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MATA ANANDAMAYEE HOSPITAL
SHIVALA, VARANASI-221001

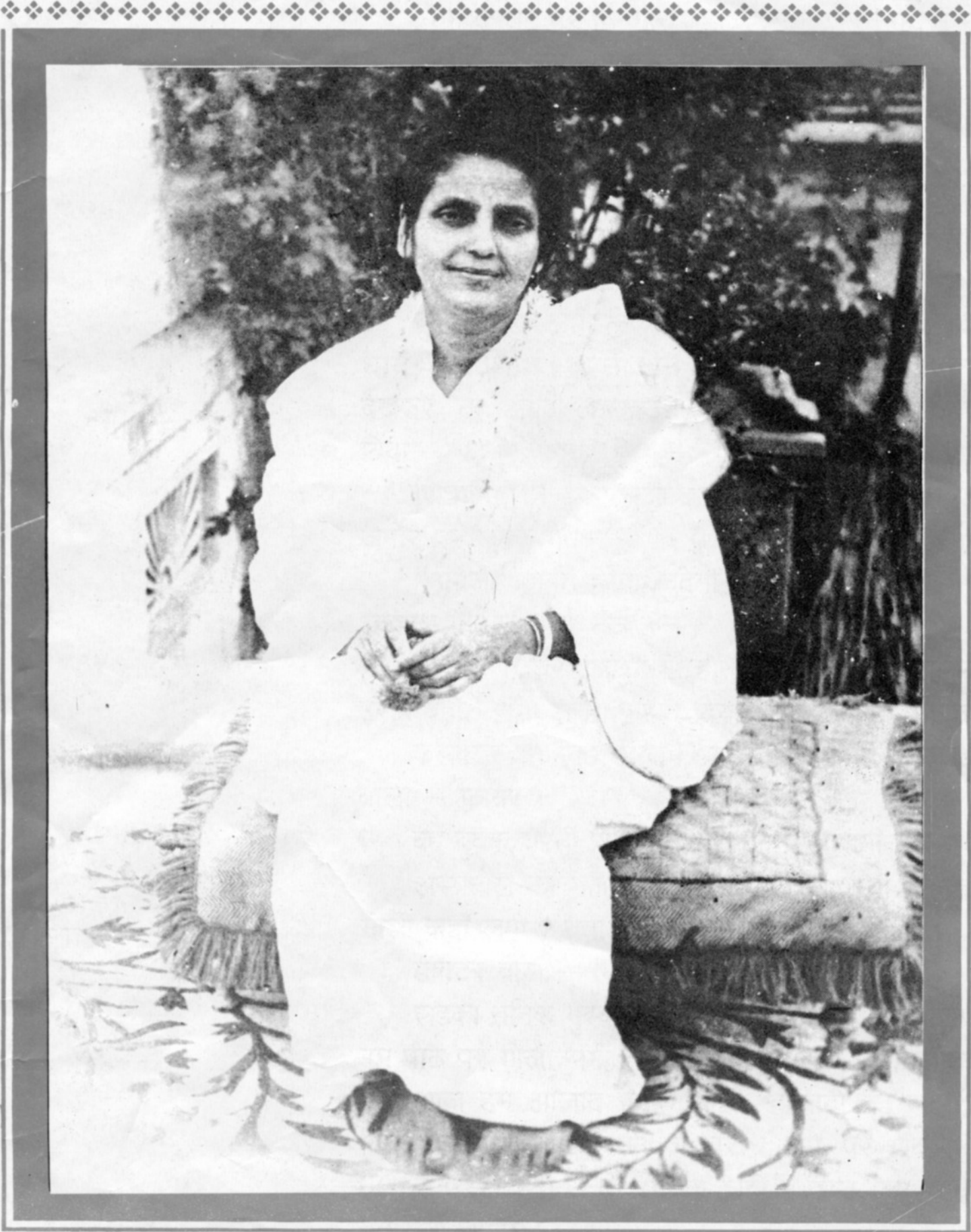
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1. Creation of a Special Fund for giving **Free Medical Relief to the Poor**, including free eye operations.
2. Construction of additional 12 rooms with all modern facilities for patients. Any donor paying Rs. 1.00 lakh will have the privilege of getting one room specially earmarked in the memory of his/her near and dear one with a marble plaque fixed in front of the room.

Donations for any of the above purposes, which will be exempt u/s 80-G of the I.T. Act, should be sent through Bank Drafts/Cheques drawn in favour of **Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha—Mata Anandamayee Hospital A/C** per registered post to :

Secretary
Mata Anandamayee Hospital,
Shivala, Varanasi-221001.



A rare photo of Ma taken in Varanasi Ashram in January, 1950

MATRI-VANI

The question of reaching that state (State of Divinity) does not arise at all so long as the veil of ignorance persists. Whether what has been said refers to *Ishwarkoti* or *Sadhanakoti*, you yourself must ascertain.

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If your aim is the Supreme, the Ultimate, you will be led on by the movement of your true nature. There are waves that carry away, and waves that pull back. Those who can give themselves up, will be taken by Him. In the guise of the wave He holds out His hands and calls you; Come, Come, COME!

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By doing work for its own sake, is engaging in *Karmayoga*. As long as a desire to distinguish Oneself is lurking, it is *Karmabhoga* (working for one's own satisfaction). One does the work and enjoys its fruit, because of the sense of prestige it brings, whereas, by relinquishing the fruit it becomes *Karmayoga*.

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Whatever anyone does belongs to the realm of death, of ceaseless change, Nothing can be excluded. In the shape of death art Thou, and in the form of desire Thou art becoming and Thou art being, differentiation as well as identity for thou art infinite, without end. Thou it is who roamest in the disguise of Nature. From whatever stand-point an assertion may be made, I never object to it. For He is all in all, He alone is the one with form and without form.

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A tree is watered at its roots. Man's root is the brain, where his reasoning power, his intellect is constantly at work. Through japa, meditation, the perusal of scriptures, and similar practices, one progresses towards the Goal.

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Why should one's gaze be fixed, while treading the path ? The gaze is He and the 'why' is also He. Whatever is revealed or hidden anywhere, in any way, is 'Thou', is 'I'. Negation, just as affirmation, is equally 'Thou' - the One,

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Yes, he who is still within the domain of speech, that is to say, wordly talk on wordly matters is within the boundaries of time. But 'There' the question of speaking does not arise. This is why the aforesaid does not apply to a real world-teacher. What a world-teacher says is not like the speech of this world.

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Where doctrines are there all - inclusiveness cannot be. What is emphasized from one point of view will be rejected from another. But where is the state in which *bhedābheda*, (difference and non difference) have ceased to exist ? Some maintain that the conception of Radha - Krishna is completely vedantic, for Krishna cannot be without Radha, nor Radha without Krishna—they are two in one and one in two.

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All that exists anywhere in the world, be it trees and plants, insects and reptiles, or any other living thing —their birth is indeed your birth, and their death your death. On the level where everything is contained within you or you are present in everything there is only the One and the One alone.



ONE ASPECT OF MATAJI'S TEACHING

—Vijaiananda (Dr. A. Weintrob)

The way of imparting spiritual knowledge (*Parāvidyā*) is fundamentally different from that of teaching secular knowledge (*Aparā vidyā*). The latter does not go beyond the realm of words and forms and remains within the boundaries of discursive thinking. Talking, reading, hearing, reflecting, committing it to memory and assimilating it intellectually are the means to master it. But where spiritual knowledge is concerned things are quite different.

"*Yato vācho nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*" 'From where all speech turns back and also the mind, having been unable to reach it', says the Taittiriya Upanishad. The purpose of spiritual instruction is to reverse the outgoing current of the mind and turn it inwards to its source. On the path to self-knowledge the aspirant has to advance stage by stage, penetrating deeper and deeper, starting from the most superficial level until he reaches the firm ground of the Great Silence. The deeper levels are the bases and contain potentially the more superficial ones—just as for example several leaves grow on a twig of a tree, several twigs on a branch, and so forth. Consequently the deeper one penetrates the more concentrated and efficient will the mind become. Instructions received by mere verbal explanation will carry much less conviction than that which is transmitted on a deeper level. At the deeper levels things bear the evidence of direct perception and appear much clearer than the arguments of discursive thinking.

This is why almost all religions make extensive use of various kinds of symbols—idols with human or animal features (*Murtis*), geometrical designs (*Yantras*), sounds (*Bija Mantra*) etc. in order to appeal to ever deeper layers of the mind. The greater the depths which the disciple reaches, the simpler will be the symbols he needs.

Probably all great teachers have made use of that way of conveying Truth without the help of discursive thinking, or using it only in its elementary aspect. Mataji in Her daily contact with Her devotees, quite frequently seems to impart some of the precious teaching in a similar way. But alas ! often we fail to take full advantage of this divine dew : at times because of our lack of awareness, but also because it appears so simple to us that we do not make an effort to grasp its real meaning. Mataji's infinite kindness sometimes makes us forget who She really is : that Her sayings are like the teachings of the Holy Scriptures; the words uttered by

Her lips like mantras; Her gestures *mudras* and Her facial expressions the images of the Divine form.

Like most of us I have been able to catch only a few isolated drops of this divine dew. It is from my own limited angle of vision that I take the liberty to write about this very profound teaching of Mataji. The few examples that follow will give only a faint idea of it.

1

Let me begin with something that appears most insignificant. Mataji frequently asks people: "How are you?" "Are you well?" etc. When returning to Varanasi after a journey She usually would ask me and others this question. In the beginning, although I was glad to receive Mataji's attention, I did not attach much importance to this. Later, however, I came to observe that She put this question in many different ways and on definite occasions. Once I was in a state of despondency, feeling that I was not progressing at all with my *sadhana*, may be that I was even moving in a wrong direction, while as a matter of fact, as I understood later, exactly the reverse was true. During that period Mataji asked me on two occasions: "*Tum bahut achhe ho?*" meaning "You are very well?" She used a slightly questioning intonation and spoke with a loud voice as if She wanted to impress something on my mind.

