

Ananda

Newsletter of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha

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Sound file:

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

<http://www.anandamayi.org/mmedia/mp3/Satyamsuktal.mp3> Sri Ma sings Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma.

Source of sound recording: Anandamayi Ma. Recordings. DIV_bMS00556_AU_001_A_Deliverable_Side_1. Performed by Anandamayi, 1896-1982 Satyam Jnanam Suktal 1979, India -Repository: Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard University. Digitized content accessed via <https://sds.lib.harvard.edu/sds/audio/430361076>

Text file:

[Excerpt from Smaranika \(souvenir at the time of inauguration of Sri Ma's samadhi temple in 1987.\) Article about Ma by Sw Paramananda. www.anandamayi.org/new/Paramansouvfinal.pdf](http://www.anandamayi.org/new/Paramansouvfinal.pdf)

Talk in Hindi with English subtitles:

Sri Ma Anandamayi.

[https://youtu.be https://youtu.be/qw8OFKrvLXw](https://youtu.be/https://youtu.be/qw8OFKrvLXw) Questions and Answers 4, date and location unknown.

Anandamayi Ma. Recordings. DIV_bMS00556_AU_128_Deliverable_Side_1. 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/>

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

MA IN SATSANGA¹

Anil C. Ganguli

Introduction

Sat means “being”; “existence”; “essence”; “truth”. *Sat* also means “good” and “*sanga*” means “fellowship” or “association”. In ordinary parlance, *satsanga* means being in good or holy company. Ma says that *satsanga* is an association which prepares one for realization of *sat*, the One Being which has no beginning, no end, no change, the Being that remains the same at all times, in all places and under all circumstances. In an applied sense, the word *satsanga* signifies a religious congregation, an assembly providing a forum for discourses on religious and spiritual subjects and *kirtan* (chanting or singing hymns and names of God).

Ma, fountain of inspiration

Satsanga, in the applied sense mentioned above, is an essential part of life in Sri Sri Anandamayi Ashram. It includes an elaborate programme of recitation of select portions from the *Srimad Bhagavat Gita*, the *Srimad Bhagavat* and *Upanishads*, besides *kirtan* and talks on spiritual and religious subjects. If Ma happens to be present, She sometimes sings and answers questions from the audience.

Ma in satsasnga is an unfailing source of inspiration to those who seek it. She awakens aspiration for God-realization which She equates with Self-realization, that is to say, knowing “Who am I?” She showers love, peace and joy on all. She wants nothing in return from anybody. If she asks (or rather, “begs” as She puts it) for anything at all, it is that we should think of God and chant His Name. Her teaching is :-

“Bear in mind that God’s Name is He Himself in one form; let it be your inseparable companion. Try your utmost never to remain without Him. The more intense and continuous your efforts to dwell in His Presence, the greater the likelihood of your growing joyful and serene. When your mind becomes vacant, endeavour to fill it with the awareness of God and His contemplation.”

The benign effect of chanting God's Name has been described by Ma as follows:-

“As you chant the divine Name or *mantra*, your mind is gradually purified; love and reverence for the Supreme Being awaken and your thoughts become subtle and refined. Then glimpses of higher places of existence begin to dawn upon you and work for your uplift.”

Let us have some glimpses of Ma in *satsanga*. To start with, Ma in the role of a singer, surrounded by a group of talented musicians, including some of all-India repute. Occasionally she leads the *kirtan* and others follow Her in chorus. Ma has never had any technical training in music. Renowned musicians, however, unequivocally confirm that her melodious voice is matchless and perfect in its rhythmic movement. Lay listeners feel that her singing not only pleases the ears but also infuses something mysteriously thrilling into one's inner self. Ma sings spontaneously. The verve and vigour and the cadence of Her music are ecstatic. The modulations of Her voice vibrate in the heart of the listener and purify his mind. She gives to almost each word of Her songs a different inflection and each inflection has a special appeal. The emphasis repeatedly put by Ma on a particular word or syllable acts as a key to the understanding of its inner meaning. With Her eyes half closed and Her tiny palms gracefully folded, She keeps on singing and then a wave of *ananda* sweeps over the ashram and floods the sky above. It lingers even after the sound of the music has faded away. “Her singing”, remarked Arnaud Desjardins of Paris, “has such force, such vigour that we are shaken in our entire being. This surpasses by far everything of that order that I have had the chance to experience. Something immense that very nearly causes giddiness makes its presence felt among us. We want even more of it. But we feel that we should be unable to bear it.”

If one's heart is receptive, language is no bar to the appreciation of Ma's singing. Its echo reverberates with a message that can be felt but cannot be expressed.

Ananda is showered by Ma not only through songs but also through silence which can, in a receptive mind, be even more effective and soul-stirring. Silence is an important item of *satsanga* in the ashram. During specified periods, every day every participant is supposed to sit still in one posture, with the mind concentrated on the goal. This discipline is an extremely difficult exercise. The presence of Ma, however, makes it easier for those who make an honest effort. Subtle vibrations emanating from Ma purify the atmosphere and create in a participant's mind a sense

of peace and beatitude if he is earnest. It is not the peace of mere quiescence but a peace pulsating with life and generating self-confidence, determination and buoyant optimism.

