

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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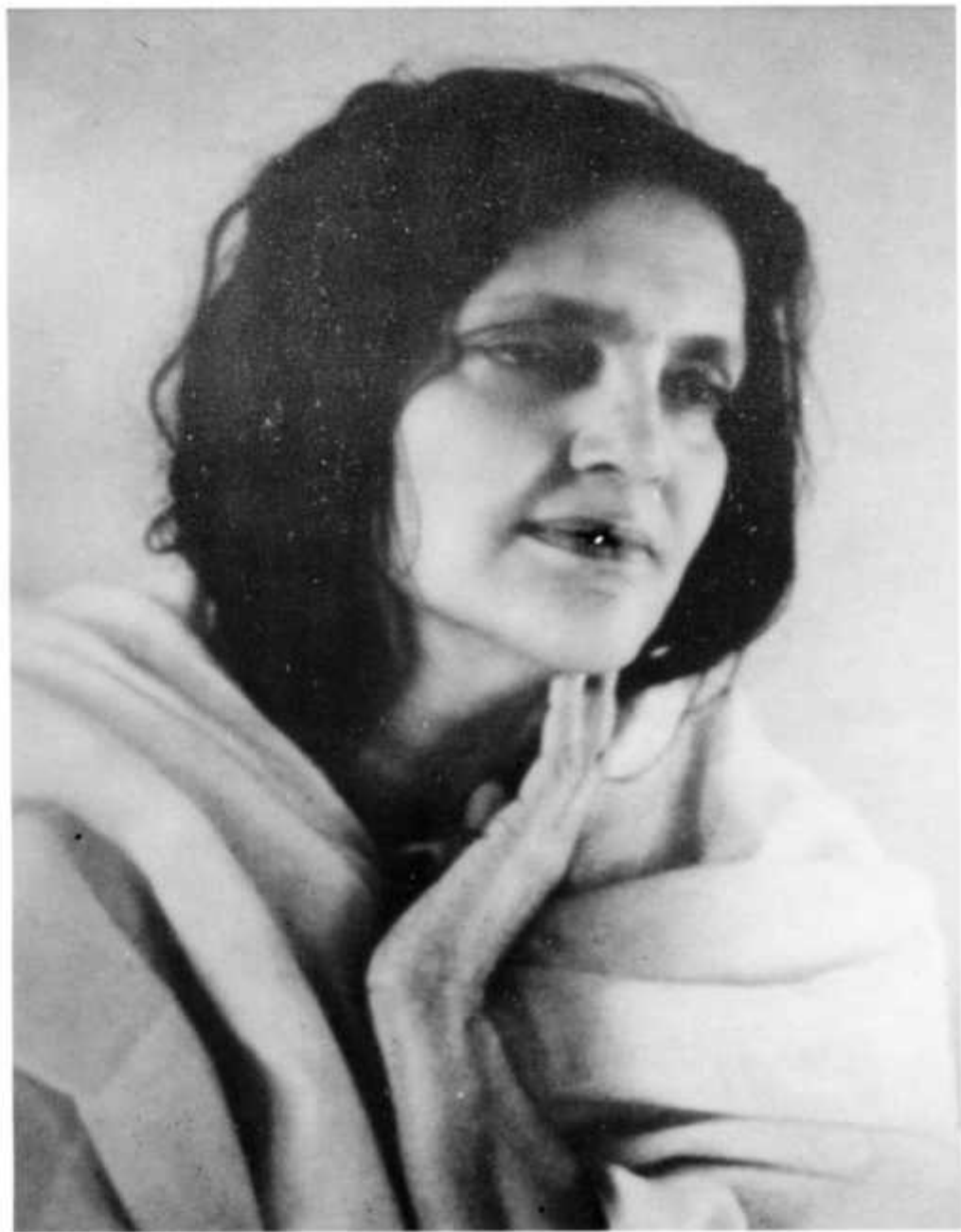
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MATRI VANI

If you say you have no faith, you should try to establish yourself in the conviction that you have no faith. Where 'no' is, 'yes' is potentially there as well. Who can claim to be beyond negation and affirmation? To have faith is imperative. The natural impulse to have faith in something, which is deep-seated in man, develops into faith in God. This is why human birth is such a great boon. It cannot be said that one has no faith. Everyone surely believes in something or other.

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A man's belief is greatly influenced by his environment; therefore he should choose the company of the Holy and Wise. Belief means to believe in one's self, disbelief is to mistake the non-self for one's self.

* * * * *

This world is itself but an embodiment of want, and hence the heartache due to the absence of fulfilment one must needs endure. This is why it is said that there are two kinds of currents in human life : the one pertaining to the world, in which want follows upon want; the other of one's true Being.

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Where you see limitation, even this is a manifestation of the limitless, the Infinite. In essence it is none other than your own self. So long as this fact has not been revealed how can one speak of full Realization, complete, perfect, all comprehensive—call it what you will! Then again how can the question of perfection or imperfection, of completeness or incompleteness, still arise in such a state of fulfilment?

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Vairāgya can consume and bhāva, bhakti melt what is impermanent in human nature. But the moment in which burning and melting are impossible—that Moment is eternal. To try and seize that moment is all you have to do. In reality this is THAT—everything perceived is THAT. How can THAT be apart from anything? You are to yearn for the revelation of what you ARE.

* * * * *

Again, to what can you attain? It is already present here itself! Anything found will be lost again. To prepare oneself for the revelation of that which eternally Is, there are injunctions, numerous paths. But do you not see, every path must come to

an end; in other words, you should concentrate upon that imagination which will sweep away all other imaginations and having gone beyond all imagination there is the revelation of THAT, which you really are.

* * * * *

A tree is watered at its roots. Man's root is the brain, where his reasoning power, his intellect is constantly at work. Through japa, meditation, the perusal of scriptures and similar practices one progresses towards God. Hence man should bind himself and, fixing his gaze on the One, advance along the path. Whatever ties, bonds or restraints he imposes upon himself, should have for aim the Supreme Goal of life. With untrammelled energy one must forge ahead towards the discovery of one's own Self.

* * * * *

Do you not know that the rope with which you tie anything in this world must rot or wear out? And though you use iron chains, or even golden, whatever binds will one day break or be shattered. Do any worldly fetters exist that can never be broken, never destroyed? It is solely the cry of lament over temporary ties that alone fashions the bondage of the mind-the mind that cannot be confined to any place. Like a restless child, unconcerned with good or bad, it seeks Supreme Bliss; never satisfied with momentary happiness and therefore ever wandering.

* * * * *

It is your nature to crave for the revelation of that which Is, for the Eternal, for truth, for limitless knowledge. This is why you do not feel satisfied with the evanescent, the untrue, with ignorance and limitation. Your true nature is to yearn for the revelation of what you ARE.

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SHREE SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE PRASANGA

Vol. - 5

—Late Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

[Translation - Sanjoy Ghosh]

(Continued)

20.4.1946 (Baishakh 7, Saturday)

To day also Ma went out with Haribaba. I heard that they went to visit the 'akharas' of Nanak Saheb situated at Tejgao and Sankartola. Even after waiting at the Ashram till 12:30 noon I was unable to obtain 'darshan' of Shree Shree Ma. In the evening, there was a musical recital of Ramayan and after that the devotees of Haribaba presented their drama by acting themselves. The theme of to day's drama ran as follows.

Devarshi Narad learnt from God that living beings despite facing all the hardships, and sorrow in this world are reluctant to take abode in Vaikuntha, renouncing this mortal state. In order to verify this, Narad came down to this world. At first he met a herd of pigs. He saw that the pigs were drenched in mud and dirt. Narad lamented at the horrendous plight of the pigs and thought that their suffering would perhaps end if they could be brought to Vaikuntha. He asked the pigs whether they were willing to go to Vaikuntha. Hearing the proposal of Narad the pigs on the contrary enquired about Vaikuntha and its environment. Narad explained that it is a very beautiful place and no comparison can ever be drawn with the mortal world. Narad further continued to say that those who live in Vaikuntha have no feeling of pain or sorrow. Eternal happiness prevails there. The thought of availability of sufficient food was only looming around the minds of the pigs, who enquired whether 'vishta' (faecal matter) was available in Vaikuntha. Narad was taken aback by the question of the pigs and exclaimed that since Vaikuntha is the abode of God how could vishta be available there! The pigs regretted that they were not interested in Vaikuntha and showed Narad the way out.

Narad continued his search for prospective candidates amongst living beings who would be willing to go to Vaikuntha. He met an old 'Sethji' and thought that this Seth had enjoyed all the happiness of mortal life like money,

children, grandchildren and nothing remained unattained. Narad further thought, if such an offer of migration to Vaikuntha was given to this old Sethji perhaps he might be agreeable on such a proposal. He said to Sethji that he had enjoyed all the goodness of this mortal world; it was perhaps the right moment to bid farewell to this world and leave for Vaikuntha. Sethji replied to Narad that what he had said was just. But he said, "Although I have grown old, my wife is still youthful. Further I have small gradsons. They are yet to be educated. The moment they are educated and married I am ready to go to Vaikuntha. Then there will be no impediments in my way to Vaikuntha". Narad returned disappointed.

After some days he revisited Sethji's house. On his second visit he learnt that Sethji had died. Narad by means of dhyanyoga (meditation) learnt that due to his intense worldly craving Sethji had continued to stay in the same house as an ox. Narad said to Sethji, "Although you wanted to wait for your gradsons' marriage yet you were unable to do so. You have taken birth as an ox simply because of your desire to live in this mortal world, and you continue to endure much pain on account of being an ox. Do you still want to live here? At least now let us go to Vaikuntha. Sethji in his form of an ox told Narad that whatever he was saying was correct, however how could he leave for Vaikuntha at that time? "I am assisting to plough the land for this family. By this the family is able to maintain and feed themselves. The family would suffer great difficulty if I leave now." The ox requested Narad to come after some time when he would be able to set out on his journey to Vaikuntha with Narad. Narad was astonished to observe such attachment of the ox to the affairs of this world.

Narad revisited Sethji's place after some lapse of time. From there he learnt that the ox had died. Narad adopted 'dhyam' (meditation) to ascertain the fate of the ox in his next birth. Through his meditation Narad learnt that Sethji was living in the same place in the form of a dog. He said to Sethji, "You are now living in the form of a dog, and this shows how strong is your attachment towards this world! You were living in this house at first as a Seth! Then you started living as an ox and now you are living as a mere dog, feeding on scraps. You are guarding the house by passing sleepless nights and undergoing a painful life. Hence, let us now go to Vaikuntha. The erstwhile Sethji now presently in the form of a dog told Narad that he perfectly

agreed with what Narad had said. "I being constantly vigilant am protecting the treasure of this family from the hands of dacoits and thieves. If I leave with you now at this moment this family will lose all their wealth." The Sethji in the form of the dog further said, "When the family members are matured enough to preserve and guard their family treasure I will leave this place with you for Vaikuntha." Narad returned to Vaikuntha empty-handed.

