

# MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly  
with the divine life and sayings of  
Shree Anandamayee Ma

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## Matri Vani

It is generally found that people are involved in their own individual interests as well as in the interests of their loved ones. But deep attachment to God and devotion are the essence of human life. An ignorant cannot take refuge to God because he does not remove the veil of illusion (*maya*). Therefore, follow the path of ever-pure *nityashuddha* (नित्यशुद्ध); ever-wise and ever-enlightened *nityabuddha* (नित्यबुद्ध) and ever-free and ever-liberated (नित्यमुक्त) *nityamukta*. This is knowledge. Knowledge to know yourself. The man of knowledge who is constantly in communion and singleminded in devotion excels.

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Root cause of all the miseries and distress is the thought that God is very distant. On the contrary, God always resides within the human being, living in their heart. He is the driving force in all's life and we are mere an instrument in His hands.

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You don't have intellect of God's power. It is He who drives you hence you must follow His directives. Pilgrims take pilgrimage to Badrinath. Pilgrimage means '*sanyam*' (संयम). *Sanyam* means the process of transformation, applies to each and every expression in life, including behaviour, attitude, speech and thought. Life based on *sanyam* is very difficult to lead because it is full of miseries and difficulties. People always urge for something following their unending *vasana* and these are due to the past experience and their impressions left on human mind. Pray to the God that you don't need anything except Him.

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God is our very own, and it is important that we see ourselves as His own. When we exclude God from our daily realities, we reduce Him to a mental abstraction. We need a concept of God that will motivate us to love Him — one that will inspire us to know Him, and one, moreover, that will bring Him into every aspect of our lives. *Satsang* and reading sacred books are the only way to feel the presence of God within yourselves. This is the way to lead an ideal life.

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Don't worry even if meditation goes deep in old age. God's grace can usher on you at any time.

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Service to human being brings *chittasuddhi* (चित्तशुद्धि - purification of mind) that leads to God. However, service must be in true form. If you are eager to get fame for your service, you will get nothing. It will take you away from the God. You will have to work with total detachment that will lead to *chittashuddhi*, making you free from all bondages.

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It is said that there are two types of sins found in the *Kaliyuga* - sins of mind and sins of body. Mind or *mano* is basically a tool or instrument which pushes thoughts and emotions into the realm of consciousness. Mind always runs after the activities that are not possible in physical body. It is said sins of body appear to be much more dangerous while sins of mind are not much serious. Sins of body directly take you to hell. But, both the sins are equally sins and must be discarded. Sins that create distance from God should always be avoided. Surrender yourself to the Lord first and be virtuous all the time. Virtue opens the door to the Lord.

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We all are dwelling on the lap of the God. We derive from Him and hence living within Him. But, we are unknown of this. A veil exists between Him and ourselves creating a distance from Him, making us ignorant about Him. We are in oblivion. Knowledge is manifested once veil is uncovered. We and He appear identical.

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Question: There is existence of God. But can He be realised?

Mother: He is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient, said the great saints.

Mother recited a devotional song: '*Kaho jin janam diya, kaho Ram Siya*'.

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## Shri Shri Ma Anandamayee Prasanga

Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

(Continued)

Gopaldada: I never thought that Mother was made awaited here till 2 o'clock in the night. (addressing the Mother) Mother, it seems you are above common emotions like, joy and sorrow but we are ordinary people and thus have all these emotions. I think we would behave with you with all our emotions. We think you too feel sorrow when we feel the same.

Mother: Who told you that I'm above joy and sorrow? I too have all these emotions (every one smile).

### On *Samadhi*

All the lights were off at 8.45pm and everyone started meditating. Discussion was resumed after the meditation. Addressing Dev Shankar Babu, Mother started speaking, "You referred to a point to raise the issue of *samadhi* (*samadhi* is the eighth and final step in the meditative process before the Self is released from its self-ignorance and enters the ultimate condition of "aloofness"). It may happen. *Samadhi* is a stage and its types are numerous. Some saints deliberately leave a few signs before *samadhi* and return to the original stage through that sign when *samadhi* is over. The reverse can also be noticed. Saints return back to the original stage without leaving any sign before it. For instance, one may go to *samadhi* after observing a beautiful flower and that flower will be the source when he returns to the original stage. The feeling or emotion will be the same when a person involves in *samadhi* as well as when he returns back from that state. There are numerous such states but you generally differentiate the stages of *samadhi* and normalcy based on certain symptoms. For example, you think a person sleeping by hearing his snoring while you think him awake by observing his

movements. Similarly, you think a person in *samadhi* while observing his motionless postures. However, there are other types of *samadhi* where there exist no such postures or motion, though it is also *samadhi*. In this case, behaviour of the person is very normal to the outer world. There exists no ascending or descending in this case. This state can be described with the example of a postgraduate teacher teaching the small children. He behaves like his small pupils while teaching, though he does not lose his original knowledge. In the same way, persons behaving like others, though ascending on *samadhi* stage, enjoy the *akhandā* (indivisible) knowledge or consciousness at the same time. People think of him as an ordinary person because he continues his daily chores as usual with all emotions. It is difficult to recognise these persons and this particular stage of *samadhi*.

### **Gita illuminates**

Mother continued to speak on *samadhi* for sometime. Gopaldada then requested her to speak on the *Gita*.

Mother: Baba, have you taught me the *Gita*?

Gopaldada: I'm not talking of teaching of the *Gita*. We want to listen the *Gita* that exists within yourself. Please tell us.

Mother smiled and started talking after a pause, " Different chapters of the *Gita* deals with different types of knowledge or consciousness. All the knowledge will appear true once the *Gita* really illuminates within yourself. Suppose you could not get the proper meaning of a few *ślokas* while reciting the *Gita*. You then ask a person and that clears your concept. This is one type of knowledge. But, I'm not talking of this type. Instead, I stress that the *Gita* exists within all of you and it illuminates you once it is manifested from your inner consciousness. In other words, all the stages of knowledge described in the *Gita* will be manifested within yourself and then you can realise that every word of the *Gita* bears the truth. Similar type of discussion was held earlier in Vrindavana. It was observed the *Gita* is interpreted with numerous meanings and ways. This is in outer pretext. There exists no difference

in these interpretations when the *Gita* starts manifesting within yourselves. It is revealed in that stage that truth is the same though described differently in different situation. It means whose form is one and whole which is indivisible and divisible both. Therefore, what's wrong in it?

Discussion was wrapped up at 10pm and we left after offering our pronam.

10 Pausha, Saturday (25.12.1948)

Gopaldada delivered his lecture this afternoon. His lecture was not based on the *Gita*, instead, it threw light on the *Gita*-puja that was scheduled for tomorrow.

Discussion on the *Gita* was started at 8pm. Gopaldada requested Mother to resume the deliberation from the point it was wrapped up yesterday.

Mother pointing to her body: There is no beginning and no end of this body. I already explained to you yesterday that this body does not contain anything. It is absolutely spotless and it cannot explain anything (every body laugh).

Meaning of *jiva*, individual self and *atma*, the soul

One gentleman: Mother, there is a *shloka* in the *Gita*. 'नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः...' what is the meaning of एनं ?

Mother: It's I but this I is not the same as we think of it. It's Self.

Gentleman: Could not get the point.

Mother: *Gita* has many references of 'I', i.e. take refuge to me, adore me etc. This 'me' is 'Self'. This 'Self' is not cut by any weapons nor fire burns it- this 'it' is 'Self'.

Gentleman: Now I'm explaining to you what I have got. एनं represents soul which is omnipresent.

Mother: It's not omnipresent, it is manifested everywhere.

Gentleman: Now the question arises what is *jiva*, the individual self?



Mother: Feeling of confine or entrapping is called *jiva*.

Gentleman: We see the cover of the electric bulb. Is it *jiva*?

Mother: Who is saying this? You are saying and it depends on your context only. I'm telling a story, an autobiography of an earthen jar. Now listen to the story:

Earthen jar was being worshiped in place of the idol in a house. The jar started telling its biography once it was put on *pran pratistha* (process of consecrating an idol). It said, " My original identity was soil which was covered with small trees and bushes. One day, I found myself under the spade which cut me in pieces. Then the pieces were further smashed and those were kept in water. Then again smashing was made with legs. My hard nature turned to soft after the series of tortures and I thought the process may be the last one and I will be in peace. Alas! that never happened. I was put on the wheel of the potter. Finally, my original identity of soil was lost and I became an earthen jar. But it was not the end. I was thrown to the fire that made me again a hard object. In next step, I was displayed in a shop and the buyers used repeated hand strokes on my body to test me. In this way I was bought one day and installed here after having filled with the water of the Ganges".

This story reveals that soil passes through numerous situation yet its original identity remains the same. Everything in this universe is changeable but *atma*, the soul, is unchangeable. Water becomes polluted and start smelling once it is stagnant. Pollution creates numerous bacteria that give birth to different diseases. Death is also possible due to these bacteria following consuming the polluted water. However, the same water can be used after proper filtering. Original identity of the water does not change no matter it is polluted or clean. In the same way, *atma* becomes *jiva* when it is entrapped while it regains its original identity once it comes out of the trap. Water is *nirakar* or formless while it becomes *aakar*, a form, when frozen and becomes ice. Likewise, *atma* or the soul is both *sakar* and *nirakar*.

