

MA ANANDAMAYEE
AMRIT VARTA

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

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MATRI VANI

After all these days this kind of question has occurred to him ? Of course it has happened because he is at a stage when questions arise, and there is nothing wrong about it—for is not everything God's creation ? Things are different for different people. It is well to remember that what looms as a formidable problem may at times be resolved in a very easy way and so the further question may arise : Was it after all but a trifling problem ? The Creator of all things alone knows how to appraise it, He alone knows what is great and what is small.

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

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

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

* * * * *

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

Worldly occupations and business are bound to cause worry, it cannot be otherwise. The only way to meet it is by endurance, endurance and more endurance. He who can endure wins in the end. One has to dive down among the waves of the sea and rise up again. The talents and the work God has entrusted to you are meant for His service and for nothing else—bear this in mind !

* * * * *

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

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

* * * * *

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

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

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

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

* * * * *

Everything comes to pass according to each one's destiny. You will have to accept this. The Creator has so regulated the universe that everyone has and ever will have to reap the fruits of his actions; there is no way out of it. If because of your physical unhappiness you feel disinclined to and consequently do not meditate on the name of Him, who is the Supreme Father, Mother, Friend and Lord—do you call this creating good Karma ? That you may have to suffer the same kind of trouble over and over again ? Your father and mother arranged what, after careful consideration, they believed to be for your welfare. *Karma*, the consequences of one's past actions are one's own liability.



PAGES FROM

“Ma Anandamayee Prasang”

(Translated from Bengali)

– Prof. A. K. Dutta Gupta

29th May, 1941, Dehradun, Raipur Ashram

As discussion continued Ma said about Bholanath - “As regards the matter whether he got initiation from this body, he said to me - ‘I have received only *mantra* from you. Apart from that I have received other mantras too : Really when he was doing *sadhana* at Uttar Kashi he received a lot of joy. Otherwise he could not have done *sadhana* for such a period in the midst of such cold”.

I - Baba had done *sadhana* at Tarapith and Jwalamukhi as well.

Ma - Yes, Bholanath remained at Tarapith only for seven days, but even in such a short period there was a lot of change in his nature. His fickle nature was quietened a lot. Apart from that there were certain special qualities in him that as he used to sit for *sadhana* his body and mind used to be still.

“I am relating to you an incident of Shahbag. While living at Shahbag although we used to live in “*Golghar*” (round-shaped room) this body used to roam about during deep nights alone in the dancing room. Once while I was roaming about in that manner I found after sometime that Bholanath was sitting there in *asana* posture. His body was covered with mosquitoes in such a manner that it looked as if his body hairs were all raised up. Seeing this I gave a push and made him conscious. Regaining consciousness, Bholanath said - “Why have you done such ? I was deeply engrossed today like that at Bajitpur”.

I - What did happen at Bajitpur ?

Ma - You know that. What an incident happened as a result of calling this body’s condition (of bhava) as a condition influenced by evil spirits ! Ashu (Bholanath’s elder brother’s son) used to stay with us. He saw that his uncle (Bholanath) was becoming still like a stone and this body, whom he had never seen outside before others, was talking with all, with no cover on her head, there was nothing like a feeling of shame, everything was as if unusual ! Seeing all this he was becoming restless through crying.

“Leave that. You know that this body does not do anything of its own will, what is to happen happens of its own. If Bholanath was then not awakened in that manner then his life would perhaps have been changed completely. But he was not allowed then to remain in that condition, otherwise the incidents of his anger would not have occurred”

“You have heard so many things about Bholanath. I have perceived within him a number of actions leading to higher life, which are not normally seen even among many great souls. On occasions through the wrong advice of others he used to give threats to this body that if this body did not listen to him then he would either become a *sannyasi* or proceed on a wrong path. Bad company was also at the root of his such excessive fits of rage. But whatever he might have done, nothing could leave a permanent impress in him. All these have been said by this body previously also. Some have perhaps even thought that this body has spoken so much in praise of him, because he was the husband. Those who say or think in that manner cannot be blamed. Everyone forms an opinion according to this own *samskāras* !”

I - When Baba Bholanath got *sannyas* ?

Ma - He had the strong desire for *sannyas* for a long time. He had the desire to take *dandi sannyas* and to take that from a prominent *sannyasi* of the *Tirth* order. When he came to me and expressed his desire, I gave consent to that and said - “These are all good things, you try for that only”. Whatever he might be saying, he never used to do anything without consulting this body. But as soon as I said that, Bholanath became red-hot with anger. Angrily he began talking- ‘You always try to keep me away’ and so on. He had expected that I would prevent him when he wanted to take *sannyas*. As he found me not preventing him that caused his anger. I then tried to make him understand that as I used to give advice to all whatever is beneficial to them when they seek my advice, in the same manner I have told him to adopt *sannyas*. How he could think that I would treat him as separate from others ? If there was any feeling of a householder in me then perhaps as a wife would prevent her husband from taking *sannyas* I would also have done like that. But that sort of feeling was never in this body. Bholanath became some-what quiet on being told in this manner. Thereafter he began trying to take *sannyas* from the Sringeri Mutt. But after corresponding with them he came to know that it will not be possible for him to take *sannyas* from that place. Then it was decided in consultation with Jyotish that Bholanath will go to Sringeri Mutt along with him, both will try to explain to them Bholanath’s whole condition and then know if he was eligible to take *sannyas* from that order. But as that period was an inauspicious one, that was also not possible.

“Later on when we went to Kailash and the day after *sannyas mantra* for Jyotish came out of my mouth I found that the trend of that *mantra* was still going on in me. When I saw Bholanath having his bath in the “Manas Sarovar” I told him - “You can do japa of the *sannyas mantra* which is going out of my lips.” On hearing this he remarked - “What is this ? I have much better *mantras* with me !” In one way he spoke the truth. I had heard that while he was at Uttar Kashi he used to make notes of

many *sannyas mantras* from other sannyasis. So, when Bholanath said that he had with him many good *mantras*, that meant that he had them in his note-book. I told - "Alright, what is coming in my *kheyala* I have told you. To do or not to do is your wish." By telling this I left for a different place. When I left it was found that Bholanath was repeating the same *mantra*, which had come out of my lips. At that time he was wearing a silken cloth of *gerua* colour and that was not worn in the manner a householder does. Later on, however, he again started wearing *dhoti* in the ordinary way."

"After this came the occasion for *Purna Kumbh* at Hardwar. It occurred to me the night before the *Kumbh* day that I should call Bholanath and remind him about the *sannyas mantra*. It happened also in the same way. I told Bholanath - "If you so desire then you can bathe on the occasion of the *Purna Kumbh* and do the *japa* of that *sannyas mantra*." Bholanath left without giving any reply. Next day he returned from the *Kumbh* and even without any asking he told me by shouting in the midst of many people - "I have done that". In this way his *sannyasa* happened. Till he was alive it was all secret. Ofcourse after his death this was divulged."

At this time Khukuni didi came and took Ma for her meals. We also went to have our bath. To-day items like *Pulao* (fried rice), *puris*, *kheer* etc. were offered for Ma's *bhog*. On this occasion a few devotees from Dehradun were invited. Pandeyji came with his wife and son, Mrs. Maharatan Jaspal came with her four daughters and Sm. Seva and Luxmiji also came, we all had that *prasad* in the noon.

In the afternoon Ma went to the cottage near the side of the hills. This is situated at the foot of the hills and by the side of the same canal water is flowing with a soft murmuring sound. From this place the spring is also very near. Mrs. Maharatanji's daughters sang *bhajans* accompanied with harmonium. The song was very sweet. While *bhajan* was being sung Ma suddenly got up from her seat and sat behind one of Maharatanji's daughters and from behind raised her two hands and began clapping in tune with the song. At this time Khukuni didi came and sat near us and said - "Please mark the fingers of the girl. For showing that Ma is doing like that and have sent me to you". It was found that the nails of both of her hands were about half or three-fourth inch long and were painted in bright red colour. Our notice did not fall on them before. Seeing those nails we all started laughing heavily. Almost all the daughters of Maharatanji are highly educated. One is M. A., another is B.A., the third one is studying in the Intermediate class. They stay in Lucknow. It has become a fashion there among girls to keep long nails and to keep them coloured is also perhaps an expensive affair.

Sri Jiten Mukherjee left this evening at 6.30 p.m. with one of his friends. After sometime we also came back to the ashram. When we proposed to Ma about our leaving for Kolkata tomorrow Ma gave the permission to go.

At night after dinner Nepal dada read from the Mahabharata of Kali Prasanna Singh. After the reading was over he questioned Ma - "Ma, if some one pays attention to religion in the old age after spending the whole life as a house-holder, then will religious feeling be retained by him at the time of passing away?"

Ma - "While talking about 'life', you mean this life, But really that is not correct. You don't know *samskāras* of how many lives are within you. When this is the position then it cannot be said what will happen at the last moment. This body says that everything may happen. That is why, it is not proper to keep one's hope small. I have said before also that nature changes with one's thoughts. It has even been seen that man reaches higher and higher stages only through high aspirations. So, one has to keep the aspiration high. It should be thought that He has roused the feeling of salvation in the heart then He will give salvation also. When the ray of light has come in the form of thought then is it impossible for the same to be fully revealed? Doubt and weakness will ofcourse come at times, but for that one should not take recourse to weakness. It is better to work with a noble aspiration. That I can't do anything, I have no strength to do anything of my own - all these, which are said, are empty words. Because you have been doing some work of the *samsāra* and you have the belief also in your mind that you can do something. If you had the firm belief that you don't have the power to do anything of your own, if that belief had been converted into self perception, then it could be understood that you have proceeded a lot in the realm of *sadhana*. Everything happens through His Grace - is there any doubt in that? The purpose of *sadhana* is to feel the limit of one's power - to understand within one's heart that I have no power to do anything. And it is also so nice and everything is so beautiful that it is found in the state of *sadhana* that we are nothing but tools in His hands. This is not a mere supposition - but real."

"When the stages of *sadhana* were passing over this body and a feeling of ignorance was going on, then I have seen that this body was nothing but a tool in His hands. I have told you that day about myself being *maun*. During those days I used to do cooking and so many household things, but it was seen that nothing was done myself. My hands and feet were as if tools of some-one elses. Although it was unknown what would happen a moment afterwards, but all work used to be done very promptly. Just think, this body was cooking, something was there in the vessel upon the fire and it was time to put the vessel down. But I did not have any knowledge of that. It was seen that a piece of worn cloth was torn, but why it was torn I cannot say. It was seen that the torn piece of cloth was being folded and then the vessel was suddenly taken down with the help of that piece of cloth. I have seen that all this work was done in that manner, I myself did not do anything. That is why I am saying

that the object of *sadhana* is to perceive that we of our own donot do anything, cannot do anything. You go on working. Anything and everything may happen, through God's Grace every time."

