

Swami Muktananda Giri

Courtesy : Sri Sadanand, Bombay.

In Memoriam

SRI SWAMI MUKTANANDA GIRI

[May, 1877 = August 9th, 1970]



Sri Swami Muktananda Giri, "Giriji" as Ma used to call her, our revered and beloved Didima, took *Mahāsamādhi* on August 9th at 1-30 a. m. in Mataji's presence at Hardwar, deeply mourned by all who knew her. We had hoped that she would remain with us for a whole century, but Divine Dispensation willed otherwise. It was Giriji's wish to retain her body only so long as she would not be bed-ridden or too frail to travel with Mataji. Her wish was fulfilled. Her passing was as simple, peaceful and inspiring as her whole life.*

Mokshada Sundari Devi, as her parents named her, was the offspring of a highly respected Brahmin family of East Bengal, which had produced a number of saintly and learned persons. She was the eighth child of her parents. Her father, a *kulaguru*, had many disciples; her mother was also deeply religious. Mokshada was one of those extremely rare souls that are born saints. She was a quiet, gentle child, fond of solitude. There were no negative sides to her character that had to be overcome. She never knew what it was to be angry, greedy or jealous. Neither did she ever quarrel with anyone or tell a lie. She attended school only for a few years. Yet she possessed a natural gift to express her spiritual aspiration and her love of God in poetry. From her early youth to her last days she used to compose many beautiful songs and lyrics. Both her parents passed away before her childhood was over.

At the age of twelve, she was married to Sri Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya, an equally saintly person, much loved and respected for his honest, upright nature and his integrity. Ascetic by inclination he had little interest in the affairs of this world. He also was an inspired singer. Soon after the birth of their first child, in 1893, he took his wife and daughter to his mother at Kheora and left home to live a life of renunciation. The child died at the age of nine months. After more than two years of absence, friends of the family found him in his place of retreat and persuaded him to return and to resume once more the responsibilities of a householder. However, a sense of detachment remained with him throughout his life.

* Her departure is described in detail in *Mātri Līlā'* of this issue.

In 1896, their second child, Nirmala Sundari Devi, our Mataji, was born. It is in the fitness of things that Mataji should have chosen such an extraordinarily saintly couple for her parents. Didima, not only a model of all the gentler human virtues, was also wise by nature and intuitively knew what was best for her children. Thus, Nirmala was never slapped or even harshly rebuked. She grew up happily, unaware of the fact that, as far as material needs went, her family was poor. Mokshada, always working hard, kept her humble cottage spotlessly clean and orderly. Every guest was served as Nārāyaṇa, while she herself went without food on many occasions. Complete trust in God, one of the main features of Mokshada's character, gave her the fortitude to bear with equanimity and patience all the hardships and bereavements of her family life. Nirmala, while still a child, helped her in her own unique way to get over the loss of three young sons who passed away in quick succession. In later years, Mokshada also had to mourn the death of two daughters. Her youngest son, Makhan, has survived his mother.

When Nirmala had become Sri Anandamayi Ma, recognised as a Divine Incarnation by an ever increasing multitude of devotees and admirers, some of them of very high standing, Didima's life naturally became easier and her privations gradually ceased. Anyone else would have succumbed to the temptation of feeling proud and superior to others. Yet Didima proved herself perfectly equal to the changed circumstances of her life. It never even entered her mind that she occupied an elevated position. She remained her simple, humble self, full of calm and dignity, whether in the company of villagers or great scholars and rulers of the world.

After Dādāmaśai* had passed away in 1936, Didima felt that she should become a *Sannyāsini*, mainly in order to be able to spend the rest of her life close to Mataji. In April 1938, she received full *sannyāsa* from the great Swami Sri Mangal Giri Maharaj at Hardwar. This kind of *sannyāsa* is hardly ever given to women. In fact, she was the only

* Mataji's father was called "Dādāmaśai" (grand-father) by Mataji's devotees.

woman to whom he gave *sannyāsa*. Her guru called her "Swami Muktananda Giri".

Swami Muktananda Giri already possessed the qualities required of a *sannyāsi*. First and foremost she was self-effacement personified. Her compassion knew no bounds; it encompassed the righteous as well as the wicked. Unaware of her own needs, she was in the habit of giving away whatever she got. Neither did she find fault with anyone. She was always quick to discover some good quality even in persons whom nobody else would tolerate. She seemed desireless, with the exception of one desire: to be at all costs with Mataji. To the last day of her life she was ever ready to sacrifice the most elementary needs and comforts so as to be able to travel about with her beloved daughter.

In the early days, Bholanath and Bhaiji had given initiation to devotees who asked for it, since Mataji does not do so. Bhaiji passed away in 1937 and Bholanath in 1938. Thereafter Giriji began to act as the Guru of all who wished to take mantra *dikṣā*. Several hundreds of men, women and children must have received initiation from her in Mataji's presence in the course of all these years. By and by Giriji also became the *Sannyāsa Guru* of most of the *sannyāsis* and two *sannyāsinis* belonging to our Ashram.

Thus it may rightly be said that, not only during Mataji's childhood, but also during the 32 years of Giriji's life as a *Sannyāsinī*, she played a very important and unique part in Mataji's *lilā*. Giriji became the almost constant companion of Sri Sri Ma and in her selfless, unassuming manner was of invaluable help and assistance to her. All the thousands of Mataji's children loved and revered her as their spiritual grand-mother. Mataji alone knows how the painful gap created by Didima's departure from this earth is to be bridged.

One thing is certain: Didima has not left us. Although she has discarded her body that had served her well for nearly a century, she is here with us. We feel her presence tangibly wherever we may be and we may be sure of her readiness to help and bless us at all times. May we ever remain worthy of her benediction.



Swami Muktanandaji in mahāsamādhi

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Sitting on the grounds of the Ashram at Poona

Courtesy : Sri Sadanand, Bombay.

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

Mātri Vāni

Happiness that depends on anything or anyone turns into sorrow when that particular thing or person is out of reach. Everything in this world is transitory. So also worldly happiness : it comes and the next moment it is gone. If permanent, abiding happiness is to be found, That which is Eternal will have to be realized.

* * *

The One Who is your Guru is the World-teacher, and He Who is the World-teacher is your Guru. He is of infinite forms, of infinite manifestation, and of infinite non-manifestation; in the shape of the Guru, the *Iṣṭa*, the mantra is He and no other. Wherever mind and heart may turn is He, the all pervading Self (*Ātmā*) : He reposing by Himself within Himself. In order that this Reality may become manifest, that it may be grasped, there are various paths. Again, grasping means holding on to one's own Self. On the other hand, there is no question of grasping or not grasping. This, verily, is the Realization that is wanted.

* * *

When in association with great souls—saints and sādhus—you are striving to embrace the highest and to relinquish ephemeral pleasures, it is not proper to criticize any practice (*kriyā*) those great-ones may engage in. Whatever they say should be accepted without argument. To speak of falsehood or error where they are concerned is an offence on your part and positively harmful. Are not all those whom you are judging in this manner your own people ! So long as one's true Being has not been realized, everyone should be treated as one's very own Self. Try to find God in everyone. This is the attitude to be cultivated. Good and evil are all within the One who pervades the entire cosmos. Therefore, the duty of those who have gone out to realize Truth, is to regard everything that saints and sādhus undertake

in quest of Truth, as the various manifestations of their *Ishta* or Guru. This is the spirit to be adopted.

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Thou art mother, Thou art father, Thou art friend and beloved, everything art Thou alone; where this is so, there is only one single universal ashram. Here, there can be no question of boundaries—it is limitless. Duality creates conflict. It is the veil of ignorance that causes blindness.

Sad Vāni

Reported by "Bhaiji"

(Continued from the last issue.)

16.

You are given to much discussion about sattvic food. For this body sattvic food means to nourish oneself with divine thoughts and emotions and to abide in the awareness of Truth or God. If once a day you eat perfectly pure food but remain engrossed in worldly thoughts all day and night, of what value can sattvic food possibly be to you? Within the mortar of the mind, pound the medicine of God's Name or of Self-enquiry with the honey of pure aspiration and partake of it. In this way the opportunity for right diet as well as the necessary ingredients for making it effective will be provided from within.

At all times let your objectives be noble, give your whole attention to whatever you undertake, and your mind and body will then develop the qualities you are trying to create by sattvic food.

Anything taken in through the senses is food, therefore be watchful and see that you do not become addicted to what you absorb into yourself. Strive always to keep your appetites under control.

17.

Essentially there is only one inner Call. All the various methods of the different religious sects are solely for the purpose of answering this Call. Once man awakens to it there is no more need to cry out again and again. Truly speaking it is not you who call Him, but He who calls you. In the hushed silence of night the sound of distant temple bells and conches can be clearly heard; through intense and undivided devotion to Him the hunger of the senses is stilled, and His call will find response from your inmost depths and reverbrate through your whole being. Then and then only will true prayer spontaneously flow from your heart. This divine Call is bound to come to everyone. Śiva, the Eternal Spirit has resolved Himself into *jīvas*, sentient beings,

and every creature has to become reconverted again into Śiva. Just as water freezes into ice, and ice melts into water again, so this play of transformation of Śiva into *jīva* and *jīva* into Śiva goes on and on through eternity.

18.

In this world one cannot afford to ignore anyone. Every human being has a claim to some measure of respect and support from every other. No one has the right to believe that he is of greater importance for the maintenance of order in the universe than anyone else. Without a ruler a country cannot be governed; on the other hand there can be no ruler without subjects. Each one is progressing continually on the path of action that has been assigned to him by the Creator. Therefore, to consider oneself great and others small because of any merit or position of prestige one may have acquired, is a serious mistake. Rather than regard this vast universe as a conglomeration of countless particles, look upon it as one indivisible cosmos, and all distinctions between high and low will then disappear. A man who respects himself will have even more respect for others. Without respect reverence cannot develop, and without reverence love will not awaken; when love is wanting the Lord of Love recedes into the far distance and no amount of effort will bring Him near.

19.

All creatures are fundamentally one, for the whole universe is a manifestation of the One. A man who hears the word 'Himalaya' without having actually set eyes on the mighty range, will be under the impression that it is but a single mountain, whereas once face to face with the Himalayas he will realize that they consist of hundreds upon hundreds of peaks, stretching over hundreds of miles, with milliards of trees, animals, birds, insects, with streams and waterfalls. Similarly, the farther one advances or the deeper one penetrates on the path of *sādhana*, the more clearly will be perceived the One revealed in the many and the many in the One. In actual fact we are always with the One, but distracted by the many we forget Him. Step by step we learn to walk, mouthful by mouthful we satisfy our hunger; single letters are composed into words, groups of days form a month, and months added together constitute a year.

You often say : "There is only the One-Without-A-Second." This is indeed a fact, for in this universe there is nothing except the One. The world is made up of sense perceptions. Although each one of the five senses reveals a different facet of the immensity of creation, yet their endless movement originates from the One, and they again find their rest in Him. Their whole significance lies in giving expression to the One. With the one goal before you try to focus your whole attention on one form, one perfume, one contact, or one sound, and you will eventually come to see that everything is contained in this one. Thereupon you will realize that the One appears as the many and that in very truth the many are the One; you will know that nothing whatsoever exists outside of the One.

20.

