

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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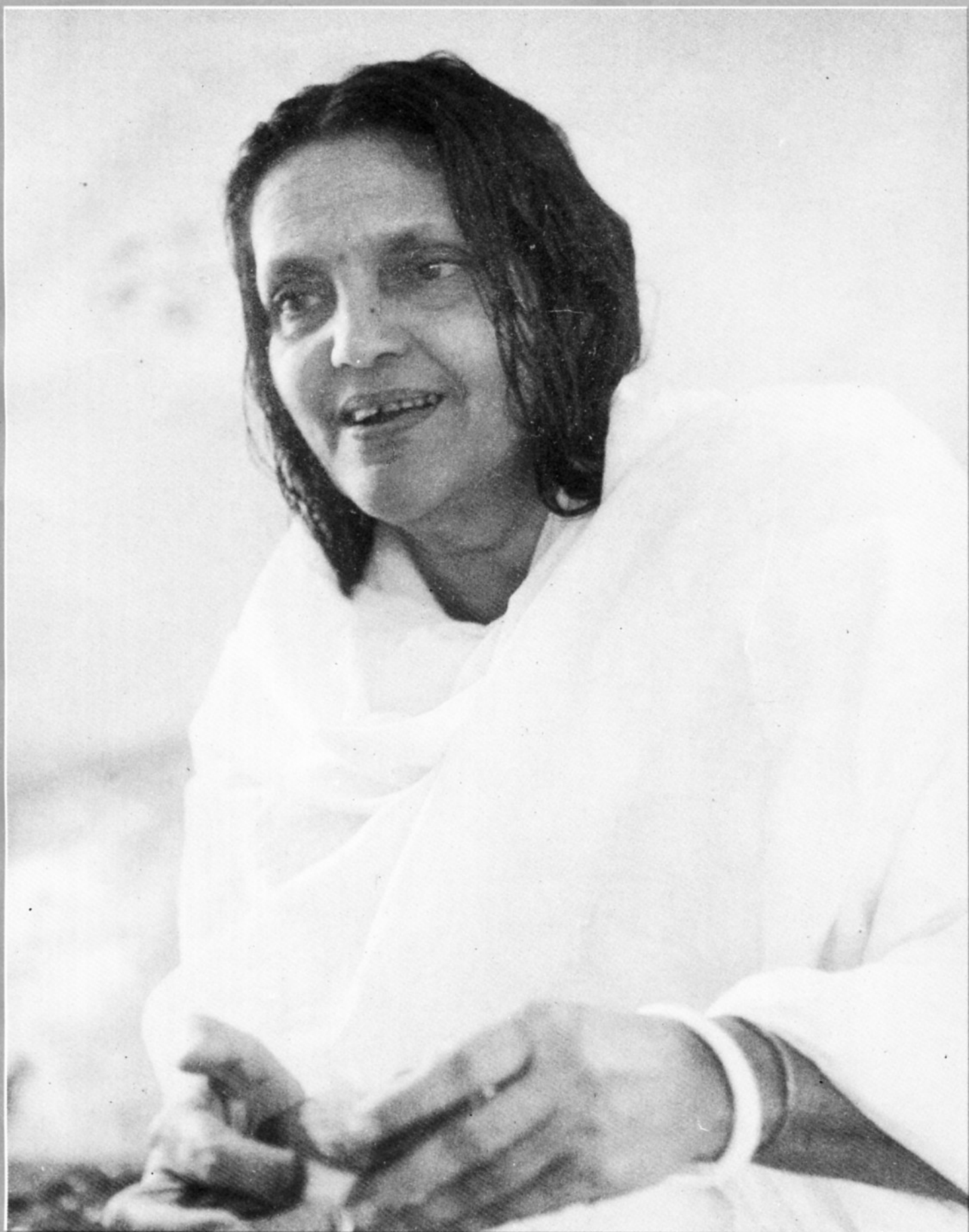
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MATRI VANI

If anything is to be had — *whatsoever*, in whatever way — it must be had of Him alone.

Man's bounden duty as man is to seek refuge at His Feet.

Days glide on; already you have let so many go by; anchored in patience endeavour to pass the few remaining.

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He, whose remembrance brings release from all anxiety — to think of Him alone is meet and right.

At all times endeavour to sustain the contemplation of God, the flow of His Name. By virtue of His Name all disease becomes easy.

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Verily, all is within His Law. How can one who has been able to accept this be still so greatly troubled ? It is but your duty to consider everything as His. Whatever he may do, try to let the thought of Him keep you at peace.

The sense of want—does it not arise because the desired object is not obtained ? When one's desire remains unfulfilled, its fruit unborn, to go on craving for that very thing and to be disappointed time and again — surely, it is futile ? So long as there is desire, the experience of want and sorrow is — from the worldly point of view — but natural. The world is ever-changing : whatever you may desire that is of the world will bring you sorrow.

Even though momentary happiness may be had at times — to seek *That* in which no sorrow is and all is found, is man's sole duty.

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Force yourself to take the medicine. It is man's bounden duty to seek refuge in the thought of God, even when there is no inclination to do so.

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Whatever keeps the mind engrossed in Him — *therein* lies man's duty. Surrender yourself at His Feet that you may become an instrument in His Hands.

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To forego the shelter that the life of the householder affords in order to devote one's days wholly to the Supreme Quest is difficult.

If you are capable of this — very well. But ponder carefully over the promptings that come from within : *His* will be done.

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

You cannot ? Why ? You will have to ! Verily, man can do all things. Who can say, what He will give to whom and through what ? Everything is His — entirely His.

What did you bring with you at birth ? Were you not empty-handed ? And all you have acquired — is it yours, really ?

All is His and whatever happens is His will. Endeavour to maintain this attitude.

Saying "it is mine" you grasp at everything — this is the way to court sorrow.

Call to Him, because all is His. To yearn thus for Him is real prayer.

All that the world can yield — what is it worth ? Have you not seen down the years the inevitable course of events ? In His treasure-house, where there are riches, relations, the vigour of youth, there are also old-age, death, disease and poverty. You will have to experience them all.

In this world there is no room for undisturbed ease; don't you see that there is distress at every step ? Does it not dawn on you even now to whom you belong ? This which is such a serious illness, is anyone suffering it for you ? Does anyone even share it ? Why all these worries ?

All is His, all is He; to leave everything to Him must be your only endeavour. Invoke His Name, meditate on Him, ever abide in His remembrance.

Not praying for anything that is of the world, strive to abandon yourself without reserve to *Him* — where no want of any kind exists, no pain, no agony. In Him is all attainment, the summit of fulfillment.



IN ASSOCIATION WITH MA ANANDAMAYEE

—Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

With Ma at the Siddheshwari Ashram

Dhaka, October 23, 1938

This morning Ma proceeded towards Siddheshwari with Dr. Pant* . I followed in a horse-cab. On arriving at Siddheshwari Kali Mandir I learnt that Ma had gone to the house of the temple Mahant.

Several years earlier, a Mahatma called Swami Sumeru Van had performed his ascetic practices here and attained to *siddhi* (perfection). The present Mahant also belonged to the Van Sect. In his house there was a picture of Sumeru Van Maharaj, which I had seen when I had been there along with Ma. In the courtyard there was a well and a creeper grew up a mango tree. A long standing belief prevailed that as long as the chain did not get immersed in the well water and as long as the creeper remained alive, Sumeru Maharaj would continue to abide unseen in Siddheshwari.

Now I presumed that Ma must have taken Dr. Pant there to hear and see all these things. We almost ran to the Mahant's house. On arriving we found Ma standing in the courtyard and Khukuni explaining everything to Dr. Pant. To show him the creeper she took Dr. Pant inside. Ma moved up to the entrance, glanced within and sat down in the outer courtyard. Conversation now commenced regarding Sumeru Maharaj.

Ma said : "There is a prophecy prevalent here that so long as the creeper along the mango tree is alive and the iron chain is not completely covered by water, Babaji (Sumeru Maharaj) will remain here. Once upon a time all the surrounding places were areas for *sadhana*.

Naresh Babu : This must have been long ago.

Mataji : Yes, quite so. However, even though all this belongs to the past, the atmosphere of it can still be felt. Grass grows even on top of burnt soil to the extent of hiding it, although the soil remains burnt below it; this is somewhat similar.

Myself : Is this atmosphere you talk of due to the transmission from a particular individual or to the ascetic practices carried out here ?

* Dr. Pitambar Pant, retd. Civil Surgeon and a very old devotee of Ma.

Mataji : This also is due to some *samskara*. The fact that Babaji has stated that he will remain here as long as the creeper is alive, shows that Babaji had a desire to be here. Otherwise, he could have declared that he is everywhere. Since he has referred to this particular place, it must be understood that he has a predisposition in favour of this very spot.

Naresh Babu : How can this be ? He went down into the well and never came up again. And now he says he is still here ! How can he still be alive ?

Mataji : The story goes that Babaji travelled to Kashi through the well. When he says he is here, he means he is here in his subtle body. When one has gone beyond birth and death, one can still exist in this fashion.

Myself : Ma, having transcended birth and death, does one still exist in an ethereal body ?

Mataji : The ethereal body also perishes. All the same supermen (*mahapurusha*) quite often assume special forms. This is due to their inherent disposition. Yet, some even after assuming a particular form can remain immersed in Supreme Being. Again the simultaneous existence in a formlessness is also possible.

