
What is perceived in this world is in the nature of a dream, similar to what one sees in dreams. The only difference is that the former takes place in the waking state and the latter during sleep. Albeit, I am always with you, mother.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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ANANDA VĀRTĀ

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

* * * *

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

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ANANDA VĀRTĀ

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

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In dreams all kinds of things may be seen :
what the mind has been busy with ; also
what has not been thought about, but has
occurred in the past or will come about in
the future. In any case everything that
happens belong to the realms of dream.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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Sri Sri Ma's Utterances

A widow devotee of Ma was taking leave after talking with Her for some time. She said, "Ma, now may I go home with your permission. How long is it possible for me to stay here, tell me? I, too, have a home and children to look after, and yet I cannot but come to see you."

Ma smilingly said, "All right, ma, go home and take proper care also of that house and the household which I have got here. Go and look after your residence keeping it clean, inside and outside. Verily, this body is yours, hence your home is also my home. But take care, ma, that it is totally clean, in and out, in every nook and corner. Again, listen, there is another thing : this daughter of yours will not brook the presence of any partner — she alone, absolutely alone, will claim the cent percent of everything." Saying this, Ma began to laugh.

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Another lady, ready for departure, said, "Now I get up, Ma, please allow me to go home."

Ma said, "Do get up, ma ; getting up is what is important ; don't get down. And going home is what one needs ; one finds peace only when one gets back home. You stay in a *dharmashala*, that is why there is suffering. Do search for your real

home, ma. This home is verily the house of respiration ; the thread breath keeps you associated with it. Again, if you live the householder's life, build it on the foundation of *dharma*. If *dharma* is eliminated, there will be troubles in store."

* * *

Once Ma received a letter from a young brahmachari. Some portions of his letter are given below :

He wrote, "It seems the attraction I used to feel towards you has diminished.What is love ?Can one be convinced ?" So on and so forth.

Ma dictated the following words in reply to his letter :

"The love of God is the only true love ; although on the pretext of love of God, some particular sentiments (of worldly attachment) are seen to manifest among ordinary people. In fact, all is one and the same. This, too, has its value. One may hope that true love may emerge some day out of this ordinary emotion. Love is the outcome of pure knowledge and pure devotion ; again, love is also self-manifested. When can one be convinced ? Is it not proper to ponder this question ?... Just as a leech takes hold of the ground on one side while it relaxes its hold to leave the ground on another side...Feeling less attracted— means feeling attracted to something else. If that attraction does not conduce to an unquestionable faith in God, that means it is going to lead towards a downfall. In fact, attraction never decreases.

“You were not supposed to lodge with householders, though if you get a room where you can live in solitude, you may stay there. While talking, it is extremely detrimental to the brahmacharis to pass time in the pleasure of laughing and joking, if it is not the pleasure of spiritual talk. It is necessary to immediately abandon the company that you realize as contrary to your path. At what moment, on what pretext, what may cause deviation from the path, alluring one to what direction, the person who is thus beguiled fails to understand. You should always stay in the company of the good, and at the same time you should also programme your own daily spiritual discipline. Otherwise one may develop the tendency of ‘eating stealthily’. If gradually that tendency forms a habit, then unless one has a keen conscience, one is by oneself quite incapable of detecting the flaw any more. Therefore it is a must to ponder — ‘What do I want? Where am I moving and for what?’ Always do self-analysis. For example, when a student learns his lessons under the guidance of a teacher, the teacher corrects his mistakes as many times as the student commits mistakes — and it is natural for a student to commit mistakes. When the teacher is not present and the student is studying his lessons alone, he takes his errors to be correct, and is quite pleased with himself. That is why you should endeavour with special care so that you may always have a good and pure *bhava*”.

One day, in the course of a conversation, Ma said, "Exert yourselves employing the sum total of the little bit of capacity you have got. He is there for sure ; He will do all that is to be done."

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A European lady once told Ma that she was eager to receive initiation from a particular saint and wanted to know Ma's opinion about it. Ma said, "Look, one should accept a Guru only after thoroughly taking into consideration all the pros and cons. For once you accept a Guru, if you lose faith in him, that would be highly culpable. It is possible for one to feel, 'My heart wants to accept this very person as Guru ; I don't feel at all the need to give it a second thought' — that is a different case ; but if that were the case, then you would already have taken initiation, this question would not have arisen in your mind. When you have this question in your mind, you should act after examining your mind well."

The lady said, "I feel specially attracted to *Devi* ; in view of this, if I am initiated with the *mantra* of *Krishna*, what should I do ? And while doing *japa* of *Krishna mantra*, if I get a vision of *Devi*, then should I start doing *japa* of the *mantra* of *Devi* ?"

To this question, Ma gave the following reply : "Look, as it should be done, you should go on practising the *mantra* received from your Guru ; no matter what visions you get. You may have good visions and also bad visions. You should

think, 'It is my *Ista* Himself who is appearing in all these visions. You may sometimes come in pants and sometimes in a *sari* ; it is like that. Again, you may have a few different names, but you are one and the same person. Again look, there is just One — only One. It is said that by worshipping *Katyayani* (a name of *Devi*), the *gopis* got *Krishna*. Hence, no matter if *Devi* comes while you are doing japa of *Krishna mantra*, or if *Krishna* comes while you are doing japa of *Devi mantra*, you should stick to your *Ista mantra*.

Sometimes you may visualize a *rishi* (seer) who tells you certain things ; and it also may be that some one appears with a bottle of wine, rousing evil thoughts in your mind. But even then you should think that all these are verily images of your *Ista*. You should put emphasis on your *mantra* and go on watching all this. Hence I say, if there are two inclinations in you, scrutinize yourself well to find out which of these two is stronger. You will certainly discover one of the two being the stronger one. For example, when you come out of your house, you see there are more than one roads, but in order to go somewhere, you must choose one of the various roads. Do you know the fact ? There must be a *samskara* that has struck deep roots in your mind and is lurking in you. And there are some other cases where the inclinations are just superficial ; for instance, you may have heard the name of a deity and seen other people worship the deity, and that has prompted a desire in you to do the same. But this inclination

has not settled in your heart with its roots deep down. You may grasp this fact if you slightly reflect on it.”

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One day, Ma was singing the following lines, standing at the door.

“Work with your hands ;
Take the Name in your mind ;
Take the Name with your lips.”

In one form or another the grace of the Guru must be obtained. Until the Guru is found it is man's duty to invoke and try to realize God by looking upon all forms as His Form, all names as His Name, and all modes of being as His.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Reminiscences of Anandamayee Ma*

(3) Compassion

Professor Bireshwar Ganguly, D. Litt

(Continued from previous issue)

I fail to explain in language how often and in what ways the graceful compassionate Holy Mother had showered her grace and mercy on this undeserving nonentity. In this third instalment of my reminiscences of the Mother, I shall endeavour to express only a few of them.

(1) It was the month of December, 1951. At that time I was posted as a lecturer in the Bihar National College at Patna. It was early in that year that I had the fortune of visiting Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee for the first time. I went to Vindhyachal to meet the Mother before joining the Ranchi College on the 19th December as a lecturer under Bihar Education Service. Ranchi was the abode of Shree Shree Pagal Baba, who had taught me some aspects of *Yoga* in my boyhood. Since he had wanted me to join his Mukteshwardham Ashram as its *Acharya*, after giving up my studies on passing the next Matriculation examination, I left him, devoted myself to my studies and joined

* Translated by the author from *Ananda Varta* (Bengali), April, 1989, pp. 113—119.

the Patna B. N. College after passing the M. A. examination. Before joining the Ranchi College, I had the apprehension that I would be under the spell of Pagal Baba, if Ranchi became my place of work and thus my new course of *sadhana* might be adversely affected. And hence I went to the Mother to seek Her guidance in the matter.

Mother said with confidence, "It is needless to worry when the protecting eyes of this body are on you. You should rather stay in Pagal Baba's *Ashram*, so long as you do not get suitable accommodation for your parents, brothers and sisters." Thus feeling encouraged I joined the Ranchi College.

On reaching Ranchi, I reported to St. Pagal Baba and began staying in his monastery. He changed my nickname, "Kalo Dadu" and began calling me "Bhalo Dadu" from the very first day. I was allowed to stay in the temple of Goddess Kali and was instructed to perform *puja* in the temple of Goddess Durga every morning. Once I narrated to St. Pagal Baba the yogic powers, including that of mass hypnotism of Swami Yogananda, as demonstrated by him in Hinoo Friends' Union Club in the year 1933 or 1934, when I was a boy of 11 or 12 years. On hearing my narration Pagal Baba said, "Those are elementary yogic powers, which can be demonstrated in the presence of an audience, and not from a distance." The next morning when I was proceeding to the river-side to attend to nature's call, Pagal Baba accosted me from a distance, but I kept marching forward, neg-

lecting his call. However, to my astonishment, I was compelled to march backwards by the attraction of some invisible force. After returning a few steps, I tried again to march forward, but in vain, and this was repeated three or four times. Then I remembered Mother's assurance and the moment I remembered Mother and uttered Her name, the invisible attraction from behind was gone.

After attending to nature's call when I met Pagal Dadu, he asked me, "How did you feel?" I replied, "This was only an external power of attraction. Please show me something deeper." That very night, when I went to the Punyapukhur pond for washing my mouth and hands after dinner, I felt that somebody was pulling my legs from beneath the water and an invisible power was forcing me forward towards the cold water in that night of winter. I felt nervous and began shouting. The cook and the servant of the *ashram* rushed to rescue me from the water, but they failed to pull me up. Then I remembered Mother and uttered Her name and immediately the invisible attraction was gone. I also observed that my younger sister, Lakshmi, who was a nun in that *ashram*, was holding me from behind. The next morning when Pagal Dadu asked me about my last night's experience, I replied, "This is also external, please show me something deeper." Pagal Dadu said, "Something deeper than this is astral journey in subtle body, and I have already given you demonstration of that by taking you to the moon and *Kailashdham* in subtle body. In this *Kaliyuga* many advanced

yogis can acquire the power of astral journey, but even they cannot make others perform the act at their will.” Later on I narrated this to Mother, but She did not give any importance to astral journey, and reminded me once, “This may hamper your *sadhana* for salvation.” After several requests, She told me, “Well, what is the necessity of flying in the sky, catching hold of somebody’s hand? This can be performed just by remembering this body from a distance. But which are the places you want to visit?” Though I had the secret desire of roaming about the outer universe to acquire knowledge about God’s infinite creation, I felt shy to pronounce it and could say in all humility: “I want to come to you in subtle body from time to time.” Mother agreed and said, “That’s all right. Whenever you will concentrate intensely on this body, you will come to me.” However, after that for several years, I did not get the opportunity or have the desire to test this new power.

(2) I used to visit Mother at least twice every year, — once during Mother’s birthday celebrations during the summer vacation for two months, and again during Durga Puja holidays, wherever Mother might stay. Apart from that I met Mother many times at Kashi, Vrindaban, Puri, Solan, Ranchi, Calcutta, Navadwip, Haridwar, Dehradun, Vindhyachal, Patna, Rajgir, Kanpur, Delhi, Etawa and Naimisharanya.

