

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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CONTENTS

1.	Matri Vani	...	1
2.	Conversation with Western Devotees — <i>Vijayananda</i>	...	3
3.	Impressions of Anandamayi Ma — <i>Richard Lannoy</i>	...	9
4.	Vedanta and Tantra — <i>Prof. Bireshwar Ganguly</i>	...	12
5.	I love you (A poem) — <i>Devayani Mehta</i>	...	15
6.	"Behold, now and always	16
	— <i>K. Satyanarayan Rao</i> '		
7.	The fundamentals of Indian Philosophy — <i>P.C. Mehta</i> '	...	18
8.	Shree Ma's Dham — <i>'Shobha'</i>	...	23
9.	Old diary leaves — <i>Atmananda</i>	...	25
10.	Ma in illusion (A poem) — <i>Mohan Das</i>	...	27
11.	Grant me repose at thy feet — <i>Prof. S.C. Das Gupta</i>	...	28
12.	Ma Anandamayi and the spiritual problem — <i>Prof. Madan Gopal</i>	...	32
13.	Ma Anandamayee and Kamala Nehru — <i>Arun Sen Gupta</i>	...	36
14.	From notes taken in Sri Ma's presence — <i>'Kirpal'</i>	...	37
15.	The Songs	...	39



MATRI-VANI

Let His Name be ever with you ; imperceptibly, relentlessly, time is creeping away.

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At all times endeavour to sustain the contemplation of God and the flow of His Name. By virtue of His Name all disease become ease.

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Human birth—does it not ordinarily mean experiencing desire, passion, grief, suffering, old age, disease, happiness, pain and so on. Yet it is man's duty to bear in mind that he exists for God alone—for His service and for the realization of Him.

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How can one be a human being without fortitude ? To attain Truth one has to endure all hardships, ever abiding in patience. It is the obstacles that give birth to patience. Write to my friend and tell him that he must become a traveller on the path upon which Peace is found.

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A pilgrim on the path of Immortality never contemplates death. By meditation on the Immortal, the fear of death recedes far away; remember this: In the measure that your contemplation of the One becomes uninterrupted, you will advance towards full, unbroken Realization.

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On the journey through life in this world nobody remains happy. The pilgrimage to the Goal of human existence is the only path to supreme happiness.

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To remain calm and at peace under all circumstances is man's duty.

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First of all, it must be made clear that it is the action of the Guru's power which induces the functioning of will-power; in other words, this will-power may be said to derive from the power of the Guru.

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Divine Happiness—that which you call *Parama sukhadham*—is pure, unalloyed bliss, happiness in its own right.

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By doing service with the feeling that one is serving the Supreme Being in everyone. The desire for God-realization is obviously not a desire in the ordinary sense. 'I am Thy instrument; deign to work through this Thy Instrument'. By regarding all manifestation as the Supreme Being, one attains to communion, that leads to liberation. Whatever work is undertaken, let it be done with one's whole being and in the spirit: "Thou alone workest", so that there may be no opportunity for affection, distress or sorrow to creep in.

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Abandon yourself to God in all matters without exception. "May He do as He pleases with me, who am I but a creature in His hands" — this should be your attitude of mind.

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Everything becomes smooth once the blessing of His touch has been felt.

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Depend on Him absolutely. In whatever circumstances you may find yourself, sustain the remembrance of Him alone. 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 with me in this guise.



CONVERSATION WITH WESTERN DEVOTEES

[FIVE]

—Vijayananda

Q. How did your relationship with Ma unfold during the course of the thirty years or more that you knew her ?

V- At the beginning for nineteen months, I was constantly with her, except for one day. We often travelled together at night in the same compartment, or in the same car. The English have a saying - 'Familiarity breeds contempt'. In my experience with Ma, it was the opposite. At the beginning, when we were in the same compartment, I had the habit of occupying the upper berth, above Ma. But once I understood better who she was, I used to lie down on the floor. We had a very simple relationship. We used to eat together. But after some pandits remarked that this contravened the rules, we discontinued the practice. In the initial years I did not speak Hindi, and my communication with Ma was always silent. I asked her questions, and received her replies, all within myself. I also learnt through direct observation.

The first few times, when I had to leave Ma for a long period, were terrible. One day, during one of these difficult periods, I wrote to her, half jokingly: "Ma, this is very hard, can't you do the sadhana in my place ?" Perhaps she did not sense the humourous tone of the question, and she replied - "A sadhaka should first of all master patience. With the help of patience, he should enter within himself."

At certain times, Ma let some tension develop between us, no doubt to lessen attachment to her as a person.

At the beginning when I wished to perform the '*kriyas*' (yogic practices), she sometimes gave me very complicated ones to perform. Later, when it seemed as if I was no longer interested, she smiled - "I know what you want". What I wanted was her '*Shakti*', the direct transmission of her power, and she gave it to me in abundance.

Q. What was the life-style of Ma like ?

V- It was a very normal life-style. When she was young, she used to go through states of ecstasy and of '*samadhi*', which was, doubtless, in response to the demands made by the Bengali public, who loved such things. But all through the years that I knew her (since 1951) she had a very normal demeanour. She had a very distinct way of doing things. Whenever she was in the presence of pandits or

mahatmas, she used to make them answer the queries of people, instead of providing the answers herself. I had never seen her directly provoking the least suffering among her devotees. Indirectly, yes, she could provoke very strong

reactions. She had the capacity of reversing the negative attitude of people towards her, in the twinkling of an eye. For example, one of the sons of a senior Indian official was not interested in the gurus. When Ma visited his family, he did not even wish to go and see her. At his family's insistence, he agreed to go and greet her. The meeting left deep impression on him.

Q. Do you think that Ma changed in over the years ?

V- I found that with age she became more serious. I asked her, "Ma, why aren't you like before ? Have you changed ?" She answered, "I haven't changed, but it is this body which has grown old. "

Q. Did you personally choose to wear the saffron robe by yourself ?

V- No, Ma gave it to me. I did not take the vows of a swami, because I wanted to remain free.

Q. Did Ma give you your name ?

V- Yes, it was in 1951, some months after my arrival. We were in a place situated above Rishikesh. One fine day, Ma named the place "Ananda Kashi", the owner of the property "Anandapriya", and me "Vijayananda."

Q. How would you describe your relationship with Ma ?

V- She was for me, a father, a mother, a beloved, everything together, and much more. I had felt that from the very beginning.

Q. Did Ma teach you 'hatha-yoga' ?

V- I practised 'hatha-yoga' during the early years of my sadhana. I was able to do almost all the postures. I had a neighbour who was very good at it, but I did not learn from him, I learnt it from books. From time to time I used to show Ma the postures, and she sometimes corrected me. Ma had a great deal of energy. When she walked, one had to run to keep pace with her, when she swam, she swam like a fish. But at the end, while leaving her body she had difficulty in moving from one place to another, and she had to be taken in a chair.

Q. Did you have a very personal relationship with Ma ?

V- Yes, especially in the beginning. Afterwards, it was a more impersonal relationship, though it was just as intense. I had also noticed that when my mind

was well, Ma used to be cold and distant; but when my meditation was not going too well, she was warm and gentle. Meditation ultimately leads to a realisation of the impersonal, but a personal relationship helps a great deal in achieving that stage.

Q. What can the guru give, techniques or power ?

V- The guru gives a power. He can help in the awakening of the 'Kundalini', but this is only one stage of 'sadhana'. He cannot give Realisation, but he can help to overcome the obstacles which veil this Realisation, already present within us.

Q. One day, when you had wanted to leave Ma and return to France, you met her. Finally, you stayed on. Was this not an excessive attachment to the physical form of Ma ?

V- It is true, that at that time I used to be very attached to Ma's physical form. I must have had need of this attachment. But Ma liberated me from it. When a real guru creates an attachment for a specific reason, he also has the power to liberate you from it.

Q. What is the meaning of "surrender to the will of the guru" ?

V- With Ma, I tried to respond immediately to the slightest of her suggestions. In this way one could be liberated from certain consequences of his previous acts. If one didn't obey, Ma used to say - "Yes, this is also right, do as you think best." But, at that moment, one had to suffer the 'karmic' consequences of one's acts. In fact, for me, it was never a question of obedience, because obedience pre-supposes fear, to a greater or lesser extent. What I felt towards Ma was love and veneration. I was thus able to follow the practical advice she gave me from time to time, even though, sometimes, this advice did not correspond to the real situation. On the other hand, I never surrendered my freedom of mind to her. This kind of surrender was not in my nature. What I was seeking from Ma, was the direct transmission of a power that would help me in my 'sadhana', and this she gave to me in abundance.

