

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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MATRI VANI

To understand means to throw off one's load, only to stand under a new one; whereas the Knowledge of the Supreme Reality is beyond thought and speech — *avāṅ manaso gocharo*.

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Amidst the cross-currents of the divergent mind, one has to become firmly concentrated on one goal.

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There is infinite becoming and infinite being, infinite manifestation and infinite potentiality. Therefore, when one becomes wholly concentrated on any one thing, why should not the one be revealed ? There is endless in the One, and end in the endless. Where you perceive an end, there is actually no end. He is infinite. In all forms and the formless is He, and He alone.

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When one practices *Yogic Kriyas*, ritual worship, *Nama Japa*, *Dhyana*, any of these, for the sake of getting into a particular *bhāva*, and having reached that stage, one wishes to remain in this state all the time. So long as this state lasts, or as long as this condition predominates, one is steeped in bliss. But this is not Enlightenment, one is only on the way to it. Remaining in this state of *bhāva* for a great length of time does induce transformation to a certain degree, but there can be no special progress.

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Never harbour the idea that you are involved in sin and evil deeds and you cannot get anywhere. At all times and under all circumstances you must keep yourself in readiness to tread the path to the Supreme.

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He, from whom you receive *dikṣa* (initiation), will be able to bring you in touch with the level upto which he, himself has reached. But if the recipient has outstanding capacity, Supreme Knowledge may dawn on him at any moment.

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Anyone aspiring to Self Realization, one who starts giving initiation (*dikshā*) to others, while he himself is still on the way, will make no progress.

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When *dikshā* is given, the giver can confer only as much power as he himself wields. But if the guru is all-powerful, he may even by his touch or even gaze, can take the disciple to his final goal.

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A *Guru* is called He, who, out of deep darkness can reveal the hidden Truth to the disciple.

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How can he be a Guru, who has not yet transcended action ? A person who still performs rites and spiritual exercises of any kind is still on the path and not established in the Self.

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An aspirant who has been initiated by someone who is still on the way and does not command Supreme Power he can progress only up to his Guru's stage, and then will have to wait.

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But even without *diksha*, power may be conferred with a simple look or even touch, whether the recipient becomes aware of it at the very moment or not. The one who has bestowed this power carries along with him everything, just as the flood carries away with it every thing indiscriminately.

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A *Guru* is not an ordinary preceptor — *Guru* is He who has the capacity to deliver man from *bhava sāgara*.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH MA ANANDAMAYEE

[Translated from Bengali]

—Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

Dhaka, 22nd May, 1937

I reached the Ramna Ashram at 10 a.m. I was told that Ma was still in her room. Seeing Jyotish Babu* talking with others at Panchavati, I went there and took my seat.

Jyotish Babu was talking about Sri Sri Ma. I said to him, "It is said that once you visualized Ma in the form of Devi. Let us hear of the event."

Jyotish Babu said, "Ma was then staying at Shahbag. One morning, going to meet Ma, I was waiting at Nachghar. Suddenly, I saw the door of Ma's room thrown open and the radiant form of a goddess appeared near the door. At that, I was very much astonished. I thought — 'What is it that I am seeing fully awake and in broad daylight?' It did not appear to be a hallucination. While I was looking on, the vision faded out and I saw Ma coming out from the room in Her easy, leisurely gait. To me reasoning never gets a less weightage than emotion. So I made up a plan and began to mentally recite a Devi stotra from the Chandi. I thought that if She really was a goddess, She would be pleased at my recitation and offer something to me by way of reward. As She slowly proceeded from Her room to the Nachghar, Sri Ma plucked up a few grass flowers from the ground. When She was before me, I bowed down to Her and She at once dropped on my head the flowers as Her blessings.

Jyotish Babu continued, "At that time, I was pestered with the desire to know Her real identity. So I often asked her, 'Ma, who are you?' One day she said, 'You will know it later on.' Another day She said, 'It is possible to say who I am only so long I have a perception of self. I am completely devoid of this perception. So I am whatever you make me out to be.' Then She said a bit seriously, 'What else do you want to know?' She uttered these words in a tone and with an unusual

* Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy, popularly known as 'Bhaiji', one of the foremost devotees of Ma.

expression on Her face that made me shiver to the inmost depth of my being. I could not say anything more. Since then, I never asked Her about Her identity."

As it was getting late in the day, I turned homewards. At the time of coming away I found Ma sitting in her room.

When at 3.30 p.m. I went back to the Ashram, I was told that Ma had gone to Shahbag for a walk. This time while coming from Nainital, Ma had brought along with Her a girl named Godavari from the hills. She had in all probability gone to Shahbag to show the girl around the place. I also went to Shahbag. Many children were walking about Shahbag with Ma. Seeing me Ma said, "The trees I had planted here, have now grown up." Khukuni Didi asked me if I had been to Shahbag before. Ma said, "Yes, Babaji has been. I had once to face a complaint on this account."

One day Ma had conducted me to Shahbag. After our walking was over, the caretaker of Shahbag came out with his complaint, saying that entry for men was forbidden in Shahbag as the begums often came there for a walk from the Nawab's residence. Ma said, "Since then I never came here for a walk — except today, and it is my first visit after that incident." So saying Ma began to laugh.

From Shahbag Ma went to Siddheshwari with Godavari and a few other women. We went back to the Ashram.

From Siddheshwari Ma returned in the evening and took Her seat in the Namghar. A little after, the *arati* began in the temple. We sat on silently watching the *arati*.

After the *arati* was over, Bhudeb Babu came and said to Mataji, "Ma, just sing us a song. We can trouble you for one, seeing that you sing so many songs to the ladies." At first Ma refused. Then She sang two songs to Her own accord. One was Hindi and the other Bengali. She sang in Her sweet voice almost lost to the outer world. It went deep to the hearts of all who heard it.

After this Bhudeb Babu came out with another request. It was that he would listen to Mataji speaking Hindi. Ma said, "You put questions to me. I will answer them in Hindi."

Bhudeb Babu : People call you *Bhagavati* and no other, that is, *Bhagavati* Herself is reborn. Can we not be emancipated by looking at you and touching you ?

Ma replied first in Hindi and then in Bengali. She said, "Proper sight and touch can certainly lead to emancipation, but how often are they in evidence ? You call me 'Bhagavati' 'Annapurna' — but these are mere words. How often can you identify the idols with divinities ? You say many things from your beliefs. I call such beliefs

blind as they are not backed up by feelings that should go with them. Deities are mentioned in scriptures also and you can talk about from your scripturebased knowledge. But to me scriptures are time-tables and no more. A time-table contains names of places but you cannot have any idea of those places by reading the time-table alone. It is the same about the deities referred to in the scriptures. You can have no notion of them from your scriptural knowledge. Notions of them call for action. Actions lead you to various mental configurations and then everything becomes plain to you. But you may contend that the nature of fire is to burn — it burns the hand if it is touched whether consciously or unconsciously. In the same way, why should you not be benefitted, if you touch Bhagavati, even without knowing Her as such ? To this I say, an ice-cold object does not burn as soon as it is brought in contact with fire. Perhaps all it does is to leave a mark on the place. In the same way if you see and touch anybody taking her for Bhagavati, it will leave on your mind a good impress. Nothing is absolutely thrown away."

Bhudeb Babu : I understand it. But the question is, are you Bhagavati or not ?

Ma : It is a question which cannot be answered.

Bhudeb Babu : Why can't you ? I can cite a precedent to support that my question admits of an answer. When Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was asked about His identity, He had disclosed it.

Ma : I do not say or do anything deliberately. With me a thing comes out spontaneously or not at all. Perhaps some day my identity might come out. But at present, it is not coming out.

Paresh Babu : It is true that one cannot go from one place to another merely by reading a time table. It requires action. But one can rise to a high state of experience, without having recourse to actions. God can draw us directly to the path of religion as a magnet attracts iron.

Ma : Attraction is there, but you cannot perceive it. It is this attraction that inclines one to the religious path. But for it there could have been no such inclination at all. It is the natural destiny of man to be liberated, to attain God. No one loves to be in bondage. Some may develop religious tendencies at an early age. You can call it fortune, or a reward of good action. Again some one has an urge for the religious life but can make no headway. In despair he thinks that he is getting nowhere. But this very thought of not getting anywhere is a proof that he is making at least some progress. He has his eye on God even for a passing moment.

Paresh Babu: He can get everything done, can't He ?

Ma: It is He who gets everything done. But a mere statement of this fact means nothing—one must perceive it. We can attend to all household works, but want to

depend on Him in respect of religious matters alone. It is an inconsistency amounting to hypocrisy. As children are directed towards education by force, similarly one has to repeat the Name against his will, and try to be single-minded. The means of attaining single-mindedness are reading good books, associating with the good and taking part in religious discourses. While at such practices, a man feels that they are attracting him magnet-like towards God. While performing household works, you should do something for Him as well. Though whatever you are doing for your domestic life are also His work, yet for the awareness of this fact, God must be drawn into your household. While looking after your relatives and serving them, you should be mindful of God inherent in them. Performing household work as one's own, leads only to bondage; but doing them as God's work leads to liberation. In each work you do, He must be involved. There's no other way.

At this moment some women came to bow down to Ma. Ma lapsed into silence. After their departure, Ma again uttered "See, can we even make a bow in the proper way? What is bowing like? Well, it is like pouring out water from a pot. If the pot is held upside down, all the water in it flows out. In the same way a proper bowing consists in pouring out all one's emotional content at the feet of the object of the bow. You say, don't you, that our head is the seat of all our thoughts and emotions. But when we bend it low while bowing, nothing flows out of it. It is like tilting a powder can. When the can is tilted, a very small amount of powder and not all falls out through the perforations in its lid". Ma added in this connection, "Unless the water-pot is emptied, God would not come forward to fill it up".

Hearing this interpretation of *pranama*, Naresh Babu said, Ma, If we bow down in that way, you will get blackened."

Ma: All right, offer to God whatever you have, Say, "God, I have only sin, I offer it to you." It will at least serve as a step forward towards giving. Here is a story for you. A beggar had gone to beg to the house of a miser. While the miser made it a point not to give away anything, the beggar refused to budge without having his alms. At last the miser, out of sheer anger gave him a handful of dust, saying, "Take it for your alms." The beggar accepted it with satisfaction, saying, 'Good, it is at least a start in giving.' (All laugh). It is very true. The miser in his anger gave dust, but when his anger subsided he must have felt sorry for having given dust to the man instead of food. It may be that to the next beggar he would give half a pice or a pice instead of dust. I also tell you to give whatever you can afford. Even if it be half a pice, no matter, later you may be able to give a pice, a rupee or even a gold coin.

23rd May, 1937

I went to the Ashram in the afternoon at about 6 p.m. It was almost impossible for us to have a glimpse of Ma. In the evening though Ma took Her seat in the open there was no way to go near Her for the crowd of women.

Even as the night was getting deeper I stood where Ma was sitting. At this moment Pramatha Babu came up and asked Ma, "Ma, is it an old-men's kirtan tonight?"

Ma: Ask it to Bholanath. You better have a kirtan with Bholanath.

Pramath Babu: You will not be present at it? If you are not present in our kirtan tonight, then we will not allow you to be present in the kirtan to be arranged tomorrow by children below twenty years.

