

MA ANANDAMAYEE
AMRIT VARTA

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

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3. The journal mainly publishes articles related to Shree Shree Ma. We invite articles from devotees about their divine experience of Shree Shree Ma and also on religious literature of any country or religion.
4. Efforts are being made to make the journal more attractive, interesting, appealing and lucid and to spread the nectorial preaching of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee for the benefit of mankind in all fields of life, whether worldly or spiritual.
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"Hari-katha hi kathia aur sab vritha vyatha."
 - Ma Anandamayee
*(To talk of God alone is worthwhile;
 all else is in vain and leads to pain)*

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*To perform one's duties is a good thing. At the same time one has to be
 mindful of Man's real duty. Set your mind on Him and contemplate
 Him at all times. Whenever practicable seek satsang – the company
 of sages, saints and seekers after Truth.*

- Ma Anandamayee

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Ma Anandamayee*

Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram – Varanasi.

*Om Sarva Swarupe Sarveshe, Sarva Shakti Samanvite,
Bhaye Bhyastrāti No Devi, Durge Devi Namostute!*

Respected Brothers and Sisters,

The annual *Shree Shree Bāsanti Durga Mahotsav* which was first held here in 1944 during the *Chaitra-Navrātri*, with Shree Shree Ma's infinite grace will be celebrated this year too from 30th March Monday to 3rd April Friday, 2020 in the *Chandi-Mandap* of the Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Varanasi. In continuation, the especial function of the worship of *Shree Shree Mā Annapurnā Devi*, the principal deity of our ashram will be celebrated on 1st April Wednesday, 2020.

We hope to receive your active support in this auspicious function. All those who intend to participate in this holy function are requested to contact us as early as possible.

Jai Ma!
Yours in Matri-Seva,
Members of the Managing Committee,
S.S.M.A. Ashram, Varanasi.

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It is our sincere request to all subscribers who have not sent their subscriptions for the year 2020 and ahead, to send the same at the earliest. The curious readers are also requested to subscribe for the magazine.

--- Managing Editor, 'Ma Anandamayee Amrit Varta'



Matri – Vani

1. Nobody can possibly be superior to God. Whatever is done is done by He Himself. No one has the power to do anything, bear this in mind. Depend upon God. So long as you feel that someone may do something that may harm you, practice the repetition of the *Name* of your *Ishta* (Beloved God) a little more often than you would do otherwise. To place your reliance on your *Ishta* is the only thing to be done under all circumstances.
2. Completely depend on Him. In whatever circumstances you may find yourself sustain the remembrance of Him only. Let this be your prayer: "Lord, Thou hast been pleased to come to me in the form of sickness. Grant me the strength to bear it, gird me with patience and give me the understanding that it is Thou who art dwelling within me in this guise!"
3. Conditioned by *sanskārs* (tendencies brought over from former births) everyone is searching for a direction in life. It is man's duty to embrace the most excellent and to abandon what is merely pleasing to the senses. Man's life must be oriented towards finding his own Self. To find one's Self means to find God.
4. Regarding all beings as His forms, with a spirit of service and utter calm serve the Lord, serve the Lord, serve the Lord and only Him. In this manner as you grow more and more perfect in your capacity of a servant of the Lord; fondness, love and devotion for Him as well as implicit faith will awaken in you.
5. You are bound to take whichever path He has chosen for you. Nobody can do anything according to his own sweet will. He is all gracious, all compassionate; towards Himself is the path in which He pulls you. And to realize Him is the goal; Him, Divinity Himself.
6. Happiness that depends on anything outside of you, be it your family, money, fame, friends or anything else, cannot last. But to find happiness in Him who is everywhere, who is all-pervading, your own Self, is real happiness.
7. While working in this world, you can do one thing: whatever you do throughout the day, endeavour to do it in a spirit of service. Serve God in everyone, regard everyone and everything as manifestations of Him and serve Him by whatever work you undertake. If you live with this attitude of mind, the path to Reality will open out before you.
8. Occupation with worldly material acts like slow poison. Gradually without one's noticing it, it leads to death. Choose the path of Immortality, take any path according to your temperament, it will lead you to the Realization of the Self.
9. By persevering in *sadhanā* (spiritual practice) the *Aham* 'I' will be transformed into *Soham* 'I am That'. Advancing along the path of devotion the wayward servant will be transformed into the Eternal Servant of the Lord.

10. You imagine that you are the doer of your actions; this indicates the existence of the ego, the worldly 'I' in you. The result of egoism is blindness. The attitude 'I am the Lord's eternal servant', there also is a duality, but the worldly 'I' does not exist. Not until the 'I' is perfect, in other words not unless '*Aham Brahma-asmi*' (I am the *Brahma*) has been realized will the ego be destroyed from its root.

11. It is necessary to try and dedicate to the Supreme every single action of one's daily life. From the moment one wakes up in the morning till one falls asleep at night one should endeavour to sustain this attitude of mind. By doing so one will come to feel; how can I offer Him greed, anger and other undesirable qualities? To Him who is so infinitely dear to me, who is my very own? Does one give that which is evil to one's nearest and dearest? As one continues to reflect in this way one finally becomes incapable of doing anything evil or undesirable. Do you know what he does at that fortunate moment? Out of your meekness he makes you perfect, and then nothing remains to be desired or achieved. The moment your self-dedication becomes complete, at that very instant occurs the revelation of the indivisible, unbroken Perfection which is ever revealed by the Self.

12. Just as a leech hooks on to something else before leaving its original place, so also the soul at the time of leaving the body hooks on to a new existence according to the state of mind of the dying person. But while dying one has no control over one's thought. It will automatically dwell where it normally dwells. Hence one has to practice the Presence of God while one is fit and well.

13. Some persons do not like to sit down and do *japa*. For them, it is advisable to purify their mind through *seva* (service to man in the name of God). Also there is such a saying that, unless the mind is purified to some extent through *japa*, service to God in man i.e. *seva*, cannot be accomplished in the proper manner. *Seva* and *Japa* are both necessary. One is supplementary to the other. Together they form an integral *sadhanā*.

* * * *

Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Prasanga

Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

(continued from before)

28th Paush 1355, Wednesday (A.D. 12-1-1949)

Today did not go to the Ashram as I was having fever. Tomorrow is *Pāush-Sankrānti* (the last day of the month of *Paush*), the third year of *Sāvitrī-yagna* will commence and hence there will be a lot of festivity in the Ashram, but it will not be possible for me to be present there.

29th Paush 1355, Wednesday (A.D. 13-1-1949)

Today I have no fever. But the cold feeling is persisting. All members of our house will have *prasād* in the ashram. I was lying down in my house when around 3pm in the noon my friend Shri Manmohan came and informed that Ma was calling me. Immediately I left for the Ashram with him. The Ashram was crowded with people. The *Yagna-Shālā* was beautifully decorated with garlands. Flags were flying on the roof and the pillars of the *Yagna-Shālā*. Various images were printed on the flags. The vehicles of the gods like *Indra*, *Varun*, etc., who were worshipped during the *yagna*, were depicted on the flags. Manmohan took me to the second floor where I had *darshan* of Shree Shree Ma. Observing my face Ma said, "Seems you have become very weak. Go downstairs have *polāo* (fried rice) *prasād* and move around, later have *neem 'r laddoo* (balls made of *Neem* leaves)." Saying this Ma laughed. Then Ma ordered Shri Binoy Sen, Manmohan and myself to go downstairs. There we sat down to have *prasād* and I had everything including *pulāo* and sweets. Ma came down once and asked me not to eat too much.

After meals I returned back to my house when Smt Buni came and gave two balls of *neem*. I was fascinated to observe the infinite grace of Shree Shree Ma. After this too one day Ma sent *prasād* to my home both for lunch and dinner and one day evening came to see the condition of my house. I cannot stop expressing the various ways in which Ma was blessing this worthless child.

8th Maagh 1355, Monday (A.D. 17-1-1949)

Today around 11 am Shri Krishnaprem came to meet Shree Shree Ma. Ma was sitting in the hall. When Shri Krishnaprem paid obeisance, Ma too smiled saying "*namah Narayan namah Narayan*." He was dressed as a *vaishnav*, *tilak* on his forehead, a necklace of beads on his neck and dressed in saffron. Quite a cheerful look. Spoke fluent Bengali. On Shree Shree Ma's request sang a song, the *kirtan* was quite emotional. Ma requested him to come the next day too and bring along his pupil Krishnarpita too.

Is *Kaal nitya*? (Is aeon eternal?)

In the evening after the *pāth* (reading of scripture) there was a pious discussion for some time. Vaidyanath Shastri Mahasaya asked Ma, "Is *Kaal* (time or aeon) eternal?"

Ma: What do you understand by *Kaal*? *Sokaal* (morning), *Bikaal* (evening), *Sheetkaal* (winter), *Grishmkaal* (summer) all these are *kaal* too, or something else?

Shastri: I want to call *Kaal* that, on whom *khand-kaal* (partial periods) like *Sokaal*, *Bikaal*, etc., are dependant. This is *nirākār* (formless) like the sky and it itself is eternal.

Ma: What name will you give to Him, on whom these partial periods are dependant?

Shastri: Will call Him *MahaKaal*.

Ma: On whom is this *MahaKaal* dependant? There is a state beyond *Kaal*. And the way in which you want to describe *Kaal* as eternal in that way everything is eternal because everything is *Brahma*; and in that sense everything is eternal. *Kaal* cannot be decided in this manner. And calling *Kaal* as *nirākār* (formless), this body (i.e. Ma) calls *Kaal* as *sākār* and it is *sagun* (with all attributes). And this *Kaal* and *MahaKaal* whatever you call, that also has an end. Whose end is non-existent, He Himself is *nitya* (eternal) and He Himself is *Brahma*."

Ma spoke of several topics in this way. Shastri Mahasaya unable to defeat Ma in the debate said, "Unfortunate you have not been educated."

Ma: I would have said that which has been taught, if educated; now I say according to my own *bhaav* (emotions).

5th Maagh 1355, Tuesday (AD. 18-1-1949)

It was 11:30am by the time I reached Ashram after finishing marketing and bathing etc. On reaching the Ashram saw Shri Krishnaprem and Krishnarpiita his disciple and daughter of his *Guru*, leaving the Ashram after paying obeisance to Ma. They were supposed to visit today.

***Advaitavaad* (non-duality) and *Bhaktitwa* (essence of devotion)**

After Shri Krishnaprem took leave from the Ashram, Devshankar babu said to Ma, "The topic of *Ahetuki kripā* (unconditional grace) that was discussed earlier, a similar explanation like that is present in the *Srimad-Bhagwat*, there *bhakti* (devotion) has been divided into various parts and one type of *bhakti* has been called as *nirgun bhakti* (devotion of the Formless). Other devotions have a motivated relation but in *nirgun bhakti* there is no motivated relation. It is the *Ātmā's* Absolute or Divine state. The *Vaishnava's* of course do not accept it because they want to keep themselves separate from the Divine. They want to be a step lower than the Divine and maintain a *Prabhu-Das* (God and servant) type relation."

Ma: All this relation of God-servant etc., you mentioned, remember that without the presence of God one cannot become servant. *Hanumān* had said that, 'In the context of the *Paramātmā* (the Lord) Rama and myself are one, again in one condition I am a fraction, He is *Purna* (Absolute), I am *dās* (servant), He is the Lord.' All these illuminate only one truth. Just as the knowledge of the partial cannot be obtained without the presence of the Absolute, similarly without knowing the Lord one cannot become the servant. Knowing God means to become God. Again that you are going done one step and separating God from servant, this too is true from your point of view. Whatever one says, from his point of view, that is only true. (Everyone laughs). In fact there is no

separate high or low. Everything is equal, everything is He Himself, He Himself is the Lord, He Himself is devotion, He is Himself.