After some time Narad again visited Sethji's house. He learnt that the dog had died. Through his meditation Narad learnt that the Sethji had taken re-birth in the form of a snake and was guarding the treasure of the family. Narad asked Sethji, "How long will you continue with this craving for material life? Do your desires for this mortal world still remain unfulfilled? You are leading a painful life as a snake. Now please accompany me to Vaikuntha." Sethji perfectly agreed with Narad but said, "If I do not protect this wealth as a snake then no part of it will ever remain in possession of this family! For this reason, I am unable to accompany you to Vaikuntha". Narad realized that such intense craving for the mortal world could not be ever diminished or nullified. Narad informed the wife of Sethji that a venomous and dangerous snake was hiding in an underground secret chamber of the house. He advised her to kill the snake with a stick and assured her not to be frightened as no harm would befall her. The wife of Sethji complied with the advice of Narad and killed the snake. The moment Sethji left the body of the snake, Narad immediately caught hold of him and said, "The persons for whom you have endured all the pains have themselves turned out to be your killers. What more? Accompany me to Vaikuntha". However, Sethji was still under the spell of this material world. He was not ready to accompany Narad to Vaikuntha. Narad commented, "Since you are not prepared to accompany me voluntarily to Vaikuntha I have to solemnly perform the duty of the Guru. I will take you to Vaikuntha by force." Saying this Narad brought Sethji to Vaikuntha by force. In this way Narad realized that the saying was correct. Living beings can never renounce worldly cravings to take refuge in Vaikuntha.

Immediately upon the sight of Shree Bhagavan all worldly thoughts vanished into oblivion from Sethji's mind. He became exhilarated with joy and started chanting hymns and prayers in glory of Shree Bhagavan and Narad.

The disciples of Haribaba are good actors. They need neither any costume nor any make-up for acting. The roles of pig, ox and dog were enacted with ease. The role of animal was easily enacted by crouching and covering one's back with a blanket. The spectators used their imagination to visualize the various animals. The acting is taken as a part of 'sadhana' because through enactment of drama, they throw light on how a Guru is of supreme importance, how God is realized by simple faith and devotion and such other spiritual topics. The team of sadhus perform drama with extremely realistic expressions. That is the reason why the hearts of the spectators are easily won over.

(to be continued)

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

During Purna Kumbh at Prayaag in January 2013 like in previous years Shree Shree Ma's Ashram too will organize a Camp. The devotees interested in staying in the Camp during this special Holy Occasion must inform the Ashram about the details of their stay at the following address, otherwise it may lead to inconvenience due to delay. You are being requested to furnish details such as date of arrival, period of stay, number of people and type of accommodation, i.e. separate tent or thatched hut. The amount of rental cost of tent and/or kutiya cannot be provided before December, 2012.

List of 4 Main Holy Bath

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| 1 st Holy Bath | — | 14 th January 2013 Uttarayan Sankranti |
| 2 nd Holy Bath | — | 27 th January - Purnima Tithi |
| 3 rd Holy Bath | — | 10 th February Mauni Amavasya |
| 4 th Holy Bath | — | 15 th February Vasant Panchami Saraswati Puja |

Shree Shree Anandamayee Ma Camp will offer stay to the devotees from the 1st week of January till the 4th Holy Bath. Kalpavaas will not be organised. Any change in the programme will be duly informed.

Secretary

Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram
Badaini, Varanasi-221001

MOTHER AND HER PLAYFUL ROLE

---Bhaiji

On the day before Mother left the Ramna ashram at Dhaka in June, 1932, at 5 p.m., She sat with many of Her devotees in the open compound to partake of the prasad. Suddenly the sky became overcast with dark clouds of the Nor'wester, with stormy winds, flashes of lightning and thunder. Everybody present apprehended immediate rainfall. Just at that time another party arrived and they also sat down to have prasad. Those who had finished eating were asked by Mother to leave, but She Herself stayed on. When all had finished, She stood up and said, "I shall have a free bath now; Many tried to dissuade Her from taking a bath so late in the afternoon. But She stood firm when a heavy downpour of rain started; the whole compound was flooded. Mother, like a restless, playful girl ran about in the rain with great delight; many old men and women, boys, girls and youths with all their fine clothes on joined the gathering and started singing *kirtan*, which continued till 9 P.M. Amongst them were some with very poor health: but none of them caught cold.

We have seen many instances when by a mere glance Mother stopped rain, or by a gentle smile or loud laughter put an end to all disputes and display of ill-will amongst Her devotees.

Mother by nature takes very little food; one cannot even imagine how a person can live on such a scanty diet. In the early stages of Her life, when many yogic processes manifested themselves in Her body, She passed many days without taking even a drop of water. She did not feel any inclination to eat until those yogic processes ceased. During those days of complete or partial fasts Her appearance was bright and cheerful, Her body nimble, full of health and vigour as usual. We already knew about the courses of Her restricted diet.

She passed five months taking just a handful of food and that too towards the close of the night. For eight to nine months She took only three mouthfuls of rice in the day and three at night. For five or six months She lived on a little fruit and water taken twice daily. There were occasions when She spent five to six months eating a small quantity of rice only twice a week; on other days a few fruits sufficed.

From 1924 She could not eat with her own hands; whenever She tried to carry food to Her mouth, Her grasp slackened and a large part of the food slipped through Her fingers. This was not due to any disease. At that time, it was arranged that the person who used to feed Her should, once during day and once in the night, give Her

only as much food as could be grasped by the tips of two fingers. In this way four or five months were spent. On alternate days She would also drink a small quantity of water. For five to six months She took three grains of boiled rice in the morning and three grains in the evening and two or three ripe fruits that had fallen from trees naturally. Sometimes it so happened that food was allowed just to touch Her lips and then dropped. For two to three months She ate as much food as one could put into Her mouth in a single breath. For eight to nine months She partook of only two ounces of rice and dal mixed together and boiled in a small bowl over sacrificial fire, or a small quantity of vegetable soup mixed with some boiled rice or milk. For several days together She lived on one or two pieces of roti. It may also be added, that for many days on end She remained entirely without food.

After She had given up eating rice altogether, She could not even recognize it. There was a Kahar maid-servant in Shah-bag, who was eating rice. When Mother saw it. She said smiling- "What is she eating? How nicely she is chewing and swallowing! I too shall eat with her." One day She found a dog eating rice, when She began to say plaintively, "I want to eat, I want to eat". When such impulses were obstructed, She used to lie on the ground for some time like a petulant little girl. Once Mother said of Her own accord, "Man tries to give up old habits. But my ways are totally different. I devise means so that my old habits may be restored. You must feed me with three grains of boiled rice every day, otherwise I shall lose the habit of eating rice, just as I have forgotten the use of my hand for taking food."

Those who used to feed Mother had to be on the alert to see that She was not given one particle of food in excess of what She wanted. They had to lead a pure life of self-control; the cooking and eating utensils had to be kept scrupulously clean and pure. Otherwise She could not swallow the food, or Her face would turn away, or She would leave Her seat automatically. Mother used to say,— "There is no difference between this body and a lump of clay; I can eat food placed on the floor or anywhere else in any way you like; but for your education, regard for hygiene, the observance of cleanliness other rules and social obligations are necessary; hence my body automatically follows those regulations."

During the long periods of abstinence from normal quantities of food She did not shrink from Her usual household duties nor did Her body lose its natural loveliness. Afterwards gradually all the activities of Her family life began to slacken. Whenever She tried to do some housework Her body would cease to function and She used to lie down on the floor quite benumbed. Sometimes She would burn Her hands and feet at the kitchen fire; at other times She would get hurt through other causes, but She was not conscious of those mishaps.

Mother says,—“Nobody can give up work by the force of self-will; when his karma is exhausted, all work ceases automatically.”

From May 1926 the rigours of the rules regarding Her diet began to slacken. But what She ate was, after all, extremely little; it might be called a small child's ration! Four or five years after She had stopped taking food with Her own hand, some of Her bhaktas expressed their great eagerness to see Her do so once again. At their request She agreed to try and sat down with the dishes spread before Her. But after putting a pinch of food into Her mouth, She gave some to others and rubbed the rest on the floor. She could not eat at all. After this nobody ever asked Her to eat with Her own hand. She said, “I look upon all hands as mine; actually I always eat with my own hand.”

(An excerpt from *Mother as Revealed to Me*)

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Have Faith in your Mother

*When inclined to be discouraged
And all hope seems to depart,
Don't forget that Ma lives
And still has you in Her heart*

*

PILGRIMAGE TO KAILAS

—Br. Gurupriya Didi

Sunday, 16 June 1937

At eight a.m. we set out for Kailas with Ma. Others who were with us were to return from Almora. They all wept while leaving Ma. Nagendada who had come from Calcutta, Naren Choudhury and family from Delhi, Hari Ram and Manik from Dehradun, all returned. Ma, Bholanath, Jyotish Dada, Swami Akhandananda, Tunu (Prankumar Babu's son), Dasudada and a servant (Keshav Singh) and I set out on the journey. The hill tribe girl Parvati was also with us. She was waiting in Almora to accompany Ma.

At eleven a.m. we reached a forest bungalow in a place called Barchina. The scenic beauty was exquisite. We had refreshments and rested till three p.m. The bungalow was situated at a distance of seven miles from Almora. Before evening we reached a place called Dhoulchina which was another five and a half miles away. We cooked, had dinner and spent the night on the verandah of a dak bungalow. On Monday June 17, we started at five a.m. and reached Seraghat eleven miles further.

Enormous trees grew on the banks of the river at Seraghat. We cooked beneath one of the trees and finished with the ritual of eating. We then lay down beneath the trees for it was difficult to walk in the hot sun. Ten or twelve coolies were carrying our luggage and walking with us. Five *dandis* had been hired along with fifteen coolies. Parvati was accompanied by another lady, her small daughter and her brother. They had two coolies with them. The coolies reached the spot, cooked *rotis* for themselves and lay down to rest. Each coolie carries a maximum load of fifteen seers. A horse was not available for Tunu at Almora—a horse will be picked up on the way. As one *dandi* was spilt, it was replaced by another one at Seraghat.

