

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

VOL.-7

JANUARY, 2003

No. 1

BOARD OF EDITORS

Km. Chitra Ghosh
Dr. Bithika Mukerji
Dr. Krishna Banerjee
Km. Guneeta



MANAGING EDITOR
Sri Panu Brahmachari



ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION (POSTAGE FREE)

INLAND—RS. 60/-

FOREIGN—US \$ 12/- OR RS. 450/-

SINGLE COPY—RS. 20/-



CONTENTS

1.	Matri Vani	...	1
2.	Replies to written queries by foreign devotees — <i>Vijayananda</i>	...	3
3.	At the feet of the Mother — <i>U. C. Dutt</i>	...	9
4.	Jai Ma — <i>Dhiraj Sapru</i>	...	14
5.	The fundamentals of Indian Philosophy — <i>Sri P.C. Mehta</i>	...	15
6.	A visit to Ma's ashram in Pune — <i>John Pegler</i>	...	19
7.	Mahā Shakti — <i>Antonio Eduardo Dagnino</i>	...	22
8.	I am not alone Ma — <i>'Mohua'</i>	...	23
9.	Our trip to Naimisharanya — <i>Shraddha Davenport</i>	...	24
10.	A memorial message — <i>Don H. Alexander</i>	...	29
11.	Joy in turning towards the Guru — <i>Swami Akhandanandaji</i>	...	34
12.	From notes taken in Sri Ma's presence — <i>'Kirpal'</i>	...	35
13.	In Memoriam (<i>Swami Swarupananda Giriji</i>)	...	37

MATRI VANI

Peace and happiness are found on the path to God, never in this world, where one gets a little happiness, which is invariably followed by its shadow-sorrow.

* * *

At all times keep your mind immersed in the thought of God so that there may be no possibility of straying on to a path that leads to misery.

* * *

Do service with the conviction that while serving, whomsoever it may be, you are serving the One, who alone exists.

* * *

Whatever God decrees is for your good. doesn't the Doctor hurt you in order to make you well? God also cleanses you before taking you in His arms. He is saying, "Give me all your uncleanness take in return this unsullied Immortal Life.

* * *

You are asking if I love you? I say unto you, that unless I loved you, you could not love me, verily, you cannot love me as much as I love each one of you.

* * *

How much more time will you spend at a way side inn ? Don't you want to go home?

* * *

How exquisite it all is.....One is in his own self, the wanderer, the exile. the home coming and the homeOneself is all that exists.

* * *

Proper diet is *Satsang*-seek the company of devout people, read good books, and medicine is regular japa.

* * *

Whether you like it or not give a little time to a daily routine of doing some *nāma japa* (repetition of God's Name); you will see that gradually your 'appetite' will awaken and function normally!

*

*

*

The supreme duty of man is to undertake the quest for his true being - whether one takes the path of devotion, where the 'I' is lost in the 'Thou' or the path of self-inquiry, in search of the true 'I', it is He alone who is found in the Thou as well as in the 'I'.

*

*

*

A child while studying doesn't understand how much knowledge he is acquiring. When he gets passmarks then he feels happy. Similarly when the time comes you will know how much progress you have made. Continue to live in God remembrance.

*

*

*

This body says anything at all is possible, a narrowing of the vision is uncalled for. It is possible that exalted ideals may uplift a man from higher to higher stages. The target should be ever high.

*

*

*

One should think, when a ray of light has brightened the inner life, is it not possible that the full illumination will also happen? Doubts and weakened efforts are natural, but he should not indulge in them. Be steadfast in your effort you will see that God's grace makes everything possible at any time.

*

REPLIES TO WRITTEN QUERIES

BY

FOREIGN DEVOTEES

—Vijayananda

Q : *Who is Guru?*

V : "There is only one Guru, God." Ma often used to say that. But only now I completely realize what it does mean. Physical Guru may have defects, the body always has defects, but the Guru is an instrument, a canal of the Divine. There are bad conductors, good conductors and super-conductors. Ma was a super-conductor.

Q : *Does this view help the disciple not to see the guru in a personal way ?*

V : Ma said that even if a disciple should fall in love with the guru, if the latter is a sadguru, he would be able to transform this love and to redirect it towards the Divine.

Q : *Was Ma imparting instructions through discourses ?*

V : No, Ma did not make speeches, but she used to give clear-cut advice individually during private interviews. By the way she could also give practical suggestions to people; if they were able to catch them, they could escape the result of a bad *karma* of the past, an accident for instance. Ma could also make disciples' *kundalini* ascend and descend in a single look, in quite informal way and without appearing to do so. Sometimes, it was important to be able to take down those who had been awakened too quickly and could not face the sudden inflow of energy.

Q : *Could Ma perform miracles with everyone ?*

V : No. The one who performs the miracle and the one who receives it must be in perfect harmony like a couple of dancers. Even with Christ, it was like this. Those who had no faith could not be saved. When Ma was old, I had a dream, but those images which I saw were as vivid as in reality. I was with a group of visitors, mainly foreigners, on a verandah in charge of keeping Ma's door, and she passed by. I asked them, Did you see Ma? They answered me, No. When Ma was young, everyone was enthralled by her contact. Afterwards, she was more inside and only those who had intensity and great faith could perceive her power directly.

*

*

*

- V :** *Speaking of someone who lived near the ashram for his sādhanā for many years: It takes time to go beyond time'*
- Q :** *Why some people meditate but do not seem to progress?*
- V :** This reminds me of what Laennec (a famous French professor of medicine in the 19th century) used to say regarding the treatment of the acute pulmonary oedema: *Start emptying the car before lashing the horses.* This means that one should begin by bleeding the patient before giving heart stimulating drugs, for in this way the work that it will have to do will be less and it will not risk collapsing completely. Likewise in the beginning of *sādhanā* one should first eliminate many negative tendencies before starting to stimulate the energy by intense meditative practices. Otherwise there is the risk of an 'acute heart failure', which means that nothing will work any longer.
- Q :** *Why do you not give kriyā to people so that they might purify their minds more quickly?*
- V :** Not by breathing exercises can people purify their mind, but by changing their lives. There is a difference between the simple relaxation practices which are in the field of psychology and the genuine *kriyā* which gives a great intensity, to teach these to someone, one must know what he will do with his or her spiritual energy once it is awakened, if it will not go towards negative reactions or be deviated toward a search for powers. Those who have a complete sincerity for *sādhanā* are very rare and even those who have even a beginning motivation for it are also rare.
- Q :** *To someone who was living a householder life, who thought that he was never angry and was wondering whether it was normal or a sign of suppression :*
- V :** (after speaking more with the visitor) In the beginning suppression is not so bad, it is much better than to let one's anger be vented through harsh words, even violent acts. You don't observe *brahmacharya*, do you? For those who practise it, anger is not a small matter as far as its mastery is concerned, because it basically comes from frustrated desire. Anger creates wounds in the *pranic* body. If repeated, it may lead to somatic diseases. (Speaking for a sadhu in the ashram whose sometimes undisciplined behaviour invited strong criticism): people reproach him with slight madness but he must have a certain spiritual level because he never answers the criticism with anger.
- Q :** *Is contentment an essential quality of sādhanā ?*

V : Yes. There was a hassidic sage who was asked to explain contentment. He answered by saying: Better go and see Zisia. Zisia means in Yuddish soft, like susse in German. He was a very poor man and, according to worldly criteria, he had had all kinds of problems and sufferings in his life. When visitors started hinting at this, he began laughing and said: *Ask this question from someone who suffered. As for me, I have never had sufferings!* He was mad for God, that which others considered a misfortune was not so for him. Once, people beat the living daylights out of him, but instead of defending himself he was laughing. He was among those great devotees of God who could perform a miracle just by one word.

Q : *What is the role of humility?*

V : If someone is arrogant you can be sure that he has not reached a high spiritual level. (Speaking of a guru who was annoyed that his name had been omitted in a program where he was invited): The more gurus or religious leaders are high in rank, the more they are sensitive to contempt. They expect to be cared for, while on the contrary if you send away a child he just will not worry. There will ever be reasons to be annoyed, so why should one be annoyed at all? And why should a sage be arrogant? His body is subject to a good deal of diseases, his mind produces all kinds of non-senses and his Self indeed is not personal, it is the same in each and everyone.

Q : *Is the vow of silence useful?*

V : I indeed know the best way to keep silent: being silent when you do not speak. it seems a joke, but in fact it is the sign of a high spiritual level: briefly telling what one has to say, and afterwards having a mind which is completely blank.

*

*

*

Q : *What is spiritual psychology?*

V : This is silence.

Q : *Is not feeling the best leading thread to follow for meditation?*

V : Usually this 'feeling' corresponds to a bunch of superimpositions, of projections, but when we succeed in quietening the mind and have a really pure perception, we are very close to the Absolute.

Q : *When we have closed eyes in meditation, is not the only pure perception that of body?*

V : Perhaps, but body perception is indeed completely deformed by the representations which we have about it. When the complete stoppage of mind is reached, there is not even sensations to be perceived.

Q : *Is this the direct perception of being ?*

V : There are not even perception, there is pure subjectivity only.

Q : *(A German who had visied a few vedantin gurus): To get rid of ego, I observe my anger and all my emotions and I say to myself that in the midst of all that, there is no ego.*

V : These are mere words. Where there is anger there is ego, and where there is no anger there is no ego. However, it is true that we should not try to 'Kill' an ego which anyway does not have any essential existence. It would be like taking a stick and trying to kill a shadow by giving it a good thrash.

Q : *You started your sādhanā during the war when your life was constantly in danger and afterwards, when all the horrors which happened came to be fully known. Have you not been disturbed then?*

V : No, not even while it was happening. I took it as a game, the ones running after others, it was like playing cops and robbers. And after the events, as the past has no reality, there was no reason to be disturbed either.

Q : *If past has no reality, what is left of Tradition?*

V : Tradition is indeed experienced in the present, when we follow what our guru tells or told us to do. From the relative and empirical point of view, the question of past and its heritage arises, but in sage's experience, this kind of questions do not arise. If you ask them, it means that you still are on the empirical plane.

Q : *How does one differentiate between mental and vital being?*

V : To know the mental being of a person, one takes the help of his face and voice; to perceive his vital state, it is enough to be physically close to him or to take his hand for some time. The yogic body is realized when there is the union of the male and female forces inside. The causal body is so called because it corresponds to that part of the ego which migrates from one life to another and thus represents the cause of rebirth. There is a stage in *sādhanā* where the subtle body is felt as a wonderful coat that nobody should touch; but this is pride, one should go beyond. All that is a question of experience.

Q : *Can we say that samādhi is a form of sleep?*

V : I found a way of being completely conscious while body is as if asleep, for instance when I remain lying in the early morning or even sitting. This is nevertheless not *samādhi*, because in the latter there is intense joy. Near death

experiences are not really experiences of death but give a feeling of happiness and light as we may have in deep sleep.

Q : *Many people came to Ma, and are coming to Amma for physical healing. Can we say that these sages see diseases?*

V : They see the spiritual origin of diseases in the form of spirits which possess the body and appear in some of its parts.

*

*

*

Q : *People in the West speak more of vedanta nowadays. Do you think that the passage from one culture to another happens in good conditions?*

V : The two pillars of vedanta are *vairāgya*, detachment and *viveka*, discrimination. If they are not present, it will be a westernized vedanta which will end into words. Reading Shankaracharya or learning Sanskrit is not enough, one must practise. After a beginning period where one may study all the paths, it is better to choose one and to deeply study the Sacred Scriptures of that given path. By jumping from one path to another Westerners imagine they are following lofty teachings while they do not have even a firm basis. For instance, Jewish people have a tradition of sacred sexuality, but you should practise with it all the basis of Torah. In any case I do not know the details, this is not my line. It is told that at the passing away of his wife, the Baal-Shem-Tov said: 'I thought that if I was the first to die, I could ascend in the heavens on a car of fire; but now she passed away first, I lost half of my power.' I have a friend who had bought a real Rollex watch, which was very expensive, but because he was afraid to be robbed of it, he bought an imitation of the real one and used to wear this one. In the West, this is so; people do an imitation of *sāadhanā*, they do not even know the requirement of true sadhana. It is true that in India as well, few people do real *sāadhanā*, but at least they are aware of its prerequisites. Westerners often intellectualize too much. This is a big obstacle, specially when approaching a sage. In front of him or her, one should be able to be open and humble like a child. If Saint Francis of Assisi is so loved in the West, I do not think that it is because of his love or of his close contact with nature, I think that this is mainly because of his humility.

Q : *India believes in asuras, 'demons' who may however have good sides, just as gods may have their weak points, but she does not believe in the 'Prince of Darkness', in the absolute Evil like recent Christianity or Judaism. What is the advantage of the Indian point of view?*

V : The belief in the Devil of the first Christian monks for instance is good for people with an aggressive temperament because it provides them with an

enemy to fight with. In fact, the Devil in the Bible is merely a petty personage, God only has created everything, good or bad, the Devil is not more than his servant. On the opposite in Kabbala, he became so important that people do not even dare to utter his name lest he felt that he is invoked. He is called by the first two letters of his name Samashem (from Samael, which means the blind angel), and he is termed as *the other side*. There is probably an influence of Manicheism in late Judaism. One day the Baal Shem Tov (the bearer of the good Name) uttered Satan's name in spite of the taboo. He came furious saying, 'Only two times I was disturbed by the call of human beings, the first time by Eve in the garden of Eden, the second time during the destruction of the Temple. What do you want of me?' Just at that time the Devil started seeing the light coming from the eyebrow of the disciples of the Baal-Shem-Tov, and he was so impressed by it that he thanked the sage to have called him.

Q : *Do you think that Buddhism can bring much to the West?*

V : Yes. First, in early Buddhism emphasis is on awareness which actually is the foundation of sadhana. However, one should well understand the meaning of *vipassana*: bring back one's emotions or mental activity to the body to calm and master them; but the body is not an end in itself, if not this would be a kind of hypochondria. If one feels that he loses his control during intensive periods of practice, he has better to stop them immediately, otherwise there is the danger of becoming unhinged. Zen may be also very beneficial for Westerners, it is very close to vedanta, it cuts the intellectualizing tendency to the root; it has the feet firmly planted on earth but the head in the sky. Once a zen master asked his disciple a question, and the latter started answering by lengthy quotes from Buddhist scriptures, etc. The master just said: 'There is too much Buddhism in what you said...'

Q : *A Western lady who spent much time near Ma's ashram in Kankhal was hearing, during satsang, of the beauty of Easter Eve in Judaism and Christianity. She asked: 'Do I not have a great handicap right from the beginning due to my lack of basic religious training?'*

V : No, religion means linking, uniting, like the word yoga itself. It can be said that you have the religion of Ma, since you spent a long time here trying to follow her teaching... There is no need to wait for realization to be completely independent of the outer Guru. That occurs only when the inner Guru is awakened.

AT THE FEET OF THE MOTHER

— U.C. Dutt

I went to Rajpur, Dehra Dun, on an invitation from a training institute and stayed there for a week. At Mata Anandamayee Ashram, Kishenpur, I learnt that Mother was ill and was convalescing at Ananda Kashi, a rest house of Rajmata Kamalendu Mati Shah of Tehri. The place, in the lap of the Himalayas, is thirty miles from Hardwar on the road to Deva Prayag. I did not want to miss the opportunity of seeing Mother in Her paternal surroundings—the Ganga flowing through the Himalayas.

Before leaving the area, I went to Mussoorie to see a friend, Dr. Jyoti Kanchan Dutta, Medical Officer of St Georges College. On the *Mahashtami* evening (4th of April) Dr. Dutta and I were resting in silence. Dr. Dutta suddenly exclaimed, "What is this? How is it possible? Ma appeared with a crown on Her head. She stood for a while. Does She wear a crown?" I told him that Ma was given a crown on Her 60th birthday. I enquired if the crown was white. Doctor informed that it was yellow. I became speechless; Doctor was lucky to have Mother's darshan, while I saw only the bare walls!

