

O Will Supreme, Thy Will prevails.

The Fountain of Goodness accomplishes everything when the time is ripe.

To aspire to That which is Eternal Truth is right for everyone.

Of Thee alone must be the spoken word, all else is but futility and pain.

One of God's Names is Love. He Himself resides within all, at every moment, everywhere. When man — true to his calling — aspires after the One with uninterrupted intensity, then only His presence manifests.

That in which there is no question of form or formlessness, of beyond form and attributes, of transcending even the beyond — That alone is worthy of human aspiration.

It lies in God's very nature to keep the door to Himself ever open. If the amount of energy and time spent in worldly pursuits is given to the search for Him, the path of Self-knowledge will of a certainty open out of itself.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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

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Sri Sri Ma's Utterances

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

One day, Ma related the following incident : "A Kashmiri lady used to sing kirtan of "Ma, Ma". Some people asked her : "You are not a worshipper of Śakti, why then do you repeat "Ma, Ma !?" This question made her doubt whether she was doing the right thing, but she lacked the courage to ask me about it. One day she sent another lady to put this question to me. Then I called her and said : "Look, if you have the firm conviction that, since you have been given *dīksā* of the name of Rama or Krishna, you must not repeat any other name, then you should act accordingly. In this everything is contained. Again, looking at it from another angle, it is a fact that God is called 'Father' by some, 'Mother' by others, and 'Beloved' by yet others. Everyone may invoke God in the manner that appeals to him most. Therefore, if you call out 'Ma', this also means invoking the One only. So there is nothing wrong with it." On hearing this, the lady got over her doubts.

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One day Ma said about the descent of *avatāras* (divine Incarnations) : "In one sense all are in fact *avatāras*. And if you leave alone this point of view,

then the question arises : from which place is the descent ? In reply it may be said : the attributeless (*nirguṇa*) as well as the One-with-attributes (*saguṇa*) manifests. The simultaneous manifestation of *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* brings forth an *avatāra*. For example, a tree first appears as a sapling, from that very sapling the tree with its branches and leaves shoots forth, but at the stage of the sapling the outer appearance and the nature of the tree cannot be detected. From the seed buried in the earth, the sprout grows and then gradually the tree, twigs, flowers, fruits emerge from it. From the united manifestation of *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* derives the *Avatāra*. This is why in an *Avatāra* are seen the display of both these modes of being. Look, the surface of the ocean is all waves, whereas in its depths there are no waves—there is utter calm and profound stillness. Likewise in an *Avatāra* the dynamic and the static play side by side.”

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Ma said : “Go on invoking whichever Name each of you like best. Without a word obey the Guru’s orders. Go ahead, abandoning yourself completely to His will. Do not attach importance to any of your desires and you will see how everything will unfold of itself. It is said that in the Kaliyuga everything can be achieved by the simple practice of God’s Name. Do not think that if you have not been initiated by a Sanskrit mantra you cannot invoke God and that therefore nothing will

be achieved. Don't you also see this body and listening to these words? Is this all to be said? Everything that is required will come about of its own accord. I have said that for entry into the register the proper name is required. Just carry on with the repetition of the name you like best, everything will turn up as the need arises. *Bija* (seed) means special acquaintance. It is like this: suppose only your name is known, but nothing else about you. But when called by your name you come near, then all about you will be known.

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Ma went on: "For this reason, I once said to Jyotish: 'Before starting kirtan in your Ashram, you may first sing: *Jai Śiva Śankara Byom Byom Hara Hara*'. The Name contains the seed (*bija*), that is why through the repetition of the Name the seed sprouts forth. Also in the seed mantra the Name is present—everything is contained in everything; in whatever manner, by whatever means—revelation must come about. Do whatever and as much as you can; do not waste your time and your breath. What you do is sure to yield results—in that very form the One will be revealed.

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On being questioned whether a Guru is necessary or not, Ma replied: "One's father, mother, teacher, even anyone from whom anything has been

learnt—all of them are one's Gurus. Whatever work is done must have a purpose ; for the attainment of any kind of knowledge a Guru is needed."

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In a different context, Ma said : "Without being active nothing can be achieved, effort has to be made. To be freed from impurities, one has to forge pure bonds. Suppose you have tied a knot in your cloth : in order to undo it you have to focus your mind on it and undo it with your hands. It is similar with all work."

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Question : Mataji, the worship of God in a particular form does not appeal to me. On what am I to concentrate my mind ?

Mataji : All right, just sit still and fix your mind on the rhythm of your breath ; you need not do anything else. Let the inhalation and the exhalation of your breath be your object of contemplation.

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Question : Is rebirth a fact or not ? Some say it is, while others hold the contrary view.

Mataji : Yes, there is rebirth ; yet it is for those who have ingrained in them the *samskāra* of previous births and rebirths. For those who do

not have these *samskāras*, there is no rebirth. The level on which people happen to be, determines their attitude of mind and heart and also what they say.

Question : If this is so, it is much better to be a Muslim or a Christian ! They do not have any *samskāra* of rebirth, hence they won't have to be born again. Whereas we shall be subjected to coming and going innumerable times.

Mataji : Are you capable of getting rid of your *samskāra* just by your desire, with the help of this feeling of yours ? In fact this is your innate *samskāra*. Besides, look, this is not determined by the mere fact of being a Hindu or a Muslim ; there are so many Muslims with Hindu *samskāras* and also many Hindus with Muslim *samskāras*.

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The same gentleman put forth the questions whether God-vision really occurs and if so, whether such visions are genuine ?

“Certainly !” .replied Mataji, “it does occur. Just as at this moment I am seeing you, exactly with the same clarity does darshan take place.”

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Question : People say that Brahman is unknowable, unmanifest. If this is true, how then can one know Him ?

Mataji : Suppose you have seen a flower. I ask you : “Bābā, what is the flower like ?” You reply : “It is very beautiful, it is like this,” and so

on and so forth. But is that an exact description of the real nature of the flower? Have you been able to express precisely what you feel about the flower? You can never by words convey the essential nature of anything. You can just hint at it, for language itself will shrink back from the dimension beyond speech. All objects of the world are both manifest and unmanifest. In a like manner, Brahman is also both manifest as well as unmanifest, knowable as well as unknowable, both simultaneously. All modes of being and feelings (*bhāvas*) dwell in Him.

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Whenever someone confides to Ma the experiences of his spiritual life, as for instance: "Ma, I get such and such inspirations, I pass through such and such states, etc.", Ma listens sympathetically; far from challenging his personal attitude, She encourages him. After some time however, She very gently and gradually makes him understand that there are so many higher and still higher states to be attained. By and by She explains to him lovingly how sometimes one's own will is mistaken for divine inspiration and how the state of inertia can be misapprehended for *samādhi*. Today also this topic came up for discussion.

Ma said: "One has to reflect carefully upon one's present condition to make sure whether in this very condition one is capable of receiving pure divine inspiration; whether it is genuine, prompted

by God, or just a mental impression. Such matters must be thoroughly scrutinized. Further, if various kinds of occult phenomena and powers appear that obstruct the path, they have to be mercilessly driven away so that the road to progress may be kept clear."

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Once, in the context of a discussion on Sri Krishna, a gentleman expressed his opinion about *madhura bhāva* (the devotee's attitude towards God as the beloved). Ma immediately observed: "*Madhura bhāva* is self-revealed ; it is indeed a very special issue. How can one have the inner qualification to comprehend it unless one attains to a particular, elevated level of *samādhi*? *Madhura bhāva* is in fact the ultimate state of development, or the culmination of the other *bhāvas*, namely *śanta*, the tranquil, *dāsya*, the attitude of a servant of the Lord, *sakya*, loving God as one's friend, *vatsalya*, parental affection for God, and so forth. The activities of the senses are sacrificed in the final oblation into the fire of *samādhi* ; hence it is but natural for *madhura bhāva*, which is beyond the grasp of the senses, to manifest in one who has attained to *samādhi*. This is how Rādhā and Krishna are disporting in their *līlā*. This, which is a symbolic way of expressing the union with the Supreme of one in *samādhi*, has been interpreted in the secular world in a distorted way by people who have super-imposed their own attitude on this

sublime truth. So some people are heard to say they do not appreciate the *bhāva* of Radha-Krishna. Yet we are told that the *gopis* (milkmaids) who participated in the *līlā* of Vrindaban were incarnations of Rishis who are gifted with the knowledge of past, present and future.

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Question : Well Ma, does it not hurt you to see us commit so many mistakes and suffer as a result of it? You are our Mother, therefore how is it possible for you not to look in our direction or to remain indifferent even if you see us miserable?

Mataji replied with a smile : "I have sometimes observed that when a child reaches for the lamp, his mother takes his hand and presses it lightly on the dome of the lamp to let him feel the burning. This teaches the child such a lesson that in future he never again goes near the lamp. Thus by inflicting a slight pain, the mother saves him from much greater suffering. Perhaps he would have burnt his hand by unwittingly grasping the lamp, but the mother forestalls that disaster by making him experience slightly the burning sensation."

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Question ; Well, Ma, which is greater the *bīja* mantra or the Name?

Mataji : Look, it cannot be said which is greater. Of course, if you are advised to repeat

the name, out of that itself the *bija* (seed mantra) will emerge in order to annihilate your *samskāras*. But just as it is impossible to say whether the seed or the tree comes first, in this context it is also similar. Therefore one cannot say 'this is greater and that is less important'. Just as the essence of the tree lies contained within the seed. Since the whole tree is potentially present in the seed, the tree develops out of it and again the tree yields so much fruit and thousands of seeds. Thus it is said, the Name and the One whose name it is, are identical.

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In course of conversation, the question arose : "What does *Sāstra* (Scripture) mean ?" Ma said, "Do you know what *Śāstra* means ? *Sva-astra*, one's own weapon—the action by which the fetters of the world can be cut asunder." Then the question came up : "What does *śiṣya* mean ?" Ma explained : "*Sva, sva* (one's own Self), that is, transforming into one's own Self. Essentially, to make the disciple realize his actual identity with the Guru—to let this awareness blossom forth."

"What is another meaning of *śiṣya* ? *Śiṣya* is *śaṣya*, corn ! Just as corn is produced by sowing seeds in the field, here also there is the similar act of sowing seeds in order to grow the crop which is the revelation of the Self."

In Association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Amulya Datta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali)

(Continued from the last issue)

*Kishenpur Ashram, Dehradun
16th May, 1941*

The change in Bhaiji's life

After a while Sri Ma continued to speak :

“The level that can be reached through regular worship and adoration can also often be attained through the compassionate-gance or touch of a great Being (*Mahāpurush*). In such cases no outward act of worship or the like is needed. But this does not mean that those who possess the inherent tendency to perform pūjā, will be asked to remain idle. For them it is better to progress through worship and adoration. God's grace does not wait for anything. This is why it is said that all things are possible at all times. Through this body too God's grace has often been manifested. But such manifestations have occurred in a perfectly natural way, not in response to anyone's request or entreaty.

That serious trouble started in Jyotish's family life was also due to an event of this kind. The

day I gave Jyotish my golden necklace to be used as a sacred thread, from this very day his life started changing radically. As soon as he received the necklace, all the outward signs of a true Brahmin, such as eating only food cooked by himself, etc. began to manifest. Noticing all this, his wife could no longer tolerate it. An intense feeling of opposition was aroused in her. This is what usually does take place. When husband and wife do not think and feel on the same lines there is bound to be this kind of trouble. If one can't be in tune with the other's feeling and ways, then severe opposition is the result and at every step one tends to put obstacles into the other's path. This feeling of defiance gradually becomes more and more virulent. This kind of things also happened in the case of Jyotish.

On learning from Jyotish of his wife's behaviour, I often used to exhort him to try and explain everything to her. But although he tried his best to follow my advice, this had the reverse effect. Jyotish would tell me : "Ma, what is the use of trying to explain to her ? In response to every such attempt she only assumes an even more violent attitude."

Soon after obtaining my necklace, Jyotish's desire to receive the sacred thread became more pronounced. He duly donned the sacred thread and with great zeal and enthusiasm started performing his daily practices with the help of a Brahmin pandit. In this way the bonds of his life as a householder gradually loosened. He did of course continue with his official duties and thereby main-

tained his family, but all this was done in a spirit of aloofness. His attitude of mind and heart was quite divorced from his outer life. During this period he used to walk with me in the mornings in the fields of Ramna and talk about his inner life in great detail.

Now see the fun of it all! Although his spiritual progress gave rise to a wild rage and resentment in his wife, which alienated her from her husband, yet how can the influence of satsang go waste? Due to her association with Jyotish, nobler qualities such as faith and trust in God were kindled in her. Consequently she took on as her Guru a certain Bhagavan Brahmachari and began to carry out all his instructions with the utmost faith. Some of you must have observed how Jyotish's wife reposed implicit faith and confidence in her Guru.

I: Ma, I have heard that Jyotish relinquished on the shores of lake Manas sarovar the necklace he had received from you.

Mataji: Yes, I shall tell you what happened. On the way to Kailash, when we were nearing the lake, Jyotish, Bholanath and others reached two hours earlier than Swami Akhandananda and myself. Immediately on arriving there, Jyotish was gripped by an irresistible urge for total renunciation. Without telling anyone he went all by himself, bathed in the lake and after offering oblations of water to the gods, he gave himself *vidvat samnyāsa** The thought that before anyone arrived

* There are two kinds of *samnyāsa*: *vividisa samnyāsa* which is preceded by a sense of detachment from the world, and

to prevent him, he would disappear and hide himself in a cave in the hills round the lake and spend the rest of his life there.