By far the most interesting feature of *satsanga* is what is known as *matri satsanga* (*satsanga* at the feet of the Mother). It provides the much coveted opportunity of informal conversation with Ma when She is usually in a communicative mood. *Matri satsanga* is free from the restraint generally inspired by Ma's imposing presence as also from the rigid conventions and rituals that mark ashram life as a rule. Ma is a 'fantastic' conversationalist. If she is in a mood to be serious, She keeps the audience spell-bound and there prevails complete silence. If, however, She chooses to be in a lighter vein, She can raise an uproar of laughter from the entire congregation in response to her keen wit and exquisite humour. During *matri satsanga* Ma is usually very patient and indulgent and more motherly than any human mother can possibly be. She then gives Her 'children' almost unrestrained liberty and sympathetically attends to questions ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Thus, followers of different faiths and sects seek Ma's guidance in *sadhana* from a practical point of view; learned scholars want clarification of intricate points of philosophy and metaphysics, with an academic approach; sometimes pretenders venture to propound empty theories with an air of importance, presumably out of sheer bravado. Again, common men of the world feel relief in placing their personal and domestic problems before Ma, whereas fastidious cynics recklessly condemn God and expect Ma to answer for His 'failings'. Thus, the questions cover a large canvas and are of varying interest and value. In the homely atmosphere of *matri satsanga*, Ma generally accepts for solution all bonafide questions, relevant or otherwise, however silly or supercilious, impertinent or irritating.

Ma's answers are as varied as the questions. They are enlivening, scintillating and inspiring. The wonder of wonders is that every question, however difficult, is disposed of without a moment's reflection. Every questioner gets the answer he 'deserves'. Every answer is on the mental level of the particular enquirer, has reference to his peculiar point of view and corresponds to his own power of understanding. Evidently, most of the questioners receive answers to their satisfaction and long for *darshana* again and again. No person with a genuine problem has ever returned disappointed. Even if somebody is hesitant or too shy to speak and conscious of being observed by others, his query is often solved in a mysterious manner. Thus, to

his surprise, Ma of Her own accord sometimes broaches the particular subject and incidentally clarifies the point involved. Again, one often finds that somebody else has asked the very question over which one had been worrying. Thereupon, Ma gives a reply which, incidentally, solves the particular problem. Then follows Ma's penetrating gaze at the person whose question was answered before he opened his mouth, accompanied by Her significant smile. Is this just coincidence? May be. But then such coincidences are quite frequent.

In *matri-satsanga* questions relating to worldly affairs are not generally encouraged and those on politics and personalities are nipped in the bud whereas queries on spiritual subjects are always warmly received and sometimes discussed at length. Occasionally Ma requests saints who are present to discuss controversial points in the light of the scriptures. They try their best. But the 'best' of the *Vedanists* following the path of knowledge often happens to be in conflict with the 'best' of the orthodox *Vaishnava*, a votary of the path of devotion. Not unoften barren debate goes on for some time and then the experts jointly implore Ma to say the last word on the subject and thus to clinch further argument. Ma smilingly sums up the principle in a few short, simple sentences. Invariably She throws a flood of light which satisfies each of the contending parties and illuminates the whole audience. And then the tension is relieved and everybody is all smiles.

Swadhyaya (study of scriptures)

One of the principal objects of *satsanga* is to spread the knowledge of sacred books. Ma strongly recommends *swadhyaya* (study of scriptures) and inspires opportunities for discourses thereon. At the same time She maintains that *swadhyaya* is not enough by itself. In fact, She sounds a note of warning against depending exclusively on mere book-learning. "There are", She observes, "more things to be seen on the road than what is listed in the Railway Time Table which only given limited items of information; but when travelling by train, one notices so many things to be seen and known along the way. Can the railway guide mention every detail? In a similar manner, can you expect all things to be written down in religious texts? Those who devoutly follow the path pointed out in the canonical books eventually realise that Truth lies beyond what is written there. There are so many things to explore! What precious little can be written in the sacred texts? Men of realisation experience much more than that. Still, you are to be guided at the beginning by what is recommended in the sacred books, just as you have to follow the time-table on a

railway journey. But what is discussed in sacred books suggests infinite possibilities underlying. The study and assimilation of sacred texts are useful so long as you have not found your path of life. Once you have started on the right path and commenced your destined work, no more reading of books is called for. Looking into the Railway Time-table and after proper enquiry, when you are satisfied that this is the train for Dehradun, and you purchase your ticket and take your seat, there is no need for further Information—the train will take you to Dehradun.”

Ma's method of teaching by illustrations and parables is very effective. The homely illustration of the Railway Time Table mentioned above speaks more eloquently than volumes of sermons on abstract ideas. The upshot of Ma's teaching is that personal experience is more important in the spiritual sphere than the study of scriptures. Real religion, She says, does not consist merely in intellectual conformity nor in ceremonial piety. According to Her, religion is really a spiritual adventure of a highly practical nature and it is for the brave traveller to undertake the journey in right earnest along some path out of many prescribed in the scriptures, each leading to the goal. Light on one's spiritual path will, She asserts, come in the fullness of time, if one has faith and determination, optimism and indomitable perseverance - a going on till success is achieved.

Spirituality

A few introductory words may prove useful to a participant in *satsanga* not familiar with Hindu thought. Spirituality is of a man's life, not a thing apart—Spirit covers his whole existence. His home, his office, the place where he carries on business or profession or works for gain can at best be the “workshop” for a man's mind; not the home for his Spirit. The home—rather the temple—where man's Spirit is installed is in his heart. Now, what is that Spirit? Certainly not man's body bearing a specific name and identified with reference to his parents, his age, occupation, residence, etc. His Spirit is no other than the One Supreme Spirit—The Ultimate Truth—called by various names such as *Brahman*, *Ishwara* etc. In the *Gita* Lord Krishna told Arjuna, “*Ishwara* abides in the hearts of all beings”.

Brahman, Being infinite cannot be defined by words. It has no beginning, no end, no change, no form. *Brahman* cannot be perceived by the senses; neither can the mind comprehend it. *Brahman* has no past, no future, no dimensions. These conceptions are all in the context of time and space. *Brahman* is beyond both. Again,

It is static as well as dynamic, yet above both. Though unseen and impersonal, *Brahman* is all-pervasive. Its presence is thus announced: "It is *Brahman* that is below and above, that is to the west and to the east, to the south and to the north. *Brahman*, indeed, is this whole universe", AND "All this is based upon Spirit; Spirit is the foundation of the Universe, Spirit is *Brahman*",

Absolute *Brahman* is too deep, too subtle and abstruse for the common man. To the seers of ancient India *Brahman* was also revealed as qualified or conditioned *Brahman*, known as *Isha* or *Ishwara* who is the personified form of the Absolute *Brahman*. "By Him is enveloped everything that exists in this world constantly in motion." The pronoun for *Brahman* is "It", that for *Ishwara* is "He".