Q. Did you invoke Ma during your 'sadhana' ?

V- Rarely, I did not want to cause her any inconvenience even at a distance. I chose to go to the limits of my own possibilities. Although one can call to the guru before reaching his limits, the determination to find his way is important. Evidently, it is the reverse for those who follow the path of *Bhakti*. They see God everywhere. It is God who does their 'sadhana' for them, all that they have to do is to pray to him all the time. The goal is the same, but the path is different. Now that Ma has given up her physical form, she is completely one with the divine power. I ask her

questions from time to time. I generally get the answers, either immediately, or in the days that follow. But I did not do it too often, because as they say, one should not 'try God too much'.

Q. Was Ma conscious of helping others ?

V- I do not know. She used to be in a very elevated state of being, and the simple fact of her paying attention to a person, and listening to him, resulted in circumstances turning out for the better for him. This could be at the material level, or at the level of the physical health of the person, but it was above all, at the level of his inner evolution, often almost experienced inwardly, Ma's action was like that of a King. It is enough for the King to tell his major-domo that a stranger was his friend, and everything is provided for the said friend: lodging, food, service, etc..... Can one say that the King is conscious of all the details?

Q. Do you think the guru can take on the 'Karma' of his disciples?

V- Certainly. It happened very often in the life of Ma. Either she directly took the sickness of a disciple, in a milder form, on to herself, or she cured the disciple without being visibly affected herself. The psychic power of sages is very strong. It cannot be disturbed by disciples. Once, at Benares, I had had, for some days, a rat-bite which had got infected. I tried not to let Ma see it, but Atmananda, who used to be with Ma, denounced me. Once Ma looked at it, the infection practically disappeared within twenty four hours.

Q. Why doesnot there seem to be any great spiritual figure in Ma's immediate surrounding?

V- Arnaud Desjardins also once asked me this question. They say that in Buddha's entourage, there were also only two disciples who succeeded in attaining it. In my case, at the end of a year in India with her, I asked her if I could meditate alone. But she kept me by her side for two more years, before letting me go for one year of solitary meditation, and after that for about twelve years of meditation in the Himalayas. Ma didn't need a second person. Whatever she had to do, she did alone.

Q. When you travelled with Ma, did the people around realize that they were with an extraordinary being?

V- Yes. Ma was very beautiful, but more than that, she used to be in a state of intense joy, and she communicated this joy to those who approached her. It was the

usual kind of joy; it was a joy without any excitement, experienced with a complete control of oneself. There were many ways of meeting and discovering Ma. One day, we took someone who had had a fracture, to a well-known surgeon in Calcutta. When the surgeon saw Ma, he must have thought that she was the wife of one of the members of the group, and asked her to go out ! She left. Later, someone explained to him that she was the 'Ma Anandamayi'. He finally became one of her most faithful devotees.

Q. Did Ma show that she could read the minds of her visitors when she met them, or did she just ask those questions which one normally asks while wanting to know something about a stranger ?

V- She asked absolutely ordinary questions. Ma was most simple and natural in her contact with people, and therein lay her greatness. It was after having met her and through its effect that one realized fully her power as a sage.

Q. Ma used to take onto herself the emotional state of the people in order to free them from it. But doesn't everyone who enters into a relationship, take on the emotional state (*bhava*) by simple imitation, without being able to liberate him ?

V- No, unless one is very enamoured of a person, one does not take on his emotional state. Rather, one is either constantly opposing it, or trying to defend oneself from it. One has to be a sage like Ma, to be able to take on completely the emotional state of someone else.

Q. What did Ma see of the interior world of her visitors ?

V- She used to see the emotional state, the fundamental '*bhava*', but not the details of their minds. Sometimes in case of an emergency, she could change their '*bhava*' for a while, but it was upto the visitors or disciples to understand the functioning of their own minds, and to change it in a more durable way.

Q. Did Ma sometimes ask her disciples, "What am I, in your eyes ?"

V- No, she used to immediately sense the opinion that people had about her. For example, I considered her as my guru, and with me she always behaved like a guru; quite a few times she used to make clear allusions as to what she was. She often said, "As you play the instrument, so you will hear the sound." If, for example, there were some parents who had lost a child to whom they had been very attached, Ma really used to become that child : she suddenly had the face, the voice, the gestures of a child; something which affected the parents very deeply.

Q. You say that sometimes Ma was 'too nice'. What does that mean ?

V- In her speech, she was always very kind. But, in reality, if one did not do as she had suggested, then, sooner or later, he was to suffer the consequences. Not because she had a wish to punish, but because she could see clearly in advance the false step which one was about to take, and she tried to prevent one from taking it. She responded to one's emotional state, but when one went to see her, it was not easy to change that state, even if one wanted to.

Q. Did you ever have doubts about Ma ?

V- Never any doubts about the fact that she was a fully realised being. Once I went straight to Ma and complained, "Ma, you have created a barrier between yourself and occidentals," I said. "There is no question of a barrier," she answered, "You and me, we are one. This (pointing to her body) is only an appearance. I am *Omnipresent*."

Q. How did Ma view the differences between the main religions ?

V. Once at Vrindavan (Krishna's village, and an important place for the followers of Vaishnavism), I acted as the interpreter between her and a monk. When asked, "Do you not find it tiresome when people of other religions come and argue with you ?" she said, "According to me, the differences between christianity, Hinduism and Islam are like the differences between different sects."

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IMPRESSIONS OF ANANDAMAYI MA

—Richard Lannoy

(FIVE)

If I had to find one word with which to describe the most out-standing characteristic of Anandamayi Ma's teaching it would have to be 'inclusiveness'. But to account for why I find this word the nearest approximation possible I would have to make my reply inclusive too !

In the simple terms of her life story, she had passed level by level, through the entire gamut of spiritual development by the age of 30, from childhood piety to humble religious ardour, to worship of gods, recitation of God's name and service to others in the name of God, to visionary experience, to meditation, to initiation, to glossolalia and prophetic utterance, to the practice of advanced Yoga at the highest levels of perfection, to ecstatic rapture, Kirtan and the dance of the *bhakta*, to *samadhi*. In addition, she had emerged as an exponent of contemplative, esoteric or mystical religion, through direct experience and personal awareness, where the inward sense of the self is one with the feeling of the external world.

At the latter end of the process, her teaching became like the delta of a great river system, an infinity of tributaries, each one flowing towards the unanimity of the human spirit. In short, she encompassed the particularistic states and stages within a unitive whole. She carried with her, as she raised awareness from one level to the next, all those who retained their divergent *beliefs*, but she then reached beyond these surface differences to the transcendental unity of *all* religions. It was not just a matter of mouthing platitudes about 'the oneness of all religions', she gave detailed instructions to people of different faiths and at different stages of development, which were precisely in tune with their ownself in tune with their own particular situation. Her teaching certainly did point to the unity hidden beneath all the outer symbols, affording a glimpse into a universalistic stratosphere without departing from down-to-each detail. She was always precise, never vague.

She was the unassuming country girl from a dirt-poor village home, who became the cynosure for all eyes. Yet still she would say : 'I am always the same !' Anne Bancroft puts it beautifully : 'All of us sense a timelessness dwelling in our heart, an essential core of being *which does not change*. Thus Mataji, who seems to have known herself to be total timelessness, always responded from this essence to same essence in the situation.' While she knows exactly who and where she is—I

am always the same'—we don't know that we also are where she is ! There is no need for us to 'become' liberated : we are already free. Most graphically she shows us how to find this out for ourselves. The clarity of the way she does this is revelatory. 'I do nothing of my own volition'. Nothing ? Surely this is a trife remark—or mediumistic ? It is nothing of the sort. If we could only realize it, she is saying, she can do nothing by her own volition and *nor can we*. All action is His action.

Bhaiji puts it this way : "Her life is an eye-opener to us all. She shows by her everyday activities how we can link every minute detail of life to the Infinite and how we can cultivate a new outlook in our relations with men and make this world a place of new joy and hope and peace She has devoted herself wholly and completely to the good of the world. All living beings are her own kith and kin. "If you think that there is something peculiarly my own, I must tell you that the whole world is my own."

Here is a strangeness, an indefinable rarity, an uncanny ineffable quality which comes so near the limits of the recognizably human as to call for a revision of what we mean by that very word 'human'. Some would undoubtedly find her behaviour very strange, and her freedom to behave strangely, both audacious and disturbing. She was, throughout her life, in every domain, the acme of effortless perfection. Were it not for her lifelong exertion, for the good of all, this perfection would be insufferable. And 60 years of total accessibility must surely have been unendurable had not she herself sustained a marvellous balance between effort and effortlessness. "There are no others. All others are like the tint of this body."

Douglas Harding, who met Anandamayee Ma, told Anne Bancroft that the essence of her life and doctrine was 'to care and not to care.'

