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“Lord, Thou Thyself art present in the way, as that particular activity”, view it in this light. See in every action an expression of THAT. Then all actions will help towards the revelation of Reality (*Svarupa Prakasa*). Do not think of them as separate one from the other — all are THAT. Who is the power of action (*kriya sakti*)? Thou thyself. And who is Power as such (*Sakti*)? THAT Itself — the One.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandan ayi

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# ANANDA VĀRTĀ

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

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## Sri Sri Ma's Utterances

Talking about the breath, Ma said, "Go on taking the Name in rhythm with your breath; this practice will help you in quieting the mind. Moreover, what is our life-breath is in fact the same thing that pervades the whole world. Once you are able to fall into the current of that sublime thought, that current itself will thenceforward carry you towards Him. It will suffice to fall just once into it."

Once Ma was on Her way back from Chittagong. While passing through a village, as Her gaze fell on a few cottages where repairing work was being done within the cottage boundaries, Ma smiled and commented, "All the confusions and complications are due to this 'bound'ness. It is only pent-up water that gets a foul smell – that is all. That is what a jiva is – the foul smell has developed due to stagnation of pent-up water."

In the context of the *samyama vrata* (observance of self-control), Ma said, "Nowadays you yourselves are getting this topic discussed at various places. Try, all of you, to observe this *vrata* carefully. What will it lead to?"

Well, do they not talk of the 'mirror of the heart' ? That mirror will become clean. If the mirror does not become clean, then how will you see your True Self (*Svarupa*) in it ?”

Someone asked, “Ma, how shall I take the Name with each and every breath ? Do explain it clearly.”

Ma replied, “Now and then, the Name may be taken in rhythm with the breath, by focusing attention on each breath. While breath is thus being inhaled and then exhaled some people feel their brain is getting heated, so they cannot take the Name in that manner for a long time. Do you know why ? Due to lack of *Brahmacarya*. With the decline of that one *asrama*, the rest of the *asramas* have also got ruined. Those who feel hot in the head are not to take the Name in that way. They should take the Name mentally, seated in a relaxed state, concentrating on the flow of breath. They need not follow the rhythm of breath. All cannot stand everything. Even if one just keeps sitting in this way, that will do.

“Again, mark ! They say, ‘Unify these three : the mind, the *mantra* and the breath.’ What does it mean ? This air that I am breathing, – if you just think of it a little carefully, you will find that all people have a common link with this vital air. For all of us are inhaling air from the same space and exhaling air into it again. In that way all are mutually related to one another. The *sadhus*, the *mahatmas* and whoever else you talk about, all are verily related to one another in the form of the

life-breath. Even this thought produces a sublime state of mind. As to this breath, it is just a ripple in the sublime state. Our goal is to reach the state of wave-less stillness, getting beyond the waves. The waves, too, are nothing but water, hence this is the road one has to take first for reaching the waveless state. You have to find your way only through the waves. For example, the sea is full of turbulent waves; but in spite of that, one takes a dip in it and comes out. With whatever little bit of capacity you have, go on doing your work. About all, nothing whatsoever happens without His grace, this is very true."

\* \* \*

One day, in the course of a conversation on various topics, it was also brought under discussion that Durvasa *muni* once said he had not eaten anything when in reality he had taken food. Hereupon a person asked, "Why did the *muni* tell a lie?"

In that context Ma said, "It was not a lie, however. In view of the state they were in, who will eat what? The saliva of the mouth is always being swallowed, yet nobody says that he has broken fast on account of that. The way you perform acts such as eating, sleeping etc. is not their way. That is why you cannot judge the words they utter. In fact, sometimes you are unable to judge them by what you see."

Again, the point was raised that instincts were manifested in Sri Krsna, that He had children. In reply also to this observation, Ma said, "Who will unite with whom? He Himself is all that exists, — union is possible if there

are pairs like you people; *He* Himself reside sin ~~His~~self – if that is what is said – . As regards the saying that *He* is the Seer – who will see whom and what ? While there is perception (of duality) there is creation (*drsti-srsti*). Verily, it is possible to be a perceiver only where there is duality.”

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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

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# In Association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee

Sri Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali)

*(Continued from previous issue)*

After the ninth 9th Vaisakh of 1353 (San), I had not had the pleasure of having sight of Sri Ma. In the meantime the political situation of India had experienced a tremendous change. Under the instigation of the British, the seed that was sown under the leadership of Jinnah had now assumed the proportion of a huge tree, which had obscured the skyline of India. Man had shrunk even below the level of animals. Murders, the burning of houses, the raping of women, and stealing them, dacoities etc. had become almost a daily affair, which, instead of being confined to the limits of a fixed boundary, had now become a problem of all India dimensions. The terrible acts that had been committed at Calcutta, Noakhali, and Bihar led people to believe that this quarrel between brothers and sisters would lead to the eclipse of Indian culture and tradition. In order to keep India directly under their heels, not believing they could do this successfully, so as never to keep India independent by any means, the shrewdly political British Raj decided to divide India into two parts. Mahatma Gandhi and other leading political figures had to accept this unpalatable decision and agree



to the partition of India. In fact this did not lead to the stopping of blood-shedding, moreover in many areas of the country, such as the Punjab and surrounding areas, under the cover of Govt. power, untold sufferings seemed to take place. Realising Pakistan was only fit to be inhabited by barbarians, lakhs and lakhs of human beings abandoned their ancestral houses, and ran towards the Indian Union ! There was no limit to how many millionaires became beggars, or how many happy homes were desecrated. Even today the dangers of these signs showed no signs of being limited. There were practically no Hindus in West Pakistan. Those that had first decided to stay in Eastern Pakistan were gradually forced to abandon their homes. The local govt. after seizing all the homes of the Hindus in East Pakistan, helped to abolish their homes, and Pakistan helped in this process by being indifferent to the abolition of the Hindus !

There were also several changes forced on Sri Sri Ma's Dhaka Ashram. By 27.7.47, the Ashram's Annapurna Vighraha had been transferred to our Kashi Ashram. After a few more days Bholanath's marble statue had been transferred to Calcutta Ashram. I had heard rumours to the effect that Sri Sri Ma had advised many people to move away from Dhaka. I do not know how far all this was true, but after the partition of Bengal, most of the wealthy citizens removed their families elsewhere. When my term of office in Dhaka University was nearing its end, and only a few days were left, the Pakistan Govt. seized my house, and were frequently insisting on my abandoning my house; under these conditions I was compelled to move to Calcutta.

On the 1st April of 1948, I left Dhaka, and on the 2nd, arrived at the house of my elder brother. Now the main problem became where could I live on a permanent basis. At this time Sri Sri Ma was in Kashi Ashram on the occasion of Basanti Puja. I thought I would bow to her decision, and would go the way she herself indicated, because I was absolutely unsettled in my mind, and the future appeared bleak and dark. Hence on the day of Basanti Puja I started for Kashi with my wife. Instead of living at the Ashram, I went to the abode of my friend Manmohan. His house was quite near the Ashram.

After leaving my household effects in his house, I went to the Ashram to meet Sri Sri Ma. Khukuni Didi took us to what looked like a Cave in which Sri Sri Ma was staying. There I discussed my domestic problems with Sri Sri Ma, and asked her where I could stay in future. Sri Sri Ma advised us to live part of the time in Kashi and partly in Calcutta. This arrangement did not appear very congenial to me, I said to Ma, "You have already stripped me of everything and now you wish to make me spend the rest of my money with the Rail Co.

Ma (laughing) : "Have I stripped you bare?"

I - "What else can you call it ? My house, furniture, etc. have all gone, I have only come here with a few clothes."

Ma : "So much the better. You appear to have taken Sannyas!

I : "Ma, this is not like your normal advice. I have learnt from you that one cannot be forced to take on a new religion. In the case of human beings, sannyas or a similar states of life comes about in the natural process.

If one is forced to take on such a state, one is apt to suffer from the consequence !”

On hearing this Ma laughed, but did not answer back. She requested me “Go and take your bath quickly. Gopi Baba will be arriving soon. Many good religious points will be discussed.”

I arrived back after finishing my bath. Bhupati Babu was among us. He had come to live in Kashi with his wife. It was he who had brought us to the Ashram. All of us together went along to the Ashram. Today was the Astami day of Basanti Puja. In the Ashram Bhog and Puja were being offered with great pomp and ceremony. Sri Sri Ma was sitting near the image of Basanti. The devotees present were singing kirtan for the occasion of the utsab. A cloth worn by Sri Ma had been cut to several pieces, to make handkerchiefs, and these were being distributed among the devotees as a piece of cloth offered to a deity. I also enjoyed obtaining a piece.

### **The liberation of human beings in a mass**

On arriving at Kashi I noticed a special subject. The devotees of Sri Ma were discussing the various aspects of the life of a special favorite devotee of Baba Visudhananda Paramhansa Deva. She was the second wife of the recently demised Ramesh Moitra Mahashay who had married twice. Both wives were alive. After the demise of Baba Visuddhananda, it was learnt that during spiritually guided times the elder wife used to have daily darshan of her Guru. During such times whatever she used to see or be given orders, she used to divulge to her sister-in-law (Satin). This was although her own memory was very short, her sister-wife's mem-

ory and intelligence were far superior, hence the other devotees of the late Baba Ramesh Maitra Mahasahay used to obtain full details of the darshan and instructions from her. They all used to call her "Choto Didi" (younger sister). This Choto Didi has now become famous as Choto Ma. I had previously already heard of her, and our family had suffered not a little in her hands. It is useless to discuss the private life of Choto Ma at this stage, but whatever she would preach had become a topic of all-round speculation. She used to predict that this concrete world would be externally destroyed, and that the day was quite nearby! Coincidentally with the destruction of this imaginary world, would appear a world of realities! Meanwhile this concrete body would not be bereft of blood and memory, its previous memory would remain intact. The immortality with which we were so far cognizant, that was not the real thing, because nobody had become immortal with a concrete body. The immortality indicated by Choto Ma, that meant allowing immortality with this very body !

A lot of people wanted to learn from Sri Ma Anandamayee that whatever was being foretold for the future would indeed truly take place. I was included in such a group. But nobody had so far been able to get to divulge anything more than, "Let us see what happens." During a certain midnight, when we were lying near Sri Ma, on the roof of her houseboat, then Sri Ma suddenly turned towards me and said, "See here without referring to any particular body, I can maintain that there is such a state during Sadhana, when referring to any particular body, that there comes a time, during sadhana when one realises that human beings and the

world together could make a near beginning simultaneously."

I: There is a belief in Vedanta that when speaking of human life, salvation for one could lead to the salvation of all. Obviously such a belief is based on a particular aspect of sadhana. Such being so, such a state can disappear when another aspect of sadhana is attained."

That this kind of belief about the human state of this type was also acknowledged by Sri Ma. But instead of prolonging the discussion, Ma started narrating about other incidents of her life. Later she added, "If I keep on talking like this, the whole night will have gone by. It is quite late already. You must now go to sleep." We were thus compelled to stop this discussion and go to bed. But slowly formed the definite opinion that whatever Choto Ma had been saying had no chance of being fulfilled.

In Kashi we spent 8/10 days in great enjoyment with Sri Ma. Later when Ma left for Allahabad, we returned to Calcutta. We learnt at Kashi itself that Sri Sri Ma was arriving in Calcutta on the occasion of Durga Puja. While in Calcutta, suddenly I learnt from a telegram from my friend Manmohan Ghosh that Sri Sri Ma was arriving in Calcutta. Later we learnt that Sri Sri Ma's arrival in Calcutta was linked with giving darshan to a few patients suffering from incurable diseases. Among the patients one well known patient was Sri Mohonananda Maharaj (disciple of Balananda Swamiji) suffering temporarily from Tuberculosis. It may be due to this that Sri Sri Ma had arrived in Calcutta. Ma left straight from Howrah Railway Station to visit Sri Mohonananda Maharaj. Later at his earnest request

she went again to visit him at Sealdah Station, as he was going for a change of place. This time in seeing off the distinguished patient, Ma took sweets, fruits and garlands with her. She had requested the buyer of those articles to obtain the best of each kind. I learnt of two other patients visited by Ma. One of them was Baba Bholanath's relation who had cancer. The second was a nephew of Prankumar Babu, who also had T.B.

This time Sri Sri Ma stayed only two days in Calcutta. After this I went to collect my belongings. But to get these I had to go as far as Chittagong to obtain permission. Sri Sri Ma returned to Calcutta on the day of Mahalaya and the next day she left for Vishnupur at the warm invitation of a gentleman there.