Our understanding of *jiva* differentiates it from those of the wood, stone etc. which are जड़ or inanimates. We differentiate *jiva* from जड़. But *atma*, the soul is eternally manifested, therefore, it is both *jada* and *jiva* depending upon the situation. I explained it with the example of stone as *jiva*, to remove your confusion.

### God reciprocates to the Devotees

Dr. Pannalal, a senior government bureaucrat, was there and he asked his question, "Mataji, I do strongly believe in what you said on soul but I'm curious to know how could we watch it"?

Mother: Ordinary spectacles cannot not see the *atma*. You need to have special specs.

Dr. Pannalal: From where will I get those specs?

Mother: From the *guru*.

Dr. Pannalal: Who is *guru*?

Mother: *Guru* will provide the specs (all laugh).

Another gentleman: According to many, God is realised only through repeated rendering of '*Rama Rama*' or '*Gayatri mantra*'. What is its meaning and does it bear any fruit?

Mother uttered 'Baba' thrice loudly. Dr. Pannalal stood up thinking he was being called by Mother. She replied with a smile, "Got the answer from you after uttering thrice." Everyone laughed loudly. Thus, said Mother, God reciprocated after his devotee uttered '*Rama Rama*' repeatedly.

Every one became amazed the way Mother replied with valuable preaching. Deliberations ended up to pave the way to decorate the hall for tomorrow's sacred ceremonies.

### 11 Pausha, Sunday ( 26.12.1948)

Today is the last day of *Gita jayanti*. Special puja of Govinda will be held today. I reached ashram after my routine household chores and found the puja going on. The hall was beautifully decorated with flowers. Idol of Govinda was placed in a throne and decorated with lots of

garlands and flowers. Gopaldada was performing puja along with his disciples. Many of the devotees of Mother too joined the puja which is different from other normal puja activities. Emotion (inner feeling of the heart) dominated this puja and musical recital and dance were being performed. Two daughters of Gopaldada were rendering devotional songs that captivated the audience. Puja continued till 1pm followed by होम (burnt offering or oblation) that continued till 5 pm. I returned home in the evening. Khukunididi sent some fruits to home.

*(to be continued)*

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## **An Earnest Request**

### ***Jai Ma***

It's an appeal to all the devotees of Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma to share with the readers of *Amritvarla* the treasure trove of their timeless reminiscences encircling Sri Ma. This might be a personal experience of great significance or that of the family members who were ever blessed by Sri Ma.

*Matri Sharanam*

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## Random Memories

Bithika Mukherjee

After I joined the B.H.U., I was not able to follow Sri Ma around on her travel. I just kept up the routine of attending the Birthday celebrations. I attended the *samyam saptah* at Sukhtal because Sri Ma has sent for me. I also went to Vrindavan for another *samyam saptah* because the girls told me that Sri Ma remarked on my continued absence. I had not seen Sri Ma for long time. When I arrived at the ashram I found *satsang* was in progress in the hall. I stood at the door to have *darshan*. Sri Ma looked at me from her distant seat on the rostrum and then very deliberately turned her face away. I was actually amused at this so human reaction. While bowing down in *pranam* I said to myself, "Turning your face away will do you no good - you cannot desert us and we have no other refuge to turn to". When I raised my head and stood up I found her gaze on me and with a most beautiful expression as if she was endorsing the sentiments. I somehow remember this incident very clearly.

Other random memories go back to earlier years. The *maunam* (silence) of 15 minutes from 8.45p.m. to 9p.m., which is observed in all our ashrams, was begun sometimes during the year I was in Kanyapeeth, ie. 1948-49. This short period of *maunam* always used to be observed near Sri Ma, that is to say, wherever she happened to be in the ashram. One evening Sri Ma was lying on her *chowki* (cot) in the red verandah of the Kanyapeeth building, Didi and one or two of us were sitting around chatting desultorily. Sri Ma spoke about the period of *maunam*. I understood her to say that the entire ashram should become silent and still during this time. "How nice it would be", she said, "if at the stroke of the hour a quiet should descend to envelop the entire building, but it is too sprawling and there are too many people busy with various activities". I asked if I should try to organise the *maunam*, Sri Ma said,

"Can you? Try and see".

I thought for a while, then went to Atulda in the Annapurna Mandir. I explained to him the details of the project and asked him if he would blow the conch-shell loudly from the parapet thrice at exactly 8.45p.m. He being a very helpful person agreed to do so. Then I went to each department, up and down the staircases and through corridors. The general kitchens were right down near the Ganges. Our own kitchens were behind the main building. The kitchen staff everywhere were either amused or disgruntled at the idea that they would be required to stop work for a while at the sound of a conch-shell. Some wanted to know if everyone was to come to wherever Sri Ma would be sitting. It took me some time (and it took a few days for all this to become a habit) to explain that the idea was for everyone to keep *maunam* while doing whatever they were engaged in during those 15 minutes. Utter silence should prevail in the entire ashram.

Years passed, nobody remembered that I had first organised the ashram for this period of silence. I myself was amazed when, after almost 30 years or so, Sri Ma once mentioned this fact in my hearing. She let me know that she remembered it on an occasion when she was asking me to arrange some function at a particular time. She said, "Do it the way you organised the time of the *maunam*".

Many awkward situation developed when *mahatmas* became frequent visitors to our ashrams. Sri Ma postponed all her appointments in order to keep herself free for the ensuing *satsang*. For the young girls surrounding Sri Ma at all times this had been a cause for resentment because they had to keep their distance while the *sadhus* were in *satsang* with her. Life became extremely difficult when Sri Krishnananda Avadhutji became an ardent devotee of Sri Ma. He was a great renunciate of exemplary reputation, but he seemed positively to dislike the sight of the girls forever surrounding Sri Ma. So whenever he came to see Sri Ma, she made it clear that we were to leave the room and wait outside. One rather amusing incident happened because of this situation. We were in Puri at this time. It was during a vacation, because a lot of

us were there. From the open window in Sri Ma's room Avadhutji was seen to be coming along the sea shore. We hastily removed ourselves to the next room and to the open verandah outside Sr Ma's room. Only young men like Abhayda, Bibhuda and Bindu remained. When Avadhutji was seated in Sri Ma's room she asked Bindu to sing a *bhajan* because the Swamiji was very fond of devotional music. Bindu began with the well-known song "*man ko range jogi sache rang me* (O ascetic, soak your garments in the true colours of detachment. Saffron clothes alone are not enough)".

While Bindu sang in his melodious voice, we watched Sri Ma fidgeting on her *chowki*. She would glance at us and then quickly avert her eyes and stare out at the ocean. Avadhutji sat still and seemed to like the song. He then did his *pranam* to Sri Ma and went away. With a sigh of relief, we trooped in to find Sri Ma almost helpless with laughter. She was half scolding Bindu for his choice of song. She was saying to him, while wiping tears of laughter from her cheeks, "Bindu, Bindu, how could you! To sit under the nose of the sadhu and sing this song! I did not know how I kept my countenance. Thank goodness the girls were not here, otherwise if they had broken into even the ghost of a smile, I certainly would have lost control. You will see, the sadhu will not come again". Poor Bindu scratched his head and said he had not chosen the song with anything in his mind, which of course Sri Ma already knew. Needless to say, the revered Swamiji had not taken it personally either.

How endearing was Sri Ma' behaviour with her retinue of young people, how circumspect with the ascetics, and all this done so gently and so joyously. Joyousness was the keynote of our experience of those days we spent with Sri Ma.

The person most annoyed by this intrusion of the *sadhus* in our lives was Bunidi. Bunidi never attended *satasng*, she would wait Sri Ma in her own room and be ready for her with a glass of water or some pieces of fruit. Very often Sri Ma had no time even take these refreshments, but Bunidi was always ready with them in case she did. Renu once told us a story about Bunidi and the sadhus. In Almora the

buildings where the *brahmacharis* (young ascetics) stayed was at a for distance from the living quarters of the young girls staying with Sri Ma. The girls were not supposed to trail after Sri Ma when she went to visit the *sadhus*. Sometimes she, accompanied by Didi, spent the night in her room within the sadhu-building. This was too much for Bunidi. She prevailed upon Renudi and Ksamadi (and perhaps Billoji) to set up an *akhanda kirtana* for Sri Ma begging her to come back to their part of the ashram. She improvised by singing. "Please, to us come back, we suffer from your lack" and many more nonsensical lines to rhyme with the *kirtana*. She said they would keep on singing till Sri Ma came back. Later at night somebody suddenly realised that Abhayda was sitting in the midst. Bunidi at once embraced the lady sitting next to him and discovered Sri Ma. Sri Ma had quietly left her *chowki* and had unobtrusively entered the girls' room and had sat quietly in their midst for quite some time. With her head and face covered, she had looked like any other white-clad ashramite. Abhayda, discovering that her *chowki* was unoccupied, guessed her whereabouts and disobeying the rules of the entry came over to the girls' quarters. The girls were joyful but Bunidi berated Abhayda since Sri Ma went back to their part of the ashram because he would not leave without her.

