



ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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

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ARATI

Arati

Translation

Jaya āratī Śrī Mā Ānandamayī, Ānandamayī, Mā Ānandamayī,
Mangala karanī taraṇī bhaṛani, Benefactor, Saviour, Protector,
Bhava bhaya harini sukha Remover of the fear of suffer-
modamayī, ing, filled with joy and delight,
Jaya āratī Śrī Mā Ānandamayī, Ānandamayī, Mā Ānandamayī.

Ma tuma hī girinandini ho, Ma, you are Uma, the daughter
of the mountains,
Vidhi hari hara suramani Revered by Brahma, Viṣṇu,
vandini ho, Śiva, the Gods and the wise,
Jagadambe asura nikandini ho, Mother of the world, destroyer
of the demons,
Kirati jagame saba or chāyī, Your fame has spread all over
the universe,
Jaya āratī Śrī Mā Ānandamayī, Ānandamayī, Mā Ānandamayī.

Tava mahimā nara kyā jāna How can man grasp your
sake, greatness,
Kimi charma chakshu pahi- How can mortal eyes recog-
chāna sake, nize you ?
Shruti shēsha nahī kuch jāna Even the Vedas can not fathom
sakhe, you,
Gā gākara Shāradā thakita Sarasvati tires herself out sing-
bhayī, ing your praises,
Jaya āratī Śrī Mā Ānandamayī, Ānandamayī, Mā Ānandamayī.

Tava daraśana hridpaṭa Your darshan opens the door
khulajāve, of the heart,
Agha giri bhī lavana sama The mountain of sin is dis-
ghul jāve, solved like salt,
Bahu janma ke mal dhul jāve, The dirt of many birth is
washed away,
Dhyuti atulita pāvana sara jāyī, The essence of pure glory is
revealed,
Jaya āratī Śrī Mā Ānandamayī, Ānandamayī, Mā Ānandamayī.

Ma kumati ko shubha mati do, Ma, change evil tendencies into
good ones,
Ānanda drishti muj par kardo, Favour me with your glance
of bliss,
Bhava nidhi se tāro, sadgati Save me from the sea of sor-
do, row, show me the path to God,
Tava mridula god kī otalayī, Give me shelter in your tender
embrace,
Jaya āratī Śrī Mā Ānandamayī, Ānandamayī, Mā Ānandamayī,

Talking of desire, Ma observed, "All people strive to attain a state of desirelessness ; while one's personal desires are lingering there is no peace. It is only when one identifies one's personal will with the Almighty's Will that there is peace. Then whatever He wills is felt as one's own will, whatever He desires becomes desirable, and desire can no longer create any unrest."

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Engaged in conversation with Professor Yajnik of the University, Ma said, "Study a little bit of *that* subject, too. Just as you have become a professor by passing B.A. and M.A. exams., be an expert in this field, also. Prof. Yajnik said, "But my mind does not become quiet ; if my mind could enjoy it, I would be able to sit and meditate on God." Ma said,—“Just try to recall how much time in your life you devoted to your studies. And again, what does *tapasyā* mean ? I put it in a topsy-turvy manner, I say”, here Ma stopped and folded Her hands : “Father, I donot speak, I voice whatever you make me say—*Tapasyā* means enduring the burning of penance ; the mind resists, but still one has to go on trying ; thus to endure the burning of suffering—that is *tapasyā*. If there were no suffering, the term *tapasyā* would not have had any value. When the suffering is over your mind will naturally experience joy in this line of progress. Then again to give you an example, children, left to themselves, want to play ; you may make them sit and study by coersion, but they are interested in games : But when a child is regularly made to

study daily at a given time, he gradually starts taking interest in study, then it is no longer necessary to force him ; for now he himself would not give up study ; now he knows that without studying he would fail in his exam, and this he does not want". At the end Ma said with folded hands, "Look, father, this daughter of yours requests you to give some time daily to Him. Gradually increase the time."

* * *

A boy asked Ma, "Ma, was Tulsidas a great *jñānī* (wise man) as well as a great *bhakta* (devotee) ?" Ma said in reply, "Yes, of course !" The boy : "Well, then, when God appeared before him in the form of Kṛṣṇa, why did he say to Him, 'I donot want to see you in this form ; reveal yourself to me in the form of Rāma.' ? Was this an expression of knowledge ? All forms are one in essence ; why then did he consider them to be different ?"

Ma immediately said, "You yourself say that he was both a wise man and a devotee. What he said was indeed an expression of his wisdom. As he says : 'Reveal yourself to me in the form of Rāma ; I don't want to see you in *this* form', it proves that he knows that Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are one and the same. 'Let me see you as Rāma'—he said ; only the forms are different ; basically they are one. His words imply this idea of identity—and this is precisely what an enlightened one would say. And since he is a devotee, he says, 'I want to see you in the form of Rāma, my chosen deity, for this form

of Rāma is dear to me. "Hence both wisdom and devotion find expression in his words."

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Talking about late Mahesh Bhattacharya (of Tripura), Ma said to one of his relatives, "Well, you see, the babaji has so far been giving donations after much deliberation and reasoning. Now make him give a little in charity without discrimination. Father (Mahesh Babu) told me once, 'One day when I was at Vaidyanath with my wife, a beggar came asking for alms but I said, 'Earn your bread by labour, I won't give you anything, and I refused to give him anything. Like this, all my life, I gave in charity only after much pondering and reasoning.' Father remembers this. So I say, now give something in charity on His behalf freely, without any discriminating thoughts."

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The question of *samskāra* being raised by someone, Ma said, "Whatever we perceive leaves its impression on our mind, and it takes an equally long spell of time to remove that impression."

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In course of a conversation as the topic of *samādhi* was being discussed, Ma said, "without *samādhāna* (solution of all problems) how can *samādhi* come about?" On hearing these words a pandit expressed great delight, saying, "Ma, I have never before heard such beautiful words."

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Again, discussion on various topics was going on. The pandit was explaining some abstruse

matters. Girija Babu said, "Well, what is the use of saying such lofty things? We don't understand them." Ma said, "Look, when you solve a problem of mathematics, if you make a slight mistake, although the rest is correct, your whole calculation becomes wrong. So it is with you. You have faith in everything; faith by its very nature is blind. Unless seen by direct perception, nothing can be understood perfectly.

* * *

In a given context Ma said, "Faith is in fact blind, but in the beginning we have got to hold on to this faith for support. Such faith is born of book knowledge, what else? But book knowledge, too, helps us to some extent, just as when going on a journey the railway time-table proves helpful to us.

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"Ma, we don't even know how to put questions to you," somebody said. Ma replied smilingly, "To whom would you address your questions? Questions and answers are exchanged between teacher and student. Here, there is neither a teacher nor a student; here he who asks questions is the one who replies to them".

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Question: "Ma, the scriptures on bhakti hold that without the grace of an enlightened Being, spiritual realization is impossible. But it is so difficult to recognize an enlightened one." Ma retorted, "That which enables you to recognize the Great—*that* indeed is grace."

Prayer first and food afterwards*—prayer and food are both needed !

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Volume 4

“For One who has real faith in his Guru it is impossible to hate anybody. If anyone is held in contempt it is the same as expressing contempt to the Guru himself. For great is the Guru and he dwells within everyone ; this must be one’s firm conviction. And patience is an indispensable part of spiritual practice.”

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Question : “Well, Ma, in the Gita it is said, ‘Giving up all duties take refuge in Me alone.’ Does this utterance exhort one to surrender to Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devaki ?

Ma : “Whenever someone recites this *śloka*, he will say, ‘take shelter in Me’. Who is this ‘me’ ? the Supreme Self, Paramātmā. Then it follows—who is Kṛṣṇa ? Paramātmā, of course. Again, it is said, “Better it is to die fulfilling one’s own *dharma* ; another’s *dharma* is horror-breeding.”

In this context Ma said, “What does *dharma* mean ? That which gives support. A thief takes support in the art of stealing, but it is often seen that a thief, himself becomes an honest man. Thus it follows that stealing is not his *svadharmā* ; that which is one’s actual *dharma* never undergoes any change. What is subjected to change is not *dharma*—it is *adharma*. *Dharma* is your inborn

*A pun on *bhajan*—prayer, and *bhojan*—eating of food.

nature, to give it up and adopt other ways which are not yours (*adharmā*) is always harmful. Again, where dharma stands for the inherent basic quality of a person or a thing—like the dharma of fire (to burn), the dharma of water (to moisten)—persons have different natural inclinations due to their *samskāras*; the Guru's power turns their heart towards Reality even through their natural inclinations."

Question : "Well, Ma, it is said 'Brahma is Truth, the world is illusory'—what does it mean?" Ma smiled and said, "How can one say that the world is illusory? All are born within this world; since the moment of birth all are seeing this world. When one really attains that Knowledge, then one has the right to say that the world is unreal."

Question : "Ma, some say that Brahman Himself has become the world by mutation, hence both the world and ourselves are real."

Ma : "In a sense this also is correct. The flux of the world is without beginning or end, on that score the world, is real. There is something more to say about it. So long as Truth is not understood, one has got to acknowledge this world as real. But what is the use of listening to all this? The words will enter by one ear and escape through the other. Only when the teaching is translated into action there has been real listening. Therefore proper listening has not yet occurred."

In Association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Amulya Datta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali)

(*Continued from the last issue*)

Dacca, August 20th, 1939.

Sadek Khan, the personal assistant of the Commissioner called on Ma along with two other Deputy Magistrates. Ma was told that when She had been to Coxbazar, Sadek had been the subdivisional officer there. Ma told him :

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mataji : Have you learnt this yoga from a Guru ?

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

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

Wednesday, August 23rd, 1939.

At Dacca Station on the way to Kheora

I had heard that Sri Ma was arriving at Dacca by the Calcutta Mail and departing from the station in a car provided by Bhairav.

There was a large crowd at the station by the time Mataji arrived. She sat down smilingly under a flowering Gol Mohur tree at the end of a platform. Ma addressed the elders, saying :

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

be obliged to take another return ticket. Already you have taken so many return tickets, oh so very many !

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mataji : Can you live in a dharmasālā ?

The old man : No, I can't.

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

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

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

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

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

Furthermore, you have not been born with the sole object of living a family life. See what a state you have reached by doing so ! Your black hair has turned white, your teeth have fallen out. How

much longer will you continue to mistake your role in the comedy of life for the Real ?

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

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

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

The world is manifested as the *prāṇa* (life force) in waves. This is *Prakṛiti* (Nature). One must

rise beyond this Nature. Just as still water can be reached by pursuing flowing waves, so Supreme Life (*mahāprāṇa*) can be realized by performing *sādhanā* with every breath (*prāṇer sādhanā*). This kind of *sādhanā* can be practised in all circumstances. God Himself is present as the breath of life. Nothing can be achieved without breath control. What I said about sitting in one's house with the doors shut means just this. To withdraw the senses from their objects of enjoyment means to close the doors. Otherwise, what would be the use of sitting in one's room within closed doors? (Smiling) You should partake of several different preparations when taking your meal; then only can your intake be increased.

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

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

The old man : This seems to be very difficult.

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

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

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

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

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

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

for building the Ashram are looking after it, and will continue to do so."

29th August, 1939.

Sri Sri Ma's Ashram at the village of Kheora was ceremonially inaugurated on Tuesday, August 29th, 1939. From there Sri Ma visited Sultanpur, Comilla, Chittagong, Vidyakut, etc. and eventually landed at Dacca for a day only, on Sept. 13th, 1939. On hearing this, I at once went to the Ashram. There, a brief conversation concerning Sobha Ma's meeting with Ma at Comilla ensued.

Tatwa Jnana (Knowledge of the Real)

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

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

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

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

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

The same applies to *samādhi*. People frequently say, "so and so goes into *samādhi*." So I should like to ask what are the characteristics of *samādhi*? Only by watching the symptoms of the body one cannot decide on the type of *samādhi*. Someone may have closed his fists and it may be impossible to open them even by force. In another case perhaps one hand is lying crosswise on the other. In a third case, may be, the feet are crossed, or else both hands and feet are static in a crossed position. But just by noticing all this one cannot know whether it is a *samādhi*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mataji : The remembrance of previous births can be of very many kinds. There is infinity in everything. Somebody may be able to tell about his father, mother, country, and so on of his previous birth. He may relate several incidents which can

be proved to have actually happened. Others may have retained the knowledge acquired in a previous birth. Suppose someone has by spiritual practices attained to a certain realm (*loka*) and become closely connected with its Gods and Goddesses ; he may then be reborn retaining the knowledge of all this, and be able to converse on vital matters of truth in accordance with it. How can one explain the different kinds of states that may be attained ! Everything is of infinite variety.

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

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

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

like to speak in any way that would hurt someone's feelings. Whatever is meant to happen does happen through this body. Where is the confusion in this ?

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

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

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

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

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

Mataji : This is just the present way of this country. Such is the world—*duniya*, based on duality. There is bound to exist side by side joy

and sorrow, truth and falsehood, war, dissention. At times there is peace, then again upheaval : like the waves which continuously rise and fall,

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

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

(To be continued)

Someone asked Mataji: "Have you seen God?" Mataji replied without the slightest hesitation: "Why, indeed, He is always visible. Yet again, who sees whom, since all are He. In very truth, nothing exists apart from God."

Reflections on Sri Ma's Lila

Acharya Gita Banerjee

(Translated from Hindi)

Mahaśaktiswarūpa, Ma the Supreme Śakti Herself, is now, in Her unmanifested Being, residing in every heart. She has ever existed, exists now, and will exist through eternity.

Some people feel puzzled about Ma ending Her mysterious *lilā* in Her divine body by showing illness. Sri Ma's whole life had been of such matchless, unsurpassed beauty, hence it was expected that She might leave in some glorious fashion. A certain mahātmā left his body by a yogic *kriyā*; another one by performing *prāṇāyama*; a great yogi's body remained fresh for many days—while with Ma none of this could be observed. Those who were near Her were of course prepared for Her departure from the material world, but why did the majority who were far away not feel anything special at the time of Ma taking *mahāsamādhi*, why did they not receive a last message from Ma? These and similar questions are being asked.

In reply, it seems best to quote Sri Ma's own words. She has repeated innumerable times: "For this body the question of coming and going does not arise at all. This body neither comes nor goes anywhere. It does not eat anyone's food nor wear clothes given by anyone. The whole universe is this body's home. All of you are my fathers,

mothers and friends. There is only one all-encompassing Ātmā—ONE-without-a-second. Where can this body go? There is no space for it to move or even turn over. Even if pushed away, it is still there.”

