

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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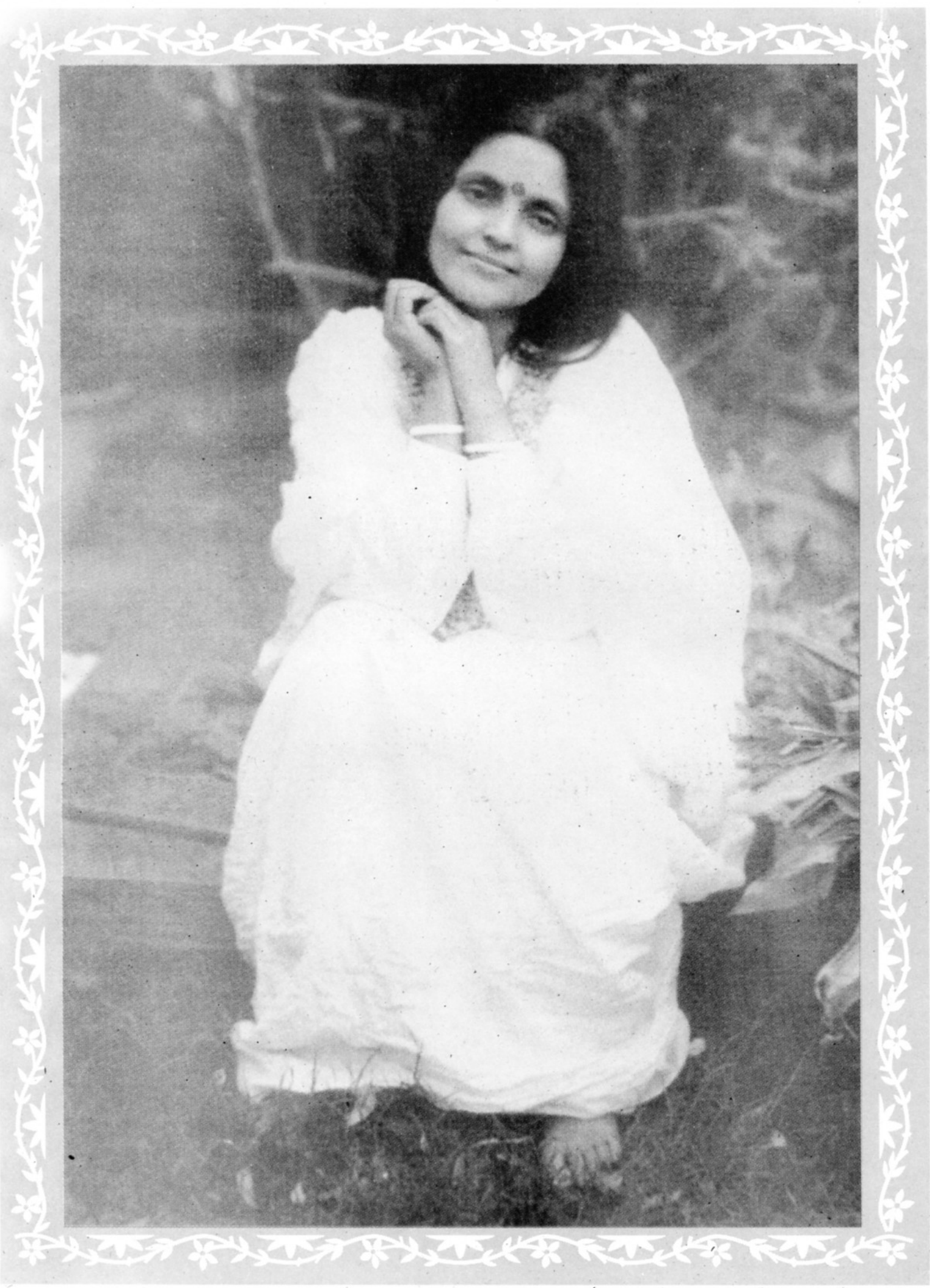
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MATRI VANI

Remember, the Almighty reveals Himself in the many as the One Supreme Form—just as there is ice in water and water in ice.

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That manifests as forms and modes of being. If someone who aspires at the Formless realizes Him as the One-without-a-second (*advitiya*), but fails to realize Him in the field of His Divine Play (*divya lila*), his realization is not complete, for he has not resolved the problem of duality.

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Realization must, therefore, be all-comprehensive, all-embracing, and one must recognise one's Self in everything.

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That the One is in all and that all abide in One have to be revealed. When the Kingdom of Pure Consciousness has been attained, Form is revealed as the Essence Itself.

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It is you who have created the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. As a matter of fact all and everything is but His *Lila* (play). In the all He has to be found.

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When Consciousness is revealed in its undivided Oneness, some find themselves in a pure Self-conscious Silence (*advaita sthiti*), while It presents itself to others as His Divine Play (*divya lila*).

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Worldly sorrow comes through the sense of want, but to pine for Him is man's true nature.

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When a *sadhaka* realizes what form and formlessness essentially are, it is indeed a consummate Realization.

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It is the perception of the world, based upon the identification of yourself with body and mind, that has all along been the source of your bondage.

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As the individual self gradually becomes freed from all fetters, which are nothing but the veil of ignorance, it realizes its oneness with the Supreme Spirit (*Paramātmā*) and becomes established in its own Essential Being.

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When the veil is rent asunder, the fact will be disclosed that even the rending of the veil, in fact all that exists or occurs anywhere, is but He Himself.

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Man's true nature prompts him to do actions that give it expression, his true nature awakens in him the urge to perform actions of this type. Man's true nature *Sva, Svayam, Ātmā*—call it by any name it is the Supreme, I Myself.



QUESTIONS FOR MA

AS I WISH TO LIVE

THROWING HANDFULS OF MYSELF

INTO THE FIRE OF YOUR FEET,

WILL YOU CONSUME ME BEYOND ASHES ?

WILL THE INTENSITY OF YOUR LIGHT ERASE ALL CONTRAST ?

WILL YOU BRING TIME ITSELF TO A STANDSTILL ?

PAGES FROM THE DIARY OF GURUPRIYA DEVI

[Translated from Bengali]

April 26, 1937, Nainital

Ma has been at Nainital from 13th April. Ma went for a walk and by the time she returned many people were waiting for *darshan*. Amongst them were the Deputy Postmaster General and his wife from Madhya Pradesh. They first met Ma last night. They reside in Bareilly and were in Nainital for a holiday. Last night the couple spoke to Ma privately. This morning they came with a silk sari, a shawl and many kinds of fruits for Ma. The lady said, "How surprising it is - I saw you for the first time last night and dreamt of you continuously through the night ! My only thought then was about when it would be morning and when I would come to meet you again. I am unable to understand the great power of attraction you wield." Ma smiled and said, "It is but natural that the mother should long for her daughter." She also asked them about their sadhana. The fruits and sweets were distributed as usual.

At twelve noon we set out for Almora. The American lady had decided to take Ma to Almora and had hired a bus for the purpose. She has become greatly attached to Ma. In the bus she sat near Ma and expressed great delight at her being able to do so. She had kept cutlery - a fork, a spoon and a plate - in a small suitcase and she showed these to Ma. Ma laughed and said, "I shall steal all these". The moment Jyotish Dada* translated this sentence to her, the lady joined her palms, did *pranama* and placing the suitcase in Ma's lap she declared, "Why should I allow Ma to steal - I shall give it to Ma. I shall give Ma whatever she wants - there is nothing belonging to me which cannot be given to Ma." Ma immediately rejoined, "You will give whatever I want, won't you ? Explain to her — I want all her mind." On its being explained to her the lady laughed, joined her palms and gazed at Ma saying, "sure, sure." She then made a gesture by taking off her hat and placing it at Ma's feet.

We reached Almora by six p.m.; we enjoyed the beautiful mountain scenery all the way. At three p.m., while in the bus, the American lady sought Ma's permission to eat biscuits. She also enquired as to whether Ma would eat something

* Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy (Bhaiji), one of Ma's first and foremost devotees, who attained salvation at the feet of Ma.

and Ma replied in the negative. At four p.m. she peeled an orange and fed it to Ma with great devotion and then ate some herself.

On arrival we went to the Nanda Devi temple. Sri Devi Dutt had sent a man to make arrangements for Ma's stay there.

The town of Almora is very beautiful. While driving in we saw the town situated on the top of a semicircular mountain range, while at its base stretched vast fields of wheat crop. As the town is situated at the top of the mountain and the fields occupy the foot hills, there is a feeling of openness. Bungalows spaced far apart, looked very pretty. As we entered the town, a group of young girls who were walking on the road saw Ma and spontaneously joined their palms to do *pranam*. On asking Ma I found that they had never seen Ma before.

We reached the temple and found that the girls had followed Ma there. A large crowd surrounded Ma and the girls sat near Ma. The American lady who was also with Ma sat near her. A carpet had been spread outside the temple. Arrangements had been made for the lady to stay at a Dak Bungalow. Ma began conversing with the girls. We went inside to settle our things; later Ma called me and said, "See, these girls live in a place near Kailash. They are here for their studies." I also conversed with the girls and found them very simple and straightforward by nature. Some of them had been to Kailash three or four times. Tonight some of them were returning to their homes with Sri Narayan Swami who has an ashram there (Sharada Ashram). These girls live in Garbyang, from where Kailash is a four or five day's journey. The girls said, "We had seen a photograph of Ma at our teacher Pandit Srinivas' place." Suddenly on sighting our bus one of the girls became strangely moved; somehow she was certain that this was Anandamayi Ma and spontaneously, without realizing it, her hands rose and she did *pranam* to Ma. Simultaneously the others also did *pranam*.

They were very happy to meet Ma and wished to take her to Kailash. Bholanath had long cherished the desire of going to Kailash and he was ready to leave the same night. The girls would guide us painstakingly. Later, it was discovered that the road to Kailash would not be accessible before June and so the journey had to be postponed. There was talk of going to Bengal for Ma's birthday celebrations and it was decided that the journey to Kailash would be considered after returning from Bengal.

Just then the hill folk arrived with a big collection of fruits and flowers. Some had received news of Ma's arrival in the afternoon and finding Ma in their midst they felt they were having *darshan* of the Goddess Herself. They adorned Ma with flowers. Around ten p.m. they left and Ma lay down to rest.

