

The asana of the enlightenment lady had been placed very near Ma. When the former sat down, Shree Ma lovingly exclaimed, "Ma, Ma", and observing a large bundle of matted hair under the sari covering her head, she felt it with her hands, and said, "Oh, so this has also grown! How many of them are there?" The lady remained silent: Bhupati Babu explained to Shree Ma what he had previously learnt about the exalted condition of the lady. He said, "Previously regular worshipping of Shree Dakshina Kali used to be carried out in her house, when their household circumstances were affluent. Lately this puja had been discontinued. Since then all sorts of disasters started taking place. One day this lady beheld the figure of a young girl sitting on their fence, and lost consciousness. Thereafter she is in this condition, every morning she gets into a trance, beholds this murti and speaks with her. She remembers what they then talk about. At other times when she experiences this exalted condition, she does not behold anybody and does not remember what has been talked about.

Ma: What murti do you behold?

Lady: A girl aged 8-10 years.

Ma: Do you not behold any other murtis?

Lady: Yes, I do.

Ma: What do they look like?

Lady: They are similar to the girl, although they assume different forms.

Ma: Do you feel anything special in seeing the murti?

Lady : I feel full of joy.

Ma : What kind of joy ?

Lady : (Pointing to her devotees), when I see them, when they call me "Ma, do I not feel exultant ?"

Ma : (Smiling), "You are a mother, so you have spoken like one." After a while Ma again asked her.

"During the trance, do you hear or understand any questions asked ?"

Lady : No.

Ma : Then how do you reply to them ?

Lady : I do not exactly realise what then happens. I do not know what questions are asked, or what replies are given.

A Devotee : Even if the question is not asked audibly, but only mentally, the answer can be heard.

Ma : That is possible (addressing the lady). Do you not remember the instructions that are given during those bhavas ?

Lady : If anything is said to me pertaining to Sadhana, I do remember this.

As night was approaching, the lady devotees wished to take her home, as she had a number of small children. When Ma asked about the number of children involved, the devotees replied to Ma. When the lady was about to rise, Ma laughingly remarked, 'I will not allow my mother to depart.'

The lady replied, "I will again come tomorrow".

Ma : When will you come ?

Lady : In the afternoon, say after two or two-thirty.

Ma agreed and allowed her to depart. After she had gone, Ma said, "All this is the manifestation of sudden power."

The Ancient Sadhaks of Ramna Ashram

After a meal, Ma started walking round the compound. We also followed suit. The question arose of who were the sadhus who had inhabited this Ashram previously, and whence did they come?

Ma said, "Of course there were many Bengalee sadhus here, in addition there were sadhus from the south and the west. From the tombs of the sadhus that are found here, their origin can be clearly ascertained. In this Ashram, there is samadhi of Golap Giri, in the Ramna Kali Bari there is Harachandra Giri's samadhi, and in the Government House there is the samadhi of a Chinese sadhu of the Giri sect."

"When this body lived at Shahbagh, we used to visit the Kali temple here for evening Arati. At these times, I used to lie on the ground on my stomach for hours. Then I used to behold these sadhus. Some were sitting on the ground. Others were seated in an Asana above the ground, I used to perceive all this clearly. In particular I used to behold four distinct sadhus.

Moreover, in the Ashram there used to be a mango tree which used to bear fruit out of season, and whose fruits were different from the others. When I went on a pilgrimage in S. India to Madras, I behold similar trees there. That is why I believe some Madrasi sadhu had bought the seeds from

his land and planted the tree here. There were no railways in those days, so you may well ask how did the sadhus travel such long distances? The belief is prevalent that the sadhus used to travel by air."

I: Whenever I went to visit Swami Vishuddhanandaji (Sri Gopinath Kaviraja's Guru) he used to ask me about the ponds and jungles of Ramna. It is said he was taken from here to Vindhyachal by air.

Ma: In those days there used to be a dense forest here.....

Why can instructions issued during a trance be fallible?

Thereafter a discussion started about the God-intoxicated lady that had visited us. Sri Surendra N. Banerji recounted to Ma that in her obsession she could bring forth various prasads. He said, "Ma, during her trance on request she can bring forth various kinds of prasad, including Khichuri, Sandesh etc. I had asked her for some fruit for two days, but only on the third day did she produce an apple for me without my asking for it.

Swami Paramananda: The fact that she can not remember anything that she said during her obsessions is probably not true, since she distinctly remembered about your previous request for fruit."

Ma: How much prasad does she exactly bring forth?

Jatin: Two or three handfuls.

I demonstrated this with my hands that this would amount to about 1½ poas (about 375 gm).

Ma (to me) : Have you actually seen her do this ?

I : Yes.

Ma : How does she bring it out.

I : She brings it out from underneath her clothes.

Kedar Babu : Can prasad ever be brought out like this ?

Ma : Why not ? If somebody can bring forth prasad from another place in a subtle form during an obsession, can she not bring fruit along with her ? But it needs a very special power to produce this in solid form.

Suren Babu : During her obsessions she can prescribe medicine for any disease described to her. She can also inform you of whomsoever you wish to know about somewhere else. Of course everything does not always turn out to be correct.

Swami Paramananda : If she answers these questions due to some special powers within her, then why can't they always be correct ?

I asked *Ma* the same question as *Swamiji*.

Ma : I can not debate on such topics, with regard to any particular person, because such incidents have not directly been observed by this body. Furthermore, there has been no such obsessions within this body so that it can speak authoritatively on this subject.