During the period 1975 to 1982, when I was the Head of Department of Economics in the Magadh University at Gaya, the frequency of my visit to

Mother was reduced. Once *Bhagavat Saptaha* was being celebrated at Varanasi in the presence of Mother. In spite of my great desire to attend the ceremony, I could not do so, as I was pre-occupied as the centre-superintendent of M. A. examinations. One day, as I was remembering Mother and weeping in my temple at my residence, I suddenly found myself in the Varanasi *ashram*. Some saint was explaining the *Bhagavatam*, while I was sitting in the rear of the huge audience and tears were rolling down my eyes, as I was gazing at the compassionate smiling face of Mother. Mother's eyes were pointed towards my eyes. After a while I again found myself meditating in my personal temple at Gaya. After a few days, when my wife and her elder sister went to Varanasi to pay their respects to Mother, She told them, "Nilmani came here a few days ago, but he left without meeting this body privately." Some days later when I could find time to meet Mother, I was just going to narrate the incident on Her enquiry, but She nodded at me to keep quiet, as there were many other devotees in the room.

(3) Once (perhaps in 1980) during the X'Mas holidays I learnt from Prof. Alok Ghosh in the Indian Economic Conference at Baroda that Mother was staying at Varanasi. Hence on my return journey, I broke journey at Varanasi along with Prof. Ramakrishna Mishra. However, I learnt at the *ashram* that Mother had left for Naimisharanya the previous day. Prof. Mishra returned to Gaya, but I went to Naimisharanya via Lucknow. It was from

Lucknow station that I was engrossed in the thought of Mother and the concentration increased at Nimsar station and in the *tonga*, while riding to the *ashram*. The moment I reached the *ashram*, Bhaskaranandaji told me in all eagerness, "Mother has been enquiring about you since the morning, please meet the Mother immediately." As I met Mother and prostrated before Her, She uttered, "Why are you so late in meeting this body?" I was just going to explain my predicament, but She nodded at me to keep quiet, as many other devotees, including Jagadishwar Pal were present there. That explained the mystery.

(4) In 1971 when I was posted as a Reader in the Patna University, my wife, Nupur had a serious heart attack. Doctor Srinivas examined her at 2 a.m. and advised us to admit her in the Cardiological department of the Patna Medical College Hospital the next morning, for her condition was very critical. Every member of the family was suffering from influenza at that time. Yet Nupur had to be admitted in the hospital at 8 a.m. the next morning. After admitting her, I sent an urgent telegram to Mother and prayed for Her blessings. After two days, I received a letter from Sri Sri Gurupriya Didi, in which it was written, "The contents of your telegram have been communicated to Mother, who has said, 'Write to Nilmani that he should inform this body after Nupur gets well and returns home.'" I remembered the analogy of killing two birds with the same stone, for Mother indicated in the reply that Nupur would

recover and would return home. This is exactly what happened. Nupur came back on recovery after three weeks. I learnt from this that even in mundane affairs, if there is the spirit of surrender, Mother's grace is showered unconditionally.

(5) Once (perhaps in 1966) Mother came to Patna. In that year I was an applicant for the post of Reader in the Patna and Bhagalpur Universities. However, my name was recommended for promotion by the Bihar Public Service Commission for the Bhagalpur University before it was recommended for the Patna University. But I wanted to continue in the Patna University. One afternoon I was walking by the side of Mother on the Bailey Road, while proceeding towards the residence of a Minister, as the car in which She was travelling broke down on the road and it was being repaired. I told Mother about my hesitation to join the Bhagalpur University. Mother replied, "Hence forward you need not ask such questions to this body. Ask them to yourself and you will receive the answer from within." I followed Her instruction, sought the answer within, got it and I got the recommendation for promotion in the Patna University after a few days.

(6) I went to the Kankhal *ashram* during the Durga Pujas in 1979. Dr. Ramapatilal Karna of the Magadh University had accompanied me. On the first day, while Mother came out in the morning from Her room in an invalid chair, Dr. Karna and I prostrated before Her and offered some flowers, fruits, clothes and money at Her feet. As Mother

was not keeping well and there was a big crowd of devotees, Mother did not ask me about my welfare, as was usual on previous occasions. Brahmachari Hiruda was standing nearby. When he observed that Mother had apparently taken no notice of my presence, he remarked jokingly in the presence of Dr. Karna, "How do you feel Nilmanida? Mother does not even recognize you these days. In your earlier days Mother used to love you so much, when you had manifestation of shivering etc in your body, while listening to *Kirtan*. You have receded far away from Mother's mind after your marriage." Of course, I did not give him any reply at that time. But I had the firm belief that Mother must have recognized me even in the crowd and would surely ask me about my welfare later on. The same afternoon Mother came to the religious congregation in the hall of the *ashram* and after taking Her seat She asked eagerly, "Where is Nilmani?" As I stood up in the crowd, Mother said, "Nilmani, say something on Goddess Chandi on this occasion of Durga Puja." I came forward, bowed down before Mother, took my seat on the adjoining cot and explained the theory of *Chandi sadhana* for about half an hour. In the evening Dr. Karna reminded Hiruda, "Are you convinced now that Mother has not forgotten Her Nilmani?"

(*To be continued*)

Sai Ram Sahay

Shirdi Sai - Sathya Sai

M. Rama Rao

Your own experience is the best guarantee of truth for you.—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Sai Baba said 'Without my will nobody comes to Shirdi and goes from Shirdi. This is cent percent correct. In 1930-31 I was working in Aurangabad proper and parts of the district jurisdiction and adjacent to Shirdi Ahmadanagar Dist. Though I passed through Kopargoan railway station a number of times, I was unfortunate, that neither I, heard Shirdi name nor Baba's. Then it was not Baba's will.

In 1961 Sai Baba came into my life through Sri Sathya Sai Baba's devotees at Mandya (Karnataka). Sometimes Sai Bhajan was held in my house. I began to read the book Sathyam-Sivam-Sundaram (the life of Sri Sathya Sai Baba) written by N. Kasluri M. A., B. L. Thereby I came to know not only the life of Sai Sathya Sai Baba but also Shirdi Sai Baba. The author has described as :

He is the Sub-stratum, the substance, the separate and the sum — the Sath, the Sathyam.

He is the awareness, the consciousness, the feeling, the willing and the doing, the chith ; the sivam.

He is the light (The splendour the harmony, the melody and symmetry the Ananda ; the Sundaram).

I retired from my service at Mandya (Karnataka) between Bangalore and Mysore, in the year 1964. The next year 1965 on Holy Sivarathri day I along with my better-half and the eldest daughter who is now of 53 years age is a devotee of Sri Sathya Sai Baba along with Shirdi Baba visited Puttaparthi.

There I enjoyed the mass bhajan by men and women sitting separately in a disciplined manner singing in chorus. As there was no place for our stay we camped at open place without fear and anxiety for our belongings. On the night of the holy day, we observed Sri Baba's miracle of taking Atmalinga from his stomach and displaying it to the devotees and producing huge quantity of vibhuti. I wanted to seek interview from Baba but utterly forgot. The next day all the devotees were asked to sit in a line in front and by the side of the Prashyanthi Nilaya. Baba came to one by one devotee and gave vibhuti packet to each. When he came to me I touched his both feet with my both palms. He said in Telugu "Pattu pattu (take-take) and smilingly left the place. On the same day we left for our place Mandya. I paid my obeisance again and again to the photos of Sathya Sai Baba and Shirdi Baba kept in the Prasyanthi Nilaya. At Puttaparthi I was very much attracted by the mass bhajan and the service rendered by the foreign ladies wearing Indian Saries and rendering the mean service of the Sweepers along with the local people. I thought that the foreigners are being

attracted by our culture whereas we are being drawn to some of their culture 3 W's wealth, wine and women. It is a tragic thing to observe.

After this, I had twice Puttaparthi Baba's darshan at Mandya upto 1975.

Since 1976 I am staying along with my family members at Bangalore. I was searching for a suitable alliance for my second daughter since five years but no avail. My eldest son took me to Sri H. H. Keshavaiahji who had come from Madras to this place. As per his advice writing Sri Sai Venkateshaynandha for 92 days daily 108 times, I succeeded in securing a good alliance of an engineer boy and marriage was conducted in 1978. Sri Keshavaiahji was a chosen devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba.

After my daughter's marriage I was put to innumerable troubles and trials, one day while sleeping at night I prayed Shirdi Baba as who will guide and guard me by relieving me from worries. Baba along with Sai Padananda Radha Krishna Swamiji appeared in my dream and indicated that Swamiji would guide and guard me. I approached Swamiji. He graced me with a copy of Sri Vishnu Sahasranama for daily chanting. He blessed me only by looking out, not talking. By obeying his indication all my worries vanished. Since then I have become a sincere devotee of Shirdi Baba who is now all in all for me.

It is mentioned in Sai Satcharita ch. III.

Then turning to Shama (Madhavrao Deshpande) Sai Baba said—

“If a man utters my name with love, I shall fulfil all his wishes, increase his devotion. And if he sings earnestly my life and my deeds, him I shall beset in front and back and on all sides. Those devotees, who are attached to me heart and soul, will naturally feel happiness when they hear these stories. Believe me that if anybody sings my Leelas, I will give him infinite joy and ever-lasting contentment. It is my special characteristic to free any person, who surrenders, completely to me and who does worship me faithfully and who remembers me and meditates on me constantly. How can they be conscious of worldly objects and sensations, who utter my name, who worship me, who think of my stories and my life and who thus always remember me? I shall draw out my devotees from the jaws of death. If my stories are listened to all the diseases will be got rid of. So, hear my stories with respect and think and meditate on them, assimilate them. This is the way of happiness and contentment. The pride and egoism of my devotees will vanish, the mind of the hearers will be set at rest and if he has wholehearted and complete faith, it will be one with Supreme Consciousness. The simple remembrances of my name as Sai Sai will do away with sins of speech and hearing.

The teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba are also identical to Sri Shirdi Baba.

“Why fear when I am here, put all your faith in me; I shall guide you and guard you. I am the Servant of every one, you can call me by any name I will respond.”

Though the teachings and sayings of both the Babas are identical it is a sorry state of affair that there are some devotees of both Babas who entangle themselves into controversy and criticism against Babas. It is nothing but a tragedy.

The people know very well that activities of spirituality, education, health are going on at Prashanti-Nilayam of Sathya Sai Baba and Shirdi Samsthan. There is no need of pointing by anybody.

Dr. S. Balakrishna Joshi is a Kulpathi and a great educationist. He released Golden Jubilee special number of Sai Sudha and rendered a speech on H. H. Narasimha Swamiji, Sai Mission — Role of Sai Sudha on 9.6.1990 during the Silver Jubilee of the All India Sai Devotees convention. He is wellversed with Sai Movement and its great masters Sathya Sai Baba, Narasimha Swamiji, Keshavaiahji, Radhakrishna Swamiji etc. He stated controversies and criticism and asked “Who are we to sit under judgement ; have we knowledge, power, wisdom and capacity ? We should not enter into such unnecessary things.”