On 9th of April I went to Ananda Kashi. It is a beauty spot, lofty green hillocks ranged in a line like sentinels over looking the babbling greenish white streams below. Red, white, pink, and yellow flowers were in bloom in the garden and the trees were bent with the weight of their fruits. The blue vault of heaven hang over head as symbol of the infinite. All the aspects of nature vied with one another to add to the sublimity of Ananda Kashi. Why is it so called? It is named Kashi as the Ganga flows northward and Ananda after the blissful Mother, Anandamayee.

It was nine in the morning when the lovely sight greeted me. Besides some known faces, I found there two foreign devotees, an old lady and a young stalwart, waiting to bid good bye to Mother.

I met them in a porch close to Mother's room. The young man seemed to take keen interest in Yoga. He had a giant figure, jovial by nature and friendly. After a word or two he asked me which theological person he could be compared with. I said Bhima. He did not want to be compared to the Indian Hercules, he preferred to be Ganesh, with a quill pen as a scribe to Vyasji. He also wanted to be a child to the Mother. He took my address and told me that I would be seeing him in the long robe of a wanderer, moving along the Indian roads.

[The following note was found in the papers of late Upendra Chandra Dutt by his son and was perhaps written in the year Mother's 65th birthday was celebrated. "Didimā" in Bengali would refer to Mother's mother-Nani in Hindi]

Mother came out of Her room, sat in the veranda and showered grace on all present. She smiled as usual and chatted humorously with the guests. While taking leave, the Ganesh was in tears.

At the after-dusk sitting I related to Mother Dr. Dutta's vision on the *Mahāshṭamī*. Mother said that she was thinking of him that day. She had visited their home in Mussoorie once with Bhaiji when the Doctor's wife had cooked and entertained Her.

That day Mother was walking down the Rajpur road and felt exhausted. A devotee offered water melon. Mother thought of the Doctor and that thought had appeared before the Doctor. Thought and appearance became identical. How to explain the golden crown? On that very day, I was told, a devotee had placed a *Mukut* of yellow flowers on Her Head. That explained the vision's golden crown. Bhaiji confirmed these facts.

It was a rare privilege to get Mother so close and with such frequency-at noon, afternoon and night; talking, smiling, moving about freely and conferring grace on the fortunate few in Her presence then. We talked of topics such as exalted souls, deities speaking through human media, Yogis assuming astral or subtle bodies and their visits to distant places and planets, the secrets of *Nāda* (sound), *Parā*, *Pashyantī*, *Madhyamā*, *Vaikhari* and so on.

We had the pleasure of musical entertainment by Brahmachari Bibhu, an excellent artist with a sweet melodious voice; collective recitations of the Geeta, the Chandi and the Upanishads, and humourous discourses (*kathā*) of the Devi Bhagwata by kanti Bhai. The night programmes included devotional reading of the Ramayana by Rajmata herself.

I offered a picture book, a collection of Krishna *Līlās*, to Mother saying that as a child I was very fond of pictures, so I have got some pictures for "the little girl". Mother was amused and replied, "the little girl has great liking for pictures as you people have not taught her reading and writing". Mother often speaks of herself as "the little girl".

Captain Amal Roy was with us; he is a disciple of Baba Bholanath. At one sitting he gave a vivid description as to how Mother had saved his life in the battle field of Kashmir when bombs and shells were dropped by the Pakistanis. Charms of a moonlit night in the 'heaven on earth' (*Bhūsvarga*) had attracted him out of his safe shelter and almost unconsciously he strayed into the danger zone. As he was attempting to take cover from the valley of death, he heard a sweet and distinct command, "do not sit here". He recognised the voice and moved behind a nearby boulder. A bomb exploded right at the place he was about to sit. The explosion

created a vacuum and he had difficulty in breathing for a while. Captain Roy had a narrow escape through the grace of Mother.

I asked Mother if her breathing stopped during Her recent illness. Ma replied, "Yes, it stopped and had to be created". I urged Mother to avoid playing such games in the future—neither stopping nor creating breath. They are so alarming.

One afternoon Mother was taking Her stroll as usual by the creepers and smiling flowers. Some of us followed Her. Suddenly She turned and talked about herself. "There is no feeling of pain, no disease either; no sensation, no feeling. I am what I am." Mother was smiling and looking at me. I felt very happy and thought "does she always live on the border line of the Absolute, or in the transcendental plane : It must be the fringe, otherwise how could She look into every detail of outer things around her? Or, is She one with both aspects of Reality - the immanental and the transcendental? She alone knows what She is. Others impose their mental patterns or scriptural estimates on Her. So far She is unknown and may remain so—a name, a voice, a mystery. O Mother Gracious, please turn your search light in the opposite direction and reveal your face that your ignorant children may catch sight of your true form and share in the festival of life eternal."

On the 13th of April fell the *Sannyāsotsava* of Didima. The venue was transferred from noisy Delhi to quiet Ananda Kashi. The programme was a crowded one : from 5 A.M. to 9 P.M.- Arati, Kirtan, Puja, Bhajan, scriptural recitations, lectures and feeding of Sadhus and guests. A party of devotional singers came from Swami Sivananda ashram, Rishikesh and charmed the audience with their musical chanting. Mahamandelshwar Swami Sukdevananda of Parmarthaniketan gave a fine talk, explaining the need for *Karma*, *Bhakti* and *Jñāna*, all these methods, to remove respectively *Mala* (dirt), *Vikshepa* (restlessness) and *Avarana* (cover) that keep a *Jiva* in bondage. Swami Venkateshwarananda of the Divine Life Society compared Mother to the Ganga and Didima to the Himalayas and laid stress on the importance of one method only - self surrender. All the while, Swami Purushottamanand of Vashishta Gufa sat on the dais like a statue, lost in meditation. His silence was more eloquent than words. He is over 81 years of age and a disciple of His Holiness Swami Brahmanand, spiritual child of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. The swami of Vashishta Gufa is considered by many as the man of self-realization (*Siddhamahatma*).

Many men and women of the countryside were drawn there by the Vaisakhimela and by Mother's presence. Some distinguished people also came

from Hardwar. The crowd exceeded all our expectations. The quiet corner buzzed with life.

The public meeting began at 3.30 PM when Swami Krishnananda Avadhut gave a learned discourse on Sannyasa - renunciation of objects, desires and ego - *Chidavasa*, reflection of *chaitanya* (pure consciousness) or *Buddhi* (cosmic intelligence) causing ego, etc. I could not avoid saying something at the end. On behalf of brothers and sisters present on the occasion I made an offering of respectful felicitations to Didima. I referred to her rare qualities - uncommon forbearance and complete self-effacement, which have raised her to an exalted position. Then I narrated an incident that I had experienced about Mother 32 years ago at Hardwar. She remained in a superconscious state for 9 or 10 hours. She was restored to normalcy with great difficulty by chantings of the divine name. More wonderful were the spiritual states through which She passed in the process of restoration. Now She appears to lead a normal life, no more agitated by strong emotions and trances. Is it superior or inferior to Her earlier stages?

According to scriptures, a state of perfection dawns after one passes through various kinds of *samādhi* - *Jada* and *Chetan*, *Samprajñata* and *Asamprajñata*, *Savikalpa* and *Nirvikalpa*. It is *Sahaja Samadhi* in which conscious and superconscious states exist side by side. Then one appears to lead a normal life, all active and alert on the physical plane by side. Then one appears to lead a normal life, all active and alert on the physical plane and at the same time dwells constantly on a deeper layer of consciousness on the threshold between the Absolute and the Relative. Mother has *Sahaja Samādhi*, so Her past spectacular states have stopped to reach a higher synthesis in a balanced natural life. Her past was an automatic preparation for Her present, a preparation to play the role of a world-teacher (*Jagatguru*).

In continuation I spoke about two yogis who had flourished in the neighbourhood of Mother's birth place. One was Jyotiji; he could separate his subtle body from the gross one and go anywhere he wanted in a moment. He considered this feat to be only a power and did not attach much importance to it. He received real knowledge in *Dhruva Loka* (polestar).

The other Yogi was Ananda Swami. He was considered to be a man of realisation and could plunge into *samādhi* at will. He would see and hear things far away. He preached the synthesis of all religions and had numerous disciples, including Muslims. He expired on the day that he had predicted earlier. Ananda

Swami's grand son, Doctor Mahendra Chandra, was the first to recognise Mother's spiritual nature. He was consulted as a physician when Mother, as a child, would go into *samādhi*. Most elders around her mistook that to be a seizure, or some other physical malady, needing treatment. Dr. Mahendra Chandra diagnosed that to be a state of *samādhi* which only a highly spiritual person would experience. Since then Mother was left alone.

Mother is our pride and glory. She is the shelter for thousands inside and outside India. On the happy occasion of Her 65th birthday, we rededicate ourselves to Her lotus feet. Blessed are those who have eyes to see and have ears to hear. Her birth is a re-birth of the world, says a brother. May She live long, at least a century, to see the fulfilment of Her mission on earth.

*

In Memory of My Beloved

Father—Sri Suresh Mahindra

*"Speak the Truth and
fear no-one."*

—Anjali Mehra
New Delhi

JAI MA

— Dhiraj Sapru

She's all; She's everything; She's ... She's ...

*The brown - towering - mountain, the Spiti - gushing - by;
This glorious sky - this sunset,
The twinkling - heavenly sky ...*

*The butterfly that flapeth - the colour in its wing,
The eternal - flowing nectar - the blessed drawing - sting ...*

*She's the 'end' - the "ever - present" soul;
Know Her to be "all" - She is, but, the goal ...*

*She's the wind that bloweth - carrying Her song;
Moving in Her lap - pervading every form ...*

*Her 'kheyal' is but thought - ever flowing through us;
Know Her to be "life" - the 'principal', thus ...*

*She is - She is - or all else must be true -
Check again though, calmly, through 'n' through ...*

*There ain't no place to go - for She is everywhere;
No point going 'out' - seeking Her 'there' ...*

*Look 'now' - look 'here' - look "within - your - self";
She is - you are - there is but 'one' self...*

*Every son that calls out - ma rushes by,
Be the son thus, give out 'one' loving cry.*

*"Coming" - "going" are just words - she is your self;
the Self is but "all" - there ain't much else ...*

Jai ma.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

[Continued from before]

—Sri P. C. Mehta

Origin of *Karma*:

What is the beginning of *Karma* or when did man start creating *karmas* that bind. In other words what stage in evolution does man begin to incur responsibility for what he does ? This is an inadmissible question. It is so because man has personality and personality is built only through which man functions. Therefore, *karma* is called '*Anādi*' or beginningless. To come to liberation, Man has to sacrifice this 'self at the altar of 'Truth' when man supersedes his 'self, he has gone beyond the pale of humanity.

So deep is the conviction of some, of the adequacy of *karma* to account for the vicissitudes of life and the diversity of human conditions that they see no need to acknowledge the existence of even God, as the creator of the world and as its judge. [similar view will be found in Jainism and Mimāṃsā.

The idea underlying the doctrine of *karma* is to enable man to develop those virtues which he needs for progressing in harmony with the evolutionary will of the Divine and come to emancipation. Here justice and retribution are only the side results or off shoots of this central aim. As we have seen, justice is blended with mercy when man is both penitent and a serious aspirant to '*Mukti*' or liberation.

Thus some of the perspectives about the doctrine of *karma* are:

- 1) That it is grounded in a moral view of the universe.
- 2) That the events of our life are determined by their antecedent causes which are put in motion by us. We are therefore the harbinger of our own destiny.
- 3) That there is absolute justice in the rewards and punishments that fall to our lot in life. It is thus not a mechanical law but ethical.
- 4) The Mahabharata says that the consequences of what a man does will seek him out later 'as surely as a calf does its mother in a herd of cows'. Thus the law of *karma* points both to necessity and freedom.
- 5) It affirms freedom because man has the free will to create his conditions.
- 6) All *karma* good or bad bring about karmic bondage. Thus as the Prasna Upanisad says, '*Puṇyena puṇyam lokam nayati, pāpēna pāpam*' i.e. 'Meritorious deeds lead to commendable realms, wicked deeds to wicked realms'.

7) Freedom lies in acting outside the realm of karmic bondage. According to '*Jñāna-Yoga*', this is best done by being constantly aware of the subject-object split and thereby remaining in the silence of the mind and thus eliminating the compulsion of the 'self. According to '*Bhakti-Yoga*', Gita says: 'With discriminating intellect and with the object of coming to self-knowledge, surrendering all actions unto Me, without hope and desire for result and without any anguish, prepare for battle' (i.e. do your duty) [Gita III. 30]. 'Those people who act on the basis of this persuasion of Mine, develop faith, become desireless and remain unbound by the bondage of *karmas*, good or evil' [Gita III. 31]. Either way, it is leading a truly moral life. It also delineates the capability of man to do so.

8) Every deed that we do, leads to a double result. It not only produces its '*Karma-phala*' or karmic result; it also establishes in us a '*Saṃskāra*' i.e. tendency to repeat the same deed in the future. These tendencies are under our control and our moral progress lies in not succumbing to the immoral ones.

9) The sole aim of the activities is ethical advancement. '*Cittasya śuddhaye karma*' i.e. 'The purpose of activities, is the purification of the '*citta*' or the heart'. We will later on see that this is an explicit teaching of the Gita. When one accepts the betterment of one's moral nature as the goal of all endeavour, one may grow indifferent to what happens in the present, being the inevitable result of the past *karma*.

'*Mokṣa*':

'*Mokṣa*' or 'Liberation', means release from the empirical state of '*Saṣāra*' which is the cycle realizes his identity with 'Ātman' and the unity of 'Ātman' with 'Brahman'. This is regarded as the highest of human ends. Asceticism runs through all practices which lead to '*Mokṣa*'.

There are four recognized values-

- i) '*Artha*' meaning 'Prosperity',
- ii) '*Kāma*' meaning 'Pleasure',
- iii) '*Dharma*' meaning 'Duty'/religion etc, and
- iv) '*Moksha*' meaning 'Emancipation'.

The first two i.e. '*Artha*' and '*Kama*' are worldly in nature, while the last two '*Dharma*' and '*Moksha*' are spiritual.

Barring Materialism, philosophy is concerned only with '*Dharma*' and '*Moksha*'. It acknowledges the other two only in so far as they help '*Dharma*' and '*Moksha*'.

Values in Indian Philosophy:

Unlike western philosophy which originated in curiosity, Indian philosophy emerged from the practical need to find suffering. This search led to *Mukti* as the goal.

From the original ritualistic teachings of the Brahmanas it appears that in earlier times the only spiritual value which was recognized was '*Dharma*' which led to the attainment of heavenly happiness. Once there, one expected to rise to higher states of existence, with returning to the world of mortals, until one attained *Mukti*. This was *Krama-Mukti*, discussed in lessons 3 and 4.

According to the earlier Vedic belief, the final ideal for man which is complete liberation, where the diversity of the world ceases to be, could be attained only hereafter.

While alive, the maximum that a man was expected to achieve, was to be free from the belief in the ultimacy of diversity of the world. This was considered the condition of '*Jivan-Mukta*' i.e. liberation while alive.

When in the end a person who had reached this stage was separated from his physical body, he became '*Brahman*' itself. That is '*Videha-Mukti*' i.e. release without the body. (see lesson 4.)

This distinction between the two ideals persists in the age of the post-Vedic systems in spite of the fact that from the Upanisadic times the older view that final liberation could be attained only hereafter has been superseded and all doctrines now consider liberation during life as not only possible but of supreme value. This is what they now call '*Jivan-Mukti*'.

After adopting the ideal of liberation or '*Jivan-Mukti*' during life, the ideal of '*Dharma*' (which was the earlier ideal to attain heaven) got subordinated and the ethical discipline which it involves is made a necessary aid to the pursuit of '*Moksha*' during life.

