

Ananda Vartā

A quarterly journal dealing mainly with the divine life and teaching of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee and with other religio-philosophical topics



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

Matri Vani

Become drinkers of nectar, all of you—drinkers of the wine of immortality. Tread the path of immortality, where no death exists and no disease.

* * *

Action directed towards God is alone action—all else is worthless, non-action, activity of the path of death. To become absorbed in *Sva kriya*, the action that ends in Self-revelation, is man's duty as a human being.

* * *

Man appears to be the embodiment of want. Want is what he thinks about and want indeed is what he obtains. Contemplate your true being—or else there will be want, wrong action, helplessness, distress and death.

* * *

Only you exist, you and you alone. Truly, you are contained in everything. Again, you are indeed THAT Itself. In all infinity is He and no other—I alone am.

* * *

'There' also one obtains a pension. The pension you earn in this world lasts only as long as you live, while *that*

pension never ends. By what grace of His such a pension is granted is impossible to tell. If anything is to be desired at all, one should desire this Grace.

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To cry out to Him is never in vain. So long as no response is received the prayer must be continued. It is but the Self that calls to Itself, and none other than the Self that realizes Itself. By ceaseless prayer He who is whole (*akhandā*) is found. One's own Self (*Ātmā*), the Life of one's life, the Beloved of one's heart is the one to be eagerly sought. How many times have you not come into the world, craving and experiencing its fleeting joys and sorrows. The prayer, the invocation of Him, by which the opposites of renunciation and enjoyment are blotted out, this invocation has to become most dear.

Teaching without Words

ARNAUD DESJARDINS

(Translated from French)

Why not state it plainly right at the beginning : from the first day that I met Ma Anandamayi I have had the conviction that I was not in the presence of a human being, however extraordinary, but of a Being of an altogether different order. This happened in September 1959. Since then I have stayed with Ma in 1961, 1962, 1963 and also in 1964, & 65 and every time I have again felt equally certain about this fact. How is one to describe this stupendous impression ? The words 'divine' and 'supernatural' come to my mind. But I falter before the mystery which they represent and hardly dare use them.

I am a European with a Christian upbringing engaged in my profession and family life. Apart from a few colloquial words, I do not understand either Hindi or Bengali, and Mataji does not speak English. With the exception of about one hour in all of conversations with her that I was granted with the help of interpreters, I have thus never understood what she said or replied to questions. And yet have I for her sake undertaken four journeys to India and spent eight months close to her, sometimes under rather difficult conditions. This proves the power of her influence even over one to whom the Hindu tradition in which she is rooted is foreign.

For years the photos of Sri Ramana Maharshi have—for me as well as for many others in Paris—been a real teaching. A few minutes of attentive silence in front of his picture—and his sublime look would teach me more than the reading of the best book. (I am speaking of the only real knowledge, the one which transforms those who acquire it.)

I have never missed the opportunity of meeting a Frenchman who has had his *darśana*. It is through these living witnesses that I conceived the overwhelming desire—more powerful than all other desires—to meet a Sage, a liberated Being, one who has realized his Self, a *Jivanmukta*.

I expected infinitely much from this meeting, and the discovery of Mataji has certainly not disappointed me. Since then I travelled to Kanhangad to be with Swami Ramdas and Krishnabai. Those also were luminous days of intense living. The *rajasic* and *tamasic* impressions of Paris have not been able to wipe out the cherished memory of those days. But 'Papa'* spoke English and his replies, his parables and remarks, so full of humour, would give to the ever insatiable mind the only valuable sustenance. The part that Swami Ramdas played in the lives of so many in the west can be explained even to our modern mentality, enslaved though it be by rational logic.

What, on the other hand, appears to me most amazing is the function of a Master, of a spiritual preceptor that Mataji has taken on towards a French visitor who has been and truly remains her pupil. Above all I should say she has gradually made me understand the meaning of the Gospels and of the message of Christ. Thanks to Mataji, the word of Jesus has now for me become a word of Life. And she also has opened for me the door to that universal treasure-house called '*Bhagavad Gita*' and has made me discover Sri Krishna.

Nothing can be further removed from the life at Paris which I lead, working for the cinema and the television, than the atmosphere of Mataji's Ashrams. Hindu orthodoxy, the observance of caste rules, the importance attached to rites and ceremonies may seem to have nothing whatsoever in common with the problems that confront modern man in

* Swami Ramdas.

the worldly and materialistic life of a European metropolis. Nevertheless, I can bear witness to the fact that the teaching of Ma, even though it has been communicated without words, has completely transformed my life in Paris. Intellectually she has given me the conviction that a metaphysical perspective exists that is unique and universal, a 'Philosophia Perennis' that teaches us that all our problems have already been solved although we are not aware of it : "He is all in all, He alone is." But she also teaches us that Realization must be all-embracing. However far away I may feel from her *ashrams*, from the purity of those white robes, from the beauty of the *kirtans*, amidst the violence, the contradictions and disturbances of professional life in Paris, Mataji or at least what she stands for is always with me, within me. And I remember the famous words : "*Kurukshetra dharmakshetra...*" and also : "Act in the play of the world" (Yoga Vasista) and I know who is the doer and who is not.

It seems to me that for foreigners the relationship between the master and his disciple is the most interesting feature of Hinduism at the present time. That some people think that the entire significance of their lives has changed because they have had the *daršana* of Ramana Maharshi, Ramdas or Ma Anandamayi is a certainty which can neither be proved nor contradicted. One may verify the recounting of a miracle; one may—in the name of Christian orthodoxy—be surprised to hear Beings other than Christ say : 'The Father and I are one'; one may be flabbergasted at the social phenomenon which the glory of a woman represents who does nothing else but teach us to seek God. But the shock of her gaze and the meaning of the slightest of her gestures is a personal experience. Those who have seen have believed. And those who have understood the words of Life Eternal have taken to the Path.

What ally does Ma's Realization find in us that vibrates in tune with her ? At what depth of our being are we touched ? All those whose experiences I have compared with

mine have had the same impression of certainty. That is how it is and nothing is to be added. All the rest has always been conditioned by 'buts' and 'ifs', by 'moreovers' and 'thens.' Face to face with the Master there is only certainty and clarity and that extraordinary experience of a life beyond time, which liberates from all fear. Nevertheless it is not easy to be with *Mataji*. None of our old tricks work and we are all the time exposed and denuded. Never before have I been so divinely happy as in the presence of Ma Anandamayi, Yet also have I never before been so ill at ease and so utterly shattered. I knew that a painful transformation had to be wrought within me : I had come for that purpose, and I knew that this transformation had to be accomplished with my consent and active co-operation. It is not enough to remain passive in the presence of a sage : one has to lend, to deliver oneself voluntarily to his influence.

"For none is it easier than for the flies to follow this body wherever it may go", *Mataji* has said, referring to herself, "but that does not enlighten them." *Mataji* asks us to work unceasingly and to make tremendous and sustained efforts, so that these very efforts may one day be transcended—and then comes effortless being, the spontaneity of one who has in the very midst of the 'battle field' attained to inner freedom beyond action and reaction.

For years before my first journey to India I asked myself the question : "And if it were true ?" How can one help posing this question with a trembling hope, when one hears about the great Sages in India who "by a single look can change a whole life." When one reads accounts, describing their supernatural presence that is a living witness to a world quite different from the one in which we believe ourselves imprisoned ? The reply, the certainty : "Yes, it is true !" I found in the *darśana* of Ma Anandamayi. At times her eyes gaze into the far distance and her expression is of a supernal beauty which defies all description. What does she see at such moments ? What is the significance of

the presence among us of a Being so totally different ? Her face is so powerful that, week after week, lost in the crowd, I was unable to detach myself from it; so irresistible was the impression of intensity and fulness that I felt with my whole being. In the presence of Ma, at last something actually was happening in my life. And I have gained the certainty that everything is possible for her.

