



ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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

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

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ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ



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

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SRI SRI ANANDAMAYI MA KI JAI !

INFINITE BLISS IS NOT HARD TO FIND
UNLESS WE SEARCH IN THE SENSEBOUND MIND
WE *CAN* HAVE ETERNAL PERFECTION
IF WE LOOK IN THE *RIGHT* DIRECTION
THE *SENSEBOUND* MIND *ALWAYS* TURNS *OUTSIDE*
IGNORING *HOLY* TREASURE *INSIDE*
PRINCIPLES, MORAL AND AESTHETIC,
CAN MAKE AN AESTHETE OR ASCETIC—
WHILE WE LET OUR TRUE LOVE SIMPLY WAIT
BEYOND OUR MIND'S TRANCENDENTAL GATE
OPEN THE GATE ! *UNLIMIT* THE THOUGHT !
BE ABSORBED IN MA, WHERE ELSE IS NAUGHT !

—Elwood Decker



OUTER SIGHT—INSIGHT

Walking in a cold pool at night
I saw only stars left and right
In front, behind, above, below—

Years have gone by and now I know
Outer sight saw *its* division
OF THAT WHICH IS FOREVER ONE
Forever Free from stars or rain
Or the senses' pleasure and pain

Only Insight can Show or Say
Beyond doubt, What We Are Today

—Elwood Decker

Sri Sri Ma's Utterances

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

The mind is no doubt restless, yet it is also a *sādhaka*. Look, what it craves for is bliss. Unable to find it, it roams here and there. Moreover, it obviously knows the taste of unalloyed bliss and this is why it desires it. In so many ways it experiences fragmental joy but this cannot hold it because it is not contented. What it hankers after is undivided Bliss, this is why it may be called a great *sādhaka*.

* * *

A gentleman belonging to the Brahma religion asked : "Ma, what is the solution for us ?"

Mataji : Everything is within yourself. You are unable to feel satisfied with fragmentary joy, so you are searching here and there for complete, uninterrupted joy.

Question : Why ? Do we not at times experience joy also in worldly affairs ?

Mataji : That is temporary. Of course, even in that partial experience there is some happiness. Perceiving the shade of a tree one knows that the tree is there. See, how marvellously happiness is always present, never is one totally deprived of it. Sometimes it is present in the memory of it, at

other times in actual fact. Even when one feels joyless, then also joy exists in our memory, that is why one longs for it. Thus, you see, joy never entirely forsakes you ; it remains with you whether as a shadow or in its true being. Again, look, deep down the infinite ocean is calm and quiet, while there are the waves on the upper layer of inner tranquillity—if the bottom were not steady, ripples could not play on the surface.

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A lawyer said : Well, how can we lawyers attain to salvation ? We at all times cover up truth with falsehood.

Mataji (smilingly) : No, this is no falsehood at all. Suppose someone takes possession of another person's house by a deceitful lawsuit. It is to be understood that in the past the loser of the case must have done the winner some injustice. What has happened is the result of this. Whatever one has done will bear its fruit. Consequently truth is hidden even within this falsity. The difficulty is that we perceive falsehood and sin. The distinction between truth and falsehood has produced the notion of virtue and vice. But when this notion really disappears then the distinction between truth and falsity will have no more sway. Then this side of the river and the other side will look the same.

Having said this much, Mataji laughed heartily and added : “Baba, for so long you have tackled any number of litigations, now attend to your own

huge litigation. Your hair has turned grey, your teeth have also fallen out. Such a lot of money you have earned — where wealth (*dhana*) is, there is also *nidhana* (destruction). But that which is never lost — that, verily, is *svadhana*, one's own true wealth. *Sādhanā* itself is *svadhana*.

The Lawyer : I fell I have lost that wealth.

Mataji : The very fact that you feel you have lost it shows that it has not been lost. The inner awareness of the undivided whole can never totally disappear, hence we do not find lasting joy in the parts, we yearn for the whole. "Better death in the discharge of one's own dharma ; the dharma of another is full of danger."¹ The meaning of this statement is that conduct that awakens the sense of want is indeed the dharma of another : this you should relinquish. It is better even to perish in *svadharma*, that is to say, you must come over to *this* side at all cost. Hand over your burden to anyone you may find, there is not much time to lose.

The Lawyer : My ego stands in the way, I am unable to make up my mind to whom to surrender — I just can't do it !

Mataji : If all are the ONE, then to whomever you hand over, it will be to HIM alone.

The Lawyer : The time is over, now accounts can no more be cleared.

Mataji : Why not ? Why do you despair ? Who knows what may happen to whom at any

1. Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3/35.

moment ? Why don't you say right now : I am catching hold of it." Don't say : "I give up", grasp at something and hold fast to it ; then only you will see how your ties will be snapped.

* * *

The day that is gone never returns ; bit by bit time is dwindling away.

* * *

Study and mastery of *Scriptures* is necessary only so long as one has not actually set to work. As soon as a particular course of spiritual practice has been chalked out and started on, study is no longer necessary. It is just like this : when by consulting the timetable or hearing from people I have made sure which train leaves for Dehradun, I then purchase the ticket, get into the compartment and occupy my seat. After that no further information is needed for the train is sure to take you to Dehradun. Therefore set to work !

* * *

Question : Ma, after creating us, what did God decide that we should do ?

Mataji : He decided that you should do exactly what you are doing.

* * *

Question : What are the six *cakras* ? How many are there ?

Mataji : Suppose you are travelling by train to a certain station. Although your destination is just one particular place, you come across so many things on the way ; similarly in your books six *chakras* are mentioned, but those who traverse through them find that there are so many more intermediate *cakras*, and what not, in between them.

Question : How can we penetrate those *cakras* ?

Mataji : By invoking the name of God with one-pointed concentration. And in order to keep up this single-mindedness one has to engage in various activities so that there may always be something to do in the endeavour to fix one's attention on Him — such as *japa*, meditation, *satsang*, reading of spiritual books, kirtan and so on.

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Question : Why is the Guru mantra not effective ?

Mataji : Do you know why ? Because although we take the medicine we indulge in foodstuff injurious to health. This is why the medicine does not work and the disease is not cured either. Hence, just as the medicine received from the Guru has to be used, so proper dietary rules must also be observed. In other words, your total deportment, your meals, your recreation — everything must proceed in the right direction. Everything is indeed

contained within yourself — oneness, multiplicity, infinity, the unmanifest, the manifest.

* * *

Question : Ma, the mind is terribly restless !

Mataji : Just as restlessness is its very nature, so is tranquillity too. Moreover the mind is pining for its Mother, which is pure Bliss. This is why, no matter how many worldly pleasures and enjoyments you may provide for it, it can never be satisfied. Again and again it strays in ever so many directions. Restlessness is bound to persist, since it is restless for Him alone. So long as He is not realized, it cannot be pacified — only when the ONE is found the mind will become still.

* * *

You think that you are the owner (*mālik*) of the garden and this is why you suffer. Give up the idea of ownership and become the gardener (*mālī*), then there will be an end to all your troubles.

* * *

Not until one has acquired the capacity and the inner qualification (*adhikāra*) to experience Grace can one understand what Grace is.

* * *

Question : Ma, everyone talks of dharma, but what actually is dharma ?

Mataji : All actions that help to realize That which everyone is yearning for, those actions are indeed dharma, for they spring from one's true Nature ; and that which brings in unrest and sorrow is negative action, in other words adharma.

The questioner : Some want money, others hanker after fame.

Mataji : It is true that they want money, but money only further increases the sense of want, thus adding to disquiet and problems without producing any peace. Hence to accumulate money is not an act of one's true nature. What we desire is peace and bliss. It is possible to find partial happiness in worldly things but this does not satisfy us. What we really long for is limitless, total joy, uninterrupted, complete peace. It is imperative to engage in activities conducive to the attainment of undisturbed peace and bliss.

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So long as there is action (*kriyā*) there is also grace (*kripā*). But when there is no more action, when there are not 'two', who then prays to whom for grace ? When there is no duality, there can be no grace either.

In Association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Amulya Datta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali)

(Continued from the last issue)

Hidden tendencies come to light in Ma's proximity

23.12.1939

This evening after kirtan, a young man recited from his own poems in Ma's presence and later performed a number of caricatures. On hearing them Ma laughed and remarked : "This place must be like a zoo, all this was missing previously, but now it has come up."

I : This is due to the special atmosphere of this place.

Ma : What you say about the local atmosphere is also true. God is everywhere, so one can perceive different kinds of manifestations in different places. (Addressing Ganga Charan Babu) : Where Mahatmas live a special influence can be felt. But in such places this kind of thing (namely frivolity or light entertainment) does not occur.

I : When people are in your proximity all their hidden tendencies are brought out.

Ma (smiling) : Yes, when they come here, whatever is concealed within them emerges. This

manifestation is all to the good. But keep in mind :
If you can bear it, it will gradually subside.

Sunday, 24th Dec. 1939

When I arrived early in the morning near Ma, only a few people were present. Ma looked towards an old gentleman, saying : "You are a Professor of Chemistry, aren't you ? Tell me what it is all about."

The gentleman : Have I the capacity to explain this ?

Ma : Explain as much as you can !

The gentleman : Western scientists have come to the conclusion that whatever matter we perceive is composed of a conglomeration of very small particles. Of course, these tiny particles are not the same as what we understand. They are not ready to admit the existence of any matter that cannot be seen with the eyes at least with the help of their scientific instruments. Scientists have analysed and divided matter into such minute particles that they cannot be split any further. Then again they have divided matter into various other constituents, and have tried to reconstruct the matter by assembling them together once more. If they are successful in getting back the original under different conditions and in different locations, they come to the conclusion that the tiny elements are part and parcel of the material. In this way they are trying to divide matter into its composing elements and then again assemble them to come back to the original. In order to do this they have discovered and keep on inventing many marvellous instruments and machines.

Ma (smiling) : Well, all this analysis they are carrying out seems to indicate that they are working under certain limitations. For instance they can assert how long it will take for this piece of

wood to be converted into dust. But do they realize that every single object is changing every moment ?

The old gentleman kept silent. Nitish Guha exclaimed : “No Ma, they cannot realize this.” Ma said nothing more.

Fate and Mercy

Sri Durgamohan Choudhry asked Ma : “Is it possible for man to change by his own action what is looked upon as Fate ?

Ma : Everything is possible by God’s grace. If He showers His mercy, there is nothing that cannot be accomplished in a moment.

The old gentleman : Is that bit of grace not part of Fate ?

Ma : If you believe this and go beyond Fate, then there is nothing left. So long as one talks of God’s existence, one’s own existence and the existence of karma, there is also the question of Grace and karma. But when this dual viewpoint disappears, then there is neither Fate nor Grace. Then it can be said that whatever takes place happens just by its own nature.

Durgamohan : Talk of Grace implies partiality for God.

Ma : From the point of view from which you are speaking, in that state, all this is certainly true. But when you come to see that God is not apart from the world, when you come to know that whatever happens in the world is an expression of God’s movement, then there will be neither grace nor karma. Nor will there be discrimination between truth and falsehood.

Enjoyment, Relinquishment, Taking on a Guru

Thereafter other topics came up for discussion.

Durgamohan said to Ma : We do not really love Ma. We are not for enjoyment and we come to Ma to enjoy ourselves.

Ma : You don't desire real enjoyment. What you seek is that which has to be renounced.

Durgamohan : I do not understand what you mean.

Ma : What you keep on wanting, are all things to be renounced. In due course they will in any case forsake you. Do you ever seek genuine enjoyment ? If you gain that which is real enjoyment, can there be an end to it ? This is why I maintain that you only desire what has to be given up and not what is truly enjoyable.

Durgamohan : If you look upon it in this light, then of course this is true. (Everybody laughs). But while we are busy enjoying ourselves, how is it possible to turn from this to the path of renunciation ? We are considering our family and our worldly life our own and are afraid to renounce them. Under these circumstances, what is the means of salvation ?