But before he could carry out his intention, Bholanath arrived and found him completely naked on the shores of Manas sarovar. Jyotish did *pranāma* to Bholanath and disclosed his heart's desire to him. But Bholanath would not let him go anywhere, made him put on clothes and brought him to me. I returned with Jyotish to the lake, where he made me sip nine mouthfuls of water. This seems to have been a part of the rituals for taking *saṁnyāsa*. Thereafter he laid the golden necklace and his sacred thread at my feet and said: "Ma, please give me permission to depart to the distant hills so that I can live all by myself in one of the solitary caves." He seemed to feel no hesitation or sorrow about leaving me. At that time his deep inner conviction was: 'Ma is not confined within any particular body, but is omnipresent everywhere in the whole universe. So it is impossible to forsake Ma under any circumstances.' I picked up the gold necklace and the sacred thread and, putting them into Jyotish's hands, I said: 'For the time being let them remain with you.'

Then I began strolling with him on the shores of the lake. All of a sudden some mantras poured from my mouth. On hearing them, Jyotish at once assimilated them and started repeating them

vidvat saṁnyāsa which is *saṁnyāsa* par excellence, preceded by Realization of THAT.

in japa. Jyotish's condition then was such that he felt not the slightest attraction for anything at all. In that condition the body does not remain because there is nothing anymore that has to be done. Subsequent to this, Jyotish's last illness was a mere pretext.

Jyotish had developed certain powers already before he took *samnyāsa*. He used to declare sometimes that he could depart from his body at will. But such a death would have been self-willed, whereas his leaving the body as it actually took place was quite natural. Already much earlier he had a desire to leave his body. In fact when he was critically ill at Tarapith this was due to some such resolution on his part.

Ma was at this juncture taken away for Her meal and we came downstairs as well.

Bhaiji's Final Beatitude

In the afternoon when we again assembled near Ma, She resumed the topic of Jyotish of Her own accord.

Ma: I had already explained previously that Jyotish's condition was such that it was no longer possible for him to retain his body. On the way back from Kailash, he soon fell ill. He was treated by a good doctor, but this did not lead to any improvement of his health. He gradually became very weak. In due course, he had no longer the strength to get up from bed and his speech became indistinct. But just before his death this feebleness disappeared and he uttered quite clearly several words in quick succession. On noticing this some people thought that his condition had changed for

the better and that his life could be saved. But others were of the opinion that this change was nothing but the dying embers of a fire bursting into flame before being extinguished for ever. The doctor, noticing the deterioration of the patient's pulse, went to the adjoining room and started crying.

The doctor was a Mohammedan, but the way he ministered to Jyotish both medically and as a nurse was something very rarely to be met with. He used to come along frequently to examine Jyotish's condition, and often helped him to pass urine and stool. He never took a pice for his labour. One day, everybody present approached him and compelled him to accept payment, because genuine expenditure for medical attention was widely believed to often lead to success. The money was given to him through Jyotish's hands. He did accept the money but before leaving, he quietly put it under Jyotish's pillow.

Meanwhile Hariram Joshi and others present, realizing that Jyotish's end was imminent, said to him, "Bhaiji, please give us some advice!" Jyotish then spoke quite distinctly : "*Ma and I are one, we are all one.*" Then he repeated his *samnyāsa* mantra, and uttering the name "*Ma*", he gave up his body. Although a number of people were present, nobody except Khukuni (Gurupriya Didi) could hear the *samnyāsa* mantra.

A little before his demise I asked Jyotish to take off the gold necklace and his sacred thread. But they were under his vest and it was not possible

to remove the vest. So it was cut open with a pair of scissors and they were taken from him.

I: Why did you ask him to remove the necklace and the sacred thread ?

Ma (smiling) : There was no particular reason for this. Jyotish had already previously relinquished them, and it was only due to my request that he had agreed to keep them. So before his passing away I took these things back in order to relieve him from all responsibility for their care. Of course, many people naturally surmised that it had not taken them away, they might have been the cause of Jyotish's further bondage. But in reality this was not so, because Jyotish's condition was such that none of those things could have created any bondage for him.

I: When Jyotish said just before leaving : "Ma and I are one, we are all one," what exactly did he mean by this ?

Ma : He had then realized the oneness of all and everything.

I: Does this mean Self-realization ?

Ma : This sort of question has already been raised. After his death, a lot of people have asked me whether or not Jyotish had attained Self-realization. At that time I did not give a clear reply, but from what I said they gathered that Jyotish had indeed attained Nirvana. I first spoke to Gopinath Kaviraj about Jyotish's ultimate state. Later I spoke to one or two others, now I am telling you : I have seen Jyotish three times after

he left his body. On those three occasions I beheld him in three entirely different forms.

The first time his appearance was just like what I had noticed on the shores of Manas sarovar — he was in a state of total renunciation (*vairāgya*), the place was just like that, with an expanse of a plateau and distant hills in the background. Jyotish was running quite naked towards the hills. This body was standing there, and though Jyotish passed quite close by, he paid not the slightest attention to it. Even when he turned his head slightly and looked in the direction of this body, his gaze was not focussed on anything. He was entirely possessed of the idea to find sanctuary in a cave of the distant hills.

When I was traveling in Narmada Valley, I beheld Jyotish for the second time. On that occasion I saw him in a body of light. At that time the wife of Gangacharan Babu* was with me. She could not see Jyotish, yet she told me: “Ma, I feel that Jyotish is here. He used to love me very much, perhaps this is why I am sensing his presence.” I of course did not reply to her words, but on looking round I saw Jyotish standing nearby, his weight on one leg, with the other leg bent behind.

The third time I saw Jyotish, his appearance was quite different. It was neither like the first time when he seemed like in a human body of flesh and blood, nor a luminous body like on the second occasion, but it appeared somewhat like a cloud of smoke. If you had seen it, you would not have

* Gangacharan Dasgupta was a relation of Bhajji.

been able to know what you saw, but I realized Jyotish had arrived in this particular guise. He was proceeding slowly, slowly to merge with this body, but I forbade him, saying : “There is a *kheyāla* that so long as this body exists, one has to communicate with it in separation.” He nodded in acquiescence. Later he very gradually mingled with the atoms and sub-atoms of this body. Thus Jyotish’s deep aspiration was fulfilled.

When he saw me for the first time, I used to be heavily veiled and speak only very rarely after drawing a circle around myself. On the first occasion when he met me, he beheld me seated in *siddhāsana*, fully veiled. He could not see my face, only small portions of my hands and feet. Even so, he resolved : “*I shall end up under these very lotus feet.*” And this actually came to pass.

Maharshi Raman on ‘Surrender’

To a devotee who complained that complete surrender was impossible, the Maharshi said, “Yes, complete surrender is impossible in the beginning. Partial surrender is certainly possible for all. In course of time it will lead to complete surrender.”

Two Gems From Ma's Treasure House

Prof. G. D. Shukla

It needs a connoisseur, which I am not, to identify a real, precious gem from a spurious, worthless one. As such, I would be setting myself a formidable task in trying to gather a few worthwhile one's, were it not for the fact that in Ma's vast treasure house there were no fake ones, no deception, no artful glitter to mislead the ignorant and the unwary.

Persons who pass by the name of saints and Gurus are not scarce in India. Some of them present a very polished and impressive appearance, and equally polished and stately is the language in which they deliver their discourses for the education and edification of their followers, but not unoften it has been found that they merely serve as living illustrations of the maxim—"all that glitters is not gold."

Ma was no such saint. In fact, She was very different and far above them. She very often referred to Herself as an ignorant, unlettered little girl, and laid no claim to any learning or wisdom. She talked mostly in the language of the common man, shorn of all meretricious adornment and idle rhetoric, but She always left a lasting impression on those who listened to Her. The reason was that She spoke from Her inborn intrinsic Knowledge. She spoke of what She knew. There was no dichotomy.

tomy in Her. She was at one with the truth, and it was the truth that She revealed in Her simple, unadorned style. The Buddha talked in a similar way, so did Jesus, so did Ramakrishna Paramhansa and a few others of that calibre. It is the genuineness of the word that impresses, not its outer glitter.

I had the privilege and the good fortune of listening to Ma on innumerable occasions. She was not in the habit of giving long discourses. Brevity and simplicity were Her *forte*, but when She spoke every word told, and left an abiding impression.

Many years ago at the Kishenpur ashram (in Dehradun), a young lady approached Ma. She made obeisance to Her, and after some hesitation said, "Ma, my exams are about to begin." "So what", asked Ma, "Do you consider Ma to be a जादूगरनी (magician)? Work hard for that." The lady was silenced and I do hope that she understood these few words of Ma in their proper spirit. Those words were not uttered in anger, nor to discourage her. They were full of love and solicitude for that person who was at the threshold of life. This world is an arena of action, and everyone has to *do*, to *work*, to *strike* and to *struggle* for attaining his desires, (both mundane and spiritual) and fulfilling the mission allotted to him. God Himself, whenever He appeared in a human form in this world exerted Himself and relied upon self-help, and His own resources—physical, mental, moral and spiritual, for the attainment of His goals and objec-

tives. The life history of Rama and Krishna provide abundant illustrations of this great truth. Ma never wanted men to become inactive and helpless beings—physically, mentally and spiritually. Of course, Her help and grace were always there in a hidden way for all those who sought that help ; nevertheless She wanted them to act, and to act their part well. This world is a very ruthless world, and only those persons and races have been able to survive who have made themselves fit by doing things themselves, by acting and suitably reacting to the environments in which it has pleased God to place them. This applies to persons on the moral and spiritual planes too. Only those have been able to make the grade and achieve something, who have struggled themselves to rise, and realise partially or wholly their affinity with their creator. The story of Christian in John Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's Progress" is a very telling example of this great truth. It has been the great good fortune of India to have received some of the greatest saints of God from time to time, but few indeed, of even those who were nearest to them, have been able to derive great benefit from their presence just because they made no efforts of their own to learn anything from them. They merely wanted their Masters to work for them and lift them up. But a Helping Hand becomes effective only when the person sought to be helped also makes an effort to help himself. It is a common sight to see people running from one saint to another in the hope that a mere darshan of them would transform them and their

fortunes. But how many find their hopes fulfilled? Ma is reported to have said that flies and mosquitoes also sit in close proximity with Her, but they remain mere flies and mosquitoes. There must be a conscious effort on the part of a person to change and improve himself. When God and His saints feel convinced that the desire to change is genuine their help always comes, though often imperceptibly.

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Ma came to this world to direct men and women to the way of God, for that is the only way which can bring real peace and lasting happiness and do good to men in every way. When Ma, for some reason best known to Her, ceased to make Dehradun Her principal abode, I took the liberty of writing to Her and seeking Her blessings at least once every year. In Her reply dated 13.9.74 She said, “भगवत प्राप्ति यात्रा बनी रहे । कोशिश”—(“Continue the pilgrimage for the realisation of God. Go on trying”.) Years later in Her letter dated 25.3.82 she harped on the same theme—“भगवत स्मरण” (Remembrance of God). I have tried to follow Her advice—but with what amount of success She alone knows. So far as I understand I have not been able to go even one step forward, for I realise full well that I am a bundle of frailties and imperfections which I have not been able to shed to any significant extent despite the little *pooja* and meditation that I do for a little while every day. But

the confidence that Ma's grace and mercy are always there gives me the courage to go on, and, perhaps, that is what Ma expects of ordinary persons like me. Strait and steep is the way to the city of God, and the ordinary mortal is bound to faint and fall—at least I feel so about myself—but what Ma seeks of us (so far as I understand) is that we should never cry halt to the march—to the pilgrimage. It is the struggle that matters, the striving for the goal that counts. “कोशिल” —says Ma. That is the real thing. If men can climb the Everest and go into outer space by dint of hard and sustained attempts, why cannot men walk on the way of God.

Now, the question arises what is this “भगवत् प्राप्ति यात्रा” and how it is to be made. Does it mean that man should neglect his work in this world and go “entirely inside”? I do not think Ma wanted that. This world itself is the creation of God, and surely God does not want men to be indifferent to the concerns of this world. He wants it to be made a better place with the coming and the presence of every man and woman. God wants man to be His ally in this noble work. Man has to equip himself physically, mentally, morally and spiritually for this great task and this can be done best when he makes up his mind to walk on the way of God. It was for this reason, I think, that Ma wanted men to “remember God” and be the “pilgrim of God”—not to renounce the world and live an idle, selfish, parasitic life caring for his own uplift and enlightenment. I vividly remember how on a certain day

many years ago I went early in the morning contrary to my usual practise of going in the evening to the Ashram at Kishenpur for Ma's *darshan*. Ma saw me and immediately asked, "How are you here at this time?" I at once understood what Ma meant, and I told her that I had finished my work in the college that day. I had only one teaching period in the M. A. class. That satisfied Ma, and She said, "It is alright then." Does not this little instance reveal eloquently Ma's views on Work and spiritual meditation? I think it does. Work for the sake of God and walk in the way of God! Work done in the name of God and dedicated to Him brings every kind of benefit—worldly and other-worldly.

