

MA ANANDAMAYEE
AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly
with the divine life and sayings of
Sri Anandamayi Ma

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MATRI VANI

Nobody can possibly be superior to God. Whatever is done, is done by Him—Himself. No one else has the power to do anything, bear this in mind. Depend upon God. So long as you feel that someone may do something that may harm you, practise the repetition of the Name of your Beloved (*Ishta*) a little more often than you would do otherwise. To place your reliance on your *Ishta* is the one thing to be done under all circumstances.

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Such is the nature of this world. Generally speaking people are born in order to enjoy and suffer the fruits of their past actions. When desires linger one has to come into the world, to have them fulfilled. The world, its happiness and enjoyments are fleeting; consequently all kinds of sorrows and troubles come in their wake and confuse the mind. This is why great saints, sages and saviours ever point out the path that leads through desirelessness to Eternal Bliss. The quest for THAT which is Eternal is indeed man's duty. He should direct his yearning towards the realization of the state in which he cannot be bewildered anymore by worldly suffering. In the traveller's inn (which this world is) everyone has to stay only for the short time that has been assigned to him. It is the One who appears in the guise of the world. He is making you serve Him in this manner. Keep wide awake: — in every living being there is *Shiva* and in every woman *Gauri*. Remembering that everyone is but an expression of THAT be ever engaged in service. It is only natural that one's mind should wander to the needs of one's loved-ones, but one must forcibly pull one's thoughts away and contemplate the Lord's Lotus feet. By so doing your loved-ones will find peace and so will you yourself, bear this in mind.

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Since you are living the life of a *sadhu*, you should try to ignore the cold as much as possible. If one moves about and takes exercise one feels it rather less. By leading a strictly regulated life one becomes firmly anchored on the spiritual path and then one does not have to suffer so much. You might exert yourself a little more in this direction. If the cold is extreme, do not bathe early morning, but later in the day; on rising from sleep change your clothes, sprinkle some Ganges water on your body and then proceed with your morning worship (*sandhya* and other spiritual exercises). Brahmacharis must completely shun sarcasm and frivolous jokes. It is therefore important to observe silence as much as possible. Brahmacharis are forbidden to sleep during the day. Rising early, they should take great pains not to fall asleep during the

day. If for a prolonged period of time one makes a special effort in this direction, the habit will be established. Do not lose courage and be persevering in your *sadhana*.

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On receiving the news of the unnatural death of a devotee's son :

Write to the father some of this little girl's unconventional talk : "This small child (Mataji) is ever, near her father. The mind's agony, listening to people's talk and speaking oneself—all happens within oneself. Near and far are also but within oneself. You should not only be a *sadhaka* at the time of your spiritual exercises—although everything is contained in everything. The capacity for uninterrupted *sadhana* is also potentially in oneself : it will be discovered by wise discrimination. One should continuously be immersed in the particular *sadhana* which will enable one to become possessed of the Supreme Treasure, which is by its very nature one's own. At all times it is the Self that plays within Itself as ego and as intelligence. Use the present with great skill. The one who manifests in the (impure) actions of the I-ness. He Himself also appears in Pure Action. In order that this may be revealed, intelligence becomes aware to stability in motion, where in the movement of Self-action wise discrimination would realize its own true Nature. When this happens then, in stupidity as well as in wisdom, He is recognized, the One who becomes revealed, who IS. He is infinite and also with end. Towards Him one should try to advance steadily without ever halting, having become free from obstacles and obstructions. When one has entered the stream any form that is perceived by the purified mind and intelligence may be accepted as an experience on the way to Self-awareness.

When one has become still, that is to say when one has become established in a state of tranquillity, then the activity of nature which continues at every moment in sleep and in waking and is part of the movement of the pilgrimage from birth to death, this and the thinking mind become caught in that Stream and eternally remain floating in it. Ever to keep the mind poised in the Self, wide awake in the current of Reality, where the Unfathomable, the One without end is ever revealed in His Infinity—this must, with the intensity of a possession, be your one and constant endeavour.

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Trading (giving something in exchange for something else) means that deliverance has not yet come. This world is the place of trading. Try to cross to the other shore. Your one and only work is the contemplation of the Lord, where all affliction is conquered and sorrow finds its end.

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PAGES FROM "MA ANANDAMAYEE PRASANG"

—Prof. A.K. Datta Gupta

[Continued from before]

Dhaka, Ramna Ashram, 31st May, 1945

Baba Bholanath's marble statue will be installed today. Khukuni didi asked us to have *prasad* in the ashram. She further added - "Know ti as Ma's order."

A square shed has been erected for the installation ceremony near Baba Bholanath's temple. Birendada has brought four Brahmin Pundits from Ichhapur. Sri Jatish Guha also has brought one Priest from Kolkata as per Ma's directions. All have been engaged in installation work from this very morning. All utensils have been collected. Very small quantity of cloth has been available due to acute scarcity of the same. The *pundits* completed everything with pleasure with whatever was possible to be collected. In the afternoon a silk cloth and *dupatta* was tinged in gerua colour and then worn around the statue. As a result of this Baba Bholanath's statue was looking very beautiful.

Biren dada did the *Puja* on the statue, because although not being the seniormost, he was one of the original disciples of Baba. Kulada babu also came to the ashram and assisted in the installation puja. When the installation ceremonies were over Ma told us, "All sorts of people, brahmin and others who are not outcastes will be able to enter the temple and do *puja*. But if worship is to be done with flowers and water then puja should be done on the *Siva-linga* which is there inside the temple. Otherwise the statue will be spoilt. It will be allright of *avisheka* (special bathing with five ingredients like milk, curd, ghee, honey and raw sugar) is done of the siva-linga once a year.

One hundred and eight *Kumaris* (young girls below the age of twelve) were fed on the occasion of this installation ceremony. But I was not present on that occasion. But after I went to the ashram it was heard that when the young girls sat in the ashram campus then the sky became very dark. Everyone were anxious as if the *Kumari bhojan* was going to be spoilt. Birenda spoke — "Baba, today on this day of installation of you statue, you must be present here in unseen form. Kindly see that there is

no obstacle in *Kumari-puja*. It was further learnt that Gopaldada, being immersed in emotion, was circumbulating the girls while uttering the name of Goddess Durga. Seeing this Ma also came and joined - not to speak of the devotees. The whole atmosphere was full of joy. Suddenly a strong gust of wind arrived and the dark clouds were flown away and the feeding of the Kumaris was also completed without any obstacle. It was seen that it was convenient for the girl's feeding as it was cloudy. Otherwise it would have been very much inconvenient for them to have food sitting under the open sky and that also in the strong heat of this month. Because of becoming cloudy that did not happen. After the *Kumari* feeding was over Ma is said to have told Birenda — "You have noticed Baba's influence?" Birenda had replied in answer — "Yes, have seen the influence of Baba and Ma both."

We had our *prasad* in the ashram in the afternoon and came back home after 11 P.M.

1st June, 1945, Ma visits Mymensingh

While reaching the ashram in the morning it was heard that Ma was leaving for Mymensingh by train at 10.30 a.m. The S.D.O. of the Railway Deptt. at Mymensingh has come to take Ma. Ma will return to Dhaka by midnight. I had the desire to go with Ma. But on reaching the station it was learnt that Jatin's (my friend) saloon will not be attached to that train. Therefore, the journey was not possible. I planned to go up to Kawaid Station by the afternoon 5.30 train and return with Ma from that point. But just before the train was to leave Ma summoned me and told—"Gopal baba, Hari Ram and Pandeyji are in the ashram, you should be present in the ashram and arrange for their meals. In case the *bhog* in the Annapurna Mandir is delayed then whatever is prepared for Gopal baba see that Hari Ram and Pandeyji are also fed from that."

Returning to the ashram I found that reading of the Kathopanishad was going on. Gopal dada and all others were present there. When the reading was over I asked Gopal dada to have his bath. Hearing my words he became quite astonished, because I had never before enquired about his bath and food. When I narrated the reason he burst into laughter and said —"See, how much worthless Ma considers me to be. It is beyond feeling to how many people Ma had spoken about my bath and meals." However, they had their meals at about 1.30 p.m. And after taking permission from them I came back home.

In the afternoon I in fact went to Kawaid Station along with Manoranjan babu in Jatin's saloon. But it was not possible to return to Dhaka in Ma's coach. Because when the train reached Kawaid from Mymensing then it was found that in Ma's

compartment Ma, Mouni Ma, Khukuni didi and others were sleeping and Brahmachari Nepal dada was sitting for want of space. So, finding that it was of no use in travelling in Ma's coach we came and sat in Jatin's saloon. After one or two station at Sripur station quite a number of people boarded Ma's compartment and therefore because of want of space Ma sent Nepal dada and Vyasji to our saloon. We returned to Dhaka by having conversation with them.

Reaching the ashram every one was found awake. Manomohan, Birenda, Nibaran babu and others were all there in expectation of Ma. Ma came and sat near the Shiva Mandir on a cot. We sat on the ground. Various discussions began and Birenda went on making every one laugh through his humorous talks.

Day after tomorrow there will be a big festival. Utensils which would be required for the *bhandara* (mass feeding) were stacked there in heaps on the Shiva Mandir verandah. In the midst of talk, Ma remarked—"See, I may also leave for some other place on the day of the festival. "Everyone began to put up their heavy objections to this. Later on Ma said—"Well, whatever happens will be seen tomorrow. It was then about 2 or 3 a.m. Ma went to lie down in Baba Bholanath's mandir. Deciding not to go home so dead at night we went outside the ashram and sat under a tent.

