

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly
with the divine life and sayings of
Sri Anandamayi Ma

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Sri Ma in the campus of the Ashram in Pune with the calf eagerly looking at Ma.

MATRI-VANI

No matter to what caste, class and religion anyone may belong, he should always speak the truth and engage in his particular japa, meditation, worship and remembrance of God. Each one should start along the lines taught by his own religion. Study scriptures, seek satsang, sing the names and praises of God. Every service has to be done as service of God.

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One who serves God can never be helpless. The more ardently one seeks communion by engaging in japa, His service and contemplation, the fuller will be his revelation.

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He who has given you what you possess in this world—wealth, distinction, youth, appeal to Him for His own sake.

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You cannot ? Why ? you will have to do. Verily, man can do all things. Who can say what He will give to whom and through what ? Everything is His, entirely His. What did you bring with you at birth ? Were you not empty handed? And all you have acquired, is it yours, really ?

All is His and whatever happens is His will. Endeavour to maintain this. Saying : "It is mine", you grasp at everything — this is the way to count sorrow. Call out to Him, because all is His. To yearn thus for Him is real prayer.

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As long as one is able to hold on to anything, one must hold on to the One. It is imperative to become entirely single-minded, and one's duty to remain concentrated exclusively on the One. By adhering to one name, one contemplation, one thought, one pointedness will be achieved.

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Q. If you have no mission to fulfil or message to give, why do you tell us to worship god?"

Ma. If you do not ask, then I have nothing to say; but if you ask, and if it is my *kheyala* then certainly I shall tell you about the better way of life (*shreyas*)

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It is by seeking to know oneself that the Great Mother of all may be found.

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Do you want deliverance from the bonds of the world? Then, weeping profusely, you will have to cry out from the bottom of your heart : " Deliver me, Great Mother of the world, deliver me !" To obtain Her grace you will have to shed tears much more abundantly than when you desire things of the world. When by the flood of your tears the inner and the outer have fused into one, you will find Her, whom you sought with such anguish, nearer than the nearest, the very breath of life, the very core of every heart.

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I never say — " I will do this, I will not do that," It is you who make me carry out whatever work lies in your power to induce me to perform.

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In God is everyone and everything. Where is God not ? This is why Ma is also ever near, though the body does not go everywhere.



IMPRESSIONS OF ANANDAMAYI MA

[Three]

—Richard Lannoy

This was a place of absolutely strict asceticism, no two way about it and, interestingly, there was never any question of it being anything other than just that. It was an irreducibly chaste regime and this simplicity gave the institution freshness and lightness of tone. At that time there were only two non-Indian residents in all Anandamayi Ma's ashrams. A year before I arrived, the celebrated anthropologist of the Ituri pygmies, Collin Turnbull had spent a while imbibing Mataji's compelling ways. She had filled exactly that emptiness I had felt in the western world, and through her I learned how to lead a whole life, how to carry the spirit into the every-day world, how to lead an every-day life that is at the same time a dedicated life and intensely spiritual.

In her ashram I felt the bond of brotherhood which will eventually unite the world and to the mutual love and consideration which pervaded all those gathered around Mataji. I found a way of life which is yet but a dream among the majority of the people of the western world. There was no question of rich and poor, good or bad, high or low, there was perfect brotherhood among all. I think that perhaps the greatest things I learned were a love for Truth and a love for all my fellow beings. Truth can be a hard master, but there are none better, for that is one of the ways in which the spirit is revealed. Those around Mataji could not help but be impregnated with this wonderful ideal and at the same time feel all the petty differences and distinctions which normally surround us disappearing. Here was life as it should be held, life for the One Self, for the little individual self, a life in which all of us could join equally, no matter how feeble and weak we were.

Foliage and flowers in the Varanasi ashram were of monastic-nature. Here was barely more than hinted at in the immediate field of vision; beyond stretched a hazy waste of water and distant fields. Soon after I first met Anandamayi Ma (that sounds so social, it was more a silent encounter!) I spent a number of days in close proximity to her at her ashram in Vindhyachal. Here I was able to see her in the depths of the Indian countryside and to gauge how deep was her relation to all living things. Vindhyachal, at some distance from Varanasi, huddles at the foot of a sacred hill on the edge of a rocky wilderness clad with jungles overlooking the Gangetic plain. It is a hallowed spot sacred to Tantrics, with remains of great

antiquity. On the slopes of the hill are plunging, forested gullies, sequestered temples and primeval shrines. It was winter when I arrived and the leaf strewn ground beneath gnarled trees and rocks were littered with beautiful sculptures that had fallen from ruined temples. The little ashram, strangely reminiscent of a Tuscan farm house, commanded a magnificent view from atop the hill. The majestically wide Ganges meandered across a vast sandy bed into the far distance. The main ashram building was a rectangular two-storey tower, surrounded by verandahs on all sides.

From the upper balcony one could view clusters of dwelling at the foot of the hill and a square temple tank with a single pillar at its center rising from the water like the *axis mundi*, the still point of the turning world. Everything at Vindhyaçal was steeped in the bright winter hush. During the day the air was very clear and every spec of detail stood out sharply, as in a medieval miniature. Only the distant sound of a dog barking or a temple bell rang through the echoing air. At night it became misty and extremely cold, the temperature dropping almost to freezing point.

There were only about a dozen of us there. Anandamayi Ma often retreated from the crowds to this ashram. It was a perfect, unhurried setting in which to imbibe the nature of her being and savour the atmosphere of this enchanted stop. It was a remarkably non-culture specific scene. On the hill top one might have been almost anywhere in the world so muted was the detailing.

At the ashram, people wore plain, anonymous garments, mostly unadorned lengths of wrap-around cotton with woollen shawls. These clothes were white and indeed the whole scene was very muted in colour. In this basic environment I had the sensation of being located at the outer reaches of what had once been a single, vast hegemony which stretched from the eastern extremity of India to the farthest western fringe of ultimate Thule. Upon this domain, as one can often feel in the Gangetic plain, there remain faint traces of an ancient unifying force that of Greece, which spread across immensities of time and space to leave their gentle impress - no more than ghostly traces now, but palpable none the less upon dwellings and people. In this antique land, Anandamayi Ma had something about her of the sibyl and walked abroad like a Homeric prophetess or Hebraic psalmist. She also brought to mind archetypes from the basilicas of Byzantian and Constantine's Rome and from *Zendāvestā* and *Mahabhārata*.

The upper storey of the ashram contained Anandamayi Ma's very simple quarters, with surrounding balconies. She would sit here on the southern balcony every morning in light shade, perhaps dictating letters. While her long and fine hair

being combed by a lady attendant. One morning it became wordlessly clear that I could approach with my camera. The light was perfect, all was quite still. I stood directly and silently in front of her, paused to collect my thoughts, made some camera adjustments, prefocussed my lens to its closest range and moved forward until her features came into focus on the ground glass view finder of my reflex camera. Holding the camera below my own eye-level, I slowly looked up from it, my eyes were now level with hers and she was precisely 68 centimeters (27 inches) away. For what seemed like an eternity I steadied my breathing and we very quietly gazed into each others eyes. Or, at least I did, but she cast her cleaning glance right through me into the far distance. For a moment I felt myself to be completely transparent, without substance. Then I pressed the shutter once and moved away. I never needed, nor wished to do that again—.

I could go for walks in the sacred groves and wander around the temples, quite alone. I peered into dark, sinister niches in the rock where stood terrifying images of deities. Only in close up could the truly Indian character of Vindhyachal be appreciated particularly in the juxtaposition of these deities of the local folk culture with the refined sweetness of the classical sculpture that tumbled from some great lost monument nearby. Then I would pick my way among rocks and pebbles beneath intricate networks of bare winter branches, or clear the autumn leaves from the sculptures strewn around. Everywhere there were streaks, veins, marks, striations, dapplings, livigs, bark, lichen, moss, ferns, thickets—.

I would return to the ashram and take my place with the others at the foot of Anandamayi Ma's bed. She was only a pace or two away; sometimes there was talk and laughter, animated discussion and tales recounted of her early life. There was no exaggerated emotionalism about her; her voice flowed, mellifluous and clear, like the water in a stream, tumbling without hesitation over sparkling pebbles. At other times she was silent, swaying a little from side to side, her head tilted as if listening to something far away. Her face was tender and her whole personality radiated a secure warmth. In a swift moodchange her sense of humour shone. She was at home among her people perfectly natural, charged with life.

Now and then I would disengage myself from this deep immersion and look into the room from outside, along with a few bystanders from Vindhyachal. The scene, especially by lamp light, reminded me of Haubert's famous remark on catching sight of cottagers in their lighted hovels: '*Its sont dans le vrai*' literally, 'they are in the truth'. But the analogy I will use for these scenes is that of a conductor with an orchestra, each musician playing a different instrument. Here Mataji was conducting a symphony of quietness, not by commands or even by a unifying beat, but by a kind of focussed persuasion, suggestion, inspiration. Each

person present would be pursuing his own inner tune and perhaps occasionally giving voice to a solo or joining a duet discussion when Mataji fell silent as she often did for minutes on end, she would tilt her head upwards in a variety of ways, but always accompanied by a flich of her looks and a shift in her gaze — intent, alert, heartening. It seemed to me that, with these little pauses, she was whisking, all present through the portals of an open door into a larger, more magical domain of invisible intimations. Even as I write, I can recall these little adjustments of her posture exactly : they had a creature quality, like a bird ruffling its feathers before it settles to roost. These were moments of pure enchantment when I could watch everyone respond as it to fresh inspiration. Like ears of ripening wheat in a light breeze, they would sway a little before they too would settle and glow.

I could look over her shoulder, through door and balcony, and see the branches of trees, pebbles, rocks, leaves and twigs which I had recently examined closely. My eyes would return indoors and scan this sibylline figure as she sat relaxed and bemused. I marvelled at the soft texture of her skin, at the way the shadows round her eyes seemed to have the density of velvet. She retained a youthfulness which belied her age 58. I was fascinated by her incessantly mobile features, especially the multiplicity of extremely delicate lines that wove a mobile network across shin, notably on her forehead and on her lips. I felt I was looking again at all the intricacies of line I had been tracing in the woods — as if she were a part of the vegetation and the markings of her face and the markings on the trees were all part of a long intricate inscription written in one single script. I had stored in my memory a beautiful observation of Paracelus on this theme. It went something like this : there are many kinds on chiromancy of man's hands, from which it is possible to infer and discover his inclinations and his fate; there are yet other kinds of chiromancy for example, that of tree leaves, of herbs, of wood, of shells, of rocks and mines, the chiromancy of landscapes, countries, their roads and rivers. Written horizontally across her brows were five lines like those of a music score crossing these were a myriad fine spun vertical lines in constant movement, knitting and fanning out, narrowing and widening like the action of a loom when the warp and weft open and close. At the midpoint her brow was momentous, with a suggestion about it of a membrane for receiving and transmitting signals. The brow arched high, expansive and flat, to meet the hairline abruptly. this arching forehead and an energetic jaw, like the prow of a ship sailing out of harbour, were her most distinctive features. The nose and brows were rounded, gentle and un-assertive., the mouth was very wide, with a multitude of little dips and puckerings, a trenchant line dipping at the centre; so changeable.