Once Didu (Chhabi Chwdhary), Bunidi and I were with Sri Ma, on her visit to Bishtapur. We were told that it was Sri Ma's *kheyal* to proceed further without her entourage of girls, accompanied only by Swamiji (Paramanandaji) and Didi. The three of us were told to go back to Calcutta and await her return. Didu and I were not given to protest and we sadly began to pack our things. Bunidi was not reconciled to this parting at all. She cried and cried and made everybody miserable. At Kharagpur Junction, we boarded our train while Sri Ma and her one or two companions stood on the platform to see us off. Didu and I looked out of the window but Bunidi was slumped in a corner still wiping away her tears. As the train started, Sri Ma took a corner of her *chaddar* (shawl) in her hand and started waving it in the manner of a handkerchief. She then proceeded to move along with the train almost

running, just as we always did when she was travelling and we were left on the platform. I cried out, "Bunidi, Bunidi look at Ma!". Bunidi then sprang to the window and lent out (there was no bars to the windows in those days) and laughed to see Sri Ma waving farewell to us while running with the train. So Sri Ma saw Bunidi's laughing face before we left. Bunidi sat back saying, "She did it just to make me laugh, but I am very annoyed all the same". But her mood had changed.

Sri Ma ever countenanced emotional displays in any way of the young people who surrounded her. Tears, sulks or hurt feelings she ignored or dealt with in a hundred different ways. However, Bunidi's case was exceptional. We all admired her commitment to the service of Sri Ma. Among the girls, she came closest to gauging Sri Ma's *kheyal* and acted accordingly. She used to suffer from asthma very badly, but she would always be neat and trim and so would she keep Sri Ma's miscellaneous effects. Memories crowd in – Bunidi was a person who felt happy when Sri Ma was joyous and radiant. If Sri Ma was grave or serious, Bunidi would try to divert her *kheyal* towards something light and funny, so that Sri Ma would smile or laugh. Sri Ma, however, seemed quite often to prefer disorder and impromptu arrangements. Once when she left on a short visit to Etawah from Dehradun, she only took Renu with her, leaving Bunidi at the ashram. Bunidi was so upset and so given over to crying that she forgot to pack Sri Ma's clothes for the journey. Arriving at their destination, Renu was appalled to see that there were no blouses or petticoats for a change of clothes. At night when all visitors had gone away, Sri Ma asked Renu to fetch one of her *dhotis*. Under Sri Ma's guidance, Renu sewed a blouse and petticoat from this cloth. Sri Ma managed with these few garments – nobody came to know that she had so few clothes to wear and change into; actually people noticed only the spotless white *chaddar* (wrapper) that Sri Ma used in all seasons.

Bunidi in spite of her occasional lapses, was irreplaceable as a custodian of Sri Ma's effects. Sri Ma lived in a perpetual state of disarray after Bunidi's regime was over. The other girls who came after



her were never so competent. I take this opportunity to pay my tribute to Bunidi who was totally devoted to Sri Ma and was like an older sister to the younger cadre of girls like myself, Gini, Tara, Buha and many more. In retrospect, I realise that not the least rewarding experience of our life with Sri Ma was this richness of many friendships with contemporaries.

Letter writing sessions with Sri Ma were always very rewarding. The ever-increasing bag of letters which Didi carried with her with such care was a regular item of her baggage. Every so often she would request Sri Ma to give some time to the letters. Important or urgent letters were read and answered as occasion demanded, but the bulk of them consisted of homely news from devotees who just wanted to keep in touch with Sri Ma. Sri Ma herself developed a pattern-form disposing of her letters in one session. Five or six of us would take out all the letters from the bag and distribute them amongst ourselves, generally according to the language, such as Bengali, Hindi, Gujrati or English. We would read them carefully, mark the important sections or just make a precis. Sri Ma sat on her *chowki* while we sat in a semicircle in front of her. Turn by turn we would 'read' out the letters and take down her answers. She was very swift. She gave her full attention to each correspondent and dealt with each seriously. There were a few correspondents who wrote prolifically. There would be five or six letters from the same persons in the bag. We were not supposed to ignore any of them. She listened to each one after which we had arranged them date-wise. Sometimes certain letters amused us but they evoked no answering smile from her. She gave all of them her serious attention. But she would clap her hands if we could empty the bag in one session and say, "Now Didi will be happy".

Sri Ma's answers are preserved verbatim in Didi's priceless collection of *Vani*. I reproduce a few here to give samples of Sri Ma's care and concern for each of her correspondents.

To a woman who wrote in anguished terms about her affairs, saying she was angry with Ma for her unconcern:

"This body has caused you sorrow, think nothing of this body,

disregard it if you can. All of you should engage only in the pursuit of that Ultimate One. He is compassionate, merciful. He is ever beckoning you to him. My mother (the correspondent) feels hurt – but has also a beautiful side to it".

"You have been given this valuable human life – Don't waste time in useless thoughts. Render service to everyone in the household in the conviction that all forms are different aspects of God. Make friends with 'the personification of anger'. Think that you are rendering service to Him, to Him, to Him alone. If you can maintain the spirit of service, you will see you are being enriched with love, devotion and reverence towards Him. Time is short. Is it intelligent to waste time over thoughts which cause obstacles? You must not say, "I cannot". All relationships are temporary after all. You do not know what the morrow will bring – everyone must pack his own belongings for that journey.

Get ready for that journey on your own

That is one path that you will travel alone.

"You feel like scolding this body? Why not? Whatever you feel is welcome here. It is my *kheyal* that since this body cannot do anything for anybody, in becoming the object of your scolding it is rendering some little *seva* (*service*) after all.

Another devotee who was a renunciate wrote to her about the administrative problems in his ashram. She answered:

"Pitaji knows that this body does not have anything to say regarding these controversies. Had it been otherwise this body would surely have obeyed (given directions). But I ask, what is the use of engaging yourself in these matters? You have donned saffron robes, the colourful uniform of the navigator of the boat for crossing the river of life; your own *sadhana* is the wherewithal for the propelling of the boat. Whatever you have written about pertains to the world; these thoughts are not conducive toward crossing the river. No help whatsoever. Whoever or whatever is creating these hazards which must lead to drowning midway

– beg of them with folded hands to allow you to proceed unhindered. Whatever is clouding your mind now are obstacles, obstacles and obstacles. Engage your mind in the thoughts of the *atma* only."

Sri Ma had a quick way of answering questions put to her in passing. Once a woman said, "Ma, how do you keep your equanimity in spite of being constantly troubled by so many of us without respite for days?" Sri Ma said, "How do you keep your sari in orderly folds in the face of constant changing conditions? You do it automatically, not even becoming aware of the movements of your hands, don't you?"

The woman was much struck by this answer. She exclaimed, "Now I understand what *Geeta* describes as *abhyasa-yoga* (yoga by practice). The effort which becomes a normal way of life." I do not think Sri Ma meant quite what the lady understood her to mean but such exchanges happened very often.

Another woman said to her, "Ma, you have to deal with crowds of strangers all the time, nowadays. Don't you ever feel tired of this constant influx of outsiders?" Sri Ma smiled and answered, "Don't you get relatives as guests staying in your house? When kith and kin come, don't you treat them as family? You don't even notice the extra work. Isn't that so? Nobody is an outsider here."

Once she happened to come across a group of elders who were indulging in jokes not to be spoken in public. Sri Ma overhearing their talk added jocular statement of her own which made them burst out laughing. One of them, a judge (Benoy Bhuson), said in wonderment, "Ma, you have no experience of the matters we were discussing; how do you understand this nonsense and moreover comment so wittily on it?"

Sr Ma said, "Baba, you are required to listen to tales of crime. Do you have to experience them before you pronounce judgement?"

The quick rejoinder was appreciated by Benoy Babu and his friends.

## Questions to the Readers

We are pleased to introduce a New Section through which we could interact with our readers. In future issues of *Amritvarta* there will be a dozen of quotes/sayings of Sri Ma for which you are requested to give the details like where, when and to whom Sri Ma spoke these and in which context. Please don't forget to mention the page number and title of the book in which you got the details.

The first five correct replies will get an annual complimentary subscription of *Amritvarta*. The names of the winners along with the correct answers will be published in the next issue of *Amritvarta*.

Kindly email your replies to [amritvarta@gmail.com](mailto:amritvarta@gmail.com):

1. The guest is God and you should serve him cheerfully. Service without cheerfulness is no service at all. Never do anything to earn praise or position. Special care should be taken to see that your words and manners do not hurt the sentiments of anybody.

2. Father, there is little to tell. My consciousness has never associated itself with this temporary body. Before I came on this earth, 'I was the same'. I grew into womanhood, but still 'I was the same'. When the family in which I had been born made arrangements to have this body married, 'I was the same'. And in front of you now 'I am the same'. Even afterwards, though the dance of creation changes around me in the hall of eternity, 'I shall be the same'.

3. Remembering Him will never go waste. Call Him until you get a response. Actually, you are calling yourself. You are trying to achieve yourself. You are sending out your call to the indivisible to become indivisible.

4. The sentiment with which you marry – no vibrations of that sentiment ever existed in this body.

5. Where there is Ram (Lord) there is 'Aram' (peace); absence of Ram would mean 'Byaram' (discomfort).

6. When initiation becomes necessary it comes at the proper time. One should always be immersed in God. Have faith that He will do whatever is necessary.

7. I am only a child and do not know how to lecture or give discourses. Just as a child, when finds something sweet and good takes it to its mother and father, so do I place before you what is sweet and good. You take whatever pleases you.

8. When this body lay in a dark room in an almost frozen condition the whole room was flooded with light radiating from it. When Bholanath and Jyotish (Bhaiji) came to take me outside, I had a *kheyal* that my body was surrounded by a very bright light. This may have spoilt the first few plates. This light began to diminish gradually until it remained concentrated on forehead only. I did not see Jyotish but I had *kheyal* that he was standing at by back.