"She was totally detached from what was going on and paradoxically totally united with it. And these two are both necessary, for if you have one without the other—look out ! She was free of the world in the sense that her essence was the source of the world and she was not limited by its products or involved in them. Intrinsically she was freedom itself—that was one extremely important half of the truth. The other half was that she was so involved in everything. To be totally separate from everything, to be space for it, capacity for it, is to be it. Paradoxically if one is free of a thing, one is free to be it. She exhibited this paradox—to be free of the world is to be the world. To be free of grief is to be grief. A woman came to her who lost her son and they sat together weeping for hours and then the woman went away comforted. At the same time her teaching was totally uncompromising

when it came to the essence of things, very tough, but absolutely gentle and generous with people's efforts."

In a letter she sent to a group of *sadhikas*, Anandamayi Ma reveals her own high-energy inclination :

"Those who are pilgrims on the path must develop great inner strength, energy, mobility and swiftness, so that their lives may become beautiful, to fill their new life with a new current. It will not do to sit down and ride in a rickety, jolting bullock-cart. At all times, the mind must be intensely vigorous, energetic and alert—then only can you forge ahead with great speed. Remember that every person has to mould his or her own life. Accept cheerfully whatever He may bestow on you or take away from you."

LAMENT OF THE EGO

—Michael Allgaier

We are shadows,
Floating through a dark and windy night,
Alone and hidden from the stars.
And when the sun arises,
We shall fade away.
But let your tears flow gently.
Sufficient to have floated freely
And, though dying, to have welcomed dawn.

VEDANTA AND TANTRA

(Three)

—Prof. Bireswar Ganguly

The Philosophy and Science of Tantra Shāktism

From time immemorial, dating to about five thousand B.C., there were two parallel traditions of spiritualism, viz. the Vedic and the Tāntrik. The bases of the Vedic tradition were the four Vedas and more than one hundred Upanishads, culminating in *Bhagvad Gitā*. Whereas the bases of Tāntrism were innumerable Tāntrik texts, starting from the *Devi Sukta* of *Rig Veda*, and culminating in Durgā Śaptasati Chandi of Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna. The Vedas were recognized mainly as *Nigama Sāstra*, based on deduction from revealed knowledge, and the *Tantras* were recognized mainly as *Āgama Sāstra*, based on induction or practical methods of Yoga.

It is not easy to define *Tantra*. Among the many meanings of the word *Tantra* (root *tan*, extend, continue, multiply), one concerns us particularly that of 'succession', 'unfolding', 'continuous process'. Thus *Tantra* would mean what extends knowledge (*Tanyate, vistārayate Jnānam anenaiti tantram*). Tāntrism gradually came to designate a great philosophical and religious movement, which assumed a pan-Indian vogue from the sixth century onward. In ancient and medieval India, Tāntrism was popular not only among philosophers and theologians but also among ascetics and *yogis*, who were active practitioners of spiritual life. In the words of Mirce Eliade, an eminent authority on Indology, "In a comparatively short time, Indian philosophy, mysticism, ritual, ethics, iconography, and even literature are influenced by tāntrism. It is a pan-Indian movement, for it is assimilated by all the great Indian religions and by all the 'sectarian' schools. There is a Buddhist tāntrism and a Hindu tāntrism, both of considerable proportions. But Jainism too accepts certain tāntric methods (never those of the 'lefthand') and strong tāntric influences can be seen in Kashmirian Śaivaism, in the great *pancarātra* movement (c. 550), in the Bhāgavata Purāna (c. 600) and in other Visnuist devotional trends."¹

There are generally two types of knowledge, viz. philosophical and scientific, the former being mainly deductive and the latter being mainly inductive, though

1. *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, Bollingen Princeton, 1973, pp. 200-201.

both the logical methods are used in both the studies. Western philosophical as well as scientific knowledge is wholly based on reasoning, whereas ancient Indian philosophical knowledge also relied on intuition and revelation. *Vidyā* or spiritual philosophy deals with the 'subject' of knowledge and *avidyā* or science (both natural and social) deals with the 'object' of knowledge. Monistic vedanta attempts to understand the 'subject' (*Adah*) by the logical process of *neti neti*, not this, (*Idam*) to assert the existence of the 'subject'. Tāntric monism being integral monism, takes up both the 'subject' and the 'object' and arrives at the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality by unravelling the mysteries of the apparent phenomenal body as well as the external world. Philosophical knowledge is sythetic, whereas scientific knowledge is analytical. Modern scientific knowledge attempts at an exploration of the *jagat*, world; vedantic knowledge, attempt to understand *Atman*, consciousness, and Tāntric knowledge is a bridge between the objective world and the subjective *Brahman* or *Atman*.

Dr. Balajinnatha Pandita has beautifully summarized the subject-matter of Tāntric science and philosophy in the following manner :

"The academic development of both *Śaivism* and *Śāktism* has its roots in *Āgamic* scriptures, called *Tantras*. The Theistic absolutism of monistic character is the main metaphysical principle of the Tāntric monism and is also the innermost secret of the higher theological pursuit of the Tāntrism. Higher Tāntric philosophy sees the only basic source of all phenomena in the infinite, all-perfect and pure absolute consciousness having perfect Godhead as its essential and basic nature. Such pure consciousness, is an absolutely monistic reality without having any internal variety or *svagataveda*, as propounded by philosophers like, Ramanuja All phenomena, that appear anywhere, enjoy their basic existence within such absolute consciousness, the divine power of which (consciousness) is their internal form. Such divine and infinite consciousness is playful by its basic nature. Its divine playfulness keeps on vibrating inwardly and outwardly

The subjective self-awareness, shining as pure 'I' is said to be inwardness and an objective awareness, appearing as 'This', is meant by outwardness. Such double-edged awareness, illuminative I-ness and this-ness, is appearing in the multifarious forms of 'this-ness' and its such static aspect is termed as *Śivahood*. The natural playfulness of such pure consciousness manifests the divine activities of cosmic creation, preservation and dissolution of the objective phenomenon, as well as the self-oblivion and self-recognition on the part of the subjective phenomenal beings. Such playful aspect of the absolute consciousness is termed as its *Śaktihood*. The absolute consciousness is thus both *Śiva* and *Śakti*."²

2. 'Philosophy of Saktism' in *Navonmesa* (M.M. Gopinath Kaviraj Smṛiti Granth). Varanasi, 1987, p. 129.

Thus we see that the noumenal aspect of the monistic absolute consciousness is termed as *Śakti*. Therefore, *Śiva* and *Śakti* are not at all any mutually different entities, nor is any of them different from *Parama Śiva*, the monistic Absolute of Tāntric śaivism or Kashmiri śaivism. Śaktism and śaivism move together hand in hand both in their metaphysical formulations as well as yogic rituals, as śaktism has adopted the philosophy of śaivism and śaivism has adopted the theological practices of śaktism. A *śaiva yogi* or a *tāntrik sādḥaka* (practitioner) becomes fully satisfied on realizing himself as none other than God Himself. He has to practically realize the three divine powers, known as *Ichchā*, *Jñāna* and *Krityā shakti* of *Śiva*. The *Trika* system of practical śaivism recognizes the whole *samsāramandala* (phenomenal universe) as consisting of *Śiva*, *Śakti* and *Nara* (*Jivātmā*). *Śiva* descends to the position of *Nara* through His extrovertive movement on the outward path of His *Śakti* and *Nara* has to ascend to the pinnacle of Sivahood by the means of his introvertive Yogic march through the inward path of *Śakti*. Dr. Pandita rightly observes :

"All deities right from *Sadāśiva* to petty *grāmadevatās*, who are worshipped by *śaiva* aspirants in the practice of *śaiva* theology are the outward manifestations of the different *śaktis* of *Śiva* and their worship is thus the worship of *Śakti*. *Śaktism* is thus an integral part of *Śaivism*. It is on such account that many *śāktas* of the present age count *śaiva* works like *Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta and *Spanda Kārikā* of Bhatta Kallata as works on Śaktism. Most of the *mantras* used in the theology of Saivism are *śākta* in character and so is the worship of *Śricakra*, the tantric diagram representing the whole system of the hierarchy of Tāntric deities. The highly sophisticated *Tāntric sadhana* by means of five *Makāras* is essentially *śāktic* in character and so are all the rituals connected with *dikṣā* and other theological performances of monistic śaivism discussed in detail in *Tantrāloka*."

(To continue)

I LOVE YOU

—Devayani Mehta

A precious treasure,
A priceless love,
Pure,
Sublime,
Selfless,
Perfect,
Words defilest,
Why am I still left
Seeking,
Wanting,
Wavering,
Groping in the dark ?
You will never desert me.
Your laughter fills me,
I can hear you within me
Whispering within the silence of my soul.
My Guide,
Support,
Mother,
Father,
Friend,
Lover,
I am afraid to talk about you

Lest you escape the secret confines of
My heart.
I am a fool
Blinded by delusion.
Give me eyes
So that I can see.
Let me cry for you
For nobody can do for me what you do.
I donot deserve you.
I can feel you
Guiding me
Every second,
Your inspiration
Ever present within my thoughts,
Actions,
Words,
Deeds,
Holding my hand.
I am your little child. Carry me,
Show me eternal love.
Impure as I am,
Can I say the three words,
"I Love you" ?

