

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

Wherever God may place you at any time and under whatever circumstances, recollect that it is all for the best.

* * *

All is His and whatever happens is His Will. Call to Him, because all is His. To yearn thus for Him is real prayer.

* * *

Wherever you may be placed and under whatever circumstances, let your thinking be centred in Him and in Him alone

* * *

In the measure as one loves God, detachment from sense objects ensues.

* * *

Why should there be fear and anxiety ? Solely because I imagine that He is not near me. He is holding you. Why fear ?

* * *

If you cling to the One in whom fear is not, how can there be even a question of fear ?

* * *

Pray to Him with heart and soul, to the limit of your power, using all the strength and capacity you possess. Surrender yourself at his feet.

* * *

Until and unless you have definitely realised Him you must never abandon your spiritual practice.

* * *

Spiritual affinity is undoubtedly stronger than blood relationship. The happiness it gives is very special.

* * *

By constant practice one finally achieves.

*

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The pure the mind becomes. by the remembrance of Him in everything, the more excellent will your work be.

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To live in the presence of God, who is Truth (*satya*)—this indeed is the meaning of *satsang*.

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If your desire is intense, it is quite impossible that light should not come to you.

*

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Where the search after Truth is really genuine there can be no failure.



CONVERSATION WITH WESTERN DEVOTEES

[Fifteen]

—Vijayananda

Q : *You started your sadhana during the war when your life was constantly in danger and afterwards when all the horrors which happened came to be fully known. Have you not been disturbed then?*

V : No, not even while it was happening I took it as a game, the one's running after others, it was like playing cops and robbers. And after the events, as the past has no reality, there was no reason to be disturbed either.

Q : *If past has no reality, what is left of Tradition?*

V : Tradition is indeed experienced in the present, when we follow what our guru tells or told us to do. From the relative and empirical point of view, the question of past and its heritage arises, but in sage's experience, this kind of questions does not arise. If you ask them, it means that you still are on the empirical plane.

Q : *How does one differentiate between mental and vital being ?*

V : To know the mental being of a person, one takes the help of his face and voice; to perceive his vital state, it is enough to be physically close to him or to take his hand for some time. The yogic body is realized when there is the union of the male and female forces inside. The causal body is so called because it corresponds to that part of the ego which migrates from one life to another and thus represents the cause of rebirth. There is a stage in *sadhana* where the subtle body is felt as a wonderful coat that nobody should touch; but this is pride, one should go beyond. All that is a question of experience.

Q : *Can we say that samadhi is a form of sleep ?*

V : I found a way of being completely conscious while body is as if asleep, for instance when I remain lying in the early morning or even sitting. This is nevertheless not *samadhi*, because in the latter there is intense joy. Near death experiences are not really experiences of death but give a feeling of happiness and light as we may have in deep sleep.

- Q :** *Many people came to Ma, and are now coming to Amma for physical healing. Can we say that these sages see diseases?*
- V :** They see the spiritual origin of diseases in the form of spirits which possess the body and appear in some of its parts.

BHAKTI

- Q :** *Can we live without desire?*
- V :** For most people, desire is necessary; this is what may take them out of *tāmas*. Everything depends upon people's levels. We can not live without love. Mystical love is the only one where total merging is possible. The fusion of physical love does not last.
- V :** *(To an elderly man who was suffering from glaucoma)* For you, the best is to concentrate on the heart rather than on *jnāna*; but this is only a stage, a footstep to be able to later visualize energy in the heart of every other human being and still later throughout the whole universe. At that time you merge into the Formless.
- Q :** *Is not all that eventually the result of grace ?*
- V :** It depends on how you understand the term grace. When you call what you consider to be the personal God, there is an echo which comes back to you and which is not in fact different from yourself, but it is beyond your ego.
- Q :** *Sometimes I succeed in pacifying my emotions for a little while but then they start again with full strength!*
- V :** Reaching a kind of intellectual peace is not enough. We should give to the basis of mind what it is longing for, i.e., for instance an intense *rasa*, taste of joy, so that it might really be attracted and stabilized. When we are in the emotions we are carried away. When we go beyond them, the emphasis is on pure consciousness along with bliss.
- Q :** *But is not joy an emotion too ?*
- V :** No, in this case, the joy of pure consciousness is steady, while other emotions are changing. However, there are days when we do not have emotions to direct towards the divine, then we may practice *ātma-vichāra*, the 'Who am I' for instance. If that even does not come properly, there is something that you can do to still your mind at least temporarily : stopping your breath with empty or full lungs as you feel. Gather all your energy in the heart and stay like this as long as possible. One can also perform one's usual practices of meditation with concentration on different *chakras*, but visualize

them in a kind of subtle body before oneself, at a distance of one or two meters.

JNANA

Q : *Should we see the world as an illusion, or as reality, or as Divine Mother's body?*

V : Ramakrishna had a vedantin master, called Tota Puri, who had reached *nirvikalpa samadhi*. Ramakrishna himself had not been able to get it at that time, but he could see the play of the Divine Mother in the entire world which was rejected by Tota Puri as illusion, *Maya*. Each of them taught to the other what he missed. Ramakrishna had been able to make the link, to come and go between the world, *samsāra* and *samadhi*. *Vedanta* means the culmination of Vedas. In India, this represents the metaphysics for the fourth ashrama, *sannyāsa*, which is itself the crowning of the three first ones. It is the result of a whole training of behavior and of *bhakti* practices during the stages of student, householder and *vānaprastha*, i.e., retreat in the forest. *Vedanta* does not consist of endless and somewhat psychological talks as it is believed in the West. Westerners do not like the idea that 'the world is a dream'. It should be understood that this is only a stage, afterwards we find again a reality to the world, but from another angle, in the sense that we see in it pure consciousness only. Zen says so : *In the beginning mountains are mountains, then they are no more so, and afterwards they become again mountains*. If one tries to concentrate on pure consciousness directly, he falls asleep after some time. This is why in meditation an affective element, a joy, a love are necessary.

Q : *It seems that there is a good deal of 'positive thinking' and affirmations in the Vedanta. For instance Ramana Maharshi used to advise his disciples to read the book which repeats ceaselessly 'I am the self, the infinite, the limitless'. What do you think about it ?*

V : This is for beginners. For those who are more advanced, observing mind without countering it is sufficient, this is the best way to quiet it.

KUNDALINI

Q : *What does 'opening the channels of energy' mean?*

V : When I was in Almora in 1954 I worked on the opening of *nadis*, channels, for a year continuously. Thanks to that, I knew that I could gain a perfect chastity without inner conflict and suppression and also an immunity against

diseases. The opening went in different stages. Once I heard that Ma was saying to her mother in Bengali: '*khulya gyase*' 'it has opened'. I had felt something important. It is useful to read books such as *Tibetan Yoga* by Evans-Wentz. It gives an intellectual and traditional basis to these experiences which we may get. Otherwise we interpret them in a personal way and it may lead to strange results. The advantage of very accurate methods of meditation as Tibetan gurus teach is that their disciples are secure that they are following a trodden and safe path.

Lateral *nādis* open on the side of the heart. One should first well establish their awakening, then that of the central channel will occur, corresponding to a complete silence of mind. Tradition speaks also of the awakening of *kurma nādi* which facilitates a steady and well erect posture. Generally speaking one should identify those practices which lead to the silence of mind and follow them fully. If we decide to take the energy down to the *mulādhāra*, one should already have a good purification of mind to sustain the sexual awakening which it produces, and this without regression in our *sādhanā*.

We should distinguish between left and right when we deal with *nādi* awakening. Their *rasas* tastes, are different. This is a psycho-physiological experience which is clearly felt and which corresponds to a mental state as well. Energy may also be blocked in its ascension of *nādis* When they are open, better to live in solitude. Sexual relationships become impossible.

Q : *In this case, why doesn't the guru open the same for a maximum number of people?*

V : He does not do it because if he awakens energy in a disciple who does not have the mental purity, it will be directed towards disturbing emotions.

Q : *Does this opening correspond to a conscious practice or is it spontaneous?*

V : Intense emotion is indeed the factor which pushes energy into the *nādis*. It may be anger, but the best emotion is an intense love for the Guru. Sadgurus like Ma could 'open the tunnel' like a giant would pierce a mountain in a poke of his thumb and say afterwards to the workers, *finish the small work by yourself*. As long as one has not obtained the opening of *nādis*, he is not a real *sadhaka*, he is only preparing himself to be so. In the beginning I had difficulties to open a *nādi* when the corresponding nostril was blocked, but later the two phenomena became independent. At some point I stopped to work on *nādi* opening to practice vedanta, it was more comfortable, there was less emotional intensity; but Ma reproached me with that. One day she told in satsang with a side glance at me, *nādi khulne se kitnā lābh hai*. by

opening the *nādis* how much benefit comes. Thus, I resumed my practice of *nādi* opening. All these phenomena of *nādis* are not theory, I see them as if they were in front of me. By their opening, one can experience the *rasa*, the best of every experience at will, but there, one should not be led astray, it would be an obstacle to *samadhi*, that Patanjali calls *rasavāda*. One should experience a first phase of coming back from the object of pleasure for instance to pleasure itself which is still a localized experience, and then come back to the one who feels this pleasure, and thus reach the level of pure subjectivity.

Q : *Is nādi opening necessary to obtain samadhi?*

V : Yes, *samadhi* comes from the union of the two currents of energy which we could call positive and negative. When these two currents merge, an intense bliss occurs and this is *samadhi*.

Commenting on a photo of Ma where she is young and has the head inclined on the side, in ecstasy:

V : This is not *samadhi*, it is a *bhāva* (a spiritual state, but temporary and less deep than *samadhi*). In *samadhi*, the spine is erect, following the vertical axis, it favours the passage of energy up to the *ājñā*. There is a loss of consciousness of outer world. By putting the head on the side, that is by leaning on one of the two lateral *nādis*, one keeps away from this loss of consciousness and one remains at the level of the *bhāva*.

Q : *Does the Yogi visit subtle worlds?*

V : There are seven superior worlds, *Brahmaloka*, *Satyaloka*, etc. This is linked to the *sadhana* of the seven *chakras*, at every level one gets visions, one wanders in subtle planes, to put it in a nutshell, one has good fun...However, in *Jnana*, one does not consider these subtle worlds.

