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MA ANANDAMAYEE
AMRIT VARTA

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

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MATRI - VANI

To know yourself and realize yourself, be a pilgrim. You yourself are the repository of light; *yogitattva* saintliness is integral to you and seerhood (*rishitattva*) is within yourself. Wherever there is God there is everything. Whatever you say is in this body. Whatever you say this body is that itself. Where is the place where God is not? There is no question of visible or invisible. Whatever you say or one says it is that. Visibility (of God) depends on your *kriyā* (spiritual endeavour).

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Whether you are aware of it or not you continue breathing. Whether you are doing *japa* or not while you are meditating, the breathing process continues to do its job (the automatic *ajapā japa* goes on with every breath). It is like when you wind a watch — it keeps doing its job, whether it is in your hand, neck or pocket. In the same way your breath (*ajapā*) is doing its job always. (This is an assurance from Sri Ma that a *sādhaka* who regularly practises *japa* will never lose it, for it will continue automatically.)

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One starts his preparations for his journey to Badrinath. As you reach Badrinath you keep travelling to have the *darshan* of Badrinath; you could well feel the Lord's presence from a distance. You touch him through your sight — you might not be able to touch the Lord but your experience through your sight is your achievement. This experience comes step by step. It is like various situations that you encounter on the way. As you encounter situations — the road ahead opens up gradually.

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As Mahavir (the great Brave Heart, Lord Hanuman) says — 'I see Him in that form.' He is my own Form — The one and the same *ātmā*. (the form of Sri Rama)* God is the whole and I am a part of Him — the Whole and a portion of the Whole — like a spark which can light a fire is the same as the blaze of the fire itself. There is only one Brahma and there is no second. One *Ātmā*, one Myself — whatever you say is the same God/Self. This light - this revelation will enlighten you that you are one with that. God is the whole and I am a part of the whole. I am the servant — He

* Sri Ma refers to Hanuman's declaration that although He knows that Sri Rama is not different from Sri Narayana, yet the Lord He worships is Sri Rama. This is a devotee's choice of *Ishta Devatā*.

is God. I am a servant of the Lord, when all these three reveal themselves as eternal unity, one understands the identity of *nityadāsa* (eternal servant of God)*.

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You have come to attain God, let the vagaries of the world be on their own; you should condition yourself in such a way that you are not even touched by them.

There are lots of obstacles at home. Someone is cooking — the aroma is being wafted to you. The sound of music and singing is coming and in the midst of all this you have come to realize God. There are involuntary actions of the body like coughing, snoring — all this will happen. All these distractions are in you too as God exists in all and God is in you also — this truth should be revealed to you (so that you are not affected by anything apparently external to you).

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You are free, eternally free. You really never believed it (and that is how you are in bondage). If you adopt the line of Love you are the eternal lover or the eternal servant (and you proceed on your chosen line) for the revelation of your status as God's eternal servant.

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Why the "I"? To attain yourself. "I" (the ego) is not to be attained. With the feeling of being God's companion one may seek God... that is why God has not given himself a fixed form. He has given you eyes to see (in your desired form of his as it suits your *bhāva*)**.

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*. These three are the three stances of the Vedanta philosophy — *Advaita*, *Vishistādvaita* and *Dvaita*. Sri Ma throws a unique light on these systems when She says that they have a basic unity which an enlightened *sādhaka* realizes and then, in spite of his knowledge that he is one with Brahma and a part of the Whole, he assumes the *bhakta's* identity of the eternal servant of the Lord.

** Sri Sri Ma used to ask persons to form some relationship with God in any *bhāva* as it suits them and thus stay in constant touch with Him. God has not specified any particular form of His so that one may choose the form one likes most. God has innumerable forms. To understand this God has given us eyes and the inner eye (*antashchakshu*) of spiritual intuition (*aparokshajñāna*).

SHREE SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE PRASANG

Vol - 5

—Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta

(Tr. by a Devotee)

Tuesday — 16.11.48

Ushākīrtan started at 4 a.m. Here it is pretty cold early in the morning; it is like what we have in our region in the month of January and February. In this cold weather Sri Ma has to remain present for the *kīrtan*, the *kīrtan* hall is open from all sides, hence we have to get uncomfortable here. Haribaba and his disciples did *kīrtan* till 5 a.m. On completion Sri Ma left for her room for some rest, we also returned to our respective rooms.

At around 10 a.m. I went to Sri Ma's room and saw that Ganesh babu (sen) has arrived from Allahabad. After some specific discussion Sri Ma left for the *kīrtan* hall. At around 10 a.m. Haribaba starts his *pātha* (discourse/reading-cum-exegesis) of the sacred texts. He did the *pātha* of the '*Chaitanya Bhāgavat*'. He speaks in Hindi and I understand very little of the language, but since Sri Ma is present, we also have to be present.

The *pātha* continued till around 11 a.m. After this I went to bath in the Ganges with all others. The river is quite far from the Ashram, around a mile. Today is '*Kartik Pūrnimā*', hence there is a rush of devotees at the Ghat (bathing ramp). After the bath as I reached the Ashram gates where I met Sri Sri Ma. She said with a laugh, "See, it might not be possible to stay here for seven days. Let's see what happens. You have come to a dispersed gathering". Sri Sri Ma left for her meal. We also left for our meals.

At 2 p.m. *pātha* was resumed. After the *pātha* of *Shrīmad Bhagvad Gītā*, the *pātha* of *Bhāgvatī Kathā* written by Prabhudatta Bramhachari was done. Yesterday also the same happened. One boy would do the *pātha*. The boy does the *pātha* quite well. I heard that the *Bhāgvatī Kathā* will be completed in 108 parts. The writing of the book and its printing are going on simultaneously. The discourse on the childhood *līlā* of Sri Krishna was done. Since it was in simple and easy Hindi, I understood a bit of it.

Haribaba got busy to leave and go elsewhere. His disciples are waiting to take him to Bandh, but it is not yet decided where Haribaba would go. Sri Ma would also leave with Haribaba. The atmosphere of joy would be shattered. It was decided that Sri Ma and Haribaba would stay here till 29th November; but since Sri Ma and Haribaba would be leaving before that, Prabhudattaji is quite saddened. Hence after today's *pātha*, the boy recited a lecture written by Prabhudatta Brahmachari. The title of the lecture was 'Unforeseen News'.

In that the Brahmachari had talked about the deficiency of *jñāna*, (knowledge), *bhakti* (devotion) and '*vairāgya*' (dispassion) in him and the lecture also dwelt upon the feeling that an elevated soul (Mahatma) like Haribaba visits him only out of compassion. He also said that whatever decision the Mahatmas take they always fulfill it. He also added that if they so wished they could also withdraw the decision etc. While this lecture was being read the Brahmachari was shedding tears.

(to be continued)

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When a *sādhaka* realizes what form and formlessness essentially are, it is indeed a consummate Realization. He comes to know what *bhāva* is, the inner relation of form to the *Śabda Brahman*, numerous types of language — endless in variety — and he also realizes language as *Śabda Brahman*.

—Shree Shree Ma

MOTHER AS REVEALED TO ME

—Bhaiji

Pramatha Babu was transferred from Dacca as Post Master General. He went to Sri Ma to bid Her farewell. Mother said to him : "Who salutes whom ? You bow down to your own Self." He was thrilled with wonder and joy to hear such a remark.

On one occasion Professor Atal Behari Bhattacharji fell ill at Shahbag during the Puja holidays. He keenly desired that Sri Ma should come to him and like his own mother massage his aching head. Mataji went and passed Her hands over his whole body from head to foot. On recovery he returned to Rajshahi, the place of his work. After some days this incident was discussed at Shahbag. I remarked : "The gentleman lacks common sense, his intelligence is equally poor. I fail to see what purpose he had to make Sri Ma do that job for him during his illness." As soon as Mataji heard my remark Her face changed colour. She said : "Shall I massage your feet ?" With these words She advanced towards me. I began to move away, with Sri Ma following me. *Pitaji* intervened and stopped Her. Even now I remember Sri Ma's childlike face glowing with motherly warmth, always eager to nurse, soothe and serve all Her children. At that moment S. Shashanka Mohan Mukherji cried out : "Ma, Ma," and fell at Her feet.

In this connection Sri Ma said : "Just as a human body has different parts such as the head, the hands, thighs, feet, fingers and toes, I find all of you representing my various limbs. You all belong to one body, each one has to do work of equal importance."

On a different occasion, the late Nirmal Chandra Chatterji of Varanasi offered some flowers at Sri Ma's feet. Just then a man was passing by, carrying flowers in a basket to perform the worship of his deity elsewhere. Mataji picked up the flowers that had been presented at Her feet and placed them in the basket. Nirmal Babu enquired from Her why She did so. Her reply was : "All people are worshipping One Being only, all hands and feet belong to One Body."

(an excerpt)

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PILGRIMAGE TO KAILAS

—Gurupriya Devi

Sunday, 14 July

We had to set out in the morning. It has been decided that Swamiji would accompany us. At that juncture he remembered his dream. As we were going for Gaurikunda *darshan*, no one ate anything, but we carried hot tea with us. We got glimpses of sunshine in between bouts of snow. We set out by seven thirty a.m.

As per Ma's instructions, the horses were arranged in a single file. Last night hardly anyone slept because of the cold. We had put on every piece of warm clothing that we had, yet our bodies felt damp and cold. It has been bad enough here and today we shall climb even higher! As we set out for Gaurikunda which is situated at a height of twentytwo thousand feet, Ma showed us, "Look, all around the sun there seems to be a circular line. This is called a *dharmasabha*. In my childhood, the mother of this body had told me that this is an auspicious sign." A few days ago the guide had halted his horse during midday to show us stars and the moon shining in the sky, saying, "It is an auspicious sign to be able to sight the sun, moon and stars simultaneously in the sky!"