"BEHOLD, NOW AND ALWAYS ONE WITH THE ETERNAL ATMAN, I AM EVER THE SAME"

- K. Satyanarayan Rao

It is now 17 years since our Blissful Ma had cast off her physical form. The physical form was only a vehicle to commune and commingle with her devotees. However, this world is subject to the change and like everything else, her saga of 'leelas' too began to draw to a close; the signs were alarming, intake of nourishment ceased during the last one year, her physical frame showed signs of steady decline. However, some of her ardent old devotees thought them to be the usual passing clouds. But when the visiting Shringeri Pontiff too ventured to request her to make a special *sankalp* to get well, She replied, "Baba, there is no illness at all here; what you are witnessing is merely the pull of the unmanifest".

When finally, the ominous day, the 27th August, 1982 arrived, we all felt crushed, except perhaps, the stout-hearted sanyasins who could absorb its impact. Devotees in general felt disheartened and wondered whether Ma had slipped away into some oblivion, called 'The unmanifest'. But thanks to the dedicated band of sadhus, the 'Light' was not allowed to be extinguished. We owe it to Mother's grace, that a galaxy of sanyasins always rallied round her devotees to enthuse them restoring their faith in the ultimate goal. Considering the grand scale on which Ma had interacted with the sadhu mandalis and mahatmas across the country, from east to west, north to south, it appears that her 'Advent' was primarily to rejuvenate and inspire the sadhus and sanyasins, to rise to greater efforts to stem the tide of Western materialistic influences. Although large number of house-holder devotees flocked to her darshan and succour, it was the sadhus, simple and erudite, ones alike who benefited the most, for they were very dear to her in a special way, and she always showed great deference and respect to ochre clothes.

If I adore Mā today as the Supreme Soul, I owe this view to the deeply perceptive views expressed by a great sanyasin, Swami Yogananda in his Autobiography. He has included therein a small chapter on "The Bengali Joy-permeated Mother", and in just 3 paras, verily 3 nuggets of gold, packed a revelation that is humbling as well as perennially thought provoking. Recalling his visit to her in Calcutta in 1936, he refers to the joyous welcome received from her --
- "Baba, you have come ! I am meeting you for the first time after ages. Please come", saying so she held him by the hand and led him. After this mere '*darshan-sparshan and sambhāshan*' he could observe, "I had instantly seen that the saint

was in a high state of samadhi, oblivious to her outward garb as a woman, she knew herself as the changeless soul, and from that plane she was joyously greeting another devotee of God!"

Immensely moved, he invites her to his Ranchi Ashram, which she visits shortly thereafter. Yogananda gently pleads with her to tell him about herself, and finally she yields to his pleas, and says— "Baba, there is very little to tell! This consciousness here has never associated itself with this temporary body; Before I came on this earth 'I was the same', As a little girl, 'I was the same'. I grew into womanhood, but still 'I was the same'. When the family in which I had been born made arrangements to have this body married, 'I was the same'. When the husband of this body, maddened by passion, murmuring endearing words, tried to touch this body, he received a shock and swooned, and on regaining consciousness pleaded for forgiveness; even then 'I was the same'. And Baba, in front of you now, 'I am the same'. Ever afterward, though the dance of creation change around me in the hall of eternity, 'I shall be the same'!"

These divine utterances shed a marvellous and humbling effect on the venerable yogi who went on to observe, "I had found many men of God-realisation in India, but never before had I met such an exalted woman saint..... The closest of dear freinds, she made one feel, yet an aura of remoteness was ever around her —the paradoxical isolation of Omnipresence. I marvelled to see that whether amidst a crowd, in a train, feasting or sitting in silence, her eyes never looked away from God. Within me, I still hear her voice and echo of measureless sweetness; "Behold, now and always, one with the eternal Atman, 'I am ever the same'.

The respect and adoration Ma evoked amongst the stoic, austere sadhus, who had given up their hearth, home, kith and kin, in their search of the Almighty, is an experience not to be missed. Once, on my first visit to Kankhal Ashram, I had stopped the cycle rickshaw to enquire with an old sadhu standing by the road, the way to 'Anandamayee Ashram'— as I put it. Smiling broadly, the Swami corrected me — "Mā's ashram ? Mā's ashram, is it not ! Just go straight along the same road for another 10 minutes, you will reach the place". I moved on, but much chastened by the loving stress on the word 'Mā' by the sadhu; The difference between my matter-of-fact 'Anandamayee Ashram', and his lovingly stressed 'Mā's ashram', came forcefully to me as I moved on. I never made that mistake again. That sanyasin had given up his own natal mother, who had borne him, in search of the real meaning of his life, only to find his 'Mother' once again. The 'Divine Mā' herself also residing in her own chosen place, Kankhal, in Haridwar.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

[TWO]

—P.C. Mehta

1. The origin of the Vedic religion:

Little is known about the origin of the Vedic religion or the Aryan people who were the originators of it. The Indo-European languages also called the Aryan languages may have been evolved among the tribes of the Russian and central Asian steppes. During the second millennium B.C. some of these tribes migrated to Europe as founders of the Greek and other European civilizations, while others went to Asia Minor. Some of them called the Indo-Europeans divided into those who settled to found the Persian culture and those who entered India about 1500 B.C. These Aryans were semi-nomadic barbarians, fair and tall. They were mainly pastoral and did some farming. They had a tribal organization and used horses and chariots.

These Aryans who invaded India came upon a highly developed civilization which is called the Harappan or Indus valley culture. The religion practiced by these indigenous people still remains obscure but from the archaeological remains and what we know of other civilizations of the period, it appears that the country was ruled by priest-kings and the fertility cult was popular. Mother goddess figures, a three faced horned male god sitting in a yogic position, seen on steatite seals from Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa and a male god surrounded by four animals, the elephant, the tiger, the rhinoceros and a buffalo with two deer at his feet seen on another seal, suggest the worship of mother goddess and the prototype of Shiva as 'Pasupati' or the Lord of beasts and the archetype of Yogis. These Aryans assimilated the civilization of the local vanquished people in their own.

David Frawley suggests the other view that there was no Aryan invasion of India. He agrees with Renfrew that the Indus Valley civilization was in fact Indo-Aryan, even prior to the Indus valley era. The main Vedic era began, after a great deluge, which destroyed an earlier decaying culture, by the people who were saved from the flood. Some of them were in the Himalayan river valleys from where they descended down on the plains of India. The Vedic culture was said to have been founded by the sage Manu between the banks of the Saraswati and Drishadvati rivers. It was from here that the civilization radiated westwards into the middle east. Thus at the dawn of human history, Vedic culture appears to be a common spiritually based Indo-European culture founded by the saints and sages of yore.

This ancient culture was rooted in yoga and control of mind and not on technology. Thus the origin of human culture as a whole is based on spiritual knowledge and values and not on materialistic considerations or pursuits.

The early people living on the banks of the river 'Sindhu', called 'Indus' in English, which is now in Pakistan, were the Vedic people. Their earliest scriptures are the Vedas. Vedas are the wisdom of their saints and sages acquired in meditation at a profound level of awakening. These Vedic people were fire worshippers. The researches of J. M. Chatterjee suggest that they believed in one formless God, whom they called 'Asura Varuna', who was addressed also as 'Asura-mahat' or the great amongst the asuras. He was the guardian of 'Rta' or the moral order. At that time the word 'Asura' was a term of respect and did not denote demon as it does now. Therein a sage 'Brihaspati' introduced the so called polytheism and idol worship on the ground that through creation, the formless God had taken many forms and therefore He could be propitiated through His many attributes in diverse forms, as well as the one formless God. This position endured till 3500 B.C. In 3500 B.C. came Maharatu Zarthostra, who started a movement to go back to the old order when only a formless God was worshiped. This divided the people. The followers of Zarthostra migrated to Iran and were called Zoroastrians. The formless one God, the great amongst the Asuras, came to be called Ahurmazda from the Sanskrit Asura Mahat. He was no other than Asura Varuna. As their scripture they took 'Chhand-upastha', meaning some of the hymns of the Vedas, which name got changed to "Zend-Avastha", The 'Zend-Avastha' is identified as 'Bhargava-samhita', which is a portion of the 'Atharva-Veda'. The one formless Vedic deity has affected the Greek religion by Varuna being worshipped by the Greeks as Ouranos and considered as the ancestor of Zeus, (see 'Vedic Mythology' by Macdonell). The concept of one formless God in Judaism, Christianity and Islam is also traced to this early Vedic concept.