These sayings make it clear that Sri Ma is omnipresent. In actual reality She permeates everything.

Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj writes in one of his books about a young gardener who by yogic practices in a former birth had acquired the capacity to move at will from one realm (*loka*) to another. One day, Kavirajji took the young man to Ma. Some devotees were sitting around Her. One of them said to him: “We hear that you are able to travel to other *lokas*. Please do so in Sri Ma’s presence!” The youth said: “Ma, I am going to Brahmaloaka, do come and join me, please!” Mataji replied with a smile: “Baba, when you go to Brahmaloaka you will see that Ma is present there also. For this body there is no need to travel from one place to another.” When the young man arrived at Brahmaloaka by his yogic power, he was struck with amazement to find Ma there.

This incident shows that Sri Ma is everywhere simultaneously. There can be no question of Her moving from one place to another. Concerning one who does not feel: “I am leaving the body and going somewhere else”, the question “why did She not give us any indication that She was going” has no meaning. According to what Sri Ma clearly

said, She has not gone anywhere. We must try to firmly establish this conviction in our minds.

Sri Ma harbours no desire. Since She has no mind, from where can desire arise? Ma is always in a state beyond the mind. A mahātmā may decide: "I shall leave my body in such and such a manner"; or "I will give up the body to the five elements by this particular method." But in Sri Ma there is no desire or wish. She is eternally reposing in Her own essential Being (*svasvarūpa*).

Who is called a world-teacher (*jāgat guru*)? A yogi attains to his goal by practising yoga; the devotee becomes one with his Beloved by intense devotion; the vedantist comes to realize the oneness of the individual with the Supreme Ātmā by the contemplation of the Brahman; and He who is fully enlightened as to all methods is called a World-teacher. In Sri Ma are fully revealed the yoga of the yogi, the adoration of the devotee and the realization of Oneness of the Vedantist. Consequently Sri Ma cannot be compared to any yogi or mahātmā. A yogi may of course leave his body by a yogic kriyā. But Sri Ma was not bound to any particular line or method. Therefore the question: "Why did Ma leave Her body the way She did?" is out of place.

Several times in the course of Her life, symptoms of serious illness could be detected and on occasions Her body seemed even lifeless. In response to our ardent prayers Ma had directed Her *kheyāla* towards Her body and for the sake of Her devotees had effected again and again

complete cures without the help of medicines or doctors.

For Ma to be embodied or not makes no difference at all. Solely for our welfare She assumed a human form. This time Ma's *kheyāla* had completely been withdrawn from Her body. The Mahant of the Nirvani Akhara beseeched Her again and again : "Ma, do make your body well !" But Ma persistently replied : "Baba, there is no *kheyāla*." To Sri Sankaracharya of Sringeri Math, Mataji had said : "Baba, all that you perceive is due to the pull of the unmanifest." Ma practically stopped eating, even drinking and hardly talked. She was all the time lying down in Her own *bhāva* (mood). She gave Her body up into the hands of Mother Nature (*prakriti*) and so it followed its own course. Ma had always said : "*jo ho jaye*" (Let happen what may !") And thus what was to happen came about. Ma's actions were never prompted by desire or volition, She had no preference. And so the body acted as bodies are apt to do.

Now someone may ask : "Why did Ma remain in this condition without even drinking water for 3½ months ? She could have finished everything within 3 days." Here again Ma's maxim "Let happen what may" holds good. The body remained as long as it could and when it was ready to go, it went. Sri Ma's body was certainly not an ordinary one. Dr. Mathur, and other physicians as well, declared that medical science has no explanation for this mystery. No one can remain without food

and water for so long. Ordinarily, without drinking water for 5-6 days maximum, the tongue dries up and starts to protrude and the whole body shrivels up. Whereas Sri Ma lived without food or water for 105 days. Whatever tiny quantities of water or juices were administered were vomited. How did Ma keep Her body in a natural and unspoiled condition for so many days? Thus we see the play of the supernatural even in Her so-called ordinary-manner of discarding Her body.

Never in all Her life Ma had of Her own volition displayed supernormal powers or performed any miracles. Everything happened spontaneously. So the body also ended in a similar way.

Many years ago Mataji had told Gurupriya Devi that Her body would end in the most ordinary of ordinary ways—and this came to pass. Mataji had said: “This body is inseparably connected with trees, plants, leaves, even insects and flies.” Sri Ma is ordinary as well as extraordinary. Therefore it is irrelevant whether Her body was discarded in the ordinary or the most extraordinary fashion. Ma had no *kheyāla* to remain in the body, otherwise She could have kept it for much longer.

People may ask: “What is this *kheyāla* of Ma?” In reply it might be said that the combined Will power, the creative Energy and the knowledge of the Supreme who enacts His *līlā* in numberless universes, manifest as Sri Ma’s *kheyāla*. By this *kheyāla* Ma had the power to transform the whole universe.

Once someone asked : “Ma, why did you incarnate in a female body and not in a male one.” Ma replied : “Because there was no *kheyāla*. Had there been the *kheyāla*, it would have been a male body.” At another time Ma replied : “Certainly !” to the question whether She could produce a microphone if She had the *kheyāla*.

The *līlā* of One who is the Ruler of the whole universe, by whose *kheyāla* the universe can come into being, can be sustained and destroyed cannot be understood by the mind. Gurupriya Didi used to say : “Why Ma does anything is beyond our power of comprehension. Ma alone knows Her reasons for it.”

For Ma there is no cycle of birth and rebirth. Those who attended the Samyam Mahavrata in 1981 will remember how Swami Svatantrānanda asked Ma : “Please tell us who you were in your former birth !” Ma replied with stress : “ज न मे” (*ja na me*). Then She clapped Her hands and laughed like a child, saying : “Now try to grasp this, Baba !” Those who were present will surely not have forgotten Ma’s lovely, mysterious countenance at that moment. What Ma had uttered may perhaps mean : “For me there is no birth” or “I am not limited” or “There is no I for me” or “Birth is not for me.” Ma had often declared : “This body was not born, this body did not come into being due to *prārabdha* karma. You all have wanted it and so you have it now for some time.” From this it is evident that for Ma there is neither birth nor death. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj said : “Sri

Ma is neither a *sādhaka* (aspirant) nor a *siddha* (perfected being) because for Her there is no cycle of birth and rebirth. *Pūrṇa Brahma Nārāyaṇa*, the Supreme Himself, has appeared in the world for the welfare of all beings.”

Mahamandaleshwara Sri Swami Vidyanandaji of Kailashashram, Rishikesh, said : “For many centuries there has been no incarnation of such stupendous spiritual power.” Many wise and learned men feel convinced of this fact.

Of course, one may say, for us ordinary human beings who have no realization of supreme knowledge, Ma came into being and also left Her body : From the worldly point of view Ma’s body was tired and worn out and so She gave it rest for ever.

Sri Ma’s *līlā* is subtle and it is beyond our understanding why She discarded Her body the way She did. So let us leave it at that.

Why did Sri Krishna make the hunter’s arrow the cause for ending His *līlā* on earth ? Why did Sri Rama drown his body in the river Sarju ? Why did Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Sri Ramana Maharshi suffer and die of cancer ? There are no answers to these questions. Our knowledge is limited and so these queries arise in our hearts.

Let us set our minds at rest, surrendering wholeheartedly at our Mother’s lotus feet. She gave many directions to us Her devotees that will help us on our difficult journey towards our Goal. If we are able to carry out Her injunctions with tenacity and devotion, we may be confident that

Ma will continue to convey Her blessings and Her advice to everyone of us.

Mahamandaleshwara Swami Vidyanandaji said :
“Ma has showered so much love on you all, has blessed you with Her touch and given you priceless directions and instructions ; She gave so much of Herself that you should all feel overwhelmed.”

Sri Ma’s last instructions was : *“Let everyone concentrate on his spiritual practice wherever he or she may be.”* This is Her injunction for all times.

Ma has not gone anywhere. She ever IS—here and now. If we can follow Her directions faithfully, Ma’s divine Grace will be showered on us. We shall be blessed with inner vision and behold Her matchless beauty, feel the sweetness of Her touch and receive Her guidance within our hearts.

May we all be able to carry out Sri Ma’s injunctions to the letter. This is my prayer at Her lotus-feet.

*He that attributeth any good to himself
hindereth God’s grace from coming unto him,
because the grace of the Holy Spirit ever
seeketh an humble heart.*

—The Imitation of Christ.

The Heritage of the Hindus

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the last issue)

The heritage of the Hindus is particularly rich in the possession of sacred literature. The concept of the "sacred" is very close to the Hindu way of thinking. It is concerned with the trans-natural dimension of human life. It inspires *sāadhanā* for reaching beyond the realm of ignorance, which is the world, to that liberating knowledge which dispels all dualities. To raise the everyday ordinary consciousness to the contemplation of a region which is of the nature of Truth, Goodness, Beauty (*satyam śivam sundaram*) lies at the heart of all modes of *sāadhanā* which have come to prevail with the Hindus.

The Hindus work with the idea that the presence of God is all-pervasive, constant and yet amenable to invocations if He, in His boundless mercy were to choose to manifest Himself in answer to man's ardent prayers, at any place and at any time. The Hindus surround themselves with symbols which evoke God remembrances. The concept of pervasive sacredness may be compared to the all-enveloping sunlight which nevertheless shines especially in a mirror so that it stands out as a focal point of rare brilliance. Thus, the Hindus are devoted to their holy rivers ; the sacred mountain-sites to which pilgrimages are made ; temples which

enshrine beloved images of God and the numerous festivals which create an atmosphere of joyous celebration of sacred moments of Divine manifestations.

The repository of all utterances regarding that which is of supreme value in human life is, of course the Vedas. After the Vedas are placed the Smritis are the written (or spoken) discourses of enlightened rishis, who have been vouchsafed a vision of Truth. They also contain divine messages given by God in special situations and to worthy recipients, etc. The Gita in the Mahabharata, Smritis in the form of Puranas and Itihasas detail the interplay of the divine and the mundane. God is never absent from the heart of man, but man does not know that he entertains this exalted presence within the texture of his being, as it were. How can he be made aware of his ignorance as well as his blessedness ?

Just as a fowler, or a hunter, entraps his preys by using as decoys, birds and beasts of the same species, so does God ensnare human hearts by assuming human forms from time to time.* Unless man can understand what he experiences, he cannot rise above his human condition. Therefore, God, in his boundless compassion for his creatures comes among them again and again and gently draws their attention away from the world and towards His own redemptive form. His concern makes Him suffer along with His creatures time after time because He is not with them to condemn, or judge, or pronounce

* From Tiruvarutpayam by Umapati Sivacarya

final options, but to bear with them and coax them towards the path of Bliss. The world which holds mankind in thrall is also His creation, so how should He not comprehend the reluctance of His creatures to turn away from the pleasures of everyday life? He, therefore, is constantly at hand, as it were, to speak and to guide, whenever a seeker is prepared to ask.

Such is the thought behind the belief in *avatāras* which so permeates our religious history. God is forever with us in one form or other, rejoicing with man, as well as suffering with him, very much involved in all that man does and yet in Himself He remains completely aloof and beyond the grasp of all but a few only to whom he chooses to reveal Himself. God looks upon mankind with compassion and understanding and perhaps also a 'smilingly rueful sadness' (of which men may not even begin to be aware) at the uncaring indifference which, in general, is accorded His loving concern. A poet of Bengal has written these words :

Never in my life, did I seek You,
But You have sought me out, the unfortunate
being that I am.
In exchange for your love eternal,
o Friend of mine,
You've ever received total indifference only.
I have sought to remove myself
from your presence,
But you have stretched out your arms to
hold me in your gracious embrace.

You have whispered urgently, so many times
 'Do not go that way', but unheeding,
I have strayed,
 So you have run after me to win me back
 Again and yet again....."*

The personalised Form of God, as Rama, Krishna, Durga, Ganesha, etc., so dear to the heart of the Hindu is called the '*Iṣṭadevata*'. To one's *Iṣṭa* may be addressed songs, such as given above, or the more usual prayers and verses of praises known as *stuti* or *stava*. The Puranas and the two epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (Itihasas in Sanskrit) are the sources of inspiration for this very unique mode of relating to God. He who is transcendent is captured within the heart of man as the in-dweller the *Iṣṭa*, the most precious possession to whom a life of *sādhana* is dedicated.

The Agama and the Tantra

The Hindu Sacred literature is classified into two major groups as stated earlier, that is, Sruti and Smriti. It may be said that in between the Vedic corpus (known as Nigama) and the Smriti prasthanas, comes that body of texts which are called Agama and Tantra. Their authority is considered to be on a par with the Vedas. The terms agama and tantra are used almost simultaneously in the tradition. These volumes comprise of the spoken words of God in the three major forms as

* A rather free translation of the well-known Bengali song beginning '*ami to tomare cahini jibane*', etc by Rajanikanta Sen.

Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahma. These texts are answers to queries put to them by a worthy questioner. The Devi herself assumes the role of an interlocuter, in her great concern for suffering humanity and seeks to show the path of beneficial sādhanā for the seeker after knowledge. Sometimes, the roles are reversed, because, in the ultimate analysis Śiva and Śakti are One only. With the Saivagamas and Tantra, may be listed the Vaishnava Agama also.

The agamic and the tantric texts are of the nature of revealed Truth. God Himself is the great Teacher, who imparts the supreme knowledge regarding the ultimate state of Bliss to His divine Śakti for the benefit of mankind. Agama therefore is said to be pauruṣeya (Truth revealed by God), whereas Nigama (Veda) is apauruṣeya (that is Truth itself).

The boundless cosmic panorama of the Vedic spirituality is set within the horizon of the worshipper and the worshipped in the Agamas. The mode of teaching by dialogue of the Vedas is transformed into the concept of initiation by the Guru (*dīkṣā*). The 'Mahāvākyas' of the Upanishads, which were to be heard, meditated upon and realised as Truth, yield place to the seed mantra which is related to a mode of sādhanā to be followed as a way of life.

It must be noted here that these differences are not real but mere distinctions only. Various modes of worship are given in the Vedas and all Agamas are stated in the form of dialogues. The mantra is at the heart of Vedic literature as well as at that of

the Agamic texts. The tradition of the Guru and the worthy disciple also comes from the Vedas. The real difference is in emphasis only. The Vedas are independent of time, space and objectivity: "a splendour of Words, which have neither beginning nor end, which is ever present in the cognizance of the One who knows."