9. Though the earthly being is ignorant of its true identity, when it accepts another being as totally free from all earthly bondages, it gets a sensation of that superior state, however, transient it may be.

10. There should be no expression of inner realisation – keep them locked in a box. If smoothing spills out of an over-full box, do not care, proceed along your own path. If by chance some indications are revealed, do not bother but take care that you yourself do not let them out in the open.

11. One must be careful while speaking as at times even causally uttered words, good or bad, may turn out to be true.

12. In order to attain to a particular stage along one of those lines of *sadhana* an ordinary individual may have to be born again and again, but in the case of this body it was a matter of a few seconds.

## Padapeetham Smarami

Dehradoon Ashram

Shri Shri Ma Anandamayee Ashram

(Continued)

Br. Geeta

### Dhyan Mandir

One of the rooms located at the upstairs in Dehradoon Ashram is known as Dhyan Mandir (Meditation room or hall). Respected Bhaiji christened it as Dhyan Mandir. He wanted this room be used only for the meditation and only one person is allowed inside at one time. Later it was made a rule that one person was allowed inside at one time. Besides, the person once enters inside meditation hall should maintain silence. Bhaiji himself meditated here. Once he saw a subtle body engaged in reading in the room and it wanted a glass of water from him. It has been a tradition since then that *bhog* has been offered there in the form of raisins with a glass of water. A writing desk and pen with ink were also arranged in the room. Nobody slept in this room except Mother.

### Mother's room in Dehradoon Ashram

Mother's room in this Ashram is the living example of many spiritual activities. Mother had numerous *darshans* here and these have been explained in detail in the books of Gurupriya Didi. Mother had seen Siva and Vishnu in their infant form. This incident was thoroughly narrated by Gurupriya Didi in the seventh chapter in her book *Shri Shri Ma Anandamayee*. The passage is as follows: "Mother did not sleep this noon and thus left the meditation room. I arranged the upstairs room for her sleep but she could not and called me inside. Mother told that sleep eludes her. I suddenly felt a smell that generally noticed in the body of the infants. The room was covered with the smell. I said, "Oh! It's the

smell of the infants". Mother said with smile, "There is a reason". I was much curious to know the reason. Mother explained, "It was already told that there were few subtle bodies arrived on 24th of Chaitra of the Bengali calendar. I woke up quite late the next day. I noticed many subtle bodies (*sukshma sharir*) in the morning of 25th Chaitra and two of them were newly born babies sleeping by the side along with me. One of these subtle bodies thought both the new borns came out of this body (pointing out at her physical body). That subtle body said, "They are her (Mother) children". At this, another *sukshma sharir* countered, "What are you saying? All the creatures of this universe are her children because she is involved in creating new life every minute". After saying this, that *sukshma sharir* prayed to this body (to Mother), "Mother, why do you not reveal the truth"? I stood up immediately and walked away fastly. Subtle body who earlier spoke about my children, realised that a common person could not walk with such a speed. Second *sukshma sharir* who prayed to me, expressed his surprise as to why other people could not recognise Mother like those who could. Another replied, "People who could not recognise Mother, fail to differentiate between the truth and untruth".

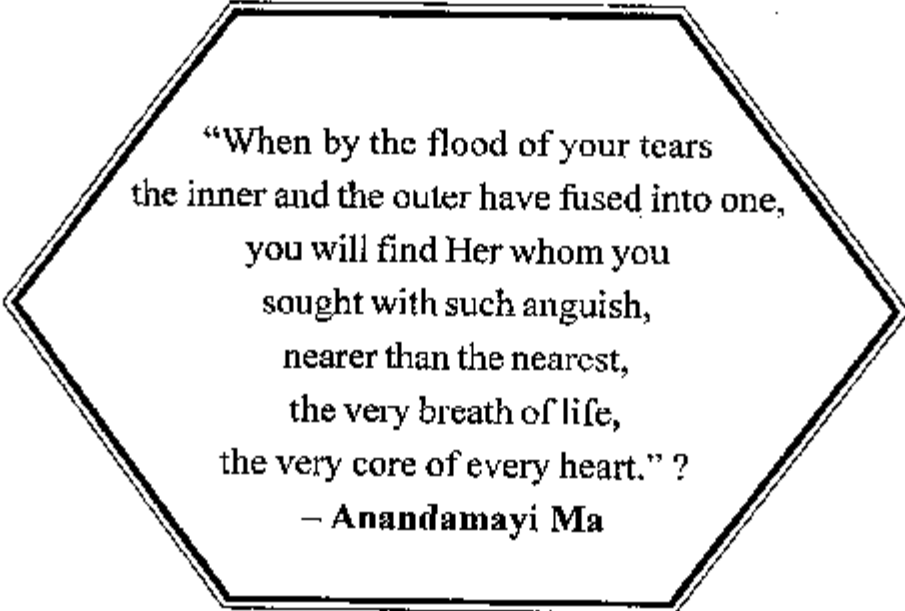
The two new borns who were lying by the side started moving their bodies and wanted to approach this body (Mother). One of the subtle bodies brought them to me and put them on my lap and placed my hands on their heads. My gestures to those new borns seemed to be not positive and that made the subtle bodies surprised. Both the the infants gradually were grown up and started walking. The rays that generally are found behind the gods, were noticed behind those infants. One infant resembled like that of lord Vishnu with *chaturbhuj murti* while other one had white skin and his eyes looked like a *mahayogi*. There are many more subtle bodies at different stages similar to that of here. There was total silence and lips were not used in conversation (that I described you), as if some body is talking from inside. It is not possible to describe the sweet tone of voice that I heard a couple of times. Do you know how these infants emerged? It's like the bubbles that cover your

hands when you rub the soap".

I was dumb founded to hear the narration and told Mother, "I came to know from your description that the infants were Siva and Vishnu". Mother did not object. I again told her, "I'm feeling shaken. Oh mother, who actually are you"? Mother smiled and took my words lightly saying, "It is not a big deal and there are many such examples. You should not be surprised. I narrated this incident following your reference of smell of the infants. This narration spontaneously came out following a *bhava* and you correctly smelt the odour of infant's body".

This very room in Dehradoon Ashram holds a significant place and is the witness of a many spiritual experiences. It is a holy pligrim centre and Her grace is illimitable. Mother took Her *mahasamadhi* in this very room on August 27, 1982.

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“When by the flood of your tears  
the inner and the outer have fused into one,  
you will find Her whom you  
sought with such anguish,  
nearer than the nearest,  
the very breath of life,  
the very core of every heart.” ?

– Anandamayi Ma



## Ma's Journey all over India

Someshwar

Banerjee

Shree Shree Ma's appearance in human form was for the welfare of all the humanity; hence, it was not possible for Ma to remain confined to Dhaka only. In 1926, the Deputy Post Master General of Dhaka, Sri Pran Gopal Mukhopadhaya requested Shree Ma to meet his guru, the famous Yogiraj Balananda Brahmachariji, and took Ma, Baba Bholanath and a few others to his Deoghar Ashram in Bihar. Balanandaji at that time was about one hundred years old. When Ma met him, he was greatly delighted to see Ma and said, "My daughter, once you had come here to give *darshan*\* in your ethereal form and today you have come personally to show your physical form". Ma replied politely, "Baba was not keeping well at that time and therefore your daughter came to see you." It surprised all the devotees present there, as Ma never visited this place earlier.

One day, there was an evening *kirtana* (devotional singing). As soon as '*Hari bol*' *kirtana* started, Shree Ma went into an ecstatic trance. Suddenly She stood up and walked straight into the crowd of devotees performing *kirtana*. In *bhava*, She started rolling on the ground as if a dry leaf rolling with the blowing of wind. She also danced for some time standing on her toes only and singing in a beautiful voice, '*Hari Om, Hari Om*'. Ma's appearance at that time was like a goddess in human form. Balananda Brahmachariji and all others were observing Ma with great admiration. In that condition, Ma touched Balanandaji's

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\* *Darshan*—It means personal audience/vision, act of seeing someone (a holy person or a Deity), a revelation by a divine being. This word is generally used when one goes with great respect to a saint to have personal audience or visits a temple to see the deities there or have a vision of God.

head and he immediately held Ma's hand and took Her to his *dhyana mandir* (place of meditation) where they talked for some time in privacy. Only Baba Bholanath was present at that time. Balanandaji disclosed later about Ma that Shree Ma was neither a spiritual aspirant nor She needed to perform any kind of spiritual practice or prayer. She was *Nitya Siddha* (completely Self Realised always). She came for some special work for the good of humanity and after its completion, She would depart.

After this visit to Deoghar, Ma did not remain confined to Dhaka only. She kept travelling ceaselessly from state to state in India without any pre-planned programme. Those travels were sudden and spontaneous and could not be obstructed. She had no fixed place to stay. She would decide to move even at midnight. Wherever She went, a unique blissful divine environment prevailed around. Her, *sadhus*, *mahatmas* (saints), scholars, philosophers and ordinary people from all walks of life were drawn to Her. They were charmed by Her blissful holy attractive personality radiating divinity and the profundity of Her words.

Ma was fond of *kirtana*. Group of persons who sing *kirtana* often would come to Ma for performing *kirtana* in Her divine presence. Sometimes, Ma Herself would lead the *Nam-kirtana* for others to follow. Sometimes with great *bhava*, She would lie down completely in trance or dance gently raising Her hands. Seeing Ma's such unique divine *bhava*, the *kirtana* participants would get more inspiration. Wherever Ma travelled, the crowd was increasing day by day. Whoever came could not forget Her and returned to Her repeatedly. Whatever was offered to Her, She would distribute amongst the devotees. Everybody wanted Her company and She responded.