The nature of '*Moksha*' differs, as conceived in the various systems. According to people like Bhadracharya, it is a condition in which only the sense of diversity as ultimate disappears and an allcomprehensive reality is experienced as identical with oneself. According to some like Sankara, it is a condition in which the self remains by itself-partless and peaceful.

Philosophers of all the doctrines believe that the suffering experienced in '*Samsāra*' carries with it the promise of emancipation. For that reason, the systems of Indian philosophy are the beacon lights to the possibility of a joyous life in freedom. In '*Brihadaranyaka Upanisad*', in a famous dialogue between Yajnavalkya and his wife Maitreyi, it is remarked that 'From Ananda or joy springs

this universe; in joy it has its being and unto joy it returns'. Therefore, all manifestation is but an upwelling joy of Brahman'.

The three pillars of Indian Philosophy

Thus there are three pillars of Indian philosophies, religions and culture. They are I) 'śabda-Pramāṇa', ii) belief in 'Karma' and Rebirth and iii) 'Mukti' or liberation as the chief purpose of life

I) 'Śabda-Pramāṇa' :

Śabda-Pramāṇa means acceptance of the experiences of the sages as trustworthy working hypothesis, till the truth of them is actually realized. Vedas are the repository of them and hence accepted as authority by the Hindus. The Jainas accept the word of Mahavira Tirthankara as pramana and the Buddhists accept the word of the Buddha as *pramāṇa*.

Indian philosophers without exception have declared that reason unaided by transcendental experience, is blind. Therefore for Hindus, Jainas and Buddhists, philosophy is an attempt to present ultimate truths already realized through direct awareness, in rational terms. Thus for them philosophy and religion are not separate.

ii) Belief in 'Karma' and Rebirth :

It is the theory that one reaps as one sows. It is *Karmas* of the individual as well as the collective *karmas* of a society or a Nations which create conditions of life, befitting the *karmas*. This is because man is endowed with free will. Any interference with it would be the negation of free will. Man creates karmas which bind and as a result of that bondage he lives within the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

iii) 'Mukti' or liberation as the chief purpose of life.

Man is capable of breaking out of this cycle of birth, death and rebirth, which is a state of suffering and come to an everlasting state of bliss. To do so, is both his privilege and purpose in life. 'Mukti' is an automatic result of Self-Knowledge'.

[To be continued]

*

A VISIT TO MA'S ASHRAM IN PUNE

— John Pegler

After leaving Heathrow airport on a Saturday morning in June 2002, we spent several days in Mumbai with relatives. Swami Bhaskarananda had suggested that this would be a good time for Martin and I to visit him. This was Martin's first trip to India so we visited various sights such as the Siddhi Vinayak and the Mahalakshmi temple. Despite having heard some unpromising rumours, we also tried to visit the cottage where Ma used to stay. However, having successfully located the place, all that we found left of the cottage was a small pond full of blue lotuses as the rest of the compound was now a building site for a block of flats!

On Tuesday morning we left for Pune which is just over two hours drive from Mumbai. About mid-day the car turned off the road into the narrow driveway, lined by neatly trimmed bushes, of the Anandamayi Ashram. Soon we were welcomed by our friends Swami Bhaskarananda and Rajesh (Gopaldas), now complete with "aerial" haircut, following his recent initiation into Brahmacharya.

Not having any accommodation arranged before we arrived, things turned out so that we were blessed to be able to live in the ashram during our stay. The room we were in was in the guest building where Rajesh said he once had the darshan of Ma.

The ashram is most incongruous for the modern, thriving city of Pune. Inside, the ashram is like any timeless, peaceful, spiritual retreat, full of trees and plants, but peeping through the trees you can see tall blocks of flats all around. In front of the drive is a busy six-lane carriageway from which you can hear the constant noise of traffic (although you don't notice it most of the time). The ashram has two main temples, the larger dedicated to Krishna, which also forms the main hall for bhajans etc, and the smaller to Shiva. The room where Ma used to stay is kept as a shrine and there is also one other meditation room.

The ashram was now full of people so an (optional) daily timetable was specially planned by everyone. Usha Kirtan was held at 5.30 am in the main hall of the Krishna temple. Self-service breakfast was available in the kitchen of the guest building, which Swamiji invariably visited to check things were well. At 10.15 was a reading in Hindi followed by chanting of Vishnu Sahasranam, Siva Mahimna Stotram, Hanuman Chalisa as well as a short bhajan. Everyone usually attended this session. Lunch and dinner were provided in the canteen. Arati and Sandhya Kirtan

were at 7.15. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to sing most of the Sandhya kirtan almost every day which I had been practising in England. The last session in the timetable was *maun* at 8.45 in the meditation room which most people also attended.

The couple of days after we arrived we had individual private talks with Swamiji in which he answered any questions we may have and gave us advice on spiritual practices.

Martin found the Indian motor vehicles particularly fascinating and wanted to acquire a Bajaj scooter or motor-rickshaw as a cheap and charismatic means of transport in London! He was observing every little Indian activity in the busy streets, reading all the slogans on the highly decorated goods vehicles and as a result he found every little outing an exhausting but interesting experience.

On Sunday was fixed a special *Samyam* day. This was a fairly rigorous program of spiritual items which everyone attended. The program began at around 9.30am and included meditation, scriptural discourse by a pundit and bhajan. Only one meal was supposed to be taken that day but Swamiji allowed us to take fruit for an evening snack. That evening after *maun* Swamiji told us stories about Ma and Her devotees, including this one.

The subtle body of a young boy had visited Ma at the Pune ashram when she was with a crowd of devotees in the porch of the guest building. (This was the same young boy in subtle form who had revealed the song "He Hita He Pita...." to Ma on another occasion). On this occasion Ma was singing the words "Gopal, Gopal..." for three hours continuously, finishing with "Oi Gopal, Oi Gopal..." meaning "This Gopal, That Gopal", while pointing to everyone present. Finally she also pointed to the subtle body of this young boy, invisible to all except Ma and another devotee, saying "Oi Gopal" as well. Swamiji said that at lot of Ma's Lila had been played in this ashram.

On Wednesday a car was hired to take a few of us including Swamiji to a Shiva temple in the forests. The journey to this ancient temple took over three hours and led a winding route up into the nearby mountains. We finally stopped in a little, traditional village, shrouded in mist and drizzle due to the monsoon weather and the altitude. From the road one had to descend along a path for a short time through the forest. Like many other pilgrimage spots, the route was lined with shops where one could buy *prasāda* small images and other souvenirs. The ground was muddy due to the weather and there was also a lot of litter around. On the other hand this is clearly a special religious centre. The place was full of groups of noisy and highly devotional pilgrims, mostly poor country people. Finally we arrived at the temple,

known as the Sri Bhimashankar temple. I was told that the special feature of this temple is that it is a *Jyoti-Lingam*, meaning that the image had emerged spontaneously from the earth. There are only twelve such temples in India. The Bhimashankar temple is built from a dark grey stone and is relatively small in size, perhaps big enough for several hundred people in the porch. The image is in a dark, cave-like room in which priests chant hymns and pilgrims queue up to bow. There is also a Rama temple in the precinct and several small bathing tanks (which many were enthusiastically using despite the cold). The whole area was bustling with pilgrims, vendors and beggars. After we had had darshan Swamiji stayed behind for some time in the temple porch to chant certain Shiva hymns. On the return our route was blocked at a certain village by the start of a festival called Palki, in which thousands of pilgrims take part. The pilgrims march from this village in groups singing loud kirtan, carrying small pot plants (tulsi I think) on the head of one member of the group for hundreds of miles to the city of Pandharpur.

The day after, a special kirtan function was put on at mid-day followed by a grand feast in the canteen. A large number of devotees from Pune attended and there were some very skilled kirtan singers as well. That evening we tried to do some shopping in Pune (with Swamiji's agreement). However, it turned out that most of the roads in Pune were blocked by the enthusiastic pilgrims from the Palki festival, who had by now arrived at Pune on foot from the village we had passed, as a result the journey took so long that none of our intended shopping got done.

The following day, Friday, was my last day in the ashram. Swamiji and all the visiting devotees were invited for another grand feast at the flat of a local family of devotees. I was surprised by the care and devotion with which the hosts looked after everyone, which demonstrated the practice of devout Indians of treating the guest as a form of God Himself, something very new to a Westerner.

That evening I left for Bombay, while Martin stayed behind for a few more days. As usual I felt my ashram stay was too short and that more benefit could have been derived from it, nevertheless the pull of everyday life and job in England could not be resisted. On arrival in England on Sunday I was exhausted from the travel and final days in India as well as simultaneously refreshed and inspired for the months ahead before I can return to such a place.

*

MAHĀ SHAKTI

— Antonio Eduardo Dagnino

Your face, contains all the sweetness
of the heavens and the earth,
the singing birds,
the ecstatic stillness at sunset,
the immaculate beauty of the stars,
the fast flowing waters,
the sublime force of the snow-capped peaks.

Body of love,
fulness of love,
secret vitality of love
that upholds life,
protects, inspires and fulfils life,
that reveals life as divine.

As the infinite temple
where man and woman
can evolve...

uniting
the ties of time with timeless splendour.

Mother,

You are desire and its satisfaction,
the harmonious body,
the sacred rapture that binds the lover and the beloved,

You are attraction and repulsion,
the generating force,
the innocence of children, wealth,
intelligence, good health, beauty
and creative moral law.

you are the perennial light,
the nucleus of truth

that, through the ages, incarnates in perfect human forms

that shine with the radiant knowledge of Spirit
 and bring to the unconscious world
 the liberating purity of supermind.
 You are One in your unknowable, formless
 all joyful Self,
 and One in your offspring.
 You pervade all.
 You are the common life,
 the substratum, Om.

*

I AM NOT ALONE, MA

—'Mohua'

Here I am sitting, alone
 But lonely! Is it ?
 Because this loneliness is You, Mother.
 Here I am, sitting at a huge life
 Its sturdy, ageless branches sprawling out to shade me, protect me
 It is You Mother, it is You.
 The gentle breeze is playing through its leaves
 A mild rustle here, a mild ruffle there
 It is You Mother, it is You.
 The river is flowing down yonder
 So tranquil, so gently rippling, so deep
 Sparkling like stars in daylight
 It is You Mother, it is You.
 The air is so cool, so peaceful
 Only the birds calling through a riveting numbness,
 At their will,
 Caringly, as soft as the silence
 Nature's melody it is indeed
 It is You Mother, it is You.
 Here I am, breathing in every moment of the bliss
 It is You Mother, it is you.

OUR TRIP TO NAIMISHARANYA

[Continued from before]

— Shraddha Davenport

One day at the ashram a very kind devotee of Mother offered us the use of his car and driver so that we might see some of the holy places of Naimisharanya. We enjoyed the tour of graceful country side, a peaceful ashram visit, and most of all seeing the marvelous banyan tree beneath which Lord Ganesha sat when he transcribed the Mahabharata as it was dictated by the Sage Vyasa. Up to that time the ancient Mahabharata had only been related verbally by the Sage. In order to preserve that great epic correctly, Lord Ganesha, the foremost scribe, was requested to write the sacred words as Sri Vyasa spoke them. Lord Ganesha agreed, but only the condition that once the sage commenced the recitation, he would continue without pause unto the end. Sage Vyasa gave his consent with the provision that Lord Ganesha must understand all which was spoken before He wrote. With this accord, the two took their seats beneath the great banyan tree and Vyasa began the story. As the glorious tale unfolded under Lord Ganesha's hand, His pen suddenly broke. Without the least interruption He quickly snapped off his right tusk, dipped it into ink, and kept writing. In that way the sacred Mahabharata was transcribed. I saved a leaf from that sacred tree.

Nearby we saw a group of small school children from Sitapur along with their teachers and school principal. We had seen them earlier when they had come for Mother's darshan. Now they were enjoying a picnic lunch before returning to Sitapur. The principal invited us to join them and we ate a little fruit as she told us about their outing. These tiny children were so well behaved and polite. What a wonderful country where school children are taken on field trips to see saints!

When we returned to the ashram that afternoon we found that a small package had come for us in care of the ashram. In it was a sandalwood mala and a letter from Gadadhar. He wrote that January eleventh was Lakshmi's birthday. She had asked him to present the *mālā*, a garland, and fruits to Mother on that day for her. As he was unable to be at Nimsar, he asked that we do this for Lakshmi.

Satya was ill that day with a stomach problem and stayed in bed. I took the *mālā* and walked toward the ashram thinking, "How am I to get fruits and a garland?" We had seen neither for sale in the village. Just as I arrived at the ashram there

stood a man with push cart full of fruits for sale. Delighted, I bought some oranges. Inside the ashram gate, I saw Bhaskaranandaji and Billoji. I told them of my mission and sat to wait.

I was feeling bad about not having a garland to complete the offering when Kamal walked to where I sat. He said that he was to get diksha that day and was on his way to get a garland made. I asked if he would have one made for Lakshmi also. With his gracious consent I knew that divine assistance was with me to fulfil this request of a devotee half a world away. Soon Kamal returned with the garland and I happily waited until Mother could receive me.

A lovely girl named Karen had come to the ashram from Bombay and was to be there some time. She had her own personal reasons for seeking Mother's counsel and I became very fond of her. Her family was in Bombay but she had living out of the country for several years and had an understanding of western thinking which drew me to share that unique mixture of east and west.

Karen sat with me in front of the Puran Mandir as I waited. It was a very long time before I saw anyone else on the grounds. Finally Billoji appeared and showed her that the poor garland was wilting. She went to tell Mother and after a little more time Mother came out on the patio. Karen and I prostrated at Her feet. Then I presented the mala to Mother saying that it was from Lakshmi and that this was her birthday. Mother asked if it was a gift, or to be blessed. I said it was gift from Lakshmi. I also presented the garland and fruit. Mother put the mala around Her neck, blessed the garland and said to send it to Lakshmi, then gave me an orange.

I told Mother about Satya's stomach trouble and asked Her to please bless him that he would quickly recover and not lose this precious time with Her. Mother said that he should eat curd (yogurt). After a little more private time with Karen and me Mother stood with folded palms as we prostrated, then went inside.

I left the ashram in search of curd for Satya. There were a few shops down a little road near our dharmasala so I went there and asked for curd. No one understood me until a kindly gentleman who spoke English came to my aid. With a few words he got the shopkeeper to produce a clay pot holding fresh curd complete with a lid made of leaves. Paying the shopkeeper and thanking them all profusely, I hurried to Satya with Mother's instruction. Satya ate the curd in two or three portions, feeling better each time. By the next morning he was well enough to go to the ashram. In past, such problems seemed to last for at least three days.

It has been our experience that when Mother gives an instruction for something, the important thing is to follow that instruction with full faith in Her. She never made small talk with us and every word had meaning. Sometimes the meaning

would come long after She had spoken, spanning the intervening time in a flash and revealing once again that eternal relationship, outside of time.

The next morning as we opened the door of the dharmasala on to the street we were met by a solid wall of people completely filling the street and in a flowing motion going one way-toward Chakra Tirtha. There was not enough room for us to go to the direction of Mother's ashram. I have never seen such a sight. Hundreds of people had been coming into this small village during the night and now were like a might human river seeking to merge with the holy Chakra Tirtha. After a while their number was a little less and we managed to "swim upstream" out of their path and the road to the ashram.

Mother was on the grounds for a while and we stayed until She went into Her house. She would come to the temple in the evening, so we left to join the festivities in the village. Kamal and Karen joined us. Little shops had been set up everywhere, lining both sides of the streets. We bought some pictures of the gods, a couple of little brass puja articles, and a small clay pot.

That evening at the ashram we were pleased to see Mr. Varma, a devotee from Sitapur, whom we had met just a few days before. He had taken photos of us sitting with his family at Mother's feet and presented copies of them to us-a sweet memento of our meeting.