Q : *Among Yogis, is there variations, rhythms of vital energy?*

V : Yes, this happens to me rather regularly There are three days in a polarity, either negative or positive and then, quickly enough, sometimes in a few minutes or hours there is an inversion. What is most interesting to notice is that there is usually an outer catalyst to this change; even in solitude you may have a visit, of a small problem, etc...If we are not conscious of this rhythm, we will project onto the outer problem the origin of the change of mood; but if we are conscious, we will just observe this phenomenon of *dvandva*, of pair of opposites, which is part of the laws of the body, or they would say in India, part of our *prārabdha karma*. By not reacting to it, we do not create a second *karma* which would compound the first.



THE LAST DAYS OF BHAIJI

—Bithika Mukerji

During Mataji's earlier visit to Almora a group of young girls, coming from a village at the foothill of the sacred Mount Kailasha became great friends with Mataji and invited Her to come to Kailasha with them. Bholanath had for long entertained the wish to undertake the most hazardous of these pilgrimages. He became so fired by enthusiasm that he was almost ready to leave the same night. He was, however, prevailed upon to abandon the scheme as roads remained unnegotiable before June. It was decided to take up the matter again after the celebration of Mataji's birthday in May in Dhaka.

Mataji returned to Almora on June 10, 1937 with Bholanath, Swami Akhandananda, Bhaiji and a few others. The girls from the Himalayas were also waiting in Almora to accompany Mataji.

At that time Kailasha (22,000 ft. above sea level) was still accessible from India. It is located in what then was independent Tibet under the rule of the Dalai Lama. It is approximately 240 miles from Almora. The journey was considered arduous because for people of the plains to walk on great heights without training and habituation was difficult in the extreme. Kailasha for all Hindus is the visible emblem of the abode of Siva. The pilgrimage consists in going round the Mountain in a *parikramā* (approximately 60 miles) and then bathing in the waters of the lake Gaurikunda (18,400 ft.). Kailasha lay 20 miles beyond, towering over the famous lake Manas-Sarovar (approx. 15,000 ft.). This beauteous site has inspired the imagination of poets and the admiration of travellers ever since the time of the ancient epics. This location is sacred to the Buddhists also; as such it has been the habitation of ascetics of both faiths for the last hundreds of centuries. Every year a few hardy and venturesome pilgrims undertook this pilgrimage to the snow-bound Himalayas for a *darsana* (sight) of the Holy Mountain.

This journey, ordinarily, would not have entered the consideration of Mataji's companions, but for the coincidence of her visits to Almora at that time. As written earlier, many young people from the hinterland of Almora came to the town every year to pursue higher studies. Some of these students had become very attached to Mataji and Bholanath. One such student, a married young woman, Parvati, was specially devoted to them and had broached the idea of a journey to Kailasha.

promising to escort them since her own home was not distant from the Holy Mountain. Other students belonging to Garbyang, a wayside station of some importance, lent their support to the scheme. The young people would be returning home in June and enthusiastically promoted the idea of the pilgrimage, so they too would have the chance to accompany Mataji for at least part of the way.

The details of this remarkable journey, made especially memorable for the devotees by the event of Bhaiji's death at the end of it, have been preserved in Didi's diary, which she contrived to write even under very trying conditions. It was a task of love and devotion with Didi to write every day regarding Mataji's activities; thus these valuable records have been made available to us.

The pilgrimage to Kailasha started on 13th June, 1937 and the party returned to Almora on 10th August with a great sense of relief. The joy of an extremely difficult journey accomplished was however tempered by the shadow of Bhaiji's illness, who had become greatly indisposed on the return journey.

The people of Almora, especially Hari Ram Joshi had grown extremely fond of Bhaiji, were stricken with grief to see him so ill. The best doctors of the town were fetched to see him and prescribe medicines. A number of other devotees from different towns came to Almora on receipt of the news of Ma's return and Bhaiji's illness. Bhaiji's wife had been informed but there was no response from her side. She had been opposed to the idea of his going on this journey. Mataji had tried to dissuade him from undertaking the pilgrimage, when she came to know about this objection, but Bhaiji's heart was set on it. He persuaded Mataji to give her permission, saying that he would write to his wife and explain everything so that she would not be anxious on his account. Nobody of course knew whether she had really been reconciled to the idea or not.

Bhaiji's condition fluctuated; it seemed to respond to treatment at times, while at other times he seemed to be sinking slowly but steadily. The doctors embarked on a struggle with imminent death, trying their best to stem the ebb of waning energies. One day, while the attendants, visitors and members of Mataji's party were sitting in a dejected group around Bhaiji's bed, they were startled by the most unexpected sound of Mataji's joyous laughter. She was sitting on a cot near the head of his bed. Even while she wiped the perspiration from his forehead, she laughed in her own inimitable fashion. Didi, Bholanath, Swamiji and others who had known her in Dhaka, were reminded that to her death was not a tragedy; moreover life and death, health and sickness were accepted by her with complete equanimity. Although they were familiar with this aspect of her personality, they nevertheless felt taken aback, because to them the recovery of Bhaiji was important. The new

members of the crowd of devotees were puzzled and awed by this phenomenon of great care and yet an obvious indifference, so to say, to the main issue. They had seen Mataji keeping almost constant vigil at the patient's bedside and knew her concern for his ease and comfort. They could not doubt her compassion and concern; and yet with a sense of awe they realized that Mataji was not at all affected by the emotions of the situation. Mataji's laughter on such an occasion was a strange experience for many of the new devotees.

Slowly the anxious attendants began to lose hope of Bhaiji's recovery. The doctors held out no assurances. Bholanath was overcome with grief and sobbed like a child at the imminent prospect of losing a dear friend. Bhaiji himself was quite aware of his own serious condition and seemed reconciled to it. He actually requested the doctors not to try any desperate means but this request naturally could not be complied with. On the eve of the days of his death, Bhaiji once looked at Didi and, perhaps in a gesture of farewell and also perhaps in acknowledgement of her devoted nursing, said clearly to her, "Khukhuni, (Didi's nick name), this is the end."

The next day Hari Ram Joshi, Didi and many others repeatedly prayed to Mataji to bring the *kheyala* towards Bhaiji's recovery; but she made a gesture indicating that no such *kheyala* seemed to occur to her. After Mataji's negative response, everyone knew that they had to prepare themselves for the inevitable end. Mataji sat quietly by the bedside of the patient, occasionally wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

Bhaiji appeared to be quite in his normal consciousness and in fact slightly more alert than on other days. At one time he began to repeat aloud the Names of God and then after a while went on repeating just, "Ma Ma Ma" After a short period of silence he suddenly remarked, "How beautiful !" (*ki sundar !*) Then again in a tone of great conviction he said, "There is One only. There is nought else except the One."

Hari Ramji thinking perhaps that already Bhaiji had removed himself to a region beyond their grasp, called out to him in a tear-choked voice. "Bhaiji ?" Bhaiji responded to him immediately saying, "Remember always, friend, that all is One, there is the One only. Ma and I are One, Baba (Bholanath) and I are One, all of us are One; there is nought else but the One."

A few minutes later the people sitting quietly around his bed heard with surprise that he was enunciating softly but clearly one of the *Samnyasa mantras*. Around 3 p. m. Mataji signalled to Didi and others to leave the room for a few moments. After a minute or so she beckoned them inside again. As they trooped back, Bhaiji

in a very calm and composed manner said to all of them, "Ma has asked me to sleep now. I shall go to sleep."

These were his last words of farewell to his devoted companions, because he died almost immediately after, at 3-30 p.m. on August 18, 1937. The serenity of the event of this ultimate departure from the world, held the crowd in thrall for some minutes. They had difficulty to realize that their great friend and guide, a pioneer to be followed on the path of religious endeavour, was with them no more.

While they were still sitting in shocked silence, they heard Mataji's soft voice recalling their attention; she was speaking again after a silence of many days. Her voice was very low and she spoke slowly :

"Arrangements will have to be made for a *samadhi* (interment) for him. He is to be regarded as an *avadhuta* (an ascetic who has not joined any specific order). Since he has attained to the renunciation required for *samnyasa*, he is to be given the status of a *samnyasi*."

Mataji's words immediately gave a new dimension to the death of this beloved companion; all of them listened with rapt attention to her words and had no opportunity for indulging in grief. She continued softly :

"They (meaning the pilgrimage party) may recall that on our way to Manas Sarovar we had become separated into different groups. I asked Khukhuni (Didi), Bholanath and Jyotish (Bhaiji) to go ahead, while I waited for Swamiji's *dandee*. A little later when I also arrived at the shore of the lake, I was met by Bholanath who took me aside and spoke in agitated tones regarding Jyotish. He told me that Jyotish after bathing in the lake had discarded his clothes and had come up to Bholanath and placed at his feet all his belongings which he was carrying on his person at the moment. Kneeling at his feet he had expressed his wish to take leave of all of us and walk off towards the mountains in the manner of an *avadhuta-samnyasi*.. His manner manifested an urgency as if he could hardly brook any delay. He only had enough thought regarding his position to seek Bholanath's permission before trekking off alone into the unkonwn regions of the mysterious Himalayas.

Bholanath, not unnaturally, was frightened by this phenomenon and did not know how to deal with it. He resorted to admonition exclaiming, "What is all this that you are saying ? Get up and put on your clothes immediately. Your Ma is not here, how can you talk like this ? What would everybody say to us if we returned without you ?"

"Thereupon Bholanath was relieved to see that Jyotish obeyed him without further protest. He put on his warm clothes and waited quietly near the tent for the rest of the party. We came up in groups. As I said, Bholanath told me about this

incident at the first opportunity. The others knew nothing about it and having at last arrived at the holy site of the lake, engaged themselves variously each in his own preferred mode of *sadhana*.

"I walked by myself for a while near the lake. Jyotish finding me alone, repeated to me in a very determined voice all that he had already said to Bholanath, and then added, 'Ma, I know I have not many more days to live in this world. I have a great yearning to spend the few days remaining to me in one such cave in the heart of the Himalayas. I wish to walk away from here just in any direction and be by myself till it is time for me to leave the world. May I take my leave of you, now. Allow me to bid farewell for ever. Please persuade Baba (father, i.e. Bholanath) to give me his permission.'

"It was obvious that he did not expect me to deny him this choice of action on his part. At that moment I saw in him the manifestation of that pure spirit of renunciation which is the aim of all *samnyasis*. He was experiencing a complete sense of non-attachment and was wholly under its influence. Indeed such a state of *vairagya* is the coveted goal of all pilgrims on the path of spiritual life. I saw all this, but what I said to him was, "Nevertheless, you must stay with us for the time being".

"Jyotish did not speak anymore but followed me in grave silence. After a while he said with an effort, 'I have one small request. Please permit that I take a vow of silence from now on.' To this I answered, 'No, that will not be possible. It will be very inconvenient while we are on this journey.' He said no more."

