

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

A quarterly journal dealing mainly
with the divine life and sayings of
Sri Anandamayi Ma

Vol.-II

April, 1998

No. 2

BOARD OF EDITORS

- Km. Chitra Ghosh
- Dr. Bithika Mukerji
- Dr. Krishna Banerjee
- Km. Guneeta



MANAGING EDITOR
Sri Panu Brahmachari



ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION (POSTAGE FREE)
INLAND—RS. 60/-
FOREIGN—US \$ 12/- OR RS. 400/-
SINGLE COPY—RS. 20/-

CONTENTS

1.	Matri Vani	...	1
2.	Sidelights on Matajis Birthday Celebration —Vijayananda	...	3
3.	Sri Anandamayee Ma & the spiritual heritage of ancient India —Prof. Debaprasad Bhattacharya	...	8
4.	From the diary of a European —Melita Maschmann	...	12
5.	Contribution of Ma to the cultural & spiritual heritage of India —Amiya Kumar Majumdar	...	17
6.	Mother —'Shobha'	...	20
7.	Incidents of Ma's grace —Swami Bhagavatananda	...	21
8.	With Mataji at the Hardwar Kumbh —'Krishnanath'	...	24
9.	Manifestation of Mother in nature —'Mohua'	...	28
10.	Some interesting details relating to Dehradun Ashram temples	29
11.	Mother—Majorie Pitzer	...	33
12.	From notes taken in Ma's presence —'Kirpal'	...	34



MATRI-VANI

Man must go out in search of That which is concealed behind the world. He should choose an abode that will make it easy for him to proceed to his true Home.

× × ×

The word '*Manus*' (man) itself gives the clue to what man should really be : a being who is self-aware. Even if he has slipped and fallen, is it not his bounden duty to use as a lever the very earth to which he has tumbled, and raise himself up again ? Besides, one does not fall so often. As a man, constant effort is his duty.

× × ×

Look, in order to pluck a rose one has to put one's hand into the midst of thorns. But if the rose is a person's aim and he has a keen desire to pluck it, he will not refrain from doing so for fear of being pricked. Moreover, the Great Mother arranges whatever is necessary for each one : She certainly knows the real need of each individual. If one has at least this much faith, there is no reason at all to feel distressed.

× × ×

Try your utmost never to succumb to anyone's influence. In order to become firm, calm, deeply serious, full of courage, with one's personality wholly intact, pure and holy out of one's strength, one has to be centered in God.

× × ×

Force of character is man's great strength. If he uses it in his dealings with the world he will indeed be victorious in most directions.

× × ×

Worldly life is no doubt a battle-field. By becoming conscious of one's spiritual wealth one must strive to emerge triumphant from the battle.

× × ×

If you do not allow your thoughts to stray from His Lotus feet there is hope of your being saved from all manner of temptations. Man's duty is to awaken to true

humanity and to cast aside his animal propensities; to choose what is excellent and to relinquish the merely pleasurable. Let your mind be like a beautiful flower that may be offered to the Lord in worship.

×

×

×

To remain calm and at peace under all circumstances is man's duty. To form a bad opinion of a person just because one has heard some gossip about him is wrong. Hostility, condemnation, abusive language, ill-feeling and so forth, even if kept concealed within one's mind, will and must fall back on oneself. Nobody should ever harm himself by harbouring such thoughts and feelings.

×

×

×

When a tree dies it leaves the seed and another tree springs forth out of the seed. Thus there is the end and also the eternity at the same time. The path of God is endless. The revelation from the mantra (seed) is also eternal. As in a tree no two leaves are exactly identical, no two fruits are exactly similar, death and eternity co-exist. There are endless paths of realization. There is no one save God alone. There is a stage when realization happens effortlessly. The entire universe is one's preaching area. One should preach to others only with guru's orders.

×

×

×

God is not far away from you, not also apart from you. The longings and desire are all within you. So, try to proceed on the path of self realization. If you still have worldly desires there will be death and re-birth. But you are the scion of immortality, the eternal divinity, the eternal Servant of the Lord. So turn towards Him, turn away from worldly longings back to your own home. This constant coming and going, birth and death entail great suffering and misery. One is redeemed by knowing one's own self.



SIDELIGHTS ON MATAJI'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

—VIJAYANANDA

My intention is not to give an account of the celebrations—this will probably be done by persons who are better qualified for the task than myself; I just want to write about a few points that struck me on those occasions.

1

Many people have noticed and some have even complained that there is apparently no organization to see to the welfare and discipline of the people who take part in the large gatherings around Mother. It looks as if there were no one to direct and no staff to carry out the orders. In fact to a mind trained in the western way it may at times even seem somewhat disorganized. But this is mere appearance, due to viewing the situation superficially. If we observe carefully and with an unbiased mind, we shall soon discover that in reality everything is proceeding as it should, that every person gets what he or she needs; that in spite of the apparent disorder nobody comes to harm, no harsh words can be heard (except, may be, on the rarest occasions); that most people look smiling and contented.

How can this be possible ?

If we look round and watch the actions of our daily life and the ways of Nature, we shall find that there are two different methods of working, that actions can be performed in two different ways : the way of the human mind and that of Nature.

The former has its origin in the intellect, the ego fully conscious of its possibilities. Let us consider for example the building of a house. The plan of construction has been devised by the mind of the architect. Before starting on the building work, every detail has been thought out and calculated : the amount of the various materials needed, their cost, the number of workmen required, etc. The architect's calculations are done with extreme care, for if the house collapsed it would be disastrous.

All this shows the functioning of a power, namely that of the intellect, the ego—conscious of its capacity no doubt, but aware also of its limitations; a power capable of perceiving only its small circumscribed sphere of activity, but not its relation with the universe.

The way of Nature is quite different. Let us take for example the growth of a mango tree. If we go into details we can notice that branches, twigs, leaves and so on are growing without symmetry. There may be a huge branch on the one side and a very small one on the opposite side. Some branches yield an abundance of flowers and fruits, others almost none. Thousands of blossoms fall down that will never bear fruits. Many unripe mangoes are shaken off by the wind; and when finally the fruits have the chance of producing a new tree? Very few indeed—although, this is surely the ultimate aim of the fruit.

In this way a power acts that is conscious of its infinite wealth, of its omnipotence. The apparently irregular growth of the tree puzzles the intellect used to geometrical forms and to symmetry. But the ultimate result is the majestic beauty of a gigantic tree.

The huge waste is the token of a power that has a storehouse of infinite riches at its disposal. In actual fact there is no waste, but only circulation of matter within the oneness of the universe. The flowers and fruits that fall from the tree are not lost. They will enrich the soil and help other plants to grow, or nourish birds and insects. The power that causes the mango tree to grow does not only see this limited part of its functioning, but knows its relation with the Whole.

A higher aspect of that very same power arranges for welfare of the hundreds of people who collect around Mother. It is the power that pervades all beings and moves them from within. This power is aware of the needs of every single individual and knows the measure of his capacity to receive according to the results of his *Karma*. It is conscious of the relationship between all beings and of the Oneness behind the appearance of diversity, whereas the power of the ego sees only the superficial diversity, the splitting up into individuals.

During the last night of Mother's birthday celebrations (or rather in the early morning) at the end of the *Tithi Puja* everyone is allowed to go near Mother to do obeisance and offer flowers or anything else of his choice. This can only be done one by one and as hundreds of people are present it is bound to take a good deal of time. The mind would naturally wish that there should be some efficient organization keeping people in a queue and making them recede by a different way after doing their *pranams*. But in Mother's presence discipline and organization from outside may be out of place and perhaps even harmful, for by it the free play of the Diving Power might be hampered through the rigidity of the human will. In fact on most occasions, without any organization, people walk upto Mother one by one in perfect order and in complete silence, but on one occasion this was not the case.

I was present during that holy night and as every body else, I also tried to approach Mother when the *Puja* was over. On that night Mother usually lies on a couch, absolutely still and to all appearance far removed from bodily consciousness. As soon as She returns to the normal state, offerings and salutations are stopped and Mother is led back to Her room.

I had brought a beautiful bouquet of flowers, intending to offer it to Mother. I tried first to follow one queue, but another one had formed from a different direction. After several unfruitful attempts I at last managed to come near Mother with only three or four people in front of me. But at that moment a few ladies rushed in and we were obliged to stand back. I then reflected that one should after all take things as they came on all occasions and thus remained aloof.

At that very moment Mother sat up. A human semi-circle was formed around Her to protect Her from the crowd. Offerings and salutations had to stop. It looked as if the bouquet I had brought would not fulfil its purpose of existence.