[To be continued]



MA IS FOR ALL

[From the diary of Didi Gurupriya]

In 1935 when Ma visited Tarapeeth she met one Muslim householder and addressed him as 'Baba'. The man was overwhelmed with joy on being addressed thus and came everyday to see Ma. The Muslim's house was close to a Masjid which was at same distance from the Siddhashram. Ma visited his house many times, taking all her devotees with her. The old man would beckon his wives (he had two wives) and say, "Daughter has arrived come out." They would both come and seat near Ma lovingly. Ma would go there and behave just like a little girl and enjoy herself greatly. Whenever she received anything at Tarapeeth, she would immediately tell me, "Send some thing to Baba". Whenever the old man came to see Ma, if he found he would have to wait to see Ma, he would send word to Ma through someone, "Tell Ma that her Baba has come and would like to meet her." On receiving this message Ma would meet the old man at once.

While Ma was at Tarapeeth another Maulavi from Calcutta came and stayed with her for some days. He belonged to a prestigious clan of Delhi. He felt extremely happy whenever he saw Ma. Ma had named him, "Prem Gopal". He wrote many poems on Ma in Urdu and recited them for Her.

After staying in Tarapeeth for some days he returned to Calcutta on Ma's behest. But we heard that on returning to Calcutta he began pining for Ma and could not even eat. He wept and his restlessness increased. Then he was sent back to Tarapeeth. This time he stayed for some more days with Ma and then calmed down considerably and returned to Calcutta in obedience to Ma's orders.

Observing the Maulavi sahibs devotion to a Hindu Mataji, the Muslims in Tarapeeth gathered in protest. The Maulavi sahib then took them all to the mosque one evening and addressed them for an hour explaining what is and how their religion would not be defiled in the least by going to Her. He took Ma to that meeting and made her sit on the dais on an *asana* and gave this lecture after bowing down to her. He revered Ma immensely.

Prem Gopal brought some foodstuff from Calcutta for Ma. He wanted to feed Ma himself, but did not have the courage to say so. Ma heard of this and called him and asked him to feed her. He put a little sweet-meat into Ma's mouth with great delight and received prasada.

Once Prem Gopal was invited to a meal at Ma's old Muslim father's place and the Muslim 'baba' looked upon Prem Gopal as his grandson and extended such affection towards him. Prem Gopal also regarded the old man as Ma's father and addressed him as grand father. Sometimes Prem Gopal sang Nama Kirtan in Ma's presence, while Hindu devotees listened to him. Again Muslims were also present for Hari Nama Kirtan. Thus Hindus and Muslims mingled with each other in Ma's vicinity.

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DIARY LEAVES

—Atmananda

In the course of a discussion about Yoga in Kishenpur, in June 1947, Mataji related the following incident :

"Once Bhaji and this body were walking from Barlowganj to Mussoorie. In the heat of the early afternoon my mouth and throat became parched, but I did not feel like saying that I was thirsty. just at that time a certain devotee's wife at Rajshahi in Bengal prepared some melon sherbat and offered it to me. I found that my thirst was perfectly appeased, the feeling of dryness had left and my mouth seemed full of juice.

"Later when Bhaji travelled to Rajshahi, he confirmed by letter that the said lady had actually prepared some melon sherbat and offered it to me at that very time. The surprising thing was that she did not as a rule offer me any sherbat. Only on that day, at that particular time it occurred to her to prepare a refreshing drink and offer it to me. This is an example for Yoga."

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One day Mataji said : "Under God's dispensation now and again man has to suffer violent blows. Do you know that these blows are God's Grace ? Without them it would be impossible for the person concerned to experience a change of heart at this particular stage.

"At Dhaka, a young girl of good family once related the following to this body : 'A man, of whom people said he was just like Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu,¹ visited our house. He said to me : 'When I came to earth last time, I left my home forsaking Vishnupriya. Now I have returned to fulfil her ardent desire for me. You are Vishnupriya reborn.' When people came to know of this they beat him up mercilessly. But this was very wholesome for him. Indeed it was the Supreme Mother who caused the beating to happen."

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One night at Vrindaban in 1948, a most animated discussion was in full swing, when one of Mataji's bhaktas, a learned old *sannyāsī*, who as a rule takes a very

1. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, also called Lord Gauranga lived in Bengal in the 16th century and is regarded as an *Avatāra*. Vishnupriya was the name of his wife.

active part in all arguments, fell fast asleep and was snoring peacefully, quite oblivious of what was going on around him. Mataji called out to him once or twice without any response. Everyone was highly amused. At last someone by way of a joke dropped a *rasagulla*, (the famous juicy Bengali sweet) into the half-open mouth of the sleeping man. Even this did not have the desired effect, nor the hilarious laughter that followed. But when the sweet syrup began to trickle down his throat, he could not help waking up.

As so often happens, Mataji made this playful episode an occasion for utterances of profound wisdom. She spoke about *rasa*. However, there is a difficulty in translating what She said, for the Sanskrit word '*rasa*' means any juice from water to nectar, essence, as well as delight of every kind, gross and subtle, also Supreme Delight. There is no equivalent in English.

This is what Mataji said : "Unless *Bhagavad Rasa* is instilled into man, unless the nectar of the Divine penetrates deep into him, his slumbering soul does not awaken. *Vedānta* is also *rasa*, just as *bhakti* is *rasa*; why should *Vedānta* be described as dry ? It is a well-known fact that poison neutralizes poison. Similarly, when transcending nature's delights, which are fleeting, man tastes of the delicious flavour of his true Being (*svabhāver rasa*), of Supreme Delight (*Param rasa*), then the excruciating anguish of the poison of mere worldly enjoyment is destroyed.

Beyond bodily pleasures, such as eating, sleeping, moving about and so on, lies Joy Supreme. Don't you recite; '*Brahmānandam Paramasukhadam*,' Absolute Bliss, Supreme Happiness.' He is Happiness Itself, Happiness is His very essence. Earthly happiness has its opposite—sorrow. But where happiness is in its essential form (*Ānanda swarūpa*), unconditioned, there the opposites—joy and misery—find no place; where solely *Sva Rasa* is, there can be no question of *a-rasa*, (of the sense of dryness, of emptiness, of the anguish of God's absence). He is the Fountain of Joy—Joy and Joy alone is His being. A state exists in which there is only Bliss, Beatitude, Supreme Felicity. At your level, joy has its opposite; you speak of the joys of heaven and of the torments of hell. But where Eternal Bliss is, bliss in its own right cannot be expressed, it is entirely beyond words. THERE—what is ? What is not ? To speak means to float on the surface; what language can express that which is neither floating nor diving deep ?"

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A gentleman who lives in a far off hill station in the Himalayas had come for Mataji's darshan and stayed for some days. During his journey back home he wrote the following letter to which Mataji replied in detail, paragraph by paragraph, as follows :

The letter : At the time of parting, when with a broken heart I did *pranāma* to you, I knew that I had found something, but I also felt as if I were losing something. In this mood I went my way.

Mataji's reply : Where nothing is, there is everything. All efforts are for the sake of this realization only. To do *pranāma* means to pour oneself out to His feet, to become closely bound to them and thereby united to Him, to become His, who alone IS. When doing *pranāma* in a temple or anywhere else, you should not hold back anything, but give yourself without reserve.

The letter : To know you are always near, although physically you may be far away, this experience can only come by your Grace. It seems impossible for me to attain it through my own efforts.

Mataji's reply : You must know Him in such a way that no place remains where He is not. According to Vaishnavite terminology there is *viraha* and *milana* (separation and union). But this *viraha rasa*, this experience of profound yearning for God after having known union, is not like the worldly sense of separateness, which means not knowing the other, being unfulfilled.

Everything comes by His Grace alone—this of course is a fact. You experience as your own the power He has vested in you. Apply it in His service to the utmost of your capability, whatever be the nature of your approach, whatever your line.

The letter : While I was near you, I forgot all about my home. I did not give a single thought to my family affairs and cares. But the nearer the train carries me to my home, the more my domestic hopes and worries crowd into my mind.

Mataji's reply : All **desire** must be for God only. Whatever you do whether with your hands or with your brain, do it as His service. Whatever you accept, physically or mentally, accept it as God coming to you in this shape. If anything is to be given, it is a surrender of yourself at His feet.

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Some time ago, a lady from Switzerland wrote a letter to Mataji. Here are her questions and Mataji's replies.

Question : Since the religious conception is the highest, the only goal in life, what becomes of those who do not attain to it in their lifetime ?

Mataji : Those who do not attain to the Goal of human existence, have to continue in the realm of death, which is the ceaseless round of birth and rebirth.

Question : Since our only reason for living is to return to That from which we came, why is there this life, why were we separated from This Being ?

Mataji : Everything is His Will, He is absolutely free, He is His own law. This coming and going is His very nature, His dispensation. He Himself plays with Himself, everything is He and He alone.

Question : Will man ever destroy this world and himself ?

Mataji : Man has certainly not got the power to create, preserve or destroy. In Him, whose play all this is, all possibilities are contained.

The destruction of one's ego virtually amounts to the destruction of the universe. Where the ego is, there the world exists. Destruction is the very nature of that which is the world and therefore perishable; it is ever destroyed, it is being destroyed now and it will be destroyed. But where He is and He alone, who is to destroy whom ? There the question of destruction cannot arise. Where is He, who is that Self ? Find out ! The Self is not subject to destruction. The ceaseless endeavour to know that Self is man's bounden duty.

Question : Is there no love between mortals or must all love be first for God and then love for another being ?

Mataji : Between individuals, true unadulterated love or fondness is impossible. Where love or affection has grown perfect this question cannot arise, for in such a case, who is the beloved ? God and God alone.

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Varanasi, Aug. 27th, 1948.

This morning a young girl student asked : "How can I find peace ?"

Mataji : "Do you really want peace ? Then make a firm resolve : 'I am going to find peace !' Just as when you want to study, you first make up your mind, then you proceed with the necessary arrangements. So also here : First you must make up your mind for it, then the road will open out. If you want to find peace, turn to Him who is the source of peace. In the world there are the twin brothers : happiness and pain. They are inseparable. As long as you are after worldly happiness there must be sorrow as well, since there is constant change. Happiness can only be temporary, never permanent. If you want lasting peace you must turn to Him. Just as a child who is hurt cries for its mother, so you must cry for Him, who is your own."

Questioner : I want peace but I don't get it.

Mataji : If you sit at home and say : I want to pass an exam, nothing will happen. You have to undertake the necessary steps. Similarly you have to take the road that leads to peace.

The girl : Then what to do ?

Mataji : Seek satsang and if you have a Guru obey his instructions.

Question : How to find a Guru ?

