

Ananda Vārtā

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



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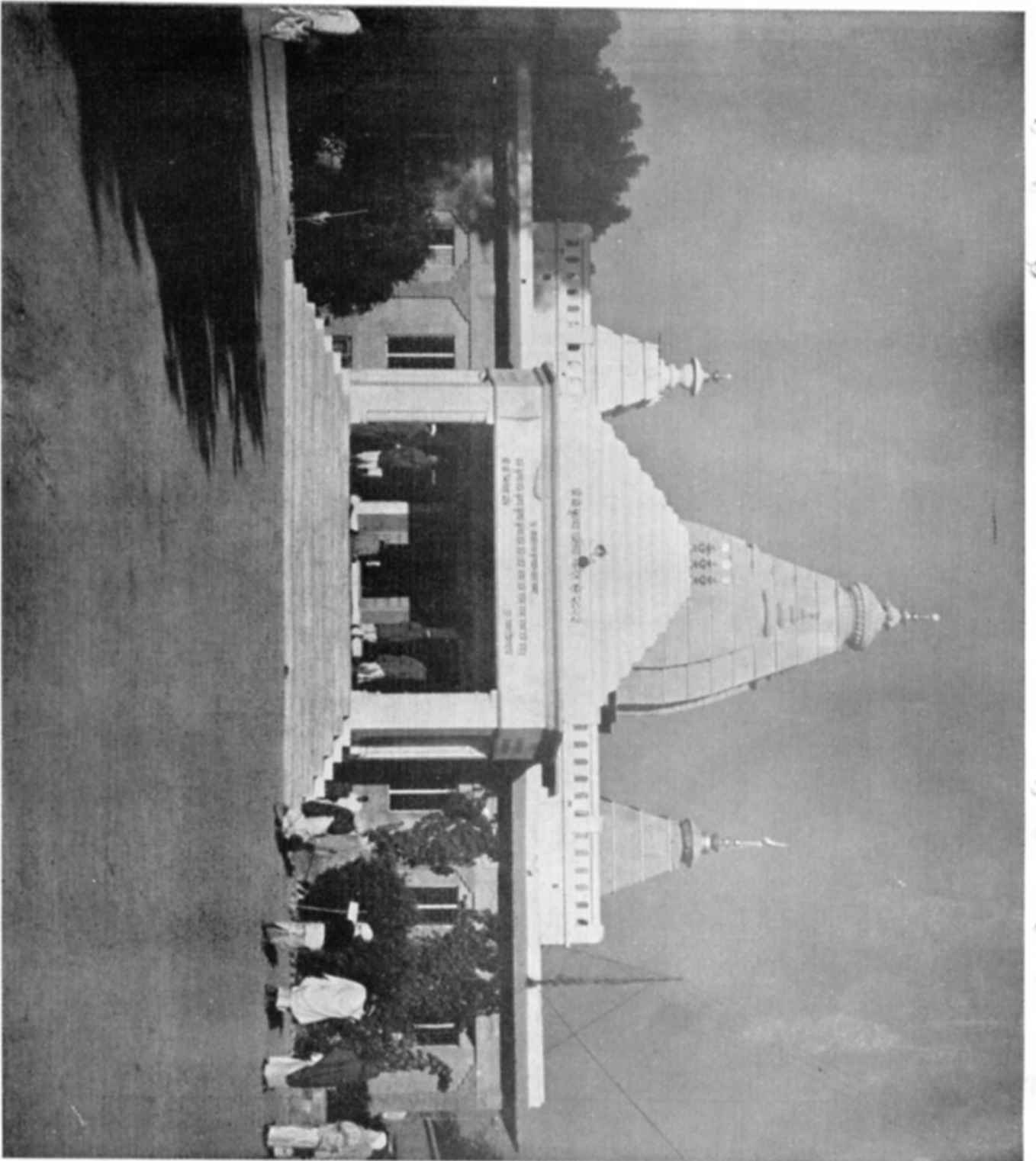
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Mataji in her thirties during her first visit to Calcutta



Front view of the three temples in Vrindaban Ashram.

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

Mātri Vāni

**Earthly love causes intense suffering and does not last.
Whereas the love of God gives extremely great happiness.**

* * * *

**It lies in God's very nature to keep the door to Him-
self ever open. If the amount of energy and time spent in
worldly pursuits is given to the search after God, the path to
Self-knowledge will of a certainty open out of itself.**

* * * *

**God is the breath of life, the Heart of hearts, the Self.
To find Him means to find oneself. What is called the world,
is dragging man towards foolishness and misery—away from
God. Therefore, the only excellent path is the one that
leads to Self-knowledge, Self-realization.**

* * * *

**Always remain calm and remember that whatever God
does at any time is beneficent. When circumstances change
in the course of events, what is there to worry about?
Everything that happens at any moment happens by
His Will.**

* * * *

**Why allow yourself to become agitated and excited?
This is not the attitude fitting for a pilgrim on the spiritual
path. On the contrary, by spending one's life in the aware-
ness of God, seeking the company of sages, saints and seekers
after Truth, one's hopes and aspirations will be fulfilled.**

* * * *

If service is your ideal, be constantly engaged in the service of God. Attachment will keep you in the realm of the transitory. His Law is truly wonderful.

* * * *

Contemplation of the *Atmā* takes one to one's ultimate Goal; while worldly action creates nothing but ugliness.

* * * *

So far as this body is concerned, nothing happens unknowingly or by mistake : be it right here or far in the distance. Whether it is perceived outwardly or not, whatever is destined to occur, does come about.

Sri Sri Mataji's Amara Vāni

(REPORTED BY BRAHMACHARI VIRAJANANDA)

(*Translated from Bengali*)

Question : Where in the body is the heart ?

Mataji : Where is the heart not ? Take for instance a tree : from the roots to the leaves it has sprung from one seed. Of course, no simile is applicable in all respects. In what branch of a tree are there no seeds ? The seed that is in the earth, where in the tree is it not ?

Question : There are various centres in different parts of the body—the centres of hearing, seeing and so forth. Similarly there are also spiritual centres from where God may be revealed.

Mataji : Just as in a tree various developments and static states can be perceived, so also are there centres all over the body.

Question : Is not a centre of necessity in the middle ?

Mataji : Of course, the centre is in the middle. Wherever God becomes revealed, there is the heart. There is only one heart, yet again there are hearts without number. Every man speaks of his own heart, but actually the heart is in one.

Question : Where is the heart according to the *Śāstras* ?

Mataji : Baba, this body has not studied the *Śāstras*. The place of the heart is one. Where is the middle and where is it not ? If you say : "The centre lies here !" this body will say : "It is so". From the ordinary point of view the heart is situated in the middle of the chest; that is to say, everyone will speak from the state he has reached. This body also maintains : "Yes, everyone experiences from his

own stage of achievement.' Where is God not? Therefore, the heart also is one and yet of infinite number—whichever way you wish to put it.

Question : When the heart fails, the end has come.

Mataji : The heart that fails and the real heart (*hri-daya*) are not identical. As regards the body, seen from this angle, whatever seed you sow, will come back to you in progressive development. Again, where in the whole tree is there no seed? From this point of view, where is the heart not? In the one are contained the many and the many in the one : wherever anyone experiences his heart, there it is.

Question : How did the seed come into being?

Mataji : He Himself manifests as the seed. Can there be a seed apart from Him?

Question : What is the secret of the *līlā* in the *Bhāgavata**?

Mataji : In all action the question "why" is present. What has to be done to find the solution? One has to pass I. A., B. A. and M. A. And here to pass means to unveil. When the veil is rent, the 'why' disappears. For this reason you are asked to read the *Bhāgavata*. He who does not study anything has no questions to ask and neither has he who has passed all exams. What is the *Bhāgavata*? The *Bhāgavata* and God are one. God's entire play—as far as He manifests with form and with attributes is contained in the *Bhāgavata*.

Question : Why did God play the *Rāma Līlā*? Was it not below His dignity?

Mataji : This body does not say anything personal. God acts His play with Himself alone. Some say He creates with the help of His *māyā*, others say it is His pleasure. With whom can He sport? With Himself, with His *māyā*,

* *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*—One of the main 18 *Purāṇas*, dealing with the *Avatāras* of *Viṣṇu*, especially and in great detail with the life of *Sri Krishna*.

His power to appear as many separate beings. Another point : You say the Rishis requested the Lord to show His special *Līlā* as Vāmana Avatāra. But Ramachandra replied : "Not as Vāmana, the play will be enacted by Krishna Avatāra." Everything verily belongs to God, thus He Himself stages the play with His own Self alone. Another point : You say a man who has supernormal powers can do anything at all. This is not so on all levels. Śiva alone is able to digest poison.

Question : In the Bhagavad Gita, we are asked in one place to engage in action and in another again to renounce everything. How is this to be reconciled ?

Mataji : Look, there are different chapters—at one stage action is advocated and at another total surrender. Is it possible to surrender merely by saying so ? There is a stage of surrender and another of renunciation.

The Bhagavad Gita should be read every day. Reading it over and over again—what will be the result ? Just as a divine being appears and gives you a message, so the Gita will have mercy upon you as the word. You may say : "How can words show mercy ?" Well, this is why one speaks of sacred scriptures. By constantly doing God's work, a certain stage is reached. Generally speaking, there is no greater work than that.

Read the *Gītā* and engage regularly every day in some spiritual practice and the answer to your questions will come to you. When a sincere question arises, it is bound to find its solution. Without one-pointedness nothing can be achieved. One has to aim at one goal, but the mind aims at many things. Only when single-minded, one is on the way to enlightenment. Therefore, so long as you have not realized deep within you the significance of the *Gītā*, do not stop reading it.

Question : Immersed as we are in *māyā*, how can we be saved from its grip ?

Mataji : By cutting down the jungle one has to create a clearing: one has to go right into the jungle in order to cut it down. Whose *māyā* is it ? God's *māyā* is without beginning. Even so there is a path out of it. By entering the jungle and cutting it down a clearing is produced; just as vessels show their true quality only when scrubbed clean—so when the veil is removed, THAT which IS shines forth. What then is the means of removing the screen of *māyā*, of delusion ? *Satsang*, to act according to the instructions of one's *Guru*.

