

How the Modern Youth can Confront Their Problems

SWAMI HARSHANANDA

(Keynote address delivered by Swami Harshananda at the Youth Convention held on 29th August, 1982.)

The world today is in a ferment. There are problems galore everywhere, problems between nations and problems among human beings. One of these problems which is defying solution all over the world and in our country too, is the problem of the youth. Whether the youth is a problem to the society, or the society to the youth, or each is a problem to the other, the problem itself has assumed menacing proportions disturbing the social equilibrium. May be, the youth has become too serious about frivolities and the old have taken the youth problem too seriously! The net result however is that all are suffering the consequences. And suffering is a serious matter and not a frivolity!

The youth problem is not a special curse of our times. More than 2,300 years ago Plato wrote thus: 'What is happening to our young people? They disrespect their elders, they disobey their parents. They ignore the laws. They riot in the streets, inflamed with wild notions. Their morals are decaying. What is to become of them?' Does it not look like a perfect echo of the wailings of the elders of today? So, it is neither a new problem nor a curse of our times. It is the most natural phenomenon that occurs in every age. As long as young people exist, the problem will also continue to exist.

Before devising or suggesting solutions to the problems of the youth, the problems themselves have to be identified and sorted out. Even before doing this, one has to reflect on the concept of youth itself. Everyone of us has been a youth at some period of time in our lives. The youth of yesterday

have become the old people of today. The youth of today will be the aged of tomorrow. This is the inexorable law of life. Thus, philosophically speaking, youth is a fleeting phenomenon, a phenomenon to be inevitably gone through, but not be inordinately attached to. Retaining perpetual youth is impossible and will only lead to mental misery. Looked at from this angle, since youth is a fleeting phenomenon, time itself will solve the problems of youth and no special trouble need be taken to solve them!

However, the problem is not that simple. Though in the life of every individual youth comes and goes, at any given time, there will perforce be a sufficient number of young people in society to cause problems or to suffer from them. This collective phenomenon of youth has got to be reckoned with.

Then there is another type of youth, the youth or rather the youthfulness, of the mind. One is as young as one feels in the mind. Youth is of the spirit and not necessarily of the body. There are young people in old bodies and old people in young ones! Such youth is rather an exception. Such 'young people', far from being problems to mankind, are a blessing to mankind. It is only they that can build bridges across the generation gaps.

After dealing with the concept of youth, let us now turn to the 'modern youth'. The youth of any historical age is 'modern' to that particular age. This being a patent fact, what is it that is so 'modern' about the youth of our times? Even today we

have young people brought up in old traditions and old people who are ultra-modern. Actually 'modernism' is a quality of mind, an attitude, that enables a person to visualize the future while appreciating the values of the past and understanding the sentiments of the present. Fossilized thinking is foreign to such modern persons. In this sense, all great leaders of mankind have been and still are 'modern'.

However, in today's jargon modernity has become identified with modern Western culture, especially of the American variety.

What are the characteristics of youth in general and modern youth in particular? From the physical view point, youth is the best period of life. It is the period of health, strength and energy. Endowed with strength and brimming with energy, the young people are apt to feel great courage. Fired with the spirit of adventure they can plunge themselves into acts of dare-devilry. High ambitions come to them naturally. Goaded by these, they can work hard and undergo any amount of suffering in the process. Defeats cannot easily force them into dejection, since optimism is in their very blood.

At the psychological level, they are always searching for novel ideas. Old ideas are questioned mercilessly and given the go-by unceremoniously.

On the negative side, their strength can degenerate into rashness and can be used to inflict cruelty and suffering. Power of the senses can get the better of the power of the mind, resulting in lack of poise and self-control. Courage can give way to impatience, restlessness and anger. Ambition can force them into expecting quick results and giving up in despair if thwarted in their efforts. Pleasure-seeking, which is a common instinct of all living beings, can do them greater harm due to the strength of the natural instincts at that age. More than

everything else, they are dangerously inclined towards hero-worship and this often inevitably leads to intellectual and emotional slavery.

All these characteristics apply equally to the modern youth also, since they are part and parcel of the youth phenomenon. Some more features may be added because of their being 'modern', or their desire to appear 'modern'. Wearing a fashionable dress and hairstyle, changing it as often as 'fashion' changes; glamour of the English language and adoration of science; soft corner for, if not a tacit approval of, the drink-drug-promiscuity-culture imported from the West; agnosticism, atheism and materialism on the one side and a positive disdain of religion and religious institutions on the other; frequenting hotels, bars, clubs and cinema houses.