In Sai Satcharita chap 18 and 19 it is mentioned as follows :

Variety in Upadesh — Slanderer Condemned.

Sai Baba required no special place, nor any special time for giving instructions. Whenever any occasion demanded them, He gave them freely. Once it so happened that a Bhakta of Baba reviled another behind his back before other people. Leaving aside merits, he dwelt on the faults of his

brother and spoke so sarcastically that the hearers were disgusted. Generally we see that people have a tendency to scandalize others unnecessarily and this brings on hatred and ill-will. Saints see scandal in another light. They say that there are various ways of cleansing or removing dirt, viz. by means of earth, water and soap, etc., but a scandal-monger has got a way of his own. He removes the dirt (faults) of others by his tongue ; so in a way he obliges the person whom he reviles and for this he is to be thanked. Sai Baba has his own method of correcting the scandal-monger. He knew by His omniscience what the slanderer had done and when he met him at noon near the Lendi, Baba pointed out to him a pig that was eating filth near the fence and said to him, "Behold how, with what relish it is gorging dung. Your conduct is similar. You go on reviling your own brethren to your heart's content. After performing many deeds of merit, you are born as a man ; if you act like this, will Shirdi help you in any way ?" Needless to say that the Bhakta took the lesson to his heart and went away.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba at Bombay on 17.3.1988 said that the new year vibhava would be prosperous as a majority of planets were well placed. But much more powerful than the Navagraha (group of nine planets) were two other planets called Raga and Dwesha. The influence of which completely spoiled man. If man is able to come out of the influence of these two planets then he need not worry about the other planets."

He has also said "Argumentation is the sign of egotism, it is searching in the darkness."

Apostle of Sri Saibaba of Shirdi Sri Narasimha Swamiji said to his disciple Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji :

"First remember Baba has form and he is formless too. Do not begin to analyse the quality of the metal or how it has been made ; but drink the milk from the container, drink nectarian milk from the very cup". Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji has said :

"Fault-finding is easy. To criticise others also is very easy. Find out whether you are perfect in your self first. Correct yourself by looking at others and their actions as though you are looking at yourself in a mirror."

Swami Keshavaiahji has said "Stop your criticism of others. Don't worry about the faults of your neighbour, rather look to your own. You will probably find more soot in your chimney than in the chimneys of others."

In my humble opinion it is better for the Sai devotees, shunning criticism, try to spread the Sai movement to the nook and corner of the world.

"Let us see what other great souls say in this regard. "Never talk about the faults of others, no matter how bad they may be. Nothing is ever gained by that. You never help one by talking about his faults ; you do him an injury yourself as well . . . We have seen that it is the subjective world that rules the objective. Change the subject, and the object is bound to change ; purify yourself,

and the world is bound to be purified. This one thing requires to be taught now more than ever before. We are becoming more and more busy about our neighbours and less about ourselves. The world will change if we change ; if we are pure, the world will become pure”.

— Swami Vivekananda

Thoughts of Sri Aurobindo.

“The quarrels of religious sects are like the disputing of pots, which shall be alone allowed to hold the immortalising nectar. Let them dispute, but the thing for us is to get at the nectar in whatever pot and attain immortality.”

“It has become a vogue with many so-called spiritual aspirants to go on visits to saints not to draw light and inspiration from them for their upward progress but to compare and judge them. They think they are very clever but their cleverness is nothing before the magnificent glory of saints who shine by their own light and are the benefactors of humanity.

Therefore let the spiritual aspirants honour saints, serve them selflessly and entitle themselves to their grace and thus illuminating their lives with divine splendour rise to the stature of sainthood”.

—Swami Ram Das

Sri Sri Anandamayee's Utterances

One day, a devotee of Ma got enraged by some objectionable words uttered by Abhay (a devotee of Ma), and as he ran towards Abhay to hit him,

Abhay hid himself behind Ma. When the Kirtan was over, Ma bade both of them sit near Her and said, "Look whatever anyone of you do in protest, protest just orally ; don't resort to beating and, do know it for sure that in whichever manner one of you hurt another, you hurt this very body. The wrong thing that Abhay said, he said it to this very body. Again, as you get ready to hit him, it was also to hit this very body. If you want to stay here, you will have to bear with many thorn-pricks. The principal support on this path is the quality of patience". Ma stretched Her own hands towards the devotee and said, "Since you felt like hitting, hit this body". At this, he clasped Her hand with both his hands. Stunned, the congregation of devotees kept hearing silently. Then Ma went on, "Look here, is it good to fight and hit ? Promise that you will never speak of beating again". The devotee said, "Ma how can I make such a big promise" ? Ma said, "Say that you will try your best". Then he promised to do so and took Abhay in his lap. At Ma's behest, Abhay, too did obeisance to that devotees went on exchanging remarks among themselves about how that day, in that particular context, Ma did a special lila.

Ananda Varta

If any body had been in place of Ma he would have sat under judgement pronouncing who was wrong and who was right but compassionate Ma settled the matter so nicely as the devotees felt sorry for their guilt.

Among the devotees of both Babas are top ranking Civil servants, Military officials, business tycoons, actors and actresses and the poor lakhs of devotees throng at Shirdi and Puttapurti. Last year on 22nd November 1990 M. R. Venkataraman, the President of India addressed the Ninth Convocation of the University at Puttapurti.

In my humble opinion we have to shun our selfishness and differences and try to spread the Sai movements to the nook and corner of the world. We make mistake in judging others and shunning the principles of ethics and morality. In Gita chap. V-V3 lord Krishna ask us to shun Raga (Passion) and Dwesha (hate). Then we can be freed from bondage. Man without Sadan Sampati, Purity and Meditation can not realise God.

Prayer

Whatever I do by my body, speech, mind, senses, intellect, soul, or the bent of my nature — all that I dedicate to the Supreme Narayana.

Some Memories of Ma

Ram Alexander

I first met Mother on a mid-October night in 1972 at the Naimisharanya ashram. I had come from Delhi with my friend, the American Swami Nirmalananda whom I had joined a few day earlier in Delhi.

Before embarking on my journey to the East, I had been living in the ashram of an Indian yogi in America where I had studied and taught Hatha Yoga and attempted to practice the basic disciplines of meditation and Raja Yoga for more than two years.

The trip to Naimisharanya was a leap into the unknown. The long train journey brought us to Hardoi well after dark. From there we took a two hour bus ride to Naimisharanya. The final two kilometers to the Ashram were made by bullock cart, dreamily ambling along through the moonless star-filled night.

We reached Mother's ashram at about 10:45 P.M., dazed and disoriented, expecting to find everyone asleep, but were pleasantly surprised to see Mother sitting outside, giving *tilaks** to all as they made *pranama* to Her. It was the eve of the ten day Durga Puja festival and Mother sometimes observed a tradition of giving *tilaks* to everyone on this night. All day long on the train, Nirmala-

**tilak*, a mark on the forehead.

nandaji had been telling me how Mother is God. Now, here I was, face to face with God who was sitting in a chair with a yellow towel over Her head, giving out *tilaks*, laughing, talking, inquiring after people's accommodations, giving minute instructions for the puja, and seemingly awaiting our arrival. "Why not?" I thought, and following Nirmalananda's lead went to make my *pranama*. As I rose up Mother smiled and with Her divine finger placed a small red dot of *kumkum* on my forehead. We were then shown to our tent where we quickly retired for the night. It was only later that I learned that all *darsana* of Mother were not conducted in the same manner as my first one.

For the next ten days and for several weeks after that, I saw Mother for many hours daily as the fantastic, spectacular festival of Durga Puja was under way. I was struck by the divine glamour, queenly dignity and the supernatural beauty radiated by Mother paralleling that of the Goddess Durga Herself. This was no humble saintly hermit, but a veritable living Goddess. I found that whenever I attempted to meditate in Mother's presence, my mind turned deeply and powerfully within. To be with Her was to spontaneously become aware of God, of one's highest ideal, more constantly and intensely than ever before. Further, the more I basked in the light of Her spiritual presence, the more refined and receptive I became to the God-awareness which She constantly generates.

After a few days, I discovered to my horror that the intensity of Mother's darshan was filling

my head with, or rather, churning up from deep within me, all sorts of impure thoughts which I had not been consciously aware of before. Nevertheless, I continued to stay around Her as much as I possibly could as I felt this to be a purification process ; although I was unable to look Her in the eyes during this period which lasted for about two weeks. I felt afterwards all the more receptive to Her grace.

One day toward the end of our stay in Naimisharanya, Nirmalanandaji told me he would be having a private with Mother and asked me if I would like to speak with Her. At the time I still had my Gurn in America and did not feel I had anything to ask Mother and so declined the offer. A few days later, however, as Nirmalanandaji was going for his private, I had the thought : "If She is really as great as everyone says, may be I should go and ask Her those basic burning questions concerning the ultimate meaning and purpose of life with which I had always been obsessed." I caught up with Nirmalanandaji and said I would like to join in his private.

Once seated before Mother, I realized I must state myself as briefly and concisely as possible. I quickly told Her of my search for Truth and of the obstacles which I felt were beyond my control and thwarted me. She gave me a clear, specific answer as to what to do in order to attain to my ultimate Goal. Later Nirmalanandaji told me that it was as though She had known me for a long time. (And in fact several years later in a private with

Mother, in response to my query regarding a very important spiritual experience I had had as an adolescent many years before meeting Her, She indicated clearly that She had been aware of that experience at the time it occurred!) After my first question I suddenly felt inspired to ask something else. I blurted out: "Please grant me the grace to never forget you, not even for a second"; for I knew that if I could remember Mother I could remember God far more intensely and profoundly than I could do on my own. Indeed, to think of Mother is to be in the presence of God. It is *Atma darsana* or as Mother says: "I am your own Atman". How absolutely true!

After my private with Mother, I felt as insignificant as ever around Her although Nirmalanandaji assured me that I had received Her '*kheyala*'. It was only several months later after my return to America that I realized the full truth of this.

After Kali Puja in Naimisharanya, I followed Mother to Hardwar for *Samyam Saptah* and then to Vrindaban and Benares. During this period I attempted to meditate as much as possible in Her presence, and became increasingly aware of an ever-growing receptivity to Her spiritual power. Still I felt that my relationship with Her was totally impersonal, that She was not particularly aware of my existence.

Thus, shortly after Nirmalananda's departure for America, I decided also to be on my way. I was holding a 'round-the-world' plane ticket which allowed me to stop anywhere and everywhere on

the way. I was determined to take full advantage of it and in no hurry to return home. Besides there was still much of India I wanted to see. It seems, however, that Mother had other plans for me.

Since I did not feel that I merited, or perhaps did not even desire at that time a personal relationship with Mother, I did not feel it appropriate to formally say good-bye to Her. Therefore, one day in Benares I simply *pranamed* from a distance and left, not at all sure I would ever meet Her again. Later I learnt that for several days after my departure, Mother had enquired about me and had even asked people to look for me.