Sri Sri Ma returned to Calcutta from Vishnupur via Jamshedpur on the Panchami day. Arrangements for the puja were made in an open field adjoining the Ashram. With great pomp and ceremony the puja was celebrated for the days involved. On the day of Vijaya Dashami Sri Sri Ma left for Beldanga, for a Sugar mill belonging to a Marwari gentleman, who wished to reopen his mill, at the hands of Sri Ma. In this mill my friend Manmohan was the Chief Engineer. Later for various reasons, the mill had to be shut down. It was the wish of the Marwari gentleman to reopen the mill. For this reason he had arranged for Sri Ma to visit the mill and came to Beldanga. He also paid all the expenses for Manmohan to visit Calcutta from Kashi. On the day of Dwadashi Manmohan reached Calcutta, and on the very day he left with Sri Ma for Beldanga. We learnt Sri Ma would return to Calcutta for Lakshmi puja. This in actual fact happened. Ma and Khukuni Didi and party

reached Calcutta. Manmohan remained at Beldanga. Didi declared that on the 5th Kartick Sri Ma returned to Calcutta from Beldanga, and at once left for Srirampur, from where she would that very day leave for Kashi by the Varanasi Express. Manmohan would return to Kashi with Ma. Didi advised us to go along with them, and herself took the responsibility for obtaining tickets.

### **The visit to Sri Kashi Dham with Sri Ma**

On the 22/10/48 I left for Kashi with my wife and two daughters. Manmohan and his third son Shakti accompanied us. We reserved all seats in a sleeper. Hence it was unnecessary to rush for seats on arrival at the station.

Sri Sri Ma after reaching Calcutta this morning from Beldanga, at once left for Srirampur to visit Srijukta Triguna Charan Banerjee. From there she would board this train. As soon as the train reached Srirampur Sri Ma boarded the train. Several devotees had arrived at Srirampur from Calcutta, and were present at the station. As soon as Sri Ma boarded the train Manmohan and myself did our pranams to Ma, who started laughing uproariously. Khukuni Didi said to Ma, "Ma have you at last taken Amulya Dada with you to Kashi."

Ma said, "Yes; this time after fixing the date and day." Then train left.

### **Can one attain salvation in the hands of a Sadguru in 3 births**

This was the first time I had accompanied Ma in this way. When would I again get such an opportunity to stay with Ma so long? Many thoughts came to my mind. I asked Sri Ma, "Ma, I have heard that as soon as one

obtains diksha from a Sadguru, all the previous sins of the disciples are washed away. Of course the disciples have to suffer the consequences of his previous sins, but the Sadguru reduces all this quite a bit and the present deeds are mitigated quite a bit by the Kripa of a Sadguru. If this is true, then why should it take three births to obtain salvation ?

Ma : Some say that the devotees of a Sadguru can obtain salvation within three births; yet others maintain that it may take as many as ten births to do it.

I : After diksha from a Sadguru, whatever deeds are done by the disciple should be the responsibility of the Sadguru, who should suffer the consequences of these deeds!

Ma did not reply, but started laughing.

I : You once told me in Calcutta that whatever works you wish to accomplish, and what you like to do, these are deeds that lead to suffering the consequences thereof.

Ma : I still maintain this. Work can lead to two results, one to enjoy the fruits thereof, and the other to suffer the consequences. Karmayog can be defined as selfless work without asking for results, and then that are done as God wishes. The work that is done for sheer enjoyment, leads to sufference.

I : If after obtaining diksha from a Sadguru, one does some work for enjoying one's senses, does the Guru suffer the consequences. Srijukta Vijay Krishna Goswami has declared that those that are unabated by a Sadguru, have no more new work to do. The Guru, after initiating his disciple, really takes over all his troubles on his shoulders. Whatever sadhana done by



the disciple is actually done by the Guru in the guise of his disciple. You have yourself declared nothing else. You once told me that even if a disciple of a Sadguru does evil deeds, he still maintain his upward progress. From this it can be understood that he does not do any new work.

Ma : "If once the kripa of a Sadguru is obtained, then nothing else matters. He can liberate his disciple in a trice ! Moreover, he permits, through his power, to allow his disciple to enjoy the fruits of his desires. You have also heard that Guru has himself taken his disciple to a place where he can fulfill his desires, and later after noticing the signs of end of his fulfilment, he has taken him elsewhere. He who can burn away all desires, can he not destroy the desires of what his disciple has implemented from previous births ? Moreover, due to the wishes of the Guru, it has taken a few births to destroy the results of previous births of the disciple, some say 3 births, some say even ten births." The Guru takes on the consequences of his disciple's previous deeds, he distribute them among other disciples, or he may decide to destroy the results without suffering the consequences. This lead to various types of disciplines. Due to reaching different states, one feels the consequences of various deeds. During sadhana then comes such times when one tends to think that this is the whole truth ! Feelings are roused to such an extent that they can no longer be kept secret. Ambition seems to be brimful over the basin. But if once you can keep such a bhava to yourself, and keep your arm steady, then you can move yourself to a higher plane, and you come to realise the meaning of the results suffered as a result of

previous deeds. Suppose somebody comes to realise that you were somebody's brother in a previous life, and he at once makes you aware of the fact! You have everything within your own self. Why, you were not his brother in that birth, but you have the brother of thousands of people in thousands of births. Elsewhere there are several connections between you and others, these others can never comprehend. He only accepts you as a brother of a previous birth. In the sphere of sadhana, such are the states one reaches. The Sadhak sometimes accepts only a piece of Truth as whole Truth! But if you stick to one single target, you will reach a state of full knowledge sometime or other, then there is nothing left to be known further.

I : If due to a Sadguru's wishes it takes a disciple ten births to attain salvation, then it may be the wish of the Guru to grant this in infinite births ?

Ma : No, why should this be so ? The question of infinite birth is always there. If once you obtain his kripa, why should it take endless births ? And so we progressed along our path with such discussions. How the time passed was beyond our comprehension.

At each station at which the train stopped, devotees brought along fruit and flowers to offer to Ma, and have her darshan. At Jasidi, Sitarampur and similar stations, there were such huge crowds of devotees arriving. The fruits, sweets (sandesh) etc. that they brought along were also enjoyed by us ! When the night was late, Ma asked us to arrange for our sleeping, and so we went to our respective berths for a rest.

*(To be continued)*

# A Tryst with Sri Sri Ma

Mr. Nagesh Talgery

During the winter of 1971 I set out on a pilgrimage cum sight-seeing tour of Upper India and Nepal. The oldest living city Varanasi was also on my itinerary. A few days prior to my departure I had had a dream vision depicting a sharply defined human profile clad in a snow-white drapet with a luxurious hair spread and a brilliant halo that is generally associated with Lord Gautama Buddha. The radiance of the beaming smile is deeply etched in my mind.

I myself could not prognosticate the dream and therefore referred it to an evolved friend of mine. All he suggested was that *some good* is in the offing and I better wait and see. I posted a brief entry in my diary and forgot about it.

On the penultimate lap of my tour I reached Varanasi. I was staying as guest of an elderly extremely pious devout relative of mine on Narad Ghat. The same evening my host brought the news that there is a large spiritual congregation on Tulsi Ghat and invited me to join.

As we entered the auditorium I was overwhelmed by the serenity of the locale the calm and discipline of the congregation mostly composed of elderly Bengali women and men.

A while later people lined up and started moving in a slow single file. When my turn came and as I

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looked at the face my inner voice shouted aloud EUREKA. This is the very form the same snow-white drapet the spread over hair and above all the unforgettable winsome beam of smile. I immediately recollected my dream and got the message.

Sri Ma Anandamayee fixed her eyes into mine for a while and gently raised her hand in fear-not expression—*Abhaya Hasta* and placed a fruit in my hand. I felt instantly energized.

During the last year enroute Kedarnath and Badarinath we visited Kankhal Ashram (off Hardwar). I felt Sri Ma's dwelling presence there and the same sort of *energisation* I had had in Varanasi.

As I write these lines I feel the same tingling in my body in the form of a low current.

Whenever I feel puzzled or nonplussed I receive a direction or message from Sri Ma. I can not precisely say how. But I do.

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Every moment belongs to God. Endeavour to keep your mind dedicated to His Feet. God, the Ocean of Mercy, who ever blesses the world, pours out His grace at all times. It is incumbent on man to consider everything that happens to be for the best : 'For the best' denoting what is most helpful towards the realization of the Divine, the realization of the fulness of Bliss.

— Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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# **Shrandhanjili to Sushila Ji – Shri Ma's Devotee**

**Er. Girish Chandra**

There are no two opinions about the fact that one of the missions of SHRI ANANDAMAYI MA's descent on earth was to look after the spiritual progress of some of Bhagwan's devotees. One such devotee who came very close to SHRI MA, was Smt. Sushila Modwel, resident of Mainpuri (U.P.). Sushila Ji's ATMA left her body in full consciousness and in peace with remembrance of SHRI MA's holy name on her lips at the age of 74 years. Just as full record of life of devotees who came under the influence of Shri Ram Krishna Pranhans is maintained, an attempt should be made to put in black and white the "LEELA" played by Shri MA with some of her close devotees. It will be inspiring to future generations. With this end in view, the author wishes to put on record some of the "LEELAS" enacted by SHRI MA with Sushila Ji.

Sushila Ji had her first Darshan of SHRI MA in 1942 in HER Ashram at Almora. It left a deep impression on her. She used to have Darshan of SHRI MA but at long intervals.

SHRI MA showered HER grace on her during HER Birth Anniversary Celebration which were held in Almora around 1952. Of Her own accord, SHRI MA asked her if she had any children. On being told, that she had no children, SHRI MA said "then this body is

both your son and daughter". Thereafter SHRI MA enacted Her "Vatsalya" Leela with Sushila Ji throughout Her life. During HER previous descent on earth, SHE had enacted the LEELA with JASODA MA in Vrindaban.

Sushila Ji joined in every Birth Anniversary Celebration of SHRI MA, where-ever it might have been held. During the first four or five years, SHE presented SHRI MA with Dolls and JHUNJHUNA etc. SHRI MA used to enjoy playing the "JHUNJHUNA". SHE would instruct HER Assistant to keep the dolls carefully.

After 4 or 5 years' SHRI MA told Sushila Ji: "Your daughter has become big and goes to school". Sushila Ji realised her mistake and started presenting her with exercise books, pencil and rubber etc. Once Swami Akhandanand Ji of Vrindaban was with SHRI MA and these exercise books and pencil were being presented by Sushila Ji. SHRI MA explained to Swami Akhandanand - the significance of this peculiar gift. One of Swami Akhandanand Ji's attendants asked SHRI MA to give him one of the exercise books. SHRI MA gave it on the condition, that it would be used only for writing God's name.

There-after SHRI MA told Sushila Ji that your daughter had become a big girl. So SHE was presented every year with SARI, Yellow towel and sometimes small gold ornaments etc. It will be observed that in Her previous descent in Gokul, She enacted "Vatsalya Leela" for a limited period with Jasoda MA, but during this descent, She played it for Her whole life.

SHRI MA paid a visit to Mainpuri along with Hari

Baba, Respected Didi MA, Gurupriya Didi and Avdhoot Ji etc. A full description of this LEELA has been given by me under the heading; "SHRI MA sanctifies the land of Dacoits" published in Anand Varta. Briefly it may be mentioned that Sushila Ji casually mentioned to SHRI MA to visit Mainpuri. Three or four years there-after, SHRI MA told Sushila Ji "you wanted to call this body to Mainpuri, now you may call". Perhaps some people of Mainpuri were praying for Bhagwan's Darshan, and SHRI MA fulfilled their desire in this way.

It goes to the credit of Sushila Ji to have organised worship of SHRI MA as Bhagwan SHIV at Ahmedabad in course of HER Birth Anniversary Celebration. Sushila Ji herself has contributed an article in Hindi Anand Varta describing the "Leela" in detail. Sushila Ji saw a dream of SHRI MA the shape of Bhagwan SHIV. She told SHRI MA of her dream and desired that she would like to worship Her as SHIV. SHRI MA agreed. During this famous celebration at Ahmedabad, Hari Baba Ji declared publicly that the "SHAKTI" of all Gods and Goddesses are concentrated in "SHRI MA" and anybody who had merely a "Darshan" of SHRI MA will attain Moksha. When Sushila Ji went out for shopping in Ahmedabad, many people touched Her feet because She had been blessed by SHRI MA with a Darshan of BHAGWAN SHIV.

Sushila Ji saw a dream during Nov. 1979 at Vrindaban in which some-one told Her "Bhagwan will be visiting your Cottage". She was staying at that time in "Shiv Kutir" - her cottage in the premises of SHRI ANANDAMAYI Ashram and SHRI MA was also stay-

ing in the Ashram at the same time. Sushila Ji went to SHRI MA and told her about the dream. SHRI MA said : I do not know anything about BHAGWAN but you can take this body to your cottage before it departs from Vrindaban". Elaborate arrangements including POOJA, ARTI, PRASAD and decoration etc. were made. SHRI MA did visit her cottage on the 30th November 1979 and Sanctified it by HER lotus feet. From there, SHE proceeded direct to Modinagar. A question arises why SHRI MA agreed to visit the cottage when it was revealed in the dream that BHAGWAN would visit the same; because SHRI MA is identified with Parmatma - the Supreme Being.

Once Sushila Ji told SHRI MA that since she had no children, who will perform "BHAGWAT" for her sake after her death. SHRI MA replied "BHAGWAN HIMSELF will perform the BHAGWAT".

During SHRI MA's Birth Anniversary celebration at Bangalore, Sushila Ji offered a sum of Rs.12,000/- to SHRI MA with the request that it may be utilized according to HER personal wishes. SHRI MA replied that SHE was interested in the development of a Sanskrit Pathshala at Naimesharayan and this amount will be utilized for that purpose; SHE directed that it may be handed over to SWAMI BHASKARANAND.

