

MA ANANDAMAYEE
AMRIT VARTA

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with the divine life and sayings of
Sri Anandamayi Ma

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MATRI VANI

The word *mānush** (man) itself gives the clue to what man should really be : a being who is self-aware. Even if he has slipped and falls, is it not his bounden duty to use as lever the very earth to which he has tumbled and raise himself up again? Besides one does not fall so often. As a man constant effort is his duty. If he does not awaken to the consciousness of his own self, what has he achieved? He has but wasted his life. How many lives are frittered away, age after age in endless coming and going. Find out who you are! Discover the significance of the round of births and deaths, its cause and to where it leads! When man becomes a traveller on the path to his inner Being the distance that separates him from his Goal gradually vanishes. You will most certainly have to undertake this pilgrimage to Immortality, trampling under foot hundreds and hundreds of obstacles and impediments. This is the kind of manliness that has to be awakened. Why should you remain helpless as if paralyzed? You only repeat over and over again that you cannot, cannot do *sādhana*. Why? Why?

* * * * *

In all forms and conditions, in everything that comes to pass is He alone, He the self of all. Although you are mourning the loss of your father's physical form you should nevertheless invoke God's presence for the sake of him who has passed away. Whatever God does is for the very best. Your father's span of life was over. Tell your mother that this is the nature of the world. She will have to be courageous. According to God's will he carried out whatever service had been apportioned for him to do and now, by the Almighty's dispensation, he has been called unto Him. It is natural to be upset by bereavement. Sometimes it seems to us that He, who is the Supreme Beloved of all, is our enemy. Nevertheless what he sends will have to be endured. Dear mother*, listen to the request of this little daughter of yours: in these days of affliction and distress call out to God and cry for Him. It is but He who comes to man in the guise of a brother or a husband. Only by invoking Him can peace be found.

My friend's" letter is filled with the expression of a beautiful spirit of love and

*. *Man* mind, *hush*-conscious.

*. Mataji addresses all married people as her fathers and mothers.

devotion. This friend* is ever near her friend. Always remember that man has been born to do *sādhana* to perform actions that help him to realize God. Therefore dedicate yourself to Him, body, mind and heart and endeavour to abide in His Presence at every moment of your life.

* * * * *

It is the will of the Almighty that prevails. By living in harmony with this will and becoming an instrument in His Hands you should try to realize Him.

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To attempt to summon the spirit of the departed is not good. Very often some other being responds and the ordinary individual is not in a position to distinguish between a genuine manifestation and a fake. Therefore it is harmful. Some one who took part in spiritualistic seances became insane. Against his mother's wishes he continued to do so. To actually get into touch with the spirit of the dead one is difficult for the average person.

Do not let your mind be occupied with any such matter. On the level of the Self (*Ātmā*) you are one with Uma. In this world happiness invariably alternates with sorrow. Bear in mind that as the Self (*Ātmā*) she is with you—within you. This is the truth, not fanciful thinking. Birth and death happen in fulfilment of the Divine will. In all shapes and conditions there is but He alone.

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Inward *Sannyāsa* is real *Sannyasa*. To become a *Sannyāsi* is very fortunate, is in fact a matter of supreme rejoicing. But do you feel that the right moment to take such a step has come for you? *Sannyāsa* signifies complete renunciation, the annihilation of everything; even the idea of annihilation has to become extinct.

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* Mataji addresses all children and unmarried people as her friends.

* Mataji refers to Herself in this way.

PAGES FROM
"MA. ANANDAMAYEE PRASANG

(Translated from Bengali)

—Prof. A.K. Dutta Gupta

Ma returns to Dhaka:

Ramna Ashram, 24th May, 1945

Ma has reached Dhaka today almost after two years. What type of violent storms in the form of restlessness and danger have passed over Bengal there is nothing to say about that. Millions of people have lost their lives due to famine; there is no limit to the same. Even while remembering the scenes of those days the body trembles in fear. At that time Ma was not in Bengal. But it is learnt that She had told to devotees that calamity would come over Bengal. At the same time it is heard that She has perhaps said that good days are ahead for India. We have seen the destruction of Bengal with our own eyes. Whether we shall see good days or not Ma only knows that.

Although now people are getting two morsels of food these days there are various types of disturbances around the whole of Bengal. Want of cloths has come along with empty stomach. Natural calamities and famines are always there. Therefore, there is no end of the calls— "Save us, save us." The hearts of devotees have danced with joy even in the midst of dense sorrow to hear the news of Shree Shree Ma's arrival in Dhaka at this moment.

I had heard the news that Ma had come to Navadweep. But no one of us knew when she would reach Dhaka. I heard the news of Ma's arrival in Dhaka first from Saroj, son of my friend, Sri Manamohan Ghosh. Immediately on getting the news I left for the ashram. On way I also took along with me my friend Manoranjan Roy, Librarian, Dhaka University. On way I met my relation Jatin also. He has arrived in Dhaka just then. I learnt afterwards that Ma has come in his saloon car itself from Narainganj to Dhaka. Jatin was asked to go to his home for tea etc. and we went towards the ashram.

On reaching the ashram we first met Khukuni didi. As soon as I did *pranam* to her she told me "Ma is at Panchavati." Going there I found Ma sitting on the *vedi*. There were many ladies near her. Ma was conversing with them smilingly. Seeing me Ma remarked— "Could you not even surmise that I would be coming to Dhaka today?. Doing *pranam* I replied— "Ma, you are beyond any surmise." Ma laughed.

Just after that the wife of Rai Bahadur Sri Prafulla Chandra Ghosh came. She laughingly told Ma— 'Ma, now we have become more courageous now. Although there are army people all around, I have come to you walking alone from house.'

Ma—"Showing so much courage is not good. It can't be said in which way He will show Himself. Everything is His form, even then it can't be known in which form what He will do at what time. That's why it is better to be careful."

Ma now started relating about the serious injury she had suffered while remaining at Navadweep on this occasion. Ma remarked-- "The wooden cot which was given to me at Navadweep had bricks under the same which were not put uniformly. One night I hurt myself with the brick. There was a sound at the time of hurting, which is even now clear to my ears. I could immediately surmise that something of a serious type had happened. Standing for sometime I made my own arrangements. Having brought water I put my feet down in the same for sometime. Afterwards asking all to move out of the room I asked Nepal^{*} to bandage well the finger with small bamboo pieces. As the bandage was done I lay down on bed. Next morning others asked to remove the packing considering that the injury was minor. That was done as per their suggestion. But as soon as the bandage was opened the finger was seen to be becoming blue in colour. Then as per the suggestions of people turmeric paste was applied.

Bhudeb babu- Was there no pain?

Ma - Yes, very much.

Bhudeb babu - Was there no feeling?

Ma - Yes, the feeling was also there. As you suffer seeing pains of others, at sometimes when even the face becomes black, it was like that.

Bhudeb babu - Your advantage is that you can keep your mind aloof from pain at your will. If the mind can be made aloof there is no feeling of pain.

Ma - What you have said is correct for some. But the matter to be watched is that the mind should be there and the same could also be taken out.

"While walking with this foot I further got hurt in the same finger 3/4 times. The doctors had although said that the finger bone was not broken, but was rather bent. This body, however felt that it was somewhat broken. Because while moving I could feel that something was moving inside the finger. As there is some sort of sound if you put something inside a bag and then shake it, similarly there was some sound inside the finger. This was also a sort of joy."

"Afterwards the finger became somewhat better either due to rest or because it was bandaged for sometime. All began to say that a doctor should be consulted. I

* Who later on became Swami Narayanamanda Tirtha.

said that if the doctor can examine without moving the finger then you could show. But the doctor came and somewhat moved the finger, as a result of which he made the condition as before. After that this body was taken to Kolkata from Navadweep and a good doctor was shown. This body was taken by them to a dark room, a sort of light was put upon the finger and after examination it was said that as a result of the injury the finger bone has become bent. After that the finger was properly bandaged and again after putting the light they said that then it was in the correct position and further advised not to remove the bandage within ten days."

When Ma was saying all these things then the sky became very much clouded. Many Bengalees and non-Bengalees have come with Ma to the ashram. On one side there was want of space in the ashram and if there were rains then the incoming gentlemen would be very much inconvenienced. Considering all this some one showed the condition of the sky to Ma and prayed that there should be no rain. Ma said in reply—"You can gather together here from various places and they cant?"

Bhudeb babu - Yes, when there are lots of people they will be happy to meet them, because more number of people can get wet in that way (Everyone laughed).

Ma got up from Panchvati after such talks. Coming to the ground outside Ma enquired after looking at the houses all around - "What are all these?" I told— "They are army hospitals."

I stayed in the ashram till about 8 P.M. and then came back home.

25th May, 1945

I reached the ashram in the morning along with my friend Manoranjan Roy and Jatin. On doing *pranam* to Ma She said— "Go and request Gopal baba to do *Geeta Path*"

Sri Gopal Chandra Chattopadhyay is the disciple of venerable Sri Satyadev, founder of Sadhan Samar ashram. He is M.A., B.L., used to practice law at Barisal. In accordance with his *guru's* orders he is now engaged in spreading the message of the Gita leaving aside his legal profession. Yesterday Ma spoke about him and remarked— "Baba has adopted poverty out of his own will. He has not lost his patience even in the midst of wants and Baba is now not pleading less on behalf of the spiritual side." Yesterday also she had remarked pointing out towards Gopal dada— "I am saying one thing to you. He does very good reading of the Gita. If you wish you can hear the same."

In accordance with Ma's orders we requested Gopal dada to do *Gita path*. It was decided that in the afternoon from 5 to 7 there will be *Gita path*.

