

CONTENTS

English Section

1.	Mātri Vāni	...	...	..	157
2.	What does Sri Anandamayi Ma say ? —Dr. Prafulla Chandra Dutta			....	160
3.	From the Diary of a European —Melita Maschmann	...		..	167
4.	Ma—My Sadguru —Saroj	....	...	...	172
5.	A little Anthology —On oneness	...		....	177
6.	Sivananda Gita	...	....	...	180
7.	The Supreme optimism of Hinduism —K.S. Ramaswami Sastri	....		....	185
8.	Sacred Places of Kashmir, Jammu and Ladhak—A devotee	...		...	187
9.	Mātri Lila	...	...	...	192

MATAJI'S 73rd BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION.

The President of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha has great pleasure to announce that the 73rd birthday celebration of Shree Shree Mata Anandamayee will be held at the Varanasi Ashram from May 2nd to May 16th, 1968. Mataji is expected to be in Varanasi during this period.

You are most cordially invited to take part in the auspicious celebrations.

R. S. V. P.

General Secretary
Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha,
Bhadaini, Varanasi.

SPECIAL NOTE :

Kindly note that with effect from this year individual invitation letters shall not be sent by post as usual. We sincerely hope that you will please appreciate our difficulties that it has become practically impossible to send invitation letters to countless devotees of Mataji individually.

We beg to be apologised for the same.

General Secretary,
Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha.



Courtesy: Sri M. K. Thacker, Dhanbad.



Katrasgarh (Dhanbad) January, 1968.

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

MĀTRI VĀNI

The *akṣara** (syllable or series of syllables) by which the mind is liberated is called *mantra*.† The *akṣara* is *cinmayī* (permeated as it were by consciousness), it is the *Śabda Brahman* (expression of the Supreme Reality), it is called the *Nāma Brahman*). Feel convinced that He will be found in the Name. Have firm faith that the seed that has been buried in your consciousness will without fail grow into a tree. Just as, after sowing a seed, it has to be watered and manured, similarly the seed in the form of a mantra will be made to sprout when provided with the necessary nourishment in the form of *satsang*. As you desire God, be it in a particular form or without form, so will you find Him,

* * *

Never remain without His Presence, without His Name. While moving about, while eating and sleeping, at all times sustain the flow of His Name. A plant will grow more or less rapidly exactly according to the measure in which you provide it with water and manure. If you do not progress quickly, you should understand that it is entirely your own fault. Call to mind that you have not been able to go beyond the way of thinking fostered life after life and dedicate yourself wholly at His feet. The wrong lies all on your side.

* * *

* *Akṣara* means both "syllable" and "indestructible". The 'Om' is also known as *akṣara*.

† A play upon words that cannot be rendered into English. *Man* mind, *trāṇ* liberation sounds together almost like *mantra*.

What this body (Mataji) always, says, is : Become a pilgrim on the path of Immortality. Shun the road that leads to death; tread the path of Immortality. Bring to light that you are imperishable, immortal.



To live in the presence of God Who is Truth—this indeed is the meaning of *satsang*. Seek refuge in Him ! By taking shelter in Him, every blemish and imperfection will melt away. Your defects will surely be transformed into virtues. He is father, mother, friend, beloved—He is all in all : this is the idea you have to cultivate. Is there anything that He cannot give ? If your desire is intense, it is quite impossible that Light should not come to you. The question whether the path is long or short must not be allowed any room in your mind. ‘Realization will have to be granted to me,’ this should be your determination. Employ your whole strength and capacity, then only will you succeed. How beautiful ! By holding on to Him, everything comes of itself.

Abandon the transitory. ‘I am the *Ātmā*,’ fix this thought in your mind. In order to be liberated from constant coming and going, the round of births and deaths, one has to seek the support of the Guru. Wither does one come and where does one go ? He Himself is everywhere. Taking refuge in Him is liberation.



In the measure as one loves God, detachment from sense objects ensues. To concentrate on God means to become drawn towards Him. And *vāirāgya* (detachment) means becoming disentangled from sense objects. Feeling pulled towards God and indifferent to sense objects occurs simultaneously. Renunciation happens of itself. There is no need to give up anything. This is real, genuine renuncia-

tion. You all are relinquishing the highest Bliss and thus you actually are renunciates ! By abstaining from the Supreme you have become supreme renunciates.

*

*

*

How wonderful is the play in God's creation ? The Self, the *Ātmā*, is of course one. Nevertheless, there are 'you and I, yours and mine,' and all the rest of it. If you cannot give up the "yours and mine," then be the eternal servant of the Lord. How many lives have you not spent in the world, in family life, in the delusion of "this is mine and that is mine." Say to yourself : "I am immortal, the Self—there is only one Brahman without a second—I am His and His alone." If the distinction between you and I remains, then let the 'you' be God. What is in ice ? Nothing but water. He is formless as well as with form. What is He with form ? He Himself in action—actionless action. Attraction means to be attracted to one's own Self.

*

*

*

Where God is there is also *māyā*. When was He not ? Therefore, *māyā* is equally beginningless. Where is the end of it ? To whom does one feel attracted ? Whose manifestation is it ? Reflect deeply ! If all is His manifestation, then whose *māyā* is it ? Endeavour to find yourself, be it as the Lord's eternal servant, be it as the *Ātmā*. You are immortal—the Bliss of the Self. Why then has one to experience birth and death ? There is but the Self reposing within Itself.

What does Sri Anandamayi Ma say ?

DR. PRAFULLA CHANDRA DATTA

(Translated from Hindi)

After meeting Sri Anandamayi Ma, many people quite naturally ask : "What is her teaching ? What advice does she give ? What does she say ?"

To such questions I usually reply : "Mataji has no particular doctrine. Her speciality is that she has no special teaching." Further, if nothing else occurs to my mind, I say : "Rather than repeating what I have heard her say, it will be better if you go and hear her talk for yourself. Listen to the words that fall from her lips, to the language of her laugh, the message of her gaze, of her touch – listen to what she says in words and to what she communicates in silence".

When I first came to Mataji, I became interested in those who had dedicated themselves at her feet. Some were *sannyāsis* and some householders, some wore *tulasi* beads round their necks and some *rudraksha* ; in one man's hand I saw a trident and in another's a staff and a begging-bowl. And some had nothing at all. One was absorbed in reciting Sanskrit hymns, another was an aspirant on the path of enquiry, a third melting away in deep emotion with tears of divine love glistening in his eyes. On getting to know them closer, I discovered that one person was a *sannyāsi* of the Tirtha line. His story was simply that one day Mataji had told him to take *Sannyāsā* from a certain Guru belonging to that line. Another one is a *Sannyāsi* of the Sarasvati line, a third one of that of Giri, and a fourth Puri. One man is a *Vaisnava*, another a *Saivite* and yet another a *Sakta*. All say : "Ma is guiding me by this particular path." After having met Ma, some young men and women have left their

homes to live the lives of Brahmacharis and Brahmacharinis. On the other hand, Mataji has advised some young people who wanted to live in the Ashram, to get married. She told them : "Remember, wherever you may be, this little child will always be with you".

In the centre of all this diversity stands Ma, directing the currents of all these variegated streams.

In the religious life of the world, a new phase has begun with the appearance of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He went through the manifold *sādhana*s of the various religions and accepted them all as paths to the Supreme.

In Sri Anandamayi Ma we observe the cultivation of all the different lines of approach. Just as all the mothers of the universe nurse their offspring, so is Mataji engaged in fostering all the multifarious currents of religious aspiration of the world. How then can we discover any special doctrine of Ma ?

Mataji says : "There is an infinite number of paths, countless ways of advancing and countless states of achievement." Are the states of spiritual achievement also innumerable ? Mataji very definitely says : "Certainly." But there is also something beyond, where none of these are, and not even any question of them.

The special characteristic of Creation is endless variety. Everything is His manifestation. He Himself is the multifarious natures and dispositions of His diverse creatures. No matter what be anyone's idiosyncrasy, no matter at what stage he may find himself, from there he has to start and go ahead. The practice that aims at realizing one's Self, at finding Truth, at recovering one's real treasure, is called *sādhana*. Whichever activity helps anyone to discover his own intrinsic wealth, this, according to Mataji, is his real duty (*svadharma*). Anything that may be obstructing this effort has to be avoided. There must not be the least self-deception in this.

A small incident may here be related. A young married woman would under the slightest instigation go into "*samādhi*". Or rather, people thought it was "*samādhi*". On such occasions she seemed lifeless, her limbs would turn cold. Once this happened in Mataji's presence. Mataji at once understood what was the matter with the girl. She whispered a "*mantra*" into her ear. And what was the "*mantra*?" "You will very soon receive a letter from your husband." From that day the "*samādhi*" of the young woman never occurred again and her behaviour became normal. Her states of lifelessness had been anything but *samādhi*.