It was almost 11 P. M., Ma went for rest. I also lay on my bed. After a while I saw that Ma was going to the roof. Perhaps she will lie down there. Swami Akhandanandaji and Monomohan were asked to go with their cot from the dharamshala compound to Shiva mandir area and sleep there. I was lying in the room. After a while Khukuni didi came and told me - "Ma has aksed you also to go up and lie down there." So, I had also to get up and after folding my bed went to Ma. I was asked to spread my bed near Ma's cot. Thus Ma did not allow me to bear the heat by lying inside the room. My heart was filled with gratitude to see Ma's deep feeling of concern towards our comforts. It occurred to me that what was of be afraid to when such a Mother was there.

(To continue)

***"Om Aditya Hridayam Punyam
Sarva Shatru Vinashanam
Jaya Vaham, Japam Nityam
Akshayam Paramam Shivam"***

—Valmiki Ramayana

Oh Sun purify my heart
Destroy all enemies within and without
I ceaselessly chant thy victorious name,
Oh indestructible Supreme Sun, Shiva !

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOTHER'S ADVENT

– Dr. Govindagopal Mukhopadhyaya

This holy land of India has been hailed since time immemorial as heaven on earth because Gods and Goddesses choose to come down here alone again and again and again to manifest their divinity. Here the spirit is made flesh, the abstract becomes concrete, the divine manifests itself as human. The unfailing promise is repeated both in the Bhagavad Gita as well as in Sri Sri Chandi that whenever there is a gloom the light will reveal itself:

*Yadā Yadā hi Dharmasya, glānir bhavati Bharata !
abhyutthānam adharmasya tadatmanam sṛjāmyaham !!
Paritrānāya sādhanam vināsāya ca duskṛtam !
dharmasamsthapanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge !!*

(Gita - 4, 7-8)

*Ittham yadā yadā bādhā danavottha bhavisyati !
tadā tadāvatiryaham karisyamyarisamkshayam !!*

(Chandi 11, 55)

The references to the *duskṛta*, *danava*, *ari* etc all signify the dark or hostile forces that shut out the light, which is always indicated by the term '*deva*', which do not basically mean the god but that which is luminous or effulgent. Darkness is always dispelled by the light and the main darkness, as is well-known, is nothing but *ajnāna* or non-cognition, ignorance.

Even when the divine power manifests itself, it is seldom recognised or known as such due to ignorance. This has been beautifully brought out in the Kena Upanisad. The gods became victorious by vanquishing the demons, once after long fight. As we all know, the two forces of darkness and light are in eternal conflict, sometimes the one, sometimes the other, overpowering its opponent. The gods or the forces of light after their victory this time became very proud and were full of vainglory. This was duly noticed by the supreme source of all power and light, which is termed as Brahman in the Upanisads, because it is the vast, the great ocean of light, of which the gods are only sparks or limited manifestations.

To remove their pride, born of utter ignorance, Brahman appeared before them in the form of a Yaksa, an apparition in the form of a Mammon, a strange being. Being curious to know its identity, the gods, first of all, sent Agni to ascertain who was he. When Agni came near it, the Yaksa enquired what god was he and what was his

power. Agni proudly answered that he was Agni and he could burn down everything on earth. On hearing this confident self-assertion on his part, the Yaksa just put a piece of dry grass before him and requested him to burn it out. With all his power being put forth, Agni failed to burn that single small piece of grass. He came back humiliated and reported to the other gods that he could not fathom who actually was this Yaksa. The gods then sent as their representative, Vayu or the wind-god to probe the identity of this Yaksa. When he came near the Yaksa, the same question was put to him once again and Vayu replied that he was the Wind, who could blow away all things on earth. Yaksa put before him the same tiny piece of dry grass, but even after exerting to the utmost power in him, Wind failed to move it even slightly. He also thus being humbled came back almost dumbfounded and reported to the gods that he was unable to fathom the mystery of the curious apparition of this Yaksa. Thereafter, the gods had no other option but to request their head or king, Devaraj Indra to go himself to resolve the mystery of this Yaksa. But then a strange thing happened. As soon as Indra approached the Yaksa, it vanished and in that vacuum (*ākāśa*) appeared a resplendent form of a goddess, Ma Haimavati. She then revealed to Indra that the victory of the gods over the demons or powers of darkness was actually the victory of Brahman, through which they have all been glorified. Only then through this intimation of Ma Haimavati to Indra that the gods came to realise how insignificant all of them were, with no power whatsoever actually belonging to them. The supreme source of all power is Brahman and Brahman alone. This narrative in the Kena Upanisad illustrates three things : (i) the insignificance of the gods, (ii) the significance of the female principle or *Sakti*, here described as Ma Haimavati, in revealing the true nature of the *Saktimān*, the ultimate Being called Brahman, in which all *Sakti* or Power ultimately rests and (iii) that ultimate Being is beyond the grasp of all, even of the gods. It is indescribable, indefinable, ineffable. It is *svayamprakāśa*, *svatahprākāśa*, self-revealed, i.e. not to be revealed by anything outside itself.

Whenever and wherever it manifests itself, it is through its own nature or self. This we find clearly stated in that wonderful hymn in the Rgveda called *Devi-sukta* or *vak-Sukta*, comprised of eight verses. *Aham eva svayam idam vadāmi* i.e. I myself am revealing my own identity, In the *Durga-saptasati* or the Chandi, as it is commonly called in Bengal, there is again that profound declaration,

*Ekai vaham jagatyatra
dvitīyā kā mamā parā,*

“In this entire existence, I alone am here. Where is the second other, beyond Me ?”

This solemn affirmation of the One without a second is the keynote of the supreme wisdom, which has been made manifest in this holy land from time immemorial. Through it alone the demon of division is vanquished, the darkness of ignornace that is heavy on hearts is dispelled, the night is transformed into light. Again and again the demon of darkness manifest itself to cover this knowledge of unity, sometimes as *Madhu* and *Kaitabha*, sometimes as *Mahisāsura*, sometimes as *Chanda* and *Munda* and again as *Sumbha* and *Nisumbha*, The world is ever full of division and discord, which are the progeny of the darkness of ignornace, but alongwith it is also the comforting promise of the manifestation of light, as we find it voiced again and again.

Even at the end of the last century, in 1896, there was again such a manifestation in this holy land of that divine power in its utter purity and spontaneity. This time the divine power manifested in the form of a woman, in her own true nature of Mother, which was a unique phenomenon, Born in a small hamlet in a far-off corner of the East Bengal, now called Bangladesh, almost unnoticed by all, this Mother Anandamayee, as she came to be known later on throughout the world, gradually revealed Her true nature to Her devotees. She was what She ever is. There was no becoming, no process, no *sadhana*, it was all self-unfoldment of the true being, On being asked about Her identity, She just revealed that She was '*Purna Brahma Narayana*'. Hardly anyone realised then nor does anyone can truly comprehend even now what She actually meant by this astounding declaration. It was just a reaffirmation of the age-old revelation, which has been voiced time and again here in India since the time of the Vedas through such utterances which are called *Mahavakyas*, Great Utterances, as '*Aham Brahmasmi*' 'I am that Brahman'.

Though every being in this world is in reality no other than Brahman, yet all of us are unaware of this basic fact, covered as we all are by the thick veil of ignorance. This ignorance makes our true nature false or unreal and instead makes the false appear as true. Our phenomenal being alone is true to us, while our true being always remains hidden. Mother Anandamayee took the human form like all of us, yet She was ever stationed in Her true being since Her birth. She played all the roles to their utmost perfection, a devoted and ever faithful wife closely following to the letter all the commands of Her husband, a loving mother to millions, ever awake to their pangs of sorrow, keen to render all help to remove their sorrows and sufferings. Throughout Her long life She was always on the move, never resting at one place for long and yet all places were one and the same to Her. This spirit of oneness under all circumstances was Her marked characteristic, through which She tried to inculcate among others the true spirit of utter unity in which She lived forever throughout Her life.

Let us try to imbibe that spirit in this strife-torn world of ours, if we really claim to be Her true devotees. She came to remind us that all is useless and full of pain except the remembrance of the ONE, call it Hari or call it Rama or call it Siva or by any other name. She had written with Her own hand to my revered father that during those days of Her early life, She used to wait till others went to sleep and then She will only weep for the plight of others, who do not care to partake of this divine delight that is stored in the Name of the Lord.

If we are really sincere, we must try to wipe off those tears from the eyes of the compassionate Mother by devoting ourselves solely and sincerely to that one pursuit alone viz. the attainment of the One, who alone Is i.e. the Reality, who alone is our Consciousness and who alone is our Bliss-Sat-Cit-Ananda. She lived, moved and had Her being in this *Sacchidananda* alone and that is why Sri Aurobindo on seeing Her photograph had commented: "She lives in the *Sacchidananda* Consciousness." She wanted everyone to live as such and that is why. She manifested Herself to exemplify this in Her own being.

*I'm burning in My love for Thee
Eternal Infinite
I cannot rest in peace now
Till I do become thy Light.*

*In silent supplications
I do burn and yearn to be in Thee
Hear Thou my soul cry
Break my bonds, Babaji set me free*

*Set me free to be in Thee
Let there be none of me
Then me in Thee, Thy love in me
I shall become of Thee*

— Yogi Siddhanath

SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

– Prof. T. R. Anantharaman

[Continued from before]

Now, we go to yet another Upanisad, i. e. Svetasvatara Upanisad:

द्वे अक्षरे ब्रह्मपरे त्वनन्ते, विद्याविद्ये निहिते यत्र गूढे ।
क्षरं त्वविद्या अमृतं तु विद्याविद्ये ईशते यस्तु सोऽन्यः ॥ (Svet. V. 1)

The beautiful way of putting things. Both spirituality and science exist hidden in the Imperishable and the Infinite. So, both knowledge come from the same source. The life hidden in the science is concerned with the perishable, while spirituality is concerned with the Imperishable. A person who is able to master both, he is different from common people. Very beautiful and precise verse. These are the two important things, both are necessary.

Now Kathopanisad- This is another wonderful dialogue. All of you might have heard of Naciketa and the Yama's wonderful dialogue that takes place. So beautiful and full of significant ideas.

दूरभेदे विपरीते विषुची अविद्या या च विद्येति ज्ञाता । (Katha. II. 4)

So, far apart of these two different things opposite and divergent in the past, the way you gain this knowledge, different methodologies, some times they look like moving in opposite directions. *Avidya* and other called *vidya*, they have divergence in their paths. This is how science and spirituality have to be understood.

Then very devastating attack on scientists. Again same Kathopanisad-

अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः स्यवम् धीराः पण्डितमन्यमानाः ।
दन्द्रम्यमानाः परियन्ति मूढाः अन्धेनैव नीयमानाः यथान्धाः ॥ (Katha. II. 5)

Very devastating statement, those who live in the world of science only, they mean themselves brave and learned, but they wonder on stumbling helplessly like blind men, led by another blind man, If we ignore Spirituality, it is a peril you may put up the show. I am a scientist, I can do this, but in your family life, dealing with people, you may be a failure. And you don't know, how to deal with these problems.