The Agamic Purusa is also beyond the touch of mortality because He is never considered to be an *avatāra*. Śiva and Narayana are true and pure forms for the devoted worshipper who meditates with one-pointed concentration on his *Iṣṭadevata*. Knowledge is the goal for agamic worship as well as Vedic spirituality.

The crucial difference between the Veda and the Agama is the recognition of the important role of time as a category of existence. The time-process brings about changes which reduce some modes of *sādhanā* to the sphere of impracticality. The wheel of time in its circulation obscures certain things of erstwhile importance and brings up to prominence other significant features of the tradition. It is time that the Vedic tradition is ever present as the foundation for Indian spirituality; together with it other modes of *sādhanā* have come into prominence in our time which so pervade and permeate the Hindu ethos, so that we do not make distinctions anymore between that which is Agamic or Tantric or Pauranic. This comingling is permissible because the goal of human life remains the same, namely, Self-realization.

(To be continued)

Guru Darshan

Acharya Satish Chandra Mukhopadhyay

(Continued from the last issue)

PART III

The experience of *Guru Darshan* comes therefore at a developed stage of the spiritual life of the *jīva*. In other words there could be no *Darshan* unless the *jīva* had done with his previous experiences of *achit paralokas* in his invisible *achit sukshma* bodies. These previous experiences may have to be repeated times without number, followed by experiences on the physical or human plane, through a series of incarnations. The fact of the matter is that the *jīva*, as long as he is a fettered soul, could have no idea of the higher *chit* i.e., spiritual plane of life, for the latter transcends the *achit* or mental plane in which the *jīva* functions. Experiencing life on the invisible *sukshma* planes is therefore a necessary preliminary. So also the experience of life on the physical or human plane is equally necessary, as a factor in the onward march of the fettered soul. But the final goal of the upward evolutionary process is the discovery of the *chit* or spiritual world in which all real, eternally-existing spiritual entities live and move, and from whence they supervise and regulate the movements and life of the lower *achit* world, functioning as spiritual lieutenants of the Supreme Being, the

Supreme Governor of the world of fettered *jīvas* and matter.

To sum up therefore,—the essential thing to remember is that there is a *chit* world, a *chinmaya* world, i.e., a spiritual world, inhabited by Rishis, Saints and Sages, who do not put on any gross material bodies, but who live only in their spiritual or *chit* or *chinmaya* bodies, i.e., bodies which never die nor fade. Another point to remember about them is that they have the power of wearing at their option a material i.e., *achit* body, *sukshma* or gross, just to make themselves visible to those who can only recognise material entities. And so if Shree Sat-Guru Deva should choose to come down to you or me in His Spiritual or *Chinmaya* Body, we may in all probability fail to recognise Him to His *Chinmaya* body. But I do not feel quite competent to pronounce a final word on this point. All that I can say is that I have heard from Shree Sat-Guru Deva that the *Chinmaya* Body is most brilliant and dazzling, and even so fascinating that it makes the observer forget everything else. Now, I have seen Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva several times in my dreams when He wanted to answer any unspoken prayer of mine. But I have not seen Him in His *Chinmaya* Body, but only in such body as I could recognise, namely, the body in which I saw Him when he was here with us and talked to us, His disciples. If He had appeared before me in His *Chinmaya Rūpa*, in His Divine *Sat-Chidānanda* Form, I do not know if I could at all make Him out as Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva.

In this connection I shall do well to narrate a particular incident in my life in which Shree Sat-Guru Deva played a most significant role. This happened when he was still in body and flesh, and very probably some time during 1894-95. Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva had left 14/2, Sitaram Ghose Street, Calcutta, and gone to Vrindaban and left me to live in the house in question. I used to put up at night in the particular room which He occupied, and used to sleep on a bare blanket spread on the floor of the room very near to His *Āsana* (seat). Everything else in the room belonging to Shree Sat-Guru Deva was kept intact in their old places so that when Shree Sat-Guru Deva, as He intended, would come back and occupy the room, He would find the room as if He had not left it for anywhere else.

One night it so happened that when I was sleeping, I saw in my dream that a Great Soul came to give me some spiritual instruction, including a *Shakti* Mantra which, if I accepted, would make me a *Mukta-Purusha*, i.e., would release me on the instant from the bondage of *Sansārik* life, the bondage of *achit* matter. One peculiarity of His appearance was that he looked extremely ugly and even dark in skin. Nevertheless, I felt at the time of the vision that He was a Great Soul ; and I fully believed that if I accepted the spiritual instruction that He gave me at the time, I would forthwith become a freed man, a *Jivanmukta Purusha* in fact. Nevertheless, I did not feel inclined to accept His instructions ; for the thought came to me at the

time that I must depend upon my own Lord, Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva, for my spiritual emancipation, and not upon anybody else, however high in spiritual status. So, I had not the slightest hesitation in rejecting His offer.

But while I rejected the Great Soul's proffered aid, I felt not a little perturbed in my mind at the thought that this offer should at all have come to me. For there was my suspicion that Shree Sat-Guru Deva might have deliberately laid a trap for me ; and that I might have been entrapped. My fear was that, in the circumstances, I might have left the protection of Shree Sat-Guru Deva in favour of the newcomer, who had promised me immediate release from the bonds of *Samsāra*. The fact was that I was intensely longing for my release from the bondage of *Samsārik* life, which was so long in coming. But even so the thought came to me in my dream that I could not leave the protection of Shree Sat-Guru Deva for the sake of immediate release, and place myself under the protection of another high Spiritual Being, who had promised me immediate *Mukti*. Nevertheless, I felt a real grievance against Shree Sat-Guru Deva in that, because of my very intensive desire for the attainment of *Moksha*, I had been placed under circumstances which might have ended in my leaving Him in favour of another high-souled personage, who was in a position to give me the kind of aid I thought I needed.

As I have said, the particularly difficult situation in which I was placed raised a strong feeling in my

heart against Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva, for it was clear to me that the situation could never have arisen unless He had wanted it. The vision was soon over, and I immediately rose from my bed—the hour was one A.M.—with the definite intention to pen a strong letter of indignation at the sorry pass into which He had led me, and into which I might have fallen. The letter was written in hot haste, and I proposed to post it the very next morning.

The morning came but my indignation had cooled down; and I felt very sorry that I had penned such a strong worded letter to One who was my All-in-All. My repentance was sincere and the letter was not posted but torn to pieces.

But the sequel is worth narrating. In the course of another month Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva came back from Vrindaban and put up in the old premises, and I had to live elsewhere very near to His house. Then some little time after His return, I went and told Him all that had happened. He told me that the immediate offer of Mukti came from a *Bhagavat-Parshad*, i.e., one who was a Personal Attendant on the Lord. He had the Power of offering immediate *Mukti* to me, and so, if I had not declined His offer, I should have been released on the instant. He told me also that there were *Mahapurushas* who have such power and who are so very kind to aspiring *sādhakas* that they spend some three or four hours every morning looking about for such *sādhakas* and offering their help to them. Their usual hours are 1 A.M. to 4 A.M. He told me that I had done the right thing in reject-

ing His offer, for I was destined for a higher spiritual Status than that of mere *Moksha* or liberation from the bondage of matter. That destined status for me was the attainment of *Bhagavat-Bhakti* and *Prema*.

Shree Sat-Guru Deva told me further that *Moksha* or liberation from the bondage of matter was not a very high or even a very desirable status. For there are *Mukta-Purushas*, who although they have freed themselves from the bonds of *prakritik* matter, and are therefore free from the trials and tribulations of life to which *baddha-purushas* or fettered souls are subjected, are yet far from having *Bhagavat-Darshan*. For which reason, He told me in so many words, such emancipated souls felt extremely miserable ; and He made the matter quite graphic by comparing their misery to the misery undergone by jackals who had gone mad. Then He further told me that between *Nirvāna-Mukti* or emancipation from *achit* bondage, and the final state of *Bhagavat-Darshan* leading to *Bhagavat-Prema-Prāpti*, there were no fewer than sixteen stages to be negotiated. So it came to this that although *Moksha* or liberation from the bondage of matter, from the bondage of *Prakritik Shakti*, was indeed a very great thing, still it fell very far short of the ultimate Goal of life, the Goal *Panchama Purushārtha* as it is called, the Goal of *Bhagavat-Prāpti*, the Goal of *Bhagavat-Darshan*, the Goal of *Bhakti-Prema*,—the Goal of Loving Devotion and Allegiance to the Lord.

I was satisfied that I had done the right thing

in not accepting the spiritual recipe offered by so great a Divine Personage as my visitor on that night. I had further related to Shree Sat-Guru Deva the very ugly and even black appearance of the visitor. It was so very black and ugly that I had even felt repelled by His sight in the vision. In reply Shree Sat-Guru Deva told me that every *Bhagavat-Parshad* has a most beautiful and even fascinating appearance ; and this particular visitor had one such. But the fact was that, out of sheer *Kripā* (grace) for me, He had put on a kind of ugly appearance which had repelled me from Him. If he had put on His usual appearance such as belongs to a *Bhagavat-Parshad*, I should have been so overpowered by the beauty and fascination of His Body that I would have lost all power to remember Shree Sat-Guru Deva. The putting on of a black appearance was therefore an act of *Kripa* on His part.

So, here we have evidence that the *Chinmaya* appearance of a *Bhagavat-Parshad* is most beautiful and fascinating. And so it appears that if Shree Sat-Guru comes and puts on His *chinmaya* robes, it would not be possible for his disciples to make Him out as Shree Sat-Guru Deva. Probably that is the reason why when in my dreams I have had vision of Him, I had vision of Him in the character in which I could recognise Him.

*Ajata and the Vivarta in Vedanta

Mahesh Chandra, Rtd. Judge, High Court

Introduction

The main principle of Vedānta is *Ajāta*—and also *Vivarta*. In reality, *Ajāta* and the *Vivarta* both are one. The difference is only superficial.

A piece of rope is lying in dim light. A person comes along and fears it is a snake. Another person says it is merely a streak of water. A third person considers it to be a piece of thin wood. The fourth thinks it is a mere crack in the floor. The perceptions vary and the inferences vary even more. In substance, it is only a piece of rope. This is *Vivarta*.

Let us now see what *Ajāta* is. Light is switched on. One knows at once that it is nothing but a rope. There never was a snake, or a streak of water, or a piece of wood or a crack in the floor. None of these things ever existed. There always was and is even now only a piece of rope. Nothing else came into existence or was ever born there. This is *Ajāta*.

The difference between the two—*Ajāta* and the *Vivarta*, is only in the manner of description. It is a difference of emphasis and not of substance. There is no conflict between the two. In fact, they complement each other. One emphasises the ignor-

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ance or the mistaken inferences from the perceptions of many of us. The other emphasises the reality, the substance. The conclusion of both is one (एकमेवाद्वितीयम्). There is only One, nothing else. Vivarta first describes the various perceptions of the people. Then it reasons them out and tells us that they are mere appearances, wrong inferences from imperfect perceptions (प्रतीतियां) because of the darkness of ignorance. Open the eyes in the light of knowledge (ज्ञान प्रकाश). There will remain then only one everlasting entity—the one and only substance (तत्त्व). Ajata starts with the light of knowledge, with the everlasting substance and says there is the one and only one and nothing else. Ajata says “Do not let the darkness of ignorance come near you”. There are many appearances and perceptions. The sky appears to be blue. The rays of the sun falling on sand create an appearance of water. But nobody who knows will draw the inference that the blueness or the sky of the water in the sand is real. In spite of the appearances and the perceptions the truth remains what it is—the truth itself.

Taitriya Upanishad speaks of five *Koshas* (पञ्च कोष). To come back to the serpent once again. “The serpent is gross (स्थूल). It eats and drinks. Its body is *Annamaya Kosha* (अन्नमय कोष). It moves. This shows that there is *Prāṇamaya Kosha* (प्राणमय कोष) in it. It becomes angry. It hisses. This indicates the *Manomaya Kosha* (मनोमय कोष) in it. It is pleased. Like the face of the Vina player, its body appears to be dancing. This shows the *Vigyāna-*

maya Kosha (विज्ञानमय कोष) in it. Sometimes it lies happily as if it were sleeping. This indicates the *Ānandamaya Kosha* (आनन्दमय कोष) in it. What is a *Kosha* (कोष)? It is a scabbard. Ātman is the sword. These are all the scabbards of Atman. This is a mode of explanation, by which even one of medium intelligence can understand easily. In *vivarta* the *Koshas* have a great importance for explanation of something very subtle. Gradually, *Vivarta* takes us to Brahma and the oneness of Ātmā and Brahma (ब्रह्म पुच्छं प्रतिष्ठा). The substance of everything we see, we perceive, is Brahma.”*

Ajata starts with Brahman. Where is the serpent? There is nothing but the rope. Then where is the *Annamaya Kosha*, *Prāṇamaya*, *Manomaya*, *Vigyānamaya* or *Ānandamaya Kosha*? None of them are there. The rope alone is there. Similarly Brahma alone is. There is a perception of a snake. But really it is only the rope. An appearance is there. Let there be an appearance. Merely because it is perceived, appearance alone is not the truth. In spite of the various appearances and perceptions Brahma remains Brahma and will remain so. An appearance or a perception by itself is no proof of its truth. If it had been so, all that one sees or perceives in a dream would have been true, the colour of the sky would have been in fact blue.

Even to a scientist as to a child the sky appears to be blue. But the scientist knows that the sky is not blue. Its blue colour is a mere illusion and not the truth. Vedānta calls it *Mithyā* (मिथ्या). The

*From a speech by Swami Akhandananda,

appearance or perception may be there, but it is really false. This is *Mithyā* (मिथ्या).

Acharya Shankara says "Brahma is *Satya*, the world is *Mithyā* (ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या)". First Brahma has been pronounced as true (सत्यम्) and the world as *Mithyā* (मिथ्या) Why? The various appearances and perceptions of the world are *Mithyā*. These appearances and perceptions (प्रतीतियां) are really called the world (जगत्). In fact Brahma alone is true and the world is nothing but its *Mithyā* appearances and perceptions.

Brahma is *Ajāta*, unborn, because mere appearance or perception of something does not mean that it is born. A thing appears or is perceived and then it disappears. Like a streak of lightning in the sky. This is not so merely in the case of lightning. It is the same with sun, the moon, and fire also. They appear and are perceived. But what is the truth which appears in the lightning, in the sun, in the moon and in the fire? It is Brahma. It is because of its radiance that all these are perceived. *Katha Shruti* says "तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वम् तस्य भाण सर्वमिदं विभाति" "Because of its radiance all this appears and is perceived. Because of its light all these reflect light."

