

MA ANANDAMAYEE
AMRIT VARTA

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

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NOTICE

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REQUEST

Efforts are being made to make the journal more attractive and interesting to preach the sayings, biography etc. of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee widely. All are requested to send their suggestion that may be complied, if considered worthy, so that we can make it more lucid and appealing for the readers belonging to every age group of modern time.

Thanking you and Jai Ma.

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MATRIVANI

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

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“One should never tell a lie. God is Truth. By speaking the truth under all circumstances a state of inegrity comes about naturally. No untruth should ever come from one’s lips. If truth is the fulcrum of one’s life all virtues will develop spontaneously.”

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“Of all creatures the human being alone has the capacity to create an atmosphere, an environment that is conducive to the revelation of Truth. With this faith one should evdeavour to adhere steadily and without wavering to the practices meant to awaken one’s true nature.”

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“Having obtained the great boon of human birth, do not waste a single moment. Plants, trees, animals and birds also live for some time and after generating other plants, trees, animals and birds of their own species, pass away. If you too live in a similar manner, what difference is there between them and yourself? Everyone should make a strenuous effort not to leave this world with a “return ticket”.

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“Worldly happiness, alternating with periodical troubles that cause much sorrow, are characteristic of the householder’s life at every step. With great patience endeavour to do your duty to the best of your ability. Always pray for God’s grace.”

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“To be born as human being is a rare boon. If inspite of having obtained this great opportunity one does not give time to the contemplation of the Beloved, one will have to ask oneself: “What have I been doing?” To neglect the contemplation of Reality means to take the road of death.

* * *

“Man experiences happiness and sorrow as a result of his past actions. He enjoys and suffers - and again new *karma* is created. In order to be liberated from all this, one must sustain the remembrance of That. Endeavour to keep your mind ever immersed in *japa, dhyana*, the thought of God - this leads to peace.”

* * *

“Truly, man is born in order to enjoy and suffer according to his destiny. So long as you have not risen beyond fate how can you possibly avoid submitting to God’s law? What you experience is precisely the result of your own actions. You have not got the capacity to judge whether the Almighty can overstep His own law or not. In God’s kingdom everything is possible. He is omnipotent. It is none of your business to question what He does for anyone. Why should He always do what pleases you? He is the Lord. What He does - whatsoever - is all of your real good : this is the attitude to be taken.”

* * *

“About health and ill-health this body does not say anything. The real, supreme and universal remedy for all ills is to abide in the constant remembrance of God. Put your whole trust in Him.”

* * *

“In wealth and property there is certainly no peace. What then does give peace? My own true nature is peace, knowledge, divine consciousness - unless and until this is realized, how can there be peace? In order to find your Self you must become revealed to yourself. How beautiful.”

* * *

“Infatuation (*moha*) causes entanglement while the love of God (*prema*) leads to Self-revelation. Having become ensnared by *moha*, weeping and regret are bound to follow.”

* * *

“In this world is there any expedient for man, save to be anchored in fortitude and forbearance? Consoling himself out of his own resources let him remain unperturbed. Everyone must try to fulfill his own duty in a spirit of dedication to the Divine. A human being should live in the contemplation of the Eternal.”

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SHREE SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE PRASANG

Vol VI

- Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

3rd *Pausha*, Saturday (19/12/1948)

I returned from the market and came to know that Shriman Bhupen had come and left information that Shri Devshankar Mitra was speaking to Shri Shri Ma in the ashram. I was asked to visit the ashram. I followed the instruction and left for the ashram immediately.

How does the *advaita tatwa* manifested?

I bowed to the feet of the Mother who was sitting in the hall of the ashram. Mother laughed and said, "We were talking of you and here you are." Shriman Bhupen told Mother, "I informed the brother in his home."

Mother: Question is raised how the *advaita tatwa* is manifested?

Myself: Shantinath Disciple of Yogirajadhiraj Shri Shri Gambhira Nathji has raised this question.

Devshankar Babu: Yes, almost.

Mother told Devshankar Babu, "Tell your opinion."

Devshankar Babu: There exists nothing like supreme law and the witness in *advaita*. It is therefore, *advaita tatwa* is described with the help of imagination which is not real.

Mother: After passing out M.A. you are now a professor. Can you open up with all the knowledge you acquired during your M.A. study? You cannot do it. Now one illiterate or even a tenth passed person asks you any question and you too reply but can that person understand on which stage you are replying to his question?

Devshankar Babu: Got you. But your example does not match with I have stated because a *nirakur* may not understand the scholars. But, *sadhaks* are aware of some

knowledge when they talk about *brahma*. In this way, the absolute (*brahmu*) came out partially.

Mother: *Brahma* does not exist between the knowledge and ignorant. Those who say having acquired the knowledge of *brahma*, do not know anything at all about *advaita*. *Sadhak* can describe different stages of *sadhana* but that does not reflect his knowledge of *brahma*. In fact, *advaita* knowledge cannot be expressed orally. *Sadhak* realises the situation as it is as it was before. For example, sun light always exists only cloud covers it and thus, the sun appears again after the cloud passes on.

Devshankar Babu: I have read in *Kathamrita* that when one comes down from..

Mother (Pointing out at her physical body): I cannot say anything with reference to *Kathamrita*. Discussion can be progressed if you do not refer to any particular person.

Devshankar Babu: It is said that experience in *Samadhi* stage can be described to some extent after it is over.

Mother: You are talking of the stage; people can say their experience of any stage they achieve. There is nothing ascending and descending in *advaita* knowledge (smiling). One who has acquired the knowledge of *advaita*, neither he pronounces anything nor do anything.

Devshankar Babu: Does the physical body exist after acquiring *advaita* knowledge?

Mother: I would say body perishes.

Devshankar Babu: But body is visible.

Mother: You people would see the body but it is not a body to the *sadhak*.

Me: *Shashtra* says *brahma* stage manifested when *sadhak* acquired the knowledge of *brahma*. When the *brahma* is known?

Mother: Acquiring the stage of *brahma* is the expression in the language. In fact, *brahma* is not known because He is self-light.

Sri Gopal Chattopadhyya arrived from Allahabad when this discussion was going on. He has come to attend the *Geeta jayanti* programme in Kashi ashram. Mother

stood up and Gopaldada offered his *shashtanga pronam* to her. She smiled and put her head on the back of Gopaldada. I returned home presuming the discussion was abandoned.

I got the information at 3 p.m. that Gopibaba came to meet with the Mother and I immediately rushed to the ashram. There was a discussion on *advaitavad*. Also, issue of *akhanda mahayoga* was raised. Gopibaba explained it briefly but very little can be understood. Gopibaba left on the onset of evening. Mother told him, "Baba, your daughter is residing here. Will you not visit here occasionally to meet her?" Gopibaba replied, "Try to visit."

5th *Pausha*, Monday (20/12/1948)

Geeeta jayanti began today. The program is organized in the hall. I reached the ashram around 10 in the morning. The hall is decorated with marigold flowers. Gopaldada was reciting the *Geeta* accompanied by his disciple while *brahmacharis* and *brahmacharinis* of the ashram too joined the recitation. Sixth chapters were finished and *kirtan* was chanted followed by the distribution of *prasada*. Narration on the *Geeta* started at 4 p.m. Gopaldada explained the circumstance under which the *Geeta* came into light.

6th *Pausha*, Tuesday (21/12/1948)

Recitation from the *Geeta* and its narration continued for the second day. I retired to the bed deciding not to visit the ashram that night while my family members left for the ashram. Sindhu, son of Manmohan came to my home informing that Mother is calling me. So, I was to visit the ashram. Mother was sitting in the hall and I bowed to her feet. Gopaldada was speaking perhaps on the current political situation. He was saying, "Present generation of our leaders seldom believe in Hindu civilisation and thus, country could hardly be benefitted by them. They mere imitate the Britishers and want to be good Britishers by avoiding their vices. Nobody can make progress by imitating others. How people be progressive if lacking own identity? These leaders also want to be secular by uniting all the religions. They are trying to appease one another, isn't it? I call you a good person and you too call me the same (audience smile). It is true that goal of all the religions is god realization yet all the religions are not the same because they are not preaching the same sermons." Gopaldada told Mother, "We expressed our views, now you tell us something else."

Mother pointing out herself said, "There is nothing else in this physical body. It's all clean."

Gopaldada: We have many things in ourselves but people still come here to take refuge to you. Why do the people come to you if you don't have anything in yourself?

Mother: They come here to attend the *Geeta jayanti* (every one smiles).

Gopaldada: Unfortunate! It is right that the people are visiting here on the occasion of the *Geeta jayanti*. However, the fact cannot be denied that you are the attraction of the ashram and I recite the *Geeta* because of this crowd.

Mother: There may be another reason that the people throng to her. You already know that a drunkard becomes joyous to visit another fellow drunkard. In the same manner, people visit me (who too have nothing in themselves).

Gopaldada: Those people don't have that sense to realise what you referred to. Instead, they come here with the expectation to get something. But they return back with empty hand.

Mother: This type of arrival is not totally fruitless.

Gopaldada: I don't mean so. It may be somewhat fruitful if someone gives a penny but it is all the way a jest if one gets one penny during visit the palace (every one laughs).

Mother addressing the disciples of Gopaldada: You must remember this view of the Baba. You should not be satisfied with one penny from the king (your *guru* in this case); you always try to extract more from him (all laugh).

One disciple: We are unable to do it.

Mother: Why you are unable? Whose fault is it - *guru* or disciples?

Disciple: It's our fault (all laugh) but why does the Mother not force us to do it?

Mother to Gopaldada: Baba! Why do you not do well to your disciples?

Gopaldada: It's not fair that you are keeping yourself aside while putting all the responsibility on me (all laugh). Here is a story. One man becomes angry with another man. He utters foul words when another person meets with him. That person says to that man, "Why do you abusing me as I have done nothing wrong to you." At this,

the former person replied, "Those words are not meant to you. I utter these words to you addressing another person." (Every one laughs). One cannot be compelled on the road to spiritualism. You take a dip into the water but it is different when you are forcibly thrown to the water. The former is called take bath while later is that of dipping into water.