Now, a little analysis is required to understand these two. In both the case, finally it gets translated into knowledge which is communicated by the intellect. Source of the knowledge may be anything, finally we have to be qualified for the knowledge, communicate the knowledge, all that is done through intellect. So, spiritual knowledge versus scientific knowledge '*parā-vidyā*, call *vidya*' well, drop this *parā*, so we have *avidyā* and *vidya* causes lot of confusion also. Science of the Absolute, science of the world within Spiritual Knowledge, Spirituality and *aparā-vidyā*, *avidyā* science of the non absolute, of the material, other than self of the world without scientific knowledge, science of today. And in one philosophical text, they talk of the *satta*. What is the truth of effective realm one is *parmārthika*. It deals with Absolute, one type of knowledge. Other is *vyavahārika*, one is philosophical, another is practical. One is *adhyātma*, another is *vijnana*. One deals with the Absolute, another deals with imperial things. So, in that way analysis comes, it's not difficult, slowly we can understand.

So now, as far as man and society are concerned, our Upanisads are clear. We need both, we cannot get away from this, we need both *aparāvidyā* and *parāvidyā*. We can use the word science in a broader sense. It is essentially intellectual, experimental and dealing with the world without, whereas Spirituality is essentially intuitive, experiential and the world within, and what we call an incoherent boundary. Many people deal with material sciences, deal with micro-structure, we have a concept, of coherent and incoherent boundaries. The incoherent boundary nothing happened, one does not influence another, but the coherent boundary, the dynamic concept is moved. It is an incoherent boundary between *vidyā* and *advidyā*. They don't touch each other, they don't influence each other directly at all, they influence finally, coherence is established in your अन्तःकरण (*antahkarana*). Everyone of us is having an *antahkarana*, *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahankāra*. This *antahkarana* provides a coherence. Each is coherent with science as well as the spirituality. Two different boundaries. But finally they meet. And in the melting part of *antahkarana*, many things come out. So, science is intellectual understanding, spirituality is experiential over-standing, about transcending the intellect. One is over-standing and the other is understanding. They are two different things altogether.

The methodology of science and methodology of spirituality, our ancients express in their own way, they don't tell so specifically. They have put it across, what is the source of knowledge. *Pātanjala-Yoga-Sutras*, perhaps composed around 300 B. C. goes back to *Sāṃkhya-Yoga*, may be 5000 years ago; the idea has started developing in our country. And they say प्रत्यक्षानुमानागमाः प्रमाणानि । (Y Su. 1. 7)

The scientific knowledge, the source of valid knowledge is three, i. e. direct observation, inference (the intellect does it work), and scriptures, that main literature. In the modern language, (the intellect docs it work), and scriptures, that main literature. In the modern language, we will say, experimental observation, that is the *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, and finally literature *āgama*, *nigama*, what is the message, scientific literature. So literature already has some knowledge, you need not repeat it, you need not repeat the experience, it is already accepted. So Patanjali's time, even before Sāmkhya and Yoga, these were so very clear to how normal knowledge is gathered.

We ponder over the Brhadāranyakopanisad, where in a very moving episode, a husband and the wife get involved in discussion of *Brahman* and *ātman*. Kātyāyāni, Matreyi and Yājñavalkya. Yājñavalkya teaches his wife who wanted to learn, she has *brahma-jijnāsā* before leaving the house- आत्मावाऽरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यः मन्तव्यः निदिध्यासितव्यः (Brh. II. 4.5). He says that the Spirit of the Self has to be meditated upon. So, indirectly he has given the sequence which has become very famous *sravanah*, *manana*, *dhyana*. He said that this is the method of acquiring spiritual knowledge. The path of spirituality *sravanam*, *mananam* and *dhyanam*, i.e., hearing, reflection and meditation. At the time of hearing and reflection, the mind remains active, but during meditation it becomes silent.

यदापंचावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह। बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टते तामाहः परमां गतिम् ॥ (Mait. Up. VI. 30)

This is from Maitrāyāni Upanisad. When you have to seek this knowledge, the mind must be silent, intellect has to be silent, and J. Krishnamurthy popularised this expression 'The discipline of the Silent Mind'. Patanjali said योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः (Ysu. I. 2). So, this is something, which we have to put across. Not an easy concept, it was easily understood. Even people of forty, fifty or seventy, have not given much thought. They may be even practising something. It is all a cell without any understanding of the significant. This is very much like our marriage, our big ceremonies, pujas, every where ritual is left.

I want to put in a different way. Spirituality means experience. What is the nature of this experience ? From whatever we see from our tradition. this spiritual experience is something penetrating into our *antahkarana* and it transform what Aurobindo called the mental being. The mental being, there of course, the vital being, the famous *kosas*. We have the *annamayakosa*, then *prānamayakosa*, *manomayakosa*, *vijnānamaya* and *ānandamaya kosa*. The transformation start taking place and the experience, the knowledge, that is the purely spiritual knowledge that brings about a transformation in your mental being, a transformation takes place. The spiritual way of direction as the practice of ethics, morals, values consists very

broadly in the pursuit of *Satyam, Sivam, and Sundaram*. Pursue truth, goodness and beauty. In fact any activity where you don't think of yourself, you think of others, unselfish idealistic humble mediation, even sports, games, fine art, study, reflection, introspection, innerprobing, involvement, everywhere there is spiritual element. So, in life when we do many things, let us now encourage such things which have got spiritual overtone, in it, without which the person cannot reach the Spirit.

In the Scout movement people used to go, and going, taking to nature and gathering together. At the Rishi Valley School they go to see the sunset. The whole school sits under the banyan tree. They watch the sunset, the beauty of sunrise and sunset we miss because we are in bed or we are doing something else. So the beauty of nature, the beauty of sky, the stars have an impact on the beauty of nature. All this leads to spiritual experience, the more you become transpersonal, the more you become unselfish, the more you get involved in others, spiritual experience starts. And it gives you experience, it makes you mature, and you find your life now reflects more of what Vinoba used to stress 'सत्य, प्रेम एवं करुणा' Your life now starts reflecting truthfulness, love and compassion. Vinoba used to say, the embodiment of *satya* was Rama, the embodiment of love was Krsna and the embodiment of *karuna* was Buddha. He says, read the lives of these people. That is how you will understand what is truthfulness, what is love and what is compassion.

Now, everyone may ask that there must be something concrete. Talking in general way philosophically does not help you come down to concrete steps. It has been done by others, the yoga tradition, which is the oldest practical spiritual tradition, in my view, Samkhya was the philosophy, intellectual framework, but the Yoga is applied. It is practical, it goes into detail. For the long time in our country, thought of some activities which you must desist from, you should not do them and some activities which you must get involved in one they call *yama*, another they call *niyama*. And if you start thinking a little, they have not chosen it randomly. In one case *yamas* are five in number *ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacarya and asangraha*, and then Patanjali says, एते जातिदेशकालसमयानवच्छिन्नाः सर्वभौमा महाव्रतम् (Y Su. II. 31). These five *yamas* are to promote ecology in society, to promote harmony in society, to promote goodwill in our country, everywhere. Whatever your tradition may be, these are important. One is non-violent, non-hurting, non-exploitation and *brahmacarya* is non-deviation from the law of your being, your *dharma*. Be faithful for it. Don't follow somebody else. And Krsna says also 'स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः' (Gita III.35). You be true to your *dharma*, the law of the being, with it your bone, genes, the quality in bone, they decide your personality. You try to understand it, you be faithful to it, *asangraha* non-holding, you need things in life, but take as many required, but not go on holding.

ध्यायतो विषयान् पुंसं संगस्तेषूपजायते । (Gītā III.62).

And then he says eventually *krodha* comes, because you can't satisfy your own. क्रोधाद्भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः । स्मृतिभ्रंशाद् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात् प्रणश्यति । (Gītā III.63).

The *niyamas*, conscious effort to promote the internal harmony. *Yama* is more concerned with external harmony in society, but here *niyamas* are to look in your ecology, you mental being, your physical being, your vital being. Are they healthy, are they working well, are they efficient to promote the internal harmony, internal efficiency, internal ecology ? You observe *śauca*, *santoṣa*, *tapas*, *svādhyāya* and *īśvarapranidhāna*, purity in life. It's for you to work-out and your parents, your teacher, your society should help you to understand what is purity i.e. *śauca*. *Santoṣa* is very important thing in our country. We stress an optimistic, positive approach to life, become cynical or negative in approach. One should have a cheerful attitude, understand and try to sort out problems. The problems are there but the shouting does not help.

Then *tapas*, everyone needs something, some exercise, some *yoga*, whatever you may call it and through internal ecology. The body, mind, intellect are not working well. We have a sick body and a sick mind. Intellect may also be sick. To be sure that they become healthy, they contribute the best for proper growth, one has to take to austerity. It is not uniform; it depends on one's own condition.

Don't go on condemning things around, it does not help. The whole system is such that each one has to understand, the strength and the weakness of personality of his own internal ecology *svādhyāya*, to learn your own, to study, to think of your own *svādhyāya*. There are various ways of interpreting it and finally ईश्वर प्रणिधानः— This is something which starts with Patañjali's *Yoga-Sutras*, dedication to our ideal. This *Īśvara* is not realized by going to temple and offering worship, that is not *Īśvara*. The concept in *Yogasutras*, there is reference to an ideal person, क्लेशकर्मविपाकाशयैरपरामृषुरुषविशेषः ईश्वरः (YSu. I.24) तत्र निरतिशयं सर्वज्ञ बीजम् (YSu. I.25). And various things mentioned about *Īśvaraḥ* is a very different concept. The *sthitaprajña* man becomes divine. That should be your ideal. You have the ideal in this case, it is the personality of the *Īśvara* as defined in the text, not *murti* or anything else. There is something associated with this *puruṣa-viśeṣaḥ*. Kṛṣṇa calls Him *Puruṣottama* and we use the word *Maryādā-Puruṣottama* for Rāma. There are the people who have certain ideal for us. One should choose that ideal, and be through to it.

[To continue]

MA EXISTS IN ALL FORMS

—Br. Jaya Bhattacharya

(Translated from Bengali by Dr. Krishna Banerjee)

[Continued from before]

To understand Ma, to know who is Ma, we have no power at all. We are unable even to comprehend the concept of *Mahāshakti*, the Supreme Power, referred to by Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Gopinath Kavirajji as *Ādyāshakti*, the Primordial Power, the true identify of Ma, the Universal Mother. Can we even think of possessing the capacity for delineating the beauty, the sweetness of Ma's limitless *lilā*, manifested within the limits of our temporal life ? When Ma is hailed as the Mother of the universe, She is no one else but *Ādyā Shakti*, the Universal Mother. Just as She is the foundation holding together the magnificent and infinite cosmic structure, She is also, on the other hand, the Primal cause of the same. In Her *swatantrya lilā*, freedom-disport, She is both one and many. We entertain various conceptions of Ma in various forms and keep differentiating them, one from another, according to our limited understanding and forget that She is the Non-dual one and All, beyond our delimiting, partial views. We tend to be oblivious of the truth that whatever is there, whatever has been there so far, each and everything is but a manifestation of one of the endless forms of Ma. And the fact that we forget, the fact that we cannot even conceive of Ma in Her totality, indicates that we are creatures in bondage, that we are not yet liberated. On the other hand, for the one who has been liberated in this very life, for the *jivan mukta*, Ma is everything, Ma is everywhere, reigning supreme as the Consciousness-Power, *Chit-Shakti*, the Supreme Being as Mother. The veil of *Māyā* conceals this transcendental secret from the mundane vision.

