

Ananda

Newsletter of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha

Issue No 20 – July 2021

Contents – First part of January 2020 Amrita Varta



Sound file:

<http://www.anandamayi.org/mmedia/mp3/HeRam.mp3> Sri Ma sings He Ram, He Krishna, Siva, Siva, Siva

Source of sound recording: Anandamayi Ma. Recordings. DIV_bMS00556_AU_035_B_Del_Side_2. Performed by Anandamayi, 1896-1982 Suktal Nov 1961 -Repository: Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard University. Digitized content accessed via <https://sds.lib.harvard.edu/sds/audio/430554947>

Text file:

<http://www.anandamayi.org/new/Gangacharan2.pdf> Mother – A symbol of a Higher Life (cont), by Gangacharan Das Gupta, (close relative of Bhajji) Ananda Varta Vol 1, No 4.

Talk in Hindi, with English subtitles:

Sri Ma talks at the Presidential Palace in Delhi in September 1961

<https://youtu.be/vHDCKNTzilk> The President of India, Sri Rajendra Prasad, invited Sri Ma to the Presidential Palace, where she spoke. English subtitles.

Sangha website <http://www.shreeshreeanandamayeesangha.org>

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

VOL.-24

JANUARY, 2020

No. 1

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Editors Note

1. In order to ensure proper receipt of the quarterly journal Amrit Varta, it has been decided to slightly enhance the yearly subscription to Rs.325/- with effect from January 2020. Your heartfelt cooperation is earnestly solicited.
2. This journal is published in four separate languages – English, Bengali, Hindi and Gujarati, in the months of January, April, July and October.
3. The journal mainly publishes articles related to Shree Shree Ma. We invite articles from devotees about their divine experience of Shree Shree Ma and also on religious literature of any country or religion.
4. Efforts are being made to make the journal more attractive, interesting, appealing and lucid and to spread the nectorial preaching of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee for the benefit of mankind in all fields of life, whether worldly or spiritual.
5. Gift the journal to your friends and distant family members and encourage them to subscribe.
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"Hari-katha hi katha aur sab vritha vyatha."
 - Ma Anandamayee
*(To talk of God alone is worthwhile;
 all else is in vain and leads to pain)*

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*To perform one's duties is a good thing. At the same time one has to be
 mindful of Man's real duty. Set your mind on Him and contemplate
 Him at all times. Whenever practicable seek satsang – the company
 of sages, saints and seekers after Truth.*
 - Ma Anandamayee

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Ma Anandamayee*

Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram – Varanasi.

***Om Sarva Swarupe Sarveshe, Sarva Shakti Samanvite,
Bhaye Bhyastrāti No Devi, Durge Devi Namostute!***

Respected Brothers and Sisters,

The annual *Shree Shree Bāsanti Durga Mahotsav* which was first held here in 1944 during the *Chaitra-Navrātri*, with Shree Shree Ma's infinite grace will be celebrated this year too from 30th March Monday to 3rd April Friday, 2020 in the *Chandi-Mandap* of the Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Ashram, Varanasi. In continuation, the especial function of the worship of *Shree Shree Mā Annapurnā Devi*, the principal deity of our ashram will be celebrated on 1st April Wednesday, 2020.

We hope to receive your active support in this auspicious function. All those who intend to participate in this holy function are requested to contact us as early as possible.

Jai Ma!
Yours in Matri-Seva,
Members of the Managing Committee,
S.S.M.A. Ashram, Varanasi.

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It is our sincere request to all subscribers who have not sent their subscriptions for the year 2020 and ahead, to send the same at the earliest. The curious readers are also requested to subscribe for the magazine.

--- Managing Editor, 'Ma Anandamayee Amrit Varta'



Matri – Vani

1. Nobody can possibly be superior to God. Whatever is done is done by He Himself. No one has the power to do anything, bear this in mind. Depend upon God. So long as you feel that someone may do something that may harm you, practice the repetition of the *Name* of your *Ishta* (Beloved God) a little more often than you would do otherwise. To place your reliance on your *Ishta* is the only thing to be done under all circumstances.
2. Completely depend on Him. In whatever circumstances you may find yourself sustain the remembrance of Him only. Let this be your prayer: "Lord, Thou hast been pleased to come to me in the form of sickness. Grant me the strength to bear it, gird me with patience and give me the understanding that it is Thou who art dwelling within me in this guise!"
3. Conditioned by *sanskārs* (tendencies brought over from former births) everyone is searching for a direction in life. It is man's duty to embrace the most excellent and to abandon what is merely pleasing to the senses. Man's life must be oriented towards finding his own Self. To find one's Self means to find God.
4. Regarding all beings as His forms, with a spirit of service and utter calm serve the Lord, serve the Lord, serve the Lord and only Him. In this manner as you grow more and more perfect in your capacity of a servant of the Lord; fondness, love and devotion for Him as well as implicit faith will awaken in you.
5. You are bound to take whichever path He has chosen for you. Nobody can do anything according to his own sweet will. He is all gracious, all compassionate; towards Himself is the path in which He pulls you. And to realize Him is the goal; Him, Divinity Himself.
6. Happiness that depends on anything outside of you, be it your family, money, fame, friends or anything else, cannot last. But to find happiness in Him who is everywhere, who is all-pervading, your own Self, is real happiness.
7. While working in this world, you can do one thing: whatever you do throughout the day, endeavour to do it in a spirit of service. Serve God in everyone, regard everyone and everything as manifestations of Him and serve Him by whatever work you undertake. If you live with this attitude of mind, the path to Reality will open out before you.
8. Occupation with worldly material acts like slow poison. Gradually without one's noticing it, it leads to death. Choose the path of Immortality, take any path according to your temperament, it will lead you to the Realization of the Self.
9. By persevering in *sadhanā* (spiritual practice) the *Aham* 'I' will be transformed into *Soham* 'I am That'. Advancing along the path of devotion the wayward servant will be transformed into the Eternal Servant of the Lord.

