

# *Serving God in the Form of the Poor and Destitute*

Sri Sri Ma's Special Kheyāla

A few days ago someone approached Mataji with the following question : "Ma, so many people are nowadays in dire need of food and clothes. What is the remedy? What can be done for them?"

Mataji replied : "Is this your problem? Look, the sublime has to be adopted and pleasure relinquished. The most sublime gift is complete dedication of oneself to God—after which the question of giving or not does not arise anymore. When one has started to serve, giving becomes more and more one's natural expression, until giving one's all, giving oneself—total self-dedication, comes about. The giver, the act of giving, and receiving, are they not all the one God—for those whose goal is the Supreme? God in the form of the poverty-stricken has to be served. If you like, you may forgo your evening meal once a month, once a fortnight or once a week, and with great reverence donate the equivalent in money to God, the needy."

Mataji sometimes says : "God Himself is the supreme father, supreme mother, supreme friend, beloved, lord. One should ever keep in mind that everyone without exception is the offspring of the Immortal." Mataji always speaks of "*Jan Janārdana*," God in the form of man. Thus it is our hope that all who come to know of it will gladly join in this fast in the service of God in the shape of man, contributing their share to this work of human welfare.

We sincerely trust that Mataji's devotees and Didima's disciples will one and all observe the above mentioned rule, wherever they may be. We further heartily request our brothers and sisters who come for Mataji's *daršana* and are therefore known to us, as well as those whom we have not yet met, to give their whole-hearted support to this good cause and on our behalf to invite everyone to join us in this work of love. We are all pilgrims on the path of Immortality. We shall be very happy to receive the good news of those who wish to join in this service.

In our Varanasi Ashram the fast was started on the auspicious date of the full moon in the month of Magh ( February ). We hope others may continue on the first Thursday of every month or of every fortnight or weekly, every Thursday.

Mataji has said that this fast is not meant for very small children, for the sick and the extremely aged. Water may be taken freely by everyone during the fast.

Our brothers and sisters who have decided to take part in the above mentioned work, are requested to very kindly send once in every four months the equivalent in money of the meals from which they have abstained, to either of the following addresses :

- (1) Sri Durga Singhji, Raja Saheb of Baghat,  
P. O. Solan, H. P.
- (2) Sri Ram Panjwani, Birla Road,  
P. O. Hardwar, U. P.

23rd Febr., 1971

Ma Anandamayi Ashram,  
Bhadaini, Varanasi.

Gurupriya Devi (Didi)

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With Sri Krishna in her lap

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

## Mātri Vāni

For Ma the question of taking on or dropping anyone does not arise. For Ma there is taking on in dropping and dropping in taking on. At all times and under all circumstances, in plenty and in want, Ma is, remains and ever will remain with everyone.

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While performing action, sustain the attitude that He alone IS. He is the instrument as well as its wielder. As He causes the instrument to move, so it has to move.

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Do not give even a thought to results. Stay immersed in Him and Him alone. Results will not always be bad. When the time is ripe, the Self reveals Itself. Being the offspring of the Immortal, be ever concentrated on the Goal for the sake of Immortality.

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The man who has gone out in quest of God can no longer remain engrossed in anything that does not lead to Self-realization, to the realization of God. Just as when a house is on fire one leaves it by the open door, so once discrimination and dispassion have been awakened, the question of proceeding in any other direction does not arise.

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This body (Mataji) does not establish any āśramas. Where *śrama* (toil, strain) is not, there is an *āśrama*. Transcending the world and pervading the whole universe there is but one single Ashram : where there are lakes as well as oceans, where no distinction between one's homeland and foreign countries exists. In whatever way you may express it, so it is.





## Sad Vāni

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

( Continued from the last issue. )

46.

So long as there is coming and going there will be 'before' and 'after'. He who is jubilant at the birth of a child, must be prepared for tears of grief at the time of death. While everything in life is uncertain, it is an ever present truth that every man must die. To end this ceaseless coming and going there is only one expedient: the realization of the One Supreme Being. Unless through *sādhana* the mind becomes purified and absorbed in Him, one cannot enter His Kingdom of Peace. The path to this Kingdom is strait and perilous like a Himalayan mountain track. Yet, braced by their overwhelming desire for the vision of the deities, so many men and women decrepit with age and infirmity accomplish on foot the tedious journey to the famous places of pilgrimage. Not heeding the difficulties of the steep climb they trail on day after day, without food, without rest, harrassed by the severe cold. Equally intense must be the earnestness and patience of those who are out for the Vision of the Self ( *Ātmā darśana* ).

47.

Accept as Divine Dispensation all work that comes to you in the natural course of events and carry it out joyfully. Verily, everything in the world is achieved by will-power. If by determination and patience someone can translate his ideal into life, his actions will be inspired. Such a worker is backed by Divine Power. Follow one

ideal and make a habit of referring everything to God. By consistently pursuing the highest Good, this practice will become your second nature and even heterogenous thought will not be able to disturb you. The formation of good habits is the only means to counteract indolence and negligence in the performance of one's duties, for man is a slave to habit. The great interest everyone is taking in the welfare of the world at large has also been acquired by practice in previous lives. Although it takes time to build up a good habit, one must never lose heart, but keep on with firmness and perseverance. It is a fact that spiritual exercises performed with regularity even for a short period daily, gradually create an ardent longing for God. The cultivation of sincerity and purity is an indispensable prerequisite to Self-realization.

## 48.

The dual process of breaking-down and building-up is inherent in the movement of time ( *kāla* ); but *Mahākāla*, the great God who sits enthroned above Time, is perfect as One Whole Being and perfect as manifested in the Many. Therefore creation and destruction are equal to Him and because of this equality He is the Fountain-of-Goodness and the object of worship of the happy as well as the care-worn. Without creation there can be no destruction and vice versa. Consequently both are unavoidable in the round of earthly existence. But we, shut up within our shells like prisoners, have become limited and narrow-minded and this is why we cannot transcend the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. At the birth of a son we shout for joy, and if he dies we shed bitter tears. If for a moment we can forget the ties of flesh and blood, the distinction between father and son will disappear. In actual reality there is neither father nor son : He alone, the One, is embodied in all appearances, everywhere.



## 49.

Take only just as little as you actually need whenever you have to accept anything from others; but when you are the giver, try your utmost to satisfy fully the person who receives your gift. Widening your shrivelled heart, make the interests of others your own and serve them as much as you can by sympathy, kindness, presents and so forth. So long as one enjoys the things of this world and has needs and wants, it is necessary to minister to the needs of one's fellowmen. Otherwise one cannot be called a human being. Whenever you have the opportunity, give to the poor, feed the hungry, nurse the sick. But if you are incapable of doing anything else, you can at least cultivate goodwill and benevolence towards all and pray for their welfare. Forgetting your body, try to concentrate on the Self and do service as a religious duty and you will come to know by direct perception that the person served, the one who serves and the act of service are separate only in appearance. At the root of service lies renunciation; so long as there is a desire for personal happiness, craving for enjoyment or the expectation of a reward, real service is impossible. These three kinds of desire must be relinquished by him who would serve God. Service can be rendered by the body, the mind or speech. Start with any one of these and by adhering to it faithfully, it will in time carry you to the confluence of all the three in the ocean of complete self-dedication.

## 50.

That which calms the breath,† lays at rest all conflict and doubt and awakens a quiet confidence in man's heart, is called FAITH. Faith always goes together with reverence

† A play upon words : *Śvāsa* breath, *Viśvāsa* faith. The prefix "vi" expresses negation.

and truthfulness. The faith that is based on the opinions of others or on belief in the law of cause and effect will serve its purpose only in material pursuits. Genuine faith emerges from within by fixing one's mind on the Supreme Being. One's consciousness thereby becomes centered in truth and a deep serenity enters the heart and infuses one with great strength and indescribable peace which is unaffected by the whims of fortune. All spiritual endeavour is based on faith; thus faith is the first necessity. One's search for the Unknown, the Unfathomable has to start with faith and reverence. There is no other means by which to embark on the quest after Ultimate Truth.