It is in the sun. The same Brahma is in the eye. All of them are the reflection of one and the same source of light. Here, we find the unity of *Ajata* and *Vivarta*.

The most well-reasoned and brief explanation of *Ajāta* is to be found in the *Māndukya Shruti* with the *Gaurpāda's Kārikā*. The *Māndukya* is the

smallest *Shruti* consisting of only twelve mantras which cover merely half a page. But it is said that it alone is sufficient for Self-realisation by a proper *adhikāri*, who is qualified to understand and imbibe the teachings of the *Shrutis*. Such is this *Shruti* of only twelve mantras. The very first of these mantras specifies Ajata. “ओमित्यक्षरमिदं सर्वम्” ॐ, this letter, alone is all this. Then we have a clear explanation of this. What is उपन्याख्या (*Upavyākhyā*)? It is a detailed innermost explanation from very close quarters. Whatever was, is and will be is *Onkār* alone. And whatever is beyond the past, present and the future is also OM (ॐ) *Yachchānyat Trikālatītam Todapyonkarmeiva* (पञ्चान्यरात्रिकालातीतं तदप्योङ्कारमेव).

In the very next mantra whatever remained has been said. *Sarvam hyetadbrahma* (सर्वं ह्येतद्ब्रह्म), “whatever there is, is Brahma.” There is nothing else. *Ayamātmā Brahma* (अयमात्मा ब्रह्म). “The soul, the *Ātmān*, is also Brahma.” This is a *Mahāvākya* (महावाक्य) measuring a sentence of very great import. Then it says that the *Ātmā*, the soul, has four *pādas*, phases.

In the next three mantras, that is the third, fourth and fifth, the three phases or *pādas* (पाद) have been described. They are the waking (बहिप्रज्ञ), the dreaming (अन्तःप्रज्ञ) and the deep sleep (प्राज्ञ) phases of one’s life. In the sixth mantra the deep sleep phases, the *Prāgya Pāda*, has been compared to Sarveshwara, the Overlord of all. In the seventh mantra the all knowing, *Turīya* (तुरीय) has been discussed. In the eighth mantra the three phases

(*Pādas*) of Ātmān and the three *Mātrās* (मात्रा) of Om have been compared and in the ninth, tenth and eleventh respectively each one of the phases or *pādas* (पाद) has been compared to each one of the three *Māntrās*. The conclusion has been given in the twelfth mantra. How brief and how good is the conclusion "*Amātrashchaturtho avyavhāryah prapanchopshamah shivoadwaita evamonkāra ātmaiva samvishatyātmanātmānam ya evam veda*" (अमात्रश्चतुर्थो-
ऽव्यवहार्यः प्रपञ्चोपशमः शिवोऽद्वैत एवमोङ्कार आत्मैव संविश्यात्मनाऽत्मानं
य एवं वेद ॥ १२ ॥). *Amātra* (अमात्र) that is the fourth phase is Turiya (तुरीय) Atman. It is beyond transaction or behaviour (अव्यवहार्य), Cessation of manifestation, final beatitude, non dual in reality, Onkāra. He who knows thus the Atma enters by *Atmā* into the *Atmā*.

For many it is difficult to understand correctly a very brief book like the *Mandukya Shruti*. So, Gaurpāda wrote the gloss on it to explain its real purport. There is a difference between a gloss (कारिका) and a commentary (भाष्य). A gloss (कारिका) explains in great detail the main purport of a work. The commentary (भाष्य) explains the whole work but not in such great detail. *Māndukya Shruti* is so brief that it has become an accepted practice to read it only with its gloss (कारिका).

What is the purpose of a *shruti*? Let us discuss it. There is a diseased person. He becomes healthy on the extinction of his disease. Similarly a person sick of the worldly troubles becomes happy and free from sickness on the cessation of the idea of

truth of these worldly manifestations when he becomes established in the one and the nondual. This realisation of the nondual is the purpose. Then he becomes *Swastha* (स्वस्थ). *Swa* (स्व) means self. So is he when he is established (स्थ) in the self, he is *Swastha* (स्वस्थ) free from disease and happy.

How can the worldly manifestation cease for one? It is caused by ignorance (अविद्या). Ignorance (अविद्या) can be removed only by knowledge (विद्या) just as darkness is removed by light.

This knowledge (विद्या) is supreme knowledge (परा विद्या). It is also called *Brahma-Vidyā* (ब्रह्म विद्या). Brihadaranyaka Upanishada (बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद्) says, “*Yatra Vānyadiva syāttatranयो anyapashyedanyo anyat-vijāniyāt* (यत्रवान्यदिव स्यान्तप्रान्योऽन्यत्पश्येदन्योऽन्यव्वजानीयात्) where there is, as it were, another, one can see another, know another”. Before that it has said “*Yatra hi dwaitmeva bhavati* (यत्र हि द्वैतमिव भवति) where it is as if there was another”. There, we have all the trouble, unhappiness. “*Yatra Vāsya sarvamāt-māirabhuttatkena Kam pashyet Kam vijāniyāt* (यत्रवास्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत्तत्केन कं पश्येत् कं विजानीयात्). Where everything became the *Ātmā* for him, whom one may see when one may know. *Brahma Vidyā* seeks to explain this unity, this nonduality.

This is the purpose, the object of Mandukya *Shruti*. To explain this there are four chapters in the *Karika*. The first is the *Agama Prakarana*, the chapter dealing with the main *Shruti*. It discusses *Onkāra* and explains that the *Mandukya Shruti* teaches nonduality. In the second chapter called

Vaitathya Prakāśana (वैतथ्य प्रकरण) the *Karaka* reasons out the unsubstantial nature, *mithyātva* (मिथ्यात्व) of duality. In the third chapter, *Adwaita Prakarana* (अद्वैत प्रकरण) the truth of nonduality has been reasoned out. In the fourth chapter called the *Alātshānti Prakarana* (अलात् शान्ति प्रकरण) the contrary doctrines have been demolished by the reasoning of these doctrines themselves and *Adwaita* has been established.

Gaurpada himself says “*Na Kaschinjāyate jīvah sambhavo asya na vidyate etaduttaman satyam yatra kinchinna jāyate*” (न कश्चिञ्जायते जीवः संभवोऽस्य न विद्यते एतदुत्तमं सत्यं यत्र किञ्चिन्न जायते). No *Jīva* is born because this is not possible. This is the real truth that nobody, nothing whatsoever, is born.

We will study and discuss the *Mandukya Shruti* with *Karika* in the first volume of this book, which will also explain the rational background and soundness of *Ajāta*.

A detailed and well reasoned discussion of *Ajāta* is to be found in the *Yogavashitha*. It is said that a daily study of *yogavāshishtha* is the easiest practice for acquiring *Brahma Vidyā*. This is really true. *Gyāna* or knowledge really means “to know”. What leads to the knowledge of the Self is alone a good practice for the acquisition of knowledge. Some people say that the principal hearer of the discourse of Rishi Vashishta was Rāma Chandra, who was highly qualified for the acquisition of knowledge (अच्चतम् अधिकारी), and that the discourse cannot be properly understood by anybody and everybody. But we should not forget that the

audience did not consist of Rāma Chandra alone but of many others in the gathering including gods, who are sensual by nature. For Sri Rāma Chandra a brief exposition of the truth in a few chosen words would have been sufficient. Vashishthaji entered into such a detailed exposition, with various reasonings, illustrations and stories so that it may be intelligible to the common man. We will study and discuss Yogavashishta in Volume III (Adhyaya 3) of this book.

Before that in Volume II (अध्याय २) we shall study and discuss the ten or eleven major Upanishads in the first chapter or *Pada*, some of the minor Upanishads like the *Kaivabya*, the *Kaushitki*, the *Tejbindu* and others in the second chapter or *Pada*, the *Brahma Sutra* in the third chapter or *Pada*, and Shrimad Bhagwadgitā in the fourth chapter or *Pada*. Thus the second volume (अध्याय २) will deal with the Prasthānatrayī (प्रस्थानत्रयी) of Vedanta. In this volume we shall see how the Vivarta and the Ajāta unite to form one whole. We shall see how one can start with the perceptions of the common man and arrive at the same truth which has been called the *Ajāta* in the *Karika*.

The third Volume (अध्याय ३) will along with Yoga Vashishtha discuss some other Gitas like the Avadhuta Gita, the Ashtavakra Gita, the Shiva Gita, the Anu Gita, the Rama Gita, the Rāmāyaṇa like the Adhyātmā Rāmāyaṇa, of which Rama Gita is a part, Tulsidas Rāmcharitmānas, and Shrimad Bhagwat. Amongst these books the Avadhuta Gita also contains a very good exposition of *Ajāta*.

In a Bhakti epic like the Ramcharitmanas we hear distinct echoes of *Ajāta* at places, for instance, on knowing you are becomes you yourself—“jānat tumahi tumahi hoe jai” (जानत तुम्हहि तुम्हहि होइ जाई). One who was not that from before and had not only forgotten can never become that (तुम्हहि). In Shrimad Bhagwat to my mind there is an exposition of *Ajāta* and *Vivarta* in the guise of Krishna Lila. The description of Krishna Bhagwan is nothing but an exposition of overflowing Brahma. What kind of Brahma? A Brahma which is an *Āptakāma* (आप्तकाम) one who has no unfulfilled desire.

Gaurpada speaks of the various theories about the creation of the world. Some consider the world to be the manifestation of God (*Vibhuti*), some speak of it as of the nature of dream (*Swapna*), and some maintain that it is the will of God. Others consider that it is for enjoyment. Some consider it to be for the sport of God. Others think it is the wish of God. Gaurpada is not impressed with any of these theories. He says there can be no question of the desire of one who has attained all (आप्तकामस्य का स्पृहा). He thinks that it is the very nature (स्वभाव) of the All Effulgent Self-Luminous to appear in various forms. Brahma is not an insentient stone, but *Satchidānanda*, something which exists, is intelligent and is bliss.

Another Sanskrit name for *Svabhāva* (स्वभाव) is *Prakriti* (प्रकृति). *Dwaitavādis* (द्वैतवाच्यः) have separated *Prakriti* from *Brahma* and given *Prakriti* a separate identity. But in reality the creation or the

world is the nature (*Prakriti*) of Brahma in the same manner as heat is of fire, and movement of wind (वायु). The creation or the world when it is seen is Brahma. Even when the world is not seen as in *Samādhi* it is Brahma. Without Brahma the creation or the world cannot appear. But whether the world appears or not, it has no effect on Brahma just as fire is latent in wood and burns that very piece of wood when the fire appears.

If we read Shrimad Bhagwata in this light, it will be clear that Shrimad Bhagwata expounds *Ajāta* at many places.

To my mind the purpose of *Vivarta* is to explain *Ajāta* itself. People have various leanings. Everyone does not want that their teacher like Gaurpāda may not climb down from a great height. They want their teacher to hold them by the hand and take them to the great heights through the appearances and perceptions (प्रतीति). This is where *Vivarta* is useful. It takes us from and through the appearances and perceptions (Pratyaksha) not to something (Paroksha) not seen or perceived but to that which is the seer and the perceiver himself (अपरोक्ष). Pratyaksha (प्रत्यक्ष) is something which is seen or perceived. It is changeable and changing all the time. Paroksha (परोक्ष) is something which is not seen or perceived. But *Aparoksha* (अपरोक्ष) is entirely different from both the seen or perceived (परोक्ष) and that which is not seen or perceived (परोक्ष). It is ones own Self, the seer, the perceiver and not the seen or perceived. It is the knower

and not that which is known. अरे विजातारम् केन विजानीयात्. Through what will one know the knower. But the knower is you yourself. Nobody is closer to us than we ourselves. I can be ignorant about somebody else but there should be no ignorance about my existence. Perhaps there can be a mistake—to a drunkard. He alone can say that he is not. You may say that such an ignorance is found in many a person. This is possible. We are drunk—with appearances. They are more intoxicating than wine. We are forgetting the *Aparoksha* (अपरोक्ष)—the Self. And, we believe what we see, like a magic show, to be true absolutely real. If you want to have a clear insight in this, read *Shrimad Bhagawata*. We shall discuss this in detail in *Adhyāya III* (अध्याय ३).

I hope to discuss in *Adhyāya IV* (अध्याय ४) *Sādhanā*—the *Asparsha Yoga* (अस्पर्श योग) explained in the *Kārikā*. Along with it we shall also discuss the other *Sādhanās* mentioned in *Brahma Sutra*, the *Upanishādas*, the *Gita*, and *Shrimad Bhagwata*. We shall try to see how the other *Sādhanās* take us to the same goal as the *Asparsha Yoga* (अस्पर्श योग) of the *Kārikā*. No *Sādhanā* is big or small by itself. The only question is which *Sādhanā* suits which person of a particular temperament. This can be told either by a teacher or *Guru* or by the one *Jagat Guru* (जगत् गुरु) within oneself if we have the ability to hear His voice, understand it and follow it. If *Shruti* tells us anything, it is that there is no place for hopelessness. We are only suffering from forgetfulness. We are the one and

the only One. There is nothing else. The greatest mistake would be hopelessness.

Like a dream there is no time when forgetfulness can be said to have begun. So long as a man is asleep, he cannot know when his dream began. Similarly, so long as the ignorance exists one does not know when the ignorance began. When a man wakes up or is awakened, he says he was dreaming. Similarly, when a man attains knowledge he knows that he was ignorant and mistaken. When he began dreaming, since when he has been mistaken—all this is now useless to him. The greatest mistake now will be to try to find out when the ignorance began. It is enough to know that the mistake has been corrected and ignorance removed. To remove the ignorance and to correct the mistake, to make one wide awake, to impart knowledge, *Shruti*, *Smriti* and the teacher, the *Acharya*, the Guru, exist. No student can get a Doctorate of Science or Doctorate of Philosophy by merely reading books. He has first to go to a teacher or a Professor. Then, gradually he passes the Matriculation examination or the Higher Secondary, the examination for the Bachelor of Arts or Science, the examination for the Master of Arts or Science. Then he writes a thesis expressing his original thoughts and ideas and becomes a Doctor of Philosophy or a Doctor of Science.

Here, we have to get over our ignorance and to know ourselves. This will take time. We shall have first to make ourselves fit for acquiring the knowledge. Then the time for the dawn of know-

ledge will arrive. When it will arrive will depend on our preparation. In that preparation *Shrutis* and *Smritis* and the teachings of the Guru are helpful. We shall discuss them.