10. You imagine that you are the doer of your actions; this indicates the existence of the ego, the worldly 'I' in you. The result of egoism is blindness. The attitude 'I am the Lord's eternal servant', there also is a duality, but the worldly 'I' does not exist. Not until the 'I' is perfect, in other words not unless '*Aham Brahma-asmi*' (I am the *Brahma*) has been realized will the ego be destroyed from its root.

11. It is necessary to try and dedicate to the Supreme every single action of one's daily life. From the moment one wakes up in the morning till one falls asleep at night one should endeavour to sustain this attitude of mind. By doing so one will come to feel; how can I offer Him greed, anger and other undesirable qualities? To Him who is so infinitely dear to me, who is my very own? Does one give that which is evil to one's nearest and dearest? As one continues to reflect in this way one finally becomes incapable of doing anything evil or undesirable. Do you know what he does at that fortunate moment? Out of your meekness he makes you perfect, and then nothing remains to be desired or achieved. The moment your self-dedication becomes complete, at that very instant occurs the revelation of the indivisible, unbroken Perfection which is ever revealed by the Self.

12. Just as a locust hooks on to something else before leaving its original place, so also the soul at the time of leaving the body hooks on to a new existence according to the state of mind of the dying person. But while dying one has no control over one's thought. It will automatically dwell where it normally dwells. Hence one has to practice the Presence of God while one is fit and well.

13. Some persons do not like to sit down and do *japa*. For them, it is advisable to purify their mind through *seva* (service to man in the name of God). Also there is such a saying that, unless the mind is purified to some extent through *japa*, service to God in man i.e. *seva*, cannot be accomplished in the proper manner. *Seva* and *Japa* are both necessary. One is supplementary to the other. Together they form an integral *sadhanā*.

* * * *

Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Prasanga

Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

(continued from before)

28th Paush 1355, Wednesday (A.D. 12-1-1949)

Today did not go to the Ashram as I was having fever. Tomorrow is *Pāush-Sankrānti* (the last day of the month of *Paush*), the third year of *Sāvitri-yagna* will commence and hence there will be a lot of festivity in the Ashram, but it will not be possible for me to be present there.

29th Paush 1355, Wednesday (A.D. 13-1-1949)

Today I have no fever. But the cold feeling is persisting. All members of our house will have *prasād* in the ashram. I was lying down in my house when around 3pm in the noon my friend Shri Manmohan came and informed that Ma was calling me. Immediately I left for the Ashram with him. The Ashram was crowded with people. The *Yagna-Shālā* was beautifully decorated with garlands. Flags were flying on the roof and the pillars of the *Yagna-Shālā*. Various images were printed on the flags. The vehicles of the gods like *Indra*, *Varun*, etc., who were worshipped during the *yagna*, were depicted on the flags. Manmohan took me to the second floor where I had *darshan* of Shree Shree Ma. Observing my face Ma said, "Seems you have become very weak. Go downstairs have *polāo* (fried rice) *prasād* and move around, later have *neem'r laddoo* (balls made of *Neem* leaves)." Saying this Ma laughed. Then Ma ordered Shri Binoy Sen, Manmohan and myself to go downstairs. There we sat down to have *prasād* and I had everything including *pulāo* and sweets. Ma came down once and asked me not to eat too much.

After meals I returned back to my house when Smt Buni came and gave two balls of *neem*. I was fascinated to observe the infinite grace of Shree Shree Ma. After this too one day Ma sent *prasād* to my home both for lunch and dinner and one day evening came to see the condition of my house. I cannot stop expressing the various ways in which Ma was blessing this worthless child.

8th Maagh 1355, Monday (A.D. 17-1-1949)

Today around 11am Shri Krishnaprem came to meet Shree Shree Ma. Ma was sitting in the hall. When Shri Krishnaprem paid obeisance, Ma too smiled saying "*namah Narayan namah Narayan*." He was dressed as a *vaishnav*, *tilak* on his forehead, a necklace of beads on his neck and dressed in saffron. Quite a cheerful look. Spoke fluent Bengali. On Shree Shree Ma's request sang a song, the *kirtan* was quite emotional. Ma requested him to come the next day too and bring along his pupil Krishnarpita too.

Is *Kaal nitya*? (Is aeon eternal?)

In the evening after the *pāth* (reading of scripture) there was a pious discussion for some time. Vaidyanath Shastri Mahasaya asked Ma, "Is *Kaal* (time or aeon) eternal?"

Ma: What do you understand by *Kaal*? *Sokaal* (morning), *Bikaal* (evening), *Sheetkaal* (winter), *Grishmkaal* (summer) all these are *kaal* too, or something else?

Shastri: I want to call *Kaal* that, on whom *khand-kaal* (partial periods) like *Sokaal*, *Bikaal*, etc., are dependant. This is *nirākār* (formless) like the sky and it itself is eternal.

Ma: What name will you give to Him, on whom these partial periods are dependant?

Shastri: Will call Him *MahaKaal*.

Ma: On whom is this *MahaKaal* dependant? There is a state beyond *Kaal*. And the way in which you want to describe *Kaal* as eternal in that way everything is eternal because everything is *Brahma*; and in that sense everything is eternal. *Kaal* cannot be decided in this manner. And calling *Kaal* as *nirākār* (formless), this body (i.e. Ma) calls *Kaal* as *sākār* and it is *sagun* (with all attributes). And this *Kaal* and *Mahakaal* whatever you call, that also has an end. Whose end is non-existent, He Himself is *nitya* (eternal) and He Himself is *Brahma*."

Ma spoke of several topics in this way. Shastri Mahasaya unable to defeat Ma in the debate said, "Unfortunate you have not been educated."

Ma: I would have said that which has been taught, if educated; now I say according to my own *bhaav* (emotions).

5th Maagh 1355, Tuesday (AD. 18-1-1949)

It was 11:30am by the time I reached Ashram after finishing marketing and bathing etc. On reaching the Ashram saw Shri Krishnaprem and Krishnarupita his disciple and daughter of his *Guru*, leaving the Ashram after paying obeisance to Ma. They were supposed to visit today.