About Amiya bala

On returning from Gopal dada it was seen that a number of ladies were sitting around Ma and Ma was talking to them. Advancing a bit forward it was understood that a certain young-aged girl was telling Ma about her spiritual experiences. On enquiry it was afterwards learnt that the girl's name was Amiya bala Sen, resident of Basabari Lane, Dhaka. Father's name Sri Ishwar Chandra Sen. She was married in a village near Vikrampur Taltala. They have got a house also at 74, Benia tola Lane, Kolkata and there an idol of Manasa devi is installed. That Manasa devi appears before her and that time many sorts of injunctions and orders come out of her mouth. Amiya bala is thirty in age, but she looks younger. For the last eight years this condition has been going on. Her devotees have been organising some function on that very day of the Bengali month of "Sravan" when she had the trance for the first time. Amiya bala's husband expired within six months after she had been in this condition. He did not understand all that and therefore used to torture her. Amiya bala did not take fish in her food as per Goddess's injunction. Her husband used to pressurise her by putting parts of fish inside cooked rice. I saw several devotees of Amiya bala, there were old and children included.

Amiya bala was narrating to Ma about her experiences—"Previously I could not understand the meaning of the words which used to come out of my mouth during my trance. I am not much educated. But my elder brother is well educated and one of my relation is a *sannyasi*. He is also a scholar. They could understand the meaning of those words. But now I am also able to comprehend the meaning of those words. My elder brother is very religious-minded. The songs which he compose are very nice. Young children sing those songs. When all together sing those song I become unconscious about myself. What a feeling of joy is then felt by me I cannot explain. I am sometimes immersed in that feeling of joy for 2/3 days together. That feeling of joy continues inside even when I perform my household duties. Ma, my elder brother's feelings are also very nice. When his two sons died one after another even then he not only did not weep himself, he used to tell his wife when she wept "Should not weep for them. Two flowers were with us. Ma has picked those two flowers for her own puja."

Ma (To us)— "How nice are the words! How nicely they have accepted death. Such change comes from good association.

Amiya bala "Ma, Although I am getting the taste of bliss at times, but still it is

* The well-known sage Sri Gopal Thakur of Allahabad.

felt that the taste of that is not being obtained fully. It hurts me that those who remain near they don't understand anything of that. Apart from that they take care of me in such a way and love me so much that I am almost suffocated. Then I wish to run away. Ma has made me free in many ways. I have one son and one daughter. Others have taken care of them. My husband being unable to understand my feelings used to obstruct me. So, one day during my trance it came out of my mouth—"He will be finished within seven days". Infact he passed away within seven days and I became a widow. But I did not have any sorrow for that.

Ma- (To us) See, what a simple nature. If there is His touch within then everything comes out having been melted.

Amiya bala— Even before my husband's death one day it came out of my mouth while in trance— "Wearing of ornaments and conch bangles of this body is going to be over. Dress her well. Hearing this commandment these people decorated me very well with bangles, vermilion and ornaments (Pointing towards her devotees). Previous to that when they used to look at me with devotion and used to call me as 'mother', then I used to feel rather awkward. I used to feel hesitation through having so much of devotion from them. But when I would object they would say— "Why do you object? We donot worship or show devotion to you, we worship and show devotion to our 'mother'." Hearing this my mind used to calm down. Manasa Devi, whose picture is set up in our house, is worshipped daily. They have put by the side of that picture a photo of mine also in trance condition. When I objected seeing the same they would say— "Why do you object to that? We have not put up your photo, that is our mother's photo." Then I also used to do obeisance to that photo and would obtain peace.

"Ma, previously when people used to call me a characterless woman, a prostitute. I used to be hurt; now I donot feel. I think let people speak ill of me, through that my ego will be destroyed."

Ma— (To us) See, what a nice attitude.

The songs which are composed by Amiya bala's brother, out of the same her devotees sang 2/3 songs. Ma admired the composition of those songs and remarked— "They are so nice because these have been composed out of emotion."

It was past 10 A.M. while talking in this manner. Swami Saswatanandaji began reading the Upanishad in the "Nam Ghar". That continued till 11.00. To-day was only the introduction. Main portion will start from tomorrow.

After the reading (*path*) was over two of the daughters of Gopal dada sang a few

songs. Everyone was very much pleased to hear them. The English rendering of the first one is like this :

In the midst of what have been received (O lord), I call you.
Haven't the strength that leaving all can I go to you,

Come to my broken home,
Come my sick body,
Come to my worldly delusion,
The real good is not.

Bring along with you (O Lord)
To go to Your abode.

Come in the midst of my penury,
Come in the midst of sorrow and shame,
Come in the midst of my futile deeds,

To make me fruitful.
Bring along with you (O Lord)
To return to Your abode.

Ever awake are You. (O Lord),
Know not how to proceed
In the midst of my unreal dreams.
So I call Thee

Come (O Lord) catching my hands
To go to Your abode.

To take me to the formless,
Be you the Charioteer of the Chariot of forms
Be You the Pilot of the ship of the *gunas*.

Come (O Lord) catching my hands
To go to Your abode."

In the afternoon from 5 P.M. to 7 P.M. Gopal dada read from the Gita. The discourse was very nice. He is not only a good speaker, but his power of explaining is also unusual. Many people heard his discourse with attention and the number of his listeners increased day by day.

[To continue]

*

ON MA ANANDAMAYEE

[Continued from before]

—M. M. Pd. Gopinath Kaviraj

(b) *Kheyāla* (खयाल) : It is also very difficult to render correctly and in terms intelligible to the average reader the exact significance of the expression *Kheyāla* used often by Mother in Her discourses. Ordinarily it means a sudden and unexpected psychic emergence, be it desire, will, attention, memory or even knowledge without any adequate causal antecedent behind to account for its origin. There is thus an element of spontaneity in the act. It might thus seem to be analogous to the playful vagaries and caprices of an eccentric and non-purposive mentality. The word is in popular use. Mother has borrowed it and used it in Her own sense, enriching it with Her own associations.

Why One becomes many, why the primal Unity, Being and Power, divides itself into infinite varieties in creation, why the subject itself becomes the object of its own action, or why the Ineffable splits itself up into subject and object is a mystery which no man can dare to unravel. All that we can say is that it is due to an act of the ultimate One which is named *kheyāla* by Mother and is variously named by various thinkers. By some it is called the Lord's *Svabhāva*, for the One Being free from desires cannot have any desire: (देवस्यैव स्वभावोऽयमाप्यकामस्य का स्पृहा) By others it is called *krīḍā* (play) (क्रीडतो बालकस्यैव क्रीडां तस्य निशामय) or *līlā* (लोकवत्तु लीलाकैवल्यम्). By others still it is called Will (इच्छा) emanating from the overflow of Bliss (आनन्द) on the white screen of Eternal Consciousness (चित्) and followed by creative action (क्रिया). It is called the Divine Word or Logos. It is in fact the Will-to-become where in reality there is neither any will nor any becoming. It is called by different names in different systems of thought. The expression *kheyāla* as used by Mother covers all these senses.

We have spoken of the Supreme Reality, the Ultimate One as Mother refers to it, and of the expression of its outgoing inner act in the form of what She describes as *kheyāla*. Divine Power is really inscrutable— it is one and yet embraces an infinite range, each being associated with a function appropriate to it.

But we should remember the general truth that behind the outer manifestation each power are latent within each. This is as true in the centre as in every sphere of the

manifestation. Still, however, we should confine ourselves, in all schemes of intellectual analysis, to the basic powers of the Divine Reality. The following lines describing the working of some of the central powers may be of some use for a clearer understanding of the empirical side of Divine Mind. There are, if we may say so, different centres of Being and Consciousness in the Divine Self, and corresponding to these there are different centres in man. So long as a man is ego-centric, his actions which follow from his individual will constitute *karma*, the consequence of which in the form of pleasure and pain he has to reap in life. As he believes himself to be the doer of the action independently of Divine initiative, he is affected by its consequences. If he could realize truly that he had no power of his own and that even his will did not really belong to him but formed an expression of the Divine Will, he would get rid of the moral responsibility. It would be the beginning of Wisdom when a man could see the working of a general Will behind all phenomena in man and nature. Going deeper down along the line he would find that there is no will left in him —no, not even a shadow of it. He then finds no will in the Divine Consciousness as well, for he cannot find in God what he is unable to find in himself. Evidently it refers to a centre in God beyond will—a centre in which will is absent but from which will in the lower centre springs. This centre is the inner Divine *Śakti* from which Will, Knowledge and Action issue forth in separate streams—it is the centre of *Ananda* or Divine Bliss, Love. Behind *Ananda* is the uncoloured *Chit* or Supernal Light where even Joy transcends itself through self-obliteration. This is the Supreme Divine Power co-related and co-eternal with the Supreme Divine Essence in a sort of undifferentiated oneness. All contradictions and conflicts lose their strength of opposition and become one with the One.

The divine power of action (*kriyā*) is *māyā* controlled by *Īśvara*. The world as we know it in its lower material aspect is a product of *māyā* and is under *Īśvara* who, as its moral governor, is responsible for the maintenance of righteousness and justice. The principle of Justice called *niyati* as a natural and moral law operates in this world and is inviolable. Man being ignorant and ego-centred sows seeds of *karma*, the fruits of which are awarded by *Īśvara* in strict conformity to the principle of justice. It is asserted by some that the *karma* laws are in the ultimate analysis explicable as the dictates of an inscrutable Will in the Divine Centre of that name. For God is law. It was in this sense that *Dharma* used to be identified with the Buddha and *Guru Vakya* is identified with the Guru and Word of God with God.

This Will is of the nature of the general Will and has no special or individual reference. A man who has the insight to see behind his own will has the privilege of discovering in the Divine Will hidden spring of the Cosmic Laws which regulate

individual existence. He sees clearly that like the general Will special Will also has its place in the centre. Looked at from this view-point God would appear to him as love (*prema*) and compassion (*mahākaruṇā*), which is the fulfilment of Law. If it is true that Law prescribes penalty for its transgression, that any offence is bound to be visited with punishment in proportion to its gravity to meet the demands of justice in nature, it is also true that Love condones, makes amends, forgives and atones. There is no conflict between the two—the special Will or Love when it is exercised simply supplements the general Will expressed in Law. Both are forms of *iccha*. The overflowing qualities of Love and Grace are not in any way incompatible with the evenness of judicial outlook. For does not Śrī Kṛṣṇa say in the Gītā that even in the midst of his evenness and impartiality there is a sort of hidden partiality towards those who love him—

समोऽहं सर्वभूतेषु न मे द्वेष्योऽस्ति न प्रियः।
ये तु भजन्ति मां भक्त्या भयि ते तेषु चाप्यहम्॥

Between Will and Action is to be found the place of Knowledge, both intuitive and rational. This is judgment, for action follows judgment, which is the function of knowledge as a power. In other words the special Will is in the inmost Centre where from Love and Grace flow out; and general Will functions as the judicial and the executive. With Knowledge it is concerned with judgment and with Action it is concerned with its execution. This is how the world administration is being carried on.

