
Many feel the urge to create a new and better world. Rather than let your thoughts dwell on such matters, you should concentrate on That by the contemplation of which there is hope of perfect peace. It is man's duty to become a seeker after God or Truth.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

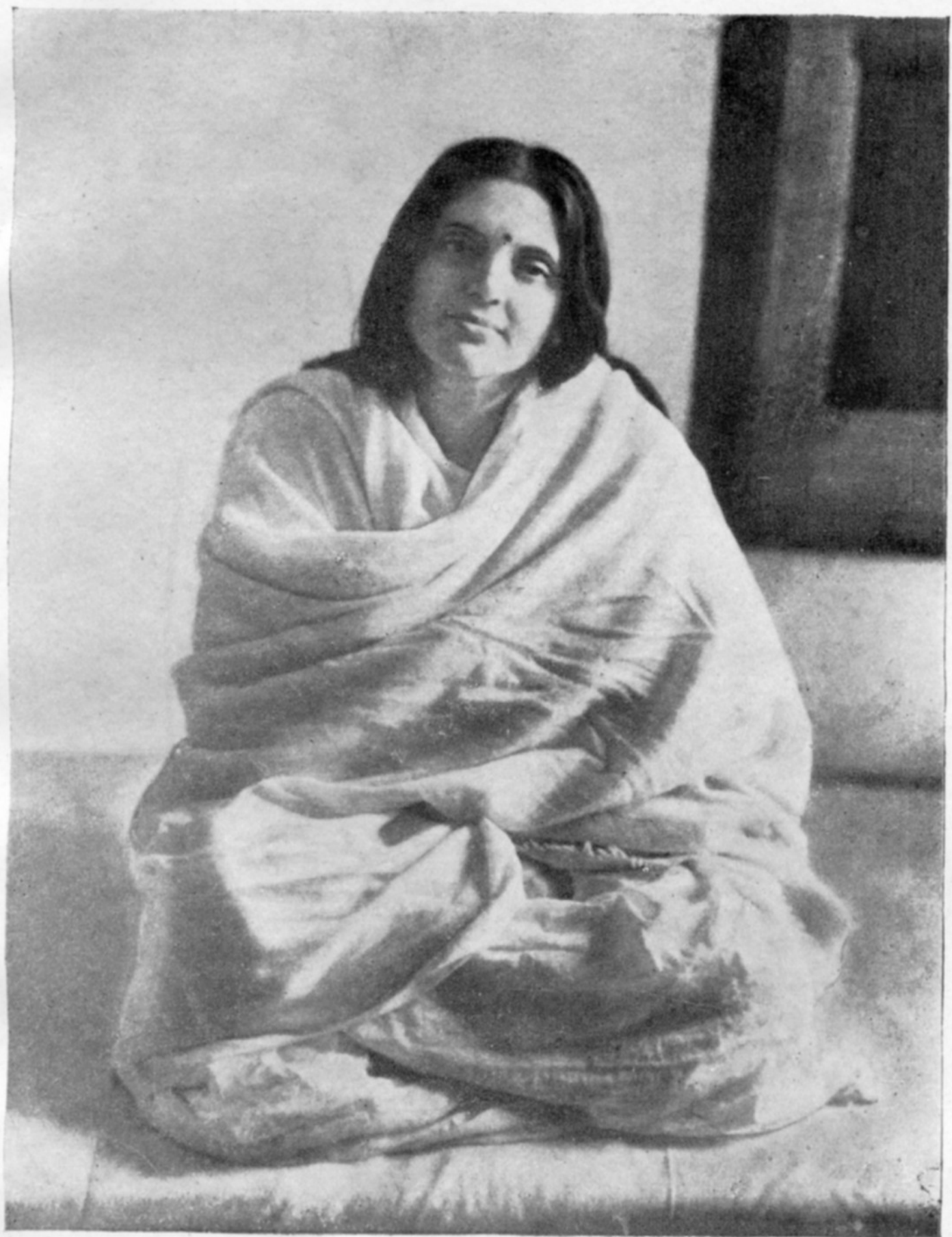
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ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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

Vol. XXXV

JULY, 1988

No. 3

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Regarding all beings as His forms, in a spirit of service and utter calm serve the Lord, serve the Lord and only Him. In the measure as you grow more and more perfect in your capacity as a servant of the Lord, fondness, love and devotion for Him as well as implicit faith will awaken in you.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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Sri Sri Ma's Utterances

Ma : "Don't do anything in secret, so that you have no secrets to guard."

Question : "What about one's *Ista Mantra*?"

Ma replied : "Only that one thing you have to carefully preserve in secret, so that it is not dissipated. After sowing the seed, if you don't keep it hidden inside the soil, if you take it out everyday to have a look at it, then there is no hope of ever getting a tree. Hence, keep the seed hidden in the soil with great care, water it and look after it ; you'll see that in due time the seed has sprouted into a sapling and is gradually growing."

Question : "Ma, if there is a strong blast of wind, then the plant may get destroyed ; how to protect it in that situation ?"

Ma replied : "In that case, the plant should be protected under cover ; you see, when there is a hail-storm, people cover small plants so very carefully ! Then a fence has to be erected all around the young plant to protect it from the cattle. Thus protected and reared, the same tree becomes one day a protector to so many people."

In response to people's comments, such as, "We would do such and such things only if He makes us do" ; "Everything depends on him" ; "Only He knows" (if we are to act in a particular way), etc., Ma said the following words :

“First of all, try to understand who He is ; try to explore in what relationship you stand to Him — only then you’ll have the right to say, ‘I am doing what He makes me do’ — isn’t it so ? At present you have got no acquaintance with Him ; although even by repeating ‘He, He,’ you may develop a desire to explore more about Him.”

A dialogue was going on, when Ma addressed the following words to the gathering : “Do you know, why people discuss so much ? They do *ālochanā* (discussion) in order to become *alocana* (eyeless) — isn’t it so ? For while there is *dristi* (seeing) there is *srusti* (creating).” Saying this, Ma began to laugh.

A Sikh gentleman who had come to have Ma’s *darshan* said, “Ma, since I have come to you, since I have had the luck to be in the company of the Holy, why should I remain in wretchedness any longer ?”

Ma : If you can really live in the company of the Holy, no such question arises. But do people really live in *satsang* ?”

An engineer from U.P. who happened to be present there asked, “Then, is it that nothing happens ?”

Ma said, “One cannot say that nothing happens. On a sunny day, if you stand in the shade of a tree, you will be protected from the sun by its shade ; while you keep standing under the tree, it will produce its cooling effect on you, there is no doubt about it. But if, after resting for a while in the shade, you come away and run about in the sun, then you will surely get tired.”

Again, the engineer asked, "Ma, we hear everybody say that God's Name alone is sufficient remedy for people in *Kaliyuga*. Yet I have seen so many people repeating God's Name for years in so many places, and yet not making any notable progress. Why is it so? To me it seems that there is a special method even of taking God's Name, and only those who do it in the right way get the benefit, otherwise it is of no use."

Ma : "Look, the Name and He who is indicated by the Name are one and the same ; as for example, if I call you by your name, you'll appear before me. Hence, there is no doubt that the taking of name is effective. Yet, as you know how sometimes children just go on reading aloud mechanically without understanding anything — it is like that ! Again, you see, even such people do gain some purity by taking the Name constantly, whereas otherwise they could have been so much worse."

The Sikh gentleman again queried, "Ma, do the *jivanmuktas* dream ?"

Ma (smiling) : "How can dreams occur to those who are ever awake ? But if you talk of dreaming, then all that we see around us is also a dream."

"Well, Ma, do the *jivanmuktas* ever suffer from any disease ?" This was another inquiry from the same questioner.

Ma : "Those who are free from jivahood, where is the question of their falling ill ?"

Ma continued, "Look, I once caught malaria in Dehradun ; I was shivering with fever ; and then

there came a *sannyasi*. He said to me, "Ma, you have long been suffering from illness ; may I give you a medicine ?" I said with a smile, "Baba, it is said that according to the *Vedanta*, one should treat and regard all equally without any discrimination : you being a *sannyasi* believer in the *Vedanta*, why do you hate illness ? Baba, I am not turning you out, am I ? Then why must I turn out the disease ? All must accomplish their respective tasks. What if the disease takes away this body ? All things are verily forms of the one Bliss. I haven't invited anyone in, nor do I turn anyone out — and whom shall I turn out ? There is just the One without a second. Then, again, you see, Baba, the courting of *sannyasa* is not just for being spectacularly dressed and roaming about in good health on a sight-seeing spree, nor is it the fundamental principle of your *Vedanta*. Impartiality in behaviour, equal regard for all, being established in the self, that is, regaining one's true self — this is verily the objective of *sannyasa*. Then why this repulsion towards disease only ? If all these feelings of attraction and repulsion, friendship and enmity linger, then what will happen to the real objective ?" Saying this, Ma started to smile sweetly. The engineer and the Sikh sardar were very impressed and delighted to hear Ma's words, and said, "Ma, this is really a very extra-ordinary state ; such a state is extremely rare to come across."

In Association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee

Sri Amulya Datta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali)

(Continued from previous issue)

Gopal Dada explained the Gita from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. The exposition was very beautiful. He is not only a good speaker, but his power of explanation is also extraordinary. Many people listened to him with wrapt attention. And during the days he read from the Gita, the number of his audience kept on increasing.

The worship of images and the caste system. Saturday, 27th May, 1945.

I arrived at the Ashram at 8 a.m. to find Ma still in her room. She was listening to the private sorrows of each and every lady present. Before the talks were to start she came out to the kirtan hall. Birenda and several others were already present. Last night some soldiers had come to visit Ma. Ma spoke to Birenda about them. She said, "One of them stated, 'Why do you worship images? This is quite wrong.' This body replied, 'What you say is true. But see how water and ice are identical. Water has no image, but ice does assume a shape. Similarly God is both without a

form and with a form. This is merely two sides of the same coin’.”

Another soldier repeated forcefully “No — worship of images is a sin —” This body replied, “Baba, what you say is quite true. But if somebody is of the view that not worshipping images is a sin, then what can you reply to him? So I say that in whatever way you worship God that is true for him.”

In the meantime they themselves fell into a quandary. Finally they came to the conclusion that in whatever way God is worshipped is right for the person concerned.

Another person said, “Why the caste-system? All are equal, so why differentiate in your attitudes towards different people?”

This body said, “All of you are in service, but not all of you are doing the same work. The status of all of you is not the same. Of course this division has been created for ease of operation and you yourself have of your own free will done so. On top of this, there is a material difference in ability. One’s own nature leads to differences in creation.”

Birenda : The big fault with the caste system is not that men have been separated in to Brahmin, Khatriyas etc — why was this division made? The main objection is why has this been extended to become hereditary.”

“For one who observes all the qualities of a Brahmin, nobody is afraid to look upon him as a Brahmin. But if his son happens to have the dis-

position of a despicable sect, why should he assume the role of a Brahmin chiefly because he has been born into a Brahmin family? This is the main objection raised by modern minded people.

Ma: What you say is true from one point of view. But you should also consider the fact that when several castes are there, and somebody is born into a Brahmin family, then you will realise he must have had some exceptional previous qualifications to qualify him to be born into such a superior caste, and moreover if he is kept being reminded of the high ideals of his caste, then his low caste qualities may be radically affected.

Birenda: So you wish to point out that because he has been born into a Brahmin caste, he has sufficient means in him to let him step aside from evil paths with very little effort? But if the good instincts for which he has merited birth in a Brahmin family be comparatively less in value, and the baser instincts preponderate, then what will happen if he reverts to behave like a base born being? There is another point, you said that if a Brahmin takes the wrong path, he must be constantly reminded that he is a Brahmin, and that his ways and habits must conform to a Brahmin's. But if a Kshatriya continues to behave like a Brahmin, then must he be reminded that he should follow the ways of his ancestral heredity and not those of a Brahmin? And moreover, even if a Kshatriya behaves like a Brahmin, people automatically will not do reverence to him.

Ma : If his Brahmin instincts are true, then it is not necessary to attract other men's faith by beat of drum. His worth will be such that men's heads will automatically be prostrated before him.

It was now 11 a.m. Swami Swarupananda started his lecture. Thus the discussion on various aspects of the caste system remained unfinished.

Is there any result from donating without having sufficient faith ?

The reading of Kathopanishad started. Rishi Rajasharas' son Uddalok was desirous of realising the benefit of performing a Viswajit Yagna, but what was he donating as part of the Yagna ? He was giving away cows that were milkless, or blind, or nearly dead, i.e., he was expecting to reap the benefits of a Yagna by donating nothing of value. Observing this irreligious attitude on the part of his parent, Nachiketa was disturbed. He had studied the scriptures only under his father. So he was so well read that the results of such a donation were poisonous to him. The ultimate destination of such a donation was a visit to a region of unhappiness. He was of the opinion that with Yagnas like Viswajit Yagna one must give away everything. "I am among the total assets of my father, I am the leader among his disciples, and not second or lower. So my father should give me away." In this way the evil results of his father's valueless gifts would be somewhat mitigated. Thinking thus, he kept on asking his father, "Father, to whom are you donating me ?"

After hearing this question repeated several times, his father got extremely annoyed, and exclaimed, "I have given you away to the lord of death."

The lecture stopped here.

At the end of the lecture Ma asked, "Well, how angry could the father have been that willy nilly he gave his own son away to Yamaraj? Was there any beneficial result from such a gift?"

The lecturer and others present replied, "What do we know of all this, you know the answer."

Ma : No, I am asking if your scriptures lay down anything on this subject.

Swami Saswatananda : When Nachiketa asked his first boon from Yamaraj, he was thinking only of the good of his father. He prayed that his father should not suffer from any anxiety on his behalf, that he should not suffer any hardship on his account, and finally that when he returned to his father, the latter should recognize him and take him back.

