

Ananda

Newsletter of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha
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Contents – Second part of April 2018 Amrita Varta



Sound file:

Sri Ma Anandamayi.

<http://www.anandamayi.org/mmedia/mp3/Satyamvibhuda.mp3> Vibhuda and Sri Ma sing Satyam Jnananam Anantam Brahma.

Video file:

In Memorium - Br Arunadi who departed this world 29th June 2019.

<https://youtu.be/lWYQaV0w95s> – Br Arunadi is seen at Durga Puja Kankhal 1981 with Sri Ma.

Talk in Hindi with English subtitles:

Sri Ma Anandamayi.

<https://youtu.be/VAi8Mj2hco0> Questions and Answers 2, date and location unknown.

Anandamayi Ma. Recordings. DIV bMS00556. AU 131. Deliverable Side 2. Performed by Anandamayi.1896-1982. B. Das Gupta. s6 (T1). S5 (T2)Repository: Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard University. Digitized content accessed via <https://sds.lib.harvard.edu/sds/audio/430602193>

BODH GAYA

The Place Where Buddha Attained Buddhahood

- Melita Maschmann

(Continued)

Later in the evening, the temple is exclusively occupied by the Tibetans who have settled in hundreds in their tents at the border of the holy region and the pilgrims who come and go throughout the year. About a dozen monks are sitting in the area; most of them are reading and turning the prayer mills at the same time, some of them are praying with a rosary. Two very tall pilgrims with thin moustaches and a long, thin goatee on their chins prostrate themselves groaning before the Buddha. All their possessions are stuffed in the chest of their padded overcoats. Knives are kept in the leg of their boots. The old lady next to me also has a knife in a beautiful silver-sheath stuck into her belt. The two giants bow reverently to the Buddha.

It is already night when I leave the temple. The street lights are extinguished. A procession of singing Tibetan women goes slowly round the temple. Some of them carry candles. Their songs have a fascinating melancholy. Children seek shelter in their broad coarse skirts from the icy wind blowing from Nepal. A group of young men with broad-rimmed hats and casque coats with belts of resistant flet, roam about aimlessly. Most have kerchiefs over their hats and knotted under their chin.

A dozen or more monks circumambulate the temple on a runner. They let their rosary fall at every fifth step, fold their hands over their head, touch with them their forehead and breast and then prostrate themselves on the ground with fervor, arms first like the swimmers who leap into the sea. There are old men among them. I hear them groaning gently, but I don't see any hesitation in flinging themselves onto their knees.

Three hundred oil-wicks in silver-cups burn in front of the Tree of Enlightenment. Foreheads of all worshippers bow to the gold-coated stone adorning the holy place.

Another path for the pilgrims winds round the temple area on lower slope and right at the top a third one. The three paths are full with singing, murmuring, whisperings and silent prayer. Here and there, someone carries a hurricane lamp and the holy tree blazes at the bottom of the valley in the light of the burning wicks flickering in the wind. Crimson rises the moon over the temple.

Next day I visit a Lama-monastery. It looks like an Asian fairytale. A broad house surrounded by a terrace on the groundfloor. The roof of a Chinese temple rises above the first floor. The front facing the street is covered by ornaments in a fantastic way; flowers, stars, fish, carved and painted ones, everything in shining colours, ornamental bands running horizontally and vertically, lots of red and blue. It is a jubilant expression of vital joy in the beauty of the world. At the same time, the skilful handiwork is completely rooted in tradition.

I climb one staircase. The layout of the first floor. I feel, is like a village square. There is a small temple in the middle. The "square" is uncovered. Around the periphery are the rows of houses. In fact, these are only the cells of the monks. Door after door in a low white wall.

A monk in a torn cowl and with a broad Mongolian peasant face walks beside me in the temple and talks for an hour almost without pause. I try to shake him off by sitting on a mat with eyes closed, but he waits patiently at the door, till I get up, and again runs after me.

The place is in semi-darkness. Here and there, an oil lamp burns in front of a Buddha statue. A silver-embossed bowl of the size of a baptismal font is filled with a mixture which looks like semi-liquid wax. A burning wick swims over its surface. The focal point of the temple is a massive, golden Buddha with a flaming crown covered in precious stones. Valuable old books, each tied in Chinese silk, are piled behind him. Precious silver goblets placed in front of him. The small Buddhas look like ancient dolls in their faded silken garments; they fill a large showcase—row after

row. Paintings of the Buddhist *Heilsgeschichte* and mythology hang on the walls: scenes from the life of Gautama Buddha, *Bodhisattvas* playing music, mysterious *mandalas* which have faded to dark-yellow, a demon; blazing in flames, priests giving instructions ... The inmates of the monastery must have collected whatever they could from the priceless treasures of their native country. They must have brought the showcases containing pious rarities here. May be, there is an order behind this chaos in the semi-darkness, and it can only be recognized by the initiated.

The monk turns away when I put a coin in the collection box. He comes down to the groundfloor with me to the “prayer-mill”: a room almost completely filled up by a brass-cylinder. I think, it is nearly one and half meters in diameter and two and half is eight with handles at the lower edge. A notice in English informs me that this vessel is filled up with prayers to help purify the world of its sins. The monk asks me to grasp one of the handles. I follow his example, and we walk briskly around the cylinder which turns easily. Each time we go round, a bell chimes melodiously. Several monks join us. They circle the mighty prayer-mill pushing it with earnest faces and long, quick steps.

Later I return once more to the temple near the Bodhi tree. It is quiet and cold there. I see the young monk outside performing the kneeling exercise on a plank. As I stand next to him, he looks through me as if looking through a glass-window.

My Tibetan friend moves a little aside on her mat without looking up. She knows from my step who is standing before her. The rite is in progress. The syllables of the *mantra* ascend and descend like singing waters of a fountain. Peace and cheerfulness flow strongly purifying the air we breathe. The Enlightened One bestows his blue-eyes smile upon us drawing into a unity what was separated by the deceptive mirror of *maya*.

THE HERITAGE OF THE HINDUS

(Continued)

- Dr. Bithika Mukerji

On Methodology:

It is well known that the Hindu tradition is the Vedic tradition. The multifaceted religious atmosphere which is so characteristic of our country derives its strength and sustenance from the Vedas. The ancient sages lighted for us the path of reverential worship of deities; they also indicated the way towards the knowledge of the One Reality which remains hidden behind the many-splendored world of everyday experience.

It is universally believed that the Vedas are the oldest scriptural lore of a living tradition. Hindus consider themselves Hindus by virtue of this ancient heritage, which has supported them in the past, helps them to live in the present and inspires them to a future of hope and blessedness. Our tradition is unique in the sense that it has remained unbroken down the ages. It can be seen easily that the ever-living fount of Truth, lived and taught by the Vedic seers, has been systematically guarded, preserved and proclaimed by succeeding generations of great exponents of wisdom. Where traditions are broken or radicalized the recovery of meaning of ancient texts becomes an academic process. The strength of the ancient heritage is lost to those who feel severed from their roots. Hindus, however, do not regard the Vedas as 'written books' composed by nature worshippers of an early civilization. They are for the Hindus the embodiment of Reality Itself presented to mankind for contemplation by the 'Seers of truth' (Rishis) in the form of inspired utterances (*mantra*), strung together in a unique sequence (*krama*), and set to specific rhythmic cadences (*chhanda*). The mantra is the heart of the Vedic literature.

