
The activity of the mind that distracts man and takes him away from the remembrance of God is called wrong thinking. Endeavour to cultivate whatever will prevent your mind from harbouring that type of thought.

All your burdens are borne by God. Be convinced of this and ever try to abide in sincerity and cheerfulness.

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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

Vol. XXXIX

● OCTOBER, 1992 ●

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Notice/Announcement

We sincerely regret to inform our Subscribers that from the new-year 1993, the annual subscription of our quarterly journal ANANDA-VARTA has been increased from Rs. 20/- to Rs. 30/- only, though the actual cost of printing the journal is much more. We were reluctantly compelled to effect this enhancement to contain the mounting inflation in the cost of paper, printing, binding, postage etc.

Those who have already paid the journal subscription in advance at the old rate of Rs. 20/- may kindly remit the balance difference of Rs. 10/- now at their earliest. The life subscription for the journal in any language has also been raised from Rs. 400/- to Rs. 500/- with effect from January 1993.

Please do note in the front page the increased rates for the foreign countries.

Debabrata Pal
Secretary

1st October, 1992

Publications Division

Sri Sri Ma's Utterances

“Try your utmost never to succumb to anyone's influence. In order to become firm, calm, deeply serious, full of courage, with one's personality wholly intact, pure and holy out of ones own strength, one has to be centred in God.”

“In this world, every single person is crazy after something or other — some more and some less. What a comedy Bhagavan's play is ! What a mad-house He has created ! He Himself sporting with himself.”

“Like a hero, taking refuge in patience, attend to your duties. Don't fall prey to despair ; don't be broken. One must remember that just as good times do not continue forever, so Bhagavan can also put an end to bad times. Repeating God's Name mentally, carry out whatever happens to be your duty.”

“The one for whose sake you have chosen this path in order to dedicate your life to Him, should be remembered constantly. Talk solely for His sake. Be mindful of His words ; ever aware of Him listen to His promptings alone.”

In Association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee

Sri Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali by Sri Kalyan Maity)

The 2nd day of Poush (Friday 17 December 1948). The day for moving house from Ramapura to Shivalaya. The whole day went in the hassle. After evening, I went to the ashram with all. Ma enquired about the merits and demerits of the new lodgings. Swami Sankarananda who had been sitting beside Ma, said by the by, "Didn't have a wink of sleep last night. Yet there was time when I could fall asleep as soon as I went to bed."

Ma: Sleep only in bed? Not sleep while sitting? You certainly remember what happened at Vrindavan?

A certain holy person: What happened at Vrindavan, Ma?

Ma: One day at Vrindavan we were all chatting together when we saw Baba (Swami Sankarananda sleeping with his mouth open and, that, as he was sitting! And no ordinary sleep it was: there was no response even if we called! There were rasgullas at hand. I asked one to put one in Baba's mouth, and it was done. Still Baba was sleeping. But he was awake the moment the rasa (the sweet juice of the confectionary) entered his throat. (Laughter) In fact, as you see, there

is no awakening if the rasa does not enter you ! whether it is sleep or the *tamoguna* (the lethargic, inert condition of the soul), the spell does not wear out until one tastes that (*supreme, divine*) rasa He is rasa incarnate whether you call it rasa, divine bliss or divine halo, that is His real self. Look at it from a worldly stand power and you will see that with weal, their is woe. Just as you cannot realise light without the experience of darkness, you cannot realise ecstasy without agony. Just like that when I say joy, you cannot get rid of your feelings of sorrow. But when we say, from a spiritual standpoint, that He is joy incarnate, then there is not a shade of sorrow or joylessness in it. Here joy is unmixed joy. Here joy cannot be referred to in relation to its opposite, joylessness.

Mother spoke like this for some time. All kept quiet for some time. She said, 'It is better to recite His name rather than remain empty. By empty I don't mean vacuum. By empty I mean thought without any purpose. It is better to recite His name than be carried away by fruitless thought. The mind never remains empty. It is like a child. It always likes to be in the lap of its mother. For rest and for peace, it is restlessly and ceaselessly changing one lap after another. To soothe it, give it good, wholesome food. Kirtan, japa, etc. are good food for the mind. The mind will be at peace when it is fed on these. And the mind at peace means to get lost, to cease to exist.

Mother said so and laughed. Since nobody came forward to talk to mother on the line, the Kirtan

started. We listened to it for a while, then made our pranam to Mother and left.

The 2nd day of Poush, Saturday (19th December 1948). In the morning on my return from the market I heard of Shriman Bhupen's message: Shri Debshankar Mitra had come and been talking to Mother, and I was to go there as soon as possible.

I immediately made for the ashram.

How the theory of the Adwaita manifests itself

Hardly had I made my pranam to Mother finding her in the Ashram hall, when she smiled and said, 'You couldn't have come earlier. We're just talking about you. Shriman Bhupen told that he had gone and given you the news.'

Ma: The question is how the theory of the Adwaita can be expressed.

I: It is the question of Shantinath*, is it not so?

Debshankar Babu: Yes, to some extent.

Mother said to Debshankar Babu, 'Now say what you have got to say.'

Debshankar Babu: To begin with, so far as Adwaita goes, there cannot be seer or sight. Therefore, when one speaks of Adwaita, one certainly speaks from the imaginative plain. Hence it is not real.

Ma: You did your M.A. and became a professor. Can you reproduce on tap everything there was in the M.A. syllabus? You cannot, can you? Supposing an illiterate person or a mere Matriculate asks you something and you answer him, can he realise the state of being from which you do so?

Debshankar Babu : I see your point of view. But your example does not perfectly fix in with what I seek to establish. The uninitiate may not understand the pundit. But those who are sadhakas may well have some knowledge of Brahman. Therefore when they say something about Brahman, is it not at least a partial manifestation of Brahman ?

Ma : Brahman is beyond knowing or not knowing. One who claims to have known Brahman knows nothing indeed. The sadhaka may speak of the various phases of sadhana but that is the knowledge of Adwaita. When he attains it, he had nothing to say or communicate. He finds everything as it is, like the sun. It was so long invisible only because of the rainclouds. They blew over. The sun became visible.

Debshankar Babu : I have read in Kathamrita that when one comes down from the state of samadhi (the loss of all sense of reality during divine communion-Tr.).

Ma : If you speak in terms of Kathamrita, etc., this body cannot say anything. If you discuss something without mentioning any particular person or individual, this body may say something.

Debshankar Babu : It is heard that one can speak of ones experiences after coming down from the samadhi state.

Ma : You are speaking of the states. If one attains a particular state, well, it is possible to tell something about it. But in the knowledge of

Adwaita, there is no ascent or descent. (Laughing)
The one who has attained Adwaita says nothing,
does nothing. It is not possible.

Debshankar Babu : Does the body exist after
one has attained the knowledge of Adwaita ?

Ma : I for one would say that it does not.

Debshankar Babu : But the body is visible,
isn't it ?

Ma : It is you who see it. To the possessor of
the knowledge of Adwaita, it is no longer the body.

I : The scriptures say that one who knows
Brahman become Brahman. If one becomes Brah-
man as soon as one knows Him, then when exactly
does one know ?

Ma : It is only a matter of linguistic con-
venience to say that Brahman is knowable. He
simply is not so because He is self-manifest.

As this discussion was going on, Shri Gopal
Chattopadhyay arrived from Allahabad. He came
on the occasion of Gita Jayanti. As soon as he
entered the hall, mother stood up and Gopaldada
made his pranam by lying down full length.
Mother, while she smiled, placed her head on his
back. I returned to my lodgings finding that no
discussion would be possible now.

At 3.00 in the afternoon news came that Gopi-
babu had come to see Sri Sri Ma. I went to the
ashram on getting the news. For a long time
talks were held on *adwaita*. The topic of *akhandā
mahayoga* also cropped up. Gopibabu tried to
explain it briefly, but I doubt if any one understood
anything. As evening was approaching, Gopibabu

got up. Mother said to him, "Baba, your daughter is staying here. Won't you come and see her from time to time?" "I'll try," he said.

The 5th day of Poush (20th December 1948). The Gita Jayanti started from today. After some shopping, I went to the ashram. Arrangements had been made in the hall. It was decorated with garlands of marigold. Gopaldada was reading from the Gita and he was accompanied by his disciples. The *brahmacharis* and *brahmacharinis* of the ashram also took part in the reading. Altogether six chapters were read. Then there was some kirtan followed by the distribution of *prasada*. As the interpretation of the Gita started from 4.30, Gopaldada spoke on the circumstances that produced it.

The 6th day of Poush, Tuesday, (21st December 1948). Reading from the Gita and interpretations thereof, as yesterday. I decided not to go to the ashram at night and went to bed after my evening meal. Everyone except me went to the ashram. But hardly had they left the house when Manmohan's son Sindhu came and told me of Mother's summons. So I had to accompany the rest. Mother was sitting in the hall. Gopaldada was speaking possibly on the present political conditions. I made my *pranama* to Mother. Gopaldada said, "There is little to hope for from our present political leaders. For, they have no faith in the Hindu civilisation. They imitate the English and they want to become good Englishman—getting rid of their drawbacks. Has one ever become great by imitating alone. If one has nothing of one's own

what will be the bedrock of his development? Then these people want to amalgamate all the religions. What is this but an attempt at forming a mutual admiration society—I say you are good, so you say I am good! (laughter)

True, all religions aim at realising God. But that does not mean that they all preach the same doctrine.”

So long Mother was only listening. Gopaldada said to Mother, “We talked so long. Now let us listen to you.”

Ma : But here there’s nothing. It’s all clean and scrubbed here.

Gopaldada : We have so much. Nevertheless, people leave all and come to you who have nothing. Why do so many people come to you?

Ma : For the Gita Jayanti ! (laughter)

Gopaldada : God bless me ! Some people have come to attend it, no doubt. The fact is, I read from the Gita here because so many people crowd around you.

Ma : There may be another reason. You know, the drunkard goes to the drunkard. Those who have nothing come to this ‘have-not’.

Gopaldada : But where is that realisation? Do all those who come here do so with that realisation? Rather they come with the expectation to get something here. But they have to go empty-handed.

Ma : That too is not absolutely in vain.

Gopaldada : No, I don’t mean that. To get even a copper from a man gives you the feeling that

you've got something. But if you go to the king and get no more than a copper, then it seems no more than a joke indeed ! (laughter)

Ma : (to Gopaldada's disciples) Remember Baba's words. Don't ever be happy with a copper from the king (meaning Guru). Always try to squeeze out some more. (laughter)

A disciple : But we can't, can we ?

Ma : Whose fault is that ? The Guru's or the disciples ?

Disciple : The fault is ours, admittedly. (laughter) But then, why doesn't mother force herself to do us good ?

Ma : (To Gopaldada) Baba, why don't you force yourself to do them good ?

