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- May, 1968

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

Mātri Vāni

How can there be an ego where the *Ātmā* is? In the sphere of 'mine and yours', there the ego exists, does it not? Renunciation and attraction dwell side by side. He Himself is both change and immutability. Live for the revelation of the Self hidden within you. He who does not live thus is committing suicide. Try to remove the veil of ignorance by the contemplation of God. Endeavour to tread the path of immortality: become a follower of the Immortal.

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To carry out scrupulously the Guru's instructions is the greatest service. It is written: "The gratification of one's own will and pleasure is called self-indulgence, the fulfilment of Sri Krishna's will and pleasure is called love." Therefore: to put into practice without reasoning the Guru's orders means engaging in the greatest service of all.

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Wherever you are, from that very state you must obey the Guru's commands. Of course, at times the Guru Himself arranges for the carrying out of His orders. If you exert yourself, the power to live according to His injunctions may manifest. One should have complete faith in the Guru's precepts.

* * *

This body is not here to reply to your questions. In actual truth this body does not stay with another, nor eat

or wear anything given by another, nor enter the home of another, nor converse with another. Then again, expressed from a different angle, this body, as it were, speaks to its own mothers, fathers and friends. To deliver a talk or lecture does not occur to this body. As you ring the bell so you hear the sound.

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He alone IS; therefore, He Himself speaks to Himself for the sake of His own revelation. The ONE who appears as movement as well as stability, He is also the *Akṣara*—that which is indestructible. On the surface and in the deepest depths is none but He; in movement He is spontaneous movement where, although ever remaining motionless, He is perpetual motion.

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The store of action which leads to vain results, vain experience—appearing to be quite useless—even in the guise of futility is He and no other. This is so where the question of store or no store of action does not arise, where everything exists, although there is nothing: One's own true Self—the Self reposing within Itself.

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The delightful words or sayings that help towards Self-realization, anything leading in that direction, should be accepted. Just as a thirsty man cannot forget water, so should one endeavour to keep the Goal awake within oneself.

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Different kinds of flowers are prescribed for different kinds of *pūjā*; similarly there are various mantras and various kinds of rosaries. To practise *japa* with the help

of beads is certainly necessary. But when *japa* comes about of itself—spontaneously—then of course there is no more need to count. However, as long as one performs *japa* by effort, one will have to keep count of it. There is all the difference between doing *japa* and *japa* occurring of itself. The mind must reach a condition where it cannot remain without the remembrance of God.

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One should make an effort to practise *sādhana*, in other words, to go to one's real home. If the mind is not turned in that direction there will be foolishness, misery—suffering. As if by compulsion the mind runs after the gratification of its desires, which leads to suffering. The mind has become uncontrollable. By the repetition of a divine name or mantra and by meditation this illness can be cured.

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You have not seen Him, but you are yearning for Him—because He is your very own. Does one pine for that which one is seeing? One's own has been lost, or rather is hidden behind a screen, this is why one is hankering after it.

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Mother—As I Have Known Her*

Girijashanker Bhattacharya

On the eve of the summer vacation of 1925, my very revered friend Rai Bahadur Pran Gopal Mukherjee, then Dy. Post Master General at Dacca, invited me there, holding but as a bait the likelihood of hearing the exposition of the *Bhāgavata* by two very learned Goswamis and also meeting a "Māji" who, the Rai Bahadur added, had impressed him very deeply. I did not give much thought to the Māji, but accepted my friend's invitation with some alacrity as both the Goswamis he mentioned commanded great respect as sound exponents of the doctrine of the Bengali school of Vaishnavism. So I went to Dacca; and a day or two after reaching there, I accompanied the Rai Bahadur and Srijut Nani Gopal Banerji, then lecturer in Sanskrit, Dacca University, to Shahbagh, a magnificent garden of the Nawab of Dacca. The late Ramani Mohan Chakravarti, known subsequently as Bholanath, husband of Ma Anandamayi, was Superintendent of the Shahbag gardens.

Ramani Babu was then living in a small building in the garden with his family, i.e. Ma Anandamayi and one or two other members. There were two rooms in the building, one rather small and the other a little bigger. The shades of evening were gathering, and the extensive and carefully tended garden looked sombre owing to the tall and leafy trees, filling our hearts with reverence, while the sweet perfume of the numerous flowering plants nearby added a rare charm. We were given *āsanas* on the floor of the bigger room and near the door between the rooms sat

* The following are portions of an article published in the book :
"Ma Anandamayi" by Devotees, in 1946. The book has been exhausted years ago and will not be reprinted.

Ramani Babu while in the small room sat Mataji. She did not yet speak to any stranger, and questions put to her would be answered through Ramani Babu. She sat partly veiled so that I could not get a full view of her face.

No sooner had I taken my seat, than I felt myself in a peculiar state of mind, of which I had had no previous experience and the reason for which is yet a mystery to me. I had gone to see Mataji with hardly any preconceived notion, and indeed I did not expect to be very much interested. The state of mind of which I speak, is difficult to describe; in any case I cannot give an adequate idea of it. All thoughts and ideas seemed to have vanished from my mind; and practically oblivious as I was of the surroundings, there was a sense of pleasure, very great pleasure, arising from what I do not know. Almost as long as I was in the presence of Mataji my mind was in that state. I left the place however with the Rai Bahadur, somewhat surprised at what had happened, and spoke to him about it on the way. He gave me the *sāstric* name for it. What struck me then, as it strikes me now, is that this was an experience which came, as it were of itself. I should have regarded it as accidental were it not for the fact that a similar experience came to me next year (1926) at 'Shibnivas' in the Nadia District in the same circumstances, i. e. sitting near Mataji while the evening closed upon us. I was therefore led to think that on both these occasions, Mataji, for reasons best known to her, induced the peculiar state of mind in me, and since I found it very pleasurable I felt attracted towards her. Thus began an acquaintance which her ineffable grace has ripened into a relation no whit less dear than the dearest in the world.

By 1927, Mataji began to talk to all who sought her blessings, without the restrictions she had imposed on herself so far. Oh! For the glorious days we passed in her company then! Now she does not enter the dwelling-rooms in the residence of *grihasthas*; and wherever she goes she has

to be accommodated in a temple, dharmasala or ashram. But in those days she came to our homes just like a member of the family. The ladies of the house would prepare their beds alongside that of Mataji where they would sleep with her. But generally sleep there would be very little, for there would be *kirtana* and conversation with her till very late at night, sometimes even till the early hours of the morning. On those occasions Mataji would listen sympathetically to all, sometimes speak of her own early experiences and above all, by kindness of speech, gracious looks and sweet manners, inspire not only love and affection for her but also a faith that her presence enveloped us and would protect us in all circumstances. We did not care to ask ourselves whether she was a *Siddha Mahātmā* or an *Avatāra* (divine incarnation). We felt that she was *Mother* and that we might depend upon her. Could we but be with her always in this life and hereafter, we thought we would be perfectly happy, and more we did not want. Thus it is seen that she made an assault upon our hearts, and they were hers before we knew it—the intellect came into play much later.

In February 1945, Mataji's bhaktas at Berhampore (Bengal) made arrangements for celebrations lasting for a fortnight in view of her presence in their midst, and some *sannyāsis* and *sādhus* travelled all the way from Benares and other distant places to attend the function. I met there a very learned Swami of the *Śrī Sampradāya* who had come from Vrindaban. In the course of conversation he asked me : "What do you think of Anandamayi Ma?" I replied in a non-committal manner : "The Divine Power (*Daiṅi Śakti*) seems to be manifest in her." The Swamiji said : "Mataji is certainly a saint of the highest order. We cannot however, believing as we do in the *Śāstras* (Hindu Scriptures), agree with people who declare that she is an *Avatāra* or that she is the *Bhagavati* Herself."

Another very old saintly person, widely recognized as a *sādhu* of high order, on the other hand, prostrated himself

before Mataji, saying that she was the Universal Mother Herself (*Svayam Jagadamba*). When someone asked Mataji why she allowed him to fall at her feet, for at this his disciples were mortified, she replied: "Tell them that the feet of the Baba are always on my head."

I am of the opinion that for us it is an idle and entirely meaningless discussion whether Mataji is an *Avatāra* or a *Siddha Mahātmā*. While all other creatures come to the world in accordance with the law of *karma*, the *Avatāras* come of their own free will. *Siddha Mahātmās*, as is well known, are also free from *māyā* and come to the earth of their own will, proceeding from their *samskāras* of doing good to the world. Some hold, however, that the difficulty of regarding Mataji as a *Siddha Mahātmā* is unsurmountable. For we have no information of any *sādhana* by her in this body.

On this point there is no room for any doubt. I have made enquiries for myself. The first occasion when Mataji was discovered to be in *Bhāva Samādhi* was when she lived in our village (Ashtagram), and I have the evidence of reliable people, indeed of everybody living near about the place, that it lasted for nineteen hours during which she was, as it were, lifeless, so much so that ants gathered round her eyes. The different stages that she seemed to pass through after this came naturally and were completed within a short time and also without any instruction whatsoever from any living being, indeed, for some time, in spite of the opposition of relatives. All this points to the strange but incontrovertible fact that the various stages and forms of *sādhana* or spiritual exercises and evolution took place automatically in her body without any active agency on her part. The theory that her *siddhi* has not been attained in this body but in a previous one does not either seem to be tenable since she has said that she had no previous birth.

Again "*Brahmavid Brahma eva bhavati*" ("one who

knows the Brahman becomes the Brahman Himself"). This too some hold is not applicable to Mataji because, as she says there has never been any question of knowing or not knowing so far as she is concerned. This superconsciousness may be regarded as her very nature (*svabhāva*).

This diversity of opinion regarding her essential nature hardly touches Mataji and her reply to those who ask her : "What really are you ?" hits in my opinion the nail right on the head. She says : "I am what you think I am."

In 1927, when Mataji was staying with us for a day or two at Rajshahi, late Professor Aswini Kumar Mukerji put some questions to her. In those days Mataji used to have *Bhāva Samādhi*, sometimes so deep that she seemed almost lifeless. Hardly could any respiration be perceived and the pulse felt at the wrists. Sometimes again she would roll from one end of the room to the other ; and on one particular occasion in 1926, I remember she moved forward and backward on a fairly large platform in the Ashram of the late Balananda Brahmachari Maharaj at Deoghar. Her movements were so rhythmical and yet so awe-inspiring that I, for one, was reminded of the Cosmic Dance of Devi Kali. Again at times, Mataji would in her *āvesha* (trancelike state) utter sweet and sonorous *stotras* (verses) not however in ordinary Sanskrit and with a preponderance of seed *mantras* (*bijas*).