I : Even without referring to any particular person, one can discuss these topics. There may be a lot of curiosity on the part of many people about such miraculous exhibitions of powers by a

simple minded lady. But of course, if you have never experienced such obsessions, then how can you know anything of such matters ?

Ma : This body often refers to subjects which you later affirm are true according to the shastras. How does this body say these things ? This body has never studied the shastras !

I : And you have also mentioned that there is no such state during sadhana that you have not personally experienced. Then why cannot you explain these obsessions ?

Ma : (Laughing) Yes, but in discussing such topics, there can arise a pointer towards a particular individual.

Anyway, as such a topic has arisen, then let us clarify it. It is true that if somebody is infused with special powers, and answers a question put to him or (her), then the answer must be correct. If all the inner knots of the body are opened up, and if an answer to a query emanates from somebody in this condition, then it is bound to be true. But it may also happen that same knots only have been opened, not all, under such condition whatever forecast comes forth may not be correct. Because in such forecasts could be mixed up some of the particular person's own preinherited instincts of which he may not himself be aware.

And also remember another aspect. Because in all beings subtly exist the germs of praise and ambition. These are not to be renounced easily, although sometimes one is not even aware of their existence. Hence, unless the body is absolutely

purified, these hidden instincts get mixed up with the powers exhibited before being manifested. Suppose you wish to benefit somebody, and do not harbour any evil thoughts about him, under this condition if any power arises within you, prompting you that there will be no benefit accruing to your friend, then this fact will not be uttered from your lips as "No". Your own internal instincts will inhibit you from doing so. The result will be that the manifestation of the temporary power within you will be negated.

Furthermore, remember that the exhibition of power may be of various kinds. If some spurious powers possess you, then is it not surprising that they will prove to be ineffective ?

This is yet another aspect. There are a lot of outward signs of manifestation of pure power. If you see that true divine power is being manifested within somebody, then you will find that his personal urge to follow his previous instincts is correspondingly diminished. One has to judge these things carefully according to their symptoms."

After this Ma returned to the Pancha Bati. A mosquito net had been hung over her bed there. Ma lay down.

The next day there would be Akhand Nam Kirtan from sunrise to sunset. Adhibas kirtan for the purpose was commenced.

(To be continued)

The Name

M. P. Jain

The Name is indeed the sweetest
Of all the sweet things on earth
It's not merely initiation of the subject
It gives him verily a new birth.

A birth that has no death,
That provides berth on high altitude—
An entry into the infinite ocean of love
A promise for the Soul's beatitude—

The Name takes us into realms
That are beyond mundane approach
It lays open before us rare gems
Lying hidden within unexplored.

The buzzing of the mind slows down
At the sight of the Name.
Fortune's favours and frowns
Become meaningless and lame.

And then begins the flow of the grace
Revealing the secrets of life's background—
A feeling of fulfilment and a peace
A new awareness and an understanding around.

The Name is indeed the sweetest
Of all the sweet things on earth
It's not merely initiation of the subject
It gives him verily a new birth.

In Her Net

Barry Maybury

(Contd. from previous issue)

As is frequently the case with Westerners, I had been highly identified in an infantile psychological way with my car. The fact that it was a complete write-off thus seemed somehow important. I was soon to realise to what extent.

At that time I was the manager of a tourism organisation in Paris, a post I had held for 15 years. For the last 2 years I had had the impression of going around in circles, the job had lost its challenge and I my freshness.

A change in the senior management at head office was not at all to my liking, and I became unhappy and seeking new directions. But where to go and what to do? I just didn't know. What I did know was that I couldn't stay and retain my self-respect.

Since Blandine's return from India I had wanted to visit with her the high spots of her prolonged stay of the previous year. I also badly wanted to see Ma and have her darshan. We had thus planned a 4 week vacation which was to take us to Ma, Varanasi, Calcutta to visit Mother Teresa's homes, Madras to visit friends, and Kahangad to visit Swami Ramdas ashram, Anandashram, where

we wanted to have the darshan of Mataji Krishnabai.

We departed from Paris to Delhi on August 15, 1982. Over lunch in the plane Blandine suddenly said to me 'Why don't you leave your job and set up your own marketing and public relations company?' At once it was clear to me, and so obvious. Of course, yes, that's exactly what I should do. The venture was decided there and then, en route for India.

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The day after our arrival in Delhi we set out for Ma's Delhi ashram to see where she was so that we could be in her presence and have her darshan. As Blandine couldn't remember the route we headed to the same Post Office from where she had been accompanied the previous year. One of the employees knew the ashram and took us a part of the way.

For me it was my first experience of one of Ma's ashrams, and thus a very special moment. In the cool of the small office just inside the main entrance we were told that Ma was in Dehradun, and that she hadn't eaten anything for three and a half months. We would however, we were assured, be able to have her darshan.

After sitting for a while with a small group singing kirtan, we were shown around the ashram with great kindness by one of the members.

The very next morning we went by coach to Dehradun and installed ourselves in the same small

hotel where Blandine had stayed the previous year. In the afternoon we took the local bus out to the ashram in Kishenpur, expecting to find many people there. It was not the case. We were told that we could probably have Ma's darshan, and to wait. We didn't dare ask where Ma was. Blandine thought she might be at Kalyanvan, further up the hill, where she had seen her the previous year. We sat in silence in the downstairs temple, and then kirtan were sung.

