

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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The beautiful statue of Shree Ma installed in Ranchi Ashram

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Sri Sri Ma's Self composed Song

The ultimate state will not be reached by the jiva without detachment. Therefore, make renunciation and discrimination your sole objective, giving up all desires.

*What is the extent of renunciation,
You will know when you are engrossed in action,
Then you shall see constantly,
In which direction your mind will be drawn.*

*Offering all your activities,
Adhere to man's dharma*

*You are the eternal, changeless Brahman,
Meditate on this in your heart repeatedly.
Beckon the mind which wanders outwards,
Keep it within your heart continuously,
Mount the raft of Brahman*

And cross the ocean of samsara.

When your ego is annihilated.

And all duality transcended

*You shall see that you repose in your true nature,
Which is the Supreme Truth to be realised.*

—Vindhyachal, March 1936

With best wishes

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MATRI VANI

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

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

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

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



URGENT CIRCULAR

All our subscribers, who have not yet paid their subscriptions for the year 2008, are requested to send the amounts at the earliest. Failing which it will not be possible to send copies of the journal from next issue.

—Managing Editor

PAGES FROM
Ma Anandamayee Prasang

—Prof. A. K. Dutta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali)

28th May, 1941, Raipur-Dehradun Ashram

After completing our noon meals when we sat near Ma various talks began. At about 11.30 a.m. Ma got up to take rest. Seeing this Sri Jiten Mukherji* said - 'Ma, you are gradually decreasing our time for conversation with you, to remain *maun* (silence), to listen to *path* (discourses) etc. all these rules are the cause for getting lesser and lesser time to talk to you on one side, on the other side your own time to remain aloof is on the increase. Previously you would go at 12 noon to take rest, today you are leaving at 11.30 a.m.

. Listening to Jiten babu's words, Ma instead of going for rest sat down in front of the door of her room and started speaking - "These days the habit of talking seems to be on the decrease. It appears as if some one is pulling this body towards aloneness. You of course see that I am going into seclusion, but there is no seclusion there also. There too are persons as here. Perhaps the *kheyāl* may also come up to stay in complete seclusion. Of course, there is no such *kheyāl* at the present. But talking has become less to some extent."

"Perhaps you have noticed that these days talking is not done taking up only one particular issue. When such type of discussion goes on if some people gets some thing in tune with their own views they then become happy. Previously such types of talks used to be more. These days while discussion I touch upon everything one by one. Perhaps you do not understand them properly and that's why such talks may not be of your liking too. You try to understand everything through your intellect. But at many times all that is said cannot be grasped through intellect. As for example, it is said that it cannot be told if there is any subject or not in the *Akhanda jnāna* (Supreme undivided knowledge). Every thing is there and at the same time nothing is there, and again there arises no question about 'there is' and "there is not". All these things are difficult to comprehend. Because all this is beyond intellect. Although you are not able to have an idea about the matter of

*. Sri Jiten Mukherjee, Advocate—Gurupriya Didi's cousin brother.

Truth, but, of course you get some glimpse. Something happens through that also. Through repeated discussions about these matters *sanskāras* also get lessened bit by bit and also assist in revelation of Truth. That's why this body says, repeating *nāma*, *japa*, good discussions, reading of scriptures, all these are helpful in the spiritual path.

About Baba Bholanath's illness and passing away :

Ma started again "You frequently say that this body knows, but does not speak". Really, many times all things are not said. Because, I can also see what will be the result of saying all that; and as a result the *kheyāl* arises that the words should not be uttered now. On many occasions something is said in the midst of so many people, who will hear those words and understand the meaning that also is known to me. Among so many persons, perhaps only one or two may hear, others will not hear anything or even understand anything.

"At times this body may speak out something in short, but many won't be able to catch the meaning. As for during Bholanath's illness Shibshankar baba said - "Ma, atleast you knew that Baba Bholanath won't live, inspite of that why did you advise to put butter over his eyes repeatedly from three or four days before ? From that I surmised that perhaps Baba Bholanath would survive.

"Really speaking, I knew that Bholanath won't live and I also knew that at the last minute he would like to see me. As a result of small pox there were burning raw sores in his eyes and the upper portion of the sores were getting dried up. In this condition if the eyes were not softened through butter then he could never see. Blood would come out as soon as he would try to open his eyes and look at. On the day of his passing away, he was saying repeatedly, 'Where are you ? I would like to touch you.'" Going near I spread my hand. He touched the same, but as there was no strength in his hand he could not keep the same raised for long; again and again the hand used to drop down. At last I myself kept his hand erect through the help of both of my hands. Bholanath then started speaking - 'I cannot see you. I long to see'. I then asked him to look at and he could see me. I then passed my hand through his whole body and asked - 'How do you feel ?' Bholanath answered - 'Ananda'. Again I asked him - 'Do you remember your *sanyasa mantra* ?' He replied - 'Yes' and by repeating the same he made me listen to that. At this time arrangement was so made that no one could hear the same. Your Sushila *Mashima** was sitting there. She was asked to bring glucose water. At a distance she was sitting preparing the same. So, she could not hear the *sanyasa mantra*.

*. Sushila Devi — Matajis cousin sister.

Apart from that garlands etc. whatever was needed after Bholanath's passing away were all kept ready. At the last moment Bholanath said he was feeling chilly. Then he was covered with a *gerua* cloth which had already been kept ready. Thereafter, I asked everyone to start kirtan. Even then no one could understand that his last moment had arrived, because doing kirtan was a routine affair and Bholanath also loved to listen to the same.

"This body did make all arrangements for Bholanath. When the doctor used to be told about the arrangements already made he okayed the same as all right. When one is going to serve a patient it is not to be judged if the patient would survive or die. The main object of nursing is to give some solace to the patient. The arrangement to keep Bholanath's body soaked in oil was also arranged by me. *I am Bholanath*. So, I very well knew what was his pain and through what he would get some peace. So many go to nurse a patient, but as they do not have this knowledge, they cannot give much relief. When this body was in the form of a house-wife and was *mauna*, even then also this happened. There was a young man near our house. They belonged to a low caste and were very poor. Frequently I used to visit their house. He used to call me as '*bhāvi*' (sister-in-law). He used to suffer from fever frequently and suffered much through head-ache. Those of his relations who nursed him of course used to put wet cloth over his forehead. Still whenever this body used to go and put the soaked cloth over his forehead in such a manner that he used to get comfort and even with his closed eyes he would utter-'Perhaps *bhāvi* has come.'

"Whatever might have been the outside reactions of Bholanath he had the feeling of great inner respect for this body. He would never want me to be far away from his eyes. The reason was that he used to think that if I was alone I might even leave this body. But he will never allow that to happen. People used to consider him as very much attached to his wife; but they did not know the real reason. Bholanath had the inner desire that he would leave his body before me; and also used to remark - 'I shall do whatever I like, I shall eat whatever I want, but nothing will happen to me. If I die in front of you I shall attain a better state. He very well knew that all sorts of *yogic kriyās* had occurred in this body. All those occurred before him. Therefore, whatever he might say outwardly he had much respect for this body in the inmost depth of his heart.

"Bholanath was not ashamed to disclose that he had received initiation from this body. He used to say - 'What is there to be ashamed of in disclosing this ? On the other hand people should know that even wife can be the '*guru*' Later on he had the feeling that he had also given *diksha* to me. Formerly when I used to take the

name of 'Hari', he would tell me - 'We are *shāktas* (followers of *shakti*), so why do you take Hari's name ? When I asked, which 'name' should be taken. Should I repeat 'Jai Shiva Shankara' ? He said, 'Yes'. But he did not notice that the 'Name' to be taken came out from my mouth itself.

"Apart from that while giving advice to people this body used to frequently say - 'Father is *guru*, mother is *guru*', 'husband is *guru*' and so on. Listening to this he in fact developed the belief that he was my guru and he had also given *diksha* to me. Once thereafter, on the bank of the Narmada, Khukuni* raised the question who had given *dikshā* to whom. Bholanath repeated that he had given *dikshā* to me. I said to him - 'If you have given *dikshā* then please tell what is the *mantra* ?' Bholanath replied - '*Shivāya nāmah*'. Then I explained to him gradually what had actually happened. Then I asked him - 'Now say, who has given *dikshā* to me.' Then he was compelled to admit that so long he had a wrong notion. Some times a question comes out of this body in such a way that no one can give a false reply. Bholanath also could not. Apart from that he always had the fear that if any false reply was given then I might even leave my body."

While all this discussion was going on it was found that it was already 12.30 noon. So, Ma was taken for rest.

Ma came and sat in the hall at about 5 p.m. Nepal dada* started reading from the 'Ramayana' in Hindi. He alone had been daily reading from the sacred texts for one hour three times daily. In the morning from '*sāadhan samar*', in the afternoon from the 'Ramayana', and at night from the 'Mahabharata'. A lot of ladies from the village has come to meet Ma today, seeing them I got out of the hall. After half an hour when I went back I found that the ladies had left. We sat near Ma. After a while Ma again raised the topic about Baba Bholanath.

Ma started saying - "When Bholanath returned to Kishenpur from Hardwar, then itself I saw that he had come back in the full form of illness. His face, nose, eyes were very much inflamed. Bed was arranged for him in the north - western room in your Kishenpur ashram ground floor and it was also advised on which side he would put his head. Later on when I went I found that he himself had changed the same and was lying on another side.

"His disease was of a very serious nature - a very bad type of small pox, which is also known as '*Charma dal*' (Skin-pox), (Pointing out to Swami Akhanda—

*. Khukuni didi - short name of revered Gurupriya didi.

*. Nepal Chakravorty - subsequently Swami Narayanananda Tirtha of Varanasi ashram.

nandaji*) Ma said they at first considered the same as ordinary ailment. But at night time through the help of a torch light I pointed out to them a number of small boils in the body which were of a very bad type. Bholanath's body got so much inflamed that it took a very fearful form. People were so much afraid that rarely people would pass even through the main road in front of the ashram. Bholanath's body was soaked in olive oil even before Shiv Shankar baba (the Ayurvedic doctor) arrived. He also put ayurvedic oil on the oil cloth and Bholanath was kept lying on the same.

