

MA ANANDAMAYEE
AMRIT VARTA

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with the divine life and sayings of
Sri Anandamayi Ma

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MATRI VANI

Mataji said : One should keep his mind free from cares and worries and be ever full of inner joy—this is the important thing! He should invoke God with his mind and heart and voice, in whatever way and by whatever words that come to him easily. Why only mornings and evenings? At every moment! For this is indeed the unfailing panacea for every kind of trouble. He is the Supreme Father, Mother, Friend and Beloved, all in one. All names and forms as well as the nameless and the formless are His. Therefore one should make use of any means or device that may aid one to sustain at all times in one's heart and mind the remembrance of Him and thereby to find peace.

* * * * *

There is no need for him to do penance. The atonement has already been accomplished by his readiness to make amends. Tell him not to cause worry to anyone by worrying himself. Keeping one's mind concentrated on God puts an end to all worries and anxieties.

* * * * *

Do not keep concealed within yourself what weighs on your mind. If you write it all to me feely and frankly, your heart will be unburdened even more. Father, why have you kept it suppressed within yourself for such a long time? To confide it to this body (Mataji) brings relief, does it not? Truly, this body belongs to all; for this reason it behaves and speaks as far as possible so as to fulfil the needs of the people with whom it deals at any particular time.

* * * * *

When the worship of an image or any other puja is performed according to the rites laid down in the *Shāstras*—as accepted by all *Brāhmana* priests—and when *Kumari Puja* forms part of the ceremonial as prescribed by the *Shāstras*, then the priests and others concerned must be allowed to have their say according to what they feel to be right. Write this to him! But of course, when this body plays with its friends, little girls or boys, it does not pay attention to the injunctions of the priests—the child may be of any caste! The other day—did you not see that the little girl taken as a focus for the worship was certainly not the daughter of a *Brāhmana*; yet the person who performed the Puja offered clothes, food and everything else exactly as it should be done, did he not? To this body everyone and everything is equal.

* * * * *

Write to him to make his mind sound and vigorous as that of a wise and brave man. To allow the mind to be in this unhealthy state will not do. What is there to be afraid of? Ever remember that God IS—may His Will be done. He is everyone's very own and has full claim on those whom He has created, to direct them according to His free and absolute Will; whatever He does is all-beneficent.

* * * * *

One may well say : What harm can there be in doing Kirtan, Japa, meditation, etc. together with others? But to feel the attraction of company constitutes an obstacle. This will naturally bring about unsteadiness. Moreover if a desire lurks or arises in one to be the head or leader of the congregation, it is also harmful. This holds good in the case of both women and men.

* * * * *

If however you ask this body for advice, it will tell you to stay quietly in one place and practise *sādhana* as a sincere and earnest aspirant and first of all to fill your own emptiness; then the treasure you have accumulated will of its own accord seek an outlet and thus communicate itself to others. Whereas if you start distributing right from the beginning by serving and giving spiritual instructions to others, you will soon be empty yourself and repentance is bound to follow. Of course, if serving and teaching is your aim, then it is quite a different matter. But if you want to attain to perfection your method of proceeding is not right, for it creates obstacles. This body maintains that you should abide by whichever of the two paths you prefer. To change one's mind again and again will not lead anywhere. Whatever one does must be done one-pointedly. Having turned away from worldly enjoyment and started advancing towards the Goal of human life, one should endeavour to arrive at Self-realisation.

*

MY FIRST DARŚANA OF MOTHER ANANDAMAYI*

—Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj

It was on a fine autumn morning in 1928 that I first came to know the name of Mother Anandamayi. I was getting ready to go to college — I had not then retired — when the late Mahamahopadhyaya Pt. Padmanath Vidyavinod, M.A., came and met me in my house and informed me that Mother Anandamayi of Dhaka had come to Benares. He presented me with a pamphlet written by the late Sri Kunja Mohan Mukherji *alias* Swami Turiyananda on Mother and on the miraculous deliverance of his son from an impending snake-bite through Her grace. He said to me that the sight of Mother absorbed in *samādhi* was really an ennobling one and he asked me to go and see Her, if possible. This commendation from the lips of a person who was known to be a fastidious critic of men and things and who spared none from his attacks, seemed to me to carry special weight.

Mother was staying then in the house of Kunja Babu at Ramapura. I made up my mind to see Her there. Accordingly, that same evening I went to Kunja Babu's place where both he and his elder brother Sasanka Babu (the late Swami Akhandananda) very kindly undertook to help me in having Mother's *darśana*. They introduced me to a small room on the ground floor where I found Mother absorbed in *samādhi* surrounded by a number of *bhaktas*. Bholanathji was anxious to see Her come back to Her senses soon and made various unsuccessful attempts to that end. Knowing that a trance must be allowed to run its full natural course and that every artificial method of breaking it up was fraught with grave risks, I asked him to desist from doing anything calculated to interrupt it. I was waiting for Her return to normal consciousness, but noting that even in two or three hours Her condition did not come down to normal, and apprehending that it might take an indefinitely long time, I returned home with the intention of coming back and seeing Her the next day.

It was on the 6th of September that I paid my first visit to Mother. I came to learn that She had come a day or two earlier and also that this was Her second visit to Benares, Her first having been in 1927 on Her way to Hardwar on the occasion of the Great Kumbha Fair.

I came back to Mother's place on the 7th as already arranged. In fact I came twice every day during Her short stay at Benares till the 12th of September. I remember I

*. Reprinted from a very old publication on Ma.

did not miss a single day on that occasion. It is difficult to analyze after a lapse of so many years my first impressions of Mother and to explain in words what exactly I then felt. I can only say that what I actually saw with my own eyes far exceeded anything of a like nature I had ever seen before; it was a dream, as it were, realized in life. During the few days that Mother was at Benares, Kunja Babu's house presented a spectacle of festive jubilation where an unending stream of visitors continued to flow in every day from before sunrise till after midnight. The doors of the house were kept open all the time and everybody was always welcome. High officials, pandits, university students, shop-keepers, sadhus, sannyasis, priests, laymen and men in the street — all flocked in numbers, each at his own convenient hour, to have a glimpse of Her *darśana*, to pay their respects to Her and if possible, to exchange with Her a few words. People of both sexes, of all ages and of all ranks, were to be found in the crowd. Some came to have Her *darśana* only, a few to have their doubts solved, while others still were there out of mere curiosity. The beauty of it was that all felt a sort of magnetic charm in Mother's personality, so that those who had come once out of curiosity could not resist the temptation of coming back again, no longer out of curiosity which had been satisfied but owing to some mysterious attraction. The fact is that all felt that they were like little children in the presence of their own mother. The bleakness of cold formalities was replaced by the warmth of familiarity and intimacy. Mother behaved with them as if they were Her own children — dear, affectionate and very familiar. There was not the least reserve in Her look nor any note of constraint in Her expression. The whole atmosphere was one of a friendly gathering imbued with vivacity and joyousness.

Every evening a sort of informal meeting would be arranged in the courtyard where the visitors would be seated round Mother and ply Her with questions. She used to reply to each question resolving the doubts of the inquirers with a few short sentences in Her sweet and inimitable manner. As the enquirers hailed from different cultural levels and represented different intellectual and spiritual points of view, it is only natural that the questions should range over many different topics, and be of varying interest and value. It was wonderful how Mother tackled all these questions with the same ease and spontaneity and without requiring a moment's reflection to deal with even the most abstruse and knotty problems brought before Her. Her replies were as a rule very pertinent, going straight to the heart of the questioner, couched in a language remarkable for its terseness and expressiveness. Every word that fell from Her lips carried weight; and humour too was not wanting when occasion demanded it. Mother as a conversationalist was seen at Her best in those days — it was a quality to which everybody who has had the privilege of talking with Her in later years is in a position to testify. It was interesting to observe that She maintained an attitude of strict reticence in regard to questions which were not *bona fide* in nature but were

either academical or intended to elicit opinions likely to hurt the feelings of others.

Different *kirtan* parties vied with one another in singing daily before Her the glories of the Divine and His name. Individual devotees with a melodious voice considered it a distinct honour to themselves to be permitted to regale Her with their songs.

