

A person who does not for the love of God and with a cheerful heart, acquit himself of whatever responsibility that may fall to his lot at any time, will find life excessively burdensome and never be able to accomplish anything. Man's duty—more especially for those who have made the Supreme Quest their one and only aim—is to work joyfully for the uplift of the world, with the conviction that all service is His service. Work done in such a spirit helps to purify both mind and heart.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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Mother on the threshold of Awakening after Samadhi.

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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

Vol. XXXIII

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Speak the truth to all. Secrecy, slyness
and deception amount to cheating. Then only
taint the mind and set one floating on a sea
of misery.

A truthful, pure and holy life tends towards
joy and happiness supreme.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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Sri Sri Ma's Utterances

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

(Translated from Bengali)

Ma : (Addressing a group of children) "You are all my friends. Are you prepared to be my friends ?". All of them agreed to do so by nodding their heads.

Ma : Well then, if you are my friends, you must listen to the advice of this friend. What is this advice ? You must perform five tasks :—

(1) On arising in the morning, and after washing your hands and face, take whatever name of God that you happen to like. You must pray to him that you may become good boys and girls.

(2) Always speak the truth.

(3) You must obey the dictates of your father, mother and other elders.

(4) You must carry out your studies with zeal.

(5) After this you can be naughty, i. e. play your games etc.

On saying this, Ma started laughing loudly, and as the children all agreed with the last order, they also joined in with Ma's laughter whole heartedly.

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Question : (Dr. Gangacharan Dasgupta).
Well Ma, all this is applicable to children, now please tell us something for ourselves.

Ma : The time for your pension approaches. This pension will only end with your last breath. You like working uninterruptedly in your places of work in the hope of securing a decent pension, likewise you must continually take the name of the lord with each breath of your body. It is thus that you will attain the Everlasting peace you are all seeking for. That is why I repeat you must pay attention to this aspect. Work wholeheartedly, so that you will attain wholetime results. At first you must practice this slowly like children, you have to do this even if you do not like it ; later, when you are practised in the art, then you find you are unable to reject it. In this way practise repeating your Ista Mantra by timing it with each breath.

Question : Ma, this can happen only if God's grace is obtained.

Ma : God's grace drops like mauna from heaven, you have to practise sadhana in order to receive it. Whatever strength you have left, term it to advantage for His sake. Read good books, repeat the Name aloud or in Japa, continue to do this with all your might. After this, He will continue to perform what He has to do. Your stomach will not be filled by merely pretending to eat.

Question : Suppose I have no capacity for Sadhana ?

Ma : I simply don't believe this ! You have the strength to ask me this question, from this it is

evident that you do have the strength. Whatever little capacity for work you do have, if you do not utilise this for this purpose, then the fault is yours. You are then not fit to declare, "It is He who is driving me or, I am merely His tool." It is only when you perform your duties in an orderly way, and this heritage of work is exhausted, then only you realise, "Oh-Oh- I myself am not capable of executing any task of my own volition. It is He who is making me perform my duties. I am wearily His tool." This feeling can only arise when one realises that no further work can be performed by himself, "it is He who is the performer—I am merely His tool."

So now you have no right to declare that all is happening due to His grace. At all times you must cling to everything that helps you to make progress in this journey, and reject everything that does not assist you to do so.

Question : Ma, now please say, something about women ?

Ma : What is there to say ? Serve your husband. Remember you cannot see the Almighty, but his counterpart resides in each household as your husband. Serve him in this sense. And children came to you in the guise of Balgopals or Kumaris. Continue to sense them in this sense. But who is the husband ? In reality, it is the Almighty who is everybody's husband. You see these men around you. All of them are also seeking some other body, hence they are all women. Just as women seek a husband, so do all these

(pointing to the womenfolk) seek the Almighty. They are all women, all of them seek the "One other Being".

* * *

Question : Ma, Jyotish Babu's wife speaks so ill of you in her anger that we have to clear our ears before tears start pouring out of our eyes.

Ma : (Laughing) You know I always say the same thing. She is also not at all at fault, because she knows nothing about me, and is ignorant of my nature. So, she speaks out of her own nature whatever comes to her mind. I had repeatedly exhorted her "Why, don't you examine this body in your own way ? You can test this body in any way you like, You will find that my nature is the same, no amount of words from you will change this body's attitudes. This body will lie in your lap just as an infant clings to the bosom of its father or mother."

* * *

Question : We do not know the correct road in which to proceed. Which road should we take ?

Ma : How can you see the road if you keep the doors shut ? Try and get out by opening any door, if necessary with outside help. You will then perceive the road, you will find that co-travellers will ask you which road you wish to take, saying, "This road is not correct, take the other

road", etc. This short of thing happens continually. You must fix your target and proceed accordingly. You will find that somebody or other will arrive to point out the correct road to you. You should merely try to proceed onwards with whatever strength you possess. You are bound to receive assistance".

"See here, do you know what earthly life is like? It is as if you have entered a bush of thorns. Even if you extricate yourselves from them on one side, you get attached on the other side. While you are so engaged, you will find that somebody will arrive to help you to, extricate yourself from the thorns. This is what usually takes place. You must keep on trying. You will find that outside help is bound to arrive."

'All seek the Lord in a moment of need—
none in a moment of joy. He that seeketh
Him in a moment of joy never comes to
grief.'

—Kabir

To forgo the shelter that the life of the householder (*grihastha āsrama*) affords in order to devote one's days wholly to the Supreme Quest is difficult.

If you are capable of this—very well. But examine carefully the promptings that come from within. *His Will be done.*

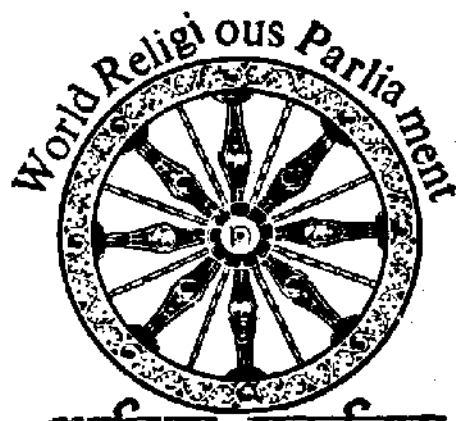
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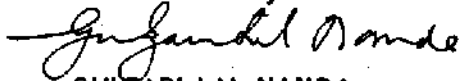
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A photo copy of the original Dharma Chakra International Memorial award conferred on Shree Shree Ma posthumously.

In association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Sri Amulya Datta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali)

(Continued from the last issue)

The necessity of spiritual work from a sense of duty.

Varanasi, 29-5-41

Ma happened to notice the state of our bedding in a corner of the hall. She asked, "Are you accustomed to sleep in such a narrow bed? Or is it that having arrived here, you are trying to compromise with whatever local condition you have landed into?"

Jitenbabu : Manomohan has informed me that at home he uses six pillows. Here we are sleeping in this fashion. We live otherwise at home, because perhaps we consider ourselves king there. Nobody is greater than us there. Hence all things are as suited to our title. Here we are lowly beings hence our bedding is of this kind (Everybody laughs).

Ma (Smiling) : By considering yourselves as king in your own house you have defined a certain limited position. You are not the king of everywhere at all times! But you must also remember that if illness attacks your children, you

cannot sleep comfortably even on a bed fitted with soft pillows. At such times you may believe that provided the children keep well, you are ready to sleep on the floor—let alone a mattress. So you see, you are king of continuous want in your houses. If sleep comes it does not wait for a comfortable bed, but if there is mental unrest, then even a comfortable bed offers no rest. It is in the nature of worldly affairs that when you wish for comfort, side by side discomfort also appears. Consequently, you must at all times, whether in happiness or sorrow, try to behave like a king. For this reason I repeat what I frequently tell others. Once a week, once a fortnight, or even once a month set aside one day to work for His cause. On that day you must stay in one room, you must not participate in unimportant issues, but spend the time in meditation, japa, reading of scriptures etc. Whatever asana or bedding you use that day, you must keep separate. You will derive considerable benefit if you proceed in this way.

I: There is no benefit to be derived from this ?

Ma : (Asking Jiten Babu) Baba, are you of the same opinion ?

Jiten Babu : No, I don't wish to say the same thing, because Amulya Babu has let himself in for trouble by doing so.

Ma : (Asking Monmoha Babu) Baba, what do you say ? Are you also of the opinion that no benefit will be derived ?

Monmohan Babu : I do not say the same thing. You may derive benefit from it, on the other hand you may also not do so.

Ma : (smiling) He is trying to placate both Amulya and myself.

(Everybody laughs).

(Looking towards me) You cannot maintain that you derive no benefit. If you say this, then, when your children do not want to study, you will not be able to compel them to do so. Because when after trying to pursue their studies they forsake their books and run away, then they are also behaving like you. But you scold them, and force them to carry on with their learning. And you subsequently do perceive that even after following their studies so unwillingly, they do in fact turn out to be pandits in due course.

I : Ma, it is not the first time that I am hearing what you have been advising about Samyam Vrata. I have heard all this before and tried to act accordingly. On the other hand I have noticed that it is on the very day of samyam that my troubles seem to multiply. I derive no spiritual satisfaction from it. From all this it seems to me that there is no further point in following this path. When the time is ripe, it will take place of its own accord.

Ma : I will then declare that you have not even started following the path of Samyam Vrata at all. Because at all times you have been eager to obtain quick results. If you expect to derive immediate benefit from any action you carry out, then it is the same as not taking any action at all.

It looks as if on the one hand you do not desire to undergo any hardships in your spiritual efforts, and on the other hand you are never behind-hand in refusing any fame or praise that may come your way !

I : It is not as if I make any special efforts to derive satisfaction therefrom.

Ma : Even that is no proof of having attained a suitably high standard. If there is no sign of any effort or energy in any direction, then this is a sign of complete inertness. Is it worth while, living in a state of inertia ? The effort to improve one's spiritual state is derived from ones innate sense of duty. There should never be any attempt to expect immediate beneficial results. But you should know that as soon as you take some action, you are bound to suffer the consequences. Even if you save half a paisa at a time, you can reach a total of 1 lakh in due course. There is a result to be derived from each and every act you undertake. Why limit this to action alone ? Even if you see anything or feel anything there is always a reaction that follows. For all these reasons there is talk of the importance of Satsang and choice of a suitable place. It is for all these reasons that the Sadhaka does not allow outsiders to touch his asana, clothes, bedding etc. Whatever we eat or think of has the effect of projecting their qualities into our being and influencing us accordingly, and of inducing changes within us.

Consequently, I have asserted that if whatever we notice in the world is looked upon by us as

being responsible for affecting our joys and sorrows, then all this will have a tendency merely to increase our bondage. If, when we behold mountains, trees or flowers, we think, "Oh, how beautiful these are", then the good qualities of these things will enter our being and lead to the awakening of many new beliefs within us. But if on beholding them we believe that they are but different forms of God Himself, if we are of the opinion that God himself is appearing before us as beautiful flowers or fruits, then the purer instincts will assert themselves within us. Consequently, we must not look upon everything or do everything from the point of view of fulfilling our carnal desires only. We will then not be able to rid ourselves of the bondage that baser desires will encourage within us. Of course, if there is God's special grace, then the seeds of these carnal fassions can be destroyed in a moment, but this is a different issue altogether. We should proceed along the path of gradual improvement.

In this way, one has to carefully nourish the seeds of pious instincts within oneself, according to our capacity of japa, meditation, or the taking of God's name.

One must never lose hope by not merely attaining immediate success along this path. Generations of inherited feelings have raised a mound of refuse within us, love of God cannot be attained until these are completely rooted out. Of course, in certain cases it is true that some people feel the beginnings of this change within a comparatively short time. In such cases it must be understood

that they have been born by inheriting more of the holier instincts. Hence the path is opened up for them that much more easily. When you embark on a course of action, you must believe that you are bound to obtain results in due course. Even if one does not possess a Guru, there is no obstacle as there is already a Guru within each one of us. If you carry on with this good work, he will be automatically awakened. But in general, it can be maintained that it is better to work under the shelter of a Guru.

The necessity of Asana etc. during Meditation and their purity.

Nepal Dada (Narayanswami) Ma, our Shastras declare that japa etc. should be carried out sitting on an asana. But if somebody comes and does japa without using an asana, will he not derive any benefit from it ?

Ma : What is this you say ? Why should he not derive any benefit therefrom. What kind of asana has this body used ? At Bajitpur it was on the ground that my japa and other activities used to take place. Even that earth was damp and wet, and because of sitting on the same spot the quality of that very earth used to be changed. It was at Dhaka that I first started using an asana and even this was at the Sadhan Samar Ashram of Atul. Whenever I used to sit on the ground, he used to declare, "Ma, if you sit on the ground then the current generated within you is lost by passing into the earth." And when in spite of this I was still

unwilling to use an asana, then he said, "Ma, if you do not sit on an Asana, then we are put to a lot of inconveniences, because we also will then not be able to use an asana." After his remarks, I did not object to use an asana. And from that day to this an asana is being used.