Beyond Special Will is the Centre where there is no longer any will at all. The entire creation is there in total abeyance. Creation begins with will and ends with its cessation both in the individual and in the cosmos. The cessation of will opens out into the centre within the Divine Consciousness where one enjoys the bliss of communion with the Self, for what the mystics call 'spiritual marriage', generally form the view-point of a basically dualistic Self is a reflection of Self-delight of God. This

* We all know that some *Vaiṣṇava* philosophers of the Mediaeval Ages used to distinguish between different aspects of Divine Unity. Thus for instance *Svayam Bhagavān* and *Bhagavān* on one hand and *Bhagavān* and *Paramātmā* on the other are distinguished. There is no functioning of *Māyā* and *Tatasthu Śaktis* (Extrinsic and Neutral Divine powers associated with the manifestation of the soul and with the creation of the world) within the central domain of *Svayam Bhagavān* (God in Himself) or even of *Bhagavān* (God), where the intrinsic Divine Powers consisting of *Sandhinī*, *Samvit* and *Hlādinī* is connected with the triple aspects of Supreme Godhead (viz. Being, Consciousness and Bliss) alone prevail. But while the latter (*Bhagavān*) represents mainly the Majesty (महत्) and Compassion (करुण) of the Lord, the former (*Svayam Bhagavān*) adds to them His Beauty and Love (सौन्दर्य) and (प्रेम). For this reason *Goloka*, the Abode of the former, is distinguished from *Vaikuṇṭha*, the Abode of the latter. Both are

state is free from all outgoing urges and is self-contained. On the background of this *Ananda* there is the all-expansive *Chit* infinite in extension, continuous, self-revealed, unitary and self-sufficient. These two are expressions of the Divine Power which is always in undivided union with the Godhead.

Now God in His Essence is above all activity, but His Power is always bubbling with activities, though it is also true that somewhere in the Beyond, God and his Power are absolutely One.

What Mother calls *kheyala* is really an upsurge of Will in a particular direction which is undoubtedly free and not indicated in the plan of things—it is usually connected with the domain of special Will rather than general Will. No law governs this region and there is no interruption in its freedom of activity. Even pre-destination which takes into consideration the triple flow of time-current is not an appropriate word for an urge which knows nothing but the Eternal Present. There is no consideration of an outside factor—*karma* (merits and demerits) or anything of the sort has no meaning there. It is also difficult to say whether it is intellectual or volitional. It has all the freshness of a playful and apparently unpurposive act holding within itself incomprehensible possibilities.

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Heaven proper in its highest form, *Goloka*, though higher than *Vaikuṇṭha*, is centrally situated and is the most secret region resembling the earth minus its defects. Similarly the Lord of *Vaikuṇṭha* is the Lord proper, being exclusively divine in character, while the Lord of *Goloka* is human and hides His highest divinity within humanity. Even in *Goloka* the most secret centre is the *Vrindāvana* where humanity and love alone have their play. The Lord of *Goloka* is *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* as Divine Man and the Beloved in *Vrindavana* is *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* as man *par excellence*.

In the same way there is a distinction between *Bhagavān* and *Paramātmā*, because *Bhagavan* as such has nothing to do with *māyā* and *tataḥśā Śaktis*, while *Paramātmā* is the controller of both, as a result of which the worlds and the souls come out into light and begin to function. The Intrinsic Power is there too, for without it the souls or the spiritual monads could not have been manifested and the *ikṣvāpa* of *Paramātmā* which disturbs the equilibrium of *māyā* could not have been effected. The subsequent history of creation down to the formation of earth and of individual human beings is concerned with the four hypostases of *Paramātmā*, viz. the four so-called *Vyūhas*. The world administration in all its phases including the making and enforcement of Law is entrusted to them. Lower Grace leading to *Kaivalya* (freedom from *māyā*) and higher Grace leading to admission into the higher world of *Narayana* (*Vaikuṇṭha*) or of *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* (*Goloka* and *Vrindavana*) flow from the respective sources above the *Vyūhas*. All these plays are due to the action of *Śakti* or the Divine Power. *Brahman*, however, in which power is not manifest, stands in its eternity and self-centred aloofness as the silent witness at it were of all these plays. Really it cannot properly be described as the witness also, though it is self-luminous.

MOTHER — A SYMBOL OF HIGHER LIFE FOR MAN

—Prof. G.C. Dasgupta

[One]

Q.—In what part of the body is the heart-centre located?

Ma—Is there any place in the body where it is not? Think of a tree—from the roots right up to the leaves—all was in one seed. Is there any spot in the tree from where a branch cannot shoot forth and put forth flowers and seeds? The seed that you sow in the soil, lies everywhere in the grown-up tree potentially.

Q.—There are centres of sight and hearing in the body. Is there not any spiritual centre where God reveals Himself?

Ma—Just as in the tree there are centres of circulation, of rest and of expression, such centres are everywhere in the body.

Q.—Does not the word 'centre' normally mean the middle of something?

Ma—Let it be in the middle then. (laughs). Wherever God reveals Himself—that is the heart. The heart is one and many at the same time. One says, "Here is my heart"; another says "There it is". But what is called 'heart' is one.

Q.—The *Shastras* tell us where the heart lies.

Ma—Pitajee, you have not taught your daughter *Shastras*. The location of the heart is at one place. When you say middle, it may mean different spots to different persons. According to popular belief it lies in one's breast.*

Q.—When the heart fails, is it not all over with the man?

Ma—The heart that fails and the heart centre are different things. The point from where the action of the physical organ originates is its centre. But everywhere in the tree you find the potential seed. From this standpoint the heart is everywhere : One expanding into Infinity, Infinity condensing into One. The point from where 'life unfolds' is your heart.

Q.—How does the seed come into being?

*. Note the difference between the physical organ called heart (हृदयन्त्र) and the heartcentre (हृत्सर्म).

Ma—It is He expressing Himself as seed. There is no seed without Him.

Q.—In the Srimad *Bhagavata* what is the secret of His *Leela*? Why does He enter into *Leela*?

Ma—In all activities—these questions crop up : Whence? How? What? Why? To solve this riddle what have you to do? When you observe a thing directly with your eyes, your query ceases to disturb you. To have Direct Vision of the Divine you are asked to read the *Bhagavata*. One who is ignorant, has no question to ask; on the other hand one who has reached the goal has no question to disturb his mental poise. What is the *Bhagavata*? *Bhagavan* (भगवान्) and His Expression—(भागवत) they are one and the same. All the expressions of His *Leela*, in forms and attributes, are in the *Bhagavata*.

Q.—Why did He express Himself as He did in His *Rasa Leela*? Does it not minimise His dignity?

Ma—This body has no personal opinion to offer. *Bhagavan* played with Himself in these *Leelas*. Some say it is His *Maya* or power of illusion. He splits Himself into two. One cannot play with oneself. There must be two or more. So He divides Himself into these forms to intensify His Divine enjoyment of the Game of Union, Separation and Re-union. His counterpart in the game is His own *Swarupa* — *Sakti* or *Maya Sakti* which is ever present in Him and under His control. It is said that during the *Leela* of Rama the *Rishis* desired to enjoy union with Him. But He promised such union when He would re-incarnate as Krishna. All are the creative activities of God; thus He delights to play with Himself. He has absolute power to do what He pleases. All are His own images.

Q.—At one place in the *Geeta* (गीता) we are asked to engage in *Karma*, or perform ceremonial rites, and at another place to give up *Karma*. How are we to reconcile these two contradictory injunctions?

Ma—Judge for yourself at what stage you are, when to practise sacrificial rites and when to give them up throwing yourself wholly unto His mercy. These are stages with their appropriate duties and responsibilities. If you are asked to rely absolutely upon Him, is it possible for you to do it all at once? You have to train your mind and body by constant practice and to purify yourself by spiritual exercises. Read the *Geeta* every day. You will find God revealing Himself through His Words recorded there. A doubt may arise in your mind, "How can words reveal Him"? You know before

the *Geeta* is read, the book has to be worshipped. By book, His words and their import are meant.

"As you continue to practise day after day you will gradually reach a stage when absolute reliance on God will be your final achievement; there is none higher than that.

"This body tells you again,— "Read the *Geeta* every day and do some spiritual exercise, you will find answers to your queries revealing themselves in your mind. If your desire to know Him is sincere and earnest and comes directly from the heart, the solution must come. It is inevitable.

"Without steady concentration on one aim no real result can be achieved. The word *Ekagra* (एकग्र), one-pointed-ness' is a combination of two words, *Eka* (एक) one and *Agra* (अग्र) pointedness. Our mind is the swiftest thing in creation. Let the mind move at its own speed constantly towards the One Aim, which is God. He will reveal Himself. As long as He is not revealed through His words in the *Geeta*, never give up practice of reading sacred texts".

Q.—Living in the meshes of *Maya*, how can one secure one's deliverance?

Ma—Suppose you are asked to convert a forest into a bare plain. What will you do? You must yourself be in the jungle and start cutting down the trees one after another. To whom does *Maya* belong? It is His miracle—making power. Like Him, She too has no beginning. But there is a way out. Just as you cut your way out through the woods, strive on with the work of forest clearing; the forest will become an open plain. When your utensils are scrubbed they shine with their own lustre. Remove the coat of dirt that hides their brightness and their surface will shine with their own lustre.

