

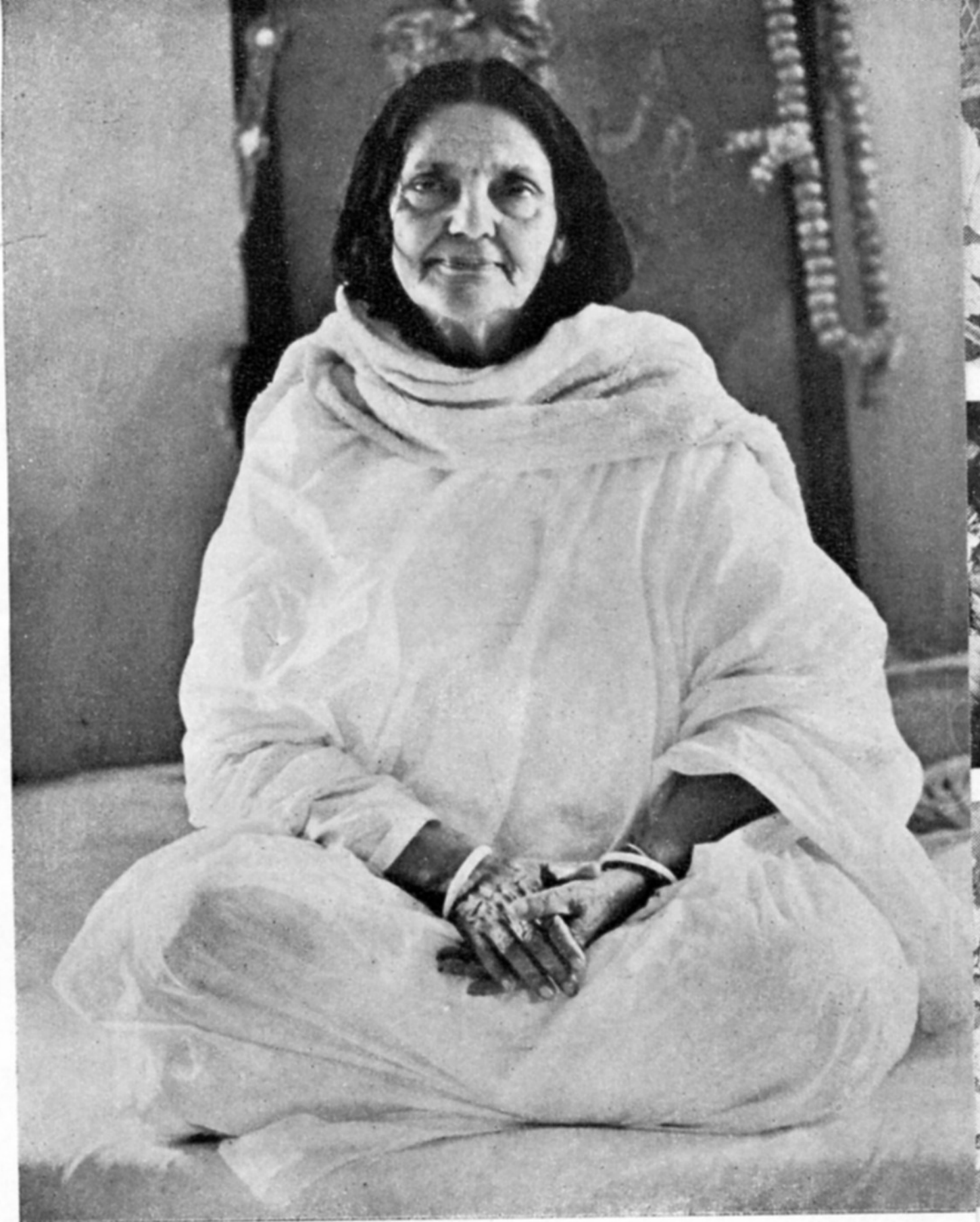
Reception of Mataji in Madras



January, 1972

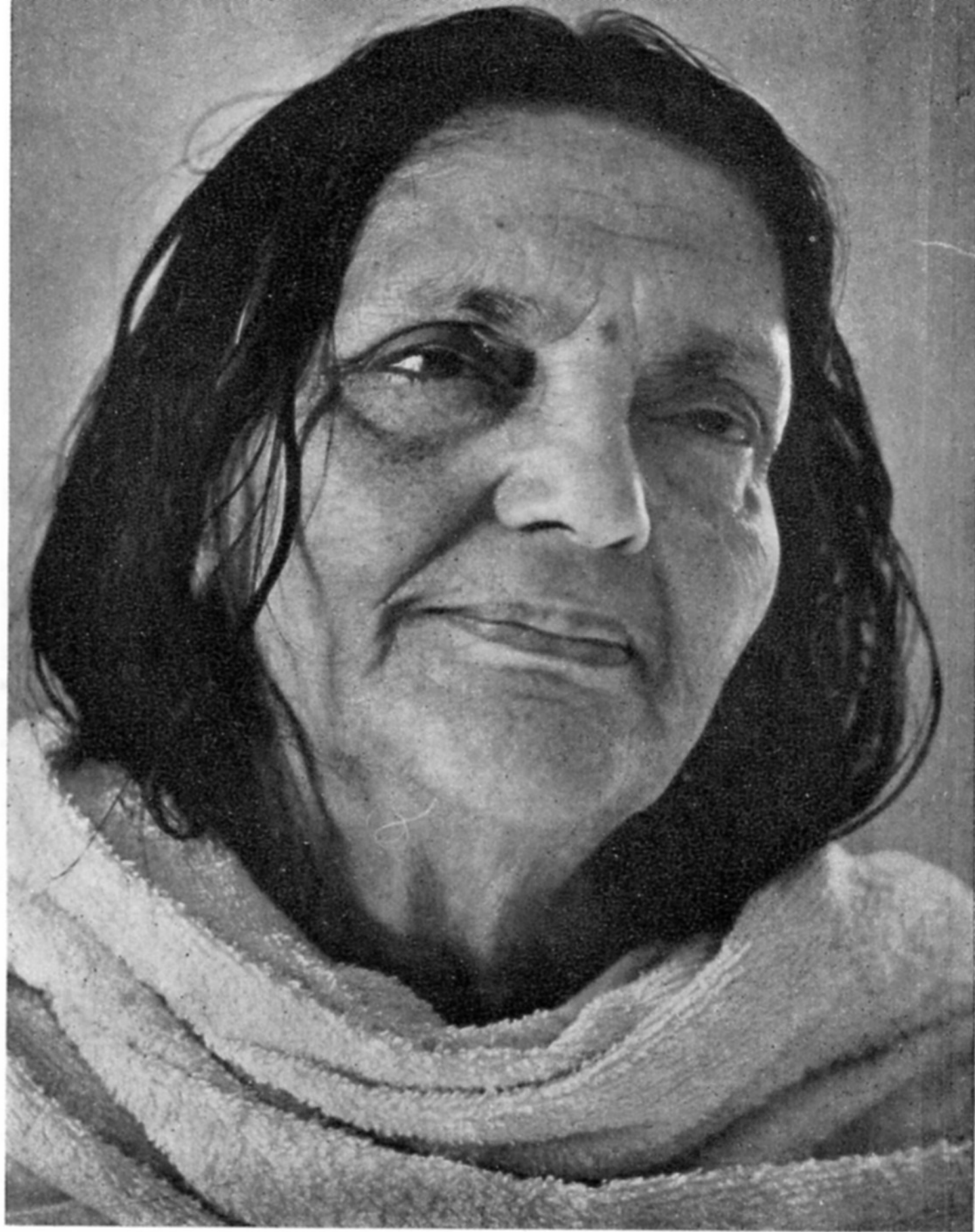
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Birthday, Varanasi

