



Ānanda Vārtā

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

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

Mātri Vāni

At the stage of the *sādhaka* there is progression towards a goal. But here, one cannot speak either of a stage or stagelessness, neither of a goal nor aimlessness. Just as when taking a torch into one's hand, every object in a dark room can be clearly seen one after another, it is exactly like this. But while still treading the path of the aspirant, it is not possible to perceive all those details. Many kinds of obstacles have to be overcome while advancing. There is an outer current and there is another one that leads within. But here, there is no question of this either. Here, the veins are myself, the nerves are myself, the movement is myself, and the witness of it all is also myself. Of course, the word "myself" is used only because some language has to be employed.

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Things appear natural or unnatural, normal or super-normal according to your angle of vision. Here, of course, Karma and desire (*vāsānā*) do not even exist. Here, all that can be said is : "Whatever happens is equally welcome."

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Ordinarily the movement of man's life proceeds on some basis—be it in the field of *sādhana* or in the realm of the world. To be embodied† means to want—to experience pleasure and pain. However, enjoyment and suffering are due to oneself. Moreover, if there is no sense of "I and

† A play upon words : *Deho* body and *deo* give !

mine" suffering and enjoyment cannot be experienced. "My house, my wife, my son, my enemy, my friend :" thus, the rhythm of life is based entirely on the sense of "I." The objective of the *sādhaka's* life is attainment. While treading the path one is not yet aware of it. Only he whom it has led to achievement can speak of the path. Then everything becomes illumined by one Light. In essence there is only ONE; the path, the goal—whatever one may speak of—nothing is anymore apart from oneself.

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Where Buddhahood (Enlightenment) is, there compassion will do its work even from Nirvāna. Just as you may take any amount of heat from fire, yet its power to burn will thereby not be diminished. In God, whom you conceive as complete and perfect, nothing can ever decrease. Depending on Himself alone, He is thus independent, free.

Sad Vāni

(Mataji's teachings as reported by "Bhaiji")

(Continued from the last issue)

31.

Each of the five fingers of the hand has its own peculiarity; each part of the body has its own function, high or low; the teeth may at times well bite the tongue; but since the whole of it is your own body you accept all its ways and take great pains to look after every part of it. In the same manner, try to regard as your own every person you contact. By making this a habit you will in due course come to feel that everyone in the universe is part of you. To abolish the distinction between 'I' and 'you' is the sole purpose of all spiritual endeavour.

32.

By degrees reduce all external diversions, such as going to see people and superficial conversation. Otherwise these will become obstacles on your way to God-realization. The One resides in the sanctuary of your heart; if your sight and hearing are turned outward, how can you become aware of His presence? Real worship is of the heart. Outer rites and ceremonies are only a small part of it. As a mother fondles her ailing baby in her lap, so have we in the initial stages of our *sādhana* to hug the Divine close to our breast as we would do with a sick infant. If at the time of prayer and meditation you are unable to calm yourself and to forget your worldly activities and cares, you will not get any real experience. Just as when listening at the telephone you focus your attention wholly on hearing, so also when you meditate must you

rally all your senses to one point in order to intensify your power of concentration.

33.

Man is the image of God. To be born in a human body is the highest type of birth. Nowhere in the world can be found such a wealth of hidden treasures as in the domain of the human mind. Like a pearl-diver one has to plunge into the inmost depths of one's being and be at work day and night in quest of those precious jewels. Kindle the inner flame and let it illumine your life and the world. This is the supreme purpose of human striving.

34.

To speak means to float on the surface†; unless the mind remains on the surface, words will not come. So long as one is immersed in the depths, there is not even the possibility to talk; but as soon as one comes up to the surface, speech will issue forth. This is why language cannot always fully express one's feelings and ideas. One can often hear people say : "I am unable to put into words what I feel." Does this not go to show how limited and imperfect human language is ? It cannot even convey the little you understand, how much less the enormous amount that lies beyond your ken ! Try to learn the science of using and understanding the hidden language of the heart and you will be able to accomplish everything without words.

35.

In whichever direction you may turn your gaze you will find One Eternal Indivisible Being manifested. Yet it is not at all easy to detect this Presence, because He interpenetrates everything. As a King is known by his

† In Bengali *bhaṣa* means language and *bhasa* to float.

majesty, as fire is known by its heat, so the Unmanifest reveals Himself through the world of manifestation. The analysis of the substance of all created things, if carried sufficiently far, will lead to the discovery that what remains is identical and equally present in all creatures : it is He, it is That, which is styled as Pure Consciousness (*chetana*). In the laboratories of universities and hospitals and in many other places all over the world, research of various kinds is being carried on and new theories are constantly evolved. If you carefully think over these, you will see that they only go to prove the existence of the One All-pervading Being. If in the midst of the diversity of the world of appearances you make a sustained effort to do all your work as a faithful servant of the Almighty Father of the Universe, love and devotion for Him will awaken in your heart. As the confining prison walls of the ego are broken down, you will become more and more persistent and wholehearted in your pursuit of Reality. Then all the manifold pictures you perceive will merge into one single picture and all your divergent moods and sentiments will be engulfed in the one great ocean of Bliss.

36.

In order to become pure white, one must make one's mind a blank or else lose oneself in the immensity of the All. Whiteness is the result of a complete reflecting of the combination of all colours; the form of the formless is white. In order to be snow-white one must be straight and simple. Endeavour to be as white as milk, both inwardly and outwardly, by abiding in the stronghold of truth and sincerity. Then, not only will you yourself be happy, but also become a source of happiness to all who contact you. Renunciation implies immaculate purity and sincerity. If you live in the world, yet are free from pride and selfishness, you will find that people will vie with one another in providing for all your needs. At the same time

your ideal way of working and your spirit of dedication will serve as an example wherever you may be. In these days of material pleasures and luxury, uprightness sanctified by renunciation is sorely needed. Perfect renunciation is in very truth perfect enjoyment.

37.

If you can make your life like a running stream that swiftly and steadily flows towards its goal without ever halting, not only will no impurity of any kind be able to accumulate within you, but even other people will be cleansed by your presence. Fire flares up high into the sky, yet there is a point beyond which the flame cannot retain its own nature and is converted into smoke. But the current of ceaselessly flowing water is so powerful that, undeterred by the trees and rocks without number which get in the way, rivers and streams traverse thousands of miles until they arrive at their final destination. If you want to attain to Truth, you must, as a river, keep on advancing indefatigably with great singleness of purpose.

38.

From every creature in the world something or other can be learned. In this sense everybody is everybody else's Guru. But the Supreme Guru is He who guides man on the path to Self-realization. When, as a result of meditation and *satsang* a person begins to yearn for God, He Himself appears to him embodied in the form of the Guru. A true disciple is one who by complete surrender at the Guru's feet comes to realise Who the Guru actually is. The disciple must devote himself to the service of the Guru and always obey His orders implicitly. The Guru's grace and benediction rains down on the head that bows low before Him. The more one-pointed and the humbler the disciple grows, the quicker will develop his capacity for progress.

Another word for son is "*ātmaja*," self-begotten. On the spiritual path, as soon as the relationship between Guru and disciple has become indissolvable, it is appropriate to call the disciple the real son, *ātmaja*, of the Guru.

39.

If you wish to become a chieftain you need along with your sword and shield the strength and capacity to use them. You clamour so insistently for self-government (*swarāj*). When you are inwardly ready for *swarāj*, you will have it. On a foundation of ethics and morality build up a life of religion and righteousness (*dharma jīvan*); keep God first and foremost in all your undertakings. In this way you will be filled with Divine Power (*Mahāśakti*), and then, who will be able to interfere with your independence? When you have no mastery over yourself, how can such a vast multitude of subjects be ruled? If you become monarch in the kingdom of the mind, earthly government will automatically fall into your hands. Truth in the world rests upon *dharma*. *Dharma* is the very life of the world.

40.

Medical students have first of all to make a detailed study of the bones, the skull and the different organs of the human body. This is done with the help of models which they dissect and investigate in various ways. Likewise, in order to learn the first steps of the science of spiritual life all kinds of practices and rites are necessary. The physical and mental discipline that these outer observances provide, usually serves as an aid to the inner Quest. In order to get to know what lies within, it will not do to ignore what is without; for behind the semblances of the world the Supreme has concealed Himself. This universe may also be called a reflection of the One who is ever

wakeful. Do not let the fleeting pleasures of the world entice you; endeavour to abide in Him, the Supreme Dweller of the heart.

41.