***Advaitavaad* (non-duality) and *Bhaktitattva* (essence of devotion)**

After Shri Krishnaprem took leave from the Ashram, Devshankar babu said to Ma, "The topic of *Ahetuki kripā* (unconditional grace) that was discussed earlier, a similar explanation like that is present in the *Srimad-Bhagwat*, there *bhakti* (devotion) has been divided into various parts and one type of *bhakti* has been called as *nirgun bhakti* (devotion of the Formless). Other devotions have a motivated relation but in *nirgun bhakti* there is no motivated relation. It is the *Ātmā*'s Absolute or Divine state. The *Vaishnava*'s of course do not accept it because they want to keep themselves separate from the Divine. They want to be a step lower than the Divine and maintain a *Prabhu-Das* (God and servant) type relation."

Ma: All this relation of God-servant etc., you mentioned, remember that without the presence of God one cannot become servant. *Hanuman* had said that, 'In the context of the *Paramātmā* (the Lord) Rama and myself are one, again in one condition I am a fraction, He is *Purna* (Absolute), I am *dās* (servant), He is the Lord.' All these illuminate only one truth. Just as the knowledge of the partial cannot be obtained without the presence of the Absolute, similarly without knowing the Lord one cannot become the servant. Knowing God means to become God. Again that you are going done one step and separating God from servant, this too is true from your point of view. Whatever one says, from his point of view, that is only true. (Everyone laughs). In fact there is no

separate high or low. Everything is equal, everything is He Himself, He Himself is the Lord, He Himself is devotion, He is Himself.

The way to attaining God

A *Parsi* gentleman came from Bombay (presently Mumbai) to have Ma's *darshan*. Heard that he was a Principal Secretary. He questioned Ma, "Mataji, 'He Himself' 'He Himself' that you are saying, what is the way to know Him or attain Him?"

Ma: To seek refuge in the *Guru*. Without the *Guru* it is not possible. He alone will catch hold of your hand and lead you.

A lady: Mataji, who is your *Guru*?

Ma: (Pointing towards me) See, she is asking who is my *Guru*? I say birds and animals, flies and insects, whatever exists all are my *Guru*. On saying *Guru* we mean God. Whatever is present in the universe all are God's form. Hence this body is also my *Guru*.

The gentleman: Those who are not habituated to visualizing in this manner what will they do? If due to my ill-fate I do not meet any *mahapurush* then what will I have to do?

Ma: *Pitaji*, I say that you undertake *satsang* (company of pious people). Undertake the company of those who are trying to attain God. Don't you say that the germs of an illness enter from one person to another and make him ill too. The fruits of *satsang* is also like that. Keeping company of pious people, their pious germs entering within you will kill the germs of materialistic desires. In fact we are all patients. Do not people say that, where there is name of *Ram* there itself is *ārām* (comfort), and where there is no *Ram* there only discomfort exists. Always remain occupied with *satsang* and with pious conversations, then the path to attain Him will be realized.

The gentleman: When the mind moves from one resolution to another then the void that occurs after the termination of one resolution and before the beginning of the other, that itself is *Maha-shunya* (Ultimate void) and that only is *Brahma*, can I contemplate in this manner?

Ma: Just by contemplating you cannot attain *Maha-shunya*. The mind is even present in the gap that you are talking about. (Pointing towards a lady) Yesterday I was telling her a similar fact. The mind can be put to use for both untying and tying a knot. The mind only creates knots if it concentrates on material thoughts. And if the mind contemplates on God then it helps in untying the knots. The attitude of the mind is to move in various directions. Again within this 'many' also exists 'One'. For example take a tree; in spite of having many branches its root is one and there is a connection with every tip of the tree. The funny part is that, concentrating on any point on the tree, you will see that, that itself, will lead you to the root. Similarly, with whatever you concentrate single-mindedly, you will see, there itself the mind has dissolved and His presence has occurred. He alone is present everywhere in the form of Self-illumination. Hence attaining Him means to remove the veil. If with any clay tumbler an oil lamp is kept covered then the light of that lamp is not revealed; but at the very instant the tumbler is broken immediately the light of the lamp is revealed. Similarly call Him *Brahma*, call Him

God, He exists everywhere in the Self-illuminated form, the very instant the veil is eliminated, then and there itself His revelation occurs. Hence the mind has to be utilized to get rid of this veil. Just as when a stone is rubbed and little by little its transformation takes place, similarly keeping the mind engaged in Godly thoughts the transformation of the mind also occurs.

Seeing that it was 12:00 noon the discussion stopped. Everyone got up and prepared to leave. While the discussion was going on a lady wanting to ask a question to Ma, though trying persistently was not able to catch Ma's attention. Now as everyone was departing Ma suddenly looking at her said, "Mother, you had a certain question that was not attended. Come, tell it now." Satisfied the lady went near Ma and said, "Mataji, some say that the *Gita* is the *Guru*, some say the 'name' of *Ram*, again some say a saint is a *Guru*, which among these to consider as a *Guru*?"

Ma: Let me tell you in simple words, on whom you have the maximum reverence, before whom your head bows down, you accept him as the *Guru*. Obey his commands without any reasoning. If after considering somebody as your *Guru*, you reason on his words, then know that a *Guru* has not been formed. How it is, you know? Don't you give marriage to your daughter? As long as the marriage is not occurring, till then there is a search for a husband. Once the marriage is over then there is no question of a search. As long as this search is present till then, one can say the marriage has not occurred. Similarly, whom you accept as your *Guru* obey his instructions without any reasoning. He will catch your hand and lead you to the Lord, whether it is in one birth or in fifty births. Hence it will be your duty that, whatever he says obey them, without aiming at the outcome.

Ma continued in this manner for some time. The lady extremely satisfied departed after paying obeisance to Ma. We also returned back.

(to be continued)

* * * *

"Relative happiness, which is happiness depending on anything, must end in grief. It is man's duty to mediate on God, who is Peace itself. Have you not seen what life in this world is? If anything is to be had, whatsoever, in whatever way, it must be had of Him alone."

