

ANANDA VARTA



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

Vol. XXXXIV

● JULY, 1997 ●

No. 3

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Those who, prompted by a deep yearning for the vision of the Supreme Being tread this long and difficult path, can do so only by His grace. To take refuge in patience is the only acceptable attitude of mind. One must never lose hope. Wherever you may be placed and under whatever circumstances, let your thinking be centred in Him and in Him alone.

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Nama is the best Bhakti (devotion) Nama is the best ending, Nama is the best Japa, Nama is the best Prayer.

Shree Shree Sitaramdas Onkarnath

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

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

*There is no sin born out of any deed, word
or thought which is not destroyed by the
Power of Nama.*

Sri Sri Sitaramdas Onkarnath

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MATRI VANI

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



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



Put your trust in God and let your mind be engaged in japa and meditation.



Be truthful in speech and rigorous in self-discipline at all times and devote yourself to the study of books of wisdom and to satsang. Cultivate the company of those who are helpful in your quest, avoid those that distract you — in other words, associate with the God and shun the merely pleasurable. If you live in this spirit the help you need will come to you naturally — unasked.



When diksa is necessary it comes about at the appointed moment. One should try to keep one's mind on the thought of God and have firm faith that at the right time He will give all that is - needful.



The true aim of man's life is to realise God. The question of renunciation obviously arises only with regard to what has to fall away in any case. That which is Eternal, that which is Truth has to be embraced.



When you feel power within yourself, when new light dawns on you from within, the more you can keep it concealed in utter calm and stillness, the more will it grow in intensity. If it gets the slightest opening, there is always the fear of its escaping. Be vigilant! He Himself will provide everything that is necessary — initiation, instruction — whatever it may be.



You and I are two persons and yet you and I are one, and the gap between the two of us, this also is myself. There can be no question of two. Attachment and hatred arise out of the sense of duality.



If man endeavours to live his life in the world according to dharma (the dictates of religion and righteousness) he will gradually overcome sorrow and will progress towards peace. Without Him Supreme Peace cannot be found.



Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Vol. VI

Translated by Tarakini

May 3, Tuesday

Ma continues to be in the same condition today also; she hardly slept last night and I also at awake. In between Ma went to Bholanath's room and organised some arrangements. Watching Ma's behaviour I felt anxious about some imminent happening.

May 5, Wednesday

Today again Ma hardly ate anything. She has only been eating boiled vegetables since the last two days. Some times she does eat some *chapati* with milk. It has been thus for some time. Ma says, "When this body functioned according to its own *bhava*, no schedule of meals was adhered to; on some days it would sit down to eat and on other days it just refused to. There was no arrangements for regular meals and whatever was available at any given time was eaten. At that time the body kept well enough and yet now when you all try so hard to make such regular arrangements this body is unwell." So be it — let the meals go on in this fashion, we will not try to cause any hindrance.

This afternoon I felt upset when I saw Ma's *bhava* and I asked, "What is the matter Ma?" replied, "What will happen? The body was unwell. You people served it devotedly and do it well. Now you will do whatever is required by a healthy body." Then she said, "Call Sachi Dada's sister, Manu. I have to tell her something." Manu came and conversed with Ma behind closed doors. It was three p.m. Just then Lakshmi, Gola and two Kashmiri relatives arrived for Ma's *darshan*. At four p.m. the doors were opened.

Whenever Ma wants to be alone I usually sit outside her door in the verandah in the afternoon. Today when the doors were opened Lakshmi and others went in but I

remained seated in the verandah. At five p.m. Ma called me in and the wan smile on her face caused me to start within. I felt that she would say something which foreboded dire consequences. Ma spoke inconsequentially for some time and then told me, "Look, there's one thing. Either you people leave today or I shall go somewhere for awhile." We all gaped — what a form Ma had assumed! She smiled, but we knew that none of us had the courage to go against this order.

Bholanath has been almost unconscious for the past two days. His condition is worsening day by day. At this juncture we felt there would be need for people to serve him but Ma just did not seem to be concerned about that. I asked, "Who will have to leave Ma? We shall leave, you do not go." Then Ma replied, "You, Baba (Akhandananda Swami), Manu and your Didi. Navataru had said he would go today. Make arrangements quickly. There is not much time for you have to leave by six p.m. I thought if Lakshmi arrived with her car the job would be done." Just then Lakshmi arrived.

Baba stood before Ma and said, "Ma, what kind of an order is this? It is like a blow with a stick on the head! My body is trembling. Bholanath is in this condition, your own health is indifferent. And you want us to leave at such a time!" Ma replied, "You are a *sannyasin*, so how are you going to render any service? Service needs to be rendered to you. You just sit down and meditate on the *atma* — everything will be achieved through that." She told Didima, "You are old. How will you serve anybody? And do you like to see such a sight? Just sit and think auspicious thoughts — that will cause auspicious happenings." To me she said, "Look, I walk off suddenly like this and I tell only you people to go in this manner. I cannot say this to everybody, can I? I know that you people are capable of getting along in this fashion." Speaking in this vein she seemed to cast everybody aside and sit away from us all. I said, "Ma, there is nobody left to look after you, and Bholanath is in such a state." Ma

said, "Everything will be done. Just do what I tell you. I say this for your welfare." I replied, "However difficult it may be, I shall surely obey your order." I wished to speak to Ma in private, so she made everybody else leave the room. I was weeping. Seeing this Ma said, "I know that if you stay here this body will be served. In other respects also it will be helpful. Yet it is not to be. Therefore I have had such a *kheyal*." When the rest returned to the room Ma said, "All of you keep close to your *prana* (life force), that is what gives me joy. Remember, doing that will be rendering service to me."

It is surprising that just when the presence of many people around her was of utmost importance, Ma was sending us all away. Concepts like 'something cannot be done without so and so' never hold water before Ma. She does everything according to her *kheyal* and does not accept anybody's remonstrances. She does not give an opportunity for organized and methodical work. Whenever any set up is well organized she breaks it up. Yet, she says that work has to be performed methodically in whatever time is available.

In due course, the train arrived and we were off in less than an hour. Ma sat in the verandah and saw us all off. It does not take her even a moment to break up everything in this manner. Making and breaking seem to be a joyful sport for Ma.

May 5, Thursday

By four p.m. today we reached Kashi. On the way from the railway station to the *dharmashala* I got off at Pandit Shri Gopinath Kaviraj's residence to inform him of our arrival. Swami Shankaranand and Nepal Dada were seated there. When I reached they got up flustered when they saw me, in anticipation of calamitous news. I gave them the news in detail. Swami Shankaranand decided to leave for Dehradun the very next day. He has had small pox once and has served many patients suffering from this and similar diseases. Hearing about the orders that

we had received from Ma they were all stunned, but this is nothing new. Ma has asked us to go to Dhaka.

May 6, Friday

Today Swami Shankaranand and Navataru Dada went to offer prayers to Ma Sheetala. Swamiji took the floral *prasada* of the worship to Dehradun. I had earlier written to Swami Shankaranand to offer worship at Ma Sheetala's temple and send the floral *prasada*. We decided to spend a couple of days at Kashi before proceeding to Calcutta. Our mind are restless for Ma's behaviour was not at all indicative of Bholanath's recovery; on the contrary her *bhava* filled us with fear and apprehension. I had said, "Ma, Shiv Shankar Kaviraj will arrive tomorrow. Let us see what he says." Ma responded indifferently, "What will Kaviraj do? Do you not observe how his condition is deteriorating day by day?" On the night before our departure Ma had pointed to Bholanath and said, "See, Bholanath's body has developed ruptures here and there. I feel that these are very nasty eruptions. You can observe his condition for yourself." While we were leaving, Ma had said, in reply to some query, "You have been seeing that his condition has been worsening day by day." This statement increased our apprehension. In the middle of the night Didi Ma screamed, "Bholanath! Bholanath!" in her sleep. Our days and nights were spent thus.

May 7, Saturday

In the afternoon today I felt extremely uneasy. My heart seemed to stall uttering, "Ma, Ma". Didi Ma, Mejudidi (Sachi Dada's sister), Akhandananda Swami and I are staying at Hari's Bengali *dharmashala*. I told Mejudidi about my uneasiness. With this turmoil within my mind I went to Bacchu's residence. In a little while Nepal Dada arrived with terrible news. He said, "I just received Bhupati Dada's telegram. Yesterday (that is on May 6, 1938 or 23 Vaishakh), Friday, Bholanath passed away." Hearing such news my heart received a big shock. Everything seemed to have gone upside down. Within the twinkling of the eye something beyond our imagination

had come to pass. Now I fully realized why Ma had been speaking the way she did. Yet while Ma conversed with all those around her we never got a hint that such a calamity was so close at hand. There was not the slightest change visible in her simple, natural and straightforward behaviour. Ma had laughed and declared, "A calamity is imminent." In reply to that I had said, "You only speak of calamities." Ma had laughed and said, "What can I do? I am told. I was told, 'A calamity is advancing' in exactly the same way in which I told you." Ma knew everything before hand and revealed it all through hints, yet it caused no change in her *bhava*. How we realized why Ma made Didima leave from her presence. Yet we also felt pained that Ma did not keep us near her during such a calamity.

Sometimes Ma's attitude towards people around her is such that it seems as if she cannot manage even for a moment without them. Then within the blinking of an eye she breaks all bonds and becomes remote and distant. At that moment it appears as if nobody is of any use to her. Ma is always free. Nobody has the power to restrain her. Her's is a wonderful character — it takes not a moment to break or make. We, who lived near Ma, would always suffer the suspense of not knowing when some unexpected order would be issued. Yet, Ma's, compassionate love that we have experienced and which we are still receiving is incomparable. Ma exists within everything ; again she is not involved in anything. This sort of a unique facet is manifested in her character. On some occasions Ma behaves in such a manner and makes such statements that a newcomer would end up with some misunderstanding. Ma herself has commented laughingly at times, "You people have placed a handkerchief in my hand because of my cold, put shoes on my feet and made me wear a blouse. Seeing this some people say, I have been to see your Anandamayi Ma. She is very anglicised." Saying this she would double up with laughter. Later we heard that some people had, in fact, reacted in this manner after seeing Ma. Ma neither relinquishes objects nor does she enjoy them. But even to imagine such a situation is impossible for ordinary people like us. Two oppo-

site emotions blossom simultaneously within Ma. Whatever little I understand leaves me astounded and then I get enbroiled in the play of Ma's *leela* and forget everything. I commit ever so many mistakes, so many blunders. Every instance in Ma's life exemplifies the spirit of detachment explained in the Bhagavad Gita. Those who have come into contact with her will verify the truth of my statement.

We did not inform Didima about Bholanath's passing away. We have sent a telegram to Dehradun.



ॐ

'Guru Kripa'

गुरु ब्रह्म गुरु विष्णु गुरुदेव महेश्वरः

गुरु साक्षात् पर ब्रह्म तस्मै श्री गुरुवे नमः

A true guru is difficult to find in this world of diversities. To get to the bottom of this sloka we can understand how wide the spectrum of this small word is. It first defines the origin of the world which is created by the masters of the Universe — Brahma Vishnu and Maheshwar or Shiwa according to the shastras. The last few words give us the real meaning which Maa Anandamayee really was to all her devotees of this world.

What if we find solace in the Geeta as our guru. Abstract though it may sound, it has helped quite a few people who have started with this assumption and found positive results.