A few minutes later Mother rose. On those occasions it takes some time until She fully recovers body-consciousness and She is led to Her room, supported by several persons. Two human walls are formed on both sides of Her way to enable Her to walk, undisturbed by the intruding crowd. Strangely enough, the spot where I stood aloof was just on Mother's way and between the human walls. Mother advanced, facing exactly in my direction. I deposited the bunch of flowers at Her feet, made obeisance and stepped out of Her way.

When afterwards I mused about this incident, I realized that in that holy night, notwithstanding the dense crowd and the apparent confusion, I had had the chance to present my offerings to Mother in a unique and exceptional way, in fact in precisely the manner that I preferred. Probably many other persons had similar experiences.

2

During that holy night I had the good fortune of being able to observe closely Mother's countenance almost immediately after She got up from the state of absolute stillness. It is well known that during the *Puja* of the last night of the celebrations, She usually lies with Her face covered entirely or almost entirely by Her sari. She appears to have left body-consciousness. I do not know whether any one has until now been able to ascertain whether Her pulse and breathing stop on those occasions. The reverence we all feel for Mother, keeps us from attempting such investigations. But even if pulse and breathing are not completely suspended, they must at any rate most likely be almost imperceptible.

The state in which Mother appears to be on those occasions is of course quite beyond the range of our understanding. It seems probable that She is then in a disembodied state. Many people believe that She enters *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. In that state, the empirical world ceases to exist and consequently there are neither the Mother nor Her children yearning for Her blessings, but only pure, unbroken, blissful consciousness. Mother is and has ever been free to remain constantly in that supreme and exalted state. It is Her boundless love that makes Her play with us the play of duality. It seems improbable that in the holy night of Her birthday when so many people have gathered to implore Her blessings, She should retreat in the Great Void. I take, in that, rather on the contrary, She very likely assumes a state in which Her benediction can pour down on us at maximum abundance and where She can absorb as much as possible of the bad *Karma* of Her children.

The first birthday celebration of Mother that I attended took place in 1951 at Ambala, only a few months after I first met Mother. During the *Tithi Puja* I sat not very far from Her. She was lying down straight, as usual on those occasions, apparently far removed from this world. I thought She was in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* and looked sadly at Her, thinking : "Mother has gone far away from us !" While this thought was revolving in my mind, Mother awoke, sat up and opened Her eyes. Her first glance fell straight on me. It was a long and deep gaze full of significance, which I clearly understood to mean : "No ! I have not gone far away from you; I am ever, ever present with you, very, very near you !"

The year at Dehradun when I saw Mother rise after the Puja, it seemed to me that She bore the expression of one who had just carried away the heavy load of our miseries.

3

The night of the anniversary of Mataji's birth is for most of us a vigil. I myself took rest for only a few hours before the function began. In general when my sleep is cut short even slightly I feel drowsy during the next day. But I have experienced this year as many times before that when we forego sleep for Mother's sake, not the least inconvenience will be felt. I returned from the celebration at about 6 a.m. feeling fresh and rested and immediately got busy with my daily routine.

4

A conversation with a friend from Calcutta, an old and fervent devotee of Mother, attracted my attention to one of the most extraordinary features that have been observed by many people in connection with Mother. The crowds around Her

may consist of thousands or tens of thousands—yet She will never forget any single person. If one asks Her for a private interview, She will grant it in due course and at the most propitious moment. If a request has been made to Her, the response will come without fail. If someone wishes to take leave of Her before going away, he will be received at the right time. She knows where and how everybody has been accommodated. If one encounters a difficulty, She is always there to solve the matter. When She talks to people about their personal problems, She gives the impression of knowing every detail. Not only this; the living interest She takes in every individual gives him the conviction—although it may seem absurd at first thought—that Mother's attention and care are fully focussed on him and on him alone, just as if he were the dearest of all Her children. Many people are convinced of this and although it sounds almost ridiculous it is nevertheless true. How can this be possible ? Mother has no ego consciousness, no limiting personality of Her own. She is one with the pure, blissful, impersonal, all-per-vading *Chaitanya* (Consciousness). When Her attention is drawn towards one individual, the centre of consciousness is atonce focussed on him. She is identified with him, nay, own Self. And there is nothing dearer than the self "Indeed, it is not for the love of all that all are dear, but it is for the love of the Self, that all are dear", says the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

●

SRI ANANDAMAYEE MA AND THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF ANCIENT INDIA

—PROF. DEBAPRASAD BHATTACHARYA

Among the great spiritual personalities of modern India there are two notable instances of enlightened souls commanding universal respect who were illiterate, or very nearly so. One is Sri Ramakrishna, the other is Sri Anandamayee Ma. Now this fact of their being unlettered has, from our present point of view, very special importance. The reason is this. Here are two supremely great spiritual personalities who have no direct acquaintance with our śāstras neither in the original nor in translation. Yet their recorded utterances strikingly corroborate and confirm the revelations of the great sages and seers of ancient India that have come down to us through the śāstras.

Had they been great scholars who had a direct access to Sanskrit sacred texts, their affirmations in spiritual matters would be less compelling especially for those of us who think to be intellectual, are sceptically inclined, would be only too apt, to suspect that their affirmations are not based on their realization but on wide reading of the śāstras. But when Sri Ramakrishna or Sri Anandamayee Ma says things that are in complete consonance with what the great rishis of ancient India have revealed through the śāstras regarding the nature of Reality and the life of the spirit, even the most fiercely sceptical among us will be driven, *malgri lui*, to entertain the probability that our rishis of old may have had something to tell that deserved to be heard with respect. This is the reason why their testimony is of such inestimable value.

But this is not the only reason; for there is another, which, to my mind, is quite as important. It is this. There is a word, a very old Sanskrit word, which occurs many times in our śāstras, including the Bhagavadgītā. It is the word—"tattva-darśin" It seems to me from our present point of view a clear understanding of this vital and profoundly significant word is absolutely necessary. The term is of such paramount importance because it clearly implies that, "tattva"s or great Truths can be, and in fact are, *seen*. Now, in the philosophical tradition of India, 'to see' means 'to know'. Hence *darśana* is synonymous with *jñāna*. Jñāna in our spiritual tradition means not knowledge arrived at through arguments or ratiocination, it is direct vision of "tattva", it has, in other words, the immediacy and directness of

sense-perceptions. This is why in our philosophical terminology, it is indistinguishable from darśana. Significantly in the fourth chapter of Bhagavadgītā, in a famous śloka the two terms "jñānin" and "tattva-darśin" have been used in succession : "Upadekṣyanti te jñānam jnaninastattvadarśinah" "jñānis and tattvadarśins will teach you jñāna, the Supreme Knowledge. That, this knowledge, this direct vision of Truth, may come to an illiterate person is evidenced by Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Anandamayee Ma; while a highly learned person who is well versed in the śāstras, may never have it. The reason for this is, as Aldous Huxley had put it so aptly in a profound remark : "Knowledge is a function of being". Knowledge, in other words, depends on the degree of purity of mind one has attained; what one knows is determined by what one is like.

There is abundant evidence to show that Sri Anandamayee Ma not only saw distant events, objects and persons; she also, and with equal directness and vividness saw *Truths*, or *tattvas* which belong to the realm of the spirit. This is demonstrated by those marvellous metaphors of hers which owe their startlingly illuminating effect to directness of vision. Take, for instance, her metaphor of the time-table, which she compares to our *śāstras* which give the sādḥaka information that is not only necessary but absolutely indispensable. But not every little detail is there : details like the scenes that the railway traveller see in the way. To give another example : take the metaphor of the electric fan, which continues to rotate for sometime ever after it is switched off, to illustrate the continued existence of the *jīvanmukta puruṣa* after the attainment of *Brahman*, Knowledge.

There is a widespread tendency in our country at present to decry "tattva". People often mention the word sarcastically, even mockingly. The reason, it seems to me is that they mistakenly believe the word to mean abstract theory; hence "tattvakathā" has come to mean in Bengal "theorising". Evidently, this marked distrust for the word arises from the notion that there is something forbiddingly recondite about it.

This suspicion amounting sometimes to dread, is somewhat surprising in the land of ours. For in the philosophical tradition of India, a tradition which is very old, this Sanskrit word does not mean "theory", which is based on intellectual perulation. Etymologically it is *tat+tva = tattva*. *Tat'* as we all know, means 'that'. *Tattva* therefore means literally "thatness", "the nature of Reality", "the true nature of something", "the essence or essential principle" and so on.