Soon afterwards Swami Atmananda joined the assembly and quickly took us in hand. Full of gentleness and love, she spoke to us about Ma's doings since Blandine had been in Dehradun the previous year. She told us that Ma was in a room upstairs.

Around 6 P.M. she escorted us up to the verandah on the first floor, where a number of people were sitting, propped against the wall, waiting for Ma's darshan. Here and there conversations in soft voices were engaged in, and the warm, friendly atmosphere was tinged with a strong sense of expectation.

After perhaps an hour, darshan was announced, and took place on a verandah leading to Ma's room. Ma could be perceived through the open door of her room lying on a bed, back towards us. At last, there she was, and it was a marvellous moment albeit rapidly over.

After we had gone downstairs, a man with whom Blandine had spoken while we were waiting on the verandah, told us that Ma had now turned

in the bed, and was lying on her back. We sped upstairs again and had a glimpse of her profile, before being chased away by the brahmins.

A young French woman from Nice told us that it was the last day of a 6 week stay she had done at the ashram, and the first and only time she had seen Ma in profile.

After purchasing photographs of Ma, and a number of books on her life and lila, we went back to Dehradun. The following afternoon we returned to the ashram again and installed ourselves on the first floor verandah. A swami who had been there the previous day was again the first person called to have darshan. His face lit up with an irradiating joy and we shared his delight.

Then all those waiting were invited in one after the other, and we were thrilled that this time the pranam could be done just outside Ma's room. Again Ma was on her back enabling us to see her face.

Since the beginning of the day, when a chance meeting with an English woman in the State Bank had permitted us to visit the Cheshire Home where she was working, I had for the first time felt Ma's presence strongly in my life. The visit to 'Raphael', the home in question, had been a powerful and moving experience for me.

We did a trip to Mussoorie on the third morning of our Dehradun stay, before once again going out to Kishenpur. This time, unlike the previous days, prasad was distributed. It was to be a farewell present for us from Ma as afterwards

it was announced that there would not be a darshan that day.

Before taking our leave we spoke with Atmananda, about Ma, inevitably, and about the rest of our trip. We told her that after travelling in the north we were going to the south where we would be visiting Anandashram. Atmananda spoke with great love of Ramdas and Krishnabai. Krishnabai, she told us, 'had no ego'.

Atmananda had been a blessing to us throughout our brief stay. We had visited her in Kalyanvan, and she had answered all our questions. She had spoken of Arnaud's visits, and showed us where he used to set up base camp in his Land Rover when he visited Kishenpur with his family.

After buying some more books on the life of Ma from Atmananda we left the ashram for the last time on this trip.

The next day we visited Rishikesh, before boarding the night train at Dehradun for Varanasi.

Train travel in India is a marvellous experience for a Westerner, a total immersion into the great moving flux of life itself. The large stations (such as Dehradun) are crowded to overflowing as the time for the arrival of a long-distance train approaches, with red uniformed porters threading their way here and there through the mounds of luggage and the squatting multitude. Once aboard, and on the way, the train takes on its own life. The kilometres roll rapidly by to be followed by long inexplicable halts in the middle of nowhere and the night ; brief stops occur at stations where hawkers

offer fruit, rice and tea served in exquisite small earthen cups — disposable works of art eons away from our western paper cups ; friendly discussions are held with attentive fellow passengers.

After settling into a small hotel and passing our first night in Varanasi, we went to Ma's ashram early the next morning. Sailen Brahmachari greeted us warmly and was very interested to hear from us recent information about Ma. He then asked a man who was in his office to show us around the ashram, which he lovingly did. On the first floor of the inner courtyard we were enthralled to see a small, stooped bearded old man performing intricate rites in an enclosed chapel dedicated, we understood, to the Goddess Annapurna. There is a small photograph of Ma beside Annapurna, and a large photograph of her on the wall, her thick plait falling on her left shoulder. Also a tiny dolls bed where she sleeps. The old priest wakes her at 4 A.M. when he begins the ceremony.

We were then taken to the temple dedicated to Gopalji a short step along the ghat. By good fortune a swami was performing a puja, and we were given prasad. We also saw the sacred fire which was first lit during a ceremony to the Goddess Kali in the presence of Ma in 1925 and which has been kept going ever since. Before leaving we sat for a while in meditation on the exquisite first floor terrace.

The following morning when we returned, some young girls were chanting in Sanskrit in front of the 'Annapurna' chapel. When we came downstairs

we went to see Sailen Brahmachari and at once he asked us how we had 'discovered' Ma and how we had come to know that she had entered our lives. Continuing, he said that for certain Westerners this had come about in strange ways. He handed us a copy of what I think must have been Ananda Varta, and told us to read an article written by an American of Chinese descent.

This American described in the article his first 'meeting' with Ma. It was during a severe car accident where he just had time to think intensely about her before losing consciousness. Ma came clearly to him in a vision (his first 'sight' of her), and although badly injured he recovered very quickly.

On reading this Blandine and I were flabbergasted, and looked at each other in amazement. We too had been through a car accident and came out safely the other side with the certitude that it was thanks to her. And for me, my first 'meeting' with her had been in that accident, just like the American.

The next day, August 24, was our last one in Varanasi. Blandine had decided that we would take an offering to Gopalji, small cakes and a garland of flowers. It was a religious feast day of some kind, and the street leading to the ashram was filled with people, mostly women. We didn't find garlands on sale until just before arriving at the ashram. On the spur of the moment we bought two, one white and one yellow.