One who has the capacity for envisioning Ma in Her true perspective can say what She really is. For us, She is just Ma, our beloved Mother, and nothing else. Ma is the core Form, Ma is the central idea, Ma is the essential Truth, the focal point of all our rituals, worships, meditations, contemplations, in short, of all our spiritual activities and celebrations. We have been used to viewing Ma in all our activities, for Ma Herself has imparted instructions, inspiration and training to us as novices on the mountain path of *sādhana*.

When we worship deities, such as Durga, Kali, Shiva, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Saraswati and so on, we in fact offer our worship to Ma in those various forms of the Supreme. When we have a glimpse of the deities in temple idols, we earnestly aspire for a direct, un-mediated *darshan* of Ma Herself. All the sportive *lilas* of Ma which we

witnessed from close quarters and in which we participated as Ma's "friends", inculcated in us the habit of perceiving all rites and rituals, all divine names and forms, as part and parcel of Ma's infinite *lila*.

Innumerable devotees had Ma's *darshan*. It is not that all of them came with any particular attitude. At the same time, it is also true that each and every person nurtures a particular *bhāva*, an attitude, a feeling state, an outlook, a subtle aura made up of the sum total of the person's sentiments, thoughts, beliefs and propensities. Suppose a person visited Ma simply out of curiosity. The visit would nullify all his preconceptions; he would realize that Ma was not at all what he had expected Her to be on the ground of hearsay. He would feel that he was in the very presence of Ma Saraswati. Hallowed in Her white radiance, there sat before him the very Goddess of divine wisdom, *Parāvidyā*, pouring out Her fathomless wisdom in the few words She uttered. Such would be the kind of his visualization. Again, another person in whom the reverence for motherhood was the most predominant sentiment would see in Ma the perfect embodiment of the essence of Motherhood. For him, She was just Mother, not the mother of a particular person or of some people, but the Mother *par excellence* of all creatures of the universe. Her glance was full of peace, Her words full of solace, Her presence dispelling all fears. The person to whom Ma thus appears as Mother and only Mother becomes like a baby absolutely dependant on Her. Again, there are persons who would like to contemplate Ma in multiple forms, divine and human, personal as well as transcendental, and to them Ma appears in various forms, like the moon reflected in innumerable floatative shapes on the rippling surface of a stream.

[To be continued]

"Leave all your burdens in His hands and he will see to everything;
there will be no more problems."

—Ma Anandamayee

THE SUPREME REALITY & ITS ULTIMATE REALIZATION

– Dr. R. Badri Narayan

[Continued from before]

Madhva (AD 1199-1276), accepted as the founder of the *Dvaita* school, believes that the universe is real and eternal, its changing nature not making it any less so as claimed by Sankara. He views God as different from all living and non-living beings and that He exists in order that His laws may be fulfilled in the universe and the finite souls, less limited than the non-living things in power and intelligence, may release from bondage and sufferings of the world by love and surrender.

We thus find that all the schools believe in the three Realities-different in essence or apparently different because of the veil of ignorance and the desirability of the individual soul detaching itself from the mundane world and coming closer to the Universal Spirit -by loving proximity or complete merger.

In *Vedanta*, therefore, the union of the individual soul with the universal one means the disappearance of a false and unreal individual self into the One Real Self, *Brahman*; breaking of the small pitcher of individual consciousness for it to merge in the vast ocean of universal cosmic consciousness.

The *Visistadvaitins*, contend that it is only for freeing his own self from the sufferings of worldly existence and for attaining unending bliss that one would aspire and try for *moksa*. This does not go very well with the *advaitic* concept of *moksa*, according to which there would be, in release, a cessation of all ideas relating to the self termed "I". Sri Yamunacarya (ca. 916 AD), therefore, suggests that it is only the body-consciousness of "I" that ceases with the attainment of *moksa*, but the Self-consciousness persists, as it did for seers like Vamadeva. What Sankara calls *maya*, which is neither real nor unreal, Ramanuja calls *Sakti*, or power eternally co-existent with *Brahman*, the Absolute, and becomes personal *Isvara* or God, the repository of all blessed qualities. The individual soul is related to God as a servant to his master, forming as it does His body. The embodied soul never merges in Him, but when released from the physical body, it is clothed in a body of *suddha-sattva* with which it is able to commune with God and blissfully experience His loving presence through eternity. Whatever may be the relative acceptability of the two views, it is certainly easier to worship God with form and attributes, offering incense and flowers, rather than to meditate on union with the Absolute *Brahman*.

One way for man to reduce the gap between himself and God is for God to come to human level in *Avatara* form, and He does so because He cares for us and wants to commune with us directly. The *Avatara* is not merely a Messenger of God aiding us in our spiritual evolution, but like a mother coming personally to her child with an emotional binding that develops into a personal devotion. The other way is to elevate humankind towards divinity. The man who achieves this state of closeness to God is believed to have attained perfection; he is a *Siddha*, who has climbed the heights of Yoga, a *Yogārudha*.

But what is spiritual evolution ? It is realization of the existence of something higher, more sublime, more serene and more satisfying than anything perceptible by the sense-organs or the intellect, to which every being is inseparably connected and inter-connected. Call this universal Oneness and Unity, call it God or anything else; imagine it to be a pure abstract concept or to have an anthropomorphic form if that suits you better; consider it to be One or Many, this does exist, and its realization will certainly lead you to eternal bliss.

Yoga is defined as the union or coming together of the essence of one with that of another; in this case, of the human with the divine, *Jivātmān* with *Paramātmān*. Its secondary meaning is the pre-requisite and process for the achievement of this union. Thus it is both the means and the end. The *Bhagavadgīta* is a compendium of the *Yoga* doctrine on the knowledge of the One Self-existent Being and the means by which the human spirit can attain complete union with the Supreme Spirit. It has, therefore, been called a *Brahmavidyā* and a *Yogasāstra*. This *Sāstra* explains that the Supreme Being can be realized only through a loving devotion to Him (*Bhakti*) which can be acquired and cultivated by the following factors : a sincere performance of duties pertaining to one's station in life gives correct knowledge (*jnāna*) regarding one's self that it is subordinate to the Lord; this produces a sense of detachment (*vairāgya*) from all things other than the Supreme Being, culminating in *Bhakti*.

Evenness of mind (equanimity with regard to success and failure and other pairs of opposites) has been called Yoga; *Samatvam Yoga Ucyate* (G.II.48) because it is a very important factor in Yoga. It has been further said (G.V.19) that *Samsāra* is overcome here itself by those whose minds rest in equalness, because the individual self, when uncontaminated by *Prakṛti*, is the same everywhere, that is, as the Brahman (*Atman*). If they are fixed in the equality of all selves; they verily abide in Brahman, and this abidance is the conquest of *samsāra*. Such a person, with a vision of equality and a feeling of equanimity, sees his self abiding in all beings, and all being in his self (G. VI.29).

Equanimity (*Sthiratā*) is a very important factor in Yoga. This quietude, calm and silence, the stillness of which no disturbance can affect, is to be cultivated gradually by disciplining the mind by the practice of *Yoga*. This evenness of temper has been called *Yoga*. The skill in action lies in the practice of this *Yoga* (*Yogah karmasu kausalam*), (G. II.50.B). This calm does not, however, include an inert acceptance of any failure in *sadhana* as an indication of the Divine will. Rather, one should find out the reason behind the failure and then go forward with a renewed intensity of aspiration and with full faith in the Divine support for success. No hurry, but no inertia either; neither a *rājasic* eagerness nor *tāmasic* indolence; a steady persistent call and working. No snatching or clutching of realization, but allowing it to come in its natural way.

Various paths have been suggested for achieving such a state. *Karmayoga* is the path by which the aspirant seeks to realize God through activity without attachment, rather detachment in all activities, which should not, however, be confused with passive indifference. *Jnanayoga* is the abidance in the purified self by those who have controlled their minds; a *jnanayogi* is not one who can give scholastic interpretation of the scriptures, but one who has realized that God is the real Master and he is only a tool in His hands. *Bhaktiyoga* is abidance in meditation and other forms of adoration with one-pointed love for the Supreme Being. All the three *yogas* are thus interconnected.

The *yoga* of the Bhagavadgita is, therefore *vairāgya* and *abhyāsa* blended together (G.VI.35). *Abhyāsa* has been construed as cultivating favourable attitude in the direction of the Self by repeated contemplation of Its being, a repository of infinite auspicious attributes; *vairāgya* is the absence of hankering for anything other than the Divine Self. This is the meaning of the practice of non-attachment and steadfastness as the principle behind the *yoga* of the *Gita*. Sri Kṛṣṇa has equated *samnyasa* with *yoga* (G.VI.2) by equating both to disciplined activity. Despite this, the serenity and quietude (*sama*) of VI.3 has been misinterpreted by many scholars as bereft of the principle of action. This is because we are not used to bring activity and serenity in one platform. The doubt is dispelled if we look at the life of Sri Kṛṣṇa who was bristling with activity at all times, and who taught in the *Gita* what he practised in life and practised what He taught. By this interpretation of *sama* He would neither be regarded as a *Yogin* nor a *Yogārudha*.

With more than ninety percent of the Vedas dealing with innumerable rituals and ceremonies, the popular idea of religion begins and ends with their performance, and often the attention to these is so exclusive and blinding that its votaries forget the more important aspect of religion, namely, service to fellow creatures, ethical conduct and meditation. This tendency was further augmented by Jaimini's simplistic

formula that liberation can be attained by just performing the rituals prescribed for everyday practice and for special occasions.

Sankara admitted that everyone has to take to rituals in the early days of his spiritual life, but should not cling to them as the be-all and end-all in religion. He lambasted Jaimini's theory that *Karma* alone, to whatever class (*Nitya*, *Kāmya* etc) it belongs, will by itself bring out spiritual light and lead one to the height of divine bliss. His scathing criticism that *Karma*, per se, is incapable of giving liberation, has often been misunderstood as an advocacy for quietism, a passive attitude towards life and cessation of all activities in general. Sankara's criticism about the limited efficacy does not apply to *nitya karma* either, for in the light given to it by the *Mimāṃsakas* it was rituals like *Agnihotra*, but for *Gita* and *Vedānta* it includes the social duties also. The attitude of mind in the performance of these duties also has to be one of non-attachment. Also, Sankara's life of intense activity is, by itself, sufficient refutation against this charge. He calls on us for ceaseless effort (and that includes doing the right work in the right spirit), to conquer the mind and make it turn towards *Ātman*, or *Brahman*. This is *nivṛtti mārga* and the first step towards *Jnana nisthā* (mental discipline to get Self-realization).