Saturday, April 27, 1937

Early morning, even before Ma arose, she was surrounded by people, some of whom were well-known in this part. As soon as Ma sat up the conversation started. One man questioned, "Ma, what is *jada samadhi* ? *Samadhi* is the play of consciousness, how then can it be lifeless (*jada*) ?" Ma replied, "There are many stages before *jada samadhi* . Look, normally when you speak of external behaviour, if someone can meditate on God with one-pointed attention, while in the midst of normal activity, the body does become lifeless ; sometimes the mind also becomes lifeless. This is all mind's play. Once such a state has been attained, even if he reverts to his previous state it is quite natural that the behaviour of his mind and body do undergo a change. And that which is called *jada samadhi* - until that state of being completely engrossed in meditation is not reached, it is natural behaviour to remain lifeless (*jada*). This is but a glimpse of the realm of *samadhi*. Just as *savikalpa samadhi* has various forms, the manifestation of *jada samadhi* is also the manifestation of a form of *savikalpa samadhi*. The *kriya* of consciousness remains within. But at that time the play of complete consciousness is not manifested and therefore appears thus. On feeling the throbbing of complete consciousness there remains no trace of lifelessness. For then it is only the play of consciousness. In between there are so many other stages. Now, the discussion revolves only around a small part of it all."

One person asked, "Ma, are Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma real, or are they imaginary ?" Ma firmly replied, "All exist." Another person queried, "We hear that they have hands and feet - is that true ?" Ma replied, "It is all true. So long as there is sight there is creation. Creation, preservation and destruction - these three are personified as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. If you call it imagination, then you are also imaginary - everything is imaginary. Just as you assign a particular piece of land to a particular landlord, so also are Brahmaloaka, Vishnuloka and Shivaloka." She laughed and repeated, "Creation, preservation and destruction always exist."

This afternoon Jyotish Dada was snoring in his sleep in one corner of the room while the ladies sat singing bhajans in the same room. Ma laughed and remarked, "Look at this - there is so much noise close by and Jyotish can't hear a thing; if he can attain this state in ordinary sleep then who knows what he may attain if this state changes to one leading in That direction. No worldly matter can ever reach him - this is proof of that."

In the afternoon the ladies arrived and filled the room. The marvel was that everyone was beginning to feel the same way - that Ma is verily the Goddess Herself. As they offered flowers they uttered the names of 'Kalika', 'Jagadamba',

and recited various incantations as they showered flowers on Ma. Sweetmeats and sugar puffs of this place were piling up repeatedly and were being distributed simultaneously. The girls living near Kailash have also arrived. Some of them taught at the Mission School here and some of them were studying there. Ladies had been coming to see Ma twice a day. Most of them were students.

One named Nanda narrated her life story to Ma which was very nice. She said, "Ma, when we first came here no one from our native place had ever come here before. My father brought my sister and me to study when I was thirteen years old. Till the age of ten I studied at home for I was too scared to go out of the house. Whenever the inspector came to the school I would hide below the table and he would force me to emerge and would lovingly place me in his lap. Now there are many other girls from our native place, who are here to study; but at that time we were the only two. My sister died as soon as she came here."

The girls were very well-behaved and humble - they had received good education. They also knew to sing and sang a couple of bhajans before Ma. I noted down some songs. I realised that as in Bengal, the young girls here did not want to miss the opportunity of sitting near Ma. Once they had placed themselves near her they did not budge from her proximity. Some sat to press Ma's feet - the reason being that they could sit near Ma and touch her.

As we step out on to the roads, crowds gather and join their palms in *pranam* to Ma. Earlier Ma had been here only for a day with Hari Ram Joshi* and others.

In the afternoon two nieces of Devi Dutt, who lived here, arrived. Both girls spoke Bengali fluently - I was surprised to hear them. I heard that they had spent six months in Shanti niketan** and had acquired such proficiency in the language in that short time. Devi Dutt then took us all to see the town. We visited the Rama Krishna Mission and heard that two or three Americans were living there and practising sadhana. They lived further downhill and we did not go so far; we returned by dusk. Our American lady companion brought an American to meet Ma. He was wearing a dhoti, a shawl and a turban. They did pranam to Ma and sat down. The lady introduced him as a friend. As they did not know Bengali there was not much conversation and after some time they left.

The gentlemen of this town sat surrounding Ma in the temple. One of them asked, "Ma, for a realized soul, no feeling of hot and cold exists. Why then do you use a blanket?" Ma laughed and replied, "I am also just like you. Who said I was a realized soul?" The man rejoined, "Then why do so many people come to you?"

*. Sri Hari Ram Joshi a very old devotee of Ma hailing from Almora.

** . The famous "Shanti niketan" founded by Sri Rabindra Nath Tagore in Bengal.

Ma laughed and said, "Why do they come ? They know that I look upon each one as a parent and they affectionately regard this body as their daughter and therefore they come. I do nothing - I eat, drink and roam about." So saying she laughed a childlike laugh which enchanted all of us. The same gentleman persisted, "Alright, those who have realized the Self have great powers. You can stop the rain. You can perceive all that goes on in our minds - then what is the need of questioning ?" Pat came Ma's reply, "Leave my case aside : I am your daughter. But to stop the rain or to perceive the thoughts of another one does not have to be a realized soul. Then regarding the matter of knowing the thoughts and giving replies - those who come with extrovert issues are given extrovert replies and those who can understand introvert matters are given replies to their questions inwardly. That is not a great thing. Just like the telephone - an instrument is installed here and another instrument is situated wherever the information is to be transmitted - conversation ensues." Hari Ram's cousin, who is a judge, was waiting to speak to Ma privately. He had been sitting silently till then. He folded his palms and said, "Ma, you have spoken out my thoughts - that is absolutely true."

The man who had been conversing with Ma said, "Alright Ma, the *darshan* of Mahatmas is enough to achieve everything. And you are telling us all - perform *sadhana* and we will get the fruit. Why is that so ? Now that we have had your *darshan*, everything should now occur spontaneously for us." Ma replied, "It is true that *darshan* is enough to achieve everything - but are you really having *darshan* ? I ask you to perform *karma* so that you become worthy of *darshan*. Without *karma*, mere talking will achieve nothing. If you enquire about the M.A. course without passing the matriculation examination, you gain nothing. Everyone must put up with some hardship and you will see that you will surely reap the fruits." The gentleman went on, "Mahatmas can do everything. God has made you a Mahatma. Why do you not make us ?" Ma replied, "Alright. Do nothing more than remember constantly that whatever has to be done for you is being done by a Mahatma." The man laughed and said, "If I had that much strength, I could have. Why don't you please shower your grace and do it for me ? If I do everything then what is the use of the Mahatma's grace ?" Then the Judge Sahib softly intervened, "The fact that you are asking so many questions is only because of their grace; this desire that you have to beg for grace sitting here at eleven p.m., is only because of grace. Do you not experience that ? We receive any amount of grace, but we rarely experience it, because we are not worthy of it. That is why Ma is asking us to perform *karma* in order to become worthy of grace."

The person continued, "Alright Ma, this morning you said that God Himself creates, preserves and destroys. But all the evil is in creation -is it not His partiality ? And if He knows that it is all unreal, then what is the meaning of sporting thus and

torturing us all ? Then again, though we know it is unreal, why do we remain engrossed in this game ?" Ma replied, "We do not really know. If we knew it truly we would never get attached while playing the game; we may play but we will never drown in the game. The *jivanmukta* can also be seen playing, but he does not partake of anything in the game. Therefore no new *karma* is created and by the effect of destiny the game comes to an end of its own accord - just as the potter's wheel turns for a while even after he stops rotating it. Also, we know for sure that if we put our hand in fire it will burn, do we then still put our hand in fire ? Similarly if you know something for certain, you will not do it, we only know from hearsay or by reading about it, where do we have determined conviction ?"

"And talking of partiality, we are obsessed with partiality and therefore blame Him for that flaw; in reality, can there be flaw of partiality in Him ? When there is none other than the One, who will be partial or impartial to whom ? And whom will Ma torture ? He Himself sports in different forms, it is His *lila*. If we were to place one hand inside a blanket and the other outside, then the hand within could say, 'See, how warm I have been kept - he loves me' and the other hand could say, 'I have been left out in the cold' and we would have been called partial - that is what you are saying. In reality, joy and sorrow, pleasure and grief are but the play of one *bhava*, nothing else. Creation is a *lila*-sport."

"Just as you put apparel on your bare body to cover it, go to work and then take off your clothing as you will, to become bare bodied again, so also He covers Himself with Himself and sports in various forms in various ways - where does the partiality arise in this ?"

The gentleman said, "But we suffer." Ma said, "Look, you were free to begin with, then you got married, you had children and now you ask how you can be free again. You have to reap the fruits of the *karma* that you have done. On achieving happiness you have to suffer unhappiness also. Where there is no happiness there is no unhappiness either. Like in the case of the *jivanmukta* - the external jobs are all done; but there is neither happiness nor unhappiness."

In the course of conversation on a variety of topics, Ma narrated the incident of how Bholanath had once experienced the vision of a headless figure. He had gone to Tarapeeth on Ma's behest and then had actually seen that the head of the image of Tara Ma made of silver was removed at night and again fixed on during the day.

At 1 a.m. the devotees reluctantly took leave of Ma and we lay down to sleep. Tomorrow we are to go to Uttar Vrindavan, which is fourteen miles away, to meet Mrs. Chākṛavarty (Jashoda Ma).



CONVERSATION WITH SWAMI VIJAYANANDA

Q. - Is it more advisable to follow the way of devotion or of knowledge ?

A.- For some people devotion is more important, while others prefer the path of knowledge; but for everyone both are necessary, just like the two wings of a bird are indispensable in order to fly. Ma Anandamoyi used to say that knowing the Self is knowing God, and knowing God is knowing the Self: in the end both paths are united in any case.

Ideally, one should combine all paths: knowledge (meditation, discrimination, reading of sacred texts), devotion, *karma-yoga*, *japam* . For those who follow *Vedanta*, devotion is oriented towards the *Guru*, who is seen - beyond his physical form - as the Divine itself. In reality the only *Guru* is the Supreme, that manifests itself through sages who are like a canal. They are more or less efficient "conductors" of this divine energy; a *Satguru* alone, having reached liberation, is a "super-conductor" that transmits divine power totally and without alteration.

Q. - Is renunciation (to material things, pleasures etc.) an important step in *sadhana* ?

A. - Yes, if it is not temporary. But genuine renunciation is rare. Anyway, it is possible to follow a spiritual discipline while living in the world. It is a question of how mature you are and of how intense is your spiritual longing. Think of two children who get out of their school and go home: one has such an intense wish to see his mother that he runs home, while the other takes his time, plays and speaks with friends, and goes home later.