Be in the company of holy men as suggested by your Guru. Always bear in mind—all names of God are His Names, all forms of life and matter are His Forms, all virtues are His Radiations. Let the whole of your being be possessed by this thought—"How shall I be free from *Maya*, what path will lead me out?" Constant meditation on Him will enable you to become free from *Maya**. Your sole effort must be to keep Him in mind. Remember—

All talks of love and light on God,
Are the ways that lead to thee Lord.
Other talks are but useless, vain noise,
They cause pain and loss of thy poise.†

*. Says the *Geeta*, Chapter VII, verse 14-मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते।

†. Mother always says :

हरिकथा ही कथा, और सब वृथा व्यथा।

[Two]

Another extract from the same diary, when translated, runs thus : —

Kashidham, 27-9-1950.

Q.—What is the meaning of 'the Vision of God' (भगवद्दर्शन)?

Ma—It is one where the dual phase of vision and non-vision does not arise.

Q.—Which is the true vision— the vision of God of the man who has known Brahman, or of the *Paramātmā* by the *Yogi* or of His *Leela* by the *Bhakta* (devotee)?

Ma—Vision of God includes all. It produces some result in some shape. You may have a vision in a dream or in your waking hours. Or when you have a vision of God, the idea of the Master and the servant, of the whole and its part or of one all-pervading Self (आत्मा) may arise.

Q.—When there is conversation during the vision between the devotee and his master, is not the sense of oneness lacking there?

Ma—In the *Leela*, there is indeed conversation. Here the Master converses with Himself. If it be not His *Leela*, there must exist the idea of "Give" and "Take" separately, or of "Knowledge" and "Ignorance". The vision in which there is no such idea of giving and taking is rare indeed.

Each vision produces some result. In a real vision the immediate result is the destruction of the veil of *Maya*. When it is removed God stands revealed. All spiritual exercise are for the removal of this veil. But by what special work of Thine such vision would be possible, no one can predict. It may be a slow, gradual process or it may be a sudden flash—it is all His Grace. If we could have His vision as a result of any particular action on our part, He would come under that limitation. But He has no limitation whatsoever. He is ever free. All our effort is intended only to lift the veil of *Maya*. The result depends on His Grace absolutely.

Q.— Is not the removal of the screen simultaneous with the vision? Does it wait for the veil to be lifted? We find when a straw is thrown into the fire it is burnt to ashes instantaneously.

Ma—His ways are of infinite variety, beyond all human calculation. In what way He would lift us to His bosom is known to Him alone.

"In some cases His vision depends on our gradual ascent through *Karma*, in other cases it may be immediate. Those *Gopinis* who could not join Sri Krishna during the

Rasa Leela, went straight to *Vaikuntha* from their own houses, merging all their thoughts and desires into Him. When the aim points directly to Him, humility, kindness to all, selflessness make their appearance in the devotee. The devotee comes to feel that His Ways are so various and so unexpected that he knows almost nothing. He becomes painfully conscious of the fact that he does not know himself even. But as he advances, the tone and tenor of his outlook changes; there is sweetness in all his ways. His whole nature becomes gracious, full of Love and Light Divine. He is himself full of joy and spreads happiness wherever he happens to be. His speech, his looks, the movements of his body, all awaken the thought of the Divine.

"Two types of devotees emerge at this stage—one in whom the ego functions, the other in whom humility dominates. The former may have a vision of Divine Light, may hear messages from above and be full of *Anandam* (bliss); he may feel great delight in spiritual discussions in which his ego flares up at times in the heat of the argument. Sometimes the ego lurks within, though there is a look of polish and humility in his external manners. The path of such a devotee is often strewn with danger. The other one, with a strong spirit of humility dominating in the core of his self, has a safe passage through life. In the one the egoistic impulse is strong while in the other humility dissolves the ego. In the former case the devotee calls out "I am That". Here the two dual entities, "I" and "That" remain intact. The devotee here is certainly on the path, but the "I" blocks his way and will make him halt at places. Here lies a threat against his progress, as the "I" is identified with the physical body. This is very subtle and difficult to comprehend.

Q.—Between the "I" of "I am Brahman" (अहं ब्रह्मास्मि) and the "I" of the devotee where is the point of contact?

Ma—Where the *Sat* (Pure Being) reveals Himself, the two become one and the same, the screen in-between being pierced. But the movement of the "I" towards "That" continues and often misses that repose of being firm on the Divine Ground.

"Just listen to a real incident. A young girl, aged about 17, approached me. From her very early age she had a strong spiritual bent of mind. She had been initiated by a Guru who had a very wide circle of devoted disciples. After her initiation (दीक्षा) by the said Guru, she was so deeply absorbed in *Japa* (जप) and meditation (ध्यान) that she hardly had time to have her food and drink. She was of spotless purity.

"One day her Gururji recited a verse from the *Geeta*, saying, "I am *Atma* and I am Sri Krishna too. Just as the Gopis lived with Sri Krishna you must come and live with

me. The Gopi-women dedicated their body, wealth and mind to Sri Krishna; if you do not do likewise, your accepting me as your Guru is absolutely futile". This surprised the girl. She was in a fix. She said with all humility and innocence,—“I can't follow. What do you mean, Guruji? Then the Guruji began to worship every part of her body putting marks thereon. She said to her Guruji, “I fail to understand what you aim at by such worship”. Then the Guru blurted out—“Ah, poor girl, everything you possess is now mine. We are both one in Sri Krishna”. At this the girl bolted away, disturbed by conflicting ideas. She came to this body and gave a detailed account of all that had happened showing the marks on her body impressed by the Guru. But the girl was of spotless purity. Her mind was absorbed in *Japa*; she was having visions of her *Ishta* (इष्ट). At this crisis of her life she sought my advice.

This body told her, “Wash away all the marks on your body imprinted by your Guru. Turn the direction of your mind. Stop thinking, ‘I am *Atma*, I am Sri Krishna’. The girl was as pure as a fresh-blown flower at dawn. She said, “I shall give him up, Mother. But what should I do with the *Mantra*? It is the name of God. Can there be any taint or sin attached to it?

This body said—No. Go ahead with the *Mantra*. From now on, look upon Sri Krishnaji as your Guru and not the one you had.”

Here the question arises—Was it proper for the girl to cease thinking, —“I am *Ātmā*, I am Sri Krishna”?

Q.—Mother, will it not be sinful to violate Guru's orders and to snap up the tie between the Guru and the disciple?

Ma—This body tells you, in this case there was no Guru. If there had been, things would not have taken such a turn. Just listen again. From one point of view the girl was the Guru; she served him with food and drink and clothes and did selfless personal service in various ways. But when the Guru asked his daughter (disciple) to live with him, the relationship between father and daughter, between the Guru and the disciple was washed off clean. Obedience in this case would amount to starting life as a wife for an unmarried girl. Can it be helpful towards the realisation of God?

“The path is narrow, as sharp as the razor's edge and perilous in the extreme. The idea “I am *Atma*, I am Krishna—ever pure and free, having no taint of worldly desire”—is a great concept. If you can choose this trend of thought and follow it up vigorously, it may help you to rip open the veil of *māyā*, provided He wills it. But to live a life of pure detachment from all the needs of the body, from all desires and

longings of the mind, all your actions and thoughts need be directed to Him. Always keep alive the sense of discrimination (विचार). Reflect thus : "I feel some joy here, but is it of the abiding type called *Atmananda*, the bliss of the Self?" There must be keen discrimination between which is fleeting and that which is abiding for ever. While eating or drinking, waking or sleeping, the compass of your mind must always be pointing to God. "What does not lead to Him is a snare to me and it must be shunned by all means in my power",—this should be your firm resolve. Therefore, it is necessary to take a vow to observe silence and self-control, to pray to God for a fixed period, to serve the weak and the poor or to fast or ask for alms at a fixed time every day, every week or every month throughout the year. Always think about the concept that the Guru has given you,—I am That (अमि तो एइ). While walking, moving about, working or resting, always seek refuge in That. You must read those topics which will develop self-introspection, insight into the realities of life; constantly seize opportunities conducive to that end. In all your thoughts and outward actions your sole aim must be to stick to Him steadily at all times.

Q.—Should we not accept the word of the Guru without any critical thought?

Ma—Where the Guru gives *Mantra* and desires to live with an unmarried girl disciple, he is not a Guru at all.

[To continue]

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DESECRATION AND CONSECRATION OF LIFE

—K. S. Ramaswami Sastri

In his volume on *Personality*, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore reveals two precious truths which the complexities and miseries of life are likely to screen from our view. The first about the difference between an animal and a man. The animal's knowledge is limited by its need of food and its love is limited to its offspring. But man seeks knowledge for the sake of knowledge and he seeks to widen the bounds of his love beyond the narrow circle of the family life. His science and philosophy thrive upon his passion for surplus knowledge, and his social, economic, political life as well as his culture, ethics, religion and art are based upon his ever-enlarged fund of altruism i.e. goodness for the sake of goodness, upon his love of beauty for its own sake and upon his love of God as the supreme ideal of life. "Man's civilisation is built upon his surplus."

The second truth urged by Tagore is that inspite of man's transcending the limitations of the animal he has not attained to peace and happiness because of his love of domination and his fighting propensities. Dr. Tagore says: "At the present stage of history civilisation is almost exclusively masculine, a civilisation of power, in which woman has been thrust aside in the shade. Therefore it has lost its balance and is moving by hopping from war to war. Its motive forces are the forces of destruction, and its ceremonials are carried through by an appalling number of human sacrifices. This one-sided civilisation is crashing along a series of catastrophies at a tremendous speed because of its one-sidedness."

Dr. Tagore says that all this desecration of life can be checked and turned into the consecration of life only if "woman steps in and imparts her life-rhythm to the reckless movement of power." (Page 172) Man is likely to be sucked into the whirlpools of power unless some kind and angelic hand takes hold of him and saves him. Man, despite his progress beyond the limitations of animal life, has not known how to complete his work by substituting the angel for the animal in him. That is why the task of the consecration of life should be taken up by woman. Dr. Tagore says: "For woman's function is the passive function of the soil, which not only helps the tree to grow but keeps its growth within limits. The tree must have life's adventure and send

up and spread out its branches on all sides, but all its deeper bonds of relation are hidden and held firm in the soil and this helps it to live. Our civilisation must also have its passive element, broad and deep and stable. It must not be mere growth, but harmony of growth.... Woman is endowed with the passive qualities of chastity, modesty, devotion and the capacity for self sacrifice in a greater measure than man is. It is this passive quality in nature which turns its monster forces into perfect creations of beauty—taming the wild elements into the delicacy of tenderness fit for the service of life."