(Laughing) Now it has come to such a pass that if I go out for a drive in a car, an asana is placed over the Car Seat. But nevertheless it is true that it is better to use an asana during japa etc. in accordance with the dictates of the Shastras. First use an asana of rushes, then over it place a woollen or any other asana you can get in the bazar and finally cover it with silk. When this is done, the shastras maintain that the current generated within the body is not lost. This is why during japa silken clothes are used.

I: Yes, yogis are very particular about the purity of their asana or clothes. Among the Vaishnavas such strictness is not generally observed.

Ma: Yes, but Sadhakas as a whole prefer not to let their clothes or asanas etc. be touched by outsiders.

Vaidik Diksha Vs Tantrik Diksha

I: The scriptures lay down that in Kali Yuga a Diksha should be according to Tantrik rites. Does this mean that those who have been initiated according to Vaidik rites cannot aspire to improve themselves.

Ma: This body will assert that if the seeds of Vaidik Diksha are truly activated, then the effects

will be the same as for Tantric Diksha. Some people can attain salvation simply by reciting the Gayatri. Whatever path you choose, if you proceed along the right line, you can always reach the goal.

I : Due to the passage of Epochs, perhaps the results of Tantric Diksha are mere efficacious than those of Vaidik Diksha.

Ma : Yes, it can well be so. There may be different regulations for different times. But there is a difference of opinion among Sadhus over the question of the correct time. You yourselves maintain that some Sadhus have declared that Satyayug has arrived, yet others announce that this is just the evening of Kaliyug. The truth is that the same period may appear in different forms to different peoples. To someone this may be Kaliyuga, yet to another this may be Satyayug. For instance it is said that the shastras declare that there can be no proper sannyas in Kaliyuga. But you yourselves are aware that even in this Kaliyuga some people have been initiated into true sannyas. Thus it could be held that the shastras are untrue. But in actual fact it is not so. For those who have become a real Sannyasi it must be understood that it is not Kaliyuga. Time is characterised by our inner feelings. Asanas etc. can also be characterised by such inner feelings. If the outward action and the natural disposition of a person are in tune with each other, then there is no further fatigue of the body. The reason why you cannot keep on sitting in the same position on an asana for a long time is that your action is not in tune with

your inner feelings. When they are so in tune, then you will notice that you do not get tired from anything you do. You can continue to sit for hours, or keep on walking indefinitely. Frequently my body is placed in a certain position in a train, I continue to sit in the same position for 8-9 hours, later when someone arrives to move me into another position, then I adopt that position.

At other time I continue to gaze straight in front of me. I am not affected by sceneries of bazars or shops which may happen to be passing on my right or left. But I gaze in front of me, I do not see anything above or below. My body does not move.

Do you not talk of the Trataka sight ? This trataka can be of several kinds. This condition of the body that I have described above can be termed as a Tratak condition by you. The crux of the matter is that whichever path you choose, if you proceed along the correct line, the infinite will be pointed out to you."

The Self, Self-contained, calling to Itself for its own Revelation—this is happiness.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

The contemporaries of Sri Krishna Chaitanya and their successors

R. K. Banerjee

Shil Raghunath Das Goswami

Raghunath was the last and youngest of the six Acharya Goswamis inspired by Sri Chaitanya and sent to Vrindaban to spread his Gospel.

He was born in 1505 A.D. and was the son of Govardhandas Majumdar, a rich Zamindar of Trisbigha and Adi Saptagram, along the Calcutta-Delhi G.T. Road. Gobardhandas and his brother Hiranyadas were installed by the then Mohammade rulers of Bengal, ending with Hussain Shah during Sri Chaitanya's life time.

Sm. Vishnupriya's father Sanatan Misra was the family Guru, but the brothers were initiated by Sri Jadunandan Acharya, Sri Advaita's disciple. The family priest was Sri Balaram Acharya. All of them played an important role in influencing young Raghunath's mind towards Sri Chaitanya in his formative years. Thakur Haridas also came to live near by, and constantly inspired the young boy with love of Sri Chaitany'a and Nam Sankirtan.

Raghunath has been identified with Sri Rasamanjari of Brajadham in Gour-Ganodyesh dwipika.

Fired by intense longing to embrace Sri Chaitanya's faith, Raghunath met Mahaprabhu

during his first visit to Santipur at Sri Advaitas' house. There he partook of Mahaprabhu's prasada and was seized with intense prema of the Lord.

During Sri Chaitanyas' second visit to Santipur, on his way to Vrindaban, Raghunath again managed to obtain his fathers' permission to visit Mahaprabhu. There and then he wanted to forsake his home, but was persuaded by Mahaprabhu to fide his time and return home to stay there until the call came.

During the next two years, he often tried to run away from home to join Mahaprabhu at Nilachal, but was always apprehended and brought back by the guards his father placed over him to ensure his stay at home.

Suddenly he heard that Sri Nityananda was at Panihati, on the banks of the Ganga, and managed to obtain permission to visit him there.

At Panihati Sri Nityananda embraced him, took him into his fold, and played a wonderful Leela with him, which is still celebrated annually at Panihati as Danda-Mahotsab (the festival of suffering punishment). He accused Raghunath of being a thief who aspired to claim Sri Chaitanya's feet as his own, thus violating Nityananda's prior claim, and sentenced him to a penalty whereby he had to feed all the assembled congregation of Vaishnavs with curds, sweets, chira and fruits.

Raghunath gladly submitted to this proposal, obtained the necessary funds from home, and then there ensued a wonderful Utsab at Panihati at the site of Mahaprabhu's Ghat, at which thousands of

Vaishnavs, gathered together, song kirtan, and fed to their hearts content. At Nityanandas' earnest desire, Sri Mahaprabhu himself appeared in person and, sat down to eat the Mahaprasad side by side with Sri Nityananda at Raghav Bhavan nearby. This Mahabhog was later distributed to the entire assembly.

Thus started an annual Mahotsab called Danda-Mahotsab, which is still celebrated each year on the Sukla Trayadashi day of Jyestha before Snan-Purnima.

Raghunath now felt that the time was ripe for joining Mahaprabhu at Nilachal. He bided his time patiently, and one day, taking advantage of the visit of the family Guru Sri Jadunandan Acharya, he quietly left his home at night, and travelled for 12 days and nights on foot to reach Puri.

There Mahaprabhu embraced him gladly, and entrusted him to the care of Swarup Damodar to be fully trained in the Vaishnav Shastras.

His father subsequently came to know of Raghunath's presence at Puri, and sent him money and other goods through an emissary but this was spurned with contempt by Raghunath, who was later persuaded to use this income to feed all the other devotees gathered together at Nilachal.

The spirit of strict renunciation increased within Raghunath at the wish of Mahaprabhu, and in due course Raghunath gave up all this food and started begging for alms at the main doors (Sinha-Dewar) of the Jagannath Temple for his daily needs.

Subsequently, carring to know that such a course was often adopted by women of doubtful virtue, he forsook this begging and started to pick out the remains of the half-eaten rice consumed and left by the sacred cows of the temple. Raghunath would wash this rice carefully and prepare a small meal therefrom for himself. Swarup caught him at it one day, and chastised him for denying him this Mahaprasad. Swarup later reported the facts to Mahaprabhu, who was well aware of the true state of affairs, and also forcibly partook of Raghunath's meal, so as to praise him for his rigorous Sadhana. Later, Raghunath abandoned even this method, and used to eat whatever was provided by the various Charitable trusts in the neighbourhood of the temple.

Pleased with the austerity of his Sadhana, Mahaprabhu presented him with a Gunjamala (a garland prepared from special reeds found in Vrindaban) and a Govardhan Shila (a piece of stone from Govordhan hill, like a shalgram), as symbols of Sri Radha "Sri Krishna for Raghunath's daily devotion."

Raghunath served Mahaprabhu faithfully for as long as sixteen years at Nilachol, until Sri Chaitanya's disappearance from the world, and thereafter served Swarup Damodar until his death before leaving for Vrindaban.

On arriving at Vrindaban, and after meeting Sri Rupa, Sri Sanatan and other senior Goswamis, Raghunath took up his abode on the shores of Radha Kundo, where he lived up to 1581 A.D.

Krishnadas Kaviraj, who wrote his famous book Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita, clearly consulted Rathunath before and during writing his book, as Raghunath, armed with Swarup Damodors Karchas, was a very knowledgeable person. Hence the author in his gratitude mentions Raghunath at the end of each chapter, thus acknowledging his debt.

During his long life at Radha Kundu, Raghunath was always consulted by all arrivals from Bengal, and passed his days in writing numerous learned books, which were later destined to become a veritable treasure-trone of Vaishnav literature. Among his publications may be mentioned.

Stabamela, Manah Shikha, Sri Muktacharita, etc.

After serving his beloved Giridhariji (Gobordhan shila) for very many years, and being constantly engaged in worshipping Sri Radhika as Gunjamala, on the shores of Radhakunda, Sri Raghunath Das finally entered his Mohasamadhi on the Shukla Dasami tithi of Aswin in 1581 A.D. at the age of 76 years.

His sadhana was something so rigid that Sri Krishnadas described it in his inimitable words as "Raghunath Niygam" yena pashaner Radha". Raghunath's rigidity in maintaining strict discipline and Sanjam was like a deep indelible impression on a piece of hard rock which could not be effaced avery by any other means.

This is the best epitaph that could be written about Sri Raghunath Das Goswami, the youngest

and the last of the 6 Acharya Goswamis initiated by Sri Krishna Chaitanya.

The devout pilgrim may still see, when visiting the shores of Radha Kunda, Raghunath's kutia containing his place of worship and his Vighrahas, as well as his tomb intact in their austere glory, as the Sadhan-pith of a very great Vaishnava Acharya Goswami, who had dedicated his lip and soul to his Lord and Preceptor Sri Krishna Chaitanya.

Sri Jeeva Goswami

Sri Jeeva Goswami, probably the most learned of the six Acharya Goswamis, was the son of Anupam, the youngest of the three brothers Sanatan, Rupa and Anupam.

Sri Jeeva has been called as the incarnation of Sri Bilas Manjari of Brajadham in Gour Ganodyesh Dwipika.

He was born in Baklo-Chandrodwip, in a family of Erudite Brahmins who had originally migrated from Karnataka.

He inherited Bhakti from Sanatan, and Rasa from Rupa. His father was a great devotee of Sri Rama. Sri Jeeva subsequently wrote several learned Vaishnav treatises in Sanskrit while at Vrindaban, none in Bengalee.

Sri Jeeva was born in 1534 A. D. and died at the old age of 86 in Vrindaban, where he spent his last 65 years.

He was only a few years old when Sri Chaitanya met Rupa and Sanatan at Ramkali village, where

he had a very brief darshan of Mahaprabhu from a distance at a tender age.

When Akbar Badshah visited Vrindaban, he was struck with wonder at Sri Jeevas radiant image. Among the famous books he wrote may be mentioned :—

Gopal Champu, Ujjal Nilmani, Shat-Sandarva (which is the last word on Vaishnav Bhakti and Darshan),

Brahma-Sanhita-Tika, Sankalpa-Kalpa Drum-Sri Madhab-Mahotsab, etc.,

His father, a great devotee of Sri Rama, met Sri Chaitanya at Ramkali with his elder brothers, and died at an early age on the banks of the Ganga. Sri Nityananda extended his kripa towards Jeeva after Mahaprabhu's disappearance, and met him at Sribas Angan in Nabadwip, where he instructed him to proceed to Vrindaban, where his future lay. On his way to Vrindaban, Jeeva stopped off at Varanasi where he studied the shastras at great depth with the famous Pandit Sri Madhusudan Bachaspati, a renowned scholar of the times. Sri Jeeva thus became an authority on the Shastras, and employed his knowledge to the full to translate Sri Chaitanyas theories into practice in due course.

Among his most famous pupil disciples were :

- (1) Sri Chaitanaya Das
- (2) Sri Narottam Das Thakur
- (3) Sri Shyamananda.

Sri Jeeva was later appointed regional Head of the Shastras at Vrindaban (Sarbabhouma Acharya).

On the deaths of Sri Sanatan and Sri Rupa, Sri Jeeva installed the image of Sree Jahnavā Dev instead of Sri Radha next to his Vighraha Gopinath at Radhakunda.

At a very young age, soon after his arrival at Vrindaban, Sri Jeeva met Ballavacharya, who had come to visit Sri Rupa. Being annoyed at Ballav's air of superiority over Sri Rupa's opinions based on Sri Chaitanya's philosophy, Sri Jeeva accorted Sri Ballava alone at a secluded spot, and by sheer force of his argument and brilliant discourse venged Ballav's views. Ballava later described his defect in the hands of his young nephew to Sri Rupa, who was so angered by his nephew's lack of contrary and self-discipline that there and then he banished Sri Jeeva from his presence for his behaviour, which was contrary to Jeeva's languishing Vaishnav hospitality. It was Sanatan who found half-starved on the banks of the Jamuna at Nandaghat and brought him back to be reconciled with Sri Rupa.

