

MA ANANDAMAYEE AMRIT VARTA

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

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MATRI VANI

New Year—Infinite forms of the God—His daily-changing ever new forms and formless too—endeavour constantly to perceive the same.

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So long as you are not finally established in that Supreme Knowledge, you all dwell in the realm of waves and sound. There are sounds that cause the mind to turn outwards, and others that draw it within. But the sounds that tend outwards are also connected with those that lead inwards.

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Look, the ocean is contained in the drop and the drop in the ocean, what else is the spark, if not a particle of fire - of Him, who is Supreme Knowledge Itself ?

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How many students attend college, but how few of them stand first, although they are all taught by the same professors ? None can foretell at what particular time circumstances will co-operate to bring about that Great Moment for anyone. There may be failure to begin with, but what counts is final success. An aspirant cannot be judged by preliminary results. In the spiritual field, final success means success right from the beginning.

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Every thing is infinite - infinity and finiteness are indeed the same. In a garland the thread is one, but there are gaps between the flowers. It is the gaps that cause want, the sorrow. To fill them is to be free from want.

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Inquirer : It is said that God's eternal Lila is based on duality.

Ma : The assumption of duality is also within Oneness; some advocate this opinion.

Q : What is the actual significance of the terms *dhāma*, *lilā*, *parikara* ?

Ma : They say that even in the midst of this Lila, Oneness remains unimpaired. What is enjoyed in Lila is *rasa*, which is unique; and in Vedanta too, duality is out

of the question. Although duality appears to manifest itself before the eyes of the bhakta, nevertheless, here also there is nothing but Oneness.

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As one continues day after day to carry out these acts of worship, one begins to question : "Is my Lord as small as this little image ? Does He dwell only in my shrine room and no where else ?" By performing His service one gradually comes to feel that all is His. This feeling grips one and spreads like an infectious disease. Some one once said : "Do not venture near Anandamayi Ma, there are small-pox germs around her." (Laughter)

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Single- minded devotion engenders deep thought, which expresses itself in action. The Lord's light descends on the devotee, His power awakens in him and, as a result, profound inner enquiry blossoms forth.

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Q : Are you suggesting that we must reach the state of Divinity ?

Ma : The question of reaching that state does not arise at all so long as the veil of ignorance persists. Whether what has been said refers to *Īśvarakoṭī* or *Sādhakakoṭī*, you yourself must ascertain !

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The many exist in the One, and the One in many.

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Samādhi means samādhāna (solution, completion.).



CONVERSATION WITH WESTERN DEVOTEES

[Fourteen]

—Vijayananda

1) Generalities.

Q : What is the place of meditation in sadhana ?

V : People who have a spiritual experience know that meditation is one of the last stages of the eightfold Yoga of Patanjali, and that henceforth a very firm basis is needed to practice it fully. Even rather advance *sādhakas* do something more corresponding to *dhāranā* (which is usually translated as concentration). Genuine *dhyana* is rare, it is almost the *samadhi*. The hippies of the second wave, those who along with the intake of drugs had an interest for spiritual things were the ones who floated the idea of meditation as an universal panacea, but it does not work like this.

One should certainly meditate at a fixed time but this does not mean that one has to force oneself. One should rather give to our body the good habit to sit regularly. It is said that our *prārabdha karma*, which means practically our destiny, is not reckoned in number of days to live but in the number of breaths. So those who breath peacefully will have a longer life. Several times in my *sadhana* I found myself facing a wall and said mentally, This is impossible to cross ! But I did it and then it was quite easy : impossible is not in the dictionary..... Of course in day to day life one must know how to adapt and to go around obstacles.

Q : A young woman being in the process of remarrying after a divorce : How to manage relational problems ?

V : One should make it a habit to see the Divine in the other.

Q : When we love them, this is too easy ?

V : Not so much, we should see them beyond their personal aspect, which means without attachment. For those whom we do not like, better to keep them away, except if we are already at a very advanced stage. If this is impossible, being near them should be taken as a *sadhana*.

Q : How to be introverted without being egoistic ?

V : By realizing that the Self at the core of oneself is not different from the Self at the core of others. At that time, love for others becomes completely natural.

Q : Question of a resident of the ashram before the departure of someone who spent several months there : 'You say that past is an illusion and thus no reality at all. Does it mean that if someone goes away one should forget him or her ? Is not the very basis of love is the capacity to remember the ones who are absent?'

V : First, someone who leads a life of a brahmachari in an ashram should not have love with attachment for another person. In addition to this, when I feel someone who thinks of me, this gives me joy inside. That comes in the present, not in the past. What is required is keeping away from mental constructions on past events. People constantly change, if one is attached to an image of them from the past, he will certainly be disappointed.

Q : Should sadhana in the world be spontaneous or the result of a persevering effort ?

*V : During sadhana, we should be able to go through hard time : There is the following hassidic story : one day two children came to visit a great sage who gave them beer to drink. The elder did not say much, but the junior who was perhaps only three or four years old exclaimed : *This is bitter, but good!* Immediately the sage concluded : *This boy will become a great spiritual person !*" And it happened to be so.*

Q : Some people say that Ma was a tantric.

V : Tantra corresponds to the worship of the Divine Mother. How could she have worshipped the Divine Mother, while she was herself the Mother ? From another viewpoint, for Ma as well as for any advanced sadhaka, all the paths merge in one single Yoga, the synthesis of Yogas if one can say. This is a total Yoga where all the ways are understood and integrated. Only in the beginning are the paths separate.

Q : A young girl came back from an ashram where she heard the guru say that the state of marriage and that of consecrated celibacy are the same, in both of them one can have the same spiritual life.

V : I do not agree ! If one is already married and remains so, while developing a spiritual life, this is good, but if one is not married and one gets committed in a householder's life, at that time this is a failure and a regression.

Q : A father whose daughter still is not married although she is not so young anymore : "It is a problem for a woman to marry late."

V : On the contrary, it is good to marry late, in this manner the number of years that one spends with couple problem is less !.... Some take the pretext that

they live in the world to say that they have no time for *sadhana*. But one can create a favourable surrounding for that: a room for the *puja* and the meditation, not meeting people indiscriminately, *satsang* (being together with spiritual people) and if this is difficult, at least the reading of books on or by saints and sages. In any case, if one has the intense desire to find favourable conditions for *sadhana*, circumstances will be arranged by themselves.

2) Basic qualities

Q : How should we develop intensity in sadhana ?

V : Our inside space is like a pierced bucket. One should obstruct its holes so that it might fill. We should observe well the places where the mind is drawn outward, 'leaks', and then plug up the holes, that is the purpose of *yamas* and *niyamas*. We know how a spiritual aspirant who was extremely attached to her dog; after the death of this one, her desire for marriage became very intense and again after it her craving for children became still more intense. Should she have been able to direct her intensity towards the Divine, she would have been a great saint.

Q : A young lady-visitor who follows the path of bhakti: 'It is said that there are two means to open a closed door: either to break it or to prostrate in front of it.'

V : A Jewish sage said that God loves those who break the doors; the self is a castle with many openings, but a time comes when the best way is to break the doors open.

Q : Is not the best way of sadhana telling oneself repetitively that one does not lack anything?

V : Yes, but once one has the awakening of the inner happiness, before that, such declarations are only words.

Q : Should we go to extremes in sadhana?

V : In general, one should follow the middle path; but in one's desire to consecration to God, the Guru, going to the extreme is good. It is told that when Ramatirtha was a young professor of mathematics, he was searching the solution of a problem: he went one evening on the terrace of the house with his razor and said to himself: 'If tomorrow I have not found the solution to this problem, I will cut my own throat!' And the next day when the sun was about to rise, he had not yet found the solution.... he seized the razor to end his own days, but at that time he got a

kind of illumination and the solution came. People who like Ramatirtha are very intense succeed in their *sadhana*.

A visitor speaks of a big ashram of South-Ind where those who become sannyasis have more comfort than others even if they still must work a lot.

Vijayananda comments with a smile : 'When they take the vows of sannyasi, they start renouncing discomfort....'

Q : What is more important, outer detachment or the mental attitude in this sense ?

V : It is the mental attitude, this is well exemplified by the story of the two friends on holidays: one leaves for a church while the other decides to visit a brothel. During the mass, the pious boy could not help thinking of the 'good time' that his friend had with women, while the other, suddenly overwhelmed with remorse, had his mind intensely focussed on the church and God who was present there and he was asking forgiveness for yielding to his bad tendencies. It happened that at that very moment the two chaps died suddenly. The one who was in the brothel went to paradise, the other to hell.

However, outer renunciation is also important : a change that I have seen in India in fifty years that I have lived here is that *sannyasis* look down upon those who follow outer renunciation as if they were stupid people while they accumulate for themselves material goods. When I arrived in India in the beginning of the fifties, a *sannyasi* was expected to have all the outer signs of renunciation.

Speaking of someone who lived near the ashram for his sadhana for many years : 'It takes time to go beyond time.'

Q : Why some people meditate but do not seem to progress ?

V : This reminds me of what La'e'nec (a famous French professor of medicine in the 19th century) used to say regarding the treatment of acute pulmonary oedema: *Start emptying the car before lashing the horse*. This means that one should begin by bleeding the patient before giving heart stimulating drugs, for in this way the work that it will have to do will be less and it will not risk collapsing completely. Likewise in the beginning of *sadhana* one should first eliminate many negative tendencies before starting to stimulate the energy by intense meditative practices. Otherwise there is the risk of an 'acute heart failure', which means that nothing will work any longer.

Q : Why do you not give kriya to people so that they might purify their mind more quickly ?

V : Not by breathing exercises can people purify their mind, but by changing their lives. There is a difference between the simple relaxation practices which are in the field of psychology and the genuine *kriya* which gives a great intensity; to teach these to someone, one must know what he will do with his or her spiritual energy once it is awakened, if it will not go towards negative reactions or be deviated towards a search for powers. Those who have a complete sincerity for *sadhana* are very rare and even those who have even a beginning motivation for it are also rare.

