

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly
with the divine life and sayings of
Shree Anandamayee Ma

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Special Information

A True and sincere devotee full of the spirit of service to Shree Shree Ma, the President of Shree Shree Anandmayee Sangha, retired I.C.S. honoured with 'Padmavibhushan'; Sri Govind Narain is no more among us. On 3rd April 2012, at his residence in New Delhi, this famous and dexterous officer of Indian Administrative Service, at the venerable age of 94, breathed his last for everlasting rest at the peaceful feet of Shree Shree Ma. Honourable Sri Govind Narainji carried on perfectly the work of President of Shree Shree Anandmayee Sangha from 1995 till the end of his life. He was the fourth President of this Sangha. His death has created irreparable loss to the Anandamayee Sangha.

We request devotees of Ma and our kind readers to send us memories of events or some special recollections of Sri Govind Narainji, which they have experienced besides articles on Shree Shree Ma. So that they can be included in the next edition of July 2012.

Jai Ma

The Editor

Last date for sending articles :
31.5.2012

MATRI VANI

Be ever convinced that at all times and without exception He will do and is doing what is best for you.

* * *

The Kingdom of God is a whole, and unless you are admitted to the whole of it you can not remain content. He grants you just a little, only to keep your discontent alive, for without discontent there can be no progress.

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By virtue of the Guru's power everything becomes possible; therefore seek a Guru. Meanwhile, since all names are His name, all forms His form, select one of them and keep it with you as your constant companion.

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Always bear this in mind: Everything is in God's hands, and you are His tool to be used by Him as He pleases.

* * *

The light of the world comes and goes, it is unstable. The Light that is eternal can never be extinguished. By this Light you behold the outer light and everything in the universe; it is only because it ever shines within you that you can perceive the outer light.

* * *

Where the question "How am I to proceed?" arises fulfilment has obviously not yet been reached. Therefore, never relax your efforts until there is Enlightenment.

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Once the mind, in the course of its movement, has felt the touch of the Indivisible— if only you can grasp that movement!— In that Supreme Moment all moments are contained, and when you have captured it, all moments will be yours.

* * *

Man thinks he is the doer of his actions, while actually everything is managed from There; the connection is 'There' as well as the power-house yet people say: I

do. How wonderful it is ! When in spite of all efforts one fails to catch a train, does this not make it clear from where all one's movements are being directed?

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Whatever is to happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time, is all fixed by Him, His arrangements are perfect.

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There are occasions when you say your brain is tired. When does this happen? When you are over busy with outer things. But as soon as you return home and talk to your loved ones, your head feels light and you are full of joy. For this reason it is said, because your brain belongs to yourself, your own work does not produce weariness. Really speaking, all work is your work-only how can you understand this? Indeed the whole world is yours, of yourself, your very own - but you perceive it as separate, just as you see 'others'. To know it to be your own gives happiness, but the notion that it is apart from you causes misery. To perceive duality means pain, conflict, struggle and death. Pitaji (Father), do take to some kind of *sadhana*.

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Sorrow will certainly be encountered on the journey undertaken for the sake of sight-seeing and enjoyment. So long as one's real home has not been found suffering is inevitable. The sense of separateness is the root cause of misery, because it is founded on error, on the conception of duality. This is why the world is called '*du-niya*' (based on duality).

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From the worldly standpoint such blows are considered extremely painful, but actually they bring about a change of heart and lead to peace; by disturbing worldly happiness they induce man to seek the path to supreme bliss.

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In truth, all the various ways of thought spring from one common source- who then is to be blamed, who to be reviled or suppressed? All are equal in essence.

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SHREE SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE PRASANGA

Prof- A.K. Datta Gupta

[Translated by Sanjoy Ghosh]

Ma's Final visit to Dhaka, (Now Bangladesh)

(17th April 1946)

After a lapse of about one year Shree Ma set her holy feet at Dhaka. Shree Ma was scheduled to visit Bahrapur during the Holi festival but instead she visited Saint Haribaba's Ashram at District Badaon. The place where Haribaba's Ashram was located is locally and popularly known as 'Bandh'(dam). It was learnt from the local people that 'Badaon' villiage is washed away every year by the flood of the Ganges subjecting the local villiage population to extreme hardship and misery, as all the crops of the villiage were destroyed because of the flood of the Ganges. Haribaba was instrumental in building a massive dam several miles in length there, with the aid of local people but without any sort of aid or help from the Government. The Ashram was built upon the said Dam. The local people respected Haribaba as a Godman. Due to the initiative of Haribaba Shree Shree Ma visited the said Bandh (Dam) during the auspicious occasion of 'Doljatra'(Holi). At the end of the 'Doljatra' Haribaba along with his devotees and disciples visited Bahrapur Ashram. To commemorate the visit of Shree Shree Ma the devotees of Shree Shree Ma held 'Vasanti Puja' at Bahrapur Ashram. Ma reached Dhaka from Bahrapur via Navadwip and Kolkata.

We were present at the Dhaka Railway station to receive Shree Shree Ma. Shreeyukta Surendra Vandyopadhyay was waiting at the Dhaka Railway station with two motor cars. After Shree Shree Ma and Haribaba reached Dhaka Railway Station they were accompanied to the Ashram by the two motor cars. The other disciples who went to receive Ma at Dhaka Railway station reached the Ashram by means of either rickshaw or horse-drawn carriage.

On reaching the Ashram we observed that Shree Shree Ma was already seated in the *namghar* (chanting room). The ladies were chanting 'kirtans'. Soon it began to rain accompanied by mild breeze which gradually became more intense. The rain and breeze increased in such magnitude that it became very difficult for the assembled devotees to remain and stay at the '*namghar*'. Observing such tumultuous rain and breeze and the ordeal of the disciples Shree Shree Ma burst into laughter. Although

the intensity of the stormy wind gradually subsided yet the rain continued unabated. Shree Shree Ma in a very jovial mood said that when the rain started with mild breeze she thought that since the wind was a gentle breeze it would soon die down but at that very thought the said mild breeze transformed itself into a tumultuous storm both in intensity and in magnitude. "Hence at that moment I was compelled to say enough is enough and the rain and storm stopped." All the disciples present and assembled enjoyed the comments of Shree Shree Ma and started laughing.

When the rain subsided a little Shree Shree Ma left the *namghar* to supervise and see to the arrangements of accommodation to be made for the sadhus and monks who accompanied Ma to this Ashram. I accompanied Ma with an umbrella. On the occasion of arrival of Shree Shree Ma a new room made of reed was erected. One military contractor has erected the said room for Ma. Ma at first visited the said room exclusively constructed for her.

Sitarambaba admired the kirtan performed by the devout ladies and said he had no previous idea that female devotees of Bengal could chant such excellent 'Ramnam'. Ma endorsed that the matajis perform excellent 'kirtan'. The male devotees (baba) also are capable of performing kirtan well but usually do not perform in large numbers. While Ma strolled slowly and stood at the verandah of 'Smriti Mandir' we stood below. By then the rain had stopped completely. On the occasion of the visit of Haribaba to this Ashram the place had been thoroughly cleaned and maintained at the instruction of Shree Shree Ma. She admired the cleanliness observed at the Ashram. Ma said "When this body visits the Ashram it is immaterial whether you keep the Ashram premises neat and clean in an appropriate fashion because this body minds and cares for nothing. However, Haribaba cannot tolerate untidy and unclean environment. Haribaba maintains his own Ashram in a clean and tidy manner. He attempts to remove with his own hand any garbage found in the Ashram premises. He maintains a strict time schedule for all his activities. There are two big halls at the top of the said dam. One such hall is earmarked for satsang which means that one of the said halls are continuously engaged throughout the day with various types of satsang activities. Some are engaged in reading holy books whilst others are discussing topics from the Scriptures. Kirtan also takes place. Haribaba performs his religious discourse at the designated time fixed but leaves the place immediately after his performance and retreats to his own room and closes the door. He never engages himself in useless work or worthless discussion. He devotes his entire time either to spiritual thought or to constructive work."

I have seen Haribaba once at a railway station. However, I never got a chance to meet Haribaba at the ashram. I learnt that he is in retreat in his own room with the door

closed. The period of 3-4 days for which Haribaba stayed at the Ashram no one got the opportunity to meet and talk to him. He could only be seen at *namghar* at the designated time of discharging religious discourses.

By appearance Haribaba was tall and handsome with his eyes cast at his own feet. He was about 60 years of age or may be a little more. Despite his advanced age when he performs namkirtan his voice never reflects this fact that he is aged. During the chanting of kirtan his performance as regards clapping, jumping and beating of the brass bell was not only commendable but also amazing. The beauty of Haribaba's namkirtan was such that it appeared as if his entire body were chanting namkirtan. From Khukunidi (Gurupriyadidi) I learnt that Haribaba hails from the state of Punjab. He has studied medicine and has adopted the life of unbroken Brahmacharya. Usually people of Punjab are not aware of Bangiya Vaishnava Cult (Vaishnava Cult of Bengal). However, strangely enough Haribaba is not only a devotee and follower but also a worshiper of Shree Gauranga (Chaitanya). I learnt that he has profound knowledge and study about Shree Shree Chaitanya Deva. He resided in the Bandh for a greater part of the time. Earlier he had met Shree Shree Ma. Didi said Haribaba met a secluded Holy saint at Punjab to seek his permission to meet Shree Shree Ma whereupon the said saint instructed and advised Haribaba to meet Ma and take Her refuge. Since then Haribaba was extremely eager to come and meet Ma. But the followers and disciples of Haribaba were reluctant and not at all inclined to allow Haribaba to leave them in order to visit Shree Shree Ma. However, this time Haribaba had paid no heed to such requests of his disciples and followers and has come to meet Shree Shree Ma. He has further expressed his intention to stay for some time with Shree Shree Ma. However, despite meeting Ma and staying in her presence Haribaba seems not to be fully satisfied and a trail of dissatisfaction is looming around him.

His point of dissatisfaction as communicated to Didi was that he had come here to serve Ma but instead he was being served by Ma with great honor. Since his main intention was frustrated he felt there was no point in continuing his stay here. I left the Ashram a little after evening with the intention to return at the Ashram at night. I did not have suitable opportunity to meet Ma. I along with my friend Manomohan Ghosh went to take leave of Ma. She enquired about Jatin. She further instructed us to go back to our place and take rest. Due to constant rain it was quite cold at the Ashram and hence the climate was not very suitable for night stay. We left the Ashram after offering our obeisance.

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THOUGHT POWER III

—Bhaiji

On another occasion there was quite a crowd of people during *kirtan* at Shah bags. Mother went into a state similar to the one just described. But this time She reclined on the floor from Her sitting posture. Her breath was almost suspended: She stretched out Her hands and feet and lay on the ground with Her face downward. Then She rolled on nimbly in a wave-like motion. After a while, like one over whelmed by a great upward urge She rose from the ground slowly, without any support and stood upon her two big toes, barely touching the ground. Her breath appeared to have stopped completely, Her hands were lifted up towards the sky; Her body had only very slight contact with the ground, Her head was bent backwards touching Her back, the eyes were directed towards the mid sky with a glowing stare. As a wooden doll moves about under the pull of a hidden string held by the operator behind the screen, She stepped along. Her eyes were radiant with a divine glow, Her face beamed with a heavenly sweet smile and her lips sparkled with joy. After a short while, supporting Her whole body on Her two big toes and keeping time with the Kirtan, She moved like a being of the air, as if the whole weight of her body was being pulled up by some invisible power from above.