We could still spot a shop or two here and there, where we purchased rice, *dal*, *ghee*, salt and other essentials. We heard that no such shops would be available as we proceeded further. We had also carried some food items with us. We were told that nothing would be available beyond Garbiyan therefore we had dry fruit, sugar candy, pepper powder, tamarind pickles and other items packed with us. It is necessary to keep such items in stock to go across ice-laden tracks, as also warm clothing, goggles and water-proof material. We had heard that some travellers feel giddy and faint on the way to Garbiyan and so a lady at Almora had prepared a concoction of pepper,

dried mango powder and other spices under the belief that it would keep our heads clear. We heard that it was difficult to cook beyond Garbiyan so that wheat flour, broken rice and other cereals have to be soaked in water and drunk—these items are also exorbitantly expensive. All were proceeding joyfully. But Ma, Jyotish Dada and I were not feeling too well. Today Bholanath went on foot for quite some distance; Ma and Akhandananda also walked for some time. Jyotish Dada and I remained seated in the *dandi*. What more shall I pen about the natural beauty of the Himalayan mountains? Many have written detailed descriptions. Probably it is this exquisite scenery that inspires people to venture into undertaking such hazardous journeys. Such surroundings and Ma amidst it all! When Ma walked on the mountain path, I watched her with the marvellous scenery in the background—it all appeared to be a reflection of Ma's beauty which seemed to be spreading its lustre. I am not exaggerating. I write as my heart experienced the vision. Ma's entire form seemed to be seeped in a surge of great unrestrained *bhava* - her simple, sweet and lovely gaze was entralling—perhaps that is the reason I was so overwhelmed. I do not understand if Ma's beauty is also getting enhanced.

Ramtaran Babu (advocate) of Calcutta had written, "I would watch Ma's form from a distance in the Birla temple—without any decoration, but what a marvellous beauty she spreads all around her! She is surrounded by well-dressed and ornamented women, but her beauty makes them all look plain. And her laughter—sometimes sweet, sometimes trilling—how enchanting was that laughter! Even today these memories make me forget everything else." Truly, Ma's gait is so lovely—this is not only what devotees observe—anyone who watches Ma even once will comment on this. I sometimes told Ma, "Ma, it seems you have grown taller than before." Ma would laugh and say, "And how do you say that? Do people ever grow taller after they grow old?" Ma's figure seems to be stouter, with considerable height—her countenance appears to glow. I had been saying, "Ma, you have gone down—do put on some weight." To which she had replied, "Alright, you wait and see, I shall surely grow fatter." When she had put on weight, she had declared, "See, I have become fatter!" After some days I had observed that she was not as agile in her movements as she had been before putting on weight, so I had said, "No Ma, don't grow any fatter. Now you must become slightly slimmer." Ma then told somebody, "Now I shall grow thinner for Khukumi had said, 'grow fatter—grow fatter' and therefore I had put on weight. But now she says it is better if I slim down. So now I shall have to become thinner." I knew that she would really become thinner—everything goes according to her will. This is only an example of that fact.

That aside, today we have to eat something more before three p.m. and set out to

reach some shelter before nightfall. The sky was overcast with clouds. At three p.m. we set out for a place called Ganai which was seven miles away and reached before dusk. There again we spent the night in a dak bungalow. Ganai had a post office as well. Not everybody is allowed to stay in a dak bungalow, but we had brought along a letter of permission.

On the way our companion from Garbiyan, Parvati narrated an incident. About five years ago when she was in her village, she dreamt that she was going somewhere with a group of people. She could not see the faces of the people clearly—but she saw Ma as a lady wearing a white sari who appeared to be a 'Mataji'. She also saw Bholanath's face clearly. She had gone to Almora for her education, some time after this dream. Now after five years, having completed her studies, she was returning to her village with us all. Last time when Parvati saw us at Almora, she had taken one look at Bholanath, recollected her dream and decided then and there that she would go with him to Kailas. Ma had also specially requested Parvati to accompany us to Kailas. She had been waiting for a month to travel with us. What a surprising coincidence of events! Last time she had not revealed the occurrence of the dream, but this time she narrated it all. Hearing this Ma smiled and said, "She came to Almora for her education in order to make the dream come true!" How exquisite this place is!

On our way here we met a brahmin householder who asked, "Where is Mataji?" On being shown Ma's *dandi* he offered flowers and fruits at her feet and did *pranama*. At night the same brahmin arrived with some milk and vegetables at the bungalow. He was asked, "How did you know that Mataji was coming?" He replied, "I read in the newspapers that Ma Anandamayi was going on a pilgrimage to Kailas. From that day I have been awaiting her arrival. Today I am blessed to have had the *darshan* of Ma's feet."

Who knows how many more devotees have been affected in this way? That may be the reason why the Compassionate One has left Bengal and got drawn to this part of the country. Now I observe how these people feel that Ma is their very own, though they are so slightly acquainted with her and call her 'Devi Bhagavati' and believe in her with simple, staunch faith.

Tuesday, June 18

At six a.m. we started from Ganai for a place called Berinag which is thirteen miles away. Water would be available there so we decided to eat and rest at Berinag. I forgot to write about an incident that occurred on the day before we left Almora. Naren Babu's wife dressed Ma in a silk sari with a red border, combed her hair, garlanded her and had a photograph taken. She then said, "Ma, I have never seen a cloth covering your head—today I shall cover your head." Ma replied, "No, let things go on as they are." Later the Compassionate Mother went to the Shiva temple, covered her head with a cloth and satisfied the desire of her devotee. Enchanted by her

form draped thus, devotees fell at her feet and did *pranama*. Ma remarked, "Why have you decked up a bride?" Naren Babu exclaimed, "How can Ma ever need to be decked up as a bride?" Ma, the unpredictable, pulled down the veil over her head as newly wedded brides do and the devotees burst into laughter. Naren Babu also took a photograph of Ma on the day of her departure for Kailas.

In the afternoon we reached a place called Rani after a ten mile trek where we stopped for a meal. At three p.m. we set out for Berinag. The route was very steep and when we reached Berinag around dusk, we did not climb further to the dak bungalow, but lay down on the verandah of a school building. That place, where we spent the night, was beautiful. One of our companions had a relative living here who had invited us all to this place. We found there a well equipped market, a good school and a dispensary. Many people came for Ma's *darshan*.

Wednesday, June 19

By five a.m. we left for a place called Thala, situated ten or eleven miles away. The *dandi* bearers were now tiring out within a distance of one or two miles and stopping for rest. Jokingly, Jyotish Dada declared Swami Akhandananda the 'king' of the group and himself the 'heir-apparent'. When the *dandi* bearers resumed the trek and wanted to halt again, we discovered that Swami Akhandananda's *dandi* had hit against a rock and got broken, while a trunk had scraped Jyotish Dada's thigh which was now bleeding and his clothes had also got torn. This matter became the butt of jest. I said, "You had believed yourself to be the doer therefore the king and his heir-apparent are in such a state within the short distance covered!" Ma also laughed. Jyotish Dada joined in the laughter and said, "Don't forget to write about this in your note book!" Truly, when I think about it, there is something worthwhile in this matter.

On proceeding a little further Ma saw an old hill tribes-woman walking with a bundle on her head. Ma called out to her saying, "Mataji, where are you going?" Without putting down her bundle the old woman replied, "I'm just going there," and continued on her way. The coolies were tired and they lowered our *dandis*. The old woman looked at Ma and stopped short-slowly she came near Ma and sat down. Some children were with her and judging from the kind of clothes she wore, she seemed to be quite well off. She also seemed to be intelligent. She began speaking to Ma on various matters. When the coolies lifted the *dandis* and walked away, the old woman stood up saying, "Ma, your words were so charming that I could not go away and had to come and sit near you. We are poor what could I say to you by way of conversation— I sat only to listen to you speaking." Even after the *dandis* had travelled some distance we could spot the old woman gazing fixedly in our direction.

We reached Thala at ten a.m. and camped in the verandah of a school. This place also had a post office and other facilities. At Seraghat we had seen the Sarayu river and now the Ram Ganga was roaring past in Thala. This spot was also enchanting. The sight of the magnificent mountains inspired great thoughts and emotions in us. Whether or not this pilgrimage gives any other kind of merit, the natural beauty of the mountains rouses such lofty, free, steady and calm sentiments in our mind, that they cannot be compared with anything else. How very beautiful the scenery is! All those who have trodden this path will surely vouch for the truth of my statement. It is impossible to express in words these feelings of the heart. However, we decided to spend the night in Thala.

(to be continued)

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MOTHER AS REVEALED TO ME

—Bhaiji

Mother says.- "Just as there is a definite time-table for work in the office, school or the shop, so should we set apart a few minutes out of the 24 hours of every day, preferably morning and evening, for divine contemplation. One must form a fixed resolve that this little time is dedicated to God throughout life. During this period no work of the world should be allowed to encroach upon the contemplation of God. For all the inmates of the family including the servants there must be allotted a fixed time. If this practice is continued long, divine contemplation will become a part of your nature. Once the habit gets settled in your soul, the future course of your life will become quite easy. You will come to feel the flow of the mysterious divine grace feeding all your thoughts and actions and giving you new strength. You get a pension or bonus after years of hard work and have to work no longer for your livelihood. It is also like that. In the spiritual plane the reward for good, sincere and selfless work is even much greater and can be obtained more easily.

"Your pension expires with your life, but the Divine Pension continues long after death. Those that amass money, store it up in a hidden chamber in the house and add to this store what they can spare from time to time and keep a constant watch over their treasure. So also reserve a little space in a certain corner of your mind for God, and always steal an opportunity to add to your stock in the shape of contemplating upon His name or doing some pious work or dwelling on some divine thought."

(An excerpt)

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MA'S TECHNIQUE OF BESTOWING DIVINE LOVE AND GRACE ON ONE AND ALL

[Taken from Svakriya Svarasamrita, Vol.2]

Why, in search of what, with what interest and wearing sometimes soiled, worn out clothes and at other times beautiful apparel, and crossing through jungles and fields, there was this girl at the doors of all ? Here indeed, there was no distinction at all between old men and women, young boys and girls, boys and girls of the same age-group and people of different communities. Sometimes, perhaps, with Thakurma, or possibly, taking a child as company at another time, or again, on a rare occasion, with the permission of parents, She would move out alone, dancing and singing as if in self-forgetfulness-why, and for what purpose?

Any attraction for a particular friend of the same age-group, which the people could see- that too was absent in this girl , indifferent to worldly interests. Any festival-amusement of the like, with its outward temptation, fascinating a child-mind, was not always there in the village. Then, hostility with anyone was certainly out of question. Just as the world and the universe were Her friends, so also simultaneously there was, as if, none at all of Her own anywhere-the One in great abstract mood, grave, calm, serene. Again, in Her own mood, She would sometimes wander about, laughing, playing, dancing and singing in a low humming voice. And then, saying a few words to the villagers while addressing them with a little smile, just this much ! Was it only to give and receive this little bit of alms of love that this girl moved about uninvited from door to door in different localities, maddening the entire village ? With what an extraordinarily profound and steady rhythm, eyes upturned sometimes, the style of movement in walking reflected a divine mode and attracted public attention. What lay hidden in it, what mystery, is known only to Him whose action it was ! The mode of movement in Her own innate style was spontaneous. This too was that, within the realm of *Jiva-Jagat* , whatever may have occurred in the minds of some people, that which was seen (in Ma) was not any deliberately planned action . Perhaps the attraction aspect was due to this. Indeed, Ma asks us now and then to love Bhagavan. Undoubtedly, the realization of Bhagavan is realization of the Self. And surely, to realize the Self is to realize Bhagavan. That is, one has to know : Who am I ? -the realization of this.