Gopaldada : Indeed ! You keep yourself at arm's length and put the whole responsibility on my shoulders. (laughter) And thereby hangs a tale.

A man had been highly worked up by another. When a third man came to see the first, he let loose a fusillade of abuses upon him. The third man said, 'What makes you abuse me like this ? I don't ever remember to have offended you.' (laughter). The firstman said, I am actually hurling those abuses at another : you are only secondary. (laughter).

Besides, you see, it's not one of those things in which you can apply force. To get into the water for a bath is one thing, to be shoved into water and get drowned another. (universal laughter)

Gopaldada : True, indeed. If there is humble submission, there is no question of getting deprived. But that is rare.

(To be continued)

Mataji's Amara Vani*

Question : Ma, may I ask a question, please ? But you will have to give a reply that I am able to understand !

Mataji : Very well, if it comes !

Question : When Supreme Knowledge (*Jnana*) has dawned, does the memory remain of the fact that one was in ignorance at one time ?

Mataji : When Supreme Knowledge comes about, by the very fact of its coming about, Eternity stands revealed. How can one say : "there is darkness below the Light." One dwells indeed in the Light ? What is darkness ? Who is darkness ? From which stand point is this said ? But don't think that darkness does not signify light or light does not signify darkness ?—this is not the point.

Put from one angle it is like this : One feels : "Really, when was I in ignorance ?" It is quite clear. To say : "I was" or "I became" is an error. IT IS—this is the Truth. The indestructible has never been or will be destroyed. Very well, your condition before you became acquainted with the alphabet has remained in your memory, has it not ? That is to say while preparing for the I.A. or B.A. examinations, can one recall one's state of mind

* The Bengali original appeared in Ananda Varta Vol. VII/2, P. 61.

Reprinted from Vol. VII, No. 3, Ananda Varta

at the time when one was studying for the matriculation ? All these stages are not each separate, all are He. He is Self-luminous, understand this now ! But to say that ignorance exists and Knowledge also exists—this is not correct.

Just as darkness vanishes at sunrise, a moment comes when there is Light. When Supreme Knowledge supervenes one sees : I have for ever and ever been “THAT which IS.” Since the Whole has been realized one understands that one has never been in ignorance. When does Creation occur, when Preservation, when Dissolution ? The question of division no longer exists.

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After the discussion was over, all sat in silence for some time. Then Bhupen asked : “Ma, shall I sing *kirtan* ?”

Mataji : Yes, it is better to do something than to remain idle.

Someone from the audience : Surely, the mind cannot stay idle, Ma ?

Mataji : Unless it is engaged in conversation about Him or in the contemplation of Him, the mind may be said to be idle and this state is fruitless and painful ; for the mind cannot remain entirely inactive, it will naturally be occupied with something or other. To be occupied with worthless things serves no purpose. Therefore do not indulge in vain talk.

The mind must of necessity be anchored somewhere—it is bound to be in the grip of one thing

or another. This is why one should fix it on Him who is the Support of the supportless—HE, the Self is the sheet-anchor one should firmly hold to. He is indeed in every one and in everything.* Thus in the guise of a device is also none but He. That is to say He is present in the practices (*kriyas*) that have for purpose Self-realization, such as *japa*, meditation, *kirtan* and so on.

The mind roams and rambles without finding peace. It flits here and there and everywhere like a small child. When here, there and everywhere become the One, then only will there be an end to its wandering. It turns to this and that side in search of food, without being able to find any. If the mind receives the right kind of sustenance, which will keep it in one place, if you give it such nourishment, a full and perfect meal, it will itself become fulfilled—a perfect child resting in his mother's lap. Whether you say reposing with his Mother or in the Self—call it by any name—they are undivided although each separate and though separate yet one and indivisible. In other words when one is wholly absorbed in meditation or in *samadhi*—one is immersed in THAT which is the essence (*Swarupa*) of delight, happiness, bliss - call it what you will. Merged in the Essence of Reality (*Swarupa*) means merged in the Self.

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Question : Ma, please tell us something !

*A play upon words that cannot be rendered into English
Sakal = all, *Sa* = He, *kal* = device, machine.

Mataji: Father, you know, do you not, here (with Mataji) if it comes, it comes!

The inquirer: Then I am going to put a question. Well: Unless there is the realization of non-duality (*advaita*) it cannot be proved; yet it is beyond knowledge. In view of this fact, how is it possible to attain to the truth of non-duality? For otherwise it is nothing but imagination.

Mataji: The difficulty is that the speaker is himself an instructor, he has come into your midst.

The inquirer: How?

Someone else: May I say something, please? So long as it is possible to use language, one is still in the realm of changing conditions—happiness, pain or whatever they may be. But when this happiness is transformed into a happiness that does not depend on anything at all, what is it called then? Love.

Mataji: Why does one speak of *Karma**? Because it goes on creating more action. But when one feels so ardently attracted to one that action no longer brings forth new action, this is called Love. Why is it said to be Love? Because after it has been kindled there can be no more question of Creation, Preservation or sorrow. Desire perpetuates the created world and therefore it is delusion (*moha*). Thus inversely it is said, to feel drawn towards God is Love (*prema*), while worldly attraction is desire, passion (*kama*). Where no 'other' is and the 'after' has ceased to exist—this is called Love, this is called

*The word '*karma*' denotes 'action' as well as its inherent results, that is the chain of cause and effect.

true Knowledge : here the movement of time has come to a standstill.

When love has awakened, Self-revelation (*Swa-Prakash*) will come and by the path of Knowledge one's Essential Being (*Swarupa*) will be realized. If proceed along the line of Love and Devotion—what will be revealed? Your own Essential Being (*Swarupa*). Here questions can no longer arise. But you will perhaps say : “How can I at my stage speak of Him who is Self-luminous? How can the truth of oneness (*advaita*) be realized?”

Very well. You have attained to the status of a professor. Do you say this from any particular level or stage? Can you for instance disclose everything that an M. A. knows?

The inquirer : Everything cannot be told, of course, but some part of it I am able to divulge.

Mataji : You cannot bring to light the whole. When you read a book, you read the whole of it, but to speak about it is a different matter ; you cannot communicate the whole of it to those to whom you are talking. Yet there are hints by which they can get an inkling of your knowledge. In Him who has realized the *Brahman* you will find no imagination. It must be understood that He is Self-revealed. Intelligence can throw no light on this, nor can words express it. There are however indications of His state ; you may not understand everything you hear Him say, but you can detect the signs of His Realisation.

That which is the natural realization pertaining to any particular state, that only will be apprehend-

ed. Therefore something has to be pointed out : how can one who is not a professor understand the level from which a professor speaks ? Suppose a person who has returned from Europe narrates his experiences ; his listeners will be able to grasp something of what they hear, but until and unless they themselves go to Europe it will be difficult for them to understand what precisely it is like. Understanding and not understanding are of this world. But where THAT is which IS—by what means can It be grasped ?

Question : How then can spiritual instruction be given ?

Mataji : Whatever you are able to comprehend that much you can pass on ; you can give information only about the path. When something is placed on the surface of water, it sinks ? But what happens underneath ? The person who watches from the shore will only say : 'It has been submerged.' Just as when someone is really absorbed in meditation, one can by just looking at him assert that he is far removed from worldly cares. For the signs of meditation are quite definite, this is why you can tell. The contemplative may be questioned about worldly matters, yet his replies will distinctly point to the inner world. You will be able to discover evidences of his state, you may even succeed in acquiring his way of speaking, but you cannot find out what he has attained, unless you yourself have had similar experience. He will disclose whatever little can be expressed in language— as much as can be put into words. But He who has been immersed

does not speak. Nothing infact exists for him, so what is He to tell ? If something remains which has not been absorbed, then he would speak something.

The inquirer : But surely He will speak of the path at least ?

Mataji : Then you will say, that he who explains is on the way. While actually, father, He does not speak at all, He is WHAT IS. Therefore when He talks He does not talk as you do. It appears to you that He speaks, but in fact He does not say anything. Because of your preconceived ideas you see something. But He does not enter anyone's house, neither does He eat, nor walk, nor talk. This is the truth. What IS, is He. Although becoming He does not become and acting He does not act. Those who maintain that He eats, speaks, sees and listens, let them say what they please. Since there is nothing for Him, what can do ?

From the audience : To know the *Brahman* means to become the *Brahman*. Then nothing remains to be learnt. So what actually does one know ?

Mataji : This is not a topic that can be expressed in language. The fact is, father, to know is to know one's Self. At the present moment you are aware of being in ignorance, but '*There*'—there is no question of knowing or not knowing. The question of knowing does not arise. Real knowledge means : *What is, IS*—Self-revelation. To say : "I know" implies that there is a second apart from me. But Revelation ever *is*, no such thing as non-revelation

exists - only the clouds have to be dispelled. Even though the veil has not been torn asunder, the light continues to burn. He who lives on the plane where knowledge and ignorance exist, for him there is knowing and not knowing. The person who believes in the reality of sense perception and Creation (*drishti srishti*), for him there is going and coming, death and rebirth. But He is THAT which IS.

Just as without the help of teachers and experts one cannot become proficient in the worldly knowledge that is taught in universities, so the sublime knowledge of the Absolute does not come without the guidance of a competent Guru. To find Him is the problem, whether it be for spiritual progress, liberation, or any other matter, however insignificant it may seem.

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Sai Ram Sahay

M. Rama Rao

[*Continued from previous issue*]

SALEM TO SHIRDI

M. Rama Murti, Bangalore

Sri Narasimhaswami, known in his purvashrama as B. V. Narasimha Aiyer, was a reputed lawyer-politician credited with the idea of addressing a letter to the American President, Dr. Woodrow Wilson asking him to advise British Prime Minister Lloyd George to grant Home rule to India. Following a great domestic tragedy in which his two children fell into a well in his house and got drowned, Aiyer felt that Providence had, through the tragedy, conveyed a message to him. It was that he should dedicate himself to the service of mankind. After years of tapas at Sri Ramana Ashram, Aiyer continued his quest for realisation of Self which brought him to Shirdi. After collecting information about Sai Baba and securing Baba's grace, he discovered that Sai Baba was really the incarnation of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna and that His power for good was as potent even after His Samadhi as it had been when He was alive and that He was worthy of worship as God Incarnate. Swamiji took upon himself the mission of propagating the Sai faith. The rise of the Sai Movement since 1932 was in a large

measure due to the crusading one-man mission of Sri Narasimhaswamiji through the All-India Sai Samaj.

My Pilgrimage Part-II

Sri Narasimhaswamiji wanted Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji to go to Bangalore and start the work of Sai Prachar.