- Ma Anandamayee

Samyam Saptāh Mahavrata

Somesh Ch. Banerjee

'*Samyam Saptāh Mahavrata*' means to take a vow to abstain (*vrata*) from worldliness and to observe self-discipline (*samyam*) for a week (*saptāh*) and strive towards spiritual progress. Ma said, "The purpose of this is to know the Self, to merge with the Self, to elevate one's own spiritual life by following in all respects, truth, non-violence, celibacy and to help others for their spiritual upliftment."

The idea of this Mahavrata occurred a long time ago when Shree Ma was in Shahbagh at Dhaka. Ma always stressed on the point that aspirants and devotees (*sadhakās*) should observe self-discipline, at least once or twice a month. Ma said that the auspicious months of *Vaishakh*, *Shravan*, *Kartik* and *Magh* of the Indian calendar, were most helpful for observing self-discipline. During such times, one must avoid pampering the palate, refrain from anger, greed and any kind of falsehood and maintain strict celibacy. Men should consider women as *Bhagwati* and children as *Gopal*.

Years later, Maharaja of Solan, Durga Singhji (Yogi bhai) came forward with the idea that the devotees observe self-discipline and perform *sadhana* collectively for a week in the presence of Ma. With Ma's consent and Her grace, the *Samyam Saptaha* was organized for a week on an annual basis from *ashtami* to *poornima tithi* (eighth to fifteenth, the full moon day of the Indian calendar) after the Diwali function.

In the holy presence of Ma, the first *Samyam Saptāh* (week of self-restraint) was held in Varanasi Ashram from 6th to 12th August, 1952. During this *Samyam*, at the end of the *Dhyān* (meditation), Shree Ma had slowly chanted the following hymn:

He Pita, He Hita, He Brahma Tatvam. (Oh Father, Oh Well-wisher, Oh Essence of God).

He Pita, He Hita, He Brahma Bhutam. (Oh Father, Oh Well-wisher, Oh the God in existence).

He Pita, He Hita, He Brahma Swarupam. (Oh Father, Oh Well-wisher, Oh God's Reality).

Ma revealed that a beautiful dusky little child in subtle form sang these words to Her and Ma sang it in the tune as sung by him. Since then, this hymn is chanted after the hour long *Dhyān* to stir the devotees out of the stillness of their meditation. It is not chanted at any other occasion. One day, on one of the *Samyams*, Ma had said, "*Samyam Saptāh* is the medicine for curing *bhaav-rog*, the pains and ills of worldly life. We all are patients of *bhaav-rog*, experiencing troubles of life and death, pleasures and pain, losses and gains. The Mahatmas are the doctors, the *vratis* (participants) are the patients, religious discourse and discussion are the medicine and the guidance given to search the 'Self', is the way to get the remedy."

Persons from any religion desiring spiritual progress are allowed to participate in this weeklong *sadhana*. This much-awaited function is held every year in the Kankhal Ashram. Learned Mahatamas are invited to deliver lectures on religious topics for the *vratis*. Everyone attending the function feel the presence of Ma inspite of Her physical absence.

Shree Shree Anandamayee Ma Bliss-permeated Mother

Brahmacharini Aruna Pandya

“Divine Consciousness” sparkling in perfect purity, bewildering in depth and diversity manifested itself in the form of an infant girl, in a small village named Khcora, now in Bangladesh in the early hours of 30th April, 1968.

Her life from the little ‘Nirmala’ to the world acclaimed ‘Shree Shree Anandamayee Ma’ is a revelation, a ‘play’ or ‘*lila*’ of the Self with the Self in a ‘body’ which was also none other than the ‘Self’ or Pure Consciousness. Being desireless, the very cause for a material body is absent.

She was a ‘Being’ in whom everything happened by ‘itself’. She was completely devoid of ‘I’-ness. She was ever-active and yet not a ‘Doer’. The ‘I’ just did not exist. Totally desireless one expects no urge for action in Her and yet, She was ever busy. Every action was a response to a spiritual call, to meet the spiritual need of man.

Ma says, “This body, is an instrument, howsoever, you play, you shall hear”.

The *Yog Vasistha* says- ‘*Brahma cid brahma ca maro brahma vijñānavastu ca brahmartho brahma*’. ‘*sadas ca brahma cid brahma dhātavah*’ — (Consciousness is Brahma, the mind is Brahma, the intellect is Brahma, Brahma alone is the substance. Sound or word is Brahma, and Brahma alone is the component of all substances.)

This realisation of the Supreme Truth is the highest ideal of our scriptures. All Vedic teachings culminate in the attainment of this ‘Universal Truth’, the Self, Brahma or the Atma, all of which are but synonyms. Today within our perception we have in Ma, such a ‘Being’ who is One with the Self.

“In all Infinity is He and no other -I alone am,” says Ma.

“For this body only One exists,” says Ma.

“The Immutable Brahman, the primeval sound, the *Omkara* are one and the same as the word ‘Ma’—Ananda in essence,” says Ma.

These are not words of a rambling mind but irrefutable words of a Being in a state of Oneness where nothing remains to be known or attained. Ma’s philosophy centered around the ‘One’ and was apparent in Her, from Her very childhood - in games, with nature, with associates, with music, with *kirtan*. She responded by becoming One with the *bhāva* of the surrounding.

The Vedas have been a marvelous spiritual heritage of mankind unparalleled and ‘*apaurushaye*’ (owing their authority to no one). They are a store house of wisdom and spiritual learning and contain the knowledge of God. Vedas literally mean ‘to know’. Shree Ma was undifferentiated from these Vedic teachings and their goal. Her physical

presence placed before mankind an 'Ideal' which so far had only been heard of in the scriptures. The theoretical Brahma of the scriptures -distant and Impersonal was no longer so. Amidst us was a living 'Reality' personal and approachable. Her love penetrated deep into the core of the hearts of all and aroused in them the desire to aspire for the realisation of the Supreme Self - '*Charam Param*'.