And so long as no *Guru* has been found : all names are His Name, all forms His Form, all qualities are God's. And constantly to meditate on the question : How can I become free from delusion ? What is the path, what the expedient ? Somehow or other He must be kept in mind. Of God alone must be all thought and word, the rest is but futility and pain.

"Wherever God may place you at any time and under whatever circumstances, recollect that it is all for the best. Endeavour to go through life leaving your burdens in His hands. He is the Preserver, He is the Guide, He is the All in All."

—*Mata Anandamayi*

MĀTRI SATSANG

SWAMI BHAGAVADANANDA GIRI

(Translated from Hindi)

December 4th, 1947.

Question : Are all our activities due to destiny ?

Mataji : In the world of destiny everything is due to destiny. As things are fated to happen so they come about. From one point of view one will have to say, everything is as it should be. What exists in Reality manifests in the material world.

Question : Is spiritual progress also fated ?

Mataji : Spiritual progress is also fated. This can be clearly seen by astrology. If the exact time of birth is known, astrology is able to foretell a man's future. Some have seen by direct perception that this is so. If a Yogi foretells something by his yogic vision, it is a different matter. Suppose someone walks in the street and has an accident. It was fated to happen, this is why it occurred. This much can be known by the astrologer. However, beyond this it may be that by the power of the Guru all that was destined to happen has been changed. There is also a level which is unaffected by fate. But there is a place where destiny exists, from which an adverse planetary constellation can be neutralized. By such neutralization something that was destined to happen can be averted and by the power of the deity invoked in the process, one may be saved. The fire of knowledge by which everything can be consumed is self-revealed. There, everything is possible—there, the impossible becomes possible. God is indeed Self-luminous. Always and everywhere is He.

Question : How can the restlessness of the mind be overcome ?

Mataji : By increasing restlessness it is overcome. The restlessness of the world only enhances duality.

So long as your mind is busy with the things of this world, your desires for worldly things will never be satisfied. When the mind is given its real nourishment, then only will it be at peace. When attaining to the supreme wealth of God-realization, the mind will be perfectly still. There is only God everywhere. HE alone IS ! HE alone and none else ! Man's duty is to provide the mind with pure food. Do not put your mind into dirt. When defiled it becomes agitated with yearning. Where Rama is, there is rest and peace, where Rama is not, there is unrest and disease.

Question : Has one to reap the fruit of all one's good and bad actions ? How did action begin ?

Mataji : (laughing) From where it began ? God is without beginning and without end.

Question : How did action (*karma*) originate ?

Mataji : The world (*jagat*) is verily the Lord's. By His will, His imagination He has created it. God Himself is sporting with His own Self. He Himself loses Himself and then again searches for Himself. Creation has neither beginning nor end. One cannot say : When did it start ? All this is nothing but God's play. God is here, right in front of me, but I am not aware of it. He cannot remain without losing Himself—losing and again finding Himself. Finding gives bliss and losing misery. When a small child grows into an adolescent, the child disappears in the young man. To change thus is called to die. Births without end and deaths without end. How many times will you change your clothes ! In the *Ātmā* no change occurs. The *Ātmā* is beyond form. Who is it that dies ? And who that weeps ?

Question : Who prompts the intelligence ?

Mataji : God does; He is the actor. Again, one can also say, He is not the actor, He is only the witness of

action. In the ever moving world God is staging His play. HE pulls the strings and we are the puppets. As He directs so we have to move.

Question : Does God induce my mind to engage in bad deeds ?

Mataji : What fruit you reap depends on what kind of tree you have planted. Perform pure action and you will get pure results. Wrong action will have bad consequences. If you become attached to money, property and so forth your true nature will be covered by want. By doing actions pertaining to man's true nature, he becomes established in his Self. Later the actions born of want are not attractive any longer. When you make efforts to realize your *Atmā*, you are desiring to find your true nature by its own momentum. But in actual fact you are trying to find your true nature while being attached to the realm of want. How wonderful ! You are craving for the power of Knowledge, but are actually attracting the power of ignorance. You are out for complete and perfect Knowledge, but as a matter of fact are acquiring fragmentary knowledge. The path of want is full of sorrow and the path of your true nature gives happiness—God-realization. All power is God's. It is He who gives you the power to reason, the power to act. Just as you provide food and other necessities by your own exertion, so you must use your capacity and your talents to find God. He who does not advance towards God, is on the road to death. The path of God-realization is full of ambrosia, it is the path of Immortality. This body says, if your mind feels drawn to God, use all your strength and energy in the duty of finding Him. The Supreme Mother, Supreme Father, Supreme Friend—one must endeavour to approach Him. Where is your home ? Your true home is in God. Who is your own ? Only God and none else. In whichever form your desire God—be it as the Lord whom you serve, be it as your own Self—on realizing Him, everything will become as it should be.

The body has to experience pleasure and pain. You have to bear want and emptiness. God-realization is supreme enjoyment. One who has renounced God (laughing ironically) he indeed is the greatest renunciate. The man who renounces the spiritual path is the most rigorous renunciate. If you move along the current of want, you will remain wanting. Endeavour to find the Supreme and you will attain to supreme bliss. Supreme bliss is immortal. But death is lurking in worldly enjoyment. When you were a child you were playing and romping about, now your childhood has passed away. In this manner there is death all along.

Question : Since God is doing everything, why does He not endow us with right intelligence ?

Mataji : The world is round and in continual flux. In God's play there are a great variety of shapes and modes. There are darkness and light and many different paths. There, everything finds its consummation in infinite movement, infinite manifestation and an infinite variety of states of being. Action aiming at God-realization is alone truly propitious. Become engrossed in such beneficent action and you will surely find God. Why is God not found ? Ask yourself this question ! Cultivate the attitude of mind that whatever happens, happens by God's Will. Decide definitely to perform actions directed towards God from now on. Something has to be explained here : From the point of view of Reality there is no such thing as good or bad. So long as you are identified with the body, you must not do anything bad. God never causes anyone to commit any wrong. This is only due to misunderstanding. The result of wickedness is misery. One has to purify one's vision. If you grasp the fact that all this is God's play, nothing will seem bad.

Question : How can one alter one's outlook ?

Mataji : By the contemplation of God.

A Pandit : The realm of want and one's true nature (*abhāva* and *svabhāva*) are talked about in the Isha Upanishad " *Vidyām cha avidyām cha !* "

Mataji : Pitaji, what you say about the Upanishad I hear from you. This body does not know about it.

Pandit : Mataji ! I am only learned One learns like a parrot. Of Reality I know nothing at all.

Mataji : While fixed at the standpoint of inequality, how can one come to know of the state of equality ?

Question : Has one to change one's clothes in order to attain to equality ?

Mataji : No, not one's clothes, only one's spectacles : in other words, one's vision has to be corrected.

Question : When some great evil is committed by someone and God induces another person to start a fast in order to reform the evildoer, why does not God cause the sinner himself to mend his ways ? Why should an "agency" have to intervene ?

Mataji : Pitaji, if someone receives an inspiration of this kind, what is there to ask ? A sick man takes the help of a doctor and a nurse to get well. The physician and the nurse try to restore the patient's health. According to your question, what need is there of a doctor or a nurse ? God Himself will cure the disease. Therefore it is said that God's play is of infinite variety.

Question : The evil-doer can also say : God has prompted me to do the wicked deed.

Mataji : No, he cannot. Why does one get ill ? In sickness there is no well-being. Where Rama is there is rest and ease and where Rama is not there is great uneasiness. But where is Rama not ? God's play has infinite variations. Good and bad, saint and sinner—through all of them God acts His play. To find fault is bad. Revise your outlook ! Why ! The wicked person is also one of God's manifestations. In the eyes of a saint nothing is bad. Look at all manifestations as God's. Where the pairs of opposites

are, there evil is seen : remove this attitude ! To see evil brings sorrow.

Question : Suppose I want to kill someone, is it a wicked attitude of mind ? What can I do about it ?

Mataji : You say to see evil is itself an evil. Do you see murder ? This is a harmful outlook—it is not the vision that sees God everywhere. Where God is perceived in everything, there cannot be even the slightest trace of anything evil. I see wickedness because my vision is blurred. There are countless aspects to every single matter. According to a man's outlook things come into being. The one who perceives virtue will perform virtuous deeds and he who sees vice will do base actions. Suppose some *mahātmā* is absorbed in *samādhi*. The one who criticises everything will say : "Nonsense ! This is no *samādhi*, the *mahātmā* is sleeping." But he who sees goodness everywhere will understand that it is *samādhi*. Seeing evil is itself a sin. One has to correct one's vision.

Question : If someone's desire for a man or a woman remains unfulfilled when he or she dies, will such an one have to be reborn as a ghost ?

Mataji : One has to be reborn to fulfil one's desires. What the *Śāstras* say about this is for you to tell. If you behave like one belonging to the world of ghosts, you will be born in that world. Birth occurs according to one's tendencies and inclinations.

Question : I have heard it say that if a person is greedy for wealth, he will be reborn as a snake. How can the desire for riches be fulfilled in the body of a snake ?

Mataji : Due to one's desire for it in countless former births, one is blessed with a human body. In the human body lies the power to realize God. Your behaviour will determine your next birth. By behaving like a snake one obtains the body of a snake. In God's creation everyone is born in perfect justice in keeping with all his actions. It depends on your state of mind at the

moment of death what kind of body you will receive. One may also be reborn through the wish of doing a particular work. The fire of the Guru's power can consume the tendencies accumulated through many former lives. So long as all desires are not burnt up by the fire of knowledge or melted by *bhakti*, the inclination to perform action will certainly persist. If God is remembered at the time of death, this will bring about God-realization. What happens to the soul after leaving the body is determined by a person's state of mind at the last moment. If one has been a transgressor all one's life, how will virtuous desires occur at the end ?