Another incident of a different variety. A young man used to have visions of various kinds. He would for instance witness Sri Krishna tell Arjuna the Bhagavad Gita. He was profoundly moved by these visions. Tears would constantly flow from his eyes. Mataji told him: "Don't lose your self-control. Seekers after Truth must never be overpowered by anything. Fully conscious and wide awake, with the attitude of a spectator, they must watch everything that happens."

The condition of a lady was discussed who used to get *bhāva samādhis* during *kirtana*. Mataji said: "She herself admits that she feels extremely happy while in a state of *bhāva*. Therefore it is obvious that she is in a different state at other times." Mataji also pointed out that it was often difficult to distinguish brass from gold. With utter truthfulness one has to tread the path of Truth. Mataji understands all the stages of *sādhana*.

Once someone remarked: "The Bengalis are highly emotional. For a little while they do *kirtana* and dance with ecstasy and a little later they give way to depression. What is the use of such momentary elation?"

Mataji said: 'It is true that momentary elation has no great value. All the same, let them have their way; at

least for a little while they are turned in His direction." Mataji always advises everyone to direct their efforts towards God.

A gentleman once took leave : "Ma, may I go home ?" Mataji laughed : "Yes, prepare to go home. Your present home is temporary. Look, the wonder of it is that everyone is eager to go home, yearning for his home. Only people do not know where their real home is. Pitaji, what you call home is only a dharmasala, at a moment's notice you have to quit."

Those who want to know their true home, for them Mataji makes arrangements according to their own uniqueness. Mataji has said : "Anyone, to whatever faith or sect he may belong, is given by this body whatever help he requires on his own path. It is his own Self that is assisting him—if only he will be good enough to accept the assistance."

How beautiful Ma's words are. She often says : "Always keep a piece of sugar candy (*misri*) in your mouth."

What good will this do ? While working in the office, while reading and writing, while chatting with my friends, part of my consciousness will constantly be engaged in tasting the sweetness of the sugar. What is meant by sugar candy ? The Name, God's holy Name. Mataji says : "In the Name He Himself is present. For other forms of worship one has to go to a temple or an ashram ; but for his presence in the Name one need not go to any particular place. In the Name His supremely dear Presence is ever within our reach, no matter where we may be."

Mataji says : "The Lord's name is like tamarind. The more you repeat His name the purer will your mind become. By using tamarind, dirt is removed. When vessels are clean they show their true substance. To repeat the Name means to scrub. By scrubbing, your real Nature will stand revealed ; this is *Jñāna* (Knowledge). By the flood of Knowledge all *karma* will be washed away."

There are already innumerable paths, what need is there of a new one ? Mataji says: "There are so many different kinds of toys. The game has been played so often. Whichever toy you choose, you will come to understand that it is all the same. Saying : 'I cannot do it, it cannot be achieved' just means courting indolence. The day that is gone never returns. You are so busy playing with the toys of the world that you find no time for the real game."

"Mataji, even though being with you, I do not feel satisfied !" a young girl complained.

Mataji smiled and began to relate a story.

"A man went to the bazar for shopping. When he got there he found it very crowded and noisy. He thought : 'Let the confusion subside and then I shall do my work.' He waited for quite a long time. At last the crowd dispersed and it became quiet. But when he approached the stalls; he found that everything worth buying had been sold.

"In the play of the world there is always some confusion and trouble. This is a necessary part of the game. Face the difficulties and you will also get the goods."

"Ma, my mind does not keep still, what to do ?" is a frequent question. Mataji's smiling answer: "I do not notice that your mind is agitated as yet. Has it become really restless in search of Him ? After it has become thoroughly agitated with yearning after the Real, then only can it become still."

A married woman asked : "Ma, in my home nobody approves of *pūjā*, *japa*, meditation and the like. My husband, father-in-law and brother-in-law, all are opposing it. What am I to do ?" Mataji said : "You observe so many religious vows in your homes; don't you keep a fast on Tuesdays and fast and do puja all night on Sivaratri ? Will you try to take up the following practice, mother ? One day a month, from morning till night, regard everyone as a manifestation of God. Your husband, father-in-law, brother-in-law, consider

them to be God in different guises. That day look at your children as child Krishna and Kumari Devi ; whoever comes to your house, be they guests, beggars, hawkers, treat them all as forms of Narayana. If on that day you are visited by any sorrow or trouble, welcome them as messengers of the Lord. By continuing with this practice you will find circumstances becoming favourable to the worship of God. First of all do this once every month, then once a week and you will observe that the happiness you feel on that day will influence all the rest of the week."

Mataji continued : "Everyone should advance along one particular line. He who takes the path of the lover of God will realize Him as the blissful embodiment of Supreme Love. He who takes the path of Knowledge will realize Him as Knowledge Itself, as the formless Brahman. Just as one and the same individual is son, husband and father, so the One Brahman is Being, Consciousness, Bliss. From whichever angle a person approaches God, thus will he find Him, the ONE. If he progresses by yoga, he will realize eternal Union. He will have to go beyond the opposites of union and separation. And in the final attainment, the question of eternal and non-eternal, of beyond and not beyond, does not exist."

Mataji says, like Sri Ramakrishna, that there are as many approaches as there are sects. How then do all these various avenues end in the same Goal ? I want to reach Vaikunth, a how will I get to Kailash ? I want liberation, how can I feel eternal love ? Mataji says : "Everything is contained in everything. Just as an infinite number of trees are potentially contained in the tiny seed."

Mataji's words are not mere words, they are blossoms of a marvelous fragrance. Mataji's words are sparks in which eternal fire has been stored. Mataji's words are songs swinging on the waves of divine ecstasy. They are mantras by whose power man's life opens out and begins to flower. They

are streams of Light that swallow up the darkness of doubt and argument. How can I carry to you the current of that fragrance, that fire, that divine ecstasy, that mantric power, those streams of Light? Those only who have listened to Mataji's words know how much magic is contained in the sweet sayings of the miraculously sweet Ma Anandamayi.

From the Diary of a European

Melita Maschmann

(X)

(Translated from German)

Calcutta, 29th December 1963.

Perhaps there is no country like India where people know from the depths of their hearts how sorely we need saints and sages. The Indian people's spiritual destiny and capacity has provided them with God-intoxicated men and women right up to our own days. It has taught them to recognize, love and adore the Holy and the Wise, regardless of the faith to which they may belong.

*

*

*

Yesterday afternoon, Mataji, for a whole hour sat on her bed completely absorbed, without the slightest movement. Only her eyelids raised themselves off and on, but her glance reminded me of that of a blind person: it was turned towards the world without perceiving it. Her whole being expressed contemplation—the contemplation of God. Reflection of His Light by the mirror of the soul. A particle of this light occasionally reflects in us. Then only we perceive it.

Yesterday an elderly man sat in front of Ma. I was told that he was the principal of a college. Suddenly his face tore open like a bleeding wound: suffering—for himself, for the world, for God. There is nothing that can be concealed at such a moment. Later, when Ma "returned," her glance rested for a long time on the face of the gentleman, and suddenly, he began to cry. He shut his eyes and tears trickled down from under his closed eyelids. After a while he full length fell at Mataji's feet. Then he stood up and went away.

It sometimes happens that a person who leaves Mataji as this man did, transforms his home into an Ashram the next day, or puts on the robe of a *Sādhu*. I have heard many reports of how, without acting, Mataji has changed the lives of people. Usually, much less ostentatiously, but not any less effectively. Always in the direction of what she calls the goal of human existence, namely the Realization of God.

Very strange, this action in non-action. Holiness that acts of itself, by its very being and its radiation.

Christian holiness always seems to be coupled with suffering. I do not know enough about it. But the unavoidable presence of the crucified Christ binds sanctity and suffering indissolubly together. So it seems to me. According to the Catholic doctrine, even the saints, as created spirits, are not established beyond sin. They will ever be pained at their imperfections, however radiant their purity may appear to those who are allowed to contact them.

The Indian Sage realizes with his whole being: *aham brahmasmi* (I am the *Brahman*). In this there is not the shadow of a doubt as to his own self. He realizes absolute perfection in himself. Any kind of doubt would only prove the incompleteness of his identification with the Brahman.

I have often regretted that I am not a trained student of the science of comparative religion. Yet, at certain moments it becomes clear to me how much easier this makes it for me, since the burden of concepts and categories does not interfere with my impartiality. The discussion between the different religions may be important and fruitful. But actual contact is made when a stroke of intuition throws light into the pre-conceptual depths of the other faith and we suddenly see: here also is the reflection of the highest Truth. To such knowledge Mataji helps me more than prolonged and profound study. Perhaps I am specially privileged in this matter. I am reminded of the

pathetic ejaculation of a scientist of religion who jokingly said that people of his profession were either too bigotted or too clever. In other words: they either approach a foreign religion with the prejudices of their own faith or they fail to understand the peculiarity of the religious problems which they regard from a foreign point of view. How lucky that I am neither specially pious nor specially clever.