Shree Ma was perfect in Herself. She was perfect in all that She did. In fact She was Perfection personified. Speaking the silent language of Universal love She spiritualised the materialistic and worldly attitudes of all who came in contact with Her. In particular She revived and reinfused the Indian mind with a regard for its own culture and ideology. She showed the individuals the simplest and easiest paths towards the realisation of the Eternal. She was ever-concerned for the spiritual welfare of the people, traversing the country to meet their spiritual need.

Thus as the 20th Century beheld this unique wonder of a Bliss-permeated Mother, radiating light and joy, there dawned a Golden Age in Spirituality or a Spiritual Renaissance. The spiritual was important in our culture and daily way of life. All activity - religious, cultural or social, all knowledge - philosophy, scientific and or medical, centered around the great principle of achieving Oneness with the Self, and ignorance, the source of all diversity, misfortune, misery and cause of all sorrow could be removed by right action and right knowledge.

According to Ma "Just as there is a veil of ignorance, there is also a door to knowledge." Her religion was Universal. It accommodated all the religious sects and diversifications. To Ma there were no contradictions; they were only different paths to the same goal. She advised all to remember Him in whatever form they believed. She advised the Muslim to be a perfect Muslim, the Hindu a perfect Hindu, the Christian a true Christian. To the many others that came to Her, She pointed out that as Perfection was the goal, so the dictates of their Scriptures or the instructions of their *Gurus* should be followed as perfectly as possible.

"Verily God is in all shapes and forms. Everybody should be told that in God's creation according to the Hindu Sanatan Dharma, it is unlawful to say anything which will cause hostility or distress to anyone. To be opposed to anyone is to be opposed to the Supreme Being. We are all one *Ātma*. This is what we have to bear in mind. Preserve a spirit of calm and friendliness." - says Ma

To Ma "All were Her very own - since all were That". Her response to their spiritual needs was spontaneous irrespective of caste, religion or creed.

In Shahbagh, near the tomb of a Saint, Ma was seen to perform the 'Namaaz' with such accurate pronunciation and perfect hand movements that even the Muslims were astonished and were unable to surpass Her feat. Ma's birthplace, even today is very respectfully and devotedly looked after by some Muslims.

Once as a child Ma requested Her mother, DidiMa, to purchase some Christian literature which two nuns had brought to the house, and later spent quite some time looking through it. On another occasion even as a child, Ma was spontaneously drawn towards a

group of Christian nuns living in a tent across the village. At sunset, when Ma reached the tent She found them engrossed in their evening prayer. Was Ma's visit an answer to their prayers?

A few years ago an American Christian lady desirous of taking initiation was torn in a conflict between her devotion to Christ and her love for Ma. Early one morning she had a clear vision of Jesus Christ giving her a *mantra*. Later she was amazed to receive the same *mantra* from Ma at the time of her initiation!

Shree 108 Triveni Puri Maharaj had said about Mother – “She is like a vast ocean in which all the rivers meet.”

The play of *sādhana* in Ma depicts the magnificent exposition of the various *sādhana*s: their various diversifications (be it *dwait*, *adwait* or Buddhism). In Ma each *sādhana* unfolded itself, through all the stages in a matter of hours, whereas for an ordinary *sādhak*, from the start to the culmination of the process of each *sādhana* could mean the achievement of many births. Ma's *sādhana* was not the activity of one striving for realisation but a divine play in response to the need of man and solely for their benefit. Those who were fortunate to witness those forms, wonder of wonders, not only looked upon Ma with awe and reverence but also remembered and recorded them for posterity. For those who were present, these visions became a part of their lives.

On being questioned as to ‘who She was’ during the ‘play’ of one of these *sādhana*s, came the reply “*Purna Brahma Narayan*”. At first, the so called abnormal behaviour of the untutored village girl was looked upon with misgivings but later as the significance of the observations gained depth they bowed down to the Spirituality Incarnate. From the very early age Ma has responded to the spiritual call of Her associates and helped and guided each one spiritually in Her unique way – a touch, a glance, a word.

A grand aunt of Ma repeatedly forgot the process of counting the *mantra* on her fingers until little Nirmala playfully taught her the process much to the astonishment of Her mother.

In the passing away of Her brother's, bachelor uncle ‘*Sona mama*’ and later of saints like, Haribaba, Bhaiji, and other devotees, Ma subtly guided their last thoughts towards the Eternal, as the Gita says – “*Prayan Kalé Manasa Chalén*.”

True to tradition Ma emphasized the need of a *guru* until the inner *guru* revealed itself. “The relation between *guru* and *shishya* deserves to be called eternal only when the *guru* is possessed of divine powers and can and does communicate this power to the latter at the time of his initiation.”

She also placed before us the ideal *Guru* Shri Muktananda Giriji Maharaj, in whom the required qualities were inherent. Complete, unquestioning obedience to the on *guru*, strict discipline, adherence to the social order, virtuous qualities and conduct based on good moral precepts were helpful towards self-realisation. Truthfulness was the very foundation of good behaviour.

Satyanaiva panthaa vittaa devyaan.

The purity of the lineage plays a significant role in spiritual attainment. Both Ma's paternal and maternal ancestors had strictly observed the disciplines and norms pertaining to the lineage of *Rishis*, and there had been successive generations of *pandits*, *sādhaks*, *yogis* and *siddha gurus* in their families.

Ma however, is the finest example of how one can live in the Highest Self and yet continue to work in the world.

Her very action was a 'lesson' to be learnt. In obedience, She was obedience itself, in truth She was Truth itself, She was the ideal child, ideal daughter, ideal friend, ideal guide. Moral precepts and good behaviour were natural to Her. Discrimination and renunciation were part of Her.

Her many ashrams are centres where cultural and spiritual ideals are being maintained defying the threat of pollution which materialism, poses. In these institutions the ashram system prevalent in India from the Vedic Age is preserved. The highest ideals are laid down for all the four orders. The *sanyasi*, the *van-prasthi*, the *griyahaṣṭa* and the *brahmachari*.

The *brahmacharya* is the very foundation of all spiritual life. No *yogic kriya* is possible without *brahmacharya*. According to Ma, if *brahmacharya* is strictly maintained in thought, word and deed it automatically leads to a natural unfoldment of the spiritual. Ma's entire life was one of an ideal *brahmacharini*. A school for boys and one for girls was started on this basis.