My contention is that, so long as we persist in our inveterate distrust and dread of this word "tattva", we shall never be able to understand Sri Anandamayee Ma. For this smiling, mild-mannered, soft-spoken Mother of ours who speaks so often

jokingly and playfully, even playing with words, with such a delightful effect, hardly ever says anything which does not express a "tattva"; and the most remarkable thing is that this "tattva" very often, indeed surprisingly often, turns out to be the Ultimate Reality, to which she frequently refers as simply "that", of course with capital 't'.

This 'tat', that or 'sheyi' in Bengali, as we all know is the term which Sri Ma often used to indicate the Supreme Reality, like many other things in her practice, takes us back to the great seers, the rishis of ancient India. It takes us back, for instance to the Chandogya Upanisad, to that celebrated passage where we find that astonishing dialogue between father and son. The father, a great sage, asked his son, Svetaketu to make a few experiments. He asked Svetaketu, for instance, to drop a lump of salt in a bowl of water. Next morning he asked his son to bring the bowl and see what happened to the lump of salt. It was nowhere to be found. Then Svetaketu was asked to taste the water from the surface, in the middle and at the bottom. It tasted salty everywhere. It was then that the father made that startling pronouncement, which was repeated several times "*sa ya eṣoṇimā etadātmātvamavedamidam sarvaṁ, tat satyaṁ, sa ātmā, tatvamasi Śvetaketo!*" "My son, that subtle essence which you do not perceive there — is that. In that which is the subtle essence, all that exists has its Self. That is the Truth, that is the Self, and thou, Śvetaketu art That"

Incidentally, it is (along with One) this word "that" (*tat*) by which Sri Ma often refers to the Supreme Reality, who cannot be described in words, because language can deal only with the dualistic world. To bring this "thou" (*tvam*) closer and closer to "that".

Incidentally these two "*tat*" (that) and "*ekam*" (One) take us back, as far back as the Ṛgveda, the oldest book of the world. Take for instance this haunting, astounding line from the *Ṛk-saṁhita* in which both these words occur in succession: "*ānīdavātāṁ svadhayā tadekam*" "That One breathed with this power of self-repose, where there was no wind." (10. 129.2) To establish contact with this That or One, to get closer and closer to it through constant remembrance, in the midst of all our activities so that at the end it is felt within us as our very self (Ātman)— this, according to Sri Sri Ma, is the real business, the only business of man, and the ultimate justification of his existence.

Before I stop, I would like to remind you of something concerning Sri Sri Ma, that is of the utmost importance. The time of all of us is indeed limited, inexorably limited. She expresses this grim, dreadful fact in her characteristic manner when she says that there's no believing in the act of breathing, since it may come to a stop at any moment of our lives.

I mention this in order to draw your attention to an aspect of her multifaceted personality which seems to be less clearly and widely noticed than her deep compassion and loving tenderness. I mean her total non-attachment—her supreme unconcern for and indifference to all things of this world, everything that is mundane. This severe and austere side of Sri Sri Ma comes out repeatedly in her utterances; when, for instance she speaks, as she frequently does about the need for "*tapasyā*"—a very old Sanskrit word, which in her characteristic manner from two Bengali words : *Tāāp+Sahā*; interestingly, this derivation is not at all arbitrary or fanciful, for the Sanskrit word *tapas* meant originally, even in Vedic literature, *tāpa* or 'heat'; it is from this that the term *tapasya* implies endurance of pain and suffering.

There is something terrifying in this total uncompromising other-worldliness as there is in that of Sri Ramakrishna. Her life and teachings clearly demonstrate that love and non-attachment can and in fact do perfectly well coexist—that *bhakti* and *vairāgya* are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. This is what our śāstras repeatedly point out, they even suggest, that, there must be something wrong with *bhakti* that is not accompanied by *vairāgya*. In the Bhagavadgītā among the essential characteristics of the *bhakta*, one is non-attachment or *anasakti*. In the last śloka of the 11th chapter we find that the *bhakta* is without attachment to anything (*madbhakta saṅgavarjita*). Again in the famous description of the *bhakta* in the 12th chapter we come across this line : "*śītoṣṇa sukhaduḥkheṣu samaḥ saṅgavivarjitaḥ*"—Equal-minded towards opposites like heat and cold, happiness and misery, the *bhakta* is free from all attachment. Sri Sri Ma warns us, reminds us with appalling clarity, the evanescence of all things and the alarming unpredictability of our life. This grim warning is of course not intended to frighten us but to impress upon us the urgency of turning our minds to "*That which alone is*".

FROM THE DIARY OF A EUROPEAN

—MELITA MASCHMANN

(Translated from German)

Varanasi, October, 1963.

Yesterday most of us left by bus for Varanasi. The rest of the party will follow today with Mataji. Only very reluctantly I left Vindhyachal. There, the foreign country with all its strangeness became familiar to me. This may sound paradox, yet is a fact.

Early morning I ascended to the roof of the Ashram where I had spent many mornings all by myself. I wanted to bid farewell to everything that had been within my horizon here. After a little while I heard the sound of quiet, regular breathing from the tiny room on the roof. Through the open door I saw Mataji lying fast asleep. Perhaps she had fled up here to escape the commotion of packing down below. I have often heard it said that she does not sleep as we do, but nobody has yet given me a satisfactory explanation of this. May be I was deceived by appearances, but what I saw was the deep, relaxed sleep of a person whose perfect inner peace was expressed in the delightful harmony of her features.

I stole away on tiptoe, and sat down in my place on the roof. If God were a mighty magician and granted me the fulfilment of a wish—if he had asked me at that moment, "Where would you like to be?" (How many times had I not imagined this as a child!)—I could only have replied: "Exactly where you have put me."

After the quiet of Vindhyachal, Varanasi seems pandemonium. What a jumble of people, cars, rickshaws, cows, camels, and again people, people, people.

We have to get down in a main street. A narrow lane leads to the Ashram. But here what a relief: the Ganga oceanic expanse, serene, streaming, promise of calm.

The Ashram is situated right on the bank of the Ganga. This is the far end of the town. The building is rectangular, opening towards the Ganga. The main tract which runs parallel to the river is three-storied, with verandas in every storey. The left wing, at right angles to it, accommodates the Kanyapith, a residential Girls' School for religious education. In the right wing there is a small hall downstairs and on the first floor the two temples with a large veranda that protrudes far into the courtyard in the manner of a balcony. Besides these there are a few small rooms in which Swamis live. All the three buildings have extensive roofgardens. Above the

temples there is a tall, pointed tower, surrounded by four smaller towers at the corners. The courtyard is enclosed by the buildings on three sides and by a low wall on the riverside. Here there are shady bushes. In the centre, under a roof, is the well arranged place for the fire sacrifices.

Behind the back-wall of the main building there are several other lower houses, also belonging to the Ashram. There is also a second courtyard. In a low annexe food is prepared; another one contains the office and the library of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. Leaving the Ashram and crossing the narrow lane, one finds a large rectangular platform on which a *satsang* hall is to be built (the original hall that was right on the bank of the Ganga had to be demolished after a high flood). On one side of the hall-to-be a large temple is under construction. Beyond the platform there is a small house, which Mataji's brother has built for himself and his family.

Having passed through the teeming, tumultuous lanes one is surprised to find here such an imposing and extensive project. This Ashram with all its annexe buildings is regarded as a spiritual centre by Mataji's devotees who live scattered all over North and Central India.

Our Ashram family of Vindhyachal has in a trice multiplied by ten. I hardly see a familiar face among the crowd that constantly waits for Mataji. My companions of Vindhyachal have become almost invisible, as the large Ashram provides shelter for all of them, while at Vindhyachal they had to remain in the open most of the day. Mataji has disappeared into her room. Even the door to the veranda in front of her room is either locked or strictly guarded. If this were not so, people would at all times try to force their way to Mataji.

×

×

×

One of the things that I appreciate immensely is that in Mataji's circle no false gesture exists and no artificial pathos. Of course, there does not seem to be any genuine pathos either, or at any rate not noticeable for me. It may well be that the religious poetry which is often recited contains pathos. But this I am unable to judge since I do not understand the language. The manner in which it is rendered does not sound in the least effusive. The same holds good for the style in which the *pūjās* are performed here : the movements of the priests are unaffected, sober and to the point. It is of course true that the numerous symbolic actions keep the *pūjāris* so fully occupied that there are, as it were, no gaps that would have to be filled in with empty gestures.

