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Do not give into your inclination to think about ghosts and apparitions ; rather keep your mind solely on God's Name and meditate on Him. In the presence of His Name no other power can function. This is the truth, be firmly convinced of it. The moment you have recourse to God's Name you should feel that no lesser power can touch you. If at that time you are aware of any physical anxiety, be quite certain that it is merely a bodily reaction.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee

Sitaramdas said that this was 'Nama'. 'Nama' meant 'Nama' of God ; Rama, Krishna, Siva, Durga ; but 'Nama' had to be repeated constantly. 'Nama' could reach the Sadhaka to 'Nada' and 'Jyoti' ; 'Nada' could bring 'Sakti' i.e. Durga and 'Jyoti' could bring Purushottam, i.e. Vishnu and ultimately Name could bring 'Onkar', the Anahat sound one could hear inside. So what the Rishis of the old days could not gain even after hundreds of years of Tapasya in jungles, Nama could achieve even when a person lived his normal life and did his every day work.

—Shree Shree Sitaramdas Onkarnath

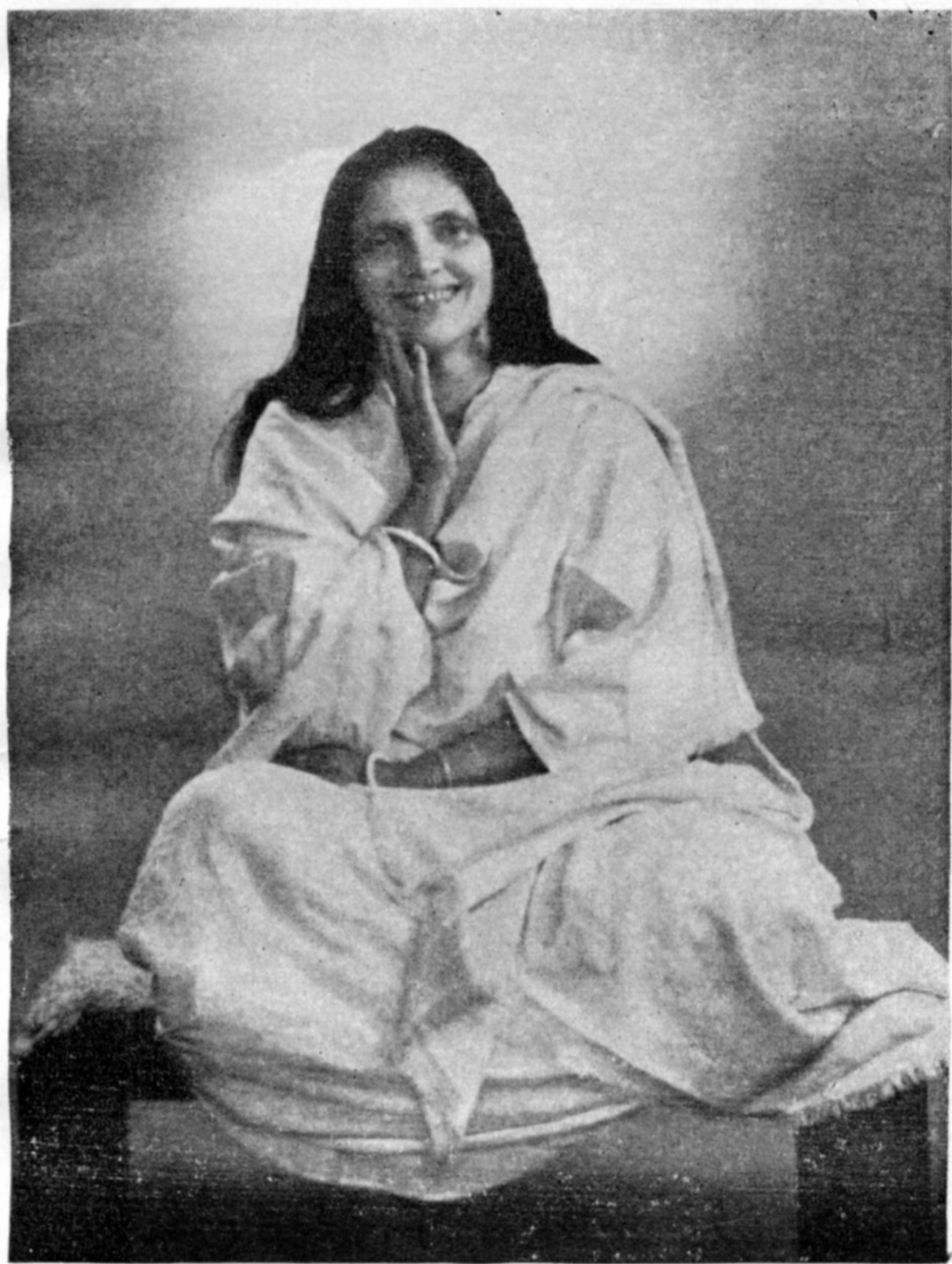
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# ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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

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

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# ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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

Vol. XXXX

● JANUARY, 1993 ●

No. 1

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Annual Naam Kirtan at "Matri Mandir"

**Shree Shree Anandamayee**

**Charitable Society**

CALCUTTA ZONAL OFFICE

"MATRI MANDIR"

57/1, Ballygunge Circular Road

Calcutta-700 019

Phone : 74-8504

Dear Brother/Sister,

We have great pleasure in informing you that we have organised a **NAM-YAGNA ADHIBAS** on the auspicious day of 6th March, 1993, Saturday (Bengali 22nd Falgun, 1399) at 6-30 p.m. sharp and a **DAWN TO DUSK NAM SANKIRTAN** on the following day i.e. on the 7th March, 1993 with special Pujas of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee, Shree Shree Narayanji & Shree Shree Onkarnathji from 9 a.m. onwards in MATRI-MANDIR here. After the Purnahuti the assembled devotees will be entertained with prasads.

We look forward to your active participation in this auspicious programme.

Yours

In the Service of Ma,

**Members**

(Executive Council)

Shree Shree Anandamayee

Charitable Society

Dated :

The 16th of Jan. 1993

(1st Magh, 1399)

# Sri Sri Ma's Utterances

Krishna Banerjee

One day in early morning, Ma, with Her eyes closed, said, "I saw this body there where Aurobindo Baba\* is. Gurupriya Didi, Abhaya and Mauni Ma was with me. I met Baba. No word was uttered, but as the eyes met, it was as if there was a conversation. I saw His hair was not grey but black. Then, how beautiful ! When Baba went away, a lady and a gentleman of that place took some earth from the spot where He had been sitting and began to apply it like sandal-wood paste. There were flowers and that earth in lieu of sandal. With them they started to worship the place where Baba had been sitting.

\* \* \*

A devotee wrote to Ma, "Ma, you just boost up our ego as you greet us saying, '*Namo Narayana*'. You are our Ma, we seek your *satsanga* in order to get rid of our ego. But when we approach you, you augment our ego all the more."

Ma smilingly said, "Well ! It creates a bondage, you say ? On the contrary, it does help you on that path. If it were to forge fetters, then what about your wish to sit still (for *sadhana*) ?—that, too, should produce fetters ! What do you say, Baba ? Is that a bondage of sense-gratification ?"

---

\*Sri Aurobindo, Pondicherry.

Then Ma Herself added, "The sap (of desire) is getting dried up. You will be taken to the shore in this way."

\*

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It is generally observed that the *sadhus* and *sannyasins* have a feeling of restlessness for coming to Ma. What to say of the householders! Referring to this, some one said to Ma, "Why do the *sadhus* and *sannyasins* have such restlessness for coming to Ma? All is one, isn't it?—*Tattvamasi*—'Thou art that'. Ma, what do you say?"

Ma immediately replied, "Bah! The truth has been expressed as '*Tattvamasi*'—that is why there is so much affection for this daughter. '*Tattvamasi*'—that is, verily, I am That! Nothing exists besides this 'I'. That is why such affection is felt for this daughter. What do you say, Baba?"

\*

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One day, standing at the kitchen-door, Ma said, "One gets a little bit even by simply standing at the kitchen-door. Don't you think so?"

A few persons present there said, "Yes, Ma, they say, 'Smelling of food is semi-eating'."

Ma—"You know, how it is! Just as on account of the company of the saints the effect of the saintly company is gradually produced. Do you know what is going on in the saints? A kind of 'cooking' is going on in them. While one stays in the company of the holy, 'cooking' goes on in him slowly and gradually. That is how it is. I referred to *that*

cooking. I did not talk about this cooking that you people perform with your pots and pans."

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Question—"Is it not possible to live a spiritual life even while staying at home?"

Ma—"Look, what has been said does not mean that you should give up everything and go away. Stay in the midst of all this ; only keep the fire of His name ever burning. Keep this fire carefully aflame. If He so wills this very fire will burn down all your impurities, purify you and take you to Him. Keep Him with yourself ; then attend to worldly activities. This husband is a form of that Supreme Lord. This very wife is *Devi*, staying with you in the form of wife. The children are forms of *Bala Gopala* and *Kumari*, thus living with you. Go on serving them. Live the householder's life with this attitude. Do not worry. Well, will you do so little by little?"

\*

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*Kirtana* was going on in Ma's presence. A strong gale was also blowing now and then. Whenever there was a storm, the *kirtana*-singers were in high spirits. They danced in a state of exhilaration. Once as the stormy wind started raging more forcefully, the singers began dancing and singing, rapt in a great joy. Seeing this, Ma said, "Now at last you have started singing the right way. So far you were mindful of decorum while singing. Now as the storm has started raging, the knots have snapped open. Do the knots get untied without a storm?"



# Reminiscences of Anandamayee Ma\*

## 7. The Epistemology and Mythology of Goddess Durga

Professor Bireswar Ganguly, D. Litt

( *Continued from previous issue* )

**Introduction :** I visited my *Guru-ashram*, Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Bhadaini, Varanasi from Patna during the Durga Puja holiday of 1951. On the Navami Puja day, we went to witness the evening *arati* of Goddess Durga at the residence of Patalda, an earnest devotee of the Mother, in a few motor cars, along with the Mother, after the evening *arati* of the ashram was over. At the end of the *arati*, a relative of Patalda asked the Mother, "Ma, are the episodes of the killing of Mahishashur and others, as parts of Durga Puja, historical facts or only the figments of imagination of the Rishis?" The Mother turned grave on hearing such a question, Her face began glowing with a divine crimson aura and She uttered in firm tone in an aphoristic language of ancient seers, "The divine play of Goddess Durga did take place, is taking place, shall take place in future and is a part of Her eternal manifestation." That is to say,

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\*Translated by the author from *Ananda Varta* (Bengali), April, 1990, year 37, No. 2, pp. 149-154.

the divine play of Goddess Durga is certainly not the figment of imagination of the Rishis ; rather the divine play did take place in a previous cosmic cycle in some part of the infinite universe, is now taking place in some part of the universe, shall take place in subsequent cosmic cycles in this or some other universe, and the spiritual battle between gods and demons rages always in the subtle-body of the *shakti-sadhak* (a yogi who aspires for the power aspect of God).

Later on I consulted Mahamahopadhyay Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, the greatest of India's indologists of the twentieth century on the meaning of Mother's aphoristic utterance and also studied *Durga Saptashati Chandi*, *Devi Bhagavatam*, *Sadhan Samar (Devi Mahatmya)* of Brahmarsi Satyadeva and *Tantrik Bangmayee Shakta-Dristi*, a Hindi treatise on *Tantra*, written by Dr. Kaviraj. I shall note down below the essence of knowledge gathered by me on the above subject.