But one has to admit that the almost miraculous aspect of Ma, the attraction she exercises over thousands and thousands of people misleads certain persons who have observed this to see in it more a manifestation of the abnormal than of the supernormal. My gratitude to Ma is even greater for what I feel I receive from her in Paris than for the extraordinary moments experienced in India. I do not seek any explanation: The oneness of the Self, the awakening of the inner Guru are enough. But the fact remains : after returning to Europe from my first trip to India my relationship to my own surroundings of which I had suffered for so long changed radically. I have understood that our being conditions our life. I know that by the grace of Ma Anandamayi and Swami Ramdas something has been transformed in my being. Of course, I have kept on the mantelpiece of the room in which I spend most of my time the photo of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, the first picture of a sage I possessed and that I looked at so much for years together. It was this photo that made the desire to visit India grow in me. And at times I have the feeling that it is Ramana Maharshi who has guided me to Ma Anandamayi.

Near her I have found the Life that is beyond all created things, yet is also in all of them, and against which no power in the world, no difficulty, no tribulation or anxiety can prevail. Since my first visit to Ma at Varanasi, I have discovered the Life in myself. I can understand that certain people negate the existence of God or of the Atma. But Life ? Who can object to opening himself to Life and to letting himself be transformed by It ? The Christ said : "I

am the Life. I shall give Life to all who come to me.” I know that Ma is Life and that she gives Life to those who come to her. Why then should it be difficult to call her ‘Mother’, to call her ‘Ma’ ? For not only does a mother protect and guide, scold and comfort, a mother is first and foremost she who gives birth, who brings you to life. And I know—and there has not been a week during these five years that has not brought confirmation of this fact—the fact that my life actually started in September 1959 in Varanasi. A life into which I have no doubt been born with the *samskāras* of my existence before that time and which is wrapt up in impurities, fears and contradictions but, which has revealed itself—once for all—as being in truth beyond those limitations.

How many times in France has one not put me the question : “What have you received from this woman saint ?” One expects a reply, I know, that will conform to what one reads in books about the *chakras*, *kundalini*, or *nirvikalpa samādhi*. But the answer is much simpler, and for myself at least, much more significant. “What I have received from this woman saint is myself. I was dead and I have come back to Life. I was born of the flesh and I am born of the Spirit.” Whatever may be my sin and my impurity, now and for ever, Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi you are my mother and I am your son. Jai Guru, jai Ma.

Mothers Infinite Karuna*

“SIDHU”

The incident related below took place about 22 years ago in the month of March. The exact dates on which it occurred have been forgotten, but the incident itself is ever green in the memory of the person who has had the great good fortune of witnessing it.

Mother was at Benares. She had been entreated to visit a large school and in her usual kind way had consented to go. Mother and her then very small party arrived at the institution in the cool of the evening. Through a lovely garden lit with coloured electric bulbs she was taken to a beautifully decorated rostrum. We all sat down around her and then some people began to sing kirtan.

Abhay and I were sitting right at Mother's feet. Abhay carried a small roll containing Mother's bedding, while I held Mother's slippers in my hand. Suddenly, when the kirtan was in full swing, Mother got up from her dais. I at once put the slippers down and Mother thrust her feet into them. Then she walked swiftly out the pandal, Abhay and myself following her. Mother sped away like the wind and we actually had to run to keep pace with her. The garden was very large and the entrance quite a distance away, but we found ourselves at the gate in a few seconds. A gentleman was just alighting from his car. He had evidently come for Ma's *darśana*. He seemed astonished to see Ma walk away with only two companions. He folded his hands and asked what we were doing at the gate. Mother appeared to be in a great hurry. She at once requested him to take her to the railway station. He hesitatingly opened the door of the car and Ma got in without delay, asking us to

* *Karuna* Compassion.

to get in 'quickly, quickly.' The door was shut behind us and the gentleman drove us to Benares Cant. Station. As soon as we arrived there, he asked Mother where she wished to go. "To Sarnath!" was the reply. The gentleman explained that there was no train to Sarnath until the next morning, but Mother insisted. So he went to purchase three first class tickets to Sarnath, while we sat in the waiting-room. He had hardly returned with the tickets when a train steamed into the station. Mother stepped into an empty first class compartment and we followed, while the gentleman kept on murmuring that this was a mail train which would not stop at Sarnath. However, Mother paid no attention to his remonstrances and soon the train left the station.

Within a few minutes it stopped (as happens at times when there is no "all clear" signal). Mother opened the door of the compartment and got down. To us she said : "Come down, come down quickly !" Abhay jumped down with Mother's bedding roll in his hand, but I felt afraid to follow suit as it was pitch dark and I could not see anything. Moreover, being rather bulky, athletic feats such as jumping down from a train were beyond me. While I was hesitating, Mother stretched out her hand. The train gave a whistle and in desperation I risked the leap. It was not a moment too soon, for the train puffed away immediately. We now found that we had alighted near Sarnath Station and that we were standing between railway tracks. Mother asked us whether we knew the way to the then newly built Birla Dharmasala. Neither I nor Abhay had ever been there before.

Mother then started walking and we followed her. We were plunged into complete darkness, with not a single light showing anywhere. We had no idea where Ma was leading us. Eventually, after covering quite a distance, we came to a large gate. The doorkeeper told us that this was the entrance to Birla Dharmasala. Mother went in and we after her. It was quite dark inside the Dharmasala also, but Mother advanced unhesitatingly in a certain direction. She seemed

to know exactly where she wanted to go. She passed along a large verandah and pushing open a door, entered a room. A small lantern was burning there. The room was quite empty, except for a couple of wooden couches placed against the walls. Mother walked straight to one of those and with an indescribable tone of voice compounded of laughter, tenderness and all the compassion in the world, she exclaimed: "Here I am, here I am!" We now detected the figure of a woman who sat up sobbing loudly. Mother put her arms about her, repeating: "Here I am, here I have come—don't cry anymore!" We ventured closer and recognized in the weeping woman Maharattan.* She gradually gained control over her desperate crying and we all proceeded to the roof of the building and sat there for some time. Soon Ma's party arrived from Benares. The gentleman who had brought us to the station had reported to Didi where Ma had gone and then conveyed her and the others to Sarnath.

Mother was in wonderful spirits, laughing, talking and joking with Maharattan. We had a very late dinner and then all went to sleep on the roof near Mataji.

It transpired later that Maharattan had come from some far off place to see Ma. On reaching Benares she had been told that Mataji was at Sarnath. Without enquiring further, she had hired a tonga and proceeded to Sarnath, only to find that Ma was not there, nor was she even expected there. In the meanwhile the tonga had left and there was no train to take her to Benares. So she was stranded for the night all alone in a huge, empty dharmasala. To make matters worse she was running a temperature and feeling quite ill. When she had been crying desperately for Mataji, *Karunamayi Ma* suddenly appeared in her room. This is only one of the innumerable examples of Mother's loving kindness and mercy.

* See Ananda Varta, February 1965 issue, p. 206.

Old Diary Leaves

ATMANANDA

On Bereavement.

In summer 1948, a lady from South India had come to Kishenpur with a party from Rishikesh. The lady seemed absentminded and was obviously deeply distressed. She asked for an interview with Mataji. She said : "First my husband passed away. I was upset, but I could bear it, because I had my only daughter, a lovely, talented child. When she was 12 she fell ill and died. Since then I cannot find peace of mind. She was all I had, so beautiful and promising. When she had hardly begun her life she was torn away from me. Why did she have to leave me? Why? I cannot understand.

"For some time I worked in an orphanage. I thought, if I have no child, let me at least serve motherless children. I got attached to those orphans and they to me. But my heart is still broken.

"My guru says : 'Go on with your *sadhana* and gradually you will find consolation.' But I cannot concentrate. All the time I am pining for my darling. Nothing appeals to me. I want my child back. What am I to do?"

Mataji : First of all : Sorrow comes from the sense of 'I' and 'mine.' You say ; 'My daughter died' and so you grieve. But who are you? Find out who you are! She was the fruit of your body. As long as you are identified with the body, there must be pain, it is inevitable. So many boys and girls die, young and beautiful, yet it does not affect you deeply. You only *think* that this one child was your own and you have lost her.

Then there is another thing to be learnt : all sorrow is due to the fact that one keeps apart from God. When

you are with Him, all pain disappears. Let your thoughts dwell on Him. Remember that your daughter is now with Him. The more you think of God, the nearer will you be to her. If you must shed tears, cry for Him.

Just as some blossoms fall off without bearing fruit, so some human beings die young. For a while God had entrusted the child to your care and then He took her back unto Himself. Now He Himself is looking after her. One day you will go there too. Until then keep your mind on God and you will also be with your child.