Referring to Mataji's deep *samādhi*, Professor Mukherji asked : "How do you feel when you are in that state ?" I am afraid she will not answer such a question now. She tried then also to avoid answering ; but the Professor, old as he was, respectfully insisted. Mataji then said : "As you sit in this room you can see everything outside through the doors and windows, but when they are shut you cannot. This body feels as if all its doors and windows were shut. Again when you take a handful of mud and wash it in the water of a pond you see how finely it spreads on the water, So does this body feel". I do not know what

Prof. Mukherji understood but to me the meaning was clear. I understood Mataji to say that she became inwardly conscious while her outward consciousness received a check for the time being and she had a sense of expansion—Infinite Consciousness and Infinite Expansion.

Then the Professor asked: "Do you perceive the presence of any god or goddess at that time?" Mataji tried to parry a good long while saying that gods and goddesses might be seen if one wished to do so. But the Professor insisted: "Do *you* see them?" And finally she said: "They were seen before." I understood therefore, that she had passed from all forms to the Formless. Thus must all seekers after Truth and Reality do before their efforts are crowned with success.*

Mataji, to me, is one through whom shines forth in all its effulgence the Infinite, and when I bow down to her, I bow down to *It (Tat)*. At the same time, however, I am not blind, nay I value very much the human kindness in her, her solicitude for the least of our comforts when we are with her, the sweetness of her speech and smile, the affectionate inquiry about our welfare. Call her an *Avatāra* if you like or a *Siddha Mahātmā* if you prefer, it makes no difference to me for all practical purposes.

Is it a tiny tot that has been brought to her? See how her face beams. Does a school or college girl want to talk to her? How kindly she receives them! Can you be half as tender as she is to the sick and decrepit? And has anybody ever had elsewhere such a balm of sympathy at the loss of a near and dear one? Yet, if you are tired of walking in the mazes of philosophy, in a few words she points out the way and you are thrilled with surprise and

* In Mataji's case there was never any effort. All the various stages came to her of themselves and as a play, not in order to attain anything.

delight. Or if in your *sādhana* a knot has to be straightened out, seek her help and see what happens. *Avatāra*, *Siddha Mahātmā*, whatever she may be, above all she is the Mother, ever tender, ever helpful, radiating love and affection. Her very sight purifies and ennobles.

That expression "shine forth" which I have used reminds me of an experience. It was in 1926 or 27 at Shahbag and I saw her on my way to my native village. It was about 9 o'clock in the morning. She was sitting on a cot in a small room and I was squatting on the floor. There was some ordinary conversation and for a fraction of a second I looked away from her. The next moment when I turned to her, gone was the Bengali lady and instead a resplendent form with light shining out of every pore of her body dazzled my eyes. I remember, I asked myself: "Where is the third eye?" On other occasions as well I noticed similar transfigurations. It seems to me she no longer has these transfigurations, nor does she have *avesh* or *samādhi*. Instead she seems now to live forever on a plane difficult or impossible for ordinary people to conceive. Once she was asked in my presence whether those who are ever conscious of the Brahman have dealings with people. Her reply was in the affirmative. I feel she is now like that. Sympathetic and tender she undoubtedly is, yet a mystery seems to envelop her. I feel she has travelled away from us although I know that nothing can be more false than this. She once said: "Are we separate?" Nay, Ma, I know we are not and in this knowledge is bliss; but I want to realize the truth of it, be always conscious of it.

Were I to point out one characteristic which above all shines in Mataji, I would at once say, "Non-attachment." She is kind, no one can be kinder; she is affectionate, no one can have more affection; she is sympathetic, no one can be more; she is solicitous of our welfare, I have not seen greater solicitude in anyone. My young daughter-in-law was with her at Vindhyachal for a few days and every letter

she wrote was full of the description of what Mataji did for her, how she took care of her. So that in spite of her shyness she was not in the least uncomfortable. Even now, when speaking of Mataji, her face lights up with joy. This is the feeling everyone has in the company of Mataji. And yet she is completely non-attached, nay it is because she is unattached that she can be so affectionate, so sympathetic, so kind. A non-attached person having no axe of his own to grind is the fittest to be really charitable and kind. From this non-attachment again proceeds another peculiarity of Mataji: nobody, whatever his character, seems to be unwelcome to her. Her patience too is inexhaustible. In Calcutta I have seen her surrounded by innumerable people almost the whole day and far into the night. She had the same gracious demeanour throughout and her kindly smile never left her face. People of all sorts and conditions come to her and probably no one goes away without feeling, however slightly, the better for the visit.

The next characteristic of Mataji that I would mention is her unwillingness to impose her will upon anybody. I have never known her do so for all these twenty years and more. She suggests, she recommends, she says it would be proper to do such and such things under the circumstances, but with a fine delicacy of feeling, never insists upon anyone following a particular line of action, both in matters earthly and spiritual. Indeed, the liberty she gives to all, often makes us apprehend that there is not sufficient cohesion among her followers. This does not trouble her in the least, for she is not out to form any new sect or party. On the contrary, all sects and creeds dissolve of themselves in her presence and under her influence.

Mataji is absolutely without any *sankalpa* i.e. motive. This sounds strange to ordinary mortals all whose actions proceed from a purpose. When asked what should be done in future regarding anything, her habitual reply is "*Jo ho jaye*"—wait for whatever happens. This is not putting off things

in the manner of lazy men, but it means that she acts spontaneously on the inspiration of the moment. Frequently has it happened during her travels that railway tickets have been bought at her direction for places not very far although her ultimate destination was far enough. Starting from Calcutta, for instance, tickets were purchased for Benares, where again without interruption the journey was continued to Delhi and then in a similar manner to Simla. This kind of motivelessness I have noticed in other great saints as well. It is this want of purpose that makes Mataji's actions tantamount to *Līlā* and indeed the actions of personalities like her make it possible for us to believe that the whole universe is the *Līlā* of the Eternal.

Mataji's way of bringing others to her point of view, if necessary, is also peculiar. I will give an instance. It is well known that Bholanath would, at times, like a stubborn child insist on doing things that happened to come to his mind. In this as in many other things he was a veritable child, simple, frank, truthful and always anxious to help. Mataji, as is also well-known, would never directly go against his wishes. Indeed, on this point as in everything else, she set an example to the most devoted of wives. On a certain occasion in my house at Rajshahi, Bholanath insisted that a goat should be sacrificed. I was in great difficulty, for I could never think of doing such a thing. As luck would have it, someone happened to bring a goat along to the great joy of Bholanath. I spoke to Mataji, without his knowledge of course. She said: "Wait and see what happens." I was extremely worried. She, in the meantime, lay down and seemed to go to sleep. Preparations were made to take the goat with suitable *pūjā* to a Kali temple. There was some delay, in any case arrangements for the sacrifice were not made quickly enough and when the party with the *pūjā* arrived at the temple, the priest said *Dashami*, (tenth day of the moon) having set in a few minutes before, there could be no animal

sacrifice that day. I did not think I was yet out of the wood, for Bholanath might have insisted on the sacrifice the next day, but to my great relief he forgot all about it. And Mataji? What did she do? She sat up when the party had started for the temple.



Neither by knowledge of the *Śāstras* nor by *sādhana* am I qualified to say what Mataji really is. To me she is more or less a fascinating mystery, an attractive and elevating personality with Infinity brooding over her. To know her is definitely blissful. Thousands all over India have now come in contact with her and to say the least, hundreds have been attached to her.* It is not at all likely that all these will have the same idea about her. May we have regard for all of them nevertheless; for truth is elusive and has many facets. Dull uniformity is not its hallmark. The man who *sincerely* regards Mataji as but a woman of extraordinary spiritual development, is in my opinion more blessed than one who *lightly* talks of her as a divinity that has strayed into our world of dust and storm. The great thing is to fix our attention upon Mataji, her words and actions, not at all the sundry theories and legends that float upon the stream of popular opinion. I may even go further and say that we should beware of the legends.

May the bliss of Mataji descend upon us all! May we all realize the truth about her! May we all be one in her Infinitude.

Om Shanti

* This article was written in 1945 or 46.

Some Recollections*

Arun Prakash Banerji

I.

It was Easter 1942. I had gone to meet Mataji in the Kishenpur Ashram on the Dehradun-Mussoorie Road. This was my first visit to Ma after I had met her at Lucknow a few months ago. On reaching Dehradun I came to know that some devotees were expected to come from Delhi for their annual *kirtana* in Mataji's presence. It was to take place on Easter Sunday from sunrise to sunset. On the previous evening all arrangements were completed. Some of the Dehradun devotees wanted to give a feast (*bhāndāra*) on the occasion and sought Ma's permission. She asked: "How many people are you going to provide for?" One said: "Two hundred." Mataji remained silent. Another said: "Ma, if you permit, we can make arrangements for, say, three hundred." Still Mataji kept quiet. A third said: "Ma, without your permission nothing can be done." Mataji looked up and said: "All right, let us hope that your wishes will be fulfilled."

The market was about five miles from the Ashram. Provisions had to be purchased the evening before. The bhaktas were busy.

Next morning the *kirtana* started with due rites and solemnity. The hall and the verandas were all packed, the crowd even over-flowed into the garden. Besides listening to the *kirtana* everyone wanted to have *darśana* of Mataji. The beggars and the sweepers of the locality also turned up, even passers by on their way to Mussoorie and other curious sight-seers, on noticing a crowd, flocked into the Ashram.

* Reprinted from the book "Ma Anandamayi" by Devotees, which has been out of print for nearly 15 years.

At about noon, Mataji withdrew from the hall and retired to her small room upstairs. Then she summoned those who were arranging the feast and asked them if they were ready. One of them said frankly : "Mataji, our arrangements are complete, but we had only about four hundred people in view. Now we find that more than five hundred are to be fed." Another : "The market is far off, otherwise something could be done." A third pleaded : "If we put off the meal until a little later we might manage." Mataji could no longer remain silent. "It is already noon; are they not hungry ?" she said and became silent. But soon afterwards she added : "No, they are to be fed, and fed immediately." Again she stopped for a moment and then spoke with a clear voice : "Make arrangements for serving them. The meal should be over within an hour and a half. Not one should go without food. Leave this body alone. Report only if there be any shortage. Otherwise do not come to me." I was present there. We all felt uncomfortable. But Mataji said with perfect ease : "Go and do as you are told. Do not forget, not one should go unfed. Don't be unhappy. God's service must be done with a cheerful heart."

I was perplexed. I was only an onlooker and could not help in any way. I made up my mind to avoid the meal knowing the situation. I no longer felt hungry. But after, a few minutes, Gurupriya Didi came to me in haste, saying : "Dada, please come soon. Haven't you heard Ma's command ? Everything must be over in an hour and a half. Won't you help by joining us without delay ?" I cast my thoughts aside. Mother had offered the boon of this meal and as her child I must enjoy it.

I took my seat with the crowd and began to eat the delicious things provided. Everyone was happy. Those who served seemed quite free from anxiety. I ate almost double the usual quantity. The meal proceeded in the midst of a good deal of laughter and merriment with

occasional shouts of "Jai Mā".

After the repast I went upstairs but did not want Mataji to discover me. I stood behind the door of her room, then with a happy heart prostrated, whispering to myself: "Ma, bless me that I may be worthy of a feast like this which brings your grace."