Shrutis and *Adwaita Vedānta* (अद्वैत वेदान्त) propagated in and by them are a great gift of India to the world. It is astonishing that we have ourselves forgotten them. Mine is an attempt to place before my country and the world one part of them, *Vivarta* or *Ajāta*, in this book. It will be published both in Hindi and English.

One of the reasons for writing the book is a question which has troubled me for long and troubles many of us. When Brahma or Parmātman is happiness personified—*Ānanda Swarūpa* (आनन्द स्वरूप), knowledge personified—*Gyāna Swarūpa* (ज्ञान स्वरूप), why and how is the world there? *Vivarta* and *Ajāta* provide the answer to this question. This we shall discuss in detail in the first volume. In the other three volumes also I will have to refer to it time and again as we deal with the Shruti, the Brahma Sutra and the Smritis.

“The mind becomes impure if one eats food without offering it first to God.”

—Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

Sri Sri Ma

A Point of View

Prof. G. D. Shukla, Ex-Principal, D.A.V. College, Dehradun

It was a pleasant summer morning in 1936 when, going by bus to Rajpur, en route to Sulphur Springs, famed for its scenical beauty and medical waters, Mrs. Shukla saw an extraordinarily beautiful and gracious lady taking, what seemed to be her morning stroll on the road near Kishenpur village. She was dressed in immaculate white, reminding one of goddess Sarasvati, and was attended by a few men and women, who appeared to be in a very reverent mood and all attention to her. Mrs. Shukla could not suppress her curiosity and asked me if I knew who she was. Although I had inherited a strong streak of the religions from my mother and did believe in prayers to gods and goddesses, which I offered daily in my own unorthodox and unconventional way, I did not feel attracted to the ever swelling tribe of sādhus and sanyāsīs who can be seen roaming in every corner of the country. I therefore replied to her very casually saying that perhaps she was some Bengali saint, and there the matter ended. But little did I realize then that this very person whom I had dismissed so summarily from my thoughts was going to come into my life several years later in a very special way and become a major influence in our lives.

What is the secret of that influence? It is difficult to analyse and investigate it. It works so subtly. It is something to be felt and imbibed, not to be explained. The prattling tongue of reason stands speechless when faced with such an experience and one lapses into that silence which, in the words of an English writer, "alone is perfect eloquence".

I remember somebody writing in a national daily a few days after Ma had merged Herself in the Supreme Power, that She was "no ordinary woman". Certainly She was not "ordinary", but equally She was no "woman" either. This estimate just fails to do justice to Her and to reveal Her true self.

Far be it from my intention to run down that estimate of Ma, and assert my view as something superior in perfection and expression. Ma was an all-embracing personality and appeared to Her devotees as they wished to look upon Her. जोकी रही भावना जैसी, प्रभु-मूरारे देखीतिन तैसी.

In other words, people see the Lord as they wish to see Him. She claimed nothing special for Herself and loved to be looked upon and treated as men understood Her. I vividly remember Her saying once that She was like a stringed musical instrument, on which men could play any tune they wanted. I think these few and simple words beautifully sum up Her multifaceted Being, as nothing else can.

It is my faith that She came into our midst as a manifestation of the Divine Power. It may seem

arrant nonsense and downright superstition to the so-called rationalists who proudly proclaim that they have no faith in faith. But eschewing all argument with them I will just say that without faith we cannot live or do anything in the world. We have faith that the motorist coming from behind will not knock us down on the road or that the restaurant man will not poison our food and drink. We need faith at every moment and at every place. Manifestations of the Supreme Power have been witnessed in India and elsewhere from time to time. They come with a clear and strong sense of the mission given them by God. They have no idea of their personal wisdom. It is God's word they speak, and they move about as ordinary human beings.

The difficulty with most of us is that we are not able to recognise the Deity when It appears among us. As Reverend L. P. Jacks, an Unitarian clergyman and Professor of Philosophy at Oxford in 1903 said: "The way of the gods is to come in disguise".

Ma moved on two different levels, the human and the superhuman, and, perhaps, it is because She made no public display of Her true Self that many were unable to understand Her or only partly understood Her, and among those who were unable to understand Her thoroughly may be several who lived and moved with Her for years. I vividly recall one such example. Once, at the Kishenpur Ashram, a certain brahmachari giving a discourse on Ma happened to talk of the early days when Ma

travelled IIIrd class and he then proceeded to tell us that now She always travelled Ist class. That sort of reference to Ist class travel seemed rather odd to me. Such a thing may be required to boost the image of an ordinary sādhu but in the case of Ma it struck me as an evidence of his incomplete knowledge of the true nature of Ma.

Ma must have smiled at the awkwardness of that remark, but being all Love and Tenderness She might have accepted it as an "offering" from one of Her children.

I do not make any pretence, nor did I ever make any systematic attempt to understand Her, such as Her more gifted and learned devotees have done. It satisfies me just to know that it had pleased Ma to give me of Her boundless love and that She had received me under Her protecting care. What more can one want? Ma revealed Her superhuman divine attributes to us on more than one occasion but since She did not like Her devotees to make public what She said to them or did for them I refrain from giving details. I also happen to be one of those persons who honestly believe that any attempt at an intellectual discussion of such superhuman Beings, and trying to analyse what they are and what powers they have is a futile exercise. After all we ordinary humans have a limited vision, and we cannot claim that our vision has the harmony of wholeness. Such attempts, in the words of Tagore, "raise the dust more than give direction to truth". The best one can do is to open the windows of his heart and try to get as

near as possible to the elevating influence exercised by such Great ones.

How great She was ! Perhaps I might be able to provide some hint by referring to a letter I received from Vrindaban in reply to one of mine, dated 28.8.80. This was the last letter I received from Ma and the message it contained was : सत्यानुसंधान भांति बनकर अपने को आप रक्षा करो "Live like a seeker of truth and protect yourself."

The full significance of the message and the greatness of the One who dictated it was but dimly understood by me. But one day after Ma had shuffled off Her mortal coil and had left a void in my heart (for I do not know why I had begun to look upon Her as my own mother) I began to feel rather sad at Her absence. To ward off that feeling I decided to read a book. As chance would have it the book I picked up from a shelf turned out to be "The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha", edited by E. A. Burt. I opened it at random and as chance would have it again, it opened at the place where the Buddha gives his farewell address to Ananda and other disciples.

"I am now grown old, O Ananda, and full of years, my journey is drawing to a close... I am turning eighty years of age...

"It is only, Ananda, when the Tathagata, ceasing to attend to any outward thing, becomes plunged in that devout meditation of heart which is concerned with no bodily object, it is only then that the body of the Tathagata is at ease.

“Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves, and do not rely on external help.

“Hold fast to the Truth...Seek salvation alone in the truth. Look not for assistance to any one beside yourselves.”

As my eyes lighted on the words “Hold fast to the truth...Look not for assistance to anyone besides yourselves” I was forcefully struck by the close similarity of Ma’s message with that of the Buddha, and I was lost in thought. How great was the Buddha and how great was Ma! Incidentally those words of Ma perhaps also gave notice, which was lost on me then, that She too, like the Buddha, had decided to quit the world.

May Her blessings continue to be with all of us ever and always.

Om shanti ! Shanti ! Shanti !

“At all times the mind must be intensely vigorous, energetic and alert—then only can one forge ahead with great speed. Remember that everyone has to mould his or her own life. Accept cheerfully whatever He may bestow on you or take away from you.”

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

The Unseen Hand of Anandamayi Ma*

Anil Ganguli

In October 1962, Durga Puja was celebrated in Ma's presence in Calcutta from where she went to Ranchi. Swami Paramananda's letter dated Ranchi, the 22nd October, 1962 brought me this special message : "Ma says, 'There could not be any discussion with Satyanil in Calcutta. However, discussions were needed. If possible let Anil come here (Ranchi) with Sati.' Please let me know when you are coming."†

We rushed to Ranchi and immensely enjoyed intensive *matrisanga* unsullied by worldly thoughts. During Ma's sojourn in Calcutta we had been in need of a private interview with Her but did not get an opportunity. In Ranchi, however, She had *kheyāl* to send for us in Her room from time to time and in course of usual conversation She repeatedly laid special emphasis on the efficacy of invoking God's Name in times of distress ; but the deep significance of Ma's forewarning was then lost upon us.

*Based on my contemporaneous Bengali diary relevant extracts wherefrom have been translated by Sidhartha Ghose.

†Ma endearingly calls us 'Satyanil'—a combination of the names of Sati (my wife) and myself—that is to say, Sati+Anil=Satyanil.

After about a week-long stay with Ma, we left for Calcutta on October 30, by the Ranchi Express. Comfortably accommodated in a four berth compartment, we had a restful evening in blissful ignorance of what was to become a dreadful experience. After dinner we fell fast asleep—Sati on a lower berth and I above on the upper one. Of the remaining berths, one was occupied by a European lady and the other by her seven-year old daughter.

Suddenly there was a violent jerk due to derailment of our compartment, with serious consequences. The little European girl was later on reported to have died of shock instantaneously and her mother severely injured. Sati and I passed through a severe ordeal but were ultimately rescued almost miraculously.

Awakened as if by a bolt from the blue, I tried to get down from my berth but was prevented by splinters causing bruises on my arms and legs. I had no option but to resign to fate. Sati's experience was more extraordinary. Just before the accident some mysterious force had awakened her, gently lifted her up from her berth and carefully left her standing on a corner of the floor of the compartment—perilously near what turned out, in course of a few seconds, to be a horrible mound of debris.

Thereafter, we passed through a series of critical stages. Nothing could be seen in the darkness nor did there exist any sign of life except the desperate scream of a fellow-passenger : "help ! help !" Sati

and I remained confined to what appeared to be our 'death traps'. Our senses were numbed. In normal circumstances, it would have perhaps been natural for us to wonder : Who roused Sati from her sleep before it was too late ?" "Who transferred her from her berth to a safe spot ?" But it is surprising that these questions did not even cross our minds.

At this moment of dire peril we acted in accordance with Ma's teaching at Ranchi that God's Name should be invoked in times of distress. For quite some time there was no rescue attempt and the Railway workmen had failed to get into our compartment as its doors had been completely jammed and blocked as a result of the accident. Suddenly a lean, thin and dark-complexioned boy with dishevelled locks of hair stood before me and assured me of necessary assistance. He had somehow managed to glide into our compartment through a self-improvised entrance created by twisting the iron bars of a window with his hands, apparently none-too-strong. The visitor easily scaled up the mound of debris to a convenient level and asked me to come down. I pleaded inability to do so without injuring my arms and legs. "Never mind about your limbs", retorted the boy somewhat impatiently and shouted in an authoritative tone : "Come out immediately, or it will be too late." I tried to do so, but in vain. At that juncture the boy worked wonders. He put one of his arms under my neck, carried the entire load of my body and brought me down. I was

astounded to note his physical strength, presence of mind and resourcefulness. Indeed, he seemed like a "Deliverer." At last our ordeal was over and the dark boy disappeared.

Thereafter, we were escorted by the railway staff to a compartment not affected by the accident. The train remained standing still. The dark boy came there to see us. For the first time I noticed that he had a pleasing appearance and clear-cut features, a winsome smile and a pair of sparkling eyes. He appeared to be absent-minded, attaching no importance to the seriousness of the situation. In response to our enquiries regarding his identity and other personal details, he assumed an attitude of indifference and only gave out that he was one Chakravarti from Tripura. In reply to my enquiry as to his occupation, he curtly replied, "Nothing." nothing". I sincerely sympathised with him and assured him that if he saw me in Calcutta I might, perhaps, help him in securing employment. I meant to be of some little service to my benefactor and so I gave him my Calcutta address. But he seemed unconcerned and did not even care to thank me for my patronising gesture. All of a sudden he unceremoniously disappeared in the melee and soon was out of our sight ; but not out of our minds.

Next morning we and other passengers boarded a special relief train. Notwithstanding diligent search, our dark-complexioned fellow-passenger could not be traced in that train or anywhere else. It may be pointed out that no other form of transport was available in that desolate place. When

did our saviour go and how ? His disappearance remained shrouded in mystery as much as his advent. The boy seemed to be a mixture of opposites—he had a frail body with almost herculean strength ; he was amiable but discourteous bordering on rudeness ; he seemed to have broad human sympathies and yet a cold attitude of detachment.

In April 1963, we had the good fortune of travelling with Ma by the Mussorie Express from Delhi to Hardwar. Ma, in the likeness of a homely mother, made kind enquiries about our experience of the Ranchi Express disaster, as if She knew nothing. I asked Her, “Ma ! who was the lovable dark boy ?” “There is no *kheyāl* to answer”, said Ma and then exclaimed : “It is all Govinda’s *līlā*, my dear child, Govinda’s *līlā* !” After a short pause Ma remarked, “Well, you gave him your address. Did you take his ?”

As I look back, I shudder to think of our horrible experience, our hair-breadth escape from the jaws of death made possible by a chain of strange happenings. Was there any specific reason for Ma’s inviting us, of all persons, to Ranchi ? Why did She tell Swami Paramananda that discussions with “Satyanil” were needed ? During our short stay at Ranchi why did Ma single us out for granting private interviews, unasked ? On the eve of the Ranchi Express disaster why did She lay special emphasis on the importance of invoking God’s Name in times of distress ? Lastly, why did Ma ask me an embarrassing question on

board the Mussorie Express : “Did you take his address ?”

Ma’s teaching on the eve of the accident was clear and conclusive—“Seek refuge in the Name of God in times of distress.” It was timely ; it is timeless. Ma’s *līlā*—commencing from Her message “Discussions with Satyanil were needed” and ending in Her query : “Did you take his address ?”—was shrouded in mystery, admitting of more than one interpretation. The shadowy glimpses of *līlā* caught by us from the whole episode awakened in us a quest for light and a prayer for eyes to see.

Surrender is Unconditional

To a devotee who complained that, though he had surrendered himself, he was not making any spiritual progress, the Maharishi said, “If you have surrendered yourself, who are you to examine your spiritual progress ? Leave that also to the Master.”