"Several days before Bholanath passed away, this body's mother (Didima), Khukuni & others were sent away to some other place. Because, when an ashram has been set up then the sanctity of the place would have to be maintained. If they were there, they would have spoilt the sanctity of the ashram by crying after Bholanath's death. Therefore, as they had left the place, everything was quiet there - no noise. There was also no feeling of impurity among those who were with the dead body. The same thing happened at the time of passing away of Jyotish* also. Apart from this there was no feeling of fear also among those who did the nursing of Bholanath. I had asked all of them to act with caution. When touching Bholanath's body they were asked to wrap their fingers with cloth. They all used to do accordingly, only Shivshankar baba would not follow that. There was no feeling of any apprehension or hate also among any one. They used to think as if they were nursing any patient suffering from ordinary fever.

"After Bholanath's death arrangements for his *jal-samādhi* were going on. No one was feeling sorrowful, this was as if getting ready to depart from one place to another. It was also surprising that almost all the things which would be required after death were being arranged automatically one by one, whereas no one had the doubt that he would leave his body. When I was asked even in the afternoon about Bholanath's condition I had told them that the condition was very bad. But many of them thought that being very much worried about my husband's condition and also due to affection I was exaggerating the thing. Not even the doctor had opined that the condition was very bad, perhaps he himself did not understand, because the doctor himself was getting ready for coming next day to see Bholanath. Everyone in the ashram was considering him comparatively better than other days. For so many days he could not speak, but that day he spoke, The day before Bholanath asked to take rice with *dal*. I enquired from Shivshankar baba if rice could be given

*. Swami Akhandananda - Gurupriya didi's father, who was formerly a renowned Civil Surgeon in Bengal.

*. Late Jyotish Chandra Roy - popularly known as 'Bhaiji'.

in that condition. He replied that if Bholanath could take then there was no objection. Really, a person, who was unable to even speak and swallow anything on account of sores in his throat as well as on the whole body, how could he take *rice* and *dal* ? However, this body made arrangement for that also in order to fulfil this desire of Bholanath. We used to keep awake the whole night. Even when it was dark, I asked to keep two fireplaces alit upon which in two pots rice and *dal* packed in pieces of cloth were put in water to be boiled. When these were quite well boiled then a sort of juice was prepared by mixing some portion of that rice and *dal*. Afterwards they were put in a glass like barley water for Bholanath to take. Every thing was prepared while this body was standing all the time. After that I went to have a wash by sending the same to Bholanath's room.

"When that juice was taken before Bholanath he declined to take that by any means. He said that unless I took the same first he would not put that in his mouth. His previous feelings came up at this moment. It was seen on prior occasions also that when Bholanath and I used to sit for the meals he would not take anything without first putting rice etc. in my mouth. Infact he used to take only after the food was first put into my mouth and thus because *prasād*. In between, this thing would stop for some time on account of adverse comments by others. People used to ask him what all this was being done by him, was I not his wife ? As a result he used to behave occasionally in a quite different manner with this body. But all such behaviour of Bholanath was only temporary and to some extent done even reluctantly. He used to act accordingly due to general shame. Therefore, that did not last for long. It is only for that reason stress is given upon regular practice even in the *shāstras*. If through regular practice it becomes a part of nature that is a different thing. Even otherwise sometimes as a result of regular practice pure instincts are aroused at the last moment after suppressing other instincts.

"Two or three days before leaving his body Bholanath was calling this body as 'Ma-Ma'. Being unable to see with his eyes he used to touch this body and feel that it was I, who was there or not. Later on he became restless to see this body. That arrangement was also made, which has already been told.

"As Bholanath refused to take the juice unless the same was taken by this body, I then asked them to put a portion of the juice into my mouth. They followed that. But even then he refused to take. Only, if this body would give the same to him, then he would take the juice. Then through the help of a spoon almost the entire quantity was swallowed by him slowly.

"Two or three days before Bholanath left his body it was found that the centre point of his skull had become low and soft like those of the babies. But this was not on account of his illness.

"After Bholanath's passing away almost everyone from the ashram went to Hardwar along with his body for giving *jal samādhi*. Next day persons came from the Govt. dept. for cleaning the rooms of the ashram with disinfectants. While washing they made all the room topsy-turvy. I sat on the verandah of the kitchen. Now, the doctor's wife, Bhanu Babu's wife and others came to meet me. They were found advancing very slowly deliberating among themselves how to start the conversation with me. Seeing this I laughed loudly, They were somewhat amazed to see me laughing in this manner and advanced towards me a bit fast. When I started talking about Bholanath's last stage in such a way that they also could not help laughing and while returning, all their hesitation was removed. They left for their homes in a smiling mood."

After talking so long about Baba Bholanath Ma talked also about the death of Nirmal babu*. In this connection a new thing was told by Ma. Ma said that She saw Nirmal babu a few days after his death. He came down from a certain *Jyotimay loka* (luminous abode in the heaven) and returned after meeting Ma. A couple of sages were also with him in their astral bodies. Perhaps Nirmal babu was residing there being merged with the head of that *loka*.

While discussing all these matters it became almost dark, Ma came out of the hall. We also went to the canal down below to have some wash and after returning sat for our evening prayers.

After evening Pandeyji came to meet Ma along with several distinguished persons. They returned after about 10 p.m.

(To continue)

*. Late Nirmal Chatterjee - husband of Gurupriya didi's elder sister.

RĀMĀYAṆA : THE SONG OF LIFE

—Dr. I. Panduranga Rao

The most valuable contribution of the renowned poet *Vālmiki* to the time honoured tradition of *Rāmāyaṇa* cult and culture is the name '*Rāmāyaṇa*' chosen by him for his immortal composition. We do not normally go into its etymology as the name is very simple, catching and homely even for the illiterate. But the main concern of the sage poet in writing this epic poem will reveal itself to us only when we try to understand the genius behind this coinage.

Literally, the word '*Rāmāyaṇa*' means the '*ayanam*' of *Rāma*. By '*ayanam*', the poet perhaps means abode, path, movement, goal or simply march. Thus *Rāmāyaṇa* as conceived by the poet is not a mere story, but much more than that. It is true that even as a story, the epic composition is superb, fascinating and captivating even for children. But it is the '*ayanam*' or the 'March' part of it that is more significant. The sage poet wants us to realise this real significance of his treatise by carefully observing how '*Rāma*', the Man of his vision, acts and reacts responding to the normal and natural course of events that encounter him in his life. **What** he does is not so much important as **how** he does it. How he takes things as they approach him and tries to face the problems as they face him is to be studied properly to understand the beauty of his magnificent March in search of truth, justice, love, compassion, dignity, decency, dedication and humanity that can excel even divinity.

A discerning reader of *Rāmāyaṇa* will appreciate that there is an inbuilt rhythm in the great grand March of *Rāma* which the poet chose to call *Rāmāyaṇa*. It is this rhythm that brings grace and grandeur to the movements of *Rāma* making the March sing for itself. This movement or march transforms the events both pleasant and unpleasant into sweet melodies that spring from the hearts of those who act and also those who observe. It is this point of view that makes us feel that *Rāmāyaṇa*, the first Indian epic presented by *Vālmiki* reads like a song, the language of the heart. That is why *Vālmiki* is often compared to a cuckoo chanting the name of *Rāma* in a voice that is sweet in sense and spirit.

There is one more point worth noting in the nomenclature of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. The two component words—*Rāma* and *ayana* are so combined in the name *Rāmāyaṇa* that the *ayana* can be applied to both *Rāma* and *Rāmā* (meaning *Sītā*). In fact *Vālmiki* uses the word *Rāmā* (रामा) to denote *Sītā* on several occasions. Thus the word *Rāmāyaṇa* can easily mean the march of both *Rāma* and his life companion *Sītā*. Practically what we see in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is a

coordinated march of *Rāma* and *Sītā*. They are two faces of the same coin. A strange, surprising and amusing identity between the two characters, both in physical form and in mental set up was noticed by *Hanumān* when he sees her for the first time in *Laṅkā*. He exclaims.

अस्या देव्या यथारूपं अङ्ग-प्रत्यङ्ग-सौष्ठवम् । रामस्य च यथारूपं तस्येयमसितेक्षणा ॥
अस्या देव्या मनस्तस्मिन् तस्य चास्यां प्रतिष्ठितम् । [वा. रा. ५.१५.५१-५२]

asyā devyā yathārūpaṁ aṅgapratyaṅga sauṣṭhavam /
rāmasya ca yathārūpaṁ tasye-yamasitekṣaṇā //
asyā devyā manaṣtasmin tasya cāsyāṁ pratiṣṭhitam / [vā. rā. 5.15.51-52]

[This noble lady closely resembles *Rāma* even in minute physical features. There is absolutely no difference between the two. Their minds also must be thinking on the same lines and in the same wave-length.]

Rāmāyaṇa is therefore, a co-ordinated march of *Rāma* and *Sītā*, whose sole mission in life was to promote this cosmic rhythm in all our activities. In spite of unsurmountable problems and untold suffering at every stage in their missionary march, they ultimately succeeded in establishing truth and justice as the permanent solutions for all problems in life. *Sumantra*, the royal charioteer, makes a significant observation while consoling *Daśaratha* and *Kauśalyā* not to feel depressed on account of the suffering to which *Rāma* and *Sītā* are subjected. He assures them that their suffering is going to create a story in the history of mankind which will be sung and celebrated for all time to come,

इदं हि चरितं लोके प्रतिष्ठास्यति शाश्वतम् । [वा. रा. २.६०.२१]
idaṁ hi caritaṁ loke pratiṣṭhāsyati śāśvatam / [vā. rā. 2.60.21]

As a song of life, *Rāmāyaṇa* reaffirms the universal truth that it is suffering that gives rise to any lyrical expression. *Vālmīki* himself experienced this when he saw the couple of birds shot at mercilessly by a cruel hunter. Suddenly he burst into emotional ecstasy which took the form of a metrical expression which happened to be the inaugural verse composed by the poet without himself being conscious of it. This oft-quoted verse has become immortal as it transformed pathos into poetry.