Those in charge of the *bhāndāra* were coming up to report to Mataji: the hour and a half was over. They opened the door and I found Mataji sitting in her usual tranquil mood. She smiled and asked: "What news?" The devotees cheerfully replied: "Ma, everyone has been fed sumptuously. We never had so much pleasure in serving food." Mataji asked: "What about your provisions?" One of them burst out: "More than five hundred people have eaten and yet there is enough left for two hundred more." Mataji said gravely: "This is very good. Not a particle should be wasted. Let those who come or are staying here be fed again in the evening. Everything must be consumed to-day. If it cannot be eaten here, let it be given to those outside who are hungry."

We all left her for an hour or so for rest. Our minds were busy with the laws of arithmetic: how could eatables for four hundred people satisfy more than five hundred and yet enough be left over for two hundred more? It was very baffling.

2

Shall I relate another incident of the same afternoon, when five *sādhus* arrived from Hardwar. There, at a religious meeting, acute controversy had arisen between them over some passage of the scriptures, for they were of different schools of thought. It was about to end in bitterness, when some gentleman implored them to accept arbitration. It was somewhat difficult to find a suitable arbiter who would be acceptable for purposes of settling disputed points of the *Sāstras*, particularly to *sādhus* belonging to

different sects. At last they suddenly agreed to refer the matter to Sri Anandamayi Ma. So they had come to her. They entered the Ashram scowling and full of gloom. When they were taken upstairs to Mataji's room, I followed them. Briefly told of the situation, Mataji smiled and entreated them to be seated in their daughter's room. Then she asked for fruit and sweets to be brought for their refreshment, but they refused to eat. Mataji insisted, saying: "When you have come to your little daughter, you will have to pay heed to her wishes." This was not a mere request but a command of love. The sadhus refused no longer. Then they asked to be left alone with Ma. After an hour the door was opened. They came out full of smiles, almost embracing each other. And Mataji's laughter filled the room. I could not help wondering how Ma, quite untutored in the *Sāstras*, could have settled the dispute.

3

In 1942, Mataji spent part of the summer in Bhimtal and I was privileged to stay with her. She was repeatedly asked to visit some ardent devotees in the neighbourhood. She was to return in three or four days, but actually stayed away for eight or ten days. Four or five of us remained at Bhimtal. The weather suddenly changed; there were showers and it grew cold. With Mother away, there was no warmth left in our hearts. My old trouble, asthma, re-appeared. I had great difficulty in breathing during the night.

Incessant coughing forced me to sit up. I thought of Mataji. When would she come? Just before starting, she had told me: "Baba, stay here like a good boy." I had not been a good boy, so I was visited with this malady. How long could I wait without treatment? I wanted to see a doctor in Lucknow, but of course with Ma's permission. But she delayed.

At last she came one evening at dusk. Someone who had accompanied her came running to my room. "Dada,

how are you? Ma was very anxious to return on your account. For the last few days she repeatedly said that you were not well. Are you not well? Mataji has come. You will soon be all right."

I was no doubt relieved by her return but did not show satisfaction. I was inwardly displeased and unhappy. When she knew of my illness, why did she not come earlier?

The person who had reported to me, returned to Ma, perhaps to inform her about me. On her way she paused for a moment at the door of my room and looking towards me, said: "Baba, are you oppressed with trouble? Don't you worry. Everything will be all right."

Then she went away. Her talk fell flat on me and I found no solace. I now had to make up my mind to return to Lucknow next morning for treatment. I did not go to Ma. People flocked to her room and I could hear their happy laughter and rejoicing. Perhaps she was relating some of her experiences. But I was in no mood for such stories. The night was fast approaching. My mind was overlast with the thought of the troubles and vexations in store for me during the night. Everyone in the premises was happy with the exception of my poor self. Whether I ate anything that evening I do not remember. But solitary, brooding, hopeless I was, feeling that Mataji was cruel, indeed very cruel to me. I tried to console myself with the thought that what was to happen must happen, and that there was no help. I reflected bitterly: "What am I to Ma?" Such considerations tormented me and made me even more miserable.

It was past midnight. The paroxysms of asthma, the difficulty in breathing and the strain of sitting up for a long time with practically no food, was more than I could endure silently. I came out of my room to go to Mataji. The door of her room was ajar. A lamp was burning inside. Mataji could not possibly have seen me as I stopped just behind

the door. I hesitated to enter and thought of returning. But I heard Ma's voice. "Come in!" she said. My burden was already considerably lightened. I went inside. She said: "Baba, you are suffering much, aren't you?" "I do," I answered, "I am unable to lie down and sleep."

"You will be all right, if you can just lie down and go to sleep," replied Mataji.

"But this is not possible. I have not slept for several nights and I am unable to stand it any longer."

Said Ma after a slight pause: "Do you keep a lamp burning in your room?" "I don't," I replied.

"Do you keep the doors and windows open?" "No, I keep one window open for ventilation."

"Do you use a blanket or a quilt?" "A blanket." "That is all right." She was silent for a moment. I also waited. Then she said: "Will you do one thing?" "I will, Ma, what is it?"

"Close your doors and windows as usual. Put out your lamp. Then go to bed. Before lying down make a clear resolve that you are going to sleep. And then lie down for rest. Will you do this?" I looked dully towards the wall and said: "I have done all this many times, with no effect."

She said with some warmth: "Do it once more as you are now told and do not worry!"

I did not know what to say, I kept quiet; then slowly left the room. I remembered her advice: "Do not worry!" but my mind was busy. How will it be possible? If I love Ma, it may be possible. If I fix my attention on her, it may be easy. Love alone can calm down all mental disturbances. Thoughts like these kept running in my mind. I went to my room. I did as I had been ordered. Before lying down, I sat on my bed with folded hands in order to say my prayers but I could not pray. All my pent-up feelings broke out into sobs and I burst into tears. I

needed rest. Would the divine Mother give me what I needed?

I lay down. Within a minute or so my eyes were closed and I fell asleep without any effort.

Next morning I got up late. When I opened the door of my room, Lina, a sweet girl-visitor who is no more alive, came running and said: "Dada, were you sleeping? Mataji enquired about you several times." I felt ashamed of myself and went straight to Mother's room.

She smiled and said: "Well, Baba, did you get sleep?"

"I have never slept so happily in all my life. I felt I was sleeping on the lap of the MOTHER." "Yes, it is the MOTHER's lap where everyone sleeps. She is loving. Is not sleep a manifestation of the MOTHER?"

That evening, I joined the happy gathering in Ma's room and laughed and jested with them. But all of a sudden I remembered that the night was approaching and feared that my trouble might recur. Mataji could read my thoughts. She at once said: "Baba, do as you did last night; *just as you did*. But you should go to bed earlier to-night. Better go now and rest."

I prostrated, inwardly praying for her blessing, and retired. I had plenty of sleep that night as well and had almost become normal. The third night again Mataji's counsel bore fruit and I no more feared the recurrence of my troubles.

Then I went to Ma when she was alone and said: "It seems to me that I have become all right. There is no trouble anymore. But do please tell me how you have cured me! You did not give me any medicine. You did not touch me. When you looked at me, I could hardly look you in the face, so full of worries and anxieties was I. When you talked I examined myself and found that I was not worthy of being your son. Tell me, Ma, how have you cured me? Or tell me what to do if the

disease recurs." Mataji looked at me with great concern, saying: "Why should the disease recur? It is already gone." I said: "Shall I take it that you have cured me?" Mataji looked up with a smile and said: "You should know that you have cured yourself."

I exclaimed in surprise: "What!"

Mataji repeated with great affection: "*It is you who have cured yourself.*"

I could not understand, but there was no mistaking her love and affection. I wanted no more. Some of my more sceptical friends ask me at intervals: "Did you have any more attacks?" I am happy to be able to answer them all in the negative.

4.

One more episode of a still more intimate nature. A son's relation with his mother must always be somewhat personal. But the feeling of love and gratitude or of repentance impels me to put on record some of my experiences so that others may also share them.

It was in summer 1943. I had gone to the Ashram in Raipur, Dehradun, for a short respite. On arrival I came to know that Mataji had also come down from Almora in connection with some *yajña* (sacrificial ceremony) at Sahasradhāra (about five miles from Raipur) and was staying there. I felt happy and eventually met her there the same day. I found her in her usual tranquil mood, spreading happiness around her. Two or three days later, when the actual rites and ceremonies were over, she came to the Raipur Ashram for a halt. She was to return to Almora very soon. I was a mere witness to the daily gathering of men and women who came from Dehradun and attended on her. I had so far no opportunity to meet her in private. When at last I did so, she said to me: "You are also going to Almora." "Mataji", I replied, "I have not brought the necessary outfit and Almora is a cold place." "It does not

matter, you will be given all you need." I was at the point of arguing but Mataji said : "It is settled then that you are going to Almora."

I remember the state of revolt I was in at that time. I was a pray to the blackest despair. I knew I was helpless and yet resented the idea of being helped. I wanted to be left alone. That was why I had chosen to come to Raipur, a comparatively solitary place, in order to regain the composure of my mind, but mataji took the task into her hands. I had to accompany her.

We were a party of four including Mataji. The story of our journey from Dehradun to Kathgodam alone would fill pages. But I must hasten to that part of the story which concerns us here. Just before we reached Kathgodam, Mataji disclosed her intention of going to Nainital. This is just like Mataji. She never announces beforehand what she is going to do. I was perplexed. "I am not going," I said. "What is the matter with you ?" said Ma. "Nainital is a very cold place, colder than Almora, and you know I have no warm clothes with me."

Mataji interrupted me : "That is known. You will get all you need. So come along. Our stay in Nainital will be very short, say three or four days, then you will also proceed to Almora."

I had no inclination to go to Nainital, so I looked round and said : "Mataji, you have got so much luggage with you. Allow me to go ahead to Almora and take the extra luggage with me. Those are things meant for the Ashramites of Almora. Why carry them unnecessarily to Nainital ?"

Mataji seemed to consider my suggestion and then said : "All right, if you want to go, then it cannot be helped."

It was midday. Kathgodam was hot and stuffy. Some lemonade was prepared and given to us. Fruit was also served. Mataji look the trouble to explain to me all about the road from Almora Motor Station to the Ashram.

It was about two miles. But she told me not to take the undulating bridle path although it was a shortcut. According to her, the motor road was always to be preferred, considering my age and strength. I was not paying much heed as these details, I thought, were known to me owing to my long stay as a teacher at Almora twenty years ago. Yet I was not altogether inattentive, because whatever Mataji says, even her lightest words command attention, partly because of her charming manner. She then gave me her hurricane lantern and instructed me to be very careful on my way. I thought this was but the outcome of a mother's anxiety for her child. I remember boarding the mail-car and Mataji standing there watching it go. I felt proud of the occasion.

