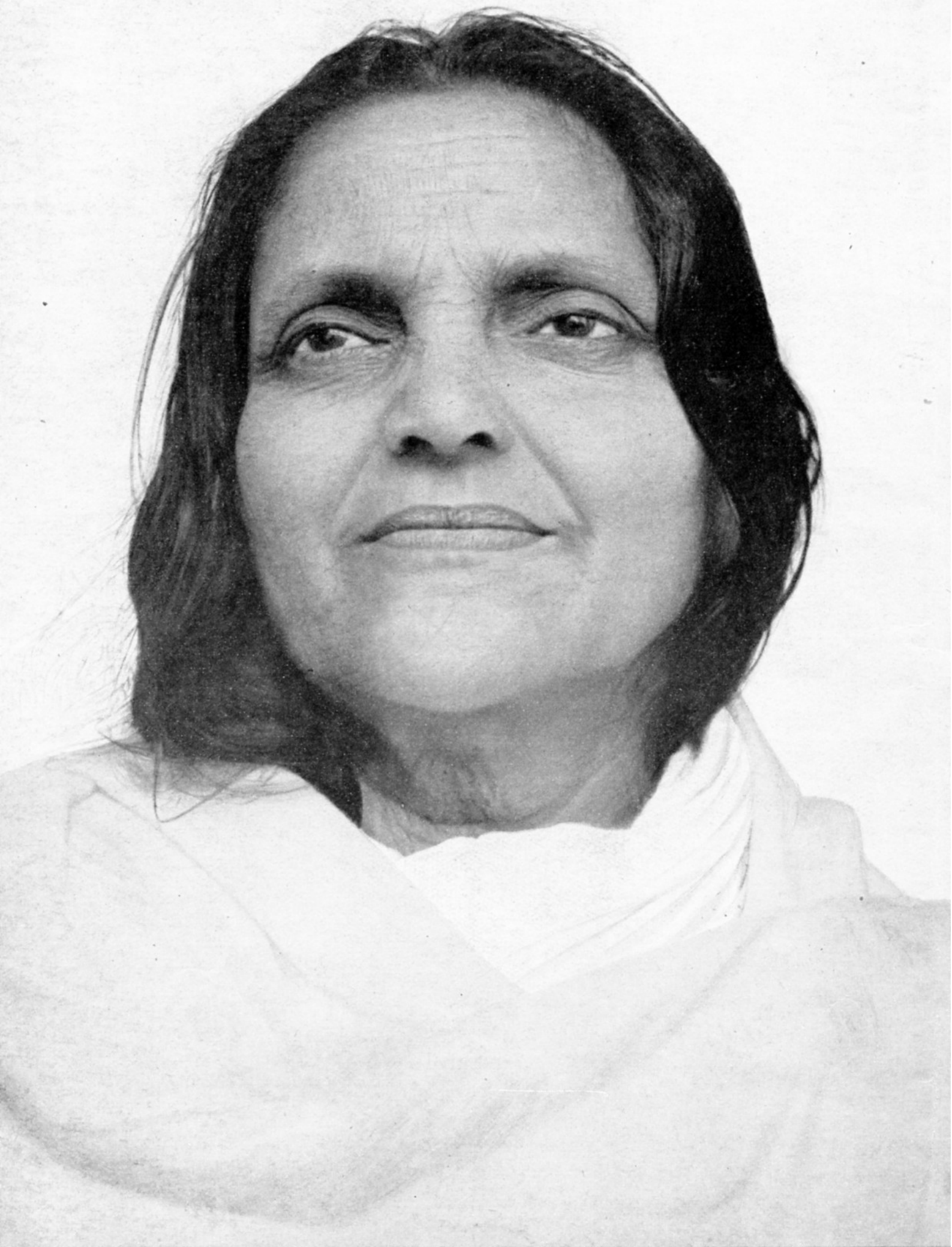


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*The Self, self-contained,
calling to Itself for its own Revelation—
this is happiness.*

MATRI VANI

To live according to the Guru's instructions is the means to Self-realisation. When, prompted by desire to find God, one attempts to awaken *Kundalini** it is impossible that He should not respond. If one really and truly yearns for God, can it ever happen that He will not reveal Himself? Practices that aim at arousing *Kundalini* should be undertaken for the sole purpose of finding God. It is impossible that this should remain fruitless; be convinced of this.

* * *

Full of patience—which is so important for *Sādhana*—and anchored in endurance one should cheerfully forge ahead with untrammelled speed in the quest after God. HE who resides in the heart must be revealed within and without.

* * *

* *Kundalini* The Serpent Power that is said to lie coiled up slumbering at the base of the spine of the ordinary person. By *yoga* it can be roused and made to rise up through the spine. When it reaches the crown of the head there is enlightenment.

To be always in a happy mood helps spiritual endeavour. Dejection creates obstacles on the Path. If one is to abide in His presence one has to be free from bondage. Driving the mind inwards one must be intent on the Revolution of the Supreme One who pervades all.

* * *

By idle and vain talk stumbling blocks are created on the path that leads to Him; going in that direction you have already spent ages and ages. Now retrace your steps and return to your Home. When one lingers on the road, one merely prolongs the troubles and hardships that are the pilgrim's lot. One who faces in God's direction, engrossed in His name and in the love of Him, advances, no matter what his condition may be; always remember this! To say: "I have not felt His touch" and therefore to pursue worldly enjoyment can never be for your real Good—keep this in mind.

* * *

One must endeavour to remain constantly engaged in the contemplation of THAT. All other thought engenders anxiety. HE is already holding your hand, so why worry? Do not allow yourself to be overwhelmed; ever be steeped solely in the contemplation of the Supreme.

— — —

Pages from my Diary

GURUPRIYA DEVI

(Translated from Bengali)

Hoshiarpur, 11th March, 1961.

For the last five or six days Mataji has been in Hoshiarpur in the Ashram of Sri Haribabaji Maharaj. In the evening after Mataji returned to her room from the *satsang*, she talked to us while lying on her bed. The Maharani Satya Prem Kumari of Mysore had sent some *tulsi* leaves to Mataji on which she had written one of God's names. Before this the Rajmata of Charkhari also had two or three times sent to Mataji similar *tulsi* leaves with God's names inscribed on them. Mataji had distributed them to everyone with the words : "To this body everything is brought right to the house where it happens to stay; and so it passes it on again to be kept in all peoples homes. Those who feel like it, may repeat the names written on the leaves." In this connexion Mataji said : "Look, as regards these *tulsi* leaves the following comes to my *kheyāla* : Once at Benares I was lying in the room upstairs. Sant Das babaji's brother (the cousin of this body) Upenbabu, who died long ago, came and said : "Please give me a present." This body replied : "There is nothing here." This was long ago—at that time nobody had as yet sent any *tulsi* leaves, they arrived much later. Pointing to you he indicated by signs : 'Ask her to write something on *tulsi* leaves. "This body then had the *kheyāla* : "If Didi comes I

shall tell her to do so.' And sure enough you just then for some reason entered the room and were thus asked to write something on *tulsi* leaves and bring it. Upen babu had been a Vaiṣṇava. You wrote and brought the leaves. Vishu was then busy with something in the Viraja Mandir. This body went there and said to you : "Give one of the *tulsi* leaves to Vishu." And then added : He should throw it into the Ganges for him who asked for it. But Vishu almost danced with joy as soon as he received the leaf, exclaiming : "It is four months today that I asked Ma for something. Now I have got it, my wish has been fulfilled."

I told Mataji : "Ma, Ashu's father also came to you at Kashi asking you to give him something." Ma replied : "Yes, of course, and he took the *mantra* with him as well as a rosary of *tulsi* beads." It has to be made clear that all this occurred on a subtle plane of consciousness. Ashu's father died long ago. Today Mataji disclosed a lot in connexion with the aforesaid, for Mataji does not speak about such things in public.

Hardwar, 19th March, 1963

The day before yesterday Mataji arrived here from Hoshiarpur. Buni's* health has become extremely precarious during the last few days. Due to heart trouble her whole body has become swollen and hard. Everyone feels very anxious for her. Mataji constantly goes and sees Buni. She

*Buni is the nickname of Kumari Juthika Guha of Calcutta, the daughter of Sri Jatish C. Guha, a devotee of many years' standing. Buni has been with Mataji since her childhood.

herself is making all arrangements for Buni's treatment and diet. It looks as if her condition was critical indeed. Civil Surgeon Dr. S. Bose and Major General A. N. Sharma (I.N.A.), both eminent physicians are prescribing medicines in consultation with each other. In spite of this there is no improvement. Her condition is such that only by Ma's grace can she hope to turn the corner.