Mataji : If you are keen to study you find a teacher. So here also, if there is eagerness in your heart you will find a Guru. When you call God, do so only for His sake, for nothing else. Why ? When you have found Him you have found everything and then you want nothing else at all."

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Varanasi Ashram, December 16, 1948.

The chanting of the Holy scriptures had just ended. A Kashmiri lady brought a basket full of fruits and offered it to Mataji. A little later Mataji called two bhaktas and asked them to distribute the contents of the basket to all present. "Give a whole fruit to each person," She said. Someone, who felt afraid that there might not be enough to go round, objected : "Why a whole fruit ? Would it not be safer to cut them into pieces ?"

Mataji : "No, when there is one for each person, why divide them ?"

After everyone had received his or her share, only one fruit was left over for the two distributors. Mataji said to them : "The task of dealing out is only one. There might have been even three of you to accomplish it. Now you two will have to divide the fruit between you." Someone remarked : "In a similar way the action of reciting the scriptures is one although many join in it; it would therefore have been appropriate for all those who took part to share one single fruit between them." Someone else added : "But then to listen to the chanting is equally only one task."

Mataji : Exactly, there is only ONE; all this is meant to make you grasp this fact. Whatever you do at any time, no matter for what purpose, must aim at the ONE in order to be brought to completion. Indeed, this holds good in every case — one must aim at THAT.

"To Ma everything is complete," put in a devotee.

Mataji : Whether you say 'to Ma' or 'to me' (meaning yourself)—everything is in reality complete. What does 'here' and 'there' mean ? That which is whole comprises everything—not even death can be excluded. Any particular angle of vision is like a fissure or gap in the whole. Even all the varying points of view, in fact anything you please, is contained in that which is complete; indeed in the guise of incompleteness also manifests the Perfect ONE—in every aspect is He alone.

A *bhakta* : From completeness arises the incomplete and the incomplete develops into the complete; movement evolves into stability, for the mouth has to be shut sooner or later when the manifestation of the next sound 'M' must follow as a matter of course. (Laughter)

Question : But do you not say : '*Hari kathā hi kathā aur sab vrithā vyathā* (Of Him alone must be the spoken word, all else is but futility and pain) ? If there is only the One without-a-second, how can there be words and speech ?

Mataji : Dwell only in Him, abide only in Him ! He cannot be left aside; although you may exclude Him, He is still there and if you acknowledge Him He is also there—on the plane where talk and discussion still exist.

At this point the lady who had brought the fruit, suddenly got up and said : "When the *prasāda* was distributed two shares were given to me." Now at last, we knew why there had been a shortage of one fruit ! Then the lady added : "When I was walking in the street carrying the basket, a cow followed me and tried to snatch some fruit. In spite of all my efforts to move the basket out of her way the cow was so insistent that finally I gave her one of the fruits."

"That was my share", Mataji exclaimed, "Do you see, now the number is complete !"

The Kashmiri lady confirmed : "In fact when I handed the fruit to the cow, the thought crossed my mind : "It must be Mataji who is claiming the fruit in this guise !"

AN ODE TO MA'S DEVOTEE

'Tvadeeya paada pankajam namami Devi Narmade'

*Salutation o' salutation to you the quiet flowing waters of river Narmada
in the silence of the night when slumber softly shuts the doors of your parlor
the image of your reigning celestial beauty
the flowers of worship kissing gently the Lotus-Feet
do I gather them to fold under my pillow
holding my rosary close to my heart I promise to wake with the rising Sun
lo behold! no slumber, no image, no vision, I remained ever awakened
sitting by Your parlor, waiting on YOU for eternity
quiet flows the river Narmada singing the song of YOUR praise.
'Tvadeeya Paada Pankajam namami Devi Narmade'.*

OFFERING OF MY PRAYERS

— 'Shobha'

I know not any rituals nor do I undergo tapas. Neither have I served the needy the lonely. My sadhana I gather from Matri vani. The rosary of my heart comes from the holy hands that worshipped the Deity of Divine Beauty. Thought waves that rise within are the reflection of Your manifestation. MA those thoughts I offer to Your Divine Celestial Beauty

Prayer..... intense call from within the heart, flow of the mind.

Yearning of the soul. The One I offer my prayers is not Righteousness, for it is cold and harsh No, not Truth, for so austere and rigid: No, not Love. It can be veiled with selfishness: its purity, its meaning can be held in many ways, by many minds.

Beauty then is my beloved Lord. Where it abides, there is joy, peace, harmony, love.

Neither can it be harsh nor can it be cruel. In darkness will it shine:

In light will it glow: The lotus of the pond opens its petals to the serenity of the moon in the silence of the autumn glow. All is quiet.

All is still. Radiance of beauty guides the lonely path finder of the night.

Like a flower nodding in the breeze. Neither of here nor of there. Infinite!!!

Thus my God, the Beauty of the Universe, I offer my prayers.

FROM NOTES TAKEN IN SRI MA'S PRESENCE

—'Kirpal'

May 7, 1959, Dehradun, Kishenpur Ashram

Sri Ma - "The mirror of the soul (*chit rupi darpan*) is cleansed by the name of god and for the purification of the mind. This body does not utter untruths. As you have cooked your meals, then eaten for many days, but have not cleaned the vessels nor washed or scrubbed them and you are unaware of their original colour. you have to scrub and scrape the vessels and have to use tamarind (*imli*), so that the dirt and dark colour is removed. The medicine for that (cleansing) has to be used. You have to apply the *imli* and also have to scrub. Just to apply the *imli* will not serve the purpose.

For ages (*jugajugantar*) the mirror of your mind has been covered with dirt. For ages and ages your *awagaman* (coming and going) has taken place and the dirt has remained. If something has to be cleaned that particular thing which is appropriate for the same, will have to be used so as to clean it.

"That thing is the name of God. That is the supreme medicine for the mirror of the soul the aim should be for the purification of the mind. Then devotion and deep faith in God will shine forth.

"How to achieve that ? With single-pointed concentration. The mind must not wander hither thither and the *kriyas* (actions) necessary for cleansing the mind have to be done. One-pointed concentration and then comes the Divine visions, the holy touch, devotion to God (*Bhagavat prem*) and supreme love (*Mahā Prem*).

Let God's name alone be imbedded in you. That is the path should be taken where in all actions, walking, eating or sleeping you should remain concentrated in His Name.

"You repeat God's name but your mind is circling around wordly matters. That is the reason why there is no achievement. If the actions (*Kriyas*) are properly performed God's Supreme Power (*Shakti*) will definitely be revealed.

"The path of being the eternal servant of God (*nitya dāsa*) by following the same the immortality that is within you will be revealed. Where there is *ananda* (bliss), where there is God, there is no question of mortality. That which is *atma* in all creations, which is self-revealed (*svayam prakāsa*) and who is within one's own self will be revealed.

"The *japa* is to be done in consonance with the natural movement of the breath, with ease and without strain. Then the Divine Bliss inherent in God's name will be experienced and the Divine that is within you, your very own, will be revealed.



VEDĀNTA AND TANTRA - A SYNTHETIC STUDY*

—Prof. Bireswar Ganguly

Vedanta, comprising the *Upanisads*, *Brahma Sutra* and *Bhagavad Gita*, studies the subjective universe of the individual soul (*Jivātmā*), cosmic soul (*Paramātmā*) and the underlying infinite all-inclusive Reality (*Brahman*). Hence Vedanta proceeds on the lines of philosophical synthetic analysis and tries to discover the unified ultimate field of reality. *Tantra* is an analytical study of the multifarious objective world. Hence it adopts the scientific method of study. A glimpse of the *Positive Sciences of Hindus* by Brajen Seal and *A History of Hindu Chemistry* by Prafulla Chandra Roy will indicate how vast was the canvass of Hindu *Tantra sastra*, which made valuable contribution in the scientific fields of Surgery, Medicine, Mathematics, Astronomy and Astrology, Geography and Geology, Botany, Zoology, Physiology, Sociology, Political Economy etc.

Thus we see that Vedantic philosophy studies the eternal principles and *Tantra* studies the ever-changing world. But the world consists of two aspects, viz. the physical universe and the subtle universe. Modern sciences, both natural and social, deal with the external, physical and social universe, whereas *Tantra sastra* deals with the subtle forces behind the physical world, to forge a link between *Jagat* (World) and *Brahman* (God). Of course, even modern physics has arrived at a stage, where scientific laws have begun knocking at the door of *Sakti* or *Prāna*, which is the primeval source of all energy.

The Relativity Equation of Einstein, ($E = mc^2$) has almost established that not only all matter is ultimately reducible to energy, but also that there is nothing real like matter. It sounds almost like the dictum of Vedanta that the *jagat* (world of name and form) is *mithyā* (false or illusory). *The Mysterious Universe* and *The Universe Around us* of Sir James Jeans or Eddington's *The Nature of the Physical World* or Pere Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man*, all throw ample hints regarding the limitations of science, Swami Ranganathananda's epoch-making book, *Science and Religion* has succeeded in proving the complementarity of science and religion.

However, the religious approach, not of Vedanta, but of *Tantra*, answers properly to the claim of the in-depth study of man, which is the subject-matter of

* Based on an extempore lecture on the subject, delivered by the author at Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Golpark, Calcutta on 4.1.99.

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religion, for Tantra is the practical or applied aspect of Vedanta. Tantra undertakes the detailed scientific aspects of *Nididhyāsana* (technique of worship and meditation). *Tantra* has the capacity of raising atheistic science to the level of a truly theistic science. Thus *Tantra* is the logical link between *Vedanta* and science.

The Perennial Philosophy :

The Vedanta offers the perennial philosophy or *Sanātan Dharma* of the Hindus, which has universal application for the whole of humanity.

According to the famous philosopher, Aldous Huxley, at the core of the perennial philosophy the following four fundamental doctrines are found :—

i) The phenomenal world of matter and of individualized consciousness is the manifestation of a Divine Ground, within which all partial realities have their being, and apart from which they would be non-existent. This Divine Ground is called Brahman, whose creative, sustaining and transforming aspects are manifested in the Hindu Trinity of *Brahmā*, *Vishnu* and *Rudra (Siva)*.

ii) Human beings are capable not merely of knowing about the Divine Ground by inference ; they can also realize its existence by a direct intuitive knowledge gained through *Yogic samādhi*.

iii) Man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego and an eternal self (*Atman*), which is the inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul. 'An eternal portion of Myself has become a living soul in the world of life' (*Gita XV-7*).

iv) Man's life on earth has only one end and purpose: to be identified himself with his eternal self (*Atman*) and so to come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground (*Paramātman* or *Brahman*). Upanisadic aphorisms like, 'Thou art That' or *Aham Brahmāsmi* (I am the Brahman) or 'All this manifested universe is nothing but Brahman,' categorically establish this monism of Vedanta¹.