×

×

×

Yesterday I paid a visit to Sri Gopinath Kaviraj. He had permitted me to do so. His house lies in a small garden. No sooner has one crossed the gate than one enters into an area of silence which encloses this unusual man in ever more silent concentric circles. A vigorous dishevelled palm tree, underwood grown wild and covered with white blossoms. On the terrace a small fire, tended by a servant who, without a word, points across his shoulder to the entrance of the house. A lofty, dark corridor, a steep staircase, everything quite undecorative and austere. The study of the wise man, more a cell than a room: books, magazines, manuscripts are towering on all four sides of the couch on which he is seated. He points to a low stool : "Sit down !" But I prefer to settle myself on the floor. Quite effortlessly : several minutes of silence. At long last he begins to talk about the essay in which I have described my first encounter with Mataji. Great hushed appreciation. Then again silence, which this time is interrupted by myself. I ask whether I may explain to him where, at the time, I believe to stand spiritually. He nods and listens to me with half closed eye-lids. Occasionally a smile of consent flits over his face.

When I tell him that I have really no special desire to converse with Mataji, he opens his eyes in astonishment. "This is excellent," he remarks softly, "do not talk to her. Gaze at her and seek the contact which is beyond words." I then ask him whether I should meditate although I seem to have no gift whatever for it. "It would be of great help to you." We remain silent for a while, then he asks me to come again after a few days. He would then give me some practical hints. Without a word he folds his hands, a remote smile, a hardly perceptible bowing of his head, I am dismissed. After getting up, I remain standing for a moment. This room with its bare walls and its mountains of books seems more familiar to me than any of my own rooms have ever been. The sage on his couch, with his scanty silver hair and the heavy eye-lids was at one time my father or will some time be my brother. I know nothing about his life and yet seem to know all.

While riding on a rickshaw through the crowded streets, I have the physical sensation as if everything I see around me were not outside but within myself. The skin that confines my body seems infinitely widened and encloses all this as well.

I suddenly recall the peculiar sensation I had a year ago after my first *darśana* of Mataji. I felt as if my heart—the physical heart—were growing to double its size. For days I could feel it expanding slowly. It was a sensation that caused pain and bliss at the same time.

×

×

×

This morning I got up very early to go to Sarnath, one of the holiest places of Buddhism. Here the Lord Buddha "set in motion the wheel of *dharma*". He preached for the first time after gaining illumination. I hire a rikshaw. It takes about an hour to get to Sarnath. We at first traverse the city. It is early dawn but the streets are already full of life. Then, gradually houses become fewer. Fields and fallow land, behind walls neglected gardens of old manor houses. A flock of goats by the roadside, donkeys loaded with bundles of dirty linen, peasants carrying milk to town; off and on we meet a monk walking with vigorous strides. Then the road becomes empty.

When I enter the holy district I am completely alone. The sun rises from behind a small grove, wild pigeons are cooing in the tree tops, and a strange perfume overpowers me with impetuous sweetness. I take off my sandals and leave them on the way.

Scattered over an extensive tract of grassy land are the ruins of several temples, stupas, monasteries from early Buddhist times. Before the first monasteries were built during the reign of King Ashoka (three hundred years before Christ), this was a large jungle inhabited only by ascetics and wild beasts. The first five disciples of Lord Buddha were practising rigorous austerities here. Gautama had been one of them and had left. When after several years he met them again, Buddhagaya lay behind him; as a living man he had reached Nirvana. The ascetics recognized him as the Enlightened one, the Buddha, and became his first disciples.

The awakening landscape is full of a secret expectation. I can hear its voice with the naked soles of my feet, while I slowly wander round the excavations. With the entire surface of my body I hear the soundless jubilation that tells of the undying presence of the Enlightened-one. He is here, in the shade of the old trees, in the moss that grows over two thousand years old walls, in the slumber of the temple ruins, in the air that vibrates with the prayers of countless pilgrims.

Buddha, the Enlightened one who conceived God. Was this silence his greatest sacrifice, his holy super-human renunciation ?

But are not silence and speech the same—at the height to which He has ascended ?

I lie down under a tree. Like a purple silk scarf a broad flag of flowering bougainvillia winds round the branch above me.

Thick white cobwebs are lying in the grass, spread all over, like pages of a book—the teaching of the Enlightened-one that has here been put into words for the first time, is later carried into the whole world as scripture. The sun sparkles in the

cobwebs that are studded with dewdrops : the unspeakable is reflected in the revealed word.

In this hour it is also reflected in me : as a speechless exultation of gratitude for all the friends of God whose feet have ever touched the earth—for those whose name I know and for the untold nameless ones. Remain with us, take your abode among us—without you there would be everlasting night.

It is nearly midday when I return to the Ashram. Mataji is sitting in the narrow court-yard of her brother's house in front of the shrine in which her brother is performing a *pūjā*. The courtyard is packed. I remain standing at the entrance. A quarter of an hour later, Mataji beckons to me to join her.

Under the tree under which I was lying at Sarnath, I have picked up a flaming red-yellow pod from which the seeds had fallen. I take it with me because it is so beautiful. Now I offer it to Mataji. I request someone to tell her that I found it in Sarnath. "Regard it as a symbol of something that I want to strive for with your help. Mataji, I wish to become emptied of all karmic seeds, just as this shell has been emptied of seeds." With great care I let the pod drop into Mataji's hands. Reverence makes me too timid to touch her.

Smilingly Mataji looks at my gift while she loudly repeats my words in Bengali. Suddenly she puts the pod into her left hand and stretches out her right one towards me. Among Hindus it is not customary to shake hands. I have never seen Mataji do so. She gives me her small, delicate hand as one would give a flower to someone. I am so surprised that I hesitate to grasp it. Finally I dare to cautiously touch only the upper parts of her fingers and to hold her hand for a few seconds as if it were some venerable and precious jewelery. It occurs to me that I should like to touch it with my forehead, but immediately I feel ashamed of such a crude impulse, and very carefully I return what has been lent to me for a few moments.

Later several people come and ask me to shake hands with them. What they seek is surely the indirect touch of Mataji's hand.

(To be continued.)



THE CONTRIBUTION OF MA TO THE CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF INDIA.

—SRI AMIYA KUMAR MAZUMDAR

The devotees and admirers of Sri Anandamayee Ma look upon her as the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. She is the embodiment of the Mother principle (*Matrisakti*) that lies latent in the phenomenal world. She is the divine incarnation, who descended on the earth to lift human beings from the morass of confusion, doubt and despair at a time when there was appalling erosion of moral and spiritual values. Ma used to say: I am especially in need of those who are unable to move for themselves and have none to prop them up in their religious pursuit. As Mahamahopadhyay Gopinath Kaviraj put it: "All we pray for is that the self-luminous should break through the veil and be manifested. Ma is no other than *Jagatdhatri*, the supporter of the universe". Sri Sitaramdas Onkarnath, the great Yogi, describing Sri Ma said. "This is the same Bhabatarini Ma, the Bhairavi of the Dakshineswar Ashram, whom Thakur (Sri Ramakrishna) used to worship."

Now, a critical thinker may pertinently raise the question: What, precisely, is the proof that Sri Ma Anandamayee is a divine incarnation? The answer is this: the expressions of those who have attained Avatahood are themselves proof positive. Sri Ma expressed the nature of her personality in various ways before her devotees. And the fact of her Avatahood has been confirmed by such yogis and savants as Mahamahopadhyay Gopinath Kaviraj, Mahamahopadhyay Jogendranath Tarkatirtha, Sri Sitaramdas Onkarnath and others.

An incident expressed the nature of her personality thus before her devotees when some designing persons sent a tantric hermit in order to test her. The tantric started chanting malevolent incantations in the presence of Ma. The devotees were visibly annoyed to see the tantric hermit indulging in vile activities and resolved to turn him out. Then Ma, sensing what was about to be done, warned the devotees saying: Let him sit as long as he pleases. Let him not be manhandled. This body (the body of Sri Ma) makes no difference between benign incantation and malignant ones—it can take all in its stride. If one can chant a Mantra properly it can't fail to be effective. Even diseases approach this body in various shapes, it rejects none". This discloses Ma's identity in unmistakable terms. She always remains immersed in the ocean of *sachchidananda* and is free from the duality of joy and sorrow, love and hatred, acceptance and rejection.

According to Sri Balananda Brahmachari, an eminent yogi, "Sri Ma is not an aspirant. She is *nityasiddha*, eternally perfect, her birth is for a particular mission—that over, she will leave; those of her like have no need of austerities." What precisely, is this mission? It is no doubt doing good to all created beings—*Sarva bhuta hite ratah* (Gita), to show them the path of self-realization. In the Kaliyuga people who are naturally busy thinking of food, shelter and other necessities of life have no time to perform complicated and rigid penances recommended in our sastras. So the only hope lies in repeating the name of god, in whatever form one finds suitable. As Sri Ma observes: "Go on repeating the name. That will do everything for you. Under all circumstances, moving about or going out, you can repeat the name as an unfailing concomitant. Let your hands work and the lips utter the name. The secret of the name is that it brings to you the one whose name it is." Again, "Birth as a human being is a rare boon difficult to obtain. You have received it and must see that not a moment is wasted. Plants, birds and beasts live for a while, reproduce their own kind and then die. If you do nothing but that, what is the difference between you and them?"

