

Ananda Vārtā

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



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CONTENTS

English Section

1.	Matri Vani	1
2.	Conversations with Sri Sri Anandamayee Ma Recorded by Prof. B. Ganguly			...	3
3.	Form—Ramanujam	...	...	...	8
4.	From the Diary of a European— Melita Maschmann	...	...	...	10
5.	Mother—then and Now—Gour Gopal Mukhopadhyaya	...	...	...	19
6.	Mataji as I saw Her and Her Message to the world—Sobharani Basu			...	21
7.	Old Diary Leaves—Atmananda	...	...	...	31
8.	Bhāsā Dhāranā Mālā	...	...	...	37
9.	Matri Lila	...	...	...	41

*Just as there is a veil of ignorance for the individual,
so there is also a door to Knowledge.*

MATRI VANI

The practices leading to the ideal that has been shown by the Guru as the goal, are performed in order to become one-pointed. When the disciple with single-eyed devotion advances towards the one goal, how can one say that there is no ideal? To labour for the attainment of the goal according to the Guru's instructions, this indeed is called firm faith (*niṣṭā*). To engage in action for the sake of enjoyment is one thing, to perform action as *yoga*, quite another. Directed towards the Supreme Quest it is called *yoga* and directed towards worldly aims it is called *bhoga*. He who treads the path of action as *yoga* is on the way to liberation. Whatever current he may be able to enter, he should, ever united with that current, endeavour by that yogic practice (*kriyā*) to attain to liberation from action. In the realm where one is ever free, in the transcendental and beyond it, there, no question can arise. First of all become united to yogic action with single-mindedness along whatever current it may be, then only can you reach liberation from action. To be a *yogi* means to be eternally united; and he who is eternally united is also eternally free.

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Your sorrow, your pain, your agony is indeed my sorrow. This body understands everything.

You may want to leave this body (Mataji). But this body won't leave you for a single day—it does not and never will leave you. One who has once been attracted to this body, even though he may make a thousand attempts, will not be able to efface or blot out the memory of this body. It will remain and persist in his memory for all time.

The search after Truth is man's duty ; so that he may advance towards Immortality"

—Ma Anandamayee

Conversations with Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma

RECORDED BY PROFESSOR B. GANGULY

(Translated from Bengali)

Ranchi Ashram, May 13th, 1965.

Question : Why should the vehicle of *Kālabhairava** be a despised creature like a dog ?

Mataji : You do not seem aware of the many virtues of the dog. Do you not know how faithful a dog is to its master, how one-pointed in the pursuance of its aim, how it regards dirt and delicacies with an equal eye ? When a dog has eaten dirt and is driven away by kicks or is pelted with stones, it will go away without any spite. But its attention remains on its purpose. As soon as you are gone, it will return to where it wants to be. It is happy in the soft bed that a rich man provides for it or on its master's lap but is equally contented to lie by the roadside or in the gutter. The dog's sleep is very vigilant. If a thief comes, it acts as a watchman and rouses its master. It never neglects its duty and accepts happiness and pain with equanimity. If, overlooking the short-comings of its animal nature, you observe its one-pointedness, devotion, dutifulness and equality, you will find that the dog has, like a Guru, taught you many lessons.

Ranchi, house of Sri Kamakhya Prasad Roy, May 13th, 1965.

Question : There is a hymn in which the world-mother is praised as the bestower of both, devotion and liberation. Does She grant both of them, or to whom does She grant devotion and to whom liberation ?

* A form of Siva.

Mataji : The MOTHER can and does give everything. According to each person's capacity to receive, she measures out precisely to every one, depending on his need and merit. This is why She is called MOTHER. Whatever anyone may desire, exactly that he will get—if not today, then to-morrow. One who craves worldly pleasures will find them; and the seeker after Truth who wants liberation will definitely some day attain to it.

Question : Why then have some people sought it in vain throughout their lives ?

Mataji : When He manifests as desire He will certainly reveal Himself also as its fulfilment. But the desire must grow intense. Half-heartedness will not do ! Why, the fulfilment is already there : You are indeed the self-effulgent *Ātmā*. The desire and its fulfilment, everything is in fact contained within you.

Ranchi Ashram, May 29th, 1965.

Question : Mataji, what should I understand by 'festival' ?

Mataji : Whatever you behold.

Question : How can I know whether this festival* has fulfilled its purpose or not ?

Mataji : Everyone will know in his own mind what has been gained by him through these celebrations. In every field of life each person will have to understand this festival and its significance to him according to his capacity to assimilate and the place or level on which he happens to be.

Question : What is an *āśrama* and what is its purpose ?

Mataji : You people speak of four *āśramas* or stages of life, namely : *Brahmacharya*, *Grihastha*, *Vānaprastha*, *Sannyāsa* (that of the student, the householder, the ancho-

* The question obviously refers to Mataji's birthday celebrations held at Ranchi in May 1965.

rite and the renunciate). *Aśrama* means freedom from stress and strain, that is to say, life in harmony with the exigencies of one's true nature (*Sahaja jīvan*). What shape such a life takes depends on the level on which one happens to be.

Question : Why is the same kind of festival celebrated every year ?

Mataji : The actual purpose of the festival is the complete revelation of one's own Self. The festival will have borne its fruit in the fulness of Self-realization. For the sake of Self-realization these celebrations are repeated year after year with energy and enthusiasm. The outer, conditional action is performed as a *sādhanā* to lead to the unconditional offering of the final oblation (of oneself), *yūrnāhuti*.

Question : Are the paths of knowledge, devotion, action and yoga accessible to all or are they hidden ?

Mataji : Even though accessible, the essential secret remains concealed. Along every path there are some profound secrets unknown to all and not laid down in any book. Whether you take the path of knowledge or *bhakti* or vedic ceremonies or tantric practices or the yoga of selfless action as expounded in the Bhagavad Gita—behind the outer exercises of all of them the essential principle remains a mystery unless revealed by the Guru or gradually understood in the course of protracted and sustained *sādhanā*. Thus, according to four different lines of outer activity there are four castes : *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya*, *Shudra* (priest or teacher, warrior or statesman, merchant or craftsman, labourer); four objects of human pursuit, namely : *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, *moksha* (Religion, acquisition of wealth, enjoyment, liberation). In this way you may become fulfilled. Again, he who is fulfilled has transcended this fulfilment. (*sholakalā*)* Besides, the four paths are different on each level for each

* Mataji uses the word '*Sholakalā*.' *Shola* means sixteen, *Kalā*, part of the disc of the moon. Thus *sholakalā* means fulness.

caste and for each *aśrama*. Thus, by multiplying 4 by 16 you can arrive at the number 64 (which symbolizes the highest perfection). When one perseveres on the path of *sādhanā*, many carefully concealed secrets will be revealed. Not everything can be made public and what cannot be disclosed is called secret. 'Secret' must not be understood as any bad or contemptible *sādhanā*. In the kingdom of the mind not all secrets can be apprehended. On reaching the state in which the mind has been stilled, nothing remains a mystery; there, everything stands self-revealed. Then, a state also exists in which there is no more question of revelation or non-revelation. When the goal has been reached, everything comes fully and perfectly to light. This is so in the supernatural; while in this world, one advances step by step towards one's goal, in other words, partial realizations come gradually. The religious functions of this world are held as a preparation for the final, total sacrifice, for the sake of complete Realization – merely in order to get ready for it. This kind of celebration is performed with great perseverance and enthusiasm so that the real inner festival may come into being. Even when the action which is carried out within the limit of time is perfect, unlimited realization has not yet been achieved. Beyond that, after the final *Pūrṇāhuti* the question of boundary and boundlessness, of relative and unlimited can no longer arise. This festival is an attempt to bring about a fully integrated, perfect life. What has remained mysterious of what this body (Mataji) says can become fruitful in the soil of each one's heart by practising the seed-*mantra* received from one's Guru. In order that this seed may germinate and fructify, there are according to people's capacities and conditioning, various lines of approach. One of them will have to be adopted. The person who proceeds along the path of love will realize God as Love and Bliss. One who takes the path of knowledge will realize the *Brahman* as Supreme Knowledge. He who practises *Karma yoga* will realize the *Brahman* as consciousness or receive the grace

of the World-mother. Again, just as the same individual can be father, husband, son and so forth, similarly the one *Brahman* is Being, Consciousness and Bliss. No matter what be the path anyone may tread, he will find the One who is all in all. In Yoga one has to achieve eternal union, which is beyond the opposites of union and separation; then the Eternal will be found. Again, where the eternal and the fleeting are transcended, where the question of the beyond and 'beyond the beyond' does not arise anymore—such a sublime and final condition also exists. This body speaks in this unreasonable and illogical manner. Now let the *pandits* reflect and give their opinion.