To the householder, Ma said, "Those who have adopted the ashram of a householder should be model householders and live according to the precepts of dharma." She also said the husband was to be looked upon as the Lord, the wife as *Lakṣmi*, the son *Gopal* and the daughter *Kumari*. This spirit eventually leads to detachment.

The *Samyam Saptāh* is an annual function where all the four ashrams gather together under the umbrella of a number of saints and sages. A week of strict discipline for their spiritual upliftment is a very delightful and joyful experience for all participating in it. Ma thus infused *tapasyā*, with a spirit of joy and it no longer appeared as a hard chore.

Shree Ma restores amity amongst the religious orders. Ma was looked upon as a leader in spirituality and almost all the saints and sages of Her period have paid homage to Her at some time or the other. She was the jewel-crest in Spirituality. Shree Ma held the saints and sages in great esteem and taught, by Her own example, how they were to be respected.

Shri Gopinath Kavirajji after a great deliberation on Shree Ma came to the conclusion that Ma could not be compared to any saint, sage or even an *Avtar*. To him "Ma was Ma alone."

In the ashrams all kinds of spiritual rites, *yagnas*, worships, prayers, rituals and the like, are observed and performed mainly for the welfare of the world and for the benefit of mankind in keeping with the ideals of the *rishis*. The entire society participates

in these functions throughout the year and they are performed strictly accordingly to the injunctions of the *shastras*.

Great impetus was given by Shree Ma to the spiritual upliftment of Indian womanhood. After years of suppression, with the advent of Ma, Indian girls and ladies received tremendous opportunities for leading a spiritual life.

“*Strisu dustashu varsaneya jayate varnasankara*,” says the Gita. Keeping this in mind, on the suggestion of Bhairji and under the guidance of Shree Ma, a Sanskrit school was started for girls based on the *gurukul* system. Here opportunity is given to every girl to mould herself in an ascetic way of life, whether she joins the *grihastha ashram* or continues to lead the life of a *brahmacharini*. Great stress is laid on the study of scriptures and household arts. Strict discipline and code of conduct is also maintained for development of character.

By reintroducing the thread ceremony for girls in accordance with the *shastras*, Ma enhanced the status of women by giving them equal rights with men in spiritual and religious activities. In ancient days Indian women like Gargi, Lopamudra, Maitreiji, etc., were renowned for their intellectual prowess. The right to take *sanyās* by women was also encouraged.

Besides the school, several opportunities were given to other *kumari* girls and ladies wishing to lead a spiritual life, for organising religious functions and spiritual discourses and participating fully in them. Thus Ma rejuvenated Indian womanhood with a new dignity and gave them a new independent way of spiritual life.

In this way Ma brought religion to the doorsteps of the common man. It was no longer the right of the privileged few. The *atithi* (guest), *daridra* (poor), the *rogi* (sick), were all to be served as service to God. Work done in this spirit promoted selflessness and the constant remembrance of the Supreme was maintained throughout the day.

In an ever-changing world Shree Ma was changeless, maintaining a perfect equilibrium in all circumstances. “I am, I was and will be” - Ma.

In a world of struggle and strife She was all peaceful. To the lost, She was an epitome of love. To the shattered, She was an embodiment of encouragement. To the downtrodden, She was a light of Hope. To the lonely, She was all in all. To the devotee, She was spirituality Incarnate and to the child, She was the mother.

In Ma's words “Ma means *Ātma*”, Ma means ‘*Mayi*’—Self permeated reposing in the *Ātma*.

Blessed are we to see Ma, the Winged Spirit, Eternal, Universal and beyond the limits of time, space and reason.

* * * *

Ma's outer manifestation

Anil Ganguli

Ma's 'outer manifestation' consists of Her human activities before the public eye; but even these inspire our wonder and admiration. To borrow a beautiful expression from the *Vāishnava* literature, it may be described as *lilā* (divine sport) which makes us feel that Ma is one of us, sympathetically sharing our joys and sorrows. In Her *lilā*, Ma has from time to time assumed different roles on the stage of life such as daughter, housewife, friend, mother and unofficial *guru*, without any desire, 'I-ness', 'my-ness', or emotions. Limitless are the channels through which flows the current of Ma's 'outer manifestation'. Let us consider the first *darshan* by an outsider with a receptive mind. However, it must be remembered that the word 'outsider' just does not exist in Ma's dictionary. She invariably looks upon every individual as a spark of *Brahma*. Also She inspires in the 'outsider' the feeling that She is not a stranger but his mother, overflowing with affection. Once the 'outsider' inches his way from the overflowing crowd towards the room or hall, he is simply struck by the *darshan* of a motherly lady, calm and composed, sparkling eyes and winsome smile, a benign glance and the joy-inspiring appearance.

If the visitor is lucky he may find Ma singing, surrounded by a group of experts in musical talent. Ma's songs are spontaneous and ecstatic. The modulations of Her voice vibrate in the heart of the listener and purify his mind. The emphasis repeatedly laid by Ma on each word or syllable acts as a key to understand its inner meaning. Ma's singing has an indefinable quality which not only pleases one's ears, but also infuses a mysterious thrill into one's inner self. Renowned musical experts unequivocally confirm that Her melodious voice is matchless and perfect along with Her rhythmic movement.

Another wonderful phase of Ma's 'outer manifestation' is revealed during *matri-satsang*, a programme which provides the spectators or votaries with a special opportunity of conversation with Ma. During *matri-satsang* Ma is usually very patient and indulgent and more motherly than any human mother. She then gives Her 'children' almost unrestrained liberty and sympathetically attends to questions ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. Ma's answers are as varied as the questions. They are enlivening, scintillating and inspiring. The wonder of wonders is that, every question howsoever difficult is disposed of without a moment's reflection. Every answer is on the mental level of the particular enquirer, has reference to his peculiar point of view and corresponds to his own power of understanding. Even if somebody is hesitant or shy to speak out his query or conscious of being observed by the large gathering, his query is often solved in a mysterious manner. Either somebody else puts forth the question or sometimes Ma of Her own accord broaches the particular subject and clarifies the point involved, solving the particular question in mind. And then follows Ma's penetrating gaze on the person whose query has been answered accompanied by her sweet and significant smile. Is this just a coincidence?