On such occasions generally, when the music flowed spontaneously out of the deeper feelings of the singer's heart, and also on other occasions when in the course of conversations a crucial point was reached, it was observed that Mother's appearance became aglow with the *bhāva* and the normal gave way to the supernormal. It seemed as if Her usual personality with which Her *bhaktas* were familiar was replaced for a while by an altogether different one. At such moments various unusual phenomena were observed. *Stotras* and mantras of an extraordinary kind used to gush from Her lips with a rapidity that made it practically impossible for anyone to record them.* The language of these utterances was unique; it was not, strictly speaking, Sanskrit nor even any of its derivative vernaculars, though there were a few Sanskrit words here and there. Several words were unfamiliar and even the so-called Sanskrit words did not perhaps convey their usual sense. Besides, very often monosyllabic '*bijas*', known or unknown, were interspersed. The pronunciation was so perfect that even a conjunct sound, made up of several consonants without any intervocalic linking, was distinctly audible. Sometimes on these occasions Mother melted into tears or ejaculations, or even would become rigid and pass into a trance-like condition.

The trance-like state was also induced in those days when *bhaktas* offered flowers at Her feet or in other ways tried to propitiate her. The response was immediate.

There was a difference of opinion at that time concerning the precise status of Mother. Some held that She was a Goddess in human form—Kali according to some, Durga according to others, Sarasvati or Radha according to others still. Some thought that She was a human aspirant, who has attained perfection in this life, after a series of births during which Her spiritual progress had been continued. Others again enter

*. In subsequent years attempts were sometimes made to record these spontaneous utterances, which were held to be as valuable as the *Srutis* revealed to the *Risis*. In "Mother as Revealed to Me" (p. 45-47), some illustrations are to be found. The difficulty experienced in recording these was two fold : firstly, they were generally of a sudden emergence; and there was no knowing when they would come. Even Mother Herself did not know. Secondly, it was really impossible to reproduce them exactly, except through some mechanical device. There was also the fear lest some letters might be missed or alteration or corruption made in their transcription as Her utterances deserved to be treated as *mantras*, in which, besides other considerations, the constancy of the phonetic value of each sound had to be maintained. It is well known—

मन्त्रो हीनः स्वरतो वर्णतो वा मिथ्याप्रयुक्ते न तमर्थमाह ।

स वाग् वज्री यजमानं हिनस्ति यथेन्द्रशत्रुः स्वरतोऽपराधात् ॥

tained the view that She was a *Brahmavādini* as of yore or perhaps an Incarnation of the Divine come down to earth to relieve its sufferings. She was identified with Sukadeva by some and with Sri Krishna Himself by others. People of worldly nature used to think that some higher spiritual entity, human or celestial, was in possession of Her body and utilized it as an instrument to serve its own ends. A certain gentleman, then living in a house adjacent to my own and working in one of the local High Schools, went to the length of telling me that Her case was clearly one of obsession, though by a good spirit and that it was desirable to bring back the soul from the control of the spirit. This gentleman, who was old and had the reputation of being a practical *Tantrik* of long standing, claimed to have the power of restoring Her to Her normal condition, provided that Her husband and father were agreeable. He was under the impression that the appointed course or evolution of Her life was being impeded in this way and that in the interest of Her own spiritual welfare this setback should be removed. It goes without saying that nobody cared to attach any importance to these words.

One day, the great speaker, the late Swami Dayananda of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandal, came to see Mother and had a personal talk with Her. Though the interview of Swamiji was intended to be more or less of a private character, it was arranged that the late Sasanka Babu and myself should be allowed to be present on the occasion. Swamiji put several questions to Mother which She answered thus :-

Swamiji- Mother, what are you in fact? People hold different views regarding you and no agreement seems to exist. What have you to say of yourself?

Mother- You want to know what I am. Well, I am what you consider me to be, not more not less.

Swamiji- What is the nature of your *Samādhi*? Is it *Savikalpa* or *Nirvikalpa*? Does mind then persist?

Mother- Well, it is for you to decide this question. All that I can say is that in the midst of all apparent changes of state in body and mind, I feel I am aware, that I am always the same. I feel that in me there is no change of states. Call it by any name you like. Is it *samādhi* ?

Several such questions were put and answered.

Those few days of Mother's stay at Benares sufficed to convince me of the greatness of Her personality and the unusual sanctity of Her life. I learnt Her past history from those around Her, including Bholanathji, Sister Gurupriya, Sasanka Babu and others, and I still remember with delight those happy occasions when Mother Herself condescended to narrate the story of Her early life and its development at Bajitpur and Dhaka. It was a story of gripping interest to us all.

This story which relates to Her earlier life at Astagram, Bajitpur and Dhaka, much of which has since been recorded by Her admirers and devoted followers and the story of Her later life throw a flood of light on Her unique personality.

The greatest thing that struck me in those days in Her was Her personality. Her physical features were magnetic. Her smiling countenance, the sweetness of Her expression, the simplicity of Her life and behaviour, Her unassuming and genial manners, the cordiality and warmth of Her relationship with all, coupled with Her extraordinary holy life and wisdom, made Her an object of universal attraction and adoration.

[To continue]

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"Those who are pilgrims on the path must develop great inner strength, energy, mobility and swiftness, so that their lives may become beautiful; to fill their lives with a new current."

—Ma Anandamayee

PAGES FROM "MA ANANDAMAYEE PRASANG"

[Continued from before]

—Prof. A.K. Dutta Gupta

Dhaka, Ramna Ashram, 26th May, 1945

After Ma concluded the story about Sethji she narrated one more incident. Which runs as under :-

"Once we were going to a certain place in Sawai Madhopur crossing through a forest area. We were travelling on a horse drawn carriage. One lawyer* also was with us. The Raja of that place was to go on hunting in the jungle. So his men were found to be repairing the path by enclosing the whole area. On seeing us coming those people stopped us. But inspite of their objection, on the advice of the lawyer, we went on proceeding. On that those people got very angry and came to attack us with their iron implements. We had entered quite a distance into the forest. It was therefore quite difficult for us to go back. But those people were determined not to allow us to proceed even one step. When the situation was like this then this body asked those people looking at them—"Then should we get down from the carriage?" Hearing the words of this body the anger of those persons suddenly cooled down and they asked us to proceed even with the carriage. There are certain points in the hearts of every person where if one can strike their is a change in their nature."

It was 2 O'clock at night. Seeing this Ma was taken for rest. Considering that it was Ma's order to keep awake tonight we spent the remaining portion of the night discussing about Ma sometime sitting inside the ashram and sometime sitting in the ground outside.

27th May, 1945

It was fixed from before that Ma would visit Shahbag** today along with devotees. The wife of Sri Jamini Mohan Chatterjee, Depot Commandant of the Pioneer Corps, had become a great devotee of Ma even without meeting her personally. By

*. Late Sri Sridas Goel, Advocate, a very staunch devotee of Ma from Sawami Madhopur in Rajasthan.

** . Shahbag, the famous garden of the Nawabs of Dhaka, where Ma had stayed for several years in the twenties, had by this time been occupied by the army and the whole atmosphere had changed.

coincidence Jamini babu also has travelled with Ma in the same train this time from Kolkata to Dhaka. Meeting Ma in the steamer on way from Goalando he became greatly attached to her. Jamini babu lives in Shahbag with his family. He had made arrangements for stay of all those devotees who have come with Ma at Shahbag and carefully looking after their comforts. If arrangements were not made at Shahbag for so many persons then it would have been impossible to accommodate them all in the ashram.

Having got the opportunity of meeting Ma Jamini babu and his wife expressed their keen desire to take Ma to Shahbag. That is why on the first day of her arrival Ma was saying about the Shahbag - "When this body was here last time then it was necessary to obtain "permission", as you say, for visiting Shahbag. But now it has become quite easy. Invitation has come this time to visit Shahbag from the person who is now in charge of that place. It has also been learnt from him that the "Jhau" trees of the garden have now been turned into Sandal wood trees. It is quite natural because so much of *Kirtan* has been sung there and there has also been such a sort of spiritual activities in that place. Of course this body is not stating that the "Jhau" trees have been converted into Sandalwood ones. But such a thing is not impossible."

I left my home in the morning for Shahbag along with my friend Manoranjan babu after finishing my bath and refreshment. We saw Ma from a distance entering Shahbag along with the group and we hurriedly went and joined them all. Ma first of all proceeded to have a glance of the Sandalwood trees. From Ma's talk I had thought the 'Jhau' trees had actually become Sandalwood trees. When I found that they were actually "Jhau" trees I said to Ma - "Ma, these are not Sandalwood trees, but infact 'Jhau' ones."

Ma - Have you seen Sandal wood trees?

I - Yes, the leaves of those trees are of different type.

Ma (pointing to all) - "Listen, Baba is saying that these are not Sandalwood trees."

But it was found that from the roots of the trees scent of sandal wood was coming out and that is why many local people have taken away the branches. These trees are standing very near the room where Ma used to reside before at Shahbag. However there are still a number of such trees there. On the east of the Dancing Hall there are a few trees of the same type. A lot of *Kirtan* was held in the Dancing Hall too. But the smell of sandalwood is not found in those trees.