Let us now turn our attention to their problems with a view to finding out suitable solutions. There is no living being that has no problems. In fact it is the problems that spur the living beings towards progress. Hence the existence of problems as an inevitable fact of life must be conceded. This however does not mean that one should suffer them silently without ever trying to remedy them.

The first thing to be done then, is to identify and analyse the problems. The most serious of all the problems that our youth has to face is in the field of education and employment. Education equips a person by imparting the necessary skill and professional competence to earn one's livelihood. It also gives one the training needed to live a decent social life. Hence every youth naturally and strongly aspires after a good education.

But the prospects of a good education, especially for an average youth belonging to the middle and the lower income groups of the society, are rather bleak. Even

admission into an educational institution is becoming a serious problem, what with the donations, capitation fees and nepotism. The student is faced with the dilemma of choosing between the government-run institutions that lack quality, discipline and dedication, and privately managed institutions which sell their seats to the highest bidders. Since more competent and better qualified persons seek more lucrative avenues of employment, it is the 'plebeians' among the educated that take to the teaching profession thereby contributing not a little to the lowering of standards. Reckless expansion of educational institutions without even the elementary academic facilities like a library or a laboratory have also contributed to the sacrifice of quality, the victims being the students again. As if to crown all this, political parties which have specialized in the art of disruption and disintegration have made deep inroads into the educational institutions, importing everything that contributes to the destruction of academic life. Mention should also be made here of the hideous practice of ragging, the sadistic outbursts of criminals masquerading as students, which has already cost several valuable young lives.

Once these formidable obstacles are overcome and a certificate obtained, the youth cannot yet heave a sigh of relief. The problems have not ended, but only begun. In spite of spending so much money and valuable time, the youth cannot stand on their own feet and earn their bread. They are not proficient enough in any profession so as to adopt it confidently. The job opportunities are less. Owing to widespread corruption and nepotism, one has to either 'purchase' the job or 'pull the strings' at the right place to secure it. Even when success smiles upon the young man, the earning is not enough to make both ends meet due to the constant rise in the cost of living. All these factors naturally frustrate the youth and their indignation

is bound to burst forth sooner or later as a revolt against the existing order of things.

Closely associated with these two fields of education and employment are other problems existing in the society which are also affecting the youth. For instance regionalism, communalism and casteism, bigoted religious leaders and their institutions, unscrupulous money-power, politics which has become all-pervasive, smoking, bars and the cinema houses, as also the T.V. have been playing havoc with the lives of our youth.

It may be worthwhile to deal briefly with these problems here. There is no society in the world which is not divided into groups, whether based on region, religion, colour, economic status, language or some other factor peculiar to it. Division is a natural phenomenon even as the fingers of the hand are divided. But what is not natural is the mutual bickerings among the various groups. This retards the progress of the society and may even endanger its very existence in course of time.

Division into regions is a matter of administrative convenience. Division based on religion can effect greater cohesion among the members of the same religion. Division based on profession—that is what caste really is—can protect the group's economic interests. Division based on language can contribute to the advancement of that language, and greater spread of education. It is unfortunate that these factors are blown out of all proportion and are cleverly being used by people with vested interests for their own selfish ends.

Though the ultimate teaching of all religions is the fatherhood of God, brotherhood of man and mutual love among fellow human beings, organized religions and religious leaders with bigoted views often sow the seeds of dissension resulting

in communal flare-ups or embittered relations among various communities.

As regards money power, the less said, the better. No sensible person says that money or material wealth is not at all necessary. But it is certainly not sense to allow it to occupy the whole of life, even as allowing the fire in the oven to occupy the whole of the house leads to destruction.

So also with politics. Politics should produce mature statesmen who will rule wisely. If politics leads to the game of cloak and dagger, it will quickly disintegrate the society. When the social structure collapses, it is not the politicians alone that suffer, but everyone, even as the ninety-nine persons, who are mute witnesses to one person boring a hole in a boat, sink when the boat sinks, and not only the person who bores the hole!

Smoking, drinking and taking drugs belong to the field of habits which quickly lead to addiction. The pace of industrialization in the West and a senseless imitation of its culture by the developing countries have led to these evils which are, of late, increasing at an alarming rate. Medical science has now amassed enough proof to conclude that tobacco smoking leads to lung cancer as also to diseases of the respiratory, gastro-intestinal, circulatory and nervous systems.