The goal is to awaken one's self, to realize one's identity with the Universal Spirit; to actualize the potential divinity of man. This awakening is necessary for all, irrespective of caste, creed or sex. Thus, Sri Ma says, "Hindus and Muslims are one—they seek the same God and call upon Him. Namaz is not different from kirtan." Sri Ma did not utter all this as a theoretician, but these were the outward manifestations of her intimate realization. It is on record that she performed Namaz before the grave of a Muslim fakir according to Islamic regulations and with flawlessly correct postures. A muslim boy was agreeably surprised to observe the transfiguration of Sri Ma during the chanting and hearing her utter "Allah-ho-Akbar" said, "The name of Allah came from Ma's lips with a spontaneous clarity which we are unable to achieve inspite of all our efforts. While uttering the name of Allah together with Ma, I experienced an ecstasy the like of which I had never known in all my life."

All this will unmistakably show that Sri Ma was a living commentary to the dictum of Sri Ramakrishna: "as many doctrines so many paths."

Western devotees who had the privilege of having Sri Ma's *darshan*, have observed, one and all, that to come in contact with Sri Ma is to have ineffable joy. Her personality cannot be described in words. Any attempt to explain the different facets of her being would be futile, as would be evident from the response of an eminent German novelist: "Here I was confronted with a human being of whom I felt that she had no "I" any more."

Those who are acquainted with the many incidents of Sri Ma's life know for certain that many astounding miracles have been performed through her body in a very natural manner and rather effortlessly, the sight of which made her devotees and witnesses dumbfounded. There is of course a feeling in some quarters that performance of miracles is a sign of a high degree of spiritual understanding and insight. Let us see how far this view is tenable.

David Hume defined a miracle as a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity or by the interposition of some invisible agent. He refused to accept the validity of miracles on a number of grounds of which the principal ones may be examined. Hume argues that in any period of history no miracle has been attested by a sufficient number of men of education and learning. The passion of surprise and wonder, arising from miracles, being an agreeable emotion, produces in the observing of miracles a sensible tendency towards a belief in miraculous events. Lastly, miraculous events are observed chiefly to abound among ignorant and barbarous nations. If, however, civilized people also are found to believe in miracles it may be concluded that they have received them from ignorant and barbarous ancestors. Plainly, the arguments offered by Hume to repudiate miracles are not cogent enough. The miracles performed by Sri Ma were witnessed by men of science having international reputation, educators, administrators and literary figures widely known in our country and abroad. It is not easy, therefore, to dismiss the miraculous events performed by Sri Ma without making an in-depth study of the phenomenon. At the most, one can suspend one's judgement relating to the validity or otherwise of a miraculous event until one has a direct and immediate proof. When all is said, the fact remains that Indian thought has never regarded miraculous events as component parts of spirituality. If miracle is to be rejected because it is a violation of the laws of nature, what would be the status of dream experience, which also is, not unoften, a violation of the laws of nature. Do I not see in dream that I pass through fire unburnt or leap from the roof of a multistoried building and remain unhurt ? Does it not happen that my dreamthirst is quenched by dream water ? Instead of rejecting dream experience straightaway, we try to find out, what exactly is the agent or principle which connects the three viz. the waking -'I', the dream- 'I' and the deep sleep-'I'. Thus, our approach to dream experience is, by and large, a pragmatic approach, and we do not discard dream experience despite its violating laws of nature.

(To be continued)



MOTHER

- 'Shobha'

FLOWERS FADE LEAVES FALL
 SEASON CHANGE MOMENTS PASS
 GRASS WITHERS TREES DRY
 SUN SETS MOON WANES
 LIFE MOVES LOVE PARTS
 WHO THEN IS THE EVERLASTING
 COMPANION OF THE SELF ?
THE SELF OF ONES OWN SELF!
 NEITHER FADES NOR WITHERS
 NEITHER CHANGES OR IS LOST
 THIS AWARENESS OF THE SELF
 STEPPED WITHIN
 IN THE QUIETNESS OF THE MIND
 IN THE MIDST OF THE GOLDEN LIGHT
 THE ISHTA'S
 VISION TURNED THE VOID
 INTO CRIMSON BRIGHT
 THE TOUCH OF THE VISION
 MERGED THE GROSS EXISTENCE
 INTO A SUBTLE FORM
 PEACE AND PEACE WAS SPREAD AFAR
 TELL ME O MY FRIEND
 THE NAME OF YOUR ISHTA
 WHOSE THOUGHT CAN PAINT
 YOUR WITHIN WITH SUCH
 LOVELY SOFT COLORS OF THE
 MONSOON SKY!
 TELL ME TELL ME
 WHO MADE YOU AWARE
 OF THIS EVERLASTING COMPANION ?
 COME! GENTLY STEP INTO
 THE THRESHOLD OF
 MY HEART.
 STEP LIGHTLY FOR HERE
HER LOTUS FEET REST
 GLANCE WITH SOFTNESS
 FOR **SHE RESTS**
HER HEAD
 IN THE MID OF MY FOREHEAD
 KNOW YOU NOT HER NAME YET ?
JAI MA JAI MA JAI MA
 THE CHOIR PASSED BY
 IN SMALL GROUPS OF SAGES
 AND HOUSEHOLDERS
 BY THE BANK
 OF RIVER GANGES
 WHERE RESTS THE **MOTHER**
 IN REGAL AURA!!



INCIDENTS OF MA'S GRACE

-SWAMI BHAGAVATANANDA

In this article I shall relate from my personal experience a few incidents that seem to me striking illustrations of the working of Mataji's divine grace.

1

In January 1947, on the occasion of the Kumbh Mela, Dr. Pannalal had arranged a camp for Mataji & her devotees at Jamuna Patti near Triveni Sangam.* A lovely little straw hut had been provided for Mataji and a number of large tents for her party. The *Amavasya* (new moon) of the month of Magh fell on January 22nd. Bathing at the Triveni is considered most auspicious and sanctifying on that day and lakhs of people flocked from all over India to avail themselves of this unique opportunity. Two very large boats had been hired to take Mataji and her party to the Sangam. In the early morning Mataji and a few devotees occupied one boat and the rest, including myself, the other. Mataji said she would change over to our boat on the return journey. At Mataji's instructions the two boats were moving side by side towards the Triveni. A gentle breeze was blowing. The blue waters of the Jamuna were dancing in small ripples as if to welcome Mataji. An enormous crowd had assembled at the Triveni. It really was the most impressive and awe-inspiring sight. We all felt elated at the thought that we were going to have our bath in Mataji's company on that sacred day. Mataji's hair was gathered into a bun on top of her head. We felt as if Lord Siva Himself was in our midst. With deep seriousness Mataji let her benign gaze wander over the vast multitude. Our hearts were calm and filled with profound happiness.

All of a sudden Mataji's boat disappeared from our sight. We searched and searched but in vain, amidst the cluster of countless boats it was not an easy task. In spite of this we continued tenaciously to look here and there and everywhere, but without any result. We felt sorely disappointed at our bad luck. Finally the only thing left to us was to console ourselves by saying: "Man proposes God disposes." I had come with the keen desire of bathing at the Triveni in Mataji's presence on that special day. That hope seemed dashed to pieces. What could I do and where was I to go? When all our efforts to find Mataji's boat proved futile we had no

* Triveni Sangam is the confluence of the three rivers, Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati near Allahabad.

alternative left but to return to our camp. On arriving it occurred to us to walk about on the bank of the Jamuna. Lo and behold, within a few minutes we saw Ma's boat approaching. At the sight of Mataji our dismay changed into great joy, yet our minds were not free from sadness at the lost opportunity. As soon as the boat landed, Mataji asked everyone to get down so that the large boat became practically empty. Mataji herself remained sitting in her place. She said she had no *kheyala* to go on shore. We were told that Mataji had not bathed. With her permission I stepped on the boat and sat down. Two or three others followed suit. Mataji did not say a word. For some time we all sat in silence gazing at Mataji. Finally she said: "Take the boat to the Sangam!" As we approached our destination, the police boat, which was controlling the traffic of the huge number of vessels, tried to stop us. Mataji said, "Let it pass!" To our astonishment the police at once cooperated. Our boat was now placed by the side of a large boat as the water was deep enough there. Mataji immediately got up in order to bathe at the Sangam. She had no change of clothes with her, neither had we. We three men who had come with Mataji took off most of our clothes and jumped into the water. Catching hold of Mataji, we carefully guided her to the exact spot of the confluence of the Ganga with the Jamuna. Mataji took three dips. Thus I was able to bathe in the presence of Mataji, touching her holy feet. What a profound joy I felt after the dejection of a short while ago! Our merciful Mother knows the secret aspirations of her children and will not let them go unfulfilled. Mataji wrapped her body into a silken shawl, the only dry cloth she had. Her hair was tied up on top of her head, drops of Triveni water trickling down from it. It was a wonderful sight—as if Lord Siva was standing in front of us. I offered flowers at Mataji's feet and also at the Sangam. Mataji then asked us to procure some milk and pour it into the current as an oblation.