So long as speech has to be employed, use your words sparingly. Listen and try to assimilate what others say, and only when necessity demands utter a few words measured out in homoeopathic doses, as it were. Have you not noticed that where large quantities of allopathic medicine fail, a few drops of homoeopathic medicine sometimes work wonders ! What is the hidden motive behind talkativeness ? Is it not to display superiority or erudition or else to defeat someone by argument ? The force of action is much greater than mere words. Superficial conversation and discussion will not take you far. Practise self-introspection and calm the passions of the heart and you will see how little inclination there is then for talk.

21.

At all times gaze into the heights and keep on mounting. If you aim at what is low, you will sink down into the netherworld. Accustomed to take the even, easy road, you have almost lost the ability to aspire after the sublime. Although you are in the habit of seizing opportunities as they present themselves at every moment, you fail to use this faculty in the right direction. Make a sustained effort to aim at the highest, and if your eyes cannot always remain turned towards the sky, you can surely at least keep them fixed straight ahead. The courage to climb upwards comes through enterprise and perseverance. You often complain that the body is willing but the mind does not co-operate, or else that the mind is quite active but the

body lags behind. When this is so, you will have to set to work with untiring energy, or your downfall if inevitable. Courage is required in whatever one does; courage itself is power.

22.

Try always to spend as much time as you can in the open air, keeping the body as bare as is practicable. Gaze to your heart's content at the lofty mountains and on the sea and your words will be frank and free. If these are not within reach, you can at least peer at the sky whenever you have the chance. Little by little the rigid knots that make up your shackles will be loosened and you will find yourself becoming freer. A fully awakened consciousness functions only through an untrammelled mind and body. To be fettered is to be crippled.

You brought nothing into this world but your naked body and one day you will have to depart stripped of everything. If during the short period that lies between birth and death you are burdened with too many possessions and luxuries, it will be very painful to leave them behind. Keep your body light and your mind will be light. When both body and mind are light it is easy to attain to Liberation.

23.

Why do you accumulate wealth and possessions? In order to maintain yourself and your family. And for whom does the family exist? If you give a straightforward reply you will have to admit that it is for yourself. But if you ask, "What is this self?", you will find no answer and your intelligence can take you no further.

'Who am I?' Once you sit down and ponder seriously over this question, you will soon discover that all the book learning that you have crammed into your brain in school and college, and all the practical experience you have gained in active life, are not of the slightest help in solving this question. If you want to discover the origin of the sense of "I and mine" you will have to alter the whole course of your thinking, and give your undivided attention to the search after Truth. Whenever the mind starts wandering, it must be firmly brought back to concentration upon the source of the 'I'. This is the means by which to arrive at Self-realization.

24.

When at daybreak a *vairāgī* (itinerant ascetic) goes from door to door chanting the name of 'Hari', thousands may hear it, but how many have really listened? Why is that? Most people have the power of hearing, but the majority are so captivated by the melodies of the world that they will not easily give ear to devotional songs. The only way to counteract this is *japa* (regular repetition of one of God's Names, anything from 10 to 10,000 times), or else to devote some time every day to prayer or meditation, the search for the Self, *satsang*, the singing of God's praises, religious discourses, or any other practice of the kind. In this way the mechanism of body and mind will by and by become attuned to the vibrations of religious music and be able to appreciate it. Without regular practice no science can be mastered. Similarly sustained effort is necessary for those who aim at Self-realization. This should be borne in mind. Just as a watch has to be wound every day, so the winding of the machinery of the mind, at least once daily with the key of divine contemplation will greatly assist in purifying the mind.

25.

Do not pay attention to other's faults. It blurs the vision, defiles the mind and adds to the load of the world's sin. Therefore try to see only the bright side of things in whatever you perceive. It is the good and beautiful which is true and living, whereas the bad and ugly is only the shadow of what really is. Nobody ever wishes to be bad. When you seek the company of others, remember you are out to find the good and beautiful. If you are truthful in thought, word and deed, your heart will be pure and full of joy, and your intelligence and reason sound and accurate. Then good will be found everywhere and nothing appear as evil. God alone is perfect; no person can be free from defects. By making a practise of seeing the good qualities in others, the same virtues develop in yourself, for as you think so you become. In fact it gives much greater satisfaction to appreciate the merits of others than to dwell on one's own worthiness. To take pleasure in thinking of one's own excellence will only inflate the ego and magnify the frailties of others.

26.

He only who lives consciously, that is to say in Self-awareness, deserves to be called a human being. Without being truly a human

being first, one cannot become a superman. By following the social and moral laws, human qualities are gradually developed, after which, when one becomes interested in the spiritual quest and the mind has been purified by divine contemplation, one may go beyond illusion and grow into a superman. The endeavour to fulfil his real want is characteristic of man; to be established in his true being is the mark of the superman. Man's task is to satisfy his want by awakening to his true nature; the superman's task to become perfected in his true being, which implies renunciation and all-embracing Love. First of all try to be a real human being.

27.

The Supreme is Joy itself. This is why the goal of life for all created beings is Joy (*ānanda*). At all times give and receive happiness, hear and see the delightful; thus you will be able to live blissfully. Gloom is the token of death, none in the entire universe welcomes it. If dejection does steal into your heart, drive it away by force. Say to yourself: "Why should I, who am a scion of Joy Supreme, feel down-cast?" Does a rich man's son ever exhibit his poverty? Even though his parental wealth may have been lost, he will rest content in himself, for he knows that he is the offspring of a distinguished family. And you, whose inner treasure is quite intact—ought you to pass your days like beggars? Can anything be accomplished without keeping one's backbone erect? Do you not see with how much energy the people of the West talk and act! They have put their heart and soul into securing the physical welfare of the world, and all affluence and every comfort is in the palm of their hands. For ever banish from your heart anything in the nature of fear, anxiety or despondency. Where joy, enterprise and diligence are, there the Supreme Energy (*Mahāśakti*) Itself is present. Learn to see God in all worthy undertakings of mankind. If you can do this, you will pass from the material world of *karma* to Reality, the Brahman, which is identical with the realization of Supreme Bliss (*Paramānanda*).

28.

Since one cannot see oneself with one's own eyes, one should listen eagerly when others point to one's mistakes. This is an aid to self-scrutiny; whereas hearing one's praise does nothing but harm.

The attitude of the majority of people is exactly contrary to this : they like being praised but greatly fear censure. As a result they remain dependant on praise and blame throughout their lives and in consequence suffer frequent frustration. In worldly life it is necessary to be mindful of praise and blame. But on the spiritual path, unless one becomes indifferent to both, one cannot remain firm and steadfast. In order to progress inwardly, one must concentrate on a single goal and become absorbed in the One. Therefore it is imperative to cultivate activities and states of mind that promote one-pointedness, and to withdraw as far as possible from all external distractions.

29.

One of God's names is *Chintāmani* (fulfiller of desires). At first men turn to God because He fulfils all desires, but by and by they become so absorbed in the contemplation of Him that there is no room left for any other thought, that is to say, one becomes infused with the divine Presence. One must pine for God as keenly as the miser craves for wealth, as the childless long for a son. Throughout life's journey keep Him first and foremost in your thoughts and He will become your sole aim. If anyone can thus enshrine Him in his heart, He will take all burdens off His devotee and give him freedom to contemplate exclusively the Divine. There have been numerous instances of this, not only among saints and *sannyāsis* but also among men of the world. Even beasts, birds and plants are within the pale of His Mercy. Laying all cares at rest, take shelter in Him with a tranquil mind. Keep your kite flying, with the string held firmly in your hand; the wind will of itself seize it and carry it soaring into the sky.

30.

Whenever you have the chance, laugh as much as you can. By this all the rigid knots in your body will be loosened. But to laugh superficially is not enough : your whole being must be united in laughter, both outwardly and inwardly. Do you know what this kind of laughter is like ? You simply shake with merriment from head to foot, so that one cannot tell which part of your body is most affected. What you usually do is to laugh with your mouth while your mind and emotions are not involved. But I want you to laugh with your

whole countenance, with your whole heart and soul, with all the breath of your life. In order to be able to laugh in this way you must have implicit faith in the power of the Self and try to bring the outer and inner parts of your being into perfect harmony. Do not multiply your needs, nor give way to the sense of want, but live a life of spotless purity. Making the interests of others your own seek refuge at His feet in total surrender. You will then see how the laughter that flows from such a heart defeats the world.

(To be continued.)

*“It is not wonderful to be a pilgrim on the Supreme Path ?
This is indeed the path to be taken. The ultimate Goal is reached
when the Supreme Path has become revealed.”*

—Mata Anandamayi

Meditation

Elwood Decker

An ordinary child soon discovers that things are destroyed by energy. Toys exuberantly thrown out of the crib, are sometimes accidentally broken. Fascinated by this knowledge, when the child tires of playing with his toys, a toy or two may be deliberately smashed to provide extra satisfaction of curiosity.

Alert parents see to it that the growing child learns to exert energy to protect his toys and other things...in order to protect himself. He learns to restrain his enthusiasm for destructive energy and let it be guided by the more important practicality of protective energy.

Later the child learns that energy also creates things, at first by imitation or reproduction; and with greater knowledge, by originality.

By this the child begins to understand that energy is generated by thought, and enters the adult world. The vast potentiality of thought is as far as most human beings can comprehend.

Only a rare few will find the absorbing drama of personal thought insufficiently satisfying, and seek the Source of its power in Silent, Blissful SPIRIT. Lifetimes are spent attempting to adjust body and mind to the ever-changing, mysterious multiplicity of things, actions, and thoughts. It seems so strangely impossible to become aware of Silence, Emptiness, and Stillness, the "drawing room" of our heart, where we may transcend time and Know our Eternal, Infinite SPIRIT through intimately Illuminating Visions and Impersonal Expansions of the Power of ITS CONSCIOUSNESS in us. It is a shock to suspect that we have been deceived into thinking that space was infinite and motion was eternal, by our commonly accepted standard of "normalcy."

Only a few will go on where Love alone is the Way.

Ma Embodied this Way from the very beginning of Her Glorious Life on our fortunate planet. Gods and Goddesses were Her Playmates. Shiva Danced for Her.

Her normal Experience was Spiritual Abundance; but what was naturally effortless for Her, will require an all-out effort for us to begin to realize. She will help us, especially if we try. She came to earth to Show us the Way.

It takes a lot of love to meditate successfully. The attention must be firmly welded to ONENESS. Duality must vanish. It isn't difficult if we love MA, for She Loves us. If we really try, ONENESS will Happen for us...perhaps when we least expect it. It will BE increasingly With us, as MA encourages our childish efforts with Her Generous Grace. With our adoration, let us also gratefully offer MA a firm mental conviction that it is only *in* our Consciousness that space and motion have been *temporarily* conceived,...borrowing from Consciousness Itself, their illusionary "infinity" and "eternity."

We devotees believe that Sri Sri Anandamayi MA is the Blissful, Merciful MOTHER of the Universe. How would *you* like it, if *you* were the Great Mother, and your children under-rated themselves and each other? Let us have enough mercy on our dear MA to think big of our Potential and Intrinsic Consciousness.