The Zoroastrians who migrated to Iran, began to call the people on the banks of the river Sindhu as 'Hindus' because in their grammar the word 's' changes into 'h' when pronounced. The name 'Hindu' is very old and appears as 'Indu' in the records of the ancient Chinese pilgrims who visited India. Slowly the whole country began to be called Hindustan meaning the place of the Hindus. Thus, it will be seen that the word 'Hindu' does not bear cultist or sectarian overtones but merely denotes people living in a particular region. It includes Jains, Buddhists and also Sikhs.

From even a casual reading of the early history by various scholars, difficulty in dating is apparent. As such there is considerable room for unbiased research in the field of ancient religions and the cradle of ancient civilization.

Though the source of Hindu-dharma meaning Hindu religion is in the Vedic religion, the two are to be distinguished. 'Hinduism is that complex of culture, religious practice, myth, belief that are felt to be a continuation of the Vedic tradition'. (This definition is given by Professor J.A.B. Van Buitenen of the University of Chicago).

2. The Vedas :

The ancient sages did not live in the midst of the hustle-bustle of modern life. They lead a life of tranquility. As such sitting on river banks, it was possible for them to ask fundamental questions about the nature of reality, the meaning of existence, the place of man and his possibilities . As they did not regard themselves as separate from nature, for them these were not intellectual exercises to gather information, but discipline to gain wisdom through personal transformation. As such their contemplation lead them through deep yogic meditation to the appropriate level of consciousness required. This was the supramental level. Language can convey experiences which are the same between people. The experiences between people are same only at the common worldly level. Therefore, the experiences at this supramental level are incapable of being put into language.

The result was that their realizations remained a secret from the unworthy and a system grew up under which at a young age appropriate pupils were selected to understudy the sages through a life of strict discipline. When the

teacher was satisfied with the earnestness and ability of the pupil, he helped him in raising his consciousness to the required supramental level and then transfer the knowledge to the pupil. This way the pupil's understanding was flawless. The wisdom thus gained was called '*Śruti*' or 'what is heard'. This was the manner in which this wisdom was transferred from teacher to pupil and preserved for centuries. In the case of lay public, rituals and prayers were evolved to suit each occasion.

In course of time as moral conditions deteriorated, the ability of teachers and the earnestness of the pupils declined and a time came when all this wisdom was put down in writing. When put in writing the texts are called '*smṛti*' meaning 'that which is remembered'. The interpretation of these texts became a problem resulting in various schools of philosophy. It is this wisdom as found in writing that are the Vedas.

The 'Vedas' are the sacred books of the Hindus. They comprise their highest religious authority. They are not a single work but a whole literature composed over a vast period of time. As such besides religion and philosophy, they reflect the civilization of the Aryans at different periods of antiquity. However, the social and other material found therein are only of secondary importance.

We discover in the Vedas, primitive as well as gross ideas by the side of others that are derived from the highest spiritual insight. This is firstly because, the Vedas are not a single work but a whole literature composed over a vast period of time. Another reason is that the scriptures represent the intellectual gropings of primitive men as well as the deep insight of men at the highest level of spiritual awakening. Thus there are present in the Vedas, both higher and lower forms of thought, because just as today, teachings of any sort adapt to the concern and capacity of those who would receive it. Herein we shall deal only with the highest wisdom disclosed in the Vedas, neglecting the inferior material as irrelevant.

3. Four collections of the Vedas:

There are four collections of the wisdom of the sages, called the '*Vedas*'. They are:

- a) The *Rig Veda*,
- b) The *Sama Veda*
- c) The *Yajur Veda* and
- d) The *Atharva Veda*.

The *Rg. Veda* is considered the earliest and contains hymns in praise of the essence of the diverse powers of nature considered as conscious entities or angels or Gods and the '*mantras*' or hymns are arranged in accordance with the gods who are adored. It consists of 1,028 hymns divided into ten books, called mandalas and describes the religion of the Aryans. Books II-VII, which contain the oldest hymns are called the '*family books*', because each is ascribed to a particular family of singers, through the Rsi, forefather, through whom the hymns were handed down. Out of the 1028 hymns of the *Rg. Veda*, 250 hymns are addressed to '*Indra*', while there are only 12 hymns addressed to '*Varuna*', 5 to '*Visnu*' and 3 to '*Rudra*'.

The *Sama Veda* consists of stanzas (except 75) taken from the *Rg. Veda* and put to chant.

The *Yajur Veda* is a manual of sacrificial formulas in prose and verse for the use of the priest who performs the '*Soma*' sacrifice with hymns of the *Rg. Veda* arranged according to their place in the sacrificial rituals.

The *Atharva Veda*, which is also called '*Bhrigu-Angirasi-Samhita*' in '*Gopatha Brahmana*', attained its present form much later than the *Rg. Veda*. Along with some hymns having philosophical content, it has matters having popular appeal, such as prayers to ward off ills as well as spells and incantations to bring about desired results.

Max Muller thinks that not even a hundredth part of the religious poetry which existed during the Vedic age has survived and several of the hymns are obscure and the hymn material which has come down to us is incomplete. It is also interpolated with inferior material of later times. It is therefore with difficulty that scholars have arrived at a definite set of beliefs which prevailed during the Vedic age.

Madam Blavatsky in her 'Secret Doctrine' claims that there are 10,580 verses or 1,028 hymns in the Rg. Veda. In spite of the Brahmanas and a mass of glosses and commentaries, it is not understood correctly. This is because the key to their real interpretation is not allowed to fall in unworthy hands.

4. The 'Mantras', 'Brahmanas', 'Aranyakas' and the 'Upanisads':

The 'Vedas' consist of two parts; 1) The 'Mantras' or hymns (in verse) and 2) The 'Brahmanas' inclusive of Aranyakas' (in prose but with quotations in verse), as well as the 'Upanisads' which are of great importance in religio-philosophical thought.

However, for a clearer understanding, it is better to consider the Vedas in the following four divisions.

- i) The 'Mantras' or hymns deal with prayers to various gods and angels. 'Mantra' means a religious hymn. In the 'Vedas', the 'Mantra' appears to be composed at vastly different times, separated by centuries.
- ii) The 'Brahmanas' deal with rituals. 'Brahmana' means prayers or devotions and exposition of the Brahman, the sacred power inherent in Mantra and more specifically in its relation to the rituals. 'Brahmana' means prayer or devotion and signifies authoritative utterances of a priest especially relating to sacrifice. Brahmanas are a repository of such utterances.
- iii) The 'Aranyakas' replace rituals with meditation. 'Aranyakas' or 'forest treatises', sprang up for older men who had passed through the trials and tribulations of life and who, due to maturer wisdom, had outstepped the need for external rituals prescribed by the 'Brahmanas' and in whose case, meditation including symbolic meditation was more appropriate. Their interest lay in being free from outward ritualistic practices and entering into deep meditation. Such people often retired to the forest, cutting off their connection or involvement in worldly cares and spending the remainder of their lives in peace and meditation. They are called anchorites.
- iv) The 'Upanisads' deal with the highest insight, the understanding of which emancipates a man.

We may mention at this stage that it is necessary to acquaint oneself with the meaning of the following three different words, which will occur in the text.

- I) 'Brahman' (neuter) means the eternal principle underlying the universe as a whole and which is the essence of man.
- ii) 'Brāhmana' means a portion of the 'Vedas', dealing with rituals.
- iii) 'Brahmin' means a member of the priestly class in the caste system.

[To continue]

SHREE MA'S DHĀM

—'Shobha'

I had come to Ma's *dham* Dehra-Doon in the September of 1997, when I was informed of my father's passing away. But for Ma's thoughts this long journey from the States to India would have taken all my courage that I had so graciously regained over a time of few years by Ma's love, support and shelter. I had become a mental and emotional wreck after the sudden passing away of a loved one. To think of those days and years makes me completely exhausted. But at the same time is reminiscent of a subtle romance that was interacted between my loneliness and the depth of Nature's Bliss. This gave birth not to a being but to a devotee. A devotee of an Infinite Bliss.....Shree Shree Ma.

The more Ma shelters me with Her devotion and compassion my longing to be in Dehra-Doon increases like an unquenchable thirst. The deeper I get involved in Shree Shree Ma's thoughts the more self-analytical I become of my moods, my thoughts, emotions and actions by words or deeds Hence the solitude of heart and mind increases and floats with the desire of sinking in Infinite Solace of the Cosmic Breeze and Ocean. Sinking in awareness of Her Omnipotent presence.

Many family relations had come to participate in the prayer services and rituals that followed in the remembrance of my father. As well to console my mother's grieving heart. But as a matter of fact that who consoles and supports lies in beatitude in the midst of our heart's heart. Silently listening to each sob, wiping every tear drop. Reassuring Her love and support time and time again. In this moment our Japa, Guru, Ista silently gathers the helpless being spreading tender light to lighten the harshness around.

