

## Swami Omkaranandaji

In Indian spiritual sphere, the name of Swami Omkarananda Giri, ever expresses the pertinence of an ideal divine life. Prior to the Sanyasa (saint hood) his name was Abani Shankar Bhattacharyya. He was born in Pattan village at Bramhanbaria of Tripura district (now in Bangladesh) in the year 1908. He hailed from the great Kashyapas of Vidyakut, well known as a unique family consisting of many noted scholars, yogis, sages and religious leaders, among which Her Holiness Mother Sri Sri Anandamoyee, is the most celebrated.

Genealogically both from pitri and matri lineages, Abani Shankar was a successor of the great heritage of the religious personalities viz. his grand father, the famous Pundit Haradas Tarkaratna, an ascetic at his young age and his cousin brother Brajavidehi Santadas Kathia Baba (previously Tara kishor Chowdhury ), his father Pundit Akshay Kumar, who has taken to the ascetic mendicancy when Abani Shankar was only four years old and was also an eminent Chandi orator empowered to utter infallible words; his mother Soudamini Devi and maternal uncle Srimad Parimohan Goswami, the descendants of Madhavacharyya, the doyen of the Vaisnavas and many other religious stalwarts.

With this deep rooted religious base, Abani Shankar's life was a splendid blend of spirituality and hard reality. He was recipient of many honours, degrees, diplomas, awards and laurels from numerous well known universities and institutions in the fields of Sanskrit language and literature, Philosophy, Ayurveda (herbal medicine) etc. in one hand and also on the other hand he had been rusticated and punished to be imprisoned by the British Government as a rebel inspiring civil disobedience movement being an activist of the noted extremist organisation of the freedom fighters named Anushilan Samitee.

He commended respect from his lots of successful students and his countrymen as an ideal teacher as well as author of a number of published books, research papers and essays in the spheres of Sanskrit language, literature, philosophy, orientology and spirituality viz. 'Kalap Chandrika' (a legendary restoration work on the lost and age old easy

Sanskrit learning procedure of Kashmir), composition of the total 'Sadvani' (teachings of Holi Mother Anandamoyee by herself) in Sanskrit verses, 'Tatvamasi' (spiritual philosophy depicted by Sri Sri Ma Anandamoyee). He was editor of many papers and periodicals and was the founder and the director of a number of organisations which render social services.

Apart from such a wide range of versatile brilliance he was also interested in sports, particularly in football and in cultural activities like music and drama. He was the lyricist of numerous Sanskrit and Bengali devotional songs. In different occasions Abani Shankar came in close contact with the celebrities like Kaji Nazrul Islam, Sachin DevBurman, Ajay Bhattacharyya, Annada Shankar Roy, Mahesh Bhattacharya, Swami Pranabananda, founder of Bharat Sevashram Sangha, Swami Swarupananda, founder of Ajachak Sangha, Swami Satyananda of Nigamananda Ashram, Sri Damodar Dandi Swami of Adyapeeth Sri Ramakrishna Sangha etc.

As because Abani Shankar's family profession were teaching and initiating people for their salvation, the divine quest about God was prevalent in his mind since his childhood and in accordance with that convention he also initiated to assist almost one hundred and fifty families from all over West Bengal, Tripura and Assam to find their eternal path. But this divine quest in his mind was intensified like anything after the untimely death of his wife. At last in the year 1979, at Srikshetra Puri he came in the close touch of Her Holiness Mother Sri Sri Anandamoyee. His life attained a strange and inexplicable level of Supernatural visualisation.

After the worldly disappearance of Mother, Abani Shankar spent a prolonged sanetimonious period by performing complete orations of Chandi, the Geeta and meditation of Mother in regular course at Agarpara Ashram where being instructed by Swami Chinmoyananda, a great devotee and one of the nearest desciple of Mother. He took 'Sannyasa' by observing 'Biraja Homa ( ritual for abandonment of previous way of life) ceremony' on the sacred day of Akshaya Tritia and became introduced as 'Swami Omkarananda Giri'. Then he confined himself in a very small cottage situated at a deserted place to go through

the austere vow and the other norms required for the 'Sannyasa' with continuous meditation, Jap (constant silent enunciation for God) and voracious study of the religious scriptures. He used to eat only a small quantity of boiled vegetables and milk during his lunch and dinner respectively.

Swami Omkarananda at first attained Samadhi (loss of entity during meditation) on the day of Saraswati Puja in the year 1987. Being afraid to watch his worse physical condition that resembled an apparent death, his relative called physicians for his treatment. The physicians found his good health and inferred about the high state of his mind. In course of his 'Sadhana' he experienced in his life the 'four phases' as mentioned in the scriptures viz. 'Pisacha Bat' (incapable to feel the dirty and abominable objects), 'Unmada Bat' (severe mental disorder), 'Jada Bat' (appearance like non living substance) and 'Balaka Bat' (child like appearance).

Omkaranandaji used to be completely absorbed in deep meditation of God. It was a divine frenzy - sometimes laughing or sometime crying being totally stoical regarding his food, dress, shelter or rest. In the mean time suddenly one day he madly ate up a basket-ful of fruit offerings to Mother, measuring fifteen kgs. approximately.

Sometimes his physique appeared like a non living substance. In this stage once grave wound at his waist was created by some venomous ants. Very astonishingly he could feel neither the severe pain of it nor its treatment through application of medicine. The psychiatrists as called on by his relatives, again diagonalised it as an indescribable condition of mind fully absorbed in the thoughts of the Supreme Soul. It was an ultimate stratum of sacrifice - a holistic indifference to any pleasure and pain, indeed, which was once expressed by him when he quoted the hymns of the 'Sankhya Sutram' viz. 'Na Titiksha Sama Sadhanam' i.e. 'there is no worship like sacrifice through endurance'.

Latter on his ascetic life entered into that phase when he seemed to be resembled a child. All his gestures, postures and mentalities were simply like a child. As it were, he was always floating upon an unknown wave of eternal pleasure. In this stage innumerable devotees and pious persons received his graceful blessings. Chanting of the holy scrip-

tures like the Geeta, the Chandi, the Bagabat etc. and Japa, meditation, worship, Jajna (worship before fire ), Satsang (spiritual discourses) etc. were always in process around his sacred presence.

One day, embracing his only son suddenly, Swami Omkaranandaji told that for the attainment of the Supreme entity a devotee should go even beyond the levels of the deities and the divinities being worshipped usually. After a few moments he shoved his son away. Hence he gave the hint regarding his detachment from all sentimental relations and bondages - the final signal of departure. He then asked his son to fetch the almanac and indicated the very auspicious day of 'Maghi Shukla Tritia' ( third day of the light fortnight in the month of Magha i.e. January-February) at the on set of 'Uttarayan' ( summer solstice according to Indian ephemeris).

The 22nd January, 1996, was that very particular day selected by Swami Omkarananda Giri Maharaj, himself. He was lying on the bed with an uninterrupted look at the illuminated Photograph of Sri Sri Anandamoyee Ma. The song written by him viz. 'Guru Bhagawan Ma Bhagawam ...Pai Jano Anteeme' 'Tabo Pade Sthan...' (Oh my Guru - my mother - my God - let me take shelter at your lotus feet at the end..) was being sung at a stretch. The divine soul of Swami Omkarananda touched the lotus feet of Mother forever departing from all connections of this material world.