## 51.

He who is perfect and holy, endowed with greatness and all virtues, is alone fit to be the ideal; from this point of view no other ideal exists except God. Nevertheless, for the practical purposes of both the active as well as the spiritual life, each one should let himself be guided by the example of some saintly person. Teaching obtained from Scriptures can never influence the imagination as powerfully as a living ideal; in other words, such inspiration as may be drawn from what one perceives with one's own eyes can never be had from what is known merely by inference or speculation.

First of all one has to decide which path one will take and then choose one's ideal accordingly and follow it. If by some special good fortune one is able to contact a real Sage or Saint and has the privilege of living in His presence, one must develop desirelessness and serve Him devotedly, and by His grace and benevolence try to elevate oneself. If you ever keep before you the essence of all ideals which is God Himself and carry out faithfully the teachings of the Holy and Wise, the road to attainment will be made smooth.

## 52.

All men hanker after peace but it occurs only to a very few that unless HE awakens in our heart, nothing at all will bring perfect peace. Neither through wealth nor through family, position or fame can peace be won, for these, as all earthly pleasures, are subject to constant change like day and night : they come and quickly flee away. This is why it is so important to gather wealth which cannot be destroyed and when gained will once for all blot out all desire. This wealth is no one else but God alone whom we do not know although He dwells in everybody's heart. When, through *Satkarma* (spiritual exercises and the service of God) the darkness that clouds our consciousness is made to dissolve, He stands revealed in His bewitching beauty : thus will be ushered in the reign of perfect peace.

## 53.

Have you ever observed children at play ? They start their game with great enthusiasm and buoyancy; how friendly they are, how affectionate ! But before their play draws to its close a difference of opinion over the question of victory and defeat has involved them in such bitter quarrelling that they first abuse one another, then come to blows and finally run home in tears. Worldly people, although grown-up, behave in a very similar manner. No sooner have they earned a little money than they go in for luxurious living with parties, entertainments and society life. For a short while they thoroughly enjoy themselves. But by degrees, with advancing age, they have to pass through all sorts of severe trials and bereavements and finally are so overcome by despair that life seems unbearable to them,

Those, on the other hand, who lead a life resigned to the Will of the Almighty, taking shelter at His Feet, will

remain unperturbed and at peace even, if faced with any number of privations and afflictions. In this ever changing world, happiness alternating with sorrow will always be man's lot, just like the eternal sequences of ebb and flow, sunshine and rain.

## 54.

As a mother is known by her affection and tenderness for her children, a wife by her love and devotion for her husband, a friend by his fellow-feeling and loyalty to his comrades, so a religious person can be recognized by his God-centred, dedicated life. Merely to say that one believes in God is quite useless. Religion must be practised by one's attitude of mind and heart and by one's actions. When engaging in austerity—fasts and vigils and the like—if real devotion is lacking they become mere mechanical observances. Carefully examine your heart and mind and try to eradicate shortcomings that you discover in yourself. In this way, performing the duties that befit your station of life, steadily forge ahead: a day will come when your actions will be in harmony with your aspirations and then you will be capable of true spiritual progress.

## 55.

To taste is the natural function of the tongue. But unless some bitter, sweet, salty or sour substance touches it, there is no taste. The wonderful thing is that whatever is put on the tongue, be it pungent or delicious, its taste will be faithfully produced. In a similar manner, the possibility which the human body does not contain has yet to be discovered; for this reason it may also be called a microcosm. Keep it in any way you like, it will respond. If you seek worldly experience, you will see how it will entice you, only to leave you surfeited. But if you train it to serve the spiritual life, it will let you grow calm and serene.

The body is valuable, yet it is not : If you want to cross a river, the boat is of great importance to you, but once you have reached the other shore, you never even give a thought to the ferry that took you across. The usefulness of the human body is of a like nature. When the "I-ness" has become extinct, the world and with it the body have gone out of the field of one's vision.

## 56.

In all matters it is necessary to establish a center. Otherwise real intensity cannot be developed. As the mind becomes ever more concentrated on one thing, one steadily grows more sincere, tranquil, loving and at ease. In this way one may well catch a glimpse of the All-pervading One. Choose a word, a form, an image, a symbol—in fact anything sacred representing Him as a whole or in part—and, whether in happiness or in misery, ceaselessly direct the current of your thinking towards it. Even though the mind may repeatedly wander here and there, it will again seek rest in this fixed centre. In due course, love and devotion will awaken for Him who will then take possession of your heart. To attain to Self-realization by personal effort only or to realize God by yoga and similar practices, is in the present age extremely difficult for the ordinary person.

## 57.

Why do you sit idle, groping in the dark? Arise and set about in search of Light, ever more Light! For how much longer can you live by the gleam of a lantern or an electric bulb? When the oil is exhausted, when the bulb fuses, your lamp is bound to go out. Illumine the world with a light that can never be extinguished. Do you know what this light is? Faith in God, the love of God. Carry the quest for this light into every home and

you will soon see everyone radiant within as well as without.

One thing has to be borne in mind: if anything is to be accomplished in our times, Ma Lakshmi will have to be propitiated, that is to say the co-operation of women must be secured. For it marks the spirit of the present time that women will take their place at the helm of society and men ply the oars. It is imperative to train girls along with boys to sing *kirtana*, to read the Bhagavad Gita and the Srimad Bhagavata, to practise *japa* and meditation. They must be brought in touch with the Holy and Wise and attend *satsang*. Then you will see how the lives of both men and women will be enobled and raised to a higher level. If in this way the first of the *Varnāshramas* of ancient times, namely the *Brahmachārya Āshrama* can be revived and lived by the young, a renaissance of Hindu society will follow.

58.

A *sannyāsī* is he who ever dwells in the void (*śunya*)†. One who has taken *sannyāsa*, yet all the time depends on others, is merely *attempting* to become a *sannyāsī*. A genuine *sannyāsī* is he who in God's Name, has set his all afloat in the void. So long as one harbours desires for home and family, for money and the things it buys, for bodily comforts and intellectual enjoyment, for fame, recognition and the like, it is far better to remain within the folds of the family. There are only very few who can tread the path of complete renunciation. Those who have gone forth into homelessness without having become utterly unselfish and are therefore unable to observe the prescribed rules of conduct of the *sannyāsāshrama*, will create all manners of

† A play upon words; *sannyāsī* sounds very much like "*śunyavāsī*" which means "dweller in the void".



complications. To be a householder with the spirit of *sannyāsa* is indeed very praiseworthy. But the man who merely assumes the ochre robe without being a *sannyāsī* at heart becomes guilty of a serious wrong. Not only does he harm himself, his behaviour also is contrary to the ideal of the sacred order of *sannyāsa*.

## 59.

Without solitude God cannot be found. Those who are striving to attain to the Supreme Being by meditation in silence and freedom from ties will find the Himalayas a most congenial abode. Braced by the grandeur and magnificence of nature, enveloped in its stillness, it becomes easy to contemplate Infinity, one spontaneously dives into the depths of the Self.

Those, on the other hand, who, are devotionally inclined will prefer to stay at the seashore. Inspired by the music of the rolling waves, ecstatic emotion surges up high until, engulfed in the boundless love of the Lord of Love, one is carried away straight to one's Goal.

For those who have no special line but are eager to be wayfarers on the path to Enlightenment, any beautiful, secluded spot will be suitable. House-holders should set apart a corner in their houses kept sacred as a shrine for divine contemplation. But for one who has forsaken everything for the love of God, who everywhere sees Him alone, all places are equally good. Endeavour to control your rambling thoughts and rise above the changing circumstances of life; then the problem of having to select a suitable site for your *sādhana* will cease to exist.

## 60.

To become a truly dedicated devotee one must uproot the "I" from one's being as well as from one's speech, and

cease in toto to judge by one's reason and intelligence. A small infant, after wallowing in the filth of his own body, stretches out his arms wanting to be taken on his mother's lap; and because a baby does not know any better, the mother cleans and washes him carefully and then smilingly lifts him to her bosom. Such is the law of selfless love and tenderness. Where complete self-effacement is the *sādhana*, no other mantra or tantra is required. Try to become as a little child and, without any other effort on your part, the Great Mother of the world will take you into Her Arms. But if contrariwise you wish to be guided by your own intelligence, you will have yourself to shoulder the entire responsibility of your uplift. Are you not weary of the play of your reason, have you not tasted enough of victory and defeat? *Now* is the moment to throw yourself unto the Mercy of the Almighty as one without shelter and support. Leap into His embrace and you will be released from all cares. Remember that it is the pure fool who shall find God.