After this short discussion Ma left for Shahbag.

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The necessity of a Guru in spiritual life

Ramna Ashram, Dhaka, 17th August 1939

I raised the topic of Sobha Ma* saying : "Sobha Ma maintains that without taking initiation from a *Sadguru* one cannot get anywhere in religious life. But do you say so ?

Mataji : I too say this.

Myself : But not all the time.

Mataji : Whom, do you call a *Sadguru* ?

Myself : Him who has realized the Brahman.

Mataji : Yes, who has been established in the Brahman. Look, one finds a *Sadguru* after acquiring a great deal of merit. You know, I lay much stress on the repetition of the Lord's name and maintain that everything can be achieved by His name. You must thoroughly understand the spirit in which I assert this.

"Look, you teach in a college, but not every body can do so. One can teach in a college only after having acquired the capacity and the necessary degree. But one

*. Sobha Ma was one of the recognised lady - saints of Bengal.

cannot ignore someone who teaches A,B,C in a primary school, for this is also not in vain. Because the knowledge of A, B, C, is necessary also for B.A. & M.A."

"Similarly there are different levels on the path of *sadhana* leading to the Knowledge of Reality. A person can only speak from the level he has reached at that time. So on all these levels a *Sadguru* is relevant. You know this body's ways, don't you ? It never discourages anyone. If somebody is told that he can never make any progress without a *Sadguru*, he may be so discouraged as to remain quite inactive. This is way I always advise constant adherence to the Name. By repeating the Name of Lord great yearning for Him will ensue and the keen desire for a Guru will awaken."

"Perhaps even after having found a Guru one's longing may not be appeased. Then you may possibly notice that some aspirants move from the shelter of, one Guru to that of another. 'Step-by-step initiation' is also mentioned in the *Sastras*. This is something similar. Guru, mantra, *Ista* are all one. From the worldly point of view one may perceive several Gurus, but in Supreme Truth they are all one. Although there are thousands of waves in the ocean, they are all nothing but water. I behold everything as one; I cannot speak of anything in division."

"The essential thing is a real thirst for the Divine to prepare the ground properly. The body is just the soil. If it has been prepared well, then as soon as the seed is sown the tree will start growing. So as to increase the desire for Truth, to prepare the soil properly, I advise the repetition of a sacred Name."

(Pointing to Herself) "In this body everything has happened of itself. Perhaps in one in a million or in a billion everything may take place spontaneously. So under these circumstances, how can I declare that nothing can be achieved without a *Sadguru* ? However, it is preferable to avoid mentioning how it was with this body."

"Again, viewing it from another angle of vision, suppose somebody does not have recourse to a human Guru and starts practising the Name or a religious rite. Although it may appear from the ordinary point of view that he has no Guru, I will say that what he does is certainly due to the Guru's prompting. When referring to a Guru we mean God Himself, who is the root cause of all thought, feeling and action. In a case like the one just mentioned, I would say that it is the Guru residing in his heart who is inspiring him to engage in those practices. So in this sense you can say that nothing can be achieved without a *Sadguru*. But the real purport of what people say about the necessity of the *Sadguru's* shelter is that once you have been accepted by a *Sadguru* there is no more downfall. For he inculcates divine power into the mantra so that it is never destroyed."

"Nevertheless you may find that many 'aspirants, even after having been initiated by a *Sadguru*, look for another Guru because their eagerness to find God is so intense that they cannot place full reliance in their *Sadguru*. About this kind of thing, I will maintain that their keen anxiety, this having recourse to one Guru after another—even this is due to the will of the *Sadguru*. Eventually one reaches a stage when the Guru, His grace and all the rest disappears—all is merged in the One. Surely, there is also a state of existence without Guru, is there not ?"

Myself : How can I tell ? I have not yet reached that state.

Mataji : But you have read the *Sastras*.

Myself : Yes, I have previously heard of such things from you.

Mataji : Yes, as soon as the sense of duality vanishes, then such a state supervenes. Who then is whose Guru ? Who showers grace on whom ?

Myself : Ma, you have previously said that it is only as a result of meritorious deeds that one obtains a *Sadguru*. Why then can no special improvement be noticed in oneself even after having been blessed by a *Sadguru* ?

Mataji : Not only as a result of one's good deeds does one secure a *Sadguru*. His mercy is also without cause or reason. This is why some obtain quick results after being blessed by a *Sadguru*, while others are faced with delay.

Myself : Is the delay due to the disciple's tendencies and inclinations brought over from previous births ?

Mataji : The Guru's power can achieve everything. He can burn to ashes everything in a moment; He may also cause delay.

Myself : Sobha Ma declares that having once been blessed by the grace of a *Sadguru*, one attains to liberation within three births. This may be applicable to persons with lesser qualifications. Is this correct ?

Mataji : It does not occur to me to reply to this question just now.

Myself : Sobha Ma also says that not more than nine *Sadgurus* can live simultaneously in the world. It will not do to have one more or one less.

Mataji : Does Sobha Ma say so ? But I cannot say anything of the sort. You must consider that there is an infinite variety of experiences in the spiritual world. Everything is possible. In this sense the simultaneous existence of nine *Sadgurus* is also correct.

Myself : After attaining to fulfilment does not the viewpoint of everyone become equally valid ? So why do some speak in a clear and definite way while others hint vaguely at the Infinite ?

Mataji : Look, fullness is made up of both the pieces and the whole. When you see something in a piecemeal fashion, how can you have seen the whole ? If you want to behold anything properly, you cannot confine it within any boundary.

Myself : Therefore should I understand that not all who have realized the Brahman are fully enlightened ? For instance the various authors of our *Sastras* are said to have been knowers of the Brahman and the *Sastras* indicate definite paths to fulfilment-they are not vague.

Mataji (laughing): This can be replied to in two ways : On the one hand it may be said that they have described only their own experiences, so it must be a partial exposition of Truth. On the other hand it may be argued that they have written to educate the public. Thus the authors of the *Sastras* who are supposed to have been knowers of the Brahman may have been fully enlightened or not. Now you have understood, haven't you ?

Myself : Yes, I have in a way, but not fully.

Mataji (laughing) : You are trying to find out who has reached what particular stage, but nothing of this kind of topic will be disclosed by this body.



CONVERSATION WITH SWAMI VIJAYANANDA

(Two)

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 enables 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.

Q. - Why is self-restraint necessary in *sadhana* ?

A. - Self-restraint is what makes a human being different from animals, and it is necessary for any social life. It is especially important in *sadhana*, because the ability to control emotions - this is the basis, actions and thoughts is what enables the *sadhaka* to turn his attention inside, instead of letting the mind be attracted by external pleasures and interests. To look inside and know oneself is the essence of *sadhana*, and it is possible only with good self-control, because without it all attention and energy go out, to the enjoyment of the senses etc. Only restraining oneself from satisfying certain desires does it become possible to concentrate fully on spiritual practice.

It is important to avoid extremes and rigidity : during the prohibition of alcohol in the USA, there were more heavy drinkers and gangsters than ever ! The ideal is to find a balance. If you are too strict with yourself, your mind will find a way to

"revenge" ... For example, if you try to reduce greed for food, but like to eat chocolate, have a little of it regularly, instead of not eating it at all and then have a whole pack of it when you cannot resist anymore ! Don't fight against the mind as if it were an enemy; explain to it gently- as with a child - that what he wants is right (happiness and peace are our real nature !), but that it looks for it in the wrong direction, outside, where everything is transitory and at some point most of the times becomes disappointing. It is like a mirror effect : people run after their own reflection in a mirror A lasting peace and genuine happiness can be found only inside yourself.

Q. - What to do when one feels discouraged ?

A. - Think of the story told by Ramdas : when you want to make a stone into pieces, you have to hit it many times. For a while it seems to have no effect, but in reality each time you hit, the stone's molecules are changed, and it prepares it for the final blow, when suddenly it will explode. It is the same in *sadhana*; each effort counts, even when it seems useless. Some day your efforts will bear fruit. Patience and perseverance are essential.

You might have noticed that when you sleep at night it is better to stop making efforts to fall asleep; if you just relax it will come naturally sooner or later. At a certain stage of *sadhana*, one should also adopt this attitude regarding Self-realization.

Q. - Why are some people Self-realized, while so many others are not ?

A. - From the point of view of a great sage, we are all Self-realized. One day I asked Ma to give me liberation, and she answered: "But you ARE free !".... It is only the veil of ignorance that makes people think that they are not enlightened, and act accordingly. This is why *sadhana* is all about removing these veils (of negative emotions and beliefs), and about acting according to morals and *Dharma*.

Q. - Divine Grace is always present, but often we do not know how to be receptive So how can we open ourselves to Grace ?

A. - By constantly reciting your mantra with love, thinking of its meaning. And by living a pure life, for example, being perfectly honest, avoiding to do harm to anyone, etc.

Q. - Is it true that if I think that I am a sinner, then I become a sinner ?

A. - Yes, you become what you think, so don't identify yourself with your mind, but with your real Self, which is pure and think about Ma as often and intensely as you can.

When your thoughts escape in the direction of what you call "sin", observe these thoughts, without doing what they tell you to do; just watch them, without judgement and let them go away. Remember that they are not you, just your mind, while you really are the Self. Then go back thinking of Ma or of your chosen deity.

