
Thus Spoke Ma

*It's only talk of God that's talk indeed ;
All other talks are vain and pain do breed.*

* * *

*Where Rāma dwells there no illnesses loom ;
Forget His Name : you're in ill health and gloom.*

* * *

*O you immortals, do eternally
Enjoy the draught of Immortality !*

* * *

*This Form comes not, nor does it disappear,
With fathers, mothers, friends It's ever here.*

* * *

*This Little Naughty Girl won't move away,
And even if you bid Her go, She'll stay.*

* * *

*Both birth and death are out of question here ;
I never leave you—I am ever near.*

* * *

*If one loves Ma, its' triumph of Ma's own Will ;
Kept miles away from Ma, he's Mother's still.*

* * *

*Your sufferings, your pains—the burning gale
Are mine, too ; this Form understands them all.*

* * *

*Prepare your luggage ; no co-passenger
Will go with you—O lonely traveller !*

(Translated by Dr. Krishna Banerjee)



ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

*A quarterly presenting the divine life and teaching of
SRI ANANDAMAYI MA and various aspects of
Universal Dharma*

* * * *

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ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ welcomes contributions on the life and teachings of Ma and reflections and personal experiences of Ma's devotees and admirers. Articles on religious and philosophical subjects as well as on lives of saints and sages of all countries and all times are also invited. Articles should as far as practicable be typed with double spacing and on one side of the page.

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ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

*

*The Eternal, the Ātman—
Itself pilgrim and path of Immortality
Self contained—THAT is all in One.*

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No. 1

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The Light Merges into the Light

Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma*

“Here is the sun, we are all the stars in daytime”, were the spontaneous words uttered by Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi, when She stood solemnly in front of Sri Bhagavan’s Samādhi shrine in 1952. Ma had come specially to Sri Ramanasramam to lay the foundation stone for the construction over the Samadhi of Sri Bhagavan. Those who were present on that occasion still remember and recollect the meticulous and measured way She handed over brick after brick to lay the foundation! Even when the traditional *pūrṇa kumbha* was offered to Her at the entrance of the Ashram, Ma graciously remarked: “Why all this? Do you do all these when a daughter comes to her father’s house!”

India abounds in sages and saints. Ma Anandamayi occupies a special place in the spiritual hoary of India. Genuine seekers from the west and east flocked to Her for spiritual enlightenment. Her gracious motherly love captivated the hearts of millions. She shed light, since She was the great Light Itself. Ma dropped Her body only to live in the hearts of devotees eternally.

We pay our humble homage to this Light of Lights, Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi !

* Reprinted from the Oct. 1982 issue of “The Mountain Path,” published by Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu.

Sri Sri Ma's Utterances

(Reported by Sri Gurupriya Devi in
"Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi", Vol. III)

God's Name is the most important work ; just see, while repeating His Name you are unable to pay special attention to anything else.

* * *

Question : Ma, how can the mind become still ?

Mataji : Do one thing—while repeating God's Name concentrate your attention on your breath. Whenever your mind starts running hither and thither pull it back and attune it—tie it—to the process of inhalation and exhalation. You will see that this will gradually work—your mind will become still.

* * *

Only if there is strong, unswerving dedication to any single objective can success be achieved. And it is necessary to carry out the behest of the Guru without allowing your reason to interfere.

* * *

Look, if one takes refuge in truth alone, truth itself protects him everywhere. It is only by adherence to a single principle that all is attained in the long run.

* * *

Only when the pain of bondage becomes intolerable, one discovers the road to liberation. Moreover, in the fetters of sense objects, how

would you gain peace? I do not say that you should all go and retire in the jungle. Even in family life peace may be attained. The world is full of suffering only to those who mistake for the Real their role in the comedy of life. And those who know that they have just put on a disguise to act their part, which is not their true identity, for them the world cannot burn in flames of sorrow. Their ties only are destroyed and afterwards everything falls away.

* * *

I find that there is slackness in all of you. You engage in spiritual practice and run after the worldly also. Let me see you take a firm decision and start your work with all your will-power. You are so unstable that you cannot stick to any programme. At least some of you must make a strong resolve and get engrossed in your real work. Don't look for results. Just attend to your daily routine with great regularity.

* * *

Question : I feel that it is better to exhaust one's desires for worldly pleasures by indulging in sense enjoyment. Otherwise, it is no good suppressing one's cravings.

Mataji : But then there won't be any end to sense enjoyments in one's whole life.

Question : Never mind, it will then be in the next birth.

Mataji : This theory I don't accept. In order to overcome craving for enjoyment one should not give way to indulgence alone. It would only increase the craving. Enjoyment seasoned with renunciation is good. As for example, the dis-

peptics want to eat all the time. But if they are given food as often as they would like to eat, their trouble will never be cured and their greediness for food won't go either. Everything should be done with moderation : only thus body and mind are kept fit. Little by little engage yourselves in actions apt to increase your longing for the real Enjoyment. You will see that the petty pleasures which you have given up will automatically fall away. These lower enjoyments are indeed destined to be given up.

You see, it is just as if you take proper care of a tree, the old, withered leaves fall off one by one by themselves and you don't have to pluck them by force. It is only by pulling and plucking fresh leaves that the tree may be damaged. Like this, nothing should be done by coercion. Yet again, you should not remain idle and effortless either. This is the world of action. It is necessary to organize one's life by engaging in activities according to the laid down scriptural rules and regulations.

* * *

Question : Ma, what is the way to check the psychic flow (with *nirodh*) ?

Mataji : Just remain immersed in that one flow. If you don't have that Godward flow of mind the inclination towards the external will not cease. Dedicate a definite, fairly long portion of your daily time to Him. Just as, if you do not take two daily meals at regular times, you are not eating properly. Besides you in between take

betel, betel-nuts, water, fruit etc even while talking. Similarly, remembering God's Name, or whatever may be your spiritual discipline, if you always stick to it in all your activities, there is no harm but if for two or three hours you leave aside everything else and sit in solitude, contemplating God, your mind will be nourished spiritually.

Everything is contained in you : the manifest, the unmanifest, the infinite—everything is indeed within yourself. For example, suppose you are asked to tell what this flower is like. To whatever extent you are able to describe it, it will be *manifest*. Again, what exactly you feel when seeing the flower or what is the essential nature of the flower, you will never succeed in expressing in language. That is the *unmanifest*.

Now, as to the Infinite : for instance, if you are asked to recall what your mind was thinking during the last 10 minutes ; to which places did it go ? You won't be able to reply. Even in the course of 10 minutes it has thought of so many things, has gone to so many places that there is no limit to it. So you see, in yourself also there in the Infinite.

Further, look, whatever part of your body I may touch, I will be touching you only. If I touch your hand I am touching you ; I touch your hair and that also is nothing but touching you. As a person you include all parts of your body. Like this, if your understanding penetrates a little deeper, you will see that everything is contained within you. The manifest, the unmanifest, infini-

tude, oneness—by a little reflection one can grasp this.

Now to something else : the Mahatmās, by their deep understanding of what the creatures and the creation are, become one with them : Seeing a tree they at once are able to intuit the treeness of the tree ; when seeing an animal, they have the capacity to intuitively experience the feeling of that animal. Similarly, by looking at a man they can intuit to perfection the attitude of heart and mind of that man. Thus, nothing at all is hidden from them.

* * *

Don't allow your mind to make plans or counterplans. Whatever is destined to take place at any time, anywhere, happens of itself.

* * *

When the topic of enjoyment and renunciation was raised again one day, Mataji said : “Look, enjoyment curbed by renunciation is necessary. When the child has already studied his subjects to some extent his marks are deducted in case he commits mistakes. Whereas to the child who knows nothing at all, the teacher says, “well done !” however shabbily the boy may write. But after he has learnt something, the teacher deducts the pupil's marks at slight mistakes. This is the rule of education. Further, listen ! when the child has studied a few lessons, even imperfectly, the teacher assigns to him other lessons. As the student goes on learning the new lessons, the defects in his previous lessons are automatically corrected.

Similarly, one should not remain idly waiting with the idea that sense enjoyment should be abandoned only when the desire for it is totally spent up after being satiated. Alternately, turning now to enjoyment and then to renunciation, gradually cessation of desire ensues. To whatever degree the heart becomes purified that alone helps you to advance. Failing to exert oneself in this manner, one comes to repent in old age for not having made any efforts to break the shackles of desire. It is also not right to allow this *samskāra** to persist. By the constant practice of renunciation, desire gradually fades away. Therefore it is wrong to give up efforts and sit back lazily expecting renunciation to come about automatically.

“All desire must be for God only. Whatever you do, whether with your hands or your brain, do it as His service. Whatever you accept physically or mentally, accept it as God coming to you in this shape. If anything is to be given, it is yourself surrendered at his Feet.”

Sri Ma

* *samskāra* Impressions, inclinations, psychic traces left in the mind after any experience, often brought over from former births.

Sri Ma's Teaching : Some Glimpses caught by me

Anil C. Ganguli

Ma delivers no lectures nor has She written any book. Her teaching, only a small fraction of which is on record, has found expression in Her spontaneous answers to questions of innumerable variety. These questions mostly relate to problems of man's existence on earth including misfortunes such as death of dear-ones, disease, disillusionment, frustration in life, attacks of hostile forces, waning of faith and vagaries of an uncurbed and erratic mind. Though some questions are of general interest, most of them are of a personal nature. Besides common householders perplexed by problems incidental to life, questioners belong to various categories including victims of "malignant megalomania" who know the price of everything but the value of nothing, book-full block-heads who carry in their brains loads of information but little wisdom, and spiritually advanced seekers of Truth who have not yet seen the Light within. Every questioner has his own point of view, different from that of others and every problem its peculiar trail of misery. But notwithstanding such diversity, Ma's is a message of Unity. Her prescription consists in the one sovereign remedy : some suitable answer centred on God.

Ma has often declared that she does not talk to "another". For Her there is only ONE. In the ONE there is no room for distinctions, although on our level they do exist. Seeker's questions spring from the ego but Ma's answers arise from a source beyond the ego-mind where no separation exists, nor any divergence of opinions. Her sayings originate from a level beyond time, space and causality.

Ma has no creed or cult, nor has she founded any sect. Her catholicity attracts all, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. She inspires everyone not only to live and let live but also to live and love and consciously to share the beauty and majesty of cosmic life, common to all. Hers is a message of peace and goodwill; of light and delight. According to Her, the root-cause of man's misery is too much worldliness—a mad race for worldly powers, worldly possessions and worldly pleasures. The remedy suggested by Ma is enshrined in Her aphorisms, dialogues and parables. Ma constantly keeps on harping on one string—God. Ancient seers also believed in the efficacy of repetition and took recourse to it as a necessary and useful discipline. The *Upanishads*, the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata* are examples. Again, sun rise, eternally repeated day after day, is welcome to everybody. So also repeated opportunity of Ma's *darśana* to Her devotees. Does not the same principle apply to repeated opportunity of being reminded of Ma's *vāṇī* (words)? Such repetition "reminds, refines and revives".

Every earnest seeker receives from Ma's 'outer manifestation' some message suitable for him ; Her 'inner being' is a message for the whole of mankind. Therefore, a resume of certain important point of Ma's sayings, some of which have already been quoted, or referred to, is expected to be interesting to Ma's devotees and specially beneficial to spiritual aspirants. Hence the following notes under different headings, based on books on Ma, the *Ānanda Vārtā* and the lustrous string of priceless pearls preserved in *Mauna Milani* Bulletins.*

(1) God

The ONE unchanging, indivisible REALITY appears in infinite multiplicity and diversity.

The ONE is ever present, everywhere, in all circumstances.

He is nameless and formless, yet all names and forms are His.

The immutable *Brahman*, the primeval sound AUM are one and the same as the word 'Ma'.

It is the Will of the Almighty that prevails. By living in harmony with His Will and becoming an instrument in His Hands one should endeavour to realize Him.

It is by yearning and pining for Him that the ONE is found. In times of adversity and distress as well as in times of well-being and good fortune try to seek refuge in the ONE alone. Keep in

* Bengali sayings of Ma compiled for private circulation by the late Principal Ganga Charan Dasgupta.

mind that whatever He, the All-beneficent, the fountain of Goodness does, is wholly for the best.

He alone knows to whom He will reveal Himself under which form. By what path and in what manner He attracts any particular individual to Himself is incomprehensible to human intelligence. The path differs indeed for different pilgrims. Very often He destroys misfortune by misfortune and annihilates sorrow by sorrow.

The Supreme Power Itself is directly present in all forms under which It is worshipped. Cry out to It—and to It alone. The Supreme Power cannot remain indifferent to the inconsolable weeping of its offspring. Thus it is the ONE who deal severe blows—yet again Himself consoles by His loving embrace.

(2) God's Name

God's Name is He Himself—the Name and the Named are identical. At every breath try to be in communion with Him through His Name. When the Name that is repeated becomes alive, it is as when a tree grows out of the seed that has been sown. If the Name that appeals most to any particular person is constantly repeated, one arrives at the realization that all names are His names, all forms His forms. Furthermore, that He is without name and form will also by and by come to light.

Refuge has to be sought in His Name in order to realize the One whose name it is.

The nature of fire is to convert everything into itself.

Similarly, association with His Name enables one to become identified with Him.

Your daughter begs of you—keep yourself in touch with Him through His Name as much as possible. Take it from me—repetition of His Name makes everything possible.

Choose any Name you like best and keep on repeating It. His most appropriate Name for you will be disclosed by Himself in the fulness of time.

Always try to remember that time is flying and life is ebbing away with every breath.

The significance of God's Name is that its constant repetition will make it easy for the aspirant to advance towards Him. It is He who is present in the form of the Name and the mantra. Therefore, to be with any of them is also *satsanga* ; you have found Him in the guise of the Name. If *japa* is practised with faith, the benefit will be much greater, but even when adhered to without faith it will yield some result. Ever keep the Name in your mind, ever foster it in the depth of your heart. Just as a seed has to be buried in the earth, so the Name has to be firmly implanted in the soil of the heart and repeated constantly. As a result, a tree will develop out of the seed. The tree signifies Self-realization. God's Names and Forms are infinite in number and variety ; by the sustained repetition of His Name His innumerable shapes will be revealed. Having been implanted in the heart, the Name will quite naturally reveal its essence. Thus one should proceed by constant practice. Throughout the twenty-four

hours, abide in the awareness of the presence of God. Then only can there be hope of Realization. Who can foresee at what moment He may choose to reveal Himself? This is why one must ever keep vigilant.

(3) Guru

Everything is possible with the Guru's grace. Take refuge in the Guru.

So long as you do not meet your Guru, concentrate on the name and form of God that appeals to you most and pray unceasingly.

“Reveal Thyself to me as Sadguru”. Actually the Guru is within. You have achieved nothing so long as you have not discovered the inner Guru.

Follow the Guru's instructions without reasoning. Surrender yourself to his will.

Do not allow your will to dominate and there will be spontaneous self-blossoming.