Once upon a time there was a queen who was deeply religious. Much of her leisure was spent in worship and devotion and she was full of generosity and compassion for all. Her one great grief was that her husband, the King, was an atheist. He never pronounced the name of God. People therefore were under the impression that he was a disbeliever, while actually he was profoundly spiritual. Secretly he spent his life in constant communion with the Divine. Only he would never exhibit his true attitude of mind and thus appeared to be an agnostic. Once it so happened that he pronounced the word 'Rama' in his sleep. The queen who was by his side, heard it and was stunned with surprise. Overwhelmed with extreme joy, she, the next day, started big celebrations and distributed gifts all round. When the king asked her what what was the occasion for so much festivity, the Queen related to him what had happened in the night. The King said : "Oh, has the word 'Rama' escaped through my lips ? This was my well-guarded and most secret treasure—it is gone !" With these words he left his body.

Occasionally it may also happen that someone spends his whole life in misbehaviour, but due to hidden good tendencies accumulated in former lives, a complete change comes over him at the moment of death.

Question : What is the difference between *Ātmā* and *Paramātmā* ?

Mataji : That which is *Ātmā* is indeed *Paramātmā*. *Ātmā* actually means *Paramātmā*.

Question : Are then *Ātmā* and *Paramātmā* one and the same thing ?

Mataji : There is a famous saying : "Wherever there is an individual (*jīva*) there is Siva and in every woman there is Gouri." This is perfectly correct. The *Ātmā* is indeed the *Paramātmā*. Just as there is pure water and polluted water. The water is the same in both of them. The essential quality of water is equal in both. To drink pure water gives comfort and promotes health. When contaminated water is filtered, boiled and strained, it will be transformed into pure water. Stagnating water breeds germs. One *jīva* generates other *jīvas*. The *jīvātmā* may be compared to impure water. By the contemplation of God he is purified and finally revealed as the *Paramātmā* Himself. This is why God is in fact the Supreme *Ātmā*. The individual is that which is bound and where bondage is, there is misery. With the help of the *Ātmā*, having purified the *jīva* by the vision of the *Paramātmā*, transform it into the *Paramātmā*. That is to say, the water has to be filtered.

Question : How is the filtering achieved ?

Mataji : In order to filter, you must go to the Guru.

Question : How to search for the Guru ?

Mataji : The longing to seek God does not awaken in everyone. The yearning to find God must be roused within oneself. By the grace of Rama everything is possible.

Question : Why is God gracious to some and not to others ?

Mataji : What are you saying ! For God the distinction between one and another does not exist at all.

Question : How can one obtain the grace of Rāma ?

Mataji : God's grace is showered on all. God knows no partiality. Just as a mother gives to her children what-

ever they need. To the small infant she will give milk only and to the big boy solid food. She feeds her children what they can digest and assimilate. Likewise does God grant His grace to His devotee according to his condition and state. Everything is indeed God's. Your whole family is His and His alone. Work with your hands and at the same time repeat God's name. You have chosen Rama as your refuge, therefore constantly repeat His name. Rāma is making you work. In order to exhaust your *karma*, march forward, seeking the shelter of God's name.

"God alone is Truth, Happiness, Bliss. Do not set your hopes on anything except Supreme Beatitude, the Bliss of the Self. Naught else exists. What seems to exist outside of it is merely illusion. Try to find your Self !"

—Mata Anandamayi

Desirelessness*

Discrimination (*viveka*) makes it plain to a thinking man that he is not the body, and starts him on his voyage of self-discovery. The seeker henceforth knows no rest till he realizes the truth of his being, and in that process of discovery consists the whole gamut of his psychic evolution. The awakening of *viveka* marks the spiritual unfolding of man.

A fundamental test—a veritable touchstone—of one's progress on the path is the measure of his desirelessness; for when *viveka* illumines the mind, all dark corners of desire vanish.

Desire is born of *aviveka*, by man identifying himself with the body. There is no desire which has not its root in man's body-consciousness. Indeed, desire is the direct product of one's identifying oneself with, or attaching oneself to an individual, an object or an environment. This is the symptom of *aviveka*. Man has truly and firmly set his foot on the spiritual path only when, through *viveka* he has awakened to his not being the body. Therefore, desirelessness is the first and foremost fruit of *viveka*. It is the base on which alone the temple of spirituality can be raised. Desire throws us outwards; love of the Divine takes us inwards. To love the Divine, one must be free from the desires of the senses. "One cannot eat the cake and have it."

Desire cuts both ways. If indiscriminately fulfilled, it produces attachment, which causes it to rise again and again. If suppressed, it produces anger and resentment, which cloud and confuse the mind. Thus, either way it produces disharmony.

* Reprinted from : "A Saint's Call to Mankind", published by the Manav Seva Sangh, Vrindaban.

Even as the outgoing waters of the river flow into the sea, then evaporate in the form of clouds, rain down and rejoin the rivers and again flow back into the sea; similarly the man of desires continues to be drawn into the sea of *māyā*, revolving in the vicious circle of so-called life and death. In a life of indulgence in desires there is strain, not rest; motion, not equanimity; *bhoga*, not *yoga*; excitement, not peace. In the life of Self-realization, on the other hand, there is *yoga*, peace, joy and immortality.

When one truly despairs of the world giving one's lasting happiness, one's desires die and one practically gets a foretaste of death. A desireless soul is not afraid of death, but awaits death as a prospective passenger awaits the train when the signal is down. That, in reality, is *vairāgya* (desirelessness). *Vairāgya* is like a fire that burns the wood of *rāga* (attachment). As the fire subsides after burning the wood, so does *vairāgya* also subside after consuming attachment—when only *jñāna* (Knowledge) shines self-luminous.

There is no *viveka*, no *tyāga* (renunciation) no *tapas* (austerity) higher than true *vairāgya*. True *vairāgya* raises one above one's physical, subtle and causal bodies and ushers one into Life Eternal. Further, as a by-product, it beautifies and illumines the fleeting life while it lasts. That is to say, all the virtues associated with divinity spontaneously flower in the aspirant. *Vairāgya* does not mean hatred or contempt for the body or the world but only equanimity by giving them their right places. Like sewage, it irrigates the world and leaves it more prosperous.

True *vairāgya* means the raising of the value of the enjoyer above the transitory objects of enjoyment.

Many persons pose *vairāgya*, detachment from the world, because they have had disappointments, frustrations and bereavements. They, however, retain their attachment to their bodies. This is false *vairāgya*, and only produces *dvesha* (animosity) towards others, which is another name for *rāga* (attachment). For *rāga* and *dvesha* are two sides

of the same coin. The body is the world in miniature and is made of the same stuff; and indeed, for the individual consciousness the world is a projection of one's body-consciousness. True *vairāgya* springs from one's realizing the phantasmagoria of the body. Then only one is truly detached from the world and is dissociated from it completely. It is impossible to be detached from the world while one is attached to one's body. As long as one is identified with one's body, one is bound to be attached to the world and the pose of *vairāgya* is a passing reaction, a remedy worse than the disease.

What distinguishes desire from the true want of the soul is this. Desire is a pursuit which allures, but from whose course the soul achieves nothing : a mirage. The true want of man restores one to the Beloved, through single-minded and one-pointed aspiration. Indeed, what distinguishes a *sādhaka* from the ordinary man of the world is that whereas the latter runs after manifold objects of desire, the desires of the former have fused into one central desire : intense aspiration to realize God or Truth.

The man of many desires casts long shadows over his fellow-beings. Only a desireless soul can be a true servant of mankind. Creative energy flows out of the desireless soul, not from the mud of desire. Desire is a dissipation of energy.

Desire is the food, the source of sustenance, of the ego. The cessation of desire makes for the disappearance of the ego. With the disappearance of the ego opens the flood-gate of Live Divine.

The natural want of man is covered over by the unnatural phantom of desire. When the natural want of man consumes the artificial desire, he becomes desireless; and Life Eternal follows desirelessness even as day follows night.

The *sādhaka* should ponder over what makes any object or body in the world of appearances glow with beauty or loveliness. The truth of the matter is that whatever the object to which the Self lends itself, that object glows

with the light of the Self. The wise one does not run after the shadow. The *sādhaka* who is still distracted by the objects of the senses has not yet realised that just as the sweetness in all sweetmeats is of the sugar, so whatever taste or attraction appears anywhere in anything is His.

The world seems to be indispensable to man only as long as he is bound to it by attachments. When attachments are dissolved, the *sādhaka* realises his freedom. Desirelessness is the key to fearlessness.

The world does not love one who constantly begs from the world. A moment lived in desirelessness is more significant than a hundred years lived in desire.

The pleasures of the senses—to which desires cater—are an animal or sub-human target, not human. As a gardener removes the weeds from the grass, even so the *sādhaka* removes desires from his mind.

Desire can only die a natural death when we are not in a state of want. The state of want is caused by our identifying ourselves with individuals, objects and environment. Detachment from these releases our true nature that is the Self and which is free from any want. For a *sādhaka*, however, whose *viveka* is not enough of a flame to burn out all desire, a few useful ideas are suggested.

The first step towards freeing one's self from desire is to introspect one's desires; to fulfil only such desires as relate to the present; which it is in our power to fulfil and the fulfilment of which does not involve harm to another. At the same time, in the fulfilment of such desires too one should refrain from indulging in the sense of excitement thereof, for that would bind us and cause such desires to recur again and again and form a vicious circle. The rest of the desires must be surrendered by deep thought. Restricting ourselves to the fulfilment of inescapable desires only gives the strength to renounce superfluous desires, and releases *viveka*. The only place that a limited fulfilment of desires has in the life of an aspirant is to allow the same, within limits as laid down

by *dharma*, with the purpose of outgrowing them through experience. Otherwise, the fleeting sensation of pleasure in the fulfilment of desires would cause a chain of ever-fresh rounds of desire and produce a vicious whirlpool.

The fulfilment of such desires should not, however, leave any trail of *samskāras* on one's mind for being reaped in the future. There must be no contemplation of the objects of desire with reference to the past or future. Contemplation of desired objects is worse than the fulfilment of desires.

Secondly, the *sādhaka* should engage himself solely in discharging the obligations to others which he has incurred as a result of his former identifications. This means that he must fulfil the rights of others by the performance of his duties to them; and that whatever rights he has imagined to be his as a result of *aviveka* must be renounced by him. The sense of one's rights in a *sādhaka* only betrays his own sense of poverty. The man who claims rights from another has in fact subordinated himself to another, for he has made his satisfaction and happiness dependent on another's mercy. The *sādhana* of man consists in his yearning to meet his Beloved or to realize Truth. When the *sādhaka* is freed from desire, he is freed from all bondage and attains life in Truth and Freedom.