The way to attaining God

A *Parsi* gentleman came from Bombay (presently Mumbai) to have Ma's *darshan*. Heard that he was a Principal Secretary. He questioned Ma, "Mataji, 'He Himself' 'He Himself' that you are saying, what is the way to know Him or attain Him?"

Ma: To seek refuge in the *Guru*. Without the *Guru* it is not possible. He alone will catch hold of your hand and lead you.

A lady: Mataji, who is your *Guru*?

Ma: (Pointing towards me) See, she is asking who is my *Guru*? I say birds and animals, flies and insects, whatever exists all are my *Guru*. On saying *Guru* we mean God. Whatever is present in the universe all are God's form. Hence this body is also my *Guru*.

The gentleman: Those who are not habituated to visualizing in this manner what will they do? If due to my ill-fate I do not meet any *mahapurush* then what will I have to do?

Ma: *Pitaji*, I say that you undertake *satsang* (company of pious people). Undertake the company of those who are trying to attain God. Don't you say that the germs of an illness enter from one person to another and make him ill too. The fruits of *satsang* is also like that. Keeping company of pious people, their pious germs entering within you will kill the germs of materialistic desires. In fact we are all patients. Do not people say that, where there is name of *Ram* there itself is *ārām* (comfort), and where there is no *Ram* there only discomfort exists. Always remain occupied with *satsang* and with pious conversations, then the path to attain Him will be realized.

The gentleman: When the mind moves from one resolution to another then the void that occurs after the termination of one resolution and before the beginning of the other, that itself is *Maha-shunya* (Ultimate void) and that only is *Brahma*, can I contemplate in this manner?

Ma: Just by contemplating you cannot attain *Maha-shunya*. The mind is even present in the gap that you are talking about. (Pointing towards a lady) Yesterday I was telling her a similar fact. The mind can be put to use for both untying and tying a knot. The mind only creates knots if it concentrates on material thoughts. And if the mind contemplates on God then it helps in untying the knots. The attitude of the mind is to move in various directions. Again within this 'many' also exists 'One'. For example take a tree; in spite of having many branches its root is one and there is a connection with every tip of the tree. The funny part is that, concentrating on any point on the tree, you will see that, that itself, will lead you to the root. Similarly, with whatever you concentrate single-mindedly, you will see, there itself the mind has dissolved and His presence has occurred. He alone is present everywhere in the form of Self-illumination. Hence attaining Him means to remove the veil. If with any clay tumbler an oil lamp is kept covered then the light of that lamp is not revealed; but at the very instant the tumbler is broken immediately the light of the lamp is revealed. Similarly call Him *Brahma*, call Him

God, He exists everywhere in the Self-illuminated form, the very instant the veil is eliminated, then and there itself His revelation occurs. Hence the mind has to be utilized to get rid of this veil. Just as when a stone is rubbed and little by little its transformation takes place, similarly keeping the mind engaged in Godly thoughts the transformation of the mind also occurs.

Seeing that it was 12:00 noon the discussion stopped. Everyone got up and prepared to leave. While the discussion was going on a lady wanting to ask a question to Ma, though trying persistently was not able to catch Ma's attention. Now as everyone was departing Ma suddenly looking at her said, "Mother, you had a certain question that was not attended. Come, tell it now." Satisfied the lady went near Ma and said, "Mataji, some say that the *Gita* is the *Guru*, some say the 'name' of *Ram*, again some say a saint is a *Guru*, which among these to consider as a *Guru*?"

Ma: Let me tell you in simple words, on whom you have the maximum reverence, before whom your head bows down, you accept him as the *Guru*. Obey his commands without any reasoning. If after considering somebody as your *Guru*, you reason on his words, then know that a *Guru* has not been formed. How it is, you know? Don't you give marriage to your daughter? As long as the marriage is not occurring, till then there is a search for a husband. Once the marriage is over then there is no question of a search. As long as this search is present till then, one can say the marriage has not occurred. Similarly, whom you accept as your *Guru* obey his instructions without any reasoning. He will catch your hand and lead you to the Lord, whether it is in one birth or in fifty births. Hence it will be your duty that, whatever he says obey them, without aiming at the outcome.

Ma continued in this manner for some time. The lady extremely satisfied departed after paying obeisance to Ma. We also returned back.

(to be continued)

* * * *

"Relative happiness, which is happiness depending on anything, must end in grief. It is man's duty to mediate on God, who is Peace itself. Have you not seen what life in this world is? If anything is to be had, whatsoever, in whatever way, it must be had of Him alone."

- Ma Anandamayee

Samyam Saptāh Mahavrata

Somesh Ch. Banerjee

'*Samyam Saptāh Mahavrata*' means to take a vow to abstain (*vrata*) from worldliness and to observe self-discipline (*samyam*) for a week (*saptāh*) and strive towards spiritual progress. Ma said, "The purpose of this is to know the Self, to merge with the Self, to elevate one's own spiritual life by following in all respects, truth, non-violence, celibacy and to help others for their spiritual upliftment."

The idea of this Mahavrata occurred a long time ago when Shree Ma was in Shahbagh at Dhaka. Ma always stressed on the point that aspirants and devotees (*sadhakās*) should observe self-discipline, at least once or twice a month. Ma said that the auspicious months of *Vaishakh*, *Shravan*, *Kartik* and *Magh* of the Indian calendar, were most helpful for observing self-discipline. During such times, one must avoid pampering the palate, refrain from anger, greed and any kind of falsehood and maintain strict celibacy. Men should consider women as *Bhagwati* and children as *Gopal*.

Years later, Maharaja of Solan, Durga Singhji (Yogi bhai) came forward with the idea that the devotees observe self-discipline and perform *sadhana* collectively for a week in the presence of Ma. With Ma's consent and Her grace, the *Samyam Saptaha* was organized for a week on an annual basis from *ashtami* to *poornima tithi* (eighth to fifteenth, the full moon day of the Indian calendar) after the Diwali function.

In the holy presence of Ma, the first *Samyam Saptāh* (week of self-restraint) was held in Varanasi Ashram from 6th to 12th August, 1952. During this *Samyam*, at the end of the *Dhyān* (meditation), Shree Ma had slowly chanted the following hymn:

He Pita, He Hita, He Brahma Tatvam. (Oh Father, Oh Well-wisher, Oh Essence of God).

He Pita, He Hita, He Brahma Bhutam. (Oh Father, Oh Well-wisher, Oh the God in existence).

He Pita, He Hita, He Brahma Swarupam. (Oh Father, Oh Well-wisher, Oh God's Reality).

Ma revealed that a beautiful dusky little child in subtle form sang these words to Her and Ma sang it in the tune as sung by him. Since then, this hymn is chanted after the hour long *Dhyān* to stir the devotees out of the stillness of their meditation. It is not chanted at any other occasion. One day, on one of the *Samyams*, Ma had said, "*Samyam Saptāh* is the medicine for curing *bhaav-rog*, the pains and ills of worldly life. We all are patients of *bhaav-rog*, experiencing troubles of life and death, pleasures and pain, losses and gains. The Mahatmas are the doctors, the *vratis* (participants) are the patients, religious discourse and discussion are the medicine and the guidance given to search the 'Self', is the way to get the remedy."

Persons from any religion desiring spiritual progress are allowed to participate in this weeklong *sadhana*. This much-awaited function is held every year in the Kankhal Ashram. Learned Mahatamas are invited to deliver lectures on religious topics for the *vratis*. Everyone attending the function feel the presence of Ma in spite of Her physical absence.

Shree Shree Anandamayee Ma Bliss-permeated Mother

Brahmacharini Aruna Pandya

“Divine Consciousness” sparkling in perfect purity, bewildering in depth and diversity manifested itself in the form of an infant girl, in a small village named Khcora, now in Bangladesh in the early hours of 30th April, 1968.

Her life from the little ‘Nirmala’ to the world acclaimed ‘Shree Shree Anandamayee Ma’ is a revelation, a ‘play’ or ‘*lila*’ of the Self with the Self in a ‘body’ which was also none other than the ‘Self’ or Pure Consciousness. Being desireless, the very cause for a material body is absent.

She was a ‘Being’ in whom everything happened by ‘itself’. She was completely devoid of ‘I’-ness. She was ever-active and yet not a ‘Doer’. The ‘I’ just did not exist. Totally desireless one expects no urge for action in Her and yet, She was ever busy. Every action was a response to a spiritual call, to meet the spiritual need of man.

Ma says, “This body, is an instrument, howsoever, you play, you shall hear”.

The *Yog Vasistha* says- ‘*Brahma cid brahma ca maro brahma vijnanvastu ca brahmartho brahma*’. ‘*sadas ca brahma cid brahma dhatavah*’ — (Consciousness is Brahma, the mind is Brahma, the intellect is Brahma, Brahma alone is the substance. Sound or word is Brahma, and Brahma alone is the component of all substances.)

This realisation of the Supreme Truth is the highest ideal of our scriptures. All Vedic teachings culminate in the attainment of this ‘Universal Truth’, the Self, Brahma or the Atma, all of which are but synonyms. Today within our perception we have in Ma, such a ‘Being’ who is One with the Self.

“In all Infinity is He and no other -I alone am,” says Ma.

“For this body only One exists,” says Ma.

“The Immutable Brahman, the primeval sound, the *Om* *karā* are one and the same as the word ‘Ma’—Ananda in essence,” says Ma.

These are not words of a rambling mind but irrefutable words of a Being in a state of Oneness where nothing remains to be known or attained. Ma’s philosophy centered around the ‘One’ and was apparent in Her, from Her very childhood - in games, with nature, with associates, with music, with *kirtan*. She responded by becoming One with the *bhāva* of the surrounding.

The Vedas have been a marvelous spiritual heritage of mankind unparalleled and ‘*apaurushaye*’ (owing their authority to no one). They are a store house of wisdom and spiritual learning and contain the knowledge of God. Vedas literally mean ‘to know’. Shree Ma was undifferentiated from these Vedic teachings and their goal. Her physical

presence placed before mankind an 'Ideal' which so far had only been heard of in the scriptures. The theoretical Brahma of the scriptures -distant and Impersonal was no longer so. Amidst us was a living 'Reality' personal and approachable. Her love penetrated deep into the core of the hearts of all and aroused in them the desire to aspire for the realisation of the Supreme Self - '*Charam Param*'.

Shree Ma was perfect in Herself. She was perfect in all that She did. In fact She was Perfection personified. Speaking the silent language of Universal love She spiritualised the materialistic and worldly attitudes of all who came in contact with Her. In particular She revived and reinfused the Indian mind with a regard for its own culture and ideology. She showed the individuals the simplest and easiest paths towards the realisation of the Eternal. She was ever-concerned for the spiritual welfare of the people, traversing the country to meet their spiritual need.

Thus as the 20th Century beheld this unique wonder of a Bliss-permeated Mother, radiating light and joy, there dawned a Golden Age in Spirituality or a Spiritual Renaissance. The spiritual was important in our culture and daily way of life. All activity - religious, cultural or social, all knowledge - philosophy, scientific and or medical, centered around the great principle of achieving Oneness with the Self, and ignorance, the source of all diversity, misfortune, misery and cause of all sorrow could be removed by right action and right knowledge.

According to Ma "Just as there is a veil of ignorance, there is also a door to knowledge." Her religion was Universal. It accommodated all the religious sects and diversifications. To Ma there were no contradictions; they were only different paths to the same goal. She advised all to remember Him in whatever form they believed. She advised the Muslim to be a perfect Muslim, the Hindu a perfect Hindu, the Christian a true Christian. To the many others that came to Her, She pointed out that as Perfection was the goal, so the dictates of their Scriptures or the instructions of their *Gurus* should be followed as perfectly as possible.