Seeing all this I asked Ma - "When you were at Shahbag *Kirtan* used to be held in the Dancing Hall itself?"

*. A particular type of big tree normally found in Bengal & Bihar area, leaves are almost similar to Pine trees of the hills.

Ma - Yes,

I - There is no such smell like sandalwood in those trees which are standing near the hall. Such thing has happened only to those trees placed near your room.

Ma (laughingly) - 'If I say that has happened because of the influence of the *Kirtan* which was held in the Dancing Hall itself? (After remaining quiet for a while) Even then the question may arise why everywhere has not happened equally.'

Uttering this Ma started laughing.

I - Then the reason of obtaining the qualities of sandalwood by those 'Jhau' trees is not the real one?

Ma - *Nam Kirtan* was performed even in the room where this body stayed. Of course. *Nam Kirtan* in groups were performed in the Dancing Hall.

I - The *Kirtan* which was held in your living room that was done by you only.

Ma - Yes.

I - Then the reason which you had spoken the other day about the 'Jhau' trees being converted into "Sandal wood" trees is not correct?

Ma - Not false.

I - You have not said about the real reason.

Ma - All reasons are real ones. There may be many reasons for a certain thing. Perhaps some of them may be deep ones. But at the time of expressing only one or two reasons may be expressed. Therefore, they are not false. All the reasons are infact one. If any particular reason is suppressed and another one is said then that becomes false. But that has not been done here. A particular reason among many such reasons, which first of all came to the *Kheyal* of this body, was told.

I - Ma, I have understood that well. I am putting my point by giving one illustration. While beheading a goat during the process of animal sacrifice we separate the head from the body with the help of a "*Kharga*" (a special type of big sword). So, the principal means of goat sacrifice is the "*Kharga*". But while giving the animal sacrifice the wooden implement is also needed.

Ma - Yes.

I - Now if I say while talking about the main process of goat sacrifice that the body has been separated from the head because of the wooden implement then will the main process of the goat sacrifice be fully explained?

Ma - (Laughing) No. But I have told that there used to be God's name repeated.

Hearing these words it occurred to me like lightning that the Name of God and the person who repeats that Name are infact one. Ma herself is the person who repeated the Name of God. Then is it so that because of proximity to Ma those "Jhau" trees have been converted into the likeness of sandal wood ones?

As soon as such a thing occurred in my mind Ma spoke out, laughing - "I am of course making myself exposed".

I - Even if you expose yourself who can ever catch you?

All this conversation was going on while loitering inside the Shahbag garden. Ma showed to Sri Gopal dada and other newcomers the room where Ma used to reside. At the present that room is being used as a Provision store of the army. Gopal dada and several others went inside the room and prostrated themselves. After this we went to the Dancing Room. Devotees started Kirtan because previously there used to be Kirtan here. The Kirtan was held only for a short while, because doing Kirtan etc. in the residential place of the army personnel was appearing to be rather incongruous. But where Ma is personally present many lose the knowledge of time & space. That's why all these things happen.

From there we proceeded to see the burial place of the Arabian Muslim Saint. Biren dada was also with us. He pointed towards a pond situated near that burial tomb and said - "Here one night Ma had told me - 'Whatever you see in this world is everything within this body.'

Hearing all these words Ma started laughing.

After moving about for some time we came to a room and sat there. Arrangement for us to sit was made here. Immediately on taking her seat Ma said - The *Homa Kund* was here, which means that the Kali Puja which was performed at Shahbag and after which the idol of Kali was not immersed and daily *homa* used to be done for that, that *homa kund* was perhaps here.

Ma asked Biren dada - "Do you remember that you used to perform *homa* here?"

Biren dada - Don't exactly recollect where the Kund existed.

Ma began to relate - 'Sitting in this room this body started talking to others for the first time. Prior to that this body would not speak to outsiders. Therefore when this body began to talk to others then first of all I used to talk after sitting within a circle mark. (*Kundali*). When the talk was over I used to get up after erasing that circle mark. It was as if sitting with some cover and removing the same afterwards. During that time there was conversation with Bholanath's brother-in-law Sri Kushari babu. He had heard about this body from Bholanath and other persons. Therefore he used to jokingly enquire from Bholanath after coming - "Where is your 'Devi'? Bholanath would call me and ask me to talk. I used to reply to the questions he used to make. He was older than Bholanath and I was of the age of his child. But he used to address me respectfully. When I used to talk after sitting within a circle mark then there would be

no hesitation within me. But the manner in which I used to look they would feel that I was not listening to their words at all. That's why he would say again and again - 'Look at us - Listen to our words' and so on. I would say - 'If anything is asked to this body, reply will be received.' In fact as soon as a question was asked by them reply would come from this body. But there was no change in the direction of the eyes. That would remain vague."

"Kushari babu began asking various questions on the first day itself. And about the nature of questions? He asked this body - 'Alright, can you burn me into ashes at your will?' This body answered - 'If it is God's will, that could also happen.'

"Two/three hours were spent while talking in this manner. To discuss about religious matters for such a long period was the first time in his life. He did not also understand that such a long period had elapsed when afterwards it occurred to him then he started feeling very surprised.

"He was to attend to an invitation that day at another place. We were also to go there. Therefore, we all proceeded. At the time of leaving he took certain burning sandal sticks with him. He did this because the smell was very nice. After leaving Shahbag we were on the road. Here the Sun was very bright and wind was also blowing much. Because of the Sun Kushari babu was walking with the umbrella over his head. In his hand were of course the burning sandal sticks. Kushari babu could not even know how the umbrella caught fire from the burning sticks. Perhaps that happened because of the wind. However, as the cloth of the umbrella caught fire a burning piece fell on the head of Kushari babu. He was bald headed. Suddenly feeling the touch of fire on his head he became startled and began shouting in fear - 'Don't burn me to ashes, don't burn me to ashes.'

Relating this Ma started laughings heavily and we also.

Now Bhudeb babu said-"Ma, you have come to your old Shahbag. Please relate about the Kali Puja performed here".

Ma started laughing and said-"At this moment there is no mood to relate all those". Of course she spoke about that in a piece-meal manner. All that has been related before; so I am not repeating that. But today while talking about the same she mentioned about certain miraculous incidents which were not told to me before.

Ma said - "I had to perform the puja at the request of them all and specially of Bholanath. What sort of puja was that? I started the puja by putting the flowers etc. on my head, doing puja of myself. As it is said that worship of a deity has to be done by becoming the deity oneself. Thereafter, I suddenly got up and sat on the same

asana almost touching the idol of Kali. As the wind blows away dry leaves, in the same manner this body was almost blown and made to sit near the *vedi* of the idol of Kali. After that the tongue became long in size and came out of the mouth. The cloth from the body also fell down. Then a sort of command came out from this body for everyone to close their eyes and further to the effect that something untoward would happen to those who will not close. Everyone closed their eyes, except only the wife of the gardener. Although this body was almost in a bent down posture, as the wife of the gardener only among many people was looking at me, knowing that she was cautioned.

"After this Bholanath started the puja. He began to worship both this body as well as the Kali by offering flowers all around. It was a matter of surprise that one of the flowers got stuck in the palm of Kali's hand, as if she accepted the puja by spreading her hand. For many days that flower was in Her hand.

"On another occasion also Kali Puja was performed. Then while goat sacrifice* was being done it was found that no blood came out at all. Once again during Kali Puja the goat which was brought for sacrifice was not sacrificed, instead the animal was let off to roam in the Ramna ground. They had made all arrangements for the sacrifice and the goat was placed on the wooden altar. Just when the goat was about to be slaughtered this body suddenly went and put its hand on the neck of the goat. In a moment the goat would have been finished along with the hand of this body. The person who was about to slaughter with the help of the "*Kharga*" (big sword) anyhow controlled his hand just at the nick of the moment. Then the goat was let off. But most surprisingly as soon as the goat was let off it immediately came to this body and kept quiet by putting its head between the two legs." (Everyone laughed).

Gopal dada remarked - "It was a "goat", that's why it acted in the same manner." (Everyone laughed loudly).

Ma - Later on the goat was taken to the Ramna ground and let off. Some said that if the goat is let off in this manner at midnight jackals will atonce kill it. But after it was let off it was found that instead of moving about in the ground the goat entered Shahbag along with us again. For many days the goat remained near us."

After such conversation for sometime everyone started Kirtan and after the Kirtan was over mangoes and sugar puffs were distributed in large quantities. Ma returned to the ashram in Jamini Babu's car. We also came back to our homes.

*. Readers may not know that after this sacrifice of goats during Pujas were totally forbidden in Ma's ashram. Even meat, fish and eggs etc. are also banned completely inside the ashram area.