As soon as the car began to move, I felt very unhappy and forlorn. Why did I choose to leave Ma? The car was ascending the motor road and the landscape should have attracted me. But everything appeared stale and hackneyed to me. Why did I not go with Mataji? There was none to talk to me. I was sitting beside the driver and thinking of Mataji. Sometimes I would doze off. In this manner, the tedious journey at last came to an end.

It was dark when I alighted at Almora station. I remembered Mataji had given me a lantern. How very thoughtful of her! She had anticipated its need although I had no idea then. The coolies picked up the luggage and began to move off. I had given them positive instructions of the route as Mataji had told me. But they chose the short cut. I discovered it too late. It was no longer possible to retrace my steps. So, with some apprehension, I followed them with unsteady steps. The path became narrow, craggy and full of sudden ups and downs. I would survey a few feet of ground with the lantern and then plod on. My nervousness increased and I almost seemed to lose my grip over myself. We had almost reached the Ashram when my foot slipped; I stumbled and fell down. One of

the coolies threw off his load and came running to me. The chimney of the lantern was broken. My hands were bruised and my thighs bleeding. I had also received a severe jerk in my hip. I however stood up and began to reprimand the coolies. But was it their fault? Like good brothers they took me to the Ashram and there I lay down as I had reached my journey's end.

When Mataji arrived three days later, I was somewhat better. but still confined to bed. The inmates of the Ashram had given me blankets and all I needed. They were extremely attentive to me and I should have been happy. But one question vexed, almosted tormented me. If Mataji had known of the impending accident, why had she not told me about it.

When Mataji came, I was eager for her sympathy. So on her approach, I said: "I had an accident." But to my mortification I found her stiff. She said: "I do not want to hear." Then she moved in another direction to attend to some *sādhus* who had come with her from Nainital. It was a sharp rebuff.

Two or three days after, when the *sādhus* had left for Badrinath and the Ashram had become comparatively quiet, Mataji came to me and said: "Now, what about the accident you had?" I said: "Mataji, the other day I wanted to tell you but you did not want to hear. Today you wish to know but I do not feel like speaking."

Mataji said: "It was for getting this reply from you that the question was asked."

I could no longer bear my condition. I said: "You knew of the accident but never said a word about it. Instead of it you gave me instructions for guidance."

Mataji was listening. I continued: "If you think that I am grown up enough to follow your commandments, I must make it clear that I do not feel worthy or competent to receive your advice and follow it. I think I am yet a baby in that respect. If you can accompany your child in

all his troubles and ordeals, I remain with you. If not, let us part company. The child is sure to perish. Who can enable a motherless child to survive ?”

I do not know why I spoke in this strain. It was not a very childlike statement. But I had no time to analyze myself, perhaps I was incapable of it. Mataji looked blank, like a white sheet of paper. The next moment there was a great change in her face. I could discern there all my faults writ large. She had taken upon herself the burden of my heart. I knelt down at her feet and my tears showed that I could no longer think of separation.

5

One last episode. This time an episode purely of imagination, a dream. Dreams about Mataji can be narrated by many of us. Mine is a gift to those who are dreamers like myself. I dreamt I was strolling through a rural lane. The path moved in a zig-zag manner and beautiful flowers and green creepers were visible on both sides of the fences. There were gardens and villas on either side. Occasionally there would be an isolated cottage. I reached a cottage that was visible from the lane. I slowed down my pace and stood at the garden gate and observed that Mataji could be seen on the veranda of the cottage. When I saw her I entered the gate and seemed to have reached my destination.

When I approached Mataji, I was startled to find that she had a baby on her lap. What was this ? There was no one else whom I could ask. I looked at Mataji. She looked towards me but immediately was all attention to the child. How was the infant related to Ma ? What an odd question to ask ? Are we not all her children ? But the question persisted in my mind. I was, no doubt, her son, but in what sense was the baby hers ? What did it matter if he happened to be the physical son of Mother ? So I argued in my dream.

Mataji was, all the time, fondling the baby. I thought to myself to put the question in a suitable form. "How does the baby get his nourishment?" I said. Mataji smiled: "Baby does not like milk from outside, I have to suckle him."

I felt compassion for Mataji: I began to scrutinise her appearance. She looked considerably reduced and her collar-bones were visible. Surely the child was a demon and was sucking her blood and living on it. I began to detest the child. The baby too, perhaps detested me. Lying on Mataji's lap, he began to stamp his foot on the ground. Was he not kicking at me? So I thought.

Suddenly my feelings changed in my dream. He was, after all, Mataji's own son. If I could love her so much, could I not love her baby as well? I looked at the child and tried to feel love for him. Mataji saw my affectionate looks and said: "Would you like to take the baby on your lap?" Realizing that Mataji might get some relief, I at once sat down and extended my arms. Mataji placed the child on my lap.

I felt happy. I began to ask myself, how could I atone for my previous resentment towards the baby? I had thought of him as a demon. I thought that he wanted to kick me. So if I love him I must touch him affectionately.

I thus touched his right foot and at heart tried to feel that I really loved him. But now something occurred that can only happen in a dream. His foot dropped out as if it were an artificial one and along with it the entire leg came out, stuck to my hand and dragged my hand towards my own right leg. There the entire limb of the baby vanished. I was extremely upset. I quickly placed my fingers on the baby's left leg. The same thing happened: the left leg in a similar manner merged into my own left leg. His right and then left arm, and afterwards other parts of his body which I was quick in grasping in succession thinking of them to be separate tangible entities, proved

deceptive in the same way and so the entire baby merged into my body, limb by limb, one part after another.

Mataji was looking at me and gauging my quick movements and my growing bewilderment. I also fixed my gaze on her, saying: "Mataji, what is this? This baby, your own baby, is it my own self? Am I this child who looks so ugly and is fond of kicking others and always sucking your life-blood out of you? Do tell me, is it myself? Mataji, do tell me please!"

I looked staggered. My whole body was pulsating with excitement. Mataji laughed in her sweet way. Her peals of laughter were so thrilling and prolonged that they entered into every fibre of my being. My anxious state, my petty self, in short my startling dream, all disappeared in the twinkling of an eye.

I was wide awake. It was almost morning. But though no more sleeping, I could still hear Ma's laughter ringing in my ears as if echoing through my room, ultimately finding its way to the world abroad, to mingle with the horizon. It was Mataji who transcended my all and yet left me full.

One chapter of my dream-life was over.

6.

To conclude. Spring 1945, *Vasanti Puja* (worship of the goddess Durga in spring) was being celebrated in the Benares Ashram in Mataji's presence. I had also gone there. I passed through the courtyard where people had assembled in groups. I listened to their conversation. Someone was saying: "If Mataji could appear in the form of Sri Krishna, I would accept her without hesitation. You see, I regard Sri Krishna as the complete manifestation of God." I could not hold my tongue. "Brother", I said, "would you be able to recognize Sri Krishna if he appeared before you in a physical form. Have you ever seen Him?" The man did not retort but he looked extremely discomfited and

disturbed. I also fretted and fumed but preferred to move off.

I went upstairs where Mataji was walking up and down the veranda overlooking a part of the Ganges. Some men and women were watching her from a respectable distance. I forgot myself. I reached Mataji and wanted to walk a few steps with her.

But I could not walk without talking. I said : "Mataji, why do I like to speak of you so often and so vehemently and bluntly ?" Mataji was listening. I continued : "When I am garrulous I feel puffed up with pride. When words fail, depression sets in. I suffer both ways. What shall I do ?" Mataji said : "What do you want me to do ?" "Mataji, grant me one favour : Make me speechless about you. I think I should not speak of you. All my prattle is an insult to you. It is already oppressing me." I felt relieved when I laid bare my troubled heart before her. It was now her turn to speak. The idol of all adoring hearts at last opened her lips : "Recognizing me as your daughter, you may say what you think. No harm will touch you. Do you understand ?"

I know her to be my mother and myself, her son. Out of this devotion some day the real spirit of service may be vouchsafed to me. And then the relationship would be reversed : She would become the daughter and I, as she usually calls me, the father. I am waiting for that day of service to dawn in my life.

"They also serve who stand and wait."

Jai Ma !

'SAROJ'

It is by way of being blessed by Ma Anandamayi, my spiritual preceptor, that I have ventured to relate some of my experiences of her infinite grace showered on me.

Samyam Mahavrata was held during the second week of November 1967 at Vrindaban *dhāma* in Ma's sacred Ashram. It was a real occasion offered to us by gracious Mataji to wash off the impurities and dross of our *saṁsakāra* accumulated through numberless lives.

It is a well-known fact that our animal instincts often prevent us from undergoing penances of high spiritual value such as *samyam*, *yoga*, *vrata* and so forth, as prescribed by the *Śāstras*. And consequently, being engrossed in the deep-rooted human ignorance, one is inclined and merrily inclined, to stick to one's daily domestic pleasures of eating and drinking. This is how one gropes in the dark. Eventually a mental fog is manifest everywhere.

I too, was frivolous and unscrupulous about attending functions like *Samyam Saptaha*, *Mahā Sivaratri* and others. Before attaining to Mataji's grace, I used to evade the idea of participating in the yearly *Samyam Vrata* under some pretext or other, since I had a great weakness for regular meals. To me *Samyam vrata* meant starvation for a week. Hence I ever failed to join in the austerity of *Samyam*.

However, by Ma's beneficent influence, the urge within me to be a *samyami* did not wither away completely. Besides, the more I faltered from partaking in the *vrata*, the greater was the thirst for it, and the more I resisted it, the sharper it grew. It was, of course, an ordeal for me to continue in this manner. Feeling intensely miserable, I inwardly prayed to Ma to enable me to undertake this penance in

future. From the year 1964 onwards, I had been preparing myself to join the *Samyam Mahavrata* in its true spirit. For this I beseeched Mataji day and night and entreated her to fill this child of hers with spiritual vigour.

Time elapsed. One fine morning, to my utter surprise, I woke up with a new vision and a fresh urge to attend the *Samyam Saptaha* that was going to be observed at Vrindaban from 9th to 14th November, 1967. During that time I could feel Mataji's grace descending upon me. A week before the actual commencement of that sacred function, I felt as if my inner being was slowly undergoing a cleansing. What a wonderful experience it was! Something beyond description. Each day, henceforth, gave me new strength and an unflinching faith to interpret the subtleties of all the activities followed during *Samyam* in a new light.

This is how Mataji took me out of the gross ignorance I had been involved in. My further experiences will reveal how she makes one achieve success in *sādhana* through the process of inward transformation going on silently within oneself, provided one leaves everything to her will. By way of establishing my own faith in *Nimitta mātram bhava savyasāchin** ("be thou a mere instrument") the eternal exhortation of Lord Krishna to his disciple Arjuna, it may be pointed out that one may not experience any wonder or grace through Mataji if one has failed to reach the state of self-surrender. It is really deplorable for a *sādhaka* to be assailed by fears and doubts and if he harbours these at all, the idea of self-surrender cannot be intelligible to him. Therefore, when I felt inwardly aroused to participate in the *Samyam Saptaha*, I left everything to Ma.