A question may be raised if modern methods of evaluating ancient texts are completely inapplicable here, and if so, is this literature to be taken as an inviolable structure totally unrelated to the requirements of changing times? In order to judge the relevance of this question it is well to remember that modern methodology is itself an outcome of a particular tradition which acknowledges many stages of radicalizations in the developing history of its own cultural pattern. The Western tradition starting from ancient Greece recognizes a break between an age of myths and an age of rational hypotheses which led to the birth of science. Modern methodologies reflect therefore an ethos which instead of taking anything on trust, would rather subject all phenomena to rational evaluations and employ verification for gaining exactitude in knowledge.

In this context, it is well to remember also, that rationality is the natural predicament of the human mind. Man does not choose to be rational; he cannot but be rational and must relate to all that surrounds him through his outward-going sensibilities. The most natural attitude for man is therefore appreciation of the world in which he finds himself. This is the foundation on which sciences are built and thus it lies at the root of the Western tradition. This intellectual climate reflects an unwillingness to accept anything outside the framework of finite time, space and modes of verifiability.

If we keep both these points in mind, then we may begin to appreciate the unique message of the Vedas. The crucial point regarding the Vedic tradition is that reverence and rationality are held together in a continuity and not in opposition. That which is to be accepted in a spirit of reverence as Truth Itself is made plausible and reasonable for the seeker of knowledge. The final state of this seeking lies in certainty, a certainty, achieved in the form of a direct apprehension, or in Self-realization because the goal of the Vedic teaching is to indicate the ultimate unity of the Self with Brahman.

The Vedas teach man how to live in the world in which he finds himself; they also teach that although the world is desirable, it is not of supreme value because the

happiness man seeks lies beyond it. The teaching which seeks to take man beyond the framework of finite time-space-objects, therefore, is necessarily of a pedagogical nature only. It has educational value, inasmuch as it is geared toward convincing a mind naturally prone to worldly affairs, of the necessity for knowing that which lies beyond 'time, space and objecthood'. This pedagogical device is for awakening an interest in the 'unnatural' rather than the natural; a dimension of total bliss rather than a preoccupation with fragments of bliss; a possibility of gaining a unity which is universal and immortal rather than what remain at the level of fragmented existence.

Scholars trained in academic methods have spoken of and written about the greatness of the Vedas as ancient religious texts. They have seen in the books a pattern of development from the worship of many gods to the contemplation of the One Brahman; from the preoccupation with worldly affairs and moral social standards toward an a-moral, lonely, asectic way of life; and from the purity of Vedic sacrifices toward a complicated ritualistic mode of worship culminating in the Pauranic tradition of the supremacy of particular gods. Hindus, on the other hand, do not subscribe to this way of understanding their scripture. The method of understanding which seeks to categorise ancient texts into time elements, becomes quite irrelevant in this context, because these are not "books written by men in by gone days" but they are the inspired songs of such men and women who have been vouchsafed the ultimate vision of Brahman as 'Reality, Knowledge, Bliss'. The realization of Brahman spontaneously gives birth to beautiful hymns of celebration and joy. There can be no past, present or future as regards these paens of joy, which are to be meditated upon, contemplated and used for holding on to that dimension of life which sets the real meaning to everyday existence. They are the pulsating, living words which overcome all barriers of time and space; and what can have a greater power of conviction than the direct apprehension of Truth?

The theme of the Vedas may be summarized by saying that it lies in a message of hope that although Supreme Knowledge of Brahman is unknown to man, yet man is the proper candidate for qualifying himself in order that this great Realisation of the unity of *atman* and Brahman may be brought about. The one question the Vedas

deal with is "Why should I be called upon to know Brahman? Why should I discipline myself in this enjoyable world in order to annihilate the I-consciousness which I am?"

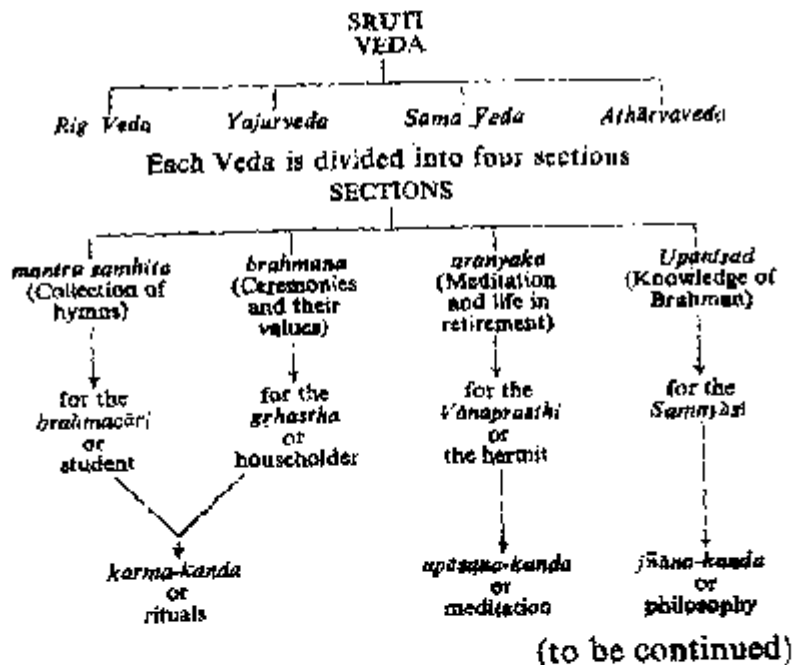
Science requires verifiability for its truths. Since the appeal here is to a mind already seized with thoughts about the other world, a reasonable presentation meets the case. The questioning arises because the possibility of the answer is already within the purview of the seeker. This can be stated in different words: all scriptures emphasize the importance of "The desire for Knowledge" (*mumuksutva*); they also maintain that the desire for Knowledge can awaken only due to Divine Grace, so that the questioning is the penultimate situation culminating in the full certainty of Self-realization, a state of Bliss which finds expression in songs of joy and celebration. The scriptures, therefore, are for those who are already in a receptive mood for the teaching regarding Brahman. They alone may enkindle the desire for knowledge which is the beginning of the quest for the man who is not totally engrossed in the world. The sequence of the transmission of this knowledge has passed from teacher to disciple to form an unbroken tradition from the most ancient times to the present.

The Vedas contain every kind of teaching including the supreme knowledge of Brahman. Nothing which affects the life of a Hindu is totally extraneous to the Vedas in the sense that all teachings down the ages regarding *karma* (social activity) *upasana* (worship of deities) and *jnana* (knowledge) have been in accord with what has been stated in the texts. The heart of the Vedic teaching lies in inculcating a reverential attitude toward the Supreme Being, who is the fountain-head as well as the ultimate resolution of all that there is in the universe.