**“Did take place”** :—The story of worshipping of Goddess Durga by Surath, the King and Samadhi, the merchant is narrated in *Shree Durga Saptashati Chandi*, a chapter of *Markandeya Puran*, written by Sri Vedavyasa. King Surath of the Chaitra dynasty was the ruler of a kingdom during the overall reign of Swarochisha Manu, the second Manu (emperor of men) of the world. By the grace of Goddess Durga he got back his kingdom and in the next incarnation, he was born as Savarni Manu, the son of Sun-god and was the eighth Manu. From this account it is clear that the mythological story of

Chandi does not belong to our historical period of only five thousand years. According to Hindu mythology the four cyclical cosmic periods of *Satya*, *Treta*, *Dwapar* and *Kaliyuga* repeat themselves endlessly. According to ancient Indian astrology we are now passing through *Kaliyuga* within the cosmic cycle of *Shwetavarahakalpa* and the seventh *Vai-vaswata Manwantara*. The duration of *Sweta-varahakalpa* is of 432 crores of years. Out of this long span, only 1972949071 years have elapsed. The span of *Kaliyuga* is 4,32,000 years and only 5090 years of this *yuga* (cycle) have elapsed. When the cycles of the four yugas revolve 71 times, then it is called the *manwantara* or the reign of one Manu. In this way when 14 such *manwantaras* are over, it is called the end of a *Kalpa*. One such *Kalpa* is equivalent to one day of Brahma, the creator. The longevity of Brahma extends over 100 years according to this calculation. Out of this astronomical time only 50 years have elapsed and his age now is 51 years. We are now passing through the 28th four-yuga cycle out of the destined 71 such cycles. Within this cycle again, *Satya*, *Treta* and *Dwapar yugas* are over and the first part of the primary transition period of *Kali-yuga* is just running. According to other epics, Lord Kalki, the last incarnation of Vishnu (God) shall take place at the end of *Kali-yuga*. However, the narration of the incarnation of Lord Kalki during some previous *Kalpa*, is found in *Kalki-Puran*. Hence we see that the present historical period comprises only a few seconds in the time-science of ancient Hindus.

We have to understand the implication of the aphoristic utterance of the Mother in the background of this comprehensive astronomical time-canvas.

The narrator of the *Durga Saptashati Chandi* epic is Medha Rishi, a realised soul, and the audience consists of Surath, the King and Samadhi, the merchant. King Surath, after losing his Kingdom and the merchant Samadhi, after being persecuted and banished by his kinsmen came to a jungle to commit suicide there. However, on hearing the glory of Goddess Durga from Medha Rishi, they performed *Durga Puja* on Her image in the month of Chaitra (March-April) consecutively for three years, according to rituals prescribed in scriptures and got Her blessings, as a result of which King Surath regained his Kingdom in that life and in his subsequent incarnation became Manu, the emperor of the world, and the merchant, Samadhi got *moksha* (liberation) at the end of his life. For Goddess Durga, the universal energy of *Brahma* (God) is capable of bestowing both pleasures of life and liberation. It is with the help of Her energy, God creates the universe as Brahma, sustains it as Vishnu and destroys it as Rudra. During the *Treta-yuga* of the present *Kalpa* and present *Manwantara*, Lord Rama had performed *Durga Puja* during the Sharat season (autumn) to assassinate the demon King Ravana, and this tradition has been maintained by Bengali Hindoos since the Bengali Prince, Vijay Singha returned from Sri Lanka after his victory during the medieval period.

In the first chapter of *Durga Saptashati Chandi*, we come across the narration of the assassination of two demons, viz. Madhu and Kaitabha, as part of the glory of Goddess Durga, described by Medha Rishi to Surath and Samadhi. When after cosmic dissolution, Lord Vishnu, the sustainer of the universe was in deep slumber in Hydrogen gas, Madhu and Kaitabha were born out of the ear-wax of Vishnu and they began obstructing the work of Lord Brahma, the creator. Hence Brahma invoked Vishnu's energy, *Yoganidra Mahamaya*, who aroused Vishnu, who in turn killed them.

In the second chapter of *Chandi* we find how the gods were banished from their kingdom of heaven by the powerful titans and how the soldiers of Mahishashur were killed by Goddess Durga, who was pleased by the prayers of the gods, who had individually bequeathed their arms to Durga to constitute the collective strength of the Divine. The third chapter describes the assassination of Mahishashur along with all his generals. The image of Durga Devi with ten hands, who had killed Mahishashur, is worshipped in autumn by Hindoos of North India. In the fourth chapter, the collective prayer of gods to Goddess Durga after the annihilation of Mahishashur, is stated. In the fifth chapter there is the episode of the demon King Shumbha, who sent his emissaries, Chanda and Munda to Ambika Devi with a proposal of marriage, after he had learnt about the beauty of Her from his emissaries, who, of course, had to return without any success in their mission. The

sixth chapter describes the killing of Dhumralochan. The seventh chapter describes the killing of Chanda and Munda. The eighth, ninth and tenth chapters describe respectively the assassination of Raktaveej, Nishumbha and Shumbha. After all the major demons had been annihilated, the gods went to Goddess Durga and prayed to Her in the famous invocation to Narayani, who blessed the gods, and this narration finds place in the eleventh chapter. The twelfth chapter describes the glory of reading and practising the tenets of Chandi. In the thirteenth chapter we find how Durga Devi blessed Surath and Samadhi. In the *Devi Bhagavat* also we get descriptions of the emergence of Kaushiki Devi from the Divine Deity Bhagavati, who also assumed the forms of Kalika Devi, Durga Devi, Shatakshi Devi, Shakambhari Devi, Mahagauri Devi and Mahalakshmi Devi.

**“Is Taking Place and shall Take Place”** :—The above mentioned war between the gods and the titans, the incarnation of the Divine Goddess, the re-establishment of the kingdom of gods after the defeat of the demons, have been taking place since time immemorial in different universes and different *Kalpas* (cosmic cycles) are taking place now in some other *Brahmanda* (universe) and shall take place in future somewhere or the other. How can the all-powerful Divine Deity, who can do or undo anything at will anywhere in the universe, and who is full of mercy and compassion for Her creatures, stop short of creating life in this tiny earth of ours? In the milky way of our galaxy there are

innumerable solar systems and as in each solar system there are three planes of existence, e. g. *Bhurloka*, *Bhubarloka* and *Swarloka*, so also above the solar systems there are the supra-mental planes of *Maharloka*, *Janaloka*, *Taparloka* and *Satyaloka* (*Brahmaloka*). According to the vast literature on *Tantrashashtra*, each *Brahmanda* (universe) is the playground of nature or matter and beyond the material plane there are subtle planes of anti-matter, known consequitively as *Prakrityanda*, *Mayanda* and *Shaktyanda*. The Lord of *Brahmanda* is *Brahma* and His energy is *Saraswati*; the Lord of *Prakrityanda* is *Vishnu* and His energy is *Lakshmi Devi*; the Lord of *Mayanda* is *Shiva* and His energy is *Kali*; and the Lord of *Shaktyanda* is *Ishwara-sadashiva* and His energy is *Maheshwari Parama Prakriti*. *Paramashiva* of Kashmir Shaivism is transcendental above *Sadashiva* or it may be said that He inheres within Himself *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*, as well as the playgrounds of their consorts, e. g. *Saraswati*, *Lakshmi* and *Kali*.

In the dialectical theories of evolution of Hegel and Marx, there is the equal importance of the forces of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. Similarly the gods and titans represent the dialectical contradictory forces of thesis and anti-thesis and as a result of their conflict the synthesis of creation proceeds in cosmic process of evolution. In the different mythological epics, the symbolic episodes make an attempt to prove that ultimately the forces of divinity, manifesting devotion to God, welfare of all beings and co-operation of individuals in society,

triumph over forces of the undivine demons, manifesting the nature of atheism, selfishness and violence. In the epics of Chandi, Ramayan and Mahabharat it has been proved how in the process of cosmic evolution, out of the conflict between the thesis of divine forces and the anti-thesis of undivine forces, the former wins ultimately for the establishment of the Gnostic collectivity. The symptoms of divine nature are manifested in the formula of action of 'maximum good of the maximum number reconciled with enlightened self-interest.' The symptoms of undivine nature are manifested in the formula of action of 'self-aggrandisement through the torture of others.' Of course, finally there is the triumph of the divine nature,—'there is victory, where there is *dharma* (righteousness)'.

**"It Does Happen"** :—The *sadhana* (spiritual practice) of *Shrimad Bhagavad Geeta* is meant for devotees of God, who can perform duties of life without desire and attachment and it appertains to the mental plane. Whereas the *sadhana* of *Chandi* is meant for devotees of the Divine Mother, who aspire for salvation and who can sublimate the gross desire and gross matter to the supramental plane. Brahmarsi Satyadeva of Allahabad, in his priceless treatise on "*Sadhan Samar (Devi Mahatmya)*" had explained the symbolic significance of the annihilation of Madhukaitabh, Mahishashur and Shumbha-Nishumba in volumes one, two and three respectively. In his spiritual explanation he has proved that the battle of gods and demons or the conflict of moral and immoral forces



goes on always in the subtle body of *divyachari sadhaks* (divine yogis). The *Sadhan Samar* is a superb exposition of the integral yoga of *jnana* (knowledge), *bhakti* (devotion) and *karma* (duty or action). It explains how the knots of ignorance are torn asunder, how the *sadhaka* tastes the bliss of liberation in life, being established in truth, energy and joy. It further explained how the *Kundalini Sakti* (primal energy) of the *Tantra-yogi* is aroused from *Muladhar* (solar plexus) for reaching the *Sahasrar* (cerebral cortex), where there is the union between *Shiva* and *Shakti* (universal consciousness and individual consciousness) and how in this inner pilgrimage of the individual consciousness, libido, anger, greed, infatuation, egotism and jealousy are conquered.

In the first part of *Chandi* we get the description of the death of *Madhu* and *Kaitabh* that is the mastery over the feelings of pleasure and pain, which means that *Sanchiyaman Karma* (new activity born of desire) is put an end to. In technical language, this means the arousal of *Kundalini* through *Muladhar* and *Swadhisthan* chakras, whereby the knots of *Brahmagranthi* are unravelled. In the battle of *sadhana*, this is the first victory. In the second part of *Chandi* we get the description of the death of *Mahishasur*, that is mastery over libido or control passion. When passion is destroyed *Sanchita Karma* (seeds of accumulated desire of past lives, which have not yet sprouted) is annihilated. In this stage the *Kundalini* passes through *Manipur* and *Anahata Chakras* and the knots of Vishnu-

granthi are unravelled. In the third part of *Chandi*, there is the description of the death of *Shumbha* and *Nishumbha*, that is the mastery over the consciousness of "I-ness" and "My-ness". When the *sadhaka* crosses this stage, his *Prarabdha Karma* (seeds of past actions, which have borne fruits in the present life) is also destroyed and he becomes a liberated soul. In this stage, the *Kundalini* passes through *Vishuddha* and *Ajna Chakras*, that is the knots of *Rudra Granthi* are unravelled. As a result of this, there is union between *Shiva* and *Shakti* in the *Sahasrar Chakra* and the *sadhaka* experiences *Nirvikalpa samadhi* and when he is in wakeful consciousness he behaves like a *Sthitaprajna* (one whose mind is always in equilibrium, i.e. a liberation soul). This condition is termed as 'liberation in life' and '*Brahmanirvan* after life'. This is also called monistic liberation or *Brahmisthiti*, by attaining which, the *Jivatma* (individual soul) realizes that the concepts of *Ma* and *Guru* are the same and he himself becomes *Anandamaya* or *Anandamayee*.

*Om Shantih*

( *To be continued* )

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

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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# Sri Sri Ma

Chaitanyaben Divatia

In January 1945 I had my first *darsana* of Sri Sri Ma at late Kantibhai Munshaw's place and at Samartheshwar Mahadeva Mandir in Ahmedabad. I saw my own mother in Her. It was not mere imagination but actual reality for a few moments, hardly one or two minutes. But these precious moments had a profound effect on my mind and heart. From that day onward, whenever Mataji visited Ahmedabad, which happened at intervals of two or three years, I without fail would go for Her *darsana*. Each time I felt greatly attracted and experienced a deep love and joy which I can't describe in words.

Several times I had the chance of talking to Mataji in private. Her superhuman qualities, Her powerful eyes radiating boundless love, completely captured my mind. In those days circumstances did not permit me to visit Sri Sri Ma's Ashrams. But although I was engaged in various types of mental and physical work, Mataji possessed my inner self. I remember distinctly how in a private interview, She gave me the following advice: "As soon as you get up in the morning, pray to Ma (*Devi Bhagavati*): Let me do all my work today not of my own volition but as an instrument in your hands." And when you go to sleep at night pray to Her that you may sleep in Her lap."