After a while it was found that Ma has come out. She was decorated in the form of Lord Krishna. Pandeyji had brought a blue coloured Sari for Ma for the function. Ma has been worn that. There was gold crown on the head. In the dim light in the meadow Ma was not clearly visible. On everyone's request Ma went and stood under the light at the entrance gate. We began gazing with charmed eyes at the supernatural dress of Ma. Whenever Ma puts on such dresses then for all practical purposes there happens to be an inexplicable change in her features. Ma was looking so beautiful in that form of Krishna that it appeared as if in truth the darling of Vrindaban has again taken form and has appeared near us. Immediately on seeing the same a sort of unprecedented joy began to flow in the heart.

Giving darsan in this form for sometime Ma again entered the temple. We too went back to our respective places. It appeared as if Ma hid herself inside the temple by giving us the means to pass the rest of the night in a spirit of joy and peace. We spent the rest of the period in comfort under the tent and returned to our homes.

2nd June, 1945

In the morning after having bath and breakfast went to the ashram again. Going there I saw that Ma was sitting in the verandah of the Smriti Mandir and was discussing about certain matter with Khukuni didi. I heard Didi saying "That's why people

blame you.

Ma (laughing)—"What happens to this body with that. I see everything as the same. So, this sort of blaming is like blaming oneself".

Khukuni did replied also laughing—"Yes, I have followed — followed."

Ma—"No, this is also a stage when there is a sense of equality in sandal wood as well as in *excrete* (stool). So long as there is no feeling of separateness between *excrete* and sandal wood then only can there be the feeling that only can there be the feeling that only One is in countless forms. You should know that one who feels pleasure in adulation must feel sorrow on blaming. But this body cannot see praise and blame as separate things. That is why this body has no feeling of pleasure in praise and no feeling of sorrow when blamed."

While Ma was talking in this manner then Hariram Joshiji came there with an American Army Officer. Coming to Ma Joshiji said —"This Officer is saying that when all the ladies are there near Ma and if they feel inconvenience due to his presence so he wants to leave."

Ma looking questioningly to all said—"What inconvenience they would feel?" Then arrangement for the officer to sit near Ma was made. Ma asked the ladies to sit a bit apart.

The officer first of all enquired from Joshiji—"If I ask question to her in English should I get the reply in English?" Joshiji translated the words to Ma.

Ma—"There is a certain stage when in whatever language anyone speaks that is understood. Consider even about Bengali language, although the language is one, the pronunciation differs from place to place, as for example the spoken language of West Bengal is also not the same at every place, as for example the language of Barisal and other places. Still while there is a difference in all these, those all are within the Bengali language. Similarly, although English and French are different languages those are all within one language. That is why one who has entered into the very seed of language he can understand and also speak in all languages. Normally, all these language to this body. But as *mantras* and *stotras* (in Sanskrit) have automatically come out of this body, similarly, English may also come out. If that happens then that will come out "*automatically*". This body has no "*control*" over that (Ma used the words 'automatically' and 'control' very clearly. So every one laughed) but you should not think that this body does not know what comes out from this body in that stage. This body is in the know when and how those things will come out.

"So, ask him to put question in English. If it so happens then answer will also come out in English. But normally that does not happen."

Joshiji started to explain these words in English to the officer; but while doing so he began to say other things also which Ma had not spoken."

Listening to this Ma smilingly told — "You are telling such things also which I have not spoken." Hearing Ma's words we all began to laugh. Joshiji was a bit embarrassed. It was also proved from this that Ma was understanding what Joshiji was speaking in English.

The American gentleman — "Is there any difference between a Christian and a Hindu?"

Ma — There is no difference between a true Hindu and a true Christian.

The gentleman — What will happen to the British empire after the war?

Joshiji—Ma does not say anything about such thing and it is also not well to speak about all these.

The gentleman—I am not an English man. I am an American. So, there is no cause for any fear.

Joshiji — There is nothing to fear. But Ma does not discuss all those things.

Thereafter Joshiji explained to Ma about the query. Ma answered that she does not talk about these things.

The gentleman — The war which is going on is this the deed of the God or of the Satan?

Ma— From where the Satan has come? Is he also not a creation of God? Good and bad both are the forms of God. On the other hand there is nothing which can be termed as good or bad. So long as we have the knowledge of duality (that is why the world is called *duniya*) the knowledge of good and bad etc. will remain separately. When this knowledge of duality is over there is peace. In that state who will fight with whom or hate others. The feeling of identifying one with the self is in fact the state of stagnancy, you see there is no dirt in the flowing water, as soon as it is stagnant it is polluted, germs are grown. In this state of stagnancy the sight is also blocked. As we are now present in the midst of crowd it is beyond our sight what is there outside, because our sight is blocked by people who are around us. But if we stand above leaving this crowd then many other things will come within our vision along with the crowd. Then it becomes convenient to see everything at a time. Therefore, so long as there is no full knowledge, the sense of good and bad, God and Satan will of course remain."

Ma continued - "You should also note that everybody desires to make himself great and noble. He himself speaks false things but when another person says anything untrue to him then he becomes annoyed. From this it is understood that although he may be bad himself there is in him a feeling of love for truth. Apart from that everyone's desire is to get peace and joy. That is why this body says that there are all the qualities of God in a human being. But those are all covered, so to say there is no expression. Once this cover is removed it is found that One God is there in the form of all. He is the Master, He is the servant. This is all His Play. When there is only one there cannot be any play. He has become many for the purpose of His *Leela* (play). But although becoming many the spirit is one. So there is no question of any conflict here. But this *Leela* (Play) cannot be understood in the state of ignorance. Until there is knowledge of Oneness, there cannot be knowledge of this Play."

In this manner Ma explained for a long time. Joshiji tried to translate in brief to the officer.

The gentleman asked again—"Does there remain anything after death or not?"

Joshiji said—"Whatever Ma has said there is answer of this question also or in other words there is nothing like death. However, I am putting your question to Ma."

Ma replied—"Yes, there is death and also not, so long as there is knowledge of coming and going within us. till then death exists for us. Once you come you have to go. But when there is no knowledge of coming and going there is nothing like death."

The American Officer —"Please convey my thanks to Ma. I have wasted so much of her time."

The gentleman left after saying this. Joshiji also went with him.

Ma — "All these things are difficult for them to understand. Endless are the ways of God. So He cannot be understood fully while seen from one angle. Just see, the other day it was being said that there is no God. In fact there is a stage of *sādhana* when it can also be said that there is no God. As for example, the doctrine of nothingness (*sunyavād*). Here I am not talking about Lord Buddha. "God is there", as this is also a sort of His revelation, similarly, "there is nothing like God," that is also another sort of revelation of Him. When there is a state of "Yes" why there should not be the state of "No". As it is said "*Sunya*" (void) as "*mahasunya*" (the state of universal void). See again, how nice is everything. This state when it is said that there is no God this can as well be a state of ignorance. As for example some does heavy *sādhana* for some period to realize God, but for want of any intuitive feeling he considers that there is nothing like God; he again is engrossed in homely life. But this is not a stage

of *sādhana*. This is only ignorance. Again, while doing *sādhana* a certain stage appears when there can be practically a stage when there is a real feeling that there is no existence of all that is being seen in the world, and there is nothing like God. It looks as if everything is but a play of something which is unreal. But this is also a stage of *sādhana*. In this stage God is being revealed to the *sādhaka* in the negative form. But although the aspirant may say that there is nothing like 'God' in this state he cannot live the life of a householder like other ordinary persons. At this stage he has the feeling of God in the form of insatiation and that itself makes him move on the path of perfection."

Ma continued further — "Just see, people adopt one Guru leaving another. One takes *dikshā* (initiation) from a certain person, after sometime it does not be of his liking, again he adopts another *Guru*. These are no stages at all. This is nothing but temporary mental aberration. But it can also be that the desire to get peace and joy is developing so strong within him that he is running from one guru to another. 'Mauni Ma had passed through such a stage. This is a stage of *sadhana*, in this stage he/she has no disregard for any *guru*. Although he/she is running from one guru to another, but his inner feeling is like this— 'O Guru, I am not showing any neglect or disregard to you. But I want peace. Whoever can bestow that peace to me he is my Guru. "Do kindly appear before me in that form through which I can obtain peace and joy." There is a feeling of dedication even in that running about. See again, so many are remaining steadfast with one Guru only. This is also a stage of dedication. This is also nice."

Ma was talking in this manner and unless she was made to stop this would have continued for a longer period. But Khukumi didi came and pressed her for morning ablution. It was about 10 a.m. and Ma had not the time to get even a face wash. So, we also got up and left the place. The reading of scripture started after one hour. There were readings of the *Katha Upanishad* as well as of the *Yogavasistha Ramayana*. At the time of the reading Ma came and sat in the "Nam Ghar" (Kirtan room), after the reading was over there was Kirtan.

I came back home at 12 noon, Jatin returned after me. He told me after coming - "Ma has said that she will remain till the big festival. She has asked me to tell Manomohan babu, Bhupati babu, Nibaran babu, Manoranjan babu and you that you all should try to perform the big festival in a nice manner. It should not happen that

*. Mauni Ma - a lady sannyasini who practiced *maun* (silence) for a long period. Later on she joined Ma's ashram and lived here till her passing away.

you have not participated in the festival because Ma was not supposed to remain."

I was a bit worried to listen to Ma's order. In such a big festival what can an useless person like me could do? Nevertheless after going to the ashram in the afternoon I met others. Discussion about the festival continued with Manomohan and Nibaran babu. This time Ma will be present during the festival. Therefore, it is needless to say that there will be more than a thousand people to have *prasad*. Nibaran babu was sent to Jogesh dada* to know about the stock of provision and cash position for the function. He came back and reported that the position was quite critical, whatever cash was collected for the festival has been spent in daily shopping; because since Ma's arrival here everyday about 200 persons are having *prasad* daily. So, there is nothing left for the big function. So, there was no way out but to collect some money. Time was also very short. Manomohan & Nibaran babu immediately went out to collect some money. Manomohan collected about Rs. 400/-. Some money started coming voluntarily. Later on it was found that with whatever articles were collected for the festival about three thousand persons had *prasad* to their fill. Therefore, we five had not to pay anything in excess and we were also able to pay Rs. 300/ more towards Ma's travelling expenses. The thing appeared to us rather super-natural. We could understand in our hearts that in this matter of this festival we five were just figure-heads, Every thing was done in a decent manner through Ma's benign wishes.