Structure of the Vedas: The Vedas are stated in Sanskrit and are four in number, *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda* and *Atharvaveda*. Each Veda is divided into four sections. The first portion is called *samhita* comprising hymns (*mantra*) to gods. The second section is named *brahmana*; it contains instructions in prose regarding ritualistic guidelines. The third section is called *aranyaka* or a forest treatise. It deals with contemplative thinking regarding this and the other world. The fourth section, known as *Upanisad* is also called Vedanta because it comes at the end of the Veda in the literary as well as spiritual sense. It contains philosophical discourses between teachers and pupils regarding the supreme teaching of the unity of *atman* and Brahman.

The divisions are very tenuous. One section flows into another. One *Upanisad* belongs in the first section itself. Thus no rigidity marks the divisions. They are fluid in the sense that one may proceed to the forest from the city whenever one feels called upon to do so, otherwise a steady progress is indicated in the passage from the life of a student, to the life of a householder, then life in retirement in preparation for the life of renunciation. The sections may be classified as follows:

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SACRED PLACES OF KASHMIR, JAMMU & LADHAK

A Devotee

UDHAMPUR

तस्मै नमः परमकारणकारणाय
दीप्तोज्ज्वलज्वलितपिङ्गललोचनाय ।
नागेन्द्रहारकृतकुण्डलभूषणाय
ब्रह्मेन्द्रविष्णुवरदाय नमः शिवाय ॥

(Reverence to Siva, who is the supreme cause of all causes, whose yellowish blue eyes are bright and shining with splendor, who is wearing a necklace and earrings formed by snakes and who gives boons to Brahma, Indra and Visnu)

Udhampur is a town situated about sixty-five kilometers north-east of Jammu. It lies on Jammu Srinagar road.

There are ancient temples of Lord Siva and Sri Rama. Big fairs are held at this place during *Sivaratri* (February-March) and *Ramnavami* (March-April).

आपदामपहतरं दातारं सर्वसम्पदाम् ।

लोकाभिरामं श्रीरामं भूयो भूयो नमाम्यहम् ॥

(I bow down in reverence again and again to Sri Rama, who is pleasing among men and who destroys all troubles and bestows all benefits).

UMA

स तस्मिन्नेवाकाशे स्त्रियमाजगाम बहुशोभमानामुमां हेमवतीं ।

तां होवाच किमेतद् यक्षमिति ॥

सा ब्रह्मणेति होवाच ।

ब्रह्मणो वा एतद्विजये महीयध्वमिति ।

ततो हैव विदाञ्चकार ब्रह्मणेति ॥

[At that place in the sky, he (Indra) came near the very beautiful daughter of the snow-clad Himalayas, Uma. He enquired of her who was this divine Yaksha. She replied, "He is the Brahman (Supreme Primordial Being, the cause of all that exists), You felt proud by mistaking the victory of the Brahman as that achieved by your own strength". Then Indra came to know with certainty that the Yaksha was no other than Brahman].

Uma is another name of the goddess Parvati, daughter of the Himalayas and wife of Lord Siva. When she went to perform severe austerities in order to win Siva as her husband, her mother Mena who greatly loved her daughter, fearing that such hardship would tell upon her health, asked her in the following words not to perform austerities:

उ दुर्गे मा कुरु तपस्याम् ।
[O Durga! Do not perform austerities.]

So the goddess Durga is called Uma.

The great poet Kalidasa therefore gives the meaning of the 'Uma' in the following verse of Kumarasambhavam;

तां पार्वतीत्याभिजनेन नाम्ना बन्धुप्रियां बन्धुजनो जुहाव ।
उमेति मात्रा तपसो निषिद्धा पश्चादुमाख्यां सुमुखीं जगाम ॥

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* Kenopanishad.

** According to another version the goddess is called Uma because She is the wife (better half) of Shiva. in 3 in Sanskrit means Siva and ऋ means beautiful woman.

*** Kumarasambhavam, first canto, verse 26.

[As yet the maiden was unknown to fame;

"Child of the Mountain" was her only name.
But when her mother, filled with anxious care
At her stern penance, cried: "Forbear! Forbear!"
To a new title was the warning turned,
And Uma was the name the maiden earned.]

The sacred village of Uma is about eight kilometers east of Achhibal which is about sixty kilometers south-east of Srinagar and only eleven kilometers from Ananta Nag. It is so called because it is sacred to the goddess Uma.

There is a beautiful spring in the village which is regarded as an embodiment of the goddess Uma and is also called Uma.

The following two verses from the Nilamata tell about the glory of the goddess Uma and her worship”

यैव देवी उमा सैव काश्मीरा नृपपुङ्गव ।

आसीत् साः पूर्णजलं सुरभ्यं सुमनोहरम् ॥

(O Great King : She, who is the goddess Uma, manifested as the land of Kashmir, which was originally a beautiful and charming lake full of water).

माघमासि सिते पक्षे चतुर्थी या भवेद् द्विज ।

उमासंपूजनं कार्यं तस्यां सौभाग्यमिप्सुना ॥

[O Twice-born! One wishing good fortune should worship Uma on the fourth day of the bright half of the month of *Magha* (December-January)]

VAISHNO DEVI

त्वं वैष्णवी शक्तिरनन्तवीर्या

विश्वस्य बीजं परमासि माया ।

सम्मोहितं देवी समस्तमेतत्

त्वं वै प्रसन्ना भुवि मुक्तिहेतुः ॥

Thou art infinite power.

Thou art the strength of Vishnu.

Thou art the seed (cause) of the universe and Thou art the greatest delusion.

All that exists is enchanted by Thee.

Thou, when pleased, becomest the cause of salvation.

The sacred shrine of the goddess called Vaishno Devi is situated on a cave of the Trikuta hill, about fifty-eight kilometers north of Jammu town. The road from Jammu to the cave shrine passes through beautiful forests and mountains with waterfalls and streams. The Trikula hill, which is about 5300 feet above, is also regarded as an emblem of the goddess Vaishno Devi and is considered very holy.

Vaishno Devi is another name of the goddess Bhagwati. It is said that the goddess originally resided at a place called Adi Kumari which is about six kilometers

below the cave. A demon wanted to marry the goddess by force. She therefore shifted her residence from Adi Kumari to the cave on the Trikuta hill. but the demon followed her there also. Thus the goddess had no alternative but to kill the demon.

The cave is nearly one hundred feet in length. It has a narrow entrance. A small stream called Charan-ganga, which literally means the sacred stream issuing from the feet of the goddess, flows from beneath the image of the goddess in the cave.

There is a sacred spring also in this place, the water of which rises in jerks. The water is warm in December, January and part of February. It is cold for the rest of the year. The spring is regarded as a manifestation of Vaishno Devi. There is a reference about this sacred spring in the Nilamata, which is quoted below.