We moved ahead—as there was not much wind the trek was not troublesome, yet the cold was so intense that we were freezing numb. Each of us was wearing two or three woollen trousers, sweaters, a coat and an overcoat—woollen socks, shoes, woollen caps, gloves—we lacked neither clothing nor equipment, yet we were shivering with cold; this route is truly terrible. The horses were stumbling at every step against rocks and stones.

Proceeding thus for about three miles we reached Gaurikunda. Whatever rituals have to be performed are done here, there is no temple or idol elsewhere; the religious ceremony at the culmination of this pilgrimage is the perambulation of the Kailas mountain. Today we complete this *pradakshina*. Gaurikunda is an icy pond surrounded by snow-capped peaks. The *kunda* thus seems to be surrounded by icy walls. We have been walking through snow, for though there was not much snow on the path, we were surrounded by snow covered mountains. It is customary to offer a coloured cloth at a spot just above the *kunda*. All the items had been brought. We alighted at Gaurikunda with great difficulty. The water was frozen hard except for pools of water near the banks with ice floating in it. These pieces of ice had to be

pushed aside while dipping in the waters of this kunda. Bholanath, Dasu Dada and the Indian *Brahmachari* in our group bathed in the water. The others only sprinkled the holy water on their heads. We spent sometime there. Ma also bathed her head, and drank some of the water. She then had dry fruits offered, incense lit and *aruti* performed. A big lock of Bholanath's hair was cut and dropped into Gaurikunda.

A glimpse of sunshine appeared inspite of the continuous snowfall. So there was not much of a wind and this lessened our troubles. But Swamiji continued to suffer from breathlessness. He seemed to be in the condition of *kumbhaka* (the holding of breath during *pranayama*) all the time and he sat thus, behind Ma. Jyotish Dada was also in the same state. From morning he had been feeling uncomfortable in the chest. As he feared that his ailment would prevent everyone else from proceeding further, he kept quiet about it. He told us about this only on the way back. It is only because of Ma's grace and Bholanath's enthusiasm that we have all been able to reach Gaurikunda and perform all the religious rituals. Fruit, *halva* and dried fruit were distributed to everyone. There was no chance of getting any other foodstuff at the spot.

Around twelve thirty p.m. we departed on our return journey from Gaurikunda. Now the descent became as terrible as the ascent. Most of the time, we could hardly keep ourselves on horseback. The path by which we descended on horseback was terrifying even to look at. The descent lasted over a distance of about two miles. Ma was accompanied by two people. Around two thirty p.m. we reached even ground and found ourselves near a spring. We rested for some time, drank some water and set out again.

We travelled on plain ground for four or five miles more and reached a waterfall by sunset and pitched camp. As we feared that the *dandi* would get left far behind the horses, Swamiji was also made to ride a horse.

During our perambulation of the mountain, we came across two men who were perambulating the mountain by prostrating full length on the ground. When they asked us for something, we gave them some money. We heard that such a perambulation, in which after each prostration the next prostration is begun where the head touches the ground last, takes fifteen days to complete. We were astonished to see such a feat being accomplished in such an inaccessible spot. The men had wrapped thick cloth around their knees and chest. We were stunned to see such devotion.

Meanwhile our guides came and told us that they had themselves declared that they were dacoit gang leaders to deceive the local people. We were again surprised to hear this! In the tent it was decided that Jyotish Dada would travel in the *dandi* in order to rest a bit. Ma puts herself to so much trouble on account of her devotees! At

night after some food was cooked, we all ate and slept.

In the course of conversation Ma told us, "I can see five people clothed in saffron coloured robes (in their subtle forms) coming to me and saying, 'We were with you during the peramulation'. There are so many such beings. I did not say anything but another subtle-bodied being asked them, 'Who are you all?' The sadhus replied, 'We are disciples of Kanai, the nephew of Maheshchandra Bhattacharya. We are continuing our work in this manner.' Ma continued, "From this it appears that Kanai was in an exalted state in his previous birth." Referring to the matter of the subtle-bodied beings Ma explained, "Just as I can see you all, I can see them equally clearly. Just as you touch my feet, they sit next to you and do exactly the same."

Here again we could not procure any wood but Parvati Devi went to a cave and brought some. It was hardly wood, just small thorny twigs. We have been spending days and nights in the extraordinary costumes described earlier. Tomorrow we shall reach Boond where all our luggage has been deposited. We met a great number of beggars here—they were given handfuls of puffed rice which they were very happy to receive; such is their poverty.

(to be continued)

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NOTICE

Anandaswarupeshu,

We hereby bring you the joyous tidings that in fulfilment of prolonged expectation of devotees, the construction of a guest house has started in the courtyard of the Puri Ashram. We appeal to all the devotees of Sri Sri Ma and our generous well wishers who are willing to cooperate with monetary assistance for successful and expedient completion of this noble project to make remittances in the form of cash/draft/money order in favour of Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha, Puri and send the same to the following address ---

Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha,
Swargadwar, Puri, Odisha

Doners are requested to kindly write their full postal address for procuring the receipt.

Managing Committee
Shree Shree Anandamayee Ashram,
Puri (Odisha)

PADA PEETHAM SMARAMI

—Br. Geeta Banerjee

(Tr. by a Devotee)

Siddha Peeth Siddheshwari

(Continued)

Taming Nature's Fury

In the evening of Ashtami there was a massive thunderstorm and darkness prevailed. The intensity kept increasing. The storm intensified and there was commotion everywhere. The room where Basanti Puja was performed had a thatched roof and thin walls. The room was shaking and leaned on one centre pole. Sri Ma was seated in the hollow of the Holy Seat and in the meantime a 12 year old girl fainted out of fear. Everyone was holding on to the centre pole and praying for Sri Ma's intervention. Alongwith the fury of nature's dance and the fervent prayers of the devotees, there seemed to be a divine rhythm and Sri Ma joined the rhythm in dance. This was joined by a resounding laughter by Sri Ma. It seemed that the idol of the Goddess was also shaking violently. On seeing this spectacle and hearing Sri Ma's laughter. Baba Bholanathji was startled and said to Sri Ma — "What is happening? save us". In the meantime it was seen that a soiled lower caste man came and began singing *kirtan* looking at Sri Ma and praying fervently that no one should chase him away. It remains an enigma as to who this man was, but the storm stopped at that moment. Eventually the gloom and darkness vanished and it stopped raining too. Nothing in the puja room was damaged. Outside it was nearly hooded, the roof of the kitchen was blown away and the branches of trees had snapped. A person called Mathur habu got everything in order within the same night.

Labanya's *Bhāva*

In the meantime Sri Ma was in *bhāva*. Baba Bholanathji's nephew Ashu and Labanya, his younger sister, along with her husband and mother had arrived. On seeing Sri Ma in the state of her *bhāva*. Labanya exclaimed "What has happened to Auntie?" and in excitement embraced Sri Ma. Thus coming in contact with the person of Sri Ma, Labanya got into a trance and started rolling on the ground chanting "Haribol, Haribol". In the meantime Sri Ma proceeded towards the Siddheshwari Kali Temple with her devotees. Shashanka babu (Akhandanandaji) said, "On returning from the Kali Temple and while proceeding towards the worship room,

I heard someone chanting 'Haibol, Haribol'. As it was dark, I went to see and found Labanya rolling around on the floor and chanting." It was raining before and Labanya was outside. She had to be brought back indoors and her clothes had to be changed. When Sri Ma returned, she saw a soiled Labanya rolling on the ground and her mother getting hold of her and cleaning her. Labanya was in a trance, unmindful with a fixed gaze and chanting 'Haribol, Haribol'. Labanya was in this state for a long time and apparently she saw Sri Ma's face in the face of Ma Durga's idol. Labanya's mother requested Sri Ma to cure her. Sri Ma chanted some mantras and Labanya became normal and eventually returned to her house with her husband.

As quoted in Gurupriya Didi's book Sri Ma was present in the delivery room when Labanya was born. Sri Ma had a special liking for Labanya. After this incident, Sri Ma said "This state is not achievable even for spiritual aspirants of a very high order, but what to do? her mother wanted her out of this state and so I had to do it".

Birthday Celebrations of Sri Ma in Siddheswari

In the year 1928 and 1929, for two years Sri Ma's birthday was celebrated in Siddheswari in the blessed presence of Sri Ma.

On the first occasion from 10 P.M. onwards Sri Ma was in the state of *samadhi*. She was on the lap of her mother (Didima). She was clasping a flower from the garland around her neck for a long time. Late in the night Sri Ma's hand clasping the flower moved towards the feet of her mother and the flower was offered at the feet of her mother. Next day her father Sri Bipin Bihari (Dadamahashay) was performing *kirtan* in the adjoining room. Sri Ma called on him and offered her garland at the feet of her father and prostrated fully at his feet and paid her obeisance. Thus she conveyed to the world that parents are always, everytime and at all places worthy of one's respect and obeisance.

The Spectacular Experience of Sri Bholanathji

Once while praying at the Siddheswari Kali Temple Baba Bholanathji witnessed a headless image of Goddess Kali. When the news was conveyed to Sri Ma, She sent him to Tarapeeth (Bengal) for meditation. Surprisingly Sri Ma then did not know about the Tarapeeth Temple nor had she heard about it from the worldly point of view. On reaching Tarapeeth Temple, Baba Bholanathji found that the head of the idol of the Goddess Tara made of silver, was removed at night after the closure of the doors and the same was re-installed after bathing the idol in the morning before the door was opened. After seeing this spectacle, Baba Bholanathji realised that this was the same idol he had witnessed in Siddheswari Kali Temple.