She remained in this posture for a long time. Afterwards her eyes slowly closed and She lay on the ground like a lump of flesh, Her head bent backwards. Next morning at about 10 A.M. She came back to her normal state.

One day there was kirtan at Niranjan's House. All the inmates, especially his old mother were very eager to see Mother in a trance. The old lady silently prayed Mother that she might be blessed with the sight. Mother was lying in the adjoining room. Suddenly she rushed into the room where Kirtan was in progress and with her divinely reposeful voice took part in the song and began to dance with the party. After a little while She sank to the ground. On recovering Her usual state she remained silent for a long time.

Besides the symptoms mentioned here, the emanations from Her mind-body found expression in so many ways that it is impossible to describe them in words. When Her body rolled on the floor, it sometimes drew out to an unusual length, at other times it shrank to a very small size; sometimes it rolled itself up into one round lump of flesh; on a different occasion it seemed without bones, bouncing like a rubber ball as it danced on.

But the speed of all Her movements had the quickness of lightening, which made it almost impossible to follow them even with the keenest eye.

During that period we felt convinced that Her body was possessed of divine forces, which made it dance in a variety of beautiful poses. It appeared to be so full of ecstatic joy that even the roots of the hairs on her body swelled, causing them to stand on end. Her complexion turned crimson, all the self-initiated expressions of a Divine state appeared to be crowded into the narrow frame of her body and they manifested all the exquisite beauties of the Infinite in countless graceful and rhythmic ways.

But she looked like one far above, completely detached from all these manifestations and untouched by the thrills brought about by their interplay. They appeared to come naturally through her body from some lofty sphere of existence.

One day I asked Mother, - "When your body is physically asleep in samadhi, do you find any divine presence appearing before your vision?" Her reply was, - "As I have no fixed aim, there is no need for it ; this body does not act with any purpose. Your strong desire to see this body in states of samadhi causes its symptoms to manifest at times. Whenever any thought reaches its full intensity, its physical expressions will invariably follow. If one loses one's being in the contemplation of Divine Name one can merge oneself in the ocean of heavenly Beauty. God and his symbolic names are one and the same; as soon as the consciousness of the outside world disappears, the self-revealing power of the name inevitably finds its objective expression."

During kirtan a supernatural, Divine state used to come upon her body. We have heard from her own lips that there was a time when She would see fire, water, the sky or some unusual sight . At such times, Her body tended to become transformed into any of these. In the presence of a gust of wind she would feel an impulse to let her body fly away like a piece of thin cloth; or when she heard a deep prolonged sound of a conch-shell, her whole body tended to freeze as it were and become static like a marble slab. Whenever any thought wave passed through her mind, a corresponding physical expression swept over her whole body.

On one occasion she joined some children in their laughing games and began to laugh so heartily that Her laughter could not be stopped even after an hour's effort. She paused for a minute or two, only to start laughing again. Though sitting in the same posture, there was an unearthly expression in her looks. Many of those present were startled by it. After some time She gradually recovered her normal composure.

Another day she was on her way to Dhaka from Kolkata. Many boys and girls, ladies and gentlemen came to the station to see her. They were all weeping at the prospect of the separation. Mother too joined them and began to weep so bitterly that it was impossible to stop her. A crowd had already gathered. They said, "Most

probably the weeping lady is a newly married bride who is being taken from her father's house to her husband's". The impulse of weeping that day continued from noon to dusk.

One day she asked me - "Where is the centre of your laughter and crying?" My reply was- "Though all stimulations flow from the brain, the real centre lies in same vital spot near the heart."

Mother said - "When there is real feeling behind your laughter or crying it seeks expression through every fibre of your body." I could not follow the meaning and kept silent. After a few days I went to the Ashram early in the morning. I met Mother and was taking a walk with Her. I asked her - "Mother, how are you today?" She responded with such an emphasis, "I am very very well; That my whole being from head to foot throbbled and danced with the vibration of Her words and I halted on the way suddenly, almost losing myself.

Mother noticed my confusion and said, - "Do you realise now where lies the centre of our laughter and weeping? when any feeling or thought is expressed by only one part of our body, its full force does not come into play."

I have heard from Mother's lips that when all the thoughts of the devotee blow in one stream towards God, all the sense objects come under its influence. At that stage even the fall of a leaf from the tree creates ripples in the field of his consciousness. During the earlier stages of Mother's life whatever happened in the outside world found response in her nature spontaneously.

(To be continued)

[Taken from MOTHER AS REVEALED TO ME]

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THE DIVINE MOTHER

By N.R. Das Gupta , M.A.B.L, Bar-at Law,
President, Calcutta Improvement Tribunal

[This article has been extracted from 'Anand Bazar Patrika' 1948]

It was a summer evening in the month of Vaishakh, about a couple of years ago, that I had the chance of seeing Mother Anandamayee for the first time .

The occasion was her fiftieth Birthday . The celebration was taking place in my locality at Ballygunge. I got an invitation letter and I at once thought of taking the opportunity of seeing Mother about whom I had heard for a long time.

I went and I found a very large crowd of men, women and children, not only inside the Ashram where Mother was putting up, but also in the street in front, making it almost impossible for anybody to push through. In any case, it was hopeless for me and I decided to come back when fortunately a friend of mine, a senior advocate of the Calcutta Bar, accosted me and I told him of my desire.

He said that Mother had gone out for an evening drive in the car of a devotee and She would be coming back presently. Both of us were standing in the street and my friend requested me to wait. I did so and looked at the crowd waiting in suspense for the return of the Mother. Within a few minutes the car came. In the mean time I was thinking of what the Mother looked like. I imagined an austere old woman with long matted hair or perhaps with a head clean shaven -a sannyasini with 'saffron' dress. I also wondered as to why such a large crowd of different ages had collected. what did they find in her?

The car came and I was practically pushed near the door of the car by my friend who was a man of influence there. The door opened and to my utter surprise, instead of an austere sannyasini of the usual type, a very soft and sweet personality in the form of an extraordinarily fair handsome woman alighted from the car. She was dressed in a clean white dhoti and a silk chadder was wrapped round her body.

I bowed as many others did from different directions. I was introduced by my friend who was well known to her. She seemed to take no notice of me. I looked at her face and saw a distant look in a beautiful pair of dark dreamy eyes, the like of which I had never seen before.

I was charmed and to be frank, I was immediately captivated. I realized at once what the people were mad for.

My idea was just to see her once and, if possible, to talk with her for a few

minutes and finish with it. But during her short stay in Calcutta for the occasion I went there everyday and, more often, twice daily just to have a look at her from a distance and to hear her talk if possible. So long as she could be seen it was impossible to come away.

I heard her talking mainly in answer to questions put to her by different members of the crowd. I have heard learned scholars and philosophers asking intricate questions on religion and philosophy and also boys and girls in their teens asking simple unsophisticated questions. She answers them all and sometimes bursts out in laughter. A part from what she says which, as I have been told by experts, reveals the highest philosophical truth in its simplest form though she never received any education in the ordinary sense of the term, the way she talks fascinates all and the ring of the laughter one is bound to bear in mind long after it is heard no more.

During the period I have known her I had the good fortune of coming in close contact with her on more than one occasion. I have seen not only in Bengal, but all over the northern India, large numbers of people of either sex of different ages belonging to various strata of society collecting around her wherever she happens to be, looking at her in a spirit of deep reverence for hours and hours and almost without exception unwilling to move away so long as she can be seen even from a distance.

Gandhi, Nehru and Patel

I have seen many young boys and girls, once coming in contact with her, weeping bitterly at the mere idea of separation. I have seen how she looks at them and how she smiles. I remember an occasion when a young girl of the Matriculation class, who had been with her only for four or five days, started weeping in the evening merely at the prospect of leaving Mother the next day though she was going back to her own mother and family. What is the secret of this mystic attraction? I once asked Mother the question straight. She laughed and said, "I am the nearest and dearest to you all, though you may not know it." I heard later from a very reliable source that Mahatma Gandhi, on an occasion when Mother was with him, asked her a question more or less on the same line to find out the mystery behind it. I am told that only a few months ago Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Ballabh Bhai Patel went to see Mother while she was at Dehradun and spent about an hour with her. I do not know what transpired. I should very much like to know. I am told by one who knows that late Sm. Kamala Nehru was a great devotee of Mother. She was always looking for an opportunity to come in close contact with Mother and often took Mother away from the crowd in her car to some solitary place so that she might feel the proximity of Mother's presence all by herself in silence, and on such occasions she often went into a sort of trance and remained like that for a pretty long time and I have been

further informed that she wrote a letter to a friend in which she stated that she realized Shree Krishna her favoured (Ishta) God, in the personality of Mother.

Foreigners also come—

Not only Indians but I have seen many foreigners too completely under the influence of Mother. I am told of a French lady of a very respectable family who was somehow or other deeply inspired by the great ancient culture of India and came to India to see an Indian Mahatma . She went to the Ashram of Shree Aurobinda at Pondichery but was directed from there to go to Mother Anandamayee and to keep company with her which she did for a long time and was deeply influenced. I have seen a young Austrian lady always eager to be in Mother's company and waiting for a long time just to get a chance of a look. When at last she gets the chance she looks and can not turn her eyes from Mother though she understands neither the language of Mother nor the culture that Mother represents, There are many others like that.

That is what I have seen of Mother Anandamayee. What she is I do not know. What she represents I have not realized. I have read some articles on her by well-known philosophers and she has been called a "Mystic Rose" and as being always in a "Sachchidananda State". Swami Vivekanand has said, "There is another set of teachers, Christs of the world . They are the Teachers of all teachers, God Himself coming in the form of man. they can transmit spirituality with a touch, with a wish which makes the lowest saints in one second ". Does she belong to that category?

She is divine as she suggests something eternal, something which inspires in us a sense of the unknown which is Beauty, which is Purity and which is Love . An all embracing and ever lasting kindness of mystic Character seems to radiate through her personality and everybody in her company is fascinated with a peculiar sense of joy which is not to be had in the ordinary pursuits of our modern life. That is perhaps the reason why she is looked upon by about 5 lakhs of devotees all over India as the Incarnation of the great power which is sustaining the entire creation - The Divine Mother.

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IMPRESSIONS OF ANANDAMAYI

—Richard Lannoy

I would return to the ashram and take my place with the others at the foot of Anandamayi's bed. She was only a pace or two away; sometimes there was talk and laughter, animated discussion and tales recounted of her early life. There was no exaggerated emotionalism about her; her voice flowed, mellifluous and clear, like the water in a stream, tumbling without hesitation over sparkling pebbles. At other times she was silent, swaying a little from side to side, her head tilted as if listening to something far away. Her face was tender and her whole personality radiated a secure warmth. In a swift mood-change her sense of humour shone. She was at home, among her people, perfectly natural, charged with life.

