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

Mātri Vāni

You have assembled here in search of Truth. Where your place is there is also his. Everyone talks according to his natural disposition—but you have not taken to the spiritual path for the sake of this kind of thing. The supreme Goal to which you aspire, the same claim is yours and also his. You are both in one position, you both have the same spiritual relationship with Ma. Where this body is there are *all* without exception. None of you have come here for any kind of worldly prosperity. Everyone receives according to his attitude of mind and heart. You are all pilgrims in quest of the Supreme.

* * *

Become a servant of the real Government. Worldly governments exist only because there is an inner Government. Just as one puts one's mind to the regular fulfilment of governmental duties, it is fitting to direct one's concentrated thought also to that real Government. If family life is lived in a spirit of service, there is no occasion to form ties because one aims at Him alone. However, in order to abide by this attitude of service—just as a clock has to be wound once a day—one must try to wind the clock of the mind regularly every morning and evening : that is to say, sit still for some time in meditation or *japa*.

* * *

Man experiences happiness and sorrow as a result of his past actions. He enjoys and suffers—and again new

karma is created. In order to be liberated from all this, one must sustain the remembrance of God. Endeavour to keep your mind ever immersed in *japa*, *dhyāna*, the thought of God; this leads to peace.

* * *

Only by taking refuge in Him can sorrow be removed. The troubles and difficulties one encounters as the fruit of one's own actions are but the grace of God. If one can accept them as such, one will progress towards one's real welfare.

* * *

Keep on repeating the name of the Lord. Pray : "Lord, have mercy on me and come to me in the shape of *dīkṣa* (initiation)." Endeavour at all times to remain merged, plunged into the Name. Solely for the sake of God must His name be repeated — remember this.

* * *

Do whatever God prompts you to do. *Japa*, *dhyāna*, *pūjā* have to be performed regularly for the sake of practice — whether one feels in a mood for it or not — so that this practice may be transformed into the yoga of practice. Devotion and faith must be awakened. What is happening at present is to cause you to stand on your own feet. Whatever has to be done, God will put it right — remember this. Whether one feels like it or not, it is imperative to attend to one's prayers with great regularity.

* * *

Whatever comes to pass is bound to happen as the result of each one's own actions. If you have to be proud, be proud of your relationship with God. Do not waste your time by letting it pass without the remembrance of Him.

* * *

In the New Year attempt to progress to ever new stages on the path of the Supreme.

Sad Vāni

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

(Continued from the last issue.)

76.

In the world people become rich by adding zeros to "one"; and on the spiritual path the aspirant concentrates on "one" alone in order to attain to the One Truth. Thus it is obvious that these two paths lead in entirely opposite directions. It will be worth while to ponder seriously over the fact that without the "one" the zeros have no value whatever. Therefore one should with complete faith and reliance on the One ever strive after the One Goal so that there may be no dread of poverty under any circumstances.

77.

The efforts prompted by one's true nature (*svabhāva*) that are made in order to discover one's own real wealth (*svadhana*) are called *sādhana*.^{*} Potentially every action is a *sādhana*, every individual a *sādhaka* and God, being man's real treasure, is the sole purpose of all *sādhana*. So long as man is worldly, he performs his *sādhana* by work done from personal motives for the sake of material success; yet, unconsciously he is even thereby seeking God, for nothing is outside of the ONE. Whatever anybody does is in the last analysis undertaken in order to attain to the Supreme; this is self-evident. The *sādhana* of the mundane person is

* A play upon words : *Svadhana* means "own wealth" and *sādhana* means "spiritual practice for the purpose of preparing oneself for Self-realization."

directed towards the satisfaction of his wants. Here the sense of possession prevails, and outer activity and enjoyment are the objective. There will be a powerful incentive for this kind of *sādhana* so long as man is harrassed by the lash of pain and misery, humiliation, disgrace, grief and affliction. In a way this *sādhana* also is prompted by man's true nature, for not until one has acutely felt the sting of ceaseless wanting, does one awaken to the urgency of discovering the Self. When a person grows eager to become established in his true being, to find his real treasure, this marks the begining of spiritual *sādhana* and he learns to act without desire or personal motive. Thereby is laid the foundation for detachment, renunciation and all-embracing love. Young and immature people desire what others possess and hanker after petty enjoyments. When as a result of religious practices and good works, man in the midst of prosperity is reminded of his real treasure, he starts labouring vigorously for its recovery. The more he exerts himself in this activity of his true nature, the fuller will be the knowledge he gains of his inner wealth. When fire breaks out in a house, it will not die down until everything combustible has been burnt to ashes. Similarly, once real *sādhana* has begun, it is impossible to drop it; on the contrary, it will gather impetus and intensity day by day and push the aspirant into the swift current of his own particular path to Enlightenment.

First of all the *sādhaka* ceases to identify himself with his body and mind; then his cravings and desires are dissolved to the last trace; thereupon the consciousness of complete equality will be born; and finally the Self which transcends mind and body be realized by direct experience. This is the ultimate goal of all *sādhana*. Single-mindedness is its very life; faith, trust and patience constitute its powers.

Without observing the injunctions of the *śāstras* it will be difficult to achieve purification of the mind (*cittasuddhi*). There is a saying that the house built on the rock of *sāstric* observances cannot be demolished. It is important to follow as far as possible the rules of good conduct laid down in the *Śāstras* and to be particular about outer and inner cleanliness and purity. In order to be received into the presence of a king one has to submit to any number of rules and regulations. How much more urgent is the necessity for purity and meticulous care when one goes to visit a deity in a temple or wants to contemplate the Divine.

79.

A man who is well established in his true nature, who, in other words, knows Himself, who is indifferent to pleasure and pain since he is ever steeped in the bliss of the Eternal, is called a *sādhu*. Filled with universal love, he is free from cares and worries, munificent, of childlike simplicity and contentment. The very sight of such a great person spontaneously suffuses one's whole being with a heavenly joy, and his proximity evokes divine thoughts and aspirations. Just as water cleanses everything by its mere contact, even so the sight, touch, blessing, nay the very remembrance of a real *sādhu*, little by little clears away all impure desires and longings. Union with God is the one and only union man should seek. *Sādhus* or saints have had communion with God and hence there is a saving grace in their presence. Like attracts like, for this reason, in our times, the company of the Holy and Wise—*satsang*—offers the most potent aid and inspiration to the earnest seeker. Saints may be compared to trees: they always point upwards, and grant shade and shelter to all. They are free from likes and dislikes and whoever seeks refuge in them wholeheartedly, will find peace. When the burning desire to know Truth or

Reality awakens in man, he has the good fortune of meeting a saint or sage. The Holy and Wise must be approached with a pure heart and a steady mind, with genuine faith and reverence. Much greater benefit will be derived by sitting still and meditating in their presence than by discussing or arguing. The behaviour of saints is not to be copied by ordinary people. But one should endeavour to carry out in one's life the teachings or advice received from them : Otherwise, it would be like sowing any number of seeds without allowing a single one to grow into a plant; and this would indeed be a matter of deep regret.

80.

The Way to Release from Bondage :

1. *Work and Prayer* : The performance of meritorious acts and good works in harmony with the laws of nature, with an eye to the real welfare of one's body and mind and the world at large. Keeping God's name in one's heart and mind and on one's lips with the help of *japa*, prayer, the study of sacred scriptures and discourses on eternal truths.

2. *Spiritual Experience* : The search after Truth through meditation with undivided concentration.

3. *The State of Pure Being* : Personal effort and identification with body and mind have come to an end. There is beatitude, complete equanimity, realization of the oneness of all. Man has become established in the fulness of Truth.

81.

On the *ektāra** one can play only one note, on the harmonium the whole scale of seven. The average person enjoys hearing the harmonium, but to the ear of the contemplative the single note of the *ektāra* sounds sweet, for

* A musical instrument with one string.

are not the seven but a dividing up of the one note? Endeavour to let your body be like an *ektāra*; on the string of your mind play unceasingly only the one song: “*Jai Jagadīsha Hare!* (Hail to Thee, Great Lord of the World!)” If you go on doing this you will come to love singing the praises of God and cease to derive pleasure from anything else.

82.

Just as the water of a lake cannot remain smooth while a breeze is blowing, so the mind can never become still so long as thoughts arise. With great determination try to drive away all thought and become calm and serene. At intervals take recourse to silence for set periods of time; this will considerably increase your power of concentration. Whenever you find worldly thoughts agitating your mind, resolutely try to chase them away by every possible device. Just as with the help of ingenious machinery, extensive canals and marshes can be drained of all water, even so the well of desires and longing will finally be emptied through sustained and single-minded practice.

83.

