
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

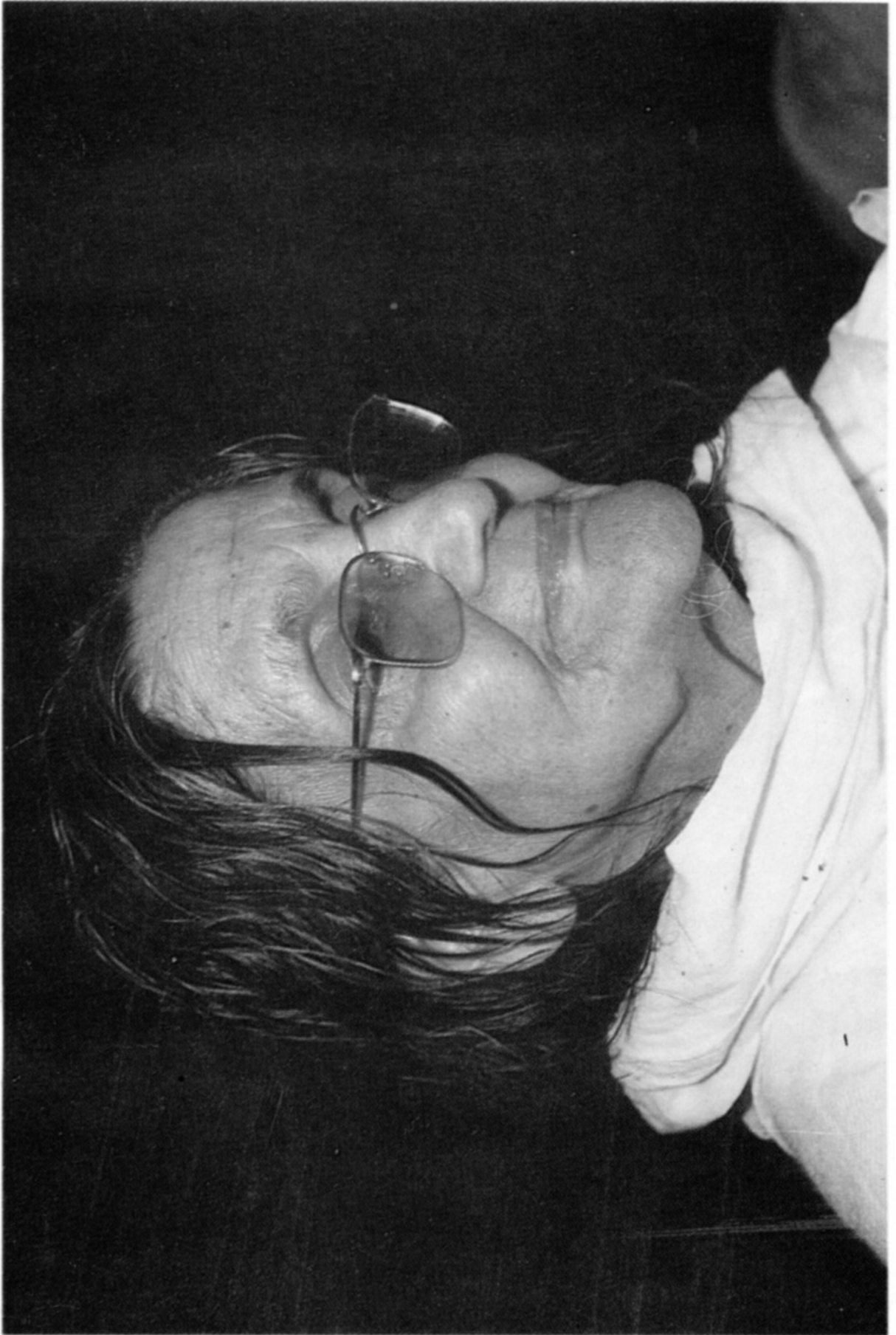
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Appeal **An Appeal**

As you all are aware that our Society has been running through a serious financial crisis for the last few months, I am fervently appealing to all of you to come forward and to save the Society with all its unit specially the hospital situated at Varanasi by making donation generously. All such donations will enjoy the benefit of deductions under section 80G of the Income-Tax Act, which is valid upto 31st. March, 1993. All donations either by cash, cheque or draft may please sent to

Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society.

MATRI MANDIR

57/1, BALLYGUNGE CIRCULAR ROAD,

CALCUTTA-700 019

Debabrata Pal

General Secretary

আবেদন

আপনারা সকলেই অবগত আছেন যে আমাদের এই চ্যারিটেবল সোসাইটি বিগত কয়েক মাস যাবৎ প্রবল আর্থিক সংকটের ভিতর দিয়া চলিতেছে। সোসাইটির এই আর্থিক সংকট নিরসনের কারণে আমি আপনাদের সকলকে মুক্তহস্তে দান করিবার জন্য বিনীত আবেদন করিতেছি। আপনাদের দান আয়কর আইনের ৮০জি ধারার সুবিধা পাইবে যাহা ৩১-৩-৯৩ তারিখ পর্যন্ত বলবৎ আছে। সকল দান—নগদ, চেক, ড্রাফট দয়া করিয়া নিম্নের ঠিকানায় পাঠাইবেন।

শ্রীশ্রীআনন্দময়ী চ্যারিটেবল সোসাইটি

মাতৃ মন্দির

৫৭/১, বালিগঞ্জ সারকুলার রোড

কলিকাতা-৭০০ ০১৯

দেবব্রত পাল

সাধারণ সম্পাদক

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

*

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

Vol. XXXIX

● APRIL, 1992 ●

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PROGRAMME OF CEREMONIES

April to July, 1992

1. 13th April, 30th Chaitra, Monday
Mahabishuba Sankranti—Sannyasotsab
of Sri Sri 1008 Swami Muktanandagiri
Maharaj.
2. 14th April, 1st Baisakh, Tuesday
Bengali New Year.
3. 2nd May, 19th Baisakh, Saturday
97th Birth Anniversary of Sri Sri Ma
4. 5th May, 22nd Baisakh, Tuesday
Akshya Tritiya
5. 10th May, 27th Baisakh, Sunday
Death Anniversary of Baba Bholanath
6. 16th May, 2nd Jaistha, Saturday
Buddha Purnima
7. 19th May, 5th Jaistha, Tuesday
Sri Sri Ma's 97th Maha-Abirvab Tithi
Puja
8. 10th June, 27th Jaistha, Wednesday
Ganga Dashahara
9. 2nd July, 17th Ashar, Thursday
Ratha Jatra
10. 14th July, 29th Ashar, Tuesday
Guru Purnima

In Association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee

Sri Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta

Translated from Bengali by Sri Kalyan Maity

[*Continued from previous issue*]

Mother comes to Kashi to attend Gita Jayanti

28 Agrahayana, Tuesday, 1355 (14 December 1948) — Khukuni didi has reached Kashi from Vindhyaçal today. Sri Sri Ma will come tomorrow. I learnt from Didi about Ma's itinerary : Gita Jayanti over, Ma would leave Kashi for Dehra Dun again, and then to Punjab with Hari Baba. Punjab was the birthplace of Hari Baba. Then they would return to Vrindaban for the Dolyatra festival. There is the Late Oriya Baba's ashram at Vrindaban. The Late Baba was also an old seeker after divine grace and a bosom friend of Hari Baba. I saw even at Jhusi that when Hari Baba has his scripture-reading and kirtan session, a seat would invariably be reserved for Oriya Baba. A seat likewise is reserved, I have heard, at the Late Baba's ashram for Hari Baba also. The Late Baba was so called because he lived in Orissa.

29 Agrahayana, Wednesday (15 December 1948) — Sri Sri Ma has reached Kashi. I went to the ashram in the afternoon from my lodgings at Ramapura. The reading session was on. I met

Mr. Petite. Upon inquiry, I came to learn that he had gone to Raipur from Vrindaban and came to Kashi again via Vrindaban. Asked about Vrindaban and Kashi, he said, "Both the places are extra-ordinary. Both the places flood me with divine feelings and almost throw me off my feet. Nothing of the sort in Bombay or Calcutta. There were special arrangements for offering Puja at Vrindaban and seeing all that I was in tears. When I was on my way to Vrindavan via Delhi, I could not be accommodated in Mother's carriage. I got a seat in an adjacent carriage but began to weep so much that Pandeji came and took me into Mother's at last."

The Late Oriya Baba and Hari Baba

After the reading session was over, Ma came out and sat down. The topic of conversation veered round to Hari Baba. Ma said, "This time we were to go to Baharampore at the time of Dolyatra. But Hari Baba said, 'You have come to attend only one Dol since I saw you first. If you don't come during Dolyatra this time, then I think I had better stop it as useless.'"

Oriya Baba's ashram at Vrindaban is pretty large. There are many big houses there. They say once Hari Baba wrote to Oriya Baba with a hint that he was actually traversing the path of the instincts. In reply, the Late Baba had told, "I used to roam about without any earthly attachments whatsoever. It is you all who have got me settled down at an ashram. Well, if I am on the path of

the instincts, I will see its end. You try to find the end of renunciation if you are after it."

The Late Oriya Baba was a Vedantic while Hari Baba trod the path of bhakti, devotion. When the Late Baba recited Vedanta, Hari Baba would not present himself there. But when Hari Baba had his recital, on many days Oriya Baba kept sitting. The paths of the two differed, but the two were greatly attached to each other. "As the peacock dances when there are clouds in the sky, when one of us sees the other his mind also dances in ecstasy like that".

Feelings defy language barriers

Mr. Thompson has also come to see Sri Sri Ma. Mr. Petite and Mr. Thompson were talking in French. Seeing them so engrossed, Ma looked at Mr. Petite and said, "He has had the chance to speak his own tongue after so many days. When he listens to a kirtana performance, tears roll down his cheeks. He cannot stop it at times and lies down with his face buried. And the tears! They literally flood him. He was once asked how it happened. How could one shed profuse tears over a song without understanding a word of it? It was Yogesh Brahmachari who sought to explain it in this way. The notes of a song can act on the mind, he said, just as the rhythm of the Vedas. In fact, Petite is engrossed in divine thoughts, he can imbibe the spirit of kirtana and divine songs and react as he does.

Sri Krishnamurti and his sayings

By the way, there was a reference to Sri Krishnamurti. Ma said that she had the occasion to meet him this time in Delhi. “Just as your Chhota Ma says”, she continued, “that chanting Hari, Durga, etc. would avail nothing and what one is to do is chant only ‘Ma’. Krishnamurti says that *guru*, *diksha*, chanting of names, etc. are no good. What the mind needs is *bichar*, — ratiocination. You have to ratiocinate, always. If doubt arises, you must seek a solution, whether in the pages of a book or by asking somebody who knows. This rational approach alone can bring wisdom or salvation, there is no other way. I asked him, “My child, won’t you be *guru* to those who would follow you ?” He said, “They must have the attitude of a disciple”. “If there is a disciple, then there must be a *guru*”, I replied. He did not reply. But then, you know, this body has no contradiction with anybody. He represents a particular state. I know what makes one speak like that.

Ma : If I have to take the help of someone else in case a doubt arises, he who solves it must be a *guru* !

Ma : These people think that one does not necessarily become one’s *guru* by solving a problem. Suppose you are going along a road and a dog suddenly barks out. You look at the dog and find that it was barking at a snake and if it did not, you would certainly tread on the snake. The dog saved you. So you can take the dog to be your *guru*. But people do not do so in such cases. Like

this, these people also are not ready to accept anyone for a *guru* if they get a problem solved by him.

Reading started again. I made my pranama to Ma and left.