At some other time I was thinking that I was progressing fast and— quite unconsciously—was getting a little puffed up with pride. But this attitude on the spiritual path is indeed the surest way to downfall. When Ma came to Varanasi, She asked me: "*Tum achhe ho, na?*" meaning: "You are all right, aren't you?" but word by word: "You are all right, no?" This question drew my attention to the weak point and I corrected my attitude of mind.

2

The following example—although not concerned with any teaching—is an interesting illustration of how an apparent defect in Mataji's voice can have a very good reason.

Once after the rainy season I got a pain in my tonsils which lasted for one and a half months without my being able to get rid of it. Mataji had just arrived from Hardwar, I believe. She sat down on the veranda in front of the Annapurna Temple; we were about twenty people sitting around Her. She looked in my direction and said: "Tum Kaise Ho?" ("How are you?") I was not sure whether Her question had been addressed to me and kept quiet, wondering. Mataji repeated the question

looking straight at me. This time Her voice seemed hoarse, as if She had a sore throat, although actually Mataji's health was quite all right that day. At that moment I had forgotten all about my aching tonsils and answered : "I am all right." The next day my throat was completely cured.

3

An apparent mistake

Once I went to see Mataji at Vindhyachal and it was decided that I should remain there for some time after Her departure. Mataji said: "You may stay in the cave at the "Bhajanalaya", you are Bhajanananda".*When pronouncing the last word Her voice choked, as if She had wanted to utter my real name, which is 'Vijaiananda', but a wrong word had come out by mistake. My first reaction was a slight displeasure to hear Mataji call me by a wrong name; but immediately after and much more so later I grasped the deep meaning of Her apparent mistake and the blessing it contained.

4

Changes in Mataji's countenance,

Our facial expressions are of great importance in our relationship with one another. Everybody can to a varying degree interpret the meaning expressed through the mimicry of the face, although with most people it is half unconscious and obscured by a great deal of discursive thinking. Our facial muscles are almost constantly moving and expressing various ideas. But this movement revolves round a central image which will be prominent for some hours, or sometimes even days, and which represents the temporary personality with whom we are identified at the moment. This central image has its origin in the movement of the vital force. Most of the time, however, we are fully identified with this central image and therefore completely unaware of it. If we could watch it as a spectator a great deal would be achieved as regards the control of our mind. Mataji has many ways of helping us to this awareness. Sometimes She acts as a mirror, reflecting for a short while through Her countenance our state of mind, or its opposite or its complement. If we could keenly observe the changes in Mataji's countenance with an attitude of love and reverence, we should greatly benefit spiritually. All the modifications in the facial expressions happen with full consciousness and have a definite meaning. The pure *sattwa* that shines through Mataji's body is in itself a potent *upadesha* (spiritual teaching)

* The *Bhajanalaya* is a house adjoining the Ashram grounds at Vindhyachal and mostly at the disposal of the Ashram. "*Bhajanalaya*" means place for doing *sadhana*. *Bhajan* means religious music, but also daily spiritual practices.

5

Sometimes Mataji brings about circumstances that strike our mind just at the psychological moment and impress it much more, than a long discourse could possibly do. One evening at Varanasi Mataji was walking on the terrace facing the Ganges. I was leaning against the small shrine of Shiva situated at the back of the terrace. That day I felt greatly depressed thinking that I was not progressing enough. I looked sadly at Mataji and told her mentally, "Ma! Vijayananda has not yet got 'Vijaya' (victory)!" While thinking these words I had quite mechanically picked one of the flowers of the *Akand* tree that grows in the courtyard of the Ashram near the Shiva shrine. It was only a bud and still completely closed. I took it in my left hand and touched its top slightly with one finger of the right hand. As soon as I touched it the bud opened slowly and spread its petals up to full blossoming. I had not exercised any pressure, but just touched it lightly. Neither was this due to any *pranic* force flowing through my body; I afterwards tried several times to reproduce this feat again, but never succeeded. It was no doubt Mataji's response to my complaint and in this original way it was impressed on my mind at that very instant. The answer was clear enough what Mataji usually replies to a complaint or query of that sort. 'It may happen even now—at this very moment!'—namely, Self-realization.

6

Once in Dehradun Mataji was sitting in the Kirtan hall of the Kishenpur Ashram after the silence that is observed daily from 8-45 p.m.—9 p.m. Some devotees had brought a few mangoes, but there were not enough for a general distribution and so Mataji gave them only to the children present. Those mangoes were slightly yellowish. Among the lot there was one green-one, apparently unripe. Mataji threw it to me saying: "Kachha hai, bahut kachha" ("Unripe—very unripe!") Mataji's *prasad* given with Her own hands is a rare and precious thing, whatever it may be. *Satsang* being over, I thought, ripe or unripe I should partake of it immediately; no harm can come through Mataji's *prasad*. The mango seemed quite soft to the touch and might not be so very unripe after all, I reflected. But when I tasted it I was amazed to find that it was most delicious and just exactly ripe. Why then had Mataji said that it was unripe? This thought puzzled me. As a part of Her all-knowingness Mataji has a very keen sense of observation—not the smallest detail escapes Her attention. Consequently She must have surely noticed that the mango was soft and of a type that remains green even after ripening. On the other hand Mataji never utters an untruth, not even the shadow of one.

But soon after I remembered what had happened that day. At about six O'clock in the evening Mataji was taking a stroll on the veranda of the Ashram. The same day I had succeeded in my meditation and was foolishly thinking that realization was now near at hand. I looked at Mataji and told Her mentally: Ma, now the fruit is in my hand, the *Āmalaka* is in my palm!" The green mango had been the medium of conveying Her answer. She had not said that the mango was unripe, obviously, She had meant the rare fruit of Self-realization of which I had been proudly thinking that I was to gather it very soon: yet it was still very unripe.

7

It often occurs that Mataji transmits some teaching, advice or even a reprimand through the medium of another person. Mataji is all-pervading; She is the *Antaryāmin* seated in the hearts of all. On several occasions I have noticed that when I entered the hall with a problem or query in my mind, the Mahatma engaged in a discourse on some spiritual topic in Mataji's presence was talking exactly about the subject that was occupying my mind. In this way I have received much valuable advice, some answers to my queries and even the solution to one or the other difficult problem. On those occasions I felt clearly that the teaching was coming from Mataji herself—I mean Mataji as She appears to us. For if we consider Her in her aspect of the Omnipresent Guru, her teaching may come through any person or object and under any condition or circumstance.

But to conclude: Mataji's mere Presence is in itself the highest spiritual teaching. A living example is far more convincing and effective than any amount of talk, however brilliant and well put. Mataji shows us how supreme intelligence can be coupled with infinite love and compassion; how one can at the same time be utterly simple and natural and yet display the manners of the highest culture; that it is possible to live constantly in *sahaja samadhi* and be also aware of the minutest details of one's every day surroundings. All Her actions, Her words, Her ways of dealing with people show us that spiritual perfection goes hand in hand with human perfection.



MA ANANDAMAYEE: A NEW POWER ON THIS EARTH

—G. C. Das Gupta

[The following article was first published in 1946, in the book "Mother", which has not been available for years. The article is being reprinted here in memory of its author, Sri Ganga Charan Das Gupta, who passed away in September, 1970 at the age of 102. He was a human being of great integrity as well as charm; calm, serene, very broad-minded and ever ready to help and serve his fellow-beings without distinction of caste, class, religion or nationality. He felt convinced that Sri Anandamayee Ma's advent on this earth would give the powerful impetus that counteract the materialistic outlook on life and bring about the spiritual revival he longed for.

He belonged to the same family as Bhajji, who entrusted to him the manuscripts of his books "Matri Darshan" and "Sad Vani" when leaving for Mount Kailash with Mataji and Bholanath in 1937. Sri Ganga Charan Das Gupta published those books in the original Bengali soon after Bhajji passed away on his return journey from his pilgrimage, and later translated and published them in English. An article by him "A Call from Above" appeared in the book "Mother As Seen by Her Devotees" and a few others in the first issues of "Ānanda Vārtā."]

—Managing Editor

There is now chaos in the affairs of the world. Man faces a cataclysmic crisis. The foundations of human civilization are crumbling, threatening the entire culture and the very existence of man. Never was the need for a spiritual revival so urgent, the search for a life of truth and nonviolence so desperate as now. The soul of man, struggling helplessly within the coils of his selfmade prison, craves most eagerly for light and deliverance. In this oppressive atmosphere of the world, laden with bitter feud and misery, Mother Anandamayee stands as a beacon-light to struggling humanity, holding out a message of hope and cheer, of eternal bliss and peace.

Before Mother Anandamayee our mind and intelligence retire baffled and overwhelmed. In her presence we feel like one standing at the foot of the mighty Himalayas with higher and higher peaks spreading out in endless panorama before our vision in their bewildering beauty and variety. Like the Himalayas too, Mother Anandamayee sends down from her great heights endless streams of love and purity that sustain and uplift a countless number of people on this earth.

Mother is herself the embodiment here below of the supreme Mātri Śakti. In her presence the young, the adult and the old, all feel the warmth of a mother's love and affection, deep and boundless. There is the same loving kindness for all. Nobody feels slighted. On the contrary, everybody feels blessed, receiving her grace according to his capacity and need. The saintly people find in her words a glow of divine wisdom, while the worldly and the sinful feel an inner awakening for a higher life. In her company an urge to live a better life becomes insistent. A new enthusiasm seizes us and pulls us up from the dull routine of the transitory pleasures of our physical existence. One is struck with amazement when one finds Mother sitting for almost the whole day, calm, serene and ever smiling, amongst streams of men and women, boys and girls, amongst the old and the decrepit and the sick, all eager to catch her glance, waiting for hours together in a mood of devotion and expectancy. The mysterious influence that radiates from her person can neither be explained by reason nor traced to any palpable source. But it is still there. We feel it in our hearts. It is a rapture to listen to the easy flow of her soft, soothing words, which, like the invisible rays of light, heal our hidden sores and brighten up the darkest corners of our hearts.