These words Sri Sri Ma spoke to me with so much love and motherly affection that I made it a rule to regularly carry out Her instructions to the letter. This was only the beginning.

A few years later, when reading some books on Mataji's life and "Ananda Varta", I learnt that during *Maha Sivaratri* Mataji's presence had a wonderful effect. I at once wrote to Her for permission to attend this festival and Mataji replied that I should come. But unfortunately or fortunately I was unable to leave and so, greatly disappointed, I wrote again and asked Mataji how to perform *Siva puja* on *Mahasivaratri* at home as I had already been observing *Sivaratri* at my home for several years.

Mataji sent Her reply in one or two sentences : "There is no need to perform *puja*. Just practise *japa* of Siva's name the whole day without a break." She asked me to keep it secret and not to speak about it to anyone.

I carried out Her instructions with deep faith. The result cannot be imagined without one's personal experience ! Who is Ma ? What is Her Grace ? Her compassion ? How can I explain it ? Ma Herself told me not to.

My father was an ardent devotee of Rama-krishna Paramahansa. He used to read from the Gospel of the Master every day. I too would sit by his side and read the *Kathamrita*. While doing so I often used to wonder whether I would ever in my life find a God-like (*Brahmanista*) Guru. I also went with my father for Mataji's *darsana* and it

pleased him greatly to see my faith and my devotion to Sri Sri Ma.

God heard my heart's prayer. I found my Guru at my very first *darsana* of Sri Sri Ma—the Goddess in person. After that I began visiting Her ashrams regularly. Even though Mataji is all-knowing and all-pervading, we cannot know or understand Her with our human limitations. For Her those who go to Her ashrams and those who don't are alike. Sri Sri Ma has come to us in human form as Mother. She imbues us with a rare strength by Her Grace and Her compassionate glance.

We should pray to Her so that we may become worthy to deserve Her Grace and Blessing. Sri Sri Ma is *Narayani* (the Goddess) incarnate. If one is able to receive and absorb even a particle of the deep peace and the radiant light that Mataji emanates, one becomes transformed. Slowly but steadily Her grace works upon us and gradually changes our hearts, our minds, our very nature. The greater our faith the more are we able to receive. As Ma says : “According to your playing you hear the sound.”

Ma ! Bless me with the grace of your glance and the power of your touch. Receive me unto yourself totally and in all ways. Be in me so that only your thought remains ! May I think of you day and night and never forget you for a single moment to the very last—this is all that I pray for !

# Sai Ram Sahay

M. Rama Rao

## My pilgrimage Part III

At Dharmasthala it striked to my mind that unless a devotee is sincere and pure he will not be accepted by any guru. When he becomes pure, he is accepted and blessed. Meghanath (Megha) was a Brahmin having no education. His case is as stated above.

### Shri Sai Satcharita

#### Chapter XXVIII

#### (3) Megha

Now let us go to the third and bigger Brahmin cook of Rao Bahadur H. V. Sathe. He was a devotee of Shiva and always chanted the five syllabled mantra 'Namah Shivaya'. He did not know the sandhya nor its chief mantra, the Gayatri. Rao Bahadur Sathe was interested in him, got him taught the sandhya and the Gayatri. Sathe told him that Sai Baba of Shirdi was the embodied form of God Shiva and made him start for Shirdi. At the Broach Railway station he learnt that Sai Baba was a moslem and his simple and orthodox mind was much perturbed at the prospect of bowing to a Moslem, and he prayed his master not to send him there. His master, however, insisted on his going there and gave him a letter of introduction of his

(Sathe's) father-in-law, Ganesh Damodar alias Dada Kelkar at Shirdi to introduce him to Sai Baba. When he reached Shirdi and went to the Masjid, Baba was very indignant and would not allow to enter. "Kick out the rascal" roared Baba, and then said to Megha, "You are a high caste Brahmin and I am a low Moslem ; you will lose your caste by coming here. So get away." Hearing these words Megha began to tremble. He was wondering as to how Baba had come to know about what was passing in his mind. He stayed there for some days, serving Baba in his own way, but was not convinced. Then he went home. After that he went to Tryambak (Nasik District) and stayed there for a year and a half. Then again he returned to Shirdi. This time at the intercession of Dada Kelkar, he was allowed to enter the Masjid and stay in Shirdi. Sai Baba's help to Megha was not through any oral instruction. He worked upon Megha internally (mentally) with the result that he was considerably changed and benefited. Then Megha began to look upon Sai Baba as an incarnation of Shiva. In order to worship Shiva, Bel leaves are required, and Megha began to look upon Sai Baba as an incarnation of Shiva. In order to worship Shiva, Bel leaves are required, and Megha used to go miles and miles every day to bring them and worship his Shiva (Baba) : His practice was to worship all the Gods in the village and then come to the Masjid and after saluting Baba's gadi (asan) he worshipped Baba and after doing some service (shampooing His legs) drank the washings (Tirth) of Baba's feet. Once it

so happened that he came to the Masjid without worshipping God Khandoba, as the door of the temple was closed. Baba did not accept his worship and sent him again, saying that the door was open then. Megha went, found the door open, worshipped the Deity and then returned to Baba as usual.

### **Ganges-Bath**

On one makar-sankranti day, Megha wanted to besmear the body of Baba with sandal-paste and bathe Him with Ganges water. Baba was first unwilling to undergo this operation, but at his repeated requests, He consented. Megha had to traverse a distance of eight koss (going and returning) to bring the sacred water from the Gomati river. He brought the water and made all preparations for the bath at noon and asked Baba to get ready for the same. Then Baba again asked him to be freed from his bath saying that, as a Fakir He had nothing to do (or gain) with Ganges water ; but Megha did not listen. He knew that Shiva is pleased with a bath of Ganges water and that he must give his Shiva (Baba) that bath on that auspicious day. Baba then consented, came down and sat on a pat (wooden board) and protruding his head said, "Oh Megha, do at least this favour ; head is the most important organ of the body, so pure the water over that only—it is equivalent to the full or whole bath. "All right", said Megha and lifting the water pot up, began to pour it on the head but in doing this he was so much overwhelmed



with love that he cried out 'Har Gange' and emptied the pot on the whole body. He kept the pot aside and began to look at Baba, but to his surprise and amazement he found that Baba's head was only drenched and the body quite dry.

### **Trident and Pindi**

Megha worshipped Baba in two places ; in the Masjid he worshipped Baba in person and in the Wada, Baba's big picture given by Nanasaheb Chandorkar. This he did for 12 months. Then in order to appreciate his devotion and confirm his faith, Baba gave him a vision. Early one morning when Mega was still lying down on his bed, with eyes closed but internally awake, he saw clearly Baba's form. Baba knowing him to be awake threw Akshata (rice-grains marked red with Kumkum) and said, "Megha, draw a Trident" and disappeared. Hearing Baba's words he eagerly opened his eyes but did not see Baba, but saw only rice grains spread here and there. He then went to Baba, told Him about the vision and asked permission to draw Trident. Baba said, "Did you not hear my words asking you to draw a Trident ? It was no vision but direct order, and my Megha said, "I thought it was a vision." Baba rejoined, "I require no door to enter. I have no form nor any extension ; I always live everywhere. I carry on, as a wire-puller, all the actions of the man who trusts Me and merges in Me".

Megha returned to the Wada and drew a red Trident on the wall near Baba's picture. Next day

a Ramadasi Bhakta came from Poona, saluted Baba and offered Him Pindi (an image of Shiva). At this time Megha also turned up there. Baba said to him, "See, Shankar has come, protect (i.e. worship) Him now". Megha was surprised to see Pindi following Trident immediately. Then also in the Wada, Kakasaheb Dixit was standing with a towel on his head after having taken his bath and was remembering Sai, when he saw a Pindi before his own vision. While he was wondering about this, Megha came and showed him the Pindi presented to him by Baba. Dixit was happy to know that this Pindi exactly tallied with one he saw a few minutes before in his vision. In a few days after the drawing of the Trident was complete, Baba installed the Pindi near the big picture which Megha was worshipping. The worship of Shiva was dear to Megha and by arranging the drawing of the Trident and the installation of the Pindi, Baba confirmed his faith therein.

After continuous service of Baba for many years, doing regular worship and Arati every noon and evening Megha passed away in 1912. Then Baba passed His hands over his corpse and said, "This was true devotee of Mine". Baba also ordered that at His own expense the usual funeral dinner should be given to the Brahmmins, and that order was carried out by Kakasaheb Dixit.

We left for the holy place Sri Kukke Subrahmanya and reached at 8-30 p.m. I wanted to spend nearly the whole night in prayer and meditation but owing to tiredness slept at 11-30 p.m. Early in the

morning at 5 a.m. we went to the temple and spent time in attending Puja of Sri Lord Subrahmanya till 7-30 a.m.

Kukke Subrahmanya is situated in a picturesque surroundings at the feet of Western Ghats in the Sullia taluk of Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka State. The Subrahmanya Swamy temple is one of the famous temples of South India. This place is directly connected by road from Bangalore, Mysore, Mangalore, Udipi, Dharmasthala and other places. Direct buses are moving between Subrahmanya and these places.

### **Kshetra Purana**

Kukke Subrahmanya is on the banks of river Dhara. According to Hindu Mythology Lord Kumaraswamy came to this place after killing the demon ruler Taraka, Shoorapad-masura and others in a war ; and the Lord washed his Shakti Ayudha (a battle-axe of the type of a bayonet) in this river. From there onwards the river is famous as Kumaradhara.

After his battle with the demons Lord Kumara-swamy came to the top of Kumara parvatha along with his brothers Lord Ganesha, Veerabahu and other aides. He was received by Lord Indra along with other Gods ; pleased by the success of the war Indra prayed the Lord to be kind enough to marry his daughter Devasena. This was agreed upon courteously and the marriage took place on the banks of Kumaradhara on 'Margashira Suddha Shashti' (The Shashti on the first half of Marga-

shira Masa.) Lord Kumaraswamy also gave a darshan to Vasuki, the head of the Nagas, who was making a penance here. Vasuki prayed the Lord to stay along with him permanently in the place and the Lord blessed Vasuki with the boon.

From that time it is believed that the Lord has made his spiritual presence in this shrine along with his wife Devasena and Vasuki. Every year a famous car festival (Champa Shashti) is being held here on 'Margashira Shuddha Shashti' with special poojas of the Lord.

Demons (Asuras) were, in ancient times lived outside and gave trouble to good people. Now in this age of Kaliyuga, the demons live only inside us, that is in the minds of all.

Only demoniac propensity dominates the whole of the mind. We are having day to day a battle between the good and the bad inside us. To conquer (the enemy inside us) our evil thoughts we need a powerful warrior. Who but the Lord and His sacred name will be our dependable and the most powerful support.

After attending a marriage, we left Kukke for Bangalore at 2 p.m. and passing through zig-zag road surrounded by valley greenary forests and hills and hillocks forming all serenity and scenic beauty. When our vehicle was passing through a cardamom plantation I felt and got a gentle and sweet breeze blowing on me. Then I thought how fortunate I would be if Guru's sweet and gentle breeze blow on me? When we were near the village Balanur our driver put on the lights of the vehicle as a

caution for the vehicles coming from opposite side. Seeing the light a lorry driver stopped his vehicle. When our van was very near the lorry, car driver coming from the opposite side drove his vehicle speedily in between the lorry and our van striking and scratching it. The occupants of the car stopped the car and came to us with their driver and asked him to beg pardon of us. They expressed that God averted a major accident and saved both the occupants of the car and van. I thought as I have taken permission of my Istadevatha Sai Baba and my Guru and worshipping Sri Manjunatha and Sri Subrahmanya we were all saved. We reached our place safely.

What are the duties to be performed at a holy place ?