The fulfilment of others' rights by our service, and the renunciation of one's own so-called rights, is thus the first step towards desirelessness. This implies selfless service to others. The *sādhaka* should not indulge in any undertaking that is not service to another.

Paradoxical as it may seem, complete discharge of one's duty to another frees one from attachment to the other.

Atonement and prayer, control of the senses, contemplation of God, quest after Truth are some of the other useful aids to the *sādhaka* seeking to rid himself of desires.

True renunciation is of the whole, not of a part. As long as a single desire remains to pollute the mind, it is a potential nucleus of disease. The ending of desire does not come from any change in one's environment but by the right use of one's existing environment. Right use of one's environment is the surest means of release from the environment as well as from desire and outgoing activity.

The desireless man hears for the pleasure of the speaker; speaks for the pleasure of the listener; eats for the pleasure of the feeder; meets for the pleasure of the other; indeed, he lives only for the service of others or for the pleasure of his Lord.

"All is His, all is He ; to leave everything to Him must be your sole endeavour. Invoke His name, meditate on Him ; ever abide in the remembrance of Him. Not praying for anything that is of this world, strive to abandon yourself without reserve to Him. In Him no want of any kind exists, no pain, no agony—in Him is all attainment, the summit of fulfilment, rest, repose , tranquility."

—Mata Anandamayi

In Remembrance

A JEWISH DEVOTEE FROM GERMANY

(1)

Clothed in the glories of the Universe
around your head a crown of stars,
remote
and yet so near.
Bathing me in the still waves of peace and bliss.
With the essence
of all the beauties of the universe
soothing the sores of homesickness for Thy abode
eternal
and feeding silently my heart.
Oh Ma !

In remembrance Solan 1946.

(2)

Ma !
Don't leave me in the turmoils
of this foolish world,
make me remember Thee, my real Self.
Then, in a twinkling of an eye
the clouding structures fall to pieces,
hiding no longer Thy shining Face.

Europe 1967.

(3)

No words can have this power of entrancing Beauty
Thy darshan
revealed.
Oh Queen of May.

In remembrance Raipur 1968.

(4)

You gladdened my heart
with the smile of Your welcome,
You played the game of hide and seek.
Where are You, Ma,
Where can I find You ?
Within that body,
inside those walls ?
Hilariously
birds and trees
chuckled with laughter
accompanied by Krishnaji's flute :
Found You in Vrindavan.

In remembrance Vrindavan 1968.

(5)

To feel the silence of the mighty river Ganga
cleansing hidden corners of the mind
instilling ecstasy divine within the heart

The mighty river Ganga

I can follow with my eyes
her majestic flowing up to the horizon

The mighty river Ganga

I can know her with my heart
when turning towards the mother of Bliss

Ma Anandamayi Ma.

In remembrance Varanasi 1968.

"Bear in mind that God's Name is He Himself in one form ; let it be your inseparable companion. Try your utmost never to remain without Him. The more intense und continuous your efforts to dwell in His Presence, the greater the likelihood of your growing joyful and serene. When your mind becomes vacant, at least try to fill it with the awareness of God and His contemplation."

— Mata Anandamayi

Bhakti Yoga

PROF. SHANTI PRAKASH ATREYA, M. A., PH.D.

Bhakti Yoga begins with *Upāsana* or worship. The word *Upāsana* means sitting near (i.e. drawing or coming near towards) God or any of his forms believed by the devotee to be God. In the Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad, it is said : “The Self (*Ātmā*) is to be worshipped, is to be pleased. Having known its nature, one goes beyond the pale of death. There is no other way for well-being”. (Brihad, Up. 1. 4. 7). God should be worshipped as often as possible, but according to the Rig-veda (8.27.21.) thrice, according to the Athar-Veda (11.2.16.) four times daily. These four times are Sunrise, Noon, Evening and Night. One should worship God in a secluded and holy place, with a calm mind. God should be approached for His grace and His benign qualities praised. The essence of worship lies in faith in God and an unselfish life for Him. What was named *Upāsana* in the Vedic Literature came to be known as *Bhakti* in the *Purānas* and later in religious literature. In course of time it acquired an equal status with *Yoga* and *Jñāna* as a method of attaining Liberation. The Bhagavad Gita not only places *bhakti* on the same status as *dhyana*, *jñāna*, and selfless performance of duty but in places, *bhakti* (devotion or love) for God higher than any other method, and towards the end of the sermon on the battle field, which the Bhagavad Gita is, Sri Krishna advises Arjuna to become a whole-hearted exclusive *bhakta* of God. Here we shall speak of the *bhakti-yoga* as a technical process of realization of Union (as variously conceived by *bhaktas*) of the individual soul with the Divine Being.

Narada in his Bhakti-Sūtras has defined *bhakti* as the utmost love (*Parama Prema*) of God. Shandilya in his Bhakti-Sutras says, “*Bhakti* is the utmost attachment

or love for God, and it is said that one who has that, becomes immortal." In Devi Bhagavata it is said that *bhakti* is *anurāga* (attachment) to God. According to Narada (Bhakti Sūtras-B, 19), it should be so deep that everything belonging to the *bhakta* is offered to God and on being separated from Him, he feels unbearably uneasy and unhappy.

Bhakti is of three kinds: *Vaidhi*, *Rāgātmikā* and *Parā*.

Vaidhī Bhakti. (Devotion with certain forms and rules of the forms) is the first stage in the entire process of the *yoga* of *bhakti*. It consists of the following nine activities in relation to an image (*Pratimā*) of God, who at the first stage of divine love is conceived as personal. (1) *Shrāvana*, hearing about God and his qualities and acts of grace mentioned in religious books. (2) *Kīrtana*, talking about and singing the praises of God or His incarnations (*avatāras*), (3) *Smarana*, remembering God constantly, (4) *Padseva*, touching and massaging the feet of the Lord, (5) *Archana*, worshipping the image of God with incense and lights etc. (6) Bowing down to Him or His image, (7) *Dāsyam*, serving Him in all possible manners as a selfless and faithful servant (8) *Sakhyam*, loving Him and behaving with Him as one would to a friend, with a friendly affection. (9) *Ātmānivedanam*, Self-surrender to Him. It is offering himself and all one calls one's own to God without any reservation, to be used by Him in any way. As already said, *Vaidhī* devotion is practised in relation to a personal God or His incarnation or image. It is difficult for an ordinary man to conceive of an impersonal and formless God and to worship or love Him. Hence Sri Krishna tells Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, "Greater is the difficulty of those whose minds are set on the unmanifested, for the unmanifested, which is the final goal, is very difficult for the embodied man to reach." But it has to be kept in mind that the worship of images and forms is not to be continued always. It has to be given up and transcended. Vasistha

tells Ramchandra in Yogavasistha, "The formal and artificial worship of God is meant only for those whose minds are not yet developed and who cannot control them from childlike fickleness. (6a.30,5). The devotion to Vishnu (personal God) is prescribed for those fools who run away from *Śāstras*, effort, and thinking, so that they may be engaged in good activities." (5.43,20.). In the Tantras, a gradation of attitudes towards God or Self is maintained in which the experience of feeling identical with the Supreme Brahman is at the top, and formal and external worship of a personal God or His image occupies the lowest place. The grades commencing from the lowest and rising up and up are: (1) External worship, (2) Prayer and *japa* (repetition) of the name of God or of any mantra (3) *Dhyāna* or contemplation of God and (4) the highest experience of one's identity with the Absolute Brahman. The external worship *Pratīka Upāsana*, however, has its utility in making the mind attentive and should be continued until the mind is able to contemplate God without form. Any form of a personal God and any image of God is equally efficacious. (5) *Rāgātmika bhakti*—(Devotion in the form of deep love and attachment to God). It is the attitude of love for God in which one feels deeply attracted towards Him and experiences peace and joy in thinking of Him. In the "Bhakti Sutra", Narada says that at this stage of love for God one becomes *siddha*, perfect, *amrita*, immortal, *tripta*, completely satisfied, when God's love is attained. One thinks of nothing else but God. One is so much absorbed in God's love that he does not think of anything else. All his relationship is then with God alone. This relationship is of as many types as a man has in his society with other fellow-men. Such as that of a servant to his master, of a friend to his friend, of a lover to his beloved, of a parent to his or her child, of a wife to her husband. The lover offers everything to God, becomes completely absorbed in the thought of Him, and sometimes weeps bitterly in separation from Him. The

devotee becomes entirely His, worrying not even about his own existence or being. Thus he becomes prepared for the next and last stage of devotion, *Parā Bhakti*.

Parā Bhakti (Highest Devotion). At the highest stage of love, the lover and the object of love become completely identified ; just as after the *Rāsa Līlā* every Gopi felt that she was Krishna. At this stage the individual soul takes the form of the Divine Being and begins to feel as such. Not only that the devotee sees God in every object. The world appears to be a Divine *Līlā* in which every player is also a divine manifestation. Such a *bhakta* is always in *Bhāva-Samādhi* in which nothing but Love, joy and the utmost satisfaction, complete union, and complete negation of oneself is experienced. Such a *bhakta* behaves in the world as described in the 12th chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā: "He hates no creature, he is friendly and compassionate to all, he is free from attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain and forgiving, ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled and possessed of firm conviction, with mind and intellect dedicated to Me. Such a devotee is dear to Me." (12.13.14.) It is certainly a great thing to love God, but it is much greater to be loved by God. And it is only through *Bhakti Yoga* that this greatest of all things is attained.

Sacred Places of Kashmir, Jammu and Ladhak

A DEVOTEE

PARMANDAL

उमां हैमवतीं शुभ्रां कोमलांगीं शिवप्रियाम् ।
नमामि शुभवस्त्रां त्वां देहि विद्यां शिवप्रिये ॥*

(I bow in reverence to Uma, the daughter of the snow-clad Himalayas. Her body is comely and of white complexion. She is lovely and beneficent to all and robed in white garments. O, beloved of Siva, grant me knowledge.)

Parmandal is a place of pilgrimage situated in the Sivalik mountains at a distance of about thirty-five kilometers east-south-east of Jammu.