So far we had been unaware of the mystery that lay behind this bathing episode. Gradually Mataji disclosed the secret. "As soon as I entered the Sangam", she said, "Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati appeared to me in the shape of three beautiful women and requested me to bathe in the Triveni. But at that time this body had no *Kheyala* to do so. This is why I remained on the boat when it cast anchor. Now the wish of the Devis has been fulfilled. When they came in human form, Jamunaji was dressed in a blue sari, Gangaji in a yellow one and Saraswatiji in a white one.

II

In December, 1947, Mataji was touring in Gujarat. At the end of the month she stayed at her Ashram at Bhimpura near Chandod. A small retreat had been built there in 1938 by Swami Akhandananda, Sri Gurupriya Devi's father. Later a hall and some other buildings had been added. The Ashram is situated on a hillock near

the bank of the sacred river Narmada of which it is said that its very sight purifies. It is a beautiful picturesque place. A small river called "Or" joins the Narmada not far from there. This confluence is supposed to be a specially auspicious place for religious bathing. However, the current of the Narmada is very powerful there and the Or is full of slippery sand. Therefore, one has to take great care when bathing in the water.

One fine morning before sunrise, a friend of mine from Ahmedabad who had come for Mataji's darsana, a Swami from the Ramakrishna Mission, and myself set out to bathe there. I said to my friend, "You bathe first while I shall guard your clothes. But beware, the current is treacherous and you do not know how to swim." No sooner had he stepped into the water than the current seized him within a second and impetuously carried him away. There seemed no way of escape. I was not a good swimmer, while the Swami was a master in the art. However, in such turbulent waters swimming is impossible. Neither of us could have rescued him by leaping into the wild current. We began to scream for help, but there was no one near. I felt desperately upset. Could I look on while this young man was drowning? What was I to do ? Now only God could help. I shouted loudly : "Ma, Ma, Ma, have mercy, save his life !" No sooner than the word 'Ma' had been pronounced, I saw to my great surprise and delight that my friend was coming back from the jaws of death. How the current that had torn him away had been reversed and brought him back to us hale and hearty was more than I could understand. Just as when Gajarāj had prayed to Narayana when he realized that no earthly power could save him and God had heard his prayer, in a similar way Mataji in her divine mercy gave a new lease of life to my friend at the mere utterance of her name. There is a famous couplet by Suradas : "I have heard that Rāma is strength of the helpless. All power is vested in God's holy name."

On returning to the Ashram, I related the whole episode to Mataji. She said, "He was destined to die to-day. God has saved his life."

WITH MATAJI AT THE HARDWAR KUMBH

[1962]

—Krishnanath

I had heard Swami Paramananda say one day that in connection with the Kumbh and in honour of Mataji one of the biggest organizations of the *Sannyāsis* at Hardwar, the Niranjani Akhāḍa had proposed to arrange for a public procession with Mataji on the back of an elephant. I had also observed Brahmachari Nirmalananda going into a huddle with a local Sādhu over the details of the arrangements. Then one day a neighbour in the dharamśālā brought a leaflet with Mataji's photograph, making the announcement about the procession.

According to it Mataji was to be taken in a welcome procession on April 12th starting at 9 A.M. from *Sati Kund Kanya Gurukul* via Kankhal, reaching the Niranjani Akhāḍa* at twelve noon. Thus on that day we followed Mataji's car along the improvised hill-side road and arrived at the Kanya Gurukul at about 9 o' clock. After a short visit there Mataji came out. A caparisoned elephant knelt down and a ladder was fixed. Swami Paramananda and Nirmalananda climbed to the silver *howdah* and took their places at the back. The Swami held a long-poled parasol (*chhātra*). Mataji had some difficulty in taking the last step which was rather steep but managed somehow to clamber into the throne-like seat in the front of the *howdah*. The mahout goaded the elephant to heave up and we saw Mataji enthroned high up like a Queen or a Goddess. Some of us were wondering whether we should get into cars to follow the procession, but when the procession got formed we all automatically filed into it on foot. It was headed by a horseman with a drawn sword, followed by two silver palanquins, then a very long orchestral band. (I think three bands had joined forces), Then we men led by two Rajas who were both conspicuous by their straw hats, then the elephant led by an ash-besmeared *Vairāgi* holding a *Triśul* (trident), the cavalcade of cars and buses bringing up the rear. From the front to the rear, the procession must have been over two furlongs long and it wound its way majestically along the thoroughfares and some of the crowded localities of Kankhal. Large crowds everywhere, on the way-side, on

* An Akhāḍa ordinarily denotes a Gymnasium where wrestling is taught, but different religious institutions style themselves as Akhāḍas and among them the Niranjani Panchayat occupies a high place under the protocol.

verandahs, ridges and house-tops were greeting Mataji who was swaying in the *howdah* with a beatific countenance looking very dignified and graceful. We, who were walking just in front of Her elephant could not avoid the temptation of turning back again and again to look at Her and in order to face Her and to have longer darshan we very often walked backwards. I saw that the elephant was every now and then raising curled tip. Someone explained to me that the elephant was picking up and passing to the mahout money which people on the road were throwing in front of him or giving to the *Vairāgi* leading him who would then place it in the elephant's trunk. It was quite an amusing sight and must have been also very profitable. When we were nearing our destination, the Kīrtana party of the Ashram, led by Vibhuda and Hiruda got down from the bus with their musical instruments and started singing bhajans and dancing in front of Mataji's elephant. In this manner we arrived at the crowded entrance of the Niranjani Akhaḍa. Mataji got down and was welcomed. For a while we sat in the pandal where Mataji was being entertained with bhajans. Then Mataji's car came to the front and She drove away. The other cars had all got scattered about. Some of the Ashram ladies could not find theirs and had to pay exorbitant rates for rickshaws to take them back. In spite of eating a lot of dust on our way back we were quite hungry when we reached the Ashram rather late for the midday meal. However we were all feeling very happy that we had been able to join that grand procession of Mataji, which will always remain with us as a cherished and treasured memory. I thought that my coming to Hardwar was worth-while for this alone.

The next day, the 13th of April, was the great day for *Kumbh Snān* (bathing in the Ganga). We were staying at a distance of about one mile from the Brahma Kund, where it is considered most holy to bathe on the occasion, though the Ganga flows through the whole of Hardwar. Since all vehicular traffic had been banned and the crowds were terrific, there did not seem to be any possibility of going there. My neighbour in the dharmasālā asked me to join him in the early morning as he was venturing forth on foot with a big stick in his hand, but I had demurred and contented myself with a swim on the deeper side of the river beyond the bridge. Hardly anyone was bathing there and I enjoyed my swift dive in the cold water and came out feeling all aglow. The auspicious time for bathing was said to be after noon, so after twelve I again accompanied some of the ladies who went a little beyond the steps of that Ghāt where we generally bathed; I thought it was very brave of them because the current here was strong and almost swept me off. By about five o' clock, hoping that the crowd would have thinned, we walked towards the bridge in order to go to the Kund, but just as we started we saw some

volunteers running that way. A telephone message had been received from the Brahma Kund that the crowd there was getting unmanageable and the situation was dangerous. So we decided to turn back.

We were spending the evening somewhat disconsolately, when we heard that Mataji had gone to the ghāt (our usual bathing place). We found that She was sitting there on the steps with the Ashramites all round. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj had also joined. After a while we realized why Mataji had come. Adjoining was the *Smashān* (cremation) Ghāt and some volunteers brought a body for cremation. While there had been no casualties as a result of the rush at the Brahma Kund, the head of the volunteers who was an old man had collapsed while standing on duty and died of heart failure. It was, I believe, for attending his cremation that Mataji had brought us all to the *ghāt*. As we watched the flames rise, some of us started chanting the Mahamantra, in quite a different way than the usual—a doleful tune like a dirge for the departed soul, a tune that has haunted me ever since.

