

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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NOTICE

In order to ensure receipt of Amrit Varta, it was decided in the Governing Body meeting that the annual subscription of the journal be enhanced from Rs. 150/- to Rs. 300/- w.c.f. January, 2019 Your cooperatoin is earnestly solicited.

COVER PAGE : Matri Mandir, Kishenpur Ashram, Dehradun

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 compiled, 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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Matri Vani

This world is created by God. *Jiva* means *jagat* and *jagat* means bondage. Best is the human life. God is omnipresent. *Jiva-jagat-vandhan* (bondage) are the manifestation of God, He has created all these with His imagination. Virtues and vices, light and darkness, *jiva* and world, all are the parts of the universe and human birth is regarded as the best because only human being enjoys the right to liberate.



Sense and consciousness are the main features that separate human being from other creatures. Joy and sorrow are the parts of the physical body, hence human being suffers. *Ajnyna* (अज्ञान - ignorance) is a veil that covers the human being. At the same time ignorance shows the door after uncovering the Truth. Pleasure and pain are subject to coming and going. One must go beyond virtues and vices to know the Truth which can be experienced only in human life.



One who is fallen by curse, is liberated from it also. All the creatures and objects - animal, bird, tree, human being can be liberated in the same body. This is the only Truth. Human life is regarded as best because it is changeable.



One who is ever liberated living entity and one who is fallen under ignorance. There is a veil needs to be uncovered. All are the instruments in my hands. World is created as imagination. I am omnipresent everywhere in different forms of manifestation.



Lord, let me know who am I? Let me realise myself. Let me liberate myself from death.



What is the physical body - animal, birds, trees, branches etc. All are both *rupa* and *arupa* (*rupa* means external appearance, not just physical existence of an object, but also its tangible nature. *Arupa*, on the other hand, means formless referring to non-material subjects or objects). There are innumerable paths through which the knowledge and ignorance are revealed. Children of the sages. *Mantras* are illuminated and so are the *bhava* and *abhava*. No question of death of the children of sages (the major manifestation is in the spiritual world. So they do not die).



God has made different *rupas* means external appearances. He is both *khanda* - खण्ड (pieces, divisible) and *akhanda* - अखण्ड (indivisible) He Himself is the *rupa* and at the sametime he has created the *rupa*. This way the play is going on and the God is the player. He is playing with Himself. He is manifested and not manifested at the same time. There are wrathful persons, there are greedy persons, there are persons full with infatuation. This infatuation can also be discarded. No question of external and internal because He exists everywhere. He is the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. He is the only ONE



The play in the physical world of action is different from that of the psychic world. The world of action is busy with new creations, while in the subtle world of emotions, every thing happens in silence and in a hidden manner. If it were otherwise, feelings and thoughts (*bhāva*) could not grow strong; it is this inner force which keeps the world of action going. The source of the Ganges lies in the depths of inaccessible jungles, hidden away from the eyes of men; yet its life-giving waters irrigate fields and pastures and bring prosperity to the smiling country-side along its bank. It is *bhāva* which is at the root of Creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe. Nevertheless so long as man's bondage of karma has not fallen away of itself and he therefore depends on work, it is needed to recognize the supremacy of action. One who feels the desire to be active cannot attain to the highest Good without engaging in karma.

Shree Shree Ma

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee Prasanga

--Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

Swami Shankarananda then began with how Sri Sri Ma used to utter *Pranava mantra* (प्रणव मन्त्र व ओम—*Aum* is a sacred sound and a spiritual symbol in Hinduism, that signifies the essence of the ultimate reality, consciousness or *Atman*). He said, "*Shastra* prohibits women to utter *Pranava mantra*. Mother, therefore, uttered this mantra after chanting "*Haribol*". At this, mother said, "The word '*bol*' became *aum* or *omkara*. It's not right that I intentionally uttered in this way. Physical body transforms itself with the right utterance of *Pranava* and my body too transformed the same way. It's just like a machine doing its work. I perceived the process like a witness. *Pranava* is known by different names i.e. *shabda-brahma* (transcendental sound) or *varnamala* and all are true and are perceived at different stages. All have their respective existence and it should not be allowed to discard anything. All appear true in situation wise and are manifested once a person reaches that stage or realises that truth. There are different ways of manifestation too and every stage seems to be extreme truth. Also, there is a stage when everything appears truth and nothing else.

Myself: Mother, does this manifestation that you have mentioned appear as same in imagination and in reality? We generally think manifestation resembles the truth.

Mother: Yes. Truth alone is manifested. However, imagination can also be manifested if it becomes the only goal. Truth becomes manifested in all stages when the aim or goal is concentrated. It reveals that existence of truth is everywhere. Truth is manifested even if there is conflict between truth and scepticism because truth pervades sceptic mind but same is not found in the case of imagination. Imagination alongwith sceptive mind never reveals the truth which overcomes scepticism, but imagination doesn't have that power. Have you got the point - difference between the truth and imagination?

Khukunididi came and took the Mother for her dinner. Discussion was suspended and we returned after offering our pronam to the Mother.

8 Paush, Thursday (23/12/1948)

Gopibaba had his lunch in the ashram this noon along with his family but there was no discussion with him today on any issue. Gopaldada delivered lecture on *Gurutattva* in the afternoon. Discussion started after the *kirtan* in the night.

Swami Shankarananda recalled his first meeting with the Mother. He said, "Gopibaba and I decided to meet Anandamayee when we came to know that she was staying in Kashi. We found her in *samadhi* (it is a state of meditative absorption) stage that continued for three days. Baba Bholanath tried to bring her back into conscious level on last day". At this point, Mother smiled and said, "They all were tried their best to break my *samadhi*. They created loud noise and the sound of this scream was so loud that it could have made me deaf. They all decided to apply that very process to break my *samadhi* because they knew only that method. However, strangely, that process failed to make me deaf".

Gopaldada: We are fortunate. We do not have the replies to our questions very often and the situation would be different had you been deaf?

Mother: They would also do another thing to break my *samadhi* stage. They would massage my backbone so severely that it became swollen and the process was too painful even for me. They thought this process could break the *samadhi* but it was broken at its own time.

Swami Shankarananda: Mother retained bit consciousness following Baba Bholanath's efforts. He asked us to raise our questions and I requested Gopibaba to do the same. But he insisted me and I asked Mother her views about me. She was unable to talk properly at that time. But she replied, "You and I are same". That made me surprised and I realised her the '*murtiman shruti*' that means she resembles Veda or she herself is the Veda."

Time of the *sadhan* and monotony in *sadhana*

Topics on proper or suitable timing of meditation and *naam* were raised and Mother said, "Dawn and *sandhi-kaal* are generally said to be the perfect time for meditation and *sandhya* (*sandhya* is a type of daily ritual in the evening) because it is considered as the perfect timing traditionally been interpreted either as the transition moments of the day, namely the two twilights dawn and dusk. You can judge this issue from another angle. Every time is best for meditation, *naam* and *sandhya* because time zone is different in whole of the world and thus, every time is suitable to meditation, *naam* and *sandhya* in this context. However, it is found that certain persons go deep into meditation and *naam* in specific time like morning or midnight. It is, therefore, found that timing differs from person to person. Every time is suitable to know and realise the god depending upon the depth of eagerness. In this stage, person is able to know the perfect timing for him and his daily chore gradually become supportive to his *sadhana*. Actually, strong impulse is necessary to know the god. Some people become frustrated sometime for not-getting desirous result of their *japa* (*japa* is an ancient practice in which a *mantra* or the name of a deity is recited either silently or aloud. The Sanskrit word is derived from the root, *japa*, meaning "to repeat quietly and internally). It's not actually the frustration, instead, it reflects

that they are inching towards their goal. More monotonous is the process more progress is noticed in the path of *sadhana*. *Sadhak* is confined to a place if he enjoys his *sadhana* so early and so easily. His efforts are obstructed at this stage as he loses his impulse to move forward. Intense longing is the secret of success in spiritual life. Attachment means the feeling towards god. It's a good symptom".

It was nine o'clock in the night and Mother stood up for the dinner of Gopaldada. We too left the ashram after offering our *pranam* to her.

9 Paush, Friday (24/12/1948)

I reached Ashram at 11 in the morning when recitation of the Gita was going on. Attended the recitation for half-an-hour. Gopaldada decorated Mother with flowers and garlands covered her all over her neck and hands. It was a majestic like look. Gopaldada started dancing to the tune of the *kirtan*. Entire hall was full with religious fervour and this *bhava* touched all of us present there. Mother asked Bhupen to take away the garlands from her and offer to the devotees.

Evidence of omnipresence of the *Brahma*

Kirtan was over in the night and daily discussion started. Sri Debshankar Mitra told mother that he wanted to have the topic clear that had been incomplete the other day. He wanted to know the evidence of the omnipresence of the *Brahma*.

Mother: Is there anything without *Brahma*?

Devshankar Babu: You are telling the stage of experience but I want to know how it would be proved through logic?

Mother: My child, what will you say? Are you denying the omnipresence of the *Brahma*?

Devshankar Babu: *Brahma* is full with *chaitanya* (consciousness). Therefore, it exists wherever conscious creatures exist. But, this world also carries inanimate objects and hence how it is proved that the *Brahma* is omnipresent in this context?

Mother: Who will prove it?

Devshankar Babu: Those who are scholars will decide over it with proof. Also, *sadhaks* can prove it through their meditation and realisation.

Mother: *Brahma* cannot be realised through mere meditation. He does not know or realise anything even though he claims to have realised it (*Brahma*). A void exists at this point. There is another stage when meditation occurs spontaneously without any efforts and *sadhaks* hardly come out of it. You too have experienced this type of meditation. These *sadhaks* can only realise the omnipresence of the god to some extent. The void you referred to start filling up. And there exists the last stage where *Brahma* manifests itself as a light. This stage does not require any meditation and the void too does not exist in the presence of the *Brahma*.

Devshankar Babu: Mother, you have just referred to the third and last stage.....

Mother: I have not talked of any stage but I referred to different conditions. This physical body does not say anything about the status of people's or *sadhaks'* different stages of *sadhana*. There exists a stage when *sadhaks* know the first and last stage. It's like the stairs when people feel the ascending and descending position. Same way *sadhaks* know the progress step by step in the ladder. He ascends the stair or ladder cautiously with full attention to avoid falling down. Each step in the ladder provides *sadhaks* specific knowledge and they feel it as the truth in totality. However, this feeling is changed soon when *sadhaks* get more knowledge in next steps and *sadhaks* feel the truth better. Ascending and descending are the major factors in this stage. In another stage, only infinite exists and it becomes the only object. In other word, it is the Absolute. I have expressed it in word or language but it is beyond any language or word. Absolute or *Brahma* cannot be described in any language because it is Self Manifestation or Self Illumination. Here is an example- light is lit inside a pot and light comes out after the pot is broken. What you will say about the illumination? Light is already there inside the pot and it was not seen till the pot is not broken. Same way, *Brahma* always exists and is not seen because It is covered under a veil (*maya*). It is illuminated once the cover is removed. Here is another example - all the ornaments are made of gold and are known by different names. There is the oneness because of the gold. Similarly, *naam* and *roopa* are the segments and a segment creates the void. Absolute exists when *naam* and *roopa* are removed.

Devshankar Babu: Mother, I talked the other day that Paramhansadev used to say 'I want to drink water' before his *samadhi*. By saying it, he left an aphorism of descending from the *samadhi*.

Mother: I have already told that this body never talks about other persons. This body can answer to any question if not referred to any particular person.

Devshankar Babu: Yes, your are right. It is not proper to hold discussion on particular individual.

Many present in the hall became frustrated following the suspension of the discussion for the cause of meditation. At this, Mother said, "We have been going to bed after two in the night for past two days and it will happen tonight also. You can continue and the discussion may be longer tonight. It does not matter if personal chores like dinner, sleep etc. miss the time during the Gita jayanti."

Everyone was satisfied with these words of the Mother. Swami Shankarananda told Gopalada, "We got the timing till 2 o'clock in the night. But you may request the Mother to leave earlier for her bed."