Ornaments, or no ornaments it was the same to Ma : Truth planted as seeds in a householder - After marriage Ma was once taken to Kheora from the house of

Revati Babu (the eldest brother of Bholanathji) at Sripur. Wearing *dul* (a kind of earrings) in the ears, *ananta* (a kind of armlet), bangles, bracelets on wrists and taking younger sister Surabala and other brothers and sisters along with Her, Ma went strolling to the houses of the Muslims. After going around a good number of those houses, Ma came to one of them where the family comprised boys and girls, daughters-in-law and some who were of the age of Ma's father. Then, one of them asked Ma to let him have a look at Her *ananta*, bangles and bracelets. Ma took them off immediately and placed them in his hands. While examining them, some members quietly went inside, placed these ornaments in a room, then returned and sat by Ma. Ma, too, after sitting for a while and remaining engaged in talk and humour, said, "Now I shall leave." The man who had taken the ornaments said, "Alright, go," but never cared to speak a word about returning the ornaments. Ma too did not speak a word about this matter. She kept smiling a little and said, "I shall go now itself." They too said, "Very well, you may go." But about giving back the ornaments, neither did they make any mention nor did Ma speak about them. Talk on different subjects continued in a spirit of much jollity. Ma, of course, used to sit in their courtyard and so She sat there on that day too as usual. Then, getting up, She said, "It is quite late now". Saying this, as Ma moved a few steps, they brought back those ornaments—*ananta*, bangles and bracelets, and giving them back in Ma's hand, said, "Suppose we had not returned them?" Ma just smiled a little. Indeed, it never occurred to Her that all those ornaments had been given by Bholanath's (bridegroom's) family and these people were talking in that vein; what would have happened then if they had not returned them? No, there was not the least concern of this kind. What a simple-hearted beautiful spirit of trust! They went on discussing among themselves with comments on some such lines.

Mahatmas drawn to Ma with reverence—Even at present we see that there is no respite in the movements of Ma. Again, when it is Her *Kheyala*, then, of course, there is the climax of non-mobility. While going for a walk, taking Bhaiji and two or three others in Her company, Ma used to pass in front of the *kutias* near Vasudhara on the bank of Ganga at Rishikesh. Then, on some rare occasions, She would even enter the *kutia* of some mahatma and sit inside in *satsanga*. As a result of this within a short time, some among the mahatmas would begin to look upon Ma with respect. Someone would invite Ma to visit his *kutia* and Ma too would call on him. Some would carry on a discussion too with Ma on spiritual subjects.

The *kutia* of Nivrattinathji too was near that of Ma. He occasionally talked to Bhaiji and visited and sat near Ma sometimes. Swami Vigyananandaji, a disciple of Ramakrishna Math, also came very often. He used to take Ma to his *kutia*, seat Her there and enter into a discussion on some spiritual matter. He looked upon Ma with

great respect. Other sadhus and sannyasis too would come and sit in Ma's *kutia* very frequently.

Purnananda Swamiji also began making enquiries about Ma. He first sent his sannyasi disciple and afterwards took Ma to his *kutia* and fed Her one day. On another day, he took Ma and seating Her with esteem, had talks on spiritual subjects for quite sometime. After enquiring about Her *kriyas*, etc., he came to Bhaiji and expressed his great pleasure (for the blissful experience). He requested Ma to visit his *kutia* occasionally. One day he even came himself to Ma's *kutia*. He would ask his sannyasi disciples to make *shrikhand* and *malpua*, two items of milk preparation, and then would go and give these to Ma. One day, it was proposed that these items be prepared at Ma's place only and be given to Her. Indeed, he did so. Very often Purnanandji would send him (his disciple) to Ma; he really looked upon Ma with great affectionate regards.

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*When your load seems hard to carry
And the burden no one shares,
Though the world seems not to pity
Just remember, Ma cares.
When you pass through the waters
And no earthly help you see,
Do not lose your faith in Ma for,
She has said, "I'll be with thee."
So, dear heart, fear not, take courage
For the word of Ma is true.
Ma said : "I'll never leave thee,
But will guide while passing through."*

—Viranchikumar

CONTEMPORARY SAINTS AND SAGES SWAMI RAMDAS

—Vijayananda

The autumn of the year 1952 found me with Buddhists in Kalimpong. Kalimpong is at the extreme eastern end of the Himalayas, near Darjeeling and was one of the rare spots in India where it was possible to meet authentic Tibetan lamas. On the height of Tirpai stood a Tibetan monastery housing several hundred monks in a cheerful and pleasing atmosphere. Their superior, an old man with large luminous eyes, was said to pass all his nights in meditation. Sometimes I went to see him, or if we met in the streets of Kalimpong, he would embrace me warmly, calling me "Bodhisattva ! Bodhisattva !" Our conversation, alas ! was minimal, for my knowledge of Tibetan was almost non-existent and my Hindi at that time was rudimentary, just sufficient to take me safely through the bazaar (the market) ; while the superior himself had only an elementary knowledge of the latter language.

Also on the heights of Tirpai, surrounded by a few monks, dwelt a Tibetan Rinpoche, a special envoy of the Dalai-Lama, a charming and cultivated gentleman. I myself lived at the foot of the town with a European bhikshu, who had been ordained as a Buddhist monk according to Burmese rites. He was a writer and a brilliant thinker. Darjeeling and Mount Everest are very close to Kalimpong but I never had the courage to make the trip. Even the climb to Tirpai, my sole distraction, was a severe strain. For I had just been through one of those dark nights of the spirit which every *sadhaka* knows. All glory seemed to have passed away from the earth. Even the splendour of the Himalayas seemed dim and lustreless. For some time I had wished to meet Swami Ramdas for I hoped that a stay in his ashram might have a beneficial effect on my depression. I had written to him and now he replied saying that I might come at the beginning of October. Kalimpong is in the extreme north-east of India and Kanhangad, near Mangalore, where Ramdas Anandashram is situated, is on the south-west coast. On the way I needed to spend a few days at Allahabad and Benares. Good God ! What a trip that was !

To begin with it had been raining heavily and the road going down to the plains was blocked by a landslide. I managed, after transferring from one car to another on the way, to get as far as Siliguri. From there an interminable "Passenger" train jolted and bumped me mercilessly all the way to Allahabad. From Allahabad to Benares was just a step, and from Benares, the simplest move, in theory, would have

been to take a train going west to Bombay ; but unfortunately there was no railway line from Bombay to Mangalore, and the bus service most inadequate. I would have had to travel by merchant ship along the coast, a matter of several days. So that, in fact the simplest and fastest means of reaching my destination was to turn my back squarely upon it and travel straight in the opposite direction to Madras on the east coast. From Madras a direct train to Mangalore stops off at Kanhangad . And so, after this long and complicated journey I finally reached the village of Kanhangad on the Konkaneese coast . Here, coconut palms replace the pines and cedars of the Himalayas, and it is still warm in October, though not quite as warm as in Madras.

The Anandashram is situated several kilometres out of the village in a place called Ramnagar and I set out on foot in the company of a porter who would also serve as a guide. I remembered that it would not do to visit a sage empty-handed, but there were neither flowers nor garlands in the little village shops, so I considered myself lucky to be able to buy two ripe coconuts. One of them I intended for Ramdas and the other for Krishnabai. The coconut is a very acceptable offering in India. As we neared the ashram, I saw it had been built in a delightful setting far from any human habitation. Close by there was a little hill from which one could see the grey-blue sea .

My porter and I passed in through the main gate of this "haven of peace". In the yard of the ashram an old man sat in an armchair surrounded by a number of children and grown-ups, a grand-father, one might have said, in the midst of his family circle. He was wearing a white dhoti. A permanent smile lit up his clean-shaven face breaking out from time to time into a frank burst of laughter which was so irresistibly contagious. Not the least sign of irony or condescension could be seen in his face, nothing whatever of severity or of a superiority complex of any kind. Clearly there was no need for me to ask if this was Swami Ramdas. The fact was self-evident. Someone who had been massaging the Swami's feet moved aside to permit me to approach. Respectfully I made the customary salutations to the Master and laid one of the coconuts at his feet.

The Swami spoke perfect English. The tone of his voice was simple and natural, as welcoming as his smile . The question he asked me were those one normally asks a newcomer, but his tone, and the general familiarity of his attitude made me feel that I was already included in the circle of his friends. His familiarity- if I may dare to use the term-suggested that of a father towards his children, a father who is at the same time a friend . His intimates and disciples addressed him affectionately as "Papa". Certainly it was the name most suited to him and perhaps the one which more than any other went directly to his heart.

Ramdas had once been a *sannyasi* and used to wear the saffron robe. "I had a beard and long hair like you", he told me one day. But now he dressed simply in a white dhoti "like everybody else", for he had transcended the monastic state and become an *ativarnashrami* (one who has risen above social castes and stages of existence.) The four stages of existence of traditional Hindu society are :-

1. That of *Brahmacharya*-the student. 2. That of *Grihastha*- the head of a family. 3. That of *Vanaprastha*-the hermit who retires to the seclusion of the forest. 4. That of *Sannyasi*- the monk who has renounced the world.

His completely bald crown, his clean-shaven face, his mouth quite unadorned by teeth (he did not even wear dentures) all contributed to the impression of utter simplicity that he radiated. Is not the *Sahaja- Avastha*, the state of the completely natural, also the last word in perfection ?

Swami Ramdas' name, before he renounced the worldly life, had been Vitthal Rao. He was a brahmin of the clan of *Saraswat* remarkable for its brilliance of intellect and enterprising spirit. He had been married and had an only daughter. Vitthal Rao, immersed in western culture, had tried his hand at various ways of earning a living, the last of these being a position in a textile mill.

He would often repeat the divine name of Ram, and hearing him one day, his father communicated to him the complete mantra of Ram.

Ramdas' Guru said to him, " My son, repeat this mantra constantly : 'Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram', and you will achieve eternal happiness ". The effect of this initiation seems to have been most extraordinary for Vitthal Rao, who now assumed the name of Ramdas (the servant of Ram), abandoned his wife and only daughter and set out, like any other itinerant monk to wander along the roads of India, repeating the mantra uninterruptedly day and night. Had not his Guru told him to repeat it *constantly* ?

("God Experience" by Ramdas, p.168)

What had he (his father) said ? "Repeat the Name constantly." Ramdas thought that "constantly " meant throughout the twenty-four hours of the day. That is why he had to give up all work.