Question : Who is a *pandit* ?

Mataji : He who has got rid of the idea that he is learned, he is a *pandit*—where what *can* be destroyed *has* been destroyed. He who has left off being a teacher and guide to others and, becoming a teacher unto himself has taught himself so that nothing more remains to be learnt, he is a real and true *pandit*.

FORM

RAMANUJAM*

Still, as the waters of Kailash
O Thou that art
The timeless contemplation of Nilgiri,
ONE within the FIVE
NOT-TWO within the ONE !
Whose Glance is the Door !
Who art that white lotus risen
Out of the ineffable blue —
Limitless as the Space in the Heart !
Praṇava Rūpi, Tree of Wisdom,
Thy branches shade the seventh orbit.
Between Being and Non-Being
Thou emergest as Sack-cloth and Ashes,
Thrilling the hearts of Rishis,
Of Rishis of countless ages.
Thou wanderest ever—being still—
Being still, Thou movest,
Still as the waters of Kailash,
Yet, Thou movest.
Still, as the Ancient Dust upon
The pathless land of truth,
Yet movest Thou amid
The ceaseless wheelings of the stars.

* The author of this poem, a South Indian gentleman, came to Suriya, Hazaribagh Rd. to talk to Mataji, two days before the *Samyam Vrata* started. This was his first *darśana* of her. Instead of leaving the next day as originally intended, he participated in the *Samyam Vrata*. He wrote this hymn during that time : At the close of the function it was read out before Mataji and the assembled *vratīs*.

O FORM of matchless Beauty,
Fair as the Dawn of perennial Creation,
O Secret of Timelessness
Thou destroyest the mansions of time
Shaking earth's foundations,
Filling the Universe with
The terror of Thy foot-steps.

O Mother, O Friend,
Soothe this frightened heart,
Bestow peace once more
Where ring the strident notes
Of the voice of Thy Silence,
Where the mind is stricken down
By Thine Immensity —
Boundless, limitless, immeasurable.

From the Diary of a European

MELITA MASCHMANN

(Translated from German)

(4)

Varanasi, October 1963.

The Ganga has a fascination that is indescribable. As far back as I can think, all rivers on the banks of which I have stood have been a disappointment: the Rhine, the Oder, the Danube, the Weichsel, the Rhone, the Moskwa, the Nile.....I always knew that this here existed, this river, although I had no idea in which country I would find it. If I were a Hindu, I should be convinced that I had lived here in a former life.

The Ganga has the power of an ocean. Early morning, when the opposite bank is veiled by mist, the Ganga lies spread out like a slumbering sea: reposing infinity. Later the distant banks emerge. One perceives a broad, white beach, and beyond it a green rampart limiting the horizon. Towards midday the surface of the water becomes lively: innumerable silvery flashing whirlpools move hastily towards the city. Broad boats with dark square sails drift on the current.

At dusk the opposite bank takes on a rosy hue and recedes ever further into the distance. The water in mid-stream is deep blue, its colour growing lighter and lighter over on the other side. Near the Ashram the shadows are increasing and colouring the water inky. Before night-fall there is sometimes a brief span of indescribable enchantment: water, banks and sky melting without transition into one luminous purple. Never before have I seen such a mysteriously scintillating light: The air resembles violet-coloured silk, and a shade darker than the silky-violet streaming of the

lessly he quotes long passages and sometimes he is moved to tears. Usually his talk ends with a homage to Mataji. Then he makes obeisance to her and she decorates him with a garland.

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The conception '*kheyāla*' seems to be one of Mataji's key-words. In its current meaning it signifies a sudden and unexpected psychic emergence, be it desire, an instantaneously arising opinion, memory, or the like. Mataji has invested it with a different meaning. Since in her case there is no ego to account for a sudden impulse of this kind, the word *kheyāla*, when she uses it, denotes a spontaneous upsurge of the Divine in herself. It is free and unconditioned, a divine voice that speaks through her and directs her steps.

Mataji has no ego-will. This is why she never binds herself to plans or engagements. She knows that she has to be available at every instant for the promptings of her *kheyāla* : and it does interfere with an apparently ruthless spontaneity. Therefore Mataji's movements can only rarely be calculated in advance.

In the course of conversation someone said to her : "Ma, I want to ask you a question. Please reply so that I shall be able to understand !" Mataji : "It all depends on my *kheyāla*."

When questions are put to her, it is not her intellect that answers. She does not reflect. She allows the *kheyāla* to reply from within herself, she serves it as a mouthpiece, as it were. Last year I was present when she turned silent in the midst of a discussion and finally remarked : "There is no *kheyāla* to reply to this question." She then does not answer of her own accord.

In this attitude her total submission to God's Will is expressed. Only because she has given herself up completely, Divine Truth is voiced by her. This is an interpretation of

keyāla that one of Mataji's girls gave me the other day. She then added : "It may well be that we ordinary mortals are occasionally used as mouthpieces of Truth. But Mataji is always one with the Truth of God or the *Brahman*; this is what distinguished her from the rest of us. Even when she does not reply to a question, her silence is an expression of the Will of Eternal Truth."

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In the afternoons Mataji nowadays often sits between the two Ashram temples and gives *darśana*. In the twinkling of an eye the veranda fills up around her. It is one of my favourite places. One has an extensive view over the Ganga, both upstream and downstream. The course of the river is bent so that one can also survey our bank and a large part of the city. At night one sees the fires by which the dead are cremated.

The veranda is like a large room. As soon as Mataji sits down among us, a personal contact is established. To begin with, severe crowding ensues, as all want to do *praṇāma* and many offer flowers. A blind old woman clad in the ochre robe is often led to her. She looks frail and sickly. The blind woman touches Mataji. Sometimes she utters something that sounds imploring. Mataji bears the touch of the groping hands with complete stillness and with an expression that suddenly reminds me of a blood transfusion. Years ago I once watched a man who had his blood tapped in order to donate it to a child who had met with an accident. This feeling : take of my life-force ! Here the spiritual—there the biological.

When the old woman let her hands sink today, she raised her head and her unseeing eyes were fixed on Mataji's face. Mataji stood close by her. She looked composed and serious. A long, quiet glance sank into the blind eyes.

Did it pierce through the night ? There was suddenly

great clarity on the old woman's face. Then she hid it in her hands. Mataji quickly turned away. When the blind woman was led downstairs she wept.

Another woman with a shaven head in *sannyāsi* dress, who also seems advanced in years, frequently sits at Mataji's feet on the veranda. She has a fine, fair-skinned face. One cannot help thinking that she most likely derives from a distinguished old family. In Mataji's presence her countenance becomes ecstatic. She seems a typical *bhakta* : she has obviously chosen the path of the love of God to attain to Enlightenment.

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Last night I could not sleep. Just to kill time I walked to the Ashram after midnight. I was in no hurry. At about 1 a. m. I got there. It was still lively as if it were plain day. I counted nine people who were waiting to have a private interview with Mataji. Every morning when I arrive at the Ashram I am told that Mataji has retired for rest only in the small hours and usually rises again at about 5 a. m. to scan the preparations for the Durga Puja which is being celebrated at present. Throughout the day she has not a minute's rest. Between two engagements I sometimes see her eat or drink something, standing. Although for about twenty hours daily she attends rituals, lectures, gives *darśana*, replies to questions, grants private interviews, dictates letters, and so forth, she never seems in a hurry and only rarely looks tired. Ever the same calm, cheerfulness, kindness, alertness and mostly a sparkling spiritual intensity. At that she is 68 years old and, I am told, not too well physically. What her body achieves under these circumstances is well nigh miraculous. But of course, it is not a bodily but a spiritual achievement. One is reminded of the reports about some Christian saints.