Sri Ma's Amrita Vānī

In those days, every Monday and Thursday there used to be *kirtan* in Siddheswari Ashram. Once Sri Ma was seated in the Ashram surrounded by her devotees and they were discussing Sri Ma's visit to the homes of various devotees and the people who missed out were expressing their anguish. This was a genuine feeling of happiness or anguish by the devotees for whom Sri Ma was their own mother and they always felt blessed in Her presence. Looking at everyone Sri Ma uttered the following words — "All of you who have come here try to forget differences, jealousy and acrimony. If you have to indulge in jealousy and criticism, then what is the use of coming here?" Then She said in a stern voice :

"I am your daughter, but you call me your mother. If your feeling is really genuine, then wherever I am, you all must know that for that moment the place belongs to me. Hence that place belongs to you all also. Remember this always."

Later Sri Ma also said, "Whoever comes here, must be ready — till now nothing has happened, the spade has just struck the earth, a lot has to be tolerated, there will be many storms and in the wake of those gales, whoever has to go will go, and whoever has to stay will stay." Each one's heart was profoundly touched by Her words. That day Sri Ma also said to all present — "Whenever I sit here, I will answer all your queries and not otherwise."

After the question answer session and *kirtan* Sri Ma was in '*Mahābhāva*'. Another day sitting in the Holy Seat, divine *stotras* were being uttered by Sri Ma. Later She explained, "One who is the creator is also the creation and recipient of knowledge, hence there is no second. I see all is one. There is no question of a second since it is that One who pervades the whole".

Extension of Siddheswari Ashram

The small room (hut) in Siddheswari had become worn out and inadequate, hence as per everyone's desire Swami Akhandanandaji purchased the whole plot and constructed two large rooms. Sri Ma had remarked, "The place of the Holy Seat is in a low land and no one would be able to take care of it." Saying this Sri Ma gave instructions for making a raised seat based on measurements of Her person.

Worship of Ma Kali in Siddheswari Ashram

In Shahbag the idol of Ma Kali that was worshipped in 1926 was not immersed. The same idol was taken from Shahbag and installed in Siddheswari Ashram. Then at the Ashram Sri Jogesh Brahmachari and Atal Brahmachari, Kamalakantaji etc. were present. They were responsible for looking after the deity and offering puja. In 1926 after the Ma Kali Puja *yajña* was performed. Sri Ma had initially said that it was

not required, but seeing the preparations for the *yajña* She relented. Again the *pūnadhuti* (the final oblation offered to mark the end) of the *yajña* was stopped and the *yajña* was carried to Siddheswari Ashram. Even today the fire collected from it is maintained in various Ashrams of the country.

Installation of Shiva Linga in Siddheswari Ashram

In the now defunct and razed Ramna Ashram in Dhaka, Sri Ma was first present on 02 May 1929. Though Sri Ma's birthday was celebrated in Siddheswari Ashram, on its completion She moved to Ramna Ashram. Ma Kali's idol and the fire of the *yajña* also moved along with Sri Ma to Ramna Ashram. In 1932 during Sri Ma's birth anniversary, a black coloured Shiva Linga was consecrated on the Holy Seat of Siddheswari Ashram by her devotees and this turned out to be Her last visit to the Ashram and Dhaka.

On partition of the country there were quite a few impediments in conducting the affairs of Siddheswari Ashram. During the 1971 Indo-Pak conflict when most of the temples and Ashrams were being defiled, the Siddheswari Ashram and Ma Kali's idol remained intact and even till date it has withstood various man made and natural calamities. On liberation of Bangladesh, Sri Ma sent Panu da to see the state of affairs in Siddheswari Ashram. On reaching there Panuda found that the temple was dilapidated, but the idol of Ma Kali was intact and the same. When Panuda returned and reported this to Sri Ma, She said, "As long as no sin enters there, the Siddheswari Temple will remain there and vibrant".

Renovation of Siddheswari Ashram

By the blessings of Sri Ma, a pleasant and favourable incident took place after the liberation of Bangladesh. Sri Amal Roy, a devotee of Sri Ma, could get in touch with his childhood friend General Ershad, who was the Martial Law Administrator of Bangladesh. On the General's orders in 1983, the dilapidated Siddheswari Ashram was renovated and thus the Ashram became vibrant again. By the grace of Sri Ma the Shiva Linga was consecrated again on the Holy Seat of Siddheswari Ashram. The devotees again started coming to the Ashram and the old glory of the Ashram was re-established.

The restored glory of the Ashram even today attracts many devotees from all over the world. Even the devotees who have not seen Sri Ma personally flock to the Ashram. Later on the request of the devotees a new plan was charted out for the renovation of the Ashram. The whole Ashram was re-laid in marble stone and inaugurated with a grand ceremony on 07 Feb 2008.

Sri Sri Ma's presence is always experienced at Siddheswari Ashram. Many important events of spiritual significance have taken place there and a rich spiritual heritage has been discovered.

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Shree Shree Ma Kali Siddheshwari Dhacca



Shiva linga wihtin Siddheshwari Ashram



Shree Shree Basanti Ma Durga, Varanasi Ashram 2015

SHREE DURGAYAI NAMAH

—Brambharini Jaya Bhattacharya.

*Sarvamangalamangalye Shive Sarvārthasādhike !
Sharanye Tryambake Gauri Nārāyani Namostute !!*

As in the past, on the occasion of Shree Shree Basanti Durga Puja, Shree Shree Ma's Varanasi Ashram resonated with drum beats : It seemed everyone was dancing with joy to the rhythm of drum beats. The 'Chandi Mandap' was the venue and everyone's centre of attraction and devotion. This was the 71st anniversary of the celebrations. By the blessings of Shree Shree Ma this worship is done here since 1944. It seemed that this year was special and we felt as if the whole city of Varanasi were involved in this auspicious occasion. The neighbouring Ghats were reverberating with spiritual activity and singing the praise of the Lord.

Near Assi Ghat Sri Murari Babu was having his discourses on the banks of the sacred Ganges from 21st to 29th March 2015. He treated all the devotees to the nectar of Ramayana for nine long days. We too had the good fortune of attending the programme one day and it seemed that the devotion of the audience was overwhelming. On the other side at Kedar Ghat a devotee of Shree Shree Ma performed one crore *Shivasahasrārchana*. 300 learned Pandits did the special *pātha* together. These were the two special happenings around the Ashram.

On the Basanti Puja front, the idol of the Goddess arrived on the 25th of March. The idol was welcomed with all the prescribed rituals and worship that were followed by devotional songs like '*Ebār nabin mone hobe Jananni tomār Udbodhan*' (This time you will feel something new in your reception, O Mother) and such songs. This was followed by more worship. The next day of '*Shasthi*' (the sixth day of *Navarātri*) started early with the prescribed ritualistic worship and devotional songs. The main event was invoking life in the idol by *mantras*.

27th March, the '*Saptami*', started at dawn and the worship included all the aspects as in human life such as ablutions, draping of new clothes, offerings of food etc. This was of course accompanied by the beating of drums, blowing of conch shells and playing other musical instruments. Accompaniments were galore with continuous devotional songs, *kirtan* and recitation of sacred texts. All this and on all days included the same rituals for Shree Shree Durga Ma's children as Lakshmi Saraswati, Ganesh, Kartik and their vehicles. The spectators including local as well

as outstation devotees and also some foreigners were enthralled and filled with devotion. 'Ashtami' and 'Navami' were the same except that the fervour seemed to be increasing by the day and happiness seemed to be contagious. 'Prasāda' whether of sweetmeats and fruits or food was the regular feature which everyone looked forward to and so was the evening gathering for rendition of devotional songs by many artistes solo or in chorus. 'Bhandārā' was a regular feature from 27th to 29th March. This year the stars foretold of the overlapping of the lunar dates and so 'Navami' rituals had to be performed on 28th and 29th March, the worship starting at 3 A.M. on 29th March. Similarly 'Dashami' Puja started at pre-dawn and had to be completed by 7 A.M. on 30th March.

'Dashami' the tenth day after *Navarātri* (nine nights) was concluded aptly as described and at around 4 P.M. the idol was taken for a boat ride on the sacred Ganges to the accompaniment of drums and conch shells. The ride lasted from Assi to Dashashwamedh Ghat for all the city folks to seek blessings and finally the immersion was done near the Ashram Ghat.

In the evening celebrations concluded with ceremonies for peace and happiness on earth. Ofcourse all this was accompanied by distribution of sweets and greeting each other. There were more devotional songs before everyone departed on their respective ways.

Jai Baba Bholanathji

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FROM MA ANANDAMAYEE LILA

(Bhaiji's Mission and Legacy)

—Hari Ram Joshi

(continued)

During the entire period of a fortnight, when Bhaiji was lying seriously ill at Almora, Mataji observed *mauna* (complete silence) and ate very, very little. Just before Bhaiji's death, I prayed to Mataji to save his life, as She had done once before in Dacca when he had suffered from tuberculosis. Mataji directed us all to vacate the room and, after a few minutes we were again called. I then reminded Bhaiji that before proceeding on to his pilgrimage to Kailash he had promised that after due consultation with Mataji he would on his return from Kailash give me detailed instructions for establishing and organising Mataji's "Mission of Universal Brotherhood, Peace and Love" in the Kishenpur Ashram, as had been conceived by him. I asked who would give us the necessary guidance if he did not survive. Bhaiji replied that if I was unable to organise the Mission, it would look after itself. Then, just a few minutes prior to his death, he said in a very clear voice : "Mataji and I are one, Pitāji and I are one, we are all one." He thereafter recited *Mā Nāma* in a sweet, melodious voice and at that moment we were directed by Mataji to place his body on a mat spread on the floor. Bhaiji repeated *Sannyāsa Mahāvākya* and breathed his last.

