bring light into that dark cave ? Delay not ! The day that is gone never returns. Invaluable time is slipping away. Devote your days to the endeavour to draw close to the Lord of the Humble. When extreme old age supervenes, you will be too sluggish, too feeble to concentrate on God's Name. How will you then make up for what you failed to do in good time ?

* * * * *

To see *Mahādeva* appear and dissolve Himself into your body, accompanied by a manifestation of light are undoubtedly good signs. Even the faint vision of a spiritual form (*chinmaya murti*) is very auspicious.



*. Mataji addresses every married woman as 'mother'.

MOTHER'S HOME IS THE HEART

—Kenneth Grant

Mother's glories are not unknown to Her devotees in England, because through Her incalculable Grace Sri Bhaji's book has found its way to these shores. Therein is unfolded such a tale of rapture and wonder that the heart melts into bliss at the contemplation of Mother's words and at the sight of Her physical vehicle which enshrines the Light of the Spirit.

Her radiance and splendour are boundless and not confined to India alone, for She abides verily in the Heart and not in time or space. It is in the Heart that one finds Mother ever responsive to one's yearnings towards Her. She stretches forth Her all-merciful hand to the least of Her devotees and consoles them with the doctrine of undecaying Bliss.

It is difficult to describe what Mother means to one for She is too deeply identified with one's inmost heart, with the core of one's being, to be objectified sufficiently for description in common words. Yet one may express the matter as nearly as possible by saying that She is that infinite Void beyond the reach of conceptual thought which shines resplendent as the sun at noonday in the clear unclouded sky of azure emptiness. Sri Bhaji puts it in a supremely beautiful way when he says in one of his songs to Her :

"The sun and the moon, Mother, are Thy twin ear-drops, the deep blue of the immense sky Thy hair, and the universe Thy glorious Body."

And this "glorious body", I think, means the body of Bliss, the body of the Adamantine and Eternal Consciousness assuming the mind-shapes of rapture which constitute the universe as we know it, and not the mere physical vehicle of Mother, beautiful indeed as it is.

But how may a bhakta of Ma describe the Bliss which is Mother ? She is all-embracing and includes all things in Her immensity, even as the ever-vacuous sky contains the planets and the clouds and the stardust and untold millions of worlds in its illimitable and vaulted body. How can anything express that wonder ? Nothing can, for She is Nothing that we can think about, sing about, write about, or know about, for to know Her is to *know Nothing*, which is the void substratum whereon all this universe has its illusory being, its incomprehensible *Lila*.

But for Mother's *Lilas* we would be unable to envelop Her image in our minds at all; it is through Her immeasurable Grace alone that we are imbued with the knowledge of Reality through the veils of Her shining words, which breathe the echoes of Truth on the breezes of our lives which are mere dreams and reflections in the tranquil lake of Her unruffled Mind.

It is only through the doctrinal approach that we may come near to expressing Mother in words, for She teaches that Truth which has existed from all time and beyond all time: That the Self alone is real and all else unreal. Mother helps us in realizing this truth by bringing clearly to our minds the inexhaustible store of Her *Lilas* that we may contemplate them and derive rich spiritual benefits therefrom. Through Sri Bhajji's words we come to a close intimacy with Mother, because She manifested a little of Her infinite Light in him and by Her Grace he was enabled to write in words some echo of Her own spontaneous and unutterable Realization.

One of Mother's characteristic sayings is : "This body is like a drum; just as you will beat it, it will produce a corresponding sound. I find that there is but one playful master-tune ringing through the whole universe." And this means, I think, that each devotee can see in Mother only the image of his own degree of attainment, exteriorized in a vehicle perfect in its ability to express that attainment in modes of spiritual consciousness operative on the dualistic planes of conceptual thought. This is the reason why no one devotee can embrace Mother entirely by his verbal descriptions or intellectual comprehensions, for as soon as he *knows* Mother as *She is*, he has already become Mother and exists in pure Being where only the Adamantine and *Advaitin* Consciousness abides as the Sole Reality. Thus has Mother declared Herself to be the void substratum of all ideas and forms, the pure and undefiled and ever-shining vacuous Consciousness, which alone is real and which is instinct with undecaying Bliss.

Mother's words, whatever they may tell us, do but show the way to merge with Her. They guide us with their subtle and beautiful power to ever more rarefied strata of Being, where the world about us is seen as a shimmering veil concealing realities of which individuality can never be a part. Only by surrendering the individuality, or ego, may we partake of Mother's Supreme Sacrament, which is the full realization of the void nature of all *dharmas*.

Set as a jewel of burning flame—the flame of everlasting Consciousness—Mother abides, constantly calling to us Her devotees to seek Within and consume our individualities on the pyre of Her brilliant purity.

And if we die to the body and to the mind, to the individuality as well as to hopes of future lives on earth or elsewhere, then we shall be taken up into that flame—the outer veil of the *Pranava Om*—which merges in that undying Silence which is the *mantra* of the Void .

That flame is depicted on the cover of the journal and it is the humble prayer of this devotee that Mother shall absorb us all in Her infinite Compassion and consume us utterly so that we at last may come to the knowledge that Mother alone *is*, and that there never were any separate existences apart from Her, for it is Her *Lila* that She divides Herself in twain as the Mother and the wayward child. We are all Her children. Let us return to Mother *now*.*

VEDA MATA

— Veena Sheth

Splendor of thousand Suns waited to welcome
as you arrived amazingly.
O Ma... O Shakti.
Luminous clouds danced in the sky delightfully
to please you.
O Ma....O Gāyatri.
Deep blue waters of the ocean hushed
in reverence to touch your Holy Feet.
O Ma.....O Ādyāshakti.
With Your grandeur and resplendent beauty
You have come
O Anandamayee.. You have come.
To possess our hearts and minds
O Gāyatri... You have come.
O Vedamayee
You have come.
You have come Home.

* Note : Reprinted from an early issue of Sangha journal "Ananda Varta" by way of homage to the learned devotee of Ma, who is no more.

—Managing Editor

PAGES FROM
MA ANANDAMAYEE PRASANG

— Prof. A. K. Dutta Gupta

[Translated from Bengali]

Sri Sri Ma's visit to Meerut

24th May, 1941, Dehradun, Kishenpur Ashram

Sri Sri Ma was to leave for Meerut today. While Ma was still conversing with others the time for departure came. Sri Pande has arranged for a big bus, in which about twenty-five persons can comfortably sit. Our beddings etc., were put in the bus. One by one we went inside and took our seats. Sri Hem Chandra Banerjee has also come. But his going with us is not yet certain. He has availed of one day's leave from the office; but his wife has raised objections on account of some family difficulties. We all started, excepting Swami Akhandanandaji, Nishi Babu and the young brahmachari of the ashram.

The bus first started for Karanpur. Hem Babu's residence was there. When the bus arrived at Hem Babu's house Ma called for Hem Babu's wife. When she came Ma asked her to accompany us then and there without giving her any opportunity to speak. She was also almost agreed. But considering the point of daughter's examination she could not come herself, but permitted Hem Babu to accompany Ma.

The bus now started running on the road after coming near the railway station. There was a change in Sri Ma's mood soon after She boarded the bus. So long as we were at Kishenpur we found Ma in a sombre mood. She of course used to talk-but not more than it was needed. Any evidence of the uncommon capacity of Ma to keep all the devotees immersed in the ocean of joy by keeping them engrossed of Her own by talking to them was not evident in Kishenpur ashram. The joyful expression of the ever-joyful Mother was evident like the under-current of the river, without any outward evidence. There was no expression outside. We had doubts if Ma had changed. On way to Meerut, however, it appeared that Her former mood had come back to some extent. Devotees became delighted to find that prior mood had returned to some extent. Ma was laughing and talking to us. She told us — "I have resumed the journey yesterday as it was an auspicious day". She hinted to the fact that She had changed her bedroom yesterday night. When Ma changed her

bedroom yeasterday it occurred to none of us that Ma was doing that because she would leave the ashram. Of course it happened on previous occasions also that changing her bedroom was a prior indication of Her change of place.

Ma was saying – "This body remains fit through movements; but nowadays has been remaining at one place for certain period. Once during winter I had high fever at Kishenpur ashram. Doctors remarked after examination that there was infection of pneumonia in the chest. The downstairs room where I was staying was very cold, so I was brought to the hall. I left for Simla along with my pneumonia and on the way itself fever and pneumonia every thing was gone."

Indicating to Sri Hem Banerjee Ma laughingly started talking – "Baba is very frank. Just before we left, Baba came to the ashram and very sorrowfully said to me – "Ma, I have obtained leave from my office, but not from my home." He could have also said in a round about manner that he was unable to go because of some illness in the home or some other problems. But he without telling that straight away told that my mother (his wife) was not allowing him to leave." (Everyone laughed).

"This thing happens when there is a feeling of equality between husband and the wife. Wife demands that her husband also should move along with her own feelings. If the husband is of a different nature then his wife cannot tolerate that. If the wife does not look upon her husband as superior then this sort of things do happen. Sometimes the wife is pained when the husband is found thinking on the other way, but she does not disobey the husband's orders or does anything contrary."

Jiten Babu : These days there is a feeling of independence and equal rights, that is why there is no feeling of high or low between he husband and the wife.

Ma : Yes, I have heard that these days the husband calls the wife by the name and the wife too calls the husband by name.

While conversation was thus going on we arrived near the Shivalik hills. Our bus was moving over the hills in a serpentine way. Sun has gone down, one or two stars were visible in the sky. The view of the hills seen through the hazy light of the sunset was very beautiful. Every moment the views were changing. Sometimes we were going up, sometimes going down, sometimes moving through dense forests, at times again we were arriving at the valley bereft of any trees. Although hilly the roads were very nice, paved like the roads in Mussorie. Our bus was found almost rolling without any problem and also very freely even in a serpentine manner. Shree Shree Ma also was talking on various things and was making us laugh.