January 5th, 1964.

Mataji today on the platform at Howrah, the largest Railway Station of Calcutta. I am told it has more traffic than any other Railway Station in the whole of Asia. It is impossible for a European to imagine such a babel. Whole villages, whole native tribes, hundreds of soldiers, sadhus, kulis, distinguished families, school children, groups of pilgrims, begging cripples, beggar children, chaprassis, all sorts of tradesmen and vendors—all of them running hither and thither, stumbling over huge piles of luggage and making an ear-splitting hubbub.

And Mataji in the midst of this infernal tohuwabohu, surrounded by innumerable inquisitive onlookers, hailed by her devotees. She stands quietly, wrapped in her white clothes, with her hair hanging down loosely, smiling her familiar and yet very remote smile. Stillness around her, peace in her eyes—*nirvāna* in the midst of misery!

Puri, January 1964.

After the inescapable teeming masses of Calcutta, Puri is a veritable paradise—at least the seashore where the Ashram is situated. Only for sleeping and for my meals I go to the hotel, all the rest of the time I spend sitting by the sea. Never before have I known such a wonderful beach. I am told it continues for over ten miles in a perfectly straight line and with the same width. The sea constantly beats against the coast with such vehemence that one is seized and dragged away by the waves like a toy. It is impossible to

swim here, but a special charm lies in letting oneself be overpowered by the roaring billows and carried back to the coast. Here and there fishermen have spread their long brownish nets. Their boats are still made in the same way as thousand years ago.

As a rule Mataji comes out of the Ashram shortly before sunset and sits on a broad pedestal of cement which has been specially constructed for her *darśana*. Her back is turned towards the house and she faces the sea.

Rarely are there more than twenty or thirty people and there is hardly ever any conversation. Mataji herself is very still here. Not absorbed in herself and closed up, but wide open, listening and seeing, in silent communion with the cosmic powers. Relaxed, she is leaning against a cushion, only her head sometimes slowly turns in a semicircle and her eyes calmly wander over the horizon, often returning to the first star whose silvery sparkle is so powerful that it is maintained right through the glow of the evening sky.

Yesterday it was night before she went inside. For almost three hours she had sat in her place, transfigured into an almost awe-inspiring depersonalization. It seemed obvious that she did not even notice the people who knelt before her to do obeisance. Her gaze seemed to penetrate right down to the depths of the universe. As long as the evening sky was beaming, one could observe the reflection of that depths in Mataji's eyes and face. It struck me that when I had my first *darśana* of Mataji, about two years ago, I was reminded of a mighty, well-grown tree. Something of this characteristic of a tree could now again be distinctly felt in Mataji. On thousands of leaves the tree exposes its heart to the sun, wind, the roaring of the breakers, the rain, the starlight. Their manifold message is not filtered and misinterpreted by the brain, but penetrates right to its marrow, to the furthest parts of its roots and is assimilated into its very substance.

A like openness for the cosmic was in Mataji last night. This is most probably a distinctive mark of her being. How could it be otherwise? For him who has reached the *Aham Brahmasmi*, the sun, the ocean, the evening star, the wind, are brothers and sisters with whom he converses in a universal language of confidence. I believe, even these metaphors are insufficient. Very likely, Mataji would say that she has no dialogue with the sea. 'Dialogue' is a concept coined by our thinking in duality.

This evening, Mataji was off and on talking to people who had come from a neighbouring town. Then again she remained silent for a long time; but I had the impression that we were all included in her monologue with the sea and the nightly sky. After she had gone inside, someone remarked: "How fortunate that God is present not only as water, that is to say without form, but also manifests as ice, which means 'with form.' If He were only water, I should feel frightened. Who could understand His voice? But in Mataji He speaks to us so that we can understand and love Him." This very aptly expressed also my own feelings.

My host in Calcutta had said: "The same Holy Ghost that revealed Itself in Christ, Buddha and other Enlightened Ones, speaks through Mataji."

This morning there was another convincing token of how concrete and vital Mataji's relation to Cosmic Powers is. We went for a stroll along the seashore. After a while, Mataji remained standing on the strip of wet sand that is regularly inundated by the largest breakers. For a long time she gazed at the ocean with calm attention. Suddenly her face relaxed in a radiant smile and she said: "The ocean is giving me *darśana*." And when a little later a wave flowed over her feet: "With this touch it greets me."

All this did not sound either solemn, nor theatrical, nor playful; it had a great, beautiful simplicity.

Ma—My Sadguru

SAROJ

From my very childhood, I was prone to adore *Śakti* as my cherished deity (*Iṣṭā*). The world itself appeared to me as the manifestation of God's omnipotence, the translation of His divine vigour. The popular idea, that *Śiva* remains merely a *Śava*, (corpse) without *Śakti*, was also patent enough to make me aware of the supremacy of *Śakti* over other forms (*svarūpas*) of the Lord Almighty.

This worship of *Śakti* on my part went on with a strong urge to find Her in a human form having a definite Personality. That longing within me grew deeper and deeper and I got firm on realizing Her through *Sakāma bhakti* and seeing my ailing husband recovered through Her grace.

It was in the year 1949 that one fine morning I was told to have Ma Anandmayī's *darśana*. The very idea of seeing a woman saint thrilled me to the core of my heart. As a girl of fifteen, my innocence was beaming to bow down at Mother's feet. At the first blush, I had a wonderful experience of seeing Ma surrounded by Her *sevikas* and devotees all with their eyes fixed at Her face. It was as if I had been caught up in the spell of Her eternal serenity shining on Her face and I felt as if Her one glance had blessed me to the point of becoming desireless. Ignorant as I was I had, that moment, nothing to offer at Her lotus feet except a garland. Ma accepted that humble gift of mine and blessed me as my *Sadguru* with Her kind and compassionate look. I then experienced that She had given me graciously what I needed most in life by purging me of my past *vikāras*. I recalled again and again the lines.

*Tulsidas Pattrain Jalasya Chulukenava,
Vikrinetai Swamātmānam Bhagwāna Bhakta vatsalah*

(God who loves His devotees sells Himself for only a tulsi-leaf and a handful of water.)

Bhakta vātsala Ma, my *Sadguru*, blessed me by giving Her *darśana* at a time when I was pining to see *Śakti* face to face. This is how Ma Anandamayī fulfills Her bhaktas desires.

Ma does, many a time, advise us to become desireless through our sustained *sādhana*, since desires are the cause of the cycle of births and deaths.

However, human nature is such that one cannot easily be free from desires, even if one grapples with them constantly. It is by the *Sadguru's Kripa* (Grace) that One begins to feel the simplification of one's needs. Lord Krishna says in the Gita :—

*Dhyāyato viṣayān puṁsah saṅgaṣṭēsūpajāyatē.
Saṅgāt sañjāyatē kāmaḥ kāmātkrodhobhijāyatē.
Krodhātभवति सम्मोहाḥ सम्मोहāt smṛitīvibhramah.
Smṛitibhramṣāt buddhināśo buddhi nāsāt praṇasyati.*

(When a man thinks of the objects of sense, attachment for them arises ; from attachment desire is born ; from desire anger arises.

From anger comes delusion ; from delusion loss of memory ; from loss of memory the destruction of discrimination ; from destruction of discrimination he perishes).

Hence the key to eternal bliss lies in the elimination of desire. In this humdrum of temporal life, none can make us free from desires except a *Sadguru* like Mataji. Two or three personal experiences will reveal how Ma has graced me by fulfilling my desires to the point of rendering me a *sharanāgata*, surrendered at her lotusfeet.

My husband's weak health was a matter of constant worry to me. With a view to invoking Her grace, I used to worship Her day and night for my husband's speedy recovery. In the meantime I was asked by someone to pray

directly before Mataji for his health. It was in the year 1959 that I made up my mind to beg of Mataji to cure my husband.

Luckily, Mataji came to Etawah in February 1960 and I decided to go and see Her there. It was my first private visit to Mataji. I quietly approached Her as a petitioner; but no sooner did I enter the room, than what I had to say and how I had to say it completely vanished from my mind. To my utter surprise, I found that the mental fog, in which I had been enveloped, dissolved at the sunny smile of Ma. On Her asking me about my problem I found myself speechless. Somehow, I regained my original self and told her that I wanted to see my husband cured of the serious disease he was suffering from, upon which Ma with Her usual ineffable sweet voice advised me to have faith in God and pray to Him for my husband. Although there was nothing new in Her advice, yet Her words were spoken in such a sympathetic tone that I had the experience of drinking in Mother's infinite compassion oozing out of Her lustrous eyes. Soon I reached the state of empathy, the state of oneness where Ma was mine and I was Hers completely. It made me feel as if Mataji had yielded to my wish and my husband was completely cured. Thereafter I would go nowhere else for his treatment. This is how Ma, my *Sadguru*, infused me with the spirit of welcoming the impending misery in the shape of my husband's prolonged ailment and made me content with my lot.