When a man reaches a state in which he does not look to any created thing to give him comfort, then it is that God begins to taste sweet to him, and then that he is quite content, whatever happens. In that state he does not rejoice when something splendid results, and is not saddened when something disappointing occurs, but he entrusts himself entirely and in confidence to God, who is for him all in all.

—The Imitation of Christ, p. 81

How Ma Captured Me

B. L. Gadkari

Like most intellectuals of my generation I was more or less indifferent to religious practices and indeed believed that most of them were priest-craft to exploit illiterate and simple minded persons. I knew of many scandals in respect of so called "Saints and Sadhus" in various places, and I wondered whether it was possible to come across and recognise a genuine self-realised person.

At the age of 45 in 1957-58 I came across Paramhansa Yogananda's "Autobiography of a Yogi," and, for the first time came to know that there existed in our country an ever-cheerful saint who was adored as a Mother and who was known by the name of "Anandamayi Ma" which fitted her nature. I then happened to be posted in Bombay for one year only. A Gujarati friend of my school days met me at my residence and while browsing through the book he saw the picture of "Ma" and read the chapter in the book and told me that many of his Gujarati acquaintances were devotees of that saint and that she was then in Vile Parle, Bombay, where some function was going on in a school compound. He told me the place at Vile Parle where, if interested, I could go to satisfy my curiosity of seeing a cheerful saint. Next evening I went to the address given, only to find an empty pandal and an empty dais. I asked a

couple of persons waiting there, as to where everybody had disappeared and at what time the "programme" was scheduled. They did not know anything and told me, probably everyone had gone to take their meals and to retire. I was about to leave the pandal as it was already getting dark and I was new to that area and had a long distance to travel to reach my residence in another suburb far away from Vile-Parle. Suddenly however I heard a young man addressing some question to a graceful lady in white robes standing on the dais where she had just arrived from somewhere. She was giving some reply which I could not hear from the other end near the exit where I was standing. She suddenly turned to a bearded Sanyāsi sitting alone with a big stick in his hand at my end of the dais, and asked him what somebody had told him he would do if God appeared in person; the Sanyāsi said that he would hit God with the big stick. The graceful lady in white robes, burst into a ringing laughter; she laughed and laughed and then told her questioner that that was why God did not appear in person before everybody. I then realised that I was in the presence of the ever-cheerful saint whom I had come to see. My curiosity having been satisfied I returned home as it was already very late. The place and time were both inconvenient to me and therefore I did not pay a second visit. Soon after I was transferred to an up-country district place some 250 miles away from Bombay.

However, having caught me, Ma was not going to let me run away. That is why most unexpect-

tedly, a year later I was transferred as a Presidency Magistrate to Bombay, this time permanently. What is more, I chanced to get a residence at Khar, a suburb hardly two miles from Vile-parle. Soon after, my Gujarati friend came to tell me that the saint who had attracted me so much a year or two ago had again come to Vile-parle and the place where she was putting up was not far away. He took me to Mr. B. K. Shah's residence where Ma was putting up. When we arrived there Haribabaji was explaining some scripture (probably Srimad Bhagawat) which was being first read by one of his disciples, and then explained by Haribabaji. There were hardly 40 to 50 persons present, and Ma came and sat very near him on the ground. I was sitting just in front of her, hardly 5 feet away. I could not resist the temptation of looking at her and soon I discovered that she was also looking at me. Our eyes met several times, and, each time, she smiled an irresistible smile which weakened all my efforts to look away. Soon I became a daily visitor to the evening Satsang of Haribabaji.

And one evening "it" happened. Haribabaji's disciple, with the help of some small boys was performing some dramatic performance called 'Lilā' and in the course of it he started singing a bhajan of four words only, namely : "*Sita Ram Sita Ram, Radhe Shyam Radhe Shyam.*" He had hardly started when Ma made a gesture indicating that she was going to sing, and those who noticed it asked Haribabaji's disciple to stop. He had not noticed Ma's gesture and was

therefore wondering what offence he had committed, why everyone appeared to be annoyed with him and why he was being asked to stop when suddenly the same *bhajan* in Ma's melodious voice began to be heard. Oh, what a sweet and emotion-laden *bhajan* it was ; full of "*bhakti-bhāva*", in a variety of tunes ! Ma was no longer the cheerful saint on this earth, she was a Goddess come down from Heaven. We all repeated the words after her and we were all transported to divine regions unknown to us. I do not know how long this went on. I was conscious only of the sweet melodies and when the singing stopped a river of tears was flowing from my eyes and probably from the eyes of all who were present. Ma was in "*bhāva*" when she stopped, and she went to her room at the rear of the main building. She was held by her attendant girls who almost dragged her away. Not knowing anything about *bhāva* etc. I thought she had suddenly fallen ill, and, in my mind I criticised the hosts for not immediately calling a doctor and for not arranging to carry her away on a stretcher or in a chair. As I did not know anybody there I went home.

That night I had disturbed sleep. I woke up in the middle of the night only to find that the same sweet voice, the same tune, the same words were continuously ringing in my ears. The next day was a working day and as I took my seat in the Court I was still hearing the music. I was afraid I would lose control over myself at any moment and start repeating the song to the accompaniment of clapping of my hands from my seat as we had done

the previous evening. It would be a hilarious scene if a Presidency Magistrate in Bombay suddenly started singing a *bhajan* and clapping his hands from his seat instead of hearing evidence and arguments and giving his decisions. Only after three days of strenuous effort I was able to suppress the urge to sing and to forget the tune. However now, I was irrevocably captured, never to miss an opportunity to be in Ma's presence and to receive Her blessings. She has showered kindness in various ways on various occasions on this recalcitrant child ; but that would be another story.

“The relationship between the Guru and disciple , according to the Hindu Scriptures is a very sacred one. This tie cannot be broken by the death of the body. After the teacher has passed away, he still continues to watch over his disciples in spirit. He will not accept his own final liberation until all are liberated.”

—Swami Brahmananda
(Rakhal Maharaj)

From Slavery to Sainthood

Story of the Renowned Sufi Rābiā

Ma Das

Part I

A mystic is one who seeks absorption into the Deity through contemplation, burning love and total self-surrender. Irrespective of the nature of the faith in which he may be born, the mystic is endowed with one unvarying common characteristic of keeping his face firmly turned away from all that is created. Transcending intellectual concepts and fanatic dogmas which divide mankind into antagonistic religious creeds, the mystic is a one-pointed lover of the Lord, whether with form or without it, worshipping Him with the single desire of attaining immutable oneness with the eternally luminous Beloved. As the Christian mystic St. Catharine says, "I desire not what comes from Thee, but I desire only Thee, Sweet Love," or as our own Mira says in her unique uni-directional Love, "*Mere to Giridhara Gopal, dūsro nā koyī* (For me there is only Giridhar Gopal, (i.e. Krishna) and no other).

The Mundaka Upanishad says, 'As the rivers flowing into the ocean disappear, quitting name and form, so the knower, being liberated from name and form, goes into the Heavenly Person higher than the high'. Very similar to this teaching is the

goal of the mystic whether from the East or from the West.

In the history of Sufism (Mysticism of West Asia), Rābiā of Basra in Iraq (Cir. 803 A.D.) is a well-known eminent figure. She is not only the leading woman mystic, but even among men, her place is with sufis of the front rank. Blessed with perfect purity and legendary longing for the Lord, the inimitable quality of her life of rare renunciation, peerless penance and supreme surrender make her worthy of hearty homage on the part of dedicated devotees of all denominations, and affectionate admiration by saints of every section of society all over the world. Among her contemporaries in Iraq, even the celebrated-ones looked upon her with respect and felt blessed by associating with her.

THE SUFI WAY OF LIFE

Before we portray the inspiring incidents and other details connected with Rābiā's life, it would be useful to mention briefly the ideals of Sufism along with a short description of the various stages recognized by the Sufis, which they go through in the spiritual pilgrimage to their goal of self-annihilation in the limitless ocean of Divine Love.

The Sufis believe that the souls of human beings differ infinitely in degree, but not at all in kind from the Divine Spirit in which they will ultimately be absorbed. This Divine Spirit of God, according to their faith, pervades the universe, and that It alone is Perfect Truth, that nothing else has a pure

absolute existence, that material substances are no more than gay pictures, that we must beware of attachment to such phantoms and attach ourselves exclusively to God, who truly exists in us as we wholly exist in Him. As a sufi (the late Baron H. P. Van Tuyl Van Serroskerken) puts it, "Religions are essentially one, although outwardly differently expressed ... No wonder that Sufism and *Bhakti Yoga* are so much alike. The keynote of both is the Love of God."

The first stage in the grand quest of God among the Sufis is called *Talab* (yearning) for union with Him. This stage is reached when the Sufi gives up everything he possesses and turns bare and desolate with no relationships with the world, which is an index of the quality of his *viveka* and *vairagya*.*

The second is *Ishq* (Love). This is not for them who want paradise after death as the reward for their *vairāgya*. One has to give up desire for name and fame altogether. Everything must be burnt on the altar of Love. Banishing even the hope of meeting the Lord, the pain of separation has to be wooed. One has to become a corpse whilst living, and this marks the onset of illumination.

The next stage is *Mārfat* (Enlightenment). This is a state of contemplative communion in which the devotee sees God as the Supreme Effulgence. Here

* *Viveka* is discrimination between what is real and what is unreal, and *vairagya* connotes a total turning away from the unreal — the changing manifold created world of perishable beings and objects — and becoming attached exclusively to the real — the immutable unmanifest sole eternal Power of the creator.

he enters that world which has no compeer in this world or in Paradise.

The fourth is *Istaghrak* (Absorption). At this stage, there is a height of despondency, like the passage into the Dark Night of the Soul, in which he cries, "Come to my help, for, without Thee, I am lost." Till this state, the seeker as a clear separate individual in duality is still there.

The fifth is *Tanhid* (Unity consciousness)—the stage of ecstasy and beatific vision, in which God is experienced as (Timeless) Unity permeating all amidst multiplicity (in time). It appears that this experience is similar to what the Gita conveys in couplet 27 of Chapter 13.

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम् ।

विनश्यत्स्व विनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥

(He who sees the Supreme Lord abiding equally in all beings, never perishing when they perish, he verily sees).

It is an experience similar to that of the Buddhist adept who, when he was asked (after his wound had been bandaged), "Who struck you ?", had answered, "He who had bandaged me !"

It is stated that this is the stage in which the Sufi says, "Who am I to dare to offer obeisance to Thee, when I am a mere shadow before Thee, O' sun ?" The shadow that sees and experiences the sun is still there, though the sense of being a concrete separate individual has disappeared.

This is a high stage and may be compared to *Samprajñata Samādhi* in which both the phenomenon and noumenon (or substratum) are present, the

Reality peeping through the vesture of name and form.

The next stage is *Hairat* (Amazement), in which there is close apprehension of Godhead. Wonder-struck at the glorious sight, the *Sufi* cries out, "I am, of course, the Lover, but to whom should I say this, for I am neither the believer nor the heretic. Of my love, I myself am ignorant ; only this much I know : I feel the effect of Love in my heart." The 'I' consciousness as an individual, which was a shadow in the last stage, is here on the verge of disappearance.

Finally, the seventh and last stage is *Fana* (Annihilation of ego, the lower self). It is the Supreme State of Divine Union, when one is drowned in the infinite ocean of Divine Love. There is total effacement of body-consciousness, and the ecstatic delight resulting from it is firm and eternal. Man is reborn in Godhead—the goal and climax of a rare *Sufi*'s realization.

RĀBIĀ'S PARENTAGE AND BIRTH

Rābiā's parents were contented devotees with great faith. It is said that at the time of Rābiā's birth—she was the fourth child—there was no oil in the house to light the lamp and no piece of cloth to cover the infant. According to the prevailing custom, oil had to be applied on the navel of the new born babe, but even this could not be done. The mother asked the husband to go to the neighbour and borrow some oil, but he had resolved never to ask for anything from anyone except God.

He, therefore, went and knocked gently at the neighbour's door so that the knock may not be heard. Returning home, he told his wife that the neighbour had not opened the door.

Feeling miserable at his utter helplessness, the father laid himself down to rest. Overtaken by sleep, he found Prophet Muhammad telling him in a dream, "Do not feel depressed and unhappy. This daughter of yours will be a great favourite of the Lord. She will worship Him with extraordinary earnestness and would also lead many devotees of mine to deliverance. Do one thing. Just write down on a piece of paper what I tell you and send the message on my behalf to the *Amir* (Ruler) of Basra." And then the Prophet dictated, "You offer one hundred salutations to me every night and four hundred every Thursday night. But last Thursday, you forgot to offer the additional salutations. So, as a penance, you give four hundred *dinars* (monetary unit of Iraq) to the bearer of this note".

After the dream was over, when Rābiā's father woke up, he wept bitterly because of the feeling that the Prophet had to take so much trouble for his sake. But, according to the orders received in the dream, he wrote out what he had been asked to do, and sent the note to the *Amir* with a messenger. When the *Amir* read the note he was greatly surprised. He had really forgotten to offer those additional salutations and no one other than himself knew about this omission. But his joy was greater than his surprise, as the message showed that the Prophet did think of him and accepted the saluta-

tions offered. He at once gave orders to distribute one thousand dinars to fakirs in gratefulness and sent four hundred dinars to Rābiā's father. Not only that, he himself went to the former and told him, "Please order me whenever you have any need and I shall carry out your orders."