Ma : This is exactly what I was enquiring about. Your Shastras do lay down that even if I give away something without having faith in the deed, there is some beneficial results accruing therefrom. Similarly, if you donate unwillingly, or in anger, there is some benefit to be obtained.

Swami Saswatananda : I do not wish to look upon it as any kind of gift at all ! The son made his father do all those things for his father's own good, otherwise there is nothing good to be said about the father.

Ma : I knew beforehand that you would construe this kind of meaning and this is but natural in your case. Because this supports the life you have adopted in becoming a Sannyasin (Everybody laughs). But one can look at it from another view point. You had said that Nachiketa had studied the Shastras under his father. So the father was indeed his Guru. His father himself taught him in what way one should donate in such kind of Yagnas. So, under the circumstances, by donating himself away, he was merely following his father i.e. his Guru's orders.

Birenda : Consider the events that have been narrated in the Upanishads, in reality nobody has any jurisdiction over them. Whatever Nachiketa or his father did, was done under the influence of an Almighty force. Furthermore, I think these stories in the Upanishads have no value or truth in them, they are merely meant to illustrate some basic truth contained in the Upanishads.

Gopalda : That everything is done under the influence of an over-riding power, is not to be doubted. But then, we cannot maintain that the stories in the Upanishads have no truth in them, or that they are not real. This only serves to insult the Upanishads. That the stories in the Upanishads are true and as valid as the Tatwas they represent, is as correct as the reality they represent.

Ma : Yes, these stories are quite true.

During the course of conversation, Gopalda enquired about the pain in the toe of Ma's foot.

Ma said, "No, the pain still persists equally."

Gopalda : This is not to be driven away so easily. Ma does not allow us to touch her feet, but she has had mercy on the pain and given it shelter in her feet. So why should it now forsake her feet ? Until Ma drives it away it will safely remain there. (Everybody laughs)

Ma (Smiling) : I am a little girl, so Baba is instructing me. Do you not see in the scriptures that the Guru repeatedly teaches his disciples the Mahabakya, "You are He, you are He."

"Similarly in order to increase my knowledge, you are incessantly teaching me in many ways, "You are He, you are He, you are indeed He". Even if I hide myself in the hills or jungles, you pull me out of these, and for the sake of my education, you keep on saying, "You are He, you are only He". (Everybody laughs)

The girls were singing Kirtan in the Panchabati after the path. Ma went there, and after staying there for a while, she came away.

I also returned home. At about 5-30 p.m. I returned to the Ashram. By that time Gopalda's path had commenced. Ma was sitting in the Namghar. Before the path was completed, Ma obtained the reader's permission to come out. We came out at the end of the lecture.

When we came out, we learnt Ma had gone out somewhere by car. We continued to wait. By this time, our friends Manmohan and Manoranjan Babu joined us. Ma returned to the Ashram after 11-30 p.m. Today was full moon so Kali puja was being carried out in the Annapurna temple.

Ma told Birenda, "Today is Purnima, so this is the night for waking all through it". I understood from this that previously whenever Kali puja was performed at Shahbag on Purnima or Amabasya, Birenda and others used to keep awake the whole night.

The hindrances before Satsang

After a while Ma came and sat down in the Kirtan hall. We were with her. Soon after arriving, Ma started the conversation herself.

Ma asked, "How did you like the reading of the Gita today?"

Birenda : The reading was beautiful. The speaker has an extraordinary knack for explaining. Everybody wholeheartedly supported this statement. I had learnt from Birenda that Gopalda had been a colleague of his in his class.

Ma : Once we staged a Gita Jayanti at Vindhya-chal. The Gita used to be read in the morning, its meaning explained in the afternoon, and at night there was a further discussion on the text. Gopal Baba used to conduct the lot. It was just an effort to be occupied with the one subject — the Gita. Baba does the same thing during the Pujas. Once he starts the puja, he continues doing it the whole day. He never bothers whether or not others join in.

Manoranjan Babu : Ma, I did not quite understand what has been said in the Gita about the mystery of birth and death. I did not feel as if we were the sons of Immortality, that there was no

death for us. Because all of us have to die. Even when Mahatmas suffer from the pains of illness, so seeing their state how can we believe we are beyond illness or death ?

Ma : Do you not understand even a little bit ?

Manoranjan Babu : I do understand a little, but do not believe it. (Everybody laughs)

Ma : Do you not believe even a little bit ?

Manoranjan Babu : Yes, I do believe a little, but it is of no use. (Everybody again laughs)

Ma : But why do you harp only on the illnesses described in the lives of the Mahatmas ? Why take no notice of the fact that they do eat, sleep etc. ? Because he who is versed in the worship of the Brahman, he who has drunk of the nectar of Immortality, what need is there for him to eat ? Well what do you understand of the one who is fully conversant with his self, or with the Brahman ? What are their outward symptoms ?

Ma enquired further about these symptoms from each and everyone of us, but nobody could furnish a satisfactory reply. At this juncture, a youth exclaimed from behind us, "I can give a correct reply, but in that case you will have to let me come near Ma." We all allowed him to sit near Ma. He sat down and asked Ma, "What is meant by one who is fully conversant with the Brahman ?"

Ma started laughing at the question. We also followed suit, because he who had prided himself in being able to specify the symptoms possessed by a person fully conversant with the Brahman, was

himself asking about the qualities exhibited by such a person. Our laughter probably disturbed the mental balance of the mind of the youth. He started speaking at random, and appeared to be mentally unbalanced. There was no relationship between what he said and a person conversant with the Brahman. It was merely an attempt to lower the dignity of Ma through meaningless questions, springing out of pride and wickedness. After hearing his uncivil question, Kedar Babu and Birenda became incensed and strongly objected. Thus there was a disturbance. It was evident that there were other youths behind the youth in question, whose behaviour and conversation proved that they had not come here as honest seekers of Truth. They had come merely to create a disturbance.

To prevent any incipient quarrel, Ma restrained Kedar Babu and purposely spoke a few words to pacify the youth. Ultimately one of them, in order to quell the disturbance, requested permission from Ma to sing a few songs.

Before these songs had concluded Ma was taken away for her meal. We got up at the same time. All of us were deeply grieved at the unsocial behaviour of the youths. They too now took their departure of Ma and departed to their respective destination.

At the end of Ma's meal, the topic of the youths came up again for discussion, but that distressful discussion did not appeal to anyone. From what we heard, we learnt that they were all disciples of a comparatively young man named Biren Brahma-

chari. This very evening Ma had seen and spoken to Biren Brahmachari.

Ma said, the topic of conversation that I had with Babaji (i.e. Biren Brahmachari) was similar in tone to what these people said. We also learnt from Khukunididi that Bhaiji's wife had been seen in the company of these same youths. In any case all these topics were stopped and an entirely different discussion was started.

God's mercy at adverse times

Sri Ma continued saying, "Many people during the course of their sadhana reach such a stage that they hardly believe in the existence of God. They think there is no such being as God. This also constitutes a stage in sadhana.

There are certain typical symptoms which denote if and when one has truly reached such a stage. It is difficult to forecast how and when God attracts people to His own self.

Once at Chandausi I heard the following story from a professor. He maintained that the story was true.

A Yogi approached a Sethji for alms. The Sethji asked one of his minions to spare a paisa for him. But the Yogi was unwilling to accept only one paisa. He wanted Sethji to take God's name. But Sethji had no time to spare for this purpose. He was busy looking after his expanding business. So he did not listen to the Yogi's plea. But the Yogi remained adamant. Sethji then exhorted the Yogi, "You yourself better take God's name. I will give

you an extra paisa.” But the Yogi did not change his attitude and repeated, “You must take God’s name. I have no need of any paisa.” Sethji was so disgusted that he drove the Yogi away with the help of his servants.

It was the Sethji’s custom to take a walk each morning and evening. On the day after the above incident, when the Sethji went out for his walk, the Yogi entered the Sethji’s home in the guise of the Sethji. It was not all difficult for the Yogi to assume such an appearance. When his wife saw him return so soon, she asked him the reason. In reply the Sethji (Yogi) said, “I have heard that an imposter has arrived, he is assuming the appearance and dress of different people and is cheating them. So if somebody arrives here in my guise, do not let him enter the house.” Having said this he went upstairs.

After a short while the real Sethji arrived. When he tried to enter his own house his servants and sons prevented him from doing so. However much he tried to persuade them that he was the real owner of the house, the angrier did they become and threatened to beat him. When he felt helpless, he called out to his wife and said, “Please come and see how badly they are behaving towards me”. Even his wife believed him to be an imposter, and hearing him address her as his wife, in anger she struck him with her shoes. Sethji was now thoroughly disheartened and took refuge with the local Police officer, who was acquainted with the Sethji. After listening to his story,

the Police Inspector called all the sons to the thana. The sons arrived and informed the Police Inspector that the man who had complained to him was not their father — he was merely a well known imposter with many appearances, because their father was really at home. The Inspector then asked them to bring their so-called father to the thana. They went and brought back the Yogiraj dressed as Sethji. The Policeman got completely bamboozled. Of the two it seemed impossible for him to spot out who was the real Sethji. The Yogiraj then asked the Sethji, "You wish to declare yourself as the real Sethji. Well tell us exactly how much it cost you to build your house." The Sethji said, "What do I know of such things? My servants have kept the books of accounts, if you consult them you will know the exact cost." The Yogiraj then asked him once more, "Well, tell us how much you spent on the wedding of your eldest son." — The Sethji could not reply even to this question. He said without looking up the account books he could not furnish a reply. But the Yogiraj divulged both the exact expenditures incurred in building the house and in performing the wedding to the last pie. Because due to his Yoga he could come to know of everything. After listening to all these evidences the Police Inspector confirmed Yogiraj to be the lawful Sethji, and drove away the Sethji himself.

Sethji on losing everything, wandered anywhere his eyes could take him. During the course of his wanderings, he came to a place where several sadhus and sannyasis were continuously engaged in

Tapasya. Among the saints he spotted the Yogiraj. On seeing him he realised the extent of his previous folly, and falling at the Yogiraj's feet, he apprised him of the causes of his downfall. And also in much humility he continued to pray and beg for forgiveness for his past misbehaviour towards the Yogiraj. The Yogiraj, on seeing his repentance forgave him and said, "You have only to take God's name. This was my only request. You have suffered so much by not listening to me. I am arranging to return all your property to you, but you must consider yourself as my representative in spending your wealth, and always take the name of the Lord."

The Sethji agreed to do all this. The Yogiraj asked him to return home. Sethji followed suit.

This time no one prevented him, because in the absence of the Yogiraj in the house, nobody had any doubts about him. But Sethji did not go back to his old life. He built a new temple in the house and spent his time in doing dhyan, puja etc., in it.

Sri Ma then went on to recite another story.

"Once some of us were travelling through the jungles of Sawai Madhopur (Rajasthan) in a horse-carriage. We had a lawyer with us. Because the local Raja was going to engage in a shikar in the jungle, his men were cleaning the jungle to make new pathways. On seeing us approach, these men forbade us to come any further. But in spite of their order, we listened to the lawyer's advice and kept on proceeding in the carriage. At this Raja's men became enraged and attacked us with their

shovels. We had by then advanced well into the interior of the jungle and it was difficult for us to retreat from there, but those men would not allow us to move forward even one foot with our carriage. Under these circumstances, this body looked at the men and asked, "Then shall we descend from the carriage?" On hearing this body speak, the men suddenly calmed down and asked us to proceed in our carriage. So you see, in the hearts of each man there is a soft spot, where if you strike properly, his nature changes instantly." It was now after 2-30 a.m. So Ma went to lie down. Today it was Ma's wish that we should keep awake all night. So we spent the rest of the night discussing Ma's inscrutable ways, sometimes in the Ashram, sometimes out in the open airs.

(To be continued)

NEW PUBLICATIONS

- 1) Matri-Lila Darshan (2nd Edition)
in Bengali — Dr. Debaprasad
Mukhopadhyaya — Pages 284 — Price Rs. 25/-
 - 2) Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi
Vol. IV in English — Gurupriya
Devi — Pages 288 — Price Rs. 22/-
or \$ 4.00
or £ 2.00
 - 3) Matri-Lila Darshan in English
—Dr. Debaprasad Mukhopadhyaya
— Under Print
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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

As already announced earlier, the administrative Head-Office of the Charitable Society will be shifted from its present location at Varanasi and start functioning from the Calcutta Zonal Office, here of Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society at Matri-Mandir, 57/1, Ballygunge Circular Road, Calcutta-700 019 — right from the commencement of the new financial year 1988-89 i.e. from the month of April next. All urgent and important correspondences with the Charitable Society should therefore be addressed accordingly — to avoid unnecessary delays.

Annual members of the Charitable Society should also, hereafter, remit their subscriptions to this office and not to Varanasi Office as herebefore. It is also notified for the information of the members that the Regd. Office of the Charitable Society will continue to function from Varanasi as before.

Dated : The 30th March, 1988

Calcutta Zonal Office

Shree Shree Anandamayee

Charitable Society

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Dr. G. N. Roy (Misra)

General Secretary

Bradley, Vedanta, and Ramakrishna : A Comparative Study

J. C. Mazumdar, M.A., I.A.S. (Retd.)

(Continued from previous issue)

The Nature of Reality and the Phenomenal World

Having said this much by way of preface, I will now make a brief analysis of Bradley's conception of absolute reality. While bringing out the essential elements of his thoughts on this issue, it will also be my endeavour to compare and assimilate them to the thoughts of Sankara and Ramakrishna.

Bradley has stated somewhat mockingly that 'metaphysics is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct, but to find these reasons is no less an instinct'. But metaphysics in the end must be so, because, as I have stated earlier, the human mind functions as an integral whole ; and all our thoughts are based on and are articulations of certain basic perceptions or feelings which we are compelled to accept as authentic. In various manners, we find and come across something higher in the universe which, as Bradley has stated, 'both supports and humbles, both chastens and transports us'. The intellectual effort to understand the universe is one of the principal ways in which

we come into touch with this higher and uplifting influence.