Followers of different faiths and sects seek Ma's guidance in *sadhanā* (spiritual pursuits preparatory to self-realization) from a practical point of view. Common men find relief on getting their personal and domestic problems solved; erudite scholars seek clarification of intricate points of metaphysics; whereas fastidious cynics recklessly condemn God and expect Ma to answer for His failings. Thus, the questions cover a large canvas and are of varying interest and value.

Occasionally, Ma requests saints who are present in the *matri-satsang* to discuss controversial points in the light of the scriptures and they try their best. But the 'best' of the *Vedantists* following the path of knowledge often happens to be in conflict with the 'best' of the orthodox *Vaishnavs* following the path of devotion. Often a barren debate goes on for some time and then the specialists jointly implore Ma to say the last word on the subject to stop further argument. With modesty Ma says that nobody has taught Her *shastras* (scriptures) but invariably throws a flood of light in a few short and simple sentences, which satisfies each of the contending parties and enlightens the whole audience. Ma's very presence creates an atmosphere unfavourable to fanaticism.

Presumably, the *matri-satsang* may have no meaning for an audience not conversant with Bengali or Hindi. But this is not necessarily true. Once I noticed a foreigner listlessly gazing at Ma with tearful eyes, apparently incapable of understanding what Ma was saying in Bengali. Later I asked him, "Do you understand Ma's language?" He replied, "No, I do not, but who does? Ma's language of the tongue is foreign to me, not the language of Her eyes!" Ma's gracious gaze often conveys to a thirsty soul a message of hope and assurance: "You are mine and I am yours!" Perhaps that gaze simultaneously represents Ma's 'inner being' and 'outer manifestation'.

Dialogues with Ma often act as spiritual seeds sown in the soil of the human mind. Properly nourished with human intelligence and faith, these seeds sprout and grow into trees, yielding flowers and fruits.

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"Misfortune must not be looked upon as a disaster; it would be a sin to do so; for who sends the misfortune? What He does is all beneficial. Under no circumstances, however adverse, should man accept defeat. In times of adversity and distress as well as in times of well-being and good fortune try to seek refuge in the One alone. Keep in mind that whatever He, the All-beneficial, the Fountain of Goodness, does, is wholly for the best."

- Ma Anandamayee

Sri Ma Anandamayee in our lives

Bithika Mukerji

In the summer of 1937 in Barcilly we had the great good fortune to come under the influence of Sri Ma Anandamayee. Sri Ma while journeying from the remote villages of Bengal to the foot hills of the Himalayas passed through the town of Barcilly.

One day, my mother and her friend Mrs. Maharatanji Jaspal were sitting in the ladies club, when Maharatanji asked my mother if she would like to have *darshan* (audience, see) of a Bengali *Mataji* who is expected soon and would be staying at the *dharamshala* (inn for pilgrims) near the railway station. My mother hesitated because for a gentlewoman to go to public places and pay court to religious personalities were not at all an acceptable norm of behavior. My father made no objection to my mother's curiosity but declined to accompany her. It was on a Sunday when we visited this *dharamshala* to call on Sri Ma. On entering found an enclosed courtyard with a small *Shiva* temple in the middle of a raised platform. A covered *verandah* led on to the rooms all around the courtyard. There was a big hall in the centre covered from wall to wall with a cotton carpet. At one corner of this hall, Sri Ma was sitting on the floor on a folded blanket. My mother gazed upon the radiant majestic form in front of her, knelt down and did a *pranām* (obeisance). We also followed her.

Sri Ma addressed my mother in familiar terms, as if she had known her for a long time. Some of us sat near Sri Ma and the rest of us sat along with the young people grouped around *Pitaji* (Bholanathji – Sri Ma's husband, an ascetic). We used to visit Sri Ma every evening after school with our mother. My early memories of these visits to the *dharamshala* centre around *Pitaji* and the *kirtans* (religious singing) we learnt to sing with him. Sri Ma was beautiful and remote but joined in our *kirtan* now and then. We liked to sit near Her and were happy when She smiled and spoke to us. We were introduced to the game of *sat-cid-ananda*. There were two teams headed by Sri Ma and *Pitaji*. Each team one by one had to throw seven *cowrie* shells (like a dice) on the floor. If three shells were face up then it was '*sat*', if five faces were up then '*cit*' and if all seven were faced up then it was '*ananda*'. If in a group, *sat*, *cit*, *ananda* came consecutively one after the other, the team wins. The winning team would sing *kirtan* and the losing team would do *japa* (repetition 108 times) of any name of God. In this way we were introduced to *kirtan*, *japa* and the word *sat-cid-ananda*. We also played 'crocodile-crocodile' in the open courtyard. The courtyard was the river and the *verandah* the bank. While descending into the river if the crocodile caught the unwary, that member became the crocodile. I remember Sri Ma joining in with us once or twice for this game. But the 'crocodile' could never catch Her, because She was very swift and nimble in walking from the *verandah* to the platform or back. Those joyous days!

My mother went to the *dharamshala* after father left for court (he was a judge) and returned before he came back. One day Sri Ma said to her, "The way your eyes return again and again to the clock, so should your mind be given over to the thoughts of God. Even if distracted for a while, bring it back to God-remembrance continuously."