Ma (smiling): I am with twenty-year-olds, fifty-year-olds, as well as with centenarians. That is not all - I pre-exist the cycle of creation, continuation and destruction.

Hearing that tonight there would be a kirtan, participated by 'middle-aged persons' like us, I went back to the Ashram and found Ma seated in the Namghar. The others were performing kirtan with Baba Bholanath. The kirtan continued and Baba Bholanath began to dance in *bhava*. After the kirtan was over Bholanath went away. In the meantime Ma also had left the Namghar. We went on singing kirtan in the Namghar.

After sometime I observed a gathering of people on the veranda of the Annapurna temple. At that I presumed that Ma was there. On going there I found that Ma was lying on the veranda of the temple, and some university students were sitting by Her. I found Sri Atul Brahmachari of "Sadhan Samar Ashram" and Naresh Babu talking with Ma. I could not clearly hear what they said partly because a loud kirtan was on in the Namghar and partly because my seat was at some distance from Ma.

I found my student Prafulla Chakraborty absorbed in meditation. Noticing him Ma said, "Where have you come from?" He made no reply. He spoke nothing even when pushed by his friends. At this I was a little astonished.

When the boy was in that condition of deep trance Ma advised that the name of God should be whispered into his ear. I said, "Ma, when a man falls unconscious repeating the Name or hearing it recited, why is it needed to whisper the Name again into his ear to restore him? It seems contrary to the law of Nature."

Ma: Why?

I: We heat water by exposing it to fire, but we do not bring it in contact with fire again to cool it.

Ma: It is not like that. It is like retracing one's steps during returning. That is also natural.

I: I have seen in the diary of Gurupriya Didi that you have divided the state of trance into four categories — *Jada samadhi*, *Savikalpa samadhi*, *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* and *Chaitanya samadhi*. Does one not have super-consciousness (*chaitanya*) in the state of *Nirvikalpa samadhi*, that you speak of another category — *Chaitanya samadhi* ?

Ma: It is impossible to say what a person has or has not in the state of *Nirvikalpa samadhi*,

I: Do the limbs stiffen during *samadhi* ?

Ma: It is not possible to detect *samadhi* simply by observing physical states. In addition to that *bhava*, spoken words and many other aspects have to be taken into consideration. Stiffness may occur during *samadhi*, but it will be similar to *rigor mortis*. If the man is moved by his leg, his body will move as a whole. (Pointing to Herself) This body has passed through no end of states. Sometimes my hands and feet became excessively stiff, so much so, that even when vehemently rubbed no sensation would be produced. But that state did not amount to *samadhi*. They were reactions to the upsurge of *bhava*. How few can understand or detect such states ! It is often seen that a person under the influence of *bhava*, closes his fists; he holds a thing so strongly that it cannot be wrenched away from his grasp. In such a case you must understand that his emotional influence has been re-inforced by his will power. But such a thing does not happen in *samadhi*. During *samadhi*, the hand may stiffen, but you can put it in any position you like. If the fist is closed, fingers would open out as soon as they are pulled, and when they are let loose again, the fist would reclose itself. You may have seen a person struck by lightning while standing and is killed. But though dead, he keeps standing like a live man. He would drop down as soon as he is pushed. The state of *samadhi* is also somewhat akin to it. In this state will power being totally absent, the body can be put into any desired position. But if you see that you cannot move the hands and feet at will but meet with a resistance, it means that it is not a state of *samadhi*.

I: What is *Jada samadhi* ?

Ma: Under it the body keeps lying like an insensient being and the mind becomes inert. When the influence passes off, the person finds that the world has taken up a new form, and that his outlook on the world has undergone a complete change.

I: You have once described *Jada samadhi* as a state when a person loses his contact with worldly objects but relationship with the spiritual world has not yet

been established. This being so, how can a man passing out of this state have his worldly point of view changed ? The spiritual truths are yet to be revealed to him.

Ma: The state I told you about is the initial state of *Jada samadhi*. It is true that in that state the spiritual consciousness does not emerge, but its seed may be lying dormant within to develop later on by slow degrees. Knowledge is then revealed in a piecemeal fashion. As for example, a sense of utter humility with regard to one's own self. We express humility and meekness as a matter of good manners, but when humility wells up from the inner depths of the heart, a person takes no offence even when insulted, as his humility is not lip-deep but a feeling disseminated through his entire being. The developments of other attributes like forgiveness, patience etc. also take place similarly. Those simply under the influence of *bhava* don't have such awareness as they are found to accept services from others. But for one who is developing knowledge bit by bit, it is not possible to accept *pranama* or services from others. *Bhava* and *samadhi* are capable of taking a wide variety of forms beyond all recounting.

As it was 2.30 a.m. I bowed down to Ma and went to the Namghar. Sitting there, I began to repeat the Name. At about 4.30 a.m. Ma also came to the Namghar, At that time our kirtan had gained a high momentum. Ma struck cymbals close to the ears of those who were dozing at that time, to wake them up. All these activities of Ma had charms of their own. At the sound of cymbals, the sleeping devotees started up and seeing Ma before them, they were found prostrating themselves at Her feet in pleasant surprise.

[To be continued]

CONVERSATION WITH SWAMI VIJAYANANDA

QUESTION: In that period of time in which we really come into the third millennium, we are inclined to meditate on the nature of time. Is it absolute, or a construction of our mind ?

VIJAYANANDA : Time presupposes motion. The movement of the watch hands gives us the notion of hour. The movement of the sun (the rotation of earth) gives us the notion of the day and the year. The change in our body, let us understand that we are getting older. That belief in the idea of time is part of all empirical truths, which are true when we are living in them because the Supreme Self, residing in each of us, gives them the seal of temporary truth.

But that "Self" is immutable, always the same, and from its point of view, time is an illusory concept, a play born from mind itself.

We can quote the example given by Ramana Maharshi, concerning the movie : the Self is an unchangeable screen, and the play of our mind is forming appearing on that screen. We cannot say that the time is a "construction of the mental", it's an illusion. "They took the rope for a snake" As it is said in the Vedanta.

Q: *Is there any difference in the presence of Ma before she left her body and now ?*

V: When Ma was still in her physical body, she was not identified to that body, but to the Divine. Her physical body was used as a channel, as an intermediary with the Divine. Now since that body has disappeared from our sight, the Supreme Divine, that is the real Ma, Omnipresent, is always the same. But from our point of view the contact is more difficult because we have to be receptive and to call for her.

When Ma was present physically, she was able to act positively to wake up and to draw towards herself different people. I also think that it probably happened for certain persons, through the intermediary of a picture of Ma, of a reading, or thanks to the vibrations of the Samadhi, and also through the contact with the disciples who had been close to Ma.

Q. (From a new correspondent from Vienna in Austria) : *What was the attitude of Ma towards the harijans (outcasts)? How were they treated in her ashrams ?*

V: The harijans, called now dalits, have always been treated with kindness and understanding in our organisation and by Ma particularly. But since our organisation is based on antique vedic tradition, there are rituals at which they can't

participate. In any way, it's childish to give an opinion on a religion so different from our occidental conceptions. Religious Indians are sometimes deeply shocked by the manners and the ways of living of the westerners, particularly concerning sexual freedom.

QUESTION : How can we know if what it seems to be a memory of a preceding life is not only a product of our imagination, or a construction of our mind ?

VIJAYANANDA : The first criterion is its spontaneous appearance which happens when we are not concentrated on this matter, We have numerous examples of persons who had images and clear notions of a previous recent life and who returned to the different places where the facts happened and were verified. However, no need to give such importance to precise images. Everybody remembers his preceding lives, but not necessarily through vivid pictures. The choice of a career, or an unexplained inclination (called in India *samskara*) may come from manifestations with no images. For instance, if someone has a passion for military topics, when nobody around him is in the army or has interest in that field, it can indicate a previous life as a soldier.

Vijayananda continued : "It concerns a physical sign described by the tradition. All the people who practiced a lot of yoga in a past life without being able to reach the liberation on account of a desire arising at the moment of death, have a reincarnation to try to satisfy that or those desires. That kind of desire takes the form of *samskaras*, or *vāsanās* (deep inclinations which rise to the surface from time to time) but when they are exhausted, the *yoga-bhrashta*, the so called person who has "missed the yoga", rediscovers his practice and starts to improve very fast."

"Having said that, we must confess that great part of the memories coming from a previous life, as people think, are in fact fantasy of their mind purely hypothetical, in which they believe".

In talking about someone having a rather fighting spirit, Vijayananda said : " I recommended him not to meditate any more on *ājñā*, because it can increase a basic anger if the latter is present inside. It was one of the advices given to me by Ma during our first interview (just half-century ago). So, I started meditating on the heart, but later, she asked me to concentrate again on *ājñā*".

Q: It is said in Yoga or Tantra's writings, that there are in fact two ājñās, the lower one situated at the nose's root, and the upper one about the middle of the forehead. The first one is connected with ego and anger, and the second is associated with ātmā and sublimation. Do you agree with that concept ?

V: I do. It can help to meditate higher than the nose's root to release the tension of ego connected with an ill-advised meditation on lower *ājñā*. However, those

centers are mainly sort of supports for the confluence of the *nādis*. They lead to a consciousness beyond the body .

Q : Was Ma able to act like those Tibetan Masters who gave exercises to develop some powers, for example warming- up the body with the *tou-mo*, so that to attract the seeker who is still a beginner to his inner-self ?

V : It's possible, but it's difficult to be sure of it because Ma asked to keep secret all the exercises she gave. Ma was great, she used to give not only an exercise of meditation, but she also included the ability to execute it correctly.

Q: Is it correct to say that *Vedanta* really consists of a sort of meditation without support ?

V : Even in *Vedanta* it's good to have a support during a long time, it is like the light. It's good to imagine yourself immersed into an ocean of light. You can do the same with the sound. After, you may ask yourself who is the one providing light and sound.

Q: Did you have periods of doubts ?

V: As far as *sadhana* is concerned, never. I have always been convinced that it was the only one thing that was really worth it. I never doubted the spiritual grandeur of Ma Anandamayi, but sometimes I wondered whether she was able to guide a westerner born and educated in a totally different tradition, while she was completely immersed in the Hindu orthodoxy. But it has been useful, I have been obliged to reach the "common denominator", that is the common level to all religions, the self to be fully in contact with her.

A French visitor living since several years in India: *Did you feel in your meditation some points of no return where you could perceive that it was no more possible for you to regress or to fall back ?*

V: Yes. The day I met Ma she gave me the *shaktipāt*, the awakening of an inner power, that only an authentic Master can give. It creates an eternal indestructible relationship between the master and disciple.

Q: *In spite of that, do you have the feeling to have improved after ?*

V: Sure. You must go on working, unless you have already reached the *summit* of Realization. I think it is said in the *Yoga Sutras* from *Patanjali*, that there is a moment where the rock rolls down the mountain, then it finds its right balance and cannot go up again : it is the *sahaja samadhi*, the natural state of mind.

Q: *Sometimes, I have the feeling that Ma is listening to me, and sometimes not. Why ?*

V: That means you are not calling or insisting strongly enough. The only one language that Ma (or God), can understand, is that of *bhava* : intensity of emotion. Words are only a support for the *bhava*. If you pray with that intensity until tears flow down from your eyes, your prayer will be fulfilled.

