

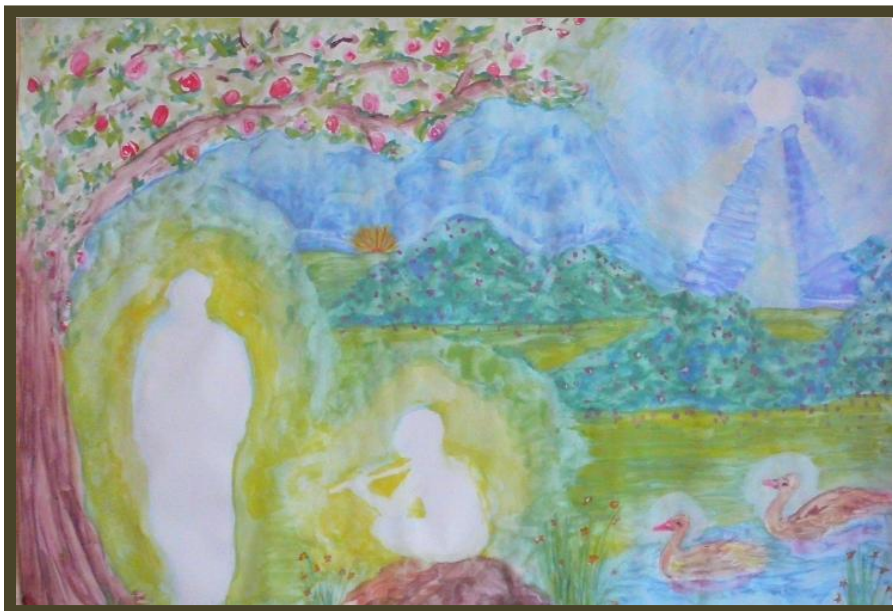
## Art Review

**By Supriti Ho**

During the Summer Yoga Conference at Ananda Marga Training Centre\* in Sweden last year, I met two trainee sisters, Shivapriya and Gayatridevi, who have created some of the inspirational artworks that grace the walkway of the yoga centre and also in the privacy of the Sisters' Training centre. I had the privilege to interview them despite their busy schedule and got an insight into the source of their inspiration and life.

The first interview was done with Sister Shivapriya (right) before she rushed off for her second posting to the organic bakery shop in Gamla Stan, the old city in Stockholm, Sweden. Before joining Ananda Marga, she had no inspiration for art-making. Although she was trained in an art school for four years, she is not interested in the commercialism of art. "My work is devotional, spiritual (Tantric) and symbolic". "Nature is a manifestation of Baba (Divinity)" is the overall theme of her artworks.

Amongst all the artworks that she has done, the painting below is her favourite. It is located in the privacy of the bedroom in the Sisters' quarters. This watercolour painting was inspired by a dream of Baba, during her first posting to work alone in the shop. It was her first time working there and she went through many struggles. The dream was a great assurance for Shivapriya that Baba loves her very much and He knows everything about her; her past, present and future. This painting is filled with symbolisms and shows the relationship between Baba and her.

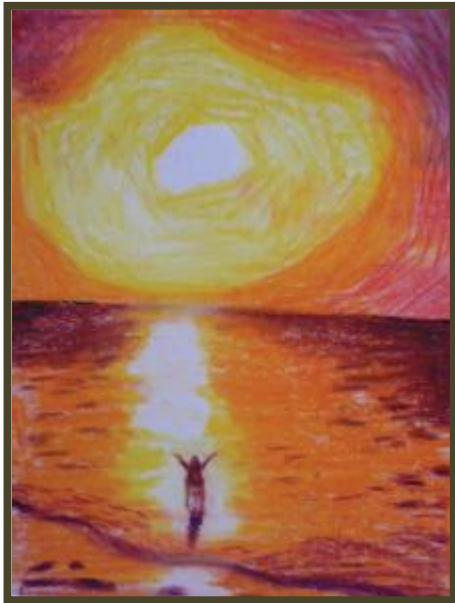


The two figures in bright effulgence represent Baba (the standing figure) and Shivapriya (the seated figure with a flute). The flute symbolises the subtlest music on earth and in Shivapriya's words, "I'm playing this melody in tune with Him". The tree symbolises devotion. The swans represent purity and the distant rising sun represents a new world paradigm, the rise of a new dawn. In fact, upon closer inspection, one



can notice that everything in the painting is glowing in effulgence, all directed towards Baba. Hope and Bliss is the main theme of this whole painting.

She wanted to paint the dream to remember and remind herself and others that Baba loves us very much. However, she will leave it behind when she graduates from her training, to inspire future sisters in training.



A personal favourite is this welcoming oil pastel drawing located at the main entrance of the yoga centre. Its rich warm colours and the totally uplifting and surrendering pose of the lone silhouette is very empowering and energy-giving. The artist commented that the outstretched open hands represent total surrender and also in recognition that all are divine. The sunrise represents the arrival of a new day/ new era in the history of humanity. The entire work signifies that now is the time for Neohumanism; a moral and spiritual era for humanity.





This oil pastel drawing is Sister Gayatri Devi's favourite work and was done during SPT, a special intensive meditation training that lasts for 7 days. The cold mountains reminded her of the place where the great yogi, Shiva, did his meditation. The sun is a message of hope, which comes from afar but brings much light and warmth. A mixture of diverse environments is created with the present of the lake that is found in Ydrefors, Sweden. The colours used represent the myriad of colours in nature.

This vibrant piece of watercolour painting (right) was located on a notice board outside the meditation hall. There was no name written on it so initially, I did not know who the artist was. But having known later that the batik painting (left),



which was also situated in the centre, was done by Sister Gayatri Devi, I assumed that she has done this piece of watercolour painting as well, and I was right. The choice of colours, the spontaneous application of brushstrokes all reflects the style of the same artist. I was very honoured to be given the beautiful and life-giving piece of artwork on the right on my last day of stay at the centre.





Unlike Sister Shivapriya, Sister Gayatri Devi has no formal training in art. Her love for drawing and painting really started developing during her solo backpacking trip across Brazil in 2000, before she even knew about Ananda Marga. During her travel, she felt that she was only enjoying and taking from everyone and everything, so she decided to give something back to the world. In this case, she decided to create art. In Sister Gayatri Devi's poetic words, "To drink from Baba's creation and reproduce a glimpse of it on paper or natural objects" is her main objective in doing her artwork. Generally, she enjoys the process of "drinking" the essence of Baba's art (i.e. His Creation), and expressing a glimpse of Baba's charm through her interpretation of His Vision in her artistic expression. Her interest in art coupled with Baba's grace has given her artworks a sense of exuberance that I feel goes beyond any formal art training. Baba is the greatest teacher!



Being a fellow artist who questions the purpose of art-making, both Sister Shivapriya and Sister Gayatri Devi have provided me with some precious answers. They have touched me with their generosity and love in sharing and giving away their artworks so freely and not signing their names on the artworks to claim ownership, reminding me the practice of simple living and non-attachment, which goes against the common practice of the art world which includes recognition, commercialism and possession.

The founder of Ananda Marga, Shrii Shrii Anandamurti once mentioned, "the aim of artistic creation is to impart joy and bliss". Both Sister Shivapriya and Sister Gayatri Devi have certainly achieved the objective very successfully with their artworks that envelope the places of location with good vibrations and fills the viewer with great joy and peace.

*\*The Ananda Marga Training Centre is a place for training acaryas (full-timers), who devote their entire life to the spreading of the ideology and teachings of the founder of Ananda Marga, Shrii Shrii Anandamurti.*