Like the rays of the sun too, her divine motherly love for the fallen, for the distressed and bereaved, descends always silently everywhere, down to the inmost depths of one's being, and transforms one anew, curing all the mental maladies that eat away one's vitals. With a mysterious divine presence she permeates every fibre of her children's hearts. There is no material, moral or spiritual rod, nor any national or international scale that we know of, to measure her greatness and grandeur, her sweetness and solemnity, her love and compassion for all created beings from the tiniest fly to the noblest of saints.

We hear of many incarnations of God in the persons of prophets and seers sent down by the Divine *Sakti* for the regeneration of the world; but Mother Anandamayi appears to be a unique phenomenon in the history of man. In her the intensely human and the essentially divine meet in perfect harmony. She has a radiant personality and serene self-assurance, the like of which cannot be found elsewhere. The beauty, joy and luster which her presence sheds all around are supremely divine. We get the impression that only a fraction of herself deals with human affairs while an immense reserve of power is held up in the background. She lives and moves about amongst all types and classes of men and women. Wherever she goes she brings illumination to the hearts and minds of men where no earthly light can penetrate. A merciful shower of bliss floods our parched-up souls when we happen to meet her, whether in a vast concourse or at a railway station or in an

ashram. She does not go into the house of any private individual; a temple or an ashram or a dharmasāla is always a welcome place for her temporary residence.

"This body belongs to all. Do God's work according to what you think best," was the message which she once transmitted to her children. She stands aloof and above all controversies and sectarianism with unruffled dignity and serenity as a symbol of unity, mutual love and trustfulness, all persons finding a common meeting-ground in and through her. The above message signifies an absolute dedication of her all for the good of humanity. She does not talk about politics or of any particular religion or social code. Her conversation directly bears on God, the Primal source of all unity and power, love and devotion, sacrifice and selfless service, tolerance and goodwill for all created beings.

She advises that every man or woman, boy or girl, should set up a relationship or link with the Creator by devoting five or ten minutes at a specified time every day to the meditation of God; and no worldly thought whatever must be allowed to creep in during that short interval. This short period is to be dedicated for life to God and spent in making the mind absolutely void for the play of the divine forces, so that the individual soul may be pulled up and find an outlet to plunge into the Infinite.

Generally in her Ashrams silence is observed daily from 8-45 to 9 p.m. when there descends a spell of heavenly peace and tranquillity too deep for expression. One feels as if one's self has become merged in that ecstatic calm. An atmosphere of mystic expansiveness then widens the horizon of our minds; we come to feel the pettiness and worthlessness of our daily squabbles and aimless pursuits. She symbolizes, at that time, oneness of all beings with the Supreme Mother, all the tiniest sparks of our life merging together for the time being into one holy flame of Mother's body.

Whenever she talks she pours out a flood of sweetness upon all persons present. In her easy, penetrating but joyful way she explains, elaborates and discusses the highest and deepest problems of philosophy in such a simple and homely manner that it carries conviction for learned as well as ordinary men and women. her mode of approach is direct, charming; an inner glow accompanies all her words, which imparts to them wonderful force and vitality. The varied problems of everyday life as well as the subtle ones of the spiritual plane are all one to her. With a few plain words or simple suggestions she solves them to everybody's entire satisfaction.

All her activities are ever directed to the uplift of the human soul whose clouded vision is responsible for all the disasters of society. She enables all persons to pass

through the trials and tribulations of worldly life with strength and determination, as well as through all the difficult, intricate paths of spiritual endeavour of *sādhana*. Sometimes her silence becomes more eloquent and effective than her words.

Those of us who have had the good fortune to come under the influence of her magnetic personality, have always felt that she is like "a star that dwelleth apart" from all the transitory toils and turmoils of earthly existence; yet she, with her natural composure and prophetic vision, points out clearly the course of action one should follow in life and impresses upon everybody the importance of the real good of all men—the realization of the divine *Ātman*. All that she does, says and suggests, converges upon the one focal point of all lives admirably expressed in the *Śruti* :

यस्यानुव्रित्तः प्रतिबुद्ध आत्माऽस्मिन् सन्देहो गहने प्रविष्टः ।
स विश्वकृत् स हि सर्वस्य कर्ता तस्य लोकाः स उ लोक एव ॥

"He who has realised the *Ātman* and has had a direct vision of It within the coils of his perishable body wherein its glory is shrouded by *Māyā*, develops the power to recreate the world anew, he alone becomes the lord of all; all beings appearing like his own selves, he himself becoming the soul of all."

All that Mother does from dawn to dusk, from dusk to dawn, proclaims the beauty and blissfulness of this highest state of existence as has been better described in the *Śruti* :

एषः ब्रह्मलोक एषाऽस्य परमा गतिरेषास्य परमा सम्पदेषास्य
परमो लोक एषोऽस्य परम आनन्द एतस्यैवानन्दस्यान्यानि
भूतानि मात्रामुपजीवन्ति ॥

"It is the state of the Brahman, the final goal of the Jiva, his crowning glory, his surest place of repose, the state of his supreme beatitude (परमआनन्दः) of which the joys of the world are but the minutest drops; with these, ordinary mortals enjoy all the short-lived happiness of the brief cycle of their lives on this planet."

Mother is infinitely greater than all the marvellous powers and glories which we find revealed in her before our eyes. She represents the eternal Mother-power (*Mātri Śakti*) playing with the manifested universe with but a fragment of her limitless potentialities, whereas she herself pervades, enlivens and illuminates the eternal mystic regions of the Great Beyond, out of which myriads of worlds emerge into our vision, and in which they move about and into which they finally are dissolved. What has been said about the Supreme Father :

एतावानस्य महिमातो ज्यायांश्च पुरुषः ।
पादोऽस्य विश्वाभूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं विधि ॥

can be applied to her with equal exactitude. We find her performing all the functions of an ordinary mortal in the most perfect manner and yet supremely detached from them all, like a drop of water on a lotus leaf; but on occasions we find glimpses of her divinity in her words, looks, actions and manners. Her ways always evoke admiration and devotion to her Self. There are many phenomena associated with her which may be called miracles on account of their mystic and supernormal character.

A few instances may be of interest. On the 3rd of August 1944, the writer went to see Mother at Nawadwip, on receiving the news that she was very unwell. It was the day preceding the *Jhulan Purnima*. Mother was staying on the first floor of the premises attached to Govindaji's temple. When the writer arrived with two ladies it was about 11 p. m. There was one electric light on. Entering the room, we found Mother seated smiling, beaming with joy. Her whole body shone like a ball of dazzling light, making the electric bulb look almost pale and red. Such wonderful radiance from a human figure was beyond all our conception. Her body shone with such an intensely soothing light that the whole room appeared to be filled with some divine ethereal presence.

Subsequently, when Mother was asked what made her body look so bright that night, in spite of her serious physical illness, she softly said with her characteristic sweet smile : "Didn't you see how the many gods and goddesses in the temples of Navadvip were nicely dressed and illumined for the *Jhulan Purnima* celebrations? Don't you think it proper that this body, too, should put forth some lustre and grace?"

Next morning we all sat before Mother. *Prasāda* from Govindaji's temple was being distributed. A lady with a baby in her arms, came to see Mother who sat talking to the many men and women assembled there. On entering, the lady asked, "Who is the Mother here?" One of us pointed her out. The following conversation ensued :

Question : People say you are Mother. Where are your sons and daughters ?

Mataji : Here, (pointing to her breast).

Question : Where is your husband?

Mataji : Here (with the same gesture).

Question : Where are your parents ?

Mataji : (With a smile) Here within this heart.

Question : Your home ?

Mataji : (With the same gesture) Here !

The lady who was putting these questions looked completely puzzled, failing to comprehend what Mother said. Mother noticed it and in her usual soothing, convincing manner said, "Here in this body lie all things in the universe —father, mother, son and daughter—all created beings. From this One all have come into being. In the One all exist, all persist and finally merge."

From the above little episode it will be manifest that Mother symbolizes the universal *Mātri Sakhti* with which the Paramātmā works; about whom the Risis of old said :

त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमानसि त्वं कुमार उत वा कुमारी ।
 त्वं जीर्णो दण्डेन यञ्चसि त्वं जातो भवसि विश्वतोमुखः ।
 अनाविपत्तं विभुत्वेन यत्ससे यतो जातानि भुवनानि विश्वा ॥

Thou art man and woman, boy and maiden, and also the old and decrepit moving with the help of a stick with faltering steps. Thou dost appear to be born into this world, assuming endless forms.. Thou art without a beginning and dost pervade the universe. From Thee all the worlds have sprung into existence."

Mother stands on a plane far higher and more intangible than the physical, far deeper and more subtle than the mental, with a heart overflowing with love for all mortal beings and ever working in inscrutable ways for the ultimate human good.

In her presence an atmosphere of purity and joy, of aspiration for a higher life and of an upsurge of man's nobler and deeper sentiments prevails. Her wispers are far more powerful than the sharp whips of kingly power to reclaim a lost soul. Her silent inspirations compel us to strive for a nobler and happier life. The elusiveness of the chase heightens our ardour until the search becomes part of our life and a religion.

When Mother sings a song, whether in Bengali, Hindi or Sanskrit, the sweetness and solemn purity of the melody, the depth of feeling and the world of suggestion called up, all these combine to affect the hearers in a strange and profound manner so that it often remains an unforgettable memory in the mind. She always insists on devotional songs of the *kirtana* type being sung, in which, as she says, the hearts of living beings, the souls of departed saints and invisible powers of the air, all join.

Divinity, according to her, is the salt and essence of life. To realise it in order to improve the quality of our lives, we must fill our hearts with noble truths and love and faith. The only faith that ennobles and transforms our being must grow from our sincere love and devotion for Mother and her message. We should remember :

श्रद्धया देवो देवत्वमश्नुते श्रद्धा प्रति लोकस्य देवी ।
कामवत्सा अमृतं बुहाना श्रद्धा देवी प्रथमजा ऋतस्य ॥

To understand her ways, to obtain her blessings to work out our own destiny, the first and foremost requisite is *śraddha* (faith) the first offspring of truth that enables gods to taste the fruits of immortality, that lay the foundation of this universe. From *śraddha* flow all the highest, purest and noblest treasures of life .

IF YOU CAN !

—Shivananda

Try to find a new life in Ma,
All old things will vanish away :
Arise, awake and step forward
To enter the door of an eternal day.