Before evening I went to the ashram again. Gopal dada's discourse on the Gita continued till sunset. Ma came and sat in the "Nam Ghar" (Kirtan hall) after evening. It was my desire to sit near Ma for sometime and listen to Her words. But Ma said to me - "Go and have sleep tonight. You had no sleep yesterday night. Did not have any sleep even in the day."

It was not unknown to Ma what I did and did not do. Hearing those words of Ma I did *pranam* and came back home.

(To continue)

*

"Enough time has been spent in wandering hither and thither aimlessly, in order to enjoy the sights of the world. Ages and ages have been wasted in this way. Now friend, return to your real Home!"

—Ma Anandamayee

SRI ANANDAMAYI MA

—B. Sanjiva Rao,

Principal, Queen's College, Benares

Many thousands of people, Her devoted followers, call Her MA, the great MOTHER, whose love fills the worlds, visible and invisible, with the radiance of an eternal peace and joy. I too will call Her MA.

Who is MA? What is Her special message or teaching, Her relationship to the world in which She has taken birth? What is the significance of Her life? These questions naturally occur to the mind, especially to the one who undertakes the task of writing about Her. Swiftly the answer comes from the depths of my being, so beautifully expressed by Edwin Arnold :

'..... Measure not with words
Th' Immeasurable; nor sink the strings of thought
Into the fathomless. Who asks doth err,
Who answers, errs. Say nought."

Whenever I have sat in front of Her, marvelling at the perfection of Her love, the profundity of Her wisdom expressing itself in the simplest of words intelligible to the least among us, I have realized that it is not by the mind that She can be understood, that no mental plumbline can ever discover the depths of Her being. Thousands have seen Her body, the radiance of Her wonderful face, but I do not know how many there are to whom She has revealed Her real presence.

To the mind She must ever remain a mystery. But to the heart that loves, She is no insoluble riddle — She is, in fact, intelligible only when the mind recognizes its own limitations and surrenders itself to Her influence. To love Her is the indispensable condition for gaining a real insight into Her nature. It seems almost a paradox of the spiritual life that to understand the essence of things the mind must abandon its normal function of knowing — yet it is a fact of human experience, that so long as the mind is busy accumulating information about any object, it is incapable of gaining an insight into its real nature. The way of the artist and the mystic is not the way of the analytical scientist. So only those who love MA will understand Her. To them no evidence is

*. From the old collection of articles published in the form of "Mother as seen by Her devotees", which is now out of print."

needed to prove that She is one of those blessed ones through whom the Light and Love of the Divine pour into our world of darkness and conflict. She is Her own proof. She is self-luminous, *Swayam Prakāsa*.

The function of the mind.

The achievements of the mind have been truly amazing in the realm of scientific thought. This has obscured its true function. It has assumed the role of a judge, a tribunal before whose bar all experience must be justified and proved. It is only recently that the West has begun to question the authority of the mind as an instrument for the discovery of Truth. It is beginning to discover that the supreme values of life are beyond the realm of the mind. Truth, Love, Bliss, all these come into being only when the mind recognizes its own limitations, and surrenders itself to the Light of the Supreme. It must quieten itself by the constant rejection of the false contents of its consciousness. The discovery of Truth, even in the domain of science, has been the continual abandonment of the imperfect formulations of the mind in favour of less unsatisfactory ones. When the mind has purified itself of all that is false and become quiet by giving up all its demands, then it becomes ready for the reception of the Light of the Spirit. It is in this quiet state that Truth dawns upon the human consciousness. Not by an intensification but by complete cessation of its activity does the mind discover the Right, the True, the Beautiful.

Mind is not the master, but the tool of desire — what we ordinarily mean by its controlling desire is merely the attempt to control is necessary in the interests of the social order to which we belong. But we have to see clearly that desire does not die by mere control. All that the human mind can achieve is a sublimation, a diversion of it from one channel to another so that it does not endanger the stability of social life.

Cessation of Desire

Desire dies when the mind surrenders itself to the Supreme. The soul must strip itself of everything, every possession, physical or psychological. It must have nothing, it must be nothing. It must make no claims, no demands. This process of self-denudation is known as 'self-noughting'. The self must learn to die. That is the condition for the gaining of Eternal Life. It is the secret of the mystic life that when the self or the mind gives up its own egoistic life, it enters into the larger life of the Spirit. Such a life seems an impossible one to the modern mind. If the self is annihilated, what remains? If the 'I' is destroyed, who is there to enjoy the bliss of *Nirvana*? These are the problems which the mind creates for its own diversion. There is no solution for these problems of the logical mind. These cannot be solved but only dissolved. Peace and joy form the very core and essence of our being. They do not depend upon outer conditions. They are unconditioned states of our essential being. Because of our

fundamental knowledge or intuition of this truth, every satisfaction we derive from external objects is not enduring. Nothing can make us happy except being ourselves. To be just ourselves, neither more nor less than what we truly are, that is the beginning of wisdom. All things, all beings constituting what we call Nature, follow this way of life. Therefore even in the midst of much destruction of forms, there is peace, beauty and splendour in the world of God's creation. It is only when man seeks to create his own world and lives in it as a prisoner that he is limited and creates ugliness and disorder. It is given to few human beings to live in the state of perfection, in the 'natural' state. In fact it is a rare experience to come into contact with one who is the living embodiment of the perfection. Ma is the living proof of the existence of what I may call the *advaitic* or non-dual state of consciousness.

Ma's psychological state is a rare phenomenon, which is worth examination and understanding. She contacts the world around Her, the world of people and of things without the mediation or interpretation of the mind. The mind carries on no independent activity of its own, but is a clear mirror for the reflection of Truth. It is like an extraordinarily sensitive, photographic plate, capable of recording without distortion or exaggeration the physical and psychic influences in the world around. Ma possesses an extraordinary gift of remembering people whom She has met or even of knowing those whom She is going to meet. The past and the future are blended in Her consciousness and fused into the present. It is not memory, but what may be called knowledge of Being, some process which is the result of the non-dual state of consciousness. It is obviously impossible for one who has not attained this state to understand how this kind of knowledge is obtained. But nevertheless it is an indubitable fact that Ma does possess this phenomenal power of remembering anyone whom She has met and being able to recall the details of such a meeting.

Ma repeatedly affirms that She does not use Her mind; I presume that it means that the mind does not indulge in its own independent activities, but is a focus for the Universal Life, which works through Her without obstruction. To the modern mind, or rather, to anyone who has not had experience of the super-mental condition, the idea of silencing the mind being a condition precedent to the manifestation of a higher state of consciousness, is completely unintelligible. *Nirvana* is to them is a state of extinction, of nothingness. If the end of the spiritual life is nothingness, of what use is such a life? Ma's life is a complete answer to this natural question. She demonstrates that the mind is the 'slayer' of the Real and when the slayer is slain, the Real, the Eternal comes into being.

Real Action.

All action that comes out of this selfless state is true and right action. It is usual for the mind to distinguish between thought and action — between Being and manifestation. Such polarization is the characteristic of the mental process. But in reality, Being is inseparable from its manifestation. To be is to be creative. Creation then is inseparable from Being. Ma ever acts from Her Being. That is what She implies when She says She does not plan, does not think. There is an activity which transcends the processes of the logical reasoning. Plotinus said practically the same thing. Contemplation was to him true action. It is most important to understand the full significance of such a statement. It does not imply that right action is right from the standpoint of the world, of society or that it conforms to the ideas and standards of modern or ancient thinkers. It simply means that the only state of Being which is right, is the selfless state, when the personal will is completely surrendered to and is in conformity with the Divine Will; and as in such a state, Being and action are inseparable, right state of being is also right action. Right action then is 'what should be' — not according to the standards of the mind acting in ignorance, but acting in harmony with the Divine Will. Such a state is intensely dynamic; it sets in motion a vast amount of unseen activity. To live a truly holy life is not so much to be engaged in ceaseless activity, but to be in that dynamic condition which, without haste or without rest, creates the right conditions, both material and psychic, in the world around. Ma does not do much Hereself, but wherever She is, She is the centre of an enormous activity. An occasional directive is all that is needed.

The full implications of 'right' action can be easily understood from Ma's own personal history. She had no visible, human Teacher or Guru. She has practised no *sādhana* in order to attain Her present state. From Her early years of childhood She has been in intimate contact with the invisible worlds and has been guided by unseen influences. All that we can surmise is that She has no 'personal' life of Her own and has been completely free from desire of any kind. God's will has been Her will. It is no wonder then that the Eternal Itself has been Her guide, prescribed for Her body the *sādhana* that it had to go through, for some purpose of its own. It would be presumptuous to suggest what this purpose is. To understand the psychology of Ma's inner life, one has to study deeply the lives of the mystics. It is clear that the physical, material plane is closely connected with the subtler planes of the manifested Universe.