Sushila Ji performed intense "SADHANA". SHE daily performed "JAP" from 4 to 4-15 A. M., 3.30 to 3-45 P.M. and 8.45 to 9.00 P. M. besides meditation and POOJA both in the morning and evening.

There is no doubt that Sushila Ji's ATMA has merged in the lotus feet of SHRI SHRI MA. With these words, I offer my Shrandhanjili to her.



# The Mystery of Death

By Dr. K. M. P. Mohamed Cassim

Generally one is afraid of death because one is incapable of facing the actuality of that unknown state "death", or in other words, one is – unwilling to dissociate oneself from the continuous process of sensual experiences. If one can live from moment to moment in that meditative awareness in which profound spiritual state one is not gathering worldly impressions then one is gifted with the faculty of perceiving the secret of death in the midst of diversity. If one reaches the highest realm of contemplation, then one's action is complete and there is no room for emotional fear or psychological accumulation of sensual qualities and tendencies. It is to be realized by direct experiment that there is no duality as death and living and this sentimental demarcation line has been created by the mind. If one can die daily or empty the mind from the attachment of passionate desires, then one can experience the fact that in essence both life and death is a joint phenomena and to meet the ecstasy of death and the impacts of life simultaneously while one is in the physical plane is spiritual liberation.

It is to be realized that to a true seeker on the path the death is nothing and it does not change his freedom of search or function because the seeker who dedicates his life in the pursuit of Reality does not die, but lives eternally with the Infinite. Physical death is no way a

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barrier for a seeker to develop further towards the attainment of divine perfection. Needless to say, that one's spiritual progress and evolution does not end by the occurrence of death, but on the contrary, one can proceed peacefully and silently towards his goal of SELF-DISCOVERY. The purpose of creation and the manifestation of man on the material world is not to destroy and deteriorate, but to cultivate various divine faculties so as to reach the exalted state of Enlightenment.

The nobility of man is that he is in possession of a soul which is deathless. For a man the physical body is only a vehicle to gain spiritual liberation. The most important fact that one has to realize is that the purpose of having a body is to establish a link with the Infinite while living in this mundane world. If one does not make use of the body for the realization of Reality, then one's life in this world is a waste and in vain.

People are deluded and deceived by the pleasures on the material plane, but at the time of death one will awaken from the slumber of ignorance and will see the real condition of the life lived in the world in a correct way without any distorted vision. While living in the physical world, one is not capable of analysing and assessing one's mind as it is, because of the fact that one's mode of thinking is tremendously influenced by the five senses with the agitation of carnal pressures and cravings. It is to be noted that for an aspirant this sort of obstacle will not hinder him as he is gifted with purity of heart and clarity of thought which brings the light of wisdom and ability to march cheerfully towards the path of plenitude.

If an aspirant realizes the fact that divinity can be discovered in the realm of death, then his life will be a source of inspiration and his action will be fresh and fearless. From the point of absolute Reality death is not the cessation of life, but the continuation of soul energy in a different plane for inner development and spiritual integration. The heaviness of spiritual impressions are so much loaded into man's mind, he is unable to walk properly towards the destination of death. With the emptiness of the mind alone one can enter into the Kingdom of Death. The materialistic attitude of the mind and poisonous sensual obsession should be obliterated or rather transcended by following the method of silent meditation and deep contemplation, then only is there the possibility of perceiving the mystery of death.

The physical world we see, as well as its diverse manifestations are mere projections of unreal appearance. When the mind is dissolved in blissful trance, the relative world is negated and then it can be proved or rather directly realized that Supreme Consciousness alone is real. We attain real happiness and satisfaction only when the mind is quiet without being disturbed by distractions. The physical world seems to be real only in relation to our mind. If the mind instead of seeing the world sees the seer or observer, then there is the possibility of transcending the mind and thus establish a divine link with the higher consciousness. Meditative awareness and self contemplation is the royal road to discover the Divinity. Our physical eyes see only outward appearance, but to contact the unmanifest secret realm of Cosmic Consciousness, we have to train our minds efficiently by cultivating mental discipline and

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dispassion. Meditation is the assurance of a new and free life. It is a wisdom born of a new revelation by which the world and life are seen and encountered in freedom and serenity.

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The sovereign and universal remedy is the contemplation of the One. To think only of Him and to serve Him at all times is essential for every human being.

— Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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# Geeta Prabundh

(Geeta Interpreted for Scientists)

D. M. SAMPAT

*"My boat is small,  
Thy ocean is wide,  
So help me, God !"*

*(Prayer)*

**SALUTATION** : I bow to that affluent GURU, who has pointed out to me that base on which everything rests, that which is unbroken, without a dent, continuous and compact (say Like Dirac's Ocean) and having the shape of the cosmos, and which permeates all that is in motion and all that is motionless.

**GURU** : There is a difference between a real guru and an ordinary guru. With the real guru, there is always a one way traffic; because a real guru always gives, and does not take.

This is because the real Guru has para-knowledge and nothing is beyond his reach. However, he is limited and not Absolute. The ultimate Guru is God. God is not a person but a principle. While not depending on anything, God is independent of everything. Hence, Absolute.

## CONTEMPLATION

Om, is the representation of the ultimate reality. The Geeta deals with this reality.

Geeta is personified as the Mother, who showers the nectar of singularity and saves a person from oblivion in worldliness. Unfolded by Lord Krishna himself to Partha (i.e. Arjuna, the son of Pritha alias Kunti) Geeta is woven into 18 chapters, in the midst of the epic Mahabharata. The author being Maha-rishi Vyasa, who knew the Vedas, subdivided them into Upnishads, wrote epics and some Puranas. He was not only a master of language, but was also a "Muni", who has access to the depth of silence and understands the language of the eloquence of silence.

Infinity is not merely a mathematical proposition; infinity is a deeper concept and is reached when one has crossed intellectual limitations. There are indeed more dimensions than what we know about at present. They can be understood but cannot be described. Can you describe a picture thoroughly ?

After this introduction, salutations are offered to Shri Vyasa and Shri Krishna. Then it is said that all Upnishads are like cows and the herdsman Krishna milches them. Partha is compared to a calf. When the calf sucks the milk, the cow gets a gust of emotion and milk rushes profusely in her udder. The calf gets just a little milk, and the rest is taken out and enjoyed by others. So, Partha or Arjuna is merely an instrument; while the bulk of the milk of Upnishads is enjoyed by "Su-dhih" i.e. good intellectuals. Thus the purpose of Geeta is clarified further. And again prayers are offered to Shri Krishna, and he is described as the captain who navigates the ship in life from troubled waters to final destination. And there is no finality to such destination unless and until one reaches the ultimate reality.

Such reality cannot be caught in the web of words. If you cannot describe a picture thoroughly in so many words, how can you describe reality with words? If you accept that language has its limitations, then you come to the scriptural concept which says that Reality is beyond the scope of language. Reality is something more than what language can encompass. It is a comprehension, free from the dimensions available to us under the space-time frame. It is a comprehension in the region of the Absolute : Astonishing ! but true. Who knows that the Unified Theory of physics when ultimately worked out successfully may terminate in the Absolute. This has something to do with para-knowledge. In the days to come science may have to include para-phenomina in its studies. It may have to include unconditioned enquiry, free enquiry of the free state.

### PURIFICATION

Purification is a necessary process prescribed by Sanskrit scriptures. You have to make your mind pure. You have to make it clear, for clear understanding of facts, the advice is -

*“Be like a mirror;  
It receives everything,  
And keeps nothing.”*

So you have to “bear in mind” and not be driven away by observations. A principle holds good upto a point and then another set starts operating and more sets enter the field and you have to keep on revising your analysis. It is a continuous process and so one should keep on moving in time, space and level of

intelligence. Certain indications are given for clearing cobwebs of orthodoxy and adopting proper methods of evaluation. How one should read the Geeta? It is to be read in the light of its Rishi or seer, Chhanda or Rhyme and Devta or Deity. Vyasa is the Rishi of Geeta, whose vision is the line of perception to be followed to understand what is intended to be conveyed. That does not preclude a person from having his own independent interpretation of the verses. But that will be that person's personal view and if it differs from the seer's message, that difference will remain, in which the spirit of the seer's message may or may not be fully represented. In case of doubt, the Rishi's version in other scriptures should be examined for corroboration.

Chhanda refers to metre, rhyme and rhythm and comments can be offered only after deeper study of that subject. The main Chhanda of GEETA is "Anushubh". May be here is a hint to the reader to be attuned to a certain wavelength. Certain background radiations do come. They just give a flash and go, Newton, Archimedes, all got their flashes.

Devta or Deity : Shri Krishna is the Devta of Geeta. When paradoxical statements appear, the paradox is to be resolved in the light of the utterances of the Deity in other scriptures. The main function of the Deity here, is to convey the knowledge of the ultimate truth, which is the ultimate reality; and all his utterances should be so construed as to fall in line with the ultimate truth. Here also people may adopt their own line of assessment but it will be at their own risk.

And then there is a process of some "Mudras"



or signs and gestures and touching some parts of the body for sanctifying them. It is a ritual prescribed for those who follow "shastras". With that the preliminaries are completed.

**And now, the GEETA proper.**

Where from this Creation ? – the seed question.

Where lies the truth ? – The final question.

In between, there are so many questions. Krishna has answered the two main questions and many more for the benefit of intellectuals, who want to know.

For those who look upon Krishna as a grotesque, blackish pranky boy aligned to flirtation, Geeta has nothing to offer. For those who want to know something, a peep into Geeta may be very useful. It is said that a reader with a strong mind, reads himself into the book, while reading. So everything is left to the reader.

Sanskrit scriptures are always written in question-answer series, the disciple asks his guru, questions and the guru answers them.

The disciple raises doubt and the guru resolves them. In this process lies the spirit of enquiry. Sanskrit is not a dead language. Sanskrit is alive and lively and shall live as long as the spirit of enquiry lives. To cite an example, in Mundaka Upnishad, the disciple asks his guru the question, "What is it by knowing which all that 'this is' becomes known ?" And the guru tells him what 'it is'. Similarly in the Prashna Upnishad (or the question Upnishad) among other things, the enquiry is about how all this came into existence. In reply it is said that pairs of opposites, came into existence and also the positive and the negative

the manifest and the dormant and thousands of rays in hundreds of ways, started operating.

So now, it is for the reader to decide from where to start and where to go; whether to stick to science with its scientific postures, or cross over to a free enquiry of the free state of nature. That will require a peep into scriptures, because scriptures are records of ancient wisdom. And so is the GEETA.

### GEETA

Chapter I, versel (I/I) : Dhritarashtra, the king was blind and he did not go to the battlefield named Kurukshetra and sat at home with his charioteer Sanjay. Sanjay is said to be endowed with penetrating vision and could see what was happening on the battlefield. Whatever it was, we are concerned with the wisdom that comes out of the conversation between Krishna and Arjuna. Sanjay narrates this to Dhritarashtra.

In Sanskrit, Dhritarashtra signifies a person, who holds the nation to ransom. The existence, time and date of Dhritarashtra, is a question for historians. We are concerned with the wisdom that is in the Geeta.

Dhritarashtra ruled with double standards, one for his sons, the Kowravas and the other for the rest. In Sanskrit, "Kow" means crowing and "rava" means noise. While Dhritarashtra held the nation to ransom, his sons resorted to slogan shouting and rowdyism, which drowned the voice of law abiding citizens, and made them meek. Kurukshetra is the field of battle between the forces of the good and the bad. Arjuna, the good one is overpowered with emotion at the sight

of two armies arrayed for the massacre, of near ones and dear ones. He is in a fix and shaky and shudders at the thought of the misery that will follow. He wants to quit; but Krishna stops him from doing so and tries to show him that in the ultimate analysis in this world, wars are a passing phase, they come and go, men are born and they die, nothing is constant, everything is in a flux. Actual Reality is different from what we know as obvious or true. Everything has a relative existence except the ultimate Reality, which is ONE and constant.

This idea of Geeta tallies with the idea of Unified Theory in Physics, in a way, because that theory envisages one single fundamental force of nature. Nature is never secretive. Nature is an open book for anyone who can read it. Science reading this book is one story, scriptures reading this book is another story. Both have their own way of reading it. And both are right. Both are complementary. If both join hands in exploring the truth, there will be unprecedented enhancement of knowledge.

Chapter I, is like an introduction (verses I to 47).

CH2/V. 1 to 9) : narrate how Arjuna sets aside his bow and arrow and stands still with sadness. Shri Krishna is described as God in Geeta and we shall maintain that attitude in this thesis.

CH2/V10, 11 (2/10,11) : The Lord tells him, "you are lamenting the unlamentable and talking like an intellectual. Wise men do not lament for those who are dead or those who have not been dead",

(2/12) : "There was never a time when I was not there or you were not there or these kings were not there and

it will not be that hereafter we all will not remain.”

(2/13): “Just as in this body, transformations of childhood, youth and old age come, likewise there is transition from one body to another and the steady one is not beguiled by their appearances.