May, 1977



Birthday, Varanasi

May, 1971

Ānanda Vārtā

VOL. XIX]

APRIL, 1972

[NO. 2

Mātri Vāni

Do as much as ever lies in your power. By using energy again and again with perseverance, the necessary action (*kriyā*) will materialize. A person who studies has a somewhat distinguished manner of speaking. Similarly, by treading the spiritual path persistently, power is developed. On this pilgrimage whatever has to be relinquished will fall away and gradually the Eternal, Truth, Knowledge and Freedom will manifest. Ever keep your gaze fixed on the goal, just as an archer aims his arrow straight at the target. If you are a *bhakta* sink your I in the "Thou"; and if you proceed by the path of Self-enquiry, let the "you" be drowned in the "I".

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When rice is boiled in a vessel, pressure is generated by which the lid opens of itself. There is no need to use force. Likewise apply all the energy you possess to your task and He Himself will do the rest. By the keen sense of want of the divine presence, a desperate

yearning will ensue and this will open the way to Self-realization.

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Only in the realm of body and mind can hostile power have sway. Sit absolutely still in a fixed position for as long as possible and try to remain immersed in the stream of consciousness (*chetnār dhārā*). Just as, nourished by the rain that pours down from the open sky, trees shoot forth new sprouts and grow to their own lofty stature, so also should there be an aspiration in the *sādhaka's* life to advance steadily towards his chosen goal, free from thoughts of the past; to keep the mind elevated and inspired by proceeding straight and simple to ever new spiritual realizations.

A traveller who is eager to reach his destination quickly, does not look back to see by what road he has come nor does he ponder about what he has seen on the way or what he has gained by it. Exactly like that thoughts of the past must be renounced in the aspirant's life. Let there be a constant endeavour to fulfil your aim. So long as one dwells in the realm of the mind, even though the beauty of one's chosen ideal may only be imagined, one should make a sustained effort to advance towards it.

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Truly, man is born in order to enjoy and suffer according to his destiny. So long as you have not risen beyond fate, how can you possibly avoid submitting to God's law? What you experience is precisely the result of your own actions. You have not got the capacity to judge whether the Almighty can overstep His own law or not. In God's Kingdom everything is possible. HE is omnipotent. It is none of your business to question what He does for anyone. Why should He always do what pleases you? He is the Lord. What He does—whatsoever—is all for your real good: this is the attitude to be taken.

* * *

Father! How much more do you want of earthly pleasure? Once you have had a taste of *that* delight, you will have no more desire for worldly enjoyment. By cultivating the company of saints, sages and seekers after Truth, by attending religious gatherings, by studying books of wisdom and by similar devices one develops a bent in *that* direction. Nothing will have to be given up. Only try to cling to Him desperately. What has to be relinquished will fall away of itself.

* * *

In all your activities, in your *kirtana* Ma is with you. With perfect repose sit still, thinking : "In the midst of emptiness Ma is with me." This will give you *ānanda*. Whether you meditate sitting quietly or lying down, feel : "Ma is with me at every single moment."



Feel convinced that He will be found in the Name. Have firm faith that the seed that has been buried in your consciousness will without fail grow into a tree. Just as, after sowing a seed, it has to be watered and manured, similarly the seed in the form of a mantra will be made to sprout when provided with the necessary nourishment in the form of *satsang*.

—Anandamayi Ma

From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the last issue)

(1933-1935)

The celebrations of Mataji's birthday in May 1933 were performed by the devotees with great care. But there was no air of festivity. This was the first birthday celebration in Mataji's absence in Dacca. The heart-break and longing of the devotees made the function one of poignant memories rather than of rejoicing.

Mataji in the meantime, accompanied by Bhaiji, was trekking the mountainous terrains of Mussoorie-Dehra Dun and Uttarkashi, which is about 65 miles from Mussoorie. Devotees from Calcutta and other places sometimes found their way to her and would join her on these pilgrimages. Dr. Vijay Ratanji Vyas, who studied medicine at Calcutta at that time, stayed with Mataji and Bhaiji for a few months. He told the present writer that they had a minimum of clothes and utensils. Bhaiji was not too well at that time. Mataji with the very inexperienced help of Vyas, looked after Bhaiji and also did all the other work that needed to be done. Vyas being a heavy sleeper and late riser it was her unenviable job every morning to wake him up, so that he could go and fetch milk. Vyas recalls these days with wonder and amazement marvelling again and again at

Mataji's happy acceptance of all that came to transpire while walking these mountain paths to various places of pilgrimage. She was never at a loss or put out by the lack of facilities at the inns or by other inconveniences. It is interesting to note that Vyas himself had a feeling of belonging and was never troubled by the barrier of language or by other doubts. Incidentally it may be recorded that he has the distinction of being one of the six people to whom Bhaiji gave initiation. In later years, after his return from Germany where he went for higher studies, he stayed with Mataji at various Ashrams for many years.

Vyas wrote to the devotees at Calcutta about Mataji's way of life. Another visitor was Nirmal Chandra Chatterji from Varanasi. He wrote to Shashanka Mohan and Didi at Dacca : "Mataji is wearing *dhotis* only. Her head is uncovered. Her hair just reaches her shoulders. The local devotees have prevailed upon her to use sandals because it is impossible to walk barefoot on these hill-tracks. Mataji has a distinctive way of using her wrapper. She freely moves about on the roads. She has no settled programme for staying anywhere. She comes to a place or leaves it at any time of the day or night according to her *kheyāla*. Many people are very devoted to her and ready to fulfil her slightest behest." He further wrote that Mataji had mentioned that Baba (meaning Shashanka Mohan) had never expressed a desire to visit her at Dehra Dun. Actually he had been patiently awaiting her instructions never deeming he would be expected to express his desire to leave the place in which Mataji had asked him to stay. Guessing that perhaps this was one of Mataji's ways of voicing her *kheyāla*, Shashanka Mohan now asked her permission

to visit her. Didi and her father came to Dehra Dun in December 1933 and stayed with Mataji for a month. Didi saw the many changes in Mataji's way of life. But there was no change in her methods of dealing or communicating with people. The men, women and children of these very different cultural backgrounds were quite as close to her as the Bengalis of Dacca. Bhaiji was less formal in his manner now and considerably more approachable. The people depended upon him to interpret for them Mataji's *kheyāla*. Mataji's diet had also changed, having become used to the *chapatis* (unleavened bread) of western India. Bhaiji was under instructions to go and beg for his food once a week. But mostly these days were of fasting for him because he did not know how to raise his voice in supplication, and householders were unaware of the silent beggar standing at their door.