Vratīs are instructed to remain steady and motionless during the periods of silent meditation, both mornings and evenings. They are also supposed to maintain one posture,

* Bhagavad Gite, Chapter XI/33.

one *dhyāna* and one mood during that particular hour—a practice pretty difficult for a person like myself. But what happened to me during the collective meditation from the very first day of the function beggars all description. My words, truly speaking, fail to depict the state in which I found myself sitting for the whole hour. O! My hundreds of salutations to Ma, my *Sadguru* who inspired me at that time to be one with her, sitting in one pose, one *dhyana* and one mood beyond all separate consciousness. After the lapse of a day or two, I began to remain absorbed in meditation. As the fourth day of the function passed, I had come to feel that *Vrata* of that kind was my need, not only for one week but for a whole life. From that day onward, the whole Ashram appeared to me animated with the spirit of motherhood (*Matritva*). Each devotee, each *sādhaka*, each visitor, each *sannyasin* was then, nothing to me but a reflection of Mataji. In this way I was brought to a world in which one had become many, and many had become one; where Ma and Ma alone was singly extending her grace to numerous souls pursuing light like rising stars, to strive, to seek and to find the City of God.

Jai Ma!

A Visit to the Ashram of Sri Anandamayi Ma

MADELEINE LANGEVINE

(*Translated from French*)*

We think we direct the course of events but in reality events direct us !

This is what I was made to feel on the occasion of our visit to Sri Anandamayi Ma. Actually, after having—due to wrong informations—thought that it would be impossible for us to meet her, we came to know that the “Saint of Bengal” was at Vrindaban, two and a half hours by car from Delhi and that we could go there.

At that time, the twelve French friends who had come to India with us, were at Agra, while Dr. Jacques de Marquette and myself had remained in Delhi. Our friends had arranged to go to Varanasi from Agra. How to send word to them who had been so disappointed on hearing that they would not be able to have Mataji's *darśana* ? The telephone line between Agra and Delhi was out of order. Finally, with the help of a tourists' agency, we decided to despatch a long telegram with detailed instructions so as to make it possible for our friends to join us at Vrindaban.

We ourselves hired a taxi and proceeded on our journey, feeling certain that we were being expected at the Ashram and that our friends would meet us there. Both these presumptions proved to be wrong. Our friends were prevented by circumstances to carry out the plan suggested in our wire and never came to Vrindaban.

On arrival we found that the Sri Anandamayi Ashram had not received any information about our visit. However, a devotee of Mataji, Austrian by birth, who has been with

* The French original appeared in “*Panharmonie*”, February 1967.

Mataji for 23 years and who speaks French, did her best to help us.

Mataji's *darśana* could be had only much later in the evening. In the meanwhile we had to secure some accommodation as we could not stay in the Ashram. So we drove to the nearest town, called Mathura. A person who has not seen the small towns of India has not seen anything! Of course, the word 'small' is relative to the immensity of the country. Mathura has a population of about 130,000. In the 3rd and 2nd centuries B. C. it was in fact a prominent centre of politics, religion and art.

Imagine a maze of streets with some extremely beautiful houses here and there that testify to its glorious past. Great numbers of shops and in the narrow roads an incredible throng of pedestrians, cycles, bullock-carts, horse-carriages, cars and trucks. It was not a simple matter to trace our way in the midst of this crowd, the more so because everyone follows his own path without bothering about anyone else, crossing the roads at his own sweet will.

There were two hotels in Mathura where we could have stayed without supplying our own bedding (mattress, blankets, pillow, bedsheets and towels, which everyone in India carries with him when travelling). But finally we decide to buy some beddings and return to Vrindaban where we are put up in a guest-house which will provide us even with meals, thanks to our recommendation by the Ashram. The proprietor is in fact a wealthy man who carefully chooses his guests. Having been sent by Mataji's Ashram, opens the doors to us.

It looks quite comfortable. We are allotted a nice clean room with an attached bathroom and W. C. to ourselves. As soon as this is settled we return to the Ashram for Mataji's *darśana*.

Mataji, as usual dressed all in white, is sitting on her couch, and along the wall at right angles there is another

couch for her ancient mother with her shaven head. She is robed in orange. Mataji is surrounded by a comparatively small group of people. We have not come at a time of large gatherings. Mataji is expected to leave Vrindaban in a few days.

Paying attention even to insignificant details, Mataji wants to know all about us. Have we found suitable accommodation? Are the other twelve also coming? They may be put up in the same guest-house, she says. We have brought with us copies of "*Panharmonie*" that contain the French translation of portions of "*Mātri Vāni*". Although Mataji neither speaks English nor French, she shows interest, scrutinizes the symbolic design on the cover and is specially pleased to learn that we are strict vegetarians, which seems to have considerable importance. Dr. Marquette has brought along some of his books as well, which he presents to the Ashram library and to our guide, Atmananda. The books evoke lively interest.

Mataji talks quite a lot to various people, always with great simplicity and intense kindness and sympathy. We do not understand anything that is said. But, as during our first visit four years ago, to be near Mataji is enough to feel that abiding peace and that great serenity which does not allow of any pre-occupation besides just being in the presence of Ma.

Usually, at the end of the *darśana* there is silence and Mataji's expression that is so active, so lively when she talks becomes very serious. One should like to know what she thinks what she sees what she discerns at that time. And one is filled with inexpressible veneration for this Being who is a link between heaven and earth. When referring to her own person, she says 'this body'. Why? Because she does not attach any importance to this body which is something impersonal, which serves but as an instrument for the outpouring coming from the beyond. Did she not reply to one of Brother

Jacques, questions four years ago : "When the ego has been overcome it is not you who speak, but God who speaks through you".

The next morning we arrive at the Ashram at about 10-30 a.m. Mataji has gone to another Ashram to attend a representation of scenes from Sri Krishna's life. When we reach there she is about to leave. Men and women touch the ground on which she has walked.

Vrindaban is a specially sacred place. Sri Krishna is supposed to have lived there and charmed the Gopis. The atmosphere is particularly favourable to meditation,

The morning *daršana* that day is quite agitated. An elderly gentleman who has been working in one of Mataji's numerous Ashrams cannot fulfil his task anymore and has been asked to give up his work. He has come to defend his cause before Mataji. There is no end to his argument which continues right through the time of *daršana*. Not for the fraction of a second Mataji loses her calm and her understanding kindness. "How patient Mataji is," Atmananda whispers to me, "he goes on repeating the same thing over and over again. I should have got rid of him long ago".

Our Austrian friend remarks that 'saint' is not the right word for Mataji, she is something quite different. Although I can sense the correctness of her statement, I ask her to explain more precisely. "A saint", she replies, "is one who by practice and aspiration has attained to a degree of perfection. But Mataji has always been what she is. She was born perfect."

In the evening when we all assemble in the beautiful place where one meets Mataji, three gentlemen arrive from outside. One is a physician, the other a former politician, who was Nehru's right hand. He lives a life of the utmost simplicity. All three are greatly devoted to Ma Anandamayi. After some time Mataji asks everyone to disperse. She wants to talk to her guests in private. But when we

are about to follow the others, Mataji make signs to us to remain. This is a great favour. She explains who we are, shows them our magazine and Dr. Marquette's books and adds that we are strict vegetarians, which gives rise to remarks of sincere appreciation by the doctor. He translates into English what is being said and then relates to us some incidents connected with Mataji.

"I was very sceptical at first," he tells us, "and to begin with came to confound Mataji. But she took me for a drive and on the way all my problems dissolved as if by miracle. Another time I brought with me a Swami who had no faith at all in her. He had devoted three whole days in formulating seven questions which he felt certain she would be unable to reply to. When we arrived, Mataji asked me to accompany her on a drive for ten minutes. 'Of course,' I, thought, 'this is how she is going to evade the Swami'. But ten minutes later she told me she had to return in order to keep her appointment with the Swami. 'Do you want to talk to me alone or in public?' she asked him. 'In public,' he said and put his first question for which he received an answer. Then the second and the third and every time Mataji replied without hesitation. Finally the Swami said: 'I humbly beg your pardon for having doubted you. With great care, working for three whole days, I prepared seven questions in order to defeat you. After having put three questions, I have nothing more to ask, for you have already replied to all my other questions as well.' And ever since the Swami is one of her devoted followers."

We felt extremely fortunate to have been able to contact Mataji and some of her people in this manner.

The next day we have our last *darśāna*. Mataji has been told of our impending departure. We might possibly have stayed for another day, but the street noise at night disturbs our sleep and, moreover, what one receives from Mataji is not in time and space. When we met her four

years ago it was sudden and short, but this time – did we not bathe in her radiance, did we not feel the powerful influence of her presence? In what way? It is difficult to define. One could perhaps say that her vibrations act on ours; but this sounds bad when speaking of something so very subtle. What can be stated with certainty, is that something develops by her contact if one is sensitive to it and this something is like a seed that sprouts and ripens. And it matters little whether one remains with her for a few more hours. The seed has been sown. It is for us to tend it inwardly and provide the right conditions for it to develop.

That last evening we ask Mataji for a word of guidance to help us on our path. Mataji says: “There is only one *Ātmā*, you are that *Ātmā*, I am that *Ātmā*, everyone is that *Ātmā*. So, wherever you may be, I am always with you.” Then she keeps everyone around her busy fetching suitcases, opening boxes and bundles. What is it all about? “She is probably preparing for her journey,” I say to Brother Jacques. And then, suddenly, she motions to us to approach her and presents to each of us a delightful coloured handkerchief into which she pours some sacred leaves that have been dipped into sandal paste and with full hands she distributes *prasāda* to us, consisting of sweets, nuts and almonds.

We are overwhelmed and exuberant with gratitude and joy. Then she remains silent for a long time and that silence seems frightening to me, for it is full of mystery, full of unknown possibilities At last, emerging from her silence, she smiles at us and that smile makes me understand that what she has told us is a reality: no matter what may happen, we shall never again be alone.

From the Diary of a European

MELITA MASCHMANN

XI

(Translated from German)

Puri, January 1964.

On the eve of my birthday Mataji grants me a private *darśana*. Before Chitra leaves us alone, I ask her to tell Mataji that I do not want to put any question, but have only the desire to sit by Mataji in silence for some time. With a smile Mataji nods assent. She settles down on a stool before me so that I can view the mighty ocean in the background while sitting in front of her.

What happens during the next few minutes is entirely beyond words. When I later return to the hotel, I note something in myself that has so far been unknown to me, something almost paradox: It cannot be denied that my body exists and functions in the accustomed manner, and yet I have a sensation of being bodiless. It is so intense that I have to touch my limbs to make sure that everything is as usual. Off and on Mataji brings about situations that remind one of fairy-tales. Now I should like to say: There were moments in which my body was not made of flesh but of spirit. My memory has retained this just as one remembers severe pain after it has passed—in one's imagination.

The next morning, Mataji lavishes an abundance of gifts on me that she laughingly throws down to me from the first floor. In the evening we leave for Calcutta and in the train both Didima and Mataji send *prasāda* to me.