(2/14) : All contacts with body and person are cold or hot and give pleasure and pain. They come and go and are transitory, so be resigned towards them.

(2/15) : The person who is not disturbed by them but remains stable in joy and sorrow is considered fit to know the essence of Reality.

COMMENTS : From here Shri Krishna starts talking about “Atma”, the word used in Geeta for the ultimate Reality. A balanced, steady intellectual is aware that body, mind and feelings are not sufficient to conduct the investigation, and there should be some more data available for the purpose. It cannot be said scientifically that nothing remains after death. There is no scientific proof for nothingness. If scientific thought comes to a halt at a point, it does not mean that the journey has ended. May be, thought is in a coma, and it may revive anytime. And then new vistas may open up. Nobody knows what is in store. In physics, they say, there are “black-holes” in the universe. Nobody knows what is inside the black-hole. Nobody knows what is on the other side of the black-hole. Even light cannot come out of the black-hole. So, a probe is not possible and all information is blocked. That does not mean that the black-hole is the dead end and there is no way out. But that is not a signal for science to stop. It may be a signal to wait. When scientific thought

comes to a stand still, one can look into the scriptures and see if they can be of help. Scriptures have a lead in tackling mental dimensions. Reality is beyond dimensions, yet within reach and the technique can be supplied by scriptures. It may be noted that all scriptures in all religions have something to say in this matter. They are reservoirs of ancient wisdom.

Lord Krishna goes ahead to describe the ultimate essence called "Atma" in Sanskrit scriptures.

CH 2/V.16 (2/16) : "For the untrue there is no state of being, no presence, while for truth, there is no void. The seers have determined this after examining both in their extremes."

(2/17) : "That Entity which pervades everything, know it as indestructible. Nobody is able to destroy such a one which is free from wear and tear."

(2/18) : "The bodies of all are perishable; but the one who is in the body is indestructible, inscrutable and permanent. Therefore O Bharata! Fight!"

**COMMENTS** : Sri Krishna refers to that element which is inside the body but separate from the body. It is not an element in the strict sense of the term. It is something which means much more than an element. It does not exist inside the body but it is always present there. It is something that supports the four fundamental forces of nature. It is at the root of the gravitational force, it is the base from where the electro magnetic force draws its power, it is the centre of the strong and the weak nuclear forces. It means a lot to the physicist though not much to the layman. It has a key to the secrets of the "black-hole." It holds

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the answer to the phenomenon of "instant action at a distance."

It has no motive, it has no will to act, it has nothing to do; it just responds. It has a centre everywhere and circumference nowhere. That is what is essence. That is what is "Atma". The key lies in its "presence".

The whole emphasis is on the subtle. All gross bodies, animate or inanimate, harbour the subtle one. You cannot catch the subtle one but you can infer its presence. That is why Geeta eliminates all gross forms from investigation. It dwells mostly on the mind and particularly on the human mind. Only human mind is capable of tackling nature in innumerable ways.

*(To be continued)*

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When the mind centres on what gives peace and one's gaze dwells on what promotes it, when one's ears listen to what fills the heart with peace and at all times there is a response from Him Who is peace itself, then only can there be promise of peace.

— Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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# Education in Ancient India

Ajit Ghosh

(Continued from previous issue)

The *Pathasala* practically was the primary school for imparting lessons to the beginners. Here the first importance was given to reading and writing and elementary knowledge of arithmetic. This kind of primary schools existed throughout the country—from *Aryavarta* in the north to the south, Deccan. For centuries they flourished and usually had a limited accommodation for learners when the teachers were hardly more than one. The teacher of such primary school had to depend upon the benevolent co-operation and contribution of the local people as well as the guardians of the wards those were being taught in the school. *Tola* had been reserved for higher studies, particularly in Vedic and post-Vedic literature, Philosophy, Logic, Sanskrit, Philology and classic literature which were taught by eminent scholars. The scholars were said to be exponents or *Pandits* in their individual subjects, or were of versatile disposition, who usually came from Brahmin families dedicated to learning and religious practices. The *Tolas* were left at the disposal of the teacher-scholars and were vested with responsibilities to carry on the maintenance so far their means permitted. Tuition fee had not been imposed as a compulsory rule, but the teacher might impose any option if required. Local

people, of course, used to come forward with charitable feeling and moral obligation in helping the institution. The teacher of such institution received due respect of the inhabitants of the locality and held an important position in the *Parishad* or *Samiti* which was an embodiment of selected distinguished persons of the place. This *Parishad* or *Samiti* was more or less similar to *Panchayet* of the present day. The teacher of a *Tola* was obviously well-versed in various subjects and Sastras, such as *Vedas* and *Vedantas*, *Nyaya* or logic, *Arthasastra* that related to administration and politics, *Ganita Sastra* i.e. mathematics, *Vyakarana* or the treatment of grammar and philology, *Kavya* or literature, *Darsanasastra* or the different systems of philosophy and *Abhidhana* for linguistic studies. This course of education prevailed for centuries since the Brahmanic age and was existent throughout the length and breadth of the land—from *Aryavarta* in the north to *Dakshinavarta* or the Deccan in the south.

Next to the Brahmanic domination India had to pass through numerous socio-political upheavals and cultural unstabilities which brought forth manifold changes, but that did not cause any impediment to the basic principles of education. The urge of knowledge remained unabated. No special bias or prejudice in regard to religious tenets and beliefs would become detrimental to the usual trend of education.

Education in India, as we know, was specially considered with religious perspective. Nowhere else in the world it had been made the object of a vast experiment as in India. The most distinctive feature of this experimentation was that at no stage was theology dis-



sociated from philosophy. Even in the heyday of India's glory this concept of wisdom reached its climax. This philosophical wisdom had its origin in Vedic hymns, i.e. *Mantras* or *Suktas*, attributed to the divinities which were uttered by the *Rishis*. While performing the *Rishis* cherished to reach the Absolute, the ultimate Truth. This intense search to Truth gave rise to a metaphysical bent of mind that the people of India inherited. Subsequently, the Brahmanical seers explored the truth behind the impersonal *Brahma* and this thought developed to *Advaitism* or *Vedanta* in the age of the *Upanishads*. Later on introduction of Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism, Saivism and Sakti cult became existent. Though the followers of these cults developed in their respective lines of thought, their ultimate object was to reach the Supreme Being as had been processed by the *Upanishads*. Notwithstanding their dogmatic separatism the followers of all these religious cults did not avoid the fundamental principles of education that was given effect to in the Brahmanical age. The educationists in those days never disregarded the pious object of educational system and allowed it develop in its own line.

In the Vedic literature it has been strictly stated that a learner in his student-life had to remain a Brahmacharin. He had to abstain from sleep in the daytime and keep himself aloof from any unhealthy affair. He would relinquish all worldly pleasure and would not be addicted to *madhu* or *soma* which he was allowed to drink after he completed his study of the *Trayi*, i.e. *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Samaveda*. [cf. *Satapatha-Brahmana* 10.5.4 if., *Paraskara-Grhyasutra*

2.2.17f.; *Asvatayana Grihyasutra* 1.20f.; *Sankhayana-Grihyasutra* 2. if.]

The subject-matter or the curriculum of lesson had to be regulated by *Anusasanas*. According to Sayana, the great commentator of the Vedas, these regulations were applied in the study of *Sadvedangas*, i.e. the six classes of the Vedas. *Satapatha-Brahmana* (10.5.6.8) refers to four *Anusasanas* – *Vidya*, i.e. lessons in general; *Vakovakya*, i.e. lessons in dialectics; *Itihasa-Purana* that was pertaining to learning historical matters and *Navasamsi-gatha* which dealt with science of human biology. *Vidya* included philology and *Vakovakya* dealt with logic. All these courses of education were judged with sufficient estimation and were regarded to be equivalent to the offering of *soma* to the heavenly beings. As soon as the learner received complete knowledge of all the above courses of lesson he became permitted to enjoy liberty in offering *soma* to the deities by the act of which he believed to acquire divine grace. Training in arts and crafts had have no sanction in the educational institution in the Brahmanic age- it was introduced in a later period, probably in the time of Buddhism.

A *Brahmacharin* should always keep himself free from the six most damaging passions, i.e. *sadripu* – those were *Kama*, lust; *Krodha*, anger; *lobha*, greed; *moha*, infatuation; *mada*, pride; and *matsarya*, envy. His most deserving and noble virtues were considered to be *sama*, tranquillity; *dama*, self-restraint; *uparati*, detachment from worldly affairs; *titiksha*, fortitude; *sraddha*, proper respect and truthfulness; and *samadhana*, self-mindedness. He had to cherish these

moral and ethical disciplines so long he was confined within the limits of *Brahmacharyasrama*. Further moral faculties were strictly maintained and those were *ahimsa*, non-violence; *satya*, which was truthfulness in thought, speech and action; *asteya*, which meant restraint from stealing of things those were belonged to others; restraining sexual passions; and *aparigraha*, that was non-acceptance of undeserved and inauspicious gifts, [cf. *Manu-Samhita* VI-92; *Patanjal* II. 30]

According to the *Upanishads*, a *Guru* or preceptor should always be regarded as a divine manifestation in mortal frame. Manu described *Acharya*, the teacher, and *Upadhyaya*, next to the status of *Acharya*, deserved considerable reverence. (*Manu-Samhita* II. 145). The teacher had to reserve full control over his student for whose successful career he retained a pious responsibility. He had the prudence to be conscious of the reality that, if knowledge were to be imparted without any consideration of what suited one's taste and the ways of doing things, disastrous result would sure to ensue. A saying of *Chhandogya-Brahmana* may be cited in this context, which means "better die with learning than to sow it in a barren soil." It is found in the *Svetasvataropanisad* (VI-22) that "the highest mystery of *Vedanta*, that was discovered in an earlier age, should not be delivered to one whose passions have not been subdued, not even to the son or disciple (of the preceptor), if he is found unworthy". *Maitrayani-Brahmana* (VI.29) proclaims, "Let no one should preach the most secret doctrine to one who is not his son or disciple or who is not endowed with serene and restraint mind. And who is devoted to his teacher and

endowed with all deserving qualities, to him its teaching should be. In the *Manu-Samhita* (II, 114-15), we find, "once the goddess of learning appeared before a Brahmin and gave him the instruction— "Preserve me, I am thy most valuable treasure. Do not impart the knowledge (bestowed by me) to a malicious person, by the act of which my potency will be left unimpugned. To that *Brahmin*, whom you consider undefiled and free from any corrupt worldly follies, you should impart me (the knowledge you receive from me)." *Mahabharata* (*Sabha-parva*, chapter 5 and *Udyoga-parva*, chapter 38) observes that proper education should be given special importance in character building and processing good conduct.

The system of education under the monastic order was practically introduced in the Buddhist period when the formation of Buddhist *Sangha* became existent. It was, of course, remodelling the educational system in its growing need and gradual development. The educational institutions those were set up by the Buddhists, though flourished as Buddhist establishments, prescribed *Vedas* and *Vedangas* and other philosophical thought in the curriculum of studies. Of course, the *chatuhsasthi-yogas* or the sixtyfour qualities of arts processed by Vasyayana in his *Kamasutra* had not been prescribed for teaching in their institutions—the Buddhists imposed strict limitation on their inclusion in teaching matters.

The Brahmanic system of education did not permit such lesson which involved sexual matters. So long the learner was confined in his student life he had to lead a celibate life and had to cast off any sexual intimacy

or association. He would not call on any woman or look at her with lustful eyes. [Cf. *Harita* III. 1,8; *Vyasa* I 23, 28; *Gautama* II; *Manu* II. 177, 179; *Vishnu* XXVIII II; *Usana* III. 16; *Yajnavalkya* I. 33] Married students were, however, not unknown. It is supposed that in a later period, wedding of student had been allowed. Kautilya in his *Arthashastra* refers to married students staying abroad. The *Jatakas* also refer to married students, coming from other regions, found studying at *Varanasi*. Even there was an instance when a teacher, who was vested responsibility of teaching 500 students, selected one of his students as bridegroom for his own daughter. In the Buddhist age a teacher, attached to any teaching institution, enjoyed special advantage to let his daughter be married to a selected student [*Ibid.* III.18; VI.347].

*Gopatha-Brahmana* (II.1.2.1-9) lays out distinctive moral regulations that a *Brahmacharin* should follow. The learner in his academic career had to subdue his emotion for pride and prejudice and to keep off any design for fame and vanity. He should be free from the tendency of anger, idle sleep and lethargy as well as those passions which might harm his peaceful state of mind; he should have control over excessive or undue speech and be moderate in taking food and would keep himself above lust, discontent, fear, ignorance, greed, hatred, falsehood, wickedness, malice, deceit, scandals, gambling, intoxication and all enviable practices. He should guard himself from attachment to woman and had to abandon notorious and mean-minded people would not be inclined to unnecessary gossip, loud talk and use of abusive words

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as well as any unhealthy feeling. He should be free from any sinful practice. He had to talk soft and suavely and be devout and keep obeisance. Let him not have pleasure in riding and use of vehicles. He should not be allowed for dancing and singing and playing musical instruments, the only exception being in case of prayer. He would not kill or arrange slaughter of animals or even injure them with any motive – destruction of animals were strictly forbidden. He should always maintain self-castigation and practice of austerities.