We thought that the Gopalji puja was at 9-30 A.M., but it was an hour earlier, so to our dis-

appointment we had missed it. However one of the ashram members accompanied us to the temple, and reaching his arm through the bars he placed our yellow garland on the offering tray. After a short time the swami who had devoted the puja to Gopalji the previous day arrived and performed a small service, we think out of kindness for us. At the end, to our joy, he took our garland from the offering tray and placed it around Gopalji's neck.

Next we went to the Annapurna Temple to offer our white garland to Ma. The old man was in the midst of his puja so we made our offering to Ma and placed the garland outside the door on the ground. We meditated, and after a while Blandine stood up, and through the bars watched with great intensity the old man's beautiful and complicated ritual. I thought irresistibly of a line in J. P. Donleavy's novel, 'The Ginger Man' — 'Please God, let me in'.

She then sat down again with me, and suggested that we give the garland to the old man. The same idea had occurred to me but I hadn't dared to put it into practise. At that moment the old man arrived at a pause in the ceremony where he was preparing various items prior to continuing. I made a sign to him, he passed behind the altar, and I knew he was going to accept our garland. I handed it to him through the bars. To our immense joy he hung it around a photograph of Ma, with the bottom half touching her feet.

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The night of August 24-25 was spent on the train en route for Calcutta. In Calcutta I had the pleasure of visiting with Blandine the places she had worked in the previous year with Mother Teresa — Kali Ghat, Prem Dam, and Shishu Bhavan.

We checked out of our hotel on the morning of August 27. It was to be a day of seemingly strange 'coincidences'.

At the French consulate, while waiting to see the consul, to my great surprise a consul employee approached me and asked if I were Monsieur Maybury. He handed me a letter which was from an Indian friend who I didn't know was now living in Calcutta. He had heard through his son-in-law that we would be in Calcutta and wrote on chance to me at the consulate. He said that his daughter was living with him, who I knew very well, and they hoped very much to be able to see us. He left a telephone number where we could reach him.

As the wait continued Blandine decided to try and see a friend she had met the previous year who was teaching at the Alliance Francaise, in the same building as the consulate. She returned saying that he was off duty but that she had taken his address.

We finally left the consulate without seeing the consul (through no fault of his) and went to visit the dispensary where Blandine had spent most of her time the previous year — at Sealdah Station. Afterwards we searched for a telephone to speak to our friend but without success.

Time was passing, as we were leaving Calcutta that afternoon, so we decided to take a taxi back to our hotel. There we would telephone to our friend, and collect our luggage. No luck with taxis either, so in desperation we headed back towards Sealdah Station, where to our relief we found one.

At the hotel I left Blandine to pay the driver while I headed rapidly to the reception and the telephone. The receptionist was speaking on the phone and I hoped it wouldn't be a long call. To my astonishment he handed the receiver to me and said 'it's for you'. It was my friend, who told me that he had been trying desperately since yesterday to track us down. He invited us to lunch with himself and his daughter, and we took the same taxi to the address indicated, in Wood Street.

As my friend hadn't yet arrived home (he had called me from his office) we installed ourselves on the steps outside the apartment building. Blandine then thought that she might have the time to visit quickly her friend from the Alliance Francaise, who also lived somewhere in Wood Street. She took the address from her handbag to discover that he lived in the same building as my friend ! So she was able to see him and renew acquaintanceship.

My friend Z and his daughter A soon arrived, and we had a most delightful lunch and get-together with them, all too quickly over as they had to go back to their respective work. We remained in the apartment, having decided to seek a taxi for the airport at half past three in the afternoon to give

us plenty of time in case it started raining. In Calcutta, as elsewhere in the world, taxis are hard to come by when the rain starts to come down.

Sure enough, at three o'clock it started raining ! Heavier and heavier. At twenty past three we were looking out the window into the street, watching the rain fall, when an empty taxi stopped in front of our building and parked. It was for all the world like a radio-taxi arriving to pick up a client.

Blandine said jokingly 'there's our taxi !' Then, not for a moment thinking that I would do so, 'go down and tell him that we're ready'. Taking her to her word I obeyed on the spot ! I told the driver that we were going to the airport, would be ready in 5 minutes and could he take us ? He replied with the side to side head movement used by Indians, the meaning of which is never really sure for Europeans. Yes or no ? It was yes !

At half past three on the dot we were in the taxi and pulling out en route for the airport and Madras where we were expected by friends.

A mere string of coincidences all of this ? Perhaps.

We were collected by our Madras friends at the airport, and taken to their house where we were to spend the next few days. The following morning when we came down to breakfast our friend informed us that Ma had departed her body the previous evening. The day of the 'string of coincidences' in Calcutta.

We considered that we had been blessed with great good fortune to be in her presence, and to

have her darshan, during the last days of her earthly stay. She has subsequently never ceased to overlook our paths.

Ma is quoted, in a book in French about her teachings, as saying that once one has come in contact with her one is in her net for eternity. This is our strong conviction.

Epilogue

We weren't in contact with Bernard Pernel until three years after the car accident with which this story begins. He then told us that when we got home the night of the accident he discovered that a mala which Ma had presented him with, and which he was wearing at the time, had burst apart.

So something had been broken after all in the crash! Bernard's strong feeling was that through the mala Ma had absorbed the full shock of the accident. Amen.