Q: *Am I right when I think that every day is Ma's birthday (not a specific day) and that she is also everywhere and not only in the samadhi ?*

V: To those who asked Ma, where her next birthday would take place, she answered : "May those believing in life and death keep themselves busy and take care of it !". Of course Ma is everywhere and mostly in our heart. She sees everything and she knows all of us, still now.

Q: *What is the fastest way ? Is it Kundalini Yoga ?*

V: Whatever way can be fast if you put into it your whole being. You must be 100% engaged in the spiritual path. "*Solo Dios basta*", as Avila wrote. But this is possible only by the grace of a Sadguru.

Q: *What do you think about Tantra (of the right hand) ?*

V: The Tantras (or *Agamas*) are a group of Holy Scriptures treating about *Tantrism*. This is one of the main ways in India, leading towards knowledge of the Self, that is freedom. While other ways (for example *Vedanta*) give great importance to the renunciation of pleasures available in a society, instead *Tantrism* accepts them at the beginning, with one objective : to deify them. They are the five *makāras* : sexual union, wine, meat, etc...but in the right hand's *Tantrism*, they are recalled only symbolically. The words *tantric* or *tantrism* have a negative connotation in the common Indian language, because they smell of magic, specially black magic. We rather use the terms of *sakti* and *saktism*. *Shakti* is one of the appearances of the Divine Mother, who is (with *Shiva*) a form of worship in that road.

Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroff) wrote several books about *Tantrism*. His book "*Shakti and Shaktas*" is a brilliant exposition and it became a classic, even among Hindu *pandits*.

Q : Why Ma came to earth at a precise moment ? What was her mission, or her missions, if she had several ? I know there was a strong call for the Divine Mother among the devotees from Bengal. I think she has come for them and so not necessarily for me who was not part of them.

V : Ma told us she had no previous life (she had no *prārabdha karma*). Being perfect, she had no volition. So it seems that the Divine might have taken a human appearance to answer the call of such devotees (it's more or less what she said to Bhaiji). When the Divine comes to earth it's generally with a special mission. In the case of Ma, I think her mission was to reawaken the ancient traditions from the Vedic times. But when the Divine comes down among the humans, he projects such a powerful beam of light that all the ones coming to his contact can feel its benefit, from whatever kind they are, whatever social circles, or whatever religion.

[To be continued]

"I BELONG TO EVERYONE"

Sri Ma Anandamayi

—Bithika Mukerji

An usual scene of departure at the Howrah Railway Station. Sri Ma is sitting at the window of her compartment while the throng of devotees are milling around in front of it on the platform. Sri Ma was smilingly conversing with those close at hand and looking graciously at those who were at the fringe of the crowd.

An emotional scene for many. One lady shedding tears called out, "Ma, tell us atleast that you belong to us !" The train was in motion : Sri Ma said, "I belong to everyone !"

The lady was probably disappointed, not realizing that she had evoked an answer which was startling in its self-revelation import. Before as well as after August 27, 1982 the truth of Sri Ma's gracious words was borne out again and again endlessly. In odd corners of the world I have been amazed to find the presence of Sri Ma as vibrant and ful-filling as in any of her ashrams in India.

I happened to be in Milano (Italy) in the summer of 1985. I was staying with my friend Dr. Caterina Conio who had invited me for a conference. Dr. Caterina Conio was Professor of Sanskrit at the Pisa University but she lived in Milano. She had spent sometime in Varanasi for her studies in Sanskrit and knew something of India and had met Sri Ma as well.

One evening Caterina and I were talking about Sri Ma. She asked me pertinent questions and I did my best to give answers. Her friend Marinella came to visit her and was drawn into the conversation. Caterina and Marinella were demanding in their questions and I by Sri Ma's grace became very articulate.

All three of us were happy with this session of *matri-satsang*. Marinella went away saying that it was her night of visiting the sick in a hospital.

Next morning Marinella rang up Caterina and related her strange experience at the hospital. It was her custom to sit a while with a very sick and ailing old man whenever she visited the hospital. On the previous evening she had found the patient in pain and very restless. In order to distract his mind she had said, "I am coming just now from a friend's house where I have heard tidings of great joy for everyone. Marinella then repeated to this old man all that she had heard about Sri Ma's divine ways of being in the world; her message of hope, her assurance that God is ever attainable in this life.

The old man listened to Marinella with great interest and seemed to grow calm and serene. He seemed at peace with himself as if he had experienced something of

Sri Ma's grace. In the morning the hospital had rung up Marinella to say that this old man had died peacefully in his sleep during the night.

Marinella wondered very much. It was as if the old man was just waiting to hear about Sri Ma, as if he was touched by her inimitable aura of peace.

It was my turn to wonder at Sri Ma's *lila*. A concatenation of events and how Sri Ma could reach out to one who needed her most.

[To be continued]

DIVINE MOTHER

—Dhiraj Sapru

'am drenching in love-all over again
 'am losing myself-all over again
 gushing in's the nectar-all over again
 brimming every pour-all over again
 the feeling's tranquil-all over again
 'am blowin' in the wind-all over again
 'am one with life-all over again
 joy knows no bound-all over again
 eternity is mine-all over again
 triumph quells on-all over again
 i rule-i rule-all over again
 'am humble 'n' fluid-all over again

life is square -all over again
 rays sparkle on-all over again
 merciful is SHE-all over again
 time don't exist-all over again
 sleep is restful-all over again
 waking is crowd-all over again
 the pace's swift-all over again
 there ain't no lapse-all over again
 the mind's placid-all over again
 the eye heholds-all over again
 vibrations are blessed-all over again
 existence is lucid-all over again
 jai ma.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

—Sri P.C. Mehta

JAINISM

1. General:

According to Jaina orthodoxy, the Jaina religion is eternal. There is no God or Supreme Spiritual Being. The world process functions in accordance with its nature which is its own innate laws. Jainism deals with matters of abiding importance to man which is the divinity of every soul and every soul's capacity to become '*Siddha-Paramesthin*' i.e. come to enlightenment and thereby become divine.

Jainism does not subscribe to the Hindu view that creation and destruction of the world goes on at regular intervals. The Jainas believe that the world has never had a beginning and will never end. However, like Hinduism they believe that cycles of involution and evolution go on eternally. They call the period of involution '*Avasarpini*', which is followed by a period of evolution called '*Utsarpini*'. '*Avasarpini*' being the descending era, in it virtue gradually decreases and '*Utsarpini*' being the ascending era, virtue begins to flourish. We are in the '*Avasarpini*' era.

There is mention of a very old non-Vedic religion called '*Nigantha*' in old Buddhist works. It probably arose in the later Vedic period. Corruption had crept into the older teachings and Vardhamana Mahavira who was a contemporary of Gautama Buddha revived this religion in about 600 B.C.

According to legend the earliest '*Tirthankara*' or ford-maker was Aristanemi. He is believed to have died before the Nirvana in about 468 B.C. of the last Tirthankara, (Nataputta) Vardhamana Mahavira. Jainas claim that in this our age of '*Avasarpini*', 24 Tirthankaras have appeared. Rishabha-deva whose name appears in the Rig Veda is considered to be the first of these '*Tirthankaras*' 'Rishabha' means 'bull'. This animal was revered in the Indus Valley culture, which suggests the ancient character of this religion. Rishabhadeva's story as a great saint appears in the Visnu and the Bhagavat Purana. The names of the other Tirthankaras are Ajitanath, Sambhavanath, Abhinandan Swami, Sumatinath, Padmaprabhu, Suparswanath, Chandraprabhu, Suvidhinath, Sitalnath, Shreyansanath, Vasupujya Swami, Vimalanath, Anantanath, Dharmanath, Shantinath, Kunthunath, Arnath, Mallinath, Muni Suvrata Swami, Namijin, Naminath (a contemporary of Lord Sri

Krisna), Parswanatha and Vardhamana Mahavira. Vardhamana styled '*Mahavira*' or 'Great hero' is the 24th and the last '*Tirthankara*'. Parswanatha who flourished in about 800 B.C. is claimed to be the last but one '*Tirthankara*'. He founded an order called the '*Nirgranthas*' meaning 'free from bond'. In iconography he is shown in meditation, with hooded serpents above his head. According to legend Parswanatha had befriended these snakes in a past life, and they are protecting him now from a great storm caused by an enemy.

There is however no evidence about the historicity of '*Tirthankaras*', other than Rsabhadeva, Parswanatha and Vardhamana Mahavira.

Vardhamana was born in about 540 B.C., in princely Kshatriya family, who were the rulers of '*Jnatrikas*'. He was born at Vaisali, the capital of Videha. Vaisali is modern **Besari**, near Patna. His parent's names were Siddhartha and Trisala. Trisala was the sister of the King of Videha. They worshiped Parswanatha. He married Yasoda; had one daughter and lived in the house of his parents till they died. When he was twenty-eight years old he entered upon the spiritual path. He then became a monk and took '*Sanyasa*' i.e. renounced every thing, and led a wandering life of severe austerity and meditation. He joined Parshwa's Order of Nirgranthas and wore clothes; as was allowed; but after thirteen months he adopted nudity and retained this custom for the rest of his life. During the following six years, he travelled about with Gosala, a fellow Nirgranthi-ascetic. Gosala was of the view that the effect of karma could not be modified to bring about a better birth or *Moksa*. That '*Niyati*' or destiny ruled supreme. Mahavira's conviction was that man had the freedom to overcome *karmic* back-lash through tenacious effort. On this point they separated, with Gosala founding the school called '*Ajivikas*', which lasted till the 14th century A.D. In the thirteenth year after renunciation, he came to enlightenment. He then became a '*Jina*' i.e. 'The victorious one' from '*Ji*' to conquer. It is from this word, that the word '*Jainism*' i.e. 'The religion of the followers of *Jina*' is derived. For many years after enlightenment, he preached his doctrine. He gathered many followers and greatly influenced the kingdoms around the Ganges river. King Bimbisara of Magadha, a contemporary of Mahavira supported him. Some kings supported both Mahavira as well as Buddha. In about 468 B.C., at the age of 72, a few years earlier than Gautama Buddha, he left his mortal body through starvation, in the small town of Pava, near Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha. During the Mauryan dynasty, c. 322-183 B.C. Jainism gained strength. In practicing Jainism, the Maurya emperor Chandragupta Maurya, following Bhadrabahu's example fasted unto death on one of the hillocks

overlooking the village of Sravana Belgola. Thus has come about the belief that the "wise man's death" is the fast-unto-death, called *samlekhana*.

Though Jainism has spread widely, its influence is confined only to India. It has till this day, scrupulously preserved its ancient customs, institutions and doctrines.

Because Jainism denies a creator or a sustainer, it is often called *nāstika* or atheistic. To understand the Jaina view, we have to first determine what is meant by the word *nāstika*. The initial meaning of the word *nāstika* is 'one that does not believe in a life beyond, i.e. one who does not believe in a surviving soul'. In this sense all Indian doctrines except materialism are not *nāstika*. In its modified form, the word *nāstika* is also used to denote those who repudiate the authority of the Vedas. Jainism does repudiate the authority of the Vedas and therefore in this sense it is *nāstika*.

