

Ananda

Newsletter of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha
Issue No 27 – September 2022
Contents – Second part of October 2020 Amrita Varta



Sound file:

<http://www.anandamayi.org/mmedia/mp3/WAGopalgovinda.mp3> Sri Ma sings Gopal Govinda at Calcutta in 1963

Text file:

<http://www.anandamayi.org/new/Vol27No3-1> Sri Ma's words from Matri Satsang by Sw Bhagavatananda in Ananda Varta Vol 27, No 3.

Video file:

Sri Ma talks at the Samyam Saptah at Naimisharanya, Part 2. <https://youtu.be/WitcptJ6c-U> Sri Ma responds in an enlightening way to comments spoken on behalf of many vratis at the retreat.

Vedas and Upanishads

Sri Chinmoy

The Vedas are a vast body of Sanskrit poetry, ritual treatises, dialogues and philosophical discourses, which are the oldest surviving literature of India, and among the oldest literature of the world. It was composed by inspired 'seers' or *rishis*. It is considered to have no date or human author, since the *rishis* did not invent but 'saw' eternal truths during experiences of enlightenment, which they transmitted in the form of sacred speech.

The Vedic seers saw the Truth with their souls, in their heavenly visions and in their earthly actions. Their prophecies were based on their full and conscious awareness of direct and immediate Truth. Hence the Vedas have the eternal wisdom. The Vedic *mantras* or incantations, helps us to develop boundless will-power. With this will-power we can transform and illuminate our body.

The central religious practise during the Vedic period was the *yagna*, in which *Agni*, the fire-god, was the intermediary between the humans and the gods (the great spiritual forces of the cosmos). *Agni* represents the sun, the lightening, the various energies of the nature, the Light from the abyss of the Unmanifest at the beginning of the creation. *Agni* is also the aspiration within the human heart, the inner cry to transcend ourselves. Seated before this ceremonial fire, the Vedic seeker contemplated on the divine to open within him the world of the gods. In this way the seer-poets asked and answered the ultimate questions of life: What is the source of everything that we observe and know? What is the secret behind it? What is the basic pattern? Who and what am I?

These aspirations drew the Vedic sages to deep meditation on 'The One', the Supreme *Brahman*. The teachings of these ancient seers, emerging from spiritual realization are most succinctly expressed in the Upanishads, the final part of the Vedas. Their essential teaching of the Upanishads is that the innermost self or soul or *ātma* of every living

being is one with the Divine. This realization of 'Oneness' is the root of the universal love for all beings. It is reached by the practise of contemplative disciplines called *yoga* or 'union'. The aim of the *yoga* of the Upanishads is a total self-transformation culminating in God-knowledge and God-union.

There are four Vedas: Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. At present there are thirteen principal Upanishads: Īśā, Katha, Kena, Praśna, Mundaka, Māndūkya, Chāndogya, Brhadāranyaka, Taittīrya, Aitareya, Śvetāśvatara, Kaivalya and Maitrī. The Vedas represent the cow and the Upanishads the milk. The Upanishads are also called the Vedānta, i.e., the end of the Vedas, the cream, the pick of the inner lore, the aim, the goal of the inner life. Like oil in the sesame seed, Vedānta is established essentially in every part of the Vedas.

The Upanishads tell us that there are two types of *gyān* or *vidyā* or knowledge. *Paravidyā* the higher knowledge, which is the discovery of the soul, and *Aparavidyā* the lower knowledge, which is the fulfillment of the body's countless demands.

The Upanishads offer us three main teachings. The first teaching is *Brahma*. *Brahma* is God, when we meditate on Him, our life grows into immortalizing Bliss. The second lesson is *Ātma*, which is the soul. When we meditate on the soul, our life becomes a conscious and speedy evolution. The third teaching is *Jagat*, i.e. the world. When we do not neglect the world, our life becomes fulfilling manifestation. If the Upanishads are studied with the mind's clarity, then you will see that God and you, you and God, are eternal. If studied with the heart's receptivity, you will see that God and you are equal. If studied with the soul's light, you will realize that there in Heaven you are the realized and esoteric God, and here on earth you are the manifested and exoteric God.

Just as we have the heart, the mind, the vital, the body and the soul, so also the Upanishads have the same. The heart of the Upanishads is self-realization, the mind is self-revelation, the vital is self-manifestation, the body is self-transformation and the soul of the Upanishads is self-perfection. Of paramount importance is self-realization. For self-realization we need four things. First, the help of the scriptures; second, a spiritual

guide; third, yogic disciplines; and finally the grace of God. The scriptures tell the seeker, "Awake, arise! It is high time for you to get up! Sleep no more!" The spiritual Master tells the seeker, "My child, run! I am inspiring you. I have already kindled the flame of aspiration within you. Yogic disciplines tell the seeker, "You are practising the spiritual life, and I am giving you the result of your practice. Then something more is required and that is God's grace. In spite of the three helps above, because very often the human beings get tired and do not reach the goal, they are totally exhausted. At that time what is required is God's grace. Without God's grace one cannot complete the journey.

Actually, God's grace starts right from the beginning. When we study the scriptures, God's grace has already dawned on us. Because, without His grace we could not have stepped onto the spiritual path; or could not have found our spiritual Master. It is out of His infinite bounty that God brings a seeker to the Master. The Master will bring down God's Compassion, and the seeker practices the spiritual disciplines. His task is to aspire.

(to be continued)

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Required

A translator keen in spirituality and adept in translating Hindi and Bengali books on religious dialogues into English.

Editor: Brahmacharini Dr. Geeta Banerjee
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Reminiscence of Gopalpriya-di

Shashank Kumar Haldar

(continued from before)

Gopalpriya-di continued: "In Ma's presence, there were regular functions and festivals with crowds of devotees all around. During one such function a devotee offered a huge box of *sandesh* (sweets made of milk), which Ma gave to me and said, 'Gopalpriya, go and distribute these sweets (*sandesh bete dao*) to everybody.' (*Bete dao* in Bengali also means 'to make a paste'). I took the box to the kitchen and looked around for the stone paste maker to pound the sweets. All of a sudden an elderly sister saw me in the kitchen searching for something and asked, 'What are you doing here?'. I replied, 'Ma has asked me to make a paste of these sweets and hence I am looking for the stone paste maker.' The elderly sister started laughing and finally explained that, Ma actually meant that she should distribute the sweets among the devotees. I was completely ashamed and thought that if Ma gets to know of this incident then I will be sent back home today itself, intimating that nothing can be done of me."

"One day all of a sudden Ma informed that She would go on *agyātvās* (unknown destination). And only Gopalpriya would accompany for Ma's *sevā* (for taking care of Ma). Till now I had not served Ma in any way, neither along with somebody nor alone. Actually Ma was taken care of mainly by Gurupriya-Didi and occasionally other elder sisters also took care of Ma. This time I alone would be going with Ma, and I had no idea how to take care of Ma. It was completely new to me. If something goes wrong, if Ma is disturbed with my hospitality, what will I do? So I strongly protested. When my protests were informed to Ma, Ma asserted 'No, only Gopalpriya will go'. The other elder Sisters boosted me by saying that, 'it is truly fortunate to be able to serve Ma. There is a lot fun and learning in taking care of Ma'. But my doubts would not subside. So I went to take the advice of Swami Paramanandji and informed him of my

dilemma. He consoled me saying, 'Gopal (he called me by this name), do not worry, Ma Herself will get Her *sevā* (caring) done (by you)'."

