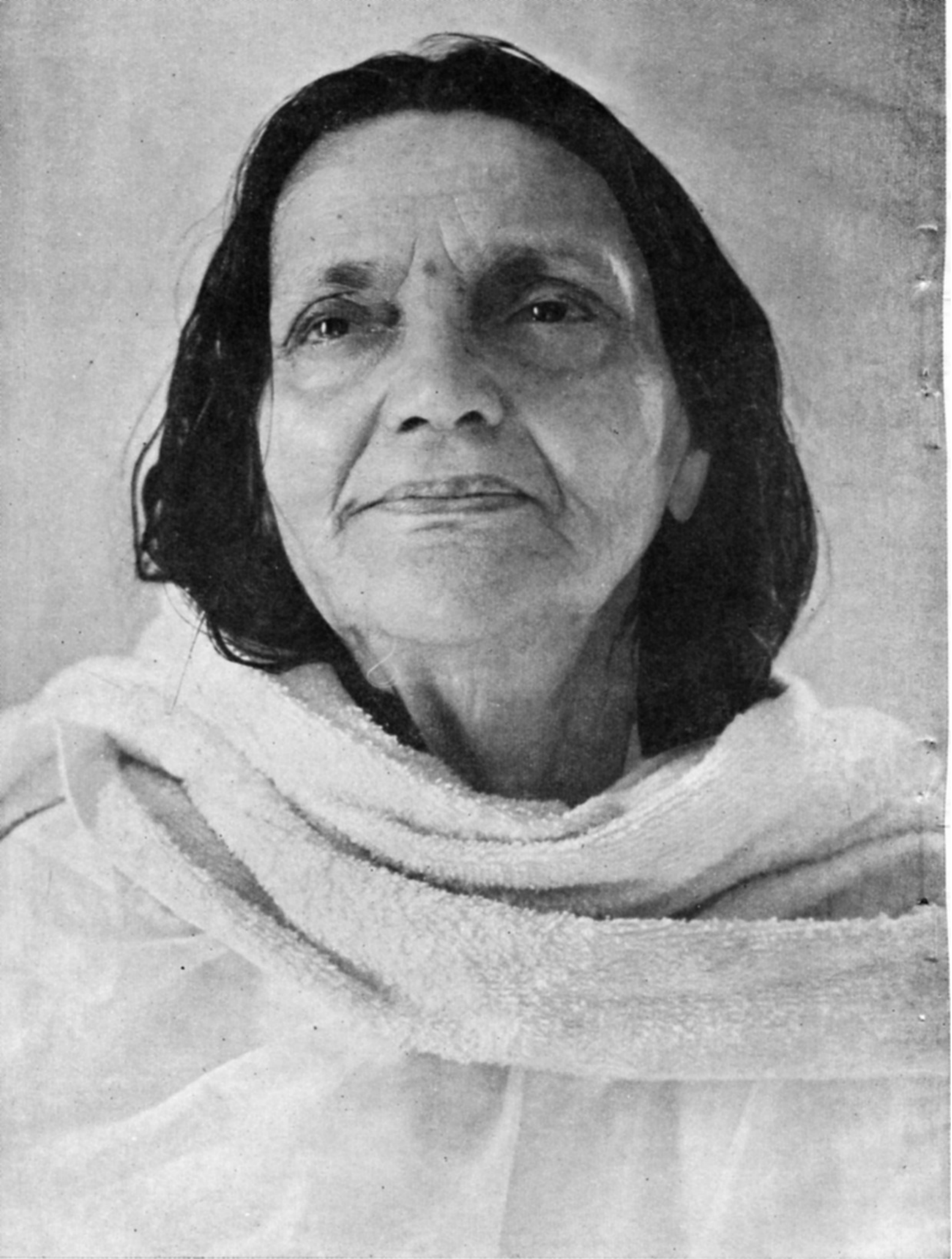


CONTENTS

ENGLISH SECTION

| | | | |
|---|-----|---------------------------|-----|
| 1. Mātri Vāni | ... | ... | 93 |
| 2. Sad Vāni | ... | ... | 96 |
| 3. Ma Anandamayee— <i>Kamakhya Prasad Roy</i> | | | 106 |
| 4. From the Diary of a European | | | |
| | | — <i>Melita Maschmann</i> | 117 |
| 5. Sacred Places of Kashmir, Jammu & Ladhak | | | |
| | | —A Devotee | 129 |
| 6. Mātri Lila | ... | ... | 133 |



Varanasi, May, 1971

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

Mātri Vāni

Due to the non-observance of the one *Brahmacharya Āsrama* the rules of all the other *Āśramas* cannot be kept as they should be : just as without a solid foundation a house cannot be built. '*Āśrama*' signifies absence of strain and toil (*śrama*); and, with the sole exception of God, everything is conducive to strain and toil. Consequently, how can there be rest and ease (*viśrāma*)? If while living in the *Grihasthāśrama* one is serving the Supreme in everyone, this is real and true *āśrama* life. Serve the supreme Lord in your husband, serve the child Kṛṣṇa in your son, serve your wife as a manifestation of *Mahāmāyā*. It is you people who say : "Wherever a man is there is Śiva and wherever a woman, there is Gouri. "Do not attempt to be a ruler in this world, remain a server. The very fact of being a ruler creates complications, while if you can become a server there will be no more trouble. In this manner family life becomes religious life. "I am but His server, acting purely according to His will." If this attitude of mind can be sustained at all times, then, even while living in the householder's *āśrama*, no new ties will be formed. Your *prārabdha* will work itself out, that is all. If you can constantly live your family life in this spirit, what have you to fear? He Himself will put everything right.

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Having obtained the great boon of a human birth, do not waste a single moment. Plants, trees, animals and

birds live for a time and, after generating other plants, trees, animals, birds of their own species, pass away. If you too live in a similar manner, what difference is there between them and yourself ?

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Embrace that which takes you to the goal of human existence and renounce mere sense enjoyment. There is but one family spread out all over the whole world. Thus it is the duty of those who have gone out in search of Truth to regard everything that sādhus do in search of Truth as the various manifestations of their own Iṣṭa or Guru. Thou art Mother, thou art Father, thou art Friend, Beloved, Master : where everything is founded on the One alone, there one single āśrama exists, pervading the entire universe. There is no question of boundary or limit—it is boundless, unlimited. All is of the One, is the One. Only because of duality there is conflict. Blindness and bondage are but the result of the veil of ignorance.

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What is to be done, Mother ? HE lent to you for a time what is His own so that you may serve Him in this manner; and He also stayed with you for a while accepting your ministrations. Then He took His own back again. If tears come to your eyes, cry only for God, for the Beloved. To weep for one who has left this world, sometimes harms that person. One hears of many incidents of this kind. Therefore, it is the duty of the bereaved to remain calm and collected and pray for the spiritual welfare of the deceased. It is He who gives and He who again takes away. Thus, what can man do about it ?

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In all forms and in the formless is but the Guru, the Īṣṭa. At all times, in all places and beyond, aim only at THAT. Days are gliding away; throwing off care and anxiety, fix your mind on God without delay.

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One seed has to be destroyed by sowing another seed, that is to say, by the constant repetition of the seed-mantra, the seed of Karma will be destroyed and then no more new Karma be created.



If the search after Truth is really genuine, one will find favourable circumstances provided by God.

— Mata Anandamayi

Sad Vāni

(Mataji's Teachings as Reported by "Bhaiji.")

(Continued from the last issue.)

61.

God's play in the physical world of action is of a very different nature from that of the psychic world of ideas and sentiments (*bhāva*). The world of action is plainly perceptible and full of activities and disturbances, while in the subtle world of ideas and emotions everything happens in silence and secrecy. If it were otherwise, feelings and thoughts (*bhāva*) could not grow strong; it is this inner force which keeps the world of action going. The source of the Ganges lies in the depths of inaccessible jungle, hidden away from the eyes of men ; yet its life-giving waters irrigate fields and pastures and bring prosperity to the smiling country-side along its shores. It is *bhāva* which is at the root of creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe. Nevertheless, so long as man's bondage of *karma* has not fallen away of itself and he therefore depends on work, it is important to recognize the munificence of action. One who feels the desire to be active cannot attain to the highest Good without engaging in work.

62.

The older you grow in years, the smaller you seem to become under the pressure of worldly cares. You may have come across some saints, who, expecting nothing from

nature or men, filled with all-embracing love, the very embodiment of independance, act as the spirit moves them and are happy and serene under all circumstances. But you, in spite of all your attempts at security in the fortress of secular life, are always frustrated and riddled with fear. Shake yourselves free and try to become really great. By applying in your active day to day life the power received from sages and saints, the world can be improved.

63.

The sense of separation between God and man has continued to exist at all times. God is ever ready to receive man with open arms. But man, entangled in the meshes of his karma is not aware of God's presence within him and, as if blind, neither sees nor even seeks Him. Yet, when the individual becomes engrossed in the search after the Divine, that very pain of separation becomes the causeway leading to union and thereby the flood-gates of Bliss are released. The hope of union is even more delightful than union itself. With increasing faith and devotion one exults ever more in this hope until one's yearning and supplications bring about fulfilment.

Have you never observed, how in the mountains birds are calling to each other from two different summits without ever getting tired? They hear each other's call quite well but derive so much satisfaction out of this love play from a distance, that they never fly near each other. Calling out to God gives itself relief from the temporary pangs of separation. The sense of want and absence is very necessary indeed. The strong impetus to struggle on that the anguish of being divorced from God arouses can never be induced by the recognition that the search after Truth is man's duty. Ever aware of your emptiness, try to fill it by intense aspiration. The deeper you become absorbed

in thoughts of Him, the more will your growing longing for the Divine avert your interests from all other pursuits and bring about complete self-surrender.

64.

