

# Ananda

Newsletter of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha

Issue No 10 – November 2019

Contents – First part of July 2018 Amrita Varta



Sound file:

[Sri Ma Anandamayi.](http://www.anandamayi.org/mmedia/mp3/Pushpabrahma.mp3)

<http://www.anandamayi.org/mmedia/mp3/Pushpabrahma.mp3> Pushpadi sings Jai Siva Omkara.

Source of sound recording: Anandamayi Ma. Recordings. DIV\_bMS00556\_AU\_001\_A\_Deliverable\_Side\_1. Performed by Anandamayi,1896-1982 Jai Siva Omkara \_Kankhal 1979, India -Repository: Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard University. Digitized content accessed via <https://sds.lib.harvard.edu/sds/audio/430361077>

Text file:

**Excerpt from Smaranika** (souvenir at the time of inauguration of Sri Ma's samadhi temple in 1987.)

[www.anandamayi.org/new/Pitajisouvfinal.pdf](http://www.anandamayi.org/new/Pitajisouvfinal.pdf) – Bhajiji writes about Pitaji (Bholanath) and himself.

Talk in Hindi with English subtitles:

**Sri Ma Anandamayi.**

<https://youtu.be/FoHgr5lgh7U> Questions and Answers 3, date and location unknown.

Anandamayi Ma. Recordings. DIV\_bMS00556\_AU\_128\_Deliverable\_Side\_2. Performed by Anandamayi,1896-1982. B. Das Gupta, tape 10(A)Repository: Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard University. Digitized content accessed via <https://sds.lib.harvard.edu/sds/audio/430602097>

**Sangha website** <http://www.shreeshreeanandamayeesangha.org>

**MA ANANDAMAYEE**  
**AMRIT VARTA**

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with the divine life and sayings of  
Shree Anandamayee Ma

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### **NOTICE**

In order to ensure receipt of Amrit Varta, it was decided in the Governing Body meeting that the annual subscription of the journal be enhanced from Rs. 150/- to Rs. 300/- w.e.f. January, 2018. Your cooperatoin is earnestly solicited.

**COVER PAGE : Kali Mandir, Uttar Kashi**

### **REQUEST**

Efforts are being made to make the journal more attractive and interesting to preach the sayings, biography etc. of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee widely. All are requested to send their suggestion that may be complied, if considered worthy, so that we can make it more lucid and appealing for the readers belonging to every age group of modern time.

Thanking you and Jai Ma.

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## **CONTENTS**

- |     |  |       |
|-----|--|-------|
| 1.  | Matri Vani   | 1-2   |
| 2.  | Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Prasang<br>- Prof. Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta   | 3-7   |
| 3.  | Forget the Forgetting Death Must Die<br>- Sri Anandamayee Ma   | 8-15  |
| 4.  | Svakriya Svarasamrita (Vol. 5 continued)   | 16-19 |
| 5.  | MA in Satsanga - Anil C. Ganguli   | 20-25 |
| 6.  | Padapeetham Smarami<br>- Br. Dr. Geeta Banerjee  | 26-27 |
| 7.  | Childrens' Pages - Under the Refuge of Truth   | 28-31 |
| 8.  | Bodh Gaya - Melite Maschmann   | 32-35 |
| 9.  | Importance of Agni, Dhatus (Tissues)<br>and Malas (Waste materials)<br>- Dr. Kavita Vyas (Ayurveda Specialist) | 36-41 |
| 10. | Ashram Varta   | 36-44 |

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## MATRIVANI

“At every moment and in th every circumstances in which you are placed, try to the limit of your capacity to sustain the remembrance of God, to pray for His mercy, to keep your mind absorbed in Him. Truly, those whose aim is God-realization have started on their pilgrimage. Spiritual exercise must be done as regularly as possible.”

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“One should never tell a lie. God is Truth. By speaking the truth under all circumstances a state of inegrity comes about naturally. No untruth should ever come from one’s lips. If truth is the fulcrum of one’s life all virtues will develop spontaneously.”

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“Of all creatures the human being alone has the capacity to create an atmosphere, an environment that is conducive to the revelation of Truth. With this faith one should evdeavour to adhere steadily and without wavering to the practices meant to awaken one’s true nature.”

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“Having obtained the great boon of human birth, do not waste a single moment. Plants, trees, animals and birds also live for some time and after generating other plants, trees, animals and birds of their own species, pass away. If you too live in a similar manner, what difference is there between them and yourself? Everyone should make a strenuous effort not to leave this world with a “return ticket”.

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“Worldly happiness, alternating with periodical troubles that cause much sorrow, are characteristic of the householder’s life at every step. With great patience endeavour to do your duty to the best of your ability. Always pray for God’s grace.”