( To be continued. )

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# What Seers and Mystics Have Said

( Collected by M. M. Verma )

There are pearls in the deep sea, but you must hazard all perils to get them. If you fail to get them by a single dive, do not conclude that the sea is without them. Dive again and again, and you are sure to be rewarded in the end.

So also in the quest of the Lord, if your first attempt to see Him is fruitless, do not lose heart. Persevere in the attempt, and you are sure to realize Him at last.

—Sri Ramakrishna

In some cases, although outwardly no change is visible, Grace works. You want to break a stone. Suppose, after twenty blows it breaks. After giving a blow if you look at it, there is apparently no change. But the molecules inside the stone are affected. Every blow does its work, and is necessary for the breaking of the stone at the twentieth blow.

—Swami Ram Das

God bears all burdens... Knowing that the train carries all the load, why should we, travelling therein, suffer by carrying our small bundles on our heads instead of leaving them on the train and being happy ?

—Ramana Maharshi

Depend on Him absolutely. In whatever circumstances you may find yourself sustain the remembrance of Him only.

—Mata Anandamayi

Our dependence on God must be absolute. It is not that we must purify ourselves first and then go to Him. He must purify us. We must go to Him like a child. A child goes in a dirty condition to the mother. The mother does not reject it, or ask it to come clean. She takes the child, washes and dresses it with clean clothes. God is more loving than an earthly mother.

—Swami Ram Das

Either melt the sense of separation by devotion or burn it by Knowledge ( *Jñāna* ).

—Mata Anandamayi

One-pointed thought of God is *Bhakti*, one-pointed experience of Self is *Jñāna*. *There should be one alone, whether we call it God or Self.*

—Ramana Maharshi

O Lord, Thy love flowing through human hearts has lured me to find the *source* of perfect love in Thee.

—Yogananda

Man fell when he saw the One as many; he will rise when his vision is corrected.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

The soul that is attached to anything, however much good there may be in it, will not arrive at the liberty of divine union. For whether it be a strong wire or a slender and delicate thread that holds the bird, it matters not, if it really holds it fast; for until the cord is broken, the bird cannot fly. So the soul, held by the bonds of human affections, however slight they may be, cannot, while they last, make its way to God.

—St. John of the Cross

There is nothing small in God's eyes; let there be nothing small in thine. He bestows as much labour of

divine energy on the formation of a shell as on the building of an empire.

—Sri Aurobindo

A man must not be judged by the nature of his duties, but by the manner in which he does them.... Every duty is holy, and devotion to duty is the highest form of the worship of God.

—Vivekananda

We should empty the heart of its contents, and then will God live in it. No other remedy is required, says Tuka, to see God. We should nip all our desires in the bud. When desires end, God comes to inhabit.

—Sant Tukaram

Give all you have; give all you do; give all you are.

—The Mother, Sri Aurobindo Ashram

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# Bhāgavata Culture and Indian Renaissance

T. Krishnaji

Among the Scriptural classics of India, the Rāmāyana, the Mahābhārata and the Bhāgavata are not only popular literature but have exercised profound aesthetic, philosophical and spiritual influence on all the people of India. Sage Vyasa, the Cultural Mentor of India, felt desolate with a sense of incompleteness of his mission, inspite of having composed Brahamasutras, Purānas and the Mahābhārata. Sage Narada divined its cause and told Vyasa that it was due to his not having written a special work glorifying God and His *Lila*. Narada planted on the field of Vyasa to develop into a rich harvest for posterity, the seeds of Bhāgavata, received by him from Brahma, who had obtained them from Bhagawan Narayana. Vyasa regained his peace after composing the Bhāgavata and taught it to his disciples and to Sage Suka. Bhagavan Narayana taught it to Brahma and so it is called "Bhāgavata." King Parikshit, under a curse and the shadow of death, within a week gave up his all and was ready to meet death. Many saints and sages gathered in his presence, also Narada and Vyasa. The youthful Suka, ever blissful in the awareness of Brahman, came and narrated the Bhāgavata to Parikshit, in the presence of all sages, and after the ultimate *upādeśa* of *Mahavakya* 'Aham Brahmasmi' left the assembly. Though Vyasa wrote it, Sage Suka was its competent exponent. The Bhāgavata is a Scripture of Instruction transmitted by a teacher to his disciples. While narrating the Bhāgavata, Sage Suka frequently went into ecstasy losing the thread of the narration. Often he replied to questions raised by



Parikshit. Therefore the present form of the Bhāgavata may be attributed to Sage Suka. The Bhāgavata is known as '*Paramahamsya*' a book recommended to be studied by ascetics of the *Paramahansa* order who have given up even study. When an eminent scholar asked H. H. Sri Chandrasekhar Bharati Sankaracharya of Sringeri Pitha, for an *Upadesa*, ( spiritual instruction ) His Holiness told him to study the Bhāgavata all his life.

To understand and appreciate the Bhāgavata, one must have not only learning but deep devotion to God and desirelessness; that is to say, one must be attached to God and detached from worldly affairs. A study of the Bhāgavata produces both devotion and detachment. The word भगवत्ता ( Bhāgavata ) has four significant letters. The letter भ stands for *Bhakti*, ण signifies *gñāna* or knowledge, व signifies *Vaiñāgya* or dispassion, त *Tatva*: so knowledge, devotion and dispassion play their parts in the Bhāgavata. The *Bhāgavata* is an authoritative scripture ( *Śāstram Kīrena Bhāshītam* ). It is a *Śaranāgati Śāstra*, where self-surrender is reiterated. It also represents the cream of all Vedānta ( *Sarva Vedānta Sāram* ). Though the Bhāgavata is old, it is ever new. Perennial fresh light is shed each time it is read. A pandit told a king to hear him expound the Bhāgavata but the king turned him away each time saying 'read it again'. Repeated readings of the Bhāgavata roused such devotion and dispassion in the pandit that he became totally engrossed in its study and did not care to go to the king. The king came to him and found him desireless.

The Bhāgavata inspired many saint poets to render it in the local languages of India. It contributed to the golden age of *bhakti* and the religious renaissance of the middle ages in India. Many saint poets blossomed in every part of India spreading the aroma of the Bhāgavata and of *bhakti*. Bommera Pothana (1400 A.D.) a saint poet of Andhra desa wrote the Bhāgavata in Telugu. Sevvai Chooduvar (about 1450 A.D.) wrote it in Tamil. About

1530 A.D. a Bhāgavata in Canarese was written. Bhalan (1500 A.D.) wrote the Tenth Canto of the Bhāgavata in Gujarati. Sri Ekanath Maharaj wrote the Eleventh Canto in Marathi in 1573 A.D. Saint Surdas (1479-1584) sang the Bhāgavata in Hindi; Sankaradeva (1449-1586) in Assamese. Saint Jagannathadas, a disciple of Sri Chaitanya, wrote the Bhāgavata in Oriya language. The Bhāgavata was translated into Persian in about 1633. Scenes from the Bhāgavata were depicted in about 1600. The Rajasthanī art and the paintings of Kangra were inspired by the Bhāgavata. Thus the Bhāgavata contributed to the development of art, music, literature and culture of different parts of India, enriching several languages.

The data of the composition of the Bhāgavata is subject to much speculation. Some scholars opine that it must have been written in the fourth or sixth century A. D. and according to some others in the thirteenth century. The discovery of a Bhāgavata manuscript dated about 1000 A. D. by the great Savant Saint Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj puts an end to the opinion that the Bhāgavata can have been written later than that. Though Sri Sankaracharya did not refer to the Bhāgavata, its influence on him may be seen from his work *Prabodha Sudhokara* and the tenth verse in *Bhagavan Mānasa Puja* with the Bhāgavata verse 5 of the 19th chapter of the Tenth Canto. The Alwar Saints of South India lived between the second and ninth centuries A. D. and St. Andal was inspired by the 22nd chapter of the Tenth Canto to write his famous work *Thiruppavat*. A comparative study of the Bhāgavata and *Dīvyā Prabandha* may throw much light on this subject. Dr. R. D. Ranade, a scholar saint, observes that the Bhāgavata must have been written earlier, pari passu with the development of early philosophical systems, so as ultimately, in course of time to be able to influence the later formulation of thought and the whole course of mysticism. I am of the opinion

that whatever be its date, the author of the Bhāgavata was none but Sage Vyasa, author of the Mahābhārata.