Sugar solution can be purified by boiling it with a few drops of milk, similarly can *samskāras*, the impurities that cloud consciousness, be removed by the contemplation of God. Worldly people as a rule take to religious practices only at an advanced age and soon grow weary and lack in energy. This is why men and women should be taught from early childhood to make God and the search after Truth the center of their lives so that they may not in their old age have to cry out piteously: “Eventide has come, my life is ebbing away. O Lord, have mercy upon me and take me across!”

For the maintenance of the body one has to earn money and collect goods; it is right to remember at all times

that it is of even greater importance to cultivate and develop one's inner wealth.

84.

Self-restraint is necessary for every human being. First of all one must practise self-discipline with a view to mastering the body as far as may be. When, with the help of various rules and regulations the body is trained to obedience, the mind also gradually realizes the necessity of thought control. Then the proper thing to do is to combine the practice of physical and mental discipline. Once body and mind have been brought under control, the desire to know one's Self is kindled spontaneously. If one does not remain indifferent but gives one's heart and soul to the Supreme Quest, the discovery of the Self becomes easy. So long as one is conscious of the body it is impossible to achieve anything without action. It is imperative ever to keep in mind that unless one is strict with oneself as a miser who amasses wealth or as a bee that collects honey, one cannot make headway on the spiritual path.

85.

Listen ! Do not let your time pass idly. Either keep a rosary with you and do *japa*; or if this does not suit you, at least go on repeating the name of the Lord regularly and without interruption like the ticking of a clock. There are no rules or restrictions in this : Invoke Him by the name that appeals to you most, for as much time as you can, the longer the better. Even if you get tired or lose interest, administer the Name to yourself like a medicine that has to be taken. In this way you will at some auspicious moment discover the rosary of the mind; and then you will continually hear within yourself the praises of the great Master, the Lord of Creation, like the never ceasing music of the boundless ocean; you will hear the land and the sea,

the air and the heavens reverberate with the song of His glory. This is called the all-pervading presence of His Name.

The world consists of Name and Form : the Name is its beginning and the Name is its end. When the aspirant achieves perfection by concentrating on the Name, he loses himself in It. The world ceases to exist for him and his ego disappears. What then is, and what is not ? Although some may realize this, it can never be expressed in words.

86.

If you say, "nothing at all exists," it is so; yet if you say, "everything exists", it is also correct. Do you not see, some declare the world to be an illusion, while others maintain that it is real. Many deny the existence of deities and angels, others are firmly convinced of it, since, if one prays to them fervently enough, one can have visions of them and also hear their voices.

Children look upon their clay and rubber dolls as living beings, but when they grow older they understand that they had been mistaken. Thus it can be seen that everyone's faith or disbelief in things is determined by the power and intensity of his ideas at any particular time. When genuine one-pointed devotion grows stronger and stronger, it does happen that aspirants in accordance with their conditioning and keen desire receive undeniable visions of deities and also hear their voices. However, for the serious contemplative, such experiences are nothing more than periodical feasts for the mind. As one advances on the spiritual path and loses oneself more and more in an unbroken stream of divine contemplation, various partial realizations and visions do occur. Although they may be helpful, they must never be confused with the ultimate Goal. Water evaporates, rises up into the air

and forms into clouds; but the cloud fulfils its calling only when it condenses into raindrops and refreshes the thirsty earth. Likewise *sādhana* does not reach its consummation unless one has been merged in Supreme Being and attained to Perfection.

87.

Do you want deliverance from the bonds of the world? Then, weeping profusely, you will have to cry out from the bottom of your heart : "Deliver me, great Mother of the World, deliver me!" To obtain Her grace you will have to shed tears much more abundantly than when you desire things of the world. When by the flood of your tears the inner and the outer have fused into one, you will find Her whom you sought with such anguish nearer than the nearest, the very breath of life, the very core of every heart.

88.

Offering thanks to the Almighty, singing His praises, heartfelt prayers are all excellent. With the help of these the mind is purified and becomes serene; one develops faith in God and may have glimpses of Truth. Yet since these practices still belong to the realm of the ever changing, meditation and contemplation are necessary along with them. One must dive deep and get immersed in the depths; merely scraping the surface and roaming here and there is simply a waste of energy and will not promote one's growth. The tendencies (*samskāras*) acquired in many former births, have like a banyan-tree struck their roots in all directions of your nature. In order to eradicate them, a sharp axe will have to be applied both inwardly and outwardly. Every day, for as long as you can, try to withdraw your senses from all outer objects and let them repose within.

89.

If you want to awaken a religious spirit in your family, it is not enough that you yourself should lead a dedicated life. It is necessary to teach them as well to be devoted to God. This will also help you considerably in your own *sādhana*. With this purpose in view you should arrange for all the members of your household to assemble every evening at a convenient hour and sing kirtana or other devotional music, have discussions on religious topics or read from sacred texts. Those who seek refuge in God gradually reduce their attachment and sense of possession and are able to stand undaunted in adversity and danger.

90.

You say you want to be free from the ties of this world. But actually it can be seen that like a kite that is held by a string or like an aeroplane driven by a pilot you are unable to remain without support or guidance of some sort. If you want to be liberated, you must be like a bird that has broken its chain and, without a thought of food or shelter, fearlessly soars up into the sky.

(To be continued)



Three Poems

**These poems are flowers offered by a devotee from
Adi Bharat at the feet of Sri Ma Anandamayi
who inspired them during the spring
Durga Puja, 1971.**

OM MA

I

**A red halo vibrating
around your dark form,
a deep red light
that turns to bright blissful fire
carrying the heart
to a joyous pulsing space
beyond stone and form and name.**

**Oh three eyed generatrix of all,
ever unfolding energy,
womb
where springs constantly
eternal life from life eternal
by the mystery of your Mayā
creating the Universes that expand
in limitless time and space,
and dissolve when maturation comes
into the One dark glory.**

**Primordial mother
vision of beauty
so profound
it consumes awareness of anything else,
transforming fear of death
into an ineffable revelation of love.**

No faced,
 Three faced,
 Ten faced,
 Myriad faced,
 Infinite faced.
 Transcending the three times,
 the three modalities of consciousness,
 all realms of becoming.
 Infinite extension of light
 where the innocent spirit of the Father
 blends in ecstatic love.

You come like a ray of pure being
 unfathomably essential,
 filling the dark spaces of fear
 with glowing heat,
 inundation of your grace.
 Mysterious awareness in dwelling in deepest peace
 self-luminous incarnation of truth.

II

Mother of white garments,
 immaculate spring of all powerful intelligence
 garlanded with the capacity
 to retribute the burning desire
 of beings who naked
 are in love with you,
 and dwelling in the burning ground
 repeat your name,
 until in the form of fire
 or silence, or vision, or spirit
 you bring understanding
 and the wideness of ecstatic peace.

Devi
 today you shine in infinite splendour

among the worlds
that swim freely
in your caressing heart.

You dissolve the pain
that ages of toil
and of passionate error,
of clinging to the body
as to life itself
and believing proudly
that I
is the accumulation of pain and pleasure
that kindles the fire of time, and death, and terror,
because the solitary corpse
will burn inevitably by the flow
of the ever new river.

Kill me Mother.
Kill the demons that feed within me.
Kill the delusion that poisons desire
and fills with anguish
the sacred receptacle
of your self-shining light.

Subdue my pride with your sweetness
dance upon my fears as upon a corpse
Silence with an overflow of purity
the snakes that terrify my heart.

Oh Mother,
Sublime presence,
Abyss of ineffable light where all colours shine,
with poison cure my poisoned Karma,
in darkness let me dwell,
in not knowing,
in the silence of the void,
in love.

Ma--My Mother

Kumari Prem Lata Srivastava

It seems to me futile to attempt to write about Mata Anandamayi, called "Ma" or "Mataji" by thousands of her devotees and admirers. Her blessed sight, her divine smile, the wonderful serene and calm atmosphere she carries with her, the fragrance of her purity and the sublimity of her thoughts are a few of the things that charm even a newcomer.

I shall just try to describe my first impression of Ma, some of her divine qualities and a few of my experiences.

It was a cold winter evening in November, 1958, when I had the privilege of seeing Ma for the first time at the residence of Sri Rameshwar Sahai at Lucknow. Till then I had not known anything about Ma, and I went to see her with my parents only out of curiosity.

Mataji was sitting on a wooden couch, dressed in sparkling white clothes, surrounded by a big gathering. Music was going on, performed by ashram girls. I got a seat quite far away from Ma. After some time, at 8.45 P.M. the lights were switched off and silence was observed for fifteen minutes. The very presence of Ma made me feel curious. It appeared to me in the dark that Ma was looking at me—a piercing look. It made me nervous for a moment, and I was shaken from the depth of my heart. Afterwards I saw Mother looking into the far distance, at times at one or the other devotee. On her radiant face was a very sensitive, infectious smile. Fortunately after some time she looked at me. Her very first glance unsettled me and what I felt is beyond description.

