

# MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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**Ma—just before taking her bath in the seas  
in front of the ashram in Puri (Orissa) in 1954.**

**— Courtesy : Km. Chitra Ghosh**

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## MATRI VANI

Spoken word, verily, must be of Him alone, All else is but futility and pain.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the mind is centered in God in unbroken awareness there is hope of full vision and revelation.

Endeavour to remain ever consecrated at His Feet by engaging in worship, japa, meditation, the study of sacred books, or in devotional music - whichever of them you feel inclined to at any particular time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Whether you like it or not, you will have to make the Eternal your constant companion - just like a remedy which has got to be taken.

Verily, of Him is all that need be said, the rest but vanity, woe.

Without loving God you will not get anywhere. Remember this at all times.

\* \* \* \* \*

When you first began to learn to read and write, you surely did not examine the reasons for and against it, did you ?

You accept what you are told. Even if all sorts of critical thoughts arise, call to mind that they are due only to your lack of understanding : they are certainly not the outcome of pure wisdom. Try to accept as much as possible, appropriate to the occasion. Discard laziness and exert yourself. It is natural that your mind should find all sorts of reasons for not doing *Sadhana* - yet your aim must be to persevere in doing it. Eschew such thought as : "I shall not be able to do it"; "It will not be possible".

Suffering is of the body only. Despite all such discomfort officials and business men attend to their work. How painstaking they are !

Create time for everything.

The purer, the more transparent you can make your mind, the greater the possibilities for spiritual progress.

\* \* \* \* \*

Be truthful in every way. Without purity one cannot advance towards God.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let your mind constantly dwell on the Supreme Reality - endeavour to let your thought be absorbed in THAT.

Be truthful in speech and rigorous in self-discipline at all times and devote yourself to the study of books of wisdom and to *Satsang*. Cultivate the company of those who are helpful in your quest, avoid those that distract you - in other words, associate with the Good and shun the merely pleasurable. If you live in this spirit, the help you need will come to you naturally unasked.

\* \* \* \* \*

To begin with keep up your habits regarding bath and diet, so that you may get undisturbed sleep. This will make it easy for you to think of God and to meditate. When the body is healthy it helps to fix your mind on Him. As you progress your diet and sleep will automatically undergo certain necessary changes.

\* \* \* \* \*

Spiritual inquiry has arisen from that which is the source of you and all that is manifest, that is "*Ishwara*", the Lord of the Universe.

To be sure, there is a way of approach even in terms of gain and loss: not to aspire to God-realization is loss and to aspire to it is gain - although He is Self-luminous. He and He alone is the one thing needful, all the rest is useless. Without Him man cannot live. Leaving Him there is no place to go. Therefore to exclude Him is impossible, He cannot be set aside. Because He is all in all, such is the nature and the mode of His play. Without Him man simply cannot proceed. He alone is. Through delusion you forget Him, all trouble is due to ignorance alone.

If man endeavours to live his life in the world according to "*dharma*", (the dictates of religion and righteousness), he will gradually overcome sorrow and will progress towards peace. Without Him Supreme Peace cannot be found.



## IN ASSOCIATION WITH MA

[Translated from Bengali]

— Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

Dhaka, August 20th, 1939

Sadek Khan, the Personal Assistant to the Commissioner called on Ma along with two other Deputy Magistrates. Ma was told that when She had been to Coxbazar, Sadek had been the Sub-Divisional Officer there. Ma told him :

"Baba, just as you receive a pension for working in your job, there is also a pension on this Path. In your present position, however much you may earn, you will never be able to satisfy all your wants. World means *duniya*, i.e. based on duality. Therefore there is happiness and sorrow, light and darkness, virtue and sin : The one is never without the other. Happiness is followed by sorrow and sorrow again by happiness. Therefore you must try to become established in your true Nature. When this is achieved you will find supreme peace."

Then the Senior District Magistrate, Manindra Babu arrived. When he was introduced, it was mentioned that he was unmarried and was practising yoga. Ma asked him :

"Baba, so you have not tied a garland round your neck and are practising yoga ? *Hathayoga* or *Rajayoga* or some other yoga ?"

Manindra Babu : Not *hathayoga*; I practise *rajayoga*. Previously I could be at it for long hours and liked it a lot; but now, due to laziness, I cannot do very much.

Mataji : Laziness is certainly an obstacle, an enemy. Well, has this yoga that you practise become natural to you ?

Manindra Babu : I do not understand it. Often it seems to have become natural to me, yet at other times I doubt whether this is so.

Mataji : Have you learnt this yoga from a Guru ?

Manindra Babu : In the eyes of the world, I have no Guru, but I know full well that I have a Guru.

Mataji (laughing loudly) : Without asking questions, information cannot be elicited.

### August 23rd, 1939

I had heard that Sri Ma was arriving at Dhaka by the Calcutta Mail today and departing for Kheora.

There was a large crowd at the station by the time Mataji arrived. She sat down smilingly under a flowering Gul Mohur tree at the end of a platform.

Ma was saying :

"The road is long, time is short, keep on walking without idleness. You are enjoying the pension earned by your worldly labours, now try to earn a pension also in the spiritual world. Otherwise you will have to return again and again. If you try hard, you can obtain a pension in this very life or at least reduce the chances of having to return many more times. But if you do not work you will be obliged to take another return ticket. Already you have taken so many return tickets, oh so many :

Manmohan Babu : We know how to earn a pension in our worldly life. Please tell us how to do so in our spiritual life.

Mataji : If you practise faithfully what you have learnt from your Guru, your pension will be provided.

An old man : I wanted to stay with you but you would not let me do so !

Mataji : Could you have stayed merely because I asked you ? You would then have started worrying about your son, your daughter and the grandchildren (Everybody laughs). It is better for you to stay at home and do your work there. Suppose your children wanted to leave home and pursue a religious life, would you not have pointed out to them that if they practised their religion by forsaking you, they would not attain their spiritual goal. Similarly they can also retort that since you have brought them into the world, you should not forsake them now. (Everybody laughs).

The old man : So then tell me please what I should do now !

Mataji : Stay in your house within closed doors. This will be as good as not staying at home. But your children will be satisfied to see you in the premises.

The old man : Is it possible to live within closed doors in a household ?

Mataji : Can you live in a *dharmasala* ?

The old man : No, I can't.

Mataji : Can you not convert your house into a *dharmasala* ? I strongly advise all to do so !

The old man : What is the use of promising something which I know I cannot do ?

Mataji : You mean to say you cannot convert your house into a *dharmasala* ? What else is it but a *dharmasala* ? You presume that you own the house, that your son and daughter are yours .. but when you breathe your last, everything will have to be left behind. Then, where will your house be, where your son and daughter ? This is why everybody should understand that he is living in a *dharmasala* . "Our real home is not here. My son and daughter don't belong to me, nor do I belong to them." How do you feel about thinking on these lines ?

The old man : When thinking in this fashion one cannot live a family life.

Mataji : Why don't you relax your hold, stand apart as an onlooker and see whether your household still functions or not. He who really owns your house and family, He will arrange for everything. Once you can place your trust wholeheartedly in Him, He is sure to run your household very smoothly.

Furthermore, you have not been born with the sole object of living a family life. See what a state you have reached by doing so ! Your black hair has turned white, your teeth have fallen. How long will you continue to misunderstand your role in the comedy of life for the Real ?

Listen, it is no good remaining in abject poverty all your life. As it is we live in constant want. No sooner do we satisfy one want, than a new one crops up. Having built one house you then hanker after another, or you wish to replace your old car by a new one. In this manner you spend one life after another in the attempt of fulfilling your worldly desires. It is good to call a halt to this incessant craving. This is why I say, it is no good to remain permanently in poverty, in other words to let constant wanting be your second nature. It is much better to strive towards redeeming your *prana*.

The old man : By '*prana*' do you mean the act of inhaling and exhaling ?

Mataji : Yes, we talked about this subject only the other day. As the *prana* , He resides within each creature. He is the Life of all lives (*praner prana*), the Supreme Life (*mahaprana*). Ever remain in His presence. At all times repeat His name with every breath. You will realize everything in this way. Creation, preservation, destruction; all the paths of spiritual enquiry, of action, of devotion are all contained in this process. The sense perceptions, such as sight, taste, smell, etc: the individual, the world, the One with attributes and devoid of attributes, are all embraced in this process.

The world is manifested as the *prana* (life force) in waves. This is *Prakriti* (Nature). One must rise beyond this Nature. Just as still water can be reached by pursuing flowing waves, so Supreme Life (*mahaprana*) can also be realized by performing *sadhana* with every breath (*praner sadhana*). This kind of *sadhana* can



be practised in all states. God Himself is present as the breath. Nothing can be achieved without breath control. What I said about sitting in one's house with the doors shut means just this. To withdraw the senses from their objects of enjoyment means to close the doors. Otherwise, what would be the use of sitting in one's room within closed doors ? (Smiling) You should partake of several different preparations when taking your meal; then only can your intake be increased.

Pramatha Babu : Ma, please make sure that this is done by us !

Mataji : What does partaking of different preparations mean ? *Japa*, meditation, reading scriptures or religious books one after another, so that you can devote more and more time to this. Should you be unable to perform *japa* beyond a certain length of time, turn to reading spiritual books or listen to talks on spiritual subjects or do *kirtan*. This is what is meant by partaking of several food preparations.