After Bhaiji's death, Mataji broke Her silence and narrated to all of us in detail how Bhaiji had embraced *sannyāsa* after taking a bath in the Mansarovar lake immediately on reaching Kailash. He and Pitāji had walked ahead. Bhaiji became an *avadhūta sannyāsī* in the presence of Pitāji and requested him to convey to Mataji (who was lagging behind with Swami Akhandananda) that he had embraced *sannyāsa* and that he would not go back from Kailash with Mataji and Her party. However, Pitāji persuaded him to speak to Mataji before taking that final decision. Bhaiji thus waited and on Mataji's arrival sought Her permission to pass the remaining portion of his life in Kailash. He reminded Mataji that the further lease of life, given to him by Her during his fatal illness in Dacca in 1927, would expire soon and therefore he wanted to stay back and leave his mortal frame at Kailash. But Mataji asked him to return with Her. He agreed but wanted to be permitted to stay in Almora for the remaining portion of his life. He also suggested that he might be admitted to the District Hospital in Almora as he was likely to fall seriously ill very soon. Mataji told Bhaiji that She Herself would attend on him if and when he got sick. After narrating all this in detail Mataji told me to arrange for laying Bhaiji's body in *samādhi* at a suitable place in Almora. As already mentioned, Bhaiji had told my cousin Girija

Datt Joshi that he wanted to stay at Pataldevi, which is considered a very quiet place, suitable for *sādhanā*. It is at Pataldevi that Bhaiji was laid in *samādhi* at about 11 P.M. on August 17, 1937. A good number of the citizens of Almora joined the funeral procession and throughout the two miles to Pataldevi, *Mā Nāma Kīrtana* was sung by all. On returning to Almora just after midnight, we found Pitāji in the grip of a severe attack of colic. He was being attended by doctors. By Mataji's grace his pain soon subsided.

At about 2 A.M. that very night, Mataji called me to the room where Bhaiji had died and I was closeted with Her for about an hour. I asked Mataji who would now give directions for organizing the "Mission of Universal Brotherhood, Peace and Love" as conceived by Bhaiji. Mataji reminded me of what Bhaiji had told me just before he passed away. She then asked me not to weep anymore. She also told me that Bhaiji had suggested to Her that She might, if She approved, consult me about Her future movements before taking any final decision. I humbly requested Her to stay in the Kishenpur Ashram and make it a centre of Her activities as had been Bhaiji's earnest desire. I also communicated to Her that Bhaiji had told me that Dehradun was the place from where She had assumed a Universal Character during the short period of four years after leaving Dacca in June 1932. Therefore, Dehradun might be looked upon as the centre of the mission. Mataji agreed to go down to Dehradun and gave me detailed instructions about the arrangements to be made for maintaining a proper spiritual atmosphere in the Kishenpur Ashram. I promised that I would try my best to mould my life according to Her directions. I must confess that I have not been able to faithfully carry out the promise given to Mataji on that memorable night of Bhaiji's death. I requested Mataji to pay a visit to Bhaiji's *samādhi* before leaving for Dehradun, which She said She might do. During that night Pitāji, Swami Akhandananda, Didi, each of them separately, had private interviews with Mataji.

We had arranged that Mataji would visit Pataldevi the following day between 3 and 4 P.M. to see Bhaiji's *samādhi*. But Pitāji did not like the idea of taking Mataji there. Mataji thereupon told us that She could go to Pataldevi in Her own way, which Pitāji would not be able to know. Just before 3 P.M., while Mataji was sitting in the room where Bhaiji had passed away, She asked all of us to immediately vacate the room as She wanted to be left alone. When till late in the evening Mataji did not come out, the room was opened. She was found lying on a mat in deep *samādhi*. Her whole body was ice-cold and there was only very slight breathing. This made everybody anxious. Pitāji was afraid that on account of the death of Bhaiji, Her adopted son (*dharma putra*), Mataji might Herself leave Her mortal frame and go into permanent *samādhi*. I told both Pitāji and Didi that they were not wise in harbouring such thoughts, and tried to convince them that their apprehension was quite unfounded. I also indirectly communicated to them that Mataji had given me a positive assurance

that She would go to the Kishenpur Ashram along with all of us and therefore they should try to remain calm during Her *samādhi*. I then made a special request that we all should recite uninterrupted *Mā Nāma Kīrtana*. Everybody agreed and the chanting of *Mā Nāma* was started by all present. When after nearly four hours there was no special sign visible in Mataji's body that She was emerging from *samādhi*, I in my anxiety, cried out : "Oh, Ma, will you not be pleased to give an indication to us by some movement of your body that you are not taking permanent *samādhi*!" Immediately after this, Mataji's body moved slightly. I was reminded of the promise I had given to her the previous night that I would always try to remain composed under all circumstances and live up to Her *bhāva*. Mataji then sat up in *padmāsana* perfectly erect, with Her face glowing and a halo all around. *Arati* was immediately performed with the recitation of many *stotras* (hymns) as also the song in praise of Mataji composed by Bhaiji—"Jai Hridaya Vāsini". When it was over Gurupriya Didi gently massaged Mataji in the region of her spinal cord. However, Mataji again went into *samādhi*. Throughout the night and also the following day till noon She remained in deep *samādhi*. Pitāji and Didiji again became apprehensive and with the help of Swami Akhandanandaji shifted Mataji from the room where Bhaiji had died to the adjoining room, inspite of my protest that in that deep *samādhi* Mataji's body should not be touched. Pitāji had thought that if Mataji were allowed to remain in the room where Bhaiji left his body She might not resume Her normal condition. Therefore he considered Her removal absolutely necessary. Mataji remained in deep *samādhi* the whole of that night. In the meantime Pitāji decided to take Mataji to Dehradun the following morning. A motor-bus was hired for going down to Kathgodam. With great difficulty Mataji was carried to the bus in an arm-chair and made to lie down on the berth behind the driver's seat.

We left Almora at about 10 A.M. On reaching Bhowali at 5 P.M., Mataji said a few words to me in a very low voice and then again resumed Her *samādhi*. At Kathgodam we had to use a stretcher to take Her to the railway compartment reserved for our journey to Bareilly. From there we caught the train to Dehradun and again a stretcher had to be procured to carry Mataji to the Dehra Express. At Dehradun also we had to take Mataji to the Kishenpur Ashram on a stretcher as She continued in deep *samādhi* throughout the whole journey. At the Kishenpur Ashram She was first taken to the main Kirtan Hall. She started speaking normally to the devotees who had assembled there to receive Her and have Her *darśana*. In Dehradun Mataji did not eat and subsisted on a small quantity of water for a whole fortnight. She broke Her fast late at night by chewing a piece of ginger that had been boiled in water according to Her directions. The day after, Mataji's devotees arranged for a big *Bhandārā* (feast) in memory of the late Swami Maunananda Parvat (Bhaiji), and on this occasion Mataji tasted everything that had been prepared—i.e., *puries*, rice, *dal*, vegetables, sweets, etc. A good number of *sannyāsīs* from the adjoining Ramakrishna Mission were also invited.

(to be continued)

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SWAKRIYA SWARASAMRITA CHAPTER TWO

Yogini Thakurma : Longing Itself for Revelation of 'That One'

The *Thakurma* of Ma had a natural indifference towards her own self, even while living in the family. A glance at her revealed her inner attitude of aloofness. She had a tall figure, looking like a yogini. Even while engaged in any work, she moved humming happily songs related to *Bhagavan*; on being called unexpectedly, she replied as if she was startled. It was like the action of one who had returned from some unknown depth to the material world. Whatever work she did would be neat and clean, manifesting complete holiness. The present poverty did not touch her much, as it were. Of this family, this was a characteristic feature—an ornament, indeed, of innate beauty.

Sriyukt Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya Mahasaya had, of course, very little connection with the family throughout the day. Wherever he would be, the people of that area would be like members of his own family and they would go on calling him (as such). As soon as they would meet him, he would be earnestly invited and taken (to their place) where he would get engrossed in songs pertaining to *Bhagavan*, etc. It was as if he was not bound by time. He spent time like this day in and day out. Sometimes he did not find time even to eat and sleep. As becoming an orthodox *brahmin*, invitation to a right place alone was accepted and food taken there. Besides this (normally) when he returned, it was only at home that he took his bath and performed the prescribed religious service and *puja*. Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya's life has already been mentioned earlier in detail. We have also heard from the mouth of Sriyukta Mokshada Sundari Devi what has been mentioned above and also about similar other topics.

Thakurma's Daily Routine

At the crack of dawn, Ma's *Thakurma* collected dry branches of trees from the roadside, arranged and gave them to Sriyukta Mokshada Sundari Devi for use in the kitchen. Pot-herbs grow in jungles. Sometimes, humming merrily the name of *Bhagavan*, she picked them also while going round these village jungles in the morning. It was as if she was collecting vegetables grown in her own well laid out garden. Again when she felt like it, she took Ma along too, to collect pot-herbs.

Gradually, in a few days, she had made Ma understand which pot-herbs were edible and which were not. When *Thakurma* could not see properly because of her poor eyesight, and if Ma happened to be with her on that day, then She would rush into the jungle and show *Thakurma* the potherbs and their tender stalks. *Thakurma* too would be greatly delighted to see them. She had a very simple and guileless nature.