When we eliminate the humiliating misconception that we are living in space and motion, by recognition of the truth that we live *in* Consciousness instead, our hearts are instantly changed to the extent of our new awareness. From that moment, if we are determined enough, we shall strive in remembrance of this revelation to free our sense of identity from the limitations of sensation and thought imposed on our Infinite, Eternal Consciousness by our naive acceptance of space, time, and motion as absolute values independent of anyone's awareness.

We love according to our sense of identity. If we are exclusively identified with our bodies, we love other bodies. If we are partially identified with our minds, we prefer thinking creatures. As our thoughts evolve, we become more selective. As we concentrate our minds, we concentrate our love and discover a finer oneness.

So it is easier, if we catch a glimpse of the Transcendent Nature of Consciousness, to turn our hearts towards IT, and offer our identity to ITS True, Eternal, Infinite BEING. MA IS such a Perfect EXAMPLE. The slightest thought of Her propels the mind beyond thought into meditative Bliss. Her Divine Form and Her Formless SPIRIT are Inseparable.

To love oneself as only a body or a mind is offensively egotistical because it shuts out all other bodies and minds.

To transfer one's identity to Pure Consciousness, by loving that Consciousness, is sanctifying, a blessing to oneself and a blessing to all others. For all Creation is known to be *not* the product of motion in time and space, but the Product of Consciousness. When Oneness with Consciousness is achieved, then a most Magical, Wonderful, Blissful ONENESS With All Creation is also achieved; and the limitations of Creation are Enjoyed along with the Infinity of The Creator.

So MA IS AT HOME with everything and every condition. She can watch Her Foot burn, take on the diseases of others, or share the love of Her devotees with the same Divinely Inviolable, Blissful Equanimity.

*"God's grace pours down everywhere and at all times.
According to one's self dedication, one will receive enlightenment.
To pray constantly for God's grace is man's duty."*

—Mata Anandamayi

Philosopher and Mystic Sri Madhusudana Saraswati

T. Krishnaji

A teenager, Kamalanayana, walked with his bundle of books from Nawadwipa in East Bengal to far off Varanasi, to study *Advaita Vedānta* with a view to be its critic. Ultimately he became a champion of *Advaita Vedānta*. Kamalanayana was none but the ascetic Sri Madhusudana Saraswati, a virile *Advaitic* scholar and an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna.

Pramod Purandaracharya was a learned Brahmin of Kotilapada Village in Chandradwipa (Faridpur District) in East Bengal. King Kandarpa Narayan was his patron. Purandaracharya had four sons, all of them grew to be reputed scholars. His third son, Kamalanayana, was a poetic genius, who by his eighth's year mastered the classical literature and became a gifted poet. His period of life is fixed differently by different scholars, namely, 1540-1623 A.D., 1570-1640, and 1525-1632 A.D. When Kamalanayana was twelve years old, his father took him to his patron king for introduction. Though the king received them cordially, he had no time or inclination to hear the young poet. Finally they returned disappointed to their village by boat. On their way, the boy was pensive, keenly feeling his father's disappointment. He told his father that he had decided to utilise his talents in praise of God and of no mortal; and beseeched his father to permit him to take to *sannyāsa āsrama*. Purandaracharya yielded to his son's request but told him to obtain his mother's assent as well and that he should study scriptures before adopting *sannyāsa*.

Reaching home, Kamalanayana secured his mothers blessings and permission to become a *sannyāsi*. Hearing about Sri Gauranga Deva and his preaching of devotion to Bhagavan Sri Krishna, Kamalanayana left home for Nawadwipa. On his way he had to cross the river Ganga. Kamalanayana offered his prayers to Mother Ganga and unexpectedly, a boatsman came and helped him to cross the river. He reached Nawadwipa but was disappointed to learn that Sri Gauranga Deva had left for Jagannatha Puri. He met many devotees of Sri Gauranga Deva and his faith and devotion to Sri Krishna were strengthened. He decided to write on *bhakti* philosophy. He thought it necessary to study *Nyāya*

philosophy, which treats *Bhagavān*, *jīva* and *jagat* as separate, enabling development of devotion. He studied *Nyāya* under two reputed scholars, Mathuranath Pandit and Hariram Tarka Vagiswar and mastered *Nyāya* quickly. Thereupon Kamalanayana thought that he should study *Advaita Vedānta* before attempting to be its critic. He walked all the way to Varanasi, braving insecure roadways and troublous conditions.

From early ages, Varanasi had been the spiritual centre of *Advaita Vedānta*, and several ascetics and scholars had illumined that city with their learning. At the time Kamalanayana reached Varanasi, there were Rama Tirtha, Narayana Bhatta, Madhava Saraswati, Appayya Dikshit, Vireswar Saraswati, etc., reputed for their scholarship and asceticism. Kamalanayana studied *Advaita Vedānta* under Rama Tirtha and Madhava Saraswati. When he mastered *Vedānta*, he realized the truth of *Vedānta*, and that true devotion is possible only on Self-realization. One should realize the *Ātmā* before self-surrender or *Ātmā samarpana*. Kamalanayana confessed to his Guru Rama Tirtha that he had committed a sin in not disclosing his intention that he wished to study *Vedānta* with a view to be its critic. Rama Tirtha advised him to write on *Advaita Vedānta* criticising the objections to it levelled in *Nyayamrita* of Vyasa Tirtha, a *Dvaita* scholar, and that he should take to *sannyāsa āsrama*, when any blemish of non-disclosure of his intention to the Guru would be absolved.

Madhusudana Saraswati became a passionate advocate of *Advaita Vedānta* and an ardent devotee of the personal god Sri Krishna. Many people fail to understand how a *Jñani* could also be a *Bhakta* and see contradictions in a person who is both. Sri Sankaracharya, the foremost philosopher, mystic, reformer, and missionary, had systematised the *Advaita* philosophy. *Advaita Vedānta* postulates the attributeless Brahman as the Sole Reality; that *Jiva* is non-different from this Reality that all else is mere appearance and that Self-enquiry is the way to *Jñāna*. The ways of work and worship are preliminary steps to *Jñāna*. The accommodative spirit of *Advaita* attracts the best minds of all countries. Sankara himself was a great devotee, who sang his devotion to all gods of the Hindu pantheon. Sankara denounced *Jñāna-Karma Samuchhaya*, integration of *Jñāna* (egoless State) with *Karma* or devotion (ego states). Each has its own place. In the post-Sankara era, *Advaita* philosophy was severely criticised by dualists and modified dualists, which resulted in much polemical literature.

The middle ages in India was the golden age of *bhakti*, inspired by several saints, whose ecstatic devotion and preachings moved the masses to devotion. *Advaita Vedānta* with its accommodative spirit could not escape the devotional fervour of the age. Appayya Dikshit 1554-1626 (another view 1520-1593), a senior contemporary of Madhusudana Saraswati, was a great dialectician and a passionate devotee of God Śiva. To an *Advaiti*, all manifestations of *Īṣwara* are the same, but he chooses one of them as *Īṣṭa Devata*. Madhusudana preferred god Sri Krishna, whom he adored as the highest Reality. The *Advaita* doctrine believes in the grace of God as a preliminary requisite. Sri Sankaracharya refers to the ways of *Karma* and *Bhakti* as but rungs of the ladder leading to *Jñāna* (Upadesa Panchakam). In one of his verses, Madhusudana reiterates this view, "Those who drink the nectar of the lotus feet of Govinda would have a pure mind to cross the ocean of *samsāra*. They will have the vision of unveiled light and obtain *Ātma Tattva* taught in the Upanishads and, freed from the delusion of duality (a dream), will be filled with pure bliss."† A deep study of the Upanishads and *Advaita Vedānta* led him to the view that God is immanent and true devotion or *Ātmā Samarpana* or Self-surrender is possible only if God is immanent and not transcendent. In the fulness of non-differentiating devotion, the light of knowledge dawns.

Kamalanayana approached Vireswar Saraswati requesting him to initiate him into *sannyāsa āsrama*. Vireswar Saraswati told him to wait for some time. Mere learning is not sufficient; devotion and dispassion (*vairāgya*) are essential doorways to enter the *sannyāsa āsrama*. He told Kamalanayana to write a commentary on the Gītā and that he would consider his fitness for *sannyāsa* on returning from a short pilgrimage. On his return Vireswar Saraswati read the Gita commentary written by Kamalanayana, and pleased thereat, initiated him into *sannyāsa āsrama* and gave him the name of Madhusudana Saraswati.

After entering the *sannyāsa āsrama*, Madhusudana Saraswati accompanied his Guru to Mathura and Vrindaban. The Guru directed

† श्रीगोविंद पदारविद मकरंदाऽस्वद शुद्धासयाः
संसारंजुधिमुत्तरंति सहसा पस्यंति पूर्णंमहः ।
वेदांतैरवधारयंति परमम् स्र्य स्त्यजंति भ्रमं
द्वैतस्वप्नसमम् विदंति विमलां विदंति चानदितां ॥

Madhusudana Saraswati to choose a quiet spot on the bank of the Jamuna to carry on *jñāna nishta* (spiritual practice). Madhusudana remained alone on the Jamuna bank, immersed in God-consciousness. Whenever he regained outer consciousness, he beheld the unique sight of Sri Krishna, flitting like a blue flame on the sandy bank of the Jamuna river. He sang ecstatically : "Let the yogis through yoga practice and mind control perceive that undefinable Supreme as Effulgence, devoid of attributes and activity. Let me ever have the sight of that Blue Flame (Sri Krishna) flitting on the Jamuna bank."† Madhusudana reached the heights of *para bhakti*, when the devotee, the act of devotion and devotion merge in the nondual resplendent Brahman, the state of '*Vāsudevam Sarvamayam*' वासुदेवं सर्वमयं.

One of the queens of Emperor Akbar suffered from an incurable illness and in a dream she was directed to approach a *sannyāsi* on the bank of the Jamuna at Mathura to seek relief. She came to him and described her ailment. Madhusudana told her to go home and that she would be well. Accordingly she regained her health and Akbar sent presents to Madhusudana. He did not accept the presents but sent a message that it was the bounden duty of a king to protect his people and their faith and that he should observe this scrupulously. The fame of Madhusudana Saraswati spread not only because of his scholarliness but also as a *Mahātmā*.

Tulasidas (1532-1623) the author of *Sri Ramacharitmanas* was a friend of Madhusudana Saraswati. The *pandits* of Varanasi harassed Tulasidas for writing the Ramayana in *prakrit* language (Avadhi Hindi) instead of Sanskrit. The pandits carried their complaint against Tulasidas to Madhusudana, who wrote a verse saying, "in the woods of Varanasi, Tulasi is a moving/plant, blissful and the bee of Sri Rama has adorned the muse of Tulsidas with his endearing kiss." Tulsidas and Madhusudana introduced the element of Rama and Krishna *bhakti* in Varanasi, the citadel of *Vedānta*.