The evil effects of alcohol are now so well known that anyone who has even a cursory knowledge of it should shudder to take to it. Alcohol is absorbed into the blood stream quickly. Even as small a quantity as 0.05% in the blood stream can remove all inhibitions from the mind and 0.30 to 0.60% can cause stupor, coma and even death! It is a great tragedy that more and more youth of universities and colleges—including women students—

are fast falling a victim to this deadly drink.

Another menace which, though of recent origin, has had an alarming rise in the youth society is drug addiction. These drugs—more commonly called narcotics—have been doing more harm to the youth than wars to civilizations. Peoples and civilizations are often totally destroyed by wars. Survivors have, however, often successfully, rebuilt their shattered countries. But when drugs destroy the youth by ravaging their bodies and impairing their minds, not only do they become living phantoms but also ruin the future generations! In spite of stringent punishment like death or imprisonment for 20 years to the pedlars of narcotics like heroin, in the U.S.A., the circulation and use of these drugs has not decreased. On the other hand, it is still on the increase.

Promiscuity is another imported devil that is devouring the youth of our youth. As a result, forced abortions, often resulting in physical death, as also venereal diseases are fast increasing, resulting in the ruin of the youth in their prime.

Drinking, drugs and promiscuity have been responsible for another fall-out viz., crimes. Crimes, especially of the violent type, are accelerating, making even day-to-day life unsafe!

Perhaps, the movies which have thrown all decency to the winds, with their eyes only on the box-office, have been largely responsible not only in setting this trend but also in positively encouraging promiscuity and crime.

From what has been delineated so far, it looks as though only the negative side is presented and a highly pessimistic future predicted. The basic purpose is, however, entirely different. Unless the disease is

diagnosed properly, no remedies can be prescribed. Unless the problems, their nature and magnitude, as also the causes, are comprehended correctly and in the right perspective, no worth-while solutions can be offered.

Let us therefore try to offer ways and means by which our youth can confront these problems and find out possible solutions which can eliminate the problems or neutralize them or mitigate their intensity.

Education being the panacea for all evils—as Vivekananda rightly puts it—there is a great urgency to implement the right type of reforms in the present system. The recommendations of the various Education Commissions like the Kothari Commission and the Radhakrishnan Commission, which are now adorning the shelves in the libraries, should be taken seriously and implemented as far as they are relevant today. By making education up to the pre-degree level employment-oriented, two positive results can be gained: The youth can easily start earning enough to support themselves and their families; the pressure on the universities can be considerably eased so that higher education and research of top quality can be organized in more effective ways. Once this basic reform is carried out, many of the problems being faced by the youth in the fields of education and employment will disappear to a great extent. Though this is largely a matter of government policy, the student community can bring organized pressure on the government for such healthy reforms instead of wasting its energy on foolish non-academic causes or on finding short-cuts to successes which ultimately lead to suicide on instalment plan.

One of the most harmful effects of the English education (of the Victorian era!)—that is what our present system is, sans the sagacity and practical wisdom of the

English people—is that the moment a person learns the first two letters of the alphabet A and B, he becomes puffed up with pride, as if he is a B.A., and starts sneering at physical labour. (What a fall in the very land that gave us the philosophy of dynamic activism through the Gita!) Otherwise, there is no dearth of work in this country and in fact there are unlimited opportunities for earning. For instance, there is a great need for artisans and skilled labourers like carpenters or metal workers or masons or bricklayers. There are plenty of opportunities in the fields of agriculture, dairy farming, poultry and any number of small-scale industries. In the western countries, it is the 'educated' people that work in these fields. Nobody thinks it is beneath his dignity to work with his own hands. Hence the youth should seriously think of learning some of these trades even as a hobby, instead of whiling away their valuable time in the streets or at the movie houses.

As regards the problem of our youth caused by their permitting or succumbing to or importing political activities into the educational institutions: Though the political parties and their unprincipled leaders are largely responsible for this, still, sane thinking should inspire the youth to keep their institutions out of bounds for the politicians. This is a field where vigorous and organized efforts are urgently needed.

As regards the canker of communalism and casteism as also regionalism and language chauvinism, some of the leaders in the political and social field with vested interests are often found to be inspiring them from behind the screen. More enlightened leaders should guide the youth properly towards national integration. Youth organizations should invite such leaders for advice, guidance, consultation and exchange of views, which should result in positive action-plans.