Sri Jeeva finally entered into his Mahasamadhi at the age of 86 years on the Sukla Tritya tithi of the month of Paush in 1620 A.D. having been the centre of Vaishnav learning of the Sri Chaitanya cult in Vrindaban for decades.

He installed and worshipped Sri Radha Damodar Vighraha in Vrindaban.

Ma and Ma Alone

1. *Introductory remarks including Ma's own words about Herself*

Ma Das

In the Introduction to a book¹, Mahamahopadhaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj has stated, "So much of disharmony and opposition in the world today, engendering bitterness and strife, is due to our lack of sympathy and sense of oneness. The root cause is the lack of Self-knowledge. There is but one Self which is Love and Wisdom eternal, and we shall share it if we but know it in a proper way." The need of the hour, therefore, is the creation of widespread interest in Self-knowledge. We, the devotees of Ma, are exceptionally fortunate that we have the peerless privilege of being blessed by that One Self Itself which is Love and Wisdom eternal.

For us, Self-knowledge is identification with our Ma, and this is not possible only by a superficially effusive emotional approach. Undoubtedly, devotion to Sri Ma's lotus feet is the *sine-qua-non*, but for this devotion to be steady and purposefully effective, the natural intelligent inquisitiveness of the mind regarding Her *Swarupa* (true nature) should be satisfactorily met and all doubts removed by providing ourselves with a clear mental picture of our true relationship with Ma.

It is said that he who knows and does not love, does not know, while he who loves and does not know does not love. If this is accepted, then love and knowledge are both necessary to know or love the Reality. With this in view, an attempt to know a little about Ma that is possible through the medium of thought has been made in this paper, which is in 3 parts. The other two parts are as follows :

Part 2 comprises a fairly comprehensive discussion, which reveals how Ma is eternally with everyone. The issues covered are the nature and problem of Ignorance ; the three states of consciousness—waking, dream and deep sleep— ; the eternal (*Thuriya*) ; and the problem of eliminating the mind.

Part 3 is entitled : Towards attaining identity with Ma. This subject is discussed under 5 sub-headings : Dissolving the ego ; the Right *Drishti* (Perception) ; No birth, no death ; Ma is All and All is Ma ; and Ma's special Directives for aspirants.

A Statement and Its Significance

A superb, solemn statement of Ma is, "You may want to banish this body (Ma) from your mind. But this body won't leave for a single day — it does not and never will leave your thought. Whoever has once been drawn to love this body, will never succeed in wiping out its impression even despite hundreds of attempts. This body rests and shall remain in his memory for all times".²

Why? The answer, in Ma's own words is, "*The Atma of this body is everyone's Atma. It cannot be that anybody, anywhere, is not Ma's very own.*"³ The supreme significance of this inimitable utterance is made further clear in the following words of Ma :

"Verily God is in all shapes and forms. Keep this fact firmly engraved in your heart and mind. Everybody should be told that in God's creation, according to the Hindu *Sanatan-Dharma*, it is unlawful to say what will cause hostility or distress to anyone. For, God and nothing but He manifests in all shapes and forms. To be opposed to anyone is to be opposed to the Supreme Being: *We are all one Atma.* This is what we have to bear in mind. Preserve a spirit of calm and friendliness".⁴

That is why Ma has issued the death-destroying directive, "Abandon the transitory; 'I am the *Atma*', fix this thought in your mind."⁵

What is the implication of this instruction in the light of Ma's clear statement that She is the one *Atma* of all? Is it not absolutely plain that by fixing, in the mind, the thought, 'I am the *Atma*, each one of us is asked to identify oneself with Ma, without the least trace of any other *bhava*, accepting fully the truth that there is only Ma and Ma alone all the time, everywhere, and nothing else.

Ma has conveyed the truth about Herself on several occasions and in diverse ways as illustrated below.

Some Declarations of Ma

Once in 1954, at an informal gathering, after Ma's birthday celebrations at Almora, one of its residents had exclaimed, "Mataji, you are leaving us, we shall feel so lonely, our lives will be empty without you !" On this Ma had replied, "Why do you say I am leaving you ? Why do you want to push me far away ? *I am always with you.* And when the questioner had continued, "Do you, then, dwell in our hearts ?", Ma had answered, "In your hearts ? Why do you want to restrict me to a particular spot ? *Blood of your blood, bone of your bone am I.* This is the truth. Believe me, I never tell an untruth."⁶

Later, when Ma was scheduled to leave Almora the following day, someone had clamoured, again, at another gathering, "Mataji, we have been coming to you daily, but now you are going away. How desolate we shall feel ! How are we to go on ?" Putting it a little differently, Ma had then remarked, "Why do you say I am going away ? *I am your little baby, always with you.* Remember this, I am ever with you. Does an infant leave its parents ? I am not asking you to sit up straight, to hold your breath, to purify yourselves. *In whatever condition you are, I am ever with you,* bear this in mind. A child remains with its parents, be they what they may." And when someone else had protested, "But we revere you as our Mother, we do not look upon you as our child, Ma had conceded the point with the remark, "well everything is alright. But does a mother forsake her children ? Never."⁶

On an earlier occasion, as reported by Bhaiji, Ma had said, "Just as you find a human being having different parts of the one body, like head, hands, thighs, feet, fingers and toes, *I find all of you represent my different limbs.* All of you belong to one body,—each one has to do work of equal importance."⁷

Once Bhaiji had desired to know, from Mother's own lips, who she was. In reply, Ma had categorically declared, "A man or woman, who has the ego-sense—the 'I'-ness (*abhimān*), or the sense of (identification with) body-mind—can easily say who he or she is. There is no such ego-sense functioning in this body. So whatever you say or observe in this physical Vehicle—I am That (*tat*). What more do you want to know? This last sentence, in Bhaiji's words, "was uttered with such an unearthly fervour and vehemence that it sent a thrill through my entire body. Since then, I have not questioned Her about it. I stopped with awe and fear ; I realized at once who she was."⁸

Who can talk like all this, except the One Himself who alone is without a second? And this was confirmed as a fact by Bhaiji on the basis of His own Self-realization. A few moments before he left his body, Bhaiji had asked someone among those present there to note down : "*We are all one. I see Mother everywhere ! What joy ! How beautiful !*"⁹

The First Great Hurdle

From all that has been stated above, we know for certain that our own Real Self, our Atma—

what each one of us is really—is Ma, who is, therefore, with everyone, everywhere, all the time. In fact, she alone is everyone, and we are not the separate concrete body-mind entities. Our primary need, then, is to have, first of all, complete intellectual conviction about this truth, which is possible only if it is based on an absolutely clear mental picture of what we actually are—what our true *Svarupa* is ! And it is here that we meet the first great hurdle.

The mind, being full of cravings and desires of all sorts due to wrong *samskars* (impressions on the mind) of long standing, including notions of exaggerated self-importance as an individual, is unable to take genuine interest in trying to know the Self, which is beyond mental realm. The mind is made of the same three *gunas* (attributes of nature) of which the world is made. That is why the average mind finds itself at home in entertaining thoughts concerning worldly matters, such as attachment to dear and near ones, wealth and property, name and fame, enjoyments of ephemeral nature, etc. In the circumstances, how can one make the mind seriously interested in withdrawing from what is external—the objects of senses, which appear so powerfully attractive in ignorance—and engaging in an earnest quest within for knowledge of the One Real Self that alone IS—the blissful Mother, beyond the *gunas* and devoid of all thoughts ? To solve this problem, Ma Herself shows the way.

Discrimination and Renunciation

Ma says, "Happiness that depends on anything outside of you, be it your wife, children, money, fame, friends or anything else, cannot last. But to find happiness in Him, who is everywhere, who is all-pervading, your own Self, this is real happinessyes, finding your self, discovering who you really are, means to find God, for there is nothing outside of Him."¹⁰

Again, Ma says, "You attempt to appease want by want; hence want does not disappear and neither does the sense of want. When man awakens to the acute consciousness of this sense of want, then only does spiritual enquiry become genuine. You must bear in mind that *when the sense of want becomes the sense of the want of Self-knowledge, then only the real Quest begins.*"¹¹

Ma terms these as "two kinds of currents in human life: the one pertaining to the world, in which want follows upon want; the other of one's true Being. It is characteristic of the former that it can never end in fulfilment—on the contrary, the sense of want is perpetually stimulated anew. Whereas, by entering the latter, man will become established in his true nature and bring to completion the striving which is its expression. Thus, if he endeavours to fulfil himself by entering this current, it will *eventually bring him to the perfect poise of his own true Being.*"¹²

The following three verses from chapter-II of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita and the commentaries¹³ on them by the extraordinarily blessed saint Sri

Jnanadeva Maharaj are most helpful in fully understanding what Ma means by '*perfect poise of one's own true Being.*'"

Projoheti Yoda Kaman

Sarban Partha manogatan,

Atmanyebatmana Tustoh

Sthitaprangastoduchyate.

प्रजहाति यदा कामान् सर्वानि पार्थ मनोगतान् ।

आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥

"When he, O son of Pritha, renounces all desires lodged in the heart, and is by himself, content within himself, then he is called Sthitaprajna (a man of perfectly-poised Discernment)"—Verse 55

Commentary—"O Arjuna! hear, the one thing that comes in the way of the happiness of the Self is the strong desires that exist in mind for the objects of senses. One who is ever-contented and whose heart is full of satisfaction, and who has completely destroyed the strong desires for pleasure which make one fall headlong into the mire of sense-objects, and whose mind is absorbed in the bliss of the Self—such a one is *Sthitaprajna*.

यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्तत प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् ।

नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

"He, who encountering diverse good as well as evil things, feels no attachment towards anything, and neither rejoices (in the one) nor loathes (the other), his Discernment is (really) perfectly-poised." —Verse 57.

Commentary—"He behaves evenly with all, like the full moon that gives light equally both to

the virtuous and the evil doers ; his unflinching equality towards all knows no distinction whatever. He is ever kind to all beings, never making any distinction whatever. He never rejoices at the acquisition of good nor loathes untoward things. Such a one O Arjuna, who is free from joy and sorrow and ever full with the Bliss of the Self is Sthitabuddhi.”

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान् पुमाश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।

निर्ममो निरहंकारः सशान्तिर्माधगच्छति ॥

“That person who, renouncing all desires, walks along freed of longings and unswayed by the ‘my’-ness and the ‘I’-ness : he attains peace—Verse 71

Commentary—He alone, know ye, is a true *sthita-prajna*, who has secured the knowledge of the Self and is ever well-fed with the bliss of the form (of the essence) of the Supreme Self. He has dropped all egoism, renounced all desires, abides in the great bliss of the oneness in the Universal life and is totally united with the Universe”.

The objective of perfect poise can be reached only by them who give up the current pertaining to the world and enter the current of one’s true being. So Ma warns everyone that “enough time has been spent in wandering hither and thither aimlessly, in leaving the path in order to enjoy the sights of the world and to have fun in various ways in the manner of the world. Now all one’s time should, as far as possible, be spent in the attempt to find one’s Self. Vain, idle talk is of no benefit and only prevents one from advancing towards Him—It is

but an obstacle to one's efforts. Ages and ages have been wasted in this manner.

"Now, friend, return to your real Home! By lingering on the way, you only prolong the agony of the troubles and difficulties that have to be endured on the pilgrimage. Ever remember that one who is eager to advance towards Him and practises His name and His Presence, progresses, no matter what his condition may be. To say, 'I do not feel His response' and, therefore, to take pleasure in mundane things can never be for one's good—always bear this in mind."¹⁴

It is such words of Ma that help in engendering discrimination between the real and unreal, and also in renouncing what is unreal, i.e., in freeing the mind of all worldly attachments, love of wealth, position, power, thoughts of transient pleasures, etc., which constitute the main obstacle in experiencing the indescribable, everlasting, immutable bliss or real happiness, which is our unalloyed true nature. And when convinced, in one's own real interest, about the need for Self-knowledge, i.e., for the discovery of the truth of the One Ma who alone exists, one directs one's efforts to overcome ignorance about this truth.

(To be continued)

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

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Some Peculiarities of Ma

Harekrishna Goswami

A limitless ocean cannot be measured. Ma Anandamayee, the ocean of divine nectar is also immeasurable. Of course, a few pails can be used by us. Out of Her innumerable characteristics only a few are enumerated here.

Ma had a divine body unlike a common one. A keen observer could discover that only a goddess of heaven would have such an appearance. Her face was the most peculiar one. Even if she was not smiling the face always appeared to be smiling. On the other hand, when she used to laugh She laughed with Her whole body and not only with lips. One more observation—sometimes She looked to be a very young lady though She was above eighty at that time.

A man or woman might be seriously stuck up and in a dilemma about what decision would have to be taken. As soon as the person went near Her She would start talking about the same problem lurking in the mind of the person though the person did not raise the problem. And Mother would either hint or tell the correct solution. Sometimes She advised a third person and the waiting questioner's problem was thus solved automatically without questioning Mother. Any question would have an instantaneous answer from Mother like an

automatic machine or a computer. She used to say that all such answers were direct from God and She was a mere instrument in His hand. In fact She was in identity with God.