Madhusudana was a towering figure among the post-Sankara *Advaita* scholars. He wrote several works in support of *Advaita*

† ध्यानाभ्यासवशी कृतेनमनसा तन्निर्गुणं निष्कियं
ज्योतिः किञ्चन योगिनो यदि परं पश्यन्तिपश्यन्तुते
अस्माकं तु तदेव लोचन चमत्काराय भूयान्चिरं
कालिदी पुलिनेषु यत्किमपि तन्नीलं महोद्यति ॥

refuting the criticisms against it. He also wrote on devotional philosophy. Namely : (1) Commentary on the Dasa Sloki of Sri Sankaracharya called *Siddhanta Bindu* (2) *Gudārtha Deepika*, commentary on the Bhagavad Gita (3) *Advaita Siddhi*, the last word on Advaita philosophy to withstand successfully the vehement criticism in Nyayamrita of Vyasa Tirtha, a dualist, (4) *Samkshepa Sareeka Vyakhya*. (5) *Advaita Ratna Raksha*. (6) *Prasthanabheda*, a summary of the *darśanas*. (7) Commentary on Siva Mahimna Stava (8) *Vedanta Kalpalatika*. (9) A commentary on the first Verse of the Bhāgavata and (10) *Bhakti Rasayana*, Philosophy of devotion with 11 groundings called *Bhumika*, on the model of Jñāna Bhumikas enumerated in Jñāna Vasista Ramayana. Madhusudana Saraswati's contribution to devotional philosophy is its treatment as an independent *Puruṣārtha*.

His fame as a great thinker and scholar spread all over the country and many students, belonging to different creeds and philosophic persuasions, came to him for study and he admitted them without making any distinction. Balabhadra Bhatt, Purushothama Saraswati, Jiva Goswami and his nephew Rupa Goswami (of the Chaitanya School), Ramacharya, a disciple of Raghottama Tirtha, were some of his noted disciples.

He was revered and honoured by all classes of people, princes, ascetics and laymen. He was one of the invitees of Akbar's Divine Faith Concourse (*Din-i-ilahi*).

Raja Todarmal respected him. In those days the Mullahs and Muslim fakirs were a privileged class wielding weapons and arms. They harassed the Hindu *sādhus* and *sannyāsis* and no court could entertain complaints against their criminal acts. The *sādhus* and *sannyāsis* made representations to Madhusudana to use his good offices with the Emperor and his ministers to get redress for their grievances. When Madhusudana approached Akbar and Todarmal, they pleaded their helplessness to remove the privileges of the mullahs and fakirs and suggested that the *sādhus* and *sannyāsis* should also be armed in self-defence.

Madhusudana was not a dreamer. He was bold and practical. He gave initiation into the ascetic order to all classes of people and was a pioneer in creating a *militant* section of the ascetic order to safeguard the life and liberty of the weaker section.

He lived long in the service of *Advaita* philosophy and Hindu ascetics but was always permeated with the fragrance of devotion to God Sri Krishna. He foresaw his end and left Varanasi, in 1623, at the age of 107 years, for Hardwar, the gateway to the celestial regions. He sang his devotion to Sri Krishna ecstasically;

“Oh Krishna, I know not any Reality but Thee,
You of the colour of the newly formed cloud,
With crimson lips, moon-like face,
Eyes like lotus petals, garbed in yellow cloth,
Holding the flute.”†

Contemplating Sri Krishna and ecstasically singing his devotion to Him, Madhusudana gave up his body to the sacred waters of the Ganga.

Madhusudana Saraswati is a unique personality in the history of *Vedānta* and *Bhakti*. He combined vast learning and forcible expression, quickness to appreciate contemporary conditions and readiness to meet the challenges to freedom, with a capacity to organise. He was a great dialectician, a staunch exponent of the *Advaita* philosophy and an ardent devotee of Lord Sri Krishna. One rarely meets a personality like him. He is one of the immortal sons of *Bharata Desa*, remembered by *jñānis* and *bhaktas*. May he inspire generation after generation of the Hindus with devotion and faith in the divine nature of man.

† वंसी विभूषित करान् नवनीरदा भात्
पीतांबरात् अरुण बिंब फलार्धरोत्वात् ।
पूर्णं दुसुंदर मुखात् अरविद नेत्रात्
कृष्णात्परं किमपि तत्त्वमहं न जाने ॥

Gita and Gandhi

Saroj.

Gita and Gandhi are two terms intimately related to each other. As the *bhakta* is inseparable from *Bhagwān*, so is Gandhi from the Gita. As its fragrance is one with a flower, so was Gandhi with the Gita; as a body perishes without *prāna*, so Gandhi believed to perish in the absence of the Gita; and as a son cries out in grief without a mother, so did Gandhi without the Gita. After all, is it ever possible to live without life? Can one think of existing being devoid of *prāna*? For Gandhiji the Gita was not only a holy book, not a scripture of religious exhortations and certainly not a piece of literature. It was, as a matter of fact, the very motherhood re-incarnated in the shape of the Gita that used to comfort him in moments of overwhelming sorrow. Gandhiji himself said once :—

“Whenever I am in grief, I turn to Mother Gita and sit in her lap to be comforted for ever.”

The Gita, to Gandhi, was the sheet-anchor, the chief support of his life's programme. After all, what he pursued and stuck to all his life was a programme of winning over his self on the inner plane and to set a pattern to be followed on the outer plane. This was the grand plan he had adopted from the very beginning of his fight for freedom and he died in harness for it.

How was the spirit of the Gita imbibed by Gandhiji to attain the pinnacle of glory? Let us understand this. Gita epitomizes the essence of all religions, all creeds and all modes of philosophical thoughts by highlighting the omnipresence of One all-pervading Spirit everywhere as Lord Krishna says :—

मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किञ्चिदस्ति धनंजय ।

मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ॥

“There is nothing superior to Me, O Dhananjaya! All this is threaded on Me, as rows of gems on a string.”

Truly-speaking, Gandhi was the Gita and the Gita, Gandhi. In the face of any serious problem, Gandhiji used to consult the Gita as a doctor consults his 'Materia Medica' or a scholar consults a dictionary. He had a subtle realization of this thought. He worshipped the sloka—

मन्मना भव मद्भक्ता मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।

“On Me fix thy mind, be devoted to Me; sacrifice to Me; prostrate thyself before Me...” and stuck to it throughout his life. Not only this, the Mahatma's whole life was a manifestation of the Gita in practice. On account of his complete identification with the ideals of the Gita he ought to be remembered as a living Gita, because whenever he smiled, the Gita smiled; whenever he wept, the Gita wept; whenever he talked it appeared as if the living Gita was talking and whenever he walked, it seemed as if the Gita walked in the form of a faqir for the elevation of her harijans, her own kith and kin. What is the Gita after all ? The Gita is :

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धः गोपालनन्दनः ।

पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्मोक्ता, दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥

“All the Upanishads are the cows; the Milker is Gopal, the joy of the cowherds; Partha is the calf; the man of high intelligence is the enjoyer; the milk is the great nectar of the Gita.” And what is the use of the Gita ? For this, it is said in Chhandogyopanishad :—

एतस्मिन् विज्ञाते सर्वं विज्ञातं भवति ।

In other words, if you know the Gita, nothing is left unknown. Within five hundred slokas, the Srimad Bhagwad-Gita has placed many patterns of spiritual evolution before humanity, such as *Sthitaprajña*, *karmayogi*, *bhaktimān*, *gunātīta*, *sanyāsi*, *samādhista*, etc. No doubt, there have been numerous venerable men who have reached the height of one path or another, but there are few in whom the highest qualities of all the paths of spiritual evolution are found blended so harmoniously as in Mahatma Gandhi. His life was a rare combination of *sanyāsa*, *yoga*, *bhakti* and *jñāna*. It was, indeed, a paradox of spiritual wonders attained in the midst of scientific glories. By all means, his was a standing monument of *samanvaya*.

Between thinkers and religious teachers there has been an age-long controversy over the adoption of *pravritti marga* or *nivritti marga*.

That means : should one remain devoted to life for attaining the highest bliss or should one retire from life in order to experience beatitude in the shape of *mukti* or *moksha*? Each great man has interpreted the Gita according to his own path. Adi Sankaracharya interpreted the Gita as the scripture of *nivritti*, while others like Tilak and Sri Aurobindo regarded the Gita as a bible of *pravritti*. Gandhiji also emphasized *pravritti mārga* more but with a difference, as he advocated a synthesis of both. He often felt and exclaimed in his moments of spiritual ecstasy :—

“*Pravritti* and *nivritti*, like truth and *ahimsa* are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like two sides of a coin, who can say which is the obverse and which is the reverse?” Nevertheless, *pravritti* is the means and *nivritti* the end. One is engaged in work in order to become free from work. One eats in order to get rid of pangs of the hunger. One relishes sleep in order to get rid of fatigue. One talks in order to purge oneself of the passion for speaking and to become speechless in time. Similarly, one becomes attached to the world in order to cut off the shackles of worldliness. The more attached one is, the stronger is the urge to be free. No world, no *mukti*. One aspires for *moksha* or pines after *mukti* because of the thirst for life. A moment comes when the action of life turns inward; passion has reached full circle and tables turn. One then begins to look within. What happens later is pictured beautifully in the Gita—

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्मुमांश्चरति निस्पृहः ।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥

“He who forsaketh all desires and goeth onwards free from yearnings, selfless and without egoism—he goeth to Peace.”

About the concept of *karma*, Gandhiji had a very simple definition to offer on the basis of the Gita.

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।

“Man, attains perfection by each being intent on his own duty.” What a practical suggestion to all of us. There can be no problem of educated unemployment, if the students follow this advice of Lord Krishna, so wonderfully practised by Mahatmaji.

The mission of Gandhi's life was the realization of God, a complete *sākshātkāra* with Him through the service of mankind. What

Mahaprabhu Gauranga's followers had attained through the constant chanting of "Hari bol" and Tulsidas had attained through his renunciation of the world, the same was attained by Bapu through the service of India's teeming millions. The sense of service was the guide-line, the torch-bearer of Gandhi's life. The constant practice of *samatva* (equality) in all walks of life, then, became his song of humanity, his message of eternity : Mounting on this platform of equality, Gandhiji heralded a new era of non-violence and truth in an age of violence and hatred.

Mahatmaji felt craving for sense objects to be the root of all evils, as the Gita declares—

ध्यायतो विषयान्मुंसः, संगतेषु उपजायते ।
 संगत् संजायते कामः, कामात् क्रोध उपजायते ॥
 क्रोधात् भवति सम्मोहः, सम्मोहात् स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।
 स्मृति भ्रंशात् बुद्धिनाशः, बुद्धिनाशात् प्रणश्यति ॥

Let us be free from egotistic desires and be prepared to find the One all-pervading Spirit everywhere. The Upanishad says—

एकमेव द्वितीयो नास्ति ।

"There is One without a second." The Gita too declares—

"I am the origin of the whole. All merge in me and I merge in all."

Gandhiji believed Karma Yoga to be the central message of the Gita. He said that sacrifice of the fruit of action was better than action itself. What do you lose if you decide to offer the fruit at the feet of the Master by saying :

"Lord ! You have made me achieve this good or bad deed. It is your creation; hence its fruit is yours."

Even if we commit thousands of blunders by telling lies or deceiving our own self, or disobeying our elders, we lose nothing by offering the fruit of our action at the master's feet. In this process of offering, we shall certainly come to see the light of God that has been denied to us so far. At this sacred moment, I appeal to you all to experiment with the *gitātmak* principles of Gandhiji to create a climate of tranquillity and an epic of humanity. In this age of science, when the moon-dust is being examined in the labs of America, let us create a science to experiment with the Gandhian ideals, in the labs of India for the welfare of the world.