Padapeetham Smarami

Dehradun Ashram

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee Ashram

Br. Geeta

Dehradun, nestling in the foot of the Himalaya, is better known as Doon valley among the tourists. According to the Purana, this place was the *tapobhumi* of Dronacharya and the name of Doon or Dehradun has been derived from him. Sri Sri Ma described this place as the seat of '*tapasya*' (it means "generation of heat and energy." It is a practical spiritual discipline that involves deep meditation, austerity/moderation, self-discipline, and efforts to reach Self-realization. of the saints and mahatmas). This place becomes more holy and pious to the devotees of Sri Sri Ma because she stepped in here first in whole of Uttarakhand.

It is in this place where women of aristocratic families took refuge at the feet of the Mother after realising her Motherhood and they wholeheartedly surrendered to her for ever. It is here in this place where politicians started coming to the Mother.

Mother first arrived in Dehradun in May 1929 following the request of Mahamahopadhaya Gopinath Kaviraj. She came here from Haridwar along with her father, Sri Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya. She stayed here for some time and visited Sahasradhara before returning back to Haridwar. Mother's second visit was held in 1932 when she arrived on June 7 from Dhaka but she went straight to Raipur and stayed there in a dharmashala. She was accompanied by Baba Bholanath and Bhaiji at that time.

She spent about seven months in Raipur. Sri Hariram Joshi who was the inspector of Dehradun Cooperative Society had her darshan in March 1933.

Mother at Manohar temple in Anandachowk

Mother again visited Dehradun in the month of July 1933 with Bhaiji. She spent one day near Tapkeshwar cave. Sri Hansdutt Tiwari, a friend of Sri Hariram Joshi, had the darshan of the Mother here. Sri Joshi took Mother and Bhaiji the next day to Manohar temple in Anandachowk. There are two temples here belonging one to Shiva and another to Radhakrishna. Both the temples belonged to Bhargava family of Saharanpur and Sri Kashinarain Tankha looked after the both. On the request of Joshiji he arranged one room for the Mother

Many Kashmiri families came to contact with the Mother here. These families became so closed to the Mother that she used different names for the members—she used to call the wife of Sri Kashinaraïn as Mahalakshmi and affectionately called Sri Dwarkanath Raina as Gopal. Jawaharlal Nehru's mother and wife too met the Mother for the first time here and Indira was also with them. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya met the Mother here.

Mother Memorial temple in Anandachowk

Gayetri yajna organised in Manohar temple in Anandachowk in August 1933 and the bhasma of this yajna (ब्रह्म) was kept inside the earth near this temple. Mother memorial temple was built at this point in 1934. A yajna *kund* too was built here. The temple was commemorated to the holy visit of the Mother. Baba Bholanath performed a yajna in 1935 and the devotees for the first time had their darshan of him here.

Beginning of the construction work of Dehradun Ashram

Sri Hariram Joshi first requested the Mother for a ashram in Dehradun. He came to Anandachowk to have darshan of the Mother in March 1935 and Bhaiji asked him to launch his efforts for the ashram. It was a joint effort of Sri Joshi and Sri Hansdutt Tiwari that the land was purchased in at Rajpur Road in Kishenpur. Birth anniversary of the Mother was celebrated in this new premises in 1935.

Construction of Kishenpur ashram was completed and birth anniversary of the Mother was observed on May 2, 1936 amidst hundreds of the Mother's devotees. In her reminiscences, Gurupriyadidi wrote, "Inauguration ceremony of this ashram was held during the birth anniversary function of the Mother. Baba Bholanath conducted a big yajna in the ashram to mark the occasion and one lakh *ahuti* (offering oblations) were offered. The ashram was decorated by the devotees beautifully with a big photograph of the Mother placed in the hall. Mother accompanied by Baba Bholanath and devotees entered the new ashram in the mid night of May 2, 1936 amidst kirtan and sound of conch shell. Devotees welcomed Mother with camphor. Yajna was completed the next day.

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee Vishwa Mandir

Bhaiji once told Sri Hariram Joshi about the spontaneous spiritual activities of Mother. "Her lila (effortless or playful relation between the Absolute and the contingent world) and activities are solely for the world brotherhood, peace and love and I realised it through my *anudhyan* and thinking", Bhaiji said. Bhaiji already had deep realisation and foresight that Mother would be regarded in future as '*Vishwa-janani*' by whole of the world and would be worshipped.



Shiv Mandir, Kishenpur Ashram, Dehradun

Accordingly, 'Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee Vishwa Mandir' was inscripted on the main entrance of Dehradun ashram.

There are two big photographs of the Mother placed in two sides of the big hall of the ashram besides other small photographs. 'Be quiescent in body, speech and mind and know that, 'Thou are that'. These words are found written in the hall. Also written in Bengali, "Friends, keep always remember the holy feet, do the *japa* and meditation. Your tongue always utter His/Her name and words". In other words, it means this ashram is the place only for the *Bhagavata katha* or the remembrance of the God.

Numerous spiritual activities were organised in this hall. The hall is surrounded by verandah in four corners with four rooms in each corner. Besides, there is car parking space. Rooms of the Mother and her mother are on the upper floor where also exist Shakti Peeth and two other rooms along with verandah.

(continued)

List of Festivals

1.	Sri Sri Saraswatipuja	February10, 2019
2.	Maghi Purnima	February 19, 2019
3.	Mahashivaratri	March 8, 2019
4.	Holika Dahan	March 20, 2019
5.	Holi Mahotsav	March 21, 2019
6.	Sri Sri Basanti Puja	April 11-14, 2019
7.	Sri Sri Annapurna Puja	April 13, 2019
8.	Ramnavami	April 14, 2019
9.	Sri 108 Swami Muktananda Giriji's Sanyas Utsav	April 14, 2019

Children Page

Flower, Frog, Fish and Bee

A big lotus bloomed in a pond. Pathway falls by the side of the pond. A passer-by happened to see the flower while passing through this pathway. The flower was so beautiful that he could not distract his eyes. He could not remember to have seen such a beautiful flower. He was thinking of the name of the flower but found nobody to answer to him.

He happened to see one frog and one fish swimming in the water and asked the frog, "Friend, can you tell me the name of the flower around of which you are swimming"? The frog looked at him and said, " Why are you so curious? It's just a flower. Have you not seen any flower before?" Frog then became busy in searching insects.

The man became frustrated and thought the frog itself did not know the name of the flower. He then asked the fish the same question and received the same reply from the fish like that of the frog. The fish started searching its food. This made the man more disappointed.

He then came across a bee which all of a sudden appeared there and sat on the flower. The man became hopeful and requested the bee to listen to him. The bee was busy in collecting honey from the flower and said, "I'm busy right now and will talk to you later." The man was curious to know what the bee was doing by sitting on the flower and he was repeatedly asking the bee the same question. However, the bee was busy in eating the honey. After half-an-hour bee flew to the man and wanted to know what his question was. He asked, " What is the name of the flower?" Bee smiled and said it was the lotus full with honey and she was eating its honey.

Narrating the story Mother asked, " Have you got the point?" She then explained, " Mere accompanying the *sadhu-mahatmas* bears no fruit unless one realises their merits or virtues. Right persons can only realise the *sadhu-mahatmas* and is benefitted by them and their merits no matter they spend very little time with them.

Existence of Human Being before Birth and after Death Character Story of Birth and Death

Swami Vedananda

(Continued)

Three Movements await after death of the human being.

Every human being passes through three movements after death- *Devyan Marg*, *Pitriyan Marg* and *Brahmaloka Marg*. Marg means path. Souls are bound to the cycle of births and deaths mainly because of desires and desire-ridden actions and *jiva* passes through any of these three movements according to his or her desires and actions.

Devyan Marg: *Jiva*, the *sthul* or gross body of living being consists of five gross elements known as *Panch-bhutas*. These are: *Prithvi, Jal, Agni, Vayu* and *Akash*. Human being lives upon this earth as per his or her destined age and passes away. Once the soul leaves the body, the person becomes lifeless. The body is then cremated and its elements are returned to the elements from where it originally had come. Death touches and destroys everything in the object world when its time comes. However, it cannot touch the individual Self which is immortal and indestructible. Death is for the physical body. Soul remains intact and escapes from the body to take birth again. The body returns from the *sthul* world to *sukshma* and exists in an astral form. However, the *mana-deha* that is covered under the previous imprints still exists in moving form.

Those people, who acquired self purification through their good acts in this earth, take shelter in the divine light immediately after their death. In other words, *jiva* mingles into the flames of the fire after death and passes to the ray of light from where it goes to the day. It is a chain of journey that *jiva* passes one after another – from day to *shukla paksha* (fortnight period from new moon to full moon) and from *shukla paksha* to *uttarayana* (*uttarayana* is basically the period when the sun travels from Capricorn to Cancer, i.e. from south to north). Here, *jiva* stays for six months

and its next journey point is the year from where it reaches *aditya* means the sun and then passes to *Chandra* means the moon and from here it goes to the celestial sphere where one celestial body receives *jiva* and takes it to the *brahmadham*, the highest heaven. This celestial body gets the mind of *jiva* free from the previous imprints through its good actions as a result, *jiva* does not return to this earth again. *Jiva* moves towards *devayan marg* which is in the form of *nivritti*, means directed inward, often with a focus on acceptance and finding connection with god or the divine. And finally, *jiva* is liberated in due course through self-realisation.

Pitriyan Marg: *Jiva* that dies with his or her desires unfulfilled, goes to *pitriyan marg* after death. *Jiva* enters into smoke, from smoke to night, from night to the *Krishna-paksha*, the dark fortnight, from the dark fortnight to those six months in which the sun moves southwards. The path through which *jiva* travels is known as the path of the ancestors (*pitrayana*) or the southern path (*dakshinayana*). Further journey covers from *pitriyana* to *akash* and from *akash* to *chandraloka*. This *chandraloka* is different from that of the moon on the sky. This *chandraloka* is a soft layer exists by the side of the sun and regarded as a pleasant place in the heaven. Gods like the presence of *jiva* at this point. *Jiva* that becomes the object of displeasure of the gods, go to the hell. Pure souls are loved by god while the impure souls are punished.

Nevertheless, staying in the heaven for several years *jiva* is not liberated and it comes down to this earth in the form of a body. When a soul assumes a human body, it takes up the thread of spiritual evolution of its previous human birth and continues to evolve toward Self-knowledge. *Jiva* enters into the *chandraloka* unconsciously after completion of its virtuous deeds and then moves to the *pitriloka* (region or heaven - according to some, the orbit of the moon- inhabited by the manes or deified progenitors of mankind) which is a place of desires and attachments. *Pitriloka* is the aerial form of the desires and attachments covered in the mind of the human father of *jiva*. There upon, exhausting the wealth of the *karmas* of the soul, it returns again, by the same path by which it comes through, to space, and from space to air. Having become air, it becomes smoke; and having become smoke, it becomes mist. Having become mist, it becomes clouds, having become clouds, it becomes rains. Those whose conduct was pure or good will attain pleasant wombs, and those whose behaviour was evil, will attain the wombs of the evil and the impure ones.

When the soul falls down upon earth, it enters the plants through water. Some of the plants are consumed by both man and animal. When both the plants and animals

are consumed by men, they become part of their semen and it is first step of human birth.

Next question is whether the *chandraloka* or *shukla-paksha* (waxing of the moon) and *krishna-paksha* (waning of the moon) or *dakshinayan* (southern world) are the heaven and hell? The answer is in affirmative. Virtuous deeds of *jivatma* on the earth take him to the heaven after death and the individual soul reaches heaven through *shukla-paksha* or the waxing of the moon. Contrary to it vicious or sinful deeds committed by *jivatma* on this earth take him to the hell which represents darkness and sadness.

Here rises another question- human beings, animals, birds and other creatures die every minute. Do all these creatures take birth in the earth through rain and grains? This earth which depends upon the sun is the *karma-bhoomi* (land of action or earthly plane) of *jivatma*. *Jivatma's* true shelter lies in the manifestation of the *vishwa-manas* (cosmic mind). *Sukshma* or subtle mind that exists behind the physical universe is the place of manifestation. This manifested region is known as *maya-prakriti* (*maya* is fundamentally inscrutable and *prakriti* is the set of eternal indestructible) belonging to *mahamaya*- *mahamaya* is devoid of delusion that pertains to material objects). It is under the influence of the *mahamaya* or the pure consciousness that *jivas* come down to the earth in numerous small conscious forms. Once *jivatmas* acquire physical bodies, they are known as men and women and their conscious mind is always indulged in the worldly objects as a result, they are unable to know their original home.