If you think you can do without a *Guru*, that's nothing wrong. Go on taking God's Name on your own, that will suffice. But many spiritual aspirants, relying on their own power, at times get fatigued and despondent and then they feel the need of a *Guru* to help them to proceed. Normally men cannot progress without a support and hence the need of a *Guru*. Not that it is impossible to invoke God without having recourse to a *Guru*.*

* *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi Prasanga* by Amulya Dutta Gupta, Vol. I, pp. 4-5.

(4) Inner Guru

There is one centre in your being from which come vibrations of mantras and images are revealed together with the Truth underlying them. Who is it that does all this? Reflect! Herein lies the mark of the inner Guru. It is He who dwells within you and does everything—He awakens inspiration without your knowing it. He is the omniscient Being.

(5) Pilgrimage to Immortality

There are two kinds of travellers on life's journey: the one, like a tourist, is keen on sight-seeing, wandering from place to place, flitting from one experience to another for the fun of it. The other treads the path that is consistent with man's true being and leads to his real home, to Self-knowledge. Sorrow will of a certainty be encountered on a journey undertaken for the sake of sight-seeing and enjoyment. So long as one's real home has not been found, suffering is inevitable. The sense of separateness is the root-cause of misery, because it is founded on error, on the conception of duality. This is why the world is called *du-niya* (based on duality).

Become a pilgrim on the path of Immortality. Shun the road that leads to death: tread the path of Immortality. Bring to light that you are imperishable, immortal.

When man becomes a traveller on the path to his inner Being, the distance that separates him

from his goal gradually vanishes. You will most certainly have to undertake this pilgrimage to Immortality, trampling under foot hundreds and hundreds of obstacles and impediments.

Pilgrims on the road towards God often encounter obstacles and stumbling-blocks which are the results of their own former actions. In such cases one should pray: "Lord, gird me with patience, and the power of endurance that I may be able to continue undaunted my pilgrimage on the path that leads to Thee." Keep your spirits high by reflecting that those hindrances and difficulties are breaking up your bad karma. Bear in mind that God is thus cleansing and purifying you in order to take you unto Himself.

You, a scion of the Immortal, can never become reconciled to the realm of death, neither does God allow you to remain in it. He Himself kindles the sense of want in you by granting you a small thing, only to whet your appetite for a greater one. This is His method by which He urges you on. The traveller on this path finds it difficult and feels troubled, but one who has eyes to see can clearly perceive that the pilgrim is advancing. The distress that is experienced burns to ashes all pleasures derived from worldly things. This is what is called '*tapasyā*'. What obstructs one on the spiritual path bears within itself seeds of future suffering. Yet the heartache, the anguish over the effects of these obstructions are the beginning of an awakening to Consciousness.

(6) Man's duty

Among all creatures the human being alone has been endowed with capacity to realize God. This is the purpose of human life. Man's bounden duty is to strive for God-realization with all his might. Realizing God means realizing the Self (*Ātmā*) which is One.

The four *āshramas* have been devised as stages on the path to Self-realization. The *brahmachārya āshrama* lays the important foundation.

Householders should emulate the ancient *Rishis* who were sages, leading God-dedicated lives with their families. Love and serve husband, wife and children as Divine manifestations. Perform all work as God's service.

Accept whatever happens as God's gift; nay, God Himself in this guise.

Various attitudes are adopted by householder devotees in trouble. There are those who have dedicated themselves to God. They say: "My Lord, whatever you may do, howsoever you may keep me, it is all right, Thy will be done". According to the state of people's minds, their conditions differ. Some are at a stage at which they just cannot help praying. Others, when visited by trials and tribulations seriously doubt the existence of God and drop their religious practices. On the other hand, there are people who turn to God more eagerly when in sorrow. And some remember Him with greater fervour when they are happy. In all circumstances, He is the great healer. Therefore many are moved to appeal to

him in trouble. Then again, a state is reached when one does not anymore feel inclined to pray to Him for relief in adversity, pain, ill-luck and so forth, but accepts it as His dispensation. To invoke God is always good. For whatever reason you may pray, with whatever motive—at least start praying to Him ! Be it for alleviation of distress or for enlightenment, be it even for wealth and possessions. The wise ever live in the remembrance of God.

Each one should start along the lines taught by his own religion.

Of Him alone must be the spoken word ; all else is but futility and pain.

Forgetfulness of God is the greatest sin ; His constant remembrance the greatest virtue.

(7) Worldly life a battle-field

Worldly life is indeed a battle-field. By becoming conscious of one's spiritual wealth one must strive to emerge victorious from the battle. Even if one has slipped and fallen, is it not man's bounden duty to use as a lever the very earth to which he has tumbled and raise himself up again ?

As a human being constant effort is one's duty. If one does not awaken to the consciousness of his own Self, what has one achieved ? One has but wasted one's life. How many lives are frittered away, age after age, in endless coming and going. Find out who you are ! Discover the significance of the round of births and deaths, their cause and where it leads.

This world is itself but an embodiment of want, and hence the heartache due to the absence of fulfilment must needs endure. This is why it is said that there are two kinds of currents in human life : the one pertaining to the world, in which want follows upon want ; the other of one's true Being. It is characteristic of the former that it can never end in fulfilment—on the contrary, the sense of want is perpetually stimulated anew. Whereas by entering the latter man will become established in his true Nature and bring to completion the striving which is its expression. Thus, if he endeavours to fulfil himself by entering this current, it will eventually bring him to the perfect poise of his own true Being.

(8) The Secret of Peace and Happiness

A person who does not for the love of God and with a cheerful heart discharge himself of whatever responsibility that may fall to his lot at any time, will find life excessively burdensome and never be able to accomplish anything. Man should joyfully serve the world with the conviction that all service is God's service. Work done in such a spirit helps to purify mind and heart.

Happiness that depends upon anything or anyone turns into sorrow when the particular thing or person is out of reach. Everything in this world is transitory. So also worldly happiness : it comes and the next moment it is gone. If permanent, abiding happiness is to be found, That which is eternal will have to be realized.

So long as the sense of "me" and "mine" remains, there is bound to be sorrow and want. Thinking in terms of "my wife, my son, my friend, my enemy, my property" proves that one's rhythm of life is based entirely on the sense of "I". If there is no "me" and "mine", suffering and enjoyment cannot be experienced.

In the measure as one loves God, detachment from sense objects ensues.

After joy gloom is bound to follow. The realization of *Brahman* is a state beyond joy and dejection. Just as when you see a wet earthen vessel from a distance you presume that it is filled with water because generally an earthen pot full of water looks wet ; similarly knowers of *Brahman* give the impression of being steeped in joy ; but this is not the ordinary joy or happiness. That state cannot be described in words.

"You must find the Master within your own spiritual self. You must regard his body in the same way that he himself regards it, the body is not his true Self."

Ramana Maharshi

Mother Anandamayi

Sri Dilipkumar Roy

Those whom Thou once hast touched with Thy fair eyes
Have known what is the loan of Heaven's Light,
A bounty none could ever here surmise
In an earth-born woman's gaze which silvered Night.

Earthly yet not of earth ; in life's dark drift
When storms tear through and wilts our faith in day,
A prey to clouds — the pall could only lift
If the eyes revealed a love-lit soul in play.

For Thee all, all is play : Thou art a child
Of the Mother Still, and yet who'll dare deny
The Child's the Mother of mothers ? So Thou art styled
Ananda's Daughter — a gift of the blue sky.

A dowry of Dream to din ! Thy message rings
To our harassed ears like some melody !
For when Thou speakest the earth-bound float on wings
Of hope and love, then learn to soar on high.

Old scriptures are life's finger-posts, we heard ;
We pored and pored and felt old, satiate
Until we saw a Face upturned, Godward,
Not ears — 'tis eyes that lead, intoxicate.

O Lotus-Grace blown on our graceless earth !
How shall we pay Thee homage — We never trod
An alley to Worship ! Pent, alas, from birth
In the sty of worldly wisdom, we shed our blood.

Only for things that break their troths for ever
 Or deep fulfilment ; science, art and passions
 Still urge us on in life's dismal endeavour ;
 'Tis half-lights are adored today of nations.

So Thou comst with Thy mystic laughter — moods
 And ruleless ways of wind and wilfulness.
 Our life is blind ; Thy aerial radiance floods
 Our age-long droughts of vision to sow Thy Grace.

From infancy we heard of Mother Ind's
 Long dynastics of sages high and hoary ;
 Yet in our Pantheons one seldom finds
 A saintly woman's form haloed with glory.

We sing of the Gopies' Krishna-love sky-vast,
 In the Vedas women wrote great hymns, we claim ;
 But when a woman harks back to the past,
 We are vexed and never can find for it a name !

So Thou art born to us, O Damsel deep !
 With wisdom and love divine, and with Thy sure
 Answers and raptures make even stalwarts weep
 And pandits laugh — one knows not with what lure !

O mystic Minstrel holding the Wizard's Wand !
 O Envoy of the Ethereal to Clay !
 Teach us until our minds can understand
 Thy gospel of Ananda, and come to stay !

Guru Darshan : Its true significance and underlying implications

(Letter written by Acharya Satis Chandra Mukhopadhyay)

Addressed to the late Sri Mukunda Jha

(Completed in 7 Parts)

2-10-44

Part—I

Param Preeti Bhajaneshu,

In your letter of 8th June you pointed out to me that when you wrote of *Bhagwat Darshan* in your “sacred” letter of 27th May, 1944, you meant *Guru Darshan*. Your “sacred” letter was not very clear to me, and hence I made the mistake I did.

The subject of *Guru Darshan* requires a detailed exposition. The subject is fully discussed in Vol. IV of “Shree Shree Sat-Guru Sanga” pp. 94-95 (First Edition) to which you will do well to refer. In the meantime permit me to give you a preliminary insight into this abstruse problem.

The physical body of the Sat-Guru is exactly like ours, as we see it from the outside. It is purely physical or material. In scriptural language, it is *achit* and not *chit* or spiritual. By *chit* or *chit*-element is meant that spiritual factor or quality which goes into the constitution of the bodies of *Avatāras* of God. The distinction may be thus stated.

All *achit* or material substances are subject to perpetual changes or modifications. But the *chit* element is never subject to any such process of change, and is therefore eternally subsisting in one mode of being, and there is no change of *Rūpa* or Form. That is the fundamental difference between an *achit* body and a *chit* or spiritual body.

In the case of a Saint or a Rishi, what happens is that having shed his *achit* physical body, i.e., after undergoing physical dissolution he goes on subsisting ; —but in what sort of a body ? In the case of most human beings who are fettered souls, at death they go on living in some *sukshma* bodies, but in some other invisible world or *paraloka* as it is called. Now, such *sukshma* bodies are *achit* or material bodies which, though not gross, are still very *sukshma* or fine or subtle. But the point to remember is that these *achit* bodies, however fine or subtle, do not retain their entity for ever so long, for they are ultimately liable to disintegration and dissolution. But in the case of Saints and Rishis, the matter is different. Therefore, when I say that they live after death or physical dissolution, I mean to say that they do not live in a *achit* body, however *sukshma* or fine, which is liable to decay and dissolution ; but that they live in a *chit* body or spiritual body which is never liable to disintegration and dissolution, and is therefore ever-permanent. This spiritual body is known as *chinmaya* body in scriptural language.

There are therefore three kinds of body : (1) the spiritual *chinmaya* body ; (2) the gross or material

or *achit* body ; (3) the fine or subtle *achit* body, which is the *sukshma achit* body. First there is the gross material *achit* body which all living *baddha purushas*, all unfree souls, all fettered *jīvas*, wear ; then there are *achit* bodies which are not gross but are *sukshma* i.e. very fine or subtle. These finer forms of *achit* matter go to constitute the bodies of *Devatas* or Gods for instance. These latter are beings who have, by sheer *punya* (meritorious) karmas, gone to reside in celestial regions, or *Svarlokas* as they are called, as celestial beings. But their very fine celestial bodies because they are not *chit* or spiritual but *achit* i.e., material, (although not gross but very fine or subtle), have, as pointed out above, to undergo disintegration and final dissolution. That is to say the *sukshma* bodies of *Devatas* have not the eternally subsisting character or quality in them, as bodies which are spiritual or *chinmaya* must have.

Besides the fine or subtle bodies of celestial beings or Gods, there are *achit* bodies, fine and subtle, of other invisible beings which are equally liable to disintegration and dissolution. These fine or *sukshma* bodies are worn by invisible beings who, in their previous lives on earth, had not *punya* but *pāpam* to their credit, and who inhabit at death the *paraloka* or the world of spirits. There are any number of *paralokas* or invisible worlds, inhabited by spirits who in their former human lives have not done any righteous or *punya* deeds, but who have unfortunately committed heinous or sinful acts, for which they have to undergo pain and suffering in

appropriate forms of *paralokas*. These invisible beings, after having undergone the full term of expiration by way of suffering or pain,—these invisible beings, wearing *sukshma* bodies, have yet to come back to this human world and put on gross material bodies and put in a fresh lease of life in which they have got to liquidate some of their past *samskāras*, some of their stored-up *prārabdhik* karmas and *vāsanās*, which had remained unliquidated.

To sum up : there are three kinds of body. Two of them are *achit* or material ; the third is *chit* i.e., *chinmaya* or spiritual. The first two are : (1) the gross physical forms worn by human or sub-human beings so long as they exist as such ; (2) the finer or subtler forms of *achit* body which the inhabitants of *paraloka* wear. I have told you also that these fine or subtle forms of *achit* body do not subsist for very long. For they disintegrate or drop off as soon as the stock of stored-up *punya* or *pāpa* karmas, known as *prārabdhas*, has been worked out by the *jīva* in question. And so as the result of such liquidation, the inhabitants of the upper regions inhabited by celestial beings, equally with the inhabitants of the lower regions, i.e., of *paralokas* where spirits ordinarily live, have to come down and put on gross bodies, human or sub-human.

The third kind of body is known as *chit* or *chinmaya* i.e., spiritual body. Such a *chit* body may be worn only by a human being who has got freed i.e. has become *Mukta Purusha*. By a *Mukta Purusha* is here meant a being who was originally

a *baddha purusha* or fettered *jīva* wearing a human body, but who subsequently becomes free or liberated from his identification with the twofold *achit* body (namely the gross body and the mind body). Such a *Mukta Purusha*, after having shed his *achit* physical body both gross and *sukshma* (fine and subtle), lives for evermore in a spiritual body, his *chit* or *chinmaya* body. He never dies, although he may have dropped his twofold body both physical and mental (*sukshma*). Thus great Saints and Sages and Rishis like Narada, Vashistha, Nanak, Tulsidas, Ramanand, Ram Krishna,—and they are infinite in number—are all living their lives in their spiritual bodies i.e., in their *chit* or *chinmaya* bodies, and will so live for all time to come. They can come down to the earth at their will and make themselves visible to selected mortals or to help humanity. And so you find them entering into discussions on spiritual subjects with such selected mortals, as you will find in *Srimad Bhagavat* or other sacred books. When they do so, they put on bodies, *sukshma* or gross bodies as the case may be, to make themselves visible to their audience.

“You must know Him in such a way that no place remains where He is not.”

Sri Ma

A Shower of Mercy

Ranadheer Dastidar

I

“When the life is hard and perched, come upon me in a shower of mercy”—sang Tagore in one of his songs.