AS A SLAVE GIRL

When Rābiā grew up, her parents died and at the same time, there was a terrible famine, during which she and her three sisters got separated. In that confusion, when she was accompanying a caravan, it fell into the hands of robbers. Its chief took Rābiā to the market and sold her as a slave. Her new master was a callous employer and he loaded Rābiā with excessive work. Rābiā worked hard and passed many a day fasting. At night, when all slept, she sat up in solitude and spent night after night offering her heartfelt salutations and prayers to God.

One night, as she prostrated, she kept sobbing while addressing God thus : "You have made me a property of another, and that is why I do not have any leisure to appear in your *darbār* (audience). I keep busy serving him only. But O' Master of my heart, you know that my wish is to serve you only, and your court is the light of my eyes. If I were free, then every moment of this life given to me would be spent in your worship and service.

As ordained by God, the master of the house suddenly woke up then. Hearing something, he wondered as to what kind of voice it was and from

where it was coming. Rising from his bed and moving towards the spot from where he felt it was coming, he soon discovered that it was the slave girl Rābiā who was saying something while in a state of prostration. Finding this, he began listening attentively to what she was saying. It was not Rābiā's tongue but her heart that was speaking with a divine aura of light on her head. Seeing and hearing all that, he stood wonder-struck, thinking that she was a being of rare purity and felt that it was a great sin to make such a noble soul serve him.

RĀBIĀ BECOMES FREE

The next morning he met Rābiā and spoke to her with great humility. He said, "Kindly forgive my sins. I have erred grievously in ignorance. You are now free. You can go wherever you like. If you wish to stay here, I shall serve you with great pleasure." Rābiā left that place, and living in solitude, became absorbed in worshipping her graciously compassionate divine Master.

About her *sādhanā* (spiritual discipline), it is said that she used to be engrossed in prayerful worship, saying her *namāz* (Muslim prayer) repeatedly day and night. In this way, she remained for a long time in the jungles and then began living as a hermit in solitude.

RĀBIĀ AND HASAN BASRI

A well-known contemporary learned saint and religious teacher Hasan Basri,* by name, too lived

* Basri is a resident of Basra, like Londoner is of London. Rabia is also called Rabia Basri.

there. Both held each other in great veneration. Rābiā sometimes went to hear his discourses. She was a strict vegetarian. Once when Rābiā was alone in a jungle, she was surrounded by all kinds of animals and birds, large and small, in a most friendly manner. Just then Hasan happened to pass that way. Seeing him, the animals and birds felt afraid and ran or flew away. Hasan felt terribly hurt and exclaimed, "Why this?" Rābiā enquired, "What had you eaten today?" Hasan said, "Meat", on which Rābiā retorted, "When you eat them, should they not feel afraid of you and run away? I take only dry loaf."

An interesting incident on the supernormal powers of the two saints is on record, which reveals the greatness of Rābiā's clear vision of her spiritual goal, besides her superior attainment. Once Rābiā was sitting by a lake in a general congregation of saints. Thinking that it was a good opportunity to gain publicity, Hasan went up to Rābiā and suggested that they leave the congregation and hold spiritual discussion sitting on the water of the lake. And he placed his *mussalla* (the carpet on which a Muslim says his prayers) on its surface. Thereupon Rābiā spread her *mussalla* in the air and invited Hasan saying, "Let us say our prayers here above in the air so that none may see us". Hasan's *mussalla* was firmly fixed on water and that of Rābiā in the air. Finding Hasan feeling small and desiring to pacify him, Rābiā said, "Look Hasan, what you have done, a fish can also do, and what I have done, even a fly can do, but the Truth is that

the real work to be done is by far higher than both of these. This is all miracle-mongering. Seek Reality in all humility and meekness."

Hasan once asked Rābiā as to how she could attain such spiritual greatness. And she replied, "I forgot all existence (became non-existent) in His remembrance.

RĀBIĀ AND SUFYAN THAURI

One evening another saint, Hazrat Sūfyan Thauri, came to Rābiā. She completed her evening *namaz* and then continued with her prayers the whole night. When the morning broke, Rābiā remarked, "How can we express our gratefulness for this marvellous grace of His, conferred on us, that we could pass the whole night in prayers!" And then added, "Let us fast the whole day as a token of gratitude."

On another occasion, when Rābiā was ill, Sūfyan visited her along with another saint, but could not speak anything in her presence. On Rābiā giving her assent to them to speak, Sūfyan said, "Please make such a prayer that whatever suffering has come to you may disappear." On this Rābiā replied, "O' Sūfyan, this suffering has come to me from God Himself. Why should I complain against what has been given to me by Him? It is not befitting a friend to oppose the wishes of a friend". Then Sūfyan enquired, "Is there anything in this world which your heart desires?" In reply, Rābiā said, "Being an *jnani* (Knower of Truth), what an enquiry are you making? I am a *sevika* (one who

serves). What can be a *sevika's* own desire?" Speaking further, she added, "For the past twelve years, my heart has been longing to eat dates and they are very cheap too in Basra, but I have not taken them till now because I am a *sevika*. It is atheistic to do anything without the will of the Master and according to one's own wishes. Sūfyan said, "No one has the power to meddle in what you say or do," and then sought some advice. Rābiā told him, "You would have been a pious man if you had no love for the world!" Sūfyan was startled to hear this and said, "What is this you are saying?" Rābiā retorted, "I am telling the truth." What Rābiā meant was that if Sūfyan had no love for the world, he would not have talked about worldly matters. This world is impermanent, and so all its things are perishable. And still he had asked Rābiā as to what she wanted. Sūfyan understood everything and wept. Then he began praying to God that He may be pleased with him. On this Rābiā remarked, "O' Sūfyan, you are not ashamed to ask Him to be pleased with you when you yourself are not pleased with Him."

Once Sūfyan passed a whole night with Rābiā in devotional talk. In the morning, Sūfyan remarked, "The night was well-spent." Rābiā said, "No, it was ill-spent. We both kept busy telling things which were pleasing to the other all the time and missed contemplation of the Lord. It would have been far better if I had solitude and spent the night remembering the Lord.

(To be continued)

A Humble Tribute To Swami Paramanandaji

R. K. Banerjee

(Continued from the July issue)

In 1953 we see Swamiji being put in charge by Ma of looking after a very reputed Mahatma, Sri Sri Dhananjoydas Kathiababaji Maharaj during his convalescence after ill health, in our Kishenpur and Raipur Ashrams.

Swamiji played a leading role during Ma's attendance at Kumbh Melas, because of his intimate knowledge of the Sadhu Akhāras, their rules and their way of bathing at the confluence of Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati. In 1954 at the Ardha Kumbh Mela at Allahabad, I was present with Swamiji in a house-boat when we joined up with Ma in a second boat.

On the 22nd April 1954 at Almora, occurred a very strange and significant event concerning Swamiji's life as narrated by Ma to Didi. I quote :

Ma : Do you know what I saw ? Paramananda's head and face were disjointed from his body. The head was split into bits like a piece of fractured cement block. But there was no blood. He seemed very disturbed, and was walking to and fro in his agitation. He was asked to lie down quietly, and this Self proceeded to massage his

head, chest and abdomen. Paramananda spoke with considerable difficulty and said, "Ma, nobody seems to understand my pitiful condition". This Self replied, "Even you do not understand as well as this body does, all about yourself." Paramananda pointed to his hands and said, "An astrologer has predicted that I will have the opportunity of attaining liberation." Then this body admonished him, saying "Oh, but when you have found a proper refuge to live in, why do you still have to bother about how to fill your stomach?"

Didi has very correctly interpreted this weird vision of Ma as meaning that Swamiji was at that time passing through some sort of terrible crisis away from Ma, where his normal instincts based on previous experience rebelled against where his present duty pointed.

So Ma proved to him in other words that once somebody has taken shelter with a Sadguru, he does not have to worry about reaching his ultimate Goal. The Guru himself arranges all the steps necessary for his disciple to reach his supreme Destination.

Ma ended by adding, "Paramananda understood what I meant, and his face became illumined with an inner light".

Compare the above with Swamiji's confession to Dr. Devaprasad Mukherji, so beautifully described in the author's wonderful book on Ma, during the latter's satsang with Swamiji at the Kumbh Mela at Prayag in 1982.

In reply to the author's pertinent question of whether or not a human being could ever gain

Supreme Knowledge while retaining a small portion of his "ego" or belief in his own intelligence, Swamiji replied, "yes, you will get there. But the best way is, never to ask for anything. Renounce everything at Her feet. Let Her bestow on you whatever She deigns. Let Her do with you whatever She wills."

In 1967, when Swamiji was in Calcutta over a protracted period while he and I were arranging for the sculpturing of images for the Radha-Krishna temple at Vrindaban, we were faced with incessant difficulties and frustrating delays. I had the temerity, out of my immaturity, of arguing with Swamiji as to why we should not take recourse to what seemed to me to be a practical approach. To my everlasting wonder and ultimate comprehension, Swamiji replied "I used to think like you, and tried to do things in my own way. But I soon found that what Ma wished eventually took place, and so I soon stopped acting according to my own wishes in the execution of Her tasks, because eventually the ultimate results invariably turned out to be exactly as She wanted."

Swamiji was the main architect and builder of most of our Ashrams, assisted in subsequent years by Swami Swarupananda and Panuda when necessary.

After the acquisition of the land for Agarpara Ashram in 1957, Swamiji planned the entire layout east of the original two-storeyed building, and constructed one by one the old kitchen, the three temples of Ma, Shivaji, Radha-Govindaji, the huge Nat Mandir, the double storeyed guest-house, and a

very fine Yajña Śālā, so that the Ashram can today accommodate with confidence Calcutta's numerous devotees at all functions.

His masterpiece was the Nat Mandir at Vrindaban to accommodate three different temples built at different times, first the Śiva temple, next the Nitai-Gauranga temple, and finally the Chhalia Krishna temple, yet nobody after seeing these three temples today can imagine what it was like before.

In 1958, when Swamiji was engaged in building Rajgir Ashram, an amazing incident took place. The seedlings of certain brinjal plants, planted previously in the Ashram compound were being choked by construction rubble having been heaped on them accidentally. Ma had a vision of the seedlings crying out for assistance, and asked Swamiji to clear away the rubble at once. Much to Swamiji's astonishment, he saw how true was Ma's prediction, once the rubble had been removed !

Inevitably Ma tended more and more to delegate authority to Swamiji to take decisions and subsequent action to meet the problems that continually cropped up in Ashram affairs. When an important visitor was announced, Ma would say, "take him to Swamiji". When a question was referred to Ma for decision on any subject, She would declare, "Ask Paramananda, he will tell you what to do."

And the strange thing was that there seemed to be a continuous telepathic link or communion from any distance between Swamiji and Ma in such

matters. Whatever Swamiji decided on the spot always had the subsequent approval of Ma.

The most crucial test of Swamiji's superhuman powers of endurance, his construction ability, and supreme trust in Ma was his wonderful preparation of the Naimisharanya site for Samyam Vrata in 1960. The whole of the ground selected for the function was swallowed by the waters of the Gomti's unprecedented flood until a few days before the start of the gathering. Yet, aided and abetted by the U. P. Forest Department labour, Swamiji, by dint of personal example, accomplished the impossible by draining the site, covering the whole of it with a fresh layer of clean sand, and of erecting tents and pandals for housing the entire assembly in the middle of a jungle away from civilisation. This was long before the coming into being of our own Naimisharanya Ashram, which Swamiji was to construct later on. For this unique and heroic feat; he came to be worshipped by the local population as an Avatar of Hanumanji, whose temple dominated the tilla or highest point of the hillock under which our Ashram now nestles.

In January 1963, Ma was in Modinagar with the Guru of the late Rai Bahadur Gujarmal Modi, the legendary Mahatma Krishna Ashramji, then 108 years old, and now no more. The Mahatma used to go about naked and never spoke. He had known Swamiji quite well during his long sojourns at Gangotri and Uttarkashi. So he enquired of Ma about the whereabouts of Swami Paramananda

whom he found absent. This is what Ma replied : “Mahavir has gone to see if he can move the mountain in Bombay.” Ma meant that Hari Babaji was in Bombay, but as Ma wanted him to be present during the inauguration of the Lakshmi-Narayan temple at Modinagar, She had sent Swamiji as a special emissary to fetch Hari Babaji.

Swamiji was closely associated with the commissioning and construction of most of the *vigrahas* (images) installed by Ma at our various Ashrams.

To mention a few, the Nitai and Gour of Vrindaban temple — almost life-like in their appearance complete to a tear falling from Nitai’s eyes, the Radha-Krishna images at Vrindaban, Didima’s statues at Kankhal and Kashi, Puran Purush at Naimisharanya, the Kali Goddess at Ranchi, etc.

Swamiji had attained such a high level of *sāadhanā* that I give below a few illustrations of the profound effect he exerted on other *sādhus* and householders, in fact on everybody with whom he came in close contact.

As mentioned earlier, I was associated with Swamiji during the construction of images for the Vrindaban Ashram in 1967. This necessitated Swamiji’s staying in our house for several days. One morning well before 6 a.m., there was a trunk call from Panuda at Kashi, obviously trying to communicate Ma’s instructions or movements to Swamiji. I received the call upstairs and went downstairs to report to Swamiji. The door of his room was not bolted, though closed. On pushing

it gently, I beheld Swamiji sitting in *padmāsana* in the midst of heavenly incense fumes, immersed in contemplation of the Supreme, with what to my bemused eyes appeared a halo surrounding his head.