In this connection Sri Ramakrishna Deva said, 'Prostrations with devotion, japa, that is, repeating God's name, taking the water in which the feet of the venerable deity have been washed, chanting aloud various stotras, hymns, offering alms to the poor and the needy, these should be performed. While on a pilgrimage, a bound soul spends all his time in carrying and looking after the small bundles of his wife. He remains busy in rolling his son on the temple courtyard and making him drink the water in which the feet of the venerable deity have been washed. As a result he does not find any time to sit quietly and meditate.

If it is necessary to go on pilgrimage Sri Ramakrishna Deva said, "If you attain devotions right here where is the need to go on a pilgrimage ?"

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Sri Sai Baba came to the village of Shirdi as it was his Guru's place and lived there for 60 years, but he never stirred out of Shirdi beyond 3 or 4 miles and he never allowed his staunch devotees, to go on pilgrimage. The following story is an example.

### **Das Ganu's Bath in Prayag**

The Hindus think that a bath in the holy tirth of Prayag where the Ganga and Yamuna meet, is very meritorious and thousands of pilgrims go there at periodical times to have the sacred bath there. Once Das Ganu thought that he should go to Prayag for a bath and came to Baba to get His permission for doing so. Baba replied to him—"It is not necessary to go for doing so long. Our Prayag is here, believe me." Then wonder of wonders! When Das Ganu placed his head on Baba's feet, out came or flowed streams of Ganga and Yamuna water from both the toes of Baba. Seeing this miracle, Das Ganu was overwhelmed with feelings of love and adoration and was full of tears. Inwardly he felt inspired and his speech burst forth into a song in praise of Baba and his Leelas.

Acharya Shankara warned his disciple Padmapada when the latter wanted to go on pilgrimage. He described specifically endless difficulties of pilgrimage. The disciple disobeyed Guru's warning and went on pilgrimage and suffered both physically and mentally. On return he asked for forgiveness from his guru Acharya.

The holy saints go on pilgrimage not for their own benefit but for the benefit of the ordinary

people as they cannot afford expenses of pilgrimage.

Sri Ramakrishna towards the year 1868 undertook a pilgrimage to holy places. The chief places visited were Varanasi and Vrindavan. At Varanasi he had a very wonderful vision. He experienced the whole place as a city actually made of gold and not of mud and stones. Another wonderful vision of his was of how Shiva imparted the Tarakbrahma (The saving Mantra) to Jivas dying at Varanasi.

The holy Mother Sarada Devi also undertook pilgrimage.

Shortly after, on 30 August 1880, accompanied by a party of devotees, she started on a pilgrimage to North India to console her grief-stricken heart. On the way she halted at Deoghar, Varanasi, Ayodhya and went as far as Vrindaban, where she stayed for about a year. While she was witnessing the evening service at the temple of Vishwanatha at Varanasi, she fell into an ecstatic mood and that state persisted even while she was returning to her place of lodging. At Varanasi she met the great saint—Swami Bhaskarananda, and was much impressed by him.

At Vrindaban she practised hard Tapasya, and her feelings were greatly stirred by the sight of the places associated with Sri Krishna, Radha and his other companions. Was not her case exactly like that of Radha when she was separated from her Lord? When she met Yogin-Ma at Vrindaban, where she had gone earlier, she began to weep like

a helpless child. That mood lasted for a few days till she was pacified by having a vision of the Master. At Vrindaban she would be so much absorbed in Japa and meditation that she did not feel at that time that flies were making sores on her face. Sometimes in exalted mood she would go alone to the sandy banks of the Yamuna, wherefrom her companions had to bring her back. It is said that at Kala Babu's house she was so absorbed in Samadhi that she could be brought down to the earthly plane only with considerable effort, after repeatedly uttering the name of the Lord in her ears. These high spiritual moods would be alternated by simple and unsophisticated behaviour just like that of an innocent infant child. She once circumambulated the sacred area associated with Sri Krishna's life—as do the orthodox Vaishnavas—on foot, though she was suffering from rheumatism ; and her companions noticed that at the places sanctified by the memory of Sri Krishna she would have an exalted mood.

While staying at Vrindaban, she once saw a vision that the Master was asking her to give initiation to Swami Yogananda who stayed with her as an attendant. At first she paid no attention to it, but the experience was humility, hesitated to give initiation to anyone, but when she learnt that the Master had not given him any formal initiation and that he too had a vision similar to hers, she agreed and gave him initiation. Perhaps this is the first initiation she gave to anybody, for it is not definitely known whether she initiated Sarada (Swami



Trigunatitananda) whom the Master sent to her for that purpose at Dakshineswar.

In 1911 March holy Mother visited this place (Bangalore). By the side of main Mandir of Ramakrishna Ashram there is a rock called holy Mother's rock sanctified by her sitting there engrossed in prayer and meditation. This rock is a holy place for every visitor and devotee.

Swami Vivekananda travelled the length and breadth of the country and foreign nations. Vivekananda Rock at Kanyakumari is a great monument for his visit which is a holy place for every visitor.

Swami Ramdas of Anandashram, Kerala visited many places in India and foreign countries.

He visited Srirangam, Rameswaram, Madura, Chidambaram, Pondicherry, Ramana Ashram, Tirupati, Jaganathpuri, Dakshineswar, Kashi, Jagannath temple, Himalaya, Mathura, Gokul and Vrindavan, Ajmer, Dwarka, Panchavati, Tapovan, Trimbakeswar, Pandharpur and Sri Siddharudha Swami. He says god is every where. I cannot refrain from stating that Sri Ma Anandamayee visited Bangalore in 1979. 108 Kannikas Puja was held for which donation was collected. A sum of Rs. 75,000/- was handed over to Ma. She added Rs. 25,000/- from her own resource and gave it to the people of Karnataka for better utilization. Accordingly, a huge Sri Anandamayi Bhagavath Bhavan stands on a monument for Ma's visit to Bangalore.

Ma also said, "Look, when seeing only a stone in a living one does not awaken to the fact of its being

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Siva whereas, when the idea arises that it is Siva, one does not look upon it as a stone.

If we want to get benefit from pilgrimage, we should not think of quality and quantity of the idol but its name given to it as Siva, Rama, Krishna etc.

A question may arise what is the use of worshipping trees, mountains, rivers and idols in temples during pilgrimage. Trees, mountains, land, rivers are providing immense material benefits for the humanity. Generally if a man do a little benefit to another man the recipient thanks the giver. In the same way worshipping these things is a thanksgiving item.

Spiritually, these things are models and symbols to reach highest spirituality for God realization.

The Science stands on the basis of reason whereas religion stands on the basis of faith. In Science to get higher objects, first models and symbols are used but they are not thrown away after use but they are preserved carefully and safely. In religion idol, river and trees are revered and maintained carefully and safely.

Since the earliest periods of human civilization the Himalayas has inspired lofty emotions. The Indo-Aryans of the Vedic times felt the pervasive power of these mountains in many ways. The Rig-Veda (10.121) extols Hiranyagarbha, the Personal God behind this universe. To him of right belong by his own power the snow-clad mountains, the world streams and the sea.' The Bhumi-sukta

of the Atharva-Veda (12.1) speaks again : ‘Your hills, O Earth, your snow-clad mountain peaks, your forests, may they show us kindness’. Rig-Veda (1.154) again refers to the ‘Bull who resides upon the mountains’. The most of the Himalayan streams brought divine feelings to the seers of Rig-Veda (10.94). : ‘O rocks, O mountains, swiftly clashing, you bring to God’s ears your rhythmic din.’ The rhythmic din of Hara Hara Vyom Vyom, the Himalayan pilgrims will always hear when the rushing streams fall like thunder with the sound of Vyom, Vyom on the rocks, and then flow out in frightening speed with the sound Hara, Hara. (Prabhuddha Bharatha)

Swami Vivekananda says, “By Karma Jnana Bhakti and Yoga, by one or more or all of these the vision of Paramatman is obtained.

In my humble opinion except Bhakti other paths are somewhat hard and difficult.

Polgai Alwar (Saint of South India) says :

Oh, poor souls, if you cannot learn the Vedas, don’t worry. There is a simple way that is of chanting Lord Madhava’s name. The quintessence of Vedic learning is only this much i.e. learning to chant constantly the names of the Lord of Sri.

The essence of Vedas is in Arm signifies the Supreme Lord only. Gitacharya says Satatam Kritayantoman. The constant chanting of the Lord’s name is the essence of the Vedas.

The weak and the old should not go on pilgrimage. Recent Mahamahamastakabhishemam at

Kumbhakonam (T. N.) turned into a blood bath and about 60 people died in stampede.

Srimannarayana is the Supreme person to be desired without devotion to whom any sacrifice performed, chanting of the Vedas, pilgrimages to holy places, baths in holy rivers and the like are all a waste.

Mukundamala  
(Verse 23)

May He (the Lord) protect us together !  
 May He nourish us both together !  
 May we work together with great vigour !  
 May our studies shine and be effective !  
 May we not hate others !  
 Om  
 Let there be peace, peace, peace.

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How can one be a human being without fortitude ?  
 To attain to Truth one has to endure all hardships,  
 ever abiding in patience. It is the obstacles that  
 give birth to patience.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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A person who does not for the love of God and with a cheerful heart, acquit himself of whatever responsibility that may fall to his lot any time, will find life excessively burdensome and never be able to accomplish anything. Man's duty—more especially for those who have made the Supreme Quest their one and only aim—is to work joyfully for the uplift of the world, with the conviction that all service is His service. Work done in such a spirit helps to purify both mind and heart.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

“Manmana Bhava, Madbhakto Madyaji Mam Namaskuru Mamevaishyasi Satyam Te Pratijane Priyo'si Me.-88/65”

“Fix your mind on Me ; be devoted to Me ; sacrifice yourself to Me and prostrate before Me.”

Sitaramdas explained these by saying that if you could not do anything and could not practise other forms of Sadhana, all that you need to do was to fix your mind on Him. If you could not do that then only do his Puja. If you could not do even this, then only do Namaskar ; that everyone could do and it could be easily done. So Namaskar, Namaskar and Namaskar was his way to success in his Sadhana and everybody else's.

—Shree Shree Sitaramdas Onkarnath

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# Sri Anandamayi Ma : Divine Play of the Spiritual Journey

Bithika Mukerji

[ *Continued from previous issue* ]

The rumor of an extraordinarily divine personality in the guise of a young housewife residing at Shahbagh spread throughout the town of Dhaka. People sought introductions to Bholanath in order to have an audience with Sri Anandamayi Ma. The pattern of gatherings around her was set by Bholanath. If he knew the male visitors personally or if they were vouched for by friends, he would usher them in to her presence and wished that she should answer their questions. Women, on the other hand, could effect a more direct approach. Sri Anandamayi Ma would greet them with a smile and unroll cane-work mats for them to sit on. She would then converse with them and inquire about their welfare.

Sri Anandamayi Ma gave no spiritual guidance unless it was her *kheyala* to do so. These early devotees wished for nothing better than the privilege of staying in close proximity to her and gazing upon her divine person. For the onlookers the radiance of her countenance and the extraordinary aura which characterized even her most ordinary behavior and speech were nothing short of their idea of divinity. She was hailed as Kali, Durga, Saraswati,

in accordance with the predilections of her audience.

At about this time, the miraculous became a prominent feature of her life. Sri Anandamayī Ma said that yogic powers come naturally to a *sadhaka*; he should not be distracted by them or make use of them for worldly goals. In her case, she hardly made any deliberate use of these yogic powers, although at times their abundance caused them to flow out of her just as water spills out naturally from an overfull pitcher. The world is fascinated by the display of even an infinitesimal part of the spiritual wealth which accrues to a *sadhaka*, and since she was at this time playing the role of *sadhaka*, she naturally created an atmosphere of the miraculous which affected all who came to her.

Sri Anandamayī Ma came to be known as the "Ma of Shahbagh," then later "Ma of Dhaka". Then she became simply Mataji for the rest of India and the lands outside its confines. The small familylike gatherings at Shahbagh expanded into the larger family of the devotees of Dhaka ultimately to include the immense clan of her devotees throughout the world.

