

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

Vol.-3

January, 1999

No.1

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MATRI-VANI

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

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This body has lived with father, mother, husband and all. This body has served the husband, so you may call it a wife. It has prepared dishes for all, so you may call it a cook. It has done all sorts of scrubbing and menial work, so you may call it a maid. But if you look at the thing from another standpoint you will realize that this body has served none but God. For when I served my father, mother, husband and others, I simply considered them as different manifestations of the Almighty and served them as such. When I sat for God whatever I did I did in a spirit of Divine service. Hence I was not quite worldly, though engaged in household affairs. I had but one ideal, viz , to serve all as God, to do everything for the sake of God.

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

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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.

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Your strong desire to see this body in states of samadhi causes its symptoms to manifest at times. Whenever any thought reaches its full intensity, its physical expression will invariably follow. If one loses one's being in the contemplation of the Divine Name, one can merge oneself in the ocean of Heavenly Beauty. God and His symbolic names are one and the same... as soon as the consciousness of the out-side world disappears the self-revealing Power of the Name inevitably finds it's objective expression.

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The universe is a Divine play, you have a desire to play and hence in all the play-ful activities of this body, in its smiles and frolics you interpret its ways according to your own light. Had it assumed a grave motionless posture, you would have stayed away from me. Learn to merge yourselves in Divine Joy in all its manifestations and you will reach the final goal of all play. Do you understand ?

* * *

Q:- If you have no mission to fulfill or message to give, why do you tell us to worship god?"

Ma:- If you do not ask, then I have nothing to say: but if you ask, and if it is my *Kheyala*, then certainly I shall tell you about the better way of life.

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The intense desire for God realization is itself the way to it.

* * *

It is by seeking to know oneself that the Great Mother of all may be found.

* * *

Do you want deliverance from the bonds of the world ? Then, weeping profusely, you will have to cry out from the bottom of your heart, "Deliver me, Great Mother of the world, deliver me !" To obtain Her grace you will have to shed tears much more abundantly than when you desire things of the world. 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.

* * *

I never say - "I will do this, I will not do that". It is you who make me carry out whatever work lies in your power to induce me to perform.

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CONVERSATIONS WITH WESTERN DEVOTEES

—Vijayananda

(Two)

Q: Was Sri Ma a Guru and can we claim to be her disciples ?

A: Traditionally the relation between Guru and disciples is created through *diksha* (initiation). But Sri Ma did not give formal initiation (except to some rare individuals). Only giving a *mantra* is not real *diksha*. It must be accompanied by *Sakti pāt* (transmission of power). But *Sakti pāt* in the case of a great Being like Sri Ma can be given even without *mantra*, by simple look or touch or even from distant place. And that is what Sri Ma used to do. Therefore, individuals who had received *Sakti pāt* from Her can consider Her as their Guru. Any how, as Sri Ma told us on number of occasions that there is only one Guru, it is the Supreme Divine. All human Gurus are only channels or connectors of the Supreme Power. In the case of Sri Ma the Supreme Power came un-obstructed through Her. Therefore there was total identification in her with the Divine Power.

Q. : It seems that Ma had difficulties with a number of her followers regarding their evolution. Why ?

A. Spiritually speaking most people tend to stay where they are or fall, and people like Ma tend to push people into an ascending current. The action of such sages towards the masses is to push the greater number of people into the current so that sooner or later they would reach the goal. That's what we call *krama mukti*, progressive liberation after death, which allows one to evolve through the different subtle levels and towards the final liberation or *moksha*. On the other hand, Ma also had an inner circle of followers whom she could work with in depth. This circle was according to the spirit, and did not necessarily correspond to her immediate physical entourage, which sometimes included impossible people or *bhutas*, bad spirits, as we call them jokingly. Ma used to keep those people close to her because they were too weak to take care of themselves along, or because they had a desire to become gurus without having the necessary maturity, therefore, Ma could handle them better by keeping them close.