Today when Ma came to see Buni, she said: "I saw first a goddess who seemed to give something to this body and then a terrifying apparition—like death himself. Usually he does not appear with three eyes, but this time his third eye was blazing. This body accompanied him up to where the road turns at Hardwar station and told him to turn in the opposite direction." Having said this, Mataji muttered, as if to herself: "This time he has gone. But whether he will return or not—who can tell?" We all exclaimed emphatically: "No, no, he won't come again." Ma, however, said slowly: "One can't be too sure."

These last few days Mataji has been giving Buni the juice of *punar nava** leaves in frequent small doses. There is some history to this. At Hoshiarpur, before Buni's condition became serious, Mataji suddenly one day said to me: "Didi, as soon as we reach Hardwar feed this body with some *punar nava*." We were rather surprised, wondering why Mataji should have to eat *punar nava*. Now the meaning of Mataji's words has become clear. Mataji is taking *punar nava* herself and also giving it to Buni.

* *Punar nava* is a plant with curative properties.

Kankhal, 12th April, 1961.

A few days ago Mataji has shifted here and is staying in 'Santiniketan', the house of Nitai.* It is a quiet and peaceful abode, being the last house of Kankhal, adjoining a temple called 'Dakshalaya', a very ancient place on the bank of the Ganges. For a long time it had been Nitai's keen desire that Mataji should bless his house by staying in it for some time. Repeatedly he had begged of Mataji this privilege and at his urgent request it has been decided to celebrate Didima's *Sannyāsa Utsava* there. Everyone was highly pleased with Nitai's management. He took great care to see that nobody was put to even the slightest inconvenience.

Nitai's house consists of two separate buildings, one opposite the other. In the smaller one his wife used to live; this is why Mataji does not enter that portion of the house. The larger house was built afterwards. Nitai stays in it and practises *sādhana*. Occasionally a *sādhu* or *mahātmā* comes and shares it with Nitai. This is where Mataji is putting up at present. It is Nitai's wish to present one portion of the building to the Ashram, to be used by grown-up girls who are practising *sādhana*.

Near the *Dakshālaya* temple there is a very old banyan tree. Many years ago Mataji and Bhaiji sat under that tree for a whole night and Mataji replied to Bhaiji's questions on various topics. At the suggestion of Mahamahopadhyaya Sri

* Sri Nitai Chand Basu Mallik—a son of the well-known Basu Mallik family in Calcutta. Being a widower he has taken seriously to religion. He lives in Kankhal the life of a *Vānaprasthi*.

Gopinath Kaviraj*, photos have been taken of Mataji sitting under that tree. On that occasion Mataji related many things that took place at the time when she had been there with Bhaiji. Much was disclosed that had not been known so far.

Gwalior 17 th April, 1961.

At the special request of the Maharani of Gwalior we have arrived here today and are expecting to remain for about four days. The consecration of some temples will be performed and many *mahātmās* have come to grace the functions with their presence. Our kirtan party from Delhi has also arrived as the Maharani is eager to have 'Nāma yajña' (perpetual kirtan of one particular *mantra*.) In the evening the Maharaja came and did obeisance to Mataji. He is very ill; but on having Mataji's *darśana* he became radiant like a child. Due to his bad health the entire burden of the arrangements fell on the Maharani. Maharani Vijaya Raje is extremely efficient and has many great qualities. She is also a Member of Parliament.

Gwalior 21st April, 1961

One day Mataji was taken to all the Maharaja's temples. In the Siva temple, a statue representing the Maharaja's mother was installed on this occasion. It is a fine piece of art—as if the Rajmata were sitting there alive. The second temple is dedicated to Radha-Krishna and the third contains the sculptured images of Rama, Sita and Lakshman. In the large

* The greatly revered scholar Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, D. Litt., formerly the Principal of the Government Sanskrit College, Varanasi.

temple in the centre an extremely beautiful image of Satyanarayan has been consecrated on this occasion. By Mataji's grace the whole function proved a great success. In spite of his poor health the Maharaja attended the entire ceremony standing. Everything proceeded like clock work. Mataji remarked several times : "What a wonderful atmosphere."

Another day the Maharani took Mataji to see the Scindia Public School. Mataji was shown round the whole place by the Principal himself. There are very few schools of this kind in India. All arrangements are perfect to the minutest detail. I hear the guardians of the boys have to apply at least three to four years in advance to secure a seat for their ward. We were immensely impressed by the school.

Today Mataji is leaving for Allahabad where her 66th birthday is to be celebrated in Nirajdada's residence.

Allahabad, 3rd May, 1961

Yesterday, on the 19th of Vaisakh Mataji's birthday puja began. The Puja was performed in the open air on the raised platform in front of Mataji's room. Brahmachari Sailesh officiated as the priest. A great number of people from the Ashram of late Sri Gopal Thakur were present. They had brought with them the image of their Ashram and were celebrating Gītā Pūjā at the same time.

Today is the last day of the function and arrangements for the Tithi Puja have been made in the Pandal. Sri Hari babaji, Sri Krishnanandaji Avadhuta, Mahamandaleshwara Sri Chaitanya Giri, Sri Yogesh Brahmachari of Calcutta and

* Judge Niraj Nath Mukerji was a very great devotee of Mataji. His whole family is singly devoted to her.

other Mahatmas have gathered for the occasion. The whole of the celebration has been carefully thought out and proceeded in great beauty and harmony. The chanting of the *Durga Sapta Sati* by 100 Pandits, a feast for 108 kumaris, a dinner for small boys (*Bāla gopāla bhojan*) were items of the programme. Bindu, Renu, Bithu, Subodh and others had done their utmost to make the function a success. Their spirit of service is really quite unique.

This morning Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru arrived in Allahabad. "Anand Bhavan," his ancestral home is quite close to this place. On hearing that Mataji was here and that her birthday was being celebrated, he came after sunset for Mataji's *darśana* together with Srimati Indira Gandhi and his Secretary Sri Upadhyayaji. First he and Indiraji met Mataji privately in her room for about half an hour. Then they all sat with Mataji in the pandal. At that time Swami Sri Chaitanya Giri was giving a talk. Then a young boy a member of the *Rāsālīlā* party, performed a very artful play with *āratī* lights. This was followed by songs by the famous radio artist Chabi Bannerji of Calcutta. Mataji also sang for a short while. After about an hour's stay Pandit Nehru took his leave.

Poona 9th June, 1961

For over a month Mataji was in Bombay because of Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj's sickness and operation. Now his health has much improved and he will probably be able to leave the hospital within three or four days. Thus Mataji has left for Poona today. It is hoped that Dr. Kaviraj will join her here as soon as possible.

Yesterday afternoon Mataji went to the hospital to see him. When saying good-bye, Mataji stroked his head and back with her gracious hand. Putting her head on his pillow, she remarked : "To how many people has not this bed and this pillow given leave to go. Now it has made you, father, well." With how much affection Mataji embraced the Anglo-Indian nurse, saying again and again : "By indefatigable service you have nursed father back to health." All who witnessed this expression of Mataji's great motherly love for Sri Kavirajji had tears in their eyes. The care and understanding with which Mataji made all arrangements from the beginning of his very serious disease to his treatment in the hospital is quite beyond description. Every one is of the opinion that Dr. Kaviraj has been brought back to life solely by Mataji's grace.

As Mataji was leaving the hospital, her attention was drawn to an Arab Mohammedan who was suffering from incurable cancer. He lay on his deathbed, reduced to a mere skeleton. Ulcers were scattered all over his body. Mataji was about to walk away, but suddenly stopped. Out of her own *kheyāla* she went to his bed and with her compassionate hand stroked his whole body. Pointing upwards she exhorted him by signs to put his mind on God. What more striking illustration can there be of Mataji's divine grace? Who is able to fathom the magnitude of the blessing which Mataji thus conferred upon that dying Mohammedan?

World Unity Through World Religions

SWAMI SIVANANDA SARASWATI

It is time the United Nations gave serious thought to real religion as the greatest common factor and universally unifying force in the world. Religion is the unconquerable impulse in every man for peace, happiness and perfection. It is the urge to realize the highest value that God or Truth is. This religious impulse makes all mankind one and united.

All world religions point to the same central Divine Aim. All religions place before us the same ideals: love for all beings, service of humanity, conquest of the baser passions and of animal nature, striving after perfection and attainment of peace and unity. They teach man the life of tolerance, forgiveness, harmlessness, mercy, charitability and divine attainments.