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“To be born as human being is a rare boon. If inspite of having obtained this great opportunity one does not give time to the contemplation of the Beloved, one will have to ask oneself: “What have I been doing?” To neglect the contemplation of Reality means to take the road of death.

\* \* \*

“Man experiences happiness and sorrow as a result of his past actions. He enjoys and suffers - and again new *karma* is created. In order to be liberated from all this, one must sustain the remembrance of That. Endeavour to keep your mind ever immersed in *japa, dhyana*, the thought of God - this leads to peace.”

\* \* \*

“Truly, man is born in order to enjoy and suffer according to his destiny. So long as you have not risen beyond fate how can you possibly avoid submitting to God’s law? What you experience is precisely the result of your own actions. You have not got the capacity to judge whether the Almighty can overstep His own law or not. In God’s kingdom everything is possible. He is omnipotent. It is none of your business to question what He does for anyone. Why should He always do what pleases you? He is the Lord. What He does - whatsoever - is all of your real good : this is the attitude to be taken.”

\* \* \*

“About health and ill-health this body does not say anything. The real, supreme and universal remedy for all ills is to abide in the constant remembrance of God. Put your whole trust in Him.”

\* \* \*

“In wealth and property there is certainly no peace. What then does give peace? My own true nature is peace, knowledge, divine consciousness - unless and until this is realized, how can there be peace? In order to find your Self you must become revealed to yourself. How beautiful.”

\* \* \*

“Infatuation (*moha*) causes entanglement while the love of God (*prema*) leads to Self-revelation. Having become ensnared by *moha*, weeping and regret are bound to follow.”

\* \* \*

“In this world is there any expedient for man, save to be anchored in fortitude and forbearance? Consoling himself out of his own resources let him remain unperturbed. Everyone must try to fulfill his own duty in a spirit of dedication to the Divine. A human being should live in the contemplation of the Eternal.”

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# SHREE SHREE MA ANANDAMAYEE PRASANG

Vol VI

- Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

3<sup>rd</sup> *Pausha*, Saturday (19/12/1948)

I returned from the market and came to know that Shriman Bhupen had come and left information that Shri Devshankar Mitra was speaking to Shri Shri Ma in the ashram. I was asked to visit the ashram. I followed the instruction and left for the ashram immediately.

How does the *advaita tatwa* manifested?

I bowed to the feet of the Mother who was sitting in the hall of the ashram. Mother laughed and said, "We were talking of you and here you are." Shriman Bhupen told Mother, "I informed the brother in his home."

Mother: Question is raised how the *advaita tatwa* is manifested?

Myself: Shantinath Disciple of Yogirajadhiraj Shri Shri Gambhirmathji has raised this question.

Devshankar Babu: Yes, almost.

Mother told Devshankar Babu, "Tell your opinion."

Devshankar Babu: There exists nothing like supreme law and the witness in *advaita*. It is therefore, *advaita tatwa* is described with the help of imagination which is not real.

Mother: After passing out M.A. you are now a professor. Can you open up with all the knowledge you acquired during your M.A. study? You cannot do it. Now one illiterate or even a tenth passed person asks you any question and you too reply but can that person understand on which stage you are replying to his question?

Devshankar Babu: Got you. But your example does not match with I have stated because a *nirakur* may not understand the scholars. But, *sadhaks* are aware of some



knowledge when they talk about *brahma*. In this way, the absolute (*brahma*) came out partially.

Mother: *Brahma* does not exist between the knowledge and ignorant. Those who say having acquired the knowledge of *brahma*, do not know anything at all about *advaita*. *Sadhak* can describe different stages of *sadhana* but that does not reflect his knowledge of *brahma*. In fact, *advaita* knowledge cannot be expressed orally. *Sadhak* realises the situation as it is as it was before. For example, sun light always exists only cloud covers it and thus, the sun appears again after the cloud passes on.

Devshankar Babu: I have read in *Kathamrita* that when one comes down from..

Mother (Pointing out at her physical body): I cannot say anything with reference to *Kathamrita*. Discussion can be progressed if you do not refer to any particular person.

Devshankar Babu: It is said that experience in *Samadhi* stage can be described to some extent after it is over.

Mother: You are talking of the stage; people can say their experience of any stage they achieve. There is nothing ascending and descending in *advaita* knowledge (smiling). One who has acquired the knowledge of *advaita*, neither he pronounces anything nor do anything.

Devshankar Babu: Does the physical body exist after acquiring *advaita* knowledge?

Mother: I would say body perishes.

Devshankar Babu: But body is visible.

Mother: You people would see the body but it is not a body to the *sadhak*.

Me: *Shashtra* says *brahma* stage manifested when *sadhak* acquired the knowledge of *brahma*. When the *brahma* is known?

Mother: Acquiring the stage of *brahma* is the expression in the language. In fact, *brahma* is not known because He is self-light.