The repetition of the sacred formula filled him with ineffable joy. He was afraid, he told me one day, that if he interrupted the repetition this joy would be lost to him.

(to be continued)

MOTHER-BLISS INCARNATE

—Mr. Shuddha Satta Chakravarty

যা দেবী সবভূতেশু শান্তিরূপেণ সংস্থিতা ।

নমস্তসৌ নমস্তসৌ নমস্তসৌ নমো নমঃ ॥

শ্রী শ্রী চণ্ডী

"Ya Devi Sarvabhuteshu Shantirupena Sansthita
Namastasyai namastasyai, namastasyai namo namah."

Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj (Padma Vibhushan) reveals that in the autumn of 1928 at the suggestion of Late Pt. Padmanath Vidyavinoda, he decided to see Ma in Benaras. Influenced by the pamphlet written by Late. Mr. Kunja Mohan Mukherjee alias Swami Turiyananda on Mother and coming to know about the miraculous feat performed by Mother in saving his son from an impending snake bite through Her grace, he set out to have Ma's darshan. Kaviraj ji writes :

"Mother absorbed in Samadhi was really an ennobling sight to experience. Mr. Kunja Mohan Mukherjee, known to be a fastidious critic of men and things who spared none from his attacks, seemed to me to carry special weight. The trance of Samadhi must be allowed to run its full natural course and any artificial method of breaking it up was fraught with grave risks. All were ultimately aware of it. I was waiting outside Mother's room, waiting for Her Samadhi to end naturally. But it took more than three hours for Mataji to come out of it and after three hours I came back home, apprehending that it might take an indefinitely long time."

"It was on the 6th September that I first paid a visit to Mother. I came back to Mother's place on the 7th as already arranged. It is difficult to analyse after a lapse of many years my first impression of Mother and to explain in words what exactly I then felt. I can only say that what I saw with my own eyes far exceeded anything of a like nature I had ever seen before : It was a dream, as it were, realised in life. All Her devotees who had come from various walks of life to get a glimpse of Her "Samadhi darshan" felt a sort of magnetic charm in Mother's personality. The fact is that all of us felt as children in the presence of our own mother. Cold formalities were replaced

by Mother's warmth of familiarity and intimacy, Mother treated us affectionately like Her own children, with least reserve and constraint. The whole atmosphere was one of a friendly gathering imbued with vivacity and joyousness.

"Her utterances were all monosyllabic 'Bijas' mixed with Sanskrit vocabulary here and there ! Her graceful pronunciation was immaculate. Several unknown words were interspersed as if from Heaven ! The language of Her utterances was unique. Mother melted into tears or ejaculation, or even would become rigid and pass into a trance-like condition. The trance-like state was also induced many times when 'bhaktas' offered flowers at Her feet or in other ways tried to propitiate Her. The response was immediate !"

Then or even now there exists differences of opinion concerning the precise status of Mother. Some held the opinion that She was Goddess in human form. According to some She was Ma Durga, some held the view that She was Saraswati or Radha or Brahmavadini as of yore or perhaps an Incarnation of the Divine who has come down to the earth to relieve its sufferings.

Swami Dayananda of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal visited Mother & had a personal talk with Mother.

Swamiji put several questions to Her which She readily answered with Divine ease thus—

Swamiji :- Mother, what are you in fact ? People hold different views regarding you and no agreement seems to exist. What have you to say of yourself ?

Mother :- You want to know what I am. Well, I am what you consider me to be -- not more nor less.

Swamiji :- What is the nature of your 'Samadhi' ? Is it 'Savikalpa' or 'Nirvikalpa' ? Does mind exist then ?

Mother :- Well, it is for you to decide this question. All that I can say is that in the midst of all apparent changes of state in body and mind, I feel I am always the same ! I feel that in me there is no changes of states. Call it by any name you like. Is it Samadhi ?

Several such questions were put and answered to the point.

Before I proceed any further I would like to throw some light regarding Mother's "Kheyal" in my life.

It happened during my stay in Almora Ashram when I made a hectic climb up to a certain Temple (I don't remember the details about that Temple) with Late Dasuda after which I started having acute breathing trouble and my breath was not coming down—I just couldn't exhale! I was gasping for breath and I asked Mother to relieve me of this condition. Ma gave me a pleasant and sweet smile of confidence

and instructed Renukadi to give me certain powders mixed in proper proportion dictated by Her. To my great surprise and relief I felt completely OK. I could now breathe normally. While parting from Her next day, She kept Her "dristi" on me throughout, till I was out of Her sight, probably to drive out any evil forces around me !

Once, when I was in Dehra Dun in my bungalow, I got very high fever in the cold winter night before my departure from there to Kolkata. I covered myself with blankets, quilt and wore a blazer also with the fireplace beside my bed. My mother Smt. Binadevi, after seeing and judging the situation, went up to Ma in the Ashram without mentioning anything to me and informed Her about my condition. I was not at all aware when my mother was in conversation with Ma Anandamayee. All of a sudden my fever came down to normal and I just removed all the warm coverings on me and felt very comfortable indeed ! The high fever that was there for two or three days vanished in a giffy the moment Ma came to know about it.

Shri. Gopinath Kaviraj says that it is not possible for him to state what Her exact role is or what particular rank is occupied by Her in the spiritual hierarchy of this country; different people have different opinions about Mother as discussed earlier.

Shri. Gopinath Kaviraj says : "The greatest thing that struck me most was Her personality. Her physical features were magnetic. Her smiling countenance, the sweetness of Her expression, the simplicity of Her life and behavior, Her unassuming and genial manners, the cordiality and warmth of Her relationship with all, coupled with Her extraordinary holy life and wisdom, made Her an object of universal attraction and adoration.

"Firstly, it is well known that Mother did not receive any Diksha or Initiation of any kind from an external 'Guru' and She Herself does not give Diksha to anybody. In other words in the technical language of the Sastras, She claims neither a Guru nor a Sisya. But an informal Diksha not one taken from any outside agency, She certainly had in 1922 at the age of 26 years. This Diksha was not of the usual type known to us, but it did represent the initiation of some spiritual activity within Her body -- an initiation activity which did not owe its origin to any source other than Her own self, like Buddha (Keval Gyani), whose illumination had its source within.

"It is not known exactly whether any type of self-generated illumination is analogous to the nature of Mother's personality. Mother is not comparable to a Pratyekabuddha. Mother is keenly sensitive to the sorrows of the world to remain contented with an isolated experience. She has always the Cosmic and Transcosmic Consciousness precluding any possible exclusiveness of outlook. Mother represents

an integral selfawareness which never tolerates even slightly an idea of separation or distinction from the integral Central Being. The view which accepts Mother's personality as Avatara is dismissed as a limited view. She has said time without number that Her body is not like that of any ordinary person's generated through Prarabdha Karma. She had had no previous life to account for Her present existence, nor will She have a future life to continue adjustment of Her activities of Her present life. The fact that She was aware of what was happening around immediately after Her birth is an illustration to show that Self-awareness was born with Her and was not the effect of either Her so-called Diksha or Her so called Sadhana at Bajitpur.

"Mother says that all Her activities are really spontaneous and not prompted by will or purpose, nor influenced by and coloured by desires. It is the Great Power beyond the will which is working from within. She distinguishes between Maha Shakti and Ichcha Shakti, saying that while the former is like fire, the latter is like smoke that issues out of it. In Mataji's case who has the Cosmic Mind, it is pure, Ineffable and Absolute. Of course Divine Will does exist just like the Supreme power. The Divine Power is free and unobstructed in its functioning. Mother's movements take place spontaneously and She does not hold Herself responsible for any of them. They are confined to the present and they rest there as in the heart of Eternity.

"From this it might be inferred that She is always in a state of purity. She is governed by the forces working from above. Her system is like a stringed instrument giving out notes, not of its own initiative but in response to shocks or vibrations received from outside. When people of our world are frustrated and tormented and feel helpless and beckon to personalities like Ma Anandamayee, or to Brahma/God or the Supreme Power, then the Supreme Power responds positively as per requirements. As to why the Supreme Power should have expressed Itself in a particular way is a question to which an ordinary man is not in a position to reply.

"The experience of Sarvatmabhava was experienced by Mataji in Her earliest days. The second stage is called Bhava Samadhana. It arises out of and under influence of Supreme Reality under different channels of expression. This stage represents a more advanced condition than the first one. In this stage the seeker remains immersed in the integral Bhava, insensible to any kind of outer stimuli. Mother had gone through both these stages.

"The third stage is called Vyakta Samadhana. In this condition the fire of knowledge burns as fully within the individual as it does outside. In the next stage, which represents perfection and is called Purna Samadhana, all kinds of dualities melt away. This state is immanent, Nirguna as well as Saguna. It is free from the ripples of thought vibration. This is Samadhi in the proper sense of the word.

"It is evident from the above that the state of Mahayoga bears a faint resemblance to Mother's own condition. One main point still remains between the two i.e. Mahayoga is the logical culmination of a series of prior Sadhana. Mother's state, as such, was not evolved in that way. It has appeared with Her and will disappear with Her. Mataji can be looked upon as being Nitya Siddha or Swayam Siddha or simply Devata.

"We always find that inspite of apparently diverse attitudes or poises in Her mind and body. She Herself is always one and the same. In the midst of tumultuous uproar, She maintains an unbroken silence and in the depth of Her silence She speaks out eloquently. In judging Her we should not be taken away by Her Samadhi or Vyutthana. She played the dual role of Silence personified in the luminous peace of Silent Self, and on the other hand a self- imposed playful attitude displaying like a kaleidoscope-- the shifting visions of a series of pictures, bound together by certain bond of affinity or sequence, the secret of which is hidden from the view of ordinary man.

"What is really needed is to feel that She is our Mother, and we are Her children, instead of trying to judge who She is actually. After all where is the need for such an approach if She gives to us intuition powerful enough to recognize Her? Mere words and books cannot do justice to make out as to What or Who She is ! We should cry out to Ma unstintedly ,every day for Her benediction."

Before concluding , I would like to quote a few words of advice from Mataji;

1. Every moment belongs to God. Endeavour to keep your mind dedicated to His feet. God, the Ocean of Mercy, Who ever blesses the world and pours out His grace at all times. It is incumbent on man to consider everything that happens to be for the best : 'for the best' denoting what is most helpful towards the realization of the Divine, the realization of the fullness of bliss.

2. The sovereign and universal remedy is the contemplation of the One. To think only of Him and to serve Him at all times is essential for every human being.