The main theme of the Bhāgavata is to sing the praises of God as His various *Avatāras* leading to the *Līlā* or divine play of Krishna *Avatāra*. Aesthetic art, philosophic teaching and ideal devotion blend in the Bhāgavata. It is work of art where all the *Nava Rāsas* are brought into play with an emphasis on *Śringāra*, *Prema* and *Mathura rāsas*. Sridhara Swami refers to Krishna as *Śringārādi Sarvarāsa Kadamba Murti*. The Bhāgavata is not regarded as a book but is revered as a manifestation of God Himself. The extraordinary divine feats of the child Krishna killing Putana, Sakatasura and Trinavarta even as an infant are portrayed. His heroic deeds killing the demons Vatsasura, Baka, Dhenuka, Aghasura and others even before he was five years old and humbling the pride and delusion of Devas, Brahma, Indra, Agni, Varuna, Kaliya are presented. He played pranks with the milkmaids of Vrindavan. The Gopis of Vraja, having witnessed Krishna's divine deeds, were fully aware of Krishna's divinity and also loved Him as prince charming. Krishna was beauty itself, *Manmatha Manmatha*. To bestow His grace on His devotees, Krishna played *Rāsa Līlā* multiplying Himself into as many Krishna as there were Gopis. God Siva burnt *Kāma* passion but Krishna conquered *Kāma*. Krishna was eight or nine years old when he played *Rāsa Līlā*. The Divine play was misunderstood and misinterpreted by Christian writers to belittle Hinduism. Bridal mysticism is common in the lives of mystics in the East as well as in the West. The Bhāgavata narrates the episodes of many devotees of God, such as Ambarisha, Gajendra, Ajamila, Kuchela, Demon Vritra and so forth. Many of the episodes deal with the *Saguna Brahman* in its transcendental aspect for the purpose of worship.

The Bhāgavata is not a sectarian work. Though God Vishnu and Bhagavan Krishna were held supreme, due

deference to Brahma, Siva and other deities is shown. Bhagavan says that Himself and Siva are not different. The Bhāgavata does not approve of *Kāmya Karma* (performance of works for any profit, while *Nishkāma Karma* is praised. One of the main tenets of the Bhāgavata is desirelessness, whereas working with a motive perpetuates desire and ego.

The Bhāgavata is a philosophical work recognized as such by every school of philosophy. The crowning teaching of Sage Suka to Parikshit was "*Aham Brahma Param dhāma, Brahmāham Paramam Padam, Evam samikhyam Ātmānam Ātman adhāya nishkala*" (Bha. 12-5-11). It culminates in *Advaita Siddhi* and Parikshit proclaims his state of fearlessness as a *Jivan Mukta* who has to pass into *Videha Mukti*. Dr. Siddheswar Bhattacharya, author of the "Philosophy of the Bhāgavata," observes that the supreme truth of the Bhāgavata is non dual consciousness. The Bhāgavata refers to itself as quintessence of all Vedāntā. Dr. S. Bhattacharya says: "The philosophy of the Bhāgavata is a philosophy of life in perfect tune with the Upanishads." The Absolute of Philosophy in its triune aspect is stated as "*Brahmeti Paramātmēti Bhagavan it sabdate*" (Bha. 1-2-11) and in another place *Jñānamātram Param Brahma, Parmātmā Iswarah puman, drisyadibhi prithag bhavai Bhagavan eka Iyate*" (Bha. 3-32-26). Sri Sridharaswami explains that the Absolute is Brahman from the Upanishadic view, *Paramātmā* corresponds to Hiranyagarbha, (*Sukshma Sarira Vyashti*) and *Bhagavan* to the devotional standpoint. Dr. S. Bhattacharya remarks that the Absolute in its transcendent nature is called *Brahman*, in its immanent nature '*Paramatman*', and in its transcendent and immanent nature *Bhagavan*. The Bhāgavata illustrates the said three aspects of the Absolute. In my opinion the Bhāgavata serves as a commentary to the Bhagavad Gītā. The chief sloka of the Gītā (XVIII. 62) "*Sarva dharmān parityajya*" can be understood better from the episode of the Gopis of Vraja, who gave up their all, even relationships and sense of

shame, to adore Bhagavan Krishna as their Divine spouse. They relinquished all desires "*Santyaajya Sarva Vishayan*" and sought the feet of Krishna. Sage Narada defined Bhakti as *Parama Prema Rūpā* (Supreme Love) but found no words to explain Prema (Divine love) and said: "like that of the Gopis of Vraja."

The composite character of the Bhāgavata has appealed to every school of philosophy in India, and each of them has paid its homage by writing commentaries on it. About fifteen commentaries exist and among them eight or nine are important. Sri Sridharaswami (1000-1100 A. D.) wrote a commentary called 'Bhavartha Deepika' at Varanasi, inspired by the grace of Rama and Nrisinha. It is not known when he lived. Scholars have different views on this subject. His commentary is the earliest and most popular from the Advaitic view point. Sri Chaitanya Deva held it in high regard. Sri Vallabhacharya, the propounder of the '*Shuddhādwaita*' school wrote his magnum opus 'Subodhini.' Venkata Krishna Acharya, otherwise known as Veeraraghavachari wrote a commentary called 'Chandrika' from the view point of the Visistadwaita philosophy of Sri Ramanujacharya. He seems to follow an earlier commentary 'Sukapakshi' by Sudarsana Suri. Sri Vijaya-dhvajacharya wrote 'Pada Ratnāvali' from the view point of the *Dwaita* or Dualistic school of Madhavacharya; Sri Jiva Goswami wrote 'Krama Sandarbha' representing the *achintya bhedābheda* of Sri Chaitanya. Suka Deva wrote 'Siddhanta Pradeep' representing the *bhedābheda* school of Nimbarka-charya. Sri Radharaman Goswami wrote "Dipanyakhya"; Mahamahopadhyaya Viswanatha Chakravarthy wrote "Sarardha Darsini," Radhamohan Goswami Tarka Vachaspati wrote "Tatva Sara Vyakhya." Sri Madhusudan Saraswati wrote "Bhāgavata Bhavārtha Prakāsika," but his commentary on the first invocatory verse alone is

available. Along with the *Brahma Sutra*, *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita* the *Bhāgavata* ranks as fourth *Prasthanā*.

The *Bhāgavata* has given solace to millions of people in India from the Himalayan regions to the plains of Kanya Kumari. As a unifying element of the culture of India the *Bhāgavata* stands supreme. If India has a high place in the Committee of Nations, it is also due to its ancient culture of which the *Bhāgavata* is a perennial life giver. Therefore '*Pibata Bhagavatam rasamalayam*' "Drink the nectar of the *Bhāgavata*."

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## An Incident from the Life of Sri Muktananda Giriji Maharaj (Didima)

On February 5th, 1963, Mataji at the request of Sri Haribabaji Maharaj, went to Jodhpur for a few days to be present at the inauguration of a *satsang* hall. She left Didima with Narayan Swami and a few other companions at Kankhal, asking them to meet Mataji at Delhi on February 14th. On February 11th at about 9 p. m. at Jodhpur, Mataji asked someone to send the following telegram to Narayan Swami : "See that Giriji is well looked after and keeps good health." It was difficult to understand why Mataji had the wire dispatched since she was to meet Giriji within less than three days.

On February 14th early morning, as soon as Mataji arrived at the Delhi Ashram, she went straight to Giriji's room, remaining there for an hour. Giriji and her party had arrived the evening before. After leaving Giriji's room, Mataji said : 'What need was there to wire, when we were to meet in any case two days later ? People may have thought, perhaps Mataji was not aware of this.' Mataji continued : "That day in the early morning I saw Giriji come to me with the words : 'Shall I leave to-morrow ?' meaning that Giriji intended leaving her body. For Mataji there is no birth and no death. She at first said : "All right', but quickly added : "No, no, no, don't leave to-morrow !'

