

# Ananda Varta

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

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*Mataji with miniature replica of Lord Padmanabha  
( Vishnu ) in her hands.*

*—Courtesy : Sadananda, Bombay*



*Durga Puja at Dehradun in October, 1971*

# Ānanda Vārtā

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## Mātri Vāni

To some devotees God gives *dārśāna* in the form they love most. He has endowed you with devotion and the power to worship Him, but He has not come to you in the form of a mantra, a word of power. For the time being repeat the name of Him that appeals to you most, contemplate Him in the form dearest to you, and pray : “Lord, reveal Thyself to me in the way that is for my ultimate Good !”

\* \* \* \*

The immutable Brahman,<sup>1</sup> the primeval sound,<sup>2</sup> the Omkara<sup>3</sup> are one and the same as the word ‘Ma’—*Ānanda* in essence. Is it not God to whom you say : “Thou art mother, Thou art father, Thou art friend and master !” He indeed is the Mother, all pervading, who gives to everyone exactly what he needs. He Himself giving of Himself to Himself.

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1. Akṣara Brahman, 2. Śabda Brahman, 3. Praṇava.

When one's sole pursuit is the self-revelation of that palace of jewel in the form of the WORD (*akṣara*), of God Who Himself present in His creation, is imperishable, eternal—He indeed being the supreme talisman of protection and safety—knowing Him, Who is ever poised in Himself, to be alone worthy of remembrance, this is the highest Good.

\* \* \* \*

God is merciful. He has saved your life. Under all circumstances there must be the remembrance of God. Anchored in patience pass through this difficult time. So often many receive blows that attack their wealth, position and life. If one's life has been saved, there is hope of everything else. Accept what has happened as the Will of the Almighty.

\* \* \* \*

Such is the pilgrimage through life ! Whatever task comes to you in this world, in whatever manner, regard it as your duty and carry it out faultlessly to the best of your ability. To automatically manifest His power through the contemplation of Him, through His name, is His nature. In all conditions of life one should be engaged as much as ever possible in *japa*, *dhyāna* and similar practices.

\* \* \* \*

To strive to know Himself, to find Himself is man's duty as a human being. Of all creatures man alone has been endowed with the potential capacity of realizing God. Thus, the search after Truth is his bounden duty. Let every man advance along the path which is most congenial to him. The Guru's instructions have to be carried out without reasoning. For the present remain engrossed in the study of scriptures and in *satsang*.\* For the sake of realizing God who is Truth, sit perfectly still for at least a few minutes every day, making the mind a blank. So long as you do not receive special instructions from your Guru, adhere to this practice in order to become fixed in yoga. If it is your wish, you may proceed in the manner indicated, with the search after Truth as your object.

\* \* \* \*

In this world of birth and death the pain of separation is unavoidable. Bear it, taking refuge in patience and obey the directions of your parents as much as you can. At all times keep your mind immersed in the thought of the Lord, so that there may be no possibility of straying into a path that leads to misery.

\* \* \* \*

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\* *Satsang* The company of sages, saints and seekers after Truth. Also a religious gathering.

The One from whom originate the universe and everything that is beyond it, who is Himself in His creation, He is present also in this very form. One must be bent on the search after Truth so as to find peace. Make a supreme effort to remain steeped as much as possible in a divine atmosphere, thinking of Him as embodied in every person—so that the mind may be wedded exclusively to good and pure activities.

\* \* \* \*

*Gurupūrnimā* falling on a Thursday is a most auspicious constellation. Try your utmost to carry out fully the Guru's orders. The Guru never abandons his disciple, this should always be borne in mind.

\* \* \* \*

To have chosen Kashi for one's abode is a matter of great rejoicing. Exert yourself to the limit of your capacity. Living in the shelter of Viṣwanāth\* and Annapūrnā\* is very fortunate.

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\* The presiding deities of Kashi (Varanasi).



## Sad Vāni

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

(Continued from the last issue.)

91.

*Ānanda*—Divine Bliss, *Paramapurusa*—the Supreme Being, and *Ātmā*—the Self are different conceptions of one and the same THING. Do you know what genuine *Ānanda* is? That which depends on nothing but the One, which is self-luminous, perfect in itself, true and eternal. You derive happiness from what you take in through the senses, but that happiness is elusive and fleeting and this is why you endlessly pursue one material object after another. With determination and perseverance dedicate yourself to the search of Him who is the source of all delight. Refuse to be satisfied with anything but His divine sweetness, and you will not be a slave to the senses, to passions, you will not, like a beggar, have to go from door to door.

92.

The mere performance of rituals does not constitute real *sādhana*. It is important to bear in mind that practices carried out thoughtlessly and without deep feeling are not helpful to true spirituality. *Tapasyā* means to endure the fire of purification. If you cannot bear much more even than the threefold suffering (which is physical, emotional and mental), it means that you are not engaged in *tapasyā*. All the senses and

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passions must be brought under complete control. So long as there is even a slight imperfection in you, it will be difficult to obtain the vision of the All Perfect-One. Try to fix as your goal Him who by a mere gesture upholds the entire universe; and the thirst for sense enjoyment will disappear of itself.

93.

Standing on the seashore at Cape Comorin, one can watch wave after wave rise, dash against the rocks and break, merging into Infinity—nobody knows where. This world may also be likened to a vast ocean. How many myriads of beings are born and die at every moment and where they go when disappearing from our sight, is beyond the grasp of human intelligence. This constant flux in nature illustrates the fact that, in reality, birth and death do not exist. There is only One Supreme Being That manifests Itself in countless forms, in numberless modes of life.

Learn to see the beauty in the laws of nature, to appreciate their impartial justice—and the contemplation of the Creator of all things will spontaneously awaken in you, you will realize that He alone is and nothing beside Him.

94.

Many hang their heads in disappointment, murmuring : “I have received initiation from a *Sadguru*, but what progress have I made ?” Just think, when a little ink is spilled on cloth, how much time it takes to remove it ! How can you expect the thick layer of impurities that obscure human consciousness to be cleared up in a few days or months ? Rather than trying to estimate how efficacious the power of the Guru and the mantra is, you should lay emphasis on exerting yourself to the utmost.

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By sitting back comfortably and without paying the price, spirituality does not come. Hard and sincere labour is indispensable in order to realize the Self. With implicit faith and a sacred regard for the Guru's instructions, continue your practice with the greatest possible regularity and concentration—rest assured, success will be yours. Those who serve Truth will be gripped by it and led on the path of Truth.

95.

Essentially there is no difference between the "I" of the path of Self-inquiry, the "Thou" of the path of devotion, and the "I and Thou" of the path of yoga or action. Those who use their energy to place Him first and foremost in all their thoughts, feelings and actions and thus advance into the realm where the "I" and the "Thou" melt into one, will be immersed in the great ocean of Infinity. Only as long as one remains floating on the surface, there are bound to be differences of religion, sect and so on. But if by some means one is able to dive down into the depths, it will be seen that the Essence of things is one, that Truth and Love are one and the same.

96

Man, like the spider, weaves web after web and does his best to keep himself entangled in its meshes throughout eternity. Caught up in the attractions of the senses and in delusion, he does not even pause to reflect how agonizing are the ever recurring action and reaction of birth and death. Resolve irrevocably and once for all that the bondage of karma must end with the present life and, like a war lord, rally all your forces in the desperate effort to tear through the veil of *māyā*; or else, like

a besieged garrison, lie prostrate before the Almighty and surrender yourself unconditionally to His mercy—and He Himself will take care of everything.

97.

What is not to your liking you can easily give up; but why can you not leave what you regard as wrong? Try to discriminate between right and wrong and eschew sin like poison. At the same time cultivate good and rightful desires and inclinations by the constant contemplation of God and by the daily performance of beneficent actions. You may conquer the world, but if you cannot master yourself, it will be very difficult for you to tread the path of liberation.

98.

The mental dispositions and tendencies (*saṃskāras*), accumulated in a great many former births, are at the root of all bondage. By action these *saṃskāras* have developed and by action they will again be destroyed. In the manner of a gramophone record the structure of man's mind has been fashioned by his past actions, thoughts and feelings. When through identification with the senses old memories are revived, the mind acts as a gramophone needle, stimulating the repetition of ideas, emotions and deeds of the past. As by the sustained practice of God centred actions, thoughts and aspirations, good and beautiful tendencies gain strength, in the same measure the undesirable ones will be wiped out. At the end, just as fire dies down of itself after reducing to ashes everything combustible, even so the good and laudable dispositions of the mind will also ultimately become extinct of themselves.

99.

“Remember Him, remember Him, day after day, hour after hour, remember Him !” By constantly sustaining the flow of God’s name, the days of your imprisonment in this world will expire. That you are working for your own uplift, goes without saying. But this is not enough : wherever you may be placed, call others also to join you. Untiringly entreat those of your fellow-men whose lives are divorced from religion to turn their thought to the Divine. Associate with seekers who with a pure heart aspire towards the realization of God and try to join them in their endeavour; and further, let your life be blessed and fulfilled by the company of those who by first-hand knowledge know the greatness of God.

100.