The next day Ma left for Delhi and we went to see her off at Lucknow Station. There was a big crowd around her. By a mere chance or by her grace I was able to approach her. I asked a very simple question : "Ma, please tell me how to find God." With a smile on her face and in a very touching tone, she replied : "Cry for Him, weep madly for Him and invoke Him by any name you like most. But your call must be genuine and from the depth of your heart. Yearn restlessly for Him." What exactly I felt is very difficult to put into words.

Though unaware of her divine qualities, I was thus attracted to Ma by her blessed sight and magnetic smile. I used to have an inner urge for Ma's darśana but I could not get the chance. After a lapse of seven long years just accidentally, I met Ma at her Vrindaban Ashram. I had gone with other relatives to Vrindaban for Bankey Behariji's darśana and there I got the news that Ma was at Vrindaban. I left my companions (as they had some other work) and waited alone under a tree in the Ashram grounds, outside of Ma's house. I was told that Ma was resting after her midday meal and would come out in the evening. I had only an hour at my disposal and if Ma did not come out I would have been deprived of this opportunity to have her darśana. It was about 2 or 3 P.M. and I had waited hardly for 15 minutes when all of a sudden Ma came out and asked one of the ashram girls : "Call her who is waiting outside." I was thus called. Immediately Ma said : "Are you a railway doctor ?" I was perplexed. My previous meeting with Ma seven years back had been only for a few minutes and then I had never had the chance to tell her that I was going to be a doctor. (At present I am a railway doctor posted at Kashi). Moreover, that very day I was returning from Delhi after a railway interview. How could she know all this ? Her supernatural power was at once revealed to me. I bowed at her Lotus Feet, I bowed and bowed—and now only, for the first time, I found Divinity in Ma.

Ma, a living embodiment of God, was before me but I was spell-bound. What all Ma gave me that day cannot be disclosed.

During the succeeding years, by Ma's grace, I had the good fortune to come in closer contact with her and to know her more intimately. It is certain that Mother alone by her causeless mercy (अहेतुकी कृपा) gives us the chance to have her darśana and to come in closer touch with her.

Mataji's mysterious power lies in her Being Itself. Her acts speak more eloquently than her words. She works wonders in silence. It is impossible to give even a vague idea of her immense power. And her gaze, how powerful it is! At times it is so intense as to be almost unbearable and it seems to embrace one's whole destiny. She looks right into the soul. Consciousness of oneness and absence of ego (a characteristic of liberated beings) enables her readily to know the past, present and future of a person. She reads one's thoughts and often one may get replies to questions raised only mentally. Her face is always, permeated with, joy and thus an expression of the name 'Anandamayi.' Her silent smile is divine and seems to give mute replies; often she bursts out into ringing laughter that gives the idea that she is an incarnation of Joy.

It is not the human being that attracts us in her. What fascinates us is definitely beyond all limitations. She is absolutely free inwardly : The state of perfect Love, the state of Divinity itself is to my mind the secret of Ma's extraordinary influence over all those who have the privilege of being blessed by her.

Speculations about her divine and spiritual personality are both futile and presumptuous, and it is practically impossible to understand, and even more difficult to describe Ma with a subjective mind. According to our spiritual status, she means something different to each one of us. Also it depends entirely on Ma, how much she

allows anyone to see of her. To the question : "Ma, who are you?" She has replied differently to different persons. The most common reply given by Ma is : "I am what you think me to be, not more not less." To me she is the Lord Himself, incarnate in the body of a woman. She never had any formal initiation from a Guru and all āsanās, mudrās and samādhis came to her spontaneously without any effort on her part. Most of us feel that she is a freed and fully enlightened soul (*Jivanmukta*). In fact, she is much more than this.

The quickness with which she replies to the most intricate questions in a most simple way is worth noting. Her replies are short, straight forward, and always on the same plane as the questions asked. She quite often says, "This body is like a musical instrument; what you hear depends on how you play." She remains in contact with people and the world around her without the least interpretation of her mind. Ma's great philosophical maxim : 'Jo ho jaye' (जो हो जाय) carries a deep meaning. Why should one worry when what is to happen will happen? Thus, complete surrender of the personal will to the Will of God is necessary.

Ma never calls herself a Guru or teacher but thousands of her devotees have received spiritual guidance from her in various ways. Mother has no line of her own and no particular doctrine. That is why men and women of different religions, castes and creeds have equal access to her. She always advises people according to their own conditioning. Different persons with different spiritual and intellectual background are being led by Ma differently. Thus, her blessings, directions and instructions vary according to the individual. Above all, she is the Mother who loves, protects and guides her children and we have the feeling of being children gathered round our Mother. She is intensely human in all her ways.

At various religious functions organised by her devotees she works for long hours without any sign of fatigue. *Pūjās* performed under her direction are strictly according to the rituals laid down in the scriptures. She allows no laxity in this. Most of the time she herself supervises all arrangements. Her music has such force, vigour and dynamism that we are shaken in our entire being. It is definitely divine and takes us to another world.

In her holy presence even the most sinful person desires to live a worthy, useful life. She has said on many occasions, "You may not need me but I need you. I am ever with each one of you wherever you may happen to be, but you have little time to come and see this body. Know it for certain, that whatever you do in thought or action, whether you are near or far away, never escapes my attention." She says to many: "Will you just comply with one request of mine: Out of the 24 hours, reserve at least 15 minutes for God, at a fixed time each day. Try to think of Him at that time in whatever condition you may happen to be. Repeat God's name with each breath and feel His presence everywhere." Each word she utters carries a deep meaning.

There are thousands of striking illustrations of her power which she exercises with extraordinary ease and spontaneity, her so called "miracles." I shall now narrate some of my personal experiences.

Ma's 72nd birthday was celebrated in Kashi. I was lying in hospital with high fever. Thus I missed all the functions connected with this celebration. On the *Tithi Pūjā* day I felt very miserable and started crying for Ma's *darśana*. But I was not allowed to leave my bed. At night at about 3 A. M. I was forced to get up suddenly. I had a dream in which Ma actually ordered me to come to the Ashram immediately. How I got there is a mystery

in itself, (the place where I reside is far away from Ma's Ashram and the way completely dark.) When I reached the Ashram, Ma was in *Samādhi*. I witnessed the whole programme and returned to my bed again at 6-30 A. M. or so. It has to be mentioned here that I was under strict supervision and it seemed impossible to move out. Next day my fever subsided. Later I asked Ma, how all this could have happened. Ma said : "As you desired it intensely, you got it done."

I went to see Ma at the Dehradun Ashram. When I bowed to Ma, she said : "Your sister is ill but do not worry." My sister was indeed ill at Lucknow but I had never mentioned this to Ma. She gave various necessary instructions and said : "Take her with you to Kashi and look after her food and medicines, etc. personally." On my return to Lucknow I asked my sister to accompany me but as her final examinations were only 3 to 4 days ahead and as she was well prepared she insisted on appearing for her exams and refused to accompany me. I agreed and left her with my mother. On arrival at Kashi I received a letter from Ma giving me the same instructions again and asking me to bring my sister to Kashi. But in the meantime she went to her examination hall quite well. However, all of a sudden she became very sick and was compelled to leave the examination hall on a stretcher. Her condition worsened and I was informed by phone. When I reached Lucknow I got the news that she had somehow been saved and got a new lease of life. Actually what she felt was that she had been saved by Ma. It was clear that Ma knew all about her bad health as she instructed me to take her to Kashi but I disobeyed Her. Yet *Karunamayi* Ma* saved her.

Another incident : Ma was to visit the Sri Ramakrishna Ashram in Dehradun to attend the death ceremony of the

* *Karuna* means compassion.

head *Sannyāsi* there. She desired to take a flower garland to be offered there. All of us tried our level best to collect flowers (it was not possible to bring a garland from the city as the place was quite far off) but till the last moment it could not be prepared as very few flowers were available. Mother waited for 5 or 10 minutes on the lawn of the Ashram and when she was about to leave, a gentleman came with a beautiful large garland of fresh hibiscus flowers and wanted to offer it to Ma. She laughingly took it from his hand and said : "So it has come !" Ma's *kheyāla* to take a good flower garland with her, was thus automatically fulfilled.