Many people say : "I do not like the clangour and agitation that are characteristic of *kirtana*. I prefer to sit quietly in a solitary place and meditate." As a matter of fact, if in solitude you can obtain communion with God, it is excellent. But watch and note carefully whether your mind is seeking God or wandering away among the perplexities of the world ? If you take no notice of the boisterousness of the *kirtana* but concentrate on God's Name; if you do not listen to the various tunes and to the rhythms of the drums and cymbals, but let yourself be wafted away at the final note of the music, you will become aware that a contemplative mood has spontaneously awakened in you. For the average person it is most important to raise the vibrations of his physical body in order to be able to penetrate into subtler levels of consciousness. Bring together your friends and relations whenever you can and unite with them in singing God's Name or His praises; or, if this is not possible, visit places where religious music is being performed. By chanting God's Name regularly and repeatedly, you will get into the right mood for *kirtana* and by engaging in *kirtana* you will become more and more disposed to practise *japa*, meditation and contemplation. To be effective, all worship must be carried out with faith and regularity; *kirtana* also should be practised in a similar attitude. It will be very good if those who take part can keep in tune and rhythm. Invoke the Presence of Him whose name you are chanting, otherwise it will be merely a musical pastime instead of *Nāmā Kirtana*.

42.

We do not know one another, He alone knows us all. Stand near a mountain and you will observe how earth,

rocks, trees, roots, creepers are interlaced in such a way as to give the impression that if one of them gets loose and falls off, the whole conglomeration will follow. But does this happen? The mountain to which they belong has hugged them all to its bosom and holds everything in its place. When an earthquake or a similar catastrophe shakes the mountain, no particle of it will remain unaffected. In the same way, though you may think you have built up and are holding together family, society, civilization and so forth, in actual fact He alone is the Great Preserver who controls the fabric of life. Hence to know Him is essential. To know Him means to know all and thus to be freed from the conflict of want.

43.

Merely to cry out : "Give me power, give me strength !" is not sufficient to make one grow strong. How numerous and varied are the devices and contrivances in a hospital for giving relief and encouragement to patients ! Yet, can the pangs of an inner disease ever be cured by outer expedients ? Relief must come from within and for this everyone has to depend largely on his own efforts. Live according to the precepts of the *Śāstras* and the sages; then, when the time is ripe, power and strength will develop from within. It is those who lack a sense of duty and firmness of character who look to others for help and energy. When you are able to manage all your worldly affairs on your own, why should you be in need of vigour just at the time of prayer or meditation ? With great faith and patience concentrate while engaging in spiritual exercises, and power will automatically awaken. However, should you feel quite unable to proceed, examine the causes for your incapacity and eradicate them with grim resolve. Otherwise you will only go on multiplying unnecessary obstructions within yourself and then expect some external power to come to

your rescue and take you in tow. Is such a thing possible? A great deal of energy is required by a horse or an engine to force the carriage wheels to revolve over an uneven track. Similarly, to wrench the mind away from its attachment to sense pleasures it has to be directed towards spiritual interests and preoccupations by a determined effort of will.

44.

First of all it is necessary to become familiar with Him whom you wish to invoke. Constantly think and talk of Him, look at His pictures, sing His praises or listen to sacred music, visit places of pilgrimage, seek solitude or associate with the Holy and Wise, so as to become acquainted with Him. When this has been achieved, you may call Him 'Father' or 'Mother.' Some relationship of this kind has to be established with Him, because people of the world do not feel affinity unless their bond is defined in such a manner. You are accustomed to ties of kinship in worldly life, this is why you have to bind yourself by some sort of relationship in the religious field as well. Even though at the start you may not feel deep devotion, learn to invoke Him unceasingly and with perseverance by repeating His name or by any other method, until gradually He will fill your heart. However, prayer, meditation, alms offered in His name, and so forth, are necessary even after the bond of love has been forged, so as to keep it unimpaired. In this way the awareness of Him will become second nature and never leave you to your last breath. This is what is termed communion with God.

45.

If someone says: "How will my people get along without me?" it only proves that his attachment to his

family is as strong as ever. Really speaking nobody is indispensable to another. It is simply not true that one can be at ease only when a certain person is by one's side and becomes reduced to helplessness without him or her. Where such a condition prevails, rather than uselessly appealing to others for support, one must through self-introspection discover the source of one's weakness and try to bring into play one's own inner strength. No one likes misery and suffering, but to work out for oneself a way of release from its grip does not seem to occur to people. From the cradle to the grave man lives his life in a most haphazard manner. For fear of the burden that a family represents many avoid marriage, but whether this brings them contentment is difficult to determine. In this imperfect world there is nothing that can give perfect peace. Therefore, throughout life's journey, it is absolutely imperative to seek shelter in Him alone. This should be man's sole ambition, his one supreme and ultimate goal.

(To be continued)

Mātri Kripā

Mother's Grace

SWAMI BHAGAVATANANDA GIRI

In this article I shall relate from my personal experience four incidents that seem to me striking illustrations of the working of Mataji's divine grace. Since I am writing from memory, I wish to beg forgiveness at Mataji's holy feet for any inaccuracy that may have crept in.

1.

In January, 1947, on the occasion of the Kumbh Mela, Dr. Pannalal had arranged a camp for Mataji & her devotees at Jamuna Patti near Triveni Sangam.* A lovely little straw hut had been provided for Mataji and a number of large tents for her party. The *Amāvasya* (new moon) of the month of Magh fell on January 22nd. Bathing at the Triveni is considered most auspicious and sanctifying on that day, and lakhs of people flocked from all over India to avail themselves of this unique opportunity. Two very large boats had been hired to take Mataji and her party to the Sangam. In the early morning Mataji and a few devotees occupied one boat and the rest, including myself, the other. Mataji said she would change over to our boat on the return journey. At Mataji's instruction the two boats were moving side by side towards the Triveni. A gentle breeze was blowing. The blue waters of the Jamuna were dancing in small ripples as if to welcome Mataji. An enormous crowd had assembled at the Triveni. It really was a most impressive and awe-inspiring sight. We all felt elated at the

* Triveni Sangam is the confluence of the three rivers Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati near Allahabad.

thought that we were going to have our bath in Mataji's company on that sacred day. Mataji's hair was gathered into a bun on top of her head. We felt as if Lord Siva Himself was in our midst. With deep seriousness Mataji let her benign gaze wander over the vast multitude. Our hearts were calm and filled with profound happiness.

All of a sudden Mataji's boat disappeared from our sight. We searched and searched but in vain. Amidst the cluster of countless boats it was not an easy task. In spite of this we continued tenaciously to look here and there and everywhere, but without any result. We felt sorely disappointed at our bad luck. Finally the only thing left to us was to console ourselves by saying : "Man proposes, God disposes." I had come with the keen desire of bathing at the Triveni in Mataji's presence on that special day. That hope seemed dashed to pieces. What could I do and where was I to go ? When all our efforts to find Mataji's boat proved futile we had no alternative left but to return to our camp. On arriving it occurred to us to walk about on the bank of the Jamuna. Lo and behold, within a few minutes we saw Ma's boat approaching. At the sight of Mataji our dismay changed into great joy, yet our minds were not free from sadness at the lost opportunity. As soon as the boat landed, Mataji asked everyone to get down so that the large boat became practically empty. Mataji herself remained sitting in her place. She said she had no *kheyāla* to go on shore. We were told that Mataji had not bathed. With her permission I stepped on the boat and sat down. Two or three others followed suit. Mataji did not say a word. For some time we all sat in silence gazing at Mataji. Finally she said : "Take the boat to the Sangam !" As we approached our destination, the police boat, which was controlling the traffic of the huge number of vessels, tried to stop us. Mataji said, "Let it pass !" To our astonishment the police at once cooperated. Our

boat was now placed by the side of a large boat as the water was deep enough there. Mataji immediately got up in order to bathe at the Sangam. She had no change of clothes with her, neither had we. We three men who had come with Mataji took off most of our clothes and jumped into the water. Catching hold of Mataji, we carefully guided her to the exact spot of the confluence of the Ganga with the Jamuna. Mataji took three dips. Thus I was able to bathe in the presence of Mataji, touching her holy feet. What a profound joy I felt after the dejection of a short while ago ! Our merciful Mother knows the secret aspirations of her children and will not let them go unfulfilled. Mataji wrapped her body into a silken shawl, the only dry cloth she had. Her hair was tied up on top of her head, drops of Triveni water trickling down from it. It was a wonderful sight—as if Lord Siva was standing in front of us. I offered flowers at Mataji's feet and also at the Sangam. Mataji then asked us to procure some milk and pour it into the current as an oblation.

So far we had been unaware of the mystery that lay behind this bathing episode. Gradually Mataji disclosed the secret. "As soon as I entered the Sangam," she said, "Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati appeared to me in the shape of three beautiful women and requested me to bathe in the Triveni. But at that time this body had no *kheyāla* to do so. This is why I remained on the boat when it cast anchor. Now the wish of the Devis has been fulfilled. When they came in human form, Jamunaji was dressed in a blue sari, Gangaji in a yellow one and Saraswatiji in a white one.'

2.

