



VENERABLE SWAMI SRI BHASKARANANDAJI MAHARAJ

It will be no exaggeration at all to write that among more than half a dozen educated and bright young stars with good family background, who were very closely drawn to Ma Anandamayee and dedicated their lives totally at Her holy feet between the period 1946 and 1956, Swami Sri Bhaskaranandaji Maharaj, because of the admirable traits of his character and total surrender to Sri Ma soon became one of the brightest jewels of Sri Ma's organisation. His unique devotion to Ma and almost constant attendance with Her during the last decade of Her physical presence, his natural concern for all classes of devotees flocking to Sri Ma soon made him very very popular and almost a spiritual guide to them all.

After Ma's *mahāsamādhi* Swami Bhaskaranandaji, because of his constant endeavour to spread the message of Ma both far and near and also to render spiritual guidance to hundreds of seekers of Truth, even being totally oblivious of his personal health and physical comforts, became one of the most popular *mahātmās* of our organisation.

Swamiji had not been keeping good health at all for some time past and had been in rest most of the time in his very favourite solitary ashram at Bhimpura just on the bank of the sacred river Narmada, near Baroda in the State of Gujarat. There he became *Brahmaleen* (merging into the *Brahman* after leaving the mortal coil) on the early morning of 8th April, 2010. The news of the passing away of Swamiji spread almost like wild fire and hundreds of his ardent devotees and admirers flocked to Bhimpura ashram for his last darshan. Almost before sunset his body was well decorated with flowers and taken to the bank of the river Narmada, put on a decorated boat, taken to the mid-stream, accompanied by many other boats full of admirers and devotees and thereafter the pious body of Swamiji was immersed in the holy waters of the Narmada in strict accordance with the rules of the Sanyāsa order.

Thus ended the glorious life of a venerable *mahātmā* who has no doubt carved for himself a permanent place in the hearts of innumerable devotees of Sri Ma.

About the early life of Swamiji it was ascertained from him that he was born in a respectable Brahmin family on 7th February, 1918 at Bhavnagar in the then State of Saurashtra in Western India. His original name was Bharat Dave. He had his early education at Bhavnagar itself and later on joined the Law College at Ahmedabad. By strange coincidence the Principal of that Law College was Sri Mukund Madhav Thakore, a very staunch devotee of Sri Ma, who told his favourite students about Sri Ma and asked them to have her *darshan* whenever She visited Ahmedabad. Thus on one occasion Sri Bharat bhai had the first darshan of Sri Ma sometime in the forties, which immediately left a deep impress on his mind. The second darshan occurred in Mumbai (Bombay) Station, which was indeed "the turning point in his life" in the words of Swamiji himself. That was sometime in the year 1949. He had his next darshan of Sri Ma in early 1954 in Allahabad during the Kumbh Mela there under very strange circumstances where he had suddenly gone with one of his friends. From there they went to Varanasi ashram where for the first time in his life the young Bharat bhai had a private interview with Sri Ma.

Sri Bharat bhai returned to Mumbai, where he had been working temporarily. Here he was living those days at Sion, a suburb of Mumbai City and very near to that place was an old Shiva temple where Sri Ma also used to reside during her occasional visits to the city. So, as his luck would have it here also Bharat bhai used to have Sri Ma's *darshan* off and on.

It is important to note that although Bharat bhai was engaged in some job, he had the least attachment and was mentally ready to leave the job as soon as he would get a nod from Ma. He was ever ready to dedicate himself to a life of *sādhana* under the guidance of Ma Anandamayee.

That moment after all came soon thereafter. He had gone to Shimla on a trip and by chance he could gather the news that Sri Ma was also at Solan those days. Bharat bhai met Ma there and the momentous hour in his life appeared when Ma enquired from him if he was prepared to leave his job

and enter into the ashram life. Bharat bhai's joy knew no bounds and he agreed without even a moment's delay. His main object in frequently coming to Ma was fulfilled.

In accordance with Ma's instructions he proceeded soon thereafter for Vindhyachal to embark on a life of intense *sādhanā*. So from now on he was known as Sri Bharat Brahmachari.

After two years of *sādhanā* at Vindhyachal he was directed by Ma to go to Uttarkashi (in the Himalayas) and do *Seva-Puja* of Sri Sri Kali Mata, installed in the ancient ashram there.