Sri Gopal Chattopadhyya arrived from Allahabad when this discussion was going on. He has come to attend the *Geeta jayanti* programme in Kashi ashram. Mother

stood up and Gopaldada offered his *shashtanga pronam* to her. She smiled and put her head on the back of Gopaldada. I returned home presuming the discussion was abandoned.

I got the information at 3 p.m. that Gopibaba came to meet with the Mother and I immediately rushed to the ashram. There was a discussion on *advaitavad*. Also, issue of *akhanda mahayoga* was raised. Gopibaba explained it briefly but very little can be understood. Gopibaba left on the onset of evening. Mother told him, "Baba, your daughter is residing here. Will you not visit here occasionally to meet her?" Gopibaba replied, "Try to visit."

5<sup>th</sup> *Pausha*, Monday (20/12/1948)

*Geeeta jayanti* began today. The program is organized in the hall. I reached the ashram around 10 in the morning. The hall is decorated with marigold flowers. Gopaldada was reciting the *Geeta* accompanied by his disciple while *brahmacharis* and *brahmacharinis* of the ashram too joined the recitation. Sixth chapters were finished and *kirtan* was chanted followed by the distribution of *prasada*. Narration on the *Geeta* started at 4 p.m. Gopaldada explained the circumstance under which the *Geeta* came into light.

6<sup>th</sup> *Pausha*, Tuesday (21/12/1948)

Recitation from the *Geeta* and its narration continued for the second day. I retired to the bed deciding not to visit the ashram that night while my family members left for the ashram. Sindhu, son of Manmohan came to my home informing that Mother is calling me. So, I was to visit the ashram. Mother was sitting in the hall and I bowed to her feet. Gopaldada was speaking perhaps on the current political situation. He was saying, "Present generation of our leaders seldom believe in Hindu civilisation and thus, country could hardly be benefitted by them. They mere imitate the Britishers and want to be good Britishers by avoiding their vices. Nobody can make progress by imitating others. How people be progressive if lacking own identity? These leaders also want to be secular by uniting all the religions. They are trying to appease one another, isn't it? I call you a good person and you too call me the same (audience smile). It is true that goal of all the religions is god realization yet all the religions are not the same because they are not preaching the same sermons." Gopaldada told Mother, "We expressed our views, now you tell us something else."

Mother pointing out herself said, "There is nothing else in this physical body. It's all clean."

Gopaldada: We have many things in ourselves but people still come here to take refuge to you. Why do the people come to you if you don't have anything in yourself?

Mother: They come here to attend the *Geeta jayanti* (every one smiles).

Gopaldada: Unfortunate! It is right that the people are visiting here on the occasion of the *Geeta jayanti*. However, the fact cannot be denied that you are the attraction of the ashram and I recite the *Geeta* because of this crowd.

Mother: There may be another reason that the people throng to her. You already know that a drunkard becomes joyous to visit another fellow drunkard. In the same manner, people visit me (who too have nothing in themselves).

Gopaldada: Those people don't have that sense to realise what you referred to. Instead, they come here with the expectation to get something. But they return back with empty hand.

Mother: This type of arrival is not totally fruitless.

Gopaldada: I don't mean so. It may be somewhat fruitful if someone gives a penny but it is all the way a jest if one gets one penny during visit the palace (every one laughs).

Mother addressing the disciples of Gopaldada: You must remember this view of the Baba. You should not be satisfied with one penny from the king (your *guru* in this case); you always try to extract more from him (all laugh).

One disciple: We are unable to do it.

Mother: Why you are unable? Whose fault is it - *guru* or disciples?

Disciple: It's our fault (all laugh) but why does the Mother not force us to do it?

Mother to Gopaldada: Baba! Why do you not do well to your disciples?

Gopaldada: It's not fair that you are keeping yourself aside while putting all the responsibility on me (all laugh). Here is a story. One man becomes angry with another man. He utters foul words when another person meets with him. That person says to that man, "Why do you abusing me as I have done nothing wrong to you." At this,

the former person replied, "Those words are not meant to you. I utter these words to you addressing another person." (Every one laughs). One cannot be compelled on the road to spiritualism. You take a dip into the water but it is different when you are forcibly thrown to the water. The former is called take bath while later is that of dipping into water.

Mother: Body gets wet even if thrown into the water. One must take refuge to the guru whose guidance whatever it may be bring fruitful result.

Gopaldada: It's true. Feeling of taking refuge (*sharanagati*) never brings deprivation. But, where is that real feeling or sense of taking refuge?

(to be continued)

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How much more do you want of earthly pleasure? Once you have a taste of that delight, you will have no more desire for worldly enjoyment. This is the actual truth. By cultivating the company of saints, sages and seekers after Truth, by attending religious gatherings, by studying books of wisdom and by similar devices, one develops a bent in that direction. Nothing will have to be given up. Only try to cling to Him desperately. What has to be relinquished will fall away of itself.