Sankara did not dispense with the importance of *bhakti* either. The various stotras composed by him are eloquent witness of his deep *bhakti*. But what is more, in his exposition to *jnananisthā* (G. XVIII.55) he states that *jnananisthā* is the highest form of *bhakti*. It is not a cold heartless process; it is the extremely concentrated passion for the *Ātman*. In fact, he states in his *Viveka Cudāmani* (31) that among things conducive of liberation, devotion (*Bhakti*) alone holds the supreme place (*moksakāranasamagram bhaktireva gariyasi*), and he defines *bhakti* as the seeking after one's real nature. Sandilya, however, defines *bhakti* as extreme attachment to God. He says elsewhere that *bhakti* to personal God, when it fully ripens, will lead to impersonal God. Ramanuja also has established (G.B. Ch. VII. Intro) the identity of meaning between the two passages, "Knowing Him alone one becomes immortal here" (Tai.A.3.12.7) and "Not by Vedas, nor by austerities.... but by single-minded devotion..." (G.XI.53-54) and thus between *jnana* and *bhakti*.

In order to effect the union with God through unselfish activities performed as sacrifice to Him (*karmayoga*) and its consequent development into *Jnana* and *Bhakti*, one has to discipline his mind properly into a state of tranquility and quietude, for which the practice of meditation, technically known as *Rajayoga*, has been emphasized in the *Gita*. The purpose of controlling the mind is to make it harmonious with the nature of the *Atman* in which it is expected to be established and with which it has a constitutional disparity. As long as the mind has the tendency to move towards

objects of senses, it can not be fixed in the Self. Patanjali has prescribed in eight-fold path to *Rājayoga*, starting with moral discipline (*yama*), through certain bodily postures (*asana*) and control of the breath (*prānāyāma*), culminating in *samadhi* in which the mind is completely filled with Truth alone and loses all external sense.

Union with God, the mind being fixed in Him, does not mean that one is sitting cross-legged for twenty four hours with a string of beads in his hands, chanting the name of his *Istadevatā* or some *slokas* to the exclusion of everything else. Living in God is living like a man of steady wisdom. An approach to God and a life in Divinity do not mean a loss of the values of life, but their enhancement and enrichment by giving a touch of divinity into your thought and action, to your entire life. Again, *bhakti* is not the impatient turbulent orgy of the ignorant, dancing mad with songs and psalms, but it is a silent love in the deep of one's inmost being giving him strength in all undertakings, security in all upheavals and softness to the flash of joy. Nor is it just obedience-that is only the first stage - but a tuning with the Divine so that one is a mere instrument in His hands : *Tvayā Hrsikesa hrdisthitena, yathā niyukto 'smi tathā karomi.*

As the last sermon (G.XVIII. 66) Sri Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to relinquish completely *bhakti yogas*, But *bhakti* for God can be aroused in a person who is free from evils, because to such a person alone God can be exceedingly dear. Often the sin accumulated because of many past misdeeds is so heavy as not be expiated in one life. The Lord has also said (G. VII.14) that the *māyā* veiling Him can be dispelled by the sole means of surrendering to Him. He, therefore, suggests giving up of all prescribed expiratory work for removing the varied sins piled up so far and seek Him alone for refuge. This is the path of *Śaranāgati* which is available to all, irrespective of anything.

OUR UNIVERSAL MA ANANDAMAYEE : PERSONIFICATION OF LOVE AND COMPASSION

– Chitra Ghosh

In May, 1961 Ma was in Bombay in the premises of Sri B. K. Shah (Ex-President, Anandamayee Sangha). He is known to all Ma's devotees as "Bhāiyya." Ma was residing in a pagoda type wooden cottage in the midst of Bhāiyya's garden.

Bhāiyya had requested Ma to pay a visit to Tata Memorial Cancer Hospital, where respected Sri Gopinath Kavirajji was convalescing after his critical cancer operation. Sri Gopinath Kaviraj was one of those philosophers in whom great erudition and high scholarship was combined with deep spirituality and genuine aspiration for experiencing the Truth propounded in Philosophy.

'Gopibābā'-as Ma called him would be released soon and Bhāiyya pleaded, with Ma to have the *kheyāl* to visit the hospital on the day Baba will be discharged. Ma asked Bhāiyya to arrange for Her visit. The doctors, nurses and staff of the Tata Cancer Hospital were also very much eager to have *darshan* of Ma. They were surprised at the miraculous cure of Gopibābā from such a critical attack of cancer at this ripe old age.

The date was fixed and I had the rare opportunity, luck and above all Ma's *kripa* to accompany Her with Bhāiyya and Paramananda Swami for the visit to the Hospital.

As Ma entered the cabin of Gopibābā he was all set and ready for his trip back with Ma. The doctors and nurses stood in a line greeting Ma with garlands. Ma accepted their garlands but returned "the *mālās*" to them after blessing them. However, She kept aside a huge red rose *mala*. Ma was offered a basket of red big apples also. She distributed all the apples but kept 2 big red apples aside. She looked at me and asked me to keep the red rose mala and the 2 apples, saying in Bengali "*Rakho-parey-lagabo*" (keep aside for future distribution).

Now Ma in her sweet voice overflowing with compassion thanked the doctors and nurses for their selfless, untiring *seva* of Baba. They all said to Ma "Its your blessings and *Kheyāl* and *Kripa* that miraculously saved Baba-we are only instruments of God-nothing else !"

At this moment I heard someone's feeble voice, as if weeping and muttering, 'Ha Allah' thrice. I moved to the next cabin and peeped in. Ma was then supervising the arrangements regarding Baba's journey by wheel chair. Inside the adjacent cabin I saw an Arabic Muslim, patient, with brown beard and hair lying straight on his bed. His body was so much emaciated that he looked like a skeleton. His mid-

chest had caved in, tears of pain (acute) and suffering were rolling down his sunken cheeks. "Hiccups" were coming off and on. Now and then he uttered feebly "Ha Allah !" His eyes were closed. His attending nurse told me he was a terminal lung cancer patient.

I returned near Ma. Ma started to move towards the corridor and the elevator with Gopibaba and his troupe of Doctors and Nurses. Suddenly She reverted back and without a word walked steadily towards the cabin of the Arabian Muslim patient. Bhaiya looked puzzled, Paramanandaji looked serene; the others and Gopibaba were spellbound and just halted on the way, stunned !

I entered with Ma into the cabin of the Arabian patient. Bhaiya and all stood outside. Ma said smilingly- 'Baba, I have come to you, look at me !' saying this, She caressed the caved in chest of the terminal cancer patient with Her soft heavenly blissful compassionate touches thrice. I felt that by doing this Ma was giving him liberation from human bondage or mortal coils. Then She wiped his overflowing tears with the corner of Her dhoti. Now Ma took the red rose garland from my hand and placed it on the neck and chest of the muslim patient. Soon after, Ma took from me one of the big apples and put it into his folded hands. The other apple Ma gave to his nurse. Now the patient slowly opened his eyes and gazed in gratitude at Ma-he took Ma's hand and put it on his head. Ma made a gesture signifying that he repeats within, his Koran Mantra. Ma and the patient had change of glances. Ma stood near him five minutes-Her eyes had an X-Ray look through him as if She was witnessing his past, present and future all at the same time. I just wept, to see this union (Spiritual) of a true devotee and God, ("*Bhakta-Bhagabāner milan*" in Bengali) irrespective of caste, creed, religion and nationality. Ma knew this was his first-cum-last *darshan*. Ma walked backwards instead of turning round so that the patient could see Her till She went out. The doctors told Ma that his days were numbered. Next morning on my own I asked Bhaiya to find out how the Arabian patient was. In the afternoon Bhaiya told me that he (patient) died the same night peacefully. I rushed to tell Ma but before I could utter any words, Ma told me in Bengali- "*Arab desher baba chole gachhay*". "Arabian Baba is no more" ! So Ma's unsolicited *Kripa (Ahetuk)* hastened his sojourn back to the Kingdom of Heaven where there is everlasting peace. The Arabian Baba was no more."

*"Only He knows to whom
You reveal Yourself
and once you have known Him you become
one with Him" (Tulsidas- Ram Charit Manas)*

SHREE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE MA— GOD'S GIFT TO MANKIND

— Dr.Indu Tikekar

This century has been eulogized as unique in widening the horizons of Science and technology. The patrons of science cherished the dream of happy, prosperous, healthy and peace loving homo-sapiens on earth. And the possibility of such a progressive human world appeared quite evident when man walked on Moon, climbed the Everest and tried to play equally with heredity and environment. The world of senses, the gross universe of five elements, has been the main dominating factor in human psyche throughout the century last decade, the heavenly dream of peace and happiness for individual and society, is fast crumbling down. Not only that destructive wars and paralyzing infightings have blackened the victories of the last century, surging doubt is engulfing serious thinking humanity as to whether there will be enough healthy food, unpolluted drinking water or even clean oxygen to breath on earth. Naturally a pertinent question is raised : What has gone wrong ? Why has the human world been led astray ? Is progress real one or merely an illusion ?

It has been India's privilege and role, since ancient ages, to guide humanity when grave problems crop up. India is rightly called "The God intoxicated country". Swami Vivekananda had pointed out that every country has her own God-given mission, and India's mission is to provide spiritual guidance to humanity. Time ad again, the unseen, yet all powerfull and all-pervading Reality, which is called *Ashraya*—the final resort by Srimad Bhāgawata—pceps in human affairs, through some seers, saints or *Avataras*, to create the awareness of defects, wrong doing and short comings of the passing age, and prompts individuals and groups to choose the correct way out of the calamitous situation. Today the whole human world has reached a turning point. And we Indians believe that the path is already shown by great spiritual leaders. Shree Shree Ma Anandamayeeji is a special expression of Divinity in human form guiding us out of the present impossible blockade.

Shree Shree Ma has been for us a personified expression of India's ancient wisdom, a living symbol of oneness of life and a unique synthesis of all the paths, Yoga, devotion, action blended into a deep understanding of the phenomenon of life, leading towards the wholeness of spiritual realization. Not that She was the only moving figure in the spiritual arena of the past and the present century in India to enrich the cultural renasissance, a host of remarkable spiritual guides like Ramakrishna

Paramahansa, Sharada Ma, Devendranath Thakur, Keshavchandra Sen, Rammohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda and lastly Yogi Shree Aurobindo were born in Bengal alone, not to mention many other like Lokmanya Tilak, Lala Lajpat Ray, Mahatma Gandhi, Rishi Dayanad and others from all over India. They all emphasized the spiritual glory of India's past, awakened the sleeping majority to accomplish the herculian task of freeing the nation from the clutches of inner and overt slavery. In the whole world India could demonstrate that the will to conquer through inner determination, moral strength and spiritual awareness can work wonders.

And yet, Ma Anandamayee's *Āvirbhāva* in human form - was an outstanding phenomenon, simply because of the spontaneity and simplicity with which She stepped out into the gatherings of scholars and larger Indian society from a traditional Hindu Brahmin family of Bengal, where even the face of a young married girl is covered while facing elders. In many ways She was a social revolutionary, easily and unconsciously setting aside many barricades. Her spiritual status commanded such a respect and honour that none could dare utter a word against her pure, spontaneous and yet non-traditional behaviour. Her courage came to her without any effort, quite like her spiritual *sadhana* itself which was a play to her. Her love and care for all, her consideration and respect for elderly ones, her sense of duty as a polite, hard-working house-wife and afterwards the responsibility of a Spiritual Guru of thousands of seekers not only from India but from many other countries as well, everything came to her without any struggle, quite in the fashion of the beautiful petals of a pure and fragrant jasmine flower opening one by one to the joys of the spiritual seekers.