“God is everywhere. Why then should we have to call out to Him? Surely, He does not want anything from us!” Words of this kind can often be heard from young and old. Precious gems and metals lie hidden in the interior of the earth. How much strenuous labour is not required to bring them to light! Similarly, although He dwells in every human heart, man must by prayer and meditation, by delving deep into the mysteries of Truth, purify his mind and remove his ignorance, so as to become fit to receive Divine Grace which alone can induce the Supreme Experience. If the above mentioned query arises in anyone’s mind, it is an indication that the desire to find God is stirring in him, be he conscious of it or not. He should therefore rouse himself by all means and turn to God. Don’t you pray but for your own benefit? When, after smarting in the threefold suffering of the world man faces a crisis, then only he implores God for help. How many desire Him purely for His own sake? To start with, most people cry out to God in dire distress. But when their prayers draw a response from Him, however dimly felt, then ever more joy is found in appealing to Him. While living your life in the world endeavour to invoke Him at all times, whether you feel the inclination or not. Trials and tribulations will thereby lose the power to distress you.

65.

“Unless one is blessed with His Grace, is it at all possible to pray to Him?” Such considerations sometimes

serve as an excuse. If His Grace were not upon you at all times you could not even be alive. Take the trouble to examine your life patiently and you will get some idea of His Mercy.

Scattered all over the earth there are innumerable things. In order to collect them and convert them into useful commodities, machines and factories are at work and science is constantly inventing new expedients and gadgets. If with similar zest you put your heart and soul into calling down His Divine Grace, you will very soon become aware of it distinctly and undeniably. He manifests through action. Let your work be prompted solely by pure, unselfish motives; by the force of your prayers the rigid knots that cause your inertia will be undone. You will then be able to see by direct perception that, like sunlight, He pervades everything.

66.

Truly, weakness is man's greatest sin. To avoid any waste of one's physical energy is very important. Food and recreation in moderation give sustenance to the body; purity of thought and aspiration and the remembrance of God provide the right nourishment for the mind. To keep the mechanism of body and mind in good condition makes it easy to find the Self (*Ātmā*) who is their master.

67.

To have continuous water supply in a city, the pumps must be worked day and night. Likewise, in order to keep the heart filled with the sweetness of the Divine Presence, the constant remembrance of Him is essential. If you can at all times remain engrossed in Self-inquiry (*Tatva vichāra*), *japa* or meditation, it is indeed excellent. If not, endeavour by all possible means, such as *kīrtana*, *ṣūjā*,

yajña, the reading of scriptures, visiting temples and shrines, contact with saints and sages, pilgrimages, to keep the thought of God fixed in your mind. Let all your actions be done as an instrument of God; live your life in the world purely in this spirit and all will be well. A person who is able to remember God's Name or His Presence with every breath, day and night, abides in the continual awareness of Him. All his outer activities are then accomplished automatically and effortlessly like the movements of marionettes.

68.

Do you know what real worship is? The expression of man's love of God. When something is boiled in a closed vessel, there comes a stage when the vapour will push up the lid and, unless force is used, the vessel cannot be kept covered anymore. In a similar manner, when, while being engaged in *japa* or some other spiritual exercise, a wave of ecstatic emotion surges up from within, it becomes difficult to check it. This ecstatic emotion is called *bhāva*. It emerges from deep within and expresses itself outwardly. At first it arises only for brief spells but by spiritual practices it is gradually strengthened. For *Mahā-bhāva*, the supreme source of divine love and inspiration is present in every human being and, given the opportunity, it functions freely and spontaneously. In the measure as this state of divine love becomes more constant, the aspirant is vouchsafed a glimpse of his Beloved. Religious practices carried out mechanically, without deep emotion, are like artificial flowers: very beautiful to look at, but devoid of perfume. *Kīrtana* may be performed in great style, the hall almost breaking with the throng of the congregation, but if the singing is without deep feeling (*bhāva*), there will be no response from on high. The Deity answers only to the call of the heart. Therefore it is

imperative to be ever vigilant and make sure that outer observances go hand in hand with single-mindedness and purity of aspiration. Fire kept ablaze with plenty of fuel is bound to shoot up to great heights.

69.

You often declare that the ego is the root of all evil; in actual fact however, this is not so. The sense of "I" implies will-power and self-exertion. While the ego is the cause of birth and death, it also helps towards liberation. The development of the ego and of the spirit of independence has made the individual feel cut off from God. To uproot this sense of separateness, the use of will-power is indispensable. The man who has merged his ego in the Divine or surrendered it completely to God Almighty, the Lord of the universe, may depend on the working of Providence; but a person with a strong sense of self-reliance, who feels that he is the doer, must exert himself in everything he undertakes. So long as intelligence rules man's life, it means that the ego still exists and that he is responsible for his actions and their results. Resign yourself entirely to Him or else be intensely absorbed in Self-inquiry. Although karma may still have to be worked out, by and by the perplexities and problems of the ego will diminish and finally fade away.

70.

Although God is ever present within as well as without, it is necessary to keep His remembrance awake in all one's thoughts and actions. For the tendencies (*saṃskāras*) acquired in countless former births bind man with such force that the Quest of God does not come to him easily. Nevertheless, even wet wood is dried by the heat of fire and finally absorbed by it. Similarly will one's interest in

the objects of sense dwindle more and more by the power of intense contemplation of God, until a glimpse of Him who is All-Bliss gladdens the heart. Thus, along with your worldly pursuits, always try to give at least some thought to Him. I do not ask anyone to leave his family in order to meditate in the jungles. What this body requests of you all is to live your family life according to *dharma*. Just as a treasury without treasure has no value, equally worthless is human life devoid of religion.

71.

“What is destined to happen, will happen” is a perfectly true saying. If you look back on your own life and on the lives of others, you will come to realise how little man himself can do to shape events and how most things depend on the inscrutable law of a hidden power. The universe runs its course in a perfect way according to the Will of the Supreme Father of all. Therefore your maxim of life should be to welcome whatever circumstances God provides for you. The firmer you become established in this spirit, the more complete will be your resignation in God’s Will and by your devotion and faith in the Divine Power the scales will fall from your eyes.

72.

To say that all action is prompted by God’s Will sounds very beautiful; but in actual fact we do most of our work ultimately for sense gratification. This is why success makes us so happy and failure depresses us. A man who is employed by another is not so very concerned whether there is profit or loss as a result of his work. If everything is done exclusively as God’s service, one simply attends to one’s duty without giving a thought to its outcome once it is over. Keeping His remembrance alive from the beginn-

ing to the end of each task, dedicate all action to the Supreme Being and you will be free from care and anxiety.

73.

The Great Mother, *Mahāmāyā*, is the origin of Creation. When the desire arose in Her to play the game of life, She divided Herself into two, namely *Mā* and *Māyā* and entered the stage of the world, concealing Herself in the many forms of *Māyā*. When, hard beaten by the blows of fate, a human being awakens to real intuition, he feels the Presence of the Mother behind the fleeting appearances and sets out in search of Her. Blessed by Her grace, his efforts are crowned with success as he realises Her as the Prime Cause of all creation, *Mahāmāyā*. But this is not the end : experiencing Her as all-pervading, he becomes merged in Her and loses himself in the ocean of *Saccidānanda*, Divine Being-Consciousness-Bliss. Thus he comes to see that, what is called *moha* or *māyā* in the world, is named *Mahāmāyā*, the Great Mother, on the spiritual Path; although their functions are different in manifestation, essentially the two are one. Play the game of the world and you will be captivated by its delights, unwilling to let them go; or, if you take to the spiritual path you will find Supreme Bliss. However, earthly joys are transitory whereas Divine Bliss is eternal. Both have their place : the Stage Manager of the world drama provides for each one what he needs at any particular setting, so that he may gradually be led to his final Goal where will be dispelled the error of the duality of *mohamāyā*, the great illusion, and *Mahāmāyā*, the Great Mother of the Universe.

74.

For how many more days can you live by external light, like that of sun and moon ? When your eyes fail,

when your body becomes feeble with age and your intellect clouded, you will be left to grope in utter darkness. Set to work while there is yet time and try to kindle the inner light. In the hearth of the mind ignite the fire of Self-inquiry or the fire of God's Name; fan it into a blazing flame by associating with the holy and wise, by prayer and meditation. Little by little this light will grow bright and steady and illumine you both inwardly and outwardly; thereby the path to Self-realization will be made easy.

75.

To be active in some cause is called to work; and the work that has to be done by any particular person is called his duty. It is important to think out carefully what exactly is each one's duty. For the householder and the housewife it is to look after his home and family. But if a man feels with overwhelming force that he should leave worldly life in order to devote himself entirely to the Supreme Quest then this becomes his undeniable duty. Consequently there is no absolute standard that can be applied to one and all; each one's duty is determined by circumstances, time, place and the nature of his object in life. That the contemplation of God is the first and foremost duty of every human being has been forgotten by the majority of people. In ancient Hindu society man's life was regulated by division into four *āśramas* (phases) : *Brahmacharya*, the life of a student with the essential condition of conserving the life-force for the sake of ultimate Self-realization; *Grihasthya*, the stage of the householder with its various duties to society; *Vanaprastha*, retirement into solitude for the sake of Divine contemplation; *Sannyāsa*, complete renunciation. But at the present time only the householder's *āśrama* is still in force. Therefore the opportunities that people used to have of preparing themselves

for the highest Goal by worldly experiences as well as by renunciation are not available anymore. Pleasures and enjoyment are sought from beginning to end and the majority of men spend their whole life in worldly pursuits. This is why nowadays far too little thought is given to questions such as : What is the purpose of life ? What is this world and what is the next world ?

"All are God's instruments. What He causes to be done is happening. The meditation, the Name that is most dear to you, this is what you should practise in order to attain to supreme peace and supreme bliss."