It is on the basis of the above perennial philosophy based on Vedanta that, after realization of God, an ancient Rishi declared. "Hear, children of immortal bliss ! Even ye that reside in higher sphere ! I have found the Ancient One, who is beyond all darkness, all delusion; knowing Him above you shall be saved from death over again. "Jesus Christ declared that he was the son of God. Upanisads of India

1. Aldous Huxley in Introduction to *the Song of God : Bhagavad Gitā*, translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, A Mentor Book, The New American Library, 1954, p. 13.

declared that all human beings, nay all other creations and even gods of higher heavens are children of God—Children of Immortal Bliss. What better for humanity can be delivered for establishing the universal brotherhood of mankind ?

3. The Peace Invocation of *Ishopanisad* and other Upanisads belonging to the *Shukla Yajur Veda*..

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

"The invisible (*Brahman*) is the full, the visible (the world) too is the full. From the full (*Brahman*) the full (the visible universe) has come. The full (*Brahman*) remains the same, even after the full (the visible universe) has come out of the full (*Brahman*)," - *Swami Ranganathananda*.

"The personality of Godhead is perfect and complete and because he is completely perfect, all emanations from Him, such as this phenomenal world, are perfectly equipped as complete wholes. Whatever is produced of the complete whole is also complete in itself. Because He is the complete whole even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance," says A. C. Bhakti Vedanta Swami Prabhupada.

According to Swami Ranganathananda, "This verse is very profound in meaning and significance, it concentrates within a few lines the entire thought of the Upanishads. It reveals at once the grasp, the sweep, the scope of that thought. *Purnamadah Purnamidam*- "That is the full or whole ; this is the full or whole ?"²

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यन्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद् धनम् ॥ १

"Whatever there is changeful in this ephemeral world, all that must be enveloped by the Lord. By this renunciation, support yourself. Do not covet the wealth of anyone."

"All this is for the habitation by the Lord, whatsoever is individual universe of movement in the universal motion. By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy ; lust not after any man's possession," Sri Aurobindo.

"Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one should not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong,"-A. C. Bhakti Vedanta Swami.

[To be continued]

2. *The Message of the Upanishads*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1993, p. 63.

FOR THE LOVE OF US ALL

[The song usually sung in the Ashram in Hawai]

IN THE BEGINNING, AS LIFE CAME FORTH,
THE OCEANS HEAVED, THE MOUNTAINS WERE CLEAVED,
THE FIRMAMENTS STORMED,
AT THE CENTER OF BEING, EMITTING *HER* CALL,
WAS OUR *MOTHER* OF NOW, DON'T ASK ME HOW,
WITH HER LOVE FOR US ALL

(REFRAIN 1) AND OUR SEASONS ARE MANY, CREATIONS ANEW,
AND THROUGH MANY A BIRTH WE KEEP COMING TO EARTH,
NOT KNOWING WHAT'S TRUE.
UPON LEARNING OF *MOTHER*, AFTER MANY A FALL,
ONE THING WAS CLEAR, *SHE* CHOSE TO DRAW NEAR
FOR THE LOVE OF US ALL

(REFRAIN 2) FOR THE LOVE OF US ALL,
MA WOULD GO ANYWHERE, TO THE ENDS OF THE
EARTH LIFE'S FULL OF WORTH FOR *HER* LOVE WILL BE THERE,
WE WALK ON THE THIN LINE BETWEEN FEAR AND *MA'S* CALL
WE LEARN TO BEND AND FINALLY DEPEND ON THE LOVE IN *MA'S* CALL.

TAKE THE NAME, TAKE THE NAME
WE HEAR *MOTHER* SAY, SHE IS SPEAKING OF PRACTICE WE MUST CONTINUE
DAY AFTER DAY. DISCOURAGED OR TIRED, WE MUST RECALL
MA, *YOU* TOOK A BIRTH AND CAME DOWN TO EARTH
FOR THE LOVE OF US ALL.

(REFRAIN 1)

(REFRAIN 2)

AND SO WE MUST PRAY, AND GIVE LOVE A CHANCE,
BROTHERS AND SISTERS AS ONE, IN *MA'S* MYSTERY DANCE.
PERMEATING THE ETHER
COMES OUR *MOTHER'S* CALL,
YOUR SORROW, YOUR PAIN IS *MY* SORROW AND PAIN
WITH *HER* LOVE FOR ALL.

FOR *HER* LOVE OF US ALL,
WE ARE GATHERED BY GRACE,
WE HAVE FOLLOWED OUR HEARTS TO TAKE UP OUR PARTS
IN THIS TIME AND PLACE, OUR HANDS FOR *HER* HARVEST,
WE HEAR *MOTHER'S* CALL. IT'S NEVER TOO LATE,
SO COME CELEBRATE IN *HER* LOVE FOR US ALL

JAYA JAYA SRI MA ANANDAMAYEE, JAYA JAYA SRI MA (2X)

DIDI, THE UNPARALLELED

[Translated from Bengali]

— Dr. Govinda Gopal Mukhopadhyaya

In the spiritual tradition of India whenever there has been an advent of a great soul or *Avatara* it is almost invariably found that the twin or dual form dominates. Not to speak of the gods and goddesses, every where one worships the two-in-one form, such as Gouri-Sankara, Sita-Ram or Radha-Krishna and so on. Whether one is a Saiva, Sakta or Vaisnava, he is bound to worship the *Sakti* along with the *Saktimān* and it is *Sakti* again which predominates or precedes in each case.

In modern times too one finds the manifestations of Gour-Nitai, Ramakrishna -Vivekananda in Bengal, where no one can think of the one without the other and we utter the two names in one breath, one was absorbed in oneself, while the other took upon himself the task of preaching or making known to others the greatness of his counterpart.

But no one has ever heard before of the appearance of two great female forms closely bound to each other. Gurupriya Devi, whose centenary is being celebrated this year, seems to have manifested herself in close proximity to Sri Sri Anandamayee Ma, just to become Her inseparable partner, as well as the unparalleled devotee. Only a few years back the centenary of Sri Sri Anandamayee Ma was celebrated throughout the length and breadth of the country as well as almost everywhere in the world and now this year we are celebrating the centenary of Her consort, the architect of almost all Her asramas, the writer of Her biography, accounts of Her constant travels and following Her at every footstep like an inseparable shadow—this Gurupriya Didi or 'Khukuni Didi', as she was fondly called or simply as 'Didi' by many of the devotees. Where the Mother is, there is this Didi and the two names are pronounced together in the same breath, such is their inseparable bond of love. Even Ma Herself at many times used to call her as 'Didi', which was her universal appellation as the term 'Ma' was to the other. Who would have served the Mother with so much care and devotion and who again could have followed Her untiringly in all her whirlwind tours through the length and breadth of the country except this unique Didi of all of us ? If Didi would not have been there, who could have had so many asramas established in all parts of

India ? And lastly, but for this Didi, we would never have dreamt of such an unique institution as the Kanyapeeth, which is solely devoted to train up little girls in the ideals of the Mother with rigid penance, discipline and Sanskrit learning.

Today this Kanyapeeth occupies a place of distinction in the field of Sanskrit learning in India which makes us all feel very proud indeed and let us not forget who was behind its creation. Asramas there are all over India of different sorts, aims and ideals, but for the girls there is no second such institution. Gurupriya Didi built it up single-handed only with Mother's blessings behind her.

We often speak of women's liberation, women's education and who comes forward to actually give shape to it. Yet the welfare of society, the progress of the country primarily rests on the true education and bringing up of the girls alone. Didi had such a farsight in this matter which no one can really fathom and it is due to her efforts alone that the ideals of the Mother have taken concrete shape.

One is reminded in this connection of Holy Mother Sarada Devi and Sister Nivedita. But Nivedita came from a foreign land and dedicated her life for the upliftment of the women of India, specially for their education and was therefore named as Nivedita, i.e. dedicated one. But our Didi, being a Bengali girl of a very modest nature, how could she have such indomitable spirit to give shape to such an ideal? It was the spirit of the Mother that worked wonders through this unique instrument which was completely surrendered to her feet alone. Like the ten-handed Durga, this Didi was cooking for the Mother, feeding Her with her own hands, arranging Her bed, writing letters to the devotees on behalf of the Mother and all these multifarious activities she was carrying on till the last breath of her life with a smiling face, with just one single aim : serving the Mother alone to the best of her abilities.

Should we be able to emulate her? Only then the centenary celebrations will be worth observing. Our obeisance and respectful pranams to her and we seek her blessings so that we can be worthy children of the Mother like her.



BRAHMACHARINI GURUPRIYA

Her early Life

—Br. Guneeta

Eternal Bharat, which is the land of great thinkers, Great Bharat, eternally bound Bharat, salutations to you. You have given us the eternal message and shown us the way to the attainment of Immortality. Not only that, you have awakened mankind. It is you who led us to the great '*Vakyas*' or teachings.

The Rishis have shown mankind the way for ages in a very scientific way. In the first twenty - five years of a man we have the four ashramas which bound his life. They are *Brahmacharya*, *Garhastya*, *Vanaprastha*, followed by *Sanyasa*. Brahmacharya is the first stage or the base which later on blossoms into an ideal life. We have an example of such a Brahmacharini of great spiritual height — who is our respected Brahmacharini Gurupriya.

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee's name spread far and near. How was it possible ? Who is this Ma and what force was behind Her great deeds and fame ? Before going into these questions one incident comes in front of us.

Once Sri Sri Ma was coming to Lucknow from Kanpur. With her was Gurupriya Didi. In her words—"We had to visit Kashmir's ex-Dewan's daughter's place. I could not refuse the request and we were travelling in their car. As we were passing through Unnao, the local people came with lots of fruits. From the car small villages could be seen and Ma said to me, "See, Didi, how beautiful those houses are." I could only see huts built with leaves. But responding to Ma's words I too said, "Yes, how beautiful". Then Ma said, "See the trees here are so beautiful." When I found Ma repeatedly speaking about the village, I asked her whether she wanted to visit it. To which She replied, "No, we have come a long way from it.

"I asked the driver to turn the car when I got the above reply from Ma and instructed him to take us to the village. Refusing to go Ma said that the car may get damaged while treading on the rough surface of the village road. The driver was a simple fellow and said it would be difficult, but he would try his best. But we soon found that we reached the village easily. There Ma got down from the car. Then she asked me to bring some fruits and a flower garland. She herself stood beside a neem and a peepal tree which were not very big, nor the leaves beautiful or attractive. Then she embraced the trees and asked us to garland them. After that Ma wanted to find out, "Who was the owner of the trees." On enquiring we found out

that the owner had gone to Nawabganj for shopping. The name of the village was Bhawanipur, which was close to Nawabganj. We were introduced to the wife of the owner who stood there with her saree covering her head. Ma gave a basket of fruits to her and said, "You are my mother and I am your daughter." Then Ma asked us to distribute the fruits among the people. Before leaving she told them to protect those trees. And then we left the place. When I told Ma that "I have seen *devatas*, water etc. calling you, but now I find trees too doing the same." Then Ma replied, "This kind of a thing did not occur earlier, I felt that someone was pulling my cloth. The trees were named *Harihar*.