Suddenly Ma asked us – "Tell me what is the English of one and a half *taka* (Indian rupee)?" One among us told that to Ma and She continued – "Once we were proceeding from Almora to Nainital in a bus. Only Virajmohini was with me. The driver made us sit in the front with care. Then he came to us and asked us to pay 'one rupee eight annas' as fare. Listening to that I at once asked Virajmohini to pay one and half *taka*. The driver surely thought that I knew English well." (Everyone laughed)

"On another occasion I arrived in a *dharamshala* in Lucknow with Virajmohini. There was the house of a certain gentleman near the *dharamshala*. Seeing my behaviour he considered me to be surely a graduate, or at the least an undergraduate. He could never believe that I was an uneducated one. He believed at last when he came to know everything. And again when I left the place then how much he wept."

The topic about Virajmohini Devi came up again during conversation. Ma said – "That time when I was moving about at various places along with Virajmohini we had no resources. At many places many people purchased our tickets. Once, one ticket collector wanted to see our tickets. On learning that we had no tickets he himself purchased our tickets. No money was with us. We used to eat whatever was available on way, passing nights sometimes in a *dharamshala*, sometimes at the railway station. This sort of movement was totally new to Virajmohini. She was in great perplexity. She started to save whatever amount was found in excess of our needs - not for her but for me only. She was always worried about what she would give me to eat or what for me to wear. From somewhere she had collected a basket and she used to keep in that whatever she got on the way. Afterwards when I asked Kamal* to leave our company, that basket with all the things inside was also given with him. In this manner Virajmohini's habit of saving something gradually decreased, because she came to see after moving about with me for sometime that we were not in want of anything, everything was becoming available in time.

Ma then started talking about Pragnananda Brahmachari – "It would have been very joyful if Brahmachari Baba was also with us. Brahmachari Baba was of a very simple nature. Baba used to say – 'I have scrutinized you bit by bit, but was unable to stop you.' Listening to various conditions of this body from my mouth he used to say – "The various conditions about which you tell, in such a state the body is not to remain.""

* Kamal Brahmachari, who later on became famous as Virajananda Maharaj.

I : Ma, I had asked Brahmachariji about your various states. He had told me that you had perhaps attained one or two states in you former life and in this life you have achieved the remaining ones very quickly.

Ma (laughingly) : Yes, Baba used to say – 'You have got up through the help of a water wheel.' (Everyone laughed).

We were proceeding in this manner talking and laughing. It was past evening. Darkness was all around. The bus was moving in the midst of fields. Off and on quite hot air was touching our bodies. It was so hot as if your breath was about to be stopped. Our bus was also moving at a fast speed, about 35 to 40 miles per hour, sometimes even 50. Thus we arrived at Roorkee. Oil was taken here by stopping the bus. We all were very thirsty. Pandeji fetched cold water through someone which we drank. After halting at Roorkee for about 10/15 minutes we started again.

At about 10:30 at night we arrived at Muzaffarnagar. Meerut was after this. Whether the devotees of Meerut had information about our arrival there, Swami Paramanandaji and Nepal dada were talking about this. A telegram was sent to them before our departure. But there was sufficient reasons for the telegram in not reaching in-time. Swamijis were trying in so many ways to ascertain from Ma if the telegram had been received by them. Listening to these words Ma was simply laughing, and saying – "What's wrong even if the telegram is not received? We are going to our own home. Even if none is there, we shall go and sleep there. They would all be astonished to find us in the morning. Once I had gone to Shimla also like this – without any information. They had arranged for a kirtan at Shimla and sent a telegram requesting us to go. we also left for Shimla. Kirtan was arranged at Shimla Kalibari. Bhupen Basu was conducting the *Kirtan*. There was a gathering of many people. It came to my mind that if I enter the *kirtan* place openly there will be pandemonium and *kirtan* will also break. Considering this I entered the Kalibari in the form of a married woman and hurriedly went to the first floor through the stairs without going towards the programme. The place of the programme was visible even from the second floor balcony. Chairs were put there also and ladies were there listening to the *kirtan*. No one could recognise me even though I went by the *kirtan* hall. Many looked at my face, some of them were known persons also; but none could recognise me. Going up to the first floor balcony I found that there was a picture of Sri Chaitanya deva hanging on the wall, below which there was an empty chair. I went and sat on that chair. One has to bend a little for seeing the programme. Ladies nearby did not even notice that I went and sat on that chair. I began to look at the programme some time by resting my arm on the shoulder of a

lady sitting by my side. She pushed my hand away, but was still not able to recognise me."

"In the meanwhile doubt arose among the gentlemen sitting downstairs. They started pondering who was this woman who so hurriedly went upstairs. Was it not a ruffian in the dress of a woman going in the midst of the ladies ? Considering all this one of them came upstairs. In the meantime some of the persons sitting in the programme were also able to recognise me by looking up. The condition after that you can understand."

In the midst of the conversation Ma started discussing about the specialities of the devotees of Delhi and Meerut. Ma was saying—"The attitude of the Delhi people is of this type that if I go to Delhi then there starts a competition among them about how to keep me for a longer period. Entreaties and requests continue unendingly. Apart from that they desire to remain near me after stopping from going to offices. They say—"We shall not go to the office even by telling lies, but will not move from you."

"The attitude of the persons of Meerut is different. Even if I say to them that I will leave today, they will not object even to that. Of course there will be a feeling of pain in allowing me to leave, but still they will not try to do anything against the will of this body. Both these attitudes are nice."

Conversing thus we arrived at Meerut. From the distance we could see that devotees of Meerut were waiting for us by standing on the road. Ma was taken down the bus, in the midst of shouting 'Jai'. They have made arrangements for us all to stay and also for the *Naam-yagna* in a girls school. We were led to the first floor of the school. Many ladies and gentlemen sat surrounding Ma. One gentleman sang a welcome song in a very melodious tone. Songs and *kirtan* continued till midnight. After that we had a full dinner and lay down on the open terrace of the first floor. Arrangement was made for Ma also to lie down in the open on a special bed.

25th May, 1941, Meerut

Very early in the morning devotees came and started singing *bhajans*. On hearing this we all got up from our beds. After listening to *bhajan* for sometime we came downstairs and finished our morning ablutions. In late morning hours Ma was brought down and several photos were taken with all. After that Ma went out for a walk.

Coming back Ma sat in the downstairs room. Sri Tarani Chakravarty read from the Gita for some time. After that the devotees commenced their *kirtan*, which soon became very resounding. Devotees were at first singing in a sitting position. Now

they got up. Ma also was standing. Her face was a bit rosy, with mild smile on her face. She was moving her hand in tune with the rhythm of the *kirtan*. The devotees were thus encouraged and started dancing. It appeared as if waves of lightning were on play. Everyone present was more or less found intoxicated in the *kirtan*. The *kirtan* continued till 11:30 am. Thereafter everyone left for their bath and meals.

Several devotees from Delhi, like Panchu babu, Amal babu, Shiben babu, Haridas babu, and others have also come. After the lunch was over we began to talk about Ma sitting in our room. It was difficult to go outside. Even from morning nine the heat of the sun was considered to be unbearable. Not to speak of now. It appeared as if a fireplace was burning around our room.

In the afternoon the ladies started *kirtan*. Ma was sitting in their midst. We were listening to the *kirtan* by sitting in the verandah. After sometime Ma Herself started singing-

"(Jai) Sri Krishna Chaitanya Sri Madhusudana
Rama Narayana Hari
(Jai) Rama Narayana, Rama Narayana,
Rama Narayana Hari."

The ladies and devotees all started singing with Ma. The song continued for sometime in this manner. Afterwards Ma went out for a walk. We also went out for having a view of the city.

26th May, 1941, Meerut

Nama Yagna commenced very early. Devotees were doing *kirtan* by circumbulating the *kirtan manch*. Later on in the early morning Ma also joined the *kirtan* and started moving around the *manch*. *Kirtan* continued well till about 10:00 am. As the noon was slowly coming and the heat of the sun was also on the increase it was found a tough task to keep the *kirtan* going. Women were also maintaining the *kirtan*, occasionally by giving some rest to the menfolk. Otherwise, it was doubtful if the *kirtan* could be maintained from sunrise to sunset.

Today also two devotees, Durgadas babu and Manoj babu have come from Delhi. Durgadas babu is old and suffering from gout. We heard about his first meeting with Ma. The gentleman was quite emotional and was also having devotion for Ma. Ma had told me about Durgadas babu—"You have not seen *baba's* ways. How much persisting he had become for keeping me in Shimla for two days. Tears were flowing from his eyes in sorrow and along with that his persistence in a strong manner also continued. Baba's house is in Panihati (near Kolkata) and is full of *Vaishnava* devotion. During *Nama Yagna* in Shimla it was baba's duty to offer

garlands and sandal paste to all. Baba was found sitting the whole day at a certain place with garlands in his hand and as soon as some one arrived in the *kirtan* programme he used to offer garland and sandal paste to him."

In the afternoon Ma again came to the *kirtan* function. Soon thereafter *kirtan* became very deep. Along with the sunset *kirtan* was stopped. We also boarded the bus at 7:30 pm. in the evening. The bus left soon thereafter. We all returned to Kishenpur ashram at 12:00 am mid-night. It was heard that after passing the night in the ashram, tomorrow early morning we were to leave for Raipur ashram.