- Q. Ma gave the impression to worldly people that she could materialise all their desires. Is that true ?
- A. Each man has within himself a desire which is the strongest. But in the centre of it is the Self. Ma used to reactivate the Self. But worldly people superimposed their materialistic desires on that.
- Q. A great many people say that Ma used to teach mainly *bhakti*. What do you think ?
- A. From time to time, Ma used to give advice on *bhakti*, but she always came back to non-duality, *advaita*. She was firmly based on *advaita*.
- Q. Is it true that Ma was less smiling and less happy in the second part of her life ?
- A. I once told her that, and she answered me : "I am always the same, only the body is getting old". It is true that she looked more severe later. Perhaps it was also to show that she wasn't always in agreement with a certain number of people and attitudes around her. When a sage comes, he lowers himself from a very high level. For him, to be blissful is so easy. Bliss is always there. He doesn't understand why people try so hard to be unhappy. Little by little he realises the level at which people are. At the beginning Ma used to laugh a lot. She only wanted trees as an ashram. Later, Bhaiji, Didi and other devotees insisted that she accept the existence of ashrams, and finally she was forced to take care of them, to avoid the risk of corruption.
- Q. A number of Ma's devotees were afraid of Her. They did not dare to look at Her in the eyes. Why was that ?
- A. May be it was because they felt that Ma could see their shortcomings directly. But as far as I am concerned, I have never felt afraid of Ma. One time I was with her in Vrindaban, I was just finishing a period of six or seven years during which I hadn't talked to, or even looked to the face of a woman. For a few days I had to take care of a young and pretty American. And from the outside, it could have looked like I was attached again. Suddenly, Ma looked at me, with the kind of look that could create real panic in most people. But I looked at Her straight in the eyes, because I knew I had done nothing wrong. She began giving me a huge smile, as if relieved. If Ma could seem tough at certain times, during others she could be sympathetic to the slightest emotion of the visitor. In the Hindu scriptures it is said regarding the Divine Mother that she is hard as thunder and sweet like a flower.

- Q. You often mention the fact that Ma didn't have any ego, and could adapt to any environment. If she had been born in the West, how would Ma have adapted to the situation ?
- A. I think she couldn't have adapted to that situation, and that is the reason why she was born in India. Western people are too intellectual for a sage to be able to flourish. He or she needs to be surrounded by people who have a capacity for direct trust.
- Q. Can you tell us a fundamental word of Ma, which would be like a mantra ?
- A. Yes, there is one which is like a *mahavakya*, a great saying from the Upanishads, similar to 'I am that'. '*Amar. atmah amar panthi svayam*'—The eternal soul, the eternal pilgrim are He only.
- Q. Could you feel the presence of Ma ?
- A. How many times have I clearly felt, even from a distance, that Ma was thinking about me!
- Q. You say that Ma during her birthdays was not in samadhi, but in omnipresent consciousness, completely in the hearts of her followers. Can you be more precise ?
- A. Yes, it is true. Why would she have been in Nirvikalpa samadhi, completely cut off from the outside world, while everyone had come to see her ? I had the proof of this at the beginning of my association with Ma. At that time, there were not many crowd for her birthdays. She was lying down apparently unconscious of the outer world. I looked at her and told her mentally, probably in Hindi, 'It's sad you are so far away from us'. She immediately sat up and had a long look on me which meant: 'No, I am not far. I am always with you'.
- Q. When did Ma give you the ochre dress of sannyasa ?
- A. In 1956 I was doing intense tapasya in Vindhyachal on the Ganges not far from Benaras. I went to see Ma in Benaras, and we were three or four on the terrace. Ma saw the dark brown robe that I was wearing; it was the only one I had, and it was a bit torn at the back, but I hadn't noticed it. She started laughing, and tore it completely, while I was doing pranam to her. I told her 'Ma, you gave me sannyas !' and she smiled. She had me give her a dress, more or less orange. Before I received the ochre clothes, I was always careful not to use a colour which resembled it, however, one day, after washing it, my brown robe came out sort of orange. I asked Ma if it was O. K., and she said, 'It is the gerua', (that is to say the ochre colour that is reserved for sadhus) 'which is inside, that is coming out'. In 1971 she asked that a white

shawl she had worn and she gave me be dyed ochre. In 1976, for her 80th birthday, she gave me some cloth, to make a complete ochre dress. By myself, I would never have taken the ochre robe. I would either have dressed like a Westerner, or I would have worn simple and discreet Indian clothes. The ashram people as well as Ma considered me as a sannyasi. One day, she said, looking at me, 'I don't make a difference between a sannyasi' and then turning towards Bhaskarananda and another, who were on the other side, 'and a brahmachari'.

Q. Is it possible to make the ego disappear by oneself?

A. The one who does the sadhana is also the ego. Therefore it is very difficult to make it disappear. Ramana Maharshi compares this situation to the chief robber becoming the chief of police. He will be able to catch all the other robbers, but he will not be able to catch himself. A guru is necessary, because it is only when you surrender to the guru that the ego can disappear completely. However, sadhana is an important means to diminish the ego. When the mind is completely sattvic, it dissolves within itself, or it becomes at least so transparent that it is only a very thin translucent veil, which barely hides the Self.