How long he had been in this kind of *samādhi* I had no means of knowing—obviously at least from 4 a.m. or thereabouts, but I did not have the courage to disturb him, as I felt I was not fit to enter such holy precincts.

In 1979, Mataji, after concluding Her hectic South Indian tour after Her birthday celebrations in Bangalore, was resting quietly in the Puri Ashram when Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj of the Divine Life Society—Rishikesh—arrived at Puri to participate in a local 3 days Convention. He naturally took the opportunity of visiting Ma every afternoon from 5 p.m. onwards, possibly on his way to the Convention that was being held elsewhere.

On the 2nd day, Swamiji was absent, although it was known that Chidanandaji would be arriving at the appropriate time, so the brunt of the work of receiving and looking after the distinguished visitor fell on me. I took the first opportunity of asking Swamiji in private why he had been absent, and his reply shook me to the core. Swamiji said, “this was to avoid Chidananda’s *sastanga* (prostrate *pranām*) to me. It is most embarrassing to me in Ma’s presence.” I was not satisfied with such a concise explanation, and tackled him further on this interesting subject. Swamiji then confessed guiltily that when he was practising his *sādhana* at

Saptarshi Ashram (between Hardwar and Rishikesh, on the Ganga) living in a Sadhu Kuthi along with other Mahātmās, Chidanandaji, who had been sent there as a Brahmachari by his Guru, the great Shivananda Maharaj of Rishikesh, frequently consulted Swamiji about his problems, and so came to consider himself as Swamiji's *chela*, affording him the same respect and honor as to his own Guru !

When Delhi Ashram at Kalkaji was being constructed, and the building of the circular "Nama Brahma Mandir" was in progress, Swamiji was alone in charge of these operations. At such a juncture Ma instructed Sri Haren Gupta, a veteran devotee of Ma from Kanpur, Delhi and Calcutta, to proceed to Kalkaji Ashram. Harenda went off in high hopes expecting Ma to pay a flying visit there, but no such thing took place. As Swamiji was alone there, Harenda was naturally forced into close association with him for some days. Later on, when Harenda happened to question Ma on this strange request of Hers, Ma replied, "I wanted you to be with a real sādhu, so that you may value what satsanga with a sādhu implies."

Turning now to another aspect of Swamiji's character, he could enjoy childish and wholesome pranks with glee when the occasion demanded. In the 1954 Ardh Kumbh Mela at Prayag, I was in a *bājra* (houseboat) with Swamiji at the confluence awaiting Ma's approach in another *bājra*, when Swamiji took off all his clothes and plunged into the river, frolicking about in the water like any

teenager. On another occasion while travelling in the same car with him from Calcutta to Krishnanagar via Ranaghat during the construction of Didima's statue, Swamiji, leading the motor cavalcade in front, and finding the second car out of sight, deliberately asked me to carry on straight to Krishnanagar, instead of bifurcating to Ranaghat, as he did not want Ma's entourage to interfere with what he had to do at Krishnanagar. We eventually joined Ma's party at Sobhanda's Ashram at Ranaghat, where we enjoyed a *bhandāra*.

Swamiji was a wonderful cook and could produce delicious food even for a large assembly in no time. He was equally fond of eating when the occasion demanded and his health permitted.

Once he was invited to be the honoured guest at the house in Calcutta of Binuda (the late Śaradindu Neogi), and was late in arriving due to his multifarious duties. A large gathering had in the meantime collected, and was busy singing Kirtan. Swamiji merely asked for 3 bricks and in a secluded room on the first floor, he cooked a three course meal for over 40 people in no time. Full justice was done to his cooking by a hungry and joyous assembly.

On another occasion, during Ma's first visit to Sobhanda's Ashram at Ranaghat, with the help of a few more bricks and one assistant, Swamiji fed over 100 people by cooking under a tree in the compound.

During my early days at Kashi Ashram in the 50's, I used to find Swamiji engaged in cooking

polau and khir etc., for large gatherings, and even in serving people on the first floor from huge and heavy vessels, which he would carry with consummate ease. His was a forceful body. I remember in the early days at Kankhal, in my hurry I collided with him at the entrance to his modest room surrounded by potatoes and brinjals, and it was I who was thrown backwards while Swamiji absorbed the jolt without flinching an inch. His body then felt absolutely solid on impact.

But gradually this iron frame was eroded by the dreaded disease diabetes, which he could very well have inherited. The first time the impact of his ailment fell on me, was during a return journey by car from Agarpara Ashram to our house, where he was then staying. There had been a grand *bhandāra* at Agarpara on the occasion of some festival or other, and like all of us Swamiji had eaten well. On the way back he asked me to stop the car south of Sealdah, where he got off and was violently sick by the roadside. On returning to the house, he climbed the stairs with difficulty, and had to rest quietly till late in the afternoon before he could attend to the constant stream of visitors that surrounded him.

My next experience of the frailty and strength of his body was during the celebration of a Bhagavata Saptaha in Hindi at Ranchi by Swami Bhagavatānanda of Patna. Swamiji fell seriously ill into a diabetic coma towards the end of the Saptaha, and I was instructed by Ma to take him by train to Calcutta and hospitalise him there for proper treat-

ment. A trunk call was made to Dr. Gunen Roy to meet us at Howrah with an invalid chair and ambulance. We had to carry Swamiji on a stretcher to Ranchi station to put him aboard the train. But so strong were his powers of recovery that next morning at Howrah he refused any invalid chair, and walked from his compartment to the ambulance to sit beside the driver !

Furthermore, he refused to go to hospital, but instead went to the house of Khokada (the late Devabrata Mukherji), where he was put under strict treatment, diet and daily clinical checking and medication. He recovered rapidly, but after a fortnight or so, the blood sugar after falling to a reasonable level, rose slightly and refused to come down. Purely by chance it was then discovered after cross-examining everybody that Swamiji was taking $1\frac{1}{2}$ litres of pure cow's milk daily, which contained sufficient natural sugar to counteract the effect of the medicines.

Swamiji's character had a unique facet which should now be highlighted once for all. Few people are aware that Swamiji, early in his career as a Saṁnyāsi, had made three vows to himself which he faithfully kept throughout his entire life. These were :

- (1) Never to follow any professional calling. This was after his phenomenal popularity and success as a homoeopathic practitioner at Bulandshahr early in his career.
- (2) Never to practise Gurugiri. He had seen many failings in this respect during his travels throughout the Himalayas.

(3) Never to give public discourses or lectures.

Needless to say, it will be realised that all three vows had the same objective, namely to shun popularity and discourage the thronging of sycophants around him.

Let us compare this outlook of a sādhu with what Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu used to preach firmly to his monastic followers. He used to exhort them to avoid at all costs to establish a reputation, because “cheap popularity was as filthy as the excreta of pigs” (*Pratistha sukari bistha* etc.).

Swamiji occasionally drew on his vast experience in sādhanā to give advice to householders. In this context let us quote from his words to Dr. Deva Prasad Mukherji as contained in his beautiful book. Swamiji said, “one can pursue a path of sādhanā even when staying at home. It is not necessary to leave your house. So long as longings remain, never desert your household. Until all the various kinds of earthly attachments are destroyed, it is preferable to live within your household. If after embracing samnyāsa you feel an attraction for home or allied material objects, a highly dangerous situation arises. There is a proper time for everything—wait patiently for it to arrive—then problems will solve themselves of their own accord.”

Swamiji’s deep knowledge of the Śāstras was quietly kept within himself. He was well qualified from his long association with reputed Mahātmās and men of learning in Gangotri, Uttarkashi and Rishikesh, including Kailash Ashram. This was the foremost seat of Vedanta learning in the north—

where Swami Vivekananda himself had studied Advaita Vedanta and insisted that other seniormost monks of the R. K. Mission should do likewise. Swamiji's knowledge of the Upanishads, Darshans, Geeta etc., was profound. He could quote at will from these books, and always carried a copy of "Viveka Chudamani" by Adi Shankaracharya amongst his effects. His standpoint was always based on Adi Shankaracharya's Advaita Philosophy. In a perverse mood I once tried to argue with him from the angle of the teaching advocated by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's followers, e. g. Sri Baladev Vidyabhusan's interpretation of the Vaishnava Philosophy but Swamiji refuted all these versions from his firm conviction in Adi Shankar's philosophy.

I have never seen him bow down to vighrahas of Gods and Goddesses, though I have sometimes observed Ma in Her spirit of fun compelling him to perform his obeisance on special occasions.

Having saved his life, during several attacks of diabetic coma, Ma made sure he would be alive to carry on as In-charge during the difficult days of the Sangha immediately following Her departure from earth. This was the critical time from Aug. '82 to Feb. '84.

Curiously Swamiji, who had been chiefly instrumental in carrying out the entire arrangements for interring Didima's body in the Samadhi at Kankhal, and later for building a beautiful simple temple over it, made no effort to do likewise after Ma's demise. In fact he did not leave his room or visit

Ma's Samādhi for days and weeks. The spirit to fight his own disease in order to serve Ma's cause seemed to be missing.

And so, when the Bombay doctors declared they could do nothing more for him in 1983, Swamiji returned to Kankhal Ashram where he intended to pass the remaining days of his life.

As long as Ma had been present, his own physical discomforts had been entirely ignored by Swamiji in serving Ma. Whenever Ma stayed in our house, Swamiji's place at night was always the floor outside Ma's bedroom door leading to the open veranda, in spite of our reserving a comfortable room elsewhere in the house for his use.

In the face of frequent ill-health in the last few years, he insisted on accompanying Ma and Her party on all Her arduous journeys, including the last exhausting trip through the whole of North India and back, from Delhi to Agartala, Agarpara and on to Dehra Dun in the spring of 1982, and it seemed that Ma also could not do without him in these tasks.

Immediately after Ma had left Her body, the way in which Swamiji, from his sick-bed at Kankhal, held the Sangha and its supporters together is best illustrated by his wonderful letters to Ashramites and devotees.

I quote from his letter dated 8th Sept. 1982, as already reproduced in the Ananda Varta of Jan. '83 :

“Ma's body is no more. Ma is existent everywhere. Ma has often repeated : “I have no place

even to move an inch or even to turn over.” This means She is omnipresent. Many of us have not acted according to Her wishes. Even now it is not too late to follow scrupulously whatever She has instructed different individuals to do ; this is the way to peace.”

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

Before the cold weather of 1983-84 arrived, Swamiji’s local medical advisers, including Dr. Priyaranjan Ghosh, who had been especially deputed by Ma to look after Swamiji in his declining years, had Swamiji removed to Sri Sri Shankaracharya’s comfortable and commodious quarters next to Ma’s cottage. Here Swamiji passed the last days of his life when the coldly ascetic Advaita-Brahma outlook slowly changed towards the warmer emotions and sentiments of affection, and of listening to the Lord’s name.

When old associates or devotees visited him, tears would start flowing from his eyes and he could never enjoy enough of their company. He was surrounded by a faithful and devoted band of Ashramite Brahmacharis, Brahmacharinis and doctors who looked after all his needs. This was bolstered by regular visits from doctors and devotees from Delhi.

Towards the middle of Dec. 1983 a wonderful event took place, just before I paid my last visit to Swamiji on the 20th-21st Dec. Before my arrival, Swamiji had dictated detailed instructions and advice for the running of the Sangha and Ashrams, showing a remarkably clear and foresighted functioning of his brain—similar to dying embers bursting into a flame only to be extinguished for ever!

Towards the end of Feb. '84, he expressed a keen desire to hear *Akhaṇḍa Harināma*, and the Delhi Kirtan party were hurriedly summoned by phone. Most unfortunately Giridhari Lallji, the leading Delhi kirtania, had just expired, and so only two members were able to make the week-end trip to Kankhal on the 25th-26th Feb. to sing for Swamiji. This was barely satisfactory, but to make up for this, the entire Delhi Kirtan party, including ladies, visited Kankhal by special bus over the week-end of 3rd-4th March, when Swamiji appeared to be very satisfied by the reverberating kirtan, and arrangements for *prasāda* thereafter. The Advaita-Brahma in Swamiji's soul had at last found final solace in the continuous hearing of the Lord's name being sung for His glory. Thus Swamiji was free to give up his body the next morning, that is, on March 5th, at about 11 a.m.

Swamiji had earned the trust and confidence of Ma and attained his position in the Sangha because he had unhesitatingly sacrificed all his personal interests, or the "self" motive, in serving Ma to his utmost capacity, relying on Ma's grace to make up for his own shortcomings. Early in his career in

the Sangha, he had realized the perennial truth of Bhaiji's edict that unless a follower entirely forgets his personal likes and dislikes in the service of Ma, and gives priority only to fulfilling Ma's wishes alone, nobody can hope to succeed.

Upto the last moment Swamiji was in possession of his senses and looked fixedly at a picture of Ma, placed conveniently by his bedside.

The news was broadcast by phone to Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay. From Delhi it was relayed through the Radio and T. V. net-work throughout India.

I am indebted to Dr. Priyaranjan Ghosh for an eye-witness account of what happened. Swamiji suffered untold agony over the last days without complaint or fears. His lungs were congested with fluid and he could hardly breathe, eat or drink anything. Dr. Priyaranjan Ghosh states that no ordinary human being could ever have withstood such suffering for such a protracted period.