## **FORGET THE FORGETTING. DEATH MUST DIE.**

- Sri Anandamayee Ma

When the author of these diaries, the Austrian woman known as Atmananda, died in India in 1985, her frail saffron-robed body was placed on a flower-decked funeral bier, carefully seated upright in a cross-legged yogic position, and taken in procession through the ancient pilgrimage town of Hardwar. The body was carried to the Ganges where it was ritually immersed in a special area reserved for *sanyasis*—orthodox Hindu renunciates<sup>1</sup>. She was one of the few women and perhaps the only westerner to ever be given this honour. This book is essentially the story of how a modern western woman—a respected pianist and educator—arrived at this destination.

Atmananda's diaries are an intimate record of her spiritual odyssey in close association with several of this century's most important spiritual figures, particularly her Guru, the great Bengali mystic—Sri Anandamayee Ma. They also give a unique account of her fellow travellers, other western artists, intellectuals and spiritual seekers who, like herself, made the journey to the East in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and who were the precursors of the many young Americans and Europeans who from the late 60's on have flocked to India in search of spiritual fulfilment.

Atmananda's journey began in Vienna on June 7, 1904 where she was born into a wealthy Jewish family and given the name Blanca. Her childhood was seriously marred by the death of her mother when she was only two, shortly after the birth of her younger sister, and the two girls were raised by their grandmother and a series of tutors. Blanca's father, although often away on business, took a keen interest in his daughters' education and was determined that they should have the best of everything. Thus there was one governess who spoke only French to them until they became fluent and another who spoke only English until the same result was achieved. Upon discovering that Blanca had musical talent, a grand piano was purchased and the best teachers provided. She turned out to be something of a prodigy, giving her first acclaimed public recital at sixteen.



Ma's Tithipuja, Kankhal Ashram



**Maharudra Yojna, Kankhal, Ashram**



**Dashashwamedh Ghat, Varanasi**



**Manikarnika Ghat, Varanasi**

Her father encouraged Blanca's immersion in the extraordinarily rich cultural life of Vienna, then the capital of the sprawling Austro-Hungarian Empire. This was the Vienna of Freud, Mahler, Gustav Klimt and Richard Strauss, which for one giddy moment had arrived at a pinnacle of Western civilization. But all this splendor would soon come crashing down under the guns of the First World War, during which at times she, along with much of the rest of the city, would undergo near starvation conditions.

It was amidst the ruin and devastation of this period and its aftermath that the seeds of Blanca's life-long mystical quest were sown. She began reading the spiritual writings of Tolstoy, the sermons of the Buddha and Meister Eckhart, the mystic poetry of Rilke and the esoteric novels of Herman Hesse and Gustav Meyrink. Then one day, when she was sixteen while walking alone through a park pondering the senseless destruction around her, one of the defining moments of her life occurred. Suddenly, all matter—trees, rocks, the sky, water—was vibrantly alive and filled with a divine light in which there was no separation between the seer and the seen, but only an ecstatic unity which was by definition eternal love. For one timeless moment all this was overwhelmingly revealed to her and this revelation was to be the driving force of her life from then on.

She soon discovered Theosophy which gave an organizational structure and expression to her experience. Blanca immersed herself in this new religion at a time when it was at the peak of its popularity as a dynamic spiritual movement. She attended the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary convention at the Society's headquarters in South India in 1925 and later lived in a large Theosophical community in Holland for several years. In post World War I Vienna, not unlike America in the 1960's, the old social, moral and religious structures had been discredited and discarded and youth was a law unto itself. Many found, or thought that they had found, the answers they were seeking in the transcendent wisdom of Eastern mystical philosophy and yoga. But very few had the courage and the vision to pursue the quest as Blanca did.

Though Theosophy Blanca came under the influence of its reluctant messiah, J. Krishnamurti, and ultimately left the West for good to teach at his school in Benares. Meanwhile a fellow Austrian had come to power in Berlin who would embark on a path of destruction and hate-filled racism that would annihilate once and for all the world she had been born into, taking most of her friends and relatives with it.



In time Blanca became disillusioned with what ultimately she felt to be, for her at least, the inadequate teaching of Krishnamurti and her search took her to the ashram of the well-known South Indian sage, Ramana Maharshi. Although she found great solace with him, her destiny lay elsewhere and her quest was finally fulfilled at the feet of a divinely beautiful woman, the sublime God-intoxicated Bengali mystic worshipped throughout India by Her followers as an incarnation of the Divine Mother: Sri Anandamayee Ma. From 1945 until her death, Atmananda's life became ever more focused on her relationship with this extraordinary woman, a relationship whose sole purpose was to reveal the innermost truth of her own existence.