"From Varanasi we went to Vindiyachal Ashram for Ma's *agyātvās*. Ma slowly slowly trained me in taking care of Her. I also had to read out the letters sent to Ma by the devotees. Ma used to dictate the replies to these letters which I had to write down and post them to the devotees. Some difficulty occurred when Ma used to be in *maun* (in total silence). Ma used to move Her hands in the air and intimate Her answers. Observing those movements I used to write down and then read it out to Ma. In this manner, I was understanding Ma's replies written in the air. Chitra-di and Pushpa-di also used to write replies given by Ma in this manner. Since I had arrived from Kolkata, my bengali dialect was slightly different. Just as for '*kono*', Ma used to say '*kun*'. I was getting used to all these, hence there was no inconvenience."

"Once in the Varanasi Ashram, an elderly Sister was writing Ma's replies in this manner. When Ma pronounced '*kun*' for '*kono*', she and her companion started laughing. Standing behind Ma, I felt quite uncomfortable on seeing them laughing. Ma suddenly said, 'I am not educated, Gopalpriya is also not educated. Hence there is a good bonding between us. From henceforth replies to the letters will only be written by Gopalpriya. I blurted out, 'But Ma...'. The Sisters started crying. But Ma just did not change Her verdict. As if Ma wanted to give this message to Her exclusive devotees that, it is an extreme offence to joke or make fun of anything related to God."

"Well I am still deputed in Ma's *sevā*. I observed that Ma very fondly made use of *Neem* (margosa) leaves. Ma used to eat the paste of raw leaves, the juice of the leaves, the leaves fried in *ghee*, and also bathed in water having *Neem* leaves soaked in it. Many a time in the evening, I used to boil the plucked leaves, strain them out and after mixing the leaf extract in a bucket of water kept the bucket on the terrace, covered with a cloth. And then, bathed Ma the next morning with that water. One day, while preparing Ma's water for the bath, Ma said that She would not bathe. She did not bathe the next day too. When this process continued for the next 5-6 days, I completely broke down. I was sure there was some fault from my side in preparing the bathing water. I informed Udasji

about my depressed situation, saying that maybe because of my offence, Ma wants to be bathed by somebody else. When Udasji informed Ma about this predicament, Ma called me the next day and said, 'Look at me'. I observed that Ma's face and eyes were absolutely fresh just as it appears after a bath. Ma said, 'Touch my hairs'. I hesitated, so Ma again said, 'See, see'. I touched Her hair, it was wet. I then shrieked out, 'Ma you surely must have got bathed by somebody else. Please tell me my fault'. Ma said, 'Nothing of that kind, they persuaded me a lot, so I could not deny them'. Here 'they' means those pure and subtle souls who came near Ma and served Her too."

"Occasionally I had served food to Ma, but Ma would not eat anything. On persuasion instead of eating Ma finally said, 'They arrived and fed me forcefully so much that my stomach is full'. Ma then belched indicating Her full stomach. Even mentioned all the items that were fed. Like, a curry of potato and *potol* (pointed gourd), etc."

"Once I arrived at Vrindavan Ashram for some function. We were not accommodated with the Ashram girls, but were lodged in an another room. Whenever Ma summoned me, I used to go and meet Ma in the Matri-nivas. I had brought along my *Thakurji* (Lord Krishna). While taking care of Him, a small portion near the hand got splintered out. I burst out crying and immediately carrying Him ran towards Ma's closed door. Buni-di was standing outside Ma's door. She informed that Ma was taking a rest and hence I cannot go in. Crying I kept muttering, 'Buni-di, please open the door, my *Thakurji*'s hand has broken. I want to have *darshan* of Ma'. Buni-di would just not open the door, but compassionate Ma truly heard my plea and informed Buni-di to let me enter and meet Ma. Seeing me, Ma asked, 'What has happened?'. I said, 'Ma, my *Thakurji*'s hand has broken, what should I do now?'. Ma took *Thakurji* on Her lap, observed Him and said, 'Let's see what can be done'. There were a few fine cloths besides Ma's pillow. She tore the cloth and made narrow narrow bandages out of it. Then slowly and softly bandaged that broken part. Everything was done inside the mosquito net. We all watched from outside. Finally Ma said, 'Go, keep Him carefully. Lets see what happens. I returned back to my room. After that I handled Him very carefully. Thought *Thakur* would not be able to eat on His own, so I fed Him myself with small pieces of *chappati*

(hand made bread). Chitra-di observed me from outside my door and later gossiped and laughed at my foolishness. And finally informed Ma too, 'Ma, Gopalpriya was feeding her *Thakur* with *chappatis* with her own hand'. Compassionate Ma said, 'This is actually perfect. *Thakur* should be served and worshipped in this manner only'. This is my Omniscient Ma Anandamayee."

"My *Thakur*'s name is 'Shantinath'. There is a history behind this name. My eldest *Jamai-babu* (my *Didi*'s (eldest sister) husband), who was a staunch devotee of Ma and had brought me to Ma's shelter, died suddenly of cerebral attack. My *Didi* then only 36, having young kids, was completely demoralized with anguish. Suddenly Ma informed me to go with my *Thakur* and stay with my *Didi*. Hence I went to her house at Mednipoore. Having my *Thakur* in her house, she suddenly calmed down. One day *Thakur*'s crown and flute fell down due to a gust of wind, and she then said, 'See your *Gopal* has thrown away his crown and flute, he wants a golden crown and flute from me'. *Didi* got the same made for *Thakur*. In this manner gradually her pain of *Jamai-babu*'s absence reduced. She seemed to be recovering and gaining some peace of mind too. Hence *Didi* and my other brothers coined the name 'Shantinath' for my *Thakur*. All my family members called my *Thakur* as Shantinath."

"Time passed by. I went back to the Ashram and joyously travelled with Ma and my *Thakur* to Ma's other Ashrams. One day I expressed my wish to Ma, 'Ma, *Thakur* needs a *Radha*, He is not happy without *Radha*'. Hearing this Ma replied, '*Gopal* is now young, *Radha* will arrive after He grows up'. Later Ma brought for me a grown up *Shantinath-Radha* couple, and said, 'Now the earlier *Gopal* has to be immersed'. Hearing this I burst into tears. How is this possible! My companion for such a long time, how can I immerse Him? It is not proper. But *Thakur* had to be immersed as Ma had made all the arrangements. The water from Yamuna river was kept in a wide bowl. Ma instructed *Nirvan-da* how the whole process of inauguration had to be conducted, from the old *Gopal* to the new *Shantinath-Radha* couple. I was just not able to console myself of abandoning my *Thakur Gopal* whom I had worshipped for so long, I continued crying. Ma in the meantime, slowly slowly started removing the bandage from *Thakur*'s

broken hand and said, 'Is it proper, is it good to cry so much?' On removing the bandage it was observed that there were no cuts in the hand, it had vanished and had completely joined as new. Ma then said, 'Now he cannot be immersed. Both will stay'. I was full of joy, having both *Gopal* and *Radha-Krishna*, i.e. *Radha* and both the *Shantinaths*."

"Several days later due to my negligence the foot of my *Gopal* broke down. Now I cannot keep Him at all. Besides I had become quite pacified and used to both of them. On Ma's instructions *Gopal* was immersed in the River Ganga. I too passed away my time peacefully in *Matri-seva* with the elder *Shantinath-Radha* couplet."