The day had thus ended and there did not now seem to be any hope of *Kumbh Snān* at Brahma Kund. Mataji had said that those who felt capable of doing so could go there, but otherwise bathing in the Ganga anywhere else was all right and in view of our experience all day we had given up the idea of venturing there. After dinner, we went to join the usual evening Kirtan in the hall of the temple. I found that Mataji had come to sit in the Śiva temple. She asked some of the Ashram girls whether they would like to go for *Snān* and on their responding eagerly told Sri Sahai and me, who were nearby, to lead the party. Mataji arranged for a small force of volunteers to escort us, and all those who wanted to go were marshalled into a long line of two abreast. There were not only the Ashram girls, but elderly ladies like the Rani of Sherkot and several visitors including the Raja of Amb, about fifty in all. Thus we were marched over various bridges and brought to the holy Kund. We were halted at the Kund just before the Brahma Kund and asked to bathe there because it was less crowded. But the Ashram girls who were in the front protested and said that having come all that way they would like to bathe in the Brahma Kund. Some people at the back called Sri Sahai* to give instructions, but I was by now in a sufficiently adventurous mood to support the girls and we marched on. It was however worse than we had imagined and once we got into the crowd there was no way of keeping together. There was such a crush that all one could do was to have a quick dip, make a short prayer and offering and come out. In all that confusion, the Sahais managed to send their servant to get our tins filled with

* Sri Rameshwar Sahai, Chief Conservator of Forests U.P., a very staunch devotee of Ma.

Ganga-jal (water) to carry home. He took a long while and by the time we came out we could not see the rest of the party anywhere. Luckily old Yogeshji came looking for us and said they were all waiting outside on the footpath. Somehow we were again all safely marshalled together and marched home with the volunteers. On reaching the Ashram, we saw Mataji sitting on the dais in the hall, sprinkling people with Ganga-jal. We then learnt that after we had left the Ashram, Mataji Herself had been taken to the Kund in a car by the Police Inspector and She had actually been there when we were having our dip, though we did not know it. I have related the whole incident in some detail to show how, with Mataji's grace, one could get or do what seemed impossible. We were able to bathe in the Brahma Kund at the most auspicious time of about 9.45 p. m. in Mataji's presence (though unknown to us) in spite of what seemed most insuperable obstacles. Thus we were able to achieve the main goal of the pilgrimage to Hardwar for Kumbh.

As I have stated earlier eminent Sadhus and Mahatmas from all over India had congregated and pitched their camps in different places. It was a great chance for meeting saints and I now wish I had been more enterprising and gone round to see some of them. Only one night some of us had walked to nearby tents and ventured into the camp of Tanpurewala Baba of Pandharpur. Here the typical Maharashtrian Kirtan was going on, but the Baba was inside the tent. He came out and talked to us and on being told that we were with Mata Anandamayi, he said he was coming to see her one day. On the 14th evening Mataji went to the camp of Swami Naradananda of Naimisharanya. As it was not far off, I had started walking with some of the Sadhus from our Ashram and had an uplifting conversation on the way with Nirmalananda. At the place where we had to turn was the camp of Yogesh Brahmachariji of Calcutta, with a book-stall exhibiting a number of his publications. Thinking that Mataji would halt there, we waited looking at the books but the car passed on without stopping, with the result that by the time we arrived at Naradanandaji's tent, it was packed and the sadhus and I had to stand on the outskirts. But Naradanandaji's men came to receive us and made us sit behind Mataji. Naradanandaji spoke about Ma and then his main disciple eulogized Her. There was some singing and one person recited a special poem he had composed about Mataji. Naradanandaji pressed Swami Paramananda to speak, referring to him as having the same devotion for Ma as Hanuman had for Rama. But the Swami who never speaks in public did not open his mouth and Mataji said on his behalf that his message was 'silence.'

●

MANIFESTATION OF MOTHER IN NATURE

—"Mohua"

No place in this universe
Can ever exist without you.
'O mother', you are its sole defender
Your presence can be felt in
Every moment of our life.

The blue-green water of ocean
And the vast blue sky above
Are the heavenly abode,
Where you reside.

It is behind the snow white moon
And the golden yellow flaming sun
Where you hide.
It is the flowers studded with
Glistening pearls at dawn
Where you reside.

It is the rising sun in the east,
Which makes everything around fresh and new,
And makes us feel the presence of you.
It is the reddish pink arc glowing
Behind the sea at dusk,
Where you stay.

It is the lonely star in the dark
And serene night, from where
You keep an eye on us.
In each and every living being,
You are present,
And at every moment
Your presence is felt by us.



SOME INTERESTING DETAILS RELATING TO DEHRADUN ASHRAM TEMPLES

Devotees will recollect that In 1937 Shri Bholanathji* took *Māhasamādhi* at the Kishenpur Ashram. Several years after he passed away, one of Mataji's devotees, Srimati Nihar Kana Ghosh of Calcutta dreamt that Bholanathji, whom she had never seen in his lifetime, suggested to her to take *Diksha* † She attached no special importance to the dream until it was repeated again the following night which made her thoughtful. When in the third night at about 4 a. m. Bholanathji appeared to her once more asking her with a peremptory voice to rise and have a bath, she obeyed and initiation was then actually given by Bholanathji according to the full rites prescribed in the *Shastras*, notwithstanding the fact that Sri Bholanathji had passed away years before. She hurried to her husband and said, "Bholanathji has just given me a *mantra*." Her husband advised her not to pronounce the *mantra* to anyone, but to sit in their prayer room and she at once began to practise the repetition (*japa*) of the *mantra* and to continue this practice regularly day by day. Her husband was of the opinion that everything must have happened in a dream. She herself, however, felt that there was no more necessity of her to take *diksha* again in the physical as well. When she uttered the *mantra* before Mataji, Mataji confirmed that it was one of the *mantras* to be found in the *Shastras*. But nothing was at that time mentioned to Mataji about the strange dream.

The new disciple conceived an ardent desire to have a memorial shrine erected for her Guru in the Kishenpur Ashram, where he had breathed his last. She discussed the matter with Sri Jogesh Brahmachari, one of Mataji's oldest devotees. A few hundred rupees were collected by her and other devotees for the purpose. However with such a small sum one could not even think of building. The money was therefore given into Sri Jogesh Brahmachari's custody.

A few years later another interesting thing happened. Srimati Bhabani, wife of Sri Ranajit Banerji of Calcutta, dreamt of three temples : Two were close together and made to the same pattern, the third one was some distance away, small and somewhat round in shape. Her dream was vivid and impressive. She related it to Mataji and requested Her to present her with a *Shiva Linga*. By Mataji's grace she was so fortunate as to receive a *Shiva Linga* that had been brought from the holy

* Mataji's husband.

† Initiation. by mantra.

river Narmada, of which it is said that every stone there is a *Shiva Linga*. When visiting Hardwar with Mataji after some time she was surprised to find that the Shiva temple built by the Raja Saheb of Solan at Hardwar somewhat resembled the one she had perceived in her dream. During her stay at Hardwar her *Shiva Linga* was given the name of "*Gangeshwar*"

On returning to Calcutta she told her husband about her dream vision and expressed a keen desire to have a temple for '*Gangeshwar*' constructed in their own compound. However, on thinking over the matter her husband had serious misgivings as one could not be sure whether after he and his wife left this world, the Puja would be continued regularly by their descendants. Such neglect is considered most inauspicious for the whole family. He therefore suggested that the temple should be built in one of Mataji's Ashrams and he made an offering of Rs. 5000/- for the purpose. It was subsequently decided to erect the Shiva temple in memory of Sri Bholanathji in the grounds of the Kishenpur Ashram.

As fate would have it, devotees from various places felt inspired to contribute towards the expenses of the temple, the construction of which was begun in September, 1957. It seems appropriate to say here a few words about those who helped in this pious cause.