The old man : This seems to be very difficult.

Mataji : Do you want to set to work or do you just want to eat and drink and sit idle ? Can you afford to behave in this manner ? How is it possible to earn your pension if you do not work at all ?

Pramatha Babu : Why does not the Mother prepare food and feed the children ?

Mataji : When will She do so ? When they really pray to Her to prepare food for them. Rely on her entirely like an infant and you will see that She will make all necessary arrangements .

When grown-up children request their mother : "Ma, please cook our meals and feed us !" The mother may then turn round and say : "Why should I ? Can't you cook for yourself ? Or else get married so that your wife may cook for you !" (Everybody laughs loudly).

As the time of departure of the train was nearing, Sri Ma stopped talking and Bhupati Mitra took the opportunity of asking Her something concerning the Dhaka Ashram. I heard Ma reply :

"I have nothing to say on this. You should all get together and decide whatever is best for you. If the Ashram belonged to me, perhaps I might lay down certain rules and regulations. But there is nothing that can be called my own. I did not even decide on the site where the ashram should be built. It is true that I used to come to this place from time to time even before the ashram was built. Therefore, Jyotish (Bhaiji) thought it was my *Kheyal* to establish an ashram here. Actually those who had in the past performed their spiritual practices in that place used to take me there. That is why I say that I have nothing to say on the subject of ashrams. Carry out whatever you think best. Those who gave the inspiration for building the ashram are looking after it, and will continue to do so".

## 29th August, 1939

Sri Sri Ma's new Ashram at her birthplace in the village Kheora was ceremonially inaugurated today.

From there Sri Ma visited Sultanpur, Comilla, Chittagong, Vidyakut, etc. and eventually came to Dhaka for a day only, on Sept. 13th, 1939. On hearing this, I at once went to the Ashram. There, a brief conversation concerning Sobha Ma's meeting with Ma at Comilla ensued.

I asked Ma, "To have a genuine desire and to stimulate a desire is surely not the same thing. I at first misunderstood what you were saying. I noticed another thing : whenever you asked Shobha Ma a question on any essential point, she would reply without any hesitation so that one could not help being impressed or amazed.

Mataji : When a thing is being discussed, it is better not to refer to any particular person and whatever I say now should also not be construed to refer to any particular person. You should specially keep this in mind !

You were talking about answers to questions on essential truths; do you know how this takes place ? Even in the material world you may have noticed that when someone acquires special proficiency in any particular subject, he can talk at length on other similar subjects. If he is thoroughly acquainted with a certain aspect of some branch of knowledge, he can talk on other branches also in a balanced way. The same applies to the knowledge of essential truths.

Knowledge (*jnana*) may supervene in three different ways. One possibility is to acquire knowledge by the study of scriptures. Another way is to have certain inner experiences during their studies. As one progresses and has more and more experiences, one's understanding of the scriptures starts undergoing all kinds of changes. These changes can be of endless variety.

There is yet another kind of knowledge which is not based on the study of scriptures and the like. This is Self-revealed. Just as the juice of ripe fruit flows of itself so this knowledge reveals itself. These three types of knowledge cause different kinds of *bhava* and different behaviour. By observing the attitude of mind and the conduct of persons who have acquired knowledge, it can be understood whether their knowledge is based on the scriptures or on their own inner experience.

The same applies to *samadhi*. People frequently say, "so and so goes into *samadhi*". So I should like to ask what are the characteristics of *samadhi* ? Only by watching the symptoms of the body one cannot decide on the type of *samadhi*. Someone may have closed his fists and it may be impossible to open them even by force. In another case perhaps one hand is lying crosswise on the other. In a third

case, may be, the feet are crossed, or else both hands and feet are static in a crossed position. But just by noticing all this one cannot say whether it is a *samadhi*.

I : Ma you made us understand at Navadwip that if someone by the force of some *bhava* closes his fists in the intensity of feeling and loses outer consciousness, then this is not a case of *samadhi*. If one tries to hold on to any *bhava* by force this may happen. Here desire and passion are still present, so it cannot be termed as *samadhi*.

Mataji : Yes, but do not belittle such a state. It is no mean achievement to curb all worldly thoughts and concentrate only on a single type of *bhava* for some length of time, one can slowly proceed towards fulfilment. You must have observed food being cooked in steam. This process is somewhat similar. If one notices that while boiling something in steam, the steam is not being dispersed away, then one understands that the food will be boiled on its own, and the more it is boiled the more will its colour change. Likewise, if by forsaking all other thoughts, someone remains absorbed in one particular type of *bhava* then he is gradually transformed both within and without. By remaining in such a state for some length of time, he will eventually attain perfection (*siddhi*).

I : Does one retain any knowledge of the outer world when in a state of *samadhi*? Once, when explaining to us the state of *samadhi* you had said that, supposing you were conversing normally and felt the urge to answer a call of nature; then suddenly a state of *samadhi* supervened and you lost consciousness of this. Three or four hours may have passed in such a state. Later, when you returned to your normal state you again felt the call of nature with the same intensity as before the *samadhi*, not more, not less. But during those three or four hours that had elapsed in *samadhi*, did you retain any knowledge of the outer world?

Mataji : You have referred to the urge of nature's calls. During *samadhi* bodily urges are kept in abeyance. Everything is thrown up and one merges into Oneness. Later after having gradually become completely still, the previous state may again be resumed. This may be repeated several times. You may perhaps have noticed that I went to the toilet. Suddenly *bhava* intervened and all outer things were forgotten. Later, when the ecstasy became subdued, I may have relieved myself, but again on return to the *bhava*, outer things were stopped.

I : Ma, you have described what was happening inside your body. What I should like to know is this : Suppose you are lying in a state of *samadhi* and we start crying in fear because your *samadhi* does not seem to end. Would you in your state of *samadhi* be aware that we were weeping?

Mataji : In that state there is no question of duality. All is merged into ONE. Everything is contained in the One—the fragments and the whole exist simultaneously just like water and its waves.

I : Ma you said that knowledge can come about in three ways : through a study of scriptures, through a combination of study and inner experience, and through direct vision. Can somebody who has not acquired any of these types of knowledge, take part in discussions on the essence of things ! Suppose he remembers his former birth, can he give instruction on spiritual truth ?

Mataji : The remembrance of previous births can be of many kinds. There is infinity in everything. Somebody may be able to tell about his father, mother, country, and so on of his previous birth. He may relate several incidents which can be proved to have actually happened. Others may have retained the knowledge acquired in a previous birth. Suppose someone has by spiritual practices attained to a certain realm (*loka*) and become closely connected with its Gods and Goddesses; he may then be reborn retaining the knowledge of all this, and be able to converse on vital matters of truth in accordance with it. How can one explain the different kinds of states that may be attained ! Everything is of infinite variety.

At this stage there was an interruption to Mataji's talk as many ladies had come to perform their *pranama*. The small room could not accommodate all the people, so Ma went to the Kirtan Hall. There I again asked :

"Ma, some people believe you to be totally perfect. Yet they cannot understand why you do not always answer their questions to their satisfaction. Why is this so ?

Mataji : (laughing) Look, you say, whosoever is completely perfect, why should he not be able to answer all questions at all times ? Actually if somebody is perfect in all respects, he is able to divulge all truths, whatever anyone present. Then again he may also adapt himself what he says to the grasping capacity of the people present. There are various aspects to this problem. But for this body there is no problem : whatever has to happen, is happening. This body has no particular *bhava*. At times certain things may be voiced by this body, but it is not at all concerned whether it satisfies people or not. At other times this body does not like to speak in any way that would hurt someone's feelings. Whatever is meant to happen does happen through this body. Where is the confusion in this ?

I : Everything is confusing. (Everybody bursts into loud laughter).

Mataji : If someone believes that I at times do not reply because I am unable to do so, why should I mind it ? I have no objection to anything you may say about me.

I : Well, Ma, what is the harm in there being a bit of ignorance together with perfection ? Do not knowledge and ignorance together make up wholeness ?

Mataji : Of course, there may also be a bit of ignorance within perfection, but do you know in what way ? This slight ignorance is completely under the control of the Perfect One, whereas the ordinary human being is subjected to ignorance. One who is perfect is not subservient to anybody or anything.

A number of similar subjects were then discussed. In the evening many visitors came to the Ashram. Manindra Babu, the Deputy Magistrate, asked some questions on the present state of the country. He said : "Ma, when will the oppression and injustice that can be observed in our country, end ? The nation seems to be heading towards destruction. What is the means to save it ? I do not want to say anything about myself, but what can be done to save the country or the nation ?"

Mataji : This is just the present way of this country. Such is the world--*duniya*, based on duality. There is bound to exist side by side joy and sorrow, truth and falsehood, war, dissention. At times there is peace, then again upheaval : like the waves which continuously rise and fall.

You have said, you do not seek anything for yourself, but this is not quite correct. You have identified yourself with the country so that its problems have become your own. Thus whatever you say about the country is also what you say about yourself. If you can merge yourself in something still bigger, such as the whole world, you will come to realize that these wars and dissentions are all part of the Almighty's *lila*. Sorrow and disaster come into being and are again driven away. It is He who is awakening in you the intense desire to change the state of affairs. Because He now wants things to change. He has aroused these feelings in you and in many others. If you look upon everything in this detached manner nothing will upset you anymore.