How do you know that your daughter is not much better off where she is now? How much trouble and distress life has brought you! Would you have desired a similar fate for her?

Then again, on the level where there is only one Self, there is no question of birth and death. Who is born? Who dies? All is One Self.

The same mind that identifies itself with the body can be turned towards the Eternal, and then the pain the body experiences will be a matter of indifference. Since the body is bound to get hurt at times, there must be suffering as long as one is identified with it. This world oscillates endlessly between happiness and sorrow, there can be no security, no stability here. These are to be found in God alone. How can there be both, the world and the ONE? On the way there seem to be two, God and the world, but when the Goal has been reached there is only One. What the worldly life is you have seen. Who is yours? Only your Guru, your *Iṣṭā*, in Him you will find everything and everyone.—I am your child.

Several months later the same lady came to Varanasi for Mataji's *darśana*. She looked younger and happier. "I have got over my grief," she told us. "I am now reconciled to my fate. When Mataji said: 'I am your child,' her voice was my daughter's voice. My hair stood on end and I had a wonderful feeling which I cannot describe in words. From

that moment the wound in my heart began to heal. I have gained an inner conviction that my child is happy where she is. I am finding ever greater peace and am able to attend to my meditation. Now I am planning to go on a pilgrimage to Badri and Kedarnath. I only wish all bereaved mothers could be comforted as I have been."

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Question : Is it good to repeatedly call a dead person by his name, to keep his picture and remember him ?

Mataji : If one mourns for the person, regretting the loss of worldly enjoyment one has had together, it is bad, both for the departed and for oneself. If, on the other hand, the remembrance be an act of worship, as for example, since it is a wife's duty to regard her husband as God, she thinks of the deceased and keeps his picture with this attitude of mind, it may well be beneficent both for her dead husband and herself.

A couple once came to this body, who had lost their only daughter just a few days before she was to be married. They were broken-hearted. The girl's mother started wearing widow's dress and her husband also deeply grieved after his child and gave up many things he had been accustomed to enjoy. They had a life-size picture of their daughter made and lived only in their memory of her. Before eating they would place the food before the picture, and so forth.

This body told them : "Just as some flowers blossom and fall off without bearing fruit, so your child passed away young and pure, without having formed any attachment. Look upon her as the servant of the Lord, keep a picture of Him near hers, burn incense in the room and set it apart for worship and meditation."

Neither the husband nor the wife were religiously inclined, but by taking their loss in this manner they gradually developed in that direction. This body then said

to them. "Your daughter has become your Guru, it is she who has made you turn towards God." This is a case where a whole family was benifited.

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The following true story Mataji sometimes relates to bereaved mothers who refuse to be comforted and keep on crying :

When this body stayed in Bengal, it used to visit Tarapith about once a year. One day a woman came, weeping at the loss of her daughter who had died at the age of seventeen or eighteen on the eve of her marriage. The woman had a younger daughter, aged about ten or eleven. This body enjoined on both of them to turn to God for comfort and the little girl also started practising *japa* regularly every morning and evening with the help of a rosary. She became very fond of this practice, and even when she fell ill would keep her rosary under her pillow and continue her *japa* with great regularity. But as fate would have it, she succumbed to the illness and died. When this body returned to Tarapith the following year, the woman was again in mourning. Having lost both her daughters, she was naturally disconsolate. I told her that her grief would react on her children, keeping them tied to the earth instead of letting them proceed unhampered on their upward path. After much talking she finally promised to try her best to remain cheerful. She made a sincere effort, but often she could not help longing for her children. One evening she was thinking dolefully : "Not even in dreams am I allowed to see my little darling." That night she dreamt of her younger child, who appeared to her dressed in white, with a wreath of flowers in her hair, looking radiant and beautiful. She motioned to her mother to follow her and led her to a place where many girls of her age were singing the praises of God.

All were dressed like herself and decorated with flowers. A venerable old man with a long white beard, who looked like a Rishi, seemed to instruct them. They all appeared full of joy and peace. When the woman awoke from her dream, she had a distinct feeling that her little daughter was happy where she was and she made up her mind not to disturb her. However, after some time the lonely woman started pining again for her lost children. One night her husband had a strange dream. His younger daughter came and put her arms round him, saying : "Mother is so sad and lonely without me. I can't bear her crying anymore, I am coming back to you". In his dream the father took the child into his arms and placed her into her the mother's lap. Ten months later a baby girl was born to them. When I came to Tarapith the next year, the woman brought the tiny infant and placed her before this body. The child grew up and is now a woman. In this way it may happen that the grief of their loved-ones drags souls back to this world, but it is better to leave them free to progress in their own way on their upward path. God alone knows what is best for everyone and provides for it.

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A couple who had recently lost their son came to Mataji and asked her, what was the sense of a child dying before he had lived his life.

Mataji : Everything happens according to one's *karma*. It was your *karma* to serve your son for a few years, and his *karma* to accept your service. When it was over, God took him away. It is all God's Play. Some flowers fall off without bearing fruit. Similarly the child was given to you by God for a time. This is the nature of the world. There is bound to be loss and bereavement.

The bereaved father : From where is one to take the strength to bear all these troubles and tribulations ?

Mataji : Remember that the *Ātmā* of the child and your own *Ātmā* are one. The *Ātmā* was neither born nor will it die, it eternally IS. The body, like a worn garment, falls away. Endeavour not to be attached to the body and not to cry for it. Cry for God alone. Remember Him, repeat His holy Name, contemplate Him, and regularly read scriptures such as the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the *Bhāgavata*, the *Rāmāyana*, and so forth and you will be comforted. Your grief will become much lighter. Let your life be a dedicated life. The householder's ashram is also an ashram. Blows come in order to remind you to turn your mind to that which is Real. Someone who had lost all his six sons found much solace by reading the *Bhāgavata*.

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Two ladies from America came to Mataji. One of them told us that she had enjoyed an extremely happy life, adored by her husband and her children, until about one year ago her husband suddenly passed away. In a moment fate had destroyed her happiness and she now felt at a complete loss, wishing that she could have left this world instead of her husband, who had been a renowned surgeon. Mataji said to her : "We must always remember that we are God's children and that it is therefore right for us to contemplate Him and to try to realize Him. God does not give sorrow. He is the one Father, Mother, Friend, Beloved and Husband. But there certainly is sorrow in this world. A beloved person leaves us and we are grief-stricken. As long as we keep in mind that we are God's children and turn our thought to Him, we shall be happy. But when we forget Him, He sometimes gives us a slap to remind us of Him, just as a fond mother at times slaps her child for his own good. 'World' (*duniya*) means duality, the world consists of the pairs of opposites and so there is happiness and sorrow alternating. Without searching the Supreme none can find lasting peace and bliss. Your husband's body is no more, but his Self

(*Atmā*) is one with you eternally. He is not separate from you. Just as you discard worn clothes and get new ones, so the body has to die in order that you may realize THAT which is eternal and can never be lost. Your husband has not really left you, his body only is gone, so that you may lose your attachment and find the real Self in which you are one with him.

It is natural for human beings to weep. If you shed tears for worldly things it only increases your attachment to them, and more and more impurity accumulates. But by crying for God all impurity is washed away. You should ever keep in mind that God has removed your husband's body, to show you the path of *Brahmacharya*, so that you may realise your husband's true Being and thereby know that you are one with him eternally. Happiness and misery are of the mind. When the mind merges into the One, then you have reached beyond them. In order to find true and lasting happiness, man has to contemplate the Supreme. Happiness that depends on anything, be it a person, money, comforts, fame, cannot endure. If we are deprived of the comforts we are used to, we feel troubled. But if we accept cheerfully whatever comes, we shall always be at ease.



The Great Work

MARK HALPERN

In the abstract and symbolical writings of the illumined alchemists and occultists repeated emphasis is placed on the necessity of completing what they term "The Great Work." Another phrase often encountered in those profound writings is "The Philosopher's Stone."

Like the teachings of the Bible, the real meaning of the words of the great sages and adepts becomes apparent only after we have found the key by which we can apply to ourselves the significance lying between and behind the words. For just as it is true that the Kingdom of Heaven and the Peace That Passeth All Understanding are to be found nowhere else but within each one of us, so is it true that the Great Work must be accomplished and the Philosopher's Stone discovered by each individual within his own being.