Q. How can a sage be recognised?

A. First, a sage has compassion, real compassion. Then there is humility. The sage is so noble that everyone feels like bowing before him, and yet, he stays totally humble. There are also many other criteria. But it is necessary to stay near the sage for a while to really understand his level. A spiritual seeker can only take care of others when he is disidentified from his body. A sage acts like a lighthouse. He lights the path for solitary navigators who are travelling away. The farthest may benefit even more than those who are physically near the sage, who are more like employees, who are sweeping the stairs of the lighthouse, they are not necessarily well located to see the light of the lighthouse.

Q. Can we observe silence while speaking?

A. If we speak only when it is necessary and if we keep the mind silent when we are not talking.

Q. Is it all right to go from one sage to another?

A. The beginners, who are seeking a spiritual master can do it, just to assess the situation. But when you have become a real disciple of a real guru, you become a part of his body and you can never leave him. It would be a diminishing of energy to go like a butterfly from one to the other simply to

see. Indians understand that very well. But Westerners have difficulties with it.

- Q. Why do some sages die very early ?
- A. They have come to accomplish a mission. They consider their body a burden. In their opinion, the sooner they get rid of it, to melt with ananda (bliss), the better. Thus, as soon as they feel that they have finished their missions, they leave their bodies.
- Q. Why don't you tell people more often to meditate ? Even though meditation is the basis of your sadhana, and it has represented and still represents for you the largest part of your life, it is unusual not to hear you push the visitors to do more meditation.
- A. I don't feel I have the soul of a teacher, and I am very careful with this type of ego. Besides, I don't want to talk and for people to be bored with me, as if they were at school. Moreover, if we tell someone who doesn't like to meditate, to do it, they will be upset. In my eyes, spiritual knowledge is happy knowledge. During a conversation with me, people extract what they need, if they really feel it. All come spontaneously. I feel that I am not the one who is talking. Real spiritual teaching is way beyond words, even though sometimes words are important. What I least like are discourses. People feel that they are doing a good action, satsang, when they come to listen to them, but in fact, we say all kinds of common things that everyone already knows. People can have the behaviour that they wish, I do not disturb them, but if they ask me for my advice, I give it. Sometimes, I happen to intervene. But it is not as a guru, it is more as one who would shout 'be careful', if he saw someone in the street about to walk into a hole that he hadn't seen. It happens at times that people get too close to a hole, and I tell them.
- Q. Do you feel that living in an ashram was helpful to you ?
- A. Ma's ashram, as well as other religious institutions, is inhabited by human beings. At the beginning, when I had an impure thought, I would immediately chase it, because I believed that everyone around me was pure.
- Q. What factors make a sadhaka start to attract disciples ?
- A. There was a time in my sadhana when I clearly understood how to attract numerous disciples, and how to become famous. But I firmly pushed back this temptation. The majority of gurus cannot give *shaktipat* (which is the transmission of energy). Therefore, they are not true gurus. Moreover, they are very much taken by the ashram they have founded or inherited, and they cannot resume intensive sadhana. There are some, however, who have been able to renounce the ashrams they have built.

Q. Do you believe in telepathy ?

A. A person who has a guru knows that they can communicate with him or her from a distance. To receive a telepathic message, one must have a silent mind, otherwise, even if we perceive it to a certain point, we start to fabulate around it. When I was in my hermitage in Dhaulchina, I had a problem regarding whether the grocery would be open when I went down to the village, or if the person who was providing my ghee actually had some. I would ask them from inside, and those people would usually answer me yes or no.

Q. Vijayananda, are you a guru?

A. Cavour, the remarkable diplomat, who was able to restore unity in Italy in the XIXth century, was asked the secret of his success. He answered: "I tell the truth, but no one believes me !" The same for me. I say that I am not a guru, but I am not believed.

Q. You must be in a permanent state of bliss.

A. No, I am a very ordinary man. However, I do not have negative emotions. No anger, no sexual desire, this desire which is so difficult to master. I don't have any attachments, not even to my adopted daughters, whom I love very much. Of course, during meditation I have bliss, but to maintain it permanently, in daily life, is much more difficult. That corresponds to the summit of spiritual evolution, or sahaja samadhi, which is spontaneous samadhi.