Mataji offers us many an opportunity to wash away the dirt of our *samsakāras* collected in countless former lives. She always asks us to welcome temptations and distractions and to look upon them as God-given opportunities for our advance and to turn our eyes inwards.

Even our good deeds make us egoistic unless we offer them to the Creator of the world. Man feels himself to be the doer (कर्त्ताऽहम् इति मन्यते). Thus he is liable to be caught

in the clutches of his ego. Being ego-ridden, I was proud of my services rendered to my husband during the period of his illness. As a result I used to feel that my beloved was not subject to decay and that I was chaste enough to obstruct the speed of Time and Death, and to fight even with Death like Savitri, if some misfortune came my way.

With this intensity of delusion I continued to serve my husband, feeling that I was the doer. This had wrapped me in the veil of *moha* (attachment). Then it happened that the tidal wave of the inscrutable Will struck hard and deprived me of my husband's company forever, in May 1963. The blow was terrible for me. As the attachment was intense, the grief was equally intense. My vision became clouded, my senses paralyzed and I remained unconscious for three days. It was on the fourth day that I recovered from that state of torpor and started uttering: "Ma, Ma, Ma, Anandamayi Ma, *Dayamayi* Ma!" My eyes closed again and to my consolation, I saw Ma in Her very subtle form consoling me with Her benign touch. I cried: "Ma! You have deserted me. I have lost my life's joy forever." I still remember the wonderful experience when Ma took me in Her affectionate embrace and said: "Your husband was not yours alone. He was God's first, yours afterwards. He needed Him more than you. As regards your life, you have other duties to perform. Now look after your children as you used to look after their father". The vision had faded away. The next moment, I opened my eyes and felt I was a different person altogether. The grief had subsided and the state of normalcy returned. Since then, my tears disappeared and with a calm mind I began to console those who came to mourn my husband's death. I encouraged them to read the *Gita* and *Ramayana* for the benefit of the departed soul. His loss made me feel that the services rendered to him egoistically had been insufficient to satisfy his Maker. I, then, understood the meaning of Milton's famous lines :

“God doth not need
Either man’s work, or His own gifts :
Who best bear His mild yoke,
They serve Him best.”

Who else can give me such insight except Ma, my
Sadguru ?

Ever since, I have endeavoured to act as Mother’s
instrument and carry out Her commands as best as I can.
My salutations again and again to the Goddess who resides
in all beings as ‘Mother’ and shows them light as *Sadguru*
in the moments of gloom.

A Little Anthology

ON ONENESS

All that exists anywhere in the world, be it trees and plants, insects, reptiles or any other living thing, their birth is indeed your birth, and their death your death. On the level where everything is contained within you and you are present in everything, there is only the One, and He alone.

—*Mataji*

But if the same soul is everywhere, how can there be a particular soul of each individual? And how is one good and another bad? The one soul is sufficient to provide for individuals as well as the whole, and contains all souls and all intellects . . . Each one of them is not marked off from the others by boundaries; so in this way it is also one. It was not to have a single, but an unbounded life, and yet a single one too, single in this way, that all souls are together, not collected into a unity but springing from a unity and remaining in that from which they spring; or rather they never did spring from it but always were in this state, for nothing there comes into being, and so nothing is divided into parts; it is only the recipient who thinks that it is divided.

—*Plotinus*

The master said to me: all the Buddhas and all sentient beings are nothing but the One mind beside which nothing exists. This mind, which is without beginning, is unborn and indestructible. It does not belong to the categories of things which exist or do not exist nor can it be thought of in terms of new or old. It is neither long nor short, big nor small, for it transcends all limits, measures, names, traces and comparisons. It is that which you see before you—begin to reason about it and you at once fall into error. It

is like the boundless void which cannot be fathomed or measured. The one mind alone is the Buddha, there is no distinction between the Buddha and sentient things but sentient beings are attached to forms and so seek externally for Buddhahood. By their very seeking they lose it, for that is using the Buddha to seek for the Buddha and using mind to grasp mind. Even though they do their utmost for a full aeon, they will not be able to attain it. They do not know that if they put a stop to conceptual thought and forget their anxiety, the Buddha will appear before them, for this mind is the Buddha and the Buddha is all living beings. It is not the less for being manifested in ordinary beings, nor is it greater for being manifested in the Buddhas.

—*Huang Po*

Wherefore it behoves thee to strive and hide thy *self* from thy sight, and occupy thyself with Very Being, and concern thyself with the Truth, for the various grades of created things are theatres of His revealed beauty, and all things that exist are mirrors of His perfections.

And in this course thou must persevere until He mingles Himself with thy soul, and thine own individual existence passes out of thy sight. Then, if thou regardest thyself, it is He whom thou art regarding: if thou speakest of thyself, it is He of whom thou art speaking. The relative has become the Absolute, and 'I am the Truth' is equivalent to 'He is the Truth.'

—*Jami*

God is not light nor life nor love nor nature nor spirit nor semblance nor anything we can put into words. God flows into God and God flows out of God and God knows himself God in himself and himself God in his creatures in general and he knows himself God in the noble soul in particular. The father is almighty in the soul, the Son all-wise, the Holy Ghost all-loving, loving all creature with the same love. But he manifests as *different* and the soul is destin-

ed to know things as they are and conceive things as they are when, seized thereof, she plunges into the bottomless well of the divine nature and becomes so one with God that she herself would say that she is God.

—*Master Eckhart*

What you are you do not see, what you see is your shadow.

—*Tagore*

“In order to find your Self you must become revealed to yourself.”

—*Mata Anandamayi*

Sivanand Gita*

I was born of P.S. Vengu Iyer and Parvati Ammal on September 8th, 1887 at Pattamadai, Tinnevely Dt., S.I., in the line of Appayya Dikshit. My star is Bharani. I was extremely mischievous in my boyhood. I studied in the S.P. G. College, Trichinopoly. I was a doctor in the Malaya States for ten years. I took *sannyāsa* in 1924 in Rishikesh. I did *tapas* and meditation for fifteen years. I founded the Divine Life Society in 1936 and the All World Religious Federation in 1945.

I am childlike in my *svabhāva*. So I mix with all. I am ever happy and joyful and make others also happy and joyful. I am full of educative humour. I radiate joy through humour. I respect all. I do salutations to all first. I always speak sweetly. I walk quickly. I do *japa* and meditation while walking and while at work also.

I am ever hard-working. I have intense application to work. I never leave a task until it is finished. I never procrastinate any work. I finish it then and there. I am very quick in doing things. I cannot suppress the spirit of service in me. I cannot live without doing service. I take immense delight in serving. Service has elevated me. Service has purified me. I extract work through kindness, service, respect and love.

I am very regular in doing *āsanas* and exercises. I do *prāṇāyama* also regularly. These give me wonderful health and energy. I run round the *bhajan* hall daily. I cannot deliver fiery lectures sitting on a special seat. Special seat pricks me. I stand up or throw the seat away and then begin to speak. I never sat on a special seat when I presided over spiritual conferences. I rejoice in giving. I always give.

* Reprinted from "Elixir Divine," the last work of Swami Shivanand.

I am 73 now. I ever feel I am quite young. I am full of vigour, vim and vitality. I am ever cheerful. I sing, dance, run, jump in joy. I am robust and strong. I can digest any kind of food. I continuously work, read and write. I never go to hill-stations or the seaside for a holiday. Change of work gives rest. Meditation gives abundant rest. Work gives me delight. Service gives me happiness. Writing bestows joy. Meditation energizes and invigorates me. Kirtan vivifies me.

“*Aham Brahmasmi*” “*Sivoham*” “*Soham, Satchit-ānanda Svarūpoham.*” This is my favourite formula for Vedantic meditation. “*Chidanand*” is my favourite song for singing. “*Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma, Rāma, Hare Hare, Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, hare hare.*”

This *mahāmantra kīrtana* is my favourite *kīrtana*.

At the present moment I am the richest man in the whole world. My heart is full. Further, all the wealth of the Lord belongs to me now. Hence I am king of kings, Emperor of emperors, Shah of Shahs, Mahārājā of Mahārājās. I take pity on mundane kings. My dominion is limitless. My wealth is inexhaustible. My joy is irrepressible. My treasure is immeasurable. I attained this through *sannyāsa*, renunciation, untiring selfless service, *japa*, *kīrtana* and meditation.