Even today such things happen.

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This Didi—who is she ? She has brought Sri Ma's celestial *bhava* to the forefront and established 'Yamalarjuna's' story once again.

Didi is none other than Brahmacharini Gurupriya. It is through her that Sri Anandamayee Ma's divine play is revealed to mankind. On a clean mirror one's image can be seen clearly, similarly on Brahmacharini Gurupriya's pure mind Sri Ma's divine will was reflected, spreading the rays on all directions.

In Dhaka the Deputy Post Master General was Sri Pramathanath Basu. On getting to know about Ma from him the Civil Surgeon Sri Sashanka Mohan Mukherjee met the 'newly wed' lady. She was shy and beautiful and soon became the talk of the town among the educated circle.

The retired Dr. Mukherjee was on the look out of a vocation. When he returned home after visiting Ma, he related the incident to his daughter Adarini, who on hearing it went into raptures and asked her father to take her also to Ma. But it was something against his daughter's nature, who shunned the company of unknown people. The matter ended there for the day. On the next evening Sashanka Mohan visited Ma alone. On getting to know of her father's secret visit Adarini who was then on the verandah upstairs started shedding tears. And she silently thought to herself that by hearing about Ma she was so much moved, what would happen when she would see Sri Ma in person. She herself was very much baffled.

When Dr. Mukherjee returned home, he found all the household chores completed by his dear daughter. She came to him and enquired about what had happened in Shahbag. He related some incidents and also told her that Ma had asked, "to take you along with me."

On the next day after lunch both father and daughter started for Shahbag and soon reached it. Sashanka Mohan saw his daughter, who was afraid in unfamiliar places, standing in front of Ma. According to custom, she paid respectful 'pranams' at Ma's feet. Ma gave her 'pān', which She did when anyone came to Her for the first time. But Adarini said, "I do not take 'pan'", to which Ma replied back, "I take it, so I have given it to you." Hence Adarini took it and said, "As you have given it, I accept it."

In Shahbag there was a garden house which belonged to the Nawab. Rai Bahadur Jogesh Chandra Ghosh was in-charge of it. It was here that Sri Ramani Mohan Chakraborty worked under the stewardship of Rai Bahadur Ghosh and was entrusted with the task of looking after the garden. His wife Nirmala Sundari Devi, Sri Ma, was then staying with his widowed sister and nephew. In those days people did not commute much to Shahbag excepting the Nawab's and the Rai Bahadur's families. The Rai Bahadur's third daughter-in law's attention fell on Ma. It can be said that the first glance of Ma's beautiful and bright face under the veil of the saree had already stolen her heart. It then came to such a state that without a glimpse of Ma's divine darshan she had no peace. Soon word spread all over Dhaka and people thronged to see Ma who was then just a housewife. The then Director of the Agricultural Department and his assistant Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy were also among those who visited Ma and had Her darshan. And it was Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy who said that Sri Ma should be addressed as "Ma Anandmayee" on having Her *divya* or divine darshan befitting Her divine posture—the name by which She is being called henceforth. Thus we see the young housewife of Shahbag becomes "Ma Anandamayee". And it was on that day that Sashanka Mohan Mukherjee's loving daughter Khukuni decided to surrender at the lotus feet of Sri Ma. Her eyes repeatedly fell on Ma's feet, while the mind pondered upon these words, "You are all in all in my life."

She embraced Sri Ma's feet and watched her from head to feet with fixed eyes. "Where were you all these days?" was Ma's question to her. It was followed by a sweet conversation between them. Then to her astonishment she found Ma coming close to her and sitting down on the floor. Earlier in Sri Ramakrishna's Kathamrita she had come across the word 'Samadhi'. Now she saw Sri Ma's divine body with Her eyes closed in front of her.

Then Ma got up and a close relationship was established between them. Ma became hers and she put her head on Ma's lap, and they spoke to each other for a long time.

Suddenly there was a knock on the door from Khukuni's father, pleading her to come out, as other devotees were waiting outside for Sri Ma's darshan. Thus after offering 'pranams' at Ma's lotus feet both father and daughter departed.

Since that day going to Ma became her only thought, she became intoxicated as though. It was her fountain of life. Sometimes she was at Ma's feet even twice daily. Slowly she started doing some service at Ma's household. One day Ma said— "God has brought you as now with this body no work can be done properly."

At that time, on Mondays and Thursdays Ma used to take only three handful of rice. On other days just one grain. Dr. Sashanka Mohan expressed his desire to serve *bhog* to Ma on one of those two days at his place and invited Her. Baba Bholanath (Revered Sri Ramani Mohan Chakravorty) and others were also there with Ma. On seeing the house, Ma said, "When I first came to Dhaka, from this tap on the road I had washed my feet and these houses were then being built. I had thought these to be some 'sahibs' houses—and it is true. Baba used to work for the 'sahib'. So I did not make any mistake !"

On hearing this from Sri Ma, the owner of the house Dr. Mukherjee was naturally very happy. Sri Nishikanta Mitra who had a grandson who was ailing, took Sri Ma to his house which was closeby. When Ma was about to start She asked Adarini, her new follower, "What do you say, will the boy get cured ?" What could she say but, "When you are going surely everything will be okay." On getting assurance from Her sole 'seviḱa' Ma said, "When she is saying so, everything will be okay."

It was time for lunch. Sashanka Mohan had made elaborate arrangements. Ma used to take food from the 'thali' or plate on which Her husband had taken. This was the custom at that time. So Ma told Bholanath to take the food first and then she would take from it later. That day happened to be the one on which Ma took only "three handfuls". With this in his mind Baba Bholanath said, "Doctor has made all such arrangements, so you will have to eat." Ma kept Her husband's word, though he too did not always stop Her from what She did.

Sri Ma holding on to her dear daughter Adarini's hand got up and said, "Come let's have food together, I have never taken food with anyone else. My sister-in-law (Kali Prasanna babu's wife) had once. It was only with her that I ate and with you today I shall be eating." While eating Ma kept an eye on her dear daughter and fed her with her own hands. Filled with happiness and in an almost choked voice she asked Ma, "Will you be feeding me only or you yourself too take some food ?" To this Ma replied, keeping in mind about the future, "I feed you today, you will feed me later." At that time she however could not understand the real meaning of the words, being swept away by bliss.

Sri Gurupriya Devi was born in the Bengali year 1305 on 30th Magh, in Silchar (Assam). Her father Sri Sashanka Mohan Mukherjee was a renowned physician of Bengal and her mother Harakamini Devi was an ideal and a very pious lady. It was from her early childhood Khukuni had an innate urge to serve people.

At the age of eleven Khukuni was married to Sri Upendranath Bandopadhyaya. As fate would have it—she was a born Brahmacharini—how could she be caught in the net of family life ? She argued that how could one, brought up by the parents from infancy, leave them and start a new life with a completely unknown person. So she stopped speaking to anyone, took to fasting and gave up sleeping. She even went to the extent of not answering to nature's call. Eventually she came back to her parents.

Her mission in life was to study and serve her parents and people. Within a year her mother died and the whole responsibility of running the house fell on her. Dr. Mukherjee's bungalow in Dhaka was in the Tikatuli locality. It became purified by Sri Ma's divine grace.

In the end we can sum up by saying that Ma's and Gurupriya's meeting was just not a mere incident in 1926, but pre-ordained. Since then we find in Sri Ma's 'lila' or divine play that Her *adarini kanya* (beloved daughter) is always with Her as a companion.



GURUPRIYA DEVI-.... THE INDOMITABLE SPIRIT OF SERVICE

—K. Satyanarayan Rao

To write something on revered Gurupriya Didi, is a daunting task for one who has neither met nor talked with her. I have only seen her from a distance. It is only when I began reading her memoirs, especially her remarkable narrative on Kailas Yatra of 1937 that I became aware of her greatness.

Persons like me are not fit to eulogise on her great qualities of head and heart. Reading that episode of Kailas Yatra leaves me with an impression that it was a setting designed by Mother to subject Didi to every manner of test and she has successfully passed all the tests, perhaps the only one who passed every test in that seemingly unending ordeal. Neither the rigours of the Arctic cold, nor physical exhaustion and prostration or hunger could daunt her spirit, and when not busy with problems, she found time to write down the day's events in her diary with unflinching regularity despite her trembling, unsteady-benumbed fingers. This single-minded dedication speaks eloquently of her love of Mother and her indomitable spirit. It is this total attention that has imbued her narrative with a certain fragrance, a certain distillation of the spirit called the '*Divine Attar*'. It is this '*Attar*' which has made me read it again and again, and yet again.

To the unending stream of devotees of God, her example shines like a beacon light, giving hope and guidance for upward progress. Didi and 'Faith' are synonymous and inter-changeable.

"Faith is like the bird which sings of the coming of the dawn even when it is dark" said a poet. It is the same in the case of the great Didi.

Such exalted spirits are rare, like the comets, we see them once in a life time.

●

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH DIDI GURUPRIYA

—'Moni'

My first encounter with Didi (as we all called her) was very interesting. I was a kid of 12/13 yrs, frisking about, when my mother caught hold of me once in Delhi and said, "Come here! Do pranam to Chordi"! (my mother's special name for her) I found a tall, stately 'man' in a cream brahmachari dress (clothed in cream shirt and dhoti) with a choti (small bunch of hair just at the top of the head), cropped hair and all! When she talked I could realize that she was a woman and not a man.

She appeared rather severe, but a more affectionate personality was rare. Later on we became extremely fond of her and would do anything for her sake. She allotted Ma's jobs to us, which we tried our level best to perform. I, for one, was very inefficient and she would call me "a learned fool" (*boka-pandit*) most indulgently.

Till her severe illness in 1954, she and Swami Paramanandaji were in charge of the tremendously huge organisation of Ma's Ashrams and the various pujas that were performed and sat-sangs held at different places all over India. The way these two persons would carry out all the jobs, were to be seen to be beleived. Of course, Ma's blessings were always with them, but still they appeared to have spiritual powers to do all these so efficiently.

Didi's devotion to Ma was exemplary. At times when Ma used to be in maun (observing silence) She wouldn't even shake Her head to say yes or no, but would only smile or laugh. If She desired anything she would just stare at you. One was in a complete fix to imagine what she wanted. But Didi always did understand. Maybe Ma inspired it. So busy she used to be that she could hardly even join Ma in satsangs. But sometimes Ma would insist on her joining some. We would be delighted at such occasions ! Very naughty of us of course ! Didi would fall asleep within a few minutes, sitting among the devotees. But Ma always found it out and would make fun of Didi and make everyone of us laugh in merriment at Didi's cost. But Didi never minded Ma's leg-pulling and would blush when she awoke by our laughing. With all her work and being always so busy, she managed to keep her diaries which are invaluable to us, Ma's children. She had also a wonderful sense of humour which the devotees of Ma who came to Her later than 1954 must have missed.