ERRATA

In the April '87 issue of Ananda Varta, on Page 108, the second paragraph should begin :

“Arnaud Desjardins was not unknown to me.”

The contemporaries of Sri Krishna Chaitanya and their Successors

R. K. Banerjee

Shree Jahnava Ma :

The story of Jahnava Ma is unique in the annals of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, inasmuch as she wielded more influence as Acharya of the Bengal Vaishnavs than any other in her lifetime, particularly after the passing of Sri Advaita shortly after Sri Nityananda's death.

In Gaur-Ganodyesh-dwipika Jahnava Ma is known as the incarnation of Ananga Manjori.

Shree Jahnava Devi was born on 1510 A.D on Shukla Navami Tithi of Baisakha, as the second daughter of Suryadas Pandit, the elder brother of Gauridas Pandit, who founded the Mahaprabhu temple of Kalna.

Jahnava was two years younger than Vasudha, and when Suryadas moved to Kalna to be near the Mahaprabhu temple, both the daughters accompanied their father, met Sri Nityananda there, and both fell in love with him. Suryadas was advised by Sri Chaitanya to allow both his daughters to marry Nityananda, but there was a strong objection in the family, since Nityananda had lived the life of an Avadhut for several years. Later Sri Advaita reminded Suryadas of Mahaprabhu's wishes, and Suryadas eventually willy nilly arranged for

Vasudha's marriage after returning to his village home. But there was still a strong objection to the marriage from the local Brahmins, who insisted that Nityananda had lost his caste, and did not even possess a sacred thread! So Nityananda, after travelling to Suryadas's house for the marriage, had to leave the place.

Eventually Vasudha fell mortally ill, and the Brahmins agreed to the wedding provided Nityananda went through the process of another sacred thread ceremony. This was done and the marriage was solemnised. It is said that Sri Uddharan Dutta of Adi Saptagram, one of Sri Nityananda's closest disciple and one of the 12 Gopals, spent Rs. 10,000/- over the festivities, which took place in 1521 A.D, when Jahnavā was 11 years old. A few days after his marriage to Vasudha, Nityananda was being fed at his In-law's house, and Jahnavā Devi was serving him with food. At this juncture, her veil slipped, and since both hands were occupied in holding dishes, two extra hands suddenly appeared to pull the veil back to place. Sri Nityananda thus recognised who was to be his spiritual consort in future, and carry on the Vaishnav tradition from where he left off.

He then asked for his sister-in-law's hand as part of his dowry, and the marriage was duly solemnised. Both the brides were taken to Sachi Devi at Nabadwip, and then to Shantipur and Adi Saptagram before proceeding to Khardah, the abode of Sri Nityananda.

In due course Vasudha, after losing a number of sons due to a strange fate, eventually gave birth to Virchandra. The story goes that Sri Abhiram, a very powerful Vaishnav and one of the 12 Gopals, used to do pranam to Vasudha's issues after birth and thereafter the newborns would die. The same thing happened after Virchandra's birth, but the child remained unaffected and Abhiram recognised the future leader of the Gaudiya Vaishnavs in him.

Jahnava Ma herself took over the duties of educating Virchand, who however remained ignorant of his foster-mother's true identity.

As he grew up Virchand felt restless and wanted to have his diksha (initiation) from a suitable Guru. Sri Nityananda had passed away and Virchand proceeded to Sri Adwaita at Shantipur. Sri Adwaita advised him that it had already been ordained that Jahnava Ma was his Guru, so why was he wandering all over instead of approaching her ?

When Virchand returned home, chastened and contrite, Jahnava Ma was at her prayers, and her veil had slipped from her head. When Virchand appeared to convey his pranams to her, he beheld two other hands appear to move the veil back to place, and then disappear. The last of Virchand's doubts were resolved, and he fell on the ground to beg for his foster-mother's forgiveness and his diksha.

Soon Jahnava Devi established herself as the first lady Acharya of the Vaishnavs and took the lead in all matters even beyond Bengal.

For instance, she sent Parameshwar Das to Vrindaban to install Sri Radha's Vighraha next to Sri Gopinath.

She adopted several promising Vaishnav lads as her sons, the foremost being Kanu Thakur, etc.

She visited Sitadevi at Shantipur after Sri Adwaita's death to console her.

Subsequently she paid three visits to Vrindaban, the first being round about 1562 A.D. when she met Sri Rupa and Sanatan, Gopal Bhatta etc.

In 1583 we see her journeying from Khardah, her home, to Saptagram, Ambika Kalna, and or to Sribas Angan at Nabadwip etc. After three days she journeyed to Katwa, and or to Kheturi on the Padma, to see Sri Narottam Das Thakur.

In 1583 during Dol Utsab she was again at Kheturi with Acharya Srinivas, before proceeding once again to Vrindaban for the second time, in 1584.

This time she met Sri Jiva Goswami, Lokenath Goswami (the doyen of all Goswamis) etc. Thereafter she was responsible for cooking and offering Bhog to the leading deities such as Govinda, Gopinath, Madanmohan, Radha Damodar, Radha Raman etc.

The installation of Sri Gopinath's consort as Sree Radha has always been credited to have been organised by Jahnava Devi.

On the way back from Vrindaban, she visited Boru Gangadas, her cousin, to pay her respects to her uncle Gauridas's Samadhi.

She returned home to Khardah via Ekchakra, the birthplace of Sri Nityananda (near Tarapith), Kantik Nagar, Nabadwip and Kalna.