I am tall. My height is 6 ft. I have a sinewy frame. I have symmetrical limbs. I am first class gymnasiast. I fast on *ekadasi*. I do not take even a drop of water on that day. I take milk and fruit on Sundays. I lead a simple natural life. There is a fountain of youth in me. I beam with joy. I observe fasting, resting, arising, bathing, breathing, exercising, sunbathing and enjoy freedom, beauty, courage, poise and health.

I love nature, music, art, poetry, philosophy, beauty, goodness, solitude, meditation, yoga and vedanta. I am

humble and simple. I am frank and straight forward. I am perfectly tolerant and catholic. I am merciful and sympathetic. I have spontaneous and unrestrained generosity. I am bold. I am patient. I can bear insult and injury. I am forgiving. I am free from vindictive nature. I return good for evil. I serve the man who has injured me, with joy.

I love Ganga and the Himalayas. Ganga is my Mother Divine. Himalayas is my Father Divine. They inspire and guide me. I take baths in the Ganga. I adore Ganga. I feed the fish of Ganga. I write about the grandour and glory of Ganga. Ganga has nourished me. Ganga has comforted me. Ganga has taught me the truths of the Upanishads. Glory to Mother Ganga !

My daily routine is like that of Lord Buddha. I always remain in the room. I do *japa*, *kirtana*, meditation. I study sacred books, I write. I come out of the room for a short time for work, service and interview. I talk little. I think much. I meditate much. I try to do much and serve much. I do not waste even a single minute. I ever keep myself fully occupied. I lead a well-regulated life. I perform worship of Atma at all times. I work for the good of others.

Gita, Upanishads, Bhagavata, Yoga Vasishtha, Avadhuta Gita. Vivekachudamani are my constant companions. I am a strange mixture of service, devotion, yoga and wisdom. I am a follower of Sri Sankara. I am a Kevala Advaita Vedantin. I am not at all a dry lip Vedantin. I am a practical Vedantin. I practise and advocate the Yoga of Synthesis. I practise *ahimsa*, *satya* and *brahmacharya*. Glory to sir Sankara !

I respect all saints and prophets of all religions. I respect all religions, all cults, all faiths and all creeds. I serve all, love all, mix with all and see [the Lord in all. I stick to my promises. I serve the poor. This gives me

delight. I do mental prostration to asses, dogs, trees, bricks, stones and all creatures. I respect elders and *sādhus*. I obey. I please all through sincere selfless service. I attend on guests very carefully. I run hither and thither to serve them. I shampoo the legs of sick persons and *sādhus*.

I give very prompt replies to all letters. I do several things at a time. I write with electric speed. I spend everything. I do a lot of charity. I do not keep anything. I take immense pleasure in feeding the poor and my students. I try to be a mother to them. I talk to others on things which I have myself practised. I look within always, introspect, analyse and examine. I hold the trisul : spiritual diary, daily routine and resolve.

I served my Masters with great sincerity and intense faith and devotion. I learnt many useful lessons for life. I developed many virtues. I wandered without food during my *parivrājaka* life. I slept on the roadside at night without clothing in winter. I ate dry bread with water. I stick tenaciously to my principles and ideals. I do not argue much. I live in silence.

I pray and do *kirtana* for the whole world, for the health and peace of sick people and for the peace of the departed souls and also the earth-bound spirits. I take a dip in the Ganges in the name of all those who are longing for a bath in the Ganges. I sing the names of all saints of all religions in the Bhajan Hall. I observe All-Saints Day and All-Souls' Day.

I constantly meditate on the following :

Prajñānam Brahma, Aham Brahmāsmi, Tat Twam Asi, Ayam Ātmā Brahma, Satyam Jñānam Anantam Brahma, Śāntam Śivam Advaitam, Aham Ātmā Guda-kesa, Aham Ātmā Nirākārah Sarvavyāpi Svabhāvatah. Brahma Satyam Jaganmithyā, Jivo Brahmaiva Nāparah, Akarta, Abhokta, Asanga Sākshi, Ajo Nityah Sāswatoyan Purāno. Jyotishāmapi Tat Jyotih.

To raise the fallen to lead the blind, to share what I have with others, to bring solace to the afflicted and suffering, are my ideals. To have perfect faith in God, to love my neighbour as my own Self, to love God with all my heart and soul, to protect cows, animals, women and children are my aims. My watch-word is love. My goal is *sahaja samādhi avasthā* or the natural continuous superconscious state.

“He Himself is holding you. He never never forsakes you.”

—*Mata Anandamayi*

The Supreme Optimism of Hinduism

K. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

It is often said that Hinduism is unworldly and pessimistic and that its essence is negative and not affirmative. So great a scholar as Albert Schweizer held and published such an opinion and some Indian scholars have agreed with him. Yet this view is not correct. There are no doubt statements of a pessimistic nature about the world to be found here and there in our literature. Since the facts of disease, decay and death are undeniable, there is certainly room for a pessimistic attitude to life. The Bhagavad Gita says : "*anityam asukham lokam*" (this ephemeral world full of pain) and "*dukhālayam asāwatam*" (abode of misery and transience). In the 'Ayodhya Kanda' of the Ramayana, Sri Rama tells Bharata about the miseries of life but says at the end : "The soul must be united to bliss. All beings are entitled to bliss." The Bhagavad Gita also teaches us that by *viveka* (discrimination) and *vairāgya* (dispassion) and *asanga* (non-attachment) we can attain to the innate, supreme, undisturbed bliss of the soul. The union of the soul with the Oversoul brings such bliss and is described in the Gita by the terms *Brahmayoga*, *Brahmasamsparśa*, *Brahmabhūta*. In the chapters XI and XVIII the Gita refers to the attainment of *Jñāna* and *Darśana* (Knowledge and Vision) and union with God.

The Upanishads contain the most sublime ideas of Hinduism and the Bhagavad Gita is said to be the essence of the Upanishads. A well-known Sanskrit verse compares the Upanishads to cows and the Gita to their milk. The Taittiriya Upanishad says : "From bliss all beings are born ; they live in bliss ; and they enter into bliss." Thus, essential and integral and dynamic Hinduism is affirmative and optimistic. It is only the soul enveloped in ignorance that

suffers pain, grief and sorrow because of its identification with the body, the senses and the mind. When by non-attachment, dispassion and discrimination it becomes aware of itself as pure and infinite, eternal and supreme bliss, it attains its true goal by realizing its own innate and inalienable nature.

It is the supreme glory of Sri Anandamayi Ma that she is ever steeped in such bliss and conveys the gospel of *Ānanda* and teaches all men the methods of its realization. A well-known verse of the Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad says : "When attachment to the body is gone and the realization of God attained, there is ambrosial bliss wherever the mind turns."

Essential Hinduism brings to the world the gospel of joy. It gives us *chitta prasāda* (clarity and purity of mind) which leads to the cessation of all suffering and to the attainment of infinite, eternal, unbroken bliss.

Sacred Places of Kashmir, Jammu & Ladakh

A Devotee

III

Gupta Gangā

The sacred spring called Gupta Gangā is situated at a distance of about two kilometers south of Shalamar Gate which is only fifteen kilometers north west of Srinagar. The place is called Ishaba, a corruption from Isheshwara.

The pilgrims bathe in the holy waters of Gupta Gangā. An annual fair is held by the side of the spring in the month of Vaisākh.

The spring feeds an old tank in the village. Behind the tank there is a mound which was the ancient shrine of Isheshwara constructed by king Sandhimān of Kashmir. It was a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. There was a temple of the goddess Durga, also called Sureshwari, constructed by Sura, who was the prime minister of king Avantivarman (855-883 A.D.). Even to-day the goddess Durgā is worshipped as Sureshwari on a steep hill above the village of Ishabar in the east of Dal Lake. A rock on the top of the hill represents her consort Shiva. According to Sureshwari-māhātmya Shiva and Durgā took their abode on this hill.

The present temple of Isheshwara at Ishabar was constructed by Mahārājā Ranabir Singh during the last century.

देवि सुरेश्वरि भगवति गङ्गे त्रिभुवनतारिणि तरलतरङ्गे ।
शङ्करसौमिनिवासिनि विमले मम मति रास्तां तव पदकमले ॥❀

[O Goddess Sureshwari, O Bhagavati Gangā! Thou savest the creatures of the three worlds. Thou art of light waves. Thou art of clear water dwelling on the head of Sankara. May my mind ever repose at thy lotus feet.]

*Gangastotram by Shri Shankarāchārya

Haramukh

भूषाभोगिफणारत्नरोचिः सिचयचारवे ।
नमः प्रलीनमुत्ताय हरकल्पमहीरुदे ॥❀

[Reverence to Hara, charming with the seam of light emitted by the jewels on the heads of serpents which adorn him. In him, who is like the wishing tree of heaven, are absorbed those who have been liberated.]