According to religious books the Geeta is personified as 'She' and said to be the nectar or sweet milk flowing from the Upanishads which are the cows. Partha or Arjun is the calf and men of purified intellect are the drinkers. Now all men and women reading the Geeta cannot be said to be perfect or purified in all respects. Specially for the 'Sansari' people it is very difficult to practice all those things. Krishna himself admitted that you can interpret it in your own wave length and state of mind.

Maa used to say we must remember Him in as many ways as we can or want to but "always keep yourself immersed in the 'Jnana Ganga' (Supreme Knowledge). The thought of God is like a flame..." Her simple method of Nama Japa has brought salvation and enlightenment to multitudes of her devotees.

If we take up 'Nature' as our guru or teacher life becomes much more simplified. Shakespeare had once

written we can 'find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones and good in everything...' So many other poets e.g. Milton, Keats, Shelly, Byron, Wordsworth and Rabindranath have admired Nature and written pages on her praises.

For one who makes learning an adventure 'Atma Gyan' can be challenging and rewarding. Knowledge together with self realization can help us to reach our goal. It is the struggle for perfection which might lead us to the Atma or Brahma as Maa often said. In the VII Chapter of Geeta Sri Krishna has said "if you want to know Me in reality you have to know my prakriti or 'Nature'. This is divided into light categories — earth, water, fire, air, ether mind, intellect and egoism. They are known as the lower prakriti of the individual soul by which this world is sustained (Slokas 2 to 5):

The human mind flutters between deep sleep and semi consciousness when the intellect chooses the correct path or good there should be no wavering, if the mind is strong. It has the power to select the right path — search for the Unknown. Maa Anandamayee made it very much easier and used to say "find your real home from which nobody can drive you out. Dive deep and unearth your real wealth, find your real home in God who is your own Self."

In Mahabharat we have the example of Eklavya. His dedication to a guru who did not acknowledge him as his shishya because he was a Bhed, is a glowing example of determination. He proved to the world that with dedication and serious effort one can reach the ultimate end.

The teachings of Maa Anandamayee have always been so simple and yet so very inspiring that I have selected her as my Guru without any formal initiation. This had provoked me to pen these lines on the occasion of her birthday celebrations. If it can be my little contribution to the Guru Purnima issue of Ananda Varta I would feel so happy.

JOY MAA

The Divine Mother

Shri Shri Ma Anandamayi

Premlata Srivastava

Dhaka : Mother of the Masses

A. Shabbag Leela : Ma of Shahbagh Dhaka

Bholanath was a disappointed man in Dhaka when his mission to get a job in that city failed to materialise. When he decided to return to Bajitpur, Ma intervened. Since she was observing reticence those days, through gestures, she indicated Bholanath to wait for three more days.

How prophetic was Ma's intervention !

Within the next three days Bholanath was appointed the supervisor of the beautiful vast garden of Shahbag, the traditional resort of Nawab Gani Mian of Dhaka. The estate was part of the property in share of Nawabjadi Pyari Banu. Rai Bahadur Yogesh Chandra Ghosh was a trustee of this estate, and he had heard about Ma and Bholanath from his son-in-law Bhudeb Basu. Pyari Banu later became devotee of Ma and had many exciting experiences of Sri Ma's spiritual power. She and her family was at times miraculously saved by Ma from imminent danger and troublesome situations.

On his appointment on 17th April 1924 Bholanath and Ma shifted to three-room cottage inside Shahbag gardens. Adjacent to their residence, was the famous dancing hall of the owners, the future venue of Sri Ma's many spiritual divine leelas.

After their arrival at Shahbag, Ma appeared to be a picture of great serenity and tranquility along with the usual reticence. Various metaphysical manifestations and spiritual sayings were in evidence during those days. Ma, still abstained from speech, which started in Bajitpur. She remained in 'Samadhi' for most of the time. Hence, Bholanath invited his nephew Ashu, widowed sister Matori and his son, Amulya, to stay with them at Shabbag

and manage the household work. Janaki Babu and Bhudeb Babu had also come from Bajitpur to Dhaka. Through these people, and some eyewitnesses, spread the words of Ma's super-natural leela. Soon well educated and learned established citizens of Dhaka gathered round Her with their families, and remained life long devotees of Sri Ma.

She was now manifesting Her spiritual power before scores of devout followers, as the Mother of the Universe. This image of Ma was seen so frequently that in no time, she became famous as the mother of Shahbag.

The garden of Shahbag, located near Ramana's race course, was spread over a huge area. It had all the varieties of plantations. Ma often used to mention about a Madrasi Mango tree, which didn't normally grow in Bengal. The leaves of this particular tree used to eject a kind of honey. Once, Ma asked for a bowl to be kept below that tree. Soon, the bowl was full of honey. There used to be a Jackfruit tree in the garden, which produced fruits round the year. Ma said, people used to liken these tree to a Mahatma, deeply engrossed in their Sadhana. She would frequently walk about this side of the garden. She would also frequent the Ramana Kali Mandir, also located nearby, where she sat with Bholanath for hours together. She met many subtle corporeal beings at that place. Where, she told us later, many great Mahatmas lay buried.

Ma has said, "While cooking meals, during the stay in Shahbag, often the landscape of a particular place used to emerge before this body's eyes. It was the perspective of Dhaka's Siddheshwari Mandir but then this body did not know its location. Neither did Bholanath."

Master Baul Basak, a childhood friend of Bholanath, used to visit them frequently. A devout worshipper of Kali, he spent nights singing hymns in praise of Kali. At Ramana Kali Mandir, Baul Basak had his first 'darshan' of Ma.

It was in December 1924, when Jyotishchandra Roy (Bhaiji) had his first 'darshan' of Ma at Shahbag. During the first meeting itself with Ma—the embodiment of supreme—reminded him about his previous birth by say-

ing, "You should always remember that you are the real brahmin. This body had an inseparable connection with you through the string of Bhagavatbhava."

The sole aim of Bhaiji was to bring the devotees, saints, recluse, Mahatmas, the needy and distressed closer to Ma, enable them to repose their respect, trust, and faith on Her. Bhaiji was convinced that Ma's only food for survival in this world of ours, was the selfless propensity, love, and devotion of Her followers.

In December, 1925 or January 1926, Dr. Shashanka Mohan Mukherjee visited Shahbag for Ma's darshan. So overwhelmed was he, that on the next day, he came again, this time with his daughter Adarani Devi (Guru Priya Didi). A retired civil surgeon, Dr. Mukherjee had an imposing personality and military manners. He was a very established name in the society. But he parted with all this gradually for a gruelling Sadhana. With the blessings of Ma, Dr. Mukherjee later became Swami Akhandanand Giri after the spiritual ordeal.

Shri Guru Priya Devi (Didi) later came to stay with Ma, and devoted her life in service of Ma in many roles—sister, friend, attendant and what not. Didi became Ma's company during Her leela on earth from the moment, of her first darshan till the moment her body permitted. Didi would always be in service of Ma and Her devotees. She deserves all praise.

Now, Shahbag was generally seen crowded by Her devotees. From common people to the respected and established persons— whoever came in contact with Ma, lent himself at Her service forever.

Ma had a magnetic attraction. Traditionally, the people of Dhaka enjoyed organising Kirtans. The tradition was so strong that later devotees also followed it. They would encircle Her, and dance to the tune of Kirtans, Khol and Kartal. When the recital peaked, Ma would ecstatically, looking upwards as if looking for someone in the endless blue, join the followers. She would turn Her hands, lift Her body upwards to dance to the tune of kirtans. The devotees had the feeling of having touched and seen the inaccessible and invisible God.

Bholanath's nephew, Ashu, who was staying at Shahbag those days, also enjoyed the kirtans. Sri Ma's stoic disciple Biren Maharaj, who was conspicuous for his resounding voice and continuous singing capacity at kirtans, once asked Ashu "For Ma's Darshan, we come from faraway places and you despite the proximity to Her, continue to be evasive. Come, and take the path of renunciation."

Kirtan recitals were held every evening in Shahbag. Kirtans were also held occasionally, during Purnima and Amavasya. Ma said, "wherever kirtans are held in great fervour, many spectacular changes do happen there." In the garden of Shahbag where Ma lived, the wood of two cyprus trees turned into sandalwood. Not only the aroma of sandal which purified the environ around, the wood had many other properties. Ma's devotees took some branches of these trees to Kashi Ashram. Interestingly, the leaves, flowers etc. of cyprus tree had remained the same, only the wood had changed.

Ma says, "whether Hindu or Muslim, or believers of any other religious faith in the world—all are same. They all worship God and seek His blessings. Kirtan and Namaz are one and the same, indistinguishable from each other."

This is Ma's message to Her children.

The number of Ma's devotees shot up in no time, and Bholanath's job was to manage them. Women devotees usually came in the afternoon, and directly went to have Her darshan. Ma would welcome them with great care, talk with them about their family etc. Men, however, were in a way screened by Bholanath before getting entry.

In the beginning itself, Ma had warned Bholanath "Before you open the door of your house for the entire world, think twice. Afterwards, you would not be able to stem the tide of humanity". But Bholanath was a warm-hearted person, perhaps, he had an inkling that he would not be able to restrict such a forceful personality to mere domestic chores.

While strolling in Shahbag one day, Ma happened to see a mausoleum there. They were tombs of two Fakirs—

Guru and his disciple — who had come from Arabia to Dhaka. Subsequently when their bodies were laid to rest, the Nawab family which respected the Fakirs, built the tombs there.

Interestingly, during Her stay in Bajitpur, Ma is said to have enquired about the Arab country, as if, Fakir Saheb (the Guru) had visited Bajitput to invite this body to Shahbag." At Shahbag too, the two met metaphysically.

One day, Kirtan was being held at the dancing-hall of Shahbag. In the midst of kirtan, in a sudden change of mood, Ma rushed out beckoned Mohammad Zainuddin, a friend of Bhaiji. Ma hurriedly went to that mausoleum and read Namaz in exactly the same way as a devout Moslem would. The Maulavi Saab was astonished to see Her gestures and the distinct and correct pronounciation. That was Thursday, the day lamps were lit there and Batasa, (Sugar puffs) were offered to the tombs. But by mistake this tradition was broken that day. Therefore, on Ma's request, the Maulavi later completed ritual and offered Batasa to Ma as prasad Maulavi made.

Meanwhile another surprise was in stock. During Durga Puja 1926, professional photographer Shashi Bhushan Das Gupta came to Shahbag and wanted to take Sri Ma's photographs. But nobody could tell him Ma's whereabouts. At the end of search Ma was found lying in samadhi in a dark room. Assisted by Bholanath and Bhaiji Ma came outside and the photographer exposed eighteen plates. On developing the plates it was found that surprisingly only a ball of light was visible on 17 plates with no figure. Only the last plate showed Ma with a semicircular light on Her forehead and Bhaiji standing at Her back, while Bhaiji was much behind the range of the camera.

Explaining the above point later Ma said, "when this body was lying in a dark room the whole room was flooded with light radiating from it. When this body was taken out for photograph, the whole body was engulfed by a very bright light. This may have spoiled the first few plates. This light began to diminish gradually until it re-

mained concentrated on the forehead only. This body had a *kheyala* that Jyotish (Bhalji) is standing behind."