— Mata Anandamayi

Ma Anandamayi

as She has allowed me to know Her

Kamakhya Prasad Roy

Mankind, as such, is born with endless limitations; added to these there are man's individual shortcomings, his vagaries and idiosyncrasies, his peculiar bias in favour of this or that doctrine, schism or ism, and moreover many of us succumb to the inevitable narrowness of a dogma, and hold a particular thing as either red or not red, totally dismissing thereby the least possibility of the subject under observation being either green or blue or of any other hue. No wonder therefore, that the highest intellectual among us today, with his somewhat jaundiced eye, renders himself incapable of seeing things in their correct perspective, every thing in its right place, or for the matter of that, as a part related to the whole. When such is our lot, we wonder what tangible benefit we can derive by our attempt to apprehend with any measure of accuracy the unique personality of Ma Anandamayi. It is therefore, with extreme trepidation, I must confess, that I venture to "rush where angels fear to tread".

Without any ceremony let us take a plunge right into the centre of our subject. A word like 'manifestation' or 'emanation' would have been a better substitute for the word 'personality' in this particular case. Yet our choice has been taken with the idea that a word woven round the pattern of our own texture of common use is likely to convey greater conviction in general.

Let us delineate the scope of our discourse in the following points :—

1. Ma is unique.
2. Ma is universal in the widest sense.
3. Her advent, an unprecedented event in time.

1. In his commendable attempt to discuss the subject of Ma's unique personality, which forms the introduction to the book, "Mother As Seen By Her Devotees", Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. G. N. Kaviraj, Padma Vibhushana, observes :

"That Mother's life, even her earliest life, should abound in extraordinary incidents is not surprising—we are accustomed to such incidents in the lives of genuine saints, mystics and yogins. They exist and have their place of honour in these lives. But all these pale into insignificance before the wonderful poise and bliss of her sweet but magnificent personality—a personality which, strong as it is, blends into the Impersonal, nay is utterly undifferentiated from it."

These observations are carried by him to the point of greater conviction on factual basis, as he elucidates his views thus :—

"Among the well-known mystics of the world we seldom find any in whom we do not observe a period of gloom and subjective torture antecedent to the descent of Light. Mother had no experience of darkness in her life, either of the soul or of the spirit nor had she any experience of the descent of Light except as a matter of play. It is said that from her very birth she was aware of what she had ever been and what she would always continue to be and that there was no possibility of a deviation from her self-conscious stature for a single moment.

"Her self-knowledge, we are assured, did not arise under the impact of an extrinsic element outside of herself.

It was always with her, being a state of her nature. It was there already in its fulness, requiring no effort on her part, nor any grace from above, to bring it into greater perfection.'

Those who are acquainted with the available biographical works about Ma, may have noticed that all the facts in support of the observations recorded above are drawn from authentic sources like Gurupriya Devi's 'Sri Sri Ma Anandamayl' (Compiled in 14 Vols.)* or 'Matri Darshan' by 'Bhaiji', rendered into English under the title "Mother As Revealed To Me". Now that we have a little idea of the wonderful personality of Ma as far as Her blissful poise and Her unimpaired state of illumination from Her very birth are concerned, let us try to understand something of Her ways and behaviour towards those around Her.

Mother's ways are really strange. Though She never delivers lectures or sermons, yet those who approach Her with sincerity of purpose, seldom are disappointed when seeking a solution of their multitudinous problems in Her mere presence, either directly evincing a reply or by means of various other methods, all of which broadly fall under the following category, cited as an instance from a recent biographical work on Ma by Bithika Mukerji :

"Some years ago, in a general *Satsang* Mataji was answering questions put to her by various members of the congregation. People who were familiar with the general trend of her answers to typical questions were surprised to notice that she was branching off into new channels and using unusual phrases and terminology. The difference was not so much in the quality of her answers as in the way of expressing them, so much so that people at a loss to follow her thoughts, desisted, thinking that she must be in one of her cryptic and unfathomable moods. Mataji,

* In Hindi 17 volumes have been published.

on her part, went on elaborating her points, giving a wealth of details. At the end of the meeting two men came forward and bowed down to her saying that they were Buddhist 'Bhiksus' who had come for her *darsana* from afar. They were specially gratified to find her elaborating on the very problem which had been exercising their minds, for long."

Though we have now just a glimpse of Mā's uniqueness in the context of the little that can be discussed within the scope of a short article, we have yet to add another point of vital importance, that is likely to be of some help in understanding this particular aspect of Her.

It is expressed by her amusing reply to those who have the boldness to confront Ma with words as these, "Tell us Mother, what you really are?" Lo! instantly comes a response from Her, with her usual beaming smile, sometimes with her palms joined together in the shape of an unpetalled lotus: "বাবা, তুমি যা মনে কর আমি তাই" "Father, whatever you consider me to be, that I am." Sometimes she would further add: "একটু বেশিও নই, কমও নই" "Neither more, not less than that".

Yet again, she is found to give such a twist to these terse and playful words as to say, "মনে করনা, এই শরীরটা যা'তা" Now, in the two monosyllabic words '*ja ta*' is probably mysteriously condensed the quintessence of Mā's real nature, for, though rendered into English, this stands for "it is what it is", (translation by Kaviraj Mahāśaya), in Sanskrit it may rightly be rendered as "*Tat Sat*", alluding thereby to the Absolute or the *Brahman*. But mark, how dexterously Ma here makes use of her words in the manner of a pun—the real import of the words "যা'তা" (*ja ta*) getting lost in the camouflage of the single word "যা'তা" a very homely word in the colloquial Bengali dialect, meaning: of absolutely no consequence—anything that is of no worth at all.

A little further meditation on this point is likely to reveal the other side of the truth contained within this cryptic assertion directly coming from Ma, as to what She really is. Precisely it is this : In whatever manner we may try to apprehend Mother, we can never do so in the totality of Her real nature, rendering each of our ventures to achieve success, in a way incomprehensive. Nevertheless, our knowledge of Ma, even as a result of such an enquiry circumscribed by our individual approach is not at the same time, completely false, for, each individual sees in her only what he can see with his own particular conditioning at that moment—the possibility of endless variations of results obtainable by a single enquirer even, as he takes his stand variously on different levels of time and space, still remaining there.

That Ma is an inexhaustible source of enquiry as well as of inspiration, is abundantly borne out by the particular aspect of Her manifestation that we have tried to hint at so far.

2. We now pass on to our enquiry about the second part of our subject, that of Ma's Universality, in the widest sense of the term.

We should like to take into consideration the following words of Ma spoken at different times, that will shed, we believe, more light on the issue than we could expect to do by mere speculation.

(a) Gurupriya Didi records in her second vol. of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi (P. 51) that Ma has often expressed in clear and unequivocal terms : "Whatever you see (here) is just a sport, a play to this body. In fact, this body has not the least relation or tie with anybody whatsoever."

(b) One day again, Ma is reported to have said to *Didima*, Her own mother : "Look, had there been the slightest bit of preferential treatment for you on the ground

of our relationship, I would have long ago left all of you. This body has just the same consideration for those who are related to it as for those who are not. As I feel no difference, I live with all of you. Whom to forsake or whom to adopt ? To me all are equal."

This, presently calls to memory an incident that is recorded from the life of Jesus Christ. Some time in the beginning of his public ministrations, when Jesus' parents were not yet accustomed to the homeless অনিকেত truant's incessant wanderings from North to South and East to West of the promised land of the Jews, the young visionary, mindful to set the disarrayed house of His Heavenly Father in order, was one day discovered by his anxious mother and brothers, who were searching for him. Let us reproduce this incident as recorded in the Gospel of St. Mark :

"And the multitude sat about him and they said unto him, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

"And he answered them saying, Who is my mother or my brethren ?

"And he looked round about on them which sat about him and said, Behold my mother and my brethren !

"For whosoever shall do the will of God the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."*

The inner meaning of Ma's significant words concerning Her personal relationship could hardly have been better explained than by the above incident from the life of Jesus Christ, in whom we find quite a close resemblance to Ma in many respects. (This subject is expected to provide a study of enlivening and absorbing interest all by itself, and may therefore be set apart for a future occasion.)

As regards Mother's Universality both in Her words and conduct, we should like to quote the following dialogue to substantiate our views more convincingly.

* Mark III, 32-35.

It was an occasion of *Satsāṅg*, held at our Ranchi Ashram some years back, when the present writer begged of Mother an answer to the following query :

“Mother, even though it has been the lot of a few of us to find ourselves close to Her at times, (merely physically though), we yet know this for certain that we are not closer to Her than any of Her children who have not yet had the occasion to reach Her in a similar manner. I pray therefore that Mother would tell us whether this is so, because there has not been anybody around worthy of being chosen as Her অন্তরঙ্গ *antārang* (belonging to the inner circle), or if it is because She does consider none of Her numberless children as belonging to the বহিঃরঙ্গ “*bahirang*” outer circle ?

Mother, immediately waving Her hand towards the image of Mother Kali installed in the temple, spoke with a melodious voice, “Why not ask Mother, if She considers any of her children as belonging to Her outer circle ?”

There was another occasion, in February, '68, when about eight or ten of us one morning reached our Vindhya-chal Ashram, and a little later Ma arrived there from Allahabad. After She had had a wash and a short rest, we soon found ourselves called to Her ever-blissful presence. For a short while, we all sat in a quiet, receptive mood in an atmosphere charged with the presence of one whose love knows no bounds. Slowly, and with the softly punctuated music of Her words, Mother broke that wonderful silence, saying, “You all love this body so much that you often come to see me, unmindful of the long distance that many of you have to travel. Yet, it is true that this body has no relationship with any of you except the kinship of the *Ātmā* which this body enjoys equally not only with each of you, but even with all the trees, creepers and the foliage, around, as well as with rocks, mountains and everything else”. As She uttered these words, which resounded like an echo from the fathomless depths of Her Being, She waved Her

hand from side to side, the effect of which was probably felt by all present who experienced a rare felicity and bliss. And, many of us know from our direct experience, that, an occasion like this truly bears testimony to Paramahansa Yogānanda's beautiful tribute paid to Her as one, "Ever carrying within her heart the portable paradise".