Fundamentally there subsists absolute unity among all religions, all faiths, all beliefs. With one voice, all of them persuade man to the realization of the Infinite Presence of the Divine Being. Unanimously they declare: SERVE. LOVE. GIVE. PURIFY. MEDITATE. REALIZE.

The beautiful anecdote of Abu-ben-Adam, the moving story of Ranti Deva, the Biblical narrative of the good Samaritan and the sublime depiction of Gautama the Buddha at the sacrifice of King Bimbisara—all serve to bring out most beautifully and effectively the universal nature of true religious consciousness.

The religious sense enfolds all mankind in the warm embrace of spiritual oneness. Such unification alone could be vital, effective and abiding. Any unity or oneness of mankind based upon economic or social or political foundations will

not last. Through the means of the awakened religious sense we link up one man with the other at the deepest levels. When religion is seen and understood through this universal religious sense that exists in every man, then the Christian, the Muslim, the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Jain and the Parsee will feel themselves not as any particular religionists but as brother souls proceeding together in total harmony along the pathway to perfection and joy.

All religions teach man to cultivate a sense of oneness, the spirit of brotherhood, to become divine by discipline, sacrifice, service. They teach man not to be deluded by the lure and glitter of the perishable objects of this world, not to be deceived by the senses, not to forget the real goal of life—the attainment of God-Vision. Religion, therefore, is the foundation of society, the source of all goodness and happiness, the basis of virtue, perfection and prosperity of the individual, and through the individual, of the nation and through nations, of the whole world.

May you all ever bear in mind the grand Upanishadic declaration, *Isāvāsyam Idam Sarvam*—all this is pervaded by the Supreme. May you all realize this great truth, *Eko Devah Sarva Bhuteshu Gudhah sākshichetā kevalo nirgunascha*—the one Supreme Being is hidden in all beings; He is the eternal inner Witness and Energiser, the ever-pure, non-dual Being. May the Governments of the world abandon the hideous manufacture of nuclear weapons and let the law of love and the spirit of spiritual Oneness expounded by all religions prevail amongst nations and races.

OM SHANTI, SHANTI, SHANTI!

Mother's Music

PROF. S. C. DAS GUPTA

Why and how does divinity cast its splendour of aroma all round Mata Anandamayi? Why and how does the holy stream of light sweetly flow out of Mother's sparkling eyes and the sacred waves of light envelop the surrounding crowd to take them to a higher plane? Why and how do Mataji's melodious words enchantingly play on her listeners' minds to bring about an imperceptible transformation? I do feel bold enough to trace the answer to the above queries to the action and reaction of the eternal Music which Mother ever sings for the greatest good and widest welfare of the world. Our revered Rishis of the hoary past solemnly declare that the origin of Music is out of 'The *Nāda*'—the *Sabda Brahma* "Om", which rings and ever rings to awaken the slumbering "Kulakundalini." What is needed is only to receive a clear and lucid broadcast of the music, is just to tune up the machine correspondingly at our own end. Anybody approaching Mata Anandmayi's Ashram where-ever it be, whether on the high hills or on the murmuring rivers or on the seaside, does so at the faint response of the inner call and with respectful urge "मातृशरणं गच्छामि, धर्म शरणं गच्छामि" "Mātrisharaṇam Gachhāmi, Dharmam Sharaṇam Gachhāmi". A *darshan* of Mataji or even a visit to any of her Ashrams brings out the musical prayer in every heart, be it uttered explicitly or not—

असतो मा सद्गमय, तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय, मृत्योर्मांमृतं गमय ।
आविराविर्मर्षधि रुद्र यत्ते दक्षिणमुखं तेन मां पाहि नित्यम् ॥

“Asato Ma Sadgamāya, Tamaso Ma Jyotirgmaya,
Mrityormā Amritam Gamaya
Avirabirma Edhi Rudra Yat e Dakshinaṃmukham
Tena Mām Pāhi Nityam.”

May I present to you a new interpretation of the nectar (*Amrita*) which was miraculously found out of the churning of the mighty ocean by deities and demons which the Lord Vishnu so pleasantly served to the deities in the guise of Mohini and which was drunk with deep delight by deities in order to be immortal, Lord Shiva having swallowed every drop of poison coming out in course of the straining struggle, as allegorically representing the birth of Music out of the fathomless depth of the wide mental region through the joint efforts divine and demonic, the turmoil of the evil in the attempt of going down only to make way for weal and welfare, bliss and delight everlasting. शृण्वन्तु विश्वे अमृतस्य पुत्राः (Shrinwantu Vishwe Amritasya Putrāh) Hark thou children of Immortals to the voice of the ancient sages.

ॐ रसो वै सः रसं ह्ये वायं लब्ध्वानन्दी भवति, तृप्तो भवति, अमृतो भवति,
ॐ यत् प्राप्य न किञ्चिद्वाञ्छति न शोचति न रमते नोत्साही भवति
ॐ यत् ज्ञानान्मत्तो भवति स्तब्धो भवति आत्मारामो भवति ।

“Om Raso vai Sah. Rasam Hi Evayam Labdhvanandi
Bhavati, Tripto Bhavati, Amrito Bhavati
Om yat Prāpya Na Kinchit Vanchhati, Na Shochati
Na Ramate Na Utsahi Bhavati
Om yat Jnanat Matto Bhavati Stabdho Bhavati
Atmārāmo Bhavati.”

“Music is Divine. Music is *amrita*.” Humanity derives peace and bliss from the fundamental musical sweetness and

gets converted to *amrita*—perpetual bliss—which leaves nothing else to be desired, nothing at all to lose, nothing further to be attached to, nor anything else to be striven for. As a matter of fact the summum bonum of life and fulfilment of activity come through the intangible effect of Music. Success is assured if we only feel work is worship and our every move is in tune with the eternal music. Its knowledge and realisation make humanity forget all external ties—be they of flesh and blood or of iron or gold. Divinity of the soul manifests itself through the lyrical chyme and rippling rhythm of Music. Mata Anandamayī is the living example in this respect.

The message of the forest still reminds me of the altitude reached with the help of Music.

यं ब्रह्मा वरुणोन्द्र रुद्र मरुतः स्तुन्वन्ति दिव्यैः स्तवैः
 वेदैः सांगपदक्रमोपनिषदैः गायन्ति यं सामगाः ।
 ध्यानावस्थित तदगतेन मनसा पश्यन्ति यं योगिनः
 यस्यान्तं न विदुः सुरासुरगणाः देवाय तस्मै नमः ।

“Yam Brahmā Varunendra Rudra Marutah Stunwanti Divyai
 Stavaih

Vedaih Sangapada kramopanishadaih Gāyanti Yam Sāmagāh
 Dhyānāvasthita Tatgatena Manasā Pashyanti Yam Yoginah,
 Yasyāntam Na Viduh Surāsuraganāh Devāya Tasmai Namah.”

[Salutation to the God who is worshipped by Brahma, Varuna, Indra, Rudra, Maruta and other deities in holy prayers, who is devotedly sung in the Sāmaveda and other branches of Vedas and Upanishads, whom the sages realize in their deep meditation and whose limit has never been traced.]

The first and foremost usher of these sentiments was heralded on this holy soil of ours in the expression of the Vedic

hymns. Since then the melody echoed and re-echoed in the songs of our immortal saints, sages, seers and others coming from all strata of society. They contributed in no small measure to the revelation of Music. In their songs they represented the music of the sun and the moon, of the planets and stars—in tune with which dances the whole universe from the minutest particle of dust to the gigantic mountain. The delightful dance of nature is nothing but sympathetic synchronising ripples in the same pulsating resonance declaring the same truth and generously giving immense joy to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. Not only the presence of Mata Anandamayi but also her remembrance evokes the same feeling. How beautifully she personifies the similar splendid touch in the heart of hearts. She stands as the living contribution to the same lofty ideas.

द्वन्द्वतीतं त्रिगुणरहितं स्वप्रकाशस्वरूपं
शान्ताकारं गगनसदृशं निर्विकारं वरेण्यम् ।
भक्तैर्जुष्टं विमलनिलयं योगिभिः ध्यानगम्यं
नित्यानन्दं परम सुखदं चेतसा तं स्मरामि ॥

“Dwandwātītam Trigūṇa rahitam Swaprakāsha swarūpam,
Sāntākāram Gagana sadrīsham Nirvikāram Varenīyam,
Bhaktairjushtam Vimala nilayam Yogibhīrdhyānagamyam,
Nityānandam Paramasukhadam chetasā Tam Smarāmi.”