The world, as it appears to us, is, in the ultimate analysis, 'a maze of relations, relations that lead to illusory terms, and terms disappearing into endless relations' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 104); but though these appearances may be 'a beggarly show', that the appearances *exist* can never be doubted. Appearances have therefore two characters. They are infected with contradictions; but at the same time, they are most doubtlessly felt to exist. It is not possible for us to deny the existence of appearances because they are inconsistent with themselves. In other words, even though the appearances cannot be true of the real, 'to divorce' them 'from reality is out of the question'. That is why, Bradley has said that appearance 'has a positive character which is indubitable fact, and, however much this fact may be pronounced appearance, it can have no place in which to live except reality. And reality, set on one side and apart from all appearance, would assuredly be nothing' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 114). In other words, (a) appearances *belong* to the reality, (b) though it cannot be said that they are true of the real.

In this connection, what Sankara has told about *maya* comes to our mind. According to Sankara, the phenomenal world is a product of *maya*, and he has characterized the phenomenal world as an *adhyasa*. *Adhyasa* is both existent and non-existent, according to Sankara. In equating *adhyasa* with

avidya (*adhyasam pandita avidya iti manyante*), he has emphasized that the world of appearances is a world of error or falsehood (*avidya*); but by defining *adhyasa* as *purvadrstavabhasah*, he has emphasized on the other aspect of appearances, viz. that, after all, they are felt to *exist* in some form or other (*avabhasa*); thus Sankara also lays bare the two sides of appearance, viz. those of falsity and existence.

'To think is to judge, and to judge is to criticize, and to criticize is to use a criterion of reality' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 120). With two apparently unreconcilable characters of the phenomenal world before us, it becomes necessary for us to judge as to how these two characters stand in relation to the absolute reality. In metaphysics, judging implies application of an ultimate standard. As we have briefly described earlier, the ultimate reality, according to Bradley and Sankara, is such that it does not contradict itself. By applying this criterion of truth, Bradley concludes that the world of appearances being full of contradictions cannot be the reality; because reality excludes contradictions. At the same time, the appearances must have to fall within the reality, because outside the reality there is or there can be nothing. Bradley accepts these two results and concludes that 'everything which appears is *somehow* real in such a way as to be self-consistent. The character of the real is to possess everything phenomenal in harmonious form'. In other words, 'the real is individual' (*ibid.*, p. 123).

The underlying logic of Bradley seems to be that, as the appearances must *belong* to the reality, they must somehow be self-consistent in order to find a place within it. But appearances *as they are apprehended* by us are nowhere free from inconsistencies. This means that appearances as they are true of the reality are different from appearances as they are apprehended by us. That is why Bradley often talks of transformation, transmutation, blending, and supplementation of appearances in his philosophy. Sankara's attitude towards the two conflicting characters of appearances (viz. characters of unreality and existence) is different from that of Bradley. Sankara does not accept that the being element of appearances has two aspects, viz. (a) an intrinsic aspect and (b) an extrinsic or apparent aspect, as Bradley seems to do. Sankara's appearances are products of *avidya*, and they are totally false, though they seem to *exist*; and they cannot be said to *belong* to the absolute. They are, in the language of Sankara, mere *aropa* or *adhyaropita* or *projections on the absolute reality*.

In a way and up to a point, Sankara's principle of *maya* (*avarana* and *vikēspa*) is just the opposite of Bradley's principle of transmutation and supplementation. Sankara's *maya* is a principle of degradation and limitation, whereas Bradley's principle of transmutation and supplementation is like a process of recovery or regeneration. When Sankara says that the world is an *adhyāsa* or the product of *maya* or *avidya*, he seems to imply that the world of phenomena *somehow* comes into existence, because

the intellect is so constituted that it takes an utterly false or distorted view of the absolute reality, which, according to Sankara, is the indeterminate or abstract Saccidananda (consciousness-cum-existence-cum-bliss). This falsity of the world of phenomena is not such as can be *corrected* without totally destroying the appearances themselves. The world of appearances seems, in Sankara's view, like a world of wicked or wanton dreams, which *vanishes* on waking up from sleep. Sankara has characterized *maya* as *anirvacaniya*, because it cannot be explained why the absolute reality takes this degraded shape, why it appears as *other* than itself (*atasmin tadbuddhih*).

Sankara differs from Bradley in so far as he seems to hold that the world of phenomena does not make any difference to the absolute, and does not *qualify* it in *any way*. The phenomenal world is inherently unreal, and nothing in it is recoverable. In the absolute being-consciousness-bliss, there is, as it were, nothing corresponding to the phenomenal world. Bradley's view is that the appearances *as they appear to us* are totally false and unreal. Up to this point, he agrees with Sankara. But the absolute is also nothing but the transmuted and rearranged appearances; reality apart from appearances and taken by itself is a mere nothing; there is always something in the absolute corresponding to the appearances; this constitutes, as it were, the *svarupa* or essence of appearances, and it is recovered after rearrangement and transformation; it *enriches* and *qualifies* the absolute.

Sankara judges the appearances to be occasional *projections* caused by the *maya-sakti* of Isvara or Brahman. If appearances are so, Bradley's view seems to be more reasonable. Because the principle of determination or *maya* being located in the absolute, the projections should also be regarded as belonging to the absolute reality. And perhaps, Sankara himself also did not judge the world of appearances to be *entirely illusory*. For, according to him, the absolute constitutes the basis (*aspada*) of the world or *samsara* ; and even a mirage needs a basis for its existence (*nahi mrigatrisnikadayo'pi niraspadah bhavanti*). And appearances as effects and Brahman as cause are, in his view, non-different (*atasca kritsmasya jagato Brahmakaryatvat tad ananyatvat*). In any event, Sankara's absolute (Brahman) is not an individuality which 'embraces every partial diversity in concord' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 129), or an indivisible system or experience as it is in Bradley's philosophy ; and appearances are, according to Sankara, beyond transmutation or supplementation ; and as such, they cannot be saved or recovered in any way.

Ramakrishna says : "The *nitya* and the *lila* belong to the same Reality. Therefore I accept everything, the relative as well as the absolute. I don't explain away the world as *maya*". (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 621). 'The Brahman of Vedanta and the *citsakti* are identical' (*ibid.*, p. 574). 'He who is indivisible Saccidananda has assumed different forms for the sake of His *lila*' (*ibid.*, p. 428). 'He is Brahman and He is Sakti'

(*ibid.*, p. 912). 'Brahman and Sakti are inseparable' (*ibid.*, p. 109). 'It is Brahman alone that appears as Isvara, *maya*, living beings, and the universe' (*ibid.*, p. 253).

A careful examination of these *sutra*-like utterances reveals that in his thoughts Ramakrishna is more akin to Bradley than to Sankara. As for Bradley so for Ramakrishna, the ultimate reality is the full, whole, and *undivided reality* (*akhandasaccidananda*), consisting of the indeterminate being, God, and the phenomenal world. Ramakrishna does not discard the phenomenal world, *lila*, as being *merely* illusory ; it is accepted together with and as part of the ultimate reality (*nitya*). It is a lower expression (*prakasa* or *rupadharana*) of the absolute reality ; just as God (Isvara or Saguna Brahman) is a higher expression of the absolute reality ; just as featureless and formless Brahman is also another aspect of the same integral reality ; and the limiting principle of *maya*, being the inherent *sakti* (power) of Isvara (God), is also an aspect of Brahman.

Ramakrishna's '*tini*' or absolute reality is a whole, which is greater than God, greater than indeterminate consciousness-being, and greater than the phenomenal world ; and the world, God, and *cinmatra* are but aspects of the whole reality ; and they are expressions of various grades or degrees. It is an all inclusive experience which contains them all in a state of non-difference (*abheda*). Bradley says almost similarly : 'The reality itself is nothing at all apart from appearances...Reality appears in its

appearances, and they are its revelation ; *otherwise* they also could be nothing whatever' (*Appearance and Reality*, pp. 488-89). And God, nature, and impersonal being are appearances of the absolute. Bradley's reality is one, that it essentially is experience, .. and every fragment of appearance qualifies the *whole* ; while so taken together, appearances, as such, cease. Nothing in the universe can be lost, nothing fails to contribute to the single reality... But appearances fail of reality in varying degrees' (*ibid.*, p. 453). The reality of Bradley is the whole (*purna*), which is *qualified non-relationally* by every fraction of experience. The absolute possesses personality, as it has everything ; but is not merely personal. 'It is not personal, because it is personal and more. It is, in a word, super-personal.' Bradley's concept comes close to Ramakrishna's on the question of absolute reality, in so far as both regard the world and God as aspects or expressions of the absolute whole. Both regard the reality as non-different from its expressions, and both believe that there are degrees of truth and reality.

In Bradley's view, 'the absolute is one system'. It is a single and all-inclusive experience, in which diverse partial experiences are reabsorbed in a rich concord. He is, however, prepared to accept that there may be in the absolute more than we know. In other words, there may be, in the absolute, elements to which there are, as it were, no corresponding formulations in the world of appearances. Here he concedes the truth of purely indeterminate reality. But 'if it is more than any feeling of

thought which we know, it must still remain more of the same nature'. The content of this indeterminate part of the absolute must also be of the nature of sentient experience. Sankara thinks that the indeterminate absolute reality is *saccidananda-svarupa* or pure *caitanya* ; so Bradley also agrees that there may be, in the absolute, aspects of featureless and formless thought-feeling.

Bradley says further : 'Pure spirit is not realized except in the absolute. It can never appear as such and with its full character in the scale of existence' (*ibid.*, p. 442). Ramakrishna concedes that there is transcendent experience beyond all *gunas* ; that experience or *caitanya* cannot be described in words. 'Only one thing has not been defiled in this way, and that is Brahman' (*Gospel*, p. 28). That experience beyond thought and speech is a part of *tini* or absolute whole. 'The personal is the embodiment of *Cit*, Consciousness ; and the Impersonal is the indivisible Saccidananda' (*ibid.* p. 433). Because a part of the whole reality is beyond form or quality or activity (*nirakara* or *nirguna* or *niskriya*), and a part is expressed in form or quality or activity (*sakara* or *saguna* or *sakti* or *Kali*), the whole reality in its entirety is more than either of the parts and both the parts. 'What is Brahman is the Bhagavan... He who is beyond the three *gunas* is the Bhagavan, with His six supernatural powers. Living beings, the universe, mind, intelligence, love, renunciation, knowledge — all those are the manifestations of His power' (*ibid.*, p. 30). 'Yes, God has form and He is formless, too. Further, He is

beyond both form and formless. No one can limit Him' (*ibid.*, p. 125).

The Conception of God

Bradley's conception of God bears comparison with Ramakrishna's idea of God or Isvara. Ramakrishna says : 'God is a person who listens to our prayers, who creates, preserves, and destroys the universe and who is endowed with infinite power' (*ibid.*, p. 79). Bradley says : 'Religion naturally implies a relation between man and God. Man is ... a finite subject who is over against God and merely "standing in relation" ... He does not merely 'stand in relation', but is *moved only by his opposite* and indeed, apart from that inward working, could not stand at all. God, again, is a finite object, standing above and apart from man, and is something independent of all relation to his will and intelligence. Hence God, if taken as a thinking and feeling being, has a *private personality*' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 394).

Ramakrishna says also that Brahman and Bhagavan or Kali are non-different (*abheda*). What does Bradley say ? 'Short of the absolute, God cannot rest, and having reached that goal, he is lost and religion with him' (*ibid.*, pp. 395-96). Bradley says : 'God is not God till he has become all in all' (*ibid.*, p. 397). And what does Ramakrishna say ? 'As long as one has not realized God, one should renounce the world, following the process of "*neti, neti*". But he who has attained God knows that it is God who has become all this' (*Gospel*, p. 271).

Sankara's God will now engage us. In Sankara's view, there are three levels of experience, corresponding to which there are three types of being or reality : (1) first, there is the perception of illusion, corresponding to which we have the *pratibhasikasatta* (imaginary being) ; (2) secondly, there is the pragmatic consciousness, corresponding to which we have the *vyavaharika-satta* (conventional or symbolic being) ; things which are accepted as real for all practical purposes are the *vyavaharika* realities ; (3) thirdly, there is the *turiya* or transcendental perception (*anubhava*), which reveals itself as the *paramarthika-satta* (absolute reality). Absolute reality is changeless, eternal, and beyond all determinations. Everything short of the absolute reality is an appearance with Sankara and every appearance is false with him.

Sankara makes two points : (1) Our life is one long business in rootless lies ; (2) *vyavaharika* or conventional realities are good, sufficient, and adequate for all normal living or for all practical purposes ; obviously, the practical purposes stand for all human goods or *arthas* other than the supreme good (*parama artha*). In other words, it holds good in all pursuits in science, morality, religion, art, or other spheres of life. Combining these two points, a Sankarite concludes that God (Saguna Brahman) is real for certain practical purposes, though intrinsically God is unreal and a mere appearance ; God regarded as creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the world, and as a *vyakti* standing in relation to man, is unreal, but this unreality

does not stand in His way of being useful to man. God is thus a useful symbol or a *mantra* that yields desired results.

We are prepared to accept that our believing that certain things are *as if* real has a way of affecting our lives ; but a philosophy which places absolute reality on one side and absolute unreality on the other side, relegates, as Bradley has aptly said, 'the mass of our chief human interests to some unreal limbo of undistinguished degradation'. A lie which is only an *utter* lie can never be of any real use to man in any field of life. In other words, every appearance must be supposed to contribute something towards the absolute reality ; that is, it must be real in some degrees. 'Ugliness, error, and evil, all are owned by and all essentially contribute to the wealth of the absolute' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 433).