Illuminated zone is the original home of *jivatma* where there exists neither birth nor death, neither sorrow, nor grief. *Jivatma* attains the extreme state of mind of purification and becomes identical with the eternal core. This is the path of the *brahmaloka*.

Brahmaloka Marg: *Jivatmas* of the individuals who leave the earth after gaining self knowledge climb upwards through the *sushumna* meaning "very gracious" or "kind" and is also the name for the central *nadi* (channel or stream) in the body. Anatomically, the *sushumna* runs down the central axis of the body, through the spinal cord. The *sushumna nadi* is the most important *nadi* of the astral (emotional) body. *Jivatma* cross the *brahma-randhra* (evolving centre of the brain) and float towards *devaloka*. They first reach *adityaloka* through crossing *agniloka*, and *vayuloka* and other different *lokas* (*indra*, *varuna* and *prajapatiloka*) and at last reach *brahmaloka*

and reside there in the presence of the Absolute. *Maha, Jana, Tapa* and *Satyaloka* are described as Aditya, Varuna, Indra and Prajapati respectively.

Do the transmigrated souls take births as animals and birds?

Yes. All the creatures taking births in this earth rotate here. Influence of the earth's gravity exists in the latent imprints of the subtle bodies. It is said that individual souls pass through many cycles of births and deaths, and live upon earth as humans, animals and other living beings until they are liberated from the bonds of Nature. Rebirth facilitates the gradual progression of souls from ignorance to knowledge, untruth to truth, darkness to light, and death to immortality. Though body and mind are different of these creatures yet they are the same in the form of *atma* (soul) and there exists a conjunction between all the mind and the *vishwa-manasa*.

Every individual is compelled to be engaged in some activity or the other, which includes voluntary and involuntary acts. Acts are inseparably attached to effects, both good and bad, and these are governed by motives prompting these acts. This is the law of karma and the basis of every individual's existence through the cycle of birth. It is eternal law not framed by any human being. This is also called *ritam* (ऋतम्) is eternal order and is an ethical principle linked with the notion of cosmic retribution through which expansion or development of universal system of creation continues since time immemorial.

Subtle bodies acquire invisible aerial forms after death with all their good and bad imprints and they get their new nature or condition as per their *karma*. Then, they proceed to the *devyan* or *pitriyan* path. Gravity of the earth draws them towards this earth and these *jivatmas* take up new physical bodies and start a new life. *Jivatmas* always depend upon the *karma*. *Karma-deha* is also known as subtle body and the mind of this subtle body is known as transmigrated soul. Every soul is a circle. The circumference of this circle is nowhere but its centre is in the body. Soul is bound to the cycle of births and deaths mainly because of desires and desire-ridden actions. At this stage, soul carries with it a small residue of the mind consisting of dominant desires and tendencies as latent impressions (*samskaras*). They become the blueprint for the soul's next birth. The *karma* decides where *jivas* will go and how long they will stay in the earth.

Supreme Soul or Paramatma is death-less, decay-less, timeless, cause-less and space-less. It is birth-less, constant eternal and ancient. It is not slain when the

body is slain. It is *sat-chit-ananda*. Human being can have the realization of this eternal Self. For that, one has to practice renunciation, cultivate virtues, perform obligatory duties selflessly, surrender to god and lead exemplary lives pursuing the highest knowledge, fixing their minds completely upon the Self or the Supreme Self. At this stage, human being can have the *darshan* of the *paramatma* through pure intellect.

Is the Death Chasing the Creatures?

Death is inevitable in the life of all creatures. Death is the last scene in the drama of the life all creatures. It is chasing all of us since our birth but we just ignore it for many reasons and deeds which make us always busy in our prime time. Sound of its footsteps starts ringing in our ears once we advance towards ageing because we by that time are suppressed with sorrows, failures, ailments etc. Death cannot be avoided and should be welcomed. It is not our enemy; instead it is the other side of the coin. Death is not the end of life. Life is one continuous never-ending process. Death is only a passing and necessary phenomenon, which every soul has to pass in order to gain experience for its further evolution.

However, god does not let the people know in advance the details of rebirth. There might have been no discipline in the human mind and human society had god allowed the people to know about the rebirth in advance. Also, people might not have the urge to know the existence of the god had they knew it in advance. It is, therefore, the Creator of this universe does not disclose what happens before birth and after death.

Why will the human being accept the words of the god? It is the nature of the human being to search or find out everything. The mind is gifted to the human being by the god and this mind remains always hungry to collect knowledge. This mind also enquires itself about the existence of the being- where I were before birth and where I will go after death; will I continue to live after death? The problem of life beyond death has ever been a most fascinating one from time immemorial. Man has always been intrigued by the question, 'What becomes of the soul after death?'

One devotee requested me to write a book on what happens after death. The book, he says, will deal with the common curiosities of the people – why the obsequial rites (*shraddha* ceremony) and *pinda-daan* (*pinda daan* is a mandatory ritual which is to be performed post death. *Pinda Daan* gives an ultimate relief to the departed

soul and paves way into the world of peace) are performed? Do these processes help *jivatma* to take rebirth soon? How long it takes for rebirth in case of accidental deaths? Human being understands the state of liberation and is inspired to get it if he knows the mystery of birth and death.

What actually happens before and after death?

Question of rebirth, or life after death, has remained an enigma through the ages. We all are moving towards death immediately after birth. There exists no life without death. Life and death are two sides of same coin and it's a natural process, can never be changed. Sorrow follows the happiness, loss follows the gains and darkness follows the light. In the same way, death follows the birth and life and death are certain for both the theists and atheists. People confront death at any time. It is like the warrant that chasing all the creatures in this earth. Death which is also known as *Yama* (God of death) is scared by all-even the lower creatures too have fear of death.

Usually, it is seen that the terror of death haunts the people with the advancement of their age. At this point, question arises why are we not ready to accept the death? We may not want to get our existence perished. We want to be eternal. Our pure mind cherishes the dream of becoming eternity and this conception becomes stronger with the search of the god. People realize the knowledge of truth that death is not real when their conception of the Absolute becomes clearer. They come to know that gross body (*sthul deha*) dies and the self is not bound by birth and death; it is *nitya shuddha Buddha mukta anandamaya atma* (Eternal, Always Pure, Always Enlightened, Always Free and Bliss) and is thus eternal and timeless. In other words, death is a subject which is of the deepest interest to everyone. One day or other all must die. The terror of death overshadows the lives of all human beings. It brings considerably unnecessary sorrow, suffering and anxiety to the survivors who are anxious to know about the fate of the departed souls.

In whole of the world, death is glorified alone in India. What is the nature of this life without death? Death is separation of the soul from the physical body. Death becomes the starting point of a new and better life. Death does not end the personality and self-consciousness. It merely opens the door to a higher form of life. Death is only the gateway to a fuller life. Birth and death are jugglery of *Maya*. He who is born begins to die. He who dies begins to live. Life is death and death is life. It is, thus, establishes the concept of immortality of the soul.

It is the soul that enlivens moves and directs the body, mind and the senses. The Supreme Soul is self-consciousness, self-awareness, self-delight, self-knowledge and self-existence. It knows itself and knows others. Everybody feels 'I exist', 'I am, Aham Asmi'. No one can say 'I do not exist'. This itself proves the existence of an Immortal Soul or the Supreme Self. This was realised by the Indian sages long long ago through meditation and Bhagavat Gita envisages this very concept. Hinduism signifies the concepts of eternity and rebirth. Second chapter of Bhagavat Gita explains this concept- just as a person gives up worn out clothes and puts on other new ones, even so does the embodied self give up decrepit bodies and enters other new ones. The soul accompanied by the vital air (*mukhya prana*), the sense-organs and the mind and taking with itself *Avidya* (*avidya* is similar to the concept of *maya*, the difference being that *maya* is universal illusion, while *avidya* is individual ignorance or delusion), good and evil actions and the impressions left by his previous existence, leaves its former body and obtains a new body. When the soul passes from one body to another it is enveloped by the subtle parts of the elements which are the seeds of the new body. This process of migration from one body to another is known as death which is known as transmigration of soul in philosophy.

Hence death seems to be a changeable condition. Common people in the materialistic world think in a different way though they are already aware of the concept of the journey of the soul. Their love and affection to their near and dear ones are so deep that they are not able to accept death of these dear and near people and they continuously cry and mourn the death. It reflects the *avidya* (erroneous apprehension through the illusiveness of the material world; admission of these unrealities as real) of the common people who totally forget their real nature in the midst of this material world. They build up a world of their own and apply all material feelings and attachments to this world. At last, they confront the death and their *sthul deha* (gross body) perishes.

Countless birth and death take place in this universe every second. It's just like an endless procession. Death is inevitable irrespective of rich and poor, caste and creed- everyone inches towards death. It does not mean that end comes with the death. Indian scriptures signify the concept of heaven and hell. Theory or the concept of *paraloka* (the other world) is not only complex but mysterious too because common people seldom know the developments occurring after death though details are available in the Indian context. It is said that once the soul leaves the body, the person becomes lifeless. The body is then cremated and its five elements move around the gross body. Common people cannot see it but the yogis observe it.

Shashibhushan Mukhopadhyaya in his book, Paraloka and Pret-tattva, narrates an incident that happened in America in November 1899. An American doctor hailing from Kansas City State wrote his experience in a journal. He became unconscious following typhoid. His pulse was lost for about four hours and the doctors declared him dead. He, however, felt that his gross body ascending towards his head. More interestingly, he experienced that *jivatma* (soul) came out of his body started moving around his head and it transformed into an invisible subtle body same as human body. This soul of the subtle body then started floating on the air in faraway places. The subtle body earlier tried to convince the people around it before it left the body but they did not hear it. This subtle body returned after four hours and entered into the gross body of the doctor after gathering lots of experiences. And, the doctor became conscious and recognised his family members and relatives.

Our scriptures say that the body the *jivatma* holds immediately after the death of the individual is not seen. It is the astral body consisting of energy, sky and air. This body does not fulfill the hunger and thirst of the subtle body as a result it suffers a lot. This aerial body face the heaven and hell as per its deeds in this world. Rituals of *shraddha*, (obsequial rites) and *pinda daan*, (a mandatory post death ritual) give an ultimate relief to the departed soul and paves the way into the world of peace. We will discuss it later in detail but we will now know the changes taking place in the body after death. It is already said that gross body (*sthul deha*) meets the death while the subtle body (*sukshma deha*) still exists. Gross body is cremated while the invisible *karmic* actions and thoughts of the subtle body float on the sky.

According to Upanishads, when a person is about to die, his senses are withdrawn into the mind, and the mind into the breath. He is unable to speak and his memory fails and intelligence stops to work. He is unable to hear and cannot smell. Infact, all the sense organs collect their sensory powers into *mana*. In other words, sense organs merge into *mana* (मन) which also stops to think over at this juncture. *Mana* takes shelter into *prana* (प्राण) which its turn takes shelter into the energy of the body. This energy or *teja* (तेज) submerges into the Supreme. In this way, gross body and its sense organs become senseless and the person dies.

Is death a painful process?

No. It's like dropping of the dry leaves of a tree. Gross body becomes infirm owing to ageing, decrepitude and ailments. The casual body or *karana deha* (कारण शरीर) inverts from the gross body along with *jivatma*, the individual, and floats on the

air as subtle body. It is not true that death is a painful process. Those who derive the sinful deeds by their past *samaskars* (संस्कार), face the sufferings at the time of death. It reflects in the faces of these persons when they die- their faces become pale. On the other hand, faces of the pure persons (पुण्यात्मा) remain as bright as ever even at the time of death; it seems they are all smiling.

Literally, terror of death is not real because gross body adopts another *deha* after death. However, process of absorbing another *deha* becomes delayed in case of sinful deeds of the persons. People are generally under fear of death with the advancement of age in the absence of good deeds and religious life. They are scared of the arrival of the death. But death is not painful; it is just like a natural process - it is not painful when we cut our hair or nail, though both are the parts of our body. Hair and nail consist of the materials of the sky as thus we do not feel pain. Human body loses its vitality in the old age because of infirmity and ailments and thus the sense organs become powerless and intellect, memory and decision making capacity lose their power. In other word, human being loses all his worldly consciousness.