Try to find a new life in Ma,
All thy sorrows will fade away;
And find your being completely new
All thy fears, Ma will allay.

Try to find a new life in Ma,
And sing Her name, the name divine.
Her blessings will descend and touch your heart,
And in a twinkle, salvation is Thine.

PRAYER TO THE MOTHER

—Sidhoji Rao K. Shitole

Come grace this temple shrine of mine Divine Anandi Ma.
 Thou art the essence of my soul, celestial flaming star !
 O let me be absorbed in the Anandamayee Ma
 Never to stray in satan's way I pray Anandi Ma
 Without a mother's grace no child on earth was ever blest
 Inspirit me with thy love oh Ma for the eternal quest
 The intake of my every breath I drink as Amrit of thy love
 And let that nectar mix in every atom of my blood
 In giving out my breath I sacrifice my all to thee
 My health, my happiness, my prāṇa, all at thy lotus feet
 Each heart beat I cry out for thee, oh come to me my Ma
 Forsake not this orphan soul, it bleeds for thee oh Ma
 Mother divine thy love is like the ocean infinite
 Just give your child one drop I pray, and fill me with thy light
 Thou art the way the truth the light Anandi Ma Divine
 Take me to *Him* who is beyond causation space and time
 That going there I may become one with Satchidananda
 Whose light sublime of truth divine is loving Brahmananda.

Hari Om Tat Sat Om
 Hari Om Tat Sat Om



NEW DIARY LEAVES

—Atmananda

Varanasi, 10th October, 1957.

An Irish journalist and a South Indian research student of the Benares Hindu University came for Mataji's *darshan*. The following conversation ensued:

Question : Am I right to believe that you are God ?

Mataji : There is nothing save Him alone, everyone and everything are but forms of God. In your person also, He has come here now to give *darshan*.

Question:: Then why are you in this world ?

Mataji : In this world? I am not anywhere. I am myself reposing within myself.

Question:: What is your work ?

Mataji : I have no work. For whom can I work, since there is only ONE ?

Question: Why am I in the world ?

Mataji : He plays in infinite ways. It is His pleasure to play as He does.

Question: But I, why am I in the world ?

Mataji : That is what I have been telling you. All is He, He plays in countless forms and ways. However, in order to find out for yourself why you are in the world, to find out who you are in reality, there are the various *sādhana*s. You study and you pass your exams, you earn money and enjoy the use of it. But all this is within the realm of death in which you continue life after life, repeating the same kind of thing again and again. Then there is another path as well, the path of immortality, which leads to the knowledge of what you really are.

Question:: Can anyone help me in this or must each one find out for himself ?

Mataji : The professor can teach you only if you have the capacity to learn. Of course he can give you help but you must be able to respond, you must have it in you to grasp what he teaches.

Question : Which is the best path to Self-knowledge ?

Mataji : All paths are good. It depends on a man's *samskāras*, his conditioning, the tendencies he has brought over from previous births. Just as one can travel to the same place by plane, railway, car or cycle, so also different

lines of approach suit different types of people. But the best path is the one which the *Guru* -points out.

Question : When there is only One, why are there so many different religions in the world ?

Mataji : Because He is infinite, there is an infinite variety of conceptions of Him and an endless variety of paths to Him. He is everything, every kind of belief and also the disbelief of the atheist. Your belief in non-belief is also a belief. When you speak of disbelief it implies that you admit belief. He is in all forms and yet He is formless.

Question : From what you said I gather that you consider the formless nearer to Truth than God with form ?

Mataji : Is ice anything but water ? Form is just as much He as the Formless. To say that there is only one self (*ātmā*) and all forms illusion would imply that the formless was nearer to Truth than God-with-form. But this body declares : every form and the formless are He and He alone.

Question : What have you to say about those who insist that only one religion is the right one ?

Mataji : All religions are paths to Him.

Question : I am a Christian

Mataji : So am I a Christian, a Muslim, anything you like.

Question : Would it be right for me to become a Hindu or is my approach by the Christian way ?

Mataji : If you are fated to become a Hindu it will happen in any case. Just as you cannot ask: What will happen in case of a car accident ? When the accident occurs you will see.

Question : If I feel the urge to become a Hindu, should I give way to it or is it right to suppress it, since it is said that everyone has been born where it is best for him ?

Mataji : If you really felt the urge to become a Hindu you would not ask this question, but just go ahead with it.

Yet there is also another side to this problem. It is true that you are Christian, but something of a Hindu is in you as well, otherwise you could not even know anything about Hinduism. Everything is contained in everything. Just as a tree yields seed and from a single seed hundreds of trees may develop, so the seed is contained in the tree and the whole of the tree potentially in the tiny seed.

Question: How can I find happiness ?

Mataji : First tell me whether you are willing to do as this body bids you to do.

The Questioner : Yes, I am.

Mataji : Are you really ? Very well. Now suppose I ask you to remain here, will you be able to do it ?

The Questioner : No, I will not (Laughter.)

Mataji : You see, happiness that depends on anything outside of you, be it your wife, children, money, fame, friends or anything else, cannot last. But to find happiness in Him who is everywhere, who is all-pervading, your own Self, this is real happiness.

Question : So you say happiness lies in finding my Self ?

Mataji : Yes. Finding your Self, discovering who you really are, means to find God, for there is nothing outside of Him.

Question : You say all are God. But are not some people more God than others ?

Mataji : For him who asks such a question, this is so. But in actual fact God is fully and equally present everywhere.

Question : Is there no substance in me as an individual ? Is there nothing in me that is not God ?

Mataji : No. Even in 'not being God' there is only God alone. Everything is He.

Question : Is there no justification at all for professional or any other mundane work ?

Mataji : Occupation with worldly things acts like slow poison. Gradually, without one's noticing it, it leads to death. Should I advise my friends and my fathers and mothers* to take this road ? I cannot do so. What this body says is : choose the Path of Immortality, take any path that according to your temperament, will lead you to the Realization of your Self.

Nevertheless even while working in the world, you can do one thing. Whatever you do throughout the day, endeavour to do it in a spirit of service. Serve God in everyone, regard everyone and everything as manifestations of Him and serve Him by whatever work you undertake. If you live with this attitude of mind, the path to Reality will open out before you.



* Mataji addresses all unmarried people as Her friends and married people as Her fathers and mothers.

LETTER FROM A DEVOTEE

**Mr. V. Mazlov,
77 Heythrop St. SW18 5BT,
London. UK.**

Date : October 22, 1996

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

My name is Valentine Mazlov and I am happy to express myself to you for the first time in my life as a disciple of Sri Sri Ma. I am Russian and I am living in London for 6 years now. My interests were always on the spiritual side of understanding of the meaning of life. Many autobiographies of the saints and holy men were under my close attention. The lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Paramahansa Yogananda, Swami Sri Yuktesvar, Babaji (Guruji of Lahiri Mahasaya), Sri Sivabalayogi, works by Sri Shankaracharya, Sri Aurobindo and other holy people changed my life completely. But the 5 volumes of the diary by Sri Gurupriya Devi gave me a new meaning of the spiritual understanding which is now most comprehensive and acceptable by my own heart.

Now I found my Mother and a daughter. Now I know why I was born and that for, (If I was...) I am now at some state of the mental transparency and devotional acceptance of all movements and conditions around. All become Her and She becomes the One with me. Only by Ma - I know now, that I am loved and continuously under her attention and a miraculous touch. I love Ma.

Om. Sri Anandamayi Ma. Om Hari Krishna Paraatman.

She is THAT. She always was. She always will be. I am writing this letter simply to let you know that there is another and one more heart which is mad about Ma and only Ma, Ma, Ma, Ma, what else could we say ? I am sort of a mentally explicit man. But with Ma, by the presence of Ma, there is not any of the mentality and intellectuality left. By being with Ma, everything becomes One. Sweet, sweet, sweet silence of all ages in one second. Repeating itself forever.

I am so happy now. So happy. I just could not believe it happened ! And lasting for two years,...but there is no time anymore. Blue light and little stars all around. I hope in the future I will be able to express my devotion to you and Ma by visiting

you. But I cannot do it now, because of my Political Asylum status in UK. But, believe me, I really would live in the Mother's Ashram somewhere. There is nothing to search any more. Ma is a beginning and the end of all existence.

If you can send me something from your place, that has some memories of Ma, please do. Specially some prasad from Mother's hands.

I am also translating to Russian some stories of Ma from available books. Unfortunately, I can read now only in English. But I am astonished by noticing the similarity between Bengali and Russian. Let me say, more than 15 % of words - are the same !

Purna Brahma Paraatman, Purna Brahman Kali Ma.

Om Ma, Om Ma, Purna Brahma Narayana,

Please pray for me to Ma to accept me always.

Devotee of Sri Sri Sri Anandamayee Ma.

Valentine Mazlov

Having entered the Kingdom of forgetting, everything is forgotten; this world is the abode of non-remembrance."

—Ma Anandamayee.

ANANDAMAYEE MA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF INDIA

—Sunil Guha, Geneva

'Ma Anandamayee' descended on earth, in our midst, in human form, not by accident but by divine design. The reason for her divine incarnation, the significance of all that she revealed and taught us, must be seen in the assurance that Lord Krishna gave to the confused Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra:

"Whenever dharma is threatened by the arrogance, folly, lust and unrighteousness of misled people, I will certainly come to protect and guide the righteous and restore dharma"

Divine beings like 'Thakur Shri Ramakrishna' and 'Ma Anandamayee' come to remind us of our hoary cultural and spiritual heritage and to spread the light and trod the path of self-knowledge, so that moral and ethical values remain the foundations of our society and the very essence of our conduct.

If one tries to analyse and fathom what messages 'Ma' sought to convey through her many utterances, discourses, *leelas*, *kheyals* and *Bhavasamadhis*, through her personal attitudes and conduct, it becomes clear that she was basically focusing on, and reasserting the following aspects of our rich cultural and spiritual heritage:

- (a) A human lifetime is exceedingly precious. The purpose of human life is to gain knowledge and experience of the in-dweller or *Paramatma* through self-development. In short, the concept of non-duality, i.e. 'I' and 'God' are not separate.
- (b) The universal nature of religion... and the need to accept and tolerate all religions are merely diverse paths to reach the same goal, i.e. God and His worship.