Mataji's presence and Bhaiji's guidance opened up a new dimension in the lives of many serious-minded people. Mataji's presence gave rise to many odd conjectures also. It is generally believed by the simple that Bengal is a land of magic. An opinion gained ground (perhaps because of the unprecedented power of attraction Mataji exercised over one and all) that Mataji possessed magical powers and that at night she could be seen floating in the air without support of the ground ! The following story has been related by Mataji herself at times and exemplifies her own keen appreciation of the ridiculous : There was a lady in Dehra Dun known to Mataji's circle as *Barikmai* who was a staunch freedom-fighter in the ranks of the National Congress of the pre-independence days. She had been jailed once but the Magistrate was obliged to release her speedily because she made life unbearable for everyone around by her raucous and loud

singing for many hours. She had been once incarcerated in her own house by her family to prevent her from going away to address public meetings. But inspite of her considerable bulk, she had jumped down from a window and gone to the Congress office. This redoubtable lady took it upon herself to keep a close watch on Mataji, eager to see for herself the miraculous things which were reported to happen at night. Barikmai was also naturally attracted to Mataji and began to spend more and more time with her. At that time Mataji was in the habit of eating on alternate days only. Barikmai began to follow the same rule inspite of many requests not to undertake this rigorous so new to her.

She would spend sleepless nights keeping a close watch on Mataji as she lay on her simple bed-roll on the floor. But she discovered nothing more unusual than the fact that Mataji did not seem to sleep at all. She was always found to be fully awake if spoken to at any time during the night.

Now this vigilance and lack of food put a great strain on Barikmai's health. One night she collapsed in a fainting fit. Mataji and Bhaiji did all they could do revive her. Mataji humorously relates : "I saw that Jyotish was petrified with fear. He thought that if the lady were to be really ill, her family and friends would put the entire blame on us. However, on her regaining consciousness, Jyotish gave her a couple of ayurvedic pills for strength which had been given him for his own use by Gopalji.¹

"In the morning, I explained to her that lack of nourishment and sleep had caused her collapse and if she continued in

1. A Kashmiri devotee of Mataji.

this manner she could not stay with me. So she promised to eat and sleep normally.

“But later on, her friends persuaded her that Mataji had after all given her some magic pills and this was why she was so attracted to her.” Barikmai stopped visiting Mataji for some time but in the end, unable to stay away, went to the inn where Mataji was putting up at the time. Mataji smiled and said, “Well, what is the latest about your magical pills?”

Barikmai was taken aback and realized that Mataji had not only known but was amused about the conflicts troubling her mind. Barikmai later confessed to the other devotees that Mataji had uncovered the real secret of her visits and she herself was able to overcome the influence of her superstitious friends.

Mataji's wanderings took her to Solon in the Simla hills. Here she had one of her sudden *kheyālas* that it was time for Shashanka Mohan to take *sannyāsa*, that is to formally adopt the garb and special rules of a life of renunciation. She therefore proceeded to Hardwar. Shashanka Mohan in answer to her letter came to join her there. Swami Shankaranandaji from Varanasi had also been summoned. Mataji was staying in a *dharamśāla* on the banks of the Ganges.

In the evening she talked to Shashanka Mohan, saying, “We had made arrangements for a longer stay at Solon. But because of this *kheyāla* I came away. These holy places are conducive to *sādhana* and attract devout and holy men. Swami Shankarananda will look for a suitable Guru for you. *Chaitra Sankranti* (about the middle of April) is an auspicious day. Time is short, so all arrangements must be expedited.” Shashanka

Mohan was not happy to hear Mataji's words. He said, "I cannot think of any other Guru. I cannot commit myself to anyone else. I have always believed and hoped that you will guide me. Why do you now hand me over to another guru?"

Mataji answered, "You know I cannot confer sannyāsa on you." Shashanka Mohan unhesitatingly retorted, "But, I have no need of anything that you may not do for me."

Mataji then said : "Well, in that case, there is no need for all these arrangements. Tell everyone that nothing need be done after all." Mataji became grave and silent. The cheerful look with which she had opened the conversation, vanished completely.

Sashanka Mohan went out and for a long time sat alone on the bank of the swiftly flowing Ganges. On the other side of the river wooded hills could be seen rising to great heights. What thoughts did he grapple with? He was a proud man more accustomed to command than to obey. The prospect of giving up every prop and support of a long and familiar way of life and to have to embark on a voyage into the unknown must have shaken him to the core of his being. He was the head of a large family, almost a clan. Perhaps he debated whether it would be right to put himself out of their reach for ever. He must have thought about his daughter also. He could not be a guardian to her anymore. These however are conjectures. What happened was that he came to Mataji at night, touched her feet and said quietly, "I spoke out the thoughts that came unbidden to my mind. I am now ready to do as you say."

Mataji, was immediately full of plans for the important event. She told him, "You have no reason to think that you will have another Guru. There is but One Reality."

So on Chaitra Sankranti 1934, Shashanka Mohan was initiated into *Sannyāsa* by Sri Mangal Giriji Maharaj of Kankhal. His name now was Akhandananda Giri. Mataji said to him, "You have rendered constant and unremitting (*akhaṇḍa*) service to your family so far. Now devote yourself with the same constancy to Self-realization."

Mataji remained in Kankhal for some time. One day some of the visitors from Calcutta made her put on a wide-bordered sari, as she had been in the habit of wearing before coming to Dehra Dun. An interesting incident occurred to mark this unusual occasion. After a few days of this event Bhaiji received a letter from Srimati Kamala Nehru, saying, "Bhaiji, you never write enough letters to give me news of Mataji. But I "see" her sometimes. Last time I "saw" her wearing a sari with a wide red border....." Evidently Kamala Nehru was one of those few fortunate people who could "see" Mataji when she was not present physically.

Bholanath in the meantime was settled in Uttarkashi, engrossed in his own *sādhana*. In Uttarkashi there are small huts and caves near the quick flowing Ganges. The water is ice-cold even in summer. It is a place meant for ascetics only. Bholanath acquired a reputation for his vigorous *sādhanā*. The local people developed a profound regard and respect for him. He was persuaded by them to undertake the construction of a small temple and perform the installation ceremonies. This

occasion can be called a landmark in the lives of the devotees of Mataji. The *bhaktas* of Bengal were invited to attend the function and the devotees of Dehra Dun and the adjoining towns became the natural hosts of these visitors.

In the month of August 1935, a huge crowd of devotees from Dacca, Calcutta, Varanasi and other places were received at Dehra Dun Railway Station by Hari Ram Joshi and other local people. The party of Bengali devotees were augmented by Kashmiris, Punjabis and hill people. Mataji at the head of this miscellaneous assortment of men, women and children started for Uttarkashi. Many of them had never before seen mountains. Quite a few could not understand each others' languages. Horses, *dandies*¹ mules and rickshas² were hired for those who were unable to walk. The winding uphill road resounded with many exclamations of wonder and awe in various languages as well as with gasps and groans. Many became foot-sore, others found it difficult to breathe or developed nausea. But nothing mattered very much because Mataji was constantly moving amongst them. Sometimes she walked with them and then again she would use her *dandi*. If the coolies out-distanced the others she would stop and get down at the wayside and await the arrival of the rest of the party. By slow marches the tired but happy and exhilarated throng arrived at Uttarkashi after five or six days.