"Verily God is in all shapes and forms. Everybody should be told that in God's creation according to the Hindu Sanatan Dharma, it is unlawful to say anything which will cause hostility or distress to anyone. To be opposed to anyone is to be opposed to the Supreme Being. We are all one *Ātma*. This is what we have to bear in mind. Preserve a spirit of calm and friendliness." - says Ma

To Ma "All were Her very own - since all were That". Her response to their spiritual needs was spontaneous irrespective of caste, religion or creed.

In Shahbagh, near the tomb of a Saint, Ma was seen to perform the 'Namaaz' with such accurate pronunciation and perfect hand movements that even the Muslims were astonished and were unable to surpass Her feat. Ma's birthplace, even today is very respectfully and devotedly looked after by some Muslims.

Once as a child Ma requested Her mother, DidiMa, to purchase some Christian literature which two nuns had brought to the house, and later spent quite some time looking through it. On another occasion even as a child, Ma was spontaneously drawn towards a

group of Christian nuns living in a tent across the village. At sunset, when Ma reached the tent She found them engrossed in their evening prayer. Was Ma's visit an answer to their prayers?

A few years ago an American Christian lady desirous of taking initiation was torn in a conflict between her devotion to Christ and her love for Ma. Early one morning she had a clear vision of Jesus Christ giving her a *mantra*. Later she was amazed to receive the same *mantra* from Ma at the time of her initiation!

Shree 108 Triveni Puri Maharaj had said about Mother – “She is like a vast ocean in which all the rivers meet.”

The play of *sādhana* in Ma depicts the magnificent exposition of the various *sādhana*s: their various diversifications (be it *dwait*, *adwait* or Buddhism). In Ma each *sādhana* unfolded itself, through all the stages in a matter of hours, whereas for an ordinary *sādhak*, from the start to the culmination of the process of each *sādhana* could mean the achievement of many births. Ma's *sādhana* was not the activity of one striving for realisation but a divine play in response to the need of man and solely for their benefit. Those who were fortunate to witness those forms, wonder of wonders, not only looked upon Ma with awe and reverence but also remembered and recorded them for posterity. For those who were present, these visions became a part of their lives.

On being questioned as to ‘who She was’ during the ‘play’ of one of these *sādhana*s, came the reply “*Purna Brahma Narayan*”. At first, the so called abnormal behaviour of the untutored village girl was looked upon with misgivings but later as the significance of the observations gained depth they bowed down to the Spirituality Incarnate. From the very early age Ma has responded to the spiritual call of Her associates and helped and guided each one spiritually in Her unique way - a touch, a glance, a word.

A grand aunt of Ma repeatedly forgot the process of counting the *mantra* on her fingers until little Nirmala playfully taught her the process much to the astonishment of Her mother.

In the passing away of Her brother's, bachelor uncle ‘*Sona mama*’ and later of saints like, Haribaba, Bhajji, and other devotees, Ma subtly guided their last thoughts towards the Eternal, as the Gita says - “*Prayan Kalé Manasa Chalén.*”

True to tradition Ma emphasized the need of a *guru* until the inner *guru* revealed itself. “The relation between *guru* and *shishya* deserves to be called eternal only when the *guru* is possessed of divine powers and can and does communicate this power to the latter at the time of his initiation.”

She also placed before us the ideal *Guru* Shri Muktananda Giri Mahraj, in whom the required qualities were inherent. Complete, unquestioning obedience to the *guru*, strict discipline, adherence to the social order, virtuous qualities and conduct based on good moral precepts were helpful towards self-realisation. Truthfulness was the very foundation of good behaviour.

Satyanaiva panthaa vittaa devyaan.

The purity of the lineage plays a significant role in spiritual attainment. Both Ma's paternal and maternal ancestors had strictly observed the disciplines and norms pertaining to the lineage of *Rishis*, and there had been successive generations of *pandits*, *sādhaks*, *yogis* and *siddha gurus* in their families.

Ma however, is the finest example of how one can live in the Highest Self and yet continue to work in the world.

Her very action was a 'lesson' to be learnt. In obedience, She was obedience itself, in truth She was Truth itself, She was the ideal child, ideal daughter, ideal friend, ideal guide. Moral precepts and good behaviour were natural to Her. Discrimination and renunciation were part of Her.

Her many ashrams are centres where cultural and spiritual ideals are being maintained defying the threat of pollution which materialism, poses. In these institutions the ashram system prevalent in India from the Vedic Age is preserved. The highest ideals are laid down for all the four orders. The *sanyasi*, the *van-prasthi*, the *griyahasta* and the *brahmachari*.

The *brahmacharya* is the very foundation of all spiritual life. No *yogic kriya* is possible without *brahmacharya*. According to Ma, if *brahmacharya* is strictly maintained in thought, word and deed it automatically leads to a natural unfoldment of the spiritual. Ma's entire life was one of an ideal *brahmacharini*. A school for boys and one for girls was started on this basis.

To the householder, Ma said, "Those who have adopted the ashram of a householder should be model householders and live according to the precepts of dharma." She also said the husband was to be looked upon as the Lord, the wife as *Laxmi*, the son *Gopal* and the daughter *Kumari*. This spirit eventually leads to detachment.

The *Samyam Saptāh* is an annual function where all the four ashrams gather together under the umbrella of a number of saints and sages. A week of strict discipline for their spiritual upliftment is a very delightful and joyful experience for all participating in it. Ma thus infused *tapasyā*, with a spirit of joy and it no longer appeared as a hard chore.

Shree Ma restores amity amongst the religious orders. Ma was looked upon as a leader in spirituality and almost all the saints and sages of Her period have paid homage to Her at some time or the other. She was the jewel-crest in Spirituality. Shree Ma held the saints and sages in great esteem and taught, by Her own example, how they were to be respected.

Shri Gopinath Kavirajji after a great deliberation on Shree Ma came to the conclusion that Ma could not be compared to any saint, sage or even an *Avtar*. To him "Ma was Ma alone."

In the ashrams all kinds of spiritual rites, *yagnas*, worships, prayers, rituals and the like, are observed and performed mainly for the welfare of the world and for the benefit of mankind in keeping with the ideals of the *rishis*. The entire society participates

in these functions throughout the year and they are performed strictly accordingly to the injunctions of the *shastras*.

Great impetus was given by Shree Ma to the spiritual upliftment of Indian womanhood. After years of suppression, with the advent of Ma, Indian girls and ladies received tremendous opportunities for leading a spiritual life.

“*Strisu dustashu varsaneya jayate varnasankara*,” says the Gita. Keeping this in mind, on the suggestion of Bhairji and under the guidance of Shree Ma, a Sanskrit school was started for girls based on the *gurukul* system. Here opportunity is given to every girl to mould herself in an ascetic way of life, whether she joins the *grihastha ashram* or continues to lead the life of a *brahmacharini*. Great stress is laid on the study of scriptures and household arts. Strict discipline and code of conduct is also maintained for development of character.

By reintroducing the thread ceremony for girls in accordance with the *shastras*, Ma enhanced the status of women by giving them equal rights with men in spiritual and religious activities. In ancient days Indian women like Gargi, Lopamudra, Maitreiji, etc., were renowned for their intellectual prowess. The right to take *sanyās* by women was also encouraged.

Besides the school, several opportunities were given to other *kumari* girls and ladies wishing to lead a spiritual life, for organising religious functions and spiritual discourses and participating fully in them. Thus Ma rejuvenated Indian womanhood with a new dignity and gave them a new independent way of spiritual life.

In this way Ma brought religion to the doorsteps of the common man. It was no longer the right of the privileged few. The *atithi* (guest), *daridra* (poor), the *rogi* (sick), were all to be served as service to God. Work done in this spirit promoted selflessness and the constant remembrance of the Supreme was maintained throughout the day.

In an ever-changing world Shree Ma was changeless, maintaining a perfect equilibrium in all circumstances. “I am, I was and will be” - Ma.

In a world of struggle and strife She was all peaceful. To the lost, She was an epitome of love. To the shattered, She was an embodiment of encouragement. To the downtrodden, She was a light of Hope. To the lonely, She was all in all. To the devotee, She was spirituality Incarnate and to the child, She was the mother.

In Ma's words “Ma means *Ātma*”, Ma means ‘*Mayi*’—Self permeated reposing in the *Ātma*.

Blessed are we to see Ma, the Winged Spirit, Eternal, Universal and beyond the limits of time, space and reason.

* * * *

Ma's outer manifestation

Anil Ganguli

Ma's 'outer manifestation' consists of Her human activities before the public eye; but even these inspire our wonder and admiration. To borrow a beautiful expression from the *Vāishnava* literature, it may be described as *lilā* (divine sport) which makes us feel that Ma is one of us, sympathetically sharing our joys and sorrows. In Her *lilā*, Ma has from time to time assumed different roles on the stage of life such as daughter, housewife, friend, mother and unofficial *guru*, without any desire, 'I-ness', 'my-ness', or emotions. Limitless are the channels through which flows the current of Ma's 'outer manifestation'. Let us consider the first *darshan* by an outsider with a receptive mind. However, it must be remembered that the word 'outsider' just does not exist in Ma's dictionary. She invariably looks upon every individual as a spark of *Brahma*. Also She inspires in the 'outsider' the feeling that She is not a stranger but his mother, overflowing with affection. Once the 'outsider' inches his way from the overflowing crowd towards the room or hall, he is simply struck by the *darshan* of a motherly lady, calm and composed, sparkling eyes and winsome smile, a benign glance and the joy-inspiring appearance.

If the visitor is lucky he may find Ma singing, surrounded by a group of experts in musical talent. Ma's songs are spontaneous and ecstatic. The modulations of Her voice vibrate in the heart of the listener and purify his mind. The emphasis repeatedly laid by Ma on each word or syllable acts as a key to understand its inner meaning. Ma's singing has an indefinable quality which not only pleases one's ears, but also infuses a mysterious thrill into one's inner self. Renowned musical experts unequivocally confirm that Her melodious voice is matchless and perfect along with Her rhythmic movement.

Another wonderful phase of Ma's 'outer manifestation' is revealed during *matri-satsang*, a programme which provides the spectators or votaries with a special opportunity of conversation with Ma. During *matri-satsang* Ma is usually very patient and indulgent and more motherly than any human mother. She then gives Her 'children' almost unrestrained liberty and sympathetically attends to questions ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. Ma's answers are as varied as the questions. They are enlivening, scintillating and inspiring. The wonder of wonders is that, every question howsoever difficult is disposed of without a moment's reflection. Every answer is on the mental level of the particular enquirer, has reference to his peculiar point of view and corresponds to his own power of understanding. Even if somebody is hesitant or shy to speak out his query or conscious of being observed by the large gathering, his query is often solved in a mysterious manner. Either somebody else puts forth the question or sometimes Ma of Her own accord broaches the particular subject and clarifies the point involved, solving the particular question in mind. And then follows Ma's penetrating gaze on the person whose query has been answered accompanied by her sweet and significant smile. Is this just a coincidence?

Followers of different faiths and sects seek Ma's guidance in *sadhanā* (spiritual pursuits preparatory to self-realization) from a practical point of view. Common men find relief on getting their personal and domestic problems solved; erudite scholars seek clarification of intricate points of metaphysics; whereas fastidious cynics recklessly condemn God and expect Ma to answer for His failings. Thus, the questions cover a large canvas and are of varying interest and value.

Occasionally, Ma requests saints who are present in the *matri-satsang* to discuss controversial points in the light of the scriptures and they try their best. But the 'best' of the *Vedantists* following the path of knowledge often happens to be in conflict with the 'best' of the orthodox *Vaishnavs* following the path of devotion. Often a barren debate goes on for some time and then the specialists jointly implore Ma to say the last word on the subject to stop further argument. With modesty Ma says that nobody has taught Her *shastras* (scriptures) but invariably throws a flood of light in a few short and simple sentences, which satisfies each of the contending parties and enlightens the whole audience. Ma's very presence creates an atmosphere unfavourable to fanaticism.