As Mother sat in the temple I recorded the beautiful kirtan surrounding Her and was absorbed in the peace of Naimisharanya. More devotees had come, but still there was feeling of intimacy as we drew near to Her.

On January thirteenth the Sacred Flame was to be installed in its new temple just next to the Puran Mandir. Many sadhus were there for the function and large crowd filled the grounds. Mother sat just outside the Puran Mandir and Satya took movies as people came to do pronam and speak a few words with Her. I savored this time near her. The sadhus all looked so nice in their new, freshly-dyed gerua clothes. All the ashram was in a festive mood as final arrangements were made for the installation.

When the time came, we all went to stand before the new mandir. Satya climbed up on the roof of an adjacent structure so that he could film from above the heads of the crowd. It was a perfect place to view the procession. Mother led the way, sometimes walking backward to direct every step taken by Bhaskarananda, who was carrying the beautiful Padmanavaji, and Nirvanananda as he carried the Sacred Flame to its new home.

The Raja of Trivandrum had come for the ceremony. We had met him and his beautiful Rani in Varanasi a little over two years before. It was very interesting to

learn that he had a twin *mūrti* of Padmanavaji which he always kept with him in his travels. He had both *mūrtis* cast in silver and presented one to Mother. Bhaskaranandaji attended that special image for many years.

We all waited in the courtyard as Mother and only the few involved in the installation went into the temple. a special *pūjā* was done and then Mother came out and sat with several sadhus on a long dais placed near the temple entrance. It was a lovely warm day and everyone was enjoying the light mood.

We were told that late that night Mother came down from Her room and sat inside the new temple, speaking to the flame and saying something like, "So, after staying in my room for some years, now you have come here." The mystery that is Mother in breath-suspending stillness, holds more divine revelation than the unreality of this world can possible know exists.

On our last full day in Naimisharanya, January fourteenth. I sat on the steps of the Puran Mandir with Karen. She asked how I had learned about Mother, so I told her about my dream of fifteen years past. Karen asked if I had told Mother about that dream and what comment She had made. I explained that I had tried on three occasions over the years, but each time I had the feeling that it had not been communicated correctly as Mother's response was non-committal. We had found that merely speaking the same language does not always guarantee that you will get an accurate translation. When having an important discourse with Mother that can be very unsettling to say the least.

Karen's grasp of English was not only quite western, but actually very American. I asked her if she would interpret for us at a private with Mother and tell Mother about my dream, after which I wanted to ask some questions of Mother. Karen was little unsure of the ashram protocol, but said that if Mother gave permission she would translate for us. I prayed that Mother would allow it as it was a very rare opportunity.

That evening Billoji arranged everything for our private. We followed her, along with Karen, to the door of Mother's house. Grass mats had been spread on the patio by the steps. Mother came out, and as Billoji went inside the screen door for something. Mother quickly sat on top step with Her back against the closed screen door. Now no one could come out and only Satya, Karen and I were outside with Mother. That way, no one could question that Karen was translating instead of someone else. Billoji who was all smiles at Mother's ploy, stood behind Mother inside the screen door.

We then pronounced and took our seats upon the grass mats, facing Mother. Mother turned to Karen and listened to every word as Karen told Her of my dream. When the story was completed, I asked my questions.

Shraddha : Mother, why did you come to me in that way ?

Ma: You wanted to see God in the form you wanted, so your desire was fulfilled. I did not go to anyone, I only came to myself.

Shraddha: Why don't I remember the experience of samadhi [from the dream]?"

Ma : Lack of total *jñāna* [spiritual knowledge].

Shraddha : Once Mother said that She always saw me sitting at Her feet. How can I experience always being at Her feet ?

Ma : Pray to God and you will always be at Mother's feet.

Shraddha : I am praying to God now !

Ma : Yes, I know !

At long last I had Mother's verification that it was indeed She who was the beautiful lady of my dream.

It has been my nature to doubt my own ability to distinguish between intuition and imagination. These words of Mother which I received this day dissolved any reserve that was carried in my heart, washing it away and leaving in its place a knowing-still and deep-where my relationship with Her abides eternal.

After asking a few other questions, we bowed at Her feet and walked back to the steps of the Puran Mandir, Karen told us two other personal things that Mother had said in reference to us when we were not present.

The next day, January fifteenth, we were to leave enchanted Naimisharanya and travel in Mother's caravan to Vrindavan. Karen was returning to Bombay and I was never to see her again. How strange is Mother's lila. In that brief time Karen had secured for herself not only my undying gratitude but a sweet affection which I shall always feel for her.

*

A MEMORIAL MESSAGE

—Don H. Alexander

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills. From whence cometh my help ? My help cometh from the Lord, who made Heaven and earth."

Shall we pray :

O Gracious God, our Father, in whom we live and move and have our being, from whom we come and unto whom our spirits return. Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations, thou art our refuge and our strength, a very present help in time of sorrow. And our Father we do pray for a deep sense of your nearness, your presence to us this day. In the midst of our loss and grief, grant that we may be raised above the shadows of mortality into the light and joy of Thy countenance and presence. As we come to give thanks for the life of Gary Yale Empie, in the sure confidence that he is safe at home with Thee, we pray your comforting presence to be with his family. Sustain and strengthen his Mother and his Father and his brother. Grant that all of those who have loved and shared in his life, may also share in a faith that is eternal. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

In the first place it is essential that we come together in a time of loss and grief to find support from those who have shared in life and in love with us, families and friends. We need one another. You have come from far and near, in order to say to this family, "We care, we share your sense of loss, we want to be with you, to assure you that God's love surrounds us and sustains us." And I know how deeply appreciated your presence here this day is.

Our second concern is that we want to celebrate and draw strength from a faith that is eternal and so we turn quite naturally to words that have given strength to generation upon generation of mankind, words that bring comfort to us, and at the same time, draw us boldly into the continuing adventure of life. We think of the psalmist who, in some of his life style had experienced some of the joys and sorrows and rewards and frustrations, that were part of the life of Gary Yale Empie. For the psalmist too, was a man of meditation, who sought to write and to speak about a Divine Source of strength and being. And because he had found that Divine Source, he had found a relationship that brought all of life's various energies into perspective. And the psalmist said, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside still waters, He

restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies, Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

It is our conviction that it was that kind of faith that lived in and through Gary Empie. And I think of the words of the Apostle Paul, in the fourth chapter of II Corinthians, words that speak of a very special perspective on life: "So we do not lose heart, though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day, for this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us, an eternal weight of glory, because we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen, for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen, are eternal."

Gary had spent these last years of his life very much in quest for and in affirmation of those things which are eternal. And I believe that he loved to echo the words of Tagore, the Indian philosopher, who said that "Death is not extinguishing the light, it is simply putting out the lamp because the dawn has come."

And then I think as words of faith for us, within our tradition, how much the words of Jesus in the 14th chapter of John, carry comfort and challenge. Jesus, visiting with his disciples and his followers, at a time when He knew that very real struggle might be coming upon them, says to them: "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You believe in God, believe also in Me, for in my Father's house are many rooms." I deeply appreciate the emphasis that a modern translator has given us, when he said, "in my Father's house are many *dimensions*." Gary had explored richly and deeply, some of the spiritual dimensions of God's house.

Gary had two homes — he made his home here in Oklahoma City with his parents at 6719 Avondale, and he had a home in Hardwar, India, where he spent most of the last years of his young life, for he died at only 34 years of age. We mourn that loss, we will miss him, yet we give thanks to God for the strength of his life. He lived in the Ashram of his religious leader and teacher, Anandamayi Ma, a dear and gracious lady, who guided Gary and many others, including Indira Gandhi, in sincere religious quest and growth. In both of his homes Gary was blest with an atmosphere of loving support. In his growing-up years, he had been a member of First Christian Church, where he attended regularly, where he found

nurture for his life, where he was a Junior Deacon. Gary had attended Oklahoma State University and Northwestern University at Evanston, Illinois and several years ago, he began intensive-study in India. It was the explorer, Richard Byrd, who said that in the end only two things really mattered to a man - - they are the affection and the understanding of his family. Gary and those realities, both here and in Hardwar.

In his religious quest, he explored dimensions of meditation and inner peace that are not often stressed here in our Western culture. We sometimes hurry too much - we know that. James Russell Lowell said that no man can produce great things, who is not thoroughly sincere with himself. Gary was indeed true to himself. It may be that Gary heard a different drum beat than most of us, but he marched boldly to the rhythm of life, as he perceived it. And I truly believe, as his Mother Katie has so beautifully affirmed, that Gary opened the eyes of many to a larger vision of the religious life.

I want to share with you a few brief selections from Gary's personal writings. I found this exploration a real adventure. You will hear a rich mixture of the best from the Christian and from the Hindu traditions. Truly Gary believed and defined the world not as a Hindu world, and not as a Christian world, but as God's world. He wrote that the strength of a tree lies in its roots, not in its fruits; and for him both Hinduism and Christianity are rooted in God. He expressed his faith in human life in these words: "Nothing need be futile. Stretch out your hand in search of your dream and your heart will be touched with hope. Set your faith free and let it be carried to all, and nourish those who hunger. For all miracles that have been, can be again: and all wonders, if sought, can be known again."

In another place, he wrote, "Genuine happiness comes with that which is in harmony with its nature. God is in our true nature as is pollen in a flower." He defined the universality of the human experience in these words: "The one great bond of all men is that, as children, they are basically good. No religion, race or creed, is more universally bonding. Children act how they feel. They wish to be free and happy. My fellowmen, are you blind to the fact that you all have this in common? Open your eyes, for this light will not blind you — the love in your heart is the heart of your God." And as I read that, I could not help but have echoed in my own mind and in my heart, Jesus's words that said, "Unless you become as a little child, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Some of Gary's most beautiful words and thoughts were expressed in a letter that he wrote to his family, shortly before his death, and which, in fact, they received two days after he had died. In these meditations, we hear his affirmation of

the path which he had chosen, and we hear the richness and depth of his personal journey of faith. He writes as if he was addressing God in prayer, and what we have then, is a dialogue between him and his God.

The Apostle Paul said that in God we live and move and have our being. It is my conviction that Gary Empie lived, and moves and has his being, in the full life of a God of Love.

There are words that were written by a Mother to her children. They express a perspective that I believe that Gary, as a child, — and aren't we always children to our parents, no matter how old we grow — that Gary, as a child would want His parents and his loved ones, and you here, to have, entitled "To Those I Love and Those Who Love Me" :

"When I am gone, release me, let me go —
 I have so many things to see and do.
 You mustn't tie yourself to me with tears,
 Be thankful for our many beautiful years.
 I gave to you my love. You can only guess
 How much you gave to me in happiness.
 I thank you for the love you each have shown
 But now it's time I travelled on alone.
 So grieve a while for me, if grieve you must,
 Then let your grief be comforted by trust.
 It's only for a time that we must part
 So bless the memories within your heart.
 I won't be far away, for life goes on
 So if you need me, call and I will come.
 Though you can't see or touch me, I'll be near
 And if you listen with your heart, you'll hear
 All my love around you, soft and clear.
 And then, when you must come this way alone,
 I'll greet you with a smile, and say -
 "Welcome home !"

Anandamayi Ma has passed word through mutual friends in New Delhi of her conviction that Gary has reached his salvation. We too, affirm our belief that he is safe in God's love. Shall we pray.

O God, our help in ages past, Our hope for years to come,
 Be Thou our Guide while life shall last, and our eternal home.
 Into Thy gracious keeping, we commit the spirit of our good

friend, Gary Empie. We thank you for the journey of his life, for the quest that was present in his spirit. We thank you for his family, and we pray your presence to be with his parents, Bob and Katie, with his brother, Roger, with his grandmother, Gretta and with all of those who have loved and shared in his being. Comfort and sustain us, our Father, with a faith that is eternal, and grant that each and every day of our lives, we may be a witness to How Great Thou Art. Amen.

SOLO: "How Great Thou Art" Sung by Bruce Smallwood

May the Lord bless you and keep you, may He make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace, both now and for evermore.

Amen.

JOY IN TURNING TOWARDS THE GURU

[Excerpts from the talk in Hindi by Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswatiji Maharaj— Transtated by Mrs. Jaya D. Kania]

These days are days of logic and reasoning. While giving their introduction people say that their thinking is logical - Please explain to us in the context of matter and energy. This is the trend of an educated mind. This is very good. Nothing can be achieved in this century unless the intellect is logical. But it should be borne in mind that logical intellect is useful only for that which can be treated in a *yantra* (machine) and for that which can be known through a *yantra*. Logic is useful for a *yantra* - not for a *mantra*. Apart from a *yantra* and *mantra* there is also a *tantra*. This also has to be studied. *Yantra* is what is known as 'technique'. The man who knows this is called a *tatric* (technician)

The object of telling this is that for those who wish to attain God or advance on the path of God. realization it is only possible to do so in the form of the Guru. Guru is the form of Shankara. Do not think that the Guru takes birth or dies. Guru is eternal. Guru is *Yantra* itself.

If you wonder what one can gain by taking the Guru's guidance. The reply is—

"When the *chandra* (moon) takes the help of the Guru, sits on Shankara's head, then even those who do not bow down to the moon start bowing down. When the Guru and the moon are on one plane, then what is there to say ?"

The moon is the ruling diety of the mind. Sometimes the mind prompts one to do the right thing, sometimes the thing wrong. On observing the mind closely you will realize this. So, if the Guru controls the mind, it will act only on the advice of the Guru and it will only do the right thing. No matter how crooked the mind is and leads one on the wrong path, but when it is turned towards the Guru the crookedness disappears. Then the disciple is also worshipped in the same way as the Guru. The disciple also becomes the Guru. This is the grace of the Guru .

Come, on this occasion of the *Guru Purnima* let us turn our mind towards the Guru. Let us merge our mind for one moment into one drop of joy eternal. Let all of us bow down at the divine feet of Sri Gurudeva thousands of times. *

Om.

*

* Courtesy : Ananda bodh

**FROM NOTES TAKEN IN SRI
MA'S PRESENCE**

—'Kirpal'

December 12, 1956

Sri Ma was talking to Sm. Mamata Chowdhury—

"What is a flower ? Who has brought the same into existence ? Why ? One must make efforts to know that. Then only ignorance will vanish and real knowledge will be revealed. Through studying you understand. By hearing from others also you learn..... I am not asking you to read only books. Real knowledge comes through *Brahma vidya, Japa, Dhyana*. At all times try to remain engrossed in these practices. The dirt of the mind will disappear, the veil will be removed.

"Children sit around— they ask - 'what is this, what is that' to their fathers. The fathers tell them—'You will study and learn.'" That is the method. You will have to study. You will have to follow the path of knowledge. If one does not study how will one pass ? He will pass only after studying day & night.

Q. But if is difficult to put into effect

Sri Ma. You will have to overcome the difficulties. Donot waste time.

Q. The reward ?

Sri Ma : This body will definitely say that when you can manage your own affairs and also for your children and family, but you cannot spare time for your spiritual well-being. Then you will have to suffer. As much as you advance on the spiritual path you yourself will be the gainer. If you swallow more than you can digest you will suffer from the pains of indigestion.

Q. It does not happen

Sri Ma : It will definitely be possible. If you make effort there will definitely be achievement. That is why it is said that without studying you won't be able to pass. When one studies and one earns, one oneself provides for one's own needs and also for those whom you believe as your own. One's own knowledge, one's own devotion and love for God - that is only one's own — those actions which will only lead to removal of the veil, to the eternally revealed, purity, knowledge and freedom — the One

within oneself. One oneself must make the effort and you yourself will receive the fruit — no other. Hence start forthwith with all your strength and the rest will be revealed automatically.

December 27, 1956

Sri Ma was discussing something with Dr. Panna Lal, I.C.S. (Retd).