What, then, is the Great Work? We of the modern world are inclined to pride ourselves on the great works of our scientific and industrial enterprise. And it is no mere accident that the genius of the Occident, particularly in this century has centered its energies on objective expression producing material works on a grand scale. For Providence in these latter times has been directing man to develop his latent creative faculties into a dynamic genius that can be efficiently used on all planes of expression. But so wholeheartedly have the people of the Occident embraced the opportunity to objectify their inner creative potentialities, that they are in danger of going "overboard" in that direction; just as the people of the Orient have gone to the other

extreme of becoming too subjective and introspective, to the extent of growing apathetic toward the creative opportunities in the world about them.

But, getting back to our main line of thought, it should be evident to us that the great works of our modern materialistic civilization have nothing to do with "The Great Work" of the illumined seers and alchemists. The inspiring and oftentimes amazing grandeur of the great works of man, created outside of himself, are only transitory and evanescent. They will inevitably return to dust—whether they be the Empire State Building and the Taj Mahal, or the Great Pyramid at Gizeh and the mysterious brooding ancient figure of the silent Sphinx. All are of the dust, and to dust they shall return.

Not only these wondrous monuments of man's architectural genius are doomed to vanish from the earth as though they never had existed. Even the immortal artistic masterpieces of Michelangelo, Davinci, Raphael, El Greco, Veronese, Rodin—all are destined eventually to disintegrate into oblivion. For a day will arrive when even this very planet of ours shall have become nothing but cosmic dust again, scattered to the four corners of the infinite Universe. Then we shall inhabit other mansions in the Father's House of Cosmic Space.

But when all that is gone, when all the boasted great works of man shall have returned to the formless substance from which they came, man himself, in his Deathless Eternal Spirit, shall still exist. For throughout ages of arduous labour—the labour of his soul on the Great work within himself—he will finally complete the transmutation process whereby he was able to fashion his radiant vesture of Divine Consciousness out of his noblest thoughts and deeds while in the travail and bondage of earthly experience.

As a reward for the consummation of the Great work, he is given the White Stone—the Philosopher's Stone. It is

a reward unasked and unsought by the selfless illumined soul. It comes as a gift of grace—the rightful inheritance of him who has conquered the lower nature. Needless to say, the White Stone or the Philosopher's Stone is no stone of a tangible kind. It is the symbol for the spiritual powers or faculties gained by the soul who has successfully brought to fruition the Great Work. In the middle ages, these powers and faculties were veiled in the guise of the magic potency to turn baser metals into gold. And so, while the spiritual alchemists of that day were in reality engaged in the Great Work of inner transmutation, the people around them were led to believe they were seeking a way to turn baser metals into gold. Otherwise they would not have been permitted to continue with their high endeavour by the ecclesiastical authorities who at that time countenanced no individual regenerative work outside of their own jurisdiction.

And so, the Great Work is forever going on in each of us. It progresses invisibly and silently, without sign of workman or sound of hammer. While the objective personality is engrossed in what it often considers to be its all-important affairs in the outer world, it oftentimes forgets, or may not know consciously, that the Supreme Work of the ages goes steadily on in the soul's innermost sanctuary, to that glorious Day of days, in which there will be the full unveiling of the Apotheosis of our own being...

Perhaps it is because there is often no definite outer proof of spiritual progress, that people cynically turn their energies into physical and objective expression, where they are able to perceive the evidence of their handiwork and creative abilities with their senses. But therein lies the great paradox of human life. What we perceive with our physical senses, will some day, soon or late, pass away as though they never were. On the other hand, the Great work within, invisible and soundless though it may be to our senses, is the one Supreme Eternal Reality which will endure forever and ever.

For we are all of the same deathless Essence as our God. We are all engaged in the Great Work of weaving our radiant immortal vesture of Divine Consciousness, in which we shall serve throughout the universe, rising from glory unto glory. That is our Divine Heritage and Lofty Destiny, achieved unto perfect fruition and realization by the soul-magic of the Great Work....

The Quintessence of the Yoga Vasistha.

DR. B. L. ATREYA, M. A., D. LITT.

Padmabhushan, Knight Commander, Darshanacharya

One of the strangest facts in the wide-spread movement of the revival of the ancient Indian religio-philosophical thought is the neglect of the study of the great Sanskrit work, the *Yogavāsistha*. "The *Yogavāsistha Rāmāyana*", rightly remarks Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, "was once one of the most widely read books in the country and...it greatly influenced general philosophical thought. Though a *Vedānta* work of the highest order, it has a place of its own in the history of Indian spiritual philosophy and cannot be described in any sense as affiliated to the school of thought associated with the name of *Śankarāchārya*. It is unfortunate that a work of such monumental grandeur, the like of which is hardly to be met with even in Sanskrit literature, should have been allowed to remain obscure and neglected so long." (Editorial Note to B. L. Atreya, *Vāsistha Darśanam*, The Prince of Wales Saraswati Bhavana Texts, No. 64, 1936). In our opinion the *Yogavāsistha* is a more comprehensive, deep, systematic and literary philosophical work of ancient India than any other known to us. Its philosophical doctrines can favourably be compared with the most up-to-date philosophical thought of the West (Vide B. L. Atreya : *Yogavāsistha* and Modern Thought, 1934). Here an attempt is made to place before the reader an epitome of philosophical doctrines of this great work.

Discontent

The *Yogavāsistha Maharāmāyana* embodies the teachings of the sage Vāsistha to his illustrious pupil, Prince Ramachandra of the ancient Kingdom of Ayodhya. Rama represents the unenlightened individual awakened only to the miserable plight of life and eager to find a way out

of it, and Vasistha the enlightened teacher who knows all that is worth knowing and who has attained the Peace of Perfection. Rama has begun to reflect over the misery and sufferings of life and feels dissatisfied with it. This dissatisfaction finds expression in his conduct. Being asked by his teacher why he was not happy, he gives expression to his ideas in such words:—“What happiness can there be in this world, where every one is born to die ? (1, 12. 7). Everything here comes into existence only to pass away. There is no stability in our achievements (1. 12. 8). How foolish are we ! Knowing the vanity of the affairs of life, we continue to be whole-heartedly engaged in them like fools. (1. 12. 12). Even knowing well that there cannot be real and lasting joy in our life, we foolishly continue to hope for it. (1. 12. 13). Accumulation of wealth does not make us happy, but miserable. Like a poisonous creeper, it hides within it the possibility of our ruin. (1. 13. 10). Life is as evanescent as an autumnal cloud, as the light of an oilless lamp, and as ripples on the surface of water. (1. 14. 6). Our mind is always restless like a caged lion. (1. 16. 10). It falls to its object as passionately as a bird to its prey, but like a baby with his toys, it gets soon disgusted with it. (1. 16. 22). Desire is as fickle as a monkey. It is never satisfied with the object which is already in hand, but jumps to others which are beyond our reach. The more it is satisfied the intenser it grows. (1. 17. 29). There is nothing desirable in the body. It is an abode of disease, a source of all kinds of agonies and subject to wrinkles. (1. 18. 34). Childhood is characterised by weakness, cravings, incapacity to speak, lack of knowledge, longing for unattainable things, fickleness of mind and helplessness. (1. 19. 2). Youth comes like a flash of lightning, soon to be inevitably followed by the roars of the agonies of old age. (1. 20. 8). It is pleasing only for some time, but soon turns into an evil. (1. 23. 10). Bitterness of pain and suffering is the consequence of the pleasures of youth, which are pleasant only at their commencement. (1. 21. 36). The poor rat of youth is soon devoured by the cat of old age, which takes delight in consu-

ming the flesh of the body. (1. 22. 25). At last, the cruel hand of death removes everything. It allows the creature only to ripen for its own use, as it were. (1. 26. 6). Of what value is the body, the pleasure, the wealth and kingdom, when early or late, death shall put an end to all ? (1. 18. 36). Is there any direction where there is no suffering ? Is there any creation which is not transitory ? Is there any view which is free from error ? And is there any transaction which is free from deception ? (1. 27. 31).

