

**MA ANANDAMAYEE**  
**AMRIT VARTA**

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

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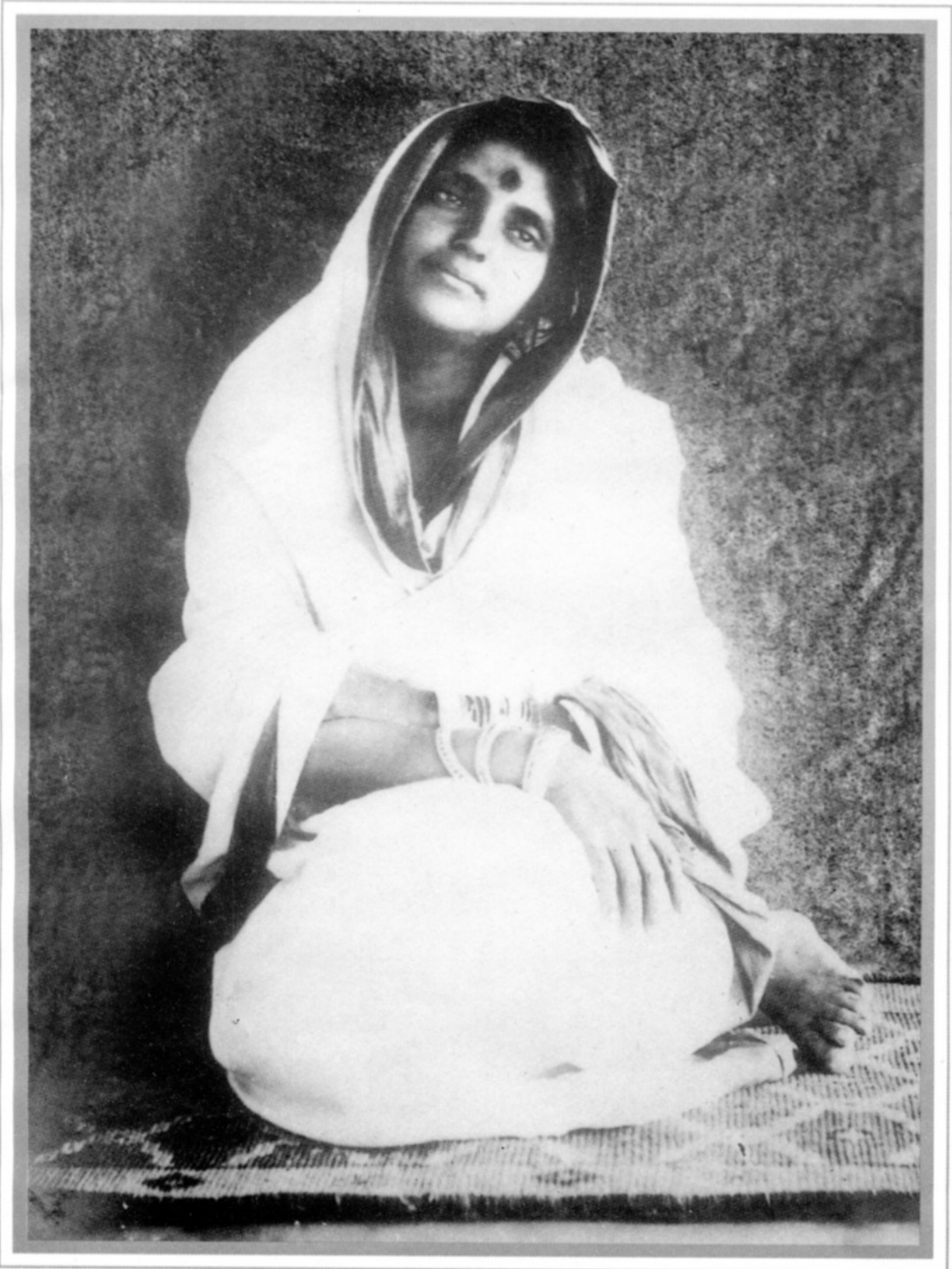
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Let thy worships Thy hymns of praise be the eternal solace of my life  
Let my life brim over with songs of Thy adoration, thoughts of Thy Divine Grace.  
I shall see Thee, Mother, in the wide open sky with wistful eyes.  
I shall see Thee for any boon, say not a word; I shall only lay myself down at Thy  
Feet with tears of bliss.  
I shall move about in Thy endless expanse of heaven, scattering songs like flowers  
representing Thy glory.  
I shall steep myself in Thy bliss, chanting Thy holy names and sending their echoes  
throughout the Universe.  
All my actions, all my thoughts of religion are Thy worship.  
Oh Mother, give me bhakti, firm faith, so that I may make Thy Feet the sheet-  
anchor of my life.

— "Paguler Gan", Bhairji (Sri Jyotish Chandra Ray)

With best wishes: Mindful Investment Management Company,  
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## MATRI VANI

If the body is well, all is well.\*

\* \* \* \* \*

This exactly is what the world is like: life is full of worries and anxieties. Without the remembrance of God there cannot be even a prospect of peace in this world; such is its very nature. It is always the parents who have to suffer in all respects on account of their children. Like a hero you will have to remain unperturbed and persevere in patience. Appeal to God for His own sake, then only may you hope for peace.

\* \* \* \* \*

The vessels used for puja and one's own vessels should always be scrubbed by oneself. Moreover, for one who lives the life of a sadhu it is only fitting so to do. The other day I met a young man who told me that when it was for the Lord's service he enjoyed doing any kind of manual labour, such as doing shopping, cutting vegetables, cooking, performing the puja, cleaning the vessels and so forth. Even if someone offered to relieve him he would decline, saying that he wanted single-handed to attend to everything necessary for the service of the Lord. He delighted in carrying out all these tasks. At the same time he looked healthy and fit. In this way one keeps happy and contented, for one is working for the Lord, and it is work performed as service that purifies heart and mind. To live in this manner promotes well-being of body and mind.

Furthermore, use your leisure to read religious books, to listen to discourses on spiritual subjects, or seek *satsang* and so forth. Do not give the mind any chance of indulging in impure thoughts. The young man mentioned above had hardly enough to eat. If someone gave him a fruit he would be exceedingly pleased. Sri Gopinath Kaviraj was saying in this connection that through need and poverty one could learn what was favourable for one's *sadhana*, such as dependence on God and so on. For those who have dedicated their lives entirely to the Supreme Quest it is good to live in this spirit; Anger, pride and the like are not helpful on the path. Reliance on God is that which is of real assistance and to feel at all times that whatever He arranges is for one's true welfare. For, you yourself do not know by what means God will draw you nearer to Him.

Drink half a pint of milk a day and eat rice or roti with dal and vegetables twice

\*. Every spiritual effort is based on the physical body, for only as long as man continues in the physical body it is possible for him to make real spiritual progress.

daily. For so many days you have lived on a pint of milk or fresh cheese without specially benefiting by this diet. Therefore try now for a time to take normal diet and exercise; do not strain yourself unduly and see how you feel as a result.

\* \* \* \* \*

You will have to strive earnestly to remain ever-centred in God, no matter in what way He may keep you. If the mind is fixed on God the question of material wants or complaints, of honour or disgrace, does not arise. The more you let your thoughts dwell on Him the more you will find yourself improving in health of body and mind. By discussions on Divine things and by a simple, frugal life you will have to prepare yourself. You must become calm and healthy. When thinking, think of Him, when working, let it be His service only. You are by nature good and kind-hearted, but you will have to become good in every respect. On no account allow your thoughts to dwell on wants and complaints. Learn to adapt yourself to circumstances as they arise—then only can there be hope of peace and tranquillity.

Mataji expressed joy on hearing of your daily programme and your collective time-table, your observing silence at fixed hours, etc. She also said : "Really, it would be a matter of rejoicing if, like good boys, they could pass day and night in Divine thoughts and occupations. What is required of a pilgrim on the Supreme Path is that he should ever keep on walking. To spend one's time in the remembrance of the Eternal does indeed mean to be a traveller on this Path."

\* \* \* \* \*

In your sorrows and troubles address your prayers and petitions to Him. To Him you should confide all your difficulties, for He is the Fountain of Goodness.

\*

**PAGES FROM**  
**“Ma Anandamayee Prasang”**  
 (Translated from Bengali)

– Prof. A. K. Dutta Gupta

**30th May, 1941, Dehradun, Raipur Ashram**

We are to leave Dehradun today.

At eight in the morning Ma came and sat in the hall. Ma commenced the talk herself today. She revived the discussion which was held yesterday. Ma began to say- “I was talking to you yesterday that qualities like anger etc. which are inside human beings that may not always be exposed; but there is no doubt that such qualities are there. You see even among the young children the qualities like, greed, anger etc. are there. Those things are not exposed in childhood; but even though they are not exposed, the proof that those are existent is revealed later on. The qualities like, anger and greed which are found in aged persons means that those were lying in the form of seeds so long in them. All types of qualities have to be in beings, otherwise human life remains incomplete. Such type of discussion happened with Gopi baba\* also. He also said that if such qualities remain in the form of seeds then they may be exposed sometime. In reply this body remarked-that might happen. But it may also happen that if the person’s direction of life is on the upward side then many things may be extinguished even by remaining unexposed.”

I —So long I understood that if we had any material desires and so long those were not enjoyed, there was no salvation. Because, it has been heard that none can be free with the debts of nature. It now appears from your words that if one proceeds on the spiritual path by controlling through *samyam* the latent desires may even be burnt out when the fire of knowledge is aroused.

Ma - Yes, that can also happen. There are many desires which can be finished only after being exposed. Again there are seeds of such desires which may not be exposed even in this life. Ofcourse, if the Guru rouses them through hitting, then also they may be roused. At times, you may see after examining that if sometime there is greed to eat something and if you desist from eating the same for a number of days through reasoning and efforts, then the substance of greed will get exposed as a result of effort and reasoning. Then there will be no greed. Again at times greed may remain among some in such a strong manner that even through *samyam* that cannot

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\*. M. M. Padmavibhusan Pd. Gopinath Kaviraj of Varanasi.

be controlled. Effort and reasoning become fruitless then. In such cases there is no way out but to fulfil the same. Therefore at times advice is given to control greed. You should know that for those who are advised to do in such a way the time has become ripe for the substance of greed to be exposed. Again sometimes advice is given for *bhoga* and *tyaga*. In such cases greed is not to be extinguished through only *samyam*.