So long as you go about repeating outwardly : “Everything happens by His Will”, it is a sign that your own strong will is still very prominent. Look, when His Will begins to work within you, your will becomes fused with It in such a manner as to make it impossible for you to distinguish the one from the other. So long as your will dominates, follow the various rules and observances of the *Sāstras* that are expressions of His Will, accepting success and failure with equanimity. Absolute surrender to the Divine Will is the duty of every lover of God. In this way the time will dawn when nothing is left that may be called your own will and when you experience everything, the outer as well as the inner, solely as the play of the Almighty One. Truly, this wonderful world has no significance unless one realizes that by His Will all of us are progressing at every moment towards undifferentiated union.

101.

All work has to be done with a definite purpose in view. Aimless actions are fruitless and devoid of grace. The one way to realize Him is prayer and meditation, in other words, to leave the surface and to penetrate into the sanctuary. Prayer and meditation act as a bridge between the individual self and God, the Self of all. By watchfulness and the regular practice of the Presence of God one must try to get communion with Him. Just as medicine is necessary to counteract bodily ailments, so the contemplation of God is indispensable to free the mind from the dross of accumulated *saṁskāras*. For this reason one should not only attend to one's spiritual exercises morning and evening, but try to steadily increase the time and intensity of one's meditation, just as one applies oneself diligently when pursuing some worldly object. *Kīrtana* fails to have the desired effect if out of tune and rhythm. Similarly religious practice must have its regular tune and rhythm, otherwise the mind cannot become steady. The Self or God is unknowable to the ordinary intelligence but He is not unknown to us as the life-breath. When a man dies, one says he has breathed his last. If one uses the rhythm of one's breathing as a support in one's meditation, this will increase one's power. Therefore one should daily for some time sit still in a meditative pose in a solitary place, turn the mind within and repeat the Name or a mantra in rhythm with one's breathing, without straining, in a natural way. When through prolonged practice the Name will have become inextricably linked with the breath, the body quite still and the mind one-pointed, one will come to realize that the individual is part of the One Great Life that pervades the universe.

# From the Life of Mataji

Dr. Bithika Mukerji, Ph. D.

( 1932-33 )

Mataji left Dacca on June 2, 1932. The manner in which she travelled from Dacca to Dehra Dun reveals some of the ways in which her actions and also circumstances are moulded by her *kheyāla*.\*

The celebrations marking her thirty-sixth birthday had just concluded at the newly founded Ashram. Most of the participants had left for their homes. Late at night, Mataji gently expressed her *kheyāla* to leave Dacca and undertake a journey with no fixed destinations.

She did not actually say that she would not return to Dacca, but somehow it was borne in upon the devotees that this journey would bring about a drastic change in the existing patterns of their lives. Bhaiji had been sent for from his home. He now walked into this unusual air of "sadness in the Ashram and immediately understood that his time for leaving home had come. Although he was not entirely unprepared for this contingency, he must have been taken aback at the suddenness of Mataji's *kheyāla*.

Bhaiji was in the habit of keeping a diary. The following

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\* May be translated as a spontaneous upsurge of Will, which not arising out of any desire and unaccompanied by any wish to see its completion or fruition, is free.

account is based on those records :\* “Brahmachari Jogesh”, writes Bhaiji, “came to my house and said that Mataji wanted me at the Ashram. On our reaching Ramna, Mataji said to me : ‘Can you accompany Bholanath and myself on our journey ? We leave tonight.’

“I could not bring myself to answer immediately. Mataji said : ‘What is it ? Can you not do it ?’

“I was troubled over the fact that my family would find it difficult to adjust to this situation and thought it would be better if I could explain and bid farewell before leaving them so abruptly. I compromised by saying that I would go home and get money and baggage for the journey.

“This did not have the desired effect. Mataji told me to take from those present whatever money they could spare for the purpose. To which I acquiesced while my inchoate thoughts centred round my wife, son and daughter.

“With a minimum of baggage consisting of a few bare necessities, we walked to the station. We found a train on the point of departure. Mataji asked me to book tickets right up to the terminus of the line. Thus, the next day Mataji, Pitaji ( Bholanath ) and I arrived at Jagannathgunge. At Mataji’s suggestion we crossed over to the other side of the station. The problem of our next destination was solved in a similar manner, namely by buying tickets for the last station of the train we boarded. This happened to be Katihar in Bihar. My small stock of money was dwindling rapidly but before I could become seriously anxious about this, it was replenished in a

\* This is not a verbatim translation.



very unexpected manner. I met a friend at Katihar, who lent me enough money and presented us with plenty of sweets and fruits for the next phase of our journey. Following the same mode of travel, I purchased tickets for Lucknow at Katihar. Lucknow was the terminus for the metre-gauge line we were travelling by. We broke our journey at Gorakhpur to visit the temple of Gorakhnath.

“At Lucknow we found the Dehra Dun Express about to leave the station. So, Dehra Dun being the terminus for that line we arrived there the next day.

“Dehra Dun is at the foot-hills of the mountain range of Mussoorie. The climate was very different. The surroundings, the scenery, the people and even the language seemed all very strange. When I expressed this thought to Mataji, she said: ‘To me everything is familiar’.

“At Dehra Dun we left the station and took up residence at a *dharamshala*.\*

“In the afternoon, Pitaji and I walked a little way into the city trying to find a congenial place for our stay. At the local *Kalibari*,† we were told that a few miles away from Dehra Dun, in the village of Raipur, there was an ancient Siva Temple which perhaps would suit us since we were looking for a secluded spot. Coincidentally we met a resident of Raipur, who offered to take us there. The next morning Pitaji and I started for Raipur. This turned out to be a small village in the interior of

\* Rest house, where pilgrims can stay for three days, usually free of charge.

† Temple of Kali.

thickly wooded hills. A little distance from the village the ground rose sharply and on top of this hillock we found a temple dedicated to Siva. The temple and the precincts looked uncared for and neglected. But it commanded a majestic view across the valleys to high mountain ranges. Pitaji liked the place immensely and we returned to Dehra Dun to consult Mataji about going to stay there. She said, 'Bholanath and you decide. Just anywhere is good enough for me.'

"So, on Wednesday morning, June 8th, Mataji, Pitaji and I took up residence at Raipur."

It may be mentioned here that only after many more years of travel through the length and breadth of India, Mataji's companions came to realize that although she would not settle down anywhere she was everywhere at home.

Dacca, in the meantime, was suffering from the painful loss of Mataji's presence. The Ashram at Ramna wore a deserted look. The devotees sometimes forgathered and talked together about their beloved Ma. During these impromptu meetings, it transpired that everyone had been fully instructed by Mataji about his or her way of life. Nobody had been forgotten or overlooked. It amazed them that without appearing to make an issue of the matter, Mataji had taken pains to speak to everyone who depended on her for guidance. Shashanka Mohan and Didi were living at Siddheshwari. Once a week Shashanka Mohan visited the ashram at Ramna. Apart from this weekly visit, Didi and her father lived like ascetics at Siddheshwari in solitude. Shashanka Mohan had given up wearing tailored clothes and shoes. He would sit in meditation for long stretches : On many occasions as long as twelve hours and at least once for

thirty-six hours on end. During the evenings and nights his body would be covered by mosquitoes but this did not disturb him. He was now able to practise breath control and to live a life of *sādhana*. At a younger age he had suffered from slight heart trouble and therefore was in the habit of avoiding exertion in any form. There was no trace of this ailment now and he was able to practise a rigorism which could be the envy of many a younger man.

Mataji continued to stay on in Raipur. They made no arrangements for storing water, or procuring lights. There was a narrow canal at a fair distance from the temple. Water had to be fetched from there. When evening drew near they would take shelter in their blankets. The dark crevices and fissures in the surrounding walls abounded in scorpions and snakes. Bholanath settled down to a routine of intense *sādhana*. Mataji would stroll around or sit by herself in the courtyard. Here also she frequently went into *samādhi*. Bhaiji tried to look after them to the best of his ability. They lived on boiled vegetables and milk and sometimes, if Bhaiji could contrive it, a few *chapatis* ( unleavened bread ).

Their way of life gave use to amusing conjectures in the village. The general opinion was that Bholanath had renounced the world to become a *sannyāsi* and his wife unable to stay behind had followed him to this place of desolation. Bhaiji was in the beginning looked upon as their family servant. He always maintained a very formal manner towards Mataji. He would never sit in her presence. Whenever it was absolutely necessary to do so, he would squat down on his knees. He never encouraged the discussion of mundane affairs and problems in

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Mataji's presence. Those who knew Bhaiji intimately told the present writer that it was always his endeavour to bring people closer to Mataji. He would encourage them to voice and articulate the problems that arose out of the depths of their hearts and to approach Mataji for guidance. He was able to a great extent to bridge the gap between what Mataji is and what people could make of her.

To one or two residents of Dehra Dun who came to visit Mataji and Bholanath at Raipur, Bholanath introduced Bhaiji as his 'spiritual son.' ‡ Bhaiji won a place in the hearts of the early devotees of Dehra Dun. It is they who conferred on him the affectionate sobriquet of "Bhaiji," (which means "respected brother.")