Ma : The means is simply to obtain the Guru's grace. If you perform your duties to your family entirely in a spirit of service, this never leads to bondage. Family life need not necessarily be a tie. It is by living for the enjoyment of it that you have created this fetter for yourself.

Durgamohan : I do not have the courage to take on a Guru, because I feel that my Guru must be such that I can obey his instructions without hesitation. If I fail to do so I shall be guilty of a serious offence. Consequently, as long as I do not enter into the correct state of mind, I cannot pluck up sufficient courage to take on a Guru.

Ma: This attitude of mind is also justified. You feel that you are not yet ready to be a disciple. If you continuously entertain such a notion, in time the desire to make yourself ready will awaken in you and prayers for it will also arise from within your heart. In this way you will make some progress. But it is not good to believe that you will never take on a Guru, just because you consider yourself unworthy. Do you know what this is like? If you look upon a stone as a mere stone, it remains a stone. But if you look upon it as Śiva, it becomes Śiva. Your Scriptures also declare that one must become Godlike in order to worship a Deity. Whatever anyone constantly thinks about that he becomes. Therefore never abide in weakness. Always be sure, "I am bound to receive Grace", and act in this belief. Have you not heard that offences can be committed even when the Lord's name is being taken? Under certain circumstances it could be a serious transgression to pronounce His name. But should one then stop repeating God's name for fear of this? Much better to be aware of the circumstances under which such an offence might occur, so that people could take the Lord's name with due precaution.

Similarly it would not be right never to take on a Guru just because you may not consider yourself fit to do so. Much better to take refuge in a Guru and try your best to become a worthy disciple, in which case the Guru will himself graciously come forward to make you a true disciple.

The Art of developing the right Inclinations through Practice

Durgamohan : There are many occasions when we actually do not wish to do certain things, yet somehow, against our will, we commit those deeds as if paralyzed. How can we prevent this ?

Ma : Paralysis in fact lies in the nature of the individual (*jīva*). Whatever people do they act as if under compulsion. Look, if a particle of dust gets into the eye, one is unable to see. Even after getting rid of it, the eyes are full of water. Similarly, the slightest pursuit of worldly affairs renders the mind restless. The impressions of any number of past births have laid their stamp on our minds. Can these be effaced so easily ? It is because of tendencies developed in the past that we are forced to perform actions as if powerless. This is why sustained effort is necessary. Such constant practice could even lead to another kind of paralysis ! Just as we carry out worldly jobs against our will as if paralyzed due to tendencies and inclinations developed in the past, so also why should it not be possible to perform spiritual work spontaneously as a result of sustained practice ?

There is no necessity to rush hither and thither to participate in Satsang

Durgamohan : Swami Vivekananda has said : Suppose there is a powerful light, then those who come within the orbit of this light will themselves be enlightened to some degree. Hence it is beneficial to seek the presence of a Mahātmā or of someone in whom God is specially manifested. This is why we come to you.

Ma (smiling) : Well—all right ! All the same you have merely come to your own Self. Nothing exist in the world but your own Self. The reason why someone loves another is also this. Though it may appear that the one is fond of the other, in actual fact he just is fond of himself. But it is truly beneficial to seek satsang. However there is no need to rush about from place to place to do so. It is possible to have satsang while sitting in one's own house.

Suppose you have gone to a sādhu, but keep on thinking of your household affairs, then you have not truly participated in satsang. While, being bound down by your household duties, you remain at home, yet are truly sorry that you are being deprived of satsang, then your gain can be said to be much greater than by actually meeting the mahātmā. It is the state of mind which is of paramount importance.

(To be continued)

Satsang means keeping company with the Lord who is Truth Itself. So long as you dwell in the company of the Wise and Holy, reflecting on Truth, listening to spiritual discourses—so long as you remain in this atmosphere—you are progressing on your pilgrimage towards Self-revelation.

—MA

Helplessness in Omnipotent Ma

Ma Das

A well-known *vānī* (utterance) of Ma is : ‘*Āmi to sarvada todair sangey sangey achhī. Tōra dekhtey chās nā. Āmi ki korbo ?*’ (I am ever with you. You do not wish to see me. What can I do ?). How deeply touching is the significance of this statement, specially the last three words, ‘*Āmi ki korbo ?*’ (‘What can I do ?’)—the puzzling paradox of helplessness in omnipotence ! And what an overflowing compassion is revealed by the divine utterance, which shows us the way out of the illusion of bondage, sorrow and pain through unity with Ma’s infinite ocean of oneness of love, light and wisdom, along with the unequivocal assurance that She is already with us all the time. No back-breaking and unnerving sleepless nights of rigorous *sādhana*, no fasts and other planned ways of self-mortification are demanded, but only our love for Ma, which would make us remember Her always with a burning desire to see Her.

Ma’s *līlā* in Her matchless manifestation was over more than a year ago. Is it not high time now at least, I ask myself, for each one of us, who had the rare blessed privilege of having Her darshan in flesh and blood with our human eyes, of getting guidance from Her peerless *Vigraha* and listening to Her unique ecstatic *kirtan* for years and years, to ponder over and respond joyfully and immediately to

the soul-stirring implication of Her gracious call to turn our gaze inwards, where She, our own Divine Mother, resides on an everlasting basis, and from where She is beckoning Her children to come hurriedly into Her universal Being ?

This is the final and crowning phase of Her timeless *īlā*, now new for us, being conducted from Her own eternal realm of innate freedom and bliss of the one indivisible whole, which She is in reality, according to Her own immortal words : Eh ! one *Bhagavan*, one alone, *Akhaṇḍa-Ami* (indivisible whole-I)'

'I AM EVER WITH YOU' : ITS SIGNIFICANCE

To understand fully all this, let us first have a close look at the real import of Ma's words about Her being ever with us. She, the sole eternal Being, the indestructible Truth—the core of our being, our Real Self — is ever in us as *Akhaṇḍa-Ami*. So the existence of each one of us as a separate entity is only a *kalpana* (mental concept). It is just an act of imagination only — a reflection of our Real Self in the mind. The 'I' as a concrete something separate — the *khaṇḍa-ami* — just does not exist. To lose oneself (the *khaṇḍa-ami*) to find Ma, the *Akhaṇḍa-Ami*, is the goal of all seekers. Mother says, 'Strengthen always the conviction that you are dwelling in Truth, growing in the bosom of the Good and losing yourself to find Him more and more from day to day.'

The Truth, in which we dwell, is immutable. It exists always. Its several facets are omnipresence,

omniscience, omnipotence, uncreated light, bliss, wisdom, etc., And that is Ma. If anyone loves Her with full faith as what She really is, the search for Her within him will begin, recognizing Her as the permanent unchanging Supreme Truth — our own Real Self — the really lawful and actually ever-present sole dweller — Master within each one of us. And then, gradually, the false presence of the imposter — I (the *khaṇḍa-ami*) should be felt less and less, and the presence of the True Occupant within, the *Akhaṇḍa-Ami*, more and more. And as this process would go on, the false should ultimately disappear altogether and Ma, the True Occupant, should reveal Herself as the sole Being — our Real Self — within and without.

This would also be in fulfilment of the Law, which in Ma's words is : 'What one thinks about, that one becomes.' An English poet has elaborated on it in the following words :

'Whatever Thou lovest, that become thou must :
 God if thou love God, dust if thou love dust.
 If thou dwellest on the lowest, then the lowest
thou must be,
 Fix thy thoughts upon the highest and the
highest thou shall be'.

THE HELPLESSNESS OF MA : WHY ?

While all this is clearly understandable, one may still question as to why the Mother, who is omnipotent, is so helpless in coming to the rescue of those, who do not long to see Her. This question is best

answered by considering the case of an average sick person in our workaday world. If such an individual wishes to get well, he should first of all have the desire to see a doctor, then take his diseased body to him and follow his instructions regarding medicine, diet and rest. There is no other way for a sick person to recover.

In the case of the spiritually sick, however, it is not their bodies that are ill, but their minds, which suffer from the disease of ignorance of the Supreme Reality. And if anyone of them wants to get rid of this disease, he has to take his mind to the doctor, who is divine. Now, the mind is only a flow of thoughts and nothing else (*manah vichar dhārā*), and so taking the mind to the divine physician, means thinking of Him all the time. It is, however, axiomatic that one spontaneously thinks constantly only of what one loves deeply. And so a necessary pre-condition for cure of the disease of ignorance is love for the Divine Master. Without such love, there is no channel of communication between the ailing child and its Divine Mother. She is no doubt powerful enough to treat the worst case successfully, but the absence of conscious connection of the sick individual's mind with Ma renders Her helpless. Once a link is established, however feeble it may be, the Divine Mother's omnipotence would do everything necessary in due course, namely, strengthening the link, communicating Her Divine *Shakti* (power) through it according to the growing capacity of the recipient and

transforming his mental personality to make him a fit instrument for spiritual experience.

The mortal human doctor may or may not succeed in curing his patient, but the immortal divine physician, who is God Himself, being omnipotent, never fails. As Ma Herself says, 'God's Name (which is God Himself) is not like worldly medicine that acts at times and at other times does not. God's Name invariably bears fruit.'

OMNIPRESENT AND YET ALOOF

An innate paradox observed in Ma, which is very relevant to the issue of helplessness in omnipotence, is Her permanent aloofness in the midst of Her eternal oneness with one and all. The illustrious saint Paramhansa Yogananda, the founder of the world-famous organization, 'Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF)', had once remarked after having Ma's darshan that though She made one feel the closest of one's dear friends, 'yet an aura of remoteness was ever around Her—the paradoxical isolation of omnipresence.'

Such being the case, it is impossible for anyone of us to establish contact with Ma with our finite strength. There is a barrier between our existence in *manorājya* (mental realm) and Ma's transcendent domain beyond the mind. A connection with Her is possible only through Ma's own omnipotent *kheyāla*. And to bring that into play, the only means available to us are our minds and hearts. That is why Ma says, '*Your one duty is to keep Him*

always in mind’, and ‘wherever you happen to be, pray to Him with as much devotion as you possibly can’.

These words of Ma show the way to Her. Compliance with them is the index of the aspirant’s earnestness, and Ma’s grace, which is the deciding factor, is Her response to our sincere longing. Without such one-pointedness, however imperfect it may be, She is helpless, despite Her omnipotence.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, here is a verse under the caption, ‘What can I do?’ Its theme is the Unmanifest Ma, Her role as an Incarnation and finally Her Self-Emanation as our Ma in matchless manifestation. The verse ends in Her significant helplessness.

What can I do ?

The Unmanifest is Ma alone,
Unseen, unheard and unknown,
Unrevealed and at rest,
In north, south, east and west.

The Fountain-head, the ever-silent,
Beyond the mind, omniscient,
Always free, the omnipotent,
Everywhere, ever present.

In everyone of every nation,
Sole source of all creation,
Remains aloof and does not move,
Her omnipresence, this does prove.

But being Grace and all Compassion,
She does reveal to human vision,

For a time as incarnation,
To fulfil a special mission.

Unique, however, is the case,
When Ma Herself shows Her face,
As peerless Self-emanation
In matchless manifestation.

Ma did not come and did not go,
There was no mission high or low,
She is always everywhere
In our midst, the Mother dear,

Ever blissful, ever waiting,
In our hearts, for our longing
To be with Her in Her oneness
Of holy peace and happiness.

Words of Ma, *Ma Das* recall,
'I am ever with you all !
Who cares to see me ? None of you,
So what is it that I can do ?'

*Ye that are slaves of the 'I' that toil in the
service of self from morn to night, that live
in constant fear of birth, old age sickness and
death, receive the good tidings that your cruel
master exists not.*

—Lord Buddha

Our Mother: The Wonder of Ma

H. H. Marthande Varma

(Continued from the last issue)

Experience 4

The 1974 Samyam Vrata was conducted from November 20th to 27th at the Rama Tirtha Ashram, which is about half way between Dehradun and the hill station, Mussoorie. Mother used to come to the pandal every morning by 7-30 a.m., then in the afternoon at 2-30 p.m., and then again in the evening and retire after Matri Satsang. As all Her devotees know, Mother is always dressed in white, unless somebody offers a coloured sari during their Matri Puja, also on rare occasions during Durga Puja and the Tithi Puja of the *Janmotsava*.