Shri Anandamayee Ma<sup>2</sup> (1896-1982) is one of the most outstanding religious figures of modern times and was the last great representative of the Hindu Renaissance that began with Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886). Although India has always been a land of saints, during this period leading up to her independence from Great Britain in 1947 there seemed to be an exceptional number of these great ones and Atmananda had the exceptional good fortune to have close contact with several of them.

Regarding herself, Anandamayee Ma would say that she is whatever one thinks her to be, and that her consciousness was completely merged in the Divine (*Parabrahman*)—the state of absolute non-duality—which manifests in the relative appearance of each individual as his or her *Atman*. In this sense she would sometimes say to people that she was their *Atman* and, indeed, to be in her presence was to become intensely aware of one's indwelling divinity. To have a relationship with her was to come into contact with something that is, far more so than anything else, uniquely one's own and not something outside of or separate from oneself. This cannot be expressed in words and thus it is difficult to describe her. She is not to be known so much through her words or teachings, but through personal relationship—a relationship that is fundamentally, by its essential nature, non-dual. This is the great mystery and secret of the ancient Indian Guru tradition which she embodied.

Anandamayee Ma was born in a remote village in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1896<sup>3</sup> into a poor Brahmin family and given the name *Nirmala*—'stainless purity'. Before her birth her mother had received various signs and omens that this would be no ordinary child. From childhood on he radiated an uncanny beauty and was doted on by all the people in the village. The world she came out of was pervaded with religious devotion and worship. Her father would often go off for weeks on end

with groups of ecstatic wandering religious minstrels, while her mother remained at home performing the extensive worship of the family deities as had been done by her forbears for centuries. A special room was set aside in their simple dwelling for the images of these Gods and Goddesses and the daily routine centered around their festive worship as it did in all traditional Hindu households. Anandamayee Ma would later say of this idyllic world of her childhood that it was a place where there was perfect harmony and order where everyone, of whatever caste or religion (the village was over half Muslim), knew exactly what his or her role or '*dharma*' was, and was at complete ease with this. This was an order based on mutual respect and on a deep awareness of the fundamentally spiritual nature of life which had been defined and refined over millenniums – a world still unpolluted by the modern opium of the masses: political panaceas and mass media manipulation.

As was the custom, Nirmala's marriage was arranged when she was 13 years old, although it was several years before she actually lived with her husband who was quite a bit older than her. When they did finally set up house together in 1914 there was never any question of normal marital relations between them. Difficult as it may be for some to understand, the quality of spiritual energy which she continually radiated, automatically and quite naturally precluded the possibility of her husband having such desires.

Bholanath, as her husband was called, got far more than he bargained for with Ma and undoubtedly this was not always easy for him. Nevertheless he persevered in this most unconventional relationship and was ultimately transformed into an outstanding yogi. During this period of her life it was noted that outwardly Nirmala was a model housewife, performing all her myriad domestic duties to perfection. Inwardly, however, something quite different was going on and at times, even in the middle of her household chores, she would go into a trance-like state, sometimes becoming unconscious and having to be brought around by others. She never gave any explanation as to what was going on at these times, however, and her demeanour was always joyous and radiant. She was always perfectly obedient and did not seem to have any personal desires. She was extremely beautiful but this was a beauty—as was the case throughout her life—that transformed the mind of the beholder into the highest spiritual awareness.

After some time Nirmala and Bholanath moved to the village of Astagrama where he had found employment. Here she became the object of veneration of an 'eccentric'

local man who was both well-educated and highly religious. He was convinced that she was an incarnation of the Divine Mother. One day, when bowing before her, he spontaneously prophesied: "Now only I call you Ma; one day the whole world will do so!"<sup>14</sup>

In 1918 Bholanath found employment as an estate manager for the Nawab of Dacca in a place called Bajitpur. It is here that what is referred to as Ma's '*sadhana leela*' (the play of ascetic spiritual practices) began in earnest. Ma always emphasized that she was in a state of perfect spiritual illumination since birth, that for her there was nothing to be attained or sought after spiritually as she had always been immersed in that timeless state. Nevertheless, shortly after moving to Bajitpur, the idea occurred to her to 'assume the role of a *sadhaka*'—one who practices spiritual and yogic disciplines—although she had no training in this regard and almost no formal education. In the evening when her work was finished, she would light incense and sit quietly, repeating one of the holy names. Very soon her body would assume an advanced yogic meditation posture and she would go into a deep spiritual trance-like state. Bholanath, tired after a hard day's work, would sit on his cot, sometimes smoking his hookah, while watching her with rapt fascination until he finally fell asleep.

These states of mystic absorption began occurring with ever greater frequency and Bholanath worried about leaving Nirmala alone. The neighbours began to talk about these strange happenings and at length he consulted a renowned physician who also had some knowledge of yoga. The doctor assured him that she was in a very exalted spiritual condition.