The first day of Paush (16th December, 1948): Shopping over, I set out for the ashram in the morning and saw upon reaching there that the yagna had already started. Ma was seated there in the yajna enclosure. I began to enjoy it all standing outside the enclosure. Around the sacred fire sat ten *brahmacharis* all with white headgears. Over the fire hang a copper vessel full of *ghee* which dripped on to the fire making the flames leap up. The ten *brahmacharis* were making offerings of oats, sesame, etc. to the fire. To the south of the sacred fire, Srijut Batukdada sat on an *asana* and chanted the Veda. Srijut Kusum Brahmachari (Nirvanananda) was chanting the *gayatri* and Ma, sitting to the north of the fire, watched everything closely. The ganga was flowing past the *ashram*. I came and stood on the *ashram* courtyard giving on to the sacred river, which looked so beautiful in the morning sun. The holy city of Kashi in all its semi-circular entirety got reflected on the bosom of the Jahnabi, the eternal purgatory. Far away, the white bridge over the river dazzled in the sun. And the boats on the bosom of the river stood like still pictures. I stood and began to feast my eyes on the unique sight.

Some time later Sri Ma came to the hall. The reading had started and a lady brought some fruits

— mainly guavas and bananas — and placed them beside Ma. Because we numbered about twenty-five in the hall, Bhupen wished that the fruits were chopped and evenly distributed. Ma said, 'First distribute these one to one. If there is a shortage, then you can think of dividing them'. The fruits were only too few at the end, and suddenly the lady who had brought them announced that she had been given two instead of one. Peals of laughter rose. Ma too laughed and said to the lady, 'See, you would have two if the fruits did not run short, would not you? It sounds until it is full, see? When the pitcher is full to the brim no more sound is there. Noise comes only out of what is empty. When I come here today, I found the regular basket of fruit absent. The moment it struck me that this regular feature of the study session was missing, fruit came. When they wanted to chop the fruits, it occurred to me that each could be given one. In case of shortage, the remainder might be chopped and evenly distributed. Now it was found that it was not necessary at all'.

There was good-humoured laughter all around for some time over this. Then I said, 'Ma, I have a question to you. But you must answer it in such a way as does not go over my head'.

Ma : How can I guarantee that? But then, if you can get me to do that, it is all right.

I : Now I am ignorant. When I shall have knowledge, will the memories of ignorance persist still?

Ma : Your question may be answered in several ways. Before that, let me ask you one thing. You are all educated, are not you ? But do you remember how you were before you had your education ?

Some said 'Yes', some 'No'. Ma began to laugh. Then she said, 'About a particular state it can be said that ignorance was there before, now it is no longer there. Just as we say, there was darkness before sunrise, now it is no longer there because of the sun. Yet there is another state, in which one may feel after attaining knowledge that he was never ignorant. He may feel that he has ever been enlightened'. I said, 'Yes'.

At this moment Khukuni didi came to take Ma away for her lunch. Mother saw her and said with laughter, 'See, how can I take any more ? She's appeared. So raise the topic some other time'.

I also got up with Ma. Asked if I would go to my lodgings, I said, I would and Ma nodded her assent.

Around 4-00 in the afternoon I went to the *ashram* with my family. I heard that Ma was looking for me. She was not present at the afternoon reading session. As soon as it was over, she came and stood on the *ashram* courtyard. The ladies offered fruits and garlands and bowed before Ma. She began to distribute the few fruits she got. The devotees would number 30-35. A lady came and handed mother a lot of fruit. She took them and laughed. 'While distributing the fruits I wondered how I could do justice to all with the few I had got. Just see, instantly an abundant supply came'.

Ma herself distributed the fruits. We got one each from her own hand.

Whether memories of ignorance persist after enlightenment

It was evening and quite chilly, too. We all went to the hall and sat down. The Late Shankarananda Swami of our *ashram* asked me to raise the question I had asked Ma in the morning. I was a little hesitant at first considering the large gathering. Swamiji told mother all. She said, 'Well, just raise the topic and there's no reason why we can't discuss'.

I: Ma, I don't think it would be proper to discuss it now. I'll ask you later.

Ma: All right. But the little we can talk now won't be bad, will it?

Considering the general eagerness, I asked her to answer the question already referred to.

Ma: Your question was: if an enlightened person can have memories of his ignorant state. Right?

I: Yes, Ma.

Ma: (to Shankarananda Swami) What do you think, Baba? Can memories persist?

Shankarananda: No, they cannot. For memories are mental impulse, and impulses and enlightenment cannot go together.

Ma: Well, can't it be like this? The moon is always there but it is not always visible. Clouds cover it and when they blow over, out it comes. Just like that, knowledge or enlightenment is always

there. Ignorance hides it. Ignorance gone, enlightenment reveals itself.

The Late Swamiji argued a lot most of which remained abstruse to me. But I got the hang of it all: to the enlightened soul time, place or past recollections are all non-existent. According to Swamiji, salvation came only through death. He did not believe in salvation in life. In this juncture Paramananda Swamiji entered and faced the same question from Ma. All he had to say only corroborated Shankarananda Swami. There were a lot of polemics to which I only partially subscribed. But it was not so important. The discussion over, the reading session started. Shankarananda Swamiji left before reading started. Ma said, 'Will you go now, too'? When I expressed my desire to leave, she said, 'Will you be too late if you leave sometime later?'

I: No. Then I'll go later.

Ma: Well.

It is hard to understand how this body feels

Immediately after the *Santi Parva* of the *Mahabharata* was read out over half-an-hour or so, the lights in the hall were put out. I had never attended a night reading session before. So this sudden black-out took me by surprise. Later it occurred to me that it was a preparation for a session of meditation. We numbered somewhere between 15 and 20 and we all started meditating together with closed eyes. But my meditation was not deep enough. The polemics of sometime ago

kept on distracting my mind time and again. Nevertheless, the surroundings were new and I liked it to some extent. The meditation went on for about 15 minutes. The hall was not impregnably dark, but the shadow-like, dead-still human figures around could not be identified. Silence prevailed all around. Breaking this silence, Bhupen began to sing very, very softly :

“Hey Bhagaban, Hey Bhagaban, Hey Bhagaban
Jneya Bhagaban, dhyeya Bhagaban, preya
Bhagaban, shreya Bhagaban.”

(O God, you who are the only one to be known, to be meditated upon, the only one to be desired and the one who is the greatest ..

—Translator)

The hum made us feel that we were seated before God Himself, and singing the hymn with our gaze fixed on Him. The beauty and the solemnity of the song kept my mind engrossed in divine thoughts for some time. The song over, we made our *pranama* to Ma. Instantly the lights were on. Perhaps the session ended for the day in this way. We got up. Ma also got up and went upstairs. I was having a talk with Atul (Brahmachari) dada when I heard that Ma expressed her desire to see me. I rushed and Ma entered a small cubicle to the north of the hall. The dark room was lighted at Ma's bidding. I saw a small cot and below an *asana*. Ma asked me to sit down and herself sat down on the cot.

Alone with Ma, I said, ‘Shall I raise that question now, Ma ?’ She giving her assent, I said, ‘One

day a famous *pandit* said during a spiritual discourse that one needed *sadhana* as long as one had bodily existence to get rid of one's bodily feelings and impulses. Even Srikrishna had to have his *diksha*. I told him that Sri Sri Ma never had such *sadhana*. Ma says, I told him, she is now just as she was in her childhood days. Only when the various phases of *sadhana* passed over her body that she had the spell of ignorance for some time. And how was that ignorance? Like not knowing while in full knowledge. When I told him all this, the *pandit* said to me, "You will also say so when you have enlightenment." At that time I could not accept the words of the *pandit* and I told him at that time that I would ask Ma about it all—should I think, when I am enlightened, that all my expressions of ignorance were actually those during my enlightened condition? Have I feigned ignorance in spite of being fully enlightened?

This is why I asked you whether the memories of ignorance persisted after the attainment of enlightenment.

Ma: You did not tell me all this in the morning. But I told you of a condition when one wonders if one was ever ignorant. I am always the other name for enlightenment, aren't I?

I: Again, this *panditji* said, "There are proofs that Ma was not always in the same state. Think of Sri Sri Ma's mother. Did she look upon her child with the same respect as she does now? And if Ma were in the same state, how come the various phases of *sadhana* expressed themselves through her

body.” In reply I said that, going by Ma’s own words, she was *the whole*, and she had in her the physical being as well. The *sadhana* a being requires to become *the whole* also passed through her body. Then panditji said, “Why, does *the whole* lack the continuum of that *sadhana* that we must put it to sensuous tests ?”

Ma : True. Babaji explained it the way he has understood me. Don’t I always say that I am precisely what you think of me ? You look upon me from a particular angle. Everybody does not do so. Many think that I progressed a great deal in my previous birth. In the present one I have attained enlightenment in a very short time and because I am enlightened, I say that I was never in the darkness of ignorance. To such people I say that I am exactly so. But know this for certain. Whatever people’s impression of me, I can clearly see the states of being from where they say so. Everything is arranged in layers one upon another, as it were. I can pinpoint precisely the state they speak of.

And when you speak of my *sadhana*, who showed me the path ? I was my own spiritual initiator. Puja, *japa*, — everything I have done flowed from inside my own self. No stranger came and told me anything. Haven’t I told you time and again that my *sadhana* is nothing but play ? I know *everything*. Nevertheless, I ask you this and that. It is nothing but play. I at times ask you to come and pay a visit to a particular place. Does that mean I have never been to the place ? Just as

we revisit a familiar place, my *sadhana* is exactly like that.

But you need not let these out now. Of course, you can do so if the topic arises. You spoke of my bodily existence. But know this that I have my physical existence, no doubt, but I am not physical being. This body never did its *sadhana* to do away with ignorance. The continuum of *sadhana* is there, in fact. And I have done my *sadhana* just as a physical being does. But it was only a whim. Nothing but a whim.

At times you see that I do not answer to questions. Many think that perhaps I do not know the answer. In fact it is not true. I tell you what. When you ask me a question, I find that I am asking the same to me. The reason is that I always find myself among you and yourselves in me. That is why your question to me is also my own question to myself, as it were. At times I do not answer. No question of depriving any one of anything at all. Because I do not tell myself anything despite knowing all. Again, at times I feel why should I give a wrong impression of myself. It is only then that I reply. I am always playing with myself. This is why it is so different to understand this body.

I: Yes. It is indeed very difficult to understand you.

(To be continued)

Ma touches us : 9. In our Social Revolution

P. C. Datta

Very often we criticize our mother society pointing out diseases and defects. Sometimes we dream of revolutionary changes. According to some histories of political revolutions in the world suggest no Improvement in the natural development of human races. On the contrary, they retarded development, aggravated diseases, rubbed off the inter-ethnic affectionate relations. What should be the attitude of social Leaders ? What do they lack, which create lacance devouring all energies of revolutionists. World leaders suffered historically from the discrepancy between POSING and THINKING. They pose as scientific and logical, but actually are emotional. They require a blind or dead mass, which can be guided according to their ideas, or castles in the sky, which can be fostered affectionately by socio-political leaders. If I am a devotee of God, must be satisfied by seeing God beyond all disharmonies created by leaders. But as an ordinary "Jeeb" (living body), I feel the importance of Scientific and religious attitude of life. Dr. Einstein considers a *living man* to have two properties (1) Science and (2) Religion. By science I mean aptitude to harmonize diversity of phenomena within the sense prison, Religion is the urge to realize the truth by being

liberated from the sense prison. Philosophy means logical harmony. A living leader must be capable to free his intellect from all likes and dislikes particularly rising from emotions. He must follow religious principles for a definite object of developing superior intelligences above the scientific ones.