Mother: Body gets wet even if thrown into the water. One must take refuge to the guru whose guidance whatever it may be bring fruitful result.

Gopaldada: It's true. Feeling of taking refuge (*sharanagati*) never brings deprivation. But, where is that real feeling or sense of taking refuge?

(to be continued)

* *

How much more do you want of earthly pleasure? Once you have a taste of that delight, you will have no more desire for worldly enjoyment. This is the actual truth. By cultivating the company of saints, sages and seekers after Truth, by attending religious gatherings, by studying books of wisdom and by similar devices, one develops a bent in that direction. Nothing will have to be given up. Only try to cling to Him desperately. What has to be relinquished will fall away of itself.

FORGET THE FORGETTING. DEATH MUST DIE.

- Sri Anandamayee Ma

When the author of these diaries, the Austrian woman known as Atmananda, died in India in 1985, her frail saffron-robed body was placed on a flower-decked funeral bier, carefully seated upright in a cross-legged yogic position, and taken in procession through the ancient pilgrimage town of Hardwar. The body was carried to the Ganges where it was ritually immersed in a special area reserved for *sanyasis*—orthodox Hindu renunciates¹. She was one of the few women and perhaps the only westerner to ever be given this honour. This book is essentially the story of how a modern western woman—a respected pianist and educator—arrived at this destination.

Atmananda's diaries are an intimate record of her spiritual odyssey in close association with several of this century's most important spiritual figures, particularly her Guru, the great Bengali mystic—Sri Anandamayee Ma. They also give a unique account of her fellow travellers, other western artists, intellectuals and spiritual seekers who, like herself, made the journey to the East in the first half of the 20th century and who were the precursors of the many young Americans and Europeans who from the late 60's on have flocked to India in search of spiritual fulfilment.

Atmananda's journey began in Vienna on June 7, 1904 where she was born into a wealthy Jewish family and given the name Blanca. Her childhood was seriously marred by the death of her mother when she was only two, shortly after the birth of her younger sister, and the two girls were raised by their grandmother and a series of tutors. Blanca's father, although often away on business, took a keen interest in his daughters' education and was determined that they should have the best of everything. Thus there was one governess who spoke only French to them until they became fluent and another who spoke only English until the same result was achieved. Upon discovering that Blanca had musical talent, a grand piano was purchased and the best teachers provided. She turned out to be something of a prodigy, giving her first acclaimed public recital at sixteen.



Ma's Tithipuja, Kankhal Ashram



Maharudra Yojna, Kankhal, Ashram



Dashashwamedh Ghat, Varanasi



Manikarnika Ghat, Varanasi

Her father encouraged Blanca's immersion in the extraordinarily rich cultural life of Vienna, then the capital of the sprawling Austro-Hungarian Empire. This was the Vienna of Freud, Mahler, Gustav Klimt and Richard Strauss, which for one giddy moment had arrived at a pinnacle of Western civilization. But all this splendor would soon come crashing down under the guns of the First World War, during which at times she, along with much of the rest of the city, would undergo near starvation conditions.

It was amidst the ruin and devastation of this period and its aftermath that the seeds of Blanca's life-long mystical quest were sown. She began reading the spiritual writings of Tolstoy, the sermons of the Buddha and Meister Eckhart, the mystic poetry of Rilke and the esoteric novels of Herman Hesse and Gustav Meyrink. Then one day, when she was sixteen while walking alone through a park pondering the senseless destruction around her, one of the defining moments of her life occurred. Suddenly, all matter—trees, rocks, the sky, water—was vibrantly alive and filled with a divine light in which there was no separation between the seer and the seen, but only an ecstatic unity which was by definition eternal love. For one timeless moment all this was overwhelmingly revealed to her and this revelation was to be the driving force of her life from then on.

She soon discovered Theosophy which gave an organizational structure and expression to her experience. Blanca immersed herself in this new religion at a time when it was at the peak of its popularity as a dynamic spiritual movement. She attended the 50th Anniversary convention at the Society's headquarters in South India in 1925 and later lived in a large Theosophical community in Holland for several years. In post World War I Vienna, not unlike America in the 1960's, the old social, moral and religious structures had been discredited and discarded and youth was a law unto itself. Many found, or thought that they had found, the answers they were seeking in the transcendent wisdom of Eastern mystical philosophy and yoga. But very few had the courage and the vision to pursue the quest as Blanca did.

Though Theosophy Blanca came under the influence of its reluctant messiah, J. Krishnamurti, and ultimately left the West for good to teach at his school in Benares. Meanwhile a fellow Austrian had come to power in Berlin who would embark on a path of destruction and hate-filled racism that would annihilate once and for all the world she had been born into, taking most of her friends and relatives with it.

In time Blanca became disillusioned with what ultimately she felt to be, for her at least, the inadequate teaching of Krishnamurti and her search took her to the ashram of the well-known South Indian sage, Ramana Maharshi. Although she found great solace with him, her destiny lay elsewhere and her quest was finally fulfilled at the feet of a divinely beautiful woman, the sublime God-intoxicated Bengali mystic worshipped throughout India by Her followers as an incarnation of the Divine Mother: Sri Anandamayee Ma. From 1945 until her death, Atmananda's life became ever more focused on her relationship with this extraordinary woman, a relationship whose sole purpose was to reveal the innermost truth of her own existence.

Shri Anandamayee Ma² (1896-1982) is one of the most outstanding religious figures of modern times and was the last great representative of the Hindu Renaissance that began with Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886). Although India has always been a land of saints, during this period leading up to her independence from Great Britain in 1947 there seemed to be an exceptional number of these great ones and Atmananda had the exceptional good fortune to have close contact with several of them.

Regarding herself, Anandamayee Ma would say that she is whatever one thinks her to be, and that her consciousness was completely merged in the Divine (*Parabrahman*)—the state of absolute non-duality—which manifests in the relative appearance of each individual as his or her *Atman*. In this sense she would sometimes say to people that she was their *Atman* and, indeed, to be in her presence was to become intensely aware of one's indwelling divinity. To have a relationship with her was to come into contact with something that is, far more so than anything else, uniquely one's own and not something outside of or separate from oneself. This cannot be expressed in words and thus it is difficult to describe her. She is not to be known so much through her words or teachings, but through personal relationship—a relationship that is fundamentally, by its essential nature, non-dual. This is the great mystery and secret of the ancient Indian Guru tradition which she embodied.

Anandamayee Ma was born in a remote village in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) on May 1st, 1896³ into a poor Brahmin family and given the name *Nirmala*—'stainless purity'. Before her birth her mother had received various signs and omens that this would be no ordinary child. From childhood on he radiated an uncanny beauty and was doted on by all the people in the village. The world she came out of was pervaded with religious devotion and worship. Her father would often go off for weeks on end

with groups of ecstatic wandering religious minstrels, while her mother remained at home performing the extensive worship of the family deities as had been done by her forbears for centuries. A special room was set aside in their simple dwelling for the images of these Gods and Goddesses and the daily routine centered around their festive worship as it did in all traditional Hindu households. Anandamayee Ma would later say of this idyllic world of her childhood that it was a place where there was perfect harmony and order where everyone, of whatever caste or religion (the village was over half Muslim), knew exactly what his or her role or '*dharma*' was, and was at complete ease with this. This was an order based on mutual respect and on a deep awareness of the fundamentally spiritual nature of life which had been defined and refined over millenniums – a world still unpolluted by the modern opium of the masses: political panaceas and mass media manipulation.

As was the custom, Nirmala's marriage was arranged when she was 13 years old, although it was several years before she actually lived with her husband who was quite a bit older than her. When they did finally set up house together in 1914 there was never any question of normal marital relations between them. Difficult as it may be for some to understand, the quality of spiritual energy which she continually radiated, automatically and quite naturally precluded the possibility of her husband having such desires.

Bholanath, as her husband was called, got far more than he bargained for with Ma and undoubtedly this was not always easy for him. Nevertheless he persevered in this most unconventional relationship and was ultimately transformed into an outstanding yogi. During this period of her life it was noted that outwardly Nirmala was a model housewife, performing all her myriad domestic duties to perfection. Inwardly, however, something quite different was going on and at times, even in the middle of her household chores, she would go into a trance-like state, sometimes becoming unconscious and having to be brought around by others. She never gave any explanation as to what was going on at these times, however, and her demeanour was always joyous and radiant. She was always perfectly obedient and did not seem to have any personal desires. She was extremely beautiful but this was a beauty—as was the case throughout her life—that transformed the mind of the beholder into the highest spiritual awareness.

After some time Nirmala and Bholanath moved to the village of Astagrama where he had found employment. Here she became the object of veneration of an 'eccentric'

local man who was both well-educated and highly religious. He was convinced that she was an incarnation of the Divine Mother. One day, when bowing before her, he spontaneously prophesied: "Now only I call you Ma; one day the whole world will do so!"¹⁴

In 1918 Bholanath found employment as an estate manager for the Nawab of Dacca in a place called Bajitpur. It is here that what is referred to as Ma's '*sadhana leela*' (the play of ascetic spiritual practices) began in earnest. Ma always emphasized that she was in a state of perfect spiritual illumination since birth, that for her there was nothing to be attained or sought after spiritually as she had always been immersed in that timeless state. Nevertheless, shortly after moving to Bajitpur, the idea occurred to her to 'assume the role of a *sadhaka*'—one who practices spiritual and yogic disciplines—although she had no training in this regard and almost no formal education. In the evening when her work was finished, she would light incense and sit quietly, repeating one of the holy names. Very soon her body would assume an advanced yogic meditation posture and she would go into a deep spiritual trance-like state. Bholanath, tired after a hard day's work, would sit on his cot, sometimes smoking his hookah, while watching her with rapt fascination until he finally fell asleep.