Sacred Places of Kashmir, Jammu and Ladhak

A Devotee

अथ वैवस्वतीयेऽस्मिन्प्राप्ते मन्वन्तरे सुरान् ।
द्रुहिणोपेन्द्ररुद्रादीनवतार्यं प्रजासृजा ॥
कश्यपेन तदन्तःएषं घातयित्वा जलोद्भवम् ।
निर्ममे तत्सरोजभूमौ कश्मीरा इति मण्डलम् ॥

SRINAGAR

[During the present period of Vaivaswata Manu, Prajapati Kashyapa induced the gods Druhina, Upendra, Rudra and others to descend on earth and cause Jalodbhava, who resided there, to be killed. He then founded the kingdom of Kashmir upon the site of the lake].

Srinagar is the capital of Kashmir. It is situated at a distance of about four hundred kilometers north of Pathankot Railway station in Punjab and two hundred ninety-three kilometers north of Jammu. Srinagar is a Sanskrit word which means 'the beautiful city'. It was founded by King Pravarasena II who reigned in Kashmir from 110 A. D. to 170 A. D. The city is on the banks of the sacred river Vitasta of which the modern name is Jhelum. It is about 5,000 feet above sea level and lies between two hills; one of them is called Hari Parvat and the other Shankaracharya Tila. Both the hills and the river Vitasta are regarded as very sacred in Kashmir.

The river Vitasta is mentioned in the Vedas and Puranas. It is said that the Goddess Parvati incarnated in the form of this sacred river in Kashmir in order to free the land from pishachas.* The great sage Vyasa has written about the sanctity of this river in the Mahabharata, a verse of which is given below :

वितस्ता च समासाद्य संतर्प्यं पितृदेवताः ।

नरः फलमवाप्नोति वाजपेयस्य भारत ॥†

* The Rājatarangini, first Taranga, verses 26-27.

* A type of evil spirit.

† The Mahabharata, Vanaparava, chapter 82, verse 89.

[The sage Pulastya said to Yudhisthira, "O King! By visiting the river Vitasta and propitiating the forefathers and gods by offering its waters, a man acquires the merit of performing the *Vajapeya** sacrifice."]

As to the origin of the sacred hill of Hari Parvat it is said that in very ancient times the valley of Kashmir was a vast lake called Satisaras (the lake of the goddess Sati). A demon named Jalodbhava resided in this lake and committed atrocities in its neighbourhood. The gods being unable to subdue him, approached the goddess of wealth (Lakshmi) for help, She took the form of a parrot (sharikā) and taking a pebble in her beak dropped it in the middle of the lake where the demon was residing. The pebble swelled into a big mountain and crushed the demon under its weight. The gods then took shelter in this mountain which is therefore called Hari Parvat (the mountain of the gods). It is also called Sharika Parvat.

However, according to the Nilamata Purana the account is slightly different. There it is said that the great sage Kashyapa, the father of the gods and nagas came to this place for a pilgrimage. Nila Naga, the head of the nagas, requested him to save the nagas from the atrocities of the demon Jalodbhava, who lived in the lake Satisaras. Kashyapa felt sorry for their plight and prayed to Lord Brahma to destroy the demon. At Brahma's behest all the gods assembled near Satisaras and took their position on the lofty peaks surrounding the lake to fight the demon. Balabhadra drained the lake by piercing the mountains with his plough-share. When Jalodbhava became visible, Vishnu killed him with his discus called Sudarshana. The gods and the nagas then took their abode in this new land, while the goddesses adorned the land in the shape of rivers and rivulets.

Every stone of Hari Parvat is regarded as sacred and representative of the gods. There are a number of sacred shrines on this hill, the shrine of the goddess Sharikā being the most ancient. A rock in the shrine is regarded as the emblem of the goddess. There is a *Srichakra* (symbol of the goddess) embedded on this sacred rock which remains covered with vermillion. It is visible only in summer when the vermillion mixed with oil trickles down and evaporates. It is said that the throat of the dead body of the goddess Sati, when cut to pieces by

* A type of sacrifice mentioned in the Vedas.

Vishnu bit by bit with his discus called 'Sudarshana', fell at this spot. Hence it is regarded as very sacred. The following verse from the sacred Tantrachudamani may be noted in this connection.

काश्मीरे कण्ठदेशश्च त्रिसंध्येश्वर भैरवः ।
महामाया भगवती गुणातीता वरप्रदा ॥

[The throat of the goddess fell in Kashmir. The God (Bhairava) is called Trisamdhyeshwara and the Goddess (Bhagwati) is called Mahāmāyā, who is the giver of boons and who is beyond the three *gunas*.]

The goddess Sati was born as a daughter of Daksha Prajāpati. She was married to Siva but Daksha was not pleased with Siva, his son-in-law. Once Daksha performed a big sacrifice. To this sacrifice he invited all the gods and goddesses, saints and sages, but he did not invite Siva and Sati. Sati came to know about this great sacrifice which was being performed by her father Daksha. Even though uninvited she was eager to go to her father's house to witness the great sacrifice. Siva, who knew what would be the consequences of this great sacrifice, unwillingly gave his permission. Sati, with her attendants, then went to Daksha's house (this place is identified with Kankhal near Hardwar in the Saharanpur District of Uttar Pradesh), but her father did not welcome her. He began to speak ill of Siva which Sati could not bear. She gave a fitting reply to her father's abuses hurled against her revered husband, but her heart was so full of sorrow that she could not endure the insult. She breathed her last on the spot itself. Her attendants then carried the sad news of her demise to Lord Siva in Kailās. On hearing the news Siva's sorrow knew no bounds. With his attendants he proceeded to Daksha's place. The sacrifice was destroyed and Daksha with many others like him were killed. Brahmā and other gods then pacified Siva by their prayers. At their request Siva brought Daksha back to life, but, as a punishment, his head was replaced by the head of a goat. Siva then left the place carrying Sati's dead body on his head, and began to wander about on earth like a mad-man. Gods and sages were upset at Siva's behaviour, fearing that the entire creation might collapse. Vishnu, at their request, then began to cut the dead body of Sati into pieces with his discus so that Siva might in the long run be freed from this infatuation. The place where the pieces of Sati's dead body fell to the earth are regarded as very sacred. They are fifty-one

in number and are called "*Pithasthāna.*" In each of these sacred spots the goddess Sati has got a special name and so also Lord Siva.

At the foot of the southern extremity of Hari Parvat, close to Bachdarwājā of Akbar's fortress, there is an ancient shrine of Lord Ganesha called Bhimaswāmi. It is said in the Rājatarangini that due to the great devotion of King Pravarasena, the image of Ganesha in the shrine turned his face from west to east in order to show that the god was not averse to his city.

नगरप्राप्तिलोभ्याय भक्त्या तस्य विनायकः ।

प्रत्यमुखः प्रामुखतां भोमस्वामी स्वयं ययौ ॥*

[Due to his (Pravarasena's) devotion, Vināyaka Bhimaswāmi, of his own accord, turned his face from west to east, indicating that he was not averse to this (Pravarasena's) city (Srinagar).]

At the top of the Sankarāchārya Hill, situated at a distance of about four kilometers from the town, there is a very ancient and famous temple of Siva. It stands on the site of a more ancient temple which, according to Major General Cunningham, was built by King Jalauka, son of emperor Asoka, in about 200 B. C., but according to others it was originally built by King Sandhimat (2629-2564 B. C.). The temple was perhaps first rebuilt in the sixth century A. D. and thereafter again in the eighth century A. D. by King Lalitāditya. It was then named after the great Sankarāchārya who visited Kashmir and revived Hinduism there also. He is said to have lived on this hill for some time. Previously the hill was called Gopādri. The Muslims call it Takht-i-Sulaiman and the Buddhists call it Pas Pahar. It is said that one of the successors of Sankarāchārya also visited Kashmir during the reign of Abhinava Gupta (993-1015 A. D.) and stayed on the Sankarāchārya Hill for some days. He believed in Brahman, the Supreme, all-pervading formless without any attributes, and did not believe in Śakti (Goddess, the manifestation of Brahman as Supreme Power). One day, when the saint was hungry, he saw a milk-maid carrying milk at the foot of the hill. He called out to her to supply him with milk. The milk-maid asked him to climb down the hill and take the milk. As he was weak, he told her that he had no strength ('Śakti')

* The Rajatarangini.

to walk down the hill. Hearing this, the milk-maid said to him, "How can you have *Śakti* when you do not believe in *Śakti* (Goddess)?" This opened the eye of wisdom of the saint. He realized that the Goddess herself had favoured him with this reply and cleared his doubts about her existence. From then he began to believe in the Goddess and subsequently composed the well-known hymn called 'Saundaryalahari' (which literally means 'Waves of Beauty') in her praise*. A verse from this beautiful poem is given below.

नमः शिवाभ्यां नवयौवनाभ्यां
परस्पराश्लिष्टवपुर्धराभ्याम् ।

नगेन्द्रकन्यावृषकेतनाभ्यां
नमो नमः शंकरपार्वतीभ्याम् ॥

[I bow in reverence to Siva and his spouse Pārvati who are in their prime of youth and who have clasped each other in embrace and united to form a single body. I bow in reverence again and again to Sankara and Pārvati, the former having a flag bearing the portrait of an ox and the latter being the daughter of the king of the mountains (Himalayas).]

The Siva temple on the hill is a splendid structure of stone with a Siva Linga installed in it. It commands a beautiful view of the surrounding scenery. It is the oldest temple surviving in Kashmir. It is said that Shikandar-But-Shikan did not demolish this shrine because he had an idea that the Mahmud of Ghazni had read his prayers in it.†

At Ghat Somyar, below the second bridge on the Jhelum, there is a sacred spot called 'Somatirtha.' It lies in the locality named Sudarmar.

The confluence of the Jhelum with the Tsunth Kul (ancient Mahasarit) issuing from the Dal Lake on the outskirts of Srinagar is regarded as very sacred from ancient times. Its name is Marisangama.

Near Shan-i-Hamdan, on the right bank of the Jhelum in Srinagar, there is a very holy spring sacred to the goddess Kali. There was a temple over this spring which was constructed by King Pravarasena II (110-170 A. D.) and was called Kaleshwari. The locality, even today,

* See "Archaeological Remains of Kashmir" by Pandit Anand Kaul.

† See "Kashmir Through the Ages" by Pandit Gwasha Lal Kaul.

is called Kalaspur which is a corruption of Kaleshwaripur. The ancient temple was destroyed by Kutb-ud-din (1373-1394 A.D.), who, with its materials, built a mosque† named after Syed Ali Hamdani who came from Hamdan in Persia in the fourteenth century A.D. and converted a large section of the people in this area to Islam. When the Sikhs came to power in the Kashmir valley, Sardar Hari Singh, the Governor, ordered the demolition of the mosque and the restoration of the site to the Hindus because it was originally a Hindu shrine. According to this order preparations were being made to blow up the mosque with canons, when the Mohammadans of Srinagar entreated Pandit Birbal Dhar to request the Governor to refrain from demolishing the mosque. Birbal Dhar being mainly responsible for establishing the Sikh Government in Kashmir commanded great influence in the government in those days. Out of compassion, he approached Sardar Hari Singh and requested him not to demolish the Muslim shrine, as the Hindu shrine (i. e. the sacred spring) was well protected, being within the enclosure of the mosque, which, if demolished, would expose the holy spring to constant pollution by all sorts of people. The Sardar then refrained from knocking down the mosque. Since the spring is inside the mosque the pilgrims can see it only from outside.*

कालिकायै विदमहे श्मशानवासिन्यै श्रीमहि
तन्नो घोरे प्रयोदायात् ॥

(According to the precept of the preceptor I know the Goddess Kalika. I meditate on Her, who dwells in the cremation ground. May that meditation and the knowledge save me from this dangerous world).