The Haramukh Mount is situated in the midst of glaciers at a distance of about seventy-five kilometers north-west of Srinagar. It is to be reached by road and hill track. The peak is at an altitude of about 17000 feet above sea-level. Its ancient name is Haramukuta which means "the crown of Hara."

Lord Shiva whose other name is Hara, is supposed to dwell on the Haramukh Mount. Below the glaciers there are lakes which are regarded as very holy in the Kasmir Valley.

At the foot of the north-eastern glacier at a height of 13000 feet above sea-level lies the sacred Gangābal lake of which the ancient name is Haramuktagangā or Uttaramānasa (the Mānasa Lake of the north). The pilgrimage to this sacred lake takes place in the month of Bhādra. The pilgrims throw the ashes of the bones of their departed relatives into the waters of the lake. The ceremony of depositing the bones takes place on the eighth day of the bright half of Bhādra. The pilgrims start from Srinagar on the fourth day. The following verse from the Nilamata tells about the sacredness of this lake.

उत्तरे मानसे स्नात्वा गोसहस्रफलं लभेत् ।
पितरस्तर्पितास्तत्र कामान् यच्छन्ति अभिप्सितान् ॥❀

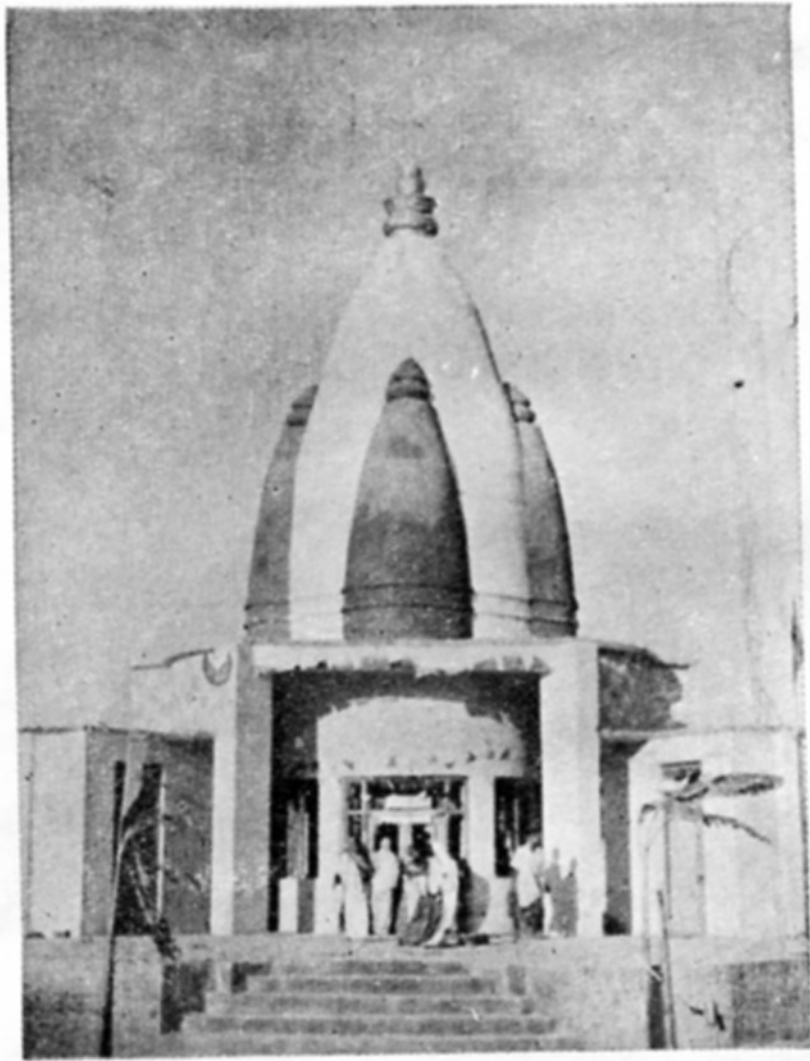
[One gets the benefit of the gift of one thousand cows by bathing in the holy waters of Uttaramānasa. The forefathers appeased with offerings there bestow all that is desired.]

* The Rājatarangini, first Taranga sloka.

* The Nilamata, sloka 1241.



At Niramoy T. B. Sanatorium, Giridanga January, 1968.



Newly-built Puran Mandir at Naimisharanya.



*A view of the satsang in Vrindaban Ashram
November, 1967.*

At the foot of the east glaciers of the Haramukh Mount lies the sacred place of Nandi called Nandikshetra. In this area there is a sacred lake called Kālodaka or Nandisara, the modern name of which is Nundkol. It is said that Nandi, the attendant of Shiva, dwells in that lake. Kalhana mentions about this place in the Rājatarangini from which a verse is given below :

नन्दिक्षेत्रे हरावासप्रसादे द्युचरार्पिताः ।

अद्यापि यत्र व्यज्यन्ते पूजाचन्दनविन्दवः ॥१३॥

[Where in the shrine of the residence of Shiva at Nandikshetra are to be seen, even to this day, the drops of the votive sandal emollient offered by the celestials.]

According to the Nilamata Purāna of Kashmir, Nandi, who was born as the son of Shiladā, performed a great penance in the Kālodaka lake. Being pleased with his devotion, Lord Shiva took up his residence there by the side of his attendant. The central portion of the lake showing a deep blue colour is said to mark the residence of Kāla (Shiva), the outer portion of a light green colour is said to mark the abode of Nandi. At this place Shiva is worshipped by the name of Nandisha which means "the Lord of Nandi."

हरमुकुटमिति ख्यातं शृङ्गं हिमवतः शुभम् ।

जगाम सहसा नन्दि तपसे कृतनिश्चयः ॥

तस्य शृङ्गस्य पूर्वार्धे सरोऽस्ति विमलोदकम् ।

कालोदकमिति ख्यातं सर्वं किल्बिषनाशनम् ॥

[Nandi being determined to perform austerities all of a sudden went to the sacred peak called Haramukuta on the Himālayas (the abode of snow). On the western side of that peak there is a lake of pure water called Kālodakam which destroys all sins.]

* The Nilamata Purāna, Sloka 1047-1048.

 HARWAN

Harwan is a small village situated at a distance of about three kilometers beyond the Shālāmār garden lying north-west of Srinagar.

The remains of a very ancient and beautiful shrine have been unearthed at Harwan. It was built by the Kushan kings in the second century A. D.

It is said that a saint named Sukarma Swāmi lived near Harwan. Pravarasena II, who reigned in Kashmir from 110 to 170 A. D. and founded the city of Srinagar, built a villa on the edge of Dal Lake in its north-eastern corner and called it Shālāmār which in sanskrit means "the abode of love." The king used to visit the saint very often.

The famous Buddhist philosopher called Nāgārjuna is said to have lived in Harwān. In ancient times six sages dwelt in the forest which existed here in those days. The place was therefore called Sadarhadvana. The following verse from the Rājatarangini may be noted in this connection:

बोधिसत्त्वस्य देशेऽस्मिन्नेको भूमीश्वरोऽभवत् ।
स च नागार्जुनः श्रीमान्षडर्हदनसंश्रयी ॥*

[And a Bodhisattwa lived in this country as the sole lord of the land namely the glorious Nāgārjuna, who resided at Sadarhadvana (the wood of the six saints.)]

* The Rājatarangini, first Taranga, Sloka 173.

Only God I Saw

KUHI OF SHIRAZ

In the market, in the cloister...Only God I saw.
In the valley and on the mountain—Only God I saw.
Him I have seen beside me oft in tribulation,
In favour or in fortune—Only God I saw.
In prayer and fasting, in praise and in contemplation,
In the religion of the prophet—only God I saw.
Neither soul nor body, accident nor substance,
Qualities nor causes. Only God I saw.
I opened my eyes, and by the light of
His face around me,
In all the eye discovered—only God I saw.
Like a candle, I was melting in this fire;
Amidst the flames outflashing,—only God I saw.
Myself, with mine own eyes I saw most clearly,
But when I looked with God's eyes,—only God I saw.
I passed away into nothingness, I vanished.
And lo ! I was the All-Living,—Only God I saw.

MATRI LILA

(October—December 1967.)

In the last issue of *Ananda Varta* we have already mentioned that *Navarātri* was observed in Vrindaban from October 4th to 13th. The actual Durga Puja began on the 9th evening with the *Prāṇa pratīṣṭā* of the traditional image representing Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati etc, which was placed in the hall in the square between the three temples. Until then, a *ghata* (a pitcher full of Ganges water with a cocoanut on top, symbolizing the deity) was set up in the Siva Mandir and worshipped daily. During those 9 days the *Durga Sapta Shati* was also recited daily in three different places in the Ashram.