A HUMBLE PRAYER

—'A devotee'

Oh God ! I know not who art Thou. I know not where Thou exist or not. I know not Thy intention. I fail to understand Thy Divine Play with my little knowledge. I know not how to propitiate Thee. I know not how to convey my prayers to Thee. Still I convey to Thee, Immutable, Eternal One (through this Divine Form) in my modest way the humble prayer and pranam sincerely and wholeheartedly. I know not when and how this pranam and prayer will reach Thee.

Oh God ! may Thy peace, bliss and purity descend on earth ! May these descend on every creature, every man ! With their touch may all difference and turbidity be removed ! May the Divine Life blossom !

Oh God ! may Thou reveal Thyself in human form for the welfare of the universe, for the welfare of the humanity, for the welfare of this country, for the good of all devotees ! Please reveal Thy Knowledge, Power and vibhuties through Thy choicest sons—the devotees, brahmacharis, sannyasis, (saints), workers, attendants and others.—who are practicing sadhana and doing service for Thee in various ways in different ashrams and institutions.

Oh God ! reveal Thy Divine Will ! Those who are aspirant yogis, may the Divine insight dawn on them. Those who are religious, may their lives become blissful and happy. Those who are pure in souls, may the God-consciousness be awakened in them ! May they follow the path of Truth of Righteousness. Those who are possessed with asuric ideas, also please inspire them to the life of Truth and God. If not, please mould them in a new fashion in Thy ways. May the Kingdom of Truth and Righteousness dawn on earth, where the centre will be spiritualism. Science, industry, art, literature, philosophy, culture etc will be the means of expression. May the social, economic and political life be guided by Thy Divine Inspiration. May Thy blessings and grace be bestowed on all. May the Divine life flourish in a new way, in a new form !

Oh God ! in individual and family life also may the Divine touch descend ! With that touch, whatever there is of lower nature may that be transformed into the Divine way to higher nature ! May lust be transformed into Divine love, trance

(moha) be transformed into divine attraction, greed into divine aspiration, anger into god-bestowed strength ! In this way, please make free this *adhara* from all failings, sins and sufferings and give a new Divine life. Mould as Thy capable true son. May Thy peace, calmness and tranquility descend on this *adhara* (vessel). Please make the mind sincere, concentrated and non-attached, simple and straight forward, firm to the faith and well established in life's goal. Oh God ! please initiate me in Thy divine work and direct me to the desired ideal path. Please bestow Thy spontaneous Divine Knowledge, Divine Strength and Divine Ananda on this *adhara* ! Grace oh God ! Reveal Thyself and make me one with Thee.

Sincerest pranam at Thy Lotus feet.*

*. The above prayer was composed by the devotee on the occasion of Shree Shree Ma's 75th birthday.

SHREE SHREE MA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIA FOR THE BENEFIT OF MANKIND.*

—Dr. S.K. Mukherjee

You should know that I, as a student of science, am very particular about believing something which I have not observed myself or experienced myself. This is the teaching of science and I do not know why a scientist has been asked to chair this session. I have experienced no such extra sensory thing that two speakers have just now talked about.

We are fond of hearing about miracles performed by saintly persons, as if, that is a certificate for their saintliness. It is not. If you think that if I or anyone else utter the name of Ma, all troubles will vanish, this is because of your faith that Ma was physically there or knew about the trouble. This is not quite clear to a scientist. But even then, if there is a person, who has influenced you to such extent, that you keep on thinking about him/her in times of danger or trouble, if you utter the name of that person in such a situation, I think, you subscribe to the belief that there is some force that is deciding our movement, our fate, our life and so on. From the speeches it is also clear that we have plenty of saintly persons in our country, but I am not sure whether there is relevance to this seminar.

You remember Anandamayee Ma and you get the thrill of a loving mother, who has always concerned herself with her children, devotees, disciples and that itself becomes relevant whenever we are in trouble. This country which has produced so many saintly persons, who have declared from the top of their voice that there is a God who guides all of us. By loving God one goes nearer to Him. These are simple things, but there are people who think otherwise. There are again those who make this holy country an unholy one. This is what we don't like to be. We want this country to be a holy one. And in order to do that we must remember godly persons like Anandamayee Ma. She is one of those who have made this country holier. Because of such persons it is a pleasure to live. It is not a painful life any

* Extracts from lecture delivered by Dr. Sushil Kumar Mukherjee, ex-Vice Chancellor, Calcutta University in the National Seminar on Ma Anandamayee held at Mahajati Sadan, Calcutta on 20th & 21st December, 1997.

more, if we think of such persons very close to us. This is the relevance of remembering them.