Now and then I would disengage myself from this deep immersion and look into the room from outside, along with a few bystanders from Vindhyachal. The scene, especially by the lamplight, reminded me of Flaubert's famous remark on catching sight of cottagers in their lighted hovels: 'Ils sont dans le vrai' — literally, 'they are in the truth'. But the analogy I will use for these scenes is that of a conductor with an orchestra, each musician playing a different instrument. Here, Mataji was conducting a symphony of quietness, not by commands or even by a unifying beat, but by a kind of focused persuasion, suggestion, inspiration. Each person present would be pursuing his own inner tune and perhaps occasionally giving voice to a solo or joining a duct discussion. When Mataji fell silent, as she often did for minutes on end, she would tilt her head upwards in a variety of ways, but always accompanied by a flick of her locks and a shift in her gaze—intent, alert, *heartening*. It seemed to me that, with these little pauses, she was whisking all present through the portals of an open door into a larger, more magical domain of invisible intimations. Even as I write, I can recall these little adjustments of her posture exactly: they had a 'creature' quality like a bird ruffling its feathers before it settles to roost. These were moments of pure enchantment when I could watch everyone respond as if to fresh inspiration. Like ears of ripening wheat in a light breeze, they would sway a little before they too would settle and glow.

I could look over her shoulder, through door and balcony, and see the branches of trees, pebbles, rocks, leaves and twigs which I had recently examined closely. My

eyes would return indoors and scan this Sibylline figure as she sat relaxed and bemused. I marvelled at the soft texture of her skin, at the way the shadows round her eyes seemed to have the density of velvet. She retained a youthfulness which belied her age : 58. I was fascinated by her incessantly mobile features, especially the multiplicity of extremely delicate lines that wove a mobile network across her skin, notably on her forehead and on her lips. I felt I was looking again at all the intricacies of line I had been tracing in the woods — as if she were a part of the vegetation and the markings of her face and the markings on the trees were all part of a long intricate inscription written in one single script. I had stored in my memory a beautiful observation of Paracelsus on this theme. It went something like this : 'There are many kinds of chiromancy, not only the chiromancy of man's hands, from which it is possible to infer and discover his inclinations and his fate; there are yet other kinds of chiromancy — for example, that of tree leaves, of herbs, of wood, of shells, of rocks and mines, the chiromancy of landscapes, countries, their roads and rivers.'

Written horizontally across Anandamayi's brow were five lines like those of a music score: crossing these were a myriad finespun vertical lines in constant movement, knitting and fanning out, narrowing and widening like the action of a loom when the warp and weft open and close. At the mid-point, her brow was momentous, with a suggestion about it of a membrane for receiving and transmitting signals. The brow arched high, expansive and flat, to meet the hairline abruptly. This arching forehead and an energetic jaw like the prow of a ship sailing out of harbour were her most distinctive features. The nose and brows were gentle and unassertive. The mouth was very wide, with a multitude of little dips and puckerings, a trenchant line dipping at the centre; so changeable was her mouth that to find any definitive shape in it was impossible.

The eyes of a sage are, of course, the focus of intense interest. Anandamayi's eyes were, as might be expected, most unusual and strange. It was actually quite difficult to settle your gaze on them, regardless of whether or not she happened to be looking at you. At times they were serene and still, but more often they flickered and fluttered like hovering moths, with neither self-consciousness nor agitation — certainly not in any way flirtatious or hypnotic. No, their flickering seemed to indicate intense receptivity, mental agility, as if she was listening to a myriad inaudible and different signals on a radio receiver. I have never watched such an *eventful* face. It was not exactly focused on any one spot, however, but this acute attention seemed diffused in order to encompass both the very near and the very far. Then, like a light

being switched off—without the least drama—all animation, all expression, all the fine sensitivity that held you in thrall, would abruptly vanish. Just for a little while, the face would become, like that in the last of the Ten Ox-Herding Pictures, *nothing special*.

Once or twice on these occasions our eyes would meet. But even then, it was hard to say whether they did or didn't meet, for the radar power of her eyes seemed to cover a wide range. It is difficult to tell what their colour was either, but I guess it was a mixture of black, brown and russet. The irises were irregularly flecked, crumbly with golden glints. I could focus on one eye quite easily, being as near as I was; I could settle on it comfortably even when she seemed to be looking straight at me. But if I made a concentrated effort to look into the other eye, it was not only extremely difficult to hold my gaze but the eye became strangely perturbed and blinked within an otherwise impassive face. My description of this scrutiny no doubt reads as detached, clinical, controlled. In fact, it was much more feeling-saturated and communicative than I can put into words. It was a truly extraordinary experience, inspirational, uplifting, consolidating. Yet it is natural that I should describe this particular face in such impersonal terms, considering who she was. In her silence she was, it seemed, *aside*, detached, apart. She didn't give an impression of coldness in the very least, but her sheer presence was paradoxical. One had to take a long searching look before one found this ultimate redoubt of Selfhood.

No sooner has one made any kind of assertion as to her true nature than one has to qualify it! I could say she had the simplicity of a rose, but I could equally say she had all the complexity of a rose. Her *nothing special* quality did not, however, conceal her distinction of manner and movement, especially in a crowd. Her walk was unusual and this alone marked her out, even when viewed from a long distance away. It had a sort of comfortably springy elasticity: she seemed to relish the sensation of walking. The English poet, Lewis Thompson, who, from long experience, had developed a discerning eye for people of very high spiritual quality, met and had long private talks with her in 1945, and said he could tell at once she was a realized being from the way she walked—completely without ego.

She had a marvellous way with words and a marvellously musical voice, as anyone who had heard her in person or has listened to tapes of her singing will testify. Bengali is a sweet-sounding and sibilant tongue. To my ear, her mode of speaking seemed to be quintessentially feminine, but more than merely in its vocal pitch and its emotional colouring, for she used words in special and remarkable ways. She was a virtuoso in the use of dazzling verbal cadenzas that bounded away from

every scriptural score — pure spontaneous extemporizations, not only with the sounds and the puns inherent in word-play (or word-lila), but, more importantly, in the import of the thought behind the words. Here was the other half of spirituality — the often unheard feminine half — reunited and completed in non-dual gender.

There was an essentially poetic organization in everything she said, but then all sacred utterance, all sacred text is traditionally poetic in the Eastern cultures. Her words bounded out of her without the least hesitation, rich in vocabulary, endlessly allusive within the heritage of quotation and conceptual paradoxes which comprise the corpus of India's spiritual traditions. She had a curiously telegraphic way of constructing her sentences, leaving out any words which her care over clarity of meaning could dispense with, as if there was no time for lingering; so swift was her mind, so direct its route. A Bengali poet told me: 'She talks the way modern Bengali poets write'. And she never wrote anything down, never prepared her discourse, never revised what she had said; somehow, it came out perfectly shaped. In her irresistible way, her woman's way, she could ignore the rules of the game in order to play it all the more exultantly, copiously, freshly.

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*ācāryāḥ pitarāḥ putrās tathaiiva cha pitāmāhāḥ
mātulāḥ śvaśurāḥ pautrāḥ śyālāḥ sambandhinas tathā*

Teachers, fathers, sons and also grand-fathers, maternal uncles,
fathers-in law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other kinsmen.

PHYSICAL POSTURES EVEN IN PLAY
MA
HERSELF IN HERSELF

[Taken from *Svakriya Svarasamrita*. Vol. 2]

In Her play with flowers, etc., how many diverse patterns were there (in the play) with flowers. Sometimes Ma would take a flower in her hand, and as She would stretch Her hand above her head as far as She could, She would keep on observing it all the time. And then She would touch Her cheeks, mouth, nose, forehead and head (with the flower). Making a braid of *nandadulal* flowers, She would give it the round shape of a bangle, putting it, may be on the nose sometimes, round the ear at another time or just on the head, She would dance a while.

Mokshada Sundari Devi had taught Ma the technique of making a wreath by inter-weaving *nandadulal* flowers. From then onwards, Ma began making such plaits and playing with them. Again, as if muttering, what a long talk She would have with flowers, while making signs with hands, nodding and moving mouth and eyes. Afterwards, collecting all the flowers in Her hands and throwing them all up, she would walk away in a serious mood. After so much fondling, in such intimacy of the bunch of flowers, there would be, as if, no connection at all (with them)! When aware of it, Ma would burst into a loud laughter. Once the play was over, Ma would, after tearing and casting away everything, and abandoning it all, turn a quiet girl and make Her way homeward. What is novel in all such stories? Now too we see that when Ma continues to stay in a particular place, it takes on the appearance of a thoroughly delightful festive congregation. We become full of expectation that perhaps the rest of our life will pass in this very manner. But, in a trice, the festive congregation vanishes, and then no one belongs to anyone.

There were still several other kinds of play of Ma. For instance, with the heel as centre and the middle part of the foot raised and curved inwards, She would, by turning round, draw at a stretch a uniform and unbroken circular line with Her big toe. After joining the ends of the circular line through that single turning itself, She would stand still there. Then, revolving round and round, She would keep on dancing. Again, sometimes, stretching both Her arms, She continued whirling round in the same style; also, leaning as well, once on the right, and then on the left. At that

time if Shriyukta Mokshada Sundari Devi happened to notice this, she would warn, exclaiming, "Hey, you will fall down; don't do all such things!" Ma would, then, stop moving, and clapping with raised hands, would run to Her mother leaping and jumping. Whatever Her mother's bidding, Ma would carry it out to the letter; this, too was noticed in Ma.

While drawing the circular line, the other foot of Ma remained aloof in the air only and did not touch the ground. Observing all these different ways (of Ma), sometimes there was an expression of fear too in Mokshada Sundari Devi. At that time, she would say, "don't know what all this girl does; of what kind She is—like a silly simpleton too; *Bhagavan* will look after Her in His own way!"

Neighbours, too, were hardly there in any considerable number. On rare occasions, some girls of Ma's age-group, from the eastern or any other quarter, came and took part in the play of drawing the circular line. Among them, perhaps one could complete half of it, some possibly a part, while others attempted to draw the same walking slowly with the help of the other foot. Sometimes the ends did not join well at all. Someone perhaps even sat down after standing. All attempts failed to get that unbroken circle through a single rotation. In the play of children, such was the distinctive feature even when Ma was playing in the sand.

Ma, though a small child, was, in fact, even in that play, not at all with anyone, though remaining in the midst of all, like white sand which is shaken off and thrown away. Of the unbroken circle, was She not Herself, indeed, that integral point at its centre? She Herself was the drawing, Herself, again, in the stationary state, and Herself in the state of dancing as well. That is, whatever it is, it is She with Herself, revealing only Herself in Herself, even in all such physical postures in the play. In fact, this is what is being conveyed at all times.

Indeed, Ma would sometimes say, "When this body was (for the first time) in the presence of you all (i.e., born), as it was then, indeed, so also it is now (i.e., the same)". So, in the past too She was in that undifferentiated wholeness of Her own—this, indeed, is what comes to our mind. A childlike play, as we see it, is the same which She is playing, but in the pattern of Her own undifferentiated wholeness. Till today, whatever is taking place anywhere, indeed in all, there is the same pattern only of Her—She Herself, so we think.