Ishwara is manifested in different forms such as the God of Creation, the God of Preservation and the God of Destruction; also as *Sakti*, the Divine Mother.

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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.

PADAPEETHAM SMARAMI

- Br. Geeta

Old Ramna Ashram (Dhaka, Bangladesh)

Methodically beginning of puja, bhog etc.

Shashtriya rituals like *puja*, offering of *bhog* were first started with fidelity and precision in the Ramna ashram of Sri Sri Ma. The ashram laws too were introduced here in this ashram for the first time and all other ashrams are following these laws at present.

Beginning of Usha-Kirtan and Sandhya-Kirtan

Ramna Ashram is the holy place where veteran Bhaiji conceived the evening vesper "Jai Hriday Vasini". Also, morning *kirtan*, evening vesper, women-*kirtan* and religious congregation (*satsang*) started first in the Ramna ashram.

Sri Sri Mai lives in the idol of Mother Annapurna

Devotees of Dhaka were restless when Sri Sri Ma left Dhaka. Particularly sad were the female devotees who were very close to Sri Sri Ma. They all went to the old yogi Sri Ramthakur and expressed their urged, "Thakur! Anandamayee Ma who captured our heart left this place. We were involved in the ocean of happiness and bliss in her presence but now we fail to concentrate to our daily chore in her absence. What should we do now?"

Sri Ramthakur said, "Sri Sri Ma installed the idol of mother Annapurna here and by doing this she established herself here forever only for you devotees. Sri Ma established herself in this ashram in the form of mother Annapurna and you must feel her presence in this idol." It was a tradition in Ramna ashram that puja was performed of mother Annapurna in the name of Ma Anandamayee on her birth anniversary in her absence and this very tradition is still followed by performing *shorashopachar puja* on her *janmatithi*.

Arrival of Mother Annapurna in Varanasi ashram

Dhaka was under great turbulence in 1947 and the situation was so grave that idol of goddess Annapurna was moved to Varanasi ashram.

Installation of idol of Baba Bholanath

Idol of Baba Bholanath was installed in Ramna ashram in 1945 in the presence of Sri Sri Ma and this idol was later moved to Agarpara ashram in Kolkata.

Destruction of Ramna ashram

This ashram is not present in its absolute form today yet its original root can be felt in abstract form in every ashram. This ashram was grazed to the ground during 1971 freedom movement of Banagladesh. Nevertheless, this incident might have been a divine display of the Mother. Her *leela* (divine display) is very little to understand. Memorable are her words about this ashram, "There are numerous rituals (*yajna* etc.) held in this ashram, therefore, nothing in this soil is unholy. Many *mahatmas* performed *sadhana* (adoration) here in the past and this ashram came into being following their spiritual accomplishments."

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Only by taking refuge in HIs can sorrow be removed. The troubles and difficulties one encounters as the fruit of one's own actions are but the grace of God. If one can accept them as such, one will progress towards one's real welfare.

Children's Page

UNDER THE REFUGE OF TRUTH

There was a thief whose main work was theft. He had a full family of parents, wife and kids whose take care was his prime responsibility. Being an illiterate he could not do any other work for his livelihood and was compelled to adopt the stealing as his profession.

One day he was thinking about his own life and found that he did nothing good in his life except theft. This made him scared of his condition after his death. Fear of hell and the punishment of the *Yamraj* (god of death) for his vices continued to tease him and he could not think any more.

He met a saint the next day as he the saint was able to wipe out the sins of the sinners with his grace. He touched the feet of the saint and urged him to save him and be graceful to him.

He was a great saint and he immediately understood the situation. He asked, "Will you take initiation? You will have to obey my words once you are initiated. Are you able to do what I ask you?"

The man leaped to joy as he was scared already of his sins. He immediately replied back, "Will surely obey you."

He was initiated by the saint who told him, "You will not tell lie anymore and will not involve yourself in theft. Be careful! You already promised that you will obey my words." The thief agreed with the words of his *guru* and bowed down to him and returned home.

Members of his family became panic when the thief was late. He was particular to return home during lunch time after completing his stealing. But, he was late today. His parents were crying loudly thinking that their son was captured by the police while stealing and he would be hanged. They were inconsolable.

Meanwhile, the thief entered the house and faced a series of questions by his parents, wife and even by his children. They wanted to know how he was pick-

pocketing and captured by the police. He was frustrated by all those queries which were asked by daily by his family members. He proudly would give all the replies but he was silent today because the situation was completely different.

His family members became surprised and were unable to understand what happened. Their surprise became manifold when they found the thief remained inside home during the period when he was usually out for the theft. He did not even speak unnecessarily and his attitude and behavior were changed.

A thief has now become a *sadhu*. But, the family started facing a problem. Poverty and hunger surrounded the family which was run with the stolen goods and money. Now, the family was in starvation because the thief stopped stealing. First few days somehow passed away but situation becoming grim with every passing day.

On the other hand, the saint thought to find out what the thief was doing after his initiation. He himself reached his home when the thief did not visit his guru. He bowed down before his guru and offered him seat. Issue of food was raised in the course of conversation and the thief told the truth as he had promised not to tell the lie. The saint too observed the pathetic condition of the family members. He ordered to the thief, "Alright. You can re-start your stealing to feed your family. However, remember not to speak lie at any cost." The thief obeyed his guru and started his original profession of theft but he did not tell lie.

The thief went to the palace after some time. He entered into the bed room of the king straight away and targeted the cash box and started to snatch the bags of gold coin. There was some noise and the king was awakened. He noticed one man was taking away the bags of gold coin from the cash box.