Presumably, the *matri-satsang* may have no meaning for an audience not conversant with Bengali or Hindi. But this is not necessarily true. Once I noticed a foreigner listlessly gazing at Ma with tearful eyes, apparently incapable of understanding what Ma was saying in Bengali. Later I asked him, "Do you understand Ma's language?" He replied, "No, I do not, but who does? Ma's language of the tongue is foreign to me, not the language of Her eyes!" Ma's gracious gaze often conveys to a thirsty soul a message of hope and assurance: "You are mine and I am yours!" Perhaps that gaze simultaneously represents Ma's 'inner being' and 'outer manifestation'.

Dialogues with Ma often act as spiritual seeds sown in the soil of the human mind. Properly nourished with human intelligence and faith, these seeds sprout and grow into trees, yielding flowers and fruits.

* * * *

"Misfortune must not be looked upon as a disaster; it would be a sin to do so; for who sends the misfortune? What He does is all beneficial. Under no circumstances, however adverse, should man accept defeat. In times of adversity and distress as well as in times of well-being and good fortune try to seek refuge in the One alone. Keep in mind that whatever He, the All-beneficial, the Fountain of Goodness, does, is wholly for the best."

- Ma Anandamayee

Sri Ma Anandamayee in our lives

Bithika Mukerji

In the summer of 1937 in Barcilly we had the great good fortune to come under the influence of Sri Ma Anandamayee. Sri Ma while journeying from the remote villages of Bengal to the foot hills of the Himalayas passed through the town of Barcilly.

One day, my mother and her friend Mrs. Maharatanji Jaspal were sitting in the ladies club, when Maharatanji asked my mother if she would like to have *darshan* (audience, see) of a Bengali *Mataji* who is expected soon and would be staying at the *dharamshala* (inn for pilgrims) near the railway station. My mother hesitated because for a gentlewoman to go to public places and pay court to religious personalities were not at all an acceptable norm of behavior. My father made no objection to my mother's curiosity but declined to accompany her. It was on a Sunday when we visited this *dharamshala* to call on Sri Ma. On entering found an enclosed courtyard with a small *Shiva* temple in the middle of a raised platform. A covered *verandah* led on to the rooms all around the courtyard. There was a big hall in the centre covered from wall to wall with a cotton carpet. At one corner of this hall, Sri Ma was sitting on the floor on a folded blanket. My mother gazed upon the radiant majestic form in front of her, knelt down and did a *pranām* (obeisance). We also followed her.

Sri Ma addressed my mother in familiar terms, as if she had known her for a long time. Some of us sat near Sri Ma and the rest of us sat along with the young people grouped around *Pitaji* (Bholanathji – Sri Ma's husband, an ascetic). We used to visit Sri Ma every evening after school with our mother. My early memories of these visits to the *dharamshala* centre around *Pitaji* and the *kirtans* (religious singing) we learnt to sing with him. Sri Ma was beautiful and remote but joined in our *kirtan* now and then. We liked to sit near Her and were happy when She smiled and spoke to us. We were introduced to the game of *sat-cid-ananda*. There were two teams headed by Sri Ma and *Pitaji*. Each team one by one had to throw seven *cowrie* shells (like a dice) on the floor. If three shells were face up then it was 'sat', if five faces were up then 'cit' and if all seven were faced up then it was 'ananda'. If in a group, *sat*, *cit*, *ananda* came consecutively one after the other, the team wins. The winning team would sing *kirtan* and the losing team would do *japa* (repetition 108 times) of any name of God. In this way we were introduced to *kirtan*, *japa* and the word *sat-cid-ananda*. We also played 'crocodile-crocodile' in the open courtyard. The courtyard was the river and the *verandah* the bank. While descending into the river if the crocodile caught the unwary, that member became the crocodile. I remember Sri Ma joining in with us once or twice for this game. But the 'crocodile' could never catch Her, because She was very swift and nimble in walking from the *verandah* to the platform or back. Those joyous days!

My mother went to the *dharamshala* after father left for court (he was a judge) and returned before he came back. One day Sri Ma said to her, "The way your eyes return again and again to the clock, so should your mind be given over to the thoughts of God. Even if distracted for a while, bring it back to God-remembrance continuously."

One evening my brother Bindu (aged 8) developed a high fever. The doctor was concerned because there was a fear of typhus fever in the town at this time. Somebody brought the news that Sri Ma was visiting the house right next to ours. My mother ran and to meet Sri Ma. Sri Ma asked her "Do you live nearby?" Sri Ma was already out of the neighbor's house and walked along with my mother to our house along with Her whole entourage. My mother was beside herself with excitement, asking the servants to fetch chairs and carpets, to the gardener for flowers and us girls to sing a song of *āgomoni* (*Ma Durga* welcome song). Sri Ma sat down in one of the chairs. Sri Ma said to my father with a smile, "See, I have come to your house un-invited." Billoji went inside, picked up my brother, brought him out and put him on a chair in front of Her. Obeying my mother he managed to gasp few lines of the song. Sri Ma smiled at him and taking a garland from Her own neck put it around his. When Sri Ma departed the doctor on examination was surprised to find no sign of any ailment. My mother was convinced that Bindu had recovered due to Sri Ma's grace. From henceforth my father visited the *dharamshala* and also took *Mataji* and *Pitaji* for drives to the public gardens and several temples in the town.

Bholanthji or *Pitaji* was tall and handsome with flowing hair and beard flecked with shining grey. He had an outgoing personality and easily communicated with all. *Pitaji* was always at the centre of the *kirtan* and sometimes Sri Ma joined him for short spells. *Pitaji* discovered early that Bindu could sing beautifully and would sometimes hoist him over His shoulders and ask him to lead the *kirtan*. On one of the visits, Sri Ma said to Bindu, "Will you sing for me every day?" Bindu exclaimed, "But you are going away!" Sri Ma then said, "Give me a time. If you sing at that time every day, I shall hear your song from where ever I am. If you cannot sing a whole song, sing one line or just make a sound, any sound, I shall hear you."

I came to know Sri Ma's principal devotee Bhaiji, when one day Sri Ma asked me to fetch him from where he was standing near the *Shiva* temple. I approached him and said, "Ma wants you." He came at once, knelt in front of Sri Ma and talked for some time. When he was about to leave, Maharatanji pleaded him to sing his special song to Ma, i.e., '*Jaya Hridayavasini*'. Bhaiji reluctantly sang the first four lines and then excused himself and left the hall. While leaving he backed away from Sri Ma as people do in temples. On the third visit of my parents, Bhaiji talked at length with them. He had said, "In the nature of things we can have only vague ideas about the Supreme Deity who shapes our destinies. I believe that Sri Ma is the manifest form of this all-pervasive un-manifest presence, which we worship as the Ultimate Being. One who is the ultimate power that creates, sustains and annihilates, the *Ādya-shakti* (primordial energy) without which nothing can stir. To be attuned to the cosmic rhythm of this vibrant creation and its equally tranquil process of withdrawal is to penetrate the mystery of life. Sri Ma is the key to this ebb and flow of

ānanda, which lies at the heart of creation. She is *Anandamayī*, the personification of the Good and Blissful and who by Her very presence awakens the aspiration for Supreme felicity, which lies dormant in every human heart.”

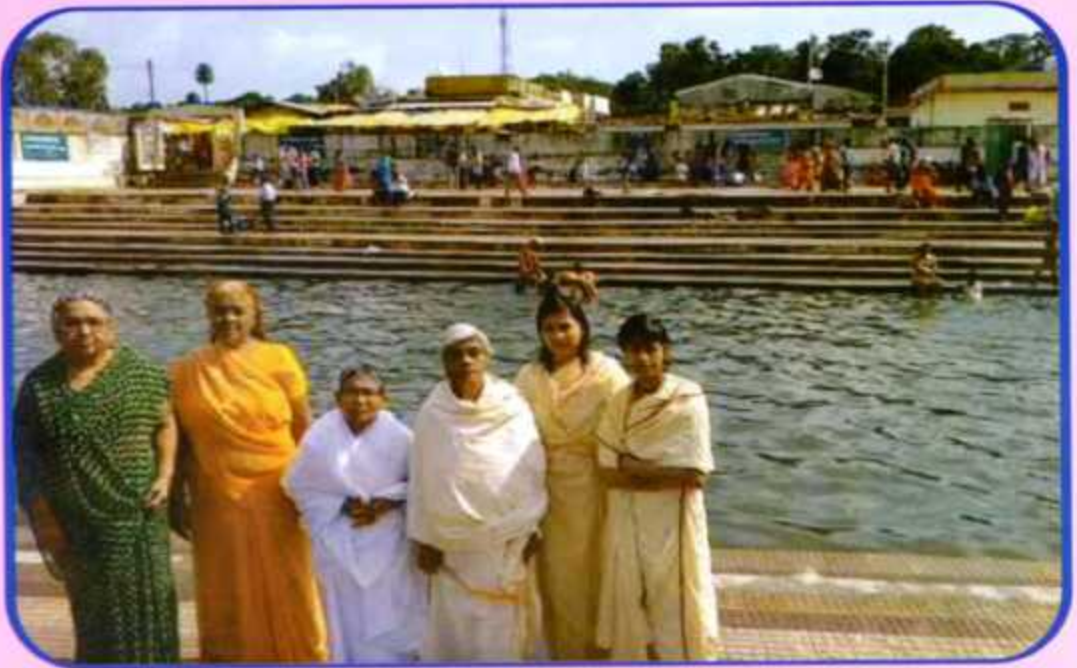
Sri Ma’s personality was self-authenticating; even if She did not speak a word, Her majestic aura was awe-inspiring. In busy crowded places, on station platforms, Her white clad figure drew attention. When confronted by Her, palms naturally came together in respect and heads were bowed in salutation. She had no wishes or desire or will, Her action or words were the outcome of a spontaneous *kheyāl* (a sudden whim). The best way to understand Sri Ma’s *kheyāl* was to see it as arising out of the needs and necessities of people surrounding Her or situations which took shape around Her, although it could not always be related to Her immediate vicinity or to a specific time.

The journey toward an understanding of this *kheyāl* however, had just started for us. A new chapter had begun. Life was never the same again.

* * * *

“Mind’s nature is to imagine a vision of multiplicity and loves to play with it, though in reality, One only exists. Multiplicity, there is none. If that One can be realized in his heart of hearts, deeply engrossed in Him, he always sees Him everywhere; then the fictitious magic of multiplicity fails to fascinate or digress him.”

- Ma Anandamayee



Bank of Narmada



After taking bath sitting on ghat



Kumari Puja – Amarkantak



The beauty of Sunrise



The Cow's



The Cow's



Goshala



The beauty of Sunrise

Ma Anandamayee Ma - Sri Ramanasramam

V. Ganesan

India abounds in Sages and Saints. Ma Anandamayee Ma occupied a special place in the spiritual history of India. True spiritual aspirants from the West and East flocked to her for spiritual guidance. She shed light, as she was the Great Light itself!

In 1952, on her pilgrimage in South India, Ma Anandamayee Ma was invited to Arunachala by Sri Ramanasramam to lay the foundation stone for the construction of a temple over the *Samādhi* shrine of *Bhagavan* Ramana. Those who were present on that occasion still remember the meticulous and measured way Ma handed over one brick after brick to lay the foundation. When the traditional *purna kumbha* was offered to Ma at the entrance of the Ashram, she graciously remarked, "Why all this? Do you do all this when a daughter comes to her father's home?"

Falling prostrate at Sri Bhagavan's yet unbuilt *Samādhi* shrine, Ma Anandamayee Ma, solemnly stood up and spontaneously uttered the following words, "Here is the 'Sun' - we are all like 'stars' in the day time!"

I could not be at the Ashram and have *darshan* of Ma in 1952 as I was studying in the college, far away from Arunachala. When I came to stay permanently at Sri Ramanasramam, and started to imbibe the import and greatness of true spiritual life, I had the great good fortune of having encouragement, support and guidance of the Old Devotees of Sri Bhagavan who were there at that time.