On the full moon night of August 3, 1922, what is referred to as Ma's 'self-initiation' took place. In the evening after Bholanath had retired she sat down as usual for 'meditation' when spontaneously from deep within her an esoteric initiatory process occurred in which she experienced herself as both Guru and disciple. She then entered into *samadhi*, the state of ecstatic mystical absorption in which all duality ceases.

For the next several years her 'play' of *sadhana* continued unabated and she was often in *samadhi* for days on end—a state in which all outer signs of life such as breath and heart-beat came to a virtual standstill. She had the *darshan*, or vision, of various Divinities who would then immediately merge into her—the relative duality of worshipper and worshipped melting into absolute non-duality. Ma said regarding

this period that she fully experienced every conceivable spiritual practice—both ‘Hindu’ and otherwise and followed each one through to its completion, although this was accomplished with tremendous rapidity. Normally it would take years or lifetimes to reach the end of even one of these practices. Later in her life she said that she had never revealed even a thousandth part of what she had experienced then. “During that time her days were not divided into mornings, evenings and nights—there was only one prolonged period of indescribable bliss. Sometimes, while engaged in performing an intricate yoga *asana*, her long black tresses would get entangled with her limbs and the hair was torn out by the roots, but she had no sense of bodily pain. Hunger, thirst, sleep or other demands of the body remained in total abeyance for days.”<sup>5</sup> During this period Bholanath looked after her as a father would a helpless child.

In April of 1924 Bholanath and Ma moved to Dacca, the principal city of the region and the seat of the local British administration. Here Bholanath became manager of the Nawab’s extensive estate, the Shahbag Gardens. It was at this time that Ma first became known to the world at large. Her divine ecstasies intensified at Shahbag and she emanated a spiritual radiance that others found irresistible. Those who now began coming to her came from the highest echelon of Indian society. They were doctors, lawyers, government officials and aristocrats from this relatively sophisticated modern city. They were not people of a particularly strong religious bent, many having virtually given up the old ways, but they experienced something overwhelmingly uplifting in Ma’s presence—something that ultimately was not outside of themselves but which revealed the essence of their own innermost divinity.

At first it was mainly women who came, as it would have been considered highly irregular at that time for a young married woman to even show her face to male strangers. But Bholanath felt intuitively that she was meant to be the Mother of all and was prepared to let go of strict adherence to social conventions and any feelings of personal possessiveness. In 1925 when, after she had completed a lengthy period of silence<sup>6</sup>, Bholanath urged her to speak to all those who had come to her, Ma warned him, “*You must think twice before you open the doors to the world in this manner. Remember that you will not be able to stem the tide when it becomes overwhelming.*”<sup>7</sup>

Soon the tremendous authenticity of her spirituality became so obvious to all that the conventional social considerations were abandoned and both men and women

flocked to her. It is impossible to convey here in this brief introduction the atmosphere of the magical and the miraculous which surrounded her constantly at this time. There were innumerable healings, both physical and emotional, and people discovered meaning in their lives that they had never dreamed possible. The elements of nature literally seemed to obey her and people were (and are) convinced that she was an incarnation of the Great Goddess—the Divine Mother of the universe. Some became so inspired as to renounce the world entirely and take up the intense practice of yoga and meditation. Often these were highly educated people who had to face serious social opprobrium, particularly as it was unheard of to receive such guidance from an uneducated village woman. In the not too distant future, the very greatest pundits, scholars and yogis of India would come to sit at her feet in awe, verifying that she was indeed a font, an embodiment, of the very highest wisdom as laid down in the Indian scriptures over thousands of years.

By 1926 her period of *sadhana leela* was coming to an end. No longer was she a shy village girl who kept her face covered with her sari in public; she had begun to assume the role of the great spiritual teacher she obviously was. Nevertheless her *bhavas* (states of spiritual ecstasy in which her body would exhibit various supernatural signs and movements) continued during *kirtans*<sup>8</sup> and at other times. Her devotees continued to increase and they made an ashram for her at Dacca. She refused to allow herself to be chained by her followers, however, and began to go on pilgrimage all over India.

At times, in order to escape the increasing throngs who wanted to possess her, she would quietly announce that she was leaving immediately, often in the middle of the night, much to the complete dismay of those who felt that their lives depended on her. She would not give any indication of where she was going or when, if ever, she might return; but proceeding directly to the train station, sometimes taking only one person with her (who had been given only a moment's notice and who was often not allowed to bring any money or belongings with him), she would board the first available train, completely oblivious as to where it was going. Once inside, she would sink into *Samadhi* as the train flew across India.