Bholanath's interest and the devotees request prompted Ma to do Kalipuja in Shahbag in November 1925. As the word spread, devotees delight knew no bounds. On the Kalipuja night, all articles for puja were properly placed before the image of Kali. Ma sat on the mat meant for Pujari and then quietly lay on the floor. After sometime, she was in a trance, spontaneously pronouncing the mantras, and offering the sacred flowers, Bel leaves and sandal paste both to Herself and Kali's image.

That was an unusual Kalipuja, many people had a chance, on this occasion, to have darshan of Ma as Kali. Naturally, this Kalipuja became a subject of discussion. Soon the mother of Shahbag, was now famous as Mother of Dhaka.

In 1929, a few internationally acclaimed philosophers came to Dhaka to attend the National Philosophical Congress, met Ma at Shahbag. The meeting lasted three hours in Bholanath's presence. According to witnesses, questions on almost all aspects of philosophy and religion were promptly answered by Ma without any hesitation. Her answers were to the point, and bore the character of spiritual, independent thought. All those present on that occasion were simply moved by Ma's range of knowledge, the manner and power of expression.

To the question this how could she answer such questions without studying philosophy, Ma has said, "Life is like an epic novel. One who goes into it's great depths, cannot remain untouched with the facts of science, philosophy and the related subjects.

After this successful meeting and discussion, even common people began recognising Ma as an outstanding personality.

"Mahabhav during Kirtans"

The play of sadhana through kirtans was revealed in Her ever since Her childhood. It was Her father a natural singer who taught Her to sing in praise of Hari when she

was still a child. But the effects of kirtans on Her body were witnessed from Ashtagram days.

Recollecting the 'Mahabhav', Ma said, "some carpenters used to live near our house in Ashtagram. They specialised in making boats. They worked during the day and after nightfall, they sang kirtans. A cluster of bamboo trees obstructed the sight of their house. Nevertheless, we could hear their kirtans."

"This body would lose all senses once it heard the kirtans. Even a look in that direction filled this body with immense happiness. There was a boy from the family, who used to visit us. He would dance and sing kirtans when told. This was one of Her kheyal. In this way, many varieties of kirtans at many places effected this body to lose all senses. Initially, efforts were made to conceal this reaction. Later, when ecstasies grew more intense, they couldn't be controlled. Except Bholanath, none could hardly know about these developments." This too was a 'kheyal' of Ma.

Initially, Bholanath was cautious to keep the matter secret. When kirtans were held in courtyard, he would not allow Her to come out of veil. Completely overwhelmed, this body would turn topsyturvy inside the house. At times this body reacted and responded to ordinary kirtans. However, sometimes even the most ritualistic kirtans would fail to effect this body."²

When the Gagan Kirtan group sang at their place one day, sitting on an elevated seat, Ma sank to Her trance inconspicuously. Later, the group could not be offered meals as it was spoiled by dog. When Ma did not regain consciousness even the next day, Bholanath invited the same group again to do kirtans. Hours after the recital began, Ma returned to the material world.

Ma's experience during kirtan once described by Her-self is—³

"The body became as it were, identified with the Kirtana. If any body has bhava during kirtana that would be of a different type. The reason is this—such bhava is mixed with actions and so it is tinged with a trace of worldly emotions. But the bhava experienced by this body

had nothing to do with any action. The conclusion is that here the wordly side is totally closed. And the feeling of joy here is to some extent, something unique."

On the request of devotees, on the occasion of Uttarayan Sankranti (26 January 1926) and solar eclipse, Ma presented Herself on the first public kirtan ever. A massive crowd which had gathered on the occasion, had the privilege to watch Ma's body glow with 'Mahabhav'. It is said, the illumination and ecstacy was somewhat similar to what happened in the case of Gouranga Mahaprabhu.

The venue of this kirtan was the ball-room of Shahbag. Bhogprasad after the kirtans were to be distributed. The recital began at 10^o clock in the morning. Ma with other ladies was inside Her house, (adjacent to the dancing hall) wherefrom she could hear the melodious tunes of hymns. Suddenly, she reached as a gust of wind at the dancing hall. The constant devout music had motivated Her, peaked Her to a kind of illumination, happiness and state of ecstacy as seen never before. The public was simply amazed to see 'Ma' in that divine composure (Mahabhav).

Kirtan over, Ma Herself distributed the prasad. Bhaiji has written that Her versatility and dexterity in distributing the prasad in a splendid manner projected Her as if 'Mahalakshmi' Herself has landed on this earth.⁴

The instruments-Khol, kartal etc. which were played during the kirtan on the day of solar eclipse, were kept at Shahbagh. One day, Ma suggested that they may be used every evening during the prayers. Thus the tradition of daily kirtan started with Bholanath, Ashu and Amulya promptly acting on Her suggestion.

Variations in Ma's manifestations during the ecstasies were evident. Sometimes Mantras would be pronounced immaculately. However, not necessarily Ma was over whelmed by each and every kirtan recital. During such occasions, when Ma entered into such divine trances, as Mahabhav Bhaiji's vivid description of Ma on one such occasion goes like this —

Suddenly Her (Ma's) body sank down flat to the ground

and began to roll on it. Then she slowly rose and stood on Her two big hands. Both hands were raised straight up, Her head slightly tilted to one side and a little backwards, and Her radiant eyes stared with a steady gaze towards the far end of the sky. A little later she began to move in that posture. Her body appeared to be filled with a heavenly presence. She was not at all aware of Her clothes hanging loosely on Her person. No one had the strength to stop Her force. Her whole body danced on with measured beats in a most delicate way and reached the place where kirtana was going on; Her body then noiselessly melted down, as it were, on the floor. Led by some mysterious power it rolled on like the dry leaves of a tree moved slowly by a gentle breeze. After sometime while still lying on the floor, very soft sweet musical strains came from Her lips "Hare Murare Madhukaitabhare" — after sometime she was again in Her normal self. Her glowing face, Her sweet ineffable looks, Her soft, tender voice brimming over with divine emotion all reminded the assembled crowd of the image of Sri Chaitanya Dev as described in his biographies. All the physical changes observed long, long ago in Sri Chaitanya Dev (1485-1533) manifested themselves again in Her person on the occasion.⁵

Sri Sri Ma's Samadhi Bhava

Apparently Ma's period of Sadhana extended for six years from 1918 to 1924. However as regards Ma's Samadhi Bhava it has happened to Her even before and after this period also. Not that, she had Samadhi Bhava during the early years which diminished afterwards. She was always in Sahaj Samadhi. She has explained that "your strong desire to see this body in states of samadhi causes it to manifest at times. A call in full intensity for this body, reacts and its physical expression will invariably follow."

Even in Her childhood, she went into a trance. Even then Her body loosened when she heard the melodious Kirtan held in the neighbourhood. Didima would shake Her out what people then thought was slumber or child-

ish pranks. After she passed through rigorous of Sadhana and turned distinctly ecstatic then people relating to the unusual events of the past.

In the later years also Ma's Samadhi came to light during Ma's Birthday celebrations, when Mahatmas requested Her to come to the place of puja. She would go in to Samadhi and remain in that state for hours together.

In the earlier chapters of her book Didi has given detailed and excellent description of Ma's various ecstasies. Didi, was amazed to see Her in such ecstasies. It is a common knowledge that Arjun was frightened to see Sri Krishna's Virat Swarup and requested Him to be again as his childhood friend. We too like Ma in Her usual motherly way.

Bhaiji has given splendid details of Ma's Samadhi Bhav in his book 'Mother as Revealed to Me'—

"Like the waning Sun, Ma's normal behaviour and manners transformed slowly, she would gradually turn breathless and speechless. With Her eyes closed, Ma's face would lit up by a bright auspicious glow; the whole body would cease to move. The pores of Her body emanating unique radiance. It appeared that Ma was sinking deep into Her samadhi. This went on for hours...."

When she returned to this world from Her ecstasies, the breathing slowly returned to normal and the body reactivated to regain the normal self.

Ma has described Her experience of Samadhi as follows:

"It is a state beyond all conscious and supra conscious plane—a state of complete immobilisation of all thoughts emotions and activities both physical and mental—a state that transcends all the phases of life here below. What you call Savikalpa Samadhi, is also but a means to reach that final objective, it is only a passing stage in your sadhana."

"Deep concentration on any one of the five elementals of sense — sound, touch, smell, taste, and sight derived chiefly from air, earth, water etc. leads a man to merge his identity into it and as concentration deepens, the body as it were gradually freezes with it. Then that special

object of sense pervades his whole being and his ego gradually dissolves in it and coalesces with one Universal entity. When this condition settles down, the consciousness of One Universal Self too melts away, and what then remains is beyond words, expression and experience."⁶

Ma explains samadhi as follows:

"The consummation of action and feeling may be called samadhi. It is a state where the question of knowledge and ignorance does not arise. A stage comes when the sadhak realises that he is one with his object of contemplation. From that plane he may again come back to the ordinary level of self-consciousness. This type of samadhi also must be transcended. The ultimate state, being unparalled, cannot be explained or expressed in any language. It is solely matter of direct experience."⁷

When Ma was requested to throw light on Her experience in Intense Samadhi, she said:

"When you sit in this room, you look out of the door and windows when they are open, and see many things outside. If they are closed, you can not see those things. During such-experiences, this body too feels that all outlets are closed, all connection with the world is strapped.. When you drop a handful of loose soil over the still water in a pond, you see how beautifully it spreads over. This body too enjoys similar feelings on those occasions."⁸

She further explained this situation, saying she felt a subtle flow of vitality running through Her body, inducing each and every particle of Her body. Whatever things this body saw and touched, if felt in oneness with all of them. This body retained no identity of its own in this situation."⁹

B. Dhaka Siddheshwari

While returning from Ramana Kali Mandir with Ma and Bholanath, Baul Basak used to go somewhere else frequently. On Bholanath's query Basak said he frequented Siddheshwari temple. Ma indicated to offer no comment as Bholanath glanced at Her for Her reaction:

One night, Baul took them to Siddheshwari. To reach

that place at that time one had to tread rough, uneven roads, to reach the ancient temple, then located far away from the city. A huge Peepal tree lay uprooted in front of the temple, exactly the same landscape as Ma had once envisioned in Bajitpur. On Her visit, Ma touched the tree and after darshan of Siddheshwari Kali, returned back with Bholanath.

That day onwards, Ma frequently visited Siddheshwari. Sometime Bhog was also offered to the deity.

Ma said, "one afternoon this body was packing things for a short journey somewhere, though I knew not the destination. While I was putting together the articles of daily use, Bholanath dropped in and asked me: "What are you doing?"

Ma said, "Let's go to Siddheshwari."

Bholanath didn't object. So we went to the temple that afternoon. There, I had a kheyal that I would stay there for 7-8 days. When I expressed my desire to Bholanath, he said, he would not be able to give company to her because of his duty in Shahbag gardens.

Ma said, "that's not a problem. Siddheshwari Ma is with this body."

Bholanath acceded to Ma's request. Ma's father used to stay with Her during daytime while Bholanath used to stay with Her over night. Happiness knew no bounds as they sojourned at the Siddheshwari temple.