The *vishwa-manas* (विश्वमानस) makes *jeeva* unconsciousness for some time and brings out the subtle body through death. It is often seen that the dying persons feel relieved before the last breath- it is like brighten the flame before it ends up. *Jiva* becomes conscious with the touch of the *paramatma* and the ailing body gets a relief. It seems that the condition of the person may improve but it does not happen because life meets its end. At this stage, *jiva* carries with him a small residue of the mind consisting of dominant desires and tendencies as latent impressions (संस्कार). He regrets at his latent impressions that carry mostly sinful deeds. He laments at his failure on not spending quality time in remembering god instead in of doing unfair deeds. He looks much worried about his condition after death. He thinks to have strong desire of doing good in life and this concept must dominate the mind in the last moment before the last breath. This very feeling will enable the body to invert from the subtle body towards heaven.

Where does *jivatma* go immediately after death?

It is said that subtle body or *sukhma sharir* still exists and *jivatma* leaves the body after a specific period. The life or vital force (*prana*) of the body enters into a particular *nadis* (नाड़ी) are the flowing currents of energy in the body) when *jivatma* comes out of the body. Then the *prana*, in the form of *jivatma* comes out through one of the organs depending upon the latent impressions of the human being. It means

jivatma can come out of mouth, eye, ear etc. Spirit leaves the body through a tiny hole (ब्रह्मरन्ध्र) at the crown of the head of the monotheists only.

According to many Indian sages, *jivatma* cannot leave the place after death following its attachment to the body and moves around the body in subtle form depending upon the individual attachment of individual *jivatma*. It loses this attachment once the body is cremated and it takes shelter in air and sky living in invisible form. *Jivatma* proceeds towards heaven if it possess virtuous deeds while it has to wait for rebirth in the form of *pret-deha* (spirit body) if it has committed sinful acts. *Brahmagya* (ब्रह्मज्ञ) person, on the other hand, does not wait for the rebirth.

Duration of the stay of *jivatma* in heaven and *prêt-loka* (world of evil spirit) depends upon its latent imprints (संस्कार)- means its good and bad actions. *Jivatma* returns to earth for rebirth once its virtuous deedset exhausted in the heaven. Similarly, *jivatma* staying in the *pret-loka* too returns to the earth after completing the period of suffering and miseries. This period of suffering varies in case of all *jivatmas* in *pret-loka*. These *jivatmas* can move in invisible form anywhere. Sweet fragrance covers the ambience in the presence of *jivatma* carrying virtuous deeds. On the contrary, foul smell covers the atmosphere in the presence of *jivatma* having bad deeds. Absorbing the *pret-deha* is known as *narak-bhog* (suffering in the hell). However, *jivatma* faces both happiness and sorrow in the *para-loka* (the other world) similar to that of this material world.

How does *jiva* enjoy and suffer heaven and hell respectively?

We already know that *jivatma* adopts subtle body after death. Subtle body (सूक्ष्म शरीर) means the combination of subtle materials of five elements. The earth element (स्थिति व पृथ्वी तत्त्व) dominates the gross body or *sthoor sharir* while air element (वायु तत्त्व) dominates the *sukshma sharir* and it is for this reason that subtle body or *jivatma* adopts the aerial (वायवीय) form. *Jivatma* cannot form gross body unless it goes through the paths depending upon its *karmas* Acts are inseparably attached to effects, both good and bad, and these are governed by the motives prompting these acts. This is the law of karma and the basis of every individual's existence through the cycle of birth.

Heaven and hell are those places where *jivatma* goes to enjoy or suffer for its karma. *Sukshma sharir jivatma* leaves the gross body and exists as emotional imprints. Earth is the central point through which people move around and perform

their all activities. In similar way, ether and air are the driven forces of *sukshma dehi jivatma*. It is unsteady because it is the form of the nature hence it follows the law of the nature. But where does it go? It goes to heaven or hell depending upon its past deeds and latent imprints - good deeds take it to heaven while the bad deeds take it to hell.

It is already explained that the human beings mostly involved in vices such as lust, egotism, violence, anger, infatuation, jealousy, crave, terror, exploitation and such other negative activities become *pretatma* in subtle form and go to hell. All these activities are dominated by the earth material and thus *pretatma* takes shelter in earthly objects like, trees, dilapidated buildings and temples etc. after death. It has to pass through tremendous torments at this stage and it is also called as '*narak bhog*'. *Karma* is the only process that takes *jivatma* as well as *pretatma* to their destination - heaven for virtuous *karma* and hell for vicious *karma*. *Karma* leaves an imprint on our *mana* and it is called *samaskara* or latent imprint. This imprint goes down in case of unfulfilled attachments (वासना). Attachments are the bonds we form with the objects and people in the world. They hold us down and prevent us from achieving complete freedom from the hold of nature and *jivatma* adopts the form of *pretatma* after death following its bad *samskaras*. Those who practice renunciation, cultivate virtues, perform obligatory duties selflessly, and surrender to god and lead exemplary lives pursuing the highest knowledge, fixing their minds completely upon the Self or the Supreme Self qualify to achieve heaven. They again return to earth taking birth in a virtuous family. One should not lament at his past deeds instead try to adopt the good path that helps him to acquire positive *samskaras*. Recitation of Bhagavat Gita and Chandi will help people towards right direction.

It is already explained how the subtle body passes through different stages of *pitriyan*. Now question is which materials dominate the *pitriyan* path? It is the aerial material that dominates this path along with energy and earth. Attraction of the subtle body depends upon the materials that form this body. The subtle body takes shelter into sky and eats air once its mundane body perishes and suffers for its *karma*. However, rituals of *shraddha*, (the obsequial rites) and *pinda daan* can minimise the suffering of the subtle body. *Jivatma* then comes down to earth through its power of gravity and takes new birth and the cycle of birth-death-rebirth continues.

Men and women who acquire *punya* through virtuous actions proceed to *devyan* path after death. They are the illuminated existent of their subtle bodies. Since these men and women have increased divinity in themselves by doing good

actions, they are attracted by the gods and spontaneously proceed to the *devloka*. Subtle body takes shelter into the rays of fire and advances through *archi marg* (rays of light. This ray does not produce heat instead it is the form of illumination. If the person is gentle and pious soul, his subtle body ascends through sun rays. Other name of this sun rays is *archi* (अर्ची) or day (दिवस). Subtle body moves towards *devyan marg* in *shukla-paksha* and from there it again moves towards *Sambatsara* which is bright but soothing ray. It then goes to *adityaloka* and moves towards *swargaloka* or heaven where virtuous souls reside before reincarnation. As time goes by in the *swargaloka*, souls lose their subtle bodies and come down to earth.

However, a few pious souls feel the attraction of *brahmaloka* (it is the highest heavenly realm where the gods or celestial spirits live) in their mind and heart and become successful to enter into that *loka* through the help of *brahmagya* (ब्रह्मज्ञ) person. Region of *brahmaloka* is full with radiant. Inner *samskaras* of subtle body are converted into the form of *sat-chit-ananda* under the influence of this divine light. It waits in this stage till the end of *kalpa* (a *kalpa* is the period of time between the creation and recreation of a world or universe. The process of dissolution and destruction of the universe that takes place at the end of each age or *kalpa* and precedes a new creation) and it merges with the Absolute during *pralaya-kala* (प्रलय काल, time of destruction of the universe). Those who realise the *paramatma* deeply in their life span reach *brahmaloka* through *devyan marg*.

There are certain creatures like, animals, birds, insects, fish etc. that cannot move towards *devyan marg* and *pitriyan marg*. These creatures take birth, survive for sometime and perish. Individual souls pass through many cycles of births and deaths, and live upon this earth as humans, animals and other living beings until they are liberated from the bonds of Nature. There are total 84 lakh *yonis* (योनी means 'a place of origin' in general) through which human beings pass before take birth in human form and go to heaven and hell depending upon their *karma*. Rebirths facilitate the gradual progression of souls from ignorance to knowledge, untruth to truth, darkness to light, and death to immortality. In this way human beings enjoy the bliss while staying in the *brahmaloka*.

Gross body perishes but why does the subtle body alive?

Souls are bound to the cycle of births and deaths mainly because of desires and desire-ridden actions. This cycle of happiness and sorrow continues until the souls become pure. It can be explained in detail through three *sharir* or bodies:

Sthul sharir: It is a gross physical body of *jiva*. Sthul body is made of different parts and organ systems called "*Anga*" and "*Upānga*" in Sanskrit. For the lower animals and microbes, their gross body is microscopic and they have tiny *angas* and *upangas*. Out of 24 elements, the sthul body of living being consists of five gross elements known as *Pancha bhutas*. They are: *Prithvi, Jal, Tej, Vayu, and Akash*. Desires, *vasana* (*vasana* is a behavioural tendency or *karmic* imprint which influences the present behaviour of a person), attachment, egotism, *maya* (the power by which the universe becomes manifest; the illusion or appearance of the phenomenal world), *mamata* (it signifies the maternal affection of a mother towards her children, *Mamata* is a feeling which is universal in all kind of life forms) and many other such things that influence *jiva* in the course of its *karma* in this world and these factors are responsible for the creation of *samaskaras*. Good and bad *samaskaras* or imprints convert *jiva* to *jivatma*. *Jiva* becomes *paramatma* when it crosses all these *samaskaras*; means when it liberates itself from all bondages and *samaskaras*.

All *jivas* get the gross bodies from their parents and as already described that *sthul sharir* or gross body is made of five gross elements. Periosteum (अस्थि) of the gross body comes from earth and visual power and body temperature come from energy. Breathing is the act of air while blood, *pitta* (पित्त), *rasa* (रस) and *kapha* (कफ) derive from the source of water and sky element is the source of the formation of nail and hair. Rest of the body elements too derive from different gross elements. There are different types of gross body consisting of city of nine gates (नवद्वार or the material body). The embodied soul lives in the city of nine gates. There are nine gates in the body: two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, the mouth, the genitals and the anus. There are numerous ways and forms through which this gross body is known. Besides, the gross body is divided into two main categories- male and female. Further, every individual gross body of male and female is introduced in this earth under numerous names, caste, *gotra* (clan), *sheel* (the quality of being modest) and lineage. Thus, this gross body or *sthul sharir* is better known as "I" that symbolises *ahamkara* or ego. Why does human being prefer to call himself as "I"? Reason behind it that *sukhma sharir* exists inside the *sthul sharir*. Now, let me explain what *sukhma sharir* is.

Sukshma sharir: It is subtle, psychological or functional body. For higher animals it is psyche or mental body for the soul. It is not perceptible by our senses or sensory organs but its existence can be inferred and experienced in our day to day life. It is not visible but can be felt in conscious. There are as many as nineteen parts in the *sukshma sharir*. For example, five sense organs of the gross body have their

deeper instincts in the *sukshma sharir*. Also, there are five *karmendriyas* that represent the physical organs of action and the corresponding subtle organs. They are related to the active solar energy of the *manas tattva*. Five organs include speech, hands, feet, excretion, and reproduction. *Sthul* organs are visible while those of subtle organs exist as imprints in the nervous system.

There are five *tanmatras* (तन्मात्रा). These are the subtle elements which are the objects of the five senses: sound, touch, sight or form, taste and smell. The five *tanmatras* are the way in which people sense the objective, tangible world the subtle elements which are the objects of the five senses- sound, touch, sight or form, taste and smell. The five *tanmatras* are the way in which people sense the objective, tangible world. Five *Panchamahabhuta* are - *prithvi* (earth), *jala* (water), *agni* (fire), *vayu* (air) and *akasha* (ether). And last but not the least there are four inner instruments - *manas* (lower mind), *buddhi* (the intellect), *chitta* (the subconscious mind) and *ahamkara* (the empirical ego). All these subtle elements mingle with *prana* and form *jivatma*. Thus, *sukshma sharir* consists of the 19 elements, namely, five *Jnanendriyas*, five *karmendriyas*, five *Tanmatras*, and four *Antahkarans*, namely, *Man*, *Buddhi*, *Chitt*, and *Ahamkara*. According to many, *mana* and *buddhi* are the parts of *sukshma* or subtle body. Sometimes *ahamkar* and *chitt* are not included as part of *sukshma sharir*, which makes the total of 17 elements for *sukshma sharir*. There exists no difference between the subtle bodies of male and female. This subtle body never perishes though its end comes only when it acquires the Supreme Knowledge

Main part of the subtle body is known as *buddhi* (*buddhi* refers to intellect, wisdom and the power of the mind to understand, analyse, discriminate and decide) which is the first wave in the mind and the root of our existence. It is called *samashthi buddhi*. World is one, but everything in it can be looked at from two levels -the individual and the cosmic. The individual level is called '*Vyashti*' (व्यष्टि) and the cosmic is referred to by the word '*Samashthi*' (समष्टि). Both of these pertain to the micro and the macrocosm respectively. All the micro level *buddhi* or intellect are the parts of *samashthi*. Since *buddhi* or intellect originates from natural force or primal creative hence it is *trigunatmak* (त्रिगुणात्मक)- three intrinsic or inherent properties, qualities, or attributes of *maya*; namely, *sattvaguna*, *rajaguna* and *tamaguna*. Human being becomes rational if inherits *Sattvaguna* that denotes having the natural quality of purity and goodness.