(To continue)

*. Jogesh Brahmachari -- One of the senior-most *Brahmacharis*, who was then in-charge of Dhaka Ramna ashram.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOTHER'S ADVENT

—Dr. Govindagopal Mukhopadhyaya

This holy land of India has been hailed since time immemorial as heaven on earth—*dīvah kantimat khandam ekam*—because Gods and Goddesses choose to come down here alone again and again to manifest their divinity. Here the spirit is made flesh, the abstract becomes concrete, the divine manifests itself as human. The unflinching promise is repeated both in the Bhagavad Gita as well as in Sri Sri Chandi that whenever there is a gloom, the light will reveal itself :

*"Yada Yada hi Dharmasya glānir bhavati Bharata!
abhyutthānam adharmasya tadā tmānam srijamyaham.
Paritrānāya sadhunām vināsāya ca duskṛtam!
dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge.*

(Gita - 4, 7-8)

*Ittham yadā yudā bhādhā danavottha bhavisyati.
tadā tadāvatiryāham karisyamiarikshayam.*

(Chandi 11,54-55)

The references to the *duskṛta*, *dānava*, *ari* etc all signify the dark or hostile forces that shut out the light, which is always indicated by the term '*deva*', which do not basically mean the God, but that which is luminous or effulgent. Darkness is always dispelled by the light and the main darkness, as is well-known, is nothing but *ajñāna* or non-cognition, ignorance.

Even when the divine power manifests itself, it is seldom recognised or known as such due to ignorance. This has been beautifully brought out in the Kena Upanisad, section three. The gods became victorious by vanquishing the demons, once after a long fight. As we all know, the two forces of darkness and light are in eternal conflict, sometimes the one, sometimes the other overpowering its opponent. The gods or the forces of light after their victory this time became very proud and were full of vain and glory. This was duly noticed by the supreme source of all power and light, which is termed as Brahman in the Upanisads, because it is the vast, the great ocean of light, of which the gods are only sparks or limited manifestations.

To remove their pride, born of utter ignorance, Brahman appeared before them in the form of a *Yaksa*, an apparition in the form of a Mammon, a strange being. Being curious to know its identity, the gods, first of all, sent Agni to ascertain who was he. When Agni came near it, the *Yaksa* enquired what god was he and what was his

power. *Agni* proudly answered that he was *Agni* and he could burn down everything on earth. On hearing this confident self-assertion on his part, the *Yaksa* just put a piece of dry grass before him and requested him to burn it out. With all his power being put forth, *Agni* failed to burn that single small piece of grass. He came back humiliated and reported to the other gods that he could not fathom who actually was this *Yaksa*. The gods then sent as their representative, *Vayu* or the Wind-god to probe the identity of this *Yaksa*. When he came near the *Yaksa* the same question was put to him once again and *Vayu* replied that he was the Wind, who could blow away all things on earth. *Yaksa* put before him the same tiny piece of dry grass but even after exerting to the utmost power in him, Wind failed to move it even slightly. He also thus being humbled came back almost dumbfounded and reported to the gods that he was unable to fathom the mystery of this curious apparition the *Yaksa*. Thereafter, the gods had no other option but to request their head or king, Devaraj Indra to go himself to resolve the mystery of the *Yaksa*. But then a strange thing happened. As soon as Indra approached the *Yaksa*, it vanished and in that vacuum (*ākāśa*) appeared a resplendent form of a goddess, *Ma Haimavati*. She then revealed to Indra that the victory of the gods over the demons or powers of darkness was actually the victory of Brahman, through which they have all been glorified. Only then through this intimation of *Ma Haimavati* to Indra that the gods came to realise how insignificant all of them were, with no power whatsoever actually belonging to them. The supreme source of all powers is Brahman and Brahman alone.

This narrative in the *Kena Upanisad* illustrates three things : (i) the insignificance of the gods, (ii) the significance of the female principle or *Sakti*, here described as *Ma Haimavati*, in revealing the true nature of the *Saktiman*, the ultimate Being, called Brahman, in which all *Sakti* or Power ultimately rests and (iii) that ultimate Being is beyond the grasp of all, even of the gods. It is indescribable, indefinable, ineffable. It is *svayamprakāśa*, *svatahprakāśa*, self-revealed i.e. not to be revealed by anything outside itself.

Whenever and wherever it manifests itself, it is through its own nature or self. This we find clearly stated in that wonderful hymn in the *Rigveda* called *Devi-sukta* or *Vak-Sukta*, comprised of eight verses. *Aham eva svayam idam vadāmi* i.e. I myself am revealing my own identity, In the *Durga-Saptasati* or the *Chandī*, as it is commonly called in Bengal, there is again that profound declaration,

*Ekaivāham jagatyatra
dvitīyā Kā mama parā,*

In this entire existence, I alone am here. Where is the second other beyond Me?"

This solemn affirmation of the One without a second is the keynote of the Supreme wisdom, which has been made manifest in this holy land from time

immemorial. Through it alone the demon of division is vanquished, the darkness of ignorance that is heavy on hearts is dispelled, the night is transformed into light. Again and again the demon of darkness manifests itself to cover this knowledge of unity, sometimes as *Madhu* and *Kaitabha*, sometimes as *Mahisāsura*, sometimes as *Chanda* and *Munda* and again as *Sumbha* and *Nisumbha*. The world is ever full of division and discord, which are the progeny of the darkness of ignorance, but along with it is also the comforting promise of the manifestation of light, as we find it voiced again and again.

Even at the end of the last century in 1896, there was again such a manifestation in this holy land of that divine power in its utter purity and spontaneity. This time the divine power manifested in the form of a woman, in her own true nature of Mother, which was a unique phenomenon. Born in a small hamlet in a far-off corner of the East Bengal, now called Bangladesh, almost unnoticed by all, this Mother Anandamayee, as She came to be known later on throughout the world, gradually revealed Her true nature to Her devotees. She was what She ever is. There was no becoming, no process, no *sādhana*, it was all self-unfoldment of the true being. On being asked about Her identity, She just revealed that She was '*Purna Brahma Nārāyana*'. Hardly anyone realised then nor does anyone truly comprehend even now what She actually meant by this astounding declaration. It was just a reaffirmation of the age-old revelation, which has been voiced time and again here in India since the time of the Vedas through such utterances which are called *Mahavākyas*, Great Utterances, as '*Aham Brahmāsmi*' 'I am that Brahman'.

Though every being in this world is in reality no other than Brahman, yet all of us are unaware of this basic, covered as all are by the thick veil of ignorance. This ignorance makes our true nature false or unreal and instead makes the false appear as true. Our phenomenal being alone is true to us, while our true being always remains hidden. Mother Anandamayee took the human form like all of us, yet She was ever stationed in Her true being since Her birth. She played all the roles to their utmost perfection, a devoted and ever faithful wife closely following to the letter all the commands of Her husband, a loving mother to millions, ever awake to their pangs of sorrow, keen to render all help to remove their sorrows and sufferings. Throughout Her life She was always on the move, never resting at one place for long and yet all places were one and the same to Her. This spirit of oneness under all circumstances was Her marked characteristic, through which She tried to inculcate among others the true spirit of utter unity in which She lived forever throughout Her life.

Let us try to imbibe that spirit in this strife-torn world of ours, if we really claim to be Her true devotees. She came to remind us that all is useless and full of pain except the remembrance of the One, call it *Hari* or call it *Rama* or call it *Siva* or by any other

name. She had written with Her own hand to my revered father that during those days of Her early life, She used to wait till others went to sleep and then She will only weep for the plight of others, who do not care to partake of this divine delight that is stored in the Name of the Lord.

If we are really sincere, we must try to wipe off those tears from the eyes of the compassionate Mother by devoting ourselves solely and sincerely to that one pursuit alone viz. the attainment of the One, who alone Is. In the Reality, who alone is our Consciousness and who alone is our *Bliss Sat-Cit-Ananda*. She lived, moved and had Her being in this *Sacchidānanda* alone and that is why Sri Aurobindo on seeing Her photograph had commented : "She lives in the *Sacchidānanda* Consciousness." She wanted everyone to live as such and that is why She manifested Herself to exemplify this in Her own being.

*

Sister Ocean

*"If you know where our sweetest of Mother is
please tell her
that I am unable to stop the flood of tears
that rises from the well of my deep longing
and that I yearn to hold her
and to be held by her again."*

*(Courtesy : The Soft Moon Shining
—Journal PEACE)*

IN THE SYLVAN SERENITY OF VINDYACHAL ASHRAM MA : THE SPIRITUAL ESSENCE INCARNATE

—Dr. Vidyaniwas Mishra

I had one good fortune of staying in Ma Anandamayee's Ashram in Vindhyachal once during Autumnal Navaratra. This Ashram commands beautiful view of the Ganges and of the hills around and has several flowery trees which were exuding the fragrance particularly, the *Parijat* trees. The whole hermitage is surcharged with the Divine presence. It is not quite far off from the Astabhuj temple and its sanctity has been enhanced by the presence of Ma for sometime quite early in her life when she performed her *sadhana* here. There is a small temple and underground there is a small room for meditation where Ma used to sit day and night in the stage of Bliss. She was spiritual essence incarnate. In fact, she did not need to perform any *sadhana* but she did so for the sake of educating and instructing the other people who were at the lowest rung of the ladder. She did all this not only to set an example but also to show that *sadhana* is a continuous process and it should not stop and it has no other end except itself.