[To continue]

AS THE FLOWER SHEDS ITS FRAGRANCE

The much-awaited book in English, which was for long out of print, has just come out again in a new form. The volume consisting of 200 pages, printed on good quality paper, is claimed as a master -piece comprising of a short biography of Ma and pages from the diary of the famous Austrian lady, Blanca Schlamm, popularly known as 'Atmananda', covering a long period of sixteen years of her close association with Ma —Price. Rs 100/-

GURU-SANGA

— S.S. Cohen

Sadhana is the persistent conscious efforts which an aspirant makes with the ultimate object of attaining God Realisation. The degree of these efforts and the tenacity with which they are pursued depend on the individual strength, which in turn depends on *Adhikāra* (maturity), that is, mental purity and ardour. Ardour is thus the greatest impelling force and the most valuable asset in the sadhana, being the expression of a highly-developed intuition in a mind which has already tested the values of things earthly and rejected them as false, and thus dedicated itself to the life of the Spirit. It is natural to such a mind to seek solitude where in it can uninterruptedly yield to the pure joys of expectation of the descent of the celestial manna in a heart aflame with the love of the Divine. Hence there arises a tendency among some of these ardent seekers to depend more on practice than on *sat-sanga* (company of saints), which they regard as incidental or auxiliary to it. Whilst practice is undeniably indispensable to obtain a state of mind which mirrors the Divine, *chit* or Self, experience and tradition have proved that in the vast majority of cases practice cannot single-handedly demolish the vast mass of obstacles (external as well as internal, which hamper progress. It is *sat-sanga*, and preeminently *Guru-Sanga*, which possesses the tremendous power of not only levelling down these obstructions slowly and steadily, but also standing guard against the pitfalls which abound on the long and weary road ahead.

Yogis and *tapasvis* are familiar with these pitfalls and the long periods of darkness, known as 'spiritual dryness', which often intervene between vividly-bright spells of illumined practice--a darkness which sometimes threatens to cause the fall of the unwearied seeker who has placed too much faith in his own independence, and has not prepared for these periods of suffering. These veterans in the spiritual line have learnt by experience to appreciate the formidable protection which the presence of the mighty Guru offers against these misadventures. Sri Krishna at the end of his mission on earth, having these difficulties in mind, called to Him Uddhava, his foremost disciple, and instructed him in the rules of *Dharma*, *Sannyasa*, mind-control and *Bhakti*, which He recommended him to observe so that he might return to His Divine Feet for which the aching heart of Uddhava, who was despondent at the prospect of losing the Master's physical presence, was yearning. In twenty-three long chapters in the Bhagavata (Chapters 7

to 29) the Lord discoursed at great length, and particularly stressed the importance of *satsanga*, which He declared to be the most effective of all practices, saying:

"Neither yoga, *sāṅkhya*, righteousness, study of the Vedas, *tapas* nor sacrifices, building of tanks, charity, vows, *yajnas*, *yatras*, *yamas* and *niyamas* to win Me as does the company of saints, which puts an end to all attachments, It is only by this association with the righteous that Daityas, Nagas, Sudras, women and even outcastes born with the natural disposition to *Rajas* and *Tamas*, sinless one, have in the several *Yugas* attained to My place.....All these had not studied the Vedas, nor sat at the feet of the learned, nor performed hard penance, but only through the company of saints have they attained to Me....." (*Skanda XI, Adhyaya 12*).

These words which fell from the Divine lips of the Lord have again and again been found necessary to repeat by all the great teachers who followed Him and find echo in the experience of many disciples of modern saints. Sri Ramana Maharshi, apart from warning against standing without a guru, in His inimitable crisp style emphasised the magnitude of the Guru's influence to which He assigned a dual positive role. "The Guru", said He, "exerts a push from outside and a pull from inside on the disciple's external mind to drive it back to the Centre, which is the *Antaryāmin*, God or the Guru Himself"; and this has been discovered to be the very action of Sri Maharshi Himself on His devotees. The greater the spiritual attainments, that is, the firmer the fixity of the Guru in Brahman, the Self, the more impressive is His influence on, and protection of, the devotees.

Mighty Gurus like Sri Krishna, Lord Buddha and others, who influence vast sections of humanity at one and the same time in a vast sweep of Their mysterious powers and ripen Their immediate disciples to full perfection, are far and few between. In this age we are singularly fortunate to have a few of them simultaneously or in quick succession in our midst. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Sri Ramana Maharshi, to mention only two, were such Ones. Even now there lives in our midst the equally mighty Shri Anandamayi Ma in the flesh, which makes it incumbent on every determined devotee of Hers to take advantage of the unique opportunity and benefit by Her company. It is true that like some other great Teachers She constantly moves about, which seems to deny stability to the practising devotee who needs some sort of a well-defined spot for his undisturbed practice, yet this constant movement is not without its advantages. It calls for greater exertion and incessant vigilance, which in themselves are potent factors in promoting the requisite self-discipline. Besides, it embodies the Guru's Divine will to benefit by His physical presence those devotees and potential devotees whom

prārabdha has kept nailed to their sense of domestic duties and fancied domestic happiness at different distances from Him. Undertanding their difficulties, He, in His infinite compassion, bodily goes to them to fan the spark of devotion in them to as big a flame as possible, in which act the accompanying *sadhakas* will have their share too.

The purity and holiness which perpetually emanate from the Divine Guru unceasingly act on every creature and everything which comes within its radius, and reduces to ashes all impurities and binding attachments, thereby making the mind of the sensitive devotee ultimately to shine in all the splendour of the Supreme Consciousness. A spiritual Sun, Shri Anandamayi Ma, incessantly sheds Her benign rays on all-around Her, whether one is conscious of it or not. The blessings which She pours out are of great magnitude, and are of special benefit to those who have opened their hearts to Her influence, and who may feel the urge to praise and address Her in the words which Uddhava addressed to his beloved Master, the Lord of the Universe, Sri Krishna, thousands of years ago, after he received the Divine *Upadesha* :

Uddhava said : 'The great darkness of delusion which had covered me is completely dispelled by Thy presence (note the word "Presence"), O Creator of Brahma. How can cold or darkness affect him who stands near the sun ?

"Thou, Lord of Compassion, hast once again bestowed on me, Thy servant, the torch of Supreme Wisdom. Which man, not ingrate, would abandon the dust of Thy Feet and seek shelter elsewhere ?...

'Salutation to Thee, O great Yogin, pray, so direct me, worshipper of Thy Lotus Feet, That I may find delight nowhere but in Them.'

(Bhagavata xi, 29)

VEDANTA AND TANTRA—A SYNTHETIC STUDY

—Prof. Bireshwar Ganguly

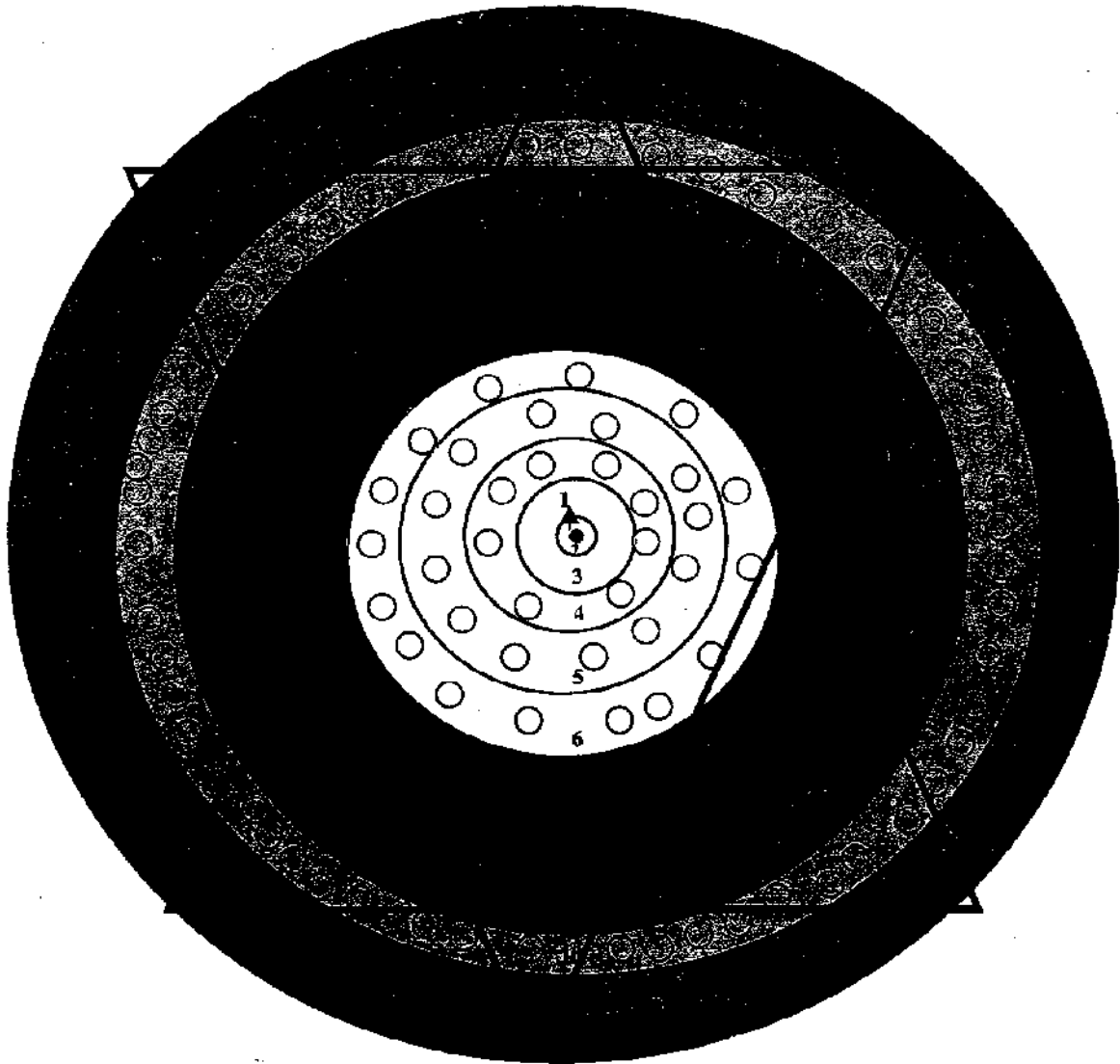
[Continued from before]