After his expiry, Mahantji Sri Giridhari Narayan Puri of Nirvani Akhāra took charge of his body, which was anointed, dressed and kept until the arrival from Bombay next morning of Sri B. K. Shah, the President of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. All the Ashram Sadhus, Brahmacharis and Brahmacharinis and a band party accompanied the body in procession on foot amidst the singing of kirtans to the main stream of the Ganga, Nildhara at Hardwar, and Swamiji's mortal remains were consigned to the eternal waters of the Ganga by 11-30 a.m. on the 6th March, amidst the chant-

ing of Vedic hymns and singing of the Lord's name.

The Sorosh Puja took place on the 20th March in a befitting manner. The only available picture of Swamiji contained in Dr. Devaprasad Mukherjee's book was suitably enlarged into an oil painting and decorated. About 115 Sadhus including Mahantas and Mahamandaleswaras were entertained, Brahmins and the poor were fed. All our other Ashrams followed suit according to their capability.

At Kankhal special pujas were held for Ma, Didima and Swamiji, and the same was repeated in our other Ashrams. A solemn Satsang was held at Agarpara.

In the passing of Swamiji, Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha lost a great Mahatma, as well as its chief executive for well nigh four decades. He had joined the Sangha already a confirmed sādhu who had completed his *tapasyā* and *sāadhanā* in the Himalayas, and had brought his vast experience to bear on dedicated ministering to Ma and Her wishes, and his sterling character to act as an inspiration to others trying to follow in his footsteps.

He told me more than once that he was not in our Ashrams to fill his belly, but only to perform service to Ma and Her cause.

We salute him as a true example of India's cultural heritage, the sādhu par excellence, fully established in the knowledge of the Brahman, which was first vouchsafed to him by Brahmajna Ma, later enlarged and expanded by old and experienced erudite Mahatmas of Gangotri and Uttarkashi, and

finally illuminated by the mercy bestowed on him by Ma.

May the example set by him guide the sādhus and devotees associated with the Sangha in the years to come, so that Ma's work may continue to flourish not only in India but all over the world.

Jai Guru—Jai Ma.

A person who returns to the world after the experience of *nirvikalpa Samadhi* (absolute Superconsciousness) does not do so of his own volition. It is by the grace of God that one gets *samādhi*, and one's re-entry into the world is also by the will of God. Everything happens only by the will of God.

—Swami Turiyananda
a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna

It is through the search after Truth that man can elevate himself. This he should regard in the light of a duty.

Merely to assume the robes of a *sādhu* while the spirit of renunciation is lacking will not do. Taking *saṁnyāsa* and becoming a *saṁnyāsī* spontaneously is certainly not one and the same thing.

Where God may place you at any time and under whatever circumstances, recollect that it is all for the best. Endeavour to go through life leaving your burdens in His hands. He is the Preserver, He is the Guide, He is all in all.

—Sri Sri MA Anandamayi

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Was It Only A Dream ?

The following is the translation of a letter in Bengali received by one of our senior brahmacharinis from a young sādika of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, who had had Mataji's darshan only during the birthday celebrations at Kankhal in May 1982. She feels deeply drawn to Mataji and cannot help thinking of Her and pining for Her constantly. She also attended Sri Ma's birthday celebrations at Kankhal this year as well as the opening of Matri Mandir at Dehradun.

Pondicherry, June 1984

Respected Didi,

This morning very early I suddenly woke up. Birds had begun to twitter, it was still somewhat dark. I looked at the clock, it was a quarter to five. My mind and body were filled with unknown deep bliss, though tired and lethargic. There was a feeling of having received a touch of the sublime. What had happened to me was neither a dream nor seen by the ordinary eye, yet seemed more real than Reality. This is what I want to narrate to you. It is not possible to tell this to everyone, only to a few people like yourself.

I had a sort of a vision of a busy morning when my friend came running excitedly, saying: "Now, what will you do? Your Anandamayi Ma has arrived with a battalion of Her devotees for an attack!" always talks in a joking manner. Ma was sitting in a car and Her disciples in a bus. I was thunderstruck. I thought: "This is amazing.

I know that She is not anymore in the body. Why should She come unannounced? Where can She be put up with all these people?" All these thoughts crossed my mind and I was so worried. I forgot that She had left Her body.

Quickly I had a bath and got on my cycle. I found that all our ashramites were going towards the new guest house in a big crowd. On reaching there I found our trustees talking to Swami Paramanandaji, Panuda and others. Monojda, one of our youngest trustees, a marked devotee of Mother Meera, was trying to manage the crowd. He scolded me, saying: "Where have you been all this time? We are all looking for you!" Swami Paramanandaji said: "Here she is! See, Ma has after all this time had the *kheyāla* to respond to your call." I said: "Why did you not inform me?" Swamiji laughed heartily and said: "Don't you know Ma? She said: 'Don't inform her. I will give her a surprise'."

Monojda was talking to the ladies of our Ashram, saying: "Not now, not now, all of you come in not less than two hours. Ma has just arrived, let Her rest!"

I found that almost all of Sri Ma's brahmacharinis and even Chhabidi were present. I was so happy, tears of joy flowed in abundance.

Ma was sitting in a small room; Udasji, Paruldi, Chitradi and Pushpadi were near Her. Some of our Ashramites who had somehow managed to enter were sitting on the floor. Ma looked as I had seen Her in 1982, She wore rimless

spectacles. She was talking and laughing. On seeing me, Pushpadi shouted : "Look Ma, a thief has arrived !" Ma laughed loudly and said : "The one for whose sake I have come has not shown herself upto now !" Ma did not talk to me directly but kept on looking at me smilingly. I was so excited that I forgot to do pranāma to Ma.

Afterwards when talking to various of our Ashramites, I found out that Ma had made arrangements for coming here long before. It seemed to me that all the Swamijis had come with Ma except Nirmalanandaji and Nirvananandaji. Bhaskaranandaji was busy arranging things.

After this you all brought Sri Ma into a large outer hall for darshan and volunteers were managing the crowd. In a few minutes the room was full of flowers and garlands. Ma was sitting serenely, a sweet smile irradiating Her face. On Her left were Her girls and on the right our office bearers. Cameras were flashing now and then. The Tamilians of Pondicherry came in a line, they had flowers, garlands, coconuts and oranges in their hands. They did obeisance to Ma in their own peculiar way, holding their thumbs to their ears. I was enjoying myself immensely.

One of our older sādhis said to Ma : "I have so much to tell you !" Pushpadi told her : "Come in the evening, then Ma will talk to you."

I now remember myself and find that I was sitting silently in a corner, no one took any notice of me. After sometime people began to disperse and I came away along with others, so as not to be noticed.

In the evening again I went and found a great multitude. Men and women were seated in their allotted separate places. Pushpadi, Gangadi, Vishuddhadi, Maladi were sitting before a mike and reciting sanskrit slokas. Ma was looking towards all, Her head and body were covered with a white cloth. Chitradi was fanning her while Udasji was standing behind Ma. From a distance I was watching. When the chanting was concluded, Ma turned towards everybody, saying : "Open the windows, so many people are here, they need fresh air." One of our brothers, now finding an opportunity to say something, exclaimed : "Ma, you have remembered us after such a long time and come at last." Ma said : "Baba, I am your little child, how can I come unless you bring me yourself !" Another one said : "Ma, twenty-nine of our old sādhakas and sādhikas have left their bodies and four or five are about to pass away. We are all so disheartened. We feel as if the pillars that upheld the Ashram were crumbling. How will it stand erect ?"

Ma became very serious and said : "It is a shame to speak like this, Baba. It shows disrespect and want of faith in your Guru. He whose Ashram this is, who has built it up, he will protect it. Your only duty is to trust whole-heartedly in the power of the Guru and of the Mother. Abide in complete faith, love and reliance on the Guru. You must watch yourself all the time and see how far you can live according to your Guru's bidding. You must be contented in whichever

condition he may keep you. This is the aim of Ashram life.

“Besides we all know that nothing is stable in this world. Everything changes constantly. Unless there is destruction, there can be no creation. Yet, in actual fact nothing comes and nothing goes. Things occur according to His Will. Everything remains as long as it is meant to remain and then vanishes. However, all this occurs according to your vision and for your sake.” Then Ma said something more which I can't remember. At the end She said : “Listen to this child ! Do not harbour fear, anxiety, sorrow or despondency in your minds. Complete self-dedication is your main duty. When surrender is flawless, total, such thoughts will not enter your mind. Hold on to your Guru with all your strength and capacity and all your problems will be solved.”

Someone remarked : “Ma, you know that we are all dedicated to Sri Aurobindo who is our Guru and to Mother Meera, our one adored Mother. Knowing all this, you have graciously come into our midst. We feel apprehensive that we may not be able to do enough to welcome you fittingly and to give you the honour that is due to you.” Ma laughed heartily and said : “Baba, you will naturally speak according to your point of view and understanding. But for this child, no one is alien, all ashrams are this body's. All Ashrams, all places are mine. Who loves and respects whom ? All are one, each respects and loves his own Self.”

Silence prevailed after this. Suddenly Ma said : "There is no end to words, curiosity also is limitless. The real language is silence. Be calm, be at peace within yourselves, search within and you will find all questions solved."

Now Ma turned to Chhabidi, who quickly came and sat down before the harmonium. Dasuda took the khol (Indian drum). After a number of devotional songs, the bell rang for the evening meal, but nobody wanted to get up. Then Ma was taken for a rest. I was coming away when Pushpadi pulled me back and dragged me to where Ma was resting. She said to Ma : "Look, she wanted to slip away quietly. We could not get a glimpse of her all day long. What a girl you are ! You were clamouring for Ma's darshan so intensely and yet you hide yourself. You know that we shall leave in the morning." Like a policeman she reported to Ma.

I felt so ashamed that I blushed. Ma laughed and said : "First give her something to eat, what you said has frightened her." Pushpadi then said : "You do not know her, Ma, she is fearless." Ma retorted : "Of course, you know her better than I do, don't you ! She is afraid of the crowd, moreover you are harrassing her." Now I slowly went near Ma, only Pushpadi was in the room. I lay my head down at Her feet for a long time. As I raised my head, Ma stretched out Her hand to hold me, but I moved aside, saying : "Ma, do not touch me." Ma said : "Why, what's the matter ?" I replied : "I am not so pure." Ma broke out into ringing laughter and said to Pushpa :

“Listen, listen to what she is saying !” Pushpa said : “See, Ma how clever she is !” Then Ma drew me towards Herself and held my head in Her lap and very sweetly said : “You are hurt, aren’t you ? I came without warning and did not talk to you.” It was true, so I could not reply. Then She stroked my head and tears washed away the pain in my heart. Ma said : “It was not possible to talk to you in the crowd, now is the time. Come, sing now !” Pushpadi suggested one song, but Ma asked : “Do you know any kirtan ?” I said : “I know only what I learnt from Chhabidi’s records.” Ma said : “Sing the song : ‘Do not burn Rādhās body nor drown it’...” I slowly said : “Ma, I know only one line of that song.” But She said, “Sing that one line then !” I knew that whenever I sang that line, tears choked my voice, but what could I do when Ma was asking ? Anyway I bravely started the song but could not continue ; tears flowed profusely and I fell at Her feet. At last I sat up and saw Ma sitting absolutely still, with Her eyes shut.

After a while She opened Her eyes and smilingly said : “Never lose faith in God. Calmly accept what He gives you. Do not ask for anything, only give. Whatever you have, give. Give your all. Only remember that His grace is always enveloping you. Never doubt this !” Saying this She gazed at me sweetly for a long time. Then according to Pushpa’s wishes I sang several songs before Ma. Pushpa fixed her gaze on Ma who was sitting perfectly still, Her eyes closed.

After some time I asked Ma : "I know that you have left the body. How is it possible that you are moving about in the company of those who are still in the body with the exception of Swami Paramanandaji ?" When I said that, the atmosphere changed abruptly. Ma said : "What can be done ? Will they ever let me go ? Even if they did, can this body leave them ? Its word has been given. It is not possible to be away from them even for a moment." I saw a divine light (*jyoti*) emanate from Ma's body, the atmosphere was full of bliss and a wonderful fragrance pervaded the air. I then woke up.

Didi, is this all my imagination, or is it the truth ? The whole time I am thinking of all that happened. I can remember everything so clearly, it is most real to me. It is amazing how all that I have seen and heard is constantly in front of me like a cinema. Dreams as a rule do not remain in my mind. Do reply soon !

"The Self alone exists ; and the Self alone is real. Verily, the Self alone is the world, the 'I' and God. All that exists is but the manifestation of the Supreme Being."

—Bhagavan Raman Maharshi

Mother's First Darshan

Chitra Ghosh

*"Nearing the sunset of life
I look back to the sunrise".*

It was in 1952, the second day after the Bengali New year in April. Late Sri Gangacharan Dasgupta's son-in-law, who was a colleague of my father, told us that Ma Anandamayi would be visiting their house at 44, Hazra Road, Calcutta on April 15th. I had just appeared for my final exams and was spending my long vacation idly at home. Professor Dasgupta's house was near ours. Suddenly I felt a pressing urge to see Ma. I knew that no one of our family had come in close contact with Ma or even had Her darshan. So I pleaded with my own mother to accompany me and have Ma's darshan.