We have already seen their two types of outlooks are available among the thinkers on Society, mechanistic and vitalistic. If we look at the Society as a machine, we will try to know the mechanistic formula and will try for products expected from such a formulated machine. We may become sometimes impatient about the slow rate of products. The mechanists may give a new formula and reject the old machines and old formulae.

Vitalists look upon the society as a living organism not explainable as a simple static idolistic or modelistic formulae. Vitalists may discover diseases and try with remedial food or medicines, but will not impose formulae after formulae for removing or rejoining the machines. Vitalists may discover some formulae for explaining life processes, which they do not take up as static, life is free to disobey that. Vitalists bow down to observed requirements of life, not to formulae. Vitalists are truly scientific people capable to serve the living humanity.

Mechanistic leaders would say : I have prepared a model. Do not meditate to any other model excepting this one, follow me, I will use you as material to construct some thing according to the model. A vitalistic leader would say : Our aim of revolu-

tion is to strengthen the living human society by providing food, nutrition, medicines, etc. as quickly as possible. Vitalistic revolutions should not mean reconstruction or destruction or replacement of organs, addition or retention, but a mass conscious attempts to revitalize the development of total health, already existing healthy affectionate relations. But upto now, such a scientific leader has not come to the forefront. All politicians have used differences to create hatred and enmity.

But, now a time has come, when the world appears to wait for truly scientific leaders, who will guide the people not to become victims of maddening emotionalism and absolutism, intolerance and hatred, but to work for the society in an intellectual calm and tranquility.

Mechanistic leaders fought so long not only unscientifically but also anti-developmentally. We have already discussed the problem of development, which includes—differentiation and growth. Cancer cells and tumour cells grow unchecked, multiplying uniformity ; this uniformity is liked by mechanists, who can not see life in the living humanity. They insult the society by dealing them as machines.

We want much changes and reforms in society according to own choice, and dislike and quarrel with others. A scientific leader, for which the world is waiting, will surrender own choice to the necessity of Nature. A tree in its healthy life process discards old leaves and barks which fall off automatically. A scientific leader will try to help this natural process ; they must try to quicken the system

but will not try to find some emotional affairs to madden people.

A scientist does not discard any aspect of diversity in human characters and discovers a thread of unity harmonising them, such a scientific capability has not yet appeared. In India, leaders are facing three fields of diversity, religious diversity, language diversity, caste diversity, all these develop out of inherent inclinations in development. Original 4 castes have differentiated into several hundred. Nearly 100 languages (including tribal ones) exist. Nearly thousand religions have been produced in *Hindu dharma*.

Though, careful analysis will show, that all these differences are related to development, our leaders fail to discover the harmony or unifying principle in diversity. Some of the leaders suggest wiping out religion, i. e. they dream of a religionless society. Some prefer casteless, some of language less (?) society (or one language either Urdu or English or Sanskrit etc.). It is needless to say that these leaders are unscientific. Some others will draw boundaries of states based on religion, language, caste, tribe or a political philosophies. Leaders are anti-social, antireligious, anti-God. The object of religion is to rise above ego based personality cult as Idolism, Separation, Intolerance, Hatred etc. can not be supported by religions. Apparent conflicts are due to political utilisation of mass ignorance by inducing absolutism and superiority complex. Many honest people also consider that unity depends upon uniformity and unanimity.

My personal experience of village culture has shown our simplicity and affection unifying all differences. Like our *Kulo-purohit* (family priest) who resided far of from our village residence, *Kulo-napit* (family barber) also stayed at a distance who had to send a message to him after one or two months interval. He came with his son. My grandmother used to tell him politely, "Mr. Seal please take bath and dine with our family members at noon". They usually dined with us in the same *pankti* as an invited guest. My grandmother requested him, "Mr. Seal please do not go home in this scorching sun. I will make a bed for you please take rest and start in the evening". This was our village culture. I did not know that our *Khanta pisi* was not our real *pisi* (father's sister) but a mere maid servant. But without hatred and anger how can one fight against others. Politicians therefore dislike this precious feeling among diverse communities. They are after removal of the love, before bringing equality of prosperity. Politicians, can you not find a scientific way by which you can bring equality and prosperity without destroying this precious feeling.

A college student at Ranchi (Bihar) asked Ma, "Why in the society some are poor who can not buy food everyday and some are rich and they can afford to buy all delicious food much in excess."

Ma says, "There is another class, my friend, who can afford much but can not enjoy that due to gastric or other trouble. Those who believe in rebirth explain this variation in capability as *Kar-*

maphal (fruit of previous activity) of the present or previous birth. To feel for the poor is natural for you, as you have a wide heart. You can not but do something for the poor. This body supports all such activities for service, but not by taking up violence. Because if you are killed they will be deprived of the service of many like you who have precious wide heart full of love.”

On another occasion (6.8.51), Ma says “Whatever you understand, you understand by mind. Understanding by mind is nothing but accepting something by mind. Change may occur in the inclinations of mind and what you have accepted to-day you may discard tomorrow, you speak of *isms*, like communism, which are also of the same nature as accepted by mind. *Samyabad* is no doubt a good idea but in the way you try to establish it, is not worth trial (impracticable). Real *Samyabad* cannot co-exist with malice, hatred, fighting or enmity. *Samyabad* can be established only after realisation of the One self, all embracing unity. To collect things owned in excess by some one and to give that to some one in want, is your *Samyabad*. It becomes possible only when it is understood that we all belong to one family. Everything regarding giving or taking happen here automatically with love. Killing or malice have no place” (A. V. Bengali 39 ; 11).

Principle of co-existence in unity inspite of diversity of religions, has been mostly accepted by most of the Indian reader. But they have failed to educate people about the scientific basis of such a

principle. They have also failed to guard the mass from the bultures utilizing their ignorance. In case of caste-system and language problem, our readers are miserably poor in clarity of vision.

What is the process by which differentiation become integrated in a development. Many biochemical and biophysical reasons have been discovered presented by researchers in life science. These are too much simplification for which students are apt to draw conclusions. The complexity and mystery of the life force are probably too great to be understood by human intellect. Geeba is imprisoned in the sense perceptions. Different patterns of organic development was explained as due to polarity established in cells which consequently controls the planes of cell multiplication and symmetry of pattern formations. But if experimentally polar differentiation and division is stopped, an one-celled body of the shape of the destined organ is produced. The pattern is not a result of process but in an inherent system predetermined life-force. The readers should learn to obey the life-plan in society.

Discovery of totipotency in the units of living bodies is a highly significant one. Ma says every part of tree carries all other parts of total tree in infinite number. One contains every diversity and diversities are all in unity. This is a primary necessity in spiritual progress.

Education in Ancient India

Ajit Ghosh

(*Continued from previous issue*)

During the Buddhist period education in India was an indispensibility. The need of learning was widely thought of specially within the Brahminic community and the people associated to Buddhist religious order. The royal dignitaries and wealthy persons used to reserve provision for necessary help to the big educational centres both for teaching and advanced studies. The great Harshavardhana, who reigned between 606 and 647 A.D., was not only a generous supporter to the advancement of learning and literature but also a great patron to the promotion of educational and cultural establishments. He himself was a calligraphist and an author of distinction. He did not prefer any special favour to institutions maintained by men of his own faith. Basically he was free from any bias in this regard.

About the middle of the eighth century Gopala, the noted powerful king of Bengal (750—770 A.D.), founded some schools within the campus of the university of Odantapuri or Uddantapura. The universities of Vikramasila, Somapuri, Jagaddal and Odantapuri were then said to be chief centres of education and higher studies in north-east India and these institutions were brought to eminence enjoying substantial aids and endowments from the

Pala kings of Bengal. All the above centres, of course, distinctively followed Nalanda in the line of teaching and fundamental principles of administration. Gopala's son Dharmapala, who reigned from 770 A.D. to 810 A.D., built and founded the university of Vikramasila the ruins of which have been unearthed by the Archaeological Survey Department in Patharghat locality in the district of Bhagalpur of Bihar and the remains of Somapuri have been excavated in Paharpur in the district of Rajasahi of Bangladesh.

Somapuri, according to the present excavation of its site, had an area of 274 metres \times 273 metres covering a land of 270 acres being surrounded by a wall measuring 4.6 metres in height and 4.9 metres in thickness. It comprised of hugely built *Viharas* with a total number of 177 dormitory rooms, a big temple attached with a spacious prayer hall, many *stupas* and *dagobas*. It had reservoirs for water, useful drainage system, sufficient open yards and easy thoroughfares. The construction wholly was made of bricks, the main attraction being its temple which was profusely decorated by terracotta figures bearing considerable art value. This establishment was built and founded by the Pala king Devapala (810—850 A.D.).

The distinguished great Buddhist scholar Atisa Dipankara Srijnana (980—1053 A.D.) received his lessons and higher studies in the above university under the learned *Sthavira* Ratnakarasanti and subsequently became the principal *Acharya* of the institution. Under him Somapuri reached a glori-

ous position in the field of education and learning. He was the most erudite scholar of his time and was respected by all as a great teacher. Being invited by the Tibetan king Hakora-Lade, noted as Jnanaprabhu in Buddhist literature of Tibet, Atisa came to Tibet and in course of time became the most esteemed personality marked as a profound man of wisdom and the pioneer preacher of Buddhism. He founded the cult of *Kalachakrayana* and adorned to be the father of Lamaism. At length, he rose to the status of a divinity in Tibetan Buddhism. Cf. Ajit Ghosh : *Origin of Buddhism in Tibet*, Supra.

Although Nalanda obtained the momentum of reputation in the field of education in the east, the importance and distinctive position of Vikramasila were not of less significance. Vikramasila was brought up to its prominence specially with the exceptional patronage of the Pala kings such as Gopala, Dharmapala and Devapala. It enjoyed a glorious existence long between eighth and twelfth centuries A.D. The monastery of Vikramasila was said to have six colleges and 107 temples or prayer-halls within its campus. The maintenance mainly depended upon the aids and endowments from the Pala rulers as well as dedicated wealthy persons. The subject of teaching were mainly grammar and literature, logic and metaphysics and matters pertaining to religion and ethics.

We come to know from the epigraphical reports of the Archæological Department of India that numerous educational institutions of considerable

importance and magnitude existed in South India between eleventh and thirteenth centuries. These centres mostly were at Kanchipuram, Tiruchattimuram, Sambaikkudi, Tiruvarriyur, Bijapur, Bahugrama and Belgaon and they were mostly founded by kings and royal dignitaries. We know that cultural institutions of the south usually received aids specially from the Cholas, the Chalukyas, the Kakatiyas, the Bakatakas and the Rashtrakutas. It has also been known from one of the epigraphs discovered as yet that successful students of Dravida used to receive special scholarships such as *Bhattariga-vritti* and *Akkariga-vritti* for their distinctions in arts and science respectively. Moreover, a student being graduated as *Snataka* was given a special award along with a distinction of *Pandita*. This was obviously approved by the highest authority, the king.

In the south the celebrated Rajendra Chola I of the Chola dynasty (about 1012-1044 A.D.) started a college specified for Vedic studies and set up the establishment after his name as '*Rajendrachaturvedi-mangalam*'. He handed over its maintenance to the leading persons of the locality. King Rajendra was not only looked upon as the most veteran and distinguished promoter of Brahminic culture and thought, he was regarded as one of the chief patrons of the Buddhists. During the reign of Narasimhavarmana II of Kanchi in about 695-722 A.D. a huge Buddhist monastery was built in Nagapattinam by the king Maravijayottunga Varmana of the Sailendra dynasty

of Java (then Javadvipa) and king Kataha of Sumatra with joint venture and being aided by the Chinese sovereignty and subsequently patronised by the Chola Rajendra I and other Chola rulers. This monastery had the provision for teaching and upliftment of education. We also come to know from an epigraphical evidence that somewhere in Guntur a big institution was run by the Kakatiya kings where a college for teaching had been annexed to accommodate the learners enjoying food and hospital amenities.