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Today an English tourist who had seen Mataji only for ten minutes during *darsana* time, said to me: "I do not understand anything about holiness, but the beauty of Sri Anandamayi Ma is bewildering." Similar statements I have heard several times from Indians. Again and again I ask myself: What is the secret of this beauty that makes an equally powerful impression on men and women, young and old? Transfigured, sometimes crying, I see them sit before her and their faces express what I feel on occasions when music is divinely beautiful: a bliss that is not my birthright, that I am permitted to sense only rarely for the length of a few heart beats—in order to miss it for the rest of my life.

A woman, aged nearly 70, dressed in the plainest white cotton dhoties, with hair that according to western standards never looks combed. And yet: bewildering beauty! And that in the most diverse situations, not only in moments of spiritual transference. I should say: *always!* The secret of it is impenetrable, but one might perhaps circumscribe it: for instance Mataji's freedom from any kind of self-observation. She does not either seek herself in the mirror of admiring eyes. Long ago and for all times she has let herself go. Whether—watched by thousands of eyes—she stands, walks, sits or lies, there is invariably absolute freedom and artlessness in her movements. One has the feeling that she never has to conquer any resistance in herself, be it of bodily or psychic origin, never to restrain any impulse.

When walking there is something royal in her attitude. One senses this distinctly from the manner in which she responds to someone falling at her feet in obeisance. With folded hands she then bows slightly. Usually in silence, occasionally repeating softly God's name: "*Narayan, Narayan!*" This resembles the greeting of the dervishes. "Be greeted king of kings!" they call to each other who possess nothing but a begging bowl and whose empire is the whole universe.

However paradox it may sound, this majesty in her

gesture of thanking has an admixture of girlishness. Or should I say : childlikeness ? At any rate, there is also something delicate, almost shy, unadorned reverent in it.

Everything has a share in this beauty or calls it out : her unrestrained laughter in which sometimes her whole body participates, the vivacity with which she relates. The play of her features that seems to transform her inexhaustibly--expressing all ages, every temperament, every mood in every situation. Sometimes this almost frightens me. Suddenly I discover on her face the exact reflex of what I have just been thinking or feeling, although I was occupied with things that lie entirely outside of her world.

Or the expression of detachment and composure when she enters meditation. Or her way of talking to children : the simplicity, directness, unaffectedness. Or the charm and the friendly mockery with which she reacts to challenges in the discussion. The motherly seriousness when she reprimands, the confidence when she comforts, her attention when she listens. The pleasure with which she enjoys fun.

All these situations have something in common : they show Mataji in spontaneous response and ever full of spirit. Besides they disclose the central impulse that pervades all her relationship to human beings : kindness.

Spontaneity, liveliness, kind heartedness—do they make a person beautiful in the sense in which Mataji is beautiful ? Do they impart to this beauty the power to transform hearts ? They certainly do. Of course only when they are rooted in the very centre of Being where reigns absolute peace. The Self reposing in Itself establishes undisturbable balance, a harmony expressing as beauty when translated into the physical, although beauty is not of the body. This harmony operates even in the most insignificant gestures : the expression of a hand during sleep; the position of a foot; the sound of laughter, the bearing of the head while drinking. There is no gap whatsoever. The peace originating in the

centre of Being radiates right to the periphery of the hairtips. Mataji's beauty is but her sanctity, her perfect reposing in God.

The elegy of the remoteness of God that has for years been sung with such fervour in the west! Its pathos is gradually getting on my nerves. Perhaps because I myself have sung it so perseveringly? Even the sermons and prayers of priests are full of this pathos. It has almost become the only testimony for 'true religiousness.' Does anyone still dare to say: what do you want, He is right here among us, in every selfless action, in every loving word! The reaction would be an outcry of scorn by those who enjoy their depravity.

Two years ago: the young woman on the staircase who showed me the mark of a child's wet foot. Her face shone as if the archangel Gabriel had appeared to her. Afterwards someone told me that she was the victim of some religious delusion. Perhaps the immanence of God was still real to her? This would—for the desperate apostles of the remoteness of God, not only for the so-called agnostics—be a reason to declare her as insane.

Mataji just said to an Indian infected with the disease of westernization (a student from Paris): "Do not be so voluble! You are now in a state in which God is present in the guise of absence. Contemplate the One present even in the guise of absence!"

She herself ever dwells in the fulness of Divine Presence and has surely not the slightest inkling of western philosophy, but one should think that she has read the Christian Existence Philosophers.

Especially impressive I find her during the periods of meditation which are a regular part of the evening programme and occasionally also inserted into the morning function. While the *sādhus*, both men and women, sit in rather stiff looking yogic postures, Mataji's body is wholly

relaxed. Sometimes she sits straight, or else lies on one side or reclines against a cushion. At other times she changes her attitude. There is a calm flow in her movements, like the broad streaming of the Ganga. Not like the small, agitated whirlpools that the wind occasionally excites on the surface of the water. Her eyes are usually shut. I can at times make out that the eyelids of the people sitting around me (I feel this also of myself) are merely let down in the manner of shutters. Our attention remains essentially outward turned, only the flowing in of pictures is interrupted. Mataji's face betrays that her gaze has turned behind her closed eyelids. It is directed towards the centre of her being. Everything in her draws together in that centre, enters into it. Sometimes a momentary effulgence is mirrored from there right in the periphery of her relaxed features. Occasionally her eyelids are slightly raised, Her look then partly returns. I always have the feeling as if it came from above (in the concrete sense of space), as if her eyeballs had first turned that way, but her look does not fill with consciousness. A smile plays round her eyes and mouth. Is it a reflection of blissful vision ? Today it overwhelmed me : There have been years when Mataji lived almost uninterruptedly in a state of spiritual ecstasy. She has tasted God with every cell of her being—also the physical being. How can she bear the stale taste which our constant relentless proximity must inflict on her ? The other day an Indian Christian said to her : "You yourself are a proof to me of the correctness of the Christian doctrine 'God is Love.' It is only because you are so wholly permeated by God that you are so loving. Or, put differently : only because you are so brim-full of love do you flow over with God."

Towards the end of the meditation her eyes open and then slowly consciousness returns into her glance. It wanders calmly round the semicircle, radiating peace and kindness.

(To be continued)

Mother — Then And Now

GOUR GOPAL MUKHOPADHYAYA

The first glimpse of Mother was granted to me at Dacca early in 1925. My father, Sj. Pran Gopal Mukhopadhyaya, was in service there at the time and Mother used to vouchsafe occasional visits to our home. Living in those days a purely domestic life, she was then unknown to the world and unsought. In fact, our first contact with her was at a time when her own family looked askance at her, wondering whether her raptures were not perhaps pathological symptoms rather than signs of spiritual exaltation. They were naturally more at pains to conceal what to them at the time was a disturbing and embarrassing domestic problem than to publicise it. My first impression of Mother was of a person, shy and reticent but calm and self-possessed with an aura of sweetness and peace that commanded spontaneous homage. The few questions she was pleased to ask me about my health and welfare were put through my mother.

Mother's light might have remained hidden for some time yet, had not Providence decided to step in at the moment and take a hand in her dawning revelation. Come to think of it, it could have been nothing short of a divine dispensation which brought my father, unbidden and fortuitous to her sequestered altar. It was my father's habit to go out to Ramna for his morning walk and he was often accompanied by his esteemed friend, Professor Nani Gopal Bandopadhyaya of the Dacca University. This was in November, 1924. Lowering clouds made my father cut short his

* This and the following article are reprinted from the book "MA ANANDAMAYI" by Devotees, which was published in 1946, and has not been available for about 14 years.

walk one morning, but the professor was not one to miss his full round. Mother was at Shahbagh at this period. Caught in the rain, Professor Bondopadhyaya had taken shelter under a tree right in front of Shahbagh. By the way, the garden was then out of bounds for the public. A relation of Mother's, the elder brother of her consort, saw the professor in distress and very kindly came out to take him along to their place. It went on raining and the tedium of a grey morning had inevitably to be lightened by casual conversation. Eventually, the same morning, the professor was taken into confidence and the perplexities of the family over Mother's disturbing seizures were laid bare before him. With patent embarrassment he was at first asked to keep the matter to himself, but the professor subsequently had their permission to confide it to a person who might possibly throw a helpful light on this obscure phenomenon. He came straight to Sj. Pran Gopal Mukhopadhyaya with his wondrous tale.

