

In Association with Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee

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[*Continued from previous issue*]

Mother comes to Kashi to attend Gita Jayanti

28 Agrahayana, Tuesday, 1355 (14 December 1948) — Khukuni didi has reached Kashi from Vindhyachal today. Sri Sri Ma will come tomorrow. I learnt from Didi about Ma's itinerary : Gita Jayanti over, Ma would leave Kashi for Dehra Dun again, and then to Punjab with Hari Baba. Punjab was the birthplace of Hari Baba. Then they would return to Vrindaban for the Dolyatra festival. There is the Late Oriya Baba's ashram at Vrindaban. The Late Baba was also an old seeker after divine grace and a bosom friend of Hari Baba. I saw even at Jhusi that when Hari Baba has his scripture-reading and kirtan session, a seat would invariably be reserved for Oriya Baba. A seat likewise is reserved, I have heard, at the Late Baba's ashram for Hari Baba also. The Late Baba was so called because he lived in Orissa.

29 Agrahayana, Wednesday (15 December 1948) — Sri Sri Ma has reached Kashi. I went to the ashram in the afternoon from my lodgings at Ramapura. The reading session was on. I met

Mr. Petite. Upon inquiry, I came to learn that he had gone to Raipur from Vrindaban and came to Kashi again via Vrindaban. Asked about Vrindaban and Kashi, he said, 'Both the places are extra-ordinary. Both the places flood me with divine feelings and almost throw me off my feet. Nothing of the sort in Bombay or Calcutta. There were special arrangements for offering Puja at Vrindaban and seeing all that I was in tears. When I was on my way to Vrindavan via Delhi, I could not be accommodated in Mother's carriage. I got a seat in an adjacent carriage but began to weep so much that Pandeji came and took me into Mother's at last.'

The Late Oriya Baba and Hari Baba

After the reading session was over, Ma came out and sat down. The topic of conversation veered round to Hari Baba. Ma said, "This time we were to go to Baharampore at the time of Dolyatra. But Hari Baba said, 'You have come to attend only one Dol since I saw you first. If you don't come during Dolyatra this time, then I think I had better stop it as useless.'"

Oriya Baba's ashram at Vrindaban is pretty large. There are many big houses there. They say once Hari Baba wrote to Oriya Baba with a hint that he was actually traversing the path of the instincts. In reply, the Late Baba had told, "I used to roam about without any earthly attachments whatsoever. It is you all who have got me settled down at an ashram. Well, if I am on the path of

the instincts, I will see its end. You try to find the end of renunciation if you are after it."

The Late Oriya Baba was a Vedantic while Hari Baba trod the path of bhakti, devotion. When the Late Baba recited Vedanta, Hari Baba would not present himself there. But when Hari Baba had his recital, on many days Oriya Baba kept sitting. The paths of the two differed, but the two were greatly attached to each other. "As the peacock dances when there are clouds in the sky, when one of us sees the other his mind also dances in ecstasy like that".

Feelings defy language barriers

Mr. Thompson has also come to see Sri Sri Ma. Mr. Petite and Mr. Thompson were talking in French. Seeing them so engrossed, Ma looked at Mr. Petite and said, "He has had the chance to speak his own tongue after so many days. When he listens to a kirtana performance, tears roll down his cheeks. He cannot stop it at times and lies down with his face buried. And the tears ! They literally flood him. He was once asked how it happened. How could one shed profuse tears over a song without understanding a word of it ? It was Yogesh Brahmachari who sought to explain it in this way. The notes of a song can act on the mind, he said, just as the rhythm of the Vedas. In fact, Petite is engrossed in divine thoughts, he can imbibe the spirit of kirtana and divine songs and react as he does.