In December 1947, Mataji was touring in Gujrat. At the end of the month she stayed at her Ashram at Bhimpura near Chandod. A small retreat had been built in 1938 by Swami Akhandananda, Sri Gurupriya Devi's father. Later a hall and some other buildings had been added. The Ashram is situated on a hillock near the bank of the sacred river Narmada of which it is said that its very sight purifies. It is a beautiful, picturesque place. A small river called "Or" joins the Narmada not far from there. This confluence is supposed to be a specially auspicious place for religious bathing. However, the current of the Narmada is very powerful there and the Or is full of slippery sand. Therefore one has to take great care when entering the water.

One fine morning before sunrise, a friend of mine from Ahmedabad who had come for Mataji's *daršana*, a Swami from the Ramakrishna Mission and myself set out to bathe there. I said to my friend : "You bathe first while I shall guard your clothes. But beware, the current is treacherous and you do not know how to swim." No sooner had he stepped into the water than the current seized him within a second and impetuously carried him away. There seemed no way of escape. I was not a good swimmer while the Swami was a master in the art. However, in such turbulent waters swimming is impossible. Neither of us could have rescued him by leaping into the wild current. I began to scream for help, but there was no one near. I felt desperately upset. Could I look on while this young man was drowning? What was I to do? Now only God could help. I shouted loudly : "Ma, Ma, Ma, have mercy, save his life !" No sooner than the word 'Ma' had been pronounced, I saw to my great surprise and delight that my friend was coming back from the jaws of

death. How the current that had torn him away had been reversed and brought him back to us hale and hearty was more than I could understand. Just as when Gajrāj had prayed to Narayana when he realized that no earthly power could save him and God had heard his prayer, in a similar way Mataji in her divine mercy gave a new lease of life to my friend at the mere utterance of her name. There is a famous couplet by Surdas : "I have heard that Rama is the strength of the helpless. All power is vested in God's holy name."

On returning to the Ashram, I related the whole episode to Mataji. She said, "He had been destined to die to-day. God has saved his life."

3.

Since 1951, the celebration of the *Bhagavata Jayanti* every September, from the 9th day of *Bhadrapad Sukla* to the full moon, has become a regular feature of the Varanasi Ashram. It is said that during this period Sukdeva expounded the *Bhagavata* to King Parikshit in ancient times.

In 1954, the well-known Pandit Srinath Shastri of Vrindaban officiated at the *Bhagavata Jayanti*. For three days everything proceeded without a hitch. On the fourth day, the pandit unfortunately developed high fever. In spite of his precarious health, he continued both the Sanskrit reading in the morning and the Hindi explanation in the afternoon. After that he was unable to proceed, his energy was spent. Who was to continue the reading? The problem was discussed in Mataji's presence. Only one who has gone through a special rite at the beginning of the *Bhagavata Saptaha* is entitled to officiate as the reader. I was acting as the chief listener on this occasion and had therefore gone through the rite. At night Mataji called me. "Kanti, can you not take the pandit's place?" "Ma"

I replied, "so far I have never conducted a *Bhāgavata Saptaha*. But if you give the order, it will certainly be carried out. You are the doer, none else." Mataji said: "Very well. From to-morrow morning occupy the seat of the pandit and perform his work."

Until I had left home to join the Ashram, I did not even know what the *Srīmad Bhāgavata* was. I attended a *Bhāgavata Saptaha* for the first time in 1948 in Delhi in Mataji's presence. Besides my Sanskrit was not at all brilliant since I had taken science after my first year in college. To make matters worse I was suffering from a bad cold. In spite of all these handicaps I had complete faith that I would be successful, since the assignment had been given by Mataji. I felt I was only an instrument and Mataji the real actor behind the scene. Mataji is all-powerful and can make the dumb talk. She had entrusted this difficult task to an ignorant person like myself. I knew in my heart of hearts that Mataji would be with me all along and guide me. By her grace I was able to perform my duty to everybody's satisfaction.

At the end of the function, to my utter surprise, an old devotee of Mataji approached me and did obeisance to me again and again. I said: "What is the matter? Why are you doing *pranāma*?" "Kantibhai," he replied, "while you were sitting on the reader's *āsana* and expounding the *Bhāgavata*, I had a most extraordinary vision. I saw Mataji's head instead of yours. The body was no doubt yours, but the head was Mataji's and it was she who read."

When at the conclusion of the *Saptaha*, I fell at Mataji's feet, she said, "You have done very well. Now you have gained self-confidence that you can officiate at a *Bhāgavata Saptaha*." I said: "Ma, by your grace everything can be achieved." For Mataji, nothing is impossible. She is our very own, she is the real doer. This body of mine was merely a tool in her hand.

4.

Once a year a gathering called *Samyam Saptaha Mahavrata* is held by the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. A large number of devotees assemble from different parts of the country to participate in this concentrated week of *sādhana*, which includes collective meditation in Mataji's presence and discourses by well-known Mahatmas, besides *kirtana* and so forth.

In November, 1959, the *Samyam Mahavrata* took place in our Calcutta Ashram at Agarpara. Under Mataji's instruction, I was, as in previous years, in charge of the programme in the pandal. When the function started in the early morning on November 8th, I noticed that electric current was leaking from the microphone. I informed the technician and asked him to change the mike. He promised to do so. I took it for granted that the mike had been replaced when the evening gathering started. Sri Tripurari Chakravarti was to deliver a lecture on the Mahabharata but was unable to come due to indisposition. In his place Brahmachari Tapan (now Nirmalananda) talked for half an hour. After him the famous musician, Sri Dhananjaya Bhattacharya was to give a recital. I was about to introduce him. Touching the microphone in order to raise it, I received a powerful electric shock. I was unable to withdraw my hand. A sharp pain shot through my whole body. The current was strong enough to cause instantaneous death. But our compassionate Mataji was sitting on the dais. Death was powerless in her presence. A brilliant white light flashed in front of my eyes and I knew that my life had been saved by Mataji's divine mercy. I fell flat to the ground almost unconscious. To divert my attention from the shock and the severe pain and to cheer up the whole congregation, Mataji broke out into ringing laughter and all present joined in. Mataji said to me: "It is nothing. Forget all about it." But I felt quite dazed

and not at all in a mood to laugh. Mataji laughed again and said : "This reminds me of a very funny story. Shall I relate it? Pitaji, what do you say? It is awfully funny, really!" But I was lying motionless with my eyes shut. Mataji said : "Alas ! whom am I telling the story? Kanti is lying with closed eyes." I immediately opened my eyes and Mataji, fixing her gaze on me, started narrating the story, interrupting herself again and again by peals of laughter. She said : "At a wedding celebration a band was playing on their instruments. In the midst of their performance, an inexperienced drummer suddenly fell flat on his back with his drum. His colleagues felt greatly embarrassed and were at a loss how to save their faces. But the intelligent leader of the band had a brilliant idea : 'Oh my dear boy,' he exclaimed, 'this marriage is being performed at a minimum expense. Why are you starting to play '*chitrang*' here?' The owner of the house, who was a simpleton, thought to himself : "What a pity ! Had I spent a few rupees more, how wonderful the function would have been with *chitrang* added to it !" Laughing heartily Mataji said to me : 'O Baba, you also have shown us *chitrang* today.' The entire assembly was simply rocking with laughter. Mataji's fascinating joyousness acted as a healing balm on my piteous condition. Mataji made me lie down near her at the back of the stage and I was given some homoeopathic medicine. By Mataji's divine grace and compassion I had escaped from the clutches of death and very soon became quite fit again. The next morning, when I offered the usual garland and sandal paste to Mataji on her entering the pandal, she put the garland round my neck with great affection. "Your life has been saved !" With these words she placed both her hands on my head in blessing.

Jai Ma ! Jai Ma ! Jai, Jai Ma !

OM

Prayer to the Mother

Sidhoji Rao K. Shitole

1. **Come grace this temple shrine of mine divine Anandi Ma
Thou art the essence of my soul celestial flaming star !**
2. **O let me be absorbed in thee Anandamayi Ma
Never to stray in satan's way I pray Anandi Ma**
3. **Without a mother's grace no child on earth was ever blest
Inspirit me with thy love oh Ma for the eternal quest**
4. **The intake of my every breath I drink as Amrit of thy love
And let that nectar mix in every atom of my blood**
5. **In giving out my breath I sacrifice my all to thee
My health, my happiness, my *prāṇa*, all at thy lotus feet**
6. **Each heart beat I cry out for thee oh come to me my Ma
Forsake not this orphan soul it bleeds for thee oh Ma**
7. **Mother divine thy love is like the ocean infinite
Just give your child one drop I pray and fill me with thy light**
8. **Thou art the way the truth the light Anandi Ma divine
Take me to *Him* who is beyond causation space and time**
9. **That going there I may become one with Satchitananda
Whose light sublime of truth divine is loving Brahmananda.**

Hari Om Tat Sat Om

Hari Om Tat Sat Om

Ma Anandamayi : A New Power on this Earth

G. C. Das Gupta

[The following article was published first in 1946, in the book "Mother" by Devotees, which has not been available for years. The article is being reprinted here in memory of its author, Sri Ganga Charan Das Gupta who passed away in September 1970 at the age of 102. We mourn the loss of a very old and outstanding devotee of Mataji, a dear friend, loved and revered by all who knew him. He was a human being of great integrity as well as charm ; calm, serene, very broad-minded and ever ready to help and serve his fellow-beings without distinction of caste, class, religion or nationality. An educationist by profession—before retiring from active life he was Principal of the Teachers' Training College in Baroda—his great concern in life was how to improve the lot of the poverty-stricken millions of India and even more, how to affect a spiritual regeneration of all mankind. He felt convinced that Sri Anandamayi Ma's advent on this earth would give the powerful impetus that could counteract the materialistic outlook on life and bring about the spiritual revival he longed for.