The king looked worried thinking the man could attack him and even kill him if he resisted. He then used his sense. He disrobed himself from his royal apparel and covered himself with old cloths collected in bundle in the beneath of his bed. He gradually stepped up and stood at the door. The thief was not aware of these activities as he was busy in stealing.

After completing his theft he moved to the door and found a man standing there. The thief became nervous while the king thought the thief was now to take out his weapons to attack him. The king asked, "Brother! Who are you? I am here for theft. Are you too the same?"

The thief felt somehow relieved and he told the king, "Brother! Why are you standing at the door? Come in." The king came inside and stood by the side of thief. He told that he never commit any theft before. "I, therefore, don't know how it is to be done. You will show me the technique and also give some share out of the articles already stolen by you," said the king.

The thief thought he must agree with the king (he called him as novice) otherwise he would make noise. He told the king, "Alright. I will give you one-fourth of the share to you. Now, you go to the entrance and keep watching indicating me if there is anybody." The king continued guarding the door. The thief brought more gold coins and gave away one-fourth of it to the king as promised and ran away from there.

It was not easy to move inside the palace. A guard noticed the thief and caught him with the stolen goods. He was put into the jail.

The king was on his throne the next day and the thief was taken to the court hand-cuffed along with the bags of gold coins. The king was aware of last night incident yet he started his work as if he did not know anything.

The king asked, "Have you committed the theft?" Obeying his guru, the thief admitted his crime. The king wanted to know what articles he stole. The thief disclosed the numbers of the gold coins as he already had counted. The king ordered for the counting and it was found the none-fourth number was missing. The king asked where the rest of the coins were. The thief told he gave away the one-fourth to the man standing at the door. That bag was also brought and it was found that the thief was correct in his words. He did not tell a lie.

The king was puzzled. He thought a thief always hide the truth for self-defense. But this thief told the truth. There must be something mysterious.

The king then told the thief, "Theft is the right of a thief. You could have taken away the whole coins. Why did you give a portion of your theft to that man standing at the door?"

The thief said, "I promised to him. I cannot tell lie." The king became much more surprised and asked the reasons of not telling lie. The thief replied, "O Lord! Undoubtedly I'm a thief but my guru strictly asked me not to tell a lie. My family was on the verge of starvation. Seeing the plight my guru permitted to commit theft

on the ground that I should always be on the path of truth. Thus, I spoke the truth and kindly believe my words." The king himself was the witness of the whole incident. He remained moved on the truthfulness and thief's allegiance to his guru.

Duties of the king are to protect the truth and justice as well as his subjects. He ordered to remove the handcuff of the thief. Holding the hands of the thief, the king said, "I have taken the responsibility of your family right now and you do not commit theft anymore." The thief politely accepted the king's order. He would pass his rest of life like a *sadhu* since then.

This is an example how life becomes easily peaceful and happy if one sticks to the truth.

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List of Festivals

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1. Guru Purnima | 27th July, 2018 |
| 2. Sri 108 Swami Muktananda Giriji's Nirvan Tithi
Shravan Shukla Saptami | 17th August, 2018 |
| 3. Jhoolan Mahotsav | 21st - 26th August 2018 |
| 4. Nirvan Tithi of Bhairji (Swami Mavnananda Parvatji)
Jhoolan Dwadashi | 23rd, August, 2018 |
| 5. Rakhi Purnima | 26th August, 2018 |
| 6. Sri Krishna Janmashtami | 2nd September, 2018 |
| 7. Srimad Bhagwat Saptah Mahaparayana | 17th September
24th September, 2018 |
| 8. Respected Gurupriya Didi's Nirvan Tithi
Lalita Saptami | 16th September, 2018 |
| 9. Sri Sri Sharadiya Durga Puja | 15th October - 19th
October 2018 |
| 10. Sri Sri Lakshmi Puja | 24th October 2018 |
| 11. Sri Sri Kali Puja | 6th November 2018 |
| 12. Annakut | 8th November 2018 |

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BODH GAYA

The Place Where Buddha Attained Buddhahood

- Melita Maschmann

(Continued)

I am restless after my return from Bodh Gaya: I would like to meet the *Tantra-Lama*, the husband of my Tibetan friend. I know that he has to be in Rajgir to make a pilgrimage to the holy places where Buddha had exerted his influence.

My destiny leads me there. While climbing the mountain over the hot springs, I saw a Tibetan nun standing under a tree feeding peanuts to shrieking monkeys. Later I had to search for her for a long time, as on reaching the spot, the landscape had swallowed her up. I finally found a gate in a rock and a small yard. The nun stood there in front of an open fire. If I hadn't heard her talking to the monkeys, I would never have known whether I was standing before a man or a woman. While stirring a thick yellow porridge over the fire, she turned her round cropped head to me and looked with a searching gaze from her narrow Mongolian eyes.

"Is the *Tantra-Lama* here?" I asked her. She nodded and went into another yard. She stood before a door, pointed to the place and said beaming, "*Tantra-Lama*."

As I entered the semi-darkness, I fumbled my way around. The only source of light was a hatch-like window in the external wall that was on the other side. A royal figure sat on a "bed" that was hewn in the rock: a tall, broad-shouldered man, clothed in a yellow, silk waistcoat which was lined with fur, a red scarf, tucked into the neck. He turned his beautiful head with dignity to me. His wavy, silvery hair was flowing over his shoulders. Really, the fairytale king of my childhood dream smiled at me and bade me a gracious welcome! After I had bowed to him, he also bowed and offered me a place on a carpet with an inviting gesture. While I was sitting down, he seemed to have forgotten me. Later I realized that the Lama does not speak either Hindi or English, so he could not do anything more sensible than to immerse himself again in his book and leave me to my contemplation.