Within the compound itself, there are remains of some old temple of which *shikhara* (top) is visible. Might be there was a temple sunk down during some natural calamity or might be there could be just ruins since no exploration has been thoroughly done nothing could be said with certainty. However, the entire atmosphere there is something which has to be felt and which cannot be described. I was granted permission to sit for some time and do *Japa*. I started with the preliminaries of *Japa* sanctification of the body and of the five elements and I had the feeling that this is a place where preliminaries are not needed. I did not hear any voice but there was a strong urge to start the *Japa* without any preliminaries and I yielded to it. I do not know how long I was there. I could sense a sweet fragrance filling me from all sides and going deep into my Being.

My spiritual Guru was there and was performing his nineday Puja ritual and under his guidance I offered *Parijat* flowers one by one under the well known thousand names of the Mother *Lalita*.

This hermitage is being looked after by the Sangha. The caretaker there is an humble devotee of Mother. Without changing the sylvan serenity of the place, the whole Ashram could be renovated and maintained as a place of spiritual pilgrimage.

This is one of the rare places in Vindhyachal where there is no noise pollution, no air pollution and there is no mental pollution as well.

I have had the *darshan* of Ma several times from a very close distance but the perception of Ma which I got through each and every sense of mind, through each and every part of my existence in that hermitage was much more fulfilling than her direct *darshan*. I surmise that Ma was a unique phenomena and in this century she was so unostentatious, so simple and so overpowering with her divine smile and with her sweet repetition of the name of the Lord that one's ego could melt away in almost a fragment of a second and just look at her as if she was his affectionate and forgiving own mother.

I am not one of those who go for personality cult but I do believe in such presences which vibrate with Supreme Bliss and radiate a sense of meaning in human existence.

My humble obeisance to her Divine presence.

*

"There is only He and no other. He Himself is holding you. He never, never forsakes you."

—Ma Anandamayee

GOD AS LOVE

—Akshoy Kumar Dutta Gupta

[Continued from before]

The first man to call Her mother was one Hara Kumar, a Vidya by caste, at Bajitpur in the district of Mymensingh, where Bholanath was employed at that time in the estate of the Nawab of Dacca. Hara Kumar was regarded as an eccentric fellow, but his feeling was genuine, and he confidently and as it now appears with a prophetic vision, predicted that a time would come when She would be acknowledged as Mother by all. Blessed be his eccentricity! Bholanath liked him and he used to come twice every day to kneel and bow at Mother's feet. But She was as yet very young and this first son of Hers failed for a long time to persuade Her to speak to him, until at last Bholanath pressed Her to overcome Her shyness.

So the Mother, without any possibility of bearing any child by Her physical body, got Her first son. Hundreds and thousands of sons, and daughters too, perhaps more in number than sons, were to follow in good time, as She said later to some of them, "You may not want me, but I want you." This is Love. This is *Mahā Karuṇā* (Supreme Compassion) as the Mahayana Buddhists say. This is *Ahetuki Kripā* (causeless mercy) as we say.

After Hara Kumar had set the ball rolling, others including men holding positions in the Nawab estate superior to that of Bholanath, and the ladies of their families who had already been much struck by the stamp of other-worldliness on the young wife's features and Her trancelike fits, began gradually to see things in a new light. Perhaps, thought they, that eccentric fellow Hara Kumar was right. And when on the termination of Bholanath's employment at Bajitpur, he and Mother came to Shahbagh, it was found that reports about Her unique spirituality had preceded them to Dacca. People now began to come in larger numbers and view Her with admiration and amazement. Among them were Jyotish Chandra Roy (spoken of before), Personal Assistant to the Director of Agriculture, Bengal (whose headquarters were at Dhaka), Dr. Sasanka Mukherji, a retired civil surgeon and his young daughter, familiarly called Khukuni, who, though married, continued at virgin by choice. Some time later Jyotish Chandra Roy was snatched by Mother from the jaws of death, when lying helpless in an advanced stage of tuberculosis. A few years afterwards he retired from the service of Government and devoted himself to the more congenial service of the Mother, his saviour in more senses than one. He even accompanied Mother and Bholanath to

Kailas and Manas Sarovar, two most difficult places of pilgrimage across the Himalayas in Tibet, where he received *sannyāsa* (the status of one who has renounced the world) and as a mark of renunciation received the name of Maunananda Parvat, and Bholanath about a year later the name of Tibbatananda Tirtha. The former died at Almora on his way back from Kailash in 1937 and the latter also departed from this life in 1938 at Dehradun. The urge for *sannyāsa* in either case came from the inner Self — from *Antaryāmin*, that is to say, who may be supposed thus to have completely snapped off their mortal coils — the fivefold क्लेश as a student of the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali would say, in order to prepare them for higher life — the life divine — in the Mother.

Dr. Sasanka Mukherji and his daughter also practically renounced the world and dedicated their lives to Mother's service with a devotion and single-minded purpose rarely equalled and never surpassed by any other person. The former also finally adopted *sannyāsa* at Mother's advice from a guru and came thence to be known as Swami Akhandananda Giri. Few people have a more pleasant temper than he had or devote their time more assiduously to *japa* (repeating God's name) than he did. He shuffled off his mortal coil some years afterwards. His daughter, renamed Gurupriya by Mother and called *Didi* by everybody else, was Her constant companion and no Mother could wish for a daughter and no mistress an attendant more devoted and tireless and possessed of both understanding and imagination. If any of Mother's heavenly परिकर ("retinues") has come down to wait upon Her, this *Didi* of ours must surely be such. I hazard on guesses as to the identities of Swamis Tibbatananda Tirtha, Maunananda Parvat and Akhandananda Giri. It may not be generally known that the first, Tibbatananda, openly and loudly called Ma Anandamayi 'Mother' on his death-bed; that is to say, he acknowledged the status of a son in relation to Her whom the world looked upon as his wife.

All the while that Ma anandamayi (not yet so called) seemed to be in fits of insensibility to happenings in the work-a-day world, She was experiencing in regular order all the known *prakriyās* (processes) of *Yoga* such as *āsana* (posture), *mudrā* (disposition of the hands and fingers as symbolic gestures), *pranāyama* (control of the breath), *trātaka* (fixation of the eye balls), *japa* (repetition of *bija*, *mantra* or name) etc. It must be emphasized that She did all this under no outside guidance.

Next began Her 'ministry' proper, which was done in answer to questions asked by the inquisitive or merely curious. She would be seen in the early part of this ministry sitting absent-minded and when a question was asked, Her face would light up

with a divine smile and straight would come out the proper answer, even arguments ending with a charming laugh. Next came those long, tireless, and almost incessant tours over the whole of upper and central India. She scarcely stayed more than a very few days continuously in any one place but gave *darśana* to all and advice to those that sought it, encouraged *kirtanas* and *Nāma yajñas*, sometimes Herself taking part in them, answered questions and solved doubts. She had picked up beautiful Hindi by which She made Herself understood by most up-country people. Mother's tours, long or short, were always unplanned. She followed, so to speak, the bent of Her inclinations or movings of the spirit (स्वातन्त्र्य) in every matter. That spirit as we see failed only in raising Her fingers to the mouth. So She had to be fed like a child by somebody else's hand.

Now, from the beginning there has been no end of questionings as to who or what She may be. Not presuming to offer any solution, I only proceed to discuss the matter and that also not without much diffidence. May not She, some have said, be a fully God-conscious devotee, who having lifted Her soul to the highest plane, is now in a true spirit of love and mercy going about advising and assisting others to lift their souls from the mire of worldly entanglements? It may be pointed out in reply that there is no evidence of Her having performed any regular *sādhana* (conscious and determined spiritual endeavour), such as most other eminent saints are reported to have done. Nor does She appear to have ever had the guidance of a guru (spiritual teacher) indispensable on that path. But, the arguer would say, She might be a free and enlightened (*mukta* and *buddha*) soul that performed all or nearly all the necessary *sādhana* in the preceding incarnation under the guidance of a *Sad* (competent) *guru* and had now come to complete the inescapable round of rebirths and incidentally to give spiritual light and leading to those coming in contact with Her. To his suggestion it may be replied that persons attaining some height in their upward spiritual progress come to recollect the details of their upward spiritual progress come to recollect the details of their previous births and often relate them to their closest disciples. Mother on the contrary is positive that She has had no previous births.

Then is She an *Avatāra*? ask others. Why not? reply some. No doubt this is a most natural supposition; and indeed I myself have commenced this humble tribute to the Mother by throwing out a suggestion of that kind. But the critical reader would not be satisfied with an *ipso dixit* and would want to know what constitutes *avatārahood*. It is difficult to answer that question. Look at the ten universally acknowledged *Avatāras*. Even leaving out the four non-humans, the Fish, the Turtle,

the Pig, and the Man-Lion, as well as the fifth, the Divine Dwarf, it is not easy to discover any family likeness among the three Ramas : Parasurama, Rama, and Balarama, while a veritable spiritual gulf separates Buddha from all of them and most particularly from Parasurama on the one hand and the future *Avatāra* Kalki on the other. What then is the criterion? How to tell the true penny from a seeming one? The fact is that *avatārahood* rests chiefly, if not wholly, on scriptural authority, though in a comparatively recent case that authority was greatly strained and in still more recent one or two cases not sought at all.