It is to be specially mentioned that many prominent centres of education rose to eminence from the very beginning of the Christian era and thriving gloriously at least to the tenth century in upper India. In Saurashtra, in the western part of India, a university was brought up within the territory of Valabhi as well as some other educational institutions those flourished between the fifth and the eighth centuries A.D. The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang visited Balabhi in 639 A.D. and thereafter nearly forty years later came I-Tsing. Their accounts state that Valabhi had one hundred *Viharas* wherein lived more or less six thousand followers of Buddhist *Hinayana* order. They invariably included students and *Acharyas*. Sthiramati and Gunamati, the two eminent scholars, were the chief *Acharyas* during the visit of the Chinese travellers. From about thirty copper-plates of the 7th/8th centuries, attributed to the Maitraka kings of the region, it has been revealed that the royal Maitrakas were the chief promoters of this

institution and their contributions practically caused the centre to be elevated to a glorious position. Alberuni, the historian traveller from Khwariz of Uzbekistan (1030 A.D.), has stated in his accounts that though sufficient damage was caused by the Muslim invaders, this institution continued its existence further. He also referred to the Maitraka rulers as its chief patrons. In *Kathasaritsagara* Valabhi has been given significant importance in comparison with Nalanda and Varanasi.

Varanasi was the earliest centre of learning in Indian history and from the remote past it retained the pride of the torch-bearer of Indian learning and thought. Throughout ages it was regarded as the nucleus of wisdom and the meeting-place of literatis and learners and still now it is the precinct of scholastic ideology and abtruse knowledge. From the pre-Buddhist period down to the golden days of Buddhist dominance, Varanasi rose to outstanding eminence in the field of education. Side by side the great monastery of the Vuddhists grew up in Saranatha adjoining the city of Varanasi. This Buddhist establishment gradually flourished with all its impressive magnitude and gravity. Asoka the Great founded this monastery mainly to commemorate the holy instance of Lord Buddha's first appearance as the preacher of Truth, i.e. the Ultimate Wisdom. Moreover, it was the place where Buddha's first two chief disciples Sariputra and Maudgallayana received initiation from the Master, and this was another cause regarding the choice of the site. The sacred *Dhameka stupa* was erected

and the significant emblem of *Dharmachakra* was placed on a specially built monument known as *Asoka-stambha*. Customarily *Viharas* and *Chaityas* were constructed along with all amenities for living, such as reservoirs of water, digging of deep wells, easy thoroughfares and drainage. And in the long run Buddhist devotees poured in and the *Bhikshus* and *Sramanas* coming from different corners of the land used to settle here. There is much contradiction if any education centre was attached to the establishment, but we consider that possibly there were schools for teaching specially in the line of Buddhist theology and tenets of Buddhism. Apart from all the discovered remains from ruins and debries there are mounds yet to be unearthed. Time will come when we may find out the truth if there grew up any educational centre attached to it.

In the ancient past down to the Buddhist and post-Buddhist period we observe that the teachers were invariably men of erudite scholarship and basically persons dedicated to renunciation. Exceptionally it was India's own tradition originating in the remote Vedic age. Though the universities, like Nalanda, Takshasila and Somapuri were practically confined in general education only, they were run by monks and stalwarts of distinctive religious practice. With similar principles the *Pathasalas*, *Tolas* and *Chatuspathis* were maintained and controlled by scholars dedicated to religious conditions. On the other hand, it was believed that without religious bend of mind, dedication to good moral prac-

tices, disciplined activities and, above all, submission and veneration towards the teacher, development of a student's aspirations was absurd. Though the domination of rigid socio-religious dogmas and conventions brought forth some harmful consequence on the social mode of life, India never shook off her fundamental principle and ethics of learning and teaching. Truly speaking, this traditional as well as customary principle helped the people of India at large to form the social structure of Indian life and India's cultural evolution.

From the very early days of Indian civilization the teacher, no doubt, was a true friend and guide to his pupil. Necessarily, he would become friendly and direct his pupil's mind to the right way. The pious and conscientious way of life was then regarded the principal object of education. Education was thought of not only for wisdom but to reach the Ultimate Knowledge, the realization of the Supreme Truth — a search from known to unknown and from material to abstract. A serious learner had to regard the Truth as the nature of all souls, all-pervading, universal and eternal. He had to earn intense conception through his devout and disciplined practices and rigid austere habits. Differences between talent and merit, morality and wisdom, vigour and energy, though considered useful factors of student-life that might be thought of, should not be questioned in the way of acquiring knowledge.

(Concluded)

Reminiscences of Anandamayee Ma*

(4) Holi Festival at Vrindavan

Professor Bireshwar Ganguly, D. Litt

(Continued from previous issue)

It was the Holi Festival at Vrindavan in 1952. The Holy Mother was staying in the *ashram* of Uriya Baba of Vrindavan. Her holy associates, e.g. Hari Baba, Paramanand Swami, Gurupriya Didi and Avadhootji were also present. I went upto Mathura by train and from there I reached Vrindavan by a tonga to visit the Mother. In the afternoon, when I went to the *satsang* pandal, after changing my dress, and prostrated before the Mother, She nodded at Hari Baba to indicate my arrival, and Hari Baba asked me to lecture on the life and teachings of Lord Gauranga, immediately after the discourse of a saint. Though at first I was hesitant, as soon as I took my seat on the platform of discourse, after bowing down to the Mother, I felt inspiration emanating from the Mother. I lectured for half an hour on the life and teachings of Lord Gauranga and the utility of *Harinam sankirtan*, with joy and self-confidence. Later on Bibhuda and Hiruda congratulated me on

* Translated by the author from *Ananda Varta* (Bengali), July, 1989, pp. 232—237.

my grand performance and told me that the saints present were highly pleased. Next day, Hari Baba again asked me to give a religious discourse and I lectured on the *Karma-yoga* of *Srimad Bhagavad Geeta*. I harboured a sense of vanity of the success of my first lecture and on this occasion I explained the teachings of *Geeta* on the lines of Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Geeta*. However, in my exposition, I was critical on mere devotion as well as external *sannyas*. After speaking for about fifteen or twenty minutes I observed that a few monks from the back of the audience were nodding at me with raised hands to cut short the speech.

When the meeting was over, as I was having a stroll with the Mother in the court-yard of the *ashram*, Mother asked me, "What have you said in your discourse to-day, which has offended the feelings of a few monks, who have complained to Hari Baba? Yesterday the same monks had praised your discourse." I replied in brief, "Mother, yesterday I had delivered a discourse on the life of Lord Gauranga and had praised the benefits of *Harinam sankirtan* for devotees of *Kali-yuga*, in a spirit of devotion and humility. However, there was in me a sense of vanity to-day and in the attempt to praise the benefits of *Karma-yoga*, I cast aspersions on *bhakti-yoga* as well as *sannyas*, based on the thesis of Sri Aurobindo. Hence, perhaps, to-day's discourse was not upto the liking of *Vaishnava* devotees and *Mayavadi sannyasis*." On hearing this Mother burst into a laughter and said, "Nilmani, your discourse was out of turn and out

of place for Vrindavan, whose inner significance is not known to you. *Karma-yoga*, in the real sense of the term, is not possible without a spirit of renunciation and devotion to God. Without these two pre-requisites, one has to undergo *Karma-bhoga* (sufferings of life). Unless one performs *Kriya-yoga* (methods of worship) with a sense of devotion, one cannot sublimate one's works of life into *Karma-yoga* (divine work). You should read the scriptures more thoroughly. Ponder over the thesis of Sri Aurobindo on *Geeta* more intensely. However, what is most urgently needed now is to feed the monks, wash their feet and beg for their apology and after that to roam about Vrindavandham to understand the inner significance of this holy place of pilgrimage." I replied, "I have heard that Vrindavandham is spread over 84×2 miles and is much larger in area than the town of Vrindavan. I have neither the time nor the money for covering such a wide area of Vrindavan. Moreover, I am a poor college lecturer. I have so little funds with me that it is not possible for me to feed so many *sadhus* (monks). I am most willing to wash their feet and beg for their apology. I am also willing to visit the important temples of Vrindaban." After hearing me, Mother again burst into laughter and said, "Have I asked you to bear the whole cost of the *bhandara* (mass feast)? If the son commits a mistake, the mother has to atone for that. Day after tomorrow, a *bhandara* will be given to the *sadhus* on behalf of the *ashram*, and each monk will be offered a piece of cloth. On that occasion you will simply

have to fan a few special monks at the time of the feast, offer them water for washing their hands after the lunch and wash their feet as well as wipe them with a napkin. And tomorrow early in the morning, you should set out on a rikshaw or a tonga to visit the main temples of Vrindavan. Do not forget to visit the temples of Govinda, Gopinath and Madanamohan. Do not miss Vanshivat, Nidhuvan, Nikunjavan and *jhanki-darshan* (alternate vision and closure) of Vanke-Vihari. If you get somebody to accompany you, well and good, otherwise engage a *panda* (travel guide).”

On hearing these sweet words of the compassionate Mother, tears rolled down my eyes and I consented to obey Her orders joyfully after bowing down to Her in a spirit of devotion. That night I witnessed some beautiful dreams. I visited many temples of Vrindavan in my dreams and served the monks in the *bhandara*. I had also the privilege of beholding the smiling face of the graceful Mother once or twice. Next morning I set out by 7 a.m. after rising up and finishing the morning rituals. It was an unexpected coincidence that a bachelor relative (perhaps Makhanda)* of the Mother was also roaming about Vrindavan. When I met him, I proposed to him that we should engage a *panda* and share his fee as well as the tonga-fare equally. Then we witnessed the grace of Lord Krishna. Just outside the gate of the *ashram* (monastery) we saw a young *panda* of dark complexion with curled hair

* Written from memory, as my old diaries were lost in the flood of Patna in 1975.

upto the shoulder. He spoke in Hindi mixed with Bengali smilingly and agreed to guide us through Vrindavan on minimum charges, provided that we shared our milk, curd and sweet-meats on the way from time to time. On our ready acceptance of his offer, he hired a tonga for us, and we started on our pilgrimage after shouting "Jai Ma".

Since my elder sister and brother-in-law were residents of Mathura, I had once visited Mathura and Vrindavan earlier, but this time I was beholding the beauty of Vrindavan with a new vision, thanks to Mother's blessings. I was seeing the sky, trees and plants, temples and deities of Vrindavan with the eyes of a poet and was enjoying the breeze of Vrindavan. My vanity of learning was vanished, my lack of faith in idol-worship was gone and the idols inside the temples seemed to be alive. Whichever way I looked, I felt a sense of familiarity and joy. The people of Vrindavan seemed to be *gopes* and *gopies* of Vrindavan of the bygone *Dwapar Yuga*. Even ordinary trees, plants and creepers were vested with a novel beauty, not to speak of those of *Nidhuvan* and *Nikunjavan*. It seemed as though Radha had a tryst with Lord Krishna here last night. I found it difficult to come out of those mystic bushes. I had to emerge from the bushes on the exhortation of the young *panda* and Makhanda. The *panda* was extremely satisfied as we shared with him equally our diet of milk, curd, sweets, butter, tea and biscuits from time to time. The method of his explanation regarding the temples and the deities betrayed the age of our young

guide, and it seemed as though a mystic *sadhak* (adept in worship) or a sensitive devotee was uttering *mantras* (divine words) to instil devotion in us.