These states of mystic absorption began occurring with ever greater frequency and Bholanath worried about leaving Nirmala alone. The neighbours began to talk about these strange happenings and at length he consulted a renowned physician who also had some knowledge of yoga. The doctor assured him that she was in a very exalted spiritual condition.

On the full moon night of August 3, 1922, what is referred to as Ma's 'self-initiation' took place. In the evening after Bholanath had retired she sat down as usual for 'meditation' when spontaneously from deep within her an esoteric initiatory process occurred in which she experienced herself as both Guru and disciple. She then entered into *samadhi*, the state of ecstatic mystical absorption in which all duality ceases.

For the next several years her 'play' of *sadhana* continued unabated and she was often in *samadhi* for days on end—a state in which all outer signs of life such as breath and heart-beat came to a virtual standstill. She had the *darshan*, or vision, of various Divinities who would then immediately merge into her—the relative duality of worshipper and worshipped melting into absolute non-duality. Ma said regarding

this period that she fully experienced every conceivable spiritual practice—both ‘Hindu’ and otherwise and followed each one through to its completion, although this was accomplished with tremendous rapidity. Normally it would take years or lifetimes to reach the end of even one of these practices. Later in her life she said that she had never revealed even a thousandth part of what she had experienced then. “During that time her days were not divided into mornings, evenings and nights—there was only one prolonged period of indescribable bliss. Sometimes, while engaged in performing an intricate yoga *asana*, her long black tresses would get entangled with her limbs and the hair was torn out by the roots, but she had no sense of bodily pain. Hunger, thirst, sleep or other demands of the body remained in total abeyance for days.”⁵ During this period Bholanath looked after her as a father would a helpless child.

In April of 1924 Bholanath and Ma moved to Dacca, the principal city of the region and the seat of the local British administration. Here Bholanath became manager of the Nawab’s extensive estate, the Shahbag Gardens. It was at this time that Ma first became known to the world at large. Her divine ecstasies intensified at Shahbag and she emanated a spiritual radiance that others found irresistible. Those who now began coming to her came from the highest echelon of Indian society. They were doctors, lawyers, government officials and aristocrats from this relatively sophisticated modern city. They were not people of a particularly strong religious bent, many having virtually given up the old ways, but they experienced something overwhelmingly uplifting in Ma’s presence—something that ultimately was not outside of themselves but which revealed the essence of their own innermost divinity.

At first it was mainly women who came, as it would have been considered highly irregular at that time for a young married woman to even show her face to male strangers. But Bholanath felt intuitively that she was meant to be the Mother of all and was prepared to let go of strict adherence to social conventions and any feelings of personal possessiveness. In 1925 when, after she had completed a lengthy period of silence⁶, Bholanath urged her to speak to all those who had come to her, Ma warned him, “*You must think twice before you open the doors to the world in this manner. Remember that you will not be able to stem the tide when it becomes overwhelming.*”⁷

Soon the tremendous authenticity of her spirituality became so obvious to all that the conventional social considerations were abandoned and both men and women

flocked to her. It is impossible to convey here in this brief introduction the atmosphere of the magical and the miraculous which surrounded her constantly at this time. There were innumerable healings, both physical and emotional, and people discovered meaning in their lives that they had never dreamed possible. The elements of nature literally seemed to obey her and people were (and are) convinced that she was an incarnation of the Great Goddess—the Divine Mother of the universe. Some became so inspired as to renounce the world entirely and take up the intense practice of yoga and meditation. Often these were highly educated people who had to face serious social opprobrium, particularly as it was unheard of to receive such guidance from an uneducated village woman. In the not too distant future, the very greatest pundits, scholars and yogis of India would come to sit at her feet in awe, verifying that she was indeed a font, an embodiment, of the very highest wisdom as laid down in the Indian scriptures over thousands of years.

By 1926 her period of *sadhana leela* was coming to an end. No longer was she a shy village girl who kept her face covered with her sari in public; she had begun to assume the role of the great spiritual teacher she obviously was. Nevertheless her *bhavas* (states of spiritual ecstasy in which her body would exhibit various supernatural signs and movements) continued during *kirtans*⁸ and at other times. Her devotees continued to increase and they made an ashram for her at Dacca. She refused to allow herself to be chained by her followers, however, and began to go on pilgrimage all over India.

At times, in order to escape the increasing throngs who wanted to possess her, she would quietly announce that she was leaving immediately, often in the middle of the night, much to the complete dismay of those who felt that their lives depended on her. She would not give any indication of where she was going or when, if ever, she might return; but proceeding directly to the train station, sometimes taking only one person with her (who had been given only a moment's notice and who was often not allowed to bring any money or belongings with him), she would board the first available train, completely oblivious as to where it was going. Once inside, she would sink into *Samadhi* as the train flew across India.

Gradually through the course of her almost ceaseless peregrinations she acquired large numbers of devotees throughout India. Kings, prime ministers, generals, scholars and saints bowed down before her. But however much worldly power a person might wield, when they were before Ma they were stripped naked as before God—their

innermost Self—and it was always an awesome experience. In her presence one saw clearly that the primary purpose of life is spiritual and that the full recognition and understanding of this Reality is the sole reason of our existence. Before such overwhelming spiritual truth, the grandiose, competitive designs of the ego which are the source of our pain-filled sense of separation, dissolve.

Ultimately ashrams were built and an organization formed. Ma, herself, tried to remain aloof from all this, but in any case, in time, things became more structured. She, however, always remained as she had ever been—completely untrammelled and free. By the time Atmananda began to get close to her in 1945, Anandamayee Ma had become one of the best known spiritual figures in India.⁹

1. *Sanyasis* are the only Hindus who are not cremated as they are considered to have died to the world while still alive and are thus free of karmic defilements. So there is no danger of the soul lingering near the body after death. The gradual reintegration of such a purified body into the elements is considered auspicious.
2. 'Sri' or 'Shree' is a respectful title, 'Anandamayee' means permeated with bliss and 'Ma' is Mother. The name may be written with the word 'Ma' placed either before or after 'Anandamayee'. Her followers more often refer to her affectionately as 'Ma' or 'Mother'.
3. Hindus are not as concerned with the solar birth date, which is not considered astrologically significant, as with the lunar date, which varies from year to year. In Anandamayee Ma's case this normally falls in the month of May.
4. From *The Life of Sri Anandamayee Ma*, Bithika Mukerji, p.18.
5. *Ibid*, Bithika Mukerji, p.27.
6. This lasted for 3 years and was only rarely broken for some important reason.
7. *Life and Teaching of Sri Anandamayee Ma*. A. Lipski. p.15
8. Group devotional singing.
9. Information on the life of Anandamayee Ma is scattered throughout the diaries. Important incidents from Her early life can be found particularly in Chapter 23. See also entry for 18th Feb., 1955.

SVAKRIYA SVARASAMRITA

Vol V

(Continued)

To ensure that the shreds of the broken bulb do not hurt anybody, someone may rather carefully collect and deposit them all at a place where no one steps upon them.

Consider this aspect as well : where there is no question of movement non-movement, action non-action, it is the *One Brahman* without a second. Where do you keep (the shreds of the broken bulb)? On the earth only (the Bengali for earth is *Mati*) which when broken up as *Ma-ti* is 'the Mother' alone. (Again, you also say the word *Atma* (in which too is Ma, i.e., the Mother). So, Ma being common, *Mati* stands for *Atma* and *Atma* is one with *Paramatman*). Now understand as to where *Paramatman, Parabrahman* is. Where there is no question of creation, preservation and dissolution, then from where (can the question arise) of birth or death pertaining to worldly life? Past, present, future—where can there be the cycle of time? Also, the state, which is particularly regarded as that of *Mahakal*, is a subject to be enquired into. The aspect of what is unknowable is also to be understood through self-deliberation. *Asparsa Yoga*, as you say, surely pertains to *Aspanda*. All, negation of all, beyond not beyond—where it is, how can it be described? (It would have been possible to describe it) if it could be expressed through *bhasha*¹ (language). When expressed it is language and that is bondage (as an expression by language is in duality).

Noticing all this peculiar behavior of Ma, Bholanath perhaps told Ashu's mother, the wife of his elder brother, who had negotiated the marriage of the former. "*Bau Thakurani* (address with respect to the wife of elder brother), what a strange type of bride you have brought home!" He said something else too, known to them only.

MA UNCONCERNED WITH WORLDLY WAYS OF CONTROLLING HUSBAND

Bholanath did not often stay long with his brother, as the former was without any job and was looking for one. His third sister's husband was employed in Dacca

and Bholanath went to his house. The sister kept him with her for a long time with love. As Bholanath was continuing his stay there for a long period, Ashu's mother one day called Ma and said, "Look Nirmala, I want to tell you something, listen." When Ma came near her, she said, "How strange you are that you cannot win over your husband; he does not even come here! What sort of a woman you are, unconcerned—a woman hard to account for, indeed! Bring a piece of paper and a pen—here they are. Write a letter. I shall tell you what to write.

Now Ma did not know how to write a letter at all. After marriage, Ma had been taken from Sripur to Kheora, and then Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya Mahasaya had escorted Ma back to Sripur. When returning (to Kheora), at that time, he had told Ma, "Nirmala, here is a piece of paper. After I reach Kheora, you write on a separate piece of paper whatever is written here and send it to me. This is the customary way of writing a letter. If you feel like writing something else too, do write." Ma enquired, "How soon should I write?" After (knowing that and) calculating the time accordingly, Ma copied verbatim what he had written and asked someone to post the letter. Words spelt rightly or wrongly, whatever it was, this was how a process of some sort began of Ma's writing letters. The language of the letter was like this : 'Hope you reached safely. Are you keeping good health? I am having a peculiar feeling since your departure and nothing at all seems enjoyable. When will you come again? etc.,' —the contents were all of this type.