In reply to someone's question, Mataji later explained : "Do you know why the telegram was sent ?" Just as one does not become a *sannyāsi* by reading the *sannyāsa* mantra

in a book, but has to obtain it from the Guru, in a similar manner this body had the kheyāla to confirm, as it were, what Giriji had heard Ma say. This is why the wire was sent to Narayan Swami. The inner telegram had already reached before."

On February 11th at about 2-30 a. m. at Kankhal, Giriji had a strong desire to leave her body. During the whole night she sat in meditation. At first she reviewed her early life, then she had a number of visions. At dawn she rose from her seat. At about 8 a. m. she went to bathe in the Ganges near Dakshalaya Mandir which adjoins the Ashram. She then sat in the temple doing japa for a long time. She saw many of her devotees. When she got up she asked Vimala, her attendant, where they had gone. Vimala said astonished, "What do you mean? They never came here !"

After distributing wheat-flour and gur to the beggars at the temple gate, Giriji sat among the tulasi plants in the Ashram garden in meditation. At that time Mataji was watching Giriji from Jodhpur. She said: "Giriji's eyes were tightly closed. Her senses did not work at all." Giriji was absorbed in deep contemplation. Her eyes were shut, but her consciousness was fully awake. Everyone present at the Kankhal Ashram saw Giriji in that state. At their request, Giriji went into the house and sat down on her *āsana*. The extraordinary visions she had can hardly be understood by the ordinary intelligence. Yet, for the benefit of all, an attempt is made here to give an idea of what Giriji saw.

She had the vision of a boatman who was taking souls across *samsāra*, the round of birth and death. Giriji was herself in the boat. At Jodhpur Mataji also saw herself sitting in a boat with Didima. Didima said to the boatman: "I have crossed over the ocean of life and death; but what about those who are standing on the bank waiting to be

ferried to the other shore ? I cannot leave them behind !” Again Giriji asked : “You will take them across, won’t you ?” The boatman repeated three times : “Yes, certainly I shall take them across.”

Giriji reflected : “For so long I have striven for the highest good of my followers, today my prayer is : Almighty God, may they all advance towards Thee, let none experience again the agony of birth, and the trials and tribulations of worldly life.”

Thereafter Giriji saw a divine personage ascend a staircase together with her. Behind her there was a dog. Giriji asked the divine being : “Who are you ? Are you taking me with you ? Are you a man or a woman ?” “Neither a man nor a woman,” was the reply. The divine apparition was clad in white garments, with a profusion of black hair covering the clothes at the back. Again Giriji spoke : “Judhisthir had once to witness hell. Let none of my followers ever experience hell !” The divine being said with great vehemence : “No, no, no, none of them will see hell. Where the name of Hari is, there can be no question of hell.”

Then Giriji’s vision changed. She was in a realm of endless light. At once the question : “Where are my followers ?” arose in her mind. Her divine companion pointed in one direction, saying : “They are there. According to their stages and states of achievement they are at various levels. This is why there is difference. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras are on their own levels appropriate to their work.” Giriji said three times : “May none of them fall down again !” And three times she received the reply : “No, they will never fall down again !”

Next, Giriji found herself alone with the divine being in a realm of which she said : “From there everything could be seen, call it the earth or anything you like; yet there was neither day nor night, neither darkness nor light,

a deep pervading peace that passes understanding—it is impossible to describe that realm.” It cannot be grasped by human intelligence. In the Kathopanishad we read :

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं

नेमा विद्यतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।

तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं

तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥

“The sun shines not there, nor the moon and stars;  
These lightings shine not, much less this earthly fire !  
After Him, as He shines, doth everything shine.  
This whole world is illumined with His light.”

Did this great land of light appear before Giriji's inner eye ? She said : “Unless all are liberated, how can there be liberation for me ? Animals, birds, insects, trees, creepers, may none have to suffer again the agony of birth and death !” This reminds us of the Lord Buddha who remained on the threshold of Nirvana out of compassion for all sentient beings.

The whole day Giriji sat on her *āsana* inside the house. In the evening she came outside and sang kirtan under the beltree and then distributed batasha to all. After having sung God's names Giriji again felt like leaving her body in front of Siva. She was utterly calm, peaceful and serene, her heart and mind merged in the Self. All at once she saw Mataji. Giriji said : “How are you ? From where have you come ?” Mataji said. “I have come to see you.” The whole day Mataji had taken nothing but water. Didima saw that Ma was wearing a red sari. That day at Jodhpur someone had dressed Ma in a red sari and performed her *pūjā*. Giriji said : “You have come to stop me from going, haven't you ?” Mataji said : “Just look at me for a minute !” Giriji : “I am looking at you.” But Mataji saw that Giriji's eyes were shut. Not one of them

would open. However, gradually the right eye opened. Mataji did not take her gaze off Giriji's eyes. For a long time Giriji remained in that state of deep inner absorption. Before returning, Ma said : "A mood was made to start in you that would not let you leave." Mataji gave Giriji a flower from the head of Siva. Giriji began to breathe again. Gradually energy returned to her senses, her hands started moving. Twice that day at Kankhal, Giriji had gone into that state and both times Mataji had seen it at Jodhpur. At night Giriji hardly ate anything. Even when going to sleep that night she was not yet fully reconciled to the thought of remaining in the body.

Some of the members of Giriji's family had had the power to die at will. One or two of her brothers had foretold the exact time of their death and made all arrangements themselves.

A few days later someone wrote a letter to Mataji, asking how the whole world could be liberated. Mataji replied : "If you yourself endeavour to attain to liberation, by your example the desire to pursue the path to liberation will be awakened in others." Turning to the people present in the room, Mataji added : "This is meant for all of you !"

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## Sacred Places of Kashmir, Jammu & Ladhak

*A Devotee*

UDHAMPUR

तस्मै नमः परमकारणकारणाय

दीप्तोज्ज्वलज्वलितपिङ्गललोचनाय ।

नागेन्द्रहारकृतकुण्डलभूषणाय

ब्रह्मनेन्द्रविष्णुवरदाय नमः शिवाय ॥†

[Reverence to Śiva, who is the supreme cause of all causes, whose yellowish blue eyes are bright and shining with splendour, who is wearing a necklace and earrings formed by snakes and who gives boons to Brahmā, Indra and Viṣṇu].

Udhampur is a town situated about sixty-five kilometers north-east of Jammu. It lies on Jammu-Srinagar road.

There are ancient temples of Lord Śiva and Śrī Rāma at Udhampur. Big fairs are held at this place during *Śivarātri* (February-March) and *Rāmnāvamī* (March-April).

प्रापदामपहृतीरं दातारं सर्वसम्पदाम् ।

लोकाभिरामं श्रीरामं भूयो भूयो नमाम्यहम् ॥

( I bow down in reverence again and again to Sri Rāma, who is pleasing among men and who destroys all troubles and bestows all benefits ).

UMA

स तस्मिन्नेवाकाशे स्त्रियमाजगाम बहुशोभमानामुमां हैमवतीं ।

तां होवाच किमेतद यक्षमिति ॥

† Sivashtakam, verse-i, by Shankaracharya,

सा ब्रह्मनेति होवाच ।  
 ब्रह्मणो वा एतद्विजये महीयध्वमिति ।  
 ततो हैव विदाश्चकार ब्रह्मनोति ॥‡

[ At that place in the sky, he ( Indra ) came near the very beautiful daughter of the snow-clad Himalayas, Uma. He enquired of her who was this divine Yaksha. She replied, "He is the Brahman ( Supreme Primordial Being, the cause of all that exists ). You felt proud by mistaking the victory of the Brahman as that achieved by your own strength". Then Indra came to know with certainty that the Yaksha was no other than the Brahman ].

Umā is another name of the goddess Pārvati, daughter of the Himālayas and wife of Lord Śiva. When she went to perform severe austerities in order to win Śiva as her husband, her mother Menā who greatly loved her daughter, fearing that such hardship would tell upon her health, asked her in the following words not to perform austerities :

उ दुर्गे मा कुरु तपस्याम् !