The day after I had said goodbye to Mother I became sick and when the illness persisted, I saw a doctor who told me that I had jaundice. I somehow made it to Calcutta and a plane that took me back to the U. S. A. My parents to whom I returned were surprised but relieved to see me, as I had been sending them exotic descriptions of my proposed adventurous round-the-world itinerary.

Shortly after my return home, I came down with a bad flu on top of the jaundice. For about a week I run a very high fever of 104 to 105 F. for which I, perhaps stupidly, refused to take any medicine. Then one morning I awoke to find that I was completely cured,—the fever was gone and I had more or less regained my full strength. At the same time I was filled with a startling awareness that I had a completely new body—that every molecule was new and pure. Furthermore, I fully

realized that this total rebirth was due to Mother and to having had the *darsana* of so many sacred places in holy India while travelling with Her. For several days I would look at my arm or hand and marvel at it for I *knew* that my entire physiological being was wholly new and that Mother had caused this.

After this time I began to meditate for a minimum of six hours daily,—2 or 3 times as much as I had done previously. Furthermore, I became increasingly convinced that I would devote my life to the practice of *sadhana*.

During this period I faithfully followed my Guru in America. There was no question for me of conflict between him and Mother. However, the closer I tried to get to him, the less I felt it was where I belonged. For several months I lived alone in the Guru's private hermitage in the country where I spent as much time as possible in *sadhana*. One afternoon I was meditating, and as was then my custom, did one mala of "Om Ma" while looking at a picture of Mother. After finishing this I said within (or, perhaps even out loud) to Mother: "If you can really hear me, prove it." At that very moment a small whirlwind about two feet tall came in through a large open window and began to violently spin around the place where I was sitting. "Go away, go away," I yelled, more than a little terrified; and Mother, disguised as the whirlwind, again graciously granted my petition. In the silence that followed I felt the room reeling with Her Kaliesque laughter. How many

times since was I graced to see Her divinely beautiful physical form, like a storm, thundering forth that mercilessly liberating Laughter !

Shortly after this incident I returned to India and Mother in time for Durga Puja of 1973. In a private I told Her that I was confused regarding my *sadhana* and She replied : “Don’t worry, I shall put everything right.” A few days later I received *diksa* from Ma. I felt that this was the most important moment of my life for at last I had a specific tool. I had full faith in its appropriateness, efficacy and power with which to carve out my self-liberation. Here I should add that Mother says, it is the Guru or the Guru’s grace which does everything for the disciple including his *sadhana*. Also, in retrospect, I realized that my real initiation by Mother must have occurred earlier, perhaps the first time I saw Her. It would seem that this initiation, or transference of spiritual power from Guru to disciple is a continuous process. At any rate I am convinced that the type of *sadhana* given is wholly secondary to the transference of the Guru’s shakti and the incorporation of the chela into the cosmic body of the Sad-Guru. Whatever mantra or Ista-devata, be it Hindu or Christian, etc. into which one is initiated, that form of God to which one is devoted must ultimately merge into the Sad-Guru’s *swarupa* which in turn ultimately reveals itself as the *sadhaka-chela’s* own *Atman*. As Mother has said again and again : “I am your own Atman. I am Darshani”,—one who gives darshan (in this case of the *paramatma*).

Shortly after my *diksa*, I had a strong desire to return to America. I had not consciously planned to remain permanently in India, however, Mother suggested to me during a long private that I should consider doing so and that I could construct a room in the new Kankhal Ashram if I desired. My inclination to live in the West immediately vanished and, almost miraculously, from that time on I found myself totally adjusted to the food and climate of India which had previously been quite troublesome for me. From that day to this I have been determined to remain in India near Mother for the purpose of doing *sadhana* in spite of innumerable obstacles.

After that fateful private with Ma at the end of 1973, I returned to the U.S.A. for a short visit. One day out of sheer desperation and boredom with what I considered the spiritual waste-land of the West, I entered a Catholic church and knelt before an image of the Virgin Mary. To my amazement I found it identical with having Mother's *darsana* just like being in India with Ma : the same Shakti and spiritual inspiration ! For some time thereafter I recited the traditional devotional prayer to Mary on the rosary and I found tremendous spiritual power therein ; but I was well aware that it was Mother who had opened this door for me ; that there is only one Truth and that Mother was my entre to its myriad manifestations.

The Kumbha-mela of 1974 at Hardwar was a revelation to me. I particularly enjoyed walking alongside Mother who was carried in a palanquin

during the various processions. Here more than ever She radiated that Divine regal majesty and the atmosphere was charged with a special spiritual intensity. This experience was even more profound three years later at the Allahabad Kumbh. How many times must I have gazed upon Her and felt that all the pain and suffering of human existence were worth enduring if only for the privilege of catching a glimpse of Her. No amount of hardship was too great if one could see Her once during the day—even if it was from a distance and only for a second. For to see Her was to catch a glimpse of one's own true Self, i.e. God. To be in Her presence was to become aware of the Ultimate Reality to a degree that would normally be beyond one's personal ability. Usually when I would *pranam* to Mother I would be slightly afraid because it was a leap into the unknown. The rebellious ego must temporarily die at Her feet, drowning in the purifying nectar of Her radiant love—time, space, ego, the world temporarily ceased.

One of the rare instances where my resolve to remain physically close to Mother wavered was shortly before the construction of my *kutir** was to begin. I expressed my doubts to Mother who told me I could do as I pleased. The next day I told Her that I had reconsidered but I was not sure to what extent I would use the room and asked Her if it was alright to go ahead and build. She told me: "You may come and go as you like

**kutir* cottage.

but know that you will always have a home here.” This was said with such intensity, penetrating my soul, that all my doubts were immediately dispelled. By giving me the maximum amount of freedom rather than trying to constrain me, She had effectively caught me.

Once after my *kutir* was built and I was living on it, Mother was passing by on Her way to the *sadhu kutir* and noticed that the tulasi growing around the kutir was tied up tightly with a cord to keep it from falling over. Mother told Gadadhar and myself to untie it because God (tulasi is thought of as a divine plant) should not, cannot be bound and, furthermore, an ashram should be a place where there is a minimum of compulsion and where there is complete ease. Finally Mother gave instructions for the tulasi to be loosely bound in such a way so as to give it a maximum amount of freedom while at the same time protecting it from falling. During the years I lived in the ashram I came to greatly appreciate Mother’s rules which may appear unreasonable to outsiders, but without which the esoteric work that leads to complete freedom would be severely impaired.

One of the many and main ways in which I am aware of how Mother differs from other ‘gurus’ I have known is that She allows you to become uniquely your own self rather than a kind of slave to the ‘guru’s’ work or organization or slavishly imitative of the ego-personality—no matter how highly developed—of the so-called ‘guru’. Because

in Mother's case there is, without a doubt, no question of ego, the more one attempts to cling to Her transcendent personality, the more one approaches the uniqueness of one's own *Atma*,—of one's own inherent and unique divinity. In other words each one's way to that ultimately non-dual, monistic absorption in Brahman must be his own. One cannot do another man's dharma, Mother is the light that reveals to each one his own unique path to the supreme, undifferentiated One. In describing Her own awareness, Mother explicitly states that it is uncompromisingly non-dual at all time. Thus it is not by chance that a *murti* of Adi-Shankaracharya, the great proponent of advaitic philosophy, graces the Kankhal ashram.

Mother's physical manifestation, Her "personality" is so irresistably attractive to those who are chosen to be Her devotees that it effectively entices them away from their worldly attachments and establishes them in that higher but more subtle spiritual reality that Mother epitomizes. The more they are weaned from the world for Her sake, the more intimate and ecstatic becomes their devotional relationship with Her. Much like Sri Krishna's *ras lila* with the gopis, each devotee feels that Mother is dancing only with him,—that She is uniquely his or her own ; that She is there only and especially for him. The point of this attachment to the external Guru is not to engender an unhealthy dependence but to establish the disciple on firm spiritual ground. Then when the disciple is ripe, and this I think is the ultimate greatness of any

true Guru, Mother dissolves the dualistic relationship and reveals Herself as one's own true Self, the supreme Guru, the *Paramatman*.

One of the main things I feel Mother has taught me, at least to some measure, is the necessity of truthfulness in thought, word and deed. Most of us are so much in the habit of being dishonest and lying that we are usually not even aware of it. This unconscious, socially acceptable dishonesty is often considered 'worldly wisdom'. So to prefer truth to falsehood is to sincerely desire the supreme Truth rather than to grovel in some transient worldly egoistic gain achieved through cowardly deceit. Obviously one who is at all established in, aware of and striving for the eternal reality of the spirit will not stoop to falsehood and deception and thereby jeopardize their everlasting spiritual gold for the cheap ephemeral junk of this world. Frequently people with spiritual pretensions boast of being in the world but not of it—but this is so often just empty words.

What I consider to be one of the most beautiful aspects of my relationship with Mother is that She did not try and pretend with me that by remaining in the world and practising 'karma yoga'—a popular euphemism for slave labour in the Guru business today—I could ever attain to any genuinely deep spiritual realization. Instead She provided me with all the tools and facilities to engage in *sadhana*, real inner exploration—something that only those who have done their practice in sustained seclusion, aided by the grace of a true Guru,

can understand. It seems that many people often like to think of Mother as a sweet, gentle Bengali lady who advocates *grihasta* ashram, sings beautiful Vaishnava kirtan and preaches *bhakti marga* but the Mother that I know, like Siva, prescribes the yoga of complete and uncompromising renunciation (a renunciation that is, no doubt, the by-product of true devotion); and like Kali, mercilessly destroys all egoistic illusions which keep the *jiva* enslaved and are the ultimate source of suffering.

Once after calling out to Mother intensely in my meditation for several days, I asked Her in a private if She always hears me when I call Her from within. Suddenly She turned toward me and with tremendous charm and intimacy—a sort of cosmic coyness—as if giving a conspiratorial wink—said: “what do you think?” On countless occasions She proved to me that She knew what I was thinking.

One evening in the Vrindaban ashram I was sitting with Mother and a small group of devotees on the raised area in the garden next to the mandir. It was dusk and the air was fragrant with the intoxicating scent of jasmine. An occasional conch or temple gong could be heard in the distance punctuated by the cries of wild peacocks. Mother was at Her majestic best,—epitomizing and embodying all the beauties and powers of nature. Although there were not many people present, I purposely sat a little away from the others, lost in my own reverie. Suddenly the thought entered

my mind: "Perhaps it is time to move on. After all my motivation has never been particularly religious but has been driven more by the search for adventure. This has been a grand adventure but perhaps there is something else over the next horizon." Suddenly, in what can only be described as a timeless moment, I lived out—mentally experienced—every possible adventure my mind could conceive of to the point of complete satiety. Then I saw that all sense experience was a type of fantasy and that real adventure lies in going beyond the entire mind ego-conditioning. I saw that Mother, like *Mahamaya*, held the keys to all mental-sensual ego experiences and that She also was the key to the Ultimate Reality beyond the cinema of the world. My desire to move on vanished. I was sitting in front of the ultimate adventure! By this time it had become dark and Mother suddenly got up to go to Her room. Very much dazed I walked along beside Ma when She suddenly took the torch She was holding and shined it in my eyes only a few inches from my face. "*Tik Hai?*" "Is it all right?" She asked me, and then burst out laughing. It was the same Kali-like laugh I had heard within while meditating in America with a miniature tornado whizzing around me two years earlier. "*Tik Hai, Ma.*" I somehow managed to murmur. This was the first time She spontaneously spoke to me.