Rama, then, asks his teacher, earnestly : "Is there any better state of existence which may be absolutely free from suffering, ignorance and grief and full of undecaying joy ? (1. 30. 11). What is the spell by which the disease of worldliness—the source of all kinds of suffering may be cured ? (1. 30. 24). What is the method, the science, or the way, by which this life may be freed from undesirable consequences ? (1. 31. 6). Initiate me into the Science of a perfectly happy life. (1. 31. 17).

Vasistha is very much pleased to know that Discrimination and Discontent, which are the source of all spiritual attainments have dawned upon the mind of his young pupil and that he keenly aspires to know the secret of Blissful Existence. He assures him that there is such a Science which enables a man to be free from suffering and pain, and this science is the Science of the Self. Self-knowledge is the cure of all suffering and the source of happiness. This Science was taught to him by *Brahmā*, the Creator of the world, at the very commencement of Creation. Having taught the Science of the Self to him, the Creator asked him to live in the *Bhāratavarsha* (India) and to teach it to those who may be the proper and suitable recipients of it. The main principles of the Science of the Self taught to Rama by Vasistha are given below.

The Source of Knowledge

Direct Cognition or Intuition (*Pratyak-sānubhava*) is the

only and ultimate source of all our knowledge, be it of an external object, Self of God. There is no other *Pramāya* (source) through which new knowledge comes to us. (III.42.15; 11. 19. 16; Vib. 52. 29). If anything is not directly experienced by anybody, it cannot be made known to him by any description of it by others. The taste of sugar, for example, cannot be communicated to one who has never himself tasted it. (V. 64. 53). Others can give us only a hint or partial knowledge of things unknown to us by way of analogy and illustrations (*Upamāna* and *driṣṭānta*). (11. 18. 51).

Knowledge presupposed Idealistic Monism

Any relation between two things presupposes an identity behind them. Without a common substance immanent in both of them, two things cannot be related either as cause and effect or as subject and object. The knowledge of things around us and the relation of cause and effect obtaining between things of the world, therefore, leads us to a Monistic view of the Universe. The fact of knowledge further presupposes that the object of our knowledge cannot but be a modification of consciousness itself (i.e. an idea *Kalpanā*). For, knowledge can have for its object only that which is homogeneous with it in nature. All objects, therefore, along with the perceiving subjects are ideas of our consciousness (III.121.37.42 53 ; Vib. 25.14.7 : Vib. 38.9; Vib. 101.54).

Idealism

The most outstanding feature of the philosophy of the *Yogavāsistha* is idealism. Idealism is the keystone or the basic principle of its entire philosophy. The world of experience, with all things, time, space and natural laws, is a creation of Mind, i.e. idea or *kalpanā*. Everything is created by the mind just in the same way as the objects of dream are. Time is only a relation of succession of ideas. It is relative to the activity of the mind. An age may be experienced as a moment and a moment as an age in accordance with the moods of the

mind. A moment of waking experience is often experienced as years in dream. Space is also relative to the mind and its ideas. Within a span the mind can have the experience of miles, and miles can be experienced as a span only. Time and space together with objects cease to exist for a yogi who passes into a thoughtless trance. The so-called Laws of Nature (*niyati*) are also ideas of uniform order of precedence and sequence. They hold good only so far as the ideas are manufactured in the furnace of the mind in the same order. But there is no reason why a different order may not be introduced by the mind. The stability and persistence of the world are also ideas of the mind and as they are as much imagined by the mind as the stability and persistence of the dream-world. (Vib. 210.11 ; IV.47.48,59 ; V,48, 49 ; Vib 42, 16 ; Vib. 56.3 ; Via. 61.29, Via.37, 21 ; Via 148,21 ; III.56.37 ; III.13.36 ; III.60,20.21.22.23.26 ; III. 103.13 ; Vib, 73, 19,20).

Similarity between Waking and Dream Experience

There is little or no difference between the waking and dream experience. Both are alike in their nature, as long as each lasts. From the standpoint of a higher realization, no difference is felt between the two. The difference is, however, felt from the standpoint of each of them. The waking man considers the dream-experience as unreal and visionary, while to the subject of the dream, its own world is really real, and the waking experience is unreal and non-existent. When a person is on the death bed, to him the entire life-experience of years passes away as a moment's dream. As hundreds of dreams are experienced within the waking time of our life, so hundreds, nay, thousands of waking-dreams are experienced by the Self in its trans-migratory journey. As we can recollect the many dreams that we have experienced throughout our life, so the Enlightened ones (*Siddhas*) can remember the many waking dreams experienced by them during their past lives (IV.29.11.12 ; Vib.34, 29,30 : IV.18.47).
(to be continued)

Tat Mukhi*

“GAURIDASI”

“*Yā devī sarva bhūteshu smṛiti rūpena samsthita
Namastasyei, namastasyei; namastasyei, namo namaḥ.*”†

Mataji continually instructs us to think of God at all times; not only to give as much time as possible to *sādhana*, but at every other moment also to keep up a constant flow of the thought of Him. As an aid in this seemingly impossible feat, she said to the Ashram girls on Saraswati Puja day this year :

“Whatever you do, do it for Him and remember all the time that every person you meet is a manifestation of Him, in fact everything you perceive.....In this way you can keep up the remembrance of God also apart from your *sādhana*, while you go about your work and leisure....”

This may sound like a very simple and unimportant matter to one who has no intention of trying to put it into unbroken practice. One can no doubt go about quite easily repeating : “All is Brahman,” but to do so with the inner *bhāva*‡ and outer expression towards every possible circumstance as if it were really so, is entirely another matter—a *sādhana* in itself.

To tell a man trembling with fear before the snake that it is but a rope, does not necessarily change the deluded man's perception, nor his reaction to it.

* *Tat Mukhi*—Facing THAT.

† “Salutations again and again to the Goddess who resides in all beings as awareness.”

‡ *Bhāva* feeling.

How very often have I not asked myself the question. Is it possible, without the direct ultimate realisation that all is God, to go about behaving as if we knew it to be so? Sometimes when I sit in the cafeteria of the university where I am working, I watch and listen to the people there, trying not to be unduly disturbed by the noise and confusion which seems to drown one in a huge wave of loud purposelessness. I think about what Mataji tells us and it seems all but hopeless. Oh, one can sit there, or indeed anywhere, and say: "All this is his *Līlā*, He Himself, playing with Himself." But to believe it, to receive it as His *darśana* is it possible without something of Ma's vision, without the realisation: "I am That."

Of course, there are moments in the lives of all of us when mind is high and free, and everything does seem to be a *rāsālīlā* of the Lord. But generally these are not the moments when strife or confusion or pettiness have to be met head on, not the times when the mind desires silence and *dhyāna* while duty forces it to the mundane associations and requirements of one's work.

Is this likewise His *Līlā*, that we cannot think of Him when we would? Even in the quiet, solitary time of *sādhanā* when the mind is distracted by every possible memory, or the body restless and unco-operative—is this also His manifestation? Shall we then bow down to Devi in the form of *chāyā* (shadow), and let it go at that? No, for then we could never know shadow except as shadow. So we persist and invariably something wonderful happens that is worth suffering all distraction and discomfort: Suddenly, quietly, unexpectedly, She is there in our mind, as it were, in the form of *shāntī* (peace), in the form of *tushtī* (contentment), and we find that seemingly from nowhere *japa* or *dhyāna* has arisen of its own accord.

Therefore if we persevere also in trying to practise as Mataji tells us to do at other times, regarding everything whatsoever as *Bhagavan* Himself, at first as a pure effort

of mind and will, an act of obedience—may we not expect that a time will come when we shall actually be seeing Him, our self in all these devious ways, no longer merely imagining it? For where there is aspiration and self-effort, there is also *kripā* (Grace).

I have a special memory of one *darśana* of Mataji that sometimes comes to my mind like fire. We all have had such experiences, and if they can just be recalled during the sounds of the day as well as in the quiet times, then what seemed so difficult to put into practise might reveal itself as steady flame of awareness.