### **About the establishment of Kishenpur Ashram**

In the midst of conversation the topic about Jyotish babu was raised. How the proposal of setting up the ashram at Kishenpur was raised Ma talked about that. Ma said, "One day I was strolling with Jyotish on the roads of Mussoorie, Just then we were sitting near the Landour 'Bazar' (shopping area). Sitting there I saw that down below near a school young boys were playing with much noise. The place became quite warm with their shouting and running. The school bell rang at that moment. Listening to that the boys at once entered their class rooms very quietly leaving aside their playing. The place which was filled with the noise of the boys became suddenly silent and empty almost like a dream. Seeing this I told- "How nice! Consider as if by hearing the sound of a bell boys consider that the time for their prayer has arrived and leaving their play they all enter the room for God's prayer - how nice that would be!" Hearing these words of this body a very pure desire to set up an ashram arose in Jyotish's mind. When I came to know that, I told Jyotish - "There are so many ashrams. What more will happen by setting up another new ashram?" Jyotish then said- "Ma this ashram will not be like other ashrams. The aim of this ashram will not be to make sadhus. The ashram will be run through the spirit of *seva* only. If we are able to get a number of boys of the age between 8 and 12, then we can assist them in proceeding on the spiritual path. If they desire to become sadhus after gaining age, that would be well. But there is no harm even if they desire to become householders by not becoming sadhus, because if there remains an imprint of religious feeling in their minds of the young age then they even after entering the gouseholder's lives will be able to become much better householders than the present day ones. The gist is that we shall not take responsibility of guiding their lives. We shall only assist them in developing their religious feelings in a spirit of *seva* (service)!"

Jyotish tried to establish the Kishenpur ashram keeping this in view. Our discussion on other things continued. Several days back Ma asked me - "A very long letter was written to you; did you not receive that?" In reply I had said - "I don't think if I have received any letter from you," Ma said - "Then you have not received that." I told Ma- "Ma, you had written a letter and that was not received by me; how this could happen?"



To-day Ma spoke in that connection- "You told that day that I had written a letter to you and you did not receive that; how this could happen ?" Really there is some such thing if a letter was written with that feeling then you would have definitely received that. But if the feeling is not like that, if the feeling is only up to writing the same, then that feeling ends as soon as the letter is written. Whether one receives such a letter or not is uncertain. Many a time letters were got written by Paramananda and then they were torn away, you may say that to write such letters become useless. But in fact that is not. The message which is to be communicated to some one by writing a letter, he receives that message by some other way. The message which was to be communicated to you and for which the letter was written, that information you have already got from mouth to mouth. Therefore, the writing has not gone in vain. Because word has spread as the letter was written. Apart from that even if the feeling is there to write a letter, even without writing, the message of the letter reaches in some other manner. Pure thought can get revealed even without the recourse of anything else. You are not able to see the revelation as your doors are shut, but obtain the result of the feeling. Perhaps you have noticed that sometime all on a sudden your heart becomes quite soft and tears may appear in the corner of your eyes. Why do that happen ? This may happen through three causes, generation of pure thought about which it has just been spoken; may happen also through *samskāras* of prior life; or through recollection of something that may happen. Whatever you find there are limitless directions. So, nothing is wasted."

At this time Ma was taken for her meals. We also did *pranām* and went for bath and lunch.

I was with Ma for half an hour after lunch. A lot of discussions happened then. Ma praised a lot about Gopi baba and mentioned about his inward sight at all times. Ma mentioned - "I can't say if you have noticed that. On many occasions Gopi baba seems to be looking at you or even smiling by listening to your words, but his sight is not upon you. That is resting on his "Sole purse" (Divine thought).

At twelve noon Ma was taken for her rest. We also began to rest. But after resting for sometime I went at the foot of the hill and sat under a mango tree because it was felt very hot inside the room. Manmohan also rests everyday at this place during noon hours. Seeing him doing like that, Ma had said one day laughingly - "Baba has taken shelter under a tree after coming to Raipur."

### **About Baba Bholanath's personal life :**

At four in the afternoon. Khukuni didi took me to Ma's room. *Path* has commenced in the hall. Nepal dada began reading from the Ramayana in Hindi. Ma was lying in her small room. I went and did *pranām* to her. Ma said - "This room was not seen by you. So, I asked Khukuni to call you, baba." Now Khukuni didi raised the topic about Baba Bholanath. She said - "Ma, you told something about Baba Bholanath to me at Vyas which was about the bad side of his character only.

Yesterday you have only praised him to Amulya dada. How these two types of remarks can be adjusted ?”

I also said - “Ma, what you had told Didi about Baba Bholanath has been seen by me written in her diary. Seeing that I had asked Didi not to print those things, because Baba Bholanath had made a number of disciples. To a disciple a guru is like the God. When Baba’s disciples would see in Didi’s book defamatory matter about their *guru* then all their anger will fall upon Didi. Therefore, it appears to me that such things should not be printed.”

Ma - “What you have said is correct. From your point of view it is better that the same is not printed. But the matter can be seen from other side too, But I am not asking you to print something, or also forbidding you from printing. You can do what you like. Keeping your faith in truth you can say everything, whether they seem good or bad while hearing. Then again there are such persons also who will be able to realize that what has been said about Bholanath’s character is not so much defamatory. Because you also know about many great souls, about whom also many such things are heard, But because of that it is not found that such great men are disrespected by anyone.”

I - What you have told Khukuni didi is full of defamation only, nothing to be praised.

Ma (laughingly) - On many occasions I speak keeping attention to all sides. Again sometime talk is held from one side only. When Khukuni raised the topic of Bholanath’s family life, then only such things which were faulty and not correct were mentioned. While talking to you attention has been directed to the good qualities of his character. Therefore, I had spoken only well about him. I had also told you at that very time, that some may even think that as Bholanath was the husband of this body so much eulogy was being made by this body. Men will naturally frame opinions according to their own *samskāras*. Where is the fault in that and what is there to say in opposition ?

“You have heard what a calumny was spread in Dhaka relating to a particular photo of Jyotish and me and attempts were also made to publish a false life-sketch of this body. It is said to have been mentioned in that this body was got married once earlier and then became a widow. Marriage with Bholanath was held for the second time and this body was born and married at Vidyakut. All these things are said to have been heard from some one at Vidyakut. There were so many talks of this type, but at the last those things could not stand. What is false finally ends as a false.

“Nevertheless Jyotish becoming much repentant on seeing such type of calumnies being spread about this body, one day he came to this body and spoke - “Ma,

after all such a bad name has happened to you for me. I will not show my face to anyone and will leave for certain place.” Then I spoke to him by making him understand the thing - “What is there to feel sorry ? One thing only so long was left behind for this body - that was bad name. Now, that also has happened. What is totally complete (*Purna*) all things should be there. Why would not there be a bit of bad name also ? I am myself the slander, the slanderer is also I, and I am also the person who is slandered. Such a sceond one will not there be.”

Ma continued - “Bholanath became nervous on hearing about Jyotish’s mental condition from me and asked Kamala Kanta to keep an eye on him.”

“You have heard a lot about Bholanath’s character and many people think a lot also about his behaviour towards me in his family life. It is very difficult to understand the inner feelings through seeing the outward behaviour. I am relating to you about one day’s incident. Bholanath, Kushari babu and myself were talking at Kushari babu’s house At this time I told Bholanath - “Let me just lie down on your lap.” Saying this I was just going to lie down, but Bholanath hurriedly moved about a meter afar. But I lay down on the bare ground where I asked to lie. Seeing this Kushari babu became a bit astonished and enquired from Bholanath about the reason of acting like that. Bholanath replied - “This sort of thing has been going on since marriage for the whole life. You are seeing her as my wife. But, the usual behaviour with a wife which a person does has never happened with me. I have been looking at her as a *devi* (goddess) and have also been behaving in that manner.”

Ma - “When Bholanath left for Uttar Kashi keeping this body at Mussoorie near Jyotish, he then wrote a long letter to Jyotish from Uttar Kashi. It was written in that letter - “I am seeing your Ma from an early age. I know her as wholly sinless and as also having control over senses. That’s why I had no hesitation at all while leaving her with you” and so on. Jyotish after going through the letter later on torn that to pieces and said to me - “What Baba writes to me !”

Ma continued - “What has been told, although that is true, the outward look of the married life was in the beginning somewhat like the relationship between a husband and a wife. I also used to show as if this body had obtained Bholanath as a shelter and Bholanath also accepted this body as the adviser.”

“These days you read so many things and also hear many things. Hearing and reading those things you say that mixing of bodies generate certain feelings in mind. But this body has touched Bholanath but nothing occurred. He has slept with me in one bed; but there also was a different feeling. He has slept with this body in the same manner as he slept with Marani.\* How will common people be able to understand these feelings ? It is not that sensational feelings never came up in Bholanath’s mind.

\*. Marani - Bholanath’s niece and almost an adopted daughter.

Being a living being human feelings are bound to come. That also was there at times through the wrong advice of his companions. Sometime after marriage when Bholanath saw no change of feelings in this body, then he used to say that he would get this body examined by a doctor. But that type of sensational feeling was also not in him for a long period. Seeing before his own eyes different states & conditions of this body he began to consider this body as a *devi* (goddess). In the middle of his life on account of bad advice of persons and to some extent due to his feeling of prestige Bholanath had the desire to show his position. But before his passing away that also was gone and the earlier feelings came up.”

It was past five while conversation was going on in this way, Many aspirants for *darshan* were waiting for Ma in the hall. Our time for departure also arrived. While discussing about Baba Bholanath's condition Ma was relating without any break various things about her past days. Being compelled I told Ma - “Ma, many are waiting for your *darshan*. It is past 5 O'clock. It is not proper for us to keep you engaged in this manner.” Ma said - “Yes, let us now go to the hall.”

Ma came and sat in the hall. We also got ready by packing our bedding etc. After a little our car also arrived. Khukuni didi gave us fruits as *prasad* from Ma. We boarded the car after bowing down to Shree Shree Ma and other sadhus & sannyasis who were present. The car left. In the twinkling of an eye the ashram of Raipur was vanished from our eyes and mingled in the midst of hills. Before us was lying that traditional, most common and long way of mundane life. We again became the travellers on that path.

(To continue)

\*

## THE WAY TO DIVINE GRACE

– Dr. M. Hafiz Syed

We have heard people talking of Divine grace glibly without their trying to understand what it really means and how it can be obtained. Before understanding what grace is in reality we have to understand whose grace is prayed for and what are the conditions of attaining it.

According to the ancient Vedic and Christian thought and tradition we cannot possibly have any idea of the unmanifested, unconditioned, limitless, fathomless, inexhaustible Being called by various names, the Absolute, *Nirguna Brahma* or the Father, as the Christians put it.

Since human beings are limited in their thoughts and visions by physical conditions and have been wholly identifying themselves with physical bodies they cannot possibly have any conception of or come in contact with that Supreme Reality called by various names, Jehovah, Jove, or God.

“The difficulty of those whose minds are set on the Unmanifested is greater; for the path of the Unmanifested is hard for the embodied to reach”. (Bhagavad Gita—Chapter XII Verse 5). In this verse Lord Shri Krishna has put in a nut-shell the need for *saguna* worship.

In current Hindu phraseology we cannot possibly attain what is called ‘God without attributes’, the *Nirākāra*, as we are embodied beings; we can only love, adore and worship one who appears to us in a human form. Whether we look upon some of the highly spiritually developed people, as *Siddha Purusha* or as incarnations of the Divine who come to this earth for firmly establishing righteousness and destroying the evil ways of human beings, there is no doubt whatsoever that they visit this world with the sole view of ameliorating the fallen condition of human beings. They have no need for themselves to live and move in this world of sorrow and suffering. They are actuated wholly by the purest motive of service to erring humanity and thus they sacrifice their uninterrupted blissful condition of life in order to be present in our midst to help and guide us to our goal of salvation or liberation. We cannot possibly pay our debt of gratitude to these Divine beings who come to serve and uplift us.