I can not judge what Mother was like or is like. There is no past for Her. She is always present. I have not studied that much and am not capable of doing so. Only once I had the happiness to touch her feet in one function. And I do not know if I am devoted to her just because of that. And this is some thing which science cannot explain. And it will be an arrogance on the part of a scientist to try to explain these things. Why is it that many of the saints or saintly persons have had the same type of experience. In that sense it is close to science. I may have not done an experiment, but if somebody else does this experiment, I know that he is a truthful person. I have reason to believe what he has done. So belief has got a place even in science. And therefore, I think that the existence of saintly persons is by itself a truth, if someone I believe, has found this to be so.

Anandamayee Ma has not studied anywhere. She has not gone to any school, college or university or done any sadhana. O yes, she mentioned that she did some sadhana, but that was not necessary for her, that is what Mahamahopadhyay Gopinath Kaviraj said. This exercise was not at all necessary for her. It was there already. It was just to show persons like us. She has had self knowledge because she was close to the source of knowledge. Before you ask a question she answers. She is perhaps a source of knowledge herself.

So this is how we have to look at such persons as Anandamayee Ma. I always pity that in a conference like this, when you are speaking about spiritual things, it is not the religion in its narrow sense. It is spirituality which is far above religion. Religion imparts spirituality. It is no longer painful that there is a dearth of younger people in conferences like this. What do they do, if they do not study these things and do not imbibe these things at an early age ? It is spiritual liberalisation that is important. And this one can study, learn and attain while attending a conference like this.

I take this liberty of joining you to pay my obeisance to Shree Shree Anandamayee Ma. Let Anandamayee Ma bless all of you.

THE PERFORMANCE OF LILĀS IN SRI MA'S PRESENCE

[TWO]

—Dr. Bithika Mukerji

One of my sister Renudi's very successful plays was *Shishupalabadha*. The last scene was very dramatic. While Krishna was still in the attitude of majestic wrath, the assembled kings started on a *stotra* of adoration, while Shishupala lay dead at his feet. I, as usual, was in the wings. Somebody came and hurriedly called me to Sri Ma's seat in the Hall. I bent down to listen to her whisper. She said "Ask Shishupala also to get up and join in the prayer to Krishna !" I returned to the wings and inched my way behind some of the "Kings" to whisper to the fallen hero. "Get up and join in the prayer." Shishupala was played by Manmohanda's daughter Agamoni. She took sometime to understand such a strange cut from the wings, but did get up and join in as directed. The audience probably thought it as a miracle, written in the Text.

Sri Ma later gave me an explanation. She said, "You see her mother and sisters were in the audience; they would not have liked the sight of Agamoni lying lifeless on the stage, when all the other girls were singing hymns to Krishna." Sri Ma's compassion reached out to all participants. The authenticity of the tableaux on stage was not more real than the audience. How blissful those festivals were. The girls of the Kanyapeeth were joined by many youngsters from the families of devotees living nearby. It was one glorious week of celebrations.

Once Gurupriya didi's sister Beludi brought a set of silver ornaments for Sri Ma from Vindhyaçal. When she was decked in these villager-type ornaments She had a kheyala for performing a *lilā* herself. Only the elder girls knew about Sri Ma's project. The whole day they were in and out of Sri Ma's room showing her the different props as requested by her. The evening programme started as usual. While one of the plays was going on, Sri Ma quietly left her seat and entered the green-room. She put on the blue sari and silver ornaments given by Beludi. We were to enact the story of *chhadma yogi*. The story is : Krishna enters Radha's bower in disguise because she being in a mood of hurt alienation (*maana*) would not give permission for him to come in. Sri Ma chose Buba to play the role of Radha. Sati, Tara and myself were the different *sakhis*. Ma would whisper lines which we were to speak from time to time. She had no opportunity to do a rehearsal or even to tell

us how to set about the enactment of the story. I had a difficult time dressing up Buba to her satisfaction. Sri Ma said, "Could not you get a nicer sari for her ? I want a gauze-like veil over her head and back through which the long black plait of hair (*veni*) will be shimmeringly visible." Buba had brownish fine textured hair. We added dark tassels to make it long and black. Sri Ma took great care with the appearance of Radha but alas, nothing was quite upto her standard; she went on saying, "Don't you have anything prettier than this ?"