So the professor and my father fixed up a date and hastened to Mother's place at Shahbagh. Even after this passage of time, it is over twenty years now* that he had her first *darśana*, there is a thrill of wonder in my father's voice as he narrates the account of his first *darśana*. Ushered into her presence, on the first day he was enraptured with what to him was an unmistakable radiation of spirituality or *sattvika vikāra*. By grace divine a spiritual planet had swum into his ken, and he was privileged to watch in humble awe and holy wonder, its resplendent rise. As the days passed, his devotion grew from more to more. At first Mother seemed tongue-tied and reticent, and it was with difficulty that she could be drawn out. But even her silence was veritably golden, and a single word bore a world of meaning and was redolent of her passion and love for the Divine. As Lao-tze, the great Chinese mystic says, "One

* In 1946.

who knows does not talk...The sage keeps his mouth shut... and conveys by silence his instruction. To be taciturn is the natural way." The chanting of God's holy name seemed to ravish her out of the world of senses and those winged words would transport her to transcendent regions far above the thud and surge of this querulous world. She would be beatifically oblivious of all and would dance in her ecstasy like a little child in sheer inconsequential joy. Ultimately outer consciousness would cease, and there ensued a tempestuous rhythmic rolling on the ground of her God-possessed body. Like a mountain torrent in spate, the flood of *Mahābhāva*, the highest ecstasy, would surge and swell through her body, life and spirit in one majestic sweep. Then followed a state of utter calm, flickerless and still peace, perfect peace,—like the sleep of the top at its highest spin. This is the state that has now been for long her habitation and home. The Alone has taken the flight to the Alone, and for ever and ever the beating of the eager wings is stilled, for ever stilled. In those early days, my father was no less struck by Mother's tireless devotion to domestic duties while her soul was ever tugging at the body's moorings in its eager voyage to the Infinite.

Another remarkable feature of her life during this early period was her almost total abstinence from food, only three to nine counted grains of rice being her daily fare. Indeed, Mother used to feel choked if she tried to force even one grain more down her throat. This is all of a piece with the experience of the great mystics all the world over, an inevitable phase in their development. Yet she looked the picture of radiant health, and showed not even the faintest sign of fatigue at the end of a hard day's work. Her devotion to her husband was also exemplary: no work on his behalf was too mean for her. Her love of truth, her strength and courage, and above all her wonderful receptivity to divine influence have left a fadeless impress on my father's mind, of these her early days. My father was expecting to leave

Dacca on retiring furlough early in June 1925, and Mother had not still emerged from her domestic seclusion. To his importunate questionings as to when she would reveal herself to the world, she replied enigmatically that he would know it all about the 6th *Asāḍha* that year, on which date the *Ambuvachi* commenced. At that time my father did not expect to be in Dacca till that date, but somehow or other, official relief was late in arriving and it was immediately after the 6th *Asāḍha* that he found himself in a position to leave.

On the whole of the appointed day Mother lay in trance, speechless and motionless. In the evening she betook herself along with her husband to the Siddheshwari temple at Ramna, and there the flood-tide of *Mahābhāva* came sweeping over her. Mother had an esoteric affinity with this holy spot, and she had once indicated a site close to the temple as the seat of the *sāḍhanā* of Bholanathji in a previous birth. This place, then discarded and over-run, was subsequently cleared and fenced around and became later the site of what was Mother's first *Āśrama*. Up till this time Mother's glory was a jealously kept secret, and was shared by my father with just a few *bhaktas* among whom were professors Nalini Kanta Brahma, Girija Shankar Bhattacharya and Atal Behari Bhattacharya. It was after the 6th *Asāḍha* that Mother's privacy was broken, and first in a trickle, then in an ever-swelling stream, people began to flock to her and receive her grace. She *had* arrived.

The first visit that Mother vouchsafed to us after my father had left Dacca was when she came to Deoghar in 1926. The most memorable incident of this visit was Mother's meeting with our Gurudeva, Sri Balananda Brahmachariji Maharaj who welcomed her with a warmth which only a feeling of spiritual kinship can evoke. For long after and on numerous occasions Sri Gurudeva used to recall the memory of this meeting and pay eloquent testimony to her *sattvik* exaltation. During her visit to the *Āśrama* she attended a

kirtan recital and went into a passionate storm of ecstatic rapture, which eventually subsided into radiant calm. Sri Gurudeva later led Mother along with her consort into his *sanctum sanctorum* and they were closeted together for some time. A year or two later Mother paid us a surprise visit at Deoghar with her consort. She was then on her way to Vindhychal and spent a couple of days with us *en route*. My father happened to be away at the time and only my Mother and my humble self were at home. She was ineffably kind and sweet to us.

It was after the lapse of a decade, years which had seen her canonization and during which myriads of *bhaktas* from all over India had flocked to her holy feet, that I was privileged to have her next *darsana*. It was in Calcutta in 1939. Not in the privacy of a home or the quiet precincts of an *Asrama* this time, but amid the din and bustle of the metropolis with constant streams of visitors surging around. It was a far cry from her demure domesticity at Dacca, and what a sea-change had come over her. 'Her frame now was like *Parrati's*, attenuated by *tapasyā* and ringed by an aureole of sweetness and light! Hers was a presence that radiated peace, 'the peace that passeth understanding,' a balm to the 'fretful stir unprofitable and the fever of the world.' And above the storm, an upper-air serenity pervaded her and all the time one felt that she was here, yet not here; astronomically far, yet withal so near. An air of easy mastery and indubitable poise, the sure-footed tread on what the *Sruti* calls the 'razor-edge path,' was hers. Majesty was hers as to one to the manner born and yet there was nothing forbidding about her with her childlike simplicity, buoyant good humour and never failing smile. She was an apotheosis of Light, Love, Power, Goodness, Beauty and Truth.

Puerile and pretentious it would be, and indeed laughably so, to try and show up the sun with the aid of a candle, and it would be no less futile to gauge the depth, immensity and expanse of Mother's illumination with the

help of our circumscribed intellects and inhibited souls. All revelation is *svapprakāśa*—Being at its white-hot incandescence, and only Being can know Being. Enmeshed in our sensuous sheaths as we are, it is only through fortuitous chinks that the Light streaks into our dark deeps, and divinely disturbs our sleep of ages. To Mother's grace we owe that even with the murky minds that are ours we have been able at times to mirror fitful gleams of the Light Divine that emanates from her. This should be to us at once a solace and a spur.

— — —

“Man must ever be intent on discovering the *Mahāyoga* that will reveal his eternal union with the Divine”.

—*Ma Anandamayee*

Mataji as I Saw Her and Her Message to the World*

SOBHARANI BASU

I had been hearing about Ma Anandamayi and her wonderful spiritual life ever since my early days, but there never had been so far an opportunity to come into actual contact or to have the privilege of a personal talk with her. It will not be out of place to mention here that very early in my life I had become acquainted with the holy personality of Sri Sri Ramakrishna. His life and teaching had seized my ardent youthful imagination and left a profound and lasting impression on me. How I longed for a contact with a similar living personality of actual flesh and blood in whom I could find refuge and from whom I could draw inspiration not only in moments of distress but throughout my life. To satisfy this longing of my heart, I eagerly sought out several saintly personalities and frequented their company whenever I could.

Some time ago, when I was engaged upon a specialized study of contemporary Indian mysticism, I happened to be in Varanasi and met Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj, the celebrated scholar. He advised me to go and see Anandamayi Ma, adding that an actual contact with a great living mystic and inspiring personality like Mataji, would certainly prove of invaluable help to me, not only in the work I had undertaken, but in my life as well.