It was here when taking a stroll in the partially enclosed vast roof of my father's house enjoying the peaceful natural beauty of Dehra-Doon when one of my uncles visiting from Varanasi remarked that it was sad that such a beautiful valley could not develop a personality or a culture of its own. Giving example of Varanasi, Allahabad, Lucknow. Technically it sounded right, but to a devotee of Shree Anandamayi Ma this concept could not be agreed upon.

Dehra-Doon is Ma's *Dham*. It is Her abode. Her Ashrams reassure the passer-by the Truth Of Time, the belief of Supernatural Phenomena. It supports every destitute with a ray of Hope and spreads the Joy of the Bliss-Permeated Mother. It reminds the lonely and the friendly, to believe in oneself is to believe in God. The

valley of Kishenpur Ashram and Kalyanvan whispers in musical notes the simplicity and compassion of Ma's Love that rests in the within of all. Her joyful laughter floats in the peaceful breeze that comes touching the peaks of the snow-clad Himalayas. That clear blue sky, the moon, the sun, the lofty top of the eucalyptus trees all pay their homage to the Celestial Beauty of Eternity. Every flower, every bud and leaf yearns to be offered to Her Lotus Feet. Each seed wants to flower in the garden of Her shelter, Her compassion. Every form desires to be shadowed by Her reflection. The garden of Kalyanvan offers every fruit to Her Altar, each bird calls out in the dawn to Her name, all beings nestle around Her shelter as the darkness of night spreads. The doors of Kishenpur Ashram lock each heart and body in its safe custody at dark, reassuring to be unlocked at the dawn, vibrating energy, hope and joy and Her Grace to one and all that pass by Her. or wait on Her. Here even after losing all one finds more than what is lost. Again to be lost in the gaze of Her eyes that look far beyond any human's reach.....Ever looking yonder to Infinity.

March 10th, 1998

OLD DIARY LEAVES

—Atmananda

During Mataji's stay at Kishenpur in April, 1957 an American lady asked a number of questions of general interest.

Question— When waking up in the morning I feel near God, but by the time I have got up and sat down for meditation this mood has evaporated to a certain extent. Is it all right to meditate lying down ?

Mataji— When you learn something by heart in which position you do so. Some people learn better while sitting, some while lying and others while walking up and down. If you find it easy to keep your mind on God while lying, you may do so lying straight. But the best position for meditation is to sit straight and absolutely still in the posture which is most comfortable for any particular person.

Question— Is it good to sleep in the day ?

Mataji— Ordinarily life is in any case a kind of sleep from which one has to wake up. It is, therefore, good to keep awake as much as possible. Brahmacharis and sadhus are not allowed ever to sleep during the day. As one progresses in one's meditation, one needs less and less sleep. The ordinary person contacts his self only in deep sleep, while at all other times he is separated from it. The contact is unconscious; yet it is there and this makes life bearable. Therefore, sleep is absolutely necessary for ordinary individuals.

The aim of all sadhana is to become fully conscious of one's self. When this has been accomplished a state has been attained which transcends both sleep and what is commonly called waking. In sleep the body rests and recuperates. This is why people are given sleeping drugs when they are ill. When you are much interested in something you do not feel sleepy, you are able to stay up till late at night. But, afterwards you set a reaction and have to make up for lost sleep.

When you become really interested in the quest of God or Truth, you will find ever greater joy in meditation and need less and less

sleep. The time of sleeping to be reduced gradually. The need to sleep has to decrease spontaneously. Otherwise, one will feel tired and be unable to do one's work well. However, by taking about ten minutes off from one's six hour's sleep there will be no adverse effect. The need to sleep depends to a certain degree on one's state of health and on the quality and quantity of one's food.

Question— Many people beg out of habit even when they are not really in need. Should one give to such beggars ?

Mataji— If one happens to know that they are not in need one should definitely not give. For if they misuse the gift, part of the evil results will have to be borne by the donor. Sometimes one feels intuitively whether a beggar is in need or not, but by no means always. In such cases one should give with the thought that it is God in that guise who is asking for alms. When giving with this attitude, no evil consequences for oneself will follow.

MA IN ILLUSION

— Mohua Das

You no more dwell by us
in your blest human form.

No more is the mortal frame
here to mend us.

Yet, this life gazes up yonder
to feel a faint light
the celestial features playing
harmoniously against the blue sky.

So, I speak as your smile
is an innocense playing
buoyant through space, soft notes
waft around leaving a stupor
pure illusion it is indeed.

But gentleness and love undefined
in your eyes so enthralling,
can wrap us safe in a
world so odious and
is imploring to follow
your Enlightened Path.

●

GRANT ME REPOSE AT THY FEET

—S.C. Das Gupta,

Even at the end of the 20th century, when the whole world is engrossed in materialism, when humanity seems to be running madly after self interest only, when securing riches and pleasures is considered to be the ultimate goal and summum bonum of life; when the science of the atomic age has put coloured glasses on every pair of eyes, a few in our midst may yet be seen here and there, like oases in the desert of life, who keep themselves far aloof from the madding crowd, deeply absorbed in ideas of their own, much against the current of the time. They are so firm in their powerful convictions that the terrific whirlwind all round cannot make them budge an inch. Imperceptibly they challenge the storm and unnoticed turn the tide. I shall not recall historic figures of by-gone days, but venture to point to two living, very striking personages, whom to our great amazement we had the pleasure and privilege to see working among us.

As in the Vedic age, so in our own times also, a young woman of a middle class family of East Bengal, wholly indifferent to worldly pleasures and comforts, plunged deeply into a life of strenuous sadhana. Like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, She, in Her child-like simplicity, could think of God only and devoted Herself to worship heart and soul. Day after day, night after night, she prayed and prayed and wept to Her heart's content and lost herself in meditation and samadhi. We, in our undergraduate days at Dacca College, heard of her holy madness and, full of curiosity mixed with doubt, we peeped from the neighbourhood of the Kali Temple at Ramna. Little did she care what the world thought of her, but continued her sadhana, scarcely eating or drinking at all, without sleeping or even lying down to rest. A veritable fountain of real joy and delight, of peace and bliss, she was given the name of Sri Anandamayi Ma.

She hardly went to school, far less did she obtain a degree from any recognized institution, but like the great Sankaracharya she has given expression to the holy sayings of the Vedas and Puranas, to the rich lore of our cultural heritage in her simple, sweet and fascinating words, speaking from a level which even the most erudite scholar of philosophy fails to understand. How She could attain that height is much beyond the comprehension of any worldly man. She is God-Intoxicated. In her thought, speech and action she evidently knows nothing but God. As with Sri Chaitanya deva her love and affection simply overflow and overwhelm. It is in fact difficult to say whether she was a Jnani or a Bhakta, whether she was of the

Shaivite, the Shakta, or the Vaishnavite cult. Like Ramakrishna she has probably realized the Godhead from every point of view. All roads lead to the same goal. Her genial, magnetic, charming and blissful personality acted like a healing balm for all maladies, physical and mental. To see her was to be attracted towards her, to meet her was to love and adore her, to get in closer touch with her was to find the solution of one's numerous queries, be they expressed or unexpressed. Many afflicted persons have found solace in her, the hungry received food, not only for the body, but also for the mind, the suffering have found real comfort and relief.

It is as difficult for me to give anything like a complete picture of such a personage as it is to see a high edifice from close quarters. You cannot have a view of the Mount Everest by standing just at its foot, nor can you get a view of the Taj Mahal from its steps. Similarly, I am afraid, it is impossible for me to describe fully or to delineate Mata Anandamayi. From my status only a very partial view of her strikes by eyes, my imagination and comprehension—moreover, she is far greater than words can express. As a matter of fact I am informed that she has herself declared that the various kinds of *sadhana* she engaged in, were merely a 'Lila', a play, of no more significance to her than to change from one dress into another. We have seen her pass through various stages, that of a child, a carefree young girl, a housewife, a *sadhika* and so forth, but she has declared again and again that there is no change for her, she remains ever the same. *Diksha* came to her spontaneously, she herself acting as the Guru and the disciple all in one, which has so far been unknown in human history. Then followed an incredible variety of *sadhanas*, each being carried to completion within an extraordinarily short period of time. But then she said none of them were necessary for her own development, but were mere play-acting.

Through the grace of Mata Anandamayi we look forward to the advent of a new Vivekananda and another Sister Nivedita to carry Mata Anandamayi's holy message not only to every nook and corner of our own country, but also across the seas, in order to bring real and lasting peace and sincere loving-kindness to the suffering world. Saints and philosophers of eminence of our land and from abroad have not been able to fathom the depth of the Mother. The scientists and technologists of the world have been unable to trace the source of that great light or fire. A Vivekananda is needed to carry her torch and to illumine the enveloping darkness in order to show the right way. I feel that personalities of his stature are coming. May we be ready to greet them and to co-operate with them in broadcasting Mata Anandamayi's message of love.