Mataji continued to converse in this way until late at night.

[ To continue ]



## AFTER THE FIRST MEETING

—A European devotee

Meeting Sri Ma in Madras resulted in some inner disturbances, but after a few months I was keen to meet her again. I learned that she was to be in Poona by mid-June (1972). This was a journey of not more than about 24 hours by bus and metre-gauge train.

When I reached Sri Ma's ashram in Poona, I found no sign of activity and was told she would arrive in a couple of days. I found a low cost student room, as this was near the university and explore the area. There was a small temple to the Divine Mother on the hillside above the ashram - inside was an orange painted rock, which was the image, and I noted that garlands were available there for devotees.

Waiting finally came to an end and at last Sri Ma arrived along with a group of cars. The assembled devotees could have her darshan for a short while and this was the situation for the whole 5 days I was there with her, as she was not keeping well. But she did walk up and down the verandah of her cottage, and I found myself gazing at her for hours, as one could not take one's eyes off her white clothed figure; it was so fascinating. Two incidents stick in my mind.

I had purchased a garland from the vendors at the Mother's temple, and bargained the price right down to a level I felt was reasonable. But when I tried to present it to Ma somehow I was not able to do so and I felt she would not accept it - the reason I came to understand was that I had "contaminated" it by reducing the price to the undoubtedly poor vendor. Thereafter I always paid the asking price of anything purchased for an offering. Sri Ma, pervading everywhere, was after all present in the whole process of offering including the purchase. Any "violence" in the scheme of things made the offering unworthy. At least that was the message I received.

When I came to return to Sri Ramanasramam I took leave of Sri Ma and she gave me the sweetest imaginable smile. As I did my pranams I felt within she was offering me her hand, if I wanted it, for help in my sadhana. Instantly something from within accepted the offer and it was as if we shook hands, "it was a deal".

On my return to Arunachala I told a friend about Sri Ma's continued stay in Poona, and he left very soon to see her also. He came back after a couple of weeks and told me of his stay and how Sri Ma, at his request, had permitted him to meditate before her for 15 minutes. Somehow that stuck in my mind, and I wanted

to return to Poona. I heard that she had suddenly left Poona on 5<sup>th</sup> August, giving the cars following her the slip, and could not be traced anywhere. No one, but no one knew where she was. It turned out she had gone to stay for a couple of days in the hall of a Siva temple in Sion, Bombay. It was looked after by old devotees of Sri Ma but all but one of them were in Poona. Swami Paramananda was with Ma but was told to stay indoors in case he was recognised. After two and a half days her presence was made known and she moved to the garden of B.K. Shah, where she usually stayed when in Bombay. After 4 days she returned to Poona. This unexpected long presence in Poona was totally at odds with her original program to go to Calcutta, Varanasi and Kankhal but it meant she was still there when I returned around 15<sup>th</sup> August.

On my arrival I was relieved to see the clothes lines with the drying white clothes, tiny white socks and yellow towels, which meant Sri Ma was there. This time the visit took on a different flavour, knowing Ma would be there for a couple more weeks and since her health was back to normal there was a full program every day. It was as if it was Christmas day every day. Upon my arrival I sat down with the devotees in the hall of the ashram and Ma was sitting on a bench in the corner, a yellow towel over her head. After about 20 minutes I became aware that my mind, which had been buffeted by the usual experience of traveling long distances by train in India, had become quite quiet and peaceful. It had happened by itself, unawares as it were.

A number of occasions stick in my mind after the 30 years that have passed since that visit to Poona. One day Ma visited the house of a devotee. A number of devotees accompanied Ma in cars. After we arrived an old man started reciting slokas, and his devotion was palpable. Looking at Ma, who was listening to him intently I noticed she no longer looked to be a woman of around 80, she looked to be so youthful, a girl of perhaps 25 - 30 years. As I gazed at her my mind tried to analyse what it was that made her appear so young. I failed but the fact remained.

Another time Dilip Kumar Roy, the well-known disciple of Sri Aurobindo, and singer, visited the ashram with Indira, the mother of his ashram. He was elderly and moved slowly and when he sang his voice was soft with his age. But as he sang his singing became stronger and stronger and he was sitting then upright and straight. It was almost a different person sitting there at the end of the recital.

During my visit Raksha Bandhan was celebrated. On this occasion a sister ties a coloured "rakhi" on the wrist of her brother as a protection. So too the Guru ties it on the wrists of disciples. The rakhi is a little coloured symbol with a variety of designs. I was watching Ma doing this and when she came to a German devotee of

many years, she happened to tie the Hindu aryan symbol like the Nazi Swastika (but the other way round). The devotee had been closely involved with the Nazi party during the world war, this was no coincidence, though I thought Ma would not have known of the use by Hitler of this symbol so similar to the Aryan one. One could see how this struck the devotee. That night there was 30 minutes of silent meditation to commemorate Sri Ma's self diksha, and Ma's touch would be felt by all.

Eight days after Raksha Bandhan was Krishna's birthday. It was the custom to celebrate this by having a dance by "cow herders" who would carry pots of curds on their shoulder. Ma joined in the dance and did a turn round with all the lady devotees. Then she threw curds into each person's mouth as prasad. When I saw her roll her sleeves up and put her hand in the pot it reminded me immediately of my physical mother. Of course the curds went not only in one's mouth but on one's face!

After my arrival I had requested one of Ma's girls if it would be possible to meditate with her (as had happened with my friend). I heard nothing for several days and on one day I had left the ashram to have some lunch nearby, when suddenly someone rushed up to say I was being called in response to my request. When I reached Ma's cottage I found to my dismay that Ma was on the chowki on the verandah surrounded by a group of people. Rather embarrassed I sat in front of her in the middle of them. After may be 15 minutes someone placed a piece of fruit in my hands as a hint that time was up. However not wishing to lose this opportunity I did not follow the lead as any Indian would surely have recognised it to be. I was waiting for some indication from within and it did not come. There was a ripple of laughter from those present. Finally someone whispered in my ear that a Maharaja had come to see Ma and Ma should attend to him. I immediately got up. To cap it Ma indicated I could take lunch at the ashram, but I declined as I already had lunch. To refuse prasad was another gaff, coming from Ma as this invitation did - which more time in India would have shown me.

By the end of a couple of weeks I was feeling ill and had decided it was time to go. I went to Ma's room to take leave and did my pranam. As I turned to go out of her room I found the door was closed. This took me by surprise and I did not know what to do. I was neither here nor there. Just at that moment Ma started speaking things to me, which when translated, turned out to be advice for sadhana. My immediate thought was "I cannot possibly do that". This was followed by another calming thought- "of course you can, if Ma asks you to".



I took a rickshaw to the station and got onto the train. I was just finding my reserved seat when I found to my dismay that my wallet had vanished from my pocket. I quickly got off the train—no money, no ticket. Luckily I had kept Rs. 4 or so in my shirt top pocket and it was enough to get a rickshaw back to the ashram. I was able to borrow some money from a German friend and my stay was thus extended until Ma left.

From that time I found myself always being drawn to visit Ma again, which was not so difficult as I was living in India. However I found that often if it was not the right time my body would feel disturbed if I pursued the plan and it returned to normal if I dropped it. Thus I could not go when I wanted. After some more months in this condition of wanting to go and not being able, at the point where I felt I badly needed to consult Ma on some important things, I felt that I could leave at last.

So I started off in mid December 1972 for Varanasi (since I had heard that Ma was there) without a train reservation. Berths had to be booked in advance and there was no time for this. The first night was sitting crammed in a passenger compartment until I reached a mid-way station where I could get a berth in an express train bound for Calcutta.

Reaching Howrah station I visited Dakshineswar and saw Sri Ramakrishna's room and the temple of Mother Kali, as well as the other places of his sadhana. A pigeon blessed me with its offering as I had darshan of the deities—I hoped it was a good omen. Taking the night train I arrived at Varanasi and went immediately to Ma's ashram in Bhadaini. The office told me of a dharmasala where I could stay and having found a room and had a bath I went to register at the hotel desk. I was shocked to be told I could not stay anywhere as I did not have my passport with me. Being the time of Mrs. Gandhi's "Emergency" there were new rules which I had not fallen foul of before, and previously I never carried my passport. I went back to the ashram and told them what had happened. Ma had just come out to give darshan and I could see them telling her my plight. After a journey of 3 days and nights things were not looking too good. Had I to go right back? Someone at the ashram suggested a visit to the police station and they in turn passed me on to the tourist officer - who was not available until next day. But where could I go now? I took a rickshaw back towards the station, quite at a loss, when someone ran out calling "cheap hotel, cheap hotel". My reply was: "No passport" but that did not seem to be a problem and I found myself in a room with a cow-dung coated floor and a single string cot all for Rs. 7. As soon as I settled in I was told I had to move out as the room had in fact been specially prepared for a bridal couple. At this time

desperation had set in and I refused to move. I bolted the door. I did not dare go out in case I lost the room, and so my idea to visit the ashram again had to be dropped.