In what was perhaps the last private I ever had with Mother, in Bhimpura, shortly after my marriage, Mother spontaneously said to me, repeat-

ing with great intensity as though pointing Her finger at me : “Nothing between us has changed. Nothing between us has changed. Nothing between us has changed”, and so it is.

Man must go out in search of That which is concealed behind the world. He should choose an abode that will make it easy for him to proceed to his true Home.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Ma touches us : 8. In our Religion Clubs.

P. C. Datta

Lord Buddha is probably the first person who starts "*Sanghas*". "*Sangham Sharanam Gachchhami*" He organizes Missionary organisations with Disciples. Followers of Christ and Shankaracharya and others also organized regimentations to educate people to live in Love for humanity. In Vedic and Buddhist ages we hear of the culture of Vedantas in the *Ashrams* of Forests, developing and harmonizing in a spiritual life for peace. Even Sri Krishna, before Buddha, have to organize all pious but weaker Kings and Kshatriyas to fight against a few tyranical and oppressive powerful Emperors.

Buddha's SANGHA was for fighting against ignorance, stagnancy and narrow doctrinism. Buddha taught the preachers to preach a *dharma* not by superimposing a new doctrine but understanding the present capability of the subject. Naturally the tribal god-worshiping was also encouraged. Introduction of new god was probably resisted first by Brahmins, priest class of the society. Gradually the priests accepted all tribal gods as menifestations of one and the basic principles of Bouddhic way of preaching which is actually fundamental system of Hindu religious teaching. Buddha teaches his preachers certain steps : (1) Con-

versation with the subject under treatment to understand his mental pains or wants. (2) Clarification of moral norms : *Swarga, Narak, Pap, Punya* and (3) If they can follow the ideas, then only they should be taught of logical concepts of Reality and the Philosophy of NIRVAN. It was an well-established principle for spiritual progress that every one should participate every organ, a Sangha or Ashram or Monastery or Church or a gathering, to attain peace and power for attaining Truth. Actually in most of the definitions of "religion" the word Society stands prominently. According to some ethnologists a common faith believed and followed by a group or an Association is religion. But if we accept Ma Anandamayee (who says every individual has his own way to traverse for realization of the Reality), we find no importance of a *Religion* (a faith of a group). Of course, in each one reside diverse potentialities and discovery of One inherent to Diversity is the instruction of Ma. Religion is a scientific urge to discover the truth which can not be realized by the sense organs. Realization is the aim of religions (Swami Vivekananda). Religion, therefore, can show you a path of developing a superior intellect and which is necessary for realizing the Truth. Religion therefore offers a help to the scientists objective. These helps are different paths for which different Sanghas, Societies, Ashrams, Sampradayas, etc. are instituted.

Causes of misuse.

Why do we find at present ; the Sanghas are the centres of “Sangharsas” (conflicts), *Sampradays* are creators of communal hatred. *Ashrams* are centres of all *Shramas* (Turmoil) ?

We forget that the different Sanghas lead to One goal, and the differences are necessary for the different temperaments created by Nature. “What is the right path for each depends upon his personal predilection, based on the specific characters of his inner qualifications” (*Sri Sri Ma—Words: 3*). The measure of a person’s spiritual advance will be reflected in the manifestations that are vouchsafed to him of his *Ista* who will by no means remain inaccessible, or separate from His devotee, but let Himself be contacted in an infinite variety of ways” (*Ma—Words : 171*).

So *Sanghas*, *Ashrams*, *Sampradayas* or camps may be infinite, but should not be considered as separate camps. Thinking in one line of absolutism leads to conversion of religion to religionism and sangharsas between camps and churches, mosques, temples, maths, Missions, Bihars, Ashrams etc. Consciousness of these camps or orders will counteract the prescriptions followed by aspirants. Actually all camps or paths are *mayik*, bound in mental or intellectual limitations. So, in an early stage of *Sadhana* as *Ma* says, “The moment may come at any time, when you realize the many in the One and One in the many” (*Ma—Words : 99*). That is why *Ma* is heard to say : Path is One, one is in all, discover the all in one path. “Fire exists

everywhere. Only one does not know at what instance the friction will suffice to kindle the flame" (Ma, Words : 99). Regiments of Truth become regiments of worldly greeds. Modern Ashrams are occasionally centres of Sangharsas based on religious creeds or activities of imposing formulae to follow and to develop hatred towards other formulae.

Characters of Ancient Ashrams

How beautiful are the descriptions (in Raghubansa) : Sita Devi left by Rama is welcomed by Valmiki who describes this Ashram life for her solace :

Asunyateeran munisannibesaista moapahantrin

Tamasanabagaya

Tat kaikatotsanga balikriavih sampatsyatete

manasa prasadah

"Look the bank of Tamasa has been covered by the thaches of Sages. You too take bath in the river Tamasa, worship God in your favoured form. Your heart will be filled up with Bliss."

Further : Seasonal fruits and flowers and easily digested *Nibar* and other rices will be collected by daughters of the Munis. They will heal your mind and give pleasure.

Ashrams of Tapoban were places of peace free from all turmoil. We can hear the Philosophies of *Upanishad* or *Vedanta* which are from planes far above those of biological wants. Rik Ved says "*Padoasya Vishwa Bhutani, Tripadasya-amritam Dibi*. Rabindranath explains as, one-fourth of the

Reality is covered by this Universe, the rest three-fourth remain in unknown Amritalok.

Songs of unity from Tapobans are still being heard. “*Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti*. “Only One exists, Sages describe in different ways.” “*Tatra ko mohah ka Shokah Ekatwam anupashyatah*”. “If one can see the unity in all diversities, how can he suffer from ignorance and sorrow.

Spiritual Utility of such Clubs

But there was a feeling that these songs should reach the common people busy in worldly affairs should be learnt by the aspirants, who have not yet left the world. From the *Pauranik* age the *dharma* for man was being taught to an wider circle. Sri Krishna showed that even in the war-field you can practice Yoga.

A necessity of regimentation for preaching the Unity principle of Upanishad was probably felt by Lord Buddha first. To produce a link between Vedanta of forests and the daily struggle for existence in the Society the sages organize regimentation. Buddhists practiced Unity in Diversity. All are one. Do not be conscious of Duality or diversity vehicles or ways are also one. The whole universe is filled up with One (Sahajia Buddhist). The Holy Bible says: “In the beginning, there was word and the word was with God and the word was God. All things were made of Him and without Him there was not anything made that was made”—Swami Vivekananda says: “Beginning from the Brahma to the minutest insects or atoms,

in everything, there exists That Love-permeated Friend, surrender your mind, life and body to the feet of them". Shri Aurobindo also preaches Vedanta of the forest, not for liberation of himself but for the liberation of the whole country, Mother India. "Like Sri Chaitanya who became mad with Love for seeing the face of Sri Krishna. We also require to be maddened in Love for seeing the face of our mother glorified by freedom."

Thus, we find *Sangha* and their centres of activities (Ashrams) are necessarily evolved for the propagation of lofty ideas developed in the hermitages of forests in the mass.

Now many people complain that *Sanghas* and *Ashrams* just like clubs are created by rival groups of egoistic group of *Mastans* for their own enjoyment (picnics and chanting). We hear about competitions and hatred between such clubs and conflicts within such organs.

Solution in Ma

When Ma Anandamayee was asked about starting of such a club, Ma replied, "There is only one *Ashram*, already covering the whole universe. Only one exists." This body belongs to that Ashram.

Devotees insisted on an Ashram Building, where they could sit together freely and pray to God. Ma did not discourage because that is also an way of developing aspiration and of attaining a stage in the spiritual voyage. Thus have been erected by now a large number of Ashram buildings (more than 32) in India. But Ma reminds of the Truth

that, the ashrams boundaried by concrete walls do not belong to Ma. She resides in an unboundaried universe Ashram and only one Ashram exists. What is that Ashram? Ma replies "Where there is no *Shrama* is the *Ashram*." Ma explains that as a spiritual stage after attaining which there exists no *Shrama*, no trouble, no conflict, no feeling of hardship, no worry. It is infinite in space and time. *Brahmacharya* ashram, *Garhasthya* ashram, *Banaprastha* ashram, *Sanyasa* ashram—all phasic ashrams merge into one. Regimentations of *Sanghas* are to help protection of the worldly *Ashrams*. How can we attain that Ashram? All *Bihars* (*Bishram*) merge with one *Sangha*, that is true Ashram. How can we attain that Ashram or Sangha? He who has attained that Ashram or Sangha he discovers the One in all diversities. Internal Sangha should be discovered through action in Love. Vivekananda says Love is only way, service in love to family members, society men, all men of poverty stricken, families etc.

Karma Yoga should be practised. "Mind that : you have appeared before me in the form of Karma — the works you have taken up, do that perfectly. It is my duty. He has given me eyes, to see that only you exist, hands are to serve Him, legs are for His Parikrama. When you eat you think you are offering *ahuti* to Him. When you leave the bed, think you are the machine (body) or it is your machine. I pray to you so that all work done by the machines are good. Every work should be for your service, and should be utilized in your service.

When you go to bed, "Whatever you have made the machine to do, I offer to Your feet."

Ma says, "Do you not see some Mahapurushas, independent natural or human environment, strengthened by the love for the universe, become clear embodiment of freedom in their own mode live everywhere in all conditions, full of joy. Love to universe will lead you to the discovery of the Universal Sangha or Club which will reveal the highest truth or Reality, "*Sangham Saranam Gachchhami.*"

Ma says : As long as you have the capital (energy, power of body or mind or any material wealth), you have come to a guest house, spent all for the service of the guests and remain grateful to them who gave you opportunity for serving them. Who can give? Whom can you give? What do you possess? You have come naked. You will have to go naked.

Ma says further : Often some are heard to grudge : I am exhausted. Again I will have to start cooking. 'Just now we have finished one cooking and distribution chapter'—Unless you can love the person whom you serve you will not enjoy the pleasure of service. Your service will be perfect and complete when you can feel the total pleasure of the person whom you served.

Thus Ma points out, if you want to have a real *Ashram* or *Sangha* you will have to possess love, and you will have to serve with love, then you will have Ma's *Ashram* or *Sangha* which covers the whole Universe in time and space.