Here persons with a philosophical bent of the mind might say that as there is but One being (एकमेवाद्वितीयम्) in the Universe, all entities, animate or inanimate, are only His becomings; phenomenal manifestations, that is to say of One all-embracing Noumenon. An incarnation of that One Being considered as a Person for directly interfering in the affairs of the world in a more or less arbitrary way is not admitted as a possibility in many schools of thought. But a phenomenal manifestation of outstanding power, grace, beauty or strength, may, according to some accepting to that extent the authority of the Gita, be looked upon as God's '*Vibhuti*' (विभूति) and in special cases something of an *Avatāra*.

Mother Anandamayi with Her over-flowing abundance of grace, sweetness and love may, according to this view, well be looked upon as a *Avatāra* in this sense. In this case there is no descent (अवतरण) of Divine Personality into a human form, but only the ascent or exaltation of *jīva* towards Divinity as largely reflecting some of its glories. A *vibhuti*, though euphemistically called an *Avatāra*, would still be subject to *māyā*. So the suggestion falls through.

Another possible view is that the Bengal School of Vaishnavism calls a *Vilāsa*, which is a sort of second personality. According to this school Vishnu or Nārāyaṇa functioning in Vaikuntha is a *Vilāsa* of Krishna, who never steps out of Vrindaban. Balarama, ordinarily regarded as one of the ten *Avatāras*, is also a *Vilāsa* of Krishna and even the Krishna functioning in Dwaraka or at Kurukshetra is not the *Parameśwara* Krishna but a *Vilāsa* of Him. So Nityananda is regarded as a *Vilāsa* of Śrī Gaurāṅga. All these are second personalities : the same yet not quite the same as the Principals. May not, it may be asked, Mother Anandamayi be a *Vilāsa* of the Divine Mother, Durga or Mahalakshmi or by whatever name you choose to call Her? Who will answer?

Persons with preference for a more practical approach to the problem would like first to enquire what Mother Herself says about it. A great many statements of Her,

bearing on this matter have been recorded in Sri Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta's Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi Prasanga, Parts I & II. Once, we are told, Mother was asked point blank by a relative (Nishi Kanta Bhattacharya by name) : "Who are you?" Mother at once replied, "*Purṇa Brahma Nārāyana*". To Bhudev Basu She said, "Who or what I am will probably come out of my mouth one day. Now it is not so happening". To Jyotish C. Roy, "If there were aham *jñāna*, (अहं ज्ञान) I-consciousness in me I could express who I am. As it is not there I am what you may choose to say about me." To Khan Bahadur Nazir-ud-din Ahmed, Registrar, Dhaka University : "This entire universe is my house. I am in my own house even when seeming to be roaming from place to place." To Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta : (a) "I am conditioned as well as unconditioned. I am neither infinite nor confined within limits. I am both at the same time." (b) "My will would be irresistible if I expressed it." (c) "I am with everybody, whether twenty, fifty or a hundred years old; I exist before there is any creation, duration, or dissolution of the world."

These, no doubt, are very significant statements, but how to fit them into the framework of any known system of religious philosophy? As they are they are not calculated to silence speculation. For the learned would ask : Can the Mother not have said that She was the *Purṇa Brahma* and all that, in the same sense in which Indra is stated in the *Kaushitaki Upanishad* to have told Pratardana that he (Indra) was *Prāṇa* (explained as *Brahma*) and should be worshipped by Pratardana as such, or as *Vāmadeva* is stated in the *Bṛihad Aranyaka Upanishad* to have claimed that he was *Surya* and *Manu*, or, to give yet another and a more striking example, as that immortal daughter of the Rishi *Ambhrina* (अम्बृण), named *Vāk*, to whom the world is indebted for that gem of a hymn in the *Rig-Veda*, now known as the *Devi Sukta*, claimed in no faltering voice and uncertain terms that she was all in all the world? All the above quoted words of Mother Anandamayi, interpreted in the light of these well known analogies, would only take us back to the supposition already dealt with that She is no more than a freed and fully enlightened soul.

The common man and woman untroubled by any load of learning in their heads know better. They trust their unsophisticated hearts which tell them : "Here is *Jagadambā* (the Mother of the world) smiling Her sweetest at you. Go and fall at Her feet." So they rush up, bow their heads in unfeigned reverence, throng round Her and feel quite gratified if they can throw a garland of flowers round Her neck and catch a word falling from Her hallowed lips.

All honour to Pandit Swarup Damodar who at a moment, no doubt, of spiritual

exaltation, conceived the idea that Sri Gauranga was none other than Lord Krishna himself assuming the complexion and character of Sri Radha in order to taste of her supreme love for him and thus to give the world a lesson in devotion enlivened by love (रगात्मिका रगानुगा भक्ति).

The conceit was literally swallowed with avidity by Sri Gauranga's followers and admirers; and the poets, scholars, and dialecticians among them at once set about illustrating, elaborating, supporting and popularizing it in their own particular ways till it passed current as a gospel truth, Swarup Damodar being regarded as being more than a Rishi, that is, a *Pārshada* (companion) of Sri Krishna. The times are different now; but will it be too much to hope that a genius with true spiritual insight, a seer, will arise at no distant date of give an enlightened and convincing interpretation of Ma Anandamayees's personality and *līlā*.

[To continue]

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***"Man must aim at the superman, at real greatness.
This is man's main duty."***

—Ma Anandamayee

A HARMONIOUS PRESENCE

—Dr. Bithika Mukerji

The twentieth century has been a crucial one for all nations of the world. Perhaps it can be said that all centuries have witnessed wars and upheavals but never before at the present traumatic rate of acceleration and wide ranging devastations. India has gone through its share of these experiences. The holocaust of the Thirties in Europe can be compared with the massacre of the Hindus in the forties in our country, the turmoil of the "Quit India" movement and its repressive aftermath affecting the lives of the people everywhere. Independence for India was not a matter of jubilation but a grim facing up to the reality of divisive forces.

Sri Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta, a well-known devotee of Sri Sri Anandamayee Ma, who suffered the tragedy of being uprooted from Dhaka at short notice, writes in his diary.

"Drastic changes were taking place in India. The policy of the British was to divide and rule. The implanted seed of hatred for the Hindus in the Muslims was so nurtured under the leadership of Jinnah, that it had grown into a gigantic tree which threatened to darken the horizons for ever. Man had descended to a level many degrees lower than animal. The terrifying carnage of Calcutta, Bihar, Noakhali made us come to the unhappy conclusion that in the divisive holocaust whatever is distinctive in the tradition of *Bharatvarsha* would perish."

In point of time we are still too close to the phenomenon of Sri Sri Anandamayee to gauge her influence not only on the whole of India but beyond her borders as well. From the vantage point of the nineties, however, it becomes clear that Sri Ma's gracious presence during the distressful times of our country was of considerable significance. Like a sure footed gazelle she travelled legibly from one corner of India to the other, meeting the common people, the scholars who were fighting their own battles against a virulent form of intellectual colonization, the political leaders, the Princes and the *Sadhu-Samaj* of our country. She did not assume the role of a guru or even a Teacher of spiritual knowledge. She was more like the mirror-image of one's innermost self (*antaryāmin*) glimpsed imperfectly but recognized immediately as such. For thousands she was a beacon light in an atmosphere of darkness. She gave direction to the keepers of our tradition when they stood at the crossroads of modernity and the ancient heritage.

Shree Ma's impact on our *Sadhu-samāj* was extra ordinary. She, who was not learned, did not belong to any *sampradāya*, did not have a Guru or disciples was

immediately recognized as the quintessence of the spirit of the Upanisadic tradition. Their unanimous acknowledgment of the central position of authority in their midst cannot be over emphasized. Every country has its own special heritage which needs to be guarded and preserved and its renewal celebrated from time to time.

The message of the Vedic tradition could be summarized in the Sloka.

*"uttisthata jāgrata prāpya
Varān nibhodhata
Kṣurasya dhārā nisitā duratyayā
Durgam pathastat kavayoh vadanti"*

Our modern age is threaded through and through with visions of utopia on earth. Perhaps it is a reaction from surviving two world wars in quick succession and the constant threat of a third nuclear war. When we reflect on Sri Ma's constant reiterations of her Vani "*Hari kathāhi Kathā āur sab vrithā, vyathā*" and its many variations, we seem to glimpse a power which can stop an avalanche, divert a torrent or dissipate a cyclone. Shree Ma talked untiringly of dispassion (*vairāgya*) but gave an entirely new direction to the ancient ideal of renunciation. She herself did not renounce anything or anybody. Her endorsement of her own family, which in time expanded in ever widening circles to embrace the whole of humanity, indeed knew no horizons. She lived a life of full involvement with all matters which concerns human beings. Her compassion for the suffering, her understanding of every scale of unhappiness and anxiety, her sympathy for those who were unlucky in life, made her the true Friend. She said, she belonged to everyone who came within the magic orbit of her presence. She was human with humanity and yet beyond its parameters of understanding. Unless it was her *kheyāla* not the most assured of scholars could penetrate the veil of her radiant, but enigmatic smile which bewitched all visitors so lightly and effortlessly she held together to seeming paradox of affirmation and denial, joyousness and dispassion. The Bliss of the self-enlightenment which has been extolled in our tradition was made a reality by life of Sree Ma as the inheritance to be acquired by man here and now in this life.

She made her available for all mankind, because she did not distinguish between caste, creed and sex or country. I remember a conversation with an interlocutor for Sree Ma who was lamenting the fact that "all that is divisive and disquieting is being imported by us, and all that is unitive and beneficial is being taken away by them!" Sri Ma smiled and said, "Who do you call they? Are they not also 'us'?"

Sree Ma spoke always of the 'One only'. We realized in time that she spoke no words of censor or condemnation or rejection. In late years she had occasion to visit a village in East Pakistan and here she was welcomed and received as a well beloved

Friend as anywhere else. Sree Ma during her sojourn on our hallowed land healed many wounds, restored flagging spirit and brought about a renewal of faith in our destiny by just being herself- a self evident personification of all that is promised by the scriptures of all religions.