To someone who was living a house holder life, who thought that he was never angry and was wondering whether it was normal or a sign of suppression:

V : (After speaking more with the visitor) In the beginning suppression is not so bad, it is much better than to let one's anger be vented through harsh words, even violent acts. You don't observe *brahmacharya*, do you? For those who practice it, anger is not a small matter as far as its mastery is concerned, because it basically comes from frustrated desire. Anger creates wounds in the *prānic* body. if repeated, it may lead to somatic diseases. (Speaking of a sadhu¹ in the ashram whose sometimes undisciplined behaviour invited strong criticism): people reproach him with slight madness but he must have a certain spiritual level because he never answers the criticism with anger.

Q : Is contentment an essential quality of sadhana ?

V : Yes. There was a hassidic sage who was asked to explain contentment. He answered by saying: *Better go and see Zisia. Zisia* means in Yiddish *soft*, like *susse* in German. He was a very poor man and, according to worldly criteria, he had all kinds of problems and sufferings in his life. When visitors started hinting at this he began laughing and said: *Ask this question from someone who suffered. As for me, I have never had sufferings !* He was mad for God, that which others considered a misfortune was not so for him. Once, people beat the living daylights out of him, but instead of defending himself he was laughing. He was among these great devotees of God who could perform a miracle just by one word.

Q : What is the role of humility ?

V : If someone is arrogant you can be sure that he has not reached a high spiritual level. (Speaking of a guru who was annoyed that his name had been omitted in a program where he was invited): the more gurus or religious leaders are high in rank, the more they are sensitive to contempt. They expect to be cared for,

while on the contrary if you send away a child he just will not worry. There will ever be reasons to be annoyed, so why should one be annoyed at all ? And why should a sage be arrogant ? His body is subject to a good deal of diseases, his mind produces all kind of non-senses and his Self indeed is not personal, it is the same in each and everyone.

Q : Is the vow of silence useful ?

V : I indeed know the best way to keep silent : being silent when you do not speak. It seems a joke, but in fact it is the sign of a high spiritual level : briefly telling what one has to say, and afterwards having a mind which is completely blank.

3) Spiritual psychology

Q : What is spiritual psychology ?

V : This is silence.

Q : Is not feeling the best leading thread to follow for meditation ?

V : Usually this 'feeling' corresponds to a bunch of superimpositions, of projections, but when we succeed in quieting the mind and have a really pure perception, we are very close to the Absolute.

Q : When we have closed eyes in meditation, is not the only pure perception that of body?

V : Perhaps, but body perception is indeed completely deformed by the representations which we have about it. When the complete stoppage of mind is reached, there is not even sensations to be perceived.

Q : Is this the direct perception of being ?

V : There are not even perceptions, there is pure subjectivity only.

A German man who had visited a few vedantin gurus : To get rid of ego, I observe my anger and all my emotions and I say to myself that in the midst of all that, there is no ego.

V : These are mere words. Where there is anger, there is ego and where there is no anger there is no ego. However, it is true that we should not try to 'kill' an ego which anyway does not have any essential existence. It would be like taking a stick and trying to kill a shadow by giving it a good thrash.

[To be continued]

FROM THE LIFE OF SRI ANANDAMAYI MA

—Dr. Bithika Mukerji

Multifarious ways of the sadhaka

Since the time of the lila of *sādhanā* at Bajitpur, Mataji hardly ever ate a full meal. When she came to Dhaka in April 1924, she was twice a day taking three mouthfuls of food including water. When Didi first met Mataji about a year and a half later, she was eating even less. On Mondays and Thursdays she would partake of three mouthfuls, and on the other five days nothing but nine grains of rice. There was, however, no rigid rule for her. She broke it now and then in response to the importunities of members of her family or of devotees. Thus, at the insistence of Pramatha Nath's son, Pratul, she once agreed to take a full meal on the day of the new-moon (*amāvasyā*). Other devotees quietly turned this into a regular feature at Shahbagh. They would organise a kirtana and everybody would partake of prasada, thus ensuring that Mataji also would have a proper meal.

Bholanath's nephew Amulya took up service at about that time and with his first earnings he arranged a special Pūjā on a full-moon night. This also was adopted as a permanent practice. Thus, Mataji ate proper meals, twice a month.

At about this time it was noticed that Mataji could not anymore raise her hand to her mouth. Her hand would stop midway, and she would bend her head to take food from her hand. Sometimes, instead of eating, she would smear the earth with the rice. None knew better than Bholanath that all phases in Mataji's life came about naturally and spontaneously. It would be as futile to remonstrate with her as with any other onlooker. So he took it upon himself to feed her like a child. Didi was pleased to be given the opportunity of rendering this service to Mataji, when she came to stay with them at Shabagh.

Mataji explained this phase of her life in these words : "Once this body lived on three grains of rice daily for four or five months. Nobody can live for so long a time on such a meagre diet. It looks like a miracle. But it has been so with this body. It has been so, because it can be so. The reason for this is that what we eat is not all necessary for us. The body takes in only the quintessence of the food, the rest is thrown out. As a result of *sādhanā* the body becomes so constituted that, though no food is taken physically, it can imbibe from the surroundings whatever is necessary for its maintenance. In three ways the body can be maintained without

food : One way has just been referred to, namely, the body can take from the environments the nourishment necessary for its maintenance. Secondly, one can live on air alone. For I have just said that in everything there are all other things, so the properties of other things are in the air in some measure. Therefore, by taking in air alone we get the essence of other things. Again, it may so happen that the body is not taking anything at all, yet it is being maintained unimpaired as in a state of *samādhi*. Thus you find that as a consequence of sadhana it is quite possible to live without what we call food.¹

"At one time I had the *kheyāla* that I was one with everything. At that stage I would give food to whomsoever and whatsoever was in front of me. Sometimes I even smeared the earth with rice and vegetables. When Bholanath saw me doing this, he removed the food in front of me and fed me like a child that had not learnt to use its fingers for eating."

Mataji abstained not only from eating but also from drinking on two occasions—once for thirteen days and the second time for twenty-three days. During this fast she did not even rinse her mouth with water. On the 24th day she asked for a sip of water saying, "I wanted to see what it would be like without drinking but the very necessity for water is becoming extinct. This will not do. As a matter of convention, a semblance of normal behaviour must be kept up."

For some time Mataji followed the rule of eating only fruits found under trees in Shahbagh. Now the fruit-trees in Shahbagh were mainly mango and leechi. It was not the season for either, so Mataji lived on practically nothing. She would sometimes take fruits if brought by somebody of his own accord. But her companions were strictly forbidden to make any arrangements for procuring them. On the other hand, if they were plentiful one day, she would not allow them to be stored for the next day. It almost seemed that Mataji did not require food, but just wanted to keep up the habit of partaking of something or other.

At one time she did not eat any cereals for about six months. Then, one day she happened to come into the room where Bholanath was taking his midday meal of rice and vegetables. She asked Matari Pisima to fetch for her all the rice that had been cooked. Mataji, on that occasion, had a meal which would have sufficed for seven or eight people.

There were other instances of consuming enormous quantities of food. During the Christmas holidays of 1925, one of Bholanath's sisters, Mokshada Devi (wife

1. From the article by Sri A. K. Dattagupta in "Mother as seen by Her Devotees", 2nd ed., 1967, pp. 117-118.

of Sri Kali Prasanna Kushari of Salkia, Howrah), had come to stay with them. She was very fond of Mataji and treated her like a younger sister. She felt greatly concerned to see that Mataji was eating next to nothing. She planned to cook *khīr* (thickened and sweetened milk with rice boiled in it) from 40 lbs. ($\frac{1}{2}$ maund) of milk because there were always guests at Shahbagh. She depended upon Bholanath to persuade Mataji to partake of a little of this. Although as a rule, Bholanath did not interfere with Mataji's ways, he could not say 'no' to his sister. He asked Mataji to have some of the *khīr* that day. So Mataji sat down to her meal. After finishing her first helping, she asked for more. Highly pleased, her sister-in-law hurriedly brought a larger second helping. Mataji got through this very speedily and would not pause till she had eaten up the entire quantity that had been prepared. In the meantime, fresh milk had been put on the fire, but it takes a long time for milk to thicken. Like a hungry child, Mataji was quite inconsolable till the yet only half-cooked and boiling hot *Khīr* was brought to her. The women fanned the *Khīr* to cool it. By the time Mataji had finished this, everybody was thoroughly alarmed. Mokshada Devi, who was a very devout lady, scraped a little of the *Khīr* from the bottom of the serving dish, and pronouncing a mantra, placed it on Mataji's head. Mataji immediately stopped eating and everybody heaved a sigh of relief.

Didi relates that once a devotee, seeing Mataji's lack of interest in food, implored her to take a full meal. Acceding to his request, she sat down to eat. Didi was feeding her. Mataji seemed to be swallowing the food at double the normal rate. She impatiently remarked, "You are not quick enough. Call someone to help you." But even two people could not keep pace with her that day. The devotee, now quite frightened at the unexpected result of his request, with folded hand implored her to desist from eating. Mataji said plaintively, "First you ask me to eat, but no sooner do I start, than you tell me to stop. Now, what am I to do?"

Didi relates that while eating, Mataji did not seem to pay attention to the food in front of her. She recalls, "Once when I did not know Mataji so well, I thought I would take advantage of this absent-mindedness and feed her as much as possible. In my enthusiasm I fed her more than a normally big meal and yet Mataji did not object. Finally, I was obliged to stop of my own accord. Mataji seemed to awaken from a dream and said, "Why, have you finished?"

If not watched carefully and told not to do so, Mataji would swallow even the pips and peels of fruit. If one expostulated with her, she would say in a surprised tone, "You asked me to eat fruit, so I did. You did not tell me that I had to choose and reject also."