The meeting of great souls is indeed remarkable in many respects. I have not had the good fortune to be present personally when Shri Rama Krishna met Sri *Keshab Chandra*, nor when the renowned literary figure Romain Rolland met Mahatma Gandhi, nor yet when the poet Rabindranath Tagore met Gandhiji, but it was no doubt a sight to witness Mata Anandamayi paying a visit to Prof. Shyama Charan De at his residence in the Banaras Hindu University in January, 1957. The grand old man of nearly 88 was struggling between life and death. One of the best surgeons of India, Dr. Rangi Lal, Principal of the Jubbulpur Medical College, had been specially invited by the Vice-Chancellor for De's treatment.

But in spite of best attention nothing could be done to cure the trouble. It must be mentioned that the calm and serene face of the patient did not in the least give expression to his agony, yet the disease seemed incurable. Only for the Mother's heart was it possible to feel her child's suffering—or was it the devotee's call for Mother that made her come? The sympathetic vibration in the hearts of both brought them together so that we were able to experience for some time how earth can be made a heaven, can come down to the solid earth. Was it Ma Yashoda affectionately gazing at her Gopal or was it the Mother appearing before the devotee Ram Prasad? The saint of Nagwa burst into tears, crying out: 'Ma, Ma, so you have come!' Mother lovingly replying: "Pitaji, your child has come!" Was it a nursing daughter attending to her ailing father? Mother's magic look fixed on the patient, her affectionate touch on his forehead, moving the invisible wand, sweetly assuring the patient, and immediately the old saint announcing his cure, all this was really much more than ears and eyes could believe. Had I not beheld the divine scene right before me, I frankly confess that I could not have deemed it possible. Mata Anandamayi had brought some flowers and fruits for the saint, who in his turn most respectfully gave his offering of flowers. Thus *Jnana* and *Bhakti* joined in *Karma*, making the meeting absolutely perfect. Not many words were exchanged, but both seemed overwhelmed beyond expression each by the other's look. Very likely their hearts conversed with each other in pure joy and delight. It really appeared as if they had known one another for years and ages, although actually they had met only once before at Dehradun and that too not less than a quarter of a century ago.

Many of the University authorities were present and every soul danced for joy to see the happy meeting.

Thus Mata Anandamayi and Prof. Shyama Charan De met in the precincts of the Banaras Hindu University.

Believe it or not, Mata Anandamayi's visit cured Prof. S.C.De of his ailment. The man of whose recovery the doctors had given up all hope, the man whom no medicine could restore to health, the man who was considered too weak to undergo an operation was quite well again, and within an hour of Mataji's visit could be seen sitting on his easy-chair basking in the sun, declaring joyfully that he was all right. Science and philosophy cannot trace the relation between cause and effect, nor can the human eye discern its working on the surface.

It is truly said : 'Much more is wrought by prayers than science and philosophy can think of.' Several events in the history of mankind in different lands at different times have established the truth of this saying, more especially in our country where people pitch their faith in religion. The lives of the Lord Buddha and Sri Chaitanya deva reveal a number of miracles which could become possible only because of their attaining great heights in their respective spheres by virtue of their sadhana. Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda by dint of their realization of the Godhead worked wonders far beyond the comprehension of ordinary human beings. In our living memory we have known and witnessed Mahatma Gandhi causing to happen in actual practical life what was considered impossible. The key to this superhuman power lies certainly in the infinite Glory of God. The source in all cases is just the same. So may we sing in chorus :

"May we realize Him—the transcendent and adorable Master of the universe—who is the supreme Lord over all the lords, the supreme God above all the gods, and the supreme Ruler over all the rulers.

"He has nothing to achieve for Himself, nor has He any organ of action. No one is seen equal or superior to Him. His great power alone is described in the Vedas to be of various kinds, and His knowledge, strength and action are described as inherent in Him.

No one in the world is His master, nor has any body any control over Him. There is no sign by which He can be inferred. He is the cause of all and the ruler of individual souls. He has no progenitor, nor is there any one who is His lord.

"May the Supreme Being, who spontaneously covers Himself with the products of Nature, just as a spider does with the threads drawn from its own navel, grant us absorption in Brahman." (Svetasvataropanisad).

MA ANANDAMAYI AND THE SPIRITUAL PROBLEM OF THE AGE

—Prof Madan Gopal,

It is a curious paradox of our age, that whilst there is so much obvious materialism in our life and thought, there is beneath the surface a great deal of spiritual longing and a strong desire to know the higher reality behind manifestation. It is seldom that such longing, existing in the minds of people with a 'modern' mentality and a western background of thought, finds its true satisfaction; for the few enlightened teachers that exist amongst us are people of the old light who lack the intellectual background necessary in order to understand the problems of the present age, whilst the many self-proclaimed 'yogis' and 'teachers' who profess to interpret the wisdom of the East at the present day are often endowed with only the merest rudiments of a true understanding and spiritual experience. Our ancient literature has been freely ransacked, and much of it very ably translated and made available in a western garb, but still it fails to satisfy the truly enquiring minds because, as always, it needs the interpretation of a living tradition, and a 'personality' in whom some part at least of the ideal can be seen to live. Hence, whilst making grateful use of the labours of the orientalists and the philosophers, the serious-minded student of Eastern wisdom will always find himself finally driven to a search after a living 'personality'—a 'guru' in the true Eastern tradition.

Having been in the course of last several years in contact with many spiritual seekers, mostly with a western background of thought and education (whether Eastern or Western by birth), I shall try in this article to approach the fundamental problems of this spiritual quest from their point of view. Here a few preliminary considerations are necessary. *First* : in the traditional Eastern method the 'truth' is stated usually in a dogmatic form, on the authority of a sacred book, an ancient tradition, or a living Teacher, and gradually the pupil is expected to realise this 'Truth' within himself and to bring it into such relationship with other parts of knowledge and his own intellectual make-up as he is capable of doing. This has given rise to a number of independent and apparently contradictory traditions, systems, or embodiments of a authoritative knowledge (Shastras) which puzzle the enquirer and leave him wondering as to which one to follow. The usual Eastern assumption—very often unspoken—that all traditions and 'Shastras' are 'true' and

lead to the same goal, does not so easily convince the modern mind, and therefore a great and serious effort is needed in these times in order to draw out the underlying truth behind these various systems, and to re-state it in a form more suited to the modern intellect. Perhaps the only satisfactory line along which this could be done is that of a 'psychology' adequate to the task of explaining the various types of human character and mind that have been engaged in such a search, and which can also account for the various views that arise at different stages and with different degrees of experience. But even before this immense and delicate task can be attempted, it would be an advantage to make a tentative psychological approach and to keep our terms precise and clear. We can, at this stage, only begin to try to reach an understanding of the facts involved in a spirit of sympathetic enquiry and interpretation.

Secondly, at least since medieval times and the spread of the various 'systematic' schools, the task of spiritual culture has been conceived in a narrow and specialised sense, and it has been generally held that spiritual life and spiritual experience have to be pursued entirely for their own sake, regardless of any bearing on external and mundane affairs. Like all other specialisation this has certain advantages no doubt, but it has been carried too far, and now it tends to leave spiritual life desecrated and poor. Anyone who wishes to convince the modern mind along this line has to consider much more carefully than in the past the relation of spiritual life to life in the world; and I think that in the future we shall have to experiment more fully with 'applied spirituality' than we have ever done in the past. But even at this stage we have got to chalk out some lines of common endeavour, some ways in which spiritual knowledge can be utilised for the enrichment of the common life around us, some specific methods by which we can bring the spiritual light to bear upon the multifarious problems of the world around us in order to ennoble and fructify its general spirit and to improve its moral tone. This again is largely a task which awaits adequate attention and performance.

Thirdly, the traditional Hindu method of exposition has always been symbolical; and whilst most minds are now beginning to recognise that symbolism is an essential part of the working of the higher human faculties, it must also be remembered that a symbolism which ceases to be understood fails to serve its purpose. For readers unacquainted with modern psychology it may be briefly pointed out that now it is recognised that man's deeper mind (often called the subconscious or the unconscious) works with symbols, and consequently perceptions coming from the deepest layers of our consciousness tend to be loaded with symbolism, and may even become stifled under them. But such 'symbols' are

only fully expressive to the mind that creates them, and consequently they have to be interpreted, more or less adequately for other minds if they are to be of any use. For minds similar in age, experience and mental background, the symbolism of a specially creative mind may be adequate and stimulating; but as these factors change, the symbolism of a dissimilar age and mind becomes more and more obscure and 'dead'. In India the situation is a curious one. The grand symbolism of our various spiritual cultures—vedantic, tantric and vaishnava still continues to satisfy and inspire many minds traditionally conditioned. They feel no need for a change or re-interpretation—in fact they stoutly resist it. But even they do not understand this symbolism sufficiently to be able to interpret it satisfactorily to an enquiring modern mind. As regards the many 'moderns', whether Indian by origin, or those who come from abroad to study our spiritual heritage, they find this symbolism not only dark and obscure, but in many of its features repellent and offensive. Hence, again, much sympathetic and enlightened research is necessary before the features of the Hindu spiritual tradition can become adequately recognised.