In the early 1970s, when I was busy helping the Ashram management in various ways, Mrs. Taleyarkhan, Balarama Reddiar, Hugo Maier and Dorab Framji (old devotees of Ma Anandamayee Ma) met me at the Ashram office. They insisted that I go along with them to Chennai to have *darshan* of Ma Anandamayee Ma, who was being given a rousing reception in that city. I could not immediately obey them. While Mrs. Taleyarkhan, Hugo Maier and Dorab Framji left earlier, the great good-hearted devotee Balarama Reddiar, stayed on and took me to Chennai towards the end of Ma's stay in Chennai.

Thanks to these old devotees, I had my first *darshan* of Ma at 'Kalki Gardens' where she was staying and conducting *satsangs*. She was giving a talk and I listened with rapt attention. Ma was saying, "To lose control over oneself is not desirable. In the search after Truth one must not allow oneself to be overpowered by anything, but should watch carefully, whatever phenomena may supervene, keeping fully conscious, wide awake, in fact retaining complete mastery over oneself. Loss of consciousness and of self-control is never right. While absorbed in meditation, whether one is conscious of the body or not, whether there be a sense of identification with the physical or not – under all circumstances, it is imperative to remain wide awake - unconsciousness must be strictly avoided. Some genuine perceptivity must be retained, whether one contemplates the Self as such, or any particular form. What is the outcome of such meditation? It opens up one's being to the

Light, to that which is Eternal.” The devotees took me near Ma and made me prostrate to her. When I stood looking at her, she showered her grace on me, so profusely that I felt as if I was in the physical presence of our Beloved Bhagavan. I stood still, in ecstasy! However, I was taken away very quickly as there was a huge queue of devotees, waiting behind me.

When I expressed to the old devotees that I wanted to meet Ma personally and seek her blessings, Balarama Reddiar held my hand and assured me that he would take me to Ma, who was leaving Chennai the very next day. Impatiently I waited for the fortunate hour.

The next day, Balarama Reddiar took me to the Central Railway station. There were lots of police constables guarding all entrances. Reddiar held my hand and walked in a right, royal manner to the compartment in which Ma was travelling. Her compartment was adorned with flower garlands. So, it was very easy to locate it. There was a thick posse of policemen guarding it. But, none dared stop the majestic Reddiar! And he boarded the compartment with a meek me in tow.

Ma was seated all alone – not even a single person or assistant was there. Balarama Reddiar prostrated to her and directed me to put my head on her outstretched feet. She blessed me by fondling my head and asked me to rise up. Reddiar introduced me as the grand-nephew of Sri Ramana Maharshi, and added that I sought her blessings - especially for progress in my *sādhana*, as I had left all worldly links and was permanently staying at the Ashram serving the old and new devotees. Ma graciously blessed me and said, “Everything is in God’s hands, and you are His tool to be used by Him as He pleases. Try to grasp the significance ‘all is His,’ and you will immediately feel free from all burdens. What will be the result of your surrender to Him? None will seem alien, all will be your very own, your own Self. Either melt by devotion the sense of separateness, or burn it by Knowledge – for what is it that melts or burns? Only that which by its nature can be melted or burnt - namely the idea that something other than your Self exists. What will happen then? You come to know your own Self. By virtue of Guru’s power, everything will become possible. I bless you, child!”

Ma put her hands again on my head and said, “Sri Maharshi’s Grace is fully on you. Stick to your *sādhana*, studiously. Guidance will flood you! Sri Bhagavan’s teaching of Self-Enquiry is your path. Stay at the Ashram. Don’t go anywhere else. He is your Guru. His teaching is your only guidance. Arunachala is your *kshetra*. All blessings will accrue to you. I bless you, my child!”

She gave me two oranges and gestured to me to eat them. Reddiar too confirmed it. So, I ate both of them in Ma’s presence. I felt her Grace seeping in. I felt profusely blessed!

In 1960, I went to Varanasi from Bombay. No one knew where I had disappeared to from Bombay. Naturally, the office I was working in, my friends in Bombay, and especially my parents back at home in Arunachala, all were worried over my disappearance. Taleyarkhan took my father to Bangalore, where Ma Anandamayee Ma was staying and giving *darshan* to devotees. When my father expressed deep concern as to where I

could have disappeared, Ma gave a beautiful smile and said, "Don't worry! My Ganga Mata is protecting him. You will soon hear from him. He will be alright!" When father went back to Arunachala from Bangalore, a telegram was waiting for him, informing that I have been located at Varanasi!

More than 25 years later, I went to stay for a year in Varanasi (1988-89) - as directed by Yogi Ramsurat Kumar. Many spiritual experiences happened to me. One such was the following: I used to visit the Ramakrishna Ashram there and get totally absorbed in myself in their Meditation Hall, which was open to all. One day, when I was coming out of the hall, an elderly swami of the ashram approached me and said, "I have been observing that you often meditate here in front of *Thakur* Sri Ramakrishna. It fills my heart with joy that a young man is absorbed in such deep meditation. Have you ever been to Ma Anandamayee Ma's Ashram on the banks of Ganga Mata? If you have not, please go there and spend some time in meditation in front of the Shrine which was worshipped by Ma herself. Make sure you request the elderly swami there to show you the 'Crawling Krishna' idol. It is sculpted out of black stone and is about a foot in height. Also, ask him to tell you about the unique greatness of the idol." I hastened to go to the Ashram of Ma that very same day. I searched for and found out that particular elderly swami. He was very happy to know that I came from Arunachala. He said he had been on a pilgrimage to Holy Arunachala at the behest of Ma herself. Even before I could ask of him about the 'Crawling Krishna' idol, he brought it out from another room and proceeded to tell me the thrilling incident that he had witnessed:

"Ma brought the Krishna idol during one of her visits here and told us that the child Krishna was very hungry and that we should bring food for him. We brought the *naivedhya* (sacramental food) that is offered to the main deity that is daily worshipped here. The Holy Mother sat down and held the idol on her lap. Embracing it like a mother, Ma offered the idol morsel after morsel of food. And lo! Every morsel was eaten by this idol of 'Child Krishna! Not only I, but a few others who are still alive, were also eye-witnesses of this spiritual spectacle! Ma was all joy and went into ecstasy as soon as she finished feeding Sri Krishna! After that, every time Ma came over to Varanasi and stayed here, she took enormous interest in feeding her '*Kanhaiya*' (Black Krishna). Please touch it, prostrate to it, and receive not just Sri Krishna's blessings, but also the profuse blessings of Ma!"

The very touch of the 'Child Krishna' sent me into ecstasy. After that, every time I went to Varanasi, one of the main shrines I would spend time without fail was that of the 'Child Krishna' at Ma Anandamayee Ma's ashram - in addition to the other shrines in Varanasi of Lord *Kashi-Vishwanath*, Mother *Annapoorna*, Mother *Vishalakshi* and Mother *Varahi*, among others. Many of my close friends too, have had the same spiritual experience when they followed suit in response to my persistent and eager pleading to have the *darshan* of the black, 'Child Krishna' at Ma Anandamayee Ma's Ashram in Varanasi. Truly, we are all very fortunate that we are always profusely blessed by the Grace of Sages and Saints !

Sri Ma's Special Directives for Spiritual Aspirants

“In order to advance towards Self-Realisation, it is absolutely necessary for an aspirant to yearn constantly for his sublime goal. He should practice *sādhana* regularly, whether he feels in a mood for it or not.”

“To criticize people or to feel hostile towards anyone harms oneself and puts obstacles into one's path to the Supreme. If someone does something bad, you should feel nothing but affection and benevolence towards him or her. Think, ‘Lord ! This is also one of Thy manifestations.’ The more kindly and friendly you can feel and behave towards everybody, the more will the way to the One – who is goodness itself – open out.”

“Take care not to be contented at any stage. Some aspirants have visions, others realizations. Or, someone experiences bliss, great happiness and thinks he has himself become God. On the spiritual path, before true Realisation supervenes, one may get caught in supernatural powers (*vibhūti*s or *siddhi*s). These constitute obstacles.”

“The positive proof that the aspirant is centred in God is that he ceases to hate any person or object, and that good qualities such as love, forgiveness, patience, forbearance go on increasing in him. When this change takes place in an aspirant, he will come to see that the One *Brahma* pervades each and every form, all sects, creeds. An aspirant should not indulge in useless conversation or gossip, but speak only when it is really necessary, which means that he must be a man of few words.”

“Try and try again to reach the goal you have set before yourself. So long as Realisation does not come, you must never relax your efforts. Let this be your firm resolve.”

“In the quest of Self-Knowledge, Love is the crucial factor. Whether it pleases you or not, you will have to make the Eternal your constant companion, just like a remedy that has got to be taken. Without loving God, you will not get anywhere. Remember this all the time.”

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Salient features of Mysticism

M. M. Gopinath Kaviraj

Who is a mystic? It is difficult to answer the question. A mystic is not necessarily an occultist, although he may have some occult powers (telepathy etc.) at his command. A mystic need not be an intellectual prodigy, though he may have all the blessings of the pure light. A mystic is not a devotee in the conventional sense, though he may have the most fervent ardour of devotion. He is neither an ascetic, though he may be found using methods of self-mortification. A mystic need not be a visionary, though he may have visions from time to time.

That the supra-human light of knowledge may be revealed to a mystic is not strange to western mysticism. St. Ignatius is said to have comprehended marvelously a great number of truths pertaining to faith or to human sciences. These truths were so numerous and the light was so bright that he felt as if he had entered into a new and glorious world. The intensity, amplitude and excellence of this heaven sent knowledge was so great that all that he had earlier learnt in his life of sixty-two years, whether acquired fortuitously or through diligent study could not be compared to that which he had gained at this climacteric moment. Similar is the account of St. Francis Xavier. He also had found himself inundated by the Divine Light. In India too, the acquisition of natural knowledge in a super natural way is not unknown. The great *yogi* Sivaramkimkara Yogatrayananda had acquired an exact comprehension of the details of the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patanjali in a vision at night.

Different people have seen mysticism in different lights. But all diverse views finally lose their rigidity and agree in implying a sense of vagueness inherent in the concept of mysticism. True mysticism, as I understand it, implies that the soul is successively awakened (*prabuddha*), and fully awakened (*suprabuddha*), so that the sense of exclusiveness pertaining to each of the normal human states viz., waking (*jāgrat*), dream (*svapna*) and deep sleep (*susupti*), is supplemented by a state of unbroken self-awareness which presupposes the integrations of consciousness (*turiya*). The awakening of the soul involves as its commitment the disappearance of the sense of alienness of the so called outer world and causes the soul to turn inward, first from the object to the light which shines upon it, then from the light to the subject, the source of illumination, thirdly from the subject to the transcendental consciousness and power, and finally from this, back to the central being which stands behind all manifestations. This is the usual process. It is assumed that all powers lead back to the self-conscious will (*ichhā-sakti*) which when turned outwards controls immediately the entire machinery of the cosmic movement, viz, the movements of *jnāna* and *kriyā*. This represents for the *yogi* a state of mastery or lordship (*aishwarya*), a state of perfection implying full control of the outgoing forces. This state

represents the majesty of the soul which is now within the Divine circle and reigns supreme over the outer creation.

The above state leads on to the higher state of absolute resignation to the Divine will. The human will at this point unconditionally surrenders to the Divine will and becomes one with it. The soul of the *yogi*, now in close embrace with the Divine, enjoys the bliss of union (*ānandā*) and supreme self-realization (*chit*). The consciousness of this state involves a blessed union of *parā-jñāna* and *parā-bhakti*, or *chit* and *ānanda*, which is universally and eternally the twofold heritage of every true mystic. Neither the senses nor the reasoning of a man can aspire to this ineffable condition without Divine Grace.