Since May, 1954 Didi fell seriously ill with TB of spinal cord, brain fever, and other such serious ailments. But whenever she was able to walk, she would immediately devote herself to Ma's beck and call. Somehow we felt that Ma also wanted Didi to be with Her - especially when one could see how wonderfully Didi recovered from those killing diseases that attacked her.

A devotee once told us that she was present when Ma narrated a story about Didi. Perhaps you have read that Ma had a good number of brothers and sisters who died young. One of the sisters, who was named *Mangala* (auspicious), also died rather young. She was older than our Ma. Ma used to call her "Didi". It was revealed by Ma that this girl Mangala was reborn as our Didi Gurupriya ! When we first met Ma and Didi in 1937, Ma used to address Didi as "Khukuni", which was her pet name. But after the story of rebirth was known, Ma was heard to call her "Didi" too. When I first heard Ma calling her Didi, I took it as a joke. [Like, Ma often called my elder sister "Didu", whenever She heard me calling her ! Isn't it wonderful ! Now almost everyone in our Ashram calls my sister Didu.] But then I heard the episode of Didi Gurupriya's rebirth.

When Ma set Her eyes on Didi for the first time (sometime in the 'twenties) She stretched out Her hands to receive Didi, saying that She had been waiting for her ! Didi was married at the usual age of 10/11 yrs in her days (!) but after marriage refused to have anything to do with her husband or in-laws on the very first day she went there. So, that was the end of the marriage. Now that gentleman with his whole family (eight children !) and all the relatives became great devotees of Ma. This is how Ma brought the fortunate ones at Her holy feet !

I don't know if I could give any idea of how our Didi was. She was an extremely intelligent, diligent and affectionate person, but never cared to show it off. In fact, she appeared severe to many people and they were afraid of her. But we were absolutely spoiled by her, so much so, that we would rather ask for things from her than from our own mother. Her show of affection, at the most, was patting hard on one's back. But the last time we met her, in Nov'79, she literally embraced us (two sisters) ! Tears were simply uncontrollable for us. She left her material body on 16 Sept. 1980 in Varanasi.

BIRTH CENTENARY OF DIDI GURUPRIYA

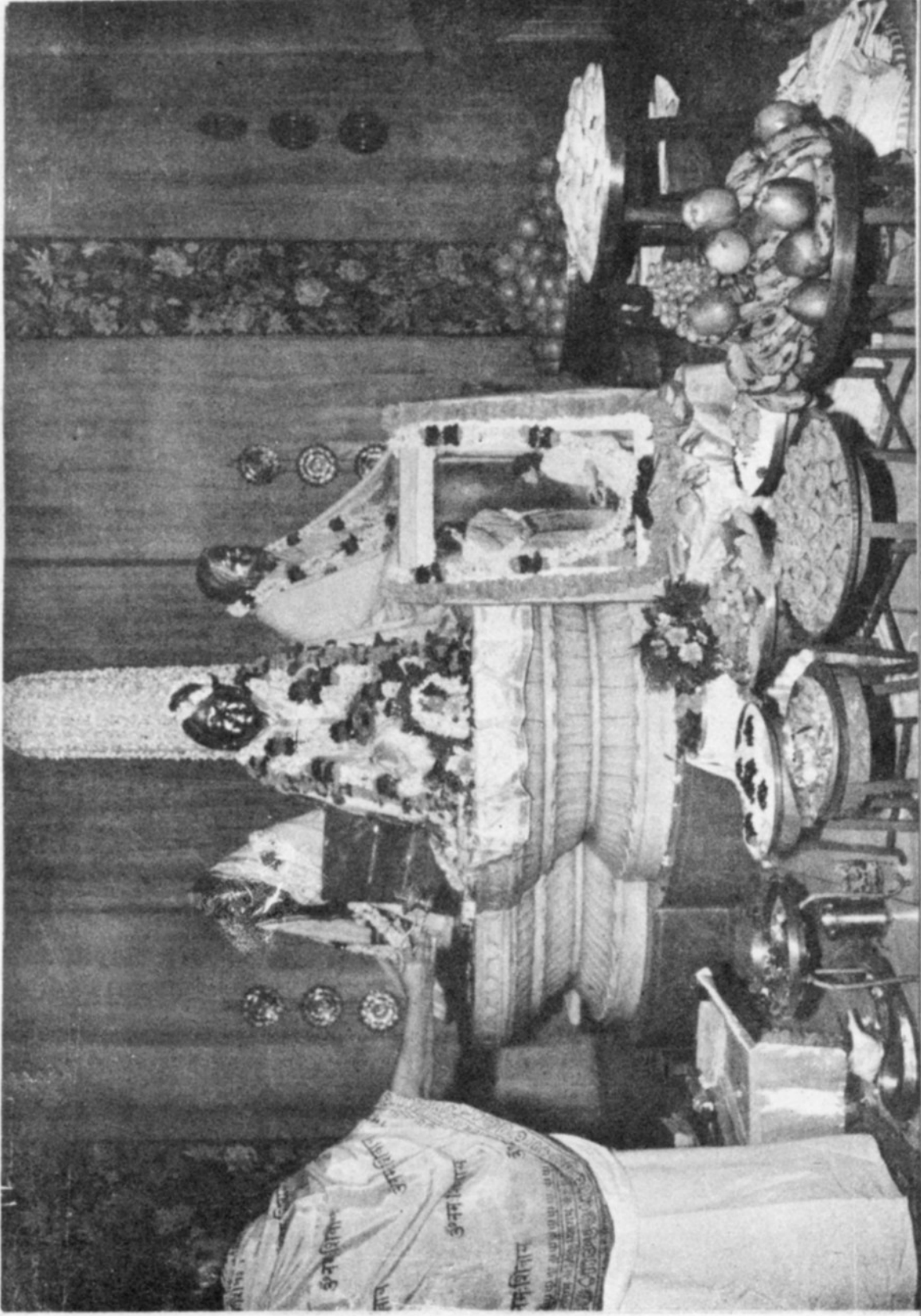
The life of the great refuses to be delineated within the compass of its apparent beginning and end. A steady and lasting flame, it keeps showering its effulgence on many lives and helps in seeking the path even when its visibility to the mortal eye is gone. Even then the birth anniversary of a sublime person regales in the opportunity of concentrating our mental focus on the noble, the perfect, the beautiful for our own joyous advancement toward the goal.

Recently, we have celebrated the birth centenary of such a great personality, Didi Gurupriya. Her name is and will ever be inextricably associated with the name of Sri Anandamayee Ma in India's spiritual history. The lamp of her life ignited by the spark of Sri Ma's divine splendour, guided a multitude of seekers on the spiritual path. It will continue to do so in the years to come. Salutations to you, Didi Gurupriya!

Long long back, perhaps in 1954 or 1955, on the birthday of Didi, Km. Sati Dutta Gupta, the then Principal of Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth, approached Ma and said, "Ma, we shall celebrate Didi's birthday. But how to do it?" Ma said, "Didi's life is a life of *samyam* (self-control). You should observe *samyam* on her birthday." Didi was ailing in those days. Prompted by Sri Ma's *kheyal*, Satidi felt that the celebration of one's birthday might prolong in life. That is how this function came to be introduced.

Thus the first birth-day celebration of Didi was held under the guidance of Sri Ma Herself. Didi was seated on a chair in the veradah of the Kanyapeeth on the ground floor of the Ashram at Varanasi. She was felicitated with birthday gifts of new clothes, fruits and garlands. Speeches on the salient features of Didi's life and personality were delivered by Ashram Brahmacharinis, some of whom were Kanyapeeth inmates. For Didi, however, Ma was everything; Ma's command was all that mattered to her. The function was taking place as per Ma's instructions, therefore, she just kept sitting silently with folded hands. Afterwards she said to the girls, "What is all this that you have started?" *Samyam*, self-control, was observed in the Kanyapeeth on that occasion.

In the ensuing years, Didi's birthday continued to be celebrated in her presence and also after her passing away. On this day, the Kanyapeeth girls recite Veda mantras in the morning. They garland Didi's portrait, offer fruits and sweets to her, and do arati. They observe *samyam* to mark the occasion.



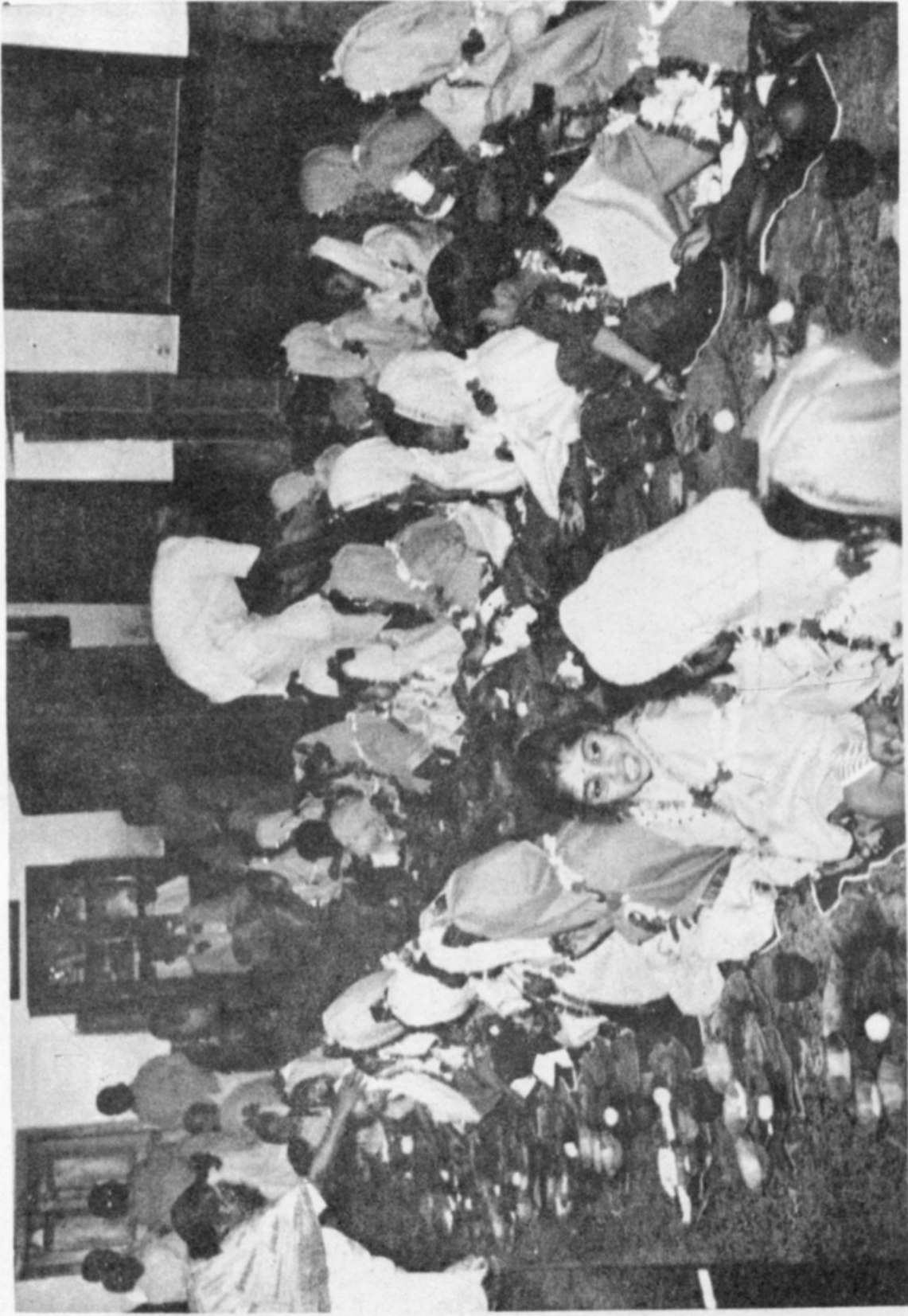
Special puja of Ma being held in Ananda Jyoti Mandir