As if to highlight the dynamic nature of the March of *Rāma*, *Vālmīki* introduces *Viśvāmitra* in the same canto (*Balakāṇḍa*-18) in which he describes the advent of *Rāma*. *Viśvāmitra* approaches King *Daśaratha* with a request to spare the services of his son *Rāma* for protecting his *yajña* from the terrorism of two demons, *Mārīca* and *Subāhu*. *Daśaratha* hesitates to comply with this request as he feels that his son, hardly 16 years, can not be deputed for such a challenging task. But *Viśvāmitra* tells him that his son *Rāma* is not an ordinary prince but a great soul

(*mahātmā*) born with immense potentialities deriving his full strength from Truth Eternal (*satya-parākrama*). But the affectionate father almost refuses to do this and instead offers himself for this perilous task. Then his family priest *Vaśiṣṭha* intervenes at the instance of *Viśvāmitra* and tells *Daśaratha* that the sage *Viśvāmitra* has not come merely to seek his help; but his real intention is to project the potential divinity of *Rāma* and present him as a universal figure. Convinced that the challenging task that has come on its own is not only in the personal interests of *Rāma* but more significantly in the larger interests of the destruction of evil forces and resurrection of human values, the king ultimately sends *Rāma* with his brother *Lakṣmaṇa* for this first assignment sponsored by the greatest sage of his time, *Viśvāmitra*. This marks the beginning of the March of *Rāma*. It was a feast for the eyes of both gods in the heaven and saintly personalities on earth to see the two princes *Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa* following the foot-prints of *Viśvāmitra*, the seer of *Gāyatrī*.

Though *Viśvāmitra* wanted *Rāma* for ten nights, the itinerary extends up to 24 days till *Rāma* and his three brothers get married in *Mithilā*. In the early hours of the 25th day *Viśvāmitra* leaves for his native hill-station in the North (*jagāmottara-parvatam*) having accomplished his mission of inaugurating the March of *Rāma* for the betterment of humanity. Though the original task contemplated was just to protect the *yajña* from the two demons, several other adventures also await the arrival of *Rāma*. *Viśvāmitra* equips *Rāma* with all the weapons of offence and defence on the way to enable him to meet the challenges. It was in a way a refresher course for the young prince potentially divine and temperamentally inclined to do anything to promote universal good under the guidance of the great sage *Viśvāmitra*.

The spiritual diplomacy with which *Viśvāmitra* conducts the tour is marvellous. Though he does not spell out the various items and events he had in mind, he executes the plan in a systematic way. We come to know that the *Ahalyā* episode had already been planned by him only when *Śatānanda* enquires about it on seeing *Viśvāmitra* in *Mithilā*. The *Tātakā* episode was also a pre-planned one because when *Rāma* hesitates to kill her, *Viśvāmitra* insists on the execution of his orders. *Rāma's* hesitation was that as his first adventure under the stewardship of *Viśvāmitra*, he was to kill a woman however devilish and dreadful she might be. But very soon he realises that it is his duty to obey the orders of his father and the preceptor. He expresses this in clear terms before he takes up his arms.

He says:

पितुर्वचन-निर्देशात् पितुर्वचन-गौरवात् ।

वचनं कौशिकस्येति कर्तव्यमविशङ्कया ॥

[वा.रा. १.२६.२]

*piturvacana-nirdeśāt piturvacana-gauravāt /
vacanaṁ kauśikasyeti kartavyamaviśaṅkayā //* [vā. rā. 1.26.2]

The subtle point underlined in this event is that *Tātakā* being the mother of *Mārīca* should be dispensed with before handling *Mārīca*. This paves the way for the main task of protecting the *yajña*. *Mārīca* figures again at the time of abduction of *Sītā*. *Rāma* saves him on his first appearance despatching him to a distant land and teaching him a lesson which he remembers throughout his life. His first encounter with *Rāma* brings about a total change in his outlook. He tells *Rāvaṇa* that *Rāma* is an embodiment of *Dharma* (रामो विग्रहवान् धर्मः- *rāmo vighrahavān dharmah*) and any attempt to confront him is inviting total destruction. Thus this incident, the first adventure in the March of *Rāma*, forms the basis for the ultimate goal of *Rāma*.

Even the trip to *Mithilā* was unspelt, though not totally unscheduled. After the protection of *yajña* was over, the sages of *Siddhāśrama* suggest that the two princes should be taken to *Mithilā* so that they can see another *yajña*, *dhanur-yajña*, which King *Janaka* was performing there. *Viśvāmitra* immediately accepts the suggestion and the party proceeds to *Mithilā*.

After *Viśvāmitra* leaves for his abode, *Rāma* faces a fierce encounter with *Paraśurāma*. He manages this independently without getting upset and also without causing any embarrassment to his formidable opponent. On the other hand the incident results in spectacular success for himself and immense relief and redemption to the opponent.

Thus the inaugural March of *Rāma* from *Ayodhyā* to *Mithilā* and back strike a pleasant and promising note for the smooth running of the future events. *Sītā*, the embodiment of grace (*śrīśvarūpiṇī*) also joins him in his march in search of service before self. As the most fitting life companion of *Rāma*, she adds fragrance to his sweetness, beauty to his truth and patience to his penance. *Vālmiki* says while referring to their mutual understanding that they speak in the language of their hearts so that their hearts can speak for themselves making their union a song of life.

The real music of life starts in *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* when the proposed coronation of *Rāma* takes the form of his exile for fourteen years on a trivial ground. As the crisis originates from lust for power on the part of *Kaikeyī*, the most beloved of all the queens of *Daśaratha*, and *Daśaratha* was helpless and miserably caught in the meshes of the two boons granted by him to *Kaikeyī* way back, it poses a threat to the prestige of the royal family and also to the basic human values and the norms of the state administration. The crisis starts at midnight when *Kaikeyī* takes a firm stand and some amicable solution had to be found before the sunrise as the whole of *Ayodhyā* was eagerly waiting for the most exciting event of the coronation.

The moment *Rāma* comes to know of this terrible crisis, he resolves it in a minute offering himself to fulfil the desires of his stepmother *Kaikeyī*. The conflict between truth and justice discussed throughout the night by *Daśaratha* and *Kaikeyī*.

ends with one sentence spoken by *Rāma*. Without any hesitation, he said, "Here I go, let the proposal stand as desired' (*evamastu, gamiṣyāmi*). The contrast between the shameless selfishness of *Kaikeyī* and the spirit of selfless sacrifice on the part of *Rāma* is so striking and surprising to the whole of *Ayodhyā* that the news spreads to the remote corners of the city in seconds after *Rāma* decides to leave *Ayodhyā* the same day before sunset. The people who spent the whole night eagerly waiting for the sunrise and the enthronement of *Rāma* that was to follow receive the news of exile with a shock, a rude shock as no one could expect such a turn of events overnight from the royal family headed by *Daśaratha* who cared more for his word than for his life. But the irony is that nobody was to be blamed because everyone including *Kaikeyī* was justified and their entire brunt of the cruel destiny had to be taken upon him by *Rāma* with a genuine smile converting the crisis into a challenge. This is what makes *Rāmāyaṇa*, the March of *Rāma*, a song of life. Taking things in their normal course with a spirit of confidence in himself and those who have a heart to feel and brain to think in the right direction is what projects *Rāma* as the most cherished member of the world of humanity (*lokābhirāma*).

When *Kaikeyī* feels nervous that the departure of *Rāma* may be slightly delayed awaiting the arrival of *Bharata*, *Rāma* catches the hint and clarifies her doubt and his stand saying:

नाहमर्थपरो देवि लोकमावस्तुमुत्सहे । विद्धि मामृषिभिस्तुल्यं विमलं धर्ममाश्रितम् ॥

[वा.रा. २.१९.२०]

nā-ham-arthaparo devi lokamā-vastum-utsahe /

viddhi mām-ṛṣhistulyaṁ vimalaṁ dharmam-āśritam //

[vā. rā. 2.19.20]

[Dear mother, I am not after the material possessions and positions. I am eager to join the world community and culture sanctified by the great sages. I prefer staying in the forests along with them to relaxing in the royal palace. I bank upon the blissful and the benevolent 'dharma' (righteous conduct) which supports and sustains this universe].

This declaration of *Rāma* marks the beginning of the second phase of his March.

[To continue]

GLIMPSES FROM MATAJI'S LIFE

A personality, unique, immeasurable and unfathomable; yet cherished by millions today as the living personification of man's ideal of eternal values, and so, one most familiar, intimate and dear to the heart. The gracious calm which was undefinable in its perfection made Mataji unapproachable; yet through Her compassionate understanding which knew no horizons, She could reach the heart most estranged. There was no hiatus between Her transcendence and immanence. Because, "There is an unborn, unbecome, uncreated, unformed; were there not this unborn, unbecome, uncreated, unformed, no escape could be found for the born, become, created, formed."

According to Mataji's own words about Herself, She had not passed through any stages of infancy and childhood to maturity; neither from that of a spiritual aspirant to a state of Realisation. She remained inherently changeless through all the physical and emotional changes that seemed to affect Her body and mind. There had been no progressive knowledge for Her, because there was nothing hidden from Her. Mataji had not passed through any previous births and therefore Her body was not the manifestation of accumulated *samskāras*.

In her life She had no mission to fulfil because no desire or personal will influenced Her actions. Her apparent activities occurred spontaneously according to the need of the time, place and people.

Mataji had never performed any *sadhana* in the accepted sense of the term. In fact Her simple village life was not conducive to such ways of esoteric religion. A very short period of Her life however was given to what might appear to be a highly concentrated form of *sadhana*, just as other periods of it were given to infancy, childhood and maturity.

Although at one phase of Her life the ways of a *sadhaka* became unequivocally manifest in Her actions, this was not a radical change from Her previous way of living. Mataji always appeared strangely affected by devotional music and the reciting of scriptures. Even during Her infancy She would get into transcendental states which people variously interpreted as sleep, unconsciousness or fits.

There were other unique features of Her infant life. Her infallible memory amazed Her parents. She once reminded them of an incident that had occurred when She was thirteen days old. Instances of a wisdom beyond Her years were plentiful. She would have been an awe-inspiring prodigy, had not Her gracious winsomeness made Her a very lovable little child.

Didima (Mataji's mother) said that Mataji was never unhappy and did not cry except once during Her childhood, when She saw Didima grieving the death of Her three little brothers. Mataji broke out into such heart-rending sobs that Didima instantly forgot her own tears in the attempt to console her little daughter. The much enduring mother never found any further occasions for indulging in her sorrow. All heartaches were healed, then as always by Mataji's radiant presence.

