

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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Sri Sri Ma, Tithi-Puja, Varanasi Ashram

Matri-vani

Question: Who are the fortunate ones to have the grace of the God and who are the unfortunate ones not to have it?

Ma: God is *lilamaya* (divine player). He is fond of playing different *lilas* for the human being in order to teach lessons. *Kripa* (divine grace) and *purushartha* (object of human pursuit) go together. Human being is asked to undertake and achieve the goals of human life through *purushartha*. But *kripa*, the divine grace, is the ultimate thing that takes the man to the ultimate goal. It means, always keep your faith in God and He will usher His grace upon you. He manifests Himself if you wholeheartedly depend upon Him as well as do your *purushartha* at the same time.



Ma: God always ushers His grace. There is no dearth of it. You have to put your bowl in a right way to receive that divine grace.

Question: Who will put the bowl?

Ma: Only He.

One woman: Our world.

Ma: This world lacks happiness because it is full with qualms. It is total foolishness to seek happiness in this world. However, I'm not saying you are foolish. Yet, you are living in a room full with black colour and it is not possible for you to keep yourself away from that black. You will surely have the spot. It's not possible that you are untouched by fire that engulfs you. In other words, happiness must be realised within. He whose happiness is within, whose rejoicing is within and whose light is within, is established in God.

Devotee: Why does Ma not speak?

Ma: What is the story of the God? He is *Ekamevadvitiam*, He is

the one and only without a second. He is the Supreme Reality or Being- the one eternally existing and unchanging reality or entity, which has no alternative, or any existence other than, separate from, or independent from it.



Question: What is *paap* and *punya* (vice and virtue)?

Ma: *Paap* resembles misery or dismay that always keeps the mind unhappy. It is a kind of emaciation. Action that brings unhappiness is *paap*. Action that is unholy is *paap*. Virtue, on the other hand, can be achieved through good action.



Mother: It's a deadly sin if one forgets God and never tries to call Him.



Question: God is invisible and impassable, that is not seen. Can the human being progress in spiritual life following observing the truth and its love for fellow being?

Ma: Human mind is very fickle, failing to devote to the God even in meditation. Action depending on truth leads to God while God is not manifest to those involved in own's fame and *atma-pratishtha*. World is advancing but is this a real advancement? How many are able to realise God's existence and His grace? *Gopis* were able to recognise the Truth, means Sri Krishna, means the Absolute. Path towards God opens up only when human being wants to walk on the right path. Faith means unflinching trust in something sublime. When one is engaged in the duties of God consciousness, he does not act in relationship to the material world.

Therefore, advice is given to carry out all the work in the name of God. All must discharge their duties accordingly. Serve your deity as your own and this service will take you to your God. This is the process called as "purification of mind" or *chitta-shuddhi*.

*Anandamayee Prasanga**

Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

(Continued)

12 Pausha, Monday (27.12.1948)

We have an invitation in the Ashram today. I arrived there by 10 a.m. in the morning when *kirtan* was going on in the presence of Ma, Gopal dada and others. Gopal dada requested Ma to sing. He said, "Your song is an integral part of Gita Jayanti and you have to sing." Ma recited three songs one after another. Jogesh Brahmachari, disciple of Sri Kulada Brahmachari, was also present on the occasion. After a pause for sometime, Sri Vaidyanath Shastri wanted to know from Ma whether the saying "As many faiths, so many path" is true?

Ma: Faith is there if path exists.

Jogesh Brahmachari: No, it is not true. Every person possesses different faiths, but it is not true that all those faiths lead to the realisation of God.

Ma: Point of discussion is different here. Every sect has its own faith or system for the realisation of God. There are different faiths and at the same time there are different paths too. And, the saying "As many faiths, so many path" derives from this concept.

Divine Pleasure and Worldly Pleasure

Devshankar Babu: What is the difference between the divine pleasure and worldly pleasure?

Ma: Oh! You people very often say divine pleasure (ब्रह्मानन्द) is the highest form. Worldly pleasure, on the other hand, seldom provides real pleasure. Worldly pleasure is a disease.

Devshankar Babu: Does it not reflect that this world is without pleasure or happiness?

* Vol : 5, pp. 103-111, Translation: Bharati Bhattacharya

Ma: I'm not saying this world is without pleasure. Pleasure or happiness of this world is linked with sorrow and distress. People, generally, are not satisfied with the pleasures and happiness they have. Instead, they want more and rush to have more pleasure. This question would not have been raised if people remained satisfied with worldly pleasure. It can not be said that world is without pleasure. Yet, worldly pleasures appear very little in comparison to the divine pleasure. God, out of compassion, combines both sorrow and happiness in this world in order to draw people towards the highest happiness or pleasure (God Himself). It can be explained in another way. Suppose a son is born to you and that makes you happy. On the other hand, you are in dismay when the son is dead. It means worldly pleasures are temporary and thus, happiness too are temporary. It is, therefore, people should run after permanent happiness and this happiness or pleasure is the highest form of divine pleasure; condescend spirituality - *bhagavad sukham*.

Time is now for the lunch and I went to Manmohan's residence after lunch for rest. Atuldada (Brahmachari) came there to inform the arrival of Gopibaba and I returned to the Ashram. I found Ma sitting in the hall along with Gopibaba, Jogesh Brahmachari and Gopaldada. I assumed some one raised question to Ma and I came to know it from a gentleman that Jogesh Brahmachari asked Ma whether it is fruitful to come to Her if the *karmic* actions have to be endured by the individual himself? Ma, however, looked not interested in answering this question as She started speaking on different subjects. I then questioned Her, "Ma, discussion had been initiated on "As many faiths, so many path" and you supported this concept...

Ma: I did not support. I only explained its true context.

Myself: It is said that unless *kundalini* (*kundalini* is a Sanskrit term for the latent energy and consciousness lying coiled at the base of the spine) unravels there is no beginning of *sadhana*. The lone path for highest *sadhana* is with *kundalini* awakened.

Ma: There was no reference to *kundalini* during the time of discussion.

Had it been so, I would have supported your saying too.

Myself: Now, tell which one is true?

Gopibaba: The path that does not incorporate the awakening of *kundalini* can't be accepted as a path at all.

Ma: Faiths seem different in the context of various ideas and opinions and even saying, "As many faiths, so many paths" is relevant only in this stage. Otherwise, path is one for all to realise God.

Weakness continues till God is not realised.

Jogesh Brahmachari: You are yet to answer to my question. My question was: Why should I seek the *kripa* or grace of the God when I myself have to go through my destiny? I would rather go for the *karma* or action. Why should I avail of the path of weakness?

Mother: Your very question reflects your weakness because a weak person can only raise such a loud query (every body laughs). Human being always depend upon God who alone can grace the people. Your weakness will continue unless you realise the existence of God.

Gopal dada (to Jogesh Brahmachari): Certainly you have got something from Jaipur, and it is reflected in your loud utterance (every body laughs).

Ma: Yes, it has resulted from the company he enjoyed there.

Pausha 13, Tuesday (28.12.1948)

Mother left for Dehradun. I heard that she will be returning here again before Pausha *Sankranti*. I offered my *pranam* to Her before Her departure.

Sri Ma's presence during the Savitri Maha-yajna in Kashi

(Chapter-5)

Pausha 26, Monday 1355 (Bengali calendar), 10.01.1949

Savitri *Maha-yajna* will complete two years on Pausha *Sankranti* (last day of Bengali month Pausha) in Varanasi Ashram. Ma arrived here from Dehradun via Lucknow for the ceremony. After Her arrival, She was walking on the terrace overlooking the Ganges. Once She saw me, She

enquired me about Gopibaba. I told, Gopibaba had gone to Deoghar last Saturday as Choto Ma had sent somebody to fetch him. Also heard that he would be staying there for five days.