We have by now a modest understanding that the blissful Mother is not only the Mother of all mankind but of all created things as well, by virtue of Her unfailing kindred feeling for all and everything, irrespective of any man-made partition or barrier. That She neither appears as a teacher or preacher, nor plays the role of an *Avatāra* even, minimizing thereby the possibility of being claimed by a select coterie of like-minded adherents only—which, by and large, tends to form an exclusive group—makes Her all the more interesting to people belonging to diverse schools of thought, religious sects and callings, so that none ever finds it difficult to accept Her as ideally universal all by Herself, in the true sense of the word.

3. Coming to the last phase of our enquiry, we may straightaway suggest that by the very fact that Mā's manifestation in Her present form is understood as unique and universal, we are already prepared to accept this wonderful phenomenon as an unprecedented event in time. We should nonetheless, take the following into consideration, and leave the entire issue to the verdict of the discerning intellect, even on the basis of what little of our inexhaustible subject we could deal with.

Here is a record of a dialogue between Sri Paramahansa Yogānanda and Ma that took place in Calcutta in the year 1935.*

* Chapter 45 of "The Autobiography of a Yogi" by Paramahansa Yogananda.

In reply to the repeated request of Sri Paramahansa Yogānanda to tell him something of Her life, She is quoted to have said :

“Father, there is little to tell”. She spread her graceful hands in a deprecatory gesture, “My consciousness has never associated itself with the temporary body. Before I came to this earth, Father, ‘I was the same’. As a little girl ‘I was the same’. I grew into womanhood, but still ‘I was the same’, and, Father, in front of you, now, ‘I am the same’. Ever afterwards though the dance of creation change around me in the hall of eternity, ‘I shall be the same’.”

In reply to one of the delegates of the Indian Philosophical Congress, held at Dacca in 1929, who asked Ma : “If the human character changes and everybody becomes unselfish, will the world then become perfect ?” She said unhesitatingly with a smile, “But such it is already”.

The report of the meeting of those delegates with Ma also merits due consideration. Needless to say, it was a gathering of very learned men, and besides, in the chronicler of this incident himself, Dr. Mahendra Nath Sircar, we have a philosopher of repute :

“...All the delegates assembled at Ma’s house. A professor of the Wilson College led the discussion that lasted for three hours”, continues Dr. Sircar, “all kinds of questions were put, mostly philosophical and Anandamayī was ready with answers spontaneously and immediately. There was no hesitation, nor the least conscious thinking, nor the least sign of nervousness in Her. Her answers hit directly the point, free from metaphysical technique.” The learned chronicler further adds that all present, were very much impressed by, “the profundity of Her wisdom, the fluency of Her expression and the luminosity of the smile on her face.”

Yet, this was virtually the very beginning, rather the preparatory stage of Ma's coming out into the world. She was hardly 33 at that time, according to our reckoning of age, of course. It seems therefore, that the above-mentioned episode pays a more eloquent tribute to Mother's profound sway even over the most learned audience, than the words spoken so beautifully, though much later, by a western savant, Prof. Jean Herbart in an article "LOVE, WISDOM AND JOY", published in the book "Mother As Seen by her Devotees".

"The Wisdom of Ma Anandamayi is not the knowledge found in books, always incomplete and hesitant, which all the time discovers yet unexplored regions, stumbles over contradictions, destroys its hypotheses in order to set up new ones and is not concerned whether its achievements lead to benefit or to cataclysm. Nor is it ethereal vision, born out of ecstasy, which has no connection with the world in which other human beings live and struggle. It is wisdom which at the same time embraces the most arduous metaphysical subjects, the most agonizing problems of morality as well as the smallest details of daily life; which sees everything in its place and in its right relation, because it knows the Reality of which our world is an appearance and of which all beings, all facts, all becoming are but partial and changing manifestations, distorted by our senses and our thoughts, and to these also She has the key. This Wisdom has a clear and intimate knowledge of all that is, because it is firmly based on Joy which overcomes all conflict and on Love which realizes all unity."

To whatsoever length we may go on elaborating our points, since it remains to be said that with the imperfect faculty of our understanding we can hardly do justice to the subject we have tried to deal with, it is better to join our voice with the muse who sings the glory of this unique

phenomenon that is Ma Anandamayi, in the following verses :

“From infancy we heard of mother Īnd’s
Long dynasties of sages high and hoary;
Yet in our Pantheons one seldom finds
A saintly woman’s form haloed with glory.

“We sing of the Gopies’ Krishna-love sky-vast,
In the Vedas women wrote great hymns, we claim;
But when a woman harks back to the past,
We are vexed and never can find for it a name !

“So Thou art born to us, O Damsel deep,
With wisdom and love divine, and with Thy sure
Answers and raptures make even stalwarts weep
And pandits laugh—one knows not with what lure !

“O mystic Minstrel holding the Wizard’s Wand !
O Envoy of the Ethereal to Clay !
Teach us until our minds can understand
Thy gospel of *Ananda*, and come to stay !”*

* From Sri Dilip Kumar Roy’s poem “Mā Ānandamayi”, published in the Jayanti Souvenir on the occasion of Mā’s Diamond Jubilee Celebration, at Varanasi in 1956.

From the Diary of a European

Melita Maschmann

Kanpur, November, 1970.

When I entered the corridor leading to the hall, there was nobody except C. She was sitting on one of the cushioned benches with her knees drawn up. The complete repose of her attitude struck me because at the same time it expressed the highest degree of concentration. As I came nearer I saw that she was in *dhyāna*, as if enveloped in a cocoon of silence.

Just as I was going to sit down at the other end of the bench, Mataji came with quick steps from her room and stopped right in front of C.

At that time near about two hundred people were waiting before the house and in the hall for Mataji's *darśana*. All the doors were open but no one seemed to notice it. Now and again I have observed similar situations: in the midst of the jungle of an impatient crowd some kind of peaceful opening is created, outside of which the pushing throng is held back by an invisible hand until what is to happen has happened.

Mataji and C. stood alone within such an opening, chance had brought only myself close by; this sort of chance, when it occurs in connection with Mataji, is always an act of Providence. Having experienced something similar several times before, I did not leave the two of them alone, although my sense of tact demanded it.

Mataji stood before C., quietly looking down at her face. Slowly and with some effort C. rose. Only after she

had stood in front of Mataji for a while—with her head slightly tilted to one side, still enveloped in the aura of her meditation—she opened her eyes. Her eyelids were raised and lowered several times before her gaze rested on Mataji, calmly and without astonishment. What she had just seen with the eyes of her soul, she now perceived with her bodily eyes; there was no difference, the inner and the outer were one.

On Mataji's face and on her own was the same stillness, in both pairs of eyes a like composure, an attentive receptivity, an earnest joy and the peace of superpersonal love. But not a flicker of emotion. Even the realm in which dwell our most sublime feelings was transcended.

In some temples I have come across images of Krishna and Radha where God and the human soul inflamed with love for Him were of a striking likeness.

While I let my eyes wander to and fro between their two faces, Mataji's lips suddenly moved. She uttered a fairly long sentence but not the faintest sound could be heard. C. listened attentively and replied with a slight nodding. For the fraction of a second I felt pierced by a sharp pain. It shot through me in the shape of the thought: "Never, never can you attain to such a measure of intimacy with Mataji. Only the common tradition makes such soundless conversations possible. Being a foreigner, you will always....."

Mataji's glance touched me with such rapidity that I hardly noticed it. The response it called forth in me, I heard as if with her voice: "Why do you allow your arrogance to deceive you? God comes as Krishna only to the soul that loves Him as Radha."

Every sincere stirring of humility opens a door. Many years ago this sentence fascinated me although I knew that I did not really understand it. It comes to my mind while

writing this. Many of my half-realizations have been made whole by Mataji. When I saw her standing before C. that day, accepting that I did not deserve a partnership of this kind, I felt nothing but joy. We three stood in the opening : Krishna and Radha and the third one, for whom the outer distance was but a mode of closeness and her own imperfection, the condition which allowed her, to recognize perfection.

New Delhi, October, 1970.

To a person educated in the west, for whom thinking represents one of the highest human functions, it comes as a shock, when he is made to realize that he must practise austerity by controlling his insatiable desire to think. I remember the long list of philosophical questions with which for several years I taxed Mataji's precious time and patience because I felt, that 'to be or not to be' depended on their solution. While these questions seemed of the most vital importance to me then, I have now forgotten them all. When the real relationship with the Guru has been established, renunciation becomes easier : The passion for philosophical argumentation dies away like the passion for smoking.

Of course, one does not stop thinking philosophically altogether but it does not happen anymore in a mood of obsession, and it is not coupled with pride, with the claim of being essentially different from a sort of superior football. By and by the quality of one's thinking changes. It is transferred to deeper levels of consciousness.

Formerly I was simply burning to define Mataji's identity. I must have expected to achieve some higher peace by putting the right label on her. Now I am satisfied with the conviction that the human and the divine are mysteriously united in her to a living perfection, and I accept the identity, which she gives to herself : "This little child".

Jesus said : "Lest you become like little children," and the lives of great Christian saints have proved like Mataji's life that highest perfection and complete simplicity are one.

If one opens oneself to Mataji's influence, one's thinking, as far as it is occupied with her, becomes part of Being. Questions and answers have to be lived. Merely to think them is not enough. For instance the question : Is there suffering in Mataji's life ? My Indian friends usually reply in the negative, declaring that Mataji is Brahman and Brahman is equal to *Sat—Chit---Ananda* (Being, Consciousness-Bliss.) This is surely true. But it is not true anymore if we misunderstand it in the way of the young man who told me one day rather arrogantly : "Ma never has pain and is never tired !" I had asked him, to come back for the general *darśana* in the evening. Ma was resting. The night before, she had been troubled by tooth-ache and had told us in the morning, that she had not slept for one moment. Like this young man we all at times succumb to the temptation to simplify difficult problems by fitting them into the scheme of what we have been taught. I remember the warning of a friend of mine, an Indian Professor who had lectured on comparative religion, and who finished his lecture saying : "Ready-made replies from the Christian point of view do not convince me any more than those from the Hindu angle." The only expedient against such hasty conclusions is *darśana* : to contemplate the problem again and again patiently until the inner truth reveals itself.