त्रिकोटयां तु नरः स्नात्वा देवलोके महीयते ।
स्नात्वा हर्षपाथायां च शक्रलोके महीयते ॥

[A man, who bathes in the holy water of Trikoti, glorifies in the region of the gods. A man who bathes in Harshapatha glorifies in the region of Shakra(Indra),]

The pilgrimage to Vaishno Devi starts from the month of Ashwin (September-October) and continues for about four month.

VICHAR NAG

शिवं भज शिवं ध्याय शिवं स्तुहि शिवं यज ।
शिवं नम बराक त्वं ज्ञानं मोक्षं यदिच्छसि ॥

(Poor fellow, if you desire knowledge and final libration then worship Siva, meditate on Siva, sing the praises of Siva, perform sacrifices for Siva and bow in reverence to Him.)

Vichar Nag is a sacred Spring situated in the village of the same name which is at a distance of about twelve kilometers from Srinagar on the way to Gangabal lake. The village is on the eastern bank of Anchar Naga a shallow lake of which the water is full of green lotus leave and the shores are lined with luxuriant chestnut trees.

There is an ancient shrine of Siva called Vikrameshwara at Vichar Naga near the spring. The temple was originally built by Vikramaditya who ruled Kashmir in the sixth century A. D. The pilgrims visit this place in the month of Chaitra (March-April).

The presiding deity of the spring called Vihar Naga is Elapatra Naga. He is a brother of the famous nagas called Shesha, Vashuki. etc. The name of the illustrious Nagas are given in chapter 35 of Adiparva in the Mahabharat. the first two verses from that chapter are quoted below:

शेष प्रथमतो जातो वासुकिस्तदनन्तरम् ।
 ऐरावतस्तक्षकश्च कर्कोटक धनञ्जयो ॥
 कालियो मणिनागश्च नागश्चापुरणस्तथा ।
 नागस्तथा पिञ्जरक एलापत्रोऽथ वामनः ॥

(Among the Nagas, Shesha was born first. Then Vasuki and thereafter followed in succession Airavata, Takshaka, Karkotake, Dhananjaya, Kalia, Maninaga, Apurana, Pinjaraka, Elapatra and Vamana.)

Elapatra was loved by all the Nagas because it was he who dispelled the fears of the Nagas by disclosing the secret by which they could be saved from the destruction that would have been caused by the snake-sacrifice of king Janmejaya, the great-grandson of king Yudhishthira.

WANGAT

स्वयंभूः प्रकटीभूय पूजां स्वीकुरुते स्वयम् ।
 ज्येष्ठरूद्रो वशिष्ठस्य यस्य वा बालकेश्वरः ॥

[The Siva-Linga called Balakeshwara is a natural one and has come to light by itself. It receives from him (Kind Jayasimha, 1128-1149 A. D.) worship as the Siva-Linga called Jyestheshwara received worship from the sage Vashishtha].

Wangat village is about fifty-three kilometers north of Srinagar. It is said that the great sage Vashishtha lived there for some time and worshipped the Siva-Linga called Jyestheshwara. The ancient name of the place is Vashishthashram.

Near the village there are the ruins of the ancient temples built by the kings of Kashmir at different times. These are by the side (south-west) of a sacred spring called Anant Nag, which is at the foot of the Bhuteshwara spur (modern Busther) lying south-east of the Haramukh peak. Naran Nag is the modern name of Sodara Tirtha which has been an important place of pilgrimage from ancient times. The pilgrims to the Haramukh lakes terminate their pilgrimage after visiting this holy spring. It is said that Lord Siva came to dwell here from the lake called Nandkol.

उत्तिष्ठ नन्दिकुण्डात् तू स्वयं मत्स्योदेर स्थितः ।
 भुतेश्वर इति ख्यातः कृत्स्नपापप्रणोदकः ॥

[Rising from Nandukunda (Nandkol) the god,* who is known as Bhuteshwara and who removes all sins, established himself at Sodara.]

One of the temples, the ruins of which are seen near the spring, have been identified with the temple of Jyeshthesha and another with the temple of Bhuteshwara. Both are dedicated to Siva. The former was constructed by King Lalitaditya at the beginning of the eight century A. D. while the origin of the latter is lost in antiquity. The ruins are in the narrow gorge of the Kankvai river, the ancient name of which is Kanakavahini, (one carrying gold), which flows past the southern foot of the spur.

About a kilometer from the sacred Naran Nag there is in the middle of the Kanakavahini a rock with a cave=shrine of Siva.

The following verses from the Rajatarangini and the Nilamata tell the glory of the sacred spring Naran Nag.

श्रुतनन्दिपुराणः स व्यासान्नेवासिनी नृपः ।
सेवनं सोदारादीनां नन्दीश स्वर्धया व्यधात् ॥

[The King (jalauka, son of Ashoka) having heard the Nandipurana from some pupil of Vyasa visited Sodara and other sacred spots vying in holiness with Nandisha].

सोदार तु नरः स्नात्वा गोसहस्रं फलं लभेत् ।
तथा कनकवाहिन्याः संगमं याति यौ नरः ॥

(By bathing in the waters of Sodara and also by visiting the confluence of the Kanakavahini one gets the benefit of the gift of a thousand cows.)

The confluence of the Kanakavahini mentioned in the above verse is perhaps the junction of its tributary with the Sind river which lies about six kilometers above Mangam village nearly four kilometers east of Tulmul (Kshir Bhawani). Stein identifies this confluence with the ancient Chiramochana Tirtha. The pilgrims visit this on their way to the Haramukuta lakes.

VASUKI NAG

Vasuki Nag is a sacred spring situated about twenty kilometers west of Veri Nag. The spring remains dry in the winter but flows with water in summer.

It is sacred to the serpent-god Vasuki.

Vasuki Nag was one of the sons of the great sage Kashyapa. His mother's name was Kadru, one of the daughters of Daksha Prajapati. Vasuki acted as the rope

for churning the ocean by the gods and the demons for getting nectar ("amrita") by drinking which they became immortal. The Mandara mountain was used as the churning rod which was supported on the back of a very huge tortoise in the sea.

अथ देवसुराः सर्वे ममन्धुर्वरूणालयम् ।
तत्र नेत्रमभून्नागो वासुकिर्बलिनः षट् ॥

[The gods and demons churned the abode of Varuna. There Vasuki Nag, the mightiest among the mighty, acted as the rope for churning the ocean].

VIAN

There are two holy springs called Kailas Nag and Phuk Nag at Vian. Phuk Nag is a mineral spring.

WATNAR

स जयति सिन्धुखदनो देवो यत्पादपञ्कजस्मरणम् ।
वासरमणिरिव तमसां राशीन्नाशयति विघ्नानाम् ॥

(Glory to the elephant-faced gud Ganesha, the remembrance of whose lotus feet destroys all troubles just as the rising sun dispels all darkness).

Watnar is situated between the range of hills lying between Shahabad and Bring. It is in Kother Pargana located about ten kilometers east of Banihal as the crow flies.

There is an ancient shrine of Maha Ganesha by the side of a sacred spring called Dumatabal.