3. When you leave everything to Him who is the fountain of peace, then only may you hope for peace.

SHREE SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE

Vol. VI

(Translated by a devotee)

—Gurupriya Devi

Friday, 3 June, 1938

During this visit, I have seen that a desire for spiritual progress has arisen in the ladies of Dhaka, even in the midst of their household duties. A lot of ladies out of these are doing *sadhan-bhajan* secretly. Manomohan Mahashaya's wife was experiencing very great grief due to the death of her daughter. Ma had come to Dhaka during those days. Her family had taken her to Ma once at that time, with a lot of effort. From that day, after meeting Ma, she began to experience some *shakti* internally. Uptil now, she used to just keep lying on her bed, but after this she began to come to Ma everyday. When Ma was leaving, she said, "Ma, you are leaving now, how shall I survive? I shall be in a bad state again due to grief for my daughter. I had forgotten everything for so many days." Ma took her aside privately and after passing Her hands on her chest said, "No, you will not experience grief again. Take the name of God." Actually it was after this, that there was a change in her internally. Now, she does not look after any of the household affairs. Most of her time passes in *puja, japa* and *kirtan*. She has made it a rule to take part in each and every *kirtan* in the ashram everyday on our coming to Dhaka. She only has this prayer, "Let me have devotion to God." She had met Ma in Bajitpur. It was heard from Ma that she is a good housewife. Now she is not interested in the duties of the household. She says, "Shall I have to keep on performing household duties for the rest of my life?" One experiences great joy in noting that, due to Ma's grace, an inclination towards *dharma* has arisen in a lot of people.

Before our departure we came to read Manik's letter that says, "Ma will most probably be in Raipur in a couple of days. I have been told to go to Lucknow."

We reached Calcutta today. We went to Birla Mandir by Shachidada's car. On the way we went to Shachidada's house and heard about Ma from him. This evening we got to know that Shachidada has received a letter from Bhupatidada, saying that Ma has reached Raipur last Tuesday.

Today Birendada has written from Raipur, "Ma is getting physically weaker, but She has the same sweet smile. But on seeing Ma there is always a feeling of worry in the heart which cannot be removed in anyway."

This morning Bhupatidada has come here after leaving Ma. He says that Ma's body is somewhat better now. Ma is in Raipur and will probably stay there for some time. Ma said, "Khukuni may have felt unhappy because I have sent her away from me. Tell her not to feel bad; it is for her own good that I have to do this from time to time." There is so much sweetness even in Ma saying such things that I was in tears due to happiness in the midst of sadness.

There is not the least doubt that whatever Ma does is for everyone's benefit (*kalyan*). The mind is not able to understand this and is full of sorrow. Then, one has to pacify the mind by reasoning.

This morning Bhupatidada again described something regarding Ma. He said, "Birendada and myself went to Ma and insisted that She bring Her body back to health. One day while talking to us She laughed and gave us this reply, 'Just as you people wish that this body becomes well, in the same way, some people wish that it becomes crippled or even that it gets completely destroyed. These *bhavas* are also assimilated by this body. These sorts of *bhavas*, full of intense hatred, are sometimes stronger than your good and positive desires. This body is for them also.'"

Today one of Ma's devotees came with his wife. They took me to listen to *kirtan* in Ramkamal Bhattacharya's house. The *kirtan* was about *Maan Bhanjan*. I heard this very beautiful thing in the *kirtan* which completely tallied with things about Ma. This is why I am writing this here. A friend says to Radhika, "You are a king's daughter and in age you are a '*Kumari*'." There was a discussion regarding the word "*Kumari*". *Kumaris* are said to be of three types, one who is not married; secondly, one who is married but has not started her menstrual period, and thirdly, the one in whom, in spite of being a young girl, there is as yet no upsurge of any sort of negative tendencies, '*ku-bhava*'. It means a person whose '*ku-bhavas*' (negative tendencies) have been destroyed. Radhika was that last sort of "*Kumari*." I remembered this : sometimes Ma in relation to Herself used to tell the devotees, "This daughter of yours, is a '*Kumari*'. Do you not now this?" Even after Bholanathji's death, now and again, Ma used to say, "I was a *Kumari* right from the beginning. I am a *Kumari* even now.

Even though you see that this body got married, in reality I am a *Kumari*. *Kumaris* also wear bangles made of couch shells and apply vermilion on their foreheads. You have made this body put these on too. This is why I wear them."

We received a letter from Birendada from Raipur today. He has written, "Ma is happy. She takes some milk in the morning, milk, *chappatis* and vegetables for lunch, some fruit in the afternoon and some boiled vegetables without salt and some milk at night.

"Now and then She relates incidents of the past; I just listen to Her; my habit of putting question to Her has been abandoned; I am only a listener now," so on and no forth.

Shree Nareshchandra Chakravarty went yesterday to meet Ma. He will stay there for a few days. Three days back, Shishir left for Tarapeeth. He has taken no clothes except for what he is wearing. His inner *bhava* is very beautiful. Although at times he is naughty in his outward behaviour, he has a beautiful *bhava* at heart. He can remain seated in one *asana* in one particular *bhava* for a long time. It is not known when he will return.

(to be continued)

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Shree Ma first blessed Lillia Elizabeth Roy with Her Darshan in March 2006, after which she made her way to Kankhal Ashram as soon as she could. It was at that time that she received the first diksha from Swami Bhaskaranandaji Maharaj (November 2006). When asked how long have you been a disciple of Ma, she answers, "That is difficult to answer as I feel there never was a time I did not belong to Ma. It is only by Her Divine Grace that She gave me eyes to see Her, ears to hear Her and heart to give to Her so that I may forever resign myself at Her Lotus Feet. I had reached the end of the journey at Her Divine Lotus Feet. Everything was over. I knew for sure without question without doubt that I was Home."

On 14 November 2011, Lillia received Naishtik Brahmacharya at Kankhal Ashram from Swami Nirvananandaji Maharaj. By Divine Grace of Shree Shree Ma, on 14 May 2012 she was initiated into Sannyas by Swami Nirvananandaji Maharaj in Presence of Shree Shree Ma in Her Samadhi Mandir in Kankhal Ashram. Her name is now Swami Brahmananda Giri.

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IMPLICIT FAITH IN COMPLYING WITH MATAJI'S SUGGESTIONS

Shri. S.N. Sopory
—Gurupriya Devi

Shri. S.N. Sopory (affectionately known as Sopory bhai to other devotees of Ma), wife Padma Behn, two sons, daughter and grandmother (eldest sister of Laxmiji Tankha, next to whose haveli at Anand Chowk in Dehradun Mataji went and stayed in a Shiv Mandir in 1932 with Bhaiji) attended the *purnahuti* of the 3 years' *Savitri Yajna* in Varanasi Ashram on 14th January 1950. The family had all baggage packed to go back to Allahabad where they were then staying. Sopory bhai went to take leave of Mataji as he was due to go to Delhi for an important meeting the next morning with senior officers of His company and some government officials.

As Sopory bhai informed Mataji he was leaving for Delhi for his meeting, Ma sweetly asked him '*Aaj Nagar Kirtan ke liye nahin rukega ?*' Sopory bhai understood it was a big event concluding the 3 years *Yajna* with Mataji also participating in the procession in Varanasi with a number of Sadhus and Saints, and Ma was indicating he join inspite of the important office meeting he had to attend in Delhi for which he would be late. However, he responded to Ma's expressed direction and stayed on in Varanasi to join the procession (He is seen in a photograph in the 1st edition of the Hindi book by Gurupriya Didi on the *Yajna* walking next to the carriage in which Mataji and some Sadhus and Mahatmas were seated, participating in the *Nagar Kirtan*). Sopory bhai was late for his meeting in Delhi and reached in the afternoon with a lot of anxiety about what explanation he could offer for his delay. To his surprise on joining the meeting not one of his senior officers or the government officials asked him where he had been at the beginning of the meeting. On the contrary they discussed points with him as if he had been at the meeting and could give his opinion on matters discussed, and what steps were to be taken as outcome of the meeting. It was all Mataji's grace and blessings on Sopory bhai while he faithfully complied with Her sweetly expressed *kheyal* for him.

MOTHER'S CURE FOR SUFFERING

—Elwood Decker (U.S.A.)

Someone asked Mother, "If I do *japa*, will it be destroyed by my bad actions?" Mother replied, "There is such great strength in the Divine Name that you will not be able to do so many bad actions. Try it and see. When you take His Name sincerely you will spontaneously refrain from wrong actions. It is not necessary to suffer. The sure cure is to lovingly take the Lord's Name. Fill your heart with it and you will be happy. The Holy Name is always Pure. You can repeat it at any time or place. Accept the fruit before you grow the tree. Do not think that the All-Powerful God is separate from you. He is your permanent, One-And-Only, Family Member. You are free to choose the Name you prefer. There cannot be exactly the same rule for everybody, but anyone can spare fifteen minutes a day for God. The human form was created for realizing God. People of all castes and religions could be effectively attracted to God, and become One with God by simply setting aside fifteen minutes a day for God alone. Though this is only a short time, it will have a powerful effect.

"First of all decide the time you can give without having to do other work. Keep this time strictly for sitting silent in meditation or doing *japa*. This is the only rule you have to observe. After some time you will experience the miracle of *japa* coming about spontaneously. Consider how the seasons keep their times, also the sunrise and sunset. Even birds and animals act by time. The duty of man is to know God. Time has its own power. You should learn how to use it wisely. Any time is good. Give the fifteen minutes to God every day without fail, and you will achieve."

This is all very simple, so simple that a child could easily do it with a little practice. The implications are profound. The devotee is trusted to have originality as well as faith, sincerity, love, loyalty, concentration, and a rare willingness to be simple....to become blissfully happy for no other reason than God may have for being Bliss. Here there is not the slightest concern for nationality, style of clothes, food, or dwelling place. The only status considered worthy of mention is the human status, created for realizing God. No religion is preferred or denied: no unique places needed such as a church, temple, mosque, synagogue, or zendo. No regular dues, special donations, or percentage to support a mediating official other than one's own God-given power of choice. No ritual, no juggling of elements, no paper to sign, no vote, simply give fifteen minutes of every day at the same time to God.

This is the mind-simplifying advice of our Mother. Take it and you will discover it to be the sharp sword of a merciful Goddess, slashing through the cumbersome complications of ignorant resistance to Divine REALITY.

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MOTHER AS SEEN BY A WESTERNER

—Arnaud Desjardins*

Flow on, Ganga, holy river, from the mountain to the gigantic plains, from Rishikesh to Benares, called Kashi or Varanasi by its children. I now intend to return to the sacred city.

At last I shall see face to face the sage whose two pictures, at an interval of several years, stirred me so profoundly that I could never forget them. When I had only just completed my studies, lost among the various problems that confront a young man hardly prepared for life, I one day, in a bookshop, glanced casually through the pages of *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda, the founder of the well known *Self-Realization Fellowship*. Among all the photos of austere sages and venerable old men that illustrate the work, the picture of a very young woman with closed eyes struck me like a shock. She seemed extraordinarily beautiful and I thought : this is the Woman, the Mother, the Virgin.