It is thus clear that it is the woman who has to tame the assertive and adventurous passions of man, bring in the notes of peace and amity and concord and affirm the supreme importance of the spiritual values in life. Dr. Tagore says: "Man has to do his duty in a world of his own where he is always creating power and wealth and organisations of different kinds. But God has sent woman to love the world which is a world of ordinary things and events. In God's world women have their magic wands everywhere, which keep their hearts awake—and these are not the golden wands of wealth nor the iron rods of power."

Ma Anandamayee stands for this magic wand of inner purity and love of all beings and devotion to God. Man is now enmeshed in his organisations of power and is becoming less and less conscious of the divine worth and value of the individual and of what Dr. Tagore describes as "the deeper spiritual necessity of sympathy and love."... The civilisation of competing commerce and fighting powers must also make room for that stage of perfection whose power lies deep in beauty and beneficence.... The next civilisation, it is hoped, will be based not merely upon economical and political competition and exploitation but upon world-wide spiritual co-operation; upon spiritual ideals of reciprocity and not upon economic ideals of efficiency. And then women will have their true place.... Woman can bring her fresh mind and all her power of sympathy to this new task of building up a spiritual civilisation, if she will be conscious about her responsibilities."

Ma Anandamayee is the symbol, the shrine and the creator of such a new spiritual civilisation. On her shines:

"The light that never was on sea or land
The consecration and the poet's dream."

The *Ananda Rasa* and the *Ananda Jyoti* of God shine in her and through her quicken and kindle the *Ananda Rasa* and the *Ananda Jyoti* in all personalities.

The fact is that the Eternal Feminine is more firmly *rooted in dharma* and devotion than the Eternal Masculine. Man who belongs to the stronger and sterner sex has the defects of his virtues. His very superiority in strength, skill and intellect is the source of his spiritual peril. That is why the well-known story about the glory of *Srimad Bhāgawata (Bhāgawata Māhātmya)* in the *Padma Purāna* emphasises the fact that wisdom (*Jnana*) and renunciation (*Vairūgya*) are the sons of *Bhakti* (Devotion), suggesting thereby that mere intellect, unilluminated by devotion, and mere renunciation, unsweetened by the love of God, may lead to sheer egotism and superiority complex and may develop into terrible spiritual snares and perils. We must realise that the earthly life is but an inn and not our home. A famous verse in the *Bhāgawata* says: "A man of cleansed soul will never let go his clasp of Sri Krishna's feet and will be liberated from all sorrows and sufferings, just like a traveller wandering from place to place feels composure and peace and rest and bliss on reaching home."

श्रीतात्मा पुरुषः कृष्णपादमूलं न मुञ्चति।
मुक्तसर्वपरिव्लेशः पान्थः स्वशरणं यथा॥

It is noteworthy that in Tamil language and literature *Moksha* or Spiritual Liberation is called *Veedu* (Home). Sri Mata Anandamayee says equally well: "How much longer will you reside in inns and journey on a road that leads astray and is beset with dangers and adversity? It is imperative to find one's own Path, to start out on the pilgrimage to one's Self to renounce the merely pleasurable and adopt what is for one's highest good." The *Katha Upanishad* contrasts the good (*sreyas*) with what is merely pleasant (*preyas*) and says that he who pursues the path of hedonistic pleasure will lose *Yoga Kshema* (spiritual order and progress and perfection). *Bhagawan* Sri Krishna points out in Chapter VI of the *Bhagawad Gita* that *Kāma* and *Krodha* and *Lobha* (lust and anger and greed) are the three doors to hell and that only when we shut those doors and turn away from them we can achieve the highest good.

That is why Sri Mataji insists again and again that we must achieve a proper revaluation of life. The more we crave for pleasures the more shall we miss the supreme values of life. *Sanga* (attachment) will push us on the downward course while *Asanga* (detachment) will lead us on the upward course. In Chapter II of the *Gita* Sri Krishna teaches us that *Sanga* will lead to *Kāma* (egotistical desire), which will lead to *Krodha* (anger and hatred), which will lead to delusion, which will lead to the loss of the memory of the higher life. Such loss of memory will ruin the higher intellect and bring about our total degradation. We can attain *Shānti* (peace) and *Ānanda* (bliss) only by engaging in *Japa*, meditation, devotion etc. These activities will bring about inner transformation. If you wish to change the environment for the better and bring a new heaven on earth, you must convert man the brute into man the angel. As the poet says :

"Move upward working out the beast,
And let the apes and tigers die."

The ape is in us; so also is the angel in us. We must suppress the ape in us and express fully the angel. In Mataji the Divine shines brightly and beckons to us to express the Divine that shines in all.

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From the Ashtavakra Gita*

[#8 The Mind....]

*The mind desires this,
And grieves for that.
It embraces one thing,
And spurns another.
Now it feels anger,
Now happiness.
In this way you are bound.
But when the mind desires nothing
And grieves for nothing,
When it is without joy or anger
And, grasping nothing,
Turns nothing away.....
Then you are free.
When the mind is attracted
To anything it senses,
You are bound.
When there is no attraction,
You are free.
When there is no I,
You are free.
Where there is I,
You are bound.
Consider this.
It is easy.
Embrace nothing,
Turn nothing away.*

* Courtesy : Journal "PEACE"

MA ANANDAMAYEE— AN ILLUMINATION FOR THE AGE

—Prof. Jitesh Chandra Guha

The times are out of joint. The world is in turmoil. Values are fast losing their validity. Eternal virtues are being challenged. Old moorings are giving way. Ancient traditions are being thrown on the scrap-heap. The whole atmosphere is surcharged with a spirit of unbelief and disbelief. People are losing their equilibrium. When we talk of 'one world', one universal humanity, one world-government, we have plenty of mental reservations and parochial narrownesses. Hypocrisy is writ large on all such projects or even ideas of one family, of all nations. When the heart remains unchastened and nailed to its prejudices and passions, it cannot reach out to embrace the wider world.

Man's mind has just begun to run in a groove different from the worn out, out-moded one. It is coming to think and contemplate that the paraphernalia of the modern civilization does not afford him the peace and the tranquillity that it hankers after. So there is thus a growing disillusionment. Even the foremost scientists of the West are feeling a sense of ennui and frustration as they find that their inventions and discoveries, instead of leading mankind to enlightenment, are sending it deep down into the abyss of annihilation.

Man's mind has begun to hunger and thirst for such Beings as will heal and bless humanity by their benediction, benignity. One such Being in Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee who, as she moves from place to place, hamlet to hamlet, all over our sub-continent, spreads her holy and exhilarating influence all round, shunning irreligion, superstition, corruption and all that is unholy, all that is of the earth earthly.

Her serene effulgence and divine smile soothes the world-wearied, the sorrow-laden and the care-worn. In a pithy and epigrammatic sentence she resolves all doubts and solves all problems. She had no formal schooling, no regular and systematic initiation into the three R's, but like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, she speaks out immortal truths in homely garb and thus carries conviction even to doubting Thomases. Her sayings are not dogmatic dicta, they are transcripts from life. They register the intuitions of the perfected soul.

The fact that India possesses a deep underlying unity which transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, colour, language, dress, manners and sect, is countenanced by the fact that wherever the Mother goes or stays, she draws to her, as by a magnetism, various creeds and castes who bow down in prayerful obeisance to her all over the country. Her life is a living commentary on all that is the noblest and the best in all the religions of the world. She is an embodiment of all the past religious thoughts of India.

"The test of civilization", says Emerson, "is not the census, nor the size of cities, nor the crops; no, but the kind of men the country turns out". India, inspite of a thousand and one ills, her poverty and present-day degradation, can still stand this test, and stand it quite well. In the spectacle of the Mother we have a beatific-Vision, an ennobling Mystery, an uplifting Influence, that is creating gold out of base metal,—an Influence that augurs well for our country and for the benighted world. She is an Illumination throwing light upon one and all, here, and everywhere. May we deserve Her grace!

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Just Because You Are My God

—Saint Ignatius of Loyola

Oh, my God, I want to love you
Not that I might gain eternal heaven
Nor escape eternal hell
But, Lord, to love you just because
you are my God.

Grant me to give to you
And not to count the cost,
To fight for you
And not to mind the wounds,
To labour and to ask for no reward,
except the knowledge that I
serve my God.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

—Prof. Bireswar Ganguly

"In one salutation to thee my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet".

— Tagore's *Gitanjali*, 103.

Poet, philosopher, *rishi*, educationist, patriot, humanist and internationalist, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), who was the authentic spokesman of the soul of India, was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for the English version of 'Gitanjali,' a collection of devotional poems in 1913. The West hailed this slender collection of only 103 poems for its mystic message of peace and love on a war-torn and embittered world. Tagore wrote over a thousand poems and over two thousand songs of exquisite quality in Bengali, out of whom one hundred and one poems were translated into English and published in 1966 by the Tagore Commemorative Volume Society. In the introduction to this volume, Professor Humayun Kabir has rightly stated :

"Rabindranath Tagore is one of the outstanding literary figures of all times. In sheer quantity of work few writers can equal him. His writings include more than one thousand poems and two thousand songs in addition to a large number of short stories, novels, dramatic works and essays on religion, education, politics and literature. In a word, his interests embrace every subject which is of interest to man. In quality he has reached heights which have been trodden, and that too only rarely, by only the noblest among men. When one remembers the enormous range and extra-ordinary quality of his work; it is not surprising that his admirers should acclaim him as perhaps the greatest literary figure in history."

We shall make an humble attempt at discovering the underlying Vedantic philosophy of Tagore, as revealed in his voluminous prose and poetical writings.