It is well within every body's knowledge that the music of Lord Krishna's flute and the dance of Natarāja Shiva are almost irresistibly attractive. Our scriptures bear full testimony to the reponse of not only living beings but also of inert matter. Mata Anandamayi has been granting overflowing inspiration throughout the country wherever she has been

pleased to go. At her darśana every head bows down in profound respect chanting all the while—

तमीश्वराणां परमं महेश्वरं तं देवतानां परमं च दैवतम्
पतिं पतीनां परमं परस्ताद् विहाय देवं भुवनेशमीड्यम् ॥

“Tam Ishwarānām Paramam Maheshwaram Tam Devatānām Paramancha Daivatam, Patim Pateenām Paramam Parastād Vidāya Devam Bhuvaneshamīdyam.”

[Thou art the Emperor, god of gods, it is thy strength which grants vigour to others, it is only a speck of thy knowledge which enlightens others.]

Mataji in her pure whiteness like Goddess Saraswati represents the excellence of supreme Music and influences all cultural developments.

Modern science has mathematically proved beyond any shadow of doubt that matter also, just as light and heat, is a form of energy and thus a condensation of waves of minute phases. Philosophers have gone even a step further to propound that mind and soul are similar to electric waves and as such susceptible to the impact of Music. It is not unknown in our country that Music invokes conflagration, invites rain, birds and beasts, snakes and crawling insects respond to its charm and even a plant thrives in Music. What wonder is there when Mother's Music spreads superhuman tendencies. Apart from the wave motion it is difficult to explain how Music transcends all limits of space and time.

Our everyday experience shows that a piece of stone or brick thrown into a pool of water creates a never-ending series of waves. Similar ripples are produced in the ocean of ether by the vibration of sound. The same principle may be

extended to waves of thought particularly of powerful persons alike, such as Sri Anandamayi Ma. It is not impossible to imagine that the strong current of waves pulls down all barriers and crosses over so-called difficult hurdles. It certainly goes to the credit of modern science and technology that sound waves are caught, transmitted and even reproduced as we have in electronics, radios, transistors, tape recordings, etc. etc. Who knows that it does not await the advent of some future scientist to catch and to reproduce to our ears the still existing waves set in motion by the ancient master minds of hallowed memory. As for the nature of motion of thought—we may only say that there are still many more things and much of the realization beyond the dream of science and philosophy.

Breathes there a man with soul so dead as not to respond, not to vibrate, to the call of Music? Of course, the receptivity varies directly as the application of and adherence to the requisite discipline, i. e., culture or *Sādhanā*. Mata Anandamayi has herself proved in her exemplary life that the attainment of divinity through Music is not at all beyond human reach. May it not therefore be said that it is our birth-right to be divine. Parallel to the lines of a famous poet Mata Anandamayi asserts: "Divine thou art, to divinity thou returnest," which is no small encouragement for the pilgrim's progress. Music not only reigns over humanity but also furnishes fillip to every human feeling—love and affection, duty and devotion, hope and heroism, peace and patriotism—bereft of all geographical boundaries, bereft of caste, creed and colour, transgressing all demarcations of society, economic and educational. Music solidifies national and international

integration which is so frantically sought these days to make one World and to form one Government.

Who can deny that there is nothing sweeter than Music which is at the sametime more powerful than pen and sword? It is the only instrument to conquer baser elements, to exercise an all-pervading influence over culture and civilization in all ages and in all countries. The influence of Mother's music has overwhelmed the lands beyond the seas.

Blessed are those who are true devotees of Music. More blessed are those who lead and guide through Music the onward march to a Life Divine. Mighty Herculean efforts are needed to make a road-way in a mountainous region and to bridge a wide gulf, but once it is made, even an ant takes long strides and crosses over. Mother has built up the shortest cut, an easy smooth path in the spiritual domain. You can never miss the goal if you proceed along it. Mother's blessing is there—

“शुभास्ते पंथानः सन्तु”

“Shubhaste Panthanah Santu”

Mother's loving care will see that everybody is happy and healthy, everybody finds everything congenial and nobody suffers more than absolutely necessary. Continuous, unceasing Music is going on—Mother sings while she sits; Mother sings while she moves; Mother sings while she is awake, the song does not stop even when she is asleep. Catch that tune, hold the same string by winding up the Radio-set inside your mind in the same metre and in the same kilocycle and you will hear a clear and distinct voice. Automatically everything round us becomes sweet and holy, the approach to a life divine is easily accessible and you will

find that heaven is nowhere else but on this mundane earth, nay within yourself.

ॐ मधु वाता ऋतायते मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः

माध्वीर्न सन्त्योषधीः मधुनक्तमुतोषसः

मधुमत्पार्थिवं रजः मधु द्यौरस्तु नः पिता

ॐ मधुमान्नो वनस्पतिः मधुमानस्तु सूर्यः

माध्वीर्गवो भवन्तु नः

ॐ मधु ॐ मधु ॐ मधु

“Om Madhu Vātā Ritāyate, Madhu Ksharanti Sindhāvah,

Madhwirnah Santyosadhih, Madhunaktam utoshasah

Madhumat Parthiwam Rajah

Madhu Dyaorastu Nah Pita, Om Madhumanno Vanashpati

Madhumanastu suryah, Madhwirgavo Bhavantu Nah

Om Madhu, Om Madhu, Om Madhu”

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever. A piece of Music is an everlasting blissful delight.

A Life in Zen*

TAKASHI HIRATA†

(Translated from German)

The Monk in a Zen Monastery.

Many books by Japanese and western authors have given the occident a definite idea of Zen Buddhism. The next step would be to introduce Zen practice in the West. In this paper I shall describe life in Zen.

First of all I shall write about everyday life in a Japanese Zen Monastery. I should be happy if my readers could get some insight into Japanese life in Zen.

I. Life in the Zen Monastery.

Nowadays three Zen sects exist in Japan : *Rinzai Sodo* and *Obaku*. The monastery in which I am living and which I shall try to describe belongs to the *Rinzai* Sect. There are seven main Rinzai Zen temples in Kyoto, a town with many ancient temples. Each one of those temples had its own monastery where young monks, aged usually between 18 and 30, practise Zen exercises. The daily life of the monastery is based on the "Rule of the Pure" that was formulated in the 8th cen-

* The following essay appeared in the German book "HÖ HLEN, KLÖSTER, ASHRAMS, GEMEINSCHAFTEN IN INDIEN und JAPAN" Published by U. W. Barth Verlag, Weilheim, Oberbayern.

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ture by the Chinese Zen Master Bai-Dshang. The general principles of this rule were outlined in Bai-Dshang's epigrams. For example : 'He who is lazy for one day and does not work, should also not eat on that day.' In a life regulated in this manner, the monk practices Zen under the guidance of a Zen Master. When the disciple has been slack, the Master may reproach him with words like : 'Walking ricebag.'

The year is divided into two terms : the winter term from October 1st to March 1st, and the summer term from April 1st to August 1st. After such a term has begun, no new monk will be admitted into the monastery, nor is any monk allowed to interrupt his practice until the end of the term.

Now I should like to speak about the rules and regulations of the monastery. On the 1st, 3rd, 6th, 11th, 13th, etc. of every month the monks have to go to town to beg. They proceed in groups of three, walking one behind the other with their begging-bags slung over their shoulders. They are allowed to halt only if someone who wishes to give them something, calls out to them. They receive rice, money and other things. The special characteristic of this begging is the spirit of *dāna*, that is to say, the begging has to be accomplished in such a manner that everyone is aware of the fact that the giver and the receiver are essentially within the void. This is the significance of the saying : '*Mukudoku*' (no merit). The donor does not know to whom he is giving, the monk does not know from whom he has received the gift. The monks wear large hats made of bamboo grass, so that their features cannot be distinguished. By 11 a. m. the monks have to return to the monastery for their midday meal. The abbot takes charge of the things which the monks have brought.

On the 2nd, 5th, 7th, 10th, 12th, etc. of every month the Zen Master delivers a lecture on the Zen doctrine. From his talk the students learn something about the wisdom of Zen.

On the 4th, 9th, 15th, 19th, etc. of every month the monks sweep the *Zazen hall*, the large hall, the bathrooms and the garden. They also cut their hair and have a bath.