Every aspect of Sri Anandamayī Ma's life is a complete totality in itself; it spans the full spectrum of her personality. For instance, the healing power of her touch, glance, or word was a constant feature of her personality. Sometimes a spontaneous glance of compassion would be enough to remedy the ills of the body and the mind of a devotee, or his

family. The many states of contemplation (*samadhi*) which involved the complete suspension of all bodily activities and functions, coupled with an inner experience of the plenitude of bliss, were as natural to her as playfulness is for a child. In her childhood, these states were regarded as fits of absent-mindedness or daydreamings or just sleep. Nor did these states cease when she was no longer engaged in spiritual discipline. They happened on occasions throughout her life. Moreover, as in her childhood so later as well, she never expressed a desire or wish but always attuned herself to the wishes of the people around her. This "adaptability" remained with her even when her wishes were of great importance to her devotees. Even her closest companion could not say definitely whether he was truly carrying out her wishes, because it was always a personal interpretation of the *kheyala* of Sri Anandamayi Ma.

To divide her life into her childhood, marriage, housekeeping, or *sadhana* is merely a convenient way of dealing with a vast subject. There were no stages in her life. She played the role (*lila*) of being a little girl, a young housewife, a *sadhaka* with as much delight as she performed the play (*lila*) of being a tireless wanderer over the land of India in subsequent years. Her "play" (*lila*) was not just play-acting ; she did not just assume a roll or pretend to be what she was not : she truly was a child, a young housewife, and later a guide for those who had need for her help in their spiritual endeavors.



### The Bird on the Wing

Sri Anandamayi Ma sometimes described herself as a "bird on the wing" (*uda pakhi*). A bird alights at random on any tree and takes to the air again to perch on some other. Similarly, after leaving Shahbagh, Sri Anandamayi Ma began to travel so extensively that it became a way of life for her and her close companions. To be more precise, Sri Anandamayi Ma's travels can be described better as aimless wanderings, because no plans were made beforehand or funds provided for the purpose. Like all other events of her life, this mode of existence also came about without any special contrivance on anybody's part. A suggestion would be made to go on a pilgrimage; a party would assemble and the journey would take place. Sri Anandamayi Ma on such occasions always took along with her such men and women of her or Bholanath's family who by themselves would never have had the chance to travel out of their villages or towns. Wherever she went, she was always the central figure of a large crowd of men, women, and children. She managed with ease to hold together without tension the life of a thoughtful and kind matron of a large family and a mendicant's life of aimless peregrinations. It is not that this was seen as such by the travelers. In her presence, the hardships of impromptu travel became adventure full of marvelous experiences which enriched the lives of all who took part in it.

For many years her mode of travel was something like this; she would arrive at a railway sta-

tion and suggest that they board the first train available. This decided the direction of the journey. Somebody in the party would suggest the name of a famous temple, or a holy site *en route*, and they would get off the train to visit it. Arriving at a town, they would proceed to a local inn (*dharamsala*) for pilgrims where travelers are allowed to stay for three days. If the party was small, Sri Anandamayi Ma would stay on the open veranda of a temple, or even under trees in the open. On other occasions more organized parties would form to visit holy towns on the occasion of religious festivals.

Sri Anandamayi Ma's companions were not chosen or selected deliberately. All who wished to go with her went along if they were in a position to do so. Sometimes it so happened that people who had come to see her off at the railway station would board the train along with her at the last moment, because they could not tear themselves away or bid farewell to her. It made Sri Anandamayi Ma laugh very much to see all the confusion and chaos she seemed to create, but it was she who would then make ingenious suggestions to provide for her fellow travelers so that they could be comfortable while they were away from their homes.

In later years, however, this spontaneous travel was considerably curtailed: programs were announced beforehand and Sri Anandamayi Ma's travel itinerary fixed so that people might meet her or know where to go on these special occasions. Provision was made in those towns which she visited

regularly for permanent rooms for her to stay in. Ashrams were built all over the country so that she should not be obliged to stay in inns (*dharamsala(s)*).

Notwithstanding all these efforts on the part of those devoted to her service, Sri Anandamayi Ma continued to travel ceaselessly, and mostly at random. She never committed herself to any definite programs. She would say, "We shall see what happens" or "Whatever happens, happens."

To say all this is not even to touch the fringe of the manner of her relating to the world. She was not whimsical or careless of the convenience of others. She was most considerate, kind, and mindful of the requirements of the people around her. The last effort undertaken on her behalf brought forth a showering of blessings and a living acknowledgment which is not easily surpassed. To underscore the same point it may be said that just as she never did or said anything to disturb her families or neighbors, so in later years she demonstrated how perfectly in tune she was with her constantly changing surroundings. New places or outwardly alien cross-sections of society were for her familiar ; she was never a stranger or a traveler to distant lands. She said :

I see the world as a garden. Men, animals, creatures, plants, all have their appointed places. Each in its particularity enhances the richness of the whole. All of you in your variety add to the wealth of the garden and I enjoy the multiplicity. I merely walk from one corner of the garden to the other.

Why do you grieve so if I am not visible to you for a while ?

The truth of this statement has been demonstrated by the fact that when speaking to individuals or congregations she was never at a loss for a response. With consummate artistry she could endlessly delight any gathering, whether of scholars, businessmen, monks, students, villagers, or sophisticates from the metropolises of the world. The world was home for her, and all people were her own people.

### **Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma**

Sri Anandamayi Ma attracted to her presence multitudes of people of all age groups and coming from all walks of life. Differences of religions, social status, caste, country, or cultural tradition became fluid in her presence because she respected everyone and gave of herself unstintingly to all who came. In this reciprocity lay the secret of the mystery of her overwhelming attraction, which radiated around her physical presence.

She had her own explanation for this phenomenon, which held in thrall everyone who found himself in her vicinity. In later life she used to say that although her body was aged she was a little child and, as such, was a friend to all children of the world. Their parents were like her own parents. What could be more natural than that children would love their "friend" and all parents would look upon "a child" with loving care, for a child is a natural recipient of love. So it was no wonder

that she was a well-beloved friend or a child dear to the heart of all who came close to her.

Sri Anandamayi Ma never delivered speeches ; how could an “untutored child” presume to teach her elders ? If, however, anybody could elicit a response from her, then he was welcome to make the effort. Her body was like a musical instrument which when played emits a resonance. It was for the interlocuter to draw answers from her. Just as the quality of music depends on the skill of the musician, so also her answers were geared to the need of the questioner as well as to his capacity for understanding and assimilation.

The truth of such statements does not belie the fact that Sri Anandamayi Ma did have something to say to all those who approached her for guidance. She in general elaborated upon the following theme in countless ways, weaving into most of her answers to different queries :

God alone is the one and only truly worthwhile concern for man —all else is pain and in vain (*hari kathai katha aur sab vrtha, vyatha*).

She did not deny man’s right to occupy himself with things other than God, but that is the way to self-forgetfulness. She would say :

To know himself is the supreme calling for man, to realize that the tabernacle of the world must not be substituted for his true home.

To the question “Should one renounce the world ?”, she would respond :

No, why ? Where is the place where God is not ? The natural way of life itself should be

transformed into the spiritual way of life. In fact there is nothing which can be "other" to God ; so properly speaking to live in the world is to be on way to Self-realization. Since this perspective has been lost to us we perforce must speak in the language of "otherness to God".

To realize one's Self means to discover that there is naught else except God. God and God alone is and all else is God only. God's true being cannot be described, for when speaking of "being" there is the opposite of "non-being". When trying to express Him by language, He becomes imperfect. All the same, in order to use words He is spoken of as *sat-cit-ananda* (being-consciousness-bliss). Because He is, there is being, and because He is Knowledge Itself, there is consciousness ; and to be conscious of that being is indeed bliss ; this is why He is called *saccidananda* but in reality He is beyond bliss and non-bliss.

The human condition is inescapably a state of fragmented existence. This disjointed way of life causes disquietude of the mind and a longing for peace and tranquillity. Man has it in himself to rise from a state of perennial wanting to the ever-lasting state of Self-realization, for Who indeed are You ? You yourself are God !

The following question was put to her by a young Irish journalist many years ago :

Is there no substance to me as an individual ?  
Is there nothing in me that is not God ?

Sri Anandamayi Ma answered :

No. Even in “not being God” there is only God alone. Everything is He. You are now in a state in which God is present in the guise of absence, Contemplate the One present even in the guise of absence !

To the question “How should one proceed ?”, Sri Anandamayi Ma sometimes gave the following answer :

The rhythm of worldly existence is in a way a shadow of the cosmic rhythm in so far as all men are ceaselessly involved in the pursuit of worldly desires, which engender more desires in such a way that there is no relief or respite from this revolving cycle which is the order of time. In order to break this stranglehold, one must put in a thin wedge to check the force. With constant effort this wedge may be widened to envelop the entirety of the circle so that the same rhythm is caught up to the cosmic one. The rhythm from within the time circle may be transformed into the timeless rhythm.

Sri Anandamayi Ma herself has described what could be called her special message to the world : she has explained what she meant by the “thin wedge”. In the round of twenty-four hours, she requested everyone to dedicate just fifteen minutes to God. Every day at the same hour for fifteen minutes one should take a respite from the world and devote oneself totally to the remembrance of God. Any image or any name of God can be used as an aid for this purpose. It is not absolutely necessary to make a drastic change in one’s daily

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routine. If one is unable to sit alone, and meditate quietly, one may simply turn one's attention inward for that short period of time. The important thing is to choose an hour when one is least likely to be disturbed and adhere to it strictly. The fifteen minutes will gradually expand to fill the entire twenty-four hours and the time cycle will become an unbroken round of recollection or self-containment.

She has developed the same theme in other ways also. In response to a question for specific instructions, Sri Anandamayi Ma said :

Once a month or week, and gradually more frequently if possible, one should make a strong resolve to live only in the sphere of Truth. On that day one should eat moderately, watch one's speech and actions carefully to avoid the least incorrect utterance or unworthy behaviour and the passions and emotions should be controlled. One should look upon one's husband or wife and one's children as manifestations of the Divine and render service to all the members of the family (including servants) in this spirit. Even if there should be occasions for anger, or other provocations, one should respond with calmness and not be jolted out of a tranquil frame of mind. In spite of a few or even many failures in the beginning, one should persevere till the goal of perfect control of thought, speech and action is attained. If one member of a family practises this, then the whole family will feel the calming effects of that one day.



Sri Anandamayi Ma paused for a moment and added amid laughter :

May be some naughty children will take advantage of you, but it will pass. When you feel confident of yourself then you may increase the number of days you practice this in a week. The aim should be that this become a way of life rather than just a special occasion. On those days some time should be allotted to the reading of scriptures, meditation and the recitation of God's names (*namajapa*). In a short time this will enable you to turn inward and be in tune with the rhythm of your own life-breath which links you to the Cosmic Breath (*prana*). In this way you can hope to realize your own inner Self, because who knows as what auspicious moment one may get caught up in that universal rhythm !

Sri Anandamayi Ma untiringly repeated the necessity of restraining the powers of the world which distract the mind and create a sense of want. The secret is to consider everything as belonging to God and oneself as a servant. One should discipline oneself to life in the belief that there is naught else except the Divine Will in operation in the world. She did not encourage anybody to neglect his duty in the world or to take his obligations to his family, society and country lightly, but she continuously sounded the one theme of God-realization like the constant drone of the keynote which fits in with every tune. She stressed the importance of the world as the necessary ground from where the quest for Self-realization begins. She would say, "To

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aspire to the realization of Truth is all that is worthy of a human being.”

It is to be remembered that Sri Anandamayi Ma spoke to audiences who were under the influence of the spirit of secularism. She readily entered into discussions regarding problems which were important to modern men. She was fully aware of the crisis situation of our times : her response to a specific question in this context is very typical.

“Will man ever destroy this world and himself?” someone asked ; to which she replied :

Man has certainly not got the power to create, preserve or destroy. In Him whose play all this is, all possibilities are contained. The “destruction” of one’s Self virtually amounts to the destruction of the universe. [To live in forgetfulness of one’s supreme calling to be in search of the Self is called “destruction.”] Where this Self is, there the world exists. To be destroyed lies in the very nature of that which is of the world and therefore perishable ; It has always been destroyed, it is being destroyed and it will be destroyed. But where He is and He alone, who is to destroy whom ? There the question of destruction cannot arise. Where is He who is That Self ? Find out ! The Self is not subject to destruction. The ceaseless endeavor to know that Self is man’s bounden duty.