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COVER PAGE : Kall Mandir, Uttar Kashi

YA DEVI SARVABHUTESU

Sri Sri Ma in the Company of Saints

- Dr. Premlata Srivastava

(to be continued)

Once during a lecture series, Avadhootji said, "When a Sadhak attains an impartial view, he can realize the truth in every cell. He attains this level after the elimination of attachment and jealousy."

In this context he mentioned that once Sridama is said to have asked Krishna for his picture as Krishna's absence was unbearable for him. Chitra who was known to be a good artist, was called. Chitra told Yashoda that she wanted to see her lala (dearest child). She had not seen him before.

So Krishna came and posed. Such was Krishna's posture that Chitra's heart was drowned in Eternal Love. She could not draw the picture; every time she tried to sketch, the lines were swept by her tears. Because of this strange experience of love and happiness she prayed to Saraswati to draw this picture for her. Saraswati expressed her inability. Instead she asked her to pray for Krishna's blessings. She took the advice, and soon an extremely beautiful picture was drawn. Both lala (Krishna) and Yashoda were delighted. Yashoda asked Chitra what she expected by way of remuneration.

Chitra asked for Krishna, and Yashoda fell unconscious. Then Krishna told her that Yashoda would be hurt if he was taken away. He promised to remain in her company as the same personality forever.

After narrating this incident, Sri Avadhootji exhorted all devotees of Ma to surrender themselves before Sri Ma.

The tradition of Sri Ma's birth celebration is the outcome of Sri Avadhootji's immense regard, love and devotion for Sri Ma.

He once saw Ma sitting on a lion. Then he suggested to Didi that a throne of a similar design should be carved. Most of the devotees including Didi, were against this idea but at the initiative of one Mahatma, a fabulous throne fitted on the back of a lion was made out of eight different metals. This throne, now kept at Kankhal

Ashram, was not used by Ma. Despite repeated requests of Avadhootji, Ma preferred to sit on its steps rather than on the throne.

In 1952, when Triveni Puriji met Ma during Shivaratri at Haridwar, he requested that in May 1953 Ma's birth celebrations be held in Punjab. However within a few weeks of the beginning of the celebrations, he departed for his heavenly abode. Avadhootji, who constructed a temple on the samadhi of his Guru, held akhand kirtan throughout Ma's birth celebrations. He was the person behind this great show. Ma praised his tremendous efforts in organizing such grand and joyous celebrations.

Swami Shankar Chaitanya Bharati

Kashi's famous saint Shankar Chaitanya Bharati was better known as Chaitanya Giri. Preferring to remain aloof, he lived at Lalita Devi Math. He was a renowned scholar and wrote many religious books. He lived a secluded life, and never used to meet women. He had not even met Ma, despite living in Kashi. He had restricted his disciples to just a few, who closely served their Guru.

One day when this devotee of Bhagawati Tripur Sundari was meditating in the temple, Bhagavati Herself asked him to meet Ma Anandmoyce, who was Her personification.

Shankar Chaitanya Bharatiji came to see Sri Ma during Her 60th birth anniversary celebrations at Kashi. As Shankar Bharatiji's boat touched the Ashram Ghat, he was escorted with great reverence to Ma on the podium. He prostrated before Sri Ma uttering a hymn in praise of Mahadevi, and was moved as if he were getting God's darshan in reality. He presented Her a huge, beautiful garland that touched Ma's feet. Someone asked him Who is Ma? Shankar Bharati replied, "Chaitanya Chidananda." During this occasion, he participated in the Satsang with Sri Ma and Gopibaba for two hours. He returned to Ma, thereafter, frequently for religious discourses and discussions.

A very trusted devotee of Ma later told me that actually Shankar Bharatiji had Sri Ma's darshan earlier also. Only Ma and Shankar Bharatiji were present at that occasion. Ma later confirmed this meeting. It was Shankar Bharatiji who named the Diamond Jubilee Celebration as '60th Birth Anniversary Festival'. During the festivities, Shankar Bharatiji once came to the Ashram and discussed several religious questions like manliness, and the relation between powers and compassion. Shankar Bharati, in his lucid speech, said that distinct compassion and kindness is manliness.

In an article published in 'Anandavarta' Swami Brahmanandaji had written that once Pannalaji asked Bharatiji about Ma's real form. His reply was that Ma is Chidananda personified.

Once a Brahmachari, who attended to Bharatiji and received alms for his Guru also, had gone to his village for some reason. Thus, Bharatiji went without food for a few days.

Then one day, Bharatiji came to the Vishwanath temple and Annapurna temple during his early morning visit to these places, and said, "He was living in their place. Was he not entitled to even his 'bhiksha'?" It was akin to how Bhagavan Shankaracharya asked for alms from Ma Annapurna.

Bharatiji proceeded from this place to Lalita Ghat.

During those days Sri Ma was in Kashi. That particular day, Ma sent a brahmachari to Lalita Ghat for Bharatiji. The brahmachari returned with news about Bharatiji. Thereafter, Sri Ma immediately arranged for care and regular meals for this great Mahatma.

The following is a unique incident involving the two great souls.

Swamiji became very weak, suffering from blood dysentery. He could take only vegetable soup. Kashi's famous physician Dr. Gopal Das Gupta, an ardent devotee of Ma, was treating him while Ma arranged for his meals and other things with Swamiji's consent. This arrangement continued for almost eight years until Swamiji left for his heavenly abode on 14th June 1957.

Swami Devi Giriji

Swami Devi Giriji was a famous seer of Uttar Kashi. Swami Paramanandaji of our Ashram described his religious discourses as simply splendid. He had a wonderful voice, coupled with lucidity of speech and excellent pronunciation of Sanskrit. During his sadhana in Uttar Kashi, Swamiji frequently visited him for his guidance on Kathopanishad.

According to Swamiji, Devi Giriji had memorised the entire Tulsi Ramayan and his prayers to Lord Shiva were unmatched by any other devotee at Uttar Kashi.

Swami Devi Giriji visited Ma in 1948 at Kashi Ashram. During his visit, the Ashram was the venue for the Savitri Mahayajna. Both Devi Giriji and Sri Ma had religious discussions for several hours. One night while Kirtan was being held in the presence of Baba, Ma herself started singing :

“Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram

Jayati Jayati Jai Sitaram”

What an auspicious occasion was that! In presence of Devi Giriji and the rippling sound of the Ganges flowing by the Ashram, the night must have been wonderful with Ma Herself singing. What a thrill to imagine that moment! In the midst of Her song, suddenly Baba said, “Ma, you are happiness personified.”

Baba left his worldly body in October 1950.

The old, dignified saint Swami Gyanananda lived in Kashi. Founder of Bharat Dharma Mandal, Swamiji was on his deathbed when he told his doctor Gopal Das Gupta that his last wish was to meet Ma. Dr. Das hurriedly went to Ma’s Ashram but Ma was not there. He was very much upset thinking perhaps the old man may not survive to have Sri Ma’s darshan. After two hours, Ma returned and just on seeing Dr. Das Gupta, she said, “Pitaji, I went to see Gyanananda Baba.”