Bholanath with great care and ceremony installed the deities in the temple. Immediately after the consecration cere-

1. A covered chair carried by 4 coolies; a mode of transportation on mountains.

2. A very small and light carriage pulled by coolies.

mony, he went on a pilgrimage to Gangotri, accompanied by Atul Brahmachari and the son of his family priest.

Mataji and her large family started on the return journey to Dehra Dun. They had now become a homogenous group.

Gurupriya Didi came to know many of the newcomers, as for example Maharatanji,¹ Sevaji,² Hari Ram Joshi and a host of others. These men and women were already greatly devoted to Bhaiji who was like a brother and friend to them. Now they were gradually beginning to know Bholanath, Didi, Akhandananda and many others from Dacca and Calcutta, including Didima. Lakshmi and a few more went ahead to Dehra Dun to make arrangements for the large group of tired and weary pilgrims. The travellers were charmed by the hospitality of the people of Dehra Dun.

After the devotees had dispersed, Mataji again resumed her travels to distant places accompanied by a few only at a time. Bholanath after his visit to Gangotri joined her at Dehra Dun. Only those who had visited Uttarkashi or Mussoorie had seen Bholanath. The rest of Mataji's acquaintances were very happy to meet him now.

In the winter of 1935, Mataji, accompanied by Bholanath, Bhaiji and a few others, again travelled to Tarapith. She was being constantly requested to return to Dacca. At Tarapith, Mataji was well known. The local people thronged round her. Almost every day a procession of bullock carts from Rampurhat would fetch men and women from Calcutta and other places. The

1. Mrs. Jaspal.

2. Dr. Miss Sharda Sharma.

desolate site came alive with the voices and laughter of the cheerful concourse of people.

In December 1935, Mataji at last came to Dacca for a few days. She had been away for nearly four years. The devotees of Dacca were beside themselves with joy. Mataji was given a tumultuous welcome. The precincts of the Ashram overflowed with people and yet more came to swell the throng surrounding Mataji.

After many years Mataji again sat out in the field of Ramna talking to the visitors. A discussion arose about man's strivings for God-realization. Somebody remarked that although men are constantly urged to make efforts towards *sadhanā*, it is also said that no human endeavour can bring about Realization.

Mataji said : "Yes this is true. But you see, men are all the time involved in the many affairs of life. This active participation comes naturally and spontaneously and can be directed towards spiritual endeavour."

"Man should strive for Realization as long as he is engaged in other pursuits of life while the sense of obligation to the world lasts, he cannot give up efforts for self-improvement either. Relentless striving brings about *shuddha bhāva*, a pure and unsullied attitude towards everything. This cannot be described in language. As soon as it comes about one understands also that no action is self-justifying. He ceases to strive and becomes as it were an automaton in the hands of God. There may not be any change in his mode of activity, the change is in his attitude towards action performed in the world as such.

"Any path may be followed to awaken this awareness. Whether the path begins from an acceptance of the doctrine of

duality or of non-duality is not important. Either, "You are everything" or "There is one Reality", will suffice if practised whole-heartedly, unremittingly and with complete abandon.

The knowledge that there is no duality will dawn as a Realization. Either there is just "I" or just "You"—and nothing else. Everything is submerged in one Existence. This realization cannot be expressed in words. Even the word "realization" is inadequate.

"As soon as words are used, limits are imposed. That is why it is said that while one is a *jīva* (finite being) he is not *Śiva* (infinite).

"What after all is this finiteness? Suppose a field is enclosed by a fence. If the fence is removed the field is one with the surrounding meadow. There is thus no question of the attainment of a state. *jīva* is in truth *Śiva*. Only because of his limitations he is called *jīva*. As soon as these limitations are dissolved he exists in his infinity.

"Moreover, you may consider the question in the following manner also: Does not the so-called finite being possess the characteristics of the Infinite? As for example, "One, Infinite, and Indefinable." Even if we try very hard, we cannot enumerate all that has gone through our minds within a few minutes. We can register a small number of items only. The depth and breadth of the darting thoughts defy an exhaustive recording. Do we not encounter the Infinite even here? There is a Oneness also. We do not rise beyond the One—we have to walk step by step, speak word by word and write one letter after another. Our unit is *one*. Then, consider the indefinable quality

of our minds. We exclaim, 'how beautiful the flower is !' but we cannot express entirely this awareness of beauty. We may use any number of words but they can never fully express the experience of beauty.

“Besides there is another characteristic in the *jīva*, namely *ananda* (Bliss). It is the nature of the *jīva* to look for happiness. Everything in creation desires happiness and tries to avoid pain. Even the lower animals will seek the shelter of trees from the blazing sun. Similarly man, scorched by the burning anguish of the body, mind and spirit, he endeavours to hide under the mantle of Peace. This anguish is to be conquered, as said before, by strong effort. (*Tāpa* is to be conquered by *tapasyā*.¹)

“It is man alone who seeks God. There is a cover of nescience cast over man, but it is pierced in places by slits of knowledge—like a dark room that is lit by rays of sunlight coming through windows and doors. If we make the effort, we can walk out of the room and stand in the full sunlight. In order to attain God, you have to strive and rise above both, ignorance as well as knowledge, then alone all duality dissolves into One Supreme Existence.

“I am not saying anything new. Whatever the Scriptures have taught is right. Do you know what the Scriptures are like? They may be compared to a staircase for ascending to the roof of a house. The panorama that reveals itself to the gaze of the man who has reached the topmost terrace does not need to be nor can it be described by any Scripture. The Sāstras give indications of the routes for the benefit and encouragement of the wayfarer.

I. *Japasyā* means *sādhana* and *tāpa* means scorching heat.

“All experiences which come to the seeker are true and yet false in as much as they can be surpassed by other experiences. Just as the lower rungs of a ladder do not disappear totally but they are as if non-existing to the person standing above.

“What is true and what is false after all? If you touch my finger—you touch me; if you touch my clothes—you are in contact with me—but just as I am my hands or feet or clothes—I am also myself—the entirety. Similarly, God is one, yet he is many. He is as complete in a particle of sand as in man and in Himself.”

While Mataji was talking in this strain to the people around her, the Vice-Chancellor of the Dacca University Khan Bahadur Nasiruddin Ahmed was seen to be out on his usual stroll near the Ashram building. Some of his acquaintances went and invited him to come and get introduced to Mataji. As he approached the group, somebody remarked “Mataji, he is a Mussulman.”

Mataji smiled and said, “I am also a Mussulman.”* After greetings, the Khan Bahadur asked one of the devotees: “If Mataji has attained peace, why does she keep wandering about?”

Mataji replied directly to him, “If I stayed in one place the same question could arise, could it not?”

Then she smiled her smile of incomparable beauty and said, “Baba, I am a very restless little girl. I cannot stay in one place. From yet another point of view, it is you who see me

* The word “Mussulman” literally means “devoted servant of God.”

travelling about from place to place. In reality I do not move at all. When you are in your own house, do you sit still in one corner of it? No, you walk about in the whole of it freely. Similarly, I also wander around in my own house—I don't go anywhere—I am always at home!" "You have found Peace, We are at the mercy of innumerable distractions. Why don't you communicate some of your Peace to us?"

"The moment you say in desperation : 'O God, how to find Peace?' you are on the path to attaining it!"