Her father, Sri Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya, was well known for his upright nature, otherworldliness and love for devotional music. He had a fine voice and taught his daughter to sing Kirtan. His wife Mokshada Sundari Devi was equally worthy of the privilege conferred upon her by providence. The blessed couple, pious and simple, were however extremely poor. It is said that although Lakshmi withheld her material gifts, the very spirit of the goddess of wealth seemed to reign supreme over the content little household. 'Didima' was never at a loss to produce for the most unexpected guests some sort of refreshments from her meagre yet seemingly inexhaustible supply. The dire indigence neither embittered her outlook nor made her slovenly. She was the most careful of housewives and looked after her family so competently that its members hardly ever felt the trials of poverty.

Didima was the kind and gentle soul she had always been, unaffected by all the radical changes which had transformed her outward life. Her self-sufficiency was saintly : she chose self-effacing retirement when she could command the attention of many; and yet no one was ever deprived of a kind word or a blessing from this sincerest of all well wishers.

Mataji was the second child of Her parents, named by them Nirmala Sundari. She was fair and beautiful and Her bright and sunny disposition endeared Her to all. The extreme guilelessness of Her nature puzzled many who even thought Her lacking a little in intelligence. She was very obedient and dutiful. In fact Mataji's habit of carrying out orders to the letter sometimes led to amusing consequences and sometimes quite otherwise. When still a child She was taken to a fair by a relative, who put Mataji down before a Shiva temple and told Her to sit there quietly, while she herself went away with her other companions. Incidentally she forgot all about the lonely child. Remembering Her at last after a long time, she hurried back and was amazed to find little Nirmala sitting in exactly the same position she had left her. She had not moved at all.

Once Didima, giving Her lessons in reading, had pointed out that She was to pause only when She reached a full stop. If Mataji came across a long sentence She would twist and contort Her body in Her effort to arrive at the full stop in one breath. If She was forced to take a fresh breath in the middle of a sentence, She

would start all over again. Such extreme obedience naturally annoyed Her mother, but the child's palpable innocence and obvious good intention disarmed all rebukes.

Mataji's education was quite elementary. She was a pupil of the local school for a short while. But since She helped at home with the housework and also looked after Her brothers, She could not attend school regularly. In spite of this She was one of the star pupils and got promoted to the primary school in an inexplicably short time. Referring to Her school life Mataji once said laughingly, "Somehow or other I invariably happened to look up the very lesson the teacher would ask and consequently he always found me well prepared. Actually my education was extremely sketchy."

Even at this early stage Mataji sometimes fell into supra-mundane states, which however nobody saw, or seeing, failed to understand. People generally agreed that She was a most unusual child.

In 1909, at the age of twelve years and ten months Mataji was given in marriage to Sri Ramani Mohan Chakravarty, who later became known as 'Pitaji' or 'Bholanath'.

Thus ended the first period of Mataji's *Lila* in the role of a carefree girl in the house of Her parents. From the moment She entered Her husband's house She behaved as a shy and retiring bride. Her husband's people felt charmed by Her grace and beauty, and soon were amazed to discover that the young and inexperienced girl could easily outdo the expert in housewifely work.

Immediately after Her marriage She was taken to live with the family of Bholanath's elder brother. He was a station-master in the service of the Railway Department. Mataji remained with them for nearly four years. She did the entire work of the household and personally looked after the children of Bholanath's brother. She easily managed to give full satisfaction to Her somewhat exacting sister-in-law. Mataji, then as always, so completely followed the written and unwritten rules of behaviour that no one could possibly find fault with Her. It was not that She consciously tried to remain on Her best behaviour, but it was in the very nature of things that Her conduct would never fall short of the ideal. There could be no half-measures for Mataji, from things trifling to matters great.

She never complained against the occasional unjust behaviour of others, nor did She try to defend Herself if taken to task for another's negligence. She Herself never found fault with others. Once Her silver anklets were taken away by an acquaintance. Mataji smilingly refused to disclose the culprit's name.

The heavy work could not change Mataji's happy disposition. She had a tendency to excel in whatever She attempted. She was good at canework, also at weaving and spinning fine thread and at various other crafts.

In fact Her housekeeping was an art in itself and other housewives came to see and admire Her kitchen and store-rooms.

Although Mataji was as gentle and obliging as the most exacting heart could wish, the extraordinary nature of Her character never seriously in dispute. She sometimes entered into *samadhi* in the midst of housework. At that time however, these lapses into the supra-mundane did not change Her general behaviour very greatly, and the simple people unaware of its true significance, were glad to gloss over this aspect of Her life.

When in 1914 Bholanath found employment in Ashtagram, Mataji came to stay with him. From the very beginning he was impressed by the unusual character of his bride. There was never a question of his exerting the rights of a husband over Her. Mataji has said that their relationship was that of a father and his daughter. Although he was convinced that it would never be possible for him to lead a conventional family life, he was quite happy and satisfied with this state of affairs.

Mataji looked after him and kept house for him as faultlessly as She had done for his brother before coming to Ashtagram.

In Ashtagram She became acquainted with other young girls. Her pleasant disposition and charming manners soon made her a general favourite.

Mataji's behaviour spontaneously adjusted itself to Her surroundings. Being completely in tune with Existence no force of circumstances could find Her unprepared.

Conscious endeavour plays no part in this scheme of things and therefore Mataji's conduct was always infallible.

It was in Ashtagram that She was first called "Ma" by Harakumar, the brother of her most intimate friend.

A few close companions had begun to notice Her peculiar reactions to Kirtan and to the chanting of Scri ptures. But these occasions were rare and Mataji was still the shy and retiring young wife. Harakumar defying the customs and traditions of village life visited Her every day to do *pranam* and ask for *prasad*. Mataji however would not comply with his request. Hidden behind Her veils, She would stand at a distance, quiet and unresponsive. In despair Harakumar appealed to Bholanath, saying that his entreaties which left Mataji unmoved would have melted the heart even of a statue. Bholanath, impressed by his sincerity and devotion, aksed Mataji to give Harakumar Her *prasad*. Mataji always tried to obey Bholanath as implicitly

as She had obeyed Her parents, and Harakumar had his wish fulfilled. He used to say, "Now it is only I who call you Ma. Some day the world will recognize you and call you so".

When after staying in Ashtagran for about a year and four months Mataji fell ill, She came to Vidyakut to live with Her parents. She was not very seriously ill and recovered soon, but stayed on with Her parents for nearly three years.

In Her own village She could dispense with Her heavy veils and move about freely among neighbours and friends. Hindu as well as Muslim villagers loved to have Her visit their homes and talk to them.

Referring to this period of Her life, Mataji said, "My mother did not need my help and so I just spent my time with my friends. In the evenings I used to stroll about by myself. Sometimes in the dark I saw a strange effulgence enveloping my body and this light seemed to move about with me."

(To continue)

*"Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is despair, hope;
And where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life!"*

—St. Francis of Assisi

LORD KRISHNA : AN EPITOME OF VEDĀNTA*

—Prof. Bireswar Ganguly

The advent of Lord Krishna, a plenary incarnation (*avatāra*) of God at the fag end of *Dvāpar Yuga*, just before the present *Kali Yuga*, is the greatest event in the spiritual history of India, for he not only manifested the best qualities of the ideal man, the ideal king and the ideal practical philosopher, but also the best propounder of practical Vedānta in *Shrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*, which was preached to prince Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The great Indian epics, viz., *Mahābhārata* and *Shrīmad Bhāgavatam*, written by Veda Vyāsa are the two authentic sources for the study of Lord Krishna's life, personality and teaching. Lord Krishna may be considered as the universal world teacher and an epitome of Indian culture, but I shall confine my treatment to the best and common tenets of Hinduism only, for the catholicity of Hindu culture of *Sanātana Dharma* of India encompasses all other cultures without any contradiction.

There is a long history of controversy, regarding the historical dates of the battle of Kurukshetra and the compilation of *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavat Purāna*. Many Indian scholars have put the dates much earlier than some reputed Western scholars. Following the chronology as accepted by Lokamanya Tilak, we can safely accept 4500 B.C., as the approximate period of *Rig Veda*, the most ancient scripture of the Hindus, and the compilation of *Mahābhārata* about 900 B.C., though, according to the famous astrologer, Makarandakar, the date of the beginning of the Kurukshetra battle was 6 December, 3101 B.C., (vide : *Epigraphia India*, VI, pp. 11-12.) This has been held by the latest historical research also. The *Purānic* age is supposed to commence from 200 A.D. Of course, the devout Hindus believe that both *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavat Purāna* were written by Maharshi Krsihna Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, a contemporary of Lord Krishna at the end of *Dvāpar Yuga*, about five thousand years ago. In the words of Chakravarty Sri Rājāgopālāchāri, "But, generations of gifted reciters have added to Vyāsa's original a great mass of accretion. All the floating literature that was thought to be

*. Courtesy : "Practical Vedanta from Sri Krishna to Ma Anandamaycc"—Published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavān", Mumbai.

worth preserving, historical, geographical, legendary, political, theological and philosophical, of nearly thirty centuries, found a place in it."¹

Though Krishna consciousness or the Christian concept of Christ consciousness is a symbol and *summum bonum* (i.e., ultimate goal), yet Lord Krishna was also a historical personality. Sri Aurobindo, the greatest Indian philosopher yogi of the 20th century observes : "The historical Krishna, no doubt, existed. We meet the name first in the *Chhândogya Upanishad*, where all we can gather about him is that he was well-known in spiritual tradition as a knower of Brahman, so well indeed is his personality and the circumstances of his life that it was sufficient to refer to him by the name of his mother as Krishna, son of Devaki, for all to understand who was meant. In the same Upanishad we find mention of Dhritarashtra, son of Vichitravirya, and since tradition associated the two together so closely that they are both of them leading personages in the action of *Mahābhārata*, we may fairly conclude that they were actually contemporaries and that the epic is to a great extent dealing with historical characters and in the war of Kurukshetra with a historical occurrence imprinted firmly on the memory of the race."²

Historicity apart, there is near unanimity in the belief of all Hindus that Lord Krishna was the ideal personality of ancient India, who represents the epitome of Hindu culture.