May be *ānanda* is the innermost essence of holiness. Ecstatic joy is one of the established conceptions also in the Christian hagiography. Catherine of Sienna, who was one of the most prominent Christian medieval saints, a great ecstatic and at the same time a great active, at once politician, teacher and contemplative, called "the mother of thousands of souls," changed the course of history by rejuvenating religion. About her I recently read that during a serious illness "she was full of laughter, in the

Lord exultant and rejoicing.'* Reports about Mataji's illnesses sound very similar.

If it is true that joy is the essence of sanctity, the truth of suffering in the mystic life is thereby not annulled. There is nothing more paradox than the life of a God-man and no form of existence flouts all analysis more than His.

It is surely due to my Christian background that I seem to have a keener perception of Mataji's suffering than many of my Hindu friends. But this only stresses a different aspect, it does not produce hallucinations. The Bible tells us, that Christ a few minutes before his death cried aloud : "God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Nailed to the cross he did not only suffer the most terrible physical pain but also the deepest agony of soul. This is difficult to understand. Not only for Non-Christians, also for Christians. We all prefer to see a divine incarnation full of strength and glorious power. Christian theology looks upon these strange facts as the proof that Christ was not only God but at the same time a real man destined to experience the most cruel human suffering. Seeing things from this angle there can be no doubt that highest mystical perfection can go together with suffering.

A few years ago during one of Mataji's *darśanas*, I suddenly saw Christ's tortured body in the place where Mataji was sitting. Superficial consciousness would unhesitatingly call this a hallucination. I believe that what I saw was an illustration of the truth, that suffering is a part of the God-man's life.

It would serve no purpose if I tried here to analyse by conceptual thinking joy and suffering in the mystic life. The result would be as unsatisfactory as the chemical analysis of a painting by Leonardo da Vinci.

* E. Gardner : "Saint Catherine of Sienna" p. 48.

Obviously different cultures put their stress on different aspects where they meet with the mystical phenomenon. But speculations about the question as to which aspect reveals the "truer truth" do not penetrate into the centre from any side. We can only approach the innermost secret in an attitude of adoration. The temptation which makes us judge, binds us once for all to the surface of things.

If cultures stress different aspects, why not also the individual? Although I seem to perceive more suffering in Mataji's life than her Hindu followers do, yet I do believe with them that the essence of her being is *ānanda*. But that does not mean that her body has no experience of human suffering and of the process of aging.

We are told that Christ suffered as we suffer. But Christians believe, that he, having transformed his human body into a body of divine light, went home to his Father (God), with whom he was united in eternal bliss (*ānanda*).

Mataji says : "THERE everything is *ānanda*." Who of us may dare to interpret this 'THERE'? I guess nobody. We can only look on it as a divine secret. The longer I contemplate it, the more I feel, that in this very secret all contradiction comes to an end. 'THERE' is beyond time! Christ's life on earth in a human body was in time, but he was not only a man, suffering like a man, but also God. That is, why he was eternally 'THERE,' where everything is *ānanda*, as Mataji teaches us. The mystic existence — God-man — is here and 'THERE' at the same time. This is the reason why He does not suffer while suffering.

I have already mentioned that questions concerning Mataji are transferred more and more from our thinking into our being. The question whether suffering exists for Mataji is important for me in a very concrete sense : It is I who am causing Mataji's suffering by my egocentric existence which is alienated from God. Sometimes I feel

this with great intensity during *daršana* time, whenever there is nobody amongst us who can break loose from the tight clasp of his ego; nobody in whom the yearning for God is stronger than all other desires. How often we let Mataji starve in this way! In lieu our hunger for God is transformed into bread. She lives by giving us the bread that appeases our hunger for God. But even in the presence of this bread, how frequently do we not crave for impure nourishment! Whatever we may desire, if it is less than God, it is less than what Mataji wishes to give us.

Mataji's sudden transformations! Most of us will have first-hand experience of how within a second she throws off all fatigue and starts radiating from within with a beauty that is ageless. A single outcry of real hunger in us (even if not voiced) is sufficient to fill her hands with real bread. The history of our numerous unreal kinds of hunger is the history of the passion of beings who live in oneness with God and want to administer to us; but alas! our hands are full of brittle toys. Mystics of all religions have assured us at times that God has need of us. For the ordinary person this is hardly comprehensible. Should God perhaps be in need of his friends (as the saints are often called) in a similar way in which Mataji 'needs' us, 'needs' our hunger, the appearing of which is her sustenance?

Solan, September, 1970

Among the people who came for *daršana* this evening there was a young woman who, at the first sounds of the *kirtana* went into a state of complete physical rigidity. For more than an hour she did not budge, although she was squatting at the edge of a threshold in a most uncomfortable position, which normally no one could have

endured for more than five minutes. The expression of her face disclosed the condition of her nerves : they must have been strained to breaking like the high strings of a musical instrument. When the *darśana* was over, I asked her husband : "Don't you think your wife needs Mataji's help ?" "She is in *samadhi*," he said somewhat self-complacently. "As soon as she hears *kirtana*, but even otherwise without any obvious reason she enters this state."

A little later Mataji came. With a smile she bent over the young woman, saying : "What is your name ?" A slight movement stirred the rigid body, as if it were trying to bow down. Mataji carressed the head of the benumbed woman with a loving robustness. At the same time she was laughing in a way that made me think : "Now Mataji infuses courage into that portion of the woman's consciousness which is struggling for its release." The woman's shoulders began to jerk, then the upper part of her body cringed as if in severe pain and she wailed loudly. Then it seemed as if she felt caught in a heavy, net, trying desperately to free herself from its meshes. Thereafter, as yet half unconscious, she did *praṇāma*, her eyes opened, a benumbed smile appeared on her face and she giddily attempted to rise.

All along Mataji had watched the young woman attentively, while the expression of her face disclosed that she understood precisely the mysterious occurrences in the woman's body and soul. "No, don't believe that the spirit of a dead person possesses you," Mataji said later, after the woman (now fully conscious) had declared that she believed such an obsession to be the cause for her strange states. "It is not true that you are compelled to lose self-mastery. If you use your will, you can control at every moment what is happening within you."

Probably the young couple had, somewhat anxiously, yet with a certain amount of self-complacency observed

what had taken place for months whenever she would fall into a meditative mood. Now Mataji, with her gentle and yet shrewd sensitivity spent a whole evening to show them a path that was free from dangers. Gradually the strain in the woman's face loosened, and then the expression of disappointment that she had been unable to hide, also vanished. One could feel how she gave in and opened herself, ready to be guided. To retrace her steps and start again at the beginning, taking a safe path along which one's inner balance can be preserved, while proceeding—perhaps with very small steps, yet with great intensity—towards the goal.

Suktal, November, 1970.

On my way to the hall I met Mataji, leaning heavily on Indra's arm and with such tired steps that I began to reflect anxiously, how very rarely she had had time to rest a little during the last weeks.

When in the overcrowded hall I had been able to occupy my place, there was unmistakable movement at the front door on the left. I could scarcely believe my eyes: Mataji had come—I should almost like to say *leaping* into the hall. Only a few moments before, I had seen her near the gate of the extensive Ashram. I asked myself whether Mataji could fly. The two high steps that led up to the dais she took with the ease of a young girl. At the same time she looked back over her shoulder right at my face and chuckled. Then she sat down, still laughing, and with folded hands greeted the Mahatmas, bowing full of dignity and grace.

During the discourse that followed, Mataji's body moved almost imperceptibly but without interruption in a quiet, swinging rhythm and there was a relaxed expression of serenity and peace on her face. Observing her gentle movements unconsciously, I fell into a daydream:

I was sailing in a boat on a calm lake, the cloudless sky above me, and at the bottom of the clear water the soundless, gliding fish. If I remember rightly, it was the laughing of my neighbour that made me start up. Someone had put a question to Mataji and she had, with the quickness of lightning replied with a single word: "Hari!" (God.) Thereafter she sat quite still in front of us, her head thrown back, and it seemed as if she looked at us from a great distance and found it difficult to recognize us. Suddenly she bent forward almost vehemently and a torrent of words gushed from her lips. At the same time her face shone with childlike joy. I did not understand what she said but a short phrase occurred again and again; and it sounded like an exultation: "*Wohin to hain, wohin to hain!* He alone is, He alone!"

When she became silent, her head moved backwards once more, and while her eyes were scanning the hall as if she were looking for someone, her face assumed that peculiarly strained expression of attentiveness. Perhaps she felt or thought: "From where I am now it is difficult to see you distinctly, my dear friends."

Interrupting her silence, one of the younger sādhus asked a question. The sequence of a little while ago repeated itself. Mataji's gaze returned to itself, as it were, her head bent forward and another torrent of words followed without interval, almost vehemently and as if imbued with laughter in which glistened tears of joy. Again: "*Wohin to hain, Bhagavan, kitna sunder, kitna sunder!* He alone is, God, how beautiful, how beautiful!" and for the third time these exalted words of highest rapture with raised hands and a beaming face: "God—how beautiful!" To all questions the one reply: "He alone IS, God, His indescribable beauty!"

Her beauty, visible to our poor eyes, was His beauty: the reflection of eternal lustre on a face apparently of the stuff our faces are made of,

I could not understand what the people were asking but I understood the one reply that possessed Mataji: "God, He, He alone, His eternal beauty?"

A little later Sri Akhandanandaji got up and excused himself, as he had an appointment. I had observed him. He found it difficult to leave. Not for a second had he taken his eyes off Mataji. Very likely he saw the divine radiance on her face clearer and with greater lustre than we could.

Mataji raised herself onto her knees and made a few steps like a child, then she got up swiftly and walked towards the Mahātmā. "He alone is in everything, only He!" she said, with undiminished exultation in her voice, "In Babaji also is only He!"