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FROM THE LIFE OF SRI MA ANANDAMAYI

—Bithika Mukerji

VOLUME III

(From 1939-1950)

Chapter One

The Ongoing Journey

Sri Ma continued to travel. In retrospect this travelogue appears as a harmonious continuity of fluid action a seamless blending of many variables. Since leaving Dhaka in 1932, Sri Ma had travelled with Bholanath, Bhaiji, Didi, Akhandananda (Didi's father) and a few other very close associates. They were mostly Bengalis. After the passing away of Bholanath a major change which came to the fore by imperceptible degrees, was the gradual disintegration of the close-knit family type set-up. Sri Ma wandering among strangers acquired a retinue of Kashmiris, Punjabis, and the hill-folk from surrounding mountain ranges; the word 'stranger', however is not right. Nobody was ever a stranger to Sri Ma. All newcomers became as if family from day one. The newcomers did not ask questions about her early life. They accepted her as they found her — a miracle in herself (as stated by Mahalakshmi), a radiant taintless being, whose loving glance of welcome and acceptance called forth an allegiance at once undemanding and fulfilling.

Sri Ma accompanied by one Ruma Devi and Abhaya went up to Simla in July 1939 to attend the annual event of the nāma-yagña. Since Sri Ma was without her usual retinue, the people of Simla found easy access to her presence. They could mix more freely with her and found it to be a charming experience. This happened in all the places she visited such as Moradabad, Bareilly, Lucknow, Faizabad and Bardwan. In the beginning of August 1939 Sri Ma came to Calcutta. She went first to the house of Jyotish Guha (Bunidi's father). She stood outside the closed gates and with the help of Abhaya sang a few lines of kirtana, in the manner of street singers.

The inmates recognizing Sri Ma's voice tumbled out of the house in great joy and excitement. Accompanied by this group Sri Ma went on to other houses to announce her advent in the same way. News of her arrival spread to all concerned like wild fire. Within a short time, Birla Mandir, where Sri Ma had put up, was teeming with a happy crowd of men, women and children.

After a few days of busy schedule in Calcutta, Sri Ma travelled to Dhaka.

Outwardly many things had changed round her. The absence of Bholanath was felt keenly by such devotees as had known him for as long as they had known Sri Ma. But they also realized that Sri Ma's luminous personality was her very own and that she was entirely sufficient unto herself.

Surrounded by a large contingent from Calcutta and Dhaka, Sri Ma proceeded to Kheora, the village where she was born nearly 43 years ago. Even in these remote villages, people had heard about 'Sri Ma Anandamayi', who used to be their little Nirmala, a well-beloved slip of girl, so endearingly charming toward one and all.

People from nearby villages came to Kheora to greet and welcome the village girl who had become so famous. Sri Ma accompanied by her retinue paid visits to all the families who had known her in her childhood. She made introductions recalling many incidents of those early days. The village folk were delighted to be remembered so well. Summing up the general impression Sri Ma's childhood friend and namesake Nirmala Devi exclaimed in wonder, "Why, you haven't changed at all!"

The same wonder was felt by the people of Vidyakut where Sri Ma arrived from Kheora on September 10. Sri Ma accompanied by an ever swelling crowd of companions, traveled leisurely by small boats, threading their way on the shallow waterways, through rice-fields, halting occasionally when the sun became too hot under the overhanging branches of big trees. Sri Ma had spent much of her childhood at Vidyakut, especially after her marriage and before she went to stay at Revati Mohan's, her eldest brother-in-law's. All the elders of the village greeted her affectionately and lovingly, addressing her in the familiar second person (tui) and then became a little self-conscious wondering if the devotees from Calcutta and Dhaka would take it amiss.

In a couple of days, a change came over the people of Vidyakut. They were in a quandary. They could not keep up the tone of familiarity although Sri Ma did nothing to dissuade them. Speaking diffidently, they sought her guidance in spiritual matters. Even the elders asked her to say something to them. Sri Ma was quick to respond to the changed mood of the people. She spoke to them about the samyam vrata of one day, her usual response to large groups of people eager to make a beginning in sadhana.

The samyam vrata of one day :

Sri Ma said, "If possible make a resolve to dedicate one day in one week to the spiritual quest. One that day, eat sparingly, speak only when necessary. Watch your own actions and words to avoid the least wrong-doing or incorrect statement. Emotions should be under control. One should look upon children as child-manifestations of the Divine, (bāl-gopāla), one's husband or wife, not only as an object of love but

reverence as well. Try to render service to all members of the family including servants, in a spirit of humility (sevā-bhāva). Even if there should be occasions for anger or other provocations, one should respond with calmness and not be jolted out of a tranquil frame of mind. There will be failures in the beginning but one should persevere till the goal of perfect samyama in thought, speech and action is achieved. Even if one member of the family practices this vrata the entire family will feel the calming effect of that one day.

After a pause, Sri Ma added amidst laughter, "Maybe some naughty children may seek to take advantage of you, but it will pass. If you feel confident you may increase it to twice a week or even more. The aim is for it to become a way of life, rather than a special occasion. One this day, give some time to the study of sacred literature, practice a little meditation and also nāma-japa. You can draw up a schedule which suits you best. This samyama-vrata will help you to turn inward, to become in tune with the rhythm of your own life-breath which links you to the cosmic breath (visva-prāna). In this way you may hope to realize your own Self because who knows at what auspicious moment you may not get caught up in that universal rhythm of Perfect Harmony!"

After this delightful interlude with the villagers of rural Bengal, Sri Ma left this part of the country altogether and came to the foothills of the Himalayas. She visited Solan for a while and from there she traveled to Suket another hill state about a hundred and fifty miles from Pathankote. The Rajah of Suket had been very pressing in his requests for Sri Ma to visit his state. He was one of those rulers who had the welfare of his people closest to his heart. It was his belief that the presence of Sri Ma in his state would sanctify it and be of immense benefit for its people.

Sri Ma's companions were impressed by the lavish arrangements for ceremonial receptions as soon as they crossed over in the state of Suket. The Rajah, who was himself driving Sri Ma's car, would stop at key points to enable his subjects to gather round and pay their respects to the guest of honour.

Sri Ma's room inside the palace grounds had been prepared with as much care, concern and splendour as if it were the temple of the presiding deity of the state. After a few days of joyous activities which characterized Sri Ma's presence anywhere, it was time to leave. On the day of departure the Rajah placed before Sri Ma a heap of costly farewell gifts. Sri Ma looking upon the rich and glittering collection said to him gently, "These things that you have presented to me are now mine, so I should be free to bestow them on anybody I choose? I shall entrust them to worthy people who will take good care of them on my behalf....." Saying so Sri Ma started distributing the gifts to the distinguished company assembled in her room to bid her farewell. She did

not discriminate between the members of the Rajah's family, important officers of the court and the group of palace servants who also had assembled to pay their respect to her. The heap of costly ornaments, gold and silver coins, silks, brocades etc. vanished in moments. The Rajah of Suket, extra-ordinary devotee that he was remained totally obedient to Sri Ma's expressed kheyala about his princely gifts as about everything else.

Sri Ma at times described herself as a udā pākhi, that is a bird on the wing. A bird which perches on a random branch for a while and then files off to alight on another. After leaving Suket Sri Ma passed through Baijnath and Amritsar. She made a short stay at Bareilly on her way to Almora. The well-educated, sophisticated and affluent ladies of Bareilly had their own special way of celebrating Sri Ma's presence in their midst. At Almora, the scene was different. The simple highland women clustered round her singing and dancing to the tune of "ambe gauri maiya." A group of eight of these women were known as Sri Ma's asta-sakhis (the eight friends). From the villages of Bengal, to the palaces of ruling princes, to the interior of Himalayan hill-towns, the perches of the 'bird on the wing' were indeed many and varied.

Sri Ma came away from the high mountains to the hill-top ashram of Vindhyachala on November 4, 1939. The war had been declared. Although India was not directly involved, it felt the impact in many ways. The political struggle for independence gathered strength. The Indian leaders said, in effect that a free India would join the Allies but the British Government had no moral right to deploy Indian troops to different theatres of war without the consent of an Indian Government. All this was brushed aside by the War Cabinet. It was not yet time for the "liquidation of the Empire".

(Courtesey : Mr. Christopher Peglar, U.K.)

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SHREE SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE AND SPIRITUALITY

—Brahmacharini Geeta Banerjee

According to our Hindu philosophy spirituality means the pursuit of the Supreme Reality, Immanent and Transcendent, which is behind all creation and beyond it. This is what makes a man a true human being. In modern times we have lost humanity, Man has become very, very selfish. Everyone thinks about his own self-interest. Shree Shree Anandamayee Ma says that the goal of human life is God realization.

“अपने को जानना अपने को पाना—अपने को जानना माने भगवान को जानना, भगवान को जानना माने अपने को जानना।”

“To know oneself is to know God. To know God is to know oneself.”

To understand Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee one should try to understand and assimilate these sayings of Shree Shree Ma-

“Since everything in this universe is the creation of the one Great Father, all are kith and kin. Just as the sons and daughters of one large family choose a dozen different professions whereby to earn their livelihood, just as they settle and build homes of their own in a dozen different places, so all human beings, although one in essence, are grouped in various ways and under various denominations, according to the demands of their multifarious lines of activity.”

“For the cure of the ailing body many systems of medicine exist, such as Allopathy, Homoeopathy, Ayurveda and others. Each person makes use of the method that is best suited to him. Equally to cure man of the diseased condition that causes the perpetual recurrence of birth and death, there are elaborate prescriptions to be found in the shastras and many rules and regulations to be learnt directly from sages and saints, yet all have the same purpose. The diverse paths followed by Hindus, Mohammedans, Vaisnavites, Shaktas etc., all ultimately lead to the threshold of the Eternal.

“At the entrance to a railway station there is much agitation and noise, much pushing and jostling; but once the correct platform has been reached everyone's destination has been settled.”

This kind of spirituality teaches us about universal brotherhood and to love each and every being around us.

Shree Ma tells us that all beings in this world are created by God Almighty. So we should love everyone irrespective of caste, creed or birth. No one is rich by money or material things. They do not make a man rich. A really rich man is the person who always remembers God and tries to follow His direction. So he loves all. He does not bear grudge against any one.

So Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Says-

"A man can be recognized as a human being by his worthy character. A human being is in fact a traveler towards the realization of the Superman. Each one should advance with his gaze fixed in this direction. A spiritual atmosphere and satsang will be helpful in this pursuit".

Ma also says:- "Although God has enveloped man by the veil of ignorance, He has also provided for him a door to knowledge. By passing through that door man can attain liberation. This is why he must be determined to realize the Supreme, to find God, to transcend ignorance as well as knowledge. So long as there is the contradiction between various ideas Brahman can not be realized. By merging in the Brahman, all differences dissolve and one is forever established in one's true being."

Ma also advises to face life squarely.

"The endeavour to keep the mind constantly engaged in the contemplation of That is man's duty as a human being. Do not escape by saying, 'I can not.' You will have to develop the capacity for it; you will have to do it. For a human being everything is possible."

"If someone is knocked down, he surely does not remain lying on the ground. He rises, stands up and walks on again. The speed of one's advance must become swift. For those who are pilgrims it is necessary to forge ahead with great vitality, vigour, vivacity and velocity. Do not proceed leisurely sitting comfortably in a hackney carriage.

Ma gives us direction about how to lead our family life-

"Due to the non-observance of the brahmacharya ashrama alone the rules of all the other ashramas cannot be kept as they should be: just as without a solid foundation a house cannot be built. Ashrama signifies absence of strain and toil (Shrama); and with the sole exception of God, everything is conducive to strain and toil. Consequently how can there be rest (vishrama)? if while living in the grihasthashrama one is serving the Supreme in everyone, this is real and true ashrama life. Serve the Supreme Lord in your husband; serve the child Krishna in your son; serve your wife as a ray of Mahamaya. It is you people who say 'Wherever there is a man there is Siva, and wherever there is a women, there is Gouri.'