He belonged to the same family as Bhajji, who entrusted to him the manuscripts of his books "Matri Darshan" and "Sad Vani" when leaving for Mount Kailash with Mataji and Bholanath in 1937. Sri Ganga Charan Das Gupta published those books in the original Bengali soon after Bhajji passed away on his return journey from his pilgrimage, and later translated and published them in English. An article by him "A Call from Above" appeared in the book "Mother As Seen By Her Devotees" and a few others in the first issues of "Ānanda Vārtā."

When Mataji paid a flying visit to Calcutta for a single day in April, 1969, she went to see the old man at his residence. This was his last physical *daršana* of Mataji.

May he remain steeped in bliss and peace !

—*M anaging Editor.*]

There is now chaos in the affairs of the world. Man faces a cataclysmic crisis. The foundations of human civilization are crumbling, threatening the entire culture and the very existence of man. Never was the need for a spiritual revival so urgent, the search for a life of truth and non-violence so desperate as now. The soul of man, struggling helplessly within the coils of his selfmade prison, craves most eagerly for light and deliverance. In this oppressive atmosphere of the world, laden with bitter feud and misery, Mother Anandamayi stands as a beacon-light to struggling humanity, holding out a message of hope and cheer, of eternal bliss and peace.

Before Mother Anandamayi our mind and intelligence retire baffled and overwhelmed. In her presence we feel like one standing at the foot of the mighty Himalayas with higher and higher peaks spreading out in endless panorama before our vision in their bewildering beauty and variety. Like the Himalayas too, Mother Anandamayi sends down from her great heights endless streams of love and purity that sustain and uplift a countless number of people on this earth.

Mother is herself the embodiment here below of the supreme *Mātri Śakti*. In her presence the young, the adult and the old, all feel the warmth of a Mother's love and affection, deep and boundless. There is the same loving kindness for all. Nobody feels slighted. On the contrary, everybody feels blessed, receiving her grace according to his capacity and need. The saintly people find in her words a glow of divine wisdom, while the worldly and the sinful feel an inner awakening for a higher life. In her company an urge to live a better life becomes insistent. A new enthusiasm seizes us and pulls us up from the dull routine of the transitory pleasures of our physical existence. One is struck with amazement when one finds Mother sitting for almost the whole day, calm, serene and ever smiling, amongst streams of men and women, boys and girls, amongst the old and the decrepit

and the sick, all eager to catch her glance, waiting for hours together in a mood of devotion and expectancy. The mysterious influence that radiates from her person can neither be explained by reason nor traced to any palpable source. But it is still there. We feel it in our hearts. It is a rapture to listen to the easy flow of her soft, soothing words, which, like the invisible rays of light, heal our hidden sores and brighten up the darkest corners of our hearts.

Like the rays of the sun too, her divine motherly love for the fallen, for the distressed and bereaved, descends always silently everywhere, down to the inmost depths of one's being, and transforms one anew, curing all the mental maladies that eat away one's vitals. With a mysterious divine presence she permeates every fibre of her children's hearts. There is no material, moral or spiritual rod, nor any national or international scale that we know of, to measure her greatness and grandeur, her sweetness and solemnity, her love and compassion for all created beings from the tiniest fly to the noblest of saints.

We hear of many incarnations of God in the persons of prophets and seers sent down by the Divine *Sakti* for the regeneration of the world; but Mother Anandamayi appears to be a unique phenomenon in the history of man. In her the intensely human and the essentially divine meet in perfect harmony. She has a radiant personality and serene self-assurance, the like of which cannot be found elsewhere. The beauty, joy and luster which her presence sheds all around are supremely divine. We get the impression that only a fraction of herself deals with human affairs while an immense reserve of power is held up in the background. She lives and moves about amongst all types and classes of men and women. Wherever she goes she brings illumination to the hearts and minds of men where no earthly light can penetrate. A merciful shower of bliss floods our parched-up souls when we happen to meet her, whether in a vast concourse or at a railway station or in an ashram. She does not go

into the house of any private individual; a temple or an ashram or a *dharmasāla* is always a welcome place for her temporary residence.

“This body belongs to all. Do God’s work according to what you think best,” was the message which she once transmitted to her children. She stands aloof and above all controversies and sectarianism with unruffled dignity and serenity as a symbol of unity, mutual love and trustfulness, all persons finding a common meeting-ground in and through her. The above message signifies an absolute dedication of her all for the good of humanity. She does not talk about politics or of any particular religion or social code. Her conversation directly bears on God, the primal source of all unity and power, love and devotion, sacrifice and selfless service, tolerance and goodwill for all created beings.

She advises that every man or woman, boy or girl, should set-up a relationship or link with the Creator by devoting five or ten minutes at a specified time every day to the meditation of God; and no worldly thought whatever must be allowed to creep in during that short interval. This short period is to be dedicated for life to God and spent in making the mind absolutely void for the play of the divine forces, so that the individual soul may be pulled up and find an outlet to plunge into the Infinite.

Generally in her Ashrams silence is observed for an hour or more, when there descends a spell of heavenly peace and tranquillity too deep for expression. One feels as if one’s self has become merged in that ecstatic calm. An atmosphere of mystic expansiveness then widens the horizon of our minds; we come to feel the pettiness and worthlessness of our daily squabbles and aimless pursuits. She symbolizes, at that time, oneness of all beings with the Supreme Mother, all the tiniest sparks of our life merging together for the time being into one holy flame of Mother’s body.

Whenever she talks she pours out a flood of sweetness upon all persons present. In her easy, penetrating but joyful way she explains, elaborates and discusses the highest and deepest problems of philosophy in such a simple and homely manner that it carries conviction for learned as well as ordinary men and women. Her mode of approach is direct, charming ; an inner glow accompanies all her words, which imparts to them wonderful force and vitality. The varied problems of everyday life as well as the subtle ones of the spiritual plane are all one to her. With a few plain words or simple suggestions she solves them to everybody's entire satisfaction.

All her activities are ever directed to the uplift of the human soul whose clouded vision is responsible for all the disasters of society. She enables all persons to pass through the trials and tribulations of worldly life with strength and determination, as well as through all the difficult, intricate paths of spiritual endeavour or *sādhana*. Sometimes her silence becomes more eloquent and effective than her words.

Those of us who have had the good fortune to come under the influence of her magnetic personality, have always felt that she is like "a star that dwelleth apart" from all the transitory toils and turmoils of earthly existence; yet she, with her natural composure and prophetic vision, points out clearly the course of action one should follow in life and impresses upon everybody the importance of the real good of all men—the realization of the divine *Ātman*. All that she does, says and suggests, converges upon the one focal point of all lives admirably expressed in the *Sruti* :

यस्यानुव्रित्तः प्रतिबुद्ध आत्माऽस्मिन् सन्देहो गहने प्रविष्टः ।
स विश्वकृत् स हि सर्वस्य कर्ता तस्य लोकाः स उ लोक एव ॥

"He who has realised the *Ātman* and has had a direct vision of It within the coils of his perishable body wherein its glory is shrouded by *māyā*, develops the power to recreate the world anew, he alone becomes the lord of all; all beings

appearing like his own selves, he himself becoming the soul of all."

All that Mother does from dawn to dusk, from dusk to dawn, proclaims the beauty and blissfulness of this highest state of existence as has been better described in the *Śruti* :

एषः ब्रह्मलोक एषोऽस्य परमा गतिरेषास्य परमा सम्पदेषास्य
परमो लोक एषोऽस्य परम आनन्द एतस्यैवानन्दस्यान्यानि
भूतानि मात्रामुपजीवन्ति ॥

"It is the state of the Brahman, the final goal of the *jīva*, his crowning glory, his surest place of repose, the state of his supreme beatitude (परमआनन्दः) of which the joys of the world are but the minutest drops; with these, ordinary mortals enjoy all the short-lived happiness of the brief cycle of their lives on this planet."