In Association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee

Sri Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta

Translated from Bengali by Sri Kalyan Maity

(*Continued from previous issue*)

Henri Pefit's arrival at Jhusi

As I was a little better, I attended the study session in the afternoon. A European was also present there. Henri Pefit by name, he was a French, Private Secretary to the Emperor of Abyssinia, 66, and a celebate. He had been studying philosophy for about 29 years at that time and had developed a particular fondness for Swami Vivekananda's works. Eager to get acquainted with the Indian spiritual life, he was even more so to give up his job and come to India. But the Emperor was in no mood to allow him to do so. On the other hand, talks were under way towards opening a legation of Abyssinia in Delhi. The Emperor lost no time to attach Mr. Pefit to the legation as advisor and sent to him to India 8/9 months in advance. Mr. Pefit let no grass grow under his feet in accepting the opportunity. Sri Aurobindo was then an internationally famous name. So Mr. Pefit first came in his Ashrama and stayed there for a month. He also joined the Mother's prayer assembly. But he did not have any deep spiritual

realisation there. Then he went to the Ashrama of Ramana Maharshi and stayed there some days also. His next destination was Kashi where he chanced upon Mr. Thomson, a devotee of Ma. On hearing that Mr. Pefit had no spiritual realisation for which he had come to India, and found everywhere nothing but the same dry-as-dust rehash of scriptural, bookish knowledge, and that, therefore, he found no reason to stay in India any longer and would return to Addis Ababa the next day, Mr. Thomson advised him to once visit Ma Anandamayee at Kashi. He himself escorted Mr. Pefit to the Ashrama at Kashi. Ma was then at Kashi. There was then a large crowd of devotees around Ma and Mr. Pefit could not reach her. He looked on at her from a distance and emotions of a unique nature from the innermost recesses of his heart in the form of tears spilled over and streamed down his cheeks. He sat there silently for a long time. He was due to leave India the next day, but after he had seen Ma, he stayed back in Kashi for about a week more. It was at this time that he met Ma's devotee, Mrs. Blanca (Atmananda). However, when Mr. Pefit returned to Abyssinia, he had turned over a new leaf. Even there, he had meetings with Ma. No, not in dreams, but in his wakeful hours. Tears rolled down ceaselessly. "I used to wear a pair of dark glasses lest people should take me for mad," he said. This time he came to India on a six-month leave. In case a legation on behalf of Abyssinia was opened in Delhi within the period, he would stay attached to it or else, he

would settle in India on his own. He said, "I am neither rich, nor poor,—I am only a humble servant at Mother's feet. I will live my life at her bidding." Mr. Pefit looked beautiful. An aura of joy always hovered around him. I heard that he knew as many as seven languages. He could read and understand English, he found it a bit difficult to express himself in the language, though.

It was Girin dada who was entrusted with Mr. Pefit's well being. Though he liked to live alone, he had a sense of humour and was a doctor who had studied in England. Now he was doing his sadhana under Ma's care. He was looking after his European charge pretty satisfactorily.

At night Mr. Pefit became the topic of conversation while we were with Ma. "He is a confirmed celibate. It is rather hard to remain so in his homeland, though. The same with Blanca. Once Blanca had hired a taxi to come to me. The driver took her along a different path. Blanca grumbled. But the driver tried to assure her that he had taken the right path. Finally, he drove into a garden. Blanca said, "Where did you bring me? This is not the ashrama!" "We shall have a stroll here," said the driver, "and then we shall make for the ashrama." Blanca saw through it all and without a word more, began to punch him ceaselessly. The driver saw red and without delay brought her to the ashrama. As soon as Blanca got down from the taxi, she began to shout at the top of her voice to tell all what had happened. You can easily

understand how pure and simple-hearted she was that she could do so !”

5 Agrahayana, Sunday, (21 November, 1948)—
This being a holiday, a host of devotees had come to see Ma. Reading, bhajans, etc. were all there as usual.

Satyananda

6 Agrahayana, Monday (22 November, 1948)
—When this morning I was sitting with Ma, she said, “Blanca requested me yesterday to give Pefit an Indian name. I suggested ‘Satyananda’. Blanca said that he was a emotional being, and tears always rolled down from his eyes in divine emotion, and ‘Satyananda’ would not be the right name for him. Then I suggested ‘Premananda’. But, I said, tell him both and he will pick his choice. When Pefit heard both the names, he instantly chose the first, Satyananda, and was highly surprised. He wondered how I could have such fore-knowledge.”

What is more, I learnt today, Ma had given Miss Blanca the name of Atmananda. However, when I saw Mr. Pefit some time later, I said, “You have got a new name, have not you?” Mr. Petit smiled and said with wonder, “How strange ! How could Ma know what I thought in Abyssinia ? I had long a fond hope that I had an Indian name. I often wished I could have an Indian name like Miss Noble and, like her, could wear an Indian garb. One day I had gone to see the man next in position only to the Abyssinian Emperor. There

were many other people there as well. He pointed to me before all of them and said, "Look, I don't believe any one of all these people who have flocked here to see me. They can tell any number of lies to please me. I trust only you. I know you cannot tell a lie." In fact, I never tell a lie. So I like the name Ma has given me,— Satyananda. I think Ma knows all about the conversation I had with that distinguished gentleman at Addis Ababa."

This morning Ma said to me, "If you are willing to go to Vrindavan then fetch your woollens from Kashi, and meet us straight at Allahabad."

I : Ma, I have no desire to go to Vrindavan, but I can do so at your bidding.

Ma : You've no desire, is it ? You have seen Vrindavan ?

I : Yes.

Then Ma said to Ganesh (Sen) Babu, "Babaji, are you willing to go to Vrindavan ?"

As Ganesh Babu began to laugh saying "of all persons, me ?" Ma suddenly put on a grave appearance and rejoined, "what's there in it to make you laugh ?" The words, per se, were nothing very serious. Not did she frown or grimace. But the way those few words were delivered, sent a cold shiver down our spines. Ma, I thought, was as much a source of infinite joy as she could be a source of chilling fear, too. Ganesh Babu spoke no more. Once again, Ma said, "Does want or obstacle matter to you ?" Ganesh Babu kept quiet.

Don't give up Karma : Let Karma give you up.

At this time a man of local origin said to Ma, "Wish we could get some *nama prasada* from you."

Ma : (Laughing) *Nama prasada*? It's you who chant His *nama*.

Man : But I can't decide which is the real name.

Ma : It's all right by whichever name you call Him.

Man : One must do one's worldly duties. What about it ?

Ma : Do everything in the name of God. Whatever you do—do it as service to God. If you are to go somewhere for some job, try to feel that you are actually circling round Him in that way.

Man : If chanting His *nama* stands in the way of my worldly duties ?

Ma : Don't give up Karma even when your mind rebels against it. For the mind is never in perfect rest. It will force you to run after other Karma. Let karma leave you for good. If your mind loses itself in *nama*, you will find that Karma stands isolated. But here it's not your mind that has let go of Karma, it is Karma that has let go of your mind. So do your Karma, your duties. Do all that as service to God. And in the evening, pay your obeisance to Him and sit in judgement over all you have done during the day. If you've done anything bad, pray to Him such mistakes do not occur again. Surrender all outcome of your work at the feet of God. When you fall off to sleep at night, feel that you rest your

head at His feet. Spend your day and night thus in His company.

The man, now overwhelmed by Ma's advice, burst out into tears.

Departure from Jhusi

7 Agrahayana, Tuesday (23 November, 1948) : We are to leave Jhusi today. We set out for Allahabad within 9.00 in the morning. Ma set out on a detour to Allahabad in a car. When I reached the house of Sri Nirajath Mukhopadhayay at Allahabad, I saw their portico ready with seating arrangements. A special raised seat had already been provided for Ma and Haribaba. But both Ma and Haribaba were seated on the floor and Haribaba was reading aloud. On the other hand, it was raining heavily outside. A stream of water flowed through the place. Many in the audience also were getting drenched. After reading was over, there was some Kirtana and then came the time for the mid-day meal. Niraj Babu had us treated to a gourmet meal and we were all crammed upto our chins. Towards afternoon, Ma paid a visit to a nearby house and from there She returned soon to go to 'Krishnakunja'. It was nothing but part of a gentleman's house at Allahabad where a hall had some pictures of Lord Krishna. All this had made it acquire the name of 'Krishnakunja'. Ma left here for Vrindavan at 9-00 p. m. and the next day, we returned to Kashi.

Education in Ancient India

Ajit Ghosh

(Continued from previous issue)

Similar to that of Takshasila the *Mahavihara* of Nalanda grew up as a great university in the eastern region of India having its inception of activities in the fifth century of the Christian era. Before the establishment of this seat of learning the site was a prosperous village in the vicinity of Rajagriha, now Rajgir in north Bihar—*Sumangala-vilasini*. Hiuen Tsang, also known as Yuan Chuang, the distinguished Chinese traveller who came in India in the third decade of the seventh century and arrived Nalanda shortly thereafter, writes in his well-famed Accounts that, with a special note to the *Jatakas*, Lord Buddha in one of his previous births was a king and reigned in Nalanda. This king never used to disfavour any act of offer or gift whenever asked for. The Indian term for negation is 'na' which the king never could say, the name of Nalanda took its form. We come to know from the Buddhist literature that one Naga king of such generosity ruled here in ancient time. He might be the same who did never use *na*. Another traditional belief was that the place where Nalanda situates contained big tanks full of lotus flowers and 'nala' being an Indian term for 'lotus' the name of Nalanda formed.

Buddhist texts state that Buddha himself visited Nalanda several times and stayed within the precincts of mango-groves —Cf. *Dighanikaya* and *Majjhimanikaya*. Taranatha, the celebrated historian of Tibet who lived in between the last part of the 16th century and the first part of the 17th century had stated that Sariputra, one of the two chief disciples of Buddha, was born as well as left his mortal frame in Nalanda. The great Maurya Asoka built here a *Chaitya* and a *Vihara* in holy commemoration of Sariputra. It is also said that once about five hundred merchants jointly constructed a massive as well as impressive *Vihara* in Nalanda at a cost of ten crores of gold coins and dedicated it as a hallowed shrine of Lord Buddha.

Hiuen Tsang during his long and extensive travel in India spent nearly five years in the Nalanda university strictly as a dormitory learner. Another Chinese traveller, It-Ching, who came in India about twentyseven years after Hiuen Tsang, became a student of this institution and remained here for long ten years between 675 and 685 A.D. Both the above eminent travellers learnt Indian and particularly Buddhist literature, philosophy and ethics and both translated into Chinese about four hundred Sanskrit and Pali texts. Moreover, Hiuen Tsang collected thousands of selected valuable manuscripts and commentaries and carried them with him on his return journey. We come to know of another Chinese traveller, Fa Hien, who came in India long before the above two travellers and had his journey in the land between 400 and 411 A.D.,

had left no reference to Nalanda in his accounts ; he only referred to the distinctive *Chaitya* which was built by the great Asoka as a sacred tribute to Sariputra. From the above accounts and other historical evidences and specially from some inscriptions discovered from the ruins of Nalanda, it has been ascertained that Nalanda was brought out to exalted prominence towards the second half of the fifth century though it started functions seemingly long before this time.