Last year in February, Ma very kindly accepted an invitation to visit my place with revered Didima, Didi and a few of the ashramites. It was a sunny day and all arrangements were made on the lawn as Ma does not enter homes of families. But all of a sudden it started raining. I was at a loss what to do. I shifted everything to the verandah, but when Ma came she refused to enter even the verandah, as it was against her rule. She took her seat outside under an umbrella. Didima and Didi occupied seats on the verandah. The rest of the party remained standing on the lawn. What a great mistake on my part ! I was ashamed of my inadequate arrangements and the trouble I was giving to Ma and to others. Ma remained for more than an hour. She also sang : "Hari bol, Hari bol." So long as Ma was sitting outside, it kept on drizzling. Before leaving she called me, asking the usual questions and then said : "Well it rained, but only very little. Did you see ? Otherwise your whole programme might have been spoiled." I understood. Ma has full control over Nature (that is a topic by itself). As soon as she left, there was a cyclone and torrential rain.

Another incident : On the way back from our pilgrimage to Badri-Kedar we went to Mussoorie. While

returning from Mussoorie in a taxi, we met with an accident. The tyre of the left wheel burst into pieces and the driver lost control. There was a deep ravine thousands of feet below the level of the road. Automatically I cried, "Ma, Ma" and to the surprise of everybody present the taxi stopped in a miraculous way after moving down a few yards. A month or so later when Ma came to Kashi I went to see her. She said : "So you have returned safely, you were saved." I got the confirmation.

A very recent incident : 15th July, 1971. My nephew aged 21 years, a medical student at Lucknow had been in hospital with irregular fever for one and a half months, during which he was treated for typhoid. On the 15th morning we noticed a sudden change in his condition. He became delirious, confused, incoherent and then comatose. His condition further deteriorated with a change in his breathing also. Almost all senior doctors attended and were doubtful about his recovery. At that moment, with all hope lost, I sent a telegram to Ma for her *kheyāla*. In fact the inner wire must have reached at once, otherwise the patient could not have been saved. Now we started giving Ma's *Charanamrita* (चरणामृत) alone by mouth. We all were helplessly crying for Ma's mercy. At about midnight, when I was sitting at my nephew's bedside with my eyes closed, I saw Ma at the door with the usual yellow towel on her head. Not believing my eyes I rubbed them but again had the same vision. Did Ma come? Yes, in her *kheyāla*. After this his condition took a miraculous turn for the better. After his recovery I went to Hardwar to attend Didima's function at Kankhal on July 29th. When Ma saw me, she said : "Very nice that you have come. As you all desired and prayed, he was saved." I said : "Ma, I saw you at the door of my nephew's room." She said laughingly : "I do not know but for your confirmation this might have happened." How simple and how deep

the reply was ! We were certain that Ma alone by Her causeless mercy had saved his life.

There are at least hundreds of similar incidents, but it is not possible to elaborate on them here.

Mother's every word, every action and her being itself are all divine. What more can I say of Her who is absolute Love, Joy, Wisdom and what not. The only thing to repeat again and again is : "Ma, Ma, Ma."—Jai Guru, Jai Ma !



Prayer is the most powerful energy one can generate. It is a force as real as terrestrial gravity. As a physician, I have seen men after all therapy had failed, lifted out the disease and melancholy by the serene effort of prayer...When we pray we link ourselves with the inexhaustible motive power that spins the universe...Whenever we address God in fervent prayer we change both soul and body for the better. It could not happen that any man or woman could pray for a single moment without some good result.

—*Alexis Carrel*

Service*

What wealth is to the merchant, service is to the server. As light emanates from the sun and fragrance from the flower so does service from the servant of God. Pure service is not *done* by the individual, rather it flows through the individual. Only he can be a channel of true service who does not run after objects, personal achievements or a favourable environment for his own happiness.

The world loves the true servant of man who does not covet anything of the world, and still the whole world's love does not bind him. The man of egoistic action pretends to love the world, but really covets the love of the world, which however eludes him.

The mind of the true server always flows towards the object of service without effort—pure and uncontaminated by any trace of selfishness. Every action in the conduct of the true servant is perfect, for every activity of his has the same inner significance. Differences in the nature and size of his actions make no difference to the love permeating them and to the goal of his life. Environment, like the scenes of a drama, has no effect on his inner being. Desirelessness which the yogi attains by yoga and the intellectual seeker by deep thinking, the true server attains by right conduct in whatever conditions that appear before him; for he is not attached to appearances or to particular forms of action.

As wood goes on turning into fire as the fire flames forth, even so, as the ideal of service consumes a man, the entity of the server becomes one with the object of service.

The true server is never tired for the Lord who is the source of all energy dwells in his heart. "He who adopts the programme of God commands the resources of God."

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

There are two types of servers : Those who are like the Ganges in the sight of humanity, and those others who stand motionless behind the scene like the Himalayas but secretly feed all the rivers. The truest service to fellow-beings is the kindling of discrimination in them with the flame of discrimination in us, even as one candle lights another.

It is a superstition to think that only a man of many external possessions can render service. Many people take service to be just some good and helpful deeds which we perform in varying measures, largely from what we can easily spare of our time, energy or money. That is all right so far as it goes, for every good deed brings its reward just as every evil deed does. But for the true spiritual aspirant service is a ritual of life that culminates in union with the Divine; his whole life has to be lived for the sole purpose of service to fellow-beings, as an offering to the Divine.

Only he can be a true server whose heart vibrates with pain for the pain of others, and who for his own happiness looks to God alone and never to the world. Good deeds prepare a man for such renunciation, but only a complete psychological renunciation of desires makes a man capable of being a true server and channel for the Divine. If external possessions happen to be needed for a particular person because necessary for service, God provides them. True service is impossible without feeling the sorrow and suffering of another as one's own and one's own happiness or pleasure as the property of those in sorrow. But by taking on oneself the sorrow of another one gets rid of one's own sorrow once for all. To impose one's wisdom on another considering him to be ignorant, is not service. Therefore, until you are eligible to be a real server, at least do not be irreverent to others in thought, word or deed, and do not wish ill to anyone. That by itself is no mean service which requires no outer resources.

To serve is a high spiritual *sādhana*, but not to serve with a hidden desire to be regarded as a server or saviour.

Just as any obstacle in the way of a flowing river accentuates the velocity of the flow, even so unfavourable circumstances in the way of a server only accelerate the momentum of his service. Thus, unfavourable circumstances advance, and not retard, the progress of a *sādhaka*. What is given to us, including our environment, is but the material for *sādhana* given by God.

All actions of the divine servant arise from and merge into feeling, and feeling merges into knowledge (*jñāna*). True service leads to freedom, for the true server does not run after the world but the world runs after him; a true server does not run after organization but organization follows him.

There is no room in the mind of a true server for either an inferiority or a superiority complex.

The true server will never indulge in any pleasure which is born of the pain of another, for it is bound to recoil on him according to the universal law.

The true server makes no difference between a small piece of work and a so-called big piece of work, for all work is the Lord's. It is the egoist who makes such differences for his own glorification. All service is bound to be limited at the level of action, but the least service is unlimited at the level of love which motivates it. The tiniest bit of pure service, therefore, yields the same result as a big act of service, in uniting one with the served.

The privilege of true service is given by God in His Grace. Anyone who looks to the world for his own happiness cannot be a true server. Renunciation of the self is a pre-requisite for one who takes to the path of service. Of course, when even the earthly master, who has limitations and is not unselfish, gives his best to his servant,

would the great Master whose love and power are infinite and who is in no want for Himself, keep from looking after one who does all work as unto Him and for His pleasure, by serving His creation ?

The true server never looks at the faults of others. If others had no faults, there would be no need for his service. On the contrary, the servant of God is always busy removing his own faults so as to be a purer channel of service.

The servant of God does not regard his body or mind or any external possessions as his own; but he offers them to God in his service. God purifies the most contaminated instruments, once they are sincerely offered to Him.

Ordinary actions—even good deeds—feed the ego; service dissolves the ego and awakens the real Self. Service is the medicine to cure the disease of disservice or self-indulgence. Medicine is of no further use beyond curing the disease. The perfection of service and goodwill is in melting the same in the realization of the Self. Service is the external form of life; the inner form is the *nirvikalpa* state.

The ego with its body-consciousness takes a man along the dark path of mortality, while the awakening of the soul takes man along the path of immortality. The greatest service egoistically performed is not equal to the simplest service rendered egolessly; for the former humiliates its doer in expectation of the fruit of his action, whereas the latter leaves no trace or any *samskāra* but engenders passionlessness and love.

Saints and sages have never proclaimed their service; but even though many of them may not appear to serve in the ways of men, who dare say that Kabir, Nanak, Mirabai, Surdas and Tulsidas* have not blazed trails of perpetual service to mankind ?