This particular emphasis is missed in Sankara. Though he speaks of higher and higher expressions, he does not emphasize, like Bradley, that 'the absolute ... has no assets beyond appearances' ; he only emphasizes that 'with appearances alone to its credit, the absolute would be bankrupt' (*ibid.*, p. 433). His absolute is the *nirguna, avisistha, para* Brahman that devours all and vomits all, because to devour or to vomit, it has really nothing. Sankara's Isvara, therefore, needs considerable interpretation before it gets a clearance. Sankara does not seem to hold, as Spinoza does, that all things follow from the necessity of the absolutely perfect nature of God.

Other Aspects

I will now say a word or two about the other aspects of the absolute. Is the absolute good? Is the absolute beautiful? 'If metaphysics is to stand, it must, I think', says Bradley, 'take account of all sides of our being' (*ibid.*, p. 130). Applying the absolute criterion of truth, we conclude that the sentient consciousness or experience constituting the absolute reality is a self-consistent whole or a harmonious system. If *knowledge* is considered as the content of the absolute, there is theoretical consistency in the absolute. But is there a practical consistency also in the absolute? Is there also an excess of pleasure or joy in the absolute? Or, in other words, is the absolute a fully satisfied experience? These questions are answered in the affirmative.

Bradley's arguments are that, if there is a theoretical consistency in the absolute, ideas must not clash with sensations; and when there is no such clash, there cannot be in the absolute *any practical unrest* or *any unsatisfied desire*, because desire can arise only when there is a hiatus between an idea and a sensation. Given harmony in the absolute, a balance of pain is not possible in the absolute, because pain implies unrest or inconsistency in theoretical consciousness; pain 'must directly destroy the theoretical rest' (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 139). There is therefore no pain on the whole in the absolute. 'We must not admit the possibility of an absolute perfect in *apprehension* — yet resting tranquilly in pain' (*ibid.*, p. 139).

Bradley's final conclusion is therefore that our main wants for truth, life, beauty, and goodness must all find satisfaction, and this consummation must somehow be experienced and be individual (*vide ibid.*, p. 140). This conclusion is not far from the Vedantic view. According to Sankara, Brahman, being *satya*, *jnana*, and *ananta*, must be *anandasvarupa*, i.e. pure *ananda* or joy ; there is no trace of pain in Sankara's absolute reality.

Bradley's view is, however, closer to Ramanuja's, inasmuch as Bradley's absolute is a concrete universal, like Ramanuja's *savisesa* and *saguna* Brahman ; and in Bradley's absolute, there is a balance of pleasure over pain, just as Ramanuja's Brahman is *anandamaya*, implying that there is an excess of pleasure over pain in Ramanuja's absolute. To Ramakrishna, the world is a mansion of pleasure ; this is so because the world is the abode of the absolute, which is both *saguna* and *nirguna* both *sakara* and *nirakara*.

And before I close, you will perhaps ask what is the essential element in Bradley's philosophy ? And how does it compare with Ramakrishna's basic message ? What is the fundamental truth in the Vedanta philosophy ? In the last sentence of *Appearance and Reality*, Bradley concludes : 'Outside of spirit there is not, and there cannot be, any reality, and the more than anything is spiritual, so much the more is it veritably real.' In this final sentence is summed up the essential truth of Bradley's philosophy. And Ramakrishna says : 'What do you mean by inert ? Everything is

caitanya, consciousness' (*Gospel*, p. 766). 'The manifold has come from the One alone, the relative from the absolute. ... Brahman is without comparison. ... It is between light and darkness. It is Light, but not the light that we perceive, not material light' (*ibid.*, p. 250). 'The soul through which God sports is endowed with His special power' (*ibid.*, p. 263). Ramakrishna's message looks very much like that of Bradley's. And does the Vedantin mean anything different when it is said; *Ekasyapi kutasthasya cittataratamyad jnanaisvaryanam parena parena bhuyasi bhavati*—'It is one and the same immutable Self that manifests itself in greater and greater degrees of knowledge and power through differences in mental organization'?

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

—St. Francis of Assisi

One who serves God can never be helpless.
The more ardently one seeks communion by
engaging in *japa*. His service and contempla-
tion, the fuller will be His revelation.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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The appearance of Sri Sri Ma & her Lila at Belrui village near Sitarampore

R. K. Banerjee

This is a story of how Ma still of her own accord descends on the houses of selected new devotees to establish her Asan, so as to be worshipped anew in her own rights and thus continue her Lila on earth.

Three hundred years ago, at the behest of Emperor Akbar, Raja Man Singh brought over and settled some Chauhan Rajputs in Burdwan district and gave them freehold land, so that they could have some sort of control over the local Bengalis.

From these are descended the families of Sri Bijoy Prasad Singh Roy, Maharajadhiraj Bahadur of Burdwan etc.

One such descendant established himself at the village of Belrui about 200 years ago near Sitarampore.

Of this family one Rai Sahib Nakur Chandra Roy built a new garden house in his garden, and invited Sri Ma and Hari Babu to stay there for a few days. A brief account of this visit has been recorded by Gurupriya Didi on Page 61 of her Volume IX as follows, "On Tuesday the 7th Jaistha, 1353 San, at the ardent request of Nakur Babu Ma with her entourage visited Sitarampore. They

reached there on the 8th Jaistha in the morning and departed for Kashi from there on the 12th Jaishtha. Nakur Babu had invited Ma to stay in his new garden home. In front was a huge old Bakul tree, practically withered away, but Ma gave it a new lease of life by touching it with her merciful hands. Later a beautiful Ashoke tree grew nearby. Nakur Babu cemented over the roots of these trees by building a bedi and arranged for daily puja to be performed there.

The nephew of such a devoted Bhakta, Sri Mihir Roy's wife, Smt. Puspita Devi was initiated by Ma at Ranchi together with her 4 sisters and a brother, who was initiated first of all. He was a Brahmachari from birth, and his name was Subrata Singha Roy. He worked very hard during the installation of Ma's portrait at his sister's house at Belrui. The ancestors of Puspita Devi had also included well known Bhaktas. Her parents lived in Mahakalpur, a place renowned for its shrines, and both had been initiated by no less a person than Sri Balananda Brahmachari, who visited their village. They were the descendants of Prithwiraj Chauhan and in their village existed a Narayan Mandir and a famous group of 12 Shiva temples (on which it is said Dakshineshwar was later modelled), a Durga Mandir etc. from San 1227. Even now daily worship, Shiva Puja, Janmastami, Rathajatra etc. festivals are duly observed.

Puspita Devi's father was descended from the founders of Tarakeshwar deity, Raja Bharamull and Raja Bharamulla's sister Bhanumati.

After her initiation in Ma's hands, Puspita Devi was greatly attracted towards Ma. During the inauguration of the Samadhi Temple at Kankhal Puspita Devi visited the festival with her relatives and Bahurani also accompanied her entourage. They put up at the Dharmasala of Thakur Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnath. From then onwards Puspita Devi's devotion towards Ma became more profound. She gave up meat, fish, etc. and started to live the life of an Ashramite, of course with the permission of her husband.

In due course another devotee of Ma and a well known Artist of Calcutta Sri Dipak Mitra was contacted and requested to produce a suitable picture of Ma for installation at Belrui. Dipak Babu was an ardent devotee of Ma and had already produced several beautiful pictures of Ma for display at Kankhal etc. and thereby had earned considerable distinction, but he stipulated that the picture of Ma that was going to be installed at Belrui would not thereafter be removable from its site. So Puspita Devi, who knew we had a full length standing picture of Ma in our house, selected this picture for copying in a smaller scale, so that it could without trouble be taken out for street processions during Nagar Sankirtan.

The wonderful part of the story is this that the flat inhabited by Dipak Babu in Calcutta was situated just under the room used by Thakur Sri Sitaram Omkarnath in the multi-storied building built by Sri Gopal Mitra, a very close devotee of Thakur in Southern Avenue. Sri Ma had often

visited this Ashram and Thakur had breathed his last in this place. The pictures of Ma displayed in Thakur's rooms were prepared by Dipak Babu himself. Just see what a wonderful coincidence this was due to Ma's Kheyal.

Mihir Babu respected his wife's wishes and agreed to build a temple for Ma on the roof of his ancient home. Many difficulties were overcome and the temple was duly completed. A beautiful bedi was built inside the temple throughout its width and a Nat Mandir was also constructed. The temple was completed in due course.

One of Puspita Devi's sisters had married into the Raj family of Ranchi. It was the custom of her family (Khatriyas) to inter-marry only with Khatriyas). So Lalu Babu, the Vice-president of Ranchi Ashram and a brother-in-law of Puspita Devi was invited to the inauguration ceremony at Belrui with his family. It was decided that the temple at Sri Mihir Roy's home would be inaugurated on the 22nd February, 1988. At the fervent invitation of Puspita Devi and urged on by Lalu Bhai, Brahmachari Nirmalananda of Ranchi arrived in Lalu Babu's car from Ranchi with Tulsi Didi, and other devotees at the right time at Belrui, to officiate as chief priest for the function. For three days Nirmalananda took an intimate part in the Puja, Kirtan and accompanying Ma's picture in the Nagar Sankirtan etc. to make the whole thing a complete success. Dipak Babu with great care brought Smt. Chhabi Banerjee and Brahmacharini Vishuddha by train from Calcutta to Sitarampore

for assisting in Ma's Puja, preparing Bhog etc. To help them, Gitadi (Ghosal) arrived from Tarapith festival hurriedly accompanied by her husband at the right time. Mihir Babu himself arrived in Calcutta to take us to Belrui in the company of his brother-in-law, Sri Rab Roy and sister-in-law Kabita Devi. Also from Calcutta arrived Smt. Mita Bose, accompanied by her husband and elder sister to join in the festival.

There must have been a close liaison between the Roy family and Thakur Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnath and his organisation. Just beside the ancestral home of the Roys at Belrui there was a beautiful Math belonging to Thakur (called Dasurathi Math) where there was a Narayan Mandir, a permanent Kirtan Manch and all facilities for cooking and offering Bhog at big festival.

The Mahanta of the Math Swami Keshavananda was a very gracious monk-in-charge. In fact recently while visiting Kashi he had procured a beautiful pair of Vighras of Sri Radha and Sri Govinda for the Roys. These were also duly installed with all due ceremony with Sri Ma's picture.

For this purpose special Vedic Brahmins were invited from Kashi, led by Acharya Sri Bishwanath Bhattacharya who arrived with his full party to perform the Yajnas, Havans, Purnahuti etc. with great care. They were all accommodated at the Math next door. All prasad etc. throughout the festival was prepared and distributed at the Math to all and sundry.

The family deity of the Roys, Sri Lakshmi-Janardhan (Shalgramсила) was worshipped in a separate mandir belonging to the family near the Math. There was a separate Brahmin Pujari employed for the worship and Bhog etc.

In the Chandi Mandap attached to the house Durga Puja was held each year and the Jagannath car was pulled each year for Ratha Jatra.

The verandah of the Nat Mandir was surrounded all round by an elaborately carried iron railing with a door which could be locked. The rumour is that when the Burnpur and Kulti lands were being acquired for ISCON, Sir Rajendra Nath Mookherjee had acquired the land free of cost from the ancestors of the Roys. So in grateful return he had utilised the first output of iron from his foundries to erect this beautiful railing round the Nat Mandir courtyard free of cost.

During Nagar Sankirtan with Ma's movable pictures, I took the opportunity of paying my respects to the memory of my ancestor by having the gate of the courtyard opened, and of parading Ma's pictures round the Nat Mandir during Nam Kirtan, before entering the Roy's ancestral home.

For three days there was beautiful Nam Kirtan in the Nat Mandir of Ma's new Mandir on the roof of the ancestral home. The participating singers were drawn from Kulti and Barakar and was composed of Bhakta youths well versed in singing the Mahamantra "Hare Krishna Hare Rama", as they took part regularly in the Nam Kirtans of the Sitaramdas Omkarnath Math.

Br. Nirmalananda was busy with Ma's puja, arati etc. from the 22nd, which he performed with great reverence and care. On the 22nd evening and 23rd morning he presided over the beautiful Satsangs. Chhabi Banerjee, Tulsidi, local singers etc. kept the Nat Mandir resounding with stirring Kirtans and bhajans. At the conclusion of Ma's main Puja on the 22nd after Purnahuti, there was a welcome sharp shower of rain bringing mercy from Ma, as is her usual custom when she has accepted the offerings of devotees.

Now listen to the wonderful story and Lila of how Ma's main portrait was brought from Calcutta to Belrui.

Mihir Babu, Dipak Babu and Sri Pinaki Sinha Roy (a grandson of Nakur Babu) and the present Station master of Sitarampore rail station, had planned that they would start from Calcutta at 3-30 a.m. to board a 1st class compartment in the Black Diamond Express starting from Howrah at 6 a.m.

But it was past 4-30 a.m. and still no coolies specially ordered had arrived. So willy nilly, they started to bring out the portrait themselves as best they could. At this juncture the coolies arrived. They hurriedly in their great enthusiasm walked to Howrah station with the portrait. It was nearly time for the train to start. Dipak Babu, Mihir Babu and Pinaki Babu had reached the station earlier and were anxiously walking up and down the platform when the train was standing. Just at this juncture the coolies arrived with Ma's portrait. But wonder of wonders — the portrait could not be

accommodated in any 1st class compartment. They ran up and down the platform in their hurry and finally took counsel with the Guard just before the train was due to start. The Guard was a Bhakta and devotee of Ma. He said there would be no problem because there was plenty of room in his van. He placed a chowki, decorated Ma's portrait with a garland and chandan and placed her reverently on the chowki. All the way to Sitarampore he took special care of Ma, so that Ma reached Sitarampore in great comfort without suffering the slightest trouble. At this point a lot of help was derived from Pinaki Babu. Good coolies were obtained at Sitarampore station, so that Ma's portrait could be carried straight from there upto the roof temple of Mihir Babu's house which was the final destination. It seemed as if Ma had herself made her journey and transport easy for all.