S W A Y A M B H U

स्वयंभूर्यत्र हुतमुख भुवो गर्भत्समुन्मिषन् ।
जुहुतां प्रतिगृह्णाति ज्वालाभुजवनैर्हविः ॥ *

(There the self-created Śiva, incarnated as Fire rising from the womb of the earth, receives with numerous arms of flame the offerings of the sacrifices.)

† There is a walking stick kept in this mosque, which is said to have been used by Jesus Christ. This stick is exhibited to the public on rare occasions.

* See 'Archaeological Remains of Kashmir' by Pandit Anand Kaul.

Swayambhu, the place named after Śiva called *Swayambhu* (the self-created), which is now known as Suyam, is a sacred place situated about a kilometer to the south-west of the village called Nichiham in Machhipura Tehsil of the Baramula District in northern Kashmir.

Pilgrimage takes place at Suyam once in a period of about thirty years when the earth there gets heated naturally and remains so for about a year. The pilgrims cook rice with water in pots by burying them upto their neck in the earth. The cakes of cooked rice are then offered as 'pindas' (morsels of food) to the departed souls of the forefathers. Sacred flames are also produced by digging holes into the hot earth and pouring *ghee* (clarified butter), honey or sugar, and camphor into them.

According to the *Swayambhu-mahātmya* (the book describing the glory of *Swayambhu*), the self-created God Siva incarnated at this place as Kālāgnirudra (Siva in the form of destructive fire) at the request of the gods who were oppressed by the demons (*asuras*). The following is a verse from the Nilamata which tells about *Swayambhu*.

स्वयंभूवं वल्लिकृतं तथा वै पिगलेश्वरम् ।
विन्दुनादेश्वरं देवं देवं भद्रेश्वरं तथा ॥†

[There is the god *Swayambhu* in the form of Fire and there is the God Pingaleshwara. There is the god called Vindunādeshwara and there is the god Called Bhadreshwara].

At Halamatpura, another village in the same Tehsil of the district, there are five sacred springs situated near one another. In one of them there is a Śiva Linga.

त्रयी साङ्ख्यं यागं पशुपतिमतं वैश्वमिति
प्रभिन्ने प्रस्थाने परभिदमदः पथ्यमिति च ।

* The Rājatarangini, first Taranga, verse 34.

† The Nilamata, verse 1021.

रूचीनां वैचित्र्याद्भुक्तिलनानापथजुषां
नृणामेको गभ्यस्त्वमसि पयसामर्णव इव ॥*

(Though the ways differ which are spoken
of in the three-fold Veda,
Sāṅkhya, Yogaśhāstra, the doctrine of
Pashupati, and Vaiṣṇava Shāstra;
Though some take this and others that to be the better path,
And followers of the various paths
both directly and indirectly dispute,
Yet Thou alone art the Goal of all
As is the ocean of every river.)

B H A D R A K Ā L I

Bhadrakāli, which is now wrongly pronounced as Badrkal, is a sacred village named after the goddess Bhadrakāli. It is situated about six kilometers south-east of the village Krambhar, which is at a distance of about ten kilometers north-east of Swayambhu.

There is a spring sacred to the goddess Bhadrakāli in the village. The Nilamata tells about the worship of the goddess in the following verse—

ततोऽष्टभ्यां पूजनीया भद्रकाली यथाविधि ।
उपसितैराराध्यैर्धूपैर्मर्त्यैर्वस्त्रादिभिरपि ।
दीपैरत्नैस्तथा भक्षैर्फलैर्मूलैस्तथैव च ॥†

(There on the eighth day, the Goddess Bhadrakāli is to be worshipped according to rules by fasting and by offerings of flowers, water, incense, garlands, clothing, light, gold and eatables like fruits, roots etc.)

* Shivamahimnastavah, verse 7. Translation by Arthur and Avalon.

† The Nilamata, verses 650-651. One line is missing.

T H I D

सिंहारूढां त्रिनेत्रां करतलविलसच्छंखचक्रासिरभ्यां
 भक्ताभिष्टप्रदात्रीं रिपुमथनकरीं सर्वलोकैकवन्द्याम् ।
 सर्वालङ्कारयुक्तां शशियुतमुकुटां श्यामलाङ्गीं कृशाङ्गीं
 दुर्गा देवीं प्रपद्ये शरणमहमशेषापदुन्मूलनाय ॥

(In order to be saved from unending miseries I take refuge in the Goddess Durgā, who is seated on a lion, who is of light green colour, who has a slim figure, who wears all ornaments, whose crown is the moon, who has three eyes, who gracefully holds in her hands the conch, sword and discus, who fulfils the desires of Her devotees, who kills their enemies and who is worshipped by all men.)

Thid is an ancient village, which is situated on the eastern shore of the famous Dal Lake on the outskirts of Srinagar. Its ancient name is Thedā.

There are seven holy springs at Thid which are regarded as sacred to the Goddess Durgā. It is said that the goddess performed austerities at the adjoining village of Bran, the ancient name of which is Bhimādevi.

Bhimā is another name of the Goddess Durgā.

The five springs issuing from the hills by the side of the nearby hamlet Dampur are supposed to comprise the sacred Tirtha of the goddess Bhimādevi. This place is now occupied by a mosque.

Kalhana tells about the sacred villages of Thedā and Bhimādevi in the following verse of the Rājatarangini.

थेदां च भीमादेवीं च देशश्चान्यान्पदे पदे ।
 स मठप्रतिमालिङ्गं हेर्म्यनिन्ये महार्घताम् ॥*

(By erecting at every spot *mathas* (temples with towers), statues of gods and emblems (*Linga*), he (king Sandhimat) gave splendour to Thedā, Bhimādevi and other places.)

T R A L

ॐ कालिका घोररूपा सर्वकामप्रदा शुभा ।
 सर्वदेवस्तुता देवी शत्रुनाशं करोतु मे ॥†

* The Rājatarangini, second Taranga, verse 135.

† Kālikākavacham, verse 12.

(O Goddess Kālikā ! Thou art of terrible form, Thou fulfillest all desires, Thou art good and Thou art worshipped by all the gods, kill Thou my enemies.)

Tral is a town beautifully situated on a sloping plateau at the foot of the mountains at a distance of about ten kilometers north-east of Tsurus. It is about eight kilometers east as the crow flies from Avantipur which is about thirty kilometers north-west of Srinagar.

There are about twelve springs in Tral. Two of the springs called Diva Nāg and Kansabal are regarded as very sacred. There is an ancient shrine of the goddess Kāli at this place.

In the nearby village called Gheru, there is an ancient shrine of the goddess Gouri. The goddess Parvati is called Gouri because her body is white. The following verse tells about her origin and name.

योगाग्निदग्धदेहा सा पुनर्जिता हिमालये ।
शङ्खेन्दुकुन्दघवला ततो गौरीति सा स्मृता ॥

[After her body was consumed in yogic fire (fire that emanated from her meditation), she was again born in the Himalayas. Being as white as the conch, the moon and the *kunda* flower, she is called Gouri.]

The following is a verse from a hymn of Gouri.

प्राशापाशक्लेशविनाशं विदधानां
पादाम्भोजध्यानपराणां पुरुषाणाम् ।
ईशामीशार्घाङ्गहरां तामभिरामां
गौरीमम्बामम्बुरुहाक्षीमहमीडे ॥

[I worship Mother Gouri, who is the better half of Śiva, who is very delightful, who has got lotus eyes, who effects the destruction of the sorrows caused by the bondage of desires, of those who meditate on Her lotus feet.]

T R I P H A R

त्वं ब्रह्मा सृष्टिकर्ता च त्वं विष्णुः परिपालकः ।
त्वं शिवः शिवदोऽनन्तः सर्वसंहारकारकः ॥*

[Thou art Brahma, the Creator of the world, Thou art Visnu, the Preserver, Thou art Siva, the Giver of unlimited good and the Destroyer of all that is destructible.]

* Himālayakṛita Shivastotram, verse 1.

Triphar is situated at a distance of about five kilometers towards east from the north-east corner of Dal Lake on the outskirts of Srinagar.

There is a peak lying east of Triphar called Mahādeva peak, which is sacred to Mahādeva.

In ancient times the sacred shrine of Śiva called Tripureshwara was located at Triphar. The following verse from the Rajatarangini tells about this sacred shrine.

त्रिपुरेस्वरभूतेशविजयेशेषु भूभृजा ।
स्नानद्रोण्या रोप्यमय्या तेन पीठत्रयं कृतम् ॥

[The king (Avantivarman, 855-883 A.D.) had at the shrines of Tripureshwara, Bhutesha and Vijayesha three pedestals made with silver conduits for bathing water.]

The stream called Tripuraganga which flows by the side of Triphar is regarded as very sacred.

* The Rajatarangini, fifth Taranga, verse 46.

A Little Anthology on the Worship

of THE MOTHER

(Compiled by Shivashankari)

*Yā devi sarva bhūteshu sakti rūpena samśhitā
Namastasyee, namastasyee, namastasyee, namo namoha.*

One has to approach, *Sankari - Sakti* to achieve *Para-
brahman*. *Paramatman - Siva* - is in *Sakti* and *Sakti* is in *Siva*.
The two are inseparable.

—*Mataji*

Do you aspire after Divine Grace? Then propitiate the mother, the primal Divine Energy—*Sakti*. Yes, She is *Mahāmāyā* Herself. She it is who has divided the whole world and is conjuring up the triple device of creation, maintenance and dissolution. She has spread a veil of ignorance over all, and unless She unbars the Gate, none can enter the "Inner Court". Left outside, we see only the external things, but the Eternal One, *Satchidananda* remains ever beyond our ken.

—*Sri Ramakrishna*

To walk through life armoured against all fear, peril and disaster, only two things are needed, two that go always together : the Grace of the Divine Mother and, on your side, an inner state made up of faith, sincerity and surrender. Let your faith be pure, candid and perfect. Let your sincerity and surrender be genuine and entire. When you give yourself, give completely, without demand, without condition, without reservation so that all in you shall belong to the Divine Mother and nothing be left to the ego or given to any other power.

The more complete your faith, sincerity and surrender, the more will grace and protection be with you, and when

the grace and protection of the Divine Mother are with you, what is there that can touch you or whom need you fear? A little of it even will carry you through all difficulties, obstacles and dangers; surrounded by its full presence you can go securely on your way because it is Hers, careless of all menace, unaffected by any hostility however powerful, whether from this world or from worlds invisible. Its touch can turn difficulties into opportunities, failures into success and weakness into unfaltering strength. For the grace of the Divine Mother is the sanction of the Supreme and now or tomorrow its effect is sure, a thing decreed, inevitable and irresistible.