There is a stream sacred to the goddess Uma flowing over the sands in Parmandal.

The pilgrims take bath in its holy waters and worship on its banks.

On a mount at this place there is a temple of Siva called Umapati Mahadeva. It is said that in very ancient times the great sage Kashyapa worshipped Shankara at this spot. Besides the main temple of Umapati there are many smaller shrines of Siva. The place was forgotten by the people but long after it was discovered by a King named Beni Datta.

It is said that Maharaja Mansing of Jaipur visited Parmandal after defeating the Afghans in Kabul when he acted as a general of the Moghul emperor Akbar. At that time he made big donations for the renovation and upkeep of the shrines. At a later date Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab visited this sacred place in April 1838 and bathed in the sacred waters on the full moon of Chaitra. He made

* Shri Aryashtakam, verse-4.

substantial gifts in cash and kind for the reconstruction and maintenance of the temples.

वन्दे शम्भुमापतिं सुरगुरुं वन्दे जगत्कारणं ।
 वन्दे पन्नगभूषणं मृगधरं वन्दे पशुनां पतिम् ॥
 वन्दे सूर्यशशाङ्कवह्निनयनं वन्दे मकुन्दप्रियं ।
 वन्दे भक्तजनाश्रयं च वरदं वन्दे शिवं शङ्करम् ॥

[Reverence to Shambhu, the Lord of Uma and preceptor of the gods. Reverence to Him, who is the cause of the universe. Reverence to Him, whose ornament is the serpent and who is clad in a deer-skin. Reverence to Him, who is the Lord of all beings. Reverence to Him, whose eyes are the sun, the moon and the fire. Reverence to Him, who is loved by Mukunda (Krishna). Reverence to Him who gives boons and in whom the devotees take refuge. Reverence to Siva Shankara].

PARASPUR

Paraspur is at a distance of about twenty-two kilometers west-north-west of Srinagar. It is about four kilometers south-west of Shadipur, which is about nineteen kilometers north-west of Srinagar.

The ancient city of Parihasapura, of which Paraspur is a corruption, constructed by the great King Lalitaditya (714-750 A.D.); was located at this place. The sacred confluence of the Vitasta (Jhelum) and the Sindhu was near Paraspur in the hoary past. In those days the ancient city was adorned with many fine temples containing images of gold and silver. It was destroyed by Shikandar-But-Shikan. The ruins of a Buddhist monastery ('Vihara'), a mound ('stupa') and a prayer hall ('chaitya') can still be seen at Paraspur.

According to Kalhana's Rajatarangini, Lalitaditya constructed four big temples in Parihasapura. They were

† The successor of Shikandar-But Shikan however respected Hindu and Muslim shrines equally.

dedicated to Mukta-Keshava, Parihasa Keshava, Maha Varaha and Govardhanadhari. The image of Mukta-Keshava was of gold and those of Parihasa Keshava and Govardhanadhari of silver. The image of Vishnu in the Maha Varaha temple was clad in golden armour.

The following verses from the Rajatarangini tell about the images of gods in those temples.

विरजे राजतो देवः श्रीपरिहासकेशवः ।
 लिप्तो रत्नाकरस्वापे मुक्ताज्योतिर्भरैरिव ॥
 नाभिनलिनकिञ्जल्कपुञ्जेनवारञ्जितः ।
 अचकात्काञ्चनमयः श्रीमुक्ताकेशवो हरिः ॥
 महावराहः शुशुभे काञ्चनकवचं दधत ।
 पाताले तिमिरं हन्तुं वहीन्निभ रविप्रभाः ॥
 गोवर्धनधरी देवो रजतस्ते कारितः ।
 यो गोकुलपथः पुरैरिव पाण्डुरतां दधे ॥*

(The glowing silver image of Vishnu called Parihasa-keshava shone like the god Vishnu while resting on the bed of the ocean flooded with the radiant light of pearls.

The famous image of Mukta-Keshava made of gold shone as if it had taken its lustre from the many stems of the lotus rising from Vishnu's navel.

The image of Mahavaraha, clad in golden armour shone forth like the sun shedding its radiant light to overcome the darkness in the world below.

The image of Govardhanadhara was made of silver. It was white as the streams of milk flowing from herds of cows.)

In ancient times the confluence of the sacred Vitasta and Sindhu was at Trigam, which is situated about two kilometers north-east of the ruins of the Parihasapura temples. The Bonarsar lake at Trigam is regarded as very holy. It is fed by the waters of the Vitasta. Long ago there was a temple of Vishnu called Vainyaswami at Trigam. King

* The Rajatarangini, Fourth Taranga, Slokas 195-198.

Jayasimha (1128-1149 A.D.) constructed a temple with towers at Trigam. This is mentioned in the following verse of the Rajatarangini.

भूतेश्वरं मठ कृत्वा त्रिग्राम्यामथपातयत् ।
तोयं कनकवाहिन्या वितस्तयाश्च यः पिबन् ॥*

[He built a Matha (temple with a tower) at Bhutesh-wara and one at Trigami and offered to fore-fathers the waters of the river Kanakavahini at the one and the water of the Vitasta at the other].

The Bonasar lake is now visited by the pilgrims in connection with the pilgrimage to Kapalamochana Tirtha in the neighbouring village of Digam (ancient Dvigram) situated about two kilometers west of Shupiyan. It is on the left bank of the river Rimbyar. Kapalamochana Tirtha is a sacred spring. By bathing in it Siva absolved himself of the sin of cutting off one of the heads of Brahma. It is said that as soon as Siva cut off the head of Brahma, the skull of the forehead stuck to his hand and could not be separated due to the great sin he had committed by such killing. When Siva bathed in this holy spring at Digam he was freed from the sin and the skull fell away from his hand.

The pilgrims visit this sacred place in the month of Shrāvan (July August).

प्रजानाथं नाथ प्रसभमभिकं स्वां दुहितरं गतं
रोहिद्भुतां रिमियिणुमृषस्य वपूषा ।
धनुष्पाणेर्यातं दिवमपि सपत्राकृतममुं
त्रसन्तं ते दयापि त्यजति न मृगव्याधरमसः ॥*

[When the Lord of Creatures, overcome by a sudden
desire

For His own daughter

So urgently desired to possess her

* The Rajatarangini, eighth Taranga, verse-3356.

* Shivamahimnastotram, verse 22. Translation by Arthur and Avalon.

That He changed into a stag ;
 As she fled from Him in the form of a hind,
 Thou did'st (in anger) bend Thy bow against Him
 As He sped in fear to the heavenly spaces ;
 And, Oh Lord ! the force of Thy hunter's hand
 Has even now not released Him.]

SHADIPUR

वसन्तं कैलासे सुरमुनिसभायां हि नितरां
 द्रुवाणं सद्धर्मं निखिलमनुजानन्दजनकम् ।
 महेशानी सान्तत्सनकमुनिदेवसहिता
 महादेवं वन्दे प्रणतजनतापोपशनम् ॥*

[Veneration to Mahadeva (the great God), who dwells in Kailasa with the great Goddess (Parvati). He is a saint like Sanaka and the great sages, and always speaks about the true religion in the assembly of gods and sages, he gives joy to all men, and relieves from pain those who worship him].

Shadipur is situated on the left bank of the Jhelum (ancient Vitasta) river at a distance of about nineteen kilometers north-west of Srinagar in Kashmir. It is opposite to the confluence of the Sind and the Jhelum which is regarded as very sacred. There is an ancient temple of Mahadeva at Shadipur.

About this sacred confluence and how it was shifted to its present position, Kalhana tells in a number of verses, two of which are given below :

वामेन सिन्धुस्त्रिभ्या वितस्ता दक्षिणेन तु ।
 यान्त्रौ ये समगंसातां प्राभ्यस्वामिनोन्तिके ॥
 वर्तते महानद्योः कल्पापायेऽप्यनत्ययः ।
 संगमौ नगरोपान्ते स सुययोपक्तमस्तयोः ॥*

(The two great rivers, Sindhu and Vitasta, formerly meeting near the temple of Vainyaswamin (Vishnu) and

* The Rajatarangini, fifth Taranga, verse--97-98.

flowing to the left and right respectively of Trigram, have to this day in the vicinity of the city (Srinagar) their confluence which Suyya†planned, and which will last to the end of the world].

The pilgrims perform their ablutions and worship in the angle of the two rivers on the right bank of the Vitasta opposite to Shadipur. This sacred confluence is known by the name of Prayaga in Kashmir. There are references about it in the Nilamata as well as in the Rajatarangini and the Mahabharata, Vana Purva,

गङ्गासिन्धुस्तु विज्ञेया वितस्ता यमुना तथा ।
स प्रयागसमो देशस्तयोर्यत्र तु सङ्गमः ॥*

[The Sindhu is to be regarded as the Ganga and the Vitasta as the Yamuna. The place where they have united is as sacred as Prayaga (Allahabad)].

Just as the people desirous of moksha (salvation) used to cast themselves down into the waters at the confluence of the Ganga and the Jamuna at Allahabad and give up there bodies, so also the people in Kashmir used to leave their lives in the waters of the confluence of the Vitasta and the Sindhu at this place. The following verse from the Rajatarangini tells about such an incident.

तथा याते प्रभोः पुत्रे मित्रशर्मा शुचान्वितः ।
वितस्तासिन्धुसंभेदे सभायाँ जिवितं जहौ ॥**

[When his King's son (Kaivalyapida) had thus departed, Mitrasharma was overtaken by grief and he and his wife gave up their lives at the confluence of the Vitasta and the Sindhu.]

† In order to honour Suyya for his great achievement a town was called Suyyapur. The present name of this place is Sopur which is a corruption of Suyyapur.

* The Nilamata, verse-297.

** The Rajatarangini, Fourth Taranga, Verse-391.

At a little distance above the confluence of the Vitasta and the Sindhu lies the sacred spot called 'Gaya Tirtha' where the pilgrims perform 'Shrādh' and 'tarpan' (propitiating the departed souls by offering water).

SENIBATTI

Senibatti village is situated in a gorge in the mountains in Peristan on the northern side of the valley just east of the village of Halan. It is at a distance of about fifteen kilometers north-east of Ramban which is about thirty-seven kilometers south of Banihal in Kashmir.