The listeners to this account of Bhaiji's attempt at disassociating himself from the world, felt that they had caught a glimpse of the magnitude of his total reliance on Mataji. In the most crucial moment of his life he did not fail to surrender his will to her *kheyala*. For man it is not so difficult to make up his mind toward a particular course of action, but it is rare to see this determination abandoned at the word of the Guru. At that moment no doubt Bhaiji attained to that state of realization which knows no difference between the two orders of human will and an extraordinary *kheyala*.

Mataji had resumed her narration again : "After some time, while I was walking near the lake, I heard what you call mantras come forth from my lips. This has happened on so many other occasions. Jyotish who was walking behind me, came forward and flung himself at my feet exclaiming in an exultant voice, "Ma, Ma. this is the *samnyasa-mantra* which I have heard from you. All my yearning is fulfilled". Overcome by a strong emotion, he sat by himself for a while, repeating this mantra: later I saw him perform certain *kriyas* in the lake. Since that time he had constantly

kept his mantra in remembrance. After a few days I asked him, 'How is it that you wanted to take such a radical step without previous consultation or without asking (me) ?' Tears came to his eyes and he answered in a deepened voice, 'Have you allowed me to have a will of my own ? Besides I know that you are never more pleased than when a person seeks to follow the path of renunciation. The pity is that we do not remember this always—I thought I was rendering you the greatest service I was capable of. In general I know that whatever I do, I carry out your *kheyala* only; but this mood came over me suddenly and with such force that I was completely in its grip. I did not have the power to check or control. it.'

"I saw that he was indeed relating facts. It had been thus with him. He did experience a state of complete renunciation (*purna vairagya*). At one time I said to him, 'Since you have acquired a *samnyasa mantra* in these holy mountains and wished to take a vow of silence, your ascetic name will be *Maunananda Parvat*'. Since he died while in a state of complete withdrawal from the world, he should be buried as a *samnyasi*.

"Jyotish had asked me not to disclose to anyone all that I have narrated just now but I had told him that I could not promise, and if necessary, I would tell the people concerned about these matters. I think the time has come for this disclosure, so that you may act rightly so far as he is concerned."

The listeners were deeply moved on hearing this account of the last days of Bhaiji.

Hari Ramji went away to look for a suitable site and see to the arrangements for the *samadhi*. A place called Patal Devi was chosen. It transpired that on a previous visit Bhaiji had expressed a wish to stay there. Now his body would be interred in his chosen place. To the inconsolably grieved Hari Ram, Mataji said, "All of you have loved him so well. The concurrence of events has been such that his body remains now in your part of the world." Mataji directed Swami Akhandananda as a *samnyasi* to perform the last simple rites of the burial of an ascetic.

Bhaiji's death was a major event in the life of the small group of devotees who had attached themselves to Mataji. There was nobody to take his place and mediate Mataji's *kheyala*. An exemplary indentification with Mataji's *kheyala* was unique with him. Mataji herself has said that many times Jyotish would do things or deal with people according to her *kheyala*, without the necessity for her to speak to that effect. Many had found his guidance invaluable and now felt deprived of this sustaining source of encouragement.

Bhaiji was typical of the well-educated man occupying a responsible position in the world, well aware of the demands of modern times and yet firmly established in

the traditional heritage of his own culture and background. He had not found easy solutions to his questions. He had had to do the work of a pioneer breaking new ground all along the line. Mataji was not known widely or recognised as an extraordinary personality in his time. He had played a considerable role in mediating this extraordinariness for the people who were daily flocking to visit Mataji. The exemplary self-surrender seen in Bhaiji is not something which happens of itself but is also a matter of constant live effort. Bhaiji's life will always remain a source of inspiration for those, who would fain understand the phenomenon of yearning for a life of renunciation.

PARAMA GURU, PARĀ SHAKTI, PARAMESHWARI

—Antonio Eduardo Dagnino

Primordial Mother.
 Vision of beauty
 so sacred.
 it consumes awareness of everything else,
 mutating gear
 into an ineffable revelation of love.....
 No faced,
 One faced,
 Nine faced,
 Infinite faced...
 Transcending the three tenses,
 the five obscurations,
 all realms of becoming.....
 Mystic extension of light
 where the beaming spirit of the Father
 blends in ecstasy
 You come like a ray of pure being,
 unfathomably essential,
 filling the dark spaces of my ignorance.
 with the glowing
 inundation of your grace!

THIRD TRIP TO INDIA

—Shraddha Davenport

When Swami Nirmalananda came to our house between speaking engagements we invited a few people who had expressed an interest in Mother to join us for satsang.

Swami Nirmalananda told us wonderful stories from the Hindu scriptures and from Mother's lila. He also taught us some beautiful bhajans as they are sung at Mother's ashram. What joyful days those were, filled with the sweetness of God's Name and the presence of that One Who had laid claim to my heart.

Some of those who attended the satsang and had seen our movies had asked to accompany us on our next trip to Mother, which we had planned for the Samyam Saptaha in Hardwar. We would leave for India on November 1, 1972. Swami Nirmalananda was also going, but would arrive some days ahead of us. He said that he and Sharmaji would meet our party when we arrive in Delhi. (There were ten of us and Swami Nirmalananda's group numbered about seven).

Weather forced our plane to lay over one night in Bonn, Germany. The airline provided hotel accommodations which gave everyone a chance to bathe and get a good night's rest. So when we arrived in Delhi we felt pretty fresh.

Once again I experienced the exhilaration of being in India. It had been one and a half year since our second trip. But when I set foot upon that great land it was as though I had never left, and my life in the west was like a dream that is only vaguely remembered.

Swami Nirmalananda came with Sharmaji and his beautiful daughter Rekha to meet us. Rekha garlanded everyone in our group and we were all joyfully talking at the same time. Finally we managed to get two or three taxi cabs, and with the luggage piled on top of them drove to the hotel where Swami Nirmalananda had reserved rooms for everyone.

After shopping for suitable Indian dress, we enjoyed looking at shops displaying little clay images that were being sold for the Diwali festival. Among the rather crudely made forms I was astounded to find a delicately made Lakshmi-Narayan. The work was South Indian style, about one foot tall. The seated figures were the color of pale sandal wood with the faintest tint of color on their features and borders of their clothing. They were also made of clay, and the idea of carrying them as we travelled in India, much less of getting them safely back to the States.

caused me to hesitate at least a full minute before purchasing them. The merchants were so taken by my feeling for the murtis that they went to a lot of trouble to pack them in shredded paper and placed them in a good cardboard box tied with twine. We were guests of the Sharma family for dinner that evening where we enjoyed renewing our friendship.

Due to Mother's travelling schedule we would not be able to see Her until She arrived in Hardwar on November eight. So there was no rush to leave Delhi. Our whole party gathered at the Sharma's, on the fifth of November for Diwali celebration. After the Puja we all went outside as the men and children set off fireworks. Mrs. Sharma and her daughter then lovingly served a typical Indian feast which they had prepared in our honor. It was late when we returned to our hotel that night.

The next day, November sixth, we hired two cars to transport us to Hardwar. There were only eight of us as three were staying in Delhi for a few more days and Swami Nirmalananda's brahmacharis had proceeded to Hardwar before we arrived in Delhi.

Luggage filled the trunk, was stacked and tied to the racks on top, and stuffed into every open space inside the cars. There was not much room to move, but who cared? We were in India and getting closer to seeing Mother every minute.

Satya and I were in the car shared with Swami Nirmalananda and an old friend whom Mother was to give the name of 'Jyotipriya'. The other car was occupied by two girls that I worked with, one of whom Mother named 'Kripa', and the other was destined to be called 'Bhakti'. Also in that car was a young couple who were friends of Jyotipriya. In a few days their names would be 'Radhapriya' and 'Krishnadas'. Still in Delhi were Lakshmi, Gopalpriya and Mahesh, our three friends who would come to Hardwar in a few days.

On the outskirts of Delhi we crossed the holy Jamuna river where clothes were washed and laid out to dry on the sand. Multicolored saris stretched towards the shore, and on high ground there was a charming thatched hut and a man working his ox-powered gristmill. As the ox slowly walked in a circle, it seemed that time had spiraled backward to centuries past when that man's and beast's ancestors must have performed that same act on that same ancient land.

About halfway to Hardwar is the town of Modinagar, and Swami Nirmalananda was anxious that we all have the opportunity to visit the magnificent temple there. It had been constructed by the Modi family and contained murtis of the most astounding beauty. We were all filled with joy to see the living Hanuman, Narayan, and all other deities. We were given prasad of Hanumanji, and Swamiji told of his

first meeting with Mother on the spacious well-kept grounds surrounding the great red Temple.

As we continued our drive to Hardwar, we enjoyed seeing the Ganges river which flowed swiftly through a channel running parallel to the highway. At one point there were giant statues of reclining lions-one on each side of the channel-facing north toward the Himalayas. That place is called the "North Gateway to India". Since then we have seen other places called "Gateway of India,"but none more captivating than this.

At this tranquil spot our car conveniently had a flat tyre, giving us a chance to enjoy the scene as our driver changed the tyre. The foothills of the Himalayas were on the north and two farmers and an ox worked in the field near the road. The mingled sounds of rushing water and chirping birds filled the warm sunny air as we relished this unplanned break in our journey.

Upon reaching Hardwar we found accommodations at the Tourist Bungalow, a lodge for pilgrims situated between the channeled Ganges and the shallow stream of Her natural path. In the north are the majestic Himalayas, home of many great Yogi-ascetics. The Tourist Bungalow faces upon the wide, swiftly moving Ganges channel. There are chains around the lower steps of the ghat that descend into the sacred water, making it safe for the devout to bathe or take a dip without being swept away by the current. On the opposite bank are several ashrams and structures which have been painted in rust and golden hues that reflected in the rippling waters along with the clear bright blue of the sky. To feast the eyes on so much beauty at one time was almost too much for this starving child of India who had lived so long in exile.

Toward the north and across a bridge that spans the Ganges and past the myriad shop, is the most holy shrine of Gangawara and the Hari-Ka-Charan, or Harki Pauri, bathing ghat. On the stone wall of that ghat is an impression of Lord Vishnu's foot. The full Kumbha Mela is celebrated here every twelve years and multitudes of worshippers bathe in the Ganges at this spot.

We settled nicely into our rooms and filled our canteens from the Ganges for drinking. We had not yet learned to use only purified or boiled water, but by Mother's grace we were spared any serious illness.