On the 14th and 29th they rest until 3 p. m. They write letters, mend their clothes or go to town to do shopping. They rise daily at 3 a. m. In front of the statue of the Buddha in the large hall, they recite *Sutra*, such as the *Prajña Paramita Hridayam Sutra* or the *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra* and some *dhāranis*. During the recitation the monks have each individually to enter the room of the Master in order to reply to their *Koan*. This is called '*Sanzen*.' I shall later explain it in detail. At 5 a. m. they take their breakfast. Complete silence has to be observed in the dining-hall. This is why wooden bowls are used for eating. The begging, the lecture and the cleaning work usually start at 7 a. m. At 11 a. m. the bell rings for the midday meal. In former times the monks used to eat only twice, but now-a-days three times, namely at 5 a. m. 11 a. m. and at 4 p. m. Meat and fish are forbidden. The main meal consists of boiled rice and *miso* soup, which is prepared from soya beans. According to the work the days are called 'begging day,' 'lecture day' and 'cleaning day.' From 1-4 p. m. the monks work in the flower or vegetable garden. Sometimes they climb on a hill behind the temple to collect fire wood for their kitchen. Every term two monks take turns in cooking. At 4 p. m. a wooden clapper calls for the evening meal. At dusk the monks gather in the *Zazen hall* to practise the Zen posture. At 6 p. m. *Sanzen* starts again, that is the reply to

their *koan* questions. On both sides of the *Zazen* hall there are long verandas where the monks sit facing one another. They meditate until 1 p. m. in winter and until 10 p. m. in summer. The man in charge of the *Zazen* hall is called '*Jikihitsu*,' which means 'the sun of the hall.' On his shoulder he carries a staff called '*Keisaku*.' He walks about in the hall and watches whether the monks are really practising. If someone falls asleep he is beaten by the *Jikihitsu* with the *Keisaku*. For a beginner it is very strenuous and difficult to practise *Zazen* for three or four hours on end. While the term is in progress a very intensive practice is observed for one week of each month in every Zen monastery. This is called '*Sesshin*.' During the *Sesshin* the monk has to do *Sanroen* three times daily. The other activities, such as begging or cleaning are suspended during that week. The monk is not allowed to leave his seat, except for the three meals and for his rest of five hours at night. From 3 a. m. to 10 p. m. he has to concentrate on his *koan*. The *Sanzen* which is held from December 15th to 22nd is specially severe, for during that week the monk is not supposed to sleep at all. Until the beginning of the winter he must constantly be absorbed in his *koan* and to *Sanzen* four to five times a day. Such practice almost surpasses human strength.

The monk who lives in the monastery is called '*Un-sui*.' *Un* means cloud and *sui* river. The inner attitude of the monk may be compared to the fleeing cloud and the ever flowing river. He must not stop anywhere. This metaphor also shows why the daily life of the monk is very simple. He possesses two sets of clothes, a rice bowl and a small knife for cutting his hair. Like a cloud or river he travels all over Japan in search of his Zen master. A newcomer must first of all for two days sit in

front of the main gate and with bowed head pray to be admitted into the monastery. There after he has to sit in a cell for five days, his gaze turned to the wall. Then only he is accepted into the monastery. The path to Enlightenment is very long. It is necessary to attend to all practices with great patience. This is why the monk is first of all tested, to see whether he will be able to put up with all hardship. In Buddhism patience is considered a great virtue.

II Koan.

In our days, only the Masters of the *Rinzai* and *Obak* sects give *Koans* to the monks to lead them to Enlightenment. The *Koan* originated from China. In the foreword to the book '*Bi-Yān-Lu*' it is said that the *Koan* started during the period of *Kong* and was developed to maturity during the period of *Sung*. But even during *Kong* the Master was able to, effect the disciple's progress by his words and actions.

To illustrate this I should like to relate the following incidents, which by their sharpness and terseness make up *Koans*.

The venerable Dyudshi (900 A.D.) had the habit of raising only one finger in reply to any question put to him.

A monk asked *Dung-shan* (10th century A.D.): "What about the Buddha?" *Dung-shan* replied: "Three pounds of hemp." When the monk asked whether he meant the hemp which the Master was just putting on a weighing-machine in order to carry it away, the Master answered in a direct and violent manner.

Much later, during the *Sung* period, the followers began to collect and note down all the sayings of the famous old Masters. They produced a collection of such *Koans*. Since

then Zen Masters have given *Koans* to the monks to serve as foci in their meditation. Those manuscripts were brought to Japan by Chinese Zen monks. They are books such as : 'Bi-Yān-Lu,' 'Mu-Monkan' and the 'Linci Manuscript.' During the *Tokugawa* period the *Koan* was Japanised by two Japanese Zen Masters, namely Hakuin and Tohrei. Especially Tohrei brought the mass of *Koans* into a systematic order. This I shall discuss later in detail.

Essentially, the word is for Zen like a finger that points to the path of Enlightenment. By concentration on the *Koan* the aspirant can break through his ego and thereby go beyond it. In every case *Koan* is a kind of fundamental question that is present in the mind of man due to the mind's structure. But even as a question the *Koan* points to where human thought cannot reach. In other words the aspirant is enabled to transcend the ordinary mind with the help of the *Koan*. Therefore the answer to a *Koan* question is by no means a theoretical or rational reply. The question is a device to find an answer that has to become one with the question. Such questions and answers go beyond ordinary dialectic.

Zen Master Tohrei divided the large number of *Koans* into three groups : *Richi*, *Kikan*, *Kojo*.

(i) *Richi* : The Vision of Innermost Nature or Pure Mind.

In Buddhism one always uses the word 'Mind' to describe the vision of inner nature. But this 'Mind' has to be clearly distinguished from the western concept of mind, Logos or ratio. Since this vision cannot be expressed in words, one is forced to call it : 'Nothing', 'Void', 'Pure Mind', '*Nirvana*.' However this vision is neither nothing, nor empty, nor pure mind. With the help of *Richi* one can attain to the vision of the formless, primeval 'I' and thereby awaken to the formless, primeval 'I'.

The following are two examples of *Richi Koans*.

(a) You know the sound of two hands. Hear the sound of a single hand !

(b) Once a monk asked the Zen Master Chou Chou :
 "Is the Buddha also present in a dog ?" Chou Chou replied :
 "Nothing." To the same question Chou Chou replied on another occasion "Presence."

(ii) *Kikan* : Animation

In Zen Buddhism one is not allowed to remain in the world of *Nirvana*, one must leave that world.

By leaving the holy world one becomes truly present in the mundane world. This is the result of *Kikan*. This stage is on a level in which the "Nothing" is further deepened right down to its foundation. To die the "Great Death" means to become really alive in this world. Zen does not mean to die the "Great Death" but rather to live the "Great Life" in this our world.

An example for a *Kikan Koan* :

Once the Zen Master Goso Hoen explained : "From one's room one sees through the window an ox pass by in the street. His head, his horns and feet have already passed by. Why can one not see its tail pass by ?"

(iii) *Kojo* : Elevation.

The final aim of Zen is, not to remain anywhere—neither in the world of death, nor in the world of the living. One must be liberated from both, life and death. This is why one can move about freely in death as well as in life. In order to make this comprehensible I must add the following: Zen Masters sometimes spoke of death. But in Zen death never signifies

the dissolution of the body, but always "Great Death." When one awakens within oneself to the "formless self" or to the 'I which is independent of body and mind' one dies the Great Death. To remain stationary neither in life nor in death is the ultimate *Nirvana* the final Enlightenment in Zen. The *Diamond Sutra* says : One awakens the heart in the place where one is established in the Nowhere.

Kojo Koan leads man to the final *Nirvana*, *Bodhi* or Illumination.

An example for a *Kojo Koan* : Once the Chinese Zen Master Bai-Yun Shan-duan said to Wu-dshu Fa-yan : "Some Zen monks come here from *Lun* hill who have already had advanced Zen experience, who can explain Zen very clearly, are able to reply exhaustively to all *Koan* questions and can write valuable commentaries on the sayings of the ancient Zen Masters—and yet they are not perfect."

Although the Zen Master Tohrei divided the various *Koans* into three groups, it must be understood that every *Koan* belonging to any one of the groups also includes the other two. Thus the *Richi Koan* contains *Kikan* and *Kojo*, the *Kikan* includes *Richi* and *Kojo* and so forth.

Merely for the convenience of presenting the *Koans*, he divided the numerous stories into three kinds, since it is difficult for the beginner to attain to all the *Richi*, *Kikan* and *Kojo* experiences with the help of one single *Koan*.

III. Zazen.

Without a doubt *Zazen* is the pivot of life in a Zen monastery, I shall explain this how.

In many countries of Europe and America Zen is already well known through the books that have been written on it,

But I should like to ask how many people have actually practised *Zazen*? I am convinced that one hour's practice in *Zazen* is more valuable for the comprehension of Zen Buddhism than the reading of a thousand books. For Zen does not lie in the mind, but in actual experience.