The horizons of Bharatvarsa were again clear to enable all to see or dream of the vision of a comingling of the dimensions of immanence and transcendence. In Sree Ma we see the unmanifest becoming manifest, a perfection which is an ever-abiding source of joy for all pilgrims on the path of Truth. To engage in the quest for Truth is all that our tradition is about. Sri Ma, in this modern age of distracting perspectives, held aloft the lamp of inwardization so that man may find himself on the path towards fulfillment.

*

***"Is it possible ever to bribe God? By cheating,
you yourself alone will be cheated."***

—Ma Anandamayee

SHREE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE MA

—Prof. Siddheswar Prasad, Ex-Governor

Cultural heritage of India is rich and has many dimensions and facets. Basically, the approach of the Indian tradition has been ethico-spiritual. Since the time of the Vedas it had holistic and integral approach. The one word which embodies and symbolizes the spirit of the spiritual heritage is '*Purushārth*' which includes '*Dharma*', '*Artha*', '*Kāma*' and '*Moksha*'. It has been all along positive and optimistic. Some Western writers have wrongly termed it negative and pessimistic because they either lack proper knowledge of Sanskrit or had little time to study the vast literature in depth.

Since the days of the Vedas in her long history, India has always produced ethico-spiritual leaders, to use the Indian term '*Sādhakas*', of exceptional merit. Some of them were Sages and Seers, some were great scholars, thinkers and philosophers, some were kings and emperors, some were men of ordinary means, some were rich, some were poor, some men, some women and some belonged to upper caste and some to lower caste. The '*Sādhakas*' from different parts of this great country spoke different languages, led different styles of life, but their aim and objective was the same—realisation of the 'Self and service to the people. In the words of Gita, it was *Lokasangraha* which was *Karmayoga*.

Modern India had such great *Sādhakas* to inspire Paramahansa Sri Ramakrishnadeva, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayananda, Swami Ramtirtha, Maharshi Ramana, Sri Aurobindo. In these galaxy of men there was one outstanding woman, Shree Shree Anandamayee Ma.

We cannot look at the sun—the rays are too strong and dazzling for ordinary eyes. But we endeavour to assess and measure the gifts of the sun from the light and warmth we get from it.

Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee is a celebrated spiritual figure. A personality like her takes birth rarely in hundreds and thousands of years to give light to the world. Anandamayee Ma was an embodiment of '*Tapasyā*'. A glimpse of her face gave deep satisfaction and immense solace.

Shree Shree Ma preached the Message of Self realization through love, compassion and tolerance and emphasized the unity of religions and the Brotherhood of Mankind.

The whole world is passing through a crisis of values. Materialism has reached a point of madness. The teachings of the Mother have eternal relevance but more so in the present situation.

Ma Anandamayee personified the essence of India with its spiritual values, sacrifice and tolerance. Her appeal has cut across barriers of caste, creed or religion and drawn people from all sections of the society. The aura surrounding her presence, and her words of advice and comfort, were one of compassion, love and understanding.

Shree Shree Ma laid great emphasis on self-discipline in one's thought, speech and action. She firmly upheld the traditional Indian values and the spiritual injunctions, leading to the path of self knowledge. We are really fortunate to have spiritual personalities like her. It is for us now to follow the footprints and values cherished by her.

I conclude by quoting a poem on the Divine Mother —

When Ma is enthroned in the
 Heart of hearts
 All emotions and attachments
 Flee from the self.
 The self remains awakened
 With that divine love
 Whose absence made the heart run
 Hither and thither.
 Seeking and searching the love of
 The mortals
 Crossing the mountains and ocean
 In futile search
 Not knowing that true bliss
 Rests dormant within.
 Who is it that awakens from
 The deep slumber?
 When lost in the wilderness
 Shows the path guiding
 With her untouchable fragrance
 Her blissful aura
 Capturing with her enchanting supremacy
 Her divine love
 Leaveth naught her child till the bliss
 of beatitude is found."

MĀTRIKĀ CHATURTHI

—Amal Kumar Roy

The air was resonant with the name of the divine mother —Ma Anandamayee. Glory to the Mother — Jai Ma, Jai Ma. On that dark fortnight of *Vaishākh*, and ecstasy had gripped one and all. Some wondered, "Who is this Ma?" The written chronicles on the holy mother unroll a record of miracles. Many of these appear unbelievable and impenetrable mystery. The world bows low to pay its obeisance at Mother's feet!

On the fourth lunar day of the dark fortnight in the month of *Vaishākh*, a baby girl was born in the village of Kheora, now in Bangladesh. Who was she really? The question was uppermost in every mind. All who could come close to Mother were flooded by her divine love, to some she had been a guru, few had even attained liberation by her grace. But as Sri Krishna had told Arjuna in the Gita, "Even among the thousands who attain *siddhi*, only a few know who I am." Even the eminent philosopher of our times, Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, could not fathom Mother and prayed to her,.... Ma, you reveal yourself....." Anandamayee Ma is indeed, a wonder in the world of spirituality.

Ma's very appearance is a mystery to us. Why did she choose the dark fortnight? Why on the fourth lunar day? Is the day, the *lagna* (astral position) an ordinary sequence as in the case of all other mortals? Lesser mortals like us muse over this. Seeker of 'highest reality' muses over this. He has heard from Sri Sri Sitaram Das Omkarnath that *Nāma* and *Nāmi* are one and indivisible in essence. He sits down with the name-'Ma'-chanting in his lips.

The seeker sits down to meditate on Ma, yet Ma herself was meditation; Ma is the worshipped, Ma is worship; Ma is the goal, Ma is the means. Slowly he delves deep into the darkness of this mind. His mind resonates with the sweet name of Ma - waves of joy rise and fall inside him. When he leaves the *āsana*, his mind is not same (seat) as before.

But why did Ma favour a dark fortnight to descend on this world? The Gita had said, "*Sā nisā pasyato mune.....*" What is daylight to the ordinary man is night to the yogi and vice-versa. Shankaracharya had said, "when a lamp burns within a pot with many holes on it, one can see only rays of light emanating from the holes. The lamp, the source of light, remains outside our vision. So also, the light within ourselves is revealed through our sense organs, but itself remains hidden."

Perhaps that was why Ma is so incomprehensible to us. She was immanent in the entire world—yet hidden from our eyes. Even when she decided to reveal herself to us, she did not deviate from her inner self. She decided on the dark fortnight, because what was dark to us, was illumination to a spiritual deity like Mother. We have heard her saying, "I do not arrive or depart."

The only way to understand Mother, was to understand the *Mātrikā Sakti* of the Supreme Being, Brahman. The 'Highest Reality' reveals the whole universe; *Mātrikā* is the power inherent in that 'reality'. The eye of the individual living being, the letters in the alphabet — all are but revelations of *Mātrikā Sakti*.

The Seeker sits down for meditation on the first hour (*pratipadā*) of dark fortnight. His heart beats to the rhythm of the universe which is *prāna*, the first manifestation of '*Chaitanya*' in the process of creation of the universe. He keeps chanting the name incessantly. The letters (*varṇa*) melt and his consciousness spurts upwards along with it. A divine light (*jyoti*) dances before his mind's eye and an unworldly tune of flute fills his mind.

His *japa* enters its second phase- from *baikhari*, *japa* proceeds to *madhyamā*. From the point of view of Time, *pratipadā* enters *dvitīyā*, the second quarter. The darkness inside his "mind's sky" (*chittākāśha*) is now illuminated with divine light. The *mantra* ceases—Ma herself appears before him. Time is progressing from the second to the third quarter.

Some yogis think that the appearance of the divine deity is all that there is to one's *sādhanā*. But for this seeker a sense of imperfection still prevails. True, that Divine manifestation of what *Pratyabhijnā* philosophy terms as *Isvara Tattva* has been experienced, yet one has to travel still further to experience *Sadāsiva Tattva* to know Ma in her *svarupa*. An unimpeded urge for the 'Highest Reality' swells in him. The reality of which Abhinava Gupta in his *Tantraloka* III-100, has described : "If the Highest reality did not manifest in infinite variety but remained cooped up within its solid singleness, it would neither be the highest power nor consciousness but something like a jar". The Seeker further remembers with gratitude what Brahmarsi Satya Dev and Sri Mat Narendra Nath Brahmachariji teach in '*Satya Partisthā*'.

The Seeker sits down again and sinks deep in meditation The word of the Upanisad begins ringing in his mind..... 'Yame Vaisa brinutetena labhyah.'

The Seeker, strictly speaking, still in *Jiva* consciousness realizes his limitations and feels so helpless, seeks for His grace - '*Saranāgatoham-Saranāgatoham* and ultimately loses his consciousness. He transcends into what is called '*Parā*'. He opens his eyes and sees..... not in space within mind but on the dust and sand of the earth. *Mahad Arrived* in Kheora. Ma had revealed Herself in *Chaturthi* — the fourth quarter — the stage transcending *Baikhari*, *Madhyamā* and *Pasyanti*. She reveals herself

from darkness—Hence her appearance in *Krisnapaksa*, the dark fortnight.

Mother is visible eternally to the seeker in her full glory. The seeker knows her and becomes one with Her. The entire universe vibrates and dances in his consciousness, in the form of Ma when the seeker attains the fourth stage of *Vak*, i.e. *Para*, keeping all his *sadhanā* hidden. Whenever that moment comes to the devotee, it is *Krisnā Chaturthi*, for him an ever *Lagna* of Ma's descent on the earth in the first month of the year *Baisakh*—which is beginning of new year --- and for the devotee a new birth — He is now *Dvija*.