Some of the villagers grew a large variety of radish in their agricultural land, and they used to sell the produce. While pulling out those which were big and of good quality, a part of their lower ends sometimes remained behind in the soil. Ma's *Thakurma*, as we know, very often collected pot-herbs from the jungle. Perhaps, on some occasion, on noticing her moving along the road by the side of their gardens they would call *Thakurma*, and giving her some good radish, would also tell her. "Look, many bits of radish are still lying under the ground, please take them too." May be, sometimes, she did take a few of them. As *Thakurma's* father's house was in Kheora, there was no question of covering her face with a veil (in this village). There was a bond of affection with everybody. *Thakurma* treated the elderly women as mothers and the others as brothers and sisters, and they, in turn, showed, in their behaviour, esteem and reverence for *Thakurma's* holy ways. That unsolicited (gift) of theirs helped in meeting the need for the time being. After collecting such vegetables and cutting them up as required, *Thakurma* would deliver them at the kitchen and then take her bath.

The Songs *Thakurma* Sang

Sriyukta Mokshada Sundari Devi spoke about one song (as under), which *Thakurma* used to sing :

Oh ! the Ruler of Vraj.

Please listen :

Tonight, after appearing

In my dream,

Know not, where Gopal

Has hidden Himself again.

The restless MOON—

The Darling, kept pulling

The edge of my sari,

And crying.

"Oh mother, please

Give me fresh butter !

Give me fresh butter !

As the Darling
 Continued crying,
 Demanding "Cream, mother,
 Cream, please",
 I kept saying,
 "Where is the leisure ?
 Who will give Thee cream ?"
 And at that instant,
 I pushed Him aside,
 Saying,
 "Get away, get away."

Then, after brushing away
 The dust from His body,
 And picking up the Darling
 I wiped the moon-face
 Of the MOON itself
 With the edge of my sari.

Then the MOON
 Cried out again and again,
 For the moon (in the sky).
 The MOON who represents
 Tens of millions of moons,
 Why should He cry
 For such moons repeatedly ?

I assured Him then.
 "Among the moons Thou art
 The one untainted MOON.
 Tens of millions of moons
 Seek refuge at Thy feet !"*

(Further), we heard from Ma's mouth that *Thakurma* used to sing the following type of songs too!

O' Courier ! I am being consumed
 Due to repeated tormentation
 By my sister-in-law
 Through her curses and wrath.

*. This song depicts motherly love of Ma Yashoda for Gopal, the divine child Krishna. She is here speaking to her husband Nanda.

And agony caused in me.
Also, by my mother-in-law
Who is (fierce) like a tigress.
I am being consumed
Due to repeated tormentation,
Oh Courier !

She hummed so many such songs pertaining to *Thakur*, always mentally and also while going round in the jungles. Taking Ma in her company, *Thakurma* used to sing these songs to Her. May be, *Thakurma* would be engaged in clearing rice and pulses off grits etc. humming a tune at the same time, when Ma would sometimes interrupt, saying, "Than Didi (an address of love to grandmother), do please sing a song—within my hearing"—as if the two were friends.

(an excerpt)

*

Whether one takes the path of devotion, where the 'I' is lost in the 'Thou', or the path of Self-inquiry, in search of the true 'I' — it is He alone who is found is the 'Thou' as well as in the 'I'.

—Shree Shree Ma

REFLECTION OF BLISS

Through the crystal clear water of a lake a golden necklace was visible lying at the bottom of the lake. Some passersby beholding the beautiful necklace got tempted to have it, and they dived into the lake to collect it. But strangely enough, when they reached the bottom, they could find no necklace there. Being disappointed they used to come up, but again when they looked down from the bank of the lake, it was visible. This made them extremely puzzled and they could not understand the mystery behind it.

Being perplexed, they were looking at each other. They discovered that a necklace was hanging high up from the branch of an adjacent tree. It was evident that some bird must have picked it up from somewhere and left it there. Now it was clear to all the assembled persons there that the necklace visible at the bottom of the lake was only a reflection of the real necklace and nothing more.

Finishing the story, Ma commented, "Similarly the fountainhead of all happiness is the Absolute Being. The pleasure that worldly people derive through their sense organs are merely an insignificant reflection of the Anandamaya Brahma".

*

QUIZ—TICK THE RIGHT

1. To Which deity did Shree Shree Ma's Thakurma pray for a grand daughter ?
(a) Shiva, (b) Vishnu, (c) Kali, (d) Durga, (e) Tara
2. In which century was Shree Shree Ma born ?
(a) 18th Century, (b) 19th Century, (c) 20th Century
3. Which among the following is Shree Shree Ma's birth place ?
(a) Kheora, (b) Mymensingh, (c) Dhaka, (d) Sultanpur
4. Who gave the name Tirthavasini to Shree Shree Ma ?
(a) Father, (b) Mother, (c) Didima, (d) Thakurma

(The answers are given on page 36)

Children's Pages

CONFRONTING LAME EXCUSES

—R.K. Das

There spread an epidemic of plague in Kolkata in 1899. People had no access to its remedy. Most of the affected people died or suffered badly. Many citizens of Kolkata ran away from the city to safe and distant places out of panic. There were neither social workers nor any medical team to alleviate the problem. At such a calamity, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) came forward with his team of monks. He not only served the affected people with medicine and eatables but also cleaned the drains together with his colleagues.

Vivekananda was a Hindu monk of the *sannyāsa* order and had become a world famous personality after his presentation in the World Congress of Religions in 1893 at Chicago. Many superstitious pundits who were against any change and modern development told him, 'Dear Swamiji, you are surely not doing the right thing by serving these fallen souls. You ought to devote your time to the service of God and preaching sermons to people. Instead, you are working day and night for the welfare of the plague-affected ones. Every action has its opposite reaction; that is why the punishment of God has come down upon these sinful people in the form of plague. Their bad luck is predestined. Are you not putting obstacles against the execution of His divine will?'

Swamiji first gave a patient hearing to their vehement allegations. Starting from his early school days, nobody could beat him in any debate. He already had got an apt and befitting reply to the allegations of the orthodox scholars. He said, 'All that you have said is very good, O Pundits. True it is that a wicked being suffers from his sins and misdeeds of the past. But don't you think that a virtuous man also gets the benefits of his work by serving the suffering souls? If you proclaim that their suffering was predestined, how isn't it that serving them by us is also predestined? In other words, their bad luck is the root of our good luck. This is my strong conviction that work done out of good will is never against the divine will of God.' The reply was more than enough for the pundits, who at once disappeared from the scene silently with their heads bowed down.

*

SHREE SHREE MA'S DIVINE CONVERSATION COLLECTION

—Kirpal

Translation — Mrs. Rohini Purang
(continued)

Ma : Kamal-nayan¹ looks at the entire universe but does not desire (anything), just like a lotus in the water stays distinct from it.

9.12.1959

Q : What is the secret and importance of *anushtān* ?

Ma : Attending a *pāth*² — by just listening³, (do you get) the whole fruit (of the *pāth*) ? *Sakāma*⁴ — the fruit that you desire — by performing the activity in that (a particular) way, you will get the fruit.

Planting a particular type of tree, you will get a particular type of fruit. Just as there are different types of *anushthāns*, there are different types of fruits (that are gained by those *anushthāns*) — for an *anushthān* is performed to obtain its fruit.

Q : About the *samudra manthan*⁵, when Devi came out from it...?

Ma : In the *shāstras* — (as) one reads in the Bhagavat - do the *manthan*⁶, it⁷ will surely happen.

Q : Why did the *gopis* swoon ?

Ma : His (the Lord's) wish — He is not dependent on anybody. If He did not do this⁸, then the sign⁹ that heralded His reappearance would not have presented itself — for (He) is merciful — blesses, is not harsh — for Him to manifest, there has to be an intense yearning — He does not manifest by ego and pride. Where there are no

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1. *Kamala-nayana* means the Lotus-eyed One, an epithet for Lord Krishna.
 2. Recitation of a scripture.
 3. As opposed to joining in the recitation.
 4. An activity that is done with a view to gaining the fruit thereof.
 5. *Churning of the Ocean* : an episode mentioned in the Puranas.
 6. Churning, i.e. spiritual practice.
 7. The result of the spiritual practice.
 8. Refers to the departure of Lord Krishna from the midst of the *gopis* when they showed traces of pride.
 9. Which is the swooning of the *gopis* due to the intensity of their divine love (*prema*) for Him coupled with the agony of His departure.

ego and pride — there (only will He) manifest.

Ma : Bhagavan (He Himself is) in the form of the mother - mother and father.

Q : What is meant by devotion - renunciation and knowledge-renunciation ?

Ma : First find one part - eight parts will be known by themselves.¹⁰

To understand all this you have to study — (and) there is only one book — *Brahma-vidyā* — by which (the duality of) knowledge-ignorance is destroyed. The activities prescribed by the guru — (and) that which is transformed by the activities — the person doing such activities will realise. (Just) reading or hearing is not sufficient - act according to the teachings of the guru. Reading and hearing (do) give a lot — (they give) what all there is in various scriptural texts — just as by reading a (Railway) timetable only the route is known — (but) when you go to the station — (and) whatever the destination, when you reach there — (then) there will be attainment.

(Within) creation and (from) the viewpoint of the world — this method (of activity) you are already aware of. (But if you) walk the path of the Lord — for God-realisation, for Self-knowledge...it is like this...(Just) like in the world (one does) business (*vyāpār*) - like this if you get business then work will be good.

(But because) it¹¹ *be-pār*¹² - one cannot always cross it - if (it is) not crossed, then it *is across*. It (worldly business) lies within the realm of what can be seen and heard.¹³ (But) when the mind is expanded — when one can see clearly — (and) knowledge comes about - by recognising that in doing *vyāpār* — (the result will be just) as you see me, it will be as clearly perceptible - (and) when you see - (that) it is oneself within oneself - none other - who (else) is there to see ? Whichever method the guru prescribes for you - following that there will be Realisation.