One evening in the Ashram at Agarpara I happened to be sitting quite close to Mataji during *satsang*. Though I was as near to her as one could get and directly in front of her, I could not see her face. She was lying down and had her arms folded and slightly raised so that her face was entirely hidden from us. Like all who have been 'caught' by her, I had only one desire—which will no doubt seem very foolish to those who have not been so captured—an intense longing just to sit there and look upon her exalted expression, so see her eyes that ever seem to be gazing into the beauty of Eternity. And it appeared that she was deliberately making that impossible. Then it occurred to me, this is exactly how God hides from us in His universe; with the limbs of His own body He remains veiled to our sight. I did not take my eyes off Mataji; neither did I observe her move her arm or raise her head. Nevertheless, as soon as that thought had crossed my mind, I was suddenly looking straight into Ma's eyes and she into mine, that still, blissful gaze enveloping me—as if to say, "at last you have understood a little something."

Perhaps it is somewhat similar in our daily attempt to practise what Ma teaches. If we carry faithfully the mental concept that all we see and hear and do and experience is He Himself, hidden only by Himself, and therefore not hidden at all, will we not imperceptibly, in an unexpected

moment find that from every pair of eyes into which we look, He Himself greets us; that every sound we hear, which now seems to disturb and bewilder us when we are yearning for silence, is the sound of His own voice; that every form is indeed His *murti* (embodiment) ?

“At all times and under all circumstances you must keep yourself in readiness to tread the path to the Supreme. Who can tell, at what moment your giving, serving or obeisance will become an act of consecration to the One ? Everything is possible.”

“Even in action as such the Perfect One stands self-revealed. This is the real significance of each action, of the striving which is the innate characteristic of the individual. Man’s true nature prompts him to do actions that give it expression; his true nature awakens in him the urge to perform actions of this type. Man’s true nature, *Sva*, *Svayam*, *Atma*—call it by any name—it is the Supreme, I myself.”*

* From : “Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma.”



Mataji at the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh

Matri Lila

February—April, 1965.

Towards the end of Mataji's sojourn at Varanasi at the end of January a very touching little function took place. In memory of their father's death anniversary some devotees had sent money to feed poor children. 200 children from the vicinity were called and asked to sit in rows in the courtyard. They made a deafening noise. At first Mataji looked down from the roof on the second floor. Then she sent some girls of the Kanyapith to sing kirtan. Our little guests were asked to join in, and although quite out of tune, they all sang "Jai Ram, Sri Ram, Jai Jai Ram" at the top of their voices, obviously enjoying themselves thoroughly. After a little while Mataji came downstairs and walking along the rows, put flowers on the heads of those unkempt and neglected little boys and girls, smiling at them and patting some. When the kirtan was over, Ashram-made *puris* and sweets were distributed to the children, who one by one scrambled out of the gate beaming with happiness, holding their leaf full of food in both hands.

On January 31st Mataji left Varanasi for Giridanga a place in Bengal. Sri Vinay Dube, General Secretary of the Yogoda Satsang had requested Ma to grace with her presence the consecration of a Siva Temple, belonging to the famous T.B. Sanatorium, "Niramoy." Mataji's train was to start at about 2 p.m., but being late by 8 hours, the Railway Medical Officer, Dr. Chakravarti invited Ma and her party to spend the rest of the day at his residence nearby. Under a large tree a charming resting place was improvised for Mataji and Didima on two wooden couches, curtained off with bed spreads. *Khichuri* was then prepared for all who had come to see off Mataji and had not had their meal. Mataji is always at her best when things happen unexpectedly, spontaneously. Mataji seemed in a delightful mood. After resting, she walked up and down in

the garden. By the evening the news had spread and many came with flowers, sweets and fruits. There was no harmonium, but the kirtan sounded more beautiful than ever. After 7 p. m. everyone proceeded to the station where Mataji sat on the platform for more than one hour. That evening the people of Varanasi enjoyed probably the best *darśana* they had during Mataji's stay. In spite of the noise of coming and going of trains and the large crowd that gathered around her, Mataji looked relaxed and amazingly young. She had a gracious smile and a kind word for everyone.

Mataji reached Giridanga on February 1st after midday. She and her party were put up at the guest house of the hospital. Mataji first went to see the newly built Siva shrine with its adjoining house for the priest. It is in beautiful, natural surroundings. On the last day she was taken to the hospital that comprises of a number of buildings. All the patients who were not bed-ridden came to greet Mataji and collected under a large tree. Mataji told them how lucky they were that Lord Siva had taken his abode near their hospital. She enjoined on them to use to the full his benign presence. Those who wished could repeat the mantra "*Om Nama Sivāya*" that was engraved on their new shrine. Mataji then started singing "Jai Siva Sankara" and everyone joined.

Mataji had sent some of her people ahead of herself to Giridanga to help with the arrangements, so that the consecration could proceed with due solemnity and full ceremony. Every evening some *Baul* singers came to sing to Mataji and after 9 p. m. the hospital nurses would have long informal discussions with her. On February 4th Mataji left for Rajgir, alighting there on the 5th morning. Didima, Didi and most of Mataji's party had come directly from Varanasi and reached already two days earlier.

Rajgir is a place with a very special atmosphere. The Lord Buddha is said to have spent many rainy seasons and preached some of his finest sermons on a hill near Rajgir

called "Gridhra Kut." It is no exaggeration to say that his presence is all but tangible there to this day. One has just to sit down quietly to become aware of it and be enveloped in a deep peace that passes understanding. No wonder that Mataji favours Rajgir and recommends it as congenial for the practice of meditation. On certain evenings this time, the girls of the Ashram were allowed to meditate in Mataji's presence for half an hour. On one or two occasions she replied to their questions. After 9 p. m. Mataji was available for the sadhus of our Ashram. The first few days after her arrival Mataji would go out for a walk in the early afternoons, accompanied by only one person. One day she strolled to the Mahabir Dharmasala where she had stayed before our Ashram was built. She went to see a very sick man who had been pining to have her *daršana*, but could not move from his bed. Mataji spoke comforting words to him, asking him to trust in God and keep his thought on Him.

Mataji had come to Rajgir for the first time to visit the hot springs while she stayed at Patna, some 13 or 14 years ago. Sri Mukti Maharaj, one of our oldest Sannyasis had then said : "Ma, build a small house here !" His suggestion was taken up and a devotee presented Rs. 5000/- for the purpose. A plot of land was acquired and a small Ashram started in 1952.

This time a double storied guest-house has been added that was inaugurated as soon as Mataji arrived. On February 6th, Vasant Panchami day, Saraswati Puja was celebrated in one of the new rooms. It was a charming function, of an intimacy which is extremely rare in our Ashrams nowadays. There were hardly half a dozen people present besides the inmates of the Ashram.

Next to the guest-house a beautiful little Siva temple has been erected with quite a spacious platform for *satsang* at the back. Srimati Rama Saksena, an old devotee, had a few years ago been cured of an ailment of 15 years standing by bathing in the hot springs of Rajgir. She then expressed

the wish to build a shrine for Siva in gratitude. In the meanwhile she became a widow and decided to build the temple in memory of her husband. For some time the date of consecration had been fixed on Sivaratri day and Swami Paramananda had stayed in Rajgir to supervise the building work. There are three *lingas* in the temple. Besides the Sak-sena family, Sri Subimal Dutt, who had just retired as Secretary to the President of the Indian Republic, desired to have a linga installed in memory of his only son who died in Russia. A third one was dedicated in the memory of Sm. Hamsa Devi's husband, a devotee of Dehradun.