Q. - What is the importance of telling the truth ?

A. - In *sadhana*, it is essential, being one of the five *Yamas* (cf. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*). India's motto is : "Only truth will win" (*satyam evam jayate* ; one can read this on each Indian coin and bank note !). Of course, this is to be combined with another saying : "Victory is where *Dharma* is respected". In order to respect *Dharma*, one must also observe common sense; obviously there are cases when it is better to keep silent than to say a truth that can hurt someone uselessly !

About truth and humility, there is a nice story : a h'assidic sage was so humble that he did not realize how high his own spiritual level was. Too many disciples wanted to be with him, so the town's Rabbi advised him to tell them to go away, explaining to them that he had no spiritual power, and could not teach them anything. The sage did so, but the consequence was that even more disciples came, attracted by his immense humility. So the Rabbi said: "You all like humility very much, so you should tell them that you can do miracles, that you are a great sage etc., so they will go away ! " The sage's sincere answer was: "I cannot say that, I cannot lie to them ! "

[To continue]

THE INIMITABLE LIFE STORY
of
SRI YOGESH BRAHMACHARI*

—Mrs. R. Rattan Singh

"Seek and Ye Shalt Find" — St. Mathew 7:7 St. Luke 11:9

Brahmachari Yogeshda's experience is truly a great example of these words of Jesus. Yogeshda was in search from early days of someone who could show him the Real Path and his desire to 'seek' led him to Mataji.

In the following narrative of Yogeshda's early experience, Mataji's Grace manifests itself. In every doubt, in every quest Her loving hands is extended imperceptibly to hold the seeker's hand and gently lead him on the Path without much difficulty.

It was round about the year 1925-26. Yogeshda was working as an assistant in the Health Deptt. in Dhaka on a meagre salary of Rs. 60/- per month. He was inclined towards a life of a sadhu since his early days. He had taken part in the Freedom struggle and believed in the Swadeshi Movement. Because of this he had also undergone a prison term.

News went round that a lady had come to Dhaka who lived with her husband in an orchard grove of the Muslim Nawabs at Shahbagh. The lady observed *purdah* as was the custom, and performed her normal household duties, but was becoming gradually known for her strange mystic powers.

A Government servant who was a disciple of Sri Aurovindo periodically came to Dhaka on administrative duties. He, too, related to Yogeshda the happenings in Shahbag. There was a large hall where the Nawabs formally held functions with accompanying dancing and singing. Twice a week Mataji came to the hall and sang bhajans with the few people that happened to come. In those days no one did *pranam* to Her. She touched no one and no one touched Her.

Yogeshda went for the first time for Mataji's *darshan*. At first he could only see her feet because her face was completely covered. On one occasion only he happened to see Her throw something out of the hall and he noticed the swift movements of her bangled wrist and hand.

Mataji would come to the hall with Baba Bholanath and clap her hands in rhythm with the singing and recite kirtan. Once Mataji requested Bholanathji to ask

*. Sri Yogesh Brahmachari, one of the oldest devotee of Mataji, known as "Yogeshda".

Yogeshda to sing a *bhajan*. He did so. Thereafter, this became almost a regular performance twice a week. Once Mataji had her face uncovered during Kirtan. Yogeshda was struck by the radiance of Her beauty. He was simply fascinated by the sight of Her face and the divine light that shone on it.

At every meeting some strange things happened. Mataji would get into a trance very often. Whenever Mataji entered the hall, she would bend her head and touch the ground in pranama and then sometimes roll in a most supple and swift manner. It looked as if she had no neck and no bone. Tears would flow from Her eyes during kirtan.

Once Mataji walked around as usual singing bhajan. Then She came towards Yogeshda, who was sitting cross-legged on the floor and all on a sudden She put Her feet against his back and holding the finger of Bholanath, got onto Yogeshda's shoulders and stood there. The next moment She fell flat on the ground in pranama. Yogeshda and every one was wonderstruck. When someone asked him afterwards how much weight he had felt, Yogeshda said, "Hardly any at all". There had been no pressure on him at all.

On one occasion a few people had gathered as usual. Yogeshda sat in great awe, as always, waiting for some guidance from Mataji for his spiritual life. Mataji entered the hall holding a garland of flowers in Her hand, which she gave to Bholanath; then clapping her hands in tune with the music she moved around in kirtan. Then suddenly, she uttered, "Hari Om" and fell into a trance. Later she asked for the garland, broke the string, pulled the flowers apart and threw them to the people sitting around. One flower struck Yogeshda on the forehead and fell away from him. Mataji suddenly said those who had received flowers could come and do *pranama*.

Yogeshda did not go to do *pranama* as he felt he had not received the flower since it had fallen away from him. All others pranamed. Yogeshda went home but could not help crying all the time. He did not cook his meal and lay down on his scanty bedding.

The next meeting he did not go to Shahbag. A message came to call him later. Mataji asked Yogeshda for the first time what he was doing, if he was married, where his parents were, what was his pay and many other questions. She enquired if he could get leave and for how long at a time, and how soon he could arrange for it in case of necessity.

He made enquiries at his office next day and came back to tell Mataji that he could get leave of three months at a stretch.

Mataji indicated to Bholanath to ask everyone to leave the room and to close the door as she had something to say in private to Yogeshda. This was the first "Private" Mataji granted to anyone.

When they were alone, Mataji told Yogeshda that she was going to ask him to do some difficult work. He should take long leave and adopt the life of an ascetic, subsisting only on begging for one whole year. He was not to tell this to anyone nor disclose what Mataji had told him nor show that he recognized Mataji and Her party if by chance he happened to meet them any where. From the first of *Phalgun* * of that year he should live by begging and take his first alms from his brother.

About that time, Dhaka was recovering from its first Hindu-Muslim riots. Life was very unsafe as there was frequent killing. Yogeshda would rather stay with friends than go home late at night.

When Yogeshda took long leave, Mataji told him that his salary would be kept at Shahbagh and only enough would be given to him to go and visit his mother. He was to stay there for only three days.

When he went home and knocked at the door, it was midnight. All were surprised to see him and wondered why he had come at that hour. He told them that he felt like seeing them as he had taken holiday to go to the Kumbh Mela. (Mataji was also going to Haridwar to attend the Kumbh). His brother was not at home. He had gone away on some work and had left Rs. 10/- with his wife.

While taking leave of his brother's wife Yogeshda touched her feet and asked for some money for the fare. At once his sister-in-law put the Rs. 10/- in his hand. Thus he received his first alms as Mataji had directed. Mataji's imperceptible *Kheyal* had made this possible even though the brother was absent. This is how Mataji's all-knowing ways exert their influence in all matters concerning Her devotees.

With some salted dry food stuff, a blanket and a pot (a round goblet like vessel with a narrow mouth), Yogeshda left home. At a place where no one would see him, in obedience to Mataji's instructions, he shaved his head and beard. Then he was not to shave again for a whole year. After buying the ticket for Haridwar, he had only a few rupees left.

The train journey passed without discomfort. He had enough food with him and did not have to beg from any passenger. He felt awkward at the thought of having to beg. He was a stranger in a strange company, going on a strange mission to strange places. How would he beg? It was the hardest thing to do. Yet he knew he could not put it off for long. He had to prepare for it mentally.

At Haridwar, he felt bitter cold. After the warm climate of Bangla Desh, such cold was a painful surprise. He did not have enough clothes. The night in the train he sat cuddled up in his blanket.

*. The Bengali month of Phalgun—February-March.

As he came out onto the platform there was a drizzle, which made him feel even colder. Another sadhu joined him and together they made their way to the holy bathing place. A panda followed them with the usual purpose of extracting some money from them. After a while, he realized that he could get nothing and so left them.

Seeing them just arrive, a boy came up and told them to go to "Har Ki Pauri" or "Brahm Kund". It was raining by now. Covering himself with his blanket, Yogeshda walked to the sacred spot to have a bath in the Holy Ganges. So cold was the water that after just two dips he was trembling and shivering. It had never occurred to him that it could be so cold anywhere in the world. He tried to get warm by walking about on the pavement. The rain had stopped. There were some empty seats with large umbrellas fixed to the ground. He sat under one of them. A panda came and asked him to move away as it was his place. It again drizzled, so he went to the next seat. That also he was asked to vacate by another person. He was shivering and was wondering where to go when someone came up to him and suggested the name of Bhola Giri Ashram.

On reaching there, Yogeshda found the venerable sadhu in meditation. He had also many followers in Dhaka. When the Mahatma was ready to give darshan, many people did *pranam* to him. For the first time Yogeshda saw devotees prostrate in *sastang pranam* (lying flat in the ground, face downwards, with folded hands stretched above the head in humble supplication). When he gave his name as Yogesh, the Mahatma thought that he was the same person who had built the temple, but when he found that this was not so, he again closed his eyes in meditation. Therefore, Yogeshda left.

Again he was wondering where to go. A young boy accosted him and directed him to proceed to Rishikesh. Where he would find place to stay. But due to the rush because of the Kumbh Mela, the place was dotted all over with people. Most of the *Kutias* (small huts) were occupied. On searching he found some shelter—just a roof and walls with a mud flooring, but with no doors fixed to the entrance. He decided to stay there. That night he huddled up in a corner, feeling miserable cold without a meal, besides insufficient clothing. Next day he gathered some branches and twigs to make a door for protection from the strong winds. But when the leaves dried, there were gaps through which the icy wind rushed in with piercing fury. Yogeshda got hold of bits of cloth and covered the gaps. But this was only a poor protection.