"Do not attempt to be a ruler in this world; remain a servant. The very fact of

being a ruler creates complications; while if you can become a servant there will be no more trouble. In this manner family life becomes consecrated life. I am but His servant, acting purely according to His Will, "If this attitude of mind can be sustained at all times, then even while living in the householder's ashrama no new ties will be formed. Your prarabdha will work itself out, that is all. If you can constantly live your family life in this spirit, what have you to fear? He Himself will put everything right."

Thus the sayings of Ma Anandamayee are a spiritual treasure, which makes man a true human being.

Jai Ma

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At every moment and in the very circumstances in which you are placed, try to the limit of your capacity to sustain the remembrance of God, to pray for His mercy, to keep your mind absorbed in Him. Truly, those whose aim is God-realization have started on their pilgrimage. Spiritual exercises must be done as regularly as possible.

—Shree Shree Ma

SHREE SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE

Vol. VI

[Translated by a devotee]

—Gurupriya Devi

Ma's Birthday Celebration in Dhaka 15 May, Sunday 1938.

Today we have reached Dhaka. Jotu and Kanu received us at the station. The devotees of Dhaka are happy even to be with us, since they are not able to be with us all the time. Their faith and love for Ma is manifested in this joy. Everyone is very unhappy on hearing the news of Bholanathji's passing away. Everybody is constantly remembering how Bholanathji enjoyed his last stay here and shared his joy with all. The function progresses according to the rules. The ladies get together in the afternoon and perform kirtan for a long time. Akhanda nam kirtan is carried on. The kirtan hall gets filled with people. It is very nice to see when the ladies go round, doing kirtan, playing the cymbals or clapping. Some ladies sit down and do kirtan. At least one person must carry on kirtan so that it is not discontinued. Ladies perform beautiful kirtan till after dusk. During this time, the men remain outside. The ladies perform nam kirtan with joy and without feeling shy. Everyone's heart is filled with happiness on hearing the sweetness of the ladies' voices singing the name of 'Ma'. Except by the ladies of Dhaka, kirtan is not done so beautifully anywhere else, nor with such regularity. The ladies are very proud of this here. Twice a week (on Sunday and Thursday), they leave the problems of the household and join in the kirtan in the ashram. At these times, they place Ma's asana in the kirtan hall. There is a very beautiful and pure bhava in them. For these two days, the ladies do not talk of anything that is useless. They just come to the ashram with the bhava of the kirtan, Old and young ladies, young girls, everyone sits together and does kirtan. Today too, the ladies performed kirtan. I am full of joy on seeing their bhava. That is why I have written so much about it. At about eleven o'clock, all the ladies and the men, gradually went home. Each person takes turns with the nam kirtan, so that it is continuous. This is the arrangement in the ashram. This rule is kept up during the kirtan, I sat on the verandah of the temple for a long time.

Monday 16 May 1938

Today also puja, yagna, kirtan etc. took place as usual. Nothing special happened worth writing about. Today too, the ladies performed kirtan for 2-3 hours. It was followed by arati. Later, Kanu sang kirtan with others and his performance was excellent. I liked it very much. Today too, all the people left the ashram-at 11 o'clock.

Injury to the Image of Kali Image Tuesday, 17 May 1938.

Today, in the latter part of the night, during the tithi (lunar date) of Krishna chaturthi, Ma's tithi puja will take place. After daily puja, today the door to the Kali temple was opened up. According to Ma's instructions, Shree Yogesh Chandra Bandyopadhyaya opened the door. We were not in the temple. We were called only after the door was opened. Kulada Dada was in the temple. As soon as we arrived he said, 'There is terrible news, look at the state of Mother Kali.' At that time we brought a light and looked at the Image of Kali Ma. The lower left hand of the Mother was broken and had fallen down. Everyone was worried and wondered as to what should be done. It was decided that a telegram should be sent to Ma. Meanwhile an expert should be called to repair the broken hand. It was decided that after the repairs, the door will be opened for all people. Ma had once said that in case any part of the body of Kali Ma gets damaged, it should be repaired. (Earlier, a thief had broken Kali Ma's hand and it had been repaired). In case an important part of the body gets damaged, (after the loss of which a human being does not survive) the door should be closed and bricked up. There was a lot of discussion today as to what should be done; in the end, everyone agreed that the first decision should be acted upon. Since it was not known when the hand fell off it was doubtful whether it will be possible to attach the arm as it was originally made, as it was broken right from the root. This is why it was doubtful whether it would be possible to repair it. Anyhow, one acharya was called in the afternoon, and somehow, that hand was attached. It is heard that previously when the grip of the hand was repaired, some special incident had occurred. After that Bholanathji himself had done the puja, even after the repairs had taken place. Kulada dada did not dare to perform the puja. It was decided that the puja should be performed on the Yantra. Ma was informed about the whole incident by telegram. In the afternoon at 5 o'clock, the door was opened up for the people. Kali Ma's puja took place on the Yantra. A number of ladies and men stayed in the ashram at night to watch the puja. The Image of Kali Ma is open for darshan only once a year. That is why a lot of people waited to see the Mother's murti. Puja was started again at night at 3.30 a.m. at the time of Ma Anandmayee's manifestation. The boys did a lot of kirtan singing "Jay Ma, Jay Ma, Jay Ma, Jay." Arati was performed at the end of the puja. A throng of ladies sat in the verandah of the temple, having darshan of Kali Ma, and watching the puja. The door had been opened after one year, that is why everyone was enjoying the glimpse of Ma Kali with such eagerness. By the time the puja and arati were over, it was dawn.

The Performance of Non-Stop Nama-Kirtan by the Ladies Wednesday, 8 May 1938

The nama kirtan which has been taking place for 16 days, will be over today. Everybody performed nama kirtan circumambulating together. The participants sang kirtan going round the temple and Ma's cottage. After that incense was burned and batashas (sugar puffs) were distributed. Everybody felt sad that the nama kirtan was over, and left slowly after taking prasad. Uptil now, everybody had something todo. Everyone used to come to the ashram regularly for the performance of the nama kirtan. On arrival everyone was offered a garland and mark of sandalwood. (The nama kirtan asana was placed in Ma's room) With regularity, they used to sit on their asanas and sing kirtan of "Ma, Ma" one by one. In this way nama kirtan would go on throughout the day and night. Sometimes, somebody would sit in the kirtan room and sing songs. The ladies always used to come in the afternoon and perform kirtan. Parimal, Nagendranath Roy's daughter, was always the first to do this. She used to sing beautiful kirtan. Hirandidi, Kirandidi, Hirandidi's daughter Belun and many other ladies did very good kirtan. A lot of ladies have learnt to play kartals and manjiras (cymbals, big and small), Marani, Kuladadada's daughters, Amulyadada's daughter's with Mukta and other ladies have learnt how to play the kartals, All of them do kirtan wearing garlands and with sandal wood *tikas*. "The ladies used to perform kirtan on Sundays. Last time I told them, "Shree Shree Ma's birthday is on Thursday. It will be good if you all get together in the ashram and do kirtan also Thursdays. As soon as the words left my mouth, everyone agreed very happily. After that there was kirtan on Thursdays also. Some people found it a problem coming twice a week, due to their household work. In spite of it, they did not pay any attention to that. Some people had to tolerate other people's banter. This did not deter them from coming for the kirtan. In fact, day by day the number of ladies participating kept on increasing.

Ma says, " By performing *kirtan* moving in a circle and keeping the beat by clapping your hands in accordance with your own *bhava*, the inertness of the body is destroyed and the *granthis* (knots) open up."

Everyone has started experiencing the truth of this in time. Sometimes some ladies experience such joy during *kirtan* that it manifests in their whole body; it is possible to see this clearly by watching them. On experiencing the effects of Ma's grace, everyone is thrilled. In the beginning Bhudev babu (the lawyer) used to say, " It was not possible to imagine that ladies could get together and perform *kirtan* in this way; this has become possible due to Ma's wish."

Eternal Samadhi of the Kali Murti, Thursay, 19 May 1938

Just yesterday there was a reply from Ma, by telegram. She had written, "The Murti of Kali should be given *samadhi* henceforth. It is not necessary to perform

puja on that *Kali murti*."

Today according to Ma's instructions, the door of the *Kali Mandir* was bricked up. The *puja* was started in the year 1926 and today, in 1938, after performing *puja* the door has been closed. All people felt a pang in their hearts.

Friday 20 May 1938...

The ladies are coming everyday to perform *kirtan* etc. Today, there was a letter from *Bhupatidada*. "Ma had described the incident regarding *Kali Mata* before we received your telegram. After that, on receiving your telegram, Ma laughed and said, "I had already told you people all this. Now let this *Kali murti* have eternal *samadhi*. I had already said this to *Khukhuni* earlier."

Saturday 21 May 1938...

Today on the occasion of passing away of *Bhulanathji's* there was a *bhandara* (feast) for *sadhus* and *kirtan* from dawn to dusk. There is a letter from *Bhupatida*; he has written, "Ma has had fever since 15th May. These days Ma had been talking a lot; her body also looked healthy. Now suddenly there is a sensation of nausea with fever, which goes up to 102. The body is weak, and it is suffering from diseases again and again. We were worried on hearing this news. Only Ma knows what is going to happen. There is a feeling of sorrow in everyone's heart.

Sunday 22 May 1938...

Today, *Bhupatida* has written about something important to *Kuladadada*, "Ma has said that in *Pitaji's* place *Swami Akhandanandaji* will give initiation to those who want it." *Swamiji* was not happy to confer *diksha* thinking himself to be unfit for it. He agreed to give *diksha* on Ma asking him to do so. There were only a few people who wanted it.

Monday 23 May 1938...

There is no other news of Ma. We are all worried about Ma. *Bhupatibabu* has written, "On Saturday, there will be a *bhandara* (feast) in *Haridwar*, on Sunday, in *Dehradun*. It is not known what Ma will do after that. "That is why everybody is keen to know what Ma would do, but there is no news till now."

Tuesday 24 May 1938...

Today, through *Ramtaranbabu's* letter from *Kolkata*, it was known that, *Shachibabu* went to Ma in *Dehradun* last Wednesday and may return on Monday. He has gone there during the holidays, for four or five days. He has written, "In *Kolkata* there was a *bhandara*(feast) for late *Bhulanathji* in *Birlaji's* temple.

(to be continued)

MY FIRST MEETING WITH MATAJI

—S.N. Sopory

It was in the summer of 1933 that I happened to go to attend the wedding of two nieces of Pandit Kashi Narain Tankha of Ananda Chowk, Dehradun. Mataji was staying those days in a temple building just adjacent to Ananda Chowk, which was a sort of enclave comprising a cluster of houses in a large compound belonging to the Tankha family. Pandit Kashi Narain's uncle Pandit Anand Narain was a well known man of Dehradun and Ananda Chowk was named after his name. Later on his wife was given the name Kaushalya and Pandit Kashi Narain's wife was given the name Mahalaxmi by Mataji. It is indeed interesting that long before the Anandamayee Sangha was formed and any building or place was named after her name, Mata Anandamayee came to reside almost within a place called Ananda Chowk.