From then onwards Ma's portrait is installed there and is being reverently worshipped daily, with great effort put forward by Mihir Babu, Sri Rabi Roy and Dipak Babu and at great cost, the whole of the proceedings were recorded in Video. These can be seen in comfort at any time to recapture the enthusiasm, and inspiration of the time. Be it the beautiful songs, or the special pujas or the Satsangs or the Nagar Sankirtans or even partaking of the sumptuous prasads.

We were blessed with obtaining an opportunity of joining the celebration. We pray to Ma that time and again we may be found to be worthy of partaking in her special worship, so that we can

enjoy the opportunity of viewing her new and wonderful Lilas and of serving her needs even a little bit.

Later in the year, Ma's Janmotsab was celebrated by Puspita Devi with great pomp and ceremony with accompanying Namkirtans etc. between the 4th and 5th May. On the 5th morning there was a Nagar Kirtan with Ma's smaller portrait as a fitting climax to the celebration.

Let there be Ma's Jai always.

Jai Guru — Jai Ma.

CORRIGENDA

In our April issue, Swami Vivekananda's verse was printed as prose through oversight on pp. 126-7. The verse, correctly reproduced, is as under :

“Listen friend, I will speak my heart to thee,
I have found in my life this Truth Supreme :
Buffeted by waves, in the whirl of life,
There is no ferry that takes across the sea.
Formulas of worship, control of breath,
Science, philosophy, systems varied,
Relinquishment, possession and the like,
All these are but delusions of the mind,
Love, love—that is the one thing—the
Sole Treasure”⁶.

Also, under References on p. 127, the words : “(Publishers : Chetna Pvt. Ltd, 34, Rampart Row, Bombay-23)” may please be read against Item 3, instead of Item 4.

The errors are regretted.

The way to fulfil desires

Swami Ramtirth

(Through the Courtsey of Mrs. Jaya Kania)

If the meaning of prayer is taken only as desiring, asking, wanting, then the results of our prayers are never realized. You may thus go on praying as much as you like. You will never obtain any results, any fruits. You may keep asking for things, but you will never get them. The meaning of the word "Prayer" is of a very high order. Going beyond desire and saying, "Oh God, let thy will be done", and becoming one with this sentiment is the true meaning of the word prayer. It does not mean asking for something, desiring something or wishing for the fulfilment of one's desires. People feel that the meaning of the word prayer is the fulfilment of their desires. According to them the meaning of the word "Atma", is a low soul, or a very insignificant soul, and a soul that is for ever begging. But only in the words, "Oh God ! let thy will be done", lies the secret and the real essence of the word prayer.

Even though your life is full of innumerable difficulties, and dangers, only the words, "Let thy will be done" should emerge from the depths of heart. Perhaps your body is ravaged by disease, all the atmosphere around you is full of troubles, yet only the sentiment, "Oh Lord, let they will be done and not mine", should emerge from you.

This alone can be named self-control, the giving up of your I-consciousness, and this alone can be called self-surrender. The real secret of prayer coming from the heart, the life of prayer, the soul of prayer is this only. Those prayers that end in selfish desires are never heard, are never fruitful. Prayers offered at this time, that is, when this world does not remain this world ; when none of the worldly relationships exist ; in other words when all worldly relationships are forgotten ; when we attain such a stage, when we attain concentration ; when our mind becomes steady in such a state (even for a moment), all prayers are heard, that is, they bear fruit. One should not worry if such a state lasts only for a moment. If any desire is born at the time of awakening from such a state, and entering worldly consciousness, then it will definitely be fulfilled. Whenever prayers are offered when man reaches the high stage of complete control of the senses, total self control, complete lack of I-consciousness, total renunciation of the world, total renunciation of everything, total self-surrender, and total self dedication, these prayers invariably succeed, but such prayers cannot be called prayers that go begging, and requesting.

There are some people who do not pray regularly, and are not conscious of praying, and yet all their desires are fulfilled. But we must consider under what conditions this happens, and what type of people they are and like whom. You are ever desirous of obtaining something. You are for ever aspiring for it. As long as you are in a beggar's

state, you will not obtain anything. You know very well that when we go to meet a great personage, we have to dress accordingly. God is the greatest among the great, best among the best, and beyond all desires. So if you wish to approach the great God, you have to be dressed in a fitting manner, without being tainted by the dirt of desire or want. You should not be dressed like a beggar or a shop-keeper because in this world nobody likes a beggar. A beggar is insulted and shooed away everywhere. If you wish to attain God, then you must obtain divine affluence, in the form of a divine dress. It is a dress which when worn, does not leave any kind of inferiority or desire in our minds. You will receive respect from God only when you are devoid of all desires or wishes.

The man who is constantly desiring, hankering, and aspiring for things, who is ever worried and troubled by this night and day, who always experiences some kind of incompleteness, is never happy. As long as you are begging and desiring, you will find no peace. That certainty of desires turning into happiness will not be yours. There is a big discord between the desire and the joy of obtaining your desired object. Your desire is your weakness. Your desired object (Ishta) is very great and very high. That is why there is a discord between these two things. If you are attracted by something and to obtain it you go after it night and day, then it will go further and further away from you. This always happens. When you leave that object, and turn your back on it, and walk away,

and thereby go beyond that object then it follows you. Has not such a thing happened in your life? Every man should experience this. Try to remember your own experiences, and you will realize that this is what happens in desiring something and obtaining it. There is something you like very much, you are very keen to obtain it, and you try very hard for it; oh, you must have it; but you will obtain it only when you give up your desire for it; when you forget it in your state of high consciousness. When you go beyond the lowly sentiment of mine and your's, and when you enter the noble state of sacrifice, then only will you see that you have obtained your desired object. This is the truth, the only truth. Only when this happens will you get your desired object.

What is the reason for this? The reason is that when you are merged in the state of elevated consciousness, you reach the high heavens of the human temple. You are the sun. You attract towards yourself happiness and the objects that give you happiness in the form of the universe and the planets and they are drawn towards you.

When we obtain our desired object, we are filled with joy. After some time, we feel sad and dissatisfied. We again become happy after obtaining some other objects. Again there comes a break in that state. Thus there is a constantly rotating wheel of longing for an object, and obtaining the longed for object. You become a king and mount the throne, and everybody will come to pay homage; all citizens, all your subjects and officials will come before you

to honour you. They want a king. They all gather before a king. They need no invitation, and they come without being asked. When you go beyond desire, want and expectations, you will feel that you are seated on a throne. All desires and desired objects will come to you as if they are officers and government officials. They will all gather near you. They will talk to you respectfully. After that is the undescribable state (which can be described only as that state, which is unworldly). Those who are stable in such a state see attractive and beautiful things being drawn towards themselves. When they get those objects, they give up that throne and often their downfall comes. They are again subject to hope, desire and want, become unhappy, and their downfall comes. When this happens their desired objects leave them. This is the secret of obtaining gross objects and losing them. The wheel of worldly wealth keeps rotating like this. This subject can be explained in another way too, thus :

A man is standing at the door of a railway compartment. He calls to his friend "Come in, come in." His friend comes running very eagerly, but the man standing at the door does not move away from the door, and keeps standing there. How will the poor man enter ? He does not allow him to go in. The friend cannot get into the compartment. The train leaves, and the man who is calling him leaves without him. Similarly you keenly desire some object. You long for it day and night. You constantly desire the object and invite it to come. The desired object comes to you,

but you in your keenness do not move away from the door, and do not give it room to come in. You are in the way of the arrival of the desired object, so you are unhappy, and get the contrary reward. First you only beg for things. But after begging, you must move away from the door. You must move in from the door, and then only will that thing come in, and you will see that friend in the form of that object sitting near you. So whether you get your desired object or not depends on whether you give it room to enter or not. The air near our universe gets thinned by the sun's heat, and goes up, and its place is taken by other air which comes flowing in. But if the former air does not leave its place, the outer air cannot take its place.

Similarly if you go on harbouring countless desires, and continue to have insignificant, lowly egoism, and body-consciousness your desired objects are not drawn towards you. You must give up these desires. At first you may be desirous, and become a beggar but this is not enough. After desiring you must go beyond all desires and wishes. Only then will your desires be fulfilled. The sun, moon, the planets, and the five elements obey the commands of some men, and work accordingly. The secret of their power is that their desires have no sense of necessity. Their commands and desires are like those of a king, which are beneficial to his subjects. Not wanting anything, not suspecting expecting anything, the king constantly looks after the happiness of his subjects, his courtiers, and his attendants. If such a king with a pure intent

orders his own men to do anything, it is not for his own happiness, but for the happiness of others.

In this world only that man is like a king and a monarch, who is free from all desires. Those whose orders are obeyed by the sun, the moon, and all the elements of the universe, are beyond all desires and yet all their desires are fulfilled. So you also have first to go beyond all desires. When this happens, all your desires will be fulfilled. This is the true secret of fulfilling your desires.

All that you see is the sun. Whatever you see is due to the power of the sun, and whatever you hear is also due to the sun. If the sun did not shine, all the atmosphere would be frozen due to the cold ; and because there would have been no movement in it, we would not have heard any sound. It is only due to the heat of the sun that you can taste anything ; Plants grow only because of the heat of the sun ; our sense organs function due to the sun ; the universe in it's present state owes it's existence to the sun. So all things exist only because of the sun.

The sun is a neutral witness. The sun shines impartially due to it's own nature. This is why the earth and all other planets exposing all their components go round the sun. As soon as the sun's rays touch them, the snows start melting, and the water starts flowing. The wind blows in all directions. Various kinds of vegetations start growing and everything acquires motion.

Vedanta says that, if without desiring any worldly objects, you can permanently reside in your own greatness ; exist in the neutral, impartial mode of

the sun ; move about selflessly spreading your life and light ; keeping faith in the true greatness of the divine mind-power (which is yourself) ; lead a life bereft of any kind of body-consciousness ; then you will become that great power, whom all the universe obeys.

There is a story of the Chief minister of a king, who had done heavy penance in order to have darshan of the Goddess Lakshmi, and had performed many holy japas, lakhs of japas, but he did not have the darshan of the Goddess. Thereby he lost faith in such matters. He left the world and became a sadhu. As soon as the minister left the world, became an ascetic, and went to the jungle, he saw the Goddess Lakshmi standing in front of him. He folded his hands in pranam, and said, "Oh Goddess ! I don't need you now. Please go away from here. Why have you come here ? Now I am an ascetic. What use are money, wealth, grandeur and objects of worldly pleasure to a sannyasi ? When I wanted you, you did not come. Now when I have given up my desire for you, you have come to me." The Goddess Lakshmi replied, "You yourself had blocked your own path. As long as you had desire, as long as you had a false idea of durability, as long as you had put yourself in the state of a poor beggar, you obtained nothing. But as soon as you became devoid of all desires, and kicked away everything, you became God-like and stood in your own divine greatness." This is the true secret of gratifying all desires.

The Teachings of Shandilya

Nirmal Chandra Ghosh

[The present topic is from Chhandogya Upanishad¹. It consists of four 'Kandikas', not verses but in (poetic) prose. The topic goes by the name Shandilya Vidya (शाण्डिल्य विद्या) which means the teachings of Shandilya. Shandilya, who was the son of the sage Shandila, was a great sage. Shandilya's name occurs in several places in ancient Sanskrit scriptures such as, Shatapatha Brahmana ; Vrihadaranyaka Upanishad. In Shatapatha Brahmana, the teachings of Shandilya is also given². Shandilya's 'Bhaktisutra', perhaps written at a much later time, is also famous.

In Sharada-mahatmya, the book describing the glory of the famous ancient sacred spot called Sharadapitha in Kashmir (now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir portion), it is said that the sage Shandilya, son of Matanga, worshipped the goddess of learning Saraswati at this sacred spot in her triple form of Sharada, Vagdevi, and Saraswati. The goddess was pleased with his devotion and revealed her divine nature to the sage³.] ⁴

1. Third Chapter, 14th part.

2. See 'Upanishad', translated by Mahesh Chandra Vedantaratra, pages 95—96.

3. Kalhana's Rajatarangini. A chronicle of the kings of Kashmir (Bombay Sanskrit Series).

4. Shandilya mentioned in Chhandogya Upanishad is the same as Shandilya mentioned in Shatapatha Brahmana. The other two Shandilyas are different.

The sage Shandilya says,

सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म तज्जलानिति शान्त उपासीत ।

अथ खलु क्रतुमयः पुरुषो यथाक्रतुरस्मिँल्लोके पुरुषो

भवति तथेतः प्रेत्य भवति स क्रतुं कुर्वीत ॥

All this entire universe (which is manifested in the form of name and form) is in reality Brahman. The universe is created by Him, it is in Him, it is activated by Him, and during the deluge (प्रलय) it merges in Him. He is the root cause of its creation, existence and annihilation. So with serenity¹ of mind, being free from likes and dislikes and anxieties Brahma should be meditated upon and worshipped² by concentrating on the above mentioned aspects of Brahma.

As you must sow, so you must reap. It is also said 'यादृशी भावना यस्य सिद्धिर्भवति तादृशी' (As one channels his thoughts and ideas so he gets the results). So one attains the lower or higher, or the supreme state (of being) after death according to his action, thoughts and ideas and conviction during his life time and according to his

1. The Lord tells Arjuna about the nature of the man, who achieves serenity of mind.

रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन् ।

आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति ॥

A self disciplined man, who moves among the objects of senses, with the senses under control, free from attachment and aversion (to objects of senses etc.), attains serenity of mind.

Bhagavadgita, Chap. 2, Verse 64.

2. See note at the end.

thoughts¹ at the time of death. Therefore one should, with firm belief, worship Brahma by doing good deeds, without craving for the fruits, and by moulding his thoughts and ideas and conviction towards the attainment of the Supreme self (realisation of Brahma).