"Being single-mindedly immersed in *sāadhan-bhajan-sevā* (spiritual practices along with serving others), and observing the faint smile on Ma's joyful face, I used to understand that everything is normal. Ma's facial gesture used to change even for a slight wrong action. I have seen Ma's facial gesture changing when somebody's thought and action turned towards gossiping on others attitude, dresses, hair-style etc. Earlier I had a desire to remain unmarried and spend all the time with my *Thakur*. But after coming near Ma, it is now very difficult to stay without Ma. Now with *Thakur* with me, I have a constant urge, to stay near Ma and serve Ma. Initially Ma wanted me to get absorbed in studies in the Kanyapeeth, but I objected saying that I did not like to study; I would be happy doing Ma's *seva*. But later on, Ma did not persuade me again."

"Once while staying in the Varanasi Ashram, Ma observed that a few brahmacharini's hairs had grown a bit longer than that was permitted. Ma notified this to Gurupriya-Didi. Didi immediately came to action and got the hairs of all the brahmacharini's cut properly. Ma then informed us that the beauty of the hairs also sometimes attracted others and this attractive force created obstacles in the path of *sādhana*. When the brahmacharini's came to pay their obeisance after their hair-cut and bath, Ma looked at them and then sharply at me, but did not say anything. Since arriving here from Calcutta I had not cut my hair, it was long as before. Although I had asked several elders about it, and all had replied, 'Since Ma has not said anything to you, why bother about it'. But on observing Ma's glance towards myself, I decided to get my hair cut. The next day I got my hair cut by an elder Sister, bathed and then went

to *pranām* Ma. Observing me, Ma laughed aloud. I immediately understood that Ma was happy about it and so I too was happy.”

“On Ma’s instructions six rooms had been built on the first floor of the Kishenpur Ashram for secluded *sāadhan-bhajan*. Six of us stayed here and ate only once a day. On the second floor i.e. the terrace, there were two rooms which Ma had coined as the *Maun-ghar* (room of silence). Occasionally Ma used to instruct me to stay in those rooms. Coming out of the room was completely banned. Watching the sun was also not allowed. Daily morning milk and fruits were kept outside the room for my morning meals. Only once in the evening I cooked *chappati* and vegetable-curry for dinner. I stayed like this for almost a month. Once, without hearing any sound from the rooms below, I had gone downstairs to check and had found that Ma had left alongwith everyone to Haridwar. On Ma’s return, Ma called me downstairs and lovingly said, ‘How comfortable you are. Your facial appearance is also quite good. Stay like this for few more days’. Hence I continued my stay in that room. On one hand I felt sad of not being able to have Ma’s *darshan*, and on the other hand felt a joy that with Ma’s grace I was able to properly obey Ma’s instructions.”

“On one occasion while I was in the *Maun-ghar*, Ma instructed me to come down daily at the stipulated time and attend the evening *satsang* in Ma’s presence. It was a great joy for me to regularly have Ma’s *darshan*. One day for some reason I got a bit delayed and hence decided to enter the *satsang* hall from the back door, because on entering through the front door, Ma might see me and enquire about my delay. The moment I entered through the back door, I found Ma right in front of me. Quietly Ma said, ‘The path through which you have come and the back door, never use it again for any work’. I was stunned with my action and foolishness. I had tried to act behind the One whose unfettered observation is always on us. I was completely shattered, bowing down I entered to attend the *satsang*.”

“Once Ma was again leaving Kalyanvan, to visit another Ashram, advising me to stay back in the *Maun-ghar*. While doing *pranām* to Ma, I started crying due to the grief of separation. Only Gurupriya-Didi was in the room. Ma said to Didi, ‘See, see, how she is crying like a

familial person'. Didi, favoring my distress, said, 'Ma she is crying for you'. Ma replied, 'She is crying because this body will go away. This body only, is Ma?'. Didi quietly said to me, 'Gopalpriya, Ma is demanding a lot from you, hence gracefully has instructed you to stay in the *Maun-ghar*, consider this as Ma's infinite compassion'. Silently doing *pranaam* to Ma, I returned back to the *Maun-ghar* with a mixed feeling of joy and sadness. In this manner on Ma's instruction, on several occasions, I have spent several days in that *Maun-ghar*. Since Ma had prepared me in this manner that I could stay here in Vrindavan Ashram for so many years, even after Ma's physical absence."

(to be continued)

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List of Festivals

1. Ras Purnima	November 30, 2020.
2. Geeta Jayanti	December 23-26, 2020.
3. Makar Sankranti	January 14, 2021.
4. Shree Shree Saraswati Puja	February 16, 2021.
5. Maghi Poornima	February 26, 2021.
6. Maha Shivratri	March 11, 2021.
7. Holika Dahan	March 27, 2021.
8. Holi	March 28, 2021.

Gurupriya Didi's treasure trove

Brahmacharini Guneeta

Respected Gurupriya Didi has gifted a priceless treasure for the future generation by documenting Shree Shree Ma's divine *lilas* in her diary printed in several volumes of the book series 'Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee'. Our respected Gurupriya Didi will always be cherished by the devotees of Shree Shree Ma and all other devotees. Before reopening another article from her diaries we bow and convey our heartiest *pranām* at her holy feet.

I present here again few more incidents from this book series for the ardent devotees of Ma. Gurupriya Didi writes:

(1) Shree Shree Ma at Vrindavan.

22nd Phālgun 1356 Monday (6th March 1950). While conversing with Gangadidi Ma suddenly said, "Sitting near this body and participating in *satsang* and gossiping with other women folk of the family, both are the same. Everything is the same for this body. These people are asking so many questions and they are getting so many varieties of answers; explaining in detail when questions are asked on the construction of the Ashram; intimating small small details when questions are asked during a function. Again explaining in detail, when questions are asked on some disease. Spiritual dialogues are also expressed in that manner. All these topics are the same for this body, there is no difference at all. It has also happened that, all worldly topics, family matters seemed like poison. Nowadays too, similar emotions are arising.

Few days later in the afternoon putting Ma to rest in Her room I shut the door from outside. Going inside again after sometime, Ma said, "There is no feeling of sleep. And the ears seem to be bursting with the sounds of *mridang-kartāl*. Several people have surrounded this body and are chanting *kirtan*. They are singing: *aao digambar arun shikar; aao, aao, aao he*. The chants are still being heard." So saying Ma started singing the song in the tune it is being sung. After sometime asked, "What is the meaning of *arun*? What is the meaning of *shikar*?" Then

started reciting a self made poem: "*Bajiche shingaa vipul ninaade, tobo aagomon toren he*" meaning '*Singa is being played with a huge noise, on your arrival*'. Later recited in a melodious voice, "They are singing keeping this body in the centre, as if this body is Lord Shiva." So saying Ma expressed an emotion, as if this is unbelievable.

Later Ma looking at me, softly said, "What to say, the installation of Lord Shiva by you all, and what else, is being seen. Maybe it is that only." After hearing Ma's words I suddenly remembered; of course, on the forthcoming 7th of *Baishakh* on the *Akshay Trithiya* day, Lord Shiva is to be installed in our Kashi Ashram. During the construction of the Kashi Ashram the two *Shivlings* that had been obtained from the excavated debris have to be installed soon. Now Ma's visions have become quite clear to me.

(2) Shree Shree Ma at Etawah

26th *Phālgun* 1356 Friday (10th March 1950). Today from Vrindavan Ma departed for Vindhyachal via Etawah. The train reached Etawah station at twelve midnight. As I looked out of the window, saw Jaynarayanbhai with quite a lot of devotees waiting in the station for Ma's *darshan*. Whenever Ma crosses Etawah station, he arrives at the station along with a group of people, with some *bhog* for Ma and lots of foodstuff for devotees accompanying Ma. Even if Ma's train crosses Etawah station at late nights, Jaynarayanbhai and his group of devotees are always present at the station in this manner. The devotees of Etawah truly respect him and call him '*Dada*'. He is deeply devoted to Ma. He feels gratified to bring people to have Ma's *darshan*.