Mother's train was due on November eight at 5:15 a.m., but was running a little late. As we stood waiting on the platform we met Mr. and Mrs. Ram Panjwani who had also come to greet Mother. The first light of day heralded Her arrival as clouds of steam from the train breathed warmth into the cold morning air. My heart raced and pounded in my ears, as the braking wheels screamed upon the steel tracks. The

coaches were slowly gliding past us. Then Swami Nirmalananda said, "That's Mother's car."

I ran as fast as I could to keep up with it, and saw Mother inside the compartment. I was at the door as She came out. Her wonderful sweet smile filled me with joy, and all of the time since last I saw Her vanished. She walked to the center of the platform and stopped as we offered sandalwood garlands to Her. I bowed, touching Her foot, then followed directly behind Her as She walked out of the station. We had taxis waiting and followed Mother's car to the ashram.

Mother's room in those days was upstairs adjoining a hall with many windows which faced the Shiva mandir and overlooked Didima's samadhi mandir. When we arrived at the ashram Mother did not go directly to Her room, but responded to our longing hearts and sat for a while in front of the Shiva mandir as we silently gathered near her feet, replenishing our souls with Her darshan.

When She arose to go upstairs we were unwilling to lose sight of Her and stood with folded hands beneath Her window-content for an occasional glance from Her, and reveling in the moment when She would sit looking down upon us with a tenderness I have never known from any other.

A dear lady ashramite called Shobhadi, whom I had met and grown fond of in 1970, came to where I stood, and looking up at Mother called in English, "Ma, Shradha has come !" Mother looked down at me and smiled, adding yet another precious gem to the mala she was winding around my heart.

We stood transfixed below that window for two hours, unaware of the time. When Mother retired we left slowly, in an intoxicated state, to return at 5 : 00 p.m.

There was kirtan at the ashram when we returned, and we could see Mother by the window above us. As we stood gazing at Her, Bhaskaranandaji came to tell us that we could go upstairs to do pronam.

With great joy we climbed the stairs that led to the long hall, to Mother.

At the top of the stairs I looked to the left. There at the north end of the porch I saw a bed covered with sheets and a white canopy above it. Upon that bed sat Infinite Reason for my being.

When in Her presence it is not as though nothing else matters, but simply that there is nothing else *to* matter.

After pronaming at Her feet, we all sat very quietly. I allowed my eyes to embrace Her and mentally I adored Her.

We were permitted to stay undisturbed in that way for some time. Then Mother arose from Her seat and we all stood as She moved towards the door to Her room. When She came to where Satya stood, She motioned for him to bow down. As he

did so, we all bowed down too. Then She motioned for him to clear the way, which he did, and She passed into Her room.

The next morning we stood again beneath Mother's window. A maharaja had come to see Mother, and was at that time upstairs with Her. So we waited below for those sweet moments when She would turn our way and grace us with Her loving smile. Sometimes when She held us in Her timeless gaze it seemed that She longed for us as we did for Her.

In the evening we climbed the stairs and I sat up in front very near Mother. Brahmacharini Chhabi was near the window by Mother's feet. I had brought a small silver and opal ring which had been made for me with the express intent of asking Mother to bless it. This seemed an ideal opportunity, so I handed the ring to Chhabi and asked her to please convey my wish to Mother. As Chhabi spoke to Her, Mother slipped the little finger of Her right hand into the ring and sat with it on Her hand for quite some time before giving it back to me. It was little finger of my right hand that the ring had been made. But much more significant even than that was what had motivated me to get the ring in the first place.

In 1970 when we were in Kanpur with Mother, Krishnapriya had placed two rings on Mother's hands, and Mother had worn them for a while during that darshan before returning them to Krishnapriya. It was so thrilling to me to think of wearing something which Mother Herself had worn that I could not get the idea out of my mind. So I asked a jeweler friend, Jack Dalton, to please fashion a little silver and opal ring for me. He made a lovely ring like flowing liquid silver that seemed to have caught the opal in its path.

Even though I had desired Mother to wear my ring, I did not believe it was possible that She would. And I did not have the courage to ask. So I only requested that She bless it.

The joy and wonder that filled my heart cannot be written in words. I recall Swami Nirmalananda saying one time about Mother, "Besides the great and miraculous things, the amazing thing about Mother is that She is simply so very kind."

Kindness from the source of pure love is the most sublime of gifts. I shall always treasure it.

Mother called for Krishnapriya to come and sit near Her. After lovingly teasing Krishnapriya, Mother asked her to sing. Krishnapriya loved kirtan so much and always had her. She sang a beautiful bhajan of Mother's, "*Āmār Krishna Gopal.*" as she so softly played the cymbals.

Mother looked at me with great sweetness and said, "Narayan. Narayan. Narayan."

Later in our room Krishnapriya was kind enough to sing that Gopal bhajan and a few others for me as I recorded her lovely voice.

On November tenth, Mother gave darshan in front of the Shiva Mandir. Carpets had been spread in the courtyard and all space upon it was filled by women on one side and men on the other. A few people even sat upon the steps of an ashram building which faced the patio. Mother sat on the small porch of the Shiva mandir. Her asan had been placed by one of the two pillars which supported the porch roof. A large yellow towel was tied to the pillar as a backrest for Her. She looked radiant that day. Everyone was captivated by Her charm and animated grace.

At the end of our 1970 trip Mr. Sharma of Delhi had produced for us a small image of Gopal (baby Krishna). As we had not asked for this murti, I had written to Mother from California and asked Her what we should do with it. Mother's reply was, "Just keep it." So I had placed Him in our little meditation room on a small platform.

After some months I started feeling guilty that He was just sitting there with no clothes and hardly any attention, so I made one dress for Him. He had been like that up to 1972, when I decided that I should take Him to Mother and ask Her again what I should do with Him. For showing Him to Mother, I made a beautiful white stain dress and crown, beaded with small pale yellow glass beads. Pearl trim was around the front and upon the crown.

This was the day I had brought Gopal for Mother to see. I was quietly sitting near Her waiting my turn while others were talking with Mother and asking Her to bless things for them as Atmanand translated.

Satya took this grand opportunity to film Mother. He started out standing behind the seated ladies and noticed that Mother gave him a couple of uneasy glances. But he was not sure of the significance until She very unobtrusively held Her hand up with the palm toward him. He understood then that it was not permissible for him to be on the women's side even standing. So he moved over behind the men. The angle was not so good until Brahmacharini Binadi motioned for him to come closer, and he came to stand in the space which separated the men and women. It was Mother's grace that he got in that choice spot, as Mother stopped in the middle of a talk with someone and, turning towards me, looked at Gopal, then reached for Him with Her right hand. In great surprise, I managed to quickly place Him in Her outstretched hand. Satya had just put a new roll of film in his camera and captured Mother's amazing lila with Gopal from the moment Her hand reached for Him.

There was total silence as everyone's eyes were upon Mother and Gopalji. Brahmacharini Maitrayi garlanded Him lovingly with marigolds. The priest of the Shiva temple bowed before Him. Mother looked at Gopalaji, turning Him slightly, lifted Him toward the camera to get His picture made, then placed Him next to Her heart as She seemed to withdraw with Him into a wonderful *bhava*. I could feel the shift in Her presence. Some people whispered Mother had gone into samadhi, but I find it difficult to use that term in reference to Her unchanging consciousness. We can try to describe what we experience, but fail totally to describe Her experience.

In awe I gazed as time dissolved in Her spell.

Then as the film in Satya's camera came to an end the camera clicked. Mother moved ever so slightly and placed Gopalji into my hands by first putting Her hands in mine then slipping them from beneath Gopalji. Mother said that He was very beautiful and asked about His dress. When Atmanandaji told Her that I had made it. Mother complimented my handiwork.

I sat very near Mother until She arose and went to Her room. That evening we enjoyed Kirtan in the courtyard for some time Then Satya and I went upstairs to have a "Private" with Mother.

One of the questions I asked was in regard to a previous instruction of Mother. I had understood Her to say that I should keep a diary entry for each day. I found this to be most difficult as well as very uninteresting. So I asked if I had understood Her correctly. I was quite relieved when She said no, She had meant for me to keep a record of spiritual experiences only.

This was truly a great gift She had given me, as I had only kept sketchy notes of some experiences in India up this point. But this instruction from Mother caused me to gradually keep more and more notes until I ultimately was able to record the events of the each day spent in India with Her as well as many wonderful dream darshans I was graced with when on the far side of the earth. So many events and details would have been lost as the years push them further back into my mind. But thanks to that instruction of Mother, they spring ever fresh from my diary pages.

I held our beautiful clay Lakshmi-Narayan murti which we had found in Delhi at Diwali time, and showing it to Mother, I asked Her to please bless it so that we could safely carry it with us back to the States. She graciously touched it bestowing which has protected that fragile image through many travels in ensuing twenty years.

After that "private" we went downstairs and into the crisp night air. My chaddar felt good as I breathed deeply of the clean air and marvelled at all the stars in the vast Indian sky. In a short time Bhaskaranandaji and Nirvananandaji came and told

us that we could go back upstairs. Full of joy we returned to sit at Her feet once again. A perfect ending to this incredible day.

The next day was Saturday, and Mother sat with us again in front of the Shiva mandir. Satya had watched yesterday as an Indian devotee of Mother had picked up a small cotton towel and waved it to keep the flies away from Mother. He had a great desire to do that service for Mother also. There are so few things that we would be allowed to do for Her, but he felt that surely he could do this if the opportunity were ever presented.

This day as we gathered at Her feet, that same little towel lay behind where Mother sat and no one had laid claim to the privilege of keeping the flies from around Her. Satya boldly walked to the spot behind Mother and, taking the towel in his hands, began waving it gently when flies came near to Mother. One of the ashram girls moved toward him to make him stop, but Mother turned the palm of Her hand to the girl and made her leave him alone. I was so proud of him for having the courage to do it, knowing that he could have been embarrassed by someone sending him away.

Satya sat just behind Mother on the edge of the mandir porch for some time. One of Swami Nirmalananda's brahmacharis, Uddhava took several photos of Satya sitting near Mother. We were unaware that the photos had been taken until Swami Nirmalananda sent the slides to us later in California. One of the photos was especially beautiful-like a portrait. Such a treasured reminder of that special time.

A little later Satya was able to take six rolls of movies of Mother as She sat for two hours in the warm morning light with Her back against the opposite pillar from yesterday. This was ideal for Satya's filming as Mother was in this way facing toward the men's side and has was able to photograph a long darshan as She looked right into the camera.