In 1585 she paid her 3rd and last visit to Vrindaban after completing her household duties, and arranging the marriage of Virchand to ensure continuity of the line.

In this final visit to Vrindaban, when she was nearly 76 years of age, in 1586, she suddenly vanished in the Vighraha of Gopinath, similar to Sri Chaitanya at Puri and Sri Nityananda at Khardah or Ekchakra.

She left behind her well-knit growing band of devoted Gauriya Vaishnavs, who were intent on carrying on the message of Sri Chaitanya and Sri Nityananda all over Vrindaban and Gaudiya Banga.

She had supervised the gradual coming into power of the 2nd generation of Acharyas, e.g. Sri Srinivas, Thakur Sri Narottam Das, and Sri Shyamananda, and had ensured that the Gaudiya Vaishnav tradition and learning were safe in the hands of these very able and inspired successors to the Sri Chaitanya cult.

Ma, We Remember Thee So Much !

A. P. Dikshit, I. A. S. (Retd.)

(Translated from Hindi by Prof. G. D. Shukla)

(*Continued from Previous issue*)

The mystery about an Aonla tree at Naimisharanya

One day Ma herself threw light on the mystery associated with an Aonla tree. Ma said, "Once this body was resting in a certain cottage. It was noticed that two ethereal bodies had gone out of that dry, withered Aonla tree. Next morning I asked Prayag Narayan to water that tree hoping that it might come back to life." Prayag Narain, struck with surprise, said that the tree had completely dried up. But Ma repeated what she had said. So Ma's instructions were carried out and the tree, after some time, revived and became green. Ma showed that tree to us herself and we were wonderstruck. The tree, right down to the trunk, was altogether dried up and hollow on one side, but on the other fresh and green and laden with small fruits.

Ma does not ordinarily reveal her limitless powers, but sometimes the vessel filled with nectar upto the brim does spill a few drops, and lucky are those who receive them. She does not show any miracles. But at times to pull us out of the

darkness of ignorance she does allow a ray of divine light to flash upon us. This incident is to be viewed in that light. Otherwise, for her the entire creation is Brahmamaya (steeped in Brahma) and all the mystery surrounding it is known to her. The living and the lifeless, the animals, the man, the birds, the trees, the plants and the creepers are just all one and the same for her.

In this context another incident has come to my mind. It is related by a devotee who lives at Unnao, and I have got it from the man himself. Pt. Shankar Dayal Dikshit was a well known advocate at Unnao. He had built a new house, but it was haunted by a spirit. Slashing of clothes inside the box, shower of brickbats, and the house suddenly catching fire were common phenomena. He told his woes to Ma and requested her to visit his house. After Ma's visit, the spirit was laid to rest and silenced. Possibly, in the same context when Ma was going from Lucknow to Unnao, she asked the car to stop at a lonely, deserted place. She got down, walked up to a tree at some distance and it seemed she talked to it. It was not an unexpected thing to happen for Ma, for all forms of creation, animate and inanimate were the recipients of her grace. Sometimes the ignorant ones charged her with favouring particular persons, but the truth is that for Ma there was no difference between a mere ant and a Prime Minister. This is how I feel.

When Ma is present at a certain place the devotees there experience an ineffable kind of joy

and self confidence even though they may not be sitting right in front of her. She may be in her room, but the people sitting outside and away from her physical presence enjoy the same bliss which the saints got from discourses about God.

We were sitting in our tent in front of Ma's cottage when Sri Rameshwar Sahai and his wife dropped in and as a matter of habit we started talking about Ma. Mrs. Sahai remarked, "People say that I go to Ma for her darshan and try to be with her as long as possible, but what here I gained except three daughters and one son who is no more." I was not aware of this, and as I heard of it I felt uneasy. Mrs. Sahai is a self-respecting lady, and I had never seen her in this mood. We just listened to her in silence. Mrs. Sahai heaved a long sigh and after a pause added, "It is true I had only one son who passed away, but it is an infinite grace of Ma that I received the strength to bear the intolerable grief of a son's loss. Life would have become impossible without that."

In what different ways Ma showers her grace on her different devotees is known only to those who have received it. I came to know of a similar incident concerning another lady at the Kishenpur Ashram of Dehra Dun. I was told that she was a great devotee of Ma. Suddenly she had to bear the unbearable grief of the loss of her son. Perhaps, it was a small child. She was beside herself with grief. She went to Ma and started crying. Ma consoled her and said, "Look upon me as your son." By this act of mercy Ma gave

her a divine insight and she began to look upon Ma as her child. Often, when she went to have Ma's darshan, she carried toys for her. Sometimes people laughed at her strange behaviour, but Ma always accepted her presents in the spirit in which they were offered. Ma quite often spoke of herself in the presence of other Mahatmas was a mere slip of an ignorant girl. But it was to a very few persons that she revealed herself in this form. This fortunate lady was one among those who had found *Purna Brahma Narayan* in the form of her child by losing her son. Possibly, Mrs. Sahai too had some such experience.

The Non-availability of the Puranas at Naimisharanya

On the first floor of Prayag Narain Dharamshala where Ma was staying at this time there is a temple with a very large idol of Hanuman installed therein. Near that Ma had arranged for a *Path* (Recitation) of the Puranas in a small room. Now there is a fine Puran Mandir, a Yagyashala, and Ma's sacred ashram.