Ahamkara comes next. *Ahamkara* refers to the human ego. It enables human being to search its original root. It is sometimes called "the instrument of the spirit"

and can lead to undesirable feelings such as pride, jealousy and hate. Then there are *sankalpa* (intension) and *vikalpa* (imagination or fancy) of *mana*. Each work gets done through *sankalpa*. Even the act of moving one's arm is preceded by the *sankalpa* in the mind. And last stage is *chitta* which is involved always in the retention act.

The subtle body is formless and hence invisible. Yet, it has its existence. Existence of gross body or *sthul sharir* entirely depends on the subtle or *sukshma* body. Gross body cannot act without the wave of the mind of the subtle body. Subtle body, therefore, is the light of truth. Head of the subtle body is *buddhi* and *mana* is its heart. *Tanmatras* means *shabdā* (sound), *roopa* (vision), *sparsha* (touch), *gandha* (smell) and *rasa* (taste) are its powers of visual, hearing, smelling etc. The *bhoga* of *sukshma sharir* is the macro part of the *panchamahabhuta*. This subtle body consists of numerous *bhava*, *samaskaras*, *brūti*, *ruchi* etc (means the behaviour) of the male and female. This form of subtle body is the true power of the *prakriti* and takes birth and rebirth as male and female.

Sinful acts of the subtle body causes suffering of the gross body while virtuous acts make the human being as good or divine soul. This process is endless in subtle body and is the example of good and bad *karmas* and their ultimate results- good *karmas* taking the being to the *brahmaloka* while the bad *karmas* degrading the human being towards the rebirth as lower beings. There are systems of *shraddha* (obsequial rites) and *pindadaan* (pinddaan is a mandatory ritual which is to be performed post death. *Pinddaan* gives an ultimate relief to the departed soul and paves way into the world of peace) in the Hinduism to enable the subtle body to take rebirth. According to the Indian scriptures, subtle body is located between *muladhar* (the root chakra is one of the seven primary chakras according to Hindu *tantrism*) and *sahasrara* (*sahasrara* is the Sanskrit name for the chakra located in the crown area of the skull. It is the seventh and highest of the seven primary chakras. It is also referred to as the crown chakra in English) while the western concept describes it as unconscious mind. *Jiva* cannot attain the Absolute unless the subtle body is totally pure and without *kamana* (*kamana* or desire assimilates all types of emotions within itself) and *vasana* (*vasana* is a behavioural tendency or *kurmic* imprint which influences the present behaviour of a person).

Buddhi, major part of the subtle body always exists around the soul as a result, soul always influences the mind to think rationally. Soul cannot tolerate if the subtle body becomes sinful. Soul represents the *sat-chit-ananda* and is itself is blissful consciousness; therefore, it remits the sins in the gross body through ailments,

sorrow, affliction, pain and suffering etc. Soul always effortlessly acts to return to its original root- Self. Aim of our routine acts is to return to the Endless and thus, soul is continuously influencing *buddhi* to act accordingly. Every *jiva* is a *jivatma* and all the *jivatmas* are the parts of the Absolute which is one and *akhanda* One. We fail to recognise it because of *avidya* (*avidya* is a Sanskrit term used to denote delusion or ignorance). Only a pure and virtuous *jivatma* can realise this Absolute through its pure *buddhi*. There is no other way to know or realise that *jiva* is itself *paramatma*.

There are hundreds and thousands of sinful latent imprints that are collected through transmigrated cycle of births and rebirths surround *buddhi*. This is known as *avarana* or mantle in the scriptures. Human being is unable to recall the immense perceptions of the eternal soul under the influence of *avarana*. Besides, *avarana* makes the *mana* distracted as a result this world seems to be true and permanent to us. This feeling also makes us sceptic about the existence of god.

However, Vedanta never believes in the falsehood of this world. Instead, Vedanta analyses the whole concept. We are confined or restrained in the desires and attachments of our *mana*. *Kamana* and *vasana* float in the *mana* of every male and female and *samaskaras* are developed following the fulfilment of these desires. Finally, these *samaskaras* are responsible for the confinement of the human being. Condition of the human being is similar to that of a spider which stays happily inside its own web, though the human being declares himself as a free person. Human being who controls the organs by the mind, performs *karma-yoga* with the organs of action, being unattached, can excel and is liberated. This liberation is the natural behaviour of the soul but *avidya* overshadows human being through *maya*. Struggle is continuously going on in this world and victory is possible when vices are overpowered through moral principles. Real confinement of the human being is his *mana* and he can be released from it through his virtuous acts and thoughts. This is the only path of liberation.

All our thoughts and acts through the subtle body and make us pure or sinful according to their status- good or bad. Human being collects *punya* (virtues) through pure thoughts that help him to be nearer to the god while *jivatma* attains the *pret-deha* (evil spirit) through the vices. Hence It is, therefore, people should refer to their conscience while doing any act. None can overcome this cycle of *karma-chakra*. Even god cannot get the people rid of this cycle. However, *tapasya* (it is a practical spiritual discipline that involves deep meditation, austerity, self-discipline, and efforts

to reach Self-realization) can take the human being to higher stage and his sinful act, if any, can be rectified.

Countless rays of the Sun spread out their radiation in the space. Likewise, countless jivas, parts of the *paramatma*, are spontaneously taking birth in the *martyuloka* (*Bhu Loka* is the starting world, which is subdivided into *Martya Loka*, *Preta Loka*, *Naraka Loka* and *Pitru Loka*. The lowest *Martya Loka* is the region in which the human beings live with materialized human bodies). *Jiva* is struggling to merge with the *paramatma* immediately after its birth and this is their destiny. Originally, *jiva* does not restrict itself into the world full with sorrows and sufferings. It restlessly struggles to achieve the original bliss and liberation. This fidgety is known as '*jivan-yatra*' (journey through life) and we are more or less aware of this life in this worldly world.

Jiva acquires different *dehas* (bodies) to meet the *paramatma* and it will take hundreds and thousands of decades to end this journey. A *jiva* takes numerous births during this period of long journey and it is called transmigrated cycle of birth-death-rebirth. This signifies death should not be mourned. But *jiva* in this earth is all bound by worldly relations and loves the worldly bodies. Feeling of insecurity and attachment to the near and dear ones compel the *jiva* to mourn the death. These feelings should be overcome in order to pave the way to the dead to return to this world. This system is known as *shraddha* ceremony (obsequial rites). Now we discuss the *karana sharir*.

***Karana sharir* contains *Sukshma deha*, and where does this *karana sharir* exist?**

***Karana Sharir* (कारण शरीर):** All the elements responsible for the creation of *sthul deha* and *sukshma deha* are known as *karana-deha*, also known as casual body. Both the *sthul deha* or gross body and *sukshma deha* or subtle body are formed by abstract molecules. *Mana* and *buddhi* too are abstract. All these abstract molecules are divided into five elements of *prithvi* (earth), *jala* (water), *agni* (fire), *vayu* (air) and *akasha* (sky or ether). We do not know what exactly are they? These elements seem to be different forms of power of conscience. Undivided abstract molecules are the pre-condition of the formation of *pancha-mahabhuta* and here lie the abstract molecules in equilibrium position. In other words, *karan sharir* is a causal body which is the sole cause for the gross and subtle bodies in the next birth of the soul that is not liberated or detached from the causal body. Causal body carries the information or knowledge acquired during the previous births. The infatuation

and intense or deep desires for the worldly objects and pleasures, called *vasana*, goes along with it. Soul is firmly attached to this causal body or *karan sharir*.

This equilibrium position is called as *karan* or *prakriti* and this *prakriti* is also known as *maya* or *avidya*. Origin of the creation or manifestation of the material cosmic world lies in this position of nature's equilibrium. But *paramatma* is known as conscience desiring Himself to be diffused to many in order to involve in *lila-vilas* (the effortless or playful relation between the Absolute, or *brahman*, and the contingent world). Vibration or motion is created in the equilibrium of nature following this desire of the conscience. *Gunas* (*guna* is an attribute of nature, according to Hindu philosophy. In Hinduism, there are three *gunas* that have always existed in the world in both all living and non-living things) are created out of this vibration. There are three *gunas*, which have always been and continue to be present in all things and beings in the world. These three *gunas* are called: *sattva* (goodness, constructive, harmonious), *rajas* (passion, active, confused), and *tamas* (darkness, destructive, chaotic).

Sattva guna denotes having the natural quality of purity and goodness and *sattvic* individuals often strive to deepen, strengthen and mature the soul. *Raja guna* always wants new sensations and variety. *Raja guna* is full of passion and is born out of "trishna" (thirst or intense desire) and "sanga" (attachment). It binds the soul through attachment with action. *Tamas* is the darkness and the crudeness in man. It binds the soul through recklessness, indolence and sleep. All three *gunas* seldom take break and are responsible for the diversity of nature. When the *gunas* are manifested in creation, individual souls come under their influence and begin their onward journey into the world of matter and death. However, all the elements of the *gunas* lie in the *hiranyagarbha* or golden womb (*hiranyagarbha* is also a name of Lord Brahma, because he was born from golden womb and the source of the creation of the whole universe or cosmos in Hindu philosophy).

Activities of the three *gunas* can be disturbed by the human beings through their *tapasya* following which the *prakriti* returns to her equilibrium status. At this stage, *gunas* lose their power of vibration and their fidgety or restlessness is under wane. This stage is called peaceful position and this position is called as *karan sharir* which helps *jivatma* to have the *darshan* of the god. *Karan sharir* or casual body become illuminated following the influence of the *sattva guna* and it has reflection of the divine rays. *Karan sharir* full with pure *sattva guna*, can be able to have the divine *darshan*. Bliss is the food of this casual body and *jivatma* enjoys the

divinity only after having felt the manifestation of the bliss. Position of the *karan sharir* is beneath the crown area of the skull. *Jiva* can attain the *turiya* state (*turiya* is the background that underlies and transcends the three common states of consciousness. The states of consciousness are: waking consciousness, dreaming, and dreamless sleep. Unless we know who we are, we cannot know who realizes *turiya*, nor can we understand what the state of *turiya* really is) only after crossing the crown area of the skull.

Every male and female in this earth contains gross body, subtle body and casual body. Complete absence of the feeling of 'I' and 'egotism' from these three bodies can only bring the liberation leading to meet the *paramatma*, the Absolute. Human being is known as 'walking shiva' when egotism perishes in these three bodies and the *chitta* becomes free of any *samaskara*. Soul survives along with subtle and causal body where *samskaras* are stored. Man would take birth again and again with the help of gross body till all the *samskaras* are consumed.

Elements of the gross body return to their original state after its death. Destruction means the return to the root. *Panchabhutas* too return to their original elements but the *roopa* (vision) of the subtle body is not perished because it is built of *tanmatras*. It is attracted by the abstract elements of the *kamana-vasana* after a specific period and forms a body to return to the earth. How does *jivatma* come back to this earth?

This universe has been created by the wish of the Creator. There have been millions of stars on the sky before our birth. This universe is attracted by one such star and creatures are created. Numerous powers of the *prakriti* have their influence on the destiny of the creatures. These powers of the *prakriti* include, sun, moon, cloud, wind or air, aqua, food grain, scripture, *yajna*, sage, *veda* etc. All these powers are alive doing their respective duties.