The prospect of having a *darśana* of Mataji was an alluring one and I lost no time in trying to seek her out. I was told that she was staying on a boat in one of the ghats at

* See footnote on page 10

Varanasi but when I reached there I found that she had moved to a spot near the Imlighat, Bhadaini, where the Varanasi Ashram now stands. The site had been newly acquired and on the particular day I went there, I found a function in progress, celebrating the laying of the foundation stone of the Ashram. There was a large gathering and in one corner of the compound, a band of young men was engaged in Kirtan. They were surrounded by a group of bhaktas listening with rapt attention. I looked about eagerly to have my first glimpse of the great personality for whose sake I had come. My eyes fell on a delicate figure of extraordinary sanctity and tenderness, standing at a little distance. From the expression of her face and her general demeanour I at once guessed, nay I was almost certain that she was Sri Anandamayi Ma, although nobody had pointed her out to me. The day was drawing to its close and as I looked at her through the uncertain twilight investing everything with its unearthly glamour, I thought I was in the presence of the Universal Mother descended in to our midst in concrete human form. Her face with its radiant smile and its extraordinary sweetness made an unforgettable impression on my mind. Motherly solicitude was writ large on it, being but the visible expression of that transcendent love and compassion which is always associated with motherhood. She stood robed in plain white, with dishevelled hair, but through this simplicity, the charm of her divine personality shone unmistakably.

Mataji moved about for a little while and then took her seat facing the kirtan party, probably to encourage them by her presence. She beckoned to me and I approached her. Though no words were exchanged, my heart was more than satisfied with her mere *darśana* and presence. I felt that one of the long cherished yearnings of my life had been fulfilled at long last. My heart was so full that even if I had had the opportunity to speak to her, I believe I would not have been able to say anything at that moment. Nor was any

talk necessary. The silence was more eloquent than any words could have been.

My second meeting with Mataji was exactly a year later when she was staying in the Birla Dharmasala at Sarnath. I spent an entire day with her and brought away treasures of many sweet recollections. Thereafter I met her several times at the Varanasi Ashram. In fact I always make it a point of seeing her whenever she comes to Varanasi. She has become a real mother to me, treating me with an affection and motherly solicitude which no words can describe. I had many opportunities to listen to her inspiring talks from which I present below the gist of some of her teachings. I have tried my best to preserve faithfully the simplicity of her expression.

We should all live as far as possible in the consciousness of God and acquire the habit of constantly taking His divine name. It is all-powerful. Supreme peace, freedom and strength flow from it. Even if the right Guru has not been found, there is no harm. For God's name is full of power and has its own peculiar virtue. Its effects are certain and though not immediately noticeable, they must come in course of time.

Simple faith has great force in bringing about the spiritual regeneration of man. If a person has faith, he has nothing to fear, for all things will come to him. Simple faith may be blind, but it is potent and highly efficacious. If a man's faith is sincere and if in his ignorance a wrong mantra is adopted and repeated by the devotee—not realizing that this mantra is not suited to his nature—he will not have to suffer any evil consequences thereby. For he will be under the protection of the Divine who will see to his mantra being corrected and the seeker after Truth directed along the proper path. The Divine always responds to sincere faith and disposes everything accordingly.

People should not be carried away by the alluring pros-

pect of seeing visions and hearing voices. These have their use no doubt, but a true seeker ought to be able to know their actual worth and take them for what they are. Real vision is that which satisfies one's thirst for vision for ever. We should therefore always be on our guard against attaching too much importance to visions and other such phenomena, which are after all external things at their best. On attaining to Truth all desires for supernatural phenomena vanish completely. Those who have the privilege of being under the guidance of a Guru, should surrender themselves absolutely to his will. One-pointed devotion and singleness of aim are the means for surrender. In addition, constant meditation, repetition of a holy Name and singing the glories of God are also helpful.

It is desirable to consider oneself a mere tool in the hands of the Guru. One should not look forward to a particular spiritual condition, for what is to happen will happen by itself through God's Will. Nobody can resist it. The practice of surrender may not be very pleasant in the beginning and one is likely to fret under restrictions but this has to be borne patiently.

Following the natural course is the best. A man should be led along the path that is in harmony with his tastes, capacities and predilections. There is no room for pressure or coercion in spiritual education. Everyone should be allowed to develop in an atmosphere of freedom, untrammelled by artificial conventions and contradictory suggestions.

It is in the fitness of things that one who has not realized the joy of Truth should find his mind wandering here and there. That the mind should be unsteady and restless is only natural. What is known as *sādhana* or spiritual discipline is nothing but various methods and devices for achieving control of mind. This disciplinary course includes *japa* or repetition of God's name, discussion on religious topics, systematic study of sacred literature, meditation

and similar other practices. Every man should devote as much time as he can to the practice that is most congenial to his nature.

People living in the world should regard it as a stage on which they are required to play their part. They should always remember that it is merely a halting-stage on the journey through life rather than a permanent resting place. Some people forget this simple truth and become engrossed in mundane preoccupations to such an extent that they come to regard the world as if it were their permanent abode. This attitude should be changed altogether. In this connection it may be pointed out that it is possible to convert the world with all its diverse elements into a kingdom of purity and happiness. It is possible, for instance, to regard one's parents as God the Father and God the Mother, one's husband as the Lord of the Universe, one's wife as the Goddess of home and hearth, and to look upon one's sons and daughters as child Krishna and child Parvati. In such a world all persons known and unknown are connected with one another and with the *sādhaka* by certain ties of personal relationship. If this process of mental transformation and the change of attitude implied in it be continued for some length of time, it will transform the aspirant's entire personality and take him nearer to his goal.

It is necessary to impart religious education to children. Parents, guardians and the authorities of educational institutions are ultimately responsible for moulding the life and character of the children in their charge. Religious education should be the foundation on which all other education is imparted.

One should bear up patiently under all circumstances, knowing that suffering is a necessary part of physical existence and the more one suffers in the present, the less may one be liable to suffer in future. Suffering when it reaches the extreme point is followed by peace and tranquillity.

If there is real craving for God in the heart, there is no reason for despondency. A person may think that in spite of his best efforts to lead a pious life, he is unsuccessful and unable to make satisfactory progress; he is apt to regard his life as a failure. But this sense of failure itself is an indication that some good has been achieved. Even if one's thoughts are directed to the Divine for one moment, it is not to be regarded as of little consequence.

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“The path of renunciation is indeed the path of Bliss”.

—*Ma Anandamayee*

Old Diary Leaves

ATMANANDA

Discussion with a young Irish journalist.

Varanasi, 10th October, 1957.

Question : Am I right to believe that you are God ?

Mataji : There is nothing save Him alone, everyone and everything are but forms of God. In your person also He has come here now to give *darśana*.

Question : Then why are you in this world ?

Mataji : In this world ? I am not anywhere. I am myself reposing within myself.

Question : What is your work ?

Mataji : I have no work. For whom can I work since there is only ONE ?

Question : Why am I in the world ?

Mataji : He plays in infinite ways. It is His pleasure to play as He does.

Question : But why am I in the world ?

Mataji : That is what I have been telling you. All is He ; He plays in countless forms and ways. However, in order to find out why you are in the world, to find out who you are in reality, there are various *sādhānās*. You study and you pass your exams, you earn money and enjoy the use of it. But all this is within the realm of death in which you continue life after life, repeating the same kind of thing again and again. Then there is another path as well, the path of Immortality, which leads to the knowledge of what you really are.

Question : Can anyone help me in this or must each one find out for himself ?

Mataji : The professor can teach you only if you have the capacity to learn. Of course he can give you help but you must be able to respond, you must have it in you to grasp what he teaches.

Question : Which is the best path to Self-knowledge ?

Mataji : All paths are good. It depends on a man's *samskāras*, his conditioning, the tendencies he has brought over from previous births. Just as one can travel to the same place by plane, railway, car or cycle, so also different lines of approach suit different types of people. But the best path is the one which the Guru points out.

Question : When there is only one, why are there so many different religions in the world ?

Mataji : Because He is infinite, there is an infinite variety of conceptions of Him and an endless variety of paths to Him. He is everything, every kind of belief and also the disbelief of the atheist. Your belief in non-belief is also a belief. When you speak of disbelief it implies that you admit belief. He is in all forms and yet formless.