Search within to find 'who you are' and 'why you are here'?

All our ancient and time-honoured scriptures, be it the Vedas, the Bhagvad Gita, the Upanishads or Brahmasutras, assert that the knowledge of 'non-duality', i.e. 'God is within you' is the only real knowledge... and all other forms of

knowledge, associated with duality, are ignorance. The truth and consistency of this theory has been corroborated by the inner experiences of many seers of truth. And Ma was indeed a living embodiment of this concept and a living commentary on the varieties and spiritual truth of our scriptures and heritage. Through her '*Bhavasamadhis*', Ma frequently had the mystical feeling of enlargement, union with God and liberation. She was convinced that consciousness exists as a continuum and is the essence of what we are... and that the physical body is only the current vehicle of our spirit as it leaves and learns in the earth dimension. And so 'Ma' frequently reminded us that the most important step in our personal development and evolution was to become conscious of our inner "seat of truth", to concentrate on its presence, and to make it a living fact. "Be a seeker of your full identity", Ma used to urge her devotees. "Every one's guide is within", she said. When an Irish journalist asked 'Ma' whether she was really God, Ma's reply was sharp and pointed: "God pervades everything, every being. There is nothing except He alone. In your person too, He has come here to give me *darsan*".

Not only through words but also through her '*Kheyalas*' and '*Bhavasamadhi*' she sought to convey this eternal message of non-duality. For instance, 'Ma' asked Bholanath to perform Kalipuja... and then herself assumed Mother Kali's postures to the surprise of everyone present and accepted the puja. She absolutely believed that she was Goddess Kali incarnate. At times, 'Ma' used to plunge deep into samadhi... at other occasions she used to feel that her body was becoming bigger and bigger and her limbs heavier and heavier. Williams James in his book, "Varieties of Religious Experiences", has described these states in the following words: "It is a mystical feeling as if I am no longer small and insignificant. I have expanded and got linked with God. Have a feeling of liberation". How could it be otherwise? How could a self-realized soul, shorn of ego and body-consciousness, feel herself to be small? 'Ma' urged us to see God in everything and every being and practice love, compassion, understanding and kindness. Her most important message was 'as humans evolve towards less reliance on their ego and more reliance on the inner voice, we begin to achieve a truly spiritualized society'. The relevance and importance of this message, based on India's ancient, traditional value system, in today's troubled world need hardly any emphasis. At a time like this when our society is torn asunder by widespread 'crisis in character' and complete breakdown of our traditionally cherished moral and ethical standards and values, there is great need to turn our minds to Ma's messages and teachings and spread its key element that by eliminating everything that

contradicts our inner truth, we must discover our true mission on earth. Without this introspection, without the discovery of that spirit within us, we will remain, as Shri Aurobindo said, "an ambitious nothing".

Ma's commitment to secularism and universal religion

The second most important contribution of 'Ma' has been to reinforce our religious secularism, her unswerving commitment to universal religion and the basic tenets of all religious faith. Like Thakur Shri Ramakrishna, 'Ma' also believed that different religions were but diverse paths leading to the ultimate goal. 'Ma' offered Namaz at the Mazar of a Faquir—a muslim mystic—at Shahbagh. And a Muslim woman devotee constantly had a vision of 'Ma' with a Taz on her head while offering prayer to Allah. 'Ma' frequented a Sikh shrine near Shahbagh and engaged in discussions with Sikh devotees on Guru Nanak and Granth Saheb. And in Punjab she was given the same place of honour as the Holy Granth Saheb. When an Irish journalist introduced himself to 'Ma' as a Christian, 'Ma' said, "so am I, a Christian, a Muslim, anything you like". and on another occasion, a Christian devotee burst forth on meeting 'Ma': "Now we have a face to put on God". On another occasion when a young Christian girl asked 'Ma' how she could overcome a terrible fear that was haunting her, 'Ma' advised her to repeat the name of Christ and cover her mind and heart with vision of Christ.

Such indeed was Ma's faith in and love for, all religions and all Gods, and for all people of all lands whichever religion they professed and practiced. The Prayer of Japaji 28.M.1 of Adi Granth—the holy book of the Sikh community says, "Let all mankind be thy sect". 'Ma' too considered the family of humankind as one; and saw the same face of God in all gods.

Challenge before Ma's devotees and the organisation

The relevance of Ma's teachings, the shining example of 'integral humanism' that she embodied in her divine self and which she urged us to practice, in today's troubled world needs no emphasis. Our own country and society today is being torn asunder by widespread crisis of character, erosion of moral and ethical values, abuse of human rights, politicization of religion and emergence of fundamentalism. We devotees, our Sangha, must deeply introspect if we have done enough to spread Ma's message, Ma's teachings; if we ourselves practice in our everyday life what we have been preached by 'Ma', if organizing successfully, Ma's Centenary Celebrations, ends all our responsibilities.

I do believe that the coming of 'Ma' in our midst and our coming together with her has not been a mere accident. It has had a deep significance. Could it be

that 'Ma' came and gathered us and gave us the lead to discover, first, our own divine potential and then work as a critical mass of individuals to bring about the spiritual awakening that we need so urgently in our country, in our culture. Let us ponder over this seriously, and convert our Sangha into a more dynamic apolitical organization with an agenda of action.

MA

—Anjali Kumar.

Ma with love for all in her eyes
 Smile for everyone
 The one who takes away our worries and woes
 She who gives peace and wisdom to everyone
 Taking away darkness and sorrows away from us
 Holds our hands and leads us to the right path
 Giving strength and courage to face the world
 Fulfilling our wishes and wants.
 Ma whose divine light fills our lives and our world
 Who is always there when we need her .
 She is there showering her blessings and kindness on us.

JAIMA

DISTANT YEARNING

—'Shobha'

O' Ma Anandamayee being close to the heart
Still far far away thou art from me.

Aware Thou art of my restlessness
To be in touch with your holy self.

I made my world beautiful with the whisperings of the solitude
That could be filled with your presence.

I made it quiet to hear the music of your sweet notes
"Hari Bol.... Hari Bol".

Grant me space to walk with you side by side
Looking straight to reach my "real home"

"Ma", your awareness touches me with the touch of the fragrance
Blowing from the nodding daffodils of the mountain cliff.

The touch of the spray of the mountain Ganges
Dancing high to meet the temple tops

The touch of the morning rising sun
Finding its way through the glittering leaves

The touch of the morning dew
Treading tip toe to pick the marigolds for offering

Passing through the meadows
With far away sounds of bells and conches

Hurrying to get the touch of that blessed hand
That blesseth this path to walk with gravity

Strength to hold the name awakened
The touch that lets one bear all that passes by.

In hurt there is joy.....in loss a gain
In distance nearness is there
O' Ma Anandamayee your touch whispered to me! !



SREE ANANDAMAYEE MA AND NETAJI SUBHAS

—Arun Kumar Sen Gupta

Ma Anandamayee has come to Dakshineswar to visit the famous Kali Temple. Netaji Subhas has also come to call on Sree Ma. The authorities of the Kali Temple has arranged for their meeting in *Panchavati*. Netaji Subhas came to Panchavati. He first bowed down to Sree Ma and then took his seat just by the side of Sree Ma.

Sree Ma asked Netaji, "You serve the country, do you think in this way you will attain God?"

Netaji replied—'Am I searching for God'? Everybody laughed at his words. Sree Ma smiled and asked again—"What are you searching? Why do you serve the country? What benefit you can derive? Tell the people what benefit you achieve by serving the country? So the people will also come forward to serve. It is true none can do any thing without any interest.

Sree Ma told Netaji, 'You are a great speaker. I also want to hear something.'

Netaji smiles and says, 'I have not come here to deliver lectures, but to hear your words. I can only tell that I serve the nation because I get much pleasure. I serve because I love the nation. I enjoy by serving the country.'

Sree Ma asked—"Is this pleasure eternal?"

Netaji replied—"The word Eternal is difficult to explain."

Sree Ma said, 'What is permanent that is eternal. If you serve honestly and without any interest, you will enjoy eternal pleasure and you are doing the work in the same manner.'

Netaji wants some message from Sree Ma.

Sree Ma asked, 'Have you come only to hear? Then what I will say, will you listen? What I will say to do, will you do?'

Netaji replied—"I can not assure, but I can try."

Sree Ma delivered a long message—"What we do that is worldly work, which encourages only the feeling of want. Worldly action of course gives some pleasure, but it increases the feeling of need. When we are in need of anything, we try to get it. If need is attained, pleasure will be available. But this pleasure generates more need. That is why worldly work only increases our want. But if you work without any interest, you will get eternal pleasure. You have just told that you get pleasure by serving the country. Serving is a great thing. Your heart is very broad. I want your heart to be broader and broader. You serve the country whole heartedly. You

will get such pleasure which is eternal. The world is full of sorrows and sufferings. If you derive eternal pleasure you can distribute the same to others as well'.

Netaji asked—'What is the work of the Nature (*Prakṛti*) ?'

Sree Ma replied—'No work is possible without need. The work which gives permanent pleasure that is the action of the Nature. As you have permanent pleasure within your mind that is why you are in the quest for permanent pleasure.'

Netaji pointed out —'You have told that the nature of all men is the same, but in the Gita it is clearly indicated that own religion is the best.'

Sree Ma replied—'The messages of the Gita are always true. The object of a man is to gain something from his own religion. Everything is 'One', there is no place for 'Two'.

Netaji asked—'What is the solution ?'

Ma replied—'Work, work, work. Have determination, you will succeed.'

"One does the work and enjoys its fruit, because of the sense of prestige it brings, whereas by relinquishing the fruit it becomes Karmayoga."