The presence of Sri Anandamayee Mata in our midst is the greatest boon given to us that we can ever think of. She lives and moves in our midst, not because She has anything to gain from us or from this world of sorrow and suffering, but only in order to elevate us from our degraded condition and raise us to the level of our highest Destiny.

As She is with us for our own good Her grace is ever present. All we have to do is to fulfill the necessary condition for being the recipient of Her grace. In the words of Lord Shri Krishna once again, "The same am I to all beings, there is none hateful or dear. Those who worship me with devotion they are in Me and I am in them." So we see that Anandamayee Mata, although She treats all alike, yet has to give Her attention and grant Her grace only to such deserving beings who qualify themselves by their strenuous self-effort, self-purification and self-discipline. We have to raise ourselves by our single-minded devotion to Her level and should not expect Her to come to our level.

Then what have we to do to attain this privilege of Her grace? The answer is that we have to bear Her constantly in our mind, meditate upon Her divine qualities, surrender ourselves to Her guidance and constantly pray to her to transform our lives and to lead us from darkness to Light.

"Man is the creature of thought, whatever he thinks that he becomes", says the Chhandogya Upanishad. This commonly accepted principle of mental transformation holds good in all cases. By constantly bearing Her in our mind we shall draw Her attention to us and thus make ourselves a fit recipient of Her grace.

One of the ways of weaning our minds from earthly thoughts and desires is to ask ourselves time and again where we are and what are we thinking of. In our calmer moments we shall come to the irresistible conclusion that we have been mostly dwelling on worldly thought, and cherishing the desire of mostly perishable earthly objects and not dwelling on That which is beyond change and is the source of our Happiness.

So what we have to do is to cultivate a habit of discrimination and dispassion by carefully observing the passing show of life and the transitory nature of earthly objects, however valuable they may appear to be for the time being. When we are fully and unshakably convinced of the fact that this solid seeming outer world has a beginning and an end, is constantly changing and therefore unreal, our minds will naturally turn away from them and instead of habitually dwelling on them we shall deeply concern ourselves with the real source of our being whose nature is, *Sat, Chit, Ānanda*.

Let us once for all bear in mind that the Great Ones, the Guardians of Humanity, the Perfect Beings, whom we call by various names, *Rishis*, *Munis*, Saints, Sages, Prophets or *Avataras*, are more keen to draw us near to themselves and help and guide us to our Goal than we are keen to attain their grace and contiguity.

Thus we see in conclusion that grace is not partiality shown to any one whom Divine Beings prefer, but grace is the outcome and fruition of our own inner, persistent desire and devotion to our higher ideal of perfection and liberation. When we qualify ourselves by the cultivation of high aspirations, God's or the Guru's grace is vouchsafed to us without any let or hindrance.

\*

Speak less; meditate more.

Words lead to blows; meditation leads to salvation.

—Swami Omkar

## A HARMONIOUS PRESENCE

—Dr. Bithika Mukerji\*

The twentieth century has been a crucial one for all nations of the world. Perhaps it can be said that all centuries have witnessed wars and upheavals but never before at the present traumatic rate of acceleration and wide ranging devastations. India has gone through its share of these experiences. The holocaust of the thirties in Europe can be compared with the massacres of the Hindus in the forties in our country, the turmoil of the “Quit India” movement and its represssive aftermath affected the lives of the people everywhere. Independence for India was not a matter of jubilation but a grim facing up to the reality of divisive forces.

Sri Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta, a well-known devotee of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee who suffered the tragedy of being uprooted from Dhaka at short notice, writes in his diary :

“Drastic changes were taking place in India. The policy of the British was to divide and rule. The implanted seed of hatred for the Hindus in the Muslims was so nurtured under the leadership of Jinnah that it had grown into a gigantic tree which threatened to darken the horizons for ever. Man had descended to a level many degrees lower than animal. The terrifying carnage of Calcutta, Bihar, Noakhali made us come to the unhappy conclusion that in the divisive halocaust whatever is distinctive in the tradition of *Bhāratvarsha* would perish.”

In point of time we are still too close to the phenomenon of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee to gauge her influence not only on the whole of India but beyond her borders as well. From the vantage point of the nineties, however, it becomes clear that Sri Ma’s gracious presence during the distressful times of our country was of considerable significance. Like a sure footed gazelle she travelled legibly from one corner of India to the other, meeting the common people, the scholars who were fighting their own battles against a virulent form of intellectual colonization, the political leaders, the Princes and the *Sadhu-Samāj* of our country. She did not assume the role of a guru or even a teacher of spiritual knowledge. She was more like the mirror-image of one’s innermost self (*antaryāmin*) glimpsed imperfectly but recognized immediately as Such. For thousands she was a beacon light in an atmosphere of darkness. She gave direction to the keepers of our tradition when they stood at the crossroads of modernity and the ancient heritage. She was not learned, did not be



long to any *sampradāya*, did not have a Guru or disciples, was immediately recognized as the quintessence of the spirit of the *Upanisadic* tradition. Their unanimous acknowledgement of her central position of authority in their midst cannot be over emphasized. Every country has its own special heritage which needs to be guarded and preserved and its renewal celebrated from time to time. The message of the Vedic tradition could be summarized in the *śloka*.

“*Uttisthata jāgrata prāpya  
Varān nibhodhata  
Ksurasya dhārā nisita dūratyayā  
Durgam pathastat kavayoh vadanti*”

Our modern age is threaded through and through with visions of utopia on earth. Perhaps it is a reaction from surviving two world wars in quick succession and the constant threat of a third nuclear war. When we reflect on Sri Ma's constant reiterations of her *Vāni*, “*Hari kathāhi Kathā aur sab vrithā, vyathā*” and its many variations, we seem to glimpse which can stop an avalanche, divert a torrent or dissipate a cyclone. Sri Ma talked untiringly of dispassion (*vairāgya*), but gave an entirely new direction to the ancient ideal of renunciation. She herself did not renounce anything or anybody. Her endorsement of her own family, which in time expanded in ever widening circles to embrace the whole of humanity, indeed knew no horizons. She lived a life of full involvement with all matters which concerns human beings. Her compassion for the suffering, her understanding of every scale of unhappiness and anxiety, her sympathy for those who were unlucky in life, made her the true Friend. She said she belonged to everyone who came within the magic orbit of her presence. She was human with humanity and yet beyond its parameters of understanding. Unless it was her *kheyāla* not the most assured of scholars could penetrate the veil of her radiant but enigmatic smile which bewitched all visitors. So lightly and effortlessly she held together the seeming paradox of affirmation and denial, joyousness and dispassion. The Bliss of self-enlightenment which has been extolled in our tradition was made a reality by life of Sri Ma as the inheritance to be acquired by man here and now in this life.

She made it available for all mankind because she did not distinguish between caste, creed and sex or country. I remember a conversation with an interlocutor for Sri Ma, who was lamenting the fact that “all that is divisive and disquieting is being imported by us, and all that is unitive and beneficial is being taken away by them !” Sri Ma smiled and said, “Who do you call they ? Are they not also ‘us’ ?”

Sri Ma spoke always of the ‘One only’. We realized in time that she spoke no words of censor or condemnation or rejection. She had the occasion to visit a

village in East Pakistan and here she was welcomed and received as a well beloved friend as anywhere else. Sri Ma during her sojourn on our hallowed land healed many wounds, restored flagging spirit and brought about a renewal of faith in our destiny by just being herself a self-evident personification of all that is promised by the scriptures of all religions.

The horizons of *Bhāratvarsa* were again clear to enable all to see or dream of the vision of a comingling of the dimensions of immanence and transcendence. In Sri Ma we see the unmanifest becoming manifest, a perfection which is an ever-abiding source of joy for all pilgrims on the path of Truth. To engage in the quest for Truth is all that our tradition is about. Sri Ma in this modern age of distracting perspectives held aloft the lamp of inwardization so that man may find himself on the path towards fulfillment.

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*“Do all the Good you can  
By all the ways you can  
In all the ways you can  
In all the places you can  
To all the people you can  
As long as you can !”*

—Swami Omkar

## SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

–Prof. T. R. Anantharaman

[Continued from before ]

We have to understand, Science and Spirituality how these two are working in society. Science is not immediately having impact on its own. It works through its handmaidens, i. e. technology and engineering. Science by itself is immoral. Science has no ethics, but ethics bad and good, cruel and kind and aggressive, all that comes in technology and engineering, which are the derivatives of Science. But I am happy to see that Sri Aurobindo was able to understand the Spirit of Science, which also is the Spirit of Spirituality. Science is a thing, common to all men in its conclusions, open to all its method.

The following chart furnishes the data with regard to the *Aparāvidyā* and *Parāvidyā*.

SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE ( <i>Aparāvidyā</i> )	SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE ( <i>Parāvidyā</i> )
Intellectual	Intuitive
Experimental	Experiential
Objective	Subjective
Of the outer, material world	Of the inner, mental world
<i>Vyāvahārika</i> (dealing with practical realities)	<i>Pāramārthika</i> (dealing with the Absolute Reality)
Unique, objective intellectual formulation	Diverse, subjective intellectual frameworks
<i>Laukika</i> (worldly, material)	<i>Adhyātmika</i> (Other-worldly, spiritual)
Emerges from an observational, active mind	Emerges from a meditative, quiet mind
A-moral (neither moral nor immoral)	Source of Morality

It is international ethics in its very nature, there can be no such thing as the national science, but only the nation's contribution to the work and growth of science which are indivisible to inheritance of all humanity. Among the people whose works are not at all read, like the works of Acārya Vinoba Bhave. Only recently, they published twenty volumes all in Hindi. This has been published by Ponnar Aśram. Twenty volumes based on lectures of Acārya Vinoba Bhave, thirty volumes of Sri Aurobindo. And we have number of volumes dealing with the *yoga* of Swami Vivekananda. People who are interested, at least should read these volumes. There are many things mentioned about science, they also apply to spirituality.

There are two traditions, dynamic tradition, growing tradition. Our scientist friends will see that science leads to technology, technology leads to engineering. Science, technology and engineering, but for some reason, the government is fond of saying science and technology. Engineering is ignored and duly ignored in institutions also. So that we failed in the field of engineering. We have to get technology engineered by others and they will come and do it for us.

So, the hallmark of science is original thinking, hallmark of technology is innovative thinking, the hallmark of engineering is practical. We think of scientific research, we think of technological development, we talk of engineering design. Each one is a culture; they are inter-dependant, but three distinct cultures. Each one has its own distinctive personality. They interact with each other. And the example, what is science, what is technology, what is engineering. You have heard about looking into what happens to heavy atoms when they are bombarded, its particles they break-up. This is known as nuclear fission. They started studying it and they got some results and they also noted while this fission takes place some energy gets released. This is science. They start developing technology by which you can control nuclear fission. So, it produces energy and you can use it by the way of engineering to produce power.