The Narmada river in Gujarat is said to be the place where practically every stone has the shape of a *linga*. It is therefore customary to procure *Siva lingas* from there. While Mataji was in Vrindaban last December, three *lingas* were brought from the Narmada for the Rajgir Temple. However, the pandits of Vrindaban for some reason did not approve of those *lingas*. When Mataji enquired what to do with them, the pandits said they should be put into the Ganges. Since the Ganges is not anywhere near Vrindaban, someone suggested that the Jamuna would serve the purpose. The day on which the *lingas* were let down into the river Mataji felt extremely cold, in fact she was so stiff that she could not get up, she had the sensation as if Siva was being drowned. She thus sent for the *pandits* and asked them to locate those *lingas* and have them taken out of the water. The pandits succeeded and the *lingas* were subsequently sent to Varanasi and later to Rajgir. Mataji remarked that there was a natural connection between Siva and the Ganga. The three *lingas* in question, however, had by their immersion in the Jamuna carried the love of Krishna to Rajgir,

During Mataji's stay the last finishing touches were put to the new temple, which was duly decorated for consecration that took place on February 28th and March 1st in Ma's presence. A large canvas roof was spread over the new platform so that there was ample space for everyone to

watch the elaborate rites and ceremonies. Mataji herself supervised the preparations with her usual vigilance and insistence on precision. Gradually more and more devotees had gathered from all over North India, taking part enthusiastically in the function. Srimati Rama and her son Virendra Saksena arrived with his family, as well as Sri S. Dutt, who had to take part in the preliminary ceremonies, prescribed for those who are responsible for the installation. Srimati Hamsa Devi was unfortunately unable to attend in person and one of our Brahmacharis therefore acted on her behalf. One of the prayers at the consecration runs as follows : "Lord Siva, be pleased to remain here as long as the sun and the moon are in the sky. Oh, Thou who art the destroyer of sorrow and suffering. Fill Thou the whole universe with light and peace." At the end of the function Mataji smeared ashes on everyone's forehead. It was our good fortune that some of the foremost *sannyāsis* of Sri Sivananda Ashram came from Bodhgaya to see Mataji and were present during the consecration as well as during *Sivaratri* night. When Vir decorated the *linga* with a crown, the bel leaves fell off. Mataji remarked : "Siva, the god of renunciation asks but for leaves and water. If the emblems of royalty are offered to him, it is natural for the leaves to fall off." Ramadi then poured Gangotri water over the *linga*. No sooner had the consecration been completed than everyone started getting busy with the arrangements for the all-night *puja* that is performed at *Sivaratri*. Seats for the worshippers were laid out in large circles on the platform behind the temple and *puja* was also celebrated in the temple itself, while Mataji's couch was placed on the temple veranda. After the first *puja*, at about 9 p. m. Mataji retired to her room, only to emerge again before 1 a. m. She then remained present throughout, and in the early morning distributed fruit, first to those who had fasted for 36 hours and then to all present. *Sivaratri* is a festival of a very special atmosphere and concentration cherished by all who have attended once. Many arrive every year from great distances, just to take part in the *puja* in Mataji's presence and leave

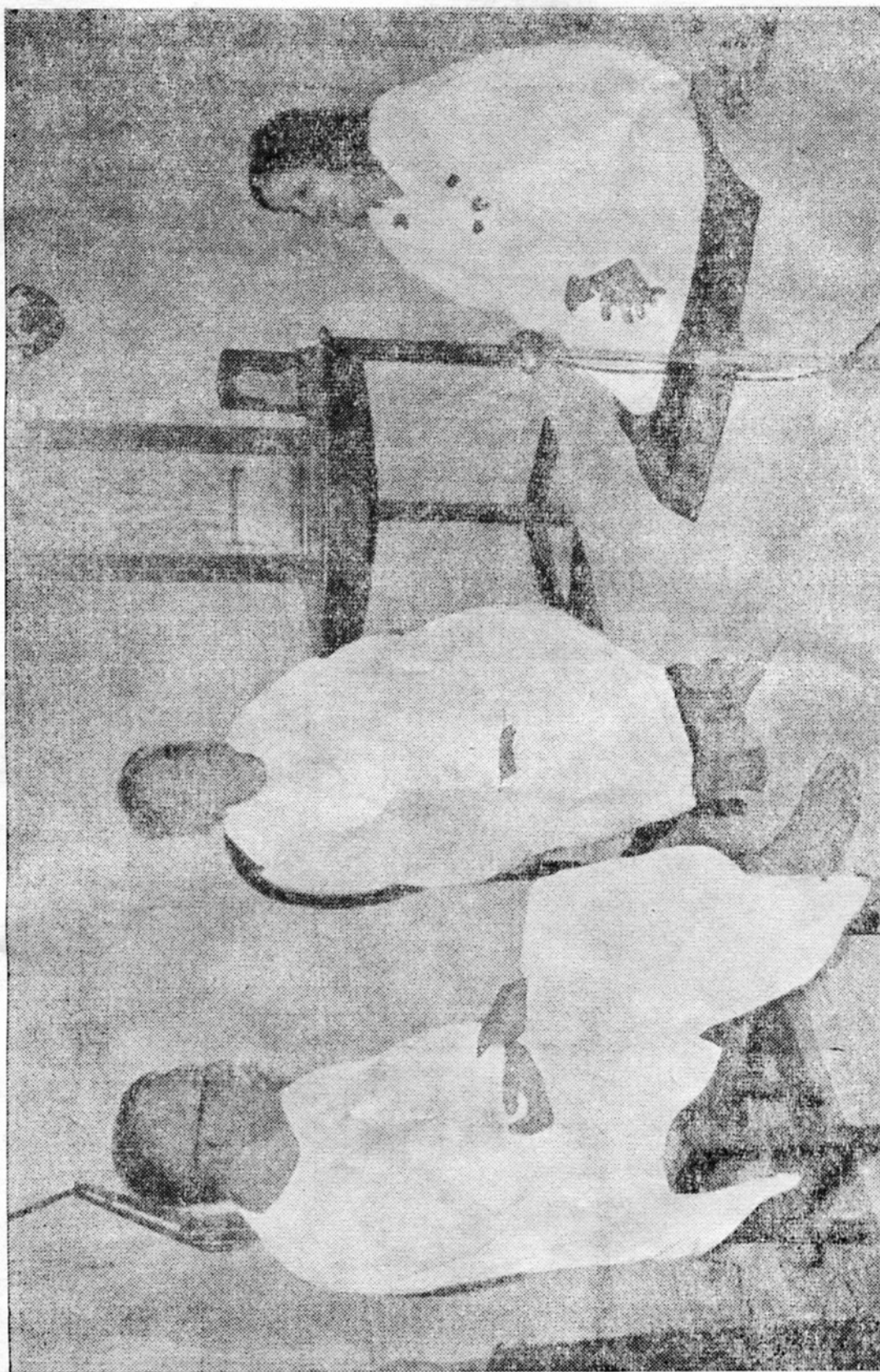
again in the morning for their various professions : They cannot afford to spend even one extra night in the Ashram.

The day after *Sivaratri* two very interesting discourses were delivered. Pd. Agnihotriji (Batuda) spoke on the significance of each of the different parts of a temple. The temple itself may be looked upon as the body of the deity enshrined in it. Then Professor Bireshwar Ganguly of Patna talked lucidly about the significance of *Siva Sakti* according to *Tantra*.

Mataji remained in Rajgir for ten more days, which were quite busy, with visitors coming and going. Mataji daily spent some time in the new temple to make sure that everything was in working order by the time she would leave. Almost daily someone or other gave a feast to Siva, and everyone was invited to partake of the *prasāda*. One day a Bhikkhu from Nalanda came for Mataji's *darśana* during the *satsang*. At Mataji's request he enlarged on Buddhist methods of meditation and on the life of the monks at Nalanda. Nalanda, a few miles distance from Rajgir was a Buddhist seat of learning for several centuries. The ruins show that three universities had existed there at different periods. They were built each over the foundations of the earlier one. Close to that ancient site, modern Buddhist University has recently been started, of which the said Bhikkhu is a lecturer. This University owns many valuable old manuscripts. Post Graduates from all Buddhist countries come to study there.

On March 6th the President of the Indian Union, Dr. Radhakrishnan together with Srimati Indira Gandhi visited Rajgir to lay the foundation of a Japanese Buddhist temple about two miles off Gridhrakut. Dr. Radhakrishnan addressed a mass meeting in the open.

In the afternoon of March 10th Mataji and her party motored to Patna. She first visited the residence of Sri Jalan, directly on the bank of the Ganges. The house contains a remarkable museum of Indian, Chinese, Tibetan,



Last meeting with Dr. Rajendra Prasad.