The Divine presence may be realized as 'that' (*tat*), as a living light permeating all and subsisting beyond all. It may be realized as 'Thee' and 'Me', both inseparable from each other, or it may be realized as 'Me' alone. Thus It reveals itself as a third person as 'That' (*tat*), or as a second person as 'Thee' (*tvam*), or as a first person as 'I' (*aham*). There is an impersonal presence also which is at once elusive and really magnificent. In each case, the soul exists in a state of indifference (*udāsin*), or as the closest companion, or as one's very self. In the impersonal, however, there is no trace of 'I', even the integral 'I' (*purna aham*) is absent there. And yet awareness persists. It is the same as the *bhāsā* of the *Sakta Āgamas*, beyond the *anākhyā*. Even here there is a 'beyond' which cannot be called present, yet which *is*, of which we hear so much in Jewish *Kaoāla*. As a matter of fact, even the 'beyond' or 'beyond-beyond' is also within the orbit of the Absolute (*akhanda*).

* * * *

Children section

Result of the *Naam-Kirtana*

Swami Shivananda (Shri Sailesh Brahmachari)

There was a young *Brahmin*, who was very religious and had faith on the rules of religion. He had no dearth of money. Since he wanted to enjoy a unrestrained life, he did not want to marry. He had heard that the Lord of *Vaikunth*, *Shree Narayan* roamed about in this world in the form of a guest. On several occasions discarding his human guest form, He had given *darshan* to many in His *Chaturbhuj* (holding *Sankh*, *Chakra*, *Jadhha*, *Padma* in His four hands) form. Hence the *Brahmin* decided that he would not eat a meal without serving at least one visitor and he obeyed it too.

His bosom friend kept persuading him to get married saying, "You have to get married, there is no shortage of finance, it is our wish, why will you not marry?" The *Brahmin* was always submerged in thoughts of the God and hence he did not want to answer their questions. However, after a lot of persuasion from his friends, one day he told them, "Since you all wish, I will marry on one condition, i.e. with whomsoever I marry she has to obey all my orders. If for any reason she fails to obey I will behead her. If someone agrees to marry with this condition, I will marry otherwise I won't.

The friends thought that there was no logic in this. Can a husband behead his wife after marriage? This is not possible. So they agreed to this condition and got him married to a young beautiful lady. On the very first day, he ordered his wife, "Serve at least one visitor daily, only after that call me for partaking of *prasād*. After I finish, you take your meals, understood? A guest is *Narayan*, without pondering, do immediately as the visitor says. Remember if this is not followed I will behead you. The newly-wed had to obey his husband, otherwise her life was at stake. Daily she used to wait for a visitor after cooking the meals. Some days the visitor used to arrive quite late and she used to cry due to hunger. But she was helpless, other than wiping her tears, she had no other option.

One day, the meals were ready but for a long time there was no sign of a visitor. The day was passing by and she thought maybe today God has not fated her to have meals. In the meanwhile she saw a horrible shaped person with a staff on his shoulder to which a freshly cut head of a cow was attached and blood was oozing out of it. On seeing the visitor, the bride started shivering with fright. What to do? How to serve him? But there was no other option, shivering she brought him inside and placed a mat for him to be seated. After washing his feet, served food and with folded hands requested him to accept the meals. Hearing this the visitor spoke in a grave voice to cook the head of the cow after cutting it into pieces. Saying this he directed the staff with the head towards her. The bride started shivering with fear and panic. For a few moment she had become stiff like a stone.

Then remembering her husband's order she cut the head and cooked it so that she may become free from her duty. The honored guest then ordered her to eat the meat first.

Now the lady was truly terrified, *brahmin* girl, wife of a *brahmin* too, how could she take cow's meat. Tears started rolling down her cheeks, but the visitor was not interested. Seeing her hesitating he said Eat if you want to, otherwise I am leaving. Hearing this she put forth her hands towards the meat. The visitor then stopped her and asked her to call her husband. Shivering she proceeded to call her husband and pondered, why did she not take the meat and put it in her mouth, now for this reason she would have to die with her husband's hands. Seeing her, the husband thought that maybe she had arrived to call her for meals. Hence he asked, had the visitor been served properly. She replied, not yet, but he has called you. Hearing her he immediately understood that there must have been some discrepancy on her side in treating the guest. Otherwise why would he be called. He started abusing her with anger.

Both of them then entered the dining room. But behold! Placed on the mat of the visitor was the dual idol of *Radha-Krishna*. And what an extraordinary glow was emanating from the idol. Seeing the idol of their adorable Lord and the glow around it, tears started flowing out from the eyes of both the husband and wife.

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Tara's experience of Ma's Grace

Liana Steindamm

My husband Arash and myself are the parents of three young girls, Devaki, Tara and Radha, aged seven, four and one year ten months respectively. We live in Sri Ma Anandamayi Ashram, Kona, Hawaii. We have been devoted to Ma since childhood and are raising our children with Ma's Grace and teachings under the guidance of Swami Dayanandaji. One of Ma's teachings that Swamiji has emphasized to us is that, when Ma's name is repeated with devotion, Ma Herself is present with us. One of our young daughters had an experience of the truth of this teaching during a terrifying afternoon.

One day Radha was choking on a small toy that she had put in her mouth. Her father and grandmother were doing everything they could to dislodge the object, but were at first not able to get it out, and they feared she would die. Radha's older sisters, Devaki and Tara were watching what was happening and were very scared at the sight of their sister choking and bleeding as their father and grandmother struggled to remove the toy. They began calling on Ma to help their baby sister. The toy was finally removed and the baby was taken to the hospital for treatment of a severely scratched throat. Later, Tara explained that, after her sister was taken away in the ambulance, she and her sister were sitting in front of their grandmother's altar, crying and praying to Ma to save their baby sister's life. They did not know at that time if the baby was going to be alright. Tara said that, while she prayed, she heard Ma speak to her. Ma spoke in the most beautiful, sweet voice, and told her, "Don't worry! I am going to save your baby sister!" Through Ma's grace, Radha recovered.

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Amrit-Katha*

(Certain incidents in Shree Shree Ma's Own words)

Bhaiji

Chapter Six: Bholanath's transfer to Shahbag from Bajitpur:

One day news came from the Central Court in Dhaka that Bholanath would have to go somewhere else from Bajitpur. Worried and troubled Bholanath departed for Dhaka and took this body along with him. Not getting a proper accommodation there, he was making arrangements to move this body somewhere else. Then this body said, "Wait for three days, see what happens." Within the next three days arrangements took place to transfer Bholanath to Shahbag. We had gone to Dhaka in the second week of April 1924 and in the beginning of third week we arrived in Shahbag Gardens. (3rd Vaisakh 1331).

Few days after reaching Shahbag, asked Bholanath, is there a Siddheshwari here, it is being seen by this body. Is there a tree by this name? Bholanath showed a few large trees in Buda-Budi Tola, near Shahbag, I replied these are not that tree. Daily we used to go to Ramana *Kali-Bari* for evening *aarti-darshan*, which was nearby. One day while returning in the night from the *Kali-Bari*, we met Bholanath's old friend Baul Chandra Basak who was walking along in the path. While conversing with him, learnt about Siddheshwari *Kali-Bari*. Bholanath requested him to take us there one day. One day in the month of *Aashaad*, we went with Baul to the Siddheshwari *Kali-Bari*. On reaching there, saw a large *peepal* tree fallen on the ground near the gate of the temple. Immediately I said 'this is the place and the tree that I had seen in Shahbag; surely there must have been few more large trees here'. Then Baul replied, "It is said that three trees *Bargad*, *Peepal* and *Chandan* had combined together to form a single tree, it was known as '*Tintadi*'." I understood that this is the very Siddheshwari tree. Baul also said that glow of light was visible on this tree and on this itself the luminescent form of *Ma-Kali* of Siddheshwari was seen to be installed. Many a time a luminescent glow used to travel from this tree to the temple and return back to the tree, this glow is reputed as the *Jyotirmayi Kali* (Illuminated *Kali*) of Siddheshwari.

That night we stayed back in Siddheshwari. That night only Surbala's thought was coming in mind and suddenly words came out from the lips, now she should be liberated. The next day we returned back to Shahbag. In the evening mother and father arrived, they said that Surbala had left her body yesterday night. Mother was crying a lot. My emotions were just unperturbed. Days were passing in *maun* (silence) in Shahbag. One day a humble family came to visit that place along with their children. Observing me they were commenting as to what a beautiful face she has, maybe she is dumb, otherwise why is she not talking with us? They were eating something. This body gave them salt. Then they said, 'We did not say, then how could she understand that we needed salt, now is smiling. Oh! Maybe she cannot hear too.' Later they went away and discussed this

matter in their house. The elders of their house investigated this matter and came to know about the state etc, of this body. Hearing everything they came back to Shahbag with a sick eight year old child of their family. The boy was unable to walk. Told them to come on some another day. When the boy arrived on that day, seeing him I put him on my lap and started caressing his body, the boy sat quietly motionless. After some time all of them went away. Later heard, his illness had been cured. The boy had visited Shahbag again and was running around.

In the month of Ashaad there was a change in my diet. One day while eating saw that I ate only three times the three grains of rice that I had taken in my hand. From that day the daily routine was like this only and this continued for eight nine months. The rule followed was to take meals once in the day time and once in the night. Did not even drink water, at any time other than the meal time. Did all the household chores. The day I took banana etc. instead of rice, that day also put the same only three times in my mouth. Even on trying one extra gulp would not go in.

In the month *Bhaado*, again there was preparation to go to Siddheshwari *Kali-hari*. Before dusk going to Siddheshwari with Bholanath, prepared rice, vegetables, etc. and *bhog* was offered to Siddheshwari *Kali*. I had never offered *bhog* earlier, but Bholanath said, 'Offer *bhog* in the way the emotions arise within you.' I did just like that. The night was almost over, stayed back the next day too. In the day-time the father of this body stayed in Siddheshwari. Bholanath used to arrive in the evening and stayed for the night. After two-three days, Baul babu also arrived and started residing there. That time used to stay alone in the room attached to the temple room. Used to enter the room early morning after bathing etc, and remained in the room for the whole day and night. In my own *bhaav*, remained lying on the floor without any bedding, sometimes sat on the floor and sometimes moved around in the room. Came out in the night, once for a short time, offering some fruits etc. to *Kali-ji*; after eating a little bit of something, within a short duration, again went back into the inner room. After seven days passes in this way, on the last night, carrying along the offered fruits, told Bholanath that we are going out and went to the place where *Mahadev* is installed now. Baul was sitting on the door of the temple, but while coming out with Bolanath he could not notice. From worldly view point I had seen this place for the first time. It was like a barren land, there was termite earth mound nearby and on the other side a little further away rain water had accumulated. It was then raining heavily. Fully drenched, going there, this body along with Bholanath circling three times around the raised spot where now *Mahadev* is, putting the right hand heavily on the floor sat down on the ground. What do I see, the whole hand right upto my shoulder, passed into the ground. Bholanath shrieked, 'What is this, everything is going inside.' Saying this catching my hand he pulled it out and made me sit properly. While pulling out the hand, along with it mud and red colored water had spurted out like a fountain. Almost half an hour later, Bholanath saying 'let's go, let's go', hurriedly brought me back to the *Kali* temple. When the hand had plunged inside, the hand had collided with some item,

had taken out some of it, Bholanath threw it back into the pond adjacent to the Siddheshwari *Kalibari*. Next day we returned back to Shahbag.

After three days because of certain action, Baul was told to cover that hand marked place with mud and also to maintain that spot. After making a thatched roof on top and surrounding the four sides with a wall, the place looked like a rectangular pit. When a tinned room was constructed there, then everything else were removed and a pillar of the height equivalent to the height of this body when it kneeled down on the raised spot, was constructed. Later the *Shiva-linga* was installed there.