Ma told a story about that. This relates to the period when Shri Govind Narain, I.C.S. (Retd) son-in-law of one of Ma's great devotees, Shri Panna Lal, I.C.S. (Retd) was the Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh.

Samyam Saptah was to be held at Naimisharanya. But difficulties do come in the way of doing a good thing. The first one was that the place where the function was to be held was still filled with flood

water of the Gomati. When this was brought to the notice of Ma, she had asked for a glass of water to drink. Holding the glass of water in her hand Ma said, "As this glass is emptied after drinking the water, so by the grace of God the flood water also can shrink and dry up." Saying this she drank the water and emptied the glass. What Ma had said did come to pass. The water withdrew, and Swami Paramanandaji Maharaj made arrangements for the Samyam Saptah at that very place.

A search was made for the Puranas. But they were not to be found in Naimisharanya — the place where the Puranas came into existence, where eightyseven thousand Rishis had listened to them, where there is the famous temple of Sri Lalitaji and where the seat of Vyas situated under a huge Akshaya tree still offers great peace and bliss to the men who go there.

It seems that Ma had gone to Naimisharanya for this very reason, and it established beyond doubt that Ma had come to this world for the revival of the Eternal Sanatan Dharma.

Ma arranged for a Pandit to perform a daily reading of the Puranas with all the ceremonies. There were only a few persons present at that time, and she asked me to join at the initial (संकल्प) ceremony. With great affection she asked me to sit near her. She placed my wife's hand on her own with a few Tulsi leaves on it and asked us to do the Puja. I had not the least inkling at the moment that at that auspicious hour of early

morning she was laying the foundation of a great project, for it was at that very spot that under the inspiration and patronage of Ma, and the supervision of Mata Anandamayee Sangh a large and fine Puran Mandir, unique and the only one of its kind in the world came into existence. Later on a Yagyashala and Ashram buildings were added at the same spot. The site chosen is on the highest elevation at Naimisharanya where the flood waters of Gomati can never reach. After some time a Veda and Puran Research Centre was established close by. This represents an important step forward in the revival of Veda and Purana studies not only in Naimisharanya but in the whole world.

The *Path* continued under the supervision of Prayag Narain and Ma returned to Lucknow with me. I was driving the car. My wife was by my side in the front seat, and Ma was sitting behind. Gopal was with Ma. Somewhere on the way he fell asleep in Ma's lap which we had not noticed. When it came to our notice we felt so bad that Ma had been put to all this trouble. My wife tried to take Gopal away, but Ma forbade it. Infinite is the affection of the compassionate Ma. We were charmed to see this parental affection of God in the form of Ma. The rest of the journey passed away in contemplation of this aspect of Ma, and the fact of her presence in the car. Now that Ma is no more we feel a stab in the heart when we call to memory this side of her nature.

Ma kept me associated in one way or the other with the project of Puran Mandir from the time the

land was purchased upto its completion. In the meantime Ma continued to visit Naimisharanya on the Akshaya Tritiya day, and sometimes even twice a year. Whenever we got the news we followed. In this way as long as we were in Lucknow we got the benefit of Ma's darshan in Neemsar and her company.

(To be continued)

A person who returns to the world after the experience of *nirvikalpa samadhi* (absolute superconsciousness) does not do so of his volition. It is by the grace of God that one gets *samadhi*, and one's re-entry into the world is also by the will of God. Everything happens only by the will of God.

—Swami Turiyananda
a direct disciple of Shri Ramakrishna

How the Gods came to know of Brahman

Nirmal Chandra Ghosh

[The supreme Prime Ordeal Being (Purusha, Paramapurusha or Purushottama) is called Brahman by the followers of the path of wisdom, Paramatman by the followers of the path of austerities, penances and breath-control and Bhagavan (God) by the followers of the path of devotion. It is due to His power that everything in this universe and beyond, living or non-living, functions. He is the supreme cause of creation, preservation and destruction of everything. He is the supreme Doer of every action and interaction. It is due to His will that everything in this universe and beyond, happens.]

In very very ancient times there were frequent feuds between the gods and the demons. Sometimes the demons defeated the gods and occupied the kingdom of heaven. Once the gods became victorious and drove away the demons from the heaven. It was due to the will and power of Brahman that they won the battle ; but the gods began to boast of their victory and thought that it was due to their great strength that they defeated the demons. They were full of vanity and egoism. They forgot that it was due to Brahman that they became victorious.

The eternal Brahman, who knows everything and the mind of all, gods, demons, men and all others, took pity on the gods. He wished to dispel this illusion from the minds of the gods, because such wrong notion, pride and ignorance ultimately leads to perpetual misery and bondage in worldliness. Unless this illusion goes out from the mind, be he god, man, demon or any other body, one cannot reach that eternal state of joy, bliss and immortality and unification with Brahman. The supreme Lord (Brahman) is attracting every being towards Him with this objective.* He therefore appeared before the gods in the form of a Yaksha† at a distance from them in the sky.

The gods were unable to know who was this Yaksha. They requested the Fire-god‡ to go to Him and ascertain who was this Yaksha. The Fire-god said, "All right. I shall go." He hurried to Him. Yaksha asked the Fire-god, "Who are you?" The Fire-god replied, "I am Fire-god. I know about all that are born." Then Yaksha asked him, "What power have you got?" The

* Shwetashwetara Upanishad, chap. 3, verse 12, tells us :

The Great Lord (Purusha), who rules over everything, who is eternal and full of transcendental light, urges the mind of every one to achieve the supreme goal of life, which is the purest, unblemished and the highest gain (i.e. realisation of Brahman.)