The essence of ancient Indian culture, later on known as Hindu culture, is found in the *Rāmāyana*, *Mahābhārata*, *Manusmriti* and *Shrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*. Life was viewed by the ancient Indian *Rishis* (wise seers) in its integral nature, evolving from the lowest animal man, governed by the vital impulses to the highest divine man, aspiring for communion with *Brahman* or God. For this type of evolution of the human soul, which is an eternal part of God, four goals of human life were enunciated, known as the *Chatur Varga* or *Chatur Purushārtha*, viz., *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Moksha*, i.e. moral duty, earning of wealth for the necessities of life, normal sex life for procreation as well as recreation, and aspiration for liberation or realisation of God. Every good citizen was expected to earn money for livelihood and lead a normal family life in the path of righteousness, moral duty to society and ultimately make efforts for the realisation of God through liberation from the bondage of desires, that is, achieving supreme wisdom and

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1. Vide : Preface of *Mahābhārata*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, as quoted in *Mahabharata — Its influence on Indian Life and Culture*, Souveenir, 1988 of Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Patna, p. 1.
 2. Śri Aurobindo : *Essays on the Gītā* . Śri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 8th ed, 8th imp. 1987. pp. 12-13.

equilibrium of mind, while performing social duties in a desireless or non-attached manner. It was the duty of the government of the State to look after, lay down and ensure the infrastructure for the achievement of the first three goals. The fourth goal of *Moksha* was meant for the most evolved individuals, who are not satisfied in the mundane affairs of life alone and who aspire for the unfolding of the divine nature of man.

To make the realisation of all the above four goals of life easy and natural, the life span of man was divided into four stages or *āshramas* (*chaturāshrama*), viz. *brahmacharya*, *gārhasthya*, *vānaprastha* and *samnyāsa*, which mean respectively celibacy in the formative period of student-life, family life from the age of 25 to 50, retired life of social service and spiritual practices (*sāadhanā*) from the age of 51 to 75 and finally *samnyāsa* or renunciation of all duties for the performance of spiritual practices alone to achieve liberation from bondage or the realisation of God, after the age of 75. A talented and bold soul, getting an inner call for liberation or for preaching could, however, adopt *samnyāsa* at an earlier stage, as was the case with Lord Buddha, Ādi Shankarāchārya or Lord Chaitanya.

The third most important constituent of the Hindu social system, devised by *Rishis* was the *Chatur-Varna* system, i.e. the classification of human beings into four *varnas* (functional castes) according to *guna* (aptitude) and *karma* (profession). These four *varnas* or classes were called *Brāhmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*. The *Brāhmanas* constituted the class of intellectuals, who learnt the four main types of subjects, viz. *Ānvikshiki* (logic), *Traiyee* (the three *Vedas* — *Rik*, *Sāma* and *Yajur*), *Vārta* (political economy) and *Danda Neeti* (the science and art of administration) and performed social duties like studying, teaching, performing Vedic sacrifices and priesthood. The *Kshatriyas* constituted the class of soldiers and administrators and formed the ruling class of warriors. The *Vaishyas* constituted the class of agriculturists, cattle grazers, cowherds and traders. Those who had neither the intellectual achievement of *Brāhmanas*, nor the ability to fight and rule, nor the capital and aptitude of the trader, constituted the class of manual labourers, known as *shudras*, who were hired by other classes on payment of wages either in cash or in kind.

Lord Krishna not only supported this four-fold functional caste system based on aptitude and profession but also declared that it was divinely ordained (Vide : *Gītā*, IV-13). However these natural classes of men gradually ossified into hereditary castes in a static rural community. Of course, according to Lord Krishna, the four goals of life, including that of *Moksha*, were meant for men and women of all castes, for the highest goal of liberation was assured for all castes, for the

highest goal of liberation was assured for all through the moral and efficient performance of one's social duties provided that there was faith in and devotion to God, to whom all social duties are to be sacrificed (vide : *Gītā* : XVIII-45 & 46).

The above brief description of four goals of life, four stages of life and four stations of life gives us an integral view of an ideal society with division of labour and separation of social powers, so that there may be harmony, equilibrium and development in society without any monopoly of social powers by any one class and at the same time the individual human soul would evolve from the lowest to the highest status in a natural sequence of transmigration of souls.

Methods of Hindu *sāadhanā*

The most essential part of Indian culture is the spiritual life for liberation or self-realisation, which is tantamount to God-realisation, according to the monistic philosophy of Vedānta. The *Gītā* classifies human beings into two main categories, viz. souls with *Daivī Sampad* or divine propensities and souls with *Āsuric Sampad* or demoniac propensities. The former engage themselves in activities aimed at personal happiness along with social welfare. The latter pursue personal happiness at the expense of others and get sadistic pleasure by torturing others. It should be the endeavour of all, according to Lord Krishna, to imbibe divine propensities. As all individuals perform activities in life under the influence of *sāttvic*, *rājasic* and *tāmasic gunas* in different proportions, individuals with divine propensities, should attempt at subordinating *rājasic* and *tāmasic gunas* to *sāttvic gunas*, for *sattva guna* leads to light and knowledge, *raja guna* leads to egoism and action, *tama guna* leads to inertia and ignorance. According to Lord Krishna, divine aspirants, based mainly on *sattva guna* may either opt for the *Sāmkhya* method of *sāadhanā* (spiritual practice) or the *yoga* methods of *sāadhanā*. *Māyāvādi Advaita Vedānta*, Buddhism, Jainism and *Kapila Sāmkhya* fall within the former category, and methods of *sāadhanā* according to Vaishnavism, Saivism, Tantricism, Patanjali Yoga, as well as the integral *yoga* of *Gītā* fall within the latter category. However, the final result of both the broad categories of *sāadhanā* is the same, namely the attainment of *Sthitaprajna-hood* (wisdom with equilibrium of mind) in this life and *Brahmanirvāna* (merging with Brahman or God) after casting off the material body. (Vide : *Gītā*, V : 5, II : 55 & 72).

Even the Christian, Islamic and Sikh methods of *sāadhanā* may be considered to fall within the category of *yoga sāadhanā*, for they also emphasise faith in and devotion to God for the realisation of God, though there are marginal differences in their conceptions of liberation of God. The *Gītā* of Lord Krishna makes a

wonderful synthesis of all the methods of Hindu *sādhana*, but declares that the method of integral *yoga* is easier to perform for householders.

God or *Purushottama* (of *Gītā*) is also known as *Satchidānanda*, having the three divine attributes of *Sat* (absolute and eternal existence), *Chit* (absolute power with absolute knowledge) and *Ānanda* (absolute bliss). The monistic Vedāntists lay stress on the *sat* aspect of God or Brahman, the *Tantrics* and *Saivaites* lay stress on the *Chit* aspect and *Vaishnavas* lay stress on the *ānanda* aspect. The *Gītā* has an integral and synthetic approach and lays stress on all the above three aspects. It makes a unique synthesis of the *yoga* of knowledge (*jnāna-yoga*) of the monistic Vedāntists, the *yoga* of action and *upāsana* (spiritual practice), known as *Karma Yoga* of the *Tantrics* and *Saivaites* and the *yoga* of devotion (*Bhakti Yoga*) of the *Vaishnavas*. All paths, however, lead to the attainment of *Sthitaprajna-hood* in this life and *Brahmanirvāna* (merging with God) after giving up the mortal frame. A *Sthitaprajna* is a realised soul, whose mind is always in equilibrium and tranquility and who spends the remaining portion of his life for the welfare of mankind as well as all other creatures. Lord Krishna, though a plenary *avatāra* (incarnation) of God (*Bhagavān svayam* of *Bhāgavata*) in the human form, was basically a *sthitaprajna* from his very birth and is the model for all yogis and hence of all mankind of the *daivee sampad* (divine propensity) category, mentioned earlier. He practised in life, what he preached to Arjuna in *Gītā*.

[To continue]

MA EXISTS IN ALL FORMS

—Br. Jaya Bhattacharya

(Translated from Bengali by Dr. Krishna Banerjee)

Our Ma is Anandamayee—Joy-permeated. It is always a joyous occasion to think of Ma, talk of Ma, write about Ma, Joy is the note that emanates from the deepest string of every creature's heart. The central chord of every creature's heart is attuned to the note of Joy. The inmost chamber of every soul houses the Eternal Joy in full splendour. That is its true nature, its true identity—Existence, consciousness, Bliss. The moment one takes refuge at the lotus-feet of Ma, the embodiment of *Sat-Chit-Ānanda*, one immediately feels the surging up of one's innermost resplendent pure self. While meditating on the Blissful Self of Ma, one feels currents of joy flowing through one's heart. It is that Bliss of which the Veda chants, 'Verily, all these creatures originate from *ānandam*, they live by *ānandam*, and they (finally) return to and merge in *ānandam*' (Taittiriya Upaniṣad, 3.6).

Ma is that Bliss incarnate. Ma herself has said, 'A creature looks for joy by nature. Verily, he has that joy within himself, that is why he is able to cry for it. Otherwise he would not have sought for it. But he cannot help being in pursuit of joy. If you observe well, you will see this yearning for joy and peace in all creatures. Even small insects avoid moving towards scorching heat, even they try to get peace, security and comfort. Exposed to the summer sun, even animals look for shade and cool water. Likewise, man, harassed by the three scorching fires of worldly suffering searches for God, the fountainhead of peace, the store house of joy'.

Magnetized by this longing for joy, we ran to Ma, but in fact we have no power to fully comprehend or express in words what Ma really is. Ma Herself says, 'I am whatever you think I am'. In these very words is hidden the spark of truth that may throw light on our query. Lord Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gitā*, 'Whosoever comes to Me with whatsoever attitude, I gratify him accordingly'. Bhaiji (Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy), one of the most elevated early devotees of Ma, once wanted to know who She was is reality. In reply, Ma said, 'I am what I was before, what I am now and what I shall always be. Whatever you say or think I am, for that moment I am that. But it is true that this body was not born in order to undergo the consequences of *prārabdha* (past *karma* that has begun producing its result). You

may simply believe that this body is a doll of *bhāva* (vibrations of thought, feeling, desire, and other higher modes of mental and supramental functions that materialize themselves in the world). You prayed for it, so you have got it. Now just go on playing with it for the time being. What are you going to gain by racking your brain about it ?'