Ma's Tithipuja Agarpara Ashram



Ma's Tithipuja, Varanasi



Ma's Room, Dehradun Ashram

I looked around at the place which resembled a cave rather than a room. Two iron boxes were kept on the right of the Lama's bed and they were covered with a carpet. On this provisional table stood a round tea cup of wood decorated with inlaid work, a hand-bell, like the one in a Tibetan temple, a small double-drum (it is called *damaru* and serves to drive away demons) and a kitchen alarm clock.

Where I sat down was obviously a sleeping place. It was upholstered with carpets and furs. A niche was carved in the wall behind the Lama where he kept his books.

The Lama sat cross-legged on his bed. A soft carpet covered his knees. His white hands lay on his lap. He was holding a book in them. Its pages are not turned from side to side, but from bottom to top. The Lama's hands are surprisingly long, powerful, but not plump. On his left hand he wears a gold-ring with a dull pearl of the size of a hazelnut. His nails extend beyond the finger-tips by more than a centimeter. The skin of his face is darker than that of his hands; it is of a bright gold-brown hue. It is fairly broad with a lofty forehead; cheekbones are not prominent; his nose is powerful and straight; mouth and chin rather delicate and the eyes are slightly Mongolian and so filled with light that I remember them as shining blue.

The expression on his face which I study often during the next days is what I was reminded of the kings in the fairytales of my childhood, when I first saw him. He has: cheerfulness, wisdom, patience, goodness, coupled with a powerful manliness residing in itself.

The nun brings for her master a fresh cup of tea. With the movement of his hand, he asks her to bring for me a cup too. On this occasion, I hear her address the Lama as "Rimpoche" (preciousness), and I make immediate use of this form.

After I have drunk my Tibetan tea (it tastes like sloppy bouillon) and sat quietly on my carpet for a while, and *Rimpoche* continues to read his book in gentle murmur, I bow to him and go to the *ashrama*.

I repeat these visits twice daily from now on. When I enter, *Rimpoche* laughs and nods at me, clasps both his hands, calls the nun so that she brings tea, says something which sounds friendly and soon immerses himself in his book. Sometimes he stops and prays gently. Yesterday morning he called me to his bed, and while he continued to pray, he took out a tin-box from the heap of books behind him and poured sugar candy into my hands. Sometimes a Tibetan monk sits on a small carpet which is opposite to the bed, and prays for a while turning his prayer-mill.

A group of Buddhist pilgrims from Bhutan, three young men with their wives, came last night. Powerful, cheerful people in their colourful clothes, with attentive and intelligent faces. Each one of them knelt-thrice in front of the Lama, then sat on a carpet and started a conversation which was often interrupted by laughter. Only the young people talked loudly. I never heard *Rimpoche* speak other than in a low tone, almost whispering in a thoughtful manner. His deep, gentle voice is pleasant and radiates peace.

When I came to the Lama this morning, I hardly believed my eyes: his wife, my friend from Bodh Gaya, was sitting where I usually sit. We greeted each other ardently.

I discover now her name: Lamo! In the twinkling of an eye, she shows that the pilgrim's refuge has now a housewife. She spreads a thin carpet on the floor, fills a women dish with dry dates and puts a box of roasted rice from Bhutan in front of me. Then she offers me the sugar candy in a silver-box. Later the nun gets us butter-tea.

In the meanwhile, Lamo holds both my hands, keeps hers next to mine and is happy to know that all four hands have the same hue. *Rimpoche* is informed about this and he nods approvingly, but the expression on his face reveals that his thoughts are far away.

The palm of my hand seems to fascinate Lamo. She looks at it for a long time and opens her left palm to compare it. Finally, she fetches her glasses and searches in a wooden box and finds a book that is wrapped in a yellow cloth. Later an Indian arrives who knows both Tibetan and English. He explains that it is a "textbook of divination". Less educated people call it "book of magic", and it contains texts and sketches about the magic wisdom of the Tibetan *tantras*. Lamo pages through it, observes my palm once more and asks the Indian to tell me that there is no doubt that I lived in Tibet in an earlier incarnation.

Rimpoche nods and laughs at the childlike eagerness of his wife to draw me into their family. When I meet the Indian again, he tells me, earlier on he was a monk in a Buddhist monastery which he left for political reasons. He is now busy studying ancient Tibetan writings. I ask him to interpret my conversation with my Tibetan friends. Now I learn that they have a daughter who studied in a college near Madras at the request of the Dalai Lama and that the family fled from the Chinese in 1959 (the parents of *Rimpoche* died while fleeing) and they are now in West Bengal. In

Tibet, *Rimpoche* was an abbot of a monastery of 300 monks, following his father and grandfather.

When I ask Lamo what the Dalai Lama means to her, she says, "He is something like a king, and we obey his orders. We even call him God, but we only worship the Buddha."

"What sort of orders do you obey?"

"Our daughter was about to marry a young Indian. But the Dalai Lama will not tolerate this. He wants our young people to marry only from our own community. How else can we preserve our customs?"

Rimpoche puts his book aside and listens to us. I now turn to him, "What do you think, *Rimpoche*, why have your people to suffer the fate of expulsion?"

The Lama nods his head enveloped in curly hair thoughtfully and then says gently, "It was like this. We have made Chinese suffer for generations. So we have to suffer now. But the Buddha teaches us that we should not hate them for it. Even he had to suffer without ever thinking of revenge. We consider that the Chinese are our brethren."

"Do you hope that you will return to Tibet one day?"

"If we succeed in preventing the feeling of hatred against the Chinese, the land will be open to us one day."

"How many Lamas were you in Tibet?"

"About a thousand. But most of them have been...." *Rimpoche* explains with a sharp movement of his right hand that they were beheaded.

Contd....

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Importance of *Agni*, *Dhatus* (tissues) and *Malas* (waste materials)

- Dr. Kavita Vyas (Ayurveda specialist)

Agni

While giving definition of health Ayurveda says "Health means equilibrium of *Dosha* (*Samdosha*), equilibrium of *Agni* (*Samagni*), equilibrium of vital tissues (*Samdhatu*), and also proper evacuation of *Malas* (waste products). Along with these the happiness of mind, senses and spirit is called as healthy state of a person.