One morning while sitting in *bhaav*, saw that this body's father somewhere is very much troubled with asthma. Breathing is not taking place, the body has become lifeless. He always suffered from asthma. This body got up and informed Bholanath about it. He said, 'You see that he recovers from it.'

(to be continued.)

*(From an old manuscript of Bhajji, recently printed as "Amrit Katha", where Shree Shree Ma Herself informs Bhajji about various incidents in Her life)

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Reminiscence of Matri-Darshan

Shri Tara Prasad Chattopadhyay

In 1929, while residing in Deoghar, I had been blessed by *Srimat Swami Mohananda*, whom Shree Shree Ma affectionately called as, 'Gopal'. I had met this *sanyāsi* in the Tapovan hills and had received pious advices from him. He was the disciple of *Srimat Swami Shree Shree Balananda Brahmachari*. Shree Shree Ma during Her stay in Deoghar had visited Shree Shree Balananda's ashram and met both of them. Before coming within Shree Shree Ma's proximity I had accepted Shree Shree Ramakrishna Paramhansa Dev's ardent devotee *Pujyapaad Shri Shri Hemchandra Rai* as my first *guru*. And he had departed from his material body long before I got acquainted with Shree Shree Ma. Now also, remembering the highly affectionate Shree Guru, his joyous face engulfs my mind.

On 20th November 1941, after working in Calcutta in a central government office for ten years I was transferred to Delhi. With Shree Shree Ma's grace I got lodging in a mess in Delhi's centrally located Connaught Place.

While staying in the mess one day I heard the news that *kirtan* will be held in a house nearby. From a very young age I was fascinated with *kirtan*. Hence hearing the news, the very night I arrived in the house in Curzon Road. The fenced compound in front of the house was illuminated and a lot of people had assembled. The *kirtan* group was also overcrowded. Learnt that, Shree Shree Anandamayee Ma had arrived in this devotee's residence. I had not had a glimpse of Ma till then nor I knew anything about Her. Saw Shree Shree Ma there seated, wearing a red bordered *sari* illuminating the surrounding with Her angelic and captivating radiance. And with the heart inspiring *kirtan* lead by the dancing Aboy-da in Her presence, I seemed to have had lost myself in that unnatural environment. This was my first *darshan* of Shree Shree Ma. And seeing Her my heart was engulfed in happiness. Even after returning back to the mess, this effect stayed within me for a long time.

In 1942, during the summer our office shifted to Shimla and hence I too went to Shimla and stayed there for almost a year and then returned back to Delhi. The *Kali-bari* in Shimla is an eminent achievement of the Bengalis. Shree Shree Ma had arrived in the *Kali-bari* several times earlier and had enthralled the bengali, non-bengali and the local community with Her divine grace and there used to be big gatherings with *kirtan* and devotional functions. However, Ma had not arrived in the period I was present.

My second contact with Shree Shree Ma was in 1951, through my wife Pannarani. My wife had a desire to have a *guru*. I advised if she got a lady as a *guru* then she should accept her. At that time she saw Shree Shree Ma in her dream and disclosed this to her neighbours Bulu-di (devotee of Shree Shree Ma and wife of Shri Purojit Lahiri) and Noni-di. Fortunately, Shree Shree Ma had then arrived for a function at the residence of

an ardent devotee of Shree Ma and a famous doctor Shri J.K.Sen. Bulu-di took my wife to the doctor's residence. There she was blessed by Shree Shree Ma. After a long wait Shree Ma Herself called her and after discussing and making all arrangements asked her to go to Kashi. I too went to the doctor's residence and had *darshan* of Shree Ma. I was extremely delighted. After staying there for quite some time we returned back home.

We visited Dr.J.K.Sen's house every time Shree Shree Ma graced his house and used to have Her *darshan*, enjoy the glorious *kirtan* and return back home. On one of these occasions, I went for Shree Ma's *darshan* and paid Her obeisance just after She came out from Her bathe. Nobody else was in the room. Shree Ma stood in front of me like Shree Shree *MaKali* with Her tongue protruded out and accepted my *pranām*. I had been amazed with that incident. Such was Shree Ma's infinite grace. May be to judge the devotee of *Ma-Kali*, Shree Ma had taken that form and had graced me.

In 1952, Shree Ma advised us to go to Kashi, so we decided that while going to Calcutta we will break journey for three days at Kashi. We decided on a date, boarded the train from Delhi, got down at Kashi and went straight to Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram at Bhadaini. Shree Ma had once said, "I am a flying bird." She ceaselessly moves around various places giving joy and comfort, and fulfilling their earnest wishes. We were lucky that incidentally Shree Ma was present in Kashi then. We just cannot forget how happy Shree Ma was to see us and took full care for our fooding and lodging. We were given a room adjacent to the *Kirtan Hall*.

Every day in the morning, Bibhu-da in his melodious resonating voice used to sing *kirtan* and *bhajan* in the presence of Shree Ma. His first day's song '*Achutang Keshavang Ramanarayanam*', still rings in my ears, wherever I am. On the second day after bathing we went to Shree Ma as She had called for us. However, She had requested us not to bathe in the Ganges. We (me, my wife and three children) were alone with Shree Ma in Her room. We were overwhelmed to see Shree Ma's radiant and exuberant facial expression with part of Her hair curled up on top of Her head. Shree Ma blessed us with several advises and talked on various subjects. Shree Ma told my wife to repeat the 'Name', given to her in Delhi, constantly along with the inhalation and exhalation of breath.

I informed Shree Ma about my predicament, "I pray by saying 'Ma', 'Ma' in front of a combined frame of Shree Ramakrishna Paramhansadev on one side and Shree Shree Ma-Kali on the other. I don't understand, while praying I used to see Shree Ma-Kali within a glowing 'Om'." Shree Ma said, "While praying just add 'Om' before saying 'Ma', say 'Om-Ma, Om-Ma'. Since it has occurred with you, hence said so." The third day while we were packing, Shree Ma came to our room and supervised us to faultlessly and effortlessly pack our luggage. We then paid our obeisance to Shree Ma, went to the station, and placed our luggage in the train which had already arrived. I then went to the cloak room to collect our remaining baggage. By the time I returned to the station with the coolies and baggage the train had left. I frantically started praying to Shree Ma for her blessings. And, what infinite grace of Shree Ma, the train suddenly stopped near the end of the platform and I boarded it comfortably.

In the year 1961, my daughter who was 8 months old, had to be given *mukhe-bhaat* (a function for feeding rice etc. to a baby child). Shree Ma arrived in Kalkaji Ashram. On asking, Shree Ma requested Swami Paramanandaji to fix an auspicious day for it. He fixed a date and then Shree Ma said, "Go, all accomplished." Arriving at the ashram again on the recommended date, learnt that Shree Ma was not well and would not take any food and was lying in Her room. My wife started praying earnestly to Shree Ma. If Shree Ma does not take even a morsel then how to feed the same *prasād* to our daughter and then how will her function be completed? Suddenly Shree Ma got up and said from inside, "If this body does not eat anything then a eight months old baby will not be able to eat anything? Bring rice for me immediately." Then after Shree Ma's *bhog* (meals), She herself came outside and put a small quantity of the *prasād* in my daughter's mouth. We also took *prasād*, paid obeisance to Shree Ma and returned back home, excited to the full with Shree Ma's infinite grace. Now also, thinking of that incident purifies our body and mind with veneration and reverence.

(to be continued.)

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"He is the Supreme Form as well as the Formless Self. In one aspect, He appears ever present in full form, beauty, qualities and attributes, whereas in another aspect He is found as Formless, without attributes, here is pure, non-dual identity. In another aspect He is Full. If fullness is subtracted from fullness it remains full all the same. There is no difference anywhere. He is Dual as well as Non-Dual. He is the Discord as well as Harmony. He is boundless, He cannot be grasped even in our thoughts."

- Ma Anandamayee

Memorial Tribute

Late Bidyut Kanti Basu

In the evening of 29th September 2019, Sunday, at the age of 75, our beloved President of Varanasi Ashram, Shri Bidyut Kanti Basu in full consciousness breathed his last and left for the heavenly abode to be absorbed at the lotus feet of Shree Shree Anandamayee Ma.

Bidyutda will always be remembered for his humble and joyful nature. In 2005, Bidyutda, as he was generally called by everyone, retired from government service. After that, on Panuda's request he was absorbed in the service of the Varanasi Ashram. Initially he held the post of Asst-Secretary, then Secretary and finally President of the Ashram.

He was the nephew of Shree Shree Ma's ardent devotees Late Potolda and Late Hiruda. At the age of eleven or twelve, in 1956, Bidyutda came with his parents and uncles for Shree Shree Ma's *darshan* at the Varanasi Ashram when the diamond jubilee celebration of Shree Shree Ma's *Janmotsav* was being celebrated in the Ashram.

He actively participated in the ceremonies and programmes of the Ashram along with his uncles. In 1968, when Srimati Indira Gandhi (the then Prime Minister of India) arrived in our Ashram for the inauguration of the Hospital, Bidyutda had assisted Panuda in the smooth completion of the programme. Bidyutda got married on 18th January 1974. Shree Shree Ma in Her *kheyal* had offered a towel to him, a *Benarasi Sari* to his wife and had also sent *prasad* to their house. In 1975, on the occasion of *Durga Puja*, Shree Shree Ma had been to their house in Chowkhamba, Varanasi, being carried in a *palki* (palanquin) within the by-lanes. On 1st January 1982, on Panuda's request, he was asked to hold Shree Shree Ma's chair, when Ma arrived in the Ashram. He was extremely pleased and honored to do so.

Bidyutda selflessly and silently donated immensely for the benefit of the Ashram. Beautifying Shree Shree Ma's room in the ground floor of the Kanyapeeth with marble flooring is just one example of his highly charitable temperament and he will always be remembered for all these and also for his humble and joyful nature.

His departed soul must be surely resting in a state of bliss at the lotus feet of Shree Shree Ma. We pray to Shree Shree Ma for consoling his bereaved family.

Late Binoy Bhusan Sarkar

On 14th September 2019, another ardent devotee of Shree Shree Ma, Shri Binoy Bhusan Sarkar breathed his last and left for the heavenly abode. He was loved by everyone for his pleasant and humble nature. He was the author of several Bengali books like, '*Lila Vighraha Ma Anandamayee O Jyoti Gopal Darshan*' and '*Ke Tumi Ma Anandamayee*'. He had actively participated in the installation ceremony of the statue. He then fell ill and finally Shree Shree Ma took him in Her affectionate lap. He used to organize *Janmotsav* and other Ashram functions with full devotion and reverence in his house. He will always be remembered by the devotees of Shree Shree Ma for his literary contribution. We too pray for his departed soul to get eternal peace at the lotus feet of Shree Shree Ma and also extend our sincere condolence to his bereaved family.

Ashram Varta

Like every year, this year too, the festival of *Sharadiyā Durgā Pujā* was celebrated from 4th to 8th October, 2019 with great devotion and enthusiasm in the various branches of Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha, namely Kankhal, Agarpara, Ranchi, etc. Just after *Sharadiya Navrātri, Lakshmi Pujā* on 13th October, *Kālī Pujā* on 27th October and *Annakut Mahotsav* on 28th October were also celebrated in various branches.

From 4th to 8th October 2019, the Diamond Jubilee year of the *Shree Shree Sharadiya Durgā Mahotsav* was celebrated in the Ranchi Ashram. Though the first *Shree Shree Durgā Mahotsav* was held in 1954 in the presence and *kheyāl* of Shree Shree Ma, it was continued on a yearly basis from 1959, with the blessings and instructions of Shree Shree Ma, by the present President of Anandamayee Sangha, Swami Achyutanandaji. To commemorate this occasion, a souvenir was also published.