Bhaiji had applied for four months' leave some time before he had come away from Dacca so abruptly. But in August he was summoned to return there for some urgent work. He wrote to the Ashram at Ramna, directing Kamalakanta Brahmachari to join them at Dehra Dun. On Kamalakanta's arrival, he returned to Dacca. He called on the devotees who were eagerly waiting for news of Mataji and told them about her way of living at Raipur.

In the meantime Mataji in her inimitable way had endeared herself to the villagers. The women, singly or in groups came and sat by her. Mataji had picked up a few words of Hindi and was able to converse with them. Seeing that Mataji's hair had become hopelessly matted due to several months of neglect, one of the women offered to cut it off for her.

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‡ *Dharmaputra.*

The coils of matted hair that were removed like a cap from her head, had formed into an exquisite pattern looking like a crown.\* Now Mataji's roughly cut hair was just long enough to frame face. For wearing apparel she was using the white *dhoti* worn by men. She used a wrapper on top of this. Her head was uncovered. In this garb she looked like a young brahmacharini. Mataji would not keep more than two sets of clothes; the spare one also served her as a pillow at night.

In late November or early December, Mataji with Bholanath and Kamalakanta travelled to Tarapith. This was in accordance with Bholanath's resolve to visit this place at least once a year for three consecutive years. Mataji, however, sent word to her devotees in Dacca, Calcutta and other nearby towns not to visit her at Tarapith. Didi's youngest brother Nandu, disobeying Mataji's injunction, not only went there but implored Mataji to withdraw it. During the Xmas vacation, Mataji with her few companions came to Nalhati, another *piṭhasthāna*.† Persuaded by Bholanath and Nandu she now gave permission to people to visit her. Nandu sent a wire to Dacca and on his return to Calcutta carried the joyful tidings to every house. Mataji was staying in a verandah adjoining the temple. Groups of people began to arrive from all nearby towns. Manorama Devi of Dacca asked Ma's permission to leave her home in order to lead a life of renunciation. Mataji told her to get her husband's permission. Manorama Devi did not want to return

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\* It was carefully put away by Kamalakanta and is being preserved to this day.

† One of the 51 places rendered sacred by the falling of a part of Sati's body, when cut to pieces by Viṣṇu's disc.

home, so she sent a telegram to her husband. He was not unprepared for this situation and soon she received a wire expressing his consent. Manorama Devi went away to Varanasi and entered upon a course of *sādhana* which subsequently became the very way of life which her Mataji called her "Krishnapriyā". She later took *sannyāsa* and keeping *mauna* (silence) for several years became known as 'Maunima'. After a long life of complete dedication to the search after Truth, she passed away in Mataji's presence at the Varanasi Āsrama a couple of years ago.

Mataji remained at Nalhati for about a fortnight. The devotees noticed the changes in Mataji's way of life and appearance. Bholanath looked an ascetic now. His preference to non-vegetarian food had undergone a change. They were putting up at a temple and did not visit the homes of devotees.

From Nalhati Mataji went to Howrah and from there returned to Dehradun. Saddened at the parting, the devotees left for their various homes. Didi and her father resumed their life of solitude at Siddheshwari.

Mataji continued at Raipur with Bholanath and Kamalakanta. In March 1933, Bhaiji again took leave and rejoined them. In the meantime he had settled his affairs at home. His daughter was now married. People surmised that his leave was preparatory to retirement and that he would not return home anymore. This turned out to be true as Bhaiji in his own way devoted the last few years of his life to the service of Mataji. Looking back to those times, the role of mediator that Bhaiji played seems significant. He is reported to have said: "In my eagerness to make people realise their good fortune, I interpret Mataji's personality to them and seek to place her on the

highest pedestal. But no matter how high I look up, she is yet higher and beyond my comprehension.”

In April 1933 they went to Mussourie and from there trekked to Uttar Kashi in the time-honoured manner of pilgrims. In May Bholanath went on a pilgrimage to Badrinath, Kedar-nath, etc. accompanied by Kamalakanta and then remained in Uttar Kashi for further sādhana, while he left Mataji in Bhaiji's care who returned with her to Dehradun in early July.

At Raipur, though people in Dehradun gradually heard about the Bengali Ma, few had been able to come as the road was extremely bad and in the rainy season actually perilous. One of those who braved it was Hari Ram Joshi,\* a man hailing from Almora, posted at Dehradun as an official. A few days before Mataji left for Mussourie with her companions, he came to Raipur. His very first darśana of Mataji completely unsettled him. He felt convinced that he was face to face with a *sthita-prajña*† as described in the Bhagavad Gita. Extremely active and fanatic by nature he was not in a mood to keep quiet over the treasure he had discovered. He was burning with eagerness to see the whole world transformed by Mataji's benign influence. He was instrumental in bringing in touch with her some prominent men and women, such as Kamala Nehru, Gandhiji, Govind Ballabh Pant, Jamnalal Bajaj and others. It was by his untiring efforts that the Ashrams in Kishenpur and Almora came into being. All his life he remained an ardent devotee.

On returning from Uttar Kashi, Mataji and Bhaiji went to stay in the Manohar Temple at Ananda Chowk in Dehradun

\* See Ananda Varta, July 1970, pp. 137-140.

† Perfect sage.

proper. A number of Kashmiri families lived in that locality. Some of them were drawn to Mataji for a life time of allegiance. To mention only a few of them : Dwarkanath Raina and his wife, Kashi Nath Tankha, whose wife was given the name of Mahalakshmi by Mataji, and his whole family, Prakash Raina and his wife. Also some Bengali families living in Karanpur (Dehradun), Manmatha N. Chatterji, Suresh Chakravarti and others. The Kashmiri ladies took it upon themselves to bring food for Mataji and her companions every day. It was a novel experience for them. They also started to sing the kirtan with Bhaiji's hymn to Ma that had been sung at Dacca.

The present writer asked Mahalakshmi to account for the fact of the powerful attraction they all experienced. They could not talk very well with Mataji, neither did Mataji give discourses or perform miracles. Lakshmi brushed aside 'miracles,' saying : "We never bothered about miracles. Mataji's presence itself was the greatest miracle to us—what more can anyone want ?"

Mataji appeared to them as a most exalted yet gracious personality, resplendent in her simple garments and endearing herself to their hearts immediately by her matchless smile and compassionate glance of absolute understanding.

Kamala Nehru\*, to begin with, had to be persuaded to go and see Mataji. At the first meeting she fell into a state of deep meditation, losing body-consciousness. Henceforth she felt irresistibly drawn to Mataji and never missed an opportunity to see her. She would spend whole nights sitting in meditation in Mataji's presence. If she found that Mataji had left for

\* The wife of Jawaharlal Nehru. He was at that time in Dehradun jail.



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Hardwar, Rishikesh or Mussoorie, she would follow Mataji to any of those places. Unfortunately she was suffering from T. B. and passed away about three years after her first meeting with Mataji.

It is now known that Bholanath had taken from Mataji a 'promise' not to leave the district while he was away with Kamalakanta. He wanted to make sure of finding Her in Dehradun or one of the nearby places when he returned from Badrinath and Uttar Kashi. Men and women belonging to all parts of North India had now gathered round Mataji who were quite as fascinated and charmed by her as the people of Dacca.

*(To be continued)*

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## Pujya Hari Baba\*

Some Impressions

M. M. V.

The sweetest relationship between our Sri Sri Mā and Sri Hari Babaji was a unique phenomenon witnessed by all the devotees. It was a joy in itself. Sri Hari Baba's loving reverence for Mataji and his devotion to her were matched by Mataji's loving solicitude and regard for him. His contact with Mataji started as long back as in 1944, and it grew ever closer since. In later years there arose several occasions each year when the devotees had the opportunity of enjoying Sri Hari Babaji's satsang along with Mataji's, specially at Vrindaban and even more at Dehradun where Mataji had specially reserved rooms for him and his party, at Kalyanvan. During his illness in the last two or three months of his life, Babaji, while in Delhi for treatment, constantly longed for Mataji's company even as a child longs to be with his mother, and Mataji repeatedly travelled to Delhi, at short intervals, not caring at all for her own indifferent health; and ultimately she took him with special arrangements, escorted by doctors, to Varanasi. How, within three days of his reaching Varanasi, on January 3rd, 1970, two years ago, Sri Hari Babaji gave up his body in the closest proximity of Mataji, full of serene joy amidst beautiful *Kirtana* which was so dear to him, is known to readers of *Ananda Vārtā*.

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\* In commemoration of the second anniversary of his *mahāsamādhi* which falls on January 3rd.

Sri Hari Baba's early life is not equally well-known to all. He came from an aristocratic family of devotees in the Panjab, and showed signs of spiritual dedication from his early youth. He was sent to Lahore for his education, where, after passing the Intermediate examination, he joined the Medical College. His parents desired that he should get married, which he adamantly declined to do; and soon he came to Hoshiarpur where he devoted himself to the service of his guru Yogiraj Sri Swami Sacchidanandaji Maharaj. Subsequently his *vairāgya* took him to Kashi, and he spent several years in that region, including Prayag, in intense *tapasyā*, before returning to Panjab. Many may be surprised to learn that his *sādhana* in those years followed the path of *jñāna*, and only later was re-transformed into that of *bhakti*. Thus he was possessed of the best of both.