Ma: Is he going to live incognito?

Myself: I have no such information.

I could not understand as to why Ma raised such a question. She told while walking, "Kashi is not cold in comparison to Dehradun. But, people were saying that unlike previous years, cold is comparatively not so severe there". Khukuni didi came there informing that her bag was lost which had been given to Buni who now failed to remember where she has kept it. The bag was carrying a number of important documents including letters. Ma started laughing to hear this and said, "Something should be lost because number of belongings has increased." On Buni, She further commented, "It is because that Buni and others always concentrate on how to board Ma's car and they remain less responsible towards other work." Ma again laughed and lovingly teased Khukuni didi as she continued to regret at losing her bag.

27 Pausha, Tuesday (11.01.1949)

I arrived at the Ashram around 10 in the morning. Sri Ma was staying in the upstairs room and Khukuni didi asked me to go there. I offered my *pranam* to Ma who was surrounded by a couple of persons including Mr. Petit. He was touching the holy footwear of Mother on his forehead. It seemed he is always attached with Her.

Ma came out of the room after sometime and entered the room of Nepal Dada (Sri Narayanananda Swami) to enquire about the '*bhoga*' of Narayana. She smiled and said, "I was told by somebody in Lucknow that Nepal looks so impressive after performing *yajna* for two years. He appears quite like a '*rishi*' (saint) with a face full of effulgence. I had not noticed it earlier and thus, looking at him now. Change in the face and physique is inevitable due to the righteousness. Oblation is offered during *yajna* by hand and if the inner spirit is

equally sanctified then this would also transform the appearance".

Meanwhile, Swami Shankarananda arrived and he said to Nepal Dada as to why is he standing like a culprit.

Ma with a smile: It's all '*mudras*' (everyone laughed). You all perform different '*mudras*' (ritual hand gestures) during puja, isn't it? These '*mudras*' come out spontaneously along with the devotional spirit. Though these are hard to notice yet these do take place and its true.

Sri Bibhu Brahmachari came and informed about the recital of religious discourses. Maimmediately proceeded towards the ground floor. We also accompanied Her and took our seat. A *brahmachari* started reciting the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas.

Reference to Mother Sita

The recitation was followed by *kirtan*. Besides other narratives, Ma told us about Her meeting with a certain mataji in Lucknow. She described: "A colonel found her in the forest during his hunting expedition and since then both, husband and wife, are attending upon her with great dedication. This time I heard from the colonel that this mataji predicted a number of things about his children and all became true. This mataji often do speak while sometimes she observes total silence. This time, she has been in silence for past six months. I noticed that cough is flowing down from her nose but she makes no effort to clean it. Same is in the case of faeces and urine. Colonel and his wife silently washed them out. She is known as Sitamata".

Vaidyanath Shastri: Is this state called '*jivan-mukta*' (One who is inwardly free while living in this world)?

Mother: "This physical body" (as Ma referred to Herself) will not say whether this is such a state or not. However, Paramananda was telling that such a state may result due to any serious ailments, for example, mental disorder. Also, he was saying that situation may arise out of vowing a '*sankalpa*' (it is a tool meant to harness the will, and to focus and harmonize mind and body). This again is not the real case. One may take *sankalpa* that he/she will observe silence for sometimes or will

make no effort to protect the body. Such *sankalpa* can lead to self-restraint or forbearance. Interestingly, if a person continues self-restraint following the practice of silence etc. for a certain period, words she/he would utter, will become true. Sitamata was brought to me and she lied down. I addressed her 'Ma' twice and she gazed at me. I noticed a *bhava* of *Trataka Sadhana* (a sure gateway to develop psychic powers). I am not saying that Mataji was practising any such *sadhana*, but her first look bore such qualities. Later, she looked at me normally.

Khukuni didi came to call Ma for her lunch. Ma asked her to distribute the fruits that have been offered to Her by devotees. She offered a fruit to the person who recited the *Ramayana* of Tulsidasa and also a garland to him. She further said: "You had not been honoured with a garland during the recitation hence I gave it now. With your daily recitation you keep this place sanctified. We all gather at this sacred spot."

Khukuni didi: Yes, this is how Ma is given *punya* in bits. (everyone laughs).

Ma to Khukuni didi: And, by establishing the Ashram and by arranging these recitation sessions, you are grabbing a part of this *punya*. (all laugh)

(to be continued)

Padapeethamsmarami

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee Vishwa Mandir

(Continued)

Brahmacharini Gita

Saints at Dehradun Ashram

Renowned saint of Kharina, Mahatma Sri Triveni Puri Maharaj spent time with Ma here at Dehradun Ashram. Also, spent time here was Sri Prabhudatta Bharhmachariji. It was a historic moment of great spiritual significance when Ma and Haribaba met in this Ashram. Vibhuda, Manida and others were involved in *harinam kirtan* at the gate to welcome Haribaba at the behest of Ma. Car stopped at the portico of the Ashram and Ma was standing there to receive him. Haribaba got down and fell flat (*sashatanga dandavat*, a symbol of complete submission that reminds devotees how to respect God) to the feet of the Ma who too rolled down on the ground. That was a memorable scene which can never be forgotten and the dust of the Ashram still silently remind the meeting of the two *mahatmas*.

Normally, Sri Haribaba used to come here and spend the summer with his followers after Ma's Birthday Celebration. He used to remain engaged in *kirtan* with his followers in the hall making the devotees enthralled. His devout nature always made him busy in undertaking spiritual activities. Therefore, he was noticed sometimes reading the biography of the Ma in Her presence or reciting from *Bhaktamal* throughout in a standing posture inspite of his old age. Last but not the least, devotees failed to control their emotions to witness Sri Haribaba continuously fanning the deities during *Rasa-Lila* ceremony held in the premises of Siva Temple and Matri Temple.

Deradoon Ashram was blessed with the presence of numerous

saints like, Sri Vishnu Ashramji, Sri Shanakaracharyaji of Govardhan Math, Sri Prabhudattaji, Sri Chakrapaniji and Sri Avadhootji who visited to have *darshan* of Sri Sri Anandamayee.

Visit of Pandit Nehru and Vijaylaxmi Pandit

Pandit Jawharlal Nehru and his sister Vijaylaxmi Pandit visited Dehradun Ashram to have *darshan* of the Ma on more than one occasion.

Installation of Idol of Baba Bholanath

It was on the auspicious day of *Akshay Tritiya*, April 30, 2006, the idol of Baba Bholanath was installed inside the Siva temple of the Ashram.

Mahasamadhi of the Mother

Ma returned to Dehradun from Kankhal Ashram on June 26, 1982. Shankaracharya of Sringeri Math came to meet Her here and Ma pronounced, '*Avyakta ke taraf khinch raha hai*' (I am attracted towards *avyakta*). *Avyakta* is the unmanifest. When you loose the sense of separation, you realize that you are *avyakta*. You realize that this *avyakta* is the Supreme truth. *Avyakta* is synonymous with absolute reality, *Brahman*, *Satchidananda*, etc.

She left for Her original abode in Dehradun Ashram on August 27, 1982. Ma is both *vyakta* and *avyakta*. Ma often used to say, "This body is the same as it was before and it will remain same in future too". She is Herself *Purna-Brahma* (Supreme Reality), eternal. Dehradun Ashram is ever illuminated with Her omnipresence. Dehradun Ashram is well stocked with books and photographs of Ma in a small museum. Jai ma!

Pride of Tripura - Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee

Brahmachari Panu Da

Tripura, one of the seventh north-east states of India, is not only scenic with all the beauties of the mother nature but it is equally rich with its cultural and spiritual heritage. Ma made her holy appearance for the first time on this earth in this land (though the village Kheora now falls in Bangladesh).