—Ma Anandamayee

WITH MATAJI ON THE BANK OF THE GOMATI RIVER

—Krishnanath

The *Samyam* and the *Bhagavat Saptaha*, held in Ma's divine presence at Naimisharanya in the year 1960 were an uplifting spiritual experience, but still left a sense of disappointment in my mind; for my expectation that in Naimisharanya, being an out-of-the-way place, there would not be so many people and it would therefore be possible to have more intimate contact with Mataji, had not been realized. We could see Her sitting on the dais for long hours and occasionally had the good fortune of having her *darshan* from somewhat nearer in Her cottage, but the informal atmosphere that I longed for was impossible. It was rumoured that after the two functions, Mataji was likely to shift from Naradananda Ashram to some cottage on the bank of the Gomati. Many of those who had come, would have liked to stay on, but they were discouraged from doing so by the dismantling of the tents, the severing of electric connections and the cessation of feeding arrangements. All this was costing a lot of money and could not be maintained any longer. It was also made clear that Mataji wanted to be left alone after the strenuous time during the two Saptahas.

So, with a heavy heart, I was resigning myself to leave, when I learnt that Dr. Pannalal,* one of Mataji's oldest devotees, was to be favoured with some accommodation and that Mataji had indicated that I could share it. If you wish for anything from Mataji very strongly, how readily and kindly She grants it ! For three days Dr. Pannalal and I stayed together in the Prakash Kutir of Naradananda Ashram—a cottage which had been previously occupied by Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, who seemed to have left in it an impress of his spiritual practices. When Mataji shifted to the cottage on the Gomati bank, Her host there, Shri Prayag Narain Saigal, was so kind as to lend us his own big tent, And so it happened that I was fortunate enough to get another fortnight with Mataji, in just the conditions I had longed and prayed for. Not only were there hardly any outsiders, but even most of the Ashramites had been sent away one by one to their various places, and after a time only a handful of them were left. So there was nobody to keep a record of 'this solitary stay of Mataji in the most charming surroundings' (to quote from *Matri*

* Dr. Panna lal, I.C.S. was not only a very renowned administrator but was also a distinguished scholar and a sincere aspirant after the Truth.

Lila). It may not be out of place, therefore, if I narrate some of my recollections of this very happy period of my life.

During the three days that Mataji was still at Naradananda Ashram, we heard on the verandah of Her cottage the tape-recorded discourse of Swami Chetan Giriji, who also gave one more talk on the Kenopanishd.

Mataji's silvery laughter is known to everybody, but I have never seen Her so convulsed with laughter as on one occasion. During the *Saptaha* a large number of dogs had gathered round our camp. They used to fight ferociously for leavings of food outside the cook-house. One day, while we were sitting round Mataji on the verandah, I heard a loud bang outside, and Mataji was laughing away with a most amused expression on Her face. One of the dogs had thrust its head into a big earthen pot; it was stuck there and the dog, while running blindly, had hit against a wall ! The dog was now running even faster in fright, with the rim of the pot like a collar round its neck ! It was only when somebody hit the rim and broke it that the dog ceased its antics.

The place on the Gomati was a kind of small hermitage. Taking advantage of an old *ghat* (stone-steps leading down to the river), Shri Saigal had built alongside, a row of five small huts, like hermit cells, with a somewhat larger cottage at one end on a slightly higher ground, and a double-roomed cook-house at the other end. He had created these for the benefit of visiting *sādhus*. Mataji occupied the bigger cottage, while Gurupriya Didi and the Ashram girls were given the cells. Soldaries (small tents) were provided for the *sādhus* of the Ashram who had remained behind, while some of them continued to stay in Nāradananda Ashram, which was not far off. Besides our little hermitage, there were, further away, other temples and Ashrams built by famous saints, who had resided here in the past. The surroundings were very picturesque. On one side was the winding river with its broad sandy basin, its banks dotted with these Ashrams; there was a railway bridge at some distance over which trains could be seen, and heard whistling and rattling twice a day. On the other side of our camp there was a small hillock called the *Hanumān Tila*, with a temple on top, containing a huge image of Hanumān (about 18 feet high) carrying on his shoulders Rāma and Lakshmana, whom he had rescued from *Pātāla* (the under-world). This hill was said to be the fort of King Virāta at whose court the Pāndavas had resided in disguise during the final year of their exile, which they were required to pass incognito. There are images (rather crude) of the five Pandavas and Krishna in one small house, and of Draupadi in a separate little hut; but these are obviously of recent origin. There is a cave with an image of a smiling Hanumān in front, which is said to have a subterranean passage

leading from the fort to some distant place. The rest of the hill is wooded and some of the trees seem to be very ancient.

A few people occasionally dropped in to have Mataji's *dars'an*, but on the whole it was a very peaceful fortnight. For the first few days Mataji suffered from acute pain in Her joints. It looked like the result of the strain of the previous fortnight, but I suspect it was due to the troubles of other people She must have tried to lighten. But apart from taking it somewhat easy, Mataji showed no outward signs of what She was suffering, and in fact seemed very relaxed and jolly.

It was on the 6th of November that Mataji moved over from Naradananda Ashram to the Gomati bank. On that day *Akhanda Kirtan* for twelve hours was arranged at Mataji's instance at Chakra-Tirtha by the *Pandas* of the place. Mataji was present there during the closing hours, when quite a large crowd had gathered.

The first evening Mataji made a tour of inspection round the camp on the Gomati bank. When She came to our tent, Dr. Panna Lal was in a half-dressed condition and to the amusement of the people following Mataji, he simply prostrated himself before Her in that state. What Mataji noticed was not his scanty clothing, but the lack of a *durrie* (covering) on the floor in the front portion of the tent, which was then promptly supplied. What touched us was the way She looked over everything, the little cells, soldaries and the cook-room, to make sure that everyone was comfortable. She was here truly like the mother of a small household. Throughout the stay we all felt as if we were members of one family. It was so cosy and comforting to sit around Her mornings and evenings on the verandah of Her cottage. At night, when it was cold, some of us had the privilege of sitting inside the cottage near Her during the nightly *bhajans* and the 15 minutes *mauna*. How our silent meditation was helped by Her close proximity ! But at other times also one felt Her presence, even when one was nowhere near Her.

Though Mataji had cured me of my habit of smoking, I was still fond of my cup of tea in the morning, which Dr. P.'s bearer faithfully provided regularly. It was a welcome warming up after the cold night and before the dip in the cold waters of the Gomati. The bathing in the river was invigorating and refreshing. After *puja* and breakfast in our tent, Dr. P. and I would wander for about half an hour over the hill or visit the nearby Ashrams and temples. At about 10 A. M. we used to join the very attenuated party for the daily recitation of scriptures on the parapet round a tree between the small huts, which also had a small shrine of Shiva. After the recitation, the *Bhagavata* used to be read and expounded by Brahmachari. Kantibhai.¹ After

1. Brahmachari Kantibhai was subsequently renamed Swami Bhagavatananda Giri.

his departure, Brahmachari Kusum² was entrusted with this task. This would finish by 10-30 or 11, when it was time for Mataji to come out on the verandah of Her cottage, where we would gather round Her. One day, when for lack of time Kusumda had omitted the reading of the Bhāgavata, the very first question Mataji asked was, whether the Bhāgavata had been read. Thus it was made clear that even when She was not present, nothing was hidden from Her. There was another instance of this supernormal perception of Hers. Dr. P. and I, while wandering round, had discovered, at some distance from our camp, another broken down ghāt and a big tree with a large parapet round it. We thought it would be an ideal place for meditation and decided to sit there every day between 3 and 4 P. M. The very first day, Mataji told us in the evening that She had seen us going with our āsanās. Then She went on to say that it was a *tapobhūmi*, a specially favourable place, and that we should do a lot of meditation (खूब तपस्या करो). This was a great encouragement to us.

The conversations that took place on Mataji's verandah every morning and evening were very informal. We all felt instinctively that there was no need to ask questions. Generally Dr. P. reminded Mataji of some incident of Her life, or of a story She had previously told and She would repeat these to us. (I will recount some of the stories later). In addition, Mataji made Dr. P. read to us *Naimisharanya Māhātmya*, a book on Naimisharanya, which one of the *pandas* had brought. Dr. P. also expounded the *Nārada Bhakti Sutra*, which contains not merely very illuminating aphorisms, giving a most delightful exposition of the path of devotion (*bhakti*), but is also a lyrical composition written in very poetical language. Dr. P. after giving his own explanation, would every now and then appeal to Mataji, who added Her illuminating comments.

In the evenings Mataji sometimes walked a little near Her cottage. One evening a flock of birds flew over our heads in formation and Mataji asked Dr. P. how many birds there were in the flock. He quickly answered, 'Thirteen'. The flock wheeled round and again passed over us. Some of the people present tried to count. Some counted twelve and others fourteen. Mataji said, thirteen was right, and asked Dr. P. if he actually counted them. Dr. P. admitted that he had given a number which just came to his mind. Mataji then told us that She had thought of the number 13 and that sometimes others spoke out Her thought. On another occasion-namely after the *mauna* in Her cottage-She asked what Avadhutji had said. As She did not indicate to what incident She was referring, we did not know what She meant. She

2. Brahmachari Kusum is now known as Brahmachari Nirvanananda.

then repeated the question, adding, we had all been there, could no one remember it ? Then Kusumda came out with Avadhutji's remark about कुतर्क (wrong reasoning) and the illustration he had given of how someone had tried to disprove God's greatness by asking: "Can He create something greater than Himself ?" and then saying: "If He could, He would no longer be the greatest and if He could not, that also would prove that He was not so great." This was the remark that Mataji was referring to. Perhaps She tries from time to time to see which one of those round Her is capable of being a receptacle of Her thought-transfers.