This also explains the deep regard and respect that the *tattva-jñāni* saint, Pūjya Sri Uriya Babaji cherished for Sri Hari Babaji. Indeed, the two saints—the *jñāni* and the *bhakta*—appeared complementary to each other.

Sri Hari Babaji's guru-bhakti continued undiminished till the end. Many would be remembering the beautiful anecdotes relating to his guru which he used to narrate on every *Guru-Purnima* day as well as at other times.

A saint of the highest order, Sri Hari Babaji was utterly child-like in his innocence, reminding one of Christ's exhortation, "Be ye like little children." His heart dripped with selfless love of God, and had no room for any other thought. He was, and is, thus, one with God.

His faith had fathomless depth, and he saw God in all living creatures. He laid great stress on the importance of

faith. Once he told the writer : “Faith is at once the *sādhana* and the *sādhyā*.”\*

And what is one to say of his compassion for those who turned to him in their sorrow ? Sometimes he was visibly moved to tears in his eyes. At the last *darśana* the writer had of Babaji in Delhi a very few months before his Mahāsamādhi, he actually rolled his hand of love round the writer’s face a few times with a look of deep compassion that is still vivid in the writer’s memory.

Child-like simplicity, deep faith, profound devotion, deep compassion were thus prominent traits of Babaji’s personality. In fact these and other divine qualities were the sole ingredients of his unique, egoless being.

This is far from being a life-sketch of Babaji. These short jottings are only stray impressions of an humble devotee. A tribute ? What tribute can a poor little candle pay to the sun ? The writer has just penned some personal memories to purify himself by turning his thoughts to the Pure Soul that Sri Hari Babaji was and is.

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\* *Sādhyā* Object of *sādhana*, goal.

## The Individual and Society\*

Humanity today is confronted by a clash of two different currents of thought, even though their hidden aim is the same. One current of thought would turn one's back on society and seek one's salvation through a solitary life. The other, regardless of one's own psychological apparatus, seeks to improve society. Wisdom lies in harmonising the two approaches. This is possible only when the individual builds his life on the bed-rock of faith in God or Truth and in the spiritual unity of man. Just as beautiful flowers make a beautiful garden, so only can society be made good and beautiful by good individuals composing it.

Exploitation, which is prevailing in the world in so many forms, visible and invisible, will not cease till the individual is purified in the fire of *viveka* (discrimination). Only thus purified will he be eager to do to others what he expects others to do to him. Only one who is instilled with love can do any good to society. Happiness resides only in a heart charged with love and forgiveness; and only one who is happy himself can impart happiness to others. Love and happiness cannot flower in a disintegrated personality. True integration of man's personality is not possible without control of the senses, without transmutation of selfishness into service, and of fissiparous thoughts into contemplation of God or yearning for truth.

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

Gratification of the senses leads to fleeting pleasures, and control of the senses to happiness eternal. Selfishness can be transmuted into selflessness only through service. To offer what one has to those who need it is service. Attachment to pleasures of the senses cannot be eradicated without service.

The rights of one constitute the duties of another. But to regard another's duty as one's right results in whetting one's appetite for rights, which intensifies one's desire-nature and provokes discontent and anger. Discontent and anger result in impurity of the heart and in blurring of the sense of discrimination which give birth to many sins and retard spiritual progress. On the other hand, for each to regard the other's rights as one's duties makes one duty-minded and helps one's spiritual progress, as well as protects the rights of *all*. Duty-consciousness leads to the beautification of society, for duty well-discharged purifies the individual and through him beautifies society.

The pure of heart know the fact of human unity. Many who do not know are impelled to believe in the brotherhood of man; for the brotherhood of man is a necessary corollary of the fatherhood of God. To behave like brothers is a necessary *sādhana* for realisation of the truth of man's oneness in the Divine. Brotherly behaviour is the keynote of *sādhana* in human relationships. True love transcends outer differences and liquidates selfishness as well as indulgence in gratification of the senses. This purifies the heart. A pure heart reflects truth.

Everyone is endowed with creative energy. But few utilise it in the service of others, which would release deeper human values and lead to true human progress. On the other hand, by utilising it for gratification of the senses, man sinks

deeper and deeper into the mire of unawareness of the higher Self. The guiding principle should be to share with others, in increasing measure, whatever one is blessed with, overriding narrow limitations of family, caste, creed or race.

The simplest formula of right social values is to value commodities more than money, men more than commodities, conscience more than personalities, and Truth above all.

What is the real content of a good social order? It is that wherein there is no exploitation of one by another. Some people hold a good social order to mean a provision of good houses, good roads, good parks and so on. These, however, are but external paraphernalia. The fundamental basis of a good social order consists in no one being deprived of his rights. Ask anyone what he considers to be the criterion of a good household; he would say a good household is one in which each person's rights are protected, where the elders protect the rights of the children and vice versa, the husband those of the wife and the wife those of the husband, and so on. Similarly a good society is one where each lives to uphold the rights of the other.

Some hold a good social order to be one in which there is maximum equality. Equality, however there can never be in the forms or functions of all. Such equality would only block progress. Just as in the human organism the functions and capacities of different organs are different, so in human society. What is wanted is unity of purpose and mutual love in spite of differences of environment and functions. The very basis of human relationship is a meeting of persons and interests which are *complementary* to each other. A good house would not consist of all rooms that are alike—the kitchen, the bed-room,

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the drawing-room—but it is one in which each part is good in its proper place.

In a good social order, our rights would be met by the duties of the others and others' rights would be covered by our duties. Our rights would be safeguarded only when others are duty-conscious, and the rights of others would be safeguarded only when we are devoted to discharging our duty. A question may arise, how to make others devoted to their duties. The answer is, "be devoted to your own duty". It is futile to blame one another for our plight. It only makes a vicious circle. And while we may be dependant on others for the protection of our rights, we are quite independant in fulfilling our obligations in the protection of others' rights. Only when every individual engages himself in the protection of others' rights, will a righteous social order emerge.

It is futile to fancy that a good social pattern by itself would give birth to good individuals. On the contrary, good individuals only can give birth to a good social order. A good social order, in turn, would *help* the emergence of the good individual by providing the right environment. And that is its sole purpose. Verily, the world is like a school. The school is enriched by the quality of the pupils passing through it; and a school thus enriched is the better equipped to promote the well-being and progress of its students. But the central figure of a school is its pupils, in whom consists its sole purpose and basis of existence.

Without loving and peaceful individuals there can never be a loving and peaceful social order. Such social order cannot

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be created by legislation or a mere change of system. Mere legislation creates more problems than it solves; and hence it goes on multiplying itself without end. True reform can take place only in the hearts of men.

An equitable distribution of wealth too may improve one part of the environment, but it cannot by itself produce the right type of man. Without the right type of individuals, mere prosperity is not of much value in the scale of truly *human* values. Economic prosperity devoid of *dharma* would be of as little value as the healthy physique of a lunatic! For man lives not by bread alone. Things and more things, can never make for the essential basis of human relationships; soul, more soul, is the panacea for the sores of present-day humanity.

The reformer, the leader, the administrator will achieve lasting results only in proportion as he leads, reforms and administers himself first. Enlightenment spreads in society from enlightened men. Purity in society is not possible unless the individuals are pure of heart. Corrupt men make a corrupt society. A disciplined nation can never emerge from undisciplined individuals.

As desires of individuals run riot, they react on one another and therefore on society with all the competition and conflict that desire breeds. Greed, anger and hatred are offsprings of desire; and mankind can never be at peace as long as the hearts of men shoot forth greed, anger and hatred. The subtle bodies of such men are perpetually at war, even more than what is reflected on the physical plane. Indeed, the sorrow of the individual reflects itself in the sorrow of the world and vice versa; the individual problem is the world problem.

Desireless men alone can rid society of all its maladies. Only as a progressive number of individuals shed their tumultuous desires, resentment and greed, will society attain a growing degree of harmony and happiness.

A social order which allows one section of the people to thrive on the degradation of the other is self-doomed; for where the prosperity of one is derived from the misery of another, such prosperity is bound to end in misery. Only where a man's well-being is linked with the well-being of others, is his well-being a blessing to him as well as to society. Men have to realise their mutual interdependence as a hard fact of their being. Man's various stations in life, including his talents and circumstances, are derived from the Cosmos and are meant for the service of the Cosmos. It is because he misappropriates these as his that the labourer thinks that he should get the whole fruit of his labour; the capitalist thinks he should get the entire fruit of his capital; the ruler thinks he should get the whole fruit of his power; and even the man of knowledge has begun to think that he should get the complete fruit of his talents. But in truth, all resources of man are Nature's and are meant for the benefit of all living beings, and not of those who merely use them—not to speak of those who suppose they own them. For example, the land does not belong exclusively to the tiller of the soil; the children, the old, the sick, etc., are equally entitled to its fruits. And so on. It is similar with nations and countries; for the universal brotherhood of man is a *fact* in Nature and not a wishful thought of the idealist. Indeed, the hard fact of "One World" is knocking into our heads from all sides in the present age. Man thought he could afford to toy with religion. But science has appeared on the scene—speaking

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the language which men shall understand—and released technological and economic forces which challenge humanity to live together as members of one human family or to perish.