Sri Krishnamurti and his sayings

By the way, there was a reference to Sri Krishna-murti. Ma said that she had the occasion to meet him this time in Delhi. "Just as your Chhota Ma says", she continued, "that chanting Hari, Durga, etc. would avail nothing and what one is to do is chant only 'Ma'. Krishnamurti says that *guru*, *diksha*, chanting of names, etc. are no good. What the mind needs is *bichar*, — ratiocination. You have to ratiocinate, always. If doubt arises, you must seek a solution, whether in the pages of a book or by asking somebody who knows. This rational approach alone can bring wisdom or salvation, there is no other way. I asked him, "My child, won't you be *guru* to those who would follow you?" He said, "They must have the attitude of a disciple". "If there is a disciple, then there must be a *guru*", I replied. He did not reply. But then, you know, this body has no contradiction with anybody. He represents a particular state. I know what makes one speak like that.

Ma : If I have to take the help of someone else in case a doubt arises, he who solves it must be a *guru* !

Ma : These people think that one does not necessarily become one's *guru* by solving a problem. Suppose you are going along a road and a dog suddenly barks out. You look at the dog and find that it was barking at a snake and if it did not, you would certainly tread on the snake. The dog saved you. So you can take the dog to be your *guru*. But people do not do so in such cases. Like

this, these people also are not ready to accept anyone for a *guru* if they get a problem solved by him.

Reading started again. I made my pranama to Ma and left.

The first day of Paush (16th December, 1948) : Shopping over, I set out for the ashram in the morning and saw upon reaching there that the yagna had already started. Ma was seated there in the yajna enclosure. I began to enjoy it all standing outside the enclosure. Around the sacred fire sat ten *brahmacharis* all with white headgears. Over the fire hang a copper vessel full of *ghee* which dripped on to the fire making the flames leap up. The ten *brahmacharis* were making offerings of oats, sesame, etc. to the fire. To the south of the sacred fire, Srijut Batukdada sat on an *asana* and chanted the Veda. Srijut Kusum Brahmachari (Nirvanananda) was chanting the *gayatri* and Ma, sitting to the north of the fire, watched everything closely. The ganga was flowing past the *ashram*. I came and stood on the *ashram* courtyard giving on to the sacred river, which looked so beautiful in the morning sun. The holy city of Kashi in all its semi-circular entirely got reflected on the bosom of the Jahnabi, the eternal purgatory. Far away, the white bridge over the river dazzled in the sun. And the boats on the bosom of the river stood like still pictures. I stood and began to feast my eyes on the unique sight.

Some time later Sri Ma came to the hall. The reading had started and a lady brought some fruits

— mainly guavas and bananas — and placed them beside Ma. Because we numbered about twenty-five in the hall, Bhupen wished that the fruits were chopped and evenly distributed. Ma said, 'First distribute these one to one. If there is a shortage, then you can think of dividing them'. The fruits were only too few at the end, and suddenly the lady who had brought them announced that she had been given two instead of one. Peals of laughter rose. Ma too laughed and said to the lady, 'See, you would have two if the fruits did not run short, would not you? It sounds until it is full, see? When the pitcher is full to the brim no more sound is there. Noise comes only out of what is empty. When I come here today, I found the regular basket of fruit absent. The moment it struck me that this regular feature of the study session was missing, fruit came. When they wanted to chop the fruits, it occurred to me that each could be given one. In case of shortage, the remainder might be chopped and evenly distributed. Now it was found that it was not necessary at all'.

There was good-humoured laughter all around for some time over this. Then I said, 'Ma, I have a question to you. But you must answer it in such a way as does not go over my head'.

Ma : How can I guarantee that? But then, if you can get me to do that, it is all right.

I : Now I am ignorant. When I shall have knowledge, will the memories of ignorance persist still?

Ma : Your question may be answered in several ways. Before that, let me ask you one thing. You are all educated, are not you ? But do you remember how you were before you had your education ?

Some said 'Yes', some 'No'. Ma began to laugh. Then she said, 'About a particular state it can be said that ignorance was there before, now it is no longer there. Just as we say, there was darkness before sunrise, now it is no longer there because of the sun. Yet there is another state, in which one may feel after attaining knowledge that he was never ignorant. He may feel that he has ever been enlightened'. I said, 'Yes'.