We get a glimpse of the *Brahmānda*, containing fourteen *bhuvanas*. From *Bhulok* to *Satyalo*k above the earth and the *Pātāl-lok* etc. below the earth,—all the planes of life are within this *Brahmānda*. When Patanjali mentions the knowledge of *bhuvanas* in the 'Vibhuti-Pāda' of his *Yoga Sūtram*, the intention is to refer to these *bhuvanas*. However, it can be gathered from *Āgama* texts that there are many more *bhuvanas* than those in the universe. In reality the number of *bhuvanas* is infinite. Even the number of major *bhuvanas* cannot be counted. The fact is that in the *Puranas*, only those *bhuvanas* have been mentioned which have physical planetary systems and the conglomeration of those *bhuvanas* only has been termed as *Brahmānda*. But from the huge *Tāntric* literature it is learnt that above the physical universe with earthly planetary systems, there is the existence of a vast expanse of the subtle universe. It is of undisputed knowledge that the number of *Brahmāndas* is limitless. Above the *Brahmāndas* there is the subtle world of *Prakṛityanda*. As *Brahmāndas* are infinite in number, so also are *Prakṛityandas*. Within each *Prakṛityanda* there are innumerable *Brahmāndas*. The *Prakṛityanda* is composed of subtle elements from *jala tattva* to *prakṛiti tattva*. Above the plane of *Prakṛityanda* there exists *Māyā* or *Māyānda*, which contains innumerable *Prakṛityandas*. As there are innumerable waves of water in the ocean, so also there are innumerable waves of *Prakṛityandas* in the vast ocean of *Māyānda*. Thus within *Māyā* or *Māyānda* there are innumerable *Prakṛityandas* and within each *Prakṛityanda* there are innumerable *Brahmāndas*. *Māyānda* is composed of five *kanchukas* (elements) of *Purusha* (Godhead) and His *Māyā* (energy). Above the *Māyānda*, there is the existence of *Shāktānda*, composed of luminous and pure *sattva guna*. In *Shāktānda* exist the three *tattvas* of *shuddha vidyā*, *Ishvara* and *Sadāshiva*. The presiding Lord of *Brahmānda* is *Brahmā*, that of *Prakṛityanda* is *Vishnu* and that of *Māyānda* is *Rudra*. The realm of *Māyā* extends upto this much only. Above this the Lord of *Shāktānda* is the dual aspect of *Ishvara* and *Sadāshiva*. The creative extrovert aspect of *Parameshwara* *Paramashiva* is known as *Sadāshiva*. *Ishvara* and *Sadāshiva* are the two functional names of the centrifugal and centripetal powers of *Paramashiva*. The five functional Lords from

Brahmā to *Sadāshiva* are known as the *Panchakārana*, i.e. the five causal sources of the universe.

Brahma Chakra

(*Parama Shiva And Sansāra mandala*)



LEGEND

- | | | | |
|-------|---|-----|--------------------|
| 1. | <i>Parama Śhiva (Parameshwara + Parameshwarī)</i> | 6. | <i>Satya Loka</i> |
| 2. | <i>Sadā Shiva-Iśvara (Iśvara+Iśvarī)</i> | 7. | <i>Tapah Loka</i> |
| 3. | <i>Śākyānda (Śhiva + Śakti)</i> | 8. | <i>Janah Loka</i> |
| 4. | <i>Māyānda (Rudra + Rudrānī)</i> | 9. | <i>Mahah Loka</i> |
| 5. | <i>Prakṛityanda (Vishnu + Lakshmi)</i> | 10. | <i>Swah Loka</i> |
| 6-12. | <i>Brahmānda (Brahmā + Brahmānī)</i> | 11. | <i>Bhuvah Loka</i> |
| | | 12. | <i>Bhuh Loka</i> |

Though consciousness, which is a qualitative concept, and *Shakti* (energy), a quantitative but non-cardinal concept, cannot be represented graphically, yet an attempt has been made in *Tāntric* texts to represent the evolution of *Brahmānda* from *Shiva-Shakti* in the *Shri chakra* based on solid Geometry and spherical Geometry. It portrays the evolution of *samsāramandala* (infinite and innumerable subtle and physical universes) from *Paramashiva*, (which is the same as *Para Brahma* of Vedānta and *Purushottama Pāramātmā* of the *Bhagavad Gītā*.)

A lucid description of the evolution of the *Brahmānda* is found in the first ten chapters of *Nirvāna Tantram*, but a comprehensive discussion of the *Samsāramandala* is found in Gopinath Kaviraja's *Tāntrik Vāngmayme Shākta Drishti*.

The mysteries of creation are discussed precisely in the *Aitareyopanishad* of the *Rig Veda*, in the *Mundakopanishad* and in the *Prashnopanishad* of the *Atharva Veda*, in Kapila's *Sāmkhya Darshan*, in Kashmir Shaivism, in the *Devi Bhāgavatam* and also in the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The first and second verses of the 15th chapter of the *Gītā* refer to the *pipal* tree of creation, which is said to be imperishable with its roots above in the primeval being (God) and whose stem is represented by *Brahmā* (the creator) and whose leaves are the Vedās. The *Brahma Sutra* in its second aphorism ('*Janmādasya yatah*') refers to Brahman, which is the basis of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe. *Tāntric* literature, instead of contradicting the Vedas, simply elaborates the basic concepts.

The '*Devī Sukta*' or the hymn to Goddess *Durga (Chandī)* of the *Rigveda* is the meeting-ground of the Vedic and *Tantric* traditions of ancient India. It occurs as the 125th hymn of the 10th chapter of the *Rigveda*, the oldest among the four Vedas, codified about 5000 B.C. and it constitutes an essential part of the recitation of *Durgā Saptashati-Chandī (Devī Māhātmya)* of *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna*, compiled later by Maharshi Veda Vyāsa).

Surath, the King, and Samādhi, the merchant, worshipped the icon of Goddess *Durgā (Chandī)* for three consecutive years by chanting this '*Devī Sukta*', according to the instruction of Medhas Rishi and got kingdom and liberation respectively. This hymn was revealed to Vāk, the self-realized daughter of Ambhrin Rishi, who identified herself as the Divine Mother as well as Brahman.

Theory of Creation in the Upanishads

In the first and second *mantras* of the first chapter of the *Aitareyopanishad* we get a glimpse of the evolution or creation of the universe from God. *Paramātmā* or

God willed that the different *lokas* (worlds) be evolved from Him and within Himself. Says the Upanishad:

Om ātmā vā idameka evāgre āsit. Nānyat kinchana mishat. Sa ikshat lokannu srija iti. (1. i. 1)

('Before the manifestation of the universe, *Paramātma* or the absolute Self was the only Reality. There was none else. He thought (willed) that the worlds be evolved.')

Again, in the second *mantra*, the Upanishad says:

*Sah imān lokān asrijata. Ambhau
marichirmaramapoadambhah parena divam
dyauh pratishthā antariksham marichayah,
prithvi marau ya adhastattah apah.* (1. i. 2)

('Willing thus, *Paramātma* created *Ambhas*, *Marichi*, *Mara* and *Apah*.)

According to Vedic definitions, *Ambha* means *Svargaloka*, *Maharloka*, *Janarloka*, *Taparloka* and *Satyaloka*; *Marichi* means *Bhuvarkala*, comprising all stars, suns and moons in the sky; and *Mara* means *Bhurloka* or *Prithvi Tattva*, consisting of all physical planetary systems. The underworld below the earth is known as *Apah* or *Pātāl Loka*.

After this the creation of *Brahmā*, the creating power of Brahman and other *Lokapālas* (governors of the inner government of the universe) as well as the five senses of knowledge, five senses of action, five subtle elements, *prāna* (life or energy), mind, intellect, the different species of animals upto man and food for all animals are described.

The eighth *mantra* of the first part of the first *Mundaka* (chapter) of the *Mundakopanishad* (of the *Atharva Veda*) describes how from the ascetic will of God, physical matter, life, mind and the worlds were created:

*Tapasā chiyate brahma tato' māmabhi jāyate;
Annātprāno manah satyam lokah karmasu chāmritam .* (1.i.8)

The *Prashnopanishad* (of the *Atharva Veda*) gives a more detailed description of creation, in reply to the first question—'*Bhagavan kutah ha vā imāh prajāh prajāyanta iti*'—'Sir, from which ultimate cause all the creatures come into life?' The fourth *mantra* gives a significant and synoptic reply: '*Prajākāmah vai prajāpatih sah tapah utapyata sah tapas taptvā sah mithunam utpādayate. Rayim cha prānam cha etau me bahudhā prajāah karishyatah iti*'. ('God, in the form of *Prajāpati* *Brahmā*, who had practised meditation and rites conjointly in his earlier

life, created the first couple of *prāna* and *rayi* (life energy and physical matter or atomic elements), so that the twin principles of life (sun) and matter (moon) could create the multifarious universe with innumerable creatures.)

Life is the male principle of consciousness, and matter is the female principle of name and form. In reply to the second question the superiority of *prāna* over all other subtle as well as gross elements is established. *Prāna*, being the energy (*Shakti*) of Brahman, has been highly praised in the fifth chapter of the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* and in the second and sixth chapters of the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, which have gone to the extent of calling *prāna* as *satyam* (real), though Brahman is '*satyasya satyam*' (the Truth of Truth or Reality).

In reply to the sixth question, the *Prashnopanishad* states that God is the Supreme Person, who has sixteen *Kalās* (constituents), and these are also existent in each body—'*Iha eva antahsharire somya sah purusha yasmin etāh shodasha kalāh prabhavantiti.* (VI.2)

Again, the same Upanishad says later:

*Sa prānamasrijata prānātśraddhām
kham vāyurjotirāpah prithivindiyam manah;
Annamanyadviryam tapo mantrāh karma
lokā lokeshu cha nāma cha.* (VI.4)

('God created at the outset *Hiranya-garbha*, the original source of all life, and then by infusing faith in life, gradually allowed the evolution of ether, air, fire, water, and earth in their subtle forms, and then the four inner faculties of mind, intellect, ego and memory and the five sense-organs and after that foodstuff, vigour or ability, the power of penance, the alphabet (seeds of sound), causes of action and the different *lokas* or planes of existence of life were created.')