Mataji at the Calcutta residence of Sri M. L. Khaitan, 1964.

pieces of art, some very ancient, collected by Shri Jalan's father. Since the residential part of the house is quite separate, Mataji could be shown round the extraordinary collection. After a couple of hours she proceeded to the house of Professor S. Choudhury, which has a *puja* room with a separate staircase reserved for Mataji's exclusive use. Until late at night Mataji gave *darśana* to large numbers of people on the adjoining open terrace. In the early hours of the morning Mataji was taken to the station. Her train left for Jullundur at 4 a. m. Only a handful of people were permitted to accompany Ma to Hoshiarpur, while Didima, Didi and the rest got down at Varanasi. At Jullundur Mataji spent a short time at the Savitri Devi Ashram, before motoring to Hoshiarpur where she had been invited to be present at Sri Haribabaji Maharaj's 80th birthday. Sri Haribabaji, just as Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu (the great Bengali apostle of Vaishnavism, who lived several centuries ago) was born on *Dol Purnima*, the full moon on which the Holi festival is celebrated. The festivities extended over several days, culminating in the actual two birth anniversaries commemorated on the two days of the Holi. Inspiring talks were delivered by well-known Mahatmas, such as Sri Chetan Giriji, Sri Akhandanandaji, Sri Krishnanand Avadhutji and others. The *Rāsālīlā* was enacted every morning and the *Rāmalīlā* every afternoon. Mataji was received with extreme veneration by Sri Haribabaji and his devotees. She herself sang kirtan several times.

On March 20th the whole party moved to Doraha, a small town in the Punjab, where Mataji had stayed once before for two or three days during the celebration of her birthday, some 12 or 13 years ago, there also the *Ramalīlā* continued daily. The gentleman; who was responsible for inviting Mataji, Sri Haribabaji and their parties, came to do obeisance to Mataji and the Mahatmas, accompanied by his wife and grown-up sons and the whole family. His health seemed precarious. There was heavy rain and Sri

Haribaba's kirtan that evening had therefore to be held in his room. During the night while lying down in bed quietly, Mataji saw an apparition that moved about unobstructed by walls or doors. At 2 a. m. Sri Avadhutaji sent word to Mataji that their host's condition had turned serious: anything might happen, Mataji then had the *kheyāla*: "If anything happened in the presence of so many Mahatmas it could only be for the best." At 5 a. m. the gentleman breathed his last.

The whole of March 23rd was spent at Chandigarh, where Sant Lakshmanji, a Sikh sādhu, has built a small Ashram in Mataji's name, in beautiful surroundings, where he lives himself. He is one of the family who are running the Savitri Devi Ashram in Jullundur. Many people of Chandigarh came for Mataji's *darsana*. Mataji also went to see the lake near Chandigarh. The same night, the whole party including Sri Haribabaji boarded the train to Delhi, where devotees were waiting with their cars to take everyone to Vrindaban on the 24th morning.

The main purpose of going to Vrindaban this time was to follow an invitation by Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachari, who has started a new Ashram and is holding a large satsang extending over several months. There also, apart from Kirtan and talks by various Mahatmas, the Rasalila was shown daily.

A strange little incident happened during Mataji's sojourn at Vrindaban. A Parsi gentleman, who had come for Ma's *darsana* from Poona, distinctly noticed that the eyes of the sculpture of Sri Gauranga in the Nitai Gauranga temple of our Ashram were moving. It was exactly like the blinking of a living person. He was nonplussed and went to the temple again the next day. He again found this time only one eye moving perceptibly. He approached the priest and said to him rather sharply: "Why do you use mechanic devices to produce this kind of sensational effect?" The priest could not understand why he was being rebuked and

assured him that no device whatsoever was responsible for what he had witnessed. Greatly amazed the Parsi gentleman thereupon reported the matter to Mataji who made him repeat it in Sri Haribabaji's presence. He was told to regard it as a special grace of Lord Gouranga who had given him *darśana* in this unusual way.

A number of foreigners hailing from Germany, France and the U. S. A. came to Vrindaban to see Mataji. Mr. R. Bosch from West-Germany, together with his wife and mother-in-law accompanied Ma also to Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, where she alighted on the 27th morning, at the invitation of Sir and Lady Datar Singh. Sir Datar Singh used to be a high official in the Government of India. He owns a large piece of land a few miles out of Bhopal and has recently built a very nice Ashram consisting of three large rooms and accessories in beautiful rural surroundings with a view on hills and on a wide lake. Sir Datar Singh was anxious for Ma to inaugurate the new Ashram. She seemed to like the place and looked relaxed and at ease, remarking more than once that the air resembled that of Vindhyaçal. Since her hosts were Sikhs, Mataji asked them to arrange for readings from the *Granth Sahib* every afternoon in the largest room of the Ashram that serves as *satsang* hall. A number of the high officials of Bhopal came to pay their respects to Mataji and also the mother of the Begum of Bhopal, who was greatly impressed by Ma's *darśana*. Some visitors sang bhajans to Ma and she herself sang twice. On the whole Mataji had four really restful days in Bhopal after the hectic time in Punjab and Vrindaban.

On the 30th evening Mataji left for Hardwar, stopping in the New Delhi Ashram for the day on the 31st. Since Mataji had come after a considerable interval and remained only for a single day, the crowd that thronged for her *darśana* proved quite unmanageable this time. By the night train Mataji proceeded to Hardwar where she as usual stayed at Baghat House. There was a severe

rainstorm at Hardwar and the daughter of a devotees from Bombay who had accompanied Ma from Delhi, got a severe attack of asthma. The anxious mother wanted to take the child to Delhi by taxi & catch the next plane to Bombay, but Mataji dissuaded her from travelling until the weather cleared up. She sent a Brahmachari to call a doctor. The Brahmachari had no idea where a good doctor, was to be found and was about to inquire. As he stepped out of the gate, a gentleman entered, who asked: "Do you think I can have Mataji's *darśana* at this untimely hour?" (It was about 2 p.m.) "Yes," was the reply, "if you are a doctor, you can, atonce." The gentleman happened to be Major General Sharma from Delhi. He took up the case and the child was all right the next day. Early on the 3rd April morning Mataji motored to Dehradun. She first went to Kalyanvan, before alighting at the Kishenpur Ashram. Mataji had not been to Dehradun since last September and so the rush there was also very great. Mataji left Dehradun on the 5th evening and reached Varanasi on the 6th.

Since *Vasanti Puja* started on the 7th evening, an extremely busy time followed. *Vasanti Puja* is the Durga Puja celebrated in spring. It ends on *Rām Navami* (Sri Rama Chandra's birthday) and is held in memory of his victory over Ravana in Lanka. The traditional image of Durga, with Laxmi and Saraswati at her right and left and the *Asura* being pierced to death under her feet, was sculptured by the artist in the *Chandi Mandap* itself (in which the *puja* took place), and was really beautiful and alive. Mataji was present for hours together, and on Ashtami day practically the whole day from 4.30 a.m. till late at night. So the devotees of Varanasi could enjoy her *darśana* to their hearts' content this time. Although it must be said that sitting in the open courtyard, protected from the blazing April sun only by a thin canvas roof, means *tapasyā*. But no body seemed to mind. The place was packed to capacity

and beyond, especially in the evenings. On April 11th *Vijaya Dasami* day the image was taken on a boat and immersed in the Ganges. The next day *Ekadasi*, was the death anniversary of Mataji's grandmother (Didima's mother, By chance someone performed a special *puja* in the Siva temple. On the 13th Didima's *Sannyāsa Utsava* was celebrated in great style from 5.30 a.m. until 9 p.m. It is amazing how well Didima is able to bear the strain of such a day inspite of her age and her frail body. She is nearly 90. It was inspiring to behold her remarkable poise while being the centre of a tremendous ovation. Didima is ever sweet and gentle, the very picture of egolessness, and yet responding with warmth and liveliness to everyone who approaches her. Distributing blessings and *prasad* indefatigably. Mataji was present throughout giving lustre to the function. She stood up for Didima's *ārati*, honouring her mother and the *guru* of so many of her devotees. In the morning of that day a new room built for Mataji's use on the uppermost floor of the Ashram guest-house was opened. Mataji rested there both in the afternoon and during the following night. Only the next evening she returned to the Ashram building. Most of the function took place in the new hall that had been inaugurated on January 14th, although it even now remains to be completed. On the 13th of April there was also a *Havan* that marked the completion of 24 lakhs of *Gayatri Mantra* by one of our *Naisthik* Brahmacharis. Since many visitors had flocked from Bombay, Calcutta, Dehradun, Lucknow and other places, Mataji gave *daršana* several times daily also on the days following the function.

On April 22nd Mataji left for Ranchi where her 69th birthday anniversary is to be celebrated from May 2nd to 19th. Her further programme is as yet uncertain, but it is likely that the Durga Puja may be observed in Agarpara and the next Samyam Maha Vrata in Hazaribagh in November.