Indeed, the multifarious social and political problems which beset us and persist in this age are due to the fact that we do not approach them with a pure heart and with righteous means.

When the leaders and men of learning of a nation fall a prey to selfishness, the nation is destroyed. Unless they acquire true discrimination and desirelessness, the nation and its people cannot make true progress. The real progress of society will be possible only in the measure in which society is inspired and led by persons of discrimination and by desireless souls. The guru seeks to reform the world through knowledge, the leader through laws, the administrator through power. If we wish to be among these, we have to reform ourselves first by being our own gurus, i. e. conducting our lives in the light of *viveka*; by being our own leaders, i. e. building our character; by being our own administrators, i. e. controlling our mind and senses. Only he who has done this can be a true guru, a true leader and a true administrator of the world. *Dharma* can only be propagated by men who lead a life of *dharma*, not by men who lead a life of *adharma* but talk of *dharma*. *Dharma* cannot be taught through talks; it can only be taught by men whose lives 'drip' *dharma*.

The best and most altruistic materialist considers the giving of more and taking less from the world as the height of altruism; but for the spiritual aspirant, altruism consists in giving away everything and one's all. Only such people can be real leaders of men and real lawgivers. Only laws made by

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desireless souls and only governments composed of selfless servers of the people can establish a society blessed with love, justice and peace. Spiritually minded leaders, while raising the standards of life and happiness of the people, are pointers to the life beyond; whereas leaders who are materialists, in spite of their promoting means of richer living, create psychological complexes that cause misery to man.

**“In limpid souls God beholds His own image; He rests in them and they in Him. I like best those things in which I see most clearly the likeness of God. Nothing in all creation is so like God as stillness.”**

— Meister Eckhart

# **“I Am the Bread of Life” : Jesus Christ**

(A study and approach in understanding these momentous words of the great Master.)

**Kamakhya Prasad Roy**

“I am the bread of life : he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” (St. John, VI-35)

Just plain and simple words no doubt, yet surprisingly any particular utterance of Jesus Christ, like the one quoted above, when correctly interpreted in the right perspective is likely to lead us almost to the realm of wonderful revelation, to which we are going to devote our present humble study.

We learn from the narrative of St. John's Gospel that after the miraculous feeding of five thousand men with five barley loaves and two small fishes only, Jesus, in order to avoid a greater crowd that might follow him, seeking all manners of selfish ends with the spread of the news, “again departed into the mountain himself alone.”

Yet in the meantime a good many people including those that had been fed, were searching for Christ and reaching there said unto him : “Rabbi, when comest thou hither ?” And Jesus answered : “Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.” Then he further exhorted the crowd with the following sermon :

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“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth into everlasting life.”

Some of those that were in the multitude at that time, little knowing what the Messiah really meant by this ‘meat’, naively referred to the occasion of their forefathers eating manna in the desert, to which Jesus forthwith replied in the following words :

“Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. “For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world.”

Whereupon the people again entreated—“Lord, evermore give us this bread.” And Jesus said unto them in reply :

“I am the bread of life : he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” Again a little while after :

“He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”

and his previous utterances are repeated once again with particular stress this time on the word ‘bread’, that is from God :

“I am that bread of life.

“Your forefathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead.

“This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that man may eat thereof, and not die.”

From now onward is being slowly unravelled the mystery of this ‘bread of life’ by Jesus Christ :

“The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

The people then reasoned amongst themselves, how could this man give us his flesh ? And, instantly Jesus, knowing their mind spoke thus :

“Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”

The next step towards the revelation of the mystery of this ‘life’ (meaning eternal life) starts from the following words of Christ :

“He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him”.

At this stage let us go back to some previous chapters of the same apocalyptical Gospel. It was the occasion of Christ’s halting with his roving entourage in a city of Samaria called Sychar near Jacob’s well.

‘And Jesus being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well; and it was the sixth hour. His disciples, all of them, in the meantime were gone to the city, to provide for their and their master’s meat.’

After some time, as the disciples returned with the necessary provisions and prepared to sit together for their meals, ‘prayed to him, saying,’ ‘Master, eat’.

But strangely enough did Christ reply :

“I have meat to eat that ye know not of.”

Now, the disciples in their accustomed simplicity thought that someone might have brought food for the master during their absence. Whereupon, Jesus, in order to remove their suspicion (which eventually sheds more light on our subject) said :

“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”

This is again followed by other significant words :

“Say not ye, there are yet four months and then cometh the harvest; behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

“And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal : that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.”

By this time we have already started to realise what this supreme idea conveys, that the bread that merely nourishes the body is not sufficient for the growth of the entire man, far less can it provide nourishment to his soul, for which we stand in need of the ‘bread of life’ that Jesus Christ offers. Just a little more meditation is necessary to be finally ushered into the secret of this mystery. Does it not almost look like an open page of a familiar book now, that one has only to take care of and read and profit therefrom ?

Let us take for instance the subsequent words of Christ saying :

“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”

Well, if to do the will of God be meat for Christ, obviously therefore what else be meat for man on earth but to do the will of Him who says :

“My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.”



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At last we come to that portion of the Gospel wherein we find an account of the holy sacrament of the Lord's supper at Bethany prior to his departure for Gethsemane. This was the occasion when Jesus sat for his last supper with all the twelve disciples including Judas Iscariot who was to betray his Master a little later.

‘And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, “Take eat : this is my body.’

‘And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them; and they all drank of it :

‘And he said unto them :

“This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.”

This indeed is the consummation of the supreme idea that the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, the Christ Jesus is the living bread—he is the bread of life, the true meat, taking which we first enter the closest chamber of the beloved Master, and through him have natural access into the kingdom of God—the realm of Truth and Everlasting Light.

Let us now see the holy sacrament, which stands as a symbol of communion with Christ, in the light of our previous attempt of unravelling the mystery of Christ, **THE BREAD OF LIFE.**

Here is a synopsis of the very significant words of the Master, all of which separately as well as collectively seem to hold the key to this great mystery, an understanding of which

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is of supreme importance for an appraisal of the Master's exalted life and ministration in the right perspective :

- I. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth into everlasting life."
- II. "I am the bread of life : he that cometh to me shall never hunger."
- XI. "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."
- IV. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him."
- V. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work."

And to these add one more utterance of the Master :

"As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

Now, Jesus Christ, through the 'meat' of his Father—or in other words, doing the will of Him—is in constant communion with God, which is to say, is God in Christ and Christ in God.

Man, likewise through the 'meat' of Christ, that is, by doing the will of Him is to enter into communion with Christ, so that he may dwell in Christ and Christ in him.

Thus only the divine purpose in man is to be fulfilled : the first step is his communion with Christ, and the next, the natural outcome in the process—through Christ to have contact with God.

This, in short, can be said to be the quintessence of the mystery of Christ's 'meat', which in other words, is 'the bread of life' that can lead man to immortality,

It will of course be idle and futile to talk only of this 'meat' of the Saviour, without giving a thought to the price it demands. Needless to say that the price is none other but to do the will of Christ, that is, to keep his commandments; and his commandments—all of them—could be compressed just into two words : LOVE and SELF-GIVING. Now, let us see what kind of 'Love' and 'Self-giving' is recommended by Jesus Christ.

Let us turn for our guidance at this stage to the Gospel of St. Mathew, Chapter XXII, verses : 37-40 :

Replying to a Pharisee as to which is the greatest commandment, we have on record the saying of Jesus :

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

“This is the first commandment.”

“And the second is like unto it : Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

“On these two commandments hang all the laws and the prophets.”

We have to understand that Jesus Christ here categorically upholds the very gist of his teaching in the simplest formula of 'love for God as well as love for man', and the entire sermon, though apparently divided into two distinctive parts, actually is one integral whole, which comes to the single word LOVE.

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A little meditation on this will presently reveal the truth underlying the words without the least shred of doubt.

If we are permitted to say that the entire edifice of Christ's teaching is exhaustively contained within the aforesaid three verses, then we can also safely assert that 'love of God' and 'love of man' to Christ are truly complementary to one another, so much so, that if the one can be called the foundation, the other is the super-structure of the whole edifice. If the foundation be removed the superstructure naturally crumbles, and likewise if the super-structure be not raised, what avails of the foundation ?

Next, coming to the occasion of Christ's washing the feet of his disciples, we have a new commandment given by the Master, as reported in St. John's narrative, chapter XIII, verses : 34-35 :

“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

So, people following Christ must necessarily have love for one another, and, precisely this is the one condition laid down here for the unfailing way to Christ.

In chapter XV of St. John's Gospel, once again we come accross a similar commandment :

“This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

Once again, he sums up his words in one of the following verses :

“These things I command you that ye love one another.”