To Her countless devotees Sri Sri Ma Anandamayī came in an unending stream of compassion. To me also She came—Mother Eternal—when my need was sorest.

It was about 35 or 36 years ago that I had had my first darshan of Ma in Calcutta at Her Ekdalia Road Ashram. Draped in an immaculately white sari, of a very fair complexion, Her dark, glossy hair tied up into a knot over Her head, Her face radiating sweetness and light, She came in brisk, quick steps and took Her seat. A hush fell upon the assembled crowd. People approached Her one by one and bowed to Her. So did I. Spell bound I gazed at Her. In a trice, Her eyes, tender with love, took on a far-away look as though Her mind were attuned to a higher rhythm of eternity. Seated among the crowd, She was talking animatedly to some, answering questions of others, now bursting into ringing laughter—a fountain of joy sparkling in sunshine, now losing Herself in the depth of silence—an image of ineffable calm, scintillating in serenity. The fleeting moments of stillness seemed poised on perfect peace, vibrant with the silent

music of the spirit. Before my wondering eyes, Ma appeared like a luminous, impersonal entity, utterly devoid of ego, beyond reach and yet so very real that it could be felt like fragrance wafted by a breeze from afar. The subtle nuances of Her varying moods were very fascinating and seemed to hold in them a world of meaning. But who could read them? At once intimate yet aloof, near and yet distant, Her mind appeared to be soaring 'beyond life's arc in spirit's immensities'. I had had the good fortune of Her darshan many a time since, and every time I returned with the feeling that what I had seen was beyond compare.

II

It was not the urge of religion that brought me to Varanasi. I was not particularly interested in spending my old age here, but I had a lurking desire to live the last days of my life far away from my near and dear ones, in a quiet place amidst pleasant surroundings. It was just an idea, vague as most ideas are, with no firm basis. But I loved to toy with it and my mind returned to it with disturbing frequency. When I was in this mood the call came from Ma, about 20 years ago. "Come to me", She said at Her Agarpara Ashram. "Come and stay with me. This body wants to stay with you, Baba." I was taken aback by this unexpected call and moved out of my depth. But I had misgivings about Ashram life to which I was an utter stranger, and my response was evasive. Perhaps the time was not yet.

Years rolled by, years of wearisome monotony. Though I had not yet cut myself off from my moorings, my mind was hovering between a sense of attachment and alienation, the one getting the better of the other. I grew restless and wanted to stretch my wings into the wider blue when the call from Ma came again. Towards the middle of December, 1972, I came to Varanasi with my younger brother and my nephew to see my ailing sister (Puspa's Mother). Ma was then staying at the Ashram and Puspa took us to Her. She received us very graciously and I was deeply touched by the kindly interest She took in us.

Later on, I had two private interviews with Her. During the first one, She repeated what She had told me years ago. "Come and stay here, 'Baba,'" She said, "it is good to spend one's old age in Varanasi. This is what our Śāstras say". It was She who was talking most of the time, I being a silent listener,—She asked me if I had had dīkṣā. On hearing my reply She said, "Bhagavan is your Guru". She spoke for a long time, mostly on things spiritual, some of which were beyond my comprehension. "I don't usually speak about these things to all and sundry", She said, and I was immensely gratified. A new light seemed to be on me, a new hope and the promise of a new life.

During the next private interview graciously granted by Ma, I freely unburdened myself and laid bare my heart before Her in a way I had never done before anybody. I somehow felt that I was talking to my own self. Ma gave me a very patient

hearing. Tears trickled down my cheeks. My talks were punctuated with frequent utterance of "Narayan", "Narayan" by Her, which sent a thrill through my body. I was as it were, in a dreamy stupor. "Come and stay here, Baba". She repeated. "Do some *seva* (service) here. Which *seva* can you do?" I told Her that I was not competent for any *seva*. She assured me that some duty suited to my status and temperament would be given to me. Her words carried such a certitude and urgency that I was shaken out of my complacency. I bowed down and took leave of Her with a light heart.

After a few days, Ma went to Kanpur on the occasion of the Bhagavat Saptah then being held there. On Her arrival there, She sent word to Puspa that she should go to Kanpur with us immediately. We left for Kanpur as desired by Ma and by Her grace spent some very happy days there. One morning Puspa came running to me to ask me in which subject I had passed my M.A. examination. I was surprised. "Who cares to remember?" I replied, "It was about half-a-century ago". "Please, *Baṛa Māmā*", she pleaded, "Didi wants to know it". No sooner did she get my reply than she ran back as quickly as she had come.

We returned to Varanasi in the first week of January, 1973. Ma told me not to leave Varanasi without informing Her. As I was not keeping quite well, I sought Her permission to return to Hind Motor where I had been residing for the last

few years. Ma said, "Narayan is in your heart. Listen to what your mind prompts you to do. But if you decide to go now, don't fail to come back here before July when the next session of the Kanyapeeth begins." I made my *praṇāma* to Her and left.

III

Some time during the summer of 1973, Ma had been to the 'Niramoy' Hospital in Calcutta. I went to have Her darshan and asked Her when I should go to Varanasi and where I should stay. She paused for a while and said "Don't go now. You had better go when this body would be there ; otherwise you might find it inconvenient. Make sure when this body will be there and arrange your programme accordingly." I was overwhelmed by Her kindness and forethought. Each of the steps taken by Her was well-calculated and meant to save me the least little inconvenience.

I went back home. An air of uncertainty hung over me as days wore on. All of a sudden, I got a letter from Puspa before Durga Puja, in which she wrote to say that Ma had asked her to request me to go to Hardwar where the Puja would be celebrated that year. Accordingly I left for Hardwar, where Durga Puja was performed in Ma's holy presence with great pomp and solemnity. Thereafter, under Her instructions, I went to Dehra-Dun to rest for about a fortnight and from there to Vrindaban during the *Samyam Saptah*. The solemnity of the week-long function, held in Ma's

presence, was heightened by the profound silence and the meditative calm which pervaded it. After the *Samyak Saptah*, I came to Varanasi as directed by Ma.

On November 17th,—I have a vivid recollection of the date—I went upto Ma's room on the 1st floor of the Ashram and after I had made my *pranāma*, She told me that thenceforward I should teach the Kanyapeeth girls English. In reply to my enquiry when I should begin, Ma replied, "Today. Here and now." A senior girl of the Kanyapeeth was sent for and Roma, a little nervous, came with an English text book. "Start your teaching here", Ma said to me. Thus, at the feet of Ma, began my initiation in teaching. A unique event this, in the history of the Kanyapeeth.

I had so far been staying at my sister's house from where I used to come to the Kanyapeeth to teach the girls and have my meals there. After 3 or 4 days Puspa came and told me that Ma desired me to go to the Ashram next morning when She was due to leave. When I went there, I found Ma seated in the court-yard in front of the Chandi Mandap, all ready to start. As soon as She saw me, She got up and told me to follow Her. She entered the Kanyapeeth with me and went into the room on the ground floor facing the Ganga. She sat down on the cot on the southern side of the room and said to me, "From now on you will stay in this room". I was overwhelmed and bowed down to Her. I know the readiness with which the

Kanyapeeth accepted me was solely due to this gracious gesture of Ma.

For nearly 2 years I stayed there. When Durga Puja was celebrated in Varanasi in 1975, I had to vacate the room as arrangements were made for a distinguished Mahātmā to stay there. I shifted to the Guest House of the Ashram. After *Vijaya Dasami*, Ma sent for me and told me that in future when She would come to Varanasi, She would be staying in that room in the Kanyapeeth, and it would cause me great inconvenience to have to move every now and again on Her arrival ; so She had arranged my stay permanently at the Guest House. Since then I have been staying there.

IV

Ma has given me shelter, peace and happiness. The opportunity to serve the Kanyapeeth was one of Her finest gifts to me. The Kanyapeeth gave an affectionate welcome, and my heart warmed up to it from the very start. Though my mental make-up stood in the way of identifying myself completely with the milieu of the Kanyapeeth, it approximated, in many respects, to the idea I had been nursing over the years of a resting place, from where I liked to embark on my final voyage. The boundless grace of Ma, the eternal beauty of the Ganga and the loving attention of the inmates of the Kanyapeeth—all these combined to make my stay there a continuous joy. What I have got from Ma is my treasured possession, and I have accepted it with humility and gratitude. What the girls have

given me is a precious gift which I fondly cherish. The weary moments of my last days will thrill to these happy memories.

V

When I went to the Ashram at midnight on August 27th, 1982, a pall of gloom had descended on it and also on the Kanyapeeth—a weird silence born of deep anguish. The first outburst of sorrow of the grief-stricken girls had given place to an uneasy calm, too poignant for words. On seeing me Gitā broke out in an agitated mood, “Mama, why have you come? it’s all false—this news.” She refused to believe that the worst had happened. Few were prepared to believe that the tearful prayers welling out of the depth of so many hearts had gone unheeded. Some of the senior girls were sitting in the court-yard, ready to leave for Kankhal. Jaya, our Principal, asked me, “Māmā, (uncle) what should I do?” I told her that her duty was to stay at the Kanyapeeth and look after the girls. Very sensibly, she agreed.

Next morning some of the girls were in a flood of tears. They wanted to go to Kankhal to have a last glimpse of Ma’s mortal body. I told them that instead of going there they should hug to their bosom the memories of Ma’s last visit here and seek consolation therein. They told me that on the eve of Ma’s departure after Saraswati Puja in January last, they had made their final *pranāma* to Ma who was seated in the car, and She had blessed them by touching their heads. “Treasure

that memory and you will find peace”, I said to them. For a while they seemed to be quiet, but only for a brief while. Ranjana broke down again and said, “When Ma came here we used to blow the conch, offer garlands and bow down to Her, but now”—the rest of her sentence trailed off in a series of sobs. I could give no reply. I myself was in tears.

Since the morning of the August 28th. our girls, under the guidance of Jaya, had been doing *puja*, *pātha* also *akhaṇḍa japa* and *kirtan* all throughout the day and night in Ma’s room on the ground floor of the Kanyapeeth. After four or five days the venue was shifted to the Chandi Mandap where before the beautifully decorated portrait of Ma, *Akhand Japa*, from dawn to dusk, *pūjā pātha* and *kirtan* went on with unabated zeal and devotion. I would add here that the quiet self-possession and the sense of dedication shown by Jaya in the discharge of her duties during those traumatic days deserve the highest praise.

On September 13th, Ma’s *pūjā* was performed on a grand scale, the *pūjārini* being Jaya. The air was charged with deep solemnity which could be felt by everybody present. During the evening *ārati*, one of our girls remarked that it seemed as though Ma’s birthday were being celebrated and She were physically present to receive our obeisance. Indeed it did. She had struck the right note which found an echo in every heart. Ma’s Birthday Festival for ever! This sentiment began to triumph over the mood of despair which had overtaken

everybody a few days ago. Slowly the dark shadow lifted. The gnawing pangs of separation gave place to a quite acceptance and an abiding feeling that Ma is enshrined for ever in every heart, shedding light and love, and guiding the steps of Her children.

In the wake of Ma's *pūjā* on September 13th, 16 Mahatmas were fed in the Kanyapeeth with appropriate ceremony and special offerings as prescribed by the Śāstras ; arrangements were made in the Gopal Mandir for feeding 108 Sadhus, and presenting *dakshina* and cloth. On the following day the *pūjā* of 108 Kumaries was performed in a colourful setting in the Kanyapeeth, where they were entertained to a feast. On the same day 108 brahmins were fed in the Gopal Mandir and given the usual *dakshina*. This was followed on September 15th by the feeding of the devotees, and the functions were rounded off with *Daridra Narayan Seva* (poor feeding) on September 16th.

VI

To come back to Ma. But who can describe Her ? "Measure not with words, The immeasurable". Ma was the supreme manifestation of the highest spiritual realisation that gave Her an unmatched splendour and lent an aura of divinity around Her. She did not have to acquire it by a long and arduous process of *sādhanā*. She was born with it. From the very dawn of Her life, it blossomed within Her like a full-blown lotus. It was, however, Her motherly image, gracious

and forgiving, that attracted me most. In Her there was ever an assurance of hope that lifted up one's heart. About three and a half years ago, I lost the sight of one of my eyes, and the light of the other might fade out any moment. But Ma said to me, "Don't worry at all. May peace and happiness be yours!" Her blessings brought me a sense of security which, I firmly believe, will last till the end.

Ma combined in Herself the grandeur and the profundity of an epic, the sweetness and the rhythmic play of a lyric and the inscrutable note of a mystic poem. She was a paragon of perfection. All Her actions flowing as they did from an illumined consciousness, were a thing of beauty marked by the bravura of a master artist. The artistry of Her manners was not a mere exercise in studied courtesy. It was a spontaneous expression of Her love, sympathy and understanding. It is not given to all to rise to spiritual height, but if we could only emulate a little of Her manners in our daily lives, the world would be a far better place to live in. Not by panegyrics alone, nor even by a mere repetition of rituals, but only by living up to Ma's teachings, we can turn our homage to Her into a real act of worship.

Emotional intensity in its purest form found expression in the ecstasy which made Her roll on the ground to the singing of kirtan and also in Her diverse activities meant to alleviate the pain of the lowliest and the lost. She bore the cross for us, regardless of Her personal comfort.

Where there was discord, She would strike a note of harmony. Where there was darkness and despair, She would shine forth like a blaze of light.

Not for Her was cloistered seclusion nor isolation in the ivory tower. She came down from the sunlit height to our level, soothed our fevered brows and brought Her healing touch to our anguished hearts. Despite Her strict adherence to orthodoxy which sometimes appeared anachronistic, She was catholic enough to help everybody to open out according to his own lights. Ever ready to minister to our needs, spiritual and temporal, She implored us to turn our gaze Godward, away from the trivialities of life to its eternal verities. She invited us to share the bliss and illumination in which She revelled.

Such was our beloved Ma. Everybody, irrespective of caste and creed, from the highest to the lowest could claim Her bounty. If only one was able to get over the hurdles occasionally put up by the gate-keepers, one would find that in Her heart awaited a warm welcome for all. Here was a place of pilgrimage. Here was benediction, joy and peace.

Indeed, Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi—a living image of beatitude ever dwelling in the realm of the spirit—was, as it were, a symphony of beauty, grace and sweetness : a symbol of faith, hope and charity. To Her we bow down in prayerful humility.

Mother as Revealed to me

Professor L. R. Jhingta

The very utterance of the word 'Ma' fills the mind with bliss ; an ecstatic delight seizes the soul and a sweet soothing sensation stirs every nerve and fibre. It exhilarates like cool sandal breeze on a sultry summer noon. Ma signifies deathlessness and eternalizes life. Dreadful death is a mere beggar before the life-giving door of Ma. Yet lately, the news of Ma Anandamayi's disappearance from the phenomenal world and merger with the noumenon has caused an irredeemable void in the spiritual world on the one hand and on the other hand raised the fundamental issue whether Motherhood or Godhood are ever subject to death. I fail to reconcile myself to the birth and death of the Mother. *Samādhi* and *Nirvana* are neither for Her. She transcends both. Mother was neither born nor can She die. If born from another agency She would cease to be the Mother and if not, She cannot die.