A Bengali singer had come, and she sat just behind Mother with several of the brahmacharinis. She played the harmonium and led Kirtan which we all enjoyed. The Mahant of the Daksha temple was seated in a place of honor on the mandir porch near the shrine door. He was facing toward Mother and us. A basket of fruits had been prepared as a gift for him, but before presenting it to him Mother suddenly went crawling like Bal Gopal for about two steps to reach the basket. Then She sorted through it to be sure it contained what She had determined should be there. She looked so cute crawling with Her little white stockinged feet protruding from Her dhoti. She was laughing as She crawled backwards to Her seat and rearranged Her clothes and yellow towel. I had never had the idea before

that Mother could be so cute. But there She was just as cute as any little baby might be as it crawled among loving family members.

What a free and intimate time we shared with Her that day! Mother stood and laughed as She talked with the Mahant before going upstairs. We still had questions to ask of Mother, so were permitted to follow Her for a continuation of our "private". Atmananda had kindly agreed to translate for us.

Mother answered all of our questions. She gave us instructions for sadhana and the conduct of our daily lives. Running through the whole of Her guidance was the thread of renunciation and upon the thread the beads of japa were tied-forming an ethereal mala. Forever bound by Her love, we pronamed at Her holy feet.

At 5:00 p.m. we went to Sri Girishananda ashram where the Samyam Mahavrata was to begin on November thirteenth. We stood and watched as Mother inspected the immense hall where the function would be held. Mother darted from place to place as a group of people followed Her every step and listened to any comment She might make.

When Mother left the hall, we all followed as She went down the walk, around another building where there was a beautiful little Shiva temple, and to the rooms that had been provided for Mother's use. Mother went inside and we found ourselves at the top of a wonderful ghat on the old Ganges-Her natural path. This spot was so quiet and peaceful, such a contrast to the mighty channel that swept through the center of Hardwar. On this side one could not see Hardwar at all, only the ghat, river, and the Himalayas.

We descended the steps toward the shallow stream, perfectly clear and sparkling in the sunlight. The small rocks that lined Her path made it easy for Satya to wade into those icy waters where he took movies of us on the ghat and the enchanting view.

Spellbound, we sat on the steps near the bottom of the ghat as Swami Nirmalananda led us in kirtan. I wondered at the great beauty that surrounded us and at Her whose beauty it all was.

The seven days that followed were filled with the Samyam Mahavrata program. Mahamandaleshwar Sri Swami Brahmananda, who was the head of this ashram. Swami Akhanadananda, and many other noted speakers sat daily on the long platform in the front of the vast hall. A special white asan was prepared for Mother on the same platform. She sat there for several hours morning and evening as the Upanishads were expounded and talks given in Hindi, and some in English, before the great crowd.

Swami Nirmalananda purchased some small Gitas with English translation and presented them to Mother. She called for our group to come forward. Each one went before Mother, pronounced, and received a Gita from Her hand.

It was wonderful to be near Mother for such long darshans, and there was always the daily hour of meditation after which Brahmachari Vibhu's sweet voice filled us with the heartfelt bhajan, "*Hey Pita.*" Several times when Mother sang or spoke I was able to record Her sweet voice.

We were also blessed one day with the unexpected darshan of Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnathji as he walked with Mother on the ashram property.

On November twentieth after the havan and a great feast, Mother moved back to the Kankhal ashram. Most of the people who had attended the Samyam left and a more casual atmosphere prevailed. Private time with Mother was once again possible. Quiet and intimate darshan was ours for three days before Mother's departure from Kankhal.

One evening as Mother sat on Her bed in the upstairs hall, we drew close to Her feet as Swami Nirmalananda showed his album of photos to Mother. The pictures were of the ashram in Oklahoma which had been recently inaugurated.

Being near sighted, I could see better without my glasses at that distance, so I quickly pushed them up on top of my head. Soon we noticed that Mother was sitting very quietly watching us with a look of amusement on Her face. Then we all had a great laugh when we realized that Mother had mimicked me, by pushing Her glasses up on top of Her head. She sat looking at me waiting for me to notice Her game. I have never seen Her do that before or after that night.

As the light was very dim, Mother asked for a "torch" to better see Swami Nirmalananda's photos. I quickly gave Her mine. As She held it, She playfully moved the beam of light back and forth across my eyes several times smiling at me with the most delightful mischievous expression.

What inexpressible joy, to experience Her playful love. A joy found in this world only at Her Holy feet.

The next evening, November twenty-third, we joined Swami Nirmalananda as he led kirtan before Didima's samadhi mandir. Mother was upstairs in Her room overlooking the mandir. Someone was with Her having a private, but Her windows were open and She could hear the kirtan. It was a beautiful evening and we enjoyed the feeling of being near Mother, though there seemed no hope of seeing Her until the next morning.

Swami Nirmalananda played the harmonium gently but with a wonderful rhythm that made the bhajans lightly float on the cool night air. The chanting went

on for quite some time, and then as we were preparing to leave, someone came to the window and said Mother had requested that we should not stop the kirtan.

A mat was spread under Mother's window, and we all sat upon it facing that window. Now the kirtan took on an even more joyful air as we thrilled to this "command performance." Other devotees that had been in the courtyard joined us in singing God's Name. I believe everyone's favorite bhajan must have been chanted. Then Swami Nirmalananda began singing, in Sanskrit, "O Lord of the Universe, kindly be visible to me." We all joined in, and soon word came down from Mother's room that She was calling us all to come up for darshan.

Unable to suppress our cheers of joy and laughter, we ascended those steps leading up to the Object of all our longing.

How sweet to finally see Her smiling face as She greeted us with folded palms and infinite mercy.

The memory of that enchanted evening is engraved for ever upon my heart.

The friends who had travelled with us were all leaving India and all had their last private and farewell darshan of Mother.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

—Sri P. C. Mehta

[Continued from before]

Varnashram Dharma

The Aryan society was divided in four '*Varnas*' or classes and four '*ashramas*' or stages of life were prescribed. The four classes are—(a) *Brahmin* (b) *Ksatriya* (c) *Vaisya* and (d) *Sudra*.

The caste-system is based on '*Jāti*' or birth. It is an endogamous unit into one is born and within which one marries. All over the world, endogamy and exogamy were observed by tribal societies. These '*Jātis*' are sub-divided into several exogamous family units called '*gotra*'. One cannot marry in the same '*gotra*'. The Hindu society did not invent these endogamous and exogamous units. In spite of outgrowing the tribal stage, it retained it.

The division of society according to the functions each performs is found in all developed societies. In fact in more advanced societies, there is greater division based on expertise. '*Varna*' means functional division and is a mark of an advanced society. The "Purusa-Sukta" of the Rg. Veda describes how the four '*varnas*' or classes emerged from the *Virāta Purusa*. From His mouth there issued Brahmins or the priestly class; *Kshatriya* or the warrior class sprung from His arms, *Vaisya* or the business community arose from His hips and *Sudra* or working class were born from His feet.

The Mahabharata defines the qualities of each '*varna*' thus:

'He is whom you find truthfulness, generosity, lack of hatred, modesty, virtue and self-restraint is a Brahmin. He who fulfills the duties of a warrior, studies the scriptures, concerns with the duties of acquiring and distributing wealth, is a *Kshatriya*. He who engages in agriculture, cattle-breeding and making money, through honest means and is acquainted with scriptures, is a *Vaisya*. He who has no compunction in working in any job, eats anything, ignores purity rules, and takes no interest in scriptures and rules of life, is a *Sudra*.'

Though untouchability is unknown in the Vedas, it originated from the belief that people who work with corpses, excretions, animal skins etc., carry impurity around them, and therefore contact with them should be avoided. This belief was carried to extremes. Reformers like Dayananda Saraswati, Narayana Guru,

Gandhiji, Savarkar and in 1967, Dr. Ambedkar, a scheduled caste 'dalit' by birth, worked hard to abolish it. In 1950, the constitution of India forbade it.

In course of time '*Varna*' became a ritual grouping and ceased to fit into any functional division. People choose their profession pragmatically and not even from inclination. Also many shudras are rich, many brahmins destitute.

The life of the first three 'castes' was divided in four stages, called 'Ashramas'. The doctrine of the ashramas was fully developed by 400 B.C. It divides the ideal life of the members of the first three '*varnas*' meaning classes, which are the Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaisya (members of the Sudra class not being included), into four stages or 'ashramas'.

They are—

i) '*Brahmacharya*' i.e. the life of a religious student. Between the age of eight and twelve, a boy undergoes the '*upanayana*' ceremony, and thereby becomes 'twice-born' meaning being born or awakened into the spiritual life. Thereafter, he gets the right to learn the Vedas and becomes a full-fledged member of his class in the society. After the '*upanayana*' rite the youth is introduced to his guru' or teacher. There, while remaining celibate and leading a very austere life, he learns mainly the Vedas for about twelve years. He must obey and serve his guru absolutely. In return the guru gives him spiritual knowledge, suitable to the pupil, not theoretically but by raising the consciousness of the student to bring about direct awareness. This is the first *ashrama*, the stage of Brahmacharin, or student. This is the stage when the *Samhita* portion of the Vedas, which are concerned with invocation and prayers to various deities are of the utmost importance to the student. He learns the Vedas, while leading a very austere life.

ii) '*Grhastha*' i.e. the householder. When the youth is somewhere between the ages of twenty and twenty-four, he returns home, marries and establishes a household. This is the second ashrama, the '*Grihastha*' or householder stage. The goals of the householder are '*dharma*', '*artha*', and '*kāma*', while keeping in mind the ultimate aim of '*moksa*'. '*Dharma*' is the observance of religious duties and moral precepts. The householder performs the 'Five great sacrifices' by making offerings to the gods and performing other duties, like giving gifts to Brahmins when they perform domestic ceremonies and to give alms to holy ascetics and '*daridra-Narayana*' or beggars etc. Here the Vedic prayers that he has learnt as a brahmacharin, are used in the rituals. '*Artha*' means prosperity including accumulation of wealth through moral means, to provide for the family and other members of the larger household. '*Kāma*' or pleasure is sense pleasures, including sexual pleasures of married life. Marriage is not a contract but a sacrament. As such the

primary duty of each spouse is to help other and the children in spiritual growth. The goals of '*artha*' and '*kāma*' are there to subserve the more important purpose of '*dharma*'. It will thus be noticed that in this longest stage of life, by placing emphasis on living a good life through morality, the original Vedic ideal leading to '*Krama-Mukti*' survives. However, as the ultimate ideal is '*mukti*', for the earnest and capable the next two stages are prescribed.

iii) '*Vānaprastha*' i.e. 'the anchorite'. He retires to the forest and there lives the life of a hermit.