Herein therefore is the final seal of Christs' testament of love, that, “**YE LOVE ONE ANOTHER.**”

As regards the ideal of ‘self-giving’, here are quoted from St. Mathew's Gospel a few commandments of the Master that demand our determined attention and study :

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” (XVI : 24, 25.)

This was the occasion when Jesus of his own, foretold amongst his disciples about his suffering many things at the hands of the elders and the chief priest and the scribes and be killed and raised on the third day, and when Peter in his wonted simplicity and devotion avowed, “Be it far from thee Lord : this shall not be unto thee”, immediately we know, he was chastised by the Master in strong words : “Get thee behind me, Satan : thou art an offence unto me : for thou savourest not the things of God, but those that be of man.”

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And the most beautiful commandment on 'Self-giving' we have according to the Fourth Gospel, Chapter XII : this was again the time of Christ's referring to the divine plan of his premeditated self-offering, in the presence of Philip and Andrews, as narrated by St. John :

".....Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone : but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." ( verses : 24, 25. )

We have thus before us the essence of almost the full range of Christ's commandments on 'love' and 'self-giving', and true, there is no denying the fact, that this is a very difficult standard set before man to emulate, but we must bear in mind also, to what height of perfection Christ would lead mankind !

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Is not this the Lord's very theme of ministration on earth ?

Besides, if humanity is to grow and prosper, sooner or later it will have to follow and imitate Christ.

Let us pray and hope that the entire humanity will one day succeed in overcoming all temptation and weakness that stand in the way of realising its long-cherished ideal and goal, when here on this earth will for evermore the angels sing :

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men."

# Samyam Saptah at Vrindaban

K.G. Ambegaokar

Sri Mata Anandamayi always wants to lead her devotees towards God and Self-realization. The daily reading of Bhagvad-Gita, Chandi Stotras, Upanishads and Bhagvat, the morning and evening Kirtans and the *Mauna* observed for fifteen minutes from 8.45 p.m., to 9. p. m- in all Mataji's Ashrams and in their own homes by her devotees, are all intended for this purpose. But the most effective measure she has prescribed in this connection is the whole week devoted to intense *sadhana* once every year at some holy place in her presence. This is called the *Samyam Saptah Mahāvratā* and is held in the Hindu month of Kartika, a week after Divali, from the eighth day of that month to the 14th, and completed on the morning of the 15th day, which is a full moon day, with a *Yajña* in which offerings are made to the sacred fire to the accompaniment of the chanting of *Gāyatrī Mantra*, followed by a feast.

This year the Saptah was celebrated at Vrindaban under the patronage of the Rani Saheba of Sherkot from October 26th to November 1st in the spacious hall of our Ashram. There are three temples adjoining the hall, one on the left with the beautiful images of Gauranga Prabhu and Nityananda standing with their hands uplifted, donated by Dr. Pannalal, the middle one, which is the largest, having the famous blue figure of Krishna as Chhalia with Ānanda Rādhā given by the Rajmata of Gwalior besides other images of Krishna and

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Rādhā, and another temple on the right with six Sivalingas in memory of various devotees of Ma. At one end of the hall was the dais for Mataji and the visiting Mahātmas behind whom sat the sādhus of the Ashram. Facing them were the *vratis* (those doing penance), men on the right and women on the left, with a small strip of vacant space between them. They were cordoned off from casual visitors by ropes tied to the pillars. A large number of people have always come for these Saptahs but the attendance this year was a record one, being about five hundred. There was also a party of more than twenty girls from Sri Ma Anandamayi Kanya Vidyalaya, Jullunder City. It can easily be imagined how difficult it was to accommodate such a large number of people even in the spacious hall so that they could sit comfortably.

Fifteen minutes before the morning meditation, Brahmachari Brahmananda chanted the Upanishad Mantra : “*Satyam jñānam anantam Brahma*” melodiously with great fervour and similarly : “*He Bhagvān*” prior to the afternoon one. This created the proper atmosphere and mood for the Vratis which I am afraid was slightly disturbed by the announcement which Brahmachari Swarup had to make, asking the stragglers to hurry. At the end of the meditations it was always a great pleasure to hear Brahmananda starting very gently the sweet strains of “*He pita, he hita, he Brahmatatvam*”. Many years ago during the first **Samyam** Vrata held in Varanasi in August 1952, Mataji had seen a vision of a boy sadhu singing this and had prescribed that it should be used only during the Samyam Saptah in this manner.

The meditation hours were from eight to nine in the



morning and three to four in the afternoon. One had to attend at half past seven in the morning when the recitation of the Vedas took place for fifteen minutes. One day the priest doing the chanting (who had an impressive long white beard and hair) was absent and Nirmalananda filled the gap by taking his place and later asking Brahmananda to join him. Brahmananda who does the daily Bhagavad Gita and Upanishad reading has a very clear and correct enunciation of Sanskrit.

Those participating in the *Vrata* are enjoined to observe certain restrictions. The men must not shave and no one should use oil, soap or any kind of adornment. They should sleep on the floor (those putting up in tents could not do so) if possible and be strictly celibate. Smoking and tea are prohibited. For food vratis are divided into two classes. A class have to fast completely on the first and last days and take only one midday meal on the remaining days. The B class are allowed in addition  $1\frac{1}{2}$  paos of milk every night starting from the second day and a proper lunch on the last day. The midday meal for everyone consists of *khichri* mixed with vegetables and on the Ekadashi day there is only milk, fruit and vegetables. We were supposed to be present at every programme, from the morning kirtan at 5.30 A. M. to the last item which finished at about 10 P. M., but not everyone was present all the time. We were also asked to do at least 5000 japa every day but many did more.

At the close of the afternoon session a *bhajan* was always sung either by Pushapadi or Jamunadi on the ladies' side or Tanmayananda on the men's side. These were always very sweet and heart-warming and I particularly liked one sung by Tanmayananda one day. Of course the chants which everyone

waited for and joined in with fervour were those which Mataji sang at night. She has been observing *mauna* (silence) for some months now and opens her mouth only to say greetings of 'Namo Nārāyana, Namo Nārāyana' to welcome Mahātmās and therefore during the half hour at the end of the night sessions when she formerly used to answer questions, she now sings chants of God's names like 'Narayana, Krishna Gopal, He Bhagawan', etc. for everyone to repeat. Mataji has a particularly charming voice and an inspiring way of singing.

Swami Krishnananda Avadhutji is always the mainstay of these functions. He takes part regularly in all the meditations and it is inspiring to see him sitting absolutely still on the dais deep in *Samadhi*. One day Avadhutji spoke about the last moments of Haribabaji Maharaj, who told him that his soul was going away and coming back and that he was finding it difficult to leave the body. Then Mataji soothed him and he passed away peacefully.

Among the Mahatmas who attended, the most prominent was Swami Akhandanandji who expounded the Brihadaranyakopaniṣad in the mornings and also gave discourses in the evenings. His Upaniṣad commentary was extremely learned and he certainly threw a new light on this important (*Brihad*) scripture which contains the famous exhortation, "Verily O Maitreyi, it is the Self that should be seen, heard of, reflected on and meditated upon. Verily, when the Self is seen, heard of, reflected on and understood, all this is known". He explained how the first wife Katyayani stood for someone who stored things, while Maitreyi was like the sun equable towards all. Probably Akhandanandaji realised that occasionally he was talking above the heads

of some of his listeners and so told the story of a villager who had been listening to him intently but afterwards asked him the meaning of the main word about which he had been talking. Akhandanandaji's evening discourses were very instructive for spiritual enlightenment; one of the subjects he talked about was how to meditate.

Acharya Chakrapani and Yogesh Brahmachari are also regular invitees of this function. The former used to be rather caustic about rich people wanting to lead comfortable lives. His chant of "*Śrīman Narayana, Narayana, Narayana*" was very often joined in by Mataji. He used to sit next to Akhandanandji and smiled knowingly when the latter turned to him for confirmation of his statement.

A most lovable Mahatma who attends regularly is Sharananandaji of the Manav Seva Sangh. He is blind. When he arrives and Ma says, "*Namo Narayana !*" to him, it is sweet to hear him reply : "*Ma, Ma, Ma !*" He prefers to answer to questions rather than deliver a speech. His main theme is : "God is yours, He is in you, He is all-powerful and therefore there can be no reason why you should not find Him." There is a prayer composed by him, wishing everyone good sense and compassion which he makes the whole congregation repeat after him at the end of his talk.

Another familiar figure was Sri Vishnu Ashramji of Suktal. He dwelt on his usual theme : "*Bharjanam bhava bījanam, arjanam sarva sampadam, tarjanam, yama dhūtanam, Rama Ramett garjanam.* [By the constant repetition of the name of Rama the seeds of worldly existence will be burnt up, all wealth will be acquired and even the messengers of death will be frightened

away ) and made people chant the mantra “*Sri Ram, jay Ram, jay jay Ram*”. He quotes other Sanskrit verses from the Scriptures and explains them lucidly with a smile. He is light and it is a pleasure to listen to him.