Mother is infinitely greater than all the marvellous powers and glories which we find revealed in her before our eyes. She represents the eternal Mother-power (*Mātri Śakti*) playing with the manifested universe with but a fragment of her limitless potentialities, whereas she herself pervades, enlivens and illuminates the eternal mystic regions of the Great Beyond, out of which myriads of worlds emerge into our vision, and in which they move about and into which they finally are dissolved. What has been said about the Supreme Father :

एतावानस्य महिमातो ज्यायांश्च पूरुषः ।

पादोऽस्य विश्वाभूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि ॥

can be applied to her with equal exactitude. We find her performing all the functions of an ordinary mortal in the most perfect manner and yet supremely detached from them all, like a drop of water on a lotus leaf ; but on occasions we find glimpses of her divinity in her words, looks, actions and manners. Her ways always evoke admiration and devotion to her Self. There are many phenomena associated with her which may be called miracles on account of their mystic and supernatural character.

A few instances may be of interest. On the 3rd of August 1944, the writer went to see Mother at Nawadwip, on receiving the news that she was very unwell. It was the day preceding the *Jhulan Purnima*. Mother was staying on the first floor of the premises attached to Govindaji's temple. When the writer arrived with two ladies it was about 11 p. m. There was one electric light on. Entering the room, we found Mother seated smiling, beaming with joy. Her whole body shone like a ball of dazzling light, making the electric bulb look almost pale and red. Such wonderful radiance from a human figure was beyond all our conception. Her body shone with such an intensely soothing light that the whole room appeared to be filled with some divine ethereal presence.

Subsequently, when Mother was asked what made her body look so bright that night, in spite of her serious physical illness, she softly said with her characteristic sweet smile : "Didn't you see how the many gods and goddesses in the temples of Navadvip were nicely dressed and illumined for the *Jhulan Purnima* celebrations ? Don't you think it proper that this body, too, should put forth some lustre and grace ?"

Next morning we all sat before Mother. *Prasāda* from Govindaji's temple was being distributed. A lady with a baby in her arms, came to see Mother who sat talking to the many men and women assembled there. On entering, the lady asked, "Who is the Mother here ?" One of us pointed her out. The following conversation ensued :

Question : People say you are Mother. Where are your sons and daughters ?

Mataji : Here, (pointing to her breast).

Question : Where is your husband ?

Mataji : Here (with the same gesture).

Question : Where are your parents ?

Mataji : (With a smile) Here within this heart.

Question : Your home ?

Mataji : (With the same gesture) Here !

The lady who was putting these questions looked completely puzzled, failing to comprehend what Mother said. Mother noticed it and in her usual soothing, convincing manner said, "Here in this body lie all things in the universe—father, mother, son and daughter—all created beings. From this One all have come into being. In the One all exist, all persist and finally merge."

From the above little episode it will be manifest that Mother symbolizes the universal *Matri Sakhti* with which the *Paramātma* works ; about whom the Risis of old said :

त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमानसि त्वं कुमार उत वा कुमारी ।

त्वं जीर्णो दण्डेन वञ्चसि त्वं जातो भवसि विश्वतोमुखः ।

अनादिपत्त्वं विभुत्वेन वर्त्तसे यतो जातानि भुवनानि विश्वा ॥

"Thou art man and woman, boy and maiden, and also the old and decrepit moving with the help of a stick with faltering steps. Thou dost appear to be born into this world, assuming endless forms.. Thou art without a beginning and dost pervade the universe. From Thee all the worlds have sprung into existence."

Mother stands on a plane far higher and more intangible than the physical, far deeper and more subtle than the mental, with a heart overflowing with love for all mortal beings and ever working in inscrutable ways for the ultimate human good. In her presence an atmosphere of purity and joy, of aspiration for a higher life and of an upsurge of man's nobler and deeper sentiments prevails. Her wispers are far more powerful than the sharp whips of kingly power to reclaim a lost soul. Her silent inspirations compel us to strive for a nobler and happier life. The elusiveness of the chase heightens our ardour until the search becomes part of our life and a religion.

When Mother sings a song, whether in Bengali, Hindi or Sanskrit, the sweetness and solemn purity of the melody, the depth of feeling and the world of suggestion called up, all these combine to affect the hearers in a strange and profound manner so that it often remains an unforgettable memory in the mind. She always insists on devotional songs of the *kirtana* type being sung, in which, as she says, the hearts of living beings, the souls of departed saints and invisible powers of the air, all join.

Divinity, according to her, is the salt and essence of life. To realise it in order to improve the quality of our lives, we must fill our hearts with noble truths and love and faith. The only faith that ennobles and transforms our being must grow from our sincere love and devotion for Mother and her message. We should remember :

श्रद्धया देवो देवत्वमश्नुते श्रद्धा प्रति लोकस्य देवी ।
कामवत्सा अमृतं दुहाना श्रद्धा देवी प्रथमजा ऋतस्य ॥

To understand her ways, to obtain her blessings to work out our own destiny, the first and foremost requisite is *sraddha* (faith) the first offspring of truth that enables gods to taste the fruits of immortality, that lay the foundation of this universe. From *sraddha* flow all the highest, purest and noblest treasures of life



Environment-Objects and Circumstances*

A grave mistake that many *sādhakas* make is to think that the environment in which they happen to be placed is an obstacle to their *sādhana*. Circumstances and objects only appear to be relatively good or bad; in reality all of them are basically imperfect. They do *not* constitute his life, but are only tools of his *sādhana*. The law of Nature is only composed of love and justice. It is the supreme friend, philosopher and guide to man. The pleasure or pain which is experienced by man is not a final reward or punishment by Nature. The proper use of both pain and pleasure makes for progress. The *sādhaka* should neither regard his circumstances as his masters nor as his foes, but only as his instruments. Circumstances and objects sting only those who enjoy them; they become servants of those who utilize them, such as they are, in the service of God. The thoughtless man indulges in the enjoyment of pleasure and smarts under the fear of pain. The devotee or the seeker, instead of indulging in pleasures, distributes them in the service of others, while he learns the lesson of renunciation from pain. The man attached to the body and the world, even if he renounces something, does so to gain better things and circumstances thereby. But just as $\frac{3}{4}$ remains $\frac{3}{4}$ even if raised to $\frac{75}{100}$, even so no multiplication of things gives him true happiness or peace; they only consume man the more in the fire either of pride or of want. Non-identification with objects and circumstances alone helps man to rise above them. The true *sādhaka*, instead

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

of trying to alter circumstances and objects, always seeks to rise above them. Thus, by the right use of objects and circumstances—service of others through what appears pleasant and good, and renunciation of what appears bad and painful—the *sādhaka* marches forward to the same goal as the *jigyāsu** attains through deep thought, the yogi through yoga and the devotee through devotion.

The *sādhaka* who wants God must sever his illusory relations with objects and circumstances. The slave of objects and circumstances can never be a lover of God and a lover of God can never be a slave of objects and circumstances.

One can never rise above objects and circumstances by merely coveting to transform them into better objects and better circumstances. One can only rise above them by proper use of them, such as they are, in the service of God.

Objects and circumstances are only bubbles on the ocean of life. To regard them as life is the height of indiscrimination.

The right use of pleasure is service and the right use of pain is detachment or renunciation. The right use of objects and circumstances is the starting-point of *sādhana*. That can only come when the *sādhaka* realizes that pleasure and pain—which are all that objects and circumstances can give—are only the tools of his *sādhana* and have nothing to do with real life. Pleasure and pain are things of the animal world. Man is born to rise above them to Life Eternal.

The discharge of one's duties is not dependent on favourable circumstances. The test of dutifulness is that it is unaffected by unfavourable circumstances. For

* Seeker of truth on the path of enquiry.

example, any husband would love a beautiful wife, and any woman a husband endowed with wealth and health; but love and duty would vindicate themselves in spite of the lack of these things.

The right use of favourable circumstances is to make ourselves generous to all, and the right use of unfavourable circumstances is to awaken ourselves to the illusoriness of the same, leading to true renunciation.

The Power that looks after the whole Universe is surely looking after the *sādhaka* also, and giving him all necessary material for *sādhana*. We have only to take everything given to us as a means or tool of *sādhana*. The *sādhaka* must not waste his breath or time in quarrelling about the tools of his work.

The intellect should be utilized in the quest of Truth, instead of in endless argumentations. Power should be used to relieve the suffering of others, rather than in self-indulgence. Time should be utilized in contemplation of the Divine, instead of day-dreaming in search of fleeting pleasures.

To evaluate oneself on the basis of one's circumstances and environment is a false standard, for circumstances and environment are tools of *sādhana* and do not constitute one's life.

Unfavourable circumstances may be an obstacle to self-indulgence, but they are never an obstacle in the way of yoga. If worldly objects were to give peace of mind, we have only to check up how many people who have lots of things and possessions really enjoy peace.

Objects and circumstances can never be favourable in all respects under the Divine plan. For if they were favourable in all respects, it would lead to the inertness of

man, since the fulfilment of the *sankalpas** would then remain his sole aim; for which the value would remain only of objects and things, not of the man; of matter, not of the spirit.