The other application is when you want to produce weapons of destruction, nuclear. We are going nuclear means we are concerned with weapons, weapons for destruction. Same science, where a scientist does research in laboratory comes out its facts, technologist seizes it, he develops it, then engineers step in because he measures its destruction, construction whatever he wants to put to use. So, science is immoral, there is no ethics in it. But technology and engineering reflect the human weakness and strength. They develop technology and engineering and they use for various purposes. May be to make money, commercial liability, having power, all that comes in technology and engineering, but not in science. But something similar happens also in the spiritual life.

So, as far as society is concerned, spirituality is not the thing which anyone understands, most people have no time to go into the spirituality, but they know they need a religion, they need rituals. Out of spirituality a religion emerges and a religion is taken over by peoples' strength and weaknesses and then finally religion gets organised.

Spirituality is a personal experience. You gain some knowledge from your own experience, but then often the person who has the experience; he wants to convey his

experience to others. So, slowly a philosophy, a way of life, because of altruistic thinking to help people and finally organisational thinking, because he wants to do it in large scale. So from spirituality comes religion, philosophy etc. and how then comes institutionalisation. So, we can compare now, religion is in a way some sort of technology coming out of science, religion comes out of spirituality and institutionalising it similarly a way to technology. There are three examples.

At first Buddha, then there is *dharma* and then there is *saṅgha*. You read how these things developed. Buddha worked for 7 or 8 years, sought spiritual fulfilment, he attained *jñāna* at Bodhgaya. But having got it, he asked himself what is the use when people are still suffering. So, he came to Sarnath. The scientist now becomes technologist, he develops a religion, he develops a way of life and then he gives that well-known *dharma-cakra-pravartana sutra* in Sarnath. He talked of the middle-way, he talked of the noble-truths, he talked of the eight-fold path, very beautiful. The first sermon given by the Buddha is the development of technology through science.

And having attained it, he goes around these things. At about 35-37 he leaves home and experiences *bodhi*. He then lives for forty five years and at about eighty he feels he is not able to do much, alone what can I do, but I want to go बहुजन हिताय, बहुजन सुखाय. And the only way he organizes it is '*saṅgha*'. And '*saṅgha*' was necessary and finally Aśoka utilizes it, sends members of *saṅgha* to various countries, Buddhism becomes the world religion. All that happen बुद्धं शरणं गच्छामि, धर्मं शरणं गच्छामि, संघं शरणं गच्छामि, the three *śaraṇas* of Buddhists are there.

Same thing happens to Christ. Christ leaves his home at a young age. No one knows till today, what did he do from the age of 11 to 28, when he returns and he gives the sermon on mount. Some westerners have found and they have published books also that Jesus came to India, he lived in a monastery in Srinagar. That is where he learnt many things of our own tradition. Then he has his own realization. Then he feels that I can help my people and goes back to his people. Then he gave the sermon on the mount. And how does he start, Blessed and be pure and you will see God. Same thing *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi*, finally you will see God. Then he said, my father and me are one. This is not Christian concept, but Indian concept, which has gone into the Jewish tradition. And finally, before he dies, seeing the danger to his life and seeing all activities around, he established Church. To Peter, his disciple, he says, 'You Peter make a rock, on this rock I am establishing my church. Take the message all over the world.' What did Śaṅkara do? Śaṅkara comes all the way from Kerala, goes around, looks for his teacher at Godavari, he meets this great teacher

Govinda Bhagavatpāda, he has his experience. Having got this experience at very young age, he starts writing the *Prasthānatraya*. And the people says it all happened in Varanaśi perhaps. And he goes around, talking to people, getting involved in debates. He also realizes that his life is not going to be very long and the message has to go on. He collected disciples and established monasteries. His *Advaita* Philosophy was the technology, the monasteries and the organisation are the engineering of the technology. So, one should look into every aspect where spiritual personality gives something, a way of life and immediately something is built up. And our people should know the difference between Religion and Philosophy.

Acārya Vinoba Bhave was a great man, because he did not speak in English, he did not hobnob. His teachings are lost more or less.

Once he said, "Science is equal to Spirituality". There is no higher knowledge, there is no lower knowledge. In India we think spirituality is higher knowledge, science is lower knowledge. Both are knowledge, both are necessary. To me, Science is equal to Spirituality, the former is more concerned with the outer aspect of the world, the latter with the inner aspect and both combined will give us the whole world in ourselves.

We must ponder over the beautiful statement, hitting the nail on the head. Science has force, science has speed, science has action, but no direction. The direction has to be imparted by spirituality. It is a very wise statement. Science can produce beautiful machines, beautiful cars, various types of roads, but what is most important is the steering wheel, without which the car cannot go where it wants to go. He says spirituality is like a steering wheel and has come out of his last experiences. Where does science go, science has no direction. Science may build beautiful things, but something shall be to give it direction, spirituality. So, spirituality, according to many Indian teachers, is the source of ethics. Science is not the source of ethics. Vinoba was fond of mathematic equations. So, this is something he popularised. Science plus Spirituality is *Sarvodaya*. Science minus Spirituality is *Sarvanāśa*. Very simple equation

Now, some well influential Westerners, one of them was Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, named Robert Muller. He spent nearly thirty years with the United Nations. He said, 'one dimension has been missing from the extraordinary journey of the United Nations for over forty years and that dimension lamented by three Secretary Generals. Spiritual dimension, the highest, the deepest, the most common, universal and binding dimension of all'. This dimension is still

missing. Dr. Robert Muller addressed the 1993 Parliament of World Religions, to commemorate the great event when Swami Vivekananda hit the world headlines. Afterwards he came to me, he said, 'You Indians have some treasure, why don't you share it with the world.' I said, 'What it is, spirituality?' I told him with great sorrow, even in India, it is not easily available, and then an eighty's thinker, he said this very beautifully. I don't know what persuaded him to write this, "The third millennium will be spiritual or there will be no third millennium". Finally, in the last days he wrote, 'Science can give you so many ways for sorting your problems, but the actual choice will depend on consideration of nothing to do with science'. So, we have to see those considerations, which come from spiritual sources.

So, Vinoba once wrote on '*Vijñāna aur Adhyātma*':

'वेदान्तो विज्ञानम् विश्वासश्च इति शक्तयश्च तिस्रः । यासां स्थैर्यं नित्यं शान्तिसमृद्धी भविष्यतो जगति' ॥

Spirituality, science and faith are three forces operating human family. If these three endure, there will be lasting peace and prosperity on earth.

So, Vinoba felt the important thing is both should be cultivated and you must have a faith that they are going to help you, they are going to elevate you, they are going to solve the problems of the society.

Again I go back to Sri Aurobindo. Long time ago, he was aware of what was going in this country. India has three tasks to perform. Nearly 80-90 years ago he wrote, "recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in all splendour, depth and fullness is India's first and most essential work". This essential first work is to recapture, recover the old spiritual knowledge, and experience in all its splendour, in all its depth, it is the first task. Second, the flowing of spirituality... in new forms of philosophy, literature, science, critical knowledge, politics, everything is the second task. So, you must find solution, the flowing of spirituality with new forms of philosophy, literature, arts, because life goes on changing. Spirituality should be used to tackle the problems of society. Then finally he says— 'An original being with the modern problems, in the light of India's spirituality and the endeavour to formulate a greater synthesis of spiritualised society is the most difficult task. India's success on these lines will be the measure of its help to the future of humanity'.

Now of course one must also know how Sri Aurobindo felt about what is happening. He wrote it and I am glad to say he saw some hope at the time of Independence. He gave a message to India. On August 15, 1947 we became independent. It was his birthday. So, he gave a long message to India. "This partition is a temporary thing, it must be put to an end by any means; finally it must be put to an end. India's spirituality is entering into Europe and America in an ever increasing measure.

That movement will grow with the disaster of the time, more and more eyes turning towards her with hope and there is an ever-increasing resort, not only to our teachings but to our psychic spiritual practices".

India has developed many practices, some of them to give psychic *siddhis* and some of them finally spiritual realisation. And there were many people in this country who have held other people because of psychic *siddhis*, like Nirmala Devi, Satya Sai Baba. there were people like Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, J. Krshnamurti, Ramana Maharshi, Annie Besant, Dayananda Saraswati, so much happened in this country.

Let me conclude by summarizing the great message of our Upanishads. Science, referred to as *Aparāvidyā* and *Vijñāna*, and spirituality known as *Parāvidyā* and *Adhyātma*, are different theories. In fact, they constitute the basic domain of knowledge. Man needs them both. There is a great need now to reorganize our education system to include both science and spirituality, in theory as well as in practice, so that our girls and boys can grow into balanced and all-rounded personalities by imbibing the best of both. As things stand today, there is not much hope of the political leaders contributing in this area. We need non-governmental and idealistic institutions, to take the initiative and lead a movement in this regard.

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*“Looking behind the veil, see the spirit, the Life of everything, the glorious God, the God who is the Beauty of all beauty, the Life of all life, the Heart of our souls, and the Breath of our Being.*

*—Paramahansa Yogananda*



## MA-AN EPITOME OF INDIAN SPIRITUAL HERITAGE AND CULTURE

—Shri H. M. Joshi

To describe the life and deeds of a saint is quite an uphill task and that too of Ma Anandamayee who herself is an embodiment of absolute Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. I know this is the most difficult undertaking which might expose me to ridicule. I, therefore, invoke Ma's GRACE.

On account of some accumulated merits in my previous birth, I had a good fortune to have Ma's darshan at a young age of four, when my father late Hari Ram Joshi met Ma at Raipur, Dehradun in early 1933 through Bhaiji (Late Jyotish Chandra Roy). At their very first meeting Bhaiji and my father came very close. It looks that this meeting was pre-ordained by Ma. My father remained an ardent devotee of Ma throughout his life and worshipped Her as "Goddess Durga" and that faith he carried and nurtured to the last moment of his life.

In India spirituality has been the pivot of life from time immemorial. The frequent birth of great souls possessing direct knowledge of the Divine and endowed with supernatural powers made Indian people to have firm belief and faith in their extraordinary vision and manifestation of divine powers and got deeply interested in them. Thus our national life was established from very ancient times on the solid foundation of spirituality.

The most significant aspect of Indian culture is the innate divinity of human beings, and all divine in their essential nature. From Vedic times words like *rishi* (seer), *adhikāri* (one possessed of authority), *prakritilina-purusha* (a person merged in the cause of universe) have been used to reflect upon the significance of these words to show and prove that the Indian religion and culture are founded on God-vision and those *rishis* have acquired these unique powers as a result of the direct knowledge of the reality beyond the senses. In India from the time of the Vedas and the Upanishads men and women worshipped the teacher, the giver of spiritual knowledge with great reverence.

The main purpose of incarnation is to give new shape to religion or to re-establish religion when with passage of time the eternal universal religion declines and gets deluded by the inscrutable power of *Māyā* when men spend their lives thinking that the world and its pleasures are all important. But when they at last discover that no

amount of wealth and worldly enjoyments can fill the void in their hearts and are drowned in the miseries and sorrows of this world, they then cry in anguish for deliverance. It is then out of His innate compassion for humanity, God incarnates Himself to free them from bondage.