This state is the living place of many a '*lila*' of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee. Her parental family resided in the village Kheora. There was a Kali temple in Kasba region and grandmother of Sri Ma arrived here to pray to the goddess for a male grandchild when Ma's mother was ex-pecting. However, grandmother actually prayed for a female grandchild to the goddess and Sri Ma came to this earth. She spent her childhood in this village and her wedding also took place here. This village and entire Tripura are proud to be associated with their daughter who became the representative of universal Motherhood.

Maternal side of Ma had a connection with the royal family of Tripura as the male members had been the '*sabha pundits*' (royal priests or scholars) in court since long. They were regarded and respected by the royal family. Ma's maternal grandfather, Sri Ramakanta Bhattacharya, was a famous scholar of his time. Her father, Sri Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya, approached the royal family of Agartala for an elephant for the wedding ceremony of Ma. The groom's party took out the wedding procession with this elephant from Kasba Kali temple.

Arrival of the King of Tripura and the initial talk on the establishment of the Ashram

Ma was staying in Poona (now Pune) in the 1970s when the King

of Tripura happened to visit for her *darshan*. She told the King when he entered her room, "How come you are here? When have you arrived? You have come to me after long time." The King offered his regards to Her and said, "I'm here for some special work and have come here when I came to know You are here. You have your ashrams all over the country except Tripura." Ma said, "this physical body does not do anything. You people establish the ashrams and you know it better."

The King was moved by Her words that touched his heart deeply. He wanted to avail of this opportunity and discussed the issue with the then Chief Minister of Tripura, Sri Sukhomay Sengupta, immediately after his return to Agartala. Sri Sengupta adored Sri Ma deeply and offered all his cooperation. There is a big lake in front of the royal palace surrounded by three temples from three sides. Uma Maheshwar temple is situated in the east, Jagannath temple in the west while Laxminarayan temple is located in the south. All these temples earlier belonged to the royal family but were transferred to the government after the merge of the royal estate to the Government of India. It was the earnest initiative of Sri Sengupta and the King of Tripura that Uma Maheshwar temple along with its sprawling compound was officially dedicated to the service of Ma on October 4, 1977. Contributions of Sri Priyadas Bhattacharya was notable in this whole process of transfer. It was his personal initiatives that king also donated a piece of land adjoining to the lake to the service of Sri Ma. Eventually, Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee Vidyapeeth was raised on this land and this institution has been making all of us proud since its inception.

We observed many a *lila* of Sri Ma in this Ashram. How we, the common people, can understand these *lilas*! Ma Herself solved the problem of her living quarter in the Ashram compound at a time when its location was not decided. And, She did it while staying away in a long distance in Haridwar.

Sri Ma developed a *kheyal* (desire) to organise Saraswati Puja in the Ashram. It was towards the end of January in 1978 when She

called me and directed me to arrange the Puja in the land north of Her proposed living quarter. She also instructed me to specify the location. Her directives made others curious as to why the Saraswati Puja being organised before the construction of Her living quarter. Sri Ma developed the same *kheyal* next year and the Puja was arranged. I came over to Agartala and organised the event with the cooperation of the devotees. A brick platform was built up on the site under Ma's instruction and the reason was not known. Neither Ma disclosed it.

Living quarter of the Sri Ma was about to get completed and Her devotees were eagerly awaiting Her arrival. But She was not keeping well at that time and She was residing in Vrindavana (March 1982). However, she called me one day and asked me to come to Her with an almanac. She asked others to leave Her room and asked me to close the door. She then asked me to find out an auspicious date for the inauguration. I found the date March 31 that fell in the holy *Navaratra* festival. Ma calmly said, "Arrange to take this body there before that date. Condition of this physical body is not well. It may not happen at all, if delayed." I became surprised but it was Her *kheyal* (desire) that I spontaneously pronounced "Agartala?" She said, "Strictly keep it to yourself for now. You leave tomorrow and make all the arrangements. I will leave once you return." I was again surprised to know Her instruction and said, "Assam and Tripura are under turbulence now-a-days. It takes 45 minutes to reach Agaratala from Kolkata by plane but it will take about four days by train. Ma, how will you travel such a long distance under your present physical condition?" Ma was determined and made it clear that She would go, "This body will travel lying in train and cars." I wanted to know who else would accompany Her because tickets would be booked in advance. Ma said, "Names cannot be disclosed right now. Book the tickets for ten people including yourself and don't ask any more question."

I was totally puzzled and spent a sleepless night. I could not understand how arrangements would be made to take Ma to Tripura under such a disturbed situation. Besides, Her poor health status was a

matter of great concern to me. I was helpless as I was unable to discuss the matter with anybody because of Ma's strict instruction. I met Her to offer my regards next morning before my departure from Vrindavana. Ma told me, "Make arrangements to construct one platform (white marble) on the site of Saraswati Puja and another platform on the south facing verandah of the living quarter. Go and finish these work and get back to me with the information of my journey." I found myself in trouble because my only concern was safe journey of Ma. I went deep in my thought while travelling to Delhi and all of a sudden I found a solution from my inner conscience - I can take suggestion from one person, Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. I will surely narrate the whole situation to her and later will offer my apology to Sri Ma for disobeying Her instruction.

I called Mrs. Gandhi's secretary, Mr. Dhawan, from a telephone booth of the New Delhi railway station and requested for an appointment with her only for ten minutes. Mr. Dhawan already knew me, immediately came to action after hearing the name of Mother. I rushed to PM residence and found her being ready to leave for the Parliament. She eagerly enquired about Sri Ma's and I explained everything to her. Mrs. Gandhi too became surprised to know about the long train journey. She exclaimed how come Sri Ma is keen to visit Assam and Tripura in this situation full of turbulence. Mrs. Gandhi, however, asked me to meet her secretary the same evening and she said she would talk to Sri Vidya Charan Shukla, the then Railway Minister, and get back to me. She just wanted to know the date of Sri Ma's journey. I heaved a great sigh of relief and realised that this latest development is again the *kheyal* of the Sri Ma Herself.

I met Sri Dhawan in the afternoon and got the information that a special coach (compartment) would be attached to the main train for the Ma from Delhi to Dharmanagar. Besides, Central Government will take every step for Her safety and security and details have already been sent to Tripura Government in this respect. Again, I could realise the miracle of our beloved Ma.

I left for Varanasi and informed one of Ma's nearest devotees, Sri

Priyadas Babu about my visit to Agartala. More surprise was awaiting to me in Agartala as I found the then DGP of Tripura, Sri Ramen Bhattacharya, along with Sri Priyadas Babu who came to receive me in the airport. Sri Priyadas Babu enquired from me about the arrival of Ma and I got the point that official instructions had already arrived from Delhi. I, however, requested him not to disclose the news as Ma did not want it to be disclosed at this stage.

Our next steps were to chalk out the route from Dharmanagar to Agartala as Ma would be travelling by car on this route. Besides, we also discussed the halt for Ma to take rest as well as Her stay in the night of March 30 in Agartala and Her journey back to Kolkata. The DGP informed that the Central Government would be making arrangements for Her security upto Dharmanagar while the Tripura Government would do the same in the State.

Priyadas Babu told in the afternoon that official instructions have already arrived from Delhi and we must inform the Tripura Chief Minister as a part of protocol. Accordingly, we met the then Chief Minister, Sri Nripendranath Chakravorty, next morning. I requested his 'help' and he immediately replied, "Tripura is a poor state. How can we help you?" I made it clear that Sri Ma is coming and She is the daughter of Tripura. Situation is not normal here and I, therefore, seek your help." The Chief Minister uttered after a pause, "Will do whatever is possible." He then said, "I often rushed to Her after my school is over when I was studying in Dhaka." Sri Chakravorty was a staunch Marxist but a man of his own words, said Priyadas Babu, adding that he would definitely do his duty. Later, his regards to Sri Ma was reflected on several occasions.