“Sri Swamiji was born to Srimati Lakshmi Ammal and Sri Venkataramana Iyer as their third son on 15 April 1902 (Chaitra, Poorvashada in the Souramana calendar) in the village of Poyyamozhi, belonging to the Tiruchinapally district. Since he was born after his mother took the prasada of a Radhakrishna he was named Radhakrishna by his parents. Almost immediately after his birth he was adopted by a grandmother of his, making him the heir apparent to a large amount of wealth and landed property. Till the year 1922, Swamiji was in Trichy Town for his education. From 1922 till 1942, when he totally renounced the family connections he used to be mostly in Fernhills, Ooty.

Love for God and an urge for a spiritual life have been inborn in Swamiji. Even in his younger days, whenever he got angry in the house, he would run to the village Shiva temple to introspect and control the anger. At times he would sit embracing the idol for hours together, causing much concern to the priest. The family deity on his father's side has been Lord Srinivasa of Gunashekhara. On the mother's side Mother Kamakshi has been the family

deity. Thus, to these two aspects of the Supreme he developed a great attraction right from his childhood days. Once, at the age of seven or eight, late in the night when all were sleeping, he heard some one knock at the door of the pooja room from inside. When he woke up his mother, she felt it may be cat and slept away. But the strange sound continued and Swamiji could even hear a lady's melodious voice 'open the door'. Taking courage, Swamiji opened the door to find none other than the Divine Mother Kamakshi Herself coming out as a young woman of about thirty, clad in a green saree and with a bright kumkum mark on the forehead. The Mother held his hand and took him to the terrace to chat and play for some time. When Swamiji felt sleepy she asked him to go down and sleep. Probably, a full volume can be written about his spiritual experiences only. Here it suffices to say that the divine hand has shaped him from his very birth for a higher life. An important incident in his life has been the vision of Lord Dattatreya, in the caves of Kurla near Poona. Somewhere in 1922 Swamiji while going from Poona to Bombay, heard of the caves and out of curiosity got down at a way side station to see them. After seeing them he had an urge to remain there for forty-eight days in solitude meditating on the Lord. He lived on the chapaties and milk supplied by the villagers nearby. On the forty-sixth day or so, Swamiji had the glorious vision of Lord Dattatreya who asked him to remain in this world helping others. Swamiji many times refers to his

contact with Sri Bet Narayana Maharaj with great affection. Sri Narayana Maharaj was a saint well known as a great Datta-Upasaka, in Maharashtra and Karnataka. His samadhi is in this city only. Sri Narayan Maharaj in 1927, during his stay in the palace of the Maharaja of Mysore, at Ooty used to invite Swamiji everyday to be near him and ask Swamiji to recite Purusha Sooktha. He also voluntarily initiated Swamiji into the Datta Mantra.

Swamiji came to Bangalore in 1952 at the suggestion of Sri Narasimha Swamiji. In 1953, he founded the Sai Spiritual Centre.

On 28th Dec. 1991, at 10 a.m. I along with my family members started for the pilgrimage to Dharmastala which is 300 km. from Bangalore in Dakshinkannada District South India. The road lead through plain lands upto Hassan, here and there coconut groves paddy and sugarcane fields. Beyond Hassan the road leads through the high curves, books, hills full of big and small trees, creepers and bushes with the lush vegetation all round which enchants the visitor. I had been to these parts in the year 1987. It was ever so green but now I noticed the degenerating because of man's cruel encroachment. What we have failed to see is that plants feed fuel and cure, provide oxygen. The elixir of life, Environmental laws are not helping fully.

We reached Dharmasthala at 4 p.m. and refreshed by washing face, hands and legs and by bathing in Netravati river and by eatables in a hotel.

The holy Kshetra Sri Dharmasthala is a conjunction of Hinduism and Jainism. Here the

Philosophy of both these two isms is being progressed with perfection without discrimination.

First we visited the 39 feet statue of Bahubali or Gomateswara (symbol of renunciation). The message of Bahubali statue is renunciation self-control and sub-jugation of ego as the first step towards salvation and it is to spread the message of Jainism.

It will not be out of place if I quote a note of unity or diversity regarding Sri Dharmasthala Bahubali Pratisthapana.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Below the changing India of the 80's runs the unchanging and eternal India joining the country into one single unit of faith and holiness. Temple and shrines have been the outward manifestations of this inner power motivating the nation to grow physically and spiritually. Modern education and physical sciences have not been able to shake the belief of the vast population in religion, nay religions of their choice. Buddhist viharas, Jain temples, Hindu shrines, Muslim mosques and Christian churches—each one of these proclaims the eternal varieties of religion. These institutions have preserved the character of India viz. unity in diversity, lending distinction and charm to the life of an ancient country.

Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala symbolises the unity of faiths in an unusual manner. A Shiva shrine where archakas are vaishnavites and the managing Heggade is a jain makes a unique combination

signifying the harmony of all religions. When Lord Manjunatha is in the centre of things, differences are forgotten and a sense of brotherhood develops. All become children of God.

Kuduma the tiny hamlet nestling amidst jungles has today become Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala attracting pilgrims from all over the country. With the installation of the monolithic statue of Bahubali in Gomata Vihara, Dharmasthal will proclaim to the world the value of renunciation. To a strife-ridden world there is no message more relevant and no sculpture more meaningful than that of Bahubali the great hero who renounced the world after victory.

Let us start with a prayer from poet Naga-chandra (1100 A.D.)

In you there is only one Rasa-Shanta
Let my mind be drowned in this rasa so that
I may not think of other passions even in
my dreams. Please help me to achieve this.

AUTHORS.

**HOLY KSHETRA
SRI DHARMASTHALA
PUBLISHERS**

**Bahubali Pratisthapana Mahotsava Samithi
Dharmasthala, Karnataka State**

January 1982

After visiting the statue of Bahubali in Gomala Vihara we reached the entrance to Lord Manjunatha Shrine. The presiding deity's Shrine at 5 p.m. At enquiry office we came to know that

the main door of the shrine would be opened at 7 p.m. We could not wait as we had to attend a marriage party Kukke Subramanya at 8 p.m. So we took the darashan of the Lord through the window. My people were engaged in doing Pradakshana (walking round the shrine) a number of times—On my part I did one Pradakshana as I was tired by the journey and the old age. I began to chant 'O namha Sivaya and Sai Rama sitting, facing the main deity and continued till my people finished their Pradakshanas. My Guru and God Sai Baba inspired me as follows :

1. O, Siva, on the Himalaya mountain you are living as Amarnath (1) ;
 2. At the foot of Sahyadri Hills you are appearing as Majunath (2) ;
 3. On the plain at the bank of river Ganga you are Viswanath (3).
 4. Further near Godavari river at Shirdi you are called Sainath (4)
 5. O, Thou Lord of the Universe, Taraknath (5)
 6. You are worshipped by all the Bhagaths (devotees)
 7. I have surrendered at your feet—
O, Viswabhavasith (6) & (7)
 8. Protect me O Deenanath (7)
 9. At Bhuvaneshwar you are Vaidyanath (8)
 10. I pray to cure my ills of
Samsara O Kailashnath
- (1) Amarnath—Lord of immortality.
(2) Manju = Snow, Nath = Lord of everlasting snow.

- (3) Viswanath = Lord of Universe.
 (4) Sai = Saint, Nath = master i.e. Supreme Spirit.
 (5) Taraknath = Protecting Lord ;
 (6) Viswa-bhav-nasith the feeling of Worldly attachment destroyer.
 (7) Deenanath = master of down trodden.
 (8) Vaidyanath = doctor of doctors.
 (9) Kailashnath = one who resides at Kailas (heaven) ;

I also prayed to Mother Parvathi.

O Matha, Viswamatha (mother of Universe) ;

Pathithvivuddharini Deva matha. I a beggar at your door—lying inflicted by Trayatap 2.

(10) O compassionate mother Lokamatha give me alms of blessings, so that I may get the Jnana and Vayaragya (4)

Lastly I chanted the following prayer :

1. O, Manjunatha I am old having no health ;
I don't want wealth, but please give me strength to serve you ; make me Bhakta to realize you.
2. Salutations to the Devi, to the Mahadevi.
Salutations always to her who is ever auspicious. Salutation to her who is the primordial cause and the sustaining power, with attention, we have made obeisance to her.
3. O (Sai) Seva
I am nothing
I know nothing
for me you are everything
pray teach me daily something and only to

chant your name from the morning to evening.

4. It is the duty of everyone to reach Amartva (immortality) for this we have atleast to try to visit Amarnath Shrine.

A Temple Built by Nature

Man has had no hand in the construction of the cave-temple of Amarnath in Kashmir. This holy abode of Shiva situated amid snow and ice at a height of nearly 13,000 ft. has been carved out of the rock by the forces of nature.

Icicles come down slowly and form the Linga, the Symbol of Shiva. The Linga inexplicably grow in size with the waxing of the moon and decreases with the waning.

Pilgrims have come to Amarnath from times immemorial. The most auspicious moment in the whole year for worship is the night of the full moon in the month of Sravan in July-August. From September to June the cave, covered by snow, is inaccessible.

Reminiscences of Anandamayee Ma*

6. (Homeopathy in the presence of Ma)

Professor Bireshwar Ganguly, D. Litt

(*Continued from previous issue*)

During the summer vacation of 1952 Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee was staying at the palace of the Chief of Solan (Yogibhai) in the company of Gopal Thakur of Allahabad, Avadhootji, Paramanand Swami, Gurupriya Didi and several other devotees. One day when She was giving a spiritual audience to devotees in a heavenly atmosphere, I reached Solan from Patna. Everyday in the spiritual audience from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, Avadhootji and Gopal Thakur used to grace the occasion by their presence. Avadhootji used to deliver his speech on Monistic Vedanta in a terse way and Gopal Thakur used to explain *Karma Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga* from Srimad Bhagavad Gita in a lucid way on the lines of Qualified Monistic Vedanta. Once Avadhootji spoke after Gopal Thakur and criticized all the points of the latter from the standpoint of *Mayavad* of Vedanta. As a result many of us felt offended and the feelings of Gopal Thakur were specially hurt. Strangely

Translated by the author from *Ananda Varta* (Bengali),
January, 1990, pp. 63-67.

enough, he fell seriously ill the same night and the allopathic physician called by Yogibhai the next morning declared that Gopal Thakur had an attack of paralysis due to cerebral thrombosis and that no proper treatment was possible at Solan. However he prescribed a few medicines and injections and the treatment continued for two or three days without any perceptible result. Then I suggested to Mother that Homeopathic medicines might be tried. Mother said, "You are referring to those white pills like sago pills. This body has heard that those homeopathic pills, though minute in quantity, are often very effective. But they are like *Veej Mantra* for, though they are powerful, if not properly prescribed may be quite harmful, and the same medicine may not be effective in all cases of the same disease. However, tell me, who will administer the medicine? Yogibhai also keeps a box full of homeopathic medicines." I replied, "Ma, I know homeopathy and I cured the left-sided paralysis of our old maid servant at Patna with one dose of *Lachesis* of C. M. potency within fifteen days." Mother said, "But Baba has right-sided paralysis. You may begin his treatment after taking the responsibility of nursing him from to-day. Concentrate your mind on the symptoms of Baba's ailment and consult the books on Homeopathy of Yogibhai's library. Do not administer any medicine to-day. Think thrice before you give him any medicine tomorrow in the morning." Accordingly I undertook the nursing of Gopal Baba, asked him about his physical and mental

symptoms, put them down on a sheet of paper and consulted the Homeopathic books (written by Kent, Allen, Boericke, Nash etc) of Yogibhai. According to my diagnosis, though the constitution of Gopal Baba was that of *Calcarea Carb*, he was proving the symptoms of its complementary *Lycopodium* temporarily. Hence I administered a dose of *Nux Vomica* 1000 at bedtime and a dose of *Lycopodium* 10,000 the next morning. I noticed no change on the first day. Gopal Baba reported the next morning that last night's sleep had been sound and bowels had been cleared that morning. He said, "I am also feeling very relaxed and happy, for I have been able to brush off the insulting words of Avadhootji." To my utter surprise, he was able to move his right arm and leg slightly the next morning and came to the chair in the verandah with my support in the afternoon. When Mother was informed, she came to see Baba and said, "Baba, you may now go to Allahabad along with your disciples for further treatment." Accordingly his disciples escorted him to Allahabad and put him under the treatment of a reputed Homeopath there. He was completely cured in due course and lived happily for a few years more.