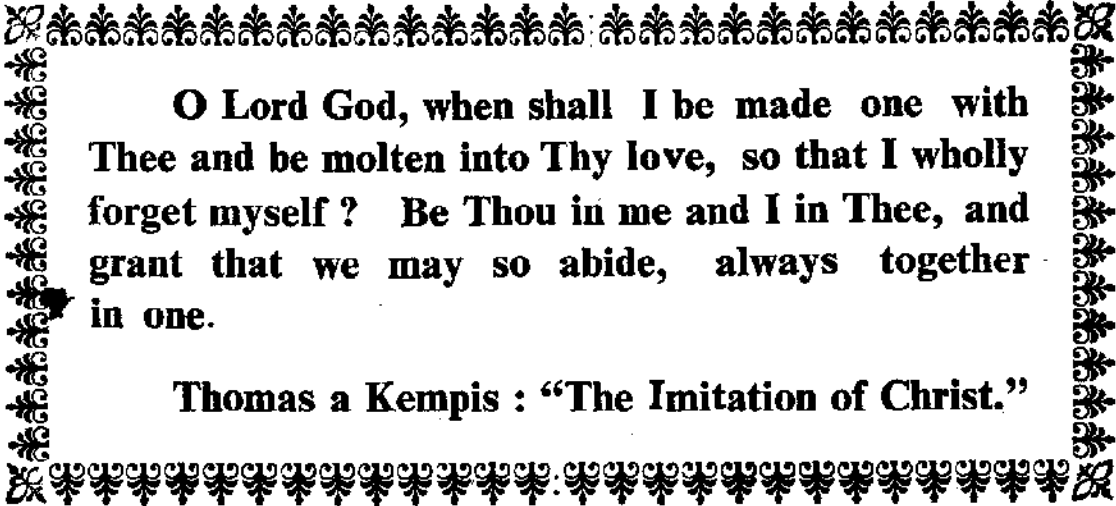
When they stood facing each others, Akhandanandaji took Mataji's hands, bowing slightly. Almost simultaneously Mataji put her head close to the chest of the Mahātmā, as a child puts her head on her father's chest, trustingly and cheerfully. An expression of the highest joy and of reverent awe appeared on Akhandanandaji's face. Still holding Mataji's hands in his own, he receded a little, bowed down low and placed her hands on his own head. There he retained them for a moment, which--if I understood rightly--was to signify: "It is I who need your blessing!"

The same ceremonial--at once gracefully dignified and of a childlike spontaneity--was repeated once more in a similar manner. This time Mataji laughed loudly and happily while laying her head against the chest of the Mahātmā. Then both bowed with folded hands seriously and full of solemnity, and while Mataji returned to her place, Akhandanandaji left the hall.

From her seat Mataji, with her head thrown back as before, looked round the hall with slightly strained attention. One of the girls whispered something to her. When

Mataji rose, viewing the congregation once again with narrow eyes, she said what she had uttered so many times this evening; "*Sab men wohin to hain!* He alone is in everything!"

Perhaps only when gazing at us from a great distance does one see that He is in us also—do we ever see it ourselves? At close quarters we are like mere shadows. But from there, where Mataji is, she may well discern His reflection even on the dense background of our lives. This, at any rate, is my hope.



O Lord God, when shall I be made one with Thee and be molten into Thy love, so that I wholly forget myself? Be Thou in me and I in Thee, and grant that we may so abide, always together in one.

Thomas a Kempis : "The Imitation of Christ."

Sacred Places of Kashmir, Jammu & Ladhak

A Devotee

(Continued from the last issue)

WULAR

महापद्मसरसः पुष्यं हिरण्या यत्र गच्छति ।
अश्वमेधं फलं तत्र पौर्णमास्यां विशेषतः ॥*

[The lake of Mahāpadma, where the river Hiranya (carrying gold dust) flows, is sacred. By visiting that lake, specially during the full moon, one gets the benefit of performing a horse-sacrifice.]

Wular lake, the biggest lake in Kashmir, is situated about thirty-three kilometers north-west of Srinagar. It is elliptical in shape, about twenty kilometers long and fourteen kilometers broad. It is the largest fresh water lake in India. Its surface is covered with beautiful lotuses and other water lilies. It is full of high waves. In ancient times it was called Ullolasaras which is a sanskrit word meaning the lake (Saras) with highwaves (Ullola). 'Wular' is a corruption of Ullolasaras. The lake was also called Mahāpadmasaras because the Nāga named Mahāpadma is said to dwell in it.

The Wular lake has been regarded as sacred from very ancient times.

It is said that there was a beautiful city in its place, the presiding deity of which was the divine serpent called Kaliya, who came there from Kallyahrada (the lake of Kaliya) a deep pool in the river Yamunā at Vrindāban in Mathura District of Uttar Pradesh. Because he was trampled upon by the lotus feet of Sri Krishna in Vrindaban, he bore the marks of a lotus on his head and was therefore called

* The Nilamata, verse 1336.

Mahāpadma Nāga. When the people of the city, which originally existed where the lake is now, became edicted to vices, Mahāpadma destroyed the city by causing heavy thunder storms and rains and thus the lake was formed. In the night before the destruction of the city, Mahāpadma informed an innocent potter in a dream about the imminent peril. The potter, believing in the dream, warned the citizens but none of them took any notice of it. He alone with his family left the city and all the others perished.

Kalhana tells about the glory of Kashmir by depicting it as the land of Mahāpadma, Sankha and others in the following verse of the Rajatarangini :

श पदनम्रमल्लैर्निर्गिर्नारत्नावभासिभिः ।

नगरं घनदत्तेन निधिभिर्यं निषेव्यते ॥*

[That country (Kashmir) is attended by the Nāgas called Sankha, Padma and others, resplendent with various jewels just as the town of Kuvera (god of wealth) is attended by the nine guardians** of treasures.]

Kalhana also says that Mahāpadma Nāga was shown to King Jayapida of Kashmir by a Dravidian sorcerer who dried up the lake by his magic power. The sorcerer came all the way from Deccan (Dravida) to Kashmir with the intention of bodily carrying away the famous Nāga from Kashmir to Deccan where in those days there was great scarcity of rain and water, with the hope that the presence of Mahāpadma would bring rain and water there. Being aware of his intentions and feeling powerless in the face of such magic power, Mahāpadma appeared to King Jayapida in the guise of an old Brahmana in a dream and solicited his protection. Mahāpadma also promised to show to the King mountains of gems and gold in case the king

* The Rajatarangini, first Taranga, verse 30.

** Their names are Padma, Mahapadma, Sankha, Madara, Kachchhapa, Mukunda, Kunda, Neela and Kharba.

would save him. The king then sent his men to search for the sorcerer, who was subsequently found and brought before the king. The sorcerer admitted his intention before him and showed him the Nāga by drying up the waters of the lake by his magic power. When he was about to bind the Nāga, the king objected and ordered him to release Mabāpadma and fill the lake with water again. This was done and the Nāga allowed to stay there in peace. The Nāga however felt humiliated having been exposed to the public gaze in a helpless condition. He therefore did not show the mountains of gold and gems to the king but showed him some copper mines instead.

In the lake there is a small island called Suna Lanka (perhaps a corruption of Swarna Lanka which means 'Golden Ceylon') containing the ruins of an ancient temple. At Garur, on the north-eastern side of the lake, there are the ruins of another ancient temple.

Oahāpadma Nāga, also called Kaliya Nāga, is regarded as very fortunate because Lord Krishna danced on the top of his hood when he was living in the deep pool called Kaliyahrada in the river Yamunā at Vrindāban in Mathura District. The incident is narrated in detail in the sixteenth chapter of the tenth Skanda of Shrimadbhāgavatam. This is given below in brief :

On the southern part of the Yamunā river at Vrindāban there was a deep pool of water infected with the poison of Kaliya Nāga. The poison was so strong that even birds flying over that part of the river would fall down dead due to its effect. Animals and plants could not live near the pool. Once it so happened that the cow herds who were Sri Krishna's play-mates came there with their cows in the scorching heat of summer and feeling thirsty they drank the water of the pool and instantaneously fell down dead. When Krishna came to know about this, he, jumped into that poisonous water of the Yamunā from a

high 'Kadamba' tree and swam in the pool. Kaliya, being thus disturbed, hastened towards him and bit him but the poison had no effect on the body of Krishna. Kaliya then encircled him with his tail with the intention of strangling him but all his efforts were in vain. Krishna freed himself from the clutches of Kāliya, caught hold of his neck, bent it low and stood on Kaliyās head. Kaliy had many hoods. Krishna began to dance on the head of the Naga, stepping from one hood to the other and Kāliya was subdued. He felt helpless and understood in his heart that Krishna was no other than God Himself. Kāliya then surrendered to Krishna and began to pray for mercy. Kāliya's wives and other members of his family also entreated Krishna to save the life of Kaliya. Krishna responded to their prayers but ordered Kaliya to leave the spot for ever with his family, which he did. The following is a verse from the hymn by the wives of Kāliya in praise of Krishna on that occasion :

कस्यानुभवो स्य न देव विदमहे
 तवाङ्घ्रिरेगुस्पर्शाधिकारः ।
 यद्वाश्रच्छया शीलंलनाचरत् तपो
 विहाय कामान् सुचिरं धृतवता ॥*

[The wives of Kaliya Nāga said to Krishna, "This Kaliya Nāga, though of low origin and mentality, has had the good fortune of getting the touch of the holy dust of your feet which is difficult to obtain even for those who have performed meritorious deeds, such as penance, austerities etc. Even Lakshmi, who is greater than all other devotees like Brahma etc., performed austerities in order to approach your feet but did not succeed. The greatness of this Kāliya Nāga cannot be expressed in words because he has received the touch of your dancing feet on his head.]