The next major turning point in his life, of *sādhanā* came when as per Sri Ma's direction he had to perform a very very rigorous three year long religious practice, "*Gāyatri Purascharan*" at Hardwar along with two other Brahmacharis Nirvanananda and Nirmalananda. Sri Bharat Brahmachari also was from now on known as Br. Bhaskarananda. Sri Bhaskaranandaji used to relate to us how rigorous *sādhanā* that was for a long period of three years even without a day's respite and also about Sri Ma's unlimited grace, love and motherly affection which they received in abundance during that memorable period in his life. That was from 1961-64.

After the conclusion of the three year long intense *sādhanā* and *Tapasyā* (penance) almost a new life began. Bhaskaranandaji got the supreme privilege of remaining with Sri Ma moving about with Her from place to place, to get in touch with visitors coming for Her *darshan*, to talk to them first, to enquire into their problems and then arrange for their personal interviews with Ma. He also became an interpreter at the time of interviews of foreigners with Sri Ma. Thus he became almost a "medium" for hundreds of devotees flocking to Ma for Her Divine blessings.

Another memorable chapter in the life of Sri Bhaskaranandaji began after the demise of Sri Ma's mother (Swami Muktananda Giriji) in 1970. It is well-known to all that Sri Ma never gave *mantra dikshā* to anyone in the traditional manner, save and except to only one person, who was Sri Bholanath himself, Ma's respected husband. So after the passing away of Swami Muktananda Giriji Sri Ma offered the most honourable and rare

privilege of being *Āchāryas* during *dikshā*-giving ceremonies in Ma's personal presence to Sri Bhaskarananda, Nirvanananda and Nirmalananda.

The most tragic incident in the life of Sri Bhaskaranandaji was nevertheless when Sri Ma left her body and merged into the Infinite on August 27, 1982 at Dehradun Kishenpur Ashram. Moreover, the worst thing was that being with Sri Ma almost constantly for a long period he was not physically present near Ma during the last few days of Ma. He had gone to Kailash Manas Sarovar trip during those very days along with Sri Nirvanananda and Swami Swarupananda, the then Addl. General Secretary of the Ashram organisation, Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha.

Sri Bhaskaranandaji had become so deeply attached to Ma that closely observing Ma's physical condition during those days, his inner feelings, his conscience itself repeatedly urged him not to go and to cancel the trip and remain with Ma. But alas it happened otherwise.

Another senior Brahmachari, who also used to be constantly with Ma during those fateful days, related the actual thing that happened during those last few days-

"As the days of Bhaskaranandaji's departure grew near he seemed to become more and more restive and ever brooding how to obtain Ma's permission to cancel the journey at this moment. He personally implored Ma several times to allow him to drop the trip. But Ma was very firm. She repeatedly said - "No, don't cancel." Bhaskaranandaji then requested the Brahmachari to intercede and anyhow get Ma's nod to drop the journey now. The Brahmachari also failed. Ma was firm for reason best known to Her alone. On the fateful day of departure Bhaskaranandaji did *Pranām* to Ma and left Her room with tearful eyes, looking straight at Her face. That was infact the last *darshan* of Ma, for whom he had left his home and infact everything."

This was infact the greatest shock in the life of Sri Bhaskaranandaji. The most sorrowful news of Sri Ma's leaving her body was conveyed immediately through wireless to the Ashram group when they returned to the Indian border. Bhaskaranandaji broke down like a young child. The

shock was almost unbearable for him. But he gathered patience anyhow and soon returned to Hardwar, Kankhal ashram along with his companions.

It of course took a considerable period for him to gain his normal composure before he commenced his normal duties. For the first 2/3 months he devoted his time entirely in meditation, *japa* and reading of the scriptures sitting in solitude. Then gradually the inspiration came to him from within that from now on his life was to be dedicated exclusively for propagation of Ma's Vani and extend spiritual guidance to all those who came to Ma's ashrams in search of real peace.

This infact became the real mission of the great man almost till the day he fell seriously ill and left his mortal coil on April 8, 2010 at the age of about 92 and merged into the Infinite. But although our beloved and respectful Swami Bhaskaranandaji, with his smiling face, will be missed by us for ever, there is no doubt at all that he will live in the hearts of hundreds of his devotees and admirers for ever.

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