When we use the word 'atheistic', its dictionary meaning is 'denial of the existence of God'. Then the question arises whether Jainism is atheistic or not. Since Jainism does not believe in a God as the creator or a sustainer, it can be called atheistic.

However, it believes in the divinity of every soul and every soul's capacity to come to enlightenment or become divine. All liberated souls are gods. The perfected person is called *Siddha Paramesthin* as well as *Paramātman* or Supreme Spirit, who is the object of worship; so that the devotee may realize the qualities of such a one within himself. Thus, though Jainism does not believe in Supreme God, it is highly religious.

We cannot overlook the fact that theistic systems are generally anthropomorphic. If God needs to create a world, it means that he feels a want which is inconsistent with his perfection as the Supreme. They bring down God to the level of man. Jainism, on the other hand looks upon man himself as God when his inherent powers are fully developed. Jainism recognizes that *karma* is adequate to explain creation as well as man's condition therein and impresses on the individual his complete freedom and responsibility for what he does. Jainism more than any other religion gives absolute religious independence and freedom to man.

It places great emphasis on *Ahimsā* or non-violence and repudiates animal sacrifice and thus like Vaisnavism, (see 12.4.9), it represents a reform of Brahmanism. No layman will intentionally kill even an insect. They are not only strict vegetarians, but do not eat roots such as potatoes, carrots, yams etc., because they claim that by eating roots, man destroys valuable plant life at the very source. According to them, the most appropriate food for human consumption is grains,

vegetables and fruits which the plant life discards, or willingly offers to man. The *Digambaras* (see 5.3) maintain that perfect Tirthankaras live without food.

2. Two sects of Jainism:

There are two principal sects of Jainism, known as,

i) *Digambaras*. literally 'Sky-clad' and ii) '*Svetāmbaras*', literally 'White-clad'.

Around 300 B.C. during Mauryan dynasty, there was a great famine when many Jaina monks led by the eminent patriarch Bhadrabahu migrated from the Ganges plato to South India, spreading their religion there. Following Mahavira, they had retained their conservative nudist tradition but those who continued in the Northernly region allowed the wearing of white clothes.

Thus the holy men who wore white apparel came to be called *Svetāmbaras* meaning clad in white, while the holy men who remained naked, were called *Digambaras*, means those who regard the four directions as their raiment. They believe in nudism as a sign of their independence from worldly customs and attachments. Their belief is that nobody who owns anything, even a piece of loin-cloth, is fitted to attain salvation.

The difference between the two sects does not lie in the doctrine, but in ceremonial practice. Both accept the authority of *Uttar-Adhyayana Sutra*, which is one of the four *Mula-Sutras*.

After Mahavira's time the Jaina community spread along the caravan routes from Magadha, the present Bihar, to the west and south. By the fifth century, the *Digambaras* were influential in the Deccan, especially in Karnataka. Under the Ganga, Rastrakuts, and other dynasties, Jaina culture flourished. Numerous sects were founded, among them the brilliant *Kapaniya*, now extinct. In the tenth century, however, Vaishnavism and Saivism overwhelmed Jainism in the Tamil area, and in the twelfth century they prevailed over Jainism in Karnataka as well.

As for *Svetāmbaras*, they were especially successful in Gujarat where one of their famous priest Hemachandra (1089-1172), served as minister to the Calukya King Kumarapala (1144-1173) and enforced some Jaina rules in the kingdom. Soon after the death of King Kumarapala, hastened by the Muslim rule, Jaina activities declined, but did not cease. Elaborate sanctuaries were erected, such as the famous Delwara temples on Mount Abu, in Rajasthan.

The vitality of the *Svetāmbaras* is seen from the fact that they even succeeded in getting interested the Moghul emperor Akbar (1555-1605 A.D.) in the Jaina doctrine, and the rise of several reformist sects from among them. The *Sthanakvasins* founded in 1635 and the *Terapanthins* founded in 1761 survived.

They are known for their strong opposition to idol and temple worship. The *Terapanthin* monk Acarya Sri Tulsi, founded in 1949 the present *Anuvrata* movement.

Nowadays, the *Digambaras* are firmly established in Maharashtra and Karnataka and the *Svetāmbaras* in Punjab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat. Jaina businessmen are active in all the main cities in India and outside India they are known for their contribution to the economic life of the country they visit or adopt.

3. The Jaina Scriptures:

According to tradition the teachings of Mahavira's times, now called the fourteen *Purvas* meaning former texts were orally transferred from teacher to pupil as was the custom then. The last to remember these teachings without further transferring them was an elder-named Bhadrabahu who flourished in 300 B.C. A council met after his death to reassemble these '*Siddhānta*' or canons. They reduced the teachings in twelve *Angas* meaning 'parts'. The *Digambaras* could not accept them as authentic and hence began to compose their own version.

Then in the fifth or sixth century A.D. at a place called Valabhi under Devardhi, the *Svetāmbaras* convened another council to determine the authentic '*Siddhānta*' or canon. In spite of all the problems of determining the authentic teachings at this late date, they formulated so well the scriptures written in the Prakrit Ardhamagadhi language that they were accepted both by the *Svetāmbaras* as well as the *Digambaras*. They are the eleven *Angas* which are the oldest extant Jaina spiritual records. Then there are twelve *Upāngas*, ten *Prakirna*, six *Cheda-sutras*, *Nandi*, *Anuyogadvara* and four *Mula-Sutras*. There are many other works in Sanskrit and Prakrit, which are not ancient.

The extant eleven *Angas* lay down the Jaina doctrines, glorification of asceticism and rules of the ascetic life, moralizing tales, ethics for laymen, heretical views of Hindus and Buddhists and the importance of death by voluntary starvation.

The twelve *Upāngas* deal with the beliefs of Jainas in matters of cosmogony, geography, astronomy, divisions of time etc, proofs for the existence of the soul, heaven and hell etc.

Then there are commentaries on scriptures written by monks during the middle ages. There are also works called *Charitas* by *Svetāmbāras* and *Purānas* by the *Digambaras*. They are similar to Epics and Puranas of the Hindus. The best-known work of this type is Hemachandra's *Trishashtishalāka-Purusa-charita*. It contains the biographies of the 'Sixty-three Excellent Men', who appear in every half-cycle

of each time wheel. They are twenty *Tirthankaras*, twelve *Chakravartins* or universal emperors, and other great leaders, totaling sixty-three. The appendix in this work contains many tales.

4. Realistic nature of Jainism:

The Jaina doctrine believes in the objective existence of the outside world. The object known is regarded as existing outside and independently of knowledge. 'As surely as there is a subject that knows, so surely is there an object that is known'. Experience without something that is experienced is meaningless.

The Jaina doctrine is therefore considered realistic.

5. Pluralistic nature of Jainism:

The Jaina doctrine also believes in the reality of both *Jiva* or spirit and *Ajiva* or matter. Both are eternal and uncreated and though they exist independently of each other, their nature cannot be known without being contrasted with each other. The doctrine therefore is pluralistic. Thus Jaina doctrine is pluralistic realism.

We have seen the absolutistic view of reality in the Upanisads. We have mentioned the pluralistic view of the Buddhists. We will see that the Jaina view that reality consists of a permanent principle (not unchanging), on which are grafted origination and destruction as its modes. As such nothing can be affirmed *absolutely* about reality. It is thus relative pluralism or *Anekāntavāda*.

PAGES FROM THE DIARY
OF
DIDI GURUPRIYA

[Translated From Bengali]

Chittagong, January 24, 1937.

It had been decided earlier that we would leave for Adinath* today after Jyotish dada's arrival. Ma wanted to leave as scheduled and when Bholanath and other devotees tried to postpone her departure, She said, "When I have had the *kheyal* to leave today, let us go to Sitakund today."

Accordingly we left for Sitakund by the eleven a.m. train. Sashi Babu accompanied Ma and arranged for her stay at the Shankar Math. As soon as the sannyasis at Shankar Math saw Ma they welcomed her with great regard. We were given accommodation in a beautiful house on the hill top. The place was very quiet, and extremely lovely.

Sitakund, January 25.

Early in the morning Ma went for a walk in the mountains. Then she sat in her room and conversed. I said, "Ma, the other day you had said that on reading that one book, nothing remains unknown." Ma confirmed, "Yes, so it is. On reading that one book, not only all languages, but no subject also remains unknown. For example, take the *rishi* who is the seer of mantras; an example cannot illustrate every aspect; understand it."

Many devotees from Chittagong have arrived today and Jyotish dada has also reached. As soon as he arrived he heard that his one and only daughter had passed away. But by Ma's grace he did not get upset even slightly, so that it seemed as if nothing had happened; externally this was the manner in which he appeared to us.

A brahmachari from the Bholagiri ashram came and requested Ma to visit their ashram.

In the evening many devotees gathered and Ma conversed on a variety of topics. In the course of conversation Ma said, "Those who have real faith in and reverence

* Adinath is the name of a famous temple situated on an island in the Bay of Bengal beyond Cox Bazar in Bangladesh.

for the Guru cannot hate anyone. If they hate anybody, it is tantamount to hating the Guru, because it is imperative to have the faith that the Guru is the greatest and that he is present in everyone. And courage is an important part of sadhana."

The brahmachari of the Bholagiri ashram raised a point from the Bhagavad Gita, "Well Ma, in the stanza from the Gita which says, '*sarva dharmān parityājya...*', are we being told to take refuge in Krishna - the Krishna who was Devaki's son?" Ma replied, "Baba, from an external point of view, you have never taught this girl the Gita. But whenever anyone reads this stanza he reckons, 'Pray to me' - who does this 'me' imply? *Paramātmā*. Then the question arises - who was Krishna? *Paramātmā*, wasn't he?"

Then the conversation proceeded, "*Svadharme nidhanam shreyah paradharma bhayavaha*. Ma commented, "What is the meaning of *dharma*? That which upholds. The thief is upheld by his knowledge of thievery, but then the thief turns into a sadhu. In that case thievery was not his *svadharna*, because one's true *dharma* never undergoes any change. That which changes is not *dharma*, it is *adharma*. Your *svabhāva* is *dharma*, anything else is *para dharna* (*adharma*) and it is always bad for you to take on *para dharna*. But in the world just as fire and water have their own *dharmas*, according to *samskāras* each one expresses his own *svabhāva* and with *Guru sakti* that is again turned towards God."

Brahmachari again questioned Ma, "Well Ma, what is the meaning of the saying, 'Brahma is true, the universe is false'?" Ma replied smilingly, "Long ago once when I was walking back from the Kali temple at Ramna, I met three ladies clad in saffron clothes. One of them abruptly confronted me and while talking on various matters stated, 'Look, Brahma is true, the universe is false'. In reply to that I said, 'How shall I say that the universe is false? For, every one is born into this universe and you have taken birth and are now seeing the universe; only when true knowledge dawns can the universe be called false.'" On hearing this the three sannyasinis began protesting. "What discussion can you have with a woman who wears white clothes and a veil! What can she say, and so on." Ma narrated this and began laughing.

Then the brahmachari continued, "Ma, some people opine that the Brahman has itself changed and become the universe; therefore the universe is also true and so am I." Ma replied, "From one point of view this is also true. The creation and dissolution of this universe is without beginning or end and in that sense one must accept the universe as true. But what is the use of hearing such talk? You will hear

with one ear and let it go out with the other. Listening is worthwhile only if the ideas are put into practice. Otherwise, even the listening is not true listening."