As in everything else, Mataji remains unchanged in this pattern of behaviour. A few years ago in Dehradun, a gentleman brought *Khīr* for Mataji, prepared with much loving care. He then asked to be allowed to feed her himself. He was an addict to Pān (betel leaves) and also very fond of talking. After Mataji had finished, she asked him smilingly, "Pitāji, have you put saffron into this?" The gentleman answered in the negative and following Mataji's gaze glanced at the left-over *khīr* in his hand. How great was his embarrassment and remorse when he saw the white surface coated with red dots !

Another incident may be cited here which was related by Mataji, because the person concerned did not know about it. At that time Mataji was moving about in the hills of the Himalayas. Her only companions were Bholanath and Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy, more commonly referred to as Bhaijī (brother). Bhaiji used to go to neighbouring villages once a day and beg for food in the manner of a *saṁnyāsī*. He would bring back whatever he was given, mostly *ātā* (wheat flour) and cook for her. They had no cooking utensils. Bhaiji would, therefore, choose a rock near a stream, clean it with the flowing water and knead the dough on it. Then he would light a fire, built up with dry sticks and twigs, and somehow bake the *chapātīs* on it. Mataji relates : "One day, when Jyotish lit the fire I saw that particles of refuse matter² still adhered to the minute crevices of the rock. When the rock had been washed and was wet, it looked clean enough, but the heat had made the dirt visible. I saw that Jyotish had not noticed anything and that the dirt was getting kneaded up in the dough."

On hearing this story, the very first horrified question was, "But why did you not tell him?" Mataji answered calmly, "Why should I? It was all the same to me, and Jyotish in any case was doing his best."

A few years ago at Raipur, after she had finished her meal one day, she asked the person who had fed her, to taste a little of the *khīr* she had been given. Accordingly, the girl took a mouthful of the *khīr*, but it was so hot that she could neither swallow it nor retain it in her mouth. In spite of Mataji's presence she had to spit it out. Mataji smilingly opened her mouth and showed her the scalded red patches in her throat. Mataji suffered from these sores for months.

Didi has always maintained that it is easier for people to worship Mataji than to render her personal service. She makes no demands, shows no preferences and accepts everything, or the lack of it, with the same calmness. Mataji's tranquility remains unperturbed even under severe provocations. Not only so, but she has,

2. The hill people of India have no lavatories. Rocks and streams suffice for them.

more often than not, to console and relieve the mortification of the devotee concerned. Her graciousness is unwavering and all-inclusive. The stranger may think that the persons surrounding her are intimate with her. That is not really so. It is a fact that she is as close or as distant with a stranger as with a constant companion. Mataji herself has emphasized this point many times. One of her own favourite stories may be cited here, which she narrates in other contexts, because she would never refer to herself as a sage, sādhu or mahātmā. A large lotus was growing in a pond. A wanderer passed by, who had never before seen a flower of this kind. Struck by its beauty, he stopped to admire it. He noticed a frog and a fish just below the lotus. 'What is this wonderful flower right above you?' he asked the frog.

The frog's answer was : 'Well, why this question? It is just a common thing!' and it turned away to hunt for insects. Disappointed, the man addressed the fish who replied, 'Did you not hear what my friend the frog said? It's just a common plant of the pond !' At that moment the wayfarer saw a bee flying swiftly towards the lotus. He wanted to address it, but the bee would not stop for him. It alighted on the blossom and drank deeply of the honey in it. Then it flew back to the man and said, 'What did you want to ask me? Speak now'. The man repeated his question. 'Don't you know', said the bee joyfully, 'this is a lotus full of marvellous honey. I am replete with it and am a transformed being now'.

"It is quite possible to live for a long time in the close proximity of sādhus and mahātmās, sages and saints, without being able to recognize their true quality. Whereas, one who has the insight may come from a great distance and within a minute know the Great and Holy for what they are—it depends on one's capacity to penetrate to the essence of things".

Mataji was at Solan (Simla Hills) during the summer of 1946. Revered Haribabaji Maharaj of Vrindaban and Swami Sharananandaji were also staying at Solan at that time. Haribabaji would read a book in the *satsang* and there would be discussion on it afterwards. For some days he read about the early life of Mataji. In answer to questions Mataji touched on some phases of her life described in the previous chapters. "After the līlā of initiation," she said, "for five months, there was hardly any time for me to take food. My body was like an automaton. I went through the motions of my daily routine of housework like a machine. I would light the fire not thinking about what I could want it for—then like an onlooker I would go through the actions of cooking and serving."

In a different context, she explained this phenomenon in these words : "Lack of food did not have any adverse effect on my body. As a matter of fact, at that time

the necessity for food itself vanished." Mataji laughed and said. "You are told that people have to abstain from the pleasures of life, but in this case everything was the other way round—I saw that I had to partake of food—sometimes less than a mouthful, so that I did not get the *kheyāla* of doing without it altogether.

"Sometimes this body would be affected by the reading of religious books, just as it used to be by the strains of devotional music. Then again, there was a time when the words of the book were not important at all—they would appear to be of little significance—whatever had to be known was already there. After this came a time when it was realized that everything is THAT only. Just like sparks of fire, where each itself has all the characteristics of the whole.

"The variety of experiences at the time of *sāadhanā* can hardly be enumerated exhaustively. A stage comes when everything becomes clear to the vision, just as when you light a lamp, the house, tree, bushes, people around you, everything becomes visible at the same time. there may be another way of looking at things, namely, what is there to visualize? After all, there is nothing which is to be known further—whatever is, is THAT only. "An idea of this comprehensive vision may be formed by anyone who takes an interest in Mataji's ways of dealing with people.

Some years ago, in a general *satsang*, Mataji was answering questions put to her by various members of the congregation. People who were familiar with the general trend of her answers to typical questions, were surprised to notice that she was branching off into new channels and using unusual phrases and terminology. The difference was not so much in the quality of her answers, as in the way of expressing them. So much so that people, at a loss to follow her thoughts, desisted, thinking that she must be in one of her cryptic and unfathomable moods. Mataji, on her part, went on elaborating her points, giving a wealth of detail. At the end of the meeting two men came forward and bowed to her saying that they were Buddhist Bhiksus (monks) who had come for her *darsana* from afar. They were specially gratified to find her elaborating on the very problems which had been exercising their minds for long. They went away convinced that Mataji had an extensive knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures, for she seemed to know the minutest details of their faith.

Once a *hathayogi* came to see Mataji. She asked him numerous questions regarding his way of life. Thus encouraged, he related the story of his life to her. He and a few friends, had started to practise *hathayoga* at an early age. By and by they had become so filled with enthusiasm that they renounced the world in order to devote themselves fully to this way of *sāadhanā*. They were determined to attain the goal of Self-realization, but it did not seem to have worked out that way. Although

to the best of their knowledge they had done nothing but what seemed right, they had met with disastrous results. One had died young and two had fallen victims to incurable ailments. He himself was suffering from severe stomach trouble. After twenty-two years of *sādhanā* they did not feel that they had attained anything, rather were they feeling disillusioned and frustrated. He was weary of the whole thing and thought that it was merely habit that was holding him to the path of renunciation.

Although he did not ask for a private audience, Mataji called him aside and talked to him for more than an hour. At the end of the interview, the air of desolation seemed lifted from his face. He said that he had received inspiration to continue on his chosen path. On being asked, Mataji said that she had questioned him in detail about his practices, pointed out where he had gone wrong, and told him how to proceed in the right manner.

Quite recently a young girl from a foreign country asked Mataji for initiation. On being told that Mataji does not herself directly initiate anybody, she asked, "What *japa* can I do?" Mataji asked her, "Are you a Christian? Do you believe in Christ?"

"Yes".

"Meditate on the form of Christ surrounded by heavenly radiance, and await His guidance."

"What can I do to rid myself of this fear I have?"

"Fear of what?"

"I don't know. Just a terrible fear."

"Meditate on God. Fill yourself with the presence of God so that there is no place for fear. Imagine that God is with you and that there can be no place for fear at all."

From these random instances it can be seen that Mataji's aim is to enkindle hunger for the Divine in man. All methods conducive to this aim are acceptable to her. She does not encourage any talk which is not concerned with religious endeavour. Gently but invariably she will guide a conversation back to considerations about a life of *sādhanā*.

All this knowledge about her personality was acquired by her companions gradually by a method of trial and error. At that time in Shahbagh they were far too overwhelmed by the extraordinariness of the entire experience. The impact of Mataji's personality was too new to be put in any sort of proper perspective. They could hardly believe in their good fortune and there was always a fear in their minds that Mataji would not be with them for long. After a state of *bhāva* or *samādhi*, they

would try their utmost to recall Mataji to her surroundings. They spoke to her about everyday affairs, sought to engage her attention in daily problems, and in other ways endeavoured to dispel her moods of exaltation. It was like trying to restrain a powerful motion with cobwebs. Mataji herself had the *kheyāla* to be where she was and therefore these attempts met with success. Mataji at that time had no need to eat, drink, sleep or cater to any other needs of the body, but she kept up a semblance of normal behaviour, or rather a shadow of it, because it was her *kheyāla* to remain with the people.

PARAMA-GURU, PARĀ-SHAKTI, PARAMESHWARI

[ONE]

—Antonio Eduardo Dagnino

*A red halo vibrating
around your dark form,
a deep red light
that turns to bright blissful fire
carrying the heart
to a joyous pulsing space
beyond stone and form and name.*

*O three eyed generatrix of all,
ever unfolding energy,
womb
where springs
eternal life from life eternal
by the mystery of your Māyā
creating the universes that expand
in limitless time and space
and dissolve, when ripeness comes,
into the one dark glory.*

These poems are flowers offered at the all-pervading beloved feet of Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma, who inspired them during the spring Durga Puja of 1971 at Varanasi.

—Antonio

OUR VISIT TO VRINDABAN

—Shraddha Davenport

The next day we flew to Delhi, then went by hired car to Vrindavan. The countryside was so beautiful. We were always attracted by rural India and its timelessness.