Unveiling of Didi Gurupriya's Photo by
Pujiya Swami Chidanandaji Mahara' - on 19th February, 99



A view of the sadhu bhandara on the occasion of
Dadi Gururiva's birth centenary celebration - 19th February, 99



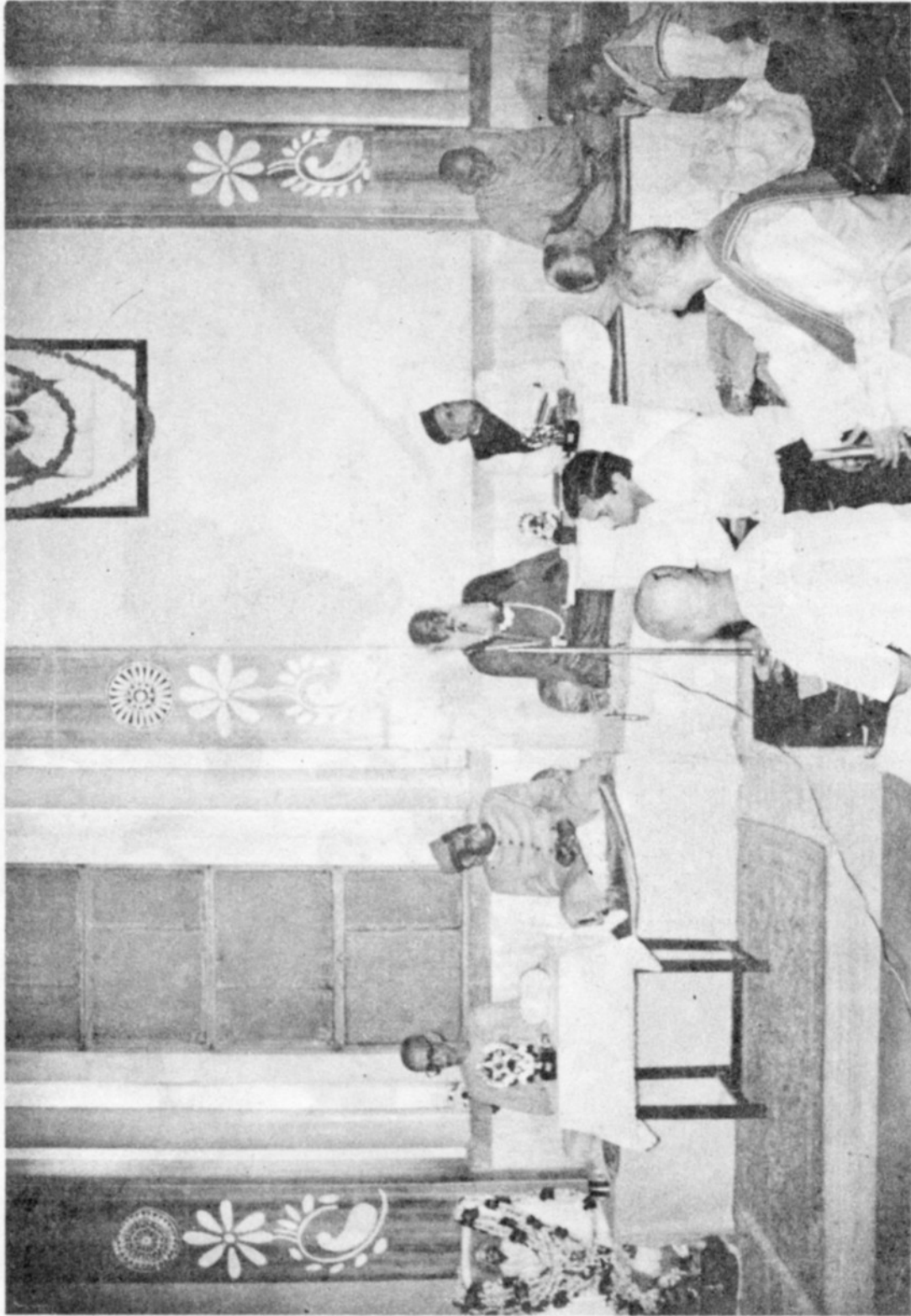
Kumari bhojan on the same occasion - 20th February, 99



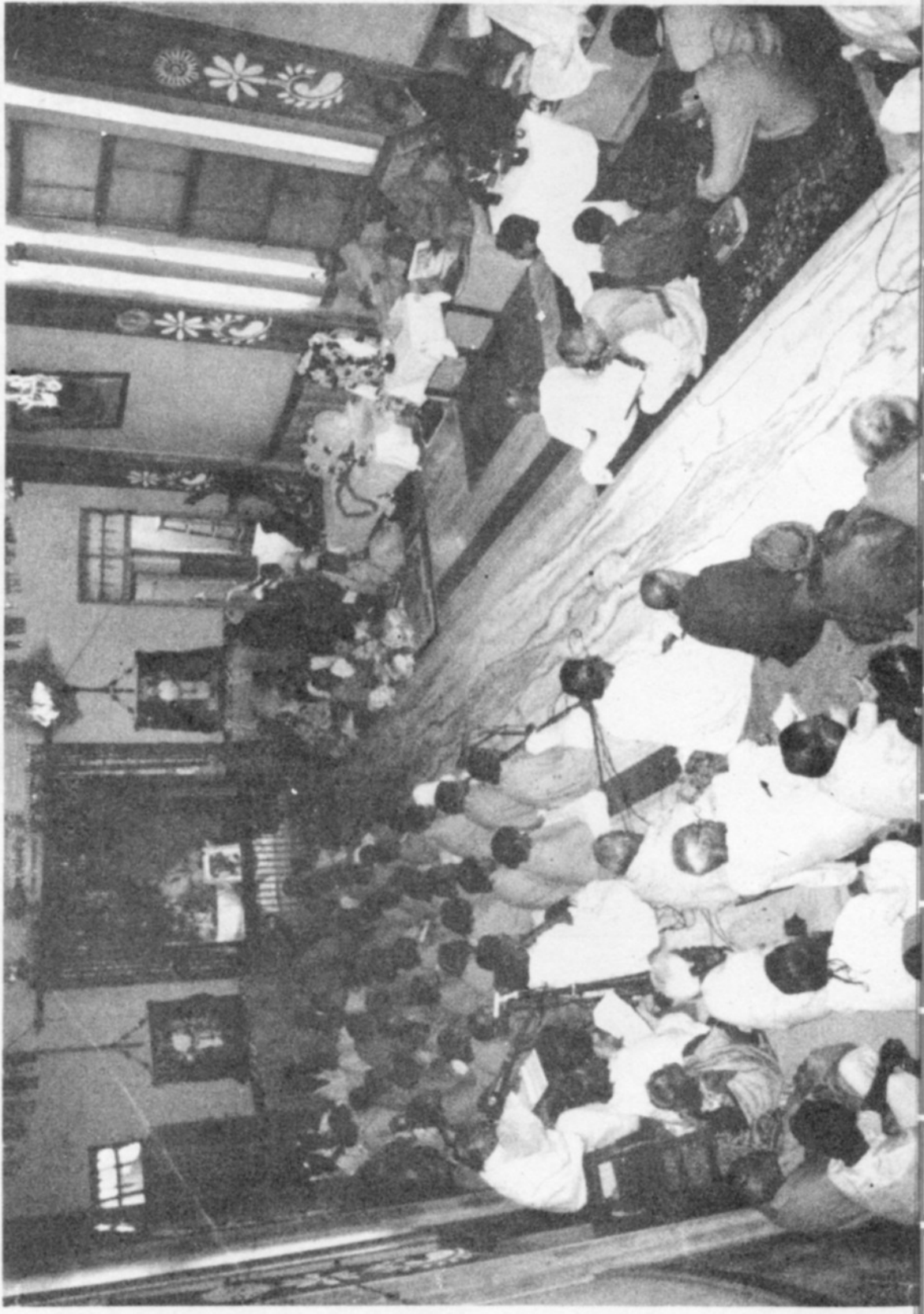
The pictorial biography of Didi Gurupriya being released by
Puja Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj - 19th February, 99



A book on Didi Gurupriya being released by
M.M. Swami Devanandaji Saraswati -20th February, 99



A scene from the inaugural centenary function on 19th February, 1999 in the Ananda Jyoti Mandir.
M.M. Swami Devananda Saraswati addressing the audience with Pujya Swami Chidanandaji and Maharaja Benares on his right
and Dr. Mandan Mishra, V.C., Sampurnananda University and Swami Bhaskaranandaji on the left.



A view of the inaugural function in the Ananda Jyoti Mandir -19th February, 1999.

For some years, the birth anniversary of Didi is being celebrated in the Kanyapeeth as the Founder's Day. And almost each year we have the good fortune of having amongst us the President of the Divine Life Society, Pujya Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj.

This year, 1999, is Didi's Birth Centenary year. The Varanasi Ashram and the Kanyapeeth owe their existence to her. Hence all had approved the idea of holding the centenary celebrations at Kanyapeeth, Varanasi. We had had a year-long preparation for this joyous occasion, which happily coincided also with the Diamond Jubilee of the Kanyapeeth. This coincidence was most appropriate since the Kanyapeeth was inextricably interwoven with Didi's life. It was decided to hold the joint celebrations from 13th to 21st February, 1999.

In the last year of the century, of the millennium, the auspicious *tithi* of Magh Sankranti, Didi's birthday, according to the solar calendar, fell on the 13th of February. It was a '*Samyam diwas*', a day of self-control, filled with befitting programmes like *kirtan*, meditation and *mauna*. A special *shodashopachar* (sixteen-itemed) *puja*, was performed by Km. Br. Jaya Bhattacharya, while Km. Chhabi Banerjee sang devotional songs in her resonant voice filling the Ananda-Jyoti-Mandir with divine vibrations. The mid-day *bhog* (meal-offering) was also in keeping with *samyam*. At midday, as part of the centenary celebrations a programme was held in Mata Anandamayee Hospital. It was arranged by "Shishu-Kalyan", a unit of the Ma Anandamayee Karuna, a charitable organization. Maharaja Benares, Dr. Vibhuti Narain Singhji was the chief guest, who distributed clothes, fruits and sweets to 100 children of the poor.