So Ma is *bhāva*-incarnate. We had her in our midst the way we wanted to have her and kept playing various plays with Her. So many times we witnessed how Ma's utterances materialized themselves from the world of thought and her utterances descended to the material world. Whatever She would say would take place the very next moment. The vibration of *bhāva* emanating from *Mahāshakti*, the primordial cause of creation—sustenance—destruction—that itself manifested in what we know as the *kheyāla* of Ma. *Bhavabhuti*, the great Sanskrit poet, says that each and every word uttered by the saints is immediately followed by its meaning '*Vāchan-artho'nudhātati*'. We may say something, we try to keep in mind what our words mean. In other words, in ordinary cases, words follow their meanings. But in the case of the saints meanings follow words. Their utterances never go in vain; they carry their own truth. The subject matter of their speech comes down from the sphere of ideas to the sphere of facts. If a saint points at water and says, 'It is milk', the water gives up its wateriness and assumes the form of milk.

For the little bit of time that we enjoyed Ma's company, we simply went on playing with Her. It was Ma herself who encouraged us, inspired us, and we fearlessly joined in Her *lilā* with joy. Sometimes we retraced our steps and held ourselves back in awe when we were face to face with Her sombre, magnificent form. At other times, we treated Her as a very close, dear friend. We even argued with Her. And we also joked and laughed together. Often Ma would narrate some funny incident and would even mimic it; that would make us treat Her as a person of our own level. We would forget how great She was. Had we remembered Her unique supremacy, the *lilā* of her affectionate friendliness would have been shattered.

Gurupriya Didi, the great devotee of Ma, said to us, 'Remember, you are playing with fire.'

[To be continued]

MA—THE MUSIC IN ALL SOUNDS

—Mohua

It is your gift to all souls,
As you are the music in all sounds.
It is a rhythm in silence,
As you engulf all in a beauty of momentous solitude.
It is a discordant ripple of the near and distant murmurs,
As you ring in our ears
To wake us from the indifference.
It is a melodious rhythm,
As you flow about in the sweet vocals, the divine verses.
It is a deep symphony of notes
Played in the strums and beats,
As you mellifluously enrich our souls.
It is a soft tune,
As your fingers play on the bamboo reed;
You are our Krishna in the jungles of Vrindavan.
It is a symphony of music,
With each season singing its *rāga*
And myriad creatures breaking in to this rhythm.
The wind whistles merrily,
As the greenery sways and rustles in unison.
The blue shelter stages the sun
To sing its warmth, and the clouds
To perform in a burst of shower,
As you strike and rumble so deep and grave,
You are the soul of this merry orchestra.
It is a sound so far and distant,
As you play in some other world.
It's your gift to all souls,
As you are the music in all sounds.

GĀYATRI MAHĀMANTRA

—Lt Gen J.C. Chatterji (Retd)

Om bhurbhuvah svah tat saviturvarenyam
Bhargodevasya dhimahi
Dhiyo yo nah prachodayāt*

During my *upanayana*, the sacred thread wearing ceremony, our *Kulaguru* taught me *Gāyatri Mantra* and told me it is a prayer to the Sun or words to that effect. Since then a doubt bothered me about this. *Savitā* means Sun. I did not know nor was told at that time and for a long time thereafter that the word has other connotations also. How can *Bhargodeva* (Sun) be adorable to Sun ? There were columns in *The Times of India*-'Gayatri Mother of all Mantras' and in *The Hindu*, 'Mother of all Vedas', which also did not clear my doubts. My son and grandson recited *Gāyatri Mantra* after *upanayana*. It is necessary to explain to them the true meaning of the *Mantra*.

Then I remembered I read in *Gurupriya Didi's* book that *Shree Ma* once told her the meaning of the *Mantra*—"He who creates, preserves and destroys, He, the *Vishwarupa*, who has endowed our intellect, He, the *Para Brahma*, who is aware of our intellect, whose adorable *Jyoti* I meditate upon".

My doubts disappeared. But ignorant as I am, I was still unable to comprehend fully *Ma's* words.

So I am writing down my own comprehension. I read somewhere *Savitā* means *Bhartā*, meaning maintainer—later somewhere else as meaning *Prasavitā* (who gives birth to).

Om - Para Brahma: bhurbhuva svah— He who is the creator, maintainer and destroyer of the Earth, the Cosmos and the Heaven, and on whose adorable** *Jyoti* (*Bhargodeva*) I meditate upon—let the *Jyoti* illuminate my intellect (so that my ignorance may disappear and I can realize God).

* Also written as *Ohm* in English

** Adore, worship as divine - *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary*.

I requested the knowledgeable to express their views on my comprehension. I also consulted Brahmacharini Chandan of Shree Ma's ashram, who performed *Gāyatri Purascharan* under direct guidance of Shree Ma. She, therefore, would have been well aware of the meaning of the *Mantra* and she did agree with my comprehension. The whole idea was to get the approval of my understanding so that I, who is not in that stage, can explain the significance of the *Mantra* to my son, grandson and others, for some of whom, I was the *Āchārya guru* during their *Upanayana*.

AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Devotees of Sri Ma will be happy to learn that the completely renovated very first ashram of Ma, situated at Siddheshwari, Dhaka, now in Bangladesh, which is recognised as the holiest of all the ashrams, is going to be formally inaugurated on 7th February, 2008. A special two-day function is going to be organised there on this occasion along with special puja etc. in Ma's most sacred birth place at Kheora as well.

All ardent devotees of Ma are cordially invited to participate in the function.

Please contact urgently :

Sri Swapan Gangulie,
Kolkata
Mob. : 09433088186

Panu Brahmachari
Ma Anandamayee Ashram
Bhadaini, Varanasi-1

INSPIRING SOURCE — SRI ANANDAMAYEE MA

—Sri S.K. Bose

We had unique opportunity to be present at Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Varanasi in the year 2006 to attend the Vasanti Puja. It was an auspicious moment when we stepped inside after a lapse of about 5 decades. Believe me, something began vibrating within me vigorously telling—"**Forget the world and listen to your soul, feel that you have come near Ma**". Those who lead an ordinary life like us move along the current of our desires, but the moment we stepped in we enjoyed every moment of it. Even ordinary circumstances, elicit a different response. We were looking every corner of the ashram differently as if Ma may step down from the Kanyapeeth any moment with Her kind and pleasant look. My heart was full of fragrant roses. There was no need for any comparison, it was unique. An extraordinary life is never based on comparison. It is due to constant blossoming within. We enjoyed every moment of our stay which was always full of wonders and never grew stale. Gazing at the spots before the Annapurna Temple where the renowned singer Omkar Nath Jee Thakur sang — "**Yeh din kaise katiho itna bata jai ho**" (Please tell me this much how my days will pass). Ma was sitting in front of him listening and I was fortunate enough to sit very close to Her amongst a handful of ashramites. What a pleasant satisfaction and stillness of mind was attained. At that time I was graduating in science at the University of Allahabad. I repent for those past events and will repent for ever.

Changes are inevitable, transformations occur, civil structures are resurrected. Even the earlier hall where myself, Bibhu da, Nilmani da and others passed few nights had gone inside the Holy Ganges. I was unable to control my tears and was looking for some hidden corner. But Panu da somehow looked at me from distance and exclaimed, "**Listen, structures no doubt are dismantled, reconstructed, but the disciplines inducted by Ma are followed here strictly even now**". Ma directly or indirectly compelled all seekers of truth to labour for Her every word and rituals. These are being followed even now and probably that was the reason for the state of absorption in non-duality was felt for some time followed by dissolution of consciousness into "INFINITE WHOLE". This was intensely activated by looking at the passage through which She walked several times, rested on the stairs of the Satsang Hall down below and so on. The mind wanders because

one does not desire the ONE but takes delight in all sorts of things. The moment one becomes free from thoughts, all desires and its wandering subside at one stroke and the mind is turned towards the light. This was experienced at Varanasi irrespective of what happened outside or where we stayed. Our mind was delighted by seeing that particular room where a wonderful *lila* devised by Ma was held on Jhulan Purnima night, 4th August, 1952. Most of the brahmacharinies of the Kanyapeeth participated and each one was to play a role to worship Krishna, others as Shiva or Durga. One of them was dressed up as Adi Shankaracharya surrounded by his disciples. In the midst of all Ma appeared dressed up as *Tirtha Vāsini Ma*, an old lady providing whatever necessary for the spiritual aspirants engaged in fulfilling their *dharma* at various holy places. At a certain point light was put off and every one became absorbed in deep meditation. The performance was really enchanting. All the spiritual parts were assembled together within one roof. Was this the true spirit of Hinduism and She wished to strengthen this to renew the whole world? She was *Tirtha Vāsini Ma*, who visited all sacred *tirthas*, providing all of us whatever was needed to perfect our *sāadhanā*. No doubt any place becomes a holy place by Her presence there. So we are not deprived of Her blessings here as well. Everyone who came was drawn into Her *lilā* and played their unique roles, including foreigners like Atmanand, Vijayanand, Jayanand and others.

All these earlier events provided inspiration once I stepped again inside Varanasi Ashram. Abhadhutji Maharaj once said, "It is difficult when one is alone to keep to a self-imposed discipline, but Brahma itself is here incarnate in front of you in the form of Mataji. So nothing is impossible".

The thing is just waking up to realize the vision of reality. The process of self realization then becomes vigorously active. For one to realize, one has to drop thinking, but remain alert from inside. Ma used to say *sāadhanā* and meditation are needed to put an end to obstacles. There is no short-cut to enlightenment. In some form or other there must be effort up to the stage of spontaneity. Meditation unites the individual Self with the cosmic Self through expansion of consciousness.

It seems all these were practically demonstrated by Ma through the play devised by Herself on *Jhulan Purnima* night.

Jai Ma !



OUR SEVENTH TRIP TO INDIA

— Shraddha Davenport

[Continued from before]

There was a holiday atmosphere at the ashram when we arrived at 9: 15 a. m. Mother was inside the Chelia Mandir and we sat gazing at Her through the gates. About fifteen or so people were waiting to receive *dikshā* at Mother's feet when we moved outside. The air was filled with god's Name as the *akhand* Kirtan continued.