There is a sacred shrine in the village.

SHARDI

नमस्ते शारदे देवि काश्मीरपुरवासिनि ।
त्वामहं प्रार्थये नित्यं विवादानं च देहि मे ॥*

[O Goddess Sharada, abiding in the land of Kashmir ! Obeisance to Thee. Ever do I beseech Thee, Grant unto me the gift of learning].

Shardi village is on the right bank of the river Kishanganga near Sangam, the junction of the sacred Madhumati and Kishanganga rivers. It is about one hundred and forty-two kilometers north-north-west of Sringar by road and tracks. The path passes through Sopur, Kupwara, Raghunathpur, Jumagarh and Dudhnihal. From Dudhnihal to Shardi is only sixteen kilometers. (Srinagar to Sopur is forty-eight kilometers. Sopur to Kupwara is about forty-three kilometers. Kupwara to Raghunathpur is about ten kilometers. Raghunathpur to Jumagarh is fifteen kilometers and Jumagarh to Dudhnihal ten kilometers).

This sacred spot is under the possession of Pakistan since 1947.

* Saraswatīrahasyopanishad.

Shardi is famous for its ancient shrine of the goddess Sharada. It is also called Sharada Pith, Sharadashrama and Sarvajnapith. The holy spot is situated on a small hill on the bank of the Kishanganga river. At present perhaps there are no temples there except the ruins. It is said that when the temple was there, there was no image of the goddess in the temple but a slab of stone covered with vermilion which was worshipped as the emblem of the goddess Sharada. According to Alberuni, however, there was a wooden image of the goddess at Shardi in those days.

According to Sharadamahatmya (the book describing the glory of Shāradāpith) the sage Shāndilya, son of Matanga, worshipped the goddess Saraswati at this spot in her triple form of Shāradā, Saraswati and Vāgdevi. The goddess was pleased with his devotion and revealed her divine nature to the sage. The sage, besides worshipping the goddess, performed 'Srādh' (Obeisance to departed fore-fathers and 'tarpan' (offering of water to the departed souls) with the water of Mahasindhu (Kishanganga river), half of which was turned into honey and formed the stream Madhumati. Since that time bathing and performing 'tarpan' and 'srādh' at the confluence (Sangam) of the Kishanganga and the Madhumati are regarded as very auspicious. The pilgrimage to the sacred spot takes place in the bright half of the month of Bhadra (August-September). Before Pakistan occupied this holy spot, fairs were held at Shardi every year during Navaratri.

Kalhana tells about this sacred spot in the following verse of the Rajatarangini.

आलोक्य शारदां देवीं यत्र संप्राप्यते क्षणात् ।
तरङ्गिणी मधुमती वाणी च कविसेविता ॥*

* The Rajatarangini.

[After visiting the shrine of the goddess Sharada, one reaches at once the river Madhumati and the river Vani (Saraswati**) worshipped by the poets.]

According to Bilhana, a Kashmiri poet of the eleventh century, the goddess Sharada is said to resemble a swan, carrying as her diadem the glittering gold washed from the sands of the Madhumati, which is bent on rivalling the Ganga. The goddess, spreading lustre by her fame, brilliant like crystal, makes even the Mount Himalaya, the father of Gauri, raise his head higher as a sign of pride for having her residence in the Himalayas.

The great Shankaracharya visited Shardapith in the eighth century A.D. He defeated the great scholars of this place in learned discussions. He was then allowed entrance into the shrine of Sharada and given the title of 'Sarvajña' (one who knows everything). The Sanskrit book named 'Shrimachchhankaradigvijayah' written by Shri Vidyāranya tells about the great philosopher's stay at Sharadapith. Two verses from the above mentioned text are quoted below.

जम्बुद्वीपं शस्यते स्यां पृथिव्यां
 तत्राप्येतन्मण्डलं भारताख्यम् ।
 काश्मीराख्यं मण्डलं तत्र शस्तं
 यत्रास्तेऽसौ शारदा वागाधीश ॥
 द्वारैर्युक्तं मण्डपैस्तच्चतुर्भिव्यं
 रोहं यत्र सर्वज्ञपीठम् ।
 यात्राऽरोहे सर्वेवित्सज्जनानां
 नान्ये सर्वे यत्प्रविष्टुं क्षमन्ते ॥*

(There is a land called Bharata in the island of Jambudwipa on this earth. In it there is a famous country named

**There is a large stream called Kankatori almost opposite to Shardi, which, flowing from the snowy range of hills, meets the Kishanganga from the north, Its ancient name is Saraswati.

*Shrimachchhankaradigvijayah, Chapter 16, verses 55-56.

Kashmir. In Kashmir there is the goddess of speech called Shārada. Her abode called Sarvajnapitha has got four doors on the four verandas on four sides. Only a *Sarvajña* (among the good who has got knowledge of everything, can secure entrance to that shrine ; none else.)

Shri Ramanuja also visited this sacred place at a later date and defeated the great scholars in learned discussions. The goddess was very pleased with him and as a token of her grace he received from the 'pandits' (scholars) of this place, the rare sacred text called Bodhayana Vritti and a golden image of the god Hayagriva. The latter is still worshipped in a temple in South India.

Since Shardi is at a great distance from Srinagar and difficult to reach, many Kashmiris instead of taking the trouble of going there, visit a sacred spring called Sharada-kunda which is near the village Tsatsa situated about six kilometers north of the Dal lake.

शुक्लां ब्रह्मविचारसारपरमामाद्यां जगदव्यापिनीं
 वीणापुस्तकधरिणीमभयप्रदां जाडचान्धकोरापहाम् ।
 हस्ते स्फटिकमालिकां च दधतीं पद्मासने संस्थितां
 वन्दे तां परमेश्वरीं भगवतीं बुद्धिप्रदां शारदाम् ॥*

[I bow in reverence to Shārada, who is the greatest and foremost of all the goddesses, who possesses all the highest qualities, who gives knowledge, who is white, who is the essence of the learned discourses about Brahman (the Supreme Allpervading cause of all that exists), who is holding the veena and book in her hands, who assures protection from fear, who dispels the darkness of ignorance, who holds a garland of white crystals in her hand and who is seated on a lotus].

* A rare sacred text.

**Hayagriva is an incarnation of Vishnu with a head like that of a horse. By taking this form, Vishnu recovered the Vedas from the demons.

Mātri Līlā

(15th September 1969—15th January 1970)

On September 10th night, Mataji reached Varanasi from Delhi. From September 12th to 25th two *Bhāgavata Saptahas* were held, one after another. The first one was performed for the late Raja Saheb of Achrol by his widow and brother. The Raja Saheb had been a staunch devotee of Mataji. Sri Srinath Shastri had been specially called from Vrindaban. In the mornings he recited the Sanskrit version in the decorated Chandi Mandap, in the afternoons he would explain in his lucid, lively and entertaining Hindi. This was the first *Bhāgavat Saptaha* held in the Anand Jyoti Mandir in front of Sri Gopalji's image in Mataji's presence. On the day Sri Krishna's birth was described, there was special *bhoga* in the festively decorated *mandir* and Mataji herself distributed *prasāda* in the evening. The second reading of the *Srimad Bhāgavata*, also by Sri Srinath Shastri, was the *Bhāgavata Jayanti*, which is a yearly function of the Varanasi Ashram, observed in remembrance of the original *Bhāgavata* that was related in ancient times by Sri Sukhdeva to King Parikshit at Sukhtal. After many years Mataji once again blessed this celebration by her holy presence.

At the same time several other functions went on in different parts of the Ashram. One day there was *abhisheka* of the *Nārāyana Silās* with fifty seers of milk and another day, one thousand and eight *tulsi* leaves were offered to *Nārāyana* by Sri Narayana Swami, which took about eight hours. Both rites were performed in Mataji's presence and dedicated to Sri Haribabaji's recovery. There was also *Rudrābhisheka* going on simultaneously.

On September 22nd, Mataji went to see Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj who was lying ill at the

B.H.U. Hospital. She asked him to convalesce in our Ashram after leaving the hospital. He accepted Mataji's invitation a few days later and we are happy to say that his health had improved. Ashramites and visitors were permitted to go and ask him questions at fixed hours and the great scholar used to give enlightening replies.

On September 28th, a much loved and revered devotee and ashramite of many years' standing left her ailing body at a ripe old age in Ma's presence. She was known under the name of "Mouni Ma", which had stuck to her since she, long ago, had kept *mouna* for seven whole years. As is fitting for a *sannyāsini*, her body was taken in sitting posture on a boat and immersed in the midstream of the Ganga with a stone slab.

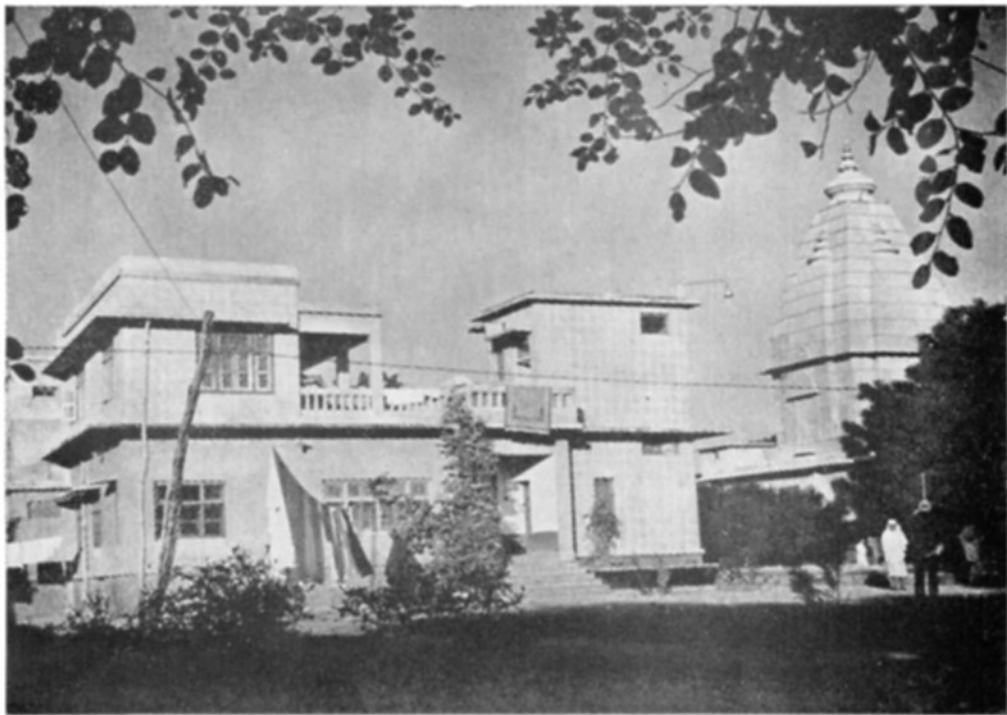
On October 3rd, Mataji went to Naimisharanya with only two companions for three days' rest. Swami Paramananda was there to supervise some building work and a few of the Ashram girls had gone there earlier for solitary *sādhana*. There was no programme, no crowd, and Mataji could relax. On the 7th afternoon she was back at Varanasi. Reports of Sri Haribabaji's condition used to arrive daily by phone or wire. On receiving the news that Sri Haribabaji was leaving Hoshiarpur for Bundh and passing through Delhi on October 14th, Mataji started for Delhi on the 13th, only to find that Haribabaji had been unable to come owing to a sudden set back in his health. Mataji returned to Varanasi on the 15th.