The next day after being passed from one person to another, I was told by the police, I could stay but only in Ma's ashram. I knew that foreigners were not normally allowed to stay but I had no option but to ask. The answer was as I expected. I was completely at the end of my tether by then and the attitude "Ma - you must help" faded away and was replaced by "Now what shall I do?" Just at that very instant someone came running from Ma - who was walking in the next courtyard—to say that I could stay in a small cottage built for Ma but currently unoccupied, about 25 minutes walk from the ashram. So with great relief I moved my luggage there. That evening I could visit the ashram again and Ma was giving darshan in the Gopal Mandir. In the middle of the darshan the lights all went out. I had in my bag a candle and matches I had purchased for the cottage as it had no light. I brought them out. The candle was lit before Ma and darshan carried on. After may be 15 minutes the lights came on and someone snuffed out the candle—which made me sorry as I watched it smoke. Just then Ma indicated that they should light it again and it was done.

After darshan I returned to the cottage and slept on the floor in my sleeping bag. It was obvious that ants were enjoying the wooden door and window frames, which had been part eaten away.

The next day I went to the ashram in the happy expectation of seeing Ma again. At the very moment when she came out someone called me to say I had to return to unlock the cottage as it had to be sprayed by a pest-control company. All my bags had to be moved to a watchman's room and I missed darshan altogether. Returning later after the spraying I found the whole place awash with DDT spray, dead and dying lizards and creatures were everywhere. The place was cleaned out, the dead creatures removed but it was not a healthy environment in which to sleep, so I had no choice but to put my sleeping bag on the verandah, though December in North India is not warm.

Because of the police restrictions I was having my food at the canteen of Sri Ma's hospital next to the ashram. After a stay of 5 days Ma was to leave for Kanpur but I could not follow as I had to wait for my passport to be posted up from Sri Ramanasramam. The Christmas holiday was coming up and I was hoping it would arrive before. On Ma's last day before departing I was sitting near the Annapurna temple of the ashram when I happened to look at a picture of Sri Ma on the wall. It was as if there was a ray of light (though it was not light) coming from it. I looked at another picture and it was the same, as if it was alive with energy.

On the morning of her departure Ma was strolling round the ashram with a small group of devotees following. One of them was an American woman and I was able to hear part of her conversation with Ma, which was translated into English. She had asked a question about her sadhana and Ma asked what her practice was. She answered, "Transcendental Meditation". Ma repeated the words with her Bengali accent-she clearly had no idea what it was. Then she said some things that I do not recollect. The lady replied with a puzzled look that she did not understand what Ma had said and Ma's reply was "How can you fail to understand? This is God (she pointed at a temple roof), that is God (she pointed at a wall), that is God (she pointed at the ground), everything is God". Immediately the doubts of the lady were removed and she seemed very happy with the reply.

Sri Ma left and I had to remain another 5 days on my own over Christmas before the passport finally came. I was in fact just beginning to feel at home there, enjoying the atmosphere of the Ganga, when I was free to leave. But by then I had had enough and decided to take the train back to Tiruvannamalai, instead of following Ma.

Shortly after I arrived at Varanasi I had asked Chitra if I could have a private talk with Ma but at the time she was very busy. Finally Chitra said I could have my talk, but by that time I had lost the inclination. But the answer to my question did come and so clearly and plainly-no words could have conveyed it so well. An incident took place during this waiting period that somehow I knew instantly illustrated the answer to my question. It was as if Ma in the form of the "world display" was giving me the answer I had traveled 3 days for.



# THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

— P. C. Mehta

[Continued from before]

**The characteristics of individuals :**

Individuals are described by the Buddha, as having three characteristics :

- i) '*Dukkha*' i.e. suffering,
- ii) '*Anatta*' (*Anātmatā* in Sanskrit) i. e. absence of any eternal self.
- iii) '*Aniccā*', (*Anityatā* in Sanskrit) i.e. impermanence

**The doctrine of '*Anātmatā*' or '*Nairātmya-vāda*' or 'no-self and self as '*Sangatha*' or aggregate:**

Ordinarily, we assume that the self is an integral something which is other than the bodily organism and survives bodily death. Buddha admitted the transient sensations and thoughts but denied any permanent self underneath. The sensations and thoughts together with the physical frame were an aggregate or '*sanghata*'. According to canonical Buddhism, there is no self other than what is made up of the five impermanent '*Skandhas*' which are, a ) '*Nāma*' (having four phases) and b) '*Rupa*'.

'*Nama*' is made up of four different phases of the mind. '*Citta*' is recognized as rudimentary and the other features of mind are explained as '*citta*' or derived from it. They are i) '*viññāna*' meaning 'self-consciousness', ii) '*vedanā*' meaning 'feeling', iii) '*samjña*' meaning 'perception' and iv) '*sanskāra*' meaning 'mental dispositions', while '*Rupa*' is the complex of the physical body, thus making the psycho-physical organism of 'mind and body'. This is our self which obviously is ephemeral impermanent and without substance. In '*Nibbāna*', it completely ceases to be. This ceasing to be is extinction. Therefore in '*Nibbāna*' there is total extinction.

'*Avidyā*', '*Avijjā*' or ignorance according to Buddhism is the failure to recognize the hollowness of the self. According to Advaita it is in not knowing the true nature of the Self which is the identity of '*Atman*' with '*Brahman*'. The origin of evil is in not knowing the true nature of the Self and therefore the cause of suffering is in '*Avidya*'.

*'Atmani sati parā-samjña sva-parā-vihāgat parigraha-dvesau,  
Anayoh sampratibaddhah sarve bhāvah prajāyante'*

'It is clinging to this false self, as a result of our ignorance of its real nature, that explains all the misery of life as it is commonly lived'.

This principle that everything was '*Samghata*' i.e. 'an aggregate' of their respective components, was extended to cover all things. The principles of impermanence and no-self are fundamental to the teaching of the Buddha. This doctrine starts by postulating basic physical and psychic elements and the whole creation as produced out of them. But the rudimentary elements are as unsubstantial and evanescent as the finished products. The finished products are all aggregates of simple elements and do not stand for new things. Early Buddhism recognized four 'bhutas' or elements of material things viz., earth, water, fire and air. These names stand for the sense-data associated with them. The material world, our indriyas or senses and our bodies are all aggregates derived from these elements and are termed 'bhautika'. On the psychical side, it recognized 'citta' as rudimentary and explained the other features of mind as 'citta' or derived from it.

This is known as '*Nairātmaya*' or 'The doctrine of non-substantiality' of things, or the doctrine of '*Anatta*' ('*Anātmata*' in Sanskrit) i.e. absence of any eternal self. The Hinayanists believed in the impermanence of all things. For Mahayanist view see para 41. For Upanisadic view of Reality see paras 52-54 of chapter 1 and for the Jaina view see para 7 of the chapter on Jainism.

This doctrine is called '*Nairātmya-vāda*' or 'no-self', from a negative point of view. It is also the doctrine of '*Samghata*' from the positive point of view. It covers both soul and matter.

### **Doctrine of '*Anityata*' or '*Ksana-bhanga-vāda*' or the doctrine of momentariness :**

The full development of this doctrine which is common to both Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism belongs to later times. It is discussed further in para 51.

The doctrine of '*Aniccā*' or '*Anityatā*' or '*Anityatva*' mentioned in para 26 means the doctrine of impermanence of self as well as things.

This doctrine is pushed further to arrive at what is known as '*Ksana-bhanga-vāda*' also called '*ksanika-bada*'. It is the doctrine which avers that nothing that is, lasts for longer than one instant. In Jainism, the minimum duration of empirical objects is two instants- (see para 27 of the chapter on Jainism). For the Nyaya-Vaisesika view see para 15 of the chapter on Nyaya-Vaisesika. While the Hinayanists believed in the impermanence of all things, the Mahayanists added that they were also non-essential, of an indefinable character and void at the bottom. (See para 35 for Mahayanist view).

Considered from the element of time, this aggregate does not continue the same even for two moments. As such the self and the material world are in a flux '*samtana*'. The symbol of a self-producing and self-consuming flame is commonly given. Thus everything is a succession of similar things. This theory is a compromise between the two views of 'being' and 'non-being, current at the time. It is 'becoming'. When a thing is not changing into something else, it is not constant but is reproducing itself and is therefore to be regarded as a series of like forms succeeding one another perpetually. The reality is dynamic, consisting of incessant change, with nothing that changes. It amounts to action but no agent.

If everything is only a series of similar states, what is the relation between two consecutive similar states ? In Buddha's time one explanation given was that it was an accident and another view recognized the causal relation between them but assigned it to God. Buddha rejected both views. He held the view that uniformity in nature ruled out the possibility of chance in the orderly succession of states. He disassociated himself from all religions which dogmatically held any external agency or God responsible for creating causal relation in the orderly succession of states. He held the view which is known as '*Paticca-* ('*pratitya*' in Sanskrit)-*samutpada*' or 'dependent-origination' and postulated necessity arising in correlation with some external factors as the role governing element as discussed in para 3. One example commonly given is that an oil lamp does not start until the wick, oil, etc. are there, but once it starts, it goes on till one or more of the co-operating factors are withdrawn. Thus though the causal law is universal, its operation is dependent upon conditions.