Fourthly, it must be admitted that many Indian 'teachers' tend to be narrow and parochial in outlook. In ancient days India led a life of rare intellectual independence; and perhaps this enabled her to perform her task of 'inner exploration' in a way that could never have been attempted under conditions of wider intercourse with other cultures. But in the modern world this intellectual and spiritual isolation is not only impossible but is also proving to be highly injurious to our true growth. A great task of intellectual assimilation and interchange, of a re-interpretation of our spiritual heritage in terms of modern thought and its permeation by the expanding scientific and sociological knowledge of the West, is necessary if we are to play our part in the intellectual ferment of today. It is a regrettable feature that most men with a genuine spiritual experience along Eastern line are not only ignorant of, but unsympathetic towards Western life and learning, and tend to look upon 'spiritual science' as a closed system. This is, as I say regrettable—though it is hardly for people like myself to criticise those in whom my own mind recognises a superior spiritual knowledge. But, at least, perhaps it is reasonable to hope that in future our spiritual heritage may be represented by people of a higher intellectual calibre and a greater understanding of the total field of modern knowledge.

Finally, it may be recognised that part of the difficulty is created by our outer environment. There is no need to dwell at length upon the poverty and barrenness of our outer life, its lack of even essential comfort and cleanliness, and the evidence everywhere of the neglect and sloth of ages. There are hardly any place, even

amongst the Ashramas of well-known spiritual teachers, that combine beauty and dignity and quiet with an atmosphere of stimulating spirituality and an adequate intellectual culture. The spiritual teachers of modern India are apt, for the most part, to strike the unprepared outside observer as being dogmatic and vain; and they are usually surrounded with too much personal worship and empty ceremonial—the constant prostrations and humble gestures of the average Hindu devotee, the ceremonial and ritualistic observances of tradition which are tawdry and ridiculous to the modern eye, and the constant repetition of age-worn formulae which form the staple of their 'Instruction'. It is sometimes difficult for us to realise how repulsive these features appear to an outside observer, and to what an extent they prevent a wise and sympathetic approach.

If having surmounted these obstacles our candid 'outsider' persists, perhaps he will begin to discover slowly that beneath a formidable growth of dogma and ritual and emotionalism there lies a core of genuine spiritual aspiration : that a few people in all such societies are beginning to feel the true stirrings of a new life, and that some characters are being definitely deepened and ennobled. Whenever we enquire into the secret of such a group, we shall find it not in a new 'teaching'—a new and better intellectual presentment of the truths of spiritual life, nor in a body of 'occult knowledge' jealously guarded from the outside world and imparted to a few favoured disciples, but in a great and significant *Personality*. Whenever such a man (or occasionally a woman) arises in the East, people gather round him (or her), and seek for the vivification and enrichment of their spiritual experience. Such 'teachers' (or in Eastern phraseology 'gurus') arise from time to time, draw round themselves a group of seekers and aspirants (roughly classifiable as 'disciples'), and if they are pure and wise, set into motion a real spiritual current. A number of people may be influenced, and certain lives definitely transformed; and if there are any intellects sufficiently virile and characters sufficiently forceful amongst such 'disciples', a new 'spiritual tradition' may come into being. But it is seldom that such a movement remains pure and influential for long; gradually the tradition of 'direct knowledge' dies out, and the guru is succeeded by formalists and dogmatists; and soon we have the wreck of one more system, left to cluster the shores of the ocean of spirituality. Fortunately few such systems have the vitality to continue to draw the attention of a wide public for long, but every Indian enquirer probably has had to work his way through several of them before he found a really inspiring. Teacher'.

(To be continued)

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MA ANANDAMAYEE AND SM. KAMALA NEHRU

—Arun Sen Gupta

July, 1933. Ma Anandamayee has come to Dehradun. Many devotees have also come to see Ma. The wife of Sri Jawaharlal Nehru and mother of Indira Gandhi, Sm. Kamala Nehru has also come for darshan. Kamala Nehru was highly pleased to talk with Ma. It was Sri Hariram Joshi, who introduced Kamala Nehru to Ma.

Ma came to Dehradun directly from Dhaka in East Bengal.

She was staying at Anand Chowk. At that time Kamala Nehru very often came to Ma. She told Ma that she had the vision of Lord Krishna during her meditation. Kamala Nehru deeply meditated in front of Ma from time to time.

When Kamala Nehru was seriously ill she was removed to the Bhowali Sanatorium. Ma also came to Bhowali to see Kamala. It was the last visit of Ma before Kamalaji expired.

When Kamala Nehru first saw Ma, she asked, 'Who is this beautiful woman ? Her beauty knows no bounds.'

Ma Anandamayee came to Mussoori. Kamalaji got the news and came to Ma. She spent that night near Ma.

Kamalaji wrote a letter to Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy, 'Bhaijee', after she met Ma for the first time. She wrote, "I am always remembering the face of the Mother. I was very eager to talk to her. I saw in a dream that She was sitting with a red saree on."

Kamala Nehru was indeed a great devotee of Ma. She kept with her till her last breath the Rudraksh Mala , which Ma had given to her for japa. Before passing away she asked her husband, Sri Jawaharlalji, to keep the *mala* with him.

FROM NOTES TAKEN IN SRI MA'S PRESENCE

—'Kirpal'

Dehradun, Kishenpur Ashram

Sri Ma's birthday, 8-5-1959

Pd. Sundarlalji— How does one attain *nirvikalpa samadhi* and what is beyond that ?

Sri Ma— It is written in the *shastras*, *Baba. Baba*, tell us what is *nirvikalpa* and what is beyond *nirvikalpa*. Both cannot exist simultaneously.

Certain devotee— What is *nirvikalpa* ?

Sri Ma— What is *Svavikalpa* ?

Pd. Sundarlalji— I don't know anything.

Sri Ma— If you donot know anything then how will you understand ?

Pd. Sundarlalji— By experience.

Sri Ma— If you have eaten *rasgullas* and someone has never tasted them, how will you explain how delicious they are.

Pd. Sundarlalji— By giving him the sweets to eat.

Sri Ma— What exists in *svavikalpa* and what in *nirvikalpa* and what exists beyond and what does not exist is it possible to explain through words ?

Pd. Sundarlalji— Let it be.

Sri Ma— You are a pundit !

Pd. Sundarlalji— Ma, this is not a question of learning.

A devotee— Can one attain that stage or not ?

Sri Ma— If it were not possible, then no one would ever strive for attaining that state.

Pd. Sundarlalji— What is the form ?

Sri Ma— Beyond happiness and sorrow is the state of divine knowledge, one's innate divinity and one's own divine form is revealed.

Pd. Sundarlalji— Does one get an opportunity to recognise the path ?

Sri Ma— According to one's *samskaras* the path is there. The path shown by the Guru, that is the path to follow. The path that leads to the realization of one's true self, that path is not written in the text books. But whatever path one strives, the path shall be revealed. As you study the *shastras* your inherent capabilities are aroused. Through *Guru - shakti* one's Guru shows the path and that is the path to follow. Whatever one does, the fruits of that are given to the minutest detail. Whatever strength you are endowed with utilize it for the attainment of the Divine Reality and God will provide the remaining power.

THE SECRET

—Michael Allgaier

The whole universe is sacred.

It is a miracle of light and motion

that our minds are yet too small and slow to grasp.

All life is sacred.

It is the striving of Being to know and

appreciate its Own Beauty.

All love is sacred.

It is the fusion power of the universe—

its focus and its ultimate secret.

And those who would receive its deepest blessing

must cling to nothing else.

THE SONGS

[Usually sung in the Ashram in Hawai]

Day by day

Day by day

Oh dear Lord, three things I pray.

To see Thee more clearly, love Thee more dearly,
follow Thee more nearly, day by day.

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*

I LOVE YOU MA

(Based on an Hawaiian Melody)

(women)

JAI JAYA SRI MA ANANDAMAYI MA

JAI JAYA SRI MA ANANDAMAYI MA

JAI JAYA SRI MA ANANDAMAYI MA

JAI JAYA SRI MA ANANDAMAYI MA

(women) I LOVE YOU MA

(men)

ANANDAMAYI MA, MA ANANDAMAYI MA

(women) I LOVE YOU MA

(men)

ANANDAMAYI MA, MA ANANDA MA

(women) I LOVE YOU MA

(men)

ANANDAMAYI MA, MA ANANDAMAYI MA

(women) I LOVE YOU MA

(men)

ANANDAMAYI MA, MA ANANDA MA

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MOTHER I ADORE YOU

Mother I adore You, lay my life before You, how I love You.