Tagore, in his Hibbert Lectures (Oxford, September, 1930), begins his discourse on 'The Religion of Man' with a brief analysis of the course of evolution, as expounded in modern Biology, but links it wonderfully with the beautiful description of the emergence of man, as revealed in the ancient *Atharva Veda*. There are certain verses from the *Atharva Veda* in which the poet discusses his idea of Man, indicating some transcendental meaning that has been translated by Tagore as follows:

"Who was it that imparted form to man, gave him majesty, movement, manifestation and character, inspired him with wisdom, music and dancing? When his body was raised upwards he found also the oblique sides and all other directions in him— he who is the Person, the citadel of the Infinite Being.

Tasmād vai vidvān puruṣhamidaṁ brahmctī manyate.

Sanātanam enam āhur utadya syat punarnavah.

"And therefore the wise man knoweth this person as Brahma.

Ancient they call Him, and yet He is renewed even new to-day."

The above quotations express Tagore's faith in God as the Supreme Person, whose eternal but dynamic manifestation is Man. His theistic Vedanta accepts the reality of God, Man and Nature within the integral truth of Brahman. Thus he is a monist, a monotheist and *parināmvādi* (not Shankarite *vivarta vādi*) like the Vaiṣṇava Vedantists and the Śaiva Vedantists, who are both theists. He accepts the ideal of freedom and self-realization as the goal of human life.

The emergent evolution of man progressing towards creative freedom is expressed by the poet-philosopher as follows:

"Every true freedom that we may attain in any direction broadens our path of self-realization, which is in superseding the self. The unimaginative repetition of life within a safe restriction imposed by Nature may be good for the animal, but never for Man, who has the responsibility to outlive his life in order to live in truth.

And freedom in its process of creation gives rise to perpetual suggestions of something further than its obvious purpose. For freedom is for expressing the Infinite."

The poet-philosopher then discusses the efforts of the human race through centuries of religious development and comes to the conclusion that though there may be differences in detail and rituals, there is a common factor, running through the theology of all religions. "These religions differ in details and often in their moral significance, but they have a common tendency. In them men seek their own supreme value, which they call divine, in some personality anthropomorphic in character."

Tagore discusses the idea of God or the Infinite both from the *Māyāvādi*, negative view point and *Loccāvādi*, positive view point. In the ancient Indian Hindu Scripture, the universe is described as an egg (*Brahmānda*) and evolution as cyclical in character. That is to say "our world repeatedly comes to an end to begin its cycle once again. In other words, in the region of time and space infinity consists of ever-revolving finitude."

Rabīndranath is believer is the positive aspect of the infinite, which is *advaitam*,

in an absolute unity, which is also *ānandam* (joy absolute). He asserts, "It is not the magnitude of extension, but an intense quality of harmony which evokes in us the positive sense of the infinite in our joy, in our love. For *advaitam is ānandam*; the infinite one is infinite love..... But true spiritual realization is not through augmentation of possession in dimension or number. The truth that is infinite dwells in the ideal of unity which we find in the deeper relatedness. This truth of realization is not in space. It can only be realized in one's own inner spirit.... This infinite and eternal has to be known as One. *ākāśāt aja ātmā*—'this birthless spirit is beyond space. For it is *Purushah*, it is the 'Person.'

Then Tagore goes on to explore the meaning of Yoga, whose purpose is to effect union between the individual soul and the Supreme Person. "Union has its significance not in the realm to have, but in that of to be. To gain truth is to admit its separateness, but to be true is to become one with truth." It reflects the truth of the Upanishadic *mahavakyas*, '*Aham Brahmāsmi*' and '*Tat tvamasi*'. This union with the cosmic spirit cannot be attained through the mind. Rather "it is the object of Yoga to help us to transcend the limits built up by Mind. On the occasions when these are overcome, our inner self is filled with joy, which indicates that through such freedom we come into touch with the Reality that is an end in itself and therefore is bliss."

The Upanishad declares that '*Raso vaishah*', the infinite is joy or love itself. One who realizes the union with the infinite becomes blissful, joyful, full of pure love for all creatures. Tagore again refers to the Infinite, as a Person, *Purushah*, by knowing whom one realizes one's higher Self. This concept of the Supreme Person may be compared with *Purusha* of *Purusha Sukta* of *Rigveda* and *Purushottama Paramātmā* of the fifteenth chapter of *Bhagavad Gita*, to which Tagore has made several references.

In his '*Shantiniketan*' lecture on '*Haoa*', Tagore has categorically declared that he can not get *Brahma*, but he can definitely be *Brahma* and the only difference between the *Jivātmā* and *Brahma* is that *Brahma* is eternally *Brahma*, the infinite and absolute *Ānandam*, but the *Jivātmā* has to make efforts to become *Brahma*, which is his destiny and ultimate nature, just like the river which has to become the ocean after running its course of fruitful and useful life. He refers to Buddha's *brahmvihāra*, ideal of living in the infinite by doing selfless works which are akin to *nishkāma karma*, done by *Sthitaprajnas* of *Gita*. He calls the selfless worker the *Vishva Karma*, the world-worker, who is like the *Mahātmā*, the great soul. The prophets are also *Mahātmās*, Great Souls, World-workers, who taught mankind that Man the Eternal, Man the

Divine is a "Being who is the infinite in Man, the father, the friend, the lover, whose service must be realized through serving all mankind. For the God in Man depends upon man's service and man's love for his own love's fulfilment... *tena tyaktvā bhunjithā*, 'enjoy him through sacrifice'- the sacrifice that comes of love, *ma gridhah*, 'covet not', for greed diverts your mind to that illusion of materials away from that supreme value in you which you represent the *Parama Purusha*, the Supreme Person". Thus we see that all these references to *Atharva Veda* and *Ishopanishad*, vindicate Tagore's theistic monism, which is supported by *Vedāvedavāda* and *Leclavāda* and has maximum similarity with *Saiva Vedānta*.

Tagore refers to the evolution of man from the stage of the animal in his first lecture on Man, and states that 'the aspect of man which has surpassed the animal grows with its ideal. It is an aspiration for that which is not evident in his material world nor urgent for his physical life; it belongs to his universal self. In the *Rigveda* we find mention of this universal Being:

पादोऽस्य विश्वभूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि॥

"A quarter of Him is in the apparent world, the remainder subsists above in the form of immortality".

Then he gives an analogy of the human body, consisting of millions of cells, which though possessing their own individual life, have a deep direction towards the mystery or unity in the complete body. Had the cells self-consciousness, they would have been conscious of their separateness and at the same time of their identity with the whole body. This is an example of philosophic *Vedāvedavāda*, as propounded in the famous dictum of Gita, *Mānāvansho jīvaloke jīvabhūtāḥ sanātana*" "Man is an eternal part of Me (God)".

However, he proceeds further and declares in the third lecture on *Man* that the *jīva* is Brahman, "I am He," '*Aham Brahmasmi*' or '*Soham*'. He refers to the remarkable verse in *Bṛihadaranyak Upanishad*.

अथ योऽन्यां देवताम् उपासते अन्योऽसौ अन्योऽहम् अस्मीति,
न स वेद, यथा पशुरेवं स देवतानाम्।

'A person who worships God as exterior to himself does not know Him, he is like an animal belonging to the gods.'

"The statement may arouse angry remonstrance. Should man then worship his own self? Is it possible to offer oneself in self-devotion? Then the whole process of worship becomes a mere magnification of the ego. The truth is quite opposite. Glorification of ego is the prerogative even of the animals, but it is only man who can

realize *Bhūmā*, immensity, within his own soul as detached from his ego".

He corroborates this assertion by further quoting from the *Upanishad*:

य आत्मा अपहृतपाप्मां विजरो

विमृत्युर्विशेकोऽ विजिघत्सोऽपिपासः

सत्यकामः सत्यसंकल्पः सोऽन्वेष्टव्यः स विजिज्ञासितव्यः।

"The great soul who is within me, who is beyond age and death and sorrow, beyond hunger and thirst, He who is true in thought and action, Him we must seek, Him we must know'.

"This seeking and knowing Him is not seeking and knowing outside oneself. It is knowing through becoming, receiving through being true within."

He calls this great soul within, the *Antaryāmi*, the *Jivan Devatā*.

In his lecture on the vision of this indwelling spirit, he has stated as follows :

"To this Being I was responsible: for the creation in me is His as well as mine. It may be that it was the same creative mind that is shaping the universe to its eternal idea: but in me as a person it had one of its special centres of a personal relationship growing into a deepering consciousness.. It gave me a great joy to feel in my life detachment at the idea of a mystery of a meeting of the two in a creative comradeship. I felt that I had found my religion at last. the religion of Man, in which the infinite became defined in humanity and came close to me so as to need my love and co-operation." This idea found its expression in some of his poems addressed to what he called *Jivan devatā*, the Lord of life.

Jivan Devatā, as translated by the poet himself, runs as follows:

"Thou who art the innermost spirit of my being, art thou pleased, Lord of my Life?

For I gave to thee my cup

filled with all the pain and delight

that the crushed grapes of my heart had surrendered.

I wove with the rhythm of colours and songs

the cover for thy bed,

and with the molten gold of my desires

I fashioned playthings for thy passing hours.

I know not why thou chosest me for thy partner,

Lord of my life,

I see thine eyes gazing at the dark of my heart, Lord of my life.

But have my days come to their end at last,

Lord of my life,
 While my arms round thee grow limp
 My kisses losing their truth
 Then break up the meeting of this languid day.
 Renew the old in me in fresh forms of delight;
 and let the wedding come once again in a new ceremony of life."

The above poem hints at the joyful realization of union of *Jivātmanā* with *Paramātmā* on the lines of *madhur rasa* (ecstatic conjugal joy), as described in Gauriya (Bengal) Vaishnava Vedantic literature, which depicts *vedāveda vāda* in a poetic way.

The mystic poet is cocksure of his philosophical justification of his intuitive realization, when he says, "Let me assert my faith by saying that the world, consisting of what we call animate and inanimate things, has found its culmination in man its best expression. Man, as the creation represents the creator, and this is why of all creatures it has been possible for him to comprehend this world in his knowledge and in his feeling and in his imagination, to realize in his individual spirit a union with the Spirit that is everywhere."

Now let us consider briefly the method of *sādhana* for realizing this union between the human soul and God. Tagore's method of *sādhana* and its result is fully explained in his Harvard Lecture, on '*Sādhana (The Realisation of Life)*' 1916.