Q : Who is Yogeshwara ?

Ma : (He is) a great Yogi - the Lord of all Yoga - the Root, the Lord - from whom comes all illumination. Acting on one's own ideas will not work - that which is read or heard — (only) that (i.e. some part) will enter the ear — (but) one wants the Whole. For that one has to carry out the practice - the study means (the study) of *Brahma-vidyā* - the studying of which *vidyā* (knowledge) means to do the practice that leads to illumination — (if you think that) practice does not lead to illumination, use all the strength that you have (to carry out the practice) then illumination will *have* to come about.

10. Refers to the *Ashtāṅga Yoga* system of Patañjali.

11. The Divine realm.

12. Wordplay on the Hindi word '*vyāpār*' (meaning 'business' or 'activity'), and '*be-pār*' (which can mean : that which has no other shore/is difficult to cross /cannot be crossed).

13. As opposed to the Divine realm which is beyond sense perception.

If thought arises, then one has to go beyond thought and no-thought. The thought that questions "Who am I?" — If it is answered through *sankalpa* (will), *vikalpa* (alternative choice/contrary idea) or ego - then (one has) remained in the very same place.¹⁴

If you dwell in a place of doubts, then how can it be that doubts do not arise? It is its (the world's) nature to give rise to doubts.

The desires by which you obtain a return ticket — the desires that remain — (they) will provide (you) with a return ticket. It is a play of the ego, mind and intellect — that is for sure — it definitely is. The place in which you dwell, in that place to have such thoughts (i.e. in keeping with the nature of the place) — that is its (that place's) nature.

Q : What is *samādhi* ?

Ma : The absorption¹⁵ of the being-ness of the entire world — performing actions with the attitude of *karma-bhāva* (*karma-yoga*) (which is) total reconciliation- that is *samādhi*. *Jada samādhi*, *nirvikalpa*, *savikalpa samādhi* - these are stages - one has to go beyond *samādhi* - (to) the self that is within oneself, no other.

Q : Is a vision of the Lord perceived with the subtle body or the gross body ?

Ma : A vision of Him — it (the vision) happens where you are¹⁶ — (for example,) you walk - (so you feel that) it (the vision) comes (walking) on its own - like you see a dream, you see it like that. A true vision (of the Lord) is where there is no question of perceiving and not perceiving it — If you want a true vision, where there is no question of perceiving and not perceiving, (then) the *bhakta* should do what the guru has ordained — *bhakti mārga*. *Jñāna* and *bhakti* are not separate. The Lord is merciful, full of mercy - whichever state you may be in, He is truly merciful (and) gives a glimpse of Himself.

It is said that (if) you walk one step, Bhagavan walks ten — it (progress) happens step-by-step. Whichever stage you reach, the vision (you perceive) is according to that stage - (there are) infinite types (of visions) — the final vision is that in which the question of now perceiving and now not perceiving (the vision) does not arise. Whatever the guru says — step by-step one gets that type of vision (of the Lord). As is one's devotional feeling, (commensurate with that) is the gain. Whatever is the stage of one's devotional feeling - the vision will accordingly change and come.

(to be continued)

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14. i.e. made no progress

15. The state of *samadhi* may be described as the state in which the characteristics of the Impermanent world are in the state of *samādhān* i.e. they are reconciled, settled, absorbed.

16. According to one's stage of progress.

LETTERS WRITTEN BY BABA BHOLANATH TO DEVOTEES

(To Sri Naren Chakravarty)

Dharamshala
Seraj Gunje
Baroda.
29.10.36

May wellness be with you,

Father Naren, I was satisfied on receiving your letter. Your 'Ma' is keeping well physically at present. The sore throat has reduced now. Don't worry at all. Srimati Jutika and I suffered from cold and sore throat for one day, the cold still persists. Your 'Ma' suffered a lot. The glands of her throat had swollen, but she is cured now. She is able to eat her meals properly now. She doesn't spare any opportunity of having a tiff with me and all the drama ensues.

A am glad to know that the fever of Panchu's son has reduced. I was worried about him. I had written to Panchu but didn't get a reply. I don't understand why Panchu hasn't replied.

I think Jiten has come to Delhi. Keep them all posted about us.

I have come to know about the details from your letter to Jatish. This person is terrible and also 99³/₄% of what he says is lies. It is his nature to tell lies, Infact, it is against his nature to tell the truth. Such people shouldn't be trusted. I had said these things about the person to her in the very beginning. But your mother did not believe it. Now everything has come to light. All that he said about his ashram, vehicle etc. is a lie.

He has collected a lot of money taking our name and now he is caught. Well, we shall tell you all of the story when we meet. We are fine. Will be happy to know about you all.

Your's
Rama Pagla.

P.S. —When and where we shall go from here has not been decided as yet. You had asked us to go to Delhi, but we don't know when that would be possible. I don't think that would be very soon.

*

(To Sm. Juthika Choudhury)

Garbyang

20.7.37

May wellness be with you,

Mother, we joyously circumambulated Kailash and safely reached here around 2'O Clock. Nobody had any problems enroute. Your 'Ma' is keeping well. She doesn't have a cold. We had climbed to 22,000 feet and so everybody, excluding me, had some breathing problems. The Doctor Babu (Swami Akhandanandaji) suffered the most. He is fine now. The path is quite difficult. But Ma, your mad son had no problems, he looked after and safely got everyone here. Shall tell you the details when we meet. Mother, does a mad son listen to anyone? Mother, it is imposible to describe the beauty of Mansarovar, Ravan Kund, Mandhata Peak of Kailas and other peaks by narration or writing. We had no difficulty in crossing the Lipu Pass and Gauri Kund. I looked after everyone and brought them safely. We shall start for Almorah in 2-3 days. It will take us 13 days to reach Almorah. We are fine and hope you all are fine.

Your's
Rama Pagla
C/o. Pandit Srinibas Joshi
Teacher, Almorah



Shree Ma with sir, lady Datar Singh and Kirpalji and ashramites
Bairagarh, Bhopal



Kirpalji with Guneeta Kanyapeeth 1954



Pujya Kirpalji

**“TVAMEVA SARVAM MAMA DEVADEVA”
O MA, THE SUPREMEST OF ALL DIVINITIES,
THOU ART ALL IN ALL FOR ME**

—Br. Guneeta

Beloved Kripalji first came to be associated with Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee in the 1950's and remained her most ardent devotee for ever. She surrendered her only daughter at the lotus feet of Shree Ma.

Today this great ascetic is no more amongst us. At predawn around 3 A.M. on the 6th of January 2015 she left for her abode at the lotus feet of Shree Ma repeating Her name. The place was Bairagarh, a division of the capital of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal at the blessed Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram. In the year 1965 Shree Shree Ma had first visited and blessed the place. Today in the year 2015 the Ashram reverberates with Shree Ma's blessing, and stands tall in the faith. Āshramvāsini (hermit) Kirpal Kaur made this pious and pure place her home and dedicated herself in the name and faith of Shree Ma for 50 years. Blessed are such souls.

Our beloved Badi Didi (Elder Sister: Kirpal Kaurji was referred to as such) was born on 9th Dec. 1923 in a place called Montgomery in Lahore district of the undivided Punjab now in Pakistan. Her father Sir Datar Singh was among the rich landlords of that area. He owned about 1000 cows and this place was famously known as Montgomery Dairy Farm. The Sahiwal bred of cows have originated from this place.

The parents of our beloved Badi Didi were very religious and dedicated to saints. The great Sikh Saints Baba Nand Singh Kalera Wale and Baba Ishwar Singhji had showered their blessings on the family and often associated with them.

When Sardar Hukum Singhji was blessed with a son Sardar Sir Datar Singh he dedicated the child to Baba Nand Singh. Sardar Sir Datar Singh was born by the blessings of Baba Nand Singh and so were another four sons thereafter and the house reverberated with the playfulness of the children. Sardar Hukum Singh was previously also blessed with five daughters. As per the then prevailing custom Sardar Hukum Singh had five marriages to beget a male progeny. The fifth wife Mother Bhagwat Kripa gave birth to the five sons of Sardar Hukum Singh. Datar Singh was sent abroad for higher education in agriculture and dairy farming. After completion

of his studies and training Datar Singh took charge of the estates and property of his father. In 1916 Datar Singh was married to Smt. Durga Devi, the eldest daughter of Bhai Mohan Singh Vaid of an affluent family from Taran-Taran in Amritsar. Durga Devi was later christened as Lady Satwant Datar Singh.

Datar Singh and Lady Satwant Datar Singh were blessed with five children — Sardar Maninder Pal, Kripal Kaur, Kuku Kaur, Sardar Mahendra Pal and Amritsar Kaur. The third child Kuku Kaur had an untimely death at the age of 15-16 due to typhoid. During this time her elder sister Kripal Kaur was taking her B.A. exams in Lahore. This incident had affected Kripal Kaur a lot and made her aloof to a great extent and she preferred staying more with her books. Due to excessive reading her sight got affected. On the advice of doctors she refrained from pursuing further studies for the Master's degree. She was further pained emotionally and carried the same pain till she met Shree Shree Ma.

Beloved Badi Didi was brought up with a lot of love and care. An English Nanny was appointed to look after her. She was admitted to the prestigious 'Air Cliff' School in Simla. This was a special school for girls which had 30 seats and only children from affluent families could get admitted. This was a residential school. Alongside modern education religion, culture etc. were taught. Badi Didi had a special interest for the Bible. She used to secure the first position in the subject. Here she learned to play the piano. At home teachers were appointed to teach her the 'Dilruba' (musical instrument). She had keen interest in tennis and so a tennis court was made at home. Thus a doting father had given his beloved daughter the best education and secured her life in this way.