The sage tells about the aspects of Brahman.

मनोमयः प्राणशरीरो भास्वरूपः सत्यसङ्कल्प आकाशात्मा
सर्वकर्मा सर्वकामः सर्वगन्धः सर्वरसः
सर्वमिदमभ्यात्तोऽवाक्यनादरः ॥

He is pervading the mind of all being ; His body is the life of all ; He is self-effulgent ; His will is truth. He is the doer of every action (or He is the source or cause of every action). He desires all the desires (or all the desires of beings are origi-

1. The Lord tells (Bhagavadgita, Chap. 8, Verse 6).

यं यं वापि स्मरन्भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः ॥

O Son of Kunti, whatever is ones thought at the time of once death, he, being absorbed in that, attains the state (of being) according to that thought, in his next life. (Generally a man's thought at the time of death is according to his actions, desires, attachments and ideas and convictions during his life time.)

In the following two verses the Lord said, "Therefore at all times remember Me and fight. When your mind and understanding are set on Me, you will definitely attain to Me and there is no doubt about it.

He, who meditates on the Supreme Person with undivided attention by constant practice, reaches the divine Supreme Person."

nated by Him). He is all (sweet) smells. He is the juice (essence) of all things. He is limitless like the sky . He is all-pervading. He is without the organ of speech and any of the other organs or senses. He does not depend on any one or anything (because He is all-in all¹).

The sage tells that Brahma is his soul lodged in his own heart. He is smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest.

एष म आत्माऽन्तर्हृदयेऽणीयान् बृहेर्वा यवाद्वा
सर्षपाद्वा श्यामाकाद्वा श्यामाकतण्डुलाद्वा ष म
आत्माऽन्तर्हृदये ज्यायान् पृथिव्या

ज्यायानन्तरिक्षाज्ज्यायान् दिवो ज्यायानेभ्यो लोकेभ्यः ॥

He (the supreme soul, Brahma, mentioned above) is my soul inside the cavity of my heart. He is smaller than a grain of paddy, or barley, or mustard seed, or shyamaka², or even shyamaka rice. (He is smaller than the smallest).

He, my soul in the cavity of my heart, is greater than the earth, greater than the intervening space between the earth and the sky, greater than the sky, and even greater than all the regions taken together.

(He is greater than the greatest.)³

1. He is self contented.
2. A type of paddy that grows in forest land.
3. Yamaraja also tells the same thing to Nachiketa as given in Kathopanishad (Part I, Chap. 2, Verse 20).

अणोरणीयान् महतो मोहीयानात्मा जन्तोनिहितो गुहायाम् ।

तमक्रतुः पश्यतिवीतशोको धातुप्रसादान्महिमानमात्मनः ॥

The sage tells that the aspirant should have firm conviction.

सर्वकर्मा सर्वकामः सर्वगन्धः सर्वरसः
 सर्वमिदमभ्यात्तोऽवाक्यनादर एष भ आत्माऽन्तर्हृदय
 एतद् ब्रह्मै तमितः प्रेत्याभिसंभावितास्मीति यस्य
 स्यादद्धा न विचिकित्साऽस्तीति ह स्माह
 शाण्डिल्यः शाण्डिल्यः ॥

One, having firm belief without any doubt that, He, the all pervading Brahma, the doer of every action (or the source or cause of every action), who desires all the desires (or who originates all the desires of all beings), who is all (sweet) smells and the juice of all things, who is without the organ of speech or any other organ or senses, and who does not depend on any one or anything, is verily my soul inside the cavity of my heart and I shall definitely attain to Him after my death, is sure to attain to Him. So said Shandilya ; so said Shandilya¹.

Note : उपासना (Upasana) means mental worship and (or) meditation. It involves three, viz., Brahma (God or the supreme soul) to be meditated upon or mentally worshipped, (2) the worshipper or meditator, and (3) the continuous think-

The supreme soul lodged in the heart of every creature, is subtler than the subtlest and greater than the greatest. A desireless person, having no sorrow, sees that divine glory of the soul through the grace of the supreme Lord.

1. Repetition is for admiration and affection for the great sage.

ing (or feeling) about (1) by driving away from the mind all other thoughts and feelings which lead the mind astray. The final success is attained when these three merge in Him, the supreme self, and the worshipper is in infinite bliss (samadhi).

**Statement Required under Rules of the Registration of
Newspaper (Central) Rules, 1956**

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1. Place of Publication | ... | Calcutta |
| 2. Periodicity of its publication | ... | Quarterly |
| 3. Printer's name | ... | Shri Baidyanath Dutt |
| Nationality | ... | Indian |
| Address | ... | The Eureka Printing Works (P) Ltd.,
76, B. B. Ganguli Street, Calcutta-12 |
| 4. Publisher's name | ... | Dr. Prafulla Chandra Dutt |
| Nationality | ... | Indian |
| Address | ... | 78/5, R. K. Chatterjee Road,
Calcutta-42 |
| 5. Name of Editor | ... | Sri R. K. Banerjee |
| Nationality | ... | Indian |
| Address | ... | 29A, Ballygunge Circular Road,
Calcutta-700 019 |
| 6. Name and address of individual, who own the newspaper and partners or the shareholders holding more than one per cent of the total capital | ... | Shree Shree Anandamayee
Charitable Society,
Publications Division,
Matri Mandir,
57/1, Ballygunge Circular Road,
Calcutta-700 019 |

I, Dr. G. N. Roy (Misra), General Secretary, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dr. G. N. Roy (Misra)
General Secretary

The Mystical Aspects of Islam

Dr. K. M. P. Mohamed Cassim, Ph.D.,

The teachings of Islam are relevant for all mankind for all time, because human problems are same everywhere. Spiritual wisdom alone can liberate us from psychological conflicts, the resultant misery and the evils of life and make our lives sweet, pure, peaceful and joyous. Islam expects each one of us to contribute something to the upliftment and peace of the world so that mankind may grow in the attainment of spiritual freedom and enlightenment. A true Muslim cannot be selfish as he is a channel through which the peace and joy of the Divine radiates for the good of mankind. He lives and functions in a higher spiritual state and he unknowingly disseminates the perfume of peace and happiness which would benefit the whole world and humanity. According to Islam the world is not an illusion to be avoided, but it exists and is real. The fact is that each sees it a little differently. However, the world is not real in the sense that it is impermanent and changes every moment, and one who in his mistaken perception tries to hold and cling to the passing panorama of the world will suffer.

Islam emphasizes the oneness of mankind and universal brotherhood and urges all men to be treated as members of one family irrespective of creed, caste or colour. Further, it teaches to

respect other religions since, whatever doctrinal difference there may be among the various religions, certainly they all attempt to lead man away from evil and direct him in the path of righteousness. According to Islam the human life is of tremendous worth as it is only man who has the capacity and the possibility of gaining the highest state of perfection. Religion does not confine itself to the mere observance of rites and rituals. It means much more because it refers to a way of life that guides a person to a good and moral life. The practice of a good life consists of harmonious, peaceful living with one's fellow being.

The world is in such a bewildered and chaotic state, people everywhere are searching for something, and often do not even know what it is. It is apparent that possession of material things does not always provide enjoyment and satisfaction. Similarly, when there is unlimited sensual pleasure it becomes a pain, sweetness turns to bitterness. Living as we do in a complex and rapidly changing world, and caught in a web of relationships, we are called upon to deal with a variety of objects, persons and events in every day life. However, it is not the complexity of external situations that is the real problem — these are not as complex as we take them to be — the real problem is the disorganized condition of our inner life. Therefore, man's future possibilities will be in the domain of consciousness.

The philosophy of Islam helps man to know his (ruh) soul which is his real nature on this realization

or soul-discovery leads him to liberate from ignorance, bondage and sorrow. The essential nature of man is joyful and he has been blessed with freedom because the soul is whole and perfectly blissful. One must realize the fact that the soul is beyond the limits of name and form and beyond the boundaries of time and space. In treading the Islamic path what is important is to understand the inner working of our (nafs) minds correctly. Nurul Irfan—Light of wisdom dispels darkness of ignorance and guides us to live a purer, nobler life of unselfish endeavour and of serenity and happiness. It is to be realised that intuitive wisdom is not memory based knowledge ; understanding is not acquired by head learning, because wisdom does not lie in the repression of the senses. It gives us the capacity to look at everything without allowing the conditioned mind to distort and intervene. It denotes a change in consciousness and a new perspective on life and it is a vision of freshness of intensity and joy. To one who has found wisdom within his (qalb) heart, all creation is a mirror in which he sees the beauty of Allah and in this perception one experiences the pervasive unity and in which state the entire universe becomes one living vibrant whole.

The teachings of Islam integrates both secular and spiritual into practical living. It removes all contradictions and conflicts and opens up new vistas to human vision and teaches the solidarity of the Universe, oneness of mankind and the divinity of the soul. It points to the discovery of Truth

which has no limits. It directs us to living wisdom which transforms the individual and through him the world. It unifies and brings peace and happiness. It also indicates the way of life which leads to the expansion of perception and the development of intuitive faculties. Islam emphasizes a perennial theme significantly relevant and meaningful to every age. At present we are in the midst of a rapid deterioration of the biological, psychological and spiritual quality of humanity which is reflected in the steady increase in the incidence of degenerative disease, mental illness and social disharmony.

Islam comes from the word 'Salam' which means peace. We can attain the state of serenity only when one's mind is completely surrendered to Allah. The concept of 'Kalima' (faith in Islam) demands not mere verbal declaration in the existence of Allah, but inner intensive awareness in the oneness with the Divinity through direct realization. Prayer should not be considered as an act of worship in a mechanical way, but an attitude of devotion which elevates one to the height of contemplation, in which exalted state, the ego is negated. To keep the mind alert and quite under all circumstances is the aim of prayer. From the mystical point of Islam 'Khalk' is not different from 'Haq' substantially the difference is only phenomenal. In the actual state of Prayer the identity between Allah and Insa'an (man) is realized. In other words man becomes one with God. The correct understanding of (Saum) fasting implies not only mere starvation, but also close observation of the

lower mind (nafs) and the maintenance of mental purity without getting involved in any form of worldly temptation. The most important lesson one has to learn while fasting is to penetrate into the various aspects of the mind by choiceless awareness so that the beauty of divine grace can be experienced and which will definitely bring harmonization and spiritual liberation. The right attitude of (Zakat) charity indicates not only the feeling of compassion in helping the poor on a material level, but also the spontaneity of a pure heart which radiates the light of wisdom and serenity for spiritual upliftment of mankind. In other words, we must make every effort to spread the mystical knowledge to the aspiring seekers to understand and discover the ultimate Reality (Haq) within. The final goal of (Hadj) consists of not only to the pilgrimage to Macca, but also to travel inwardly to establish spiritual connection with the Ka'aba of the heart indwelling Divinity. The practical point for an Insa'an to contact Allah is to silence the mind because the mystery of divine presence cannot be known by the mind. The most subtly of all disciplines is the inward journey because it opens the secret window of the soul and gives us the master key of Self-Knowledge through which one realizes essential Oneness — Unification with Allah.

Spiritual practice is actually an inner discipline and it is mainly concerned with the process of self-discovery which is the culmination of every spiritual endeavour. It is to be realized that self-awareness is not a mental game to play or intellectual exercise

in abstraction. As soon as all impurities have been removed by the practice of (muraqabah) meditation one's spiritual vision opens to the divine light giving wisdom of reality. Spiritual life is essentially a method of self-discipline leading to self-transformation having therefore tremendous practical advantages in our day-to-day affair. Actually, meditation refers to a state of synthesis of all the various faculties of the mind. Meditation transports one to a new dimension which unfolds all the dormant potentials leading to spiritual liberation. The divinity one seeks will not be found outside himself in the realm of phenomena, but it is to be re-discovered within his own being, for Allah centres in every man. Actually, (muraqabah) meditation establishes a living relationship between ourselves and Allah which in turn gives meaning and significance to everything in life, because such complete surrender to the divine inner power gives the body and mind renewed energy to cope with worldly problems and responsibilities. Among the tangible benefits resulting from regular meditation are improved mental health, development of a calmer mind and a greater sense of peace and happiness. In (muraqabah) meditation there is a vigorous surge of divine power and thus man's link with the inner plenitude is re-established and he becomes master of his senses. In meditation man develops a perception of wholeness so that one can safely make a quantum jump from mental level to divine state. In meditation when ego centred activity goes to abeyance then one draws tremendous spiritual

energy from the unknown, the fathomless ocean of Divinity. In meditation there is no fear, friction and resistance ; one feels rejuvenated, regenerated, and fresh. In meditation human life is enriched by intuition, peace, freedom and bliss. This meditative awareness bestows order and offers a glimpse of the total potentialities of man. Through prayer and meditation can the eternal Truth that has been proclaimed by the Prophets and Mystics be re-discovered in a most penetrating and practical manner.

The first stage in Islam is 'Shariah' which stresses the importance of faith, devotion and complete surrender to Allah. This practical method of purifying the physical body, emotion and mind through prayer greatly facilitates a man (Insa'an) to establish close contact with Allah. Without understanding correctly the cardinal principles of Islam which is based on elementary knowledge of 'shariah' one cannot progress in the spiritual path. Prayer is the most effective way to have true peace of mind ; when our mind is still and calm we are free to contemplate on the divine attributes of Allah. In the light of mystical dimension of Islam, true surrender to Allah is a positive acceptance of everything by giving up ego defences, the oneness of real surrender consists in facing all the situations in life boldly with an attitude of trust and confidence. In other words, submission to the divinity within takes one far beyond the confines of mere mind and intellect, reason and logic into the unfathomable depth of the Supreme Silence.