Every day during this Samyam Vrata Mother wrapping around Herself an orange Kashmir shawl which had been presented to Her by the Mahamandaleswara of the Rama Tirtha Ashram. This was the first time I had seen Her wear a coloured shawl. I would gaze at Her more than ever because the rich and significant colour attracted me very much. When the Samyam Vrata was over, Mother moved on the 28th to Her own Ashram on Rajpur Road in Dehradun till the 29th. When my wife and I went to Ma's room, to have darshan and to take permission to leave the Rama Tirtha Ashram, She graciously gave me the orange Kashmir shawl

that had adorned Her person for a week. This is one of my most treasured *prasādas*.

As soon as the Samyam Saptah was over we too moved to Anandamayee Ashram, Kishenpur. I was staying in the cottage in Kalyanvan above the one which I had been given in 1971, where I had the vision and my first experience. I found that by this time a marble *peetam* had been made and it was here in this cottage that puja was performed of Padmanabha Bhagwan by Swami Bhas-karanandaji whenever Ma was in Dehradun. It was thrilling to see that the cottage where I had had three years ago the *Divya Darśana* of Ma, had become a Temple of Sri Padmanabha Swami. The aura and vibrations here were indescribable. It was also my good fortune to do my daily worship there for a couple of days.

Experience 5

In 1975 the *Janmotsava* was celebrated in Ma Anandamayee Ashram in Kamarhatti, Calcutta. My wife and I were present there from 24th to 30th of May. The crowd of people was unimaginable, the masses were well nigh uncontrollable. On the 28th of May, we were privileged to do our Matri Puja. I had as before, taken my puja box early so that I could arrange everything and keep the Bhagawans on Ma's cot. Due to the rush the time would be short and the Puja would have to be done as soon as Ma came. While waiting, both of us realised that we had forgotten to bring garlands for Mother. I rushed downstairs and went

out of the Ashram premises. It was a very narrow road and there was hardly space for a car to pass almost touching the front of the shops. I quickly bought two garlands, hung them over my left arm and took out my purse to pay. My left foot was turned outwards due to paucity of space, when without any warning a car travelling at a good speed passed by. I was wearing thin sandals and the car just ran over my foot ; first the front wheels and then the back wheels. The people standing around and I were flabbergasted, the marvel was that nothing happened ; no pain, no fracture, not even a deep impression of the tyre on my feet. I ran upstairs to be in time for the Puja. No one could believe it when I narrated what had happened.

Experience 6

After having the privilege of real darshan and deep devotion for Ma, both of us have had the opportunity of going to many of the holy places of India, such as Haridwar, Varanasi, Somnath, Dwaraka, Badrinath, Uttar Kashi, Gangotri, Pratapgarh and in 1975, I had the good fortune to go to Naimisharanya, where Veda Vyasa wrote all the 18 Puranas and the Srimad Bhagavata. In this Ashram Ma had a Mandir built and in the centre there was a large glass encased cupboard in which were housed all the Puranas, the Bhagavata and many other great works of the ancient Rishis of India.

As many devotees of Ma know, there is an old neem tree a little way away from the Ashram.

This was withered and about to disintegrate when Ma went there for the first time. She was told about the tree. She went and touched one side of the tree and even now one can see half of the tree withered and the other half green, full of leaves and fruits.

Ma had gone to Naimisharanya to get a *Yajña Śāla* inaugurated for a fire kept burning since 1926 when Ma had been at Dacca. I had no idea as to how the *Yajña Śālā* was to be inaugurated. To my wonder and delight, at the right time, that is at the right *muhurta* Swami Bhaskaranandaji entered the *Yajña Śālā* with Sri Padmanabha Swami in his hands along with Ma. This was in the month of January. I was there from the 13th to the 15th. As the Ashram was small, accommodation was very scarce and I had to stay at Sitapur, 20 and odd miles away. While taking leave of Ma on the 13th night I asked Ma where I was to stay and do my puja. Ma told me to go to Sitapur to sleep and to come to the Ashram for my bath and puja, and that Bhaskaranandaji would tell me where I could do my devotions. I left Sitapur early next morning and after reaching the Ashram, Swami Bhaskaranandaji said that I was to bathe and get ready in the rooms meant for the Sadhus and do my puja in Ma's bedroom and to leave the puja box in Her room to be there all the time.

Experience 7

Upadeśam (spiritual instruction) is a great thing which is to be received from the Guru by an aspi-

rant and it is certainly the goal to be sought after having found a Guru (*Guru Lābha*). The searching for a Guru or Preceptor and then receiving an *Upadeśa* as learnt from our religious and Puranic lore is a hard and difficult task and when this is to be given depends entirely on the Guru's appraisal of the seeker. It had been the desire of both my wife and myself to receive the Blessings from Sri Sri Ma especially by *Upadesam*. This had been in our hearts and minds since our very first darshan of Ma in Haridwar in the Kankhal Ashram in 1971. From May 4th to June 10th 1976, my wife and I were in 'Ganga Lahari' and in the Kankhal Ashram. In the Ashram that year we had two rooms to ourselves ; one to live in and the other to do my puja and devotions.

On the 9th of June, Mother and Swami Bhaskaranandaji came to the room in which I was doing my puja, without any prior notice or information that Ma would grace our room. Ma spent forty minutes with us to our indescribable happiness. Knowing all and everything, Ma was of course aware of our desire for *Upadeśam* and it must have been Her *kheyala* to fulfil our longing that day. With all the Bhagwans : Padmanabh Bhagwan, Maha Lakshmi, Sastha, Ganesha, Parthasārathi and Śiva Linga on the two trays after worship, Ma had the *Upadesham* graciously bestowed on both of us.

Next day, that is on June 10th, while I was packing my puja box, as we were to leave that day for Delhi, suddenly and without any intimation,

most magnanimously Ma came to our room and after beholding the Bhagwans, presented to us and for those at home tokens of Her Blessings and Grace.

Experience 8

January 1977 saw the Kumbh Mela at Allahabad. Knowing and realising that the multitudes from all over India would congregate for this event that occurs once in twelve years, which is almost unparalleled in any other part of the world for the faith, fervour and devotion of the people, we made what we considered elaborate arrangements for our air passage to Delhi, and train journey from there to Allahabad, for someone to meet us at the railway station, a car to take us to the Kumbh Mela site and a tent in a special enclosure. When we reached Allahabad after a cold and tiring journey we found that all our plans and arrangements had gone astray and to the winds. No one was there to meet us and we were on our own in a strange place overflowing with people. At the end of tiring trials it was possible to get the help of a friendly company who were kind enough to arrange for a car to take us to the site of the Mela which looked like a vast city of tents and thatched pandals. Due to the congestion the car deposited us at the special tent enclosure and left at once. We had been assured of accommodation there but found that nothing had been arranged. Food was the next problem. We felt completely lost. We had got off the train and

not bathed and felt hungry and helpless in this overcrowded area without anyone to guide or assist. Leaving our luggage we trudged for a long time searching for Mother's camp. At last we found our Ashram at 1.20 p.m. and then all was wonderful. We were allotted a tent, a jeep was sent to collect our baggage and food was ready. It was like coming home.

The 19th of January was a very special day on which a combination of planets occurred once in a hundred years. It was our privilege to join the Mela procession as part of Mother's entourage. The procession began at 5.30 a.m. and it was 8.30 a.m. when we got back to our tents. It drizzled continuously and we were fully drenched, but neither caught a chill nor even sneezed once. It was bitterly cold, yet we happily had our dip in the holy confluence with and at the same time as Ma and the people of Her Ashram.

Experience 9

The fortnight of June 1977 was most memorable to all the four of our family. After the *Janmotsava* in the month of May, we learnt that Mother would go to Almora for some time and a well-wisher of ours in the Ashram advised us not to miss this opportunity but to go to Almora as Ma would be comparatively free and not surrounded as usual by crowds and that we would have the grace of being able to spend at least some time with Her every day with only a very few people around. And so, my wife, daughter, son and my-

self went to Almora and stayed there from 3rd to 15th June. Mother was in the Patal Devi Ashram. To our great joy we found that what we had been told was correct : there were no crowds, only a few devotees. We would go to the Ashram in the mornings and evenings and had our prasāda (meal) twice a day there itself. It was Ma's *kheyāla* to tell us stories of dharmic value, reminiscences of the past and of happenings of long ago, as far back as the days of Dacca. To be in Her presence for such long hours was itself a great blessing. So much so that these fourteen days are etched in wonderful memories in the hearts of all of us. It so happened that the boys of the Vidyapeeth had come to Almora from Vrindavan. One day the pupils and their teacher requested me to take a photograph of Ma with all of them. I said that I would be delighted to do so, if they got permission from Ma. This was done and one morning the boys and teachers sat around Ma and I took a few photos. After they had moved away Ma asked all four of our family, to sit near Her and to take a picture. In my ignorance I had not brought enough films and my joy at being allowed to be photographed with Ma was equal to my sorrow and disappointment that I was not prepared. I explained that I would have to get a roll of film. Ma then most graciously told me to go to the hotel where I was staying and come back with the film. I went and returned with all the speed that the car and I were capable of and all this time my wife, daughter and son sat around

Mother. The motherly love and affection that Ma showered on us is unforgettable. I came back, set the camera, and after asking a friend to click, joined the group of the four of us round Ma. This picture is another treasured possession.

Experience 10

On the 14th of June 1977, after our two weeks with Ma in Almora, the unhappy day of having to take leave to go back to South India rose and we went on that day to seek permission to start for Delhi on the 15th. We regretfully took leave on the 15th morning to go to Nainital where one of our friends had asked us to come for lunch, and from there to proceed to Delhi. When, on the morning of the 15th we all four went to have darshan and take permission to leave, Ma said that we were to eat before going. As it was only 9 in the morning we expected a light breakfast. But we were not only given breakfast but a whole meal which was a lunch as well and we were at a loss to know why, as we expected to be in good time for lunch in Nainital. The morning was fine and sunny but after being on the road a short while it turned out to be, first cloudy and grey and then it began to rain heavily by the time we left the main road and turned to the 6 mile route to the hills. When we were just 5 miles from the Nainital town our path was blocked by a large landslide and the car just had to stop. We soon realised that to clear this mass of earth would take hours. The best, we thought, would be to turn around with some diffi-

culty and get back to the main road and telephone to our hosts and tell them of our inability to get to them. Our driver turned the car and we drove back about a mile, when we came to another landslide. So we were caught between two landslides, one in front and another at the back. Then it dawned on us why we had been given such a large quantity of food in the Ashram. My wife, son and I decided to walk to Nainital and after reaching our hosts' house to organise some help. But our daughter said she would not leave the car and Ma would look after her. We got to the town and to the house and our host and I equipped with some food walked back to where the car was stranded after making arrangements for a car to come to the first landslide. By the time we got to where the car should have been, the road had been cleared and when we trudged back to the house, my daughter was already there safe and sound. She had just sat in the car and prayed to Mother and got to the house half an hour before us who had walked up and down.