Here he spent some days. The discomforts were richly compensated by the grandeur of nature's beauty. He was overjoyed at the sight of the high mountains,

so close to him. They seemed to dip their feet into the Holy waters of the river that flowed majestically in the center of the valley enriching every part of the land. Such scenery was not to be found in his home country.

Physical inconvenience he was learning to brave, but begging was most difficult. Often he would go without a meal. Sometimes he would follow the other sadhus when the bell rang at the '*Kshetra*' (a place where food is distributed particularly to sadhus). Then he would have a good meal. Often he would be given a heap of chappaties (unleavened bread). But he was not used to eating those as his staple food was rice. So he would sit upon a rock near the Ganga and throw bits of chappaties into the river. Soon large fishes came and it was fun seeing them scramble for the food.

Some sadhu told him he could go to Badrinath by just paying Rs. 10/- to an organization that provided all necessities for the trip.

One day a boy showed him a *Kutia* that had fallen vacant. He shifted into it. Here there was a raised stone with a depression on the top at one end. He cleaned it and found it most suitable to spread his food to eat with convenience. It was better than fumbling in the vessel for morsels.

Time was drawing near for the Kumbh. He knew Mataji would be coming. He said to himself "If Mataji comes, let her find me out". The very next day as he was sitting on a rock, he saw Mataji and her party approaching. But he was not to show any recognition. Yet he was very eager for Mataji to see him. So he thought he would go into the *Kutia* and sing a Bhajan loudly to attract Mataji's attention. He tried to raise his voice and sing. Alas, no sound would come. His throat felt chocked. He struggled in vain to sing and felt exasperated.

This was Mataji's way of not recognizing him. As Mataji's party made its way down the path, Yogeshda rushed out to see their backs just around the corner of the ridge. Bholanath saw him and said "Hey Yogesh" and smilingly passed out of sight. A little later he returned and put Rs. 10/- into his hands and disappeared. Yogeshda was lost in amazement at this strange incident and this gesture of providing for the money he needed for the Badrinath trip.

Such are the countless ways in which Mataji manifests herself, and the mysterious actions in which she shows her benevolent love. Lucky and blessed are those who can come within even a shadow of her Grace.

[To continue]



THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

—Sri P.C. Mehta

Buddhism :

1. General :

Buddhism is so called because of its allegiance to the Buddha, or the Enlightened one, a title given to *Gautama*, who lived in North India in the latter part of the fifth and early fourth century B.C. The religion has evolved in three main schools:

There were four religio-philosophic thought patterns prevalent during Buddha's time. '*Krama Mukti*' with the attendant rituals to reach heaven, '*Sadyo-Mukti*' with emphasis on 'Sannyasa' or renunciation, popular practices of '*Yoga*' which were not fully developed at the time, and materialism preaching hedonism. The clear division of matter and mind that we find in later philosophical thought was absent at this stage.

The religion has evolved in three main schools:

- A) '**Hinayāna**' Buddhism, which means 'the lesser vehicle', subdivided into,
 - i) Primitive Buddhism and
 - ii) The '*Thera-vāda Buddhism*' (the doctrine of the Elders) also known as '*Sthavira-vāda*', which is the surviving form of the 'Hinayāna Buddhism.' It is the later stage of the basic original teaching of the Buddha.
 - B) The '**Mahayāna**' or great vehicle and
 - C) The '**Vajrayāna**' or diamond vehicle which has 'Mahāyana' affinities.
- The '*Thera-vāda*' is found in Ceylon i.e. Sri Lanka, Burma and South East Asia;
The '*Mahayāna*' in China, Japan and Korea and
The '*Vajrayāna*' in Tibet and its environs.
In India, Buddhism was at one time wide spread but now exists marginally.

2. Buddha's Life:

Buddha's family name was Gautama. His personal name was Siddhartha. He was born at Kapilavastu in 563 B. C. in the Terai region of Nepal. He was of the '*Kshatriya*' caste. His father Shuddhodana was a prince of the Sakya clan. His

mother's name was Maha Maya devi. He is represented as a greatly accomplished prince. He was married at the age of 16 to beautiful Yashodhara and in due course a son named Rahul was born to him. On seeing a sick man, an old man, a dead body and a 'Sanyasi' i. e. arecluse, he awoke to the transitoriness of the world and its values, and at an early age of twenty nine, abandoned his life of luxury, his wife and a young son and set off to discover the cause of human suffering and its spiritual cure. He went away to a distant forest and on foot to Rajagrha (Rajgir) and thence to Uruvela. There, in the company of five other ascetics, he practiced severe penance, mortifying his body, as it was the common practice at the time for the intensely religious-minded recluse. For six years he led this kind of life and finding that undue bodily mortification did not help in coming to deeper insight, he modified the bodily discipline to a point where the body was kept balanced for meditation. Seeing him thus lessening the severity of bodily discipline, his companions left him. In this second attempt he was successful and he came to full enlightenment i.e., became '*Buddha*', and reached, as it is expressed, 'the end of craving'.

3. The doctrine of '*Paticca Samuppada*' or Dependent origination:

Before coming to enlightenment Buddha sat in meditation and in the following twelve steps of the chain of causation, called '*nidāna*', discovered the origin of existence. This cycle of dependence is therefore called '*Bhava-cakra*' or the 'Wheel of existence'. 'Dependent origination' means origination of phenomena depending on earlier phenomena.

While discussing Materialism, we have seen that '*Svabhāva-vāda*' regards the necessity to produce effect as inherent in the cause. According to it, we need not go outside the thing to explain its sequential behaviour. In Buddhism, the cause-effect chain is not due merely to the self-unfoldment of the cause, but the result of certain external factors co-operating with it. Thus a cause-effect series does not come into being until certain conditions are fulfilled and it will cease when the conditions discontinue. Thus though the law of causation is universal, its operation is dependent upon conditions. Therefore, it is called the law of '*Paticca- (pratitya*' in Sanskrit)-*samutpāda*' or 'dependent-origination'. The important implication is that in Buddhism, the cause-effect series, though begun can be put an end to, by removing the conditions surrounding the cause. In '*Svabhāva-vāda*' whatever is to happen must happen. This doctrine of 'dependent origination', is considered a fundamental Buddhist doctrine and the starting point of Buddhist philosophy.

Step i: Buddha asked on the happening of what does decay and death or '*jarāmarana*', occur ?

- Step ii: He discovered that decay and death can only occur when there is birth '*jati*'.
- Step iii: He then discovered that birth could take place only if there were previous existences called '*bhāva*'. In '*Mādhyamika Vritti*', Candrakirti interprets this word '*bhāva*', as the deed or '*karma*' which brings about rebirth (*punar-bhāva-janakam-karma*).
- Step iv: He then found that '*karma*' which brings about rebirth called '*bhāva*' depended upon '*upādāna*' meaning 'holding fast' to the elements necessary for attaining one's desires, and thereby rebirth. In other words, clinging to existence.
- Step v: He then realized that '*upādāna*' depended on '*tanha*'. '*Tanha*' is the desire that there may never be any separation from the pleasures etc., which are dear to us.
- Step vi: He found that '*tanha*' arose from '*vedanā*' or feeling. '*Vedanā*' means all kinds of feelings, pleasurable, painful or indifferent.
- Step vii: He found that '*vedanā*' is produced by '*phassa*' or '*sparsa*' i.e. sense-contact of any kind and leads to '*tanha*' or desire.
- Step viii: He then discovered that there are six fields of contact **ayatana**. *Ayatana* means the six senses together with their objects. '*Sal-ayatana*' means six senses as six fields of operation.
- Step ix: He found that for the six *ayatana* or fields of contact to be effective, there has got to be '*nāma-rupa*' i.e. mind and body or psycho-physical organism.
- Step x: He found that '*nāma-rupa*' depended on consciousness or '*vinnana*'.
- Step xi: He questioned as to why does consciousness or '*vinnana*' arise? He found that '*vinnana*' arises out of '*sankhara*' or 'confirmations' meaning attachment, antipathy and infatuation.
- Step xii: He found that the *sankharas* can only be if there is ignorance *avijja*.

At the end of these seven days of meditation, it is recorded as follows; 'Then the Blessed One, during the first watch of the night fixed his mind upon the chain of causation, in direct and reverse order: "From ignorance springs the '*sankharas*', from the '*sankharas*' springs *vinnana*' or consciousness, from consciousness spring '*nāma-rupa*', name and form, from name and form spring '*salayatana*' or the six provinces (of the six senses), from the six provinces springs '*phassa*' or contact, from contact springs '*vedanā*' or sensation, from sensation springs '*tanha*' or thirst (or desires), from thirst springs '*upādāna*' or attachment, from attachment

springs '*bhāva*' or karma which brings about rebirth, from such karma springs '*jati*' or birth, from birth springs '*jaramarana*' or old age and death....."

Thus if *avijja* could be stopped then the *sankharas* will be stopped, and if the *sankharas* could be stopped *vinnana* could be stopped and so on.

This discovery points to the positivistic and practical basis of Buddha's teaching. Here we have the Indian counterpart of 'The law of sufficient reason'.