Islam then speaks about the second stage known as 'Tariqah' which is specifically devoted in pointing out the divine faculties in man and guides him properly in the pursuit of Truth. Each group consists of a spiritual master — Sheik and aspiring seekers — Mureeds. As a matter of fact, 'tariqah' is really a divine fellowship or spiritual organization the chief aim of which is to give spiritual training and then initiate the disciples so as to advance in the higher aspects of divine wisdom by imparting and exchanging the inner mystical experience of the Sheik. We know from daily experience that to achieve anything in life, at the physical and intellectual levels we need training, practice and concentration. In a similar way specific instructions are given to the disciples to practice dhikr and muraqabah — techniques of meditation systematically with a view to equip and stabilize themselves spiritually so as to undertake the most difficult task of penetrating further into the realm of the mind.

'Haqiqah' refers to the third stage in Islam which reveals the inner divine secret of man. Man was originally perfect, due to ignorance and false identification with his physical body and mind he is in a state of imperfection now. 'Haqiqah' stresses the importance of self-knowledge, contemplation and the capacity to awaken soul energy 'ruh' through (muraqabah) meditation. A seeker who proceeds in the path of 'Haqiqah' realizes that Allah or Absolute Reality ceases to be an outside object. And to him the discovery of eternal Truth

is not an intellectual formula to be theorised, but a spiritual fact to be experienced directly, because seeking Allah is a natural teleological urge in every man. Each soul is an integral part of the divinity and must return to that Infinite Divine source Allah. The search for Allah Almighty is only another name for unfolding of perfection already present in the soul (ruh). The concept of 'Haqiqah' is based on the Truth that real Insa'an is not the body or the mind, but essentially rooted in 'ruh' which is pure and free. The philosophy of 'Haqiqah' points out that the delights that are born from the senses are the cause of pain, for they are ephemeral ; desire can never be satisfied, and the more we feed it the more it grows. The supreme joy can be attained by Insa'an by realizing his 'ruh' through the practice of (muraqabah) meditation. The purification of one's life is a necessary condition for progress in meditation. The meditative way is not an escape from life or a dreamy living, but it is a method of living in full awareness and attentiveness so that there is a possibility for a man to contact the soul energy. It is a way of growing spiritual consciousness and thereby rising beyond the limitation of the body and mind. The last and the final stage of spiritual evolution of man described as 'Ma'rifa' in which state the Insa'an merges in the oneness of Allah and thereby the feeling of separation vanishes ; the ego barrier is dissolved and transcended.

Some Festivities at our Vrindaban Ashram

Saroj Paliwal

We bow to the Land of Braj that has long been glorified in the Puranas as the seat of supreme, celestial Krishna Consciousness. Our Vrindaban ashram has been a unique place as far as its expansion and environs are concerned. Its beauty, grandeur and purity — all are so eye-catching as to make the visitor fall in love with it 'at first sight'. It contains in itself all the elements of nama, rupa, lila and dham which represent the spirit of Shri Vrindaban in toto. One can find these four elements of nama, rupa, lila and dham shrunk into one in our ashram and remain manifested herein making the environs joy-permeated manifoldedly by the divine advent of our beloved Ma Anandamayi. It means to say that the element of 'anand' i. e. bliss has been re-incarnated in the form of an ashram that keeps on singing the lulling lyrics of Ma in the name of Chhalia — Krishna. To my mind, the entire ashram is Ma's 'Swakriya-swarasamrit-swarup', as Ma's lila, Ma's name, Ma's swarup and Ma's dham-all play frolics in peaceful precincts of this beautiful ashram embodying Ma's subtle spirit in a gross form. Herein, one can realize that Ma and Krishna are one and

the same. A devotee may concentrate on Ma as Yashoda, the mother of Krishna or Krishna Himself put into the form of a mother. Both are identified with each other and very kindly and lovingly witness each visitor's arrival and each activity of the ashram performed on different festivals.

In this ashram of ours, one can easily enjoy the solitude of perfect seclusion and absolute calm for inhaling the ambrosial air of the vernal wood as mentioned by the Nature Poet, William Wordsworth :—

One impulse of vernal wood
 May teach you more of man ;
 Of moral evil and of good
 Than what the sages can.

The ashram arranged our Guru purnima puja on July 11, 1987 when we adored Sri Sri Ma and Didima most reverentially. The puja was performed by Sri Swarup Brahmachari amidst the singing lores of 'guru-bhakti'.

From 28th July to 9th August i. e. Shravani purnima, the ashram arranged an elaborate programme to felicitate the Shravan month that embodies the spirit of joy of super mundane nature by way of 'Jhulan-festivals'. During this period we had a fortnight long Rasa-lila programme witnessed by several devotees and admirers of Rasa from far and near, in which the Rasa-mandali staged daily Radha-Krishna lila related to the various incidents from Krishna's life. Out of these lilas, the Jhulan lila, Bhakta Mirabai lila proved to be highly exciting.

As we know, the Shravani Purnima i.e. Full Moon day has been a super divine date for all of us, as several gods and goddesses got manifested, this day, in the celestial body of Sri Sri Ma. Among Ma's devotees, this day is known as the diksha date of our beloved Ma. In order to commemorate it, we all meditate this day between 11.45 and 12.15 midnight, so as to be one with the supreme consciousness of Ma.

Shri Krishna Janmashtami is also a very special kind of festival for the whole of Brajbhumi, since the Formless Brahma got manifested in the form of Krishna. This blessed day fell this year on the 16th of August. It is magnanimously meaningful to our Ashram of Vrindaban, as it signifies the installation-ceremony of two pairs of Shri Radha-Krishna, popularly known as 'Krishna-Chhalia' by our Ma. Great was the Janmashtami of 1966 that witnessed the inauguration ceremony of this historic temple amidst the holy communion of saints and sages like Haribaba, Swami Akhandanandaji etc. and throngs of Vaishnava mahatmas and devotees.

Br. Shivanandaji (Sailesh-da) performed Chhalia and Ma puja on this celestial occasion. During the midnight hour, we all assembled in the hall for Samkritan at 11 p.m. Just at 12 O'clock at midnight, the entire environs of the temple resounded with the blowings of the conchshell and bells marking the divine moment of Krishnavatar. At this hour, we were having the chanting of Smd. Bhagwatam and the nerve-inspiring sweet

samkirtan of —

Krishna Chhalia Anandtal

Braj Raman Pran Gopal

This freshened our memories of Ma's unique association with Krishna Chhalia and her innate unity with 'Braj Raman Prana Gopal' that made her hum these ambrosial addresses for Lord Krishna. We, then, felt absolutely overwhelmed at her causeless grace that enabled us to remain attached to this animate ashram that vibrates with the Krishna-Ma-Consciousness every moment, every hour, every day. Nothing can be more fortunate to the devotees of Ma and Shri Krishna and Shri Radha Rani than to spend this whole life in the ceaseless sadhana within the ashram premises.

During this Krishnotsava, Ma's very close girl devotees like Paruldi, Gopalpriyadi, Premlata ji, Renudi and Swami Praggyananda (Pramiladi) were present amidst others to celebrate the holy occasion. We all chanted, full-throatedly, at 12 p.m., the fortunate moment of Shri Krishnavatar, the following rhyme very much popular in Braj area —

Nand Ke anand Bhaye

Jai Kanhiya lal Ki

We were, then, greetedly dispersed with bhog-prasad after the radiant arti.

A unique event occurred, too, on this Janmash-tami which can be summed up as follows :—

“Once I was urged up at Naimisharanya to submit before Ma to give me certain instructions for rendering some seva to the Vrindaban ashram. At this, Ma immediately remarked :

“You sing one or two couplets of Ram Charit Manas every last Sunday of the month.”

At this instruction of Ma, Shri Ram Charit Manas path started with the kind co-operation of Sri Jai Nath Kaul, the then Secretary of the ashram, now widely known as Ma Das, some 16 years back. As Ma Das has been a great admirer and constant chanter of Ram Charit Manas under Ma's spell of Manasprem, I enjoyed this Manas path and continued it without break till this Krishna-janmashtami. During my absence, Ma Das used to perform it and in his absence, I used to sing 'path' twice or thrice a month to complement the absences caused in the event of urgency.

This 16 year-old-path came to a close this Janmashtami when Ma Das had returned from Kankhal. Since he was a witness of this entire Manas path, I was inspired to complete it in his presence. I, then, got inspired to arrange an 'akhand path' so as to mark its completion.

Our present Secretary, Br. Sitanshu Dada, lent us his full support to organize a 12 hour akhand manas path on 23rd August, 1987 in the ashram hall before Shri Mahaprabhu temple.

In front of Ma's inspiring picture, we started path at 6-15 a.m. on 23rd Sept. and finished it at 6-15 p.m. the same day.

It was, certainly, miraculous to see how Ma supported this path by rendering the sky wrapped with the clouds as we started reading 'Kishkindha kanda and recited the following lines :—

**Varsha Kal Megh Nabh Chhaye
Garjat Lagat Param Suhaye**

At this moment, reading of Manas and roaring of the clouds went simultaneously. As the spacious firmament got densed with the roaming clouds in frenzy, it began to rain cats and dogs, although it was a heavily draught-stricken period. Surprisingly enough, the thunder roared and roared on our reading the following lines :—

**Damini Damak Rahi Ghana Mahi
Khal Ki Priti Yadha Thir Nahi.**

At this divine lila of Ma, we all bowed within at Ma's grace and her silent sanction of this 12 hour path.

On this auspicious occasion, Swami Satyanandaji, Udasin Pujariji — Sadhubela of Vrindaban blessed the ashram with their holy presence. Pt. Indu Bhushan Goswami, the noted Ramayani, graced the occasion by delivering his illustrious talk on the substance of Shri Ram Charit Manas and the message of Goswami Tulsi Das.

This inspiring incident came to a close with the distribution of prasadam after the glorious 'arti'.

Jai Ma

Truth itself will assist in every way him who has gone forth in search of Truth.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Sai Ram Sahay

M. Rama Rao

How Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi came into my life ?

I am one of humble and meek devotees of Sirdi Sai Baba. Baba advised his devotees to light up their lives with the Saints and Sages. It is also said that where there is an extraordinary divine power, there it is God's incarnated Power itself.

Lord Krishna also says in Gita Chapter 10 Verse 41.

“Whatever glorious or beautiful or mighty being exists anywhere know that it has spring from but a spark of my splendour.”

On the above basis I am of opinion that Ma is not only a great mystic sage but also is a Avatara of God (Divine incarnation).

Ma (Nirmala Sundari Devi) was born on 30th April, 1896 to her mother Mokshada Sundari Devi. Names to mother and daughter are apt. Mokshada Sundari Devi got Moksha (Liberation) as Swami Muktananda Giri. Ma Nirmala Sundari's name is as apt as her physical beauty and spiritual bliss. She was radiantly beautiful, lovable, obedient, ever ready to help others and always happy.

In 1909 she was married to Ramani Mohan Chakravarti. She came to stay with him in 1918. She was God-intoxicated. Along with household chorus she was engrossed in innumerable kinds

of spiritual exercises and yogic practices. Officiating as her own Guru she gave herself initiation to Ramani Mohan whom she named 'Pitaji' (father) or Bholanath. After some time Bholanath became her formal disciple. The question of marital relationship naturally never arose. He aptly lived as a Vairagi as Bholanath Siva.

The spiritual practice for the purpose of self realization were conducted in Ma's presence. It enjoined strict discipline in food, sleep, speech, thought and behaviour and had a daily programme during annual Samyam mahavrata.

Anandamayi Ma preached no creed or cult nor she founded any sect. Her catholicity attracted all. I am one of them.

Ma Anandamayi came to this place in 1979 during the Governorship of Sri Govind Narayan. Then Homas, Havanas and Pujas were held. There was a mass Kumari Puja. My two grand children chi. Meera of ten years and Rupa of 8 years participated in the function and received gifts of clothes, utensils and mangal dravyas. They described me Ma's beauty and her charming Divine bliss.

Ma Anandamayi was handed over the balance of Rs. 75000/- collected for the above function but she in return handed over to the people of Karnataka to use it for spiritual purpose and gave Rs. 25000/- from her own funds.

Living a full life of 86 years as mystic and holy personality she left this world on 27th August, 1982.

Sai Baba prompted me to have Satsang. Accordingly I used to attend the spiritual discourses

at Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, The Sai Spiritual Centre and Prasanna Anjaneya-Temple, Raigudda at Bangalore from 1980-84. One day in 1985 my friend Sri T. K. Iyyengar, took me to Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi Bhagavath Bhavan, 16th Main J. P. Nagar, III Phase, Bangalore-78. The foundation stone of this BHAVAN was laid down by Sri Govind Narayan, the then Governor of Karnataka on 9th February 1981 and was inaugurated on 24th Sept., 1982 by Sri Sri Swaroopanandaji Maharaj of Dwaraka. Since then it has become a radiating centre of Bhagavatham which teaches Devotion, Dedication and Love towards the Supreme reality, and pure Bhakti by arranging regular discourses on Bhagavatham by learned Scholars, Pandits and Saints. The Trust has also arranged free classes for teaching Sanskrit, Upanishad, Recitation of Geetha, Lalitha Sahasranama, Vishnu Sahasranama Slokas and Stotras.

On the first day I was very much attracted by the loving, smiling and divine portrait of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi. This is my first impression and the last impression. Since then I became a regular devotee of Ma as my beloved Sai advised us to light up our lives with the saints and sages. Sri Viswananda Swamiji, Secretary of the Ma Bhavan entrusted me a small work of noting the proceedings of the functions held in the Bhagavat Bhavan. I performed this duty obediently and sincerely as a humble service.

Out of those proceedings I am noting here one or two. One, the Vishnu Sahasranama

Parayana inauguration function ; the other installation of idols of Sri Lakshmi Narayana.

On 14.10.1985 at 6.30 p.m. Sri H. S. Varadesikacharya Rangapriya, Sanskrit Professor (Retired) inaugurated the Vishnu Sahasranama Parayana function in Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi Bhagavat Bhavan. The Bhavan was filled with devotees.