Experience 11

In November 1977, my wife and I went to Baroda and thence to Chandod on the banks of the Narmada river. Mother has an Ashram there, known as the Bhimpura Ashram, opposite to the place where we were to be for the Samyam that year. The Samyam Saptah was performed at the invitation of the Mahamandaleswar of the Ashram at this place. The Mahant had made very elabo-

rate arrangements. Running along the banks of the holy river Narmada were a series of tents in rows for the vratis and the devotees who had come. The actual pandal where twice a day all the meditations and the discourses took place was also near the riverside. The pandal was large enough to accommodate about 5,000 people. A new cottage had been built for Ma on top of the hill, opposite to the temple of the Ashram. A few tents had been pitched near and behind Ma's abode. We were fortunate to be given one of these. A few of the Swamis from Mother's Ashram were also staying around Mother, in tents. The whole place presented the appearance of a township in canvas. Wherever Ma is, there is comfort and ease for mind and body, and we were very happy in our tent. Being so near to Ma was another source of joy. But, I was worried and I had one great apprehension; for everyone by now had come to know that I always have my puja box with me wherever I go and many had seen the contents and there was a lot of silver. I was very concerned about the safety of the Deities, for after all the tents had only a moral protection. The very day we reached, I submitted my anxiety about this to Ma. This was on the 17th of November. It was about 6 in the evening when we had darshan after reaching Chandod from Baroda. Ma solved my problem and worry at once. She decided that before and after my puja was over in the mornings, the puja box was to be packed and kept in Ma's own room and taken to my tent only for worship. So from the 17th to 25th Sri

Padmanabha Swami and the other Deities were with Ma most of the time.

Tradition, pauranically, has it that in the golden past of India's heritage many ceremonies for the good of mankind used to be done and performed regularly by the Kings and Rulers in those ancient times. One of them, particularly in South India, was a ceremony called *mura japam*. This translated would mean *japa* done traditionally, numerically and religiously. This ceremony, almost a *yajña*, takes 56 days to perform and had *Vedā parāyanā*, recitation of the *Vishnu Sahasra Nāma* and *jal japa* (where the Ritviks do *japa* standing in waist deep water) in the evening at dusk. All this was for the wellbeing of the state and of the people of the state. This is done like the Ardha Kumbh, once in 6 years. King Karthaveerarjuna used to conduct this ceremony, as we are told in the Mahabharata. It has been the good fortune of the Travancore Ruling family to have done this *sevā* to Sri Padmanabha Bhagwan for years and years. (It may be recalled that in the year 1972 Ma had come to Trivandrum for the last day of this festival which is on the 56th day. This was all done in the temple of Sri Padmanabha Bhagwan and the last day's function is called *Lakshadeepam* when literally Lacs of lights are lit in the temple and a *yatra* within the 4 furlong long corridors of the temple takes place at 8-30 p.m. on the 14th January which is the Sankranti day). On the 20th of November, when I had darshan of Ma, I submitted that on this day, at Trivandrum, my brother would be commencing

the *Murajapam* festival which would conclude on the 14th of January, 1978. I prayed for Ma's blessings that this 56 day ceremony should be accomplished auspiciously and with all propriety and grandeur and that Ma be gracious to bless my brother in this undertaking. Ma said that something should be done here in Chandod that day, that a lamp should be lit for Sri Padmanabha Bhagwan and that Bhaskaranandaji would tell me what was to be done. I had no idea as to where this lighting of a lamp was to take place : in my tent or in Ma's Kutia or somewhere else ? At about 5 p.m. Swami Bhaskaranandaji told me that Mother had told him that it was to be done in the pandal. At dusk, I went to the pandal and Sri Padmanabha Swami was kept in a silver tray on top of the puja box next to Mother's *āsana*. I lit a lamp and waited. When the hall was full to overflowing and the Mandaleswars and Mahants had been seated and Mother had also come, I was permitted and privileged to sit behind Sri Padmanabha Swami and Mother on the dais for the whole evening. In no time Ma had numberless candles brought and lit in front of Sri Padmanabha Swami and it was like a mini *Lakshadeepam* itself. Sri Padmanabha Swami was to the right of Ma and constantly Her attention would be on HIM, so much so that one of the Mandaleswars said in Hindi "Ma, where is your *shraddha* ? It is not with us !"

(To be continued)

Ma—The Munificent

C. S. Jaswal

On the 28th of August, 1982, the Radio blurted out “Anandamayi Ma is no more”. Shocking news indeed. But “Ma no more” was certainly difficult to grasp. In the evening of the 30th August when I reached the Kankhal Ashram, I found some brick work going on at the place where, I was told, Ma’s body had been laid to rest. The atmosphere around the Ashram I found serene and calm. Kirtan and *ārati* were held in the evening wherein we all participated, but it was just not possible for me to reconcile myself to the idea that Ma had really left us.

Ma has always emphasized that wherever She may be, She is always with us. Of course, it may not be possible for all of us to see Her as we had known Her before. But I am sure that we shall always feel Her presence.

With the incidents that I have gone through in life, I have always been wondering what would have been my fate had I not been supremely graced with Ma’s *darśana*, however reluctantly. Yes, reluctantly indeed did I go for my first *darśana* of Ma in the year 1953, but that is a different story. Here I should like to share just two incidents of my life connected with Ma.

Ma had come to Hoshiarpur during Holi. She was staying with Sri Hari Babaji Maharaj at his

Ashram. The week passed in great gaiety and in supreme happiness all around. The days just glided by and after Holi came the time for Ma's departure. Everyone was feeling sad and no one wanted to leave Her. There was a big crowd around Her car when She was sitting inside. I had done my pranāma and seeing the crowd gathering around I went and stood in front of the car. I could see Ma sitting inside with a serene smile on Her face. Suddenly She looked up towards me, gazed straight at my face and then beckoned to me to approach Her. Immediately, I rushed towards the door of the car. Jostling with the crowd and pushing them to one side, I opened the door and bowed with folded hands before Ma. She stroked my head but said nothing. As I was backing out my head touched the roof of the car, Mataji called me again, stroked my head and pointed to the roof of the car. This time I was more careful to let nothing touch my head.

Ma departed in the car and immediately after, I along with my wife, our two sons and a nephew left for my place. It was evening and by the time we reached the hilly portion of the road it was getting dark. As I took a sharp bend on a climb I heard a loud noise from the rear of the jeep that I was driving and it came to a dead stop in the middle of the road. Yet by Ma's grace none of us were hurt. Now, there was a lot of traffic passing that way as pilgrims were returning from the Holy shrine after the Holi Mela. We immediately got down and tried to push the jeep to one side

of the road but it would not budge. With great difficulty we were able to push it a little to the side. Since the buses going in the direction of my place were empty, I sent my family by one of them and remained in the jeep till my servants arrived. Next day it was found that the rear axle had been broken. Only Ma knew what a terrible accident we had been fated to meet and we were saved through Her supreme grace.

It is not once only that Ma has showered Her motherly grace upon me ; at many other times also She has pulled me from mishaps. The following incident dates back to 1961, prior to the one just described. My two sons aged 11 and 8 years were studying in a school at Dehradun. They had come home on vacation and I was now going to Dehradun to leave them in their school. This was the month of August when the monsoon is in full force. There is an unbridged stream (Sombhadra) between my place and the Railway station. During other seasons it is very docile but during the monsoon it is quite turbulent.

We had planned to leave after lunch to enable us to make a safe crossing, although our train left late in the evening from Jullundur. Much before midday dark clouds started forming and I felt worried that in case it rained in the catchment area we may find the Sombhadra in flood. We, therefore, immediately left and reached its bank. Now, during this period there is a lot of rush of pilgrims going for the *darśana* of Chintpurni and Jwalamukhi. Many buses had been passing that way

daily with the result that right in the middle of the stream a deep depression had formed. Although I had crossed this stream a number of times, I did not know anything about the impending disaster awaiting us. In my haste to cross before the flood waters arrived I did not pay proper attention and started crossing the stream. Reaching the middle the jeep plunged into the depression, the water ran over the engine which spluttered, misfired and was about to stop. In that split second my thoughts went towards salvaging the jeep. The flood water would be on top of us before we could push the jeep out. But my boys had a different idea. Both of them shouted : "Ma, Ma, Ma !". Simultaneously there was a sudden push from behind, the engine picked up a little and we found ourselves on the other bank. There the engine stopped completely.

Having got down I asked my servant, who was sitting at the rear, if he too had felt something. "Yes", he said, "I felt a push". This is what indeed we all had observed. When I opened the bonnet of the jeep I found the whole engine wet and there was no reason why the engine should not have stopped in mid-stream.

This illustrates the infinite grace of Ma who is omnipresent and shall always respond to our genuine and earnest prayers.

'JAI MA'

The Rare Sahaja State*

Swami Ramdas

We can keep *vasanas* under control temporarily. We cannot entirely destroy them without the grace of saints or Guru. We attain *jñāna* when the mind disappears with all its desires. Thereafter, there is no *sādhana* necessary for self-control, because there is no mind. We live in a natural state. It is called *Sahaja*.

When you attain to the Sahaja state, there is nothing left for you to do. That is the *Siddha Avasthā*, which means the state of spiritual perfection. You have nothing more to attain. Worldly desires are replaced by the desire for *jñāna* or liberation. When liberation is achieved, that desire also disappears. Then you are perfectly desireless. That is your normal state. When you are desiring things and running here and there in pursuit of them, you are in an abnormal state.

Till we reach the Sahaja state, we are, as it were, in a diseased condition. Ignorance is the disease which had made the soul bound and miserable. Health returns when we know that we are the Self. Otherwise, we think we are the body. Identification with the body and the senses gives rise to duality. Then comes the dual throng and you are caught up in the *guṇas* and *dvandvas* like praise and blame,

*Reprinted from 'GOD-EXPERIENCE' by Swami Ramdas, 1963, pp. 103-104.

honour and dishonour, etc. You have forgotten or ignored your real nature, which is the eternal infinite Self. You think you are a body subject to birth, decay, disease and death, though you are the immortal, changeless spirit. Instead of identifying yourself with the Atman, you identify yourself with the body and the result is pain, misery, anxiety and death. Thus runs the prayer in the Upanishads :

“Lead me from the unreal to the Real.
Lead me from darkness to Light.
Lead me from death to Immortality.”

Such a soul who has realized the pristine glory of his immortal Self is happy and cheerful at all times. Sorrow and death cannot touch him. He has conquered death and will bravely face it without flinching.

An American writer who had studied the life and works of the great Teachers of the world belonging to different religions, has come to the conclusion that there are six characteristics common to all those who have realized God and attained to the highest spiritual eminence. They are :

Awareness of immortality,
Absence of the sense of sin,
Perfect fearlessness,
Consciousness of a new birth,
Eternal bliss and peace,
Gentle and attractive nature.

Such men who have achieved this glorious Realization or experience are indeed a blessing to humanity, and are very rare.

• बहुनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।
वासुदेवःसर्वमिति, स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥

“After many births a soul attains jñāna.

“Very rare is that Mahatma who realizes that everything is Vasudeva.”

—*Gita, Ch. 7, Verse 19*

Mother ! Thou art in my heart
Shining in its in-most part
Like some lovely lunar light
Soft and soothing yet so bright !

Thy lips like petals smile display
That wipes all life's blues away,
Draws me daily to Thy feet
With flowers and tears Thee to meet.

How my heart doth throb with song
Mad with ecstasy moves along,
Dipp'd in Thy light all around
For an unknown bourne thus bound !

Deeper deeper let me feel
Thy benedictions and Thy will,
Aad sink into Thy effulgence
To great Thy eternal presence.

—*Paresh Nath Mukerjee*

Guru Darshan

Acharya Satish Chandra Mukhopadhyay

(Continued from the last issue)

Part—V

(A)

Therefore coming back to the subject of Guru-Darshan, or of Shree Shree Sat-Guru Darshan in particular, the point to remember is that when you speak of Shree Shree Sat-Guru Darshan, you must primarily think of visualising Him in His Inner Chinmaya Self i.e., His truly spiritual entity and form which subsists eternally. If you look up Vol. IV of Shree Shree Sat-Guru Sanga pp. 94-95, you will find the Master reprimanding Kulada, the disciple-diarist, because the latter had wrongly conceived of His Real Self as identical with His outer visible Form or Rupam. Shree Sat-Guru Deva corrected Kulada by explaining that His Inner Chinmaya Rupam (closely corresponding to the outer Form) is His Real Self. He further explained to Kulada that the discovery of the Inner Form and Spiritual Entity is only possible through intensive concentration, technically known as Dhyāna, on His outer physical form.