So in this definition importance is given to fire (*Agni*). Ayurveda considers thirteen types of *Agni* (fire) in body. (5 fire of *Agni* for metabolism of air, ether, water, fire and earth element in the body, 7 fire or *Agni* of seven vital Tissues (*Dhatu*) and 1 fire or *Agni* is digestive fire. We are giving here detail about digestive fire, because it is more obviously seen by us. Other *Agnis* work at subtle level of the body.

Agni is the biological fire that governs metabolism. It is similar in its function to *Pitta* and can be considered an integral part of the '*Pitta*' system in the body which functioning as a catalytic agent in digestion and metabolism. *Pitta* contains heat energy which helps digestion. This heat energy is '*Agni*'. '*Pitta*' and '*Agni*' are essentially the same with this subtle difference; *Pitta* is the container and *Agni* is the content.

Pitta manifests in the stomach as the gastric fire or *Jatharagni*. *Agni* (*Jatharagni*) is acidic in nature and its action breaks down the food and stimulates digestion. *Agni* is also subtly related to the movement of '*Vata*' because bodily air enkindles bodily fire. In every tissue and cell *Agni* is present and necessary for maintaining the nutrition of the tissues and the maintenance of the auto-immune mechanism. *Agni* destroys micro-organisms, foreign bacteria and toxins in the stomach and small and large intestines. In this way, it protects the flora in these organs.

Longevity depends upon '*Agni*'. Intelligence, understanding, perception and comprehension are also the functions of *Agni*. The color of the skin is maintained by

'*Agni*'. As long as *Agni* is functioning properly, the processes of breaking down food and absorbing and assimilating it into the body will operate smoothly.

When *Agni* becomes impaired because of an imbalance in the *tri-dosha*, the metabolism is drastically affected. The body's resistance and immune system are impaired. Food components remain undigested and unabsorbed. They accumulate in the large intestine turning into a heterogeneous, foul-smelling, sticky substance. This material which is called '*Agni*', clogs the intestines and other channels, such as capillaries and blood vessels. It eventually undergoes many chemical changes which create toxins. These toxins are absorbed into the blood and enter the general circulation.

They eventually accumulate in the weaker parts of the body, where they create contraction, clogging, stagnation and weakness of the organs and reduce the immune mechanism of the respective tissues. Finally a disease condition manifests in the affected organs and is identified as arthritis, diabetes, heart disease and so on.

The root of all disease is '*Ama*' (undigested food mass). There are many causes for the development of '*Ama*', for example whenever incompatible foods are ingested, '*Agni*' will be directly affected as a result of the toxins or will be indirectly affected as a result of the toxins or '*Ama*' created from these poorly digested foods. *Ama* develops when *Agni's* function is retarded; however over active *Agni* is also detrimental. When '*Agni*' becomes hyperactive, the digestive process burns away, through over combustion, the normal biological nutrients in the food and emaciation results. This condition also lowers the body's immunity.

The Seven *Dhatus*

The human body consists of seven basic and vital tissues called '*Dhatus*'. The Sanskrit word *Dhatu* means, constructing element. These seven *Dhatus* are responsible for the entire structure of the body. The *Dhatus* maintain the functions of the different organs, systems and vital parts of the body. They play a very important role in the development and nourishment of the body.

The *Dhatus* are also part of the biological protective mechanism, with the help of '*Agni*', they are responsible for the immune mechanism. When one *Dhatu* is defective it affects the successive *Dhatu* as such *Dhatu* receives its nourishment from the previous *Dhatu*. The following are the seven *Dhatus* in serial order.

1) **Rusu (Plasma)**- Contains nutrients from digested food and nourishes all the tissues, organs and systems. *Kapha* is considered as side product of this *Dhatu*.

Functions

General nourishment/maintaining health [*Preenana*], Blood nourishing [*Raktupushti*], Preservation [*Dharana*], Giving satisfaction or refreshment [*Tushti*]

2) **Rakta (Blood)**- Governs oxygenation in all tissues and vital organs and maintains life. *Pitta* is considered as side product of this *dhatu*.

Functions

Imparts colour [*Varnaprasadana*], Nourishes muscles [*Mansa pushti*], enlivening [*Jeevanam*], Responsible for tactile sensation [*Sparsha-gnanam*], Produces growth [*Vridhhi*].

3) **Mansa (Muscle)**- Covers the delicate vital organs, performs the movements of the joints and maintains the physical strength of the body. Ear wax is considered as side product of this *Dhatu*.

Functions

Nourishes body [*Sharira pushti*], Nourishes *Medas* [*Medasa pushti*], Covers the body [*Sharira lepa*], Nourishes *Malas* [*Mala pushti*]

4) **Meda (Fat)**- Maintains the lubrication and oiliness of all the tissues. Sweat is considered as side product of this *Dhatu*.

Functions

Oleating [*Snehana*], Produces sweat [*Sweda karaka*], Nourishes osseous tissues [*Asthi pushti*], Secures steadiness [*Dradhatvam*].

5) **Asthi (Bone)**- Gives support to the body structure. Nails and hairs are considered as side product of this *Dhatu*.

Functions

Supporting [*Dharana*], Nourishing *Majja* [*Majja pushti*], Supports *Mamsa* [*Mamsa alambaka*].

6) **Majja (Marrow and nerves)**- Fills up the bony spaces and carries motor and sensory impulses. Waste secretion from the eye is considered as side product of this *Dhatu*.

Function

[*Snehabalam*], Repairs bone [*Asthi puranam*], Nourishes *Sukra* [*Sukra pushti*].

7) **Shukra and Artava (Reproductive tissues)**- Contain the ingredients of all tissues and are responsible for reproduction. According to *Sharangdher Samhita* *Oja* (the essential energy) is considered as waste product of this *Dhatu*.