[ O Durgā ! Do not perform austerities. ]

So the goddess Durgā is called Umā.\*

The great poet Kalidasa therefore gives the meaning of the word 'Umā' in the following verse of Kumārasambhavam ;

तां पार्वतीत्याभिजनेन नाम्ना बन्धुप्रियां बन्धुजनो जुहाव ।  
 उमेति मात्रा तपसो निषिद्धा पश्चादुमाख्यां सुमुखी जगाम ॥\*\*

‡ Kenopanishad.

\* According to another version the goddess is called Umā because she is the wife ( better half ) of Śiva. उ in Sanskrit means Śiva and मा means beautiful woman.

\*\* Kumārasambhavam, first canto, verse 26.

[ As yet the maiden was unknown to fame;  
 "Child of the Mountain" was her only name.  
 But when her mother, filled with anxious care  
 At her stern penance, cried : "Forbear ! Forbear !"  
 To a new title was the warning turned,  
 And Umā was the name the maiden earned. ]

The sacred village of Umā is about eight kilometers east of Achhibal which is about sixty kilometers south-east of Srinagar and only eleven kilometers from Ananta Nag. It is so called because it is sacred to the goddess Umā.

There is a beautiful spring in the village which is regarded as an embodiment of the goddess Umā and is also called Umā.

The following two verses from the Nilamata tell about the glory of the goddess Umā and her worship :

यैव देवी उमा सैन कश्मीरा नृपपुङ्गव ।

आसित् सरः पूर्णजलं सुरम्यं सुमनोहरम ॥\*

( O Great King : She, who is the goddess Umā, manifested as the land of Kashmir, which was originally a beautiful and charming lake full of water ).

माघमासि सिते पक्षे चतुर्थी य भवेद् द्विज ।

उमासंपूजनं कार्यं तस्यां सौभाग्यमिप्सुना ॥\*\*

[ O Twice-born ! One wishing good fortune, should worship Umā on the fourth day of the bright half of the month of *Māgha* ( December-January )].

### VAISHNO DEVI

त्वं वैष्णवी शक्तिरनन्तवीर्या‡

विश्वस्य बीजं परमासि माया ।

\* The Nilamata, verse 12.

\*\* The Nilamata, verse 493.

‡ Krishna Yajurveda, Taittiriya Āranyaka, XI.



सम्मोहितं देवी समस्तमेतत्

त्वं वै प्रसन्ना भुवि मुक्तिहेतुः ॥ †

[ Thou art infinite power.

Thou art the strength of Vishnu.

Thou art the seed (cause) of the universe and Thou art the greatest delusion.

All that exists is enchanted by Thee.

Thou, when pleased, becomest the cause of salvation].

The sacred shrine of the goddess called Vaishno Devi is situated in a cave of the Trikuta hill, about fifty-eight kilometers north of Jammu town. The road from Jammu to the cave shrine passes through beautiful forests and mountains with waterfalls and streams. The Trikuta hill, which is about 5300 feet above sea-level, is also regarded as an emblem of the goddess Vaishno Devi and is considered very holy.

Vaishno Devi is another name of the goddess Bhagwati. It is said that the goddess originally resided at a place called Adi Kumari‡ which is about six kilometers below the cave. A demon wanted to marry the goddess by force. She therefore shifted her residence from Adi Kumari to the cave on the Trikuta hill, but the demon followed her there also. Thus the goddess had no alternative but to kill the demon.

The cave is nearly one hundred feet in length. It has a narrow entrance. A small stream called Charan-gangā, which literally means the sacred stream issuing from the feet of the goddess, flows from beneath the image of the goddess in the cave. The rituals are performed on a platform outside the cave.

† Sri Sri Chandi. Translation by Arthur Avalon.

‡ Adi Kumāri literally means "first virgin."

There is a sacred spring also in this place, the water of which rises in jerks. The water is warm in December, January and part of February. It is cold for the rest of the year. The spring is regarded as a manifestation of Vaishno Devi. There is a reference about this sacred spring in the Nilamata, which is quoted below.

त्रिकोट्यां तु नरः स्नात्वा देवलोके महीयते ।  
स्नात्वा हर्षपाथायां च शकलोके महीयते ॥‡

[ A man, who bathes in the holy waters of Trikoti, glorifies in the region of the gods. A man who bathes in Harshapatha glorifies in the region of Shakra (Indra), ]

The pilgrimage to Vaishno Devi starts from the month of Ashwin (September-October) and continues for about four months.

### VICHAR NAG

शिवं भज शिवं ध्याय शिवं स्तुहि शिवं यज ।  
शिवं नम वराक त्वं ज्ञानं मोक्षं यद्विच्छसि ॥‡‡

(Poor fellow, if you desire knowledge and final liberation then worship Siva, meditate on Siva, sing the praises of Siva, perform sacrifices for Siva and bow in reverence to Him.)

Vichar Nag is a sacred Spring situated in the village of the same name which is at a distance of about twelve kilometers from Srinagar on the way to Gangabal lake. The village is on the eastern bank of Anchar Nag, a shallow lake of which the waters are full of green lotus leaves and the shores are lined with luxuriant chestnut trees.

There is an ancient shrine of Siva called Vikrameshwara at Vichar Nag near the spring. The temple was originally built by Vikramaditya who ruled Kashmir in the

‡ The Nilamata, verse 1299.

‡‡ The Skanda Mahāpurāna, Avantikā Khanda, Revā Khanda Chapter 11, verse 55.

sixth century A. D. The pilgrims visit this place in the month of Chaitra (March-April).

The presiding deity of the spring called Vichar Nāga is Elāpatra Nāga. He is a brother of the famous Nāgas called Shesha, Vāsuki, etc. The names of the illustrious Nāgas are given in chapter 35 of Adiparva in the Mahabhārata. The first two verses from that chapter are quoted below :

शेष प्रथमतो जातो वासुकिस्तदनन्तरम् ।  
 ऐरावतस्तक्षकश्च कर्कोटक घनञ्जयो ॥  
 कालियो मणिनागश्च नागश्चापुरणस्तथा ।  
 नागस्तथा पिञ्जरक एलापत्रोश्च वामनः ॥

( Among the Nāgas, Shesha was born first. Then Vāsuki and thereafter followed in succession Airāvata, Takshaka, Karkotaka, Dhananjaya, Kāliya, Manināga, Apurana, Pinjaraka, Elāpatra and Vāmana. )

Elāpatra was loved by all the Nāgas because it was he who dispelled the fears of the Nāgas by disclosing the secret by which they could be saved from the destruction that would have been caused by the snake-sacrifice of king Janmejaya, the great-grandson of King Yudhisthira.

### WANGAT

स्वयंभूः प्रकटीभूय पूजां स्वीकुरुते स्वयम् ।  
 ज्येष्ठरूद्रो वशिष्ठस्य यस्य वा बालकेश्वरः ॥\*

[ The Shiva-Linga called Balakeshwara is a natural one and has come to light by itself. It receives from him ( King Jayasimha, 1128-1149 A. D. ) worship as the Śiva-Linga called Jyesthesha received worship from the sage Vashishtha ].

Wangat village is about fifty-three kilometers north of Srinagar. It is said that the great sage Vashishtha

\* The Rājatarangini, eighth Taranga, verse 2430.

lived there for some time and worshipped the Śiva-Linga called Jyestheshwara. The ancient name of the place is Vashishthāshrama.

Near the village there are the ruins of the ancient temples built by the kings of Kashmir at different times. These are by the side (south-west) of a sacred spring called Naran Nag, which is at the foot of the Bhuteshwara spur ( modern Buthser ) lying south-east of the Haramukh peak. Naran Nag is the modern name of Sodara Tirtha which has been an important place of pilgrimage from ancient times. The pilgrims to the Haramukh lakes terminate their pilgrimage after visiting this holy spring. It is said that Lord Śiva came to dwell here from the lake called Nandkol.†

उत्तिये नन्दिकुण्डात् तू स्वयं मत्सोदारे स्थितः ।

भुतेश्वर इति क्षातः कृत्स्नपापप्रणोदन ॥\*

[ Rising from Nandikunda (Nandkol) the god,\* who is known as Bhuteshwara and who removes all sins, established himself at Sodara. ]

One of the temples, the ruins of which are seen near the spring, have been identified with the temple of Jyeshthesha and another with the temple of Bhuteshwara. Both are dedicated to Śiva. The former was constructed by King Lalitaditya at the beginning of the eighth century A. D. while the origin of the latter is lost in antiquity. The ruins are in the narrow gorge of the Kankvai river, the ancient name of which is Kanakavāhini, ( one carrying gold ), which flows past the southern foot of the spur.