As for the letter which Ashu's mother had asked Ma to write, Ma wrote whatever She could. Ashu's mother then read it, and after making necessary amendments, posted the letter (to Bholanath). Since Bholanath had stayed long at his sister's house, many of them who were of the same age group there had become like friends of Bholanath. So when that letter reached the house of Bholanath's sister, there was a scramble for it. The letter was snatched and opened, and then, in the midst of all, there followed at once riotous amusement with hearty banter. This was just about all regarding Ma's reading and writing. Bholanath's sister took that letter from Bholanath and later, at some other time, gave it to Ma and said, "Here it is, take it! What a scene was enacted— an awkward situation for (poor) Ramiani (Bholanath), because of this letter! Ma tore up the letter, threw it away and said, "All that was written according to the dictation of Ashu's mother." However, after the death of Revati Babu, when Ma had come from Atpara to Vidyakut where She stayed definitely for more than a year, whenever Bholanath, who was then at Ashtagram, his new place of employment,

would write to Ma from there on any particular issue. She would also write back in reply about those significant points.

A year later, Ma went (from Sripur) to Kheora, and after staying there for sometime, She was escorted back to Sripur. At Sripur, Revati Babu's illness aggravated, so he returned to Atpara taking Ma and others in his company. He recovered through Ayurvedic treatment and came back to Sripur, his place of employment, and resumed his duties. At that time, Shriyukt Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya Mahasaya took Ma back to Kheora from Atpara. She lived with Her parents at Kheora for sometime. Meanwhile, Revati Babu was transferred to Narundi Railway Station. Shriyukt Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya Mahasaya too wound up his settlement at Kheora and taking Ma and all others along with him came to live at Vidyakut. Later, Ma came to Narundi from Vidyakut.

When Ma was first taken to Narundi, the family of the Assistant Station Master there had not arrived till then, and, therefore, it was arranged that he take both his meals at the house of the Station Master Revati Babu. Ma was very young then. She cooked and Ashu's mother served the Assistant Station Master both the times. (But) he could not join others (at mealtime), because of his duties which kept him busy till odd hours. He came late at night as well as during the day to take his meals. Ma used to neatly preserve his food and keep it warm, as She would have done for others. Later, Ashu's mother felt it troublesome to serve him food both the times because of late hours and told Ma, "You serve him both the times with the veil on." The purdah system was, then, prevalent in villages and young women could not appear in front of others. But for Ma, obeying instructions was the rule, and so She did just that.

At that time, Ma did not have any stitched apparel like a bodice or chemise but wore only a sari. The way She draped Herself was so beautiful that one could see only Her hands and feet. Due, possibly, to excessive work, Her sari became unserviceable in a somewhat short period. That was the reason why, a little before leaving Narundi, Ma was gradually provided with such a coarse sari that it was perhaps almost like fine gunny. Wearing that only, Ma did Her work of cooking, etc., in the heat of summer with a smiling face. Noticing this, a feeling of sympathy arose in others and they commented, "What a pity that such a young bride with so tender a body has to wear a sari so coarse and in this heat. And again, look, what a smile is there on Her face, as though She is devoid of any sensation—does not feel anything at all!"

When serving food to the Assistant Station Master, Ma would offer it with a veil on and in a large plate with rice and the different other articles well arranged on it. A little later, thinking that a second helping may perhaps be needed, She would again take and offer all the dishes in a large plate. He would take whatever he liked or tell Ma that he did not need anything more. Ma would, then, go back, finishing Her serving in these two rounds only. She served in this fashion so that She may not have to go (in his presence) time and again.

We have already mentioned that the Assistant Station Master would come very late at night after finishing his duty. Who should open the door at such a late hour (was the question)? Ashu's second brother, about five to seven years of age, was made to sleep with Ma, so that She may not have to be all alone in the room. She would wake up the boy, unbolt the door and ask him to hold it on and open it only after Her going away to the kitchen. He would just do that. The boy would be drowsy, being a child, and would return to sleep. Ma had been instructed to serve and, therefore, She would go, with the veil on, in the presence of the gentleman only when food was served. Ma had made this arrangement for only this reason that there may be no meeting on any other occasion.

* *

God apportions man's lot; He is not only the maker of fate. He Himself is also fate - remember this. What is called destiny is HIS decree - here rules and regulations do exist. World (*jagat*) means that which moves and individual (*jiva*) that which is in bondage. In this state fate and restraint, rules and regulations, activity, are in force. As ordained by the Great Mother, whatever be the result of any action, that She will bestow without fail.

MA IN SATSANGA¹

Anil C. Ganguli

Introduction

Sat means “being”; “existence”; “essence”; “truth”. *Sat* also means “good” and “*sanga*” means “fellowship” or “association”. In ordinary parlance, *satsanga* means being in good or holy company. Ma says that *satsanga* is an association which prepares one for realization of *sat*, the One Being which has no beginning, no end, no change, the Being that remains the same at all times, in all places and under all circumstances. In an applied sense, the word *satsanga* signifies a religious congregation, an assembly providing a forum for discourses on religious and spiritual subjects and *kirtan* (chanting or singing hymns and names of God).

Ma, fountain of inspiration

Satsanga, in the applied sense mentioned above, is an essential part of life in Sri Sri Anandamayi Ashram. It includes an elaborate programme of recitation of select portions from the *Srimad Bhagavat Gita*, the *Srimad Bhagavat* and *Upanishads*, besides *kirtan* and talks on spiritual and religious subjects. If Ma happens to be present, She sometimes sings and answers questions from the audience.

Ma in satsasnga is an unfailing source of inspiration to those who seek it. She awakens aspiration for God-realization which She equates with Self-realization, that is to say, knowing “Who am I?” She showers love, peace and joy on all. She wants nothing in return from anybody. If she asks (or rather, “begs” as She puts it) for anything at all, it is that we should think of God and chant His Name. Her teaching is :-

“Bear in mind that God’s Name is He Himself in one form; let it be your inseparable companion. Try your utmost never to remain without Him. The more intense and continuous your efforts to dwell in His Presence, the greater the likelihood of your growing joyful and serene. When your mind becomes vacant, endeavour to fill it with the awareness of God and His contemplation.”

The benign effect of chanting God's Name has been described by Ma as follows:-

“As you chant the divine Name or *mantra*, your mind is gradually purified; love and reverence for the Supreme Being awaken and your thoughts become subtle and refined. Then glimpses of higher places of existence begin to dawn upon you and work for your uplift.”

Let us have some glimpses of Ma in *satsanga*. To start with, Ma in the role of a singer, surrounded by a group of talented musicians, including some of all-India repute. Occasionally she leads the *kirtan* and others follow Her in chorus. Ma has never had any technical training in music. Renowned musicians, however, unequivocally confirm that her melodious voice is matchless and perfect in its rhythmic movement. Lay listeners feel that her singing not only pleases the ears but also infuses something mysteriously thrilling into one's inner self. Ma sings spontaneously. The verve and vigour and the cadence of Her music are ecstatic. The modulations of Her voice vibrate in the heart of the listener and purify his mind. She gives to almost each word of Her songs a different inflection and each inflection has a special appeal. The emphasis repeatedly put by Ma on a particular word or syllable acts as a key to the understanding of its inner meaning. With Her eyes half closed and Her tiny palms gracefully folded, She keeps on singing and then a wave of *ananda* sweeps over the ashram and floods the sky above. It lingers even after the sound of the music has faded away. “Her singing”, remarked Arnaud Desjardins of Paris, “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.”

If one's heart is receptive, language is no bar to the appreciation of Ma's singing. Its echo reverberates with a message that can be felt but cannot be expressed.

Ananda is showered by Ma not only through songs but also through silence which can, in a receptive mind, be even more effective and soul-stirring. Silence is an important item of *satsanga* in the ashram. During specified periods, every day every participant is supposed to sit still in one posture, with the mind concentrated on the goal. This discipline is an extremely difficult exercise. The presence of Ma, however, makes it easier for those who make an honest effort. Subtle vibrations emanating from Ma purify the atmosphere and create in a participant's mind a sense

of peace and beatitude if he is earnest. It is not the peace of mere quiescence but a peace pulsating with life and generating self-confidence, determination and buoyant optimism.

By far the most interesting feature of *satsanga* is what is known as *matri satsanga* (*satsanga* at the feet of the Mother). It provides the much coveted opportunity of informal conversation with Ma when She is usually in a communicative mood. *Matri satsanga* is free from the restraint generally inspired by Ma's imposing presence as also from the rigid conventions and rituals that mark ashram life as a rule. Ma is a 'fantastic' conversationalist. If she is in a mood to be serious, She keeps the audience spell-bound and there prevails complete silence. If, however, She chooses to be in a lighter vein, She can raise an uproar of laughter from the entire congregation in response to her keen wit and exquisite humour. During *matri satsanga* Ma is usually very patient and indulgent and more motherly than any human mother can possibly be. She then gives Her 'children' almost unrestrained liberty and sympathetically attends to questions ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Thus, followers of different faiths and sects seek Ma's guidance in *sadhana* from a practical point of view; learned scholars want clarification of intricate points of philosophy and metaphysics, with an academic approach; sometimes pretenders venture to propound empty theories with an air of importance, presumably out of sheer bravado. Again, common men of the world feel relief in placing their personal and domestic problems before Ma, whereas fastidious cynics recklessly condemn God and expect Ma to answer for His 'failings'. Thus, the questions cover a large canvas and are of varying interest and value. In the homely atmosphere of *matri satsanga*, Ma generally accepts for solution all bonafide questions, relevant or otherwise, however silly or supercilious, impertinent or irritating.

Ma's answers are as varied as the questions. They are enlivening, scintillating and inspiring. The wonder of wonders is that every question, however difficult, is disposed of without a moment's reflection. Every questioner gets the answer he 'deserves'. Every answer is on the mental level of the particular enquirer, has reference to his peculiar point of view and corresponds to his own power of understanding. Evidently, most of the questioners receive answers to their satisfaction and long for *darshana* again and again. No person with a genuine problem has ever returned disappointed. Even if somebody is hesitant or too shy to speak and conscious of being observed by others, his query is often solved in a mysterious manner. Thus, to

his surprise, Ma of Her own accord sometimes broaches the particular subject and incidentally clarifies the point involved. Again, one often finds that somebody else has asked the very question over which one had been worrying. Thereupon, Ma gives a reply which, incidentally, solves the particular problem. Then follows Ma's penetrating gaze at the person whose question was answered before he opened his mouth, accompanied by Her significant smile. Is this just coincidence? May be. But then such coincidences are quite frequent.