Q. - Was total renunciation difficult for you ?

A. - No, because the joy of being close to Ma took away all importance of other matters. About dispassion, Ma used to like telling the following story :

A very religious king had four spiritual questions that he was very eager to ask. So he publicly offered a reward to whoever would give him satisfactory answers. Many *pandits* and sages came, but the king was not satisfied with any of their replies. So finally a beggar, who had been asking for some time to be allowed to give his answers, was let in as a last chance for the king to obtain what he wanted. He asked the beggar his first question :

"Where does God live ?" The answer was: "Where does he not live ?" The king was happy, and he asked his second question: "What does God eat ?"

"He eats egos". The third question was: "When does God laugh ?" "In two occasions: First, when a father dies and his two sons divide his land in two, saying 'this is mine, that is yours', since everything belongs to God. Second, when a baby is in his mother's womb, he suffers, so he tells God "Let me out, I promise I will do a lot of *japam* and meditation, but please let me come out !", and when he's out he forgets all about his promise".

Very satisfied, the king asked the beggar his last question: "What does God do ?" "Well, this is an *atiprashna* (a transcendental question), so in order to reply I should be seated on your throne and you at my place". The king agreed. Once seated on the throne, the beggar remained quiet. So the king told him to give his answer, which was: "Well, this is the answer, this is what God does: kings become beggars, and beggars become kings".

- Q. - Did you speak to Ma about personal matters (apart from questions on *sadhana*) ?
- A. - It was not necessary, since I communicated mentally with Her.
- Q. - Did you totally surrender to Ma's will ?
- A. - I followed precisely Ma's advice on physical matters; if she had told me to drown in the Ganges, I would have done so without hesitation. But regarding mind and emotions, I wanted to remain totally in control.
- Q. - Was Ma sometimes hard with devotees ?
- A. - She could even take a severe expression when necessary, but it was out of love.
- Q. - How is it possible to get rid of doubts ?
- A. - Doubts are not to be eliminated, but they should be faced and fully dealt with, since it is a necessary step towards strong and deep faith. If you are not sure that your spiritual practice is useful, then remember that the conquest of oneself is the biggest conquest of all; it leads to not needing anything outside of yourself anymore. Mystical (inner) Union is the only one that is fully satisfying and brings total peace with infinite joy.
- Q. - How should one protect oneself when one becomes very sensitive during *sadhana* ?
- A. - Repeating constantly one's *mantra*, respecting *dharma* in everything (even the most simple or seemingly unimportant matter), and keeping a calm mind.
- Q. - And how is it possible to calm down the mind when it is very agitated ?
- A. - By observing it with vigilance; see it like a horse that you want to educate firmly and softly at the same time. The idea is to stop identifying oneself with mind and thoughts (as well as with the body).

Q. - What should we understand about the fear of dying ?

A. - The survival instinct exists in order to protect the body and creates a fear of death that is the basis for all fears. It also creates an awareness of impermanence, which awakens us by reminding us that we should not lose time : we should do our best to remove the obstacles and veils that separate us from our real and Divine Nature, the eternal Self.

Q. - And how can we conquer fear ?

A. - When a fear or emotion arises, it is important to stop and face the physical sensation - usually unpleasant - that is its source. The idea is to observe the body's subtle sensations that create the emotion, without letting the mind interpret them, nor become agitated, and without yielding to the impulse to escape from it. Going to the inner source of the fear is the way to conquer it.

Q. - People in Western culture speak often about "enjoying the present moment." What do you say about it ?

A. - The present moment is Conscience, not enjoyment. To be aware with vigilance of whatever is there now leads step by step to the real joy of Unity. On the other hand, enjoyment of worldly pleasures leads necessarily to suffering, since it is part of duality.

Q. - What is dignity ?

A. - It is self-respect.

Q. - What is the importance of humility in *sadhana* ?

A. - It is very important, because its opposite (pride, arrogance) leads to "fall down" : it does not allow the *sadhaka* to be receptive, patient and compassionate. Humility also enables to see the lessons given by life and also by some people whom we consider as an 'enemy' ! Humility and compassion enable to see the good and divine part of everyone, which should go with lucidity, keen attention and being realistic, pragmatic.

Q. - Does the ability to bear physical pain help to control the mind ?

A. - Yes, because pain is usually only 10% physical, and 90% is the mind that adds worry, associations of ideas, interpretations, memories etc. By avoiding pain, escaping into the mind, we make pain bigger. On the other hand, if we look at it directly, calmly, silently, pain goes back to its real proportions, usually quite bearable. Sometimes it even disappears ! So mind-control and pain-bearing often go together and help gain inner stability.

"I BELONG TO EVERYONE"

—Sri Ma Anandamayi

—Bithika Mukerji

The following story was related to me by Prof. Vyas Mishra of the Benares Hindu University. He came into very close contact with Sri Ma during the Ati Rudra-Yagna performed in Kankhal in 1981. He was instrumental in organising many aspects of this under-taking. Being a Professor of Vedic studies he was especially helpful regarding procedural matters. During this time he became convinced that Sri Ma was fully conversant with all forms of ritualisticism stipulated by the sacred texts. With great awe and reverence he saw that Ma would even at times make appropriate movements of her own arms and hands to indicate the correct modes of accompaniment to pronounced mantras. She did this in order to correct mistakes, but in her own very gentle and unobtrusive manner. Vyas Mishra, being knowledgeable himself, could understand the significance of these gestures.

He knew Sri Ma to be the Supreme Goddess Incarnate. He being a dedicated *Shākta*, this understanding came naturally to him. He knew nothing to be higher than his *ista-devata*, the Devi Durga. It was his custom to pay an annual visit to the temple of *Kamaksya Devi* in Assam during Navaratri. On one of these pilgrimages he had met an odd-looking ascetic who came to the temple obviously to pay his respects to the deity. Vyas Mishra was astounded to see that instead of bowing in obeisance this man stood at the door and addressed a tirade of abuses and imprecations at the Goddess in unsavoury language. He looked to the priests to manhandle him and throw him out; instead he saw them smiling indulgently. When Vyas Mishra had finished his own ritual of daily worship, he enquired about the strange man who had disappeared from the temple precincts. The priest said, 'Don't you know Aghori Baba ? He is an *avadhoot* of great spiritual eminence. It is said that he knows everything due to his great yogic powers. Nobody knows where he lived, but once a year he comes to this temple to worship the Goddess. This is his own unique mode of showing his total dedication and surrender at the feet of the deity. Who are we to judge his way of doing things ! He is beyond the accepted codes of behaviour. His freedom from the world and its ways operates in mysterious ways. He is a great saint and an ideal recluse".

Vyas Mishra set out to look for this great ascetic and in due course found him living temporarily in a nearby cave. Aghori Baba seemed to be waiting for him. Within a few minutes Vyas Mishra knew him to be a great scholar and a man with

the yogic eyesight to know everything about the interlocuter in front of him. Aghori Baba talked to him familiarly about his family background, his career and lastly about Sri Ma Anandamayi. Vyas Mishra was over whelmed to be endorsed in his views about Sri Ma. He could not make out if Aghori Baba had ever met Sri Ma physically or not, but it did not seem to matter at all. Thereafter, whenever Vyas Mishra went to Kamakhya Devi's Temple, he would search out Aghori Baba and talk with him for many hours. He held scholarly discussions with him, and also talked about mundane things. But he was unable to discover any biographical details about the *avadhoot*. He knew many languages, so Vyas Mishra was unable to form any opinion about his own province, caste or creed. Aghori Baba was indeed a man of enjoying the joyous freedom of being quite sufficient unto himself.

Vyas Mishra related all this to Sri Ma when he met her in Varanasi, one year, on the eve of his departure to Assam for the annual visit to Kamakhya Devi. Vyas Mishra said to Sri Ma, "Ma, if I see Aghori Baba this year, I will tell him I am coming from you and would like to give him a little *prasad* from you."

Sri Ma at that time was not too well. She asked Udasji to fetch a box of sweets from the stock, which accumulated wherever she was. The box fetched by Udasji evidently did not meet Sri Ma's approval. She made a sign for another one. After rejecting three or four, she made a selection and gave it unopened to Vyas Mishra.

Vyas Mishra was lucky enough to find Aghori Baba the very first day when he arrived at the Temple of Kamakhya Devi. Very happily he presented the box of sweets to him saying how Sri Ma herself had made the choice. Aghori Baba opened the box and gazed mesmerised at the sweet packed within. When he raised his eyes, Vyas Mishra was amazed to see tears in them. Aghori Baba said in an unusual soft voice, "It is only the mother who knows what her child craves ! I have been a homeless mendicant for many years. I have forgotten the taste of good food, but a few days ago I had a sudden desire for this special sweet which is made at this season (The Bengali *sandesh* made of new molasses or *gur*). But see Ma knew and so graciously has fulfilled my desire ! Who but Ma can do this ! "

Vyas Mishra was very happy to see Aghori Baba so pleased. Now he also realized that the ascetic had belonged to East Bengal before he became a homeless wanderer or *avadhoot*. Also that Sri Ma was ever with Aghori Baba in his remote caves in the jungles of Assam.



SUPREME WOMAN OF BEING

[IV]

—Chloe Goodchild

Back at the ashram, I sat down and opened *Matri Darshan*:

You feel lonely? In very truth you are not alone.

Does the Supreme Friend ever forsake his friends?

I closed the door of our little room and found myself with pen in hand. Ma was encouraging me to write. I wrote a letter to Chandra Swami :

Ever since childhood I have been aware of the presence of God. As a tiny child, I was constantly experiencing a profound wonder and awe with the world about me. That fundamental relationship with the world has remained, like an undercurrent running through all my actions. It has sustained me at times which would otherwise have been intolerable. This abiding grace revealed itself to me through the mystical and esoteric aspects of Christianity; and later through the spiritual practices of Buddhist meditation. Yet it wasn't until recently, when I began to familiarise myself with the devotional path of Hinduism, together with Indian vocal music, that I was finally introduced to the unique Being of Sri Anandamayi Ma. It was my encounter with Her through her photographs which intensified the longing for union with God. I believe that She brought me to India, not only to become closer to Her through meetings with Her disciples and devotees, but also to find a spiritual master, who can initiate me, that is to say, draw me down into the deeper current of the True Self, to which She has drawn me. I know that by my own efforts I can do nothing. I want to live within the fire of God unceasingly. I want to extinguish all attachments to both my actions and the fruits of my actions. I ask for your mercy and help, and for your guidance with my sadhana, in the practice of unceasing prayer.

This letter was the beginning of several short but valuable interviews with Chandra Swami. I met him on the open roof overlooking the ashram courtyard. The

sun beat down upon our heads, and he would patiently respond, in silence, on paper to my questions. The bustle and noise of everyday life from the street tried to invade the peace of ashram life. Chandra Swami was oblivious to it. He gave me the following instructions:

Simply concentrate on your love of God more and more. Your path is that of devotion. You should sing God's name, pray, adore and read the life-stories of the lovers of God.