* Well-known Indian saints.

The Divine never expects you to do what is beyond your power. Your field of duty lies only in what you are able to do.

Many men get so involved in outer action that the feeling behind it dries up. Such action loses its potency to lead to the true destination.

As the flower emanates sweet fragrance naturally, even so does the loving soul saturate all living beings. Service flows from the true server to all alike who come his way. He who limits himself to a certain creed, caste or country to the exclusion of others, shuts himself out from the Infinite.

A useful principle for one who embarks on the path of service is never to start a course of action that does not do good or provide happiness to others. Even if one has thereby to remain inactive for some time, Providence will in due course give him the necessary power to release beneficent action.

If any happiness comes to the server, he distributes it among the unhappy on behalf of the Supreme Giver. Beneficent activity and desirelessness are the roots of *sādhana*.

The body and all other instruments of the server are never slow to be utilized in the service of others, but they are always slow to move in any action that does no good to anyone.

The acid test of pure action is that it leaves no trace of any *samskāra* on the mind,

All human relationships are for service only, otherwise they are illusory. When you have rendered unto the world what belongs to it you will be detached from the body and its relationships and will commune with the Divine.

The heart in which love and compassion for all living beings reside can have no room for seeking after personal pleasures.

Let not a server fancy for a moment that he is obliging the served. After all, whatever a man has with which he serves is derived from others, e. g. eyes see by the dispensation of air, the tongue tastes by the dispensation of water, and the various elements that sustain man's life are derived from the dispensation of plants and animals. Man is indebted to society in various ways : he is brought up by his parents and relatives, educated at the expense of others, the roads he walks on were not constructed by himself or his family, and so on. We only repay a part of the debt we owe to others by our humble service. True service is therefore rendered only in humility. There is no room for pride in service. In fact, when the whole world is powerless to entirely mitigate the sorrow of a single individual, how much less can a single individual mitigate the entire sorrow of the world ! Indeed, service purifies one's own heart even more than it does lasting good to another. The honest server should feel indebted to the served. Humility and egolessness in service automatically result in renunciation and unite the server with the Beloved whom he serves, for the pure server follows up each thought and each act of service by true renunciation, and renunciation by pure love and awareness. But the server should serve without any label and the devotee should love without a label.

Pure service is its own reward. It is no investment or barter. If we desire anything for ourselves through service, it is the worst form of impurity of mind in the garb of service. Service and renunciation are only the returning of whatever belongs to another, and therefore should be done for their own sake; when done to achieve any ends they amount to their own denial.

For the spiritual *sādhaka* all acts of service resolve themselves into worship of God.

Sacred Places of Kashmir, Jammu & Ladhak

A Devotee

(Continued from the last issue)

YANGTHANG

माता यथा नियं पुत्रं आयुसा एकपुत्रमनुरकखे ।
एवंपि सर्वभुतेषु मानसं भावये अपरिमाणं ॥*

(Just as the mother protects her son at the expense of her own life, so you should feel unlimited affection for all beings).

Yangthang is situated in a ravine of the mountains about thirteen kilometers north-west as the crow flies, from Leh, the headquarters of Ladhak.

There is an ancient Buddhist monastery at Yangthang. On all ceremonial occasions people visit the temple in the monastery for offering prayers and obtain the blessings of the Lāmā.

ZEWAN

ज्येष्ठेऽत्र कृष्णद्वादश्यां यात्राये तक्षकश्च तम् ।
आगतं चूडया तोयस्यन्दिन्या ज्ञास्यसि ध्रुवम् ॥**

[You will certainly recognise him by his bun-like hair-tuft dripping with water when he comes to visit the Takshaka Nāga on the twelfth day of the dark half of Jaistha (May-June).]

Zewan is about eleven kilometers south-east of Srinagar. Its ancient name is Jayavana.

There is a large pool of limpid water in the village which is sacred to Takshaka-Nāga, the divine serpent. It is visited

* From the sayings of Buddha.

** The Rajatarangini, first Taranga, verse 220 (see Shesh Nag).

by the pilgrims on their way to the sacred shrine of Siva called Hareshwara. It is said that the cultivation of saffron has originated from Takshaka Nāga.

Takshaka Nāga is famous in the Mahabhārata and Shrimadbhāgavatam because he was instrumental in bringing about the death of King Parikshit by biting him.

In chapter eighty-two of the Vanaparva of the Mahābhārata, Pulastya tells about the sanctity of Kashmira, the abode of Takshaka.

काश्मीरेष्येव नागस्य भवनं तक्षकस्य च ।

वितस्ताख्यामिति ख्यातं सर्वपापप्रमोचनम् ॥*

(In the land of Kashmir there is the abode of Takshaka Nāga and there is the famous river called Vitasta, which destroys all sins.)

Kalhana says that King Kalasa (1063-1089 A. D.) established a city near Jayavana.

ततो जयवनोपान्ते निरन्तरं महागृहम् ।

स्वनामाङ्कं पुरं कर्तुं प्रावर्तत विशांपतिः ॥

मठाग्रहारप्रासादमहागृहं परंपराः ।

सत्तोयपवना स्तत्र ययुः सिद्धं सहस्रधाः ॥**

[Then the king (Kalasa) set about to construct near Jayavana a town bearing his own name and full of large houses. Rows of *Matims* (temples with towers), *Agarahas*, palaces and buildings with beautiful gardens and tanks were constructed there in thousands.]

At a distance of about three kilometers north-east of Zewan there is a village called Khunmoh. Its ancient name is Khonamusa. It is the birth place of the famous Kashmir poet Bilhana. In one of the two hamlets which form the village

* The Mahabharata, Vanaparva, chapter 82, verse 90.

** The Rajatarangini, seventh Taranga, verses 607-608.

There is a holy spring called Damodar Nag. Above the village, on the side of the hill, there is another sacred spring called Bhuvaneshwari.

शरणागतजीवानां सर्वदुःखविनाशिनीम् ।

सुखसम्पत्करीं नित्यां वन्दे त्वां भूवनेश्वरीम् ॥

(I bow in reverence to Bhuvaneshwari, who is eternal, who bestows happiness and wealth and who destroys all the sorrows of those who take refuge in Her.)

On the mountain above Zewan there is the ancient cave-shrine of Hareshwara. There is a Siva-Linga in the cave. It is said that the Linga came to light by itself (Swayambhu).

हर यद्वस्मत्कृतमपराधं विविधं कृपया हरसि तथा ।

गिरिश महापञ्जलवेरस्मानुद्धर धीर कृपाजलधे ॥*

(O Hara ! If we have committed different types of sins, then graciously relieve us of them. O mountain dweller, who is patient and an ocean of mercy, save us from the great sea of miseries) :

काश्मीरमण्डलं पुण्यं सर्वतीर्थमरिन्दम ।

तत्र नागहृदः पुण्यस्तत्र पुण्याः शिलोच्चयाः ॥

तत्र नदयस्तथा पुण्याः पुण्यानि च सरांसि अपि ।

देवालयाः महापुण्याः तेषांश्चैव तथाशुभाः ॥

तस्या मध्येन निर्यता सिमन्तमिव पार्वति ।

वितस्ता परमा देवी साक्षाद्धिमनगोभवा ॥

[“Vaishampayana said to Janmejaya,” O subduer of enemies, the region of Kashmir is the holiest of all holy places. There the lakes of the Nagas are sacred and so are the many mountains. There the rivers are holy, and so are the ponds. There the temples are very sacred and so also the hermitages. From within that region the great Goddess Parvati is flowing as the river Vitasta originating from the Himalayas just like the line that divides the hair on the head of a woman when combed into two parts.”]

* From Sivastotram, Stotrarnavah.

Bhagavata Saptah at Hardwar

K. G. Ambegaokar

Bhagavata Saptah is a frequent occurrence in one or other of Sri Sri Mata Anandamayi's Ashrams; her devotees are happy to hold it under her holy auspices. Meticulous attention is paid every time to all details of the religious rites and it would be difficult to say that any particular Saptah was better than the others. I was not able to attend when Swami Akhandanandji expounded the Bhagavata for fifteen days at Naimisharanya but I am told it was most impressive. I was however privileged to participate in the Saptah held at Hardwar from the 28th August to the 4th September 1971 for the soul of one of Ma's great devotees, Dr. Pannalal, and I think it had some unusual features which deserve to be recorded.

The daughters and the son of Dr. Pannalal had decided to perform the Saptah. When the three daughters approached Mataji about this, she at first suggested Vrindaban where Dr. Pannalal had built a temple of Mahaprabhu but as that would have had to be held much later, she gave the above dates at Hardwar and Swami Paramananda agreed to make all the necessary arrangements. How efficiently he went about this work can be imagined by those who know his ways; he bought the numerous items of worship etc. needed for the ceremony and there was hardly anything the family had to do.