We were fortunate to be given rooms at the Jaipuria House dharmasala, where monkeys looked for handouts as they played in the garden courtyard.

Vrindavan, the land of Sri Krishna's childhood, is a wonderful place. Not a business town, but rather the sacred haven of pilgrims and devotees of Lord Hari. Temples abound and everywhere one hears God's Name in greeting and in song.

Mother's ashram in holy Vrindavan is very charming and peaceful. We entered the gate and proceeded up the wide path way leading to the temple steps. I felt as though suspended in the stillness. What a contrast to all the activity and crowds of two days past. Here we found the India that thrilled our souls.

Inside the temple doors was a spacious hall used for satsang and various religious functions. Just beyond the hall were shrines for Mahaprabhu and Nityananda, Sri Krishna Chhelia and Radharaniji and Lord Shivaji.

Mother's asana was placed in the hall very near the shrine of Lord Chaitanya. We stood as Mother entered from a side door and came to take Her seat. I breathed deeply the perfume of that exalted atmosphere, intoxicated with the joy of Her nearness and the luxury of sitting uncrowded to gaze at Her for long periods of time.

In those days the Vrindavan ashram was also housed the boy's school. When they were all allowed to come for darshan it was delightful. Each boy had been given a lovely gold-colored shawl with "Om Ma" imprinted all over in red Sanskrit letters. They sat respectfully before Mother, singing bhajans to Her or quietly enjoying the chance to be in Her presence.

Brahmcharini Chhabi sat at Mother's feet with eyes closed playing the harmonium and singing "Ma, Ma, Ma". Little birds came into the hall through the open grill work above the windows and joined their voices with hers. At other times Chitra and Reena Mukherjee from Calcutta would chant verses from the Gita with Chhabi.

One day Mother allowed us to each sit at Her feet for taking photos.

When Mother arose from Her seat to leave the hall we would all do *pranam*, then follow behind Her down the brick path that led past the graceful *bougainvillea*, sacred trees and gardens to Her house. On the patio at the foot of the steps we would stop, watching as she disappeared behind the double doors. Her presence was so irresistible that we often stood on that patio for some time after She had gone inside—still held captive by Her sweetness. Only then would I become aware of the heat. But it was never so consuming as was Varanasi's.

On our second day in Vrindavan, Chitra arranged for us to have our "Private" with Mother. It was late in the evening when we were called to the roof patio of Mother's house, just in front room. Mother's cot had been placed on the roof. She reclined on Her right side, resting Her head on a pillow or propped up against her hand. We sat very near Her with Chitra. No one else was allowed to be there.

The heat of the day was gone and millions of stars filled the Indian sky. There are more stars in India than anywhere else in the world. At least that is my belief, for I found it impossible to find even a tiny spot in the heavens that did not hold a star.

Mother was in a divine mood. She allowed us to take all the time we needed to ask our questions. Dear Chitra carefully translated for us. Intoxication made me bold as I said, "Mother, my heart is your ashram. What will you do with it?" Mother said, "Always think of God in your heart and when doing *japa*. Mother is one with the mantra. Doing *japa* advances spiritual progress. The more *japa* done, the more advancement is evident."

Wondering if we had any duty to pursue some social cause, we asked if we should concern ourselves with worldly matters. Mother said, "Do not concern yourselves with any worldly things; concern yourselves only with spiritual things."

Feeling the last days of this trip is slipping away, I was seized by the thought that I might never see Mother again, so I asked, "Mother will I ever come to India, to You again?" Mother's thrilling words, which would reassure and inspire me from that moment on, were: "I am always with you, wherever you are. I always see you sitting at My feet, as you are now"

Returning to our *dharmasala* that night, I wondered at Her great and perfect love. Never in this life had I known anything even remotely suggestive of such unchanging purity. And this was only a touch of Her, who remains far beyond my comprehension.

We had only three days in Vrindavan with Mother, but each one was filled with Her sweetness as She sat with us morning and evening. During the middle of the day we returned to the *dharmasala*. Swami Nirmalananda and the *brahmacharis*

would walk across the open fields. I could not tolerate the heat and would go by rickshaw. Satya would sometimes walk with the boys and other times ride with me through the narrow cobblestone streets. After taking a rest, we would return to the ashram and enjoyed the luxury of sitting uncrowded near Mother.

One afternoon as devotees pronamed at Mother's feet some left a few flowers there. Most were removed by one of the brahmacharinis sitting near Mother. However one very small pink flower which had a profusion of tiny petals was picked up by Mother and as I watched She pressed each tiny petal between Her fingers, gently holding and caressing it for at least an hour. As I gazed at Her beautiful hands and that delicate little bloom, the desire to have it grew inside me.

People again started going up to do pronam, offering and receiving a few flowers from Mother's hand. As She gave some blossoms to each person, my heart would skip a beat, thinking that the treasured little pink flower must have been given also. Then I would see that She was still holding it. But for how long?

I made my way to the line of devotees and at last was at Her feet. As I pronamed and looked at Her, She picked up a hibiscus flower to give to me. I held out my hands before Her and as She dropped the red blossom from between Her folded palms, there in my hand I found not only the hibiscus, but a tiny treasure—that precious little pink flower. Tears came to my eyes as I quietly returned to my seat and again was filled with the wonder of her great compassion and love.

On May twenty-five we learned that Mother had still more blessings in store for us. Instead of returning directly to Varanasi as originally planned, She would be going to the Delhi ashram for a couple of days.

Our plane would leave from Delhi airport on the night of the thirtieth, so we would not have had time to follow Mother back to Varanasi. But-joy of joys-in Delhi She was granting us two more days to be near Her.

Leaving Vrindavan was sad, but because we were not leaving Mother we were all smiling as we piled into our two hired cars for the three-hour drive to Delhi. Krishnapriya rode with us. Swami Nirmalananda and the brahmacharis were in the other car, Satya took movies of our little caravan along the way. In Delhi, we stayed at a hotel while Swami Nirmalananda's group stayed with the Sharma family.

We went by taxi to the ashram and spent as much time with Mother as we were allowed.

Reena Mukherjee came to Delhi with Mother-in Mother's car. Reena told me that Mother had talked about Satya and me during the drive from Vrindavan, saying how we had met. It was hard for me to imagine that Mother would take such notice of us.

The Delhi ashram is on the city, away from traffic and noise. The atmosphere was peaceful with only a few devotees present in the circular satsang hall. There was a large ceiling fan, but due to problem with the electricity it kept shutting off. So someone was needed to fan Mother. One young man was trying to do that, but with very little force, so Chitra took the fan from him and called Satya to do this service for Mother. He could hardly believe that he was honored but hastily stepped to where Chitra indicated he should stand, and with great relish made the fan perform to its maximum. I chuckled to myself as I imagined Mother being wafted into the air by such a strong current.

Another time Chitra said I could sit at Mother's feet during satsang. I had my tape recorder with me and turned it on to record Mother's voice as She talked. After one side of the tape finished, the machine clicked off. At that sound Mother stopped speaking and Chitra quickly told me to record further. After I put it away, Mother again spoke. Later I learned that She was talking about the two Krishna murtis in the Vrindavan temple. From that time on, I was more careful about using the recorder around Mother.

One afternoon we were permitted to have a few last words with Mother as She sat with us in the satsang hall. Chitra was interpreting for us when suddenly she was called away, leaving us alone at Mother's feet. Now as I look back on that most rare occasion. I wonder why I did not speak to Mother in English. There is no doubt that She would have understood, and perhaps might have answered in English.

In the evening, carpets were placed in the courtyard and Mother sat with us out in the open. Such wonder-filled days She gave to us! It is hard to believe that there were only three days in Delhi. She could make time stand still. And why not? It is Her creation.

On May twenty-seventh we went for the last time to the Delhi ashram. Mother came into the courtyard and walked around briskly. We all stood back so as not to interfere with Her exercise.

It felt so wonderful to be in the company of devotees who were so respectful to Mother. Each face held a personal love story as all gazed at Her with tearful eyes. She was leaving Delhi that day and we were all going to the train station to see Her off. We watched as the ashram cars were prepared. At an opportune moment I went to say a few last words to Chitra.

Swami Paramanandaji walked with Mother to the car that was waiting for them. Mother was seated and Her door closed. Our car was also waiting. In somber caravan we were taken to the station.

An Indian train station is a beehive of activity. Red-coated porters balance stacks of luggage upon their heads as they thread their way through the crowded platform. Everyone travels by train for there are varied accommodations to suit each one's pocket. The cry of vendors hawking *chai* (Indian tea) and *mumfali* (roasted peanuts) rises above the din of voices. When a train arrives, the shrill metallic sounds of brakes pierces through the "cush" of released steam as crowds of people gravitate to that sound.

Amid the clamor we searched for Mother's train. It did not take long to find the devotees cluster by one particular coach. Mother had gone inside to her compartment and everyone was trying to catch a glimpse of Her through the windows. Soon our compassionate Mother appeared in the doorway. We managed to stand near Her for quite a while then stepped back a little to let others draw near. She stood there with us for about one hour as we pressed against each other with hands folded in pronam.

The heat was intensified by our closeness. I became aware that my clothes, hair and skin were all wet as though I had fallen into a pond. Satya also was soaked. I must have looked faint, as he led me to a large fountain near where we stood. We both bathed our faces and drank some water, then returned to stand near Mother for our last darshan.

Slowly the train began to move. Mother returned to Her compartment as we stood quietly, our eyes unwilling to release that Divine Thief who had stolen our hearts, our very being.

In the three remaining days before leaving India we visited with the Sharmas and Satya took me shopping at the Tibetan stalls where I found treasures to share with friends upon our return to the States.

Our pre-dawn flight lifted us from that sacred land and my eyes were filled with tears as I wondered if I would ever see her again.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

[Continued from before]

—Sri P.C. Mehta

Ritualism and Dharma:

In early post-Vedic literature we find the same monistic views of the Absolute as mentioned earlier, though these views are inseparable from monotheism. Gradually this period shows changes in the prevailing thought patterns of absolutism, ritualism, theism as well as 'Vedic free thinking'. We shall refer to the development of these thoughts as we proceed.