Her inner joy was contagious, so much so, that leaving back her parent's given name-Nirmala, She was called 'Anandamaye-' an ever present beatitude pervading not only her person but the very atmosphere around her. No wonder that every where She was welcomed with eagerness. When honey is ready, bees need no invitation. Even at the time of birth, She had no business to cry, as normally all newborn babies do without exception. When asked how and why such a wonderous thing happened, She amusedly told, 'How could I cry, when I could see from our window the beauty of the lush green trees, waving joyously, out in the courtyard?' She could even recollect the name of an elderly person who visited their home on the 13th day after her birth, when her mother could not remember it. That She was a very special embodiment of Life as divinity could be gathered from the one occasion when She was chosen at the age of five, for *kumari puja* the worship of a very young girl.

No lust, not a tinge of worldliness, could touch her all her life, and She could only be immersed in *Mahābhāva* all the time, a spiritually advanced stage when the up

lifted all-pervading consciousness of the oneness of life alone dominates. Such a non-dual awareness is seen only in mature, realized and rare souls like Radha of the *Dwāpar Yuga*. Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj, himself a great yogi and a vastly learned personality-declared Shree Shree Ma as a very rare example of Spiritual Guru. It seems that Shree Shree Ma equals herself with the Rigvedic seer Vagambhruni, whose spontaneous utterances of the Advaitic realization are included in the famous tenth Mandala of Rigveda; "*Aham Brahma-Swarupini.... Shunyam cha ashunyam cha, Aham akhilam jagat*" [I am the final, eternal, limitless spiritual Reality. I am the Void, as well as non-void itself. I am the whole of this moving Cosmos.]

Obviously, She could see her own word, in the beginning. But Bholanath, her husband, could see her as beyond any consciousness of the difference between male and female and the attraction between them, from the very first day of their married life. Her very touch transformed him into a devotee and a spiritual seeker. Till his last he was a devout seeker, a protector and always a follower of her. As if to complete the previous century's example of Shree Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Ma Sharadamani-the Spiritual teacher and his spouse as his disciple, here was a converse of the same experience, perhaps even more instructive for today's consumeristic society. Consumerism treats everything and even everybody specially woman-as an object for enjoyment. Since ancient times, India has evolved the ideal of perfection in human form wherein there is total freedom from sex-attraction. The sadhana paths of *yoga, bhakti* or *dyāna* ultimately take a seeker to the consumption of the experience of Oneness, where all quality vanishes, how can male and female attraction survive where All is one? *Sarvam Khalu idam Brahma?* It follows that none in society and nothing in nature can be treated as objects for consumption. Everything and everybody are an expression of the Divine Reality, as sung in the Bhagavad Geeta, and deserve prayer and worship. Shree Shree Ma instructed all around her through her simple, childlike way the great tenets of spiritual *sadhana*, leading them to a life of simplicity, prayerfulness and joy. All our present-day distresses have sprung from our lustful attitude towards life.

Every individual is different from others, and needs special guidance for spiritual advancement. Shree Shree Ma treated everyone according to his or her special temperament and characteristic. One major point of importance She usually emphasized for every one. That one has to give oneself totally in *sadhana*, partial approach and attention lead not only to distraction, but also to aberrations. Once while in Varanasi, during the decade of sixties, Shree Shree Ma was visited by a group of Sarvodaya social workers headed by Shree Shankarao Deo from Maharashtra, a great social

leader as well as spiritual aspirant. He asked Ma the most pertinent question-ever-present on a struggling spiritual seeker's mind. "Ma, how can one keep one's mind steadfast in *dhyana*?" Smiling with all her radiance Shree Shree Ma spoke in her usual simple, yet cryptic way. "Whatever time, say five minutes, you could snatch for yourself, give it totally. A seed cannot be sprouted if sown broken." Wholeness of total attention is the first requirement to achieve wholeness in spirituality. Obviously, whatever deed, work, we do wholeheartedly, no residue remains, and no possibility of hankering after the results of our deeds in terms of money, power or status in society, could hamper the simplicity of total awareness of our psyche.

The whole human world is reeling under the stresses and strains of the modern so-called developed societies. Are we to be considered developed when war-mongering in the name of religion, caste, creed or nation is encouraged? Are we to be supposed advanced and learned while we are absorbed in break-neck competition for getting more and more of things for enjoyment? Actually there is nothing like materialistic seeking as apart from spiritual aspiration. To treat life in divisions is the real and only sin. Shree Shree Ma has always pointed out that politics, finance, education and all other sections of life are suffering from partial approach that breeds the seeds of misery, injustice and cruelty. Shree Shree Ma implored all concerned to live totally, holistically, that is spiritually. Many influential families in politics and business sought her advice and She time and again advised them to be lenient, compassionate, just, and selfless. If these virtues of head and heart are lacking in us are we still to be taken as human beings? Spiritual aspiration is the only distinguishing mark of being human.

Shree Shree Ma knew that unless women are rightly educated, are encouraged to come forward in society to handle all sorts of responsibilities, there will be no end to the cruelties in the names of religion, tradition or modernities. As capable human beings, women well-educated in our sciences and arts, of ancient India, can no more be the victims of many abuses. Through her own example Shree Shree Ma has encouraged many educated young girls to lead the spiritual life of intense *sadhana*. Ashram school for young brahmacharinees are guiding them.

Physical well-being is also not to be neglected, according to Shree Shree Ma. Through her encouragement hospitals with most modern facilities are setup and thousands get loving treatment for bodily diseases.

But all learning, all care for bodily and mental health are futile if *sadhana*, spiritual practice is forgotten. So Shree Shree Ma started organizing *Sadhana saptahas*, week long spiritual programmes every year. Eminent spiritual gurus are invited to speak and guide. Though Shree Shree Ma has dropped her earthly body, her pres

ence is always sensed by her near and dear ones. In all our exertions, if we forget ourselves, then in that void Ma's presence is felt. Her presence is like the sweet tune of Shree Krishna's flute, and a flute allows the spiritual melody played only if it is inwardly empty, void. This humility is the life breath of spirituality. All *sadhana* is to usher in this emptiness, nothingness.

Shree Shree Ma's spiritual guidance recognized no divisions of religion nor of country. She attracted all from the nook and corner of the whole earth. Many Muslim and Christian devotees surrounded her, finding in her the incarnation of peace and love. During the second world war, one German devotee of Shree Shree Ma-Alfred Wuerfel, working in the German Consulate, was incarcerated at the Dehradun jail and he used to go from the jail every day just to have a glimpse of his spiritual Guru-Shree Ma! The authorities of jail knew this saintly person so well that they never objected to his absence from jail while he could get a glimpse of his own great Mother ! What are the different branches sprouted from the original tree of spirituality, at different times and in different circumstances ? Are not all seeking the same oneness, same peace and beatitude, where lies the possibility of quarrel if deep understanding dawns on earth through the spiritual strivings of human beings ?

Through Shree Shree Ma's enlightening example India has again sought to explain the root of human misery. Through her sublime effortless effort the way to realize oneness is again powerfully explored. There is no other way to find unconditional joy at heart and peace and poise in outside world except the ancient and ever - new path of spirituality exemplified by Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee. Salutations to Her, salutations to Her.

SHREE SHREE MA'S CONTRIBUTION FOR THE BENEFIT OF MANKIND

- Justice Amitav Banerji

Ma Anandamayee's contribution to the social and spiritual world is immeasurable. Any effort to encapsulate them is not likely to succeed. Ma's contribution is fathomless, but all pervading. Ma was everywhere and Ma is everywhere. Ma was *Bhakta's* mind, thought and conscience. and was Omnipresent, Ma is Omniscient. Ma responds to the call of the bhakta. I have personal experience in this regard. I will narrate an incident that took place in November, 1994.

We were going to Kankhal by car to attend the 'Sanyam Saptah'. We had reached Bijnor, some 700 km from Allahabad and were on our way to Kankhal. About 40 km from Hardwar, we saw a crowd assembled on the road and even from some 400 yards away it appeared that an accident had taken place. Men with lathis were blocking the road. Vehicles coming from the Hardwar side were asked to leave the road and take the roadside. The nearer we got to the site of the accident we saw belligerent mood of those wielding lathis. We could have turned back, taken some other road but that would mean a detour of over a hundred kilometers and perhaps another three hours. It was already past four in the afternoon. It was a semi-jungle type area. There were not many villages and the nearest urban area was Hardwar. I could think of nothing else, so I uttered a prayer to Ma, '*Ma RakshāKaro* (Ma, save us) Before the car was stopped we saw a child, blood still oozing from his body, and where we stopped, there was blood all over the place. They shouted '*roko*' (stop) rather harshly. We stopped. I asked them, '*Kahiye*' (speak). They had surrounded the car. Some of their lathis were being kept on the car. My wife and my friend's wife lowered the glass of their door and tried to see the dead child. Many pairs of eyes looked at us, our luggage and one of them, a youngman of 20 plus, said, "Ladies would be put to difficulty-let them go". I do not know what transpired in their mind, but none protested and we were allowed to proceed. Some super power made them all think alike and let us move forward. Unbelievable, it was sure that Ma was there, and Ma saved us that day. When I narrated this event later that day in Hardwar, I was told that anything could have happened, for the people in such cases take law in their hands and that we had a very good fortune to escape their wrath. I knew in my heart of hearts that but for Ma's blessings we could not have got out of the situation.

Ruminating over our good fortune, I noticed that there was change of tone of the leader of the mob in asking us to proceed. In a grim situation like the above this could only be due to some unknown and unseen power that saved us that day. That power

had moulded their thinking and action. I for one never had an inkling of doubt that it was Ma's *kripa, ashirwad*, affection, that was there. Although now we do not see Ma's physical self, but I see that all the time in mind. I recall the various moments in Ma's presence and rejoice that Ma is there.

Ma Anandamayee is the bliss of the Upanishads personified. A section of contemporary Indians have claimed that Ma Anandamayee is one of the sages described in the Upanishads. Those who have come in her contact have their own view and all agree that she was a 'mystic sage'.

Shri Shyamananda Banerji in a book titled, 'A mystic sage' writes: "in fact, the Upanishad is regarded as the magnum matrix in Indian life and thought. The Upanishad means inner knowledge, that secret or esoteric knowledge which it means to the realization of the Ultimate."

Schopenhauer's eulogy reads: "In the world, there is no study so beneficial, so elevating as the study of the Upanishads: it has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death."

I would quote one more passage from Shri Shyamananda Banerji's book, which will touch a core subject of the spirituality. He writes: "The Upanishads say that Truth is the final goal and home of man. It is absolute, and it does not change with the flux of time. In fact Truth of the Upanishads is Brahman Himself, and the light of this Truth is the end of this journey. It is this eternal Truth which has been seeking expression through the centuries, and all our conflicts with life and the world. In the language of the Vedas Truth is '*Yam jnatva na param jnanam*' ie, 'it is that which being known, there is nothing else required to be known'.