The temple in which destitute widows were muttering the name of *Hari* (God) for daily wages, created initially a sense of depression over the thought of their miserable condition. But later on I consoled myself by arguing that they got at least a chance of exhausting their *Prarabdha Karma* (deserts of actions in past lives) by muttering the name of the Lord. It was also a method of providing social security. Not only do inquisitive devotees and wise devotees surrender to God, but also devotees who are in distress or are in need of material sustenance. Of course, whatever be the initial motive of the *Harinam* singers here, the collective recital of God's name by so many devotees together must ultimately bring about the salvation of the devotees. After listening to the devotional music for some time, I had also the holy spiritual experience of shivering, ecstasy and rolling down of joyful tears.

Our young guide brought us to the temple of *Vanke-Vihari* after sunset and said, "Gentlemen, please behold the *jhanki-darshan* of *Vanke-Vihariji*. When the curtain is raised, you should see the deity with open eyes and when the curtain is lowered, you should try to behold the Lord with closed eyes. I shall return after drinking water." The *panda* departed and while we began looking at the beautiful standing figure of Lord Krishna from the rear of the crowd, I had a feeling of entrancement.

After half an hour I regained external consciousness on a knock from Makhanda, and then we began searching for the *panda*. But the young eccentric guide was nowhere to be seen. It was 8 p.m. by then. By quarter to nine we must be back in the *ashram* to take part in the collective seance of silence in the holy presence of the Mother. We felt sorry for not being able to pay the proper fee of the *panda*. Ultimately we returned to the *ashram* and participated in the group seance in the presence of the Mother. I was looking at the enchanting figure of the Divine Mother sometimes with open eyes and sometimes with closed eyes. I was thanking my lot for having such a beautiful vision of Vrindavan. At 9 p.m. the silence was broken by the brief devotional song of Bibhuda and some girls of the *Kanyapeeth* (Mother's convent). Then Mother asked me, "Nilmani, have you surveyed Vrindavan intensively? Have you understood the deeper mystery of Vrindavan?" I said in all humility, "Yes Mother, the *karma-yoga*, *kriya-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga* and *jnana-yoga* of this place of pilgrimage consist of singing the divine names of God and worshipping His deities. Since the devotional vibration of Vrindavan is spreading throughout the length and breadth of India, the devotees all over India are getting sustenance of devotion even in this *kali-yuga*. Oh Mother, blessed am I that I have perceived Vrindavandham and the deities of Radha-Krishna with a new orientation through your grace." Mother returned a sweet smile.

(To be continued)

Sai Ram Sahay

M. Rama Rao

We, the mankind.

The mankind has received the highest education
It has surpassed in discovery and invention
We have framed a many plans for agriculture
and irrigation
We are competent in industrialisation
We know killing of millions of million worms
in sericulture

But we boast about culture
At Hiroshima First Atomic bomb
Killed two lakhs in devastation
Wrought terror and destruction
We know construction of multistoreyed building
But forgotten the character building
We have different motivation
But not learnt the cultivation
Of heart with love and compassion
And God realization
So I pray Baba (God)
For redemption
From my sin and win name and fame
And grant me whole hearted love and devotion

Sai Kinkar

(M. Rama Rao)

The cause for the present day ills and crisis is
that man thinks that he is separate entity from

another man and he is all in all. The high ideals are crumbling and faith in God is vanishing.

In recent Iraqi war a number of soldiers and public were killed by dangerous weapons and fourteen thousand children died by after-effect of these weapons. The saints and sages are often showing concern for these ills and the ways to be adopted.

Sai Baba Says

Shirdi his Maszidmai is very merciful. She is the mother of simple devotees, whom she will seva in calamities. Once a man sits on her laps all his troubles are over. He who rests in her shade gets bliss.

Your behaviour

1. Always speak the Truth.
2. Always labour, shun idleness.
3. Be content with what God has given you.
4. In the body (Wada) there are many robbers. Bolt your doors. Be very vigilant, the thieves will carry everything, wealth and prosperity are transient and the body is subject to decay and death.
5. Let the senses do their allotted works. We should not meddle with their work. God has created this beautiful world and it is our duty to appreciate its beauty. The mind will get steady and calm slowly and gradually. When the front door is open why go by back door. When the heart is pure, there is no difficulty whatsoever. Why should any one be afraid of any one if there be no evil thought in us ?

6. You go on reviling your own brethren to your heart's content. After performing many deeds of merit you are born a man and if you act like this, will Shirdi help you in any way ?

Towards Fellow Beings

1. Help the poor and needy.
2. You should never speak ill of others or unnecessarily criticise.
3. Never insult the poor.
4. Never envy others' riches.
5. First give bread to the hungry and then eat yourself.
6. If any one does any evil unto you, do not retaliate.

He further says

“Sacrifice for the Lord, Sacrifices for the humanity, Sacrifice of self are essential for the human being to attain bliss.”

Swami Ramdas of Anandashram South India says

The accumulated wisdom of ages should prevail in adjusting the affairs of mankind broad-based upon mutual love, co-operation and brotherhood. The lessons which the cataclysms, disasters and miseries that have come in the wake of the ruthless wars have taught humanity cannot be forgotten. In the light of the past experience nations will unite in ushering in an age of a new world-order of abiding peace and goodwill.

Such a great ideal cannot be achieved by the efforts of statesmen, diplomats and politicians. It

is only the divinely inspired and illumined saints and sages of the world who can guide the destinies of mankind along right lines for establishing world-union and peace. It is the bankruptcy of spiritual values of life in the administration and government of nations that is responsible for the present state of discord and confusion. This is evident to all who can give even a passing thought to the present day world problems.

So long a veil covers the splendour of the Universal Spirit-God-living in the heart of a human being, the lower self asserts, and there is a scramble, strife and fight for earthly power, glory and riches. Now he is dominated over by an Asuric force, and he lives and acts in such a manner as to degrade himself to the level of the brute, and also to bring about wide-spread distress and destruction among his fellowmen. The remedy is to put down the lower self by revealing the light, power and joy of the Divine residing in his heart and in the hearts of all.

God alone can save the world by awakening humanity to a feeling of universal fellowship through the subdual of the narrow, selfish and individualistic instinct. So let our appeal for creating an atmosphere of peace, love and harmony through prayer, meditation and self-surrender touch the hearts of all people.

God is dwelling in every one of us, nay, He pervades all the worlds. Heart-contact with Him means salvation of the individual and therefore happiness of mankind. This is the only effective

way to transform the face of the earth, ugly and distorted as it is by the horrible wars, so that divine love may triumph for the supreme good of all people on it" (Vision Mag).

Swami Vivekananda says :

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, and injure 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 and less about ourselves. The world will change if we change ; if we are pure, the world will become pure."

(Prabuddha Bharata)

The great soul Ma Anandamayee prescribes for the disease of worldliness as follows :

Ma's prescription for the disease of worldliness was not, as one might expect, renunciation of the world. Although she herself was a supreme renunciant, Ma asked her devotees not to renounce the world, but to renounce their misconceptions. She asked people only to remember who they really are. She said, "God is not outside the world and the world is not outside God. You don't have to go anywhere. God is where you are". Her pres-

cription, then, called for spiritualizing the very lives that people were already living.

No matter who came to Ma for spiritual advice, she tailored this prescription to the situation. One day a young married woman came to Ma complaining that no one in her family approved of her spiritual practice. Rather than encouraging her to renounce family life, Ma replied :

Will you try to take up the following practice, Mother ? One day a month from morning until night, regard everyone as a manifestation of God. Your husband, your father-in-law, your brother-in-law—consider them to be God in different guises. That day look upon your children as child Krishna and Kumari Devi. If, on that day, you are visited by any sorrow or trouble, welcome them as messengers of the Lord... First of all do this once a month, then once a week, and you will observe that the happiness you feel on that day will influence all the rest of the week.

Thus Ma maintained that life and religion are one. "All that you do to maintain your life, your everyday work and play, all your attempts to make a living, should be done with sincerity, love and devotion, and with a firm conviction that true living means virtually perfecting one's spiritual existence (to be) in tune with the universe." She maintained if one could do one's worldly duties always bearing in mind that the worker, the work, and the recipient of the work are one, one's life would be transformed.

Radhakrishna Swamiji says :

“We have to study carefully the teachings of the saints and sages and put them into practice. Then only we can help ourselves to be relieved from the worldly crises and can help others. May the wicked turn good ; May the good attain peace ; May the peaceful be freed from all bondage and May the liberated redeem others.”

Sri Saipadnanda
Radhakrishna Swamiji

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

The end of an epoch with Didi Gurupriya

R. K. Banerjee*

During Mataji's sojourn at the Dacca Shahbagh gardens, Dr. Shashanka Mohan Mukherjee, the eminent Civil Surgeon, was destined to be attracted to Her and it was thus quite natural for his daughter, Khukuni (or Adarini) to come within Ma's orbit. And so Didi's first *darsana* of Sri Ma took place in Dec. 1925 or early Jan. 1926, when Ma was not yet 30 years old and Didi nearly 27.

This memorable association was to last for almost 55 years. Hailing from a distinguished family of Dacca, Didi soon became the focal point through whom members of other distinguished families of East and West Bengal came to know Sri Ma in subsequent years.

As an intimate confidant of Ma in those formative years, Didi was in an unique position to know first-hand of Ma's inspired spontaneous utterances, meetings with luminaries, and inexplicable incidents in Ashrams, private homes and public places. So it is to her that we owe the first authentic recording of Sri Ma's life as it unfolded itself in its unparalleled glory throughout the length and breadth of India. These are upto-date, composed of seventeen volumes in Bengali and twenty volumes in Hindi translation. Research workers can keep themselves

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fully occupied by pouring over their contents which include Ma's words, doings, teachings by personal example and exhortations, so faithfully and lovingly recorded by Didi over the years.

No doubt as time goes on her life of dedicated service and unswerving loyalty will be given due recognition. This article will be mainly concerned with her last few days on earth and Sri Ma's strange movements over this period.

During the last few years, Didi was spending a large portion of her time in Bombay under the personal supervision of Sri B. K. Saha's well-known Physician, Dr. Seth, who was in charge of Didi's treatment all through her illness and was always consulted even when Didi happened to be elsewhere.

It was Ma's *kheyala* that Didi should be present near Her whenever possible. So Didi was in Kankhal with Ma over Gurupurnima and during Brahmananda's Bhagavata Saptah in July this year. It was however apparent that Didi's condition was deteriorating and so she was sent to Delhi under strict medical supervision while Sri Ma proceeded to Kuchaman for a Bhagavata Saptah. But Didi's condition became worse and so Ma rushed to Delhi on August 22nd, a few hours after Her arrival in Vrindaban, where She had been expected to spend the Jhulan festival. Dr. Seth arrived by plane from Bombay and was anxious to take Didi back there for treatment. He himself escorted Didi and her attendants by train. Even Dr. Priyaranjan Ghosh, who had been attending Swami Paramananda daily, was included in the party.

Sri Ma personally saw Didi off at the station. Didi had been arguing and grumbling, but during the last few minutes before her departure, she became entirely docile and, like a child, asked Ma : "What shall I now do in Bombay without you ?" Mataji replied : "Just listen to the doctors and obey them implicitly."