—Bhagavan Raman Maharishi

Our First Meeting with Sri Anandamayi Ma

Madeleine Langevin*

(Translated from French)

One evening in July 1963 at nightfall, a taxi takes us to the gate of Sri Anandamayi Ma's Ashram on the outskirts of New Delhi. On arriving we hear songs and prayers to the accompaniment of a harmonium and small cymbals. This is called "*bhajan*" which helps to create an atmosphere of religious fervour. We ascend to the first storey and enter a rectangular room. There is a wooden Indian bed in it with immaculately white sheets. Already a number of people are sitting on the floor, others come and sit down after us, yet others do obeisance at the feet of Ma and then leave.

Dressed all in white, Ma sits on one side of the bed. Her features are harmonious and beautiful, Her eyes, deeply sunk in their orbits, are sparkling with a sweet radiance. Her gaze is not directed towards the outer world and has a great tenderness. She is smiling, simple and very friendly. Although I see Her sitting here amongst us, I have the impression that actually She is not here. She speaks, but She is not entirely in what She says.

* The French original appeared in "Bulletin de Panharmonie", Paris, No. 193, January 1983.

Raihana Tyabji introduces Jaques de Marquette to Her, but She does not seem to pay attention, She sees beyond, She dwells in THAT which is essential. And this I can sense down here. Sitting in front of Her, I receive with great force the vibrations emanating from Her. They are so powerful that they transport me into a state of deep calm and peace somewhat like when receiving the sacrament. I am so intensely moved that I feel like crying. I am as if overwhelmed by something sublime. With ever growing might the certainty, evident, definite, incontestible, establishes itself within me that nothing exists except THAT—everything else is unimportant.

Raihana asks : “Have you any questions ?” No, I have not. All I desire is to remain sitting here, in front of HER. My problems have vanished, they are solved !

Jaques de Marquette who always feels that he is not equal to his task, he who spent his life from his early youth in the service of others, asks : “Am I fulfilling my duty ?” Ma is not ready to answer. She says : “Everyone has to find his path, his truth, for himself and has then to follow it to the very goal. We are guided by our particular inclinations, our tendencies, our aspirations.” A little later She adds : “One has to conquer one’s ego and then there is nothing but the One. When one has got rid of one’s ego one does not act anymore, what is done is done through us.”

All this we have heard many times but when Ma says it, it becomes a living reality and ceases

to be mere theory. What She voices becomes alive within us.

Now there is 'silence' for 15 minutes, announced by the ringing of a bell. The lights are put out, What does this meditation mean for me? I feel as if dematerialized. A flood of love pours out over me and within me.

Who is She? Who is She? This is the question that arises in us and is often put to Her. But what does it matter? Raihana says: "For me She is the Incarnation of Universal Love." And actually this is what I also feel. Being all Love, it emanates from Her, spreads out and encompasses us. We bask in it, we are submerged by it. She is for us the Being that unites heaven and earth.

Now I know what 'Darshan' means: the contemplation of a superior Being.

Before we leave, She asks someone to give us fruits. This is prasāda, the gift of food blessed by the Guru for His disciples.

"God is Himself the Mother and hence will provide you with everything you need. Relying entirely upon Him, keep still and watch what happens. Not until the faith that whatever the Mother does is for the best of Her child awakens in you, can you find the Mother."

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Anandamayi Ma

The passing of a great soul*

Anandamayi Ma ("Joy-Permeated Mother") entered the final samādhi on August 27, at the age of 86. The beloved form was taken to Her Kankhal Ashram at Hardwar for the public services. India's Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, flew there by helicopter to join the thousands paying tribute to this sublime soul in whose presence so many had found blessing.

During Her last few days at Her Dehradun ashram in northern India She gave daily darshan. Many came from all over India to receive the blessings of one who Paramahansa Yogananda said had "solved the only problem in human life—establishment of unity with God." After his first meeting with Her he wrote : "I had found many men of God-realization in India, but never before had I met such an exalted woman saint. Her gentle face was burnished with the ineffable joy that had given Her the name of Blissful Mother. Long black tresses lay loosely behind Her unveiled head. A red dot of sandalwood paste on Her forehead symbolized the spiritual eye, ever open within Her. Tiny face, tiny hands, tiny feet—a contrast to Her spiritual magnitude !"

*Reprinted from "Self-Realization", Vol. 54, No. 1, Winter 1982.

Born in April in 1896, in the village of Kheora in the Tripura District of East Bengal, Anandamayi Ma was attracted at an early age to devotional songs and prayers. Such was Her spirituality that when shortly after She was given in marriage by Her parents, Her husband took the vow of silence and became Her first disciple. As the years passed Her radiant life drew many thousands more in India, and later, from around the world. "The closest of dear friends She made one feel," said Paramahansaji, "yet an aura of remoteness was ever around Her—the paradoxical isolation of Omnipresence."

In a letter of condolence to the Blissful Mother's chelas, Sri Daya Mata wrote: "With such sweetness I recall my first meeting with our beloved Anandamayi Ma—I felt as though a dart of divine love from Her had pierced my own heart. Anandamayi Ma will be remembered in this world as a divine soul whose life exemplified the unconditional love and wisdom of the Divine Mother. I pray that God may bless you all with awareness of Her continuing love and care, and with the inspiration to carry on in Her divine spirit. To love God and to express in our lives the ideals for which the blessed Mother lived is the greatest tribute we can offer Her."

To such a one, death was merely a corridor leading to continued divine service in another realm. As Anandamayi Ma once said of Herself when asked by Paramahansa Yogananda to tell of Her life: "Father, there is little to tell. My

consciousness has never associated itself with this temporary body. Before I came on this earth, Father, 'I was the same.' As a little girl, 'I was the same.' When the family in which I was born made arrangements to have this body married, 'I was the same.' And, Father, in front of you now, 'I am the same.' Ever afterward, though the dance of creation change around me in the hall of eternity, 'I shall be the same.'"

ANNOUNCEMENT

By the kind initiative of Sri Amar Kumar Jalan, an ardent devotee of our Mother and the Treasurer of this Charitable Society, a photo-copying machine has just been donated by M/s. The Asiatic Oxygen & Acetylene Co. Ltd. This instrument will now enable us to prepare photo-copies of all the back-issues of ANANDA VĀRTA, for supply to our devotees—both in India and abroad. Further particulars pertaining to this matter will be published in the October issue of the journal in all the 3 languages.

Manager
Publications Division
Calcutta.

Activities in Sri Ma's Name

**Shree Shree Ma Anandmayee Bhagawat Bhavan
Bangalore**

—A Living Memory of Ma—

In May, 1979 distinguished citizens of Bangalore and other parts of Karnataka and South India joined together in celebrating the 84th birthday of Sri Sri Ma, who was gracious enough to come to Bangalore. For these celebrations, a trust had been created known as 'Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Trust, Bangalore' with Sri Govind Narain, the then Governor of Karnataka as the Chief-Patron and Sri N. Lakshman Rau, as the Chairman and Elaya Raja of Travancore, Swami Vishwananda and others as trustees. The celebrations in May, 1979 created an enchanting and blissful atmosphere.

In commemoration of this great event, the local Trust, with the inspiration and blessings of Ma Herself, decided to construct a 'Bhagawat Bhavan' in Bangalore, where the famous Bhagawat pandits of Bangalore and elsewhere will have daily recitations of Bhagawat and also train disciples in various languages who will carry the message of the Bhagawat to all the corners of India.

With the munificent donations from the State Government of Karnataka and the Government of Andhra Pradesh through Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam and several local philanthropic insti-

tutions and individuals, today a beautiful building—
 ‘Shree Shree Ma Anandmayee Bhagawat Bhavan’—, on a spacious plot of land located in one of the well developed extensions of Bangalore stands now to conduct its avowed functions.

The imposing structure of this ‘Bhagawat Bhavan’ comprises a spacious Satsang hall with marble floor and a raised platform. It can easily accommodate about 600 persons. There is a commanding corridor with marble floor all round the hall. The raised platform has the holy Bhagawatam duly installed in the centre with pictures of divine personalities : Sri Sri Ma, Adi Shankaracharya, Adi Vedavyāsa and others. The platform also accommodates Mahatmas, Mathadhishas and holy persons giving discourses, bhajans, etc. The approach steps to the Hall are laid with attractive coloured stones. The ‘Gopuram’ adds sanctity to the Bhavan. Behind the main Hall building is located a suite of rooms for the use of Mahatmas during their stay along with a separate room for attendants. There is a separate office room and a servants’ quarter. In the office block will also be located a Library with spiritual and religious books and a set of all the available books on Sri Sri Ma. The basement floor underneath the ‘Satsang Hall’, has a spacious kitchen block, a store room and a few rooms for the use of acharyas and their disciples. Sufficient toilet facilities for gents and ladies separately are provided. In the basement there is a spacious hall which can be used as a dining hall on special occasions. The

entire structure is so planned as to have natural light and air. A well laid out garden is coming up which also includes a lawn. Any devotee entering the premises gets a sense of elevation and experiences a blissful atmosphere.

What the 'Bhavan' stands for? Besides the main object of propagating Srimad Bhagawatam, the Trust has a number of other objects such as providing relief to the poor, education, providing free accommodation and assistance to travellers, food to poor people, advancement of the ancient Hindu culture, etc., by conducting discourses and lectures by eminent scholars on topics of humanity, Indian philosophy and culture.

Constitution : The Trust has His Holiness the Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Sringeri Sharada Peetham as its Chief Spiritual Patron, whose decision on all spiritual and religious matters shall be final and binding. Sri Govind Narain, ex-Governor of Karnataka, is the Chief-Patron with whose approval only all the resolutions of the Trust will be effective. Sri B. K. Shah, the President of Shree Shree Ma Anandmayee Sangha has been enlisted as a trustee.

In order to secure the smooth working of the Bhagawat Bhavan and the promotion of the aims and objects of the Trust, an agreement has been entered into between Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Trust and the Ragiguddada Anjaneyaswamy Bhaktha Mandali Trust which has a beautiful and spacious Temple of Sri Hanuman adjacent to the 'Bhagawat Bhavan.' Pujas, Festivals, etc., are being conducted

for the benefit of the people at large to have better and closer coordination in the activities of both the institutions.

Funds : The activities of the Trust are sought to be organised out of the returns on fixed capital investments made by the Trust and donations and contributions that may be received from philanthropic and pious people. Donations to the Trust Fund are exempted from Income-Tax under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Inauguration : The Bhagawat Bhavan was inaugurated on the 24th September, 1982 by His Holiness the Jagadguru Sri Shankaracharya of Dwaraka Sharada Peetham, Sri Sri Swaroopandaji Maharaj in the presence of Sri Govind Narain, the then Governor of Karnatak and Sri R. Gundu Rao, the then Chief Minister of Karnataka. All Ma's devotees had hoped and wished that Sri Ma would Herself be present on this great occasion but She had attained Maha Nirvan just a little earlier and touching references were made to Her on this occasion by all the speakers, specially by His Holiness the Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Dwaraka Sharada Peetham.

Since the inauguration of the 'Bhagawat Bhavan' various Mahatmas/Gurus like Swami Iswarananda Giri Maharaj of Mount Abu, H. H. Sri Sri Abhinava Vidyatheertha Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Sringeri, Sri Sri 1108 Dr. Shivamurthy Shivacharya Mahaswami of Sirigere, Sant Bhairagiri Keshavadasji and Iskcon members of Bangalore visited the Bhagawat Bhavan and gave discourses/bhajans.

His Holiness the Jagadguru Shri Shankaracharya of Shringeri Sharada Peetham, who is the Chief Spiritual Patron of the Trust, announced during his visit to the Bhagawat Bhavan that, as the outward symbol of the Holy Bhagawatam and as the deity before whom to bow in the Bhagawat Bhavan, the images of "Sri Lakshmi Narayana" should be installed on the dais under the Gopuram, according to religious principles and traditions. The Trust has already started making suitable arrangements to get the statues of "Shri Lakshmi Narayana" carved and installed at the Bhagawat Bhavan as early as possible. His Holiness the Shankaracharya also offered to send a "Sivalingam" to the Bhagawat Bhavan for daily *abhishekam*.

Daily pujas mornings and evenings apart from special pujas and programmes on important occasions like Sri Ramnavami, Sivaratri, Sri Krishna Jayanthi, Sharannavarathri and so forth will afford opportunities to the devotees and people in all parts of the City and elsewhere to participate in these spiritual and devotional activities. On each Full-moon Day (Purnima) Sri Sathyanarayana Katha and Puja is being conducted by enlisting the voluntary offers of a minimum of 15 couples.

The Trust has already chalked out detailed plans of the programmes and activities to be carried out regularly at the Bhavan, including Sri Ma's birthday celebrations and Bhagavata Saptaha every year with a spirit of dedication and devotion to Ma, who is held in profound veneration by countless people even in the south.

Thus Shree Shree Ma Anandmayee Bhagwat Bhavan, in the City of the Beautiful Gardens, is flourishing as a glowing monument of 'Ma'—The Great Saint and Great Spiritual Beacon for millions of souls.

* * *

Sri Ma's birthday was celebrated at the Bhavan from 23rd to 30th May by a full programme starting with Usha Kirtan at 7 a.m. followed by Vedaghosha, Devi Bhagavata, Bhagavata and Gita Parayana, and Mangal Arati up to midday. Again from 5-30 to 8 p.m. there were discourses and music performed by reputed speakers, artists and devotees, followed by ārati. Ma's birthday pūjā was performed solemnly in the night of May 29th.

Agartala

Mataji had begun Her life on earth in Tripura State, East Bengal and Her last journey at the end of March, 1982 was to Agartala in that very State.

In the July '82 issue we had reported that Mataji had brought a beautiful small marble statue of Goddess Saraswati from Vrindavan to be installed in Her own room at Agartala. Mataji admonished the devotees to celebrate with special care Saraswati Puja on Vasant Panchami which fell on February 18th, this year. Accordingly the celebration was done on an elaborate scale through the efforts of the local Managing Committee and devotees. 300-400 people partook of prasāda in the Ashram compound.

It is interesting to note that Mataji was to visit the new Agartala Ashram on Vasant Panchami in 1980, but due to certain reasons had changed Her programme. However She gave instructions that a clay image of Goddess Saraswati should be worshipped at the exact spot where the marble vigraha was installed in 1982. In 1981 & 82 the puja was also duly performed there. Before the worship was done in 1982, Ma sent word that the clay image should not be immersed as customary but kept for a whole year. The marble vigraha was installed in Ma's presence on Mahāstami day of Vasanti Puja which fell on March 31st, 1982. It thus seems obvious that the Agartala Ashram has a special connection with Saraswati, the Goddess of learning, music and Brahmavidya.