Mātri Līlā

(April—July 15th, 1971)

In the last issue of *Ānanda Vārtā* we have mentioned that Mataji remained in Varanasi over *Vasanti Pūjā*, which was celebrated from April 2nd to 5th. Simultaneously *Devi Bhāgavata Pārayana* was held, starting on March 27th and ending on April 4th with *homa* (fire sacrifice). Mataji's health had not been quite satisfactory but during *Vasanti Pūjā* she was, as usual on festive occasions, very active and saw to every detail in person. A number of foreign visitors kept on coming. One of them wrote some poems inspired by the *pūjā*, which we hope to publish in the next issue. On *Makāstami* day (April 3rd) Sri 108 Dhananjoy Das Babaji Maharaj visited our Ashram with a party of disciples and was with Mataji for about half an hour. On April 5th, after *Darṣana Vīsarjana* Mataji blessed the audience by touching each and everyone's head. After the immersion ceremony she distributed sweets to all present.

On April 7th Mataji boarded the train to Dehradun, alighting at the Kishenpur Ashram on the 8th morning. Mataji was badly in need of rest. She gave *darśana* every evening. Private talks were of course going on at other times of the day. On April 10th Mataji left for Kankhal where preparations had to be made of the function on April 14th to commemorate Didima's *sannyāsa utsava*. At Kankhal Mataji was her lively self again supervising arrangements with great interest. In the morning of the 14th a solemn *pūjā* was performed at Didima's *samādhi*. At midday a large number of *sādhus* were entertained on Didima's behalf both at the Nirvani Akhara at Kankhal

and at the Kailash Ashram at Rishikesh. On that auspicious day Brahmachari Mahānanda and Didima's attendant, Srimati Vimala were initiated into *sannyāsa* by the Mahant of Mangala Giri Ashram. Vimala had dreamt that Didima had given her *sannyāsa* mantra. Her name is now Swami Dayananda. She lives at the Kankhal Ashram ever since Didima left her body and daily offers bhoga to Didima.

On April 16th Sri G. S. Pathak, Vice-President of India, paid a visit to Ma with his family and stayed for the day. In the evening Mataji went to Paramartha Niketan at Rishikesh to grace with her presence the *Srimad Bhagavata Parayana* which Sri Swami Akhandananda was holding for three weeks. The next morning Mataji came there again for a short while on her way to Raipur, Dehradun. She also halted at the Government Anti-biotic Medicine Factory near Rishikesh where a devotee had built a cottage for Mataji who took her midday meal there, arriving at Raipur between 3 and 4 p. m. On April 20th Mataji shifted to Kishenpur. On her way she followed an invitation to the residence of the District Magistrate where *kirtana* and *bhajans* were sung by the girls of our Ashram under a pandal on the lawn. Before proceeding to the Ashram Mataji stopped for a few minutes in the garden of another devotee. The next day, Mr. James George, Canadian High Commissioner in India, came to see Mataji accompanied by three Canadian seekers after Truth. They had come specially from Delhi to have an interview with Mataji and returned to Delhi straight from our Ashram. Mr. George had met Mataji for the first time about ten years ago. This time he had come mainly to clarify some points that had been discussed when he and Mr. Trudeau, the Canadian Prime Minister had a talk with Mataji last January at Varanasi. He and the other Canadian guests asked very interesting questions and Mataji responded most generously. She was in a wonderful, communicative mood,

looking young and radiant. Our guests were deeply impressed and full of gratitude.

On April 23rd Mataji and a large party of Ashramites and others boarded the train to Varanasi, where preparations for the forthcoming 75th birthday jubilee of Mataji were in full swing. When the train halted at Lucknow on the 24th morning, Mataji quite unexpectedly got down with only two companions, while the rest of the party was obliged to proceed to Varanasi without Mataji. Nobody knew where Mataji was going and when she would arrive at Varanasi. She first went by taxi to the residence of Sri Rameshwar Sahai, where a room is permanently reserved for her use. To the joyous surprise of the family, Mataji had her midday meal there and after a few hours of rest left at about 3 p. m. for Kanpur, going straight to the beautiful Radha Krishna temple, in the vicinity of which Sri Akhandananda Swamiji's *Bhāgavati Parāyana* had taken place last November. Sir Singhania and his family were informed of Mataji's arrival by members of their staff. From there she also paid a short visit to Jaipuria House and thereafter left for the Railway Station. There she took the train to Allahabad, reaching there at about 1 a.m. Mataji spent the rest of the night and the next morning in her cottage at 31, George Town. One can easily imagine the delight of the family at Mataji's surprise visit. From there Mataji motored to Varanasi, reaching the Ashram quite unexpectedly at about 3.30 p. m. on the 25th, only to leave within a few minutes for Sankat Mochana (about a mile from the Ashram) where the Sangha owns some land and a cottage in which she spent the following two days. On April 27th Sri Krishnandaji *Avadhuta* arrived in Varanasi with a Ramalila party. He went to see Mataji and with the greatest difficulty persuaded her to come to the Ashram and take up her residence there. Mataji was most reluctant to have any birthday celebrations this year because of the sad plight of

East Bengal and to the last moment tried to prevent them. However, since it was her platinum jubilee nobody was willing to listen to her objections.

In actual fact, the religious functions which were to start on May 3rd in honour of Mataji, began already on April 28th, which was *Akshay Tritiya*, the anniversary of the consecration of Gopal Mandir. There was special *pūjā* in the morning while Mataji was walking up and down, giving instructions. Beautiful *kirtana* was kept up all day and in fact never interrupted until May 14th. With great enthusiasm small and at times large groups of devotees took turns in singing every day and every night. A European devotee joined every night throughout the celebrations, singing with real delight and playing the cymbals. Mataji would appear at the *kirtana* sometimes all of a sudden at 2 or 3 a. m. and brace the singers. Even the fishermen of the locality took a turn for two hours late every evening. An abundance of religious functions had been arranged. There was something for every temperament and every taste. The Ashram is fortunately spacious and comprises several buildings, so that it was possible to provide for so many ceremonies and functions simultaneously without disturbing one another.

For the first time in our Ashram *Śiva-Śakti Yajñ* was performed by twenty pandits in the *Yajña Śala* in the courtyard for eleven days, starting on April 29th. Every morning there was *Rudra Yajña* and every afternoon *Durga Sapta Sati Yajña*. *Pūjā* was offered daily to a *Śiva Pārvati mūrti*. In the cave hall below Gopal Mandir the whole of the four Vedas were chanted one after another by renowned pandits for four hours every morning. In another room all the eighteen *Purāṇas* were recited one by one. *Śit Chandī Pātha* was performed daily in the room of Sri Narayan Swami. Uninterrupted *jaṇpa* was sustained in the *Chandī Mandap* throughout the period of the celebrations day and



Mataji in deep Samadhi—being carried in a decorated palanquin after the *Tithi Puja* at Varanasi Ashram on 13th May, '71

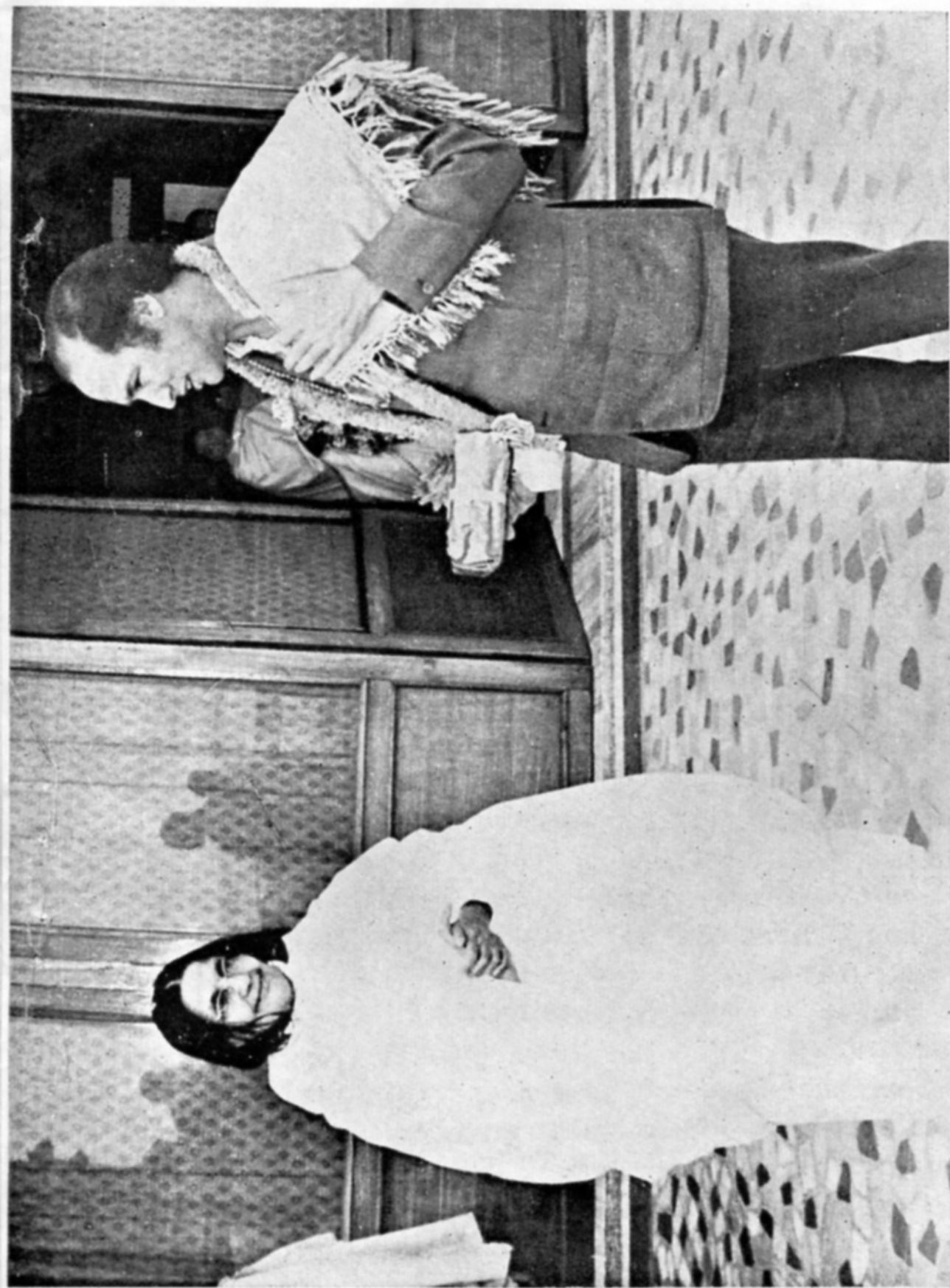
night, and *pūjā* done daily there itself before Mataji's and Didima's photos. In the night of May 3rd, all the pupils of the Kanyapith (about 30 girls) actively joined in Ma's birthday *pūjā* on the roof of Gopal Mandir, while Brahmachari Nirvanananda acted as the main priest.