Others in the Ashram also helped enthusiastically in the various chores. Amongst them particular mention may be made of Maitreyi who every day prepared all the elaborate *puja* material and was present for any other help. Brahmachari Brahmananda and Brahmachari Tanmayananda who did the *bhajans* during the reading, the girls who took in turn the *bhajans* that were sung during the intervals between the morning

and evening sessions, Chitra and other women who cooked our food, Dasuda who took part in the japa, Lakshmiiji who prepared all the decorations for the stage and Mrs. Ramadi Saxena who cut out and sewed the silk covers for the Bhāgavata books.

The hall in Baghat House was tastefully decorated; buntings in three colours with gold border were hung along the walls and across; strings of mango leaves were also put across the arches and round the pillars. The stage on which the Bhāgavata was to be kept and read was done in yellow silk cloth and had a beautiful silk awning, plantain branches with big leaves at four corners, a tulsi plant in front, flower pots with barley sown in them and the usual *matkas*. Mataji's elevated seat was to the right of the stage. The *dhāra* who had to keep a check on the reading of the text sat on the right and the *jap-walas* on the left. Clean white sheets were spread over the floor for the audience and mats for the overflow in the corridors. There were some carpets on the right for sadhus. On the left of the stage near the wall, the *pūjā* was arranged. The whole hall presented a gay and colourful picture.

Mataji arrived in Hardwar on the morning of the 25th August. Leila Sahai came from Lucknow the same day and her husband, Rameshwar Sahai (known as Bhaisaheb) travelled from Delhi with the other two sisters Ratna and Chandra, along with me on the 26th. Bhaisaheb's friend Ram Panjwani, who is also a great devotee of Ma, had arranged three rooms for us at Bhīm Goda on the bank of the Ganga about two furlongs from Baghat House. We left our luggage in the rooms and went to do *pranām* to Mataji. We had been told that the famous Srinath Sastri of Vrindaban had been invited and had agreed to do the Bhāgavata reading but that night when we again went to Mataji we learnt to our great disappointment that a telegram had been received saying that Sastriji was suffering from some eye trouble and would not be able to come. Ma was observing *mauna* throughout this period but showed us by signs that whatever had to happen would happen. When we asked Swami

Paramananda what was to be done, he told us not to worry since Ma was there but that as a precaution they had sent for Brahmachari Nirmalananda from Dehra Doon and made enquires about *pandits* in Hardwar. Swamiji himself went ahead calmly with the arrangements.

Next day, on the 27th of August, we bathed at Har-ki-Pauri and went to Mataji who gave saris to the three sisters, a dhoti to Bhaisaheb and an uparna to me for wearing during the reading. Swami Paramananda told Bhaisaheb to act as *yajman*, which he did with great devotion and punctuality. That night at a late hour when we again went to Ma, we learnt the happy news that Srinath Sastri was starting at night for Hardwar and bringing a *pandit* with him; next morning he arrived in time for the function. I cannot help feeling that it was Ma's grace which brought about this joyful end to our suspense.

On the 28th morning, when we went to the hall, Mataji came down. We all in turn knelt down near her and in our open mouths she sprinkled a few drops of *panchagavya* for purification. Then we went up and did *pūjā* of Ma. A Banarasi silk sari was put round her and a gold ring on her finger. Then we came downstairs and Bhaisaheb first did the *pūjā* of the deities. On two stools, designs in coloured rice had been drawn to represent some of the gods and there was a big *kalash* which was supposed to be occupied by all the other deities. Over this *kalash* was placed a silver *simhāsana* in which was kept a gold plaque with the figures of Laxmi-Narayan. The priest had the whole elaborate *pūjā* performed in detail while we sat round. The gold plaque was bathed in five materials : milk, curds, ghee, sugar and honey. By the time the *pūjā* was over, Srinath Sastri arrived and we all went up to Mataji's room. From here the Bhāgavata was carried on his head by Bhaisaheb followed by all of us and the Ashram Swamis playing music and singing kirtan, 'Sri Krishna Govinda Hare Murare, He Nātha Nārāyana Vāsudeva.' Downstairs in the hall the Bhāgavata was duly installed on the Vyāspīth. Mataji also

came down and sat on her dais. Three Brahmacharis sat on the left of the stage doing *japa*. Srinath Sastri who was wearing dark glasses made the beginning of the introductory *Mahatmya* which is read on the first day and then, because his eyes were not yet all right, he took Ma's permission to allow the other Sastri he had brought with him to take his place to continue the reading of the Sanskrit text.

When the reading was over by about twelve, we went upstairs to Mataji and received from her leaf bowls containing fruit and sweets. We were told that she had made these ready herself because she felt that as we had had nothing to eat or drink from the morning we should have some refreshment as soon as the reading was over. After a little while we were served with *phalahār*, the food one eats during a *Vrata*. We could rest a little before Srinath Sastri started his exposition in Hindi at three o'clock till about 6.30 p. m. Then after *ārati* was performed, Nirmalananda addressed us for about half an hour; it was a very learned exposition. He started by explaining the Viniyoga of the *Bhāgavata*. He said that Narada, the Rishi who advised Vyasa to compose the Purana for the peace of his mind, was a very kindly soul. In the Purana itself he guides Dhruva to realize God by giving him the *Dvadasa Akṣara* Mantra. This was presenting, in a new light, Narada, whom we had always looked upon as fond of creating quarrels. The Purana has many Chhandas; its seed is Brahma, its Shakti is Bhakti and its Keelakas (keys) are *Jñāna* and *vairāgya*. The object of the *Bhāgavata* was to remove the fear of death. Rajah Parikshit had been cursed to die of snake bite after seven days and Shuka Muni was making him realize that life was only a short sojourn of the soul in the body, and death frees it from this confinement.

For the next seven days the same course was followed except that Nirmalananda did not speak in the hall after Srinath Sastri who continued his exposition till seven p. m.; instead Nirmalananda used to give us a short talk upstairs at 9.30 p. m. when we sat in front of Mataji. These talks were very interest-

ing and he told us that Mataji had asked him to speak on the spiritual aspect of the Bhāgavata. For example he explained that Kalia serpent, whom Krishna subdued, represented *rodha* (anger); similarly the lifting up of Krishna into the air by the demon Trinavarta, whom Krishna vanquished, represented purification of the atmosphere by him. On the last day he explained the importance of *bhakti* and *nāma japa*.

The second *Sastri* who read the text in the mornings never finished before twelve and one day went on till it was almost one. On the fifth day when he read about the birth of Krishna, Mataji who generally did not attend the morning session, appeared with a beautifully adorned image of Krishna. She arranged the image on the dais and big baskets of fruit and sweets were brought and placed around; it was *bhoga* of 56 kinds. In the Hindi exposition by Srinathji the birth occurred the next day. The birth of Krishna during the Saptah is treated in the same way as *Janmashtami* with joyful singing and distribution of sweets. We got *prasāda* of these sweets from Ma when we went to do *pranāma* after the *mulpath* (Sanskrit reading) but we could not eat it till the end of the function on account of our *Vrato*.

For the last two days Srinathji did the morning reading of the text in Sanskrit. He read very fast with the same speed that one runs over a book with one's eyes but in between sang some of the verses in his melodious voice thus making the reading interesting and allowing us to catch up with him. Consequently on these days the reading finished earlier, about 11.30 A. M. His Hindi exposition in the afternoon was of absorbing interest. He spoke in the sweet *Brij bhasha* and had a wonderful way of telling the stories and explaining the teachings of the Bhāgavata. The way he told the story of Sudama was particularly striking. His disquisition attracted large crowds including several *Sadhus* and on the last two days Mr. Gulzarilal Nanda was present. Raja Saheb Solon to whom the Baghat House belongs attended for the first three days. One night when

it rained a lot, he was kind enough to send us home in his car. The other members of Dr. Pannalal's family arrived on the night of the 3rd September and included the son, Kamta with his wife and daughter and Mr. Govind Narain with his two daughters and grand children.

Mataji generally had one or two looks at the hall below from the gallery and came down about an hour before the end of the Hindi exposition. At the first day's evening session Mataji sang a *bhajan* with the congregation. We thought she had given up her *mauna* but it was only for the occasion. She could, however, convey what she desired by signs or writing letters on a person's palm. Once again on the day of Krishna's birth she participated in a *bhajan*.