4. 'Avijja' :

In the Upanisadic teaching '*Avidya*' is considered as a cosmic power responsible for giving the impression of an empirical world where in reality there is only '*Nisprapanca Brahman*'. It is the ignorance of the essential unity of all existence. According to Advaita it is in not knowing the true nature of the Self which is the identity of '*Atman*' with '*Brahman*'. In Buddhism '*Avijja*' is generally regarded as a failure to recognize the hollowness of the self. If all things are transient and unsubstantial, our desire for them is a delusion. Since there is no self, the craving for the preservation of the self or the will to be, is more powerful than our desire for transient and unsubstantial things. Belief in the being of oneself begets belief in that of others and thereby gives rise to love and hatred. Belief in self-identity is the chief '*avijja*' and the source of all evil. Thus, this ignorance boils down to the ignorance of the four noble truths called '*Arya-Satya*', which are ignorance about sorrow; its cause, its extinction and its means of extinction.

It is said that '*Avijja*' comes into being through '*Asavas*', meaning 'intoxication' or 'depravities'. By eradication of '*Asavas*', '*Avijja*' is removed.

The word '*Asava*' in Sanskrit means 'old wine'. In Jainism, '*Asrava*' means 'flowing in of karma matter'.

In the '*Dhammasangani*', '*Asavas*' are categorized as i) '*komasava*' meaning craving for sense pleasures, ii) '*Bhavasava*', is desire for those vibrations which birth only can provide, meaning desire for birth, iii) '*Ditthasava*' meaning holding dissident views which stands in the way of adopting the true Buddhistic doctrines and which therefore cloud the mind and iv) '*Avijjasava*' meaning the ignorance about sorrow; its cause, its extinction and its means of extinction.

5. Buddha's Later Life :

Buddha decided to teach the way to others and his first disciples were the five ascetics who had earlier parted company with him. He delivered his first sermon to them at or 'Deer Park' near Varanasi. Varanasi.

In this first sermon he dwelt upon the '*Arya-Satya*', i.e. 'The Four Noble Truths', to which we shall refer to later. Thereafter, he converted many others, including his own family. His activities were confined to a limited region comprising parts of Nepal, Bihar, and the Uttar Pradesh.

In 483 B.C. at the age of 80 at Kusinara, (Kasia, in modern Nepal), when he realized that the time drew near for him to die, he entered into '*Dhyāna*' and passing through its various stages left his mortal coil. This was his birth day as well as the anniversary of the day on which he came to full enlightenment.

This event took place between two '*Sala*' trees, a circumstance which is piously depicted in the sculptures and bas-reliefs relating to the closing scene of his life. The story of Buddha's life is based on tradition, long posterior to the time he lived.

In the third century B.C., the famous emperor, Asoka (274-232 B.C.), was converted to Buddhism by the Buddhist monk Upagupta, and it is commonly believed that through the impetus of Asoka, Buddhism began to spread not only in other parts of India, but beyond it. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan maintains that Asoka sent Buddhist emissaries to Syria, Egypt, Macedonia and Epirus. In the third century B.C., Buddhism reached the zenith of its glory. In India and outside, the inspiring story of Buddha is portrayed in temples, statues and reliefs and has prompted the splendid Mauryan stone sculpture.

There is much difficulty in determining the original teachings of the Buddha, or his exact words. Buddha's teachings have to be gathered from works compiled a long time after his death and therefore cannot be taken as completely authentic. In this connection, Oldenberg mentions the following interesting story from Buddhist literature. 'After the death of Buddha, Purana, an old disciple came to Rajagrha and was invited to accept the canon which the other disciples gathering together had meanwhile fixed; but he declined to do so saying the he preferred to hold fast to what he had learnt from the lips of the exalted Master himself'. (taken from M. Hiripanna's '*Outlines of Indian philosophy*'). The '*Canonical literature*' are the earliest works and there is much difference of opinion amongst scholars about the exact character of his teachings.

6. Early Buddhism as expansion of Brahmanism:

Buddhism did not deviate much from the Upanisadic doctrine, of Brahmanism. As such there are fewer references to them. The canonical literature, which now and again criticizes Brahmanism, does so mostly about the over-elaborate rituals. It places great emphasis on morality. Belief in the doctrine of *karma* in Buddhism,

shows its connection with Upanisadic thought. The early Upanisads are against the belief in a personal God; Buddha also does not concern himself with the question of God. Secondly, according to many statements in the Upanisads, 'Self is to be conceived of as without any attributes. Buddha eliminates the concept of 'Self'altogether Early Buddhism believed in the same cosmological and eschatological views as Brahmanism of this type. It represents a new expansion, not against, but with Brahmanism.

We saw that Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism rest on the three common pillars of i) *Sabdā-Pramāna*', ii) doctrine of *karma* and iii) *Mukti* as the goal of life. All of them are akin to each other with minor differences in approach. All the three started as religions and concerned themselves with imparting transcendental wisdom. Ultimately they were forced to justify their viewpoints in rational terms against each other's attacks and thus become philosophies.

[To continue]



PAGES FROM THE DIARY
OF
GURUPRIYA DEVI
[Translated from Bengali]

Almora, April 28, 1937

We were to leave for Uttar Vrindaban this morning with Ma. The American lady is very much keen to visit all the saints here. She had Yashoda Ma's address with her. An American gentleman was serving Yashoda Ma at Uttar Vrindaban.

He was formerly a professor and the American lady was very keen on meeting him. Just then she received the news that the American had gone away somewhere and was returning the next day. But we were to go back to Nainital tomorrow. As the American lady had brought Ma to Almora she wanted also to return with Ma, otherwise she would have stayed on for a day more and meet the American. So, we did not go finally.

Ma was seated on her asana. From yesterday Ma had the *kheyal* that, 'those people are not there; we shall not go'. But she did not stop anyone. For she always says, "It is necessary to perform all the *karma* that has to be done. It is not right to stop it, for everything has a purpose." Therefore she never expresses a strong approval or disapproval over any matter. Normally she participates in whatever is being done.

Today again the local ladies arrived and sat surrounding Ma on all sides. They offered so many flowers that Ma was almost covered with flowers. They were offering fruits, sweets and whatever else they had managed to get, at Ma's feet. They were singing Ma's name, saying, "You are Kalika, you are the All - Powerful."

Many gentlemen had also come including the man who had questioned Ma incessantly yesterday. He asked Ma, "Ma, is there greater happiness in samadhi or in normal day to day activities ?

Ma replied, "It is that everyone goes to mahatmas with the desire of understanding its essence. Again it can be observed that those who revel in worldly existence do not gain permanent happiness they suffer more agitation. Sadhu mahatmas who are in samadhi are immersed in a kind of bliss all the time. They are in such bliss that by merely having their darshan people get a touch of that bliss."

The man asked, "In that case why are you not always in samadhi ?" Ma burst into a ripple of laughter on hearing this and said, "I am but your little daughter."

Akhandanandaji who was nearby, said, "Ma is always in samadhi. While she speaks to you, or lies down or walks or talks - she is always in the one state of samadhi." Ma laughed and said, "See, what is the conclusion of this talk ? I am also just like you all." The man gazed long at Ma and said gravely, "No, that is not so - the conclusion can be drawn from your countenance." Ma again laughed and said, "How do you do that ? Just like you I also have hands, feet, face and the rest." But the man refused to agree with this and merely shook his head in disagreement.

People began leaving - one person stood up and Ma said, "Baba, are you also going ?" He replied, "Yes, Ma. You lie down, I shall go." Ma laughed and said, "Listen, I am always sleeping. Even while I converse with you I am sleeping." He did pranam and left.

After conversing for some time, Ma covered herself with her sheet and lay down. At twelve noon ladies arrived and sat surrounding Ma while she rested. She got up at one p.m. and began enjoying the company around her in various ways. Sometimes she threw flowers and fruits here and there playing with the children present. She asked the devotees to sing Nama-kirtan, saying, "Sing Hare Krishna. Hare Rama - what is the use of wasting time with an empty tongue ? Sing Nama-kirtan - '*Kaho Jine janama diya, Kaho Rama Siya!*'"

In this manner Ma spread joy all around. Once I took Ma outside. As I returned with Ma the ladies began saying, "Ma, as soon as you left, our plight was like that of the wedding party without the bridegroom. In those two minutes our joy was turned into gloom." One lady said, Ma, you are our Lord and we are all your gopis". Ma laughed and quipped, "How shall I feed so many gopis" ? They all laughed together and said with joined palms, "Ma, by your grace each of us eats in her own home," Ma said, "Then all of you put together are my one Lord and I am the gopi." They refused to accept this and said, "No Ma, it can't be so, it can't be so. We are in your shadow - you are our Lord." Ma laughed and replied, "Alright, whoever is my gopi will receive this flower and fruit," and she started distributing the fruits that had been offered to her and the flowers that covered her. There was a veritable scramble to receive these as all eagerly stepped forward to receive the flowers that had adorned Ma's feet.

Amidst this merriment *dandis** arrived. We got into the *dandis* which were originally meant for the trip to Uttar Vrindavan and went with Ma for an outing.

* **Dandi** - a sort of open palanquin used to carry persons in the hills.