I felt great relief and instructed Priyadas Babu before leaving for Delhi via Kolkata. I deposited the train fares to a railway officer after meeting Mr. Dhawan in Delhi. My next destination was Vrindavana and there I met Sri Ma and after narrating all the details handed over the train tickets to Her. I also offered my apology to Ma for disobeying Her. She listened to me but did not react.

It was an elaborate arrangement when we gathered at the Delhi Railway Station on March 26 with Sri Ma. Her troupe included ailing Swami Paramanandaji, Dr. Triguna Sen, Brahmachari Nirvanananda, Brahmachari Shantivrata, Brahmachari Dashu and some Her close female assistants and myself. There were as many as ten commandoes and one commandant travelling along with Sri Ma's coach. Except myself, members of the party have no knowledge where they were travelling to and none of them dare to ask this question. Ma's troupe reached Dharmanagar on March 29 after travelling three nights and the security personnel left here after offering their regards to Her.

At this point, DGP of Tripura, Mr. Ramendra Bhattacharya, himself undertook the security charge and escorted Sri Ma and Her convoy with a huge police force. The convoy reached Manu in the afternoon for a night halt in a guest house. Ma reached Agartala next day on March 30 and She stayed in a new police quarter in the city. Meanwhile, the news of Sri Ma's arrival spread all over and the people thronged to the place of Her stay. Even the Maharaja of Tripura came to have Her *darshan*. He repeatedly expressed his gratitude that Ma ultimately arrived in Tripura to honour his request without caring Her ailing health.

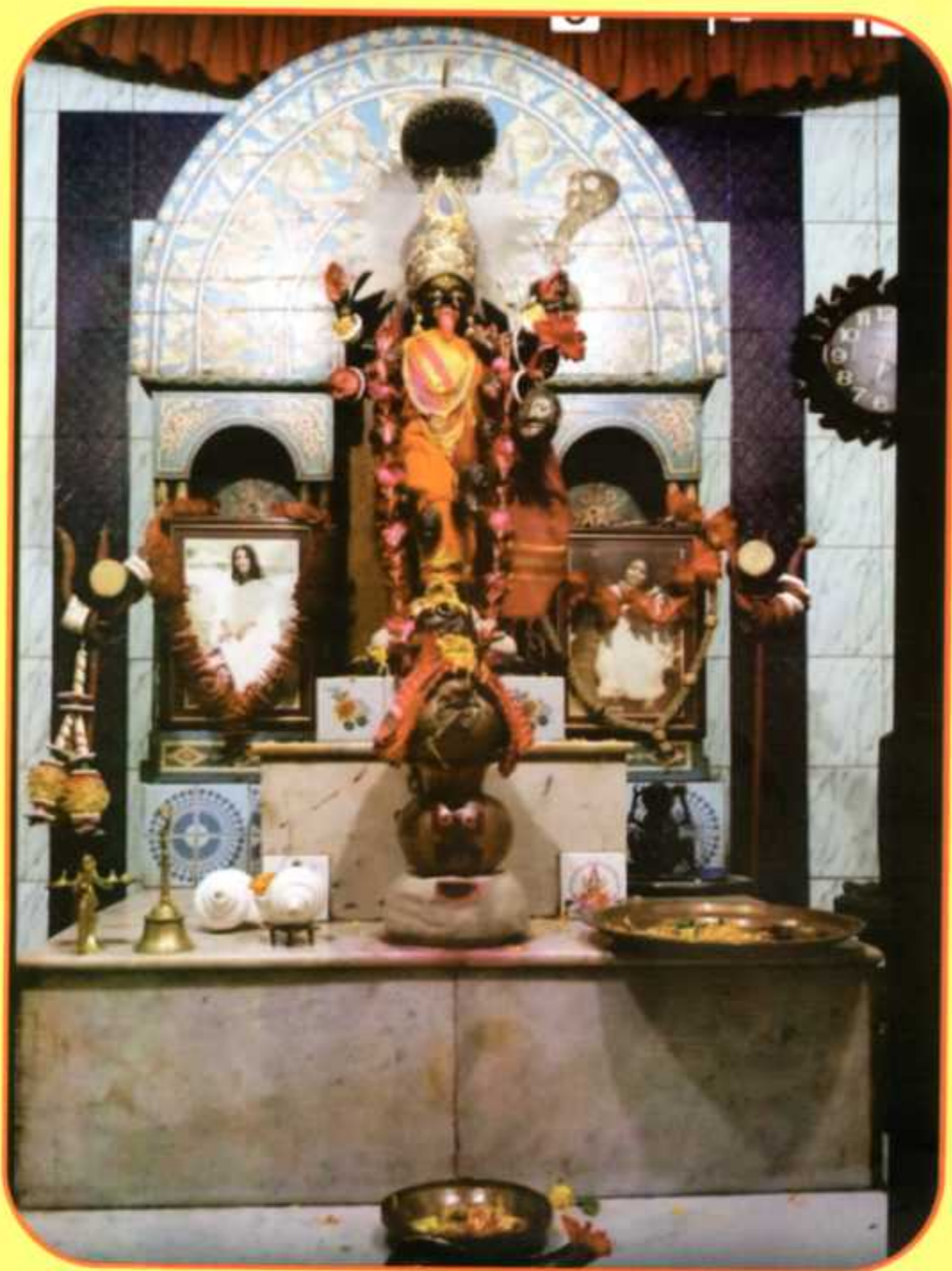
It was the early dawn of March 31, 1982 when Ma arrived the Uma Maheshwar temple. It's a beautiful temple and also known as Kali temple because goddess Uma or Parvati is known as Mahakali here. There is a temple on the left side of this temple and there are spherical stones placed on the platform. It is said that these stones are the gods of the tribal community of Tripura. Ma sat here for sometime and went around entire temple compound before leaving for her own living quarter. She also offered valuable clothes she brought with her for the Uma Maheshwar temple.

Ma entered her newly constructed living quarter with *narayana shila* and auspicious pitcher. She looked curious to see two platforms which had been constructed on her instruction - one in the north corner of Her room and another in the south facing balcony. She