Eight years later someone presented to me the beautiful book *India* by the English photographer and writer Richard Lannoy. As I turn its pages, the face of an elderly woman with a look unlike any other, touches me to the quick. I am reminded of the meaning of the name *Krishna* : "he who steals the hearts." I do not even skim through the rest of the book : it has remained open on that page and never been closed again.

And a few months ago, when in my own car I started on my first trip to India, I made my first halt in a small Swiss village, at a distance of several thousand miles from my destination. Two courageous women spend every summer in that village. They both have lived a number of eventful years in the country that I am about to explore. To my question : "If I were to meet only one person in India, who should it be?" one of them replied very softly : "Ma Anandamayi."

When I mentioned Her to Swami Sivananda, he said : "She is the most perfect flower the Indian soil has produced."

Today I only think : "It can hardly be that I shall not be disappointed." And I am not even sure that I wish to meet Her.

Benares is the touchstone for the love or the horror of India for Europeans. I have perhaps never been so perfectly happy as during the weeks that I spent in that city,

and thanks to my friends Bhattacharya who made me discover the heart of their city, I lived as if in the Kingdom of Heaven. But I know a number of travellers for whom it remains the memory of a veritable nightmare. I am sure that one could spend one's whole life in Benares without exhausting its riches.

At the very end of one of the narrow lanes that all resemble one another, and where it is easy to lose one's way, right at the bank of the Ganges, in the mohulla of Bhadaini is situated the main Ashram of the great Bengali saint and sage Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi. I arrived there for the first time one evening during the Durga Puja festival. I shall always remember it.

Having started at sunrise and succeeded in reaching Varanasi by nightfall, I am fairly exhausted. To locate Bhadaini is yet an event. At last I park my car in a road broad enough for carriages and, led by a few children, proceed on foot through the lane that seems even more mysterious and unreal in the dark of night.

What I see at the end of the lane is fantastic.

A swarming multitude enters, emerges, and watches those who enter and emerge. One might think the bustle on the footpath due to a special performance at the Opera-house or to a ball in some large hotel, of which the guests have been miraculously deprived of their shoes.

The narrow entrance, giving way under the streamers, is blocked by flower and garland-sellers and by a heap of shoes and sandals scattered all over the pavement.

Inside, the crush is indescribable : tanned backs, *dhotis* shining white in the night, a rainbow of *saris*. A guide whose dark features I am unable to distinguish catches hold of me, and not without difficulty tracing out a passage for us, walks ahead of me up a narrow staircase.

The noise, the chanting, the music are deafening. But as we enter a terrace where the crowd becomes, if possible, even more dense, the threefold rhythm beaten on gongs, bells and cymbals bursts forth abruptly. Those who know it will guess at once. Those who have never heard it cannot imagine it. Thundering, sublime, piercing, overwhelming, shaking the whole body with its ever repeated three beats, capturing emotion, imposing silence on the mind, it raises in that wonderful autumn night the cry of the planet towards the sparkling sky. Across the white of a portico, amidst the black infinity of the plain far below, I distinguish the broad band of the eternal Ganga. In that frame, which opens out from a small outer stairase rising from the river, I see the most beautiful face of a man I have ever seen. Some wandering *sādhu* for whom this evening is but a halt on the road without end. The serene and

silent peace that emanates from him, his ineffable smile and the light in his eyes give their meaning to the clangour of the brass under the blows of the clappers. Then he vanishes.

Instantaneously, abruptly there is silence, total, absolute, nourished by a thousand individual silences.

I do not know for how long.

And suddenly I am pushed through the once again moving and noisy crowd, towards Her whom I had almost forgotten. "Mother, Mother", says a voice close to my ear. A woman who seems at the most forty years old, with long black hair falling loosely over her shoulders, dressed in a spotlessly white *sari*, more beautiful than I even dreamt, smiles at me.

There is no question of my prostrating and putting my forehead on the ground : I cannot tear away my gaze from Hers. I place one knee on the floor. I do not know how long this lasts. Then She turns round and walks away. I have had my first *daršana* of Mataji.

Devotees and visitors are sitting around Mother in a cluster in order to have Her *daršana*, Her blessed sight, and She enlivens by Her supernatural presence and Her silent radiance the singing of the hymns.

Close by Her, dressed all in white, the young girls who have dedicated their lives to Her.

By Her side a woman of hoary age, very thin, very frail, a *sannyāsini* with shaven head, clad in the orange robe. It is Didima, Mother's mother, the mother of Ma Anandamayi.

And I marvel at the extraordinary destiny of that humble woman of the village, who lost several children at a tender age, and whose baffling little girl, more serious, more gentle and more joyous than all the others, the little girl who did not cry after she was born and who never wept except once during her childhood, has become the epitome of the Mother for millions of men and women. While Didima's life was confined to her modest home, how could she have thought that she would one day travel all over India and that the crowd of the small and the splendour of the great would come and bow at her feet?

Three young women share the honour of fanning Mataji, and their movements seem in rhythm with the music.

To the accompaniment of his little harmonium, a *brahmachārī*, sings. His singing has attained to such an abandon, to such an impersonality that he really seems to transmit something divine. Then two of the young girls, dressed all in white, sing some songs and this is perhaps even more perfect, even purer.

Among the crowd are many children. Some play quietly in their corner. Others, curled up, sleep without the slightest movement. A few gaze at Mataji, unwearied.

Without a pause, newcomers worm their way to Ma, prostrate and offer a few fruits, flowers or a garland.

Indifferent to all this veneration, Ma Anandamayi is basking in peace and bliss.

Off and on Her eyes gaze into the far distance and Her expression takes on a beauty that is truly divine and beyond all description. What does She see at such moments? With which world is She in touch? What is the significance of a being in our midst so totally different? She has eyes like ourselves and yet so entirely unlike. She sees us and sees much more than us. Why have we no access to Her vision? Why are we thus banished from the world of which She is a living proof? The more I look at Her, the more fascinated, the more amazed am I.

Sometimes she smiles at a newcomer. Sometimes suddenly, Her gaze fastens on one or the other with such intensity that it is almost unbearable even for those who only witness it. This lasts for a few seconds that seem an eternity.

The hymns follow one another, but now it is Ma who sings, and the crowd repeats in chorus : "Hari bol, Hari bol, Hari bol, Hari bol." Her singing has such force, such vigour that we are shaken in our entire being. This surpasses by far everything of that order that I have had the chance to experience. Something immense that very nearly causes giddiness makes its presence felt among us. We want even more of it. But we feel that we should be unable to bear it.

Her face is so powerful that I cannot disengage myself from it. Lost in a crowd I have never before known a similar impression of intensity and fulness. At last something has actually happened in my life. And this certainty remains with me day after day for weeks, together with the one, not less forceful, that everything is possible for Mataji.

A sentence comes to my mind : "I am not worthy that you enter my house, but say only one word and my child will be saved."

Perhaps I have been capable of really knowing this, for at this very moment Ma Anandamayi slowly turns Her face in my direction and looks at me. Of that instant I will not speak. Now She talks. She speaks with animation and gaiety. She laughs a great deal. "Anandamayi"—does it not signify "permeated by joy"? Everyone seems highly amused. Questions are asked in quick succession.

The atmosphere is completely free, intimate, spontaneous, relaxed. I do not understand anything, for sure. But what does it matter? The French disciple to whom someone remarked, "You don't understand anything of what Ma says?" only replied : "But who does?"

This reply is correct. The teaching of Ma Anandamayi is absolutely beyond words, just like that of Ramana Maharshi. And when She speaks, She still remains beyond Her words and beyond the comprehension of Her listeners. Nevertheless, a teaching of Ma Anandamayi, formulated in words, certainly does exist. One has often been surprised and dumbfounded by the way this unlettered woman replies, without even a moment's reflection, to the most difficult and perilous questions that are put to Her by very learned men. Her words have for years been recorded by Her disciples, especially by a quite astonishing and indefatigable woman, Sri Gurupriya Devi, and by Brahmachari Kamalda, and some have been translated into English. They are extraordinarily interesting and striking, and represent one of the monuments of metaphysical thought and a prodigious commentary on all *sādhana*s known to us.

I myself have, assisted by the Swami who served me as an interpreter, prepared in minute detail several conversations with Her. Certain sayings, certain utterances have impressed me profoundly.

But this was never the most essential point.

(an excerpt)

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Notice

All the readers of Amrit Varta are informed that a membership form will be attached with the January 2013 issue. Please fill the form and kindly enclose Rs. 200 by Money Order addressed to 'The Managing Editor Amrit Varta'. This money will cover the whole year's expenses.

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COME MY BELOVED COME

(An Invocation)

—J.N. Dhamija

I have wandered, since the days of my youth, to find my Beloved, I have been through many a vicissitude of life—seeking, searching, suffering.

This poem is an invocation to Her. It was inspired by one of Her numerous photographs none of which are alike. The poem was conceived and written in her room in Almora Ashram. It was completed after midnight of the 20th August, 1975.

When I commenced writing this poem I was possessed by a rare spirit of Love and Beauty. I felt Her presence intensely. She was always with me and around me. She inspired and guided my pen.

While I sat writing, I watched the beautiful valley spread before me. Down below stood, in stillness, the white temple of Patal Devi - Goddess of the Nether World. On my right, high up on top of the far off pine forest hill, could be dimly seen the temple of Kasar Devi - Goddess of the Mountains. On my left grew a large peepal tree with one of its top branches softly swaying before my front window, giving a strange depth and beauty to the view before me.

Seated in Her open and airy room, I saw the valley in a naked blaze. I saw it in all its phases, moods and colors. Every day was a new day, a new dawn, a new glow in the valley, newer skies; the gathering monsoon clouds aflame, magic sunsets, strange and mysterious—an unearthly vision of supreme Beauty and Power.

I have seldom seen and experienced in my life such a blaze of Glory, such intensity and serenity, such beauty, bliss and power.

At the break of dawn, I would view the valley and feel the atmosphere which vibrated with Divine Presence. There was a strange Silence around me. I lived and breathed Silence. Silence spoke to me.

I would tenderly pluck the jasmine flowers and make an offering to Her and to the Lord Shiva in the Ashram temple.

The white jasmine and its perfume
The incense and its aroma
And Thy secret love in my heart
Elusive but constant
Ever vibrating in my being

Like the perfume and aroma
In the white and pure freshness
Of the Himalayan air.

I was happy, intensely happy, during my three months' stay in Her ashram amidst the foothills of Himalaya. I would not have exchanged the supreme bliss with a king's domain.

I owe this poem to Her - the most Beautiful and the Purest One - at whose feet one cannot but fall down and worship. She possessed me and inspired me. In fact She possessed me the very day when I first saw Her. She awakened and infused a new love and beauty in my heart. She guided and transformed me.