Dr. Das Gupta was stunned, how could Ma know about Swamiji’s wish? Ma said She had the kheyal while She was in Vindhyachal.

[Dr. Gopal Das Gupta was an outstanding person. A competent doctor he had a flourishing practice, the earnings from which he distributed among the poor and needy. Dr. Das Gupta used to be very affectionate towards Ma. He would cry while talking about Ma and make the listeners to cry. At times, he disclosed his troubles to Ma in private.]

(to be continued)

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Become drinkers of nectar, all of you - drinkers of the wine of immortality. Tread the path immortality, where no death exists and no disease.

Matri Vani (Volume II)

Non Suppressible, Urges, Suppressible Urges and Behavioral regimen

- Dr. Kavita Vyas (ayurveda specialist)

A. Non Suppressible Urges (Adharaniya vega)

Acharya Charaka says the wise never suppress the following urges- urine, stool, semen, gas, vomiting, sneezing, upward movement of air through mouth (Dakar), yawning, hunger, thirst, tears, sleep and rapid respiration after heavy work.

- (a) **Urine-** If one suppresses the urge of urine, pain starts in the urinary bladder and penis; it also causes other symptoms like obstruction in urination, headache, swelling and pain in lower abdomen.
- (b) **Stool-** When one suppresses the urge for stool, the duodenum starts paining; also it causes other symptoms like headache, obstruction in passing the gas and stool, pain in calf muscles and swelling of abdomen.
- (c) **Semen-** If one forcefully stops the flow of semen, then it causes the following symptoms- swelling, pain and heaviness of testicle, vasa deference, seminal vesicle, prostate glands some times and pain in anus and obstruction in urination.
- (d) **Gas-** If one suppresses flatulence, it causes obstruction in passing urine and stool, swelling of abdomen, tiredness, pain in abdomen, headache, and disorder of nervers.
- (e) **Vomiting-** Actually it is difficult to stop vomiting, but if one forcefully stops the urge of vomiting then it causes itching and swelling on skin, disinterest in food, jaundice, fever, nausea etc.
- (f) **Sneezing-** Suppression of sneezing causes heaviness of head, pain, facial paralysis migraine and weakness of sensory organs.
- (g) **Belching (udgar)-** This generally comes after food; suppression of this causes hiccups, difficulty in respiration, anorexia, heaviness in heart and chest.
- (h) **Yawning-** Suppression of this urge causes convulsion, bending of body, shrinking of organs, tremors in hands and legs and heaviness.



Shringar of Gopalji during Holi



Playing Holi with Gopalji



Shri Chintamani Ganesh



Shri Dhundiraj Ganesh

- (i) Hunger- Suppression of hunger causes weakness in body, pain in different organs, anorexia, fainting.
- (j) Thirst- Suppression of thirst causes dryness in mouth and throat, tiredness, depression, pain in heart and deafness.
- (k) Tears- Suppression of tears causes cold, heart disease, eye disease, anorexia, heaviness in head.
- (l) Sleep- Suppression of sleep causes yawning, tiredness of body, dizziness, headache, heaviness and burning sensation in eyes.
- (m) Rapid respiration after laborious work- Suppression of this causes pain in heart and chest, uneasiness, fainting.

B. Suppressible Urges

The one who wants his welfare, he/she should avoid doing any prohibited (ethically, legally) work, and any wrong by mind, speech and body. According to Charaka Samhita one should suppress the urge of greed, sadness, fear, anger, ego, attachment, shamelessness, jealousy, wanting to steal other's wealth etc.

Acharya Rasayan

(Behavioral regimen which acts as Rejuvenation)

Ayurveda believes that if one doesn't take any rejuvenating herbs or treatment then also he can get benefit of rejuvenation, if he/she is following behavioral regimen which is called as sadachar ('sad' means good, 'achar' means behavior). Good behavior morally uplifts the person and increases confidence.

Acharya Rasayanam (Behavioral Regimen) includes-

- Speaking truth, not getting angry
- Not drinking alcohol
- Control on senses, non violence
- Calm mind, cleanliness of body and sweetness in speech
- Keeping patience, giving donation, doing pesance
- One who serves cows, priest, masters (Guru), scholars, aged people
- One who has compassion for all living beings
- One who has equanimous attitude for sleeping and waking state
- One who daily eats ghee and milk
- One who is egoless and generous
- One who has controlled his senses and who is in the company of saints
- One who reads spiritual scriptures and behaves according to them

All these habits of behavior give effect of rejuvenation to the body and mind

Behavior Regimen with ladies (As given in Charaka Samhita)

- Don't insult the ladies
- Don't tell your secret to ladies
- Don't make physical relations with the lady who is under menstrual cycle, who is not clean, who is suffering from any disease, who doesn't have good behavior, who loves other persons.

Behavior Regimen for Students (As given in Charaka Samhita)

- Don't criticize wise people and Guru
- In unclean state don't worship the gods, trees; also don't study
- Don't study during earth quack, heavy rain, fire accident, during big festivals, during sun eclipse or moon eclipse, at the time of sun set
- One should not take knowledge from unqualified persons
- One should not read the subjects (verses etc.) in very high volume, very low volume or in a strange volume of speech

The summary of behavioral regimen is to indulge in knowledge, charity, friendship and compassion, happiness, neglecting wrong things controlling senses, and keeping peace. By following the above social and ethical regimen one gets good health, praise and fame in society and after death one goes to heaven according to Charak Samhita of Ayurveda.

Dietetics and Regimen for Spring Season (Vasanta Ritu)

The kapha dosha accumulated in the body during winter, aggravates in spring season because kapha dosha melts as rays of the sun are more prominent in the spring season. That melted kapha dosha in the body weakens the digestive fire of a person and causes a number of diseases. To get rid of this accumulated kapha dosha one should undergo purification method like vamana karma.

- One should not take heavy, oily, acidic and sweet food products
- One should avoid day time sleep

In this season the following things are beneficial-

- Physical exercise, scrubbing the body (Ubatan), Having medicated smoke, Using warm water, applying sandal wood paste on the body, using barley and wheat, mung dal (with cover), green vegetables, ginger, honey etc, drinking milk with little turmeric powder; walking in garden & watching nature.

In the month of Chaitra (15 March- 15 April) it is good to chew 10-15 leaves of neem tree, early morning. In this season one can have Haritaki Churnam (Terminalia chebula) 5gm with honey; it has rejuvenation effect.

ASHRAM VARTA

Anandasvarupeshu.

The new year 2018, like always, got started with the celebration of *Paush Parvan*. On the day of *Makar Sankranti* which is associated with the reminiscences of the commencement and *Purnahuti* of *Akhanda Savitri Mahayajna* in the Varanasi Ashram from *Makar Sankranti* in 1947 to the same day of *Makar Sankranti* in 1950. This year *Makar Sankranti* took place on 14th January. Special oblations with *Shodashopachara* (sixteen special offerings) were offered with the chanting of *Gayatri Mantra* to the *Yajna* fire. Special *puja* of the deities was performed in the Ashram temples with dawn to dusk *kirtan*, sumptuous *bhog* offerings of *Pitha* (*pishtaku*), *Payasa* (thickened milk with rice) and varieties of food sweets and other food items.