This gives a comprehensive picture of the *Brahmānda* with its 16 constituents, e. g. *prāna*, *śraddhā*, *panchamahābhuta*, *pancha jñānendriya* and four *antahkaranas*

[To continue]

ON MA ANANDAMAYI

— Ma Suryananda Lakshmi

[A talk given at a conference at Vienne (France)]

i

OM SHRI MA ANANDAMAYI!

"At Ma's feet, a veil drops, many people become able to concentrate and to pray. Her presence, her smile, her expressions are as such a whole teaching. Ma's protection is felt, as soon as we think and act in a pure way, devoid of personal interest. The pure desires are fulfilled", that is to say, the desire without selfishness and without pride. We have an example in the story of the Princess Kunti, who waited upon Brahman for one full year without any idea of her own importance, serving, loving and worshipping him as if he were truly a god.

Ma Anandamayi was without doubt a divine incarnation, and she was not the only one in this so cruel 20th century. Surprisingly enough, while several great sages were born during the last century and even a little earlier with Shri Ramakrishna, our world behaves worse than ever with a lot of selfishness, arrogance and cruelty. And yet Ma, who lived over 80 years, was fully a divine incarnation on this planet earth, an embodiment of the Divine Mother; she was beyond all appearances, all duality, and she has been busy with the most humble work, the minutest service in her household, until the crowd around her became too large.

Her presence itself was purifying (repeated twice), Her presence itself was sanctifying. And as stated by Josette Herbert in her preface, her protection was granted to all those whose deeds were without any personal interest, without any idea of personal interest, devoid of selfishness and pride. And Ma simply said: "How beautiful is the work without ego" (repeated twice) I am going to add one thing: Happy is the work without ego (repeated twice), without any care for oneself, without any idea of personal importance.

Note : Quotations included in the article have been taken from the book — 'L'enseignement de Ma Anandamay by Jean Herbert, editor Albin Michel, Paris (1974 edn.)

I don't want to speak for a long time, tonight, I want to read to you a few small sentences that I have at my disposal, which I have taken from Ma's teaching.

ii

Somebody puts a question "What is the easiest path leading to God?" (repeated twice) Ma answers: "Profuse tears" (repeated twice)- "Cry only for God".

And the person who puts the question says: "And if no tears are coming?"

Ma: "Then look for the company of those who shed tears, who shed tears for God".

That means, of those who do what we are doing, *satsang*, that is to say, a meeting, a congregation to concentrate on "Sat", the Truth, to sing the Truth, "Sat".

The easiest way to go to God is love, devotion, worship.

My Lord and My God, I love you (repeated thrice)

And I would like to add this: when everything is going well, apparently, we should sing to God: "My Lord and my God I love you". But when everything is going bad, apparently and inwardly, we should above all sing to God.

When everything is going well, we should sing to God, we often forget, and when everything is going badly, we don't think of it either.

And when everything is going badly inwardly, when we are blocked, pulled down, wretched, we should sing to God.

We should sing to God, even without belief. There will always be an effect, and it becomes a huge strength, a surpassing power within us.

When we are sick, in pain, annoyed, when we face an inner dryness, it happens, all the great saints have spoken about it. Saint Theresa of Avila has told how much she suffered, sometimes from being dry, without inner devotion--then, "My Lord and my God, I love you". That's all. These are tears.

Ma says thus: "Your presence here, your very questions are tears, that is a steadfast devotion in the quest of God. How can you say, you have got nothing out of these years of *satsang*, without them you won't be where you are. No time is ever lost. Because we forget God, God, He Himself, does not forget us. (repeated twice) And sometimes we believe we mourn for ourselves, while in fact we mourn for God. (repeated twice)

We mourn for being not close enough to Him, we mourn for not being able to understand Him better, this is all the same homesickness, a thirst, a worship. I repeat the question and the answer: "What is the easiest way leading to God?" Ma answers: "Profuse tears".

iii

And now I would like to tell you, what she said while lying down, a very short time before leaving her body. "Remember that the truth is to know That, in actual fact, nothing has happened." She spoke of herself, she spoke of everything. "The truth is to know That in fact, nothing has happened, neither birth, nor death, only eternity was manifested in all these things."

These words are 24,26,30 carat gold and are to be remembered. "The truth is to know That, in fact nothing has happened, neither birth nor death, only eternity was manifested in all these things"

It is true for her, and it is true for us as well. Only eternity was manifested in all these things.

We are the eternal, we are the infinite, we are nothing else (repeated twice). Why to linger over our petty disappointments, over our petty worldly troubles, which are so tiny in comparison with the universe?

God is here, He is within us. Jesus said so, Buddha said so, Ramakrishna said so, Vivekananda said so, Ma Anandamayi said so, Shri Aurobindo said so, all said so. God is within us, and all is life, and death is fulfilled in eternity, this is what I am also often telling you, without having been taught.

iv

A blind man puts a question, and if there is any handicap, a disability, which is painful, this one really is, he asks: "How can I get the vision of God?" having in mind, that the vision should come from the external vision. As he cannot see, he puts the question: "Please, Tell me what is the easiest way to meet God, to see God?" Ma answers: "Look for Him alone." (repeated twice) "Love God for Him alone. How many times do I repeat this, of which I am so deeply convinced. Love God for Himself, not for you, not for you (repeated twice)".

The main point is to love God, and to grow through it, and up to where we grow. I cannot tell you, but it is boundless (repeated twice). Love Him, for Him alone.

The blind man asks: "Which is the best path, the path of devotion or the path of knowledge?" One may say both, and neither one, nor the other. "Cling to the name of God, day and night, let it permeate you with its sweetness." See, how this discussion is moving "When I still had the use of my eyes, I was reading a lot, now it is impossible, how could I understand?"

The blind man remains one-pointed on his blindness in his questions, he remains self-centered, while the door is fully opened by Ma.

My Lord and my God, I love you. And the difficulties find their solutions in you, and the sweetness of the divine flows in you, replacing bitterness, replacing sorrows.

"Cling to the name of God, repeat the name of God, day and night, let it permeate you with its sweetness.

The Book of Revelation from Saint John, in the sixth letter: "I put in front of you an open door that none may close." (repeated twice)

A door that God alone opens, that man cannot close.

"For you are of little might, for you kept the word of perseverance in me."

Turn towards God and you will understand.

My Lord and my God, I love you. You alone. My Lord and my God I love you.

All the questions we may ask ourselves have their answers in God, find their solutions in God. My Lord and my God I love you.

The sweetness of the divine which enters into us, what the Hindus also call the sweetness of Krishna within the heart, and Krishna is the full moon. One should look at the full moon (repeated twice) and worship it and tell oneself that it is Krishna and that it pours into us the silence, the sweetness of the divine.

"Give me your blessing." "Pray to God and you will feel his blessing." It is true. (repeated twice)

During the worse times, one has the strength to be silent, not to react, to greet what happens, and I have met such times, as all of you have.

My Lord and my God, I love you. You alone.

"Pray to God and you will feel His benediction, look for Him, for Him alone."

To go and see Anandamayi, one did not see Her, if it was not God whom one went to see. (repeated twice)

Look for Him, for Him alone, cling to the name of God, repeat the name day and night to be permeated by its sweetness.

The trials don't come from God, they come from the earth, they come from us, from duality, but not from God.

God brings solace, support, strength.

Turn towards God and He will make you understand.

"Pray to God and you will feel His blessings." (repeated 5 times)

[To continue]

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About the speaker, Ma Suryananda Lakshmi :—

Her name at birth in 1918 was Noutte Genton Sunier, and she died around 1995. Her mother tongue was French and she lived most of her life in Switzerland, had a Christian upbringing, became a pianist and singer. She married a doctor in 1945 and had two daughters and lived all her life as a householder. She had met Jean Herbert at the age of 20 and through him and his books was in touch with Sri Aurobindo. Through a letter she asked Sri Aurobindo if she could become his disciple and even before the letter reached India she had confirmation of this through a vision. She also had visions of Christ, and some other Christian saints.

Without her family even being aware of it she did her *sadhana* during the nights for about 15 years. She studied all the Hindu scriptures and saints, wrote poems and books about her experiences and *samadhis*. Throughout her whole life she suffered from serious injury and sickness. From 1970 she started to hold conferences and teachings and she gave lectures at the University of Lausanne about "Christian Faith and Hindu Spirituality".

The name Suryananda Lakshmi came from her connection with Sri Aurobindo. Then, in 1980, after terrible physical suffering she was completely broken down. At this point she had a visit from a lady completely unknown to her, who had been sent by Ma Anandamayi from her ashram in Benares with a sari worn by Sri Ma herself. This lady talked to her of Sri Ma until 2 am. When she left, the lady did *pranam* to Suryananda Lakshmi and called her Ma Lakshmi. Through this visit confidence and courage returned to her.

ABOUT SOME MIRACULOUS INCIDENTS

— AVM. P.P. Madhava (Retd)

During the course of my long association with Swami Virajanandaji he told me how Ma saved him on different occasions. When he was staying in Rajgir ashram, he went to the Buddhist shrine in the hill to do his meditation there. In the evening, he started walking back to the ashram when it was quite dusk. Suddenly, he found a tiger in the middle of the road, eating the carcass of a cow it had just killed. He stood there thinking of Ma, wondering how to proceed further to the ashram. At this very point, a truck came out of the jungle and he managed to get a lift in it. He did not tell anybody about that incident.

After more than a year, Ma came to Rajgir when Virajanandaji was also there. Ma went for a drive with him sitting in the front seat. She told the driver to stop at a place and suddenly asked, "Is this the place where the tiger killed the cow?" Virajanandaji was amazed and suddenly asked Ma how She knew it. Ma replied, "You people do not know; this body is always with all of you".

* * * * *

Another time, Swamiji had some talks with Ma and took leave of Her around 11 pm in the Kalyanvan ashram in Dehra Dun. As he was leaving, Ma said "Take a torch with you". He carried a torch but did not switch it on as he was going through the bushes to his cottage. Suddenly, he remembered what Ma had told him and he switched on the torch. Right in front of him was long snake with its hood up. It moved away and he could go to his cottage.