Complete concentration and complete relaxation are the same thing. You can approach the Truth through concentration or relaxation.

Kundalini is not totally dormant in you. It is because of the kundalini that you are able to think, reflect, and evaluate. When the kundalini is completely active in you, you will realise your true nature.

Sublimate all your energies and direct them to the realisation of your God.

After these interviews I remembered how the Indian saint, Ram Das, had written in an article about the search for God, that for every seeker there is one spiritual master who is the appropriate 'hook' for them to hang their ego upon. Chandra Swami was not that 'hook' for me, but his generous and profound presence offered vital encouragement and inspiration on the way.

The city noise continued to blare all around this haven of peace. The ashram of Chandra Swami was like a rose surrounded by thorns. We would rise for meditation at 3.30 a.m. Then one of the temple loudspeakers would come on, chanting deafeningly across the town until 6.30 a.m. It was impossible to speak or to be heard. I would do 'japa' (a meditational practice frequently with small string of 108 beads called 'mala beads', similar to rosary beads), then sleep for an hour, then rise and have breakfast. It was strange to feel so near and so far away from God at the same moment. I felt like the Sufi seeker and poet, Rumi—

I am so close to you, I am distant,
I am so mingled with you, I am apart,
I am so open, I am hidden,
I am so strong, I totter.

(Love's Fire-Andrew Harvey)

One day, in the late afternoon following kirtan and meditation, I had an overwhelming desire to go alone to the River Ganges, in the sunset. It was as if Ma

was drawing me there herself. I practised 'japa' all the way, repeating 'Ma enter me, Ma enter me...' and 'Into God, into God ...' There was such a soft evening light, as I walked into the foothills of the Himalayas.

Chandra Swami's ashram is at a place called Sapt Sarovar, (Seven Rivers). Here, the river is divided by long strips of island into seven streams. I climbed up onto the flood bank which divides the mainland from the Ganges, and there she was, the far-reaching river, flowing fast, on and away before me. As I walked towards the river, I felt as if I was approaching the being of Ma herself. In books that I have read about her, she is often described as being like the Ganges. I found myself walking with clear purposeful steps, glad to be alone. The sadhus' homesteads were all there again, but my gaze was solely on the water that day. Nothing else mattered. I got as close as I could to the water, and sat down to stare and imbibe the beauty of this ancient place, whose spiritual heritage was still faithfully sustained right here, while stretching back thousands of years to the time of the Upanishads and the great oral teachings on the perennial wisdom which became the Vedas.

Sadhus were bathing, meditating and praying. Young men came to gaze upon the river also, on their way home after work. Given the crazy chaos and corruption of the rest of Indian city life, I could quite understand these solitary people spending their lives on these banks. I felt like one of them. The place was so familiar. I was 'home' again with this constant expression of profound reverence for life, from the greetings in the street-'Hari Om' -to prayer offerings on the water's edge. We spoke the same language. I had missed this in childhood, this transpersonal way of communicating, at once so simple, so direct, which the West has forgotten.

The wind was gently ruffling the surface of the water. Birds darted and played together, occasionally skimming across the water and resting upon it for a while, allowing themselves to be taken by the fast-flowing current, then flying up and away again. How I envied them. I sat down on a rock at the water's edge, and began to lose myself in the subtle play of wind, water, river-birds and evening sky.

Then I began to hear Ma's words:

Who is it that appears as
Water or wind? SHE and no other...

Suppose some people go to bathe in the sea and make up their minds to swim ahead of everyone else; consequently they will have to look back. But for him whose one and only goal is the Ocean Itself, no-one

has remained for whose sake he looks back or is concerned; and then, what is to be, will be. Give yourself up to the wave, and you will be absorbed by the current; having dived into the sea you do not return anymore. The Eternal Himself is the wave that floods the shore, so that you may be carried away. Those who can surrender themselves to this aim will be accepted by Him.

But if your attention remains directed towards the shore you can not proceed. After bathing you will return home. If your aim is the Supreme, the Ultimate, you will be led on by the movement of your true nature. There are waves that carry away, and waves that pull back. Those who can give themselves up, will be taken by Him. In the guise of the wave, he holds out his hand and calls you Come ... Come ... Come!

As these words faded from my mind, I turned my gaze to see a man, only a few feet away, bending down, cupping some water from the river in his hand and raising it to his forehead in the form of a baptismal blessing. His gesture immediately brought tears to my eyes, and an image of Ma. It invoked the longing for a total union with her, and, with it, an aching loneliness. In silence, I began to call out to her:

'Where are You?'

'Who are You?'

'Where are You, Ma?'

'What do You want of me?'

'Enter me Ma. Enter me Ma'.

Where was she, this elusive all-pervading one, who sang in the wind and laughed across these waters? I was filled with her again and with a longing for her. With this longing came a mysterious upsurge of emotion and love. Where did it spring from? My whole body seemed to be opening up, and turning inside out, The sun had set, and the dark cloak of night was descending with a speed that was unfamiliar to me. As I looked around me, a feeling of levity filled my head. My body felt lighter with each second. The loneliness was lifting too, and the boundaries of my skin seemed to be dissolving into the surrounding landscape. She, the ground of my Being, was pouring in from everywhere. Her invisible presence was manifesting everywhere.

She led me along the banks a little further to a place where three men, one in white, one in brown and one in orange, were sitting, backs erect, gazing outwards

into the unknown across the river. The expressions on their faces showed me that they were looking with the inner eye. Their interior concentration was so strong that they were like immutable breathing statues placed there by the goddess of Time and Space.

I sat down again and stared out into space, my body porous to the river, the sky, the sadhus. Every thing was interconnected. I whispered the word 'Ma' into the wind, and the river began to enter me, filling through my body and my bloodstream, the river rushing in, the fluid-force of my flesh and blood, the river rising in me, filling me up, washing away the waters of my life time, softening the sufferings away, silencing all secret, smoothing the shadows out with its infinitely velvet soft touch. The simple touch of the 'I am'. I am the river.

I said to this wanting creature,
 What's this place you want to find?
 Where's the boat and what's the hurry?
 You are that place you had in mind.

I could hear my heart-beat pounding, pounded into a pulp turned over and over slowly rolled and rocked backwards and forwards by years of rushing waters. They were rushing my heart-beat, rushing my anonymous life away, these heavy waters, rising, swelling in my belly, squeezing out the sweat, swirling around the body, upwards then descending down to the soles of my feet, cementing my feet to the ground, this dense liquid, neither hot nor cold, neither painful nor pleasurable, entering every orifice, weighing me down, a deep-down gravitational pull down towards the earth, Aaron's rod straightening my spine, lengthening my back, drawing the life force into the centre of my body.

I felt so heavy I could not move. It did not matter. Nothing mattered. The dark of night began to close like a cloak over my shoulders. I became aware of the lights and sounds of the city, somewhere around the back of my head. I waited there. I had to. It was impossible to move. She and I were of the same undifferentiated presence. We were of one body at last, a body which was simultaneously a gust of wind, a flock of birds, a mantra, a child playing with her kite, the sound of the rippling waters. I was the sound bell of the world, and her voice, my voice.

It took great physical strength to drag myself back through the night to Chandra Swami's ashram. I moved mindfully and slowly, my body feeling heavier and heavier. Every step was like a thousand miles. The ground was like a magnet pulling me back to it with relentless force. When I eventually returned, she placed me upon the bed and held me there, in the deepest relaxation I had ever known.

This was a very different state from the one when she first placed a pen in my hand all those years ago. The nightmare of my early life was at an end. She held me fast in her invisible arms. I stared wide-eyed at the candle that was burning on the little wooden table in front of the shuttered window of my room. My body was inert, my soul awake upon the moment, in a state of childlike simplicity and receptivity - ALONE and ALL-ONE.

'Do you want any supper?' came Roger's voice from around the door. 'No thankyou' I replied. The nourishment I had received was enough to sustain me forever. Material food seemed like a joke of an idea. Never had I felt so profoundly loved.

'Jai Ma, Jai Ma.'

The profound quiet and restedness remained and filled the room. My mind was empty. There was nothing to think about, just a benign indifference to all future action - staying there, leaving there, coming or going. Was this bliss ? I began to understand what she meant by the inner guru emerging when the time is ripe:

There is a time for everything. No-one can come to me until the time is ripe.

The guru actually emerges from within. When genuine search takes effect, his genuine manifestation is bound to occur; it cannot be otherwise. The one assuming himself in the shape of the guru of his own accord brings about his manifestation or becomes manifested.

When God himself appears as the guru, he has to be invoked full of faith. Just as a *vigraha* [an image of God, which consecrated through mantras or the devotion of the worshipper, becomes the Deity itself] must not be regarded as a stone, so the guru must not be regarded as a human being. If you looked upon him as a human being you have not found a guru - can a human being ever be a guru? The significance of the word 'guru' is '*Jagadguru*' [World Teacher]. A world teacher is one who diverts man from the path leading to death and puts him on the path of immortality. He who does this is the inner guru. Once the guru has accepted the disciple, he will never leave him until the goal has been attained. The question of leaving does not arise at all. The guru resides within. So long as the inner guru has not been revealed, nothing can be achieved.

The next day, I walked down to the Ganges in the morning sunrise and you were there, Ma, in the mist moving across the water. Every pebble and stone seemed to be coated with a magical quality, like invisible velvet. There was a clarity and a freshness in the atmosphere, dew upon the grass. On waking you had reminded me that 'The intense desire for God-Realization is itself the way to it'.

'Strengthen my spiritual thirst, Ma. Strengthen my spiritual thirst, Ma.'

I saw your image, the last one in the book. You were walking away, your back to the camera, and I felt my attachment to you. I sang to you, alone, when others had left the meditation hall.

'Jai Bhagawan, Jai Bhagawan'.

For a few moments, you sang me, then disappeared again. You come and You go. Inner surrender still seemed a long way off. 'Patience, have patience,' you said to me. I thought of Rumi:

In the driest whitest stretch
Of pain's infinite desert
I lost my sanity
And found this rose.

(Love's Fire-Andrew Harvey)

You are that rose Ma, beloved Ma.



THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

[Continued from before]

—Sri P.C. Mehta

The practice of Jainism:

The goal of life:

The goal of life is to restore the soul to its pristine purity, so that it may attain '*Kevala-jnāna*'. It is a discarnate state; when the soul has all the perfections,

a) infinite knowledge, b) infinite space and c) infinite power

As in the Upanisadic teaching, freedom here also means getting beyond good and evil by transcending both '*pāpa*' or 'demerit' and '*punya*' or 'merit'.