Ma spent the night of August 25th, *Jhulan Purnima*, in the Delhi Ashram to enable the devotees assembled there to meditate in Her presence at midnight, the time when Her self-initiation had taken place in 1922, and left for Vrindaban on August 26th.

Two Bhagavata Saptahs were held in Vrindaban, the first from Sept. 11th to 18th and the second from Sept. 21st to 28th. The dates are important to understand Ma's subsequent movements.

Meanwhile Didi's condition in Bombay got from bad to worse. Swami Bhagavatananda a very senior Ashram samnyasi and Ex-Vicepresident of the Charitable Society, passed away on Sept. 7th in Nanavati Hospital, while everybody was deeply concerned with Didi who was staying in Sri B. K. Shah's house next door. Dr. Priyaranjan wrote on Sept. 10th from Bombay that Didi was lying quietly with her eyes mostly closed or half-open in a coma, and no longer responding to drugs and injections.

Sri Ma of course knew exactly what Didi's condition was at any moment and did not require any medical reports from Bombay for Her to decide on Her next course of action. She was only waiting to inaugurate the first Bhagavata Saptah at

Vrindaban on Sept. 11th morning. After midnight a message was received from Bombay that Didi's condition was hopeless. On the 12th morning Ma boarded the train to Bombay with only Bhaskaranandaji and Udas in attendance, disregarding Her own condition of health in view of Didi's urgent requirements.

The doctors in Bombay could not, from the point of view of medical science, advocate another long train journey for Didi. Nevertheless, Ma travelled all the way to Varanasi by train on Sept. 13th night with Didi attended by doctors and nurses in a separate compartment, reaching in the early morning of Sept. 15th.

It was Ma's *kheyala* that Didi should leave her body on the banks of holy Ganga in *Kashi dhama*, in the Ashram Didi had done so much to bring into being, where her beloved Kanyapeeth had been established and where so much service had been accomplished by her.

It was entirely due to Didi's heroic work prompted by Ma's *kheyala* that the Varanasi Ashram had come into existence. When it was completed with its beautiful terrace above the spacious satsang hall right on the bank of Ganga, with *Yajna Mandir* and *Viraja Mandir* protruding on each side, Didi had turned round, looking at Ma for some token of appreciation, Ma had laughed unnaturally loudly (*attahasye*) and exclaimed: "For how long do you want this Ashram, can it last for ever?"

Sure enough, a few years later the hall and most of the beautiful terrace had to be demolished, and

the danger of the very foundations being affected by the continuous erosion of the ever changing river was somehow only just arrested.

On Sept. 15th, Ma stayed at Varanasi only for a few hours before returning to Vrindaban, knowing full well that Didi had only a brief period of precious life left. It was not Ma's *kheyala* to remain physically with Didi, but She must have been in constant yogic communion with her.

Didi's condition grew steadily worse. The senior girls of the Kanyapeeth, who remained with Didi all the time, were amazed to behold that from 10 p.m. on the 15th, Didi's eyes were open and fixed in unblinking gaze on a picture of Ma conveniently placed near her bedside. Didi maintained this intense concentration for nearly eleven hours until she released her spirit at 8-53 a.m. on Sept. 16th.

Back in Vrindaban Ma knew exactly when the expiry occurred. She was heard to mention to Udas and others : "Your Didi is now no more !" Ma was present in Vrindaban for the description of Sri Krishna's birth which ended at 11-30 a.m. and at 12-30 Ma boarded the train to Varanasi, reaching the Ashram in the early hours of the 17th morning by taxi from Moghal Sarai where She had to negotiate the very high railway overbridge with no apparent difficulty on emerging from the Station.

Meanwhile the Ashram authorities had reverently prepared Didi's body for the final journey. It was Ma's order that the body should be buried

in the deep waters of the Ganga as is the custom for *sannyasis*.

Didi had been invested with the sacred thread in 1936 at Tarapith along with Maroni, Bholanath's adopted daughter, and had to all intents and purposes been looked upon as a brahmachari in the Ashram. In fact she was called "*Dadabhai*" (elder brother) by the Kanyapeeth girls. Some time ago, Mataji had conferred *sannyasa* on Didi who was seen to wear saffron robes.

From the moment of Didi's arrival in the Ashram on Sept. 15th morning until after the immersion, continuous reading of the Gita, singing of kirtana and uninterrupted *japa* had been performed near Didi by the Ashram girls. 28 kg. of ice had to be procured to preserve the body pending immersion after Ma's arrival.

It is remarkable to note that on reaching the Ashram Mataji went straight to Her room on the ground floor of the Kanyapeeth and never once emerged from it until the last rites had been completed by about 7 a.m. on September 17th.

Under Ma's instruction Didi's body was taken downstairs from her room above Gopal Mandir and placed in front of Chandi Mandap in exactly the place where, after the yearly performance of *Vasanti Puja*, the image of Durga is placed before being taken out for immersion. One of the teachers of the Kanyapeeth, who had been brought up there from her early childhood and is now an *acharya*, performed Didi's puja. Swami Chinmayananda

did *arati* before the body was carried out amidst chanting of hymns and Vedic prayers.

Beludi (Didi's youngest sister and an inmate of our Vindhychal Ashram) who had been Didi's constant bedside companion during the last hours was heard to remonstrate with Ma in despair : "But Didi has served you so well for so many years, yet you did not feel inclined to look at her face for the last time ?"

Sri Ma whom we know to be inscrutable and beyond the reach of emotions, must have felt the need of providing solace in the face of Beludi's intense grief. So She replied quietly : "She was my friend and companion (*sakha*) for a life-time, don't expect me now to look at her in this condition."

A brahmachari of the Ashram asked Ma why She had travelled all the way back to Varanasi just to spend Her time in Her room. Mataji replied : "Do I ever come out for the immersion of a *Pratima** ?"

To the Kanyapeeth girls who were crying in their deep bereavement, Mataji said : "Your Dadabhai is now enshrined in each of you as she has brought you all up. Do not mourn for her now, she is living within each one of you."

Thus history repeated itself : When *Dadamasaya's* (Ma's father) end came in Calcutta, Ma was also not present by his bedside, although she had travelled all the way from Tarapith to see him beforehand. Later, when the time came, Ma left

* *Pratima* Image of a Deity.

Tarapith for Calcutta but broke journey at Asansol to entrain for Varanasi, knowing that Her father would not last out the night. It is clearly quite unnecessary for Ma to be in the physical proximity of a person with whom She has the *kheyala* to be in communion.

Ma now let it be known that Didi was to be remembered as “*Sri Gurupriya Ananda Giri Maharaj*” and that any puja for her should be performed on the Siva Linga.

Ma did not linger at Varanasi. True to the tradition of service set by Her, She left the same day to be present in Vrindaban for the conclusion of the Bhagavata Saptah on Sept. 18th.

In accordance with the customs for *samnyasis*, Ma declared that Didi’s *Sodas* rites were to be performed on the 16th day after death. Consequently, On Oct. 1st at Varanasi as well as at most other Ashrams, *bhandara* was performed in Didi’s memory with veneration and solemnity.

At Agarpara (Calcutta) Swami Chinmayananda personally led the Puja on the Siva Linga, puja of 5 kumaris, the reception and garlanding of 5 sadhus, 5 brahmins and batukas amidst kirtana, and *bhandara* for all devotees present. The menu for the day consisted of all the dishes that had been Didi’s favourites on the innumerable occasions when she had presided over similar functions at Ma’s request.

Thus passed away a great soul who by her selfless service to her chosen Guru over more than five decades has given an unique example of unswerving

loyalty and devotion that would be hard to emulate. To mention only a few of her achievements : the Kanyapeeth, the Savitri Mahayajna, the coming into being of the hospital at Varanasi—all these owe their success to Didi's selfless work behind the scenes, inspired by Ma.

It had become evident for some time that Didi's time on earth was drawing to its end. But her apparent suffering during the declining years was not due to any *prarabdha karma* (effects of one's deeds during this and earlier births). This important fact Mataji took pains to clarify during one of Her utterances about Didi after death. Ma also said : "Now that Didi is gone, people are beginning to find out what she was in reality."

It is quite clear that Didi is beyond all human afflictions and her immortal soul merged for ever with the Supreme Paramatma.

Jai Paramahansa Sri Gurupriya Ananda Giri Maharaj.

"The greatest error of a man is to think that he is weak by nature, evil by nature. Every man is divine and strong in his real nature. What are weak and evil are his habits, his desires and thoughts but not he himself.

—Ramana Maharshi

Why to Come

Nihar Ranjan Chakraborty

Light, Oh delighted light
Come to my secret room.
Bring all that you have
And help me to bloom.

Built a joyful image
In my hidden hut.
Send the moon at your rest
And keep me alert.

Pain, if awakes any
And troubles me again ;
Please turn it into a song,
And thus let me gain.

Days pass ripples-like
On the lap of life !
Have we not come here
To learn and to strive ?

Samyama Vrata : Its Observance in Calcutta in 1953 and 1959

Anil Ganguli

Samyama means discipline, self-control. *Vrata* is a vow, a voluntary religious observance. The special *Samyama Vrata* inspired by Ma in 1952 and since then regularly observed by Her "children" year after year, has been warmly received by a section of the intelligentsia of India. Its exalted objects, coupled with its practical programme, make it admirably suitable both for men of meditation and men of action. This is why it attracts saints who have renounced the world as well as householders. Initiated by a small group of idealists at Varanasi, it has gradually gathered momentum. The *Vrata* has been earnestly taken up by spiritual aspirants hailing from different parts of India and by some foreigners. Every year in the month of November, they assemble for concentrated collective *sadhana*, at some place previously approved by Ma. The session lasts for one *saptaha* (week) and is, therefore, called *Samyama Saptaha*, week of discipline. So bold and ambitious a spiritual adventure on an all-India basis, inspired by such a great source of *Sakti* and so meticulously maintained by such a band of zealous idealists is unprecedented.

Let us say a few words about the genesis of this *Mahavrata* and its objects. The word “*Samyama*” in this context is not confined to discipline or self-restraint, in the sense of merely controlling one’s unruly lower self. The *Samyama Vrata*, annually repeated, has a wider scope — it is intended to be utilised as a preliminary step to Self-realisation, also called God-realisation. For such realisation discipline is, of course, an aid but not enough by itself. Ma identifies *Samyama* with *Sadhana* : “To engage in *sadhana* means to observe *samyama*”. To start with, *Samyama* has to be practised with conscious effort, so that real *Samyama* may come about spontaneously. The idea is this : Sustained effort to be in a particular state ends in an effortless existence in that state. In other words, what has been attained by constant practice is finally transcended and then comes spontaneity.*

Ma is often approached by many who protest that they lack the time and opportunity to think of God. In the storm-tossed sea of life the struggle for existence demands their whole time and energy. Overpowered by their cares, desires and incurable habits, they feel helpless and seek Ma’s advice. She does not ask them to renounce the world or to neglect their worldly duties but takes a practical view of the situation and often says something like this :

“All right, if your time is taken up by your everyday occupations and thoughts, at least you can set apart certain days and dedicate them entirely to

*Ananda Varta, Vol. VII/4/203

the Supreme Quest. If possible, let the members of a family co-operate and devise together the programme for those special days, which may be observed once or twice a year, once or twice a month or better still once or twice a week. Decide that on those days at least you will speak the truth, avoid all gossip and unnecessary talk, keep *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), forgo your favourite foods and drinks and live on simple, moderate diet. Let the thought of God be with you all the time, read the *Gita* or some other sacred text, seek the company of Mahatmas (saints and sages), execute your work as a service to God, be in harmony with all, do not quarrel with anyone. If on such a day you experience even a slight touch of Him. Who is your Self, you will begin to hanker after His constant presence, the thought of God will be with you more and more along with your outer activities and gradually your life will be changed.”*

Ma's precepts, briefly sketched above, inspired the Raja of Solan, popularly known as Yogibhai, to make an experiment. He proposed to Ma, then at Varanasi, that as many as were willing should together observe a week of *Samyama* at certain intervals. It was to be a week set apart for intense spiritual aspiration and rigorous self-discipline. Yogibhai expressed his desire that the proposed *Samyama Saptaha* should be observed in the presence of Ma and She blessed the idea and has since graced every session of the *Vrata* by Her august presence. Besides, She attracts great saints who

* *Ananda Varta*, Vol. I/2/50

add to the value of the celebrations. Their contribution towards its success is immeasurable. The objects of *Samyama Vrata* are :

“To know oneself, to realise oneself ; to develop one’s spiritual life by the observance of *Satya* (truth), *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), *Ahimsa* (non-violence) etc., and to assist the spiritual progress of the members of *Sri Sri Anandamayee Sangha* and all others”.