Two criticisms of '*ksanika-vāda*' or 'the doctrine of momentariness' are: i) if everything is a flux and continually renewed, how is recognition possible ? Buddhists answer that things are only similar and we mistake them as same. Thus similarity is mistaken for identity. ii) If the self is changing every moment, how does one account for memory ? Buddhists answer is that every successive phase has within it all the potentialities of its predecessors' which manifest when conditions are favorable. Hence, though a man is not the same in any two moments, yet he is not quite different. Professor Hopkins says, 'The self is not only a collective, but also a recollective entity'. It is on this basis that Buddhism establishes moral responsibility. The 'Jataka' stories all end with the identification of characters, though separated by births. Thus Buddhism denies unity in the sense of identity of material, but recognizes continuity in its place.

### **Ignorance : (See also; Avijja' para4)**

The doctrine of the cause of suffering as ignorance along with the eleven steps leading to it was later applied to all thing (see para 3). This means that ignorance was regarded as the cause of our perception of multifarious things.

If all things are transient and unsubstantial, our desire for them is a delusion, which we must shed. More powerful than this desire is the craving for the preservation of the self or the will to be. Since there is no self, we should get rid of this craving and thereby extinguish the pains of existence. Thus self-denial is to be understood in a literal sense in Buddhistic ethics.

### **Buddha's purpose :**

Buddha's purpose was to bring about release of man. He was not concerned with metaphysical questions which did not bring about the emancipation of man. 'philosophy purifies none, he said, 'peace alone does'. Some say that he did not believe in God; some say that he did not concern himself about the topic. He wanted man to work out his own salvation through diligence. Though there is no metaphysical aim in what he taught, there is a metaphysical view underneath it, which we have tried to explore.

### **Comments on 'Theravāda Buddhism':**

This theravada doctrine called the doctrine of the Elders which is the surviving form of the so-called '*Hinayana*' or lesser vehicle, represents the later stage of the basic original teaching of the Buddha, which we have dealt with in section VII. 7 under the title of 'The primitive stage'.

i) It is pessimistic. But it is not a creed of despair, because it admits of the possibility of attaining peace here and now.

ii) Since all is suffering, the foremost aim of man is to escape from it.

iii) Therefore '*Nibbāna*' is more concerned about looking to the negative side of extinguishing this suffering than the positive side of what that perfected state is.

iv) It is positivistic that is excludes whatever was not positively known.

v) It is pragmatic. Buddha taught only what was necessary for overcoming evil. Its aim is direct and immediate realization and not conceptual comprehension. It therefore avoids being theoretical.

vi) Though there is no metaphysical aim in what he taught, there is a metaphysical view underneath it.

vii) It completely repudiates Vedic tradition especially as regards rituals.

viii) Early Buddhism is dualistic and realistic. It recognizes a distinction between a soul or self and the material environment in which it finds itself. However it is very different from Hinduism in its ideas of self or soul and matter.

ix) In it, there is no belief in God, nor even in a Divine Absolute.

x) Buddha is not regarded as God and therefore temple worship is only the paying of respect to the memory of a departed teacher.

xi) Buddha's doctrine is less austere than Jainism. It avoids the two extremes of mortification and indulgence. This is the meaning of 'Buddha's Middle Path' in its physical sense. (See para 46 for Middle-Path principle).

[ To continue ]



## JAI MA

— Dhiraj Sapru

jai ma

....and presiding was a poetic flight, one fine spring night....  
to behold - in the passing is she ...

Oh ! this twinkling sky - with many - a - eye  
in sapphire gleam - this silver streak  
to behold - in the passing is she ...

smiling down on younder youth  
dawns to mind those - days - withstood  
to behold - in the passing is she ...

waxing high - then - sometimes low  
as though a brilliant magic show  
to behold - in the passing is she ...

heaving tides - the ocean roars  
yet glistening pathways - easing soars  
to behold - in the passing is she ...

so near - yet afar - floating loose  
cut free from bonding warp 'n' woof  
to behold - in the passing is she ...

bashfully - coy as day - light - breaks  
gallant again - when twilight makes  
to behold - in the passing is she ...

queen 'n' crowned - on Her night  
potent - awesome - in splendid might  
to behold - in the passing is she ...

jai ma



# THE DIVINE MOTHER

—Dr. Premlata Srivastav

[Continued from before]

## Life Introduction

### (b) Childhood

Ma was a witty and a pretty child, ever smiling. Unlike other children, however, she was neither naughty nor fickle-minded. During that age, Ma's leela began, albeit in a low-key manner.

When she was two and a half years old, Ma went to Her maternal Grandma's place. There, Didi Ma took her to a kirtan recital. Kirtans had an effect on Ma's body and soul. Time and again, Didi Ma would notice that the child was losing Her control. Then she could not realise that it was ecstasy which overcame the child.

Even during meal time, Ma's lack of concentration was noticeable. But Her indifferent behaviour at that time was not explainable.

Ma was greatly fascinated by devotional songs and music. The residents of Kheora village used to go round, doing kirtans, during new year eve, and other special occasions.

During her childhood in Kheora once a storm flew a part of the thatched roof of Bipin Behari's house. The storm was dangerous enough to scare everybody but Ma continued to laugh till the next evening when, pointing to the hole, she said to her mother. "Now we can see stars without going into the open. Now, inside and outside have become one and the same."

Ma had an easy independent gait. It is heard from Didi Ma that in childhood Ma would often look at the far off sky without battling Her eyelids. At times, she would loudly sing and dance with divine grace, jump and laugh and talk to plants and trees. Sometimes she would be lost in Herself; in a playful mood. This sweet little girl would visit the neighbours singing and dancing. Often suddenly, in sharp contrast she will withdraw and turn serious. In what type of rapture she was submerged only she knew.

That even as a child she had no fear was exemplified when one day Ma and other girls, who were her mates, suddenly saw the herd of cows. While others ran

away instantly, Ma easily befriended the cattles and walked alongside until herdsmen rushed in to move them away.

Ma's devotion for the supreme authority was also evident when at Her maternal grandma's place she worshipped small earthen images given to Her as toys.

When *Ma* was about five, Bipin Behari called Her to do 'Hari Kirtan'.

Ma asked him, "Baba, who is Hari"  
 Father said, "Hari, is the name of God"  
 Ma: "What happens when you sing the name of Hari ?"  
 Father: "Hari Naam Kirtan will bring Him closer."  
 Ma: "Is Hari too big ?"  
 Father said, "Yes, He is very big"  
 Ma: "Is He big as the field we see ?"

To her child-like innocent queries, Bipin Behari said, "Yes daughter, He is bigger than the field. Call Him, then only you can see how big is He ?

Narrating this episode, Ma said, this is how she was initiated to Hari naam Kirtan by her devoted father.

Ma's respect for elders and heed for their advice was beyond doubt. Once, an aunt took Her to a fair. At a nearby temple, she asked Ma to wait until she returned. The aunt went to the fair and forgot about it. Only after two three hours did she remember and came back in a hurry. She was astonished to see Ma seating in the same place, as she had asked her to.

Once *Ma* went to her Badima's (aunt) place, near their house for getting 'Mattha' which was used to be churned from milk on a daily basis. When she was very small, she would go to the aunt's home, holding an utensil close to her chest. Ostensibly, she went there to collect butter and Mattha. One day, when she went there, the aunt cried out, "I have only started just now and you are already here"!

The aunt suddenly noticed the utensil, being used for the process, had a hole through which all the curd was draining out. She was astonished by this development. She gave *Ma* whatever was left in the pan. After this incident, Badima would call Ma to give her share even if she was late.

Her childhood games were unique.

With the ankle of one foot as centre in a heap of sand, she would draw a circle around it with the big toe of the same foot while keeping the other foot suspended in air. Then she would dance by rotating Herself in similar fashion. Didi Ma used to be scared of Her dance in this manner. Ma's other mates were not able to repeat her feat.

She used to play with her mates, but she could always detach herself from the rest. Here she was fully involved, as part of the playing group. Then she was all alone, detached like sand is brushed away from one's body. Her mates knew Ma was honest, would always speak the truth. That's way, whenever they wanted to do something secretly, Ma wouldn't be taken into confidence. So whenever people wanted to know the fact, they would ask Ma rather than any of her mates. Ma would not speak lie even by gestures. 'That—Truth is the first step of divine attainment' is Ma's teaching.

Ma's way of wearing saree was so good that village women used to cite Her way as a perfect example.

Ma used to be cynosure among the children who never felt satisfied in playing without Her presence.

The tale of Ma's childhood can not be complete without the mention of Her youngest maternal uncle Sharda Charan Vidyasagar (Sona Mama). A very pious and virtuous man, Sona mama was an acknowledged master of the Vedas. He had a special affinity for the young Ma. Later, Ma has recollected many incidents involving Sona mama.

When she was about 7 year old, Ma visited her Grandma's place during Durgapuja. Amidst festivities, people noticed a change in Her mood. She had turned ecstatic and mumbling something to Herself. Having watched Her in trance, Sona mama later quipped :

"What were you muttering ?"

Ma had no answer to Sona mama's, apparently frivolous question.

Sona mama was a saintly person. During the Pujas, he used to worship Ma as Kumari (Virgin Goddess) before performing Durga puja. Likewise some others also used to treat Her as the Virgin Goddess during some puja or the other.

When she was a child, Ma would often be found lost in Her world of dreams during the religious celebrations. When she regained her normal composure, she would feel shy of Her entrancements.