Mataji had agreed to be present in Varanasi for Durga Puja at the newly built house of a devotee, Sri Harish Chandra Banerji. The house opening ceremony was performed in Ma's presence. Durga Puja started on October 16th. It was celebrated in great style before a beautiful image of Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati, etc. as tradition demands. Sri Banerji himself officiated, prompted and assisted by Brahmachari Nirvanananda. A pandal had been erected

Pictorial view of the Vrindaban Ashram

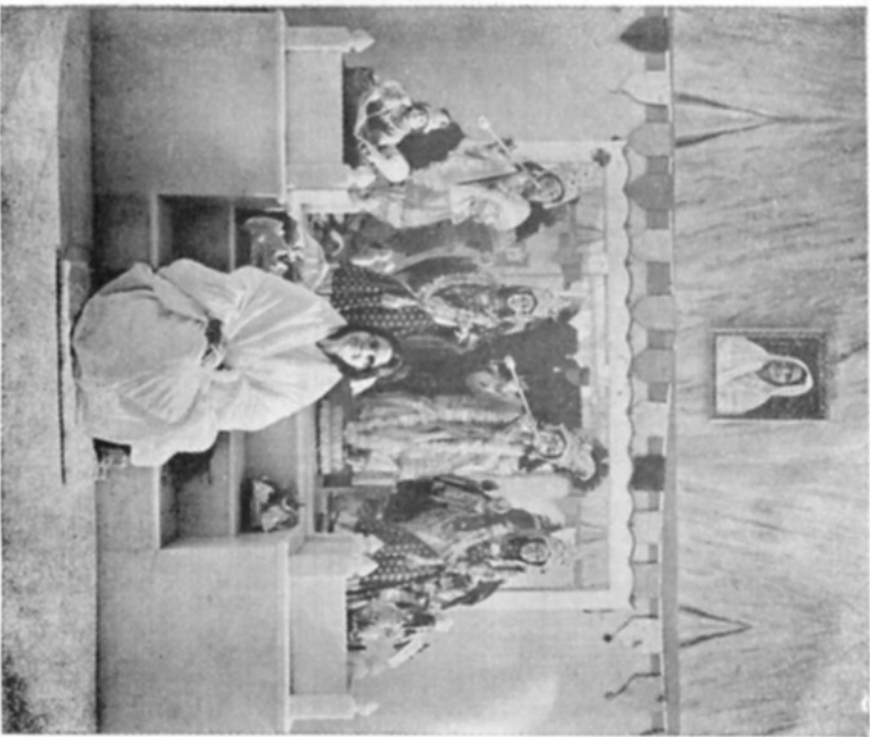


Inside the Shiva Temple

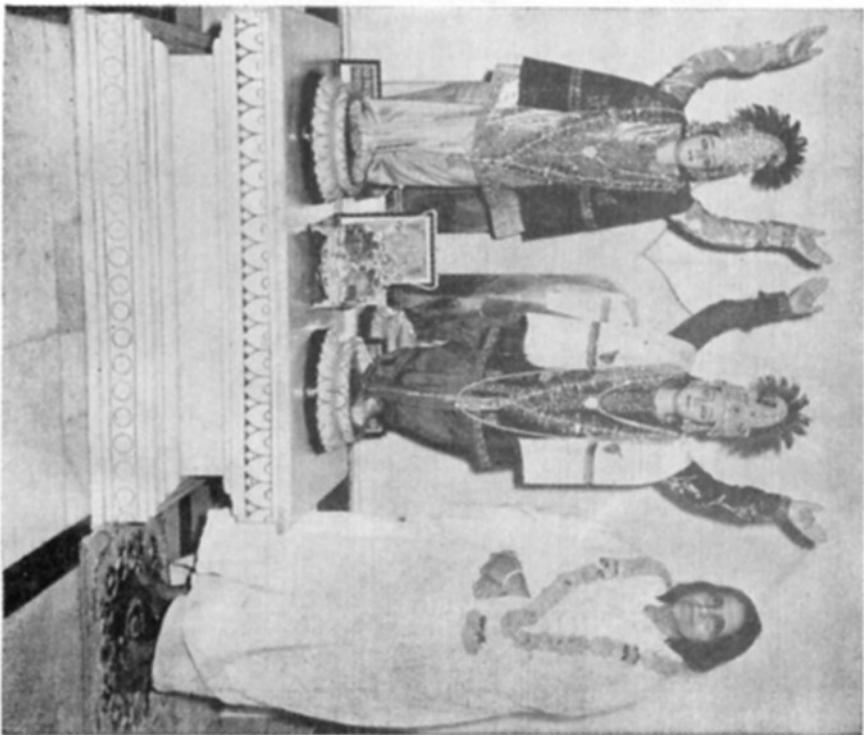


The house where Mataji resides. On the right is seen the main Chheliya Temple.

Pictorial view of the Dindaban Ashram



Inside the Radhakrishna Temple



Mataji in the Mahaprabhu Temple

for the daily satsang in the evening. Dr. Gourinath Sastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Sanskrit University, delivered lectures and Dr. Govinda Gopal Mukherjee, son of the late Sri Prangopal Mukherji, Postmaster General of Dacca,* talked and sang beautiful *bhajans*. A large number of devotees had gathered from Calcutta and other places. They put up at the Ashram, but spent most of the time at Sri Banerji's house. On *Ashtami* day, Puja was done to forty Kumaris. On *Vijaya Dasami*, October 20th, Mataji, in a special mood, sang very beautifully for quite a long while.

In our Ashram there was no *pratima* †; however, regular *pūjā* was performed for the whole of *Navaratri*. Mataji would visit the Ashram daily, giving a round at all those ceremonies and also seeing Dr. G. Kaviraj who was improving steadily. On *Mahāshtami* day, *Pūjā* was performed of 108 Kumaris at Ananda Jyoti Mandir and a feast given to them. A devotee dressed up and decorated Mataji along with the Kumaris and Mataji moved about among them playfully with a childlike smile and also ate with them.

On coming to stay in the Ashram after the immersion of the deity, Mataji occupied her old tiny room in the 2nd floor of the Kanyapith and kept silence without signs or gestures for three days. During *darśana* time, twice daily, Mataji would stroll up and down the roof and visitors would stand downstairs in the courtyard gazing up to Mataji. Lakshmi Puja was celebrated before a beautiful image of the goddess in the Chandi Mandap on full moon night, October 24th.

On October 25th, Mataji declared that she was leaving for Delhi again. Haribabaji had in the meanwhile arrived there and was very anxious to see Mataji, but unable to move. Mataji remained in Delhi for three days, proceeding to Kanpur on October 29th. For one day and one night, she stayed in a new cottage which Sri Sitaram Jaipuria had built

* Sri Prangopal Mukherji was one of the first to "discover" Mataji.

† Image of the deities.

‡ The nine days from New moon to Dusserah.

for Mataji's use. From there she was taken by Sir Padampat Singhania and his wife to the Ashram they had recently built for Mataji. Lady Singhania who is greatly devoted to Ma, had wanted to invite her for the last few years, but not without building a place worthy to be offered to Mataji. Now at last she had, near the famous Radhakrishna Temple, erected a building consisting of a very spacious hall for *satsang* and five large rooms with accessories, kitchen and dining-room for the use of Mataji and her party. The house is far from the hub of the city, in the midst of a beautiful garden with flowers, tulsi shrubs and a fountain, and the roof of the hall commands a full view of the Radhakrishna temple. The new structure was opened with great solemnity and Mataji welcomed by an elaborate *Pūjā*. Huge quantities of flowers, fruits and sweets were offered which Ma freely distributed all round. Jokingly, yet very seriously, Mataji called the building "*Vanaprastha Ashram*" and enjoined on her hosts to spend in that Ashram all the time they could spare from their worldly duties. *Vanaprasthis* live a frugal life dedicated to God, practising *sādhanā*, reading sacred scriptures, listening to sacred music and religious discourses. The large congregation seemed deeply impressed by Mataji's words. The Singhanias expressed the hope to be able to follow Mataji's instructions by her blessing.

Satsang was held daily and the large audience would listen spell-bound to the inspired *bhājans* and *stotras* sung by Chhabi Banerji and Kumari Pushpa, which transported them into a world of joy and peace. In the evening Mataji would sometimes sing herself. Then Sir Padampatji and others used to ask many intelligent questions to which Mataji responded by beautiful, straightforward replies as they occurred to her spontaneously, interspersed with stories and parables. At night Mataji was taken to witness the grand *ārati* in the Radhakrishna temple. This temple was built as the fulfilment of a long cherished desire of Srimati Rampyari Devi, the deceased mother of Sir Padampatji.

On November 5th, Mataji again returned to Varanasi. During Divali night, on November 9th, Kali Puja was celebrated with great splendour and there was brilliant illumination all over the Ashram.