Lord Shri Krishna says in Bhagawad Gita in chapter IV, verse 7 & 8

यदा यदा ही धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भरत । अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ।

परित्राणाय साधुनां विनाशाय च दुस्कृताम् । धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥

“Whenever there is decay of *Dharma* (righteousness) and an ascendancy of unrighteousness, I manifest myself for the protection of virtuous, the destruction of vicious and for the establishment of righteousness I manifest myself in age after age.”

To carry the mission of the Lord, sages and saints who are His true representatives, have appeared in this world at proper times. They serve humanity as Beacon-Light and show true path of salvation to aspirants and try to set matters in right perspective by their Godly words and deeds. In this Kali age (*Kaliyuga*) a number of renowned saints and *avatāra purushas* have appeared in this country from time to time. To name a few are Adi Shankaracharya, Lord Buddha, Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Shri Rama Krishna Paramhansa and Sai Baba of Shirdi.

Before Ma's advent in this world Didi Ma (Ma's mother) used to have visions of gods and goddesses in the same manner as was experienced by the parents of divine personages like Sri Ram, Shri Krishna, Shri Shankara and others. Ma was born on Thursday, the 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1896 in the remote village of Kheora in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) just after a decade of Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa entered into *mahasamadhi* in Jan., 1886. Ma from her very childhood was a perfect *Siddha*. She had no proper schooling but had full command over the Elements. In fact she was a Glory-personified and Bliss-incarnate. Ma never exhibited or made any show of her spirituality, but always feigned ignorance and used to call herself “a child”. Though from worldly point of view Ma was a perfect daughter, a perfect housewife and a perfect Universal Mother, but from spiritual point of view she was “*Purna Yoga Sampanna*”, as one could see in her a complete synthesis of Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga.

In the early days Ma was known only to the people of East Bengal, but after Bhajji's meeting with her in 1924 in Dhaka, Ma's *lilās* were made available to persons outside Dhaka as well. Bhajji himself was *sādhaka* of high order and in quest of Divine Knowledge had studied the Vedas and the *shāstras* and had met a number of sadhus and saints but no one could enlighten his soul. He wrote a book on *sādhanā* and through this book he came in close contact with Ma. Ma's comment on the book

was—“always remember that you are a real Brahmin and my *Bhagawat-Bhāva-Rupi* relation with you is from times immemorial in a very subtle form”. This was a turning point in Bhaiji’s life. Bhaiji worshipped Ma as “*Ādyā Shakti*”. It is on account of Bhaiji’s selfless devotion and complete surrender to Ma’s will, Ma was made available to all of us. Bhaiji’s position with Ma can well be compared with that of Hanumanji with Shri Rama. Unfortunately Bhaiji left his mortal coil on return from Kailash Mansarovar *yātrā*, where he embraced *sanyās* in presence of Ma and *Pitājee* (Bhola Nathji—Ma’s husband) in August, 1937 at Almora.

Ma never gave long discourses about religion and culture, but through stories, parables and questions put by devotees conveyed the message of the Divine in the language of devotees. Ma always looked and cared for the welfare of her devotees and never forced Her will on anyone to follow a particular path of devotion. But she always said to remember that “Lord’s Name is the only way to salvation and rest is all painful.”

हरि कथा ही कथा और सब वृथा व्यथा: .....

Ma knew that Vedanta and *Jnana* could only be understood by a microscopic minority. The vast majority being only fit for *Sankirtan*, *Bhakti*, put utmost emphasis on Kirtan and *Nāma japa*. Ma asked children and ladies to do *Nāma Japa* and *Kirtan*, both backbones of culture and religion and that could be guarded and maintained in a better way through their devotion.

Ma through *her* innumerable *leelās* revived the spiritual glory of our ancient past in her most unusual manner as recorded in our *shāstras*. Ma through her “*Kheyala*” (*Māhā Bhāva*) used to convey the teachings of the Vedas and the *shāstras*, although being Divine Herself. In fact the Vedas are nothing but the fountain head of true knowledge and that knowledge oozed out from her lips in the form of mercy and grace towards the devotees in particular and to the whole world in general. She asked the people to follow strictly the rules and regulations as prescribed in their religions and try to be always in tune with God. For the upliftment of the poor and uneducated Ma revived the ancient system of education (*Gurukula shikshā padhyati*) by opening Vidyapeethas for girls and boys. This was done with the simple and pure object to build up the character and personality by imbibing the principles and values of our ancient culture and make them devoted citizens of this country.

Ma arranged performances of *yagnas* from time to time as prescribed in our *shāstras* to bring home the importance of our spiritual heritage which not only purified the mind and atmosphere but also gave tremendous power for achievement in the spiritual realm. With Ma’s grace a number of ashrams have been constructed. An ashram of Ma outside Dhaka was constructed in Dehradun in 1935-36 as per

directions given to my father by Bhaiji. Ma's fortieth birthday was celebrated in this ashram in May, 1936. The main purpose of having ashrams was to provide a proper shelter to *sādhakas* to do *sāadhanā*, *kirtan*, *pooja* and *anusthāns* so that real aspirants could advance spiritually and the modern youth could learn about the ancient culture and values which with the passage of time have reached its lowest ebb in the present times. Ma also got established at Naimisharanya an Institute for Puranic Research for scholars and *sādhakas* to enlighten themselves and propagate the message of the Divine as contained in our *shāstras* and other holy scriptures.

Ma being herself "*Purna-Brahma-Sanātani*" did not make any publicity of her divinity and always remained obscure. But a number of sadhus and mahatmas who were themselves highly evolved held Ma in high esteem and used to visit her frequently. This proves without any reservation that Ma was all powerful and in fact an embodiment of "*Ādyā-Shakti*", as perceived by Bhaiji when he composed a sacred hymn in which he very lucidly described the most important phrases of 'Ma's divine *Mahābhāvas*. The hymn is "*Jay Hridaya Vāsini Suddhā Sanātani Shri Anandamayee Ma.....*"

Ma entered into *Mahāsamādhi* at Kishenpur Ashram, Dehradun in August, 1982 (where Baba Bholanath also left his mortal coil in 1938) thus fulfilling the dream of Shri Bhaiji who had wished to make this particular ashram as the main center of activity for establishing and organizing Ma's "mission of universal brotherhood, peace and love."

I quote from *Matri vāni* a message for all. Ma has said. "To a human being the most noble, irreproachable line of conduct should alone be acceptable. It is a matter of great rejoicing if any one strives to mould his life upon this pattern. Any line of behaviour that fails to quicken the divine in man should be eschewed, no matter how enticing it might appear, but any thing that helps to awaken man's inherent divinity must be resolutely adopted even though it be seemingly uninviting. Man's calling is to aspire for the realization of truth, to tread the excellent path that leads to immortality."

I therefore would like to make a fervent appeal to all the devotees of Ma to undergo self introspection and resolve to follow honestly her teachings and sermons and propagate the same to the masses so that the evils of modern society which have engulfed our country could be eradicated, thus making life really meaningful.

Jai Ma.

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## MOTHER : THE MESSENGER OF CERTAINTY

—Shri M. M. Verma

A pertinent question was raised by some brothers at the *satsang* during ‘Samyam Saptaha’ held in Delhi. It might have been partly in a lighter vein; but beneath it was clearly perceivable a hidden doubt, perhaps in some cases amounting to despair, as to why we are not making more rapid spiritual progress even when blessed by a spiritual guide of the stature of Mother Anandamayee or other saints and sages of high order. The question was shaped in a plausible garb, just as the discoveries and achievements of great scientists, attained by them at much cost to themselves, are made available to the people at large at small cost to alleviate their suffering and to promote human happiness—e.g. the X-ray, the Wireless, the Radio, Medical remedies, like Penicillin and other drugs, etc. Why are not the spiritual attainments and discoveries of the saints and sages of humanity similarly useful to us in making our spiritual growth quick and easy ?

I am conscious that for me to take up this theme is “to rush in where angels fear to tread”. Yet I feel that it would be cowardly not to share my thoughts with brother-seekers and to bear witness to such little confidence as is vouchsafed even to a beginner-like me by the Merciful *Sad Guru*.

First of all, a purely objective study and observation of the story of man’s spiritual achievements in the past ages would reveal that it was by hard and prolonged *tapasyā* that the ancient *sādhakas* were able to lift the least corner of the veil. The austerities that the ancients had to resort to, not only in India but also in other lands, for God-realization, fill many books of occultism, mysticism, and *yoga*. It is due to the pains taken by some of our forefathers that it has become comparatively so easy for us even to understand the true meaning and import of profound spiritual varieties, which used to be a guarded secret for the ‘initiates’ in olden times. One had to undergo so many ordeals to be an *adhikāri* to be admitted to sanctuaries of spiritual thoughts and practices. Today, thanks to all our elder brethren of the Spirit, most of those treasures are laid bare before the whole of humanity for such souls as are willing to tread the path, desirous of ‘Return Journey’. Mahatmas tell us that by sheer *Japa* of the Divine Name, by sheer discharge of duty and service of fellow-beings in His Name, or by sheer surrender to Him “as we are” (i.e. with all our faults and shortcomings), nay, even by sheer *satsang* we would find God. Many men and women have borne

witness to the truth of these assurances, thanks to the limitless Love and Compassion of the Lord.

The obstacles and difficulties in the way of God-Realization are in reality due to our desiring worldly objects *through* God. God, in His Love, grants these too in so far as they do not obstruct the devotee's spiritual progress. Yet, when the devotee, blinded by age-long attachment, goes on and on asking for the illusory and the ephemeral God, who is his Supreme Well-wisher, says 'No', so as to make him pause and turn back from the ungodly. As soon as he does that, and his desires at last fuse into one single desire to realise God, that single desire or aspiration by itself illumines the path of the devotee. Would we but once turn our gaze from all our fleeting objects of desire and so-called dear ones to the Supreme Giver of these !

Then, the Medical remedies, Penicillin and other 'tablets' — discovered by medical science that are our common heritage, help to effect cures for those who are patients of the diseases concerned and longing to be cured, take the remedy. They are not 'thrust' on all and sundry. Further, they are only palliative, they are no substitute for good health, which rests on its own laws; and in fact good health is not had by drugs. The increasing number of "beds" in hospitals is no index of the health of the people. New palliatives, new diseases ! Indeed, man would seem to be a prey to unending diseases when his vitality is sapped, however long the list of wonderful drugs being released by medical science. Good health exacts its price of good living, in consonance with the laws of good health. Same is true of spiritual health and its *sādhana* on any of the well-known paths.

At any rate, all the multifarious inventions and discoveries of science have not necessarily made mankind more happy. The technological gifts of science may have made the world one single physical neighbourhood, but of what value is it when the hearts of men have built up walls of separation and are not neighbourly ! And so on.