My second, third and fourth experiments with Homeopathic medicines in the presence of Mother took place at Swargadwar Ashram of Puri the same year after Durga Puja. Once Didima (Mother's mother) was suffering from severe vertigo. Mother asked me whether I had brought my Homeo medicine chest with me and said, "Nilmani, if you

have brought your medicines, you may administer a few of your white pills to mother after proper diagnosis." I administered a dose of *Phosphorus* 200 to Didima according to her symptoms. Didima reported in the afternoon, "Nilmani, your medicine speaks, for my vertigo is gone."

Just one day after this Hari Baba was down with influenza due to sea-bathing everyday. In the afternoon discourse on Srimad Bhagavat, Manohar, a disciple of Hari Baba prostrated before Mother and narrated in a voice choked with sorrow, "Mataji, Baba's fever is on the rise. Baba has said that he will not accompany you in the South India trip and that he would give up his mortal frame at Puri, for the world is full of suffering, men are roaming about to quench their burning thirst and there is no point in prolonging one's life in this suffering world."

I listened to the narration of Manohar attentively and on interpreting the symptoms of Hari Baba in Homeopathic language came to the conclusion that Hari Baba's ailment tallied with the symptoms of *Arsenic Album*. I took the initiative in asking Mother, "Ma, should I administer a dose of Homeo medicine to Hari Baba?" Mother replied with a sweet smile, "Yes, do it. But you should approach Hari Baba in all humility and ask him carefully about his ailments. See that the right medicine is prescribed." I took a phial of *Arsenic Alb.* 200 in my pocket and after saluting Hari Baba, I asked him about his present condition. After confirmation of the symptoms I

administered a dose of the medicine to him and left two more doses with Manohar to be given once at bed time and again next morning, if need be. On my return I noticed that Mother was strolling on the sea beach along with the devotees. As I approached the group, Dr. Nalini Kanta Brahma, retired Head of Department of Philosophy, Presidency College (Calcutta) asked me the name of the medicine administered. I requested him to infer. He said, "He had fever after bathing in the sea everyday and has enough restlessness. Hence which other drug than *Rhus Tox* can be given?" Immediately Dr. Ghosh, retired Head of Department of Economics, Jadavpur University retorted, "The fever took place after bathing in the warm saline water of the sea ; hence *Natrum Mur* should have been given." I replied, "However, I have given him *Arsenic* according to his symptoms." Both of them burst into laughter, saying that the wrong medicine had been given. After about an hour of the administration of the medicine, Manohar came running to the beach, prostrated before Mother and said, "Mataji, a miracle has happened. There has been a remission of Baba's fever after profuse perspiration. Baba has said that he would not give up his mortal frame now as desired by us and that he would accompany Mother to South India after recovery." Mother immediately rushed to see Hari Baba. On our way Dr. Brahma assured me, "Nilmani, it is not the miracle of your medicine. It is rather due to Mother's grace." I retorted, "Surely, with-

out Mother's grace, either *Rhus Tox* or *Natrum Mur* would have been administered." Mother burst into a laughter on hearing this.

Again after two days of this incident, Avadhootji, the robust Punjabi saint fell ill as a result of sea bathing twice a day. When I asked Mother whether I should give some medicine to him also, Mother replied, "Avadhoot Baba may not agree to take your medicine. He never falls ill, nor does he ever take any medicine. It is his habit to suffer pain without any effort to remedy." The next day Gurupriya Didi sent him a cup of sago pudding. He tasted one or two tablespoonfuls of it and returned it, saying, "This is no better than cowdung. Who has prepared it? I don't need anything other than water." I told Mother that it was the symptom of *Bryonia*, which could be given, if permitted by Her. Mother said, "The nursing of Baba is your duty from to-day. See if you can convince him after serving him and conversing with him." I accepted joyfully the duty of nursing that sober, monistic saint of few words. When I told him that I had cured Hari Baba and sought his permission to give him some medicine, he lost his temper and muttered, "Oh Nilmani, Hari Baba is a Vaishnava saint. Vaishnava devotees know how to weep and how to take medicines in illness. Whereas I am a Mayavadi Monistic Avadhoot. I can bear pain of the physical body without recourse to any remedy, according to the dictum of Shankarachary's *Vivek Chudamani*. Hence I shall not take any medicine." After observing the agony

of the saint for sometime, I decided to dilute all the globules of *Bryonia* in the water of his earthen pitcher. As he was frequently drinking glassfuls of cold water, I thought, this would serve the purpose. He was reclining on the other side in his bed. Just as I thought of this plan, he turned towards me, opened his eyes and uttered, "You clever Nilmani, you have thought of my statement as a fun. You are contemplating to administer the medicine in my water. Beware, don't do so. I do not want to take medicines to verify as to how much body consciousness is left in me. I have also occasional experience of *Savikalpa Samadhi* like you, but I have not yet reached the stage of *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. Hence I am pursuing Mother. One can experience *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* just by the grace of Mother. However, prior to that one's mundane desires and ego must be annihilated. I have no desires left. But ego has not yet left me. Hence body consciousness persists. Had I not fallen ill, how could I have felt that body consciousness has still been lingering in me?" How could I give him any medicine after listening to his self-analysis? Of course, he recovered the next day in the natural course.

(*To be continued*)

Trees and Ma

Arpana

From the life of Shree Shree Ma, in fact from Her very childhood we hear of a strange relationship between trees and plants and Mataji. At the time of Her manifestation, unlike other children, She did not cry. Many years later on being questioned, She replied, She was watching the mango tree just outside the window.

As a young girl too, Mother was often seen laughing and talking, playing and whispering, embracing and patting the trees as She skipped along. Her childhood companions were struck with amazement and would some times ask Her to repeat Her peculiar behaviour. At other times they were too frightened to say anything specially when the trees too shook in response to Ma's words.

We also hear of a mango tree which was green on one side and had dried up on the other side. During the season there were many mangoes but nobody took much notice of them. However, if any mangoes were lying near the base of the tree Ma was often attracted to them and would pick them up and give them to Didima. The mangoes were large in size, of a nice colour. They had a nice fragrance and were sweet too.

One strange incident took place in Naimisharanya a few years ago. Shree Prayag Narain an

ardent devotee of Ma and also an ardent Ram bhakta arranged for Ramayan Path in the Ashram. Since the Ashram hall was under construction and there was no arrangement for a Shamiyana, it was decided to perform the Ramayan Path under a tree. Adjoining the Ashram there was a plot of land on which stands a huge banyan tree. From its roots it seemed very very old and its thick foliage covered a large area giving it a natural shade." It was a beautiful spot, shady, open and overlooking the river Gomati.

A photograph of Ramji was placed under the tree and suitable sitting arrangement for Ma was also made. Devotees of the Ramayana 'Gosthis' arrived. They tried their best to do Ramayan Path in the ashram every Sunday. Ma with Swami Paramananda and a few others proceeded to the spot. Meanwhile a devotee with a camera arrived. Seeing him Ma looked very pleased and exclaimed — "Look, Ramayana is being performed under a tree and the photographer has also arrived." Ma was in a very pleasant mood and sat throughout the Path. At the end a few songs were sung and then Arati was performed. As the programme came to its conclusion the devotees requested Ma to bless them with a few words. Ma said—'Any kind of gathering which leads the way to Ram is a thing for joy, where there is Ram there is Aram (rest) and where there is no Ram there is Be-aram (trouble).

Meanwhile some devotees had arrived with offering of fruits and flowers which were placed

near Ramji and then prasad was distributed to all present. Ma actively participated in the distribution of prasad.

In this joyful atmosphere Prayag Narainji requested Ma's permission to relate an incident. He had hardly begun when Ma Herself took over the narration—

“A couple of days ago this body was resting in the cottage in the downstairs room, Anasuya was sleeping near the front door and Indira was sleeping near the back door. In the middle of the night a voice, very soft, very gentle and musical was heard calling out clearly “Ma! Ma! This body sat up. The voice was very sweet and full of affection. It seemed to come from the side Anasuya was sleeping. Meanwhile Indira came and stood nearby and after waiting for a few moments she went back to sleep. Next morning when this body was relating this incident, Indira enquired—“Ma, did you call me last night?” On saying so she said—she had heard a very sweet voice calling out very lovingly ‘Indira! Indira!’ and then ‘Ma! Ma!’ She could not figure out who it was. She presumed it must be Ma, and that is why she had come and stood nearby but when Ma did not say anything she went back to sleep.

Ma continued—‘Sometimes later in the day Prayag Narain arrived and wished to arrange for a Ramayan Patha. Since suitable arrangements were not possible in the ashram premises he suggested that to perform it under the banyan tree would be the best.

“On hearing this, this body related this incident. The voice had seemed to come from the side Anasuya was sleeping, but actually the tree itself had come in the form of the ‘word’. It was the banyan tree itself which had called. Many times had this body come here but nothing ever happened before and this time when this body had come to rest, see what happened.” Ma further said that “Prayag Narain was inspired to perform this Ramayan Patha under the banyan tree, so this incident was revealed; otherwise it would have remained unrevealed. God in the form of the tree — see how he arranged everything. Who knows who comes in which form. It is Ram alone. He has made his own arrangements. Prayag is there and the Sangam of the tree Narain is also there. It is Ram who inspired him.”

In the Geeta Lord Krishna states—“Aswatthah Sarvā vrikshanam—of all the trees I am the Aswatthah. The Puranas also speaks very highly of the Aswattha tree. In the root of the tree resides Vishnu, in the trunk Keshava, in the branches Narayan, in the leaves Lord Hari and in the fruits abides Achyut in conjunction with all the Gods. There is not the least doubt about this. This tree is Vishnu Himself, appearing in a concrete form. Ma’s words about the banyan tree strike a similar note.