On the morning of April 15th we reached Hazra Road and entered the garden with the help of the brother-in-law of Dr. Gopal Dasgupta, the only son of Gangacharan Babu, the only person there that we knew.

On one side of the gate stood Jatin Guha, (Bunidi's father), and on the other side stood Gurupriya Didi. A crowd of people had gathered near the bael tree under which on a dais, Ma's *āsana* had been placed. Gopal Dasgupta is a homœopathic doctor and has a dispensary consisting

of a large room in one corner near the gate. Suddenly the door of the dispensary opened and I saw Ma for the first time in my life. Gazing at Her from a distance, I called out to my mother : "SHE IS NOT OF THIS WORLD !" My eyes were glued to Her face and I felt I had seen Her elsewhere, not in this world. She walked very swiftly and sat down on the platform under the bael tree. Gopalda approached Her and put a huge garland of red lotuses in full bloom round Her neck. Within me I sang Tagore's words : "On this blessed morning, what exquisite heavenly beauty you showed me, opening the gate to the abode of peace and light !"

In the meantime the assembled people were asked by Didi in her so familiar peremptory way to queue up one by one. I enjoyed watching Didi who asked the devotees not to delay by talking to Ma while kneeling down and doing *pranāma*, so that the queue could go on moving. At one moment she was urging the crowd to move forward and the next moment she would run to Ma to tell Her something very important.

As soon as I reached Ma, knelt down, did *pranāma* and looked up, Ma smiled very, very sweetly and asked me : "What is your name ?" I replied. Ma again asked : "Your father's name ?" "Sudhir Kumar Ghosh." Pushpa and a few other girls were sitting near Ma, I could hear their whispers. Then Ma asked : "Do you regularly perform any *pūjā* ?" I answered : "I do Śiva *pūjā* and offer flowers to a picture of Goddess Saraswati to secure

good results in my exams.” Suddenly I told Ma of my own accord : “I shall be leaving for the U.S.A. in four months.” Ma gave me an X’ray look. She lightly grasped my hand and said : “This body knew you when you were 9 years old.” I got scared and puzzled. I replied : “Ma, I did not come to you at that age neither did I dream of you.” Ma broke out into loud laughter and said : “You are not going abroad after 4 months as you said just now. Come with me to Allahabad instead !” I murmured : “But all arrangements are made and my departure by plane is fixed for the 29th August 1952.” Ma heard my whispered words and laughed again : “You can’t go this year !” She said.

By now Gurupriya Didi had reached Ma to find out why the queue could not progress. She scolded me, saying, “So many people are standing in the line, waiting to do *pranāma* in this summer heat and you, a newcomer, are talking with Ma and preventing the queue from proceeding !”

Ma looked at Didi with slight displeasure, saying : “Didi, go back to the gate and keep quiet ! This new girl did not talk to me of her own accord. This body started the conversation.” Didi smiled and immediately fell in with Ma’s *kheyāla* and walked back, saying loudly to the crowd : “You all have to have patience. Don’t you understand that Ma is Herself talking to the new girl ? So nothing can be done and you just have to wait !”

When, later, I tried to take leave of Ma, She called me, put a garland of sweet scented flowers

round my neck, gave me fruits and sweets, and again repeated: "This year you can't go to the United States—instead come to Allahabad for Durga Puja.—Come again!" And she bathed me in the rays of Her ever flowing grace and Her heavenly smile.

I stood in one corner of the compound and started reflecting: "How could She have seen me at the age of 9? Who can stop me from going to America this year? Everything has been fixed and arranged in detail." I felt thoroughly confused and dazed. A month later I received a letter from the Department of Cytogenetics, Carnegie Institute of Washington, Coldspring Harbour, Long Island, N.Y., informing me that the Research Assistantship grant would be awarded to me from September 1953 instead of September 1952. I was going there to assist the world famous Cytogeneticist Dr. B. P. Kaufmann for 3 years. Thus I had the good fortune to visit Ma several times in Calcutta for one year and left for the States with Her permission, Her blessing and Her detailed advice on how to live there, at the age of 23.

It seems appropriate to me to end with two lines from Tagore's memorable song: "Whatever I received on the first day of your darshan, Let my last day achieve the same."

Ma, We Remember Thee So Much !

A. P. Dikshit, I.A.S. (Retd.)

(Translated from the Hindi original by G. D. Shukla)

The thought of Thee, O Ma, never leaves us. We remember Thee So much. Where, O, where have you gone? We have been left like orphans. Nothing delights us. The *sap* of life has dried up. The *Ashrams* appear deserted. Whole towns look desolate. Nobody seems himself. When they talk, they do so by fits and starts. The rooms in which Ma lived and which reverberated with Her ringing laughter or brightened up with Her gentle smile, which witnessed many a discourse from Her lips or bore witness to Her inscrutable silence, are now deserted !

While in the Ashram one often hopes that, clad in immaculate white, as was Her wont, Ma may be seen any moment, and then we shall be listening once more to Her charming talk or the sound of soul-entrancing *songs* rising skyward, or feasting our eyes on the usual, daily spectacle of thousands of people, young and old, men, women and children bowing before Her, offering Her garlands of flowers or just watching Her in a state of sheer ecstasy, with no thought of themselves or, unable to contain themselves, shedding tears of joy and bliss. Then we fondly hope that the atmosphere of the Ashram

will again be pervaded by deep peace and sublime happiness. But that is not to be. Desolation reigns all around. *Bhajan* and *Kirtan*, the daily worship and *Āratī* go on as usual and so also all other activities, but the life-spring is missing. The bright beacon of light is now extinguished, and the boat of our life left on the darkened ocean of this world is now exposed to blows and buffets from every wave. Where is the divine light which guided us? O Ma! where have You gone? We remember You so much!

Where is that heavenly flame which dazzled the universe with its divine light, and illuminated every nook and corner? Where is that heart winning laughter which like a magnet attracted people from the wide, wide world to the land of India? Where is that gentle smile before which bowed in all humility the most haughty heads, and before which melted away the cold conceit of the high and the mighty? O, where, where is that plain and simple voice to hear which gathered from all the corners of the world many an erudite scholar and great saint who had plumbed the mysteries of life? All of them looked so avidly for the moment when Ma would open Her lips and scatter pearls of wisdom.

Where is that Ma whose simplicity, suavity and charming manners conquered everyone's heart, who talked freely to ordinary persons like ourselves as if She were one of us, who looked after our day-to-day comforts as if we were the guests of some thoughtful householder, whose solicitude exceeded even that of our parents; who called little children

Her friends and treated them as Her equals, who addressed men and women as 'Pitaji' and 'Ma', who showed so much respect to men of learning so as to confer greatness on them, and who honoured Sādhus strictly in accordance with the rules laid down in the Shastras, so as to set an example for householders to emulate ?

Her very silence was so eloquent that even the most learned discourses paled into insignificance before it. It was no ordinary silence, it solved the most difficult problems. The very peace of the universe at the bottom of things was concentrated and revealed in that silence. That silence, poured oil and water over the most violent storms raging in the vast ocean of the world, and bestowed joy and bliss on the most learned men, who found themselves drifting or drowning in the midst of its tempestuous waves—as also on the most common among men. Where is that joy-permeated figure whom we miss so intensely ?

Ma, we remember You so much !

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Shall we never have Ma's darshan again ? Ma's last darshan I had during the Ardhakumbha Mela at Prayag, where I was camping near Ma's camp. Before this, Ma had been living in seclusion at Her Ashram in Vindhyachal. Perhaps, She had no intention then of going to the Kumbha Mela. She was not keeping well. But the mahātmās especially pleaded with Her to attend the Mela. "You are

the light of the Kumbha" they said, "Your presence is very necessary." So, Ma, the Effulgent, the Compassionate, agreed, and attended the fair with all Her retinue. Panuda, along with a few other devotees of Ma, had already set up a camp for Her. Unforgettable was the moment when Ma entered the Kumbha in a procession. As it was moving down the Bandh, the route was lined on both sides by a vast multitude of people overwhelmed by veneration and love, standing motionless and gazing at Her. It seemed as if the invisible Saraswati Herself had emerged in between the visible streams of Ganga and Yamuna, and was moving slowly forward to merge with them.

With the arrival of Ma the entire area of the Kumbha fair became suffused with radiance. Word went round with the rapidity of lightning from Jhusi to Daryaganj and Uprel that Ma had arrived, and in the evening the news was flashed by the AIR all over the country and abroad. People were overjoyed. The entire atmosphere of the fair was filled with fragrance, as it were, and countless were the people who surged forth to be blessed by Ma's darshan. The crowd became unmanageable. The problem was how to control this flood of devotees and spectators. Ma was physically not too well, and everyone was anxious not to expose Her too much to the strain which was certain to be caused by the endless stream of visitors who were as eagerly and irresistibly attracted to Her as the rivers are drawn to the ocean. At first an hour's time was fixed for Ma's darshan. People were

asked to stand in a queue, but the queue would go on lengthening while the hour would be over very quickly. Besides, the problem was aggravated because those who had reached Ma could not tear themselves away, as if they had not had their fill of the blissful presence. The organisers, who were aware of the frail condition of Ma's body felt worried. They were afraid of the adverse effect it may have on Ma's health. But it was not possible to make rules for Ma. Those who have realised the Truth to some extent know that Ma is always in communion with Brahman or is Herself veritable "Purna Brahma Nārāyana". Who can say when and in which form She may incarnate Herself ! The entire humanity is seen by Her as pervaded by Brahman. Actually, the truth is that She is forever giving darshan to everyone, but owing to the veil of ignorance we cannot see Her. Few indeed are the lucky ones who feel Her Presence everywhere at all times.

Distinguished people from foreign countries also came frequently and arrangements were made for them to have Ma's darshan. So also the intelligentsia, the saints and the officers present at the Mela. But despite all this bustle and restless activity, perfect peace reigned in the Ashram. The inmates of the Ashram whose faces were always bathed in tranquillity, were full of joy when smilingly they greeted one another with the salutation of "Jai Ma". How is it that such an easily accessible Ma of so many happy children has now become so inaccessible ? Ma ! where have you gone ? We miss you so intensely !

During the Kumbha Mēla, on three separate occasions Ma invited the sādhus of different orders for dinner and honoured them with garlands, sandal paste, arati etc. On these occasions the other devotees of Ma had the benefit of enjoying Ma's darshan to the full and of listening to the discourses of the invited mahātmās. Triveni, the confluence of three rivers, which by itself is so sacred, offered a special kind of sublimity and bliss on account of the presence of these countless mahātmās and Ma Herself. It is said that in the areas where the Kumbha is held, innumerable other mahātmās, yogis and all the very Gods are present in their subtle forms. The most celebrated yogi, Devraha Baba, was also staying near Jhusi, at the western end of the Mela area. It is impossible to describe in words the heavenly bliss created by the presence of, and the sermons preached by such high class yogis in the hallowed presence of Ma.

Ma is seated under a gorgeous shamiana (canopy) covered with a white sheet. Dressed in spotless white, Ma looks like Devi Saraswati Herself! Peace radiates from Her face! No words can describe it. No painter, sculptor or other artist can adequately portray that serenity, the like of which is seen on some statues of the Buddha. The atmosphere all around is rendered fragrant with joss sticks and flower garlands. The brahma-charinis and other women attendants clad in white or light yellow are standing or sitting around Ma. On either side of Ma there are wooden seats for mahātmās, who arrive one by one. They are led

to their places by the brahmacharis after having offered salutation to Ma. Naga sādhus are also among them. Their naked bodies, besmeared with ashes remind one of Lord Shiva Himself. Ma's legs have grown feeble, and so She is not able to welcome them by standing up. But She bows so low and so gracefully from Her seat that She looks the very embodiment of simplicity, suavity, humility and beauty. The mahātmās are visibly impressed by this graciousness of Ma and overwhelmed by emotions. She is the same Ma who was formerly avoided by these sādhus as She was considered by them a mere woman. But Her real self was revealed to them in course of time and they now looked upon Her as a manifestation of Divine Light. The truth is that Ma has taken birth to remove the fanaticism of different sects and to re-establish the eternal ideals and principles of Sanātana Dharma.

"Whenever there is decay of righteousness, and there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then I Myself come forth. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, I am born from age to age" (Bhagavad Gita, IV/7-8)

The mahātmās are sitting in their respective places. They have been duly garlanded and shown other marks of respect. Perfect serenity and joy prevail under the canopy. The strains of sacred music sung by Brahmacharini Pushpaji in her sweet, melodious voice are rising skyward and have filled the atmosphere all round. The Ashram is packed to capacity by devotees. They are sitting, or stand-

ing spell-bound, as if painted, or carved in stone, their eyes fixed on Ma. Who can gauge their profound joy? Who can describe the happiness of their hearts?

As directed by Ma the kirtan has stopped and short discourses by the mahātmās have begun. Mahātmā Hans Kumarji of Rishikesh said, "We go to Badrinath and Kedarnath. We travel to great centres of pilgrimage. But nowhere do we get the peace which we find in the presence of Ma."

The famous saint of Naimisharanya, Swami Nārādānanandaji said, "What we gain by reciting 24 thousand Gāyatri Mantras is obtained by just one darshan of Ma."

Several other saints have spoken in the same strain. Each one says just as much as it has been vouchsafed to him to understand of Ma. The fact, however, is that it is extremely difficult to understand Ma. But the little knowledge that has been granted to us is sufficient for our material and spiritual welfare.