At last we were ready. The scene opened with Radha sitting with her *sakhis* in the forest grove. Sri Ma as the disguised yogi entered with a conch-shell held to her mouth. The sound was a playback from the green-room. The *sakhis* engage the yogi in conversation. He begins to abuse Krishna to which Radha takes exception and orders him to be evicted from the bower. The yogi reveals himself and all is joy and celebration.

I cannot quite recall if we could systematically work out this scenario, because the audience went ecstatic to see Sri Ma decked out as she was and raised shouts of "Jai Ma", "Jai Ma". They were happy to see Sri Ma since they had missed her in the auditorium. I do not think they paid any heed to the dialogue or to us. Sri Ma walked into the auditorium to delight of the women and so the play came to a happy end in any case.

Pushpadi was a great asset with her musical talent. She provided all the songs, kirtans, hymns needed for the plays and also the background music, one of her very beautiful musical presentations was the dance-drama "*Mahisasuramardini*", performed by Jaya and Tara of the Kanyapeeth, who were very young and slim at the time. Jaya looked beautiful as the Goddess and Tara was very convincing as the asura. The martial rhythm of the famous *stotra* sung as accompaniment created a truly uplifting atmosphere.

We gained so much prestige by our performances that once we were asked to do a play in public, that is in the hall of the Gopal Mandir on the occasion of the annual Sanskrit Divas in the presence of Sri Ma and Pt. Gauri Nath Shastri, the guest of honour. I took on the task of abbreviating the Sanskrit-drama *Prabodha-Candrodaya* for this purpose. The Kanyapeeth rose to the occasion beautifully. The guest of honour was profuse in his appreciation of the purity and simplicity of the presentation. Since those times the young girls themselves, now more competent than we were, carry on the tradition very effectively. Km. Geeta Bannerji now can write, produce and direct plays which are appreciated by the elite audience of Varanasi every year. Swami Chidanandaji was once invited by Sri Ma to sit in with her while a group photograph of the Kanyapeeth was taken. He was many times the

guest of honour for the annual prize-giving function. He has become so identified with the aims and ideals of the Kanyapeeth that he graciously comes to attend this function every year, from wherever he may be. The ultimate compliment was paid to the Kanyapeeth by the most renowned scholar of Varanasi, Pd. Pattabhirama Sastri. After participating in one of the Sanskrit-Divas programmes, he said, "It is said that if one dies in Kashi, there is no rebirth but salvation; however, if I should be reborn I would like to come as one of the *Kanyas* (girls) of the Kanyapeeth !"

Sri Ma's *vāṇī* that "little girls (or boys) are like fresh unsullied flowers, worthy of God; for them to touch the dimension of the ever present grace is easy and natural." Sri Ma's *kheyala* was always with the Kanyapeeth. Perhaps it was right that when Sri Ma's *kheyala* was directed toward the performing of a *līlā*, the venue happens to be the Kanyapeeth.

SRI MA'S LILA :

During one of the dramatic evenings Mauni Ma said to Sri Ma, "Ma, why don't you do a lila yourself ?" Sri Ma, said at once, "Shall I do so ? Will all of you act in it if I direct a *lila* ?" Everyone agreed enthusiastically.

The next day, Sri Ma sent for me and gave expression to her *kheyala* regarding this *lila* to be performed in the evening. In retrospect I realize that in this Sri Ma revealed herself fully. The *lila*, simple in itself, may need pages for an indepth study of its meaning. To begin with, Sri Ma detailed a stage where actors and audience would form a homogenous group. Sri Ma never had time to instruct me fully, I would follow her around with a notebook and pencil and write down whatever she would manage to say from time to time, sometimes even while going from one meeting to another. I understood her instructions as follows :

The hall was to be divided up in 8 or more sections. These divisions were to be fluid and arranged without disturbing the audience who were to fill up the whole room inclusive of the space generally set aside for the stage. There would be two central figures in each of the main section. One, depicting an image of God and the other a worshipper. The entire hall would be like a congregation where people would be sitting in groups around some special images. Groups could merge into each other, but a discernible narrow path would lead to each group. The groups detailed by Sri Ma were as follows, that is, as far as my memory goes : The first two groups at one end of the hall would be those of Vaishnavas and Saivas. In the first square two girls from the Kanyapeeth would stand in the classical pose of Radha and Krishna. In the second Didi would sit in meditation in front of Ganga, another student, adorned as Siva. Other groups depicted devotees of Rama and the

Buddha. Buba would sit in the posture of Buddha. In one section we had ascetics who looked up at the calm and serene figure of the Adi Sankaracharya. In one rather amorphous section there were yogis, gānapatyas and Hanumanji depicted by Vishuddha, who was at that time a little imp of mischief. I think there were other figures not too clearly defined, but who could represent images or worshippers of non-Hindu forms of religions.