This was the period of fierce nationalistic movements all over the country. Some of the friends of Badi Didi wore Khadi and this influenced her and resultantly she also started wearing Khadi. Due to partition the country got divided into India and Pakistan. The organised dairy sector and cow rearing was lacking in India and hence to give a filip to these activities Mahatma Gandhiji had made Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and Datar Singh his assistants. On the directions of Mahatma Gandhiji, people who lost all their property in Pakistan were given land in Delhi and other places. In the process Datar Singh also got 300 acre land in Punjab Kher. Other than this Datar Singh purchased some land in Bairagadh near Bhopal from Nawab Habibudulla of Bhopal. Besides, the Nawab also donated some land to Datar Singh for starting the Montgomery Dairy Farm. Datar Singh had cordial relations with all great nationalistic leaders of the country at that time and among the eminent were K.K. Munshi, Sardar

Patel, Rajendra Prasadji etc. Sri Jagjivan Ram was also very close to Datar Singh. Other than this Sri Naval Wadia of Bombay Dyeing and the Maharaja of Mysore Sri Ghanshyamdas Birla were close friends of Datar Singh. The government of India appointed Datar Singhji as an advisor in the Home Ministry, a post that he held and served till his end.

After Independence Badi Didi was in close association with Mahatma Gandhiji. She had close friendship with his niece Manu and daughter in law Abha. Bapu used to like her a lot. If he didn't notice her with his niece or daughter in law, he would enquire where the girl had gone. She used to accompany Bapu to the colony of sweepers and the downtrodden. Along with Princess Anrit Kaur and others, she would help the downtrodden in their personal area cleanliness. One day Bapu pointed at her hands and remarked "These hands never worked before". Other than these activities of social service her job was to read out the personal letters to Bapu, listen to the replies and write the same for him. She was quite adept in shorthand and typing.

No one knows what time has in store for oneself. On that fateful day Bapu was proceeding to the prayer hall with the help of Manu and Abha. Suddenly bullets riddled his body and he fell repeating 'Hey Ram' to his eternal sleep. There was commotion all around. 'Elder Sister' had gone elsewhere for some job at that moment. On returning what she witnessed was unimaginable. She looked after the inconsolable Manu and Abha and accompanied them till the last rites which were concluded in Triveni Sangam.

Times had changed and the parents had to get their daughter married. In 1950 she was married to Sri Amarjit Singh Madwa of a Mona Sikh family in Madras. Many great luminaries attended the marriage ceremony and among them the prominent were the President of India Sri Rajendra Prasad, the Home Minister Sri Sardar Patel, K.K. Munshi, Sri Ghanshyamdas Birla, the Bajaj and Wadia families. This was one of the most talked about marriage ceremonies in Delhi in those times.

Just 6 months into the marriage Badi Didi's mother got her back to Delhi at her home. The reason was her failing health as she could not adjust to the climactic conditions of Madras. Moreover, the groom's family were not ready to reside in Delhi. Subsequently the marriage was legally annulled. On the 3rd October 1951, Kripal Kaurji gave birth to her daughter in the erstwhile Wellington Hospital. Datar Singh and the family were overjoyed as the first child of their third generation was born. The child was brought up with a lot of love and care. The name ceremony was done as per Sikh traditions and the child was named Guneeta.

After arriving in Delhi Badi Did got associated with the Sarada Samiti of Ramakrishna Mission. Some ladies of the same age group from Southern India were also associated with the Samiti and their husbands were high ranking officials in the Government. At this time 'Elder Sister' was 27 years old. She was seriously engrossed in reading books and she had read all the books on the teaching of Swami Vivekananda. The book 'The Master' impressed her the most and she always carried the same with her. In those days Delhi Ramakrishna Mission was headed by Swami Ranganathanandaji.

(to be continued)

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There also one obtains a pension. The pension you earn in this world lasts only as long as you live, but that pension never ends. By what grace of His such a pension is granted is impossible to tell. If anything is to be desired at all, one should desire His grace.

—Shree Shree Ma.

SHREE SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE KANYAPEETH AN OVERVIEW

—Krishna Banerjee

Kanyapeeth is a unique fruition of Shree Shree Ma's divine *kheyāl*. It is an educational institution for girls in the *Gurukula* tradition. Girls ingress here at a very tender age, normally ranging from 4 to 10 years, to live a well disciplined and spiritually-oriented life of *Brahmacarya*. It is an externally concretised form of Shree Ma's *bhāva* regarding *Brahmacarya* and the ideal of the *Kumārī*. The particular form of the Divine Mother as *Brahmacārīnī* and *Kumārī*, which She has manifested in Herself, is installed as the Supreme Ideal of worship and approximation in the hearts of all the inmates, the tiny girls, the adolescents and their adult teachers and care takers, who are all desirous of purity, grace and light.

Kanyapeeth had its birth in Ma's spontaneous *kheyāl*; it developed with an indomitably powerful dynamism typical of all outcomes of Ma's *kheyāl*. Nurtured by Ma's own loving care, protected by Her own benign powers, planned by Herself and guided by Her own instructions, this small institution housing the "little friends" of Ma has completed many glorious decades of its existence.

It is said that vibrant sound is the origin of cosmic creation; it is interesting that from the ringing of a bell emanated the idea of Kanyapeeth. It was a school bell summoning little children back to the classroom. In the year 1932, Shree Ma was in Mussoori. One day, She saw some school children at play. They were running about, jumping, shouting, climbing trees, and just enjoying themselves. Suddenly they heard the bell. Immediately they left playing and ran back. Like a flock of birds they fled and vanished into the school building. Pointing to that scene, Shree Ma said to Bhaiji, "Can't you do like that?" Although there were no further talks as to what She meant by these words, to Bhaiji's mind it seemed that Ma had a sudden *kheyāl* for a special kind of residential school where all inmates, young and old, the teachers and the taught, were to live a spiritually oriented life punctuated by *japa*, *dhyāna*, *pūjā*, *pātha* and *kīrtana*, side by side with academic cum cultural activities and the daily routine of eating, sleeping, working, playing and resting—all regulated under a disciplinary course by the clock and the bell.

The idea which thus originated in Bhaiji's mind, however, could not be realized by him as his mortal existence came to an end in 1937. But the plan for a *Brahmacarya Ashram* for young students had already been chalked out by him on cardinal points.

and his bereaved friends and admirers took it up as a mission with Ma's full consent. For bringing this mission to a culminating point of success, the major responsibilities fell on the strong shoulders of the ever vigilant, fully dedicated personality of rare excellence in the service of Shree Ma, namely, *Brahmacāriṇī* Shree Gurupriya Dēvi (Shree Gurupriyananda Giri), who is known as "Didi" to all devotees of Ma. She had her own dreams of an abode where girls interested in spiritual life could find a shelter and favourable conditions for progress in spiritual pursuits.

During the first quarter of the 20th century when child marriage was in practice and girls were married off before they could be aware of their choice—and, in fact, they seldom had any choice even in later life—Gurupriya Didi did something revolutionary. Thirteen years old Adarini (that was her name in her early life), when married very much against her will, refused to live in her father-in-law's house. Everybody was shocked at her stubbornness, but her parents were compelled to take her back home. She stayed with them, devoting her time to their service, to study of literature and philosophy and contemplation of God. Finally, she found fulfilment of her heart's desire on meeting Ma at Shahbag, Dhaka, in the year 1925.

Shree Kuladaranjan Banerjee of Dhaka, a devotee of Ma, volunteered to send his two daughters, Jyotsna and Usha, to be initiated as the first *Brahmacāriṇīs* of the proposed Ashram for girls.

On September 25, Sunday, 1938, the inauguration of Kanyapeeth (its name for some time in the beginning was Mahila Ashram) took place at Haridwar in the holy presence of Shree Ma. The two girls, Jyotsna and Usha, were named by Ma as Bhaktipriya and Shantipriya. Their hair was cut short, they took bath in the Ganges, changed to white clothes*, and were given each a Shivalingam and a rosary. A special *yajña*, *pūjā* of Shree Ma and *Kumārī pūjā* of the two *Brahmacāriṇīs* were performed to solemnize the occasion.

Shree Ma Herself gave instructions regarding the daily routine of Kanyapeeth, which remains basically unaltered to this day. The girls get up at *Brāhmanuhārta*, i.e., at about 4 a.m. and foregather to perform *japa*, *dhyāna*, *kīrtan*, *pātha*, etc. They do some light exercise and *āsanas*. Then they take bath and assemble in the *Thākur ghar* (room for worship where deities are enshrined) for *Shiva Pūjā*. Then after breakfast they perform daily duties like cleaning, dusting etc, assigned to them according to their age and capacities. After this they sit down to study. At noon they take a vegetarian meal. After a short break they resume their study. In the afternoon they take snacks and have time for relaxation and recreation. In the evening they do *kīrtan* and *japa*. This is followed by some hours of personal study when they complete tasks assigned by their teachers. From 8:45 to 9.00 p.m. they observe *maunika*

* The yellowish uniform was introduced in the year 1942.

(silence). On the day of *Ekādāshī* (the eleventh phase of the moon) they take light meals containing fruit, boiled vegetables, and milk.

Since in the first few years there were no permanent housing arrangements for Kanyapeeth, it was taken from place to place, usually according to Shree Ma's sojourns at different places. Thus from Haridwar it was shifted to Dehradun, Allahabad, Vindhyachal, Delhi, once more to Haridwar, Raipur, Varanasi, Dunga, Almora, etc.