I saw Her for the first time when She came inside the garden one day and stood near the raised platform (Chabutra) extending outside Pandit Kashi Narain's House.

She was, as ever, dressed in immaculate white and Her appearance was radiating happiness all around. Her benevolent glance must have surely fallen on me at that time and in Her Khoyal She must have earmarked me as one of the many to receive her Ahetuki Kripa in abundant measure during the days to come.

We were in Allahabad those days and my grand mother, the eldest sister of Laxmi-ji already had a picture of Mataji in the house. She used to put flowers and chandan on the picture every day. This particular picture remained with her till her last breath.

After my Dehradun visit I often used to go for Mataji's Darshan at one place or another including Railway Stations, Riverside Ghats, Temple compounds, Dharamshalas etc.

The number of Mataji's devotees was not so large those days but a fair sized group invariably used to collect wherever She went. Bholanathji, Bhajji or Akhandanandaji were often to be seen managing the crowd or assisting some one to get near Mataji or to have a private talk with Her. I was, as a rule, always the last in the gathering and hardly ever attempted to have a talk with Mataji. However, even while remaining at a distance I used to get an orange or an apple falling in my hands thrown by Mataji in my direction. On several occasions Mataji gave answers to any thoughts or questions arising in my mind by talking somewhat loudly apparently addressing those in the front row.

Years rolled by and we saw several incidents like miracles, some concerning our

own family. But it was not till 1947 that I had any talk or discussion with Mataji. I was transferred from Karachi to Kanpur just before partition and Mataji happened to come to Kanpur some time after that. The orgy of violence that followed partition had brought great suffering and loss to many. I had lost several good friends and relatives who were killed in the area that had gone to Pakistan and so this subject was uppermost in my mind these days. It was in this connection that I had a long and somewhat heated discussion with Mataji one evening which went on for several hours till late at night. Dr. Panna Lalji, Shri S. N. Agha and Swami Paramanandaji were present at that time.

My contention was that our people should not submit meekly like lambs but should pay back in the same coin. Further I felt that Mahatmas, Spiritual leaders and those who believed in Hindu Dharma should give the lead and their blessings to those who were prepared to take up the challenge to fight the menace that was threatening the very existence of the followers of Hindu Dharma. Mataji repeatedly said "Who is killing who" and refused to take sides. I kept on saying that it was not the first time in the history of this country that the peace loving followers of a certain religion were being treated in this manner. There was further danger from outside and also from within unless a stout counter offensive was launched to bring the offenders to their senses. It should be considered on the same footing as Dharma Yuddha and therefore I pleaded that we should not equate both sides or talk of Ahimsa while our brothers were being treated brutally and were deprived of life, property and honour. I tried to make the point that those who preach Dharma had greater responsibility at a time when Dharma was in danger. I must have talked a lot as I was obsessed with this idea at that time but Mataji heard me patiently and no one else interjected. In the end Mataji said "Well, if you sincerely think that way then you may do as you feel is correct."

I do not know whether Mataji really agreed with me, but She, perhaps, said what I have mentioned above just to close the long discussion.

Jai Ma.

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SANAKA SANANDANA SANATANA

SANAT KUMARA AND SANAT SUJATA

—Swami Akhandanandji

Translated from Hindi from "Jeevan - Mukta Sant"

Sanaka, Sanatana, Sanandana
Sanat Kumara and Sanat Sujata

They are all Brahmaji's Mind-born Sons. Sometimes Sanat Kumara and Sanat Sujata are said to be one and the same person, and thus there are only four of them.

It is said that Brahmaji created them with his divine power (Shakti), when he was free from the five-fold knot of ignorance and absolutely pure of mind and heart. He experienced a great joy.

Brahma's Shakti (Power) bestowed on them complete knowledge of the modes of worship and metaphysical truth.

Their depth of knowledge, austerity and their intrinsic nature are completely similar. They do not differentiate between a friend and a foe. They always go about like five-year-old children. The dualities of the world do not touch them and they do japa of Shri Krishna's name night and day. The Mantra - "Hari Sharanam" is chanted with each breath, that is why they are eternally childlike. They experience such bliss in drinking the nectar of the Lord's leela (play), that they repeatedly go to Lord Shesha and ask him about the Lord's Leela. Not a moment goes by without their meditating on the Lord ! They are forever immersed in Brahmananda. Their teachings have been of benefit for so many people. They have given beneficial advise to Shukadevaji and Bhishma on spiritual knowledge (Brahma Vidya). The king Prithu, even though he was a partial Avatara of Lord Vishnu, received counsel from them as well. Sanat Kumarji, in answer to Prithu's humble question, said :—

"Satsang above all is the simplest and the best way to reach God. The impurities of the heart and mind are washed away by talking about Shri Krishna's Leelas, his qualities (Gunas) and nature (Svabhava). Only then, of course, one obtains the realization of God. Indeed, in the Shastras, this is the one thing that is mentioned with absolute certainty. This is the one and only highest truth that one should always be immersed in Bhagawan, who is the form of one's own Atma. It is possible to experience the touch of God within by following the precepts of the Lord's Dharma with faith. Take refuge with the saints and hear about God's Leela from them. One should

not harm anybody mentally, physically or through speech. Residing in a secluded and pure place, keeping away from bad company one should practise Yama and Niyama. The highest good is in doing this and constantly remembering God. Slowly, with this sort of remembrance, the veil of ignorance is destroyed and so also desire. The Pancha Koshas (the five sheaths) and the Linga Sharira (the subtle body) are also destroyed. Then, of course, only God (Paramatma) remains, who is without duality, without an end, Vignanadghana, Then there is nothing left undone. Prithu, an avatara of God, expressed his gratitude on receiving their advice. At the time of the Mahabharata, the Muni Sanat Sujata gave some beautiful advice to Dhritarashtra. There is an important part of the Udyoga Parva which is known as the "Sanat Sujatiya." Adi Shankaracharyaji has written a very comprehensive commentary on it, which should be read by the seekers of the truth.

Sometimes they used to have discussions amongst themselves regarding God. One used to be the speaker and the rest would listen. In this way, subjects of great depth were discussed. The "Veda stuti" of Srimad Bhagawata was sung on one such occasion. Shri Sanandanaji was made the speaker and the others listened to him. In this way, mankind gained an answer to a very difficult question - How is God described in the Vedas; how the Vedas by negating everything with the exception of God (neti, neti), in the end, are left only with God. This text describes this teaching with great clarity.

The impure changes (vikaras) of the world-namely desire, anger, etc. are not present in the devotees of God, Jeevan Muktas and Siddha Saints. Nor will they ever be. In spite of it, due to the will of God, these can be seen in the lives of saints, in the form of Leela (Play). Not understanding the Leela of saints, some people think, mistakenly, that they are afflicted by anger, desire, etc. This is because of their own impure hearts. The world is not harmed in any way by the saints, Leelas (Play) In fact their Leela is of benefit.

One day the rishis went to Vaikunth (Lord Vishnu's abode). The sentries at the gate - Jaya and Vijaya - thought of them to be naked five year old children and refused to allow them to enter. The rishis, getting angry, said — "This differentiation is not correct in the Lord's eternal abode, where Satwa reigns. Pride and guile have definitely affected your minds. Otherwise, how is this possible in the Lord's abode? It is open to all. In this place, where there is only one state of being (एक रस) For your personal satisfaction, you have allowed worldly differentiation to take place. Fall from here at once (to earth)."

Even though it is not possible for saints to undergo such excitement (anger), it was God's will. He wished to incarnate Himself on earth. It was the Lord's leela that the

Munis were not allowed to enter into His abode and have His darshan easily. Later on this same abode was easily obtained by monkeys and bears : He was in the midst of village cowherds. By making the Munis the instrument, He made Himself easily attainable. The Lord himself came and praised them, talked about the greatness of Brahmins. The Munis said without any reserve, "Lord, we do not know what is correct or incorrect. Please give us whatever punishment you deem fit as penance (prayashchit) for this offense. We will accept it with utmost joy".

Bhagavan smiled and said — "This is not your fault. This was indeed my desire. I had already thought about it even prior to this incident."

On hearing the Lord's loving and profound words, all of them circumambulated the Lord, howed to Him and having received His permission, went on their way, wandering at will.

Though all of them are eternal Siddhas, and firmly established in the highest Good, to continue the Guru - Shishya tradition, the younger brothers accepted elder ones as Gurus.

Even now they wander about without being seen (invisible to most humans). It is possible that they are close to us, but we do not have the good fortune to make our birth fruitful by obtaining their darshan. Their grace is necessary for that.

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ON HER ASCENSION TO MĀTRILOKA

—Krishna Banerjee

"In Thy infinity, whatever distances I traverse with my heart and soul,
Nowhere do I ever come aross death, sorrow or bereavement.
Death assumes its form and sorrow becomes a well of woe,
The moment I turn away from Thee and fix my gaze at myself."

Rabindranath Tagore

(tr. by the author)

"It is a modest creed and yet
Pleasant if one considers it
To own that death itself must be
Like all the rest, a mockery."

P.B. Shelley

The passing away of Dr. Bithika Mukerji, our Bithikadi or Bithudi, is a deep, personal loss for me. I am beholden to her in more than one way. Not to mention anything else, I shall ever remain grateful to her for her being instrumental in my reception of *Mātrikripā*. About half a century back, in July, 1962, I first met Bithikadi as our philosophy teacher when I was admitted to the Women's College, Banaras Hindu University, as an undergraduate student. Not only was she one of the most efficient and admired teachers we ever had, but she was also the epitome of ancient Indian wisdom for us. We were simultaneously awed and charmed by the dignity of her personality and the graces she was invested with. Later on, when I met Shri Shri Mā, I understood the secret of the nobility, serenity and profundity she had in her bearing.

On December 31, 1964 during the winter vacation, a class friend of mine (Manjula Chowdhury, now Sen) and myself were drawn by some mysterious circumstances to the Varanasi Ashram of Shri Shri Mā to have Her *Darshan*. We were apprehensive of meeting Bithikadi there, in whose presence we felt tremendously awed. After much calculation, we had chosen an hour when she was likely to be away. On the Ashram terrace, a *satsang* was going on. Perhaps it was a question - answer session which had just been over. Finding our way, we timidly approached Shri Shri Mā, Who received us with Her radiant and benign smile. As we offered our *pranāms* to Her, She stood up and left the congregation to retire to Her room. And then, to our embarrassment, we saw Bithikadi walking towards us. She was visibly pleased and asked

us to come the next day, a bit earlier, in order to be introduced to Mā. So on January 1, 1965, we went again, just because we had to obey our teacher. When she introduced me to Mā and Mā began talking both jovially as well as cryptically with me — and my words were more inspired by Her *Kheyāl* than willed by myself — Bithikadi asked me to sit near Her and the dialogue continued, in the course of which Mā showered Her Grace in full measure on my heedless self. The wonderful fruition of the same is still going on in my life. Hence, but for Bithikadi's intervention (which definitely was a feat of Mā's *Kheyāl*), it could have ended as a chance encounter with the Being Whose Divine magnitude I would perhaps never have understood.