The ashrama of the forest dweller begins when the householder's first grand son is born or when his hair begins to turn gray. He leaves home, joined by his wife, if she wishes to accompany him, and lives in the forest, in order to meditate on philosophical and religious themes and symbols. The rituals that he has practiced during the '*Grihasthāsrāma*', are here symbolically meditated upon. In ancient and medieval India, life in a forest hermitage was not incompatible with a certain amount of worldly activity. Sages and seekers of wisdom did visit the hermitage and held lively discussions. Family members also visited the hermitage for a short time.

iv) '*Samnyāsin*' i.e. 'the wandering mendicant'. He abandons all worldly and selfish concerns, and devotes himself to meditation on the Ultimate Reality. Having passed through the experiences of life, through maturity when the individual realizes that freedom from the round of birth, death and rebirth is the only desirable purpose, and that a time has come for him to give up all attachments and fully rely on God, he chooses the path of total renunciation and retires to forest for undisturbed contemplation and release in this very life. This can come at any stage, but generally it happens and is recommended when life is coming to a close and through past exertions, man finds himself spiritually ready. He then adopts life of a wandering ascetic. His wife accompanies him, if she is ready; otherwise she returns home, bidding farewell to the husband. The husband removes the sacred thread as a final gesture of his non-attachment even to religious norms and as a sign of total anonymity. He wanders egoless. He does not reveal his past worldly life or social standing. Such wandering sanyasins are greatly respected even now in India. He meditates on the *Atman=Brahman* equation to the point where no other concern affects him. He hopes to come to self-realization and *mukti*, in this very life or die in the effort.

Though the ideal life was so composed, each person had to decide on his own, the stage at which he would remain. Naturally most people remained at the *Grihasthāshrama* stage. Only the earnest adopted the later stages. In present day

India, retired people wishing to follow the old pattern, pass the third and fourth ashramas in a small place in the home compound or in a room in the home. Most of the sanyasins whom we see in India today, belong to some religious order and are strictly not sanyasins 'as a result of following the sequential order of ashramas'.

Each class and each stage has its own specific purpose for which adherence to a definite behavioral pattern is demanded, so that it is wrong to think that those who don the mendicant's garb have no commitment. Their entry into that order signifies only the giving up of ritualistic life, associated with the householder in particular.

These duties which are appropriate to the several classes of society and the stages of life, are described as '*Varnāśrama-dharma*', literally meaning dharma according to one's '*varna*' i.e. caste and '*āshram*' i.e. 'stage'.

These duties which are peculiar to one's caste and stage in life are in addition to the common *dharma* mentioned above. They are mostly of a religious character, but even they conduce both to the cultivation of private virtues like self-restraint and the advancement of the common good. The five '*Mahāyajnas*' i.e. 'great sacrifices', which every householder is expected to perform daily, is a case in point.

Dharma Sutras

In these '*Sutras*', the usual view set forth is that, the discipline of the four stages has to be gone through seriatim i.e. as the stages are reached. That way, they combine the training of '*Pravṛtti*' i.e. active social life with the final stage of '*Nivṛtti*' i.e. renunciation.

The course of life generally commended in the Upanisads is the same i.e. there also '*Sanyasa*', which marks the culmination of ethical discipline, pre-supposes the training of other stages of life, particularly that of a householder.

In short, people are advised to pass through the earlier stages and become mature enough before taking '*Sanyasa*'. Yajnavalka, had been a householder long before he renounced the world. (Br. Up. ii, iv).

*'Anādhitayakhilānvedānānishtvaivakhilānsurān,
Anutpādya sutānvipro na sanyāsitumarhati.'*

'A Brahmin does not qualify for '*sanyas*' or renunciation, till he has studied all Vedas, done sacrifice to all '*Devas*' or gods, and begotten sons'.

In the '*Dharma Sutras*', there are also references to a view which denounces '*sanyasa*'. See '*Gautama Dharma Sutra*, iii-36.

This view apparently accords better with the spirit of ritualism and probably represents the original Vedic view which held out the attainment of heavenly happiness as the final goal of life.

Kāmya-karma

We have just seen above that 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.

Besides obligatory dharma, which includes both '*sādhāraṇa dharma*' i.e. dharma common to all and '*Varnāshram-dharma*' meaning dharma as required by one's caste and station in life, there is this optional *karma* which is '*Kāmya-karma*', or karma indulged in to satisfy one's desire.

The Altar & the Fire

For the performance of the *Srauta* rites, near the home of the '*yajamāna*' sacrificer, three sacred fires representing the three worlds and a '*vedi*' or an 'upraised altar' was required.

For animal sacrifices '*Pasubandhu*', a more elaborate area with a supplemental altar and a '*Yupa*' or a 'sacrificial stake' was required. Five male animals: i.e. 1) '*Purusam*' or man, 2) '*Ashvam*' or horse, 3) '*Gam*' or bull, 4) '*Avim*' or ram, and 5) '*Ajam*' or goat are declared suitable for sacrifice. It is likely that human sacrifice was only notional, personified in the cosmic sacrifices of '*Purusa*' and '*Prajāpati*'.

Taken as a whole, these *Sutras* represent a synthesis of ritualism with the Upanisadic view of liberation.

In Apastamba Dharma Sutra, I-xxii, 2ff, holding up '*Ātma-lābha*' or Self-Realization is set as the goal for man and in Gautama Dharma Sutra, viii, 22-23, the development of one's spiritual nature, is considered preferable to mere ceremonial sanctification.

The ultimate end to be reached by training and practice of rituals is described as attaining '*Brahma-loka*' or 'The world of Brahma.' From there progressive realization of *Mukti* is the goal. This as we saw is called '*Krama-mukti*' as set forth in the Vedic beliefs and discussed earlier.

Discipline during the post-Vedic period:

Thus it appears that the disciplines recommended during the post-Vedic period are three-fold being 1) *Karma*, 2) *Yoga*, and 3) *Bhakti*.

1. Karma :

Here *karma* means sacrificial rites and allied acts as taught in the Brahmanas and later systematized in the *KalpaSutras* as well as tradition. For entering on the path of *karma*, ethical behaviour was taken for granted. Vasista has said '*Ācāra-hinam na punanti vedāh*' - (Vasistha Dharma Sutra vi-3). 'The Vedas do not cleanse the ethically unworthy'. 'Vedas do not save him who is a hypocrite'- (Mahabharata).

Karmas are either i) obligatory or '*nitya*', ii) permitted, iii) optional or '*kāmya*' or iv) prohibited i.e. '*pratisiddha*'.

The entire code of conduct presupposes survival of self after death and considers present life as a preparation for the coming one. Its disciplinary value is obvious. It replaces an austere life for the life of indulgence. It does not abolish desire altogether as in some schools. The true ideal of life is three-fold or '*tri-varga*' of '*Dharma*', '*Artha*', and '*Kāma*'. *Moksa* though not excluded does not have a prominent place in the '*Kalpa-Sutra*'s. '*Artha*' and '*Kāma*' which stand for wealth and enjoyment of present life as associated with '*Dharma*' representing spiritual and moral life are considered legitimate. The *Sutras* speak of succeeding in this world as well as the next. Apastamba says that he who adheres to '*Dharma*' reaps worldly benefits also. If he does not, it matters little, because attainment of '*Dharma*' is the chief aim. '*Dharma*' as compared to '*Rta*' means 'what supports or upholds' i.e. the moral principle which upholds the universe and in the present context includes established ways of living secular, moral and religious life. *Dharma* bears fruit in a future life and includes moral purity as a necessary condition to attain it.

The authority to decide what is '*Dharma*' or '*Adharma*' is the Veda and tradition traceable to it. This is the meaning of the term '*Vidhi*'. Thus '*Dharma*' is extra-empirical and can be known through a channel other than common experience.

2. Yoga :

Yoga being a process of self-conquest was often resorted to in ancient India to acquire occult powers. However here we are concerned with Yogic practice to gain liberation. In this sense it is associated with absolutism and is the same as '*Upāsana*'. Morality is the very basis of such practice. The *Katha Upanisad* says that concentration which is indispensable to Brahma-realization is possible only through ethical purity.

3. Bhakti :

Bhakti or devotion is appropriate to theism with belief in a single personal God. It represents a social attitude because *Bhaktas* find spiritual exaltation in the

company of others. The yogins seek God singly. *Bhakti* is emotional while yoga is intellectual.

Some have tried without success to trace the origin of *Bhakti* cult in India to Christian sources. The idea of devotion to God and his grace were well known to the Indians long before the Christian era as is apparent from prayers in the Vedas. The Katha Upanisad alludes to the need of divine help which is the reward of *bhakti*, before one can be saved. The Svetasvatara Upanisad uses the word '*Bhakti*' and speaks of the necessity for the highest devotion not only to God but to the Guru. Visnu-Krisna is most prominently connected with the idea of *Bhakti* with Bhagavat Purana as the classic text. Siva is also described as '*Bhaktanukampin*' or 'kind to the devotees.'

Of these disciplines, Yoga alone can be associated with heterodox views and even that only is so far as it is a way of withdrawal from the world and not as a means of attaining union with the Ultimate. The heterodox ideal was the world renouncing Yogin and not the Rsi. The heterodox teachers did not believe in the cleansing effect of Vedic karma and hence prescribed exclusively ethical training of stoic severity. *Sanyasa* was recognized in the heterodox schools. Among the orthodox it was not universal. For the orthodox, the '*ashram*' or stage of life, other than studentship was that of the householder. The two remaining '*ashramas*' of '*Vānaprastha*' or anchorite and '*Sanyasa*' or renunciation were intended only for such as were for some reason disqualified from performing the *karmas* of a householder. This is probably the oldest view for it explains the numerous rites taught in the Brahmanas.

From this point of view the modes of discipline in this period can be divided into the path of '*Pravrtti*' or the activist way of life or the way of '*Nivrtti*' or the way of quietism.

What is the aim of this discipline ? According to those who follow the '*Tri-varga*' or the three-fold aim of man, the goal of life is the attainment of heaven after death through religious merit in this life. For those who recognize *Moksha* as the highest ideal, it is either i) union with the ultimate as in absolutism or ii) reaching the presence of God as in theism, or iii) escape from the trammels of *samsāra* as in some heretical schools. In this last sense it is often termed '*Nirvana*'.

Howsoever it is conceived, the ideal of '*Jivan-mukti*' continues and receives greater emphasis in this period. The Mahabharata proclaims serenity attainable in this life as itself *Moksha*. This ideal though adhered to by many of the orthodox schools, may have originated in heretical circles.