The American lady also went with us. Many others walked alongside. We were being taken to Kali Math, about four miles away. The scenery enroute was marvellous. We also passed through a thorny jungle. The American who had come yesterday with the American lady to see Ma lived in an ashram close by. He lived here to practise sadhana in solitude like some other men and women. As we reached the ashram the American came forward, did *pranam* to Ma and joined us on our trip to Kali Math. This time I observed attentively and noted that he wore clothes in the Bengali style and a thick *Kurta*. The clothes were grimy. He explained that saying, "The water source is far way and therefore it is difficult to wash clothes."

We reached Kali Math. It was a quiet and beautiful spot surrounded by exquisite scenery. The American lady photographed Ma alone, then with Baba Bholanath and then with Munni and myself. On Bholanath's suggestion the American took one photograph of the American lady seated between Ma and Baba Bholanath. Then we all returned. On the way the American lady visited the house of a German painter.

A little while later the owner of the house and his wife came out and took Ma and all of us inside. We saw a Spanish girl who had run away from her country where there was the fear of war. She said, "The Western world is bad - one cannot have peace there. I am gaining much peace after coming to India. Another foreigner was there who was dressed as people do here. Later we came to know that he was the person staying in Yashoda Ma's ashram in Uttar Vrindavan. The German couple, the Spanish girl and the gentleman from Uttar Vrindaban touched their foreheads on the ground and did *pranam* in the Bengali fashion to Ma and Baba Bholanath. As Ma would not enter the house they made arrangements to seat outside. The German showed his paintings to Ma. He had painted Buddha, Swami Sharadananda, Swami Shivananda and many others. We sat there for a long time. The scenery around the house was picturesque - it was a tranquil spot. We then returned to the dharmasala.

The American gentleman and lady were still with us. The lady said, "At seven p.m. a sadhu from the Ramakrishna Mission is coming to meet Ma."

The sadhu arrived at the correct time, accompanied by a couple, who were connected with the Ramakrishna mission.

April 29, 1937

Before Ma got up some teachers made their students stand in the compound of the Nanda Devi temple and recite stotras. After the recitation the boys lined up and went back to school. Ma entered the room and sat on her bedding. People began

arriving for darshan. The girls from Garbyang had also come and were pressing Ma to visit Kailash sometime. The Kailash route would reopen by May or June. We would have to go via Almora. It was almost decided that if all went well we would go to Kailash. next summer. The girls were very much delighted.

We then accompanied Ma to Doctor Boshi Sen's laboratory. He is a student of Prof. Jagadish Chandra Bose* and wished to show Ma his laboratory. We drove by car to the house and were received by the couple, the sadhu who had come yesterday (we learnt later that his name is Sri Ramaswami) and two other Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission (one was an American) who expressed great joy on Ma's arrival and took her inside. Doctor wished to show Ma his instruments and other equipments inside his room but Ma smilingly declined. Ma was seated in a garden of flowers. She was accompanied by many. Three sadhus stood near Ma and expressed great joy. Ramaswami pointed to the American sadhu and said, "He was very keen to meet you yesterday but could not do so as he was unwell. On knowing that you would be here today he has come very happily. As the Nanda Devi temple is very far off he did not have the strength to go there, but surprisingly, though I am so old, I experienced no difficulty in going so far. I cannot understand how that was so." Ma laughed and said, "Everything is the *lila* of that One." He replied, "Everything is verily that, but because of impurity within we are unable to understand it. The Paramahansa once said, 'that even a slightly blunted needle could not be used to stitch.'" Ma commented, "That is absolutely right". Ma left after some time. The sadhus followed her to the car. The American sadhu joined his palms and said repeatedly, "It is my great good fortune that I had your darshan." Ramaswami also made similar comments. Ma said, "Why do you say so ? I am your little daughter - look upon me thus." Immediately Ramaswami said, "How can that be ? You are our mother !"

We were about to leave for Nainital. Four or five of the girls from Kailash who were with us, began crying and saying, "We feel like going with Ma right now. We shall complete our studies and then go to work with Ma." I was wonderstruck and tried to analyse what these young hill girls had gained from Ma in these two or three days. Actually these girls are so straightforward and simple, it is no wonder they behaved thus. They embraced me and repeatedly requested us to come again. They said, "When you all go to Kailash we shall go with you and remove the snow from the path for you." Their sincere, heartfelt affection made a touching

* Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose — the world renowned scientist from Bengal.

impression on our minds. I was enchanted by Ma's power - these girls could barely understand Ma's language and yet this weeping!

One event that I forgot to mention - seeing the school boys Ma had a *kheyal* and said, "Every one should be given a note book to write the Name of God. In the morning they should first write God's Name in it and then do other work." There were one hundred and forty five boys and a note book was purchased for each one of them. The Judge Sahib bore the expense and insisted that no one else should pay for the books.

In the car on our way to Nainital the American lady questioned Ma and Jyotish Dada interpreted. The lady asked, "Is the consciousness in birds and animals, plants and trees the same as in human beings?" Ma replied, "It is the same - just as we are all present in one space. Space cannot be cut up and separated - exactly that way."

The lady again asked, 'Alright, if there is the same consciousness in everything, are you able to experience it ?' Ma replied, "That is an extremely natural thing." The lady said, "Sometimes I feel trees can talk. When the wind blows I feel all the elements are one and it appears to me that the trees speak." Ma said, "Trees can also speak -yes, that is true." The lady said, "Right then, if the consciousness in human beings and that in birds and animals are of the same kind, can animals and plants pray to God ?" Ma replied, "Everything is in God; they are also in Him. The human birth is the highest, for even a childish and ignorant man can be educated to become a scholar, whereas a plant or an animal cannot be thus moulded. God's special manifestation is in man. It is also true that plants or animals cannot worship God as humans do, but it is nevertheless a fact that they can also attain peace and bliss. But there is a particular point about this - like Jada Bharat, who became a deer. For those who remember their previous births it is a different matter. In this manner plants or animals do worship God; but it is a special instance and if for some reason some human being acquires the form of a plant or animal for some time, this may happen."

The lady asked "The universe was created from Aum. Then how does the universe dissolve into it again ?" Ma smiled and said, "Just as there is creation, so also is there destruction. Just as we came from Nainital by a road and will return to Nainital again by the same road." The lady was very happy to hear all this .

She was extremely attentive about Ma's comfort and repeatedly asked Ma whether she suffered any inconvenience. She pulled her suitcase near Ma's feet and asked Ma to place her feet on it. In the afternoon she again peeled an orange, fed some to Ma and ate the rest. Ma spoke a couple of words of English like a child and

the lady was delighted to hear it and praised Ma's flawless pronunciation. It was a six hour journey and we reached Nainital at about six p.m.

As the car came to a halt the group of devotees at Nainital gathered and prayed at Ma's feet. In the car the American lady had asked Ma, "How did you like Almora ?" Ma replied, "All places are alike, I do not feel any difference." This answer made the lady very happy. She is very intelligent.

We got off the car and went by boat from Tallital to Mallital where we proceeded to the dharmasala at the Naina Devi temple. The hill women who were waiting for Ma were seated on the steps leading to the lake. A stream of joy burst forth as soon as Ma reached. The ladies came up and followed Ma into a room where bhajan was started. After dusk they left.

Nainital, April 30,1937

Early morning Ma went out for a stroll. At ten a.m. the American lady arrived. A devotee had presented Ma with a silk dhoti and shawl and Ma had given these to the American lady who had worn them today. She had not put them on correctly and Ma made me dress her up in the right fashion. She began expressing her joy in many ways and in different terms. She joined her palms and prayed, "Please bless me that I may be as worthy inwardly of this dress that you have given me externally." It seems she believes that on wearing this Indian costume one becomes a sadhu. One sadhu had given her a brass kamandalu and she had brought it with her. She looks very nice ! She invited Ma and all of us to go to America. Looking at Bholanath she said, "I like him very much. I had seen a sadhu like him once and he reminds me of the sadhu."

The hill women had been dancing and singing for Ma. Today they did so in front of the American lady also.

By five p.m. the American lady returned and went out with Ma for a walk. They got back after some time. Today arrangements have been made for serving refreshments to the lady. She eats our kind of food with great relish. At nine p.m. she did pranam to Ma, thanked us all for the meal and left.

[To continue]



A VISION

—Sri Surinder Singh

To describe something which is indescribable in human language or words, is my attempt.

In the early hours of a summer morning, May 11, 1986, to be precise, I lay on my bed in the last leg of my undisturbed sleep. And lo! What do I behold? A saintly lady draped in a dhoti, squatting on the floor, a picture of divine beauty and ecstasy, her smiling face radiating peace and serenity, never witnessed before. Her lustrous tresses fell on her shoulders like a child hugging its mother. Her age was anyone's guess, she seemed to be ageless. However, in human calculation it could be around 70-75. Close to the squatting figure, lay a long Rudraksh rosary on the floor. The divine face just looked at me. No words were spoken. From somewhere, or shall I say nowhere, came the sound resounding loud and clear, "Ma Anandamayee" — and the vision disappeared, leaving me spell-bound. I found myself awake.