Functions

Causative of fetus [*Gurbotpadaka*], Ejaculative sensation [*Chyavana*], Fondness [*Priti*], Strengthen the body [*Dehabalama*].

The seven *Dhatu*s are understood in a natural, biological, serial order of manifestation. The post digestion of food, called nutrient plasma (*Aahar rasa*), contains the nutrition for all the *Dhatu*s. This nutrient plasma is transformed and nourished with the help of heat, called as *Dhatwagni* of each respective *Dhatu* (*Rasagni, Raktagni, Mansagni*-etc.) *Rasa* is transformed into *Rakta* (with the help of *Raktagni*); which is further manifested into *Mansa, meda* etc.

This transformation results from three basic actions :

A) **Irrigation**- Nutrients are carried to the seven *Dhatu*s through the blood vessels.

B) **Selectivity**- Each *Dhatu* extracts the nutrients which it requires in order to perform its physiological functions.

C) **Direct transformation**- As the nutritional substances pass through each *Dhatu*, the food for the formation of each subsequent *Dhatu* is produced.

These three processes- irrigation, selectivity and transformation operate simultaneously in the formation of the seven *Dhatu*s. The *Dhatu*s are nourished and transformed in order to maintain the normal physiological functions of the different tissues, organs and systems.

The Three Malas

The body produces three waste products, or *Malas*: 1) Feces 2) Urine 3) Sweat; the production and elimination of these are absolutely vital to health. Though these are considered bodily waste products, the urine and feces are not totally waste. They are in fact to some extent essential to the physiological functioning of their respective organs.

1) Feces

This supply nutrition through intestinal tissues; many nutrients remain in the feces after digestion, later after these are absorbed, the feces are eliminated. Feces also give strength to the large intestine and maintain its tone. If a person has no feces, the intestine will collapse.

2) Urine

The urinary system removes the water, salt and nitrogenous wastes of the body. Urine helps to maintain the normal concentration of water, electrolytes with in the body fluids. The functioning of this *Mala* depends upon the water intake, diet, environmental temperature, mental states and physical condition of the individual.

If the body retains water, the urine will be scanty and this water will accumulate in the tissues. This condition in turn, will affect the blood and increase the blood pressure, so balanced urine production is important for the maintenance of blood pressure and volume. Ayurvedic text states that human urine is a natural laxative that detoxifies poisons in the system and helps absorption in the large intestine as well as elimination of feces. If one takes a cup of urine (Passed in main stream) every morning, it will help to clean and detoxify the large intestine.

The body fluids, such as blood (*Rakta*) and lymph (*Rasa*), serve to carry wastes (*Malas*) away from the tissues that produce them. The urinary system removes water (*Kleda*), salt and nitrogenous wastes. The urinary system also helps to maintain the normal concentration of water electrolytes within the body fluids. It helps to regulate the volume of body fluid and aids in the control of red blood cell production and blood pressure. Thus the urine helps to maintain the balance of the three humors (*Vata, Pitta* and *Kapha*) and water.

3) Sweat

Perspiration is a by product of fatty tissue. Sweating is necessary to regulate the body temperature. Sweat keeps the skin soft maintains the flora of the pores of the skin and also maintains skin elasticity and tone.

There is a special relationship between the skin and the kidneys, since the excretion of watery waste is primarily the function of these two organs. Thus perspiration is indirectly related to the formation of urine. In summer people perspire profusely, but their urination is reduced because waste products are eliminated through perspiration. Thus it is necessary that the production of perspiration and urine be in balance.

Diabetes, psoriasis, dermatitis and ascites are examples of diseases resulting from an imbalance of perspiration and urine in the body.

Dietetics and Regimen for Summer season [*Grishma Ritu*]

In the summer, the sun with the help of its hot rays absorbs the moisture from the earth. So in summer-

- One should take food which is sweet in taste and cool in its effect.
- One should take liquid diet and light food.
- In summer when one takes *sattu* [a special type of food which is used after diluting in water, common in India], *Ghritam*, rice and milk, then person can not lose his normal strength.
- Taking sweet milk with *Ghritam* in the night is a good habit.
- Eating seasonal fruits like water melon, cucumber, orange etc. is good for health.
- Chewing fresh coconut fruit, fennel with *Mishri* gives cooling effect in stomach.
- In this season one can have *Haritaki churnam* [*Terminalia chebula*], 5 gm with Jaggery, it has rejuvenation effect.
- Also one should not take more salty, sour and spicy food. Also one should not take the food which is causing heat in body.
- One should not do vigorous exercise in summer season.
- In the day time one should stay in cool room, and in night one should sleep at the roof cooled with natural air and moon light.
- One should apply sandal wood paste on the body and one can wear the pearl ornament, because pearl causes cooling effect in body.
- One should stay at the place nearer to river or lake; one should walk in garden filled with different flowers.

ASHRAM VARTA

Anandaswarupeshu,

Like other years, *Vasantipuja* was celebrated with grace and religious fervor in Kashi ashram of the Mother. Br. Jayadi writes on this year's puja, Timing of the rituals of this year's puja has been bit different. Auspicious arrival of the goddess was scheduled in the evening of March 22, 2018 but the divine mother arrived around 12 o'clock in the night following the delay in the completion of the deity. *Shashthi puja* began at 8 a.m. on March 23. Puja was held of the *beal tree* and *Shri Chandī* while *shorshopachar puja* was performed and *bhog* was offered to the Mother.

Aj vasante sejeche dhara varan tomaye korbo mora (we will welcome you as the universe is dressed up in the spring). *Adhivas* of the goddess was performed. Br. Jayadi chanted the mantras in the absence of *tantradhar*. Mantras of the goddess are powerful and its chanting makes the feeling as if the goddess is alive. *Brahmachari* Ajit Bhai was performing the puja.