A large very beautifully decorated pandal had been erected in the hospital grounds for the *satsang* week from May 7th to 13th. On the 7th evening the function was solemnly and in hushed silence inaugurated by the Chief Minister of the U. P., Sri Kamalapati Tripathi in the presence of an enormous audience. The Chief Minister had come from New Delhi specially for the occasion and read out a letter from Srimati Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, who conveyed her *pranāmas* and best wishes to Mataji, regretting not to be able to be present in person due to pressure of work. The Maharaja of Benares, the Vice-Chancellor of the B. H. U., Dr. K. L. Shrimali, Sri Rajaram Sastri, Vice-Chancellor of the Kashi Vidyapith, several Mahatmas and Prof. Tripurari Chakravarti of Calcutta sat in a semicircle on the dais, Mataji occupying a seat on the extreme right, next to the Chief Minister. The meeting began with chanting from the Vedas, followed by '*Vandana*' by the girls of the Kanyapith. Then every one of the dignitaries and Mahātmās sitting on the raised platform delivered short but very spirited and original talks. The Maharaja of Benares for instance said : "Mataji is our mother, we her children are playing on her lap. May this continue for thousands of years." All the Mahātmās who usually grace our functions with their presence had come and the large audience was kept spellbound by their brilliant and enlightening discourses every morning and evening. One of the Mahātmās made a striking remark. He said : "We all have assembled here to celebrate the birthday of one who was never born, so that we also may be liberated from the wheel of birth and rebirth." It is impossible to even hint at all that we were fortunate enough to listen to

during that week, but all talks have been tape recorded and we hope will gradually be published in the pages of this magazine.

Rāmlīlā was performed every afternoon from April 28th to May 13th and Rāsalīlā every morning from May 8th. Special puja was offered on behalf of Mataji's birthday to the main deities of Varanasi. A reception was also given to 51 pandits who were presented with flowers, fruits, sweets, clothes, brass vessels etc. Another day there was *Kumāri Pūjā* and a feast and presents given to 108 *Kumāris*. *Puris*, sweets and handkerchiefs were distributed to all the children of the fishermen of the locality. There was poor feeding on a large scale. One day special food was sent to the patients of the leper hospital and fruits distributed in several hospitals of Varanasi.

The climax of the celebrations was the *Tithi Pūjā* in the small hours of May 14th. Satsang went on in the pandal until midnight. Then the pandal and the whole Ashram lane were specially decorated with garlands and rings of fresh flowers and the dais on which Mataji was to lie converted into a bower of sweet scented jasmins. At 2 a. m. the pandal was opened again and in a few minutes occupied to capacity by devotees and visitors. *Kīrtan* and *bhajana* started immediately. At about 3 a. m. Mataji was carried from the Ashram to the pandal on a silver palanquin to the accompaniment of music. As soon as she reached her couch she lay down, covering herself completely. Before starting the *Tithi Pūjā*, Brahmachari Nirvanananda performed a short pūja before a large picture of Didima that had been placed near Mataji. The beautiful music was interrupted for half an hour by silent meditation. It was really amazing that pindrop silence was possible in the packed pandal. At the end of the function, at dawn, long queues were formed and everyone was given the chance to ascend the dais and offer *pranāmas* and flowers



The Prime Minister of Canada with Mataji

He is seen carrying the *Puja Asana* on his shoulder and the *Prasada* packet etc.
given by Mataji in his right hand

to Mataji who lay completely motionless in deep *samādhi*. There seemed no end to the people lining up patiently to approach Mataji. At about midday Mataji was roused with difficulty and helped to stand up and get into the palanquin to be carried to her room. People stood on both sides all along the lane and others were looking down from the windows and roofs of every house to catch a glimpse of Mataji who was still under the impact of *samadhi*, her eyes shut and her limbs hanging down loosely. By the evening Mataji was again her usual self and people who were leaving could go to her room to say good-bye. At about 10 p. m. she came down to the hall of Gopal Mandir for the beginning of the *Nāṇa Yajña* that continued until the evening of May 15th. Mataji remained for part of the night and for a while joined the women who circumambulated singing and dancing round a circular altar until sunrise. After the birthday night Mataji was in a rare *bhāva* : her whole countenance of heavenly beauty and sweetness and the aroma of another world visibly about her. It seemed as if Mataji had been rejuvenated and her health obviously improved.

It may well be imagined that devotees had flocked from every corner of India to be with Mataji on this joyous occasion and pay homage to her—not only from India—ten devotees had come specially from America and Europe. The writer of Matri Lila is painfully aware of his incapacity to adequately describe this unique festival and to give even a faint idea of the atmosphere that pervaded the whole locality. People who arrived during the last few days felt as if transported to a kingdom of joy, peace and universal love. All worries, troubles, quarrels and difficulties seemed far removed and unreal. Mataji, although most of the time surrounded by a surging throng, found a way of giving individual attention to every single person who had come. Nobody left without a present given by Mataji herself and

without being blessed by her loving words, her smile, her touch. The limitations of time and space seemed transcended. Many had travelled from great distances and were able to stay only for two or three days. Yet the trouble they had taken was insignificant compared with what they gained by this unique and unforgettable experience. Mataji is master of the art of bestowing in the twinkling of an eye what cannot be achieved by years of personal effort.

Even the elements co-operated. Within living memory Varanasi had not known such cool and pleasant weather in the month of May, which is greatly dreaded for its scorching heat and its violent dust storms.

Mataji stayed on in Varanasi for another week and the few who could remain with her enjoyed her *darśana* and her words freely. On May 22nd she left for Vrindaban and on the 25th proceeded to New Delhi where the foundation stone for a Siva temple near the Panchavati in the Ashram grounds was laid on the 26th. The Prime Minister availed herself of this opportunity to have a private talk with Mataji. On May 27th Mataji returned to Varanasi, reaching there on the 28th. On June 3rd two Brahmacharinis of our Ashram were given sacred threads.

On June 9th Mataji left for Hardwar, reaching the Kankhal Ashram on the 10th morning. On the 14th she proceeded to Dehradun. This time Mataji put up in her house in the compound belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Khaitan, adjoining Kalyanvan. There she enjoyed a certain amount of privacy in extremely quiet and beautiful surroundings. Every evening she would give *darśana* in the Kishenpur Ashram for an hour or two. The students of the Kanyapith who were spending their summer vacation at Kishenpur, used to recite Sanskrit hymns and portions from the Ramayana. Then Brahmachari Nirmalananda would very lucidly expound the Narad Bhakti Sutras before the large congregation that daily came for Mataji's *darśana*.

followed by kirtana for one hour, sung again by the girls of our Varanasi school. On two or three occasions Sri Swami Govinda Prakashji of the Ramatirtha Ashram delivered interesting talks and once Sri Swami Krishnanda of Bhagavad Dhāma, Hardwar spoke. One evening the whole programme was performed at the Ramatirtha Ashram (4 miles further up) at the kind invitation of Sri Swami Govinda Prakash. There Mataji sang herself for a short time at his request.

On July 5th early morning, Mataji left for Kankhal where Guru Purnima was celebrated on the 8th. Mataji came downstairs early morning and gave *darśana* until about two in the afternoon sitting alternately on the veranda of Śiva Mandir and on the veranda of Didima's *Samādhi Mandir* where Gurupūjā was performed on Didima's *samādhi*, accompanied by interrupted kirtana which continued until the evening and *ārati* at night. Devotees arrived from Dehradun, Delhi, Varanasi, even from Bombay and Calcutta to pay homage to Mataji on this auspicious day and brought gifts of various kinds. It was amazing how everything proceeded without a hitch in spite of the very limited space. Again the elements co-operated: it did not rain that day except for a short shower after everybody had partaken of *prasāda* in the small open space in front of Śiva Mandir.

On July 12th Mataji returned to Kishenpur with a number of devotees from Bombay and with the Maharaja of Travancore and his family who came for the first time to spend a few days with Mataji. On this occasion Mataji was staying at the Kishenpur Ashram.

On July 15th the Indoor Section of our Varanasi Hospital was opened. A devotee from Varanasi urgently wired to Mataji requesting her presence. She wired in reply: "Mataji is with you and will ever be with you."

Swami Nirgunananda, known as "Muktibaba", one of the last disciples of Holy Mother Sarada Devi of Sri Ramakrishna Math and who lived in our Ashram for about 32 years, was admitted as the first patient. The next afternoon at about 4 he passed away peacefully at the age of nearly 90. Since our Hospital is situated within the "Mukti Kshetra" (area of liberation at Varanasi), where everyone who leaves his body is supposed to attain release from the wheel of birth and death, there can be no room for regret. When Mataji left Varanasi last month, he fervently begged her to free him from his ailing body. As soon as the message of his passing was received by phone, *akhanda kirtana* for 24 hours of "*Satyam Jñanam Anantam Brahma,*" was started at the Kishenpur Ashram and also uninterrupted japa.

The anniversary of Didima's *Mahāsamādhi* will be celebrated at Kankhal on July 29th. Since it has not been possible to complete the *Samādhi Mandir*, its consecration has been postponed until next April. Jhulan and Janmastami are also likely to be celebrated in Mataji's presence in Kishenpur or Raipur. Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja and Divali are to be observed in Dehradun this year. The Sanyam Mahavrata is proposed to be held at Vrindaban from October 27 to November 2.