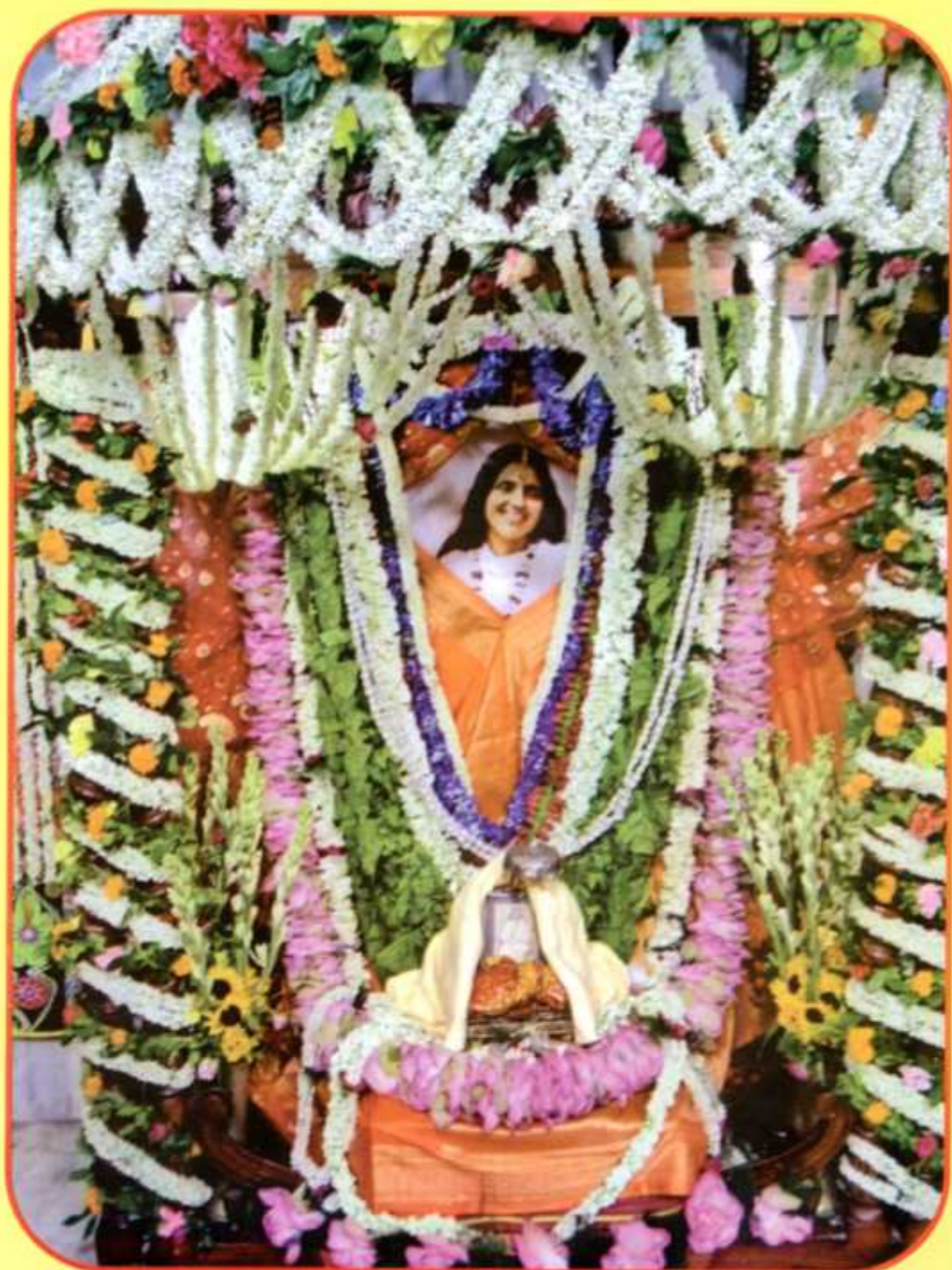


Shree, Shree Mata
Anandamayee Ashram
Varanasi.

Sri Gopalji, Holi festival, Varanasi Ashram



Sidhleshwari Kali, Dhaka



Sri Ma's Janmotsava Ceremony, Agarpada Ashram



Ma Durga, Vasanti Puja, Varanasi Ashram

privately opened the giant trunks She brought with Her from Delhi. A beautiful white marble Saraswati idol was taken out first followed by idols of Narmadeshwar Siva, Parvati, Ganesha, Nandi, and Gouripeeth. Beautiful Sartaswati idol was brought from Jaipur while Narmadeshwar, Parvati, Ganesha (made of white marble) and Gouripeeth (made of black stone) were brought from Varanasi. Nandi was brought from Kankhal. It is the same Nandi that was once placed by the side of the Ma when Brahmacharinis worshipped Her as Siva in Kankhal (1981).

The idol of Saraswati was installed on the altar inside Sri Ma's room during an auspicious occasion by the priests of Tripura royal family while Narmadeshwar Siva idol was installed on another altar in the balcony. Ma announced Tripureshwar Siva Mahadev would offer His *darshan* right from this point. Other rituals like, oblation, process of consecrating, *bhoga* etc. were completed under Her instruction. By now, devotees and common people realised that all the ceremonies happened at the behest of Sri Ma's divine wish or *kheyal*. Also, it was Her divine *kheyal* that Saraswati Puja was held twice here. Yet, it remained still a mystery as to why Ma installed the Saraswati idol in the Ashram. Only future can answer!

One of the Mother's devotees spread the news of her arrival in Tripura through radio and it spread out like wildfire. Hundreds of people crowded the Ashram making the task of the security a difficult one. They raised slogans praising Sri Ma and wanted to have Her *darshan*, even for a single moment. Ma also did not disappoint them as She frequently came out of Her room to offer Her blessings to the people. It was an unforgettable scene. I was standing by Her side and reminded myself what Sri Ma had told me in Vrindavana, "be sure not even a bird can know about my visit".

I recall another small incident. Session of the Tripura Vidhan Sabha was going on at that time and a member of opposition questioned the Chief Minister, "Why the Tripura Government is so active for the smooth visit of one lady?" (Ma's name and status were not mentioned

by him). Chief Minister simply replied back, "She is the Guest of Honour in Tripura and we are doing the needful."

Ashram remained crowded throughout day and night and hundreds even returned back without Her *darshan*. Sri Ma realised their frustration and She missed Her sleep that night. She left Agartala next morning to reach Kolkata via Dharmanagar. She pronounced before Her departure, "I am leaving this room for the Goddess of Wisdom, Saraswati, who also provides *brahma-jnana*." She visited the temples of the Royal Palace at the request of the Maharaja. I showed the land donated by the Maharaja to Ma. She said, this land should be used for something good and Her words came true. Our Vidyapeeth was built upon this land which is situated just by the side of the Ashram where Goddess Saraswati is installed.

Ma then came over to the official residence of Sri Ramendra Babu. He arranged a beautiful tent on the lawn for Her rest. Chief Minister visited Ma and they held a private session for about half-an-hour. It was really a miracle that a Communist, who once declared himself as an atheist, became a totally changed person after meeting Ma. He even used to recite the *Bhagavat Gita*.

Ma left for Kolkata. Her divine grace to the people of Tripura is till remembered with due respect and fondness. This place is especially blessed because Sri Ma arrived on this earth in this very region.

Jai Ma! Jai Uma Maheshwar! Jai Tripureshwari!

My First Impression*

Vijayananda (Dr. Adolphe Jaques Weintrob)

It is a difficult task to try and to give a reader, who often is only curious, if not indifferent, an idea of that which for you is the most precious thing, the jewel of the jewels.

There are two dangers to be avoided: The first is to let your heart run away with you, to write an account so enthusiastic, so extravagant that the reader gets the impression of having before him the product of an unbalanced mind or at least of a rank sentimentalist, and consequently hurries through the article with an amused smile full of ironic pity.

The other danger would be to endeavour to remain completely cold and detached, to write like an impartial observer. This would be even worse, because one cannot speak of Her, who is the embodiment of Love Divine, as if one were dealing with a scientific problem. I shall, therefore, try to restrain my heart, without however reducing it to complete silence.

It is bad taste to talk about oneself, but all I can do, is to relate the story of how I got in touch with "MA". For it is impossible to describe Her objectively: She is different for every one of us. "I am, whatever you think I am", She often said.

It was on the 2nd February, 1951, at about six o' clock in the evening that I saw Her for the first time in Her Ashram at Banaras. Having "provisionally" placed a substitute in charge of my medical practice, I had left France in quest of spiritual guidance in this country, which since time immemorial has illuminated the world. Landing in Buddhist Ceylon, then proceeding along the East coast of India I had arrived in Banaras the previous day. Tired and disappointed, almost

convinced that my journey had been in a vain, and determined to return to France, I had already reserved a berth on the "Marseillaise", which was to sail from Colombo on February 21st.

I am frequently asked what was my first impression of Ma, what made me decide to leave everything - family, friends, country, profession, wealth - to follow Her. Why I have clung to Her like shadow suffering torments whenever I am unable to see Her for a few hours. Why, though I cannot understand what She says, I spend hours at Her feet, without taking my eyes off Her.