Sometimes, persons keenly desiring for Ma's divine presence, attracted Her and She reached over there. None could tell whose distress call was drawing Ma to move towards them. A remarkable such incident occurred at Sarnath near Varanasi. A simple woman devotee from Bareilly once set out for Varanasi all by herself, solely for Ma's

*darshan*. She had heard that Ma was in Varanasi. However, on reaching Varanasi Railway Station, she was misinformed that Ma was at Sarnath, which was about ten miles away from Varanasi. Therefore, she went to Sarnath. It was a quiet place where Lord Buddha started preaching the Buddhist religion. There the woman went all over looking for Ma but could not find Her. When the day ended and it became dark, she was in despair as she was alone in a lonely strange place. She found her way to Birla Dharmashala, a rest house for pilgrims and stayed in a room on the first floor there. She lit a candle and tearfully appealed to Ma, feeling lost and bewildered.

Ma at that time was in Varanasi. Suddenly, Ma got up from the 'satsang' (spiritual programme) that was going on around Her at that time. She called an ashram *brahmachari* to accompany Her and hurriedly made her way to Varanasi Railway Station. Shree Ma got into a fast train standing on the platform. It was not supposed to stop at Sarnath Station, but mysteriously it made an unscheduled stop at the outer signal of the station. Ma got out of the train in thick darkness and led the way directly to Birla Dharmashala with the *brahmachari* following Her. She reached the first floor and knocked at the door of the forlorn devotee. The devotee opened the door to see Ma standing there. Can words be found to express feelings of that fortunate devotee at that moment? Ma simply said, "You called this body, so here I am". There are numerous such instances of Ma appearing at the prayerful call of Her devotees.

During her initial whirlwind tours, Ma stayed in *dharmashalas*, temples or even under tree. Ma had stopped entering the home of householders. Bhajji, Gurupriya Didi and many others felt concerned to provide comfort to Ma for Her stay and to facilitate the devotees to have Ma's *darshan*. They took the initiative to establish ashrams in all such places where Ma visited frequently, although for Ma, there was no need of any separate ashram for Her. She once commented, "This body of mine is a bird flying around. It flies into the places where its fancy guides it and leaves it on its own whims. When you mention as an ashram, can't

you see that the whole world constitutes one single ashram?"

However, gradually several ashrams in Ma's name were established, but only at specific places indicated by Ma, which were either places of *sadhana* (spiritual practices) from ancient times or where some divine supernatural events had occurred in Ma's presence. The ancient *sadhakas* of those places in their subtle forms humbly requested Ma to settle there.

Shree Ma's early ashrams, those built before India's independence, are:

Siddeshwari in Dhaka (1926), Vindhyachal (1928), Ramna in Dhaka (1929), Uttarkashi (1934), Kishenpur in Dehradun (1936), Khcora in Bangladesh (1938), Puri (1939), Bhimpura near Baroda (1939), Raipur in Dehradun (1940), Almora (1943), Calcutta at Ekdalia Road (1944), Varanasi (1944) and Kalyanvan in Dehradun (1944).

After India's independence in 1947, sixteen more ashrams were established. They are:

Vrindavan (1949), New Delhi (1953), Ranchi (1953), Rajgir (1955), Dhawalchina in Almora District (1957), Agarpara near Calcutta (1958), Pune (1961), Naimisharanya (1961), Bardhaman Kunj at Vrindavan (1962), Jakhn in Dehradun (1964), Tarapeeth (1968), Kankhal in Haridwar (1970), Bhopal (1975), Agartala (1977), Kedarnath (1980) and at Jamshedpur (1988). The ashrams at Calcutta on Ekdalia Road and Ramna Ashram in Dhaka do not exist now.

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## Mother as seen by a Westerner

Arnaud Desjardins (Paris)\*

Flow on, Ganga, holy river, from the mountains to the gigantic plains, from Rishikesh to Benares, called Kashi or Varanasi by its children. I now intend to return to the sacred city.

At last I shall see face to face the sage whose two pictures, at an interval of several years, stirred me so profoundly that I could never forget them. When I had only just completed my studies, lost along the various problems that confront a young man hardly prepared for life, I one day, in a bookshop, glanced casually through the pages of *Autobiography of A Yogi* by Paramhansa Yogananda, the founder of the well known Self-Realization Fellowship. Among all the photos of austere sages and venerable old men that illustrate the work, the picture of a very young woman with closed eyes struck me like a shock. She seemed extraordinarily beautiful and I thought: this is the Woman, the Mother, the Virgin.

Eight years later someone presented to me the beautiful book *India* by the English photographer and writer Richard Lannoy. As I turned the pages, the face of an elderly woman with a look unlike any other, touches me to the quick. I am reminded of the meaning of the name of Krishna: "he who steals the hearts". I do not even skim through the rest of the book: it has remained open on that page and never been closed again.

And a few months ago, when in my own car I started on my first trip to India, I made my first halt in a small Swiss village, at a distance of

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\*The following are short extracts translated from the French book by Arnaud Desjardins : *Ashrams, Les Yogis et les Sages*, Published by La Palatine, Paris Geneva

several thousand miles from my destination. Two courageous women spend every summer in that village. They both lived a number of eventful years in the country that I am about to explore. To my question: "If I were to meet only one person in India, who should it be?" One of them replied very softly: "Ma Anandamayee."

When I mentioned her to Swami Sivananda, She said, "She is the most perfect flower the Indian soil has produced."

Today I only think : "It can hardly be that I shall not be disappointed." And, I am not even sure that I wish to meet her.



Banaras is the touchstone for the love or the horror of India for Europeans. I have perhaps never been so perfectly happy as during the weeks that I spent in that city, and thanks to my friends Bhattacharyas who made me discover the heart of their city. I lived as if in the Kingdom of Heaven. But I know a number of travellers from whom it remains the memory of a veritable nightmare. I am sure one could spend one's whole life in Benares without exhausting its riches.

At the very end of one of the narrow lanes that all resemble one another, and where it is easy to lose one's way, right at the bank of the Ganges, in the *mohulla* of Bhadaini is situated the main ashram of the great Bengali saint and sage Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee. I arrived there for the first time one evening during the Durga Puja festival. I shall always remember it.

Having started at sunrise and succeeded in reaching Varanasi by nightfall, I am fairly exhausted. To locate Bhadaini is yet an event. At last I park my car in a road broad enough for carriages and, led by a few children, proceed on foot through the lane that seems even more mysterious and unreal in the dark of night.

What I see at the end of the lane is fantastic.



A swarming multitude enters, emerges, and watches those who enter and emerge. One might think the bustle on the footpath due to a

special performance at the Opera-house or to a ball in some large hotel, of which the guests have been miraculously deprived of their shoes.

The narrow entrance, giving away under the streamers, is blocked by flower and garland-sellers and by a heap of shoes and sandals scattered all over the pavement.

Inside, the crush is indescribable: tanned backs, *dhotis* shining white in the night, a rainbow of *saris*. A guide whose dark features I am unable to distinguish catches hold of me, and not without difficulty tracing out a passage for us, walks ahead of me up a narrow staircase.

The noise, the chanting, the music are deafening. But as we enter the terrace where the crowd become, if possible, even more dense, the threefold rhythm beaten on gongs, bells and cymbals bursts abruptly. Those who know it, will guess at once. Those who have ever heard it, cannot imagine it. Thundering, sublime, piercing, overwhelming, shaking the whole body with its ever repeated three beats, capturing emotion, imposing silence on the mind, it raises in that wonderful autumn night the cry of the planet towards the sparkling sky. Across the white of a portico, amidst the black infinity of the plain far below, I distinguish the broad band of the eternal Ganga. In that frame, which opens out from a small outer staircase rising from the river, I see the most beautiful face of a man I have ever seen. Some wandering sadhu for whom this evening is but a halt on the road without end. The serene and silent peace that emanates from him, his ineffable smile and the light in his eyes give their meaning to the clangour of the brass under the blows of the clappers. Then he vanishes.

Instantaneously, abruptly there is silence, total, absolute, nourished by a thousand individual silences.

I do not know for how long.

And suddenly I am pushed through the once again moving and noisy crowd, towards Her whom I had almost forgotten. "Mother, Mother", says a voice close to my ear. A woman who seems at the most forty years old, with long black hair falling loosely over her shoulders,

dressed in a spotless white *sari*, more beautiful than I ever dreamt, smiles at me.

There is no question of my prostrating and putting my forehead on the ground: I cannot tear away my gaze from hers. I place one knee on the floor. I do not know how long this lasts. Then she turns round and walks away. I have had my first *darshana* of Mataji.



Devotees and visitors are sitting around Mother in a cluster in order to have her *darshana*, her blessed sight, and she enlivens by her supernatural presence and her silent radiance the singing of the hymns.

Close by her, dressed all in white, the young girls who have dedicated their lives to her.

And I marvel at the extraordinary destiny of that humble woman of the village, who lost several children at a tender age, and whose baffling little girl, more serious, more gentle and joyous than all the others, the little girl who did not cry after she was born and who never wept except once during her childhood, has become the epitome of the Mother for millions of men and women. While Didima's life was confined to her modest home, how could she have thought that she would one day travel all over India and that the crowd of the small and the splendour of the great would come and bow at her feet?