Mataji said this so humorously with such an eloquent gesture of her hands that the crowd broke out into spontaneous laughter.

Then more seriously Mataji said, "If you live with things 'unpeaceful', how can you hope for peace? People are affected by the things in their vicinity. If you sit near a fire you feel the heat. If you are close to something very cold, you feel cool—similarly if you are living amidst distractions, how should peace descend on you? I do not say that men have to leave the world and stay in forests to find peace. But wherever you are you must live in the company of that which gives peace. I say to you, keep in mind always, *God* who alone is Peace, whether you call Him Kali or Khuda or Allah is immaterial because there is One only. The really important thing is to persevere : relentless perseverance brings about the change in perspective which will establish you in Peace.

"Peace can be attained, anywhere in the world or away from it. You say that I have found Peace and should distribute it to others. I say to you that I am a little child and you are

my parents. Accept me as such and give me a place in your hearts. By saying 'Mother' you keep me at a distance. Mothers have to be revered and respected. But a little girl needs to be loved and looked after and is dear to the heart of everyone. So this is my only request to you, to make a place for me in your hearts."

(To be continued)

Is peace possible in the domain of want? Ever new desires will arise. Sense objects only generate poison, they never give real peace. Caught in the round of coming and going, can one be at peace?

As long as there are two there will be sorrow. Duality breeds conflict, pain. Sorrow arises from want. So long as you are not established in your true being you cannot be at peace.

—Anandamayi Ma

Come and See

Kamakhya Prasad Roy

There was a poet who trod this earth of ours like a giant, delighting as he said, to sing for his own ears and his own self alone. "Give me to warble spontaneous songs recluse by myself, for my own ears only", this is precisely the burden of one of his living, pulsating songs that goes by the title : GIVE ME THE SPLENDID SILENT SUN. Yet, mind you, poet Walt Whitman never really lived his seemingly cherished ideal of a recluse, away from the din and bustle of the world. Rather did he live his life in full, in the midst of its triumph and tragedy, dispassionately, with a face, we are told, "suffused with serenity and goodness and physical and mental health."

Here are some of the heart-warming and soul-stirring flashes of mystic experiences the poet leaves behind as a rich heritage for all of us to share :

"In this broad earth of ours,
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,
Nestles the seed perfection.

* * *

"For it the mystic evolution,
Not the right only justified, what we call evil also justified.

* * *

“From imperfection’s murkiest cloud,
Darts always forth one ray of perfect light,
One flash of heaven’s glory.

* * *

O the blest eyes, the happy hearts
That see, that know the guiding thread so fine,
Along the mighty labyrinth.

* * *

“All, all for immortality,
Love like the light silently wrapping all,
Nature’s amelioration blessing all,
The blossoms, fruits of ages, orchards divine and certain
Forms, objects, growths, humanities to spiritual images
ripening.”

We see again with what passionate zeal and unwavering faith this highpriest of total salvation singing the “SONG OF THE UNIVERSAL” pours out the treasures of his unfailing mystic insight :

“Give me O God to sing that thought,
Give me, give him or her I love, this quenchless faith
In thy ensemble, whatever else withheld, withhold not
from us
Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space,
Health, peace, salvation universal.”

And the crowning glory of this unique song with which it ends :

“Is it a dream ?

Nay but the lack of it the dream,

And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,

And all the world a dream.”

This wonderful mystic realisation* of Whitman, in fact, is the result and natural outcome of man's persistent endeavour to commune with his own soul, and thence with the universal soul at last. And man's life on this earth, we know, is truly a pilgrimage to attain to that final goal of perfection, to reach that blissful stage of immortality, which has found expression so beautifully through the poet's quoted verses.

It is not every day that you meet a Tagore or a Whitman, whose consummate love and the high spirit of dedication of their lives for the good of the community, together, might have opened to them the way to the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ here in this life—an achievement, which has been the one theme engaging man's attention variously through the ages.

No wonder therefore that one should sooner or later turn to a Buddha, a Christ, a Ramakrishna or their like—an ocean of Love as they are, of ‘Grace and Truth’ we might say—whence man ultimately apprehends the perfect consummation of the

* “. . . . The superintellectual blissful realisation of the fundamental unity of the world” a meaning and interpretation of mysticism offered by Prof. A. C. Das in his biographical work on the life of Sri Ramakrishna under the title “Modern Incarnation of God.” (See Page 113.)

promises and aspirations so long nourished after the living inspiration of the great souls, as we have seen earlier. And lo, even a little understanding of the ways of this boundless ocean of Love, offers man a clear and unfailing insight of the purpose of his life on earth and its glory, simultaneously with the awareness of the joy and freedom of the soul, being his birthright too !

Now, we propose to take a dip in such a limitless ocean of Love, that the life and example of Ma Anandamayi presents before us even today, while she moves with us, speaks to us in her soft modulated music of words, and above all wins our heart with her luminous and blissful smile.

Let us see how different individuals from around the globe, representing various walks of life and culture, respond to and receive out of this unfathomable repository of Peace and Felicity, each in his or her own way.

“From the world over Mataji attracts seekers; French, German, Austrian, English, American, Dutch men and women are to be met in her Ashrams — all are welcomed by her loving radiance. How often do we come to her, worried by the cares of life, puzzled about ourselves and others, and in her presence our problems resolve themselves, we find peace in the glory of her smile and, relaxed, we face life’s cares afresh, energy renewed, understanding of ourselves and others deepened”. Thus observes an English gentlewoman, Ethel Merston by name, a member of the Order of the British Empire, in her article “An Indian Sage”.*

Two apparently contradictory statements by a German authoress of considerable fame, Melita Maschmann, in her

* Mother As Seen By Her Devotees, 2nd. Ed. P. 59.

article : "Matāji Gives Darshan",† are likely to be of much interest in this context :

"What confounded and perplexed me so greatly was that this 'Phenomenon, Ānandamayi Mā' did not fit into any place of my scheme of the world. Just as the tree that starts walking cannot be fitted in anywhere and therefore threatens to blow up the habitual order", an observation she had obviously recorded about the impact of her first meeting with Mā. As against that she subsequently says : "Never have I met a more beautiful human being or more precisely, never have I seen the mysterious beauty of the Imperishable shine with such effulgence through mortal flesh". That the authoress discovered a reconciliation of her own seems to be again evident from her following confession.

"My first feeling that I had lit upon a dimension of reality entirely foreign to me was reversed into its opposite. I now felt that I had only just, for the first time, discovered man's own true reality".

An octogenarian, eminently erudite French scholar, Prof. Jean Herbert offers a beautiful introduction of Mā to the western world in these few words :

"Seeing the radiant face of Mā Anandamayi and hearing her laughter, you guess that she is an incarnation of joy. Touched by the caress of her glance you know that her heart is overflowing with love for all beings. Listening to her teaching so simple and clear, you understand that she is in possession of all wisdom. But one cannot say whether it is Joy, Love or

† Ibid, P. 74, 78 and 79.