The only way of solving the problems of smoking, drinking and drug-addiction is not to start them. After all, prevention is better than cure. The saner sections of the youth should organize themselves in this direction and try their best to educate their friends who have already succumbed to the temptations and wean them away. Qualified doctors who have had experience in handling such addicts as also social workers can be of immense help in this field.

And then, promiscuity. Parents, teachers as also the youth should join hands in fighting this menace. It should be impressed upon the youth that the excesses of youth will be like drafts on old age payable with compound interest! Dissipation leads to mortgaging oneself to disease and poverty. Cultivating respect for womanhood as potential motherhood is one way of minimising the problem. Trying to see every person, man or woman, as the Spirit, a spark of the Divine, will help to a great extent in attenuating sex-consciousness. This training must become part of the educational system. Concerted efforts to boycott the movies until the producers improve the cultural and moral quality of the films should also be thought of.

However, all these solutions, though good as far as they can go, are not good enough. They will be like ordinary medicines for rheumatism. When the pain appears in the wrist and is 'cured' by the medicine, it will reappear at the knee-joint, or the shoulder! It will change places but never quits. Unless a very strong medicine that can tackle the disease at its very root and remove it from there, be administered, no permanent cure can be hoped for.

What then is the fundamental solution to the problems that confront the youth? A little reflection will convince us that

something more basic in human nature has to be tackled, and tackled effectively. It is man that tells lies, steals, robs, commits adultery or murder. All this is done by him in order to get 'happiness' or 'peace' or 'freedom'. But he has taken to the wrong means of achieving them. He commits these crimes, since his mind is not in order! If the mind can be purified and attitudes set in the right direction, in the direction of the greatest good of the greatest number, *bahujanasukhaya*, *bahujanahitaya* everything is done. Or, to put it in one word, it is 'character' that should be inculcated first and foremost, in the youth. This again becomes possible only when the system of training the youth starting from the home itself, is reoriented to building up a strong moral character. Since it is a burning candle that can light up another candle, a much higher quality of life and conduct is expected of the parents, teachers and leaders of the society, from whom the youth can draw inspiration.

It is here that religion—not in the denominational sense but in the true sense of 'the manifestation of the divinity already in man' as Vivekananda puts it—can play a significant role in the life of the youth, nay, of the whole society.

Religion should not be confused with rituals or with the regimentation that obtains in organized churches. If God is our father and mother, and all of us are his children, it is the bounden duty of human beings to love one another and express that love through service. That is why Vivekananda has declared thus in unequivocal terms: 'Renunciation and service are the twin ideals of India. Intensify her in those channels and the rest will take care of itself.' This is the necessary and sufficient solution, the ultimate solution to all our problems, including those of the youth. This is the only way by which the youth can confront their problems effectively.

Pariprasna

(As reported elsewhere in this issue, one of the highlights of the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Youth Convention held at Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, on August 29, 1982, was the bunch of lively and probing questions asked by the participating students and the answers to those queries provided by Swami Harshananda and Swami Tapasyananda. Below we give some of the interesting questions and the answers thereto.)

QUESTION: Swamiji, you have enumerated the various errors committed by the youth and the mistaken values adopted by them. But after all, the youth follow norms set up by the elders. So should not the reformation start with the elders?

ANSWER: This is really a vicious circle. It is true that the elders are at fault in setting bad examples for the youngsters. But on that score youth should not postpone or shelve the needed change of attitude. To take a dip in the sea one does not wait till all waves subside. More-over it is easier for the younger generation to change than for the older generation. Young men and women should try to imitate what is good in the older generation and avoid what is bad. In the famous convocation address in the Taittiriya Upanishad the Brahmacharins taking leave of the Gurukula are told among other things:

*Yani anavadyani karmani tani sevitavyani,
no itarani. Yani asmakam sucharitani
tani tvayopasyani, no itarani—*

Only adopt those deeds which are blameless—not the others. Whatever is good in us, that you should imitate—not the others.

We are not minimising the responsibility of the elders in setting up imitable examples. Sri Ramakrishna has a revealing story in this regard. A man took his ailing boy to a physician. He was asked to bring the boy the next day, when the prescription would be given. The father went back home which was at quite a distance. Next morning he trudged the distance to the physician's house once more

with the boy. The physician now told the boy that he should not take any jaggery or other sweets. The father was puzzled and a little irritated. He asked the doctor why this simple prescription was not given the previous day. Why did the physician make him and the boy go up and down for nothing? The physician replied with a smile, "Yesterday, when you came here, there was a jar of jaggery in this room. If then I had told the boy not to eat jaggery, he would immediately think that I am a hypocrite who eats sweets himself, while denying them to boys. He will not have any faith in my prescription, But today I have had the jar of jaggery removed. So there is no scope for the boy to disbelieve my *bona fides*."