Navapatrika was taken to the river Ganga for holy bathing following the special bathing (*maha-snan*). The goddess was dressed up with *saree* and was decorated with *sindur*, *aalta* and garlands. Before that, goddess was bathed with the holy water and soil of different *tirtha*.

The morning *bhog* and *arati* of the goddess were performed after the bathing and then began *shorashopachar puja* followed by the same puja of all the gods and goddesses. Worship of the *nava-patrika* was performed with chanting mantras of nine tress. Also, *puja* was performed of different gods and goddesses. *Kumari puja* and the worship of the Mother too were held. Devotees offered *pushpanjali* to the goddess followed by the *bhog* offering ceremony. Goddess was taken to the bed after the *bhog*. In the evening, there were *Bhagavat* and *Ramayana* recital and *kirtan* and *arati* were held. Junior girls of Ashirvad Sangitalaya displayed cultural programs after the *arati*. It was an impressive crowd. Many devotees came from Kolkata to attend the *puja*.

Mangal arati was performed at 4 o'clock in the morning and the *Mahashtami* puja was completed before 6.58 a.m. following all the rituals. The goddess was

offered *khichri* (rice with mixture of lentils), fried vegetables and *kheer* (rice pudding). *Sandhi puja* was performed after *arati*. Timing of the *sandhi puja* was between 6:58:30 and 7:46:30 in the morning. *Kheer* and *pulaw* (yellow rice) were offered to the deity. Puja was performed of the goddess Annapura at 7:22:30 in the morning. *Navamai puja* was completed after the *sandhi puja*. It was *rajbhog* offered to the goddess. *Kumari puja* was also organized on the occasion and the *puja* of the Mother too was performed. Devotees offered *anjali*. *Navami* was the birthday of Lord Rama and his puja was performed at 12 o'clock in the noon. With the *hom* (burnt offering) and *navami puja*, *puṇahuti* was completed and the goddess was taken to the bed. Junior kids of Rahul party presented Odissi dance followed by the music recital after the evening vesper.

Dashami puja was held in the morning of March 26 with all its rituals including the immersion of mirror (*darpan visarjan*). Immersion of the goddess was held in the evening after which the devotees and the ashram inmates and guests joined the *kirtan* and exchanged *vijoya* greetings. Devotees and others offered their *pranam* to the Mother and they were distributed her photograph.

Vasanti puja also was held with all religious fervor in the Agartala ashram.

Puja and *sadhu bhandara* (feeding of the saints) were organized on April 14, 2018 on Chaitra *sankranti tithi* of the Bengali calendar in all the ashrams of the Mother to commemorate the *sannyasotsav* of Shri 108 Swami Muktananda Giri. The foundation day of Varanasi ashram fell on April 18, 2018 and special puja was organized of the Mother and all the deities in Aandajyoti temple. *Sadhu bhandara* too was held to mark the occasion. Similar puja ceremonies and *sadhu bhandara* (feeding of the saints) were organized in the Anandajyotipeethem in Kankhal ashram. Both Varanasi and Kankhal ashrams celebrated the Adi Jagadguru Shankaracharya jayanti on April 20. The *nirvana divas* (death anniversary) of Baba Bholanath was observed in Kankhal ashram on April 23 and in Varanasi and other ashrams of the Mother the following day. Puja and *sadhu bhandara* were the main features. Buddha jayanti was celebrated on April 30.

Date and *tithi* of this year birth anniversary of the Mother coincidentally fell almost on same time and same *tithi* when she was born 123 years ago on April 19, 1896 (19 *Vaisakh*, 1303, *Krishna Chaturthi tithi*, Thursday in Bengali calendar). This made the devotees very much inspired and devoted. Kankhal ashram organized various programs on this auspicious occasion.

The eight-day long *maharudra yajna* ceremony was organized in Kankhal ashram from April 17 to 24, 2018. Other programs organized on the birth anniversary of the Mother in Kankhal ashram include: special puja of the Mother from the midnight of May 3 to the dawn of May 4. Sri *Shatachandi path*, puja and *yajna* on May 3, *Rasleela* from April 30 to May 2, *Ma-nam kirtan* on April 29 from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. the next day, spiritual recital and lectures from April 30 to May 2, feeding ceremony of 108 *kumaris* and 12 *batuks* on April 29, *sadhu seva* and *Prasad* distribution on May 4, *nam-yajna* from the night of May 4 to the evening of next day. Besides, numerous religious programs were organized every day.

On April 29, special puja was held in local temple and fruits were distributed to the patients in the hospital. Devotees offered their puja and *pranam* to the sanctum sanitarium of the Mother.

Though number of the devotees was not impressive this year on the occasion in Varanasi ashram, there was no lack of enthusiasm in the celebration of the Mother's birth anniversary. Hall of the Anandajyoti temple was decorated tastefully with flowers. Mother's idol was giving a luminous and dazzling look and that expression was beyond any language. Br. Jayadi's worship was much emotional and appreciative. After the special *bhog* ceremony, one hundred lamps were lit for the *arati* of the Mother and her glittering look spread out the entire hall. *Chandiputh yajna* was also performed on the occasion. Various dishes and sweets of Mother's choice were offered to her next day and devotees took the *prasad*.

Special puja ceremony of the Mother on her birth anniversary was also held in Agarpara, Bhccmpura and other ashrams. *Rasleela*, evening *bhajan* and *kumari puja* were the main features of Agarpara ashram. Portrait of the Mother was decorated tastefully with flowers. Recital of *kirtan* continued throughout the day. *Sadhu bhandara* was organized the next day and the devotees were distributed the *prasad*. Pomp and grandeur marked the birth anniversary of the Mother in Bhccmpura and Agartala ashrams.

All the ashrams situated on the bank of the river Ganga celebrated the Ganga Dashhara on May 24, 2018. In Varanasi ashram, this ceremony was held on June 23 following the '*malamasa*' (the month when no auspicious ceremony is held as per Hindu calendar).