Many devotees had come to the ashram for this special day, and we were happy to see Mr. Dhamija and meet his lovely wife for the first time. Mr. and Mrs. B. K. Shah, who had been so kind to help us on our previous trip, were there and Bal Krishna Gupta, who had just returned from Bombay that morning, was also there with Mrs. Gupta.

Someone said that Mother would be coming to the raised patio beside the temple, so we all moved to that area—the ladies on one side and the men on the other. After some time we were told that Mother would not be coming there but would sit on the large porch in front of the temple. Every one moved to that place and in a very orderly manner took seats upon the porch facing Mother's asana which was placed on the left side of the entrance.

Then Mother was carried out in Her chair to the opposite side of the porch and all bedlam broke loose. Suddenly everyone was pushing and shoving, trying to get close to Mother.

Finally we were able to sit down. I sat with Swami Nirmalananda and Prangopal. Satya was taking movies, and to get above the crowd he stood on the railing which ran along the sides of the porch. From that angle he could capture Mother's play and all of the devotees around Her as well.

Mother told one man who was seated near Her to give four oranges to us. It was the sweetest thing in all creation to receive something from Mother's hand unasked.

Nirvanananda handed a pump gun full of colored liquid to Mother. She shot a high wide arc of red color above our heads and it softly rained down upon us. That was the start of a wild *lila*. She directed the next stream of color so high that it made a long mark across the ceiling. I have always hoped that Her mark was left untouched by paint in the ensuing years. Everyone got a little of the spray.

A plate heaped high with red powder was then given to Mother and as She threw handfuls of it everyone got very excited. Mother motioned for all to sit still. She got a little more playful with each handful of powder. Sometimes She would act like She was going to throw one way, then quickly let the powder fly in another direction. At one point She even poured some on to the yellow towel which was over Her head. She was covered with all colors as more powder was given to her. Bhaskarananda was at Her feet along with Nirvanananda and Udas. They all looked like rainbows.

As Mother's play got more intense the people started rising to their feet and pushing wildly forward. I managed to stand before getting stepped on. Prangopal and I helped Swami Nirmalananda to get up, then we all helped Bal Krishna assist Mrs. Gupta to her feet.

Mother had the play moved to the wide steps in front of the porch. She sat at the top of the steps as we gathered around Her. She drenched all of us with colored water and powders intermittently. We laughed so much as She played with us. A very mischievous expression would come over Her face as She marked us all with Her color.

Satya took five rolls of movies and ran out of film just before Mother moved us to the steps. He sent Bhagavandas to our room to get more film, but before he returned with it Mother had finished that lila. She left us all dazed and laughing as She went to her room.

Satya then got movies of the aftermath in all its glory. I had a beautiful lavender mark in my white hair which I managed not to wash out for some time. Krishnapriya looked wonderful as she stood on the porch with hands raised. Bright bursts of color adorned her from head to toe. The Dhamijas were also covered with the beautiful colors as were Anindita's children as they frolicked with Dasu. Mr. and Mrs. Dhamija were guests at Neem Karoli Baba's ashram and drove us to our rooms at the adjoining dharmasala.

I had developed a very bad migraine headache and nothing seemed to make it go away. It was not possible for me to go back to the ashram that evening. I lay on my bed and prayed that it would be gone by morning. It was a great loss, missing Mother's darshan, as I was told that She sang that night.

Thankfully I was much better when I awoke. Anindita and her family were about to leave for Bombay. I made a couple of polaroid pictures of them and Satya took movies. My memories of Anindita and her father, Binuda, will always be dear to me.

When we went to the ashram Krishnapriya showed me where she was staying. It was in a lovely new room built in the back side of the garden.

We went to Mother's patio and she came out on the roof. She stood at the railing looked directly at me as I pronounced, then stood with folded palms while I prayed to Her. In a short time, She went to Her room and we returned to the dharmasala.

It was about 11:00 a. m. when we went to the ashram the next morning.

Some people who were leaving had been given permission to go upstairs and do pronam to Mother. Happily we were allowed to accompany them. After a short darshan we pronounced to Mother then had to go back downstairs.

We had brought our cameras because Nirvanananda wanted me to take a polaroid picture of Mother with Sri Narayan Goswami, who had conducted the Bhagavat Saptaha. I told him that I would be happy and that my price was that we be allowed to take a few photos and movies of Mother for ourselves. He laughingly agreed to my terms.

Nirvanananda got things organized for the picture-taking and we followed him and the Pandit up to the roof. Mother sat on Her wooden bed and the Pandit sat at Her feet. I took two photos for Nirvanananda. Satya was taking movies. Then Satya and I took each other's photos sitting at Mother's feet. I also took some of Mother alone. We were thankful to get the photographs and movies but I must admit that I felt uneasy about it, as though Mother was simply enduring our desires. I felt that perhaps I was being a burden to Her, or maybe She did not approve of my bartering. After pronaming at Her feet, we walked downstairs, then went to the dharmasala. We had not been there long when Krishnapriya arrived for a visit.

It was always a joy to hear her tell stories about Mother. That day she related Mother's words as She spoke to some devotees. Mother said, "Now is the time to be doing heavy *sāadhanā*, for the time will come when I may not recognize anyone. But when that happens, then I will give something inside." I pray that by Mother's grace this has been recorded correctly. It is just as I wrote it in my diary that very day.

Swami Nirmalananda and Prangopal had also come to our room. We all discussed the concerns which were always with us in those days, for each of us could feel Mother with-drawing.

At 5:00 p. m. we returned to the ashram for darshan. A beautiful sadhu, Sri Swami Gangeshwaranandaji, had arrived and went upstairs to see Mother. He stayed for only a few minutes. When he came down Mother stood at the railing of

the roof. Darshan was lovely as Mother talked with the pandit and some of the girls.

Krishnapriya was leaving the next morning for Dehradun. She was then going to Calcutta and expected to be in Hardwar the first week of April. Unfortunately she did not meet her schedule and that was our last time together at Mother's feet. However, in my heart, that is where I will always see her.

Melita was also leaving. She was going to Germany for two months. We were happy that we had been able to spend a little time with her on that trip and were sorry to see her go. I would have loved to hear her tell stories about her experiences with Mother. I am sure they would have been wonderful.

We bid both of them good-bye with pronams and "Jai Ma !" then went to our room for the night.

Stepping in the ashram in the morning, we were pleased to find it quiet and hoped that was a sign that Mother would get some rest. It was a nice thought, but when we returned at 5: 30 p. m. we found that was all that it was. People were being crowded up the stairs in tens and coming down in fives as certain ones were allowed to stay while others were made to leave.

On a previous trip Triguna Sen had told us about the "temple guards." They were those who stood at the temple gates and made the decision as to who would be allowed to go in to see the god and who would not. He laughed as he explained that one must gain the favour of the temple guards.

At the dharmasala Swami Nirmalananda and Prangopal came to our room and we talked about Mother. Swami said that through the years Mother had told about a place where there was a great temple or hall of sandalwood, with a ceiling so high you could not see it. There She and some others were instructing souls in certain *mantras* and other things. From that place they attained liberation. Surely there would be no temple guards there.

Satya and I had shopping to do in the morning, so Bhagavandas took us to several places. Since my beautiful Gopal was here in his "hometown," I thought that I should get something nice for him. At one shop I found a very ornate red dress and mantle. They also had the perfect jewelery to go with it. I purchased a necklace, earrings, bracelets, and crown made of ruby-red stones and small pearls. A tiny pair of silver padukas (God's shoes) to set before his asana completed the costume. He looked gorgeous in those things and Mrs. Pujari told me to take roses from the dharmasala garden for him. I took his photo there in our room surrounded by those lovely roses.

At 5: 15 p. m. we went for darshan and were allowed upstairs with Mother for about fifteen minutes. We appreciated that time with no distractions. Mother looked at us lovingly and told the girl to give oranges to us. After darshan we went with Swami Nirmalananda and Prangopal to the Banke Bihari Temple before going to the dharmasala.

The following evening we went to the ashram at 6:00 p. m. In about thirty minutes we were told that we could go up to Mother. She looked so sweet. I prayed mentally that She let me see Her in all things to see *only* Her, pleading that I never forget Her and that She never withdraws Her feet from me. Mother looked steadily and lovingly at me as I prayed. The darshan was too short, but I had received Her touch. What more is there. ?

At noon the following day. Swami Nirmalananda and his "party" (Prangopal and we) were invited by Banke Bihari Temple to take prasad there. I could hardly believe that such an honor was to be given to us.

We four arrived about 11:30 a. m. at the temple and sat for about two hours visiting with the men who were in charge there. When arati was done to Bihariji, we all stood before His beautiful form as many offerings were made. The heady aroma of incense filled the great temple. A crescendo of bells and gongs culminated in the resonate blowing of the conch as the worship was ended.

After the arati we were taken to an alcove on Bihariji's right and seated there. The prasad which was served included three kinds of rice, aloo, dal, chapatis, pappars, and sweet rice. The prasad was followed with pan (spice wrapped in pan leaf). It was a very rare experience and we felt blessed to have been included in the invitation. From there we went to visit Mr. and Mrs. Bal Krishna Gupta, and then to our rooms for a brief rest before darshan.

A welcome surprise awaited us when we got to the ashram at 5:30 p. m. Swami Dhirananda and Triguna Sen had told Mother that we wanted to have fifteen minutes of *maun* sitting with Her. Mother agreed to that request and it was simply wonderful. Everyone sat so quietly, and a tranquil mood filled me as I gazed at Mother. She looked at me for a long time. I tried to focus on Her within my heart, and then as That which contains my being, but I did not want to give up that sweet form which first I had seen so long ago in a dream. Our short time was ended but the sweetness of being with Her in that peaceful setting was very comforting.

The day which followed was one that must have been fated to happen, as it fulfilled a prophecy made in jest. Before the first trip, and each succeeding one, we had to fill our papers requesting for a visa. This always included the question as to what was the purpose of our going to India. Not wanting to be misunderstood, I

only wrote certain things such as "to see some of the country, travel by train, do some shopping in Delhi, and perhaps to see the Taj Mahal." My report was not untrue because we did see part of the country, travel by train, and shop in Delhi. We told ourselves that if we were ever in Agra we would certainly see the Taj Mahal.