*(To be continued)*

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To concentrate only on Him, the remembrance of Whom brings release from all anxiety, is meet and right.

At all times endeavour to sustain the contemplation of God and the flow of His Name. By virtue of His Name all disease becomes ease.

– Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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# Christian Theosophists ?

Jose Pereira

## Introduction

JOSE PEREIRA was born in Bombay, India, where he received a Ph. D. in Indian History and Culture from the University of Bombay. During the past fifteen years, he has taught or studied at the University of Lisbon, the University of London (School of Oriental and African Studies and the Institute of Archaeology), and the American Institute of Indian Studies at Benares, where he was a Research Associate in the History of Indian Art.

Dr. Pereira, who speaks and/or reads some fifteen languages, is currently an associate professor of theology at Fordham University, New York, where he teaches Sanskrit and lectures on the theology of religions – especially Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. In addition, he is a member of the Institute of Intercultural Research, Heidelberg, and the American Academy of Religion. He has published several books on cultural history and literary criticism, numerous articles for scholarly publications, as well as co-authored a number of works on traditional Indian music and cultural history.)

## 1. The Challenge to Western Oriental Gurus

There are many ecumenically minded Westerners who have an interest in a group of religions they call "oriental", and in the dialogue of these religions with Christianity. This group is said to include Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, Jainism, and even Islam and Shintoism; it is believed to possess a common character which distinguishes it from "Western" religions and philosophies. We are given to understand that this character partly consists in a sharing of the ethos of the

“mystical” East, while Christianity, it is alleged, has been conditioned by a “rational” West.

However, as the prime sources of the theological insights of these religions are in languages like Classical Sanskrit, Chinese and Arabic, which the natives themselves find difficult to master, our Western devotees of dialogue are forced to depend on translators and interpreters. A race of such interpreters has arisen, who themselves rely less on original works than on translations, though some of their followers claim that their mentors possess powerful intuitions that more than make up for their scholarly limitations. These interpreters of Oriental religions are generally, though not always, Westerners; their writings read like homilies, where they adopt a lofty and edifying tone such as behoves gurus : they may thus not inaptly be also described as Western Oriental Gurus. Since they rely mostly on translations, the most famous of which is a series called the Sacred Books of the East, they may further be designated as the Sacred-Books-of-the-East philosophers. While highly regarded by their Western and westernized disciples, they are generally treated with indifference by Indologists, Sinologists and Islamologists, and sometimes evoke hostility from traditionalist believers.

Most of these men are Christians, but they often sound like theosophists, and so may also be termed Christian theosophists. Theosophy can be discerned by three characteristics. First, it affirms that there is a transcendental unity behind all religions, and that their doctrinal and institutional features are only accidental. Second, it generally expresses itself in



Western European languages, rather than Asian ones, and employs a vague and mystical sounding vocabulary to describe vaguely understood concepts of religions identified as "oriental". Third, it displays an ambivalence to what it calls "dualism", which it professes to despise, while constantly employing dualistic polarities (like East-West, rational-mystical) to support its quasimonistic world view.

It would appear that the renowned Benedictine Bede Griffiths, also known as Swami Dayananda ("Lord Blissful-in-Compassion"), is one such Western Oriental Guru, and an exponent of Christian theosophy. His latter role has become especially evident in a controversy that he had with a traditionalist Hindu Swami Devananda ("Lord Blissful-in-God"). Both Blissfuls exchanged letters which have recently been published (*Catholic Ashrams : Adopting and Adapting Hindu Dharma*. New Delhi : Voice of India, 1988). In the discussion that follows, I shall refer to this book only by page number. I shall also make reference to some of Griffiths' books and cassettes; as well as to my own *Hindu Theology* (Doubleday 1976), and to my article on the first and perhaps greatest of Vedanta theologians, Badarayana ("Badarayana : Creator of Systematic Theology", *Religious Studies*, Cambridge, June 1986).

Both Blissfuls appear to agree that "Truth itself can only be known by pure intuition which is beyond all language" (*The Marriage of East and West*, Templegate Publishers, 1982, p. 31), and that "discursive reason which seeks to dominate the world and imprisons man in the narrow world of the conscious mind must be dethroned" (*ibid.*, p. 165). Yet, however much they may

agree on the reason-intuition duality, when they descend to the level of language and hence of discursive reason, they occasionally lapse from the lofty state of mystical intuition which they no doubt usually experience, though each denies that the other does. Blissful-in-God displays an unrelenting hostility toward Catholicism and to Blissful-in-Compassion, and so does a disservice to what otherwise appears to be a valid case. He thunders against Catholicism, because of the abuses he says it perpetrated, and because, he alleges, it "has subsumed and subverted the deities, symbols, rituals and philosophies of the peoples it wishes to conquer" (p. 45). He further accuses the Western guru of ignorance of Hinduism and of presumptuously putting himself above the Indians, in colonial British fashion. One gets the impression that for Devananda, Bede Griffiths, unlike his 7th century Anglo-Saxon namesake, is definitely the "unvenerable" Bede. Blissful-in-Compassion, on the other hand, maintains a uniformly civil and conciliatory tone, but on one occasion exasperatedly decries his opponent as a "fundamentalist" (p. 52), and on another, suggests that the irate and pugnacious Blissful-in-God may be destined for hell, when he refers to Krishna's words in the Gita (16:4), which to Griffiths' mind evidently describe the Swami's aggravating behavior: "Arjuna, to the man destined for the way of the demons belong hypocrisy, insolence, and self-conceit; rudeness too, and ignorance as well" (p. 56).

Vituperation and raillery apart, Devananda makes the following points:

1. *That one religion must not be permitted to subvert the symbols of another.* In Hinduism the ochre robe stands for the Hindu ascetic, and the sacred syllable OM for the essence of the Vedic Scriptures. Christianity too has its symbols, the monk's robe for its monasticism and the cross for its basic message. Now Griffiths has taken over the ochre robe and fixed the OM to the cross. This is a subversion of Hinduism, much as a Hindu's wearing of a Franciscan habit to preach his faith (and his adopting the cross as a symbol of that faith) would be a subversion of Christianity.

2. *That the usage of Hindu symbols is not valid unless sanctioned by representatives of the Hindu tradition.* Hinduism is a hierarchical religion, and the continuity of its institutions and the authenticity of its symbols depends on the supervision and vigilance of its hierarchy. This is true of Catholicism also. As Devananda says: "The Church does not recognise a priest outside the apostolic succession of Peter, and we do not recognise a sanyasin [ascetic] outside the Hindu *paramparas* [traditional congregations]" (p. 44).

Griffiths responds to both points by invoking the theosophical principle of the unity of religions. "Our search today", he proclaims, "is to go beyond the institutional structures of religion and discover the hidden mystery which is at the heart of all religion" (p. 47). This idea, he continues, "is the prevailing view among educated Hindus today" (p. 46). Some other Hindus who subscribe to this view, he observes, are Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi and Mahatma Gandhi. He then makes this strange pronouncement: "I consider myself a Christian in religion but a Hindu in spirit, just as they

were Hindus in religion while being Christian in spirit" (p. 52).

If this is anything more than the vague and pious talk that theosophists engage in (note also the dichotomy between "religion" and "spirit"), it must signify that being a "Hindu in spirit" and being a "Christian in spirit" mean the same thing or mean different things! If they mean the same thing, then we have the theosophical unity of faiths, and Griffiths, by implication, is not a Christian, at least in the orthodox sense. If they mean different things, then too Griffiths is not a Christian, by his own confession. Yet, in all his writings, he constantly uses Christian language, and has always sought to reconcile Hinduism with Christianity. How then shall we describe him? Perhaps as a Christian theosophist, and certainly as a Western Oriental Guru.

## 2. *The Failure, to Date, of a Christian Vedanta*

It may be urged, however, that the theosophical stance does not represent Griffiths' real thought, and that it is only the position he takes to dialogue with Hinduism. To assert the ultimacy and uniqueness of Christianity, it is claimed, only causes resentment on the part of the Hindus, and renders any discourse impossible.

Now, whatever the "educated Hindus today" may say, it is quite the rule for the great Hindu theologians of the classical age to assert the exaltedness of their own kind of Hinduism, in terms similar to those used by Catholic theologians and by the Magisterium to enunciate the transcendence of the Catholic Christian faith. For the "emperor of Indic speculation", Abhinava Gupta, "the doctrine enunciated by Siva, the Supreme Lord, is the sole norm of knowledge... the knowledge

enunciated by the other sacred traditions liberates from bondage limitedly and not wholly; only the Supreme Lord's doctrine is wholly liberative" (Hindu Theology, p. 373). For Vatican II: "This is the only Church of Christ... which our Savior erected in perpetuity as 'the column and support of the truth'. This Church, constituted and organized in this world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him, although many elements of sanctification and truth can be found outside her assembly. As gifts proper to the Church of Christ, these elements impel toward Catholic unity" (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 8).

Be that as it may, it could be claimed that Griffiths is a Christian, if only because one of his constant concerns is to interpret Christian thought in Hindu terms. In reply, it may be argued that his theology is neither Indian nor Christian. It appears to suffer from two shortcomings, immaturity and superficiality.

First, its *immaturity*. The level of Griffiths' Indological scholarship may have been adequate for Vivekananda's time, that is, the late 19th century. The other-robed Benedictine is very much a Sacred-Books-of-the-East philosopher. The Hindu sources he usually speaks of are the very ancient Vedas, Upanishads and Gita (all translated), or the very modern Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and other westernizing or neo-Hindus (who normally write in English). With the theologians of the intervening two millennia he shows little familiarity, except perhaps with Shankara, a proponent of monism or *advaita*. However, he rejects "that kind of *advaita*", proclaimed by Shankara, "which denies any

reality to this world and says that God alone is real” (“Transcending Dualism”, *Cistercian Studies* 20-2, 1985, p. 83). He seems to have no knowledge of the other great Advaita theologians, like Nimbarka, Vallabha and Vijnana Bhikshu, who emphatically affirm the world’s reality, and belong to what are known as the schools of Difference-in-Identity, of which the Vedanta alone has twelve varieties (*Hindu Theology*, p. 427; “Badarayana”, p. 196).

But he himself claims to profess an *advaita*, the one he says was declared by Christi in the words “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). Griffiths gives the impression of having been the first person to identify this special kind of *advaita*, which he describes as “unity-in-distinction”. Here again he does not seem to be aware that Hindu theologians have traditionally divided their schools into those of Identity (or unity), Difference (distinction) and Difference-in-Identity (unity-in-distinction). Madhva, the great master of Dualist Vedanta, observes that the Difference-in-Identity concept does not serve to unify the three great categories of being, God, the souls and matter, but can function only within each of them; he could have mentioned the Christian Trinity as an instance in point. The Difference-in-Identity theologians, however, insist that all beings are interrelated by this concept. All beings, they declare, are identical in essence and are thus God; but they are different in particular mode of being or in appearance, and thus constitute the phenomena.

Solemn pronouncements constantly fall from the guru’s lips, the truth of which has no other guarantee than his own mystical intuition. To take one instance.

"Nonduality", intones the guru, "is the name given to the highest experience of God in India" ("Advaita and the Trinity", 1983 cassette). If so, one wonders why that name is nowhere to be found in the Vedic Canon, Hinduism's foundational revelation, nor in the Gita, perhaps the greatest of all Hindu scriptures. Here again Griffiths does not know, or care to show that he knows, that "nonduality" was first used by the Buddhists, to describe their own non-theistic monism of Emptiness. It was later taken over by a Hindu theology for which the ultimate reality was an impersonal "qualityless absolute" (*nirguna brahman*), while the theist God was described as an inferior being, a figment of illusion, and identified as the "qualified absolute" (*saguna brahman*).

Another sign of the immaturity of Griffiths' theology is suggested by its methodological principle, which he states thus: "We seek to express our Christian faith in the language of the Vedanta as the Greek Fathers expressed it in the language of Plato and Aristotle" (*The Cosmic Revelation*, Templegate Publishers, 1983, p. 76). Here the guru is speaking more truth than he knows, for he adopts the same interpretative methods as the Fathers, that of reading Christian ideas into non-Christian texts (through a process known as *eisegesis*), rather than that of endeavoring (through a process of *exegesis*) to ascertain the meaning intended by the authors of those texts, before deciding whether this meaning coincides with Christian thinking. We cannot afford, on the one hand, to have a Western Christian theology making use of the refined and penetrating techniques of modern hermeneutics;

and, on the other, of an Indian Christian theology employing the archaic and fanciful methods of the Greek Fathers. Moreover, Griffiths and his kind substitute Greek and Scholastic terms with Indian ones, only to give the latter Greek and Scholastic meanings.

This brings us to the second feature of Griffiths' theology, its *superficiality*. Its principle here seems to be that similarity is a sign of basic identity. One instance of this principle is the equation of the Christian Trinity with the Hindu triad of Being-Consciousness-Bliss (*sat-cit-ananda*). Says Griffiths : "we could then speak of God as *Saccidananda* ... and see in the Father, *sat* ... we could then speak of the Son, as the *cit* ... we could speak of the Spirit as the *ananda* ..." (*The Marriage of East and West*, p. 190).