As we saw, the Vedic religion was primarily a religion of sacrifice. The sacrifice was performed for worldly prosperity and attainment of heaven after death. The domestic cult of sacrifice as described in the *Grihya-sutras*, a part of the Smriti literature, continues.

The ritualistic spirit which was so prominent in the later Vedic thought, is further developed in the post-Vedic period. The Vedanga of ritual is given the name '*Kalpa-sutras*'.

There are three classes of *Kalpa-sutras*.

1) '*Srauta-Sutra*' organize the sacrificial lore of the Brahmanas, and is concerned with the description of elaborate rites which mark the chief subject matter of the Brahmanas.

2) The '*Grhya-Sutra*' lay down domestic life-cycle ceremonies that sanctify the individual from before his conception to his death. This is the most important section of the '*Kalpasutras*' for Hinduism today.

3) The '*Dharma Sutras*': the purpose of which is the preparation of the individual for a successful moral and ritualistic life as house-holder; in order to obtain worldly prosperity and a life in Heaven after death. They also deal with law and morals from the stand point of society or state.

The main classes of 'dharma' taught in these sutras are three : i) the specific duties of each of the four 'varnas' or 'castes' of the society; ii) the specific duties of each of the 'ashramas' or stages in life and iii) the common duties obligatory to all, such as self-control, kindness and speaking the truth.

That ritualistic life is fruitful only to the morally pure, is a principle recognized from very early times. Vashista has said that 'Neither the Vedas, nor sacrifice, nor liberality can save him, whose conduct is base, who has departed from the right path'. (Dharma-Sutra, vi.2 & 6).

All these, being ritualistic texts, they have limited value for philosophy, which can only be gathered indirectly. They lay great stress on recitation, claiming proper recitation or '*swadhyaya*' itself as a sacrifice and regulate the four ashrams, especially the first two of 'brahmacharya' and 'grahastha'. The sutras thus represent the conservative thoughts of the time. While the tradition of the Vedas as seen in the Brahmanas was the only authority and '*samaya*' or the practices of those who followed the Vedic tradition were respected; now *Kalpa-sutras* asserted Vedic sanction for both. Thus the *Kalpa-Sutras* subordinate everything to ritualism.

The later Upanisads lean in favour of sacrificial practices of the Brahmanas and consider Vedic ceremonials necessary for Self-knowledge. In this context they affirm that rituals are '*durita-ksaya*' or a remedy for sin, or a means to purify the heart, which leads to emancipation. Nevertheless they also assert that there is a state when the obligation to perform Vedic rituals is transcended. Their attitude therefore is not the same as that of the *Kalpa-Sutras*. The Mahabharata contains views in favour as well as opposed to rituals.

Ceremonials covered under the '*Srauta-Sutra*' and the '*Grhya-Sutra*' are elaborate and complicated. We shall therefore refer to them in short. We shall offer more observations to the third head dealing with '*Dharma-Sutra*'.

The '*Srauta-sutras*' or 'aphorisms of solemn rites' were compiled over the period, roughly from the Brahmanas to the Upanisads, while the '*Grhya-sutras*' concerned with domestic rites; (from 'Grha' meaning home) appear to be composed during Upanisadic times.

The Elaborate Rites

During '*Vedic*' and '*Brahmanic*' sacrifices, the '*rasa*' i.e. the juice of what was known as '*Soma*', the divinized plant of '*amrita*' or 'immortality', was ritually extracted with appropriate '*Mantras*' (or words of power) and partaken of. There were two kinds of '*Soma*', the earthly and heavenly. The heavenly '*Soma-rasa*' appears to be the outflow of divine energy. Great importance is given to this '*Soma-rasa*' and its effect in the Rg. Veda and the rituals.

The earthly '*Soma-rasa*' is interpreted by some as the juice of the very poisonous hallucinogenic fly agaric mushroom, extracted in a manner or mixed with some other ingredient to overcome its poisonous effect. It is also interpreted as a mixture of several herbs or as the plant '*Kushta*' (Saussurea Lappa). It is also

equated with the '*Sakti-pat*' or descent of divine-grace which takes place during rituals.

'*Soma*' sacrifice involved the pressing and offering of '*Soma*'. *Soma*'sacrifice would include animal sacrifice along with many sub-rites, the most basic of the '*Soma*' sacrifice was the '*Agnistoma*' i.e. 'In praise of the Agni'. Prior to the ceremony the '*yajamāna*' or host and his wife were consecrated and '*soma*' plant brought in a prescribed manner. Then along with preliminary rites there were three pressings of the *soma* plant to extract the juice. This was a four-day rite culminating on the concluding day with '*soma*' pressings in morning, afternoon and evening and sacrifices of two goats.

The shortest rite was the '*Agnihotra*'. This was a food offering of milk to '*Agni*'. This was an important rite for the '*yajamāna*' that is host, in which Adhvaryu priest officiated.

There were also new-moon and full-moon sacrifices in which vegetables were offered along with oblations to the ancestors. There were also sacrifices of the seasons, which occurred every four months, in the spring, summer, monsoon and winter. There were also occasional sacrifices.

The three of the most ambitious '*Soma*' sacrifices were royal rites: 1) The '*Asvamedha*' or 'The horse sacrifice', 2) The '*Rājasuya*' or 'The Royal consecration' and 3) The '*Vājapeya*' or 'The drink of strength'.

The '*Asvamedha*' or horse sacrifice was performed only by a conquering king. It was a year-long rite. It had for its purpose dominion over all the area covered by the wandering stallion, as well as the general welfare, fertility and prosperity of the kingdom. Its main feature was the letting loose of a horse to wander whither it chose for a year, attended and defended from capture and prevented from intercourse with mares, by a band of noble youths. The stallion represents the universe in its male aspect and meditated upon as such during the *Āranyaka* stage of life. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanisad it is stated that the horse has to be meditated upon as '*Prajapati*' or the cosmic Being. The dawn is its head; the eye is the sun; the vital air is the air; the open mouth is the '*Vaisvānara*-fire'; the trunk is the ear; the back is the heaven; the belly is the sky; the hoof is the earth; the forepart is the rising sun; the hind part is the setting sun; shaking its body is the thunder; its neighing is the speech, etc. As the steed it carries the gods; as a stallion the celestial minstrels; as a courser the demons; as a horse the men etc. In the sacrifice two cups made of gold and silver respectively are placed in front of and behind the horse to hold the sacrificial libations. These are to be meditated upon as the day and night respectively. The queen as the empress of the kingdom is the dynamic *Sakti* responsible for the fertility of the kingdom and protection of its inhabitants. It is interaction between the two which is symbolized by this rite. The sacrifice was concluded after the stallion was brought back. Though the public cult of sacrifices

had started to decline so early that by the third century B.C. little survived, the last king on record to perform the horse sacrifice appears to be a ruler of Chola dynasty in the eleventh century A.D.

Non-animal sacrifices involved offerings of 'ghee' or purified butter, 'samidh' i.e. a bundle of eight small dry wooden twigs from a particular tree, rice, barley, milk and vegetable substances with appropriate 'mantras' or words of power. They were more popular and have survived the longest.

The Domestic Rites

The '*Grhya-sutras*' are concerned with domestic rites; (from '*Grhā*' meaning home). They have Vedic origin and hallowed by tradition. They appear to be composed during Upanisadic time and still survive in conservative homes.

The domestic rites involve maintenance of the household fire with offerings of 'samidh', grain and ghee (clarified butter) made to the household fire and the performance of the so-called 'Five great sacrifices' viz: '*Pancha yajna*' or 'Five Yajnas':

*'Pātho homascha atithinam saparyām tarpanam balihi,
Ami pancha mahā yagna brahmayagnādināmakaha'*

- i) Studying the Vedas ('*Pathan*' called *Brahma Yagna*)
- ii) Sacrificing to the gods, ('*Homa*' called *Deva Yagna*)
- iii) Honouring the guests, ('*Atithi seva*' called *Manushya Yagna*)
- iv) Presenting oblations to ancestors (*Tarpan*' called *Pitri Yagna*) and
- v) Offering food to birds. ('*Bali*' *Bhuta Yagna*) are the five great *Brahma Yajnas*'.

The important '*Grhya*' ceremonies are the sacraments or life-cycle rites (*samskāras*), 16 in number; the most important being,

- 1) Rites of conception and birth of a male child,
- 2) The '*Upanayana*' or the sacred initiation of boys of the three upper castes to the sacred Vedic lore, rendering them '*Dvija*' or 'twice-born', a term first used in Atharva Veda.
- 3) Marriage,
- 4) Death followed by cremation and '*Antyesti*' rite or the 'final offering' rite.

The '*Upanayana*' ceremony allows boys to participate in the '*Sautra*' ceremonies which are sacrificial systems of great complexity lasting even upto two years. Seasonal '*Sautra*' observances cover the whole year and is woven around the notion of '*Prajāpati*' in his aspect of sacrificial life-death-regeneration round. Through '*Agnicayana*' i.e. the piling of the fire alter, one gains immortality and needs no more nourishment in the other world. ('*Satapatha Brahmana*' 10-1-5-4).

What is 'Dharma' : 'Dharma-Sutra' :

The Dharma-Sutras are so called because their aim is to lay down the standard of Dharma. We have therefore first to examine the meaning of the word *Dharma*. This word is of great importance in the history of Indian thought.

'Dhāranāt dharmam ityāhuhu'-Mahabharata xii-109-14, i.e. The word '*Dharmam*' is derived from '*Dhāranā*' i.e. from '*Dhru-dhara*' to hold. In other words '*Dhārayati iti dharmaha*' i.e. *Dharma* literally means 'what holds together'.

All the factors that holds together the cosmic, moral and social order form part of the word *Dharma*. Therefore the word *Dharma* includes the following elements, but is used either to denote all of them collectively or any one or more of them according to context.