In *matri-satsanga* questions relating to worldly affairs are not generally encouraged and those on politics and personalities are nipped in the bud whereas queries on spiritual subjects are always warmly received and sometimes discussed at length. Occasionally Ma requests saints who are present to discuss controversial points in the light of the scriptures. They try their best. But the 'best' of the *Vedanists* following the path of knowledge often happens to be in conflict with the 'best' of the orthodox *Vaishnava*, a votary of the path of devotion. Not unoften barren debate goes on for some time and then the experts jointly implore Ma to say the last word on the subject and thus to clinch further argument. Ma smilingly sums up the principle in a few short, simple sentences. Invariably She throws a flood of light which satisfies each of the contending parties and illuminates the whole audience. And then the tension is relieved and everybody is all smiles.

Swadhyaya (study of scriptures)

One of the principal objects of *satsanga* is to spread the knowledge of sacred books. Ma strongly recommends *swadhyaya* (study of scriptures) and inspires opportunities for discourses thereon. At the same time She maintains that *swadhyaya* is not enough by itself. In fact, She sounds a note of warning against depending exclusively on mere book-learning. "There are", She observes, "more things to be seen on the road than what is listed in the Railway Time Table which only given limited items of information; but when travelling by train, one notices so many things to be seen and known along the way. Can the railway guide mention every detail? In a similar manner, can you expect all things to be written down in religious texts? Those who devoutly follow the path pointed out in the canonical books eventually realise that Truth lies beyond what is written there. There are so many things to explore! What precious little can be written in the sacred texts? Men of realisation experience much more than that. Still, you are to be guided at the beginning by what is recommended in the sacred books, just as you have to follow the time-table on a

railway journey. But what is discussed in sacred books suggests infinite possibilities underlying. The study and assimilation of sacred texts are useful so long as you have not found your path of life. Once you have started on the right path and commenced your destined work, no more reading of books is called for. Looking into the Railway Time-table and after proper enquiry, when you are satisfied that this is the train for Dehradun, and you purchase your ticket and take your seat, there is no need for further Information—the train will take you to Dehradun.”

Ma's method of teaching by illustrations and parables is very effective. The homely illustration of the Railway Time Table mentioned above speaks more eloquently than volumes of sermons on abstract ideas. The upshot of Ma's teaching is that personal experience is more important in the spiritual sphere than the study of scriptures. Real religion, She says, does not consist merely in intellectual conformity nor in ceremonial piety. According to Her, religion is really a spiritual adventure of a highly practical nature and it is for the brave traveller to undertake the journey in right earnest along some path out of many prescribed in the scriptures, each leading to the goal. Light on one's spiritual path will, She asserts, come in the fullness of time, if one has faith and determination, optimism and indomitable perseverance - a going on till success is achieved.

Spirituality

A few introductory words may prove useful to a participant in *satsanga* not familiar with Hindu thought. Spirituality is of a man's life, not a thing apart—Spirit covers his whole existence. His home, his office, the place where he carries on business or profession or works for gain can at best be the “workshop” for a man's mind; not the home for his Spirit. The home—rather the temple—where man's Spirit is installed is in his heart. Now, what is that Spirit? Certainly not man's body bearing a specific name and identified with reference to his parents, his age, occupation, residence, etc. His Spirit is no other than the One Supreme Spirit—The Ultimate Truth—called by various names such as *Brahman*, *Ishwara* etc. In the *Gita* Lord Krishna told Arjuna, “*Ishwara* abides in the hearts of all beings”.

Brahman, Being infinite cannot be defined by words. It has no beginning, no end, no change, no form. *Brahman* cannot be perceived by the senses; neither can the mind comprehend it. *Brahman* has no past, no future, no dimensions. These conceptions are all in the context of time and space. *Brahman* is beyond both. Again,

It is static as well as dynamic, yet above both. Though unseen and impersonal, *Brahman* is all-pervasive. Its presence is thus announced: "It is *Brahman* that is below and above, that is to the west and to the east, to the south and to the north. *Brahman*, indeed, is this whole universe", AND "All this is based upon Spirit; Spirit is the foundation of the Universe, Spirit is *Brahman*".

Absolute *Brahman* is too deep, too subtle and abstruse for the common man. To the seers of ancient India *Brahman* was also revealed as qualified or conditioned *Brahman*, known as *Isha* or *Ishwara* who is the personified form of the Absolute *Brahman*. "By Him is enveloped everything that exists in this world constantly in motion." The pronoun for *Brahman* is "It", that for *Ishwara* is "He".

Ishwara is manifested in different forms such as the God of Creation, the God of Preservation and the God of Destruction; also as *Sakti*, the Divine Mother.

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Truly, man is born in order to enjoy and suffer according to his destiny. So long as you have not risen beyond fate how can you possibly avoid submitting to God's law? What you experience is precisely the result of your own actions. You have not got the capacity to judge whether the Almighty can overstep His own law or not. In God's kingdom everything is possible. He is omnipotent. It is none of your business to question what He does for anyone. Why should He always do what pleases you? He is the Lord. What He does - whatsoever - is all of your real good : this is the attitude to be taken.

PADAPEETHAM SMARAMI

- Br. Geeta

Old Ramna Ashram (Dhaka, Bangladesh)

Methodically beginning of puja, bhog etc.

Shashtriya rituals like *puja*, offering of *bhog* were first started with fidelity and precision in the Ramna ashram of Sri Sri Ma. The ashram laws too were introduced here in this ashram for the first time and all other ashrams are following these laws at present.

Beginning of Usha-Kirtan and Sandhya-Kirtan

Ramna Ashram is the holy place where veteran Bhaiji conceived the evening vesper "Jai Hriday Vasini". Also, morning *kirtan*, evening vesper, women-*kirtan* and religious congregation (*satsang*) started first in the Ramna ashram.

Sri Sri Mai lives in the idol of Mother Annapurna

Devotees of Dhaka were restless when Sri Sri Ma left Dhaka. Particularly sad were the female devotees who were very close to Sri Sri Ma. They all went to the old yogi Sri Ramthakur and expressed their urged, "Thakur! Anandamayee Ma who captured our heart left this place. We were involved in the ocean of happiness and bliss in her presence but now we fail to concentrate to our daily chore in her absence. What should we do now?"

Sri Ramthakur said, "Sri Sri Ma installed the idol of mother Annapurna here and by doing this she established herself here forever only for you devotees. Sri Ma established herself in this ashram in the form of mother Annapurna and you must feel her presence in this idol." It was a tradition in Ramna ashram that puja was performed of mother Annapurna in the name of Ma Anandamayee on her birth anniversary in her absence and this very tradition is still followed by performing *shorashopachar puja* on her *janmatithi*.

Arrival of Mother Annapurna in Varanasi ashram

Dhaka was under great turbulence in 1947 and the situation was so grave that idol of goddess Annapurna was moved to Varanasi ashram.

Installation of idol of Baba Bholanath

Idol of Baba Bholanath was installed in Ramna ashram in 1945 in the presence of Sri Sri Ma and this idol was later moved to Agarpara ashram in Kolkata.

Destruction of Ramna ashram

This ashram is not present in its absolute form today yet its original root can be felt in abstract form in every ashram. This ashram was grazed to the ground during 1971 freedom movement of Banagladesh. Nevertheless, this incident might have been a divine display of the Mother. Her *leela* (divine display) is very little to understand. Memorable are her words about this ashram, "There are numerous rituals (*yajna* etc.) held in this ashram, therefore, nothing in this soil is unholy. Many *mahatmas* performed *sadhana* (adoration) here in the past and this ashram came into being following their spiritual accomplishments."

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Only by taking refuge in HIs can sorrow be removed. The troubles and difficulties one encounters as the fruit of one's own actions are but the grace of God. If one can accept them as such, one will progress towards one's real welfare.

Children's Page

UNDER THE REFUGE OF TRUTH

There was a thief whose main work was theft. He had a full family of parents, wife and kids whose take care was his prime responsibility. Being an illiterate he could not do any other work for his livelihood and was compelled to adopt the stealing as his profession.

One day he was thinking about his own life and found that he did nothing good in his life except theft. This made him scared of his condition after his death. Fear of hell and the punishment of the *Yamraj* (god of death) for his vices continued to tease him and he could not think any more.

He met a saint the next day as he the saint was able to wipe out the sins of the sinners with his grace. He touched the feet of the saint and urged him to save him and be graceful to him.

He was a great saint and he immediately understood the situation. He asked, "Will you take initiation? You will have to obey my words once you are initiated. Are you able to do what I ask you?"

The man leaped to joy as he was scared already of his sins. He immediately replied back, "Will surely obey you."

He was initiated by the saint who told him, "You will not tell lie anymore and will not involve yourself in theft. Be careful! You already promised that you will obey my words." The thief agreed with the words of his *guru* and bowed down to him and returned home.

Members of his family became panic when the thief was late. He was particular to return home during lunch time after completing his stealing. But, he was late today. His parents were crying loudly thinking that their son was captured by the police while stealing and he would be hanged. They were inconsolable.

Meanwhile, the thief entered the house and faced a series of questions by his parents, wife and even by his children. They wanted to know how he was pick-

pocketing and captured by the police. He was frustrated by all those queries which were asked by daily by his family members. He proudly would give all the replies but he was silent today because the situation was completely different.

His family members became surprised and were unable to understand what happened. Their surprise became manifold when they found the thief remained inside home during the period when he was usually out for the theft. He did not even speak unnecessarily and his attitude and behavior were changed.

A thief has now become a *sadhu*. But, the family started facing a problem. Poverty and hunger surrounded the family which was run with the stolen goods and money. Now, the family was in starvation because the thief stopped stealing. First few days somehow passed away but situation becoming grim with every passing day.