Calcutta, January 1964.

For three days Mataji is the guest of a family staying in a distinguished residential quarter of Calcutta. At mid-day after our arrival, Mataji gives *darśana* for the first time

in the elegant blue-white tent on the roof which is pleasantly airy. One can notice that Mataji feels at ease here. During the welcome she sparkles with humour and vivacity ; then she composes herself to a stillness which has a great intensity of radiation. I never know how to express what I observe on such occasions. Very likely Mataji does not meditate. She does not need to still her mind by a special method. When she withdraws her attention from the outer world and directs it inwards, the transcendental Light that shines in her soul absorbs every movement of thought and emotion. Everything that can be called the contents of consciousness dissolves in that Light. The more complete this immersion, the more visibly—because more vigorous—the transcendence shines also through Mataji's physical being. With these concepts I try to explain to myself to some extent what I observe.

Mataji remains transfigured for hours while the power of her effulgence does not weaken. Twice or thrice her consciousness returns for a few moments. Her gaze drifts away, far beyond us. When it falls on a young man whose face I can see from where I sit, he quickly covers his eyes. I have several times had to suppress an impulse to do something similar and therefore know what has happened to him at that moment. Not that one covers one's face in shame when a penetrating glance from which nothing can be concealed grasps one's whole being with all its shortcomings and its pettiness. Using a simile, I could say : one stands before a fire and suddenly feels as if a flame rushed into one's eyes. That is to say, one's eyes are able to take in the fire as a symbol but they are incapable of absorbing the fire itself. The raising of one's hands expresses one's fear to be burnt to ashes.

It is marvellously quiet in the tent. Perhaps most people have not yet heard of Mataji's arrival in Calcutta. Only about a third of the available space has been occupied and nobody disturbs Mataji's contemplation.

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I am full of admiration for Didima, Mataji's mother aged about ninety. With what dignity and wisdom she plays the role that falls to her lot in the community of Mataji's devotees. It is the more surprising when one remembers that she was born and bred in a village of Bengal in the insignificance of a life whose horizon seemed destined to be limited to the day-to-day humdrum of villagers. Instead of this, she has in the spiritual sphere risen to the role of a queen-mother as it were. She receives the veneration of thousands from all classes of society. I do not know how many see in her their Guru who has given them initiation. Their number must be very large too. Years ago Didima took *Sannyāsa* and I have met several people who regard her as a saint.

All this has not in the least changed her human simplicity and humility. She has obviously learnt long ago to move with dignity and a genuine self-assurance among prominent people of every order who come for Mataji's *darśana*, yet she always remains in the background. Her presence is not striking, and yet something would be missing if she were not there. Because of the fact that Didima is with her, Mataji, in a certain sense, remains with a part of her being in the familiar sphere of the human. Her remoteness from this realm can never be so complete as to make us fear that she may slip away from us. She has not fallen to our earth from another planet like a shooting star but has been born by this lovable, intelligent, humble woman who is fond of smiling and who is said to be an indefatigable reconciler of tensions.

To-day Didima is radiant. Her son has come for a visit from Benares. With her ninety years she is still his mother and he her child. I wish I could look into her heart and see how her feelings of a mother—for after all Mataji is her daughter—can exist side by side with the veneration for a Being that can say: "The Brahman am I." But

probably this would be difficult only for a Westerner. Countless Hindus worship the divine child Gopal as their beloved Divinity (*Iṣṭa*). Besides, Didima an unshakable balance proves it—the synthesis in her attitude of mind has been achieved effortlessly.

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When it is pointed out again and again that Mataji is egoless, one must not infer from this that she lacks what is called 'personality.' No such thought can ever enter the mind of anyone who has met her. On the contrary, he finds himself face to face with an unusually intense and powerful personality whose fascination is undeniable. It is based on qualities which at once evoke affection, confidence and veneration. Never in my life have I felt equally certain at the first sight that here was someone incapable of the slightest egotistic reaction, someone who could never colour Truth to the least degree. Although Mataji's egolessness frightened me, yet the special, the unique in her—in short her personality—strongly attracted me. (Except for the element of the noumenous, of which I cannot easily say that it is also terrifying.)

An old Hindu who, although his Guru had passed away years ago, still felt the living contact with him, told me. "Do not think that the divine personality disappears in a fog of impersonality when the physical form is not visible to us anymore." This is surely so when the ego has been dissolved by an Enlightened Being or—as many of Mataji's followers think—if an Enlightened-One has been born egolessly.

What would be more natural than to desire a friendly and personal relationship with someone whose charm is based on singularly admirable and lovable qualities? But just at this point one becomes aware of the complete difference in being that confronts us in Mataji. One feels atonce: In her the supposition for a resonance that could respond to such a desire is non-existent. Just as there is

no attachment to possession, place or doctrine in her, there can be no attachment to human beings either.

Someone related to me that when Bholanath once asked in the presence of several people: "You always say that everyone is equally dear to you. Don't you love me a little more than other people?" Mataji replied with an expression of extreme kindness, but with a clear "No!"

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Agarpara, January 1964.

A morning on the roof of the Ashram. I struggled with my sari at which the wind was tugging. Mataji stood in the sun enjoying the vigour of the storm. Suddenly our eyes met. Her look had an expression of all-embracing love. It rested on me for a long time. But while feeling held by it, I simultaneously felt that it also encompassed the trees behind me, the village, the clouds and the thief who was walking down the road with a stolen kid. Strangely, I did not feel that I received any less of the love that was lavished on the trees, the village and the thief. On the contrary I felt more loved because of it. In Mataji's love reached up to the horizon.

Something of this I had already felt at my first *darśana* of Mataji. But then I did not know anything of her actual realisation of *Advaita-Vedanta*. It is not that Mataji has adopted a philosophical doctrine which she found convincing and translated into behaviour; rather the final mysterious Truth expresses itself and takes shape in her life, as it has manifested again and again in this country in special human beings. About eleven hundred years ago it was formulated into the doctrine of *Advaita-Vedanta* by an Enlightened-one, Sri Shankaracharya.

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Vrindaban, February, 1964.

When I ask myself what experiences or realisations I

owe to my contact with Mataji, three things seem of the greatest importance: I feel that I may be compared to a crow which since it was born has lived with a swarm of crows without ever meeting other birds. One day a white eagle alights on the tree just above the crow. At first the crow is so terrified that it for a moment fears to be killed by the shock. But this shock holds an indescribable joy: the crow realises that it is possible to be a white eagle instead of a black crow. And suddenly it hears the eagle say: "It is not only possible, it is your true nature. One day you will come to know that you have only been disguised as a crow. In reality you are a white eagle." One could also put it differently: "it is only *māyā* that makes you think of yourself as a crow."

'One day' need not be in this very life. And this is the second thing I have begun to understand: that we have time, because in actual truth time does not exist. Time is an invention of the calculating, measuring human mind, which has also invented miles, pounds, and degrees of temperature. Has it any significance for the sun that we have calculated how far it is from us? None whatever. What does it mean to my *Self* if we declare that I shall remain in this body for about seventy years? Nothing at all. If time were not a fiction I should say: The *Self* has infinite time. More correctly I state: It has eternity. In this eternity seventy years are like a drop in the ocean.

Having been born and bred in Europe, I until now believed in time. To live meant to live this life which may possibly last for seventy years or so. Since I have met Mataji, I have realised that we look at this life as we see a drop of water with the help of a microscope. That this drop is only a tiny part of the infinite ocean we do not want to see. Perhaps because we cannot view the ocean through our microscope.

Since I have come to Mataji, an organ is growing within me with which eternity can be perceived. I am

beginning to feel the eternal present. More precisely I cannot put it. To express it in our ordinary language I would say : I suddenly sense something of the infinite past stretching behind me and the infinite future lying before me. This would be correct on one level. I am beginning to perceive my being in its extension in both dimensions. But on a higher level - not the plane of thinking but of a more direct perception—the two dimensions of past and future contract into one single point. This also I can feel although it sounds rather incredible. In this point my being lives embedded within the Self or Eternity.

The third thing is that I now realise that the inner Guru has been active in me as far back as my memory reaches. And I see that He is identical with Mataji. There is only One. But it is God's grace if He shows Himself as He does in Mataji, so that one can perceive and love Him.

While I am afraid of the fact that already tomorrow I shall be in a place where I cannot see Mataji or ask her advice, I also know at the same time that the separation will only be illusory. An old man said to me once in Calcutta : "For the last thirty years my son has been in the U.S.A. In spite of this he is always with me. His physical absence may be compared to the apparent absence of the moon during a lunar eclipse."

I am granted a long final interview. The most significant part of it proceeds in silence. Then I am given leave to go with so many presents that I can hardly carry them

For a second Mataji's right hand rests on my head, then glides over my forehead, cheeks, shoulders, back. I quickly get up and walk to the door. Mataji says three times : "Look after yourself and come back well, look after yourself and come back well, look after yourself and come back well !"

Mātri Līlā

(January—June, 1968)

On January 6th Mataji arrived in Rajgir from Varanasi with a very few companions. She had a fairly quiet time there. Many improvements had been made in the Ashram since Mataji's last visit. Mataji visited a few sites where the Lord Buddha is supposed to have dwelt.

On January 16th Mataji proceeded to Katrasgarh Colliery at Dhanbad where she spent two nights. Sri Morarji-bhai Thacker, the owner of the colliery, a Gujerati devotee of many years' standing, made excellent arrangements for Mataji and her whole party. Satsang was held daily and many came for Mataji's *darśana*.

On the 18th Mataji left for Dubrajpur to visit the "Niramoy" T. B. Sanatorium where about three years ago a *Śiva Mandir* had been consecrated in Mataji's presence. On her way to the Sanatorium Mataji halted at Durgapur for a couple of hours at the invitation of a devotee who gave *bhoga* to Ma and entertained the whole party and many local guests. The General Secretary of the T. B. Hospital had requested Mataji to grace "Niramoy" with her presence for the uplift of the patients. Mataji remained for three nights. She enjoined on the patients to practise the presence of God by the repetition of any mantra or name that appealed to them most. She sang "*Jai Śiva Śankara*", "*Jai Rama Sri Rama*", the *Mahāmantra* and various other well-known mantras to them, asking them to choose any one of them for their daily prayers. They should try to feel that God had come to them in the guise of disease. All who could walk attended the *satsang*. Many were moved to tears. To the doctors and nurses Mataji said that all service was His service only and that they were serving God in the guise of sick men and

women. Mataji also visited the bed-ridden patients who felt greatly comforted. One day Mataji was taken to the famous Siva Temple at Bakreswar near Dubrajpur. Bakreswar has hot springs.

On January 21st Mataji travelled to Tarapith.* It is a place in Bengal where many *tāntrik sādhakas* have practised austerities. The legend has it that Rishi Vasistha, while in China, North of Kailash, was ordered in a vision to go to Tarapith and take *dīksā* from the Goddess Tara. At Tarapith, while sitting under a cotton-tree, he had a vision of the Goddess. The image for the temple was sculptured according to his vision. The head of the sculpture is detachable and is removed every night. It is said that Sati's third eye fell down at Tarapith. The great *tāntrik sādhaka* Vamadeva also did *tapasyā* there. This is historical.