The one who has become perfect by realizing his divine nature and is not touched by the good and evil in the world has reached the highest rank called '*Siddha Paramesthin*.'

The one who has received illumination but not final liberation, has a desire to serve humanity and looks upon his fellows with love and kindness has reached the stage of *Arhat*.

Then there are three lower stages of ordinary human teachers.

Karma as a link between *Jiva* and *Ajiva* :

The link between *Jiva* and *Ajiva* is *karma*. We have seen that karma is conceived of as matter in an extremely subtle form. The soul in its mundane condition is permeated through and through by such matter and its aim in life is to extricate itself from this kind of *ajiva*.

Seven axioms of Bondage and liberation:

The scheme of seven principles which shows how the *jiva* comes to be associated with *karma* and how it may escape from it is as follows :

They are,

i) *Jiva* ii) *Ajiva* iii) *Asrava* - the influx of *karma*, iv) *Bandha* - bondage,

v) *Samvara* - stoppage of creating new *karmas* or *karma-check*, vi) *Nirjara* - working out old *karmas* and vii) *Nirvana* - liberation,

Thus:

i) first of all there is *Asrava* or influx of *karma* into the soul, and ii) which results in *Bandha* or bondage.

This *karma* is being continually liquidated as the person works out his destiny. But in the case of an average person, other *karma*, good as well as bad are finding their way equally continually in the soul of man, due to his willed actions. So the man is never free.

After death, this *Karmara-Sarira* i.e. *karmic* accompaniment follows the soul in its new existence. It is thus that man remains rooted to this wheel of birth, death and rebirth. Man's hope of release lies in,

a) *Samvara* i.e. stopping this process of influx of new *karma* or *karma-check* and b) *Nirjara* i.e. in working out the old ones.

It is to bring about *Samvara* that the discipline of *Tri-ratna* mentioned hereunder is prescribed.

With the total cessation of accumulating new *karma* and complete destruction of accumulated *karma*, man automatically attains liberation.

This is a state of absolute perfection and implies that although Jainism may deny the existence of a Supreme God, it retains the idea of the divine as 'Man made Perfect'.

Jainism believes in the soul's transmigration, but *karma* is conceived here as material and permeating the *jivas* through and through and weighing them down to the mundane level. The soul so united with *karma* is called a soul in bondage. In Jainism also the ideal lies beyond good and evil, so that virtue as well as vice is believed to lead to bondage. When all *karma* is worked out, the *Jiva* becomes free. It escapes at death from the body and rises until it reaches the top of the universe described as '*lokākāsa*', and there it rests in peaceful bliss for ever. Thereafter it does not involve itself in worldly affairs. However, it serves as an example to the aspirant. All liberated souls are gods and dwell away from *karmic* influence. An enlightened person may lead an active life, but his activity does not taint him. The

enlightened person while alive is called *Arhant* as in Buddhism and after he sheds his body he is called *Siddha* or the perfect.

These seven principles with '*punya*' or merit and '*pāpa*' or demerit constitute what is known as the nine categories of Jainism.

***Tri-ratna* or the 'three jewels' of discipline :**

The discipline recommended which is spoken of as the *Tri-ratna* or the 'Three jewels' is threefold;

- i) *Samyag-darsana* i.e. 'faith in the teaching';
- ii) *Samyag-caritra* i.e. 'right conduct'; and
- iii) *Samyag-Jnana* i.e. 'right insight'

i) Faith in their teachings is the very bedrock for the Jaina spiritual life. The teachings include freedom from superstitions, pride and other vanities of life.

ii) Right conduct includes five *vratas* or observances viz.

- a) *Ahimsa* or non-violence which includes, displaying positive kindness to -wards all creation;
- b) *Satya* or truthfulness;
- c) *Asteya* or non-stealing which also includes mentally not coveting;
- d) *Brahmacarya* means both aspiration for '*Brahman*' and celibacy in the case of monks and chastity in the case of laymen. This has to be in mind, speech and action,
- e) *Aparigrāha* or total non-attachment amounting to renunciation in the case of monks and contentment in the case of laymen.

Like Buddhism, Jainism also admits a two-fold training, that of lay folks and the monk. For the layman, the lesser vows are called '*anu-vratas*' and for the monks they are called '*mahā vrata*'. The two institutions of lay and ascetic life are more closely connected here than in Buddhism. The difference in the training between the two is not of kind but degree.

iii) The right insight is brought about through '*Yoga*' or *Dhyāna* - mental concentration, which plays an important part in this discipline. *Dhyānam moksa-hetuh* i.e. *Dhyāna* is the immediate cause of *Moksa*' (from commentary on '*Tattvarthadhigama-Sutra*').

These are termed the *Tri-ratna* i.e. the 'three jewels'. When these three jewels flower out and come to fruition in man, he attains *Moksa*, rather *Nirvāna* as the Jainas call it.

There are two types of disciples, *Sramana* or 'monks', and *Sravaka* or laymen. Only monks are required to practice the discipline in an austere manner. The lay people may practice restraints in a less rigorous manner until they qualify to become ascetics.

The monks cultivate *samvara*, or *karma*-check, by means of established ethical and behavioral practices that are usually enumerated as follows:

1. The tripple "supervision" of mental, verbal, and bodily activities
2. The fivefold "care" not to hurt living beings when walking, acting, speaking, begging or performing excretory functions
3. The "tenfold righteousness" or *dasa-dharma*: patience, humility, uprightness, purity, truthfulness, restraint, austerity, renunciation, voluntary poverty, and spiritual obedience.
4. The twelve mental "reflections", or *anupreksas*, including reflection on the impermanence of things, the helplessness of man, the course of transmigration (*samsāra*), the unmitigated solitude of each being in this cycle, the fundamental difference between body and soul, the impurity of the body, the presence of *karmic* influx, the means by which such influx may be stopped, the ways in which one may rid oneself of *karmic* matter, the fact that each person is responsible for his own salvation without the assistance of a deity, the rarity of enlightenment, and the truth (i.e. of the teachings presented by the Jinas, especially that of *ahimsa*)
5. The twenty-two "trials" (ranging from hunger to confusion) imposed by the pains inherent in religious life.

The monk finally sheds the residues of *karma* by means of steadfast and thorough asceticism or *tapas*. The purity of the "wise man's death" is the fast-unto-death called *samlekhana*.

We have seen that the changes or modes known as '*paryāya*' come into being, persist at least for one instant and then disappear. Thus the minimum duration of empirical objects here is two instants as contrasted with the single moment as in Buddhism.

In Jainism as in Buddhism, Reality, is dynamic, but Buddhism repudiates the constant element. For Jainism, reality is one-in-many. Though the many are distinct, they are identical being of the same substance.

Jainism resembles Buddhism in its repudiation of the authority of the Vedas, its pessimistic outlook on life and its refusal to believe in the Supreme God.

It differs from Buddhism in its recognition of permanent entities like the self and matter. In these it resembles Brahmanism. Justifying the description that it is 'a theological mean between Brahmanism and Buddhism',

Jainism is severely ascetic. Most of the ascetic principles accepted by Jainism have been traced by modern scholars to Hindu sources. Only in some cases those ascetic principles have been carried to extremes, as in the vow of '*Ahimsa*' or 'non-violence'. No Jaina will knowingly kill or harm even the tiniest of insects.



"If you engage yourself in ceaseless, uniterrupted service directed to Him, then only by His mercy the waters of the Ganga of knowledge will wash away all your desires and doubts and only then will you be at peace"

— Ma Anandamayee

FROM NOTES TAKEN IN SRI MA'S PRESENCE

—'Kirpal'

Septembr 14, 1956, Kishenpur, Dehradun

Sri Ma was speaking — "Where there is existence of duality there is darkness-sorrow".

"In order to realize one's own self, to achieve one's own identity, 'Who am I', the association of holy saints is itself the path. The divine path is the only *path*- all others are *vi-path* (wrong path-sorrow). If one takes the wrong path one will suffer. The path that leads to enlightenment, that alone is the real path, the path that removes sorrow and reveals one's true self. In that path all sorrows and miseries are destroyed. The remembrance of Him destroys all sorrows. By recitation of the Divine Name the mind attains peace. At all times the name of God must be kept in mind. The remembrance of God is one's *rakshā-bandhan* (thread of protection)."

"In the fertile soil of one's heart by sowing the seed of God's name" God is revealed and the revelation of God destroys all want. Why have you kept the soil of your heart barren? Get engrossed in the repetition of the name of God (*Japa*) and concentration on the form of the God (*dhyana*)."

"Try to be always pure. Never use harsh language. Always keep in mind that God is holding me; I will never fall. Let your mind always dwell on such thoughts."

September 29, 1956, Vindhyachal

Sri Ma was relating how once at Vindhyachal ashram Abhay, Dr. Panna Lalji and others had been talking all day about 'miracles', at night they went for mid-night meditation to the *shasthi-tala* (outside the ashram gate). Ma also came there. Soon they all saw a bright light which lit up the place even in darkness. Sri Ma herself saw an old sadhu practising austerities under the tree and also a number of others at places close by.

Today also Sri Ma clearly saw that none of the present structures were there, it was almost a different place and one was offering garlands to Her. One *mala* was like a *rudraksh mala*, polished, large beads but broken. Sri Ma, asked, "Why are you offering this broken *mala*?"

There was a corner, from which the Devi offering the broken *mala* to Sri Ma looked straight at Ma—rather questioningly and then the Devi returned again to her niche. On one side was a long verandah and there a lady devotee was lying.

Septembr 30, 1956, Vindhyachal

Sri Ma was relating another incident which occurred at Puri (Orissa). Once Sri Makhan Ghosh of Calcutta, one of Ma's very prominent devotees from Calcutta, took Ma to Sri Jagannath Mandir. As Ma approached the deities her breathing became almost faint and her steps also slowed down. Seeing this Sri Makhan Ghosh told Ma— "Ma, let us proceed." But what Ma was seeing that the three deities, Balaram, Subhadra and Jagannath had taken a single form. There was just *one* deity and around the neck were three beautiful garlands, rather unusually beautiful, one below the other and one huge garland hanging around the three garlands touching almost the feet of the deity and out of a hole came a very powerful light.

On another occasion when Sri Ma visited a mandir, a very strong light came out of the deity towards Ma, a very powerful attracting force and Ma's form would become not unconscious, but almost attuned with the trees and flowers and even walls.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH MA ANANDAMAYEE

—Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

[Translated from Bengali]

First Voice-recording of Ma

Calcutta, October 20th, 1938

It had previously been arranged to make records of Sri Ma's songs and talks *today*. Gurupriya Didi had spoken to me about this project. She wanted to place on my shoulders the responsibility of putting questions to Ma during the recording but I instead requested Didi to ask the questions herself. We also discussed what subjects should be raised. Our sole object was to record faultlessly Ma's own words. However carefully we had been trying to note down the words emanating from Her lips, we had not the slightest doubt that our efforts were just a poor imitation of the real thing. This is why Didi was anxious to record precisely Ma's own words.