On the other hand, the saint thought to find out what the thief was doing after his initiation. He himself reached his home when the thief did not visit his guru. He bowed down before his guru and offered him seat. Issue of food was raised in the course of conversation and the thief told the truth as he had promised not to tell the lie. The saint too observed the pathetic condition of the family members. He ordered to the thief, "Alright. You can re-start your stealing to feed your family. However, remember not to speak lie at any cost." The thief obeyed his guru and started his original profession of theft but he did not tell lie.

The thief went to the palace after some time. He entered into the bed room of the king straight away and targeted the cash box and started to snatch the bags of gold coin. There was some noise and the king was awakened. He noticed one man was taking away the bags of gold coin from the cash box.

The king looked worried thinking the man could attack him and even kill him if he resisted. He then used his sense. He disrobed himself from his royal apparel and covered himself with old cloths collected in bundle in the beneath of his bed. He gradually stepped up and stood at the door. The thief was not aware of these activities as he was busy in stealing.

After completing his theft he moved to the door and found a man standing there. The thief became nervous while the king thought the thief was now to take out his weapons to attack him. The king asked, "Brother! Who are you? I am here for theft. Are you too the same?"

The thief felt somehow relieved and he told the king, "Brother! Why are you standing at the door? Come in." The king came inside and stood by the side of thief. He told that he never commit any theft before. "I, therefore, don't know how it is to be done. You will show me the technique and also give some share out of the articles already stolen by you," said the king.

The thief thought he must agree with the king (he called him as novice) otherwise he would make noise. He told the king, "Alright. I will give you one-fourth of the share to you. Now, you go to the entrance and keep watching indicating me if there is anybody." The king continued guarding the door. The thief brought more gold coins and gave away one-fourth of it to the king as promised and ran away from there.

It was not easy to move inside the palace. A guard noticed the thief and caught him with the stolen goods. He was put into the jail.

The king was on his throne the next day and the thief was taken to the court hand-cuffed along with the bags of gold coins. The king was aware of last night incident yet he started his work as if he did not know anything.

The king asked, "Have you committed the theft?" Obeying his guru, the thief admitted his crime. The king wanted to know what articles he stole. The thief disclosed the numbers of the gold coins as he already had counted. The king ordered for the counting and it was found the none-fourth number was missing. The king asked where the rest of the coins were. The thief told he gave away the one-fourth to the man standing at the door. That bag was also brought and it was found that the thief was correct in his words. He did not tell a lie.

The king was puzzled. He thought a thief always hide the truth for self-defense. But this thief told the truth. There must be something mysterious.

The king then told the thief, "Theft is the right of a thief. You could have taken away the whole coins. Why did you give a portion of your theft to that man standing at the door?"

The thief said, "I promised to him. I cannot tell lie." The king became much more surprised and asked the reasons of not telling lie. The thief replied, "O Lord! Undoubtedly I'm a thief but my guru strictly asked me not to tell a lie. My family was on the verge of starvation. Seeing the plight my guru permitted to commit theft

on the ground that I should always be on the path of truth. Thus, I spoke the truth and kindly believe my words." The king himself was the witness of the whole incident. He remained moved on the truthfulness and thief's allegiance to his guru.

Duties of the king are to protect the truth and justice as well as his subjects. He ordered to remove the handcuff of the thief. Holding the hands of the thief, the king said, "I have taken the responsibility of your family right now and you do not commit theft anymore." The thief politely accepted the king's order. He would pass his rest of life like a *sadhu* since then.

This is an example how life becomes easily peaceful and happy if one sticks to the truth.

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List of Festivals

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|---|--|
| 1. Guru Purnima | 27th July, 2018 |
| 2. Sri 108 Swami Muktananda Giriji's Nirvan Tithi
Shravan Shukla Saptami | 17th August, 2018 |
| 3. Jhoolan Mahotsav | 21st - 26th August 2018 |
| 4. Nirvan Tithi of Bhairji (Swami Mavnananda Parvatji)
Jhoolan Dwadashi | 23rd, August, 2018 |
| 5. Rakhi Purnima | 26th August, 2018 |
| 6. Sri Krishna Janmashtami | 2nd September, 2018 |
| 7. Srimad Bhagwat Saptah Mahaparayana | 17th September
24th September, 2018 |
| 8. Respected Gurupriya Didi's Nirvan Tithi
Lalita Saptami | 16th September, 2018 |
| 9. Sri Sri Sharadiya Durga Puja | 15th October - 19th
October 2018 |
| 10. Sri Sri Lakshmi Puja | 24th October 2018 |
| 11. Sri Sri Kali Puja | 6th November 2018 |
| 12. Annakut | 8th November 2018 |

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BODH GAYA

The Place Where Buddha Attained Buddhahood

- Melita Maschmann

(Continued)

I am restless after my return from Bodh Gaya: I would like to meet the *Tantra-Lama*, the husband of my Tibetan friend. I know that he has to be in Rajgir to make a pilgrimage to the holy places where Buddha had exerted his influence.

My destiny leads me there. While climbing the mountain over the hot springs, I saw a Tibetan nun standing under a tree feeding peanuts to shrieking monkeys. Later I had to search for her for a long time, as on reaching the spot, the landscape had swallowed her up. I finally found a gate in a rock and a small yard. The nun stood there in front of an open fire. If I hadn't heard her talking to the monkeys, I would never have known whether I was standing before a man or a woman. While stirring a thick yellow porridge over the fire, she turned her round cropped head to me and looked with a searching gaze from her narrow Mongolian eyes.

"Is the *Tantra-Lama* here?" I asked her. She nodded and went into another yard. She stood before a door, pointed to the place and said beaming, "*Tantra-Lama*."

As I entered the semi-darkness, I fumbled my way around. The only source of light was a hatch-like window in the external wall that was on the other side. A royal figure sat on a "bed" that was hewn in the rock: a tall, broad-shouldered man, clothed in a yellow, silk waistcoat which was lined with fur, a red scarf, tucked into the neck. He turned his beautiful head with dignity to me. His wavy, silvery hair was flowing over his shoulders. Really, the fairytale king of my childhood dream smiled at me and bade me a gracious welcome! After I had bowed to him, he also bowed and offered me a place on a carpet with an inviting gesture. While I was sitting down, he seemed to have forgotten me. Later I realized that the Lama does not speak either Hindi or English, so he could not do anything more sensible than to immerse himself again in his book and leave me to my contemplation.



Ma's Tithipuja Agarpara Ashram



Ma's Tithipuja, Varanasi



Ma's Room, Dehradun Ashram

I looked around at the place which resembled a cave rather than a room. Two iron boxes were kept on the right of the Lama's bed and they were covered with a carpet. On this provisional table stood a round tea cup of wood decorated with inlaid work, a hand-bell, like the one in a Tibetan temple, a small double-drum (it is called *damaru* and serves to drive away demons) and a kitchen alarm clock.

Where I sat down was obviously a sleeping place. It was upholstered with carpets and furs. A niche was carved in the wall behind the Lama where he kept his books.

The Lama sat cross-legged on his bed. A soft carpet covered his knees. His white hands lay on his lap. He was holding a book in them. Its pages are not turned from side to side, but from bottom to top. The Lama's hands are surprisingly long, powerful, but not plump. On his left hand he wears a gold-ring with a dull pearl of the size of a hazelnut. His nails extend beyond the finger-tips by more than a centimeter. The skin of his face is darker than that of his hands; it is of a bright gold-brown hue. It is fairly broad with a lofty forehead; cheekbones are not prominent; his nose is powerful and straight; mouth and chin rather delicate and the eyes are slightly Mongolian and so filled with light that I remember them as shining blue.

The expression on his face which I study often during the next days is what I was reminded of the kings in the fairytales of my childhood, when I first saw him. He has: cheerfulness, wisdom, patience, goodness, coupled with a powerful manliness residing in itself.

The nun brings for her master a fresh cup of tea. With the movement of his hand, he asks her to bring for me a cup too. On this occasion, I hear her address the Lama as "Rimpoche" (preciousness), and I make immediate use of this form.

After I have drunk my Tibetan tea (it tastes like sloppy bouillon) and sat quietly on my carpet for a while, and *Rimpoche* continues to read his book in gentle murmur, I bow to him and go to the *ashrama*.

I repeat these visits twice daily from now on. When I enter, *Rimpoche* laughs and nods at me, clasps both his hands, calls the nun so that she brings tea, says something which sounds friendly and soon immerses himself in his book. Sometimes he stops and prays gently. Yesterday morning he called me to his bed, and while he continued to pray, he took out a tin-box from the heap of books behind him and poured sugar candy into my hands. Sometimes a Tibetan monk sits on a small carpet which is opposite to the bed, and prays for a while turning his prayer-mill.

A group of Buddhist pilgrims from Bhutan, three young men with their wives, came last night. Powerful, cheerful people in their colourful clothes, with attentive and intelligent faces. Each one of them knelt-thrice in front of the Lama, then sat on a carpet and started a conversation which was often interrupted by laughter. Only the young people talked loudly. I never heard *Rimpoche* speak other than in a low tone, almost whispering in a thoughtful manner. His deep, gentle voice is pleasant and radiates peace.

When I came to the Lama this morning, I hardly believed my eyes: his wife, my friend from Bodh Gaya, was sitting where I usually sit. We greeted each other ardently.

I discover now her name: Lamo! In the twinkling of an eye, she shows that the pilgrim's refuge has now a housewife. She spreads a thin carpet on the floor, fills a women dish with dry dates and puts a box of roasted rice from Bhutan in front of me. Then she offers me the sugar candy in a silver-box. Later the nun gets us butter-tea.

In the meanwhile, Lamo holds both my hands, keeps hers next to mine and is happy to know that all four hands have the same hue. *Rimpoche* is informed about this and he nods approvingly, but the expression on his face reveals that his thoughts are far away.