On another occasion she was approached by a Swamiji from the Ramakrishna Mission. He spoke in some anguish regarding the rising influence of the secular in the holy land of Bharatvarsa (India). He said, “The Indians are thoughtlessly imitating

the West, whereas the people of the West come here on their spiritual quest !” Sri Anandamayi Ma said :

It is in the nature of the world [*jagat*, “that which moves”) to undergo change. Whatever was, is not anymore ; all that is now will not remain. This coming into being and passing away is the essence of the world. Yet, because of this transience there is stability, permanence.

Did you not say that Bharatvarsa (India) is holy land ? This is indeed true ; because that is so, those who seek spiritual solace, are able to find it here. If those you call foreigners find what they are seeking in this land, why should it be a reason for chagrin ? Are they not your brothers too ? Why “brothers”, they are indeed you, yourself. God is disporting himself in countless ways. The ways of His play are infinite. It is now like this, may be anon it will be different.

The Swamiji was not satisfied. He asked bluntly, “Can we not hope for the recovery of the glory of India ?”

Don’t you say God is all-auspicious ? May be the change you desire is in the offing because He is manifesting Himself as such thoughts in the minds of many persons such as you.

The Swamiji desisted saying that she had parried his questions but not answered them.

The conversation is indicative of Sri Anandamayi Ma’s aloofness from engaging in talks about the future. She did not project herself as a savior of mankind. To a direct question such as this :

“Why are you in the world ?” she replied : “In this world ? I am not anywhere, I am myself reposing within myself.”

What is your work ?

I have no work. For whom can I work since there is only One ?<sup>4</sup>

Inevitably a tiny part of Sri Anandamayi Ma’s “teaching” could be incorporated in this article. Perhaps it would be more realistic to conclude this section with a variety of her responses to questions from different persons.

If you have no mission to fulfill or message to give, why do you tell us to worship God ?

Sri Anandmayi Ma :

If you do not ask, then I have nothing to say, but if you ask, and if it is my *kheyala*, then certainly I shall tell you about the better way of life (*sreyas*).

Your sorrow, your pain, your agony is indeed my sorrow ; this body understands everything ..... Whenever you have the chance, laugh as much as you can. By this all the rigid knots in your body will be loosened. But to laugh superficially is not enough. Your whole being must be united in laughter both outwardly and inwardly. Do you know what this kind of laughter is like ? You simply shake with merriment from head to foot, so that one cannot tell which part of your body is most affected. What you usually do is to laugh with your mouth while your mind and emotions are not involved. But I want you to laugh with your whole countenance, with your whole heart and

souls, with all the breath of your life. In order to be able to laugh in this way you must have implicit faith in the power of the Self and try to bring the outer and inner parts of your being into perfect harmony. Do not multiply your needs, nor give way to the sense of want but live a life of spotless purity. Making the interests of others your own seek refuge at His feet in total surrender. You will then see how the laughter that flows from such a heart defeats the world.

Ma, say that you belong to us !

I belong everywhere and to everybody.<sup>5</sup>

### Conclusion

The yearning to find a meaning in life knows no boundaries of time and space, history or geography, but encompasses a wide spectrum of ideals and visions of the true goal of human life. This polarity would seem to comprise the spiritual history of mankind. The experiences of this century have taught us the necessity of paying heed to all expressions of this need to relate meaningfully, to a world we ourselves have created so we seek to learn from the inchoate thought patterns of ancient cultures as well as the the strident voices of prescriptive ideologies.

In India the quest for this meaningfulness assumes the form of finding ways of relating to its past heritage. This age of progress with its swift and cataclysmic changes is bewildering in its effect of transvaluation of values. India tries to effect a middle way between the forces of modernization

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and her rooted conviction in the reality of the timeless order of ultimate Truth. Perhaps it is a sign of hope that in India there is no awareness of any lost horizon. The secret of India's continuing resilience to the forces of radicalizations lies in the simultaneity of the two opposing forces which ever remain entwined in the very fabric of her being, namely, pull of the world, where a sense of duty must prevail, evil be suppressed and justice upheld ; this is counterbalanced by the call to renunciation and a striving for that supreme knowledge of the One Reality which liberates.

Rabindra Nath Tagore once wrote that the different characters of the sages Vasistha and Visvamitra illustrate well the contrast between the development of the East and the West. The former was a recluse, the latter a robust man of action ; the former lived away from the world, the latter taught the young prince Rama how to fight the forces of evil in the world ; the former whispered the mantra of renunciation into the young man's ear and the latter told him how to rule his kingdom righteously. The poet wonders if the two sages will ever meet on friendly terms so that the world may witness the unfolding of new vistas in the future.

Can it not be said here that India herself has reconciled the visions of the two seers insofar as both sages spoke to Rama, who was both an exemplary king as well as an ideal renunciate. India to this day worships Rama, who paid heed to both his teachers.

It is a fact that Indian spirituality is grounded in its myths and that even modern India does not find it difficult to hold together the teachings of Visvamitra and Vasistha. Even so there is at present a possibility of a rift between them at a deeper level. In the rarefied atmosphere of scientific clarity, can the ancient gods continue to speak meaningfully and overcome modern skepticism and disbelief? We can observe the beginnings of a separation between religion and spirituality in the sense that it appears possible to be without faith in God and yet strive to merge the human consciousness into a higher consciousness on the cosmic level.

This separation does not belong to the spirit of India. India likes to go on believing in ritualistic worship of her many deities, her religious festivals, her pilgrimage, holy rivers and mountains, sacred animals and trees and shrubs and stones—in fact, her mythology in its entirety. Is it possible to continue to believe in mythos as a dimension of Truth, not in opposition to but in harmony with logos?

Sri Anandamayi Ma fully understood the existential implications of the present age of technology and by her way of being in the world put it in a correct perspective for those who wished to see beyond it. That God is as much present in the world given over to scientific research as in the age of “mythology”, we may say, is the message conveyed by her sojourn on earth. She made it possible once more to talk meaningfully of the one

Reality which as the beautiful unity of vision and resonance was revealed as mantra in the poetic experience of the Vedic seer. Just as as a mirror shines like the sun in the light of the sun, so did the tradition of the Vedas, the *Purana(s)*, the *Agama(s)*, and the *smrtis* become actual because she lived it as self-evident truth.

Indians think that the soil of Bharatvarsa (India) is holy. Once in a while we see in India not merely a teacher or just a saint, but an exemplar of the way of life which is the quintessence of her spirit. India cherishes a coming together of heaven and earth, a commingling of the timeless order and the order of time, a meeting of horizons of the eternal yearning in man and the descent of Grace. Once in a while such a dream is transformed into living experience by the presence of a Teacher who not only awakens the longing for the quest for Truth but enkindles and sustains faith in its ultimate fulfilment.

Such was Sri Anandamayi Ma.

#### Notes

- 1, *Ananda Varta* 31/3 (July 1964) 231.
2. *Ananda Varta* (May 1966) 34.
3. *Ananda Varta* 16/1 (January 1969).
4. *Ananda Varta* 26/2 (April 1979) 66
5. All citations in the essay apart from those documented from *Ananda Varta*, the official journal published from Sri Anandamayi Charitable Society, Calcutta, are taken from the multivolume biography of the saint in Bengali by Guru Priya Devi (*Sri Sri Ananda Mayi*).



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It is through the search after Truth that man can elevate himself. This he should regard in the light of a duty.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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# On the eve of New year

Nihar Ranjan Chakraborty

The year will born  
Let us sing a song  
Of oath, to undo  
Any future wrong.

Breathing so long  
Would last in,  
Longing to serve  
Let live within.

Bliss is our need  
On this holy day  
For a gloval love  
And for unknown gay.

All will be friend  
None stick to foe  
Days full of love  
Will come and go.

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# Aagamani

Nihar Ranjan Chakraborty

The sky of autumn is blue  
Fair fun play the pleasing breeze,  
Hairy petals-white of kash  
Lovingly dance down at ease.

Pink lotus blooms in pond  
To focus her beauty show,  
Shiuli cherish fragrance  
How to love to know.

Sweet music of advent  
Resounds every where  
The sense of human-mind  
To harmonise with nature.

Is it to please mother only  
That the festivity we do,  
Or to appease all the hearts  
From friend to foe ?

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# Only Love

## A Conversation with Sri Daya Mata

Linda Johnsen

“I remember once I was traveling in India, sitting in an airport, and I had *Autobiography of a Yogi* on my lap. A woman came up and said, ‘Do you know anything about Paramahansa Yogananda?’ and I said, ‘Yes I do.’ She asked, ‘Are you connected with him?’ I said, ‘Yes I am.’ She was so excited, she turned to her friend, she clapped her hands, and she said, ‘You know, I had just said yesterday, I’d give *anything* if I could just meet someone who knew Yogananda!’ I’m telling this only to show how Master’s message has touched the hearts of so many.”

The vivacious, silver-haired woman sitting with me is Daya Mata, president of Self-Realization Fellowship since 1955. Daya Mata, whose name is Sanskrit for “Mother of Compassion,” has been feted by kings and maharajahs, her rare public appearances attended by thousands, all eager to hear about her experiences with her guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, one of the best loved yoga masters of our century.

Yogananda incorporated Self-Realization Fellowship in 1935; today the society has 370 centers worldwide, a monastic community of 135 here at their international headquarters near Los Angeles, and a lay following numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Most of its members were drawn to

SRF after reading Yogananda's spiritual classic, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, which recounts the stories of some of India's greatest adepts, including his own remarkable lineage of gurus.

At about the time of the American Civil War, a railway employee named Lahiri Mahasaya took the day off to wander over Drongiri Hill in the Himalayan foothills. There he encountered a yogi named Babaji who initiated him in a special meditation technique called Kriya Yoga. Years later, Sri Yukteswar, a serious minded disciple of Lahiri with a deep interest in Western culture, decided to send an "ambassador of yoga" to America. He chose a teacher from a local boy's school, a Kriya initiate named Yogananda.

He could not have selected a finer emissary. America was almost completely ignorant of yoga and meditation when Yogananda arrived in Boston in 1920. Yogananda had a genius for explaining yoga in scientific terms his Western audience could understand. At the same time, his tremendous reverence for Christ and his contention that Jesus, after all, had been a yogi himself, allayed the concerns of many Christians that in taking up this new practice called meditation, they might be betraying their faith. Yogananda's public lectures drew thousands : his books inspired millions.

Forty years after his death, Paramahansa Yogananda's work continues to transform lives. For example, some years ago Romania's leading prizefighter stumbled across a smuggled copy of the *Autobiography*. Realizing that he could not learn

more about yoga unless he escaped to the West, he determined to win all 16 matches against the greatest fighters in the USSR, so that he could attend the world championship rounds in North America. "No one could beat me," he recounts. "I was fighting for God. Jesus and the gurus were in my fists." He defected in Canada, renounced all forms of violence, and headed directly to SRF headquarters in California, where he learned Kriya Yoga. Following the collapse of the Communist regime, he has returned to Romania to carry Yogananda's message of inner development to Eastern Europe. And at yoga centers throughout Europe, Australia and the Americas, whether they are affiliated with SRF or not, a large proportion of yoga students report that they first became interested in meditation after reading *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

Sitting with Daya Mata at the beautiful SRF international headquarters at Mount Washington, I hoped to learn more about the woman who has represented Kriya Yoga for over 35 years, and about her relationship with her legendary guru.

**You took over leadership of SRF in 1955, shortly after Yogananda's death. I hope you don't mind my saying so, but you had one *tough* act to follow. How did a shy young girl from Utah come to be head of one of the most respected yoga organizations in the world?**

From my earliest years I had a deep, abiding interest in India. I remember first learning about India in geography class. I was overwhelmed, and

I remember coming home and saying, "Mother, I will never marry. When I grow up I will go to India." About the age of 14, mother give me a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita*—the poetic one, Sir Edwin Arnold's. I remember thinking, this is so beautiful, I'm not sure I understand it. But I just responded to it. Maybe that's when my search really began.