On the other hand, it seems to me that not only the saints and sages are like 'lighthouses' in the stormy sea of our world, but by their very attainment they have made a 'receptacle' on the plane of man's consciousness which makes it easier for the whole of mankind to share and receive Divine Grace; or, say, they have built a bridge between human consciousness and Divine Consciousness which makes the path of the devotee or the *jijnāsu* easier. To take another example, the very presence of good Professors in a University at least infects earnest students with love of learning and creates an environment which facilitates the student's progress. Or even an arduous pilgrimage becomes easy in the wake or company of our fore-runners who have traversed the thorny path and removed the thorns from the path for our benefit. Above all, saints and sages give us a vision of that "fourth dimension" of Reality, for which the human heart would seem to have been throbbing in its long-drawn agony.

But to those who have had the good fortune of coming into contact with a *jivan mukta* saint or sage, not to say of our Divine Mother, no such thesis should be necessary. Have they not already caught a glimpse of the Divine, felt *some* touch of the Rock of the Ages, the Messenger of Certainty? Let us not under-value our precious possession, only because we have obtained it cheap! Otherwise, we only pay lip homage to the *Sad Guru*, the Master, or to our Divine Mother. Even as the ascent from the animal to MAN is the high-watermark of evolution, so is the finding of the *Sad Guru*, the Master or The Mother, a new and high landmark in human evolution, a veritable descent of the Divine in man.

A child is misled and loses his way in a busy thoroughfare. After a long and painful separation from his parents, the parents suddenly appear before his sight. What follows?

A filth-laden calf rests unashamed in the lap of its mother cow, who licks up all its filth.

A wage-earner, however exalted, labours hard for bread, then gets his wages. A child prince, by virtue of his very *kinship* with his father, the King, succeeds to the throne.

Maharshi Ramana once said that the Grace of the *Sad Guru* is like a tiger's jaw; it does not spare the devotee who has received the Grace. "There is no difference between God, the Guru and the Self. God, who is Immanent, in His Grace takes pity on the loving devotee and manifests Himself according to the devotee's development. The devotee thinks that he is a man and expects a relationship between the two physical bodies. But the Guru, who is God or the Self incarnate, works from within.... Thus, the Guru is both 'external' and 'internal'. From the 'exterior' he gives a push to the mind to turn inward; from the 'interior' he pulls the mind towards the Self".

Of such Guru and his technique Kabir has said:

गुरु तो वही सराहिए जो सिकलीगर होय ।  
जनम जनम का मोरचा छन में डाले धोय ॥

(Adore such Guru who is a master smith; and who washes off the rust of many a life in a moment).

गुरु कुम्हार सिश्व कुम्भ है, गढ़ गढ़ काढ़े खोट ।  
अन्तर हाथ सहाह दै, बाहर बाहै चोट ॥

(The Guru is the potter and the disciple is the pot. The Guru sets right the defects of the mould of the pot by administering strokes; but while he delivers blows from outside, he sustains the pot with his own hand from inside).

Questioned by a devotee who was agitated and worried about his salvation, Maharshi Ramana said, "Why do you worry? Many a small boat, attached to a big

ship, steer across by themselves.” To another who claimed to have chosen the path of “self-surrender” (*bhakti*), but protested against his slow progress, he remarked, “If you have surrendered yourself to the Master, who are you to measure whether you are making spiritual progress or not. Leave that too to the Master”.

“A wise gardener, having sown the seeds, would not unearth them again to see if they are growing,” said Swami Sharanananda.

One “insures” one’s life over a term of 25 or 30 years. He gets the sum after that long period, but on the very date of having insured, one has a feeling of *certainty* of provision for old age, inspite of uncertainties attached to Insurance Companies and to life itself. Shall one trust insurance in the Divine Feet less ?

“The Sad Guru is One, and is Immanent”, thus spoke Maharshi Ramana. “The Guru is *vyapak*”, says Ma Anandamayee; and “when the status of the Guru becomes revealed to one, one understands that it has little to do with any person; the Guru is none else but the World-Teacher. My Guru exists in many forms as the Guru of each and every one, and everyone else’s *Guru-tatwa* is one”, says Swami Sharanananda; and it is Immanent, though explains he, “as does the flower, by virtue of its *sattvik* quality, emanate the perfume that in fact pervades the seed as well as the entire tree, so does the personified *Sad Guru* bring Light and Life to us”.

So, whoever has appeared to a devotee as Guru or *Ishta* is One—and one with our *Mother*.

Now is the time not to wrangle what we shall attain through *Mother—Sad Guru par excellence* — but to thank her that we have found all when we have found her. What is there to be afraid of now ? Hell ? Let us dare it ! Says C. Jinarajadasa: “Could we but know that He is by our side when we suffer, we would gladly bear all pain; there is no pain to the crucified who sees Him as he lies on the Cross”.

That is why, after ever so many wanderings in the wilderness, even the writer of these lines—the last and the unworthiest on the ‘que’ of devotees —has once for all found deep solace in surrendering himself—such as he be : filthy, in filthy rags; too faint-hearted for the path of *Yoga* or *Jnana* and too feeble for the path of action at the feet of the Divine Alchemist, our *Mother*. He could do nothing more except to *cling* to Her Feet. A lot of *karma* may yet be awaiting its revenge on him : there may be much pain and suffering in store to visit him— but he just clings, and would cling and cling all the thicker to Her Feet, till She, weary of his weariness, in Her compassion lifts him up to Her lap. JAI MA:

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## THE PHILOSOPHY OF VEDANTA

—Dr. Debabrata Sen Sharma

The term Vedanta literally signifies the “Concluding part of the Vedic literature” technically called the *Sruti* (revealed-Knowledge). Looking from the spiritual point of view (*adhyātma dristi*), the *Sruti* is comprised of the Vedic *Samhitās* (collection of Vedic mantras embodying the spiritual experiences of the seers) the *Āranyakas* and the Upanisads (text containing the dialogues on spiritual subjects between the sages (*munis*) and their disciples). The *Āranyakas* and the Upanisads constitute the concluding part of the Vedic lore, hence these two components of the Vedic literature are technically known as Vedanta.

It is held that the Vedic mantras embodying the vision of the Spiritual Truth (*paramārtha satya*) of the seers (*rishi-mantradrastā* not *srastā*) came out from their lips spontaneously and effortlessly, hence these were pregnant with deep spiritual significance. The seers very often found that ordinary words were incapable of conveying fully their direct vision, hence they were forced to employ symbolic language which was difficult for common man to grasp their import, since their words were surcharged with the power of revealing the truth directly, the disciples who heard them first from the lips of the seers could grasp their significance immediately after they heard them but when they (disciples) transmitted the “heard mantras” (*sruti*) to their disciples, repetition of these mantras by them failed to reveal the knowledge contained in the mantras. Therefore the true significance of Vedic mantras compiled in the *Samhitās* remained a sealed book. This fact is testified by Sri Aurobindo in his preface to “Hymns to Mystic fire” from his own experience.

Common people therefore had to take recourse to the study of the *Āranyakas* and the Upanisads which also conveyed the same Spiritual Truth in dialogue form which could be easily apprehended by them. It is for this reason that the *Āranyakas* and Upanisads are regarded as authoritative as the Vedic mantras, and are assigned the place at par with the Vedic *Samhitās*.

Besides this, there is positive evidence to show that some Upanisadic sages too had a direct vision of the highest spiritual truth which is testified by such statements as-

शृण्वन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्राः,  
 आ ये धामानि दिव्यानि तस्थुः ॥  
 वेदाहमेतं पुरुषं महान्तम्, आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ।  
 तमेव विदित्वाति मृत्युमेति, नान्यः पन्था विद्यते अयनाय ॥

(Yajurveda XVIII, 18; Sveta Up. III. )

Adi Sankaracarya, one of the earliest commentators of the Upanisads has given logical justification for regarding *sruti-vacana* (utterances in the revealed texts) as the final authority on spiritual matters. He says अतीन्द्रिय वस्तु विषये श्रुतिरेव नः प्रमाणम् (Revealed texts are the final authority for as in respect of super-sensuous subjects). He repeats the same in his commentary on the Taittiriya Upanisad- श्रुतिश्च नः अतीन्द्रियविषये विज्ञानोत्पन्न निमित्तम् । (Revealed texts are the cause for producing comprehensive knowledge in us in sensuous subject).

According to later Vedanta Ācāryas, the *Brahmasutra* by Badarayana embodies the essence of the spiritual teachings of the Upanisads. It is for this reason that several *vedāntācāryas* attempted to explain the meaning of *Brahmasutra* together with the Upanisads from their particular perspective, and in the light of their understanding of the purport of these two classes of texts. This has resulted in the birth of ten schools of Vedanta in different periods of time and in different parts of the country.

Arranged in chronological order, these are as follows :—

	<b>Philosophical view point</b>
1. Sankaracarya (788-820 A.D.) Author of <i>Sārīrakabhāṣya</i>	Absolute non-dualist
2. Bhaskara (1000 A.D.) author of <i>Bhāskarabhāṣya</i>	Dualist-cum-non-dualist
3. Ramanuja (1140 A. D.) author of <i>Sribhāṣya</i>	Qualified non-dualism
4. Madhvacarya (1238 A. D.) author of <i>Purnaprajnābhāṣya</i>	Dualist
5. Nimbarka (1250 A. D.) author of <i>Vedānta Pārijāta</i>	Dualist-cum-non-dualist
6. Srikantha (1270 A. D.) author of <i>Saivabhāṣya</i>	Saiva qualified non-dualism
7. Sripati (1400 A. D.) author of <i>Sri Karabhāṣya</i>	Virasaiva qualified non-dualism
8. Vallabha (1479-1544 A. D.) author of <i>Anubhāṣya</i>	Pure non-dualism

9. Vijnānabhikṣu (1600 A. D.)  
author of *Vijnānāmṛita bhāṣya* Partless non-dualism
10. Baladeva (1725 A. D.)  
author of *Govinda bhāṣya* *Acintya bhedābheda*

It is obvious from the above description that the extent of literature that grew in course of time centering round the *Brahmasutra* was enormous and bewildering, and it gave rise to as many as ten schools of Vedānta. All these sectarian schools of Vedānta are included which is technically called *Smṛiti Prasthāna*.

The main difference between *Sruti* and *Smṛiti* lies in the fact that the authoritativeness of *sruti vacana* is self-evident on account of their being based on the direct experience of spiritual truth by seers, while *smṛiti vacana* are merely explanation in rational terms by *Ācāryas* of the true meaning of *sruti vacana* in accordance with their understanding of their significance. The *smṛiti vacanas* are meant for those who lack the capacity for direct experience of the spiritual truth, hence these are considered subsidiary to *sruti vacanas*. Sankara has shed light on this point, relation between revelation and reason in his *Viveka cudāmani* (v. 477). While giving primacy to revelation (*Sruti*), he gives due importance to reasoning, paving way to realisation of the spiritual truth (*Svānubhuti*) by the spiritual seeker.

He elaborates his view on the subject in his commentary on the Kenopaniṣad (II-1) यथोक्तं आचार्येण आगममर्थतो विचार्य, तर्कतः च निरूप्य स्वानुभवं कृत्वा (आत्मानं विजानीयात्). The self should be known through self experience after hearing the *āgama vacana* from the lips of the spiritual teacher, reflecting on its meaning aided by reason.