* * * * *

Once, apparently Swamiji got upset over something and told Ma, "I am going away". Ma asked him "Where will you go?" He did not know himself where he would go and hence did not give any answer. He travelled to Mt. Abu and started staying in a secluded cave in a mountain. Someone or the other gave him some food. After some days, he developed a disease in which he was passing motions with blood. He became very weak and thought that he would not survive. At that time, some person came to him and gave him a telegram from Swami Paramananda saying, 'Ma is with you'. After he recovered a little, he came down the hill and saw Ma and Swami Paramananda waiting for him in a car. Ma asked him, "Will you come back now?" Swamiji did his pranam to Ma and said, "Yes, Ma".

* * * * *

Another time, Swamiji went to Amarkantak, the source of the Narmada river. There, he decided that he would go to the other end of the river where the Narmada-Sagar sangam (confluence) takes place. The difficulty was, unlike Ganga-Sagar, the place where Narmada mingles with the sea is an uninhabited wild place and nobody goes there. The river current also was unpredictable and the depth of the river bed even at the bank was unpredictable. So, all the people told him that it was very unsafe to go there. One devotee who agreed to accompany him also backed out as soon as they approached the point where they had to cross the river in a boat then walk on the bank on the other side a few kilometers to reach the confluence. Swamiji continued alone and as he walked quite a distance, he saw the river became very wide and it was not clear which part of the bank was to be taken as the place of the confluence. There was no person in sight anywhere for him to ask. While walking thus he saw a man and woman, scantily dressed, looking like aborigines, walking toward him. As they neared him, he asked them, with his head bent down looking at their feet (because of their scanty clothing) if they could tell where the river-sea confluence was. They gave clear instructions and walked past him in the opposite direction. The Swamiji walked little and looked back, but the aborigines could not be seen any where. He went to the spot of the confluence and took his bath there after carefully measuring the depth of the water with a pole and eventually returned all alone. As he approached the Bhimpura ashram where Ma was, She greeted him, "Come, tell us what happened" and hinted that the two aborigines were none other than Narmada and Sagar manifesting like that to help him.

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Vibhuda (Sri Brahmananda) of our ashram told me in Pune how Ma once brought him back to life from near death. That time his *prāna* (life force) left his body and was about a foot away from it. Didima saw him struggling in that condition and called Ma urgently saying, "Vibhu is in danger". Ma came and brought his *prana* back into the body and he revived. While narrating this to me Vibhuda said twice, "I do not know why I am telling you this".

* * * * *

A brahmachari who was in the Pune Ashram told me this incident. Ma was once travelling by train and he was also in the same compartment. Devotees came in good numbers and had Ma's darshan when the train stopped at some station. Then, the train started and after going some distance away from the station, it stopped moving. The driver got down to see what was wrong and saw the engine was functioning but the wheels were rotating at the same spot on the track and there

was no traction. In the meanwhile, some devotees who could not come to the station in time, were ardently praying to Ma for darshan and came running to the place where the train stopped. Ma just looked at them from the compartment window and gave Her darshan to them. The train started moving immediately. The engine driver and others who were on the ground watching the wheels rotating, had to scramble back on to the engine and the train moved on. The brahmachari was a direct witness to that incident.

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Swami Prakashananda told me this. In our ashram, a feast for all the mahatmas is usually arranged towards the end of major functions. In one such feast, a large quantity of *kheer* (milk pudding) meant for serving to the mahatmas got burnt at the bottom of the vessel and a strong burnt smell was coming out. Didima noticed it, went running to Ma, telling Her what happened as there was no time for making fresh *kheer*. Seeing Didima frantically urging Ma to do something, Ma outwardly feigned some annoyance, telling Didima, "You are the *vakil* (pleader) for everybody" and then said "Serve the same *Kheer*, let us see what happens". Swami Prakashananda said that all the mahatmas ate the *kheer*, saying it was very delicious and took additional helpings.

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A very elderly devotee narrated this story. He attended the Samyam Vrata at Naimisharanya. They were accommodated in tents with four people in one tent. His companions were some very senior people in the Government service. The function concluded with midnight meditation on the seventh day. The participants observed a strict code on food intake, observing fasts on the first and last day etc. One of those senior persons said on reaching the tent after the midnight meditation, "Now that the function is over, let us have some nice snacks," which evidently they brought with them when they came for the function. All the four companions enjoyed those snacks. Next morning, they had a pleasant as well as shocking surprise. Ma sent a large amount of prasad to them through somebody, telling that those people were very hungry last night. She knew obviously what each person was doing all the time.

* * * * *

Ma used to throw *batashas* (sugar puffs) as prasad to crowds of devotees. On one occasion, all the available *batashas* were finished and still some more devotees were clamouring for the same. Ma asked Udasji to get more but she looked for them every where and she said there were no more. Ma told her to look under the

cot and there she strangely got a whole basket full of *batashas*. Ma distributed them saying, "See how Bhagawan gives".

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Swami Parameshwaranandaji is invited regularly to all major functions in our ashram and gives discourses on Puranas and other spiritual topics. He narrated the following incident in a *satsang* in Kankhal ashram. In one of the functions where Ma was present, he and Raja Durga Singh of Solan were also there. The Raja was thinking in his mind, "Ma is considered to be Divine Mother Kali. But Kali Ma is black and Ma is so fair". As he thought like that Ma made an '*Attahās*' —a loud pealing laughter and Her complexion became black. The Raja became concerned and a bit frightened at this sudden change in Ma's appearance and prayed to Her to revert to Her normal appearance. Then Ma's complexion and appearance returned gradually to normal. Ma thus admonished him for having such thoughts.

* * * * *

Brahmacharini Udasji, a Kashmiri lady, was a close compainion and attended on Ma for many years. She spent her last few years in Kankhal ashram. When we met her in 1994 and mentioned some problem we had, she said in Hindi, "Ma is there, why worry" and narrated the following incident. A lady devotee of Ma was living alone in her house in Hyderabad. Burglars came at night and collected all her valuables. Before leaving, they wanted to kill her. She asked for a little time to say her last prayer before they killed her. They agreed and in their presence, she closed her eyes and prayed to Ma to take her. Then, she opened her eyes and told the burglars to go ahead with their task. They looked bewildered with a sense of wonder writ large on their faces. Instead of killing her, they did a pranam to her, left all the valuables they had collected and disappeared hastily.

* * * * *

That the political destiny of nations is in the hands of the Divine is not easily understood. Sri Aurobindo was a revolutionary, but he got his call to become an exalted yogi. It was reported that he told the Divine Mother that he wanted to lead the country to independence, but Mother told him that the task was given to somebody else who had just landed back in India. That was Mahatama Gandhi. When Dr. Rajendra Prasad visited Ramana Maharshi and asked for his blessings to Mahatma in his work, Maharshi told him that *Adhyatma Shakti* was working through the Mahatma and asked what further blessings were needed. Sri Aurobindo was also reported to have said that Nehru was a yogi in his previous life but in his present life he chose to keep that aspect out, to lead the country in the political field.

Here I wish to cover the events when the Chinese Army incursion into Assam in India in 1962 took place. The Chinese came down close to Tezpur. There was a collapse or a setback to the Indian Army there and they were in no position to repulse the Chinese at that point of time. Prime Minister Nehru, who was the architect of the Panchsheel Agreement with China, was extremely distressed at the turn of events. It looked as if his Non-alignment Policy would have to be abandoned or diluted and India would have to seek Western assistance.

Ma came to Delhi a day or two before this development. The Prime Minister wanted to see Her personally but was tied down handling the emergent military situation. He sent his Personal Secretary Shri Upadhyaya to see Ma and tell her the position. (It is understood that some cabinet ministers also went with him). They were with Ma till midnight. What transpired there is not known, but Swami Virajananda told me that Ma asked all in the ashram to do bhajan, kirtan and japa all night with Herself present.

In the morning, Ma asked someone (very unusual), "What does the radio say now? Have they, (the Chinese) gone back?" The news was that the Chinese unexpectedly announced withdrawal of their troops and implemented the decision with speed.

Theorists can project different reasons for that sudden withdrawal of the Chinese. Is it difficult for us to see the Divine intervention in that? In fact, the 1962 defeat was the turning point for the country to realize that the defence capability had to be built up for its survival. That, in turn, enabled us to face the 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan successfully.

* * * * *

Once, Ma was travelling from one town to another by car. The devotees who go with Her usually travel in their own cars. Ma told one such lady devotee to travel in Her car. After going some distance, one tyre of Ma's car burst. After replacing it, as the car went some distance, another tyre got burst, and in the same manner after a further distance, the third tyre also burst and all were stranded there for some time till help came. Each time the tyre burst, Ma asked the lady, if she was feeling okay. Ma indicated that some power to take that lady's life came thrice and it was diverted each time to one of the wheels of the car and she was thus saved.

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A Bengali family was returning by car to Calcutta after having satsang with Ma in another town. On the way, they had to cross a river by ferry. When they reached the place for the ferry, they did not see anybody there. The family consisted of the person who was driving the car, his wife, mother and two daughters. The

gentleman parked the car with the hand brake on and went out with one daughter to fetch the man who ply the ferry. As they went away, the car suddenly started rolling down. There was panic in the minds of the ladies in the car. The two elderly ladies fainted. As the car was about to be plunged into the river, the daughter said, "We have the garlands given by Ma, no danger can come to us". The car stopped as it plunged into the water and water started entering the car through the closed doors. But help came immediately and all the ladies stuck inside the car were rescued.

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A professional photographer wanted to take pictures of Ma in the year 1926. Ma was in a room which was dark, in a state of deep meditation. Bholanathji and Bhaiji took Her outside and the photographer exposed eighteen plates. After developing them, only a ball of light was seen on the first few plates and a hazy outline on the rest except the last one which showed Ma clearly with light all around Her head. Ma explained later that when She was in the dark room, the room was flooded with light radiating from her body. The light diminished gradually until it remained around Her head when the last picture was taken. In another picture Bhaiji also appeared behind Ma in the photograph, though he was not at all present there. Ma explained that it was due to Her *kheyala* that he was there.