About a kilometer from the sacred Naran Nāg there is in the middle of the Kanakavāhini a rock with a cave-shrine of Śiva.

† Nandkol is a corruption from Nandikāl.

\* Nandikshetramāhātmya.

The following verses from the Rajatarangini and the Nilamata tell the glory of the sacred spring Naran Nag.

श्रुतनन्दिपुराणः स व्यासान्तेवासिनो नृपः ।  
सेवनं सोदारादीनां नन्दीश स्पर्धया व्यधात् ॥\*

[ The King ( Jalauka, son of Ashoka ) having heard the Nandipurana from some pupil of Vyasa visited Sodara and other sacred spots vying in holiness with Nandisha ].

सोदार तु नरः स्नात्वा गोसहस्रं फलं लभेत् ।  
तथा कनकवाहिन्याः संगमं याति यो नरः ॥\*\*

( By bathing in the waters of Sodara and also by visiting the confluence of the Kanakavāhini one gets the benefit of the gift of a thousand cows. )

The confluence of the Kanakavāhini mentioned in the above verse is perhaps the junction of its tributary with the Sind river which lies about six kilometers above Mangam village nearly four kilometers east of Tulmul ( Kshir Bhawāni ). Stein identifies this confluence with the ancient Chiramochana Tirtha. The pilgrims visit this on their way to the Haramukuta lakes.

### VASUKĪ NAG

Vasuki Nag is a sacred spring situated about twenty kilometers west of Veri Nāg. The spring remains dry in the winter but flows with water in summer.

It is sacred to the serpent-god Vāsukī.

Vasuki Nag was one of the sons of the great sage Kashyapa. His mother's name was Kadru, one of the daughters of Daksha Prajāpati. Vāsukī acted as the rope for churning the ocean by the gods and the demons for getting nectar ("amrita") by drinking which they became immortal. The Mandāra mountain was used as the churn-

\* The Rājatarangini, first Taranga, verse 123.

\*\* The Nilamata, verse 1330.

ing rod which was supported on the back of a very huge tortoise in the sea.

अथ देवासुराः सर्वे ममन्धुर्वरुणाक्षयम् ।  
तत्र नेत्रमभून्नागो वासुकिर्बैलिनां वरः ॥

( Then all gods and demons churned the abode of Varuna. There Vāsuki Nāg, the mightiest among the mighty, acted as the rope for churning the ocean ).

### VIAN

Vian is a village situated about five kilometers east of Pampur which is about twenty-one kilometers southwest of Srinagar. It is at the foot of a rocky spur in Vihew Pargana.

There are two holy springs called Kailas Nag and Phuk Nag at Vian. Phuk Nag is a mineral spring.

### WATNAR

स जयति सिन्धुरवदनो देवो गत्वादप जस्मरणम् ।  
वासरमणिरिव तमसां राशीन्नाशयति विघ्नानाम् ॥

( Glory to the elephant-faced god Ganesha, the remembrance of whose lotus feet destroys all troubles just as the rising sun dispels all darkness ).

Watnar is situated between the range of hills lying between Shahabad and Bring. It is in Kother Pargana located about ten kilometers east of Banihal as the crow flies.

There is an ancient shrine of Mahā Ganesha by the side of a sacred spring called Dumatabal.

\* The Mahābhārata, Ādiparva, Chapter 39, verse 3.



Mataji at the Ranchi Station



Mataji at Katrasgarh, Dhanbad

## Mātri Līlā

( December 15th, 1970—March 15th, 1971 )

On December 17th, Mataji reached Varanasi from Dehradun. A few comparatively quiet days followed. Several devotees arrived from Bombay, taking this opportunity to have private talks with Mataji at leisure. On December 21st, the well-known saint, Sri Sitaram Das Omkarnath came to meet Mataji. He always makes it a point to see her whenever he happens to be in the same town. On December 24th, Sri Gulzari Lal Nanda, Union Railway Minister, visited our hospital and was much impressed by the arrangements. He then had Mataji's *darśana*, spending over half an hour with her.

On December 26th, Mataji left for Ranchi. For a long time the devotees and ashramites had been clamouring for her presence there. Mataji remained until January 3rd. Many devotees arrived from Calcutta to spend a few days with Mataji and the citizens of Ranchi came in large numbers for Mataji's *darśana* and *satsang* which was held three times daily in Mataji's presence.

On January 4th, Mataji returned to Varanasi. The next day Mrs. Mallefant, a member of the Unesco delegation came to meet Mataji "on her way" to Malaya, although Varanasi was actually a good distance out of her way. She had had Mataji's *darśana* in Delhi three years ago.

On January 11th, the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. Pierre Elliot Trudeau, accompanied by the High Commissioner of Canada in India, Mr. James George, and



the Indian High Commissioner in Canada, came for Mataji's *darśana*. It rarely happens that an official guest of the Government visits a private person. Mr. Trudeau, who had studied at the Benares Hindu University years ago, had expressed the wish to see Mataji on the occasion of his visit to Varanasi. The Prime Minister's party comprised a number of high officials of the Central and State Governments of India, several foreigners, journalists, photographers, television men, etc., in all about eighty persons. The reception took place in the hall adjoining Gopal Mandir. The General Secretary of the Sangha offered to provide chairs for the main guests but Mr. Trudeau preferred to sit on the floor like everyone else. The girls of the Kanyapith, stationed on the gallery, regaled our honoured guests with beautiful religious songs. Garlands, sweets and souvenirs (booklets) were presented to each one of the party. After about ten minutes, the Prime Minister together with Mr. James George, the General Secretary of the Sangha and Dr. Bithika Mukerji as translator were taken upstairs to have a private interview with Mataji which lasted for about twenty minutes. Mr. Trudeau asked mostly philosophical questions and seemed highly pleased with Mataji's replies. His people, in glowing terms, expressed their appreciation of the reception given to them. While our own Prime Minister and many other topmost officials are regular visitors wherever and whenever Mataji is within their reach, Mr. Trudeau was the first Prime Minister of a foreign country to pay his respects to Mataji.

On January 16th, a group of about 25 Brazilians of French origin, disciples of the late Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh, came for Mataji's *darśana*. They were obviously very sincere seekers of Truth, judging from the response they were able to evoke from Mataji. She was in a wonderful mood throughout their visit and even after. The atmosphere was intense and inspiring. Mataji for about half an hour replied to their questions, then

distributed *prasāda* and blessed every one of them by touching their heads. They requested the privilege to have silent meditation in Mataji's presence, which was granted for 15 minutes. Finally they sang to Mataji. They all seemed deeply moved, many cried at the parting. One woman completely overcome, broke out into sobs. Mataji took a wrapper from her own shoulders and presented it to the woman.

The next day the Vice-Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University, Dr. Srimali came to see Mataji and was with her for over an hour.

On January 19th, Mataji motored to Allahabad, going straight to Satya Gopal Ashram at Allengunj where she regularly, once every year, spends two or three days with the family and the disciples of the late Sri Gopal Thakur. At about 5.30 p. m. she came to the *Ardha-Kumbha Mela* at the Triveni, where a camp had been arranged for our Ashram. Mataji remained until about 9 p. m. and then returned to Allengunj. She seemed to enjoy the atmosphere of the Kumbh where so many mahātmās and sādhus and such masses of lay people had gathered for the sake of *satsang*. Recitation of the Rāmāyana, Kirtana, Rāsila and religious discourses could be heard over the loud-speakers. Mataji remarked: "Even if one does nothing at all, one is bound to hear God's name at least!"