At Mataji's advice Sri Bholanath went to Tarapith to practise meditation in the temple. He had many beautiful experiences there and reached a state of complete absorption. In 1929 Sri Bholanath and Sri Jogesh Brahmachari took some of the holy fire to Tarapith which had been lit in a particular way and been kept alive in Dacca for several years. It is the same fire by which the *Mahayajna* held in Varanasi from 1947-1950 was lit and which is being preserved to this day in our Ashrams at Varanasi and Agarpara. As first the people of Tarapith used to light funeral pyres from this fire. But later the fire somehow became polluted and the practice had to be abandoned. A *Siva Mandir* was erected in memory of Bholanath. For several years it contained only Bholanath's picture. Only in 1961 Brahmachari Kamala Kanta brought a Sivalinga from the river Narmada which was installed in the temple.

Mataji used to visit Tarapith almost regularly once a year from 1929 to 1936. She was greatly revered and loved by

* See Ananda Varta, Vol XV/No. 3, November 1967, which contains a note on Tarapith and several pictures.

the Pandas and their wives and children. Her visit this time occurred after an interval of about 32 years. It is in Tarapith that Mataji sang for the first time "*Krishna Kanhaiya bansi bajaiya etc.*" and she sang it again there this time. A small Ashram has recently been built near the Siva Temple and Mataji came for the opening ceremony. A large crowd of devotees had arrived from Calcutta to be with Ma on this special occasion. A pandal had been put up near the burning ghat. The Ashram is near the Tara Mandir and Mataji went there twice on the first evening. Km. Chhabi Banerji delighted everyone present by her beautiful songs. Villagers flocked in their thousands from all the neighbouring villages and also from a distance by bullock-carts with their whole kith and kin to welcome Mataji after all those years. Mataji was visibly moved by their genuine affection and faith. She was in a great mood throughout those three days and related many interesting incidents that had taken place at Tarapith. She pointed out the places where she had slept, where Bholanath had sat for his *tapasyā*, where Gurupriya Didī and Marani* received their sacred threads, etc. On a Tuesday a special puja was celebrated at the Tara Mandir and Mataji presented a costly sari to the deity.

Tarapith had been a rough and very primitive place when Mataji went there in the early days. Through Mataji it became known and developed considerably. A proper motor road has been constructed and the temple renovated. It is a fact that Mataji by her mere presence revives places of pilgrimage. Mataji is always at her best in rural surroundings. Her short visit to Tarapith was treasured by all and will not easily be forgotten.

On January 24th, Mataji motored to Deoghar. Nine cars, carrying most of her companions, drove in a line. The journey took three hours. At Deoghar Mataji put up at

* Bholanath's niece who was brought up by Mataji.

"Deva Sangha", the Ashram of Sri Naren Brahmachariji Maharaj. Mataji had last visited Deoghar in 1953 to be present at the consecration of Haimavati Temple in the grounds of the Deva Sangha. The Ashram is extremely peaceful, well kept and in beautiful surroundings. Sri Naren Brahmachariji had made wonderful arrangements for Mataji and all who came with her. Mataji also visited the Ashram of the late Sri Balananda Brahmachari. The present head of the Ashram was out on tour. Further Mataji paid visits to "Nirvan Math" (Sri Brahmajña Ma's Ashram) and to the Sri Rama Krishna Mission Vidyapith. On the New moonday Mataji went to Baidyanath Temple near Deoghar where *Rudrabhisheka* was performed by twelve pandits. Mataji sang, *Jai Siva Sankara* while water was poured over the Sivalinga.

On January 30th Mataji reached Varanasi, leaving the next day for Allahabad, where *Saraswati Puja* was celebrated on February 2nd, *Vasant Panchami* day, in a pandal in the compound of Sri Bindu Mukerji's residence. For two nights Mataji stayed at Satya Gopal Ashram before moving to Mukerji's place, where a small house has been built several years ago for Mataji. In her absence it serves as a shrine-room. The Puja had been prepared with great care and went off beautifully. The crowd was well managed and very orderly. After three nights at 31, George Town Mataji spent the last night of her sojourn again at Satya Gopal Ashram. On February 5th. Mataji followed an invitation to the house of Sri Virendra Saksena, who entertained the whole party for lunch.

On February 6th Mataji returned to Varanasi, where she remained over *Sivaratri*, on February 26th. For a number of years Mataji had not been in Kashi for this festival. It was celebrated in great style, many having flocked even from considerable distances for this solemn occasion. As customary, puja and kirtan was performed throughout the night on all the three storeys of the Ashram building by



*A scene from the Hospital opening ceremony.
Mataji with Maharaja Benares & other dignitaries.*



Mataji along with Hari Baba and others inside the Hospital premises.



Gopalji being taken to the new temple before installation.



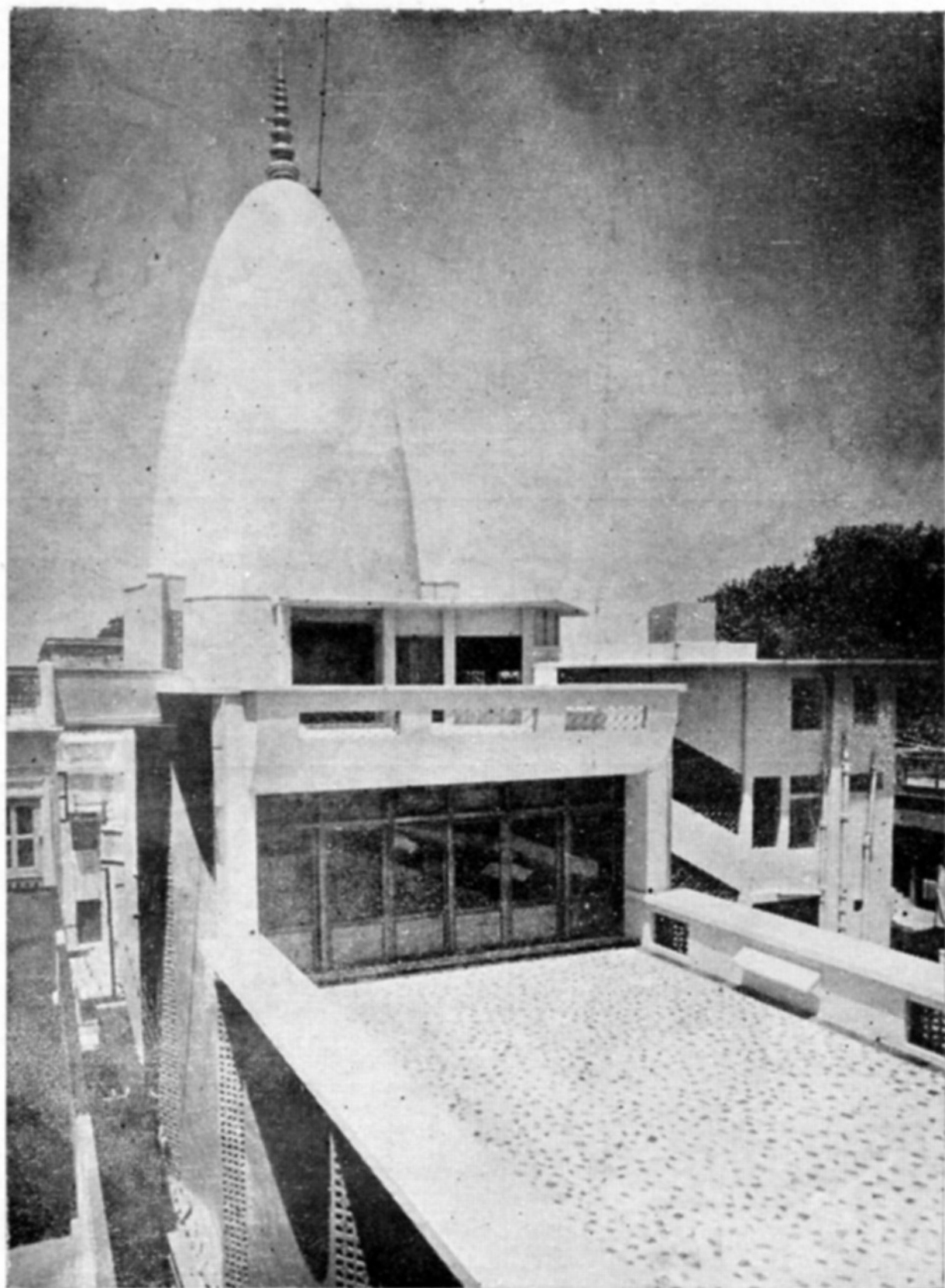
Mataji in samā.ghi during the Birthday Puja — lying on a sandalwood cot on the terrace of the new temple.



Concluding scene from the Tīthi-Pujā in the pandal — Mataji in deep samādhi.



Mataji, still in deep samādhi, being carried from the pandal after the Tīthi Pujā.



*Front view of the newly inaugurated Ananda Jyoti Mandir at
Varanasi Ashram.*

everyone who wished to take part. Mataji gave *darśana* several times during the night, moving from one place to the other. At about 2 a. m., when many were about to doze off, she began to lead the *kirtana*. Instantly everybody was wide awake.

One day Mataji paid a visit to the aged Swami Swarupanandaji, the present head of the Bholagiri Ashram at Sonarpura.

Soon after Sivaratri Mataji left for Vrindaban, alighting there on February 29th. The first few days Mataji had a comparatively quiet time. *Darśana* hours were restricted to 15 minutes in the morning and half an hour in the evening. Mataji would however attend Sri Haribabaji's satsang at the Uriababa Ashram two or even three times daily. Among visitors from abroad was a French Trappist monk who stayed for ten days and had some private talks with Mataji. He seemed greatly impressed. We later heard that on returning to his monastery, he felt homesick for the atmosphere of India and her saints.

Holi, on which falls the birthday of Lord Gouranga and also of Sri Haribabaji, was celebrated in our Ashram by special *kirtana* and a feast. A new cottage in the Ashram grounds and some rooms built above the kitchen and dining-halls were ceremonially opened on that auspicious occasion. On March 15th the society of *sādhus* of Vrindaban held a meeting in our Ashram to discuss the spiritual welfare and uplift of Vrindaban. Since Mataji welcomes men and women belonging to all sect and religions and our Ashram being entirely non-sectarian, it was chosen as the most suitable place for such a gathering.