Up until that seventh trip, we had never been to Agra. And after writing that so many times without it happening, we began to say in a joking way that if we ever did actually visit the Taj Mahal it would probably be our last trip.

One day Swami Nirmalananda suggested that we all hire a car go to Agra, have lunch, and return in time for evening darshan. I felt a little uneasy about it, but shrugged it off as superstition on my part, and we made arrangements to go at 10:00 a. m. The driver said he would actually come at 9:00 a. m. We were pleased and thought we would get an early start.

9:00 a.m. ...10:00 a. m.... then 11:00 a. m. passed, and he had not come. Finally Mr. Pujari got a car and driver for us. It was 12:30 p. m. There was still plenty of time, so we took the short trip of around thirty miles to Agra.

After a lovely meal we talked about seeing the Taj Mahal. It was still early, and we felt that we should go there as long as we were in Agra. When we arrived at the gate, we saw that many people were there. We had expected to pay for admission, but it was a free day and that explained the crowd.

The building was very beautiful with fine inlay work and artful carvings. Satya took lots of movies there as we walked around the wellkept grounds and graceful pool. A guide led every one through the inside and we heard about the human love story which had created that work of art. I felt sad to see the empty inside of the great edifice, and the air was stifling. I was glad to get outside again.

When we started back to Vrindavan. We still thought we would be there in time for darshan. That was before our car was stopped for some kind of "transportation check." Our driver had to fill out some papers and it took quite some time before we could continue.

It was 7:30 p.m. when we got to the ashram. Swami Dhirananda and Bhaskarananda greeted us and said they had wondered where we were. We explained our delay and assured them that we would be there the next evening.

We had finally seen Taj Mahal, and that was indeed to be our last trip to see Mother

[To continue]

MY RECOLLECTIONS

— Sri Ravindra Singh

I was born in 1933 and I don't remember when I became aware of Ma. Ma said.— "Those who are unable to do anything, who have nothing dependable in life, for them I have special concern".

I hope and pray to Mother that Her devotees may find some glimpses in this play of Her which I have tried to recollect from my memory. I pray "Ma's" wish be accomplished through this unworthy child of Her's

I pray— "Ma, grant me some of your patience and composure" O Ma, Let my doubts be set at rest. May Ma bless us with her bounty and grace !. Jai Ma.

Doonga is a small village situated at the bottom of Bhadraj Hill in Mussoorie range of the Himalayas. It is about 25 km from Dehra Dun. Doonga was a Zamindari Estate during British rule in India.

The ruler of this Zamindari Rai Bahadur Choudhuri Sher Singh was a *Kshatriya* by caste. *Parasar Gotra*. Doonga "*Kothi*" was the residence of Ch. Sher Singh, which actually was a Haveli with modern guest house for the British Governor's stay.

There were stables and garages for pheatons and cars and encloser for cows. Godown big enough for storing grains for years, servant quarters, offices etc. Orchards with different varieties of fruits spread out on north, west and southern side in almost seven-eight acres, but the main house was called "Kothi". Two temples were also built by him, one of Lord Vishnu and Lakshmiji and the other of Lord Shiva and Dharam Raj. There was also a Shiva linga under the peepal tree which was very ancient. Some 30 feet below the Shiva linga is the source of a stream which is still there. Sher Singhji built an ashram for Ma on top of the hillock over looking the temples on one side and Badhraj hill on the other side.

Ma used to send devotees to Doonga and my grand father and grand mother used to look after them. They stayed for long periods. I remember a Sanyasani Ruma Devi (Deviji) of Tibet, old but very fit. She was the disciple of Sharada Ma w/o Bhagawan Rama Krishna Paramhansa. She was always busy working. At that time two boys also came from Bengal, Sanku and Rajen. Deviji used to look after them. We used to play together.

A Muslim gentleman who had a carpet shop on Chakrata Road, Dehradun was a regular devotee of Shri Ma. Whenever he visited Ma he would stand far behind

other devotees, and would keep on crying looking at Mother. I was too young to understand all this, but I saw this happen. Elders used to say that he had mentioned to them that whenever he performed namāz he used to see Mother standing in front of him.

In 1949 we were in Solan as guest of Raja of Solan, now in Himachal. Haribaba was also there with his *Rasa Mundali*. It was great with Harababa participating in the Rasa Lila in the evening. Haribaba with his "*ghanta*". Ma was always present. We went by cars from Dehradun to Solan, one belonged to my Nanaji and the other was my father's Pontiac, one driven by my elder brother and the other driven by driver.

Our stay there was for about ten days. From there we drove back to Delhi, Haribaba was also with us. In the front seat with my elder brother driving and I sitting next to Haribaba. Haribaba sang Kirtan, right from Solan upto Kalka, We all participated in the Kirtan.

Reached Delhi, stayed in Delhi for a couple of days. My result of Matriculation exam. came out. I had passed, so it was decided that I should leave and reach Dehradun and get admission in the D.A. V. College. So I was sent by train, the rest of the party stayed as Ma was there.

As told to me by my mother, Nanaji and the party went to Ma to obtain permission to leave. Ma enquired, who is driving and who all are in which car"? Ma was informed about the seating arrangement and the drivers of the different cars. Ma said,

"Kabhi Kabhi aisa hota hai do gaadi ki savari ek gaadi me Hai"

"Sometimes it so happens that passengers of two cars have to sit in one".

They left in the evening. My father and mother shifted to my elder brother's car as my father was feeling feverish. In the other car was my "Buaji", cousin sister of my father and a servant and the driver.

At Meerut it became dark, lights were switched on. My brother told the other car driver to keep in view the tail lights of the front car. And my elder brother was keeping an eye in the mirror of the head lights of the following car. Near Muzaffar Nagar the head lights of the following car were not to be seen so my brother stopped the car and waited for a few minutes, but there was no sign of the car that followed. So he turned his car and drove back for about five-six kilometers. His light fell upon the upturned car with wheels still running in the ploughed fields. On focusing the beams of his car and taking it nearer he stopped his car and got out to see the passengers of the other car. Buaji sitting on the side of a ploughed field, shivering, the driver totally shaken and dazed, the boy servant still inside the car.

They were all taken out to the road near the side of the other car. By Ma's grace, believe it, there wasn't even a scratch on anyone. Even the *surahi* (water bottle of mud clay) was intact.

The turned car's tyrod was broken. It had gone into the ploughed field, hit the stump of a tree and took three somersaults with wheels up and roof down. All the passengers of the two cars were adjusted into one car, as Ma had announced earlier before their departure. By Ma's *Kripa* everyone was saved.

The girls of the Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth used to stay those days in the area of Doonga. Many Bengali sadhus and devotees of Ma also used to come there. The temple is at a very scenic location surrounded by jungles full of wildlife. Tigers, leopards roamed the jungle, sometimes roaring in the late evening and night. Other wildlife also abounded, many varieties of antelopes, birds and pheasants used to be seen in great numbers. Doonga jungle was the private preserve of the zamindar.

Some one from the Kanyapeeth told Ma that they could hear 'tiger' roaring in the night. As my nanaji and naniji always used to visit the ashram with all of us, Ma asked nana ji, "Pitaji *Doonga me Bagh hai Keya ?*" (Father, are there tigers in Doonga ?)

My Nanaji joked and with a hand on his whiskers replied, "There cannot be two tigers in one jungle."

Nanaji's name was Sher Singh, meaning "Tiger", Everything was forgotten. Ma left Dehradun.

After a few days a messenger came from Doonga to Dehradun reporting to my grandfather that a cow had been killed by a tiger and was lying in a "nala" (dry stream bed) on the slope of a hillock.

Nanaji instructed the messenger to go back to Doonga and tell the head Shikari "Monha" of Doonga Estate to build a "*machan*", finding a suitable spot on the cow's kill location and also to bring his DBBL Rifle 500 with other accessories like torch etc. and to wait at the road side for his car.

Nanaji, his driver and orderly "Bhotu" reached the spot at about four in the evening, where Mona Shikari with other servants was waiting for him. Car was parked on the road side. Nanaji and his orderly walked to the site with Mona leading. Sher Singhji on examining the spot, the dead cow & the built *machan*, noticed that it was built wrongly. It was on the slope hardly three feet high from the ground and facing the kill lying in the "Nala" about 16 feet down. Sher Singhji asked the *shikari* that if the tiger approaches the kill from the top side of the hill my *machan* will be in the way and hardly 3 feet from the back side. Shikari replied,

'No sir, it will come to the kill by the dry stream *Nālā*'. Sher Singhji said, "Fool", had the tiger asked permission to approach as you say ?" Anyhow, Sher Singhji settled facing the kill on the *machan* with his 12 DBBL Gun laid on his right & DBBL 500 Rifle on the left side. He sat folding his legs on the blanket with other accessories kept at the right spot.

Sher Singhji's silence "*mauna*" time was approaching, with hands in his lap he sat there in *dhyana*. After sometime he heard the sound of twig breaking in the rear. On hearing the sound he turned his head over his right shoulder and there he saw a huge tiger, his face hardly 3 feet from his face, snarling, with whiskers moving forward & backwards looking directly into the eyes of Sher Singhji. He could see the rough tongue & large teeth in the tiger's mouth and even feel hot breath of the tiger.

Sher Singhji thought—"This is the end". After a few minutes the tiger moved to the rear of Sher Singhji. Sher Singhji's second thought was that the tiger would now give one blow with his paw and all would be over. Collecting his courage and with Ma in his mind he took the last chance. He snatched up the right side gun and turning left, half reclining, pointed the gun to the rear with his finger on the trigger. "Oh Ma/" no tiger: the tiger was gone. It vanished into the air. Clutter of wild fowls was heard in the distance. He whistled to the servants. They came and picked up the guns and other items and walked back to the car. On reaching Doonga he himself narrated the incident to all of us. After a few days Ma was at Kishenpur ashram. Sher Singhji went with naniji and others. Ma, on seeing Sher Singhji, asked with a smile, "Pitaji, you said that two tigers do not live in one jungle, how is this ?" Nana ji, with wet eyes and choked throat bowed at her feat and uttered, "*APKI LILA HAI—*" ALL IS YOUR PLAY

JAI MA.

[To continue]