One evening my brother Bindu (aged 8) developed a high fever. The doctor was concerned because there was a fear of typhus fever in the town at this time. Somebody brought the news that Sri Ma was visiting the house right next to ours. My mother ran and to meet Sri Ma. Sri Ma asked her "Do you live nearby?" Sri Ma was already out of the neighbor's house and walked along with my mother to our house along with Her whole entourage. My mother was beside herself with excitement, asking the servants to fetch chairs and carpets, to the gardener for flowers and us girls to sing a song of *āgomoni* (*Ma Durga* welcome song). Sri Ma sat down in one of the chairs. Sri Ma said to my father with a smile, "See, I have come to your house un-invited." Billoji went inside, picked up my brother, brought him out and put him on a chair in front of Her. Obeying my mother he managed to gasp few lines of the song. Sri Ma smiled at him and taking a garland from Her own neck put it around his. When Sri Ma departed the doctor on examination was surprised to find no sign of any ailment. My mother was convinced that Bindu had recovered due to Sri Ma's grace. From henceforth my father visited the *dharamshala* and also took *Mataji* and *Pitaji* for drives to the public gardens and several temples in the town.

Bholanthji or *Pitaji* was tall and handsome with flowing hair and beard flecked with shining grey. He had an outgoing personality and easily communicated with all. *Pitaji* was always at the centre of the *kirtan* and sometimes Sri Ma joined him for short spells. *Pitaji* discovered early that Bindu could sing beautifully and would sometimes hoist him over His shoulders and ask him to lead the *kirtan*. On one of the visits, Sri Ma said to Bindu, "Will you sing for me every day?" Bindu exclaimed, "But you are going away!" Sri Ma then said, "Give me a time. If you sing at that time every day, I shall hear your song from where ever I am. If you cannot sing a whole song, sing one line or just make a sound, any sound, I shall hear you."

I came to know Sri Ma's principal devotee Bhaiji, when one day Sri Ma asked me to fetch him from where he was standing near the *Shiva* temple. I approached him and said, "Ma wants you." He came at once, knelt in front of Sri Ma and talked for some time. When he was about to leave, Maharatanji pleaded him to sing his special song to Ma, i.e., '*Jaya Hridayavasini*'. Bhaiji reluctantly sang the first four lines and then excused himself and left the hall. While leaving he backed away from Sri Ma as people do in temples. On the third visit of my parents, Bhaiji talked at length with them. He had said, "In the nature of things we can have only vague ideas about the Supreme Deity who shapes our destinies. I believe that Sri Ma is the manifest form of this all-pervasive un-manifest presence, which we worship as the Ultimate Being. One who is the ultimate power that creates, sustains and annihilates, the *Ādya-shakti* (primordial energy) without which nothing can stir. To be attuned to the cosmic rhythm of this vibrant creation and its equally tranquil process of withdrawal is to penetrate the mystery of life. Sri Ma is the key to this ebb and flow of

ānanda, which lies at the heart of creation. She is *Anandamayī*, the personification of the Good and Blissful and who by Her very presence awakens the aspiration for Supreme felicity, which lies dormant in every human heart.”

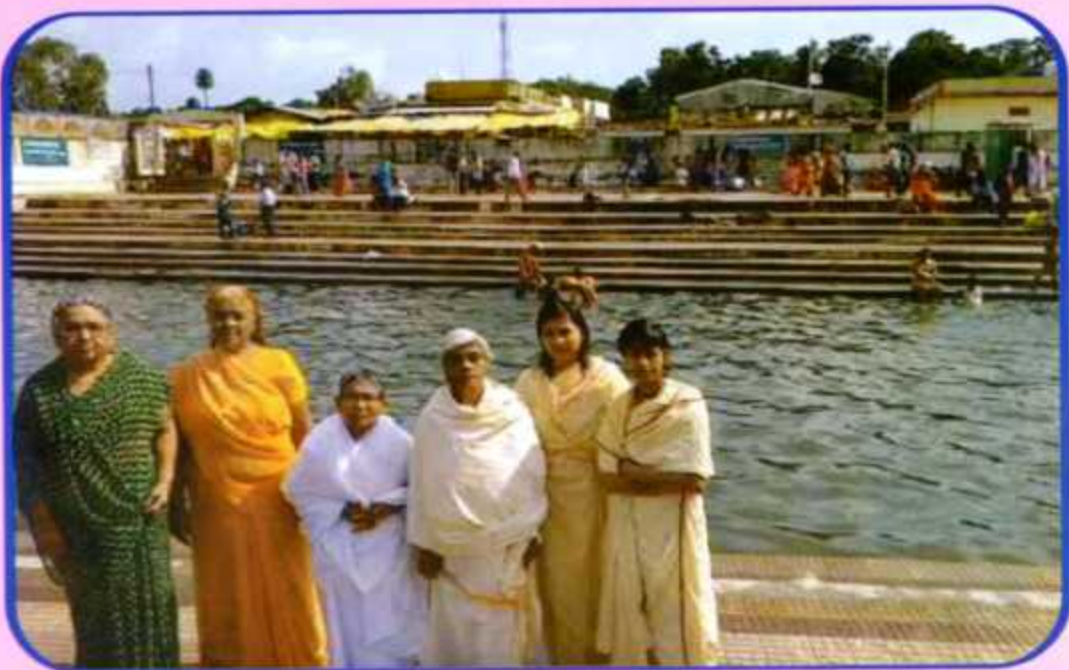
Sri Ma’s personality was self-authenticating; even if She did not speak a word, Her majestic aura was awe-inspiring. In busy crowded places, on station platforms, Her white clad figure drew attention. When confronted by Her, palms naturally came together in respect and heads were bowed in salutation. She had no wishes or desire or will, Her action or words were the outcome of a spontaneous *kheyāl* (a sudden whim). The best way to understand Sri Ma’s *kheyāl* was to see it as arising out of the needs and necessities of people surrounding Her or situations which took shape around Her, although it could not always be related to Her immediate vicinity or to a specific time.

The journey toward an understanding of this *kheyāl* however, had just started for us. A new chapter had begun. Life was never the same again.

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“Mind’s nature is to imagine a vision of multiplicity and loves to play with it, though in reality, One only exists. Multiplicity, there is none. If that One can be realized in his heart of hearts, deeply engrossed in Him, he always sees Him everywhere; then the fictitious magic of multiplicity fails to fascinate or digress him.”

- Ma Anandamayee



Bank of Narmada



After taking bath sitting on ghat



Kumari Puja – Amarkantak



The beauty of Sunrise



The Cow's



The Cow's



Goshala



The beauty of Sunrise