The last three words — “and all others” — give the *Vrata* a universal character. The *Vratīs* (participants) are required to go through a discipline of austerity in their diet and conduct which makes their body and mind fit for a journey along the spiritual path. The *Vrata* provides them with an atmosphere conducive to concentration and self-purification. The whole week is spent in individual *sadhana*, *satsanga* and collective meditation in Ma’s presence. The crowded programme leaves no time nor does it permit any inclination for worldly thoughts or idle talks. Vedic hymns, devotional songs, periods of meditation and talks by Mahatmas give an inward exhilaration. Ma lays special emphasis on the last-named item as follows :—

“To frequent the company of saints, sages and seekers after truth is the bounden duty of man. Association of this kind will help to awaken his interest in that which is Real. The more consistently one seeks the fellowship of the spiritually minded, the greater will be the benefit.”*

Ma also said once :

* *Matri Vani*, Vol, 1/130

“A patient suffering from some physical ailment goes to hospital for recovery. The *Samyama Vrata* is meant to cure one from *bhava roga* (the chronic disease of being born again and again and to suffer the sorrows and inflictions that such earthly existence entails). The *Vratīs* are the patients, the Mahatmas their doctors and the religious discourses the medicine. Instructions that help towards Self-realisation are the remedy that must be used to the full. A whole day’s programme (of the *Samyama Maha vrata*) is one dose of medicine. In order to gain strength for your search, you should listen to what the Mahatmas say. For your sake they have taken the trouble to come from great distances. Try to digest their teachings and put them into practice.”*

The first session of *Samyama Vrata* held as an experiment at Varanasi in August, 1952, under the auspices of the *Sangha*, was a great success ; so also the second one, observed in the seclusion of Vindhyachal. In 1953 it was the good fortune of Ma’s devotees in Calcutta to be entrusted with conducting the third *Samyama Mahavrata* in the presence of Ma. But the local Ashram (appropriately nicknamed by Ma as “Govinda’s Tiffin Carrier”) was too small for the purpose and so arrangements were made in a pandal erected on a vacant plot of land at Ekdalia Place, with Ma’s temporary abode on the top of the garage of Justice S. R. Dasgupta’s residence, close by.

* Ananda Varta Vol. VII/4/203

On the eve of the *Vrata* it was my good fortune to be with Ma at Vindhyachal where I had the opportunity of submitting to Her that we, Ma's "children" in Calcutta, had no experience in the line nor a favourable atmosphere in the locality and so we were feeling rather diffident. Ma was pleased to indicate the guidelines of the *Vrata* in detail, laying special emphasis on the importance of constant practice throughout life. The *Samyama Saptaha* proposed to be held annually was, She said, intended to set a model programme to be followed periodically at such intervals as might be practicable. "The aims and objects of the *Vrata*", She said, "should be borne in mind three hundred and sixty-five days every year." Incidentally, a suggestion came from Ma at Vindhyachal that the *Vrata* should, in future, be known as *Samyama Saptaha Maha* (great) *Vrata*. In course of conversation I mentioned to Ma that we were afraid of mischief from a group of misled local youngmen of Ballygunge, having anti-religious views, who were reported to have threatened to set fire to our pandal. After listening to me with patience, Ma remarked, "If you honestly do your best, you need not be afraid of anything. God will help you. He is there to fill up all gaps if you are true to yourselves." I came back to Calcutta with Ma's blessings. N. R. Dasgupta, Barrister at-Law, a leader of the Calcutta Bar, seemed to be very pessimistic about the future of the proposed *Samyama Vrata* at Ballygunge. According to him :—

“Calcutta, true to the tradition in which it was born and brought up during the British Rule, is really a nursery for all sorts of luxuries and sensuous enjoyments. There are cinemas, theatres, dancing halls, restaurants of various kinds and what not. Ballygunge reflects, more than any other locality in Calcutta, that real character of the city.”

His views were shared by many others who predicted that those of us who were used to extravagant comforts and luxuries would not be able to stand the strain of austerity for one week. In this background, Ma's message in Vindhyachal was a source of strength and inspiration to all of us and we started our preparations in right earnest.

I had been entrusted with the duty of arranging discourses by Mahatmas. I did not know any in Calcutta. I thought of some Professors noted for their learning but wondered whether their scholarship and intellectual subtlety would not be out of place in this *Vrata* and so I did not approach them. I counted on Professor Tripurari Chakravarti, well-known for his popular talks on the Epics. At first he seemed unwilling to participate in a function associated with Ma Anandamayi, who was, according to hearsay evidence relied on by him, “the Mother of a rich few”. Ultimately, he obliged me and gave wonderful talks on the *Mahabharata* for seven days consecutively. I knew that Professor Tripurari Chakravarti alone would not be enough for a great *Vrata* which required a team of experts

to talk on different aspects of religion and philosophy. I felt guilty that failure on my part to enlist the co-operation of such a team might make the Calcutta session of the *Vrata* a failure. I prayed to God for help but was in doubt about the result because I lacked faith. Most unexpectedly, my problem was solved by Ma Herself who came to Calcutta with Her party including Mahamahopadhaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj the great savant, Sri Krishnananda Avadhut, a specialist in Vedanta Philosophy and Sri Swatantrananda Swami, a powerful speaker on many subjects. Admittedly, there had been gaps in the discharge of duty on my part. But I had the best intention. God filled up the gaps.

Ma arrived in Calcutta on the 11th of November. The next day my ego was put to test under peculiar circumstances. Ma expressed Her *kheyala* for display of suitable mottos inscribed on boards to be hung up against the pillars and walls of the pandal. Everything had to be completed within a couple of days. An artist was needed for the purpose but none was available at such short notice. After diligent search I traced a part-time artist in a remote corner of Ballygunge. He readily obliged me with a tall promise. The next day, however he disappointed me by his non-performance, coupled with smooth excuses. His explanation was that he had too much work and too little time. I offered a solution by volunteering to do part of the job entrusted to him. He was pleased at my gesture and gladly lent me a brush and Chinese

ink. But my contribution to the 'joint venture' was small in quantity and poor in quality. Besides, I was, to the dismay of the owner, mishandling the brush and lavishly wasting costly Chinese ink. The artist must have felt—'enough is enough'. But he had, by then, realised the importance and urgency of fulfilling Ma's *kheyala*. He promised to complete the rest of the work unaided. This time he kept his word. I triumphantly marched into the pandal, ready with a bunch of boards, complete with mottos. I was fully conscious of my creditable performance. In the meantime, gossip, transmitted from mouth to mouth (and exaggerated in the process) reached Ma's ears, "Our Anil da has done the writing on the boards." Looking at the bunch Ma said, "Well, well. You have done all this writing?" I should have contradicted Her then and there. But I did not; on the contrary, I swallowed the compliment, observing strict silence. (Incidentally, it was not the scheduled hour for silence at that time.) Ma noticed a beautiful sample of the board and asked me whether it had been written by me. I had to break my silence to say 'no'. It was not easy to find any of the few boards written by me. After some search one was traced. The writing on it was inartistic—clumsy, to be more accurate. And lo and behold! a spelling mistake had crept into it. My friends laughed at my cost. Possibly, I deserved the punishment. Anyway, my mission had been successful. God helped me because I had tried to help myself.

The worst enemy of *Samyama* is the restless mind. How can it be conquered? "By intense love of God," according to Ma. Why is the mind restless? Ma's answer is: "Your mind is so much absorbed in the world that it does not like to leave it. It has found rest there. If it becomes completely restless, it will realise the *Atma*."* Somebody once asked Ma how to overcome restlessness of the mind. Ma prescribed a method in simple language: "By increasing restlessness it is overcome." This apparently paradoxical statement was clarified by Her as follows:—

"The restlessness of the world only enhances duality. When your mind is given its real nourishment, then only will it be at peace. When attaining the supreme wealth of God-realisation the mind will be perfectly still. There is only God everywhere. He alone Is. He alone and nothing else. Man's duty is to provide the mind with pure food. Do not put your mind into dirt. When defiled, it becomes agitated with yearning."

The root-cause of restlessness of the mind is desire for worldly things. Ma teaches us to sublimate such desire into desire for self-realization which is the same thing as God-realization.

"If you become attached to money, property and so forth." She observed once, "your true nature will be covered by want. By doing actions pertaining to man's true nature, he becomes established in his Self. Later the actions born of want are not attractive any longer. When you make

efforts to realise your *Atma* (Self), you are desiring to find your true nature by its own momentum. The path of want is full of sorrow and the path of your true nature gives happiness—God-realization. All power is God's. It is He who gives you the power of reason, the power to act. Just as you provide food and other necessities by your own exertion, so must you use your capacity and your talents to find God. He who does not advance towards God, is on the road to death. The path of God-realisation is full of ambrosia, it is the path of Immortality. In whatever form you desire God—be it as the Lord, whom you serve, be it as your own Self—on realising Him, everything will become as it should be. If you move along the current of want, you will remain wanting. Endeavour to find the Supreme and you will attain Supreme Bliss which is immortal. But death is larking in worldly enjoyment.”*

In their search for Self-realization the *Vratīs* were materially assisted by a Manual prepared by Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj with instructions about *Asana*, *Japa* and *Dhyana*. The austerity consisted in abstaining from smoking, tea, coffee, betel-nut, from eating between meals, and in living on simple, light, vegetarian diet. *Vratīs* belonging to Class A kept fasts on Ganges water on the first and the last days and had, on the remaining days, only one meal of one dish, at noon. In Class B were relegated *Vratīs* like myself, having a lot of outdoor work as volunteers and some others

* *Ananda Varta*, Vol. XVII/1/9-10

who could not (or thought they could not) stand the strain of A-class diet, according to them "bordering on starvation". The B-class *Vartis* were exempted from complete fasting. They had a simple meal at noon and a large cup of milk every evening. With these austerities we felt fitter and stronger than usual and got internal *Sakti* never experienced before, both for action and meditation. According to the Manual mentioned above each of us was required to do *Japa* at least 5000 per day. This was in addition to the congregational meditation in the pandal. The *Samyama Saptaha Mahavrata* began on the 14th November. Some time before dawn the beating of a gong — vibrant and sonorous — announced the commencement of *Prabhat Kirtan*, a daily ritual of the Anandamayi Ashram, which purified the atmosphere of the locality. The regular morning session of the *Samyama Mahavrata* was due to start at 7-30 a.m. Meanwhile we got a respite for getting ready for the day. With the *Prabhat Kirtan* still ringing in our ears, our hearts were filled with joy at the prospect of an ambitious experiment inspired by Ma. Pandit Agniswatta Shastri of Varanasi (popularly known as Batu Da) started the day's programme by chanting Vedic hymns, with his perfect diction and appropriate gestures. His deep voice, magnified by a loud-speaker, reverberated in the surroundings. Not used to hear such exalted music in Ballygunge, we felt as if we had been transported to some *Tapovan* of ancient India.