It is generally believed that the soul for whom the Bhāgavata is read is usually present. Amongst us some felt the presence of Dr. Pannalal without actually seeing him. Mr. Pandya who also did the *Vrata* with us, did see him in his *bandh galekā* coat sitting near Bhaisaheb and a lady saw Didima. Mata Anandamayi indicated to us that Dr. Pannalal and Didima were present and also the various deities. Of course most of us did not see anything but felt that the atmosphere was highly surcharged spiritually.

On the third day Mataji folded up her big padded *āsana* and said it should be used by Bhaisaheb to sit on during the readings. She had noticed that he was sitting uncomfortably on the hard floor on a thin *āsana* and always solicitous of the comfort of her devotees she gave away her costly *āsana* to Bhaisaheb. I also think that perhaps she saw Dr. Pannalal sitting near Bhaisaheb and gave the *āsana* for him.

During the course of his talks Brahmachari Nirmalananda had told us that when the barley seeds sown in the pots round the dais sprout up, at least one of them should be absolutely white and that would be an indication that the departed soul and the deities had come to attend the function. He warned us not

to be disappointed if this did not happen, but sure enough, we saw on the last day that there was just one absolutely white straw. It was however lost subsequently because we had failed to pluck it then.

On the last day after the *Mū'pātha* was finished in the morning we went up to Ma as usual and all the men received *Rāmnāma Chadders* from her and she also put her hand on our heads which is a rare privilege. Each family also received from her a *Bhāgavata* wrapped in a silk jacket. On the first day when we had gone upstairs to her after the Sanskrit reading we had carried our *Bhāgavatas* with us as we thought that we should stick to the same copy throughout. But Mataji made us give back the books and told us that they should be left in the hall and also allowed to rest like all of us. So afterwards we had been replacing the *Bhāgavatas* on the dais after the reading every day and were happy to get a copy at her hands at the end.

When Srinath Sastri's Hindi disquisition was over in the afternoon and after the *ārati*, he gave in the *ānchal* of each lady present a coconut as *prasāda* for their whole family. When the function ended there was a regular stampede towards the dais where Sastriji was sitting as all those who attended wanted to make their offerings and bow to him and the *Bhāgavata* and at one time the stage was in danger of collapsing !

On the morning of the 5th September, Bhaisaheb did the *pūjā* as usual and then a *yajña* was performed at which offerings were put into the sacrificial fire. This ceremony is known as *Pūrnāhuti* and signifies bidding farewell to the gods. After this was finished we all went into the hall where various gifts were made to Sastriji and then Bhaisaheb carried the *Bhāgavata* on his head upstairs back to Ma's room. A final *pūjā* was performed of Ma; everyone from the family put a sari round her and at one time, in addition to her own clothes, she had four or five of them wrapped round even though it was so hot. Bangles were put on her hands (which she later distributed among the ladies), her hair was combed and all other articles, like a mirror, were offered to her.

After this there was the *bhāṇḍarā* (feast), which always follows these functions. The Brahmins were first fed and then all of us ate. The special dish was *khir* which was very delicious. That evening Ma first visited Kankhal and then left for Dehra Dun in Karṇta's car. Leila, my wife and I, who spent one more day in Hardwar, were given lunch by Didi and were lucky enough to be taken in the Ashram car by Dasuda to Kankhal where we put our offering of flowers on Diditna's *Sāmadhi* on which her statue is to be placed.

This Bhṛgavata Saptah which was celebrated with so much eclat and enthusiasm and in such a highly spiritual atmosphere on account of the presence of Sri Ma and invisible beings, was an unforgettable experience and will always remain green in my memory. All the members of Dr. Pannalal's family feel most grateful to Sri Sri Mata Anandamayi for the gracious favour she did us; it was really she who did the Saptah for us.

Mātri Līlā

(July 15th—October 15th, 1971.)

Mataji left Dehradun for Kankhal on July 24th. On July 29th (*Jhūlan Panchami*) the first anniversary of Didima's *Mahāsamādhi* was commemorated at our Kankhal Ashram by *akhandā* (uninterrupted) *kīrtana*, *akhandā japa* and *akhandā mouna* (silence) for 24 hours, devotees taking turns of one or two hours each. At midday *sannyāsīs* and *sadhūs* were given feasts in our own ashram as well as in *Nirvāni Akhāra* and at Kailash Ashram, Rishikesh. In the night *pūjā* was performed at Didima's *samādhi* and there was silent meditation in Mataji's presence during the hour of Didima's passing, namely from 1.15 - 1.45 a.m. All sat on the veranda of the *samādhi mandir* and in the courtyard in solemn silence. Didima's presence was felt tangibly by one and all. It was as if she had merged with Mataji. After the meditation, Ma got up and placed a large garland on the *samādhi*. Didima seemed to receive it in person.

On July 31st Mataji returned to Kishenpur, visiting on her way Nirvani Akhara, Maheshwarananda Ashram and Baghat House.

From August 2nd to 6th, *Jhūlan* was celebrated every evening in the Kishenpur Ashram in the usual manner. A number of *vigrahas* of Krishna and Radha were placed on a large swing on the east veranda. The decorations with silk hangings and a profusions of flowers and leaves became more gorgeous every night. *Pūjā* was performed to the accompaniment of sweet songs. On August 6th, the festival of *Rakshā Bandhan*, *rākhīs* (bracelets) were presented to Mataji and in turn tied by her to the wrist of every person who approached her. There was midnight meditation in

remembrance of Mataji's self-initiation in the *Jhūlan* full-moon night in 1922. Since there happened to be a lunar eclipse, *kīrtana* was performed until 3 a. m. Mataji herself led the *kīrtana* for about 15 minutes at 2-15 a. m. when some of the congregation were in danger of dozing off. Several American devotees took part in the celebrations with great interest and devotion.

On August 7th, Mataji motored to Raipur, where she remained for three days' rest. Due to heavy rains the road was in a precarious condition and Raipur difficult to approach. All the same, many went to see Mataji there, enjoying Mataji's *darśana* in that beautiful, secluded spot.

On August 13th, *Janmastami* (Sri Kṛṣṇa's birthday) was celebrated by solemn midnight *Pūjā*. In spite of running a temperature, Mataji remained downstairs until 2 a. m., actively supervising everything as she always does. There was a wild storm with torrential rain and the electric lights went out already in the evening and had to be replaced first by candles and finally by gas lights. The next morning, *Nandotsava* (the joy of the cowherds over Sri Kṛṣṇa's birth) was observed in the open space in front of the Ashram temples. A few devotees who usually dress-up as *gopas* (cowherds) had come from Delhi and were singing and dancing round a circular altar, one of them carrying on his shoulders a yoke with earthen pots filled with curds, one of which was knocked down and smashed in course of the dance, as tradition demands. Mataji was in a great mood. She sang: 'Brahmagopal, Prāṇagopal.' Suddenly she caught hold of the most bulky old lady and danced round with her. Then she moved all over the place, joining hands, one by one, with every single woman present, swinging them round once each. Mataji throwing curds into the mouth of everyone and splashing it all over them marked the climax of the function. Fortunately it was only drizzling at the time, so everything proceeded without disturbance and to the maximum enjoyment of all present.

Every evening during Mataji's sojourn at Kishenpur, there was satsang in the parked hall with *kirtana* and a brilliant talk by Brahmachari Nirmalananda, until he left for Varanasi just before *Janmāstamī*. On August 19th he returned, bringing some of the sacred fire that has been kept burning ever since 1926. In that year at Divali, *havan* (fire sacrifice) was performed in Dacca after a very extraordinary Kali Puja. At Matajis suggestion, the fire was not allowed to go out after the *Pūrnāhuti* (final oblation) as is usually done, but preserved. After the partition, the fire was transferred from Dacca to Vindhyachal and Varanasi and later also to Calcutta. Now it has come to Dehradun as well. We have on several occasions written in detail about this fire. *Already about two years ago a structure to house the sacred fire had been erected in Kalyanvan on the platform near Rama Mandir where Sri Haribabaji used to hold *satsang* formerly.

From August 18th Mataji stopped talking. Some of us guessed that her keeping silence might be connected with the installation of the sacred fire at Dehradun, since the Brahmachari started with the fire from Varanasi on the 18th morning. However, our guess was obviously wrong because, although Mataji uttered one sentence of instruction after the installation of the fire on August 24th, her silence continues to this day. Nobody knows why and for how much longer. However, Mataji is by no means in retirement, on the contrary she is extremely active and interested in everyone and everything and expresses herself by signs and gestures and, whenever necessary, by drawing Bengali letters with her finger on someone's hand. Mataji even holds private interviews and conveys replies by letters in this manner. Now and again, on special occasions, she sings *Kīrtana*.