KAMALA NEHRU'S FIRST MEETING WITH MA

—Sri Hari Ram Joshi

A couple of days after Mataji's return from Uttarkashi, I felt that Kamla Nehru should somehow be requested to come for Mataji's *darsana*, so that if impressed by the Divine Personality of Mataji, she might at an opportune time be able to bring Mahatma Gandhi also in close contact with Her. I thought that if Mataji were properly approached by Gandhiji, he would by Her grace be successful in his non-violent struggle for the freedom of our country from foreign rule and might establish *Ramraj* and thus revive and preserve the old spiritual and cultural heritage of *Bhārata*.

Kamalaji was then suffering from T.B. and at the advice of her doctors was staying in Dehradun to recoup her health. While she was undergoing treatment, Jawaharlalji was in detention in the Dehradun jail along with Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant. Both of them were suffering from one serious illness or the other.

I suggested to Kamala Nehru one day that she might visit Mataji and secure Her blessings. Kamalaji was a devotee of Lord Krishna and had received *mantra diksa* from the late Swami Saradanandaji of the Ramakrishna Mission. She often used to go into trance during her *puja*. Kamalaji told me that due to certain domestic difficulties, it would not be possible for her to go for Mataji's *darsana*. While we were thus conversing, Srimati Swaroop Rani, Jawaharlalji's mother, entered the room and on hearing about Mataji from me expressed the desire to have Her *darsana*.

In the evening Srimati Swaroop Rani, Kamalaji, Indiraji, Shivadatt Upadhyaya and myself motored to the Anand Chawk temple. To my great surprise, Kamalaji, after leaving her mother-in-law at the gate of the temple, drove away with her daughter Indira and with Upadhyaya without even paying homage to Mataji. I was sorely disappointed and therefore went to see Kamalaji again a day or two later. I pointed out to her that she had not acted wisely in turning away at the gate of the temple without even seeing Mataji. Kamalaji explained to me that her husband did not like her to associate with *sadhus* and *sannyasis* and for this reason she had not gone to see Mataji. I was surprised to hear this. However, after seriously reflecting for a short while, Kamalaji told me that she would that very evening go and visit Mataji with me. We thus went by car to the Anand Chawk temple and paid due

homage at Mataji's lotus feet. Kamalaji sat close to Her, touching Her body. A few minutes later, Kamalaji lay down on the floor having gone into a sort of trance. She got up again after a couple of minutes, but on touching Mataji she again went into that state. Mataji then asked me to keep a conveyance ready to take all of us to Chandbag in Dehradun Cantonment after Kamalaji regained consciousness. So we all motored to Chandbag. Mataji and Kamalaji sat on a large, green lawn, while Bhaiji and I were asked to remain at a distance and to join them only when called. After a short while we came back to the Anand Chawk temple and Mataji asked me to accompany Kamalaji to her residence and then to return to my home. Kamalaji invited me to have dinner with her. I politely refused, as I was then somewhat orthodox and would not take my meal without performing my *sandhyā* (evening prayer). I however agreed to wait at Kamalaji's place till she had finished her dinner. She then expressed the desire to spend the night in the Anand Chawk temple. I tried to dissuade Kamalaji from this but she paid no heed to my words and told me straight off that if I was not willing to accompany her she would go by herself. I therefore decided to take her to the temple once more. Fortunately we could get a tonga just a few steps ahead. When we reached the temple at about 11 P.M. Mataji and Bhaiji were sitting on the veranda, conversing. I entered the temple, leaving Kamalaji in the tonga. Mataji asked me what had brought me back at that late hour. I narrated to Her all that had happened at Kamalaji's residence. Mataji thereupon called Kamalaji and directed Bhaiji to spread Mataji's only blanket on the floor to serve as bedding for Kamalaji. But She asked Kamalaji not to visit Her again without the consent of her husband. Mataji then asked me to go home and return in the morning at about 5 A.M. to escort Kamalaji to her bungalow. This is how Kamalaji had her first *darsana* of Mataji in July, 1933. Kamalaji felt so strongly attracted to Mataji's Divine Personality that she longed to be in constant touch with Her thereafter.

The following day Mataji and Bhaiji suddenly left for Lakshman Jhula, Rishikesh and returned to Dehradun again one day before *Krishna Janmastami*.

While *Krishna Janmastami* was celebrated at the Anand Chawk temple, Kamala Nehru had gone to Hardwar and Rishikesh in search of Mataji. On her return to Dehradun, Kamalaji learnt about the performance of *havan* in Mataji's presence. She was told that immediately after the *havan* Mataji had gone back to Hardwar or Rishikesh. Kamalaji therefore went to Hardwar and on meeting Mataji expressed her keen desire that another *havan* should be performed in Mataji's presence somewhere in Dehradun. Mataji returned with Kamalaji to Dehradun and

arrangements were made to perform *havan* at the Durga temple at Rajpur which is on way to Mussoorie.

A special messenger was sent to Vindhyachal Ashram to bring the perpetual sacrificial fire from the *havan kunda* there. The fire had originally been lit by Mataji Herself in a supernatural way on the occasion of Kali puja in Dhaka in 1926. In Mataji's presence, Kamalaji performed *havan* at the Rajpur temple. After the completion of the fire sacrifice, Mataji asked Bhaiji to keep that fire burning and offer every morning and evening ten oblations with *Gayatri* mantra. Bhaiji carried out Mataji's instructions for some time but later I requested Mataji to entrust this fire to a *pandit* who, not being in service, had considerable time to regularly offer the oblations as prescribed by Mataji and to keep the fire burning. Monthly contributions were given to the *pandit* for this purpose and for some time he carried out Mataji's instructions faithfully; but after a year or so his enthusiasm slackened and he neglected to take due precaution to keep the sacred fire burning, so it got extinguished.

My feeling is that Mataji had asked for the maintenance of the fire for the well-being of Kamalaji, who was ailing. In summer 1934, Kamalaji came to Dehradun from Allahabad to meet Pt. Jawaharlalji, who was still in jail. Kamalaji sent me a telegram asking me to inform Mataji about her visit to Dehradun and to request Mataji to come down from Mussoorie as Kamalaji had not much spare time to go there. When Kamalaji came to my house the day after her arrival, I told her that Mataji could not possibly be expected to regulate Her programme according to her convenience. Kamalaji thereupon decided to go the Mussoorie after meeting Pandit Jawaharlalji in jail and asked me to accompany her. As I could not go, she left alone for Mussoorie and passed the night with Mataji. On this particular occasion Mataji gave Kamalaji a gold bangle that had been offered to her during the *puja* performed in Mussoorie by Sri Nirmal Chatterji, the husband of Gurupriya Didi's elder sister.

The next morning when I came to Mussoorie I found Kamalaji preparing to move down to Dehradun on her way to Allahabad. I advised Kamalaji not to take the risk of staying in Allahabad during the month of June when it was extremely hot there, as she had not yet completely recovered. However, since there was none to look after the "Anand Bhawan", Panditji being in jail, Kamalaji went to Allahabad. My apprehension that she would again become bedridden if she did not stay in the cool climate of Mussoorie was unfortunately justified and soon after reaching Allahabad she had to be shifted to Bhowali for treatment.

Mataji went to see Kamalaji at Bhowali on Her way to Almora about the middle of October, 1935. I met Mataji accidentally at Ranikhet while She was travelling in a motor-bus with Bhaiji.

I saw Kamalaji again at Bhowali on our return with Mataji and Bhaiji from Almora to Dehradun. In the winter of 1936 Sri Feroze Gandhi, who was then not yet married to Indiraji, came to Dehradun and requested Mataji to go to Allahabad to see Kamalaji, who was shortly to proceed to Switzerland for treatment. But Mataji told him that She had no *kheyala* to go then to Allahabad. I suggested to Feroze Gandhi that if Kamalaji was very keen to meet Mataji she might be brought to Dehradun. Feroze Ganjhi went back disappointed.

Kamalaji was sent abroad and expired there after some time. In the letters which she often wrote to Bhaiji from Switzerland she said that she was very fortunate in having visions of Mataji, sometimes in dreams and sometimes even in waking, though she was physically separated from Her by thousands of miles. Kamalaji thus lived only for about three years after her first meeting with Mataji in July, 1933.

AN APPEAL TO DEVOTEES OF SHREE MA

The ashram at Bhimpura is one of the most beautiful ashrams of Shree Ma, located on the bank of the holy river Narmada, 50 Km. from Baroda, in Gujarat.

The Ashram management proposes to produce one comprehensive documentary film on Shree Ma for the benefit of the future generation. All devotees of Ma are earnestly requested to fully co-operate in this project, especially those who have films on Shree Ma in 35mm; 16mm, 8mm or Videos. Devotees are requested to convert their old films into videos, which can be done almost at all places, and then kindly send the same to :

Sri Padma Kant Trivedi,
President, Shree Shree Ma Anandamamee Ashram
401, Anang Avenue, 18, Brahmin Mitra Mandal Society,
Ahmedabad- 380 006.
[Phone-6448166—Fax- 5833146]

PAGES FROM MY DIARY

Those memorable days at Solan

—Atmananda

Solan is a place which played a comparatively prominent part in Mataji's *lila*. Leaving Bengal in 1932, She first stayed in Raipur (Dehradun) with Bholanath and Bhaiji. The very next place outside of Bengal that She chose for Her abode in spring 1934 was a cave at Salogra, about 5 miles from Solan, just below the car-road to Simla. She Herself gave us an amusing description of how She sat in the one dry spot in a cave not big enough to lie in, with rain-water streaming down all round Her, while Bhaiji was occupying the outer chamber, equally wet, if slightly more spacious, when suddenly the Raja of Baghat State, Solan, Sri Durga Singhji turned up in a car. This was the Raja's first darshan of Mataji. He was amazed to find Her perfectly happy and unconcerned in such surroundings.

The cave was later repaired and made waterproof, a temple built near it and a proper path leading to it. Mataji said it had been changed out of recognition.

The Raja tried to persuade Mataji to move to Solan, but she smilingly declared she was all right wherever she was. Several days later, however, She did visit Solan. Quite a famous old sadhu was then residing there, named Shogibaba, who was reputed for his bad temper, for scolding, abusing and even threatening to beat people who ventured to approach him. Although, in spite of these provocations they persisted, he became friendly.

When Mataji expressed a wish to call on the strange mahatma, both Bhaiji and the Raja felt rather apprehensive. But Mataji would have Her way. However, to everyone's surprise the sadhu welcomed Mataji with the utmost joy and reverence, in fact he seemed all courtesy and sweetness.

Mataji greeted him, saying; "Pitaji, your child has come," upon which he at once offered Her a special carpet to sit on and began a most amiable conversation with the words: "I hold you in great love and respect."