Let me now proceed to quote the relevant extracts (in translation) from Shree Shree Sat-Guru Sanga Vol. IV, pp. 94-95 (First Edition). Disciple

Kulada had been asked by the Master to go and visit his eldest brother, who was then living far away in the United Provinces, and was in need of a good helper and companion. Kulada however felt the pang of coming separation from Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva, and thus expressed himself :

Kulada : "I am most reluctant to leave you and go elsewhere as you wish me to do."

Thakur : "This is not for you the right attitude to take. It is a form of Māyā, a form of bondage. You must know what the Guru truly is. He is something different from His outer body. Inside the latter there is something else but He is not *Jada* (lifeless), is not a material substance."

Kulada : "We have heard that the Body of the Guru is *Nitya* or Eternal. But if the outer body of the Guru is not the real body, then everything has gone wrong with me."

Thakur : "No, your efforts have not gone in vain. But I must tell you that the Real Body of the Guru is *Nitya* i.e., ever-permanent. But it is not this body which you see. Inside the external body is another body—of exactly this *Rupa* or Form. That Body is of *Sachchidananda* Form ; that Body is *Nitya*. The body which you see from outside is but a shadow, a reflection of that Inner Body. If you look at the looking-glass, you will find the image of your face reflected therein. That image exactly corresponds to your face ; but it is no substantial entity ; it is a shadow. This outer body which you see is exactly like that—a mere reflection. If you want to reach the internal

Sachchidananda Rupa or Form, you have first to fasten on the external shadow form. There is no other way of getting at the Sachchidananda Form. By intensive concentration or Dhyān on the external shadow form which is the outer body, the Inner Sachchidananda Form could be visualised. If you don't concentrate on the external shadow form, how could you get at the real Kāyā, i.e., the Real Body Entity, namely, the Sachchidananda Form ?”

(B)

In the above extract in translation Shree Sat-Guru Deva advises the disciple, who aspires after the Darshan or the visualising of the Chinmaya i.e., the Spiritual Sachchidananda Rupa or Form of the Shree Sat-Guru, to practise “Dhyān” or intensive concentration on His outer physical form. Now “Dhyān” on any subject is a sustained mental effort requiring the exercise of highly developed will-power on the part of the individual practising Dhyān. For the Jīva's Chitta should have first to be weaned away from all other forms or achit objects or even from the sanskāras lodged in it, and so made one-pointed. Therefore the Chitta has got to be so trained that it should point only to one single object of attention, — in this case the outer physical form of Shree Sat-Guru Deva. The achievement of such one-pointedness of the Chitta is, as I have said, a very difficult feat. But if what you have written to me in your letter marked “Sacred” (dated 27th May 1944) be an index of

your present spiritual condition, the cultivation of "Dhyān", i.e., the practice of intensive concentration, may not be a very difficult exercise for you, as it must be to most others, for whom the spirit of self-surrendering devotion has not reached such high development. For you write in the very second paragraph of your "sacred" letter as follows: "First of all, let me tell you that I am today very happy in many ways because I have been enabled at last to surrender, however imperfectly, my all (if I have anything at all which I can call my own) as well as my own self, (if again I have a separate self of my own, as I believe I have, completely to Him." If this does at all actually give the true spiritual index of your inner self, then you have only to try and try and try again, and you will be able to make your mind or chitta one-pointed and so achieve Dhyān or intensive concentration on Shree Sat-Guru Deva's outer physical form. The outer form or body, Shree Sat-Guru Deva calls the shadow or reflected image of His Inner Self, i.e. His Inner Sachchidananda Rupa or Form. The latter He calls His Kāyā i.e. the external entity corresponding to the Inner Self.

If, however, you feel that your mind or chitta could not so easily be directed or trained along lines of "Dhyān", i.e. intensive concentration, then please try to examine yourself once again and see what stands in your way. For then there must be something in your subjective make up which prevents you from attaining the state of Dhyān on the outer form of Shree Shree Guru Deva.

(C)

The subject of Guru Darshan in the sense of the discovery of the Inner Self, the Inner Chinmaya Form or Rupam, of Shree Shree Sat-Guru was expounded by me on a former occasion in a letter (enclosed) addressed to Shree Ramakant Tripathi, a former Fellow of the Institute of Philosophy at Amalner, Bombay Presidency. He is a first class first M.A. of the Benares Hindu University. You will find that my letter to him deals with the subject of Guru-Darshan in the sense of the Darshan or Visualisation of the Real Murti, which is the Sachchidananda Rupam, of Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva. That is my apology for giving below the whole of that letter here as Part VI of this series.

As Shree Shree Guru-Darshan is but another name for the discovery of the Inner Self, the Chinmaya Self, of Shree Shree Guru Deva, you will find in that letter some relevant extracts (in translation) from Vol. V pp. 301-302 of Shree Shree Sadguru Sanga (First Edition). For Shree Shree Sat-Guru there certifies that Prabhupada Nityananda showed His Inner Chinmaya Self, i.e. His own Sachchidananda Rupam or Form, to Shree Shree Sat-Guru Deva. You must know that Prabhupada Nityananda was a Divine Personage Himself, who was a contemporary and indeed the greatest Lieutenant of Mahaprabhu Shree Shree Chaitanya Deva in Bengal. The point for you to note is that as in the case of Prabhupada

Nityananda, so also in the case of every Higher category of Bhakta souls, there is always a spiritual or chinmaya Rupa or Form, which constitutes their Inner Selves, in which they abide for all time. And Shree Sat-Guru Deva's Teaching is that to discover this Inner Chinmaya Self, which is the Chinmaya Murti, the aspiring devotee must bend all his devotional energies to the practice of Dhyān or intensive concentration on the outer physical Murti or Form.

(To be continued)

“Learn to accept blame, criticism and accusation silently, without retaliation, even though untrue and unjustified”. What a wealth of wisdom in that counsel! What does it matter what people think? It is God's approval you want. Be filled with one wish, for God, God, God. Unless you are single-hearted, my dears, He is very hard to find.... He cannot and will not accept less than 100 per cent surrender on the part of His devotee.

—St. Francis of Assisi

The Heritage of the Hindus

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the July 1983 issue)

The Purana

The eighteen Purāṇas hold an important place in the Indian tradition. According to an ancient text, Purāṇa, *Nyāya*, *Mīmāṃsā*, the Dharmaśāstras, the six Vedāṅgas, the four Vedas together with the four minor Vedas, namely, Dhanurveda, Ayurveda, Gandharvaveda and Vāstu-śilpa are listed as the eighteen sources of knowledge or educational treatises that lead to spiritual upliftment.

Traditionally, Purāṇas are given full recognition as records of God's involvement with His creation, His participation in the affairs of men, His constant and unremitting concern regarding the subjugation of evil so that good may prevail. The sanctity of these texts is on a par with the Vedas themselves. The difference is that these texts are narratives expounded by various speakers on suitable occasions. It may be said that the Vedas when seen from the perspective of changing times assume the forms of Purāṇas and Itihāsas, or the Epics. The rhythmic word-form of the Veda remains unchanged and forms the subject matter of study for the scholar, whereas the narrator of the Purāṇas concentrates on an interpretative exegesis of the texts. Thus it is only natural that the same subject matter

would be handled a little differently by two speakers. Moreover the speaker, in a way, responds to the questions put to him from the audience ; he is often required to hold his main theme in abeyance while he goes into other matters. This is the reason why the same theme is treated differently in different Puranas.

The Tradition of Narrators :

The ancient seer Vedavyāsa is said to have compiled the major eighteen Puranas for the benefit of mankind. In this work he was helped by his disciple, Romaharṣaṇa, who was a *sūta* by caste. The *sūta* caste originated from the marriage of a *kṣatriya* father and a *brāhmaṇa* mother. (Vāyupurana, I, 34). It is well-known that Sūta is traditionally the *pravaktā* (narrator) for the Puranas. The other eminent name in this context is that of Sri Śukadeva. A few of the texts mention the name Ugraśravā, the able son of Romaharṣaṇa. The fact that the Puranas were made available to non-brahmans is very meaningful. We see here a widening of the circle of spiritual knowledge irrespective of caste. The brahman alone could study the Vedas but all that the Vedas contained was disclosed in the form of Puranas to worthy audiences in the spoken language of those communities.

According to the legendary history of India, a great Satra (a comprehensive *yajña* involving thousands of *ritviks*, engaged for more than a thousand days) was taking place in Naimiṣāraṇya while the

great battle of the Mahabharata was being fought at Kurukṣetra. The brahmans, after the rituals of the mornings were free for the day; what better mode could be evolved for utilizing this time than to listen to the learned discourses of eminent scholars who could be invited for this purpose or who just happened to pass by? So we read of the advent of Sūta at Naimiṣaraṇya and his election to the traditional seat of Vyāsa from where in response to the question of the chief of the brahmans, Śaunaka, he embarked on the narration of Puranas.

Not all Puranas are recounted by Romaharṣaṇa. The interlocuters also vary, as for example, King Parikṣita was the auditor for Sri Śukadeva. King Janaka is also mentioned as one of the auditors. Thus amongst speakers, we have Sri Śukadeva, Romaharṣaṇa and his son Ugraśrava and among auditors we have Śaunaka and Emperors Parikṣita and Janaka. Sri Śukadeva also conversed with Vidura and Maitreya. The naming of the participants makes it clear that not only should the speakers be of the highest calibre but the audience should also be devout and capable of appreciating the teaching contained in the Puranas.

The number of the Puranas :

There is a verse in the Devi Bhagavata which enumerates the names of the major Puranas :

madvayam bhadvayam caiva bratravam

vacatuṣṭayam |

anāpakūskalingāni purāṇāni vidurbudhah ||

When expanded the names may be written out as follows : two beginning with ma, that is, Matsya

and Markandeya ; two beginning with bha, that is, Bhagavata and Bhavisyottara ; three beginning with bra, that is, Brahma, Brahmāṇḍa and Brahmavaivarta ; four beginning with va, that is, Viṣṇu, Vāmana, Vāyu, Vāraha ; then beginning with a, nā, pa, kū, ska, li and ga, we have Agni, Nārada, Kūrma, Skanda, Linga and Garuḍa Purana, that is, eighteen in all. The two names which are conspicuously absent from this list are Śivapurana and Devi Bhāgavata. Śivapurana is sometimes counted as an alternative of Vayupurana. The Bhagavatapurana is available in two forms at present, one which is narrated by Romaharṣaṇa and the other by Ugraśravā. The former is called the Devibhāgavata and the latter the Srimadbhāgavata. The Padmapurana also is available in two forms. It can be easily understood that texts would show some variations because they were spoken, heard, remembered and written down in due course of time. The authority and authenticity of the succession of great ascetics who have preserved this spiritual literature for us are not questioned. The harmony of the general teaching of the Puranas emerges clearly in every case. The speakers, therefore, always seek to co-ordinate the variations along with the major teachings. This is a recognised mode of exegesis in the tradition, known as *sangati*, that is, the mode of reconciling one text with another. This is done, not to flout the law of contradictions, but in the belief that there is a deep-rooted pervasive unity underlying all religious teachings ; it is the duty of the narrator to bring

this out for the benefit of every devout audience. The role of a speaker who is called upon to grace the seat of Vedavyāsa (Vyāsāsana) is to respond positively to the questioning mind, to instil faith in the doubting heart and to rouse the spirit toward the quest for greater knowledge.