Sri Krishnananda Swami from Bombay stood up and made everyone repeat after him the amusing chant : “*Agad bam, agad bam baje damaru, nache Sadajiva jagata Guru*” “*Brahma nache, Visnu nache, nache saba Deva, Narad nache vṛṇa leke, nache Mahadeva*”. ( Sadasiva, the world teacher plays on his drum and dances. “Bramā dances, Viṣṇu dances, all the Gods are dancing, Nārada dances playing on his viṇā and Mahādeva also dances” ).

The successor of Mahamandaleshwara Sri Maheshwarananda of Sanyasa Ashram Vile Parle in Bombay, Sri Swami Brahmananda had also come. Two other swamis whom I saw for the first time were, Sri Govind Prakash who has succeeded Swami Rama Tirtha of Puujab and young Swami Ananda who was bare bodied and held only a blanket round his waist. Both of them quoted Urdu couplets. Sri Govind Prakash spoke lucidly about Swami Rama Tirtha very often and liked to make people laugh. Swami Ananda seemed a very earnest young saint. At meditation he either sat very erect in the lotus-pose or swayed about. The first time when he spoke just before the *mouna* at 8-45 p. m., he exhorted us to go deep down within ourselves and this really helped our meditation. The second and last time he referred very feelingly to the difficulties of ordinary people to tread the path of God-realization and asked us to concentrate on the Name.

Whenever any Mahātmā came to the end of his visit and

finished his last discourse, the Rani Saheba of Sherkot, who was the hostess, garlanded him and presented a basket containing fruits, sweets, clothes, books and other gifts.

I cannot give a gist of all that the Mahatma said because I have not kept notes. Almost everyone referred to the significance of Samyam which was defined as well-performed (*samyak*) control (*yama*) which consists of five essentials: (1) *Ahimsa*, not to harm anyone by thought, word or deed, (2) *Asteya*, not to steal or covet, (3) *Brahmacharya*, celibacy, (4) *Satya*, (truthfulness and (5) *Aparigraha*, not to be attached to anything. All the Mahatmas emphasized that everyone is after happiness, that no one likes misery, that the pleasure one gets from things of this world is temporary and unreal and that perennial bliss is to be found only in the Almighty. The importance of having one Guru to initiate the *sādhaka* (*Dikṣa Guru*) was stressed but it was stated that like Dattatreya one can have several Gurus (*Shiksha Gurus*) to learn from.

One of the eighteen Puranas is always read on these occasions and the Vishnu Purana was selected this year. Goswami Narsingh read and expounded it.

The night session of the last day is always a long one because the midnight meditation from 11.45 P.M. to 12.15 A.M. (*Mahānisha Dhyāna*), which on the previous days we were supposed to do in our rooms or tents if we desired, is held in the hall in Ma's presence. To make the interval after the end of *Matri Satsang* interesting, Kapindra Maharaj, the great exponent of the Ramayana, had been invited; he described one of the episodes and sang several *dohās* melodiously. Mataji remained in the hall from 7 p. m. until 1 a. m. with an interval of only 15 or 20 minutes.

On the morning of the 2nd November, the *Yajña* was performed by five priests on the platform under the neem tree. One offering was made after every Gayatri Mantra and the main priest told the beads to keep count.

A problem at such functions is the rush of people for offering garlands to Ma. The announcer had warned everyone not to leave their seats in the hall to do so. Only a few ladies sitting near Ma broke the rule but this did not create any confusion. The arrangement first made was that after the morning session Ma sat on the bench under the neem tree to receive the garlands; but this caused a great rush and Ma could not even look at the person putting the garland at her feet; a man standing on one side gave the *prasada* garlands to the men and a lady on the other side to the women. Later it was decided that people should stand round the platform and Ma went round receiving and returning the garlands. This worked very well. On the last day after the *yajña*, however, when people stood in a queue there was quite a lot of jostling and jumping of the queue. Ma remained unruffled and serene as usual.

Feeding so many people was another big problem. Cooking even *khichri* on such a large scale must have been a herculean labour and serving such a large crowd was another. Some of the students of the Ashram school did the service very efficiently. Though more than hundred persons sat down at a time, there had to be two or three sittings. There was also a scramble for milk at night. I was one of the lucky persons who got help from some quarter or other.

After the function was over, many people individually did *pūjā* and *ārati* of Ma. My wife and I were lucky enough to get a chance to do so on the previous evening.

It will be seen that this was the biggest Samyam Saptah held so far. It is so popular that the attendance is bound to increase and considerable thought will have to be given to the question of how to manage this function in future. With Ma's grace things somehow get done well and the organisers no doubt will learn to devise methods for handling such large assemblies. It is an undeniable fact, however, that the Saptah itself is of great spiritual benefit to the participants and highly appreciated and looked forward to from one year to the other by one and all.

“Do not again and again turn your attention to the past, for this will arrest the speed of your progress. Go on with your work and do not keep on looking for results. Neither should you repeatedly beg from God. The fruit of your labours you will reap without a doubt. If you meditate with one-pointedness, God will certainly be revealed to you. Employ your mental powers and the power of your ego in the performance of *sādhana*. Quickly, quickly engage in spiritual exercises—light will come to you.”

—Ma Anandamayi

## Mātri Līlā

(October 15th, 1971—January 15th, 1972.)

Kāli Pūjā was celebrated on October 18th, late at night (Divali) in the same beautiful pandal\* in which Dūrgā Pūjā and Lakshmi Pūjā had been performed, in the compound of Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Khaitan, adjoining Kalyanvan at Rajpur, Dehradun. After the Pūjā, there was *havan* (fire sacrifice) at about 3 a.m. Mataji remained present throughout the Pūjā and then descended from the dais and sat near the fire with a small group of devotees, since most people had left as soon as the pūjā was over. This was the most intimate part of the function and greatly relished by the few who had remained. Early morning *prasāda* was distributed.

On the 20th, *Annakut* was observed. This is the festival of Annapurna, the goddess of physical and spiritual plenty. On that occasion 108 different items of food have to be offered and thus, although the cooking began before dawn, the *bhoga*† was quite late. *Kirtana* and *bhajana* was kept up until after 4 p.m. when the function was completed. Within a few minutes the pandal was converted into an enormous dining-hall and people sitting in long rows were served a sumptuous meal on leaf plates and in earthen cups. Mataji at first watched from the dais and then came down, and walking along the rows of

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\* See 'Matri Lila' Ānanda Vārtā, October, 1971.

† *Bhoga*—Food offering to a deity.



dining devotees, served with her own hand a large spoonful to every single person.

The next evening Mataji, accompanied by a large party, boarded the train to Delhi en route to Vrindaban, reaching Delhi early morning on October 22nd. Mataji spent only a few hours there, but by no means quietly. She visited a patient in the Nursing Home, then the residence of Rajmata Sukhet's daughter, where a Bhāgavata Saptah was inaugurated in Mataji's presence in a school building. Even there several Americans came for Mataji's *darśana*. After halting in our Ashram at Chandralok for less than an hour, Mataji and a small party drove to Vrindaban by car and jeep. After several miles something went wrong with the jeep. The car also stopped as Mataji wanted both vehicles to remain together. There was no workshop anywhere near. Someone, going in search of a telephone, entered a newly built factory. He found no phone, but the owner, a Sikh gentleman, was greatly delighted when he heard that Sri Anandamayi Ma was waiting on the road nearby. He had read about her a year ago and ever since was most eager to have her darsana. He at once came outside and after this unexpected fulfilment of his cherished desire, repaired the jeep and then begged of Mataji to bless his factory by setting her foot on the premises. Mataji agreed and inspected the whole place. However, after several miles the jeep again failed near village Hodal. A message was sent to Vrindaban to bring a car from there and rescue the stranded party. Mataji strolled up and down the road. There were only a few small houses nearby. Some women of the village called Mataji and made her sit down on a cot. Mataji began to sing "Sri Ram, jai Ram" and then "Narayan" etc. and

everyone joined in. After some time Mataji expressed by signs that it was getting late and everyone was feeling hungry. She asked the villagers to bring out their provisions, a cooking stove, coal, vessels. Some were obviously very poor. In one house there was only *āta* (wheat flour), others provided potatoes, ghi, spices. Mataji's companions started preparing food in the open air and Mataji also lent a hand. A delightful picnic was improvised. Mataji had whatever fruit, etc. was in the jeep, taken out and She herself distributed food on leaves to everyone of her party and a smaller quantity to each and every villager, who had gradually all appeared on the scene, men, women and children. By that time the car from Vrindaban arrived and its inmates were also given *prasāda*. Mataji sang again and the entire village repeated in chorus. Needless to say that the generosity of the poor people who had gladly supplied their scanty stock of provisions, was amply rewarded not only by this intimate *darśana* of Mataji but also in hard cash, which they were reluctant to accept. In this manner, what ordinarily would have been a serious predicament was converted by Mataji into a most charming interlude, quite unforgettable for all who had the good fortune to be present. The lucky villagers were all given *Rāma Nāma* by Mataji. Mataji has no fixed plans. Whatever happens is equally welcome to her and regarded as an opportunity to pour out her blessings and bring happiness to all within reach—for all are her very own; men, animals, plants, stones and invisible beings.