* See "Ānanda Vārtā," Vol. VII/3, pp. 144-150, Vol. VIII/1, pp. 45-51, Vol. XII/1, pp. 48-53 and "Akhaṇḍa Mahāyajña," a book in Bengali and in Hindi translation by Sri Gurupriya Devi,

When during the recent Durga Puja many old devotees who had come from distant places begged her to talk to them, she responded by saying : "Narayan, Narayan" or "Baba Tripurari" or "Ma Durga", "Sri Krishna" and the like. During Durga Puja Ma uttered a word occasionally when absolutely necessary, but then she again reverted to complete silence.

Brahmachari Kamalakanta who had been with Mataji already in the days of Dacca, has been in Dehradun for some time now. Having studied astrology, he had figured out that his life in his present body was to end on August 20th of this year at the age of 65. A few days before Mataji stopped speaking, she explained that while the ordinary person's life is completely controlled by destiny, the *sādhaka* can rise above it. On August 20th *akhanda Rāmāyaṇī* (the uninterrupted recitation of the whole of the epic) was performed in the Ashram hall and Kamalakanta was asked to spend most of the day in Mataji's immediate presence. He did not die and is in fact quite hale and hearty. He feels that by God's grace he has been given a new birth in his old body. Mataji has assigned to him the task of tending the sacred fire and offering daily oblations into it. He had for some time done this already in Dacca long, long ago. In the early morning of August 24th the fire was ceremonially installed in the *kunda* (fire pit) of the new building in Kalyanvan and an elaborate function held in Mataji's presence. By irony of fate it was pouring with rain and everyone was thoroughly drenched. A *yajña* of 100,000 oblations with *Gāyatri mantra* was started on that day, performed daily for 2 hours by three pandits, ending on September 27th, *Mahāstami* day.

On August 25th early morning, Mataji was to motor to Hardwar. However, she went first to Kalyanvan and spent nearly two hours making arrangements for the fire since the wood was all wet due to continuous rain and the fire was not burning as brightly as it should have,

From August 28th to September 5th a *Bhāgavata Saptāh* was held in Hardwar which has been described in great detail in a separate article*. On August 28th, when the sad news of the passing of Yogacharya Sri Swami Shyamananda, head of the Yogada Satsang at Ranchi, was received, Mataji interrupted her silence by saying: "*Shreya grahan*" ('Embrace the highest'). Mataji sang for a short while on the first and last days of the *Saptāh*. She visited our Kankhal Ashram in the beginning and at the end of her sojourn at Hardwar.

On September 5th evening Mataji again alighted at Kishenpur. Satsang was held twice daily. One day someone related that some devotees at Poona had recently had a car accident. The car was badly damaged and the window pane crashed into small pieces that fell on the inmates, but nobody at all was hurt. The devotees ascribed their miraculous escape to the fact that Mataji's photo was with them, since they were taking it to a shop for framing.

On September 10th Mataji proceeded to Raipur. The next day happened to be the anniversary of the Mahā-samādhi of Swami Akhandananda Giri, Gurupriya Devi's father. A feast was given in his honour to a few sādhus and to all present. On September 13th Mataji returned to Kishenpur. On the 15th and 16th there was another recitation of the entire Rāmāyana. Guests now began to gather for Durga Puja. On the 18th Professor Tripurari Chakravarti arrived from Calcutta and from that very evening gave a daily lecture for an hour, mostly in English, interspersed with a few Bengali sentences during the evening *satsang* in the over-crowded hall. On the 19th evening Mataji shifted to her beautiful cottage near *Panchavati*, in the compound of Mr. and Mrs. Khaitan next to Kalyanvan, but would come twice daily to the Ashram for *satsang* until

* See p. 177 of this issue.

the pandal was opened on September 25th morning. On the 24th and 25th the whole of the Ramayana was chanted in Rama Mandir, Kalyanvan.

On the 25th evening Durga Puja started with "bodhan" (awakening) and "āmantyan" (invitation) followed by *āraṇ*. The traditional clay images of Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati etc. had been sculptured by a Bengali artist in life size and were extremely beautiful and lively. The walls and the ceiling of the shrine were completely covered with gorgeous red velvet, and a huge velvet curtain shut off the shrine from the pandal whenever necessary. The pandal itself was a real piece of art, in fact it looked like a beautiful temple with its painted pillars, freezes, lamps and paintings from Hindu mythology. Mataji's throne-like chair was placed on the extreme right of the dais on which the *pūjā* was performed and a chair with Didima's garlanded photo on the extreme left. Mataji was present every morning during the *pūjā* and in the evening during *āraṇ*, as well as an hour before when Prof. Tripurari Chakravarti delivered his interesting daily lecture on the Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa. After *āraṇ* the famous Baul singers Sri Prahlad Brahmachari with his party and the renowned Dhananjay Bhattacharya regaled the audience with the best type of Bengali songs till late at night. On *Daśami* day slides of Ma and Didima were shown after the music. On *Sastī* and *Vijaya Daśami* the great saint Sri Sitaram Das Omkarnath came with a party from his ashram at Rishikesh and again one day after Lakshmi Puja, when he spent three hours with Mataji in her cottage, notwithstanding her *mouna*. On *Mahāstami* day, besides Durga Pūjā and the *Purnāhūṛī* of the *yajña*, the consecration took place of a lovely little sculpture in silver of Padmanabham (Viṣṇu lying on His bed of snakes), a replica of the deity that is worshipped in Padmanabham Temple at Trivandrum.

When last July, the brother of the Maharaja of Travancore came for Mataji's *darśana*, he was put up at

Kalyanvan, in the cottage which is nearest to the *panchavati*. Padmanabham is the presiding deity of Travancore and the Maharaja regarded as His representative on earth. As such, the Maharaja's brother carries with him an image of the deity wherever he goes and performs daily worship. On taking leave from Mataji in July, he took his *vigraha* to the Ashram to show to Mataji. Mataji was highly pleased and said, when Padmanabham had chosen to come all the way to Kalyanvan from South India, He should not be allowed to depart anymore. A devotee from Bombay therefore had a silver model of Padmanabham made in Travancore and on Mahāstami day brought it to Dehradun together with the Maharaja's brother and two South Indian priests who gave instructions about the proper worship. Padmanabham was first placed near the deities of Durga Puja for consecration and then carried by the Maharaja's brother in procession to the *Panchavati* where another ceremony was performed in Mataji's presence, and then to the cottage at Kalyanvan. Nobody had been permitted to stay in the cottage after Padmanabham had graced it with His presence last July. Mataji takes great interest in this new shrine and almost daily walked down the steep hill and up again, arranging for an altar there and certain alterations in the building. Three Brahmacharis and a Dandi Swami have been deputed to take care of Padmanabham.

On *Navami* day, after the *Pūjā*, Mataji blessed every single person present by putting sandal paste on their foreheads. On *Vijaya Dashami* day, after *Darpan Visarjana*, Mataji sang : "Ma Durga, Ma Uma." Later she distributed flowers, fruits, and cloth to everyone who came to do *pranāma*. In the evening everyone queued up, to receive laddus from her hand. In spite of Mataji's *mouna* everyone felt amply blessed during those festive days. Mataji conveys everything by smiles and gracious looks and sometimes by touch.

On September 30th morning Mataji motored to Suktal at the urgent invitation of Sri Swami Vishnuashramji, who had specially sent a Brahmachari to Dehradun to persuade Mataji to grace with her presence a *Srimad Bhāgavata Pārāyana* which Swami Akhandananda Saraswati was holding in Suktal. On her arrival Mataji was given a tremendous ovation by a huge gathering of sadhus, mahatmas and others. Besides attending the *satsang* Mataji wandered all over the spacious Ashram. Before leaving at about 3 p. m. on October 1st, she visited Sukhadeva Temple, then motored to the bank of the Ganges and stopped at two other places, alighting in Kishenpur at about 5-30 p. m. Mataji went first of all to Kalyanvan to see Padmanabham and Rama Mandir and then gave *daršana* at the Ashram before proceeding to her cottage.

On October 3rd evening, Lakshmi Pūjā was performed in the pandal and Satya Narayan Pūjā at the Ashram until late at night. Mataji is just indefatigable. Nobody is able to keep pace with her countless activities. The *satsang* continued every morning in the Ashram and every evening in the pandal, where Professor Tripurari delivered very brilliantly expounded lectures on the Valmiki's Ramayana in English. On October 8th night, Mataji boarded the train to Varanasi, accompanied by over twenty people. She is expected to return to Kishenpur on the 14th morning. Kali Puja will be celebrated in the same pandal on the 18th night, Divali. Mataji is expected to leave on the 21st for Vrindaban where the twenty-second *Samyam Mahāvratā* is to be held from October 26th to November 1st.