Question : From what you said I gather that you consider the Formless nearer to Truth than God-with-form ?

Mataji : Is ice anything but water ? Form is just as much He as the Formless. To say that there is only one Self (*Ātmā*) and all forms illusion would imply that the Formless was nearer to truth than God-with-form. But this body declares : every form and the formless are He and He alone.

Question : What have you to say about those who insist that only one religion is the right one ?

Mataji : All religions are paths to Him.

Question : I am a Christian.....

Mataji : So am I, a Christian, a Muslim, anything you like.

Question : Would it be right for me to become a Hindu or is my approach by the Christian way ?

Mataji : If you are fated to become a Hindu it will happen in any case. Just as you cannot ask : 'What will happen in case of a car accident ? When the accident occurs you will see.

Question : If I feel the urge to become a Hindu should I give way to it or is it right to suppress it, since it is said that everyone has been born where it is best for him ?

Mataji : If you really felt the urge to become a Hindu, you would not ask this question, but just go ahead with it.

Yet there is also another side to this problem. It is true that you are a Christian, but something of a Hindu is in you as well, otherwise you could not even know anything about Hinduism. Everything is contained in everything. Just as a tree yields seed and from a single seed hundreds of trees may develop, so the seed is contained in the tree and the whole of the tree potentially in the tiny seed.

Question : How can I find happiness ?

Mataji : First tell me whether you are willing to do as this body bids you to do.

The Questioner : Yes, I am.

Mataji : Are you really ? Very well. Now suppose I ask you to remain here, will you be able to do it ?

The Questioner : No, I will not. (Laughter).

Mataji : You see, happiness that depends on anything outside of you, be it your wife, children, money, fame, friends or anything else, cannot last. But to find happiness in Him who is everywhere, who is all-pervading, your own Self, this is real happiness.

Question : So you say happiness lies in finding myself ?

Mataji : Yes. Finding yourself, discovering who you really are, means to find God, for there is nothing outside of Him.

Question : You say all are God. But are not some people more God than others ?

Mataji : For him who asks such a question, this is so. But in actual fact God is fully and equally present everywhere.

Question : Is there no substance to me as an individual ? Is there nothing in me that is not God ?

Mataji : No. Even in 'not being God' there is only God alone. Everything is He.

Question : Is there no justification at all for professional or any other mundane work ?

Mataji : Occupation with worldly thing acts like slow poison. Gradually, without one's noticing it, it leads to death. Should I advise my friends and my fathers and mothers* to take this road ? I cannot do so. What this body says is : choose the Path of Immortality, take any path that according to your temperament, will lead you to the Realization of your Self.

Nevertheless, even while working in the world, you can do one thing : Whatever you do throughout the day, endeavour to do it in a spirit of service. Serve God in every one, regard everyone and everything as manifestations of Him and serve Him by whatever work you undertake. If you live with this attitude of mind, the path to Reality will open out before you.

Guru and Shishya

Varanasi, March, 1949.

One day, during the *satsang*, an old gentleman hailing from a foreign country suddenly fell back unconscious, his face becoming bluish and foam forming on his lips. Mataji

* Mataji addresses all unmarried people as her friends and married people as her fathers and mothers.

said: "This gentleman has been practising meditation for the last 30 years. His practice was based on instructions received from books and not directly from a competent teacher. What is happening to him is the natural consequence of this. Whenever he sits down for meditation, he falls into a trance-like condition. It is not true meditation, for his mind, not being purified in a proper way, cannot contact Eternal Peace within the heart and attain to stability. Failing this it strays away along different channels and this leads to unhappy consequences, which point clearly to the necessity of being guided by an efficient master. The prescriptions and directions of masters are in strict consonance with the actual needs and capacities of the disciple, as a result of which he will be free from the troubles which follow from wrong direction. There is one thing more : he who has no yearning in his heart for the realization of the Divine but merely practises breath control mechanically may have to face unhappy results, as you are witnessing here."

In the course of a discussion about the relationship of *Guru* and *Shishya*, someone asked Mataji: "What is the work of the *Guru* and what the work of the *shishya*?" "It is said," remarked Mataji, "that the *shishya's* task is to efface the ego and become as a blank. There is a story of a king who invited the best artists to paint frescoes in his palace. Two painters were working in the same hall on opposite walls, with a curtain between them, so that neither of them could see what the other was doing. One of them created a marvellous picture which evoked the admiration of every onlooker. The other artist had not painted anything at all. He had spent all his time polishing the wall—had polished it so perfectly that when the curtain was removed, the picture of the other painter was reflected in a way that made it appear even more beautiful than the original. It is the disciple's duty to polish away the I-ness."

"But then the major portion of the work has to be accomplished by the disciple?" put in the inquirer.

“No”, said Mataji, “because it is the *Guru* who paints the picture.”

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Mataji sometimes tells the following story to illustrate that it is not enough just to hover about in the proximity of sages and saints :

“A large lotus was growing in a pond. A wanderer passed by who had never before seen a flower of this kind, Struck by its beauty he stopped to admire it. He noticed that a frog and a fish were living in the water just below the lotus. ‘What is this wonderful plant right above you ?’ he asked the frog. ‘Well, what should it be ? It is nothing very particular, just the ordinary thing,’ was the answer, and he turned away to hunt for insects. Disappointed, the man addressed the fish who replied : ‘Have you not heard what my friend the frog told you. ? It is the common every day thing, nothing special. ‘At that moment the way farer saw a bee flying at great speed towards the lotus. He tried to stop it in order to inquire, but : ‘I have no time now, wait a little !’ So saying, the bee sat down right in the heart of the exquisite blossom, sucking nectar for a long time. At last he flew back to the man : ‘Now you may talk to me.’ The wanderer repeated his question and added : ‘Tell me, what have you been doing there all this time ?’ ‘Don’t you know,’ said the bee joyfully, ‘this is a lotus full of delicious nectar, which I have been sucking and now I am a changed being.’”

It is possible to live for a long time in the close proximity of sages and saints, *sadhus* and *māhatmās* without being able to recognize their true quality; whereas one who has the *adhikāra*, who is inwardly prepared and really ready for such a contact, may come from a great distance and within a minute know the Great and Holy for what they are and derive great benefit in a short time. It depends on one’s capacity to penetrate to the essence of things.

Bhāsā Dhāranā Mālā

Being extracts from the journal of a western aspirant who wishes to remain anonymous.

“All this is strung on me
Like jewels upon a thread.”

—Bhagavad Gita

“In a garland the thread is one but there are gaps between the flowers. It is the gaps that cause want and sorrow. To fill them is to be free from want.

—Mataji

Sept. 8, 1965.

Ananda Vārtā for August has come at last. Its coming is always the same inexplicable miracle. With it comes a curious intensification of the sense of Matajis presence. And as usual one simple sentence in “Matri Vani” brings the solution of a many-days dilemma. This time it is the following admonition: “To regret one’s bad luck only troubles the mind and ruins the body; it has no other effect—keep this in mind.”

Why do we continually forget this self-evident truth? We go on bewailing the inevitable and then wonder why mind and body are so ill at ease. How could it possibly be otherwise if we spend our frail human energies in fighting His will—against Whom we are powerless?

The description, in this issue of the magazine, of the Ranchi Ashram and Mother’s birthday celebrations there served, of course, to bring vividly to mind again the days spent there with her in 1961 at Kali Puja (Divali) time, when the goddess was moved to the beautiful new *mandir*. Before it was completed, Ma came each day to inspect it. I can still see her standing in the shrine, her hair wound up

on the top of her head and a long white cape over her dhoti. She is giving instructions to Swamiji and the others about this or that which needs to be done. She herself is so vibrant that the others seem like mere shadows beside her. I am reminded that someone said to me: "She is the only *real* thing in this universe," which seemed, at the time, rather an extravagant statement.