YOGA IN THE ANCIENT INDIAN SCRIPTURES

— Dr. Rakesh Kumar

There are several physical and spiritual problems which seem to have engaged the minds of the Indian thinkers, philosophers and scientists since the ancient times. It is true that human life on this earth is full of miseries and sorrows. People have been striving hard to overcome such problems by seeking help from different methods prescribed in our ancient Indian scriptures. That apart, they also depend upon the various doctrines and religious and philosophical treatises. It is commonly considered that Indian philosophy can show the way to attain a state which is completely free from the clutches of misery and sorrow. With the knowledge of *tatvajnana* or *darshana* an individual is felt motivated or induced to some extent to think and act in such a way that he would ultimately succeed in overcoming the entire suffering. Naturally, the first response of an individual springs from the very fundamental and experimental aspects of life.

By and large, the word yoga is associated with the acquisition and exhibition of supernatural powers. It is very common and customary to look at yoga as a curious ancient art which combines a set of religious beliefs with a strange mysterious practical discipline. There seems to be a belief in minds of common man, that yoga is concerned mainly with some extra-ordinary phenomena. It is also supposed that yoga is not for common man. It is only for those who can pay proper attention and take care of his health. It is an amazing fact that such ideas are widespread even among the people of the discipline. Such ideas turn out to be erroneous if we try to see and observe from a very close range. These state of affairs will be changed only when intelligent, educated men having a great strength and courage will be attracted towards this particular discipline. However, some thinkers, eminent philosophers and scientists are showing interest in this discipline and at the same time they are trying to discover something new and worthwhile.

In the Vedas and other scriptures, we find that some *rishis* and seers were quite familiar with the highest state of being which is the ultimate goal of the yoga. They used to achieve this through the process and procedures described as *dhyana*, *diksha*, *tapas* and some other methods like this. In Kathopanishad yoga has been defined as a state of steadiness and control of the senses as well as the mind and the intellect which when attained makes an individual completely faultless and unoffending. Our minds are usually swayed away by the objects of enjoyment.

Contrary to this, the mind of a yogi is not taken away by his senses because it becomes free from all the worldly passions and desires and hence he remains steady in the highest state of being.

Likewise, in the Svetasvatara Upanishad, we find the description about various states of a yogi. It is said that disease, old age and death do not come to him. Further, it is also described that his body becomes supple and healthy, his mind devoid of greed and passion. The above descriptions show very clearly that a yogi is a person whose body and mind both become pure by the practice of yoga.

In the Yogavasistha, yoga is described as a device that makes for reaching the other shore of the stream of sorrows. Indeed, a yogi is a person who is eternally free from sorrows. Such phenomenon can be experienced to some extent even by a common man who practises the physical and mental exercises.

We find several references related to yoga in another Hindu scripture, Srimad Bhagavad Gita. In Chapter 2 of the text we come across such examples where yoga signifies a state of equipoise wherein opposites like success and failure, make little difference. Let us quote an example in this regard—

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि संज्ञां त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।

सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्यो समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥ गीता, 2-48

[Being steadfast in yoga, O Dhananjaya, perform actions abandoning attachment, remaining unconcerned as regards success and failure. This evenness of mind is known as yoga].

However, it is difficult to attain a state of mind in which we feel satisfied. It can only be possible through regular and constant practice of yoga.

According to the Bhagavad Gita, a yogi is a person whose pattern of motivation is wholly changed; for nothing remains for him to be achieved in this world. He is completely free from desires and passions to attain and achieve anything. He does not abandon work and the worldly activities, rather he continues to work for the welfare of the humanity. He does continue to work, but renounces any pleasure of the consequence. Such things have been made clear in another definition of yoga. In Sloka 50-51 of the 2nd chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, it is stated that a yogi who renounces the concern of the consequences of the work, overcomes bondage for ever—

बुद्धियुक्तो यहातीह उसभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।

तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥.....गीता, 2-50

[Endued with this evenness of mind, one frees oneself in this life, alike from vice and virtue. Devote thyself, therefore, to this yoga. yoga is the very dexterity of work.]

कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिणः ।

जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ताः पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम् ॥... गीता, 2-51

[The wise, possessed of this evenness of mind, abandoning the fruits of their actions freed for ever from the fetters of birth, go to that state which is beyond all evil.]

Most of us are mainly concerned in life with pleasant and joyful imagination of the consequence of what we are engaged therein. It is common concern that we always aspire for an improvement in our status and position, we always desire to be important and advanced in our society. However, a yogi is not supposed to be instigated and motivated to act any such motives. He can remain undisturbed and patient even in the wake of any incident. Such state of a yogi has clearly been described in another definition of yoga in Bhagvad Gita (VI, 20-23)—

यत्रोपरमते चित्तं निरुद्धं योगसेवया ।

यत्र चैवात्मनात्मानं पश्यान्नात्मनि तुष्यति ॥ ... गीता, 6-20

सुखमात्यन्तिकं यत्तदबुद्धिग्राह्यमतीन्द्रियम् ।

वेत्ति यत्र न चैवायं स्थितश्चलति तत्त्वतः ॥ गीता, 6-21

यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः ॥

यस्मिन् स्थितो न दुःखेन गुरूणापि विचाल्यते ।... गीता, 6-22

तं विध्याद्दुःखःसंयोगवियोगं योगसंजितम् ।

स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगो निर्विण्णचेतसा ॥ ... गीता, 6-23

[When the mind, absolutely restrained by the practice of concentration, attains quietude, and when seeing the Self by the Self, one is satisfied in his own self. When he feels that infinite bliss which is perceived by the intellect and which transcends the senses, and established wherein he never departs from his real state; and having obtained which, regards no other acquisition superior to that, and when established, he is not moved even by heavy sorrow, let that be known as the state, called by the name of yoga - a state of severance from the contact of pain. This yoga should be practised with perserverance, undisturbed by depression of heart.] Gita, VI, 20-23.

Yoga is very authentically defined here as a state of separation from sorrow. The text declares that when the state of happiness par excellence is achieved, there remains nothing else to be achieved, which may be greater than it, not even the greatest misery can ever disturb that state. At the same it is also said that such a state of yoga is to be attained with a high resolve and a firm determination. When we go through the Yoga Sutra, somewhat a different picture appears. Patanjali defines yoga as a state in which there is complete elimination of the thought and modification of the mind. He states that there are eight parts of this yoga which after rigorous practice ultimately makes that state come into being. However, atleast two conditions must be fulfilled for achieving this goal. They are truly mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita (VI,35) as well as in the Yoga-Sutra (I,12) and are called *Abhyāsa* and *Vairāgya* respectively.

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुनिग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ।... गीता, 6-35

[Without doubt, O mighty armed, the mind is restless and difficult to control; but through practice and renunciation it may be governed].

Thus any person can attain an optimum level and finally the goal of Yoga, only when he has these two qualities to begin with. *Vairāgya* means lack of craving for worldly things. The absence of the process of desire is what is meant by *vairāgya*. It is only through *vairāgya* that one can succeed in getting rid of the tendency of the mind to run after various things of beauty and joy. Such a controlled mind can be made steady. While *abhyāsa* is the process of steadying the mind. This can be achieved in various ways, according to one's temperament. They are known as different types of yoga and although looking separate and different in the beginning, they all seem to lead to the same goal of *mukti* or *moksha*.

Here, *mukti* means attainment of *moksha*. It is a state in which a man experiences the supreme happiness. Chāndogya Upanishad says that if one attains *moksha*, he never again returns to this world. Indeed, *moksha* is that changeless state of the soul in which it is in full possession of the object of its deepest yearning. All its wishes and desires have been fulfilled and got satisfied. As a consequence, the soul gains eternal rest and peace.

Almost all the ancient Hindu scriptures insist that in order to control the mind and to have a control over various feelings and emotions, aspirants must practise the discipline of yoga. Such aspirants must have good knowledge of yoga-philosophy. Under such religious and philosophical treatises, two most important aspects have been mainly emphasised. They are *yama* and *niyamā*. Non-killing,

truthfulness, non-stealing, continence and non-receiving of any worldly things are called *yamas*, while internal and external purification, contentment, mortification, study and worship of God are the *niyamas*.

However, the disposition of being happy at the happiness of others creates a very soothing mental climate in which wrong impulse like jealousy cannot thrive. It is, therefore, advisable to be compassionate for the unhappy and by doing so and practising in this manner, we can really help them and the entire humanity at large. Active compassion means service to the afflicted. In the true sense of the term, service done or provided in the proper attitude is one of the methods of purification of the self. It brings a change in overall attitude and enhances our sense of identity with the whole and finally liberates us from the physical and mental agony of being very small and sorrowful. So, this can provide us the real satisfaction and a lot of joy and happiness.

Generally, we are advised to be indifferent to the evils of the society. The most noble task before anybody is to try to change evil into good and keep away from all the sordid affairs of life. However, this task is not for ordinary man, only a noble person can perform duty in a successful manner. It is so because an ordinary man is always busy and preoccupied with his day-to-day problems. For getting into greater problems and overcoming them we must save our minds and strive for the better. It is only possible when our minds are well under control and at peace. For that, we must take refuge in various methods of yoga. In addition to this we must try to remain at peace.

However, the avoidance of evil company is helpful in controlling our minds. The good company is always helpful in the most positive way. Such good company removes all the impurities of the mind of the low and degraded people. Our association to worldly affairs is the most powerful impediment to control the mind. When attachments are removed, aversions and delusions also leave us very easily, as a result of which we attain right discrimination, understanding and above all clarity of vision. Finally, the clarity of vision and understanding lead us to the state of self-realization.