Another thing I have realized during this stay was that Mataji like other great prophets and saints, often speaks in parables. She Herself told us the story of a rich man, whom She had advised to 'keep his mouth sweet'. When he met Her again after a year he complained that he had not yet had any experience of God even though he had followed Her advice of always keeping a piece of sugar candy (मिथ्री) in his mouth. The only way in which he had benefited was the disappearance of his cough and cold. This man had taken Her literally and not understood that She was asking him to repeat God's name constantly. Another advice Mataji gives is, 'go and sit under a tree'. Here the tree is a symbol of someone who gives solace without making any distinction. What is meant is that one should seek the company of *mahātmās* or *sādhus* and, of course, ultimately of God, who drops the fruit automatically into one's lap. She once explained the allegory in the *Gītā*, about this life being an Ashwattha tree with its roots above and branches below (ऊर्ध्वमूलम् अधःशाखम्) by asking, "Is not your head, which is the seat (*mūla*) of your consciousness on the top ? You get your knowledge through your brain, just as water reaches the tree through its roots and that too not directly, but through the soil." At the end of our stay, when I told Her that I was returning to Bombay, She said, "How long are you going to remain in a *dharamś āla* (caravanserai) ? You must now go home". I thought at first that I was being asked to renounce the world at once, but later, in another connection, She explained that what She meant was that one should not remain attached too long to worldly activities and possessions, but turn one's mind to God, one's real home.

It is well known that Mataji has never been to school to learn Grammar, but She has evolved Her own practical etymology. Her derivations of words are quite unorthodox and yet bring out their meaning in a new way that hits you in the eye. Thus, according to Her, *viṣaya* (object of sense), is *viṣ hai*, and so She calls it 'slow poison'—one of the English expressions She is fond of using. Similarly She explains *vāsanā* (desire) as *vās nā* where God does not dwell'. She adds: "When you cling to your desires you cannot reach God. Therefore give up those vain

passions, which lead you away from God to the realm of death." One day a Brahmachari said to Mataji: "How can we love whom we have never seen? Therefore we first of all want God to give us a glimpse of Himself." Mataji's reply was that this was *durbuddhi* (literally 'wrong idea') which She defined as *dūr buddhi*, 'thinking that God is at a distance' and this is what leads to *durgati*, (literally, misfortune) meaning, according to Her, *dūrgati* 'going away from Him instead of realizing Him.' How beautifully this expresses the truth that God is within ourselves ! Ma went on to say that if one could not visualize a particular form of God, one should look upon the letters of the mantra itself as representing God. In Sanskrit the word for the letters of the alphabet is *aksara*, which also means 'imperishable' and is in this sense applied to *Parabrahma* in the *Gītā*. The term '*mantra*' is ordinarily derived from *mannāt trāyate*, 'that which protects by contemplation,' but Ma's derivation is *man tera*, 'My mind is Thine—complete surrender !

Occasionally outsiders who came to see Mataji asked questions. A few of those, together with Her answers, may be quoted here. A student wished to know how to find time for japa (silent repetition of God's name), without interfering with his studies; Ma said, "Spend less time in chatting and thus you can save at least ten minutes in the morning and ten in the evening." A man asked how to get rid of *kāma krodha* (passion and anger)'.
 "By repeating God's name".
 "Even when one is impure ?"
 "Yes. God purifies everything."

One man, who said he was employed in the Railways, wanted to know a simple way of reaching God without having to spend time in *japa*, *dhyāna* (meditation etc.)

Mataji: "Keep satsang, meet saints."

"If even that is not possible ?"

"Then read Sad grantha (good religious books)."

He asked how he was to earn his livelihood if, in pursuit of God, he left his job. Ma said, "God provides." Then She told a story of two friends who tried to test the truth of this belief by meditating in the jungle. After several hours, one of them got hungry and seeing no prospect of food coming to him, went back to town and had a hearty meal there. Then, feeling sorry for his friend, he took some food to him to the jungle where he was still sitting and meditating under a tree. To his taunt that God was not providing any food for him, the friend replied that God had already sent some through the doubting friend himself.

The gentleman who was questioning Ma continued to express his disbelief and some of us were feeling annoyed at his conceited way of talking, but Mataji gave him *prasād*, spoke sweetly to him and asked him to try.

One old lady wanted to know how to find the Lord. Ma said: 'Do *puja*'. The lady replied, she did not feel interested in *puja* and would rather do *japa*, but found that her mind would not settle down to it. 'Compel your mind,' said Mataji. The lady had come to stay in the camp, and another day asked, which was better *jnāna* or *bhakti*, since each was being praised at different times. Narayan Swami replied: 'They go together and one follows the other.' Mataji said: 'Try *bhakti* first', but the woman said जी नहीं लगता (I have no aptitude). Ma said, 'Then first practise *Guru bhakti*.' Another day again the lady asked similar questions and from something that Didima said I realized that she was no idle questioner, but an earnest seeker who was finding it difficult to concentrate. Ma advised her to reserve a special place for meditation and to sit there doing *japa* for not less than half an hour at time; if she felt sleepy she should refresh her eyes with water. The sweet old lady ultimately said she wanted Mataji's blessing.

Another lady asked : 'What should a person do if she did not understand the *Gītā, Bhagavata* or the *Purānas* ?'

'She should approach God directly; pray and repeat God's name.'

'Is not a Guru necessary ?'

'Yes. A Guru will appear when necessary; in the mean while make God your Guru.'

A man posed the problem: 'What is better, *par seva* (service to others), or *bhajana* (singing God's name) ?'

Mataji: 'It is wrong to look upon service as *par seva*; that only enhances the ego. You must look upon everyone as God, (*Tat*) and thus do only His service.'

'Should one get up while doing worship, if a person in dire distress wants help ?'

'Look upon the needy person as God and there will be no problem.'

A Police Inspector said he had to beat people in order to detect crimes and asked what he should do about it. Mataji requested me to reply. I said it was wrong to beat. "Then how is he to detect the criminal ?" asked Mataji. I said there was a science of criminology, fingerprints and other clues by which crimes were detected in other countries, where the Police did not resort to beating to extort confessions. The Inspector exclaimed it would take many years for our country to progress to that stage. For us there was no other way. He also felt that it was not he who did

the beating, but some power within him. Ma said, अपने कर्मफल तो भोगना ही पड़ता है, meaning that he could not escape the responsibility for his actions.

On new moon day, when lots of people had come to bathe at the Chakra Tirtha, Mataji told us to go there and see *Bhagavan* (God) in the guise of the crowd. So Dr. Pannalal and I walked to the sacred pool, and looking with the vision suggested by Ma, we were truly touched by the sight of hundreds of men, women and children milling around and bathing. They had come walking, some as far as forty miles. We saw two boys measuring their length by prostrating themselves on the ground and proceeding in this manner towards the pool. Another interesting feature were the *Pandas* (Priests) sitting all around the tank either on small cots or just squatting on the ground with a basket in front of them in which the pilgrims deposited their clothes and belongings. They were given *kusha* grass to sprinkle water as offering to God, and on returning after the bath they placed in the basket as a reward to the priest whatever they had brought, mostly handfuls of grain or vegetables from own farms. Whenever I shall in future see crowds at holy places, I hope I shall remember not to get annoyed, but to look upon them as manifestations of God.

During the *Samyam Saptah* one gentleman used to ask Mataji if She saw any divine beings in the air. Ma never satisfied this person's curiosity, but those of us who remained behind on the Gomati bank had the privilege of hearing some of her experiences in that sphere. On the night of the 19th November, Ma told us in Her cottage after the *mauna* that immediately after the *kirtan* was over, She first heard a kind of throbbing sound which gradually became louder and turned into a chant— 'परमेश, शरणागतं, शरणागतम्', and then gradually faded off. She repeated the tune several times, but unfortunately when, the next night, She asked us to reproduce it, nobody could remember it precisely and She would not sing it again at the time (though afterwards I found that Sri Shobhanda had learnt it and sang it once or twice). It was suggested that the correct words might be शरणागतोऽहम्. Mataji at once agreed to this. She explained that somebody had chanted this hymn in the ancient days. and it had remained in the air.

ASHRAM NEWS

BAIRAGARH (BHOPAL) ASHRAM-

Gita Jayanti was celebrated in a very special manner this year from 18th to 20th December, 1996 in Ma's beautiful Ashram at Bairagarh, Bhopal, situated on the top of a hillock with a picturesque view of the down below.

On the earnest request of the Ashram authorities to H.H. Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj, President of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, Swami Sri Ramarajyam, a good scholar as well as a fluent speaker, specially attended the programme on behalf of Pujya Swami Sri Chidanandaji.

Apart from having daily *patha*, *puja* and discourses on the Gita, a novel programme of having painting and dance competitions on different chapters of the Gita were also very beautifully organised among young school children.

The entire three-day programme, which was attended by heads of different educational institutions and distinguished citizens of Bhopal, was very widely covered in all prominent dailies of Madhya Pradesh.

Full credit for organising such a decent function on the occasion of the Gita Jayanti celebration goes to the Secretary of the Ashram Committee, Sm. Kirpal Kaur and her daughter, Km. Guneeta.

VARANASI ASHRAM-

On 14th January, 1997 on the sacred occasion of the *Makara-Samkranti* festival, special *pujas* of Sri Padmanabha (Lord Visnu), & Goddess Savitri (*Gayatri*), sunrise to sunset *akhand* kirtana along with special *bhoga* etc. were organised in the Ashram. The *Yagna mandap* as well as the *Puja mandap* were artistically decorated with fresh flowers for this occasion.

Swami Bhaskaranandaji along with other Ashram brahmacharis and Dr. Bipin Bhatt family from the U.S.A. were specially present for the functions.

On 1st March the annual function of the Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth, which is going to celebrate its Diamond Jubilee next year, was held in the Ashram hall under the chairmanship of Dr. Vibhuti Narain Singh, Maharaja of Benares. H.H. Swami Chidananda Saraswati, President of the Divine Life Organisation was the chief guest.

Nice programme of about forty five minute's duration by young girls of the Kanyapeeth was highly applauded by several distinguished educationists of Varanasi.

Swami Sri Chidanandaji Maharaj, apart from distributing prizes to meritorious girls, dwelt in his short speech specially on three aspects of ideal character building—*Paropakāra* (doing good to others) *Satya Vachanā* (observance of truth) and *Sadāchāra* (noble action), because "building of ideal character" has all along been the motto of the Kanyapeeth as ordained by Sri Ma.

Maharaja Benares in his concluding presidential speech laid particular stress on the fact that *quality* and not *number* of students in such a type of institution is only worth considering. If this institution through its continuous efforts is successful in putting up before the outside world even one single ideal girl (*Sukanyā*) in the form of a *Viswa kanyā* (top-most ideal girl in the whole world) then the whole object of the institution established through Ma's divine blessings will be fulfilled.