Ma further continued that “if in future there is no obstruction this body would like Ramayan Patha to be performed under this tree every year.” The devotees gladly agreed and started pressing Ma to be present there every year.

Ma continued to stroll around the tree. The scenery was beautiful and the river Gomati was visible at a distance. On the other side a little lower down were two caves. As Ma came near one of the caves there was a statue of Mahavir. It was a very very old statue. On seeing Mahavir, Ma was very pleased and remarked, "Look Ramayan was performed and Mahavir Hanuman was right next to it."

Later Ma mentioned to Swami Paramanandaji that if the land is available all efforts should be made for its purchase and if it was possible Ma would like to maintain the Murti of Mahavir and the cave intact.

Strange are Ma's ways and strange still Her relationship with trees. Ma had once said, "It is heard that Mahapurush live in this form. They are numerous in forms and also fulfil their final birth in the forms of trees. Ma has often referred to the trees in our ashrams as sages doing Tapasya. Who knows in which form they have come to serve the almighty Mother.

AN APPEAL

SHREE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE CHARITABLE SOCIETY, established in 1973, through the divine direction of **JAGANMATA SRI SRI ANANDAMAYEE MA**, is engaged in managing the institutions like "**KANYAPITH**" at Varanasi, "**STIPEND FUND**" at Varanasi, "**VIDYAPEETH**" at Kankhal, "**KARUNA**" at Varanasi, "**MATA ANANDAMAYEE HOSPITAL**" at Varanasi, "**PUBLICATIONS DIVISION**" at Calcutta, with its Head Office at Matri Mandir, 57/1, Bullygunge Circular Road, Calcutta-700 019. To run the activities of these institutions an amount of Rs. 12.00 lakhs is needed yearly.

We appeal to all Devotees of **SRI SRI ANANDAMAYEE MA** and generous public and Institutions to send their donations for continuing the works of these institutions. All such donations will enjoy the benefit of deductions under section 80G of the Income Tax Act which is Valid up to 31st March, 1993. All donations either by Cash, Cheque or Draft may kindly be sent to "**SHREE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE CHARITABLE SOCIETY**", Matri Mandir, 57/1, Ballygunge Circular Road, Calcutta-700019.

Debabrata Pal
General Secretary

Prof. Gopal Mitra
President

Ma touches us : 11. As a Silent Revolutionary Force for Awakening Women

Prof. P. C. Datta

The Problem

Science says : a man is equal to a half woman or a woman is a double man because the major sex-determining Chromosome (x) is represented twice in a female body, once in a male. This doubling of certain factors has imparted certain qualities of mind and intellect, emotion and physical health of the woman. A man, on the other hand, is lighter, swifter, smarter and can move easily and efficiently in external activities. Mothers are compelled to confine themselves in the house, for a major period of their youth. All these factors have naturally lead to a male dominated society, though the females are equipped better with some fine capabilities in Art, Music, Dance, Poetry etc. What is the harm in a male dominated society ? When a lady enters her husband's family she needs to adjust with Mother-in-Law and Sister-in-Law, with much difficulty. This is not related to male dominance but to the female dominance in the family. Husbands are usually soft towards wives, who occasionally take the opportunity in isolating the husband from others of the family, even if she has educational

degrees. Of course, some husbands may be described as 'Harassing', some as "Harassed". If the husband becomes invalid, the couple with the children can not come back to the joint family and the wife has to learn to earn. So education of females which was previously regarded uneconomical, has now become a necessity. Education brings about relaxation of tense relations in the family, particularly among females. But tensions are not completely reduced. It is the development of selfless love which can reduce the expectations and gives liberty from anger, hate etc.

Now what is 'Awakening of Women'? Hindu way of female life (early rising etc.) brought about an active and alert lady. Emotionally, the women are too much centered to own children. They are not enlightened about her own society, race or nation consisting of diversity of life. So far development of emotions and intellectual awakening, the woman need proper educational enlightenment. But this light is not sufficient. For attaining true Love (Love is God, God is Love-Holy Bible) a superior consciousness is required. According to Hindu scriptures, every person is born as SHUDRA, after UPANAYAN (a ceremonial starting of learning BRAHMA GYAN) he becomes a DWIJA (Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya). As they are not trained to pronounce and sing Vedas, the SUDRAS and women are not authorised to utter PRANABA (Omkar) and sing or explain Vedas publicly. STREE and SHUDRA are mentioned simultaneously. So a woman could not be a preacher or a GURU person.

Movements

Raja Rammohan, Vidyasagar, Kesav Sen and others emphasized in female education. Vivekananda compares Indian Women as PRAKRITI of SANKHYA, a blind lady carrying on shoulders her husband (with vision but without leg) who guides the PRAKRITI. Swamiji considers the male and female as two wings of the society bird. A bird cannot fly on one wing.

Divine Mother arranged the events, significantly :

- (1) Shri Rama Krishna accepted a lady (Bhairabi) as GURU.
- (2) His wife came to help him in spiritual advancement. He worshipped her as Divine Mother.
- (3) He left the worldly body after advising Ma SARADA to liberate the souls of Calcutta and promised Gaurima to supply facilities in her endeavour to improve the minds of backward women.
- (4) Swamiji wished to start a separate ASHRAM for Ladies, run by Ladies, parallel to Sri Rama Krishna Math and Mission. This is fulfilled by Gaurima.

A Forceful, Advent of Divinity

Shri Ma ANANDAMAYI observes from behind, that PRANAB comes out spontaneously from within. She further observes that a consciousness cautions that this is a female body. Still the Word comes out from MOOL (Origin) ABYAKTA (unexpressed).

Similarly came down 'TARAK BRAHMA NAM' in the Vedic Form (not as the common song).

Vedic Stotras were being changed automatically. Some parts of Koran were also recited by the body.

Yajnas were performed through this body with Vedic chanting, though Ladies and SUDRAS are forbidden to perform Yajna.

The interesting aspect is this, there was no personal effort, an impersonal unknown revolutionary effort was coming down through a sacred surrendered body discarding many dogmas of religionism.

A silent Revolution in the Husband-wife Relation

Following were the steps in transformation :—

(a) A sincere harmony (DHARMA) established between worldly activities and spiritual ecstasy. Ma ANANDAMAYI after marriage behaved with the husband as a daughter and disciple behaves with a person, who is both father and Guru. She washed and cleansed the bed room of the Guru with special care every day. She spreaded sanctified water, walked around the bed uttering God's names to maintain sanctity of the bed of Guru. She touched the bed with forehead, in the posture of PRANAM. She made all arrangements of smoking and sleeping comfortably for Bholanath (socially husband, Father-cum-Guru in behaviour). Then She, with the permission of Bholanath, sat for worshipping at a corner of the room. Bholanath observed that the body of Ma, while chanting God's name, was moving miraculously performing innu-

merable Yoga postures automatically coming down from some power source above. In this way usually, the night was over.

Occasionally, that body went to the bed. After pranam it lied down near Bholanath as if intoxicated, with a spiritual glow on the divine body. Bholanath did not venture to touch her with any worldly lust. She started, at dawn, all her daily house hold activities, always in a spiritually intoxicated mood, but with perfection in every details. All these happened not by any personal will but by an impersonal revolutionary divine Will.

(b) Bholanath was being instigated by friends and relatives to remarry (as was the situation in Mira Bai's life). But Bholanath found no fault in her for which she could be discarded. On the contrary, he made his mind to nurture and protect her body. Not only that, he became her disciple and sought her spiritual guidance. That divine revolutionary power worked within which was later manifested externally. Bholanath began calling her as Ma. Chanting Ma, prostrating in PRANAM, like other devotees. What a tremendous revolution.

(c) When devotees began to gather around Ma, she remained stiff, covering the face with traditional veil and she did not talk to any male devotee. Externally, there was no force to remove the unnatural barrier between Mother and Children. But Bholanath became highly softened by continuous cries of devotees, Ma, Ma, Ma. He requested repeatedly to uncover the face and speak to the children. Thus, externally who was simply a

house-wife, became the Mother of the Universe. Bholanath became BALGOPAL of Ma.

Introduction of Upanayan for Female Devotees

Spiritual Wind (Kheyal) inspired the 'BODY' of ANANDAMAYI MA to offer Upabit (through Upanayan ceremony) to some pure bodies of girls of different castes. But Kheyal did not do this indiscriminately. Kheyal chose the persons spiritually advanced and capable of honouring the sacred thread. Ma asked Maha-Mahopadhyay Gopinath Kaviraj whether this Kheyal is approved by Shastras. Kaviraj Maharaj said that a few examples are there of passing through Upanayan by Ladies. If the Kheyal wants, it can be reintroduced. Shastras will follow Ma. Ma need not follow Shastra. Probably about 100 female devotees have been given Upabit. Is it not a revolutionary force, acting silently, not by reforming, but by revitalizing from within.

A Brahmachari of the Ashram, declared after joining, that as he was a VAISHNAB, he could take the Prasad of only Shri Krishna or Shri Chaitanya, not of Ma. When this was informed, Ma said, every one shall follow his own way. But mental conflicts began to rise within him, one after another. Ma could read the mind. One day Ma called him privately. When the Brahmachari reached near Ma, he found that in place of Ma, Shri Chaitanya was lying down. He prostrated. Ma told him smilingly—God is one, and you should not discriminate one name and form of Him, from

another name and form. In the male dominated society, the present age is that of awaking of women. Therefore, you may find your God appearing in a Woman.

Divine Will worked through selected instruments (Gurupriya Devi, Ganga Ma and many others), who with blessings of Ma, establish Brahmacharinis Ashrams for Girls alone, where they are taught all modern subjects along with Vedas, Upanisads etc. etc. in the RISHI-DHARA so that they are truly awakened from inside.

Thus, we find that a revolutionary power for awakening Women, has come down on earth to demonstrate through Ma ANA DAMAYI, working not exteriorly like reformists but from interior to exterior silently in a natural process.

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

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

The love of God is alone desirable for a human being. The One, whose offspring you are, who is your Mother, Father, Friend, Beloved, Lord, who has brought you forth, has nourished you with the nectar of mother's milk — by whatever Name you invoke Him — that Word you should keep in mind at all times.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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Sri Anandamayi Ma : Divine Play of the Spiritual Journey

Bithika Mukerji

It is often said, and with some truth, that India is a land of saints and god-men. Indeed, there are many spiritual teachers renowned the world over even in contemporary India. It will not be right, however, to situate Sri-Anandamayi Ma amid this company. It is true that she occupied a position of great authority, yet she did so by virtue of her way of being in the world rather than anything else. She professed no philosophy of her own, nor formulated any messages for humanity. On the contrary, she repeatedly declared herself to be quite untutored in the knowledge of scripture or in the kind of spiritual disciplines that characterize the masters of most religious communities. She would say this of herself in a light and good-humored manner to forestall, as it were, any attempt to assign to her the status of a guru.