The Raja and the Rani of Solan, profoundly impressed by Mataji, became Her sincere devotees. Mataji afterwards visited Solan many times. In summer, 1946 for instance She spent over a month and a half there, including *Guru Purnima*, The Durga Club was then put at Her disposal.

During the morning satsang, Sri Haribabaji Maharaj used to read from the lives of saints. One day he announced that he would next take up Bhaiji's "Matri

Darshan". To read out and discuss the story of someone's life in his presence was quite unheard of. Mataji did not come. Sri Haribabaji waited for a long time, everyone sitting in silence and suspense. Finally he sent a messenger humbly soliciting Mataji's presence. She first declined, but suddenly rose with a start. "What is the difference whether the story of this body is read out or anyone else's ? I am coming !"

Sri Haribabaji would interrupt his reading by innumerable questions. Keeping reserved to begin with, Mataji gradually responded more and more freely. Spell-bound we listened to Her inspiring narrations of incidents from Her early life, especially to Her truly breath-taking descriptions of the various *sadhanas* that manifested through Her body. Those mornings will ever remain unforgettable.

Again in summer 1952 at Solan, when Sri Krishnanandaji Avadhuta used to put questions, Mataji had favoured us with many fascinating reminiscences from Her life she had never disclosed before.

But never even at Solan, it seemed to us, had Mataji been so communicative as this summer. Not only did she delight all by frequently leading the kirtan and by relating incidents from the past, but she also gave an extraordinary amount of teaching on a vast variety of subjects. Often she would reply to questions mornings, afternoons and evenings. People from all over India as well as westerners from many walks of life voiced their problems, which gave rise to really enlightening and sometimes very detailed discourses by Mataji.

During *Durga Puja* in October 1946, Mataji had for the first time occupied the charming and comfortable Ashram which the Raja and his wife had built for Her just below their palace, facing a large unused tennis-court. The broad veranda on two sides of the Ashram provided a very suitable site for satsang.

The elevation at the east-end of the tennis-court put up for the image of Durga in 1946, had been kept enclosed and protected ever since. Mataji's couch was placed on it during the recent birthday celebrations and a waterproof tin-shed built round it, which was beautifully draped and decorated. Between it and the paved path in front of the Ashram was a large pandal.

The length of the period of the birthday celebrations varies from year to year, subject to astronomical calculations. This time it was barely one week, May 4th-11th. Untimely rains set in on May 3rd, continuing unabated and culminating in a violent thunderstorm on the night of the final puja. The pandal could not stay the torrential rain, the carpets got soaked and submerged in a muddy puddle. These outer disturbances only heightened the spirit of pervading joy and harmony. Perhaps we were to have an object lesson of the inclemencies of the weather.

During the long night-watch, in spite of the cold wind and rain, many remained in the less flooded areas of the pandal, families huddled together with remarkable patience in the face of considerable discomfort, others watching from the Ashram veranda. After the Puja, Mataji was carried to Her room on a chair. Utterly still, she seemed transfigured with the shining radiance of a celestial being. People stood silent as if stunned with awe by such beauty.

A Punjabi lady who was sitting in the pandal, suddenly had a clear vision of Mataji sitting on a lion as the Universal Mother (*Jagaddhātri*). She fell unconscious and had to be carried to the veranda of the Ashram.

Mataji afterwards praised the Raja's staff who were putting up again and again decorations that had been knocked down or spoiled by wind and rain. "This is as it should be", She said, "let the rain do its work, you do yours. After all no serious damage was done. Suppose the lights had gone out or the pandal had been blown away ! The only trouble was that you had no place where you could sit comfortably".

Mataji related to us how, many years ago at Dhaka, a severe rainstorm during Her birthday celebrations had induced people to pray to Her to stop the bad weather, instead of which Mataji, followed by many, ran out into the rain, merrily singing kirtan. She splashed rainwater with both hands on the few who preferred to remain under shelter to protect their clothes. So they had no alternative but to join the others. Later She asked everyone to receive *prasāda* by holding out a piece of their dhotis, since the ground was flooded and food could not be served on leaf-plates in the normal way. Finally She led the party to a tank where everyone had a good swim. When laughing and shrieking with delight they returned to the Ashram, the sky had cleared up.

As usual a great number of visitors arrived from far and near. The hospitality of the Raja, (whom Mataji had named "Yogiraj" and "Yogibhai") and of his people was outstanding and we wish to express our deep appreciation for the trouble they took to secure our comforts. Everyone felt at home at Solan.

The observances during the week were more or less similar to all birthday celebrations. Perpetual japa was kept up besides satsang and kirtan. Over and above, the *Ramayana* and the *Durga Saptah Sati* were being chanted for several hours daily in different parts of the Ashram. 108 *kumaris* (small girls aged between 6 and 10) were also given a feast. As they sat down in rows on the Ashram veranda, Mataji appeared and took Her seat with them. Pink silk scarves were distributed among the children and Mataji also put on a similar one. She was served food along with the *kumaris* on leaf-plates and fed a little of it. Later She got up and approached a tiny girl. Mataji opened Her mouth and the little kid, without any hesitation, with her left hand took a morsel from her own leaf-plate and put it into

Mataji's mouth. All present took immense delight in Mataji's playful childlike mood.

Another day when the *Daridra Narayana* (the Lord in the guise of the poor) were invited for a meal, two hillmen turned up with a dog. Mataji remarked, referring to the dog: "It is difficult for people to know which mahatma has come in what guise to partake of the feast." Thereupon the two men with the dog feeding between them were entertained along with the others.

The Governor of Himachal Pradesh, Raja of Bhadri, and other officials, as well as Rajas and Ranis of neighbouring states, came to pay their respects to Mataji.

In connection with the visit of Sri Shiv Dutt Upadhyaya, Pandit Jawaharal Nehru's Private Secretary, who came from Simla, Mataji related how the late Kamala Nehru, wife of Pandit Jawaharlal, had had her first darshan of Mataji at Dehradun. Mataji was then known only to a few in U.P. No Ashram had been built for Her except the one at Dhaka. When Mataji stayed at Ananda Chowk (Dehradun) in 1933 Mrs. Nehru would arrive after night-fall and leave before dawn, so as to remain unrecognized. She used to have very deep meditation in Mataji's presence, her body becoming stiff. Sri Upadhyaya would sit and prevent the ants from crawling up on her. She loved and admired Mataji so much that she once said, if Mataji permitted, she would some day give up her political work with Gandhiji and remain with Mataji.

In the beginning of Mataji's stay at Solan Her foot that had been injured at Vrindaban still needed rest, but after a few weeks she resumed Her usual evening strolls up and down the paved path in front of the Ashram. During that hour she would as a rule distribute sweets or fruits received during the day. One day a dog came, insisting on getting into Her way in spite of all attempts to chase it away. Mataji said, "Give him some sweets." The next day 'Moti' came again. Mataji gave him a double share of *rasagullas*. Since then Moti turned up regularly to the last day of Her stay. Mataji was quite evidently lavishing Her grace on the animal. Someone asked, "Ma, who is Moti really?" "Perhaps it is Toma who has returned. Toma was a dog Bholanath kept at Bajitpur when this body was engaged in the play of *sadhana*", was Mataji's reply.

On July 11th, to everyone's sincere regret, the wonderful days at Solan came to an end.

FROM NOTES TAKEN IN SREE MA'S PRESENCE

—'Kirpal'

Sree Ma: Even if he is a great sinner, how else will he be redeemed? With deep faith let him continue. Who knows at what moment the fire will come out?

Q. Very clever...

Sree Ma: Father, is your child (Sree Ma refers to herself) clever?

Q. Efforts are being made....

Sree Ma: For whom are you striving? For your own self. Once someone said to hurt God-God or oneself! One has to destroy one's self (one's failings) with faith. In whatever manner the name of God must be constantly remembered. Who knows at what moment the fire (of purification) will emerge? As you strike the match, fire will appear, whether one is aware of it or not.

Q. The imaginations of the mind....?

Sree Ma: Where the Divine is revealed, at that stage. But where there is neither revelation or non-revelation.

Q. When God appears does God talk to one?

Sree Ma: Definitely.

Q.- My experience is different.

Sree Ma: At the stage that you are in, that is the form that is revealed. Where there exists the state of duality me and mine, one's shortcomings, the revelation is experienced, but one does not receive the entire reward that is due. The one who appears, stands, gives darshan and can also speak. To the son he appears as a father, to the wife as a husband according to one's due.

As one proceeds on the path, *nirākāra* (without form), *nirguna* (without attributes) there is only the one Lord and no other exists, according to one's inclination whatever path one adopts. He alone exists, what comprises ice water itself.

Whether you adopt the path of *nirākāra* or formlessness, there is only the one Lord and no other, and the other path of the Lord with form and attributes, *sākāra*. By following the path of image worship as you proceed on the path you realise, "Is my deity only this much? and then

you automatically realise the vastness of your deity. The all pervasive-ness of the deity is revealed automatically. The Lord is here and also there and then you realise that Lord is not confined to one place. He is here and there and also beyond all limitations. He alone exists, whether you tread the path of *Yoga* or *Kriya*, whether meditation, or rituals, you will achieve the One, who alone exists.

Try to attain the state beyond the mind, the one is within oneself. This state cannot be attained by the knowledge from books, the learning acquired through books and lectures such knowledge leads to discussions and arguments in the mind. Until the state of duality is not transcended, questions will arise e.g. who is such and such a person? Till there is the craving of knowledge, what is this, what is that, if this happens, if that happens. Questions do not arise to the one who has not started learning, nor to the one who has passed. In both of these situations, while one is proceeding on the path, if questions arise they are resolved, while on the path towards supreme attainment and questions do not arise when one attains to one's ultimate goal.

By relinquishing the mind make efforts to attain the state beyond the mind. God will not be revealed by your efforts. God is ever revealed. One is oneself the veil. In order to remove that veil..... when was God not revealed. He was and is ever present. One is one's own veil, one's own creation. In order to remove that veil one has to follow the instructions of the guru and by following those directions the clouds are dispersed and the self is revealed. Then one's own in oneself is revealed. There is no question of another. While one perceives duality one is still on the path.

Q. Does the Almighty disperse the clouds?

Sree Ma: One is oneself the veil; there is no question of less or more. He Himself is eternally revealed. Where are all the clouds? Where is the veil; the curtain? Such questions arise on the path. There is only the one brahma and no other. Where there is illumination; knowledge incarnate, there is no question of another. The Divine form, knowledge incarnate is He alone; these is no question of duality. No other exists. He alone exists. Whatever form of worship is done or seen is He alone.