An unfortunate me, who had never even heard the name of any such saint, much less to have her *darshan*, the experience was intriguing. Where and how to look for the beautiful face? The desire just possessed me. After a while I recollected having seen a sign-board outside a house in Sector 24, Chandigarh, indicating 'Ma Anandamayee Ashram', which was the abode of Sant Lachhmanji, whom I had the good fortune of seeing on some occasions during the course of my association with late Sant Gulab Singhji of Chandigarh. Instead of having my morning walk, I straight away made for the Ashram. I went inside the Prayer Hall looking for the face of my dream but found it nowhere. I then went to Sant Lachhmanji and described to him what I had seen in my dream. I asked him if there was a lady saint by the name of 'Ma Anandamayee'. Santji looked at me surprised, and indeed so, because of my ignorance about such a well known personality. However, he showed me some snaps of the Ma in the younger years of her human form but this was not the face I was looking for. Then my eyes fell on a handkerchief spread on the prayer platform. Painted on one corner of the handkerchief, I found at last that Divine face, the very face of my dream. My joy knew no bounds.

I requested Santji to permit me to take the handkerchief for a few hours so that I could get a photograph of the face made. It was a Sunday. "How would you

manage to get the photograph? Today is Sunday', said Santji. I politely replied, 'I shall try to get the job done and shall return the handkerchief to you by the evening.' Santji agreed, while emphasising that the handkerchief should be handled with due reverence and care.

The photograph was made, and I presented two portraits to Santji at the Ashram in the evening of 24th May, 1986. To my delight, Santji told me that the birthday of Ma Anandamayee fell on the next day, i.e., the 25th May. I joined a group of devotees at the Ashram to celebrate Ma's birthday. The photographs adorn the Ashram, one of them on the very bed on which Ma ji used to sleep, as told by Santji.

MA—IN GANGA

—Mohua

You are present in such myriad forms
 To shower us with joy and bliss.
 As I watch in solitude,
 You are flowing by so gently,
 So quietly as if resting on the soft bed;
 Not a ripple to break the sound of quietitude
 Yet flowing down your way,
 In silence.

As my eyes move along with You,
 You bend by a winding path
 In a burst of childish gurgle.
 You play and frolic over the pebbles
 You skip, You run
 And fall further down.

The joyous ripples run with infantile squeals
 And get lost behind the curve.
 As you flow out of my sight
 My eyes rest nearby
 And as I watch in solitude
 Ma, You are still flowing by
 So gently, so quietly
 As if resting on the soft bed.

WITH MOTHER IN THE KUMBH MELA

—Shraddha Davenport

[Two]

While waiting we took the opportunity to explore the area around Mother's camp. It was like a village with many little shops selling fresh fruit, vegetables, prepared food, and chai. There were even shops for puja articles and some clothing items such as shoes, dhotis, and chaddars. The wide, well-maintained roads had street lights all along them. At strategic locations tall platform towers were built where camp guards could oversee large areas and control any difficulty which might occur. On main bath days that proved to be a good system, as when people were moving toward the rivers' confluence down one road, the guards would close that road to further traffic and divert the bathers to a less congested route. This prevented the deadly stampedes which had plagued some past melas.

Fresh running water was available to all from taps outside each camp. The grounds of Mother's camp held Her hut which had a nice sized concrete porch with steps leading down into a small pandal before it.

Across from Mother's pandal was another larger one and some small huts. One was used as an office and the others were sadhu kutirs. There was a kitchen and dining area. The rest of the grounds were covered with Swiss Cottage tents, such as we used on our first trip. More huts were placed in the back side for bathing and toilet use of those in the camp.

As we stood by Mother's pandal talking with friends, Dasu came and gave prasad to us. We were enjoying that when Bhaskaranandaji walked to where we stood and inquired of our well being. I smiled and told him that we were very happy and that Dasu had just given prasad to us. With a twinkle in his eye he softly said, "I have the real prasad." "Yes Swamiji," I told him, "I saw you receive it in the parade." "In the procession, as I was standing before Mother, I had seen Bhaskaranandaji place a cloth near Mother's lips and receive from her mouth the spices placed there earlier by that laughing sadhu who had jumped upon Her carriage. Never did I dream of receiving such a blessing, yet into my palm he had placed one whole cardamom pod instructing me to share it with Satya and the others who were standing beside me. With utmost care, I separated the hull from the seeds, then divided the hull and the tiny seeds into equal amounts. Each of us shared in that most rare grace of Mother's "real prasad."

In the excitement of the day Satya had left his movie camera and five rolls of parade film in the glove box of our car. When Swamiji returned with the car we were elated to find the camera and the irreplaceable film just where he had left it.

Mother's latest program was to stay at the mela grounds for two or three days. So we planned to bring enough things with us the next day to live in our hut during that time. From childhood we had both dreamed of living in a grass hut, and now that dream was to come true. Returning to our room in Allahabad, we got a good night's rest. The next morning with our minimal luggage and sleeping bags we returned to the mela.

Swami Swarupanandaji, who had done a grand job of organizing Mother's camp, arranged for us to hire a chowkidar, a trustworthy man whose main job was to guard our hut. A grass door is not much security, but with someone there we could leave our possessions without worry. The chowkidar was a very kind and willing man who did many chores for us. His name was Nandi Kumar, a Brahmin farmer and family man. We became quite fond of him, though he spoke not a word of English and of course my "Hindi" was pathetic or non-existent. We left our things in his care and went for Mother's darshan.

The railing around Mother's camp was no more than a few thin branches across small upright tree limbs. To go from our hut to her pandal we had only to step over a branch and we were beside Her room. Now I can say that once I lived next door to Mother.

We stood at the near of Mother's pandal as She sat upon a cot which had been placed on Her porch. Chitra was at her feet. Chitra called us to come and do pronam. As we did so, Mother smiled at us and asked, "Thik hai?"

I told Mother, "Thik hai!" and that Swami Swarupananda had found a chowkidar for us. Mother sent for Swami Swarupananda and asked who the chowkidar was and how we were situated. She seemed to approve of the arrangements. The Swamiji left and we were allowed to sit there at Mother's feet beside Chitra for two whole hours.

Krishnapriya had walked up behind us to do pronam. Mother called, "Krishnapriya," and she came and sat next to me. She spoke to Mother in Bengali, asking if Mother felt better with all the *mahabhava* of Kumbha with japa and bhakta. Mother said, "Ah-Ha!" and, "Listen to her-She has learned something." I always loved to be there when Mother played with Krishnapriya. What a special relationship she has with Mother! Mother's great sweet love engulfed us as we sat there with Her.

A tiny flower petal was next to where Mother sat. She flicked it off and it came to rest by my knee. I quickly picked it up and later taped it on my diary page. Chitra told Mother of Satya's comment, that Mother had given him such a big birthday party yesterday, and Mother laughed. Most of the time we just sat quietly soaking up as much of Her blessed presence as we were able. Then we were asked to step down and Mother went into Her hut.

After having a cup of chai we went to settle in our hut. We put mats over the straw on the floor and I hung a sari around the inner wall to cut down the dust from outside. Our sleeping bags kept us warm upon the straw and we slept well.

Mother had told us that we had very good *samskaras* to be there, as it was a very auspicious mela. She said that we must be prepared to endure some inconvenience for it. We assured Her that we felt no inconvenience. The next morning I was so sure about my starry eyed response of the previous evening. Satya was to use the toilet facilities at the sadhu camp and a special unit had been constructed for me along the side, but outside, the ashram facilities on the fire road. The concrete basin, recessed into the sand, was fine, but it was little more public than I was prepared for. Bamboo poles held a cloth around all sides but it was only about shoulder height and I could stand in there and watch the world go by. I soon adjusted to that, as the world ignored me, but bathing was a problem. We did the best we could and went for Mother's morning darshan.

She was absolutely radiant and sat with us for three hours. Such darshan without a function program going on was so rare. No words can describe the joy of sitting at Her feet in such a relaxed and holy atmosphere. The whole area was electrically charged with the powerful *bhakta bhav* of so many saints and devotees.

That afternoon the ashram had prepared a feast, and Nandi Kumar brought leaf plates of food to our huts for us. There was rice, dal, potato, fried breaded squash, sweet tomato, puris (bread) and khir (rice pudding).

After a short rest we went to Mother's pandal and found Her sitting on Her porch. Some devotees were seated before Her on the large rugs spread there. We stood in the rear until Mother told each of us to sit down. For over an hour we sat with Her as kirtan was being sung. Then She went inside.

Swami Swarupananda surprised us by placing cots in our hut while we were gone. That was nice, as things could then be put under the bed and out of the way. The hut was just big enough for a single cot on each side and space to walk easily between them. At the end of each cot there was about one foot of space where things could be stored.

Mother's health was much improved in the holy mela atmosphere, so no plan was made for her to leave the grounds.

The following day we hired a car for the afternoon, went into town, got more of our things, and did a little shopping. At the Pandya's home in town we luxuriated in hot baths, collected our things, and then went in search of a few needed items—some white cloth for the walls of our hut, a big plastic tub for my bath, a small table for our Gopal, and a lovely bucket with a lid. It was late when we got back, and we could only see Mother for a short time. We arranged our hut and at last had a nice little altar which was decorated with flowers and colorful silk garlands.

The nights were very cold, but for some unknown reason the water tap near our hut gave warm water early in the morning. At all other times, even in warm sunlight, the water would be cold. I was most thankful for that, since with a bucket of warm water I could stand in my plastic tub and have a good bath inside our hut. That is how I began the next day and each one for the rest of our time at Kumbh Mela.