I never thought my life would be unusual. As I became older and decided what I was going to do with my life, it was either that I would take up nursing or join the Catholic church and become a nun. Neither one appealed to me very much, but I had gotten to the point where I had sent away for some literature about it. That was when Guruji (Yogananda) came to Salt Lake. I was seeking, I was waiting, and so my mother was the one who encouraged me to go see him. She said he was going to speak at a large ball-room and come along, let's hear him. He's well spoken of.

He had already begun to speak and I was at the back of the hall just entering the door. If you ask what was the most outstanding moment of my life I would say that. *That!* The impact of his image was so great that I stood transfixed. I remember saying to myself, "This is it. He's the one that I will follow." In other words, to myself at that moment I took the vow that this is my life, and that's it. There were never any temptations, never any turning back.

Then came the great wish to come here to the ashram to live. One day his secretary said to my

mother, "You have a young daughter who has been coming here to these services. Do you think that she could help us? Could your daughter take Paramahansaji to the room where he has his interviews after the service?" And so of course I was thrilled, but also shaken.

After his talk she said to Swamiji, "This is the young lady that will escort you."

He looked at me and walked down the hall. I'm sure I was walking behind him. But I wanted to say something—I was *bursting* to say something—and I found myself impelled to say, "I want so much to come to your ashram and give my life."

He stopped just like that and looked at me very straight and these are the only words he said: "And you will." And you will! Nothing else! He didn't know my name—nothing. I remember thinking, how kind he is! He doesn't know me, he's just seen me here, and yet he's so gracious he said, "And you will."

I put the question in his lap and never mentioned it again. I came down as often as they called me to take his notes and transcribe. One day my mother asked him, "Would you come to our home for dinner one evening?"

He said, "Yes, I will." Of course we were all thrilled. He had dinner with us and then, while my sister and I went out to do the dishes, he remained with my mother in the living room. During the course of the conversation, he said, "I don't understand your daughter. She expressed a



wish to come live in the ashram but she's never mentioned it since."

Mother said, "She thinks because she expressed it, it's now for you to say—she didn't want to impose herself on you."

He said, "So *that's* it! Would you let her come?"

And mother said, "Oh yes."

He said, "Would you like to call her and tell her that?"

They called us in from the kitchen and mother said, "Please tell it to her gently, otherwise she'll faint!" I jumped up and down for joy. About two weeks later I drove down to Los Angeles, and that was the beginning of my life here.

### **What was it like, being a direct disciple of Yogananda ?**

It was discipline and kindness. The only thing he asked of us was always to be sincere and truthful. That was something no one violated around Master. If you want his wealth, be open with him. Take correction. If you're going to be steadfast to your ego, you're not going to change. You're looking for someone who will point out your flaws, who you feel is doing it not because he's angry, but because he *cares*, he wants to see you change, just as his guru, Yukteswarji, treated him. And so began those many years that I was privileged to live here, accept the training, and also to record his talks and write.

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**So much of Yogananda's love is conveyed through his books and his photographs, but I've heard that living with him was not always easy.**

No! He was not here to flatter us, and he didn't. But he was always kind, he was always appreciative, and you felt a love coming from him. From the moment you see him in the morning you hear him chanting. You see him sitting quietly and you can tell by his expression that he's lost in that other world. There was such love for God flowing from him that it overwhelmed you—it overwhelmed you. If we came into his room restless or upset with the duties or problems we had, he said, "You sit down." He wouldn't discuss it. Just sit down and meditate. He taught us to keep our minds always centered in God, and throughout all those years I can see him touching each one of us here (she indicates the space between her eyebrows) and saying, "Just keep your mind there, keep your mind with God. Make Him the polestar of your life." It's the most wonderful way to live. It's an honest, open way to live. I always pray, "Lord, let these devotees feel love." I just want to be in love with God. That's all.

During the last days of his life he said, "I will be leaving this world soon."

I said, "Oh Master, what will we do without you? You are the diamond, that's what gives off the light! All we are is just the little disciples who are here to support."

With such beautiful devotion in his eyes, and that's what touched us all, he said, "Just remember

this, when I am gone, only love can take my place.” That message of love has been given by all the teachers, every one, in every scripture. That’s what it’s all about. What else can we give God? What else? He doesn’t need our gold. He doesn’t need our wisdom—he’s much smarter than we are!

I remember once when Guruji was talking to a group of people, he said, “Each human being has some want. God also has a great desire. He has everything in this world—He has all power, all wealth, all wisdom, but one thing He hasn’t got, the only thing that is lacking. He wants your love.” I was so intoxicated! And I thought what greatness in this soul that he can stir hearts like this. And it’s so easy to love God, but it takes time. It takes time away from one’s daily activities.

**In retrospect, can you see how Yogananda was preparing you for your future role of spiritual leadership?**

Well, you will find those around in those days who will say that, of all the disciples, he was hardest on Daya Mata. He said once, “My master broke every bone in my body.” He meant that not literally. I feel I went through the same thing, but it never turned me away, and I don’t want to even give you the wrong impression. I needed to change. In all those years, never, never could I find *him* at fault. Never! Let me give you an example. Most teachers today want to be worshipped, they long to be idolized. And the moment that happens, they lose something. “I must be great because they say

I'm great." That kind of teacher can't attract a real devotee, I don't think. At any rate, we did reverence him. Sometimes we perhaps were more devoted to Guruji than he thought we should be. He wouldn't permit that. Sometimes he'd say things that were very hurtful, and I would think, "Oh my, I have so much to change in myself." As often as you felt devotion, so often Master said something harsh and pushed you away.

After some time of that I thought, "Something is wrong with *my* attitude." So I went out on that bluff and meditated. I had such determination. It meant more to me to find an answer than it did to sit there forever. And I sobbed inwardly and I prayed and I meditated, and suddenly I saw what was wrong. "Your love and devotion to me is overshadowing your love for God." I bowed my head, tears rolled down my cheeks, and I thought, "Ah, I understand!"

I started back to the hermitage, and Sister Gyanamata was just coming out of the door. "Oh there you are, dear," she said. "Master wants to see you!" I walked in—he was sitting in his study writing. I didn't say anything, I just went over and touched his feet. He just looked at me and petted me.

"*You have learned,*" he said. That, to me, is a great teacher. That's a Christlike teacher.

Three days before he left his body, he asked me to come for a ride with him. He said, "You have a lot of work to do. You must be like steel, you must be strong." So in these ways he was preparing me, but I don't mind telling you I took to my bed

for a week when I found they were going to vote me as the president, that's the truth. Yes, we all have to do some work in this world, but my consciousness was, "Let me stay in a little corner. I'll serve; I'm happy serving. But that's all."

And then he scolded me. He said, "Now you must be a *karma yogi*." And you know what that means. There are four great branches in India, *karma yoga*, *raja yoga*, *jnana yoga*, and *bhakti yoga*, and I always thought myself more as a *bhakta*. But once he said that, it helped me, because then I knew what my duty was.

He had such wisdom! I remember once, I was sitting on the floor with the other devotees and I thought, "Oh, if only Divine Mother would give me the power to echo his thoughts after he's gone! His teaching, his truth, his spirit is so beautiful, so inspiring, if just some way God would use me. I never told that to him. But I feel the same way today. Let's just forget this Daya Ma—I just want to speak of his message. That's what means everything to me."

### **Can you share with us your favorite moment with Yogananda?**

There were so many. The most outstanding was when I first beheld him. The next was when I beheld him for the last time. The day before he left his body, he asked me to join him, and he stood in front of his Guru's picture and said, "Do you realize it's a matter of hours now and I'll be gone?" It was said not with sadness, but kind of an awe.

(The following day, March 7, 1952, Yogananda was scheduled to speak at the nearby Biltmore Hotel, following a banquet in honour of an Indian ambassador.) It was arranged for him to have a room where he could sit and rest until the time of the banquet. He was very quiet, there was no talking. Talking had ceased. I kept looking at him and I could see the withdrawal. It was just as if I could see him gradually cutting all the cords that bound him to this world. As he went to the elevator to go downstairs, he turned and looked back at us with such overwhelming blessing. It was just as if a sheet of blessing was falling over all of us. And it was like a farewell. There wasn't sadness there; I don't know how to describe it except that we were lifted out of our ordinary consciousness with this blessing.

When Master was asked to speak, my heart was pounding, because I knew something was going to happen. Years before, he had said, just in a casual way, "When I go, I will go singing of my beloved India." He got up to speak and he spoke with such love. So many people's lives were changed that day, who later joined the work though they had never been interested before. He spoke with such overwhelming love. He just poured out his heart in such a sweet, simple way about his love for God, and then he quoted that poem, "Where Ganges, woods, Himalayan caves, and men dream God—I am hallowed; my body touched that sod." As he said that, he slumped to the floor.

I'll never know how my sister and I got to his side, but he had always told us if he ever went into *samadhi* to chant "Om" in his ear, so we knelt at his side to chant "Om." That was when something happened. I don't know how to describe it. I only know that as he was withdrawing from the body, a mantle of such peace, such joy, such love, seemed to be thrown over me. And I remember thinking "What is this? *What is this?*" It was so beautiful. And that stayed with me throughout all these years. If you ask how I carry on, it's only that I am not the doer. I don't want you to build up anything more about Daya Ma except to say something he did, something he gave me at that time, affected me deeply. The only life I know, the only reason for being here is God alone, and to serve my guru and his work.

**I admire the way you've incorporated spirituality into your daily life. Many of us have a hard time balancing work responsibilities, social engagements, and time for spiritual practice. How can we keep our level of inspiration steady and high?**

It is difficult keeping the balance always. But you can't keep a balance unless you've got a center. That center is God, and if you work from that center you don't lose your way in all of the conflicting and confusing avenues which are part of life. God first. When I find that's being forgotten, these devotees here know I don't hesitate to speak to them because they don't reap the rewards of their lives without having some inner relationship with God.

I once said to Master, "You've given me so much responsibility, Master, and it's very difficult to carry this on and also to have my mind with God," and I thought he was going to say something magic to me.

He looked at me and said, "Yes, I told my guru the same thing!" Everybody has to struggle for that balance. He reached it, and that's what we all must strive to reach, no matter what else we do.

How does it come? First think of God in the morning. Throughout the day think of God. It isn't difficult to do. In the Catholic religion it's called practicing the presence. In India it's called *japa yoga*. But it's better to have ten minutes of deep devotional meditation upon God than an hour of absentminded saying of prayers.

Guruji gave this illustration: When an individual falls in love, always in the background of that individual's mind is the one that he loves. And the same when the devotee loves God. He carries on all his duties in the world, but in the background of his mind is the thought of that one love, and that love influences and motivates everything he does. If Daya Ma's been able to accomplish anything, it's only because that is the foundation of her life. Bring God into all one's activities.

**You lived with Yogananda for 20 years. Can students who're just learning about Yogananda now have any real connection with him?**

Someone said to me, "You're lucky that you had Master as your guru. Now he's gone."