Dharma means : *Rta*:

Rta which we discussed earlier means to uphold the cosmic order by upholding both the moral and physical order.

Dharma means : Right and virtuous conduct :

This is its purely moral concept. That conduct which leads to illumination is moral that which makes for greater ignorance and greater bondage is immoral. This is best explained in the 'Bhagvad Gita'.

Dharma means : Religious merit, through performance of certain rituals and *Sadhana* and *Varnāshram Dharma*.

Religious merit derived through the performance of certain rituals. Such ritual performances are supposed to secure good to a person in the future, either here or elsewhere. Thus the performance of certain sacrifices is believed to lead the person to heaven after the present life; and of certain others to secure for him wealth, children and the like in this very life. This is a ritualistic meaning of dharma, having ethical significance.

'Brāhmana vividishanti yajnena dānena'. 'The Brahmin desires to know, with the sacrifices and charity'. That is when the heart is purified through sacrifices and charity, that there arises the hunger for the knowledge of Brahman. Karma yoga is performance of those actions which lead to emancipation. Those include sacrifices and charity and the rituals and rites of religion. It is true that these rituals did become overbearing and chanting of Vedic mantras, a mere outward form. But that does not negate the efficacy of duly performed sacrifices or rituals.

It is this ethical significance in actions supposedly having religious merit or the ideal of moral purity which these treatises speak of, which evokes our interest.

This ideal of moral purity as laid down in these treatises may be having only relative value i.e. as a means to success in ritualistic life and may not have ultimate

or absolute value. Some scholars have interpreted this drift to mean that over-elaborate ritualism led to assigning a somewhat subordinate place to morality. This does not seem to be a valid criticism.

'Sādhāraṇa' or The obligatory duties

The obligatory duties prescribed in the Dharma Sutras conduce to the cultivation of personal virtues as well as to the fulfillment of social obligations. This is clear from two of the main classes of dharma taught in these treatises and mentioned hereunder.:

'Sādhāraṇa-dharma' i.e. common virtues such as i) self-control ii) non-violence iii) truthfulness iv) compassion v) charity vi) peace, vii) cleanliness viii) and the like are obligatory on all.

When these virtues are selfless or have a bearing on others, they do not stop at mankind but extend to other kingdoms such as animal, who are endowed with rights without obligations.

'Ahimsā satyamasteyam saucam indriya-nigrahaḥ',

Dānam damo dayā sātīhi sarvesām dharma-sādhanaṃ'.

(Yajñavalkya Smṛiti (I, iv, 122).

'Non-violence, truthfulness, cleanliness, self-control, charity, self-restraint, compassion, peace are required of everyone for living a life of *dharma*'

[To be continued]

MATAJI'S LILA AT DEHRADUN

—Sri Hari Ram Joshi

It was in the first week of July 1933 that at about 10 A.M. the nephew of late Sri K.N. Tankha of Ananda Chawk knocked at the door of my office-room at my residence in the Phaltu Line. When I came out, he enquired from me if I was Hari Ram Joshi, for whom he had brought a letter from Bhaiji. He had met him and Mataji in the early morning at Tapkeshwar Mahadeva (Garhi), in the cave of the temple. Bhaiji informed me through this letter that Mataji and he had walked from Mussorie to Tapkeshwar the previous day and that, if I wished, I could go to meet them there. I immediately requested a friend to lend me his car for a couple of hours, so that I might show Mataji a few places for Her future stay in Dehradun. On my way I picked up my friend, the late Sri Hansa Datt Tewari. Reaching Tapkeshwar we paid our homage at the lotus feet of Mataji as also of Bhaiji. I learnt that Pitāji and Brahmachari Kamalakanta had stayed back at Uttarkashi for further sādhanā.

We were given prasāda by Bhaiji consisting of one loaf of bajri with some gur (jaggary), which they had collected in their morning *bhikshā* (alms) out of which one loaf had been eaten by Mataji and Bhaiji. Then we all left Tapkeshwar for Nalapāni Śiva temple, which was under a rudraksha tree. After about an hour we motored to Dehradun. I showed them the Śiva temple adjoining the Parade Ground and the General Post Office. Bhaiji then directed me to take Mataji to the Kālī Bari *dharamśala* as it was getting late. I requested Mataji to see one more place at Ananda Chawk that I had in view for Her stay, and Mataji agreed to go there.

Mataji decided to pass the night on the veranda of the Ananda Chawk temple, on one side of which was installed a Śiva linga and on the other side a twin moorti of Sri Radhakrishna. I brought from my house a few chapatis prepared by my mother with flour mixed with milk, some unsalted fried potatoes and some cow's milk for Mataji and Bhaiji. They partook only of a little of it and I was asked to take the rest back home. Thus in the first week of July 1933, Mataji and Bhaiji started living in a small room of the Ananda Chawk temple.

The temple belonged to the Bhargava family of Saharanpur and Sri Kashi Narain Tankha had been entrusted with its management. I therefore approached him to obtain permission for Mataji and Bhaiji to stay in the room attached to the temple. The following morning the wife of Sri Dwaraka Nath Raina, pleader, who was residing in the small cottage next to the temple, and the wife of Sri Kashi Narain Tankha, who lived in Ananda Chawk in a bungalow nearby, came to the temple for

their daily morning prayers. They met Mataji and Bhaiji. Mataji's personality greatly attracted them and they both became Her ardent devotees. Kashi Narain's wife was given the name of 'Mahalakshmi' by Mataji. Within a few days of Mataji's arrival at Ananda Chawk, a number of persons belonging to that locality, mostly Kashmiris, started visiting Her almost daily. Their devotion to Mataji was of a very high order. Dwaraka Bhai used to be addressed by Mataji as 'Gopalji'. One evening in October or November, 1934, I brought for Mataji's *darsana* Sardar Balwant Singh, P.E.S. Assistant Registrar, Co-operative Societies, U.P. Meerut, who had come to Dehradun on his official tour. He was greatly impressed by Mataji's remarkable personality and the next morning took Mataji, Bhaiji and myself in his car to Kalsi on the Chakrata Road along with his wife who had not seen Mataji before. Sardarji's wife later became one of Mataji's foremost devotees. Mataji named her 'Maharatan' (great jewel). Sardar Balwant Singh was a Sikh and distantly related to the family of the Maharaja of Kapurthala. His wife Maharatan was a religious soul. She and her five daughters started coming to Mataji as often as they could. Sardar Balwant Singh died in harness at Lucknow. Sister Maharatan passed away in 1967 constantly remembering Mataji, The second daughter of Maharatan, Swarnalata, lived in Mataji's ashram for many years. She was an M.A, L.T., unmarried, and devoted much of her time to Mataji's service. For several years she was a teacher in the Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth at Varanasi.

At Bhaiji's suggestion Mataji's devotees and admirers started reciting *Mā Nama Kirtana* at the Ananda Chowk temple every evening. It may be recalled here that on a good many occasions at Bajitpur and Dhaka Mataji had in Her *mahābhāva* recited Vedic mantras, one after another in Sanskrit. A few of those mantras had been taken down by the devotees and were recited daily at fixed hours in the morning and evening. In 1931 Mataji had suggested to Bhaiji to try and compose something else as the hymns were incomplete. He therefore one night composed a hymn for recitation at *kirtan* hour, which was sung daily at the Ramna Ashram, Dhaka. In this prayer, reproduced hereafter, Bhaiji has lucidly described the most important phases of the *Mahābhāvas* of the Divine Universal Mother Anandamayi Ma—

Jai Hridaya vāsinī suddhā sanātani Śri Anandamayi Ma,

Jai bhuvana ujwalā jananī Nirmala punya vistāriṇī Mā.

Jai rāja rājeśwarī swāhā swadhā Gouri pranava rūpiṇī Mā,

Jai soumyā soumyatarā satya manoharā pūrṇa parātparā Mā.

Jai ravi saśi kuṇḍalā mahāvvyoma kuntalā viśva rūpiṇī Mā.

Jai aiswarya bhātimā mādhurya pratimā mahimā maṇḍitā Mā.

Jai ramā manoramā śānti śānta kṣamā sarva devamayī Mā,

Jai sukhadā varadā bhakti jñānadā kaivalyadāyini Mā.

Jai visva prasavinī viśva pālinī viśva samhāriṇī Mā,

Jai bhakta prāṇa rūpā mūrtimatī kripā trlokatārini Mā.

*Jai kārya kāraṇa bhūtā bhedābhedātītā parama devatā Mā,
 Jai vidyā vinodini yogijana ranjini bhava bhaya bhanjini Mā.
 Jai mantra bijātmikā Veda prakāsikā nikhila vyāpikā Mā,
 Jai saguṇā svarūpā nirguṇā nirupā mahābhāvamayī Mā.
 Jai mugdha charāchara gāhe nirantara tava guna mādhuri Mā,
 Morā mili prāṇe prāṇe praṇami Śri Charane, jai jai jai Mā.*

English rendering :

Glory to Thee, Sri Anandamayi Ma, eternal holy dweller of the heart !

Thy lustre, Mother Nirmala, illumines the universe. Heavenly virtues radiate from
 Thee, O Mother.

Queen of divine glory, Gouri, *swāhā*, *swadhā*, Om art Thou, O Mother,
 Divinely graceful, Thou art absolute Reality, supremely beautiful and perfect,
 O Mother.

The Sun and the moon adorn Thy countenance, the boundless sky crowns Thy
 head, the whole universe is Thy glorious form, O Mother.

The lustre of worldly riches art Thou, sweetness incarnate, radiant with splendour,
 O Mother.

Thou art charming as Lakshmi is to Vishnu, Thou art peace, tranquility and mercy;
 all gods and goddesses emanate from thee, O mother.

Grantor of happiness and benediction, bestower of love, wisdom and liberation art
 Thou, O Mother.

Bringing forth the world, Thou it is who nurses and preserves and finally draws it
 back into Thyself.