Sitakund, January 26.

Ma got up very early and went to the hills accompanied by Jyotish dada and Akhandananda Giri. Later when some others followed and joined Ma, she spread a blanket under a tree and sat down. Local residents who had heard of the arrival of Mataji also gathered for Ma's darshan one by one.

Since Ma would not eat today, I also went near her. It was ten o'clock and Ma kept sitting under the tree. Around noon she descended from the hill top. In the evening all gathered to sing kirtan in her presence. In Ma's proximity even that deserted hill spot was milling with people. People were coming and going from Chittagong all the time.

During conversation Ma said, "The knowledge gained from books is akin to travelling with the aid of a time table. In addition to the places mentioned in a time table, there are so many other places and items of interest. Only some outstanding places and whatever the compiler of the time table is able to express are mentioned in the time table. Using this as we go along the path we realise the existence of so many other features worthy of note and understanding. But can this all be described in a time table? Similarly, is it possible to delineate every point in the scriptures? Only those who tread the path realise that what is mentioned in scriptures is true, but beyond that also many features exist. How much then can be written in scriptures? Those who witness for themselves see many other things and understand them. Just as you refer to a time table and travel by train, so must you, at first, move ahead according to scriptural injunctions. But scriptural statements also have infinite meanings hidden within them."

Tonight the moon shone brightly and for a long time Ma remained seated outdoors. Devotees and other visitors sat surrounding Ma, listening to her sweet talk till 11 p.m.

Sitakund, January 27.

This morning again Ma went to the hills accompanied by a couple of people. She spent quite some time there before coming down. Many people had gathered for Ma's darshan and since the room had become overcrowded Ma sat out side The brahmachari, who was the *mahant* of the Math, revered Ma greatly. Every day he sent Ma samples of each item prepared in their kitchen.

Later in the afternoon he came and conversed with Ma and many others also gathered. As soon as he came Ma told him, "Baba, please say something to these people. I am your daughter and I know nothing." The brahmachari replied, "You say you are a child and understand better, But look at this congregation of people who are gazing intently at you, waiting for your lovely speech ! I have been here for the past sixteen or seventeen years, but never have I been able to collect such a crowd. The real reason for this is that these people see in you the kind of bliss that they have not been able to achieve, and therefore they come to you. And in order to hear your sweet words they are gazing at your face."

Ma smiled and replied, "Baba, if you want to put in that way then we have to admit that these people have tasted that sweetness. Therefore I say that everything lies within one's self. Man searches for unbroken bliss because he is not satisfied with partial happiness. Everybody longs for peace and bliss. But they are not satisfied with worldly peace and happiness and pursue complete peace and bliss, so we have to accept that they do have an experience of this total bliss; and therefore they do not remain satisfied with partial happiness. Hence, sadhana is imperative. Imagine that all want to go to the sea, but there are many routes leading to the sea. All of you please grant a request made by this girl. Give a little time to progress towards that direction. At home you grant so many requests made by your sons and daughters. Please do oblige and grant this one request made by this girl."

One person asked, "Ma, when we view events we observe that even when man tries hard he is unable to achieve his desire. The doctor attempts desperately to save his patient, but the patient dies. The lawyer is so keen to win the case and makes every effort, yet he is unsuccessful. The farmer labours endlessly, hoping that he will get a good yield, but his desire remains unfulfilled. When man has no power, then everything happens according to His will. Therefore if he takes us, only then can we go in that direction. Our efforts will not achieve anything."

Ma replied, "Look, we do not have the right to say such a thing. Because, this 'He' that you speak about is only at the talking level. Actually we have no acquaintance with Him at all. By really practising sadhana such a state is attained when the *sadhaka* realises that he has no ability of his own and that he is only doing what He makes him do. Now I am asking you to apply only as much effort as you are able to, that is to engage whatever energy you have in practising sadhana. After that whatever He wills will happen - this is an eternal truth. But where is that experience at this stage ? When that is actually experienced, sorrow and troubles no longer exist. Just as you carry on writing, studying and doing all other work with the conviction that you are doing it, similarly put some effort in going in that

direction. You believe that you can do everything, but when it comes to spiritual work you say, 'If He does not make us do it how will we do it?' This is unacceptable."

Ma countered, "It is only to establish that state that you are being told to work at least a little in that direction. I never say anything. Whatever you all make me say is being uttered."

Evening drew on as the conversation continued. The people did *pranam* and took leave of Ma.

After dusk a couple of gentlemen arrived again. A poet asked Ma, "Well Ma, one can see such wonderful powers in ordinary people. For example, exorcists learn mantras to drive away spirits and actually do so. In order to cross this ocean of *samsāra* so many people engage in japa and such other practices. But I can see no power of mantras emanating from them."

Ma replied, "What happens when you learn a mantra, Baba ? The fact is that it is easy to learn all these worldly mantras and if you could learn the mantras on that path you would definitely see the power of those mantras - but the mantra towards 'That' has not been properly imbibed. But you incur a resulting gain from whatever you learn. The *kriyā* of *Guru sakti* also surely exists."

The same person said, "But japa and other practices are performed by many." Ma replied, "If that were so easy, it could not be labelled, 'hard to get'. So many *rishis* and *munis* have performed intense sadhana and gone - this fact is not even recorded."

Sitakund, January 28.

A number of devotees who had come from Chittagong in the morning left for *darshan* of Chandranath. They returned after 1-30 P. M. Then conversation started.

Ma asked, "Alright, who is a man ?" Many men who were seated near Ma began laughing. Ma also laughed and told the ladies, "Look, just as you all gaze at your husband's faces and ask for something, men also turn towards someone and pray for the fulfilment of their desires; therefore they are also women! No longing and no shortcoming. He remains unmoved and calm. Thus, all long for that Supreme Lord and therefore all are women." So saying Ma began laughing.

In the evening many of the devotees from Chittagong left and those who stayed back sat with Ma on the verandah. A gentleman had purchased three pairs of *kartāl* for his grand children and Ma took one pair and began playing with it singing, 'Hari bol' with her sweet voice. Everyone joined in singing 'Hari bol'. I had never seen Ma playing with the kartal before - this was the first time. Surprisingly

she played it so beautifully it seemed as if she had practised well playing it. She then spoke on various matters and delighted the people around her. Around eleven p.m. everyone retired for the night.

Today a lady disclosed the following anecdote : Her legs had become totally useless and she was unable to walk. One night she dreamt that she had been to Anandamayi Ma and that she had regained her strength. Her father was in Dhaka and after prolonged treatment her condition had improved slightly. Meanwhile Ma went to Dhaka for a week and as soon as her father received information he took her to Ma's ashram. Ma was seated under a peepal tree in the compound. Later when Ma got up and went inside the ashram this lady found she could also accompany Ma. After that she gradually gained full recovery.

Sitakund, January 29

Today again she played the *kartal* and began singing—

"Jai Radhe Radhe, Krishna Krishna,

Hare Rama Hare Hare

Eyi nāma balo badane sunāo kâne

bilāo jiber dvāre dvāre."

In the afternoon many people came for Ma's darshan. The Station Master also visited Ma every evening and devotees who came from Chittagong in the evening left with him. Ma laughed and commented, "You are the one who take them across. If you stay right behind the one who takes you across, you need have no worry about crossing over." The Station Master asked, "Ma, we are worldly people - what is the remedy for us ?" Ma replied, "I know only the *Nama*. Everything is achieved by the *Nama*. Give as much time as you can for God. If you cannot do much *nama japa* then talk about God, or sing *nama kirtan* or read holy scriptures - however possible, try to spend the maximum possible amount of time in turning the mind towards Him."

In the evening Jyotish dada sang the name "Ma, Ma" and everyone joined in. Kirtan went on for a long time. At eleven p.m. all retired for rest.

Sitakund, January 30

Today again Ma went to the hills as soon as she got up. Around seven when she descended from the hills and washed her face, she said, "Come, let us all go for a walk." And she went downstairs accompanied by Jyotish dada, Swami Akhandananda and myself. Ma went to Bholanath and said, "Come, let us all go to

the Sambhunath Mandir.* Immediately we set out and Ma said "We shall all eat there." Hearing this, the boys packed all the necessary items and got ready with great enthusiasm. Ma started at once.

One of the ladies questioned Ma as she walked alongside, "In which land is your home?" Ma replied, "In No - land." "In which district?" "Brahma Nagar" Everyone enjoyed such conversation as we walked along. Then again some other person asked "Where is your home?" Pat came the reply, "Brahma Nagar," "Who do you have there?" Ma said, "Atmananda."

Ma reached the Sambhunath temple. It was decided that *bhoga* would be offered to lord Sambhunath and everyone would receive prasad. Ma was not to eat that day. I cooked rice with my own hands because I was forbidden from eating anything cooked by others. Ma's orders were so strict that according to the regulations she had asked me to follow, I was absolutely forbidden to eat even her prasad or any sweet-meat which had been touched by anyone else. Ma always stresses that all work has to be done properly.

The entire day was spent on the mountains. The pandas there requested Ma, "We shall be very happy if you stay with your devotees till the evening and watch the arati." Ma complied. The pandas performed the arati of Sambhunath and they also did arati to Ma. In the evening they arranged for a second session of various kinds of prasad for the devotees. Ma asked everyone to sit still and started singing *nama kirtan*, "Jai Siva Sankara Bom Bom Hara Hara."

Everyone sat steadily and joined in the kirtan. As Ma sang kirtan surrounded by her devotees who sang in unison, a strange quietude enveloped our hearts. At nine p.m. the pandas served refreshments generously to the devotees and Ma also had some. Around ten at night we left with Ma for the Shankar Math. It was a moonlit night and the devotees sang, "Ma, Ma" as they walked with her. Ma encouraged them, clapping her hands - what wonderful bliss there was! It cannot be described in words!

As soon as we returned to the math, Ma became extremely quiet again. She lay down and did not speak anything after that. Noticing her mood all of us lay down quietly.

Sitakund, January 31

Today again Ma went to the hills in the morning but sat quietly. Her *bhāva* was such that it caused a feeling of awe in us-what a strange *bhāva* it was! She did not

* Sambhunath mandir is a famous place on way to the famous Chandranath temple situated on the top of a very very steep hill in Chittagong.

seem to notice anything. I knew not why and I did not dare break her silence. I went up the hill and made Ma drink some milk. She drank very little.

The brahmachari of Bholagiri ashram (named Dasharatha) had been pressingly requesting Ma to visit their ashram; Ma was to go there this afternoon. At three p.m. he came and took Ma down the hill, singing kirtan all the way. Ma went to the *mahant* of the math, Brahmachari Swarupananda and called him to accompany them saying, "Baba will walk ahead and the girl will follow." Such is Ma's sense of decor that there is never a flaw anywhere.