Sometimes a question is raised as to the importance of the number 'eighteen' in the Indian tradition. It will be remembered that 'eighteen' figures repeatedly in enumerative lists. The Mahābhārata has eighteen *parvas*, the most beloved book of the Hindus, the Bhagavad Gītā has eighteen chapters, the Śrimadbhagavata is said to have eighteen thousand verses. Knowledge as *mokṣasāstra* was classified by Vedavyāsa into eighteen groups beginning with the four Vedas. The number, therefore seems to have had a significance for the ancients. Modern scholars have given various renderings of the meaning of this number. We may choose the one which is very well-known :

According to the old system of Sankhya Philosophy man is endowed with eighteen elements or, in other words there are eighteen aspects in which he may relate to the world in which he finds himself. At the lowest level there are the five active organs, namely, the two eliminating organs, hands, feet and speech ; then he has five sensory organs, namely, tongue (taste), ear (sound), nose (smell), eyes (vision) and skin (touch) ; thereafter the mind which has sway over these ten organs. These eleven are known as the *ekādaśa indriya* or all together as the *antaḥkaraṇa*. It should be noted

that in this system the mind is also an *indriya*, although the chief one. The life-breath which sustains this mind-body complex can also be analysed into five elements : *Prāṇa* (breathing), *apāna* (the passage of air downward), *samāna* (the absorption of food), *udāna* (belching) and *vyāna* (strength in the body). The vital air without which the body becomes mere inert matter, according to this view is also analysable into its functions. Beyond the body-mind-life entity lies the intellect which acts for the I-consciousness. This is the entire personality of man as we know him or know ourselves. The *atmā* which resides inside these five coverings, that is body, mind, life, intellect and ego, as it were, remains untouched by the eighteen possible ways of activity which engages man.

Since man can do good or evil in eighteen different ways, there are eighteen redeeming ways also. Good and bad deeds which lead to the endless cycles of births and deaths can also be classified under eighteen heads as follows :

- Evil mind—hate, greed and scepticism
 body—killing, theft, adultery
 speech—lies, calumny, cruel words, meaningless chatter
- Good mind—kindness, righteousness, faith
 body—charity, to give protection, service to all beings
 speech—truthfulness, recitation of scriptures (*svadhyāya*)

The above list is given by the Nyāya Philosophy. We see that there are eighteen ways in which man

can get entangled in the *karmic* cycle and therefore needs eighteen ways of escaping from the fruits of his actions. These analogies are by way of appreciating the significance of the number 'eighteen' and are not to be carried to improbable lengths.

Content :

According to the time-honoured tradition, the Puranas are said to deal with five major topics, namely, creation, expansion or dissolution, geneologies, the ages, and accounts of exalted families.

*sargasca pratisargasca vamsa manvantarani ca
vamsanucaritam caiva purāṇam pancalaksanam*

The Puranas describe the process of creation or how the different orders of existences come into being. They relate the significance of the duration of time as ages and also the conditions which lead to the cessation of creation. They give accounts whereby the rulers among gods, seers and men acquire merit and power and how the exemplars of the righteous way of life live in this world. Thus we see that the Puranas are very comprehensive in their scope. In fact every concern of man is dealt with in the Puranas. We may bring this vast literature under two heads for our purposes of study, namely, *bhoga* and *mokṣa*. In the Puranas, life in the world and life away from it are held in a continuous line.

(To be continued)

Shraddhanjali to Sri Anandamayi Ma

Girish Chandra, M.I.E.

August 27, 1982 will remain a memorable day in the history of spiritual development. On this day one of the greatest mystic saints of all times threw off Her mortal coils in the outskirts of Dehradun. She is well-known as Mata Anandamayi throughout India and in foreign countries also. It was at 7-55 P.M. on 27-8-82 that the world lost a powerful spiritual dynamo in physical form thus creating a vacuum which cannot be easily filled. When a great man passes away, there is a reaction in nature which results in earthquake, lightning and stormy weather. Western U. P. experienced unprecedented rains prior to Her leaving Her physical frame and on the day of Her Mahasamādhi, and the following day also when thousands of people were having Her last darshan. The object of this write-up is to offer the author's *Shraddhānjali* at the lotus feet of Sri Sri MA. Though the author did not take initiation from Her, yet he had Her darshan from time to time during a period extending over 40 years.

Saints who can attract common people by mere darshan without saying a word are very few. Ma possessed great magnetic force. One could feel powerful currents of peace and bliss flowing from

every particle of Her physical frame. Generally religious leaders attract people by brilliant speeches and display of vast spiritual knowledge. But in the case of Sri MA, this was not needed. She was almost illiterate; yet She had far greater knowledge than the most scholarly person. There are instances in which people in foreign countries after reading Her words or about Her life or seeing Her photo were so overwhelmed, that they came to India to have Her darshan. In fact, Her darshan was found to be more potent than a few words spoken by Her by way of instruction. This was a unique feature of Sri MA and this can perhaps be compared to the darshan of Sri Raman Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo and Sri Shankaracharya of Kamkothi Peetham.

Devotees of Sri MA are deeply grieved on Her taking Mahasamādhī. But Sri MA in Her life-time had been training them not to attach importance to physical form but to remember Her and let Her be enthroned in the innermost recess of the heart—*Hriday-Vāsini*. In fact for the last one year Sri MA had been enacting the lila of not attending functions in Her Ashram but giving Darshan for a few minutes from the terrace in the evening. So the transition has not been so painful for the devotees.

What is the status of Sri Sri MA? This is a question often put by people. It is most difficult to answer. She was in a state of *Sahaja Samādhī*; merged in *Paramātmā* at every breath. Great Saints only can have an inkling of Her state of Being.

No ordinary man can. Her mind was merged in *Sat-Chit-Ananda* of *Paramātmā* (Absolute truth, absolute being and absolute bliss). It is generally accepted that She was "Swayam Siddha".

She was one of the greatest Yogis and perhaps may be called a Mahayogi. She has been known to be at two places at the same time. But She never exhibited supernormal powers. She had the power to cure people if She so willed. When She realised that She had this power, she never used it. But divine spontaneous action always took place when somebody placed his or her sorrowful plight before Her.

What was the greatest miracle of Sri MA? Her greatest miracle was that She would sit quietly on the dais looking at the *darshanārthies* (Seekers of Darshan) as a mother looks at her children and thereby spirituality was transmitted to the people.

What are the important teachings of Sri MA? Her teachings given from time to time in answers to questions have been printed under the name "Sad Vani" "Matri Vani" & "Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma". Her important injunctions are: "Follow the instructions of your Guru faithfully; have faith in the constant repetition of God's name—(japa); and attend "*Satsang*" as often as possible and read the *Bhagavata*—which contains the *līlā* of Sri Krishna and other *Avatāras* of God. She stressed fixed times daily for meditation.

She inspired Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhas Bose, Sri Jawaharlal Nehru and Seth Jamna Lal Bajaj to work for the freedom of the country in a

dedicated manner and thus to attain Self-realisation. An account of this can be had from the book "Autobiography of a Yogi" by Paramahansa Yogananda.

May Sri MA bless Her devotees to have more and more devotion for Her name—"Anandamayi Ma—Brahmamayi Ma"; for Her lilā and for Her lotus feet.

Meditation will help you to find your bonds, loosen them, untie them, and cast your moorings. When you are no longer attached to anything, you have done your share. The rest will be done for you. By whom? By the same power that brought you so far, that prompted your heart to desire Truth and your mind to seek it. It is the same power that keeps you alive. You may call it Life or the Supreme.

—Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Let Us Be Filled with Sweet Memories

Chitra

(Translated from Bengali)

On November 30th, 1960, Sri Ma sent the following long letter to Udas, Shanta, Pushpa, Shobhana, Vani and myself. It was the first time that She had left the older brahmacharinis at the Kishenpur Ashram, Dehradun during the three severe winter months to practise intensive *sāadhanā*. Now, after 23 years, I am remembering those days and with tearful eyes am reading over and over again this affectionate and sweet letter full of loving advice and instructions for Ma's girls. Sadly I contemplate that there is no one now who lavishes grace and compassion on us as did our adored Ma.

'My pained heart cries out in anguish
To take shelter in the pure haven
Of love that was our Mother's lap.'

Sri Ma dictated the following : "Write to my friends ; we are told that for the sake of concentrated *sāadhanā* sādhus and samnyasis often stay in cold places since this is congenial to japa and meditation. So let the girls make a strenuous effort during these few months so that it may help them to attain their goal. When travelling hither and thither with this body it is not always possible to sit

down for long hours of meditation. Tiring journeys and meeting too many people become an obstacle. The *kheyāla* has come to this body that their spiritual welfare, their practices of contemplating the Supreme Father are not given enough scope when moving about with this body. Thus, in that beautiful deep solitude, my friends have become pilgrims on the path that leads to their goal. Since they are making every effort to discard and turn their backs on worldly pleasures, it seems a duty to create facilities for them to continue whole-heartedly on their path. Unless one delves deep it is but natural for the mind to waver and to wander. Those who are yearning for God, who want to realize pure, all-embracing love, must they not be absolutely single-minded in their concentration on Him ?

Thus, write to my friends that this splendid opportunity should not be wasted. The aroma of the *sādhana* of these *tapasvinis* must be noticed in their looks, their way of speaking ; each movement should manifest their progress towards Truth. Every effort must be made to speak the truth, to remain steeped in the spiritual, to advance toward immortality. Try your utmost to be friendly and affectionate with everyone and let your speech be gentle and sweet.

Udas, Ma had not told you how long you were to remain in the cold, so she is sending warm clothes for you. Ma says : Udas is growing old, wrinkles have started on her face. When will you concentrate on *sādhana* ? Are you going to spend

your whole life attending to this body? Complete your japa and do your sādhanā with enthusiasm and steadiness.

Patience and forbearance are necessary for all. How can the foundation be laid without endurance?

Ma was happy to hear that Pushpa's and Chitra's inflammation of the throat has subsided. She asks: "Is Shanta feeling better?" Tell them to buy warm socks. Even in winter they should not drink tea. This habit must be given up. Adherence to this mania creates obstacles on the path. When going for a walk my friends may wear socks and shoes, but within the Ashram they should use wooden sandals. During winter hot water with sugar should be taken instead of tea. In any case not enough water is consumed during the cold season. Therefore all should drink water first thing in the morning to keep healthy. Those who require it should buy hot water bags. All combined may purchase a large thermos flask.

Another important message Ma is sending you: "While cooking one should not wear tight blouses because in the proximity of fire in a closed room the body gets heated. The friends of this body, although well-educated are like babies in the practical field, since they are not used to do housework. Hence they must be very careful in these new circumstances. Let me not hear of any illness!

For the present do not let Maitreyi cook in the evening. Do not give too much work to Vani. If everyone shares the work, it will not be a strain to anyone.

The reading of the *Gītā* at 9-30 a.m. and the evening kirtan should be performed in the hall downstairs, whereas the early morning kirtan may be held upstairs. Happy to hear that they are all doing uninterrupted *japa*.

Gopal's mother will cook the midday meal and two girls at the time should help her, taking turns. In the evenings two and two girls by turns should prepare rotis and vegetables without salt. No one must remain alone near fire. Gopal's mother will rest in the evening but will serve the food at night. Nobody is allowed to sleep in the afternoon—at that time vegetables should be cut.

Many a day have you spent watching the sights of the world, joking and laughing in the worldly way; now, friends, be pilgrims on the journey to your real Home! Do not think that just because you have not felt His presence and the touch of Him you are free to while away your time in frivolities, this can never lead to your real welfare.

All of you should regularly recite the *stotras* (hymns) in tune, with great care and accuracy. Five *stotras* are to be chanted daily during the months of Vaisakh, Shrāvan, Māgh, Kartik. Again Ma said: "It may become extremely cold there but no one is to make an excuse of this and say: 'Today I shall not eat and so there is no need for me to do the work.' This must never happen."

The daily routine of spiritual practices must be arranged in such a way that mind and body do not feel fatigued and disinclined to perform *japa* and meditation. Make a proper plan of work and

sādhana so that all may take part in the programme.

Ma had been remarking that no letter from the girls had been received for a long time, so when your letter arrived today Ma listened to it attentively and said : "Tell them, by trying again and again achievement will come. Let them keep in mind : 'all right, since our friend has requested us, let us try our best to obey Her to the letter.' " Until the Lord will deign to grace us with His touch it is our duty to call out to Him unceasingly.

Ma was considering going to Dehradun Herself, but since Her health is not too good She is going to Rajgir. She says you are to write a detailed letter to Her at Rajgir.