At this moment Khukuni didi came to take Ma away for her lunch. Mother saw her and said with laughter, 'See, how can I take any more ? She's appeared. So raise the topic some other time'.

I also got up with Ma. Asked if I would go to my lodgings, I said, I would and Ma nodded her assent.

Around 4-00 in the afternoon I went to the *ashram* with my family. I heard that Ma was looking for me. She was not present at the afternoon reading session. As soon as it was over, she came and stood on the *ashram* courtyard. The ladies offered fruits and garlands and bowed before Ma. She began to distribute the few fruits she got. The devotees would number 30-35. A lady came and handed mother a lot of fruit. She took them and laughed. 'While distributing the fruits I wondered how I could do justice to all with the few I had got. Just see, instantly an abundant supply came'.

Ma herself distributed the fruits. We got one each from her own hand.

Whether memories of ignorance persist after enlightenment

It was evening and quite chilly, too. We all went to the hall and sat down. The Late Shankarananda Swami of our *ashram* asked me to raise the question I had asked Ma in the morning. I was a little hesitant at first considering the large gathering. Swamiji told mother all. She said, 'Well, just raise the topic and there's no reason why we can't discuss'.

I : Ma, I don't think it would be proper to discuss it now. I'll ask you later.

Ma : All right. But the little we can talk now won't be bad, will it ?

Considering the general eagerness, I asked her to answer the question already referred to.

Ma : Your question was : if an enlightened person can have memories of his ignorant state. Right ?

I : Yes, Ma.

Ma : (to Shankarananda Swami) What do you think, Baba ? Can memories persist ?

Shankarananda : No, they cannot. For memories are mental impulse, and impulses and enlightenment cannot go together.

Ma : Well, can't it be like this ? The moon is always there but it is not always visible. Clouds cover it and when they blow over, out it comes. Just like that, knowledge or enlightenment is always

there. Ignorance hides it. Ignorance gone, enlightenment reveals itself.

The Late Swamiji argued a lot most of which remained abstruse to me. But I got the hang of it all : to the enlightened soul time, place or past recollections are all non-existent. According to Swamiji, salvation came only through death. He did not believe in salvation in life. In this juncture Paramananda Swamiji entered and faced the same question from Ma. All he had to say only corroborated Shankarananda Swami. There were a lot of polemics to which I only partially subscribed. But it was not so important. The discussion over, the reading session started. Shankarananda Swamiji left before reading started. Ma said, 'Will you go now, too' ? When I expressed my desire to leave, she said, 'Will you be too late if you leave sometime later ?'

I : No. Then I 'll go later.

Ma : Well.

It is hard to understand how this body feels

Immediately after the *Santi Parva* of the Mahabharata was read out over half-an-hour or so, the lights in the hall were put out. I had never attended a night reading session before. So this sudden black-out took me by surprise. Later it occurred to me that it was a preparation for a session of meditation. We numbered somewhere between 15 and 20 and we all started meditating together with closed eyes. But my meditation was not deep enough. The polemics of sometime ago

kept on distracting my mind time and again. Nevertheless, the surroundings were new and I liked it to some extent. The meditation went on for about 15 minutes. The hall was not impregnably dark, but the shadow-like, dead-still human figures around could not be identified. Silence prevailed all around. Breaking this silence, Bhupen began to sing very, very softly :

“Hey Bhagaban, Hey Bhagaban, Hey Bhagaban
Jneya Bhagaban, dhyeya Bhagaban, preya
Bhagaban, shreya Bhagaban.”

(O God, you who are the only one to be known, to be meditated upon, the only one to be desired and the one who is the greatest ..