A great many devotees had gathered from all over North India and a few even from the South. A number of functions, not directly connected with the festival, took place as well.

On October 5th, *Mahaprabhu Lila* was enacted in the hall by a new *Rāsa* party. It was a performance of a rare beauty and perfection. Mataji remained present throughout the play which took 4-5 hours. The audience sat spell bound and moved to tears. A *sannyāsi*, Sri Swami Purushottamananda had composed the *Lila*. The subject matter was taken from a book called "*Swapnavilāsa*" dealing with the advent of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The Swami had taken great pains to train the actors. This was the first performance. Only after the *Lilā* had been hallowed by being staged in front of our Nitai-Gouranga temple in Mataji's presence it was shown to the general public everywhere.

On October 6th evening *akhanda kirtana* started and was kept up for 24 hours. Mataji herself joined and was walking round the Gouranga temple with the singers for some time on the 7th midday.

October 10th-13th were the main days of the *Durga Pujā*. As usual Mataji made sure that every detail of the worship and the preparation of the food offered were carried out with the utmost care and precision and that the audience was fully occupied with *kīrtana*, *japa*, meditation and so forth. Thus everyone was able to derive the maximum benefit from the celebrations. In the afternoon, *Mahātmās* would deliver talks appropriate to the occasion. On *Dassera* day (Oct. 13th) Mataji sang herself for quite a while in the morning and again in the evening. With her own hands she distributed *prasāda* to all present.

On October 18th night, Lakshmi Puja was observed. On October 19th, Mataji quite suddenly left for Varanasi where she remained for one week. During her sojourn there the opening ceremony of a recently acquired additional building was held. Another very enjoyable function took place in Mataji's presence. Dr. Gouri Nath Śastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Varanasi Sanskrit University came in person to our Ashram to distribute prizes to the students of the *Kanya-pith** who had, one and all, passed their exams very creditably this year. By the merest chance, Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj happened to pay a visit to Mataji just then and the illustrious Sanskrit scholar was therefore present during the little informal function.

A number of years ago, when nobody was particularly keen for girls to learn Sanskrit, Mataji had the *kheyāla* that the *Kumāris* should take up Sanskrit seriously. Mataji's suggestion was followed and some of the girls have by now become *Sāstris*, even *Achāryas*. In the meanwhile, many women all over India have also become interested in the study of Sanskrit.

On October 27th Mataji returned to Vrindaban in good time for Divali, when *Kali Puja* was celebrated in the night from 1st to 2nd November from 10 p. m. to 3-30 a. m.

*The Girls School run by the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha.

There were not too many people and the worship of the beautiful, life-like image of the goddess Kali was deeply felt and impressive. It was accompanied by music throughout. We had the rare pleasure of hearing one *bhajan* sung by Didima, who is still up and doing inspite of her 90 years of age.

When the puja was over at 3-30 a.m., Mataji sat down in the main hall and everyone collected round her. She said: "To-day is Divali, so I shall tell you a story: Some *pūjā* was going on somewhere. Among the audience there was a woman with her little daughter, a child of three or four. The little girl was very restless and kept on disturbing her mother, who finally lost her patience and said angrily: "*Mar jao*"! The child went outside and when a little later the mother went to look for her, the child was not to be found anywhere. After a frantic search her clothes were discovered. Perhaps a wild animal had attacked and devoured her?

"During *pūjā* everyone should take great care never to say anything in anger or hate, for it may bear fruit. In fact, people should at all times be vigilant as to their words, remembering that "*svasti, svasti*" goes on constantly on a subtle plane. Whatever is pronounced by anyone while '*svasti*' is said, is bound to come true, while what is said in the intervals will be of no consequence. Therefore never say anything in anger, for your words may have very serious repercussions."

That afternoon someone did *Lakshmi Puja* in Rāma Mandir. Mataji sat there dressed in a white silk sari with a broad red border. It was one of the even now, not rare occasions when Mataji looked amazingly young. One could have sworn she was not a day older than 40.

The next day, '*Annakut*', a sumptuous *bhoga* was offered in Chheliya Mandir and a feast given to all at about 3 p.m.

*The literal meaning of the word is "die" ! But it is often said meaning "leave me in peace !"

Until then *kirtana* was kept up in front of the closed temple. Mataji gave *daršana* at intervals, but mostly she was inside, supervising arrangements in the kitchen and the temple.

On the 3rd morning the image of Kali was taken in procession to the new tank, named "*Krishna Chheliya Ananda Sarovar*" and immersed in it. The tank is 100 ft. long and 20 ft. deep.

From November 9th to 15th, the 19th Samyam Mahavrata was observed. Every Samyam Vrata is a spiritual experience. Many of the participants look forward to it from one year to the other and make it a point never to miss it. Those who have come for the first time and perhaps only for part of the week, express the desire to come again the following year for the whole period. Almost all the *Mahātmās* who grace this yearly function with their presence and enlighten the *vratis* with their brilliant and profound talks, came also on this occasion. Swami Akhandanandaji who resides in Vrindaban, very generously talked to us every day for an hour. Among those who had taken the trouble to come from outside were Mahamandaleshwara Swami Chaitanya Giri of Hardwar; Mahamandaleshwara Swami Maheshwarananda of Bombay; Swami Chidananda, the Head of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh; Swami Vishnu Ashram of Sukhtal; Swami Sharanananda of the Manav Seva Sangha. Only Sri Haribabaji was unfortunately absent due to indifferent health. Swami Krishnananda Avadhutji gave the preliminary lecture on the 8th evening, besides his talks during the *Saptaha*. Several Goswamis of Vrindaban delivered very fine and spirited discourses. Not only the speeches were excellent and highly interesting but also the music. Chhabi Banerji, Brahmachari Brahmananda, Brahmacharini Pushpa, Srimati Malati of Rae Bareilly were among us and this was in itself a guaranty that this part of the programme would be exquisite. Over and above, we had a special treat on November 14th when Mrs. Taleyarkhan of Ramanashram brought the famous singer Sm. Subhalakshmi with her hus-

band and daughter for Mataji's *darśana*. The great singer and her daughter sang *bhajans* for about 70 minutes at the end of the morning session. It was truly superb. Everyone forgot that their only meal within 24 hours was delayed by over an hour and would have gladly listened much longer. The kitchen staff also could be seen standing at the back, listening entranced. Mataji sat in the hall until 12-30 that morning. Our illustrious guests seemed to enjoy singing in that atmosphere and expressed the desire to come again and again for Mataji's *darśana*.

On November 12th, distinguished guests of a different order attended the morning meditation and *satsang*, namely Sri Gopal Swarup Pathak, the Governor of Mysore, and his wife. They arrived by car from Delhi at 7-30 a.m. and stayed over lunch.

It is impossible within this limited space to give even faint idea of the contents of the discourses, which have however all been preserved by tape recording. Swami Maheshwaranandaji specialized on the *Mahāvākyas* and gave his final talk the day after the *Samyam Saptah* was completed. Swami Vishnuashrama, who stayed only for two or three days, once said: "If you want to meet God, you must give up meeting others. You think your father, wife, son are yours and therefore you suffer. In actual fact only God alone is yours and you are His. But you are under the illusion that God is far away and that you have no connection with Him."

A significant story was told: "A rich man dreamt that he was poor. In his dream, everyone was going to a circus that had come to the town. So he also joined them. When he got there he was not allowed to enter as he could not even pay for the cheapest ticket costing 8 as. He asked everyone who came along to pay for him, but none responded. Deeply pained, he woke up, to find himself a millionaire. "If all my riches are useless even in a dream, of what worth will they be in the next world?" he exclaimed. He

abandoned his life of luxury and began to search for that which has real value."

During *Matri Satsang*, the last half hour of the evening session, Mataji sometimes replied to questions and sometimes related interesting incidents from her life. The first three days, she gave part of her time to Pd. Kapindraji, the well-known, witty expounder of the Ramayana, who kept everyone amused and relaxed after the many serious and thought-provoking discourses of the day. On the 11th night, he left for Delhi and promised to return on the 13th. But he did not come. On the 14th night at the end of the programme, he suddenly emerged out of the crowd, and although Mataji requested him to have his meal and rest as he had just arrived, he insisted on ascending the dais. He then related that when he and five other persons had left for Delhi by jeep at midnight on the 11th, he himself drove. As he was rather sleepy, the jeep got out of control and rushed into a ravine, about 50 ft. deep. However, as if by miracle, nobody was hurt and even the jeep remained intact, so that they could proceed to their destination. His daughter began to shriek with fear and then shouted, "Ma has come!" Kapindraji said: "Yes Ma is here." He could see her distinctly standing in front of him, only she seemed much taller than usual.