A stream of grace or power used to flow from Her. Such radiation of soothing grace would penetrate the body and mind of devotees present nearby and a blissful inexpressible joy would be felt.

Some devotees would approach Her to ask some questions but would become still and forget to ask anything, and would be silently sitting near Her. It was really astonishing. It happened due to the fact that the Divine Mother was always in the state of silent thoughtless Atma and anyone approaching Her used to be influenced by the state and automatically become silent and thoughtless. To overcome such silence and stillness some used to write before hand, on a piece of paper, the questions to be asked and then approach Her. Even then many used to be induced by the same ~~silence and stillness~~, and were not able to ask anything. In turn, one would return unspoken being besmeared with bliss within one's self.

The writer, a direct disciple of Ma, has observed all those specialities and seeks refuge in Her holy lotus feet.

Science, Sanskrit Scriptures and the Essence

Dharamsinh M. Sampat

(Mind barrier)

1. Both science and real philosophy are trying to find the Essence underlying the entire Existence.

2. SANSKRIT Philosophy includes Vedic philosophy with its branch YOGA which relates to pure experience as distinct from relative experience. In yoga, the emphasis is on the mind rather than on the body or its postures.

3. Like the sound barrier or the light barrier, there is also the mind barrier, about which science has not made any study. Now, this mind barrier has to be overstepped, so that you can see what is on the other side of the conventional mind.

4. The Essence is Infinite and is not bound by anything. In fact, it is 'Free'. It is beyond the scope of earthly reasoning. Our reasoning is based on values established by earthly beings, from their findings, beliefs and assumptions, which do *not necessarily* have a universal application. Earthlings have a limited knowledge of the universe. Our understanding of the universe is limited and so, our reasoning and its application are also limited, in the wider context of the universe.

5. The sense of limitation, the sense of 'conditions' including scientific conditions has to be crossed, in order to understand infinity.

6. The infinite is not finite and not 'conditioned'. Finite means are not sufficient to grasp the Infinite. Scientific conditions are impediments which impair the thorough understanding of the entirety of the unconditioned Reality. You cannot grasp the limitless with limitations. Therefore, you have to shed the limits as and when possible, so that you may be able to see BEYOND the limits—beyond the limitation of mind and even beyond the present-day scientific thought.

7. So, the 'beyond' actually does exist. It is beyond the mind barrier and is reached by crossing the mind barrier. It is the field from where flashes come—from where Newton got the flash, from where flash came to Archimedes or from where flashed the Theory of Relativity in the mind of Dr. Einstein—the field from where you get your flashes.

-8. When the 'beyond' opens up, there is a unique perception. It is something better than what an X-ray perception can be. Such perception is even beyond the domain of space-time-continuum. All along, this experience goes parallel to science and not contrary to science, and what is more, it extends beyond the field of science into realms unknown to science at present; but this unknown is not unknowable.

The Malady of the Age-its Cause and Cure

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(*Contd. from the last issue*)

The most important and startling discovery of psychical research, now also called Parapsychology, is that man, and some men particularly and in greater degree, is capable of acquiring knowledge of objects, and of thoughts and feelings of others, without the usual means of knowledge, by the direct action of the mind. This supernormal kind of knowledge, formerly called clairvoyance, lucidity and cryptesthesia, is now called Extra-sensory Perception (in short ESP) by Dr. Rhine of the Duke University in U.S.A. It finds expression in various forms and manners, such as Telepathy (communication of thoughts, experiences, and feelings of one mind to another at a distance without the use of normal means), Clairvoyance (in a restricted sense meaning seeing, without the use of eyes, events taking place at a distance), Clairaudience (hearing sounds and words which convey information of distant events without the use of ears), Precognition (non-inferential knowledge of future happenings), Retro-cognition (direct knowledge of events that happened in the distant past), Psychometry (Power of acquiring knowledge of

events of a person's life by simply holding or handling some object used by him), Dowsing (divining the presence of water or minerals underneath the earth), Crystal-gazing (seeing veridical scenes in a bright reflecting surface), Automatic writing (scribing without volition or consciousness veridical information), Inspirations of geniuses, veridical statements made by entranced persons, and verifiable reminiscences of "previous life" expressed by babies. All these types of supernormal cognition (ESP) have been very carefully, empirically and experimentally investigated, and have been established as facts by scientifically trained investigators all over the world. ESP or supernormal cognition had been found to have four peculiar features which distinguish it from the normal cognition. (1) It does not stand in need of the use of sense-organs, physical or physiological contact with the object, or even the immediate presence of the object concerned. (2) It does not work under the limitations of space. Distance does not affect its operation. (3) Its function is not limited in time. It operates equally well in the present, past and future. (4) It is not always under the conscious control of the person who exercises it.

Another class of very important supernormal phenomena studied and investigated by psychical research is what was called Telekinesis by earlier investigators and is now called Psychokinesis by Dr. Rhine. The former term literally means production of movements at a distance and the latter means movements effected by mind. The idea

underlying both the terms is that the mind is capable of moving or lifting things at a distance from the body without any physical contact between one's physical body and the external material object. This power of mind is symbolised by Dr. Rhine as PK. He brings both ESP and PK under one symbol PSI. According to him and many other investigators, PSI capacity is not very rare. It is potentially possessed by all human beings and perhaps by animals too. In his latest work, *Parapsychology*, Dr. Rhine writes, "The capacity is, therefore, a normal equipment of the species."

A third type of paranormal, rather unknown normal, phenomena, investigated by psychical researchers and other investigators is what may be called supernormal psychophysiological effects, which are observed in miraculous cure of physical ailments effected by suggestion, hypnosis, prayer and creative imagination ; in extra-ordinary control over the autonomic nervous system and the organs controlled by it, found in case of yogis and faqirs ; in cases studied by psychosomatic medicine ; and in all treatments brought about by Christian Science, New Thought and the use of mantras (incantations), All such cases evince a remarkable power of the mind over the body.

Still more and perhaps the most remarkable facts investigated by psychical research are Astral Projection, Materialization, Ghosts, Apparitions, Haunted Houses, Trance-personalities and Remembrance of Previous Life. In astral projection, a person can, while alive, temporarily go out of the

physical body, roam about, show himself to his friends and relatives, and return with memories of his sojourn. In materialization, temporary living forms of human body or its limbs, like face, hands and larynx, are created and formed out of a strange substance, called ectoplasm, supplied by the body of an individual present nearby. These materialized forms do often resemble those of some persons no longer present in the world. Prof. Richet, in his *Thirty Years of Psychical Research*, writes about materialization, "Absurd, but no matter it is true". (P. 544) In the phenomenon of ghosts and apparitions, and haunted houses, we see visions of persons who are either already dead, or are still living elsewhere. In trance-personality we have a very strange phenomenon of a person passing into a trance or temporary and partial or complete suspension of consciousness, and his body and speech being apparently used by those who no longer exist in the world. In cases of memories of the previous life we find young children remembering some events which occurred in the lives of persons who died long ago and with whom identity is claimed.

On the basis of these data psychical researchers, many of whom are great scientists and philosophers of the world, have come to a conclusion that man is not the physical body alone, that his mental activities are not merely the functions of his bodily organs and systems, that in his deeper nature he is not merely the unconscious and brutish Id, but, on the other hand, some very superior type of psychic principle. This psychic principle, call it mind

or soul, is capable of existing and functioning independently of the physical body. As such, it survives the death of its physical body with which it was temporarily associated. Before getting associated with the present body, it must have been associated with some other body, now dead and gone, whose life it sometimes recalls. Potentially, this psychic principle has great powers of knowledge and action. It is capable of effecting a lot of changes in the physical body. This psychic principle is not governed by mechanical laws of matter and is not limited in its operations by time and space. It is not born with the body, nor does it perish with it. It has got a life and being of its own and perhaps in a psychic world different from the one. Mysticism is an attempt to withdraw from the affairs of the external world and from the activities of the physical body into the being of the psychic principle in order to understand and realize its nature and potentialities. In this attempt the mystic comes to have very strange and fascinating experiences within himself. When the mystic passes into the deepest recesses of his being he experiences a state of inner illumination in which all sense of individuality is lost, in which no kind of duality or multiplicity is experienced, and in which there is a feeling of supreme delight which was never experienced in the enjoyment of sense-pleasures. In the literature of *Yoga*, Indian mysticism, this unique experience is called *Samadhi*. Here we touch the very essence of our being, and, in the words of Patanjali, exist as "*Swarupmatraeva*". Mystic experiences of

various kinds and grades and experience of Samadhi are not mere hallucinations. They are facts which can be experienced by all those who follow the particular disciplines which lead the seeker to them. In a complete understanding of man we cannot afford to neglect them. Mystic training is important from another point of view also. As a mystic proceeds along the path of Self-réalization, he automatically gets most of the supernormal powers (*siddhis*) which Psychological Research has discovered some persons to possess sporadically. Great miracles have been performed by the great mystics of the world. In Chapter III of *Yogasutras*, Patanjali makes a mention of the great powers that a yogi comes to acquire in the course of his training in *yoga*.

Epistemological Analysis of Man by the Advaita Vedanta, which takes note of all the aspects and forms of human experience, and of all the epistemological factors involved in it, is, therefore, capable of doing greater justice to the understanding of man than any science so far has done. Vedantic analysis of human experience is thoroughly systematic, rational and comprehensive. Taking the entire human experience in view, the Vedantist discovers and points out four distinct *types* in it, namely, Waking, Dream, Deep Dreamless Sleep (slumber) and Mystic Trance (Samadhi). In the waking experience the subject of experience (Self) is associated and identified with the physical body which functions in the physical world. In the state he is aware of external objects as existing indepen-

dently of him and of himself as one of the objects of the world, all governed by the laws of nature operating in objective and stable time and space. When a man is physically tired and goes to bed, his waking experience vanishes and he begins to experience a world of dreams. Here he has a different body to use and a different world to live in. Although the dreamer does not know it, the stuff of the dream world is thought. Everything therein is ideal in structure. The space order of the dream is quite different from that of wakefulness. The stability, identity and causality of dream are quite different. Objects and persons, time and space, cause and effect change in no time in a dream. The body experienced in dream is quite different and performs different functions and acts from the physical body of the wakeful experience and its functions. In the third state of experience, namely in deep dreamless sleep, both the worlds and bodies of dream and wakefulness pass into nothing, vanish from the experience of the sleeper. Still there is some experience, for on waking we remember to have been in deep sleep when we experienced nothing objective. There we are aware of nothing. This experience is characterised by intense pleasure, and every person desires to enjoy it. We do not cease to exist or to be aware in sleep. Quite different from and perhaps superior to all these states of experience is the fourth state *turiya*, Samadhi or mystic trance. The deepest state of Samadhi is that of objectless and thoughtless experience characterised by supreme delight. Time, space, objectivity, duality,

plurality and individuality—all vanish, leaving awareness (consciousness) alone shining in its pristine purity and native joy. There is a feeling of infinity, fulness and satisfaction, which is beyond all description.

Having discovered that man is capable of experiencing these four states of existence, the Vedantist tries to understand the necessary epistemological and metaphysical implications of human experience. Despite variations and changes in the states of experience and their objects, the ultimate experient (subject of experience) remains identically and unalterably the same. It is one and the same subject who experiences all the states and objects or the absence of objects therein. Otherwise how could it be said that all the four states are those of the experience of the same subject? That which changes not and remains identically the same in the midst of changing circumstances and environment must certainly be regarded as something different from and independent of them. It is, therefore, clear that the witnessing Self (awareness or consciousness) is something different from the witnessed states and their objects, and exists in its own right. It is always the subject, and never an object, for to know it as an object, we have to pre-suppose it as the subject of our knowledge. The Self cannot be a mere series or stream of changing ideas and feelings, for in that case the feeling of personal identity and sameness from birth to death would not be experienced. Consciousness of succession implies a non-succe-

ssional principle. To experience all the changes from birth to death an unchanging witness is necessary. A continuous and identical principle is presupposed by the fact that we remember past experiences of our life. The consciousness of personal identity and continuity that we all have implies the existence of an identical and unchangeable Self. This Self cannot be identified with any object experienced in any of the state nor can it be said to have any objective quality, for in the fourth state (*turiya avastha*) it exists as bereft of all objective contents and qualities. The objects and their qualities changing with the change of states, how could the unchanging Self be identified the real nature of the Self, therefore, can only be that which persists unaltered throughout the entire experience. But as we are too much engrossed in the objects and have established identity with some of them, our own existence and nature are thrown out of focus. It is only when we try to discover it by analytic thinking and when we have a glimpse of it in samadhi that we come to know what we really are.