At 10:00 a.m. we went for morning darshan. Both pandals were being arranged for the visit of some sadhus who had been invited for a bhandara. Mother was sitting outside the large pandal in the sun. We all sat or stood around her. After some time She went to inspect the preparations before withdrawing into Her hut.

At noon Krishnapriya and I were standing near Mother's porch behind a short cloth partition that encircled Her pandal. Mother came out to see that the sadhus were properly cared for and everyone followed her but us. We knew that She would be back soon. When She returned, several girls were with Her. Udas said something to Mother and motioned toward Krishnapriya. For two days Krishnapriya had been saying that she wished to receive the yellow cloth from Mother. That is the color that Mother's brahmacharinis wear. She had also confided that wish to Udas.

I, too, had a wish for several days that Mother would give me a sari. As I watched the play of Mother with Krishnapriya I thought, "I would rather have the white cloth like Mother wears." But I did not say anything. Then one girl brought a yellow cloth and we watched as Mother gave it to another woman. Then another cloth was brought. Mother took it and tossed it to Krishnapriya. She was totally ecstatic. Then suddenly from the corner of my eye I saw a blur of white as a sari came from Mother's hand through the air to me. I caught it up to my face and squealed with unexpected joy as I hugged it and said thank you to Mother. She laughed affectionately at me.

I was in tears, being so happy for Krishnapriya and feeling that special dart pierce my heart revealing once again how my relationship with Mother is subtle and within. There is absolutely nothing of me that is unknown to Her.

Mother told Krishnapriya to bathe in the Ganges, then dress in the yellow cloth, and then take food. Krishnapriya could not understand all the words and asked Mother again. Mother replied, adding a little English and said, "*First is snan* [bath]." "*Second is Capra* [cloth]". Krishnapriya quickly left for the Ganges as Mother went inside.

At 3:45 p.m. Mother came out again. Krishnapriya was seated with the girls doing kirtan, radiant in her new yellow cloth. Mother was seated upon a large dais at the side of the pandal. She sat up very straight. Her legs were folded with Her left ankle resting knee. She looked so elegant.

The visiting swamis came and took their special seats within the pandal. There was a crowd all around the outer edge, but we stood on the side, behind the swamis and facing Mother. Each of the swamijis was given fruit, a book, blanket, flowers, and some other items. As we stood behind one very saintly-looking swamiji, I commented to Satya, "This is so nice." The swamiji turned around to one side with folded palms to Satya, then to the other side to me. I felt he gave us his blessing.

There were a few talks and some chanting, then Mother went and Spoke to each swamiji. One was a lady swami. She and Mother embraced. Mother sat by her and they held hands. It was so lovely.

When all had left, Mother went to Her porch and we entered the pandal to sit with Her. She showered us with love and light until 7:00 p.m. while the girls sang beautiful bhajans. That night we did not care for food. Mother had filled us completely.

[To continue]

MA ANANDAMAYEE — THE UNIVERSAL MOTHER

— Sri Ajit Bhattacharya

Ma Anandamayee [30th April 1896-27th Aug. 1982] a great God-intoxicated saint of the present era, manifested as Divine being; an exalted Saint, had great influence on the spiritually minded people of Bengal, and whole of India. The blissful Mother's spirit and teachings on compassion, truth and love, live in the heart of numerous devotees and followers universally. People were charmed by her spirituality and being a woman — saint was no bar in her being accepted. Ma's ceaseless quest for spiritual welfare of fellow beings, commitment to Universal Religion and teachings on the common tenets of all faiths, confirms her belief and involvement.

Early period

She was a devoted householder. Her husband Bholanath [Ramani Mohan Chakravarty- 1938] was her chief disciple, a devoted follower, who maintained silence, mostly accompanied her. Her name Nirmala Sundari was given by orthodox scholarly brahmin parents [Mother — Mokshada Sundari, Father— Bipin Behari Bhattacharya], leading a dedicated way of religious life. Father was a renowned singer of devotional songs and deeply spiritual minded, believed in sacrifice, service and devotion.

Endless are the instances of *leelas*, actions, moving into trance in childhood days suggesting her divinity. She got little schooling, but could learn lessons without any effort. She was essentially a dear one, a mother to all, permeating every soul with warmth and affection. **The doors to the inner world would not open completely unless all the other attributes get totally released and tend to become non-functional** — she said.

She had unusual interest in plants and animals, could communicate with them. "All creatures, plants and even inanimate objects are nothing but the manifestations of God". All creatures belong to the same family", She used to say. She was in tune with the spirit of mute creatures, plants, birds and animals, even unseen souls. She would experience the coming and going of Divine beings, gods and goddesses perceptible alive and real.

She lived the life of a simple *sādhikā* in the beginning while remaining preoccupied with household work. She could perform with greatest ease the two

different functions of a housewife and also a person on the high path to spiritualism.

She used to advise 'Do not be the lord of the family, remain as a gardener. Try to be a master and you will be surrounded with problems. Serving others and chanting of mantras would do. Do divine work with perfect good-will and harmony without any thought of self or reward. It is necessary to try and dedicate to the Supreme every single action of one's daily life.' **Let the name [NAMA] of Hari be in your mind and in your actions (Kam) and you are sure to find the Supreme Being [RAMA].**

You suffer when you deny Him the seat in your heart and instal someone else. It is His to draw you near Him as a fully conditioned being, through the ordeal of pleasure and sorrow. He is engaged in playing with Himself, engrossed in *Lila*.

When you find your own territory, your own self, your desires and wants will vanish. One who passes away, in fact, merges into the One who is ever-existent.

One should try to submit all actions to God, these would include all activities. Whatever happens should be accepted as good. If one develops this attitude one would not suffer. It is the desire which is painful and causes repeated cycles of birth and death. To submit whatever one considers as one's own, is to realize one's own self. The moment your self-dedication is complete, at that very moment occurs the revelation of the indivisible unbroken perfection, which is ever revealed by the Self.

When you instal Him in your heart it is *Sakara* and as you move to *Agyachakra* He becomes *Nirakara*.

Cry for Hari and you will get Him. Attachment to Him brings joy and freedom. Your happiness and peace of mind will increase if you devote a little time to God everyday. Work done grudgingly would be unproductive from the start, but with enjoyment leads to further action. God can be revealed through the path of service rendered in true spirit.

Anandmoy is ever present in images, symbols, paintings and the heart of everybody. He is indestructible. If you know yourself you are beyond fear, your confidence is undecaying.

If you do your daily service to God, you will get a kind of pension, a payment which never ends, which will be paid to you as long as you live.

It is not possible for everybody to be engaged in prayer and meditation all the time.

Continue with prayer and meditation and take care to conduct yourself in a spirit of service. Action without a desire for return purifies the mind. Do not allow your

body the luxury of comforts [*ārām*] Comforts brings disorder [*Beārām*] Put your heart into your work then it will cease to be mechanical.

Advice to Householders :

She used to maintain long periods of silence and often used to be in spiritual ecstasy with manifestation of divine moods, with varying facial expressions and disposition. She was against the external manifestation of a saint's divine powers. A family which takes up activities which help attain the road to the Supreme is known as a family of the religious. She said- One must take a vow to live and eat in a spirit of purity for at least once in a week initially. There is a striking resemblance between one's mind and one's style of dressing.

If one can serve one's *Pati* (Husband) as *Parampati*, children as Gopal incarnate and *Kumaris* as virgins as deities, then one is actually serving God. Nobody should feel your displeasure unnecessarily. What we seek is peace and happiness. While leading a family life, one may enjoy momentary joy but that does not give complete satisfaction. Whatever work you may do - consider it as a service to Him. We all are but one. If you hold on to One who is beyond fear [*abhoy*] then where is the question of fear [*bhoy*]

As a young housewife, persons much older than her showed great interest in discussing intricate matters of religion and rituals with her to seek oneness with God. She used to talk on the Glory of God and the devoted religious life one should lead to receive God's grace. She never received any formal initiation from anyone, got herself self-initiated on Jhulan Purnima Day.

A brahmachari - according to her is a humble servant of God, devoid of all desires and emotions, living on dole, movements unplanned, spontaneous. It is better to become an ideal family man than to be an aimless brahmachari. There is no contradiction between family life and spirituality - she emphasized.

The first lesson the child receives is from the parents. That system had degenerated, as the morality of the parents has undergone alarming changes. There is no difference between the concepts of God with a form or without. Any work that leads you to God is of virtue and whatever takes you away from Him is vice.

Patience is the only way to tide over the trying time of Death. The consolation would come from within. The duty is to keep oneself engaged in good action. The duty of everyone is to remember God.

Discipline of utterance leads to calmness of mind. Energy is wasted when one speaks excessively. Discipline in speech increases energy—one must always try to pray and meditate silently.

Whatever is ordained by God is for the good of us. God purifies the soul through suffering to draw people closer to Him. He inflicts suffering on devotees only to increase the yearning and craving, intensity of which should be so great as if the house is in fire. He has to get out, cannot stay confined. God accepts the devotees offerings paid through sufferings and tears.

Japa Samarpan—Jap itself has a beneficial effect. If someone devotes that value back to God, the effect becomes permanent to the devotee. God will return the value in good time.

Knowledge [*jnan*], devotion [*bhakti*] and action [*karma*] all stay together, they cannot be segregated.

[To continue]

CIRCULAR

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—Managing Editor