Sri Ma : You desired for a doll and now you have got the same

Dr. Panna Lal : By practising *japa* the doll has appeared.....

Sri Ma: That's one aspect. As one gazes at a flower and one concentrates on the same, as the desire arises if it could be put on your coat how wonderful it would be. And also on seeing the nice flower you have the urge to offer such a beautiful flower at the feet of the Lord. Does one get the benefit of such desire or not ?

*

URGENT CIRCULAR

All our subscribers are desired to note that if they have not yet paid their subscription amounts for the current year 2003 they should try to send the same at the earliest. Otherwise it will not be possible for us to despatch the next April issue.

— Managing Editor

IN MEMORIAM



SWAMI SWARUPANANDA GIRI
(Sept. 23rd, 1919 -- Sept. 14th, 2002)

Remembering Swamiji

---- 'Mohua'

I still remember my first visit to Kankhal ashram with my parents, though slightly blurred with time. That was many years back when I was very young, just about nine years old. Having entered the ashram premises near the office, the first thing that I remember seeing was a person grizzled with age, dressed in saffron and long hair resting on the shoulders. He was seated and several people crowded around him, some paying their respects to him, some talking casually. I don't remember if I bowed down to pay my respects to him then, but that was the beginning of getting slowly acquainted with Swami Swarupanandaji, with our yearly visits to Kankhal ashram during Ma's birthday celebration. As I grew a year older with every visit to the ashram, I got to know him better. During those early years, I would always feel joyous to be able to sit near him. My notion about him matched him to a "Grandfather" figure. I would be thrilled to see the twinkle in his eyes. It seemed to me as if he smiled through his eyes because I could never find the smile on his lips. I felt his smile getting hidden within his moustache and beard dignifying his majestic appearance. It would be amusing to hear him narrate incidents of his accompaniment with Ma, in his life. Over the years, I perceived Swamiji as the person he was, behind that "Grandfather" figure.

It was a huge responsibility that he had shouldered his long life for the ashram, ever since I knew him. And yet he was the pleasant person whom people would meet and pay their obeisance. He was a person of strong personality, knowing his work about the ashram. Yet he was so loving and beloved. His continuous and consistent presence on the chair outside his room was something, which had become a picture set in our eyes. Every time we would pass by, he would enquire about us, joke with us lightly and make us feel jolly.

Though in his latter life he had a divan laid down in the verandah outside his room, as his health wouldn't permit him to sit through such long hours. Still one could never find him failing in his duties. The last days of his had given him a suffering health though. In spite of this, his last and greatest achievement for the ashram was the completion of Ma's unique museum. The museum in true sense enlivens the life and *leelas* of our beloved Ma.

After a considerable time of nagging illness, he finally breathed his last on 14th Sep.'02. The news was very saddening. We all have lost a very invaluable person who had dedicated his life for the betterment of the ashram. But instead of mourning we all rather get together, heart and soul, remember him and his work and pay our final obeisance to him.



Swami Swarupanandaji Maharaj

As we have seen

---Pradip Bhai & Bisnupriya

Swamijee, we always called him as "Dada", was our friend, philosopher, guide, elder brother and what not?

We first came into contact with "Dada" during 1986-87 at Belrui, on the way to his visit to Bangladesh. One "darshan" and we became deeply attached to him and he always enlightened us with philosophy of Sri Ma Anandamayee and changed our whole life style.

We came of Dada's closeness more since 1997 when he started visiting "Ananda Tirtha", A sadhu kutiya was built to get blessings of sadhus and mahatmas visiting us at Ukhra in Burdwan district. Dada used to come every year during December after the Samyam Saptaha and stayed for about 2 to 2.5 months to bless the persons of Ukhra and surroundings. All the persons of the area used to eagerly wait for his arrival and getting charged for the whole year.

Through Swamijee many people of this area got the blessings of Sri Ma and we had the rarest opportunity to render our seva to our dearest "Dada". Our Dada was always referring to Ukhra as "*Jangal Garh*", due to the presence of "Garh Jungle" near Kenduli, place of Sri Jaidev. Dada used to invite many people to have the essence of "Bauls" and the beautiful village life surrounding the coal mines. Dada used to ask people to come there to have fresh air, to take some rest, being away from the bustle of mechanised city life. Due to frequent visits of Ma's devotees, "Ananda Tirtha" became fully surcharged and everyone used to feel the presence of Ma.

Dada used to tell about the stories of Ma at Vrindaban, Bhimpura, Delhi, Agarpara, Uttarkashi and other ashrams. We also used to enjoy the continuous presence of "Dada" around us, which was not possible to get at Kankhal.

Swamijee's devoted work is reflected maximum in the making of Vrindaban ashram, Delhi ashram and Kankhal ashram & in the later stage of his life, his main concentration was to construct a beautiful "Samadhi Mandir", a useful museum, a polyclinic, a high standard school upto secondary level at Kankhal and a library for all sectors of religion. Most of his dreams were fulfilled, but some were yet to be materialised. Swamijee was also interested to have a research on "Tantra". He even wanted to keep one chair in some university through which interested persons could

make research on "Tantra" and help to establish the actual "Tantra" in the present world. Swamijee's firm belief was that today's Tantra has not only lost its glorious legend but also has become polluted due to corruption and ill-motive. Swamijee wanted to re-establish "Tantra" in its original form by more education and research work. He even collected lots of books on "Tantra" from different parts of the country which are available in the present library at Kankhal.

Swamijee, as we feel, was a true Manager, was a hard task master and he used to continuously monitor the progress of work to complete the jobs within a fixed schedule. Swamijee had also an excellent artistic approach and he liked to perform the job perfectly, nicely and with an artistic touch.

Dada was a good leader and a complete personality and he used to be with us in our sorrows as well as in happiness. His laughing face, his inspiration, his blessings will always motivate us for our better work, better living and ultimately to know ourselves, to know the "GOD"

Surprisingly even today we do not feel Swamijee's absence, but we always get courage by feeling Dada's ever presence with us by guiding us, protecting us and leading us to move towards "Mother" more and more.

Jai Ma.

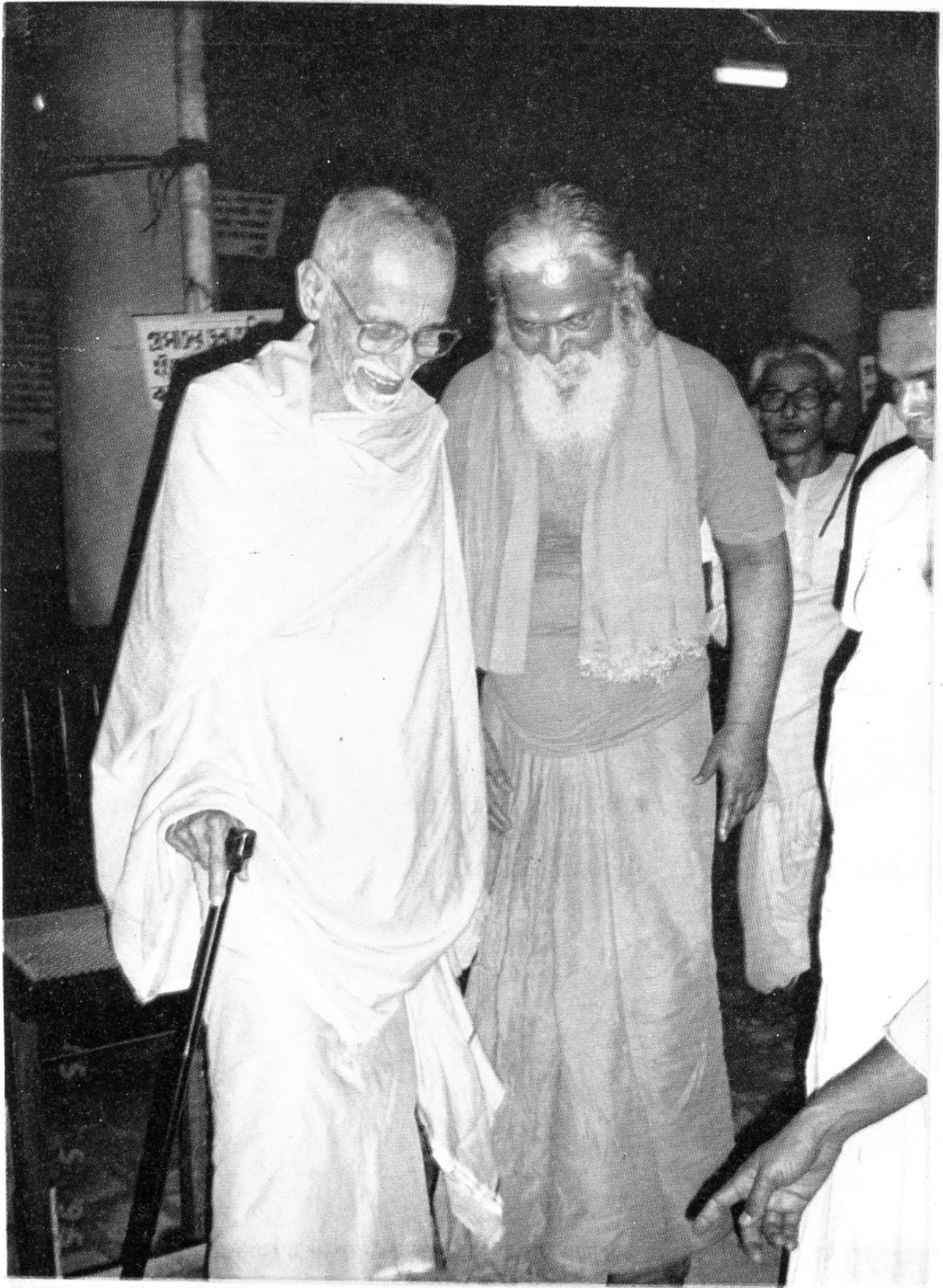


ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We are deeply grateful to Sri P. K. Mondal of South Eastern Coalfields Ltd. a very ardent devotee of Sri Ma, for very kindly providing us with some beautiful photos of Swami Swarupanandaji.

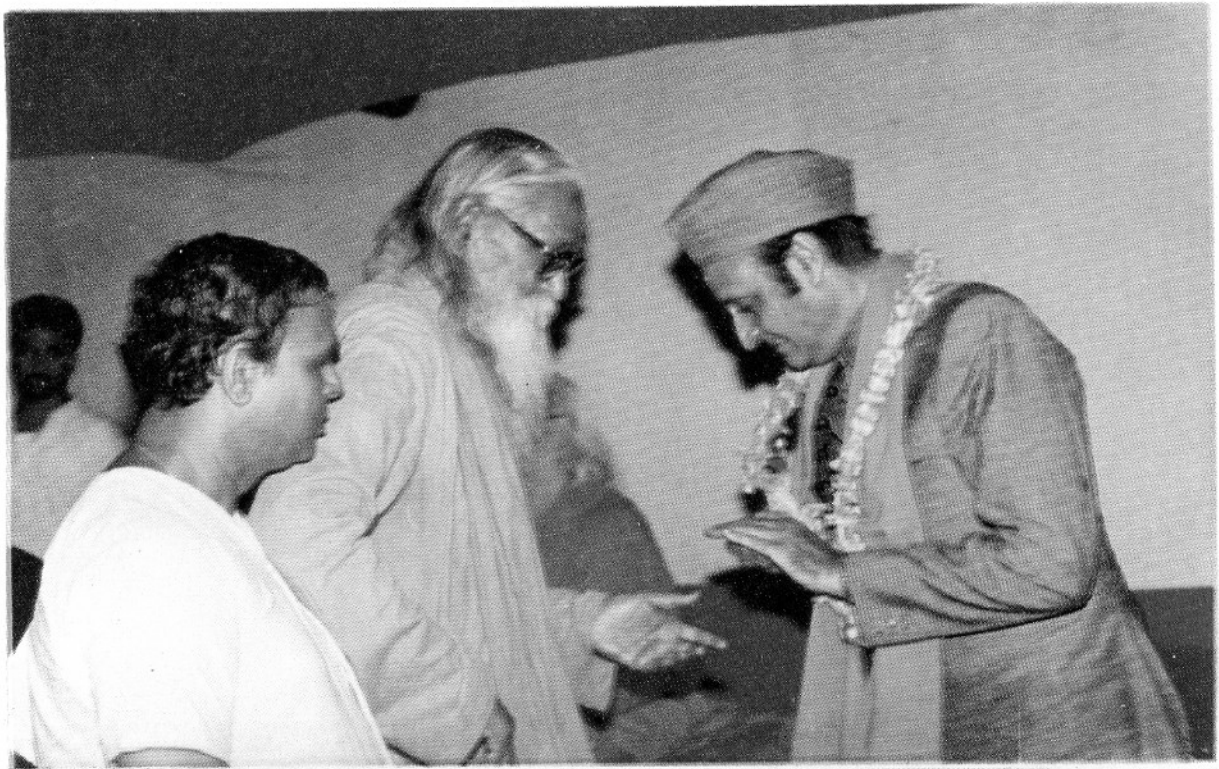


An early photo of Swami Swarupanandaji with Sri Ma at Vrindaban ashram during Jhulan festival. Sri Nirvanandaji on the left.

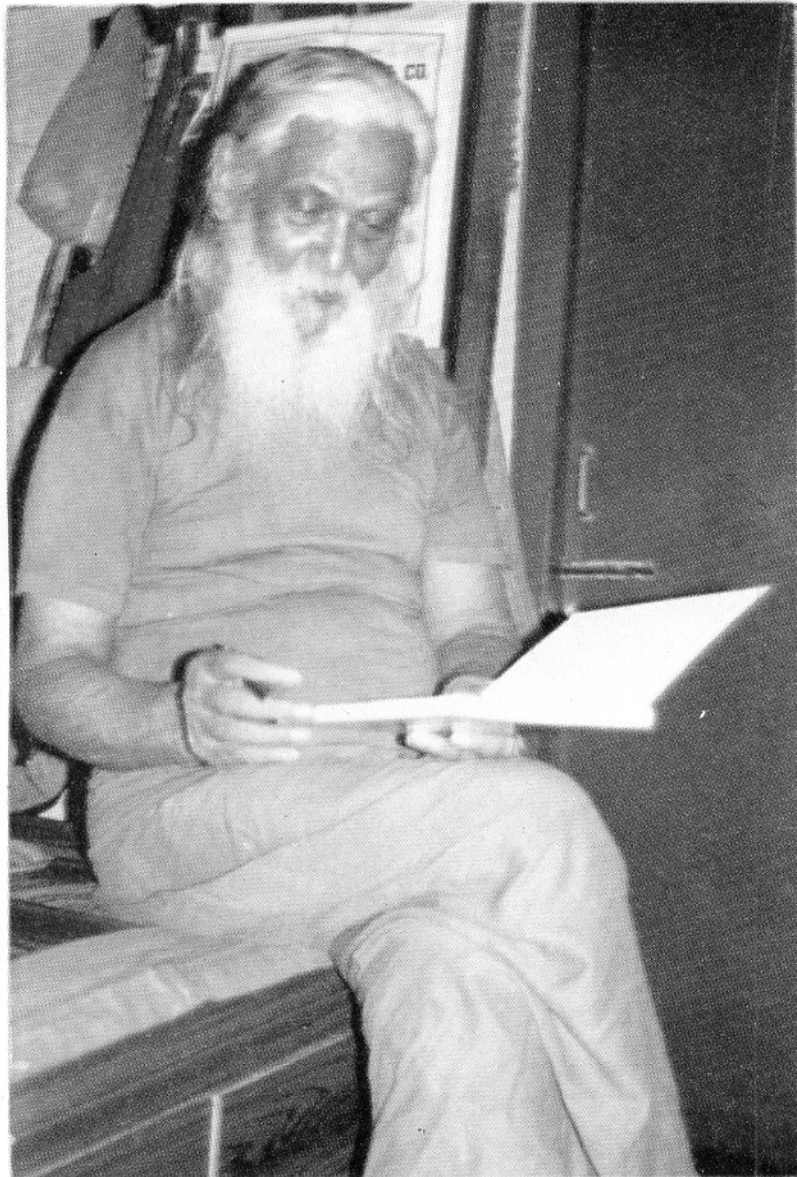


Swami Sri Chidanandaji Maharaj's visit to New Delhi ashram temples.
Swarupanandaji escorting Pujya Swamiji.