Three women share the honour of fanning Mataji, and their movements seem in rhythm with the music.

To the accompaniment of his little harmonium, a *brahmachari* sings. His singing has attained to such an abandon, to such an impersonality that he rally seems to transmit something divine. Then two of the young girls, dressed all in white, sing some songs and this is perhaps even more perfect, even purer. Among the crowd are many children. Some play quietly in their corner. Others, curled up, sleep without the slightest movement. A few gaze at Mataji, unwearied.

Without a pause, newcomers worm their way to Ma, prostrate and offer a few fruits, flowers or a garland..



Off and on her eyes gaze into the far distance and her expression takes on a beauty that is truly divine and beyond all description. What does she see at such moments? With which world is she in touch? What is the significance of a being in our midst so totally different? She has eyes like ourselves and yet so entirely unlike. She sees us and sees much more than us. Why have we no access to her vision? Why are we thus banished from the world of which she is a living proof? The more I look at her, the more fascinated, the more amazed am I.

Sometimes she smiles at a newcomer. Sometimes suddenly, her gaze fastens open one or the other with such intensity that it is almost unbearable even for those who only witness it. This lasts for a few seconds that seem an eternity.

The hymns follow one another, but now it is Ma who sings, and the crowd repeats in chorus: "*Hari bol, Hari bol, Hari bol, Hari bol.*" Her singing has such force, such vigour that we are shaken in our entire being. This surpasses by far everything of that order that I have had the chance to experience. Something immense that very nearly causes giddiness makes its presence felt among us. We want even more of it. But we feel that we should be unable to bear it.

Her face is so powerful that I cannot disengage myself from it. Lost in a crowd, I have never before known a similar impression of intensity and fullness. At last, something has actually happened in my life. And, this certainly remains with me day after day for weeks, together with the one, not less forceful, that everything is possible for Mataji.

A sentence comes to my mind: "I am not worthy that you enter my house, but say only one word and my child will be saved."

Perhaps I have been capable of really knowing this, for at this very moment Ma Anandamayee slowly turns her face in my direction and looks at me. Of that instant I will not speak. Now she talks. She speaks with animation and gaiety. She laughs a great deal. "Anandamayee"—does it not signify "permeated by joy"? Everyone seems highly amused. Questions are asked in quick succession.

The atmosphere is completely free, intimate, spontaneous, relaxed. I do not understand anything, for sure. But what does it matter? The French disciple, to whom someone remarked: "You don't understand anything of what Ma says?", only replied: "But who does?"

This reply is correct. The teaching of Ma Anandamayee is absolutely beyond words, just like that of Ramana Maharshi. And when she speaks, she still remains beyond her words and beyond the comprehension of her listeners. Nevertheless, a teaching of Ma Anandamayee, formulated in words, certainly does exist. One has often been surprised and dumbfounded by the way this unlettered woman replies, without ever a moment's reflection, to the most difficult and perilous questions that are put to her by very learned men. Her words have for years been recorded by her disciples, especially by a quite astonishing and indefatigable woman, Sri Gurupriya Devi, and by Brahmachari Kamalda, and some have been translated into English. They are extraordinarily interesting and striking, and represent one of the monuments of metaphysical thought and a prodigious commentary on all *sadhanas* known to us.

I myself have, assisted by the Swami who served me as an interpreter, prepared in minute detail several conversations with her. Certain sayings, certain utterances have impressed me profoundly.

But this was never the most essential point.

(Excerpt from *Mother as seen by her Devotees*, published by SSAS, 2nd edition, October 1967)

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## Ma Anandamayee Camp in Allahabad Kumbha Mela 2019

Most revered Maluk Peethadishwar Sri Sri 1008 Rajendradasji visited the camp of Ma Anandamayee during Kumbha Mela in Allahabad to pay his homage to Mother. He remembered a number of incidents and his own experiences of Mother. Following are some highlights:

I have the privilege today that I got the opportunity to sit down in front of Mother's photograph in her camp in Allahabad Kumbha Mela. I remember an incident and narrating my reminiscences. There was a sadhaka living in the ashram of Oriyababa in Vrindavana. He belonged to Agarwal Vaishya community and spent long decades in Vrindavana. He had the opportunity to get along with many great sadhakas including Oriyababa, Swami Akhandanandaji and Mother. He used to visit the ashram of my Guru and narrated an incident that I'm telling you today. The sadhaka told us: "I spent more than forty years in Vrindavana but I could not experience any spiritual feeling. There is a temple inside Radha Vallabha temple in Vrindavana and it is known as the temple of Jeevan Vallabha. Once there was religious discourse of Swami Akhandananda. He was delivering his discourse and Mother sat nearby. She was totally under *bhava samadhi* (while praying or talking to god when one loses its senses of 'I' and becomes one with the energy of god, it is *bhava samadhi*) while listening to *Krishnalila*. After some time, Mother went down deep in her *bhava* and all the signs of *prema* (pure love or divine love) emerged on her body. Her eyes were half open. Swami Akhandananda too was in *bhava samadhi* making the audience immerse into the same feeling. All of a sudden, I noticed child Krishna came out beneath the chair of Mother and climbed up to her. Child started playing on her lap while Mother was in her deep *samadhi*.

I continued to watch the *bal-lila* of Krishna. I became motionless, could not even hear what Swami Akhandanadaji was telling. I continued to get involved in a dream like situation. Child Krishna merged to Mother's body after the discourse was over. I experienced such a great feeling for the first time during my long stay in Vrindavana. I now can realise that divine *lila* was possible in Vrindavana but that needed the spiritual power like Mother and other saints through whom Krishna can continue his *lila*".

Mulak Peethadhishwar said Gopalji of Mother installed in Kashi ashrama continues his *lila*. God and divine souls are inseparable. It is said in the *Veda*, 'ब्रह्मविद् ब्रह्मैव भवति' (The knower of the Brahman becomes Brahman). According to the *Naradiya Bhaktisutra*, it is explained as 'तस्मिन् तज्जने भेदभाव' (there is no difference between God and His devotees. Divine souls are *satya* (truth) and *nitya* (eternal), same as God. Mother was full of divinity and the symbol of *satya* and *nitya*. We are not sitting in front of the portrait of the mother. Instead, we are here directly sitting by her side. I'm fortunate enough that she called me in her camp on this auspicious occasion of the Kumbha.

I refer here to Mother Madalasa, 'संगः सर्वात्मना त्याज्यः सचेत् त्यक्तं न शक्यते सः सद्भिः सह कर्तव्यः सतां संगो हि विमुक्तये' *Sanga* means *asakti* (आसक्ति) or attachment which must be discarded away with full force. 'सर्वात्मना आसक्तिः त्याज्यः' calls us to be detached. It is because जीवात्मा is a fraction of *parambrahma* (Absolute) and a part always carries the virtues of its origin. God is नित्य-मुक्त (eternally liberated) and beyond any bondage. *Atma*, the soul is the part of the Absolute and hence it is also beyond any bondage. It means one must free himself from all types of bondage to remain the part of the God.

Now question arises why god is free and *jiva*, the individual soul, is under bondage? Lord Krishna seldom condoled following the destruction of his relatives and community. It was a vast community of 56 crore *yaduvanshis*. He remained deter and continued smiling. Why?

It is because he is beyond any bondage and is स्थितप्रज्ञ, *sthitaprajya* – maintaining equilibrium in all situations. It reflects the symbol of *mukti*. In other words, common people are entrapped within their own small shells that causes bondage and *asakti* leading to the cycle of birth and death. This also causes delay in total freedom or *mukti*. Therefore, *asakti* cannot touch God while it grasps the common people all the time.

Next question arises immediately as to how attachment is removed. Usually bad habits are rarely removed. And how does attachment, cause of the continuing cycle of birth and rebirth in a chain process, can be got rid of? Many saints and scholars have opined that people cannot get rid of *asakti*. But, it may also lead to liberation instead of bondage. 'सः सद्भिः सह कर्तव्यः' means people must turn their *asakti* to the divine souls, being in the company of the truth (सत्संग). More you are attached to them more your bondage will minimise. This is the way to free from the cycle of birth and death. We have to turn our attachments (cause of sufferings and sorrow) to the lotus feet of Mother and other great souls and their divine grace can only make us detached from the worldly pleasures.

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## *Children Section*

### **Noble Gesture**

There was a thief whose only activity was theft. Once he was out of his home for theft like other days but he was not successful in his bid. At last, he found a cottage of a sadhu. He thought what he could collect from there as there would not be any precious things or money because a sadhu does not possess any riches. The thief thought he would have to be satisfied with a few small articles only.

He found the sadhu's cottage empty. The door was closed but not locked. He first thought the sadhu would have been inside and he pushed the door gently. Since the door was not locked, it opened with the push. The thief peeped into the cottage and found nobody there. There was complete calm outside. He entered the cottage and found a few articles of daily use – a dish, a glass, a water pot (*kamandal*), a couple of clothes and a mat. He wanted to take away all these articles in the absence of the valuables. He collected all and made a bundle but confronted the sadhu while coming out of the cottage. He started running and the glass came out of the bundle. He did not stop to pick it up because he had to escape.

The sadhu well understood the situation that a thief had stolen all his articles and now escaping. All of a sudden, sadhu picked up the glass and started chasing the thief. It was just like a competition of a race of the two persons. Sadhu at last got hold of the thief who became very nervous. He thought he had to go to jail for his crime.