The *sādhaka* should remember two things. First, that he should do whatever he can do and not worry about what he cannot do; second, that he must never rest contented without doing what he can do. The darkest hour of the *sādhaka's* life is one in which he does not do what he can do, and has not the 'divine discontent' for doing what he can do.

The Divine always gives power and strength to a *sādhaka* who makes proper use of the power and strength already given to him. However powerless we might be, when we dedicate ourselves to righteous performance of duty, power will flow into us, things will come to us. If we do not get more power and more things it is because we have not utilized properly what is given to us. The Lord of power is always looking out for those who make right use of the power given to them, to give more and more power. Divine Grace descends even on a man who, laden with sorrow for not doing what he can, surrenders himself to Grace.

A wonderful feature of *sādhana* is that, whether the *sādhana* be based on the tiniest power and strength of the *sādhaka*, or on ample power and strength, the result is the same. Divine Grace is not to the measure of the magnitude or the amplitude of the *sādhana*, but of the single-mindedness of the *sādhaka*.

Renunciation of thought about unattained objects and circumstances leads to the proper use of the existing objects and circumstances.

* Resolutions, projections of the mind.

No circumstances can be perfect; and since everything is in a perpetual state of flux, no circumstances can yield to permanent possession by anyone. Therefore, circumstances can only be a means of *sādhana*; they are never one's life. To regard them as life is like building castles on ever-shifting sand. The right use of circumstances enables one to rise above the realm of the objective world to deeper and truer levels of consciousness: self-realization, awareness, life divine.

Innumerable problems beset the realm of the objective world, which is the realm of the mind. They can never be solved on that plane, or by the mind. They can only be dissolved by rising above that plane, and by *viveka*: the supra-mental light that illumines the mind. Indulgence in the world of objects for their own sake only involves us in their whirlpool, nourishes the ego, entangles us in the vicious circle of *sankalpa** and *vikalpa*,* with the result of an unbreaking chain of pleasure and pain !

As the seed, the tree and the fruit are one in their substratum, but different in their manifestation, so the actor, the action and the fruit of action are one in substratum but different in their manifestation. The right use of objects and circumstances elevates the doer into the *sādhaka*, action into *sādhana* and the fruit of action into *sādhya*.† The same unity in substratum which exists in the actor, the action and the fruit of action, exists in the *sādhaka*, the *sādhana* and the *sādhya*; the lover, love and the Beloved; the seeker, the quest and Knowledge; the server, service and the served.

* *Sankalpa* and *vikalpa* — Projections of the mind and distraction.

† *Sādhya* — Goal.

Sacred Places of Kashmir, Jammu & Ladhak

A Devotee

UTTAR BAHANI

नमः शिवाय शान्ताय [कारणत्रयहेतवे ।
निवेदयामि चात्मानं त्वं गति परमेश्वर ॥

[I bow in reverence to Siva (Beneficial), who is an embodiment of peace and the root of the three causes. O Supreme God ! I offer myself to Thee. Thou art my refuge.]

Uttarbahani is a village situated at a distance of about thirty-seven kilometers east of Jammu town. It is so named because there is a sacred stream in the village which flows north-ward, a phenomenon regarded as very sacred.

There are two noted temples in Uttarbahani, both gilt-domed. One of the temples is dedicated to Siva and the other to Radha-Krishna.

नायकानां शिरोरत्नं कृष्णस्तु भगवान् स्वयम् ।
यत्र नित्यतया सर्वे विराजन्ते महागुणाः ॥
देवी कृष्णमयी प्रोक्ता राधिकाः परदेवत ।
सर्वलक्ष्मीमयी सर्वकान्तिः सम्मोहिनी परा ॥*

[Krishna, the jewel among all heroes is God Himself. In Him rest all the great qualities which never diminish. Rādhikā, who is steeped in the love for Krishna, is the Supreme Goddess. She is possessed of all beautiful qualities, all glorious colours and she is the most charming.]

VERI NAG

उदयद्वैतस्तनिःष्यन्द दण्डकुण्डातपत्रिणा ।
यत्सर्वनागाधीशेन नीलेन परिपाल्यते ॥
गुहीन्मुखी नागमुखावीतभूरिपथा रुचिम् ।
गौरी यत्र वितस्तात्वं यातापुञ्जति नोचिताम् ॥**

* Verses from Bhaktirasamritasindhu.

** The Rājatarangini, first Taranga, verses 28-29.

[It is the territory under the protection of Nila, the lord of all Nagas, whose parasol is Nila Kunda (Veri Nāg) with the flowing waters of the Vitastā for its staff. It is the place where Parvati, who adores Guha and whose copious milk is drunk by the elephant-faced Ganesha, although she had converted herself into Vitastā, who turns her face towards low-lying land and whose abundant waters are drunk in mouthfuls by the Nāgas, does not abandon her natural impulse.]

Veri Nāg is a famous spring situated at a distance of about twenty-seven kilometers south-south-east of Ananta Nāg in Kashmir. It is nearly eighty-five kilometers from Srinagar by road. The spring, which rises in an octagonal stone reservoir, is located at the foot of a spur and in the midst of a beautiful garden. The basin and arcade surrounding it were constructed by the Moghul emperors Jehangir and Shahjahan. The spring is regarded as very sacred. It is at the foot of the Banihal mountain ranges near the source of the Vitastā.

According to the Nilamata Purāna the Goddess Parvati manifested herself as the river Vitastā in Kashmir in order to save the land from the Pishāchas (a type of evil spirits). She wanted to issue forth from this place but on coming to the spot she found her spouse Lord Siva there. She thus left and took her rise from Vithavātur (ancient Vitastātra) which is about two kilometers north-west of Veri Nāg. Since she got separated from Siva at this place, the lake is called Viraha* Nāg, of which Veri Nāg is a corruption.

Another name of Veri Nāg is Nila Kunda because the great Nāga called Nila dwelt in the lake. It is said that the Nilamata Purāna which is the ancient sacred scripture of Kashmir, was found floating on the waters of Veri Nāg. (The Sanskrit word 'Nilamata' means 'the doctrine of Nila').

* Viraha (विरह) is a Sanskrit word which means separation.

Nilā Nāga is one of the famous Nāgas who were born as sons of the great sage Kashyapa and his wife Kadru. Nilā is the thirteenth of the Nāgas beginning from the first called Shesha. The names of the first nineteen Nāgas are quoted below from the Mahābharata :

शेषः प्रथमतो जातो वासुकिस्तदनन्तरम् ।
 ऐरावतस्तक्षकश्च कर्कोटकधनञ्जयी ॥
 कालियो मणिनागश्च नागश्चापूरणस्तथा ।
 नागस्तथा पिञ्जरक एलापत्रोऽथ वामानः ॥
 नीलानीली तथा नागो कल्मषशबलो तथा ।
 आर्यकश्योपकश्चैव नागः कलशपोतकः ॥*

[First Shesha was born. Thereafter were born Vāsuki, Airāvata, Takshaka, Karkotaka, Dhananjaya, Kāliya, Manināga, Apurana, Pinjaraka, Elāpatra, Vāmana, Nilā, Anila, Kalmasha, Shavala, Aryaka, Ugraka and Kalashapotaka.]

At Vithavātur there is a spring sacred to Pārvati. It is said to be source of the river Vitastā. Its ancient name, as already stated, is Vitastātra.

The following verses of the Nilamata tell about the glory of the Goddess, the river Vitastā and its source :

हरस्य दयिता भार्या सती दाक्षायणी शुभा ।
 संवोमा कथिता राजन् प्राप्ते वैवस्वतेऽन्तरे ॥
 हिमाद्रितनया संव यमुना पापनाशिनी ।
 मनवन्तरान्ते संवोक्ता नौर्गिरिष्ठ जगतत्र्ये ॥
 कश्मीरा कथिता देवी वितस्ता संव निम्नगा ।
 पातालादुचिथता देवी शुलचटात्तरङ्गिनी ॥**

[Sati, the daughter of Daksha and wife of Hara (Śiva) was beneficial to mankind. After the lapse of the period of Vaivaswata Manu she became known as Umā, the daughter of the Himalayas, and as Yamunā, the destroyer of all sins.

* The Mahabharata, Adiparva, Chapter 35, verses 5-7.

** The Nilamata, verses 1369-1371.

After the reigning period of the next Manu she became the the greatest boat in the three worlds. She, flowing downward, is known by the name of Vitastā in Kashmir. The goddess, full of waves, took rise from below the earth from the spear-thrust (shulaghatya).]

Nilamata tells about the efficacy of visiting these sacred places in the following verse :

नीलकुण्डं वितस्ताख्यं शुलघटयं तथैव च ।
तीर्थं त्रिनामकं दृष्ट्वा स्वर्गलोके महीयते ॥*

[By seeing the sacred places called Nila Kunda, the Vitastā and Shulaghatya one glorifies in heaven.]