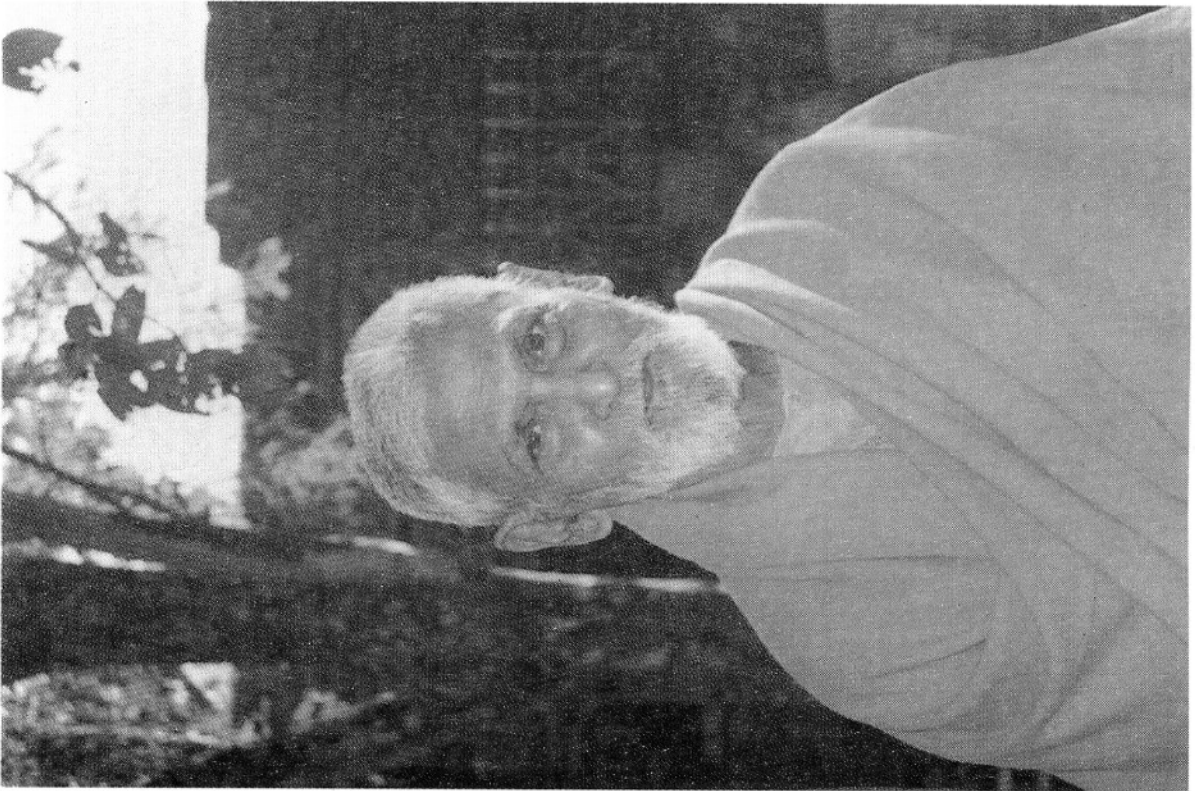
— 15th May, 1995



Swarupanandaji in a jovial mood with Dr Karan Singhji in Kankhal ashram on the occasion of Sri Ma's centenary function. —May, 1996

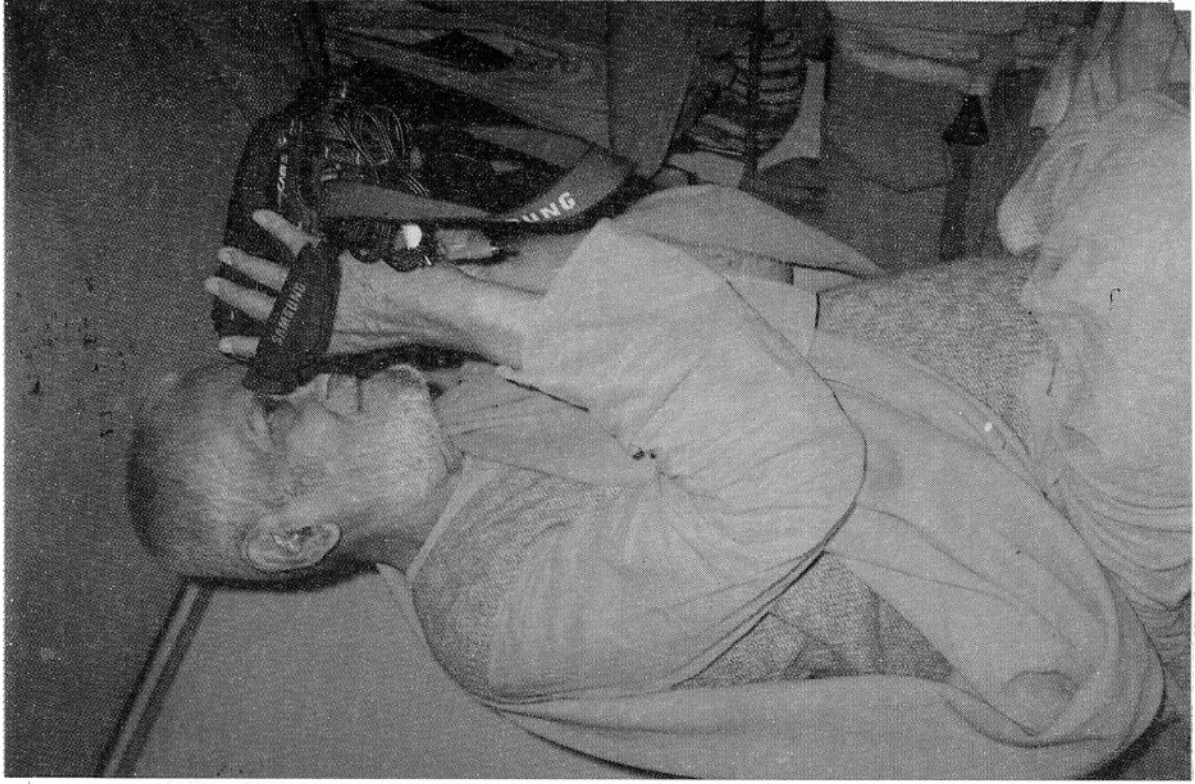


A view inside his room at Kankhal ashram —July, 1996

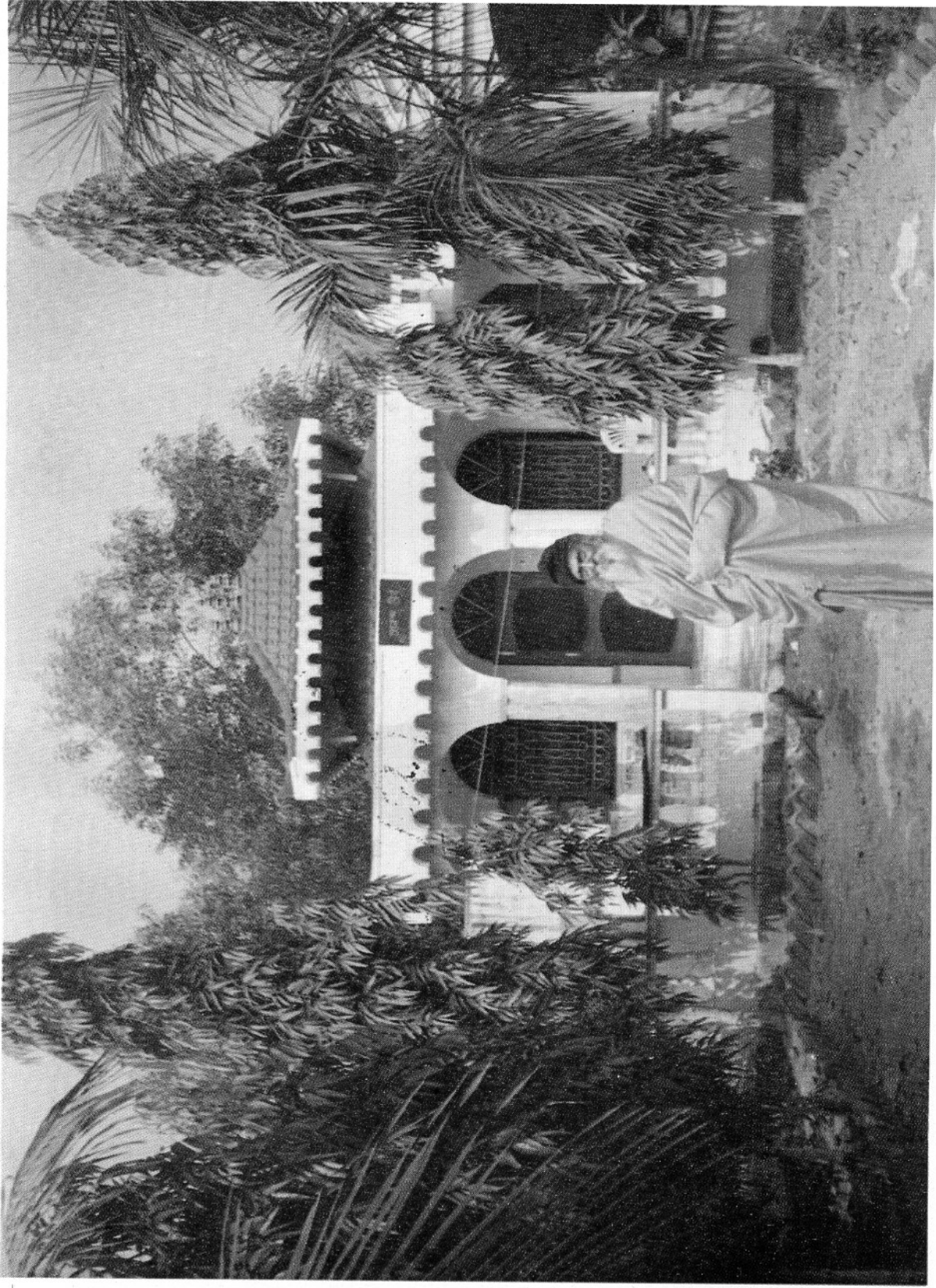


After brain surgery

—Feb., 1998

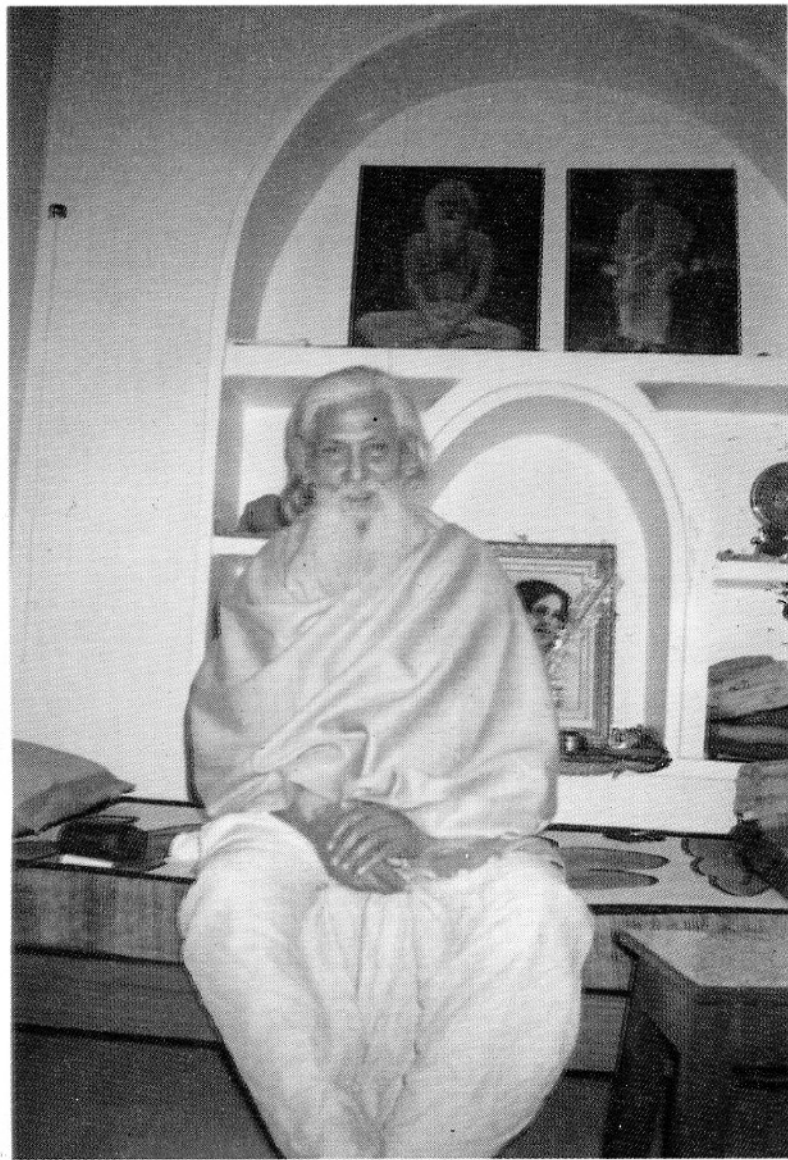


Swamiji in a happy mood



In front of the "Ananda Tirtha" at Ukhra

—Jan., 2000



Inside "Ananda Tirtha", Ukhra



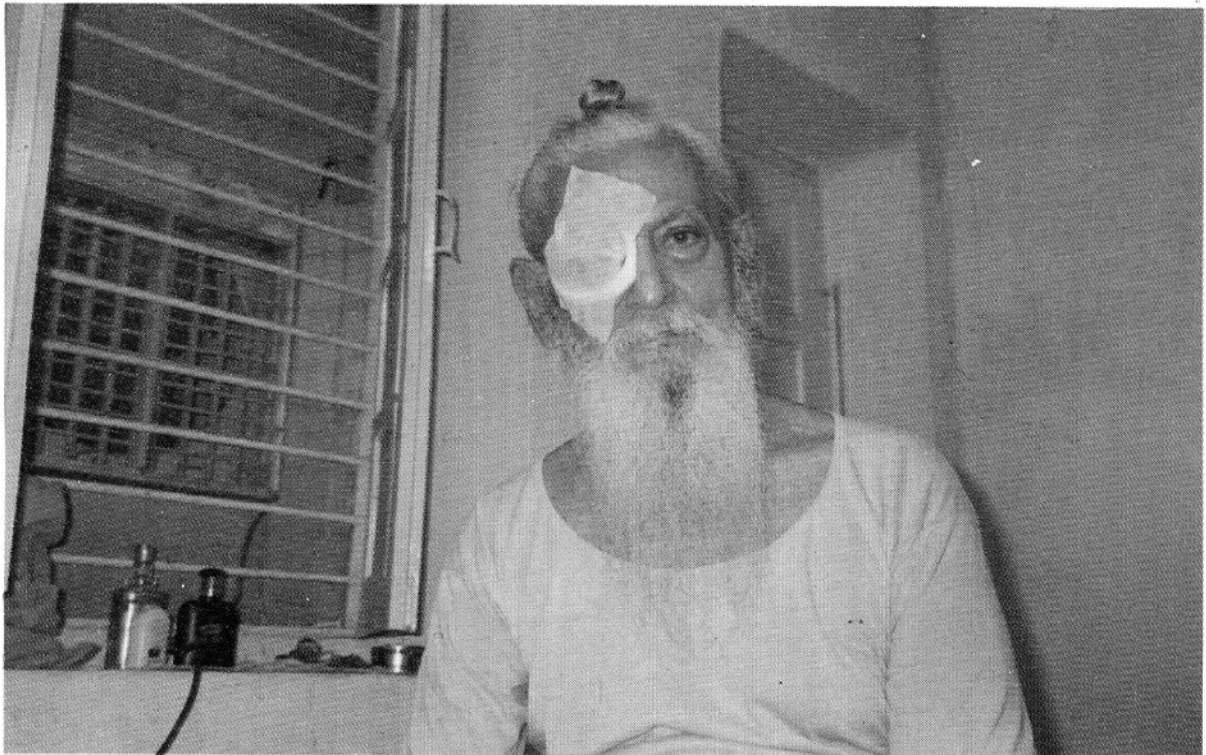
With the tribal people at Garh Jungle, Durgapur