However, to his utter surprise, he found the sadhu neither rebuking

nor beating him for the crime. Instead, the sadhu said, " This glass was dropped from your bundle. Have you collected all the articles from the cottage?" He then handed over the glass to the thief and left.

The thief was spellbound with these words. Tears rolled out on his cheeks. He fell flat on the feet of the sadhu and apologised.

The thief left stealing on that very day and started a new life under the guidance of the sadhu living with him in his cottage.

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### List of Festivals

1. Sri 108 Swami Muktananda Giriji's Sanyas Utsav	April 14, 2019
2. Akshay Tritiya	May 7, 2019
3. Adi Shankaracharya Jayanti	May 9, 2019
4. Baba Bholanath's Nirvan Tithi	May 12, 2019
5. Buddha Purnima	May 18, 2019
6. Sri Sri Ma's Janmotsava	May 3 – 21-22, 2019
7. Sri Ganga Dashahara	June 12, 2019
8. Guru Purnima Mahotsava	July 16, 2019
9. Sri 108 Swami Muktananda Giriji's Nirvan Tithi	August 7, 2019

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## Prabha Sakshi Interview

Ascetics and devotees throng Maa Anandamayee camp in Allahabad Kumbha seeking peace

Prabha Sakshi is a devotional media channel that approached Maa Anandamayee camp to highlight messages of Mother and the history of the camp. Two senior inmates of Maa Anandamayee Ashram, Br. Geeta and Br. Gunita answered the following questions:

**Prabha Sakshi:** Tell us the importance of this camp. Why have you gathered here?

**Br. Geeta:** In 1962 Hardwar Kumbha Mela, Niranjani Akhada came out with the procession with Mother Anandamayee sitting on an elephant. She was honoured and worshipped with *kalash* and *angavastram* as a senior *brahmavid*. Niranjani Akhada described Mother as 'Kumbha Jyoti'. The then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, visited Mother in her camp in next Kumbha held in Allahabad in 1966. I was present at that time. Our camp remained full with devotees all the time. Many ministers too visited our camp following the visit of Mrs. Gandhi. She also visited Mother for her grace after becoming the Prime Minister. Even police and administrative staff visited the camp and they were moved by the visit of the Prime Minister and wanted to have the *darshan* of Mother. Purna Kumbha mela was held in Allahabad in 1977 and Mother attended it. Her last visit to Kumbha mela was in 1982 in Allahabad when she recited a *kirtan*, '*brahma-may kumbha jal, jai ananda kumbha jai*'.

A consciousness always covers the Kumbha which is attended by hundreds and thousands of great ascetics. Mother Anandamayee is the consciousness that passes through these ascetics and great saints. No work is possible without inner consciousness and Mother resides within all of us in the form of inner consciousness. She empowers us and it



reflects in the Kumbha Mela too.

Prabha Sakshi: Please highlight the promotional activities of Sanskrit language?

Br. Geeta: Indian culture and philosophy are based on Sanskrit. You know that even foreign scholars and scientists are recognising this as a holistic language. Devnagari script derives from Sanskrit and is said to be a holistic language. Infact, Hinduism has its base in Sanskrit language which, I think, is in our blood. Our existence entirely depends on this language. It's a driven force in our life.

Prabha Sakshi: What is your opinion about the present generation?

Br. Geeta: Knowledge without Indian tradition and Sanskrit language leads to a haphazard development in the evolution of man. Ideal character and *sanskar* (sacrament) are two most characteristics that reflect the quality of education, youth are getting at present. Unfortunately, today's syllabus does not compile these characteristics. I stress on building a synthesis between modern education and India's ancient teachings.

Prabha Sakshi: You spent long time with Mother since your childhood. Tell us some of her messages that would inspire the people.

Br. Gunita: Mother was requested to deliver her first lecture in Bangalore in 1952. She said, "Take the name of Hari (God). Rest is useless or rubbish". This, infact, is Mother's main message. Main aim in our ashram is to get ourselves attached with God in any way. This attachment is not done in aloofness, instead, it is established simultaneously doing all the daily chores and discharging all the duties and responsibilities. Mother taught us how to do all activities in a detached manner in order to keep ourselves attached to God. It's the *mulamantra*, for all the inmates in our ashram.

Prabha Sakshi: You enjoyed long association with Mother. Can you tell the feeling of the devotees towards Mother? How does this feeling inspire others?

Br. Gunita: Mother had the unique nature to get along with the

people. She became child when she met the children. She behaved with the people including her devotees as per their own '*bhava*'. She never hurt anybody's '*bhava*' or religious conceptions. Thus, everybody thought she was speaking in her/his inner feeling and she adored him/her most. However, she said one single word to everyone, 'get yourself attached to your god'. This message was for all- to the ascetics as well as to the householders. She taught how to remain attached to the God all the time without disturbing usual activities. You can easily do it from within yourself, she used to say. And, to give an example she narrated a brief story: There was a woman whose husband died and she went to the cremation ground for his last rites. That was the time of remembering her God. She did it by keeping herself going by the side and came back after few minutes to do her duty. This way she maintained her relationship to her god. This world is full with miseries and suffering and people must remember god during this crucial time. God reciprocates and gives power to fight against those sufferings. It (reciprocation of God) contains the core, essential truth of creation, and its vibration is so powerful that it can change your fate and destiny. This is the *mula mantra* of our Mother.

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## Ashram Varta

Anandaswarupeshu,

सतीर्थराजोजयतिप्रयागः

Rotation is the law of nature. Kumbha Mela follows the same law. It happens in every six or twelve years. Sometimes it is *Purna kumbha* while sometimes it is *Ardha Kumbha*. This year's *Ardha Kumbha Mela* was held on the bank of Triveni *sangam* in Prayagraj from January 15 to March 4. Maa Anandamayee Ashram organised a camp under the supervision of Swami Devchhananda Giri, Secretary of Varanasi Ashram. Sri Tapan Kumar Basu, a devotee of Mother, arranged the camp and Sri Sri Maa Anandamayee Kanyapeeth organised various programmes during the Kumbha Mela. Mother's devotees from all over India thronged the camp.

Inmates of all the ashrams of Mother and her devotees took part in *Shahi snan* (शाही स्नान) on January 15 (*Makar Sankranti*), February 4 (*Mauni Amavasya*) and February 10 (*Vasanta Panchami*) along with Nirvani Akhada. Saraswati puja was organised on *Vasanta Panchami* day in the camp.

Princess Vishnupriya and Princess Krishnapriya of Banaras royal family attended and assisted the camp. General Secretary of Maa Anandamayee Sangh, Sri Swapan Ganguly took holy dip on the first and last bathing days. Rev. Swami Golakanandaji of Puri also took part in three *Shahi Snans*. *Sadhu bhandara* was held on January 15 and February 4 and blankets were distributed to the sadhus while young *hatuks* (celibates) of Nimbarka ashram were fed and given blankets on *Vasant Panchami* day.

Mother introduced the tradition of honouring the great saints during the Kumbha. This very tradition was duly followed. We visited different Akhadas to honour Sri 1008 Swami Avadheshananda Giriji, Mahamandaleshwar of Juna Akhada, Mahant Nimbarkacharya Sri 1008

Vrinvandasji Maharaj, Sri 1008 Maluk Peethadhishwar Rajendradasji Maharaj and Sri Gurusharananandaji Maharaj of Karshni Peethadhishwar of Ramanreti, to name a few. They were honoured with *angavastram* and *prasada*. All were invited to Mother's camp but it was not possible for them to visit owing to their busy schedule. Rev. Rajendradasji of Maluk Peethadhishwar visited our camp to pay homage to Mother (the event was covered in this issue of the *Amrit Varta* separately).

We are grateful to one of Mother's close devotees, Sri Karunananda Vajpayee, judge of the Allahabad High Court and his elder brother, Sri Mukundbhai Vajpayee who not only visited our camp but also ensured smooth running of the activities. They will receive the divine grace of Mother.

Annual *Satyannarayan* puja was organised on February 21 in Kashi Kanyapeeth. Ananda Milan Utsav was held in Tarapeeth Ashram of Mother.

*Mahasivaratri* festival was held with full religious fervour in all the ashrams of Mother on March 4. Festival of colour, Holi was celebrated in all the ashrams. Special features included *Holika-dahan* on March 20 followed by colourful puja of Gopalji in Varanasi Ashram and Chhaliyaji's *dol-mahotsav* in Vrindavan Ashram the next day.

### **Ashram Utsav in Agartala**

The nine-day special *utsav* of the consecration of the deities in Agartala ashram was celebrated from March 7 onwards. Many *sanyasis*, saints, *brahmachris* and *brahmacharinis* from different ashrams of Sri Ma attended this programme.

Agartala, the capital of northeast state of Tripura is a picturesque city surrounded by lakes and temples. Ashram of Sri Ma is situated in a sprawling campus in front of Agartala royal palace. Uma Maheshwar temple, located in the east of the palace, is in the campus of the ashram. Sri Ma made her last visit to this ashram towards the end of March 1982.

Ashram houses varieties species of flowering and trees. Coconut trees invite one in long queue at the entrance. A beautiful lake is situated

at the centre of the ashram, surrounded by a white building and a temple.

Uma Maheshwar temple houses the deities of Uma and Maheshwar in black stone. All the rituals are held here with fidelity and precision. The priest, carries out his duties in total devotion and he is particularly caring to the devotees.