Referring to the ancient Indian ideal of perfection and its attainment Tagore lays emphasis on the fundamental unity of creation and says that it was the life-objective of the best men to realise the great harmony in feeling and in action. "With meditation and service, with a regulation of life, she cultivated her consciousness in such a way that everything had a spiritual meaning to her. The earth, water and light, fruits and flowers, to her were not merely physical phenomena to be turned to use and then left aside. They were necessary to her in the attainment of her ideal of perfection, as every note is necessary to the completeness of the symphony. India intuitively felt that the essential fact of this world has vital meaning for us."

Explaining the *mahāvākya* of *Chhāndogya Upanishad* viz. '*Tatvamast*' (Thou art that), Tagore states: "According to the Upanishads, the key to cosmic consciousness, to God-consciousness, is in the consciousness of the Soul. To know our soul apart from the self is the first step towards the realisation of the supreme deliverance. We must know with absolute certainty that essentially we are spirit. This we can do by winning mastery over self, by rising above all pride and greed and fear, by knowing that worldly losses and physical death take nothing away from the truth and the great-

ness of our soul".

However for winning the mastery over our lower egoistic soul to realise this higher unity, Tagore abhors the negative approach of '*neti neti*' and the *Sāṅkhya* method of *sādhana* of *sannyāsis* and prefers the yoga method of *sādhana* as mentioned in *Bhagavad Gita* (III-3 & V-2). He asserts, "I have already warned my hearers, and must once warn them against the idea that the teachers of India preached a renunciation of the world and of self which leads only to the blank emptiness of negation. Their aim was the realisation of the soul, or, in other words, gaining the world in perfect truth."

The above approach to *sādhana* is clearly reflected in Poem No. LXXIII(73) of Tagore's *Gitanjali*, which is actually the English translation of his Bengali poem, 'Mukti' in *Naivedya*. It runs as follows:

"Deliverance is not for me in renunciation,
 I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.
 Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine
 of various colours and fragrance,
 filling this earthen vessel to the brim.
 My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame
 and place them before the altar of thy temple.
 No, I will never shut the doors of my senses.
 The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.
 Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy,
 and all my desires ripen into fruits of love."

*

MOTHER IN SOUTH INDIA

From the Diary of Guru Priya Devi

(Continued from previous issue)

Tanjore, 9th November, 1952

We set out for Srirangam via Tanjore—visited the samadhi of the famous saint Sri Tyaga Raja. At Tanjore we went to several temples including that of Shiva, with its huge images.

Srirangam, 9th & 10th November, 1952

We then reached Srirangam where a disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi and a trusted worker of the Ashram joined us and with great efficiency looked after Mother and the rest of the party. In the afternoon we went to see the temples. Information about Mother's visit had as usual reached the temple authorities and so we were shown round with great care. We crossed gate after gate till we reached the inner temples of Ganesha, Kartika, Parvati and other deities. We then came to the temple of Srirangam. Those who have not actually seen the temples of South India can have no idea of the huge size of the images, nor of the profusion of gold, silver and valuable jewellery used for their decoration, particularly of 'Bhoga Murtis', which are the moveable images taken out in processions and worshipped on other ceremonial occasions. It was decided to have the daily *satsang* from 7 to 9 p.m. in the spacious compound of the temple. About a thousand persons had assembled. At the request of the people present Mother sang, "He Bhagawan" for some time. The audience seemed to appreciate the gathering very much although they could not understand the language.

The next day we went to see the image of Ganesha on the top of a hill accessible by 300 steps. A dandi was brought for Mother, but She preferred to walk all the way up and down though it was a fairly arduous climb. In the afternoon we went to the temple of Jambukeshwar Shiva. As soon as Mother approached the temple, music as usual began to play. An elephant slowly advanced to place a garland round Mother's neck, but as Mother stretched out Her hands, it put the garland into them instead. It also garlanded Sri Hari Babaji and Sri Avadhutaji in a similiar manner. The elephant followed Mother as She moved about in the temple. We then saw the temples of

Vishnu and Parvati. The four pillars in the temple were things of beauty with fine workmanship. They were said to have been built at a cost of lakhs of rupees and it took ten years to complete them.

As we were returning the elephant stepped forward rhythmically and saluted Mother lowering its head. Then it rolled its trunk upward and trumpeted loudly twice or thrice as if in joy. The Manager of the temple, we learnt, had taken measures to have the temple and its surroundings cleaned and decorated in preparation for Mother's visit.

We left for Rameshwaram the same night at 11-30 P.M. and reached there at about 7-30 A.M. on November 11th.

Rameshwaram, 11th to 14th November, 1952

Arrangements for Mother's stay had been made in the fine Dharmashala built by the Raja of Ramnad, near the famous temple of Rameshwar Shiva. At noon we all went to the temple and saw the Shiva Linga which is said to have been brought by Hanumana and also another one made by Sita. None but the priest of the temple was permitted to enter the sanctuary, so we had our darshan from a distance. We had brought Ganges water from Gaumukh to be offered to the deity. We handed it over to the priest who bathed the deity with it. The priest brought a gold plated Shiva Linga explaining that it was the original Linga of sand that had been made by Sita. Mother held it affectionately for a moment and we also touched it with our heads.

The story runs that Sri Rama Chandra wanted to build a Shiva temple after his victory over Ravana. Hanumana was asked to bring a Shiva Linga to be installed in it but as he was late in returning Sita improvised a Linga out of sand which Sri Rama Chandra worshipped. Later when Hanumana brought the Shiva Linga, this was also installed and worshipped, lest Hanumana should feel hurt.

In the afternoon Mother went for a stroll by the sea side. The next day, i.e. on the 12th, Sri Hari Babaji and Sri Avadhutaji went to Dhanuskodi to see the temple of Rama two miles away. According to the legend Rama bade farewell to his followers at that spot after his victory at Lanka and distributed gifts in order to purify Himself from the sin of killing Ravana, who was a Brahmin. We were to have gone to see the evening ceremonies at the temple which are reputed to be very impressive but owing to the indisposition of one of the mahatmas our visit was cancelled. At Dhanuskodi mahatmas and some others of our party went to the sea-side where the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal are said to meet. They returned at noon after a bath there. The railway line runs some distance into the sea, with the water on either side. It is said

that Sri Rama Chandra built His bridge across the sea at that spot and this is why the sea is so tranquil.

The 13th of November was Ekadashi. We made arrangements for offering a lakh of *bilwa* (Bael) leaves and special *bhoga* at the Shiva temple that day. Brahmins were also fed. We left for Madura on the 14th noon.

The Siddha-Baba episode

During Mother's stay at Rameshwaram She happened to refer to a peculiar incident, but asked us not to disclose it at the time. Later She added a few more details when talking about it from time to time. Shortly after our arrival at Rameshwaram, Sri Hari Babaji had suggested that we should visit the famous temple there at noon, later he however decided to go there in the afternoon. But Mother said that She would keep to the original plan and visit the temple at 12 O' clock as She had already given word to somebody to be there at that time and it was not possible to revoke that. It may be mentioned that ordinarily Mother is very particular in adhering to the programmes and changes suggested by the mahatmas. Sri Hari Babaji accompanied Mother to the temple. On Her returning Mother explained to Sri Hari Babaji why She could not fall in with his suggestion to change the hour of their visit. This is the substance of what we have been able to gather from Mother about this particular incident.

Shortly after Her arrival at Rameshwaram, Mother suddenly of her own accord climbed up the steps leading to the roof of the rest-house (*Dharmashala*) where we were staying. She said She would rest a while under a temporary structure there and asked us to leave her alone. Mother said that at that time someone appeared before Her and spoke to Her. While narrating this Mother observed, "This body often makes enquiries, although aware of everything; in this case also it put certain questions to the person." He then disclosed that he was one of the priests of Chidambaram, who had been practising *sadhana* at Rameshwaram for the last ten years, waiting for Mother's visit. He further said that he would visit the temple in Mother's company, for then alone his '*darshan*' would be complete and fruitful; he also said that he would accompany Mother to Dwarka.

It had been for his sake that Mother went to the temple at noon as originally decided. We also recalled seeing, on our way to the temple, a strange figure like that of a mad person, bare, save for a piece of loincloth and besmeared with ashes, moving along-side and sometimes before us in an unconcerned manner and standing before the temple with folded hands. We had paid no particular attention to him at the

time. Mother however observed the figure for a moment and then said to Herself, "A woman". On hearing this as I turned to look more closely, the person had vanished. We gathered from Mother that this was the priest but She did not care to state explicitly whether he had assumed this form or chosen the body of some actual person for his manifestation. Mother added a few more details subsequently. The priest had at first been engaged in the *sadhana* of "Sakti", then of the "Beeja" (mystic formula) of "Sakti", and after that of the Word as "Brahman", till he had attained Truth and "Siddhi" i.e. the goal of his *sadhana*. First it was 'Vishwa-Milan' or unification with the universe i.e. realisation that He was the universe, then 'Maha-Milan' or Supreme Unification, realisation of Oneness, complete identification and manifestation of the Self, the Absolute, till finally there was no question of the Absolute or the relative. This is the goal, the final consummation.

The priest, or as Mother called him now 'Siddha Baba', had declared his intention of accompanying Mother from Rameshwaram to Dwarka in the form of air. Once in the night, I heard Mother utter a word which sounded like one of the languages of that country. On my enquiry Mother said that She was having a few words with 'Siddha Baba', who sometimes chose to indicate in this way that he was following Mother.*

Mother said that when he had expressed his intention to accompany Her to Dwaraka, he had also happened to mention— "Full moon, Thursday." Mother had not paid much attention to these words, nor enquired when it would be full moon nor even suggested to reach Dwarka by that time, since, as She put it, "So far as this body is concerned, it is always the same happen what may." In due course, it would be afternoon of 31st of December. Suddenly Hari Babaji changed his mind and decided to leave for Dwaraka early next morning instead. On enquiry by Mother, we found it was full moon which would last till 10 A.M. the next day, i.e. 31st December. We left Porbundar at 5 A.M. and reached Dwaraka about 9 A.M. Unfortunately there our car missed the way but after some delay we managed to reach the temple of Sri Dwarkadhish at 9-30 A.M. We had our darshan while it was still full moon. When telling the story Mother commented on the strange coincidences and the manner in which everything happened spontaneously as required by the occasion.