In spite of her sustained disclaimers about herself and manifest humility in the presence of any person of recognized or even just-claimed spiritual eminence, her own impact on every kind of audience was always over whelming. Her presence had the unique quality of demanding nothing yet creating an atmosphere of peace which overcame even the most turbulent and unquiet mind. To be in her

presence was to be at peace with oneself and with the world.

It is difficult to avoid the use of the word "unique" when referring to Sri Anandamayi Ma, just as it is impossible to unravel the mystery of her personality. Generally, the study of the development of a personality reveals many a clue to its nature, but here we meet with an uncontrived spontaneity which is baffling in the extreme. Sri Anandamayi Ma, as a child, a young woman, and in her mature years, was completely self-sufficient, with no manifest desires or prejudices and utterly devoid of a will to any to want nothing for herself, she was not indifferent to the issues that were important for the people around her. Her undefinable air of aloofness was somehow tempered by the delight she took in her surroundings ; joy emanated not only from her facial expression but from her entire body. To look upon her radiant form was to shed the cares of the world, at least for the time being. This radiance — or aura of glory, if it may be so called — was seen to be hers from her birth to her passing away.

Although she was seen to be a happy person, the spiritual depth of her joyous way of being in the world was not always appreciated or understood in its full implications. In her childhood and youth her unruffled serenity, not to say cheerfulness, in all situations — even in what the world calls adverse circumstances — made her appear simple-minded to her elders. These impressions were short-lived because at the same time she appeared

to be very intelligent and gifted beyond her years. During these years her family and friends thought her to be extraordinarily good-tempered, docile, and *unselfish*. Gradually it dawned on them that these qualities were not personality traits but the outer *manifestation of an inner self-sufficiency which required nothing from the world for its fulfillment*.

Not the least of Sri Anandamayi Ma's endearing traits was her sense of impish mischievousness. Looking back over the years, it seems that this aspect of her behavior was very important ; not only did it counteract the effects of her *transhuman aloofness* but it effectively dispelled any tendency to a merely sentimental adoration of her. Even the *atmosphere of exaltation* which was a *feature of her presence* remained tempered by her humorous appeal to the piquant in almost every situation. She made congregations laugh with her ; her joyful talks on the possibility of God-realization in this life, transformed spiritual discipline (*sadhana*) into a balanced way of life suitable for the most ordinary men and women.

Sri Anandamayi Ma was considered at times to be an enlightened *yogi* liberated in this life (*jivan-mukta*) or one of stable wisdom (*sthitaprajna*), as the *Bhagavadgita* puts it ; but with the dawning realization that no matter how high she was raised in the estimation of men, something of her remained outside the parameters of human understanding. The word "paradox" is used to indicate that bridge which is the meeting point of opposites — but what words can express an obliteration of

not only of the opposites but of all diversities as well? Yet in this obliteration was to be found a resilient affirmation of even the smallest details of life. Her all-embracing vision was in fact a hymn of praise to the wonderful variety of creation rather than its denial. It is well known that she had countenanced all forms of ritual worship of the many deities enjoined in the Hindu scriptures; she had also made it possible to celebrate many of the most arduous Vedic sacrifices under proper conditions. The vast spectrum of possibilities in the Hindu way of life was held together very easily and naturally by Sri Anandamayi Ma. She trivialized nothing which had any religious significance and belittled none who showed even the least inclination toward a spiritual way of life. Indeed, her affirmation of people, life, and all creation is just another aspect of that same boundless vision of unity which falls beyond the scope of language.

The most extravagant language, nevertheless, has been used to describe the enigmatic personality of one who remained on this plane of existence for a good eighty-six years. She was widely acclaimed as the living personification on earth of that Being who is called God by the devout, while eminent scholars caught a glimpse in her of the immensity of the vision of the One. Heads of every renowned ascetic order of India, in spite of differences among themselves, assembled on special occasions in reverent recognition of her as the quintessence and the exemplar of the timeless spirit of India.

One of the greatest scholars of our times, Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj, applied his vast learning for many years to interpret the words of Sri Anandamayī Ma. On numerous occasions, when controversies arose, her word was accepted as the living voice of scripture by qualified exponents of Hindu law. While Sri Aurobindo had observed that Sri Anandamayī Ma ever abides in the state of the being-consciousness-bliss of the Universal Self (*saccidananda*), Mahatma Gandhi, when at a loss to answer the spiritual queries of one of his most trusted lieutenants (Jamnalal Bajaj), sent him to Sri Anandamayī Ma and took pride that he had found the right guru for this exceptional man.

Philosophers sustain the theory that she is the visible manifestation in the form of a universal master (*jagadaguru*) of that primordial divine power (*adhyasakti*) which pulses at the heart of all that exists. The list of such high estimations of her nature may be lengthened to many pages, but it is not necessary to do so. All those who have seen and heard Sri Anandamayī Ma will readily understand that indeed, it adds nothing to her stature. Such descriptions merely indicate the inadequacy of language when it seeks to encompass the dimension of mystery.

Sri Anandamayī Ma herself did not choose to unravel the mystery of her presence on earth. To the oft-repeated question, "Who are you," she as often replied, "Whoever or whatever *you* think, that I am," or "Whatever I was at birth, I am now and I shall be hereafter." Once to an importuning

devotee who asked this question, she replied :
 “Why ask such a childish question ? Why don’t
 you tell yourself that this body is here in response
 to man’s yearnings for spiritual fulfillment. What
 more do you need to know about it ?”

So perhaps it is not necessary to understand
 the events of the advent or the passing away of Sri
 Anandamayi Ma ; may be it is sufficient to be
 receptive, if one is so inclined, to the “message” of
 her way of being in this world, at this time.

Early Years (1896-1914)

The early years of Sri Anandamayi Ma’s life
 were spent in the villages of Bengal, now Bangla-
 desh. On 17 February 1984 a delegation of devo-
 tees from India went on a pilgrimage to Kheora, the
 village where she was born on 30 April 1896. All
 these years, in spite of the changes of regimes in
 Bangladesh, the site of the humble shed which had
 sheltered her as an infant has remained intact, pro-
 tected by a grove of trees and high walls. The
 Muslim population accorded a warm welcome to
 the Hindu devotees. In a public function it was
 proudly announced : “Although *Ma* was born in
 a Hindu family, She is also the *Ma* of the Muslims,
 She is our *own Ma*.”

Sri Anandamayi Ma was named Nirmala
 Sundari, which means literally “taintlessly beauti-
 ful.” She is known to have been a delightfully
 engaging little girl, fair and ethereal as a fairy, so
 good and well behaved as to be a little astonishing.
 Her unquestioning obedience, uncompromising

truthfulness, and unimpaired cheerfulness made her dear to the hearts of her playmates and elders. Her willingness to be of service to anyone in need made her a welcome visitor in every household of the village, irrespective of caste or religion. The whole of her village was in fact her home. She also spent parts of her childhood years in the villages of Vidyakut and Sultanpur.

When Sri Anandamayi Ma was not quite thirteen, a marriage was arranged for her with Sri Ramani Mohan Chakravarti of Atpara. In later years he came to be known as Bholanath, and we shall refer to him by this name in these accounts. The Maharaja of Tripura, the reigning prince of this region, held her father in high esteem as a devout scholarly Brahmin of exemplary conduct. So much so that on the occasion of Nirmala Sundari's marriage, the Maharaja as a mark of his respect sent his caparisoned elephants to form a part of the bridal procession. The marriage took place with due pomp and ceremony on 7 February 1909. This simple incident prefigured in a sense the future for SriAnandamayi Ma ; this occasion was marked by a quality of plenitude and magnificence which was quite unrelated to her worldly circumstances. This aura of magnificence always surrounded her, somehow without affecting her austere way of life. Moreover, such paradoxes did not seem in any way remarkable in her presence.

The cultural pattern of arranged and early marriages caters to the exigencies of a particular situation. The child-bride is generally left to the

care of her own parents till she attains to her years of maturity; or, if it is convenient, she is sometimes accommodated in the family of the bridegroom. In Sri Anandamayi Ma's case, she lived on with her parents for another year, after which time she was received into the family of the eldest brother of Bholanath, Sri Revati Mohan, who in the absence of their parents was the head of the family. She remained with them for nearly four years. Bholanath visited them occasionally, bringing simple gifts for her as well as for his small nephew and niece. He wrote to her more frequently, however; and she replied in respectful tones befitting the manner of a young person writing to an older man.

These years (1910-1914) for her were a time of hard and grueling household work. She was pitchforked into this situation without any preparation, but even so she was not found inadequate or out of her depth even for a day. Although her own mother was not a little anxious regarding her lack of experience, the young bride endeared herself quickly to her new family. They were charmed by her joyful expression, her neatness, her marvelous cooking, and above all the timely performance of her chores. If the servant was absent, she ungrudgingly shouldered the heavy tasks of fetching water and breaking the coal for the stove. She also had the added work of taking care of the two children Ashu and Labanya. These youngsters head a long list of children who remained completely devoted to her as they grew up and when

they took up their places in the world in subsequent years.

Sri Anandamayi Ma was not always immersed in housework. The neighbors loved to welcome the shyly smiling, charming young girl whenever she had a little leisure. Some of them taught her embroidery, cane-work, and spinning. After the day's work was done, Sri Anandamayi Ma devoted some little time to these crafts.

Sri Anandamayi Ma's behavior was such that it did not appear that she was overworked, tired, or unhappy—and, in fact, she was not. She, as always, abided in her own state of tranquillity and self-containment. Her tranquillity was not a matter of "endurance," because for her comfort and discomfort were equally acceptable. Even to say this is not enough. Sri Anandamayi Ma took as much delight in what the world calls physical discomfort as in any other phenomena. Many times even under dire provocation, she was totally free of resentment. She was loved by all who came in contact with her. The lasting impression left on neighbors was that of a joyous and happy young girl, perhaps a little simple-minded not to resent the hard work which was put on her young shoulders by her elders.

Bholanath's eldest brother, Revati Mohan, passed away in 1913 after a short illness. The bereaved family returned to their village home, Atpara. The other four brothers (including Bholanath) and their sisters, gradually lost touch with each other for want of a central place of home-

coming. As it happened, this was restored to them by Sri Anandamayi Ma. In later years the brothers, sisters, and cousins were to be reunited under Bholanath's roof as one big family, during the time they spent in Dhaka.

The Divine Play (Lila) of Spiritual Discipline (Sadhana) (1918-1924)

At the age of eighteen, Sri Anandamayi Ma came to keep house for Bholanath at Ashtagram, where he was in service. After about a year and four months, she went to stay with her parents at Vidyakut for some time. While she was in Vidyakut, Bholanath was transferred to Bajitpur. It took him a while to find proper quarters for himself and Sri Anandamayi Ma. Finally she came to join him in Bajitpur at the beginning of 1918.