There was a small balcony on the other side of the hall. The many simple adjuncts to this lila were assembled here; a book, a pair of cymbals, a *rudraksha mala*, a flower garland, *tulsi petals*, *bilva* petals and many such items. The whole day Sri Ma would dictate to me snatches of the lines to be spoken by me. The idea was that I would describe the various images extolling their majesty and grandeur and also their captivating qualities which keep their devotees enthralled. Then I would call upon an attendant (Sri Ma, in disguise) to provide them with some item which would be of use to them in their mode of worship of their chosen *Iṣṭa Devatā*. Sri Ma said, "You will say, "Oh you servant woman ! Come here !" I was astonished. I said, "Who am I to call Ma a servant woman ?" (*dāsī*)

"This body, of course !"

"But I cannot say 'servant woman' (*dāsī*) to you !"

"Can't you ?"

"No, absolutely not !"

Sri Ma looked a little non-plussed, but Didi who was nearby supported me. She then overcame this check to her *kheyala* by saying, "Well, I had many nicknames as a child. One of them was *Tirthavasini*. How about Tirthavasini Mai ?" (The lady who lives in places of pilgrimages). I had no objection to Tirthavasini Mai, which I thought was very apt.

Thus, I was to call upon her saying something like this', "O Tirthavasini Mai ! Come here, See how beautiful this grove of trees is; how captivating are the images of Radha and Krishna. See with what dedication people are gathered here for a *Kirtana*." Truly one is transported to another world in an atmosphere like this.

After this comment, Sri Ma so heavily veiled that she hoped she would not be recognised, would emerge from the balcony carrying a pair of cymbals which she would place in the hands of the worshipper. Then she would go back to the balcony and become invisible to the audience. Sri Ma very painstakingly dictated comments for every group in the hall. Her words were a paen of praise, a hymn of ecstatic adoration in every case. There were no special or marginal groups. All were equally important. She wove such a rich tapestry of words signifying man's upsurge toward the divine that it seemed to encompass all possible attitudes which bind God

and man together. It was a celebration of variety and a realization of unity. Only Sri Ma could create this *lila* and 'enact' it beautifully.

One of the incidents of this *lila* threw light on Didi's attitude of utter obedience. Sri Ma had said in the beginning to her to sit in meditation in front of Siva. Didi had closed her eyes. Throughout the *lila* nobody told her to open her eyes, so she missed the entire presentation. We all laughed at Didi, but it was truly a remarkable example of unquestioning obedience.

In my desk, I still have a few pages of my original notes; Atmanandaji wrote an account of this *lila*. I think she was one of the very few who appreciated the presentation. The rest were looking adoringly at Sri Ma while she moved up and down the hall totally absorbed in what she was doing. Although her face was hidden, the beautiful hands were unmistakable. The audience was content to look upon her to the accompaniment of devotional music. I do not think anyone bothered to listen to my comments or relate them to Sri Ma's movements. Such was always the effect of this fantastic personality. She commanded total attention. We never paid heed to what she was saying, but were interested only in being in close proximity to her, to see her, to be near her and generally live in the shelter of her magic presence.

Sri Ma, in a later year, directed another *lila* in Dehradun. I was not there but heard about it from the others. This time Sri Ma herself did not take part but directed others in their performances which was again a *lila* of Divine images and their worshippers. The players were Chhabidi, Chitra, Bishuddha and other young girls who formed Sri Ma's entourage at this time. It was acted out in public in the satsang hall of Dehradun Ashram. Sri Ma took delight in impromptu arrangements and also a type of contrivance which makes do with whatever is at hand. She was never at a loss or discouraged by lack of facilities; it must also be recorded that her *kheyala* itself brought about a concatenation of circumstances which bridged all lacunae.

The Kanyapeeth still maintains a high standard of artistic performances on special occasions. Sri Ma's *Kheyala* continues to sustain this institution which has celebrated its 60th year in September, 1998.

BHAIJEE—THE FOREMOST CHILD OF MA

—Dr. Debaprasad Mukhopadhyay

No narration about the *lila* of Shree Shree Ma would be even half complete without speaking about 'Bhaijee' —Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy.