Mataji: But how did you lift the jeep out of the abyss?

Kapindraji: You yourself lifted the wheels, I saw it clearly. You saved us, you did everything.

Mataji: There is only ONE. God saved you. Since you have faith in this little girl, He appeared to you in her shape to save you.

Kapindraji: My body was in Delhi for three days, but my mind has been here at your feet all along. I could not think of anything else.

Here is one of the incidents Mataji related to the *vratis*. When Mataji went to South India for the first time with

Bholanath, Bhaiji, Swami Akhandananda* and Didi, they had *darśana* of Kanya Kumari at Cape Comorin. At night the goddess was decorated with sandalpaste and in the morning plain. When some time later Mataji stayed at Raipur, one day, Kanya Kumari, looking as they had seen her in the morning, came and sat on Mataji's left knee. The goddess was doing *japa* and Mataji could perceive the mantra. Then Bholanath came and talked to Ma. In the course of the conversation, Mataji took a book into her hands to look at the pictures. She opened the book and instead of on a picture, her glance fell on the very word which Kanya Kumari had been repeating. When Mataji went to Cape Comorin again with Sri Hari babaji and others in 1952, the *panda* of the temple explained to them that the goddess was doing *japa* to obtain Siva and he disclosed the mantra to them. It was the one Mataji had observed her repeat at Raipur.

Another day Mataji talked again about her trip to South India in 1952. One thing she said was that somewhere, where a statue of Krishna was, she saw Siva and thus had the *kheyāla* to instal a Śiva Linga in the then newly started Ashram at Vrindaban. It was first put into *Śiva Kutir*, the small house at the gate. Later, when the hall was built, it so happened that in the town of Sri Krishna the first temple erected in our Ashram was the *Śiva Mandir*. The Linga was shifted to it from *Siva Kutir*. Mataji also related the story of Nitai Gouranga temple. The Radha Krishna temple which had been planned first, materialized last.

Of the questions and answers during *Matri Satsang*, we shall mention here just two :

Question : If someone worships Krishna, he will finally come to realize Him. Suppose a man worships God in all humility and serves human beings, won't He realize Him ?

* Didi's father.

Mataji : Yes, provided he sees *Janārdana* in everyone and serves *God* in human beings. In this case his mind will be purified (*chitta suddhi*) as a result. But not if he serves human beings as such. Because in that case his ego will get the better of him. He will feel proud and elated about his good deeds and this will harm him.

Question : During the hour of silent meditation we all concentrate on our *Iṣṭa*. Whom or what does *Mataji* contemplate ?

Mataji (smiling) : Whatever anyone imagines her to contemplate ; be it any *Iṣṭa* or person or object. There is only ONE.

Sri Maheshwarananda : If there is only ONE, who meditates and on what ?

Mataji : Yes, where there is a meditator and an object of meditation, there one can speak of meditation. But this small child (*Mataji*) knows no *japa*, no *āchman*, no meditation, nothing at all. Therefore, whatever her fathers, mothers and friends do in their meditation does its work also for her.

The last day, midnight meditation was observed by candle light, with the *Nārāyana Śīla* enthroned on top of the staircase behind the dais. *Mataji* came for the evening *satsang* at 8-30 p.m. and never left her seat until 12-30 a.m. She asked *Kapindraji* to speak for an hour after 9 p.m. Then *Mataji* began to sing '*Rāma, Sitārāma*' in ever new variations and modulations with great enthusiasm and everybody repeated in chorus. *Mataji* was in great form that night and kept the whole congregation enthralled. After a while she asked *Chhabi* and later *Malati* to continue the singing until it was time for the meditation.

Havan started early on the 16th morning on the platform under the neem trees and after its completion, *Mataji* distributed garlands, fruit and sweets to all the *vratis*. A substantial and delicious meal was served that day after a week of austerity.

If however anyone had imagined that a period of rest and relaxation would follow the strenuous *Samyam Vrata*, he was mistaken. On the 17th midday *Akhanda Rāmāyana* started in the *Rāma Mandir*. The whole of the Ramayana was sung in beautiful ever varying tunes to the accompaniment of harmonium, cymbals and drums for two days and two nights. The function ended on Nov. 19th at 2-30 p.m. Many *vratis* had left but quite a number remained for a few more days. The singing of the Ramayana was organized mainly by Sm. Malati and her family who are experts in it. Mataji had the *kheyāla* that Kapindraji should be present as well. Sure enough he turned up just before the *pūrnāhuti*. Immediately after, Mataji sat down in the hall and related that the Vrindaban Ashram was originally to be built in the grounds opposite to where it actually is. The plot had been acquired and two huts opened ceremonially and Mataji had spent one night there. Then the Ramakrishna Mission claimed the land to build a large modern hospital on it. The plot was abandoned in their favour and the Anandamayee Sangha purchased the land on which our Ashram, comprising now about 12-15 large and small buildings, is now. The Ramkrishna Mission Hospital is doing excellent work. Incidentally it is invaluable to us also to have expert medical aid, rendered in a spirit of service, just across the road.

A few days later Sri Haribabaji arrived in Vrindaban. He paid one short visit to our Ashram. Mataji used to go almost daily and attend the *Mahāprabhu Lila* at the Uriababa Ashram where Sri Haribabaji stays,

Throughout Mataji's stay at Vrindaban a regular stream of foreign visitors, mostly French and American kept on pouring in. Two French ladies took part in the *Samyam Vrata*. As soon as they left, a Japanese lady who is studying yoga in India came for two days. On November 23rd, Dr. Jacques de Marquette arrived with his secretary, Madame Langevin. Dr. Marquette, an earnest seeker after Truth

is a remarkable scholar in comparative religion and a doctor of two Universities. He has written a number of books on comparative mysticism and similar subjects. This was his seventh visit to India. He and Madame Langevin had had Mataji's *darśana* already four years ago in three different towns. At present they are editing a French Monthly called "*Panharmonie*" in which Mataji's "*Mārtri Vani*" appear by instalments in every issue since September, 1967. A portion of "*Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma*" has also been rendered into French and is to be published in the same magazine. Later the entire French translation is to appear as a book.

On November 30th the Governor of the U.P. Dr. B. Gopala Reddi paid a visit to Mataji and had a private talk.

On December 2nd, Swami Akhandanandaji started to expound the Srimad Bhāgavata in Hindi at the Uriababa Ashram. Mataji attended daily for full five hours until she left in the afternoon of December 4th for New Delhi, after having been in Vrindaban since July 20th, with an interruption of only eight days in October.

Mataji remained in our New Delhi Ashram for two nights. The Prime Minister Sm. Indira Gandhi and the Ex-Home Minister Sri Nanda came to see her. The crowd that clamoured for Mataji's *darśana* was too huge to be manageable. On the 6th, *Nama Jajña* was held in the hall of the Ashram from sunrise to sunset. Mataji left immediately after for Lucknow, from where she motored to Naimisharanya the next morning.

★

●

●

Naimisharanya is one of the most sacred places of India. It is said that all the 18 *Purānas* were composed there. When in 1960, a *Samyam Mahavrata* was observed there, it was discovered that not even one copy of each *Purāna* was available in the whole town. It seemed

appropriate that at least one full set of the *Purānas* should be kept in Naimisharanya permanently and a portion read daily throughout the year. It was therefore decided to erect a small *Purāna Mandir* on behalf of our Ashram. The daily reading was begun immediately in 1960 in Mataji's presence and a pandit engaged to continue.

A plot of land was acquired at Hanuman Tila, the highest spot in Naimisharanya and a Gujrati devotee Sri Manubhai Bhimani volunteered to be responsible for the expenses of constructing a temple. The opening ceremony of the *Purāna Mandir* was performed from 9th to 11th December, 1967 in Mataji's presence. Sri Prabhudatta Brahmachari and Swami Naradanandaji had come specially for the occasion and delivered talks on Naimisharanya. Adjoining the *Purāna Mandir*, a small room has been built for Mataji, in which she stayed for three nights. For the rest of the time she and her small party were accommodated in huts in the *Prayag Narayan Kshetra*, which is a charming place situated on the bank of the Gomati river. Mataji extended her sojourn up to December 18th, when she left for Lucknow to spend two nights at the residence of Sri Rameshwar Sahai, Retired Chief Conservator of Forests. U.P. From there she proceeded straight to Vindhyaachal.

Our Ashram at Vindhyaachal is still a solitary place, not too easily accessible from any big city. Water has even now to be carried up the hill in earthen pitchers and there is no electricity. Mataji is at her best in such surroundings and the people who can be with her deem it a great privilege. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj spent a few days there with Mataji. Mataji was in a communicative mood.

On December 29 she came to Varanasi and after about a week's stay she left for Rajgir on January 5th with only a few companions.