Almost adjacent to Mataji's building is the huge temple of Uma Maheshvara, gifted to the Sangha at the express wish of the Raja and Rani of Tripura. The very popular temple is visited by numerous people of the town.

Naimisharanya

It may be recollected that a small Siva Temple had been consecrated in July 1981 in Ma's presence. Jagadishvara Mahadeva (a Siva Linga from Narmada) was installed in memory of the deceased son of Sri Kotecha of Bombay, a devotee of many years' standing. Ma gave special instructions that all night puja should be performed there during Sivaratri in 1982. We took it for granted that Mataji's order had been carried out.

Some time after Ma took mahasamādhi, She indicated to one of the ashramites to make sure that all night puja would be duly performed on Sivaratri in 1983. On inquiry it was then found that the puja in 1982 had not been celebrated strictly according to Ma's instructions. To make up for the neglect, the recitation of the Siva Purana was arranged for nine days ending on Sivaratri day. The exposition in Hindi was rendered very lucidly every afternoon by a Professor of the Institute for Puranic and Vedic Research and Study, Dr. B. N. Tripathi. On Sivaratri morning Rudrabhisheka was performed by eleven pandits in the Mandir. All night puja was celebrated there as well as in the hall by devotees who had come from Sitapur, Hardoi, Lucknow and Calcutta. Thus Sri Ma's instructions were this year carried out to the full.

On Ma's birthday, May 3rd, special puja was performed of Ma and Goddess Chandi in Sri Ma's room and Chandi Pātha was recited every morning until May 29th when Tithi Puja was celebrated in the night followed by a feast the next day. Devotees from various places participated.

Varanasi

From 19th to 22nd April Vasanti Puja was performed by Br. Nirvanananda in a very dignified and elaborate manner as it had been done in Mataji's life time. Most of our sadhus had gathered for the festival from Kankhal and other places. The attendance of local devotees was very large.

On May 3rd Ma's birthday puja was performed by the students and staff of the Kanyapeeth with great ceremony and devotion. The decorations were exquisite. Thereafter, pūjā, āratī and bhoga were performed three times daily until May 29th when Ma's Tithi puja was celebrated in a very impressive manner. Devotees from the town regularly participated in all functions. Prasāda was served to all on May 30th.

Calcutta

A very successful Nama Yajña was held at Sri Tarun & Ratna Goswami's place in Ballygunge on March 5th/6th. Practically all of Ma's Calcutta devotees visited and took part in the function at some time or other.

Sri Sailen & Ranu Ghosh had originally intended to have their new house inaugurated by Ma in person. They arranged for japa, puja, kirtan on April 14th, japa for 12 hours each on 1st & 8th of May and a 24 hours Nama Yajña on 14th-15th (Akshaya Tritiya) before occupying the house.

Sri B. Ghoshal held a Nama Yajña on 16/17th April and Sm. Chitra Thakur on April 26th.

Ma's birthday on May 3rd was celebrated by devotees in town and Tithi Puja on 29th May at the Agarpara Ashram with full ceremony followed by a feast for all on May 30th.

Holy at Vrindaban : Saroj Paliwal

The land of Braj, sanctified by the advent of Lord Krishna in a human form, is a centre of

attraction, owing to its rich cultural heritage. The divine life of Sri Krishna has been described in the scriptures, especially in the Srimad Bhagavatam and in the poetry of reputed poet-saints.

'Holi' is hailed as the merriest festival of all. As the scriptures say Lord Krishna is very fond of the Holi-līlā, the colourful play with Sri Radha and the gopis that expresses the highest type of joy. Through the sprinkling of *gulāl* (red powder) and different colours, Sri Krishna pours out all that is within and Sri Radha and the gopis receive it and vice-versa.

This colourful festival of Holi was celebrated in our Ashram this year between 25th and 28th of March. Needless to say, deprived of Ma's physical presence, the devotees who assembled from near and far were feeling pangs of separation. Yet the entire environs were vibrant with the LIVING PRESENCE OF MA.

On the morning of March 25th 1983 the programme of speeches was inaugurated by Mahamandaleshwar Swami Purnananda Giriji. Swami Siva Chaitanya Puriji and Brahmachari Nirmalananda spoke on the special significance of Holi. All the proceedings were convened very skilfully by Brahmachari Swarup.

On March 26th Bhagavatacharya Swami Akhandananda Saraswati blessed us by a very inspiring talk, abounding in reminiscences of our beloved Ma. Also Swami Nishchalanandaji and Swami Vipinchandranandaji, disciples of Swami Karpatriji gave beautiful discourses on bhakti, elaborating

on the deep meaning of Harināma. Brahmachari Nirmalananda of our Ashram, the brilliant Sanskrit scholar, spoke very appealingly on the meaning of *Madhumāsa* (the month in which Holi is celebrated), co-relating it to his experiences in Ma's loving presence.

In the evening Sri Har Govind and party staged Krishna-Lila, which attracted a very large number of devotees, so that the hall was packed to capacity.

On the morning of March 27th Sri Sukumarda and party from Calcutta chanted Hari-nām-Sankirtan that filled the whole atmosphere with divine zeal. Thereafter Acharya Indubhushan Goswami, the reputed Manas Kathakarin, in a very impressive manner spoke on japa-yoga, with special reference to Rām-Nām.

The evening of March 27th was devoted to the performance of the Lila of renunciation of Mahaprabhu Chaitanya Deva. Afterwards a central *Nāma-Yajña*-altar with beautiful pictures of Ma and various deities was erected, around which *Akhanda Nām-Samkirtan* was started by Sri Sukumarda and party amidst a large gathering joined by the Samkirtan-party from Delhi. The entire temple-environs was echoing with "Jaya Jaya Kar" of Haribol and Jai Ma.

On the auspicious morning of Holi Purnima Brahmachari Shivananda (Shaileshda) performed Sri Chhaliya and Sri Gaur Nitai puja amidst melodious chanting, and each devotee then placed a *gulal*-offering at the lotus-feet of our beloved Ma, while Br. Nirmalananda distributed *gulal*-tika to all

present. Very eloquently, he assured us of the subtle presence of Sri Ma who is and ever remains with us.

In the evening the Akhaṇḍa kirtan came to a very delightful close as Br. Nirmalananda scattered prasādam, blessing everybody present.

On March 30th a big “*bhandara*” was arranged and silken *chadars* and *dakshina* were given to all sadhus and brahmins with puja performed by Swami Dhirananda and Br. Vishudhananda of our Ashram.

Inauguration of “Matri Kripa Cottage”

“*Om Ma, Sri Ma, Jai Jai Ma.*” with this mantra I like to say that my cottage named “Matri Kripa” was inaugurated during this Holi festival. It has been constructed by the skilled devotion of Swami Dhirananda with the consent of our beloved Ma and Swami Paramananda in January 1982. The Nārāyaṇ-Pravesh-ceremony had been performed on the morning of March 8, 1983 to the sounds of conch-shell and cymbals. To my great joy, as I stepped into the cottage after Pujari Narayan Banerji (Dadu) with a small earthen vessel full of water, I very ardently prayed to Ma for Her sanction of the ceremony. Lo and behold! Ma responded by manifesting Herself to me, saying smilingly, “Now this is your only abode.” Her divine words remained humming within me, while Br. Vishuddhananda performed Narayan and Ma-puja in the cottage with elaborate bhoga, etc., in the presence of all Ashramites.

On the second evening Swami Satyanandaji of "Kripa Vilas", Vrindaban blessed me by his inspiring presence, while the illustrious "Katha-chanter" Acharya Indubhushan Goswami recited Lord Rama's glories very lucidly. The ceremony then came to a close with kirtan and āratī. After a gap of 15 days, on March 25th, Holi Ekadashi, a five day-programme was arranged inside the cottage which is next to late Dr. Panalal's. On the evening the Jagadguru Shri Purushottam Goswami of Radha Raman temple spoke as the chief guest on the significance of God's name and then started Akhanda Hari Nama Samkirtan, which was kept up the whole night by my college staff girls such as Kr. Archana, Usha, Uma, Vinaylaxmi, etc. Even Swami Prajnānanda (Pramila Devi) blessed us during Hari-Samkirtan.

On the 26th afternoon, the music party of Shri Sukumarda of Calcutta added immense zeal and zest to the Akhanda nāma kirtan, which came to a glorious end in the presence of Swami Dhirananda, Swarupananda and Shivananda, etc. after *parīkrama* of the cottage.

Br. Nirmalananda delivered an inspiring talk assuring us, that Ma was and would ever remain with us. In Her own words: "Wherever you remember this body there it will be present."

On the 27th morning, the pujariji of Sadhubela Ashram, the exponent of Radha tattwa, visited my cottage and blessed me before Ma's picture after chanting Veda-mantras. He felt overwhelmed recalling Ma's spiritual wealth, which She had

showered on humanity. Pt. Indubushan Acharya, my spiritual brother also visited the cottage and distributed prasādam to all. Simultaneously Judge Swami, the noted disciple of Sri Haribaba visited Matri Kripa. He was an ardent follower of Baba in whose blessed company, he sought several opportunities to remain very close to Ma and to discuss with Her spiritual topics. It is worthwhile to record the unique experience of Acharya Indubushan Goswami : He once had a vision in which he saw Ma Anandamayi reclining on Her bed. To his utter amazement Ma's left foot got cracked and a stream of deities started emerging : Lord Rama, Sita, Hanuman and so on and so forth.

Fortunately Swami Virajananda along with Madas (Kaul Bhai) also arrived in Vrindaban. At my urgent invitation they came and Virajanandaji said : "Ma's real grace has been manifested to you in the form of this beautiful, peaceful abode. Now stay here and go ahead with bhajan."

My daughters Nilima, Purnima and my son-in-law Ravi felt as if Sri Ma had come Herself in the guise of a Sanyasin.

On the 28th morning, Holi Purnima, Br. Swarupananda performed a havan (fire sacrifice) which marked the completion of the inauguration of my cottage Matri-Kripa. Sri Ma has made me a true Braj-vāsi by letting all the significant events of my life happen in Vrindaban, like Ma's darshan, Her touch, Her satsang, Her grace, words with Ma, Mantra-diksha, Gayatri-diksha, Bhagwata Saptah in memory of my departed husband.

With deep gratitude to Swami Paramananda, Swami Dhirananda and other Ashramites, I pray that each devotee of Ma may be blessed by Her as I have been.

OM MA ! JAI MA ! JAI JAI MA !

Kankhal : Matri Mandir.

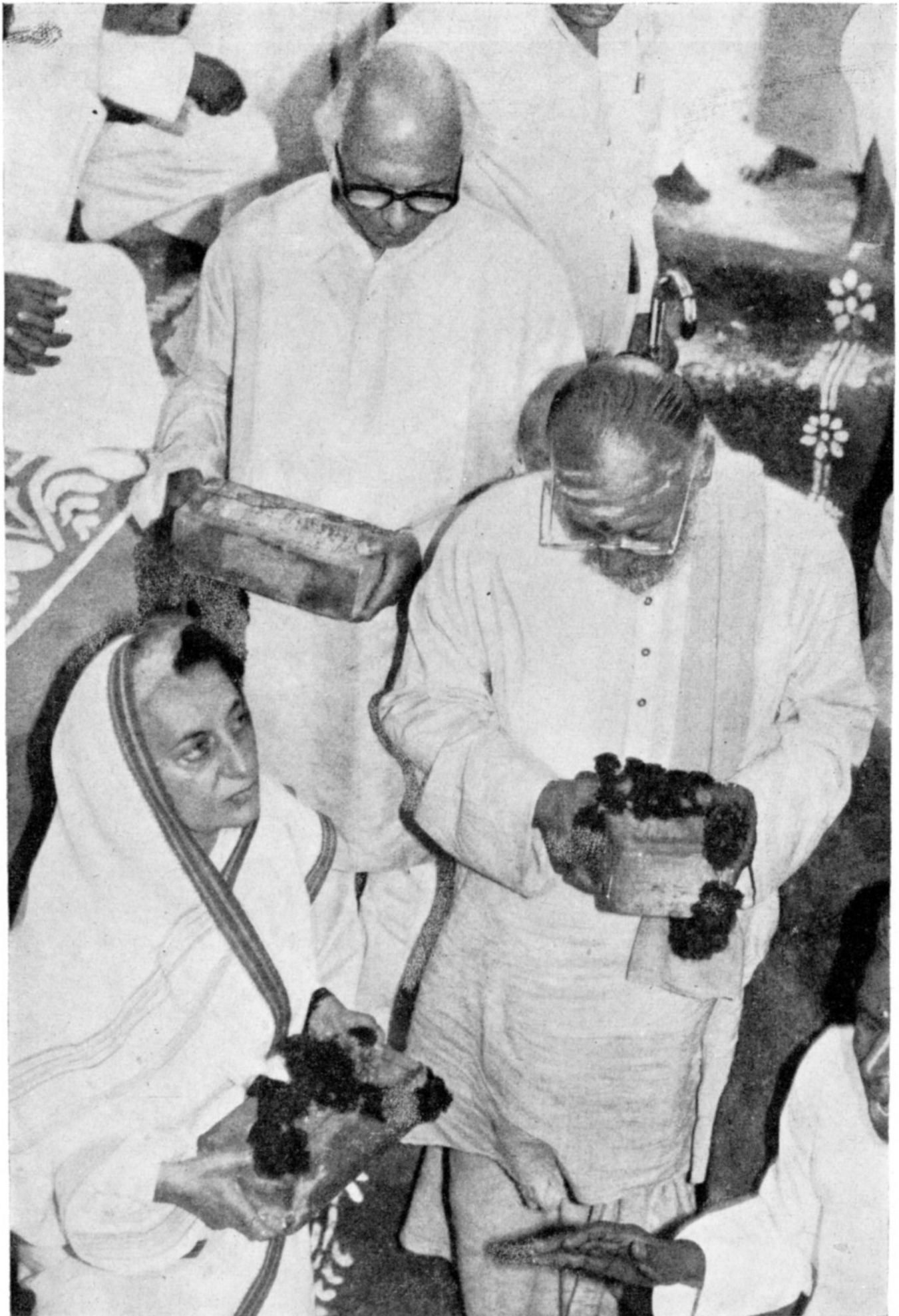
In the January issue of "Ānanda Vārtā" we had already mentioned that requests have been made to several renowned architects to submit designs for the proposed Mandir. About half a dozen have been received but no final decision has yet been made. The basic scheme is now to have two temples side by side, one over Sri Ma's Samādhi and another one with Ma's *ashtadhatu* (8 metals) statue, a medium sized meditation hall in front, and a hall for a library etc in the basement. Several topmost architects of the country, such as Sri N. K. Kothari, Sri A. P. Kanvinde, Sri P. L. Verma, Sri J. D. Sastri have been requested to draw up dignified designs, keeping in view the basic points decided by the Construction committee consisting mostly of Ashram sādhus.