From October 26th to November 2nd, our 22nd *Sanyam Mahāvrotā\** was held at Vrindaban. As on similar occasions,

\* See special article on p. 43 of this issue.

Mataji was present almost throughout the long hours of *satsang* and in between found time to attend to visitors and to supervise all arrangements. She sang at least once every day, sometimes twice. A special feature were the foreigners who, although not actual *vratīs*, attended the collective meditation regularly in large numbers, in spite of having to sit outside the roped off space. Among them were disciples of Sri Neem Karauli Baba, the Self-Realization Fellowship, Sri Goenka and other gurus. During the few days after the *Samyam Vrata* that Mataji remained in Vrindaban, 30-40 foreigners used to come daily for Mataji's *darśana*, often waiting patiently for hours, since timings were not definite. Although Mataji has never been out of India and does not speak any European language, she has obviously by now made a profound impression on seekers in the West. While Mataji was in Dehradun for three days in November, for example, a 78 years old lady, disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda, came all the way from Paris for Mataji's *darśana*. When actually face to face with Mataji, she said : "All my life I have dreamt of this blessed moment. Now my dream has come true."

On November 6th evening Mataji motored from Vrindaban to Agra where she remained for a few hours at the residence of some devotees. The first feeding of solid food (*annaprasāna* ceremony) of a child was performed in Mataji's presence. Late at night she took the train to Jaipur, arriving early morning on November 7th. Dr. Jivanlal Purohit and his family had arranged for Mataji to stay in a devotee's newly built house. Mataji visited Jaipur mainly to give instructions to the artists who are sculpturing Didima's statue for her *samādhi mandir* at Kankhal. Six sculptors had been commissioned to model a

statue each. Mataji selected two out of the six and the better one of the two will be installed in the temple. Mataji is very particular that it should be life-like. A number of Rajas and Ranis of Rajasthan had come to Jaipur to meet Mataji and some devotees who cannot easily move out of Jaipur were eagerly waiting for Mataji's visit. Mataji went to the famous temple of Govindji one day.

She left on the 8th night, reaching Kishenpur on the 9th evening. She came straight to the Ashram hall and indicated by gestures that she was very tired and not feeling well and wanted to rest. After a little while Mataji proceeded to her cottage near Panchavati, where she was expected to remain until November 17th. No times were fixed for *darśana* and she did rest all by herself for one day. The next evening she came to the Ashram. On the 12th morning she suddenly declared that she would leave for Varanasi that very night.

Mataji reached Varanasi on the 13th evening. There also she did not rest much as she found many needs that had to be attended to. Mataji had been running a temperature off and on for some time and was not looking robust at all. Nevertheless Mataji travels about and sees to thousands of things like a young person of radiant health.

On November 17th morning Mataji boarded the train for Itarsi. From there Sir Datar Singh himself took Mataji and the whole party to Bairagarh near Bhopal by road,

In picturesque surroundings in the vicinity of the vast lake of Bhopal with Shamla Hill in the background, Sir and Lady Datar Singh had several years ago built a small Ashram

for Mataji on their estate.\* This time a *Bhagavata Saptah* was held there in a pandal from 23rd-30th November. Sri Vishnu-ashramji of Suktal had very kindly agreed to expound the *Bhagavata* in Hindi, although he is a *dandi swāmī* of a very strict order and neither travels by train nor by bus. Brahmachari Bhaskarananda brought him and his small entourage in two cars after a journey of four days. A separate cottage, tastefully decorated with orange and silver buntings, had been reserved for his use. When he expounded the intricacies of the *Bhagavata* with his gentle, melodious voice, it all appeared so simple and easy to grasp. Mataji was present twice daily for the whole period of the meetings. No wonder the audience felt altogether transported into another world. The Sanskrit recitation was performed by a pandit in a specially built, dainty little hut. The '*sankalpo*' and the initial *pūjā* was prompted by Br. Nirvanananda but performed very solemnly and beautifully by our host's eldest grand-daughter, a senior student of the Ma Anandamayi Kanyapith, who has from her early childhood been brought up under Mataji's loving care.

In spite of running a temperature most of the time, Mataji would almost every morning go for a walk in the wide open country full of green fields, interspersed with a profusion of bright yellow and orange marigolds, that had been specially cultivated for the daily decoration during the Saptah. Sir and Lady Datar Singh and their family took great trouble to see to the comforts of Mataji and of all guests. Several Rajas and Ranis of neighbouring states with their families attended the function and a number of the elite of Bhopal came regularly.

\* See *Ānanda Vārtā*, October 1969, P. 194 & A. V. July 1970, P. 143.

The chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and his wife also came once. Mrs. Aga, the wife of the S. P. of Bhopal stayed in a tent in the compound for the whole week and was very helpful. Some high military officers were also present several times.

On December 2nd afternoon, Mataji left by car for Itarsi after a brief halt at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. N. N. Shah and took the train for Varanasi. Devotees were waiting at the station to receive Mataji on December 3rd. But Mataji suddenly chose to get down at Allahabad from where she motored straight to Vindhyachal for a few days' rest, alighting at Varanasi on the 6th.

On December 10th Mataji travelled by train to Kanpur reaching there the same night. In the pages of this magazine\* we reported in detail about the *Bhagavata Parāyana* (recitation in Sanskrit and explanation in Hindi of the whole of the *Srimad Bhagavata* in fifteen days) held by Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati in Mataji's presence at the invitation of Sir and Lady Singhania in the vicinity of the beautiful Radha Krishna Mandir in the outskirts of Kanpur in November 1970. A similar religious festival took place from December 13th to 28th 1971 in the same place with similar excellent and most elaborate arrangements carried out by the Singhania family and their staff. This time also mataji was present in the pandal for full five hours daily. Sri Vishnuashramji had also been persuaded to come and daily sat by the side of Swami Akhandanandaji on the dais. The function begun under the gloom of war and blackout and the attendance in the huge pandal was comparatively poor during the first few days. Fortunately the war and

\* See Ānanda Vārtā, January 1971, pp. 46-47.

with it the general anxiety and nervousness came to a favourable end within four or five days and immediately the people of Kanpur flocked in large numbers. The whole function turned out extraordinarily successful, the climax being December 21st, when Sri Krishna's birth was narrated and specially celebrated. A beautifully decorated *vighraha* of Sri Krishna was placed on the dais. Mataji was in a rare *bhāva* (for the second time during this function) and, regardless of the enormous congregation, prostrated full length (*saṣṭāṅga prānāma*) before Krishna and rolled over. Nothing similar had happened for many years, and never before in front of thousands of people. Mataji put wreaths of flowers and tulsi leaves on the heads of Swamis Akhandananda and Vishnuashram. She also sang with great inspiration. On the 18th already Mataji had been in some kind of *bhava* while in the pandal. She lay back with closed eyes for about an hour and a half, her breathing had become very slight and the whole body cold. All the same Mataji was listening to the exposition of the Bhagavata and also seeing the speaker. Afterwards Mataji distributed *prasāda* saying ; "Gopal, Gopal !" to each person who approached her. Mataji is still observing silence.

At Kanpur a number of very distinguished guests, high Government Officials as well as many industrialists of the city came for Mataji's darśana. Sri, G. S. Pathak, the Vice-President of India and his family, Dr. Gopal Reddy, Governor of the U. P., Ex-ministers G. L. Nanda, Dr. Triguna Sen and others. Srimati Madalbensa a daughter of Sri Jamnalal Bajaj and wife of Sriman Narayan, the Governor of Gujrat, staged throughout the fortnight and was greatly impressed.

As soon as the *Bhāgavata* had been completed on

December 28th, *Akharḍa Namajāna* (uninterrupted *kīrtana* with circumambulation round a circular altar) began and continued until sunset on December 29th. Our Delhi Kirtan party came specially for the occasion like last year. But this time it was performed in the pandal as the hall had proved far too small on the previous occasion. At the end of the fortnight, Sir Padampat Singhania gave a short address, thanking Sri Mataji and Sri Akhandanandaji and requesting them to make it possible for him to arrange for a similar *satsang* once every year, by gracing it with their presence. He said that during the gathering he had been inspired so much that he actually came to look at the men and women in the pandal as “*janjanardan*” (God in the guise of men).

On December 30th, Mataji left Kanpur for Varanasi. On January 4th she was again in the train to Delhi and from there she travelled with a party of 46 to Madras, reaching there on the 7th. On the 9th, she and all her companions proceeded to Trivandrum, where they remained till the 15th. On the 17th Mataji reached Poona, where on January 21st Saraswati Puja was celebrated and a new temple of Gopalji was consecrated. In South India Mataji was in an excellent mood throughout and also kept better health than she had done for a long time. We hope to report in the next issue of *Ānanda Vārtā* in detail about her trip to the South and to Poona, where a *Bhagavata Saptah* was held from Jan 22nd to 29th. Mataji left for Bombay on the 31st. She is expected to go to Jaipur for a short visit on February 5th and then to New Delhi where *Sivaratri* is to be celebrated on the 13th. Immediately after Mataji is due at Kishenpur, Dehradun where another *Bhagavata Saptah* is to be held.