'*Za*' means to sit; 'Zen' derives from the Sanskrit word '*dhyāna*', which originates from the root '*dhi*'. '*Dhi*' means to compose oneself, to collect one's thoughts. *Dhyāna* therefore verbally means self-composure. One who endeavours to tread the path of Zen must ever keep his heart and mind turned inward. But turning one's mind inward, 'Zen' means something quite different from what psychology or philosophy expresses by the word 'introversion.' The philosophical or psychological turning inward of the mind signifies that one tries to observe one's mind or consciousness objectively, while in Zen it means to turn one's mind to that in which there is neither 'inward' nor 'outward.' This is what is meant by self-composure.

[to be continued]

New Diary Leaves

ATMANANDA

(12)

Kishenpur, 2nd July, 1962

Question : It is said that if one thinks a certain thing is so, then it is so. If one does not think so, then it is not so. For example : If I believe *prasād* brings blessing this will be so, but not if I do not believe in it. What then is imagination and what actual truth ?

Mataji : Imagination is one of the activities of the mind. *Prasāda* always carries blessing, whether you believe in it or not. Let me tell you a story : A thief got caught in a heavy rainstorm. He took shelter in a shrine dedicated to *Viṣṇu*. The storm did not subside and so he was obliged to spend the night there. In order to have a dry place on which to lie, he carefully swept all the water out of the shrine and thereby cleaned it. After a short time he died. The messenger of death came to take him away, but the messenger of *Viṣṇu* interfered, claiming his soul, since he had cleaned Lord *Viṣṇu's* temple, although he had not even looked to see whose shrine he was sweeping.

Another story : A man was riding on a very slippery road. Finally the horse stumbled, knocked him down and due to severe injuries he soon died. The messenger of death arrived. But it so happened that his body had fallen on a

*sāligrām** and consequently his soul was carried away by the messengers of *Viṣṇu*.

These two stories illustrate the efficacy of *prasāda*. Whether one believes in it or not, one is blessed by anything that has been consecrated to God. Therefore I always advise people to offer their food to Him before partaking of it. On one occasion someone replied to this advice. "How can meat, fish and eggs be offered to God? This is what I eat." This body said: "At least pray to God with the words: Lord, look with what sort of food you are sustaining my body." The person put this suggestion into practice. After some time she came to me and related that she had fallen ill and that the doctor had forbidden her to eat meat, fish and eggs. She had thus been forced to give them up. This shows how beneficial it is to turn to God. He Himself will see that you are purified.

An old woman: Why is it that I never think I am going to die? I sometimes think of other people's death but not of my own.

Mataji: Because you are afraid of death you avoid thinking about it. But then again, you cannot believe that you will die, because in reality you are immortal. It is only the body that dies.

Vrindaban, 7th February, 1963

Someone who had recently come from abroad and was thinking of joining the Ashram, asked. "When one stays in the Ashram one meets with many difficulties. Are these of any help in one's *sādhana*?"

* A *sāligram* is a piece of stone symbolizing *Viṣṇu*.

Mataji : You should understand that the way people behave towards you, be it pleasant or unpleasant, is the result of your *karma*. Man is born into this world to reap the fruit of his actions in previous lives. The joys and sorrows he experiences are all due to his accumulated *karma* and should be accepted as such. In the worldly as well as in the spiritual life, one should try to meet troubles with equanimity. On every pilgrimage it is but natural that there should be difficulties. They provide the opportunity to develop forbearance, humility, generosity and friendliness towards all. Keep in mind that by treading this path all impediments will gradually vanish.

January, 1963.

The following is the translation of a letter that was received by one of the Ashramites in reply to what she had written to Mataji: "How enviable their lives are! Free from the numerous ills, worries and embarrassments that harass the householder. What a wonderful chance is given to them to perfect themselves, to attain to inward beauty, to make themselves fit for the Supreme Quest. By enduring the difficulties that arise when people from different places, of different upbringing and temperament are thrown together, one's power of forbearance grows strong, the capacity for endurance is developed. Do not pay attention to the shortcomings of others, but try to discover their positive qualities, remembering that it is your way of looking at things (namely of finding fault with people) that causes you pain. All these difficulties are due to your own *karma*. In God's creation the results of one's actions have to be enjoyed and suffered to the minutest detail. Everything is His dispensation. You will have to find Truth! Always

bear in mind that you have to exhaust all kinds of karma and that He is there by cleansing you to make you fit to be united with Him. At all times and for everyone He is. The nearer you draw to him, who is the Fountain of Mercy and Compassion, the more will you experience His Presence. Spend your time in japa, meditation, the study of Scriptures, and so forth. Be truthful in thought, speech and behaviour. Let others do as they please, as their nature dictates them. To the good the world appears good. Be straight and sincere with those with whom you have to work together. By your example others will be changed. Man should be full of generosity and broad mindedness in outlook and conduct. The harmony in the home between husband and wife, between parents and children is based on worldly attraction and affection. But to live in harmony with a large group of people—in that lies real greatness. In whatever circumstances God may place you at any time, cast aside distractions and be ever intent on the kindling of a spiritual atmosphere. The foundation for it is truthfulness in speech and conduct, patience and long suffering. Depend on God in all matters. That all kinds of things should occur on a pilgrimage is but natural, it is the rule of the world.”

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On doing Pranāma.

Kishenpur, 1st July, 1962.

Question : What is the right way of doing *pranāma* ?

Mataji : When doing *pranāma* to a deity or living saint or *mahātmā*, first have *darśana* of his whole figure. Start with the feet and let your eyes wander right up to the head, while

* Obeisance. It is done either by kneeling and touching the ground with one's forehead or by lying on the ground full length, face downwards.

inhaling slowly. Imagine that together with the breath you are absorbing into yourself power from him to whom you are bowing. Then let your gaze descend slowly again to the feet while exhaling; at the same time offer yourself to God with all that is in you, good and bad. Try to pour yourself out completely, without reserve. When your head touches the feet of the deity or saint, his power enters your head. The head is said to be the root of a human being. When his hand is put on your head as you touch his feet, power is transmitted to you through his fingers.

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When copying this, it occurred to me to look up what else I had noted of what Mataji had said on the same subject on other occasions. It is repeated below.

“To do *pranāma* means to dedicate oneself to one’s *Iṣṭa* or to God with all that constitutes one’s nature at the time, be it desirable or undesirable, one’s virtues, vices, capacities, short comings—everything; to offer one’s whole being at His Feet. Then, purified by His touch, to receive oneself back, as it were, as His *prasāda*.

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“*Pranāma* is done to God alone, never to a person, and therefore can be done anywhere at all, for He is all-pervading.”

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“To do *pranāma* means to pour oneself out at His Feet, to become closely bound to them and thereby united to Him, to become His, who alone IS.”

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“Whenever *praṇāma* is being done there is, without fail, a give and take of power. The qualities of the person to whom one does obeisance—be they good or bad—are transmitted to the one who bows, regardless of whether he offers salutation from his heart or merely as an outward gesture. Therefore, whenever you bow down before one spiritually advanced, irrespective of whether you do so with real faith and reverence or not, by virtue of the very act of saluting him, something will flow out from him to you. When one does *praṇāma* to one’s parents it is the expression of genuine love and respect. To bow down to them is therefore beneficial.”

Someone asked :—“Suppose one does obeisance to one who apparently is a great saint but in reality a wicked person, it therefore will have an adverse influence on one’s character. How is one to save oneself from this ?”

Mataji :—By regarding whomever one salutes as the Supreme Being. Everyone, be he good or bad, is but a manifestation of Him : if you remember this and do *praṇāma* to the ONE alone in whatever guise, no harm can come to you.

Question :—So then, how can the evil consequences of bowing to a wicked person be averted ?

Mataji :—By bowing to the Supreme Being alone; *praṇāma* must always be done with this attitude of mind.”



“To do *praṇāma* means to put one’s head where it should be—at the Feet of God. His Lotus Feet are everywhere and therefore one may do obeisance everywhere, remembering the Feet of God. To do *praṇāma* means to open oneself to the Divine Power that is always streaming down on

everyone. Only one usually shuts oneself away from it. To do *praṇāma* means to give one's mind, one's I to him, to surrender oneself to the ONE, so that there should be only HE and not you. Dedicate yourself to Him without holding back anything, with all you possess, your virtues as well as your shortcomings and faults: "While doing *praṇāma* one receives His Power into oneself with the intaking of breath, and when exhaling one should feel that one is breathing out the 'I-ness' and remain as long as possible in *kumbhaka*.¹ When doing *praṇāma* to a living person or to a *vigraha*,² one should always look at the object of one's reverence first, so as to receive the *adhikāra* (the right and capacity) to do obeisance."