In 1966, when I came back to the Women's College, B.H.U. as a lecturer, Bithikadi insisted that I become a member of Shree Shree Mā Anandamayee Sangha and then of the Kanyapeeth Managing Committee. Thus our association progressed, first as teacher and taught, then as colleagues, and simultaneously as seekers of Mā's *kripā* — one veteran and the other a novice. Soon I came to realize with what deep involvement and singleness of purpose she was dedicated to the service of Mā and what a great matter of spiritual joy was it for her. Often we would travel together from Varanasi to Kankhal and her mother, who was *Kākimā* for us, her elder sister Renudi, her younger brothers Binduda and Babuda and their family would come from Allahabad, Delhi and other places. An exceptionally memorable and lasting get-together took place in 1981 during the Ati Rudra *Mahāyajña* at Kankhal in Sṛī Mā's Holy Presence. It was wonderful to see how all the members of this family had Shree Shree Mā enshrined in their hearts. They would talk of Mā, sing Her praises — which was particularly true of Binduda — work for Her and try to follow Her words in each and every matter of their daily life. Perhaps it would not be out of place to mention that *Kākimā* (Smt. Moti Rani Devi *alias* Achanchala Devi), a pious and devout lady, extremely tolerant and totally dependent on Mā, had also literary talents. Composing poems and songs in praise of Mā was her favourite pastime. When she lost her vision, she would dictate them or pen them down herself with her fumbling fingers. Some of her compositions have been published in *Ānanda-Vārtā* and *Shree Shree Mā Anandamayee Amrita Vārtā*.

Bithikadi had many other salient features, apparently secular, but all underscored by her ever vigilant spiritual awareness. She was well known for her expertise in the culinary art, needlework, knitting, gardening and histrionics. For many years, she directed dramatic performances staged on the Annual Day of the College and on similar other occasions. She also directed the Kanyapeeth girls for staging skits. She carried about her an aura of peace and solace and commanded her students' respect. She was equally popular as Senior Warden of the girls' hostels. At the annual Farewell Party of the College, it was customary in those days to give compliments to the

outgoing students as well as the members of the teaching staff. At such a party, Bithikadi had the title "Florence Nightingale" conferred on her in recognition of her role as a round-the-clock care-taker of the girls.

Bithikadi was a great lover of books and a connoisseur of good literature. Many a time she would invite me to join her on book-buying expeditions. She herself was marvellously gifted as a writer and researcher. At home and abroad every where she was highly acclaimed by the *cognoscenti* for her scholarship, intellectual acumen and her incessant fending for the perennial values of life. Quite a few of her scholarly papers and books have been translated from English in many European languages. Her book "Neo-Vedānta and Modernity" (available on internet) is used as a text in the Department of Religion, Mac-Master University, where she wrote it as her post-doctoral thesis under the supervision of the eminent Professor George Grant.

All that she did, she did with a relish and a grace, with refinement and sense of proportion which were qualities of her inner being. Writing books on Shree Shree Mā was a source of great joy to her. It was no less than a kind of constant meditation. She had already written several books on Mā, including a complete biography, and yet towards the end of her life she undertook the task of writing a much more elaborate biography of Mā in three volumes. Two of them were published during her lifetime and she has left the third in manuscript.

Behind her outward ease and composure, Bithikadi lived a life of intense *tapascharyā*, justifying her name Tāpasī (a female ascetic practising austerities), which she had received from Shree Shree Mā Herself. In her last message to posterity, she has exhorted each one of us to undergo *tapasyā* and do some sincere heart-searching in order to become a fit receptacle of Mā's Grace.

May her life-long *tapasyā* yield to her the fruit of eternal peace and joy at the Holy Feet of Shree Shree Mā.

Jai Ma !

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**1982, Kumbha Mela, 31 George Town, Allahabad
Dr. Bithika Mukherjee at the lotus feet of Sri Sri Ma.**



**1968, December in "Ananda Jyotir Mandir", Varanasi The then Prime Minister
Indira Gandhi and Dr. Sushila Nayar with Bithikaji,
having a glimpse [Darshan] of Ma.**



**In the open courtyard of 'Anand Jyotir Mandir' the Canadian Prime Minister
Mr. Pierre Elliot Trudeau in association with Ma.
Bithikaji in the role of interpreter**

A SOLILOQUY

—Dr. Bithika Mukerji

(Translated from Bengali)

Regarding Shree Shree Mā's *Khevāla* of Self-withdrawal into the Unmanifest, a question has surfaced in my mind, which I want to convey to Mā's devotees. Ma is no longer in Her manifest Form near us. Without saying anything to us She has disappeared from the visible world; as if She said, "Who belongs to whom?" and quitted the stage. Even earlier we had seen in Her the *mahābhāva* (mood of Divine Magitude) of total detachment. Daunted by that remote look in Her eyes, we, for the time being, did not dare to go near Her. Yet the very next moment, Her compassionate glance and sweet, enchanting smile would make us forget everything. But how shall we wipe out the painful reminiscences of Her extremely non-negotiable aloofness of the last moments? I feel that if we all exchange our views about these two questions as to "why we were not prepared for Ma's absence" and "why Ma had completely withdrawn Her joy-permeated look—Her *Ānandamayī Murti*" then perchance some satisfactory answer may emerge.

Here I express my own views in order to create a special column for reflections over this matter and hope that other devotees of Ma will serially communicate their ideas through this column. We should be cautious so that it is not reduced to a column for mere discussion. Through this column I would like to invite all participants to be mentally determined for treading the path of *sādhanā* and meditate on these questions. And as a result of this spiritual awareness it is possible that a reply flashes at some moment in the mind that may give us solace and peace.

The one and only eagerness (if this word can be used at all) that Mā had was expressed in Her implorations addressed to us: "Do *tapasyā*". Be good. Have mercy on Me. Talk of Hari (God) is the only worthwhile talk; the rest is pain and in vain." All know that the central teaching of Mā was: "The sole duty of a human being is the remembrance of God."

This supreme Manifestation, Incarnation of Grace, this Descent of Divine Grandeur, must have been the fruit of immense meritorious deeds performed by several members of the family in which Mā manifested Herself. The Universal Mother had responded to the earnest call of her true devotees. But Mother knew that her children would not be able to sustain in equal measure the capacity for maintaining Her on earth. That is why, out of compassion, Mā has repeatedly exhorted Her children to excel in the performance of renunciation, austerities, worship, *japa*, meditation, and

so on. By the performance of virtuous deeds, the fruit of *tapasyā* is easily redoubled. Without *tapasyā* can human beings be fortunate enough to have the Magnificent Presence of the Divine in their midst? Mā instructed us to perform rigourisms in order to give Herself abundantly to us. In fact She had come for letting Herself be within our reach and incessantly told us the ways and means of being worthy of Her Presence. Mā Herself used to say that nothing is achieved without the Grace of God, but She would add that God's Grace is always there, overtly or covertly, showering on the world. She would again and again point out to us how to hold the bowl of our life turned upward to receive that shower of Grace.

Yet I feel that perhaps we undervalued Mā's words in comparison with her Bodily Presence. We forgot that the Bodily Presence of Mā could be preserved only by following Her words. We thought that we would build temples of Mā, that we would construct magnificent palaces fit for the Divine Status of Mā. Who can ever build a dwelling place fit in every respect for the Mother of the Universe? But that is not the question. People want to utilize the maximum of their own powers and means for the worship of the Supreme. They try of interpret Mā's *Kheyāta* in the light of their own understanding.

Have we really comprehended what Mā said to us? Mā pleaded with us to awaken the inner spiritual power, to fix our inner gaze upon the horizontal line expanding on and on from the great to the greater, from the lofty to the loftier, gradually vanishing away into the Infinite; She has urged us to rise from the vast to the vaster; She has upheld for our benefit the ideal of merging the individual self in the Cosmic Self. When did we really follow this message?

Due to lack of *tapasyā*, as the effect of our accumulated *punya*—good *karma*—was on the decline, what was once manifested to us was again lost in the Unmanifest. What was a treasure to be stored by means of *sādhanā* we tried to sustain by building temples, āshrams and *yajñashālās*. It is true that Mā received even this offering with boundless compassion. But there is definitely a limit even to the best and most precious objects in this transitory world. Perhaps the mission of progressing on the path of the Limitless Infinity, suggested and shown by Mā, has not been fulfilled. While dwelling in the Presence of Mā, perhaps the *tapasyā* powerful enough to sustain Her Presence was not undergone. But it is absolutely true that Mā is not accessible without *tapasyā*. Perhaps that is why, by effacing Herself from the canvas of the visible world, Mā has left behind the tear-strewn path to Her re-discovery for us.

*

A SOLILOQUY

Translator's Note :

Shortly after the self withdrawal of Shree Shree Ma into the unmanifest the translator visited late Dr. Bithika Mukerji at her home. During their conversation, Bithikaji brought out this article and read it aloud. At the disappearance of Shree Shree Ma from the visible and tangible world, she was at once grieved, shocked, puzzled and totally disoriented. She said she wanted to send the article for publication. Then as was wont of her, she paused for a while, evidently entertaining a second thought, and then said slowly, "No, it will be published posthumously."

Publishers' Note :

The writer of this soliloquy, Dr. Bithika Mukerji, President of Shree Shree Ma Ananadmeye Kanyapeeth, Varanasi, passed away on 10 January, 2012 at the Brahmamuhuta around 3 A.M. She was specially favoured by Shree Shree Ma. This article was found among her papers.

According to the writer, if the devotees of Ma ponder whole heartedly over the questions raised in this article and send their thoughts for this column it will be beneficial for both the readers and the writers. It will give the writers an opportunity to be mentally in association with Ma atleast for some time during their self analysis and will also help the readers in their pursuit of Ma's blessings.

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FUNCTION IN MUMBAI

On 10th January, 2012 a commemoration function on Sri Sri Ma was organised by the disciples of Mumbai. The main persons among the organisers were the family of late B.K. Shah, Sunayana Mehta, Km. Madhavi Badiyani and other devotees of Sri Sri Ma. The main attraction of the functions were homage to Ma by the national saint Sri Morarji Bapu and duet of Santoor and Tabla by the well known Santoor artiste Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma and Tabla Wizard Zakir Hussain.

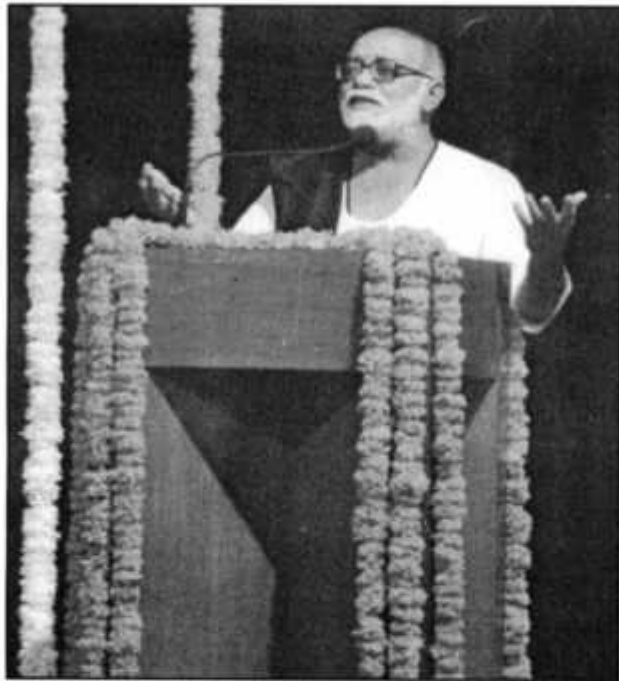
After the lighting of lamps in front of the picture of Ma and inaugurating the function, Bapuji expressed his feelings in the following words : "Well respected Sri Sri Ma is still inspiring her disciples in the pious atmosphere of this Ashram. I pay homage to that force. My wishes to both Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma and Ustad Zakir Hussain, who are also here to pay tribute to Ma. It is not a big function. So my respect is for all the brothers and sisters present here.