Near Vithavātur there are a group of seven springs called Saptarshi, close to one another. They are sacred to the seven sages, namely Marichi, Atri, Angirā, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vashishtha. These seven sages are also identified with the seven stars (the Great Bear) in the sky. The springs remain dry in the winter season.

PAWANA SANDHYA

At a distance of about eight kilometers east of Veri Nāg there is a sacred spring called Pawanasandhyā. It ebbs and flows continuously just like a living creature inhales and exhales air.

A religious fair is held in this place on the new moon of the month of Bhādra (August-September).

RUDRA SANDHYA

At a distance of about ten kilometers west of Veri Nāg there is a sacred spring called Rudra Sandhya. It is dry during almost the whole of the year but has water continuously for some days at intervals in the months of Baishakh and Jyaishtha (April-May). The spring is sacred to Rudra.

तत्पुरुषाय विदमहे महादेवाय धीमहि ।
तन्तो रुद्रः प्रचोदयात् ॥*

[We comprehend and meditate on the Supreme Being, the great God Mahadeva. May that Rudra impel us to do so.]

* The Nilamata, verse 1288.

TRISANDHYA (SUNDBRAR)

सन्ध्यादेवी जलं यस्मिन्दत्ते निः सलिले गिरौ ।

दर्शनं पुण्यपापानामन्वयव्यतिरेकयोः ॥†

(There the goddess Sandhya produces water on an arid hill-side which serves as an indication of the presence of merit and the absence of sin.)

The modern name of Trisandhyā is Sundbrar. It is an ebbing and flowing spring situated in a village of the same name lying south of Devalgam in Bring Pargana. It is about sixteen kilometers east as the crow flies from Banihal and is about three kilometers up the right side of a narrow defile which opens into the Bring Valley towards its southern extremity.

The sacred spring is regarded as a manifestation of the goddess Sandhyā. It oozes out its water in a small basin about eight feet deep and about ten feet wide, with steps on one side for descending into the holy waters. It flows intermittently in the months of *Jyaishta* and *Āṣāḍ* (May to July) three times during the day and three times during the night, and has, on account of this phenomenon, an analogy with the three-fold recitation of the sacred words of the Gāyatri mantra. The pilgrims visit this sacred spring in the month of *Har* (*Āṣāḍ*) in order to see the spring appear and rise. They fill their vessels with the holy water, they bathe in it and drink it.

The origin and miraculous powers of this sacred spring have been narrated in the *Trisandhyā Mahātmya* (the book describing the glory of Trisandhyā). It is said that the miracle does not show itself before any wicked person, as indicated in the verse quoted from the *Rājatarangini* at the beginning. The *Nilamata* tells about this spring in the following verse :

सन्ध्यादेवी नदी पुण्या यस्यां स्नातस्य मानव ।

न्यपयति कल्मशं देहात् स्वर्गलोकं च गच्छति ॥*

[The water of Sandhyādevi is holy. He, who bathes in the sacred waters of Sandhyādevi, becomes glorious. All sins are removed from him and he goes to heaven].

† *Rājatarangini*, first Taranga, verse 33. Translation by M. A. Stain.

* The *Nilamata*, verse 128.

Mātri Līlā

(September 1st—December 15th, 1970)

We already mentioned in the last issue that Mataji stayed in Vrindaban from August 28th to September 9th. A *Bhāgavata Saptāh* was held there from September 1st to 8th. Apart from this function, *akhaṇḍa japa** was kept up day and night, although there were hardly enough people to take part. The girls of our Ashram were asked to choose one hour each during the night which should be reserved for *japa* also in future as a regular practice. Visitors kept on arriving from Delhi almost daily for Mataji's *darśana*. One day Mataji went to see the *Rāsālīla* at the Uriababa Ashram.

Following an invitation of H. H. Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia, Mataji motored to Gwalior on September 9th. There she attended for a few days a *Bhāgavata Pārāyana* by Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati, which took place in the hall of Sri Satyanarayana Mandir. Mataji was present daily for three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon. One day a public reception was given to Mataji and to Swami Akhandanandaji at the Chamber of Commerce Building. The hall was packed to overflowing. Swami Akhandanandaji and a judge gave discourses, while Mataji said two or three sentences only. She, however, sang kirtana for over half an hour. The *Bhāgavata Paksha* having been completed on the 14th, Mataji left for Solan the next day via Delhi where she halted at the railway station for two hours, reaching her destination on the 16th morning.

* Uninterrupted repetition of God's names by turns.

At Solan she had a really restful time, such as she had not known for years. She had brought only a very few companions with her. The people of Solan were asked to come for Mataji's *darśana* in the evenings only, when satsang was held for about one and a half hours. Local devotees recited from the Ramayana and performed kirtana. Many came from considerable distances, since Mataji had not been to Solan for several years. Most of the day Mataji spent quietly, except for dictating a few letters and attending to special visitors off and on.

This short and sweet interlude changed abruptly into intense and concentrated activity as soon as Mataji reached Delhi on September 24th morning. Preparations for the forthcoming Durga Puja were in full swing. The celebrations of Durga Puja (7th to 10th of October), Lakshmi Puja (14th of October) and Kali Puja (29th of October) were of a rare and overwhelming magnitude and solemnity. The divine presence was overwhelming. Everything connected with those festivals was carried out well nigh to perfection. Mataji remarked : "Such a *pūjā* we have never had before and are not likely to experience ever again." There is a Committee in Delhi that distributes prizes for the best Durga Puja every year. Our Ashram was awarded the first prize for the beauty of the image as well as for the quality of the worship. The prize consisted of a fine bronze statue of Nataraja, the dancing Siva. Someone exclaimed : "Lord Siva was so pleased with the intensity of the worship of his consort and His whole family that He came in person to take His permanent abode in our Ashram." Everything was done on a large scale. On *Ashtami*, *Naomi* and *Daśami*, every single person who came for *darśana* was asked to sit down and partake of the *bhoga prasada*. In this manner, about five hundred people were entertained to a meal on each of the three days. An enormous pandal had been erected for the congregation in front of the

Panchavati which served as the sanctuary. There was extremely lovely music throughout, performed mostly by Kumaris Chhabi Banerji and Puspa and Brahmachari Brahmananda. Moreover, concert was given by Radio artists, both vocal and instrumental, and a Bengali party sang 'Kali Kirtana'. The climax was, as usual, provided by Mataji herself who sang with great *bhāva* on *Naomi* day after the *bhoga āratī* and even more so on *Vijaya Dasami* day after the symbolic immersion.

Every day before the *pūjā* began, *satsang* was held. It was our good fortune that we had inspiring speakers : Sri Chaitanya Giri Maharaj, Sri Swami Vishnu Ashramji, Sri Avadhutaji and others. One afternoon *Rāma Līlā* was performed by Sri Avadhutaji's party. Every evening Professor Tripurari Chakravarti talked about the Valmiki Ramayana in his unique way, speaking Bengali, Hindi, Sanskrit and English alternately.

The number of guests from all over India was very large. They were accommodated in a school of the neighbourhood and in tents in the Ashram compound. The attendance of the citizens of Delhi and New Delhi was greater than ever.

It goes without saying that many Government officials took this opportunity of meeting Mataji. The Prime Minister, Sm. Indira Gandhi came twice, once in the beginning of Mataji's sojourn and then on *Ashtami* day during the *pūjā*. Mataji was in the *Fūja Mandap* and the door was closed. As soon as it opened, Mataji with a sweeping gesture presented a profusion of flowers and a special garland to Sm. Indira, who was sitting right in front. The Vice-President of India, Sri G. S. Pathak and his family were regular visitors all along. Among other dignitaries who came for Mataji's *darśana* were the Congress(0) President Sri Nijalingappa, Acharya Kripalini

and Sm. Sucheta Kripalini, Sri Gulzari Lal Nanda, Dr. Triguna Sen, Sri K. K. Shah. Also the Rajmata of Gwalior, the Rajmata and Maharaja of Baroda, Maharaja Karan Singh of Kashmir, the Maharaja of Bhavnagar, the Rani of Mandi, the Maharaj Kumar of Karauli. On October 3rd six judges of the High Court and their wives had an interview with Mataji, asking philosophical questions. They were meeting Mataji for the first time and were deeply impressed by her terse, pithy and witty replies.

On October 4th, Mataji and her whole party followed an invitation to Dalmia House where *satsang* was held in the morning. On October 11th a feast was given to sweepers and poor people and clothes were distributed to them. The entire police force present was also entertained to a sumptuous meal and Mataji herself distributed fruits to them. On the last day of Mataji's stay, October 15th, she called the children of the neighbouring Chandralok colony and taught them to sing "Sri Ram, jai Ram, jai, jai Ram" and then presented a length of cloth to each child.