The details of her life as a housewife at Ashtagram and Bajitpur are well known. Her painstaking, scrupulous service to Bholanath was on a par with the high standard of housekeeping she had maintained at his brother's house. She anticipated the least of his needs and provided for them beforehand as if she could read his thoughts. Her mother had told her that Bholanath was to be respected and obeyed. Sri Anandamayi Ma during Bholanath's lifetime never deviated from the standard of behavior set up for her by her mother. Bholanath was pleased with her childlike, innocent spirit of service. He patiently waited for her to feel some of the sentiments of young womanhood, but in this he found himself to have been completely mistaken.

Sri Anandamayi Ma, herself, in one of her humorous reminiscences of the incidents of her earlier life said, "In the beginning Bholanath would say 'You are very childlike. It will be all right when you grow up,' but it seems I never grew up!"

Very soon, Bholanath's attention was taken up by a marvelous vista opening out in front of his eyes, because at about this time there arose in Sri Anandamayi Ma the conscious intent or *kheyala* to engage in the divine play or *lila* of spiritual discipline (*sadhana*). These two words *kheyala* and *lila* came to be associated with her gradually as aptly describing her way of being in the world. Although *kheyala* is similar to the "will" or "wish" or any kind of desire, it is more like a sudden spontaneous thought arising not out of any need in her but because it was just the right idea for the time, place, and people around her. Again, a *kheyala* is self-caused and requires no ultimate result to justify it. To this must be added that beyond giving expression to a *kheyala* she did not contrive to bring about results, but, once expressed, it became irresistibly operative. A chain of events would take place so that somehow her *kheyala* would be fulfilled. In the beginning many of these occurrences were thought to be coincidences, but in time the creative impulse inherent in her intention became sufficiently well defined as to become almost self-evident. Sri Anandamayi Ma, when questioned as to why she should have had a *kheyala* for this, that, or the other, would reply at times, "There is no need for

me to explain" ("no rendering of account is necessary", *kaifiyat dewa na*).

Thus, none observed any change in Sri Anandamayi Ma during or after the period of her spiritual practice. She remained just as she always was. For this reason, her spiritual practice or *sadhana* came to be known as her play (*lila*). The word *lila*, like *kheyala*, denotes spontaneous disinterested action, pure sport which is an end in itself, although spiritual discipline requires the exertion of effort toward spiritual fulfillment. Thus, in her personal spiritual discipline as in her benevolent intent (*kheyala*) for others, her work combined in a mysterious way effort with unperturbed tranquillity.

Eastern cultures accept the fact that human beings are born with differing predilections and varying capabilities. Even so, these differences dissolve away in the unifying experience of a yearning for transcendence. When this yearning is translated into love for God, it may be called religion. Religions are the many ways of relating to the One God who is hidden in the deepest recesses of the heart as the supremely beloved One (*ista-devata*). All forms of loving relationships are possible with Him who is beyond any particular form and all relationships. He may be for us a child, lover, father, mother, friend as well as master, because He alone is the one repository of the entire spectrum of love.

Every possible way which leads to God-realization has been illumined by those who seek Truth. Sri Anandamayi Ma's period of spiritual discipline

bears witness to the personal experiences of those great men and women who have already traveled down these paths and is an abiding inspiration for those who follow behind. During this period she was a devout and dedicated seeker (*sadhaka*) fully occupied with the manifestations of the inner life, while her outward behavior remained that of a serene and pleasant-spoken young housewife. At the end of the day, she would ask Bholanath's permission to sit for a while to practice the simplest form of devotion, namely, the repetition of God's names (*namajapa*). During these evening sessions Bholanath watched amazed as her body assumed various yogic postures and her hands made ritual gestures (*mudra*) in close coordination with her breathing. She would sink into deep meditation for hours, her body still and motionless, sometimes like a rock, and sometimes limp like a rag doll. Bholanath recognized a few of these yogic postures, but much of what happened was beyond his ken. He knew she had no previous knowledge of Yoga and had no doubt about the spontaneous nature of these manifestations. She became more and more centered on the inner life, until this process of interiorization culminated in an initiation, which in this case was as unique as the spiritual discipline which led up to it.

Sri Anandamayi Ma herself narrated this incident in these words :

On this night of *Rakhi purnima* (3 August 1922) I was sitting as usual in the corner of the room. I watched my finger go through the motions of

drawing a mystical diagram on the ground before me, as a mantra issued from within me which inscribed itself, as it were, inside the diagram. As the master (guru) I revealed the mantra ; as the disciple (*sisya*) I accepted it and started to recite it. The mantra now replaced the Names of God which I had been repeating earlier, as the realization dawned within me that the Master, the mantra, the Lord (*ista*) and the disciple are One.

Sri Anandamayi Ma used to explain the nature of spiritual initiation in these words :

You wish to attract the attention of somebody you can see but you don't know his name ; so you use any words or just a sound to draw his attention. He comes over and says "Did you want me ? My name is such and such". Similarly God Himself in the role of the Guru discloses His Name to the pilgrim wandering in search of a guide. In the ultimate analysis the pilgrim is one with the Name and with the Guru. How can it be otherwise ? He alone can impart the gift of His Name and none but He Himself can sustain the knowledge of His Name.

After her initiation Sri Anandamayi Ma was observed to be in states of profound contemplation frequently. For long hours she would lie on the floor, her face and body bathed in a light marvelous to behold. Few, however, saw her in this state, and this also was as it should be because the deepest spiritual experiences are had in solitude. The why and wherefore of the play of her spirituality were only gradually grasped by scholars and men

of discernment in later years by persistent questioning, for this was a subject Sri Anandamayi Ma did not discuss. She has, however, disclosed that in six short years (1918-1924) she traversed the paths of all religions and faiths apart from the variety of forms of Hinduism. She had the *kheyala* to experience, as it were, the trials, hardships, despairs of the pilgrim in search of God and also his state of blissful enlightenment. A vast range of spiritual experience was encapsulated within this short span of time for the benefit of all seekers of truth. Many Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and others will bear out the truth of this statement from their own experience of dialogue with her about their own spiritual discipline. When asked "Why did you need to traverse these paths like any mortal pilgrim? Surely omniscience renders such labor redundant," Sri Anandamayi Ma would say :

When you come to me, do I not enquire about your welfare and the welfare of your family? You may say that if I am already aware of the answers I should not make enquiries. Would that please you better? The fact of the matter is that when a pilgrim is struggling to reach the goal, he welcomes the testimony of a fellow-traveller although it is true that, in this case, there was no question of journeying into the unknown. It may be said that the experiences of an intensive spiritual life were highlighted so that all human beings with spiritual aspirations may take heart and feel encouraged to continue on their paths. Are you not reassured when I confirm the validity of the stages of your

endeavours and speaking on the basis of a lived experience emphasize that the quest for Self-realization is the only ultimately worthwhile aim in life ?

The Gathering of Devotees

In April 1924, Bholanath came to Dhaka in search of a job and was offered a post as the manager of the Shahbagh Gardens, which he accepted. There was a small house on the premises where he resided with Sri Anandamayi Ma for nearly four years. Shortly after he took up his post, two of his young nephews came to stay with them and other members of both families began to visit them often. Bholanath was a very hospitable and generous host. He was of an outgoing, robust temperament, very much inclined toward enjoying the good things of life. Sri Anandamayi Ma continued to cook marvelous meals for his guests and took care of his household as much as lay within her power at that time.

The Shahbagh years (1924-1928) witnessed a strange and most attractive amalgam of family life and an exalted spiritual atmosphere. The impossible was made possible in Sri Anandamayi Ma's presence. When she came to Dhaka, she was frequently in states of introverted contemplation which may be called *samadhi* ; she often lay perfectly still on the floor for many hours. Although her body was still, the radiance on her face remained undiminished. It was observed that she was neither unconscious nor in deep sleep. It was rather a state of complete withdrawal from the

outside world. Sometimes day would merge into night and the new light of dawn shine before any signs of life or movement could be seen in her body. Under Bholanath's guidance, the family and later her first devotees learned to take care of her physical form at such times. Bholanath had got in the habit of keeping vigil over her on such occasions and at the first signs of returning life, he would gently rub her hands or feet and speak loudly, as if calling a person at a distance. On arising out of these states, Sri Anandamayī Ma would in the most natural way smile at the people around her and then gradually take up again her interrupted household duties. It did not seem that she passed from one state to another but rather that both were somehow the same for her.

Bholanath had already accepted unreservedly Sri Anandamayī Ma's unworldly childlike attitude toward him. Now he saw in her the manifestations of the most marvelous characteristics of spiritual eminence. He was never frightened nor disbelieved that this was anything but a confrontation with a mighty phenomenon. Throughout his life he never deviated from a disposition to completely trust in her *kheyala* or her way of life and continued to occupy his position with dignity and kindness toward all as the head of the family of devotees which grew to considerable proportions under his aegis. Scores of devotees bear witness to his open-hearted generosity in welcoming to his hearth and home the unrestful world in search of peace.

(*To be continued*)

My First Encounter with Ma

Tara Kini

I have often been tempted to write about my associations with Ma, but have hesitated to do so till now, mainly because every encounter with Ma is a sacred memory, a precious treasure which I was reluctant to put into words. In one issue of *Ananda Varta* (July '80, Vol. 27) there was an article called '*Ahaituki Kripa*' by Lekha Sengupta. Reading the sincere narrative of her experience with Ma, I was deeply moved. I realised how much such articles help devotees of Ma in sharing the similarity of their feelings towards the Universal Mother. It has inspired me to write this article.

I first saw a picture of Ma in Sri Lalit Mohan's house. Both he and his wife are a deeply religious couple who have known Ma for over two decades. They are our family friends of long standing, but I came to know them intimately only because of satsangs. We had started a group study of the Bhagavad Gita and other scriptures and both Uncle Lalit Mohan and Aunty were regular participants. I was very impressed with their sincerity and faith. Gradually I heard about Ma from them. In November '72 when I was studying in my final year at college in Delhi, Uncle and Aunty were preparing to go for annual *Samyam Saptah* to be

held at Kankhal that year. They described the unique week-long function to us and I found myself strongly tempted to participate. My father also was interested but he had never driven long distances alone and was hesitating to do so now. Providentially his brother turned up and volunteered to drive us to Kankhal, when he saw how keen I was to go. By then I was so set on the trip that any excuse hindering it made me feel very upset. It seemed strange that I should have such a strong desire to see a person I had never met.

As soon as we reached Kankhal and entered the premises of Maha Mandaleshwar Brahmananda Giri's Ashram where the function was held, we saw Ma. She was walking briskly down the compound to supervise the serving of a meal to a 102 year old sadhu who was an honoured guest. This is how I saw Ma for the first time. I was impressed by Her agility as She bustled about organising details of arrangements with a truly maternal air. I was surprised to note that Ma's hair had not begun greying though she was nearing eighty years of age.