It is our sheer ignorance to associate the ever-radiating, self-effulgent, compassionate Mother with a mortal fate, feature, form and name, nature and norm. She is the genesis and the goal. She manifested and unmanifested at Her Will. She assimilated and exhibited the true 'Gita'. She showed to the erring and doubting human mind how to revel in and resign itself to the Divine Will

and also taught ideal human conduct in accordance with Śāstras from marriage to spiritual thralldom. She revealed the efficacy of austerities and left a legacy of love. Her Name is a lilting lullaby and a sweet soothing song that befits every lip. Recitation of Her Name can transform dross into gold, the gross into the glorious, evil into good, a sinner into a saint. She may have become invisible to the human eye but she is visible to the human mind through love, compassion, charity, character, faith and fortitude.

The embodied Ma was compassion incarnate. Her selfless love and concern for Her devotees can never be described in words.

Though I have been extremely unfortunate in not having had a physical darśana of Ma which would definitely have absolved me of many a voice and set me on the road to spiritual recovery, yet She was kind enough to compensate me even for my casual recitation or chanting of Her Holy Name.

Once I developed some very serious throat trouble which made me morose and gloomy. Very graciously Ma appeared to me in a dream vision in which She stood on a rope. Beckoning me to Her, She pressed open my mouth, blew a breath or two into it and consoled me by the assurance that I would be all right. I woke up and verily, from the very next day I was considerably relieved of the throat infection, literally without any medicine.

How I became attracted to Ma while being an avowed devotee of Sai Baba is again an instance of

secular sainthood and Godhood without sectarianism. My mental association with Ma came through Raja Sahib C. S. Jaswal, the Ex-Ruler of Amb state, who has actually been spiritually born and brought up in the eternally blissful lap of Ma. Incidentally my posting at Amb proved spiritually faithful by way of getting the blessed company of an exalted Saint Swayam Sidha Swami Ram Saran Dass Ji of a nearby Ram Mandir and the companionship of the spiritually elevated soul, the Raja Sahib. We were mutually drawn to each other and introduced to the serene splendour and wealth of wonders of Sri Ma and Sai Baba simultaneously and also were blessed by God with an understanding to harmonise the various ways and spiritual disciplines. As a result of Ma's Grace and Baba's blessings and the inalienable nature of these two Incarnations, we have a small spiritual fraternity in which almost all except myself had the good fortune or merit of a physical *darśana* of Ma. But this deprivation of Her *darśana* and the living and lasting impression of Her dream vision has endowed me with an eternal hope of Her never ceasing and ever guiding and guarding those who sincerely seek anchorage in Her name by clinging to the Mother like a child. Her physical repose is a repast for memory and Her absence an enticement for a spiritual seeking and an urge for yearning for the Divine. How can death kill the deathless? She discarded the vesture to don a veil. She lives lest all should cease.

“Ma has gone, so people say,
From the weary world away
Into the radiant realm of love,
Ever-effulgent, glorious, gay.
Ma is Life, Knowledge and Bliss
A certain cure to all amiss,
Worldly woes and human ills—
May the ailing remember this.
Blessed Mother, do not play
Hide and seek with us, I pray,
We are lonely and love-lorn
Thou art our sole belay.
May Thy love forever stay.
In the heart of L.R. Jay.

“As one gets the fragrance of a flower by handling it, or as one gets the smell of sandalwood by rubbing it against a stone, in the same way one gets spiritual awakening by constantly thinking of God.”

Holy Mother Sardamani Devi
(the Divine consort of
Sri Ramakrishna Deva)

The Beatific Mother No More

A. B. Gupta.

On the martyrdom of Gandhiji, the Father of the Nation, Nehru said in anguish : "the light has gone out of the world"! The same can be said about the recent demise of the great lady 'Anandamayi Ma'. She was unlettered,—the same as saint Ramakrishna, but the purest gems of wisdom flowed from Her tongue, as easily as water flows from the Ganga.

This writer has had the opportunity of meeting Her for a brief, few minutes, at Dhanbad ; and he is not ashamed to admit that though he is an agnostic, he was entirely electrified, and energised in a way that cannot be expressed in words. He was introduced by a common friend, who is a disciple of Ma Anandamayi. He kept a safe distance, and saluted Her in the Indian conventional way, by folding his hands. There were others, who were eager to touch Her and prostrate themselves before Her, though this was not permitted. He did nothing of the kind. The Mother beckoned to him. She blessed him, unasked and unsolicited !

Greater men and women than this poor scribe, who met Her on that day for a few fleeting moments, were keen to meet Her and solicit Her blessings. A man of the stature of Dr. Triguna Sen used to be constantly at Her feet. The Prime Minister's mother, Kamala Nehru, is reported to

have been initiated by Her, and since then, the Prime Minister and all the members of her family are devotees. In fact, as the reports go, it was the Prime Minister herself, who first put the shovel of earth into the special *samādhi* (a Hindu decified saint would be interred, and not created).

A bewitchingly beautiful lady, She retained Her eternal beauty, radiating from the great spiritual powers She possessed, till the last. She suffered a lot physically. It is reported that She could take, and absorb the diseases from others, so that those who were diseased, could be cured.

She used to be frequently in trance, *samadhi*, as it is known in Hindu spiritualistic terms. When She breathed Her last, some people around thought that She was in *samadhi*, as She used to be so very often. Her death was self-willed. Probably, She did not like to see anymore what was going on in India, and abroad. Spirituality is the eternal source of energy which sustains the multitudinous people living in this sub-continent. Ma Anandamayi was spirituality personified. She was a born Yogi, of the type nobody else was. In the *bhandāra* or mass feeding, celebrated after Her demise, thousands of people were fed, many of them in the highest ranks of the Hindu spiritual world.

She was a great organiser, and also very pragmatic. Probably, this emanated from the livewire spirituality She personified. She could see things far ahead. It is a coincidence, a very happy coincidence, that a house was built at Dhanbad by one of Her most devoted disciples, a great

musician, who has earned her fame as a singer of devotional songs. That house may be converted into another ashram to carry on the mission the great lady lived for, and died for.

This is a homage, a personal homage from a confirmed agnostic, who is not Her disciple. There are a number of Her disciples in this coalbelt, who would continue to be guided by Her teachings, and Her way of life. We only wish that they may behave, in their personal and public stances, in the way She asked them to. The pity is, however, that this may not be so. Reciting mantras and singing songs in praise of Ma Anandamayi in their places of worship, and doing just the opposite of what She asked all of us to do, is the kind of life we have been used to, particularly in contemporary India.

Anandamayi Ma has a large number of foreign disciples too. We do not know how they will react, now that Her mortal body is no longer in our midst. The Mother was married but had no family life, as we understand it. Her husband also embraced the life of a sādhu, but died many years back. The Mother's mother,—the 'grandmother', as she used to be called by her disciples, initiated many of Ma's disciples. The 'grandmother' also died a number of years ago, the beatific Mother plodded Her way alone,—*'akela chalo re'*.

I do not know whether the Mother named anybody to succeed Her. Probably, this was not done, and Her succession may, therefore, be carried on by a band of dedicated workers and

disciples,—people like Dr. Triguna Sen, who sat at Her lotus-feet, and lived according to the words heard from Her.

She was a very humble lady. She never displayed any extraordinary, magical powers, which other 'godmen' and 'godwomen' in this country do, probably to charm the people. And yet She was loved, and respected by millions all over the country and abroad.

The Mother believed in the '*varnashrama*',—the caste system, which used to be the basis of the old mores of life, inculcated in some of the scriptures of Hinduism,—*sanatana dharma*, the eternal religion. Probably, there are many, who would raise their eyebrows over this. We do not know why She did this. It is something beyond rationalisation. May be this was a way to teach Her disciples that in the practice of *dharma*, austerity and rigours were essential. Perhaps what She meant was that the disciplined way of living, ensures a better and fuller life. As an agnostic, this writer may not agree with some of Her teachings, particularly on the outdated *Varnashrama*, in the context of the present day atrocities perpetrated by people of the so-called higher castes on the lower ones.

That Anandamayī Ma was not in favour of politicising *dharma*, was evident from one incident. It is reported by an eye witness that a few months before Her death, some persons from Paunar, the ashrama of Acharya Vinoba Bhave, sought an audience with Her, and solicited Her to advise the Prime Minister to ban cow slaughter. Ma

Anandamayi did not respond. In Her own characteristic, humble way She said : “This *body* is unwilling to say anything about this matter”. That meant that She was against the tendency to mix up religion with politics.

Yes, “the light has gone out”,—the light eternal, which kept the spiritual values of eternal India alive, and burning. No more need be said.

Awareness !

“The mind is centred in the body and consciousness is centred in the mind, but awareness is free. The body has its urges and mind its pains and pleasures, but awareness is unattached and unshaken. It is lucid, silent, peaceful, alert and unafraid without desire and fear. Meditate on it as your true being and try to be it in your daily life and you shall realize it in its fulness.

“The mind is interested in what happens, while awareness is interested in the mind itself. The child is after the toy, but the mother watches the child, not the toy.”

—Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

The Heritage of the Hindus

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from *Ananda Varta*, January 1982)

Veda is said to be supreme knowledge. The numbering of the Vedas into four and the division of each Veda into its constituent parts are simplifications for the convenience of seekers after Truth. In our own time the available Vedic literature is not complete and parts of it are said to be "lost". Tradition, however, upholds the belief that the Vedas are eternal and can never be lost. Whatever is not manifest in the living memory of man remains unmanifest and hidden in the region of *Āditya* or the sun. The sun is the visible, ever-present sustainer of this creation and the Vedas abide with it till dissolution. They become manifest with creation and remain unmanifest during dissolution. A story is related in a Purāṇa¹ regarding the recovery of Veda from the *saurya-maṇḍala* (the region of the sun) by the seer Yājñavalkya : Guru Vaiśampāyana on one occasion was required to perform severe penance to expiate some unworthy act committed by him. He gathered his disciples together and asked them to undertake the penance on his behalf jointly so that the burden would not be too great on any one of them. Yājñavalkya, the favourite, stepped forward and said, 'There is no need for all of us to do penance. I alone will accomplish it.'

1. Viṣṇu-purāna, III, 5.

The Teacher was annoyed by the show of arrogance and took away the rights of discipleship from Yājñavalkya. Further, he was asked to 'return' all the teachings already imparted to him. Yājñavalkya, obediently belched out the entirety of the knowledge acquired by him at the ashram of the Guru. The latter, then, asked his other disciples to assume the bodies of *tittiri* birds and eat up the 'food' given up by Yājñavalkya. This knowledge given up by Yājñavalkya and saved by *tittiris* is known as the *Kṛṣṇa-yajurveda*. The great sage Yājñavalkya in his turn went away to do severe penance and perform austerities in order to regain the knowledge lost by him. By proper *tapasyā* he became *brahmavit* (knower of Brahman) by the grace of the great God Savitā (the Sun). This knowledge acquired by the sage is known to us as the *Śukla-yajurveda*.

The story accounts for the two divisions of the *Yajurveda* and also indicates that Brahman-knowledge is eternally present in the *Saurya-maṇḍala*. Fragmentations of this eternally abiding truth is with us because we are limited beings. Since truth is homogeneous and one, even the fragments are considered to be complete in themselves ; the Veda, therefore, as available to us is complete and Supreme Knowledge itself.

Mantra Samhitā

The first part of each Veda is called *samhitā*, which consists of hymns to gods. The worship of many gods is sometimes condemned as thoughtless

primitiveness or unphilosophical idol-worship. All primitive cultures have shown a course of development in historical times from worship of many gods to the awareness of one God, a progression from polytheism to monotheism. The Hindu tradition is peculiarly neither polytheistic nor monotheistic. Max Mueller coined a phrase 'henotheism' to fit the case of worship enjoined in the Vedas. Many gods are extolled but each hymn gives the highest praises to the god to which it is dedicated. How can many gods be supreme lords of creation? This supremacy of each god in turn is termed henotheism. The more natural interpretation with which we are familiar is that the Veda teaches all are manifestations of the same Reality. A hymn to a particular god is a hymn to that One Reality which remains hidden as the ground of all that is visible, felt or known to us. Some hymns do not refer to any gods at all, but addressed to the One Reality. The famous Nāsadiya Sūkta says :

There was neither the non-existent nor was the existent then ; there was neither the region nor the sky that is above. What did cover it? Where, in whose protection? Was there water, unfathomable, deep?

There was neither death, nor immortality. There was not even the distinct knowledge of night and day. That one breathed without wind by its will-power, other than that there was nothing beyond.

The darkness was concealed with darkness in the beginning. All This (world) was indistinguish-

able water. That, which existed, was covered with all-pervading void ; through the power of austerity that one was born.

Desire, that was the first seed of the mind, came upon that in the beginning. The sages, having searched in their heart with wisdom, found out the bond of existent in the non-existent.

Their (web of effects) was extended like the ray of the Sun ; was it across ? Or was it below ? Or was it above ? They were impregnative ; there were great forces ; food was below, and consumers (were) above.

Who knows truly ? Who shall here proclaim whence it is born ? Whence its vivid creation ? Gods are later by the creation of this universe. Then who knows whence it has come into being ?

Whence this vivid creation has come into being ; either he held it or if he did not (then who held it ?). He who is the lord of this (creation) is in the highest heaven ; certainly he knows it ; or if he does not know (then who knows ?).—Rigveda X. 129-1-7.¹

The hymn states that the gods are coterminous with creation ; they are to be worshipped as the first manifestations of the Divine. The Vedic culture is embedded in mythology. It does not seek to emerge into an air of pure rationality because mythology itself is considered to be a dimension of truth. Thus, in the Vedas the wor-

1, Translation by N. K. S. Telang and B. B. Chaubey ; *The New Vedic Selections* (Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1981), pp. 477-491.

ship of many gods forms the framework for the meditation on the one Reality.

The Brāhmanas

Mantras are used as recitations on the occasion of sacrifices. The second section called *brāhmaṇas* are manuals giving guidelines regarding the performance of *yajñas*. The *yajña* (sacrifice) lies at the heart of the Vedic tradition. It is a unique mode of relating to that one overarching and underlying unity which transcends all multiplicity. The sacrifice is a ritualistic re-enactment of the beginning of things ; a celebration of God's creation of man ; a commemoration of the immanence in the world of that which is transcendent. It is a function celebrating the descent of Divine grace which sustains all creatures. By the mode of oblations consigned to the sacred fires, singing of hymns of adoration etc., man establishes commerce with the gods, who are our elders in the hierarchy of the sportive-creation (*ṣṛṣṭi-līlā*) of God.

In our mundane world, we see clearly that the commerce of give and take upholds the entirety of human relationships. A family, a community, a nation or even the one world in which we live cannot survive without the reciprocity of self-restraint on the part of one and acceptance on the part of another. He who denies himself in one respect is fulfilled from another quarter. Duties and rights, privileges and obligations are so dovetailed that one loses meaning without the other. This universal law is upheld in the ritual of sacrifice. The

rising flames of the fire symbolise the mingling of the two dimensions of reverential worship on the one hand, and benedictory granting of boons on the other. All aspects of human life are permeated by the thought that in anything and in everything one must invoke the presence of the Divine. From the birth of a child to the death of an aged one, all are events, strung like pearls on the same thread of the universal rhythm of life and death. The multifaceted religious atmosphere which is so characteristic of our country, derives its strength and sustenance from this tradition of sacrifices. The region of gods by this mode of worship is always near at hand for the man living a life of striving in the world.