There are indeed similarities between the Christian and the Hindu concepts : the number three; the possible equivalence in meaning of the Christian Logos and the Hindu Consciousness; and perhaps also of the Christian Spirit (who is Love) and the Hindu Bliss. But the Christian Trinity has even greater differences from the Hindu triad, differences which appear to be unjustifiable in the vocabulary of any Hindu metaphysics. In the Christian Trinity the Persons are irreducibly distinct in reality; a "relational opposition" of origin exists between them. But Being-Consciousness-Bliss are no more than different aspects of the same reality, distinguished from another only in concept, with no question of any of them originating from either or both the others. They are better identified with Scholasticism's three transcendental attributes of being-unity, truth and goodness - to which they largely correspond.



A surreptitious imposition of patristic and Scholastic concepts on those of the Hindu triad serves to transform them into the Christian idea of the Trinity. The Father is said to be the "Source and Godhead"; the Son the "Logos and Divine Pattern", and the Spirit "the goal and unifying Principle of the Divine Nature" (*op. cit.*, pp 84-85). Where in Hindu thought can these notions be found?

As though the initial Christian Trinity-Hindu triad equation were not enough, Griffiths proceeds to identify monism's Qualitiless Absolute with the Father, described as the "infinite abyss of being beyond word and thought", and its Qualified Absolute with the Son, said to be the "Self-manifestation of the unmanifest God, the personal aspect of the Godhead" (*ibid.*, p. 190). It is difficult to imagine a greater incomprehension of both the Christian and the Hindu viewpoints. From the Christian, both Father and Son are coequal; each is as much a "personal aspect of the Godhead" as the other. From the monist Hindu viewpoint, the Qualified Absolute is an inferior aspect of the deity, an illusory deformation of it projected by an ontological Ignorance. There could be no better proof, in Hindu terms, of the heterodox interpretation of Christ's words, "The Father is greater than I" (John 14 : 28).

There is yet more. The Hindus also have a triad of divine individuals, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, who are sometimes spoken of as three gods (tritheism), and sometimes as three modes of one substance (modalism). The only Hindu parallel to the kind of consubstantial plurality in God confessed by the Christian faith is not a Trinity, but a Duality or Dyad, consisting

of an Energizer (*shaktimat*) and an Energy (*shakti*). The Energizer represents the deity in itself, and is always singular; the Energy represents the deity as ordered to the phenomenal world, and may be manifold. If this dualist concept were to be applied to the Trinity, the second person, the Logos, would supposedly be the exact equivalent of the Energy, as "by Him all things were made" (John 1 : 2-3). For Griffiths, however, it is the third person, the Spirit, who is God's *shakti*, which is communicated to and revealed in the entire creation ("The Personal God : the Trinity, 1983 cassette). This offends the Christian position, according to which the Persons are wholly transcendental, and are not differentiated through any relationship to the phenomenal world. And even if they were to be so differentiated, two Energies are superfluous; one is more than adequate to deal with phenomena. The concept of Spirit as *shakti* also offends the Hindu position. For if the Spirit is God's only Energy, the other two Persons will constitute two Energizers, or together coalesce into a single Energizer, both of which alternatives are absurd according to Hindu postulates. And if the Spirit is a second Energy, serving as a bond between the first Energy (the Son) and the Energizer (the Father), the concept of Energy as bond is alien to Hindu thought.

In short, Hindu theology does not appear to have the conceptual framework to clarify the Christian notion of the Trinity, and Griffiths' attempts to impose a Christian sense on Hindu categories indicates an insufficient appreciation of both positions and the consequent shallowness of his theol-

ogy. This theology is really a theosophy, in the second sense described above : one using a vague and pious Western vocabulary to describe only vaguely understood concepts of an "oriental" religion.

This is not to say that an Indian Christian theology is impossible. Quite the contrary, for it was in Hinduism that were first enunciated some of the mysteries that Christian theology believes are wholly supernatural, and hence unknowable to the human mind except by revelation. Ideas such as the mysterious plurality of beings in the unique and transcendent being of God (whether it be dyadic or triadic); the assumption by this being of creaturely form (the Incarnation); the intimate personal union with this being as constituting man's supreme happiness (the Beatific Vision); and the unattainability of that being except through His favor (Grace). It is arguable that more of the mysteries distinctive of the Christian revelation are to be found in the Hindu scriptures than in the theologically more jejune Old Testament.

But a Christian Vedanta, besides making use of modern (and not patristic) hermeneutical methods, besides deriving its conclusions more from a careful study of the primary sources and less from the pontifications of theosophical gurus, must adopt the postulates unanimously accepted by all Vedantic schools : that the Vedic Canon is impersonally originant and infalible; that its meaning is made explicit by personal revelations like those of Krishna in the Gita; and that this meaning has been systematically organized by Badarayana, "the teacher of teachers", in his Aphorisms on the Brahman (*Brahma Sutras*). These

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postulates, which constitute the Triple Method (*prasthana traya*) of the Vedanta, have first to be investigated, especially the revealed character of the Hindu scriptures, and their possible acceptance as revelation by the Catholic Church. And there is no reason why the Church should not accept as revelation a source that proclaimed her supernatural mysteries long before she definitively formulated them herself.

The next step would be to do what Vedantic theologians of every denomination have done : to write an expose of Badarayana's Aphorisms, proving the tenets of one's denomination on the basis of the Triple Method, with only secondary reference to the scriptures of one's own denomination (in the case of Christianity, the New Testament). Only then could we have a Christian Vedanta. Otherwise we might have an Indian Christian theology making use of Vedantic terms, but essentially non-Vedantic. What is certain is that no system can be called Vedantic if all it does is to take Vedantic vocabulary and impose on it meanings derived from Greek philosophy and from Scholasticism.

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# MA Touches Us : 6 In Our Superstitions

Dr. P. C. Datta, Ph. D.

I consider everyone as superstitious (except my ownself, whom I take as only norm in my universe). Probably you, he, they and everyone also think similarly. Are we all correct individually? Are our individual universes also superstitions (as supposed by some) ? Have science and religion any relation to superstitions? What is superstition?

The word has originated from *Super* (Over or excessive) and *Stare* (Stand Still). So it means excessively clinging to a belief or a fixed stand based on irrational feeling of fear or joy, grief etc. (Derived from Webster). Gardner also (in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics XII ed. by J. Hastings, 1955) attributes significance to the prefix 'Super' which may mean excess or exaggeration of normal reasonable belief with a readiness to accept unverified. Gardner points out two significant characters of superstitions.

(1) It has a subjective nature. No man is ready to acknowledge himself as superstitious.

(2) Superstition may not be in anyway related to mysticism.

Plato, the greatest of mystics was eminently sane and reasonable. The superstitious mind, then is one that is not educated to discern characters of evidence

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or one that has no patience to suspend judgement in the presence of unfamiliar phenomena (Gardner.)

### **Superstition and Science.**

History of the birth of sciences like Chemistry, Physics, Botany, Zoology etc. is attended by crude hypothesis, superstitious faiths and vagaries (Pattison, 1902 : Story of Alchemy and origin of Chemistry). From these vagaries of thoughts emerged the sciences of today. Newtonian laws explain all worldly phenomena, but according to Einsteinian Science these rigid laws are applicable to a limited field of view, to which we cling superstitiously, but has no real existence. This is the universe, which exists only in our senses. Lamerkian science was once highly esteemed which was superstitiously clung to by some even after the establishment of Darwinian Theory of evolution.

Mendelian science did not find a recognition in the scientific world (Is it not superstition?) during Mendel's life. After recognition his theory had of course to be modified by Morgan. In this way, today's sciences may be ridiculed as superstitions by scientists to-morrow. But we find a common mind working through ages, *a whole hearted desire after Truth*, the unifying principle holding the diversity of phenomena. Thus we find a constant scientific attitude of mind which is important for development. Crude superstitions in Europe declines with the education of science (Burry 1900, A history of Greece). But the history of science shows clearly that when we discover a new principle, we begin to like it, we feel an attach-

ment to it, we try to enjoy it and our mind develops resistance to a change of the principle. So superstition is an inherent deep-rooted constituent of the mind. How can we be liberated from superstitions ?

Teaching of science makes our mind wide enough to accept all differences of opinions and to try to unify the diversities; but as soon as we find a solution we become engrossed or intoxicated in it. In this intoxicated condition we develop "isms" which are hardly in progress of development. If on the basis of a formula discovered by a scientist, a separate camp is created and it possesses an aggressive attitude to others' views, would you call it science ? It is a *scientism* or *superstition*. This is a great *granthi* (Knot). The stranglehold that sense objects exercise over men's minds, is called *granthi* – the knots constituting I-ness. (Ma, Words-40).

How can we remain awake in this intoxicating condition ? We need "Religion." "What is wanted is genuine awakening, an awaking after which nothing remains to be attained" (Ma Anandamaye, Words p. 125).

### **Superstitions, Religion and Science.**

Religion in the Indian outlook is the way of attaining the pure superior intellect or perfect vision, free from vision, free from emotion, mind and ego. "Who can tell when the veil will be lifted from your eyes. This vision is no vision at all, for it is only temporary. Real vision is that vision, where there is no such thing as seer and the seen. It is eye-less – not to be beheld with these ordinary eyes, but with the eyes of wisdom" (Ma

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Anandamayee Words p. 46).

What do the teachers of religion do for the purpose? They prescribe some Psycho-somatic exercises aiming actually at development of a superior consciousness or nurturing a consciousness already existing, by freeing it from desires, anger, greed, emotions, hatred etc all excesses or superstitions of mind and by standing on the margin of all opposite attractions (*Tatastha* Stage). Such marginal consciousness, like a third person (Ma says) must be awakened to detect the correct Scientific Truth. Thus true religion has an antisuperstition attitude and a whole hearted desire after Truth. "Religion is not in creed, nor in dogma, it is realization" (Swami Vivekananda). If you restrict the religion in this field, it is the most unavoidable essential for the progress of science in the present age. But the prescriptions given by religious teachers of India must differ according to receiver's capability. If one person has a deep faith in a Goddess of an epidemic disease, the teacher will ask him to worship the Infinite one GOD through his beloved deity which is one of His manifestations. A course is given to follow gradually to feel His presence in every particle of the creation. If you can love One, all superstitions will fall off like the old leaves of a growing tree. If you can not extend your devotion to the infinite forms and the formless, you are bogged in superstitions. "It is good to be born in a mosque but one should not die there" (Swamiji). You must come out of any "ism" or inclination, to the open sky. One ritual may be a superstition for one person, but a gateway for liberation of another man. Our person



may frame a non-ritualistic mould of religion and jump on the society with that framed structure, but he will have to apply force to destroy many things, living or nonliving, only to fulfill his self-made superstitions and a greedy ambition of framing a new artificial creed. So, the Indian religious teachers do not devise any such unscientific formula to wipe out systems appearing as superstition to some otherwise superstitious people, but tries to utilize his natural faith to develop a superior consciousness.

So, an educated mind should learn to isolate religion from superstitions. Europe was full of superstitions of different patterns in different states. Churches, like Indian spiritual teachers, were sympathetic to superstitious people. It is folly to consider them as Christian Superstition. Superstitions declined with spreading of education of science. Folk superstitions in different regions of India are considered as Hindu superstitions by some superstitious blinds. How are the superstitions sublimated by Hindu Teachers can be shown in the following example, given by MA (Words, 170).

(1) "When a Sadhaka starts worshipping a *Vigraha* of his Beloved; he will in the course of his practice attain to a condition in which the form of his beloved is beheld wherever his eyes may fall" (The previous stage may appear as superstitions).

(2) Next he comes to realize : All other deities are contained in my Beloved.

(3) He sees everyone's Lord and all things are in his own *Ista* and his *Ista* dwells in all deities and everything.

(4) The *sadhaka* comes to feel – Everywhere in the whole universe abides my Beloved.

(5) Further all the varieties of forms and modes of 'being that we behold, are they not expressions of my Beloved'?

For there is none save Him. He is smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest.

(6) You will find the All within you . . . . . you cannot dissociate yourself from the whole.

(7) What are these varieties of shapes, of modes of being, what is the essence within them? What really are these ever changing forms ? Gradually He becomes revealed to you in everyone of them not even a grain of sand is excluded.

Realization does not come to everyone in the same way. There are infinite possibilities.

(8) A time will come, must come, when one actually perceives this all pervading Universal Form of the One.

(9) When *Sadhak* enters this stage, he becomes conscious of the perpetual transformation of all forms and moods, what at one moment is non-existent, the next where being is continually entering into non-being. Who then is this non-being ? Even the non-existent exists simultaneously and in the same place, there is non-existence as well as existence, and also neither existence nor non-existence; and more of the kind if you can proceed further; when this is realized one has realized Self. To find the Beloved is to find my Self.

(10) He comes to know what *Bhaba* is the inner relation of form to the *Sabda-Brahman*.

(11) In this way the world reveals as void, before merging into the Great Void (*Maia SUNYA*). The

void that is perceived within the world is a part of *Prakriti* and therefore still form. From this void one will have to proceed to the Great Void.