Before dawn, Ma would bathe and enter the temple. And then drop of water or eating a morsel of food. Baul Babu, who taught in a local school during day time, would bring fruits after nightfall for Puja. Baul braved the muddy pathway, following rains, singing in praise of Goddess Kali all the way to bring those offerings for puja. These were offered to the deity which were later distributed as prasad at midnight to the devotees present at the temple. Initially, Ma Herself used to make the offerings. On occasion, she would offer the Bhog and turn ecstatic, either in a sitting posture or lying down. Then suddenly she would stand up and announce, the Bhog (to Siddheshwari) has been offered and its ready for distribution. There were

also occasions when local priests would bring flowers, sandal paste etc. Ma would sometime offer them to Kali, sometime throw them upon Herself. Pujas were performed in unusual ways, until Ma said to Bholanath:

"I am not able to continue it this way. You have the Mantra (Bholanath was initiated) You offer the Bhog instead."

Ma remained at the Siddheshwari temple for seven days at a stretch. Ma has said later; "when Baul learnt about Ma's sojourn at Siddheshwari for a week, he anticipated some miraculous incident will happen. Therefore, he stationed himself in front of the temple in evenings as a watchman, like "the Nandi," looking for some unusual event to unfold. Six days and nights passed. On the seventh day at dawn-break, Ma in Her own kheyal came out of the temple. Baul, who stood guard for the last six nights, was fast asleep. It was drizzling outside, following heavy rains in the night. Bholanath was awake. Ma gestured him to follow Her, and, walked into the forest behind the temple. After walking for a while, they found a clean place. Ma went round this place before squatting down, facing south. Bholanath sat nearby.

The drizzle had stopped. Ma was sitting, stotras started coming out of Her mouth as this was usually the way she resumed speaking after abstension. She pressed the soil with Her right palm at the place she was sitting. Incredibly the soil layers gave way to Her palm, then the entire arm upto armpit entered the earth. Bholanath got frightened and in a reflex action, Bholanath jerked Her arm out of earth. The moment, he forced Her hand out, a fountain jet of reddish hot water sprang out of the same spot.

This was not rain water. It was hot and red in colour, which coloured the white bangles (made of conch-shell, a sacred, customary symbol of marriage). Visibly scared, Bholanath said to Ma, "Let's go away from here."

Ma asked Bholanath to put his hand on the same spot. Together, they covered the spot with some soil and returned to the temple. Baul Babu, upon learning what had happened, cursed himself for his sleep. Ma requested

Baul to protect the spot.

Later brick were put around the holy spot to make roughly a square-metre vedi (altar), raised half-a-metre above the ground level. That this spot is the real Siddheshwari Peeth, has been reflected from Ma's words.

The discovery of Siddheshwari Peeth was a significant unusual event, the news of which spread like a wild fire to become a common knowledge soon. This spot the Siddheshwari Peeth sthan came to light as shown by Ma in 1924. It is said that a saint called 'Sumeru Van' had established a Kali temple at this place. In ancient days, many saints, sadhaks etc had meditated here. And it is inferred from Ma's talks that Bholanath was one of them.

In April 1925, building a dwelling for Ma on the holy ground, then fenced with bamboo sticks, was contemplated. Ma was in favour of an ordinary hut with earthen walls. Shashanka Babu took the initiative. In just seven days, it was ready. On the appointed day, amidst kirtan, Ma and Bholanath moved into this hut. Kirtans, as part of the celebrations, were held the entire day and night.

This place became Ma's Adi-Ashram-the first, where in the spring of 1926, Bholanath organised Basanti Puja.

Frequently, Ma used to sit on the holy vedi in Her Ashram. She would squeeze and reduce Herself and manage even to lie down on that tiny vedi. One day, the devotees were scared to see Her shrunk so much that only the clothes were visible, not Ma's body. However, they took a sigh of relief when they saw to their amazement, a slight movement of the clothes as Ma's body gradually expanded and finally, she sat up.

In this context, Ma said later :

"As the kites fly with the help of a string, yogis with their respiratory system and embellishment ties, are capable of transfiguring themselves to the minutest or the most massive beings and even capable of disappearing from public eye."

One day on this holy vedi. Ma appeared to embody the spirit of Joy. This sight of Ma prompted Bhaiji to suggest:— "From today we will call Her Ma Anandamoyi."

Bholanath seconded the proposal.

Bholanath and then Shashanka Mohan and Didi had deeply meditated on this holy place of Siddheswari, which on occasions was the venue of deep religious symposia. Answers to many of the unsolved, oblique references in those discussions were provided by Ma. One day, during the course of such a symposium, Ma said:

"Whoever have come here, should get ready. So far, nothing has happened. The digging, with a spade, has just begun. An unknown amount of suffering is to be endured, many storms are to be faced. In those blows of storm, the one destined to wither, will fall and the one destined to survive, will stay on... There is no room here for petty quarrels and jealousies."

One day, Ma looked at the devotees present and said:

"I am seeing, everything is one and the same. The one who is embodiment of soul, the embodiment of knowledge and wisdom, how can there be two? There is only one soul, encompassing the whole universe."

Siddheshwari Kalipuja (1926)

One day, while going somewhere with Bholanath, Ma envisioned an image of Kali, walking 18 foot above ground in the ethereal sky. She was eager to come into the lap of Ma. A garland of Hibiscus flowers lay on Her neck. But there was no image of Mahadev below Her feet. Ma said nothing, but lifted Her left arm in the direction of Kali.

It was time for Deepavali when devotees expressed their desire to hold Kalipuja. Bholanath asked Ma for Her permission. Ma didn't reply but Bholanath sensed Ma's reaction was positive. It was just a night before the Kalipuja when the image makers would have sold all the images wherefrom the image will be procured? What will be its size? These were natural questions that one would be faced with, a night before the Kalipuja. Perhaps, due to Ma's Kheyal only, Bholanath had an inkling that Ma raised Her hand twice that day and so he decided to measure Ma's height in sitting posture. Ma was then in Samadhi. Somehow, they managed to put Her in sitting posture. Raising Her hands, Bholanath measured the height to two arm's length.

It was 11 o'clock at night. Even then they found an image of exactly the same size with an image-maker, who had made only 12 images. Eleven of them were made on order. And the 12th he made out of his own will. When Ma saw the image She said, "this was the colour of the image I had seen." Instead of the usual black, it was dark bluish black.

The Kalipuja was performed with great fervour. The lucky and privileged devotees had a glimpse of Ma as Goddess Kali during this occasion.

The time for the final invocation was imminent. Ma was in samadhi but at the right moment, she gestured with Her hand to keep it in abeyance. The fire was kept glowing. After sometime, awakened from Her samadhi, she piously touched the fire. She advised for the careful protection of the sacred fire. By asking not to finally invoke the fire did she not initiate for Savitri Mahayagna in future? Perhaps, only Ma knows about it.

Niranjan's wife Binodini brought all the offerings to be made during the immersion of the image of Kali. After the darshan of Kali, Binodini humbly crying said to Ma, she could not bear the fact that this image will be immersed.

Ma said, "when this kind of thought has come to your mind, it appears that this image wants to stay with us. Let it be kept properly and regular puja be arranged."

This clay-image was shifted from one place to another four times. The fifth and last time, it was shifted to the cave of the Ramana Ashram Dhaka. Ma had arranged to offer a garland of Hibiscus flowers to this image daily. The day it was not offered to the image, Ma would Herself accept it in a miraculous way instead, to maintain the routine.

In 1938, after Ma's birth celebrations, this image was worshipped and thereafter the doors of this Kali Mandir were sealed with cement and bricks as directed by Ma.

Talking about this Kalipuja's background, Ma said: "Truly, like an infant jumps onto her mother's lap, the image of Kali jumped to this body's lap. I too, cajoled her as if she was a kid. This was a human body, which was

fondling, the Brahmamoyi Kali like an infant."

She further said : "This body had seen Kali on move, without splendour of the Shiva below her feet. This Kali image had the Splendour of the Primordial God (Adya-Shakti). The Kali which came to Ma, was not the awe-inspiring, pitch-black Kali which reigned supreme, philandering on the bosom of the Mahakal (an epithet of Shiva) terribly destructive manifestation. Instead, she was the soft, sweet dark blue, Shyama, the traveller in the ethereal. Ma saw Kali without Shiva. Do you know why?

"The kind of feeling and ecstasy you people bring in to this body reacts to that only. These emotions are manifested from.

The sacred fire of Yagna, lit during the Kalipuja, continued to glow under the directions of Ma, who delegated this responsibility to the Brahmacharis of the Ashram. Ma instructed them that in case of difficulties to keep this sacred fire glowing, they should follow a particular ritual to rekindle the fire. Whenever such problem arose, the fire God (Agnidev) — himself appeared before Ma. Ma used to tell about the meeting. Later, on the basis of time calculations the presence of Agnidev used to be confirmed. Thus in Ma's knowledge, Agnidev ever remained burning, there without a break.

Keeping this sacred fire burning, oblations were offered by Kali-Mantra and Gayatri Mantra. Along with this sacrificial fire and the Gods and Goddesses who emerged from it, Ma was worshipped as its living embodiment.

In May, 1929, when Ma was staying at Uttama Kutir in Dhaka, Bholanath had already decided to dedicate his life in Kirtans and meditations. Besides, two-three people joined him to spend the rest of their lives under the blessings of Ma. For them, Ma was an ideal, an eternal source of energy, knowledge, wisdom and sacrifice. But how and why?

For 15 days, Ma used to sieve and drink the dirty water of Dhakeshwari pond, the rest 15 days she drank the water of tender coconuts.

She would take only as much as three fingers could hold from the food cooked in the Ashram, or fruits from

trees inside the Ashram premises. Sometime Ma would take 8-10 morsel with the help of a small spoon out of the handful of puffed rice mixed with water. The devotees would spend day and night together in puja, yagna, kirtan, and reading religious scriptures. She thus showed the way one can remain in Bhagavat Bhava all the 24-hours in service of God on Herself.

At times she would not eat anything and consider the oblations offered to the sacred fire as having taken Her meals. When the fire would become obscure, Ma would attract it with the 'Pranagni' of Her body and protect it. At that moment if anybody was found drowsy while doing 'Japa' Ma would wake him up with a pallid alarm. Her actions reflected meticulous way of doing things.

During one Amavasya in Shahbag, Ma asked Didi to bring sacred fire. Playing with the pot of fire in Her hands, she said, "what do you look? This sacred fire will be utilised in Mahayagna.

After the establishment of Dhaka Ashram, Agnidev was instituted in the premises. Seeing the all pervasive effect of this fire, Ma said:

"Why Savitri Mahayagna alone? We can hold — Vishnuyagna, Rudrayagna — many yagnas with this sacred fire."

On some other occasion, she was discussing with Acharya Batuda (Agniswat Shastri) on the naming — of this sacrificial fire. She suddenly said: "By whatever name you wish to call this fire, but can we not call it — Vishwaroop?"

Batuda was amazed to hear the statement. He conceded that in the Shastras, (the religious scriptures,) he had read Vishwaroop as one of the name of Agni Deb.

At different Ashramas of Shree Ma, especially in Kashi and Kankhal, this sacred fire remains lit with Havans, supported by Gayatri Mantra, being performed daily even today.

During the Kalipuja celebrations of 1929, (Shree Ma had a divine kheyal for an idol of Ma Annapurna. As the Kheyal dawned, so its implementation followed with Bhaiji and other followers taking initiative in establishing an

Ashram in Dhaka Arrangements were also made to institute the idol of Ma Annapurna in its premises. First, an idol was made of silver. A year later, on the request of devotees, another idol made of Ashtadhatu (combination of eight different metals), replaced the silver idol.