The elders have the great responsibility of practising what they preach. But the youth also have the responsibility of doing whatever is possible by themselves instead of waiting for a lead from the elders.

QUESTION: Are there genuine Gurus today?

Answer: Gurus are not like stones in the street over which you stumble as you walk along. Ultimately, there is only one Guru—Satchidananda or God. Human Gurus are but conductors or channels through whom the redemptive power of the Divine flows. At no time is there a scarcity of such human Gurus. But to meet them the aspirant must have tremendous earnestness. Knock and it shall open, seek and you shall find.

QUESTION: Swamiji, you spoke of the need for education in the mother tongue. But has not the linguistic division of the country worked havoc?

ANSWER: If subjects are taught in the mother tongue, the students will be able to grasp the significance of the various topics easily. But this does not mean that the study of languages other than the mother tongue is to be banned. In all progressive countries in the West the schools teach four or five languages. The children do not find it difficult to become fluent in all these languages. But here in India forgetting the purpose of education, the politicians are chauvinistic and try to exalt the mother-tongue by suppressing all other tongues. Very often we hear foreign visitors complaining that in India they meet only Maharashtrians, Gujaratis, Kannadigas and Tamilians, and not any Indian. Language should be a means of integration and not division.

QUESTION: Is there not too much of ritualism in our religion today?

ANSWER: Swami Vivekananda has stressed repeatedly that religion is realisation. It is the manifestation of the divinity already in man. Rituals are necessary in the preliminary stages of spiritual discipline. When realisation dawns, rituals drop off by themselves. Sri Ramakrishna has compared rituals to the elaborate scaffolding that is erected when a building is being built. After the edifice is complete, the scaffolding can be removed, but not before. Really, most of us are in the kindergarten class of spirituality and hence rituals are a great help to the majority of us.

QUESTION: How can you turn the minds of young people to religion?

ANSWER: It is education that transmits the higher values of life. Religious education should start at home. Children need not be told about theories but should be trained in

practice. For this the parents should live an exemplary life, observing which the children also will follow in their footsteps. At the school stage the students can be taught the common essentials underlying all religions. Unfortunately the term secular has been misinterpreted as anti-religious. When our constitution-makers declared India to be a secular State, they only meant that the State as such should not swear by a particular religion. It should treat all religions equally. Secularism does not mean avoidance of the religious attitude. After all, public opinion counts. If the youth of the land are sincere in their thirst for religion, they can bring pressure on the government and insist that the educational curriculum shall contain adequate religious instruction, taking care, of course, not to denigrate any of the religions.

QUESTION: What is the need for special religious training?

ANSWER: Man's intelligence is of very limited grasp and range and it is not possible for reason alone to understand the Ultimate that we call God. For measuring different things we require different types of instruments. A thermometer, however accurately graduated, cannot measure the quantity of milk in a vessel. Similarly to know something of the mystery called God, certain disciplines have to be gone through. Intelligence by itself is not adequate.

QUESTION: One of the drawbacks of modern youth is their inability to concentrate on anything. How is this shortcoming to be removed?

ANSWER: Concentration springs from interest. Once a student-devotee came to me for help in mathematics on which he found it difficult to concentrate. As if casually, I asked him about the cricket test match that was then going on. The student at once reeled off not only the names of the players but also their past records. I pointed out to him that this was good mathematics. So many

figures he was able to remember without any strain. Then he understood that his interest in cricket equipped him with the mental capacity to remember details. Hence first develop interest in the subject you are studying and then you will gain mastery in it easily.

QUESTION: Today we lack leaders like Gandhiji who achieved substantial things. Hence we suffer for want of proper guidance.

ANSWER: The concept of leadership should be correctly understood. In each small group one of the individuals becomes a leader. Certain problems challenge the group and the man who rises to the occasion and faces the challenges is automatically the leader. It is not necessary that you should be the leader of a nation or the world. You can show the qualities of leadership within your own group. If we are sincere in our desire for the welfare of the group and not for power and position, leadership blossoms spontaneously and results in great achievements. Without waiting for great manifestations like Gandhiji, each one of us can function as leaders in the given context. What is required of a leader is that apart from technical abilities he should have a large heart. Once Swami Vivekananda told his brother disciple Swami Turiyananda: "Haribhai, I do not know if I have gained spirituality, but this I know, my heart has expanded."