No plane is superior or inferior, lower or higher. The physical body is the manifestation or expression of the subtler bodies on the physical plane. When there is

an internal surrender, the acceptance of the Divine in every detail of life, no matter how trivial it may appear to the limited mind, then the entire governance of such a life is taken up by the Divine. All planning by the individual life ceases. Even when there is apparent attempt at *sādhana*, it is merely the Divine Power purifying the various vehicles in Its own way. Real yoga is not an individual effort. It is the Divine that does the yoga through an individual. It is not the individual seeking God through yoga. All that the individual need do, is to give up the sense of separateness. The moment such a surrender of self is achieved, there is a descent of the Divine and it is the Divine activity that results from such a union that we see as yoga. Ma explained on one occasion how the body moves in obedience to the rhythm of music. The gestures of the musician are the spontaneous expressions by the body of its response to music. Likewise all *āsanas*, *mudrās* are the natural poses resulting from certain psychological states of the mind. By a careful study of these, Indian psychology has built up an elaborate structure of ritual and form of worship. Religion is really applied psychology.

Ma's own experiences are of great significance. She discovered that Her body was going through extraordinary experiences of which She was more or less a detached spectator; one such occasion was, when she suddenly discovered that Her body was performing with great accuracy the prescribed form of prayer or *Namaz* of the Muslims — with all its appropriate gestures. Her husband thought She had gone mad or was obsessed by some disembodied entity. The doctor who was consulted, however, seems to have been a man of deep understanding, and he declared that She was not mad and that She should be left alone. That anyone who surrenders himself to the Supreme is directly guided is borne out by the experience of several mystics. Sri Aurobindo had his inner voice, his Guide to whom he gave implicit obedience. Sri Anandamayi Ma was completely an obedient instrument of the Power that guided the activities of Her body. Her body and mind were given to the service of Her children, the devotees.

It is stated that Ma is God, *Purna Brahman Nārāyana*. It is not for me to express an opinion on such a question and besides it seems to me not to be of any real importance. Whether She is the perfect instrument of the Divine, a channel of his *Śakti* or a Power of the Godhead acting directly, is impossible for us humans to decide. So the wisest answer is that given to us by Ma Herself: "I am, for you, what you think me to be." Speculation about Her spiritual status is both futile and presumptuous.

The study of Ma's psychological experiences throws a flood of light on what is called *Sādhanā*. There is the spiritual or rather psychological discipline which leads to the release of superphysical powers or *siddhis*. Popularly this is called *yoga*. Undoubtedly yogic powers are a genuine manifestation of the hidden powers latent in the psyche. They lead to an expansion of the ego-consciousness. The psyche becomes powerful, with enormous control over the material and even the subtler worlds. This heightened self-consciousness is attractive to minds which have not yet transcended the self-life. It is in the hands of the ambitious that such powers become dangerous. Power, material or superphysical, is not in itself either good or evil; but because it has a tendency to corrupt the wielders of such power that all spiritual teachers have warned *sādhakas* against the seeking of *siddhis*.

[To continue]

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*"You may want to banish this body from your mind.
But this body won't leave for a single day—it does
not and never will leave your thought."*

—Ma Anandamayee

MEETING WITH SRI ANANDAMAYI MA*

—Yogiraj Gurunath Siddhanath

True to her name she was the joy-permeated mother. Oblivious to the thousands of devotees who thronged to her, she was ever engrossed in the Lord. She was visiting Pune, my hometown in India, in the year 1970. The monsoons had set in, I remember, and the word was in the air that Mother was in town.

It was on a Sunday that I was meditating in my underground cellar. I was not motivated to see her because of the rush of devotees who crowded her ashram. As my meditation deepened, there emerged from my inward eye the smiling face of *Ma*. She was beckoning me to come and see her. I perceived in my meditation a long line of devotees with me in the line. As I approached closer to her she leaned aside, looked at me and smiled. She then took a white garland of fragrant flowers and threw it at me. They hit my chest and came into my hands and she said, "Come!" I mentally said, "Okay, it's just a mental image," but as I opened my eyes to my delight her face still persisted smiling, alive and very real.

So after my meditation I set out to meet the Divine Mother and waited my turn in a queue for her *darshan* (blessings with her sight). As I approached her, she leaned aside, smiled, took a white garland of flowers and threw it at me. The flowers hit my chest and came into my hands. My meditation had become a reality. Soon in her presence she touched my head and said, "God looks to Them who look at Him," and her chant of *Hari Bol* continued. She then stopped and after a while went into a glorious state of *bhāva*. The whole ambience and audience were transported with her to another world.

I spent entire day at *Ma's* ashram in great peace, often finding a spot to meditate, often not. So the day passed on. It was evening and *Ma* was sitting outside her room on a divan. All the people and devotees were sitting around her as she became quiet and went into *bhāva* (a state of deep introspection). We all felt the breeze bringing a sultry message of rain. The clouds arrived large and dark portending a heavy shower as everybody became restless for the Mother, so that she should not get soaked in the rain. But she was as serene and calm as ever, not moving at all. The forked lightning lit up the clouded sky, as the clouds threateningly rumbled to rain down upon us. Then suddenly a downpour of rain began. *Ma* transfixed the skies for a while, and

*. Extracts from the famous book "Wings to Freedom" by the author.

sat silent, lost in her own *bhāva* (state of consciousness). Lo and behold! The rain showered all around us but not a drop of rain in the Ashram area. Now, to my mind this was a miracle, a *siddhi* she performed. But to her it was merely a spontaneous happening with no conscious effort on her part. This taught me the great lesson of life. "The more you trust in God, the more trustable He becomes."

A few days later by her grace I was able to meet her. She told me, "Don't be impressed by miracles, but, by the lessons they teach. In the future, as you will travel the world to teach, you too will be able to command the elements, to inspire the confidence of God in people." With this she got up and went into her room. The words of such an *Avatāra* are never empty. A few years later a similar stopping of the rain by me occurred at the Ashram of Dhundi Baba at Ram Dera near Pune. Arvind Rane and Baba Sathe were witness to this event. My "I" however had no hand or ego in the happening. The power of the elements was within me, and to remove their doubts, the rain stopped on the hillock where we were, while all round the hillock it rained. The next incident was when I was on Long Island teaching a group of lesbians. The Divine created a thunderstorm through me to cure the "doubting Thomases" of their scepticism in *yogis* and all healers of humanity. That incident removed their blocks and healed many of them.

I often wondered why these incidents took place through me when I least expected them to happen. An uncanny force welled up within and with great spontaneity I was able to do what was to be done. It was to inspire the confidence of the God-essence in them and speed them on their path of evolution. It is indeed very awkward for me to pen down such supernatural events as they appear to smack of a certain pride or boast. But at the command of the Master I am told to write, and so I write. As one grows upon the spiritual path, supernatural events become natural, and *siddhis* (as they are called) may be used for the service of humanity, to inculcate faith in them and their evolution. They may be brought into play at the behest of the Master for reasons best known to Him. But they must never be used for self-aggrandisement as they delude the Soul from its journey to God.'

Getting back to Anandamayi Ma—she is the greatest of women of grace and glory. I reflect here also on the spiritual stature of my own mother, who in her naive innocence created a permanent place in many hearts. Such was her purity that once when she came out of our family temple with the *aarti*, through the flaming lamps, I saw in her the actual blaze and form of the Goddess Ambika. This was no hallucination. It was 10 o'clock in the morning. Her crystal heart was so newborn that whatever she said came to pass. The same dazzling form of the Goddess Ambika I saw in *Anandamayi Ma. Anandamayi Ma*, my ceaseless salutations to thee.

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THE CHOICEST FLOWER AT THE HOLY FEET OF MA —SWAMI BHASKARANANDAJI MAHARAJ

—Swami Mahananda Giri

[Translated from Bengali by Dr. Dhruvajyoti Chakraborty]

Narration of the glory of *Lord Sri Rama* was chanted by his twin sons, Lava and Kusha, prior to His departure from this material world. Thus the divine grace of the great deeds of *Sri Rama*, the living image of god in human physique, was spread everywhere.

Lord Sri Krishna, too, left the earth and then His supernatural activities and philosophical doctrine were delineated and explained by the sage Sukdeva to King Parikshit, successor of the *Kuru-Pandava* dynasty. This worthy knowledge is scripted in the holy book *Srimad Bhagavatam*. People of the present era (*Kaliyuga*), which is full of tensions and disturbances, could get mental peace to be introduced with that great concept.