—*Sri Aurobindo*

The path of the spirit is so simple that a child can walk it; but grown-up people, who have complicated minds, for them the path is as sharp as the blade of a razor. The simple-minded are ever protected by the Divine Mother and She creates such an atmosphere about them that nothing can touch them. Everyone can acquire this atmosphere. Whatever you really want, you can gain. The power is within you. But you cannot do it if you take the egoistic point of view. If however, you surrender to Divine Mother and pray to Her with whole-hearted devotion, then nothing can prevent you from moving onward. You are sure to attain

—*Swami Paramananda Puri*

One must worship the Mother in all Her manifestations. She is the creative aspect of the Absolute. She is symbolized as Cosmic Energy. Energy is the physical ultimate of all forms of matter and the sustaining force of the Spirit. Energy and spirit are inseparable. The five elements and their combinations are the external manifestations of the Mother. Psychic power, intelligence, discrimination and will are Her internal manifestations. Humanity is Her visible form. One must feel that the Mother sees through one's eyes, hears through one's ears and works through one's hands. The body, mind, *prāna*, intellect and will and all their functions must be felt as Her manifestations. The one universal life throbs in the hearts of all. There can be no room for hatred and selfishness; for hating another one is but hating the Mother; for being selfish to another, one is but denying one's own self. This consciousness must be driven deep into the heart. This ideal of divine oneness must be the practice for meditation.

Mother's grace is boundless, Her mercy illimitable. She is pleased with a little purity of heart. During the sacred *Navarātri*, one must not lose the glorious opportunity to make a definite and sincere attempt to obtain Her grace. She will transform one's entire life and bless one with the milk of divine wisdom, spiritual insight and *Kaivalya moksha*.

—Swami Sivananda

While the child is in its mother's womb, its inner power is united with that of his mother and thus there is knowledge of Reality. By the yogas of meditation or inquiry or by *krīyāyoga* and other yogas one must again reach the state of the child in its mother's womb. The *sādhaka*, the bhakta, the yogi must become the child-yogi in the womb of the Divine Mother. Then the breath will not be broken up anymore. All along there will be only one goal, one aspiration, one inner experience, one Realizaion

While in its mother's womb, the individual has no connection with the outer world; There is thus no impediment and the blood circulation is not conditioned by the functioning of the breath but evenly flows straight in and out of the mother's blood stream. By the sight of outer things and breathing the outer air, man's concentration is destroyed by outer things and the remembrance of his true nature vanishes. It is necessary for the aspirant to hide himself from the obstacles of the outer world by entering the Divine Mother's womb in the case of his own heart. Thereby lost remembrance will be restored. Then the Mother will take on Herself all his burdens.

—Mataji

*Yā devī sarva bhūteṣu matri rūpeṇa samsthita
namastasyee, namastasyee, namastasyee namo namoha.*

Mātri Līlā

(June 15th—August 31st, 1970)

Mataji was in Poona since May 13th. We have already reported in detail about the celebrations of her birthday and after. In the middle of June Mataji was to visit some places in Maharashtra, when Didima developed breathing difficulty. The doctor prescribed a few week's complete rest for her. Mataji therefore postponed her trip. Didima rested for about a fortnight, after which her health seemed normal.

In the later part of June Mataji followed invitations to the houses of several devotees, among them the Rajmata of Baroda who had met Mataji for the first time this summer only. Satsang had to be held in sheds, since Mataji does not enter the dwelling of a householder. On one occasion it started raining heavily and the wind blew the rain into the shed from the sides. Our hosts felt quite desperate, being unable to protect the gathering from the inclemency of the elements. Mataji said laughingly: "What is the use of worrying? Just sing kirtana!" She herself began to sing, "Radhe Govinda" and the whole congregation joined in enthusiastically not heeding the pouring rain. In a few minutes the sky had cleared up and the gathering proceeded undisturbed.

Mataji used to go for a drive on Kharakvasla Road almost every evening and then walk for a mile or more accompanied by a number of Brahmacharis and Brahmacharinis. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj also often walked with her.

On June 28th, Mataji paid a visit to the Ashram of Sri Dilip Kumar Roy. The great poet and singer sang beautifully before Mataji.

On July 2nd, Mataji together with Didima, Didi and a large party of ashramites and devotees motored to Miraj, 140 miles from Poona, at the invitation of Sri Thakorebhai Patel, a devotee from Bombay, who owns some mills at Miraj. It is a health-resort, renowned

for its bracing air and wholesome water. There is a T. B. Sanatorium also at Miraj. Mataji and her entire party were put up at the "Tilak Vidya Mandir" school. One day the students of the school gave a demonstration of *āsanas* in which they are experts. Their performance was much appreciated.

On July 3rd, Mataji and Didima motored to Nipani in Belgaum at the pressing invitation of Sri Chandrasekhar Swami, Head of the Department of Comparative Philosophy in Varanasi Sanskrit University, who happens to be the head and *Guru* of the famous Shivacharya Swami Hiremath at Nipani. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj was already there. Dr. Gouri Nath Sastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Sanskrit University and a few others accompanied Mataji from Miraj. Mataji was taken in a two-mile long procession in an open car followed by hundreds of citizens who all walked on foot. The entire population of the town numbering several thousands seemed to have come out to welcome Mataji and to pay homage to her. Eleven arches had been erected along the road. Women carrying copper vessels went on sprinkling water in front of the car. As Mataji passed, people came out of every house waving lights and incense in worship. It was indeed a moving and unique sight.

Sri Dattabal had requested Mataji to visit the meditation hall of his "Divine Mission" if ever she came to Kolhapur. On her way back from Nipani, Mataji had to pass through Kolhapur but she did not know Dattabal's address. Mataji went to the famous Mahalakshmi Temple at Kolhapur. In the very crowded bazar she by chance met a devotee who knew the address and who had been praying fervently for Ma's *daršana*. At night Mataji was again back at Miraj where she remained until July 9th. *Satsang* was held twice daily. One day the renowned singer, Sri Vinaya Pattavardhan sang to Mataji. Another day she went to see the famous Ganesh temple which is made of black stone.

On July 9th, Mataji proceeded to Barsi where she had been for the first time last summer.* Twenty-two persons accompanied her, while the rest of the party, including Didima, returned to Poona. At Barsi Mataji was in a very animated mood. She sang and talked as during her previous visit. Like last year she also visited the *mandir* of Lord Vishnu and King Ambarish where special puja was celebrated.

* Ananda Vārtā, October 1969, pp. 190-91.

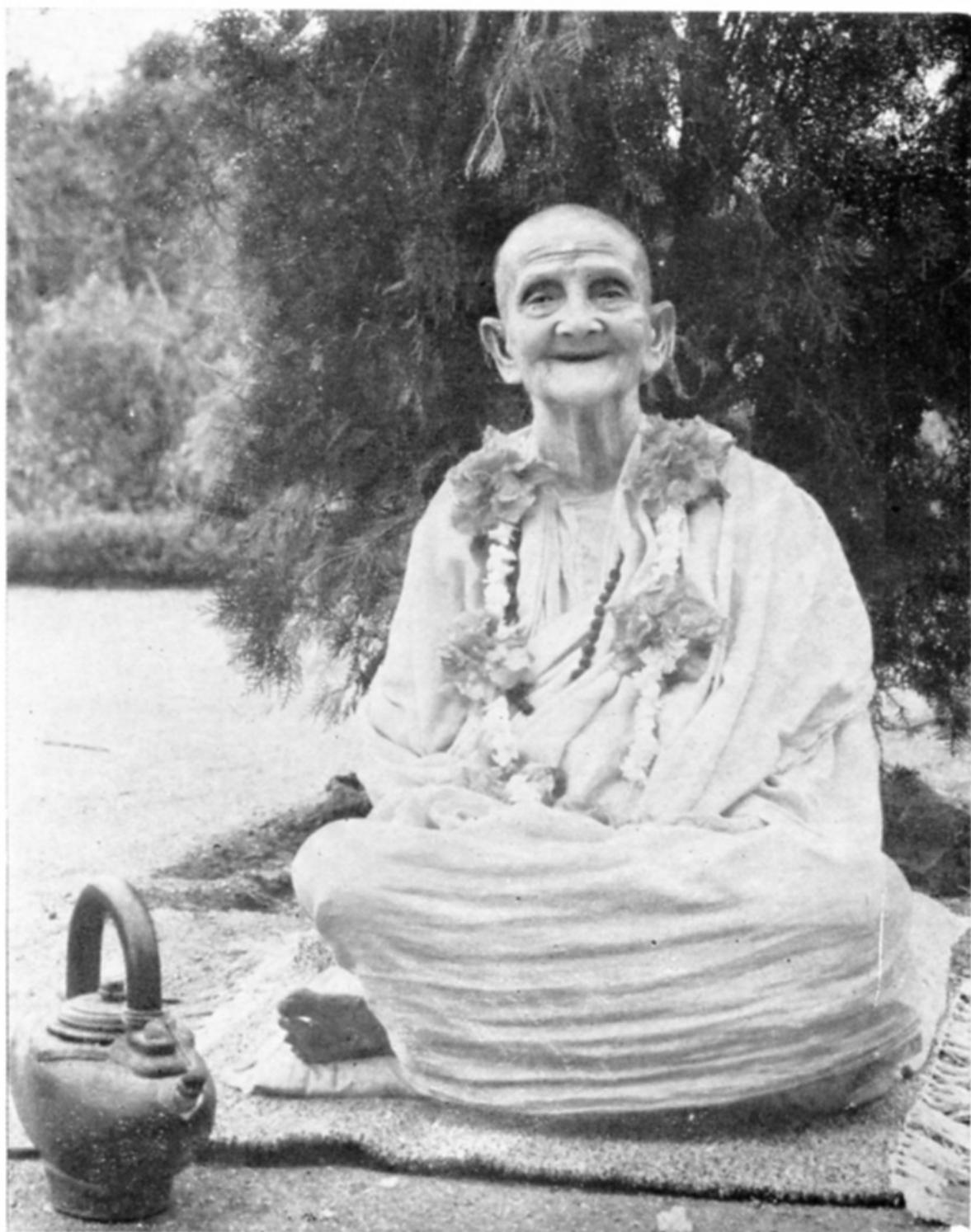
On July 12th, Mataji returned to Poona. On the 13th the opening-ceremony of a new guest-house in the Ashram grounds was performed in Mataji's presence.

Mataji had wanted to go to Kankhal (Hardwar) for Gurupurnima. But the devotees of Poona and Bombay just would not let her go. Some of them pleaded that they had never before been with Mataji on that auspicious day and they took great trouble to persuade her to remain in their midst. Mataji finally responded to their entreaties, leaving for Bombay on July 19th, the day after Gurupurnima. The festival was observed in great style on July 18th. Excellent arrangements had been made. The attendance was enormous. Mataji felt inspired to sing for quite a long while. She sang "Krishna Kanhaiya," "Krishna Gopal" and "Prangopal re." It was as it were, an invitation to Gopal to take his abode in the temple for Him which is under construction in the Ashram grounds with an adjoining hall for satsang.

During her short stay in Bombay for two nights, a number of dignitaries came to see Mataji, such as Swami Akhandanandaji, Swami Chinmayanandaji, the Secretary of Sri Vinoba Bhave, the Rajmata of Gwalior and the head of the R. S. S. (Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh), who was still in hospital after a cancer operation.