On Divali night she sat in the shrine while the *Puja* of Ma Kali was being performed. There was a more-than-usual, bubbling, childlike gaiety about her that night. She soon began moving the various articles for worship about, arranging them in a different order, saying that everyone else had been so very busy, she also should do something: She wore a gorgeous red Banaras sari for the occasion, and someone wanted to take a colour photo of her in that. She was cheerfully agreeable; however, she had another red silk sari, every bit as beautiful, which she had just taken off before the *puja* began. That had to be in the picture, too! It was brought to her, and she happily spread it across her lap before the pictures could be taken. So gay! Not with our strained, sophisticated gaiety, but with an abandon that can only be called Divine—for it never rings with the harsh undiscipline of human abandon. How to say it? It must be the nearest thing perceivable in this world to pure, unalloyed *anandam*. Anandamayi, indeed!

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Māyer Jayanti Mālā

May, 1966.

What can it mean that we call you, "Mother," whom none dares to define? Is it that we have not known a human mother's care and seek such satisfaction in you? Or do we not yet know life well enough that we think we can escape its burdens and return to a child's protected haven—which you would not give us if you could? Do we know why we cry,

“Ma, Ma,” in every small joy and pain, while giving very little real thought to the meaning of your life? Do we know anything? No, we are rather caught, like unborn children, in the dark womb of *mahāmāyā*, our unconscious existence fed and maintained, in ways we cannot understand, by your very life—your incomprehensible *beingness* in which inner and outer; conscious, unconscious; seen, unseen, are words only, having no significance.

Yā devī sarva bhūteshu chetanetyabhidhiyate namastasyei, namastasyei, namastasyei namo namaha.

In this quiet hour I sit with closed eyes before your image. I see you smile slowly and hear you say, a little chidingly: “And what about *mouna*?” you know, though I have never told you, how much I wish to live near you under a vow of perpetual silence.....you know also that my mind is never silent for a moment.

“In *Paramātmā* there is no language.”

Through the dark, chaotic corridors of my own mind I grope blindly, led onward by the echo of your laughter: Have I lost my reason—or only just gained it—that I place my soul's trust in the ringing memory of a Woman's laughter?

Benedictus qui veni nomine domini

It is night time in New Alipore once again. I come onto the dark terrace where you sit among the shadows in compelling majesty. I lay my head at your feet for, “Good night, Ma.” Your laughter breaks forth like sudden music, pervading every atom of my being until I feel as if my very body were made of the sound of your laughter. But why, why do you laugh thus when we would make obeisance to the embodiment of our most cherished ideals, or when we ask very seriously in our hearts. “Who, what is Mataji?” Is it because you see what we cannot even guess: that we are indeed foolish children’

making *pranāma* to our own Self ; beholding our *Ātmā* IT SELF, yet saying, "What is this ?" O, the wonder of you !

* * *

"She the is only real thing in this universe."

* * *

O ! most sweet Mother, the seed you plant in us is the seed of your own divine life. Help us to cherish and nourish it. Help us, that the tender holy plant may not be choked out by the hardy weeds of our desires and distractions.

Even as I sit here, wrapped in your own cloth, so also wrap me, enfold me in your spirit, Ma. Touch my mind with the magic of your own "mind"—with is pure *ānandam*. O, take all my little darknesses away ! Let them be lost in that great light which is you yourself.

* * *

"Blessed, blessed be God that he does work in the soul and that he loves his work."

— — —

Matri Lila

JANUARY-APRIL, 1966.

In the last issue of this magazine it was already mentioned that Mataji stayed in the Kumbh Mela at the Triveni* near Allahabad from January 11th to 26th night. Quite a spacious camp consisting of thatched huts and tents and a pandal for *satsang* had been arranged for Mataji and her devotees by the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. The *Pūrṇa Kum-bha* occurs only once in 12 years. Large numbers of devotees from all over India availed themselves of this rare opportunity to spend a few days with Mataji at that holy spot. Five Westerners hailing from five different countries were also putting up in Mataji's camp. A number of Europeans and Americans were among those who came for Mataji's *darśana*. On the main bathing days, namely, on January 14th and 21st Mataji went to the Triveni together with all the devotees present. She did not actually bathe, but just sprinkled Triveni water over her head and put her feet into the water. On both occasions she was carried the distance of nearly a mile to the river in a palanquin in procession, surrounded by a kirtan party, before boarding a boat. Thousands of pilgrims had the benediction of her *darśana* on those days.

On January 18th Mataji followed an invitation to the camp of the *Bharat Sevasram Sangha*, where a meeting of many prominent and learned Mahātmās was held. Mataji was received with the utmost veneration. She could not be persuaded to address the gathering, but finally agreed to lead the kirtan for a short while.

We have already reported about the visits of the Prime Minister and several other Ministers on January 25th, the

**Triveni* means confluence of three rivers, namely Ganga, Jamuna, Saraswati. The Saraswati had gone underground years ago.

day when they had all come to the Triveni to be present at the immersion of the ashes of late Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri.

On the 26th, *Vasant Panchami* day, Saraswati Puja was celebrated with great joy and solemnity in our Camp in Mataji's presence. Saraswati is the goddess of learning, art and music and above all the bestower of *Brahma-vidyā*, the Knowledge of Reality.

The same afternoon Mataji went to the camps of Sri Jogesh Brahmachari of Calcutta and of Yogi Maharshi Mahesh. Late at night Mataji moved to the Ashram of Sri Prabhudutta Brahmachari at Jhusi, where she remained quietly for three nights, visiting the Kumbha in the day and also giving *darśana* at 31, George Town, Allahabad on the last day.

On January 29th she alighted at Varanasi by car, only to leave the next morning for Hoshiarpur, to pay a visit to Shri Haribabaji Maharaj who was seriously ill. In Varanasi Mataji went to see a number of patients on her way to the Ashram and in the Ashram itself.

Without halting at Jullundur, Mataji proceeded straight to her destination, but promised to spend a few hours there on her return journey, which she did. Sri Haribabaji's health and spirits improved visibly during Mataji's sojourn and when she left for Vrindaban on February 9th his condition was very hopeful. During her stay at Hoshiarpur, everything that Sri Haribabaji partook of in the way of food and drink was prepared in Mataji's kitchen under her personal supervision.

A large crowd of devotees came to meet Mataji at Delhi Station, trying in vain to persuade her to remain with them for a few days. Mataji however agreed to come to Delhi on April 6th and to remain over the celebration of Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava* on April 14th. Mataji reached Vrindaban on the 19th February. Only a very few companions had been allowed to accompany Mataji to Hoshiarpur. Didima,

Didi and the rest of the party had remained in Varanasi and came to join her in Vrindaban on February 12th. On the 18th Sivaratri was celebrated in the Ashram hall. As every year, many came to spend that holy night in *pūjā* and *kirtana* in Mataji's presence after whole day's complete fast.

From February 21st to 28th a Bhagavata Saptah was held, arranged by Sm. Taraben Bhuta from Bombay for the good of the soul of her husband who had passed away recently. Pd. Srinath Shastri officiated and also gave the Hindi version in the afternoons. Swami Akhandanandaji very graciously agreed to talk every evening for about an hour on the *Srimad Bhāgavata* in his well-known delightful way. Some of the students of our *Vidyapith* came specially to Vrindaban to receive their sacred threads in Mataji's presence during that time.

On March 1st Mataji left again for Hoshiarpur to spend Holi with Sri Haribabaji Maharaj, who was not yet strong enough to go to Vrindaban, although his health had in the meantime further improved considerably. Just before Mataji departure from Vrindaban an urgent telegram brought the sad news that Swami Bhumananda Giri, one of the *Sannyasi* disciples of Didima, had suddenly died of heart failure the same morning at our Varanasi Ashram. Swami Bhumanandaji, before he renounced the world and became a *Sadhu*, had been a senior official of the Government of Bengal and had been well-known to Mataji and Bholanathji since the days at Shahbagh. After having joined our organisation in the fifties as a permanent inmate, Swamiji, inspite of his old age, served the organisation in various capacities with a rare spirit of service. It is indeed surprising that Mataji had advised the Swami to come down to Varanasi from New Delhi only a few weeks before his death, and thus he was found blessed enough to be able to leave his mortal coil in our Ashram at Varanasi on the bank of the holy Ganga.