The palm of my hand seems to fascinate Lamo. She looks at it for a long time and opens her left palm to compare it. Finally, she fetches her glasses and searches in a wooden box and finds a book that is wrapped in a yellow cloth. Later an Indian arrives who knows both Tibetan and English. He explains that it is a "textbook of divination". Less educated people call it "book of magic", and it contains texts and sketches about the magic wisdom of the Tibetan *tantras*. Lamo pages through it, observes my palm once more and asks the Indian to tell me that there is no doubt that I lived in Tibet in an earlier incarnation.

Rimpoche nods and laughs at the childlike eagerness of his wife to draw me into their family. When I meet the Indian again, he tells me, earlier on he was a monk in a Buddhist monastery which he left for political reasons. He is now busy studying ancient Tibetan writings. I ask him to interpret my conversation with my Tibetan friends. Now I learn that they have a daughter who studied in a college near Madras at the request of the Dalai Lama and that the family fled from the Chinese in 1959 (the parents of *Rimpoche* died while fleeing) and they are now in West Bengal. In

Tibet, *Rimpoche* was an abbot of a monastery of 300 monks, following his father and grandfather.

When I ask Lamo what the Dalai Lama means to her, she says, "He is something like a king, and we obey his orders. We even call him God, but we only worship the Buddha."

"What sort of orders do you obey?"

"Our daughter was about to marry a young Indian. But the Dalai Lama will not tolerate this. He wants our young people to marry only from our own community. How else can we preserve our customs?"

Rimpoche puts his book aside and listens to us. I now turn to him, "What do you think, *Rimpoche*, why have your people to suffer the fate of expulsion?"

The Lama nods his head enveloped in curly hair thoughtfully and then says gently, "It was like this. We have made Chinese suffer for generations. So we have to suffer now. But the Buddha teaches us that we should not hate them for it. Even he had to suffer without ever thinking of revenge. We consider that the Chinese are our brethren."

"Do you hope that you will return to Tibet one day?"

"If we succeed in preventing the feeling of hatred against the Chinese, the land will be open to us one day."

"How many Lamas were you in Tibet?"

"About a thousand. But most of them have been...." *Rimpoche* explains with a sharp movement of his right hand that they were beheaded.

Contd....

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Importance of *Agni*, *Dhatus* (tissues) and *Malas* (waste materials)

- Dr. Kavita Vyas (Ayurveda specialist)

Agni

While giving definition of health Ayurveda says "Health means equilibrium of *Dosha* (*Samdosha*), equilibrium of *Agni* (*Samagni*), equilibrium of vital tissues (*Samdhatu*), and also proper evacuation of *Malas* (waste products). Along with these the happiness of mind, senses and spirit is called as healthy state of a person.

So in this definition importance is given to fire (*Agni*). Ayurveda considers thirteen types of *Agni* (fire) in body. (5 fire of *Agni* for metabolism of air, ether, water, fire and earth element in the body, 7 fire or *Agni* of seven vital Tissues (*Dhatu*) and 1 fire or *Agni* is digestive fire. We are giving here detail about digestive fire, because it is more obviously seen by us. Other *Agnis* work at subtle level of the body.

Agni is the biological fire that governs metabolism. It is similar in its function to *Pitta* and can be considered an integral part of the '*Pitta*' system in the body which functioning as a catalytic agent in digestion and metabolism. *Pitta* contains heat energy which helps digestion. This heat energy is '*Agni*'. '*Pitta*' and '*Agni*' are essentially the same with this subtle difference; *Pitta* is the container and *Agni* is the content.

Pitta manifests in the stomach as the gastric fire or *Jatharagni*. *Agni* (*Jatharagni*) is acidic in nature and its action breaks down the food and stimulates digestion. *Agni* is also subtly related to the movement of '*Vata*' because bodily air enkindles bodily fire. In every tissue and cell *Agni* is present and necessary for maintaining the nutrition of the tissues and the maintenance of the auto-immune mechanism. *Agni* destroys micro-organisms, foreign bacteria and toxins in the stomach and small and large intestines. In this way, it protects the flora in these organs.

Longevity depends upon '*Agni*'. Intelligence, understanding, perception and comprehension are also the functions of *Agni*. The color of the skin is maintained by

'*Agni*'. As long as *Agni* is functioning properly, the processes of breaking down food and absorbing and assimilating it into the body will operate smoothly.

When *Agni* becomes impaired because of an imbalance in the *tri-dosha*, the metabolism is drastically affected. The body's resistance and immune system are impaired. Food components remain undigested and unabsorbed. They accumulate in the large intestine turning into a heterogeneous, foul-smelling, sticky substance. This material which is called '*Agni*', clogs the intestines and other channels, such as capillaries and blood vessels. It eventually undergoes many chemical changes which create toxins. These toxins are absorbed into the blood and enter the general circulation.

They eventually accumulate in the weaker parts of the body, where they create contraction, clogging, stagnation and weakness of the organs and reduce the immune mechanism of the respective tissues. Finally a disease condition manifests in the affected organs and is identified as arthritis, diabetes, heart disease and so on.

The root of all disease is '*Ama*' (undigested food mass). There are many causes for the development of '*Ama*', for example whenever incompatible foods are ingested, '*Agni*' will be directly affected as a result of the toxins or will be indirectly affected as a result of the toxins or '*Ama*' created from these poorly digested foods. *Ama* develops when *Agni's* function is retarded; however over active *Agni* is also detrimental. When '*Agni*' becomes hyperactive, the digestive process burns away, through over combustion, the normal biological nutrients in the food and emaciation results. This condition also lowers the body's immunity.

The Seven *Dhatus*

The human body consists of seven basic and vital tissues called '*Dhatus*'. The Sanskrit word *Dhatu* means, constructing element. These seven *Dhatus* are responsible for the entire structure of the body. The *Dhatus* maintain the functions of the different organs, systems and vital parts of the body. They play a very important role in the development and nourishment of the body.

The *Dhatus* are also part of the biological protective mechanism, with the help of '*Agni*', they are responsible for the immune mechanism. When one *Dhatu* is defective it affects the successive *Dhatu* as such *Dhatu* receives its nourishment from the previous *Dhatu*. The following are the seven *Dhatus* in serial order.

1) **Rusu (Plasma)**- Contains nutrients from digested food and nourishes all the tissues, organs and systems. *Kapha* is considered as side product of this *Dhatu*.

Functions

General nourishment/maintaining health [*Preenana*], Blood nourishing [*Raktapushhti*], Preservation [*Dharana*], Giving satisfaction or refreshment [*Tushti*]

2) **Rakta (Blood)**- Governs oxygenation in all tissues and vital organs and maintains life. *Pitta* is considered as side product of this *dhatu*.

Functions

Imparts colour [*Varnaprasadana*], Nourishes muscles [*Mansa pushti*], enlivening [*Jeevanam*], Responsible for tactile sensation [*Sparsha-gnanam*], Produces growth [*Vridhhi*].

3) **Mansa (Muscle)**- Covers the delicate vital organs, performs the movements of the joints and maintains the physical strength of the body. Ear wax is considered as side product of this *Dhatu*.

Functions

Nourishes body [*Sharira pushti*], Nourishes *Medas* [*Medasa pushti*], Covers the body [*Sharira lepa*], Nourishes *Malas* [*Mala pushti*]

4) **Meda (Fat)**- Maintains the lubrication and oiliness of all the tissues. Sweat is considered as side product of this *Dhatu*.

Functions

Oleating [*Snehana*], Produces sweat [*Sweda karaka*], Nourishes osseous tissues [*Asthi pushti*], Secures steadiness [*Dradhatvam*].

5) **Asthi (Bone)**- Gives support to the body structure. Nails and hairs are considered as side product of this *Dhatu*.

Functions

Supporting [*Dharana*], Nourishing *Majja* [*Majja pushti*], Supports *Mamsa* [*Mamsa alambaka*].

6) **Majja (Marrow and nerves)**- Fills up the bony spaces and carries motor and sensory impulses. Waste secretion from the eye is considered as side product of this *Dhatu*.

Function

[*Snehabalam*], Repairs bone [*Asthi puranam*], Nourishes *Sukra* [*Sukra pushti*].

7) **Shukra and Artava (Reproductive tissues)**- Contain the ingredients of all tissues and are responsible for reproduction. According to *Sharangdher Samhita* *Oja* (the essential energy) is considered as waste product of this *Dhatu*.

Functions

Causative of fetus [*Gurbotpadaka*], Ejaculative sensation [*Chyavana*], Fondness [*Priti*], Strengthen the body [*Dehabalama*].

The seven *Dhatu*s are understood in a natural, biological, serial order of manifestation. The post digestion of food, called nutrient plasma (*Aahar rasa*), contains the nutrition for all the *Dhatu*s. This nutrient plasma is transformed and nourished with the help of heat, called as *Dhatwagni* of each respective *Dhatu* (*Rasagni, Raktagni, Mansagni*-etc.) *Rasa* is transformed into *Rakta* (with the help of *Raktagni*); which is further manifested into *Mansa, meda* etc.

This transformation results from three basic actions :

A) **Irrigation**- Nutrients are carried to the seven *Dhatu*s through the blood vessels.

B) **Selectivity**- Each *Dhatu* extracts the nutrients which it requires in order to perform its physiological functions.

C) **Direct transformation**- As the nutritional substances pass through each *Dhatu*, the food for the formation of each subsequent *Dhatu* is produced.

These three processes- irrigation, selectivity and transformation operate simultaneously in the formation of the seven *Dhatu*s. The *Dhatu*s are nourished and transformed in order to maintain the normal physiological functions of the different tissues, organs and systems.

The Three Malas

The body produces three waste products, or *Malas*: 1) Feces 2) Urine 3) Sweat; the production and elimination of these are absolutely vital to health. Though these are considered bodily waste products, the urine and feces are not totally waste. They are in fact to some extent essential to the physiological functioning of their respective organs.