On July 21st, Mataji left for Varanasi with Didima and Didi to see the ailing Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj and Sri Mukti Maharaj, who is one of the last surviving disciples of Holy Mother Sharada Devi. Both of them have been staying in our Ashram at Varanasi.

On July 29th, Mataji and Didima travelled to Kankhal, reaching there the next morning. Mataji remained in the Kankhal Ashram until August 1st and then moved with her entire entourage to Jaipuria Bhavan at Ramghat, Hardwar, where a *Bhāgavata Saptah* was held from August 3rd to 10th, with Sri Srinath Shastri of Vrindaban officiating. Sri Sitaram Jaipuria of Kanpur—who unfortunately was very ill and therefore unable to come himself—had put the greater part of the newly built Jaipuria Bhavan at the disposal of Mataji and her party for the entire period of her stay which extended over *Jhulan* and *Janmastami*. This *dharmaśāla* is a beautiful four-storeyed structure consisting of forty rooms, spacious courtyards, kitchens, bathrooms etc., situated directly on the Ganges. An ideal place for large gatherings. From August 4th, Mataji motored to Kankhal almost every evening, spending the night there in quiet and solitude.



At Poona—May, 1970

Courtesy : Sri Sadanand, Bombay.

The Ashram at Kankhal had so far been known by its old name "Shantiniketan." The owner of the property Sri Nitai Basu Mallik, who happens to be a devotee of Mataji, recently made a gift of the same to Sri Sri Anandamayee Sangha in the memory of his parents. The Gift Deed was registered only on July 31st and in the morning of August 7th it was formally inaugurated in Mataji's and Didima's presence as a regular Ashram. Brahmachari Jogeshda who is incharge of the Kishenpur Ashram and a few others were called for the occasion and special *bhoga* was offered in the Siva Mandir at midday. Mataji returned to Ramghat as usual by 11 a. m. to be present during the last half hour of the Sanskrit reading of the *Bhāgavata* followed by *ārati*.

On August 8th, Sri Krishna's birth was described in the course of the reading of the *Bhāgavata*. This is always a special occasion. Didima was present in her seat and Mataji noticed her extraordinary radiance that day. Late in the evening the car that almost daily used to take Mataji to Kankhal was sent back. Mataji said she had no *kheyāla* to spend the night at Kankhal. At about 1 a. m. Didima got up and went to the bathroom. On returning to her room she felt uneasy. Her attendant wanted to call Mataji, but Ma had already left her room and came of her own accord. Didima could not breathe normally. Mataji sat down by her side and gently massaged her chest, yet there was no improvement. At nearly 1-30 a. m. Didima suddenly opened her eyes, looked at Mataji, tried to raise her hands by way of *pranāma* and breathed her last. Her room was directly on the bank of the Ganges, the music of its streaming filled the atmosphere. In this simple and beautiful manner, in the most blessed surroundings, under the most auspicious circumstances, ended the life of the holy woman who had been chosen by Providence to give birth to Sri Anandamayi Ma and to bring her up. Not only that : to be later her closest companion for 32 years as a *sannyāsini*.

Trunk calls were put through first to Varanasi and then to all our other Ashrams. Early morning disciples and devotees began to arrive from Dehradun and Delhi. Later in the morning Didima's body was lifted into a car and taken to Kankhal Ashram in sitting posture. It remained all day long in the lotus pose on an elevated seat on the veranda of the Ashram, dressed in silken garments, the forehead adorned with ashes. The face looked entirely beautiful, serene and

fresh until the late evening when the body was given *samādhi* in the garden of the Ashram.

Mataji went to Kankhal after the Sanskrit reading of the *Bhāgavata* at about 11 a. m. More and more devotees collected from many places. Excellent singers arrived from Delhi and the kirtan could be kept up with full vigour until 10. p. m. Someone came from Jullundur where no information had been sent. He had been prompted by a dream to hurry to Ma without delay. A few others in different places had also dreamt. By 2 p. m. devotees arrived (partly by plane) even from Bombay. At 6-45 p. m. Didima's only son, Sri Makhan Bhattacharya came from Varanasi with the General Secretary of the Sangha and Brahmachari Nirmalananda. Then only the final rites were performed. The Mahant of "Nirvani Akhara," the Ashram of Didima's Sannyasa Guru, had come earlier in the day and his advice was sought as regards the procedure and he himself provided some of the necessary paraphernalia. Hundreds and hundreds of people had *darśana* of Didima in *Mahāsamādhi* in the course of the whole day. A solid *samādhi* had been built of bricks, the inner walls were made of marble slabs. By about 9-30 p. m. the body was placed into it in sitting posture. The whole function was extremely inspiring and serene.

The next day, August 10th was the last day of the *Bhāgavata Saptāh*. On the 11th morning there was *havan* (fire sacrifice) and the recitation of the whole of the Bhagavad Gita. Immediately after its completion, *Akhanda Rāmāyaṇa* was started in Didima's room at Ramghat in Mataji's presence. It was followed by the reading in Hindi of the *Devi Bhāgavata*, the *Bhāgavata* twice and again *Rāmāyaṇa*, ending with *Yoga Vāsistha*. In this manner the uninterrupted reading of Sacred Scriptures was sustained day and night until August 25th by all present taking turns. At Kankhal the *Siva Purāna* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* were read in the day only.

On several days Brahmins in small numbers and beggars were fed and given presents at Kankhal. On August 20th, Mataji went to Rishikesh to grace with her presence feasts that were given to Sannyasis on behalf of Didima's *Mahāsamādhi* in Sri Sivananda Ashram and Kailash Ashram. On this occasion, Swami Sri Vishnudevananda, the aged Sannyāsaguru of Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati and also the Guru of Sri Swami Chetan Giri, met Mataji for the first time. He is the head of the Kailash Ashram. On August 23rd, which was the 16th day of

Didima's passing, a special celebration was held at the Kankhal Ashram. Uninterrupted *japa* was kept up all day in Didima's room upstairs and uninterrupted *kirtana* downstairs, Mataji herself singing several times and starting new tunes. Four *pūjās* were performed that day, namely of Narayana, Siva, Durga and Giriji (Didima). Another *pūjā* of Giriji was performed at 1-30 a. m. (the time of Didima's passing) in Giriji's room at Kankhal by a Brahmacharini who had come from Varanasi. Mataji and those who spent the night at Kankhal were present. In spite of acute scarcity of space and rain at intervals, food was served in leaf bowls at midday to all present and also distributed at Daksheshwar Temple.

On other days *Daridra Nārāyaṇa Bhojan* (feeding of the poor) was arranged at Harkipowri on a large scale. About one thousand poor were fed. The final and biggest *bhandārā* was held on August 25th at the "Nirvani Akhara" at Kankhal, which has been amalgamated with the Ashram of Sri Mangal Giri, Didima's *Sannyāsa Guru*. Five hundred *sannyāsīs* were given food and clothes and sixteen also special presents. Mataji attended, accompanied by a very large number of devotees who had arrived for the occasion from all over North India. At our Varanasi Ashram also two hundred *sannyāsīs* were entertained to a feast on behalf of Giriji and about three hundred poor were fed. There was *sādhu* feeding, on a smaller scale, *kirtan* and talks about Didima in most of our Ashrams. Giriji's disciples and devotees of their own wishes contributed generously to all these functions.

In between, *Jhulan* was celebrated at Ramghat every evening from 13th to 16th August in the customary manner. *Vigrahas* of Sri Krishna and Sri Radha were placed on a profusely decorated swing and Brahmachari Nirmalananda performed *pūjā* to the accompaniment of beautiful songs. Next to Mataji's seat there was a seat for Giriji with her garlanded picture. A large swing had also been prepared for Mataji's use, but she would not sit on it the first day. Afterwards Ma would place Didima's picture on it at the end of the function and then sit on the swing just for a second, so as to satisfy those who had taken much trouble over its decoration and were anxious to see it used by Mataji.

On *Jhulan Purnima* there was midnight meditation in the open courtyard. At 1 a. m. Mataji drove to Kankhal, as a function was held there the next early morning with *pūjā* and *havan*. It was August 17th,

the day of the *Rakshā bandhan* festival. Already from the evening before, people had started tying bracelets (*rākhīs*) round Mataji's wrist, receiving *rākhīs* from her in return. This continued almost all day long.

On August 24th, *Janmāstami* (Sri Krishna's birthday) was celebrated by a solemn midnight *pūjā* which started at 11-30 p. m. and continued for nearly two hours. At 1-30 a. m. another *pūjā* was performed in Giriji's room. The attendance was extremely large as people had arrived from everywhere for the *Pūrnāhuti* of the function held in honour of Didima, which was to be the next day.

On the 25th morning, *Nandotsava* (frolics of the *gopas* and *gopīs* after Sri Krishna's birth) was observed. Although Mataji was in a hurry to go to Nirvani Akhara for the *sannyāsi* feeding, she gave her full attention to this joyous festival. The men were singing *kīrtana*, dancing round *vigrahas* of Sri Krishna. Mataji joined in the singing and danced a few steps with the woman who was dressed up as a *gopi*. After a small vessel containing curds fell down and broke into pieces, as tradition demands, Mataji went out into the open courtyard in the pouring rain, surrounded by the whole crowd of devotees. Someone held a large bowl full of curds in front of her. With such swift and skilful movements Mataji threw curds into every one's open mouths and all over them that in a few minutes every single person had received his or her share. Mataji was in a great mood, full of joy and *bhāva*. She then entered Giriji's room, where the reading of scriptures (that had gone on for full 15 days without a break) was now brought to an end and *ārati* performed. When Mataji came out of the room, she moved like lightning among the throng of men and women, touching the head of every single person in blessing.

Mataji was to motor to Dehradun in the early afternoon after returning from "Nirvani Akhara", but it became late in the evening. On her way Mataji first went to Baghat House, Kharkhari, where the stepmother of the Raja of Solan was given *Ātur Sannyāsa** by Swami Hridayananda of Sivananda Ashram. Then Mataji went once more to Kankhal, reaching Kishenpur only at 10-30 p.m. Mataji was to board the train to Delhi from Dehradun on the 26th evening, but she had the *kheyāla* to return to Kankhal for some work that had been left undone. She therefore drove to Hardwar already at 2 p. m.

* *Ātur Sannyāsa* is given to people who are likely to pass away soon.

and got into the train from there. During the few hours spent at Dehradun a packed full hall of people had *darśana* in the morning. Mataji also visited Kalyanvan and then a devotee at Rajpur who, aged 95 and confined to bed, was pining to see Mataji once more in this life.

On August 27th, Mataji reached Delhi, leaving for Vrindaban on the 28th. A *Bhāgavata Saptah* was held there from September 1st to 8th. Mataji is expected to be in Gwalior for five or six days from the 9th. Swami Akhadanandaji is expounding the *Bhāgavata* there for a whole month. After Gwalior Mataji may spend a few quiet days at Solan and before the end of September go to Delhi in time for the *Navarātri* and *Durgā Pujā*. It has already been reported in the last issue that the Luxmi Puja as well as the Dewali and Annakut festivals also are scheduled to be held in our New Delhi Ashram in Mataji's presence. Soon after that she is likely to leave for Shuktal where the *Samyam Saptāh* will now commence from November 4th, and not from 6th as already announced.