The Bhagavad Gita is traditionally held to contain the quintessence of the spiritual wisdom contained in the Upaniṣads and the *Brahmasutra*. Therefore, the different *Vedāntācāryas* made it a point to interpret the meaning of the Bhagavad Gita in their commentaries in the light of their understanding and in conformity with their metaphysical view point. These three components of *Sruti* viz., *Āraṇyakas* and Upaniṣads (taken together), *Brahmasutra* and the Bhagavad Gita are technically called *Prasthānatraya*, which are regarded as authoritative and infallible. It is enjoined in the Vedānta tradition that an *Ācārya*, in order to qualify as a *Purānācārya*, must write commentaries on all the three components of *Sruti*.

Since it is impossible to harmonise the divergent spiritual thought currents expressed through the interpretation of the *Vedānta vacana* by different *Ācāryas*, it is proposed to focus attention on the main tenets of non-dualist (*Ādvaita*) Vedānta as are found enshrined in the Upaniṣads. These tenets are intimately connected with life

of man in the world. The famous Maitreyi, wife of sage Yajnavalkya in Brihadaranyaka Upanisad (2.4.3) said, येनाहं नामृता स्याम् किमहं तेन कुर्याम् “What shall I do with that (meaning wealth and prosperity) which does not make me immortal.”

That ancient spiritual thought is intimately connected with the life of man in the world, seeker of spiritual truth, is evident from the fact that it revolves round four points, namely, the nature of the Ultimate Reality, the nature of world phenomena, the nature of human being, who occupies the central position in creation and the ultimate Goal.

[To continue]

\*

## SRI MATA

— Monika Schlatholter

Oh Mother, surely Thou art greatest,  
of all that's living Thou art best-  
Thou art Divine, Oh give Thy blessing !  
Render us Peace in times of warring.

Oh Ma, I'll never know Thy real greatness  
Infinite Depth ! — Yet I kneel in weakness  
At thy Holy feet : I seek Thy Grace  
And cry again: give Peace to our race !  
Once, Oh only once, I long to be  
Within thy healing presence, Mataji !  
One thought of thee alone brings happiness.  
Feeling Thy Love is soothing in distress.

Oh may this bleeding world for long be blest  
With Mother's sacred Feet on it to rest.  
Through Ma we may reach our final goal at last  
Sustained by motherly Love poured out on us.

## SHERE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE MA

– Km. Aruna Pandya

"Divine Consciousness" sparkling in perfect purity, bewildering in depth, and diversity, manifested itself in the form of an infant girl, in a small village named Kheora, now in Bangladesh, in the early hours of 30th April, 1896.

Her life from little "Nirmala" to the world-acclaimed "Shree Shree Anandamayee Ma" is a revelation, a 'play' or '*lila*' of the Self with the Self in a 'body' which was also none other than the Self or Pure Consciousness. Being desireless, the very cause for a material body is absent.

She was a 'Being' in whom everything happened by 'itself', She was completely devoid of 'I'-ness. She was ever-active and yet not a 'doer'. The 'I' just did not exist. Totally desireless, one expects no urge for action in Her and yet, She was ever busy. Every action was a response to a spiritual call, to meet the spiritual need of man. "This body is an instrument, howsoever you play, you shall hear"-Ma.

"Consciousness is Brahman, the mind is Brahman, the intellect is Brahman, Brahman alone is the substance, Sound or word is Brahman, and Brahman alone is the component of all substances."

*'Brahma cid brahman ca maro brahmā vijnānvastu ca brahmartho brahma  
sadas ca brahma cid brahma dhātavaḥ'—*

-Says the Yoga Vāsistha.

This realisation of the Supreme Truth is the highest ideal of our scriptures. All Vedic teachings culminate in the attainment of this 'Universal Truth', the Self, Brahma or the *Ātma*, all of which are but synonymus. Today within our perception we have in Ma, such a Being, who is One with the Self. "In all Infinity is He and no other - I alone am."

"For this body only One exists".

"The Immutable Brahman, the primeval sound, the *Omkāra* are one and the same as the word 'Ma'- Ananda in essence"—Ma.

These are not words of a rambling mind but irrefutable words of a Being in a state of Oneness where nothing remains to be known or attained. Ma's philosophy centered around the 'One' and this was apparent in Her from Her very childhood—in games, with nature, with associates, with music, with kirtan. She responded by becoming One with the '*bhāva*' of the surrounding.

The Vedas have been marvellous spiritual heritage of mankind unparalleled and 'apaurusheya' (owing their authority to no one). They are a store house of Wisdom and Spiritual learning and contain the knowledge of God. Vedas literally mean "to know". Shree Ma was undifferentiated from these Vedic teachings and their goal. Her physical presence placed before mankind an 'Ideal' which so far had only been heard of in the scriptures. The theoretical Brahman of the scriptures - distant and Impersonal was no longer so. Amidst us was a living 'Reality' personal and approachable. Her love penetrated deep into the core of the hearts of all and aroused in them the desire to aspire for the realisation of the Supreme Self- "*Charam Param*".

Shree Ma was perfect in Herself. She was perfect in all that She did. In fact She was Perfection personified. Speaking the silent language of Universal love She spiritualised the materialistic and worldly attitudes of all who came in contact with Her. In particular She revived and reinfused the Indian mind with a regard for its own culture and ideology. She showed the individuals the simplest and easiest paths towards the realisation of the Eternal. She was ever-concerned for the spiritual welfare of the people, traversing the country to meet their spiritual need.

Thus as the 20th century beheld this unique wonder of a Bliss-permeated Mother, radiating light and joy, there dawned a Golden Age in spirituality or a spiritual renaissance.

The spiritual upsurge was important in our culture and daily way of life. All activity religious, cultural or social, all knowledge—philosophy, scientific or medicine centered around the great principle of achieving Oneness with the Self, and ignorance, the source of all diversity, misfortune, misery and cause of all sorrow could be removed by right action and right knowledge.

According to Ma, "Just as there is a veil of ignorance, there is also a door to knowledge." Her religion was Universal. It accommodated all the religious sects and diversifications. To Ma there were no contradictions, they were only different paths to the same goal. She advised all to remember Him in whatever form they believed. She advised the Muslim to be a perfect Muslim, the Hindu a perfect Hindu, the Christian a true Christian. To the many others that came to Her She pointed out that as perfection was the goal, so the dictates of their scriptures or the instructions of their Gurus should be followed as perfectly as possible.

"Verily God is in all shapes and forms. Everybody should be told that in God's creation according to the Hindu *Sanātan Dharma*, it is unlawful to say anything which will cause hostility or distress to anyone. To be opposed to anyone is to be opposed to the Supreme Being. We are all one *Ātmā*. This is what we have to bear in mind. Preserve a spirit of calm and friendliness."—Ma

To Ma, "all were Her very own—since all were That". Her response to their spiritual needs was spontaneous, irrespective of caste, religion or creed.

At Shahbagh, near the tomb of a Muslim saint Ma was seen to perform the 'Namaaz' with such accurate pronunciation and perfect hand-movements that even the Muslims were astonished and were unable to surpass Her feat. Ma's birthplace, even today is very respectfully and devotedly looked after even by Muslims.

Once as a child Ma requested Her mother, Didi Ma, to purchase some Christian literature which two nuns had brought to the house, and later spent quite some time looking through them. On another occasion even as a child, Ma was spontaneously drawn towards a group of Christian nuns living in a tent across the village. At sunset when Ma reached the tent She found them engrossed in their evening prayer. Was Ma's visit an answer to their prayers ?

A few years ago an American Christian lady desirous of taking initiation was down in a conflict between her devotion to Christ and her love for Ma. Early one morning She had a clear vision of Jesus Christ giving her a 'Mantra'. Later she was amazed to receive the same *Mantra* from Ma at the time of her initiation !

Shree 108 Triveni Puri Maharaj had said about Mother—"She is like a vast ocean in which all the rivers meet."

The play of *sāadhanā* in Ma depicts the magnificent exposition of the various *sāadhanās* : their various diversifications (be it *dwaita*, *adwaita* or Buddhism). In Ma each *sāadhanā* unfolded itself, through all the stages in a matter of hours, whereas for an ordinary *sādhaka*, from the start to the culmination of the process of each *sāadhanā* could mean the achievement of many births. Ma's *sāadhanā* was not the activity of one striving for realisation, but a divine play in response to the need of man and solely for their benefit. Those who were fortunate to witness those forms, wonder of wonders, not only looked upon Ma with awe and reverence but also remembered and recorded them for posterity. For those who were present, these visions became a part of their lives.

On being questioned as 'Who She was' during the 'play' of one of these *sāadhanās* pat came the reply—"Purna Brahma Narayana". At first the so called abnormal behaviour of the untutored village girl was looked upon with misgiving, but later as the significance of the observations gained depth they bowed down to the Spirituality Incarnate.

From very early age Ma had responded to the spiritual call of Her associates and helped and guided each one spiritually in Her unique way—a touch, a glance, a word.

A grand aunt of Ma repeatedly forgot the process of counting the *mantra* on her fingers until little Nirmala playfully taught her the process much to the astonishment of Her mother.

In the passing away of Her bachelor uncle 'Sonā māmā' and later of saints like Bhaiji, Haribaba and other devotees, Ma subtly guided their last thoughts towards the Eternal, as says the Gita —

"*Prayāna Kāle Manasā Chalen.*"

True to tradition Ma emphasised the need of a Guru until the inner Guru revealed itself. "The relation between Guru and *shishya* deserves to be called Eternal only when the Guru is possessed of Divine powers and can and does communicate his power to the latter at the time of his initiation. She also placed before us the ideal Guru Shri Muktananda Giriji Maharaj in whom the required qualities were inherent.

Complete, unquestioning obedience to the Guru, strict discipline, adherence to the social order, virtuous qualities and conduct based on good moral precepts are helpful towards self realisation. Truthfulness is the very foundation of good behaviour.

सत्यनैव पन्था वितता देवयान । (*Satya naivapanthā vitatā Devayāna*)

The purity of the lineage plays significant role in spiritual attainment. Both Ma's paternal and maternal ancestors had strictly observed the disciplines and norms pertaining to the lineage of *Rishis*, and there had been successive generations of pundits, *sādhakas*, yogis and *siddha* Gurus in their families.

Ma, however, is the finest example of how one can live in the Highest Self and yet continue to work in the world.

Her very action was a 'lesson' to be learnt. In obedience She was obedience itself, in Truth She was Truth itself. She was the ideal child, ideal daughter, ideal friend, ideal guide. Moral precepts and good behaviour were natural to Her. Discrimination and renunciation were part of Her.

Her many ashrams are centres where cultural and spiritual ideals are being maintained defying the threat of pollution which materialism poses. In these institutions the ashram system prevalent in India from the Vedic Age is preserved. The highest ideals are laid down for all the four orders—the *sanyāsi*, the *vana prasthi*, the householder and the *brahmachari*.