—Feb., 2000



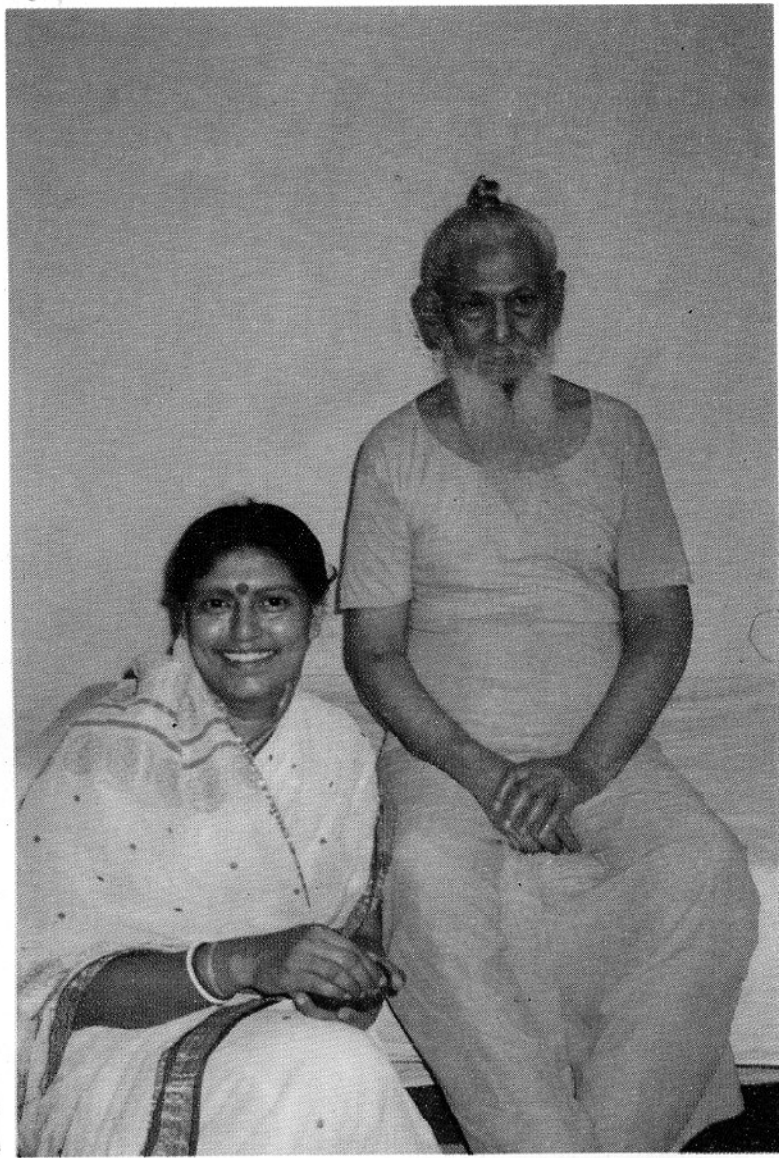
Inside the Garh Jungle

—Feb., 2000



After eye operation

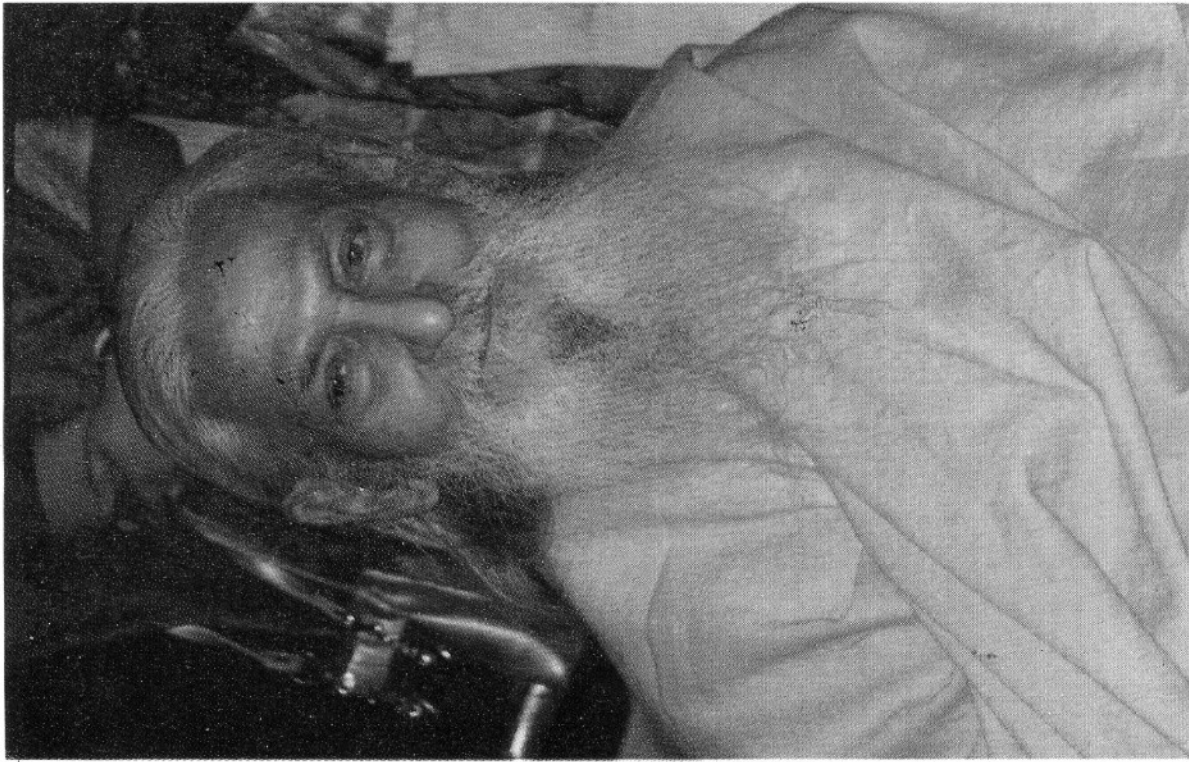
—Kalkaji ashram, May, 2001



At Kalkaji ashram with an ardent devotee of Sri Ma.



With Sri Ma's devotees at Asansol station.

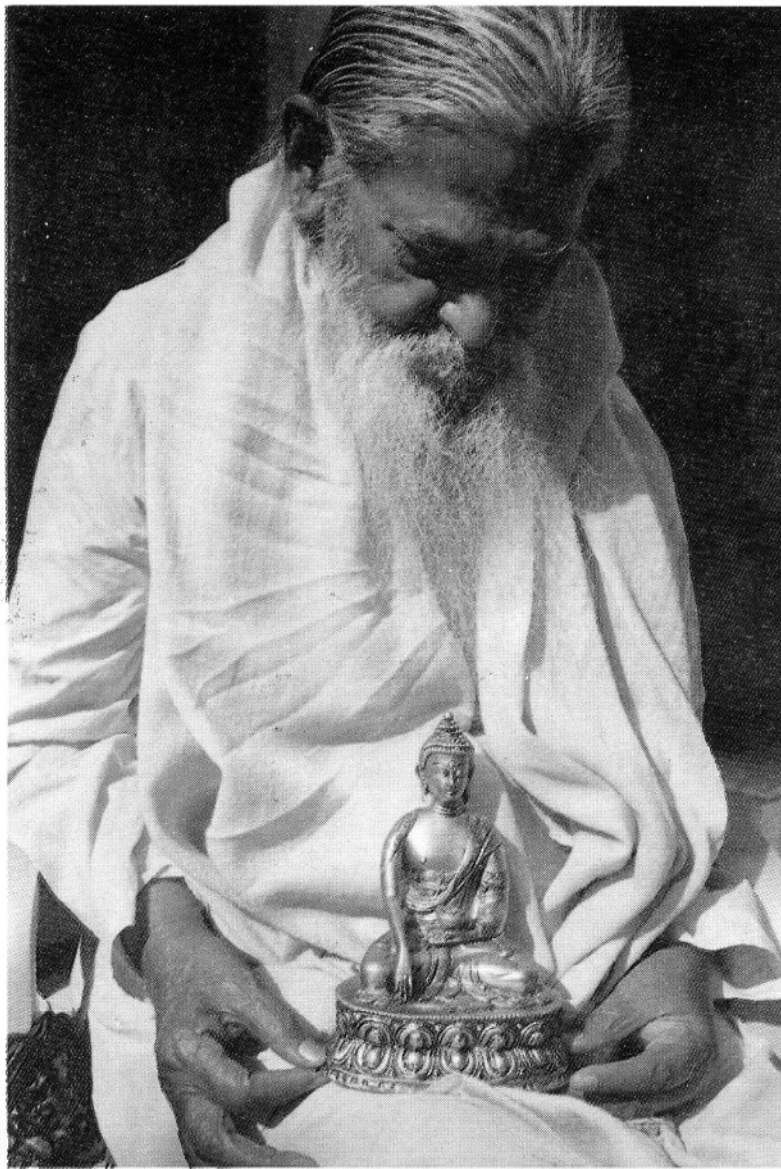


In a relaxing mood

—Feb., 2001



Near the ancient Shiva temple at Durgapur.

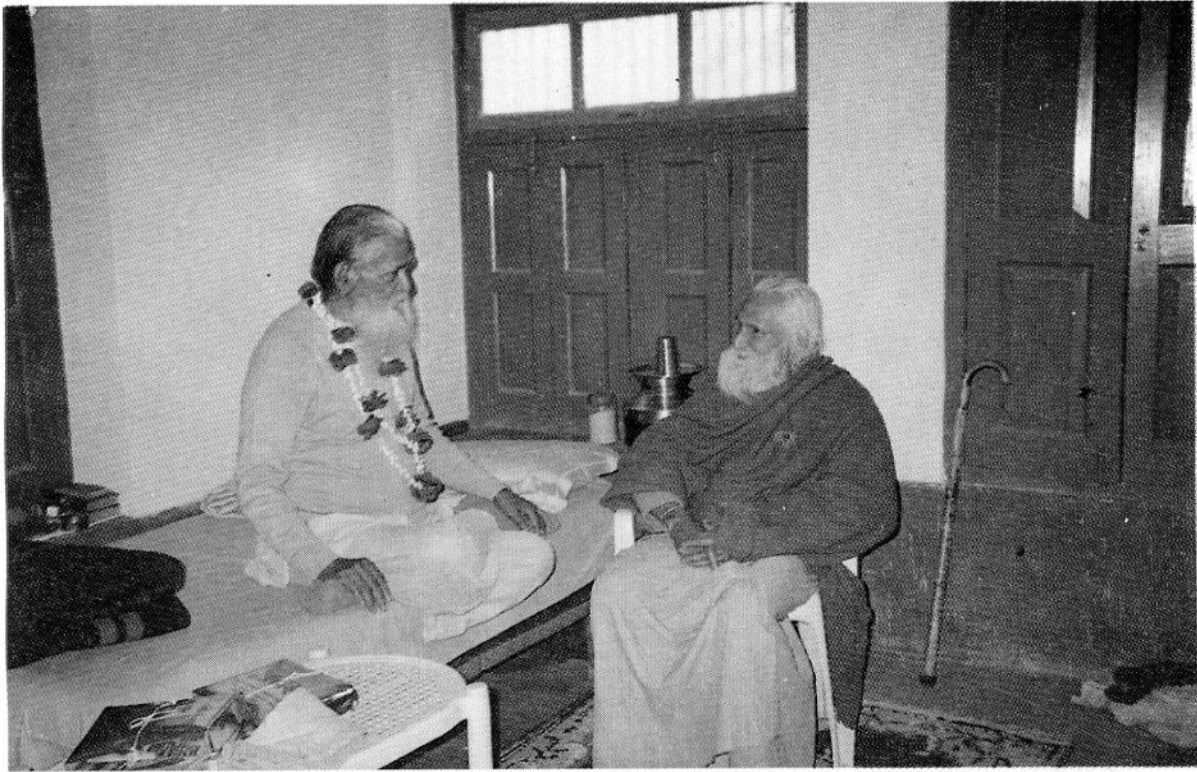


With the rare image of Lord Buddha on his lap

—Ukhra, 2001



Looking minutely at a Tibetan painting



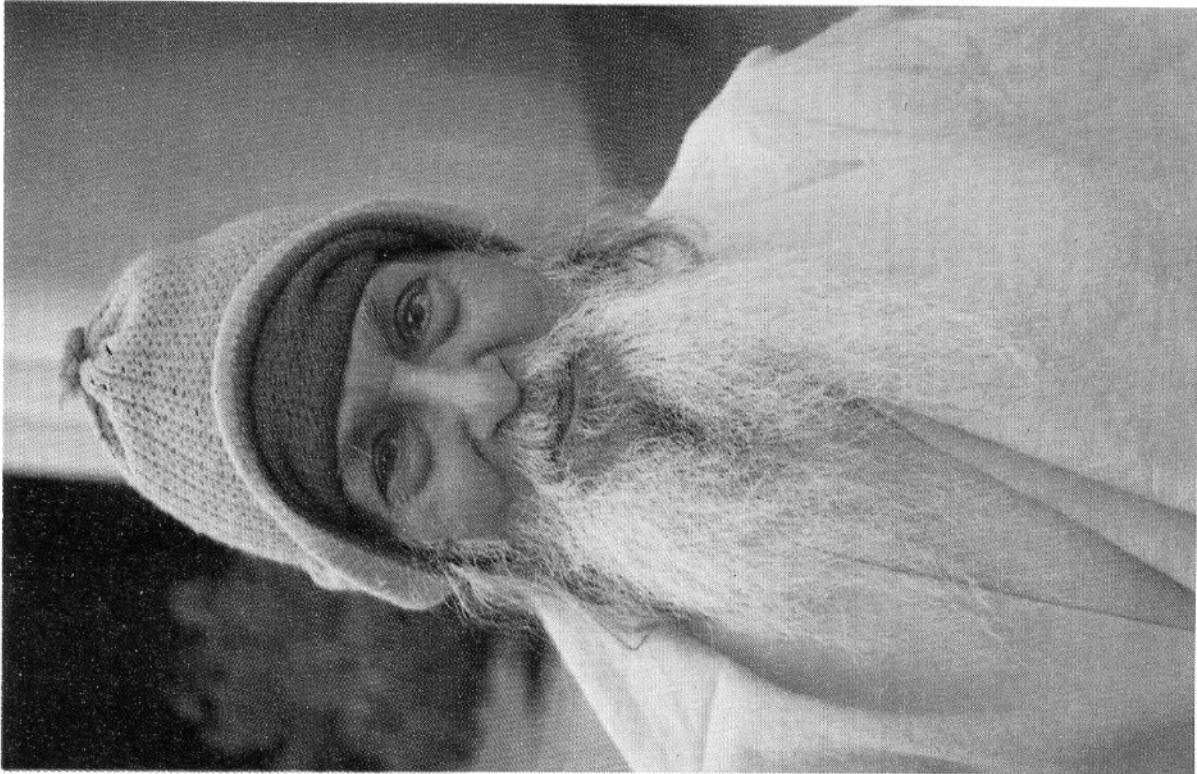
At Vrindaban ashram with Sri Sivananda Maharaj

— Feb. 2001



Sitting near ashram temple at Vrindaban.
Last visit to his very favourite ashram.