It is very difficult to reply to these questions. Not because language lacks words, but because a word has not the same meaning for different persons, unless they all have experienced the corresponding to that word. Thus one may well try with the aid of comparisons to make a child in France realise what exactly is the flavour of a mango. Even if one spent hours over it, he would only get a very vague idea that also most likely false.

Having made room for all these unavoidable limitation I shall now make an attempt all the same. What then was my first impression? It was in the evening of the 2nd of February, I found myself in the presence of a woman of 55, looking younger than her age, still beautiful. But at the moment I did not notice her beauty, it was only later that I became aware of it. I still see Her, focusing Her eyes on me with that strange gaze that seemed to embrace my whole destiny.

The same evening, at about ten o' clock, She had granted me an interview which lasted for about 20 minutes. She was supposed to answer my questions, but I had nothing to ask. I simply desired to make a spiritual contact. She seemed to be in divine thought. It was She who put the questions, clear, precise, going straight to the heart of things, raising exactly the points which interested me. But Her words were only a play on the surface. In those 20 minutes She had infused something into me, which was to last for a long time, which still continues. I returned to Clark's Hotel after having secured Her permission to come back the next day to live in the Ashram.

I was in a strange state - my heart swelled with jubilation, with joyful exaltation - the state of one, who has just found what he has always yearned for in the most secret recess of his heart. Her image did not leave me anymore, even at night, and the very thought of Her drove tears into my eyes. What exactly had happened to me? My critical sense, which had been submerged by the first wave, awoke on the 3rd or 4th day. "Take care", it told me, "you have fallen into the hands of a great magician. She has cast a spell over you to make you her obedient slave". And I began to be on the defensive, to struggle against Her influence - rather feebly. I confess, for how can one fight Love; there is no power in the world mightier than Love.

But what kind of love was this? It is not directed towards a woman. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the love one may feel for a woman. As by a strange alchemy my entire potentiality for affection, all that one can love and admire in the world, had been transferred to Her. But at the same time this love became so pure, so sublimated, that it merged into and greatly intensified the call for the Absolute that I had always felt. All worldly attachment lost its attraction and the spiritual ascent became easier, since She donned me the wings of Love. In one single person all that one can love, admire, respect and adore became identified with the *Sad-Guru*, the Lord. For all these months that I have spent near Her, have given me the conviction that She is the Lord Himself, incarnate in the body of a woman.

I thought that this Love (I am obliged to use this word for want of a better one, though it does not express exactly what it stands for) would disappear or at least dwindle with time. The very contrary has happened: It has only grown in intensity. For it is like with those ancient cities buried underground; as one delves deeper, even more new marvels are brought to light.

Something that has struck me from the very first day is the atmosphere of the miraculous in which one moves when he is with Her. Let me explain: In Europe (and no doubt here also) by the word "miracle" one conceives of a breaking away from the laws of nature,

something that strikes one as impossible, as absurd. But this is only its crude, objective side. Its subtle, subjective aspect is quite different. What does it matter to me if a certain yogi has walked across the waters or flown through the air? The real miracle is, when that which one needs, which one desires keenly or feebly, comes at the moment it is needed. And still better when it comes, not only as one desired it, but one would have loved to see it in the innermost depth of one's heart. It has been for me as if I were guided on a path beset with obstacles by the hand of the most loving mother - an All-Powerful Mother. As you advance She removes all the thorns, all the stones from your path, and when it is necessary, She even lifts you across in Her arms. And all circumstances adjust and adapt themselves with a marvellous precision, without hurt. "Coincidence", I thought at first. But a coincidence that goes on repeating itself daily cannot be called so anymore. And all this happens without apparently violating the laws of nature - for the Lord has no need to break any laws: He is the Law. Should I give examples? No, for those who do not know Her will not believe me and those who have lived near Her have already understood.

She is like the Ganges - Her very touch purifies. In Her presence one feels oneself getting better all the time. Not by the suppression of one's faults: The very fault is sublimated and becomes an aid in the search for the Divine. She does not seem to notice or does not want to notice the dark sides of the individual. She only sees our luminous aspects, enhanced considerably by Her Divine mercy.

As the *Jivan-Muktas*, all the emanations of the Divine, give in broad outline the same message; and Ma Anandamayee does not make an exception to this rule. Yet there is an aspect of Her which no other *Sad Guru* has ever before presented (not to my knowledge at least) except perhaps Sri Krishna: I am referring to Her power to attract human hearts. It seems to me (this is an entirely personal opinion) that the first contact She makes with those who come to Her, is essentially a contact of Love. Instantaneously She recognises

the dominant note in the individual's emotional nature and it is this aspect in which She appears to him or her.

For some - for the great majority - She is the Mother, full of love and tenderness, to others a friend and elder sister or even their child. For others yet, who are spiritually more advanced, She is the Guru or an aspect of God: Durga, Krishna etc. And it is not only in the imagination of the *bhakta* that She represents these various aspects; Her physical appearance, Her behaviour, Her voice are actually transformed and adapted to the part She wishes to play. To illustrate this I should like to mention a striking little incident that I witnessed. It was during the last *Janmashtami* festival (Sri Krishna's birthday) at Banaras. She had been dressed up as Lord Krishna and we were all allowed to go to see Her. I went with a certain reluctance and with a slight irritation, for I do not like disguises. But when I beheld Her, I understood that there was no question of a disguise. Her face though one still recognise it, was completely transformed. It shone with a Divine beauty, with a truly super-natural calm and sweetness. She had really become one with Sri Krishna Himself. This is only an example among a thousand.

I have often seen Her features assuming entirely different aspects within a single hour. According to the person who questions Her, She appears at times like an old mother with a sweet face, her features drawn and tired; a few minutes later the radiant face of a young girl of twenty emerges. At another time She takes on the noble, serious, almost severe, almost masculine countenance of the Guru, a little later again Her laughter. Her caressing voice, Her tender look conjure up those of a child. This contact of love or affection becomes in some way the lure that will entice him, who has had the great good fortune of getting in touch with Her, away from attachment to worldly things. For it will be transmuted and turned to the Divine.

What else can I say about Her? But have I not promised to limit my effusions? Perhaps it would have been better, had acted like the friend who, when asked to write an article, replied: "All I can say is: Ma, Ma, Ma". May these few lines be not altogether unworthy of Her. They have

been written not from any ulterior motive, but as a humble testimony of the love, the veneration and gratitude I feel for Her. And may they induce some readers to come and quench their thirst at that source of Life Eternal, which is Ma Anandamayee.

Translated from the original in French and reprinted from *Mother as Seen by Her Devotees*.

Special Information

Anandaswarupeshu,
Jai Ma!

We are pleased to inform you with great pleasure that Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Ranchi, is going to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Shree Shree Sharadiya Durga Puja this year.

The devotees, who are desirous to attend this function, are requested to contact at the following address atleast ONE MONTH before.

Smt. Soma Banerjee
Shree Shree Maa Anandamayee Ashram, Ranchi
Main Road, P.O. Ranchi-834001
Telephone : 8797876417, 8102763630

Children Section

Faith

Mount Kailash is the abode of Siva-Durga. Once both were involved in *satsang* sitting at the peak of the mountain. Mother Durga wanted to know from Mahadeva about the nature of the *moksha* that can only be attained through death in Kashi. Mahadeva replied in a negative way. He said that *moksha* can be attained only to those who had great faith in this belief; otherwise it is not possible. Faith, and only deep faith in this belief can lead to *moksha* if one dies in Kashi, Mahadeva added.

Parvati looked confused and repeated her question saying, "Does only faith lead to *moksha*? But how can we judge who have faith and who haven't"? Mahadeva got her point and asked her to follow him to Kashi where she would get her answer properly.