“*Parama punyadham Varanasi Ashram, pranami*” – this was the song of the *udayasta* (dawn to dusk) *kirtan* performed by the Ashram inmates and other devotees circumambulating the *Yajnasala*.

Sarasvati Mahabhage Vidye Kamalalochane Vishvarupe Vishalakshi Vidyum Dehi Namostute. (O great *Sarasvati Devi*, Goddess of learning with eyes like lotus petals, one who resides in all Divine Forms, O large eyed Goddess, please give us knowledge, We bow to thee). This *pranama mantra* was repeatedly heard during the *Sarasvati Puja* on the day of *Vasanta Panchami*, which occurred this year on 22nd January. A beautiful idol of *Ma Sarasvati* graced the *Kanyapeeth Hall* in the *Varanasi Ashram*.

Vasanta Panchami was thus celebrated amid gorgeous beauties of nature. The devotees of *Devi Sarasvati* were brimful with the springtime joys emanating from the divine splendour of *Ma Sarasvati*. *Devi Sarasvati* was worshipped with due solemnity and gaiety also in *Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Vidyapeeth, Kankhal*, in the *Bhimpura Ashram of Shree Shree Ma* and in many other Ashrams under the *Sangha*.

Republic Day, the *Ganatantra Divas*, the day on which India adopted the rule of democracy, was duly celebrated with solemnity and gaiety on 26th January, 2018 and special programmes inspiring patriotic zeal were held with the hoisting of the Tricolor National Flag in *Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth, Varanasi* and also in *Bhopal, in Ma Anandamayee Shiksha Upavan*.

On the full moon day of *Maghi Purnima*, a *Mahotsava* (grand festival) was celebrated in the Tarapeeth Ashram of Shree Shree Ma. In the Varanasi Ashram, the annual *Satyanarayan puja* took place with special programmes like the recital of *Panchali* etc. A lunar eclipse occurred that day. The inmate Brahmacharinis of Kanyapeeth held *kirtan*. They and other devotees took a holy dip in the Ganges (*mukti snana*) after the eclipse was over.

On the occasion of the birth centenary of the veteran sannyasi of Shree Shree Ma's Ashram, Swami Bhaskarananda, a grand celebration was organized in Shree Shree Ma's Bhimpura Ashram on the holy bank of the divinely beautiful river Narmada from 31st January to 7th February. This year too, during this time, the *Samyam Saptah Mahavrata* was held in the Bhimpura Ashram, following the tradition of the past years. This year, it was the 20th *Samyam Saptah*. A group of Kanyapeeth Brahmacharinis took part in the *Samyam Saptah* in Bhimpura.

On 30th January, during the inaugural ceremony, the Brahmacharinis of the Kanyapeeth recited *Veda mantras* as an auspicious beginning of the programme. Next, Brahmacharini Dr. Geeta Banarjee sang the following inaugural song—

O *Madhava*, I will express my soul's suffering to Thee alone.

I will take refuge at Thy feet alone, O *Madhava*! Let the chant of Thy name raise ripples of joy, and again, when the heart weeps in sorrow, even then let me not forget Thy name, O *Madhava*!

May my heart never beg for any favour from anyone else except from Thee, O *Madhava*!

May no one else be dearer to me than Thee!

May I see only Thee everywhere in the world.

I will undergo the pains of defame and hundreds of obstacles and fears, just in love of Thee, O *Madhava*! (English translation of the original Bengali song).

After the inaugural song, Shree Jagat Bhai, President of the Bhimpura Ashram, spoke a little about the Bhimpura Ashram and told the *vratis* about the rules and regulations of the *Samyam Saptah*. After this, Swami Chetan Giri of the Sannyasa Ashram and Brahmachari Samanandaji of the Chinmaya Mission delivered short speeches to inspire the *vratis*. Swami Achyutanandaji, President of Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha, also informed the *vratis* about the rules and regulations of the *Samyam Saptah*. Then, after *kirtan* and the recital of *Pranama Mantras*, the inaugural function was over. Smt. Mandira, a pupil of Late Smt. Chhabi Banerjee, delighted the audience with her presentation of *kirtan*.

Next day, on 31st January, the regular *Samyam Saptah* programme got started, beginning with the Usha Kirtan. Before and after the morning meditation, the Kanyapeeth girls recited Veda *Mantras*. *Kirtan* was sung and *path* of the Gita and Chandi (Durga Saptashati) was also done. Swami Achyutanandaji recited verses from the Upanishads. Swami Uttamanandaji of Kailash Ashram delivered scholarly speeches on the *Ishavasyopanishad*. Brahmachari Samanandaji daily gave discourse on the *karmayoga* of the Gita in the light of its usefulness in practical life. The programmes were successfully conducted by Swami Vimalananda of our Ashram. Vishnu Sahasranama and Shree Narmadashtaka were recited to conclude the daily morning session. In the afternoon, *kirtan* and *bhajan* were sung again before and after the meditation. On two days, after the meditation, Brahmacharini Geeta spoke on "Venu Geet" and "Bhramar Geet" from Shreemadbhagavatam Mahapurana during the time of *Purana Path* she also spoke about Shree Shree Ma. She read out from Milanda's book; the words of Shree Shree Ma which she had uttered to Kalachandda. The incident was as follows: Panuda's uncle Kalachandda was a nephew of the famous patriot Shree Ashwini Kumar Dutta. Kalachandda had Shree Shree Ma's *darshan* in Dhaka. During the freedom movement of India, he was also imprisoned many times. He had also stayed in the Ashram of Shree Aurobindo in Pondicherry. He used to carry Shree Shree Ma's photo with him. He was criticized for worshipping Shree Shree Ma when he was in Pondicherry. So he came to Shree Shree Ma with Shree Shree Ma's photo. After some time he was called again from the Pondicherry Ashram. Kalachandda sought Shree Shree Ma's advice. Ma told him that if he would go back to Pondicherry, he would receive a lot of praise, fame, honour and the good name for his quality of successful management, and if he would stay in Ma's Ashram, he would receive only defame, dishonor and criticism, but in the end he would gain the jewel of spiritual progress. He had to decide as to what he wanted, Ma said in addition. Kalachandda chose the option of not going back to Pondicherry. Br. Geetadidi said that we should all remember the song which says that we should be ready to undergo the suffering of defame, calumny and hundreds of obstacles for the love of God (*taba preme shakoli shabo, he Mulhava*) Shree Shivamahimna Stotra and Hanuman Chalisa were recited after Br. Geetadidi's speech. Smt. Sujata Ben's sister Smt. Nandita had published Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Sahasranamavali as a tribute to Swami Bhaskaranandaji on the occasion of his anniversary. This book was musically recited one day after the *Pravachana*. During the night session, Swami Nirgunanandaji of Shree Shree Ma's Ashram spoke about Shree Shree Ma. His speech was quite captivating. After the *maunam*, and after his speech till 9:30 p.m., *arati* was done and *pranam mantras* were recited. Thus the programme of the first day was concluded.