"A true preceptor is neither a male nor a female, nor does he belong to any caste. He is above the castes. Revered Ma was in the body of a mother but she remained awakened all the 24 hours in the transcendental consciousness.

"She does not belong to any caste but she is a guiding light. The consciousness of a holy preceptor saves all his/her followers. Whenever any one surrenders himself/herself completely, then that consciousness saves him/her fully. The consciousness of a true preceptor destroys our inner weaknesses taking the form of Guru or Lord Shiva. That supreme consciousness annihilates our depressions. In the form of Ma, the consciousness of a true preceptor forgives us for our sins. They are truly lucky who are in the company of Ma. This flame of consciousness was in the form of Ma. This flame forgave all and the whole world got benefitted.

"I had the good fortune of having 'Darshan' of Ma twice or thrice. I felt something special. Ma used to talk less. Ma's saying always echoes in our mind like an axiom [sutra]. It guides us like a friend and makes us liberal in our views just as eyes lead us in darkness.

"Amir Khusro was a true and very close disciple of Nizam-ud-din Auliya. He used to see his preceptor, his 'Peer', all the time while sleeping or awake. Amir khusro got benefitted. But after all a man is a man (jeeva). At times Amir Khusro had doubts in his mind. He used to think that he was serving him (Auliya) all the time, but was he a real 'Peer'? One day Amir Khusro was nursing the feet of his preceptor. His body was active, while his mind was pondering. Nizam-ud-din changed his position (side)



and said, "I have changed my position, you also change your position."

Whenever there was any uncertainty or doubt in the minds of her followers, Ma also used to utter some such words. Her devotees used to get guidance from them. Like a mother, she used to forgive, like a father, she destroyed their weaknesses or faults. Father can never give full independence. But Ma used to give full independence but kept watch so that the devotees might not go astray. Such prophets are rare."

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Forgetting that God is the only beloved one (Iṣṭa), men give their love to sense objects. To love anything else that is for from God means to divide one's devotion between two (do-iṣṭa) and this makes one wicked (duṣṭa).

—Shree Shree Ma

NEWS OF ACTIVITIES AT DIFFERENT ASHRAMS

(1) Sri Mad bhagavata Week :

Sri Madbhagavata week was celebrated at Puna Ashram of Sri Sri Ma, from 15th to 22nd January.

(2) Shri Shri Saraswati Puja :

The Ashrams of Sri Sri Ma at Kankhal, Varanasi, Agartala, Kolkata, Bhimpura, Puna, Ranchi and other places celebrated Sri Saraswati Puja with great pomp and show. All the ashrams reverberated with the sound of melodious music sung on the occasion of Saraswati puja on 28th January. Many followers of Sri Sri Ma visited the ashrams and a mass lunch was also held.

(3) Maghi Purnima [Full Moon] :

Maghi Purnima festival was celebrated at the ashram of Sri Sri Ma at Tarapeeth on a grand scale. Saints and scholars from other ashrams participated in large numbers.

In the morning of 6th February at the temple of Shiva, Rudrabhishaka, adhivasa, arati were held. Later 'Satsang' was arranged. Bhajans and kirtans were sung and everyone observed silence. Later on, all took prasad.

In the morning of the pious Maghi Purnima Day, worships were held at the temple of Sri Sri Tara Ma, at the temple of Vama Deva and at the temple of Shiva. Besides many celebrations like Deeksha, recitation of Sri Sri Geeta, Chandi Vishnu Sahashranam, Kirtan, Bhog, Hawan, mass lunch of Sadhus and Brahmans were held with full accuracy and grace. It ended with religious discourses, Arati, Bhajan, kirtan and observing silence (Maun) in the evening.

At the Varanasi ashram Satyanarayan Puja was held on the day of Maghi Purnima.

(4) On 20th Feb. Maha Shiv Ratri was celebrated at the various ashramas of Sri Sri Ma at Kankhal, Varanasi, Vrindavan, Delhi, Agartala, Puna, Bhimpura, Ranchi, Rajgir, Uttarkashi, Almorah, Jamshedpur etc.

At Ma's ashram in Varanasi, the students of Kanyapeeth recited Mantras in chorus and worshipped Shiva and the ashram hummed with the songs in praise of Lord Shiva. All through the four quarters of the night Special Puja was held at 'Chandi Mandap' and at the temple of Annapurna, Anand Jyoti Mandir, Girijia temple and

Bipineshwar temple.

(5) Holi Festival :

With the advent of Falgun, nature gets coloured with Abir, gulal and its effects can be seen in all directions. On the last 8th March, Holi was celebrated in the ashrams at Kankhal, Brindavan, Varanasi, Agarpara, Puna etc. In the ashram of Sri Sri Ma at Brindawan, on the birthday of Mahaprabhu Chalia Deva special Puja (shodashopachar) was held in the temples of Sri Krishna Chaitanya, Srimati Radhika, Sri Radhakrishna besides Nama Sankeertan, mass luch of Sadhus and other disciplines were arranged. Special puja of Sri Sri Ma was held at Vardhaman Kunj.

In the morning of 7th March, on the Birthday of Sri. Harj Baba special Puja [sorashpuja] was held at Anandajyoti Mandir in front of Gopalji. In the evening, on the stage in the courtyard of Kanyapeeth 'Adhivas' of Sri Narayanji was held and Holika Dahan was also done there. This ritual was begun by Sri Sri. Ma in her 'kheyal' in 1977.

In the morning of 8th March, on the day of Holi special Puja [Shodashopachar] of Sri Narayan was done and all offered Abir and Gulal. Then all went to Gopalji's temple. The idol of Sri Gopalji was brought out of the temple and was seated in a shallow dish of metal [Parat] on a couch. On the day of Holi, anyone can touch and offer abeer to Gopalji. After offering abeer, 'Maha Abhishek' of Gopalji was performed. Then Gopalji was dressed in new clothes and he was adored. Special puja [Shodashopachar], Bhog and Arati were held.

(6) Sri Sri Vasanti Durga Puja :

During the spring season, Vasanti Durga Puja is celebrated. This was held at Varanasi from 28th March to 2nd April 2012. Enjoying the rhythmic sound of 'Dhak' during the performance of various functions, everyone was happy at the ashram of Sri Sri Ma. The speciality of this year was 'Shashthi Puja'. It continued for two days. In the morning of 28th March, Kalparambha of Shashthi was performed and at night 'Aamantran Adhivas of Devi' was held, on 29th March again Shashthi Puja took place and at night Aarti was performed. On 30th and 31st March and on 1st and 2nd April Mahasaptami, Mahaashami, Mahanavami and Maha Dashami Puja was held accordingly. On the day of Astami, 'Sandhi Puja' and 'Shodashpuja' of Ma Annapurna - the main diety of the ashram was performed in the Annapurna Mandir. On 1st April, on the day of 'Ramnavami' special Puja of Sri Ram was performed. Bhajans were sung every evening. On the evening of Dashami, after the immersion of Devi, the festival ended with the singing of Bhajan, paying respect to Ma and mass dinner.

Many devotees joined. Every evening Kashi Naresh and the Princess used to be

present. They were also present in the morning of Dashami.

(7) Bhimpura Ashram :

Following functions are scheduled in the ashram by the Grace of Ma.

(i) The punyatithi of Revered Swami Bhaskaranandaji.

On Sunday 8.4.2012 morning. Sadhu Bhandara and Daridra Narayan Seva.

(ii) Sri Sri Ram Navami : Sunday 1.4.2012 from morning 10 A.M. to 12.00 noon.

(iii) Sri Hanuman Jayanti Puja : Friday 6.4.2012 from 7 A.M. to 8 A.M.

(iv) Sri Ram Mandir Doosara Patotsava : Tuesday 24.4.2012 from 10'oclock A.M. to 12. A.M.

(v) Sri Sri Matri Janmotsava Puja : Monday 7. 5.2012 Wednesday 8.5.2012 Km. Bhanu Ben Patel.

(a) Recitation of Shata Chandi : Commencing in the morning of 7.5.2012 by 9'clock.

(b) Remembering Ma and Kirtan : Purna Ahuti on 9.5.2012 by 5^o P.M.

(c) Puja on the Birth Day of Sri Sri Ma and Kumari Puja.

Wednesday 9.5.2012 from 3. A.M.

Tuesday 10.5.2012 upto 7 A.M.

(vi) Sri Sri Guru Puja : Tuesday 3.7.3012 from 10' A.M. to 11.30 A.M.

(viii) Janmashtami : Friday 10.8.2012.

(8) International Seminar :

An International Seminar was organised at the School of Management situated on the Varanasi - Allahabad Road about 14-15 miles away from Varanasi. The days were 24th, 25th and 26th of February. Many scholars and experts, followers of other religions from all over the world, besides the followers of Paramahansa Yogananda, Sri Aurobindo, Anand Margis, followers of Nanak and masters of other sects and philosophers participated. The Brahmacharinis of Kanyapeeth also participated in this seminar. A discourse entitled, "You a Scion of the Immortal" based on Spirituality for common Man" written by Brahmacharini Guneeta was read in the Seminar by Br. Geeta Banerjee of Kanyapeeth. It was highly praised. It is published in the magazine of the School of Management Studies.

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IN MEMORY OF AN ARDENT DEVOTEE OF SHREE SHREE ANANDMAYI MA

Jai Ma !

Smt. Siya Bhatnagar was an ardent devotee of Shree Shree Anandmayi Ma. Smt. Bhatnagar first met Ma Anandmayi in 1959 at Kalkaji Ashram in New Delhi and instantaneously developed a strong spiritual connection with her. Bestowed with Ma's blessings she found peace and tranquility and remained in Ma's devotion all through her life.

Ma asked her to send one of her sons to the Vidyapeeth in Almora. Following Ma's words, she sent her son, Mr. Rakesh Bhatnagar (currently residing in Germany) to the Almora Vidyapeeth from 1960 to 1967.

Smt. Bhatnagar visited many of Ma's ashrams viz., Almora, Nainital, Kankhal, Vrindavan and Varanasi. She actively participated in Sanyam Saptah, Ma's Janmotsav and Durga Pooja ceremonies in various ashrams. She was fortunate to have attended several of these programmes in the physical presence of Shree Shree Anandmayi Ma. Ma's benevolence upon her was such that on two occasions, she claimed to have received Ma's blessings in her dreams.

Being a resident of Bhopal, she was closely associated with the Baigarh Ashram. Despite her old age, she actively participated in many ceremonies and programmes at the Ashram. Her devotion towards Ma had an everlasting effect on all members of her family. All her children and grandchildren are devotees of Shree Shree Anandmayi Ma and continue their association with Ashram's activities in various ways.

Having lived a full life blessed by Ma, Smt. Siya Bhatnagar breathed her last at Bhopal and left for heavenly abode on March 30, 2012. She is survived by her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. May her departed soul rest at Ma's lotus feet.



**Smt. Siya Bhatnagar
1927-2012**

Jai Ma !

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