On March 16th Mataji returned again to Varanasi. While in former years Mataji came to Varanasi frequently and sometimes for long spells, she had during the last few years been there only rarely and for very short periods. This year at last the holy city of Vishwanath has been favoured by

her presence again. After ten days Mataji left for Hoshiarpur. On her way she visited Hardwar for a couple of hours on March 27th and from there motored to Dehradun, where she remained for 26 hours, leaving for Hoshiarpur on the 28th. Only very few were allowed to accompany her. Didima, Didi and most of her party remained in Kishenpur and joined Mataji in April at Hardwar. At the invitation of Sri Haribabaji Maharaj, Mataji went from Hoshiarpur to Gandhwal, his native village, and stayed there for two nights. On *Rama Naomi* day, April 7th, a new Rama-Sita-Lakshman temple was consecrated in Gandhwal in Mataji's presence. The whole of the *Granth Sahib** also was read and installed in the Mandir. Thousands of villagers attended the *satsang*.

On April 9th Mataji reached Hardwar. Due to the *Ardha Kumbha Mela* the crowd was immense. However, Government had made such elaborate and efficient arrangements that everything proceeded in perfect order and without any mishap. Didima's *Sannyāsa Utsava* was celebrated on April 13th by a full programme of *Puja Kirtana* and discourses by *Mahātmās* from early morning until late at night. This was also the main bathing day of the *Kumbh* and in spite of very large congregation, the function was beautiful and harmonious. Mataji was very approachable and gave *darsana* several times daily in spite of indifferent health. On April 15th morning Mataji motored to Rishikesh for the opening ceremony of a new house at Sri Sivananda Ashram, built by Dr. Mrs. Padma Mudholkar, Deputy Director of Health, Maharashtra Pradesh. The house has been named "*Gurukripa*." From there Mataji drove to Kankhal where she spent the rest of the day. The pupils of the Girls' College "*Sri Anandamayi Seva Sadan*" at Hardwar paid her a visit and at the end Mataji sang for a short while at their request. By the night train she left for Varanasi with a large party.

* Sacred scripture of the Sikhs.

At Varanasi preparations for the consecration of the new temple for Gopalji and for Mataji's birthday celebrations were in full swing. Soon after her arrival some new buildings of the Ashram were inaugurated. On April 22nd, Sri Dayamata, President of the Self-Realization-Fellowship* came to see Mataji, accompanied by Sri Mrilanini Mata, the Vice-President and Yogacharya Sri Binoy Dube. They were the guests of our Ashram until April 24 and had several talks with Mataji.

Brahmachari Mohananandaji, Mahant of the Sri Balananda Ashram at Deoghar, paid two visits to Mataji. One evening, Mataji attended a musical soiree by Sri Dilip Kumar Roy at the residence of Dr. Gouri Nath Shastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Sanskrit University. Subsequently, Sri Dilip Kumar and his party sang *bhajans* twice in our Ashram. One day, Mataji paid a visit to the ex-Chief Minister of U.P. Dr. Sampurnanand who was lying ill in hospital. He was deeply moved by her solicitude. Sri Hari Babaji Maharaj arrived with his *entourage* on the 28th evening.

Akshaya Tritiya fell on April 30th, which by the way is the day on which Mataji was born in 1896, although the celebrations of her birthday usually begins on May 2nd. The consecration of the new temple and opening of the *Satsang* hall as well as the ceremonial opening of the newly constructed wings of the Ma Anandamayee Seva Hospital were scheduled for this auspicious date.

At 8-30 a.m. the opening ceremony of the hospital took place in Mataji's presence. H.H. Maharaja of Benares, who is the President of the hospital, many Government officials of the city, many doctors and other distinguished citizens of Varanasi attended the solemn and dignified function. The rooms on the ground floor were beautifully

* A worldwide organization founded by Sri Paramahansa Yogananda.

decorated. *Rudrābhisheka* was also a part of the well-planned and impressive ceremony.

After 11 a.m. the consecration of the "*Ananda Jyoti Mandir*" took place, followed by an elaborate *puja*. The beautiful image of Gopalji had been presented to our Ashram in 1954. Before that it had been worshipped for 81 years by a *pujāri* somewhere in Varanasi. Its rightful owner, living in Pakistan, and unable to send the necessary funds for three years, Gopalji was about to be immersed in the Ganges, when at the 11th hour, he found a home in the room adjoining the Annapurna Temple of our Ashram.†† Now, fourteen years later, he has been installed in the magnificent temple designed and personally supervised by Sri P. L. Varma, retired Chief Engineer, Punjab and a renowned architect as well. It was really unfortunate that Sri Varma, who had taken great pains for about six years past to complete the structure, which is an exquisite piece of architecture, could not personally attend the inauguration ceremony as he had a heart-attack in Chandigarh and was unable to undertake the long journey to Varanasi.*

The preliminary rites for the temple consecration took place on April 29th in the *Chandi Mandap* of our Ashram. On the 30th morning at 11 a.m. a small procession started from there for the *Ananda Jyoti Mandir*. Mataji herself and Sri Haribabaji Maharaj took part in it and together opened the *Mandir*. Dr. Gouri Nath Shastri entered first, carrying a small *vigraha* of *yogamāyā*, emblem of *Śakti*. Second Gopalji was carried on his sandalwood throne by four *sādhus* of the Ashram, followed by several devotees carrying on their heads sacred scriptures, such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Bhāgavata*, *Rāmāgana*. The temple also

†† See A.V., Vol. II/No. 3, pp. 283-285.

* We hope to put together and publish in a later issue of A.V. the history of the temple and of its main *vigraha*, a large Gopal made of black touch stone.

contains a small *Siva Linga* and pictures of Krishna, Sita Rama and Mataji. From the *Satsang* hall adjoining the temple, one can have beautiful *darsana* of Gopalji. On the 30th evening 51 Vedic pandits of Varanasi chanted portions from the four Vedas in the new *Satsang* hall.



Mataji's birthday had not been celebrated in Varanasi in her presence since her 60th Jayanti celebration in 1956. This time initial puja was performed in her personal presence in the night from 2nd to 3rd May on the terrace of the new temple. Since usually Mataji retires to her room on that occasion, the attendance was not too large. The function was intimate and of deep concentration and therefore treasured by all present.

A spacious pandal, artistically decorated and equipped with lights, fans and loudspeakers had been erected in the hospital grounds. *Satsang* took place there mornings and evenings, while the afternoon session was held in the new *Satsang* Hall. The highlight of the daily programme for the largest number of people was the *Lila*, performed every morning. The attendance was enormous. Many citizens of Varanasi expressed their gratitude for being able to witness those artistic and moving representations of scenes from the lives of Sri Krishna and Gouranga Mahaprabhu saying that they did not feel inclined to go to the cinema anymore, as the *Kāsalila* was infinitely more enjoyable.

Sri Haribabaji was present from the very beginning of the birthday celebrations, while other *Mahātmās* came several days later. Among them were Sri Maheshwaranandaji of Bombay, Sri Vishnu Asbram of Sukhtal, Sri Sharananandaji and Sri Krishnananda Avadhutji. In addition to their brilliant and highly interesting discourses, there was an hour of exquisite music programme almost daily from

9-10 p.m. Amongst the articles was Sri Lal Mani Misra who played on the *Vichitra Veena*, accompanied by the famous *tabla* player Sri Ashutosh Bhattacharya. Sri Jyotin Bhattacharya, disciple of the great musician Alauddin Khan, gave a *sarod* recital. Among singers were the renowned Sm. Jayalakshmi of Madras, called the "Queen of Music in S. India and Km. Chhabi Bannerji of Calcutta. The famous sitarplayer, Sri Ravi Shanker, came for Mataji's *darsana* twice, but was too busy to give a recital. The music was followed by *Matri Satsang* from 10-11 p. m. Mataji was very generous with her replies and occasionally also sang. On some days the programme continued until midnight and even later.

Throughout the 15 days and nights, *akhanda japa* was kept up as usual; also kirtan during the intervals of the daily programme. *Sat Chandi Patha* was recited by pandits. Besides there was leper feeding, *Kumāri Pujā* and a feast and presents given to 108 little girls.

Tithi Pūja was celebrated on the 15th night in the specially decorated pandal, which could with difficulty hold the extremely large congregation.

Inspite of excessive heat and the strain of a very heavy programme Mataji kept fairly good health at Varanasi.

On May 17th, Mataji, Sri Haribabaji and a large party boarded the train to Dehradun. Mataji alighted in Kishenpur in the early morning of May 18th. She first accompanied Sri Haribabaji to Kalyanvan and in person inspected the arrangements made for Sri Haribabaji and his party's accommodation, before proceeding to the Ashram a couple of hours later.

Mataji has not fixed any time for *darsana* during the day, but regularly attends Sri Haribabaji's *Satsang* at 8 p.m. She however meets people at irregular hours in her room or on the veranda and occasionally in the hall.

On Sunday, May 26th, our Delhi Kirtan party came in full force and performed *Nama Yajna* from sunset. Mataji and Sri Haribabaji joined the very inspired *kirtana* for sometime at midday. Mataji was in an extraordinary awe-provoking mood. Hundreds of devotees from Dehradun had come that day.

On June 4th, *Akhanda Ramayana* started at the Raipur Ashram. On the 5th morning, Mataji and the Ashramites and guests of the Kishenpur Ashram went to Raipur. Mataji was present for the "*Purnahuti*" of the Ramayana at midday. In the afternoon a charitable dispensary for children under 12 years of age was inaugurated in the Raipur Ashram. The first patient, a little girl carried by her mother was examined and given medicine in Mataji's presence. *Arati* was performed to the child. Mataji never tires in stressing that all service must be performed as a service to *Jānardana* (God in the guise of man). The dispensary was thus given the name "*Paramātmā Swarūpa Parabrahma Bālgopāl Kumārī Sevā.*" A young *brahmachārini* of our Ashram, who is an M.D. and a Specialist in child diseases, has been put in charge of the dispensary, which will be open for 3 hours daily on 6 days of a week.

One evening during Sri Haribabaji's *satsang* Mataji 'saw' a small boy with long wavy hair sitting near her. He was singing with intense absorption, swinging his whole body from side to side in rhythm with the tune. It seemed to be the same boy who had sung "*He pita, he hita, etc.*" during the first *Samyam Vrata* at Varanasi in 1952. Mataji could hear the melody and the rhythm of the song very clearly, but the words were indistinct. Mataji then composed them herself which run as follows:

नर तन पाया आत्रो प्यारे बोलो राम नाम
राम नाम लेकर मस्त होकर चलो राम धाम ।
तन मन भरके हा प्यारे लियो पियो राम

राम नाम लेकर शान्त होकर चलो साकेत घाम ।

राम राम राम आराम

राम प्राणाराम ॥

It was first sung to Sri Haribabaji at Kalyanvan. Mataji has asked the girls of the Ashram to sing it daily after the *Rāmāyana Pātha*. On June 8th *Akhanda kirtana* of the song was held in the Ashram hall for 12 hours.

On June 12th Mataji followed an invitation by the neighbouring Sri Ramakrishna Mission to a function in honour of one of their seniormost Swamis who had recently passed away.

Mataji is expected to stay in our Ashram at Kishenpur till atleast the end of July. The programme thereafter still remains indefinite. The next Durga Puja is, however, scheduled to be held in Kishenpur, Dehradun from 28th September.