Jiva passes through the stages of childhood, youth, infirmity and ageing and at last meets with the death. Its subtle body starts floating on the air immediately after its natural or unnatural death. Air is extremely thin or microscopic element and cannot be realised by sense organs. Air can be realised through touch sense (*sparsha*) while ether is realised by holding an object. Gross body is visible because it is built of earth, water and fire while the subtle body is invisible because it takes shelter under air and ether. However, subtle body possesses all the latent imprints (*karma samaskaras*). These imprints assimilate

the power of conscience and move towards a particular direction. Now question arises where do the collected aerial imprints go to- *brahmaloka*, *satyaloka*, *janaloka*, *tapaloka*, heaven, *chandraloka*? Or do these imprints acquire *preta-dehu* and take shelter in dilapidated temple or building or tree? *Karmic samaskaras* or imprints of the subtle body are fixed in their proper places. In other words, subtle body will acquire a movement and the *karmic samaskaras* continue to write down the destiny based on good and bad. *Jiva* can attain the heaven following its virtuous deeds and it returns to earth once the virtue or merit exhausted. How will *jiva* take birth on earth?

How does *jivatma* take shelter in the sperm of the male?

It is said *jivatma* takes shelter in the cloud after *jiva* completes its *swarga-bhog* or *naraka-bhog*. *Jivatma* comes down to earth through rain. Then it takes shelter in the rice plants and corn plants, as herbs and trees, as scsams and bean plants. In next stage, it takes shelter in the male sperm after the male takes food through grains. Male transfers his sperm to the female body during intercourse and the female reproductive organ with the fertilized egg is implanted and a developing embryo and fetus grows. Process of growing the fetus inside the womb is a magical way and the scriptures described this process as 'great *jyyna*' without which this earth would have no existence of rational creature.

It is said that the Creator selects the parents of *jiva* when it was in *manomaya* body before birth based on its karma *samaskaras*- those whose conduct was pleasant will attain pleasant wombs and those whose behaviour was evil, will attain the wombs of the evil and the impure ones. However, these concepts are very complicated. Very few can realise the process of rebirth and the role of deeds or action in human life.

Where does human being come from?

It should be reminded that astral body (*linga deha*) is formed out of the nature's abstract form. *Sukshma deha* or subtle body derives from the influence of the casual body (*karan*) and the subtle body becomes gross body gradually. *Samaskaras*, the latent imprints that exist in the depth of *jiva*'s mind seem to be the *vibhiti* (sacred ash used in Hindu rituals) of tri-*gunas* (three *gunas* already described above) of the Absolute. It seems that He is enjoying His creation by opening up Himself in a new way. It means that god himself stays inside all the human beings while we are treating

them as individual *jiva* and establish different relations with them for the worldly play in this earth. All this world, deluded by these three states composed of the *gunas*, does not know Him, who is beyond these and immutable.

Here lies the concept of *gunas*. There exist nothing like 'I' and 'my'. *Rajas* and *tamo gunas* are intimated closely with 'I' and 'my' that cause egotism. Human beings are attached with these two *gunas* that bring only sorrows and miseries. This subtle body does not belong to *jiva*. *Jiva* is Self itself and hence is born only once and it is liberated too only once when it attains the knowledge of the *Brahma*. It is the *sthal deha* or gross body that takes birth and rebirth again and again.

Those who are constantly in communion and single minded in devotion enjoying virtuous life can excel and get the inner sight to realise the Absolute. A transcendental world is opened before them which is full of mysteries and realities. Now we discuss the reasons why the sages suggest for certain ceremonies like, *shraddha*.

Whether all the thoughts and deeds are floating on the *viswa-manas*?

Yes. All our deeds done through sense organs, mind and intellect, have their immediate reflection on the *viswa-manas*. Wind or air is invisible *mahajagatik* form but touch or *sparsa* is sensible, sky is invisible but *buddhi* or intellect can be sensed. Same way, *karmic samaskaras* are invisible but these can be admissible in the conscience. All our *samskaras* frequent in our mind before the perceiver or impartial witness having full conscience. Here is an example – a young couple is involved in the conversation of love and it becomes clear to the perceiver the feeling of lust that occupied in the mind of the couple. Though feeling of lust appears through external object, inner conscience of the perceiver immediately gets hold of it. This very truth is realised by all through their inner knowledge. World is one, but everything in it can be looked at from two levels- the individual and the cosmic. The individual level is called '*vyashti*' and the cosmic is referred to by the word '*samashti*'. Both of these pertain to the micro and the macrocosm respectively. Therefore, the role of the impartial perceiver is true at both *vyashti* and *samashti* level. Feeling of lust of the young couple reaches through ether to the *virat* or *samashti* and is written on its mind.

Everything of *jivatma* is written in the mind of the universal consciousness. But how? *Vishwa-manas* or cosmic consciousness is full with waves without which *vyashti* means individual mind cannot do anything. This conscience is known as '*Ritam*' that means absolute truth- i.e. fire always provides heat and energy, never

gives the feeling of cold and this is the ultimate truth. Similarly, water is always cool and air is not visible to the eye and the existence of ether is realised at macro intellect level. *Vishwa-manas* or cosmic consciousness eternally exists everywhere and works with *ritam*, hence, every wave of feeling of *jivatma* reflects on it. It is the reason that cosmic consciousness immediately gets that wave. It is the total identification with body-mind-intellect. All these processes pave the way to one result- collection of good *samaskaras* or bad *samaskaras* based on the deeds of *jivatma*. *Puranas* describe it as 'Chitragupta's Record Book' (Chitragupta is a Hindu god assigned with the task of keeping complete records of actions of human beings on the earth).

All the past lives of *jivatma* including its previous births, form of births (human being or other creatures), places of births, deeds etc. are recorded in a micro chip in the mind of the *vishwa-manas* and these recorded information reflect on the fore once manifested by pure consciousness.

Are the impure or sinful deeds and thoughts responsible for non-liberation of the subtle body?

Yes. Liberation means realisation of God, realisation of the Absolute and above all Self Realisation. In other word, it means human being should try to realise the divinity inherent in him - his relation to God is enmeshed within him and not without. In fact, *vrittis* (*vrittis* refers to the thoughts that surface in the mind, often described as a whirlpool) of the mind influence the Self realisation (*atma-gyan*). Pure state of mind can have the power of fire (*teja-tatva*) that takes it to the stage of illumination. This stage of illumination is placed in the region of milky way of the world of stars. It should be kept in mind that we all are the citizens of this universe, notwithstanding that we reside at different countries and continents. We move around the circumference of the Sun. This solar system exists in the galaxy of stars. Gravity of the Sun abides us. This world consists of 220 nations recognised by the United Nations. Similarly, more that 13,000 crore of galaxies exist on the sky. Energy of these large galaxies touches the pure mind which reaches the *vyom-tattwa* through the constant thinking of the *Brahma*. It means the *mana* becomes the form of ether and it enters the macro form of the *karana* before taking round of the *maha-vishwa*. This macro *karana* is called as *vishwa-manas* which shelters the ether. In other word, man is distanced from himself. His thoughts and perceptions and are influenced by the external forces, the unholy *samaskaras*.

Visible and Invisible thoughts always are playing hide and seek

We think we are alive. But, it is the air that automatically passes through nose and mouth helping the lungs to keep the creatures alive. Birth and death are beyond

anybody's control. Human being cannot know what happens next moment; whether he will survive or meet the death and becomes subtle body. It is the *vishwa-manas* that entirely control all the births and deaths; every minute is under its control. It is beyond our realisation. However, those having acquired the extreme stage where their mind concentration merges with the wave length of *vishwa-manas* through their *sadhana*, can have transcendental experience or feeling. They are able to feel a mysterious relationship between the gross objects of this earth and the objects of invisible world. These invisible objects are the forms of inexpressible bliss reflecting the mind.

Right from the birth we try to perceive everything in this world in material "form" or body as well as within the span of day, month and year. Even using the word "I", we refer to our physical body. Same happens when we look outside to the world, identifying to all the forms of physical entities. We cannot relate to anything without a physical "body" or structure. Even those things we cannot perceive with our sense organs, we try to objectify as an image with our imagination. So our world is only full of objects, bodies, entities and images. These perceptions are the world of *maya* which fastens us so tightly that we are unable to enter into the periphery of *vishwa-manas*. Infact, cycle of birth and death are the riddling creations of *maya*.

Reason of performing shraddha ceremony after death

One of the *mantras* uttered during the cremation of a Hindu body prays to pave the way of *jivatma* towards salvation. However, actual situation is otherwise. Leaving the body the soul now adopts the form of subtle body. *Shraddha* ceremony (obsequial rites) is performed in the honour of this invisible subtle body. It is said that the *Shraddha* ceremony can provide momentum to the deceased soul to ascend to a higher plane of existence. In addition, it is also believed that this ceremony can also satisfy the unfulfilled wishes of the departed so that they are relieved of the traps binding them and preventing them from entering the higher planes. Once their desires are fulfilled, they can progress in pursuing next their goal.

This ceremony is taken place after the completion of mourning period (*ashaucha*). Why is mourning period or *ashaucha* observed? In India when someone dies, close relatives are said to be *ashaucha* for 10 or 15 days because they are very sad. Near ones and the relatives distant themselves from all worldly pleasures and pray for the soul during this period. All types of worldly comforts are given up and the persons confine themselves into pure life during that period. Period of *ashaucha* differs from region to region and caste to caste. However, *sanyasis* do not perform

this rite, neither their *shraddha* ceremony is performed because they have renounced the world. They attain their final status as per their *dharma-samaskaras*.

In Hinduism, mantras or hymns dominate the *shraddha* ceremony. It is believed that subtle bodies, *jivatmas*, accept the items offered in the ceremony and the hymns are the medium of offering and acceptance. Family of the deceased, whose *shraddha* ceremony is performed, offers all the items he was fond of when he was alive. Recital from the religious scriptures is organised and offerings are made. It is believed that the prayers (through mantras) performed by the priests and the relatives of the deceased, take *jivatma* to next stage. It means an ideal *shraddha* is the process through which *jivatma* takes rebirth in a new body. In other word, it means soul gets peace. It is said that *jnyana-yajna* and *nama-yajna* are two media that can pave the way for the soul to get peace immediately.

Sri Krishna says in Bhagavat Gita, “For whatever objects a man thinks of at the final moment, when he leaves the body - that alone does he attain”. And the last thought of the dying person inevitably reflects his inmost desire. These different courses after death have been described to warn people against neglecting the path of Self-knowledge, which alone can confer immortality and eternal peace and happiness.

It is generally found that most of the people try to remember god while taking last breath. However, it is also observed at the same time that general intellect of the people becomes weak and inner *samaskaras* or imprints start floating on the mind restraint the people to utter the name of god. It is advised by the gurus to be religious and virtuous in the life that helps the people remembering god in the end. Leading a religious and virtuous life means not to surrender under worldly pleasures, taking consecration, reciting religious scriptures and doing other religious rituals as part of daily chore. All these activities help people to acquire good results that are taken by *jivas* to next life. According to Hinduism, only present *karma samaskara* passes through life after life. *Jiva's* fate to ascend or descend after death entirely depends on this *samaskara*. As the beings accumulate *karma* continuously, they are bound to the cycle of births and continue their mortal existence birth after birth. It is the biggest truth in the life of a human being, according to Hinduism.

Why is suicide not allowed?

As already described that we all are floating on the big universe riding on the earth. All the *jivatmas* exist in this universe with their conscious Self. *Jivatmas* are

spreading all over in the form of the Absolute like the fire engulfs all over with its sparks. All these are eternal with no birth and death.

Hindus believe that it is only their physical form, which is mortal and can be destroyed. They believe soul ascends to heights inaccessible to humans and it returns to live in a new body. Under the influence of *avidya*, *jivatmas* acquire material body which is restricted by *maya*. However, *jivatmas* desire to return back to their original form, that is *paramatma*, through the cycle of birth and death. When one understands the implications of this knowledge in the proper light, desire to get out of the cycle of birth begins to take root.

Jivatma is eternal, hence it is not perished. It is not slain when the body is slain. These bodies of the eternal, imperishable and embodied Self are said to have an end in order to get their ultimate end. *Jivatmas* are the parts of the infinite. This body consists of both positive and negative *samskaras*. Virtues lead to liberation. In other words, it means virtuous acts take *jivatma* to the lap of *paramatma*.