It was Bhaijee who was called to Siddheswari (then a dilapidated Kali temple complex in the outskirts of Dhaka) from his office by Ma Herself in a mysterious manner, and here itself "Nirmala" was most appropriately named as "Anandamayee" in presence of Pitaji (Baba Bholanath), Her husband in 1924. The incidence was very much pre-destined.

Bhaijee was born on 18th July, 1880 in the port city of Chittagong in a respectable family of Bengal. He was groomed into a simple but highly cultured and educated man who held high office those days (I.S.O.) and was attached to Mr. Finlow, the then Director of Agriculture, Bengal in Dhaka.

Since his childhood, he had a deep spiritual urge which led him to look for the company of many ascetics in vain. He lost his mother at the early age of four, as such he used to always feel a sense of deprivation and longing for true motherly love and affection. But that was not easily available. He was married early to a girl when she was 8/9 years old. While outwardly Bhaijee maintained a normal family life with a comfortable home and children, his silent *sadhana* or yearning for inner peace and knowing the ultimate continued. He was initiated by his *Kulaguru* at the age of 28. Yet his restlessness of mind did not subside and still wandered for its destination. It was only in 1924, at the age of 44, that Bhaijee suddenly came in touch with Ma. It was very much pre-destined ! He heard that some Mataji had been staying at the Nawab's Gardens at Shahbag (Dhaka) since last few months. That time Ma was *mauna* (carrying out the vow of silence) for a long time. Seldom she used to sit in *Yogasana* and converse a few words. Thanks to Bholanath, Ma's husband in the material life, one fine morning Bhaijee could glance at the lotus feet of Ma. He could immediately realize that his half-a-century-long ambition and prayer was going to be fulfilled. It was for this "Mother" that he was restlessly moving in pilgrimage. He could feel an ecstatic joy with shivering. He felt like crying and ask Ma like a small child right then as to why She had not appeared before him earlier ? Also, due to his background as a *sadhaka*, he was stunned by seeing the highly elevated super-blissful state of existence of Ma as a housewife, always engrossed in a high state of *samadhi*, in which Ma used to be immersed at all times.

After some time Bhaijee asked Ma, "What are my chances of spiritual improvement ?" But the Master always tests disciples' tenacity and perseverance. Ma replied, "I do not see any true appetite for that as yet". Bhaijee returned home quite disappointed. He did not visit Shahbag Gardens for the next seven months but his attraction for Ma as a real mother became more unbearable ! The Mother had caught the right child in Her firm hands at the first sight, as Bhaijee was destined to play a very important role in Ma's *lila*, and help disseminate Ma's message and identify Her before the world.

Meantime, Bhaijee wrote a book titled "Sadhana" and sent it across to Ma at Shahbag. Ma called for the "writer" of the book. Bhaijee was delighted. Ma said, "After a long vow of silence I am now able to speak better. You have written a nice book. Try to improve upon the purity of mind and *bhava*". Pitaji (Baba Bholanath) was also present. From that day, there was sea change in Bhaijee's interior and exterior beings, and at last he fully surrendered himself at the lotus feet of Ma like a child.

Soon afterwards, two major events happened by which extremely kind and graceful Ma Anandamayee decided to remove all doubts and confusions from the mind of Bhaijee. Firstly, during a conversation Bhaijee suddenly asked Ma, "You tell me correctly Ma, who you really are ?" Smilingly Ma replied, "Why this childish question ? I am the same as what I was, what I am now and what I shall remain in future. I am all that what you people think and talk about me. But know it for certain that this body was not born to reap the fruits of any *prarabdha*. Why don't you see that this body is nothing but a Divine manifestation of *bhavas*. You people prayed for it and you have now got it ! Play with it for the time being. What's the use of knowing more ?"

Bhaijee said, "Ma, your reply does not satisfy my queries". On hearing this, Ma's face suddenly turned very serious, Divinely grave and she forcefully asked, "Tell me what more you want to know. Tell me." Bhaijee was stunned and scared to see Ma in that dazzling and terrifying form. He was dumbfounded and kept his head down ! The second incidence quickly followed the first one—a fortnight later. It was the summer of 1925. Bhaijee had gone to Shahbag gardens very early in the morning as usual and was waiting for Ma's *darshan* outside the door at a distance of about 25 yards. All of a sudden, the door opened and Ma appeared in front in a dazzling, Divinely beautiful form of a Goddess, and the whole room was suddenly illuminated as if with million suns. Within seconds, Ma reappeared at the same place in her usual human form, as if absorbing the whole energy emanating from her very quietly within Herself again. Bhaijee realized immediately that Ma gave