It is very common feeling that our thought processes are in a state of perpetual flux. It means restlessness is the basic characteristic of mind. When we observe carefully, we find that the inspiration to do various spiritual practices springs from this state of restlessness. Thus, the state of serenity and peace comes into being when mind is withdrawn into itself. As a result of this, we realise true happiness, peace and prosperity, which is eternal and beyond all worldly pleasures.



OUR SEVENTH TRIP TO INDIA

—Shraddha Davenport

[Continued from before]

From the very beginning of this seventh trip, our last to Mother, there was a different mood from any of our previous trips. A shadow of unreality seemed to stand between me and many of the events which unfolded during those days. Often I felt as though I were merely an observer, somehow removed.

When our plane arrived in Delhi on March 2, 1981 we were told that all of our luggage, except what we carried, had been left in Frankfurt. Fortunately our kind friends in Delhi, and Manju Vaish, helped us find a good tailor who made some clothing for us. They did everything they could to make our three-day delay in Delhi comfortable and productive. Their company was always a true delight.

On March fourth the airline office had received three pieces of our luggage and said that we could pick them up after 10:00 a.m. The fourth piece, a duffel bag containing our bedding among other things, could not be located. At the airport we met a young man, Mr. Roy, who was in charge of the office. We explained to him that we could not wait any longer for our duffel bag, but must go on to Vrindavan where we were to meet Anandamayi Ma. His face lit up when he heard Her name and said that he had seen Her. He asked how we had learned of Mother. After telling him of my dream, he shared a lovely memory of his with us.

When he was younger, he used to visit a great saint. Sometimes he would stay all night and talk with the saint. One night as he went to spread his bedding on the floor, the saint stopped him and said, "Tonight you will sleep on the bare floor with no cover or bedding." It was in December and the night was quite cold but the young Roy, without hesitation, agreed to do as he was bade. The saint asked him, "How will you manage it?" The boy replied, "That is not my problem, you have told me to do it and I know that if you tell me to do something, that it is you who will make it possible for me to do it," and he lay down on the floor. He told us that it was like lying on a feather bed, warm and comfortable. He said that it still filled him with such a good feeling each time that he thought about that experience.

I had to smile at Mother's *lila*. There we were, in the middle of an irritating situation, when suddenly a door opened into reality and in that unlikely place we had *satsang*.

We were given our three bags and Mr. Roy told us that when our duffel bag arrived it would be brought to us in Vrindavan. He said that if at all possible he would bring it personally and have Mother's darshan. Unfortunately the duffel bag was never located and Mr. Roy did not come to Vrindavan.

It was March sixth before we got all the business taken care of in Delhi and went by taxi to Vrindavan. There we met Swami Dhirananda for the first time. He had been put in charge of Mother's Vrindavan ashram. From him we learned that Mother was expected to arrive from Bhimpura about 9:00 a.m. the following morning.

Swami Dhirananda accompanied us to the Neem Karoli Baba Dharmasala. We had stayed there on our last visit to Vrindavan in 1975 and hoped to do so again. The host there, Mr. Pujari, remembered us and our little Gopal. He made us most welcome and gave us a lovely clean suite of large rooms looking out onto the beautiful rose garden and lavish bougainvillea surrounding the courtyard.

After putting our things in order and bath, we returned to the ashram to see Swami Paramanandaji. It was wonderful to be in his presence again. After a brief visit with him we went to the marketplace in search of some kind of bedding. We were fortunate to find two sleeping mats which a merchant had left over from a special order and there were lightweight cotton chaddars to use as sheets. We bought bath towels and some grass mats for the floor. I found a pretty cloth for the table where Gopal would sit. That took care of our immediate needs and we returned to the dharmasala.

While on that first shopping expedition we had the good fortune to find a rickshaw driver named Bhagawandas, who was a most exceptional young man. He was not only dependable, but completely honest. The dharmasala was quite a distance from the ashram, so we hired Bhagawandas for the whole month that we were in Vrindavan. He transported us twice each day, did shopping and ran errands. We never had to worry about any of those things. That was no small blessing!

The next morning, we were up by 6:00 a.m., did a few chores, then arrived at the ashram shortly before 9:00 a.m. As we walked up the wide road leading to the temple entrance, a car drove past us. We saw that it was Mother's car and hurried to

greet Her at the temple steps. My heart was pierced when I saw how tiny and frail She looked. It took quite some time for Her to get out of the car and then She stood a few seconds before starting up the stairs. She moved with apparent difficulty.

Inside the temple She stepped to each shrine and stood before it with folded hands as She greeted the beautiful deities there. We followed behind Her with mixed feelings. It was, of course, our greatest desire to be near Her, but I could not escape the great sadness of seeing Her look so fragile. After greeting the deities, Mother sat with us for a few minutes. We took the opportunity to pronam at Her feet, and when we did She asked how we were. I replied, "Thik hai, Ma", though I could not shake the melancholy mood which enveloped me.

Mother then stood, and we followed as She went out of the door and down the temple steps. There She was seated in an invalid chair and carried to Her house in the rear of the compound.

We saw Bhaskaranandaji, Nirvananandaji, Billoji, Maitreyi, Panuda and Swami Satchidanandaji. Bal Krishna Gupta, Manju's father, was also there. When he learned of our lost bag, he said that he would send some things for us to use while we were in Vrindavan.

Darshan was to be at 6:00 p.m., so we went to our dharmasala for the afternoon. When we returned that evening we walked down the path toward Mother's house. She was staying in a downstairs room instead of on the roof as She had in the past. Mother came out of the door and stood on the small porch of the house. Everyone there stayed back a little way, respectful and quiet.

When Mother spoke, Her voice wavered and I found it painful to see Her standing even for the short time She was there. After She went inside, we all sat on the patio where we had been standing and observed *maun* from 6:15 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Bal Krishna then took us to his house where we saw his beautiful temple and met Mrs. Gupta who was a lovely lady. They treated us to *chai* and some of their favorite foods. He arranged for us to get boiled milk from their house each day. Later he showed us around their large home. We saw childhood photos of their daughter Manju (our friend in Delhi) and Sailendra (Dimpie) their son, of whom we were so fond in California.

After a pleasant evening we returned to Neem Karoli Baba's Dharmasala and found Gadadhar waiting there for us with startling news. He told us that Mother had suddenly left for Varanasi taking Bhaskarananda, Panuda, Dasu and Udas with

Her. She was not expected to return until the eleventh or twelfth—in four of five days.

I could hardly believe my ears. We had been in India for five days and had only that day seen Mother for the first time in over two years. Then She went away and it would be several days before She returned. I felt a strange emptiness inside and sensed the shadow of a loss which I could not see. I thought about how fragile Mother appeared and the strenuous trip She was making. Mother's *lila* could never be grasped by human evaluations.

Gadadhar said that he was going to Kankhal for a few days, but then changed his plans and stayed in Vrindavan.

Earlier that day Shuddhananda shared a story with us told to him by someone who had heard Mother tell it.

Mother said that She was walking, and a young girl was following Her. When Mother stopped and turned around, the girl also stopped. She smiled at Mother and laughed. When Mother would again start walking, the girl also walked, following Mother. Each time Mother stopped, the same thing would happen. Mother said that She did not know where She was going—then suddenly She knew that She was going back to where She had come from and the young girl was Her Shakti.

I did not ask his source for this story, but hearing it only reinforced my feeling of forbidding.

The next morning at the ashram we saw Nirvanananda and he told us about Mother's going away the night before. He said that She had the *kheyala* to do so ever while in Bhimpura, but told only Panuda, who made the reservations.

Mother's sudden departure left us stunned. There was no interest in doing anything. I mechanically performed my duties but had little energy.

After a good night's sleep, I was in a somewhat better mood. Satya made vegetable soup and in the afternoon we went to the ashram. Nirvanananda and another sadhu were just going out for a walk. Inside the satsang hall Billoji was putting decorations up for a Bhagavat Saptaha which was to start on the twelfth.

We walked down the side path toward Mother's house, then across the patio and into the garden. There we found a nice seat beneath a large tree and sat for some time in that peaceful spot doing japa. It seemed that the seat to which we were drawn had been made for Mother's use and we were told that, in a very nice way by Dr. Ghosh, who found us there. He spoke with us at length and said that he had been a dentist before coming into the ashram.

When we walked out of the garden we saw Swami Paramanandaji. He smiled so sweetly at us and we prostrated at his feet. As I touched his foot, he reached over and patted me on the shoulders then lovingly stroked and patted my head. I felt so blessed by his holy touch. It seemed that he could see into my heart and was consoling me. He spoke with us for a little while, then we left the ashram and went to our quarters.

That night I was blessed with Mother's darshan in a dream. How sweet is Her touch in any realm of consciousness. All else may change, but She is always the same.

Next to the dharmasala was the ashram of Neem Karoli Baba. He was a very remarkable saint and great devotee of Hanumanji. A most beautiful murti of Sri Hanumanji was enshrined in front of the ashram. It was life-size and elaborately adorned.

We had been invited to come to the ashram and meet the saintly Siddhi Ma. She was Neem Karoli Baba's devotee, and after he left his body ("Central Jail," as he called it), she became the head of his ashram.

When we arrived the Hanuman Chalisa (hymn in praise of Sri Hanumanji) was being recited before the beautiful white marble temple of "Maharajji," as Neem Karoli Baba was called by his devotees. The doors to the temple stood open and an image of the saint could be seen in the shrine. On the caves above the entrance were several small monkeys. It was said that monkeys could always be seen around that temple. A slightly-raised platform of earth faced the temple. The surface had been purified with cow dung and a thatched roof shaded the whole platform.

Afterward we were invited to enter Siddhi Ma's room, prostrated, and sit with her for a brief time. She was very kind and made us feel most welcome.

The room used by Neem Karoli Baba faced onto the courtyard of the temple and we were permitted to enter that room also. There were many photographs of the saint upon the walls and his simple bed was covered by a dark plaid blanket of the type which he favored. Flowers were artistically arranged upon the blanket in a graceful pattern. After arati was done, we prostrated and left the room.

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