All *jivatmas* take birth in this universe in the forms of human being who commit virtuous deeds for their self development. Formation of human body provides *jivatmas* an opportunity of self realisation. However, many men and women end up their lives under doleful circumstances and this act is called suicide which is said to be a great sin in Hinduism. Suicide creates obstructions on the path of *jivatma's* advancement towards *paramatma*. Devotion, divine qualities, and worship, which break the bonds of the world, are indeed sufficient to take one to the highest truth. Every person is born with *samskaras* already, which are embedded and imprinted in their minds from past lives. During a person's lifetime, they will gain many more *samskaras*. In this way, *samskaras* are associated with *karmic* theory. Actions or karma that one accumulates in one lifetime will be passed on to one's future reincarnation through one's *samskaras*. Bad *samskaras* lead the human being, if commits suicide, to adopt *preta-deha*. In this *preta-deha*, subtle body of this person passes through untold miseries and sufferings before a new birth. It is because soul is eternal while body is temporary. Therefore, efforts should always be made to make the life fruitful through virtuous deeds to reach the eternal bliss. On the other hand, subtle body that adopts *preta-deha* following suicide, has to wait for long to take a new body. *Shraddha* and *pinda-daan* are two methods that clear the bondage of the *preta-deha* helping him to come down to this earth for a new life.

It is to be remembered that subtle body takes shape after gross body is perished and it again comes down to the earth in the form of gross body after certain time depending upon its *karma-samskaras*. In this way, cycle of birth and death continues

until soul is liberated. This process becomes longer in the suicidal cases. It is advisable not to commit suicide under any circumstances. Nobody has the right to perish his own body. Instead, people must take refuge to god to overcome miseries. It will provide enormous joy preventing people to destroy themselves before natural death.

Reasons of *pinda-daan* in Gaya

Human birth is the rarest gem in this earth because human birth can alone fulfil the life in real sense. Acharya Shankara has termed human birth, wish for the liberation (*moksha*) and *satsang* (being in the company of the truth or seeker of truth) are the rarest opportunities in human life.

Pinda-daan is a mandatory ritual which is to be performed post death. *Pinda-daan* gives an ultimate relief to the departed soul and paves way to next birth because liberation is possible only through *sadhana* of the *paramatma* in life after life. Now, question arises about the importance of Gaya as the supreme place of *pinda-daan*. Is the transmigrated soul satisfied with this *pinda-daan* in Gaya and does *jivatma* come back to this earth again and again? Or does the *pinda-daan* process in Gaya expedite the path of *jivatma* to reach the *paramatma*?

There is a story about the importance of Gaya and its reference to *pinda-daan*. There was a demon named as Gaya whose father was Tripurasur and mother was Pravabati. Gaya was stoic since childhood and went on to perform severe penance on the mountain Kolahal. Indra and other gods became afraid of losing their position. The holy Trinity then approached Gaya wishing to offer a boon. At this, Gaya asked for a unique boon that whoever touches him, no matter he belongs to any caste or race or whether he is qualified for or not would get immediately purified and achieve liberation in this very life. The boon was granted to him.

After sometime, Brahma wanted to perform *yajna* in a purified place and asked whether Gayasur could offer his body for the purpose. Gayasur's body is purified by Vishnu's boon and can be the best place for performing *yajna*. Happy at this opportunity, Gayasur agreed upon.

Gayasur laid down on the ground and a rock was placed on his head where Brahma started his *yajna*. But his body started shaking and Vishnu got the body to rest by his *gada* (*gada* is a club or blunt mace) and put his feet on the rock. He declared the place holy naming it as Gaya after the name of Gayasur. He further

announced that anyone who bathes, offers *pinda* and offers charity will get benefitted and purified immensely more than any other holy places. And that by taking Vishnu's *darshan* as *Gadadhar*, they will be further purified of all accumulated sins. Anyone who performs *shraddha* and offer *pinda-daan* to his forefather here, the deceased ancestors will be absolved from all his sins and will get placed in his next life in *Brahmaloka*. It is said that most of the great men since that time came to Gaya to offer *pinda-daan* to their ancestors.

According to the *vedic* scholars, millions of the Hindus offer *pinda-daan* through *mantras* (hymns) in Gaya and the subtle bodies receive that offering. Hymns are most powerful process or method to pass anything from this world to another world. It's like the remote of modern age that passes the current through ether. Hymns too function in same way and take the offerings (*pinda-daan*) of the subtle bodies through ether. Subtle bodies then reach either of *martyaloka* or *swargaloka* or *brahmaloka* depending on their deeds of previous lives. However, devotion, divine qualities, and worship, which break the bonds of the world, are indeed sufficient to take one to the highest truth. It means all the worldly senses i.e. body, mind, intellect and egotism will have to be offered in the fire through *pinda-daan* to reach the *brahmaloka*. In other words, *pinda* represents gross body, subtle body and casual body.

However, there exists no doubt that sinful soul can take rebirth as human being through proper process of *pinda-daan* in Gaya. Also, virtuous *jivatmas* suffering in hell because of their sinful deeds in previous births can proceed to heaven through the process of proper *pinda-daan*. Infact, final redemption in Hinduism is the detachment of soul from its three bodies consisting of *maya* and its attributes.

Process of Self Realisation

This earth is the world of action (*karmabhumi*) where *jivatmas* come down after having passed their time in heaven or hell. Rebirth of these *jivatmas* as human, animal or other creatures depends upon their past deeds in previous lives. According to Hindu scriptures, individual souls pass through many cycles of births and deaths, and live upon earth as humans, animals and other living beings until they are liberated from the bonds of Nature. Rebirth facilitates the gradual progression of souls from ignorance to knowledge, untruth to truth, darkness to light, and death to immortality. It gives an opportunity to the souls to start a new life on the path of liberation to use the lessons learned in the past lives and work for their liberation. Only few persons can perceive the mystery of *paraloka* based on their *sadhana* (adoration). *Sadhana*

takes them to *hiranyagarva* (cosmic egg or golden egg) or *vishwa-manas* (cosmic mind). Infact, concept of the cycle of birth and death, theory of action and mystery of *paraloka* are very complex subjects and only a handful of *sadhaks* who have attained the highest realm can realise these.

We owe our existence to our physical body. This is why the ancient people referred the body as the earth element, because our life exists in earth. Anything that is gross, solid, inert, it is referred to as body or earth. All the *samaskaras* of our mind are connected to earth. Our mind gets attracted towards water following *sadhana*. *Apa* means water and it represents cloud. This mind, however, is not solid like the body. The mind can change rapidly and flow or alternate between various sense perceptions. The mind also can flow backward in time and leap forward in time. Because of this fluid nature, it is attributed the mind to the water element and it is placed in the region between earth and *chandra-loka*. Next come fire or *teja*. Fire is the source of energy and light. Waves in the mind become illuminated following long *sadhana* and the fire dominates the body. Thus, fire represents intelligence. Without intelligence, mind would just be a random flow of thoughts without any logic in it. In other words, intelligence illuminates the path for the mind to flow logically as a result, *manomaya deha* or *kosha* (*manomaya kosha* is the third of the five layers, or sheaths, of the body. *Manomaya kosha* is the mental sheath, composed of *manas*, meaning "mind". Instinctual consciousness, thoughts and perception are all linked to *manomaya kosha*) becomes larger following the attraction of *hiranyagrabha*. Ether comes in next stage where *manomaya deha* spreads over ether or sky. The sky is the vast open space that accommodates everything. The clear blue sky above us acts as a shelter to the earth in the day, while in night it serves as a gateway to the starry galaxies that exist light years ahead of us. Therefore, sky is associated with consciousness. Without consciousness nothing can exist. Since sky is vast and pure hence mind of the *sadhaka* become pure and it starts adopting the form of *hiranyagarva* though its gross body still exists in earth.

Other name of this *hiranyagarva* is *vishwa-manas* which remain in subtle body in the form of *samasti* (cosmic level). It is the conscious witness that is God. World is one, but everything in it can be looked at from two levels- the individual and the cosmic. The individual level is called '*Vyashiti*' and the cosmic is referred to by the word '*Samashiti*'. Both of these pertain to the micro and the macrocosm respectively. *Jivatma* or *jiva* is the conscious element of *vyasti mana*. This macro element is infinite and full but it is seldom perceived because of the existence of *raja* and *tamo gunas* in subtle body.

Surrender to the Divine Will with complete humility and prayer is the way to go through it all with peace. Inner strength to go through this will come by absolute refuge and constant prayer. Constant prayer and *sadhana* should be for Divine's grace to realise the Self. At this stage, all dirts of the *chitta* (चित्त) are washed away and *jivatma* feels itself in the form of the Absolute. It is known as Self Realisation or *Ishwar darshan* in the term of theology and philosophy.

Anyone can have this *Ishwar darshan* once the *manomay* body becomes totally pure. *Chitta suddhi*, (purification of mind and heart) is therefore, termed as the lone process through which God realisation is made. It is to be kept in mind that God realisation is possible to have certain elements- respect, truth, self restrain, tolerance, concentration, meditation, *japa*, *puja*, prayer etc. All these elements keep the mind peaceful and concentrated and a concentrated mind starts ascending the higher realm breaking the power of gravity.

Earth, water, fire, air, sky, mind, intellect and egotism are the eight divine elements that are said to be imminent to complete the process of *sadhana* in spiritual world. All these elements are regarded as gross and subtle bodies of the god. Among these eight elements, earth means soil, water and fire are visible, air is touchable (feel) and sky or ether related to mind while intellect and egotism are experienced through conscious. Consistency in *sadhana* makes the mind pure which enters into cosmic mind after having crossed the elements of *pancha-mahabhuta*. The pure mind then reaches the *samasti* intellect through pure wave of the cosmic mind. Image of the *paramatma* manifests on the pure *samasti* intellect and a *sadhak* having pure mind, heart and intellect enjoys the Absolute. At this stage, he realises the true form of *jivatma* as well as the cycle of birth and death. In other word, it become crystal clear to him that *jivatma* and *paramatma* are identical. This realisation is called as *brahmagyan* or Self Realisation and it is the goal in everybody's life. Self Realisation makes *jivatma* the epitome of love, purity, knowledge, compassion, respect and bliss. It feels the presence of infinite or the Absolute in all *jivas*. *Jivatma* is always surrounded under divine ecstasy. According to *Shakta* theory (*shaktas* are the worshippers of the goddess, called *Shakti* or *Devi*), it is the total refuge to the *Anandamayee*, Mother Goddess. *Sadhak* feels blessed at this stage.

Ashram Varta

Anandaswarupeshu,

Sharadiya Durgapuja was organised in Kolkata, Agarpara, Kankhal and Ranchi ashrams of the Mother. Likewise, Lakshmipuja and Kalipuja too were organised in all the ashram of the Mother. Annakut festival was observed on November 8 in Varanasi, Delhi, Kankhal and Kolkata ashrams. Religious fervour prevailed all through in all these celebrations.

The week long 69th Sri Sri Samyam Mahavrat (संयम महाव्रत) program was organised from November 16, 2018. Inauguration ceremony of this program was held in Kankhal ashram on November 15 and was attended by many spiritual luminaries including President of Sri Sri Anandamayee Sangh, Swami Achyutanandaji, Swami Parameshwaranandaji of Sadhana Sadan, Dr. Shyamsundar Dasji of Garibdasji Math, Swami Madhavanandaji of Chinmaya Mission of Ranchi, Swami Samatmanandaji of Bhavnagar Chinmaya Mission and Swami Vijayanandaji of Kailas Math. Female inmates of Kanyapeeth chanted from the Veda and Vishuddhadi presented the inaugural songs composed by the Mother. Srimati Gayetri Banerjee (Buludi) recited a composition of Swamis Muktananda Giriji (mother of the Mother)

This song describes Mother as *anadamayee*, a person full with divine joy and bliss. She is our own and we see ourselves as her own. She controls whole of the universe as she is the driving force in our lives and we all are just her followers in this journey. She is pure and unqualified bliss attained through union with the Highest Self. We, however, fail to recognise her though she is always caring. Oh Mother, give us power that we can always keep you in our hearts.

Sri Swapan Ganguly, general secretary of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee Sangh, welcomed the guests and participants while Sri P.K. Mandal, assistant secretary of the Sangh narrated the rules and regulations of the *samyam* (*samyam* literally means that all the dimensions of human personality are taken through process of transformation and beautification, and that state is maintained and developed). Swami Parameshwarananda of Sadhana Sadan said goal of *samyam* is to realise the own self as described in the preaching of the Mother. Swami Madhavananda

of Ranchi Chinmaya Mission stressed on the adoption of '*shat sakar*' (षट् सकार) in our *samyam* (control, integration or restraint). He further explained the words *sadhya* (साध्य - goal), *dhyay* (ध्याय - intense aspiration) and *sadhak* (spiritual practitioner). He said those driven by *dhyass* for the *sadhya* (साध्य) are *sadhaks*. Physical body, mind and intellect lead to *sadhana* (disciplined and dedicated practice or learning, especially in religion) to achieve the spiritual goal that is known as *siddhi* (सिद्धि).