Seated on Nandi, both travelled to Kashi and they left him for grazing on the bank of river Varuna and arrived at the famous Manikarnika ghat, the cremation ground where cremation fire is never extinguished.

Mahadeva asked Parvati to sit on a stair of the ghat and he himself lied down like a dead body keeping his head on her lap. Parvati started wailing loudly saying she lost her husband but was unable to cremate him for the want of money. She sought help from others. A couple of people came to her offering help. At this, Parvati put forth one condition. She said, "One who has never committed any sin, can only bring wood for the pyre of my husband. He would not meet the release if the wood is brought by a sinful man. Oh my sons! Bring wood if any one of you never committed a sin."

Consequently, none looked ready to bring wood for the pyre

because every one thought about his sin. They thought telling lie would also be a sin and they had already committed such a sin by telling lies. Some of them remembered their childhood days when they were involved in petty thefts from the store of their mothers. Some people thought in a different way. They felt guilty for their act of cheating others because they were thinking till now that cheating was not a sin.

Meanwhile, a man in loincloth appeared there and came to know the whole story. He assured Parvati, " Don't worry, I will bring wood for the pyre after taking a dip into the river Ganga". And, he brought wood after bathing. People assembled there, told him that wood brought by him would not serve the purpose because an honest person who never told a lie can only bring the wood. The man replied, " I too have heard it and my body at present does not contain any sin."

Parvati asked, " My son, are you really telling the truth that your body is pure? Otherwise, my husband will not meet his ultimate release. "The man said, " You are still sceptic. Have you not seen that I took a dip into the holy river. All sins are vanished or washed away once one takes a dip into the Ganges and it is an eternal truth. Have you not read any scriptures?"

Mahadeva and Parvati disappeared immediately. Mahadeva told, "Parvati, this is the true faith that I was explaining to you".

List of Festivals

1. Guru Purnima July 16, 2019
2. Sri 108 Swami Muktananda
Giriji's Nirvana Tithi August 7, 2019
3. Jhulan Mahotsava August 10-14, 2019
4. Sri Bhairavi's (Swami Maunananda Parvat)
Nirvana Tithi August 12, 2019
5. Rakhi Purnima-Raksha Bandhan August 15, 2019
6. Sri Krishna Janmashtami August 23, 2019
7. Sri Gurupriyadidi's Nirvana Tithi September 5, 2019
8. Srimad Bhagavat Saptah Parayan September 6-13, 2019
9. Mahamopadhaya Sri Gopinath
Kaviraj's Birthday September 8, 2019
10. Sri Sri Sharadiya Durga Puja October 4-8, 2019
11. Sri Laxmi Puja October 13, 2019
12. Sri Kali Puja October 27, 2019
13. Annakuta Mahotsava October 28, 2019

Mataji Gives *Darshan*

Melita Maschman

I saw how Her eyes lit up when amongst those who fell at Her feet and touched the ground with their foreheads, a familiar friendly face turned up. I believed to notice how She suffered from the heat. I felt Her slight resistance when She withdrew Her feet from an importunate adorer. I observed Her pleasure in puns (an ashramite translated to me what was being said). I saw how She dismissed a Parsi lady from Bombay who requested a miraculous cure from Her. "Take your husband to a good doctor and pray to God for peace for both of you". At that moment Her face had an expression of sadness and inexorability. I also marked how Her attitude and the deepening shadows in Her features betrayed fatigue before She got up and traced a passage for Herself through the multitude that thronged round Her.

The Christian painters of the early Middle Ages had a simple, yet effective device to express holiness in paintings. Not letting their brush to be voluble, they could only tacitly hint at the mystery against the luminous background. I feel very much like those artists. What is describable in Mataji is the familiar human element. For that which is beyond, for the Divine, I also have no means of expression. But I could use an expedient similar to that of Medieval painters. Sometimes I believe to have seen a stream of light radiate from Her eyes. But at such moments, I more than ever felt pained at my blindness. I knew that, if only I were more of a seer, I should have beheld Her whole form in this halo. Although incapable of perceiving it, I was able to register its effect by the complete peace that filled me at certain hours.

The mystery in its secrecy shall remain untouched, but perhaps I may be permitted to try and approach it by a few more steps: I felt this

Divine Light must be connected with Mataji's egolessness. It originates from the eternal Ground of all existence - let us unhesitatingly call it 'God'. And it streams through Mataji because it is not impaired by the opaque texture of the I-ness which, in the case of all of us, is more or less dense.

I have yet to mention how very thoughtful it made me that although millions of men and women of all strata of society fell at Her feet, I could never detect even the faintest trace of pride, neither also of humility in Mataji. Probably there is a connection between this and what I stated when I first met Her, namely that She seemed beyond good and evil. I must confess that, to this day I am unable to understand this fully. I have still to ponder deeply about it, for I know now that this statement is in keeping with one of the elements of Hindu scriptural teaching.

Mataji's mysterious power lies in Her being, not in what She does. Without a doubt, has for many, many years She lived solely for Her fellow-beings. But this may be said of a fair number of others as well, although with them it has very different significance. Seen from our angle of vision, Her whole life seems to be one continuous self-sacrifice and could therefore still be called 'action'. Yet, when watching Mataji for a sufficiently long time, one comes to feel that, what is essential in Her existence does no longer fulfill itself by action. She is not what with one of the elements of Hindu teaching.

She is not what She is because She does good. Her life seems a manifestation of pure, self-contained Being, perhaps I should say 'Being reposing in God'. Hence She corresponds to our highest conception of 'good', but the ethical laws are for Her not anymore a matter of struggle and daily decision as for us who still live fully steeped in action. The Christian apostle St. Paul says, "Christ is the end of the law." He does not thereby mean the denial of ethical commandments, but their fulfillment as a matter of course. For Him who is "one with the Father" (with God), ethical demands are no more of the nature as commandments. He fulfills them spontaneously by His

very Being. This also holds good for Mataji. For one who sees Her with open eyes, not only the beauty of God is reflected in Her, such as we may recognise in a flower or more powerfully in the sea or mountains, but also God's Love. Moreover, Her whole being is a passionate, indefatigable, newly formulated proclamation of self-experienced Divine Reality. According to the Christian doctrine, Christ is the most perfect Child of God, the son, because His love for God and men was most perfect. The ocean or a mountain cannot testify to Divine Love, but man, if he is what he should be, gives evidence of God's Love. This, is so with Mataji. Hence She is one of the important religious figures, as a proclaimer and a witness.

While I was sitting at Mataji's feet with Her other devotees nothing happened except that we looked at Her. I, at certain moments, felt the presence of Divinity more powerfully than I had ever before during Church ceremonies. I believe, I understand that all ritual of that kind exists only because of the want of Divine Presence, as a gesture of longing and invocation of That, which cannot be forced to come. But where Divinity IS, even prayer is silenced. The ritual action is blotted out in the mysterious presence of Divine Being. A strange experience, impossible to convey to others - this fullness in the void of gazing. A gazing in closed eyes, and yet with eyes wide open. Once or twice I perceived what can hardly be grasped by a Western brain. I do not know how Mataji experiences Her own person. Certainly not as we should express it, namely as a human being in whom the divine spark emits a specially bright light - for She lives in Oneness. I believed to observe that She, in whom Holiness is embodied before our eyes, 'joined' us in the reverent contemplation of Divinity that She Herself IS. In my diary I find, the clumsy sentence: "Sometime one has the feeling as if Mataji revered Herself. But this attitude is completely supernatural." Later I discovered the conception of '*Lila*'. Does it perhaps give the clue?

Mataji's *Darshan* I have probably experienced only three or four times. This numinous by which it was characterised did not lessen, but

to my great surprise a fundamental change took place: My first feeling that I had lit upon a dimension of reality entirely foreign to me was reversed into its opposite. I then felt that I had only just, for the first time, discovered man's own true reality.