On the third day, Swami Adhyatmananda, President of the Ahmedabad branch of Swami Shivananda Ashram arrived and delighted the audience with his speech. Every day, he delivered speeches on Shreemad Bhagavatam and also spoke about Ma. On the first day, he spoke about the daily life of Shree Krishna. After this, he talked about the *Gopi Gita* daily. Besides, he also spoke about Shree Shree Ma daily in an attractive way.

During the night session, Brahmacharini Guneeta sang *kirtan* in praise of Ma Narmada (Jaya Mayi Narmada, Mayi Reva, Shivavallabha, Sadashiva). She also spoke about the grace of Shree Shree Ma, Her sweet *lila* and Her boundless love. Swami Adhyatmanandaji and other Swamijis who presented scholarly speeches were present during Guneetadidi's lecture. She spoke on two nights.

One day, Swami Uttamanandaji said, that the *Ishavasyopanishad* contains explanations of the meaning of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* – the four *Purusharthas*. He explained the meaning in the following way:

1. "*Ishavasyamidam sarvam yat kinchit jagatyum jagat*" – these words speak of *moksha*.
2. "*Tena tyaktena bhunjithah*" – these words relate to *kama*.
3. "*Ma gridhah kasyesvid dhanam*" – these words relate to *artha*.
4. "*Neha nanasti kinchana*" – these words relate to *dharma*.

One day during the afternoon session Swami Achyutanandaji spoke on Shree Shree Ma and Swami Bhaskaranandaji. During the night session, Brahmacharini Geeta also spoke on Shree Shree Ma and Swami Bhaskaranandaji. Brahmachari Shyamal Bhai presented memorable vocal music (*kirtan*). Brahmachari Bula carried on regularly the *puja*, *arati* etc. in the room on the upper storey in the morning and in the evening. He also did *stava path*, *kirtan* and *satsang*. *Puja*, *bhoga* and *arati* were regularly done in the Shiva Mandir, Rama Mandir and Hanuman Mandir.

Swami Jagadishwaranandaji (Jagadish Bhai) and Swami Jyotirmaya also took part in the *Samyama*. A *yajna* was held in the adjacent Anandabhavan in the memory of Swami Bhaskarananda. On 6th January during the night session Shree Christopherji (Mr. Pegler) showed video films on Shree Shree Ma. Shree Swapan Ganguli, General Secretary of Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha, was present during the show. Before the *Mahanisha Dhyana*, Smt. Mandira's singing of Swami Vivekananda's composition about the experience of *Samadhi* ("*Nahi Surya*" etc.) enthralled the audience. She presented the song with great *bhava*. Then *kirtan* was sung and *pranama mantras* were recited. Thus the *Samyam Mahavrata* was concluded and the participants received *Prasad* from Swami Achyutanandaji and Swami

Adhyatmanandaji. The next day, the *udyapana* of the *Samyam Mahavrata* took place with the performance of *Homa*, the devotees took the *yajna* ashes and smeared their foreheads with the holy *Vibhuti*.

The next day, on 7th February, 2018, *Sadhu Bhandara, Bhandara* for all devotees and distribution of *Prasad* took place. In the afternoon, a Ramayana Party came from Varodara and presented Ramayana song, *Sandhya kirtan* and discourses on Shree Shree Ma took place in the evening. Shree Sanjay Kapoorji, Secretary, Bhimpura Ashram, Shree Jagat Bhai, President, Bhimpura Ashram and the Sadhu Incharge Swami Vasudevanandaji, had the credit for successful organization and successful completion of the *Mahavrata*.

One day, Swami Vasudevanandaji narrated the interesting story of his *Narmada Parikrama* in response to the eagerness expressed by the audience. He said that a salient feature of the Bhimpura Ashram is that the visitors and residents also have the good fortune of the *darshan* of Shree Narmadaji. It is said that a dip in the river Ganga grants *punya* whereas just the *darshan* of Shree Narmadaji produces *punya*. The Kanyapeeth inmates one day went with Swami Vimalanandaji and had the *darshan* of important places in and around Bhimpura. They recalled the song, "*Hara Narmade Hara*".

Maha Shivaratri was observed with due solemnity and joy in all the Ashrams of Shree Shree Ma.

On 28th February, on the eve of Dol Purnima, *Chanchar Utsava* (fire ceremony) took place in the Varanasi Ashram. In the courtyard of the Kanyapeeth, Shree Narayana was placed in the *Dol Mancha* (special pedestal for the *Dol* worship) and was offered *Puja* and *Adhivasa*. *Holika Dahan* (setting fire to *Holika*, the evil) was done. *Kirtan* was sung.

The next day, on 1st March, 2018 in the morning, Shree Narayan *Puja* was performed in the courtyard of Kanyapeeth. All the idols of Gopalji, worshipped by the Kanyapeeth inmates, were brought and worshipped there. All the devotees present there did *arati* to Shree Narayanji and offered *abir* to Him.

After this, Gopalji was brought down from his throne and placed on a large platter on Shree Shree Ma's cot, where Shree Shree Ma's photo is placed. His *simhasana* (throne) was beautifully decorated with garlands and flowers. There was an abundance of flowers strewn everywhere. All the devotees present there touched His feet and put *abir* on Him. Gopalji's *arati* was done Shree Hiranmay Gupta, a great devotee of Shree Shree Ma and Shree Gopalji, came from Kolkata to observe the festival of *Dol Purnima* in Varanasi and have *darshan* of his dear Baby Gopal.

After playing Holi with Gopalji with *abir*, they took Him back to His *Mandir*. His *Mahasnana* was done and *Maha Abhisheka* was also performed.

The other idols brought and placed together with Baby Gopal were also given *Mahasnana* and *Maha Abhisheka*. Child Gopal was dressed up in new garments in keeping with the rules of purification and was beautifully decorated with shining gold ornaments and jewellery fit for the occasion of special *Shringara, Rabri, Malai, Makhan, Misri, Sweets, laddons* of coconut chips, fruits etc. were served as *Naivedya*. Special food items of *Naivedya* were prepared and served at noon. Special *Naivedya* and noon time *Bhoga* were prepared and served to Gopalji. *Dol Mahotsava* was thus concluded with joy.

Dol Mahotsava was celebrated with all due colourfulness also in the other Ashrams of Shree Shree Ma and specially in Ma's Vrindavan Ashram. Holi was observed by common people in the town of Uttar Pradesh and in some other provinces of India on the next day.

Vasanti Durga Puja during the *Chaitra Navaratri* was performed in Shree Shree Ma's Varanasi Ashram with a lot of devotion and bliss. A detailed report is expected to appear in the Amrit Varta of July, 2018.

With our best New Year wishes,

Jai Ma!

Editor

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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.