Ma's childhood friend and cousin, Sushila Masi, who lost her husband at a very young age, was initiated by Bholanathji and thereafter lived in our Ashram.

One of Thakurma's (Bipin Behari's mother) friends was Chikkan Didi who liked *Ma* very much. She would often take *Ma* to her house and ask her to cook meals. Chikkan Didi called Her preparations as Ambrosia. Ma had a friend who at 30, was twenty years older than she was. One day, she asked **Ma about the nuances of evening prayers**. Smilingly and playfully, the ten-year-old **Ma demonstrated** the entire ritual before her.

"The body responded on its own" *Ma* said to Didima later.

Although she never failed in what the elders instructed Her to do, she used to be always a bit detached, often lost in Her own world in the midst of friends and relatives. Such actions invited comments. Some used to consider it as Her innocence, others termed it as dullness and lack of concentration.

Didima always considered *Ma* simple and straight. One day, *Ma* went to the pond filled the brass pitcher (given to her by Sonamama) with water, pulled it upto Her belly to see Her curved shadow in the pond water. Then she cried aloud to Didima: " You always call me straight, see me now."

### (c) *Ma's Education*

*Ma* went to school only for a few months in Kheora and Sultanpur (Grandma's Village) put together. She was irregular because she couldn't go to school on Her own. Secondly, Her brothers and sisters were prone to diseases due to which she had to attend to them.

*Ma* went to Kheora's primary school for sometime. There whatever she studied she learnt quickly. Incidentally, the teacher would ask Her only what she knew well. To the teacher, *Ma* was a bright girl.

In later years though *Ma* could write in Bengali but whenever someone requested Her to write something *Ma* would simply put a dot and say this dot encompasses everything. (Bindu mey Sindhu). On Baba Bholanath's request in 1930 *Ma* wrote in Bengali. English translation of this writing is given at the end of this chapter.

### (d) *Marriage*

On 7th February 1909 *Ma* got married to Ramani Mohan Chakravarty who later become known as Bholanath, also as Pitaji (Father) by the devotees.

About her marriage she has said "The sentiments with which you marry, no vibrations of that sentiment ever existed in this body".

*Ma's* role as a bride was excellent. In absence of Her mother-in-law who had passed away, Pramada Devi, wife of Bholanathji's elder brother Revati Mohan, was incharge of the household affairs. She was a hard task mistress. *Ma* did all household chores - from fetching water, cleaning the house, to cooking - with utmost sincerity under Pramoda Devi's supervision. As was the custom for a newly wedded bride, *Ma* used to keep a part of Her saree over Her face as veil. Nevertheless, she looked very attractive in the bridal composure. On many a occasion, ladies of Her age in the neighbourhood, would share Her work in many different ways.

Sometime, while cooking Ma would be in a trance, not knowing the food being cooked on the stove is charred. These incidents at times invited comments from those who never could understand Her deep religious introspections. However, never did she retaliate against such comments. Thus, duty, and service to mankind are foremost to be cultivated in a sadhak is *Ma's* teaching. Years later, when *Ma* was in Calcutta, the sister-in-law Pramoda Devi visited Her. She was surprised by the crowd of Her followers there. During the festivities, one night when most of the people had returned home, *Ma* herself went to old Pramoda devi and talked to her for a long time about the old days in their East Bengal dialect. Those present there, were enhanced by *Ma's* excellent sense of humor and memory. Pramoda Devi said, "You won't believe the way she did Her household chores. She never left any scope for me to complain."

*Ma* has said "no duty can be fulfilled without putting one's heart into it. Service or duty strengthens one's zeal for good work."

*Ma* has mentioned that "this body has lived with father, mother, husband and all. This body has served the husband so you may call it a wife. It has done all sorts of cooking and also all menial works and scrubbing etc so you can call it a servant. But looking from another stand point this body has served none but God. All served are different manifestations of the Almighty God and this body served them as such. When I prepared food it was done as a ritual for food cooked was after all meant for God. All Service is service to Divine. Serve all as God and for the sake of God."

After the death of Revati Mohan in 1914 *Ma* went to Ashtagram with Bholanath. *Ma's* life with Bholanath started from here. The wife of Jaishanker Sen, at whose residence they stayed used to call her 'Mother of Joy'.

In *Ma's* words—"At the time of marriage this body's mother (*Ma* used to refer her like this) has asked to respect and obey her husband. Hence she loved and respected Bholanath like she esteemed Her father."

"This body had a relationship with Bholanath which can be likened to the closeness between a father and his daughter".

To Bholanath *Ma* was a mystery from the very beginning. She saw in him a little child Gopal (Name of Lord Krishna as a child) and inspired in him as his mother.

*Ma* broke into laughter recalling that Bholanath initially passed Her trance and body effects as childishness. He would emphatically say 'It will be all right when you grow up.'

*Ma* said, "seems I never grew up."

Bholanath had no inkling of his unusual marriage. He thought he married an ordinary village girl. But Ma-instead of leading an ordinary conjugal life, managed Bholanath's stride into the spiritual world with extraordinary care, determination and devotion acting as a friend, philosopher and guide. Even while engaged in domestic duties she would often lose control over Her limbs. Thus the mysterious house wife was a mixture of opposites. Household duties were usually performed by Her to perfection. But she was unpredictable, often prompted by kheyala.

He often wondered is she a Goddess in human form ? It is beyond all comprehension that they had a unique relationship poised on a spiritual plane.

### **(e) The Sacred Task of Service**

From the early days Ma was pained by people in distress. She always extended her helping hand to people in need. Hence she was welcomed to every house of Kheora village.

Beside the general upkeep of the house *Ma* used to make pickles, spin the wheel to make clothes. In 1974 during Ma's birth-anniversary celebrations at Agarpara Ashram Calcutta one lady presented Her with a piece of cloth which *Ma* had spun years ago and given to this lady. *Ma's* expertise at embroidery work was excellent, some of Her work reportedly are kept at Her ashram at Kashi.

Sri Ma has said "Unknowingly, Her respect for Bholanath extended to giving even water and towel for wash whenever he returned home. Ma's mother said to her, 'husband is her guru. "That's why her body devoted herself to the service of Bholanath."

Bholanath used to be amused by her obedience and devotion.

When spiritual practices started, duties towards Bholanath were never neglected. Ma would sit for meditation on the floor of the bedroom at night only after finishing the household work. Even that work was done completely engrossed in Her own world with a feeling of reverence to God. The single most aim in all Her work was to do everything in the name of God.

Ma's neatness and competence in upkeep of the house, preparing for evening prayers, cooking meals, and treating guests was discernible from very early days.

She cooked delicious food and Bholanath enjoyed treating his guests with the delicacies. Once *Ma* came to know the guest who would be dining at their place had a distaste for preparations of radish. Invariably, the guest was treated with excellent food prepared by Ma. He was astounded however when told that all the dishes including sweet dish had radish as the base substance.

One day a Gujarati Sadhu visited Ma's place. She received him reverentially, wiped the seat with the corner of Her saree before offering the seat. She devotedly

treated the Sadhu with an assortment of food. The whole arrangement reflecting an honest and dedicated service deeply impressed the Sadhu.

He said, "Today, I had meals at the hands of the 'Mother of the Universe. I never had such an experience."

Ma's spiritual life was noticed from Her Ashtagram days. Ma had maintained a 'Tulsi Manch' at the house she lived. The Tulsi altar was so well kept with *Ma* regularly worshipping the place that people, the neighbours, too reverently came there and prayed. The famous kirtan group of Shri Gagan Roy too came for a recital at their place. During the kirtan *Ma* went into a trance.

The earliest revelations, as per the records, of *Ma's* bhava samadhi was kirtan sometimes sung by neighbours and strangers. Ma becoming totally unaware of the surroundings, fully absorbed in something undescrivable and would lose body consciousness. In the beginning she tried to keep it a secret but slowly took Bholanath into confidence. Here for the first time she went into a trance in public. Bholanath tried his best to bring Her back to this world but failed. *Ma* remained in that condition for nearly 19 hours.. During this stretch ants had gathered around Her eyes as she looked absolutely lifeless.

Referring to trance later Ma said "As sweat oozes from human body streams of Joy and Happiness (Anandam) emerged through this body, with a feeling of strange communion with the hymns."

Ma said "Hari Kirtan' which her father used to do as part of his Sadhana and she as a child became his regular companion was now extended to Naam kirtan at Ashtagram when she lived there."

It was in Astagram where not only Hara Kumar Roy called Her 'Ma' but Kshetra Mohan, a friend of Bholanath prayed by falling at Her feet calling Her Durga, Durga.

Some people would take Ma's trances as evidence of mental disease, while some others took it as effect of evil spirit. So for cure Bholanath took Her to many saints and exorcists but without success. Finally Bholanath invited his friend, a physician Dr. Mahesh Nandi to examine her. Dr. Nandi stayed at their place and after thoroughly watching Her for few days opined, "it is not the illness or any disease but Her exalted stage on the path of spirituality. You should not show her to everybody.