Gradually through the course of her almost ceaseless peregrinations she acquired large numbers of devotees throughout India. Kings, prime ministers, generals, scholars and saints bowed down before her. But however much worldly power a person might wield, when they were before Ma they were stripped naked as before God—their

innermost Self—and it was always an awesome experience. In her presence one saw clearly that the primary purpose of life is spiritual and that the full recognition and understanding of this Reality is the sole reason of our existence. Before such overwhelming spiritual truth, the grandiose, competitive designs of the ego which are the source of our pain-filled sense of separation, dissolve.

Ultimately ashrams were built and an organization formed. Ma, herself, tried to remain aloof from all this, but in any case, in time, things became more structured. She, however, always remained as she had ever been—completely untrammelled and free. By the time Atmananda began to get close to her in 1945, Anandamayee Ma had become one of the best known spiritual figures in India.<sup>9</sup>

1. *Sanyasis* are the only Hindus who are not cremated as they are considered to have died to the world while still alive and are thus free of karmic defilements. So there is no danger of the soul lingering near the body after death. The gradual reintegration of such a purified body into the elements is considered auspicious.
2. 'Sri' or 'Shree' is a respectful title, 'Anandamayee' means permeated with bliss and 'Ma' is Mother. The name may be written with the word 'Ma' placed either before or after 'Anandamayee'. Her followers more often refer to her affectionately as 'Ma' or 'Mother'.
3. Hindus are not as concerned with the solar birth date, which is not considered astrologically significant, as with the lunar date, which varies from year to year. In Anandamayee Ma's case this normally falls in the month of May.
4. From *The Life of Sri Anandamayee Ma*, Bithika Mukerji, p.18.
5. *Ibid*, Bithika Mukerji, p.27.
6. This lasted for 3 years and was only rarely broken for some important reason.
7. *Life and Teaching of Sri Anandamayee Ma*. A. Lipski. p.15
8. Group devotional singing.
9. Information on the life of Anandamayee Ma is scattered throughout the diaries. Important incidents from Her early life can be found particularly in Chapter 23. See also entry for 18<sup>th</sup> Feb., 1955.

## SVAKRIYA SVARASAMRITA

Vol V

(Continued)

To ensure that the shreds of the broken bulb do not hurt anybody, someone may rather carefully collect and deposit them all at a place where no one steps upon them.

Consider this aspect as well : where there is no question of movement non-movement, action non-action, it is the *One Brahman* without a second. Where do you keep (the shreds of the broken bulb)? On the earth only (the Bengali for earth is *Mati*) which when broken up as *Ma-ti* is 'the Mother' alone. (Again, you also say the word *Atma* (in which too is Ma, i.e., the Mother). So, Ma being common, *Mati* stands for *Atma* and *Atma* is one with *Paramatman*). Now understand as to where *Paramatman, Parabrahman* is. Where there is no question of creation, preservation and dissolution, then from where (can the question arise) of birth or death pertaining to worldly life? Past, present, future—where can there be the cycle of time? Also, the state, which is particularly regarded as that of *Mahakal*, is a subject to be enquired into. The aspect of what is unknowable is also to be understood through self-deliberation. *Asparsa Yoga*, as you say, surely pertains to *Aspanda*. All, negation of all, beyond not beyond—where it is, how can it be described? (It would have been possible to describe it) if it could be expressed through *bhasha*<sup>1</sup> (language). When expressed it is language and that is bondage (as an expression by language is in duality).

Noticing all this peculiar behavior of Ma, Bholanath perhaps told Ashu's mother, the wife of his elder brother, who had negotiated the marriage of the former. "*Bau Thakurani* (address with respect to the wife of elder brother), what a strange type of bride you have brought home!" He said something else too, known to them only.

### MA UNCONCERNED WITH WORLDLY WAYS OF CONTROLLING HUSBAND

Bholanath did not often stay long with his brother, as the former was without any job and was looking for one. His third sister's husband was employed in Dacca

and Bholanath went to his house. The sister kept him with her for a long time with love. As Bholanath was continuing his stay there for a long period, Ashu's mother one day called Ma and said, "Look Nirmala, I want to tell you something, listen." When Ma came near her, she said, "How strange you are that you cannot win over your husband; he does not even come here! What sort of a woman you are, unconcerned—a woman hard to account for, indeed! Bring a piece of paper and a pen—here they are. Write a letter. I shall tell you what to write.

Now Ma did not know how to write a letter at all. After marriage, Ma had been taken from Sripur to Kheora, and then Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya Mahasaya had escorted Ma back to Sripur. When returning (to Kheora), at that time, he had told Ma, "Nirmala, here is a piece of paper. After I reach Kheora, you write on a separate piece of paper whatever is written here and send it to me. This is the customary way of writing a letter. If you feel like writing something else too, do write." Ma enquired, "How soon should I write?" After (knowing that and) calculating the time accordingly, Ma copied verbatim what he had written and asked someone to post the letter. Words spelt rightly or wrongly, whatever it was, this was how a process of some sort began of Ma's writing letters. The language of the letter was like this : 'Hope you reached safely. Are you keeping good health? I am having a peculiar feeling since your departure and nothing at all seems enjoyable. When will you come again? etc.,' —the contents were all of this type.