QUESTION: What is self-realisation and for whom?

ANSWER: Self-realisation is the conviction that we are not just a body-mind complex but are essentially spirit. When we function from this understanding the world changes for us and divinity pervades everything.

QUESTION: What is youth power? And how can it be used?

ANSWER: Youth is full of idealism and energy. But often it is like a flood that destroys. The waters have to be dammed and channelled. It is no use condemning excesses on the part of the youth. The power of youth should not merely be opposed or checked but canalised to creative purposes.

QUESTION: Most of us are essentially not bad, but when we get together, mob psychology takes over, and even the good ones are unable to be good, surrounded as they are by the bad. What is the way out?

ANSWER: Ultimately all light comes from within. If you have faith in yourself, you can achieve much despite the surroundings. All great things have been achieved by people who dreamt dreams and ventured far ahead of contemporary thought. Each individual must act as if everything depended on himself. Have an action plan and start study groups and action groups. Treat the national problems as specific challenges to you. If you lead selflessly, others are bound to follow.

QUESTION: Swamiji, you spoke of the handicaps produced by government influence on, and control of education. How is this to be removed?

ANSWER: Government, being the tax-collector, should provide the funds for education. But beyond that they should not interfere with the educational system. In America, for instance, the principals of all the schools in an area get together and draw up the syllabi, list of text books etc. and provide the broad guidelines for education in that region. They are a completely free co-operative group that does not have to depend on the government at all. This enables the institutions to try novel experiments in education which becomes a truly liberal training.

QUESTION: What is the difference between truth and superstition?

ANSWER: Superstitions weaken while truth always strengthens. It is when man loses faith in God and so in himself that superstitions have a field day. When a crisis arises and you are unable to face it squarely you try short cuts. Then it is that you have recourse to superstitions, which give you a false confidence. Resort to magic cures etc., is a sign of this want of real faith in God.

QUESTION: For spiritual progress, will not a *manasika* Guru (an imagined preceptor) do?

ANSWER: A Guru is a guide who has travelled the path himself and so can take you to the goal. It is easier and quicker to find fulfilment under the self-less guidance of the preceptor. But if you are yourself very competent spiritually, no separate Guru is needed. Your own mind will be your guide. But such competent minds are rare and it is easy to delude ourselves that we are competent. So, for the majority of us a physical Guru is indispensable. After all, the Guru only transmits the redeeming power of God, who is the one ultimate Guru.

QUESTION: In what way can youth practise renunciation?

ANSWER: Renunciation means giving up the lower in order to get the higher. If we are hanging on to a branch of a tree we give it up only when a higher branch has come within our grasp. Hence for renunciation faith must develop in the higher values of life. We must be convinced that Artha and Kama, material affluence and physiological pleasures, do not bring permanent satisfaction. Then only do we turn to Dharma and Moksha, the path of rectitude and the urge for liberation. Renunciation can start from the rung of the ladder on which you find yourself. In your college you can help a fellow student with his material or intellectual needs. In the family you can have consideration for the other members and silently give up demands to which normally you are entitled. This concern for the welfare of others among whom destiny has cast your lot, will purify your heart and make it more sensitive to the sublimer values. Renunciation is not a single act but a cumulative process that finally leads to the practical experience of the oneness of existence, which is otherwise termed God.

... I repeat the Mother's name as 'Ma Anandamayi'. Through the power of her name one can attain everything—devotion, faith, intellect, wealth and opulence etc. In the Chandi it is said She can grant prosperity and success and all. I derive more strength from the Mother's name than from Sri Ramakrishna's. Once Swamiji (Vivekananda) happened to be at the house of Balaram Babu. The Holy Mother too was there. Everyone was going to offer their salutations to the Mother. I was just sitting near Swamiji. Swamiji asked me to go and prostrate before the Mother. I went and did my salutation touching the ground with bent knees and head. I did not quite know that Swamiji had followed me. Seeing me saluting the Mother in that fashion he remonstrated, 'Is that the way of prostrating before the Mother?' Saying this he threw himself full length on the ground at the feet of the Mother. Seeing that, I too at once followed suit. Mother is our very own. The mind is in eternal obedience before her.

SWAMI VIJNANANANDA.