From 13th February to 18th February, the daily schedule of programme included special *puja* of Sri Ma in the morning, Kirtan, bhajan, group recitation of *Gita* and *Chandi (Durga Saptasati)* and *Bhagavata Path*. Devotees partook of *prasad* after the offering of *bhog*. After a short break, the programme was resumed in the afternoon with singing of *stotras* (hymns), recitation of the Ramayan, *satsang*, *pravachan* (religious discourse), talks on Didi, and the programme was concluded with evening prayers and songs.

An attractive feature of the functions of the 13th February was the discourse on *Bhagavata* and *Ramayana* delivered by the eminent speaker Sri Ramesh Bhai Ojha and the saint from Bihar, Sri Mamaji. Sri Ramesh Bhai spoke on *Gurutattva* and his darshan of Sri Ma.

With great pomp and festivities, Maha Shivaratri was celebrated on 14th February. The Shivapuja of the Kanyapeeth girls was accompanied by Chhabidi's songs. On the verandah of the Chandi-mandap, inside the Chandi-mandap, in the

Annapurna mandir, in the Gopal mandir, in the mandir of Didima, in fact all over the Ashram Shivapuja was performed with great zest. Apart from the ashramites many devotees of Varanasi and from other places joined in the puja. Many outstation devotees had assembled particularly to observe Shivaratri here. The famous *dhrupad*-singer from Calcutta, Sri Arun Bhattacharya sang classical songs in the *dhrupad* style during the puja at night on the verandah adjacent to the Annapurna temple.

Dr. Srinath Mishra, the renowned discourses of the Ramayana, gave his beautiful programme on the epic in the afternoon of 15th February. Sri Tarak Paul from Calcutta enchanted the audience with his recital of *dhrupad* and *Shyama-sangeet*. Sri Guruprasad Brahma, son of the late Dr. Nalini Brahma, who was a famous philosopher and Sri Ma's devotee, delivered captivating talks on Didi.

The mahamandaleshwar of the Bhogiri Ashram, Swami Devanandaji Maharaj, arrived on 17th February. From the next morning till 21st February, he gave scholarly discourses highlighted by his melodious songs. The veteran sannyasi of Ma's ashram, Swami Bhaskaranandaji also spoke on Didi each morning.

During the afternoon session on 18th February, the Ex-Vice-Chancellor of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Prof. Venkatachalam, a scholar of great eminence, presented his enthralling speech. He beautifully narrated the anecdote of Sri Trotakacharya's devotion to his Guru, Sri Adi Shankaracharya. On this very day, the arrival of revered Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj, President of the Divine Life Society, cheered the heart of all.

19th February was an important day of the centenary celebrations. After the daily morning programme of puja, satsang, pravachana etc. the scheduled sadhubhandara was arranged. In keeping with directives received from Sri Ma, each one of the 100 sadhus was honoured with garlands, sandal wood paste, clothes, fruits, prasada-handkerchief and *dakshina* and was offered a sumptuous meal. Each sadhu was also presented a copy of *Viveka-Chudamani*. Arati was performed of the sadhus.

At 3.30 p.m. the special centenary function was held in the hall of Ananda-Jyoti-Mandir, with H.H. Dr. Vibhuti Narain Singhji in the chair. The eminent guests were Pujya Swami Chidanandaji, Pujya Swami Devanandaji and the Vice-Chancellor of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Prof. Mandan Mishra. Maharaj Kumar Sri Anant Narain Singh and Maharaj Kumaris were also present.

With vedic recitals and blowing of conch-shells done by Kanyapeeth brahmacharinis, the function was inaugurated by Swami Chidanandaji and H.H. Maharaja of Benares, who formally unveiled two large portraits of Gurupriya Didi.

The portraits were duly garlanded by the honoured guests. The mahatmas and illustrious guests were also garlanded. The inaugural song was presented by the Kanyapeeth girls. It was followed by a sanskrit song, composed and tuned by the teachers of the Kanyapeeth in the honour of Gurupriya Didi. The next item was paying of homage to Gurupriya Didi by the girls in various Indian and foreign languages. They spoke in Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Gujrati, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Kannad, Tamil, Nepali, English, French, German and Latin.

The centenary volume on Gurupriya Didi, *Brahmcharini Gurupriya*, was then formally released by Pujya Swami Chidanandaji. This volume, written in literary Hindi and amply illustrated with rare photographs, has attracted public attention and praise.

After the release of the book, Chhabidi presented a song in praise of Didi, composed by a Kanyapeeth teacher. Following this, the mahatmas and distinguished guests were presented with a memento named '*Sri Gurupriya Devi Smriti-Chihna*'. After that, Br. Guneeta, senior teacher of the Kanyapeeth, read out the Annual Report of the institution covering special features of Didi's Birth Centenary and the Diamond Jubilee of the Kanyapeeth.

The Vice-Chancellor Dr. Mandan Mishra addressed the audience as the Chief Guest. The mahatmas also offered tributes to Gurupriya Didi in their short speeches. Dr. D. P. Mukhopadhyay read out the message of felicitation and good wishes from the President of the Sangha, Sri Govind Narainji. From the President's chair, Maharaja Benares delivered an appealing speech on Didi. The function was concluded with **Matri-vandana**.

Kumari Puja was held on 20 February. Tiny girls, one hundred in number, were worshipped with offerings of meal, clothes and dakshina. It was one of the most colourful programmes. The kumaris were given the treat in the Kanyapeeth hall on the first floor. They looked like little angels in their shining, beautiful dress. Arati was also performed of the kumaris at meal.

The afternoon function which began at 3.30 was presided over by Swami Devananda Saraswatiji. Swami Chidanandaji was the Chief Guest that day. The programme got started with Vedic chant presented as usual by the girls of Kanyapeeth. It was followed by welcome speech, garlanding the guests and Matri-vandana. On this day, the senior brahmacharinis of Kanyapeeth had their turn to offer tributes to Didi. Didi's favourite song was then sung by the brahmacharinis.

In the memory of Didi, gold medals were awarded to Br. Chandan and Br. Vishuddha for being respectively the first Acharya and the first M.A. degree

holders from the Kanyapeeth. The mementos, 'Sri Gurupriya Devi Smriti-chinha', were presented to the teachers of Kanyapeeth for their distinguished service.

The respected M.M. Swami Devanandaji released the Bengali book on Didi, "Shraddharghya".

From the Chief Guest's *asana* Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj delivered a memorable talk on Didi. The President of the function, Swami Devanandaji also spoke beautifully about Didi. The day's function was concluded with singing of one of Didi's favourite songs.

Finally, it was 21st February, the last day of the celebration. The morning schedule was unchanged : special puja of Sri Ma, arati, scripture-recitations, speech by Swami Devanandaji and soul-stirring kirtan by Chhabidi.

Later on the day, the patients of Mata Anandamayee Hospital received the prasad of fruits and sweets from the hands of Swami Chidanandaji and Swami Devanandaji. The doctors and other employees of the Hospital too received prasad. Daridra narayan seva was held in the Hospital courtyard at which 100 destitutes were served with full meal & also money offerings.

That afternoon, the programme which began at 3.30 P.M. had something special about it. It included the Annual Day function of the Kanyapeeth. As it has become a tradition for quite some years, the chair of the President was duly adorned by His Holiness Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj.

The function began with *Veda dhvani* and *Saraswati vandana* performed by brahmacharinis of the Kanyapeeth, welcome address and then the garlanding of honoured guests were followed by the singing of Kanyapeeth *Kulāgeet*. Then a colourful cultural programme was presented by the girls.

There had been an essay-competition on Didi. In the junior group Br. Siddhidatri Bharadwaj bagged the first prize. In the senior group, the first prize went to Br. Prativa Bharadwaj. They both read out portions from their compositions.

Sanskrit debate is one of the regular highlights of the Annual Function of the Kanyapeeth. This time the moot point was devotion versus knowledge.

Patriotic songs, classical numbers and choric hymns were other lauded items.

"Namo namoogo Gurupriya" was the concluding song, composed for the occasion by a Kanyapeeth teacher.

After the cultural programme, the Gurupriya Didi Special Issue of the Kanyapeeth's annual journal "Adarini" was released by Swami Chidanandaji. A short report on Kanyapeeth was read out and then merit and other prizes were given away to girls.

The Chief Guest's chair was adorned by Padmabhushan Dr. Vidyanivas Mishra, ex-Vice-Chancellor of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University and also of the

Kashi Vidyapeeth. After his speech, the outstanding Austrian scholar and writer Dr. Bettina Baumer paid her tribute to Didi.

Then with Swami Chidanandaji's presidential address, thanks giving and Matri-Nama-Kirtan, the celebration of Gurupriya Didi's centenary came to a close.

To Gurupriya Didi we owe the immortal memories of *Matri-Lila*; hence Ma's devotees all over the world are forever indebted to her. During the celebration, many devotees from inside and outside India have boosted our morale by active participation and collaboration. Some devotees came from France specially to take part in the celebration.

An old devotee of Sri Ma Sri Jagadishwar Pal has made the following comments after having participated in the centenary celebrations :

"The 20th century will be indelibly recorded in the history of India as a remarkable century that has witnessed a number of centenaries of immense significance. 1936 was the year Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa's birth centenary; Sri Ma Sarada Devi's centenary was held in the 50's; the 60's witnessed the centenaries of Rabindranath and Swami Vivekananda; likewise, Sri Aurobindo's in the 70's; M.M. Gopinath Kavirajji's in the 80's, and now in the last decade, we have celebrated the centenaries of Sri Ma and Her lila-associate, Gurupriya Didi. Didi Gurupriya was our beloved Didi. Without having participated in the Kanyapeeth-Diamond-Jubilee-cum-Gurupriya-Devi Centenary Celebrations, we would have missed glimpses of this supreme creative force that incessantly propelled the activities of Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha and realized splendid visions by the grace of Ma."

Revered Swami Chidanandaji had given us valuable suggestions regarding the layout of the entire programme. We are indeed deeply indebted to him.

Sri Ma's infinite grace was felt by all the organizers and the participants, from the very beginning till the end of the function. We gratefully bow to Her Holy Feet.

Finally, we offer our obeisance to our beloved Didi Gurupriya sincerely praying for her blessings so that, following her noble example, we too may dedicate ourselves whole-heartedly and egolessly to the Holy Feet of Sri Ma.

"Oh Gurupriya, beloved of Ma,

Salutations to thee !

To us thou belongest, to thee belong we,

We have thee in our heart.

On the completion of one hundred years of thy coming,

let conches blow in joy;

We bow to thee, we bow to thee, we bow to thee,

year after year !"



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I, Panu Brahmachari hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

March 1, 1999

Panu Brahmachari
Publisher