Since May 15th, Akshay Tritiya, was a very auspicious day (many of our temples were consecrated on that day), the Sangha decided to have the foundation puja performed although no final decision has been taken for the architectural design of the Mandir. Srimati Indira Gandhi was invited and gladly agreed to be present on that sacred occasion.

For the foundation stone laying a pit was dug at the north-east corner of the Samādhi as per



Prime Minister of India laying a Garland on Sri Sri MA's Samadhi.

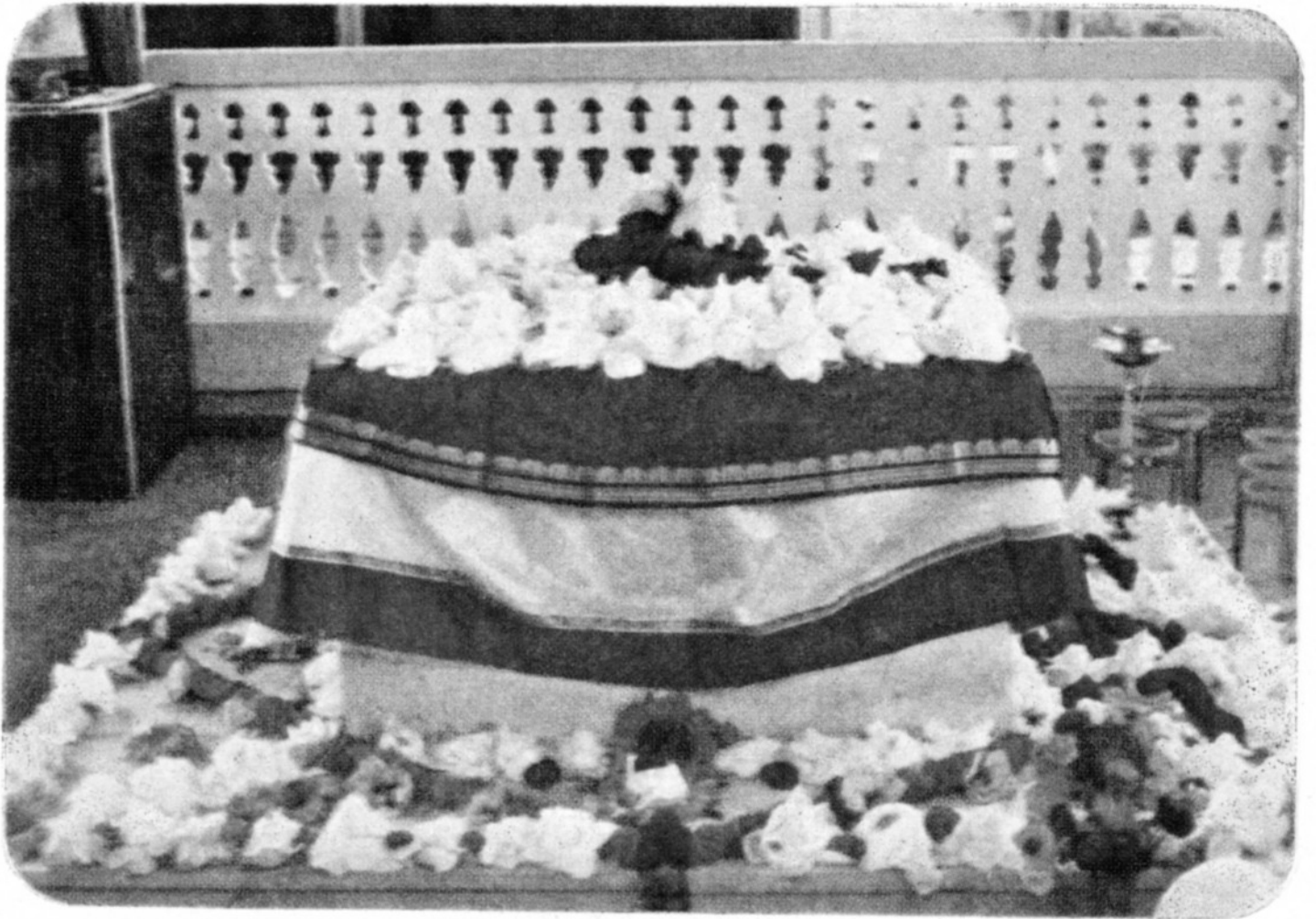


Sm. Indira Gandhi, Sri Sripati Misra, Chief Minister of U. P. and Girdhar Narayan Puri of Mahanirvani Akhara laying each a sanctified brick in the foundation—one after the other. The fifth brick was laid by Swami Nirbananandaji of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee Asram (not seen in the picture).

Śastric rules and elaborate puja and havan were performed. Mahamandaleswar Swami Vidyananda of Kailashashram and Mahant Sri Girdhar Narayan Puri of Mahanirvani Akhara were specially requested to grace the occasion. Representatives of several other akharas also were present. Sm. Indira Gandhi along with the Chief Minister of the U. P. and several other high officials went straight from the helipad to Sri Ma's Samādhi where all offered gralands. Then she was taken to a specially erected pandal in front of the Samādhi where she sat with the Mahatmas for a few minutes.

The Markandeya Upanishad with Hindi translation by Dr. Dharmendranath Sastri, Ex-Professor of the Naimisharanya Institute for Puranic and Vedic Research and Study, with a critical introduction by Dr. V. D. Rakesh of the Gurukul Kangra University, Hardwar, was released through the hands of the Prime Minister. The book has been published by Dr. D. Sastri, inspired by Sri Ma, and is dedicated to Her. It contains Ma's photo and has a dignified get-up. Mrs. Gandhi with her own hands distributed ten copies to the Mahatmas present. Thereafter she and the Mahatmas were taken to the opening dug for laying the bricks.

There is an interesting prelude to this which seems worth relating here. Several years ago Swami Swarupananda, then in charge of Agarpara Ashram and certain Calcutta devotees had a desire to build a Matri Mandir. When Ma was in Calcutta for Her birthday celebrations in 1975, She one night at



Sri Sri MA's Samadhi at Kankhal Asram.



The first brick sanctified earlier by the touch of feet of Sri Sri MA being laid in the foundation of Matri Mandir at Kankhal by Mahamandaleswar 1008 Swami Vidyanandaji of Kailash Asram. Swami Swarupanandaji, the additional General Secretary of the Sangha is seen on the right.

2-30 a.m. called the Swami and asked him to show Her the site where Didi wished to build the Mandir, which he did. When the Swami came to Kankhal for Guru Purnima the next July, he wanted to perform Sri Ma's puja. Ma said : "The time is very auspicious, bring the bricks !" He brought five carefully washed bricks. Ma sat down on a wooden bed in the room next to the office, with Her feet resting on the bricks while the puja was performed. Swami Swarupananda took the bricks to Calcutta and preserved them carefully. When he came to Vrindaban for Holi in March 1976, he brought with him a small golden snake with rubies for eyes and five jewels (diamond, ruby, sapphire, emerald, topas) which he had procured for being put into the foundation of the Mandir. Mataji put the coiled snake on Her finger like a ring and handled the jewels, saying : "*Don't build now, build later !*"

The Swami kept the snake and jewels with him all along. They were now put into the foundation at Kankhal. He had wired to Calcutta and a devotee brought the *five bricks*, which bear the living touch of Ma's feet, in time for the ceremony on May 15th. These *bricks* are the foundation stone of Matri Mandir at Kankhal.

The first brick was laid by Mahamandaleswar Swami Vidyananda, the second by Sm. Indira, the third by Sripati Misra, Chief Minister, U.P., the fourth by Mahantaji G. N. Puri and the fifth by Br. Nirvanananda.

After the ceremony Mrs. Gandhi was taken to the permanent mandap under construction of

Ati Rudra Mahayajña and from there to Sri Ma's old cottage where she sat quietly for a few minutes and took light refreshments together with the Chief Minister. All the other officials were also served cold drinks and light refreshments while the Mahatmas were offered fruit packets. The whole function proceeded in a very dignified and impressive manner and everyone praised the arrangements.

* * *

From May 14th to 21st a Bhagavata Saptah was held jointly for the deceased widow of Sri Parasuram Dhami, one of Ma's oldest devotees of Dehradun who was responsible for building the Almora Ashram and one of the Raipur Ashrams ; also for the brother of late Maharattan (Sm. Jaspal), another prominent devotee of Dehradun.

On May 17th, Adi Sankaracharya's birthday puja was performed in front of his shrine in the hall. Mahamandaleswara Sri Swami Brahmananda of Sannyāsāshram spoke for half an hour, after which sādhus were entertained to a feast and presented cloth and cash offerings.

On May 20th, the anniversary of Sri Bhola-nathji's tirodhan was observed by puja and sadhu feeding.

Birthday Celebrations

Sri Ma's birthday was celebrated from 23rd to 30th, followed by a Nāma Yajña which ended on May 31st late at night. The attendance was not as large as last year but it must be remembered that elaborate celebrations were held in all our larger

Ashrams which were well attended by local devotees. In spite of this, from 27th onwards, the number of devotees who had arrived from all over India became spectacular. Throughout the week uninterrupted satsang was kept up starting at 4.30 a.m. with Mangal Āratī and Usha Kirtan and ending with Video films upto 9.30 p.m. In the morning Gita, Chandi, Viṣṇu Sahasranāma, etc. were recited near the Samādhi followed by āratī. In the hall Rāsa Līlā was performed by the Rāsaparty from Vrindaban. In the afternoon we listened to inspiring talks by Swami Chidanandaji, President of the Divine Life Society, Mahamandaleswaras Swami Vidyananda and Swami Brahmananda and several other well-known Mahatmas who had come also on former occasions. After 7 p.m. there was āratī at the Samādhi followed by beautiful kirtana.

One morning 108 kumaris and a few batuks were worshipped and entertained to a feast. On the completion of *Shata Chandi Patha*, that had been recited daily on the veranda of Siva Mandir, there was again Kumari Puja of a few kumaris. During fullmoon night ladies performed all night kirtan. For 48 hours Akhanda Ramayana was sung most beautifully in Sri Ma's cottage by a special Ramayana party. On the last day āratī was performed to the Mahatmas in the hall and they were entertained to a feast. Ma's Tithi Puja was celebrated very solemnly in the hall by Br. Nirvanananda.

For Ma's 60th birthday in Varanasi in 1956 a huge lion, made of the traditional eight metals, with

a silver throne on its back, had been sculptured by late Sri Nitai Pal, because Sri Krishnananda Avadhutaji had had a vision of Ma as "*Singha Vāhini*" (seated on a lion), a familiar figure of *Mahaśakti* as described in the Chandi. He had therefore proposed that Mataji should be worshipped seated on that throne. In 1956 Mataji during the puja on May 2nd, in spite of all entreaties, refused to ascend to the throne on the lion's back and remained seated on the steps. However, on the day of the Tithi Puja on May 28th, She finally, at the urgent requests of Haribabaji and Avadhutaji, mounted the steps and lay down on the throne on the lion's back. We had never seen the lion after that occasion. To our great surprise the lion (weighing 28 maunds) appeared within the enclosure of the hall at Kankhal and two large pictures of Sri Ma were placed on it and worshipped during the Tithi Puja. The decorations were quite exquisite and the Puja proceeded very solemnly to the accompaniment of beautiful music with half an hour's silent meditation at the time of Sri Ma's birth. There was Kumari Puja of one Kumari followed by havan. Everyone was allowed to enter Ma's Samādhi to offer pranāma on this special occasion.

Last year Mataji had never left Her cottage during the birthday celebrations and we got to see very little of Her but Her presence had been felt very powerfully. This year this was even more so. Ma was with us undeniably and everything proceeded in great joy and harmony.

Dehradun

Kishenpur is the first ashram built for Ma outside of Bengal in 1936 and Ma chose to complete Her līlā on earth there. Ma's birthday was celebrated with great love and devotion. Sm. Shanti Sabarwal, the President of the Dehradun Ashrams, in spite of Her age, took immense trouble to arrange for a full programme from 23rd to 30th May.

Usha Kirtan started everyday and from 8-30 to 11 a.m. there was Chandi Puja and recitation. Every evening from 5-30 to 7 p. m. devotees assembled again. On some days very beautiful kirtan was sung, once by the Kishenpur women's kirtan party, twice by the devotees of Gauriya Math who sang entrancingly and one of them gave a short talk. On other days there were discourses by Sri Dikshit, Rt. D. M. of Dehradun about Ma's lila, by the blind singer and speaker Motwani about the Ramayan and by Col. Sharma on yoga and sādhanā. From 7-8 p.m. japa was performed in Sri Ma's room, followed by Arati at 8 p.m. there itself.

On the 26th seven kumaris and one batuk were worshipped and entertained to a feast and devotees also partook of Sri Ma's bhoga. The next day food for 70 lepers was taken to the leper colony by a devotee. On the 28th there was sadhu feeding. On the 29th morning Akhaṇḍa Rāmayana was started in the hall which was completed on 30th midday. At about 3 a.m. Mataji's Tithi Puja was celebrated most solemnly in Mātri Mandir, also Kumari Puja of one seven years old girl who

afterwards recited two chapters of the Gita by heart which was much appreciated by all present. Prasada was served to all on the 30th.

Local devotees attended in large numbers throughout the week. Besides many who had come to Kankhal from Delhi, Lucknow, Calcutta and other places kept on visiting the Kishenpur Ashram, some remaining for two or three days. Everyone was charmed by the blissful, harmonious atmosphere. Here also Sri Ma's loving presence was felt tangibly by one and all.

Ma's birthday was of course celebrated also in Vrindaban, Ranchi, Poona and all other larger Ashrams.

Mataji seems to be more active than ever. Her presence, guidance and inspiration are felt everywhere by all who are eager for it. Swami Chidananda said so beautifully in one of his talks : Formerly Mataji had one body now She works through many.

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Durga Pujā will be celebrated from 12th to 16th October and Lakshmi Puja on Oct. 21st most probably in Kankhal ; Kali Puja on Nov. 4th in Delhi. Samyam Mahavrata is to be observed from 13th to 19th Nov. The venue is not yet certain.

“Seek not God but see Him !”