On reaching the ashram we all sat down. A raised asana had been specially placed for Ma, but Ma sat down amongst the rest. Kirtan was sung for some time and then Dasharatha brahmachari stood up and spoke starting with, "The residents of Sitakunda are indeed blessed. Today it is seven days since Ma came here and has blessed everyone." Later conversation ensued as to whether Siva or Krishna was greater. Ma laughed and said, "Everything is alright. Each person speaks correctly from his own point of view." After varied conversation the brahmachari performed arati to their guru and then to Ma. Then Dasharatha brahmachari fed Ma with his own hands and then served all the devotees with great affection. Again it was ten at night when we returned to Shankar Math

Before retiring for the night I made Ma eat some little refreshment. After eating Ma sat up and talked, but her *bhava* remained as before. At one point, in some context, Bholanath questioned, "Why did this happen?" and Ma replied at once, "Whatever has to happen will surely happen. Whatever is ordained will certainly appear." So saying she laughed.

Then the point was raised that during kirtan in Shahbagh the perfume of incense was scented though no incense had been lit. Commenting on this Ma said, "Beings in subtle bodies also help you all in your work. They come to help in the kind of work that is in tune with their nature - they always do so. Only you people are unable to see them."

Ma lay down only very late in the night, but tonight again her mood was similar - she did not become still even for a moment. I was hesitant even to speak to her, for her mood was so strange. She said, "One hand is clasped tightly over the other - they cannot be separated." I unclasped her hands hastily, but Ma turned her face and said, "Nothing is achieved by this. That day is no longer. How long will this body go on in this fashion, almost forty years have elapsed already."

My heart sank when I heard these words. But nothing could be done.

Sitakund, February 1, 1937.

Talk of returning to Chittagong was afloat; we were to leave by the three o'clock afternoon train. Ma told us to finish meals early. The residents of Sitakund including the mahant of the ashram, Brahmachari Swarupananda expressed sorrow at the thought of Ma's departure. Around two p.m. Ma left. The road was lined with people who had gathered for Ma's darshan. Some did pranam and some wept as Ma took leave.

Ma proceeded slowly on foot and reached the station which was packed with devotees, including the Station Master. The train had not yet arrived and the Station Master spoke to Ma, "Ma, nothing is happening." Ma replied, "You must take the *Nama*. In order to create a taste for the *Nama*, one's routine and diet must also be regulated accordingly. A controlled diet is necessary along with medication, without which the disease is not cured. You become a chronic patient and lay down all your responsibilities on doctor. Then be like the patient who not only eats medicines according to the doctor's prescriptions, but also moves about, sits and stands as per the doctor's instructions - only then will you obtain the fruit."

The train arrived. Sri Swarupananda Brahmachari had also come to the station. He had been staying in this place for the last eighteen years, yet today he was feeling totally restless because Ma was leaving. Ma laughed and said, "It will be so - the father's heart will surely yearn for the daughter." In addition, Ma was calling him, "Baba, Baba", because of which Baba's plight became worse ! Most of those who were standing along the route and doing pranam to Ma were the wives of poor householders. Ma smiled at each one of them and said, "Ma, shall I take leave ?" folding her hands and gazing at them, increasing their longing for her and their misery. Some of them caught hold of Ma and wept aloud. All the residents of Sitakunda were wondering, "When will we see Ma again ?" Ma told them, "You all go every evening to the math. Henceforth, take the *Nama* that you like best and do japa at that time. If I have the *Kheyal* I shall also remember you." Ma took leave of everybody in this fashion and boarded the train.

MĀYĀVĀDI VEDĀNTA AND LEELĀVĀDI VEDĀNTA

—Dr. Bireshwar Ganguly

Vedanta can be interpreted either with the *Māyāvādi* monism of Shankarācharārya (788-820 A.D.) or with the *Leelāvādi Vishista-dvaitavad* (theistic qualified monism) of Rāmānujāchārya (1027-1137 A.D.), or with the *Dvaitavād* of Madhvāchārya (1199-1278 A.D.) or with *Dvaitādvaitavād* of Nimbārkāchārya (11th Century A.D.), or with the *Shuddhādvaitavād* of Vallabhāchārya (1481-1533 A.D.) or with the *Achintyabhedābhedvāda* of Lord Chaitanya (1487-1533 A.D.), as interpreted by Krishna-dāsa Kavirāja in *Chaitanya Charitāmrita* (1616 A.D.) and by Sri Jiva Goswāmi (16th-17th Century A.D.). Bengal Vaishnavism or *Gaudiya Vaishnavism* is a religious movement inaugurated by Lord Chaitanya (Gaurānga Mahāprabhu) and elaborated by Sri Jiva Goswāmi on the lines of the philosophy of dualism of Madhvāchārya. Leelāvadi Vaishnava Vedanta consists of both the schools of qualified monism of Rāmānujāchārya and Nimbarkacharya and dualism of Madhvacharya, Sri Chaitanya, Krishnadas Kaviraj and Jiva Goswami. Mayavadi Vedanta is suitable for sannyasis and Vaishnava Vedanta is suitable for house-holders¹. For a philosophy suitable for *Yoga-sadhana* should not only be logically acceptable for the aspirant *sadhaka*, but should also be psychologically and intuitively understandable.

While dealing with the views of Sri Ramakrishna on different schools of Vedanta, Romain Rolland observes : "The three great orders of metaphysical thought—Dualism, qualified Monism, and absolute Monism—are the stages on the way to Supreme Truth. They are not contradictory, but rather are complementary, the one to the other. Each is the perspective offered to the mental stand point of one order of individuals. For the masses who are attracted through the senses, a dualistic form of religion with ceremonies, music, images, and symbols is useful. The pure intellect can arrive at qualified Monism; it knows that there is a beyond; but it cannot realise it. Realisation belongs to another order, the Advaita, the inexplicable, the formless Absolute, of which the discipline of Yoga gives a foretaste. It surpasses the logical means of word and spirit. It is the last word of

1. Vide : Acharya Bireshwar : Editorial on 'Vaishnava Vedanta in Monthly Bulletin of Vedanta Research Centre, Ranchi, Nos. 4 & 5, Aug & Sept, 2000.

'Realisation'. It is identity with the one Reality."¹ *Māyāvād versus Leelāvād* : One who believes in Absolute Monism of Shankarācharya and feels a congenial atmosphere in the *Samkhya sadhana* of Mayavad cannot logically be confined to household duties of *Grihasthashrama* and undertake *Karmayoga*, based on *Varnashrama Dharma* of *Sanatan Hindu Dharma*. He can at best undertake the work of a preacher and perform self-less social services like the monks of Buddhism, Christianity or the Ramakrishna Mission of Hinduism. The practical Vedanta of *Bhagavad Geeta* logically belongs to householders like Prince Arjuna, who was exhorted by Lord Krishna to perform his functional caste duties of a Kshatriya in a detached manner in the spirit of surrender to God. This is in fact the practical Vedanta of *Nishkāma Karma Yoga* even for house-holders for all functional castes. Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission for carrying the banner of Vedanta as taught in the Geeta for whole-time sannyasis, who engage in self-less social service in the Ramakrishnaite spirit of serving humanity as the manifestation of divinity (*Shiva jnane Jiva seva*). Mahatma Gandhi divinised political and social activity by applying the principles of practical Vedanta as found in his Geeta Mata. *Mayavadi Vedanta* : According to monistic Vedanta philosophy of Shankaracharya, *Brahman* alone is the ultimate reality, the world is an illusion, the *jivatma* or individual self is fundamentally the same as *Brahman* and not different from *Paramātmā*, the illusion of the world is apparently created by the inscrutable powers of *Brahman*, known as *Maya* and liberation consists in the recognition or realisation of the truth that the Self is ever free and this state of consciousness comes when the *Sadhaka* becomes completely desireless. This, in a nutshell, is the essence of Vedantic philosophy, as explained by Shankaracharya and other monistic philosophers of India.

Monistic Vedanta has uniformly admitted that the world of sense and intellect is an illusion, that is relative or temporary truth, having no permanent or absolute validity. The conception of dualism has no logical or ontological justification. The entire monistic Vedantic philosophical literature from Sankaracharya down to Madhusudan Saraswati is pre-occupied with the main task of providing the unreality of the objective or phenomenal world. This is done by appeal to logic as well as authority (*Shruti*). The following three are the criteria of Truth, viz., (a) authority (*Shruti*) (b) logic (*Yukti*) and (c) self-realization (*Ātmānubhuti*)

2. Romain Rolland : The Life of Ramakrishna, trans from French by E.F. Malcolm Smith, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta- 14, 1997, pp. 133-134.

Vedanta is out and out rational, but when reason fails to unravel the mysteries of Reality, it takes the help of supra-rational *pramānam* (proof).

However, it has to be remembered that the aim of Vedanta is the realization of the Self (*Atman*) and not merely a rational defence of it (the Truth). The *Atman* alone is real, that is, permanently true and not the appearance of the universe or the objective world, which is the Non-Self. The false identification of Self (*Atman*) with non-self (world) is the cause of bondage, which is nothing but the ignorance of the real nature of the Self. Therefore, freedom (*mukti* or *moksha*) is attained as soon as the ignorance disappears on the dawn of self-realization, which is the *summum bonum* of *Sadhana*. (Here may be cited the familiar analogy of the rope appearing as a snake in darkness, the fear generated by this illusion and the subsequent disappearance of the illusion, the moment light is brought).

According to *Ashtāvakra Samhitā*

यत्र विश्व मिव भाति कल्पितं रज्जुसर्पवत् ।

आनन्दपरमानन्दः स बोधस्त्वं सुखं चर ॥ (1.10)

"You are that consciousness, which is Supreme Bliss, in and upon which this universe appears superimposed, like a snake on a rope. Forget the superimposition and live happily."

Though moral discipline and detachment are needed in monistic *sadhana* for preparing the mind to be able to realize the Truth, yet what is of supreme importance is the conviction about the normative ideation. Here we may refer to the simple formula of *Ashtāvakra Samhitā* again :

मुक्ताभिमानी मुक्तो हि बद्धो बद्धाभिमान्यपि ।

किंददन्तीह सत्येयं या मतिः सा गतिर्भवेत् ॥ (1.11)

"He who considers himself free is free indeed, and he who considers himself in bondage, remains bound. "

As one thinks, so one becomes' is a popular saying in this world, and it is quite true (with regard to bondage and liberation also.)"

Now we may refer to *Māyā*, that power of Brahman, which creates the illusion of the phenomenal world and which is the principle of unreason and the source of irrationality and infatuation as well as false identification. But the *Māyā* of Vedanta is different from the Satan (Absolute Evil) of Semitic conception and *Mahāmāyā* of Tantra, which has both the powers of bondage and liberation. However, the redeeming feature of Vedantic *Māyā* is that She is also the embodiment of science

and scientific reasoning, Here we may refer to *Avidyā* of *Ishopanishad*, which comes within the purview of *Māyā*, whereas both *Avidyā* and *Vidyā* come *within* the purview of *Mahāmāyā* of *Tantra Shāshtra*.

विद्यां चाविद्यां च यस्तत्वेदोभयं सह ।

आविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा विद्ययाऽमृतमश्नुते ॥ (Isha, 11)

One who knows *vidyā* (*Brahmajñānam*) and *avidyā* (scientific knowledge) together, solves the problems of the world of death by *avidyā* and attains the bliss of immortality of *vidyā*."

[To be continued]



OM AIM

—Antonio Eduardo Dagnino

Only sound,
the music of the spheres,
the perfect rhythm
that harmonizes energy
and articulates creation.

Only music,
the song of life and the song of death
singing your completeness,
because you are the song
and you are its witness.