1) Feces

This supply nutrition through intestinal tissues; many nutrients remain in the feces after digestion, later after these are absorbed, the feces are eliminated. Feces also give strength to the large intestine and maintain its tone. If a person has no feces, the intestine will collapse.

2) Urine

The urinary system removes the water, salt and nitrogenous wastes of the body. Urine helps to maintain the normal concentration of water, electrolytes with in the body fluids. The functioning of this *Mala* depends upon the water intake, diet, environmental temperature, mental states and physical condition of the individual.

If the body retains water, the urine will be scanty and this water will accumulate in the tissues. This condition in turn, will affect the blood and increase the blood pressure, so balanced urine production is important for the maintenance of blood pressure and volume. Ayurvedic text states that human urine is a natural laxative that detoxifies poisons in the system and helps absorption in the large intestine as well as elimination of feces. If one takes a cup of urine (Passed in main stream) every morning, it will help to clean and detoxify the large intestine.

The body fluids, such as blood (*Rakta*) and lymph (*Rasa*), serve to carry wastes (*Malas*) away from the tissues that produce them. The urinary system removes water (*Kleda*), salt and nitrogenous wastes. The urinary system also helps to maintain the normal concentration of water electrolytes within the body fluids. It helps to regulate the volume of body fluid and aids in the control of red blood cell production and blood pressure. Thus the urine helps to maintain the balance of the three humors (*Vata, Pitta* and *Kapha*) and water.

3) Sweat

Perspiration is a by product of fatty tissue. Sweating is necessary to regulate the body temperature. Sweat keeps the skin soft maintains the flora of the pores of the skin and also maintains skin elasticity and tone.

There is a special relationship between the skin and the kidneys, since the excretion of watery waste is primarily the function of these two organs. Thus perspiration is indirectly related to the formation of urine. In summer people perspire profusely, but their urination is reduced because waste products are eliminated through perspiration. Thus it is necessary that the production of perspiration and urine be in balance.

Diabetes, psoriasis, dermatitis and ascites are examples of diseases resulting from an imbalance of perspiration and urine in the body.

Dietetics and Regimen for Summer season [*Grishma Ritu*]

In the summer, the sun with the help of its hot rays absorbs the moisture from the earth. So in summer-

- One should take food which is sweet in taste and cool in its effect.
- One should take liquid diet and light food.
- In summer when one takes *sattu* [a special type of food which is used after diluting in water, common in India], *Ghritam*, rice and milk, then person can not lose his normal strength.
- Taking sweet milk with *Ghritam* in the night is a good habit.
- Eating seasonal fruits like water melon, cucumber, orange etc. is good for health.
- Chewing fresh coconut fruit, fennel with *Mishri* gives cooling effect in stomach.
- In this season one can have *Haritaki churnam* [*Terminalia chebula*], 5 gm with Jaggery, it has rejuvenation effect.
- Also one should not take more salty, sour and spicy food. Also one should not take the food which is causing heat in body.
- One should not do vigorous exercise in summer season.
- In the day time one should stay in cool room, and in night one should sleep at the roof cooled with natural air and moon light.
- One should apply sandal wood paste on the body and one can wear the pearl ornament, because pearl causes cooling effect in body.
- One should stay at the place nearer to river or lake; one should walk in garden filled with different flowers.

ASHRAM VARTA

Anandaswarupeshu,

Like other years, *Vasantipuja* was celebrated with grace and religious fervor in Kashi ashram of the Mother. Br. Jayadi writes on this year's puja, Timing of the rituals of this year's puja has been bit different. Auspicious arrival of the goddess was scheduled in the evening of March 22, 2018 but the divine mother arrived around 12 o'clock in the night following the delay in the completion of the deity. *Shashthi puja* began at 8 a.m. on March 23. Puja was held of the *beal tree* and *Shri Chandī* while *shorshopachar puja* was performed and *bhog* was offered to the Mother.

Aj vasante sejeche dhara varan tomaye korbo mora (we will welcome you as the universe is dressed up in the spring). *Adhivas* of the goddess was performed. Br. Jayadi chanted the mantras in the absence of *tantradhar*. Mantras of the goddess are powerful and its chanting makes the feeling as if the goddess is alive. *Brahmachari* Ajit Bhai was performing the puja.

Navapatrika was taken to the river Ganga for holy bathing following the special bathing (*maha-snan*). The goddess was dressed up with *saree* and was decorated with *sindur*, *aalta* and garlands. Before that, goddess was bathed with the holy water and soil of different *tirtha*.

The morning *bhog* and *arati* of the goddess were performed after the bathing and then began *shorashopachar puja* followed by the same puja of all the gods and goddesses. Worship of the *nava-patrika* was performed with chanting mantras of nine tress. Also, *puja* was performed of different gods and goddesses. *Kumari puja* and the worship of the Mother too were held. Devotees offered *pushpanjali* to the goddess followed by the *bhog* offering ceremony. Goddess was taken to the bed after the *bhog*. In the evening, there were *Bhagavat* and *Ramayana* recital and *kirtan* and *arati* were held. Junior girls of Ashirvad Sangitalaya displayed cultural programs after the *arati*. It was an impressive crowd. Many devotees came from Kolkata to attend the *puja*.

Mangal arati was performed at 4 o'clock in the morning and the *Mahashtami* puja was completed before 6.58 a.m. following all the rituals. The goddess was

offered *khichri* (rice with mixture of lentils), fried vegetables and *kheer* (rice pudding). *Sandhi puja* was performed after *arati*. Timing of the *sandhi puja* was between 6:58:30 and 7:46:30 in the morning. *Kheer* and *pulaw* (yellow rice) were offered to the deity. Puja was performed of the goddess Annapura at 7:22:30 in the morning. *Navamai puja* was completed after the *sandhi puja*. It was *rajbhog* offered to the goddess. *Kumari puja* was also organized on the occasion and the *puja* of the Mother too was performed. Devotees offered *anjali*. *Navami* was the birthday of Lord Rama and his *puja* was performed at 12 o'clock in the noon. With the *hom* (burnt offering) and *navami puja*, *puṇahuti* was completed and the goddess was taken to the bed. Junior kids of Rahul party presented Odissi dance followed by the music recital after the evening vesper.

Dashami puja was held in the morning of March 26 with all its rituals including the immersion of mirror (*darpan visarjan*). Immersion of the goddess was held in the evening after which the devotees and the ashram inmates and guests joined the *kirtan* and exchanged *vijoya* greetings. Devotees and others offered their *pranam* to the Mother and they were distributed her photograph.

Vasanti puja also was held with all religious fervor in the Agartala ashram.

Puja and *sadhu bhandara* (feeding of the saints) were organized on April 14, 2018 on Chaitra *sankranti tithi* of the Bengali calendar in all the ashrams of the Mother to commemorate the *sannyasotsav* of Shri 108 Swami Muktananda Giri. The foundation day of Varanasi ashram fell on April 18, 2018 and special puja was organized of the Mother and all the deities in Aandajyoti temple. *Sadhu bhandara* too was held to mark the occasion. Similar puja ceremonies and *sadhu bhandara* (feeding of the saints) were organized in the Anandajyotipeethem in Kankhal ashram. Both Varanasi and Kankhal ashrams celebrated the Adi Jagadguru Shankaracharya jayanti on April 20. The *nirvana divas* (death anniversary) of Baba Bholanath was observed in Kankhal ashram on April 23 and in Varanasi and other ashrams of the Mother the following day. Puja and *sadhu bhandara* were the main features. Buddha jayanti was celebrated on April 30.

Date and *tithi* of this year birth anniversary of the Mother coincidentally fell almost on same time and same *tithi* when she was born 123 years ago on April 19, 1896 (19 *Vaisakh*, 1303, *Krishna Chaturthi tithi*, Thursday in Bengali calendar). This made the devotees very much inspired and devoted. Kankhal ashram organized various programs on this auspicious occasion.

The eight-day long *maharudra yajna* ceremony was organized in Kankhal ashram from April 17 to 24, 2018. Other programs organized on the birth anniversary of the Mother in Kankhal ashram include: special puja of the Mother from the midnight of May 3 to the dawn of May 4. Sri *Shatachandi path*, puja and *yajna* on May 3, *Rasleela* from April 30 to May 2, *Ma-nam kirtan* on April 29 from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. the next day, spiritual recital and lectures from April 30 to May 2, feeding ceremony of 108 *kumaris* and 12 *batuks* on April 29, *sadhu seva* and *Prasad* distribution on May 4, *nam-yajna* from the night of May 4 to the evening of next day. Besides, numerous religious programs were organized every day.

On April 29, special puja was held in local temple and fruits were distributed to the patients in the hospital. Devotees offered their puja and *pranam* to the sanctum sanitarium of the Mother.

Though number of the devotees was not impressive this year on the occasion in Varanasi ashram, there was no lack of enthusiasm in the celebration of the Mother's birth anniversary. Hall of the Anandajyoti temple was decorated tastefully with flowers. Mother's idol was giving a luminous and dazzling look and that expression was beyond any language. Br. Jayadi's worship was much emotional and appreciative. After the special *bhog* ceremony, one hundred lamps were lit for the *arati* of the Mother and her glittering look spread out the entire hall. *Chandiputh yajna* was also performed on the occasion. Various dishes and sweets of Mother's choice were offered to her next day and devotees took the *prasad*.

Special puja ceremony of the Mother on her birth anniversary was also held in Agarpara, Bhccmpura and other ashrams. *Rasleela*, evening *bhajan* and *kumari puja* were the main features of Agarpara ashram. Portrait of the Mother was decorated tastefully with flowers. Recital of *kirtan* continued throughout the day. *Sadhu bhandara* was organized the next day and the devotees were distributed the *prasad*. Pomp and grandeur marked the birth anniversary of the Mother in Bhccmpura and Agartala ashrams.

All the ashrams situated on the bank of the river Ganga celebrated the Ganga Dashhara on May 24, 2018. In Varanasi ashram, this ceremony was held on June 23 following the '*malamasa*' (the month when no auspicious ceremony is held as per Hindu calendar).