(to be continued)

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ASHRAM NEWS

1. Guru Purnima Celebrations

Guru Purnima was celebrated in various ashrams with great devotion and joy on the 3rd of July, 2012. In all the ashrams Shodashopchar Puja was performed of Shree Shree Ma's Shubh Vighraha and of Shree 108 Swami Muktananda Giriji along with Sadhu Bhandara etc.

Shri 108 Swami Muktanandaji's Nirvana Tithi was celebrated with special puja in Kankhal, Varanasi, Agarpara, Delhi, Ranchi, etc. followed by Sadhu Bhandava etc.

Pujya Bhaiji's Shodashopchar Special Puja was performed on Jhoolan Dwadashi Tithi, 30th July, 2012 in Shree Shree Ma's Ashram in Kankhal, Varanasi and Almora.

Jhoolan is celebrated in the Shravana month of the Monsoon (July-August) amidst beautiful greenery, blue black skies, heavy rains and joyous peacocks dancing, which inspired Nandnandan Lord Krishna in Vrindavan. In the same spirit it was celebrated in Kankhal, Vrindavan, Varanasi etc in Shree Ma's Ashrams. (from 28 July to 2 August).

In Vrindavan Jhoolan Puja of Chhaliyaji and Radha Krishnaji was performed daily at 7 p.m. On the 2nd of August, 2012 Shodashopchar puja was performed the whole night followed by Ved Path, Vishnu Sahahasvanam path and bhajan, of Shree Shree Radha Krishna and of Shree Shree Ma, followed by kirtan and prabhat kirtan next morning at 5 a.m. Later at noon Lord Krishna and Shri Radha were offered bhog; thereafter sadhu seva and prasad distribution took place. The same night akhanda Harinam Kirtan took place from 10 p.m till sunrise. From July 28 till August 1, the famous Ras Mandali of Pandit Srichanda performed Rasleela from 3.30 p.m to 6.30 p.m. In Varanasi Ashram Jhoolan celebration took place daily in the evening with beautiful decorations and melodious songs invoking Gopalji while he was being gently swung in the jhoola (swing). The bhajans unique to the occasion inspired by Shree Ma are rendered now by Geeta di.

Sri Krishna Janmashtami was celebrated in Vrindavan Ashram on the 10th of August, 2012 according to the Vaishnava tradition. At midnight Lord Krishna's divine birth was celebrated with suitable puja. On 23 September at 10 a.m Shree Shree Radha Ashtami was also celebrated with puja.

In Varanasi Janmashtami was celebrated on the midnight of August 9 according to the Shaiva tradition followed by the Vishwanath Temple Trust. Gopalji's Holy Vighraha was taken down from His usual throne and offered Shodashopchar puja with great love and devotion accompanied by bhajans. Khokada from Kolkata as usual took special interest in the success of the celebration. The next day Nandotsav was celebrated with active participation of small girls of Kanyapeeth.

On September 8, the renowned removed Sanskrit Pandit Padma Vibhushan Sri Gopinath Kavirajji's birthday was celebrated in Varanasi Ashram. Kanyapeeth celebrates this day as Sanskrit Day. The Head of the Puran Department of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Sri Gangadhar Panditji, Sri Manudav Bhattacharya and Sri Kamlesh Jha ji, President, Chief Invitee and Honoured Invitee, in this order, took special seats. The programme began with Ved Path, garlanding of Sri Krishna ji's photo and Arati by five girls from Kanyapeeth and simultaneously five conch shells were blown. After garlanding and greeting the honoured guests with gifts, Kanyapeeth girls sang Kanyapeeth Kulgeets, Kaviraj Invocation song was sung by the youngest of the girls, a short skit 'Ancient Poets' Meet was staged, followed by a dramatic presentation of Vishwaroop Darshan from Shrimad Bhagawad Geeta. This was followed by offering tribute to the great Kaviraj ji by the renowned Sanskrit scholars mentioned above, distribution of prize to the girls by the Chief Guest and his speech. The programme was suitably wound up by the chanting of Ganga Stotra in a melodious tune.

Respected Gurupriya Didi's Nirvana Tithi followed thereafter on Lalita Saptami on 22nd September and was commemorated in Varanasi as well as Kankhal Ashram with traditional pujas and sadhu bhandara.

Between 24th September and 30th September in memory of late Km. Sandhya Banerjee of Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth, a student as well as teacher plus an all rounder in all the activities of Kanyapeeth-Shrimad Bhagwat Saptah Jnan Yagna was organised in Varanasi Ashram. Shree Gangadhar Pandaji was the speaker from Sampurnanand Sanskrit- University, Head of the Puran Department.

He made his explanations simple for the young Kanyapeeth girls. The scholarly exposition was received well by the girls. On October 1 the Saptah was completed with traditional yagna, Brahman Bhojan, etc.

On 25th September Matri Navmi was observed with Dhyana and soul-stirring kirtan by Geeta Banerjee.

Meanwhile in Pune Ashram too a Bhagwat Saptah took place between 7 August and 14 August, 2012. The speaker was Shree Hari Priyaji. To include Jannashtami the evening session of the explanation was postponed to 9.00 p.m-12.00 midnight on August 10. It was followed by poojan from 12.00 p.m to 1.00 p.m. Vishnu Sahasranam, Bhagwat Geeta path, namsankritana etc. and finally partaking of prasad at noon the next day.

Another Bhagwat Saptah was performed from October 6 to October 13 as Jnan Yagna in Bhopal Ashram.

According to belated news from Raipur Ashram Shree Shree Ma's puja was performed on Her birthday, May 3 at 3.00 a.m by Swami Tanmayanandaji, a resident Swami, followed by traditional Kumari Puja and distribution of prasad. This was preceded by Sunderkand Path the previous night between 11.00 p.m and 1.30 a.m. Devotees from Raipur performed beautiful nams ankirtana. As prasad, Ma Anandamayee Brahma Khichdi and other delicious items were distributed. All devotees spontaneously broke out into "Hail to Thee, Joyous Anandamayee Ma."

Like all other years this year too Shree Shree Shardiya Durga Puja from October 19 to Oct 24, Shree Shree Lakshmi Puja on 29 October, Shree Shree Kali puja on Deepawali, November 13 and Annakuta on November 14 will be organised in Kankhal, Varanasi, Agarpara and Ranchi Ashrams.

From 21 November to 27 November 2012 Shree Shree Samyam Saptah Mahavrata will be organised.

Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee paid her first visit to Gujarat on 19-10-1937 which was a day of full moon i.e. 'Sharad Purnima'. She had come from Haridwar to Vadodara via Delhi. She travelled by narrowgauge train from Pratapnagar (Vadodra) station and arrived in Chandod, which is a place of pilgrimage on the

bank of Narmada river. She resided in 'Trikamji Mandir' (Vishnu Temple) in Chandod. 'Sharad Purnima' being an auspicious day, Shree Ma asked Baba Bholanath to perform 'Mahalakshmi Puja'. During her total 50 days' stay in the year 1937, Shree Ma paid visit to the holy places situated on the banks of Narmada and also Vadodara, Dakor, Ahmedabad etc.

Shree Shree Ma again visited Chandod during the winter of the year 1938. This time most of the period she stayed in Vyas and visited holy places by boat. During this period Shree Ma selected a place in Bhimpura for an Ashram. While selecting this place, she remarked that this place had been a region of religious austerity (Tapobhoomi) since ancient times. Thereafter with the noble efforts of Swami Akhandanandji Shree Shree Ma's Ashram was established in the year 1939. About the place in the Ashram where the 'Dakshinamurti' banyan tree stands full of sacred vibrations. Shree Ma said that sages and ascetics visit the place and sit on this tree. Shree Ma stayed for 64 days during this visit.

Shree Ma stayed for about two months at different sacred places and increased the importance of many holy places situated on the banks of Narmada by visiting them frequently. Murli Manohar Mandir of Karnali, Shree Ramniki Ashram, Swayam Jyoti Ashram, Shukdev and Anasuya Tirth were visited by her. In between, Shree Ma paid her holy visit to Ahmedabad and Vadodara. Shree Ma also visited Dakor Nathji. People of Raj Pipla and Tilakwada felt obliged when they saw Shree Shree Ma, a Deity in their town. People staying near the bank of Narmada used to address Shree Ma as 'Ma Maheshwari', 'Ma Narmada' and bow down at her feet, full of faith. Shree Ma stayed for 77 days in Bhimpura Ashram and also at other places in Gujarat during 1940-41.

The committee of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Bhimpura Ashram has decided to celebrate the 75th (Platinum Jubilee) year of Shree Ma's first holy arrival at the pilgrimage places in Gujarat. The first such celebration was arranged on 11-10-2011 at Trikamji (Vishnu) Mandir, Chandod by Mahalakshmi Puja with 'Bhandara' on that day.

As 'Punit Ashram' and 'Jankalyan' have affiliation with the Ashram therefore, on the auspicious occasion of Ma's Birth Centenary, the office of 'Jhankalyan' published an article in Gujarati written by Jyotiben Thanki entitled — 'Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee ni Jivan Sudha' in their quarterly magazine.

With the full support and cooperation of devotees of Shree Shree Ma construction work of Memorial premises named. 'Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Namsmaran Sthali' on Shri Anandamayee Road at Anand Nagar Cross Road in Ahmedabad is in progress. During this year i.e the Platinum Jubilee year only the work will be

completed and 'Shree Shree Ananadmeyee Namsmaran Sthali' building will be dedicated for the benefit of the public of Ahmedabad and Gujarat. On 29-10-2012, the day of 'Sharad Purnima', it is decided to arrange 'Mahalaxmi Puja'. Also 'Matri Katha' for 3 days and visits i.e. 'Anand Yatra' to various places in Gujarat which Shree Ma visited with her holy footsteps will take place. A programme of 'Satsang' is also thought of. These are tentative programmes. Detailed information in this regard will follow in due course of time.

Please note that a picture of model premises of 'Shri Shri Ma Anandamayi Namsmaran Sthali' is published in this bulletin.

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LIST OF FUNCTIONS

1. Shree Shree Samyam Saptah — November 21 to Novemeber, 27 2012
2. Shree Shree Jagaddhatri Puja — November 22
3. Ras Purnima — November 27
4. Geeta Jayanti — December 20 to 23 Ending on Ekadashi Tithi
5. Makar Sankranti — January 14, 2013. First Kumbh Holy Bath
6. Maghi Purnima — January 27. Second Kumbh Holy Bath
7. Mauni Amavasya — February 10. Third Kumbh Holy Bath
8. Shree Shree Saraswati Puja — February 15. Fourth Kumbh Holy Bath
9. Mahashivratri — March 10
10. Holi — March 27