The immensity of the void
and in that space
a light,
and within that light
The WORD that gives birth to all words.

The logos
contained as timeless silence
in the stillness of the Absolute
and expressing the Absolute
in time,
as seed vibrations
that spell multiplicity,
pleasure and pain,
action and ecstasy.

The One truth
becoming relative
and yet One in every part.

The One sound
becoming atoms, forms, universes,
an infinite depth of Being
divided and playing with itself;
the perfectly free intelligence
crystalized as thoughts,
as self-centered awareness,
as memory attached to forms
and *karma* feeding on contradiction.

But in the rock bottom nadir of suffering,
in the culmination of heroic mental strife,
in the zenith of introspection,
in that moment of supreme aloneness
in which only death is,
silence is born,
and the immeasurable blessing of peace
that unites again
the born and the unborn,
the child and the Mother...
the many thoughts dissolved in joy.

Matrix of revelations,
pure river of Eternal Wisdom,
that feeds mankind
showing the ways to liberation
according to the needs of evolution.

You are the purest art,
the sublime poetry of the seers,
the quintessence of religions,
the underlying goodness
beyond relative good and bad.

... And you are also confusion,
language used to lie,
thought used to divide,
strength used to exploit.

You create myriad illusory wants
that death defeats,
to teach us, by forcing us to use our discrimination
and search for truth and immortality,
that you are all in all,
and That which is beyond.

"Why should there be so many different religious sects and sub-sects ? Through every one of them He gives Himself to Himself, so that each person may advance according to his individual uniqueness."

— Ma Anandamayee

OUR VISIT TO RANCHI

—Shraddha Davenport

On December fourth Mother would go by night train to Ranchi. We could not get reservation in Her train but with the help of Sanjit, a new friend and Patna resident, Satya was to get a coupe for that very night, December third. Thus we could meet Mother's train when it arrived the morning of December fifth in Ranchi.

I had just finished packing our things when Chitra came to our room for a last visit. She would not be coming to Ranchi but would rejoin Mother in January. We wanted to pranam to Mother leaving that night. Chitra said that we would probably be unable to see Her, and we were very disappointed. Then She said. "Well, if we go now, we might be able to get in for a minute." Seizing that opportunity, we quickly went to Hathwa House, purchased garlands, and following our "guardian angel" Chitra, entered into the courtyard where Mother was seated.

After offering pranams and garlands, we sat at Mother's feet for a few precious moments as She smiled at us and gave us each an apple. When Mother left we exchanged affectionate good-byes with Chitra, went to collect our luggage, and took a taxi to the station.

Our compartment was comfortable and we slept until 6:30 am. The train arrived in Ranchi at 9:30 a.m.

With assistance from Dr. K.P. Roy of Mother's Ranchi Ashram we got a lovely room at the Raj Hotel which had a wonderful vegetarian restaurant. Our spacious room was bright and clean, with mosquito netting over the beds. After unpacking and settling in, we ate, relaxed, and went to bed early. Mother's train would arrive the next morning and we wanted to be there to greet Her.

I awoke at 6.00 a.m. Sung inside my sleeping bag. I looked through the mosquito netting at the soft light coming through the ornamental iron work over our windows. Puja bells were ringing as Ranchi worshipped God and the day began.

Rickshaws carried us to the train station and we stood on the platform amid other devotees as Mother's train arrived. When the train stopped, Satya was standing at the window facing Mother's compartment door. He filmed as She came out. Those pictures captured the joy of the devotees as Mother stepped from the train. One lady was waiving incense, gently doing arati to Mother, oblivious of anything but Her. A great wave of people followed in Mother's wake as She was escorted to Her flower-bedecked car.

I was staying back a little, holding our garlands. A very kind gentleman kept telling me to go forward and present the flowers to Mother. After urging me towards Her three times, and other people also making way for me, I approached the open door where Mother sat. Looking into Her wonderful eyes I bowed before her, presenting our garlands, then received Her blessings as She put them over my head and smiled at me.

We were so intoxicated with the mood that enveloped us that we stood on the edge of the street as first Mother's car left. Then a car full of sadhus waived to us as they followed. Satya took movies as two more cars full of ashramites and devotees smiled as we waved to them while they drove away. Soon we awoke to find that we were the only ones left standing there and we had not arranged for a car. Laughing, we managed to get two rickshaws and proceeded to the ashram.

Mother was seated inside the temple near the Kali shrine. Many people were seated before Her facing the shrine. We found a side window where we could stand and have an unobstructed view of Mother. Nirvananandaji pointed to us and told Mother that we were there.

In the evening we returned for darshan on the roof outside Mother's room. Two staircases leading up were packed solid with people and once on the roof a surge of devotees moved towards Mother as She sat just inside Her doorway. Someone quickly shut Her door. We got to see Her through Her window for a while then everyone was made to go downstairs.

The next morning we came to the temple hall for darshan and stood at our same side window. Among those seated before Mother was a beautiful Swamiji with long white hair and beard. His shining countenance drew my attention and I hoped for the chance to meet him. When the satsang was ended, the swamiji came out of the side door and walked straight to where we stood. He held me with his eyes, and when I stooped to touch his feet he caught my hands and I had to raise up in order not to have him bowing. He asked our names, then I asked his. "Swami Jnanananda Giri," he told me. Then he said, "We shall meet again," and he was gone. Where but India could such extra ordinary things happen in a most natural and ordinary way ?

Mother's presence had been requested at Ritu Palace, the residence of the Maharaja of Chota Nagpur in Bihar. A car was taking Her party there. We shared a taxi with our friend Shuddhananda, an American devotee, and set out to follow Mother. We were about thirty minutes behind Her. As we drove down a road some distance out of town we were all remarking upon the beauty of a peaceful little lake on our left. Ducks sat silently on the water and fishermen were casting their nets.

Suddenly Shuddhananda told our driver to turn around as Mother's car was coming from the opposite direction with two others following Her. They had driven beyond the turn off to the palace and were returning. It was as though Mother had waited for us to reach that charming lake, then appeared to show us the way. Otherwise we would have missed the road to Rutu Palace and the ensuing *lila*.

Our car fell right in behind theirs, going up a narrow dirt road across from the lake. Soon we came on to the palace grounds. Several young men dressed in yellow stood beside the driveway blowing conchshells accompanied by the sound of deep rolling drums as Mother's car entered. Further in, as Her vehicle arrived at the family temple, a red carpet was laid at Her door, stretching towards the temple entrance. As Mother stepped out, a lady spread rose petals upon the carpet before Mother as She walked to the temple.

Inside the temple an elegant seat had been prepared for Mother. She was draped in a lovely red sari and bedecked with an array of flowers as arati was done to her. The conch and drum sounds were intensified by the Bengali ladies to trilling to Divine Mother.

Upon leaving the temple, Mother was again seated in Her car. It drove a short distance then stopped. No one else approached as She waited. I went near Her window and stood watching as She toyed with the little red thread which had been tied around Her small left wrist. She instructed a young brahmachari to give prasad to us, accepted our pranams, and was driven away.

After lunch at our hotel we went to the ashram. I hoped to meet Swami Jnanananda again. We stood at our window and could see Mother as She sat near the Kali shrine. The swamiji was seated in the hall facing Her. Darshan did not last long that day, and after Mother left the hall Swamiji again came out the side door near where we stood. I had my polaroid camera with me and asked if I might take his picture. He gave his consent and I took two photos, but there was not enough light. He agreed that I could try again tomorrow.

"Swamiji", I asked, "will I attain liberation?" He said, yes, that I would. "Do you promise?" I urged. He hesitated a moment. Then said, "Yes." "When. Swamiji?" I pleaded. He smiled softly as he said, "In time." As he left he told us that he would return in the morning at 8:00 a.m. His gentle voice and saintly nature were so compelling. It was a blessing to be in his presence. It was becoming difficult to get close to Mother as the crowds increased. I felt that she had kindly led us to meet Swami Jnanananda who spoke from the same one-pointedness as She.

The next morning, standing at our side window darshan spot, we saw Mother briefly, then waited for Swamiji to come out. He asked if I wanted to take the

photos. I was pleased to get several beautiful pictures of him, then he spoke with us about finding Mother within ourselves. I said, "Yes, this is the problem—how to do that?" He replied, "Japa". He said that the *diksha* Mother had given me would do it. I asked, "How do you know that Mother has given me initiation?" He smiled and said that he could tell that from my face. That the face was a reflection of the mind.

Swamiji suggested that I should learn Sanskrit, Bengali, and Hindi. I told him that I had tried to learn Hindi, but that my small mind was unable to grasp it. He said that I had been in contact with some big minds, now that would help me. I told him how Mother had once told me that I had not enough spiritual *jnana* and that he was my *jnana*. Everyone laughed at the play on his name.

Slowly walking from the side, past the front of the building, we were drawn to enter the office door. There we found Swami Paramanandaji sitting with a gentleman called Manubhai Bhimani. Manubhai had a most remarkable experience two years ago. He told us that his family members were devotees of Mother but that he had been a confirmed atheist when he was involved in a very serious accident. He had been taken to a hospital where distraught relatives could not accept the news when told that he had died. They rushed to tell Mother. Mother told them not to remove his body from the hospital that day. His body remained lifeless for eighteen hours. When at last he opened his eyes he was no longer an atheist, and very much alive.

Manubhai introduced us to his friends Mr. and Mrs. C.K. Somany from Calcutta. They kept a house in Ranchi and had requested Mother to come there. The family wished to do Mother's puja on the grounds of their lovely home. Mother had consented to go and Manubhai received Her permission for Satya and me to attend. It was a joy to have Mother's darshan in this peaceful setting and the Somany's did worship of Mother with great devotion. Afterwards we went with the family and Manubhai to a large hall for Mother's darshan and Matri satsang. We basked in the luxury of sitting one hour gazing at Her as She talked with the devotees.

Mother saw Swami Jnanananda sitting on the men's side and called him to come forward and sit with Swamis from Her ashram. He looked at Her lovingly all through the satsang.

When Mother left the hall we talked with Swamiji for a while, then he came with us to our hotel room. I was surprised and delighted that he would come into the hotel. The boys who worked at the hotel were very honored and rushed to bring chairs into our room. Swamiji said that he wanted to see how we lived. Then he asked me to tell him the details of my dream of Mother. I related the whole

experience to him. He told us that he had a 9.30 p.m. appointment with Mother. We walked with him to the ashram, ending a beautiful day.

The next morning December eighth. Mother was shifting from the ashram to her quarters at Ratu Palace. She was to be there for four days. After breakfast there was a knock at our door. When we opened it, a hotel waiter said "Swamiji" and smiled as he pointed to the balcony window. I ran to the window and saw, standing below, Swami Jnananandaji and one of the two gentlemen who had travelled with him from Purulia. I pranamed and said that we would come right down.

Satya and I hurriedly locked our room and went to join Swamiji. He said that he was also going to stay at Ratu Palace. We walked with him to the road asking how we could find him in such a large palace. He said not to worry about it, that God would find us. The word he spoke were like echoes in my mind of things that Mother had said. I told him, "Swamiji, you are Mother! With his sweet gentle smile, he looked at me and replied, "The day will come when you will know the truth of that."