The Tibetan historian Taranatha has put forward a detailed description of Nalanda wherein he has named some stalwarts of learning and wisdom who were directly concerned with the responsibilities and interest of the institution. Among them were the great Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna of the second century, Aryadeva of the third century, Rahulabhadra, Samgharakshita and Asanga of the fourth century, Basubandhu, Buddhapalita, Bhavaviveka, Dingnaga and Sthiramati of the fifth century and Chandrakirti of the sixth century. They were all distinguished scholars and dedicated teachers. When Hiuen Tsang was engaged in his studies in this institution, the Principal or Acharya was Silabhadra (625-632 A.D.), the esteemed wise man of wide celebrity as well as a great exponent of Buddhist monastic order. He was entrusted with the responsibility of running this great educational centre. Previous to his entry in the monastic order he had his domicile in Samatata, now Bangladesh, and had been a member of a royal family. Hiuen Tsang had paid esteem homage to

this great master with a befitting manner. Silabhadra was preceded by Acharya Dharmapala, another scholar of elevated calibre, hailed from Kanchipuram of Deccan. Dharmapala's deputy Chandrapala was also an eminent scholar. Other noted Acharyas were Dharmakirti (639-691 A.D.), Santideva, also of the seventh century, Santarakshita and Kamalasila of the eighth century, Biradeva, Padmasambhava, Buddhakirti and Ratnakarasanti of the eleventh century. All these erudite scholars were obviously distinctive personalities of the monastic order. Santarakshita and Kamalasila both were invited by the then king of Tibet for the object of missionary teaching. Both of them honoured this invitation and remained in the Himalayan kingdom till their death. Santarakshita came in Tibet during the sixth decade of the eighth century and became known as Pandita Bodhisattva. Cf. Ajit Ghosh : *Origin of Buddhism in Tibet*, Sri-Bharati, Indian Research Institute.

Nalanda attained to its eminence with a great extent of grants and aids from the Gupta Kings for a period of long years beginning from the rule of Kumaragupta I (415—455 A.D.) upto the reign of Gupta Adityasena (672 A.D.). From the historical evidences gathered so far we come to know that this institution obtained inter-continental reputation during the reign of king Baladitya in the middle of the fifth century. It also used to receive considerable grants from Maurya Puṇnavarmana (600-620 A.D.), the great Harshavardhana of Kanyakubja (606-647 A.D.), King Yasovarmana, also of

Kanyakubja (700-740 A.D.), as well as from the Pala rulers in the eighth century. The munificent patronage of these sovereigns helped Nalanda to grow up to its elevated position. Harshavardhana favoured the university authorities with an endowment of hundred villages in order to meet their necessities. The Chinese visitor It-Ching estimated that Nalanda was accommodating three thousand students studying in various departments, but Hiuen Tsang found eight thousand students and a teaching staff numbering about three thousand. According to the description laid down by the Tibetan visitor, the university was comprised of eight big auditoriums used as lecture halls and at least three hundred rooms as resort for the dormitory learners. It had also three multi-storied edifices named *Ratnasagara*, *Ratnadadhi* and *Ratnaranjaka* those were exclusively used to preserve collections of valuable manuscripts of Sanskrit and Pali texts. Maurya Purnavardhana of Magadha had installed a giant metal figure of Buddha in an enormously big edifice which was also built by him. Seemingly it was a *Chaitya* meant for joint prayer in assembly. Samuel Beal while reproducing the translation of the accounts of Hiuen Tsang narrates: "The priests belonging to the convent or strangers (residing therein) always reach to the number of 10,000 who all study 'The Great Vehicle' and also (the works belonging to) the eighteen sects, and not only so, but even ordinary works such as the *Vedas* and other books, the *Hetavidya* (logic), *Sabdavidya* (phonetics), the *Chikitsavidya*

(medicine), the works on magic (*Atharvavidya* or pharmacology), the *Sankhya* (a system of philosophy); besides these they thoroughly investigate miscellaneous works. There are 1000 men who can explain twenty collections of *Sastras* and *Sutras*, 500 men who can explain thirty collections, and perhaps ten men, including the Master of the Law who can explain fifty collections. Silabhadra alone has studied and understood the whole number. His eminent virtue and advanced age has caused him to be regarded as the chief member of the community. Within the temple they (the authorities) arrange every day 100 pulpits for preaching and the students attend these discourses without any fail, even for a minute (an inch of shadow on the dial). The priests dwelling here are as a body naturally (or spontaneously) dignified and grave, so that during the 700 years since the foundation of the establishment there has been no single case of guilty of rebellion against the rules. The king of the country respects and honours the priests and has remitted the revenues of about 100 villages for the endowment of the convent. Two hundred house-holders of these villages day-by-day contribute abundant food which was enough for the students and priests of the *Sangha*. Hiuen Tsang found this institution at the height of its glory and a resort of a considerable number of students from abroad and even more from his home land. Cf. Samuel Beal: *Accounts of Hiuen Tsang*.

In an inscription of Malada, son of a minister of king Yasovarmana of Kanyakubja, which is now

preserved in the Nalanda collection, distinctive reference of spacious *Chaityas* and *Viharas* with attached tanks has been made. The Pala kings, such as Gopala, Dharmapala, Devapala and others reigning till the twelfth century used to contribute sufficient grants. In the ninth century, Sri Balaputradeva, a king of the Sailendra dynasty of Sumatra, built a *Vihara* within the campus of Nalanda with the direct support of king Devapala. And to meet the initial expenses in regard to the functions of this *Vihara*, Devapala made a gift of five villages. He appointed Biradeva, an erudite scholar of Nagarahara, now said to be Jalalabad in Pakistan, as the Acharya of this institution.

Chinese and Tibetan academicians as well as the learners those had come to Nalanda translated sufficient number of Sanskrit and Pali texts with direct co-operation of the educationists employed in the university. Not only the learners but the teachers too had to translate from originals into their individual languages. We have enough evidence that under the auspices of the Pala kings important Tantric texts and works on metaphysics were such reproduced to other languages. Any preparation of commentary too related to such text was not a rare event. More so, it was no doubt a regular and usual practice. Some manuscripts such translated or copied with the support of the Nalanda authorities are now preserved in the libraries of the Oxford University and Royal Asiatic Society as well as in the Royal Nepal Collection.

Originally and practically Nalanda was domi-

nated by the *Mahayana* Buddhists. Subsequently, infiltration of *Vajrayana*, *Sahajayana*, *Kalachakrayana*, *Mantrayana* and some other Tantric cults came in and influenced the functions of the university to a great extent. The buildings and properties of the university had to face devastating fire several times that caused irreparable loss and damage. Finally, the havoc of destruction was made by the Muslim onslaught in the twelfth century and specially under the hostility of Bakhtiar Khilji in between 1197 and 1203 A. D. Bakhtiar turned Nalanda to complete ruin. He brought about immolation of men and property indiscriminately with his intense motive of all-out plundering. The Muslim historian Minhaz-i-Siraj in his book '*Tawakat-i-Nasiri*' written in about 1243 A.D., states that this immolation was so grave that no one remained to read out the Buddhist texts. According to the Tibetan work '*Pag-sam-jon-jang*', written in 1747 A.D., following this massacre one Bhikshu Muditabhadra and, after him, Kukkutasiddha, a minister of Magadha king, strived after restoring the existence of Nalanda by repairing some *Viharas* and *Chaityas*, but they could hardly succeed. Thus the historic tradition of Nalanda was wiped out from the face of existence. It is beyond our estimation how many specimens of art and architecture as well as valuable and rare manuscripts on the works of philosophy, religion and ethics as well as books of literature were destroyed.—Cf. Ajit Ghosh: *The Glorious Nalanda*, Sree Bharati, Indian Research Institute.

[To be concluded in next issue]

The Spirit of Sufism

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

The spirit of Sufism makes us live a life of freedom. It teaches that we should not run away from the duty or activity and we must do such actions without the sense of ego. We must become instruments in the hands of the divine and cheerfully do actions without being affected by them. Sufism is particularly relevant to the present time as it points to the wholeness of individual consciousness and unity of life. It does not separate man's spiritual life from his everyday life, but rather links his realisation of truth, beauty, and goodness with his action in thought and feeling. Sufism is not a way of escape from life and its problems, but it enables an individual to face himself, his problems and his relationships to the world around him.

According to Sufism life is intended for attaining the supreme goal of self-realisation. If we choose to remain in our lower nature, we will be a victim to life in bondage and misery. At a time when the world is passing through a period of great travail and agony, it is upto us to make our lives either harmonious or chaotic. If we attune our minds with meditation then we will fill it with true beauty and peace. On the other hand, if our lives are ruled and controlled by egoism then all the dark forces within us will create a state of discord and

confusion. Therefore, it is very essential that we must make every effort to reveal our divinity and make our lives blessed.

Sufism indicates that freshness arises from living in the present unspoiled by the conditioning and distorting of psychological memory. In other words, it requires the renunciation of everything to which we cling. It is only from the point of the present that both past and the future can be observed. The touch of living truth can be experienced only in the present. The attitude of a seeker consists in examining every fact as a fact in true perspective. Then only he can undertake the spiritual journey of search for Truth without identification and resistance. Sufism declares that there exists a kind of silence so intense, so immensely powerful that even great roars cannot disturb it. This silence is so profound that it makes any noise utterly insignificant. This silence is not non-talking or non-acting, because it does not lie in anything we do or do not do. Actually it lies in what we are and it is the complete absence of ego of I-ness. According to Sufism this silence constitutes a mystical experience of a high order. The silence within is what is aimed at in meditation and when we are able to stay in that state of meditation then only there is a possibility of negating the sense of "I" or the ego-centric attitude. When we are able to keep our minds still we develop a fresh understanding of the process of thinking which means thoughts may appear in our silent mind, but they do not disturb our inner serenity. While in the silence we may be

using our thinking apparatus, but when we are not using it, it should be still.

When we become completely absorbed in whatever we may be doing then only the significance of the present moment grows enormous. We must observe in all kinds of situations awareness of our thoughts, feelings and sensations and the functioning of our minds must be without identification or justification, without conclusion and preconceived ideas, without the screens of explanation and prejudices, without the expectation of reward, results or satisfaction. Then only spiritual experience is possible. Truth has to be discovered from moment to moment by meditative silence.

There is a good deal of discussion among modern people about freedom. Sufism points out that freedom comes to those who have a deep reverence for spiritual life, who are sincere in their quest for truth. As long as our thinking is conditioned by psychological time we cannot have real freedom, as the absolute freedom is attained by transcending mental limitation. As a matter of fact, it is fear more than anything else that enslaves our thinking. Casting off fear and gaining real freedom for the mind is a matter of self-discipline and self-discovery. Needless to say, without self-discipline the mind would not know what to do with its freedom. We must realise that by freedom we do not mean the sense of freedom of a profligate who foolishly throws all established values to the winds and lives a whimsical and irresponsible life. The divine freedom within is not attained by

learning or by extensive study. Spiritual liberation is revealed to those who have embraced the Truth in all sincerity.