(3) Shree Shree Ma at Delhi

31st *Shrāvon* 1357 Wednesday (16th August 1950). Today on Birlaji's request Narayandasji took Ma to Birla Mandir. Quite a huge crowd had gathered to have Ma's *darshan*. On their request Ma sang God's 'name'. During the *satsang* someone asked Ma, "How can the mind be diverted towards God?"

Shree Shree Ma replied, "All actions in one's life should be dedicated to Him. Everything, including eating, walking, seeing, hearing, and speaking. Dedicate everything that is being done by the body, which is an instrument in His hand. Maintain this attitude from the moment you

get up till you fall asleep. After this, contemplating on His lotus feet, while meditating or doing *japa*, imagining your head on His lotus feet, with total dedication, fall asleep. While maintaining this attitude, gradually this feeling will arise that greed-anger etc., are immoral, how can these be offered to Him? He is so much my own loved one. Can anything immoral be offered to my beloved? Contemplating in this manner, we become indisposed to act in these immoral manners. After that, pour out all your energy at His holy feet, nothing should remain with you. Do you know what He does in this pious moment? He will fulfill your scarcity. At that moment there will be nothing to ask or receive. The auspicious moment when you become fulfilled, at that moment, eternally One who is revealed as the infinitely perfect, He will be revealed. I am my own, whatever I have, to offer that means, to realize oneself."

(4) Shree Shree Ma at Etawah

27th Bhādro 1357 Tuesday (12th September 1950). Yesterday, on the sincere request of *Dada* Jaynarayandasji Ma departed from Kashi and reached Etawah today. Numerous devotees, both men and women, had arrived at the Etawah station to welcome Ma. From there Ma was taken to the local *Shiv Mandir*. In the meantime observed that, several devotees have arrived from Delhi too.

31st Bhādro 1357 Sunday (16th September 1950). From yesterday evening *Nām-kirtan* was started by the local devotees with great zeal and devotion. It continued for the whole night. Today early morning the devotees of Delhi took up the *kirtan* which finally concluded in the evening. Just after that Ma was taken out in a procession for *nagar-kirtan*. Ma was seated in a decorated Landau carriage. The Swamiji of the temple was also with Ma. There was such a huge crowd in the procession that I initially just could not guess that Ma's Landau was being pulled by the excited devotees instead of horses. The carriage was often stopped in front of various houses and the residents were offering garlands and fruits and performing *arti* to Ma. After circumambulating the city, few hours later the devotees returned back with Ma to the temple.

1st Ashwin 1357 Monday (17th September 1950). After the culmination of *Nām-kirtan* yesterday, the devotees in continuity had started *Nām-jap*. The men started first and then from midnight the ladies took over, which also culminated today evening.

Around fourteen-fifteen years ago, when Ma had arrived here in Etawah alone with Virajmohinididi, then Ma had first stayed on the banks of the River Yamuna. The owner of this temple Haribabu had brought Ma here to this temple. Hearing this I laughingly said, 'Okay, you had already arrived here earlier and fixed the place. And eventually you have arrived here again.' The devotees took around Ma to all the important places of Etawah and Ma was given special reverence by one and all. While going to the old *Shiv Mandir* on the bank of River Yamuna, Ma laughingly said, "Oh yes, I had told the *Shivji* of this temple (14-15 years ago) to call me again. Hence have arrived here again." So saying Ma lovingly caressed Her hands on the face of the idols of *Shiv-Parvati*. The accompanying devotees exclaimed, "Ma, repeat the same request again to *Shivji*."

(Taken from "Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee" (Hindi-Vol-13), (Bengali-Vol-10))

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New publication

(1) *SantānVatsalā - Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee* (in Hindi)

Author: Swami Narayananand Tirth.

(translated into Hindi by Brahmacharini Guneeta)

Price: Rs.275.00

To be ready for dispatch within a few weeks.

(1) *Shree Shree Anandamayee Prasanga* – Volume 7 (in Hindi)

Author: Dr. Amulya Kumar DuttaGupta. (M.A., B.L.)

(translated into Hindi by Brahmacharini Guneeta)

Retired Professor, Department of Law, Dhaka University.

(2) *Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee* – Volume 18 (in Bengali)

Author: Gurupriya Devi

Shabda and Mantra

Dr. Udoyan Banerji

Shabda

Shabda (sound) occupies a very important place in *Sanātan Dharma* (Vedic Hinduism). Understanding and realization of *Shabda* is said to be the goal of life itself. The Amrita Bindu Upanishad proclaims that: Two *vidyas* (sciences) are fit to be known *Shabda Brahma* and *Para Brahma*. One who has completely mastered *Shabda Brahma* attains *Para Brahma*. Also it is noted by Lakshmaṇa Deshikendra in *Shārada Tilaka Tantra* that the essence of all beings is itself the *Shabda Brahma*. *Chaitanya* in all beings is *Shabda Brahma*. Thus, the above statements from Hindu scriptures indicate that *shabda* is an integral part of our life. In Vedic literature, it is mentioned that *Shabda Brahma* is omnipresent through the sound of *Om*.

The modern scientific enquiry of sound which is also termed as acoustics has shown that sound plays an essential role virtually in all aspects such as earth sciences, engineering, life sciences and arts. Sound in modern scientific view refers to the audible range, with infra and ultra sound covering the inaudible molecular vibrations of the medium. Similarly, in Hindu scriptures, *shabda* originating from the vibratory cause is termed as *āhat shabda*. It also refers to the self-sustaining sound, without vibratory cause, termed as *anāhat shabda* which is experienced only in higher (deeper) states of yoga. Thus it is seen that *shabda* (sound) encompasses the life itself.

It is interesting to learn that the formation of the universe out of chaos is brought about by sound. Certain sounds produce certain sets of vibrations in the ether. Some of these are of such low frequency that they form particles of what we call matter. The clairvoyant primitive people actually saw the shapes produced by various sounds in the ether. They represented these shapes as the letters of their alphabets. So most of the words and sounds of the early languages actually controlled and represented that which they expressed. Throughout history we learn of the deliberate and effective use of sound. Priests have always employed

it creating certain definite reactions on the people by the use of chanting and intoning. In the ancient magical rites words, sounds and shapes were combined to gain certain ends. Sound is therefore eternal and that it is the matrix of all creation. The science of sound holds the key to the mysteries of the universe. Even thought is a sound and sound is the cause not the effect of vibration. There can be sound without vibration. Yoga has developed the theory of static sound; in developing this theory it says that there is no vacuum in this universe. Sound changes its property according to pitch, rhythm, volume, speed, frequency, harmony, intonation and utterance. The sound energy has to be organized and channeled in particular way to produce particular results. *Mantra*-yoga is an attempt to organize and channelize sound energy to produce particular results.

Mantra

According to Vedic texts, the Sanskrit word *Mantra* consists of the root 'man' (to think) (also in 'manas' which means mind) and the suffix 'tra' meaning, tool, hence a literal translation would be 'instrument of thought'. Another explanation is that the suffix 'tra' means 'protection'. *Mantra* in its most literal sense means 'to free from the mind'. *Mantra* is therefore that which protects one from aberration. According to *Vishnupurāṇa*, it is said that in *Satyayuga* (The Golden Age), spiritual illumination is attained through meditation and in *Dwāparayuga* (Brazen Age) through worship. But in *Kaliyuga* (Iron Age), Mahābhārata declares that *Mantra japa* is the best amongst all spiritual practices. *Mantra* is, at its core, a tool used by the mind which eventually frees one from the vagaries of the mind and instills one-pointed concentration.