The idol was made of Ashtadhatu as per the divine Kheyal of Sri Ma. Ma gave all Her gold ornaments, silver utensils etc into the making of this pious sculpting. Everything was done under Ma's direct supervision. The image was crafted with the best possible mixing of the metals to make it more beautiful. Ma herself often visited the sculptor, with Bholanath or Bhaiji, to give instructions.

Thus Ma described in short—

"Devi Annapurna squatting, her right foot resting on her left thigh. She would have a bowl in her left hand. She would distribute food with a spoon, with her right hand. The left hand would have Trishul, as well as the bag for alms, Annapurna is being asked for alms with both hands stretched — this is the Bhaav. Slight above, on the left of Annapurna, is the image of Kali — in the ethereal space; no Shiva under her feet. Only the Shiva of Annapurna will remain."

On May 2, 1929, Ma formally came with Bholanath to live in for Annapurna temple also began. Bhaiji had the job of organising the Ashram work, which he did with great sense of responsibility. With Sri Ma in his heart, with the support of Her divine power, Bhaiji would easily accomplish the task of building the Ashram. Behind this pious, selfless accomplishment was his will power and complete devotion in service of Ma. He could easily befriend and get close to Ma's other devotees whom he regarded as his own people.

In 1932, during the birth celebrations of Sri Ma, at Brahma-Muhurt the idol of Devi Annapurna and other idols were consecrated in Ma's divine presence, by none other than Bholanath. They were instituted in the newly-constructed temple as chal murti (can be moved if necessary).

During this occasion, Tithi Puja of Ma, revolved round

Ma Annapurna as the central deity. Baba Bholanath did all the puja rituals. From 2nd May to 23rd May, 1932 for 21 days at a stretch the celebrations continued.

The Pujas, Kirtans, Havans, Prasad distribution went on without any break for 21 days considering Ma Annapurna the same. The disciples seated Ma upon the round platform at Panchavati, and dedicated their love, respect and faith at the feet of Sri Ma. During this period all the Ashram inmates, the Brahmacharis, the householders and those absorbed in meditations were content with small amount of food that remained after offering to the sacred fire. On the last day, according to the ritual of Annakut, Bhog offering to Ma constituted more than 108 different items.

During this time, old renowned Mahatma Ram Thakur visited Ma. He prostrated before Ma, she stood before him with folded hands. This brew resentment and protest among the followers. When Baba Ram Thakur learnt this, he said I have prostrated before the person who deserved to be given that respect. The news also reached Ma, who smiled and said! "Baba's revered feet is always placed on the head of this girl."

Dhaka's devotees were pained and disturbed when Ma left the city. They met Ram Thakur, then in Dhaka on a visit, and disclosed to him their plight. Ram Thakur explained: "By building a temple of Ma Annapurna, she has instituted Herself forever amidst you. You must see Ma Annapurna as Ma Anandamoyi."

In 1944, on the banks of Bhagirathi in Kashi, began the construction work of a large Ashram. But the turning events, Ma's Kheyal and devotees request led shifting of the deity of Ma Annapurna and other idols to Kashi Ashram. Ma Annapurna had to come to Kashi, the holiest of the holy places in the universe. With her arrival came up a splendid temple on the banks of the holy Ganges. Shri Manmohan Ghosh was the main contributor in designing this temple which was designed like Dhaka Annapurna Mandir. In 1950, after Deepavali, on the auspicious moments of Annakut, Ma Annapurna's idol together with other idols were consecrated once again

in the newly built temple.

According to Ma's directions, even today Bhog is regularly offered to Ma Annapurna in a very systematic schedule. Besides special pujas during Purnima, Amavasya, and Annakut with 108 preparations, there is specific arrangement for Bhog offerings on all seven days a week.

Who is this Kali near Ma-Annapurna?¹⁰ Kali-Kal, Mahakaal the manifestation of terrible destruction, the primordial Goddess of Shakti. To escape from the destructive kaal, one had to take refuge in the lap of soft-sweet loving Ma. Whether for this reason alone, was this descent of Shyama? Who is she, in whose fold even Mahakaal wants to go? Whose power has made Mahakaal the master destroyer of the universe. Therefore, Ma Annapurna is flanked by Mahadev and Ma Kali. Beyond time or Kaal, is infinite happiness and peace. That's why this Mantra, Japa, Tapa, and meditations are in practise.

Kali is Mahashakti. Kali symbolises beings. Ma Kali wishes to be in the security of that Parashakti. If we also sacrifice our lust, ambitions, greed and clean out and purify to dedicate ourselves at the feet of Ma, we would also be able to get the blessings of Ma as Ma Annapurna.

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10. Ananda Varta.

AN APPEAL

It is hereby requested to every members of Ananda Varta and devotees to increase the number of the subscribers for our Society and donate generously. This Publications Division will appreciate this type of gesture on your part. Otherwise it is becoming very difficult to run this publication of Ananda Varta owing to price hike annually.

Under the circumstances, it has become imperative for us to enhance the price of Ananda Varta from Rs. 30/- to Rs. 40/-. Henceforth the Membership Fee of Society has become Rs. 75/- instead of Rs. 51/- from 1st April, 1997 to our Society.

All the members of the Society are requested to contribute some amount of money as donation to overcome the present financial crisis and for the development of the Society's Projects. Your help will be highly commendable for the smooth running of our Society and Publications Division.

We are expecting from you a prompt cordial response. Hope, you will appreciate our feeling and will do the needful.

On Society's behalf, I am conveying our best wishes and Vijaya/Diwali greetings to you.

JAY MA

Yours in the Mother

Sri Tapan Bose

General Secretary

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June : 1997

Sai Ram Sahay

SRI VISHNU SAHASRANAM STHUTHI

Sri Vishnu means all pervading God.
Sahasranam means one thousand names of God (Vishnu)
Stuthi means praising or singing gods glories or at-
tributes.

There are nine paths to devotion according to ancient hindu scriptures. Out of nine the fifth is the incessant and repetition of the Divine name.

Lord Krishna says to Uddhav

na sadhayathi mam yogo na sankhyam

dharmam uddhava

na svadhyayas tapas tyago ratha bhaktir mamorjita

(The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna said:)

"My dear Uddhava, neither through astanga-yoga (the mystic yoga system to control the senses), nor through impersonal monism or an analytical study of the Absolute Truth, nor through study of the Vedas, nor through practice of austerities, nor through charity, nor through acceptance of sannyasa can one satisfy Me as much as one can be developing unalloyed devotional service unto Me."

— Srimad-Bhagavatam 11.14.20

(Quoted in Chaitanya-Charitamrita, Madhya-lila 20.137)

harer nama harer nama

harer namaiva kevalam

kalau nasty eva nasty eva

nasty eva gatih anyatha

"In this Age of Kali, simply by chanting the holy name of Krishna God one can attain the ultimate goal. There is no alternative.

[The ISKCON World Review, September 1996]

Shirdi Sai Baba says the efficiency of Vishnu Sahasra Nama to his pet devotee shama.

Ramdas went to the bazar. Then baba descended from His seat, came to the Ramadasi's place of reading took out the copy of Vishnu-Sahasra-Nam, and coming to his seat said to Shama, "Oh Shama, this book is very valuable and efficacious, so I present it to you, you read it. Once I suffered intensely. My heart began to palpitate and my life was in danger. At that critical time. I hugged this book to my heart and then, Shama, what a relief it gave me ! I thought that Allah Himself came down and saved me. So I give this to you, read it slowly, little by little, read daily one name at least and it will do you good.

SHRI SAI SATCHARITA Chap-27 p 144

Pujya Sai padananda Says (Extract is noted below)

He who recites Vishnu Sahasranama knows no fear and is never afflicted by disease. He acquires great prowess and strength. Fair complexion, energy, beauty and the finer accomplishments become his possessions. He quickly surmounts his difficulties and will never encounter any evil. Indeed such a one is freed from the very bondage of the cycle of birth, disease, decrepitude, old age and death.

He who recited the thousand sacred names with sincere devotion acquires felicity of soul, a forgiving disposition, prosperity, intelligence, retentive memory and fame. Neither anger nor jealousy, neither cupidity nor any evil thought sullies his heart.

VISHNU IS VASUDEVA

"TAD VISHNOH PARAMAM PADAM !"

Adoration to Sri Vedavyasa, the compiler of Sri Vishnu Sahasranama !

Adoration to Bhagwan Maha Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of incomparable excellence.

To him we bow,

Sai Padananda Radhakrishna Swamiji

In Bhagavad Geeta chapter 8th V.5 Lord Krishna says Who ever at the time of death leaving the body remem-

bering 'ME' alone he attains My being, there is no double about this (V.5).

Unless we have constant practice of chanting of Gods name, we cannot remember him at the time of death.

Now I quote very few attributes and glories of Vishnu.

*Vedyo vaidyah sada-yogi viraha madhavo madhuh
atindriyo mahamayo mahotasaho mahabalah,
Mahabuddhir mahaviryo mahasaktir mahadyutih
anirdesya vapuh sriman ameyatma mahadridhrk.*

163. Vedyah : One who has to be known by those who aspire for Moksa.

164. Vaidyah : One who knows all Vidyas or branches of knowledge.

SANKARA'S COMMENTARY

165. Sadayogi : One who is ever experienceble, being ever existent.

166. Viraha : One who destroys heroic Asuras for the protection of Dharma.

167. Madhavah : One who is the Lord or Master or 'Ma' or knowledge. Says : Harivamsa (3.8.49)

*Ma vidya ca Hareh prokta tasya iso yato bhavan !
tasman Madhava-namasi dhavah svamiti sabditah !!*

"The Vidya or knowledge of Hari denoted by 'Ma'. Thou art the master of that Vidya. So thou hast got the name Madhava. For the suffix 'dhava' means Master."

168. Madhuh : Honey, because the Lord gives joy, just like honey.

169. Atindriyah : One who is not knowable by the senses. Ka. Up (3.15) says:- "Asabdam asparsam - without or beyond sound and touch."

170. Mahamayah : One who can cause illusion even over other great illusionists. The Gita (7.14) says: 'Mama maya duratyaya' My Maya is difficult to cross.

171. Mahotsahah : One who is ever busy in the work of creation, sustentation and dissolution.

172. Mahabalah : The strongest among all who have strength.

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173. Mahabuddhih : The wisest among the wise.

174. Mahaviryah : The most powerful one, because Ignorance which is the cause of Samsara, is His great power.

175. Mahasaktih : One with great resources of strength and skill.

176. Mahadyutih : One who is intensely brilliant both within and without. Br. Up (4.3.9) says : "Svayam jyotih-One who is self-illumined", also Brh. Up. (4.4.16)

"Jyotisam Jyotih-One who illumines the brilliance of all brilliant entities."

177. Anirdesyavapuh : One who cannot be indicated to another as: 'He is this', because He cannot be objectively known.

178. Sriman : One endowed with greatness of every kind.

179. Ameyatma : The Spirit with intelligence that cannot be measured by any one.

180. Mahadridhrk : One who held up the great mountain 'Mandara' at the time of the churning of the Milk ocean and also Govardhana in His Krishna incarnation.