When it was time to proceed to the studio for the recording, Didi asked me and Bhupati Babu to accompany Ma in the car. But as there was not sufficient room for both of us, Bhupati put me into the car and left by bus.

On arriving at the studio Didi first of all did *pranama* to Ma. Ma laughed and asked : "Tell me, why this frequent *pranama* today ?"

I : I suppose Didi is beseeching you again and again to take care that your songs and speech may be recorded in a proper manner.

Ma (laughing) : But nothing is certain with this body. Who knows whether words will come out at the required time ?

We all went and sat down in a room of the studio. Just then the well-known blind singer Sri Krishna Chandra De arrived. On request he sang a song in from of Ma. Afterwards all present except ourselves were asked to leave the room.

A machine was placed in from of Ma. A mechanic showed Her two electric bulbs and explained that when the red light would go on, Ma should get ready and as soon as the green light was lit, She should start. The song was to continue for three minutes to complete one side of the record. At the appropriate time he would signal for the song to be discontinued. On hearing all this, Ma started laughing and said again and again : "I cannot guarantee that the song will come out at the exact

time." But Didi firmly said : Why shouldn't they ? They surely will." Again Didi continued to do *pranama* to Ma.

A test was made to check the reproduction of Ma's voice. It was found satisfactory. So, now final preparations for the recording were carried out. Then the red light went on. With expectant eyes we all kept looking alternately at Ma and at the lights. The red light was extinguished and the green light went on. We signalled to Ma to start singing. Ma began singing. :

*"Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram
Patita pavana jaya Siya Ram !
Jayati Siva Siva Janaki Ram
Jaya Raghunandana jaya Siya Ram !!!"*

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*"Jaya Radhe Radhe Krishna Krishna
Hare Rama Hare Hare !
Oi nam balo badane sunao kane
bilao jiver dvare dvare !!!"*

×

*

×

Ma sang each line alone and then we repeated in chorus. We were none experienced in this. I doubt that anyone of us had ever before sung in public. Fortunately Kumari Buni was with us, otherwise God only knows what a laughing stock our singing might have been ! Beneath the sweet tone of Buni's voice and guided by her fine sense of rhythm, our suppressed voices somehow did their duty as accompanists.

After three minutes the song was over. A little later by signalling again with red and green lights, the other side of the record was completed. Ma beautifully sang two songs entirely in Bengali on Her own (the English rendering of with are as under.

*"What is my caste, my name, my home ? Nothing is certian, so how can I tell ?
What else can I say ? I don't belong to anybody and in all the three worlds I call
nobody my own.*

*No mother, no father, whether there was anyone I don't know, Nobody has
told me and I have not heard it. With a husband full of virtues was I favoured.
What happened at the burning-ghat I do not know.*

Forgotten have I all torment, renouncing home forsaking the world, from jungle to jungle I roam.

*

*

*

*Who knocked at the door of my heart today ?
Whose sweet voice have I heard ?
Listening to his words
I can no longer remain at peace.
Restless became my heart today,
Made me leave my home.
Having drunk the wine of delusion
Unconscious did I lie.
Who is it that came to-day to wake me up ?*

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After the songs a conversation commenced ;

Didi first asked : Ma Is it necessary to take on a Guru in order to lead a religious life ?

Ma : One has to accept a guide ; without guidance one cannot proceed. For the simple reason -- look, when we are reared from birth, all this cannot be achieved without guidance. For the same reason one has to secure assistance also in the spiritual world from a definite source. Who can be this guide ? God Himself ! It is He who for the uplift of the individual, for his real good, in order to free him from his *samskāras*, appears as his helper on the path in the shape that is most beneficial for any particular person. Therefore we need a Guru. Without a Guru, without guidance one cannot proceed.

Didi : Many say : "If the Guru himself does not know, what can he teach me ?"

Ma : Well, suppose a small child discovers a seed -- it does not know anything, it just finds it and keeps it. If you plant this seed in good soil and tend it with care, a tree will definitely grow out of it. Such a tree will yield flowers, fruit and so forth. Then you will be able to know what kind of a seed you have sown. That is why it is said that if one sets to work with whatever one may have obtained from no matter whom, the fruit thereof will be reaped without a doubt. There is only one God, none and nothing else. Although we, as creatures of the world do not know, do not understand anything, in reality it is certain that God alone exists and nothing else. So, wherever, and in whatever manner you may receive something, if you make good use of it you will and must get a result".

"And you know very well : without a cause there can be no effect. Whatever work you undertake must definitely bear its fruit. Therefore to assist you on this path you must take recourse to some practice and to some helper. Do you know what we have to determine ? First of all we must resolve : "I want to realize God." If once you are bent on this 'want' definitely, then whatever is helpful will automatically come. Just as for instance, as soon as you decide to give your children proper education, ways and means of doing so and how to get the right company for them will automatically suggest themselves to you. Similarly, if one wants to proceed along the spiritual path, one must have recourse to certain aids such as the company of seekers after Truth, *japa*, discussion on spiritual subjects, kirtan, and so on. This type of aids will awaken the tendencies (*samskāras*) or currents that lie dormant within you'

"When you let your children study a number of subjects, you will discover after some time that they excel in certain subjects; then if you let them continue their studies according to their inherent inclinations, they gradually become proficient in those subjects. So also, if we make up our minds to realize God, if the keen desire to follow the spiritual path awakens within us, then whatever is necessary along this path will automatically present itself. But one must progress according to one's natural inclinations. To proceed along a line not in keeping with one's innate predilections will not do."

"Supposing we are not all eager to find God just as children have no desire to pursue their studies then in order to awaken such eagerness, we have to bring ourselves to a strict timetable. Children, even if they don't feel like studying, have to be compelled to sit down with their books at regular hours. So will you have to engage in spiritual exercises regularly for at least some fixed time, in order to rouse the keen desire to seek God. Do you know what you must resolve ? "Whether I like it or not, whether I am able to concentrate or not, out of the 24 hours I will definitely set apart so and so much time for Him".

"Further, to bring about this keen sense of longing, you must put your whole heart and soul into whatever spiritual practice you may undertake. To devote merely your mind to this task is not enough. Why? Because although Conscious Being (*chaitanya sattā*) is all-pervading, yet in order to worship a deity effectively, we, after creating an earthen image, have to ritually instil life into it (*prāna pratisthā*). Similarly you must put your whole being into the attempt to realize God. To call forth this whole-hearted effort you have to bind yourself down to a rigid routine. Just as children have to spend a definite period, say from 10 a.m. to 5p.m. at school or college, so also if you want to lead a spiritual life, you must devote a

definite amount of time daily to your *japa* or similar exercises. If, any day, for some special reason the fixed period kept apart for God cannot wholly be given, then the amount by which it has been reduced should be remembered and made up the next day. Furthermore, efforts have to be made to increase this period of time gradually, as far as possible. The sole purpose of these attempts is to enhance your eagerness to find God. For until you become totally anxious you cannot attain to anything. Not until you are truly agitated can you become tranquil. To realize tranquillity you must first of all become frantic, frantic for Him."

"Therefore you have to resort to certain means that will be helpful in this objective. Such a device may be *satsang*. This does not necessarily mean to cultivate thoughts and aspirations, directed to God or Truth. If you sit in the presence of a saint while your mind is busy with family affairs or something similar, then there cannot be any improvement. Of course, some benefit will be derived from the proximity of saints; but real *satsang* means to be God-centred in thought, feeling and aspiration. Your whole being, mind, heart and even the body must become absorbed into such self-dedication to the Supremes. Unless this is attained totally there can be no achievement. That is why one must carefully choose the kind of work that is helpful in spiritual life. The I-ness and intelligence that we apply to all our worldly tasks, that very I-ness and intelligence must be used to select the type of work that will be beneficial. Since we live in the midst of *karma* we must advance through action. Action that leads to purity of mind and heart, to concentration of thought, is the type of action helpful to spiritual life."

"Do you know what is essential? God is one. So, in order to realize the One, we must become one-pointed. It is imperative to be single-minded in all objectives."

Gurupriya Didi: Should we maintain that everything is within the One?

Ma: In the One there are many, and in the many is the One. We are indeed of the One. There is evidence of this: as for example we eat bit by bit, we walk step by step. In the one, Infinity is contained. Suppose I were to ask you: "Tell me where your mind has been during the last five minutes?" You cannot even account for the movements of the ordinary mind. You are unable to register your mind's wanderings within five minutes. In this respect there is infinity also in the mind.

"Again look, supposing I catch hold of your hand or foot and ask: "Who is this?" You will reply: "It is I ". The I-ness is not confined to the body. When saying "I", this refers actually to the Supreme "I" which is the real "I". In order to know, to realize that Supreme "I", you will have to start on the task with the self-consciousness and intelligence that you possess. For THAT which we call God or the ONE, is one eternally and in all respects. In order to become aware of the fact

one must aspire to one single Goal. What will be the result of this single-mindedness? You will come to understand that you are of the ONE. The proof of this is that whatever you may undertake, you have to attend to your tasks one by one, you cannot do two things simultaneously. Our prime need is to take recourse to one remembrance, one aspiration whatever helps us to realize the One must be our constant companion."

Didi: You say that we yearn for never-ending happiness because we know this uninterrupted bliss in our innermost being?

Ma: If the hidden knowledge of this unalloyed bliss were not within us, why should we seek it? The consciousness of it is there, but it has not manifested. We desire what we have had a taste of. Because undisturbed bliss, undisturbed peace are concealed deep within us, it is the very nature of a human being to yearn for it. Hence nothing finite can give lasting satisfaction. In this wide world, whatever people do at all times is ultimately for the sake of obtaining peace and happiness. In order to find this happiness we must take up the work dictated to us by our true nature. Work prompted by our true nature means action which will ultimately lead us to uninterrupted joy and uninterrupted peace.

Already before Ma stopped speaking, the time allotted for recording had been over

Afterwards Dr. Pant* asked Ma a few questions in Hindi and She also replied in Hindi.

Dr. Pant: Mataji, does the real welfare of the world lie in being well-fed and clothed or in remaining hungry and practising devotion?

Ma: Look, is it not a fact that you are always hungry? Do you ever feel satisfied? If you did, why should you continue to go to all this trouble? But by your endeavours to approach God you will get satisfaction. By stilling 'that' hunger everything will become all right.