(12) A time will come when this kind of perception will give way before the awaking of Universal consciousness which will reveal itself as an aspect of Supreme Knowledge. (from Words of Shree Anandamayee Ma, P.170-4)

Thus we find starting from worship of a so called idol one proceeds in an endless voyage, higher and higher enlightenment, leaving the lower as a superstition, in an internal search for a perfect balance.

Any how discernation of religion from superstition is necessary for :

(1) Development of an analytical outlook, a scientific approach, facilitating a dynamicity of a developing society.

(2) If you stamp a subject or a faith or superstition as related to religion and it becomes fixed and very difficult to shake off. Those who decry superstition are usually enimical to Hindu Society. They themselves are *excessively inclined* (superstitious) *irrationally contaminating* the religion with folk superstitions, with the object of darkening the face of *Hindu Dharma* and hindering in the progress of the Indian Societies.

Thus religion is necessary for human progress, but religionism, which divide people into many camps and creates hatred between them is dangerously superstitious.

(To be continued)

# The Shield of Love

Yvonne Sterk

*(Translated from French)*

Neither theology nor philosophy are my domains, I experience life as a poet and poetry is my field of expression.\*

Feeling that my life was not in harmony with my deepest aspirations, I embarked on freelance journalism in 1967. I wanted to help the depressed people. I had already started to fight racial hatred by articles and poems. Living in Egypt for eight months after the war between Israel and the Arabs in 1967 and for three months in Israel in 1968, I came to settle in Lebanon in 1972 and two years later became the private secretary of a Lebanese chief. It was this distinguished personage who introduced me into Vedanta and Advaita philosophy. A well-known sage of South-India had been his Guru. My employer frequently went to India with a young French lady who periodically suffered from fits of nervous depression. Both of them had met Ma Anandamayi in Her ashrams in Vrindaban and Varanasi, and the French lady held Ma in profound veneration. However, soon after I started my secretarial work, the French lady, after another journey to India, decided that the Sankaracharya of Kanchipuram was her Guru and replaced the

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\* Several collections of poems by Madame Yvonne Sterk have been published in French.

photos of Ma that embellished her room at Beirut by pictures of her Guru. I did not understand anything of all this. The only thing I could do was to study books like *Jnana Yoga* by Vivekananda or *Spiritual Discourses* by Sri Krishna Menon. At the same time I devoted myself to my work which consisted mainly in giving a poetic touch to my boss's writings that were inspired by his devotion to his Guru. In 1974, the French lady, who had made friends with me as well, went to Kanchipuram all by herself. But after eight months there, she again succumbed to a severe attack of nervous depression and thus returned to Beirut. However, as soon as she arrived she longed to go back to India and asked me to accompany her. And here I now see the working of Ma's will. Thus her mother and I travelled to South-India with the sick lady. In spite of several visits to the sage, she remained in a state of acute restlessness and to divert her attention her mother decided to take her to Delhi and Agra for sight-seeing. I had no say in the matter and of course had not the faintest idea that a mysterious Will fashioned this programme. It was January 1975 and nobody could foresee that by April the most horrible civil war would break out in Lebanon.

One day we motored from Delhi to Agra. On our way back the young lady suddenly expressed the wish to visit Vrindaban where, she said, Ma Anandamayi might perhaps be in Her ashram. It was evening when we arrived there, and Ma was giving *darsana* in a crowded room on the ground floor of Her house. As soon as we entered everyone had to leave as the *darsana* was over. I hardly caught a glimpse of Ma and

felt vaguely frustrated. My friend looked so terribly disappointed that I said to her : "If it is really important that you talk to Ma, ask someone to arrange for it." "This is very difficult", replied my friend, "almost impossible!" However, I felt certain that we would meet Ma and so I said : "If you are really keen to see Her, it will happen."

My friend and I were alone at the doorstep of the house. Her mother was waiting in the taxi, parked near the temple. One of Ma's girls came and asked us to leave. She refused to listen when I tried to explain the urgency of our visit. I consoled my friend : "Don't worry and don't move an inch ! I can assure you that you will see Ma." The same girl passed by again and said to us : "It is useless to wait here. Ma has retired to Her room. She is not well." I thought to myself : "What this girl says is quite irrelevant, it is Ma who decides," and told my friend : "All is well, we only have to wait." I cannot explain what prompted me to act as I did, but something within me directed. There was no logic in what I said and no obvious reason for my obstinacy. I had come to India only because of my friend and was trying my best to be of service to her. It never entered my mind that this journey could be for my own benefit. I then did not understand the inestimable value of the *darsana* of the Sankaracharya or of Ma Anandamayi.

After about half an hour, a sadhu in the ochre robe approached the house. It was Sri Bhaskarananda. I accosted him, explaining in a few words that my friend was ill and wanted to talk to Ma and that we had to return to Delhi the same evening and two days later to Paris. The Swami promised to inform Ma. Within

ten minutes he returned and opened the door for us. We were taken upstairs. Ma was surrounded by a few devotees. We both knelt down and I gazed at Ma full of tranquillity and confidence. Ma smiled and looked at us with interest. A devotee said : "Tell Ma now what you have to say !" I turned to my friend. She looked pale and shrivelled. She stared at Ma with intensity, tears streaming down her cheeks, but was obviously unable to utter a word. So I spoke instead, explaining her condition. Ma listened and watched me with undefinable attention, and asked my name, nationality and whether I was married. I replied but added that I had not come for my own sake but for my friend's who was anxious to talk to Ma. Ma laughed pleasantly and said something to Her devotees. One of them translated : "Your friend keeps mum. Let her say what she wants to tell Ma." But my friend only shook her head. Nothing could be done. Ma glanced at her for a moment and then said : "Who is your Guru ?" Again my friend remained silent. Ma thus continued : "You have to approach your Guru, he alone can help you. If you can't go to see him, concentrate on his picture. This is all I can tell you." Our meeting was over. We had to leave and return to Delhi.

I did not try to analyze what had transpired at Vrindaban for I vaguely felt that my petty logic was unable to grasp the deep significance of Ma's attitude and Her words. My friend was plunged in a deep gloom and had to undergo psychiatric treatment on arriving in Paris. I returned to Beirut and resumed my post as literary secretary.

My friend had presented to me a small photo of Ma

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which I placed on top of a bookshelf. At my employer's I also saw a photo of Ma as well as pictures of other spiritual personages such as Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi, Vivekananda. Since my trip to India my outlook on things had begun to change continually and irreversibly but I was hardly aware of this transformation.

At Beirut the social and political atmosphere deteriorated rapidly and in April 1975 civil war broke out. The horrors of this period beggar all description. Violence reached its peak by the indiscriminate bombardment of the poor peoples' quarters. Amidst this mad rage of destruction I saw my employer preserve an exemplary calm. Every day he offered flowers, incense and lights in front of his Guru's picture. "We are defending spiritual values", he told me, "and must fearlessly risk our lives in this fight." For me this was a matter of course and I acted accordingly. But civil war is the worst type of war. It brings to light monstrosities and the lowest instincts of the men on both sides. There was a frenzy of violation, plunder and killing. I felt isolated in a world that had become incomprehensible. Once stones were thrown at me. Then again a shell exploded at about four metres distance from me, breaking all window-panes. There was glass-dust in my eyes and I thought that splinters had penetrated my body but I was safe. Certainly I was protected, as if surrounded by a shield of Love. My cat, which sat on the table by my side, died after frightful suffering two days later. The blast of the explosion had destroyed its brain.

My flat was on the 9th storey of an estate and right



in the zone where shells and rockets landed. At any moment the roof could have exploded as happened continuously to places all round. The bombardments caused great conflagrations in the city. The largest book depot was hit and many damaged books were sold at reduced rates in a shop where they had been dumped. It is here that I found amongst a large pile of books blackened by smoke a copy of "L'enseignement de Ma Anandamoyi", translated by J. Herbert.\* Nothing happens by chance. That book was there for me and there was a reason for this. I at once purchased it. Only its back cover had been burnt. I started reading voraciously. It was about the mysterious Being I had met at Vrindaban. It was Ma Anandamayi Herself who spoke to me through this book. I devoured it wholesale without halting at passages beyond my understanding. All I understood was that the pure, clear voice of Love was speaking to me amidst the tornado of hate that seemed to engulf everything. I was even more dumfounded by this voice of inner silence than by the pandemonium of the cannons. What was the significance of all this? I had read with great interest "*Jnana Yoga*" by Vivekananda and I often went through passages of the teaching of the Lebanese leader's Guru. I could see how he loved his Guru who for him remained present in spite of having left his body several years earlier. I vaguely sensed that 'Happiness', that marvel eagerly sought since my childhood, was a reality for some beings whereas for me it

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\* "L'enseignement de Ma Anandamoyi" by Jean & Josette Herbert appeared in 1975 as one of the series "Spiritualites Vivantes" published by Editions Albin Michel, Paris.

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remained a concept, an idea, a dream. "Truth never dreams", I often repeated to myself with Vivekananda, but I just voiced a beautiful phrase of which the real import escaped me. All the same, I persistently pronounced it again and again, just as I looked at the photo of Ma Anandamayi as if I expected Her to reply to me. For everything had become a question – as if everything were upside down and I became a stranger to myself. I became just a big Question. Did the whole of Creation depend on my reply? I looked at everything with different eyes : the people, the sea, the sky, the flowers. The people remained deaf and close up but everything else seemed to smile, as it were, and I began to guess that Happiness existed where the play of the intellect could not enter. Perhaps the silence of Love spoke to us through the perfume of jasmine. One morning I actually beheld the formidable beauty of the crimson bougainvillia glittering in the sunlight. And suddenly this seemed to me more real than my moral misery, than my great bodily fatigue and all the suffering into which Lebanon was steeped. Had my intellect been keener, I might perhaps have gone mad but my mediocre brain did not look for explanations beyond its comprehension. My condition could perhaps have been compared to that of the earth that receives sunlight, rain, wind or snow as they come – choicelessly! But this state did not last : the nightmare again resumed substance. It happened that Beirut was without water and electricity for lengthy periods. One day, while running I injured my knee. I could not get it treated, so I just tried it up. In this condition I had to climb up and down 180 steps to get to my roof-

apartment and to leave it whenever the bombardment started, sometimes up to six times within 24 hours. In summer it was terribly hot and in winter I was shivering with cold because the heating did not function. I fell ill and was bed-ridden for ten days. I subsisted on dry dates which a welfare organization had distributed to the residents of our block. It was during this period, when I was totally forsaken, when nobody came to see me and I was in bed with fever, suffering the pangs of hunger, that I experienced moments of complete peace and a joy hitherto unknown. Later I came to understand that Love was at work, the gaze of Love that had enveloped me at Vrindaban unknown to myself....

“Love never sleeps nor slumbers”, is a pure and simple truth. Love, Life, Truth, are one and have no place in the dark little labyrinth of the brain. *That* at times is called by the name of a man or a woman, be He born in Bethlehem or be She born in Bangladesh. This kind of reasoning has nothing in common with what great intellects call ‘reason’. But how delightful to be devoid of ordinary logic!

Now, how to express what cannot be put into words? The poor, exhausted creature that I had become after several months of civil war, without rest, subjected to constant nervous strain, slowly began to feel that death was preferable to this never ending agony. At Beirut cases of insanity became frequent and nervous breakdowns were the order of the day. In fact I found myself forced to choose between opening my eyes or continuing to grope in darkness, pretending to see clearly by candle light. How to make the choice in my ignorance? But then, if there was any choice, had

it not already been made? Truth is a permanent urgency. It must spring to one's eyes some time or other.

One day I seemed to have reached the limit of my capacity for resistance. Long range cannons were pounding the city, the noise of rockets rent the air in a terrifying manner. I saw shells explode in neighbouring houses. I said to myself : "the end has come!" and my body started trembling with fear. My brain seemed paralyzed. The idea of death put me into a panic. *And suddenly, without any transition, I was completely at peace while I saw Ma smiling at me. I beheld Her radiant face and I heard Her ringing laughter as I had heard it at Vrindaban.* I also started laughing and calmly sat down on the mattress in the corridor of my flat. Suddenly my horrible fear had given way to the conviction that death did not exist. This certitude and the luminous smiling face of Mataji were one and the same thing. Inexplicable but absolutely true! This truth came to me in a flash. A little later, when I tried to relive that strange moment, I remembered that I had thrown a frantic glance on the crucifix in the glass cupboard and Christ's tormented body seemed to me an image of death. I had seen the marvellous face of Ma. Nevertheless, I also was convinced that the Truth of Christ and the Truth of Ma were one and the same. Love, Joy and Peace are Truth and thus indivisible.

Very gradually Lebanon regained a relative calm and I resumed my work as literary secretary. My desire for Ma's darsana grew more and more intense. It happened that I would suddenly throw myself on the floor in front of Her picture with tears streaming from my eyes as if my heart were being emptied of all pain

by the force of Joy. I suffered a lot from rheumatism and arthritis but I was not affected by these bodily troubles. What a change ! Did I start living at the age of 56 ?