Wisdom that is the source of all this, for with her all three are inextricably and indissolubly mingled—one could not exist without the others”.*

The above observations from one who is an outstanding figure amongst the followers of Sri Aurobindo and at the same time equally interested in the teachings and message of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, and above all, who had not, for the same reason, to alienate from his faith in Christ Jesus, the beacon light towards peace and happiness for mortals on earth for well nigh two millennia now, is likely to be of absorbing interest to those desiring to form an idea of the universal motherhood projected in the person of Ma Anandamayi to whom the German authoress we have quoted earlier, very aptly refers as a ‘phenomenon’ as distinct from a personality.

Referring to the sweet and charming manner with which Mā is seen going around her unremitting course of public ministration, a gentleman of deep understanding of Mother’s ways, Sri Akshay Kumar Dutta Gupta, after elucidating certain concrete instances of her irresistibly sweet manner of doing things, finally sums up his observations thus : “It will be seen that there is no patronising air in all this. Like a fondling daughter she speaks directly to the heart and her words have always a ring of sincerity that softens and wins over the most critical person addressed by her”.

This brings to our memory the following remarks by Principal Sanjiva Rao (Lately of the Queen’s College, Benaras) in his article “Sri Anandamayi”.†

* Mother As Seen By Her Devotees, 2nd. Ed, P. 49.

† Ibid, P. 34.

“Whenever I have sat in front of her, marvelling at the perfection of her love, the profundity of her wisdom expressing itself in the simplest of words intelligible to the least among us, I have realised that it is not by the mind that she can be understood, that no mental plumbline can ever discover the depths of her being” †.

How beautifully Principal Sanjiva Rao has again ventured an attempt to analyse the secret of Ma’s fascinating way of communicating with her innumerable children, in a brilliant foreword to a recent biographical work : “From the life of Sri Anandamayi Ma”, by Dr. Bithika Mukerji of the B. H. U. in these words : “People are amazed and ask : ‘How is it possible to love and understand thousands of her devotees?’ The truth is simple. Normally we do not see each other as we really are; and the barrier of the separate self obscures our vision, and we create a world of our own, darkened by the shadow that the self casts upon every thought and feeling. Ma lives in a world where there is no darkness at all. One has only to stand in the radiance of her love to realise that, though it is a mystery that baffles the mind of man, it is an intense reality.”

Suffice it to say that the soaring spirit of the poet who divines “The guiding thread so fine,

Along the mighty labyrinth”

and as well receives a vision of immortality through the holy interception of, “Love like the light silently wrapping all

... to spiritual images ripening,”

is best understood as one gets an opportunity of reaching

† Ibid, P. I.

the living presence of the very embodiment of Love that Mā Anandamayi is in herself.

Again, Mother's ways are so simple and yet prolific beyond words, that even a modest attempt at an understanding of this singular aspect is likely to offer a very interesting as well as illuminating study to the enquirer. To be precise, we cannot do better in this context, than directly refer to the following points so aptly made out by B. Mukerji in her effort to present Mother's incomparably charming ways of doing things right from the beginning of her public ministration as early as 1924-26, during her stay at the Shahbag Gardens of Nawabzadi Pyari Banu of Dacca :

‘It was not Mātāji's way to do anything spectacular, which would arrest the attention of people around her or create a distance between her and her companions. It is one of the most remarkable features of her personality that extraordinary events acquire a normalcy where she is concerned. She brought about radical changes, complete metamorphosis in the lives of some of her companions, but without the striking of a single jarring note against any susceptibilities. Her appeal was always to the individual. She never sought to pluck him out of his background for a different way of life. It has been her method to help a man to make the most of his opportunities and capacities. A divine presence seemed to permeate the atmosphere. The life of religious endeavour seemed to be the normal way of life rather than a turning away from this world’.*

* From The Life of Sri Anandamayi Ma (By Bithika Mukerji), P. 47,

The concluding remarks of the above paragraph sound like a bold departure from our present day popular concept of a religious life as distinct from a secular one. Time and again have we seen Mother taking endless pains to set us on the right track whenever we have failed to comprehend this integrated idea of Religion, which in other words—if we have rightly understood her—is Life itself. Life and Religion are then truly synonymous words for those who have had the occasion of sitting at Mother's feet with a heart willing to learn.

Let us now also try to understand the nature of the 'divine presence' that is found to permeate the atmosphere around Mother.

In an attempt to analyse this extraordinary phenomenon, a French devotee Vijayanandaji (Dr. A. J. Weintrob) narrates his personal experience in an article "My first Impression"† thus : "Something that has struck me from the first day is the atmosphere of the miraculous in which one moves when one is with her".

The entire paragraph of Vijayananda is reproduced hereafter with the hope that an appraisal of the unprejudiced approach of the enquirer tending towards a plausible conclusion might prove to be a cogent factor in dispelling many misconceptions that have gathered around the idea 'miraculous' both in the East and the West.

See, how dexterously sifting the 'crude objective side'—to quote Vijayananda's own words — of the 'miraculous' as generally understood, he subjects the entire issue to the searching

† Mother As Seen By Her Devotees 2n1. Ed. P. 46.

queries of the intelligent mind ! In the conventional context of the popular notion of the 'miraculous' being held as something like that of thaumaturgy, bordering the precincts of jugglery, the author in his search after Truth seems to have struck at the proper place for the 'living water' that presently aids even an adamant and unyielding heart to see light where darkness prevailed so long.

“Its subtle subjective aspect is quite different” continues Vijayananda. “What does it matter to me if a certain Yogi has walked across the waters or flown through the air ? The real miracle is, when that which one needs, which one desires keenly or feebly, comes at the very moment it is needed. And still better when it comes, not only as one desired it, but as one would have loved to see it in the innermost depth of one's heart. ‘coincidence’, I thought at first. But a coincidence that goes on repeating itself daily cannot be called so anymore. And all this happens without apparently violating the laws of nature, for the Lord has no need to break any laws : He is the law. Should I give examples ? No, for those who do not know her, will not believe me and those who have lived near her have already understood.”

That examples of the nature referred to above are galore, will be rightly supported by our previous narratives of personal experiences of only a few of the countless children of Mother, and many of them, we know, are gifted with unquestionably discerning intellects.

In fact, and to be precise, the boundless love that seems to be the essence of the very manifestation of a Christ or an Anandamayi is in itself the miracle par excellence.

Howsoever we may go on delving into the fathomless depth of a Christ or an Anandamayi's 'Grace and Truth' and as well be rewarded in our untiring zeal with a priceless pearl now and then, yet we are prone to question at moments like a doubting Nathaniel, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"—to which the fitting reply for all times to come is verily : "*come and see.*"

Mother of Compassion

M. M. V.

Sri Mā Anandamayī's utterances and teachings are second to none of those of the great sages and spiritual teachers of humanity in respect of eternal verities. They could not be. Bhaiji, one of the earliest and foremost devotees of Mā, referred to her as being "supremely steeped in the light of the Supreme." Here are a few extracts from her teachings :

"There are two types of pilgrims on life's journey : one like a tourist, keen on sight-seeing, wandering from place to place, flitting from one experience to another for the fun of it; the other treads the path that is consistent with man's true being and leads to his real home."

"So long as one remains enslaved by time there will be birth and death In reality there is nothing but the One Moment all along."

"Either melt the sense of separation by devotion or burn it by Knowledge (*jñāna*). For what is it that melts or burns ? Only that which by its nature can be melted or burnt ; namely the idea that something other than your Self exists. What will happen then ? You come to know your Self."