In the strictest sense, a *Mantra* is a pure sound vibration which delivers the mind from its material inclinations and illusion. Chanting of *Mantras* is one of the best spiritual *sādhana*.

A *Mantra* (or *Mantram*) is a religious or mystical syllable that has been used since the Vedic ages as spiritual conduits, words or vibrations that instill one-pointed concentration in the devotee. This has endeared its utility in realization of the universal consciousness which has manifested in the form of sound. This is more so emphasized in the Bhagvad Gīta. *Mantras* are syllables that produce specific resonance and vibrations with a specific spiritual intent and modulate the flow of prāṇ, thereby

restraining the mind and senses from their sense objects and indrawing them into subtler aspects of their conscious states. By making use of these resonances, one can move to subtler layers of consciousness, stilling the manifestation of the consciousness, until one attains self realization or bliss.

One such *Mantra* that has been known to reduce fear of death is the *Mahāmrityunjaya Mantra*. The general meaning of the *mantra* is: *tri-ambaka-m* ('the three-eyed-one'); *yajā-mahe* ('we praise'); *sugandhi-m* ('the fragrant'); *pusti-varḍhana-m* ('the prosperity-increaser'); *urvāruka-m* ('disease, attachment, obstacles in life, and resulting depression'); *iva* ('like'); *bandhanāt* ('from attachment like the stem of the gourd, but more generally, unhealthy attachment') *mrtyor* ('from death'); *mukṣīya* ('may you liberate'); *mā* ('not'); *amrtāt* ('from immortality').

"We worship and adore you, O three-eyed one, O Shiva. You are sweet gladness, the fragrance of life, which nourishes us, restores our health, and causes us to thrive. As, in due time, the stem of the cucumber weakens, and the gourd is freed from the vine, so free us from attachment and death, and do not withhold immortality."

Another important *Mantra* that addresses the basic principle of human existence is the *Gayatri Mantra*. For ages this *mantra* was a well guarded secret and out of reach even for most Hindus. It is said that if the true meaning of the *mantra* is realized, an individual transcends all boundaries of consciousness and ultimately unites with God Himself. The *Gayatri mantra* reads as: *Om* (Brahma); *Bhur* (embodiment of soul), *Bhuvah* (destroyer of suffering), *Svah* (realization of happiness), *OmTat* (that), *Savitur* (bright like the Sun), *Varenyam* (choicest), *Bhargo* (destroyer of sins), *Devasya* (divine), *Dheemahi* (may imbibe), *Dhiyo* (intellect), *Yonaha* (who), *Naha* (our), *Prachodayat* (may inspire).

"May the divine light of the Supreme Being illuminate our intellect, to lead us along a path of righteousness."

"We meditate on the glory of the Creator, Who has created the Universe, Who is worthy of worship, Who is the embodiment of Knowledge and Light, Who is remover of Sin and Ignorance, may He open our hearts and enlighten our Intellect."

(to be continued)

The Universal Mother Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee

Somesh Ch. Banerji

Ma's visit to Haridwar

Shree Shree Ma's first visit to Haridwar was in 1926-27 to attend the great *Kumbh-Mela*. On the first day of the *Kumbh-shahi-snān* when the *Shobha-yātrā* (pious procession) of *sadhus* and *naga-sadhus* took place, Ma bathed in the *Brahmakund*, the ancient auspicious pond within the River Ganga and met the great *sadhus*, *mahants* and saints who had arrived for that occasion.

Ma's second visit to Haridwar was with Her father in 1929 and the third visit was in 1934, for the *sanyās* ceremony of Gurupriya Didi's father, Shri Sashank Mohan Mukhopadhyay, who was then close to seventy years old. Then Shree Ma had stayed in Kankhal for some weeks. Initially he was not prepared to adopt a different *Guru* detaching himself from Ma, even if it was for *sanyās*. Ma pacified him by saying, 'There is no relationship of *Guru* and *shishya* so far as *sanyās* is concerned, so he should not feel that he is getting a new *Guru*'. Thereafter he took *sanyās* from the reputed Mahant of Nirvani Akhara, Swami MangalanandGiriji, and was given the name 'Swami Akhandananda'. Thereafter, Ma stayed in a hut on the bank of the River Ganga at Rishikesh for about two and a half months.

In 1938, Shree Ma was in Haridwar for a few months during the *Kumbh-Mela*. She then stayed in a new cottage on the banks of the River Ganga, built by Dr. Pant, who was a civil Surgeon and a devotee of Ma. After all the auspicious bathing days were over, Ma returned to Dehradun where Bholanathji breathed his last on sixth of May 1938.

Swami Muktanand Giriji (Didima)

Ma next arrived in Haridwar along with Didima (Ma's mother) in April 1939, after the marriage of her only son Makhan. She was now free from all family responsibilities and wished to spend the rest of her life with Shree Ma only. Ma said to Didima to take *sanyās* if she wanted to

stay with Ma, which is heartily agreed. It was decided to approach and request the aged and reverend Mahant of Nirvani Akhara, Mahamandaleshwar Swami Mangalanand Giriji, who was residing in Kankhal. At first he refused to give *sanyās-dikshā* to a woman, but when he learnt that Didima was the mother of Shree Anandamayee Ma, he immediately agreed. At the dawn of fourteenth April 1939, the auspicious day of *Chaitra-Sankranti*, Didima received the *sanyās-dikshā-mantra*, after performing the *Virajā-hom* (a specific yagna) and was given the monastic name 'Swami Muktananda Giri. Ma had said that Didima was already the very personification of detachment and a real *sanyāsi* at heart. After the ceremony, Swami Mangalanand Giriji said, "Daughter, till today I have never conferred the *sanyās-mantra* to a woman, but I did that today, because you are the mother of Anandamayee Mataji. Not only this, I have given you all that has to be given for this pious *sanyās* transformation." He was full of supreme joy at finding a disciple full of all virtues to hand over whatever spirituality he had. He told Giriji (Didima) not to touch fire, which meant that she cannot cook even food for herself. She was expected to depend upon whatever food would be offered by others. However, on Ma's request he allowed her to cook for Ma only if Ma said so. Giriji had no self-ego. While she was at Dhaka, a devotee was very much astonished seeing the negligence shown towards Giriji when a Brahmachari of the ashram offered her a discarded mango after distributing good mangoes to all others present over there. Giriji tasted a bit of it and gave the rest of it for feeding the cows. When Giriji was asked as to why she refused to accept the rotten mango, she calmly answered that she did not want to hurt that Brahmachari. There are many such incidents, which display the enormous patience and negligible ego within her.

After Bholanathji, passed away, *dikshā* was not given to anybody in the ashram for almost two years. Later, Shree Ma empowered Giriji (Didima) to give *dikshā* to the spiritual seekers. Shree Ma had said that Giriji was born possessed with all the ten great qualities of *Dharma* needed in a *Satguru*, which is indeed rare in a person. These are purity, kindness, compassion, fortitude, forgiveness, self-control, knowledge, truthfulness, deep understanding and lack of anger. Such was her compassion and responsibility for her disciples that would keep awake

for almost full nights and do *japa* on the behalf of those disciples who were unable to continue their spiritual practices regularly. She once remarked, "Till all are liberated, where is liberation for me". Enormous was her feeling for the welfare of the others. Ma had also said that, 'Giriji held the throne of *Jagat-Guru* in the kingdom of spirituality, for which she was totally entitled'. Though her worldly education was negligible, she had enormous spiritual realizations which she never had any interest in using or displaying.

Most of the devotees at that time received *dikshā* from Giriji only. Her first *dikshā* disciple was Brahmachari Hiruda (Swami Tanmayanandaji). Few of the other Ashram Brahmacharis to have been blessed to have *diksha* from Giriji were Swami Chinmayanandji, Swami Prakashanandji, Swami Chaitanyanandji, Swami Swaroopanandji, Swami Keshavanandji, etc. All of them had achieved spiritual advancement to a great extent.

When Giriji was on the tour of South India with her disciple Swami Chinmayanandji, she had visited Pondicherry also. Giriji too like others went to the Ashram of the realized saint Sri Aurobindo to have his *darshan*. While standing in the long queue, Sri Aurobindo noticed her from a distance and enquired as to who she was. When Giriji in her turn arrived in front of Sri Aurobindo, he exclaimed in great delight, 'What a beautiful flower she is!'

Once in Varanasi, Ma was very ill, but had no *kheyal* to cure Herself. Shankar Bharatiji, an eminent *mahatma* of Varanasi was requested to come to the Ashram. When he had arrived, Giriji was sitting near Ma's bed. After meeting Ma when he came out, while pointing at Giriji, he remarked that as long as Giriji was alive, one should not be worried about Ma.

M.M. Gopinath Kaviraj meets Shree Shree Ma

Mahamahopadhyay Gopinath Kaviraj, a great *sadhak* and one of the most respected Indian Scholars visited Shree Ma in September 1928, when Ma had arrived in Varanasi. He was then the Principal of the Govt. College of Sanskrit, which later became the Sampurnanand Sanskrit University. He was a renowned scholar and authority on 'Tantra Shastra'.

Shree Ma was staying in the house of Shri Kunj Mohan Mukhopadhyay, elder uncle of Gurupriya-Didi. Ma was very often in deep *samādhi*.

During such an instance Gopinathji met Ma. He found Ma the very embodiment of all the knowledge sustained in the scriptures. Whenever he met Ma and asked various spiritual and philosophical questions, he felt that Ma fully answered them. He felt that Ma could read the thought behind the question and sensed the precise need of the questioner. The reply was completely adapted to the capacity of the questioner and to the demands of any particular situation.

According to Gopinathji, Ma's identity is beyond ordinary human understanding. Ma Herself is beyond all *bhāvs* (inner feelings) although possessing the *Maha-bhāv* (supreme inner feelings). Ma is the source of infinite types of *bhāvs* in infinite ways. Who is capable of perceiving such *Turiyateet* state of Ma, that is, Ma is beyond the very state of consciousness which is beyond wakefulness, sleep and dream. Whoever tries to see or understand Ma in whatever way, Ma reveals Herself to him in that very way. In order to understand Ma, it is essential to surrender oneself completely at the lotus feet of Ma and concentrate on Ma. It is not possible to understand Ma, by remaining detached from Ma. Gopinathji remained one of the foremost devotees of Shree Ma throughout his life. In the later part of his life, he stayed in Ma's Ashram at Varanasi for about a decade, attained high spiritual level, and left his mortal body in 1977. Ma had said that such a learned man was never again seen in the present era.

Persons arrived to stay in Ma's Ashram

Several people have time and again, after having Ma's *darshan* have stayed back in Ma's Ashram and later have become Brahmachari's, Brahmacharini's and *sadhus*. Some of them even had received *diksha* from other *Gurus*.

Swami Paramanandji, a highly advanced *sadhu* and a learned *Vedanti* (knowledgeable on Vedas) came to stay in Ma's Ashram in Dehradun in 1938. He was the disciple of a realized saint, Brahmyagna Ma of Bengal. Bholanathji brought him near Ma when he was busy in *sadhana* at Uttarkashi and Gangotri for more than a decade. Paramanandji gave word to Bholanathji at that time, that he would serve Ma after completion of his *sadhana*. This word he kept as long as he was alive.

Ever since he came to Ma's Ashram, he remained busy in all sorts of work. He not only was a *sanyāsi* but also an expert cook, a born engineer

and possessed extraordinary organizing capacity. In all the major and large functions like *Janmotsav*, *Shree Durga Puja*, *Bhāgwat-saptah*, *Sanyam-saptah*, etc., Swamiji was invariably the overall in-charge because of his administrative qualities and immense devotion for Ma.

Swami Avdhootji, a great saint of Punjab, was a disciple of the reputed saint *Khanna-Baba*. He was also present in Uttarkashi along with Paramanand Swamiji studying Vedanta from the eminent and aged saint *Devi Giriji Maharaj*, who had a great affection and regard for Ma. Avdhootji once asked Swami Paramanandji why he wished to devote his life in the service of Shree Ma. Swamiji had replied that he saw in Ma all the qualities of a *Sthitaprajña* (having steady and divine consciousness) as described in the *Bhāgwat Gita*.

Once in the presence of Avadhootji, a *sadhu* came near Ma along with his followers and started abusing Ma without any reason. Ma was calm and quiet all throughout and told the angry devotees of the Ashram not to react. Seeing this unusual and rare quality of Ma, Avdhootji himself took refuge in Ma forever and came to Ma regularly. On his inspiration, many other *Mahatmas* and *sadhus* followed him.

Other spiritually inclined people, both men and women, also joined the Ashram to have Ma's company and also to enhance their spiritual progress. Some of them were from well-to-do families too. All of them practiced an ideal religious life and they deserve appreciation for carrying out Ma's instructions. Some of them were political sufferers, who had rebelled against the British rule in India. Once while Ma was staying in Raipur Ashram, one such Bengali young man came to Ma. The Calcutta Police after getting information followed him and arrived at the Raipur Ashram. After showing the photograph of a young man enquired whether such a person was present in the Ashram or no. Ma just instructed the Police officer to investigate himself as all the persons staying in the Ashram were present there. Surprisingly the Police failed to recognize him, although he was sitting near Ma. Thereafter the young man stayed back in the Ashram and later took *sanyās-dikshā* from Giriji and was then known as Swami Chinmayanandji. Similarly, two more young men took refuge under Ma in the Varanasi Ashram and stayed back forever with Ma. They too later took *sanyās-dikshā* from Giriji and were known as Swami Prakashanandji and Swami Swaroopanandji. Kalachand-da, a

political sufferer and associate of Sri Aurobindo, met Ma in Her Ranchi Ashram after passing a long period of solitary confinement in the jail at Andaman Island. He was a disciple of Swami Brahmanandji (a disciple of Thakur Ramkrishna). He attained a high order of spirituality following Ma's guidance and had later opted *sanyās*. Our very own Panu Brahmachari staying and guiding Ma's Varanasi Ashram came to meet Ma for the first time along with his uncle Kalachand-da. And on Ma's request stayed back in the Varanasi Ashram forever.

In this manner several *sadakas* came and joined Ma's Ashram. All of them were blessed with having spiritual advancement. However, Ma says, "Neither anyone is invited here nor anyone is said to leave the Ashram. Who-so-ever have arrived here, have arrived for their own sake and will continue to stay in the Ashram till his fate will permit him. He will then leave giving some reason or the other". Bhaiji used to say, "If anyone gets an opportunity to come to Ma and stays in the Ashram even like a stray dog, he should feel fortunate enough, because he has got this opportunity because of the good deeds of his past births."