Arriving at the ashram, we had Mother's darshan at "our" window, then watched as She was seated in Her car and driven down the road toward the palace. Words are inadequate to describe the emptiness I always felt when watching Mother go away. Philosophically I know that She is never "away" or "separate" from me, as She and Swamiji both had said. But alas I have "not enough spiritual *jnana*," as Mother had told me. To this day I still yearn to see Her beloved form, and only She can change that in me if it be Her *kheyala*.

On December twelfth Mother was going by train to Kanpur. We had little time to arrange transportation for ourselves and of course we wanted to travel on the same train as Mother if it was at all possible. We sought reservations through a local travel agent. At one moment it would appear that we had accommodations and the next moment it looked hopeless. Ah ! the delicious madness of trying to keep pace with our Divine Mother.

After going to the travel agent's office we took a taxi to Ratu Palace. There we waited until almost 6:00 p.m., then were led upstairs to where Mother sat with a few people around Her. I took a seat in front near Mother as a beautiful bhajan was sung by a girl with the voice of an angel. Mother looked so wonderful. We were all spellbound by Her presence. I saw light emanating from Her form that was white, turning blue and golden. As I gazed in awe there was a positive and negative image interplay with light so intense that it was blinding, actually turning into darkness. She radiates not only light, but love and a most pure sweetness that is impossible to describe.

Darshan lasted about one hour I think, but time in Her presence is like an elastic band. It can stretch to many times its usual length, or snap out of your grasp by Her touch. Who can understand it ?

Next morning I awoke early with a queasy stomach, took some medication, and we got ready to go to the palace. This time we went by motor rickshaw (mini-taxi). This one broke down on the way and it took some time for the driver to fix it. When we arrived at Swamiji's cottage he was not there. We went to the satsang room and found him doing kirtan with Tanmayanandaji.

Mother was in the hall with a young girl of the Raja's family who was receiving her *diksha*. We could see Mother through the window as She sat with lovely peacock feathers in Her lap.

After a light lunch and a half hour's rest we went again to Ratu Palace. It was two hours before Mother came out and sat with us for a brief time. When she left the room we spoke with Bhaskaranandaji and Nirvananandaji about our getting accommodations for Kumbh Mela. The chances sounded pretty slim and we were discouraged and saddened at the prospect of being separated from Mother at that time.

Feeling better after a long night's rest we went again to seek Mother's darshan. There Bhaskaranandaji called Satya to the side and told him that he had spoken with Swami Paramanandaji on our behalf regarding our accommodations for Kumbh Mela.

When we returned to the satsang hall, it was full. We went into the hall and had a perfect view of Mother. She was very animated and playful as some people were taking Her photo. When Mother came out of the room and into the hall She looked at me so sweetly and smiled.

There was only one full day left in Ranchi.



IN MEMORIAM



SWAMI BHAJANANANDA

(May 14, 1923 – February, 15, 2003)





Late Shree Bhajananandaji, known to everyone generally as Pushpadi, has been called to her Eternal Rest in the Divine Presence, that we all knew and adored as Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee, while THAT PRESENCE was here on earth amidst us.

When Bhajananandaji was in the body, she had endeared herself to Shree Shree Ma by her child-like simplicity and her very great loving devotion to Shree Shree Ma. In all general gatherings and satsangs at the Adi-Shankaracharya Hall, at Kankhal, especially during the annual Samyam Saptaha Mahavrat conducted after Diwali, it was the duty of Pushpadi to begin and end each Samyam session of the program. Pushpadi's place was always at the Feet of Shree Shree Ma, just in front of and quite close to Ma's seat. She was a familiar figure there, sitting with her harmonium. Both the commencement of the program and the conclusion of the program were done by her with her soft and sweet voice that could reach a very high scale when she chanted, "Satyam, Jnanam, Anantham Brahma". Pushpadi began at a low cadence, but, gradually as she went on chanting it rose higher and higher until she reached the peak point of "ANANDAM BRAHMA". Similarly during the end it was also her duty to conclude with "Jaya, Jaya, Ma."

Bhajananandaji was so completely absorbed in Ma that she was not aware of the audience sitting behind her, filling the hall. Her total rapport with Ma was such that, when the devotees filling the hall clamoured for Ma to sing Her famous and well-known, "Hey Bhagavan," Ma would first shake Her head and refuse, saying She was tired and Her throat was not normal. But, when the devotees begged and pleaded saying, "Please Ma, just for two minutes. Only two minutes", then Ma would yield and just look at Pushpadi (Pushpadi was not

Bhajanandaji during Ma's time) and nod Her head. Pushpadi immediately understood. She would return the nod and commence, "Hey Bhagavan" on harmonium on a low key. Shree Shree Ma would then hold Her towel before Her face with Her left hand and start, "Hey Bhagavan". When Shree Shree Ma commenced the chant Pushpadi would stop chanting and accompany Ma's chanting on the harmonium. This was the oneness of understanding that I closely observed time and again as I used to sit quite close to Shree Shree Ma in those early days before 1982.

The inner relationship between Shree Shree Ma and Pushpadi was something very difficult to explain or define. Pushpadi looked upon Shree Shree Ma as her Mother just as a baby would look up at its real Mother. Shree Shree Ma also on Her part looked upon Pushpa as a Mother would look at her child. There was a certain harmony between them that is difficult to explain.

Strangely enough, I never felt that Pushpadi was a grown-up person. I always regarded her as a little grand daughter of mine. She had also the same type of feeling towards me, like that of a grandchild towards grandfather. Whenever I visited Varanasi Kanyapeeth, Pushpadi also made it a point to come over to the Kanyapeeth, no matter where she was at that time. At the time of my departure from the Kanyapeeth she would go in advance and stand beside the car that was to take me to the airport. When I came down she held open the front door for me to enter the vehicle to sit beside the driver in the front seat. After I sat and the car started she would hold the door half opened, bend down with her head inside the car and ask me again and again to place both my hands on her head and give her *Ashirvad*. If someone had already closed the door she would make urgent signs to me to put down the window glass and then she would put both her hands inside and catch hold of my two hands, she would pull them out and place them both

upon her bowed head and press both of her hands upon the back of my hands. It was as though the added pressure would confer some more additional *Ashirvad*. Even when the car started to move, she would move a few steps along side with the car still with my blessing hands on her head until someone shouted, "Pushpa kya kar rahi ho ? Gadi chal padi hai. Swamiji ke hath chodo", then only she would leave my hands. This drama would be repeated each time.

Truly, Pushpadi was a simple hearted little child of Worshipful Shree Shree Ma. Her departure from the body on 15.2.2003 at Pune was in response to Shree Shree Ma's call to her Eternal Abode. Her last days at Pune and the physical ill health and suffering she passed through was all the working of the inexplicable *KHEYALA* of Ma in its various manifestations.

Shree Bhajananandaji will live long in the memory of all the countless people who knew Ma. Pushpadi has once again taken her place in front of Shree Shree Ma and is close to HER.

Om Ma Shree Ma Jai Jai Ma !

—Swami Chidananda

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President,
The Divine Life Society

SWAMI BHAJANANANDA

—Dr. Krishna Banerjee

Swami Bhajananandaji, our dear 'Pushpadi', one of the choicest *Pārshadal* of Shree Shree Ma, the golden-voiced *Sārīka* of *Mātri-Nāma Sankirtana*, has left for *Mātridhāma*.

Born on the auspicious day of 'Savitri Chaturdasi', according to English calender May 14, 1923, the girl was named 'Savitri' by her parents. Savitri Sen in her early life. was of a quiet and cheerful disposition, Savitri was very fond of music and dance. In her artistic pursuit, she was encouraged by her parents, Shree Umesh Chandra Sen and Sm. Kshirod Vasini Devi . The fourth child in a family of eight children, she was exceptional in many ways. This delicate, beautiful girl of a sweet voice who loved serenity and contemplation, met Shree Ma at the age of 23/24. It was during Shree Ma's sojourn at the Ekdalia Road Ashram in Kolkata. Savitri had gone there with her aunt. She got spellbound and transported with spiritual joy at the very first glimpse of Ma. That very first *darshana* proved decisive in her life. She began to pay daily visit to Ma and nothing could stop her.

The day of Ma's departure for Varanasi drew near. Savitri realized that now she belonged to Ma; she could not bear the pangs of separation from Her. "Ma, please take me with you", she implored. "Are you crazy?", said Ma, "It is not so easy to live the life of an ashramite." "It won't be difficult for me, Ma. !" Savitri appealed again. She had in fact been preparing herself for the life of a renunciate. She had become a vegetarian and shunned

all kinds of luxury. But Ma was adamant, "Your parents' willing consent is needed besides your own full mental preparation," She said. With tears in her eyes Savitri went home in dejection. Perhaps Ma was testing her, she thought. Then just when she had almost given up all hopes, there came a messenger from Ma. He said, "Ma has sent me to tell you, just as you are, without any preparation or delay, if your parents are willing, to go with Ma." Savitri was highly elated. She had already taken her parents' permission. Without a moment's delay, without looking back or thinking twice, she left home.

Savitri accompanied Ma to Varanasi and began her new life at the Varanasi Ashram. She got her new name, "Pushpa", from Ma. She had in-born musical talents, moreover, she had duly learned music and given stage performances. Now she began to teach music and dance to the girl students of the Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth. But her innermost desire was to stay at the Holy Feet of Ma – all the time ! And Ma kept travelling from place to place. After some time she got the opportunity of being one of Ma's *sevikas*, who were usually allowed to stay and travel with Her; – "usually", because Ma would not have anything taken for granted and would send away even Her closest companions for a period of solitary meditation from time to time. Whenever this happened to Pushpadi, it was an un-bearable torment. But being a soft, sentimental and deeply devout person, Pushpadi had an unflinching faith in Ma's Grace and abided by Her *kheyala*. Ma was her *Guru*, her *Ishta*, her parents and her eternal friend.

Pushpadi offered Ma the puja-offerings of her songs. Her resonant, reverberating voice touched the chord of every heart. Her vocal number became a regular feature of all religious festivals and *satsangas*. If she was absent, even the Mahatmas would say, "Ma, where is Pushpa ? Has she not

come ?” Ma once remarked, “There is *vairāgya*, the spirit of detachment, in her voice.” During the Samyam Saptaha, Pushpadi used to lead the chanting of ‘*Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma*’ before meditation.

“Ma, can one attain to God realization through music ?”, Pushpadi once inquired of Ma. “Why not ? Of course !” That was Ma’s clear reply.

After August 27, 1982 when Ma entered the *Avyākta Dhāma*, Pushpadi’s *vairāgya* deepened. She took *sannyasa diksha* from Parama Pujya Swami Chidananda Saraswatiji Maharaj, President of the Divine Life Society, and received her new name, “Bhajananda”.

Her *Mātri Ārāadhanā* through *sangeeta sādhanā*, *swādhyāya* and *sevā* continued till the last day of her life. At the Pune Ashram, even when she was ailing, she would sit up and perform the daily kirtana at the appointed hour. When others remonstrated, she would say, “I am following Ma’s orders.”

On 15 February, 2003, she passed on to *Mātri-Loka*.

We, the children of Ma, shall always cherish fond memories of our dear Pushpadi, the frail-looking, but animated person, who carried a halo of purity, simplicity and gaiety, who lived and moved in the sphere of Ma’s grace.

Jai Ma.