394. Ramah : The eternally blissful one in whom the Yogis find delight. Padma Purana says : Ramante yogino yasmin nityanande cidatmani. Iti Ramapadena etat param brahm' abhidhiyate. The word Rama denoted supreme Brahman who is the eternally blissful spiritual self in whom Yogis delight. Or the word can mean one who of his own will assumed the enchanting form of Rama, the son of Dasaratha.

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717. Visvamurthih : One who, being the sould of all, has the whole universe as His body.

718. Mahamurthih : One with an enormous form stretched on a bedstead constituted of the serpent Adisesa.

719. Diptamurthih : One with a luminous form of knowledge. Or one who, as the Hiranyagarbha, has as-

sumed a brilliant form.

720. Amurtman : He who is without a body born of Karma.

721. Anekamurtih : One who assumes several bodies in His incarnations as it pleases Him in order to help the world.

722. Avyaktah : One who cannot be clearly described as 'This' even though He has many forms.

723. Satamurtih : One who, though He is of the nature of Pure Consciousness, assumes different forms for temporary purposes.

724. Satanianah : He is called one with a hundred faces to indicate that He has several forms. 'Visvam', this whole universe also is His form with countless faces.

734. Lokanathah : One to whom all the worlds pray. Or one who regulates, comforts, and rules over the whole world.

735. Madhavah : One who was born in the clan of Madhu.

736. Bhaktavatsalah : One who has got love for devotees.

12 *Imam stavam bhagavato visnor vyasena kirtitam
pathed ya icchet purusah sreyaḥ praptum
sukhani ca.*

12 Whoever desires advancement and happiness should repeat this devotional hymn on Vishnu composed by Vyasa.

13 *Visvesvaram ajam devam jagataḥ prabhav apyayam
bhajanti ye puskaraksam na te yanti parabhavam.
Om namah*

13. Never will defeat attend on a man who adores the Lotus-eyed One, who is the Master of all the worlds, who is birthless, and out of whom the worlds have originated and into whom they dissolve. (Sri Vishnu Sahasranamam by Adi Sankaracharya English translation by Swami Tapasyananda and published by Sri Ramkrishna Math Madras.)

Shirdi Sai Baba has prescribed the easiest way to His devotees to achieve the end (salvation) as follows :

1. If a man utters My name with Love and Devotion, I shall fulfill all his Wishes, increase his devotion. The simple remembrance of My name as 'Sai Sai' will, do away with sins of speech and hearing (Sri Sai Satcharita Chapter III).

2. Sai Baba was very fond of remembering and singing God's name. He always uttered 'ALLAH MALIK' (God is Lord) and in His presence made others sing God's Name continuously day and night for seven days (Nama Saptaha). He blessed the devotees who did nama Saptahas.

Om Sai Sri Sai Jaya Jaya Sai

Let us know what other saints say regarding singing or chanting God's Name.

a) Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram

Vision October 1995

NAME ANTIDOTE OF ALL EVILS

By Swami Ramdas

Ram has made Ramdas His child. As such he will tell you a few things relating to the spiritual path on which his Divine Master and Mother led and guided him to the final vision and realization of him. In the first place, Ram in all His mercy awakened His heart of His existence and gave him a keen aspiration to see and realize him. With this end in view He initiated him into Ram Mantra. Thereafter, by His will and power the Name rang in his heart and dwelt on his tongue ceaselessly, purifying his mind, senses and even the physical part of him. There is no greater enlightener and purifier than this holy and glorious Name. Verily, the person who has His name is a blessed soul. Ramdas need hardly describe to you the greatness of the Name, as all of you are fully aware of it

from your own experience. It is this Name that fitted Ramdas for the vision of his immortal self, the vision of Ram in all beings creatures and things in the world and the vision of Him as the entire universe and beyond. Ram's unbounded grace illumined every aspect of Ramdas' life. Granting him the very summit of spiritual experience through the power of his name.

Ramdas is principally a votary of the Name and he has found in it the supreme way and means to realize God in all His perfection. Ultimately Ramdas became Ram's confiding child, finding complete refuge in Him as his universal Mother. Now this child is moving from place to place to disseminate the greatness and splendour of His name which is the only antidote for all the evils in the world. Harmony, peace and goodwill can be established on the earth only when the heart of man is turned towards God and attuned to His will : and thereby he realizes the Divine Presence within himself and everywhere about him. This great consummation is possible when every one of you link your mind with God through continued remembrance of Him by chanting His all-powerful name. It is rightly said Name is the bridge that unites the devotee and God. Name is the boat that takes the devotee across the sea of life : Name is the light that dispels the darkness of ignorance : Name is a priceless gem more valuable than all the riches of the world because it can bring you peace and bliss which is eternal. Name can lead to perfect self-surrender. Nay : Name can bring you face to face with God. Name is the way; Name is the goal. Name can open the fountain of your heart and flood you with divine love and joy. God, His Grace and Name are one and the same. Ramdas, the child of Ram, has nothing more to say than to conclude by the prayer that Ram, who is all power, wisdom, love and bliss may ever shower His grace and blessings on all beings on this earth.

(Message to the devotees of Sri Rama Nama Kshetram, Guntur, for their annual celebration in December 1951, and first published in The Vision, January 1952).

Pathway to God in the Vedas-29 - Bhavans Journal.

YOGIC ELEMENT IN MEDITATION

MEDITATION on the name of God with a fully concentrated mind is verily the royal road to the attainment of God. The wavering mind becomes calm when it contemplates continuously on the name of God. When united with the name of God, the mind is bereft of all other ideas.

"From the sea of clarified butter swells up a stream of sweet nectar, let it reach Agni and attain immortality. I know the secret name of this clarified butter, which becomes immortal it is 'God's tongue', the navel of immortality is its other epithet. We are repeating the name of clarified butter in this sacrifice. We continue to offer oblations in the sacrificial fire so that this four-horned, white ox in the form of sacrifice will vomit the clarified butter. Listen to me as I chant the name of this clarified butter with utmost devotion. (Rig Veda IV. 58. 1-2).

Sayana understands by clarified butter (ghrta) as Brahman and the 'name of the clarified butter' as the Pranava or the sacred syllable Om. In his highly ingenious commentary on Taittiriya Aranyaka X.10.2 where the same Mantra occurs Sayana says that herein is stated unambiguously the efficacy of Om in the attainment of Brahman, when uttered at the time of meditation.

Sayana further explains as to why Om or the Name of God is regarded as God's tongue.

Sri Sri Ma Ananda Mayee was a great mystic and Yogini of Bengal but she used to sing God's name and participate in Bhajan and Kirtan.

On the second day, in the night's programme, Shree Shree Ma sang songs, on the request of devotees, for more than an hour, including Her famous song 'hay Bhagavan' with Her God-tuned voice. After that, she started doing Kirtana propagated by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu —

*"Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare,
Hare Rama Hare Rama
Rama Rama Hare Hare"*

(Anand Varta April 1988)

Person : Is there any need of a Guru in pursuing a spiritual path ?

Ma : Of course.

Person : Why can we not imbibe all this from reading books or holy literature ?

Ma : Had this been so, then one would not need any teacher to study any subject. Who is the Guru ? The Guru is God Himself. One must never look upon his Guru as a human being.

Ma was taken away for her food. But on the way she went to the Name hall. Here the ladies were singing Kirtan. Ma went and herself started singing in a sweet melodious voice.

*Hare Krishna Hare Krishna,
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare,
Hare Rama, Hare Rama,
Rama Rama Hare Hare.*

The ladies accompanied her. All at once the Kirtan hall became surcharged with the force of the Name. Ma sang this for sometime and then went along for her lunch. We returned home.

Ma Says —

“The name of Hari in the mind, The world's chores in the hands by this alone will Rama the supreme Being, be realized.”

One is reminded of Mahatma Gandhi's recipe for this strife torn world “Bolo Ram Karo Kam.”

Everywhere Nama received its due honour. Nobody could object to Nama. Who could object if one repeated Rama, Rama, Krishna, Krishna, Allah, Allah, Christ, Christ or the Name of any other God ? But Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was of the view that Nama had to be properly done and whoever did it should do it with full faith and reverence. If the person repeating Nama had no faith or reverence then Nama, instead of producing good result, might adversely affect the Singer.

(Ananda Varta April 1994)

SAI AND RADHAKRISHNA SWAMIJI'S GRACE

(By M. Rama Rao, Bangalore)

During 1978-79, I lost peace of mind under stress due to domestic circumstances. I was always pining for peace of mind and happiness. And who will show me the way? In 1979, one early morning I got a dream in which Sri Sai Baba was standing stretching his right hand. This posture was just like a handpost on the road. Near Him, Sri Radhakrishna Swamiji was silently sitting. After some time the figures disappeared. I was quite perplexed to know who this Rishi was because upto that time, I had not met any day the Pujya Swamiji. After a week I visited the Spiritual Centre. On that day, I noticed the Maharishi, our Swamiji sitting among his devotees and preaching.

After paying my humble pranams to Sri Sai Baba image, I also took a seat among the devotees who were Chanting Vishnu Sahasranama. Swamiji looked at me and asked one of the devotees to give me a copy of Vishnu Sahastranama. Taking the copy, I was glancing at it. Again Swamiji asked the same devotee to guide me in chanting the mantras I was very much pleased and took this situation as my Guru Upadesha. After this I met Swamiji only thrice.

By Devotion and reading Vishnu Sahasranama

During 1980-81, my family circumstances improved and I got peace of mind. I became a staunch Sai devotee and attended the 19th All-India Sai Devotees convention and also the installation of Sri Swamiji's statue at the Sai Spiritual Centre, Bangalore.

15-7-70. The occasion is Prathama Ekadashi. Swamiji said, "We should completely surrender ourselves to the Lord and try to keep Him in our hearts. This keeps us away from evil. There are primarily three basic desires for man : wife, money and children. With all these, if one thinks of God, he is uttama. But if one can go to God without these, he is uttama of the uttamas. Therefore, one should go beyond these desires in a natural manner through the path of renunciation. Through constant ef-

fort and grace, we can overcome all the obstacles to spiritual realisation." Referring to Lord's Name he said that during moments of crisis, we should repeat, "Vanamaligadi," etc., which sloka is repeated at the end of the recitation of Vishnu Sahasranama. Then Narayana will come to our rescue."

10-10-70. Today Swamiji explained the importance of Vishnusahasranam. He said one should be regular in reciting Vishnusahasranama at least in the evening."

In Bhagavath canto 11 chap 10 Text it is stated as noted below.

*Amany amaisaro dakso
nirmamo drdha sauhrdah
asatvaro rtha jijfisir
anastiyur amogha-vak*

Srimad-Bhagavatam

[Canto. 11, Ch. 10]

TRANSLATION

The servant or disciple of the spiritual master should be free from false prestige, never considering himself to be the doer. He should be active and never lazy and should give up all sense of proprietorship over the objects of the sense, including his wife, children, home and society. He should be endowed with feelings of loving friendship toward the spiritual master and should never become deviated or bewildered. The servant or disciple should always desire advancement in spiritual understanding, should not envy anyone and should always avoid useless conversation.

PURPORT

No one can claim to be the permanent proprietor of his so-called wife, family, home, society, and so on. Such material relationship appear and disappear like bubbles on the surface of the ocean. No one can claim to be the creator of the material elements that produced one's

home, society and family. If it were a fact that parents were the ultimate creators of the bodies of their children, children would never die before their parents; the parents would simply create new bodies for the children. Similarly, parents would also not die, because they would create new bodies for themselves to replace the old ones. Actually God creates everyone's bodies as well as the material elements with which we build our material societies. Therefore, before death drags these things out of our grasp, we should voluntarily engage them in the loving service of the spiritual master, who is the bonafide representative of Lord Krishna. Then such material objects, instead of causing lamentation, will be the cause of happiness. (Commentary by Sri Prabhu Pada)

Sri Vishnu is a great powerful god He is Almighty he is Trivikrama.