The next day was a Thursday. A member of our party who had recently arrived from Calcutta desired to offer special 'Puja' and 'Bhoga' at the temple. We assembled

* Our readers, we hope, will forgive us if we anticipate the course of our story and relate a few more facts about *Siddha Baba* in order to round off the account about him—Ed.

early in the morning at the temple where Gita Path by the Brahmacharis and Kirtan had been organised. The deity was dressed in a set of new clothes and after the Puja, Brahmins, some Sadhus and the Brahmacharis were given a feast. In this way, again without anybody deliberately planning or realising it, everything came about as required to celebrate the *Maha-Milan*' of *Siddha Baba*.

A day or two after, Mother suddenly sent for one of us late at night and began to enquire about a piece of land which had been recently acquired in Vrindaban by our Ashram. She also mentioned about the '*Shiva-Linga*', which had been brought for installation at Hardwar at the temple founded by Raja Durga Singh of Solan. They had not been used and were now lying at the Benares Ashram. Mother enquired if it would be possible to instal at an early date this '*Shiva-Linga*' in a temple on the strip of land at Vrindaban. When we were at Dwarka, we visited some Shiva temples; its '*Linga*', we were told, had appeared spontaneously, immediately after the passing away of Sri Krishna and Balaram. Mother declared that sometimes things that had not yet happened on the material plane took place on a subtle non-material plane. I understood from this that the installation of the '*Shiva-Linga*' on the occasion of the '*Maha-Milan*' of *Siddha Baba* had already taken place on the subtler, non-material plane immediately after the event; the physical ceremony would follow in due course. The '*Linga*' thus installed would be known, Mother said, as *Siddheshwar Shiva* after the *Siddha Baba* of Chidambaram.

[To continue]

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RECOLLECTIONS

—Sri Ranju Banerjee

It is a well-known saying that *Darshan* of great *Mahatmas* and sages is a result of merit accumulated in many a former life. Also it is natural that we do not know deeds done in our past lives. In this life, I had the blessings and good fortune of coming in contact with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee and I am writing about that.

A *Khcyal* emanating from Sri Ma resulted in the performance of the great *Savitri Maha Yagna*. It lasted over a period of three years from 1947 to 1950 at *Kashi Dharm* of Sri Sri Ma. Many great sadhus, saints and brahmacharis had come from all over India to participate in the great *Yagna*.

It was on this occasion that I had the great and good fortune of seeing Sri Ma for the first time. It all happened quite unexpectedly. The imprints of that first visit are deeply engraved on the screen of my heart and mind.

The year was perhaps December, 1948 or January, 1949, when the following unforgettable event took place in my life. I was then in class VII. Our exams. were over. My parents along with me and my younger brother decided to visit Kashi and see places there. On arrival at Kashi (Varanasi now) my parents heard that a great *Savitri Maha Yagna* was being performed at Ma Anandamayee Ashram and that Sri Ma Herself was present there. On hearing this my parents lost no time. We all hurriedly got ready; father hired a boat which ferried us across the Ganga to Ma Anandamayee Ghat. From there, we stepped into the hall which is unfortunately no longer there. It has been swept away into the waters of the holy Ganga. As we entered the hall, we found that a Bhagavat Path was in progress. Sri Sri Ma was at the far end of the hall and was in a lying down posture. The hall was crowded with people. I was a little boy. I could not see Ma. I kept pressing upon my father to help me to see Mother. Finally, father lifted me up in his arms and pointed at the far end of the hall where Sri Ma was lying down. Ma in Her pure white sheet and garments appeared to me like a white lotus. I was unable to move my eyes from that pure and beautiful vision in front of me. Those thrilling moments of my first *darshan* of Mother still vibrate in my being.

Meanwhile, my younger brother was also tugging and pulling my father to lift him up too to have a view of Ma. So, father put me down and picked him up over his

shoulder to enable him to have a good view of Ma.

A while later, the Bhagavat Path got over and the *arati* began. As I watched the *arati* a question arose in my child-mind. I put it to my father. I asked him why the *arati* was performed in front of the *Shastriji* sitting on the dias, why not of Ma? At that young age, I did not know that the *arati* is performed to Lord Narayana in the form of the holy book 'Srimad Bhagavat'.

Arati ended, Sri Ma got up to go somewhere. The crowd of devotees swiftly moved to make a way for Mother to pass through. Mother had gone a few steps only when my brother, a child of six then, suddenly blocked Her passage. He bowed low in front of Ma, his forehead touching the dusty ground and spontaneously offered his *pranam* at Her feet. Embarrassed, my father tried to remove him from the way, but Sri Ma did not want to stop the child from paying his obeisance to Her. Mother kept looking at him most intently. It appears that Sri Ma was looking at the child's future -- that he would one day serve and look after the affairs of Ma's organisation. Other devotees also followed suit and offered their *pranams*. This done, Mother then climbed up a flight of steps with an amazing swiftness. Never again have I seen Mother climb up as fast as She did then.

From the hall, we moved up to the *Yagna Shala*. The *Yagna Shala* was resonant with the sound of the *Savitri Maha Mantra*. A large number of Pandits were chanting together the *Maha Mantra*. At the end of the *mantra*, they were offering ablutions into the sacred fire of the *Yagna*. The whole atmosphere seemed to belong to another world. Deeply moved and full of bliss and beatitude, we left the Ashram. But we did not leave before buying a picture of Sri Ma and the invaluable book '*Matri Darshan*' by Bhaiji. That picture of Ma still adorns our family altar.

Another unforgettable *Matri-leela* springs up in my mind. By the time, this *leela* of Ma took place, there were twenty nine ashrams of Sri Sri Ma all over India. The moving spirits behind the growth of these ashrams were Gurupriya Didi and Bhaiji, supported by the *kheyal* of Sri Sri Ma. Ma had thousands of devotees all over India. Most of them were so bound by ties of family responsibilities that they could not visit Ma easily. Therefore Ma travelled frequently from one place to another to be with Her children. Everywhere Mother enacted many a *leela* for the joy and welfare of Her devotees.

I had the good fortune of accompanying Ma on several of Her travels. I am now going to narrate an unforgettable instance of *Matri-Leela* which took place at Almora. I was a direct witness to it.

It was the month of May, 1964. That year, our Almora Ashram was celebrating Sri Ma's *Janam-Utsav* in a big way. Great saints and sadhus had come to join the celebration. The very notable ones were, Haribaba, Avadhootji, Chakrapaniji, Vishnu Ashramji and Chaitanya Giri Maharaj. Haribaba would daily come to the Ashram in the morning at the time of the *Rasleela*. At this point of time I cannot help mentioning here that I had never before seen such attractive and captivating performance of *Rasleela*. Particularly winsome was the performance and beauty of the child who played the role of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

After the *Rasleela* we would go to the courtyard of the ashram for our mid-day meal. We sat down on mats spread out in rows. One day a gentleman came and sat down next to me. I had not seen him before in the ashram. His was an unfamiliar face. Therefore, I ventured to ask him, "Sir, where have you come from?" He replied, "I belong to the birthplace of Ma. I have come to see how the *Janam-utsav* of Ma is celebrated here." At this, I could not help remarking, "birthplace of Ma is in Kheora in East Pakistan (Bangladesh now). Have you come all that distance only to see Ma's *Janam-utsav*?" He softly answered and said, "Yes, it is so". While we were thus talking, I observed that some of the people sitting in our row had quietly got up and taken places in other rows. I could not help asking them why they were getting up when there was plenty of space in our own line. They did not answer my question. Instead, the gentleman asked me my name. I told him my name. He then asked me my full caste name. I told him I was a 'Bandopadhaya'. At this he said that since I was a Brahmin, I should not be eating and sitting with him in the same row, it would be against my caste rule. I was perplexed and asked him ruefully, how would my eating and sitting next to him spoil my caste. He then gently replied and said that he was a Muslim. I remonstrated and said that we were all children of Ma. He looked at me with hunched eyes and said that since he was a Muslim, could he be a child of Ma like myself. As I was searching for words of assurance, an ashram 'didi' arrived on the scene. She addressed the gentleman and said that Sri Ma was calling him to Her room. He looked at her with utmost surprise and said, "Why should Ma call me to Her room? She does not even know me." Pointing at me, he said that possibly Mother wanted to see me. He requested Didi to find out again whom really did Mother want to see? She was back in a short while and told the gentleman that it was him only whom Mother wanted to see. At this, I reminded him that did he not only a short while ago wonder if he too could be a child of Ma. I advised him to go the Her unhesitatingly.

Finally, he got up and followed Didi to Ma's room.

Sri Ma's room was a distance away from where we were sitting and talking. Ma could not have heard us from that distance. I was now curious why Mother had called him to Her room. All said, he was a stranger and a Muslim. I waited for him. Our lunch was over. It was quite some time before he came out of Sri Ma's room. As soon as he came out, I approached him. I requested him to tell me, if he did not mind doing so, what all transpired and what did Ma say to him while he was with Her there in Her room.

The gentleman from Kheora was in an ecstatic state of mind. He began by saying that as he entered Sri Ma's room with Didi, Ma said to him, "Baba, today you will have your meal here sitting near me, That is why. I have called you." He was quite taken aback by this. How could Ma want him to have his meal sitting near Her. But an *asana* had been spread out for him near Ma. A *thali* with rice, dal, and vegetables in it had been placed in front of the mat, along with several other bowls of delicacies had been put around the 'thali'. He went on to say that Ma said to him "Baba, come and sit down here near me" He occupied the *asana*. Ma pointed out to him what was to be eaten first, what next, and then what was to be taken last of all. He said that Ma kept fanning over the food all the while to keep flies and insects away from the food. Deeply moved and with tearsome eyes, he agreed with me and said that I was right. We were all children of Ma Anandamayee.

Mother's universal message to us all was that love alone is the true binding force and the only source of peace and joy for all in the world.

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