Finally, as a result of Shree Ma's *Kripā* and Didi's strenuous efforts, a piece of land was purchased in 1944 at Bhadaini near Assi Ghat in Varanasi. On the two previous occasions, when Kanyapeeth girls were brought to this city, Didi had taken for them a temporary residence on rent, first at Ramapura and then at Debnathpura. Ma had a special *kheyāl* for the new plot of land and when it was purchased She congratulated Didi. At first only a few rooms and a hall were constructed and Kanyapeeth got finally settled down here in the year 1945.*

(to be continued)

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*. This article was first published in 1988 in *Ānandamundākinī*, Kanyapeeth's Golden Jubilee Souvenir. On completion of the institution's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, this article is being reprinted serially with a few relevant changes.

—Editor

1. (c), 2. (b), 3. (a), 4. (d)

QUIZ Page 22 Answers :—

“SHREE SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE VIDYAPEETH”

—Priya Shankar Bhattacharya

Even after completing eons of my life and reminiscing, the desire to write about our Vidyapeeth (Seat of Learning) keeps recurring.

A few days back, on the request of sister Geeta Banerjee, the desire to write on the subject got re-ignited.

Most of the treasured moments of the 72/74 long years of my life are in and around Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Vidyapeeth.

From the Utterances of Shree Shree Ma, one can gether that Bhaiji (Shree Jyotish Chandra Roy) had a desire to establish an Ashram for brahmacharis, where young boys would stay and practice brahmacharya and alongside learn other worldly subjects. But in his life time he couldn't achieve his mission. Later in the year 1941, on the auspicious occasion of Shree Shree Ma's birthday the Vidyapeeth was established in Kishenpur Ashram with a few young boys.

Bhaiji's desire was fulfilled by the efforts of his earnest devotee, the king of Solan, Durga Singhji (Yogi Bhai) and Sachida (Sachindra Nath Ghosh). Later the journey progressed and was taken ahead by many persons. In the initial period Sachida was in-charge. Then (Swami Chinmayanandaji and Swami Swarupanandaji were in-charge, but it is difficult to say who preceeded the other. During this period Vidyapeeth was shifted to Almorah. After this Kantibhai (Bhagwatananda) held the reins for a long period. But in administrating Vidyapeeth, Shaileshda's (Shivanandaji) name stands out and is remembered the most, the reason being that during this period Vidyapeeth progressed the most. Mrinmayda (Swami Chinmayananda) was with Shaileshda for some time during this period. After Mrinmayda, we two brothers joined in the month of December 1950.

In the bitter cold, the day of the young brahmacharis would start at 4/4:30 AM. After the abtutions and change of fresh clothes we used to go for the pre-dawn kirtan. Shaileshda would already be there with his harmonium and singing kirtan “Jagore Jagore Man” (Awake, awake, O mind) or “Nishabashane ke tumi asane” (At the night's end, who are you sitting in effulgence?) sometimes we also witnessed tears roll down his eyes during these kirtans. After the kirtan there would be some physical exercise for the upkeep of the body. Shaileshda would conduct the yoga and frechand excercises. Then we would proceed to the ‘Yajnasala’ for other rituals and

havan. This routine was rigorously followed after February 1952. During this period 20 young boys had their sacred thread ceremony together under the aegis of the king of Solan in the premises of his palace. After the ceremony, by the cumulative effects of the good deeds of many previous births, these young boys received their first alms from Shree Shree Ma.

The routine would start in the Yajnasala with obeisance and oblation and repetition of the Gayatri Chant and closing the ceremony with oblations. Then the young ascetics would proceed to the desks in the classrooms for various lessons. At 10 A.M. we had to go for a bath. In the meantime breakfast would be finished. We used to go down hill for the bath. It could be in a mountain stream or a pool. After that at 11:30 A.M. would start the 'Geeta' and 'Chandi' patha and some kirtan. On some occasions we used to sing kirtan from the text of the Ramayana. There used to be kirtans or singing the praises of Shree Shree Ma and the texts composed by Shankaracharya. Lunch was at 12:30 P.M. and then before the classes could start we would do odd jobs like cleaning of rice etc. On the bell for the classes all the young ascetics would queue up for the assembly and sing hymns. During this period the teachers were Shaileshda, Panuda and Swarupji. Sometimes Sukumarda and Govinda da would teach the lower classes. A period used to be for 45 minutes and signalled by a gong. The classes would alternate between Shaileshda, Panuda, Swarupji and thus we would continue till 5 P.M. in the evening. Then there used to be games or gardening. Shaileshda used to teach us gardening and growing of flowers and fruits. In games we used to play football, volleyball, tennis etc. For gardening we would be allotted separate plots of land. In my plot, I had grown potatoes. For watering the plants we used to fetch water from a stream or pool downhill by making a human chain and shifting pails of water from one person to another. Shaileshda would also join the human chain.

After having a wash, freshening up and change of clothes, we would sit for the prayers at dusk.

There used to be arati and kirtan. After the kirtan Shaileshda used to sing from the texts of Ramayana and Mahabharata, which used to enthrall us. The descriptions of Shree Rama's departure to the forests, Sita's abduction and Laxman's bravery and selfless service would move us to tears.

At times Shaileshda used to play a very old Gramophone and treat us to the songs of Mirabai, Chaitanya and others. In the meantime Shree Ma visited Almorah

— that's a different history. It was just happiness galore and due to her visits great saints and seers from all over the country would throng at the place. It would be voluminous to write all that.

Though the tenets may be the same today yet it doesn't match up to the exacting standards of our time or is it a case of glorifying one's own nostalgia ? Ma knows it all.

Jai Ma.

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LIST OF FESTIVALS

1. Shree 108 Swami Muktananda
Giriji's Sannyas Utsav — 14th April, 2015
2. Shree Shree Basanti Durga Puja — 25th March to 30th March, 2015
3. Shree Shree Annapurna Puja — 27th March, 2015
4. Akshaya Tritiya — 21st April, 2015
5. Adi Jagadguru Shree
Shankaracharya's Avirbhava Divas — 23rd April, 2015
6. Baba Bholanathji's Nirvana Tithi — 26th April, 2015
7. Buddha Purnima — 4th May, 2015
8. Janma Tithi Puja of Shree Shree Ma — 8th May, 2015
9. Shree Ganga Dushehra — 28th May, 2015
10. Gutu Purnima Mahotsav — 31st July, 2015
11. Shree Swami Muktananda Giriji's
Nirvana Tithi — 23rd July, 2015

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ASHRAM NEWS

Dear Anandaswarup Brothers and Sisters,

On 25 January 2015, Saraswati Puja was celebrated in a befitting manner in all Ashrams of the Sangha. In Varanasi Ashram the hall of Kanyapeeth was decorated with mustard yellow cloth and huge garlands of flowers. The Brahmacharinis of Kanyapeeth welcomed Shree Shree Ma Saraswati with appropriate songs and hymns. Ashrams at Agarpara, Kankhal and other places also celebrated the *pūjā* with a lot of pomp and gaudcur. After the worship the devotees were blessed by partaking of the *prasād*.

On the 17th February 2015, Mahashivaratri was celebrated in all Ashrams. The highlight was fasting of devotees throughout the day and night accompanied by singing the praise of Lord Shiva and culminating in ritualistic worship which was carried on all through the night.

At Kankhal Ashram on the 27th and 28th February 'Akhandā Ramayana Pātha' was organised and the rendition was truly a spiritually elevating event. On the same day Murghaniji of the Lokumalji family organised a feast for 108 Sadhus for the peace of the soul of her departed father. On 5th March, at Varanasi Ashram, on the full moon (Purnima) day of the festival of Holi (Dol) celebrations reached a crescendo when the devotees and specially the Brahmacharinis of Kanyapeeth played Holi with Gopalji (The childhood God form of Sri Krishna) and the little Gopal was given the full treatment of cleansing and beautifying His body and all this amidst devotional songs and hymns. The day before this the ritual of 'Chanchar Puja' was performed and was followed by the traditional lighting of the pyre of 'Holika' popularly known in Bengali tradition as "Budir Ghor Jalano" (burning the house of the old lady).

On 17th February 2015, at Vrīndāvan Ashram, on the eve of Shivaratri, the followers of 'Shree Siddheswar Shiva' performed the ritual of 'Rudra Abhishek' and special *pūjā*. From 28th February to 4th March 2015 the troupe of Sri Chandra Sharma performed the 'Rasliḷa'. On 5th March there was unceasing *kīrtan* by various devotees singing the praise of Lord Shiva, Shree Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Shree Ram, Shree Krishna and Shree Shree Ma. This was followed by a feast and cash gifts for Sadhus. On 27th March on the occasion of Ram Navami, unceasing rendition of Ram Charit Manas was done. On 28th March the celebrations followed with *pūjā*, *yajna* and partaking of *prasād* by the devotees.

From 26th to 30th March 2015 Basanti Durga Puja was celebrated in Varanasi Ashram. All the five days were days of prescribed ritualistic *pūjā*, partaking of *prasād*, *Bhandārū*, rendition of religious texts, devotional songs and *kirtan* etc. There was more of special devotional songs by artistes in the evenings. The celebrations concluded with the immersion of the idol in the holy Ganges and 'Dashami Milan'.

From 29th to 31st March, at Kankhal Ashram on the occasion of Ram Navami the famous and revered Swami Rameshwaranandaji Saraswati did the rendition of the Ramayana with interludes of discourses on the preachings of great saints, Kabir, Surdas and Tulsidas.

On the commencement of the Bengali New Year 1422 we invoke Shree Shree Ma's blessings for all Her children.

Jai Ma.

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In all forms and shapes and in the formless is only the Supreme Being — That alone is. Service performed with the conviction that one is serving Him in everyone will purify the mind and lead to the highest good. Patience is the foundation on which spiritual endeavour is based. The pilgrims on the path of the Supreme must be intent on becoming endurance personified.

—Shree Shree Ma