We soon got into the spirit of the Samyam Saptah and though the rigorous fasting had seemed terribly difficult at first, we found ourselves doing it without any strain. I realised it was Ma's influence. Permeating the entire atmosphere was a peace I had never felt before. I found about five hundred people sitting still during meditation for an hour at a time, chanting *bhajans* and verses out of scriptures, listening to lectures from *pandits*

and *samnyasis*, with perfect discipline. It was possible only because of one factor, Ma's presence.

During the Matri Satsang hour I strained to catch Ma's words. Her sweet laughter and simplicity of manner, her childlike conversation in the presence of sadhus, so rich in meaning, began to seep into my mind, revealing slowly that what I beheld was nothing other than an embodiment of Love.

On the last day of the *Saptah*, Brahmachari Nirmalanandaji spoke about his first experiences with Ma. I have heard him speak very well several times later, but never has he revealed his feelings for Ma so frankly and movingly as he did on that day. He spoke of his student days at St. Stephen's College in Delhi, and how he finally joined the Ashram. After the turmoil of making the all important decision of join the Ashram, he described the scene when he walked into the Ashram worn out physically and mentally, late at night. All were asleep and he went in wearily. Just then Ma came out and said, "Have your meal and go to sleep"—and the Brahmachari wept as he remembered the tremendous affection contained in that one sentence. This speech coming from Nirmalanandaji who had lived in Ma's Ashram for the past several years, made a lasting impression on me. I saw how many others like him had abandoned worldly lives to solely engage in *sadhana* after coming into contact with Ma's radiantly divine personality.

It is Ma's overwhelming love that conquers even the hardest heart and turns it Godwards. I

remember that what finally made me understand the cause of the inexplicable attraction that pulled me constantly towards Ma, was a sentence from my father as we drove back to Delhi. "Ma's love is so totally unselfish—She only gives and wants nothing in return." I was thoroughly moved by this overflowing ocean of Love, which gave infinitely whether one deserved it or not. I was totally ensnared by Ma whether I wanted it or not and have now found that it is the most worthwhile thing that has happened in my life.

The actual 'ensnaring' occurred a year later. Uncle Lalit Mohan had built a house in Vasant Vihar and when Ma came to Delhi for the *Janamashtami* function he requested Her to bless his house with Her presence for three days. He came to me and said, "I must make you sing before Ma and I'll introduce you to Her personally." For both these things I am eternally grateful to him for they opened up an entirely new life for me.

On the second day of Ma's stay a continuous reading of the Tulsī Ramayana for twenty-four hours had been arranged by Uncle. Somehow the regular singers did not turn up. So I sat with the Ramayana which I had never before read right through and lead the singing for seven hours. I was amazed for I had never thought that I could read with such fluency the verses which were so unfamiliar. It was all Ma's grace. During the reading Ma threw a tulsī garland round my neck. The next morning during the completion of the reading we were asked to sing *bhajans*. My mother

and I sang a couple of Bengali songs on the Divine Mother. Ma was immensely pleased and as I heard her praising our music I was reminded of my grandfather's words, "Take one step towards God and God takes ten towards you." Next evening Ma asked me to sing again. Her gaze, so full of grace and love enveloped my being as I sang.

On the day of Her departure from Uncle's house She called me to Her room and gave me a saree. As She patted my head and praised me, I couldn't hold back my tears. "Ma, she's crying," one of the Ashram girls said. "They are tears of joy", Ma said, smiling at me.

And how right She was. The joy that flooded the very core of my being has remained with me to this day. My associations with Ma have shown me the true meaning of life, the only Real Aim. Every time I meet Her the zest of pursuing the Goal is renewed. The awareness of Divinity and the existence of the Truth hidden by mundane activity is brought to light. Meeting Ma is like a mirror which reflects one's true Self stripped of the outer crusts which we usually believe we are. Each moment with Ma is a flight into the realm of endless happiness, a taste of divine joy, one sip of which remains permanently in the memory, reminding one of the richness of Reality and the futility of worldly pursuits. Encounters with Ma are sufficient to carry us across this worldly ocean—this is my firm belief.

Jai Ma !

Ashram News

Kankhal

Last 14th July, Tuesday, on the auspicious occasion of Guru Purnima, the Ashram complex was dressed in a festive mood with a large gathering of devotees. On this occasion a special Puja and prayer were held in Ananda Jyoti Pitham. After devotional songs and Arati the devotees from different States, offered floral tribute on the Holy Altar and thereafter Prasadam were distributed among them.

On this occasion Sri Murarkaji also organised a special Puja of MA and also arranged a special Bhandara.

On 5th August, Wednesday, the 1008th Tirodhan (Final Samadhi) Tithi of Swami Muktananda Giri Maharaj was also celebrated. A special Puja and Sadhu Bhandara were also performed.

From 8th to 12th August, on the occasion of Jhulan festival the complex was decorated with flowers. The statues and the pictures of Shree Shree MA, Gopal and Narayan were decorated gracefully. Puja, Kirtan and Arati were performed by the enthusiastic devotees during the time and Prasadam were distributed among them. On the 12th August, on Purnima (Full Moon) a special Puja of Shree Shree MA was organised. On 13th August, on the occasion of Rakhi festival the devotees offered Rakhi to MA and other devotees.

On 9th August, the 1008th Tirodhan (Final Samadhi) of Shree Shree Swami Mounananda Parbat (Bhaiji) was celebrated with special Puja, Kirtan and Sadhu Bhandara.

On 21st August, Friday, Janmasthan festival was celebrated with special Puja, Kirtan, meditation etc. On the next day i.e. 22nd August, devotees celebrated the Nanda Utsab.

On 4th September, on the occasion of Radha Astami, a special Puja of Shree Shree MA and devotional songs were performed and thereafter Prasadam were distributed among the devotees.

Varanasi

On 14th July, on the occasion of Guru Purnima, special Puja, Bhajan, Kirtan of Shree Shree MA were meticulously performed by the Brahma-Charinis of Kanyapeeth. Many devotees of MA attended the festival and took Prasadam after the Puja.

On 5th August, the 1008th Tirodhan Tithi of Muktananda Giri Maharaj was celebrated by special Puja. On this occasion clothes and Dakshina were distributed among 12 Sadhus after entertaining them with Prasadam. During Jhulan festival all the devotees of Kanyapeeth and Gopal Mandir were beautifully decorated. Special Puja, Utsab, Kirtan were performed during the entire period of five days.

On the occasion of Janmastami special Puja and prayer were held in Gopal Mandir.



Utsab held at Matri-Mandir on 21-8-92 on the occasion of Sri Sri Janmastami

On 9th August, the Tirodhan day of Bhaiji was performed with special Puja, Kirtan and Sadhu Bhandara.

Vrindaban

Like past years Jhulan and Janmastami festivals were performed in the Ashram with great enthusiasm. Rash Lila, Kirtan and Puja of MA and Gopalji were performed. In the midnight of Janmastami, the special Puja of Radha Krishna at Chhalia Temple and the following day Nanda Utsab were also held.

Agarpara

Last 14th July, Tuesday on the auspicious occasion of Guru Purnima, the Ashram Complex was dressed in a festive mood with a large gathering of devotees. On this occasion a special Puja and prayer were held and thereafter Prasadam were distributed among them.

On 5th August, Wednesday, the 1008th Tirodhan (Final Samadhi) Tithi of Swami Muktananda Giri Maharaj was also celebrated. A special Puja and Sadhu Bhandara was also performed.

From 8th to 12th August, on the occasion of Jhulan festival Puja, Kirtan and Arati were performed by the enthusiastic devotees and Prasadam were distributed among them. On the 12th August, on Purnima (Full Moon) a special Puja of Shree Shree MA was organised.

On 9th August, the 1008th Tirodhan (Final Samadhi) of Shree Shree Swami Mounananda Par-

bat (Bhaiji) was celebrated with special Puja and Kirtan.

On 20th August, Friday, Janmastami festival was celebrated with special Puja, Kirtan, meditation etc. On the following day i.e. 22nd August, devotees celebrated the Nanda Utsab.

From 3rd September to 11th September, under the guidance and supervision of Shri Nirmalanandaji Bhagabat Saptaha was performed. After Purnahuti (conclusion) Nam Yagna was celebrated. During this occasion Shri Nirmalanandaji's charming recitation of Bhagabat delighted all the devotees assembled there.

Matri Mandir, Calcutta

Janmastami festival was celebrated at "MATRI MANDIR" on Friday 21st August, 1992. In this connection Special Puja and Kirtan of Shree Shree MA Anandamayee, Shree Shree Omkarnathji and Shree Srimannarayan was performed.

The chanting of Mahanam from dawn to dusk gave a divine shade to the entire atmosphere. After the performance of Puja, Arati and Hom, Prasadam was distributed among almost eight hundred devotees.

Obituary

On Thursday, 13th February, 1992, Dr. Triguna Nath Banerjee, an old devotee of Ma breathed his last. He was a regular writer in our journal—Ananda Varta. On his death we lost a veteran desciple of MA.

Shri Sris Kumar Dutt, a worthy son of Late Sarojendra Kumar Dutt and Late Shobhamayi Dutt, both wellknown old devotees of Sri Sri Ma, has obtained the abode of the lotus feet of Sri Sri Ma, consciously, on 1st April, 1992.

One of the favourite sons of MA Sri Nirmaleswar Chakraborty is no more with us. In 1953, under the instructions of Shree Shree MA he alongwith his wife took initiation from Shree Shree Mohanananda Brahmachari. Once MA stepped into his new house in Calcutta and in HER presence, Srimad Bhagvat was performed. He breathed his last on 7th July, 1992.

On Thursday, the 23rd July, 1992, Srimati Basanti Bhattacharya, one of the oldest devotees of MA left her mortal coil while she was in meditation. In 1950, under the presence of Shree Shree MA she was initiated from Didima at our Varanasi Ashram. From her very childhood she was soft hearted, dutiful and religious.

One of the greatest scholars in recent times, Dr. Gouri Nath Sastri passed away. His child-like

simplicity charmed all the Ashramites of our Ashrams. He spent a long time in our Varanasi and Naimisharanya Ashrams. He got immense blessings from MA. Because of his passing away we as well as the entire country suffered an irreparable loss.

On 18th August, 1992, Pramiladi of Dehradun (Kishenpur) Ashram breathed her last in a hospital at Kankhal. She was a selfless worker in our Ashram. Due to her untimely death we lost an ardent devotee of MA.

We all pray to our Mother to grant those souls to rest in peace at HER Lotus Feet.

The moment that has passed does not come back.
Time must be used well. Only when spent in the effort to know "who am I?" has it been used well.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi
