

## An August Midnight in Mata Sati's Abode

The day full of work in Kolkata had been tiring and it was nearly ten o'clock at night when I reached the Ashram. After dinner around midnight, I automatically fell asleep in the room of Swami Sadashivananda. For some unknown reason I suddenly woke up and looked at the clock. It had crossed nearly 2 am! I got up hurriedly. Shiv-da had already embarked on his night-long sadhana. From his posture and appearance it was clear that he had already delved deep within. The ground floor was silent, but everyone was not necessarily sleeping. Sadhvi Sanyuktanandamoyee had just retired to Sree Sree Maa's ground floor room having returned from the top floor a little while ago, after serving Maa her frugal supper. Maa's next meal comes approximately seventeen hours later. The other ladies were in their room. Swami Prabodhananda had already laid out the asana for his 'dhuni aradhana' that was to be performed a little later, both in the diwan-e-aam (or the hall room of this complex) as well as in the diwan-e-khas (or main temple where the enthroned Lords hold court). Prabodh-da and Lakshmi-da's shared room door was also closed. Through the gap I could see Swami-ji lying down, but the beads in his hands were slowing rolling through a quiet movement of the fingers.

Silence also reigned in the first floor. I noticed Swami Samvedananda's slippers outside his closed room, dim lights on inside. Nowadays, we see him out of his room for only a couple of hours at the most, in the whole day. You ask him anything and he merely smiles with a twinkle in his eyes. As I peeked into Dada's room, I saw him working on the computer in his room. He turned round as the door opened and smiled. "Hiranyagarbha", he whispered, "My

assignment is long overdue. Scolding is staring in the face. The good thing is that packets of inspirations seem to be descending at the moment and I am trying to hold on to them." I had a good idea what these 'inspirations' mean and who usually provides them. Maa says, that "Dada is 'their' special emissary and has private conversations with 'them'." I did not want to disturb him at this moment but extracted a promise of getting a preview when completed. Refreshing myself, I trudged up the stairs to the top floor.

Here also, except for the sound of the computer keyboard being pressed, there was silence all around. Arnab et al's room was open and its lights were on. Mohit was on the c o m p u t e r valiantly working on the Hindi typesetting. I pushed Maa's top floor room very slowly and peeked in. It looked like full-fledged office hours at 2:15 am!! Barun was i n t e n s e l y



Sree Sree Maa examining a Hiranyagarbha article

concentrating on watching his small LCD video player, earphone in head, transcribing the visit of Swami Dharmananda Saraswati - the saint of Beleswar - to Akhanda Mahapeeth. Sree Sree Maa was examining a potential article for Hiranyagarbha that Arnab - who was sitting beside with a sheaf of papers in his hand - seemed to have provided. The editor, in his inimitable style, was ensuring quality of publication with Maa doing the most

critical part of his work!! I sat down quietly observing the proceedings. The earlier drowsiness was slowly being overcome by an increasing alertness.

After about twenty minutes or so, Maa had completed her assigned task. She then picked up a piece of paper, which seemed to have been xeroxed from some book and said, “See, I have marked a piece on Devi Sati for the next issue of Hiranyagarbha. It is from the book ‘Sadhu-r Katha’ (meaning ‘Sayings of a Saint’) written by the peerless Mahatma Sri Bishnupada Siddhanta. You can easily make out that such people have insight that is rare even among saints. There is a difference between a ‘Brahma-vetta’ and a ‘Bhagwat-vetta’. A Bhagwat-vetta can see deeper into the leela of the supreme divine. That is why I find them so close to my heart and love reading what they have said. Most of them, like this great soul, are well known to me. We are part of the same family in Nityaloka, the Eternal Divine world. Hear this piece on Daksha Yagna.”. She began reading the relevant portion. The silence of the night was laced with the sweet voice of Sree Sree Maa’s reading of yet another divine tale. I have heard many such tales from her. These remain prized memories. In this case it was Sri Bishnupada talking to his disciples, elucidating the meaning of Daksha Yagna. The almost lyrical Bengali text is not easy to translate accurately. But something is better than nothing -

“Who is Daksha? Daksha symbolizes Prithivi, this physical world. Whenever Yagnas (or prayer-sacrifices) are conducted for the well-being of this earth, one needs to invoke the form of Satya (Truth) - namely an embodiment of Sati - to receive the ultimate blessings of prosperity. King Daksha is a symbol of creation and Sati symbolizes the creator. But Sati, that is Satya, never mingles with any creation alone. That is why, when

Shiva - the embodiment of benevolence - was unable to accompany her, creation was incapable of gracefully receiving her singular auspicious presence. Due to this Daksha’s Yagna met with misfortune and ended in disaster.

Shankara too could not fully recognize Sati. He could not fathom that Sati is that mighty, all-encompassing, great Satya (Truth), which is imperishable; that she is the eternal, infinite, all-powerful Shakti (Power) - one who is the creator of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara as well. That is why - veiled by his personal attachment with her - in a fit of possessive ignorance he remarked, ‘I will not permit her. She will never be able to go against my wishes.’ But when Sati said, ‘Look carefully, who I truly am. There is none in this entire universe who can obstruct me’. Then, when she began to show her Dasha Mahavidya forms (or ten forms of Divine Knowledge that embody the principles of creation) one by one, Shiva was unsettled. Whatever little pride he had of being her husband (or lord) was ground to dust. Later, when Shankara carried the divine body of Sati on his back, he became the holder of Infinite Knowledge. Such was the power of the knowledge he held (on his shoulders) that Shankara lost his mental bearings. Later through engrossing tapasya (spiritual practice) for several ages, he was able to absorb and assimilate it. Finally, after burning his desire-form of Madana (the God of amorous desire and love) into ashes, he became Devadideva - the Supreme of the Gods.

Like men pray to God to make them great and destroy their foes, so did Daksha. His purpose was not to achieve universal welfare, but to acquire wealth and attain supremacy. In his attempt to choose soundarya (beauty), he left aside the spirit of benevolence. He carefully selected and invited the Gods of

aishwarya (wealth). Wherever sadhana of Shakti (power) is performed, Bhagawati - the Divine Mother - automatically dwells there. When Satya (Truth) is worshipped, Sati appears. Mother Sati came to the Yagna uninvited - without being invoked - to show the light of Satya to King Daksha so that proper sense prevails in the ill-minded, misled monarch. But Daksha paid little heed to the good advice of Sati-Maa and thereby, instead of appealing for his own welfare, heralded his misfortune. By excluding Shiva (the propitious) he worshipped the un-Shiva (the inauspicious). That is why his Yagna ended in such a catastrophic tragedy. But look - the first victim martyred at the altar of this ill-fated Yagna was the Godhead of Satya - Sati herself. Still the Ignorance-drunk Daksha could not realize that a Shiva-less Yagna only unleashes the uncontrollable forces of ill-will. No good ever results out of this. Even when the benignant Shiva eventually appeared on the scene, the indignant Daksha was not able to respectfully accept him. Instead, he abused and insulted the great Lord. In this manner, blinded by Ignorance, delusion and false pride, man brings about his own doom. Even when shown the way, such a person cannot grasp what his own good is. Nor is he able to see the path to disaster ahead of him. In a fit of ill-conceived passion, he chooses for himself a calamity-ridden path of eventual ruin.

And yes, there is another aspect worth observing here. Shiva picked up the lifeless body of Sati on his shoulders. Now see, we have two forms of Satya. One is the divinely conscious form, which is eternally true. The other is the apparently unconscious, material form, symbolized by the body of Sati sans its life force. The Maya (illusion) of Shankara over this material body is the sadhaka's limited ego. Now, can you make out the state of Shankara at this point? The sadhaka has

seen the light of Truth but his limited ego has not yet been fully clarified. However, if supreme knowledge of Purna Brahma (Absolute Divine Consciousness) is to be attained, then this ego-sense needs to be completely annihilated. That is why Lord Narayana Hari used his Sudarshana Chakra to cut Sati's body into pieces and through this the sadhaka's ego-sense was completely obliterated. Here Shankara also has two forms - one is the sadhaka and the other is Lord Vishnu - while the Sudarshana Chakra is Divine Knowledge.

Daksha is a symbol of delusion induced vanity - one who attempted to perform a yagna forsaking the fundamental principles of universal good. The head of a goat that was affixed on his beheaded body is the image of such misplaced arrogance-filled ego. Human beings perform yagnas in an attempt to sacrifice their ignorance at the altar of divine truth accompanied by all-encompassing benevolence. But Daksha did not do so. He insulted Satya and abused Shiva. Thereby the Yagna was aborted and defiled, resulting in a chaotic failure. Do you know why he ended up with a goat's head? Goats and lambs are animals who can never object to anything. Whichever way you turn one of the pack, all others will follow in the same direction. This sort of a goat-like attitude is the sadhaka's reaction at the initial stage. King Daksha has now found the path of Satya."

Maa folded up the piece of paper, handed it over to Arnab and remarked, "This saint has a clear idea of who Sati really is. This piece also reminds me of an interaction that I had with Sri Sri Baba." She stopped and started smiling, knowing very well what to expect next. Our eyes said it all. We sat up straight and alert as Maa continued, "One day, I was having an argument with Sri Sri Baba on some topic. I told him, 'This time you will not be able to tell

me anything you like and get away with it. I am no more an illiterate rustic. This time I have been born in the house of a kingly person and come armed with a University degree.' Baba merely smiled and said, 'That degree is almost irrelevant compared to what you already know or to your future work. This is not the first time you have been educated. You were among the earliest ones to receive any form of true knowledge and education. Nor is it the first time you were in a royal household. You will soon come to know.' Baba almost always won any such argument in his inimitable style of unfathomable knowledge combined with an irresistibly charming wit. I was silenced into curiosity. I began to wonder a while about what he had said and then gave up, thinking that he must have made up something to win the war of words.

A couple of days later, in my sadhana, I had a vision. I saw myself, probably in my early teens, running down the stairs of a magnificent palace towards a flowing river accompanied with a number of sakhis (lady companions), giggling and talking in animated joy as young girls do. The golden pillars and intricate arches of the palace were beyond compare. As we were approaching the clear waters of the gushing river, on the other side a dazzling flash occurred. From the flash emanated a ball of white light which sailed over the river across the sky and landed on the platform at the top of the stairs. We watched in stunned awe as we saw that the light was actually the glorious radiance of a majestic figure - mat-locked hair, enlightened forehead, uplifted eyes with half-closed eyelids, ashen body, tiger-skin wrapping for a dress, trishul (trident) in hand. It was Lord Shiva in all his magnificence!! Initially we all felt a little

scared. He then pointed to me, asking me to come near him and indicated to the others to go away. They ran away immediately. He said, 'Sit down Devi Sati. I have come to teach you the fundamental scripture - the Guru Gita - and impart the supreme knowledge of the Atman (Soul) to you.' As we sat down, he began reciting. It was no ordinary chanting. Every word was imparting realization and self-experience. When it was over, he again vanished in a blaze of light. At this point I 'woke up' to the realities of this physical world of the twentieth century. Baba's earlier words on education and knowledge came ringing back to my mind. Later that day, I picked up a copy of the Guru Gita and began reading it. It seemed so easy to understand!!" Maa stopped. It was our turn to be spellbound. "This was in Prajapati Daksha's palace, before Shiva and Sati were married. Baba's methods are incomparable." Maa said, continuing, "After Rabia, you had asked what next? I thought that this little piece of information may also interest you."

Maa looked at the clock and exclaimed, "My goodness! It is four o'clock already. Now let me complete my japa". Sree Sree Maa turned around and picked up her sandalwood beads. Barun got up to refresh himself before starting on his pre-dawn sadhana. Arnab and I got ready for returning to the Institute. I had an early morning class and he also had to complete his paper quickly. We needed to start by four-thirty. We performed pranam before leaving Maa's room. As I was closing the room door Maa asked, "By the way, Partha, what have you decided to write for this issue of Hiranyagarbha?" I replied, "I will show you very soon."

*-Her Blessed Child*

**Sri Partha Pratim Chakrabarti**