In this way Ma's Lila went on and Ma's devotees continued to experience bliss. Swami Paramanandaji, maintaining a detached stance as usual, organised all the Ashram activities very smoothly. On one occasion the officials of A I R taped an account of Ma's greatness as given by Brahmachari Nirmalanandaji, and broadcasted it afterwards over the radio.

(To be continued)

Birth Centenary Celebrations

OF

M. M. PANDIT GOPINATH KAVIRAJ

Mahāmahopādhyāya Gopinath Kaviraj (1887—1976) was a unique personality in contemporary India. Representing the true spirit of ancient Indian wisdom, he combined in him academic excellence and spiritual realisation. The great scholar-sādhaka, devoted his whole life to the exposition of Indian spiritual heritage in a unique manner.

Birth centenary celebration of this great savant is proposed to be organised during 1986-87 in the most befitting manner. On the eve of it, we fervently appeal to all the students, devotees, admirers to come forward and extend their whole-hearted co-operation to make the year-long celebrations a success.

Panu Brahmachari

Secretary

M. M. Gopinath Kaviraj Centenary
Celebration Committee.

Shree Shree Mata Anandamayee

Ashram,

Bhadaini, Varanasi—221 001.

Ashram News

*Activities of Shree Bhagawatha Bhavan, Shree
Shree Ma Anandamayee Trust, Bangalore*

(1-1-1984 to 30-6-1984).

In pursuance of its avowed objectives, the Trust has been conducting regular bhajans, kirtans, discourses, lectures etc. on Srimad Bhagavatham and allied subjects such as Tulsidas Ramayan, Bhagavadgita and Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi's life and teachings, by Mahatmas, Saints, Gurus and eminent scholars.

January, 1984 :

Sri M. K. Bharathiramanachar, a renowned scholar in Hindi and Kannada, delivered lectures on Srimad Bhagavatham for a fortnight, in the course of which he covered the life of Bhakta Prahlad, whose faith in the Lord was explained in a very devotional way.

Sri G. N. Jayathirthachar gave discourses on Srimad Bhagavatham for three days.

Sri Subramanya Sastry, of the Hindi Sahitya Parishat, spoke on Srimad Bhagavatham, with special reference to Kapila Muni.

On 29-1-84 H. H. Rawalji, the Chief Priest of Sri Badari Vishal, U.P., performed "Arati" in the Bhagawat Bhawan premises.

On 31-1-84 Sri Madhavacharya Jayanti was observed and Sri M. K. Bharathiramanachar spoke on the teachings of Sri Madhavacharya.

February, 1984 :

Sri M. K. Bharathiramanachar continued his discourses on Srimad Bhagavatham for three weeks during February, 1984.

Brahmasri Aswatha Narayan Sastry spoke on the Bhagawadgita for seven days, highlighting in general the relevance of Lord Sri Krishna's teachings for present-day life.

A meeting of the Trust was held under the Chairmanship of Sri Govinda Narayanji, Chief Patron of the Trust, on 10-2-84.

On 12-2-84 H. H. Rawalji of Badari Vishal was invited specially to talk. In the beginning Swami Vishwananda spoke on the Badari Narayan temple and the Puja-krama there by Namboodiri Brahmins of Kerala. He introduced H. H. Sri Ganapathi Namboodiri (Rawalji), Chief Priest of the Badarinath temple. On the same occasion, after the talk by Rawalji, Swami Vishwananda spoke about his devotion towards Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi and mentioned one occasion when Sri Rawalji visited Ma in Kankhal, Hardwar, and the way Sri Ma received Sri Rawalji and Sri Rawalji's respect and devotion for Sri Ma.

On 16-2-84 the Chairman and the Secretary of the Trust invited a great scholar to Bhagawat Bhawan : Jr. Mr. Brunton son of Paul Brunton. He expressed his appreciation.

The speaker spoke about his father who was instrumental in bringing out a book on Bhagawan Sri Ramana Maharishi.

Celebration of Sri Sathyanarayan Puja, which had been stopped for some time, was resumed and the puja was conducted on 17-2-84, well attended by devotees. H. H. Sri Raja Marthanda Varma, Chairman of the Trust, was also present on the occasion.

Mahaśivarātri Puja was conducted on 29-2-84. In the evening Swami Vishwananda spoke on the significance of Mahaśivarātri.

March, 1984 :

Sri M. K. Bharathiramanachar continued his discourses on Srimad Bhagawatham for two weeks. Prof. Bheemasena Rao gave lectures on Jaimini Bharatham for two weeks.

On 4-3-84 Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's birthday was observed, in the course of which Swami Vishwananda highlighted the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Sri Sathyanarayana Puja was conducted on 17-3-84.

April, 1984 :

Sri M. K. Bharathiramanachar was requested to conduct a one month's lecture programme on Srimad Bhagawatham without any interruption. The subject covered included Ajamilopakhyana.

On 10-4-84 Sri Rāma Navami Puja was performed.

A 15-day Greeshma Samskritika Shibira was conducted from 12-4-84 to 27-4-84, in which 29 children aged 12-15 participated. These children were trained in conversational Sanskrit and the enacting of a drama in Sanskrit by them was organized. Certificates were distributed to the participants on the concluding day.

Sri Bharathiramanachar and Sri Vijaya Havanur, an eminent Sanskrit scholar were in charge of running the Shibira.

On 15-4-84 Sri Sathyanarayana Puja was celebrated.

May, 1984

On May 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 8th and 9th, Kavya Vachana was conducted by Sri Suryanārāyana of Bangalore.

Sri Basava Jayanthi was conducted on 3-5-84. Sri N. M. K. Sogi, M.A., L.L.B., former Dy. Minister for Education, spoke on Sri Basaveswara's life and teachings.

On 5-5-84 Sri Ramanuja Jayanti was observed.

Sri Shankara Jayanti was conducted on 6-5-84. H. H. Swami Chinmayananda graced the occasion by his presence and addressed the devotees. In the evening, Dr. B. S. Ramakrishna Rao, Head of the Department of Sanskrit, National College, Bangalore, delivered a scholarly lecture on Sri Shankara's Adwaita philosophy.

Sri Sri Ma's 88th birthday celebrations were organised in a befitting manner from 11th to 17th May, 1984.

The daily programmes commenced at 7 a.m. with Usha-Kirtan, Veda-ghosha, Devi Bhagavatha parāyana, Bhagavat parāyana, Bhagavadgita parāyana, Lalitha-Vishnu Sahasranama puja, with Maha Mangalarathi at 12 noon and prasād-viniyoga.

In the evenings, from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. Swami Vishwananda spoke on Matri lilā (Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi's life and teachings), followed by Bhagawatha pravachan.

The cultural programme included singing of Bhakti-geethas (devotional songs). The details are as follows :

On 11-5-84 the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama of Basavanagudi, headed by Sri N. Krishnaswamy, conducted Bhajans.

On 12-5-84, Padma Bhushana Dr. V. Doreswamy Iyengar and party played on the veena, which was highly appreciated.

Srimati Subrata Banerji, wife of Sri A. N. Banerji, Governor of Karnataka, graced the occasion by her august presence and lighted the traditional lamp.

On 13-5-84 Smt. Indira Srinivasan spoke on Bhagavadgita. The topic chosen by her was : "*Geethe Nitya Balakeyalli*" (Gitā in day to day life). The same day Vidwan Sethuram and party recited devotional songs.

On 14-5-84 Vidwan Jayasimha Das and party gave a Harikatha performance.

On 15-5-84 Smt. Karunamayee and Smt. M. K. Ramamani rendered songs on Sri Sri Ma Ananda-

mayi, after which there was music performance by Vidushi Vaidehi and Vidwan Srinivasan and party.

On 16-5-84 Vidwan S. Sankar and party recited devotional songs. On the same day, the members of Ayyanar Kalashala gave "Laya-lahiri" programme with 12 musical instruments, which was highly lauded by the audience.

On 17-5-84 — the concluding day — Ganakala Bhushana Vidwan A. Subba Rao and party gave an enchanting musical programme by rendering Purandara Dasa's compositions.

Sri Sri Ma's Thithi-puja was conducted on the 18th of May after midnight in a ritual way.

The 15th being full-moon day, as usual, Sri Sathyanarayana puja was conducted in the forenoon. The blind boys of Sri Ramana Academy for the Blind were fed.

From 18th May to the end of the month Sri M. K. Bharathiramanachar continued his discourses on Srimad Bhagavatam.

June, 1984

Sri M. K. Bharathiramanachar continued his discourses on Rukmini Kalyanam in Srimad Bhagavatha during the first and the last week of the month.

During the middle period, Smt. M. K. Ramamani, Teacher in the National Higher Primary School, gave lectures on the Bhagawadgita for five days and Smt. M. K. Nagarathna gave performance of Kavya-vachana (Udyoga Parva).

On 25-6-84 Brahma-tatva Sri Bhagavatottama Sri Angam Madhavan Namboodiri of Guruvayur (Kerala) visited the Bhavan and gave a lecture on Narayaneeyam. H. H. Raja Marthanda Varma was also present. Swami Vishwananda introduced the mahātmā to all the devotees.

Gītā classes for adults and children are being conducted twice a week, viz every Saturday and Sunday. Smt. M. K. Ramamani is handling these classes since 9-6-84.

Similarly Sanskrit classes are being conducted for Children freely on Saturdays and Sundays. Sri B. S. Ramakrishna Rao, Head of the Department of Sanskrit of the National College, is in charge of these classes.

New Delhi

The year 1984 started with a spurt of activities in the local Ashram as well as outside.

On the 7th February, Saraswati (the Goddess of Learning, Supreme Wisdom or Brahma Vidya) was worshipped. Brahmachari Nirmalananda explained in his lucid way the significance of Sarvashukla Saraswati (All-White, the 'satwik' aspect of the Deity). Devotional songs were followed by the partaking of *prasāda* by more than four hundred devotees.

On 29th February, 'Shiva Rātri' was observed in the Ashram. About eighty devotees worshipped Shiva four times during the night, keeping, of course, complete fast, under the guidance of a Professor of Vedanta at the local Lal Bahadur

Shastri Institute of Sanskrit Studies, Dr. Manmatha Bhattacharjee.

The advent of Lord Rama on the Rama Navami Day was celebrated in the local Ashram, with special Puja exactly at 12 midday. Devotional songs and kirtans by the devotees preceded and followed the Puja.

Didima's Mahasamadhi Day was observed with due solemnity. A large number of devotees assembled on the raised platform in front of Didima's mandir underneath a 'shamiana'. The main feature was the discourse given by Brahmachari Nirmalanandaji on the significance of *sannyāsa*. It means giving up things which are transitory and catching hold of the one which is everlasting.

On 24th April, Chittaranjan Park Kali Mandir Society arranged the first of a series of talks by Brahmachari Nirmalananda on "Narada Bhaktisutram". Brahmachariji while introducing the subject exploded the popular concept of Narada as responsible for division and feud. He is, in fact, the agency for making a bridge between the aspirant and God. The talk generated great interest and the local elite are eager to listen to the second talk to be given in May.

Ma's advent 'tithi' (day) generally referred to as birthday was also observed in the local Ashram. The devotees, particularly ladies, sang invocatory songs and Ma's Namkirtan before the puja at 3 A.M.

All our Ashrams are very active, however, it is not possible to report in detail.

Gurupurnima was celebrated everywhere. At Kankhal all the special pujas at Sri Ma's Samadhi, in Didima's Mandir at Shankaracharya's Mandir, as well as Sri Padmanabha puja were duly performed followed by prasāda for all. Several devotees including one lady from France were given diksā at Sri Ma's samadhi. On Jhulan Purnima, August 11th also diksā was performed there itself.

In Kishenpur, Dehradun, special puja was performed in Mātri Mandir on Jhulan Purnima morning by Br. Nirvanananda, followed by *havan*, kirtan, satsang and bhandara. About 300 people participated. At Agarpara, Calcutta about 600 attended. At Delhi and Varanasi also there were elaborate celebrations and bhandara.

On August 2nd & 3rd the 20th anniversary of Rama Mandir at "Kalyanvan", Dehradun was observed by Akhanda Ramayan and special prasada.

3 Bhagavata Saptahas were held: in July at New Delhi, in August at Kankhal and in Sept. at Varanasi. Bhagavata Jayanti was celebrated in commemoration of Sri Gurupriya Didi's Mahasamadhi in Sept. 1980. Br. Nirmalananda was the speaker at the Varanasi function. Jhulan and Janmastami were also celebrated in most Ashrams.

Durga Puja will be celebrated in great style at Vrindaban from 1st to 4th October and also on a smaller scale at Kankhal.

The Samyam Mahavrata will take place at Kankhal from 1st to 7th November.

There are two kinds of restlessness : one due to worldly activity and the other the restlessness to advance on the spiritual path. The latter is the very means to real peace. That which is tranquillity, *Ātmā*, God, That becomes known. Only when there is intense hankering after it, will supreme peace be found. Eternal bliss is also one and the same thing.

Who is going whither and whence from does he come? For this body there is no going and no coming. That which existed before exists even now. What does it matter whether one dies or remains alive? Even after death he still exists, so why feel upset?

In the morning, as soon as you wake up pray : "Lord, accept as Thy service everything that I shall do today." At night again, before falling asleep, pray : "In self-surrender I bow to Thee placing my head at Thy holy feet." Try to spend the whole day in this spirit.

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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