[To continue]





## WITH MOTHER IN THE KUMBH MELA

[FIVE]

— Shradha Davenport

As the years have passed, those words of Mother stand strong and solid like a beacon piercing the fog of this Maya, pointing out the only safe way on this Journey home to Her holy fect. Sometimes when life seems over whelming I recall that She said, "I can play with you any way I like" Then I smile and think, "Yes, and so She plays"

Rameshji gave us one more treasure that day. On January nineteenth, during the main bath, he had taken water from the rivers confluence. Mother had put her finger into that water which he had collected and he presented a small bottle of it to us. I still have a little of that precious gift.

That afternoon Satya and some of the boys went to visit a great sadhu whose camp was about a five-mile walk from Mother's camp and was situated on the other side of the Ganges. That sadhu's name was Brahmachari Yogiraj Deoraha Baba. He was a naga Baba who always stayed in a hut built upon stilts about eight feet above the ground. He was reputed to be any where from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty years old.

Satya took his movie camera and photographed that beautiful saint. His smiling countenance was framed by heavily matted locks. There were no V.I.P. 's at his camp. Any one who came to see him stood in the sand looking up to where he sat. A short cloth covered the railing surrounding a narrow porch outside his hut. As he squatted behind the cloth, he was constantly propelling fruit through the air to the awaiting hands of the devotees below. Like Mother, his aim was perfect and the fruit would sometimes come from his hand so rapidly that it appeared to have come from a catapult. All of this I saw only later in the movies which Satya took I did not want to take the chance of missing Mother's darshan and so I had stayed behind at Her camp that day.

At 4:30 p.m. I found Krishnapriya in Mother's pandal. I also went there and sat near where the girls were singing kirtan. Mother had not come out yet and by 5:30 p.m. the whole front of the camp was filled with people waiting to see Her. For crowd control, Swami Swarupanandaji had closed off the regular entrance into Mother's pandal and constructed a narrow passage-way with heavy bamboo rails on each side. It ran from the front of the pandal inward almost to Mother's porch.

Pilgrims seeking darshan could pronam there, then the passageway turned and led back out to the camp exit road. The rest of the pandal was kept for Mother's devotees.

When it was announced that Mother would not come out until 7:00 p.m. the crowd got angry and noisy because they had waited such a long time. So Mother came onto Her porch at 6:15 p.m. There were people everywhere. I was close to the front but on the side Swami Swarupananda sat on Mother's porch between Mother and me I kept leaning over to see Her. Finally, Mother leaned way over, around Swamiji, and smiling She looked at me for a long moment. It seemed that She was saying, "Are you happy now?" Smiling as I pronamed, my inner reply was, "Yes, Mother, I am happy."

When the crowd started rushing, Mother went in side and the curtains around Her porch were closed. Krishnapriya told me to wait and she went onto the porch. A lot of the people left. Mother then came back to the porch. Swami Swarupananda had the idea of opening Mother's curtain only on the left side and quickly moving the people down the passage-way pronaming to Mother as they moved by. When the crowd threatened to rush, he would close Mother's curtain and they would settle down. That plan worked well and the crowd was getting smaller.

When the curtain was closed, I knew that soon She would again be revealed, just like Banki-Bihariji in Vrindavan. Then I moved up to the right and peeked in at Mother over Krishnapriya's shoulder. Soon Swami Swarupananda noticed me and said "No peeking". I stuck my lower lip out and asked, "What if I cry?" He, with mock sternness replied, "Not even if you cry "I laughingly lamented," Oh Swamiji, you have a hard heart!" He smiled as I touched his feet. The men close to where I was were all laughing, and told me peeking was not allowed.

Then the curtain was opened and Mother smiled at me. She looked at me often. Once She turned Her sweet gaze toward me for a long time, smiling all the while. Chitra was near by me and I said to her, "Thank you for all that you did today." She replied that it was not her, and said, "You do not thank your own." I told her, "I cannot help it. I love you. Thank you !" She gave me a sweet loving smile and I knew that she understood how my heart was overflowing from the events of that glorious day.

Like a spoiled child I had cried for the Mother of my heart, and like the perfect love which She is, She gave Herself to me who had no merit.

January twenty-fourth was a special day. It was the last bath day during Mother's stay on mela grounds and our eighteenth anniversary. Saraswati Puja was to be performed in the large pandal after the bath that day.

We awoke at 4:00 a.m. and within forty-five minutes had joined Mother's party for trek to the rivers' confluence. The walk started from the camp across the road. Each group had its assigned place in the procession. We all walked behind Mother Who sat upon the same graceful silver throne which had carried Her into the mela grounds seventeen days before. Above Her was the large white umbrella with shimmering silver lace around its edge. The silver fluttered in the breeze, catching any light amid the darkness, reflecting it and dancing joyfully around Mother's head.

As we slowly moved across the sand, a pale pink dawn began to reveal the identities of devotees who had appeared as only shadows before. The quiet was suddenly rent by the wild sound of the mighty Naga Babas. They almost collided with our group as they rushed by in a double-file line clad only in ashes.

At the river the crowds were so intense that I just stood to the side hoping I would not be knocked down. Each group in the procession was allowed only a few minutes to bathe then to move on so that the next ones could have their turn. I held our little bag clothes and Gopalji's basket. Chitra asked me to hold her basket too. I thought that I would go to the river when Satya came back but I did not know about the time limit. Satya had gone into the river with Mother and took movies of Her and all the devotees surrounding Her in the water. He gave Gopal a bath and dipped some shell garlands, which I had purchased, into the water. They were for friends in America.

When he returned, soaking wet, to where I stood, he handed me his camera bag, our wet Gopalji, and the dripping shell garlands. Dye from the pink tassels of the garlands played "Holi" on everything they touched. I believe that I sunk a few inches into the sands as I juggled so many things and put Gopalji safely into his basket. There was no chance for me to take the blessed flower offerings to the river, much less for me to go into the water. Satya took the flowers, offered them for me and collected a small bottle of water from the river. As Mother's group left, we were the last ones out, for Satya had to quickly change from his wet clothes.

I did not mind being unable to bathe in the river that day, for my only salvation lay in Her. She was the sole reason for my being there. If She would not grant me liberation, then I would never have it.

Slowly the pink dawn turned to a warm coral and illuminated the festive colors that surrounded us. The road, which we walked, was cordoned off on both sides by heavy wooden railing. As we caught up with Mother's carriage I could hear

people who were standing behind the railing joyfully calling out. "Jai Ma! "Jai Ma!- happy to catch a glimpse of Her as She passed. Mother smiled and greeted all with folded palms.

Satya took movies as Bal Krishna Gupta danced before Mother with arms held high. Dr Shelat's face was beaming with joy, reflecting the mood of everyone who was blessed to be there that marvelous day.

I managed to walk just ahead of Mother for a while and She graced me with several loving smiles. When we returned to Mother's camp, Chitra asked me to take a polaroid photo of Mother before She got down from Her carriage. Then Mother went into Her house and we went to change clothes.

Chitra told us that Saraswati Puja would be at 9:30 a.m. in the large pandal. We started to go there early, but Mother called for us and said to bring our cameras. Dressed in white silk with Her coral shawl and wooden puja chapals (slippers), She walked down the camp road to a more private area behind a barrier. We eagerly followed Her and both took pictures as first She stood, then when a chair was prepared for Her, took her seat. Most people were told to stay in front of the barrier but a small group had already lined the side of the road behind it. Mother motioned for us to come near Her. We took each other's photos kneeling by Her chair, then as I sat at Her feet She gently closed Her eyes and everyone fell silent. She sat that way, in a sublime bhav, as time stood still.

Looking at Her divinely beautiful face I wished that I were able to *really see* that which I beheld. Then Her nostrils slightly flared and She subtly shifted Her body. With eyes cast down She slowly opened them as I bowed at Her feet. What happened during those moments was known only to Her, but as She arose from Her chair I stood to follow Her and became aware that I was completely intoxicated.

Krishnapriya and I held hands as we moved behind Mother, insuring that She was not crowded as She made Her way through the many devotees and into the large pandal. The rare privilege of being allowed to do any small service for Her is a great boon.

Inside the large pandal a shrine had been erected. It held a **graceful, life-sized** image of Goddess Saraswati. Brahmachari Nirvananandaji was **making all** the preparations for Her puja. When Mother entered the pandal, She was escorted into

a small room next to the altar. There She was worshipped as She held the symbols of the Goddess. Afterward She came to an asana which had been prepared for Her next to the altar. The puja was beautifully done and we all admired the lovely Saraswati image. Afterwards everyone stood as Mother left the pandal and went to Her house. Slowly the crowd dispersed and we went to our hut for lunch.

This would be our last full day on the mela grounds. We would then follow Mother to Modinagar for the last few days of our trip. Most of our western friends were scheduled to leave for Varanasi late that afternoon. Mother would be going there right after Modinagar. We were very honored when Swami Keshavanandaji came to us. He was not sure if he would be going to Modinagar. Krishnapriya, Gadadhar, Ram. Shuddhananda, and Jayananda each came to say good-bye. We were very sad to part from them as we had all shared a very special time together and now it was ending.

In the evening I went to Mother's pandal hoping to have Her darshan. There was a great crowd pressing in around Her house and pandal. The curtain that hung around Her porch was completely closed so I was unable to see Her. I returned to our hut and got most of our things packed for the next day's travel. That was our last night at the grand Kumbha Mela, our last night on the sandy banks of sacred Triveni of Prayaga, and our last night in the little grass hut next door to Mother.