—Translator)

The hum made us feel that we were seated before God Himself, and singing the hymn with our gaze fixed on Him. The beauty and the solemnity of the song kept my mind engrossed in divine thoughts for some time. The song over, we made our *pranama* to Ma. Instantly the lights were on. Perhaps the session ended for the day in this way. We got up. Ma also got up and went upstairs. I was having a talk with Atul (Brahmachari) dada when I heard that Ma expressed her desire to see me. I rushed and Ma entered a small cubicle to the north of the hall. The dark room was lighted at Ma's bidding. I saw a small cot and below an *asana*. Ma asked me to sit down and herself sat down on the cot.

Alone with Ma, I said, ‘Shall I raise that question now, Ma ?’ She giving her assent, I said, ‘One

day a famous *pandit* said during a spiritual discourse that one needed *sadhana* as long as one had bodily existence to get rid of one's bodily feelings and impulses. Even Srikrishna had to have his *diksha*. I told him that Sri Sri Ma never had such *sadhana*. Ma says, I told him, she is now just as she was in her childhood days. Only when the various phases of *sadhana* passed over her body that she had the spell of ignorance for some time. And how was that ignorance? Like not knowing while in full knowledge. When I told him all this, the *pandit* said to me, "You will also say so when you have enlightenment." At that time I could not accept the words of the *pandit* and I told him at that time that I would ask Ma about it all—should I think, when I am enlightened, that all my expressions of ignorance were actually those during my enlightened condition? Have I feigned ignorance in spite of being fully enlightened?

This is why I asked you whether the memories of ignorance persisted after the attainment of enlightenment.

Ma: You did not tell me all this in the morning. But I told you of a condition when one wonders if one was ever ignorant. I am always the other name for enlightenment, aren't I?

I: Again, this *panditji* said, "There are proofs that Ma was not always in the same state. Think of Sri Sri Ma's mother. Did she look upon her child with the same respect as she does now? And if Ma were in the same state, how come the various phases of *sadhana* expressed themselves through her

body.” In reply I said that, going by Ma’s own words, she was *the whole*, and she had in her the physical being as well. The *sadhana* a being requires to become *the whole* also passed through her body. Then panditji said, “Why, does *the whole* lack the continuum of that *sadhana* that we must put it to sensuous tests ?”

Ma : True. Babaji explained it the way he has understood me. Don’t I always say that I am precisely what you think of me ? You look upon me from a particular angle. Everybody does not do so. Many think that I progressed a great deal in my previous birth. In the present one I have attained enlightenment in a very short time and because I am enlightened, I say that I was never in the darkness of ignorance. To such people I say that I am exactly so. But know this for certain. Whatever people’s impression of me, I can clearly see the states of being from where they say so. Everything is arranged in layers one upon another, as it were. I can pinpoint precisely the state they speak of.

And when you speak of my *sadhana*, who showed me the path ? I was my own spiritual initiator. Puja, *japa*, — everything I have done flowed from inside my own self. No stranger came and told me anything. Haven’t I told you time and again that my *sadhana* is nothing but play ? I know *everything*. Nevertheless, I ask you this and that. It is nothing but play. I at times ask you to come and pay a visit to a particular place. Does that mean I have never been to the place ? Just as

we revisit a familiar place, my *sadhana* is exactly like that.

But you need not let these out now. Of course, you can do so if the topic arises. You spoke of my bodily existence. But know this that I have my physical existence, no doubt, but I am not physical being. This body never did its *sadhana* to do away with ignorance. The continuum of *sadhana* is there, in fact. And I have done my *sadhana* just as a physical being does. But it was only a whim. Nothing but a whim.

At times you see that I do not answer to questions. Many think that perhaps I do not know the answer. In fact it is not true. I tell you what. When you ask me a question, I find that I am asking the same to me. The reason is that I always find myself among you and yourselves in me. That is why your question to me is also my own question to myself, as it were. At times I do not answer. No question of depriving any one of anything at all. Because I do not tell myself anything despite knowing all. Again, at times I feel why should I give a wrong impression of myself. It is only then that I reply. I am always playing with myself. This is why it is so different to understand this body.

I: Yes. It is indeed very difficult to understand you.

(To be continued)