Congregational silence is an important feature of this *Mahavrata*. It was observed four times every day — 8-9 a.m., 3-4 p.m. 8-45—9 p.m. and 11-45 p.m. to 12-15 a.m. Once a questioner asked Ma “What is the fruit of remaining silent?” Ma’s reply was: “It controls speech and preserves your energy. If the mind also becomes silent at that time, Truth shines forth.”* Once an elderly gentleman lodged a complaint before Ma against silence. He claimed that during the whole day his mind behaved all right and his grievance was that the period of daily silence converted his mind into a repository, as it were, of unclean thoughts, for the time being. He therefore suggested that he should stop observing the daily silence for half an hour as it made his mind so ugly. Ma pointed out that silence did not *make* his mind ugly ; it only *showed* that his mind was ugly. His mind, She added, effectively beguiled itself during the whole day and appeared in its true colours only for the half hour under enforced silence. By way of comment on his ultimatum that he would stop observance of his daily silence, Ma’s conclusive answer came in the shape of a simple but embarrassing question: “Would you desist from X-Ray examination lest your disease be detected?”

Coming back to the daily programme of the *Mahavrata*, in between the scheduled periods of congregational silence, there were various items such as kirtan, recitation of the Gita and Chandi in chorus and discourses on religious subjects by

* *Ananda Varta* Vol. VIII/3/154

experts. Professor Tripurari Chakravarti's talks on the Mahabharata, coupled with copious quotations from other sources, Indian and Western, had a special appeal for the cultural society of Ballygunge, so far indifferent to the activities of Ekdalia Road Ashram ("Govinda's Tiffin Carrier"). Dr. Nalini Kanta Brahma's explanation of the teachings of the Gita, combining philosophical depth with lucidity of expression, was highly appreciated by listeners with spiritual aspiration. Swami Swatantrananda's talks on the Upanishads and Yoga Darsan, based on thorough study and practical experience of Ashram life, kept the audience spell-bound. Sri Krishnananda Avadhutji started as an uncompromising Vedantist and ended in devotion to Sri Krishna with tears in his eyes, which moved the audience. Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj did not give regular talks but occasionally answered specific questions referred to him by Ma. He invariably threw some light which benefited all, including the experts present. It was my privilege to have him as my guest. Close association with him enabled me to see how great he was in a class by himself. Almost a living encyclopaedia, he was a master of many subjects, including religion, philosophy, history, literature and in particular, yoga and tantra. His visit to Calcutta in connection with the *Samyama Mahavrata* was a great boon to the scholars of this city. His presence converted my house into a living centre of learning for the time being. Professors seeking guidance in their respective fields of study and research, as also

persons interested in the practical aspects of yoga and tantra approached him and received advice and assistance.

It was a matter of great satisfaction for us that Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj was full of praise for the quality of the speeches delivered in the pandal and the earnestness with which the *Vratīs* participated in the *Vrata*. Another event was specially gratifying to us — the change of heart of the misled youngmen who had threatened to set our pandal on fire. During the *Vrata* they one day visited the pandal, had *darsana* of Ma and were blessed with conversation with Her. They had come to destroy but stayed to pray. Thereafter they presented Ma with a poem in praise of Her, composed by one of them. Furthermore, Professor Tripurari Chakravarti who had been previously misinformed that Ma was “the mother of a rich few”, eventually came to a different conclusion as will appear from his observations as follows :

“To Her (Ma) have bowed men and women hailing from countries all the world over. Among Her admirers are philosophers and savants, saints, sages and Mahamandaleshwaras of religious institutions of All-India status, besides common people by the million..... To Her poverty and prosperity make no deference. Ma Anandamayi is the Mother of all — not only of a rich few”.*

And N. R. Dasgupta, who had at the beginning been very pessimistic about the success of the *Vrata*

* Ananda Varta, Vol. XXVI/2/115

in Calcutta, particularly Ballygunge, as stated above, later on expressed his feelings in words as follows ;—

“*Samyama Vrata* in Calcutta was, to my mind, to say the least, a wonder...Undoubtedly, this was something unique in the history of Calcutta.”*

The common experience of the participants was that in the course of the week of discipline they had gained something memorable, a new strength in their spiritual pursuit, a greater certainty of purpose and a stronger will to succeed. In the words of Ganga Charan Dasgupta :

“We had to slam the door on our daily routine of soulless drudgery and direct our attention to a course of self-discipline with Ma as the central symbol, moulding our aspirations for higher life. We had a unique opportunity to turn our eyes inward and to find out that there were many dusty corners in the chamber of our soul which required vigorous cleaning. We felt the great need of a constant repair-job to be done in the daily scheme of our lives.”†

Apart from the regular *Vratīs*, there were part-time participants who flocked to the pandal by the thousand and derived immense benefit. Indeed, the *Mahavrata* created spiritual history in Calcutta. The benign influence of the centre-symbol—Ma Anandamayi—could be felt but could not be described in words. We realised that Her presence worked wonders out of the most unpromising

* Ananda Varta, Vol. 1/5/307

† Ananda Varta, Vol. 11/1/85

material. The residents of Calcutta still treasure in their minds the sacred memories of the seven days of the *Samyama Vrata* when they were blessed with daily *darsana* of Ma for hours together and enjoyed the benefit of Ma's presence for 24 hours every day. The events of those days proved the truth of Ma's assurance that if there are honest efforts, the gaps are filled up by God. We appreciated, from experience, the force of the saying of Sri Krishnananda Avadhut :—

“Whilst it is difficult for the *Sadhaka* to live upto his resolve when left to himself, literally nothing is impossible in the presence of Mother. Have firm faith in Mother's Grace.”

(*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

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—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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Ashram News

Kankhal

Like previous years, Pous Sankranti, Shri Shri Saraswati Puja, Shivaratri Vrata and Dol Purnima were celebrated by devotees residing in the Ashram and visitors from all over India. Special worship and chanting of devotional songs were offered in the sublime temple of Sri Sri MA. Special offering of food was arranged.

Tarapith

This year also from 17th Feb. to 19th Feb, special functions were celebrated on the Maghi Purnima Day, the day of installation of MA's statue.

On 17th Feb. evening, Sri Sri Ma's temple was specially decorated and the adhivas of Sri Sri MA was performed, followed by Arati and devotional songs by Sri Biswanath Ganguly and kirtan by Geetasree Chhabi Bandopadhyay.

On 18th Feb. on the Maghi Purnima morning, a Nagar Sankirtan with photos of Sri Sri Tara Ma and Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee were carried out gracefully. Later on a special puja with Sixteen ingredients (shorasha upachars) to Sri Padmanabha, Sri Sri Ma, Baba Bholanathji and Girijaji, was offered. About 500 devotees from Calcutta and different parts of India attended the function for

3 days and enjoyed Puja, Hom and Prasad. The ashram compound became glamorous by Bhajan and Kirtan. Swami Bhaskarananda, Nirbananandaji, Nirmalanandaji, Achutanandaji and many other Bramacharis were present on the occasion and the devotees were very much pleased to have darsan and blessings from them.

Matri Mandir (Calcutta)

Like previous years, the Annual Nam Kirtan was celebrated in the Head Office of Sri Sri Anandamayee Charitable Society, with much grandeur.

On 21st March evening the adhivas and on 22nd March Sunday, a dawn to dusk Ma-nam Sankirtan, Special puja of Satya Narayan, Sri Sri Ma and Baba Onkar Nath were performed. Geetasree Chhabi Bandopadhyay sang devotional songs and kirtan on both the days. More than 2000 devotees were entertained with prasad.

Due to irregularities of postal service many devotees did not receive the invitation letters in time. We are very sorry for that.

Varanasi

On 8th February, Swaraswati Puja was gracefully performed in the Hall of Sri Sri Anandamayee Kanyapeeth Ashram.

On 13th Feb., Gurupriya Didi's birthday celebration was performed with garlanding the statue of Gurupriya Didi followed by bhog and prasad to all.

On 17th Feb., Swami Chidanandaji of Divine Life Society came to Kanyapeeth. He was received gracefully followed by Satya Narayan Puja and prasad to all.

On 19th Feb., the annual festivity of Kanyapeeth was arranged. Swami Chidanandaji was the Chief guest and the function was presided over by Kashi Naresh (Shri Bibhuti Narayan Singh). The Vice Chancellor of "Sampurnananda Sanskrit University" of Varanasi was present with many other renowned educationist. The function was a great success.

On 18th March, on the occasion of Dol Purnima, abeer was offered to Gopal followed by washing ceremony and puja with 16 ingredients (upachars).

Ranchi

On 14th January '92, Tuesday, Paus Sankranti was observed after usual puja and bhog. Pithe-Puli prasad was distributed to devotees.

On 8th Feb. '92, Saturday, as in previous years, Sri Sri Saraswati Puja, was celebrated with great grandeur. Many devotees were present for offering of flowers (Anjali) and Bhog. The well decorated Ashram compound was resounded with devotional songs.

On 2nd March '92, Shiva Puja was arranged in all 4 Praharas, on the occasion of Shiva-Ratri.

On 18th March '92, on the occasion of Dol, abhishek and puja with 16 offerings of Sri Gopal

and Sri Narayan, kirtan and distribution of bhog prasad were arranged.

Beside above functions, on every 1st Sunday of the month, Akhanda Narayan Path is being performed in the Ashram and on every 3rd Sunday Ma-Nam Kirtan is also performed in the Ashram.

Vrindaban

On 2nd March '92, Shiva Ratri Vrata was performed in the Sri Siddeshwar Mahadev Mandir, inside the Ashram. Shiva-puja was arranged in every prahar.

On 18th March '92, on the occasion of Dol, a special function was performed in the Sreekrishna Chalia Mandir inside the Ashram. Many Vaishnav devotees from all over India came to grace the occasion.

From 15th March to 18th Mdrch '92, Purnima day, Rash Lila was performed inside the Ashram. After special puja on Purnima day, sadhus and devotees were entertained with prasad. The function was a great success.

Obituary

Subimal Dutt

On Monday 2nd March '92, the auspicious day of Shiva Ratri, Sri Subimal Dutt, an old devotee of MA, left this world in a south Calcutta nursing home after a brief illness at the age of 89 years. He was a widower for the past 35 years.

Sri Subimal Dutt was born in 1903 in a very respectable family of Chittagong, now in Bangladesh. He stood first among the Indian Candidates in the Indian Civil Service examination. He joined the ICS in 1928 and retired in 1964. He held various posts during the service and he was the longest serving Foreign Secretary, being in the office for 12 years. He was also Ambassador to West Germany and Soviet Union. Besides he held the post of Secretary to President Radhakrishnan. He was very close to the Nehru family and authored a book "Years with Nehru".

After his retirement, Smt. Indira Gandhi requested him to become the first High Commissioner to Bangladesh.

Sri Subimal Dutt came in touch with Sri MA Anandamayee after the death of his only son when he was Ambassador in USSR. Since then he was very much attached to MA. In Vrindaban he got special blessings of MA and made a HUT for

staying inside the Ashram. Once MA compared Subimal Dutt like Bhaiji.

Let MA grant his soul eternal peace and we express our deep condolences to the bereaved family.

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I, Debabrata Pal, General Secretary, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Deba brata Pal
General Secretary