Dr. Pant: Then it comes to this that people should remain hungry, but worship God?

Ma: Look, when you talk of being hungry, are you ever not hungry? But when you start engaging in some practices for the sake of finding God, and in the process of it you procure some spiritual food to satisfy your inner hunger, your craving for material food will disappear of itself. There will no longer be any need for it. First of all you must realize that in order to get proper nourishment and still your hunger you must take to the path of devotion. Try to reduce the need for material food and

* Dr. Pitambar Pant from Nainital, one of Ma's early devotees, a retired Ciril Surgeon.

sleep. You are a doctor, arn't you? So you know full well that to cure a disease, firstly medicine and secondly a diet are necessary; then the malady will vanish of itself.

"There is something else to be said: When falling ill we automatically develop an aversion to material food. Similarly, once we are longing for God, the taste for worldly goods will disappear of itself, and the type of hunger that is necessary will be aroused simultaneously. Nobody can remain hungry. In one way or another one's hunger has to be stilled. Hence remember: "God alone exists. I want peace, I want bliss, so I must do whatever is necessary in order to attain these." Just as for curing a disease, medicine as well as right diet are required, so also to approach God you must engage in what is helpful for this purpose. If you take medicine but persist in eating the wrong type of food, will you obtain good result? Once you start advancing along the path leading to God, all the rest will of itself be settled. First of all feel convinced and then resolve firmly: "I must walk in His direction."

Dr. Pant: To realize Supreme Bliss, which is the best path to follow- that of knowledge, or of action or devotion?

Ma: Whichever is most dear to anyone, whichever he likes best. Keep on advancing and everything will happen in due course None of these paths is independent of the others. From the outside it may appear that some are inclined towards devotion, others towards knowledge and yet others towards activity. but in actual fact the three exist side by side. For instance, suppose you decide to visit a temple. Why do you go there at all? To have *darsan* of the Deity. Thus, first of all you have knowledge that there is a temple with an image of a certain deity at such and such a place. Next you wish to behold the image because of your devotion for it. Finally, in order to have *darsana* you have to walk to the temple-- this is action. Hence knowledge, action, devotion exist side by side.

"Again, look, those who take the path of knowledge enquire into what is Real, saying: "not this, not that". But they also have to act and be devoted: just as some aspirants are devoted to their chosen Deity, so those who advance through enquiry have equal faith in knowledge. To discriminate between the Real and the unreal is their work. Thus there is knowledge, devotion and action all together.

"Furthermore, consider : whatever work you accomplish will undoubtedly have a result. Nothing is wasted. To attain to peace and bliss you must resort to some action or other. Never keep your mouth empty nor take a breath uselessly. Just as you chew betel while working in your office, so repeat God's name or mantra with each breath. Simultaneously with your worldly duties the Lord's work has to be done.

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In the short interval between the Bengali and Hindi recording, I took the opportunity to say : "Ma, it was my desire to ask you about the real import of the Guru concept and about the potency of mantras."

Ma : It is not possible to discuss such profound subjects in such a short time. These matters cannot be explained within three minutes.

I : What is the difference between a Guru and a Sadguru ?

Ma : Guru means Sadguru.

I : But I believe the Sastras make a distinction between the two ?

Ma : Do you know what the difference is ?

Like someone starts teaching others only after having passed all his exam, while many who are still studying are teaching others at the same time.

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When the Hindi recording was complete, we got up. All of us offered our devoted *pranamas* to Ma. None of us could have foreseen that Ma's songs and words could be so beautifully recorded.



WITH MOTHER IN THE KUMBH MELA

—Shraddha Davenport

January 7, 1977, was Satya's fiftieth birthday and the day Mother would enter the mela grounds. We awoke at 7:00 a.m. that day, bathed, dressed, and enjoyed a tasty breakfast thoughtfully prepared by our hostess. Just as we were leaving, a car drove up to the door. Swami Paramanandji had come with Aruna, Gadadhar and Ram. The brahmacharis were there to leave their luggage until the mela camp. After their things were placed inside, we rode back with them to Mother's cottage. Everyone there was wearing yellow handkerchiefs imprinted in red with the Anandamayi Ashram emblem. Mother had given them out earlier. Aruna had kindly put two back for us which we were to receive from Mother's hand when She again came out from Her little house. I was delighted to see Krishnapriya, who had just arrived from Calcutta with Chhabi Banerjee. She told me about her visit there to the beautiful Dakshineswar Temple of Sri Ramakrishna where she had darshan of the great Kali Ma and lovely Radha-Krishna.

Soon Mother came outside. Chitra took the yellow handkerchiefs to Her and then Mother gave one to each of us. We joyfully joined the other devotees with yellow cloths tied around our neck, marking us as belonging to Mother. Mother sat on a chair in the courtyard. We all gathered around Her basking in Her sweet lively mood. She talked about the holy rivers' confluence, illustrating by drawing Her right index finger over the palm of Her tiny left hand. Her right hand then closed in a fist, softly striking the left palm, then gliding off before Her fingers spread flat. I can still hear Her infectious laughter punctuating Her remarks. Behind where She sat was a clothesline holding many pairs of Her freshly-washed little white stockings. The sun felt wonderful on our back as we sat before Her for two perfect hours, absorbing Her nearness.

Dasu had, as usual, made his costume for the occasion. He was dressed in gerua cloth with a turban. He carried a tall staff with a trident at the top and a pot of Ganga jal hung just below the trident. He approached Mother, bowing at Her feet. She patted his back. Then he turned his face up to her and She burst into laughter, seeing that he had covered it with ash. Playfully She gave him a couple of swats on the arm. We all laughed, enjoying that loving play.

The program was for Mother and Her party to go by car to a point in the business district of Allahabad where She would join the procession already in progress. From there we would all walk with Her for the remaining four miles to the mela grounds. We were sharing a car with Krishnapriya, Gadadhar, Ram, and Shuddhananda. Mother's car and the other ashram cars were decorated with marigold, so we put three garlands on our car, too. The cars would then follow after the procession and meet us at Mother's camp for our return trip.

It was time to leave, but Mother was still talking. Someone told Her and we all dashed for our cars as She moved toward Hers. Following the ashram car we were led to the parade route and the location from which Mother would join the procession. Mother was escorted through the doors of the Mahanirvani Akhada there. We followed Her into a courtyard. But when She entered the main building we could not follow, so we went back to the street to enjoy the festivities.

Bright colors were every where-on banners, costumes, horses, and magnificent elephants carrying great sannyasis and mahamandaleshwars who rolled back and forth with every step, high above the ground. The air was filled with so many different sounds: the blare of trumpets and tubes accompanied by drums as various bands passed by; the sweet sound of God's Name when kirtan parties sang as harmoniums and cymbals were played: a cacophony of loud speakers interspersed with the wave of voices from bystanders along the road. There was a procession of Naga Babas whose ash-smearred bodies accentuated the powerful *bhava* which surrounded them. Seated upon a beautiful little pony was a small boy dressed in spotless *gerua* and wearing a turban. A sadhu walked beside him. One great elephant thought that Satya's camera might taste good and reached for it with his trunk. Satya moved quickly out of his path.

Soon Mother's flower-adorned chariot arrived. It was a beautiful silver throne with lion figures as arm rests. A large white silk umbrella rose above it with sparkling silver trim shimmering around its edges. All of this was upon a skirted wooden platform with wheels. In front was a tongue attached to a wide crossbeam where a row of a men could pull it forward. In the rear there was a similar arrangement where a row of men would push.

Mother came to the street and a small wooden step-ladder was placed at the side of Her carriage. Udasji was trying to assist Mother as She climbed the ladder. I felt my protective urge rising when I saw how difficult it appeared for Mother to reach Her seat. A tall gentleman devotee who had been assisting thoughtfully placed his hand over a projecting part of the throne just as Mother's side leaned into it. I was very relieved when at last she was seated with Udas at Her feet.

Swami Paramanandaji, Bhaskaranandaji and the chief disciple of the Sri Mahant of Nirvani Akhada, who held a silver handled chowrie in his hand, took their places, standing just behind Mother's seat. Mother looked so incredibly beautiful; it took my breath away.

Leading Mother's procession was a platform on wheels which carried the ashram kirtan party. Chhabi sat at the harmonium and her sweet voice led the praise of Bhagavan. Krishnapriya sat near her joyfully playing her cymbals and singing. Next in order was a palanquin bearing a small silver throne upon which sat the *shalāgram sila* watched over by Nirvananandaji who walked beside it. Then all the brahmacharinis of Mother's ashram followed, walking in pairs. By Mother's infinite grace, I was told to walk at the end of that group which put me directly in front of Mother's carriage.

I was glad that, by chance, I had chosen my yellow sari to wear that day. With Mother's yellow handkerchief around my neck I was wrapped and branded with Her color. Naturally that yellow sari became my "favorite." Great happiness filled my heart as I stepped forward with Her. I felt that my feet did not touch the grounds.

The procession moved only a short distance at a time, then would pause. This was the pattern for the whole way. At each stop we would all turn and look at Mother. Right away Her eyes met mine and She filled my heart until I thought I would cry with joy. It seemed that She became more lovely each time I gazed at Her. Sometimes She would appear very regal and aloof, then the next time She would be playfully laughing or again radiating love and compassion with the sweetness of Her smile. My longing heart had waited an eternity for the darshan and it was poured out upon me. I became intoxicated with the sheer mystery that is Mother. Overflowing with that rare *amrita*, I would often have to be told to move on because I was oblivious to my physical surroundings.

Satya had free rein to move around the procession and take movies. He came to where I was and told that he had not yet taken my picture. He walked ahead a little way as I stood looking at Mother. She motioned for me to turn around, facing Satya. She held her little hands like a frame in front of Her face and nodded toward him, indicating that I was to turn and have my picture made. So of course I did.

Once along the way a sadhu, who must have been a very special soul, came to greet Mother. He easily bounded up the side of Her carriage to where She sat. She seemed very pleased to see him, and when he offered some spice to Her She

opened Her mouth, joyfully receiving it from his hand. Both he and Mother were laughing as he jumped down to the street and vanished into the crowd. Sadhus and devotees were pronaming to Her along the whole route.

It took three hours to make that four-mile walk. I was completely ecstatic from the intensity of Her nearness and pure *bhava*. Then, as I stood looking into Her eyes, I mentally prayed for the most special boon that I could conceive. For some time I beseeched Her with intense longing. Her eyes never left mine during all that time. Then lifting Her hands, with folded palms and still looking into my eyes, She smiled, acknowledging with a gentle nod of Her head that She had "heard" me and, I believe, sanctioned my deepest yearning. Only by Her unconditional love and unending grace could I have received any of the miraculous things that She has bestowed upon me.