† A type of semi-celestial being.

‡ The presiding deity of fire. He is called Agnideva or simply Agni. He is also called Jataveda (one who knows all that are born.)

Fire-god replied, "I can burn everything that is in this world." Then Yaksha put a piece of straw before him and asked him to burn that piece of straw. The Fire-god tried with all his might to burn that straw, but did not succeed. He felt ashamed and came back to the gods without knowing who this Yaksha was.

Then the gods requested the Wind-god* to ascertain who was this Yaksha. Wind-god was also proud. He said, "All right. I am going to Him."

The Wind-god hastened to the spot where Yaksha was. Yaksha asked him, "Who are you?" Wind-god replied, "I am vayu, the Wind-god. My glorious name is Matarishwa. Then Yaksha asked him, "What power you have got in you?" Vayu said, "I can take away everything that is in this world." Then Yaksha put a piece of straw before him and said, "Take away this piece of straw." The Wind-god tried with all his force but failed to lift that piece of straw. He felt ashamed and returned to the place, where the gods were, without being able to know who this Yaksha was.

Then the gods requested Indra, the head of the gods, who is also called Maghavan because of his great strength, to ascertain the identity of the Yaksha. Indra said, "All right. I shall go and ascertain who is this Yaksha." Indra was very proud as he was the head of the gods. He hastened

* The presiding deity of wind. He is also called Vayudeva, Vayu, Pawana or Matarishwa (one who blows in the atmosphere.)

towards the place where Yaksha was. When he reached the place, Yaksha disappeared from there. In His place in the sky, Indra saw the very beautiful goddess Uma,* the daughter of the Himalayas. He politely bowed to her and enquired, "Who was the Yaksha, who was here?"

The goddess replied, "He was Brahman. The victory over the demons which you took to be your glory was really His victory." From this utterance of the goddess Uma, Indra came to know that the Yaksha was Brahman.

Indra then returned to the place where the other gods were, and told them that the Yaksha was none else than Brahman.

Since the three gods Agni, Vayu and Indra had the fortune of seeing Brahman, the nearest and dearest of all, with their eyes by going near him

* Uma is another name of the goddess Durga or Parvati. She is the wife of Lord Shiva. Before her marriage she used to perform severe austerities for having Lord Shiva as her husband, Her mother Mena, who was very affectionate to her daughter, fearing that such hardship would tell upon her health, asked her in the following words not to perform austerities :

O Durga ! Do not perform austerities

So the goddess Durga is called Uma.

According to another version the goddess Durga is called Uma because She is the wife (better half) of Shiva. 'U' in sanskrit means Shiva and 'Ma' means beautiful woman.

She is the embodiment of Brahmavidya (knowledge of Brahman), the highest knowledge. So she could know who the Yaksha was and tell Indra that He was Brahman.

[U, as in full. Ma, as in master.]

and therefore touched Him by their sight, they are regarded as superior to all other gods.

Since Indra could know from the goddess Uma, that the Yaksha was none other than Brahman, the nearest and dearest of all, he touched Brahman by his mind also. He is therefore superior to the rest of the gods.

The above mentioned incident about the appearance of Brahman in the form of Yaksha, is an allegorical advice stating that Brahman appears first like a flash of lightning or like a twinkling of an eye before the aspirant and disappears to increase his aspiration more. This is the advice of Brahman relating to the gods.

The spiritual significance of the incident is that when our mind touches (thinks of) Brahman for a moment, then it has a tendency to think about Brahman with great love again and again and ultimately feels a strong desire to realise Him.

The knowing of Brahman by Indra is called 'parokshanubhuti' which means indirect realisation of Brahman or knowing of Brahman through others eyes. In this case it is from the saying of the goddess Uma, Indra could know that Yaksha was Brahman, because he believed Uma. The direct and perfect realisation of Brahman which is called 'aparokshanubhuti' comes from within by the methods described in the Upanishads, from instructions from a teacher who has knowledge of Brahman and due to grace of God.

Brahman is to be worshipped and realised by every one — for which reason He is called

Tadvanam. Brahman, who is eternal bliss and joy and the soul of all, is the dearest and nearest of all, and knowingly or unknowingly every one wants to realise Him. He is to be worshipped with this idea. The aspirant who worships Him in this way and realises Him is loved by all. Everyone enjoys his company and desires to have his association.*

Austerities leading to concentration of mind, controlling of senses, performance of all duties (without coveting for fruits) as offering to God, are the basis for acquiring the knowledge of Brahman. The Vedas are the embodiment of this supreme knowledge and truth is its abode (i.e. one should be truthful in words, mind and deed).

Any one, who realises Brahman in the above mentioned way, destroys all his sins, and gets firmly seated in the supreme, eternal, blissful and joyful region of Brahman and remains firmly seated there.†

Note: The above topic forms Parts 3 and 4 of Kenopanishad, which is the ninth chapter of 'Talwakara Brahmana' of Sama Veda. Talwakara Brahmana is also called Jaminiya Upanishad or Brahmanopanishad. Since the first verse of Kenopanishad begins with the word Kena it is called Kenopanishad.

* Such persons are very rare, but there are a few, who are wellknown, e. g. Shri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Shri Ramakrishna, and Shri Anandamayee Ma.

† Kenopanished Part 4, Verse 9.