After the mysterious disappearance of the great prophet *Sri Chaitanya Deva*, His six identified disciples, known as '*Sad Goswami*' (six Vaisnava saints), who inherited His Religion of love, emerged as spiritual saviors to thousands of people possessing divine quest.

The great *Avatāra*, (incarnation of god) *Sri Ramakrishna* abandoned His godly but earthly existence. His disciples Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda and others who were the living icons of selflessness and sacrifice, placed His better half *Sri Ma Sarada* in front of their vision as the primmest source of their inspiration. With Her blessings they initiated and led the '*Sri Ramakrishna Ideological Movement*' throughout the world, which was tantamount to a unique renaissance that united the East with the West.

An epitome of divine bliss and purity, Her Holiness, *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee* has also exulted to merge in the inexplicable ecstasy of the Supreme Soul leaving this material world. Then Ma devolved, too, upon a number of Her committed devotees like *Swami Paramananda*, *Sri Virajananda Ji*, *Swami Chinmayananda*, *Swami Swarupananda*, *Swami Sivananda* and others, who attained their sainthood from Her, and also many devout *Brahmcharis-Brahmcharinis* (righteous males and females who practice and observe strict religious regulations, moral rectitude and celibacy

throughout their lives), to carry out Her revelations and verities, and to share these with the devotees.

The great saying of Ma— 'Immortal Soul, follower of the Immortal Way— Knowing Of Oncself (*Amar Ātmā-Amar Panthi-Āpnāke Jāna*). Accordingly by the grace of Ma, the abovementioned personalities, duly designated by Ma, have dedicated their lives to provide innumerable common people with the glow of knowledge, holding their hands to assist them consistently in their efforts to be aware of that wisdom for self-enlightenment, eradicating the darkness in their minds.

Amongst those great personalities one of the most worth mentioning saints is *Swami Bhaskarananda Ji Maharaj*. Following Sri Ma's guideline, he has meticulously instructed many salvation-seekers from both of our country and abroad, regarding their rites and scrupulous duties— have shown them each of their different personal '*Ista Mantra*'s (holy linguistic symbols provided during baptizing a person, by recitation and meditation of which one can attain God or the ever expected emancipation in actual sense) according to their own individual nature and deserving extent as traditionally prescribed in the Hinduism — a religion *par excellence*, synonymous to eternity.

Srimad Bhagabad Geeta announced, 'Be free from any form of acrimony and be affable and bounteous to all...' (*advēstā sarvabhutāmām maitrah karuna eva cha... — Geeta, 12/13*). In reality *Swami Bhaskarananda's* character was fully enriched with such rare qualities. One can get ample evidence about the above statement from Swamiji's memorable life, a few of which are being mentioned presently.

After the utterly divine and emotionally picked moment of '*Mauna Dhyāna*' (silent meditation) during the concluding part of '*Samyam Saptāha*' (a week's observation of the vow for a ritual to maintain religious sanctity with prescribed restrictions and control upon life), being celebrated in Ma's Ashram at Kankhal, Haridwar, suddenly a crazy guy strongly hit at Swamiji's forehead. Bleeding profusely from the wound which got clotted, Swamiji who was ever enemy-less in true sense, became faint. He carried the sign of that wound till the end of his life. But Swamiji not only forgave that aberrant person, but treated him also with spontaneous affection and care which caused his spiritual upliftment eradicating his mental disorder. *Jesus Christ* and *Prabhu Nityananda* could be recalled in this context.

Another instance can be presented which is the story of a spiritual metamorphosis by Swamiji of a highly educated young man, who was professionally placed in high position. He met a fatal accident which took away the lives of his parents, his wife and two sons— in a word, his whole family along with the driver of the car, in seconds. He fell in to a deep trauma. At last he came in close contact with Swamiji's unending compassionate flow of sympathy and kindness, which not only expunged

his tears of deep pain due to loss of his dearest family members but also transformed him in to a completely different person with a keen desire to attain *mukti* unlike his previous nature. This young man resigned from his profitable professional portfolio and left almost every thing and dedicated himself in deep and rigorous religious exercises under the guidance of Swamiji.

In fact, *Swami Bhaskaranandaji* by dint of his superb and elegant skill has remodelled this young man with such an extent of uniqueness so that the very person has now become transmuted to a saintly identity with much dependable and charming personality that has made him today very popular to many devotees as well as spiritual stalwarts.

A pious and sincere young lady considered her ill-fated and was deeply aggrieved due to the adverse scenario in her family life, since she was facing unreasonable apathy from her in-laws. She was helplessly crying silently at the bank of the river Narmada. Besides her there were her husband and child daughter. Overwhelmed with sorrow she decided to stop taking meals. But the situation changed with *Swami Bhaskarananda's* splendid affectionate way of action. He slowly stepped in front of her and the young lady came to know that if she would not take food Swamiji would also eat or drink nothing.

With her tearful eyes, she became astonished to think how could Swamiji know where she was staying at this moment, because she was weeping hiding herself behind the vast Banyan tree, the wide spread aerial roots of which were suspended from its upper branches covering a large area. She couldn't also understand, how Swamiji came to know about her agony and her decision to starve.

Then *Swami Bhaskarananda*, the living image of decency and tenderness, blessed the lady advising her never to be deflected from her duties for her family even despite of adversities. He also consoled her by saying that Ma would make all situations convenient since Ma always stays besides a devotee. Woe of the lady was appeased and she has been maintaining her family life skillfully since seven-eight years keeping Swamiji's suggestion always in mind.

This lady stays almost two thousand miles away from Swamiji. She, therefore, consulted regarding her problems from time to time, to get Swamiji's worthy directions and suggestions over telephone whenever she felt it necessary. She availed the blessings of Ma during her childhood. Still she remembers that auspicious occasion which came in her life. After Ma's merging into *Param Brahma* (The Supreme Soul), nowadays, the eyes of this lady often become full of tears due to that great loss, again for the second time, when she heard of the news of the departure of *Swami Bhaskarananda*.

A person aged about forty years awoke suddenly from his slumber and was able

to think and offer *Pranam* before his Guru's holy feet, just prior to his demise within moments, due to cardiac arrest. His seventy years old mom became fuddled in pain due to loss of her son. She came to Swamiji at Bhimpura. Swamiji, an effigy of utter kindness and sympathy, assimilated as if the woe of that mother being devoid of her son, deep into his own heart and allowed her to sit alone before the holy altar of Ma, enshrined in the sacred cave of Bhimpura, an auspicious place of worship for many devout persons. Boundless tears from that woman's eyes covered the floor, as it were, all the dry dust were flushed off. She bowed down before Swamiji after a prolonged course of Japa. Swamiji advised her to recite the holy *Bhāgavatam* daily by taking her son's photograph in her palms. The woman returned home back and now she spends a calm and peaceful life.

Not much far away, surrounding the Bhimpura village in a semi-circular style, the sacred river Narmada flows with a keen urge for her great union with the sea. The semi-circular route as it were, resembles a naturally created *Mekhalā* (a girdle made of holy *Kusha* grass, being worn surrounding one's waist during *Upanayana* i.e. 'sacred thread ceremony' by the Brahmins). It is true that the mother goddess *Dākshāyani* alias *Sati*, as described in the ancient *Puranas* and by *Sri Sri Anandamayee Ma* are same. According to Her divine wish, by dint of the earnest efforts of Her devotees, Ma's Ashram—the holy place of worship in this heavenly cavern, has been set up.

This Nature's paradise possesses the great tradition of religious habitation by hundreds of hermits and spiritual stalwarts, adherents of God, since unknown past, which is flowing continuously like the holy stream of the river Narmada, who is considered as the daughter of *Shiva*. Among those stalwarts, one of the most revered was *Swami Bhaskarananda*, in the context of virtuosity, whose height and firmness, resembles the tall apexes of the strong and the vast Banyan trees found plenty in this region.

A salvation-seeking person came and sat down before Swamiji's feet. He used to wear nothing but a small piece of loin cloth. He used to stay in the trance of meditation most of the time, day and night. In the river or on its bank, during dawn or in a small room at *Ma's* Ashram — wherever it may be, always he was found to be merged in meditation. None knew when at night he went for a doze of only two hours' span. Small quantity of milk and fruit he took as food. He was not a *Brahmin* by birth. But by virtue of his perseverance and devotion he was maintaining a very restricted life approximately for twelve to fourteen years to observe the very hard vow like *Gayatri Purascharan* and rigorous practice of other strenuous curriculums under the guidance of *Swami Bhaskarananda*. Today his uniqueness has earned a very distinguished and revered attention among the ascetics.