On the 10th there was Annakut at the Annapurna Mandir. At this festival of Annapurna, the goddess of plenty, 108 preparations have to be offered to the deity. Hundreds of people partook of the *prasad* and there was poor feeding on a large scale. The following day, Didi performed the ceremony of giving "*Brahma bindu*" (a mark of sandal paste on the forehead) to all present, putting a flower on each one's head and a sweet into their hands.

On the 11th November Mataji departed for Vrindaban, alighting there on the 12th morning. That very afternoon, 65 American disciples of the Himalayan Academy at Nevada, U.S.A., arrived for Mataji's darsana with their Guru, Master Subramuniya. Mataji replied to their questions and then distributed fruits and sweets to them all. They were on a pilgrimage through India and Ceylon. On the 14th, a group of thirty students of Hathayoga from Finland turned up with their Indian Guru. They also were visiting holy places and ashrams and had come specially from Delhi for Mataji's *daršana*. Their Guru translated Mataji's replies from Hindi into Finnish.

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Ever growing numbers of westerners are being attracted to Mataji. During her sojourn at Varanasi, there was a regular stream of foreign visitors to the Ashram. So also in Delhi and Vrindaban. Recently an Ashram in Ma's name has been opened in the U.S.A. Last year four young Americans took part in our Samyam Vrata at Dehradun. One of them had come to Mataji for the first time six years earlier at several places. During that visit to India, he had taken *Sannyāsa* from a Swami in Bengal and been given the name Nirmalananda Giri. The others were his disciples.

When after seven and a half months in India they had to return to their country, they decided to start an Ashram at Oklahoma city since they were eager to devote their lives to *sādhana*. "As we all look upon Mataji as our guiding light", they sought and obtained permission to call it "Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi Ashram." "We do not pretend that we are Indians or Americans. We hope to be only children of Ma." They claim to feel Ma's presence tangibly during their spiritual practices and on occasions even to have seen her form in the room.

Letters arrive from people in foreign countries who have vivid and elating dreams of Mataji, or visions of her while meditating, some also claim to receive instructions. Not only persons who have been to India met Mataji, but also some who have only read or heard about her. Although Mataji has never been out of India physically, her *Līlā* is obviously not confined to this sacred land. When people from abroad ask her to visit their country, Mataji often replies: "I am always there." For those who are open to her influence, this is no doubt a fact.

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From November 17th to 23rd our *Samyam Mahavrata* was observed at Vrindaban. Being twentieth, it was not surprising that everything proceeded smoothly, harmoniously and without a hitch. Most of the *Mahātmās* who very graciously enlighten the *vratis* every year by their fine, thought provoking talks, were present, with the exception of Sri Haribabiji, Sri Chetan Giriji and Swami Chidanandaji. Mataji sat in the hall for many hours daily and yet found time to attend to visitors, "privates" and any number of things. During "Matri Satsang", she gave some wonderful replies to questions, which we hope to reproduce in Anand Varta. One evening she gave her time to Dr. Gourinath Sastri of Varanasi and once to Pt. Kapindraji, who had come from Delhi. Mataji sang several times during that week.

On the fourth day there was a message from Delhi to say that Sri Haribabaji's condition was far from satisfactory and that he was eager to see Mataji. As soon as the meditation was over, at 4 p.m., Mataji therefore motored to Delhi, returning at 10.30 p.m. with good news that Haribabaji's health was not so bad after all. Never before had Mataji gone out of station during a *Samyam Saptaha*.

On November 24th *havan* under the neem trees marked the successful completion of the Vrata. That day our Delhi Kirtan party performed *Nāma yajña*, moving round the Nitai-Gouranga Mandir. The Kirtan had already started the previous evening and was kept up all night, also almost inaudibly, during the midnight meditation that proceeded solemnly by candle light. The *Nāma yajña* ended on the 24th after sunset with the usual procession of the singers round the compound. When they returned to the hall, Mataji sang "*Dharo lao*," as she often does on similar occasions.

While the number of men and women taking part in the *Samyam Vrata* is always more or less equal, we are glad to state that the week is observed with great zest and enthusiasm in several of Mataji's ashrams and also by some families in their homes. There is, for example, a Girls' school run in Mataji's name in the Savitri Devi Ashram at Jullundur where for several years now, the full programme with lectures etc. has been followed. This year some devotees of Dehradun, unable to go to Vrindaban, arranged for *satsang* from 8-11 a. m. and 3-7 p. m. daily in our Kishenpur Ashram, which proved a full success. Even devotees in foreign countries try to observe the *Vrata* and the programme as far as possible.

Mataji was to leave for Varanasi on the 27th, but again a trunk call gave the news that Sri Haribabaji, who was strictly confined to bed, wanted to go and see Mataji against the doctor's orders. Mataji thus motored to Delhi on the 26th afternoon, catching the train to Varanasi from there the next morning. Mataji remained at Varanasi for

a week leaving for Delhi on December 5th to be with the ailing saint, Sri Haibabaji for one night again. On the 7th night Mataji entrained for Lucknow, from where she drove by car to Naimisharanya on the 8th morning. On the 10th morning, an upstairs room in Mataji's cottage and two guest rooms were ceremonially opened. The *Bhāgavata Saptaha* also began the same day. Swami Vishnu Ashramji of Sukhtal expounded in Hindi twice daily in the newly completed hall adjoining the *Purān Mandir*, while Pd. Agnihotri Sastri (Batuda) chanted the Sanskrit version in Mataji's room every morning. It was a beautiful, intimate gathering without the usual crowd. Mataji attended throughout. The *Saptaha* was followed by a grand *Vishnu yajna* for six days. During that week, Dr. Gouri Nath Shastri read the whole of the *Bhāgavata* in Sanskrit in his inimitable way and in the evenings gave an hour's talk in Hindi in the hall. One day *Gītā Jayanti* was celebrated in the *Puran Mandir* with *Pujā* and recitation of the whole of the *Bhagavad Gita* in chorus by all present. On the 24th morning Mataji proceeded to Varanasi, reaching the same evening. On the 26th she went to Delhi once more, returning with Sri Haribabaji and his party on January 1st, 1970.

Shri Hari Babaji Maharaj, who had been ailing for some time past, was in Delhi for more than two months. He was being treated for his heart trouble by the renowned heart specialist Dr. R. K. Caroli and his able assistant, Dr. D. Sen Gupta. During the course of Shri Hari Babaji's long treatment, both the doctors showed exemplary spirit of service and did their best to give the ailing *mahatma* at least some relief. But, in spite of their best efforts, the condition of the 84-year old *mahatma* did not improve and he developed a strong inner urge to be near Mataji. Only to fulfill his wishes, Mataji, in spite of her indifferent health, paid flying visits to Delhi about 7/8 times during the last four months.

It was, as a matter of fact, not possible for Mataji to remain in Delhi for an indefinite period, as Pt. Gopinath

Kaviraj was convalescing in our Varanasi Ashram since October 8, after he had been discharged from the Banaras Hindu University Hospital. Therefore, after considering all the factors, it was deemed convenient for all concerned to shift Shri Hari Babaji to Varanasi, so that he could stay with her at least for some length of time. Necessary arrangements were immediately made and Shri Hari Babaji was allowed by his attending physicians to undertake the long journey to Varanasi. We are all the more indebted to Dr. Sen Gupta for taking immense trouble in personally escorting the ailing *mahatma* to Varanasi. He left the next day after explaining the full course of treatment to a team of very competent doctors of Mata Anandamayee Hospital, consisting of Dr. B. R. Thukral, one of the foremost Cardiologists of the city, Dr. U. N. Mathur and Dr. S. N. Mathur.

But it is a matter of deep regret that since his arrival in Varanasi, Shri Hari Babaji's condition grew from bad to worse and, in spite of the best efforts of the doctors to save the precious soul, the 84-year old *mahatma* left his mortal coil just sixty hours after he got down from the train at Varanasi. Thus ended the noble and illustrious life of a *sadhu*, who had been looked upon as the 'Living God' by thousands of simple and unsophisticated villagers of the District of Badaun, for whose service and well-being he had dedicated his entire life. It can be said without the least chance of exaggeration that the last days of the *mahatma*, who was indeed a model of excellence and an invaluable jewel among the *sadhus*, manifested rather extraordinarily the inner craving of a child to be with his own mother for ever. The passing away of the saint exhibited at the same time the unique and boundless love and affectionate care of the mother for the child, who had all along been so near and dear to her.

At the earnest desire of many of his devotees, the mortal body of Shri Hari Babaji Maharaj was taken by road to Bundh in the District of Badaun for its funeral on the bank

of the Ganges. That tiny and insignificant village had already become hallowed by the presence of the great saint, for the upliftment of which he had laboured and toiled as a part of his *sadhana* during the better part of his life. A week long programme, consisting of various religious ceremonies has been arranged to be held at Bundh from January 12 to 18. At the pressing request of Shri Hari Babaji's devotees, Mataji left for Bundh on the 15th afternoon to attend the celebration.

Mataji is expected to leave Bundh on the 19th immediately after the ceremonies are over and reach Varanasi the next day, as Pt. Gopinath Kaviraj, who had been convalescing in our Ashram at Varanasi for the last three months, suddenly developed acute urinary trouble since the first week of January. The latent infection in the bladder also flared up suddenly and the 82-year old great savant was almost in agony. Under medical advice he has been again shifted to the Banaras Hindu University Hospital and is at present under the treatment of Dr. K. N. Udupa, the renowned Surgeon, who happens to be the Superintendent of the Hospital, as well as Principal of the College of Medical Sciences. We are glad to say that since his admission in the hospital, his condition has somewhat improved and the doctors have been trying their level best to alleviate his suffering.

Mataji is likely to pay a short visit to Allahabad in the second week of February, where the Saraswati Puja is proposed to be held on February 10, the Vasant Panchami Day, at the residence of Shri G. S. Pathak, the Vice-President of India. From February 21 to March 7 a fortnight long *Bhagawat Parayan* is to take place in Varanasi Ashram in Mataji's presence with Shri 1008 Swami Akhandanandaji of Vrindaban expounding the original text in Hindi both in the morning and evening. Mataji is therefore expected to be in Varanasi during the *Shivaratri* which falls on March 6.