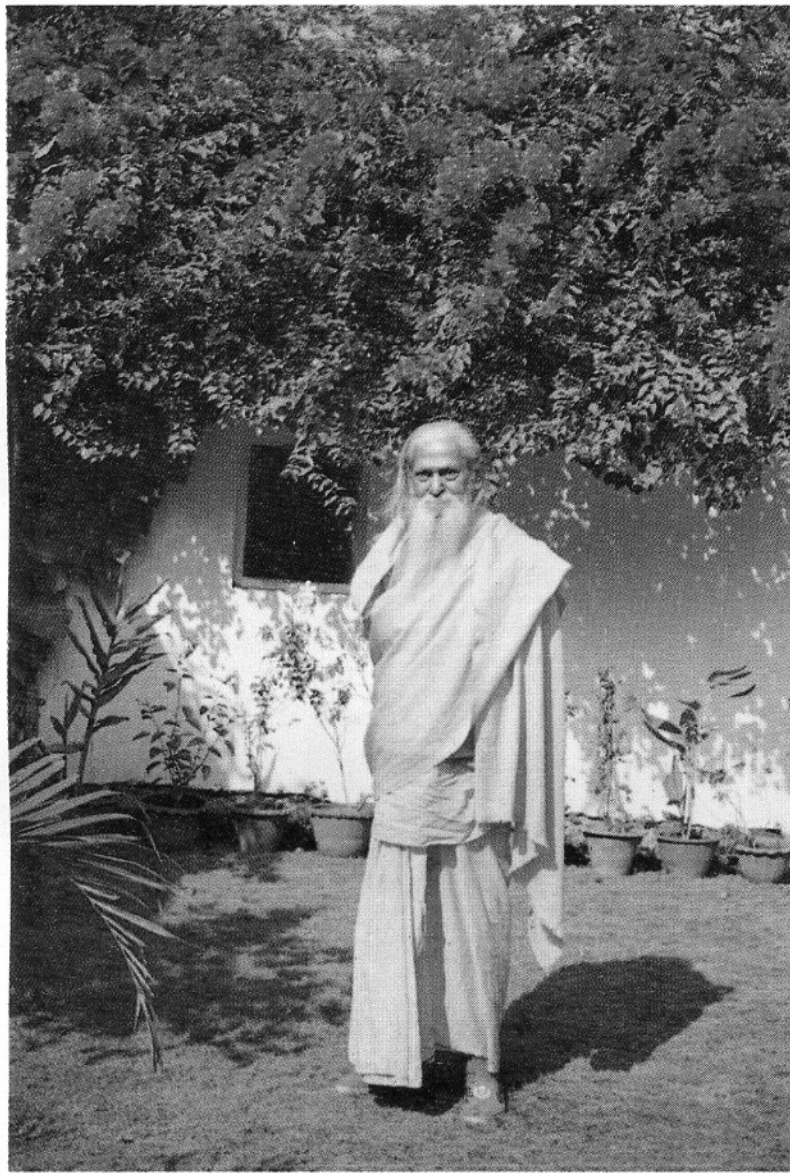
—Feb., 2001



Swamiji in his usual happy mood.



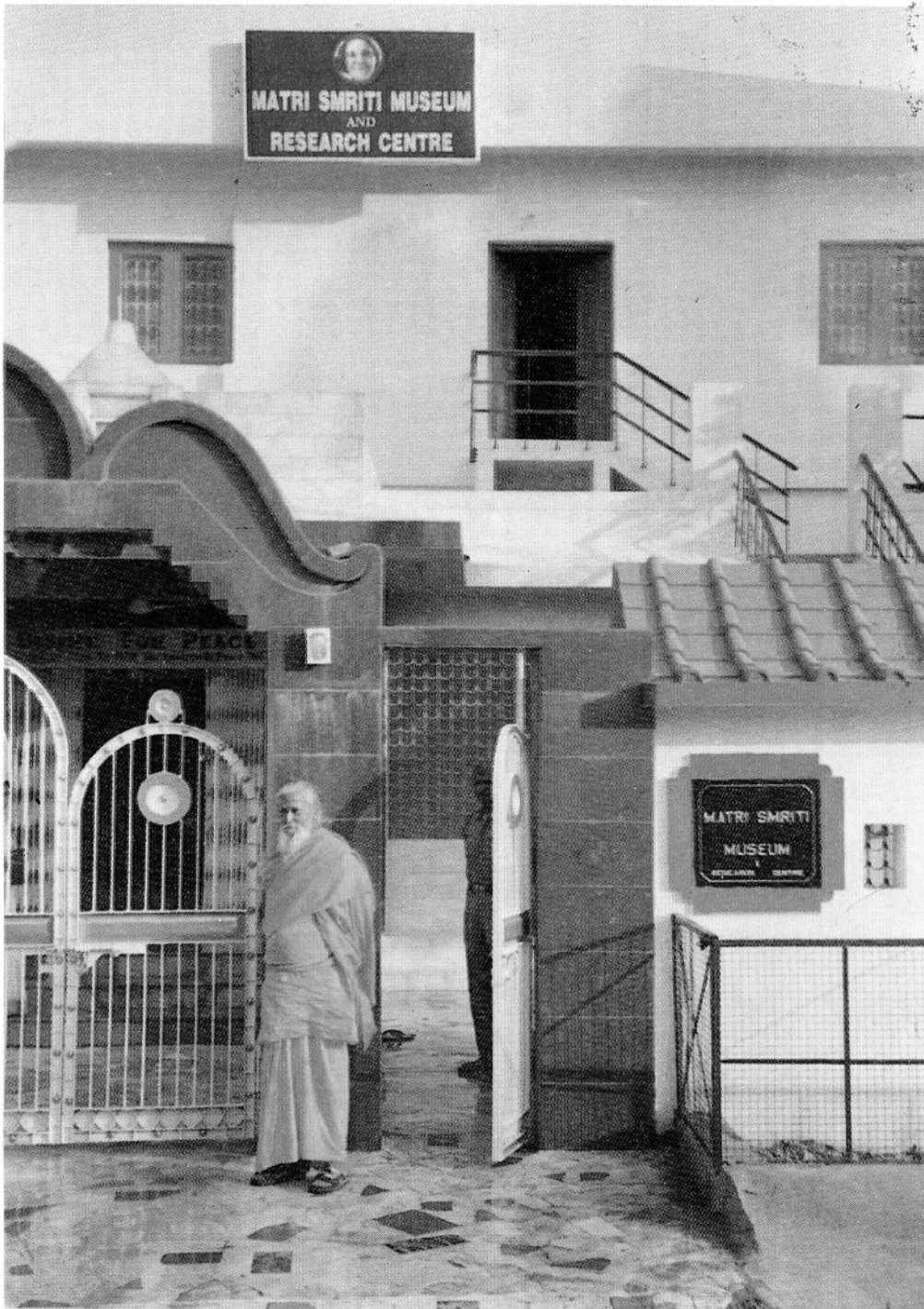
Enjoying the winter sun at Ukhra.



In a beautiful surrounding at Jhanjra, West Bengal.

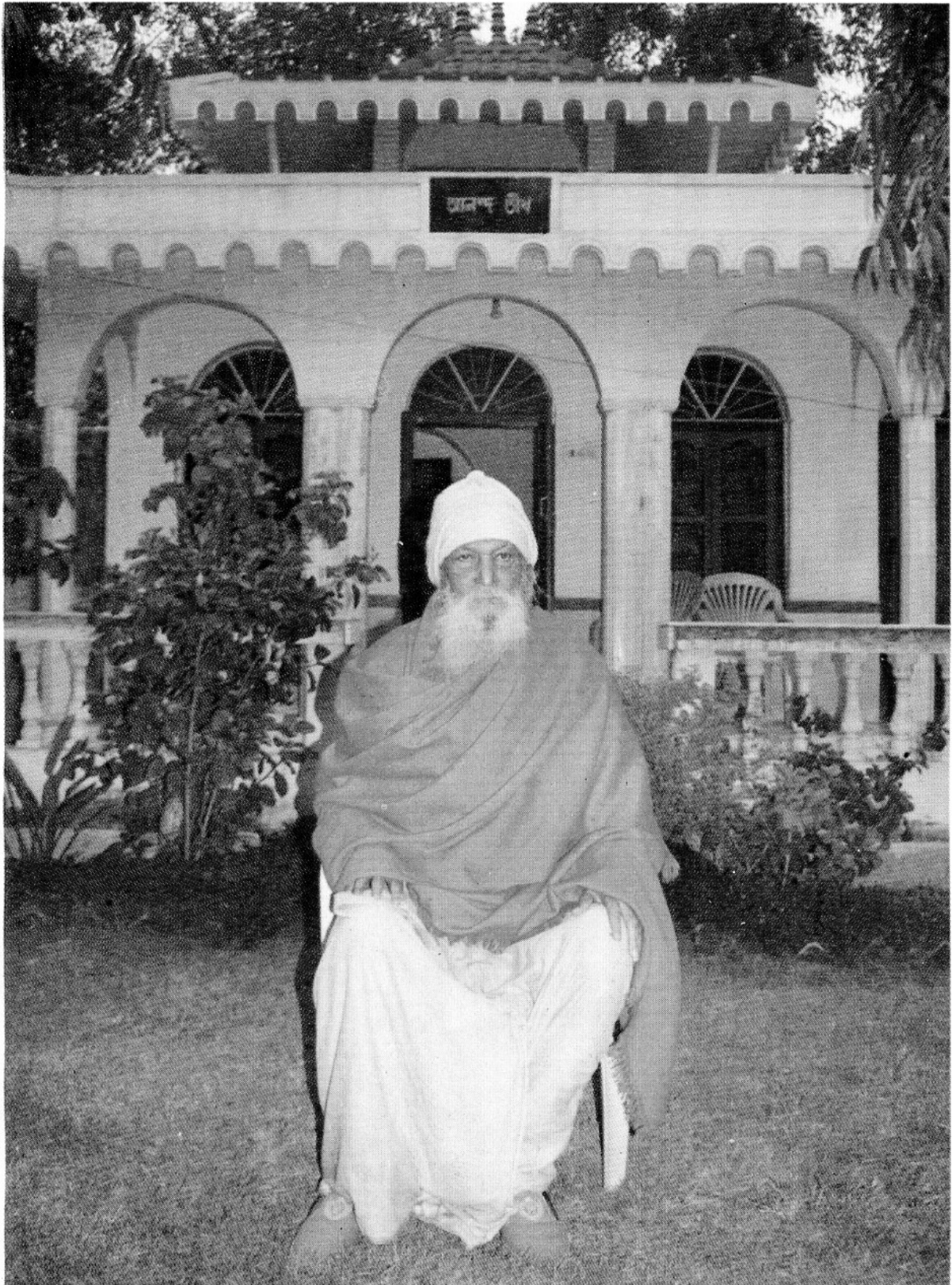


Swamiji at a devotee's house at Jhanjra.



Fulfilment of Swamiji's dream-project—
Matri Smriti Museum at Kankhal.

—Nov. 2001



Last visit to Ananda Tirtha, Ukhra.

Feb, 2002



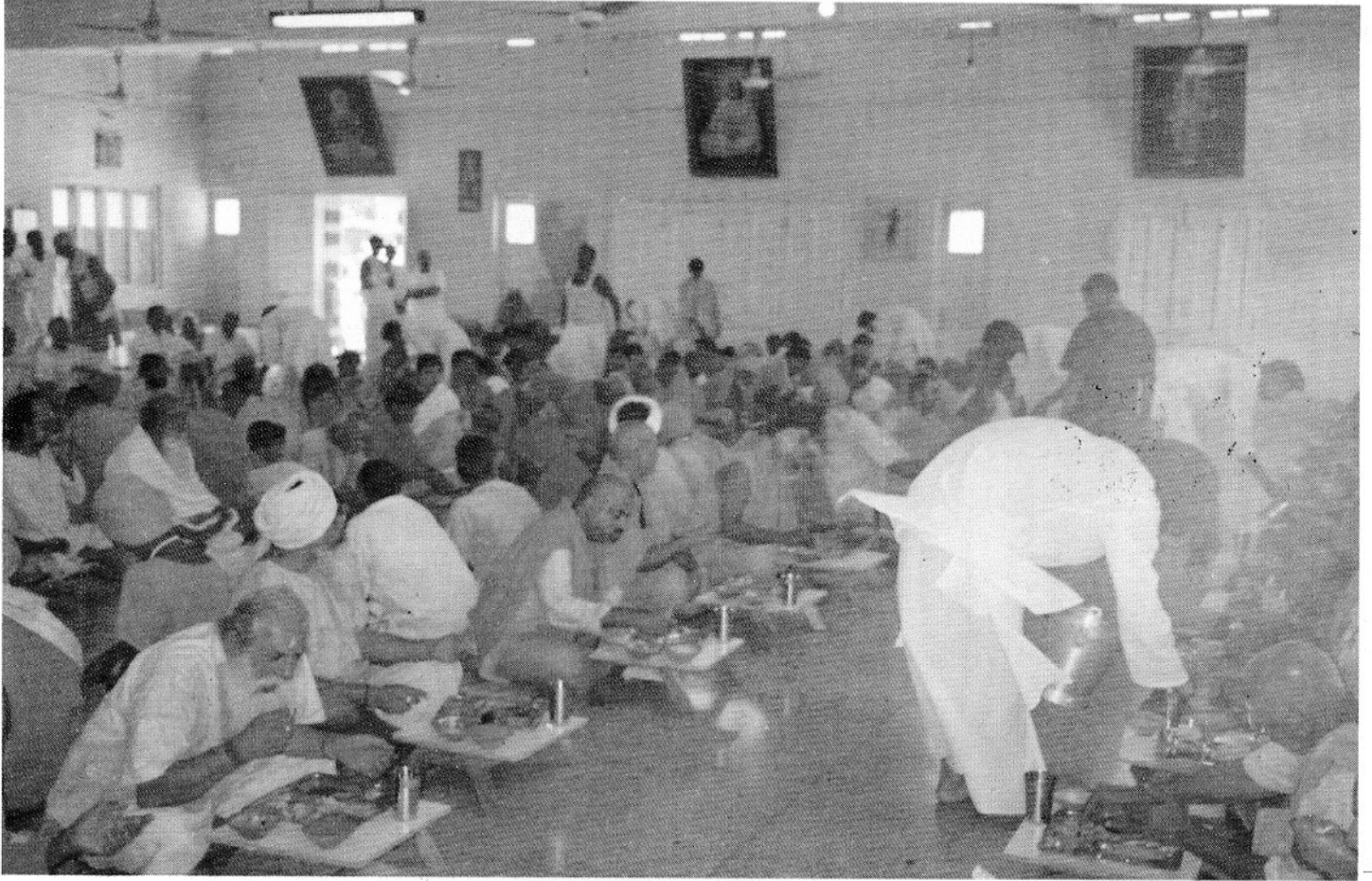
A scene from the special ceremony on the sixteenth day of the "Jal samadhi" of Swamiji. Mahamandaleshwars and Mahants of different *akhadas* speaking eloquently upon Swamiji

—Kankhal ashram, 30th Sept., 2002



Mahamandaleshwars and Mahants being treated to a grand feast on the occasion of the "*Sodashi Bhandara*".

—30th Sept., 2002



Another scene from the sadhu bhandara.

—30th Sept., 2002



A view of the various offerings to distinguished Mahatmas on the said occasion

—30th Sept. 2002



"You are always with us."