Shyamsundardasji spoke on *samyam* while Swami Achyutananda offered *ashirvachan* to the *vratis*. Session concluded with a song and *pranam* mantra presented by Buludi and her team.

Next morning, on November 16, began with *ushakirtan*. Also held puja of the Mother in Anandajyoti Peetham, Veda recital in Shankaracharya hall, meditation, recitation from Gita, Chandi and Upanishad. Swami Madhavananda explained Kathopanishad with its meaning by breaking each syllable. The name Upanishada is composed of the terms of *upa* (near), and *shad* (to sit) meaning something like 'sitting down near'. It is inspired by the action of sitting at the feet of an illuminated guru or teacher to engage in a session of spiritual instructions. He further threw light on the depth meaning of Upanishadas that remove *ahamkara* (egotism) and *agyan* (ignorance) and help human being to merge with the Absolute. In other words, it is the path through which *atma* (soul) merges with *paramatma* (Absolute). He selected as many as 37 slokas of Kathopanishada's 119 slokas and explained in a simple way. In a nut shell, Swami Madhavananda explained the following:

Nirgun Nirakar (निर्गुण निराकार) : (*Brahma Paramatma*- ब्रह्म परमात्मा)

Sagun Nirakar (सगुण निराकार) : (*Ishwar Mayadhish* - ईश्वर मायाधीश)

Sagun Sakar (सगुण साकार) : (*Avatar* - Jagannath is *parambrahma* (परब्रह्म), Balbhadra is *shabdabrahma* (शब्दब्रह्म) and Subhadra is *brahmadevya bhakti swarupa* (ब्रह्मदेव्या भक्तिस्वरूपा)

He then spoke on four core words of the Vedanta:

Aham Brahamsmi (अहं ब्रह्मस्मि) : from Yajurveda-Vrihadaranyaka Upanishada (it's a statement of experience)

Ayamatmabrahma (अयमात्माब्रह्म) : from Atharvaveda-Mandukya Upanishada (it's a suggestive meaning)

Prgyanmbrahma (प्रज्ञानंब्रह्म) : from Rigveda-Aitreya Upanishada (it's a technical statement)

Tattvamasi (तत्त्वमसी) : from Samaveda-Chhandogya Upanishada (it's

a preaching statement)

Next came Swami Divyananda, Mahamandaleshwar of Kailash Math. He said that *manushya yoni* (human species) is the best one in the world and it will take the human being to the *paramatma* means God. Therefore, human being must do virtuous deeds to reach to the *paramatma*. Swami Vijayananda explained Matsya Purana in the evening session.

Second day started with the recital of Upanishadas followed by the lecture of Swami Parameshwarananda of Sadhana Sadan. He explained the aims of observing the *samyam* - संयम (it is progressively deeper state of absorption). He called upon the participants to take refuge to that immortal who is full of knowledge and bliss and is wholly existent. It simply means that everybody must take refuge to the Absolute, the ultimate goal. He said there was no need to reform others, instead every one must reform him/herself. You are all fortunate to have the grace of the Mother and observing this vow, he stated.

Swami Padmanabhananda of Divya Jivan Sangh and Swami Shivananda of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee Sangh spoke in English on the third day. Sri Mohanchaitanya of Sadhana Sangh too spoke on this occasion.

Br. Samatmananda of Bhavnagar Chinmaya Mission delivered discourse on *Karmayoga* of Bhagavat Gita daily in the evening during the program. Besides, Swami Madhavananda Puri nicely explained 51 slokas on Jagannathdev described in *Utkalkhand* of Skanda Purana in all the seven nights. All the participants recited the slokas with him. Swami Achyutananda, Br. Vishuddhadi, Br. Gunita, Br. Geeta, Sri Patanda, Sri Swapanda and Sri Sumuda narrated their reminiscences on the Mother every night.

Br. Geeta said this *samyam mahavrat* (संयम महाव्रत) is the result of the grace and blessing of Sri Sri Mother. *samyam vrat* simply means to know myself and to go deep into myself. She then read out the diary of Gurupriyadidi as well as the book of Sri. Amulya Duttgupta:

Once one foreign woman asked the Mother whether she would get any result following the japa of *pranava mantra*? Mother replied, "*Pranava* is the root of everything, so, it covers all the things and people. However, concept of our *sanatana* Hindu religion is not totally reflected in the Christianity and Islam". The woman again said that she did'nt have the Hindu *samaskaras* (संस्कार). Mother said she already explained and there should not be any other question.

Br. Geeta quoted from the diary of Gurupriyadidi:

Grandmother (mother the Mother), Virajananda, Lalita (Miss Pathak) and

myself were sitting together and writing a book of Bhaiji when the reference of the birth of the Mother was raised. Grandmother explained different stages of her pregnancy (when the Mother was in her womb). She said, "Many gods, goddesses, avatars, saints etc. used to come in my dreams very often at that time. After her birth, I saw these figures came to my home and I welcome them in our traditional way. I visualised different mudras (hand gestures used to represent different deities) of the gods and goddesses and found your Mother in the midst of them. Some of them were in folded hands." Our Mother was lying by our side but she all of a sudden moved upwards and said, "Don't tell such thing to this physical body. To whom the deities and avatars pray in folded hands?" We told they offered their respect to themselves. Mother smiled like a child and agreed with us. But immediately she became restless and her fingers became stiff and hard like iron and tears rolling down her cheek. I found both of her hands too stiff. Her hands became normal after some time and those became '*vajra mushthi*' (one who is grasping a thunder bolt or one whose clenched fist is like a diamond).

We simultaneously remembered another incident of '*vajra mushthi*'. It happened near Parade Ground in Dehardun on July 16, 1966. Mother was travelling along with her disciples and devotees in a car. A bus suddenly moved towards the car and was about to head on collision. Mother was in front seat by the side of the driver in the car. Her small hand automatically moved upwards to prevent the bus. A vibration was created from head to bottom in her body immediately after her hand gesture. It is because that the action was linked with the root, Mother explained later with a smile exclaiming how it was possible to prevent a big bus merely by raising hand! Her hand then became '*vajra mushthi*'. Philosophically, it means Mother first raised her hand to prevent an accident and then fist the hand to bring back the '*sthit*'- the life-giver, duration of life of the maintenance of universal creation. Mother explained later on this incidence, "Hand gesture brought the driver to his sense and he successfully controlled his wheel averting an accident. His move saved lives of both the vehicles," Mother's hand was injured but she did not explain the reason.

Extracts from the book of Sri Amulya Duttgupta were read out. Topic was 'how the *guru* stays always with his disciples'? To this question, Mother said, "Existence of *guru* is everywhere-both in molecule and in atom. Thus, *guru* always stays with his pupils or disciples. In another sense, *guru* and *shishya* are identical, therefore, *guru* stays with his disciples. *Guru* gives *mantra* to his disciples, hence always stays with them. *Guru* whose form is one whole which is indivisible present everywhere."

Homage

ENTRENCHED IN BHAKTI OF MAA



UTTARABEN CHINUBHAI

The life of Smt. Uttaraben, who was totally entrenched in the devotion of the venerable Shree Shree Anandamayee Maa has become a beacon of light for people in the path of Bhakti.

Being the grand-daughter of the famous litterateur and critic, the late Rao Bahadur Keshavlal Harshadray Dhruva and the daughter of the late Smt Vinodineeben and Shri Vilochan Dhruva, sister of Shri Amal Dhruva, Uttaraben was married in the year 1967 to Shree Achyut Chinubhai, the son of Sir (Girijaprasad) Chinubhai Madhowlal, 2nd Baronet and the grandson of the noted philanthropist and one of the three or four known initiated "Poornabhishikta" of that time in the path of Shree Vidya. Sir Chinubhai Madhowlal the 1st Baronet.

The inherent qualities of erudition and devotion were in her genes and because of her deeds of the past, her lifespan of 74 years from 1944 to 2018 turned out to be the one befitting an accomplished devotee.

She did M. A. in Hindi from Banaras Hindu University and 'Sahitya Ratna', also in Hindi, conducted by Rashtrabhasha Prachar Samitee. During her visit to Banaras for her M. A. examination in the year 1967 accompanied by her husband Achyut, she had her first 'Darshan' of Shree Shree Maa. Her husband Achyut Chinubhai as well as her own grandmother Smt. Jasvidya were disciples of Paramahansa Hansdevji Avadhoot, but she was destined to be blessed by Shree

Shree Maa. Mysterious are the ways how divinity leads one to the destination.

Being interested in our ancient scriptures, initially she used to go to Swami Chinmayanandaji. It was Swami Chinmayanandaji who first suggested to her that she should go to Shree Shree Anandamayee Maa.

After gaining her first darshan, she would often visit Shree Shree Maa. Her attraction towards Maa gradually became intense. It is not necessary to narrate to Maa's devotees how that attraction to Maa pulls one to Her. Even to feel that pull towards Maa is a divine experience in itself.

She appeared as 'Cover Girl' of the famous magazine *Femina* sometime in the year 1965-66 and after her marriage, who can forget the photographs of their wedding published in *The Illustrated Weekly* of India of the Times group for an article covering various traditions of the Naagar community wherein she appeared as a bride in full splendour? The same Uttaraben appeared transformed in a simple white attire after 1975. And on the occasion of the reception pursuant to the *Upanayana Samskara* of her two grandsons, Aniruddh and Aadya, the two sons of her son Aneesh, though she put on a silk sarce, we saw her in the white attire.

Her white attire reflected her virtuous persona. Her detachment from worldly matters was so profound that she wanted to lead the life of a 'Brahmcharini' with Shree Shree Maa. But at the indication of Shree Shree Maa, she continued her family life with an attitude of detachment. She got the much needed cooperation from her daughter-in-law Chaitali who took over the responsibility and duty of the household.

Her daily routine commenced with prayers and meditation from early morning and she sincerely adhered to a fixed schedule thereafter. Evening 6 PM to 9PM was also dedicated to her pious activity in solitude within the confines of her room that the family had on a lighter note named her "Goofa".

Bhavabhooti writes in "Uttar-ramacharita" that the life of an individual leading family life, but undertaking daily religious commitments, cannot remain independent and is regulated by specific set of rules.

"Kintvanushthaana nityatvam swatantryamapakarshati"

Since the last about seven years she used to hold Geeta Satsang once a week from 11AM to 1PM wherein she would chant the Geeta with other participants and explain the meaning.

She also wrote poems wherein she would pour her emotions like the rising waves of an ocean. She had also written in 1996 a thesis in Hindi with the title "Johan se Akash Shuru Hota Hai Aur Kai Hisson Vala Aadmi". In some of her poems there is a touch of Upanishads.

She used to paint and had held a solo exhibition of her paintings in the School of Architecture, Ahmedabad. She taught fabric painting and took painting classes for children.

In the year 2007 she toured Bangladesh, the birthplace of Shree Shree Maa. She went along with eight other devotees to see the places that were blessed by the lotus feet of Shree Shree Maa for 36 years. After experiencing the divine vibrations in the atmosphere there, she wrote a beautiful booklet in Gujarati describing that journey. The title of the booklet was: 'Sri Sri Anandamayee Jambhumi-Lilabhumi, Bangladeshi Yatera'.

In 2017 she translated the book of the late Geeta Bhattacharya from Bengali into very simple and lucid Gujarati. This book is published by Ramakrishna Seva Samiti under the title 'Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee Pad Prantama'.

She was editing the quarterly magazine "Amrutvarta" very efficiently. Her views on Hindu philosophy reflected therein have been useful. She was so committed to her work that she had already prepared and finalized the January 2019 edition of the magazine.

Finally her transition to "Matrulok" took place on 10th December, 2018.

Does death come wearing a cloak of darkness to make one shed the old body and to replace it with new and make one realize that "I am not this body but an entity quite distinct and separate from this body"? Or is it a divine play of Maa to settle the account of past Karma of Her devotees and lead them from the bondages to ultimate liberation? Be it as it may, for who can fathom what divinity has in store for one? We can only bow down in reverence and humility before Maa and her dedicated devotees of the like of Our Uttaraben.

Vaidehi Adhyaru