It is the single-minded who are blessed, for they shall have peace in all its fulness. How was it that some of the saints reached such heights of perfection and contemplation ? They strove to die completely to every earthly longing, and so they were able to hold fast to God with all their inmost heart and concentrate, without hindrance on the life within.

—*The Imitation of Christ*

Guru, The Guide

(A discourse by a devotee at the 34th Sanyam Saptāha Mahā-Vrata at Kankhal, reproduced from memory in English.)

My Ācharya — Nirmalāndaji, Mahātmas, fellow Vratīs.

The subject of my talk is “*Guru Tatva*”. That I, an ordinary *vratī*, am here before you all this evening to speak on a subject which used to be explained by no less a person than Mahamahopadhyāya Gopinath Kaviraj before Ma at Kashi, is itself an eloquent testimony of *Guru Kripa*. I can visualise the wonderful scene — Gopinathji sitting at the feet of Ma, and Ma explaining in Her unique way what Guru means and occasionally asking Gopinathji — “what do your *Śāstras* say?” Answers Gopinathji — ‘yes, Ma, the (Scriptures) *Sāstras* too say the same thing.’ Fortunately, there are three students of Gopinathji present here who had the good fortune to witness all this themselves.

The Tantra says, —

“*Ajogyopi Yogytāmāpādya Śri Guru-Surya Vodhayati*” “even the most unfit person is made fit by the Sun-like Guru”. It is, therefore, actually Ma who is making me speak.

“*Bhagavan Guru*” says Ma Ānandamayi in one breath, so as to express the oneness of God and Guru. The juxtaposition of the two words, without a pause in between connotes their complete

identity. It is fortunate that Ma used the word Bhagawan and not Brahman — for our benefit, I suppose, as Brahman is beyond our comprehension, is 'Ja ta' as Ma says — 'It is what it is'. In fact, the Absolute has no name. The Bhagavatam says, '*Brahmeti Paramātmēti, Bhagwāneti Śabdyate*'. (It is referred to as Brahman, Paramātmā, and Bhagawan.) It has no name, says Ma, but all names are Its names, It has no form but all forms are Its forms. She goes further as was explained by Swami Virajanandaji — Form, formless — and superform (*Rūpa, Arūpa* and *Aparūpa*). This *Aparūpa* is *Guru Rūpa*. So God is one, Guru is one, Ma is one, there is nothing but the ONE in this universe. Now coming back to Bhagawan, even He is not easily approachable, neither does He talk nor can He be talked to. Then where does one go? God in his infinite mercy assumes human form to act as a guide or Guru. In the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: "Every individual is a pupil, an aspirant for perfection, a seeker of God and if he seeks earnestly with faith, God the goal becomes God the guide." (Introductory Essay, 'the Bhagavat Gita', S. Radhakrishnan).

"Who can be this guide? God Himself. It is he who for the uplift of the individual, for his real good, in order to free him from his conditioning (*saṁskāra*), appears as his helper on the path, in the shape that is most beneficial for any particular person", said Sri Ma Anandamayi in answer to a devotee in Calcutta on 20th October 1938. (*Ānanda Vārtā*, Vol. XXVIII, January 1981, page 9).

“Who can be a guide? Only a Self-realised person can be a guide for the achievement of Self-realisation”. Only person who have actually seen Kashi (Vārānāsī, the holiest city in India), said Ramakrishna Paramahansa, can tell all about it. One who has read about Kashi or seen a photograph of it cannot be expected to describe Kashi as effectively as one who has actually seen it.

When does this grace come into one’s life, and when does the guide appear? This question has been asked by many and has been answered a number of times by the guides in his or her inimitable fashion. Ma Anandamayi says, that the arising of this question in one’s mind, the feeling that one does not comprehend is the first dawn of grace. Assuming that one is so fortunate as to have this feeling, how does one get the guide? “Have patience”, says Ma, “think about Him in any form, concentrate on whichever of His images that appeals to you, utter his name by any mantra.”

God, the guide appears in one’s life at the most propitious moment. That moment is known to Him alone. One in whose mind grace in the shape of the urge has arisen, prays for the appearance of the Guru. This prayer is silent. It is not known when the mind says the prayer, but he who knows the mind, answers the call. In fact, the Guru is there, ever present to respond to that call. Tantra says, “*ISHWARA guru rupena, gudāścharati bhūtāle*” — (God in the shape of the guru, moves about, hidden in this world.) In fact, when God appears, He too does not reveal Himself to every-

one. (*"Naham prakashah sarvasya yogamāyā samāvritā* — (Gita-25/7). Ma says "there is a time for everything, no one can come to me until the time is ripe".

This response takes the form of a formal initiation — *dīkṣā*. *Dīkṣā* actually is another name for self-purification. Tantra says "*Diyate Jñānasatbhāva kshiyate pasu Vāsanā*" — (that which enlightens or gives knowledge and removes the animality in man or his animal desires — the *jīva* (man) becomes Śiva (God)).

That this is necessary has been stressed by almost all seers and saints in India. In fact, there is hardly a sage in India right from Ādi Sankaracharya who did not receive formal initiation. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa had a number of initiations, three of which are recorded. But it must be said that at a later stage in his spiritual progress, what his guides the Brāhmani and the naked Totapuri told him physically, had been revealed to Him earlier. How this happens can be appreciated only after initiation by the Guru or by his grace.

This formal initiation by a Guru in human form was however, absent in the life of Ma Anandamayi but as She has revealed, the process took place internally. In fact, as She has narrated Herself for the good of humanity, She felt as though She observed the ritualistic formalities, like the burning of incense, the chanting of mantras connected with the initiation. For deeper significance of this process, we look forward to revered Swami Virajanandaji's annotation of "*Svakriya Svarasāmrita*,"

which follows this talk. But let us remember that what happened to Shree Ramakrishna or Ma Anandamayi does not happen to anyone. However, both of them agree that no human being can perform the initiation. It is God alone who does it, so when Guru, the guide gives initiation, it is significant that none of these liberated Beings in human form, have ever said that He or SHE is the Guru. In fact, Shree Ramakrishna used to be displeased if anyone called him Guru.”

To realise or to have implicit faith that Guru in human form is God Himself is the first step towards spiritual upliftment. Those who are fortunate to be under the care and guidance of Guru are, so to say, insured against all the pitfalls of life—like the toddler whose hand is held by the father does not fall on the road. The vedānta says, “*Karnadhāram Gurum prāpya, tat vyākyaṃ plavavat driḍam*”. ‘As soon as the Guru who is the helms-man, is gained, one should hold fast to his words, instructions and teaching.’ Ma also sometimes says, that to think about Guru as a human being is as bad as regarding an image as a piece of stone. One should always remember what Shree Ramakrishna said about this in Bengali. ‘*Jadio amar guru suri bāri jay thathāpi amar guru Nityānanda Roy*’ (even if my guru visits a drinking den, yet he remains my guru all the same).

I have referred to Tantra several times. It is but proper to dispel the doubt or misgiving anyone may have about Tantra, because of certain abuses

which were indulged in by the so-called Tantric 'sādhakas'. It should however, be remembered that the word Guru appears in the Rik Veda, in the Upanishadas as well as in the Mahābhārata. But it must be said that the Guru concept was developed to its finest form by the tantra. 'Guru Mārga' the path of Guru as propounded in *Gurugītā* of the *Vishvasar Tantra* for achievement of Self realisation may be discussed later if it is Ma's *kheyāla*. To be brief, I quote Sri Aurovindo : "The Tantric system is, in its aspiration, one of the greatest attempts made to embrace the whole of God manifested and unmanifested in the adoration, self-discipline and knowledge of a single human soul". Ma, in fact revived the Tantra in a very subtle way as She has revived so many other things like 'Bhagavat Parāyan' (week-long recitation of the Bhāgavatam), Vaidic Sacrifices like *Ati Rudra Mahayajña* and last not least in importance—study and research in the Puranas. It is our infinite good fortune that She revived the correct "*Tantriki Vaidiki Dīkṣā*" (initiation as prescribed in the Vedas and Tantra) and saved us from the onslaught of commercial *dikṣa* which is rampant today. Time does not permit me to explain all the attributes of Guru as codified in Tantra, but I must say that all these were noticeable in Ma, and can still be felt. To illustrate the point, I may quote from *Yogavasista* : "*Darśanāt Sparśanāt Śavdāt Kripayā Sishya Dehake Janayet Jah Samavesam Sambhavam sa hi desikah*" (one who by his own grace can generate godliness in the mind of the disciple by his

look, touch and word is the Guru). Again both Tantra and Shiva Purana mention "*Guru Yasyaiva Samsparsāt Paramansanda abhi jayate*" (He is Guru whose touch generates supreme bliss.)

Tantra also says : "One who initiates by giving the mantra is Guru." It has to be remembered that a mantra printed in a book has no potency. It is like a fried seed which does not germinate. The mantra has to be heard from the mouth of a Guru (*Gurur Vaktena Lavyate*). Ma says, that even if the mantra is obtained in dream, if the receiver has not got complete faith in it, he or she should again hear the same from a Guru, so that the necessary potency may be transmitted. The next in the line (*Guru Paramparā*) is that the mantra is the *Parama Guru*. It is said that the process of repetition of mantra or the concentration on it which has the power to deliver man from the cycle of birth and rebirth is called *Parama Guru*. Time does not permit me to explain *Parāpara Guru* or *Paramesti Guru*. But when Ma was referred to as *Paramesti Guru* by Mahamandaleswar Prakashanandaji the other day, he was right from his '*Sthiti*' (state). We, as the children of Anandamayi Ma know that every one is correct from his or her stand point. To us, Ma is Guru, *Parama Guru*, *Parāpara Guru* and *Paramesti Guru* all in one, even if there are some more in the line.

A thing which is generally misunderstood by us is whether Ma gives *dīkṣā* or not. From the very day, myself and my wife were fortunate to receive *dīkṣā* almost eleven years ago, I was convinced

that it is Ma alone who gives *dīkṣā* and nobody else. The *āchāryas* perform the rituals as directed by Ma. But I never expressed this view in public. Is it an accident or Guru Kripa that I received a copy of the book — ‘As the Flower Sheds Its Fragrance’ three days ago? As I was turning over the pages, the first thing that attracted my notice was the foot-note in the chapter “Mataji’s Methods”, where it is said, “for the last few years, since Didima took Mahāsamādhi, Mataji did give initiation in Her own peculiar way.” I must say that Mataji has been giving initiation in Her own peculiar way always. If we go back to the history of Anandamayi Sangha, the first Acharya was Swami Akhandanandaji (Gurupriya’s father), I can say on the authority of my mother-in-law who is also a *vratī* here that it was Ma, who indicated the date, time and also the mantra. After the demise of Swami Akhandanandaji Didima was authorised to give *Dīkṣā*. Can anybody say that Didima gave *dīkṣā* without Ma being present? We do not realise how fortunate we are to have been protected by Ma Herself, ‘We live in the crown-land — *‘Ānande Ānandamayīr khās taluke vasat kari’* — (Ramprasad the singer and matri sādḥaka of Bengal). My grandson or your grandson will proudly say ‘my grand-father was a direct disciple of Sri Ma Anandamayi’. At the present moment there are only two in this world who were initiated by Sri Ma Saradamani. We hardly realise what great, invaluable wealth we have inherited. I end this short discourse with a fervent prayer to Ma in

which I am sure you all will join me, to shower potency on the various Acharyas that She has nursed into spiritual growth, so that the future generation may be saved from commercialised *dīkṣā*, and the lease document, so to say, can be executed on behalf of Ma.

I dedicate this talk to the lotus feet of Ma.
*“Gurur madhye sthithā Mātā, Mātrī madhye sthitho
 Guru*

—*Gurur Mātā namastestu Mātrī Gurum*

namāmyaham”.

(Mata is in the Guru, In Mata is the Guru.
 Guru the Mother be saluted as Mother the Guru.)