When we came to the summit of the last downhill road we saw the vast mela grounds spread out before us. Our eyes beheld a panorama of neatly laid out wide roads and well organized camp settings. But there was little time to drink it all in as the immediate concern was getting Mother's carriage safely to the bottom of that steep incline.

Chitra spoke to Satya and Gadadhar, intimating that Mother had shown concern for band of older men who were drawing Her carriage. She said the last hill was too difficult for them to manage and that the stouter men in the procession should be asked to perform the seva of easing her carriage down that hill. Satya had always cherished the desire to drive for Mother, but knew the chance of chauffeuring Her car was not likely to happen. Now in Her own unique way She was making that dream a reality, and indeed he was to be a driver of Her chariot.

All of Mother's American male devotees, with Satya in the center, lined up in front of Mother's carriage. They took the tow bar in their hands and facing Mother, walked back wards down the hill, gently assisting Her entry into the mela grounds. Later referring to that sweet blessing and the rest of that magical day, Satya laughingly told Chitra, "I know it is my birthday, but I didn't expect Mother to give me such a big party." A big party, indeed!

All Kumbh Melas are grand, but this one was surely an event to stagger the imagination. The alignment of three planets in a most auspicious conjunction with the total eclipse of the moon on January nineteenth made that main bath day and the whole mela an occasion that had not occurred on this earth in one hundred and forty-four years. It was said that the planetary configuration was as near to the original one as was possible.

Many people came from all over India, and some from the west as well, to participate in that mela. Some devotees with only a few paisa (pennies) in their hands withstood great hardship and walked long distances for the rare chance to be in the company of so many wise and saintly souls, all in quest of merging body and spirit with the Divine. Even reclusive sadhus from the Himalayas came down to bathe in the holy Triveni where the three sacred rivers—the Ganges, Jamuna, and Saraswati-meet.

The well-planned grounds had separate camps for the vast array of ashrams and groups. Only after the mela were we to learn just how incredible the size of that gathering was. In America it was written up in *Time* magazine and listed in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the largest known gathering of people in recorded history. There were ten million people there on the main bath day and twenty four million had come during the whole mela. Saints of the highest caliber, holy men, women, and devotees—all gravitated to ancient Prayag (Allahabad) where a bath at the confluence of the three rivers was said to grant liberation.

In the holy Vishnu Purana the story is told of the gods (*devas*) flying to the feet of Lord Vishnu after being conquered in battle by the evil demons (*asuras*). They implored Him to grant His mercy to them, restoring their powers and strength. He told them that their wish would be granted, but first they were to follow His instructions for producing a beverage, *Amrita*, which was the source of all strength and also immortality.

The Lord commanded the gods to unite peacefully with their enemies, the demons, and collect every variety of plant and herb in existence. They were to cast those into the sea of milk. Then they were to take the mountain, Mandara, as a churning stick. For a rope He said they were to use the serpent, Vasuki. Within the ocean Lord Hari Himself took the form of a tortoise and became the pivot for the churning staff. He assured the gods that the demons would share in their labor, but not in the immortal *Amrita*.

The gods did as Lord Vishnu had said and united with the demons to churn the sea of milk. Using the snake as a rope, they twirled the mountain upon Lord Sri Hari's tortoise back. First arose from the water Surabhi, the sacred cow. Then Varuni, Goddess of wine. Next came Parijata, the beautiful tree of Paradise whose fragrance perfumed the world. The Apsaras, celestial nymphs with perfect grace and loveliness, followed. Then arose the radiant Chandra, the moon, which Lord Mahadeva took for his own. The terrible poison which came next was claimed by the Snake Gods. Then a pure lotus emerged bearing the Goddess Sri (Lakshmi), of peerless beauty; with Her was Dhanvantari, physician to the gods. In his hand, held



Sri Ma standing majestically in front of the Mata Anandamayee Hospital, Varanasi.



Small, but beautiful, temple of Sri Ma inaugurated in front of the Varanasi hospital on April 22, 2004

up high, was a jug bearing the nectar, the *Amrita* longed for by the gods and demons alike.

The demons tried to capture the jug and might well have succeeded, for the gods were in a weakened condition. But true to His promise the lord confused the evil demons as the gods drank all of the *Amrita*. When the demons assailed the gods, whose strength was renewed, they were quickly dispatched into the abysmal darkness, but in the struggle the jug was broken and fell to earth in four pieces. Where those pieces fell became the sites of what we know as Kumbh Mela, "Festival of The Jug." The names of those four holy grounds are Allahabad, Hardwar, Nasik, and Ujjain. The waters of these locations were blessed by the touch of that jug which had held the *Amrita*. At all Kumbha Melas devotees flock to those waters and with reverence enter into them for a spiritual bath on auspicious days. Kumbh Melas are held alternately at all four locations every twelve years and half-melas every six years.

After arriving at Mother's camp area, we were shown to our little grass hut. Actually it was built just outside the railing around Mother's camp. It was a tiny duplex with a door for each side. We were delighted to learn that Krishnapriya would be our neighbor. The hut was not quite finished as it was due to get wiring for a light bulb and straw upon the ground. We were told that it would be completed by the next day.

[To continue]

INSTALLATION OF SRI MA'S STATUE **In** **MATA ANANDAMAYEE HOSPITAL, VARANASI.**

All our subscribers and devotees of Ma will be happy to learn that a full-size statue of Sri Ma was installed in a newly-built small temple inside the garden in front of the Mata Anandamayee Hospital in Varanasi on 22nd April, 2004, the most auspicious Akshaya Tritiya day, which is considered as the beginning of the *Satya yuga*.

The short history behind this statue of Sri Ma is really very interesting. This relates to the period as early as 1965-66. One of the renowned sculptors of Varanasi during those days, Sri Pashupati Mukherjee, who and his wife were also admirers of Ma, out of his sheer devotion and attachment prepared with meticulous care a full-size standing statue of Ma. On his earnest prayer Ma also visited his studio and blessed the couple.

But inscrutable indeed are the ways of the Divine Personalities. Very shortly after the studio of Sri Mukherjee was blessed by the footsteps of Ma, the devoted sculptor, having a very robust physique, about 6' ft in height, suddenly died of heart failure and the family was simply shattered. Having no son or near relation to run the marble workshop and the studio the poor wife sought Sri Ma's counsel to wind up everything. On her earnest request the statue of Ma, which was almost the last creation of her husband, was brought to the ashram in Varanasi. Many were very curious to know where the big statue all in white-would be installed. Ma gave no reply at all. On her specific instruction the statue was fully wrapped with a new piece of cloth and put in a secure place in the ashram. No one had the courage to ask Ma again about the statue.

It was April, 1968 the same Akshay tritaya day. After the ceremonial opening of the hospital was duly performed in Sri Ma's divine presence, while coming out of the hospital premises. She suddenly of her own *Kheyala* panted out towards the small open space in front of the main hospital block and whispered to one of the accompanying ashram *brahmacharies*- "That thing could be put up there under a canopy" That much and nothing more. The *brahmachari*, could immediately follow, perhaps that also through 'Her sheer inspiration, about which 'thing' Ma was referring to. The topic ended there completely and was never raised again either by

the *brahmachari* or by Sri Ma herself. Perhaps every one even forgot about that statue lying covered in a secluded corner in the Varanasi ashram.

Long twenty-one years after Sri Ma went back to her Divine abode a devotee of Ma from Kankhal (Hardwar) ashram during one of his visits to Varanasi suddenly discovered the hidden statue of Ma, covered with the same piece of cloth, and enquired in details from the same brahmachari, who was still there, about the stature and the reason for it being kept in that position for long thirty seven years. Discussion ensued and the brahmachari related the whole thing to him.

Everything perhaps was pre-arranged. During that period the 108th birth anniversary celebration of Ma was going on & the devotee from Kankhal (Hardwar) spontaneously took it upon himself to see that the statue was installed at the very site "indicated by Sri Ma." Being an experienced engineer himself he designed the small temple with all its minutest details and also took upon himself to even periodically see through its proper execution.

Date for inauguration of the temple as well as for installation of the statue of Ma was finalised. It was to be the same most auspicious *Akshaya tritiya* day this year, ie, on April 22, 2004, a few days before Sri Ma's 108th birthday anniversary.

Things proceeded no doubt in accordance with Ma's divine *Kheyal*. A very devoted family from France learning about the construction of the temple and installation of Ma's statue inside the same spontaneously came forward to pay for the required expenses.

Things went on in proper sequence as per schedule. The small temple with its dome & pillars covered with special quality stone, altar and floor made of white marble, with full glass panes on three sides was ready. The statue, which had been standing wrapped in a piece of cloth for more than thirty seven years past, was also taken out of its solitary corner and thoroughly cleaned & polished for being ceremonially installed on the appointed day.

The day of installation finally arrived. The day before the newly-built temple was thoroughly cleaned & purified with Ganga water and decorated with flower garlands. Sharp at 9 A.M. the temple was ceremonially inaugurated in the midst of chanting of the Veda mantras and blowing of conch shells by the girls of the Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth. Puja & homa concluded at about 11 A.M. The statue was to be unveiled in the evening at 6 P.M. sharp through the hands of a senior and widely respected monk, Swami Adhyatmanandaji, President of the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashram, Varanasi, in the absence of Swami Vijayanandaji from Kankhal, who happened to be one of the senior-most & venerable monks of our organisation, who could not undertake the long journey in this extremely hot climate. The French

family had also arrived all the way from France for this memorable occasion braving the sweltering heat.

Exactly at 6 P.M. Pujya Swamiji arrived, went straight inside the new temple and unveiled the beautiful life-size statue of Sri Ma, with the girls chanting Veda mantras and blowing conch shells. After this, *arati* was performed by Swamiji himself and reverentially offered flowers at Sri Ma's feet.

Thereafter, the neatly drawn programme commenced in a decent pandal erected specially for the purpose. As soon as Pujya Swamiji was seated on the dais the girls of the Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth began the inaugural song. After that the Vice-President of the Hospital Management Committee welcomed Pujya Swamiji and all the distinguished persons of the city who had assembled on this occasion. The distinguished visitors from France also spoke a few words in English in appreciation of the beautiful temple & Sri Ma's statue expressing their deep devotion to Ma.

The function concluded after a very sobre speech delivered by Pujya Swami Adhyatmanandaji full of reminiscences of his several meetings with Ma long long before. Everyone present was offered a nice memento along with a brochure printed for this occasion and a packet of sweets.

In this manner the earnest desire of the late sculptor and Sri Ma's divine *Kheyal* were fulfilled.

Jai Ma.

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