“Under the semblance of union and under the semblance of separation abides He, the Supreme Himself.”

“God alone is Truth, Happiness, Bliss. Do not desire anything except supreme Beatitude, the bliss of the Self. Naught else exists. What seems to exist outside of that is merely illusion.”

“Doing work for its own sake is *Karma Yoga*. As long as a desire to distinguish oneself is lurking it is *Karma bhoga*.”

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What is remarkable in her utterances is the ring of compassion attuned with wisdom, tender love permeating the highest *jñāna*. That is a great solace to the humblest of aspirants with their feet in clay, for thus by her Grace the lowliest devotee may feel as if transported to heaven. For them she is Mother, while to others she may be Kali or a Personality too impersonal to contact.

In a way, she is all things to all men : *Kalpataru*, so to say. It would appear that her compassion makes her step down to meet the devotee at his or her own level. The philosophy of this is explained by her answers to the question put to her : “Mother, what are you in fact ? People hold different views regarding you.” “You want to know what I am ? Well, I am what you consider me to be—not more, not less”, and “whatever is said is correct from the standpoint from which it is said.”

Above all, what could be more tender and gracious than ; “Your sorrow, your pain, your agony, is indeed my sorrow !”

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I was particularly reminded of this compassion aspect of Mā while I had the good fortune of seeing her lately after nearly two years—and in a state of *mouna* (silence). I was informed that Mā had imposed *mouna* on herself since some three months back.* Whatever might have led her to do so, my attention—not diverted by her genial utterances or flashes of good humour, or ‘question and answer’ channel—was focussed on her Face, at once almost awfully detached from our world, but just dripping mute love and compassion on us all. What blessedness !

* (This article was written in November last—Ed.)

Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi

Sakti in human form, an answer to prayers

P. N. Deogun, (Rtd.) Chief Conservator of Forests

("*Kabhi ae haqiqate muntzar Nazar aa iibasae Majaz main ke hazaron sajjde tarap rahe hain mari jabinaeniaz main*"—Iqbal)

("Sometimes Oh God, appear in human form so that I may offer obeisance to you a thousand times and more.")

As a school boy, I used to attend religious gatherings but as a college student I avoided these in favour of political meetings, inspite of the orders of the Government College authority.

I attended the Indian Congress session of 1919 at Amritsar, dragged Lokamanya Tilak's cart through bazars, saved M. Gandhi from being crushed against a wall by a maddening crowd, anxious for his *darśana*; met all types of politicians, saints and rogues; collected money for various political funds and so on, continued studies on the advice of L. Lajpat Rai and after competition and training joined the Forest Service in 1924.

I was married while still at school. My wife had a strong religious bent of mind from her childhood. She would visit saints and have some worship or the other going on in the house. Many sadhus and saints would visit us but I would take no interest in any of them.

In 1930, I was deputed to the Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun. My wife learnt about Ma's presence. She would walk from our house (Forest Cottage on Convent Road) to

Raipur through wilderness and forest, on a so-called road, alone or sometimes with another lady, while I would be away on work. Once or twice, she did talk to me about Ma but without any response.

My first darsana of Ma : One day, in 1934, a friend, R. R. Bhatia and his wife invited us for a picnic at Rishi Kesh. The picnic was just an excuse. Most probably it was arranged at the request of my wife and by Ma's wish, as my wife was keen to take me to Her.

Ma was staying in a grass hut on the bank of the Ganges. Bhatia suggested a visit to Her. As I approached the hut I was thrilled with joy. Celestial light and happiness were flowing out of the hut. A devotee of Ma (Bhaiji) was standing outside. The delight I derived was beyond words.

Ma asked me to sing. I made an excuse as I did not know singing. Ma said, "You were singing a while ago." Yes, I was, some film songs in the train. To avoid the situation I suggested a dip in the Ganges. Ma agreed. Photos taken at that time are a prize collection of mine.

Later on, Ma came to Dehra Dun. I would accompany my wife for Her *darśana*. I would offer no flower or fruit nor do obeisance but would stand or sit with eyes fixed on Her face.

Ma reads your mind : Once at Hardwar at the *Kumbh Mela* we learnt about Ma's presence. With my wife and my eldest daughter I went for Her *darśana*. Ma was standing on the banks of the Ganges. A lady was giving her some eatables. Ma was wearing an expensive sari. A thought ran through my mind that such gorgeous saris were not available to many of the

rich even. I was about fifty yards away. As soon as we came near Ma, the first thing She said : “Pitaji, it is no fault of mine. These people have dressed me in this sari.” I felt ashamed of myself, for having allowed such a thought to come to me. Ma then in a jovial mood pulled my daughter’s sari and said, “You are also wearing a silk one.”

Parting of waters by Ma : My wife used to walk from our house to Raipur without my knowledge and spend a much time as possible with Ma. A couple of ladies sometimes joined her. One day, when my wife and two or three other ladies started back home, Ma accompanied them some distance. They found the small hill torrent in flood. Ma made them sit under a tree and do *kirtan*. When *kirtan* was going on, the top of the tree burst with a bang and the ladies wanted to rush away but Ma told them to sit and continue to sing. On being asked, Ma told them that some ‘spirit’ had been released. It was already late and my wife was anxious to return home before 4 P. M. Ma was told so but She took no notice and made them continue the *kirtan*. After some time She got up, walked upto the rushing current and put her foot into the water. The ladies held Her, shouting : “Ma, this water is dangerous.” But they got the shock of their lives when they saw the waters fall. Ma asked them to cross which they did. The waters again rose. Ma wished them bon voyage and returned to the dilapidated temple. I reached home late and had to give an explanation not knowing that my wife had come home only a few minutes earlier.

King cobra : My daughter the late Mrs. Sheila Rishi, having come in contact with Ma as a small girl, became a great

devotee of Her. She used to do Krishna Puja regularly and on Mondays would sit for 24 hours, with two breaks of an hour each, without food or water or a fan, during the burning hot days of summer at Multan and Montgomery districts.

In 1938, I was posted as Divisional Forest Officer with headquarters at Ghichawatni. My house had a compound of a few acres and I was told by the watchman, an ex-soldier, that a king cobra lived there. My wife was once-cornered by the snake and at another time when it was out I rushed with my gun but it disappeared. I had all the low vegetation completely removed from that part of my compound.

One day as I drove in, my wife told me that Sheila had come running, shouting 'snake' and had locked herself into her room. I made her open the door. She told me that as she was lying on a mat under a sweet-lime tree, reading a book, some *maina* birds would collect over her head and make agitated noises. She would wave them off but they persisted in twittering excitedly. She looked back and to her horror found the snake within a foot or so of her. She jumped up and ran for her life.

The cobra must have been there for a pretty long time with its hood spread over Sheila's head. Under ordinary circumstances a cobra, not to speak of a king cobra—would strike and even chase, but it was Ma's *lila*. Who can doubt that Seshnag made an umbrella of his hood over child Krishna when being removed across the Jamuna.