529. Satyadharma : One whose knowledge and other attributes are true.

530. Trivikramah : One whose three strides covered the whole world. Sruti says : "Trini pada vicakrame - by His feet, He covered three measures". About His covering the three worlds by three strides, Harivamsa (3.88.51) says :

Trir ity'eva trayo lakah kirtita manisattamaih,

Kramate tams tridha sarvams trivikrama iti srutah

By the sound 'tri' the sages mean the three worlds. The Lord crossed them three times. So He is famous as Trivikrama.

But he is Bhaktavasthala one who has got love for devotees.

Sakanasanah : One who effaces the sorrows of devotees even by mere remembrance.

Papana Sanah : He who destroys the sins of those who adore Him, meditate upon Him, remember and sing hymns of praise on Him.

If we want to get any benefit worldly or spiritually from Lord Vishnu we have to please Him by reciting his Vishnu Sahasranama and singing and hearing his glories without any ego.

Om Shanthi Shanthi Shanthi.

Ma Touches us :

Her contribution to the cultural heritage of India

Dr. P. C. Datta

In previous article, on the contribution of Ma Anandamayee in the social heritage of India, which has been shown—Ma's contribution to heridity involves some new revolutionary aspects of life. Such as particularly the Indian Heritage of distinction between male and female was modified by Upanayan, Diksha to many spiritual advanced female belonging to Brahman and non Brahmin. Her — utterances on the cast system will induce thinkers of the society rethinking on cast system.

Another system of heridity involves temples, ashrams and sastras. Ma had great respect to the different ashrams or different communities which have been constructed by the devotees by inspiration of Ma herself. She gave a new meaning of Ashram. She says that true Ashram is that where there is no shram or troubles, Ashram is the place of eternal peace and that can not be restricted to buildings only. Ashram is eternal, universal, unlimited, not restricted to be any form or dogma, so She allowed the devotees to construct Ashrams. She discovered many new and sacred places. Most of such places are related to many miraculous lila and kheyal (divine promoting).

One day She said spontaneously a few words about Siddhesari Ashram which She repeated to Bholanath, but instructed not to tell anybody. She Herself one day guided by the divine force entered a forest area, where there was a temple of Kali, which was called Siddheswari. By instruction of Ma a Bedi was constructed near the temple. On that Bedi Ma used to sit for a long time. A room was built there leaving the Bedi untouched. Inside of the room was like a hole created according to the height of the Body of Ma. Ma was found to stay there for indefinite period. While construction of the room by earth from an

ant hill was going on, Ma said that it was a place of Sadhana of Bholanath in one of His previous lives.

Similarly Ramna Ashram was constructed. A similar place of Bholanath's Sathana was discovered by MA. Ramna was a vacant ground where people came for morning and evening walk and this place was surrounded by houses where all the aristocrats officials stayed. That place was also the place of sitting in a previous life of Bholanath and Bhaiji. Siddheswari Ashram was not only further sanctified by Ma's presence, but also by the first vision of Mother Tara by Bholanath. Ma instructed him to go to Tarapeeth for practising meditation and japa. That was probably the second place of Ma's Ashram. Bholanath was in a deep meditation in Tarapeeth surrounded by flies. Suddenly Mother came and arranged mosquito curtain. He became a Siddha Purusha.

The history of Vindhyachal Ashram is like this :— There was a temple of Vindhyabasini Kalimata on the hill. But for some reason, some said by Mughal invasion or for Jalapahars' revengeful activities, the pujaries and local pandits concealed the Mother's statute in the planes of Vindhyachal town below the hills. About 200 Vighras of gods were also concealed under earth. This fact was not known to the public. Only Mother heard the voice from some deities asking Mother to liberate them from the earth. They were crying seriously, calling Mother again and again. Once, therefore, She asked a devotee chief archeologist of U.P. to excavate the land, which She pointed clearly. There was a large number of Vighras (Image). The architect arranged a group of diggers from the government department. They continued their job for two days. But there was no sign of any deity. Only stones and earth were there. Mother again reconfirmed the plot, and asked the Engineer to continue the work. After a few days they discovered about 200 deities below the soil. Now in this plot the Mother's disciples sing devotional songs and occasionally arrange satsangas. The idols were disposed to the Museum of the archeological department. The place was surrounded by some stone walls which are visible on the ground surface and reveals beautiful

sculpture, flowers etc. In this way Vindhyaachal Ashram is related to many miraculous happenings.

Naimisharanya, the place where Bhagavath was told to the Rishi (sages). Ma discovered the sacred place and installed a model of Puran Purusha. Previously no Bhagavath Puran was available in this locality.

In this way Kalyanvan was established on the basis of Mother's vision that a number of sages were loudly uttering the word Kalyanvan. In that place ashram was constructed. Now many kutias are waiting there for the sadhakas, who want to lead a dedicated life with meditation and japa.

These are contributions to the heridity of India by Mother. Puran Mandir is a source of encouragement of the propagation of the ideas of the Bhagavath Puran. She encouraged persons talking about Mahabharat, Ramayana, Bhagavath, Gita, Chandi, Yagna with Vida Mantras, Upanishads etc.

Though She speaks very often that there is only one ashram spread through out the universe that ashram is to be attained by the devotees. Her devotees have established near about forty ashrams. Each ashram was dedicated mainly to one god or goddess. But by the grace of Ma the devotees realised that there is only one god in different forms.

Her activities and words are provoked from the same universal root called Abyaktam.



THE CONCEPT OF SAKTI IN TANTRA

Dr. (Smt.) M.K. Agrawal

Philosophy is primarily adhyatma-vidya in India. The Veda is the eternal fountain head of all spiritual knowledge. All other epics and Puranas are supposed to be later compositions. Tantra also occupies an important place in the form of Agama. The term 'Tantra' has been used at several places to denote a system of thought, a set of doctrines. 'Tantra' is derived from root 'tan' — to spread. *Tanyate vistaryate jnanam anena* — knowledge is increased by it. According to N.N. Bhattacharya, 'The etymological interpretation points to the fact that Tantra was the general term for "System" serving as the guiding principle of any work and that the use of the word in strictly religious sense was a later growth.'¹ S. B. Dasgupta describes the Tantric Literature as '...an independent religious literature which utilized relevant philosophical doctrines, but whose origin may not be based to any system or systems of philosophy; it consists essentially of religious methods and practices which have been current in India from very old times. The subject matter of the tantras may include esoteric, yoga, hymns, rites, rituals doctrines and even law, medicine, magic and so forth.'² Thus it is clear that the term 'Tantra' signifies a kind of knowledge related to both the spiritual and material aspects of men's life.

Regarding the origin of the Tantra, S.C. Banerjee states that the Vedas and the works which followed them were too abstruse for the common people. Brahmanical philosophical systems were too recondite for them. Tantra allowed greater freedom in religious matters to women and sudras, who were denied many privileges enjoyed by man of upper classes. Moreover, Tantra prescribed easier

¹N. N. Bhattacharya, The History of The Tantric Religion, p.2.

²S. B. Dasgupta, Introduction to Tantric Buddhism, Calcutta, 1950, p.1.

modes of sadhana. In doing so, it allowed the satisfaction of normal human propensities as means of progress in the path to liberation.³ Consequently there was a rapid growth in Tantra and it influenced almost all the systems of Indian Philosophy. There are indeed hundreds of Tantras. It is very difficult to deal with the whole tantric literature; therefore, I have selected only the concept Sakti in Tantra on the ground that all the Tantra deal with the worship of Sakti. In this paper I will give emphasis on two points. A. Sakti as a symbol of motherhood, and B. Sakti stands for equanimity or equipoise. Again, Sakti is taken in two forms, first as a metaphysical entity whose glories are depicted in the Vedas, Puranas and other religious works, secondly the aspect of Sakti which is present in all human beings called Kundalini.

The problem of the origin of the Sakti-worship is an extremely fascinating one. In the Indian religious tradition from the very beginning the divine reality is conceived of as both man and woman. Both the great God and the Great Goddess, Mahadeva and Mahadevi represent the two aspects of a single cosmic reality. This supreme reality is transcendent in its absolute form but immanent at all levels in manifestation. Indian thinkers believe in two types of creation—the first is Manasi Sristi and the other Maithuni Sristi. On the plane of the mind the two parents are named as Svayambhu and Viraj, Mahadeva and Mahamata. Svayambhu is pure static. All objects originate from movement Mahadevi is pure energy. She has brought the universe into existence and preserves and governs it.

In almost all religious sects the Sakti concept plays an important part. In Sankhya Philosophy, Prakriti, the (feminine principle) with Purusa plays an important role. All tantric religions give much importance to Sakti as all-creative, all-preserving and all-destroying power, and the male God is given a subsidiary position. This Sakti cult shows its pre-vedic origin. In Rigvedic period also maximum number of hymns referred to her. She was

³S. C. Banerjee, Tantra in Bengal, pp.3, 57-68.

supposed to be the preserver of man and the world. In the *Athervaveda* there is only one Goddess *Prithivi* or the earth who was credited with great powers of creation and sustenance. A large hymns is attributed to her in the *Athervaveda*.

The epics and Puranas give a full developed picture of Sakti. The Ardhanarisvara conception of Lord Siva was a step forward towards the achievement of Sakti ideas. It is not without but within the Sakti that the God lives. In the Puranas and Agamas the concept of Sakti developed and was perfected. Prof. D.C. Sircar has brought into light that the most important mythological complex connected with the Tantric shrine and Tantric worship are called Saktipilhas. It is related to the Story of Daksa's sacrifice.

"...the earliest form of the legend of Daksa Yajnanasa is probably to be traced in the *Mahabharata* (XII chapter 282-3; in *Brahmapurana*, chapter 39) and a slightly modified form of the same story is found in many of the Puranas (*Matsya*, chapter 12; *Padma*, *Sristikhanda*, chapter 5; *Kurma*, chapter 15, *Brahmanda*, chapter 31 etc.) as well as in the *Kumarasambhava* (1,21) of Kalidasa who adorned the court of Vikramaditya.⁴ Here in Kalidasa's story of Daksa Yajnanasa, Sati died by yoga. According to certain later Puranas and Tantras (*Devibhagavata* VII, chapter 30; 1 *Kalika Purana*, chapter 18 etc.). Siva inconsolable at the death of his beloved Sati, after the destruction of Daksa's sacrifice, wandered over the earth dancing madly with Sati's body on His shoulder (or head). Two Gods now become anxious to free Siva from his infatuation and conspired to deprive him of his wife's body. Thereupon Brahma, Visnu and Sani entered the body by yoga and disposed of it gradually. The place where the pieces of Sati's body fell are said to become pithas, i.e. holy seats or resorts of the Mother Goddess, in all of which She is represented to be constantly living in some form together with Bhairava, i.e. form of Her husband Siva."⁵ The text lists 108 pithas, but four are most im-

⁴Athervaveda, XII, 1.