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***"Offer all your impurity and depravity to me and
in return receive the ambrosia of immortality."***

—Ma Anandamayee

MA ANANDAMAYEE : A SHINING SYMBOL OF INDIA'S SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

—Shri Sunil Guha

In the spiritual firmament of India "Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee" shines like a brilliant star, alongside the long line of great *rishis* and saints. Unlike many of our spiritual leaders who acquired their experience and wisdom through years of rigorous '*Sadhana*' Ma Anandamayee was a born *siddha*. Has she fulfilled her mission? Will she be born again? A great spiritual leader of India—Shri Shri Sitaramdas Omkarnathji—whom 'Ma' much respected and who in turn, held 'Ma' in great esteem, has predicted—

"Ma will return soon..... in Bengal With much more creative power. You will all see what a tremendous change for the better will come over in India". How blessed will we be!

Two great Messages of 'Ma'

Through her messages, discourses, *leelās*, *kheyāls* and *Bhāvsamādhi*, as well as her personal attitude and conduct, 'Ma' sought to convey the two eternal messages enshrined in India's rich spiritual and cultural heritage :

- (a) A human lifetime is exceedingly precious. The purpose of human life is to gain knowledge and experience of the in-dweller or *Paramātmā* through self-development. In short, the concept of non-duality.
- (b) The universal nature of religion; and the need to accept and tolerate all religions as merely diverse paths to reach the same goal, i.e. God and His Worship.

Be a seeker of your full identity and your true mission in life :

All our ancient and time-honoured scriptures, be it the Vedas, the Bhagvad Gita, the Upanishads or Brahmasutras, asserts that the knowledge of 'non-duality' i.e. God is within you, is the only real knowledge; and all other forms of knowledge, associated with duality, are ignorance. The truth and consistency of this theory has been corroborated by the inner experiences of many seers of truth. And 'Ma' was indeed a living embodiment of this concept and a living commentary on the varieties and spiritual truth of our scriptures and heritage. She was convinced that consciousness exists as a continuum and is the essence of what we are; and that the physical body is only the current vehicle of our spirit as it lives and learns in the earth dimension. And so

'Ma' frequently reminded us that the most important step in our personal development and evolution was to become conscious of our inner "seat of truth", to concentrate on its presence, and to make it a living fact. She constantly urged us to try and discover our real 'mission' in life and to eliminate consciously whatever contradicts our inner truth. "Be a seeker of your full identity", 'Ma', used to urge her devotees. "Every one's guide lies within", she said. When an Irish journalist asked 'Ma' whether she was really God, Ma's reply was sharp and pointed; "God pervades everything, every being. There is nothing except He alone. In your person too He has come here to give me *darsana*".

Not only through her sweet words but also through her '*Kheyāls*' and '*Bhāvsamādhis*' she sought to convey this eternal message of non duality. For instance, 'Ma' asked Bholanath to perform Kalipuja; and then herself assumed Mother Kali's postures to the surprise of everyone present and accepted the puja. She was Goddess Kali incarnate. At times 'Ma' used to plunge deep into *samādhi*, at other occasions, she used to feel that her body was becoming bigger and bigger and her limbs heavier and heavier.

Willams James in his book "Varieties of Religious Experiences", has described these states in the following words; "It is a mystical feeling as if I am no longer small and insignificant. I have expanded and got linked with God. Have a feeling of liberation. How could it be otherwise? How could a self-realized soul like 'Ma' shorn of ego and body-consciousness, feel herself to be small? 'Ma' urged us to see God in everything and every being and practise love, compassion, understanding and kindness. Her most important message was as human beings evolve toward less reliance on their ego and more reliance on the inner voice, we begin to achieve a truly spiritualized society'. We must therefore seek to know who we are and discover our true mission on earth. Without this introspection, without the discovery of that spirit within us, we will remain, as Shri Aurobindo said, "an ambitious nothing."

The second most important contribution of 'Ma' has been to reinforce our religious secularism, her unswerving commitment to universal religion and the basic tenets of all religious faith. Like Sri Ramakrishna, 'Ma' also believed that different religions were but diverse paths leading to the ultimate goal. 'Ma' offered '*Namaz*' at the *Mazār* of a Faquir—a Muslim mystic at Shahbagh. And a Muslim woman devotee constantly had a vision of 'Ma' with a *Taz* on her head while offering prayer to Allah. 'Ma' frequented a Sikh shrine near Shahbagh and engaged in discussions with Sikh devotees on Guru Nanak and Granth Sahab. When an Irish journalist introduced himself to 'Ma' as a Christian, 'Ma' said, "So am I a Christian, a Muslim, anything you like." And on another occasion, a Christian devotee burst forth on meeting 'Ma' :

'Now we have a face to put on God'. On another occasion when a young Christian girl asked Ma how she could overcome a terrible fear that was haunting her, Ma advised her to repeat the name of Christ and cover her mind and heart with the vision of Christ.

Such indeed was Ma's faith in love for all Gods, and for people of all lands whichever religion they professed and practised. The prayer of *Japaji* 28. M.I. of *Adi Granth*-the holy book of the Sikh community says, "Let all mankind be thy sect". 'Ma' too considered the family of humankind as one; and saw the same face of God in all gods.

Relevance of 'Ma's teachings to-day :

The relevance of Ma's teachings, the shining example of integral humanism that she embodied in her divine self and which she urged us to practice, in today's troubled world needs no emphasis. Our own country and society today is being torn asunder by widespread crisis of character, erosion of moral and ethical values, abuse of human rights, politization of religion and emergence of fundamentalists.

I do believe that the coming of 'Ma' in our midst and our coming together with her has not been a mere accident. It has had a deep significance. Could it be that 'Ma' came and gathered us and gave us the lead to discover, first our own divine potential and then work as a critical mass of individuals to bring about the spiritual awakening that we need so urgently in the whole world and especially in our country, in our culture.

Let us work together as sisters and brothers inspired by "Ma's" noble mission. Let us remember these precious words of Swami Vivekananda. "Each soul is potentially divine. The goal must be to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. "Let us manifest this divinity within ourselves by engaging in the many humanitarian work which were very dear to 'Ma'. To serve the poor, the needy and the sick, to promote and support educational activities based on our rich cultural heritage and human values. For, 'Ma' will soon be on this earth again, as predicted by Swami Omkarnathji, and will judge us by our performance on these fronts.

THE HOMEWARD JOURNEY—MY PATH

—James Johnson

[Continued from before]

Durga Puja in Haridwar

After wending my way the length of the subcontinent and back and having become slightly more at ease with all around me, I arrived in Kankhal a few days before Navaratri began. Westerners normally cannot stay at Ma's ashram. I took up residence in a Government Guest House right on the main channel of the Ganga with a bathing ghat stepping down to the holy river. It was wonderful to immerse myself in the river every morning at sunrise before meditation, the water still clean from the Himalayas, milky with glacial tilt and warmed by the October Sun.

On Dusshera, the final day of Durga Puja, after I had dipped three times in the Ganga as usual and greeted the rising Sun, I sat for meditation. Suddenly, eyes closed, I saw in my mind, with spectacular vividness, a vision of the whirling wheels of a slot machine, a gambling device which pays out a winning when the three tumblers stop with all the same symbol lined up. The tumblers snapped to a stop spelling out a three word, five-syllable *mantra*! As I later learned, what I had seen was variation of the Shiva mantra, then unknown to me, with Shiva in its usual place, bracketed by epithets of Vishnu. So little did I know of the Hindu tradition that I did not know the core of initiation is the transmission of a mantra. What can I say? I was a Westerner, as green as they come.

Going to Mataji's ashram later on that auspicious day, I placed my glasses on top of the perimeter wall while I washed my face in the basin by the gate. When I reached up to get them, they were gone! A monkey must have grabbed them, I was told by Swami Bhaskarananda, who may have been the Sangha's General Secretary by then. So, there I was, unable to see properly in the middle of a solo trip in a foreign country. I couldn't recognize faces or read signs; sometimes I could not even see them. I felt panicked and internally pleaded with Mataji, asking why she had blinded me. The rest of the trip I had to ask for help at every turn.

That noon, I had a long conversation with Atmananda, the Austrian nun, who had been close to Mataji for 30 years at that time and who translated for Ma. And I was able, as I said, to bring her news of a friend, Sunyata, of whom she had not heard since he left for America. But she told me that, as a rule, Ma did not give *diksha* or initiation. She had asked Ma for it once and was told it was unnecessary. But, she said, some people believed that they received initiation from Mataji in a dream, or by

a look or special feeling or in a vision; and that Ma never discouraged such beliefs. I immediately thought of my vision of the *mantra* at dawn on this holy day and wondered if that might have been my initiation.

Still, Atmanandaji said she would see what she could do, as sometimes ashram Swamis would give initiation in Mataji's stead. Just then Bhaskaranandaji swept by grandly, intent on some task this very busy day. Atmananda, tiny, shaven-headed and bent with age, rushed after him, tugging at his sleeve. He stopped and looked down to listen to her entreaty and then wheeled about imperiously, fixed me in his gaze and intoned, an index finger raised high, "One year! Return in one year and you can have your initiation." He turned on his heel and steamed on like a grand ocean vessel. Atmananda was crestfallen, shrugging her shoulders and spreading out her upturned hands. "Well", she sighed. "I tried. But I must be silent now. Ma says I talk too much." I was disappointed, knowing that a trip halfway around the globe is probably a once-in-a-lifetime experience, that I would not be back next year.