But an unexpected, most tragic event radically changed the course of my life : the murder of my employer. Had I accompanied him to his place of retreat I should without a doubt have perished together with him, as was the case with his driver and his bodyguard. But I did not want to leave Beirut because my new cat could not be left without food for several days. My employer had gone away to complete some writing on Siva for a book he intended to publish. His death was a severe blow for many but it also cruelly affected me : I was suddenly left without work, without money and without shelter. I received temporary financial help from the wealthy French lady when she came to Beirut in April. She also invited me to accompany her to Inida in May. I was most delighted and at my request she promised to help me to find Mataji, wherever She might happen to be.

Thus, my young friend, her mother and myself flew to Madras and from there went daily to Kanchi for Sri Sankaracharya's darsana. At the end of May we proceeded to Delhi. Ma was in Almora. On May 31st my friend hired a taxi for me and I left Delhi at 6 a.m. On reaching the Jamuna bridge we were stopped. The bridge was blocked by about 60,000 people who had come to bathe on new-moon day and moreover a sudden strike of truck drivers complicated matters even more. My driver said : "We have to return to Delhi" ! "Patience," I replied, "when one goes to Ma

Anandamayi things arrange themselves.” “I do not know that Saint”, said the driver, “but I feel that you are right. Let us wait.” We waited for five hours, surrounded by the teeming crowd, at a temperature of 45° C. in the shade. Suddenly the strike was over and the bridge became empty. At 7 p.m. we arrived at Almora. I wanted to go first of all to the Ashram without looking for accommodation. We got there at night-fall and were told that Mataji was about to retire to Her room after the darsana. I hardly heard what I was told. I was in a state of love for Ma impossible to put into words. I felt nothing else. My body seemed to have no weight. I just wanted to fall at Ma’s feet and was ready to spend the night on the Ashram floor waiting for Ma. Full of adoration I breathed the air that Ma breathed. Then I saw Her. She left the terrace and went to Her room accompanied by a few devotees. Just like two years earlier in Vrindaban the same girl asked me to leave. But this was simply impossible for me. An Indian gentleman asked me very kindly who I was and from where. I replied and added that I had come to thank Ma for saving me from death. The gentleman, a doctor from Calcutta, at once went to Ma. He came back and told me that Ma would see me and that I should come to the entrance of Her room. I thus knelt down at the place assigned to me. To my left a devotee called Krishnapriya sat down. I remained on my knees until 9 p.m. or longer, I don’t remember. I felt neither hungry nor thirsty, and my knee, usually so painful, did not hurt at all ! Ma bathed me in her glance and, smiling at me in the most marvellous manner, She asked me questions that were translated by the Calcutta doctor

who also translated my replies, I had brought the French book of Ma's teaching that had been rescued from the fire in Beirut. Ma took it, looked at it, and after listening to my explanations, returned it to me. Ma never stopped smiling at me. My happiness surpassed everything that has been said and that ever can be said about happiness. I was simply dissolved by Love. Ma's words, Her smile and Her glance filled me with Light.

When it was time for Ma to retire for the night, She told me to return at 9 o'clock the next morning and not to leave for Delhi until the day after. By Ma's grace the driver and myself found accommodation in the hotel where the doctor was staying with his wife and two sons. The next morning we reached the Ashram at the appointed hour. That 1st of June 1977 was a most wonderful day. Ma had not been well during the night, but nothing could be noticed of this. She was sitting on the terrace of Her simple cottage. The air was very pure, the temperature perfect. Two apricot-trees gave shade to the courtyard where about ten visitors were sitting. Off and on an apricot would fall down and Ma said it was prasada. This special darsana continued from 9.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. With the help of the kind people from Calcutta who translated I could tell Ma about the tragic events in Lebanon. Ma looked at me with Her infinite glance and told me that this was the most peaceful and the simplest Ashram of all and that the spot had been selected for its natural beauty and simplicity. I replied that the place filled me with happiness and that I felt in harmony with it. She laughed, saying that this was the very reason why She

had made me come there ! The friends from Calcutta told Her that I was writing poetry and that a commentary to my poems said that my poetry was made of leaves and water. "Nature lifts you up towards Supernature", remarked Ma. Then She related how the Ashram came into existence many years ago. It was meant to be a school for brahmacharis. The saintly person who used to travel with Her over forty years ago was buried on the spot where he had sat down when he arrived there first and a small temple had been erected over his tomb. It was by God's grace that one could have his *darsana* in this pure and peaceful spot. That day Ma presented to me a towel to put over my shoulders during meditation and a small carpet on which Her feet had been resting. The afternoon and evening passed in similar enchantment. Ma asked me to come early next morning for a last *darsana* before leaving. When I arrived Ma was in Her room and I was taken to the back veranda to sit by the entrance to Her room. After a silent *darsana* Ma took garland made of brightly coloured paper from a picture of Sri Krishna on the wall and put it round my neck. I was kneeling and had a great desire to touch Ma. She gazed at me with intensity, smiled at me and bending down caressed my head and shoulders. At that moment the thought that I had to leave became unbearable and tears rushed to my eyes. Ma was standing in front of me. I saw Her shut Her eyes. She looked marvellously beautiful and serene. My tears stopped and I was at peace. I walked backwards when leaving, looking at Ma who smiled at me.

The journey to Delhi went off without a hitch. Ma



had entrusted a young samnyasi to us who had to return to the Delhi Ashram. On the way the driver said that the brakes of the taxi did not function and that he managed to brake with the motor at the downward slopes. "But I know that we are safe", he added, "because Mataji's blessings are with us. I have probably done a very meritorious deed in a former life to have earned the benediction of Mataji's darsana."

In September 1977, I had to leave Lebanon and to return to Belgium where I had been promised some work in the Ministry of Culture. But nothing came of it and for over two years I have been in a most precarious financial condition. Nevertheless, in spite of abject poverty I have never felt unhappy for a single moment. Ma had told me in Almora : "I am always with you, I shall never leave you" ! and this is the truth that sustains me in this difficult period of my life. In October 1977 I saw Ma again at Varanasi, but only briefly, when I came to India once more with the French lady, who had another attack of nervous depression and I took her back to Paris and never met her since.

It seemed that I would never again be able to see Ma, for from where could the money come for the journey ? Nevertheless the keen desire for Her *darsana* never left me. However, I had first of all to devote myself to the service of my father, a widower aged 90. He died on August 31st 1979.

In the meantime money came to me from a most unexpected source, and this is how I was able to attend the *Samyama Mahavrata* at Kurukshetra in October 1979 in the presence of Ma. Then I stayed at Vrindaban

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until the end of November and Ma gave *darsana* every day.

I had hoped to spend the rest of my life in one of Ma's Ashrâms and to dedicate myself entirely to Her service or to any work She would assign to me. This was an unrealistic desire and so to convince me of the impossibility of ending my days in India, I had to fall ill. Already in Kurukshetra I had an attack of fever, followed by two other attacks in Vrindaban. All I could do was learn my lesson. Ma knows exactly the nature of everyone who comes to Her and Her love for every single person makes it possible for everyone to understand somehow or other what he should do or leave undone. As nothing happens by chance, the discomfort of bad health was compensated by the presence of a guardian angel called Melita whose friendship and care made the lesson bearable.

For a long time I hesitated to entrust this tale to "Ananda Varta". It is certain that the darkness that speaks of Light cannot illumine. Words are but the negation of the Peace, the Love, the Bliss of which they tell, for THAT is Silence.

## Ashram News

### **Kankhal :**

By the grace of highly adorable Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee, ceremonies like Sri Sri Durga Puja, Sri Sri Lakshmi Puja, Sri Sri Shyama Puja and Annakut were celebrated satisfactorily.

During the Naba Ratri, Sata Chandi Recitation and Yajna were beautifully arranged by Sri Ram Panjayani and Smt. Santosh Panjayani. From 23rd September to 25th September, 1990 Smt. Malati Bhargavji and her associate created a special atmosphere in the Ashram by the devotional songs of Ramayana.

From 27th October to 2nd November, 1990 the 41st "Samyam Saptah Mahabrata" was observed solemnly through yam, niyam, japa, meditation, silence (mauna), chantings, discourses on religious topics, satsang etc. On this occasion about 250 Vratis assembled at Kankhal from various States of India.

From the 25th November to 28th November 1990, Sri Sri Gita Jayanti Utsab was celebrated.

### **Varanasi :**

On 19th September, 1990, Sri Sri Chandi Ghat was installed to start the celebration of Nabaratri for 9 days. Special puja and Chandi recitation were done and on the 10th day the "GHAT" was immersed in the

Ganges.

Sri Sri Lakshmi Puja, Sri Sri Shyama Puja and Annakut were solemnly celebrated. Many local devotees took the *prasada* of Annakut with great pleasure. The *Samyam Saptah* and *Sri Sri Jagadhatri Puja* were also done in a befitting manner.

The Gita-Jayanti was celebrated from November 25 to 28, 1990, by worshipping Sri Sri Gita and reciting of Gita. Every evening the Kanyapith girls used to talk on Gita.

**Rajgir :**

This is a sacred place where the Hindu, the Baudha, the Jaina and the Islam's religious establishments are in existence since long. There is a beautiful ashram of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee.

From September 19 to September 29, 1990 during Nabaratri, Sri Sri Durga Puja was celebrated by the devotees of Bihar. After the "GHAT" installation the ashram was resounded with devotional songs of Geetashree Kumari Chabi Bandopadhyay.

Swami Giridhar Narayan Puriji of the Mahanirvani Akhra of Kankhal and Swami Vidyanandaji of the Kailash Ashram of Rishikesh attended as special invitees.

By the grace of Sri Sri Ma, Sri Sri Durga Puja and Sri Sri Lakshmi Puja were performed with great pleasure.

On 4th October, 1990, the day following Lakshmi Puja, about 500 Daridra Narayan's and devotees were fed in a Bhandara. The function was successful due to the untiring efforts of the Raj family and the devotees of Bihar.

### Agarpara (Calcutta) :

In this ashram, due to special kheyal of Sri Sri Ma, every festival was celebrated with special poup and ceremony. This year too Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Kali Puja and *Samyam Saptaha* were celebrated.

At the weekend 22nd December 1990 and 23rd December 1990, the Ashram's annual Nam-yajna Mahotsab was nicely celebrated. Local devotees and others numbering over 1000 were all entertained with *prasada*.

### Ranchi :

By the grace of Sri Sri Ma, the Durga Puja was solemnly performed by Brahmachari Nirbanannadaji. There were Satsangs and offering of flowers on the Maha Ashtami day. Many devotees and Daridra Narayans took the *prasada*.

Sri Sri Lakshmi Puja, Sri Sri Kali Puja and Sri Sri Jagadhatri Puja were celebrated with the usual pomp and serenity.

### Bangalore :

In the Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Bhagavath Bhavan, during the months of October 1990 to December 1990, many religious activities like classes of Vinhun and Lalitha Sahasranama, Sanskrit classes, pravachana, lectures and discourses were conducted.

### Other Ashrams :

In addition to these reports, all other ashrams of Shree Shree Anandamayee Ma had also celebrated the festivals.

## Obituary

### 1. Sri Anil Chandra Ganguli.

It is with great regret that we have to announce the death of our beloved Anil Da, an octogenerian sincere devotee of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee. He left his mortal remain fully conscious in the early morning of 20th October, 1990 and went to rest in the lotus feet of Ma.

He had suffered a long illness but was always smiling which one cannot forget.

The then Mr. Anil Ganguli, Bar-at-law at first sight of Ma Anandamayee remarked "Boy-Catching Mother." He had a very long association with Ma and his "Lila" with Sri Ma was published in the Ananda Varta—both in English and Bengali in the name "Ganga Samiran" many years back. He was in the Advisory Editorial Board of both English and Bengali Ananda Varta and used to contribute regularly in the quarterly journals—both in English and Bengali.

Anil Da was closely associated with Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha and Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society. At his passing away, both the organisations have suffered an irreparable loss.

We send our deepest condolence to his wife, our beloved Sati Di and family and pray that MA may grant them the mental peace.

## 2. Smt. Profulla Di.

An old monk of 90 years known as Swami Premandagiri passed away on Saturday the 13th October, 1990 in the Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Hospital at Varanasi.

About 40 years ago she came in touch of Ma at Ekdalia Ashram in Calcutta. Since then she spent the remaining long period of her life in serving Ma and stayed in Varanasi and Ranchi Ashrams. She travelled many places with Ma. Her household work was very clean and cooking was praiseworthy and Ma gave her the duties of preparation of Bhog.

May her soul rest in eternal peace in the bosom of Sri Sri Ma.

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## PROGRAMME OF CEREMONIES

*(from January to April 1991)*

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| 1. Poush Sankranti                                       | – | 14th January, 29th Poush,<br>Monday.        |
| 2. Saraswati Puja  | – | 20th January, 6th Magh,<br>Sunday.          |
| 3. Shivaratri  | – | 12th February, 29th<br>Magh, Tuesday.       |
| 4. Dol   | – | 28th February, 15th<br>Falgun, Thursday.    |
| 5. Sri Sri Basanti Puja                                  | – | 21st to 25th March, 6th to<br>10th Chaitra. |
| 6. Sannyas-Utsab<br>(Renounce day<br>Festival of Giriji) | – | 14th April, 30th Chaitra,<br>Sunday         |
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