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"When this body was engaged in the play of *sādhana*, at times, if any person approached it in a spirit of deep faith, this body would feel as if suffocated. If someone came and touched my feet, I would in return touch his. One day, when Bhaiji did *praṇāma* to me, I also did *praṇāma* to him. Needless to say he bolted away, but where could he go? As quick as lightning I followed him, and catching hold of him I did *praṇāma*. See the play of the Divine Power, he was unable to escape. Yet later again, whether anyone touched my head or my feet, it made no difference at all. Once the feet of this body became sore as the result of being touched by so many people. It also happened that when I was walking someone would catch hold of me and stop me by force in order to do

1 *Kumbhaka*: Suspension of breath.

2 *Vigraha*: Concrete external presence as form. An image consecrated through *mantras* or the adoration of the worshipper becomes the Deity Itself.

obeisance. Then again, at the time of playing the role of a *sādhikā*, it occurred that where people offered flowers at my feet and put a garland round my neck, this body would become as if paralysed. At other times, if a *bhakta* put his head on my feet, this body would feel an electric shock. Once it was as if this whole body were burning. Then also, when someone as much as put his hand on my foot, it became difficult for this body to breathe; yet on other occasions people could touch my feet or seize my hands and it did not matter in the least. Someone would bow down to the ground before this body and it would remain seated quite comfortably, feeling nothing—so much so that someone remarked: 'Look, how grandly she is sitting, just like a *Mahanta*.*' It also happens that people do *pūjā* or *ārati* to this body and someone observes: 'Do you see how she accepts worship and adoration.'

There is only ONE—so then, what is wrong in letting people do as they wish? When one is in duality and does not perceive the ONE in everyone and everything, then to allow people to worship one is wrong."

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Kishenpur, July 23rd, 1963

A consecrated priest of the Roman Catholic Church from France, who has come to India to see for himself what Indian spirituality was like, arrived in Dehradun a couple of days ago in order to meet Mataji. To-day he had an interview with Her. He asked: "What does Mataji consider to be the most essential thing in life?"

* *Mahanta* Head of a religious sect.

Mataji : To try to find out 'who I am ?' To endeavour to know that which has brought into existence the body that I know : The search after God. But first of all one must conceive the desire to know oneself. When one finds one's Self, one has found God; and finding God one has found one's Self, the one *Atmā*.

Question : Are there many people who succeed in this ?

Mataji : Quite a few attain to some perfection (*siddhi*) or liberation (*mukti*). But complete Realization is very, very rare indeed—one in ten millions.

Question : Does Mataji think that she herself has attained to that complete perfection ?

Mataji : (Laughs.) Whatever you believe me to be, that I am.

The Priest (to the translator) : It means that she does think so, otherwise she would have said 'No.'

(To Mataji) : From what moment did you have that Realization ?

Mataji : When was I not ?

Question : You can no doubt see people from within. Can you tell me whether I have advanced on the Path, or am I just a beginner ?

Mataji : Many ask similar questions, but this body does not usually reply to such questions. However, it does occur on occasions, that this body says to someone : 'You have reached such and such a state.' It depends on this body's *kheyāla*.

Question : Does Mataji know about Christianity and what does she think of it ?

Mataji : If Christianity claims a special position for itself and places itself apart, it thereby breaks up all other religions. We recognise Jesus Christ, but within the unity of all religions. He Himself stands above this aloofness.

Question : As a Christian my first duty is the search after God, but also to love my neighbour as myself. There is so much poverty in India. It is my duty to serve the poor. What is Mataji's opinion ?

Mataji : Exactly the same teaching is given by Hinduism. To serve God in every human being is certainly a path to the purification of the mind (*citta suddhi*).

Question : You say 'a path,' while for us it is the only path. Do other ways to perfection exist ?

Mataji : There are innumerable paths, and service is one of them.

Question : Is technical progress an aid in the spiritual life or a hindrance ?

Mataji : In themselves technical inventions are neither good nor bad. At the present time one flies by aeroplane, in olden time people also flew, but in special chariots (*Pushpaka ratha*). This is the ceaseless play of the world. Anything that is of help in one's search is to be adopted, and whatever hinders, to be shunned.

The Priest : Take for instance the invention of printing. Through book people may be helped in their quest.

Mataji : If someone really wants God, and nothing but God, he carries his book in his own heart. He needs no printed books. But there is no harm in making use of modern inventions, provided they are helpful in the quest after God.

Matri Lila

We have to apologise for being unable this time to give the usual detailed account of Mataji's movements and of happenings around her. When Mataji travels as much as she does it is not always possible to receive full reports.

After the Varanasi Ashram was started in 1945, Mataji used to stay there very frequently, often for weeks and months together. But during the last two or three years Mataji has been to Varanasi only rarely and then also for a very few days each time. Last October-November, however, Varanasi was so fortunate as to be blessed by Mataji's presence for a full month. She arrived from Vindhyaçal on October 16th and remained without a break until November 15th. Durga Puja, Luxmi Puja and Divali were celebrated during that period. Durga Puja took place, not in the Ashram, but in Mataji's younger brother's residence which adjoins the Ashram. Many visitors had come from Calcutta and other places and the people of Varanasi availed themselves in large numbers of this rare opportunity of Mataji's *darshan*. Kali Puja on Divali night was celebrated in the Ashram on November 15th and on the 16th morning Mataji entrained for Bombay.

Mataji went to Bombay at the special request of H. H. Rajmata Saheba of Gwalior who had arranged for a *Bhagavata Saptah* for the benefit of the soul of her deceased husband, the late Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior, who died about a year ago. Mataji reached Bombay on November 17th and for three

days she attended the *Saptah* for several hours daily. Mataji stayed for three nights in a Shiva temple inside the compound of the Gwalior Palace, just on the sea side in Worli, Bombay. The Rajmata Saheba's spirit of service and attention to even the minutest details is rather unique. On the 21st evening she left for Ahmedabad where the 14th *Samyam Mahavrata* was held from November 23rd to 29th.

As a rule this yearly function is observed in a place of pilgrimage. This time, however, Ahmedabad was chosen to fulfil the special wish of Late Sri Kantilal Munshaw, an ardent and very active devotee of many years' standing, who unfortunately passed away suddenly about four years ago. Shortly before he died, he had begged of Mataji the privilege to arrange for a *Samyam Saptah* in his own residence in Ahmedabad. Ever since then his family was anxiously waiting for an opportunity to fulfil his wish.

All arrangements were excellent and carefully thought out to the minutest detail. A dainty and artistically decorated little house built of asbestos and matting for Mataji's personal use and a large and elegant pandal equipped with fans, lights and loudspeakers were erected in the compound of the residence of the Munshaw family. Many devotees, who have made it a point to take part in the *Samyam Vrata* every year without fail, had come from considerable distances and the *bhaktas* of Bombay and Gujarat naturally attended in numbers. Among the *vratis* were also two Western guests who had come to India for the sole purpose of spending some time with Mataji, namely, Sri Durga Mata of the Self-Realization Fellowship, who arrived straight from Los Angeles and Melita Maschmann, the well-known German novelist whose article: 'Mataji gives Darshan' appeared in the last August issue of 'Ananda Varta.'

The hardships and inconveniences of camp life that the *vratīs* had to contend with on former occasions in places like Naimisharanya, Sukhta, Rishikesh and so forth, were this time conspicuous by their absence. The *vratīs* were accommodated in private houses in the neighbourhood and those who stayed at a distance of half a mile or more were regularly taken backwards and forwards by cars. As if to make up for this lack of austerity a quite untimely and very severe thunder storm broke out on the third day of the function, just a few minutes after the collective morning meditation had started. Torrential rain began to batter the canvas roof of the pandal and, where it gathered, it burst through the canvas with the vehemence of waterfalls. The fury of the storm seemed to threaten most of all the platform on which Mataji and the Mahatmas had their seats. A large piece of waterproof had to be held above Mataji's head by two tall men to protect her from the water leaking through the roof and, when after a little while the roof was in danger of falling right down over head, a large rafter was brought to support the canvas. Big vessels arrived from the kitchen to catch the rain that had begun to form little pools in several places of the pandal, but the vessels filled up in no time and had to be emptied again and again with the help of buckets. All this activity was carried on in complete silence. Mataji herself sat like a statue until the meditation hour was over. Many *vratīs* followed her example and remained in their places without budging, continuing their *japa* and *dhyāna*, notwithstanding their drenched clothes. Others were forced to move from their seats and to stand up, but perfect calm and quiet was maintained by everyone. Sixteen ceiling fans and many tube lights had been fixed in the roof of the tent and one can easily imagine what might have

happened if even a part of the roof had collapsed and crashed down on the *vratis*. When the short *kirtana* that always follows the meditation had been sung, the announcer requested the congregation to vacate the pandal without delay, as Mataji would not leave the tent until the last person was in safety. As soon as the last *vrati* left the pandal and Mataji also came out the huge pandal collapsed in the twinkling of an eye. It was indeed a miracle that no one was hurt. We could not help remembering the legend in which Sri Krishna is supposed to have held Mount Govardhana over the cowherds to protect them from torrential rains. Here also it seemed obvious that only Divine Grace was responsible for saving the situation.