Sri Viswananda Swamiji, Secretary of the Bhavan said, "If a vision of God has to be exhibited the names of God have to be chanted regularly, and properly. For that and to show the way a Guru is very necessary. Such Guru is Sri Varadesikacharya. He is a great Pandit and has with him 32 volumes of Bharatha in Kannada. Instead of earning money his life was set apart for imparting education. He is the proper man for inaugurating the function."

The Chief Guest Sri Acharya said :

"There are ananth namas (endless names) to Sri Vishnu.

Namo Astvanathaya Sahastra Murthaye

Sahasra Padakshi Sirora Bahave

Sahasra Namne Purushaya Shaswathe

Sahasrakoti Yuga Dharine Namaha.

In this way Lord Brahman has praised Sri Vishnu.

Bhagavan becomes himself praise-worthy and he gives the strength to the devotee to pray. That strength is Amrutha. Thereby oozes the devotional juice (Bhakthi Rasa). Then devotee prays and worships God to grant Jnana and Moksha."

Lastly, God is pleased to remove Trice Tapas and give Bliss.

The Great Guru Sankaracharya first wrote commentary on Vishnu Sahasranama. There is no fixed time and place to recite thousand names of God. There are no hard and fast rules. It is the duty of everyone to recite the Sahasranama every day as many times as possible or even one or a few names. Saying thus the copies of Vishnu Sahasranamas were distributed among the devotees by him.

The next an important function held in the Bhavan was installation of Sri Lakshmi and Narayana moorthies on 19.5.1986.

On 24.1.1983 the Chief Spiritual and Religious Patron of the Mayee Bhavan Trust, His Holiness Sri Sri Jagadguru Shankaracharya Mahasannidhanam, Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharada Peetham Sringeri visited the Bhagavat Bhavan and stated that it would be befitting to have Sri Lakshminarayana moorthies in the precincts and to conduct Bhagavath Sapathaha regularly. Accordingly beautiful marble moorthies of Sri Lakshmi and Narayana had been donated to the Bhavan by a devotee.

'Bhagavath Sapathaha' had been organised from 12.5.1986 to 19.5.1986. There had been Bhagavatha Parayana. In connection with the installation of the moorthies Homa and Havans were performed according to Shastras. On 19.5.1986 installation muhurtham was fixed between noon 12 to 1-15.

On this auspicious occasion Ma's devotees and other public gathered together from various places to enjoy the holy occasion from morning 8 a.m.

From 8 a.m. Sriyuth Narasimha Iyyengar and T. K. Iyyengar chanted Vishnu Sahasranama. Songs on Siva Parvathi were sung. From 9-15 a.m. Bhuth Homa, Asan Homa and Sakthi Homa etc. were performed. At 11-45 a.m. Sri Sri Jagadguru Shankaracharya Sharada Peetham Sringeri arrived. The Secretary of Bhavan Sri Viswananda Swamiji welcomed Sri Acharya with Vedghosha and Poorna Kumbhas. Sri Acharya enquired the welfare of Sri Rajamarthand Varma, the President of the Mai Trust D. K. Shah former Dewan of Baroda and Rama Rao of Hyderabad. At 12-15 the then Governor Sri Ashoknath Banerji with his wife arrived.

At 12-45 Sri Mahaswami Acharya performed Abhisheka to Lakshinarayan moorthis and wiped them with his own hands and decorated with beautiful clothes, flowers, and garlands. Swamiji lastly offered Mahamangalarathi.

After this, Sri Viswanandaji, Shahji Raja marthand and Governor bowed to Acharyaji. All the devotees also offered their pranams to the Moorthis and to Acharyaji. The devotees, brahmins, guests and poor were fed simultaneously.

In the evening at 5 p. m. the Chief Guest Ashoknath Banerji told the audience that Sri Ma did not get an ordinary education but she achieved the highest education of Athma Jothi as mystics such as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Her divinity was unscrutable. She taught spirituality to the lettered and unlettered alike.

Sri Sringeri Mahaswamiji pointed out "God is every where. He is here also. This Bhavan is Sri Anandamayi's living place. She is playing her Leelas. When I went to North India Sri Shah created some connection for me with Ma. I came to know that she is not an ordinary person but a great Brahma Jnani. I told to Sri Govinda Narayan and Viswananda to have a symbol for Puja and creating Bhakti in ordinary men and women. That object is fulfilled today by installing Lakshmi and Narayana's moorthies. The Sanskrit lessons are being conducted in this Bhavan. Sanskrit is the original language of all the languages. Every one should learn Sanskrit. So saying His Holiness Acharyaji distributed the medals to Bhavan students who had secured distinction in the Sanskrit examination held during February, 1986 by Surasaraswathi Sabha Sringeri.

I will try to narrate my own experiences as regards to Ma.

On 10.3.1986 thoughts which gushed out from my heart are stated below. "I have to be content and compasionate in life. Chant 'Om Sai Ram' whenever possible. Lead the life with Sharadha and Saburi (Perseverance and patience) and leave the rest to Sri Baba to make me reach the goal of life. A ray of sunlight has pierced my life's prime moments."

My life's hard experience was awaited for me after two weeks. On 26.3.1986 my grand daughter of 19 years old Jothi complained some urine trouble. She was admitted to Nursing home on

27.3.86 and she expired taking Sai Baba's Udi and seeing his photo on 28.3.86. The hands which craddled Jothi had to lit the pyre at the age of about 80 years. I was dumb founded for some days. After performing due ceremonies one day I went to Ma's Bhavan, bowed her and sat silently in front of her picture. She with her smiling and loving motherly face reminded me that life was not a bed of roses but a mixture of fragrant flowers and pricking thorns. Be bold enough to face it. Her these soothing words really made me peaceful, calm and composed.

Ma Anandamayi is a great mystic sage. Her teachings are Upanishadic. The Upanishadas say that Truth is the final goal and home of man. The crux is union. Union with what? Union with Real — with the supreme.

You are in God and God is in you.

All in one and one in all. All creatures are one being. Mystically Ma finds God in all and all in God. Her eternal truth is 'I am what I was and shall remain now and evermore'. She declares that whatever she does or whenever she speaks it is not 'I' who speaks but it is 'He'. "I live yet not 'I' but God in me". She asserts that she has no personal will but the Divine will acts through her. This is her Philosophy.

Death of sorrow does not weigh her down. Death of Jyotish Chandra Roy, a devotee and her husband Bholanath who lived with her for 30 years worshipped and venerated her but his death never weighed down her. Her extra ordinary powers

of overcoming was the death of her own mother Didima.

Her catholicity impressed me very much. Once at Shahbag from Kirtan she went to the grave of a Muslim Saint and offered Namaz and Sweet. For her Church, Mandir and Masjid were alike. She respected them with equality. There was no distinction of castes in her.

One day Ma met at Pondicherry with the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and placed the garland round the mother's neck. The mother took it off and placed it round Ma's neck. Thus they respected each other. It signifies that each of the two mothers was conscious of the same Divinity being manifested in the other.

For me the Mother of Aurobindo Ashram, Mother Saradadevi of Ramakrishna Ashram and Ma are respectively the embodiments of the Sat-Chit-Ananda, Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram, and goddesses of Lakshmi, Saraswathi and Paravathi of Modern Trinity.

Bhagavan Sri Krishna in the Bhagavadgita (chp-4-V8) says that for the protection of the virtuous for the destruction of evil doors and for establishing Dharma on firm footing, "I am born from age to age". Generally for the above purpose God's avataras take place.

The same God is born as man (God-man, Santh, Sage) to uplift not only the good but also the bad man to become God. Buddha, Christ, Sri Ramakrishna, Sai Baba and other Godmen paid special attention to the fallen, the down-trodden and the

destitute and by their redeeming power they lifted the lowly to the highest state.

Justifying her special concern for questionable characters, usually condemned in society, Ma remarks, "Should not a seriously sick person receive intensive care at a hospital and can a mother forsake a wayward ailing child?" Saints follow punishment as a last resort.

I bow at the lotus feet of Sri Anandamayi and pray to grant me devotion and duty-bound consciousness and strength to bear the pleasure and pain alike.

PROGRAMME

1. 29th July, 1988 - Friday - Guru Purnima.
2. 7th August, 1988 - Sunday - Nirban day of 1008 Swami Muktananda Giriji.
3. 23rd August, 1988 - Tuesday - Jhulan Ekadashi.
4. 24th August, 1988 - Wednesday - Jhulan Dwadasi—Bhaiji's "Tirodhan" day.
5. 27th August, 1988 - Saturday - Jhulan Purnima.
6. 3rd September, 1988 - Saturday - Janmastami.
7. 18th September, 1988 - Sunday - Lalita Saptami "Tirodhan" day of Didi.
8. 20th September, 1988 - Tuesday - Navami Shree Shree Ma's "Tirodhan" day.
9. 16th to 20th October, 1988 - Sunday to Thursday Shree Shree Durga Puja.
10. 24th October, 1988 - Monday Shree Shree Lakshmi Puja.

Ashram News

Kankhal :

On the 13th April on Chaitra Sankranti the revered 1008 Swami Muktananda Giri Maharaj's (Didima's) Sannyas Utsab was duly celebrated in her Samadhi. There was a feast for Sadhus and Mahatmas in the afternoon after their discourses.

On the 1st Vaisakh, New year (14th April) a special puja of Ma was conducted in the Ashram.

On the 19th April, on Akshay Tritiya day, the anniversary of Ma's Samadhi Mandir opening, a special puja, kirtan and distribution of prasad took place.

From the 1st May to 5th May, Ma's Janmotsab was celebrated with full pomp and ceremony.

Daily Sri Hara Govindji of Vrindaban conducted his Ras Leela with Sri Radha Gobinda and Mahaprabhu. The Maharasleela on the 1st night charmed all present.

On the night of the 2nd May (Ma's birthday) a special puja was celebrated from 3 a.m. at the Samadhi with Kumari Puja, Bhajan, Kirtan and Arati. On the 3rd May 108 Kumaris, 11 Brahmins and 1 Batuk were worshipped and fed.

Each day in the morning and evening the Mahatmas present gave learned discourses, accompanied by bhajan and kirtan. Leading Mahatmas such as the Mahatma of Mahanirvan Akhara, 1008 Swami Giridhar Narain Puri, Swami Chida-

nandaji of Rishikesh and Swami Akhandanandaji of Uttarkashi delivered special discourses and joined in the celebrations.

The revered Sri Sri Haribabaji Maharaj's devotee Swami Bipinendra Saraswati delivered a discourse full of deep truths and repeated Ma's advice to him when he first expressed his desire to her for taking Sannyas.

On the 5th evening Subha Adhibas Kirtan for a 24 hrs. Nam Yagna was sung, which was concluded after the breaking of the curd-vessel which heralded the conclusion of the entire festival.

Dehradun :

Kishenpur Ashram celebrated their annual Nam Yagna on Akshay Tritiya on the 19th April. Ma's Janmotsab was duly celebrated on 4th May.

Ranchi :

On the 13th April, Chaitra Sankranti, Sri Sri 1008 Muktananda Giriji's Sannyas Utsab was duly celebrated with special puja, kirtan and distribution of prasad.

On the 1st Vaisakh (14th April) New Year's day, several devotees visited the Ashram and conveyed their pranams to Ma and sought her blessings. On the 2nd May, Ma's birthday was duly celebrated and on the 4th May the Ashram was crowded from the evening onwards by devotees singing Kirtan, Matri Sangeet etc. On the 5th morning after speeches about Ma, hundreds of devotees were fed in a Bhandara.

Agarpara :

Ma's Janmotsab was celebrated with great pomp and ceremony on the 4th and 5th May. On the 4th night Brahmachari Tanmoyananda sang beautiful old Ashram Matri Sangeet before Maun and Matri Puja started at 3 a.m.

On the 5th nearly 2000 devotees were fed in a Bhandara to celebrate the occasion.

In Delhi, Varanasi and other Ashrams, Sri Sri 1008 Muktananda Giriji's Sannyas Utsab and Ma's Janmotsab were duly celebrated as in other years with great devotion.

Obituary

J. C. Mukherjee :

Didi Gurupriya's paternal elder cousin Jitendra Chandra Mukherjee was the son of Swami Turianandaji, Didi's father Swami Akhandanandaji's younger brother. He breathed his last in his advanced age on the 17th March last in his own house at Varanasi. Jitenda was one of Ma's oldest devotees, and a trusted member of the inner circle in all spiritual and material discussions of the Sangha.

Shankaridi :

On the 19th April last on Akshoy Tritiya day, Sri Sri Ma's devotee Swarnalata Das (Shankaridi)

entered the lotus feet of Ma in her full consciousness. She undertook several duties at Dehradun (Kishenpur) Ashram for many years and then went to Kankhal. Recently she was with her son in Delhi due to ill health, but expressed her strong desire to return to Kankhal. Strangely enough, on the day of her departure for Kankhal she was absorbed in Ma's bosom in permanent rest.

Binadi (Nepal) :

Died on the 23rd May, of a heart attack, suddenly in the afternoon, taking the names of Ma to the last.

She was the daughter of Nepal Raj, Tribhuban Vir Vikram Shah's brother Mohan Vir Vikram Shah. Although she was married into a Royal family at Pratapgunj, she was, like Mira, completely devoted to Sri Krishna Seva. She met Ma in Calcutta when visiting a friend there. Ma called her specially near her although she was standing far off wrapped in her thoughts. Subsequently she was converted to a Yogini in white clothes. She was very proficient in decorating the Ashram during Utsabs such as Ramayana, Bhagavat, Hanuman Chalisa etc. She spent 20 years in our Ashrams and at the age of 70 at the Samadhi Peeth of Kankhal she gave up her soul to Ma's feet in eternal rest.