From the above mentioned considerations we come to the conclusion that the Self in us, whatever it be in its own nature, is one and the same throughout our existence from birth to death and throughout the changing states of experience. But the question of all questions, namely: "Does the Self come into existence at the birth of the body and does it perish at the death of the physical body?" still remains to be answered. The Vedantic epistemology

gives a very clear and convincing reply. It says there can be no proof of the birth and death of the Self, for nobody has ever experienced them. Births and deaths of physical bodies alone are witnessed by us, but never of the Self. The Self not being a physical object, nobody can perceive it being born or dying. The Self alone can be a witness to what happens to Itself. It cannot witness its birth for it must pre-exist to witness the event. It cannot witness its death for it must exist at the same time when it is dead. The Self has never intuited its birth and death. Its existence has never been touched by myriad changes in its experience. So the Vedanta concludes that the Self, the ultimate Subject of our Experience, is eternally present. It transcends time. That the Self is the immortal witness of all the states of experience and of all the changes in the physical body, and that in its purest existence it is characterised by joy, is the least that can be said about it. Its real nature in its fulness remains beyond our present state of knowledge. The powers and potentialities of the Self are incalculable and unimaginable, as the yogis who are able to withdraw into the Self by meditation and contemplation come to possess many miraculous powers, some of which have come to the notice of Psychical Research.

The Vedantist further points out that the deeper we go into the experience of the Self the nearer and closer we are to one another (as some of the paranormal experiences indicate) and in the deepest state of Samadhi all differences and distinctions of

individuality are obliterated and a feeling of fulness and perfection is enjoyed by everyone. This indicates that ultimately we are all rooted in the same Self which is the very root, heart and core of the entire world-experience, the Universe. Thus in Samadhi we touch the Ultimate Reality in which we are all rooted. It is possible to make this realization perpetual in our every day life.

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In times of affliction one must persevere in patience. Although distress and danger are certainly part of man's lot, yet will they be conquered by one who can meet them with courage and calm.

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

“He is the Fountain of Joy”

Dr. Roma Chaudhuri, M. A., Ph. D. (Oxford),
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Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi, as befitting her soul-stirring, heart-touching, mind-lifting beautiful name, was herself “Ananda” or “Bliss” incarnate. Whoever had the great fortune of coming near her and touching her holy feet (I, myself, was one of those due to God’s great grace)—felt at once that she emitted bliss all around, making all forget, at least for the time being, that the world is a place where—

“Sarvam Duhkham, Duhkham,
Sarvam Ksanikam Ksanikam,
Sarvam Sunyam Sunyam.”

“Everything is sorrowful, only sorrowful
Everything is transitory, only transitory,
Everything is empty, only empty.”

Over and above that, it is held that the Universe at large — with all its numerous departments, more numerous living beings, more new numerous aims and objects, can never be an abode of “Ananda” or Bliss at any time whatsoever.

But those who know the real nature of things and how these have been really produced, assert with firm faith, unshaken belief and unalloyed joy that this can never be — as the “*Saccidananda Parabrahman*” — the Absolute who is “Sat” or Eternal Existence, “Cit” or Eternal Knowledge and “Ananda” or Eternal Bliss — has Himself graciously transformed Himself into the Universe of

Souls and Matter ; and so it must be "Saccidananda" like Him — as the cause and the effect must be similar in nature — e.g., from the cause — a lump of clay, we get only clay-jars, clay-pots, clay-plates — all clay in essence — and never effects of any other kinds, such as, gold-jars, silver-pots, iron-plates etc.

Whatever be the case, Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma, in her own divine being, in her equally divine words, in her equally divine behaviour, manifested the great and grand and glorious truth that Ananda or Bliss or Joy or Happiness is everywhere — in every blade of grass, in every drop of water, in every molecule of atoms.

Hence, her exhilarating saying to her devotees :

"Beyond bodily pleasures, such as eating, sleeping, moving about and so on, lies joy Supreme. Do'nt you recite '*Brahmanandam Paramasukhadam*' — 'Absolute Bliss, Supreme Happiness'. He is Happiness Itself ; Happiness is His very essence. Earthly Happiness has its opposite — sorrow. But where happiness is in its essential form (Ananda-svarupa), unconditioned, there the opposites — joy and misery — find no place ; where solely '*Sva-Rasa*' is, there can be no question of '*Arasa*' (of the sense of dryness, of emptyness, of the anguish of God's absence). He is the Fountain of Joy — Joy and Joy alone is His Being. A state exists in which there is only Bliss, Beatitude, Supreme Felicity. At your level, joy has its opposites, you speak of joy of Heaven and of the torments of the hell. But where Eternal Bliss is, bliss in its own right cannot

be expressed, it is entirely beyond words there — what is? What is not? To speak means to float on the surface. What language can express that which is neither floating, nor diving deep.”

(As the Flower sheds Its Fragrance—Pp. 30-31)

This single, but singular quotation will go a long way to give us an inkling into Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma's exalting Philosophy of Life, which is nothing but the age-old Philosophy of the holy land of India in a modern, fitting form.

E.g., in our ancient and celebrated Taittiriya Upanisad, it has been gloriously said :

“Anandadhyeva Khalvimani Bhutani Jayante. Anandena Jatani Jivanti, Anandam Prayanti Abhisambisnatiti.” (Tait. Up. 3, 6.)

“All these beings are born from Bliss. When so born, they reside in Bliss. Finally, they return and enter into Bliss.”

But what prevents us from realising this great and good and glorious fact, is our own Avidya, Ajnana, Vasana-Kamana, Samkirnata, Svarthaparata — our own ignorance and blindness, our own lowly and worldly desires, our own narrowness and selfishness. But get rid of the same — then, will you not see “Ananda” or Bliss everywhere? Undoubtedly.

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi Ma's whole blissful divine life was dedicated for this one and only one purpose — to give bliss to all and show all the path to it. How supremely fortunate are all that she appeared before us even in this 20th Century, so full of sins and sorrows of all kinds, due to our own faults.

OM SANTI

Divine Manifesto

(II)

Sri Dibya Darshi

Deva Mission (Chander Nagore)

Aspire to know that
From which all these are born
They live by which
After they are born
Towards which they move
Into which they merge
Brahman is that
The supreme Truth of life.

(Tattiriya Upanisad Part 3.1.1)

The whole of our existence on the surface of the earth is but a manifestation of the Divine. In this regard the Upanishad of India represent the Divine Life which is consistant with advances of Science and Society. The question arises, is there any religion in the world which can stand the test of reason and rational investigation of modern man with knowledge of Science and Socialogy? Yes, Upanishads of India represent that Eternal Religion of mankind. The Divine Life as enshrined in the Upanishads stand the test of time and History. The voice of the Upanishad speaking through the ages of dim antiquity has come down to us through the corridor of time undimmed and full of vigour.

It is because the Upaniṣads preach the eternal religion (Sanātana Dharma) to mankind. The Upaniṣads are an impressive record vivid experiences of spiritual illumination in human life. Unless it is clear to us what is the significance of the term 'eternal religion' or Sanātana Dharma and its uniqueness, it is difficult to appreciate the picture of Divine Life that is enshrined in the Upaniṣads which are also called 'Srutis' or Vedanta. Particularly in this modern age where the progress of science and social knowledge of human history has far advanced; when man refuses to accept anything on the basis of authority only; when man has developed a habit of rational investigation in every aspect of human knowledge, it is quite natural that man may desire to apply the same test to spiritual understanding also. In this respect the Upaniṣads have a special message for the ears of enlightened humanity bewildered by the material progress of human civilisation.

The Upaniṣads are the only sacred books that occupy themselves exclusively with the discovery of essential spiritual truths and are leading man irrespective of creed and race to realization in his own life. Indian tradition refers to the Upaniṣads therefore as *Sruti* as contrasted with another class of religious literature known as *Smṛiti*, including the Dharma Sāstra to which it wisely left the work of forging social rules and regulations in the past, as it would leave it to the political constitutions and social sciences to day. To the category of *Smṛiti* also belong the sacred books of all the historical

religions which derive their origin and authority from a personal founder. Thus among India's sacred books, the Gitā. Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyana and all the Purānas are classed as Smṛtis, besides Manusmṛti, Yājñavalkya Smṛti and similar other books. Smṛtis come and go ; they change age after age, but Sruti according to the penetrating analysis of Sānkara contains Vastutantra Jnāna—'knowledge of tantra reality as it is, (Brahma Sutra 1.1.2) and as such it stands the test of time and history. Whereas Smṛti contains Purūṣatantra Jnāna (knowledge depending on the person)'—which can be modified or altered by human effort.

“कर्तुम् अकर्तुम् अन्यथाकर्तुम्”

(Kartum Akartum Anyathakartum)

A Smṛiti that sustained society in one age may choke it in another age. As socio-economic conditions change, laws and regulations need to be recast and re-interpreted. Otherwise they result in strangling the social organism. If the bark that protects the tree fails to grow and expand along with the growth of the tree it will choke the tree. A living tree will shed that bark and grow a new living bark for itself. Regarding all smṛtis Sri Ramakrishna's pithy utterance correctly conveys the Indian idea: “Mughal coins have no currency under (East India) Company rule.”

Much of the irrelevance of the world's religious traditions today proceeds from their inability to separate the Sruti or the essential from the Smṛiti or the obsolete contents, the eternal spiritual truth from the historical sociopolitical dogmas, due to

traditions and their unwillingness to throw overboard the latter which have no more any currency value under the changed conditions. Historian Arnold Toynbee in this respect has nicely put this point when he says : "Thus in our society in our time, the task of winnowing the chaff from the grain in mankind's religious heritage is being forced upon us by a conjunction of social and spiritual circumstances." (An Historian's Approach to Religion).

The philosophy and religion of the Upanisads in their inimitable way point to humanity that 'Eternal Religion'—anātana Dharma. The Divine Life based on the spiritual illumination as revealed in the Upanisads derives its authority from its truth, character and not from any person, be he a saint or even an incarnation ; and the truth character of a teaching demands that it be verifiable by all at all times, irrespective of dogma, creed, race. It has a high place for saints and incarnations as examples and teachers of the eternal truths of religion.

Throwing light on this unique characteristic of the eternal religion (Sanātana Dharma) as derived from the Upanisads, Swami Vivekananda says in his lecture on 'The Sages of India.'

"This is a peculiarity which we have to understand—that our religion of the Upanisads preaches an Impersonal—Personal God. It preaches any amount of impersonal laws plus any amount of personality : but the very fountainhead of our religion is in the Upanisads which are perfectly impersonal. Persons all come in the Smritis and Purānas...the great avatāras, incarnations of God, prophets and so

forth. ...Our religion is not based on any *person* but on *principles*. That you obey your religion is not because it came through the authority of a sage, no, not even of "Incarnation" but because it speaks of the eternal principle of spiritual truth. ...Just as the law of gravitation existed before its discovery and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so is it with the laws that govern the spiritual world."

Upanisads speak of the Divine life based on spiritual truth of perennial character...they speak of the eternal religion. Here in lies the distinctive feature of the upanisadic message to modern man in quest of a soul in circumstances radically altered by the progress of science and society.

(To be continued)

**Scheduled functions between the months of
July and October 1986 :**

1. Guru Purnima—4th of Sraban—Monday—21st of July.
 2. Jhulan Purnima—2nd of Bhadra—Tuesday—19th of August.
 3. Janmastami—10th of Bhadra—Wednesday—27th of August.
 4. Durgapuja—23rd to 25th of Aswin—10th, 11th & 12th of October.
 5. Laksmi Puja—30th of Aswin—Friday—17th of October.
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The Temples of South India

R. K. Banerjee

For some years now my wife and I had often made plans for setting out on pilgrimage to the more famous Southern Indian Temples that we had read or heard of, without being able to bring any plan to successful fruition. In the meantime our appetite had been whetted by two brief visits, once on my part while on tour, to the Meenakshi Temple at Madurai, and a hurried combined visit by both of us, together with an old colleague from Madras and his family, to the famous Tiurpathi Temple in the Winter of 1955/56.

The December/January season in Calcutta is always the best part of the year, and at that time we are usually inundated by visitors and invitations. Nevertheless we eventually made up our minds during the cold weather of 1963/64 to forego these pleasures for this once for a trip to the south.

In this connection it must be appreciated that the coastal regions of Madras and Kerala States normally possess a delightfully cool climate, free from cyclones or rainfall, *only* during a very limited period during this time of the year, so we deliberately chose the first three weeks of January for our planned tour.

As visits to temples had perforce to be interspersed with spells of duty at places where I had

business interests, and as the tour also entailed a visit to the highlands, and was finally to culminate in one of the longest train journeys known in India, by the Grand Trunk Express from Madras to Delhi in the month of January, we had to take both light and heavy clothing in our baggage. The journey started by train from Calcutta to Madras on the 25th of December, 1963.

A friend who came to see us off at Howrah Station presented me with a beautifully bound volume just before the train left. This book was none other than the "Narayaneem" by the Kerala Bhagavad Narayana Bhattathiripad, giving a devoted account of his long stay at the temple of Guruvayur in Northern Kerala, with a moving commentary in English by P. N. Menon.

Reading this inspiring book throughout the leisure of air-conditioned travel, I was fired by a resolve to visit Guruvayur although it had not been included in our original itinerary, and we did do so in due course to our extreme benefit and satisfaction.