Mataji remained at Hoshiarpur for about ten days and on March 12th she left for Dehradun, halting at Jullundur for

a little while. On the 13th morning she arrived at Kishenpur where she was expected to remain until April 3rd, but actually stayed only for 5 days. Mataji gave *darśana* only once daily, as a rule, mainly at 6 p.m. One morning Mataji went to Kalyanvan and sat on a platform under a jack fruit tree. A small group of devotees collected round her and an interesting discussion ensued. Some one stated that he had received certain orders from his inner Guru. Mataji there upon explained that to be able to discern orders from one's inner Guru required "*adhikāra*" (a certain height of achievement.) There are definite signs by which such a person can be recognized. "What then are these signs?" asked another person. One is free from anger, greed, delusion, pride, egotism. One looks on all with equanimity and feels friendly towards one and all. Neither is one swayed by likes and dislikes and accepts whatever comes as divine dispensation. Unless and until one has reached a state of this kind, one is liable to confuse the promptings of one's own mind with those of the inner Guru. In the case which was being discussed, what the devotee had imagined to be the orders of his inner Guru were nothing but the creations of his own mind. It is therefore imperative until one has attained to the state of achievement described above, to obey the orders of one's outer Guru. At the end Mataji caressed the jackfruit tree and named it '*Satyavrata*' (one who clings to truth) in memory of the fact that while sitting in its shade truth had been established and falsehood disclosed.

On March 18th Mataji motored to Ananda Kashi, a solitary place about 15 miles off Rishikesh on the road to Badrinath. The Rajmata of Tehri has a guest house and Shiva temple there and years ago built a small cottage for Mataji near it, which is used by Mataji occasionally as a retreat. Only two or three people were allowed to accompany Mataji. On the way she met Swami Chidanandaji, the head of the Divine Life Society, who was going somewhere in a car. In front of Sivananda Ashram, the Sannyasis and other inmates

were waiting for Mataji who stopped there for a few minutes. They came to Ananda Kashi later to have Mataji's darśana. Some of the people of Yogi Mahesh's Ashram and a few foreigners had the good luck to meet Mataji in that charming and picturesque place on the bank of the Ganges surrounded by forests and hills, where Mataji was in a relaxed and approachable mood, since it is inaccessible to crowds.

During her stay at Ananda Kashi another sad news was conveyed to Mataji. That was about the most unexpected and untimely death of Sri Saroj Kumar Ghosh on the 21st afternoon in the Willingdon Nursing Home in New Delhi. Sri Ghosh was in robust health and was only about 48 years old at the time of his death. He was the eldest son of Sri Manomohan Ghosh of Dacca, at present residing in Varanasi, whose entire family is singularly devoted to Mataji. Sri Saroj Kumar, an extremely lovable, honest and straight-forward person, had been drawn to Mataji when he was a mere boy.

On March 25th Mataji returned to Dehradun from Ananda Kashi and went straight to the Raipur Ashram. She remained there until the 27th, when she proceeded to Kishenpur, staying in the Ashram for 5 hours only. The same evening she suddenly entrained for Varanasi with only Didima and a few others.

It was later on known that Mataji out of her infinite grace undertook the long journey to Varanasi only to give solace to the aged father and mother and the childless widow of Late Saroj Kumar. Nothing but the divine presence of Mataji could have given them the necessary strength to bear the irreparable loss.

In quick succession came the news of the sad death of one more devotee. Immediately on her arrival in Varanasi Mataji heard the news of the sudden passing away of the husband of Marani, Bholanath's, niece, who had actually been brought up by Mataji herself.

The Durga Puja in spring which is celebrated every

year in the Varanasi Ashram was held this time from 29th to 31st March. The devotees were delighted beyond measure to have Mataji among them so unexpectedly just in time for the Puja. The writer of *Matri Lila* just received a letter from a friend in Varanasi, describing very vividly her visit to the Ashram on Ram Naomi day, 31st of March. "...We had wonderful *darshan* of Mataji from 9. a. m. until noon. At first Mataji was inside the *Chandi Mandap* till about 10 a.m. but after the *Pūjā* was over she sat in the courtyard in front of the office. There was a shamiana covering that part of the courtyard. As we had from the beginning seated ourselves there, Mataji was very near to us. She distributed oranges to all people. There was a great rush of servants, street urchins and women for a short time, but the two basketfuls of fruit seemed to suffice for all, though she gave two to everyone, including children in arms and the crowd kept on coming in. The miracle which occurs so often seems to have no explanation.

"While seated in the courtyard, Mataji was speaking of an incident that had occurred that morning. During the *pūjā* a little bird—perhaps a sparrow—had flown into the room. During *ārati* it continued there, despite the noise of cymbals conches, drums, etc and would not go out. But immediately the women started rolling their tongues in their mouths and making the peculiar sound they always do during *ārati*, the bird rushed outside. When they stopped, it flew in again and sat on as before. So Ma made signs to the women to continue the sound and again the bird left the room. They kept on until the *bhoga* was removed. Ma said it would have made a mess on the food had it been allowed to remain there. She told us that while watching the bird she had the *kheyāla* that "a change occurs only when a certain special point is reached. The bird was indifferent to the sound of singing, cymbal, drums, etc. But the sound of the women rolling tongues sent it away. Similarly we are indifferent to certain things until something special shatters our indifference and awakens us."

In the meantime someone brought a book and gave it to Ma. It seemed to be the first copy of a newly published work in Bengali. Ma called one of the Ashram girls who teaches in the Kanyapith and asked her to read it out to the audience. As she was reading, Mataji unobtrusively put a garland round her neck, then she quietly put another garland on the book. Then signed for a small table to be put under the book, then a kushāsana for the reader, finally a mark of sandal-paste on the book and on the reader's forehead. It looked as if she quietly initiated the girl into the vocation of a *pāthaka* (reader of sacred scriptures), so that henceforth she could give discourses etc. The girl became very bashful and shy, but Mataji motioned to her to proceed and she had to carry on for a few minutes until the chapter ended. Then Mataji called for a Hindi book, but as none was forth coming she asked whether anyone could translate into Hindi what had been read so far. A girl who is a Dr. in Sanskrit offered and did it very competently. The subject matter was Daksha's *yajñā*. It was as if Mataji wished to satisfy all the people present, Bengalis and non-Bengalis.

When we had arrived at the Ashram, Mataji was pacing the veranda of the Kanyapith. We had taken some loose flowers ; roses, marigolds, jasmynes. As we reached she was distributing other flowers to those about her. So we waited until her hands were empty and then went forward. She took the flowers and said : "I was wondering that now the flowers were finishing what would I do for more, and here they are !" She took ours and distributed them as well, I was very happy that morning seemed so significant and charged with an inner meaning....."

On the 29th afternoon Mataji motored to Vindhychal for a few hours. She then remained in Varanasi quietly until April 5th, alighting in Delhi on the 6th. On the 9th she visited Vrindaban returning on the 10th. In Delhi Mataji had a very hectic time, with no end to people who clamoured for her *darśana* and interviews. On the 13th the Prime

Minister came to see her and invited Mataji to her house. Mataji went there on the 15th morning. Sm. Indiraji offered fruits to Mataji and fed her with her own hand. Dr. Sushila Nayar, Health Minister, also came to see Mataji twice and listened to the Kirtan that was held all day on the 15th. Another visitor who had a very long interview with Mataji was Dr. Caseyedo, Cultural Attache of the Columbian Embassy who is a Psychiatrist. On the 14th Didima's Sannyasa Utsava was celebrated with great solemnity as every year. Swami Chetan Giriji very graciously gave a beautiful talk.

On the 16th Mataji and most of her party left for Dehradun. Mataji herself, however, got down at Hardwar and went to the Ashram at Kankhal for 3 nights with a handful of companions. She had a short rest there between the rush of Delhi and the very full programme that is awaiting her at Kishenpur, where she arrived by car on April 20th. Her birthday is to be celebrated in the compound next to Kalyanvan from May 3rd to 8th.

Mataji is completing her 70th year. On this joyful occasion we all join in the fervent prayer that she may continue to keep her body in perfect health and grant us the benediction of her presence in this world that so sorely needs her, for many, many more years to come.