That night Mataji left for Hoshiarpur, where she alighted on October 16th morning and remained for three days at the Satchidananda Ashram. The devotees of Sri Haribabaji Maharaj had clamoured for Mataji's presence at Hoshiarpur ever since Sri Haribabaji left his body and Mataji had agreed to spend a few days in their midst as soon as her crowded programme would permit. Sri Haribabaji's disciples were overjoyed to welcome Mataji in their town. For the first time since their Guru had left this world they felt really happy and at ease. It was as if he had returned to them in Mataji. They were greatly comforted and prayed to Mataji to receive them in her fold and to grace Hoshiarpur with her presence at least once every year. On October 19th Mataji motored to Jullundur

and spent the day at the Savitri Devi Ashram, which for many years has been and is running a Girls' School in Mataji's name. At night she left for Delhi, where she paid a visit to our Ashram on October 20th early morning for one hour only, mainly because Gurupriya Devi was ill and confined to bed. During that short hour the famous singer Sm. M. S. Subbalakshmi had a private talk with Mataji and also sang to her. Mataji then motored to Vrindaban. Some devotees had arranged for the recitation of hundred Durga Sapta Satis there.

On October 26th Mataji returned to New Delhi where *Kali Pūjā* was celebrated during Divali night, October 29th. *Kali Kirtana* was sung all night by a special Bengali *Kirtana* party and the puja was extremely solemn and awe-inspiring. On the 31st Annakuta, the festival of the Goddess of Plenty Annapurna, was performed in the usual style. Mataji also presented sweaters to a number of poor children.

On November 1st, evening, Mataji motored to Suktal to be present at the 21st *Samyam Mahāvratā*, which was observed from November 4th to 10th. Suktal is a village with not more than 500 or 600 inhabitants, situated near the Ganges, about 18 miles from Muzaffarnagar, the nearest railway station and market. It is said to be the spot where Sri Sukdev related the whole of the Srimad Bhagavata to King Parikshit in ancient times and is therefore a specially hallowed place and a place of pilgrimage with a beautiful Sukdeva Mandir on the top of a hillock. Every Kartik full moon a huge mela is held on the banks of the Ganges and villagers flock in their thousands in bullock carts and buses. Since it was *Kartik Purnima* two days after the completion of our gathering, pilgrims started arriving during the last three or four days of our *Saptaha* and *salsang* with loudspeakers was held all over Suktal. In 1961, our twelfth *Samyam Mahāvratā* had also taken place at Suktal, but on a different site.

The general programme of the Samyam Vrata is always more or less similar; yet every one of these yearly functions has had its special distinctive features. This was the first time that a Mahatma had invited us to hold our gathering in his Ashram and had himself seen to all arrangements. Sri Dandi Swami Vishnu Ashram Maharaj is well known to all *Vratīs* by his wonderful, inspiring talks, and is greatly revered and loved for his serene and benevolent presence. He made elaborate preparations for the occasion. Arrangements were excellent in all respects. He gave his own rooms to Mataji, himself occupying a thatched hut prepared for the purpose. A beautiful spacious hall had been newly built, almost adjoining Mataji's rooms. It was opened in Mataji's presence on November 3rd morning and *satsang* held immediately after, while the customary preliminary meeting on the eve of the Samyam Vrata took place there in the evening. Several Ashram buildings, guest houses and *dharmaśālas* were put at our disposal, besides a considerable number of tents, all in the close vicinity, so that every *vrati* could be comfortable and near enough to attend even the *Usha Kirtana* at 5-30 a. m.

The year 1970 has deprived us of the physical presence of Sri Haribabaji, Sri Maheshwaranandaji and Sri Didima, an irreparable and grave loss to all of us. Yet, the number of Mahatmas that graced our gathering with their presence was larger than ever before. Almost every one of the Mahatmas who every year delight us by their inspiring talks had come. Every morning we sat glued to the spot, listening spell-bound to the lectures on Upanishads delivered by Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati the first few days and by Mahamandaleshwara Sri Chaitanya Giri the following three days. Not only Sri Swami Vishnu Ashram, Sri Sharananandaji, Sri Govinda Prakashji of the Ramatirth ashram, Sri Chakarpaniji and others held our undivided

attention by their talks, we were also fortunate to listen to three excellent new speakers, namely Swami Brahmananda, the successor of Sri Maheshwarananda, Swami Bhumananda of Hardwar and Swami Dharmananda of Paramartha Niketan, Rishikesh. All of them were praising the quality of our concentrated week of *sadhāna* and we hope to listen to them again on future occasions. Swami Chinmoyananda of Bombay came for one day only and gave a very short talk in English. There was beautiful music every day and Mataji herself led the Kirtana two or three times.

On November 11th everybody dispersed. Mataji left for Delhi from where she proceeded to Kanpur the next night, arriving there on the 13th morning. A *Bhāgavata Parāyana* by Swami Akhandananda Saraswati, such as we had witnessed at Naimisharanya in December 1968 and at Varanasi in February-March 1970, was held in Kanpur from November 15th to 29th, at the invitation of Sir Padmapat Singhania in a pandal of impressive size erected on an extensive lawn near the exquisitely beautiful Radha Krishna Temple. We have on former occasions reported about the fine Ashram that had been built in the close vicinity for the use of Mataji and her party. At the special request of Sir and Lady Singhania and their sons, Mataji had consented to be present for the entire function. Day after day, she sat on the dais on her elevated seat from 8-30 to 11 a. m. and from 3-30 to 6 p. m. surrounded by Mahatmas, with our hosts sitting at her feet, while Swami Akhandanandaji, occupying a decorated couch in the centre of the platform, expounded the *Bhāgavata* to the vast congregation which not only filled the pandal but often spread out on the lawn. The loudspeakers were excellent and everyone listened in pindrop silence to the Swami's brilliant and enlightening discourses and to the soul-stirring bhajans before and after each session. Many guests had flocked from all over India and with a rare spirit of selfless service

the whole of the Singhania family assisted by their efficient staff, were busy taking care of everyone's well-being and comforts. The function had been advertised by large posters all over the city and the people of Kanpur availed themselves in gigantic numbers of this rare opportunity of the choicest *satsang*. After every meeting Mataji would sit in a small pandal in the Ashram grounds and everyone could approach her individually and receive her personal attention, blessing and advice. At night there was kirtana in the beautiful Ashram hall and Mataji was usually present for the silence from 8-45 to 9 p. m. On two evenings the Kirtana was performed in a newly built hall in the residence of the Jaipuria family in the presence of Mataji and her party.

Immediately after the completion of the *Bhagavata Parāyana* on November 29th, *Nāma yajña* of the Mahamantra was started in the hall by our Delhi Kirtana singers. It continued until sunset of November 30th. Mataji was present for the '*Adivāsa*' until the women took over for the night. She came again at about 2 a. m., and once more to distribute *prasāda* before sunrise when the men's kirtana started. A German and a Swiss devotee joined the ladies' kirtana with great enthusiasm, playing on cymbals and drums indefatigably all night. The next midday Mataji joined the men's circumbulations for a while, singing and almost dancing in great *bhāva*. At the end of the function, Mataji sang '*Dhoro lao*' as she usually does on those occasions. Many of the citizens of Kanpur feasted their eyes and ears on this rare and wonderful spectacle.

On December 1st Mataji left for Varanasi, arriving the same night. She remained there until the 8th. On the 3rd the newly acquired house of a devotee next to the hospital was opened and Mataji stayed there for 24 hours.

On December 9th, Mataji alighted at Hardwar, to be present on the 12th morning at the foundation stone laying of the temple to be built over Didima's *samadhi* at the Kankhal Ashram. Sri Girdhar Narayan Puri, the Mahant of the Nirvani Akhara (which is amalgamated with the Ashram of Sri Mangal Giri, Didima's *Sannyasa Guru*) was the special guest of the function. He was profoundly impressed and full of praise of the rites and ceremonies performed.

Immediately after the midday meal, Mataji motored to the Kishenpur Ashram at Dehradun. An upper storey which has been added to the girls' department was opened in her presence at about 7 p. m. The next morning food was prepared in the new kitchen upstairs and Mataji herself distributed rice *prasada* to all present. After the meal she proceeded to the Raipur Ashram where she remained for two nights. The women of Raipur recited the Ramayana and sang beautiful *kirtana* for hours. Mataji was in a great mood and animatedly talked to them of her own *kheyala*, asking them to hold *satsang* regularly in the Ashram hall, to read the whole of the Ramayana, Srimad Bhagavata, Devi Bhagavata and the Siva Purana one after another and to call her again soon. Mataji spent another night and day at the Kishenpur Ashram, visiting Kalyanvan and the residence of Mr. & Mrs. Khaitan where *Havan* and *Kumari Fūja* were performed on the 16th morning. The same evening she boarded the night train to Varanasi. On December 26th she is expected to leave for Ranchi and stay there for a few days. Mataji will have a camp at the *Ardha Kumbh Mela* at the Triveni and may stay there for part of January.