The morning sky was cloudy and the air was cold. We went to see Mother and found Her in the big pandal near Saraswati image. The image would be taken to river for immersion that day. Mother sat with Saraswati Devi for some time, then we followed Her when she went to Her pandal. It had started to rain. We prostrated to Mother and with Chitra's help asked Mother to bless us. We asked Her permission to go that night to Delhi, then to join Her in Modinagar on January twentyseventh. Mother nodded Her head and said " Accha. "Chitra brought an orange and an apple for each of us. Mother touched them, then She went inside Her house with Chitra.

The rain seemed to be dissolving the last vestiges of the mela. The roof of our straw hut had developed new leaks and there were no plastic bags left for patching it. We kept our luggage in the only dry spots and with a sweet sadness stood within those straw walls for the last time, reluctant to bid good-bye to our lovely hut.

When our taxi arrived we put all of our things in the trunk and asked the driver to wait.

Mother's pandal top was leaking and only a few people were there. We saw Bal Krishna Gupta and enlisted his aid in translating our words to Nandi Kumar who had been such a good chowkidar. We had a few gifts for him and wanted to be sure that he understood how much we appreciated him and his selfless devotion to service.

This was our last chance to see Chitra, as she was going to Varanasi from the mela. We called for her to come out and said that we must go. She shook hands with Satya, then held my hand and affectionately touched my face and shoulder. Lovingly she looked at me and said, "Please come to Varanasi for two days." Then she was gone. I felt sad, knowing that there was no way we would be able to do as she had asked.

Our taxi carried us into Allahabad where we collected the rest of our things. After a hot bath and delicious meal we rested until train time. At the station it took about an hour to finally get the coupe which we had reserved before the mela, but at last it was made available and we settled in for the night.

[To continue]



## **SRI ANANDAMAYI MA —THE ONE ALONE**

— Sri S.K. Bose

There is only one way to achieve happiness in this terrestrial ball that is either to have a clear conscience or none at all. The world in fact reflects our inner thoughts and feelings from inside and thereby experiences different phenomena and realities from outside. On the contrary Anandamayi ma had neither naught nor aught, neither death nor immortality. Her body simply existed, breathed silently, self contained, absorbed in the world of her own. As far as immanent, temporal aspects are concerned she underwent through physical changes but in the transcendent eternal aspect, forever complete and unchanging. This is probably the reason why she was not perturbed by jealousy, dejection and grief nor by miseries born by passion. She was in the world yet not of the world, a state of complete detachment. No vision of ours could grasp her but her grasp is over all visions. She was above all every thing yet accessible to us in spite of herself, being omnipresent with all the events appearing and disappearing in this world. She had the power to catch away a man from his stillness and plunge him deep into the ecstasy of timeless omnipresent being. Just as a lamp lights hundred of other lamp yet remain lit, so was Anandamayi ma. She often used to say "To be a human being means to place first and foremost the desire to know your self". You make God your closest friend and do this by installing him in the alter of your heart. You cry out for him with desperate eagerness. He will be with you at that instant. "Apply all your energy you possess and He himself will do the rest". Even a desperate yearning will open the passage to establish a direct contact with the supreme power.

On seeing her for the first time Sri Ram Baba exclaimed Anandmayi ma is a burning fire personified. She is in coherent association with the Universe a part limited in time and space created by a non-physical cosmic force. Even at this level of consciousness, to her, each human being was important. While responding to questions dealing with mundane sequences or social problems her responses were short full of solemnity and meant for the total person. Her language used to reflect the basic theme of philosophy combined with the most modern concept of cosmogony and structural coherency. Even Mahamahopadhaya Gopinath Kaviraj

had with full modesty and wisdom in his command admitted about powerlessness of his intellect to fathom the phenomenon that was intrinsically paradoxical and resistant to rational deduction. Best thing for us would be to try to love her, bring our self into closer union with her true self. "As a result of this process she will surely reveal herself to us more fully according to our degree of fitness and receptivity what Gopinathji said. This clearly indicates that we had been dealing with Anandamayi ma a super spiritual genius of very rare variety.

Richard Lannoy being a photo journalist specialized in magazine reportage recorded her fast changing facial expressions. His basic objective probably was to register spontaneous changes in Her facial expression and to do this Lannoy could focus the camera for a long time on Anandamayi ma's face specially on her forehead. Ceaseless mobile lines of extremely delicate in appearance were recorded crossed by countless vertical lines converging at the centre of her forehead. This resembles with the architectural design of two unequal summits of the samadhi temple placed one behind the other as if suggesting silently the place and the spot where the body be rested permanently.

Incidentally the author likes to recall utterings of Anandamayi ma. **"No doubt innumerable number of births follow out of only one seed, but pointing to herself, there are exception"**. For instance an old seed instead of undergoing through the process of germination becomes a fertilizer after combining with the soil and thus provide each plant the substance necessary for its growth. This probably implies that her formless presence will remain as a source to provide inspiration to every aspirant according to their need while practicing sadhana. Beside this her flickering eyes followed by tilting her head was the reaction due to receptivity of both audible and inaudible sound signals produced all the time at distant horizon.

Lannoy had an unique opportunity to watch Anandamayi ma at Vindhyachal closely from outside, sitting in silence with few others in a room . The atmosphere was divine lasting indefinitely without any break. The analogy he used for the scene is **"Mataji was conducting a symphony of quietness not by commands or even by a unifying beat but a kind of focused persuasion suggestion, inspiration"**. Each person present would be persuing his own inner tune. After few minutes she tilted her head in a variety of ways together with a



shift in her gaze, a little adjustment of her sitting postures similar to birds quality, ruffling its feather before it settles to roost.

Although Atmanand to some extent managed to convey the language of her quietness and transparency of words but was unable to explain her musical tone accurately. She had marvellous command upon word making to project with excellence an image of a deity. The precision and tensile strength of Sanskrit were well suited to Anandamayi ma in order to give an appropriate reply to questions when asked by both common and highly educated persons. She used to emphasize **"One who loves God is but to destroy identification with the body.** When this has come about there is destruction (*nasava-na-sva*) . In a similar way she used the word *samundra, sva-mudra* (ocean) to characterize the supreme being as if he is expressing himself. Similarly *taranga, tar-anga*, limbs of his own body. These simple and catchy examples give immense impact and pleasure to the person and helps for the advancement towards 'Truth'. Her repeated submission to every body is those who are pilgrims on the path of super consciousness must develop inner strength, energy, mobility and swiftness. **It will not do to sit down and ride in a rickety jolting bullock cart.** At all times, the mind must be intensely vigorous, energetic and alert then only you can forge ahead with great speed.

Collin Turnbull a renowned anthropologist passed some time with Mataji and expressed "She had filled exactly that emptiness I had felt in the western world and through her I learned how to lead a whole life, how to carry the spirit into every day world, how to lead a every day life that is at the same time a dedicated life, and intensely spiritual". She had the simplicity of rose yet had all the complexity of a rose. Her "nothing special quality" did not conceal her distinction of manner to express movements in a crowd. The English poet Lewis Thompson who had a discerning eye for people of very high quality said "She is a realized being completely without ego". Douglas Harding who met Anandamayima told "She was totally detached from what was going on and paradoxically totally united with it. Her teachings were totally uncompromising when it came to the essence of things, very tough, but absolutely gentle and generous with people's effort. For instance an eminent speaker happened to be the head of Shankaracharya Math, was lecturing on Vedanta at Almora. He was using Sanskrit terminology in somewhat hectoring

tone. Playing with a flower garland, very casually, Mataji injected a word only addressing to Swamiji as 'Pitaji' in a soft and lightest tone. Swamiji stopped in mid sentence, looked down and suddenly burst into tears. The joint monk just crumbled astonishingly before everybody . The atmosphere however was normalized by Mataji, asking one ashram girl to sing devotional song which was accompanied by all those present. This immediately relaxed, Swamiji, regained his composure and was soon rattling on. No body except Mataji could tell what actually touched him at that moment. This gives an idea about Mataji's interaction at right moment in appropriate words. This is an indicative how in one hand she was firm like thunder and extremely soft like flowers.

This remembers me her words **"When you feel power within yourself, when new light dawns on you from within, the more you can keep concealed in utter calm and stillness, more it will grow in intensity"**. "This probably applies to Swamiji". Mataji does not often give orders but when she does command obidance without asking for reasons is the only way, together with the tasks she sets, Mataji transmits the power to carry it out as well.

At later age when she no longer had the physical strength to answer to people, she had but one order *"Bhagavan ke niye thako"*. Early in 1982 aged 86, she made the strenuous journey from Vrindaban to Agartala, to Calcutta and back. She was in poor health when visited by His Holiness Sri Shankaracharya of Sringeri in the month of July. He earnestly begged Mataji to get well soon. She replied **"Baba, this body has no illness at all"**. **What is happening is due to the pull of the 'Unmanifest'. All that you have noticed is due to that"**.

Some days later Indiraji with Rajiv, Soniaji and her grand children paid a short visit. For the last time she sat for a few minutes. On the 27<sup>th</sup> August attendant girls heard her whispering *"Narayan Hari"* several times. That evening she suddenly opened her eyes and gazed upwards. Within few minutes she took her last breath.

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**'I am what I was and what I shall be, I am whatever you conceive, think or say'.**