His past identity reveals that he belonged to one of the few most affluent persons

of Vadodara. Practically speaking, he is perhaps an example of that individual about whom the poet says, "*To achieve thee, O Lord! Indifferent to regal treasure and pleasure—a prince doth wear rugged wrapper...*" Now, big amount of donations are being provided by his brothers, wife and sons for the charity of destitute, devotees, as well as for maintenances of temples from his huge funds. A number of print media from Gujarat wrote about him along with his photographs.

He was going well with the so called material solvency and happiness. But the auspicious moment he met *Swami Bhaskarananda* as his mentor, his complete transformation has been brought about by Swamiji's magical touch.

A teenager from Kolkata, with a deep pain due to loss of his mom that roused his earnest quest to resort to a competent Guru, used to roam here and there viz, either in the bank of rivers or in holy places or in the cremation grounds. He met Ma in his forty-two years of age to seek *Deeksha* (initiation) from Her. This occurred at *Puri Dham* (one of the holiest places according to Hindu religion in Orissa, considered as the domain of lord *Jagannath* i.e. the Almighty—the Supreme Lord of the world) in the year 1979. Ma asked him to go to *Bhaskaranandaji* who was then in his *Brahmachari* stage. But after a few days again he came to Ma for *deeksha* as per advice and saw that *Bhaskaranandaji* himself was sitting near Ma. He was struck with a little bit of hesitation because he was preoccupied with the thought that *deeksha* was an extremely confidential process where none other than *Guru* could be present, though he did not express this in any way.

But Ma, who had the divine power of knowing other's mind, said to him in a very significant manner, "Do you know, *bābā*, how strict *sadhanā* this *Brahmachari* has performed?" Not only that but, by stretching Her arms upwards She further added, "The *Sādhus Brahmacharis* and *Brahmacharinis* or whoever has come to this body belong to upgraded spiritual stages according to their respective degrees of competence. Not only that, here those who are washing utensils, purchasing commodities or even who are washing the drains, this body possesses vital connections with them also." That *Deeksha*-seeking person was overwhelmed with emotion, and bowed down before both Ma and *Bhaskaranandaji* too.

These momentous words of Ma becomes more unfolded in the following incident. One day with a divine frenzy, the great Yogi Neem Karoli Baba came to Ma's Ashram in Varanasi. No sooner than he was entering the Ashram, he found *Brahmachari Panuda* standing before him. He tried to bow down before Panuda's feet. Being wonder-struck Panuda hastily said—"What are you doing, Baba?" Baba spontaneously answered—"Doing *Pranam* to Ma."

One day during puja in the temple of Ma's Ashram at Agarpara *Nirvananandaji*

was performing *arati* and *Bhaskaranandaji* was waving a large fan, holding it by both of his hands. *Nirmalanandaji* was also standing there to assist them by supplying the *arati* materials in their hands. Sm. Sati Ganguly, a keen devotee of Ma, was also present there. She was meditating by closing her eyes, praying to Ma so that she could perceive any divine supernatural act of Ma. Along with her everyone present there suddenly saw Ma paying obeisance to both *Nirvananandaji* and *Bhaskaranandaji* in the gesture of doing *Pranam* by touching their heads, which they could not resist since both of their hands remained engaged in *arati*. Both of them felt abashed. *Nirmalanandaji* tried to sidestep. But Ma summoned him and did *Pranam* to him too. Her divine voice announced, "This body has already consumed both Bhaskar and Nirvan... The rest one was Nirmal... Now consumption of him, too, is complete..."

Thus Ma confirmed Her previous comment regarding the upgraded state of Her devotee ascetics. In Agarpara Ashram many visitors and devotees were astounded to visualize such a super natural action of Ma that day. As per the great scholar-sage *Anirvanji's* opinion, the eloquence of Ma can be termed as the Fifth Veda. The verse—the depiction of Ma is equivalent to *Amrita* and the devotees who listen to it become ever blessed and gratified.

The whole life of *Bhaskaranandaji* is impressively graceful. Swamiji hailed from a well off and cultured family of Gujarat. His father's name was Dr. Mohanlal Dave, who was a pious as well as a righteous person. He used to maintain the ritual to stay in fasting during all nine days of *Nava Rātra* (holy nine nights) to observe the vow consisting of the worship of the Goddess. Swamiji's grandfather was also very popular in the locality and was well-known for his whole hearted dedication to spirituality. Dr. Mohanlal was an eminent physician of Bhavnagar, who did not demand any fee for treatment of the poor and the ascetics. Many devotees and saintly persons used to visit this ideal family.

Swamiji's mother's name was Kunti Devi. She had eight sons, all of whom are highly established in India and abroad too. Her second son's name was Bharat who afterwards came to be known as *Swami Bhaskarananda Giri*. Since known childhood he was inclined to spirituality. The astrologers and clergies had predicted that he would not enter into the conventional family life. He completed his studies from Bhavnagar Collage and was placed in a part time job in Mumbai where simultaneously he studied law also. Approximately when he was twenty two or twenty three years in age he met Ma for the first time at Mumbai. Later on, he came to Allahabad along with one of his friends to join in the *Ardha Kumbha Mela* there.

Not only when they reached Ma's camp in the *Mela* ground during midnight, it was closed and no one knew them. However, they offered their *Pranams* to Ma from

outside the tent. And most surprisingly Ma said from inside the tent, Go and get place in any one of the tent. Take rest tonight... Tomorrow at five morning should go for morning holy bath in the *Sangam*..." They complied accordingly and accompanied by other devotees, got the opportunity to partake the holy bath at the *Sangam* with Ma.

On the verge of their departare Ma when asked them to come again, they came to know that Ma was leaving for Varanasi, they also made up their mind to go to Varanasi and meet Ma again.

They reached Varanasi; but did not know the actual location of the Ashram. They were enquiring about the address. In the meantime a young person dressed in a typical Indian style asked them, "Do you come from Gujarat?" Answering affirmative they asked him whether he knew the location of Ma Anandamayee Ashram. "Yes, I stay there...", the young man answered and arranged a car so that they could reach there comfortably. His name was asked by them and from his reply it was known that his name was 'Gopal'. The young man also told them that there was a big temple of *Gopalji*, where that Gopal's voice asking for little offerings could be heard sometimes by the devotees. Saying this very mysteriously the young person became invisible. May be this strange incident indicates that *Gopal*, an appellation of *Lord Krishna* himself, showed the direction of Ma's Ashram to Swamiji and his friend in the gesture of that young man.

Later on after more than two years, *Swami Bhaskarananda* again met Ma at Solan (near Simla). Ma cordially accepted him this time as an ashramite and advised him to go to Vindhyachal Ashram and live the life of *sādhana*. From now on he came to be known as "Brahmachari Bharat bhai" and later on as "Brahmachari Bhaskarananda."

After the physical disappearance of Ma, many helpless persons came to him for pertinent solutions regarding different types of their personal difficulties. With a sympathetic attitude he used to listen to their problems and being submerged almost in a deep trance that goes beyond common intellect, he used to keep his right palm upwards touching his right ear, and with a smiling look he used to say, "Ma is there..." Subsequently, all the tough problems were found to be solved very strangely.

Many such incidents could be narrated. Calamity came to a pious lady's family life. *Swami Shivananda* was very affectionate to her and used to provide her with blessings. He advised her to inform about her family unrest to *Swami Bhaskarananda*, actually who was the *Acharya Guru* of her family, Since Swamiji was at a distant place she faced difficulty to inform him about her family problem. It was such a problem, consultation with Swamiji regarding which could not even be possible over telephone. In the meantime, she met one of their family friends who was also a devotee of Ma. That person was then going to *Bhaskaranandaji* at Bhimpura. With tearful

eyes she asked him to inform about the adversities faced by her to Swamiji. She also requested him to apprise Swamiji about *Swami Shivananda's* suggestion to seek solutions from Bhaskaranandaji in this regard. Listening to the problems of the lady, Swamiji uttered with his known style of smiling look, "Ma is there..." It seemed to be really astonishing that within a few days the clouds which remained pervaded deeply upon the lady's life, were removed. One of Swamiji's attendants used to say jokingly, "Swamiji! Please start a consultancy firm to solve all family problems!" Calmly Swamiji answered, "Where will they go who faced much trouble and sorrow in their lives and intend to come under Ma's shelter?"

Some foreign devotees, such as Mr. Claude Portal, Mr. Christopher Pegler and others used to do *satsang* (religious discussion, reading of holy books etc.) according to Ma's directions in their own countries. There they regularly read and chant *Shiva-Mahimna Stotram, Chandi Stotram, Vishnu Sahasra Nāma* with correct pronunciations.