⁵Quoted in Ch. "Pilgrimage" of the Book *The Tantric Tradition* by Agchanand Bharti, p.86-87.

portant for Tantric worship. These are, a. Jalandhar, b. Oddiyana, c. Purnagiri and, d. Kamarupa.

The *Valkritikam Rahasyam* of *Durgasaptasati* depicts Devi Mahalaxmi as the mother of Maha Kali and Maha Sarasvati. She is Trigunamayi Prakriti. But Tantras describe it differently. The Great Sakti or Prakriti, after casting off the cover of Maya divided herself into two, Siva and Sakti. The first issue of their union was Brahma and she created out of her own energy a charming maiden Vidya or Savitri and gave her to Brahma and asked him to spread Vedas and works of creation on earth with her. Next was born Visnu pervaded by the Sattva (goodness) and goddess Sakti created out of her own portion a maiden named her Mohini or Vaisnavi and gave Vishnu the work of preservation. The third son was a great yogi and whose name was Sadasiva. The great Sakti united herself with him and was engaged in the work of destruction.

"From the above symbolic representation, it is evident that not only the work of creation but even that of preservation and destruction is an outcome of union of Prakriti and Purusa. Thus Prakriti or the Mahasakti, as the Tantrikas designate her, is the creative power of the almighty."⁶

"Not only tantras but Puranas also depict goddess in three forms. In the fifth chapter of *Devi Mahatmyam*, threefold repetition of namah in the beginning shows devotion paid to the three forms of mother (Mahalaxmi, Mahasarasvati and Mahakali). Then namonamah points to the identity of both the father principle and the mother principle, the universal parents. Namah namah is thanks giving or showing a gratefulness to the two parents."⁷

The Great Goddess is also depicted as Vak. She is the daughter of the primeval ocean and named *Ambhrini*. In *Vagambhrini Sukta* (an exposition of Rigveda X, 125) Vak Devi viz. the speech is the universal and eternal substratum of all spoken words and the panchabhutas or

⁶Quoted by D. N. Bose in his book, *Tantras Their Philosophy and Occult Secrets*, pp. 127-8.

⁷या देवी सर्वभूतेषु संस्थिता ।

नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥39॥ देवी महात्म्यम् Ch. IV.

creation. Speech or Vak is the same as Sabda which is the attribute of Akasa (sky). The Goddess exists as the meaning (arth) which is the same as the idea (Manas) or the mind of the creator. She is the symbol of the highest consciousness (vijnanagana) namely the power of chitsakti which is identical with Brahman. This Devi is the supreme energy; she is eternal and the object of meditation.⁸ In Devi Mahatmya, which forms an important episode of the *Markandeya Purana* (chapter 81-93), we find the different names of the same Goddess as Gauri, Parvati, Mahisa Mardini, Sri, Laxmi, Narayani, Vak, Sarasvati, Savitri, Svaha, Svadha etc. all defy the orbit of words and meanings. The first dominant manifestation of Visnu-Maya is consciousness.⁹

The Goddess is the divine light that has entered the plane of matter. When once Devi is conceived as chetana, all the faculties of the soul and the forms engendered in matter became identified with her power. In Devi Mahatmyam, she has been called by so many names: Visnu Maya (Narayani), Chetana (consciousness), Buddhi (intelligence), Nindra (sleep or rest), Kshudha (hunger), Chhaya (shadow), Sakti (energy), Trisna (thirst), Kshanti (patience), Jati (power of generation), Santi (peace), Lajja (modesty), Sraddha (faith), Kanti (beauty), Laxmi (prosperity), Vritti (livelihood), Smriti (memory), Daya (compassion), Tushti (contentment), Mata (motherhood), Bhranti (error), Vyapti (persuasiveness) and chiti (mind). These are the forms of Devi, who is like a centre and all Her forms are the points of compass corresponding to a particular view of the seer.

The Tantras believe that the body is a microcosm of the universe. Sakti is already present in latent form. The Tantras aim at discovering her working within the body which is the greatest and most miraculous Tantra in which the Mother Goddess has revealed Herself in the

⁸ते वै शक्ति परां देवीं परमाख्यां सरात्मिकाम् ।

छयायन्ति मनसा नित्यं नित्यां मत्त्व सनातनीम् ॥ देवीभागवत (8-47)

⁹या देवी सर्वभूतेषु चेतनेत्याभि धीयते ।

नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥13॥

देवी महात्म्यम् Ch. V.

best possible manner as Tripurasundari. Each individual body is pura and that which resides in it is Purusa. The organic body is also called Durga and its controlling power or Atma Sakti is called Durga. In Devi Mahatmya there is an allegorical presentation of Devi Durga as Mahisasuramardini. Mahat overcome by asurika darkness is Mahisa. Tripusundari is comprised of three gunas each of which is a pura and she becomes manifest as Maha Sarasvati (equal to jnana) Maha Kali (equal to Kriya) and Maha Laxmi (equal to artha). The story of uttera charita of Devi Mahatmya shows threefold battle between Durga and a. Sumbha-Nisumbha, b. Chanda Munda, and c. Raktabija. Here Durga becomes Kali, the principle of Kriya. The battle with Sumbha and Nisumbha represents the psychological complex, i.e. samkalpa - vikalpa of the mind, Chanda Munda represent the Asurika nature of prana. The Asura Raktabija refers to the physical body. Each individual is a Raktbija and each drop of his blood is capable of creating similar bodies. The Goddess, therefore licks with her tanguer the whole bloody race of the hostile Asuras. The Goddess is known as Kalika.

The Goddess Kalika is the same Goddess Parvati. Parvati has the composite form of Siva that is, the *Ardhanarisvara* form in which the male half is the symbol of Agni and the female half that of Soma. By a dip in Ganga the Great Goddess bifurcates her person into some as Kausiki and also Agni as Kalika, Kausiki is her beautiful form and Kalika is her terrific and destructive form.¹⁰ The goddess Kali is a destructive mother who withdraws the whole creation. She is called Ratri, here Ratri symbolizes womb of the Goddess from which the entire creation emanates including both Asuras and Devas. She is the great mother who can control both the powers. Kali is the abstraction of primal energy, Kala or time devours the world during its dissolution. She even devours Kala and that is why She is called Kali and is conceived of as the primal cause of creation and destruction."¹¹

¹⁰Vesudeva S. Agrawal, *Devi Mahatma*, p.21.

¹¹Mahanirvan Tantra IV, 30.22.

Kali sends time with both cause and effect in its fold into oblivion, the entire phenomenon is reduced to bindu or dot. Bindu represents the state where dualities (dvanda) of life are resolved. The state of equipoise beyond dualities. This can be seen in the icon of Kali. In Tantrasara she is described as having a terrible appearance. In her lower and upper left hands she holds a severed head and a sword, and in the lower and upper right hands she exhibits abhaya and varada poses. This indicates that destruction is her secondary job, the primary one is preservation represented by varabhaya. Thus in the same icon, an equipoise (samarasya) of preservation and destruction is achieved.

The bijamantra of Kali is Krim, the letters K, R, I, M being suggestive of dharma, artha, kama and moksa respectively. According to another interpretation K denotes the creative aspect of the goddess, R the destructive, I the sustaining, and M the equilibrium of 'Siva Sakti'.¹²

Therefore it is clear from the above analysis that Sakti has the dual role : one as a mother who creates and sustains and the other is the work of destruction, without which new — comers would have nothing to eat, and deterioration of the ecology would lead to extinction of life itself on earth. *Purana Itihas* put things attractively through parables, etc. Tantra depicts the things in a straightforward manner. Sakti is an inherent power in every organism. In human body this Sakti is known as Kundalini. With the help of sadhana one can awaken this Sakti through the *Cakras*, from Muladhara to Ajranacakra and then uniting it with Siva in the Sahasrara Cakra. The Great Goddess Tripura is the presiding deity of the physical, vital and psychical sheaths of each individual. The physical corresponds to the five lower *Cakras* located in the spinal column (Merudanda), the vital to the region of Prana which controls all the sensory and motor impulses from its centres in the Ajna Cakra, corresponding to the middle brain which is the seat of both the individual and the universal working of the most subtle psy-

¹²todalatantra uttasa 6; purascaryarnova, IX, p.724.

chological emotions feelings, thoughts and spiritual intimations.

"Above all these and in the topmost part of the cerebrum is located Sahasrara. From the very centre of Muladhara Cakra, rises the subtlest of nadis called Brahma Nadi. It passes through all the cakras to the sahasrara. It is the vehicle of nada which is finer than sound. It is the medium of the most subtle flow of energy in creation, responsible for the downward (centrifugal) and upward (centripetal) current ever present in the system. The downward flow leads to animality and the upward flow, viz. nada to Brahmapada."¹³

In his book *The Man and his Religion*, S.C. Chakravorty has nicely shown that the Omkara represents the entire creation of the microcosm and the macrocosm alike. "This Om is the symbol of the seven tattvas located in the seven cakras on the Susumna line inside the backbone. The Om represents different stages of creation from the subtlest to the grossest, the seven are A, U, M, Nada, bindu, Kala and Kalatita. The A of Om is Prithvitattva and its seat is in the Muladhara cakra and it is identical with Brahma — the creative principle of the universe; The U of Om is Jalatattva and its seat is in the Svadhisthana cakra and it is identical with Visnu the sustaining principle of the universal; The M of Om is Tejastattva and its seat in the Manipura cadre and it is identical with Rudra — the destructive principle of the universe; The nada of Om is vayutattva and its seat is in the Anahata cakra and it is identical with isvara; the bindu of Om is Akasatattva and its seat is in the Visuddha cakra and it is identical with Mahesvara; The Kala of Om is Ajnacakra and it is identical with parasiva and kalatita of Om is the Sahasrara and it is identical with Parabrahma."¹⁴

The quest for salvation is an inherent urge of the individual; for this awakening of the Kundalini is necessary. The Kundalini is a tangible and living symbol of the divine force by taking resources to which the Para Brahma

¹³D. N. Bose, *Tantras their Philosophy and Occult Secrets*, p. 152.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 155-56.

has manifested himself in this created sphere. It is said that Kundalini lies in the dormant sleeping state like a serpent folding itself in three and a half coils. When awakened the energy rises up to the Sahasrara through the Susumna vein after controlling the activities of other numerous nerves and veins of the body by controlling the breath. However in her upward progress the Kundalini thus absorbs in herself twenty three tattvas commencing from the gross elements, and then unites with Paramasiva whose nature is one with her. This union is known as Samarasya. This is the State of paramananda. Jiva is fully merged in Brahma and duality is over. He becomes one with the supreme soul. The kundalini does not stay long in Sahasrara. She has an inherent tendency to her original place. Therefore the aspirant has to make continuous efforts to retain her in Sahasrara, because liberation is not gained by mere awakening of Kundalini.

Obituary

Smt. Uma Das, the eldest daughter of Late Urmila Das (Kalandi) an ardent devotee of Mata Anandamayee and one of the oldest member of Jamshedpur Branch of the Sangha passed away on the 13th September, 1996 to take eternal rest at the lotus feet of our Divine Mother. May her departal soul may rest in peace by the grace of Ma.

Sri Monoranjan Chatterjee, an ardent devotee of Mata Anandamayee, an untiring worker and one of the members of the Managing Committee of the Jamshedpur Branch of the Sangha passed away by a sudden heart attack of the 20th January, 1997. May his soul rest in peace of the lotus feet of Ma.