The Aranyakas

A good life of enjoyment in the world is commendable for a righteous and just society. The Vedic tradition gives due importance to the ideals of social justice and individual happiness and freedom in the world. Let him then seek to establish himself in that ultimate knowledge which will leave nothing else to be desired and so will be a state of total freedom and of bliss supreme.

After a useful life in the world a seeker of truth (or a couple together) could repair to forest hermitages where he (or they) would meditate on such questions and hold discourses with other *jijñāsus* (seekers of knowledge). This could be a life of retirement, spent in studying and teaching. These forest schools were both for those who were on

the threshold of entering society and those who having discharged their debts to a particular society were seeking to engage in a greater task for the benefit of the whole of mankind.

In order to get a glimpse of the society of Vedic times, we may cite from the following sermon spoken to the pupils on the eve of their departure from a forest hermitage. The pupils have finished their education and are about to enter society as responsible householders. The very first injunction emphasised by the Teachers is that truth is to be spoken and practiced, no deviation from truth must be allowed ; righteousness must be cultivated, the pupil must discharge his obligations to his Teacher (before entering the world) and also to his family by getting married. Carelessness in anything is not permissible ; without being cruel to others, he must observe the right of self-protection ; he must discharge all duties of the householder, be specifically respectful toward his mother, his father and his teacher ; the guest is to be honoured, all actions which are praiseworthy are to be resorted to but not the other kind...

The Teacher then propounds a remarkable criterion for ethical judgements : he says, 'When in doubt, about yourself, see how good men of the highest integrity of character the highly respected brahmins "who are not cruel", behave, and take your cue from them.' Even for "accused people" the same rule holds good. The injunction is not to mete out justice to wrong-doers but again the criterion is, to be guided by the judgement

of those who are well versed in such matters and who are good and righteous and not cruel, and are desirous of acquiring merit for their actions (deliberations in this case). Morality here is squarely based upon precept and conscious emulation of the goodness in other worthy leaders of society, rather than one's own evaluation of a situation. In this context we must keep in mind the fact that brahmins were privileged, not because they had power or wealth but because they had moral, intellectual and spiritual excellence, and so were worthy of emulation. A combination of moral excellence together with wealth and power is a rare phenomenon, given due recognition as in the character of Janaka, etc., but ordinarily learning, power, wealth and constructive work were divided up for brahmins, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras.¹ A mingling of these privileges makes for disorder in society, but we may see that in Vedic times, brahmins were poor scholars engaged in the pursuit of knowledge only and in imparting it to deserving pupils.

The Upanisads

The Upaniṣads contain the highest teaching for man, viz, the unity of *ātman* and Brahman. This statement is called a *muhāvākya* and in general four such utterances are cited from the four Vedas as the quintessence of their teachings, they are :

1. No attempt is being made here to discuss the much-vexed question of the caste system. It will be taken up for elucidation in a later essay.

1. *ayamātmā brahma* (Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad, 2)
2. *prajñānam brahma* (Aitereyopaniṣad, 5.3)
3. *tattvamasi* (Chhāndogyopaniṣad, 6.9.4)
4. *aham brahmāsmi* (Bṛhadāraṇyaka, 1-4.10)

“In the Upaniṣads, philosophy arises as a question and lives as a dialogue...” writes one author, “there is no inquiry if there is no question. A dialogue arises not because a question is asked and answered, but because a question is questioned... The Upaniṣads are a demonstration of the fact that man can bring about a revolution in his nature through dialogue. The Upaniṣads are, therefore, dialogues of the civilization of man.”¹

The Upaniṣad is for the samnyāsī or the ascetic who has renounced the world. Renunciation as a concept is easily understood in India, because we have lived and breathed the tradition of discrimination between that which is pleasing (*preyas*) and that which is to be preferred (*śreyas*) as an ultimate goal of human life. Renunciation does not mean a physical gesture of disgust with the world. Such an attitude actually would be a bar to renunciation. Renunciation is that state of the mind which is of an all-consuming yearning for supreme Knowledge. It cannot be foretold when one may be inspired by this *jijñāsā*, and at what age. The Upaniṣads, therefore, relate the intellectual quests of kings, sages, women (ascetics as well as housewives), men of low birth and also the very young.

1. N. A. Nikam : Ten Principal Upanishads (Bombay, 1974), pp. 1—5.

The teaching of the unity of the self and Brahman is imparted in many ways. In every case the disciple is required to 'see' for himself the truth being discoursed upon, by a process of meditative austerity (*tapasyā*). On the realization of this truth, the disciple is joyous and in turn becomes a *btahmavit*.

We see, therefore, that this teaching is highly selective and yet completely universal in that anyone may become a *jijñāsu*, and thus qualify himself as a suitable disciple for the lesson in *brahma-vidyā*.

It may be asked, why a desire to know, coupled with the teachings already available in the Upaniṣads, should not suffice for Self-realization. This brings us to the fact of the indispensability of the Teacher in the tradition. The knower of Brahman alone may enkindle the light of Self-knowledge. A description of a sparkling bright lamp may be very pleasing but it cannot ignite the fire which is required for lighting other lamps.

There is another aspect to this necessity for the Teacher. A man who is in ignorance does not know that he is labouring under a misapprehension. To him error is truth. It is an outsider, who alone can point out the error to him. The nature of this error and enlightenment is related in the following story used very often in philosophical writings as *daśamo'sīti* (you are the tenth man) :

Ten men are obliged to swim across a river at night. Arriving at the other shore they want to make sure that none is lost. The man who takes a tally omits to include himself and there is great

anguish and sorrow at this 'loss'. A compassionate passerby (although he knows there is no cause for alarm) takes pity on his predicament. He taps the man on the shoulder and says, 'you are the tenth man.' There is great rejoicing at this 'recovery'.

The Upaniṣadic knowledge teaches that the self is Brahman and of the nature of Bliss Supreme ;¹ *ātmā* is the immortal Brahman ;² Brahman is Reality, Knowledge and Infinity,³ etc. etc. The human being living in the world is in a state of forgetfulness of his real nature. The gracious teacher helps him to become aware of his state of ignorance. Nothing else needs to be done. Once doubt about what is apparently real but in reality unreal is enkindled, the disciple is set on the road to *jijñāsā* regarding the quest for self-knowledge. This turning around from an outward vision to an inner vision is called renunciation.

The Importance of Continuity in a Tradition

The available Vedic literature has been preserved for succeeding generations by special modes of memorising and transmission to qualified disciples. Vedic scholars refer to the following verse to enumerate the eight artificial modes of arranging the *mantras* in mnemonic lines :

*jaṭā mālā śikhā rekhā dhvajo daṇḍo ratho ghaṇaḥ,
aṣṭau vikṛtayaḥ proktāḥ kramapūrvā maharṣibhiḥ.*⁴

1. Taittirīyopaniṣad, III. 6-1
2. Chhāndogyapaniṣad, 8-14-1
3. Taittirīyopaniṣad, II. 1-1
4. Together with these 8 artificial, there are 3 natural modes in which *mantras* can be stated and memorised. This

The methodology of this process of memorising in order to preserve the unity of the entire body of literature, is itself exact science with its ramifications of grammatical rules and specified rhythms regarding pronounciations. For this reason, when the Vedas come to be written and transliterated into other languages, a profound unity was seen to uphold the Texts recited from memory by scholars belonging to different parts of India. This remarkable continuity, preserved so painstakingly and faithfully by generations of Vedic scholars is for the Hindu a fact of metaphysical importance, because the Veda is sometimes defined as :

Sampradāyavicchede sati asmaryamāṇakarṭṛkatvam.

This definition may be rendered freely as : the Vedic heritage is a continuing unbroken tradition of self-authenticating literature. The originator of Veda is not subject to proofs because Veda itself is the only source of indicating the vibrant presence of the ultimate Reality. The *mantras* therefore are not composed by the seers, but they are 'seen' by them and transmitted as joyous tidings to their disciples. The Vedas are eternally present, but they are 'recovered' in time by seers for the good of mankind.

ensures that no sequence is broken or extraneous matter interpolated into the Texts. The Vedic Texts were made available to the English speaking world for the first time at Oxford, England during the year 1849.

They were edited by Max Mueller. Since then other editions in German and French have been published. For the Indian readers the following edition with translation into Hindi may be recommended : Sripad Damodar Satvalekar, *Rigveda kā subodhabhāṣya*. (Svādhyā Maṇḍala, Paradi, 1967).

A point may be raised here regarding the relationship of passing times with what is stated to be eternally existing. This question was raised in a different context earlier.¹ It is elucidated more fully here because the relevancy of time is made important for us in the present century, when we are automatically imbibing many of the ideas of western culture. Traditions which do not believe in rebirth, have a different way of evaluating the goals of human life. Time, for them has a reality and quality of irrevocability which is unfamiliar to Indian ways of thinking. Belief in time as a reality also influences man's thinking regarding his role in the world. Man becomes a historical being, which means that he is in essence subject to the changes which time may bring and his authenticity lies in relating meaningfully to the transformations taking place ceaselessly.

The belief in cyclic orders in time on the other hand, imparts to it a relativity which is peculiar to the Indian traditions. According to this way of thinking, creation and dissolution are the outflow and inflow of God's breath, as it were. Time and space are both created along with the world of creatures but they are not in themselves more real than man himself.

This should not be taken to mean, however, that the changes in time are irrelevant or not of supreme moment to us as well. Time and life in the world are simultaneously true. As long as we live and strive in this world, all time-bound

1. *Ānanda Vārtā*, vol. XXIX, No. 1, p. 15.

values are inescapably real. The Vedic tradition does not oppose the world. In fact the Vedas themselves contain mantras to be uttered by men desirous of greater felicity, wealth and good-fortune in the world. Discrimination, rather than rejection lies at the heart of the Hindu way of life. The scriptures teach the way of discriminating against the sphere of the not-self. It is true that materiality is a dimension of the not-self hence to be discarded, but so are planes of mental feelings and intellectual ideations. The I-consciousness in man belongs with the awareness of the world in which he finds himself. Both have the same status in the scale of reality as experienced by man. Such being the case, the only source of information regarding the possibility of transcending this 'I and the world' scale is the Veda. The Veda seeks to act as a constant reminder that man must seek for Self-knowledge.

There is no tension between the seeker of knowledge and the world here. The opposition is only between the Self and its ignorance regarding its own nature. Teachers of the Vedic wisdom feel called upon to reiterate again and again, through succeeding generations, the necessity for sublating the sphere of ignorance which threatens to engulf the self and keep it from knowing its true nature. The quest operates not within a polarity of the world and the individual but rather within that of *vividiṣā* (yearning for knowledge) and *ātmā-sākṣāt-kāra* (Self-realization). If there is no desire for knowledge, then the question of realization also

does not arise. The world is, in fact, indispensable in the sense that it instigates the desire for knowledge.

The question of the passage of time is also important, in the sense that the dialogues regarding *Brahma-vidyā* necessarily must relate to specific situations. The questions and the answers which constitute the supreme teaching will of course differ from age to age and even place to place but the content of the teaching as transmitted from Teacher to disciple, remains the same. The dynamism required for adjusting with the march of time falls within the structure of created time. Reflective analysis and appropriation of the teaching which indicates the presence of Brahman as Bliss supreme is required on the part of the disciple. The disciple is required in every case to hearken to, meditate on and realize for himself the Truth and thus although he may belong to one particular time and place, he is in a position to overcome all such limitations.

The question of continuity is necessarily related, therefore, to the mode of teaching envisaged in the Vedic literature. The definitive injunctions to be found in the Vedas pertain to life in the world and felicity after death. A good life on earth is necessary both for the attainment of heaven after death, as well as for an awakening toward *jijñāsā* (yearning for knowledge). Renunciation, then, forms the core of the Vedic tradition. Renunciation, to this way of thinking, is a dimension of knowledge, a power of discrimination between the

changing world-order and that which remains hidden and unchanging. The enquiry into the ground of our being does not follow naturally from man's given status in the world. Without the Texts there would be no indication of knowledge of anything other than that which is given in our experience of the world. The emphasis on continuity, therefore, does not seek a perpetuation of meaningless reiteration of aging principles. The tradition seeks to preserve the purity of the indicators towards a life of blessedness because man, says *Śruti*, is capable of attaining the highest knowledge.

—*To be continued*

“In Nama Japa, you are not taking God's name ; you are taking the name of your Atman, the name of the Self who is Rama, Atma-Rama.”

—**Swami Ramdas**

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi in Mahāsamādhi

(As felt in Calcutta)

R. K. Bānerjee

Seen in retrospective, it would now appear that most of Ma's devotees in Calcutta as well as elsewhere, were lulled into a sense of security during August which is always a busy month with *Jhulan*, *Janmastami* and *Rādhāstami* festivals regularly celebrated in various households, Ashrams and temples. It is also a month in which Bhaiji (Aug. 18th, 1937), Didima (Aug. 8th, 1970) have passed away.

Ma had given certain warnings of the coming catastrophe, to which we, in our fond belief of Her invincibility had paid no heed.

When She was unable to leave Her room for the 1982 Birthday celebrations at Kankhal, people gave vent to their disappointment and frustration, but Ma issued the dire warning ; "In future you will have to be content to do pūjā in front of a picture !" We had ignored the terrible prophecy.

When Sri Ma's only brother took his newly-wedded twin-sons and daughters-in-law for Ma's blessing while She was bed-ridden in the Kishenpur Ashram, Ma whispered : "You must continue to live !" Now only we understand the significance of these ominous words.