The knowledge of the Brahman, the blissful, which shines forth is perceived by the wise. 'He is the light of light'. 'His radiance illumines the entire world.

A question arises at this stage: can a human being attain such a state? Upanishad's reply is, '*It is knowable*' and by knowing Him everything is known.' This cannot be achieved by mere learning. It can be known by being one with it. A person has to strive, struggle to achieve a union with Him. The path is a narrow one-and it involves austerity, conquest of the self, righteous action, and complete subjugation of lower senses.

Ma Anandamayee is completely devoid of selfhood. She finds herself in stages of perfect union with the featureless Absolute. She is in stages of union with God and God is in her. That is the impression one carries after having seen her and known her for sometime. The way she spoke, the contents thereof, the direction of her talk, the reference to her physical self as 'this body' is very significant. I for one felt, that she was no ordinary mortal; she had attained illumined consciousness and for ordinary mortals the physical resemblance' to that what is stated to be in the Upanishads as

'Brahman'. There may be some who may not agree with me, but I venture to say that I have an unshaken belief in what I say above.

You may recall one of her sayings: 'I am what I was, and shall remain now and for evermore'. Very authoritative indeed. Our heads bow at her above utterance. Coming from her lips the above words spell a magic wand to galvanize our thoughts, rekindle our consciousness (*chetanā*), and to seek the knowledge that eludes us. Ma Anandamayee, is not a mere mortal. She had appeared with a physical body to guide the ordinary house holder and steer him or her to path of austerity, selflessness, abjuration of lower senses and tread on a path of righteousness. She used to remind us that the Lord (*Narayana*) was there in the heart of everyone. For this everyone must treat everyone with respect and dignity. Of course, some did not believe in this, questioned the wisdom of respecting another with a sordid record of activities. The action of such a man was liable to be condemned no doubt, but he/she could also change his/her activities. And Ma was often seen addressing such persons too. There was a mission and zeal in this regard. Since she was beyond the usual way of recording one's approval or disapproval, she would spread her benevolence and affection in order to change the modus operandi of such a person and induce him to think and act in a manner which would have the approbation of all concerned. We saw such an aura of her power of love, of understanding, her benevolence and above all of her righteousness, the ineffaceable smile summed her spirit, the spirit of her all pervading protection and consideration for such a person. Almost always such a person changed his attitude, and sometime even after the very first meeting. This was Ma Anandamayee's mission, but not the only one. Her '*anandaiswarya*' murti was non-parallel. This was the manifestation of the '*Brahman*'.

Ma Anandamayee, the name itself, gives us sheer delight, conjures up a picture of an immaculate personality, an apostle of love and piety, of kindness and compassion, whose abiding faith and trust in Truth, poured nectar of sweet blessings and created a bliss for those who were present there. I have nothing but deep faith and belief that Ma is Omnipresent, Omniscient and responds to a call full of ardour from any of her devotee. I have noticed this more than once. I have had the good fortune to come in her presence from 1955, at the house of Late Gopal Swarup Pathak, the eminent legal luminary of India and subsequently, Vice President of India. I could feel the presence of an ethereal form, and felt that her eyes had seen everything. This feeling made an immense impact on me. There are some aspects which cannot be described adequately, an ineffable quality, which made her mystic.

There was sociological aspect which moulded the thinking of Ma's *bhaktas*. A feeling went round that Ma's blessings protected the devotee from all evils, but then,

one had to maintain purity of thought, action and in himself or herself in a manner that was fair and transparent. While in her presence, one had to control his or her mind, for Ma had the power to notice them. Ma would know the feelings and desires of such a person instantly. Hence it was necessary that the devotee or any other visitor had to change his views and attitude and that was a gain for the society.

Hundreds came to have Ma's *darshan* wherever she went. Hundreds came to meet her and seek her blessings, some came to seek advice in their problems. All these persons came with a hope, and Ma met them, discussed their problems, gave advice and solace wherever necessary. A few simple words of advice and the person went back happy and overwhelmed with her love. They spread the word that Ma was alive to human problems and gave words of advice that worked like balm. In other words they went back satisfied and happy. If philosophers say that 'happiness is an attitude of mind', Ma infused some of her attributes in this respect, one may say 'in the mind-set' of those persons and that worked like a miracle. The spirit of happiness prevailed. And that was something that one could not get easily or everywhere.

Ma's voice was soothing and affectionate. It was persuasive. It was confidence creative. Her words would get engraved in the mind of the devotee and the listener. They formed an instant rapport with the listener and the latter understood that the words so uttered were in his interest. They felt they were very close to her, and spoke to her in confidence. And a few words from Ma, caused complete transformation. 'Ma was bliss herself', was the refrain one heard everywhere.

Ma was 'mother to everyone'. The indelible impression left behind was that she was mother, Ma to everyone. The Universal Ma, Ma the affectionate and, then, Anandamayee Ma. This feeling did wonders to the populace. Her large following all over the country whether they understood Ma's language or not. But Ma, ie, Mother, always understands the child's problems and wants. And that means kindness, compassion and benevolence. Ma had them in abundance and distributed them to all those who sought them.

Ma was '*mātri-śakti*', the power which we find in our scriptures, *mātri-śakti* was more powerful than anything else. In this country 'mother's position' has always been on a high pedestal. She has been assigned a superior position. A benign mother, a kind-hearted, affectionate mother, a sincere well-wisher is our concept of mother. Mother is also the first teacher of the child. Similarly, Ma was a teacher to her devot-

ees. This was another aspect of Ma's activities. Removing traces of want and educating the minds with fair and clear thinking was Ma's great contribution to the society.

Ma's advent is all well chronicled. It needs no repetition. But how did Ma get cosmic powers? Ma did not get it by any penance or learning. Ma had it all the time, it became manifest gradually.

I recall two passages from Shrimad Bhagawad Gita and the Ram Charit Manas, expressing more or less the same view. I quote them here. Gita Chapter IV slokas 7 & 8—

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

And a *Chaupai* from Balkanda, Stanza 121, where Sant Tulsidas penned these lines—

जब जब होई धरम के हानी ।
बाढ़हिं असुर अधम अभिमानी ॥
तब तब प्रभु धरि बिबिध सरीरा ।
हरहिं कृपानिधि सज्जन पीरा ॥

These two scriptures state more or less the same view but in different languages eg Sankrit and Avadhi Hindi. Arjuna enquires how is it possible for him to reveal the doctrine that was prevalent at the beginning of the creation when he was born in the present age. Lord Krishna replied that he frequently appeared in the world in material garb whenever it was necessary, particularly when wicked people thrived and harassed virtuous people, when good and noble customs and traditions were trampled under foot and were replaced by evil and mischievous customs, he appeared to destroy the wicked and eradicate the evil customs and restore good traditions and to help virtuous people.

Sant Tulsidas says the same thing, perhaps in a manner, to which we are accustomed. Nevertheless, Ma Anandamayee also appears in the same way. Ma had a human form no doubt, but she was different and that was much too evident. The physical frame was no different but the mental frame, the thought, the activities and the consciousness was entirely different. She was born with indications of greatness, with qualities that saints even did not possess. She was Omniscient and Omnipresent, who did not have to learn anything. Ma was here on earth, to reform and

mend the ways of the wayward, evil thinking persons and attract good men and women to think of God. Ma had indeed different ways for different people, but her affection was the same for all. It was overpowering and all pervading.

Ma did not write any book on her advices. It was unnecessary. Ma's *vānis* are printed by those who were with her and heard her. Numerous are her *vānis* and a perusal of the same makes life sublime. A whole new world is laid bare, a new vision, in short, there is an awakening. Swami Virajananda Maharaj, may be quoted, in regard to Ma's clarion call for abiding to truth. He says, Ma would caution: What proves to be false and ephemeral, and one has to transcend the periphery of its jurisdiction and establish himself in '*satya*', by taking resort to '*satya*' being devoted to '*satya*', and abiding in the sole determination to observe '*satya*', only-where this stage is reached or attained, then only the path to *vivek* and '*vairāgya*' would unfold'. Ma used to say, he wrote, 'Whatever you do, do it perfectly, bringing out the inner beauty and significance of the work in hand'. Ma's view was the habit inculcated to do any work in perfection (*Purna*), would bring about an identification with perfection.

Numerous are the incidents, which devotees have noticed, some have written about them, some have spoken about them, some have experienced them. Ma's devotees have sometime or the other noticed them. I too had on several occasion, noticed her supernatural powers. I need not recount them, but I am convinced that ordinary mortals do not have such powers. Ma was Supreme. There was no one like Ma during my lifetime. The *sadhu samāj* accepted her as the foremost *Sant* in the country. Param āchāryas, Maha Mandaleshwars, Shankaracharyas all acceded her the prime position, the highest *asan* for her. All placed her ahead of all others, as she represented 'pure consciousness', and one who was part of '*brahman*', Ma was a rare phenomenon that strode this earth as a colossus, the like of which was not seen in this century at least. Her contribution to the spiritual and social heritage of India was unfathomable and undoubtedly profound.

I conclude here by uttering 'JAI MA', the two words which spell a thrill for the person who hears them. And the listener, begins to think of Her joyous, blissful form, Her enduring smile.



OUR LAST VISIT TO MA

– Shradha Davenport

[Continued from before]

It was 6:15 p.m. when we returned to the ashram. Quite a few people were waiting at Mother's gate. She had not yet come out. We sat with Bhaskaranda, Gadadhar, and Swami Vijayananda beneath what was left of the great banyan tree in the courtyard. Atmananda joined us.

After some time the gates were opened and we got a glimpse of Mother. The crowd pushed a lot but soon it thinned out and we could see Mother well. She looked at each of us and told the girls to give us fruit and went into Her house.

Satya and I moved to a side window which was open. We could see Mother as She sat with the Mahant. It was a pretty good view. Swami Nirmalananda and Prangopal joined us and we stood there for a long time. Nirvanananda told others there to move away but did not say anything to us.

When the Mahant left, Ram Panjwani and his party arrived. We got to continue our little clandestine darshan while they were in Her room. As I stood there a certain knowing settled upon me and I saw that it does not matter in what way She chooses to play with me, I am completely Hers. I have no more choice in any way with Her. She can pet me, or ignore me. I am Hers and that is finished.

After Mr. Panjwani left, Mother asked if we had received handkerchiefs. We said no, we had not. Aruna brought four yellow handkerchiefs, Mother's prasada from the Bhagavat Saptah.

We looked at Mother again for a while, then She was ready to retire and we left, completely filled by Her loving touch.

April fourteenth was our last full day with Mother and, in the Bhagavat Saptah, the day commemorating Sri Krishna's birth.

It was close to 9:00 a.m. when we reached the ashram. Swami Nirmalananda was not well that day and stayed in his room, but Prangopal came with us. We talked with Atmananda, Gadadhar, and Ram for a while, then asked Bhaskarananda about having a last private with Mother. We did not actually have anything "private" to speak about, but did wish to have Her blessing on a few things. Bhaskaranandaji said that could be done at 11:00 a.m.