Modern man is a sick man because to him progress means radio, television, cinema, the invention of new ways of enjoyment, more and more better cars and aeroplanes and a ceaseless craving for outer stimulation to escape into meaningless trivial activities. Since there is no richness of inner life, he seeks compensation in outer wealth. He lacks inner strength and spiritual force and hence, his life urges him into a false excitement.

Many people have mental troubles such as disquiet, distraction and emotional disturbances, because they look upon pleasures and possessions as the primary objectives of life. Whoever is attached to pleasures must have the fear of losing them and the consequent cares and worries. Needless to say, that the senses are insatiable and the means of their fulfilment are inadequate. Since the objects of desire are transitory they cannot be acquired easily.

Further, the physical body and the organs, the instruments of sense enjoyment, give way before the mind is satisfied. As long as a person clamours for maximum pleasure, power and material prosperity he cannot escape the baneful effects of modern living—constant tension, discontent, conflict, clash and competition. The contributing factors for mental and functional disorders are due to fear, anxiety, frustration, internal conflict and suppressed desire.

Sufism does not condemn the search for pleasure and possession, but it strongly advises the seekers not to look upon them as ends in themselves. It also urges the aspirants to divert their attention to the higher values and then they invariably become detached from the lower. Human desires and emotions are not wrong in themselves, but they have to be given higher and higher directions until they turn to Allah the Highest. The task of Sufism is to develop man morally and spiritually so as to prevent his deterioration. Sufism is a divine art, the finest of all arts and should be practised in day-to-day life, in good cheer, just for the sheer joy of it because it is a life of never-ending sweetness and ever present inspiration.

Worldly life is no doubt a battle-field. By becoming conscious of one's spiritual wealth one must strive to emerge triumphant from the battle.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

The Angel

Nihar Ranjan Chakraborty

How do I tell what was she,
Who came, in a dream to me !
Let me say, Oh Lord, little to thee
How she gracefully pleased me.
Once I had no time for pleasure
Because I had no rest and leisure.
So I slept in my bed, in a bad-sad mood,
She thought, the time is good.
Like a flame, having no heat, she came
With her calm and glorious fame.
Wondered not, but she hailed in a glance
With the nectar of dream-land bless.
The absolute had so much divinity
That I felt no shy to rejoy her beauty.
The more she came from far to near
I felt fragrant of a loving flower.
While she set near to my lazy arm
I fell in unknown, felt boundless charm.
There had a tiny yellow wrapper
Lying on my face-over.
All the sorrows secretly I kept
She stole all, and she left.
Still I wonder what she was—
Was she real, or was bogus ?
No, No, she was none. But
she played in a refreshing fun.

Message Divine

Sri Dibyadarshi Krishnapran

Many devotees are confused about the right way of proceeding towards the Divine Path. Human beings are the only privileged creatures to have the capacity for talking ; animals can shout, but they cannot talk in the way as men do. But the Divine path starts from the subject of talking. When a man moves towards the Divine, his subject of talking changes, he talks of the Divine, and hears Divinely words, he becomes a devotee.

In the words of the Mother Divine Anandamayee "हरि कथाई कथा आर सब बृथा व्यथा" [हरि कथाई कथा आर सब बृथा व्यथा]. When one talks about God, his words are blessed, talks other than Godly lead to unhappiness and sorrow. Lord Krishna in Gita in clear words, paint out to the devotees that they must be careful about speech ; as it is the first step towards the austerity for God for a spiritual aspirant. The speech must not be such as gives pain and sorrow to others. The harm done through speech is often more painful than caused by physical violence. Words of excitement and words that hurt people should by all means be avoided by the spiritual aspirant. The speech must not contain falsehood. His speech and manners should be beneficial and pleasing to others so that people may get happiness. The devotee in order to be full of

Divine thoughts and ideas must regularly read holy books that relate the events of saintly persons and full of spiritual message. If speech is enlightened in this way, it will bring bliss and happiness for the speaker and the persons to whom they are addressed and such speech will turn the foundation of spiritual discipline. So Lord Krishna says :

“अनुद्वेगरकरं वाक्यं सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत्
तवाध्याय भयत्सनं चैव वाङ्मयं तप उन्याते,

[Gita XVII/15]

The speech which causes no excitement, which is truthful and beneficial and also the practice of sacred recitation — these are said to form the austerity of speech [‘वाङ्मयं तपः’]

Om Shanti

(*To be continued*)

When there is constant effort to grow into the awareness of THAT which IS, there is hope that in time this awareness may become permanent.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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 like the previous years.

From 14th Nov. to 20th Nov. '91, the 42nd "Samyam Saptah Mahabrata" was observed solemnly through 'yam' 'niyam', japa, 'meditation', Silence (Mauna) chanting discourses on religious topics, Satsang and so on.

On this occasion many Sadhus, Sannyasis and about 250 devotees were present. At the end of Samyam Saptah on 21st Nov. morning, all devotees offered flower etc. to the base of the altar of Ma. Bhandaras for all were also arranged as usual on that day.

In the evening of 7th day of 'Samyam Saptah' under the guidance of Sri Sisir Kumar Mukhopadhyay, "Sree Sree Matri Geeti Programme" was celebrated. The vocal song was given by famous Geetasree Kumari Chhabi Bandopadhyay.

The Annual General meeting of the Sangha was held on 21st Nov. '91 at 2 p.m. The meeting was presided over by the Samyam President Sri B. K. Shah and was attended by 98 members of the Sangha.

Like previous years on the occasion of Sri Sri Gita Jayanti for 4 days recitation of Gita, worship (Puja) and purnahuti (final offerings) was performed on the Ekadashi day (eleventh day of the lunar fortnight). Smt. Meenakshi Kumari arranged and organised this Gita Jayanti function beautifully.

Bhimpura (Baroda)

Sree Sree Durga Puja was specially arranged in the Ashram of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee at Bhimpura, situated on the outskirts of Chandod town and on the bank of the river Narmada.

This old ashram is very suitable for meditation. In this remote place it was not easy to arrange a festival like Durga Puja, but due to sincere help of the local people and untiring effort of the two Brahmacharis—Binoy and Jyotish—in charge of the Bhimpura Ashram, and by the kind help of respected Mahanta Maharajji of “Nariad Sant Ram Mandir”, every arrangements were highly satisfactory.

The artists from Calcutta made the beautiful Pratimas in the Ashram premises. The Pratimas were decorated by the traditional “Daker Saj” of Bengal.

On 13th Oct. in the auspicious ‘Panchami Tithi’, with the ceremonial songs and traditional ‘Drum Beating’ — “Sree Sree Chandi Ghat” was established to start the “Maha Puja.”

The whole atmosphere was charged with the devotional music. All the devotees present there were charmed by the divine song. Then gradually,

“Baran” were performed for the Goddess and Maha Saptami, Maha Astami, Sandhi and Maha Navami Pujas were performed by Brahmachari Nirvananandaji.

All the three evenings during Puja, Odessi Dance, Garba Dance of Gujrat, Sitar Recital and devotional songs were performed.

At the auspicious moment of “Vijaya Dasami” traditional music were performed. Then the ladies did the “Debi Baran”.

In the afternoon the Goddesses were loaded in a truck and taken on the bank of the Narmada River where the Goddesses were immersed. In the evening “Sweets” were distributed to all. Numerous devotees from all places of India gathered in the Bhimpura Ashram to celebrate this “Mahotsav”. The famous devotional singer of Calcutta, Geetasree Chhabi Bandopadhyay and Mala Brahmacharini of Kanyapeeth of Varanasi, gave the devotional musics all the three days. The Brahmacharinis of Kanyapeeth arranged the Puja materials with special devotion. On 22nd Oct. on the full moon day, the Kojagari Lakshmi Puja was performed beautifully in the evening with pomp and grandeur.

Agarpara (Calcutta)

Sri Sri Durga Puja, Sri Sri Lakshmi Puja and Sri Sri Kali Puja were celebrated with special solemnity under the guidance of Swami Nirmalanandaji. Innumerable local devotees and devotees from Calcutta joined the ceremonies from morning and kirtan, devotional songs etc. kept the ashram

resounded. After pushpanjali (offering of flower), all devotees received the prasada.

The Annual Nam-yagna of the Ashram was performed nicely on 21st and 22nd Dec. 1991. Local devotees and others numbering over 1500 were entertained with prasada.

Ranchi

By the infinite grace of Sri Sri Ma, the autumnal Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Kali Puja were celebrated immaculately and were attended by a large number of devotees. On the Mahastami and Sandhi Puja day all the attending devotees were supplied with Bhoga-prasad. All enjoyed a special bliss in every evening in bhajan and kirtan. On 15th Nov., Sri Sri Jagaddhatri Puja was performed with usual pomp and serenity. More than 100 devotees were entertained with prasada.

Vrindavan

From 14th Dec. to 17th Dec. '91 a special Geeta Jayanti was performed nicely on the 25th year of the ashram's deity "Sree Krishna Chaliaji".

On this occasion many devotees from Delhi, Dehradun, Calcutta, Hathras, Agra and many other places, were present and rejoiced much.

All the festivals were conducted by Sri Sibandaji Maharaj.

On 17th Dec. being Ekadashi, on 18th Dec. Sadhu Bhandara was given followed by prasada to all devotees present on the occasion.

Obituary

1. Ramaji Saxena

On 15th December 1991, Ramaji Saxena, a well-known intimate devotee of MA, passed away to Matri-dham in the residence of his son Sri Bir Saxena who is also a disciple of MA.

Late Ramaji and late Kamalaji were two sisters, who had dedicated their lives for the service of MA. They were untiring workers, from 1951 to 1990, long 40 years Ramaji used to attend "Samyam Saptah" regularly in the category of 'A' class in spite of her ill health. This is a record in the history of Samyam Saptah.

Everybody loved Ramaji for her simplicity and straightness, ever smiling face and sweet behaviour and nature. She was cremated in the Kankhal cremation ground near Ma's Ashram. We pray for further devotion of her soul and peace in the mind of her family members.

2. Smt. Basantalata Sharma

On 23rd November 1991, wife of late Abani Mohan Sharma, a very old devotee of Ma, attained eternal peace at the feet of Ma Anandamayee.

In 1935 she came in touch with Didima, Dada-mahasay, Ma, Bholanath Baba, Akhandananda and Bhairji ; She had the opportunity to serve them again and again.

From 1962 to 1985 she stayed in our Varanasi Ashram. After the death of her husband, she came to Calcutta to stay with her only son. All the members of her family are great devotees of Ma. During death there was no sorrow in her face ; whereas an illuminous face flashed out.

We send our deep condolences to her relatives and hope the departed soul is now resting peacefully in Ma's cherished abode.

3. Sri Anil Krishna Pal

It is with great regret that we have to announce the sudden tragic death of Sri Anil Krishna Pal on 16th November 1991 due to a roadside accident. He was only 56 years old, a blessed devotee of Ma.

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

Always keep yourself in a state which is favourable to the contemplation of the Divine. Thus will be provided the right sustenance for the mind.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi