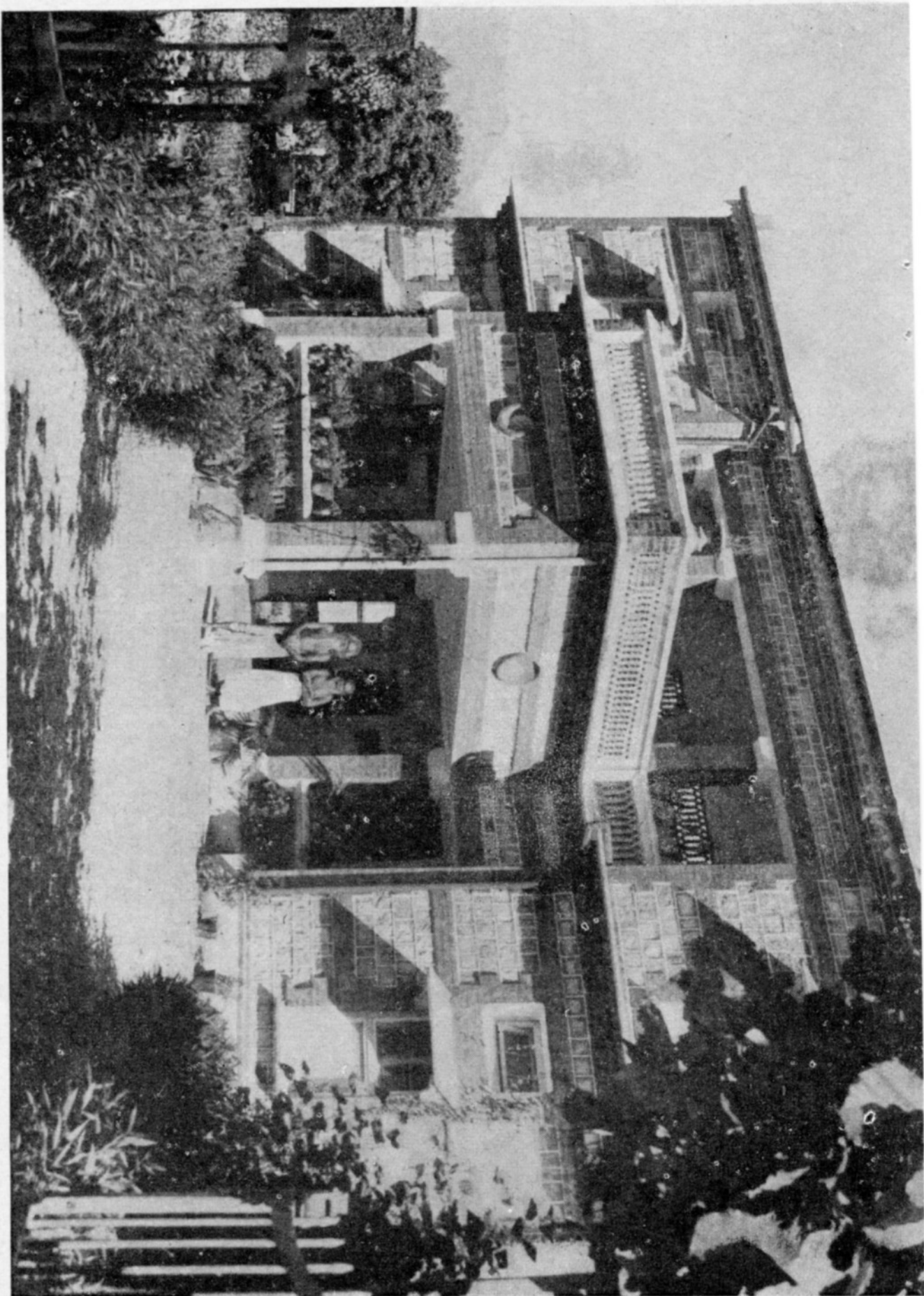
Reports of Her ill-health brought about by Her refusal or inability to partake of solid or even liquid nourishment for months, kept on reaching Calcutta, but everybody hoped and prayed that Ma would gradually recover, so as to enable Her devotees to have Her *darśana* in the ordinary course of events during the coming Durga Puja in October or Samyam Vrata in November.

So whenever a gathering of devotees took place, we hopefully recited the *Hanuman Chālisa* and increased our japa of “*Om Mā*”, each according to his or her capacity.

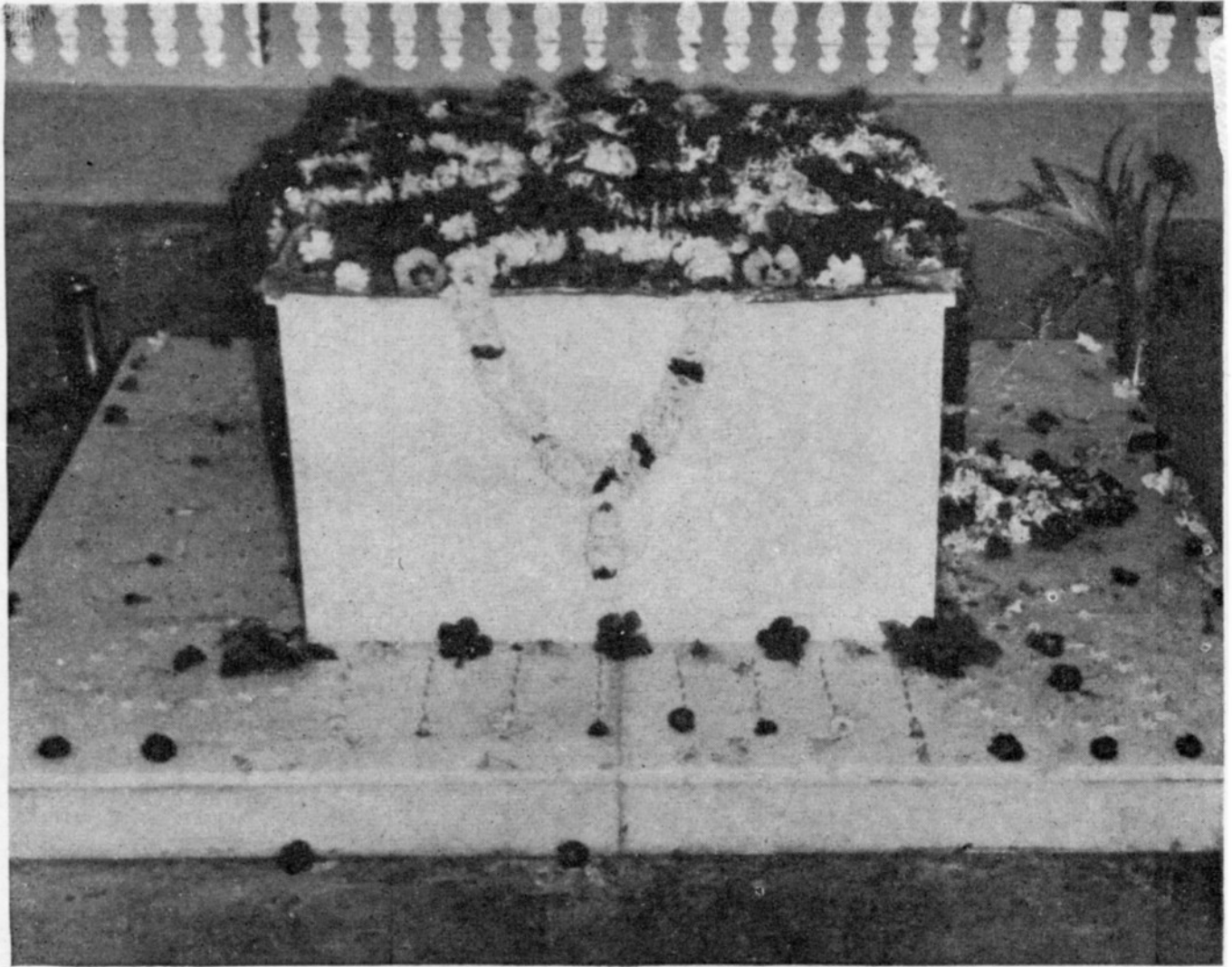
In due course *Janmastami* and *Nandotsava* festivals were observed as usual in the households of Ma’s devotees in Calcutta, and at Agarpara.

Even on August 26th, several devotees assembled to celebrate *Rādhāstami* all day in a household at Ballygunge, and many of them actually felt Ma’s presence during the joyous festivities, with no inkling what was to follow.

At 11 p.m. on the 27th, the all-world Radio news first broadcast the tragic news of Ma’s *Mahāsamādhi* which was heard by a devotee in Jatindas Road, who at once rushed to Km. Chhabi Banerjee’s residence nearby. In pouring rain these faithful, dedicated disciples went to Jodhpur Park and together with the inmates managed to board the early morning flight to Delhi. Later in the day others left by hopping flights and finally about 60-70 devotees took the evening plane. A trunk call had meanwhile been received in Calcutta at about midnight.



MA Anandamayee Ashram at Kishenpur, Dehradun where Sri Sri MA left HER Celestial body on 27. 8. 82.



Maha Samadhi of MA at Kankhal Ashram (Hardwar)



Those who had flown early morning were able to reach Kankhal by road from Delhi in time to see Ma's body arrive in state at about 2 p.m. from Dehradun by road. These eye-witnesses, on returning to Calcutta after attending Ma's Mahāsamādhi on the 29th were the first to give grief-stricken accounts of what took place on the 27th, 28th and 29th.

Meanwhile, the morning papers on the 28th confirmed the news in large headlines, though even before 6 a.m. phones were buzzing between devotees' houses to pass on the grievous tidings.

I left for Agarpara Ashram at about 9 a.m. to find that bewildered devotees were flocking from all sides. By 11 a.m. 400-500 people had assembled, seeking information and comfort. A satsang was held in the *Nat Mandir*, in front of Ma's temple. Anilda Ganguli and others related their personal experiences of Ma. Bhagavad Gita and Chandi were recited and Ma's name and Mahāmantra were sung in a hushed reverent atmosphere.

At 1 p.m. "Brahma khichuri" (rice and vegetables boiled together) in limited quantities, as prescribed during Samyam, was served to all assembled. The minimum period of mourning was to be 3 days and the maximum 16 days upto Ma's *Sorash Pūjā* on September 13th. This date became known only later.

Devotees in South Calcutta decided to spend the whole of Sunday 29th in uninterrupted remembrance of Ma. A satsang was organized at Ballygunge Place from 10 a.m. to midday. Another

satsang was held at Matri Mandir in Jodhpur Park from 1-30—2-45 p.m. and Birendra Banerjee personally organized *Mauna Dhyāna* (silent meditation) between 1-45 and 2-15 p.m. when it was assumed that Ma's Samādhi would take place. Later we gathered at Jatin Das Road from 3—6 p.m. There the inmates had started a daily satsang which was faithfully continued between 3 and 6 p.m. upto Sept. 12th. Many wonderful experiences with Ma were related there by various devotees. Ma's songs were sung with deep emotion and reverence and portions from the Bhagavad Gita, the Vedas etc. were recited.

Meanwhile, All India Radio and Calcutta and Delhi T. V. reported on Ma briefly but vividly on 29th and 30th. The "Jugantar" and "Ananda Bazar Patrika" brought out special articles and photos, and the "Jugantar" continued in this vein up to 8th September, culminating with an article from the proprietor himself, a devout admirer of Ma. A senior office holder in Thakur Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnath's organization, Sri Gopal Mitra, published a full size picture of Ma with religious quotations on successive days in the "Ananda Bazar Patrika" and "Statesman", thereby reaching the furthest corners of India.

At the Agarpara Ashram *Nāma* and *japa* were continued throughout and an elaborate programme was drawn up for Ma's *Sorash Pūjā* and *bhandāra* on the 13th. Swami Chinmayananda, the head of the Ashram, had previously started a daily ritual recitation of the *Chāṇḍī* with *homa* (fire sacrifice)

for Ma's health. It was concluded on the 13th September. The priest in charge was a direct relation of Dadamashai, Ma's father.

The first *Mauna Milana* (weekly meeting of devotees) after Ma's *Mahāsamādhi* took place at Jodhpur Park, when the Mātri Mandir was packed from the bottom of the staircase right up to Ma's picture at the end of the hall. Here a first hand account was given of events in Dehradun and Kankhal upto Aug. 29th. On September 3rd, *akhanda japa* was performed at Ballygunge Place between 5-30 a.m. and 5-30 p.m., concluding with kirtan of Ma's name. Thereafter some devotees who had by then returned from attending Ma's *Samādhi*, related their experiences of the 28th and 29th with much shedding of tears. Later Sm. Arundhati Roy Choudhuri spoke from the Upanishads on "Death" with special reference to Ma. A wonderful letter of Didi's eldest brother, Birendra Mukherji, as published in Ananda Varta, October, 1970, was read out, clearly reflecting in what light this *sādhaka* beheld Ma, which was very appropriate to the occasion.

In the meantime news was received of a radio-telephone contact having been established with four of Ma's devoted monastic sons, who had with Her permission and blessings gone on pilgrimage to Mansarovar and Kailash on Aug. 17th from Delhi. They were trying to return by Sept. 13th, but actually reached Kankhal on the 14th.

On 8th and 9th September, *Adhivāsa kirtan* and *Nāma Yajña* were held at Mātri Mandir, Jodhpur

Park in the midst of a very solemn gathering with Birenda invoking the name of Ma in place of *Mahaprabhu* (Sri Chaitanya Deva) in the appropriate passages of the immortal songs handed down to Vaiṣṇava Bengal from 500 years ago. This function was a fitting monument to Ma's memory by devotees who know in what high esteem Ma held these *Nāma Yajñas*.

Birenda's father had been the leader of the original group of devotees in Simla and Delhi who always invoked Ma's presence for similar *Nāma Yajñas* from 1932 onwards. Thus the Calcutta *Nama Yajña* was a small part of the effort to carry out Ma's wishes, which will continue to guide our lives even in the spheres where we have failed Her during Her *līlā* on earth.

And now we have to mention the astounding reports of the passing away of some of Ma's devotees, coinciding with Her own exit from Her earthly body. Sm. Tarulata Chatterji, a devout and aged disciple from Delhi and Simla, who having become a widow, settled in her own house in Calcutta, had extracted a promise from Ma (like Thakur Haridas from Mahaprabhu) that she would not live to hear of Ma's demise. So Tarulata Devi sank into merciful unconsciousness under oxygen a few days prior to Aug. 27th. But at about 8 p.m. on the 27th, she suddenly woke up and murmured : "Put on the light and read the Gita." Soon she sank back into oblivion and finally breathed her last at 7 a.m. on Aug. 29th, so that the body of this ardent disciple was being cremated

at the Keoratolla Mahasamsan while Ma's body was lowered into Her *samādhi* at Kankhal !

Similarly the late Sri Gopal Svarup Pathak, Ex-Vice President of India, (two daughters of whom are Brahmacharinis in Ma's Ashram) who was living the life of a Vānaprastha in New Delhi, passed away on Aug. 31st. His body was brought to Kankhal that very day and cremated under the auspices of *Nirvāni Akhāra* (that had been chiefly instrumental in carrying out the last rites for Ma) in the *ghāts* adjoining Daksheshwar Śiva Temple near Ma's Ashram.

The husband of Labanyadi of Jadavpur, an old devotee of Ma from Dacca, passed away about the same time as Ma. Labanyadi had pre-deceased him by some years.

Finally, the mother of Sm. Swati Das, a devoted disciple who never missed any of Ma's functions for the past several years, passed away at noon on Aug. 27th, at Dhakuria, Calcutta.

Ma's *Sorash Bhandara* was duly celebrated at the Agarpara Ashram on Sept. 13th. From the beginning funds started arriving in great abundance, we were merely silent and grateful on lookers of Ma's amazing *līlā*, showering Her grace on us even after becoming invisible to our eyes. On the 6th an aged devotee visited my house and placed a cheque of Rs. 10,000/- in my hands. Oh Ma, how wonderfully you work from your eternal sphere to make our tasks easy, if only we are guided by a spirit of selfless service to you ! I feel certain the Ashram authorities at Kankhal en-

countered similar spontaneous generosity, as there Ma's *bhandāras* continued until Sept. 23rd.

At Agarpara, functions on the 13th commenced at 5-30 a.m. with Usha kirtan and *japa*, followed concluding by the *Chandi pātha* in Ma's room on the floor above *Nāt Mandir*. Ma's *Sorashupachār Pūjā* included the reading of the whole Gita and *Chandi*. Chanting from the Vedas was conducted in a sonorous voice by Sri Harinarayan Sastri of the Sanskrit College. *Kumāri* and *Batuk pūjā* also formed an integral part. Samnyāsis, Dandi Swamis and a few Brahmins were worshipped and fed, as well as *Daridranarayanās* (Narayana in the guise of the poor) from among the really destitute. Sri Bala Brahmachari from Adyapith read out and explained selected portions of the Bhāgavata between 10 and 11 a.m. and Dinesh Sastri, who had been closely associated with Ma from the Shahbagh days, read from the Katha Upanishad with a commentary in Bengali, followed by a recapitulation of his copious memories connected with Ma.

Finally, the vast crowd assembled (well over 2500) were fed in batches. It is possible that all present could not be properly looked after in the crush. The management express their regrets for inconvenience caused to the more senior members, while attempting to deal with large numbers of local youngsters.

This article cannot be completed without recording a wonderfully inspiring letter from Swami Paramananda, dated September 8th, which translates as follows :

“Ma’s body is no more. Ma is existent everywhere. Ma has often repeated : “*I have no place even to move an inch or turn over.*” This means She is omnipresent. Many of us have not acted according to Her wishes. Even now it is not too late to follow scrupulously whatever She has instructed different individuals to do ; this is the only way to peace.

“Therefore, it is now the duty of us all to follow the path of being equally kindly disposed towards all around us without exception, forgetting our own petty jealousies and ill-temperers just as Ma showed absolute equality towards one and all. This is the only hope we have of finding lasting peace.”

Let us compare these priceless words with Bhaiji’s 2nd edict, in which he exhorts us to follow as closely as we can, any of Ma’s attributes, such as *Samachittata*, equally kind disposition towards all.

By following such immortal advice we may hope to maintain our close links with Ma, and bask in the wave length being perpetually radiated by Her towards Her beloved children on earth from Her eternal abode.

Jai Guru, Jai Ma !

Samyam Saptaha Mahavrata At Sri Ma Anandamayi Ashram, Kankhal

November 23rd—30th 1982.

B. C. Bose

Samyam Saptāha Mahāvrata is the most important annual function of Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. To quote Dr. Alexander Lipski, Director Religious Studies, California State University : “The institution for which She (Ma) personally is responsible, is the annual *Samyam Vrata* (vow of restraint and self-control), started in 1952. She is well aware of the fact that modern men, even in India, are deeply enmeshed in worldly activities and rarely willing to live a life of total renunciation. Knowing that the world is too much with us, She wants the lay devotees to abandon worldly living for at least one week each year and to devote that time entirely to spiritual pursuits.”* This week-long exercise is enough to recharge the battery, so to say, to generate the motive force for *sādhana* (religious practice) among the devotees.

This was the thirty-third *Samyam Saptāha*, but the first after the withdrawal of Ma from the manifest world. It was, therefore, very significant. By the grace of Ma, it turned out to be so sublime that

* Page 30, “Life and Teaching of Shri Anandamayi Ma,” (Motilal Banarasi Dass).

people returned to their homes spiritually elevated and with greater hope for the future.

The devotees, whether lay or ascetic were probably wondering at the beginning how things would go this time without Ma's physical presence. But Ma, by Her infinite grace, dispelled all these doubts from the minds of everyone. Her presence was felt by one and all. This feeling was more intense when devotees thronged around Ma's *Samādhi* to do obeisance, watch the morning and evening *Pūjā* and *Āratī* (waving of incense, lights, flowers, consecrated, conchshell and finally fanning by the tail of a yak, in the prescribed manner to the accompaniment of devotional songs). Some people sat there for hours, in silent meditation.

At the inaugural session, on the 22nd evening, Brahmachari Nirmalanandaji set the pace for this spiritual practice, preceded, of course, by Pushpadi's heart melting song. Since the participants were mostly old timers, elaborate instructions were unnecessary. What he therefore stressed was the necessity of installing Ma in one's heart of hearts. He fervently prayed that the *jyoti* (light) emanating from the ten nails of Ma's lotus feet may continue to enlighten human beings for ever.

In the Satsang Hall, which was the venue of the function, Ma's life-size oil painting, tastefully decorated was placed on Her seat. Two other photographs were placed in such a way that devotees could see from any angle Ma's face, and beaming eyes. Apart from the feeling that the

whole atmosphere was surcharged with the presence of Ma, She, in fact, even guided the proceedings in more than one way. On the first day after the morning meditation and recital of holy scriptures, some devotees left the hall to attend the morning *Pūjā* and *Āratī* at the *Samādhi*. This meant, when Mahātmās started their discourses the congregation thinned. Ma, by means of “*Parāvāk*” (heavenly voice heard internally,) told an ascetic devotee with a clear voice that leaving the hall during the discourse by Mahātmās specially invited for the occasion was tantamount to showing disrespect to them. Swamiji changed the *Pūjā* timings at the *Samādhi* from the next day, so that it was over by 7.30 a. m., the starting time for the morning session.

Of really great importance and significance was the presence and participation in the *Samyam Vrata*, throughout the week of revered Swami Chidānandaji, President of the “Divine Life Society”. His entering the hall with folded hands immediately before the start of every single meditation, the humility with which he made obeisance to the Mahātmās on the dais and finally lay prostrate before Ma’s seat, was a glorious testimony of his great devotion to Ma. To him, obviously, the Divine Mother was manifest. In fact, every evening before he started his discourse, he would loudly say his prayers to Ma, seeking Her guidance and blessings to be of service to Her devotees purified by the practice of *Samyam*. It was as if he were conversing with Ma, as he had done during

previous *Samyam Saptahas*. His '*dhyānamurti*' (countenance in meditation) compensated to a large extent for the physical absence of Ma. It was this feeling that prompted the ashramite lady ascetics to have a photograph taken with him on the last day. He occupied his seat, with the back drop of Ma's coloured photograph, with another photo on his lap and the lady ascetics, lined up on either side, Dasuda, sitting at his feet. These lady ascetics, many of them products of the Kanyapeeth (the training centre for girls) who are emblems of pure devotion and flag bearers of the ideals of *Rishikanyās* (daughters of ancient seers), are sparks of divine light left by Ma to ignite spiritual life amongst thousands of girls all over the world.

This year at the inaugural function, brahmacharini Puspa, gifted with a heavenly voice, capable of melting the snows of the Himalayas, as it were, sang a different song, the burden of which is an ardent prayer of seeking refuge in Ma, who is eternal, beyond time and space, the totality of divine power, grace personified, an object of obeisance. '*Parātparām devamayīm namashyām*

Kānti Swarūpām Śaranam prapadhye.'

There was yet another new feature, this year. The songs sung by Gītāsri Chhabi Banerjee were actually Ma's own songs, and as such as great as Vedic hymns. Some of them came from Ma not long ago. Ma lovingly asked Chhabidi to render the tune. What happened between Ma and Chhabidi at Dehradun last year is best explained by quoting Swami Ashishānandaji. The

Master recognises the organ and the organ recognises the Master and divine music follows.” Chhabidi sang *bhajans* during *Pūjā* and *Āratī* also every morning and evening. Finally, she organised a *Nāmayajñā* from 30 Nov. evening to 1st Dec. night in the Satsang Hall, along with Birenda, the old well-known Kirtania and brother Pratibha Kundu.

It has been universally agreed that collective meditation and recital of Srimad Bhagwat Gita and Saptasāti Chandi, this year, were superb. The *grihi bhaktas*, (house holder devotees) as well as young and old ladies from America, France and Germany did not lag behind the saffron-clad ascetics in meditation. There was no discordant note in the recitation of Gita and Chandi which was led by Vidyavaridi Brahmacharini Gunita of the Kanyapeeth. Upanishad recital was solo by Brahmachari Swarupananda who acted also as the only announcer. The chanting of vedic invocatory mantras was performed as last year by the young pupils of Shree Anandamayee Vidyāpeeth. *Brahma Sangit* (song on the ultimate Reality) which marks the beginning of the day's proceedings was, of course, sung by Pushpadi.

Revered Swami Vidyanandaji of Kailash Ashram, Hrishikesh, (the premier institution for the study of Vedānta, where no less a person than Swami Vivekananda studied the subject), delivered the daily lecture on the Upanishad. He explained the Mandukya Upanishad. His exposition of the meaning of *Shantipātha* (invocatory portion) was superb. The Mandukya Upanishad is in a way

the quintessence of Vedānta. It was a happy combination that Mahāmandaleswar Brahmānandaji of Surat Giri Ashram spoke immediately after Swami Vidyanandaji Mahārāj. Taking the cue from the scholarly exposition of Vidyanandaji, he in his inimitable way explained in simple language the gross, subtle, and causal bodies and their interrelation with the states of waking, dreaming and deep slumber (*jāgrat*, *swapna*, and *sushupti*) and the final goal of '*turiyā*', which cannot be expressed, like the last sound of OM. OM is the manifesting word of the Supreme Self. The Mandukya Upanishad is a very short treatise but of high value to achieve *Moksha* (liberation).

According to tradition, the first hour of the afternoon Session was devoted to the study of Purāna, which actually means the exposition of Upanishadic philosophy through the medium of narratives. Though old still ever new, is what is meant by 'Purāna'. It is like old wine served in a new bottle, but the wine here is nectar of words (*kathāmrita*). It was unfortunate that Dr. Vishnu Dutta Rakesh of Gurukul Kangra University could not be present all through the week because of ill-health. However, he started off with Devi Purāna, and in two discourses opened up the long vista for deeper study of the significance of creation of the universe by the *Śakti* (energy) of the Supreme Self as well as the deliverance of the *jīva* (human soul) by getting rid of the snares of desire : from animality (*pashutva*) to divinity (*śivatva*), from duality to non-duality. Subsequent

discourses on Siva Purāna were given by Sri Amar Muniji of Ramathirta Ashram.

Another Mahatma, very popular in the *Samyam Saptāha*, Swami Swatantranandaji, mainly narrated his experience of his association with Ma over a long period with occassional interludes of Vedānta. Sri Swami Vishnu Ashramji, noted for his discourses on Srimad Bhāgavatam, spoke on the efficacy of the repetition of the name of Rāma who is the *Parama Brahman*. Swami Chidanandaji spoke on various aspects of *Samyam*. The modern tendency to discard the path of *sādhana*, which is arduous, and to seek some method for quick results, is not justified by the Śāstras.

These seven days were golden days, gathering treasures which cannot be compared to any worldly thing. If this exercise had no deep meaning and value, Ma would not have advocated it. Self-restrained and disciplined life is not to be confined just to a week. It is only a specimen. If not exactly on the same scale, we are to follow a similar pattern always. The writer craves the indulgence of many other Mahātmās like Mahāmandaleswar Niranjanāndaji, Swami Hansaprakashāndaji, Swami Ashishāndaji and others for not being able to give the gist of their valuable discourses for want of space. The sincere regard and devotion for Ma, of all these saints and their deep belief in the efficacy of *Samyam Vrata* were obvious and heart warming.

The last item of the daily programme always used to be *Mātri Satsang* (questions and answers

with Ma every evening at 9 P.M.). *Vratis* would look forward to listening to Ma. She had regaled them after the day-long austerity with Her radiant smile, Her subtle humour, and Her songs which everyone had joined in chorus.

This year the moment brought old memories. However, what was organised for this period was most appropriate. Veterans narrated their personal experience which threw new light on the multifaceted personality of Ma. The first to speak was Sri Virajānandaji, to whom not only we all, but posterity will be grateful for recording Ma's words. It is interesting to note that in the early days, whenever Ma found somebody taking notes, She stopped speaking; Swamiji had really a tough time to record the terse sentences of Ma often without a verb. Sri Vijayanandaji (originally a medical doctor in France) asserted that nothing can break the link with the Satguru.

That Ma is omnipresent and omniscient, Vijayānandaji realised at the time of Durga Pujā, from two coincidences which could not otherwise have occurred. Swami Swarūpānandaji, General Secretary of the Sangha, expressed how Ma taught him to serve others under stress and strain, and ever since service is his motto. Swami Chinmayānandaji, and Brahmachari Swarupananda also spoke feelingly on their association with Ma.

A most interesting and informative discourse was given by revered Jogesh Barahmchari of Calcutta who had come to Ma at the age of twenty when Ma was a timid housewife, nineteen

years old. He narrated an incident which has not been recorded anywhere to the best of my knowledge. The Commissioner of Dacca, a Senior British I.C.S. Officer came to see Ma, around 1920. He asked : "What is a mother to her son ?" Ma replied through Bhaiji as the interpreter : 'These people are hardly breast-fed by their mother. So they don't understand what a mother is. Ma asked, whether the father and the mother were within the commissioner's body, He answered, "Yes", Ma asked : Was there anybody else other than his parents in his body ? The reply was in the negative. Ma said : "If he understood his mother, then through her, he would have realised God". This conversation gives us so much food for thought.

On the last day, before the midnight meditation, Sri B. K. Shah, the President of the Ānandamayee Saṅgha narrated his life story permeated by the grace of Ma. On some days at the end of *Matri Satsang* there was Video recording of Ma's Kirtan and the ceremony of Ganga Ārati was also shown, which was appreciated by the *Vratīs*.

Prayer to Ma always brings about beneficial results, relief of pain and suffering in any form. Such a supernatural thing happened this time in the Satsang hall, that no report of this *Mahāvratā* would be complete without mentioning it. An elderly devotee, from the Punjab, who had his left leg amputated while a student, comes with a crutch every year to attend this Vrata. It so happened

this time that while he was sitting on his *āsana* he found his right leg getting swollen and so heavy that he was not able to move, far less to get up. He surrendered to Ma and deeply prayed to be relieved of the malady. Within ten minutes he felt some sort of a jerk in his lower abdomen due to thumping by someone : The swollen leg gradually came back to its original size and he could move about as easily as before. Glory to Ma !

Glory to Ma who wrote with Her own hand fifty-two years ago, "*Oh Supreme Being, Lord of the Universe, I see you in the form of husband, wife, father, mother and offspring, and in all forms*". (this writing is now displayed in one of the rooms of Ma's residence at Kankhal).

Before concluding this short account of such a great event, I may quote a stanza from a poem on *Samyam* composed and recited in Sanskrit by Brahmacharini Acharya Gauri Banerjee of the Kanyapeeth.

*Sanyamasya Prachāroayam Gehe Gehe Vidhiyatām.
Gītapaniṣadām Vāṇī Jane Jane Prasāryatam.*

("Oh Mother, ensure spreading *Samyam* in every house and let the message of Gita and Upanishad reach every human being").

If this is the prayer of a young Brahmacharini of Kanyapeeth, let us hear the ardent prayer of Swami Chidānandaji. "Let the heart of each member of this spiritual family be full of divine love for Ma's lotus feet. Let the organisation associated with Ma's Divine name get strength and

inspiration from Ma for ever, let every limb of this organisation which is a divine spark, engulf the entire humanity in an undivided radiation of Divinity. Let the organisation be inspired with the spirit of 'forgive and forget', have respect and reverence for others and rise higher and higher by personal example, mutual love, understanding, friendliness and a spirit of service and tolerance.