The whole of the next day, Mataji remained in Satyagopal Ashram. Kalyani, Sri Gopal Thakur's daughter, performed her usual very impressive *pūja*. Mrs. Rajen Nehru came for Mataji's *darśana*. On the 21st morning, Mataji shifted to 31, George Town, where she has a small cottage at the residence of the family of late N. N. Mukerji. The Vice-President of India, Sri G. S. Pathak with some members of his family paid her a visit there and again the next day in the Mela grounds. In the afternoon Mataji

drove to the Kumbh. It was cold and raining. Mataji walked about in the rain. The next day the sun shone brightly.

Our camp had been started before January 10th, as a number of the grown-up girls of our Ashram did "*Kalpavāsa*" for one whole month, beginning from January 10th. Swami Paramananda was himself in charge of the camp. The girls stayed in straw huts, preparing their own meals in a tin-shed, bathing daily in the Ganges and spending the whole day in spiritual practices and *satsang*, listening to discourses of various mahātmās, to kirtanas, etc. On February 22nd, Mataji came and occupied her pretty little hut at the camp also during the night. A fairly large pandal had been provided for *satsang*. Mataji gave *darśana* very frequently, answering questions for long hours. Many sādhus came to discuss their problems with Mataji. People of all classes and walks of life crowded into our camp, eagerly waiting for Mataji's *darśana* : officers, police staff, rich people clad in silks and jewels, poor people in rags, and so forth. A number of well known Mahātmās, whose camps were not far off, came to see Mataji at various times : Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachari, Sri Swami Vishnu Ashram, Sri Swami Sadananda of Paramartha Niketan, Rishikesh, Sri Chakarpaniji of Vrindaban, Sri Swami Govind Prakash of Ramatirtha Ashram, Sri Jogesh Brahmachari of Calcutta and others. Late one night a group of sādhus and lay-members of the Vijai Krishna Matt, Calcutta had a long talk with Mataji. Members of the "Krishna Consciousness Society," a Vaiṣṇava organisation that has opened branches all over Europe and America, came several times; among them Americans dressed as Vaisnavas, carrying rosaries in little bags and with sandalwood marks on their foreheads and down their noses. They presented some of their publications to Mataji. An old Sikh sādhu, called Vahiguru Maharaj talked to Mataji very enthusiastically about

Sri Haribabaji. The Rāsalila was performed in several places at the Kumbh. Sri Haribabaji had been so keen on it. Now that he has left his body, others have taken it up, the fruit of his endeavours.

The Commissioner of Allahabad, Sri R. K. Trivedi, the son of an old devotee, came right in the beginning of Mataji's stays, offering his services.

From January 26th to February 3rd a Bhāgavata Saptah was held in the pandal of our camp which had been specially decorated for the occasion. Sri Nityananda Bhatt of Vrindaban officiated as the reader and expounder.

On January 28th and 29th Mataji spent the nights at 31, George Town, but returned to the Mela every morning. On January 29th, Kumari Puja was performed to three Kumaris, representing Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati. Just as all preparations had been completed, Sri Prabhu-datt Brahmachari happened to come along and at Ma's request performed the Puja very beautifully. That evening Sri Swami Ananda arrived and gave a talk.

On January 30th evening, Sri. G. S. Pathak and his youngest daughter-in-law came to take Mataji to his residence where Saraswati Pūja was performed the next morning (Vasant Panchami day) in Mataji's presence. Like last year on the same occasion, a lovely hut had been erected for the pūja and a pandal for the audience. The daughters of the house had taken immense trouble over the preparations. The pūja was grand and inspiring. In spite of traffic restrictions, over a hundred people attended and stayed to partake of the Devi's *prasāda* at midday. The same day Mataji returned to the camp.

On the February 1st, Sri Krishna's birth was narrated in the course of the Bhāgavata Saptah. To celebrate it there was special *bhoga* and distribution of sweets. In the

evening a Rasalīla party from Vrindaban gave a performance in our pandal in Mataji's presence.

On February 2nd, Mataji accepted an invitation to Sri Jogesh Brahmachari's camp and had her midday meal there. On February 3rd she went by car to the Triveni. But she did not bathe there as she had done on former occasions, she just put her feet into the water.

On the 4th morning Kumari Pūja and Gopal Puja were performed to a small girl and a small boy. The same day Mataji left Allahabad by car for Varanasi. On her way she stopped for a while at Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachari's Ashram at Jhusi.

The Ashramites who had to complete their *Kalpavāsa* remained at the camp until February 10th with Swamis Paramananda and Satchidananda in charge.

At Varanasi Mataji stayed for one week in her tiny room on top of the Kanyapith, where she enjoys a certain amount of privacy. She hardly descended. On the 11th she boarded the train to Hardwar, reaching Kankhal on the 12th. On February 15th her sojourn there was interrupted by a short visit to Dehradun, where she remained for four days, spending the first and last day at Kishenpur and the two days in between at Raipur. One of the newly built rooms on the uppermost storey of the girls' department at Kishenpur was designated as "Silence Room." The girls are taking turns, staying in it one at a time, for a few days each, in seclusion, keeping silence without signs, gestures or writing—except in cases of extreme emergency—cooking their own meals in the adjoining kitchen and spending all their time in *japa*, meditation, contemplation, silent reading of scriptures. The practice was begun in Mataji's presence and is to be continued without a break henceforth.

On February 19th, Mataji and a fairly large party returned to Kankhal, where Śivarātri was celebrated in the night of February 23rd. In the evening of the same day the Siva temple of the Ashram was reconsecrated by a short ceremony, since its walls, inside as well as outside, had been covered with marble. The *vīgrahas* that for a few months had been worshipped in one of the rooms in the Ashram, were re-installed in the temple, which now is extremely beautiful. The Mahaśivarātri night pūjā had to be held under a canvas roof in the open space in front of the temple. Fortunately only fifty to sixty people participated in the pūjā, so that it was just possible to arrange in spite of extreme shortage of space. Last year at Varanasi, where there is ample space, 215 *vratis* had taken part in the pūjā. As always in Mataji's presence, circumstances adjust themselves spontaneously according to necessity. This year, the winter being late, there was an icy wind blowing from the snow-clad mountain peaks, and to the *tapasya* of 36 hours of fast without water and the vigil was added the *tapasya* of sitting up all night in the cold under a thin canvas. However, by Mataji's grace everything proceeded without a hitch and even a few guests, among them two American devotees, sat up all night watching the *pūjā* with great interest and devotion.

The next day most people dispersed, while Mataji herself with a few companions remained at Kankhal until March 7th. Some devotees arrived from distant places and had quiet days with Mataji. Sannyāsis and other inmates of Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh and people from Dehradun and Delhi came for short visits whenever possible.

Sri Haribabaji's disciples had urgently requested Mataji to spend Holi at Bundh, where the *Samādhi Mandir* of the great saint was to be inaugurated on his birthday. Thus, Mataji boarded the train to Delhi on the 7th night

and from there proceeded by car to Anupshahr and the last few miles by jeep to Bundh. Jagadguru Sri Shantananda of the Shankaracharya Math, Sri Krishnananda Avadhutaji, Sri Chakrapaniji, Sri Krishnanandaji from Bombay, Sri Nirmalananda from Karnavas and other Mahatmas had assembled for the occasion. Satsang was held three times daily in a pandal, Mataji usually attending in the mornings and afternoons, but resting in the evenings as her health was not too good. On March 10th at about 6 p.m. the *mandir* was solemnly opened in Mataji presence and *pūjā* performed. It contains a beautiful, like-life statue in sitting posture of Sri Haribabaji Maharaj. The celebrations continued for several days. Mahatmas delivered talks about Sri Haribabaji's life and character. One evening a film depicting various phases from the saint's life was shown for about two hours in Mataji's presence. Kirtana of Mahamantras is performed daily throughout the year by the villagers in Bundh at all times.

Mataji left on March 12th, travelling straight to Kanpur at the request of the Jaipuria family. She remained there for three days, leaving for Varanasi on the 16th. Mataji remained in Varanasi over Vasantipuja, till 6th April and left for Kishenpur the next morning.

Mataji's 75th birth anniversary celebrations are going to be celebrated in Varanasi from May 7th to 13th.

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