Srimati Shanti Devi, wife of the late Choudhury Sher Singh, Zemindar of Dehradun, died of an operation shortly after the building work had been taken in hand. Before going to hospital she deposited Rs. 5000/- with her relatives, requesting them to pass this sum on to the Ashram in case she did not recover. The money was added to the building fund and a *Shiva linga* named '*Shānitishwar*' was set up in memory of the deceased. Srimati Maharatan Jaspal, a Punjabi devotee (who by the way did not even know that temples were being constructed) suddenly offered Rs. 5000/- to Mataji to be used for any purpose required. Prof. Nalini Kanta Brahma, whose son had recently lost his life in a tragic accident, donated Rs. 1000/- for the installation of a *Shiva Linga* in memory of the departed. The Linga was named '*Kālyaneshwar*'. Further, a bhakta of many years' standing, Srimati Lakshmi Tankha, widow of Pandit Kashinarayan Tankha, the architect who built the main Kishenpur Ashram, presented Rs. 1000/- in memory of her husband. A linga called '*Kāshīshwar*' was therefore added. Yet another old and faithful devotee, Kumari Sharada Sharma (Sevā) donated Rs. 500/- with the request for a linga in her father's memory, which was given the name of '*Māmuleshwar*'. Finally, a linga called '*Kirtishwar*' was installed in memory of the son of Sri Rameshwar Sahai, Chief Conservator of Forests, U.P. who bore the expenses for the construction of the alter of the temple. At the desire of Sri Ranajit Banerji

and his wife '*Gangeshwar*' was conecrated; and by the consecration of the Shiva Linga named '*Bholānāth*' the heart's desire of Srimati Nihar Kana was at last fulfilled and thus the new Shiva temple came to house in all seven *Shiva Lingas*.

When Mataji had visited the Sapta Rishi Ashram at Hardwar, the thought suddenly occured to Her about seven Shivas in the memory of seven Sages. She went into the temple and touched the *Shiva-Linga* with Her hands. Strangely enough, when seven *Shiva-Lingas* were installed in our new temple, Mataji one day was heard to say like this: "Look, Dehradun in so near Rishikesh and Hardwar, all in the Uttarakhand. '*Bholanath*' and '*Gangeshwar*' have become the main cause of the installation of seven Shivas, *Mahayogeshwars*, on one and the same altar."

• Now about the second temple, *Mātri Mandir*. During the opening ceremony of the Kishenpur Ashram a raised platform with a sacrificial pit (*homa kunda*) in the centre had been erected and one lakh of oblations were offered into the sacrificial fire on the occasion. Bhaiji (Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy) was too eager to build over that platform a temple dedicated to Mataji. But during the few years that were still left to him he had no opportunity to see his pious wish materialize. Therefore Sri Gurupriya Debi tried ever since he passed away to fulfil what he had left undone and she kept on collecting and putting aside small sums of money for the purpose. When the construction of the Shiva Temple was now taken in hand the construction of the *Mātri Mandir* too proceeded along with it and both temples were consecrated on the last Shiva Rātri.

The small shrine at Kalyānvan has also a history of its own. Late Sachikanta Ghosh, Retired Asst. Income Tax Commissioner, who many years ago bought a plot of land now called 'Kalyānvan' has also a history of its own. Late Sachikanta Ghosh, Retired Asst. Income Tax commissioner, who many years ago bought a plot of land now called 'Kalyānvan' on Rajpur Road, about 3 furlongs above the Ashram, had fixed a place in it for a special room for Mataji. He laid the foundation stone and buried the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and other sacred scriptures also in that spot. He later presented the whole of the plot for the Vidyapith* . But he died soon after and his desire to accommodate the room for Mataji in the grounds of Kalyānvan did not materialize.

When the two temples at the Kishenpur Ashram were in the process of being constructed, Mataji suddenly said one day : "I see that you are building a Shiva Temple here. Sachibābā bought Kalyānvan for the use of the Vidyapith. There is no

* A small residential school run by Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha where boys are educated according to the ancient ideals of the Brahmacharya ashram, while they are taught all modern subjects at the same time.

sign to mark the blessed spot where he has buried so many holy books and people walk over it. Is this right ? Suppose you dug up the ground and found the place where the foundation-stone was laid and the scriptures buried, how would it be if a *Shiva Linga* were erected over it ? Think it over and decide !"

Thus shortly before Shiva Ratri a small Siva shrine named '*Maheshwara*' was built over the spot where the sacred scriptures had been found buried. The shrine was consecrated along with the other two temples of the Ashram on March 7th, 1959.

Srimati Bhabani Banerjee had dreamt of three temples. When she arrived at Kishenpur to be present at the consecration, she found only two temples there and exclaimed_ 'In my dream I saw another small round temple at a short distance. I cannot see it here.'" Swami Paramananda said: "Go to Kalyanvan and you will find it." When she reached the garden she stood speechless with amazement : The three temples she had dreamt of had actually been completed as they had appeared to her in the dream. This can surely not be explained by ordinary common sense or reason. By Mataji's grace the impossible becomes possible. Who could have foretold that the pious wishes of all the devotees concerned would materialize in this way ! While supervising the construction of the temples Swami Paramananda felt that the two temples in the Ashram grounds should be made to the same pattern, but the third one to a different one. Thus Srimati Bhabani's dream came true. Mataji always says: "The Will of the Almighty is being fulfilled."

There is another interesting feature worth mentioning: When some people voiced their doubts as to how the constant expense involved in *Puja* and *Bhoga* in all the temples could be regularly met, Mataji replied: "You need not worry. Shivaji will Himself see to all arrangements." Indeed, this has already happened in the most unexpected manner.



MOTHER

—MAJORIE PITZER

And I can hear you calling my name.
Your healing hands smooth away the pain.
And I can hear you whispering, "It'll be alright."
You'll stay, until the night breaks into day.

(Chorus:)

You are my light, in the dark.
You stand beside me.
You take my hand, show me the way.
You're here to guide me.
You give me the strength that I need.
You give me shelter.
You gave me life, You give me love.
You are my Mother.

And when You hear me calling Your name,
(I hear your voice)
You touch me with your chosen words.
Everlasting Faith, everlasting Love,
are the gifts You give to me.
Believing, understanding me.

(Chorus:)

Closer, closer, closer as God are You. (3x)

You are my light in the dark.
(You are my love) (Oh I love you)
You take my hand and show me the way.
You give me the strength that I need.
(closer to me)
You gave me life You give me love.
(Oh I love you Mother)

Closer, closer, closer as God are You. (3x)



NOTES TAKEN IN SREE MA'S PRESENCE

—'Kirpal'

22-9-56, Varanasi

Rani of Mandi and Raja Saheb of Bhadri, Governor of Himachal Pradesh, his wife and relations have come for Sree Ma's darshan.

Sree Ma: The sweeper cleans the house and the servant scrubs and polishes the vessels, but the purification of the mind can be done only by God.

Ma: (To Kunwarni Bhadri's Mother) As the mother bears the child, gives it birth and mother herself serves the child, similarly God Himself and God alone can cleanse us. His own service. He Himself.

Dr. Panna Lal questioned Ma about the general trend of scolding beggars.

Sree Ma related a story about a sweeper woman and a beautiful queen. A sweeper woman decided one day to sit down on one side in deep concentration. People gradually started flocking to her and offering fruits & garlands, but she did not look up or even take the slightest notice. Now, all this reached the queen's ears and she said to the king, "At our doorstep is a great saint. Ganga (Holy River) Herself has come to our house and we don't go." So the king and the queen went and offered their respects. But still the sweeper woman did not look up. Then through the cover of her eyes she saw the king and the queen and the knowledge dawned on her that just the disguise of a saint has brought me all this fame. The world is just false and she took to real renunciation (*Sanyas*).

Dr. Panna Lal: What is the easiest way for realization ?

Ma: Effortlessness. (*Anupāya*)

Dr. Panna Lal: But, first one has to strive for that state through one's effort.

Dr. Panna Lal: Does God create evil ?

Ma:

Everything is his creation. Just as there is a senior officer and he drinks and is thus an example to others is set, who seeing his miserable state decide, "Oh, let us not be like him"

To realize that whether you recite the name of Krishna or Rama or Shiva, that is the highest state where disaster is absent. One's own state; fulfilment, that is the Supreme state. Under whose protection is one, and through whose guidance one becomes effortless Effortlessness is the path. God cannot be realized through any particular effort. It is fact that God is bound by his own devotee. The path, one has come under his protection to surrender to the Lord entirely, that is the path. When one has the earnest longing for the Lord, that is not a worldly desire or worldly torment. To repeat the *nāma* or do *Puja* you should perform the rituals enjoined in your faith. The Muslim should perform his own rites, Each one should practice his own religious rites regularly One who is enclosed in a dark room will experience the polluted air (worldly atmosphere). One should have faith that hearing the Amrit Vani, the Divine strains, the path to eternity is revealed.

Ma :

Amar Kā rāstā khol deo (Open the path to Immortality Till one is attached to anything, one cannot understand, even on it being explained. One must rise above all such understandings. Whatever you desire, you are bound by that. Where the love of God is absent, that is a *shamshan* (cremation ground). Whatever kind of food you take that will affect your state of mind. Where there is abode of God's name, Rama's name, that is one's own dwelling, where the name of Lord Rama is present. That is the true wealth and only that person is truly wealthy.