After completing some official business in Bangalore and Madras, where we saw the New Year in, we eventually left Madras by road on the morning of the 1st January in delightful weather, braced by the prospect of sixteen days of strenuous touring in front of us.

The journey from Madras to Tiruchirapalli—a distance of nearly 240 miles—is too long to be done in comfort between meals, so arrangements had been made for us to have a break for lunch at Villapuram, approximately half way.

About 12 miles from Villapuram we acted on the spur of the moment, and decided to make a diversion to the hills to the left of the main road, the first of many such last minute changes of plans, without which a holiday of this type is never truly complete.

This diversion proved to be very enjoyable, because it gave us an insight into the deep veneration in which the God Subramaniam is held in the south. In the north He is better known as Kartiek, and in the temple in question at Mailam, He is also known as Murugesh.

My wife, son and myself were charmed by the innate simplicity of the Priests in charge of the temple and, by the deep veneration and respect with which they carried out rituals of worship handed down from one generation to another for perhaps one thousand years.

By chance we had hit upon a time honoured custom in southern India whereby Subramaniam is given priority of place when setting out on pilgrimages, in the same way as Ganesh is treated in the north and west of India.

The Temple is situated on top of a hill, which is nearly 500' high, and a well constructed motor road leads right up to the paved Courtyard before the bottom of the temple steps, so that there is no discomfort to the traveller.

The Mailam Temple is one of the most famous dedicated to Subramaniam, and is often visited by top ranking personalities in their journeys south of Madras.

We arrived at Tiruchy at about 5.15 p.m., in good time for a refreshing cup of tea at the State Guest House, which has recently been constructed in the outskirts of the city, and where our accommodation had been booked for three nights. We found this place very well fitted out, with utility but comfortable furniture, and running hot and cold water in the bathroom. The food provided by the admirable Chef was according to taste, Indian or European, Vegetarian or non-Vegetarian.

Trichinopoly, or as it is now called—Tiruchirappalli—is a historic town strategically situated on political, military, cultural and religious considerations. The name hails its descent from Trisiras mentioned in the Ramayana as the three-head demon cousin of Ravana, king of Ceylon, and he is said to have worshipped Shiva here in legendary days. Historical references hail from sixth century inscriptions onwards.

The town is an admirable blend of the two main Hindu religious cults found in the south, viz. the cult of the Shaivas worshipping Shiva, and that of the Vaisnavas, worshipping Vishnu.

The place comprises the island town of Sri Rangan, Sri meaning beautiful and Arangan, the land lying between two rivers, that is, the Cauvery and the Coleroon.

Outside the island at the northern entrance of the town stands is a permanent landmark the 273 high rock containing the Rock Fort Temple dedicated to Shiva and Ganesha.

In the island itself stand two of the most beautiful temples in southern India, the Jambukeshwar Temple dedicated to Shiva, and the Sri Rangam Temple dedicated to Ranganathan, or Vishnu, in the Ananta Sayanam pose.

On the morning of the 2nd January, we paid a visit to the Temples of Jambukeshwar and Sri Rangam.

The temple of Jambukeshwar constitutes one of the five famous Shiva temples of South India, each being associated with one of the five elements, in this case "water".

The origin of the temple is shrouded in dim mythology, according to which Shree Akilandeswari Devi—an incarnation of the Goddess Parvati—the consort of Shiva—is supposed to have worshipped the Lord here under a Jumbu tree, or Nawal tree, situated near an eternal spring originating from the Cauvery waters.

Shree Akilandeswari was helped in her daily worship by an Elephant, which sprinkled water on the Shivalingam, and a Spider which wove a net over the lingam to keep off fallen leaves from the Jumbu tree, which still exists today. This relationship of the Elephant and the Spider with Shiva is not confined to the great Jambukeshwar Temple alone, but is repeated in the famous temple of Kalahasti in Andhra which we were destined to see later.

The image of the Goddess has been carved with great charm and reverence.

The present temple owes its origin to King Sangannam of the Chola dynasty, who was

supposed to be a re-incarnation of the devout spider mentioned above, and historical references to the temple are found in writings of famous Tamil bards from the sixth and seventh century onwards.

It is known that Sri Adi Sankarcharya worshipped at this temple in his time. He then donated the oldest known jewel of the temple—a pair of earrings—to the Goddess Akilandeswari.

The vast temple has five enclosures and seven Goupurams, a mantapam with 800 pillars! The outer enclosure is 2500' in length, 1500' in width, and 35' in height, the rampart walls being 6' thick. Water gushes out from the eternal spring permanently, worshipping the Shivalingam in such profusion, that it has to be pumped out daily with an electric pump to an outside well to be drained back to the river.

Of all the Vishnu Temples of southern India—the Sri Rangam Temple at Tiruchirapalli—is perhaps the most important and famous. Its glory has been sung from time to time by most of the 108 Alwars—Vaishnav Saints of southern India.

The origin of this temple is also shrouded in the mythology of the epic Ramayana. After the conquest of Ceylon, Rama entrusted Vibhisana—the brother of Ravana—with the mission of transporting Sri Rangam to Ceylon. During his journey the deity was placed by mistake on the ground on the island of Sri Rangam, and could not be moved therefrom, so that a shrine was built on the spot for future worship.

During the Mahommedan invasion of Tiruchripatti in the fourteenth century, the deity was moved by the priests to Tirupathy, but was brought back to Tiruchy under the instructions of the then Vijay Nagar Kings, and reinstalled after a consecration ceremony in the year 1371/72.

There are seven inner circles of the temple, and the top of the sanctum-sanctorum is covered with gold plating. Architecturally, the temple of Sri Ranganam is amongst the greatest temples of southern India, and contains amongst others, the 1000 pillared Mantopam, the Horse Court, Garuda Mantopam, Ranga Vilasa, the Vasantha Mandapam, and a room full of mirrors.

In one of the outer Courtyards a Pandal and a dais had been erected, and a religious session had been in progress for several days, presided over by eminent men of repute. I was introduced to some of them by our friends who were acting as our guides.

The incident was the first glimpse we had of the high esteem in which religious culture is held throughout the length and breadth of southern India.

The south Tamil saints have composed immortal poems in singing the praise of the Lord Ranganathan in the lying posture. Among the saints intimately connected with the temple, can be named Sri Andal, the maiden who made a vow that she would marry the Lord Ranganathan, and none else, and Tiruppan the Harijan, who was carried on the shoulders of the Brahmin priests in accordance with the Lord's request to his very presence.

The inscriptions on the temple range from the ninth to the sixteenth century, and belong to the Chola, Chera, Pandya, Hoswala and Vijay Nagar dynasties.

Our visit fortunately coincided with the tail end of the festival of Margali, and so we did see something of the famous celebrations held at this time.

Worshipping in the temple has been codified by the great southern Indian Vaishnav Saint Ramanujan, whose tomb lies just outside the main temple precincts, and who spent the last years of his life at Sri Rangam.

On the evening of the same day we timed our visit to the great Rock Fort Temple, so that we would be just in time to see sunset, and the magnificent views of the surrounding countryside from the top before darkness fell.

The base of the hill is covered with an extensive temple market in which antiques, consisting of old offerings by devotees, as well as modern utensils, can be picked up at economic prices by those who are willing to spend the necessary time.

The Rock Fort Temple, called sometimes the Kailas of the South, is carved out of solid rock, which is ascended by various flights of steps, totalling 417. It was probably built by King Mahendravarman of the Pallava dynasty in the sixth century. At different levels, different Courtyards have been roofed over, and these provide welcome breaks to the visitor while ascending. Our guide in this respect was a very experienced old person who knew to a nicety the limits of our endurance,

and beguiled our laborious journey upwards with a fund of topical stories.

Our entrance to the temple was greeted by the trumpeting of the temple Elephant who stood to attention with raised trunk amidst a fanfare of turmpets. We were garlanded, and my wife and son were asked to give a coin each to the Elephant who immediately returned the coin to his Mahout, and brought his trunk down very gently on top of their heads as a blessing.

This feat would appear to be unequalled in the most regulated of Zoos or Circuses !

In one of the floors in which the first flight of steps ended, there was a huge canopied hall on pillars in which a large gathering was present listening spellbound to a Thyagiraj recital.

We were told that the annual festival in memory of the famous southern Indian bard was in the course of being celebrated, and we were only too pleased to get our breath back by spending some time listening to very high class music, before starting the ascent again.

The view from the open courtyard situated at the bottom of the last flight of steps to the Ganesha Temple was indeed magnificent, and it was only left to the most venturesome to climb the last flight to the extreme top, where a beautiful full size statue of Vinayaka or Ganesh is installed. He is one of the presiding deities of Tiruchirapalli, and the history of his worship here is intimately connected with the episode of Vibhisana and Sree Ranganam, mentioned earlier.

The Shivalingam is installed below the Ganesha temple, on a spur of the hill so that the dome is the highest point on that perspective, and is easily the largest lingam we have ever seen.

It was magnificently decorated for the occasion, and looked even larger because of the weight of shining metal superimposed on it.

The name of the God Shiva here is Matrubhuteshwar, which is derived from a charming episode in which the God is said to have appeared as an old lady to attend a girl devotee, Ratnavathi by name, at the time of her confinement when she was left segregated due to the flooding of the river during which He ministered unto her, even as her own Mother.

The story is depicted in eleven fine murals on walls of the courtyard immediately above the hall where we heard the Thyagiraj music.

Next door there is a palatial shrine for Parbati—Shiva's consort—and here worshipping was in progress by a number of well dressed ladies at the time of our visit.

The rock with the temples of Shiva and Ganesh serve as a landmark for the whole of the Tiruchirappalli countryside, and at night the lights of the shrines shine far and wide, to be visible from immense distances, rather like the Chamunda hill of Mysore.

According to the words of the late Sarojini Devi, "the spirit of the Lord Matrubhuteshwar broods over the place, and keeps all evil influences far far away".

We went back to the Guest House that evening fairly tired, but imbued with deep and abiding respect for those immortal mortals who had carved out such immense monuments at such inaccessible places in order to worship God in their sublime Faith, for all Eternity.

During the Mahomedan period, and even the period following it, the Temple Courtyards and inner enclosures had been used more than once as a Fort to harbour violent armies and desperate prisoners, but this had failed to leave the slightest mark behind, and today Shiva, Parvati and Ganesha are worshipped with as great a reverence and respect as was done centuries ago, before, invading armies sought to defile their holiness.

The next morning, that is, the 3rd January, we left for Tanjore after Breakfast in order to visit the great Shiva Temple there.

The temple was built by the most illustrious of the Chola Kings of Tanjore, namely Rajaraja I, Circa 985, using the best architectural techniques known to the Chola Dynasties of Tanjore, which flourished from the ninth to the twelfth century.

In 1010 a gold covered Finial was planted on the top of the Vimana of the temple.

There are a number of exquisite statues of Gods and Goddesses in the galleries and the halls, including those of Nataraja, Tripurantaka, Ganesha, etc.

The granite stone used in the construction of the temple is not to be found locally.

The plinth of the central shrine is 150' square, and the vimana is 200' high. There are full sized

statues of Dwar Palas at each of the four entrances.

The inner courtyard of the temple is 500' × 250', and a huge monolithic Nandi in granite commands the front courtyard.

The Shivalingam in the main temple is quite large, and thereby derives the name of Brihadishwara (the Huge One). It is more than 12' high.

There are separate temples in the courtyard for Devi and Subramanya, which must have been erected subsequently.

The temple is now in the hands of the Government Archaeological Department.

Due to archaeological work being carried out continuously round the inner walls of the sanctum, ritual worshipping has been reduced to the minimum, and we were allowed to go up to the top of the temple, and walk along the higher corridors around the sanctum where by chemical means murals are being renovated.

The temple of Devi within the main enclosure is a separate building as mentioned before, and here worshipping is carried out with more religious significance.

Our friends had made arrangements for a member of the Government Archaeological Department to take us round the temple, and we were amply compensated by the extreme trouble he took in explaining the finer details of architecture throughout our tour.

After Lunch at the State Guest House in Tanjore, which was again a typical example of the amount of care lavished by the Madras State Government

on tourism, we wended our way back in comfort in the coolth of the evening via the Grand Anicut, which is a magnificent engineering feat started by Tirumala Nayak and finished by the British, thus dividing the Cauvery a few miles out of Tiruchirappalli into five rivers, the waters of which are used to irrigate the Tanjore countryside, and thereby convert it into the granary of Madras.

Either on the way to Trichinopoly, or from Tanjore, we could have made a diversion to Kumbhakonam, which is a city in Madras State with the largest number of temples possibly in the whole of India. But as we had only very limited time at our disposal, and as we could not think of giving priority to any particular temple in the city, we perforce had to cut Kumbhakonam out of our itinerary.

On the 4th morning we left for Madurai after an early breakfast by road.