The very life of Thy devotees art Thou, grace incarnate, saviour of the three worlds,
 O Mother.

Spell of all Knowledge, charmer of the yogins... the terrors of life are dispelled by
 Thy presence, O Mother.

The soul of all mantras art Thou, the revealer of the Vedas, pervading the whole
 universe, O Mother.

Thou art with forms and qualities, yet also formless and beyond all description;
 aglow with love and bliss, O Mother.

Thrilled by Thy touch, the entire universe, animate and inanimate, ever sings Thy
 praises, O sweet Mother.

Let us all unite and from our hearts offer obeisance at Thy holy feet; hail, and again
 hail to Thee, O Mother.

GLEANINGS FROM "IN ASSOCIATION WITH SRI MA"

—Sri Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

Dhaka, 1931

One morning when I went to see Ma at the Siddheswari Ashram, she came out with the snake stories, of her own accord.

She said, "In the horoscope of one of Kunja Babu's* sons, it was recorded that he would die from injury caused by teeth. Kunja Babu brought the boy and wanted to leave him with me. I told him that it was not needed, the boy should rather be staying with his parents. A few days after, there was a talk of our going abroad; Bholanath was specially eager for this journey. I made an agreement with him that if we should meet an acquaintance on our way to the station, then the journey would be cancelled and we would be back to Shahbag. One morning I set with Bholanath as my sole companion. It turned out that on that particular day, we met no known face. Those who worked at the garden in the morning, were also absent. Jyotish** had been lying ill in a rented house near Shahbag. He used to pace up and down every morning on the verandah. We went past the house, but Jyotish was not to be seen. Thus without leaving a message for anyone, we went to Vindhyachal from Dhaka.

"At that time Kunja Babu was at Vindhyachal with his family. One day I went out to see the temples of Vindhyachal with his wife, children and Bholanath. We were climbing up a hill along a very narrow set of steps, with I leading. I was followed by Bholanath while Kunja Babu's wife and her children brought up the rear. I was climbing up absent-mindedly, heedless of what I was treading on. It is always like that when I am out on a hill. Proceeding in this way I trampled upon a snake. The cold touch made me move away my foot at once and I stood up on the next step. No sooner than my foot was up, the snake bit under it and staying where

*. Shri Kunja Mohan Mukherjee, brother to Shri Shashanka Mohan Mukherjee: He was afterwards named Swami Turiananda by Ma.

** Sri Jyotish Chandra Roy (Bhaiji), a special devotee of Sri Sri Ma. He was a Personal Assistant to the Director of Agriculture. At the time referred to, he had an attack of T.B. and was staying at Ramna. It is a common knowledge that he was saved from that fell disease only through Ma's grace. In 1937 Jyotish Babu went to Kailash with Ma and Baba Bholanath and on the way back he fell ill and died at Almora.

it was, it raised up its hood and kept looking at me. I also stared back at it. In the meantime, all shouted out, 'snake, snake' and all eyes were on the snake. Bholanath was behind me and the snake. Much concerned, he asked me if the snake had bitten me and whether he should kill it. I said, "No, don't." When Bholanath asked me about killing the snake it turned aside its head looked at his face for a while and then slithered up the hill face into the woods. At this time Kunja Babu's younger son abruptly said to his mother, 'You see, mother, it is the snake-bite meant for Dada. Ma has taken it for him.' It was very strange that such a categorical utterance should come from him - a very little boy.

"After that we wandered to different places before we came back to the house. On that day a dish of *Khichri* had been cooked for all. But I ate up the whole, so the cooking had to be done over again for the others. In the afternoon, led by an impulse I roamed about with Kunja Babu's sons and went down to the foot of the hill. While resting the eye, I observed under the thumb of my right foot two blue marks like pricks of a needle. The snake was a cobra, and after the bite I had experienced the working of poison for a while. On my return to the house in the evening, I indulged in a pun to Kunja Babu's son, 'The snake ate (a Bengali term for bit) me, and I ate rice.'

"A few days after we returned to Shahbag. One day while relating the snake story to Baul Babu and others, I almost felt weeping at the snake having gone away like that, but comforted myself saying that I would meet it again.

Ma continued—"After this event we once went to Vidyakut. When after staying there for a few days, we were to set out for the station in a boat, I was again seized by a fit of tears. At the time of departure, I started weeping. It was like the weeping of a married woman at the time of leaving her father's house for her father-in-law's. I myself was not quite definite about why I was weeping. It was certainly not for my parents, for they were with me. Those who had come to see us off, also began to weep to see me in tears. However, we got into the boat. I was accompanied by my parents, Shashanka Babu, Khukuni and her elder brother.* When our boat was plying through a canal, I found a snake coming in the direction of our boat with distended hood. Strangely, the snake kept up all the time with our boat, maintaining a distance of ten feet or so. It never shot ahead of the boat or fall behind it. I kept gazing at it fixedly and could not take my eyes off. I was sandwiched between Khukuni and her elder brother. But nobody else had marked it. At last when it approached. the boat and raised its hood right before my face, the boatman saw it

* Late Sri Birendra Nath Mukherjee, a professor of Agra College.

and tried to kill it with the oar. But the oar missed it, and it sunk away. The oar raised a volley of water which almost bathed me. Asked to change my clothes, I said, no, it should rather be dried on the body. Then they pressed me for revealing the identity of the snake. I said, 'It is the same snake of Vindhyaachal—a great saint, with a disciple following him'.

At this time I interrupted—'But, Ma did not you speak of only one snake? How comes this disciple then?'

Ma said, 'I saw a disciple behind the saint. The high-souled one seldom move about without disciples. Even at birth they are attended by their disciples. However, you may wonder at the snake of Vindhyaachal appearing in Vidyakut'.

I said, 'No, I have no difficulty on that score. But if it is a saint why did it bite you?'

Ma said, 'Bite me? Well it did not. Don't you fondle little children holding them by the feet? It was just like that. You see, I am a girl spoiling for being fondled—so the Baba gave a caressing touch to my foot. Ever since he is with me.'

Then I said, 'Ma, a Siva temple planned by you lies on a tomb.* Is it not the tomb of this very saint? Why else would you direct the other day for the modelling of a snake on the steeple of the temple?' At this Ma burst into an uncontrollable laughter and said, 'I cannot answer all your questions.'

Ma continued, 'Another day a kirtan was going on at the house of Niranjana Babu**. I was lying in a room on the first floor. They came to me asking me to join the kirtan. But at that time I felt obsessed and could not rise and walk up to the spot. After a while there was a shout, 'Snake, Snake.' At that I stood up, ready to go downstairs. The people were looking for the snake in the rooms. I was staggering down the stairs when one of my feet came down on the snake. The snake was writhing under my toes in a bid to get away. Bholanath was behind me. I pushed him aside and raised my foot from the snake which moved to the foot of the staircase and lay still lengthwise. It was slender and black. Some asked for my permission to kill it. I said, 'Kill it if you can.' They tried to strike the snake with a stick but in the meanwhile it had disappeared nobody knew where. No one could think out how the snake could have managed to make good its escape in the midst of a houseful of lights and quite a multitude of people.'

*. Behind the Annapurna temple in the Ramna Ashram there was a small cemented space. When I first visited the Ashram I found it in the same state and on my enquiry to other devotees I came to know that it marked out a saint's tomb.

** Late Niranjana Roy, friend of late Jyotish Chandra Roy. He was Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax. Both the friends were among Ma's top-ranking devotees.

Another day I asked Ma, 'I heard it said, Ma, that you used to feed snakes on milk and bananas on the spot you chose as a site for the Ramna Ashram. Is it true ?

Ma said, 'Snakes are still offered milk and bananas. Before the Ashram was set up, the spot was overgrown with forest infested with foxes, snakes and many other wild animals. There was also a small dilapidated temple here. As you know, I never do anything on my own. One day I had the kheyāl of leaving milk and banana there. Returning there at night, I did the same. A week later I was pressed by the desire to find out the result of the experiment. Accompanied by Bholanath and some other persons, I went there with a lantern. I saw that the milk and bananas were still there as they had been left—quite untouched, though the place was teeming with animals. What was more surprising, not a straw had settled down on the surface of the milk, which seemed to have been covered up by a lid, just lifted up at the time. At this I said, 'Come, let us share it as a prasād.' But those with me objected. They said, 'We had better not taste the milk, for it may contain poison, killing the one tasting it.' I said, 'I shall be the first to take it,' and pouring a little on the palm, I drank it. The others then followed me. Some milk still remained and I left it there. When I went there back the next morning, I found the whole lapped up clean. Evidently they had been waiting for us so long. Later the spot was taken on lease and after the forest was cleared, your Ashram was set up."

The spot had been praised by Ma on many occasions. Once she had said, 'The site of many sacrifices, there is nothing unholy here. Even the dust particles of this place are sanctified.' Another day she had said, 'The Ashram here has been prompted by the saints, who in former times practised sadhana here.' Ma always advised the devotees to visit this Ashram and recount Names and practise Japa.

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When Ma was staying at Shahbag and Siddheswari Ashram, many saw her wonder-working powers directly. But by the time I started paying her visits, she had withdrawn all her supernatural attributes into an untroubled oceanic personality. I had never witnessed any of her miracles. Before that many had listened to Sanskrit couplets issuing from her mouth while in a trance. She herself alluded to these couplets to me. She said, 'What was strange about it was that while these couplets came out, my tongue was automatically shifted to the proper positions knocking out the correct pronunciations of the words.'

Hearing this one day I asked her, 'Ma, how much I would like to listen to a Sanskrit couplet recited by you.' Ma said, 'I cannot recite them of my own accord. Sometimes they come out of me by themselves—I have no control over them.'

One day I said to her, 'Ma, it is said that you have revealed before some devotees your '*Dasamahāvidyā*' forms.' Ma laughed and said, 'I revealed nothing. They claim to have seen them.'