From 5th to 12th November 2019, *Shree Shree Sanyam Saptāh Māhāvratā* was organized in various branches including that in Kankhal. The inaugural function of the *Sanyam Saptāh* in Kankhal was held on the evening of 4th November. Besides several other dignitaries, Sw. Parameshwaranandji of Sadhana Sadan, Sw. Uttamanandaji of Bikaner, Sw. Vigyananandji of Kailash Math, Sw. Omkarananda Teerthji of Suratgiri and our beloved President Sw. Achyutanandaji were present for this function. The Kanyapeeth girls started the function with the recital of the Vedas. *Brahmacharini* Bishudhha-di sang the welcome song composed by Shree Shree Ma. This was followed by, a welcome lecture by Shri. Ashish Chowdhury; information of the special rules of the 7-day *Sanyam vrat*, by Shri P.K. Mazumdar, deliverance of Ma's *Vani* on *Sanyam vrat* by Sw. Parmeshwaranandaji; finally a note of blessings to the devotees and participants (*vratīs*) of the *Sanyam vrat* by Sw. Achyutanandaji.

From 5th onwards, as per the rules and regulations, the *Sanyam Saptāh vrat* commenced with *Ushā kirtan*, Shree Shree Ma's *pujā* in the *Ananda-Jyoti-Peetham*, *Ved-pāth*, *kirtan*, *Dhyān*, *Gita-pāth* and finally discourse on the *Upanishad*.

Sw. Uttamanandaji of Bikaner, spoke on '*Ingshabasheyapanish*'. He said, "To be born again and again and to die again and again is the greatest disease called *Bhabrog*. The medicine for this disease is *Tatwa-vichār*. After that *Brahmacharini* Geeta read the *Rās-Panchadhycaya* of the *Srimad-Bhāgvat* and then narrated the famous incident, "Ma was in Tarapeeth. Somebody questioned Ma from outside Her room, 'What is the name of Mataji? Where does Mataji stay?' Ma came out from the room and laughingly said, '*Avaykt-dhām, Svaroop-grām, Sacchidānanda Ghan Shyam-naam*.' In other words, Her abode is *Avaykt*, i.e. it is inexpressible; Ma is forever residing in *Sva-Svaroop*, i.e. She is in Her Own-Self. And Her name is *Sacchidānanda Ghan Shyam*. She is always in the state of *Sat-chit-ānanda*. *Sat* means eternal presence. *Chit* means unknown form. And *Ananda* means ever-bliss. She is both, *Ānanda* the Bliss and *Anandamayee* the Bliss-Incarnate. She is *Nirgun-Nirākār*, and again She is *Sagun-Sākār*. By trying to comprehend Her, everything can be realized, everything can be attained, this is Shree

Shree Ma's unique identity. Later Sw.Achyutanandaji also narrated incidents with Ma. In the evening after the *dhyān*, Sw.Vijayanandaji of *Kailash-Math* discussed the *Vāyu-Purān*.

On 6th, the President of *Divya-Jyoti Sangha*, Sw.Padmanabhanandaji remarked, "Dedicate yourself to virtuous deeds, devotion, yoga, sense control, and peace of mind. Complete sacrifice of addiction, passion and abstinence of power. Upliftment of detachment, discretion, forgiveness, devotion, reverence for the Guru and faith on his teachings are extremely essential for the purification of the soul. We feel angry and sad when we see others being praised and felicitated. The only recourse to such a situation is to pray sincerely at the lotus feet of the Universal Guru Shree Shree Ma. Ma will then remove all the negative tendencies."

On 7th the third day, after the discourse on the Upanishads, Sw.Dvijananda Saraswati of Kailashpeeth commented, "The soul is not different from the body. Just as the reflection of the Sun or Moon vibrates on the rippled water, similarly when there are vibrations in the base of the spine, the soul also vibrates. The soul is the seer of the awakened, the dreamt and the deep slumber states of the body. All scriptures are specifically meant for the purification of the mind. The ignorance of our true Self is the reason for our sufferings. Our evil deeds only give rise to our sufferings and these sufferings are the messengers of the Almighty God. To make us vigilant over our deeds and action, God gives us these sufferings. Reform yourself instead of keeping vigilance over others and their deeds. There are several ways available for the purification of the mind. For this very reason *Satsang* (company of the good) and *Sanyam* are required." Later in the night, *Matri* discourses were given by *Brahmacharini* Geeta, Sw.Golakanandaji (of Puri ashram), Shri S.Banerjee (Somuda), Shri S.K.Banerji (Patunda) and Shri Ashish Chowdhury (Chotonda).

Sw.Uttamanandaji gave explanatory discourse on the Upanishad. He told about the four divine statements: (a) '*Pragyanam Brahman*' – this statement is from the *Rigveda*. (b) '*Aham Brahman Asmi*' – this statement is from the *Ajurveda*. (c) '*Twat-tvam-asi*' – this statement is from the *Samveda*. (d) '*Ayam-Ātma-Brahman*' – this statement is from the *Atharvaveda*.

Sw.Omkarananda Teerthji of Suratgiri explained, "The four castes have been given four different titles: (a) Sharma to *Brahmins*, (b) Verma to *Kshetriyas*, (c) Gupta to *Vaishya*, (d) Das to *Shudra*. Again there are five types of *Brahmins*: (1) *Saraswat*, those residing near the river Saraswati, (2) *Kanyakubj*, those residing near the Ganga and Yamuna rivers, (3) *Gaud*, those staying in Rajasthan and Gujarat, (4) *Dravid*, South Indians, and (5) *Utkal*, the *brahmins* of Orissa. If *karma* (action) is done with *dharma* (piously and truthfully), then that action is called *Karma-yog*."

In the night everyday from 8:00pm to 8:45pm, Shri Mohan Chetanaji read the *Gita*. He said, "Whatever work or action is done it should be aimed at following the instructions of the *Guru*. Never attach the mind towards condemnation or praise."

On 11th November, the seventh and last day of the *Vrat*, in the evening Shree *Satya Narayan Pujā and Pānchāli pāth* (reading of the scriptures related to Shree

Narayan) was held in the *Shiv Mandir*. After that in the night the *Māhā-Nishā Dhyān* (midnight meditation) was held. The *vratis* took *prasād* after the *dhyān*.

On 12th (*Rās-Poornima* day), the *Sanyam Saptāh Māhāvrat* was concluded with the *yagna* and later everyone paid there obeisance to Shree Shree Ma in the *Ananda-Jyoti-Peetham*. *Sadhu bhandara* was held in the afternoon and after that all the *vratis* and devotees had normal *prasād* (lunch). In the late evening the *Naam-Yagna* with full-night *kirtan* commenced.

On 13th, there was *mālsa bhog* for everybody. The seven days long *Sanyam Saptāh* festival came to an end after the culmination of the *kirtan* in the evening, with all devotees and *vratis* enriched and enlightened by the combined meditation and spiritual discourses.

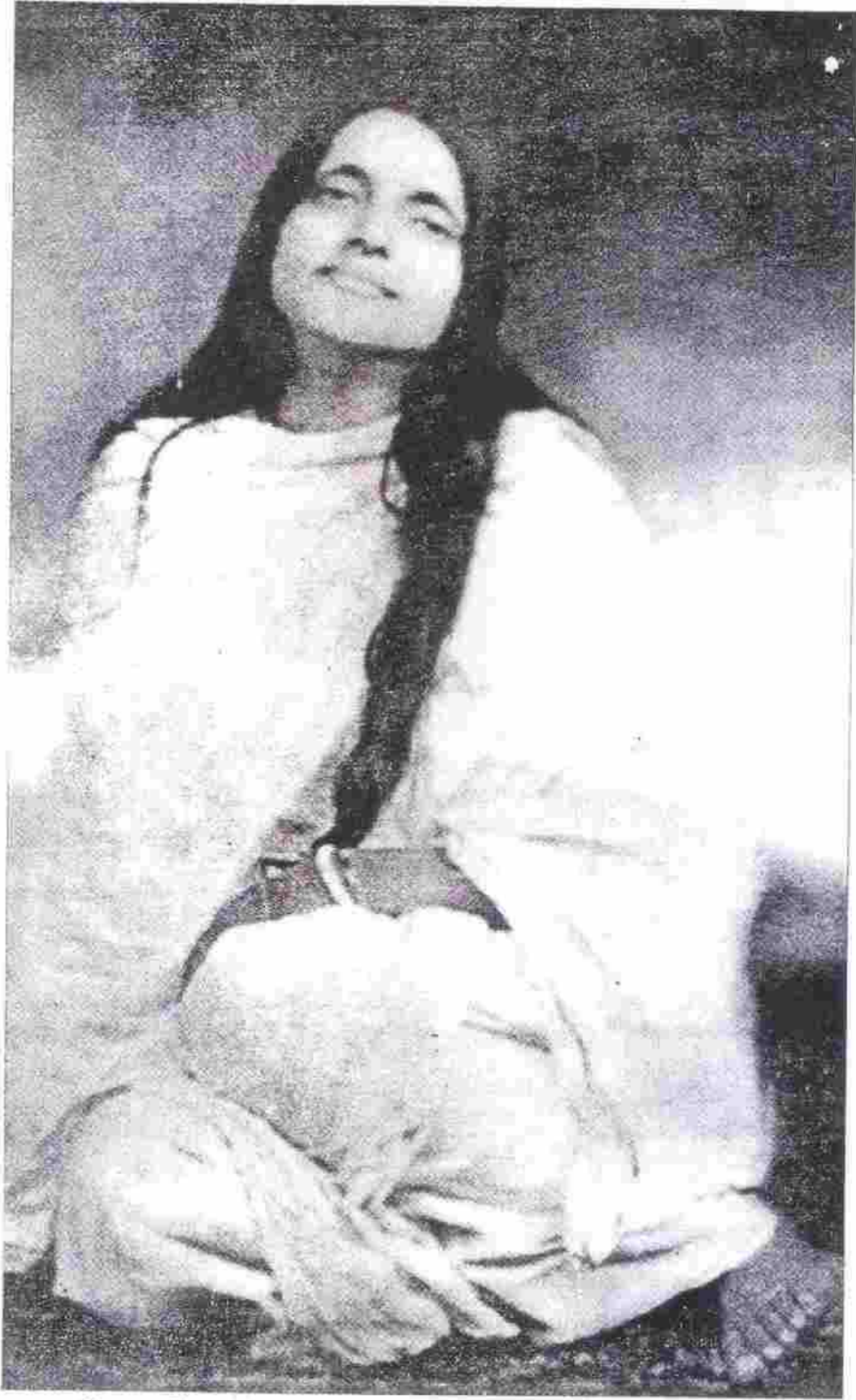
From 5th to 8th December, *Gitā Jayanti* was celebrated in every ashram of Shree Shree Ma.

Earlier in the month of July-August 2019, *Br. Guneeta*, *Br. Geeta*, and two other Kanyapeeth residents visited Amarkanthak for 25 days. In Amarkanthak, they were assisted by an ardent devotee of Ma, Shri Milind Kopargaonkar. The river Narmada originates from here and flowing westwards finally falls in the Arab Ocean. There they had a dip in the holy Narmada river, visited the temple of *Ma Narmada* and the Narmada garden and another holy place called Sonmuda. The river Sonbhadra originates from Sonmuda and flows eastwards.

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List of Festivals

1. Shree Shree Saraswati Puja	January 29, 2020.
2. Maghi Poornima	February 9, 2020.
3. Maha Shivratri	February 21, 2020.
4. Holika Dahan	March 8, 2020.
5. Holi Mahotsav	March 9, 2020.
6. Shree Shree Basanti Durga Puja	March 30, 2020
7. Shree Shree Ma Annapurna Puja	April 1, 2020.
8. Ram Navami	April 2, 2020.
9. Shree 108 Swami Muktananda Giri Sanyas Utsav	April 13, 2020.



Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Satsanga Sammilani
Salt Lake, Kolkata