The journey was very interesting, once when we passed Tipu's famous Fort at Dindigul—we broke journey here to visit some business associates—and again when we passed under the foothills of the Kodaikanal range near Kodaikanal road station where we saw the countryside dotted with vineyards and vegetable farms, looking really luscious and green.

We entered Madurai by the famous bridge over the river Vaigai on the 4th in good time for a late Lunch.

Our accommodation at Madurai had been fixed at the T.V.S. Guest House, thanks to the extreme

kindness and hospitality shown by the Management of that Company.

As we had left the evening free, our guide had made arrangements to take us in the coolth of the evening to the famous temple of Alagarkoil, about 13 miles from Madurai, and about 900' up the 3000' high Algar hills, on the summit of which there is a holy spring, with waters that are well known for curative powers. The mountain stream is called Nupra Ganga, after the silver ornaments worn on the feet of the Lord Vishnu.

The origin of the temple goes back to the time of the epics, and is mentioned by Shri Periyalwar in 3055 B.C. in his poems.

The temple of Alagarkoil is dedicated to Vishnu, and is enclosed by the magnificent ramparts of two forts, obviously to keep off marauders in the various ages of the dim and distant past. The original fortifications are attributed to King Malayadhwaja, who is mentioned in Mythology. The whole temple occupies 100 acres.

Later, the Pandya Kings reconstructed the temple, and later still Thirumala Nayak and his Queen worshipped here regularly.

The great dome over the sanctum-sanctorum is accredited to the work of Vishvakarma himself, and is built in the shape of a golden half moon, whereby it derives its name of Somchanda Vimanam.

The temple surroundings, and the form of worship reminded us of the Jagannath Temple at Puri, the main difference being that the image of the Lord Vishnu here stands over 7' high, and is cast in

magnificent proportions. He is shown holding the Chakra in the 'Prayoga' form, which is quite exceptional.

We were privileged that evening to take part in a procession ceremony during which the Utsava idol of the God was taken out from the 'holy of holies' amidst a fanfare of trumpets and chantings of hymns, and brought back for the night. This idol is called Sri Sundararaja, and is exquisitely proportioned in solid gold.

The areas of this hillside, as well as its waters have remarkable curative properties, and pilgrims come and stay here to get well of their afflictions.

Up till now we had been allowed to wear normal dress in visiting Temples, except to go barefooted, but from here onwards my son and I were obliged to wear orthodox dress, that is, dhoties with nothing but a Chudder above the waist, but the reverence with which we were allowed to worship inside the sanctum-sanctorum on each occasion was well worth the change in garments involved.

Madurai is the traditional home of Tamil culture, being over 2500 years old. Written history dates from the Pandya Kings of the sixth century B. C. Just as Madurai on the banks of the Vaigai is the centre of Mythology concerning Shiva and Minakshi, one is reminded of the other Mathura situated similarly on the banks of the Jamuna, which was mythologically the scene of the loves of Krishna and Radha.

The temple of Minakshi — an incarnation of the Goddess Parvati—is believed to have originated

from the Pandiyan times, and we visited the temple on the 5th morning.

The Mahommedans invaded the temple in the 14th century, and during these disturbances extensive damages were caused, but the temple was more or less rebuilt as it now stands during the Nayak dynasty after 1559, and flourished at the height of its splendours under Tirmula Nayak, the greatest of the Nayak Kings, who ruled from 1623-1659, and has left behind him in addition a magnificent Palace, the ruins of which even now give a glimpse of his glorious past.

The temple covers an area of 830' × 730', and has recently been renovated thoroughly in colour, whereby the mythological legends that are depicted on the walls and, the Gopurams, have been brilliantly brought out by the most famous artisans of modern S. India.

After the redecoration was completed, a most elaborate Kumbhabhisekham was celebrated at the temple in 1963 in front of several important local and foreign dignitaries.

The image of the Goddess is very beautiful indeed, and great care is lavished on her daily worship.

Shivo, her consort here, is known as the Lord Sundereswar, and the story of their wedding is depicted all around the walls and Gopurams of the temple.

The southern Goporam is the highest and rises to a height of 170'. There is a perennial lotus tank inside the temple, its origin being cloaked in hoary mythology.

Many of the sculptures and statues of Shiva and mythological Gods and Goddesses which abound in the courtyards are veritable masterpieces of Indian craftsmanship, particularly those contained in the 1000 pillared mantapam.

Special mention must be made of a very large tank called the Teppukulam, built by the great builder Tirumala Nayak, as a cool retreat in summer. It is almost square, each side being 1000' long.

We were fortunate in being given a first class birdseye view of the more famous Minakshi jewels, and the item that still remains vivid in my memory is the pair of jem studded stirrups in gold, donated by the famous Rous-Peter—Collector of Madurai from 1812-1828, who also presented several valuable jewels to the temple of Algarkoil.

There is a very interesting story concerning the presentation of this gift by the Collector. It is said that he was a famous Shikari on horseback and once got hopelessly lost in the forests around the city, but was rescued by the Goddess Minakshi in the form of a virgin maiden, who disappeared as soon as he was back on the road to civilisation; and in grateful memory the Collector donated the pair of stirrups he was wearing that day, studded with suitable jewels, and covered with gold.

On the morning of the 6th we left Madurai for Rameswaram as early as possible after Breakfast, carrying our Lunch with us.

The motor journey to the Railway Station of Mandapam took nearly three hours, and on the way while passing Ramnad we stopped for a few minutes

to look at the Palace of the Rajas of Ramnad, who are the hereditary rules of the islands comprising Rameswaram and Dhanushkhodi. From Mandapam we entered a train which passes over the picturesque straits dividing the main land from the island.

The scenery on both sides of the railway here is magnificent, but our destination being Rameswaram in the first instance, we had to change at Pamban, as the main line goes on to Dhanushkhodi.

We ate our picnic lunch as soon as the train left Pamban, and arrived at Rameswaram in $\frac{2}{3}$ of an hour. Here we were met by the Temple authorities, and were very agreeably surprised to see that we had been accommodated not in the Railway Rest House, but in the Raja of Ramnad's private Guest House, which is just opposite the Temple, and very comfortably furnished.

The atmosphere of this place has been sanctified by the long stay of Swami Vivekananda during his intimate sojourns with the then Raja of Ramnad, who was chiefly instrumental in sending Swamiji to America. In fact, on the entrance to the house is inscribed in marble Swami Vivekananda's famous edict on rules and regulations to be observed when visiting places of pilgrimage, such as Rameshwaram.

Rameshwaram contains one of the twelve great Shiva temples of India, and its sacredness and priority in importance among pilgrimages is second to none throughout the length and breadth of the land.

The origin of the temple dates back to the Ramayana, as Rama is said to have worshipped Shiva on this spot with Sita, when coming back to India after defeating the army of Ravana and killing him in Ceylon.

The legend goes on to say that Rama was instructed by his family Priest Vasistha to worship Shiva here in penance for having taken innumerable lives in battle, and since he could not find a Sivalingam on the sandy shores, he instructed Hanuman to fetch a Sivalingam from the Narmada Valley.

The time of worship was fixed in advance, and as Hanuman had not returned by then, Rama instructed Sita to build a Sivalingam out of sand and commence worship only a few minutes before Hanuman arrived with the actual Lingam.

Today both the Lingams stand side by side, and although the original sand Lingam is the main deity of Rameswaram, the Lingam brought by Hanuman is also worshipped with great reverence.

At arati time the lamp used for worshipping Hanuman's Lingam is taken round the whole of the temple, and Arati of Hanuman himself is performed with the lamp in front of his image at the southern entrance.

There is a separate temple dedicated to the Goddess Parvati to the left of the main sanctum sanctorum, and here also worshipping is carried out with great reverence.

The highest tower is the eastern tower which stands at a height of 126'. The famous rectangular corridors of the Rameswaram Temple are 17' wide

with 5' high colonades, composing a rectangle 649' long and 395' wide, so that nearly 2100' are traversed when making a single circuit inside the temple.

The sanctum sanctorum of Sri Rameswaram is built out of Ceylon stone.

The origin of the temple, as it now stands, is credited to King Parakramabahu of Ceylon in 1173 A.D. The inner shrines are of early Pandyan architecture, and the whole temple is a typical example of the Dravidian style. Additions were made to the temple from time to time in the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th, and even in the 20th century.

There are 22 holy wells inside the temple precincts whose waters are considered to have potent and curative properties.

The temple authorities had made every arrangement for our worshipping that evening and the next morning.

We bathed in the sea off the shores near the temple in the evening, and had a comfortable night's rest at the Guest House. We were fortunate in catching a glimpse of the start of a procession which emerged from the temple the next morning at 7 a.m., and which we were told only takes place once a year.

We were sorry to leave Rameswaram in haste after an early Breakfast on the 7th, again carrying our lunch with us.

(To be continued)

Ashram News

I. Kankhal.

On the occasion of last Kumbha Mela, Asramites of Ma Anandamayee Asram joined Maha Nirvani Akhara on 1.3.86 in inaugurating the great Kumbha. The first bath was on 9.4.86 on Sivaratri day and the 3rd and main bath fell on 14.4.86—the last day of the Bengali Month—April. On those two days all the Asramites—monks Brahmachari and brahmacharinis joined in a big procession with Niranjani and Nirvani Akharas respectively and took bath in the Brahma Kunda at Har-Ke-Pyari. A large photograph of Ma installed in a silver throne followed the processions throughout the route—all singing kirtans. The Asram authorities arranged “bhandaras” on four different dates during the occasion when the sadhus, Maha-mandaleswars of all the four Akharas viz. Udashin, Juna, Niranjani & Nirvani were fed sumptuously in turn and a cloth and Dakshina was distributed to each of them. Nearly 500 devotees from far and near arrived in the Asram for bathing in the Kumbha.

On the 14th of April, special puja, kirtan and bhandaras for the Sadhus were arranged to celebrate the sannyas utsab of 1008 Swami Muktananda Giri Maharaj. Ma's birthday function was duly celebrated too, between 2nd of May and 26th of May—the day of HER “Tithi-Puja”. Throughout this period, japa, meditations, religious discourses by the reputed Mahatmas and reading of 100 Chandis were arranged. During the last week of this

celebration period, Puja of 108 "Kumaries" and 11 batuks were arranged as usual. By the full moon day, Namkirtan was sung throughout the night by the lady devotees. Reputed Mahatmas like Swami Vidyanandaji, Swami Ganeshanandaji, Swami Amarmuniji paid their eloquent tributes to Ma.

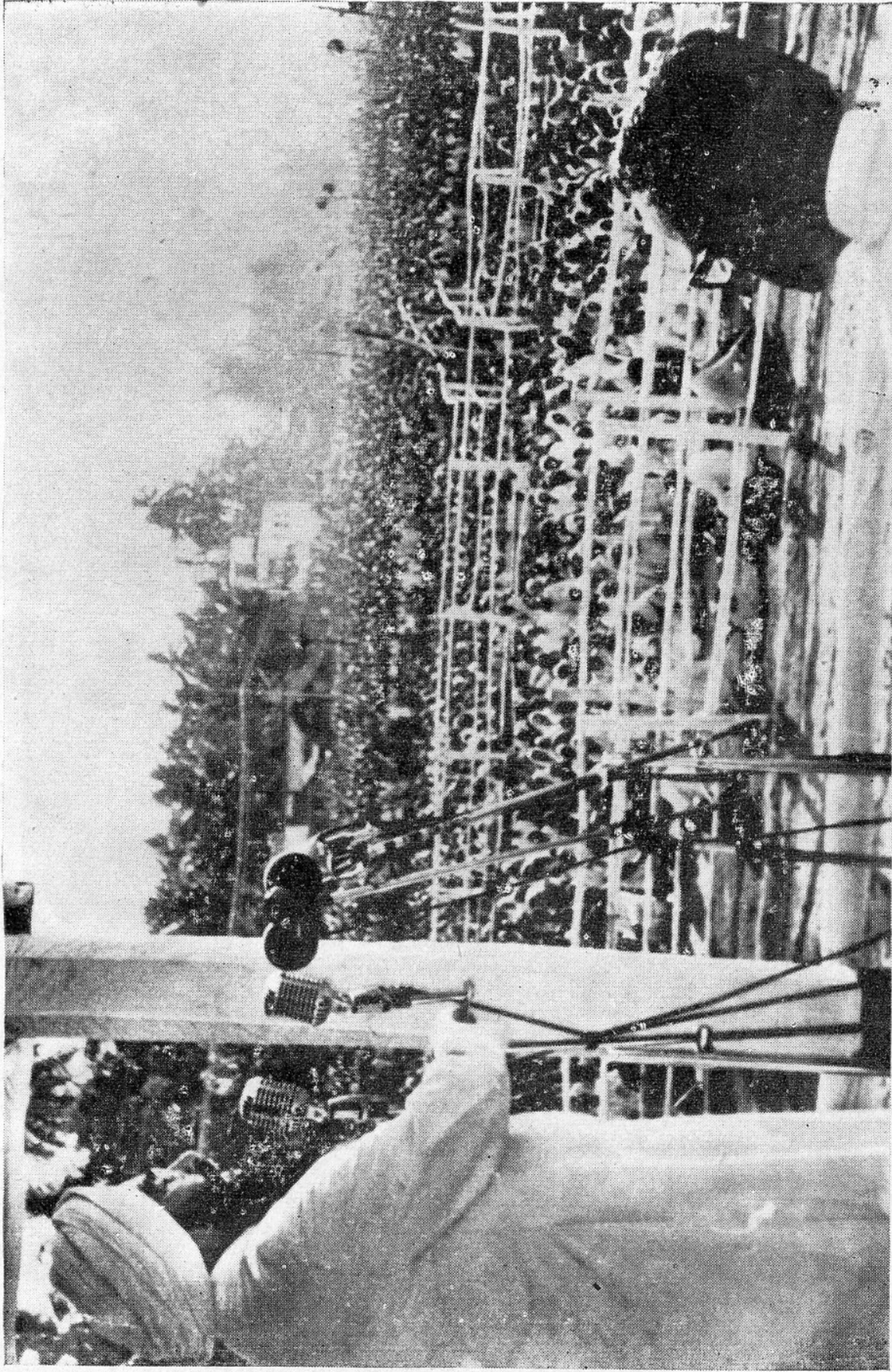
Bholanathji's birthday was also celebrated this year during the period with Puja, Kirtan, Arati and Bhandaras for the Sadhus.