(to be continued)

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Shree Shree Ma is the embodied manifestation of all we can possibly conceive of as Divinity or Godhead. Her physical form, actions and playful moods are all supra-natural and extraordinary; if established in this conviction, we realize that in all our action, meditation, and knowledge She is the sole and supreme object of adoration, and we finally focus our concentrated attention on Her Holy Lotus Feet, then we will require no other haven of refuge in our journey of life towards ultimate spiritual enlightenment and emancipation. -Bhaiji

Losing hope is losing all indeed. But has this loss of everything actually occurred? Is not the heart bubbling over with desires and hopes? This is the innate tendency of the individual. Perfect resignation gives deeper joy than anything else. Accept it as your sole refuge. Whatever God does at any time is wholly benign. If you can bear this in mind, you will be at peace.

- Ma Anandamayee

Memorial Tribute Jai Maa!

Editor



Late Swami AmritanandaGiri (SadhuMa)

Swami AmritanandaGiri was born in early hours of 15th March Friday 1935, in Bogura, near Karatoya river in the eastern part of the undivided Bengal (present Bangladesh). As she was born at dawn she was called as 'Aruna'. From there her parents shifted to Rajshahi, near the river Padma. In 1947, during the partition, her parents arrived in India at Chaibhasa, Jharkhand, and in 1950 they settled down in Kapilvastu Road, near Gorakhpur where her father got a job in the LIC. After retirement they settled down in Hararbagh, Sonarpura, Varanasi. In 1967, Aruna-di was married to Shri. Virendra Kumar Chakravorty, a senior LIC officer residing in Shivcharan Lal Road, Allahabad. In 1973, while residing in Allahabad with her husband, Aruna-di had her first darshan of Shree Shree Ma at Shri Gopal Swaroop Pathak's residence in Allahabad. Both of them got initiation from Ma at the KumbhMela, in 1977. When her husband got transferred to Varanasi in 1978, she had her third darshan of Ma during the ongoing *Shree Basanti Puja* in the Varanasi Ashram. From then onwards both she and her husband being ardent devotees of Ma, visited the Ashram quite often and attended every function of the Ashram. They spend their off time, meditating in the Chandi-Mandap of the Ashram. Also during every *Shree Basanti Puja*, from early morning till lunch time, both of them sat there and performed *japa* and *dhyān*.

When her husband passed away in 2002, she left her palatial household in Varanasi and with Br.Panuda's permission took shelter in the 'Sukhdham' of the Ashram to be as near as possible to Ma. After completing the annual death rituals of her husband in 2003, she decided to take *sanyās*. Since she was deeply attached to DidiMa (Ma's mother) too, she decided to get *sanyās mantra* from 1008 Swami Girdhar Narayanpuri (*gurubhai* of DidiMa), Mahantji of Nirvani Akhada, Kankhal. Mahantji initially declined to accept her. SadhuMa then narrated about her *diksha* from Ma and her pious life-style of long hours of *diksha-jap*, meditation, etc., for the last thirty years. Mahantji agreed and in late 2003 gave her *sanyās mantra* and renamed her 'Swami AmritanandaGiri'.

In the Ashram she was called as 'Sadhu-Ma'. She spent most of her time in *japa*, *dhyān* and narrating poems in praise of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee, which has been published in a book form too.

For the last six months Sadhu-Ma was suffering from a fungal infection on her legs, because of which lately, she was admitted in the Anandamayee Hospital. At the dusk of 2nd December 2020, an ardent devotee of Ma Sadhu-Ma, in a peaceful and painless state, departed from this material world to rest forever at the lotus feet of Shree Shree Anandamayee Ma.

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Gayatri japa:

Aum Bhur Bhuvah Svah Tat Savitur Varenyam

Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi hiyo Yo nah Prachodayāt.

Didi writes:

"Ma lays a great deal of stress on *Gayatri japa* for Brahmins. She tells each one to do as much *Gayatri japa* as he possibly can. In Solan, Ma had explained the meaning of the *Gayatri* to me, which I have recorded as follows:"

'He who creates, preserves and destroys, whose form is universal, He Himself inspires our intellect, He Himself is Parabrahma and the Knower within each creature; I meditate on His divine brilliance.'

--- Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee

Memorial Tribute Jai Maa!

Brahmacharini Guneeta



Late Brahmacharini Bani Bhattacharya

Being in the service of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth for almost seventy years, we pay our heartiest condolences to Brahmacharini Bani Bhattacharya, who left her earthly body for an eternal rest at Shree Shree Ma's lotus feet on 28th September, 2020.

She once narrated how Shree Shree Ma had pulled her into Ma's Ashram. She continued:

"I was nineteen years old and the only daughter of my father Shri Kulendra Chandra Bhattacharya, who was a religiously and saintly person. And hence he showered all his love and affection on me and took great care of me too. One month before he departed from this material world, he had gone to Vindychal to have Shree Shree Ma's *darshan* and requested Ma to accept me at Her lotus feet for service in the Ashram. Then father had dropped me at his sister's house (*pishima* - my paternal auntie) in Kolkata. Just after returning from Vindychal father fell ill. During that period I one day asked him, 'Baba, what arrangements have you made for stay?' He replied, 'You will stay with Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee. I have informed Ma about your dilemma.' Seven days after this conversation, father left this mortal world."

"Within six months of this incident I arrived at Kashi to have Ma's *darshan*. The moment Ma saw me, She said, 'Didi, the fair looking *sadhu* who had arrived in Vindychal, she is his daughter.' Ma said this,

even though She was seeing me for the first time. From then onwards I am happily spending my life dedicated at the lotus feet of Ma.”

“Once Ma was in Kashi, and Ma’s *bhog* was being offered in the Kanyapeeth *Puja* room, and I was standing in front of Ma. After the *bhog* Ma placed the *prasād* on a silver plate and instructed me to distribute it to everyone. After distributing it to everyone sitting here and there I kept the plate consisting of some *prasād* in front of the store room and went away to complete other chores. The plate was missing when I returned back after fifteen minutes to collect it. The plate was made of solid silver and hence I was terrified. The elders like *Dadabhai* (Gurupriya-Didi), *Udasji*, *Chandan-di*, *Pushpa-di* and others started scolding me and hence I could not hold my tears and started crying. Though I searched for it everywhere it was not to be found. In fear I did not go near Ma that day. The next day at seven in the morning, I went to Ma’s room in the third floor of the Kanyapeeth building. Ma had a beautiful bun of hair on Her head. An enchanting smile on Her face. Just as I bent down for the *pranām*, Ma asked, ‘The plate could not be found?’ I replied that I could not find it. Ma replied, ‘Someone here only has taken it’. But Ma did not say anything further. Ma is never strict on anyone’s faults. But everyone should conduct their duties with caution and responsibility and there should not be any lapse while doing one’s duties, on that Ma was absolutely strict.”

It was as if God had bestowed an ability of competence in Banidi’s hands. Whatever she did was always perfect and like an expert. Ma had ordered her to stay in the Kanyapeeth and look after all matters concerned with the Kitchen *bhandār* (store room). She used to wake up exactly at four in the morning and after finishing her daily routine of cleaning up, two hours of morning worship, and then having *darshan* of all the temples in the Ashram, she used to enter the *bhandār* exactly at seven. This schedule continued for almost fifty years after which her timings had to change due to her gradual deterioration of her health. Actually right from her young age she had health issues with her digestion. Hence she was very particular with her food and could not eat all normal meals. Most of the time she passed her days with boiled vegetables and rice. Even though she looked after the cooking and also was an efficient in cooking she herself did not eat any of those, such was her restraint.