Then Panuda came to speak with us. At an earlier time we had told him that we would have an extra seat in our car if someone from the ashram needed to go to Delhi. He asked, "Is that seat in your car still available for someone of Mother's

choosing ?” Satya said, “Of course, if it is someone of Mother’s choosing.” Panuda then said that Mother’s brother, “*Mamu*,” was in need of a ride to Delhi. He was to leave that day, April fourteenth, but as it was the Bengali New Year, Mother told him to wait one day. He had no way to go the next day, but Panuda told Mother that he had a seat in our car and was sure Mamu could use it. Of course we felt greatly honored to have Mother’s brother share our car.

About 9:30 a.m. Mother came out of Her house and sat in Her invalid chair. Satya had climbed up on a high place facing Mother’s door and took movies as Udas put little white stockings on Mother’s bare feet. A yellow towel was placed upon Her head and Bhaskarananda held a large umbrella above Her. Four young men lifted Mother’s chair by the extended poles and carried Her the short distance into the satsang hall. We all followed as Mother took Her seat to the Pandit’s left. I sat just behind Atmananda and could see Mother perfectly. It made me sad to think that the next day at that time we would be leaving.

Mother sat with us for at least one hour as the Pandit recalled the event of Lord Krishna’s birth to the devotees seated there. A puja was done to Mother and the family performing it gave a tiny silver rattle to Mother. She smiled and held it as She looked at me.

Bhaskaranandaji quietly stepped to where Satya was and gave him a special prasad. Then he came to tell me that after darshan Mother would go to room #6 and we would have our private there.

When the Bhagavat discourse was finished Mother stood, then walked from the hall and on to the verandah leading to Room #6. Satya had gone there ahead of Her and took movies as She walked slowly toward him. Mother went into the room for a few minutes. When She came back outside, She sat in a chair to the right of the door.

We bowed at Her feet, then each offered rose garlands to Her. Mother put the garlands over our heads. I placed Gopalji in Her hands. She held Him to Her head, eyes, and heart, then returned Him to me. Satya held Him while I gave some beads to Mother for blessing. Then I presented a lovely little golden image of Lord Chaitanya for Her to touch. This special *murti* was for our good friend in California, whose name is Chaitanya. Mother held Him to Her head, eyes, and heart as She had done with Gopalji.

Satya asked for mother’s blessing on his movies and for permission to take movies as She sat there with us. He was allowed to do so.

Those few minutes at Her feet were sweet and sad at the same time because we soon had to leave. Mother asked when we were leaving. Bhaskaranda told Her we were to leave at 9:00 a.m. the next morning.

When Mother stood we all pronamed, and she walked into Her room.

Moving back down the verandah and through the satsang hall, we went into the courtyard. There we talked for a while with friends.

Then Atmananda called to us saying that Mother was back in the satsang hall. We went there to sit with Her, but soon She left to inspect the arrangements made for feeding sadhus.

We returned to the dharmasala to check on Swami Nirmalananda.

He was feeling better so we all went to eat, then went back to our air-conditioned room for a rest.

At 5.45 p.m. we four went to the ashram. Mother did not come out until about 7:00 p.m. We stood right next to Her as She sat on Her porch. The Mahant was seated just inside Mother's door so She did not stay out very long. Before She went inside, She told the girls to give *laddus* to us.

We stood looking at Her through the windows. About 7.45 p.m. the Mahant left and Mother asked for some water. The lights in Her room were dimmed as we pronounced and stepped away.

That night I packed our things before going to bed.

In the morning by 9:00 a.m. our luggage had been put into the car. Swami Nirmalananda and Prangopal rode with us to the ashram for our last darshan.

Some people were in Mother's room having a private when we arrived. Bhaskarananda, Udas, and Ram Panjwani were just outside Her door. We spoke with Bhaskaranandaji for a few minutes and expressed our appreciation to Mr. Panjwani for all of his kindness.

Gadadhar, Ram, and Parvati came to talk with us while we waited. Soon Bhaskarananda went inside. In a little while he called for us. Mother came out on to the porch with Udas so that we could do pronam for the last time. We laid our garlands at Her feet as we bowed. Mother instructed that we be given two oranges each and a little plastic bag full of nuts, dried fruit, and crystal rock candy. She said for us to let Her know when we reached safely.

At first Mother kept looking everywhere except at us. I wondered why She evaded my gaze. After standing for a while, She did look into my eyes as I mentally told Her of my love. It was like our first trip in that I knew She would not leave me if I did not turn away. This time I did not turn away, and She stood looking deep into my eyes. I could not move.

After a while Satya got worried about Mother standing for so long and he asked, "*Darshan ho gaya ?*" As if by permission, Mother and Udas then stepped through the door and were gone.

A sense of unreality enfolded me as slowly we left that empty place where She last stood.

Taking our seats in the car, we were silently carried down the dirt road away from Kankhal.

The magic lila was ended, and there can be nothing to equal it in this life Yet She can never be lost to me, as She Herself told me many years ago, "I am *always* with you wherever you are. I *always* see you sitting at My feet."

Sometimes Mother blesses me by coming in a dream. This story began with a dream and I shall end it with one which came to me three years after She left Her body.

I sat at Mother's feet and She blessed me. It was so wonderful to be with Her, when suddenly I remembered that She had left Her body and I knew that I was dreaming.

Instantly, I had the *knowing* that She was no less real in that dream state than in this dream state which we call "life".

She has said that there is no place where she is not, that there is not even room for Her to turn over.

This *Maya* belongs to Her, not She to it.

"It cannot be that anybody, anywhere is not my very own. I am with you at all times."

-Ma Anandamayee

MY RECOLLECTIONS

– Ravindra Singh

Once during the Samyam Saptaha at Swami Ram Tirth Ashram, I and Raja Chain Singh of Amb were standing and talking. We saw Ma come towards the staircase, which was in front of us and started climbing them. After climbing a few steps she glanced at us. Two Buddhist Monks were standing behind us. One of them shouted to the other, “Do you feel the current, vibration ?”

I on the other hand was hypnotized. No, I do not know what I felt as if something through her merciful current passed deep into me, the next moment tears poured out of me. I was in this state for almost an hour, then felt great peace.

Jai Ma

Once I was passing very near to Kurukshetra. A thought came that I must visit the place where the great war was fought, the battle between right & wrong. I turned my vehicle towards Kurukshetra. Arriving at the place I went to a spot where there was an old temple and few other buildings. As we approached the temple an old Pujari came out. We did pranam to him. We were in uniform. He came near us and without asking told us that the place where I was standing, Shri Shri Ananda Mayee Ma sat on that platform when She visited that place the day before only. He told me that was the very spot where Lord Krishna preached Geeta to Arjuna.

I did pranam and left Kurukshetra.

Jai Ma

In 1965 the war broke out. We were deployed and I was doing the duty of a Gun position officer in Lahore sector. Artillery fire was being exchanged by both sides, soon as we finished firing, super heavy guns opened up on us from Pakistan. Their shells falling across us, though targeted at us. It was a terrifying sound. As that burst we used to jump into our trenches. The shells hissed past us, as if they were lifted and thrown by someone far beyond our position. This went on till the ceasefire. Ma protected us from the barrage of the shells.

I was commanding a Regiment of Air Defence Artillery. My area of protection was a motor, railway bridge on the high way to J. K. Daily a Pak Airforce bomber used to come in the night for our location and you will not believe, was always misguided. I am certain that Ma turned it from our position and it would release its heavy bombload at a distance of 5 to 7 kms from the target. This was a drill, which

kept on till cease-fire. By the grace of Ma we did not receive even a scratch, neither was our non-living equipment damaged in anyway.

Hopeless cases like me were taken up by Ma; alcoholics and downtrodden. Some one asked mother, "Why do you allow such persons to come near you"? Ma replied, "Who comes to hospital? Who are in need of the doctor?"

I remember Ma mentioning of God's grace always falling upon us, only we have to turn our vessels upwards. In 1956, on the occasion of my sister-in-law Seeta's marriage in Lucknow, there was Mumps fever in our house & my daughters had just recovered from it. On reaching Lucknow I was also affected and was feeling feverish. Just that I may not fall ill and miss the marriage I ignored the fever. In the night my fever rose to 105 degrees and was still rising. So I was immediately removed to Balarampur Hospital. The fever rose higher, I was put in ICU Block. Whatever medicine was given to me I vomited it. That night was crucial. I went into delirium also. In my unconscious stage I saw Ma entering my room in her white dhoti and with that merciful look. She came near my bed and put her hands on my head and said (you will be well). Next morning my fever started subsiding and I became well, though I was very weak. My mother & elder brother came from Dehradun. I told that Ma came to see me as she was very worried. Doctor said that it will take at least a year for me to be normal in health. But by Ma's blessings I was fit in three months.

This incident is also written in Guru Priya Didi's book. Some sannyasi left the body at the same time, I don't remember his name.

Jai Ma

Ma's Kripa

It is difficult in our class & caste to find suitable houses for marriages. My daughter's hand was asked by the boy's side, I did not had to search. I remember when my eldest daughter's marriage was fixed to the elder son of Raja of Narauli. A huge *baraat* was expected with absolute royal ceremonies to take place.

I was worried, how all this would take place. I went to sleep in the early hours on the day the *baraat* was to come. I dreamt Ma coming to me and again that same look. "Worried? All will be well". My eyes opened and there was no Mother. I knew then, that everything would be perfect.

I was always a broke, but all my wishes were fulfilled. I do not know how my boat has come so far to this place with so many fearful rocks on the path. Ma has been my oarsman after 1971, when I came home from Army.

My subjects in B. A., Hindi & Philosophy came handy. I drowned myself in Ramayana, Geeta, Upanishads. I got all the answers by Ma, through Ma, from Ma.

I was fortunate to have darshan of so many saints, who came to Shri Shri Ma, Shri Bholanath ji, Bhaiji, Hari baba, Prabhu dutt ji Maharaj of Jhunsi, Shri Chakrapani ji, and many others. Bholanathji left his mortal body in Kishenpur Ashram in 1938. Bhaiji passed away in 1937 in Almora.

A million times I have been saved, but unable to write. Yes, I feel I know that Ma is always there more nearer than myself. Where all hopes left, planning's failed & intellect exhausted, no one to look at, there She is always merciful and loving. How many times I have been pulled out form this chasm. that is the world, absolutely drowned. I got everything I longed for in this world. Now, I am afraid to ask these wordly things, I know I will get it and be in it. But no more.

My Diskha at the Railway Station, Dehradun.

I was twelve years of age. Ma was leaving for some place. She was standing at the door of her compartment, surrounded by devotees.

"Robi" "Robi" every one turned towards me, I was standing at the gate of the station, watching Ma from a distance. I came near and was given way to go near her. Ma gave me "*Vilva patra*" leaves. "*Nam*" written on it. My mother said to me, "This is your *Guru diksha* and *mantra* : I did pranam to Ma. After years I was again in the presence of Ma. I had some doubt regarding my *Ishta* and *mantra*. I asked Ma. Same was repeated.

Jai Ma. Only Ma Ma.

I do not want anything lesser than Ma herself.

**"Birth and Death are a chapter in your life story. But
you are the Immortal River of Livingness, flow on !**