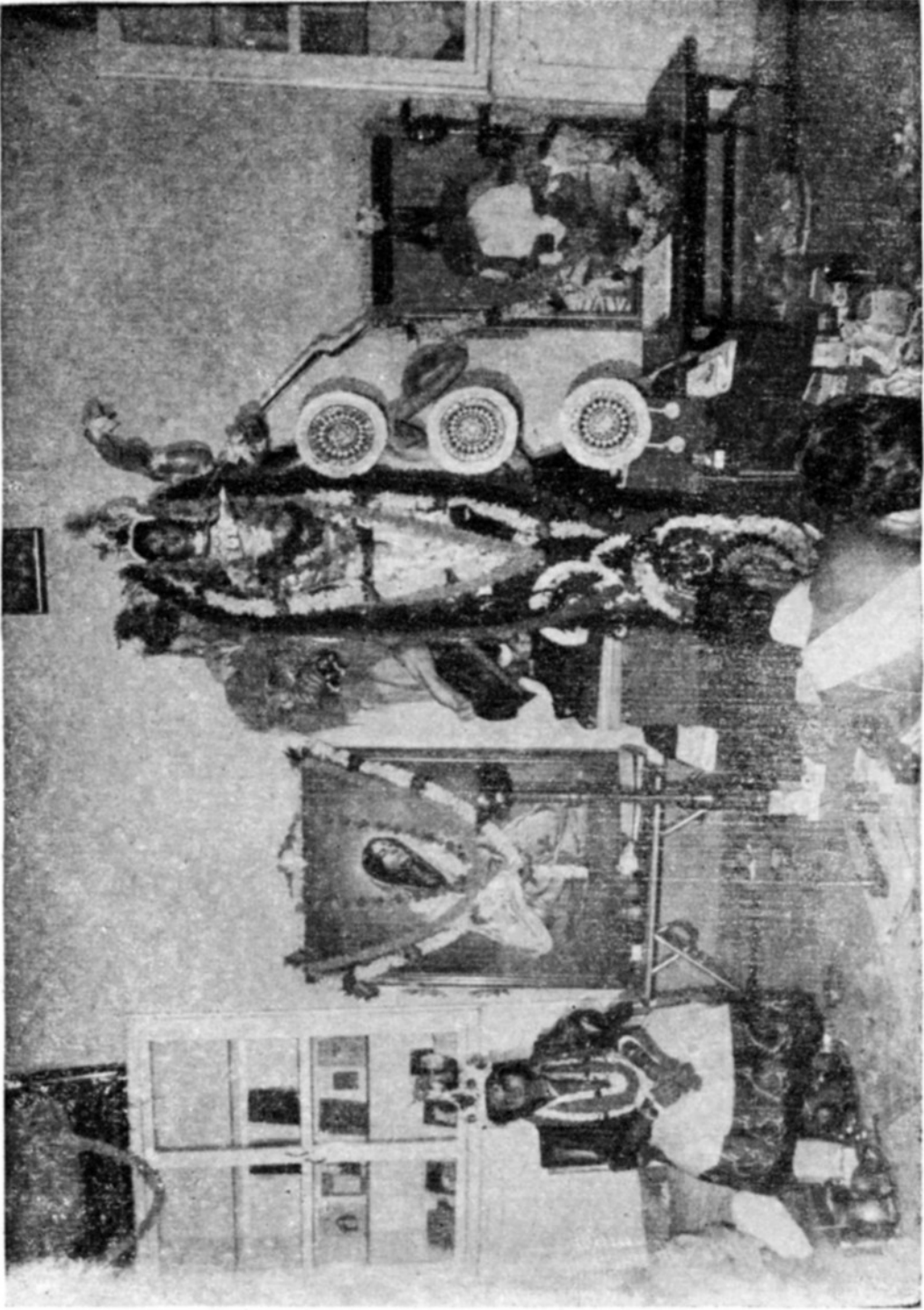
I said, "Just a moment. It isn't the amount of time you spend in the presence of the guru, it's how you absorb the teaching of the guru." Christ was born centuries before the time of St. Francis. But let me say that one of the greatest disciples he ever had was St. Francis of Assisi! Why? Francis never saw him in the flesh. But he knew him. He knew his spirit.

### **What is Kriya Yoga ?**

Master said that if we all could live to be a million years old, in the natural course of evolution we would all achieve cosmic consciousness. But no one lives that long! So Babaji brought this technique to the world. He taught that by rotating the life energy up and down the spine, it magnetizes the spine, and in doing so it draws all the energy from the rest of the body. Our attention becomes focused in the Divine; there are no distractions. Master once said to me, "If you do nothing but *kriya* in this life, you will reach there." That's its effectiveness. But you must remember that along with doing *kriya* there has to be the proper conduct as well. Now that's a very minor explanation I've given. If you're really interested, read Master's chapter on *kriya* (in his autobiography).

**Although SRF specializes in Kriya Yoga, I notice that all SRF meetings begin with a prayer to "saints and sages of all religions."**

Guruji said, "I am 1,000 percent dedicated to my guru and his teaching, but I revere all reli-



Jagadhatri Puja at Matri Mandir

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gions.” One illustration Guruji used to give was trying to reach New York. You don’t say you can only get to New York by crossing the ocean from Paris. You can reach New York from Los Angeles, from Tokyo, from India, but the point is as those planes gather over New York, they all have the same perspective—they see the same thing. There are many paths. Let’s honor them all. Seek the one that you find satisfies your needs, then be steadfast while respecting all the rest.

Daya Mata rises from her chair, glowing with the memory of her guru, and pauses to give each of us a blessing. She seems to be on fire with love. As I walk out of the room I can’t help reflecting that when Yogananda said, “Only love can take my place,” he was thinking of Daya Mata.

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*Linda Johnsen is a regular contributor to Yoga International. She is currently writing a book about India’s remarkable women saints.*

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

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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# Ashram News

## **Kankhal**

Like earlier years, this year too, Shri Shri Durga Puja, Shri Shri Laxmi Puja, Shri Shri Shyama Puja, and Annakut were celebrated with proper devotion and gaiety. From 2nd November to 8th November 1992, 43rd Samyam Saptaha was celebrated. On this occasion a large number of devotees from different places gathered in the Ashram complex. Swami Vidyanandaji, Swami Chidanandaji, Mohant Maharaj Shri Giridhar Narayan Puriji, Swami Niranjananandaji and other celebrated Mahatmas delivered courses on Upanishad, Puran and other scriptures to the devotees assembled. On the concluding day of the week Mahanam-Yagna was performed.

From 5th to 9th December, 1992 Shri Shri Gita Jayanti was celebrated. During this occasion recitation of Gita and relevant pujas were performed everyday. On the concluding day after the performance of Puja, Bhajan and Kirtan, prasadam was distributed among the devotees present.

## **Naimisharanya**

From 1st October, 1992 to 6th October, 1992 Shri Shri Durga Puja was celebrated with great grandeur. On this occasion a large number of

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devotees assembled in the Ashram complex from various parts of the country and gave it a festive look. On 11th October, 1992 Shri Shri Laxmi Puja was performed with devotion and gaiety.

### **Calcutta—Agarpara**

Like earlier years Shri Shri Durga Puja, Shri Shri Laxmi Puja, Shri Shri Kali Puja and Annakut were performed in the Agarpara Ashram with deep devotion and gaiety. On these occasions many devotees assembled in the Ashram complex. After the pujas prasadam were distributed among the devotees present.

The Annual Nam Yagna of the Ashram was celebrated this year on the 26th and 27th December, 1992. A large number of devotees attended the function. At noon prasadam was distributed among the devotees present.

### **Matri Mandir**

On 2nd November, 1992—Monday at evening the Holy Adhivas and on the 3rd November, 1992—Tuesday Shree Shree Jagadhattri Puja was celebrated with great grandeur in the head office of Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society at Matri Mandir, 57/1, Ballygunge Circular Road, Calcutta-700 019. On this occasion recitation of Shree Shree Chandi, Yagna, Puja, Bhog, Arati, Kirtan and Kumari Puja was performed with deep devotion. At noon prasadam was distributed among almost 1600 devotees who participated in the puja.

### Ranchi

From 2nd to 4th October, 1992 Shri Shri Durga Puja was celebrated with due devotion and gaiety. During the entire period the whole Ashram complex was filled with pleasing sounds of Sanskrit hymns and charming devotional songs. A large number of devotees assembled everyday during the period to offer floral tributes to Shri Shri Ma Durga. On the day of Maha-Astami, after puja prasadam was distributed among the devotees. On 11th October, 1992 Shri Shri Laxmi Puja was performed with due devotion.

On 25th October, 1992 Shri Shri Kali Puja was celebrated in a grand manner. During this occasion a large number of devotees assembled in the Ashram complex. After the puja prasadam was distributed among the devotees.

On 24th October, 1992 Annakut and on 3rd November, 1992 Shri Shri Jagadhatri Puja were performed in the Ashram.

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It is possible to practise God's Name under the most adverse circumstances. He causes everything to happen and is therefore ever near.

—Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

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## Obituary

1. The sudden death of Chabirani, wife of Shri Balaram Bakshi of Ranchi, an amiable and deeply religious lady and an ardent devotee of Shri Shri Ma, on the 6th October 1992, has shocked her relations and all who knew her.

2. On the 25th October 1992, Nupurani, a disciple of Shri Shri Ma, died at a Patna hospital with her consciousness in full. She was the wife of Dr. Bireswar (Nilmony) Ganguly, a blessed disciple of Shri Shri Ma.

3. Debjani, wife of Shri Maniklal Bakshi of Ranchi died at an young age of 26, on the 10th December 1992 at Nigeria. Lively by nature, Debjani was liked by all for her amiable disposition and dutiful nature. Her death has indeed been a shock to all her known friends.

4. Shrimati Anima Gupta, wife of Shri Amiya Gupta had reached the eternal peace at the lotus feet of Shri Shri Ma. Her pleasing manners had endeared her to all. All are mourned at her untimely death.

5. Shri Sisir Mukhopadhyaya, an ardent devotee of Shri Shri Ma, died suddenly on the 13th November 1992 on his way back from Kankhal after performing "Samyam Saptaha". His last rites were held at Kashidham. He was the Secretary of the Ranchi Ashram for a long time and was closely

connected with various developmental works of the Ashram. Sisirda's collection of "Matrigeeti" have been read in many ashrams and have inspired many to join the spiritual path. Only last April due to his efforts "Namyagna" was held at Ranchi. He was much respected for his disciplined and polite behaviour. It is no doubt a great loss to the Ashram. May his soul rest in peace at the lotus feet of the Mother.

6. On 30th September 1992 at the crack of dawn Swami Satyananda passed away chanting "Jai Guru" "Jai Ma" in her lips. Though she was suffering for the last ten years, she was looking very beautiful at the eternal time and hardly any sign of fatigue marked her face and constant invocation to God could be heard till her last breath. Apart from her weak eye sight, the death of her adult son could not deflect her devotion to her Guru. The name of "Achanchala" (non-restless) was aptly given by Shri Shri Ma. Later she was called Satyananda by Ma when once she had her bath at Sangam Kumbha Mela. Last year she was initiated as a Sannyasin by Swami Giridhar Narayan Puri on the suspicious day of Akshay Tritiya.

Before joining the religious order she was the devoted wife of Late Viraj Nath Mukherjee, once a District Judge of U. P. She was the mother of Renu and Bithu. Her entire family is centred around Mother. In their large mansion at Allahabad, Shri Shri Ma had stayed often and many a function was held there. Many Sadhus,



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Scholars and Leaders of Society had visited their house to have a darshan of Ma. As a housewife, she had entertained so many guests with great warmth and a constant smile was on her face. Her composure and self effacing nature attracted one and all.

She had composed a number of poems and songs dedicated to Mother. The last song was written on 21st November 1992.

Oh mother ! how long will keep us afar  
When do we come close  
To you when we are near  
Darkness from us goes.  
Lights will glow bright

Oh mother ! when your lamp is lit to light.

She had premonitions of her death which she shared with others. All the rites were performed in due order. We all send our deepest condolence to the bereaved family and pray to Ma for her eternal peace in the bosom of Shri Shri Ma.

7. On his way back from Naimisharanya Shri Sudhir Sikdar (Sevananda) died in a road accident. He was a very competent worker and was fully devoted to the service and welfare of the Ashram.

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# PROGRAMME OF CEREMONY

From January '93 to April '93

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| 1. Paush Sankranti                                   | 14th January, 1993<br>29th Paush, Thursday |
| 2. Saraswati Puja                                    | 27th January, 1993<br>13th Magh, Wednesday |
| 3. Shiva Ratri                                       | 19th February, 1993<br>7th Falgun, Friday  |
| 4. Dol Purnima                                       | 8th March, 1993<br>24th Falgun, Monday     |
| 5. Shri Shri Basanti Puja                            | 30th March, 1993<br>16th Chaitra, Tuesday  |
| 6. Sanyas Utsab (Reunion Day,<br>Festival of Giriji) | 13th April, 1993<br>30th Chaitra, Tuesday  |

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

Debabrata Pal  
General Secretary

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