VARANASI HOSPITAL-

In the interest of the poor suffering people of the city of Varanasi and other adjoining areas a Free Medical & Surgical Camp was organised in the Mata Anandamayee Hospital for a period of one full month from 10th January to 10th February, 1997.

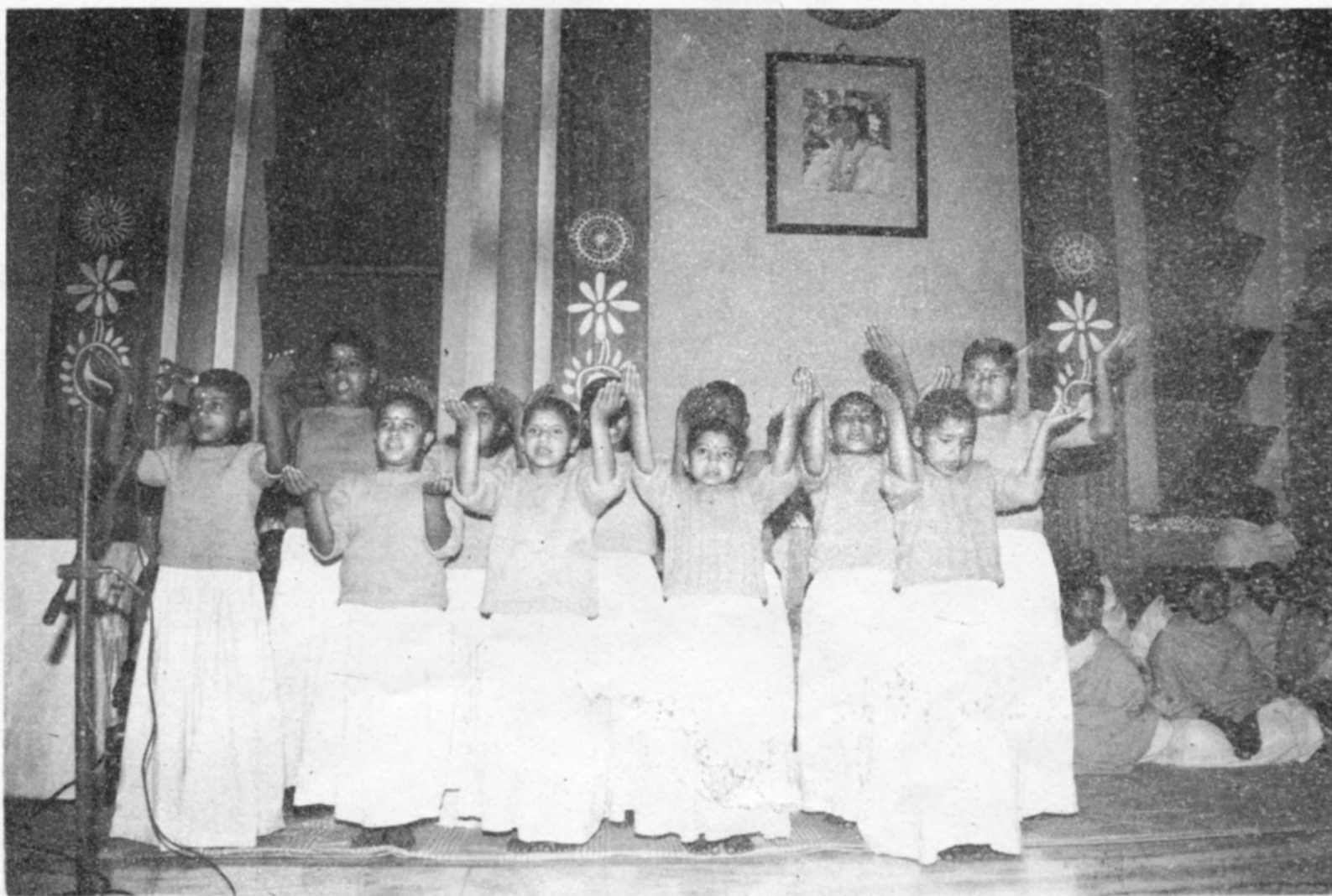
During this period nearly 2300 patients were examined free by renowned physicians & surgeons, various types of investigations were also done free of any charge & all sorts of medicines were given completely free. Special stress was given on free cataract operations, intraocular lens transplantations as well as on hernia & hydrocele operations everything free.

On 3rd March, at the request of one of Ma's devotees, more than hundred beggars were sumptuously fed in the hospital campus. Cotton shawls & cash amount of Rs. 10/- each were also distributed through the hands of H.H. Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj.

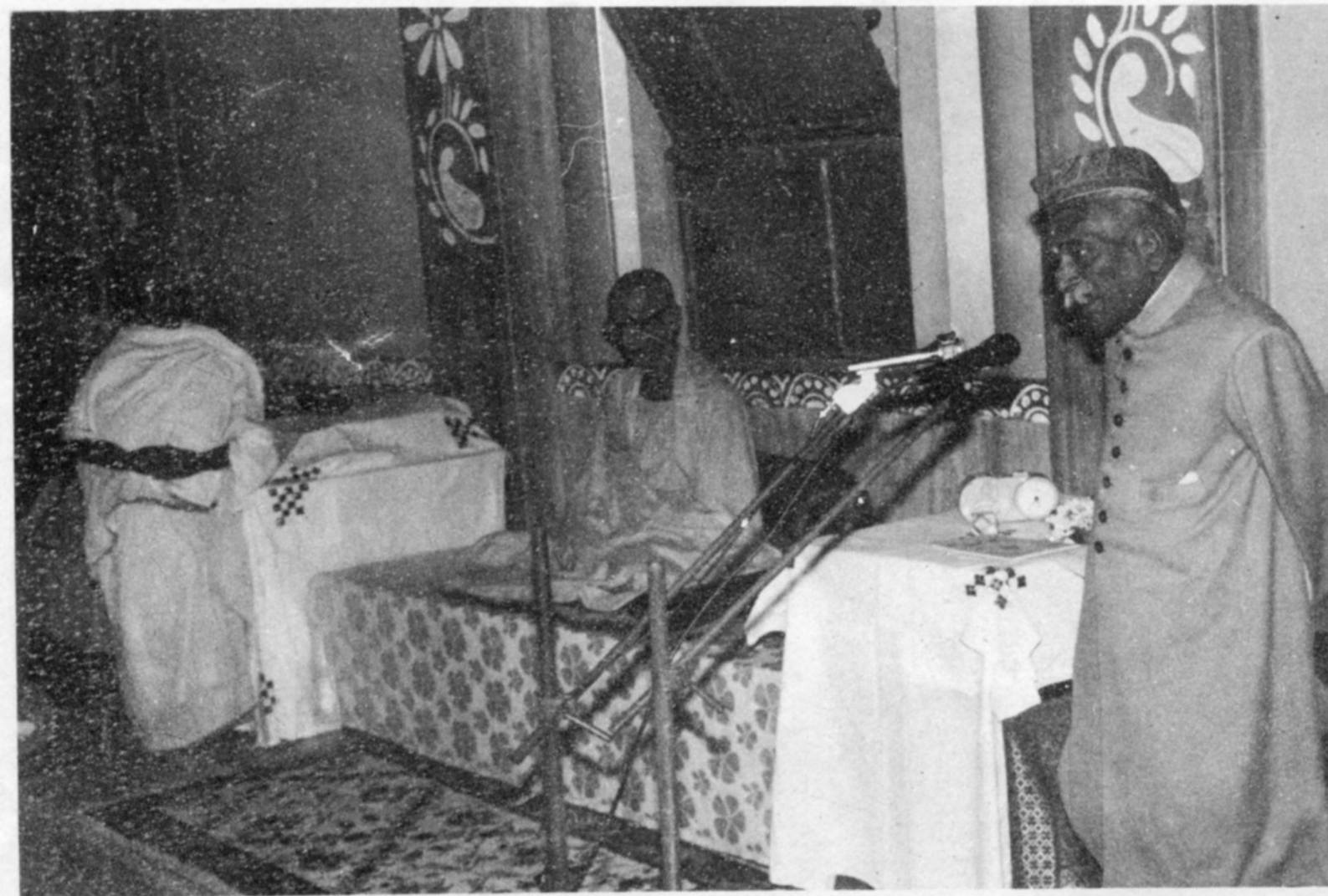
Swamiji also blessed all the indoor patients of the hospital and exhorted the doctors & other attending staff to work with dedication in the spirit of real service to the God—*Jana Janārdana Sevā*.

PURI ASHRAM-

This, one of the very old Ashrams, established in Sri Ma's name more than fifty seven years ago, just on the beautiful seabeach in Puri, was once a place for resort for Sri Ma. The people of Puri & neighbouring areas were blessed by Sri Ma's divine presence for almost one full month in the summer of 1979, which was her last visit to this region.



A scene from the annual function of the Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth
Varanasi on March 3, 1997



Another scene from the Kanyapeeth function. Dr. Vibhuti Narain Singh, Maharaja Benares, addressing the girls with Swami Chidanandaji sitting on the dais.

Due to some unfortunate developments the Ashram remained practically closed for several months at a stretch during 1994-95.

But it is really gratifying to note that through the dedicated efforts of Sri Anil Ranjan Dewanjee & a few other devotees from Calcutta the Ashram in Puri has again hummed with activities after remaining almost totally silent for a prolonged period.

On 15th and 16th March special functions were organised in the Ashram consisting of Ma's *puja*, *havana*, *bhajan*, kirtan, spritual talks and distribution of *prasad* etc. The 'days' programme started on the 16th morning through offering special *puja* in the temple of Lord Jagannath and procession of Ma's devotees & admirers with Sri Ma's, Lord Jagannath's & Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's pictures etc. singing kirtan all the way from the temple to the Ashram at Swargadwar.

The sadhus of the local Bharat Sevashram Sangha actively co-operated in the functions. More than forty devotees reached Puri from Calcutta & Burdwan specially for the programme.

Through the sincere and untiring efforts of Sri A.R. Dewanjee the entire Ashram had also been completely renovated.