As for the letter which Ashu's mother had asked Ma to write, Ma wrote whatever She could. Ashu's mother then read it, and after making necessary amendments, posted the letter (to Bholanath). Since Bholanath had stayed long at his sister's house, many of them who were of the same age group there had become like friends of Bholanath. So when that letter reached the house of Bholanath's sister, there was a scramble for it. The letter was snatched and opened, and then, in the midst of all, there followed at once riotous amusement with hearty banter. This was just about all regarding Ma's reading and writing. Bholanath's sister took that letter from Bholanath and later, at some other time, gave it to Ma and said, "Here it is, take it! What a scene was enacted— an awkward situation for (poor) Ramiani (Bholanath), because of this letter! Ma tore up the letter, threw it away and said, "All that was written according to the dictation of Ashu's mother." However, after the death of Revati Babu, when Ma had come from Atpara to Vidyakut where She stayed definitely for more than a year, whenever Bholanath, who was then at Ashtagram, his new place of employment,



would write to Ma from there on any particular issue. She would also write back in reply about those significant points.

A year later, Ma went (from Sripur) to Kheora, and after staying there for sometime, She was escorted back to Sripur. At Sripur, Revati Babu's illness aggravated, so he returned to Atpara taking Ma and others in his company. He recovered through Ayurvedic treatment and came back to Sripur, his place of employment, and resumed his duties. At that time, Shriyukt Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya Mahasaya took Ma back to Kheora from Atpara. She lived with Her parents at Kheora for sometime. Meanwhile, Revati Babu was transferred to Narundi Railway Station. Shriyukt Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya Mahasaya too wound up his settlement at Kheora and taking Ma and all others along with him came to live at Vidyakut. Later, Ma came to Narundi from Vidyakut.

When Ma was first taken to Narundi, the family of the Assistant Station Master there had not arrived till then, and, therefore, it was arranged that he take both his meals at the house of the Station Master Revati Babu. Ma was very young then. She cooked and Ashu's mother served the Assistant Station Master both the times. (But) he could not join others (at mealtime), because of his duties which kept him busy till odd hours. He came late at night as well as during the day to take his meals. Ma used to neatly preserve his food and keep it warm, as She would have done for others. Later, Ashu's mother felt it troublesome to serve him food both the times because of late hours and told Ma, "You serve him both the times with the veil on." The purdah system was, then, prevalent in villages and young women could not appear in front of others. But for Ma, obeying instructions was the rule, and so She did just that.

At that time, Ma did not have any stitched apparel like a bodice or chemise but wore only a sari. The way She draped Herself was so beautiful that one could see only Her hands and feet. Due, possibly, to excessive work, Her sari became unserviceable in a somewhat short period. That was the reason why, a little before leaving Narundi, Ma was gradually provided with such a coarse sari that it was perhaps almost like fine gunny. Wearing that only, Ma did Her work of cooking, etc., in the heat of summer with a smiling face. Noticing this, a feeling of sympathy arose in others and they commented, "What a pity that such a young bride with so tender a body has to wear a sari so coarse and in this heat. And again, look, what a smile is there on Her face, as though She is devoid of any sensation—does not feel anything at all!"

When serving food to the Assistant Station Master, Ma would offer it with a veil on and in a large plate with rice and the different other articles well arranged on it. A little later, thinking that a second helping may perhaps be needed, She would again take and offer all the dishes in a large plate. He would take whatever he liked or tell Ma that he did not need anything more. Ma would, then, go back, finishing Her serving in these two rounds only. She served in this fashion so that She may not have to go (in his presence) time and again.

We have already mentioned that the Assistant Station Master would come very late at night after finishing his duty. Who should open the door at such a late hour (was the question)? Ashu's second brother, about five to seven years of age, was made to sleep with Ma, so that She may not have to be all alone in the room. She would wake up the boy, unbolt the door and ask him to hold it on and open it only after Her going away to the kitchen. He would just do that. The boy would be drowsy, being a child, and would return to sleep. Ma had been instructed to serve and, therefore, She would go, with the veil on, in the presence of the gentleman only when food was served. Ma had made this arrangement for only this reason that there may be no meeting on any other occasion.

\* \*

God apportions man's lot; He is not only the maker of fate. He Himself is also fate - remember this. What is called destiny is HIS decree - here rules and regulations do exist. World (*jagat*) means that which moves and individual (*jiva*) that which is in bondage. In this state fate and restraint, rules and regulations, activity, are in force. As ordained by the Great Mother, whatever be the result of any action, that She will bestow without fail.