The *vratis* were then asked to collect on the veranda and in the spacious drawing-room of the house, while Mataji, who never enters the house of a *grihastha*, sat under the porch. The programme proceeded as scheduled: there was no interruption at all. In the evening we were informed that a new pandal was under construction and would be ready by 4 a. m. the next morning. Lo and behold, the pandal was actually ready for use with lights and loudspeakers, and Mataji arrived punctually at that early hour and stayed throughout the *kirtana*, blessing the newly built structure with her presence.

Thus, what might ordinarily have resulted in panic and caused even a serious calamity, became on the other hand a source of inspiration. The whole incident seemed to have been turned into an object lesson of how difficulties and emergencies should be met. A *sādhaka* must regard every difficulty or trouble as an opportunity to develop initiative, courage and powers, as an incentive to make him proceed on his chosen path with even greater determination and vigour.

When, with the erection of a new pandal within 16 hours a serious obstacle had been overcome, the spirit of the function seemed to rise perceptibly. Mataji attended the *satsang* for longer hours; some eminent Mahatmas arrived and enlightened the audience by their brilliant and highly interesting discourses. Chhabi Banerji, the radio artist from Calcutta was among the *gratis* and there was more music this time than on former occasions. Mataji herself sang almost daily for a short while to the delight of everyone present.

No sooner had the *Samyam* week been successfully accomplished, than Mataji began to follow invitations to the houses of devotees. The daily *satsang* was now held in various places of Ahmedabad. Mataji also visited a few schools. One early morning, she gave an hour and a half to *Sarada Vidya Mandir*, a school in which all the pupils join into a religious gathering every morning, even on Sundays. A few songs, exercises and fifteen minutes of silent meditation to very soft instrumental music form their routine starting every single day.

On the night of December 4th Mataji, Didima, Didi and a large party entrained for Bombay, reaching there the next morning. Mataji put up in her pagoda in the compound of Sri B. K. Shah's house. There she usually gave *darsana* for about two hours in the evening and had a comparatively restful time. She also paid a short visit to our Ashram in Poona in the meantime. The devotees of Poona were exceedingly pleased to have her *darsana* after more than an year.

Leaving Bombay on the 19th evening, Mataji alighted in Calcutta on the 21st, staying not in our Ashram at Agarpara on the bank of the Ganges, but in the city proper. For three days she stayed in a newly-built premises inside the compound

of the house of Sri R. K. Banerjee, a devotee of Mataji. After that she shifted to the house of Sri D. K. Nag in south Calcutta where the *Gita Jayanti* was held from December 25th to January 1st. Thousands of people were blessed by Mataji's *darsana* every day. A special cottage was built for Mataji and the arrangements left nothing at all to be desired.

On January 2nd Mataji left for Puri with a limited number of devotees, where she stayed for full one week and had a very good rest after the hectic days in Calcutta. The Ashrama in Puri, just on the bank of the Bay of Bengal, is situated in very beautiful surroundings. Mataji's stay coincided with the annual session of the Indian National Congress in the nearby city of Bhuvaneshwara, the capital of Orissa. Naturally therefore quite a number of big Congress leaders and Ministers took this opportunity of going to Puri and have Mataji's *darsana*.

Mataji returned to Calcutta on the 11th morning and at the earnest and repeated request of Sri M. L. Ghosh stayed for two nights in his house at New Alipore. There also a room had been specially built for Mataji's use sometime back. On the 13th Mataji shifted to our Ashram at Agarpara, where a *Bhagavat Saptah* was observed from 15th to 22nd. Mataji left for Rajgir, in Bihar, on the 23rd and is expected to stay there for about two weeks, from where she is most likely to proceed to Vrindaban. The *Shivaratri* and the *Holi* festivals will probably be celebrated there in her presence.

SHRÉE SHREE ANANDAMAYEE SANGHA

The Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha (Registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860) was called into being in February, 1950, through the efforts of some devotees of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee. They had been feeling the need to form an association in order to bring closer together the ever-growing number of devotees and admirers of Shree Shree Ma and to take over the management and control of the various Ashrams and Institutions which had sprung up in different parts of India & Pakistan.

Objects :

The aims and objects of the Sangha may be briefly summed up as follows :—

1. To promote and diffuse knowledge in philosophy and mysticism and in methods aiming at Self-realisation.
2. To start centres for the benefit of the members of the Sangha, aspiring at spiritual life and practising group *Sadhana*.
3. To organise religious functions and celebrations.
4. To give free medical relief to deserving persons and provide financial aid for medical assistance to *Sadhus* and *Brahmcharis*.
5. To establish and maintain charitable institutions to serve the sick and the needy.
6. To make arrangement in the Ashrams for the residence of *Sadhus*, *Brahmcharis* and *Brahmcharinis* and to provide for their maintenance.

7. To manage, supervise and control all Ashrams, Temples and Institutions belonging to the Sangha.

Management :

The entire management and control of the affairs, funds and properties of the Sangha vest in the Governing Body consisting of forty-one members. It is important to note that Shree Shree Ma is in no way connected with the management or control of the organisation.

The Executive Council, consisting of ten members, works on behalf of the Governing Body, subject to its general supervision and control.

Membership :

All persons, irrespective of nationality, creed or caste, who have attained majority, are entitled to become members of the Sangha provided they make an application in writing in the prescribed form and agree to accept the objects of the Sangha and to abide by its rules.

Ordinary Membership fee Rs. 15.00 per annum and Life Membership fee Rs. 1000.00 once for all. *Sannyasis* and *Brahmacharis* are eligible for Free-Membership.

Finances :

The main sources of income of the entire organisation with all its Branch-Centres are voluntary contributions from generous devotees of Shree Shree Ma. Donations paid to the Sangha are exempted from Income-Tax under Section 88 of the Indian Income-Tax Act, 1961.

Accounts are regularly checked and audited by qualified Auditors and published along with the Annual Reports.

Some Branch-institutions maintained by the Sangha :

1. *Anandamayee Karuna, Varanasi* :—

The main object of this institution is to serve the helpless and the destitute and to give relief to the sick and needy. It has been running since 1951 :

(a) *Charitable Dispensaries*—where daily about 150 patients receive free medical aid.

(b) *Shisu Kalyan*, which distributes daily about 50 bottles of pure milk to the infants of the poorest.

The average annual expenditure of the Karuna comes to about Rs. 6000/- The organisers of the institution hope that financial assistance from benevolent devotees either in the form of lump-sum donations or regular yearly contributions will be readily forthcoming to help them to run and further develop the *Karuna*. Above all, the institution is in urgent need of a separate hospital building with indoor and outdoor departments. Its construction will cost about Rs. 1,50,000/-

2. *Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth,*

Varanasi :—

This residential educational institution for girls represents an attempt to guide the students to an understanding of a woman's duties and to combine instruction according to the modern curriculum with the cultivation of the ancient ideals. The life of the students is planned with a view to harmonious physical, emotional and intellectual unfoldment. The girls live the life of *Brahmcharinis*.

Course of studies : Students are prepared for different examinations of the Varanasi Sanskrit University.

The institution bears the entire expenses of fifteen girls, who are considered fit for Ashram life and are also financially deserving. The expenses of this institution are also met through contributions from persons interested in its aims and ideals.

Detailed enquiries may be made from : The Secretary, Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth, Bhadaini, Varanasi, U. P.

3. *Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Vidyapeeth, Almora* :—

This institution for boys at Almora has been in existence since 1938. It seeks to impart education and training to the young according to the ancient ideal of *Brahmacharya* as adapted to modern conditions. Due attention is paid to ensure the balanced and harmonious development of the students—physical, intellectual and moral.

Education is provided in all subjects for the High School Examination of the Board of Secondary Education, U. P.

Here also the entire expenses of fifteen boys are borne by the institution.

Further enquiries about the Vidyapeeth may be made from : The Secretary, Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Vidya-peeth, Patal Devi, Almora, U. P.