The *brahmacharya* is the very foundation of all spiritual life. No *yogic kriyā* is possible without *brahmacharya*. According to Ma, if *brahmacharya* is strictly maintained in thought, word and deed it automatically leads to a natural unfoldment of the spiritual. Ma's entire life was one of an ideal *brahmacharini*. A school for boys and one for girls was started on this basis.

To the householder Ma said—"To those who have adopted the ashram of a householder they should be model householders and live according to the precepts of *dharma*." She also said the husband was to be looked upon as the Lord, the wife as the Laxmi, the son as Gopal and the daughter as a Kumari. This spirit eventually led to detachment.



The Samyam Saptaha is an annual function where all the four ashrams gather together under the umbrella of a number of saints and sages. A week of strict discipline for their spiritual upliftment is a very delightful and joyful experience for all participating in it. Ma thus infused "*tapasyā*" with a spirit of joy and it no longer appeared as a hard chore.

Shree Ma restores amity amongst the religious orders. Ma was looked upon as a leader in spirituality and almost all the saints and sages of the time have paid homage to Her at some time or the other. She was the jewel-crest in spirituality. Shree Ma held the saints and sages in great esteem and taught by Her own example how they were to be respected.

Pd. Gopinath Kavirajji after great deliberation on Shree Ma came to the conclusion that Ma could not be compared to any saint, sage or even an *Avatara*. To him "Ma was Ma alone."

In the ashram all kinds of spiritual rites, *yagnas*, worships, prayers, rituals and the like are observed and performed mainly for the welfare of the world and for the benefit of mankind in keeping with the ideals of the *rishis*. The entire society participates in these functions throughout the year and they are performed strictly accordingly to the injunctions of the *sastras*.

Great impetus was given by Shree Ma to the spiritual upliftment of Indian womanhood. After years of suppression, with the advent of Ma, Indian girls and ladies received tremendous opportunities for leading a spiritual life."

Keeping this in mind, under the guidance of Shree Ma, was started a Sanskrit school for girls based on the Gurukula system. Here opportunity is given to every girl to mould herself in an ascetic way of life, whether she joins the '*Grihastha ashram*' or continues to lead the life of a brahmacharini.

Great stress is laid on the study of scriptures and household arts. Strict discipline and code of conduct is also maintained for development of character.

By reintroducing the thread ceremony for girls in accordance with the *sāstras* Ma enhanced the status of women by giving them equal rights with men in spiritual and religious activities. In ancient days Indian women like Gargi, Lopamudra, Maitrayi and others were renowned for their intellectual prowess. The right to take *sanyas* by women was also encouraged.

Besides the school several opportunities were given to other *kumari* girls and ladies wishing to lead spiritual life, by organising religious functions and spiritual discourses and participating fully in them. Thus Ma rejuvenated Indian womanhood with a new dignity and gave them a new independent way of spiritual life.

In this way Ma brought religion to the doorsteps of the common man. It was no longer the right of the privileged few. The 'Atithi' (guest), 'Daridra' (poor) the 'Rogi' (sick) were all to be served as service to God. Work done in this spirit promoted selflessness and the constant remembrance of the Supreme was maintained throughout the day.

In an ever-changing world Shree Ma was changeless, maintaining a perfect equilibrium in all circumstances. "I am, I was and I will be"—Ma.

In a world of struggle and strife She was all peaceful.

To the lost She was an epitome of love.

To the shattered She was an embodiment of encouragement.

To the downtrodden She was the light of hope.

To the lonely She was all in all. To the devotee She was spirituality incarnate and to the child She was the mother.

In Ma's words, "Ma means *Ātmā*", Ma means 'Mayi'—Self-permeated reposing in the "*Ātmā*".

Blessed are we to see Ma, the Winged Spirit, Eternal, Universal and beyond the limits of time, space and reason.

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*"Life in all its channels should flow for His sake. It should be in all respects permeated, enveloped and inspired through and through by the one consciousness of God. This is the summum bonum of human life. This is the goal."*

*—Swami Ramdas*

## NO BODY THERE BEHIND THOSE EYES OF A WOMAN

[Translated from German]

—Maria Wirth

### II

Finally by January I was beginning to plan another trip to see Sri Ma. I heard she would be at the Delhi ashram for Saraswati Puja. I booked in the Rajdhani Express well in advance, this time direct to Delhi.

It was a 40 hour journey and soon I was back on familiar ground with the difference that it was pleasantly cool and sunny. Looking forward to 2 weeks with Sri Ma it felt like Christmas Day again as each day held the promise of Sri Ma's *darshan*. We were put up in the local college as before. I cannot recollect the sequence of events, only a number of incidents. For example, Sri Ma would often walk around the large open ashram in an unplanned way. If one just let oneself follow her one found oneself automatically going the way she ended going and thus circumventing the crowds that surrounded her. It was an interesting experience.

On one occasion I was standing right behind Sri Ma in a crowd. I spied one of her loose hairs lying on her shoulder. I felt it was Ok to do so and very gently removed it. Having done so I found I could not however keep it, but gave it away to another devotee. Another day I was sitting next to the Hanuman temple when Ma suddenly came by and stopped in front of the image of Hanuman. No one was watching her and she did the strange little dance before him and then moved on. Sitting near Ma was a German lady, a lecturer at a university and very proper and reserved in manner. As Sri Ma passed her, she just touched her forehead and moved on. I watched this lady turn away as tears came from her eyes, and she went to a quiet corner.

A spiritual teacher, Carl von Durkheim from Germany also came to visit Sri Ma. Sri Ma gave him a private audience on the grass lawn away from everyone. One could see how intently she was looking at him as he sat at her feet. On another occasion Sri Ma was prompted to sing in the satsang hall. I watched her closely and it was clear that it was not her that was singing, rather something invisible was "singing in her". It was as if she was a puppet whose strings were held by an invisible hand.

Whilst at Sri Ramanasramam I used to take colour photos of Sri Bhagavan. Naturally I was keen to try photos of Sri Ma also, so whenever I visited her I used to study

closely her skin colour. I found that every time it appeared different ! Finally I completed a photo of Sri Ma holding Lord Krishna and I was keen to present it to Sri Ma. Since at that time I had no visit planned I gave it to Mrs. Taleyarkhan, who lived near Sri Ramanasramam, and was an old devotee of Ramana Maharshi and of Sri Ma, who she visited regularly. Now it so happened that Mrs. T. only gave the photo to Sri Ma whilst I happened to be in Delhi. After we all saw Sri Ma off from the ashram gate as she left for Kankhal, I walked back to the college via the ashram office. There on the side sat the tinted photo of Sri Ma in a frame, As I looked at it a very strong wish to see Ma again came over me. When would I see her again ? I had no idea. I walked out of the gate and down the road towards the room where I was staying and found to my surprise Sri Ma's car had stopped. I walked up to it happily, seeing Sri Ma again, but there was no apparent reason for it remaining there. A group of us was standing round the car—but no movement and nothing apparently happening. It was all a bit of mystery. After may be 20 minutes, feeling the sun hot on my head, the thought came that may be Sri Ma's car should move on. Immediately the car moved forward and was soon lost to view down the road. Whether there is a link, I cannot say, but these were my observations.

After that I had tried to meet Ma on two occasions but had missed her as she had left the place before my arrival.

By mid 1975 there was an important question that I wished to put to Sri Ma in person. Thus I had travelled to Bombay to wait for a suitable occasion to meet her. But she was always travelling here and there and I stayed in a cheap hotel for several weeks waiting for an opportunity. During that time I also stayed at the Krishna Prem Seva Ashram in Poona, and visited Sri Ma's ashram daily and talked with the Swami there at the time, Swami Chimayananda. I remember him telling me that the sadhana that Ma gave him was that he should bear in mind that his life might suddenly end within a very short time, and that he should live his life accordingly.

It was only at the end of 1977 that I could again meet Sri Ma, this time in Poona, where I could be with her for about 10 days.

This time I had brought a camera with me and I was keen to take some photos of Sri Ma. I found that each time I tried to focus Sri Ma would cover her face with her cloth, even though she did not appear to have been aware of the camera. Then one day I had the feeling, "Now you can take some photos". Two were taken when Sri Ma was sitting on her 'chowki' on the verandah of her room, and they came out really clear and well; it was as if Sri Ma had given them as gift. At that time I also

noticed some black hairs on her pillow right next to where I was standing, and I quietly preserved a couple as a memento.

One day the blind Swami Gangeswarananda visited the ashram. He was nearing 100 years of age and had a big smile across his face. He was accompanied by another Swami disciple, who also had only one eye. One eye between the two of them ! It was as if Ma was showing him round her ashram. Calling out, "Baba, Baba" she led him up to the images of Radha-Krishna to "introduce" him. The Swami knew all the Vedas by heart even though (I believe) he had been blind his whole life. He visited places around India to instal beautifully bound copies of these scriptures. Ma's girls began to sing to him various *slokas* and he stopped them on a number of occasions to correct their pronounciation.

In the evenings Sri Ma would have local devotees in her room, and we could sit just outside at the door, and sometimes hear what were being said. I remember Sri Ma told some that they should take alcohol as poison, and even the glass in which the alcohol had been kept was poisoned.

It was blissful occasion, but finally it had to end and we had to return to Bombay. I had wanted to take leave of Sri Ma, but on the morning of our departure she was in her room with the door closed. I left sadly and whilst doing so bumped into Swami Paramananda who was coming back from a walk with a couple of people. Without even thinking I found myself doing pranam to Swamiji, with no thought of clean clothes and the very dusty path. It was as if Sri Ma had presented herself through him, and a non-rational part of me had recognized that and fulfilled my desire.

Our next visit to India was in early 1980. It was not known where Sri Ma was staying because she was not at all well and was resting. However a devotee in Bombay kindly let me into the secret, that she was at Bhimpura. I immediately took the night train to Baroda, and then a bus and metre-gauge train to Chandod. A walk along the banks of the Narmada in the hot morning sun brought me to the ashram. I had brought some oranges and gave them to one of Sri Ma's attendants to pass on to Sri Ma. They said that Sri Ma was very ill. I spent most of the day sitting in the hall or under the banyan tree. There was no one around at that time. Of course sitting in the hall was sitting immediately under Sri Ma's room so I did not feel far from her. Passages in the little book I had brought with me kept reminding me that one should not be attached to external forms.

In the evening some devotees started to arrive, and I learned that one could sometimes have darshan at that time. After a while I saw that people were going up onto the roof of the hall where Sri Ma's room was. I followed and the last darshan of Sri Ma's physical body was of her lying on her bed with her back to the door. Shortly after that I returned by taxi to Baroda, with another American devotee, Gadadhar, who was to pass away within a couple of years— shortly before Sri Ma's Mahasamadhi.

That is not to say there have not been some vivid and "living" dreams since then, with Sri Ma's blessings.

Jai Ma.



*The guru never dies. He lives in the disciple. That he may so live, he spends his life entering into the disciple in the form of his idealism, his ideas, his vision, his attitudes, his sense of values. The bright light of a candle never ceases to shine once another candle has been lit by its flame. The disciples ensure that the light of the guru, the inspiration of the guru, the wisdom and teachings of the guru will be perpetually present in human society in and through each one of the disciples."*

—Swami Chidananda