She was always eager to help and teach the Kanyapeeth children some or the other handicraft. Brahmacharini Bishuddha-di had taught her the art of knitting, which she adeptly and patiently taught the children in every winter, and how beautiful these knitted sweaters used to be, whether for the children or for babies.

The ex-Kanyapeeth brahmacharini's who have married and otherwise too, always remember their dear teacher Bani-di for their efficient cooking. Bani-di has left behind an idealistic way of living. Being very punctual for all duties; restrained meals; young to old, taking care of everyone; whether everyone have had their meals or not; whether proper diet is being taken by all the children and elders; she had an eye for everything.

Bani-di was related to Shree Shree Ma from Vidyakut. Bani-di's name will always remain as an ideal star of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth.



UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay's greetings on Gita Jayanti

Director-General of UNESCO Audrey Azoulay has wished that the story of transmigration of the soul as described in *Bhagwad Gita* brings hope for 2021.

She tweeted on Friday 25th December 2020..

- "This year on Christmas day it is also Gita Jayanti - the day the *Bhagavadgita* was spoken 55 centuries ago. '*The soul is unbreakable and insoluble, and can be neither burned nor dried*'. May the story of the transmigration of the soul bring hope for 2021."

- "Happy Gita Jayanti 2020 and Merry Christmas 2020."

- "*Bhagavadgita* is a literary masterpiece and a wealth of wisdom - it was one of the works translated with the support of UNESCO."

The Ministry of Education also tweeted....

"As Honorable Director-General UNESCO Audrey Azoulay has put the dialogue between *Arjuna & Krishna* very eloquently, let us all welcome 2021 with new hope and love."

The Ministry of Education offered greetings for Gita Jayanti and Christmas and said the dialogue between *Arjuna* and *Krishna* is an inspiration for all.

Celebrated on the '*Shukla Ekadashi*', the eleventh day of the waxing moon of *Margashirsha* month in the Hindu calendar, it is believed that *Lord Krishna* revealed the sacred *Bhagavad Gita* to warrior *Arjuna* on this day in the legendary battlefield of Kurukshetra.

Read more at:

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/may-story-of-transmigration-of-souls-bring-hope-for-2021-unesco-dg-wishes-on-gita-jayanti>



Ashram Varta

Brahmacharini Geeta

In Divine Bliss - *JaiMa*.

The *Sharadiyā Durga Puja*, inspite of the pandemic effect culminated quite peacefully and joyously from 21st to 26th October, in all the Ashram branches where it was held, like Kankhal, Agarpara and Ranchi. *Ghot-Puja* was only held, i.e., the rituals were held only on the pot; unlike on the Idol of Mother Durga, as is the tradition. In Bhopal Ashram too *Ashtabhujā Devi Puja* was held ceremoniously.

The *DurgaPuja* held in the Kankhal Ashram was telecast live through Zoom/Youtube. From Delhi Ashram too, videos of the *Puja* was uploaded in Youtube from time to time. And all devotees who could manage to have *darshan* of these videos were truly jubilant. Even in this crucial period that most of us were able to enjoy our Ashram functions so happily and peacefully maintaining social distancing, sitting in our houses, reminded us all the time of Ma's infinite compassion and grace on us. When the whole world was terrified by the clutches of Covid-19, then too most of the devotees due to Ma's inscrutable *kheyāl* were maintaining their emotions in peace and silent worship. Some of the devotees had also been effected by this dreaded disease, but with Ma's grace, all of them are now hail and healthy. Hence the *Akhand Bhagwat Smriti Japa* had been started and we are sure all devotees are giving their precious time as much as possible in *japa*. Following that *Lakshmi Puja* was also held piously on 30th October, *Kali Puja* on 14th November and *Annakut* on 16th November, with full rituals in our various Ashrams. In Varanasi, *Lakshmi Puja* was held in the *Chandi Mandap*, and *Kali Puja* and *Annakut Puja* in the *Annapurna Mandir* on the first floor. Along with the rituals, heartfelt *kirtan*, *Kumari-puja*, Ma's *bhog* and distribution of *prasād* was also held. Although, the number of devotees attending the functions was scarce everywhere.

The annual *Shree Shree Sanyam Saptāh Māhāvrata* was held in Kankhal Ashram from 22nd to 29th November. Everyone there felt the

presence of Ma, by the manner in which the whole function proceeded healthily and devotedly with the small number of devotees and residents in these seven days. However, the live telecast and videos of the function elated and filled the hearts of all devotees, especially those who attended the *Sanyam* every year and also to those who wanted to attend it this year. The inaugural function was held on 22nd. Brahmacharini Bishudhha-di sang the welcome song composed by Shree Shree Ma. This was followed by a cordial welcome address by the General Secretary of our Sangh, Shri Swapan Ganguly. Then Sw. Shivanandji's explained the rules of the *Sanyam vrat*. Respected *Mahatmas* Swami Parameshwaranandji of Sadhana Sadan and Mahamandaleshwar Swami Vishwanandaji Maharaj blessed the *vrat*is and devotees with their exceptional sermon. Lastly blessings and instructions of Shree Shree Ma, were presented by the President of Anandamayee Sangha, Swami Achyutanandaji. Every morning there was *Ved-pāth* i.e. recitation of the *Vedas* by Pundit Shivpujan Shastriji, followed by '*satyam gyanam*' *kirtan* by Shyamal Brahmachariji. This was followed by *Gita-pāth*, *Chandi-pāth* and finally a discourse on the *Upanishad* by Acharya Shri Divya Chaitanyaji. In the evening after the *Dhyān*, a discourse on *Purān* was given by Acharya Shri Mohan Chaitanyaji. Both of them are *Acharyas* of Sadhana Sadan. In the evenings, Shyamal Brahmachariji also sang '*He Bhagawan*'.

On 29th November, the General Secretary of Divya Jeevan Sangha, Swami Padmanabhanandji Maharaj gave a discourse in the evening from 5pm to 6pm which was telecast Live. The *Sanyam Saptāh Māhāvrat* concluded with the *yagna* in the morning and *Naam-jog* (all night *kirtan*) from the evening. The next day *Mālsa Bhog* and *Hari-loot* took place.

Sanyam Saptāh Māhāvrat was also observed serenely in the other Ashrams of Ma in Agarpara, Varanasi, Ranchi, Bhopal, Bhimpura, Agartala, etc.

From 23rd to 26th December, *Gītā Jayanti* was celebrated in every Ashram of Shree Shree Ma, with the recitation of six chapters each on first three days and the full *Gītā* on the last day, followed by *yagna*.





Even if you are unable to concentrate your mind on *japa*, The name you will repeat has its own intrinsic power. None can foretell at what particular moment circumstances will co-operate to bring about the Great Moment for you.
— Ma Anandamayee

*With best compliments and heartiest pronaams at the Holy feet of
Shree Shree Anandamayi Ma:*

Shri. Gautam Chellaram, Mumbai.

Shri. Hiren T. Patel, Andheri (W), Mumbai.

Shri. MMSingh, Varanasi.

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Shri. Soumya Haldar & family, Bhavnagar.

Shri. Anil Kumar Bhati, Meerut.

Shri. Praveen Anand, Chennai.

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Shri. Amitabh Gautam & family, Meerut.

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Endeavour to go through life leaving your burdens in His hands. Some persons do not like to sit and do *japa*, it is advisable for them to purify their mind through *seva* (service of God in man).

- Ma Anandamayee

*With best compliments and humble pronaams to
Shree Shree MA Anandamayee:*

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