On May 26—the auspicious Krishna Chaturthi tithi, Ma's tithi-puja was performed with great enthusiasm through special puja, Kumari Puja, Chanting of Vedas etc as usual. A large number of devotees from various parts of the country had assembled to participate in the celebration which concluded with the performance of "Yagna".

2. Varanasi

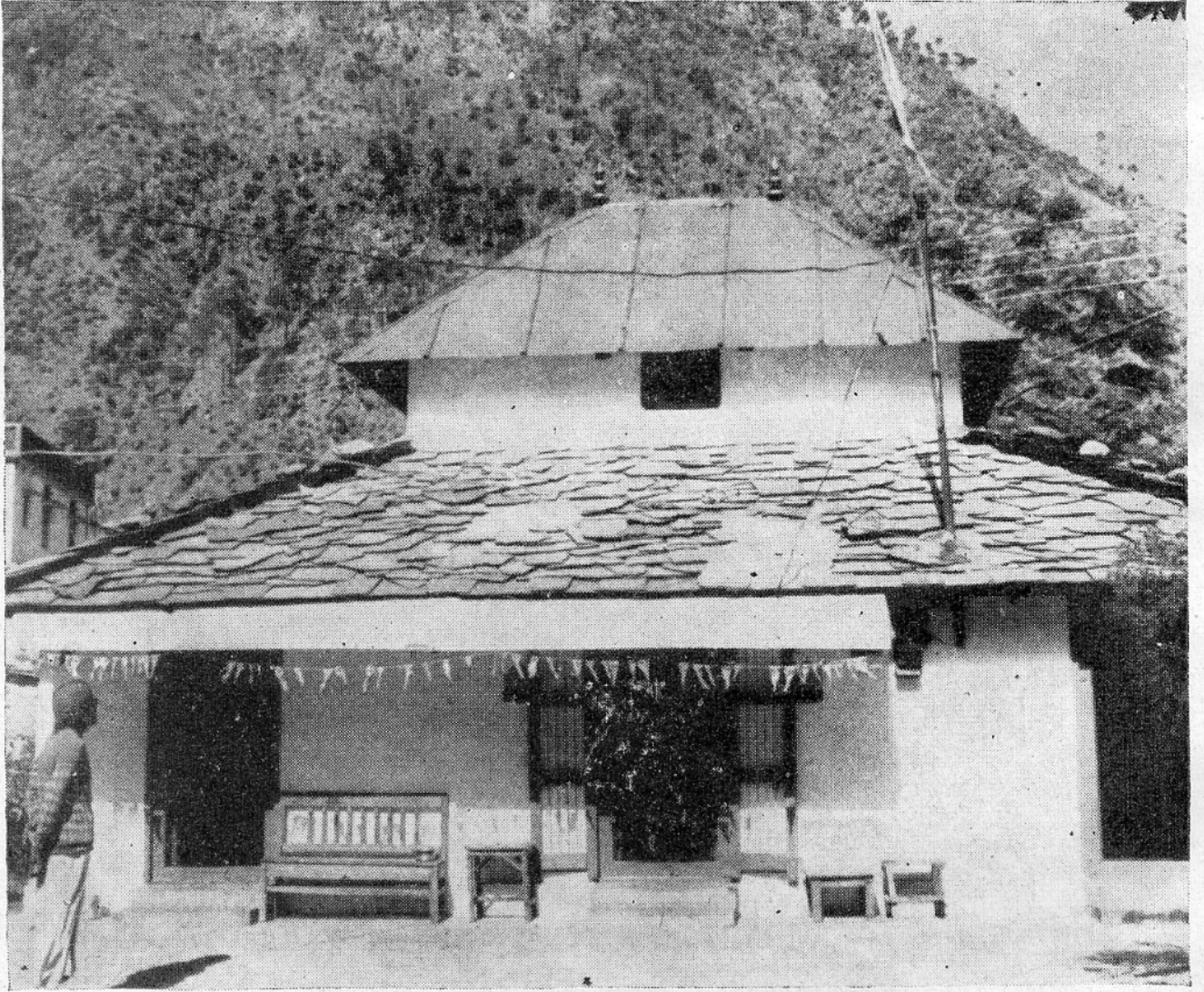
The Annual Basanti Puja was celebrated in the Ashram with equal pomp as in previous years. On the Maha-astami and Maha nabami, pujas of Shree Shree Annapurna and Shree Shree Ramchandra Jayanti were performed respectively with all serenity. This year—by Ma's Kheyal, Sm. Malati Vargava, Dada and other artists unexpectedly arrived from Bareilly and arranged "Ram Charita Manas Parayana" in a unique way. Many local devotees turned up to participate in the function.

Ma's birthday was duly celebrated in the ashram from 2nd May to 26th May through special puja, arati, kirtan, sadhu bhandara, cultural functions and feeding of the devotees.



Sri Jail Singh—President of India inaugurating the 500th birthday celebration of Shree Shree Mahaprabhu in a mammoth gathering of over two lakhs of people at Puri on 9.2.86. The function was organized by Ma Anandamayee Ashram there. In the picture is also seen

Sri K. Ram Murthi—the Vice-Charcellor.



The front view of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram at Uttar Kashi which celebrated its Golden Jubilee last year. The famous temple of Goddess Kali is located inside the building.

Shree Gopalji was shifted in the room of Ma upstairs for painting and colour-wasing of the temple and after the work was completed, the deity was brought back again to Gopal Mandir on the auspicious Akshaya-Tritia day when the resident asramites and brahmacharinis installed Gopalji in his Sandal Wood throne and offered painted earthen jars filled with Ganges water to the deity.

3. Delhi

Ma's birthday celebration was observed with all solemnity by offering special puja and through Kirtan and feeding of the devotees. On the day of the Tithi Puja on 26.5.86, it started raining in torrents since evening but defying this natural hurdle, many devotees turned up—some in their wet clothes to participate in the function.

4. Dehra-Dun

In Kishenpur Asram, local devotees for many years regularly hold "Akhand Ramayana" on the second Saturday and Sunday of every month.

This year "Ram-Navami" was celebrated in the temple of Lord Rama in Kalyanvan in the Bengali month of Baisakh.

Special puja was performed in the mid-day on the occasion of birthday of Lord Ramchandra when about 250 devotees were entertained with lunch. On the birthday of Ma on 2.5.86, the asram authorities arranged special puja, arati and devotional songs and on Akshaya Tritia day which happened to be the day when Ma's statue was

installed in Kishenpur, some 50 devotees had arrived on 10.5.86 from Delhi in a special bus and sang kirtan nextday—both in Raipur and Kalyanvani Asrams. At night they started Namyagna for 24 hours in Kishenpur Asram by holding “Adhivas” in the evening. About 500 devotees who assembled were entertained in lunch.

On 26th of May “tithi puja” was performed with usual Yagna, Sadhu Bhandara, Kumari puja and general feeding of the devotees and the poor.

5 Puri

Ma's birthday celebrations at Swargadwar Ashram was performed with great pomp and gaiety. In front of Ma's large photo placed in a large decorated pandal erected on the occasion came his excellency Sri Biswambhar Nath Panday—Governor of Orissa, Srimati Jayanti Patnayak, Gajapati Maharaja, Sri Dibyasingh Deb of Puri, Director General of Police, Sri M. S. Padhi—Vice Chancellor, Sri K. Rammurthi, Major B. K. Mahanti, Pandit Sadasib Rathsarma and other renowned people—amongst others. Amidst blowing of Conchshells and chanting of the Vedas the function was formally inaugurated by the honourable Sebait of lord Jagannath in the person of Gajapati Maharaja of Puri himself. The speeches delivered on the occasion by the distinguished guests were all very heart-rendering. Governor Sri B. N. Panday who had the privilege of coming in contact on many occasions with Sri Sri Ma, narrated his many experiences which moved the audience. At the end of the function,

all assembled were entertained with Maha-prasad of lord Jagannath—Dr. Jaydeb Mukhopadhyaya the Secretary of the Ashram and the Chief-Organisor of the celebration was all attention to the guests.

On the evening of 27th of May, at the conclusion of Ma's birthday celebrations—Doctor Sudhir Brahmachari—the incharge of Deb-Sangha of Baidyanathdham participated. It was he who performed the evening arati of Ma. D.M, A.D.M, S.P. of Puri—amongst others were entertained with Ma's prasad and Maha prasad.

6. Ranchi

On the 26th of May—the tithi-puja day of Sri Sri Ma, the entire Ashram Campus reverbated with devotional songs and chanting of Ma's name. Special puja, Arati and offerings of bhoga were all performed with devotion. Hundreds of devotees of Ranchi who turned up on the occassion were all fed with Ma's prasad. At the start of the birthday celebration a small playlet called "Matri-vani" composed by Sri Sisir Mukhopadhyaya was staged in the Ashram premises by Sri Satyen Chakrabarty, Srimati Kanika Chakrabarty and their students.

In ranchi Asram Kirtans and reading of Geeta are regularly arranged on every second and third Sundays in the month.

7. Agarpara—The 91st Brithday Celebrations of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee.

As in previous years the above function was observed in the Asram also this year for two days

on the 26th and 27th of May. With the active participation of the Ashram management staff and devotees of the Ashram, the celebrations took place with great-enthusiasm pomp and serenity. From the morning of May 26, devotees in batches from far and near areas started arriving and the entire ashram premises became all gay in no time. By the evening the whole campus was surcharged with Dhoom Kirtan, and devotional Songs. Sri Sukumar Bandopadhyaya and party staged beautiful Kirtan between 9 p.m. and 11 p.m. and a very large number of devotees were entertained with Ma's prasad. By the courtesy of Sri Sailendra Nath Ghosh—a Video Cassette on Ma was exhibited before the devotees from 11 p.m.

In the spacious hall in front of Ma's mandir three distinguished brahmins offered special puja to Sri Ma and recited Shree Shree Chandi from 3 A.M. till day-down. At least 500 devotees had assembled on the occasion. On the 27th morning Kumari pujas were performed and Nemaï Bharati and party staged their Kirtan which was much enjoyed by the assembled. In the mid-day, over 2500 devotees who were present were all entertained with a sumptuous lunch in a very disciplined and orderly way. The function was a great success and unique because of the sincere and active participation of many workers and devotees under the able and compassionate guidance of Swami Chinmoyananda Giri Maharaj and his able team.

Obituary

Sasadhar Bhattacharya

Sasadhar Bhattacharya, a nephew of the well-known Philanthropist Mahesh Bhattacharya, was a very old devotee of Ma in Calcutta. He had the good fortune of living in Ekdalia when the first Ashram in Calcutta was established near by in the late thirties.

So naturally, Sasadharda acted in the capacity of Secretary there for same time, and became very much associated with Ashram activities and Ma's visits to Calcutta.

Sasadharda took an active interest in Agarpara Ashram since its inception in 1958. During the last few years his health deteriorated rapidly, and in spite of his wife Arunadi's constant and unfailing attention, His condition gradually became worse, until he passed away on the evening of Akshay Tritiya, the 12th. May, when Hari Bol was being sung at Sm. Chhabi Banerjee's Nam Yagna at its conclusion. Sasadharda was 77 years of age at the time. Sasadharda will be remembered most for his tremendous effort in bringing Ma to Jodhpur Park and staging the very successful Bhagavat Saptaha there, during which Ma lived in the newly constructed Matri Mandir in Prativa Kundus house.

It is hoped that Ma has relieved him of all the pain and suffering which he had to undergo as his "Prarabdha" during the last few years, and that his soul is now resting in eternal peace at Ma's lotus feet. We offer our heartfelt condolences to his bereaved widow Arunadi, who has been a great Ashram worker on her own for the past several years.