Ma could not have found a better human agency than revered Swami Chidanandaji to give such a valedictory message to conclude this heavenly week.

Swami Chidanandaji made it a point to attend the midnight meditation on Nov. 30th, although he had to leave at 12-45 a.m. by car for Delhi en route to Madras.

Jai Ma !

"There is nothing REAL outside, everything REAL is within.

—Swami Brahmananda
(Rakhal Maharaj)

Glimpses of Sri Ma's Worldwide Ashram

"This body does not establish any Ashrams. Where śrama (toil, forced labour) is not, there is an Āśrama. Transcending the world and pervading the whole universe there is but one single Āśrama where there are lakes as well as oceans, where no distinction exists between one's homeland and foreign countries. In whatever way you may express it, so it is."

Sri Sri Ma

Mataji has ever been all pervasive. Yet while living and moving on the physical plane Her presence was specially concentrated in Her body. Since Ma has become unmanifest we have received letters from devotees in India as well as abroad, saying that Her presence is now felt more than ever before.

The following, quoted from letters from far and near may interest our readers.

Washington, Oct. '82.

"Ma's presence, help and comfort have been very near, more so than before (at least for me) and I feel She will always be present to answer my internal call."

New Delhi, Oct. '82.

“I don't feel even for a moment that Ma has left. Her *kripa* (grace) is more intense now and mental association more intimate.”

Oklahoma, Oct. 82.

“We all knew that Ma would no longer be with us in Her well-known and well-loved physical form, some time in the future. But when it really happened, we find it hard to accept. The fact that we can no longer pranām at Her holy feet and have Her darshan is difficult to believe. Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma, the physical aspect of God, is no longer with us, living and moving among us, shedding the light of Her presence.

Perhaps now, even more than before, we should always remember that She is our Divine Mother, so She is ever with us, keeping Her watchful eyes on us, Her children, as always. She is but a prayer away. Only if we forget Ma, will we be separated from Her. So, may we be filled at all times with Her very presence, leading exemplary lives of Her teachings. Jai Ma !”

Calcutta, Oct. '82.

“Now Ma is with me constantly—more so than before 27.8.82.”

Canada, Oct. '82.

“I feel very, very close to Ma, and so happy about it. I would never let go of Her. Had another dream where She sat in the open air and

She looked so agile, full of energy, slim and young, and told me that death is nothing and then She smiled so radiantly for a long, long time, and I felt so happy in the dream and after. There is no change, She never left. She only left that poor old body.

France, Sept. '82.

“I don't know the date of Mataji's passing away, but recently and before I heard about it, I felt Sri Ma's love as I had never felt it before and for a whole day and night I was wrapped in that love. It has been a beautiful and unforgettable experience and an ultimate message from Her.

After the first moment of emotion and tears is over, one gets the certitude that Sri Ma is still here and guiding and protecting us all, and that the link we have with such a high spiritual Being will remain for ever.”

California, Sept. '82.

“I got the news at 3-15 in the morning on Saturday, the 28th, and right afterwards while looking at the sky, I saw several flashes of lightning coming from the pacific, and loud thunder claps—but no storm ever came. As though the earth herself were saluting a farewell to the mortal coil.”

Another devotee at a distance of 200 miles also saw flashes of lightning, and they were perceived in Oklahoma (1500 miles away) as well.

“On August 28th, from 6-30—10 p.m. a meeting was held in the house of Dr. Hemant Pathak, Los Angeles. There was special pūjā, the recitation of the entire Gita in Sanskrit and beautiful kirtan. 35 devotees were present. “It was a very moving affair. Ma was definitely there. The kirtan was inspired.”—“It was very beautiful and uplifting. The pūjā was a great comfort to us all.”

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The following report was sent to all devotees of California who were unable to be present in person :

Jai Ma !

“On Sunday, September 26, 1982, Mother’s devotees in the Los Angeles area sponsored a Bhandara (feast) in Mother’s honour.

“This was most beautifully arranged when Dr. Hemant Pathak spoke with Srimata Gayatri Devi of Ananda Ashram about our wish. She most graciously suggested incorporating our Bhandara with their Durga Puja festival.

“At 11-30 a.m. we all met with the Ananda Ashram devotees in their lovely temple. Sri Durga Devi’s picture was in the center of the shrine with Sri Ramakrishna and all Sacred Images of their ashram. Srimata Gayatri Devi had sweetly placed her own picture of our Mother within the Shrine for this special occasion.

“Explaining the Durgā Pūjā celebration of India, Srimata Gayatri Devi spoke of the various aspects of Divine Mother and Her great love for Her

children. She lovingly declared that Divine Mother had taken human birth in Anandamayi Ma.

Food, which was prepared for the Bhandara, was carried into the Shrine and offered to Divine Mother as Srimata Gayatri Devi supervised. She then placed a candle in a silver holder before Ma and sat within the Shrine by Mother's picture as we were all led in kirtan to "*dako-bolo-gao-japa-bhajo Ma.*"

A light rain was falling and the beautiful grounds of this ashram were a soft misty green. We walked from the Temple, about one block distance, to the large guest house where tables had been prepared for the feast. There were at least 150 people to be fed. Among those who came were people from Self-realization Fellowship, East-West Cultural Center and Hollywood Vedanta Center.

The meal was absolutely wonderful. There was so much food that everyone had all they could eat. The devotees and ashramites of Ananda Ashram had worked all morning preparing all pure vegetarian dishes cooked in the very best of Indian style. The love that went into the serving and the preparation permeated the atmosphere.

In memory of the many times that we had received yellow handkerchiefs when attending some special function at Mother's Ashram in India, we kept that custom here at Her Bhandara with yellow cotton handkerchiefs, printed in red with "OM MA" in Sanskrit over a lotus design. They were sprinkled with Ganga jal and offered to Mother, then distributed at the Bhandara. It caused a

nostalgic sweetness within us all to see those little yellow banners tied around the men's necks and tucked into ladies saries, saying "I belong to Ma !" It made us all feel so close to one another—so close to Her.

After the feast, as a few of us sat near Srimata Gayatri Devi, she told us of her family's love of our Mother. Coming from Dacca, they have known of Mother from the time She was very young. She was so sweet to all of us that we were reluctant to leave.".....

P. S. The following story showing Mother's compassion for Her devotees was told to us by Hemant the day after the Bhandara.

"Hemant's sister was feeling very sad because She was unable to come from Santa Barbara for Mother's Bhandara, so she went to the Santa Barbara Vedanta Center for their Durga Puja celebration.

"The Swami there did not know Hemant's sister or of her connection with Mother.

"To her great surprise, during the services, the Swamiji started telling the crowd about Ma Anandamayi. He told them that She was Sri Durga Devi incarnate and because of Her they would all have a feast that day.

"After the service, 100 people were fed."

Jai Ma.

* * *

A devotee from Brussels writes : "On Saturday, Oct. 23, I took part in a broadcast of the regional radio of Paris—3 hours (from 9 a.m. to midday)

exclusively devoted to Ma. About one hour was given to questions and answers ; several parts of the book : "L'enseignement de Ma Anandamayi" by Jean Herbert were read out and, with the help of a cassette given to me last year by Melite Maschmann, people were able to listen to Ma's voice, singing and speaking."

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In 'Mātri Līlā' we naturally always reported first about Ma's movements on the physical plane which were exclusively in India. This time, for a change, we have started by giving whatever news we received from abroad.

Now to India : Detailed reports about Calcutta and about *Samyam Mahavrata* in Kankhal as well as some details about Varanasi have been given in separate articles in this issue.

New Delhi :

Although Swami Swarupananda, who had gone on pilgrimage to Kailash was unable to return in time for Ma's special pūjā on September 13th, householder devotees came forward and organized a beautiful, dignified function on that day in the Kalkaji Ashram. Chanting of Vedic hymns preceded the solemn pūjā performed before Mataji's tastefully decorated photo. Twenty one sadhus were received with due ceremony, entertained to a feast and presented with cloth, fruits, sweets, etc. The hall was packed. Devotees by turns went up-stairs to meditate in Sri Ma's room. Various speakers elaborated on the multi-

faceted personality of Ma. Kirtan continued all day.

On Friday, Sept. 3rd (exactly a week after Ma took Mahāsamādhi), a prayer meeting was held at the residence of Sm. Sarama Mukherjee, who is noted for her devotion to Ma and her love for kirtan. For 6 hours the singing of *Mā Nāma* and *Mahāmantra* (Hare Kṛṣṇa, hare Rāma) was kept up, with an interlude of one hour when Sri B. C. Bose spoke on the significance of Sri Ma's withdrawal into the Unmanifest. The atmosphere of this gathering of mostly close devotees was overwhelming. Similar meetings will be held once every month.

The residents of Chittaranjan Park, New Delhi-19, desired to offer their reverence and homage to Ma. A public function was therefore organized on October 5th at the local Siva Mandir premises, inspired by Swami Keshavanandaji. About 500-600 people were present and prasād was distributed to all as well as to poor children.

Swami Keshavananda narrated his personal experience how Ma had been revealed to him, which he had kept a close secret for over 50 years. Sri Bisweswar Chatterji, President of Bhagavan Ramchandra Dev Association, spoke on his personal experience of Ma, who had given *darśana* to his wife in a dream, before leaving the physical world. Sri A. B. Roy, a disciple of Br. Narendra Nath gave a very erudite talk on Ma. There were other speeches and bhajans as well which charmed the audience.

Naimisharanya

The "Institute of Puranic and Vedic Research", which was started with Sri Ma's blessings several years ago is making fairly good progress. As per Sri Ma's *kheyāla*, serious research work is being done in the Purānas. Three research scholars have so far obtained Doctorate degrees from different universities. The Government of India has also been taking keen interest in the development of the Institute. Due to the kind efforts of the Governor of the U. P., Sir C. P. N. Singh, five lakhs of rupees were sanctioned in 1981-82 for urgent construction of hostels and staff quarters. Appeal is being made for substantial donations from philanthropic persons and institutions as well as grants from Government for research publications. It is well known to Ma's devotees that Ma had a special liking for Naimisharanya where all the Purānas are supposed to have been composed, hundreds of years ago.

Kankhal

Since Ma's *samādhi* is there, Kankhal has now become the main Ashram. Most of the girls who did Ma's personal service are now staying there. This year, upto September, 1983, all festivals are expected to be Celebrated there. It is also proposed to shift the Head Office of the Sangha from New Delhi to Kankhal.

Pūjā and ārati are performed regularly every morning and evening at Ma's *samādhi*. There is a constant stream of visitors who come to pay their

respect to Ma. Durga Puja was celebrated very beautifully from Oct. 23rd to 27th. Although the attendance was about half the number compared to last year. Quite a number of devotees had arrived from Calcutta, including Km. Chhabi who delighted every one by her beautiful songs.

Lakshmi Puja was celebrated on the full-moon evening and Kali Puja during Divali night.

About 300 devotees took part in the *Samyam Vrata* which was an intimate, inspiring function. Details have been given in a special article.

A Bhagavata Saptah was held from 16th to 24th December and Gita Jayanti 23rd to 26th December.

Sivaratri is proposed to be observed on March 13th.

Steps are being taken to build a beautiful and dignified Matri Mandir round the *samādhi*. Some prominent architects have already been asked to submit their designs for approval by the temple construction committee, set up recently. The foundation stone laying ceremony is proposed to be held in May, on *Akshaya Tritiya* day.

Sri Ma's birthday will also be celebrated in May in Kankhal. The exact dates will be announced later. The venue for the *Samyam Vrata* in 1983 has not yet been decided. It will be announced in May.

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Since the publication of the last issue of A. V., some entirely incorrect rumours about Sri Ma that have been circulated by various types of persons, have come to our knowledge. Firstly that Ma had

been suffering from cancer of the stomach for about one year. We wish to state emphatically that this is completely wrong. Sri Ma never suffered from any major disease. Of course, there had been, at times, symptoms of serious illnesses which vanished as suddenly as they had appeared. These were due either to Her *kheyāla* being thwarted or to Her taking on the diseases of others and working them out in Her own body within a few hours or days.

Dr. S. C. Seth, Medical Superintendent of one of the biggest hospitals in Bombay, Dr. K. N. Udupa, a renowned surgeon of all-India stature, and several other well-known Physicians and Vaidyas examined Ma's body at the request of devotees and categorically declared that no disease whatever could be diagnosed until the last day. We reported in the Oct. '82 issue that Sri Ma had said on July 1st to Sri Sankaracharya of Sringeri Math : "*This body has no illness at all. What is happening is due to the pull of the unmanifest.*" This is the truth. Whatever else may be said about Ma's health are just baseless rumours.

Further, in some journals it was printed that Ma is supposed to have said to Sri Thakur Sitaramdas Omkarnath some time ago that She would live for 108 or 125 years. We are happy to find that the categorical denial of this by the venerable saint himself during his life time has since been published in some journals.

We consider it our duty to declare that Sri Ma never at any time prophesied anything about Her

span of life in spite of various queries from different devotees.

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It is really amazing that some people have questioned why Sri Ma's body was given *sthal samādhi* (burial) instead of being cremated, since She was not a *saṁnyāsī*. Sri Ma was not a *saṁnyāsī* because She cannot be said to have been anything in particular, which would be a limitation. To enquiries about Her identity She would reply : "Whatever you think me to be." She never claimed any position for Herself and called Herself an unlettered little child. Yet, it is well-known that not only have any number of *saṁnyāsīs* bowed at Her feet with deep and sincere reverence and sought Her advice, some of the greatest religious authorities of the country such as various Sankaracharyas, Heads of *Akhāras*, the Head of the Divine Life Society and others regard Her as a stupendous spiritual power and hold Her in profound veneration.

Moreover, a very large number of Indians and a good many westerners look upon Her as their most revered Sadguru who leads them from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality, from ignorance to Knowledge. To them the very suggestion that fire should have been set to the precious and hallowed vehicle of this unique manifestation of Divinity on earth, seems truly sacrilegious and utterly revolting.

They are all agreed that *sthal samādhi* was the only appropriate way. Besides nothing whatever

had been planned or prepared beforehand. Everything happened naturally and spontaneously according to Sri Ma's maxim—"Jo-ho-jay !"

Already in the October '82 issue we reported :
 "...all the rituals connected with Her *Mahāsamādhi* had been performed according to the wishes of the heads of various *akhāras*, strictly following the Śāstric injunctions observed when a *saṁnyāsī* leaves his body."

Indian, European and American devotees are all meditating near the *samādhi*, deriving great peace and solace.

Prayer

An American Devotee

O ! most sweet Mother, the seed you plant in us is the seed of your own divine life. Help us to cherish and nourish it. Help us, that the tender holy plant may not be choked out by the hardy weeds of our desires and distractions.

Even as I sit here, wrapped in your own cloth, so also wrap me, enfold me in your spirit, Ma. Touch my mind with the magic of your own "mind"—with its pure ānandam. O take all my little darknesses away ! Let them be lost in that great Light which is yourself.