#### **Thursday, March 7, 2019**

A devotee donated a piece of land in Udaipur area and a building was constructed at the site. *Adhivas*, a ceremony preliminary to an auspicious act, of the idols of Sri Ma, Swami Muktananda Giriji and Baba Bholanath was performed following all the religious norms.

#### **Friday, March 8, 2019**

Murti or Idol *pratishtaha* (*murti pratistha* refers to the ceremony by which a *murti* is consecrated in a temple, wherein hymns and *mantra* are recited and the idol's eyes are opened for the first time) ceremony of Sri Ma, Swami Muktananda Giriji and Baba Bholanath was held in the new temple in Udaipur ashram. *Kumari puja* was also organised on the occasion. *Brahmins* were fed and devotees took *prasad*.

#### **Saturday, March 9, 2019**

*Shodoshopachar puja*, a puja that is performed with 16 different offerings, was organised in Uma Maheshwar temple. Eminent spiritual orator Prabhu Nityagopal Goswami captivated the audience with his rendition of Bhagavat *katha* in the evening.

#### **Sunday, March 10, 2019**

Students of Anandamayee Vidyapeeth of Agartala presented lovely cultural programme in the evening in the hall of the ashram.

#### **Monday, March 11, 2019**

A musical evening was organised in which the vocal and instrumental artists presented their performances.

#### **Tuesday, Marh 12, 2019**

Devotes and the *kirtana mandali* took out the *nagar parikrama* (moving round the city by chanting devotional songs) in the morning.

Gangapuja was performed on the bank of the lake. Initiation programme was also organised. *Adhivas* of the idols of Sri Ganesha, Radhakrishna and Hanumanji was performed in the newly-built Sri Mokshada Sundari Bipin Bihari Bhawan on the bank of the lake.

### Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Idols of Sri Ganesha, Radhakrishna and Hanumanji were installed with *shodoshopochar puja*. *Kumari puja* and *batuk puja* were organised to mark the occasion. Initiation programme was also held.

*Adhivas* of Siva idol and idols of Sri Saraswati, Muktananda Girji and Baba Bholanath was held in the evening. *Matri satsang* was organised the same day and *brahmacharinis* of Varanasi Kanyapeeth presented classical music recital. Senior Br. Geeta Banerjee presented a graphic narrative of the arrival of Sri Ma at Agartala (this description was penned by late Br. Panuda). This presentation described the great supernatural power of Sri Ma and the audience remained captivated to listen to Her magical and spiritual journey. Br. Gunita welcomed the guests and devotees.

### Thursday, March 14, 2019

Installation ceremony of the idols of Parama Siva, Sri Saraswati, Muktananda Girji and Baba Bholanath was held with absolute perfection. Swami Achyutanandaji Maharaj, President of the Sangha, narrated his reminiscences on Sri Ma followed by another reminiscences shared by Vedantacharya Br. Jaya Bhattacharya, former Principal of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth. Both the sharings took the audience to another world, a world full of divine bliss. After musical event, initiation programme was held and Br. Chandan Didi, first Principal of Kanyapeeth, initiated the devotees. *Adhivas* of Sri Ma was held and *naam-yajna adhivas* (नाम यज्ञ अधिवास) was initiated by Sri Ashish Chowdhary, Assistant Secretary of the Sangha. *Sadhus* and *brahmins* were fed and the poor and destitutes were distributed *prasad*.

### Friday, March 15, 2019

Sri Ma's murti or idol was consecrated in the newly-built temple in

the morning amidst chanting of the *Vedas*. Special pujas were held in all the temples. Swami Adhyatmanandaji of Ahmedabad spoke on Sri Ma (*Matri pasangu*). *Naam-kirtana* (devotional chanting of God's name) continued from the dawn to dusk. *Maha-prasad* was distributed to the devotees.

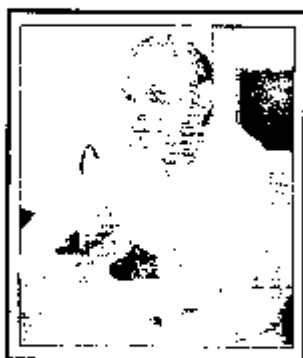
Nine-day *utsav* concluded with the *mandir-parikrama* (circumambulation of the temple) and *Hari-naam sankirtana* in the evening.

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“Wherever God may keep you at any time, from there itself must you undertake the pilgrimage to God-realization. In all forms, in action and non-action is He, the One Himself. While attending to your work with your hands, keep yourself bound to Him by sustaining japa, the constant remembrance of Him in your heart and mind. In God's empire, it is forgetfulness of Him that is detrimental. The way to Peace lies in the remembrance of Him and of Him alone.” ?

– Anandamayi Ma

## Homage



Shri Subhash Bhattacharya (26.02.1947 - 02.08.2018)

– Annapurna Bhattacharya

By the divine grace of Shri Shri Anandamayee Ma, we have had the good fortune of knowing many visionaries in ashram, who, have left an indelible mark in our lives. Subhash Bhattacharya, fondly known as Keshto Da, is one such individual, whose contribution to the ashram and devotees have been immense.

Keshto Da was born in Dhaka (Bangladesh) on February 26, 1947. He was the third youngest son of Shri Ananda Mohan Bhattacharya and Smt. Bijon Bala Devi. He and his elder sister, Brahmacharini Jaya Di came to Shri Shri Ma in Almora Ashram during their infancy and remained associated with the Ashram since then. They completed their education from Vidyapeeth and Kanyapeeth respectively, and went on to accomplish various ashram responsibilities entrusted to them. On the professional front, Keshto Da worked as Senior Proof Reader in Delhi University Press and retired on February 28, 2007.

Keshto Da's services towards the ashram fraternity have been enormous and unforgettable. He was blessed to be present during *Ati Rudra Maha Yagna* at Kankhal in 1981 and attended Mother as and when required. Moreover, his dedicated services were required during several Durga Pujas held in various ashrams in different periods of time.



For years together, he has made immense and highly important contributions and supervised the religious functions in Delhi Ashram, and additionally and notably, Sri Annapurna Puja in Varanasi. Devotees have come to associate his presence and involvement in the Annakut function in Delhi Ashram as a vital part of the festivities. His recitation of *shloka* from scriptures, specifically, The *Bhagawad Gita* were inimitable. He was a true *dhaarak* (bearer) of the tradition of Mother being duly steeped in his being.

Keshto Da has lived in the Delhi Ashram for more than fifty years. He has been an integral part of the ashram fraternity and his memories and instructions will remain ever relevant in the years to come. Being extremely witty and wise, he was hugely involved in building a personal connection and bonding with the devotees in ashram. He was the one person who knew almost every devotee for at least three generations and was instrumental in ensuring everyone got the *bhog prasad*. Many devotees recollect reverentially about the care with which Keshto Da used to ask one and all to accept the *bhog prasad* distributed in the ashram. Keshto Da will always be remembered for his kind gestures and consideration towards devotees. Once Keshto Da revealed that it has been Shri Shri Ma's kind instructions to get food prepared in little extra quantity than required in ashram, so that, if at once, devotees happen to visit ashram on any routine day, other than *utsav* time, then also *bhog prasad* remains sufficient enough to be taken by everyone. It is to Keshto Da only that Shri Shri Ma once said, pointing to the plants and trees in Delhi Ashram, "These are all parts of me only, nothing moves without this body wishing it so". Shri Shri Ma's divine grace remains ever cherished by one and all.

Often we would find Keshto Da enthusiastically narrating the details of Shri Shri Ma's *lila satsang* in ashram premises. He had a characteristic aura and charisma of his own and he will remain as one among the "*tejaswi putras*" of Shri Shri Ma. Keshto Da had special affection for kids and used to motivate youngsters for their educational and spiritual pursuits.

Steeped into the philosophy of *sanatana dharma*, Keshto Da maintained "*sama- bhava*" towards one and all and never differentiated among his kins with their other ashramites or devotees. Ashram's interests have been the only thing which mattered to him. He remained a one-man encyclopedia and was absolutely well versed in the *parampara and niyam* of Vedic knowledge and systems, procedures and philosophy, followed in the ashram. Being ever vigilant, firm and affectionate, he would execute all duties with great elan and proficiency. He was an extremely helpful individual and ensured that everyone is well taken care of. Be it accomplishing any responsibility or honouring distinguished guests in ashram, he remained completely committed and pro-actively involved. He was a very hard-working, forthright, amicable, practical, modest, meticulous and jovial individual and his dedication to the ashram has been exemplary. His personality reflected serenity, simplicity and '*sadaa prasanna-sat-chit-anand-swarup.*'

There is a huge void created by the sudden passing away of Keshto Da and the loss for the ashram fraternity is irreparable. It is impossible to imagine Delhi Ashram without him. As Keshto Da left for heavenly abode, a treasure trove got lost and many spiritual instances remain undocumented. We realize that Keshto Da is *Matri-leen* now and enjoying Shri Shri Ma's care in the divine realm. He will be fondly remembered in our cherished memories and will forever continue to inspire us for generations together in future as well. We offer our humble offerings at the lotus feet of Shri Shri Ma and pray for peace and strength for one and all. Om Shanti! Jai Ma!

*(With inputs in the above text from Br. Geeta Di, Br. Jaya Di, Shri Sandip Datta and Shri Shubrashish Sen.)*