*Last night I asked the sage privately not to
 hide from me the secret of the Universe
 Quietly he whispered into my ear ‘Silence’.
 It is something to know, but not to utter.*

—Jalalludin Rumi

Ati Rudra Maha-Yajna Trust

To boost up the fund-raising campaign for the completion of Ati Rudra Maha-Yagna Shala at Kankhal, a devotional programme of Music and Dance was organised on December 7, 1983 at 6 P.M. at Kalamandir, Calcutta by the selected devotees of MA. Noted amongst the organisers were Smt. Chhabi Banerjee, Brahmacharini Bishuddha and Smt. Shivani Sengupta. Dr. Roma Chaudhuri and Mrs. Anjali Khan of Narajole participated respectively as the Chair-person and Chief Guest at the function. Many V.I.Ps including the Governor of West Bengal and Sri Tushar Kanti Ghosh attended the function. Smt. Chhabi Banerjee, Sri Ramkumar Chattopadhyaya, Smt. Suchitra Mitra, Sri Siddeswar Mukhopadhyay and others took part in the function. Smt. Sanjukta Panigrahi of Orissa staged her fascinating dance with Sri Raghunath Panigrahi (Vocal) and their party.

Smt. Padma Mishra — President — Ati Rudra Maha-Yagna Trust in her fervent appeal said that with the passing away of MA on August 27, 1982, a new era had commenced for commemorating the Mother's hallowed memory. That can be done best by giving effect to the ideas that emanated from HER. On the eve of HER exit from this world, MA had been pleased to express HER Kheyal to some senior Sannyasinis and Brahma-

charinies composing HER inner circle — the importance of creating a proper edifice in the shape of a magnificent Yagna-Shala on the original site where the Ati Rudra Maha-Yagna was performed and successfully completed in 1981 — under the direct guidance of MA. With a view to translating into action this express Kheyal of HER, a well-designed massive Yagna-Shala strictly on Sastric line was already constructed at Kankhal at the initiative of the Board of Trustees of the Ati Rudra Maha-Yagna also formed at Kankhal. The function was short and neat and was surely a grand success — judging from the spontaneous co-operation of hundreds of MA's devotees and very handsome donations received on the occasion. Every one felt as if MA was present in the Function.

Neither by yoga, nor sankhya, nor by work, nor by learning, but by the realization of one's identity with Brahman (Supreme Reality) is liberation possible, and by no other means.

—Sri Adi Sankaracharya

Activities in Sri Ma's Name

Durga Puja was celebrated very successfully in several of our Ashrams. The main function took place at Varanasi. About 250 attended. Quite a number had come from Calcutta and other places. Ma's presence was felt by one and all and so everything proceeded full of joy.

At Kankhal also about 250 people took part in Durga Puja which was performed in great style. In Diwali night Kali Puja was celebrated at Ma's samādhi. The atmosphere was superb. This was followed by the Annakut festival. 230 different items of food, including fruit, nuts, dried fruit, sweets etc. were offered to Annapurna, the Goddess of Plenty, although many ashramites had gone to New Delhi to be present at the festival there. Everyone in the Ashram shared in the work and so by Sri Ma's grace everything was accomplished to perfection.

The 34th Samyam Mahavrata at Kankhal was a most harmonious gathering. Sri Ma's presence being tangible from the first to the last moment. Over 200 vratis took part.

We are happy to report that the Samyam Mahavrata was observed collectively in several places simultaneously, namely at Fort Kuchaman in Rajasthan by the Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Kuchaman Trust with a full, slightly modified

programme and diet. Invitations were sent to devotees all over Rajasthan. Sri Ma had blessed Kuchaman by several visits. Once a Bhagavata Saptah was held there in Her august presence at the invitation of Raja Pratap Singh.

The Vrata was also observed for the 3rd time at our Bhimpura Ashram, attended mostly by devotees from Rajpipla and Baroda.

Also at Ranavav near Porbander, where a devotee had built a "Muktananda Kutī" in Didima's name a few years ago. Further we heard from Rajkot devotees who arranged for the Vrata collectively in a private home.

The following reports have been received :

New Delhi

July 6th, 7th and 8th (1983) were red-letter days for the people of Delhi in general, and those of Chittaranjan Park in particular. The local Kali Mandir Society organised a public lecture on Sri Sri Ma Anandamayī, by revered Brahmachari Nirmalānandaji of Sri Sri Anandamayee Sangha ; While introducing the speaker, though he did not need any introduction, Major B. C. Bose (Retd.) said that it was just the beginning of a series of public lectures as distinct from typical Satsang which we organise. The subject of these talks was "*Gitar Aloke Ma*" (Ma in the light of the Gita). Nirmalanandaji dealt with the subject in a superb fashion. The three main divisions of Gita, karma (action), bhakti (devotion), jñāna (knowledge) with bhakti as the cementing factor between the two

ends achieved fruition in the life of Sri Sri Ma in the manifest form.

At New Delhi Kalkaji Ashram weekly Satsang kirtan and meditation go on routine wise ; 'Janmastāmi' (the birth of the birthless Lord Krishna) was celebrated in the Ashram. There was a night long-Kīrtan by the ladies which flooded the singers as well as the listeners with bliss. There was subsequently a lecture by Sri A. B. Roy on the significance of the Lord's assumption of a human form.

The Kali Puja and Annakut festival of Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha for the year 1983 were organised at the New Delhi Kalkaji Ashram. It may be mentioned here that the image of Dakshina Kali was installed in this Ashram by Ma in the year 1979¹. The memory of that function which continued for five days, is ever fresh in the minds of those who were fortunate to be present. Subsequently the annual Kali puja during diwali night was organised in this Ashram in 1981 also in the holy presence of Ma. The ritualistic worship was performed by the so-called high-priest of the Sangha, revered Brahmachari Nirvānānandaji, once a scholar in chemistry, a handsome young man dressed in European costume turned into a '*Naistik Brahmachari*', trained under Ma's tutelage in the most difficult procedure of Tantric worship in its pure form, Annakut on the following day was attended by more than three hundred devotees.

1. See Ānanda Vārtā, Vol. XXVIII, Oct. 1981.

In all these functions particularly at the public lecture at the Chittaranjan Park Mandir premises, it was observed that people are keen to know more and more about Ma's life and teaching. It is certain that if Ma's '*kheyāla*' goes that way Ma's ambassador will one day go all over the world.

Bairagarh Bhopal

In this picturesque ashram, blessed by many visits of Sri Sri Ma, a special kirtan was performed on August 27th, the anniversary of Sri Ma's mahasāmadhi according to English date and on 14-15 September (the anniversary according to the Hindu calendar) *Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyana* was held. Besides local devotees, a group of brahmacharis, all students of final Śāstri, partook in this holy function. The pūjāri of Hanuman Mandir arrived in pouring rain to join the recitation. There was a distinct aura evinced by those present. A senior lecturer of the local Girls' Secondary High School was deeply moved. She had a vision of a golden butterfly at the conclusion of the Ramayana and a deep feeling of Sri Ma's closeness. A similar thing had happened to her years ago when she had taken *dikṣā* from Didima at Poona. When we call Ma deeply She ever responds and is with us.

Though our Ashram is small, not only devotees but also casual visitors remark on the great calm and peace in the precincts of this lovely lakeside ashram.

Since 1981 Durga Puja has been held there regularly. An ashramite had the desire to celebrate

Durga Puja. As soon as he expressed this desire, someone came along and volunteered to arrange for it. He said, "for many years we Bengalis of the Military Centre used to hold a regular Durga Puja. But for two years now it has been discontinued. It was my privilege to make all arrangements and I shall feel blessed to be allowed to do the same here in my Guru's (Didima) Ashram." This devotee is a retired military employee. Several years ago he had been greatly disturbed by family troubles. A colleague, seeing his depression advised him to go for Mataji's darshan who happened to be in Bairagarh and to take *dīkṣā* from Her mother, "all your problems will be solved." Both came to the Ashram and took initiation. A new light came into his life. He was successful in his work and settled all his family troubles.

This was the person who made most arrangements for the Durga Puja, assisted by a number of devotees. A Calcutta artist sculptured the images. Those who came for darshan were of the opinion that the vigraha was the most beautiful of the many they had seen in Bhopal. Every day of the puja devotees arrived in cars, buses and on cycles to offer pushpānjali and all partook of *prasāda*. On October 13th, *Sundar Kandh* from the Rāmāyana was sung from 9 p.m. to 1-30 a.m. by a renowned party. Listeners were enchanted by the heavenly music. On Oct. 14th Akhanda Rāmāyana was performed. At about 10 p.m. a well-known radio singer came and joined the recitation. She had never before been to the Ashram. Every year

larger and larger crowds come for darshan. The Chandi was also recited and on Navami day there was Kumari Puja.

Uttarkashi

In the holy city of Uttarkashi above the emerald green waters of the swiftly flowing Ganga rests the beautiful Kali Temple consecrated in August 1935, sanctified by the holy touch of Sri Ma and Baba Bholanath. Many devotees from Calcutta and other towns in Bengal had come and trekked up to Uttarkashi led by Sri Ma. At that time there was no car road. By slow marches the tired but happy and exhilarated throng arrived at their destination after five or six days. A stone engraving records the installation of the Deity by sādḥaka Ramna Pagala. The then tiny hamlet has been the winter abode of yogis, mahatmas and seekers after Truth from times immemorial. Bara Ramananda Avadhuta lived over 125 years. In 1973, Sri Ma blessed him by Her *darśana*, saying : “Baba, this body is always with you.” Chhota Ramananda, another highly revered devotee, had conveyed to Sri Ma : “Ma, I cannot come to you”, and Ma had given him also darśana. Last June he passed away at Gangotri. Our Swami Paramanandaji had lived in Uttarkashi for eight years at the feet of his Guru Sri Devi Giriji Maharaj who loved and revered Sri Ma so much that he came down from his hill top ashram to grace the *Pūrṇāhuti* (completion) of the Savitri Mahayajña at our Varanasi Ashram in

January 1950. Sri Bholanathji did *tapasyā* in this blessed spot for over two years.

When Ma was trekking in these parts with Bhaiji in the early 1930)s, Bhaiji once felt extremely thirsty and tired. Low and behold, Bhaiji in the dense forest saw a pool of clear water. He drank, washed and refreshed himself. Walking a little further, he looked back — there was no pool and no water. On another occasion, walking in those heights, Bhaiji felt hungry and exhausted. Suddenly a young boy with a basket full of *khoa* (cottage cheese) turned up and offered some to Bhaiji. Bhaiji found it unusually delicious and invigorating. When he turned round to pay the child, no one was to be seen.

As one enters the Ashram one is greeted by the sweet fragrance of jasmine. The evening *ārati* is being performed and one is enveloped by a strange peace. The Deity is beautiful and powerful. Living in this quiet peaceful ashram surrounded by high fir-clad mountains near the rushing waters of Ganga one feels blessed and grateful to be here.

A young brahmachari, grave beyond his years, well versed in Vedanta, sees to one's comforts, without the usual small talk. The pūjari, not only does puja, but also sweeps the courtyard, picks flowers and prepares the offerings for the worship and cooks *bhoga* all by himself. A few sādhus live in the ashram, busy with their holy calling. The brahmachari and most of the sādhus take *bikṣa* (begged food) at the Punjab Sindh Kshetra, which

offers roti and dal to all sādhus. This is just opposite the Kali Mandir.

From the Ashram itself one can have a daily *darśana* of the sādhus who come from as far off as Ujali to take *bhiksha* — young brahmacharis walking barefoot and others, hoary with age and wisdom, with a strange peace in their countenance.

Numbers of little children come to take *prasāda* of Ma Kali, always lovingly given. Last not least, a young, almost blind and almost deaf Brahmin lad who lives in the nearly Gopal Mandir, cleans the utensils for Ma Kali's Puja and bhoga, reciting at the same time from the Ramayana and Bhagavata. The vessels are shining brightly. "To be able to do such service is special good luck. Some have achieved everything thereby," Ma has said.

God is ever near us, because He is within us. If you are a true seeker, then seek Him within you first and then behold Him everywhere around you.

—Swami Ramdas