It may sound presumptuous, but I should like to say it in all humility: In Mataji, God allowed me to see Him with the closeness of intimacy. Ever clearer I felt, what distinguishes me from Her is nothing essential, it lies where the brightness of a candle is distinguished from that of the sun. This was of course a tremendous discovery that, by the grace of God, I should wish to justify by the trend of my life in future.

Mataji's evening in Kishenpur, which was also my last one, has remained in my memory as a big festival. About two hundred people had assembled in the Ashram. I see Mataji standing in the courtyard, indefatigably distributing *prasad* in all directions. Not in a solemn manner but laughingly, like a mother whose greatest happiness is to satisfy the hunger of her children. Sometimes She would suddenly throw a fruit over many heads to someone standing at a distance, who had asked for it only with his eyes. Afterwards, for a long while, She walked up and down between us, talking to a child, joking with one or the other, allowing questions to be put to Her, sitting down near the musicians who were singing *kirtana*, then rising again to walk once more between us. It was as if She wished to distribute Herself, and She did this with a hundred hands. Never had I met a more beautiful human being, or more precisely, never have I seen the mysterious beauty of the Imperishable shine with such effulgence through mortal flesh.

Late, that same evening, there was a very special moment for me. I stood behind a trellised window, which looked out over the temples. Mataji stood between them and, for a short while, all the people who had surrounded Her receded far back. My memory shows Her to me standing there all by Herself. I raised my folded hands to bid good-bye to Her. From my prison (behind the latticed window) my greeting went out and upwards to Her freedom. She lifted

Her folded hands in response, and simultaneously sent a veritable torrent of joy right into the core of my heart.

Leave-taking usually makes me feel quite sick. This parting should actually have torn me to pieces. For me, there was not a single painful moment. The instant in which Mataji had lifted Her hands to respond to my greeting lay outside of time. I felt this with every fibre of my being; here nothing was threatened with transitoriness.

Never in my life have I felt so carefree, so confidently happy as during the weeks that followed, although I was travelling alone, with little money, and for the first time in a non-European country.

During the Cuban crisis it became clearer than ever to me how much I owed to Mataji. Just like everyone else I saw the dreadful danger of the situation, but quite contrary to my attitude in similar crisis hitherto, I did not feel afraid. Perhaps, I have grasped not with my mind but with my whole being that even the most cruel outer destruction does not touch that which we ARE in Reality. May I be able to preserve this knowledge.

There is a Zen Buddhist saying: "When an Enlightened one touches a dry twig, it begins to blossom...".

Ashram Varta

Anandaswarupeshu

Annual four-day long Vasanti Puja was held in Varanasi Ashram from April 14, 2019 with all religious fervour. It is to be mentioned here that this Vasanti Puja was performed by the ancestors of Baba Bholanath in the past. It was at his behest that Sri Ma arranged this Puja in 1926 in Adi Siddheshwari Ashram, Dhaka. There was an anthill in the premises of this Ashram and it was demolished by Baba Bholanath and the mud was mixed with the clay that was used for making the Durga idol. Varanasi is next to Siddhishwari Ashram where Vasanti Puja was organised. In 1944, a platform was raised in the premises of the newly acquired Varanasi Ashram and Vasanti Puja was performed for the first time in the holy presence of Sri Ma. Vasanti Puja along with other pujas have been held on the same altar since then. Ma was residing at the Jain temple during the first Vasanti Puja. *Akhand kirtan* was organised for nine days during the first puja and Prabhuduttji and other *mahatmas* were present to grace the occasion. Next year in 1945, Vasanti Puja was held in the newly built Ashram compound and it became an integral part of Ashram's religious calendar since then.

Vasanti Puja in Varanasi Ashram has certain special characteristics making it entirely different from Vasanti Puja of other places. This size of the Durga *pratima* measures the height of Sri Ma. Also, iconographic traditions of erstwhile East Bengal (now Bangladesh) are followed in the idols. Contrary to the usual arrangement of the idols of Laxmi, Ganesha, Kartika and Saraswati, *pratima* of Varanasi Ashram presents a different order. Here, Kartika is located near Laxmi while Ganesha is by the side of Saraswati. According to East Bengal tradition, it is believed that Goddess Laxmi represents wealth and Kartika is the symbol of power that protects the wealth. Similarly,

attainment of success comes through *brahmavidya*. Saraswati is the Goddess of Knowledge and *brahmavidya* while Ganesha is called as *siddhidata*. In the West Bengal tradition, Ganesha is located near Laxmi while Saraswati is accompanied by Kartika. There also continued different traditions for the arrangement of the idols of Laxmi and Saraswati and at many places these can be seen on the upper portion of the main idol of Durga. Durga Puja of the famous Mitra family of Varanasi is 300 years old and the *pratima* has certain remarkable features. Idols of Rama and Siva are incorporated with the main idols of Durga and her children because Rama worshipped Siva and Durga before slaying Ravana in the battlefield.

Sri Abhijeet Brahmachari was the main priest and Sri Saurabh Banerjee was the *tantra-dharaka* in the Vasanti Puja this year. Swami Golakananda gave religious discourses during all the three days in the afternoon while *bhajan-sandhya* was organised after the evening *arati*. Kumari Alankrita Roy, daughter of Smt. Ratna Roy, music teacher of Kanyapeeth, enthralled the audience with her devotional songs. Post *Visarjan* rituals, like *Darpan-Visarjan* etc. were also performed as per *shashtra*. After the immersion of the idols, devotees, ashram inmates and guests greeted each other followed by *Matri-pranam* and distribution of *prasada*. Ram Navami also was celebrated with equal religious fervour.

Sanyas-utsav of Swami Muktananda Giriji was observed on April 14 in all the ashrams of Sri Ma with *sadhu-bhandara*.

Baishakh 19 (Bengali calendar) is the most auspicious day for the devotees and associates of Sri Ma as She came over to this earth on that very day. All Her ashrams celebrated this day with full enthusiasm and grandeur. It was the 124th birth anniversary of Sri Ma. All the ashrams of Kankhal, Agartala, Agarpara, Varanasi, Pune, Bhimpura, Vrindavan, Ranchi, Almora, Bhopal, Puri, Jamshedpur, Rajgir, Dehradon etc. observed the day with various programmes and activities.

Anandajyoti-peetham in Kankhal organised various programmes

including religious discourses, *Raas-lila*, *sadhu-bhandara* and *bhajan-sandhya*. This ashram also celebrated Akshaya Tritiya on May 7 with *shoroshopochar* puja of Sri Sri Ma. Also, special puja of Sri Shanakaracharya was performed in Shankaracharya Hall. The puja of Didima in Giriji temple was followed by *sadhu bhandara*. In Varanasi Ashram too, pujas were performed of Sri Ma, Gopalji, Siva, Jogmaya and Didima on Akshaya Tritiya.

The week-long *Maharudra-yajna* was conducted at Kankhal Ashram from May 7. *Nirvan divas* of Baba Bholanath was also observed here with special puja on May 12. Buddha Purnima was marked by the pujas of 108 young virgin girls.

Tithipuja of Sri Sri Ma was celebrated in all Her ashrams on May 21. In Kankhal Ashram, *adhivasa* (ceremony preliminary to an auspicious act) of *naam-yajna* was performed followed by a day-long *kirtan* session.

Varanasi Ashram celebrated the *Janmatithi* Puja of Sri Ma under the guidance of Brahmacharini Jaya Didi. *Shatachandi-paath* was also organised. Elaborate *bhoga* was offered to Sri Ma and to all the deities of the Ashram. *Prasada* was distributed among the patients at Sri Anandamayee Hospital.

Ganga Dashhara was celebrated in all the ashrams of Sri Sri Ma on June 12.