Atmananda had related something else of Ma's unpredictable behavior during our conversation. She said that Mother had been ill for some time, withdrawn and communicating very little. Sometimes, however, as when a *Mahatma* would come, her demeanor would change completely and she would become quite animated. This indeed happened a few days later when a *Mahatma* arrived and gave a talk on cow protection. After he had finished, Ma began speaking. She had visibly brightened and gesticulated freely as she spoke. Then she began cracking jokes one after another, as the hall became that proverbial 'mart of joy.' People were doubled up in laughter with tears in their eyes. Some were slapping their thighs in that universal gesture of unrestrained merriment and hardly able to catch their breath. One teenage boy had so lost control that he was rolling on the floor, howling with laughter. It was an amazing spectacle, showing how in control Ma was of that fountain of universal joy and mirth, spreading it like a flood over the whole gathering and drowning every ego in unifying release.

In the evening on that ultimate night of Durga Puja hundreds assembled to do *pranam* to Anandamayi Ma as Durga. A fellow Westerner, John, a devotee of Mataji, quite savvy in Indian customs, was guiding me because of my sight problem. John said that the night before the crush of worshipers trying to do *pranam* to Ma at once caused a dangerous situation. Therefore, this night we were to line up and do our *pranams* individually; He had already done his. Ma, he said, was seated in a dim corner of the Adi Shankara Mandir behind the railing of the inner sanctum, beside and almost behind the huge *murti* of Durga with her lion and her attendants assisting her in slaying the demon Mahisha. It was eight feet tall and ten feet long, made of unfired clay, dressed and painted vividly and now had been brought symbolically to life by five days of elaborate rituals and incantations.

When I entered the temple I couldn't see Mataji at all. The dark corner where she was seated was twenty feet in back of the railing of the inner sanctum, quite beyond my range of vision. When, after a long wait in line, I had done my prostration, I left the mandir. In the courtyard, John rushed up to me, and said incredulously, "I know you couldn't see this because you lost your glasses, but Mataji, who had been sitting there quite impassively throughout the evening with no expression on her face, fixed her eyes on you as soon as you entered the temple and a big smile came across her face! She kept you in her loving gaze the whole while and followed you out of the temple with her eyes; then she returned to her formerly passive state!"

Again, as when I found the peacock feather after the *parikrama marg* in Vrindaban, a thrill went through me. At once, it was clear to me that this, along with the *mantra* I had received that morning, was both my initiation and a lesson: In Vrindaban I was blinded by the sun and then by my tears and I lay prostrate and so unable to see Ma's face; and this night also I could not see her. Both times she was showering undeserved and unknown blessings upon me. Both times someone else had to tell me what was happening. Just so is God always aware of us and purging out Grace and Light, calling us home; calling out to us, "Awake!" But we are blind and deaf to the entreaty, suffering without comprehension on our wearying round of births and deaths until one who knows Truth, such as Mataji, reveals it to us, calling us back to the path to our true home.

The next day, one on which it was auspicious to immerse in the Ganga, I was crossing a bridge when I saw an Indian man swept along by the swirling current. He waved and called out to me, "Come on in, the water's fine!" Realizing hadn't anything on me that couldn't get wet, I threw myself off the bridge with full abandon. Ecstatically, I was carried swiftly down the holy Ganga until I reached the government guesthouse, and then swam over and climbed up the steps of the ghat.

Since that night of Durga Puja, I have considered that Mataji, or more precisely the animating Spirit manifesting through her, Durga, Devi or *Shakti*, has initiated me and is my Guru. One day she will burn away all my imperfections, all "me". What remains will be the Universal Consciousness which She is. The Being and the body it temporarily inhabits will then be pure, fit to manifest the Truth as Krishna had and then be absorbed back into the Light. I am feeling that call very strongly these days [this was written just before I retired and came to India in 2005] and will return to India as soon as possible to live out my life, in time, perhaps, taking *Sannyas* (vows of renunciation) near Ma's Samadhi Mandir, the Ananda Jyoti Peetham in Kankhal. She passed away before the next Durga Puja at the age of 86. But I am not in control. The Supreme may have other plans.

[To continue]

RECOLLECTIONS

"Year 1954. I had just graduated. Occasion was *Surya Grahan* (Full Solar eclipse). I along with some of my friends went to Baghat House at Kharkhari, Hardwar to meet Ma. Ma along with other *bhaktas* (devotees) had gone to the Ganga to have a dip in the sacred waters. On reaching the bank we noticed that some monkeyes and crows were also coming out of the jungle on the other side and seemed to be forming a line, waiting in front of us. The expanse of the river was about 50' ft. We all watched with curiosity, as if they were also waiting for the "moment" of the holy dip.

When the time came we all entered into the water for a dip. On the other side they also jumped into the river and then disappeared in the jungle. We all were greatly surprised.

In the evening some devotee asked Ma about the incident. Ma told us that they were all *muni-rishis* (sages) who came in this form for the *Surya Grahan* (Solar eclipse) dip in the Ganga. Later we came to know that this sort of eclipse took place after thousands of years under such planetary conditions and its significance was great."

(Shri Gnga Prasad Shah, Dehradun)

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"I was then about 4-5 years old; but yet distinctly remember having *darsan* of revered Ma for the first time at Manohar Mandir, Anand Chowk, Dehradun with my mother and Dr. (Miss.) Sharda Sharma. In full view of everyone Ma was standing and suddenly got drenched in water. How this happened was a great mystery for everyone present. From my mother I learnt later that Ma had confided to someone that she had gone to save "someone" drowning in Varanasi; hence she got drenched in water.

Years later I visited Ma at Kishenpur Ashram (Dehradun) frequently. On one such occasion I was sitting in a small room with other devotees. A certain Conservator of Forests was trying to explain about preparation of "*saboot dans Khichri*" (a sort of mixed food preparation) all were listening.

After a while Ma looked at me and asked me if I had anything to say. The question which came up to my mind was about an article published in the "Life" magazine, which I had read a few days ago. In this article the writer had expressed his

doubts on the presence of Lord Sri Krishna with every Gopi during "*Mahārās*" (the great play with hundreds of young girls of Lord Krishna at Vrindaba). I requested Ma to enlighten on this.

Ma replied - One should not have any doubt about this as even for an ordinary Yogi it was possible to make his presence felt at several places at the same time, but for Bhagavan Sri Krishna it was a very very trifle matter as He was a *Maha Yogi*, who could perform even more. These words of Ma satisfied my question.

Jai Ma."

(Dr. J.H. Lal, son of Late S. Darshan Lal, Bar-at-Law, Dehradun)

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"By the grace of Sri Ma my first opportunity to have her *darshan* had come quite unexpected. I was then studying for my B.A. degree in Benares Hindu University. Ira Chatterjee, popularly known as 'Iradi', was senior to me. She was an ardent devotee of Sri Ma. Whenever Ma came to Varanasi, Iradi would brush aside all assignments and spent maximum time at Ma's feet. On one such occasion she asked me to accompany her and I most willingly complied. What I beheld that evening took my breath away. In a small room, surrounded by numerous devotees, sat the most divinely beautiful form, her face radiating absolute peace, love and compassion. I gazed at her, transfixed, while the devotees sang devotional songs in melodious tones. After a while the chantings ceased, we bowed to Ma, took *prasad* and dispersed.

For many years after that I had no chance to have Ma's *darshan*. Then, when I came to live in Dehradun I found myself in the midst of family and friends who were regular visitors at Sri Ma's ashram at Kishenpur and Kankhal, whenever Sri Ma was residing there. All time spent in Sri Ma's presence was like the celebration of a festival. One was always conscious of an aura of love and bliss emanating from Ma.

I wish to share with my readers some hallowed and mystical experiences, the memory of which is engraved in my heart. Mother was those days at Kishanpur Ashram. Every evening men women and children flocked to the ashram for *darshan*. The hall would be packed to capacity. We almost always could manage to get seating place only towards the farther end of the hall. Mother would be on a raised platform in full view of everyone. On one such evening I felt particularly down-hearted and secretly thought, "Will I never get a chance to sit close at Mother's feet? The next moment I saw in a flash Ma's face come close to mine and then withdraw to where she sat upon the dais. For a moment I felt stunned and bewildered then awareness flowed and I knew that Ma in her compassion made me realize that distance is no barrier; Ma's spirit moves among each and every one of us.

Another time, a couple of years after Ma had taken *Maha Samadhi*, I was along with a friend at Kankhal during Ma's Janmotsav celebrations. We were seated to partake of the prasad during the *bhandara*. It was a grand spectacle, row upon row were seated sanyasis and sadhus, clad in ochre and white and innumerable other men women and children. *Prasad* was served, but all waited in silence until the senior presiding Swamijee's deep sonorous voice announced "*Bolo Sri Sri Anandamayee Ma ki Jai*" and the word "*Jai*" was boomed and resounded by thousands of aspirants congregated there.

At that moment I experienced mystically as if a beatitude was showering all around in gentle vibration. I felt bathed in it and a flow of joyous tears streamed down my face, my hands lay limp in my lap as I sat dazed and motionless. My companion seemed perplexed, thinking I was in grief. I could barely motion to her to let me be. This state lasted for a few seconds.

My consciousness has often strayed away from Ma but it is as often brought back with a jolt like an errant child not infrequently. Sri Ma has in her great loving kindness appeared to aspiring souls in their dreams and given them comfort and solace. My own mother, living in a very remote part of the country had never seen Ma personally but earnestly longed for her *darshan*. She would read everything she could find about Sri Ma. Once she fell very ill and prayed mentally to Sri Ma. One night she dreamt tht she was in Ma's presence and coming close to her. Sri Ma placed her hand on her head in a gesture of blessing. Then onwards her suffering grew less. A couple of years later she happened to be visiting Dehradun while Sri Ma was residing at Kishanpur Ashram. My mother felt that it was because of Sri Ma's will that such an opportunity had come up. She requested to be initiated and was granted permission.

Ma often said-"God's grace is perennially being showered, you have to be an upturned vessel to receive it."

Jai Ma :

(Sm. Prabha Kumari, Cross Road, Dehradun)

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