She made similar answer when I asked her also about her effecting cure through touch. She said, 'It is none of my willing. God wills and it happens. I have noticed that at times when some patient approaches me, my hand automatically touches his body and he is cured. On the other hand, in the case of some other patients, I never feel like touching them. While in Shahbag, a patient was brought to me with the request that I should bring him round. I pleaded my inability to cure a patient and advised them to consult a medical practitioner. But Bholanath was adamant and said, 'You must cure him or I shall give you no rest.' So saying he made room for the patient in Shahbag. For the moment I said nothing. In the afternoon when the kirtan was started, I felt inspired and said, 'Let the patient roll himself on the ground of the kirtan.' The patient came to the spot, but try as he would, he could not roll himself. Yet he was not too weak to do it unaided, for he had come to the Ashram on foot. What was strange was that his attendants too did not force him to lie down there. Later I came to know that he had died on his way back. So I say, nothing can be done except at the will of God.'

Another day I went to the Ashram in the morning and saw many devotees chanting the holy name. After the kirtan had gone on for a while, I felt talking to Ma. I said, 'Ma, can you divine the character and thoughts of a person by merely looking at his face?' Ma said smilingly, 'No, nothing of the kind.' The reply did not satisfy me and I again said, 'Ma, I have heard that Yogis can tell everything about a man – his appearance, his character, where and how he lives – by looking at his face or even seeing or touching articles used by him.'

Ma replied, 'You see, if I start telling about your character it might put you to shame.' I laughed and said, 'But I did not ask you to describe my character. I only asked you if you had the ability. Why then did you put me off at first by a denial?' Ma merely smiled and said nothing.

That day something mentionable happened, which bore testimony to Ma's unusual power, which some might call supernatural. It was about 11 or 11.15 A.M. The sun was quite oppressive. At this time some women came to the Ashram. Suddenly Ma turned to one of them and said, 'These earrings in your ears—they are very elegant. Such earring are in fashion now, I suppose.' She kept repeating it.

Up to that time I had not even for a time looked at the target of Ma's remark.—I had not thought it necessary. I had my eyes fixed only on Ma's face, lit up with smile, eager to catch her way of being witty. Her manners gave her away as a guileless little girl, beaming over with joy over a mere trifle.

At this time Ma said to the woman, 'And your eyes – how beautiful they are ! Lucky I had a sight of those things of beauty—your earrings.' This made me curious and I looked at the woman. What I saw staggered me. The woman was in her mid-thirties. Very dark-complexioned, her face was devoid of any charm and her eyes were big, red-shot and abnormally dilated. The way she looked was the stare of one in fright on seeing an apparition. Looking at Ma she began to groan and then fell down unconscious. I was greatly frightened and unable to decide what to do. There were marks of worries on every face. As I looked at Ma, I found her eying me with a fit of merriment. I was struck dumb at two simultaneous events. I could not account for the unnatural mirth of Ma. Then I thought that perhaps Ma had something to do with what happened to the woman. The way she was looking at Ma bespoke that she had visualized in her something, which shocked her into unconsciousness; and judging by the merriment of Ma, there was nothing to worry. Surely, Ma could not be so cruel as to laugh if there was a threat to the woman's life. On the other hand, the companions of the woman were perplexed over her.

Ma suddenly stopped her laughter and said, 'Seeing that she is conscious, you had better leave her at the Ashram and go away. She will leave when she comes to.' They did not like the suggestion. From the way of their companions it appeared that they blamed Ma for the unhappy turn and their faces betrayed annoyance. One of them declared that the woman used to have similar fainting fits occasionally. Ma said, 'Well, if she suffers from such ailment, why do you object to leaving her here ?' While these verbal exchanges were on, the woman came to, and leaning upon one of the companions walked out of the Ashram. But she kept looking at Ma wide-eyed so long as she was not out of our sight. After she had gone, one of the devotees—Pramatha Babu* said, 'Ma, it is your doing.' Ma said, 'What did I do ? I only praised her eyes. Did you not hear her companions say that she had such fits occasionally ?'

It was not clear whether Ma had something to do with the woman's unconsciousness or whether it was the effect of a hysteria-type disease from which she had been suffering. What was to be considered was how Ma picked her up from so many women. She had nothing special about her. Even her earrings which started

*. Sri Pramathanath Bose, one of Ma's old devotees and a legal practitioner at Dhaka.

the whole thing were also quite plain, frequently used by rustic women. A little before the event I had asked Ma whether she could read a man's character from his appearance. I wonder if Ma gave me an inkling of her divine power through this incident.

Yet I must say that I never observed in Ma any instance of what is commonly described as yogic miracle. What I always observed instead was that she at once came to know my thoughts the moment they arose in the depths of my mind. The other devotees are likely to have similar experiences.

In the Ashram, the devotees even then used to sing to the tune of 'Ma' 'Ma'. When I started frequenting the Ashram, I found one of the devotees repeating 'Ma', 'Ma' in an unbroken sequence from sunrise to sunset on each Saturday. 'Ma' is not the name of a deity and before that I had never heard a kirtan being sung to that tune. So the incessant cry of the devotees – 'Ma', 'Ma'—almost inclined me to laughter.

One morning when I went to the Ashram and found a devotee singing 'Ma', 'Ma'. I made my obeisance to Ma and sat listening to the song. Ma suddenly said, 'Look here, none should hold in contempt these people because their holy name does not resemble yours. All are God's name. You may repeat any name you choose, you shall be calling Him.' I was ashamed to know that the baseness of my feeling was not hidden from her.

Once my wife while bowing down to Ma, presented to her a Tussore silk saree. It was her desire that Ma should use the cloth at least for a day. But it happened that she would not even touch it. Khukuni Didi put away the cloth and instead gave to Ma a cloth already used by her. Finding the cloth presented by us, thus ignored by Ma, we could not help feeling a sort of sorrow. But there was nothing we could do.

Two or three months after this, the celebration of Ma's birthday anniversary started. It was an occasion for all to present Ma with cloths. The wife of late Bibhucharan Guha, lawyer of Dhaka, offered Ma a red sari. But unlike others, she did not rest content by offering it; she got Ma put it on. Naturally, a deity-like in form, Ma, clad in red, shone like Bhagawati Herself. In a corner far from the place where Ma was seated dressed in red, my wife was sitting. Seeing Ma in her red cloth, she was thinking within herself, 'Ah, blessed indeed is she who presented the sari to Ma. As for the one I offered her, she would not even touch it.' As soon as the thought flitted across her mind, Ma turned to her and said, 'I wore you cloth too; then I passed it to one who was destined to have it.' Hearing this my wife was ashamed and wonder-struck.

In 1932 Annapurna Puja was being celebrated with great pomp on the occasion of Ma's birth anniversary in Ramna Ashram. The 'Bhog' offered to Ma Annapurna consisted of 108 items of food. In connection with this, some of the devotees were directed to bring some articles. The direction came through Baba Bholanath at the instance of Ma. Those at the receiving end of the direction were required to observe secrecy about it. But it leaked all the same and after the Annapurna Puja, I came to know of it from a few. I cannot vouch for all, but the two who had received such orders, were both honest and pious in my estimation. I thought that Ma had appealed only to the worthy ones for providing materials for the worship of the goddess. I was smarting under a sense of inferiority and thought that Ma's order had not come to me perhaps because she deemed me impure of heart and lacking in piety. But I did not share my thoughts with anybody. However, on the eve of my departure for Calcutta after the end of the celebration, I went to the Ashram to render my parting bow to Ma. Ma said to my wife, 'Tell Baba to procure some good sandalwood from Calcutta for worship in the temple.' Hearing it from my wife, I at once realized the meaning of the order. Ma was thereby removing from my mind the pains of not being able to offer anything towards the worship of the goddess. As I boarded the train, my head was bowed with hundreds of devoted salutations to Ma arising in my mind.

FROM NOTES TAKEN IN SRI MA'S PRESENCE

—'Kirpal'

23-1-1956-Delhi

Sri Pandey, Secretary to Sri Gobind Vallabh Pant, had only two children, elder son, F.A., died in a horse accident, gashed against a wall. His examination result first division, came a few days after his death. Sri Pandey comes to Ma. Has got high blood pressure.

Sree Ma : Such incidents happen, no one belongs to anyone. After completing one's destiny one departs. No one is one's own. Leaving every thing one will depart; it is absolutely futile.

Sree Ma: (About Pandeyji) The agony has not subsided as yet, what is destined happens in this manner.

Sree Ma: Nalini Brahma (a famous scholar of Bengal), a motor bus was passing by, and his son was crushed under the bus and he died instantaneously, a boy of 16-17 years. There is no peace save in the remembrance of God. That is the truth. There is no guarantee of even a minute as to what will happen and at what moment to a human being.

Sri Hari Ramji The usual customs were not observed as he had not died a natural death, So what should be done?

Sree Ma: What do the pandits advise?

(To Sri Pandey) You do one thing, both the husband and the wife. Make an effort to read the Bhagawat daily. When it is completed, then start again, five, six times. While reading the Holy scripture. try to concentrate. There are also the daily morning and evening prayers, *Sandhyā vandanā*. This practice should also be followed. Sometimes one and sometimes the other should recite the *holy scripture* without any break. Make a concerted effort. Sometimes, if there is a delay, there is no restriction. But there should be no break on any account. Before eating any thing read 2-4 slokas (verses). Then when the opportunity arises meet this body. You should feel that this is for the peace of the soul.

25-1-1956

Sri Hari Ramji brings a doctor of psychology to Ma. The doctor does not believe in God.

Sree Ma- He does not believe in God, but he believes in psychology; that is also a form of God.

Sri Hari Ramji- He has no faith in God—

Sree Ma- But has faith in psychology.

Sree Ma- God Himself has revealed in all forms in the universe. He himself is in all forms. In his worship is contained all worships. He (the professor) is a non-believer. Those who do not believe in God are also a form of God.

In Memory of My Beloved

Father—Sri Suresh Mahindra

*"Speak the Truth and
fear no-one."*

—Anjali Mehra

New Delhi