



Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj
— a very natural photo

VENERABLE SWAMI SRI SHIVANANDAJI MAHARAJ

Fair complexioned and tall with flowing hair and beard, looking like a veritable sage, ever smiling and with a highly amiable nature Swami Sri Shivanandaji Maharaj, who had been a great asset to our organisation left his body at the age of ninety three at Kankhal. Hardwar on 9th April, 2010.

Swamiji had been ailing for sometime past and on the same day as Swami Bhaskaranandaji Maharaj left his body in our ashram at Bhimpura, on the bank of the holy river Narmada, his physical complications somewhat aggravated, he was shifted to the nearby Rama Krishna Mission Hospital at Kankhal and breathed his last almost in the noon of April 9, 2010. His body was brought back to the "Sadhu Niwas", where he used to live, cleaned with Ganga water, new ochre cloths were put on, decorated with flowers and as per tradition of the *sanyāsa* order taken to Hardwar and was immersed in the Ganga with proper rituals.

Thus ended the life of a great man, who had served this organisation with exemplary dedication and utter humility for long sixty four years.

Born in a respectable family of Bengali Brahmins, settled in Allahabad, Swamiji whose original name was Sri Sailesh Banerjee first met Ma at Allahabad itself sometime in the forties. The very first darshan of Ma, which he had in the famous Satya Gopal Ashram there left an indelible impression on his mind and he was heavily drawn to Ma from that very day. This was indeed the turning point in his life. From then onward he would try to meet Ma whenever possible and finally leaving everything surrendered his whole life at the Divine feet of Ma sometime in the year 1946. It was learnt that he was then prosecuting his Post Graduate studies in Kolkata (Calcutta).

It is indeed very interesting to note that just several months before that his next brother Sri Kusum Kumar Banerjee, who was also a very bright student, just after completing his Master of Science Course left his home and surrendered himself at the feet of Ma. The said Sri Kusum Kumar is

now known as Swami Nirvananandaji Maharaj and is recognised as one of the most respectable and senior *mahātmās* of our organisation.

Soon after Sri Sailesh Kumar joined the ashram he was directed by Ma to proceed to Almora (in the Himalayas) and take charge of the young boy's educational institution, Ma Anandamayee Vidyapeeth there. From now on he began to live the life of a Brahmachari and came to be known as "Brahmachari Sailesh."

The wonderful service which he rendered for the sake of the Vidyapeeth for nearly three decades was really unique. He was the father, mother, guardian and teacher all in one of the very young brahmachari boys, undergoing their studies there in the ancient *Gurukula* tradition. His spirit of service was really unparalleled and his ex-students scattered all over the country even now very fondly remember about their most respected "Saileshda".

After rendering exemplary service to the Vidyapeeth for quite a long period Sri Sailesh Brahmachariji thereafter engrossed himself fully in spiritual practices and after Ma's *mahā samādhi* he began performing the task of being one of the *Āchāryas* at the time of giving *dikshā* to devotees. His most affectionate way of giving instructions to the spiritual aspirants and all who became privileged to receive *dikshā* was something really exemplary and made him very very popular among all concerned. After sometime he took *sanyāsa* and from that time onwards he came to be known as "Swami Shivananda Maharaj."

It is very significant to note that Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj, apart from all his other qualities, was a very good writer in Bengali and a known poet. His writings and poems used to be published in various journals all over the country.

There is nodoubt whatsoever that he will be remembered by hundreds for many many years to come for all the qualities of his head and heart.