They used to come to Bhimpura Ashram during *Samyam Week* and used to take no food except drinking water only throughout the week in order to observe this particular vow in a perfect righteous manner. They used to spend seven to eight hours in deep meditation everyday. Many devotees from different countries like France, Italy, Germany, America, Japan etc. also used to come to *Swami Bhaskarananda* at Bhimpura during recent years.

Swamiji had also spent some of his valuable time in Europe and America during last few years to propagate the sayings of Ma being invited by devotees from non-resident Indians as well as foreigners. He was also the General Secretary of the main all-India body, Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha for some period.

Prior to leaving his mortal coil, for about two months, Swamiji's consciousness was entirely out of this material world. During this time almost everyday his more than hundred disciples, devotees, ascetics, social workers as well as eminent physicians from Mumbai, Vadodara and Ahmedabad, used to come to him on regular basis, devoting themselves to holy prayers, continuous recitation of Japa by sitting before Swamiji's feet. This unique sight undoubtedly illustrates the inner spirit of devotion in them.

On 8th April, 2010, in the holy moment of *Mahendrakshana* (considered as celestially very much auspicious according to Indian astronomy), *Ma Anandamayee's* beloved son, *Swami Bhaskaranandaji Maharaj*—an icon of divine bliss was merged with the infinity, the Supreme Soul, at Bhimpura Ashram which was glorified with the gracious presence of Ma, situated on the bank of holy river Narmada — a place concerned with the tradition of age-old religious austerities where the direct proximity

of Anandeshwar śiva is perceivable.

*"In the Domain of Joy, in the Domain of Weal
Do exist, O Graceful Truth...
Thy Glory is Manifested in the Stellar Sky..."*

— Rabindranath Tagore

Swamiji — It's next to impossible for a person like me, lacking adequate competence and proper confidence to eulogize you. Still, I dare to be effortful in this task, remembering only the verse of *Puspadanta*, the great devotee of Shiva!

If they have not been disregarded yet, who have composed your encomium as per limits of their own knowledge; hope that this effort of mine to eulogize you may not be disapproved."

*

*"The nearer you draw to Him, who is the fountain
of mercy and compassion the more will you experience
His Presence."*

—Ma Anandamayee

MOTHER—
A SYMBOL OF HIGHER LIFE FOR MAN

—Prof. G. C. Das Gupta

[Continued from before]

Varanasi Ashram, 27th Septembr, 1950

Q.—What is the meaning of "*Bhagawat Darshan*?"

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 by the man who has known *Brahman*, or of the *Paramātmā* by the Yogi or of His *Leelā* 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 exercises 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, 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 varieties, 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* (गोपिनी गण) who could not join Sri Krishna during the *Rāsa Leelā*, 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 first may have a vision of the 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 entity, "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 "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 *Guruji* recited a verse from the *Geeta*, saying. "I am *Ātmā* and I am

Sri Krishna too. Just as the Gopis lived with Sri Krishna you must come and live with me. The Gopis dedicated their body 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 Krishna as your Guru and not the one you had."

Here the question arises—Was it proper for the girl to cease thinking — "I am Atma, 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 to 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 *Ātmānanda*, the bliss of the Self?" There must be keen

discrimination between that 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, as 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 (आमि तो एहू इ). 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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“नमन्ति फलिनो वृक्षा नमन्ति गुणिनो जनाः।
शुष्कं काष्ठं च मूर्खश्च न नमन्ति कदाचन॥”

[*Namanti phalīno vrkṣā namanti guṇīno janāḥ*

Śuṣkaṃ Kāṣṭhaṃ ca murkhasca na namanti kadāchana.]

Trees laden with fruits bow down,

People with good qualities also bend down,

But dry wood and fools never bend down.

SWAMI SIVANANDAJI MAHARAJ —AS I SAW HIM

—Saroj Krishna Mitra

The first week of April, 2010 was indeed a shocking one to innumerable devotees of Sree Sree Ma as three of Her stalwart monks and very close devotees for over half a century each left for their heavenly abodes within a span of 5 days. Such unprecedented events developed one after another at so short intervals that it can be truly termed as a bolt from the blue to thousands of Ma's devotees more so as the chain of mishaps took place during the tenure of the auspicious *Poorna Kumbha* festival held at Haridwar. This is certainly an irreparable loss to Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha, in particular, and to disciples and followers in general.

The first such event was the passing away of Swami Vijayananda, the French monk, on 5th April, 2010 followed by Swami Bhaskarananda on 8th April, 2010 and next on the queue was the sad and sudden demise of Swami Sivananda on the very next day i.e. 9th April, 2010. Hundreds of pilgrims and devotees who had assembled on the occasion of *Poorna Kumbha* festival paid their respectful homage to all the three departed souls.

My initial contact with Swami Sivananda Maharaj was not preplanned, rather just a coincidence. As a matter of fact, after our visit to several places, on our way to Mussoorie, we decided to drop in at the Kishenpur Ashram of Ma located at Dehra Dun, where Ma breathed her last. We were extremely delighted to have had the opportunity of meeting him followed by a round of pleasant conversation. We were greatly impressed by his devotion to Shree Shree Ma, and also his genuine commitment to inter-faith understanding which is a basic tenet of the Hindu tradition. We were equally impressed by his saintly appearance and sweet words full of wisdom and at our humble request, he initiated us under his loving guidance at Ma's Kishenpur Ashram at Dehra Dun on 5th November, 1999.

Ever since then we have had very close contacts with him and over the years we used to meet him atleast twice a year wherever he used to stay at different ashrams from time to time, be at Vrindaban, Dehra Dun, Haridwar, New Delhi and

continued our stay each time for a week or so at each ashram. This apart, we have had the rare privilege to exchange series of correspondence coupled with telephone calls at frequent intervals, During our stays at ashrams we used to have long interactions with him on different subjects, mostly on religious topics and Ma's philosophy. Both my wife and daughter as also I were indeed keen listeners to his teachings and were extremely impressed by the style of his inimitable and easy narration of different 'slokas' and paragraphs of Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharat etc. which he committed to memory at his early life.

He was born into a cultured and religious traditional Bengali family. His father had his own house at Allahabad and settled there. Sivanandaji graduated from the reputed Scottish Church College of Calcutta while he was a boarder at the famous Duff Hostel. Thereafter, while doing his postgraduation in Philosophy at the Calcutta University, he attended a number of classes taken by the famous Nobel Laureate, Rabindra Nath Tagore and got in personal touch with him on several occasions.

When I asked him about Ma Anandamayee, he replied that She is an embodiment of "*Poorna Brahma Nārāyana*". She is fully matured and is a beauty of loving devotion. She is an eternal fountain of joy and is present every where. Though She is beyond the bounds of the manifested universe and exists quite detached from it, still all created beings are held together in their rightful places through Her grace only. She is a simple, humble soul, but endowed with a vast wisdom.

Sivanandaji was a versatile genius and a linguist too. He was equally proficient in English, Bengali, Hindi and Sanskrit. He also learnt and could speak in French language as well. He had written a number of books on short stories and poems which were published by the Sangha from time to time. He was one of the principal members on the Editorial Board of "Ma Anandamayee-Amrit Varta" published from Varanasi Ashram in English, Bengali, Hindi and Gujarati and stories and poems written by him were published at regular intervals. A poetry written by him on the occasion of Ma's birth anniversary was last published in the April, 2010 issue which was acclaimed by one and all. He also composed a number of *Bhajan* songs dedicated to Ma and those were subsequently recorded in cassette form.

He was an ardent reader of religious books and literary works and used to maintain a huge number of such books in his stock. He was suave in his manners with a smiling face at all times. His simplicity and extent of patience knew no bounds.

As directed by Ma, he acted as the Principal of Ma Anandamayee Vidyapith set up at Almora where he spent more than two decades. The Vidyapith made tremen-

dous progress under his vigorous efforts. A large number of ex-students of the Vidyapith still remember him as an ideal teacher and benevolent guide who helped them to stand in good stead in their post-academic career.

Swami Sivanandaji was not only our revered guardian, but was truly a friend, philosopher and guide of our entire family. Even though he is not physically present in this world, we feel confident that he is very much with us and will continue to guide us in the right direction in future as well.

I pay my humble and loving tribute to Swami Sivananda Maharaj and pray that he will continue to rest in peace at the lotus-feet of Ma.

I take this opportunity to bow down to Ma, who is the eternal fountain of all power that leads to creation, preservation and dissolution.

Jai Ma.

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*I am in all beings,
All beings are in me.
This is the whole truth,
Nothing to embrace,
Nothing to relinquish,
Nothing to dissolve."*

—From The Heart of Awareness.