Darsana to Khanna Baba : In 1948, I was back in Dehra Dun. Ma's birthday was to be celebrated in the

Kishenpur Ashram in 1950. Khanna Baba was brought from Khanna (Punjab). *Akhandakirtana* was going on. Ma was leading. I was told Khanna Baba did not participate in Kirtans. When we were moving round, I saw Baba standing quietly in one corner. Then I saw him clapping his hands and keeping time. After a while I found him moving with the party. I made room for him behind Ma. Later on Ma stood aside and the party continued moving. In the next round, Baba came face to face with Ma and just collapsed. I was shocked, I thought his heart had failed. Ma bent down and touched his shoulder. He got up and walked to his room. I told this story to Bhatia, who was sitting in Baba's room. Bhatia told me what happened later on : Baba went and lay with closed eyes in an inclined position as was his habit. After a few minutes, he asked, "Has Doiwala come?" (Doiwala is a Railway Station between Hardwar and Dehra Dun).

My interpretation of this incident was that Ma gave *darśana* to Baba, possibly as Kali or Durga, which Baba could not bear and collapsed. The whole scene must have been transported and Her *darśana* was given at Hardwar from where the Baba was travelling back, as per his question.

Ma as Annapurna : I was posted as Chief Conservator of Forests, Saurashtra. In 1952 Ma came to Junagad and chose to stay with us in spite of arrangements having been made elsewhere. My wife got worried about getting things ready at a very short notice. I told her that when mother was there, children should not worry about anything. When food was ready and the party sitting down for lunch, one of them saw my brahmin cook in pyjamas and objected. Another ten joined

him. I rushed to Didi and told her that it would take hours before fresh meals could be prepared. Didi looked in the direction of Ma and asked me to spread mats on the lawn where Ma was sitting, and to send the objectors there. Didi had cooked some rice and vegetables for Ma. About a dozen persons were served food by Didi. I stood watching the whole affair. When all had had their fill, I approached Ma and told Her that if a few ounces of rice and dal could suffice for a dozen people, a pound would do for the whole party and She might ask Didi to run the kitchen. Ma smiled.

Ma in a Siva temple and the halo : On December 28th, 1952, Ma paid a visit to Somnath, Dehot Surg and other places. When coming out of a small Siva temple on the sea shore, I noticed a change in Her and clicked my camera without any preliminaries. On the photo I found a halo round Ma's head. Light emerged from every hair.

Ma and Sri Krishna : From Porbunder Ma went to Dwarkaji. On January 3rd, 1953, She was to leave for Rajkot. We went to the Railway Station. I sent back all the cars, keeping a jeep for myself. We were told the train was late by an hour and a half. This was conveyed to Ma. She wanted to go some where but there was no car. She jumped into the jeep. Didi followed. I was ordered to drive to the temple. Ma stood before the image muttering something. Didi asked Ma what it was. Ma said, "*Tum hi main tum, tum ja rahe ho.*" Ma generally talks to Didi in Bengali, but this time she spoke Hindi, words that came from Lord Krishna. The meaning is so obvious : You and I are one. There is no parting."

Ma as saviour : In 1953 Ma was at Ahmedabad. My wife and I had gone for her *darśana*. At about 11.00 p. m. I told Ma that we would be leaving the next day by the early morning train and asked Her permission. Ma told me to see Her before leaving. I replied that it would be an awkward time as we had to start at about 4.00 a. m., but Ma insisted.

At about 4.00 a. m., I got ready and walked towards Ma's tent. I wanted to offer *pranāma* from outside and not to disturb Her. I was about five or six yards from the tent. I heard her voice, "Come in", I opened the curtain, walked in and just grasped Ma's feet involuntarily. Ma did not object. After a minute or so, Ma sat up and in the dim light I saw Her looking at me. She stretched out both Her hands and I held them fast. Then Ma said, "*ab jao*". ("Now go"). I did not realise the meaning until after some time my jeep hit a parapet wall, jumped into the air, took a somersault and landed right on me. The jeep was smashed and written off. My steno got a bad cut on his neck and my cook and a forester were hurt. I fainted. In that state, I found my jeep lifted up and I slid from underneath. I came back to my senses, but could hardly breathe. My chest had been damaged, some ribs cracked, and my face cut up in several places. Nevertheless I was full of joy and did not feel the pain of a pin prick. I was rushed to the hospital, X-rayed and bandaged and taken by my friend Col. K. Rai, Director of Medical Services, to his house as I refused to stay in the hospital. At night, I heard the wailing of a dog. This unnerved me a good deal. The howling continued, night after night, for six days. I decided to leave Rajkot against the advice of the doctors. At Junagad, about 60 miles away from Rajkot, a dog's wailing was again heard at

dead of night. This continued night after night in spite of dozens of persons guarding my house that had a big boundary wall and a thick hedge all round. No dog could be seen. After another 6 or 7 days, these cries stopped and I heaved a sigh of relief. My own dog had been so silent all along. All four of us who had been in the jeep survived.

When at Hoshiarpur Ma was told about this accident. She said, '*Bahut achha hua* (All for the good)'.

2. My second son and his wife had come to Dehra Dun from Bombay. They wanted to collect a brief case from the Rani Sahiba Nalagarh whose house is situated near Ma's Ashram at Kishenpur. The gardener of Kalyanvan informed me about Ma's arrival on the previous night without any notice.

I rushed to the Ashram. My wife, son and his wife followed. Ma came out on the balcony and told me to come at 5 p. m. As I had accepted an invitation from L. Roshanlal Kuthiala for a reception given by him on the occasion of his second daughter's marriage, I told Ma that I would come at 6 p. m. Ma then asked me to come at 7 p. m. but I again repeated to Ma that I would come at 6 p. m. Ma once more asked me to come at 5 p. m., and on my expressing my inability, She again asked me to come at 7 p. m.

After the party we came home and I took out my own car so that my son and his wife were at liberty to leave the Ashram at their leisure. Near Jakhan, a few furlongs from the Ashram, a large old taxi ran into my car with such force that my car's body girders got bent. I hit the steering wheel bending it badly. The impact was bad enough to kill me.

My son who was following me with his mother and wife in his car, picked me up and took me to Ma, who tied my bleeding forehead with a piece of cloth. As soon as She touched my head I felt myself returning to life. Ma gave me hot milk with turmeric to drink and told my wife not to bother about the car.

We went home and the next day Ma left Dehra Dun.

Ma must have seen what was coming. She was going to Bombay but at the Varanasi Railway Station She got into the train for Dehra Dun. At Dehra Dun She took a taxi and reached the Kishenpur Ashram quite unexpectedly. First she tried to save me by avoiding the accident but like a fool I did not obey Her command. Yet She saved me from sure death.

3. My second son, an All-India athlete and sportsman, got an attack of eczema. The more it was treated, the worse it became. The disease spread all over his body. On our request Ma was gracious enough to visit us in Delhi. She saw the young man. After having tried all systems of therapy and when the case had become hopeless, I called him to Chamba (H. P.), my headquarters. I sent for a *pūjārī* from a village, approachable on foot only. A simple, illiterate and shy man. He told us that he would not have come but for the orders of a lady in white, who came in a car to his house at mid-night and ordered him to treat Deogun's son. The poor fellow did not know, who Deogun was. Next morning my man approached him and told him that he was wanted by the Conservator. He got frightened at first but on learning that the Conservator's name was Deogun, he felt relieved. After some days, treatment, my son's condition became worse. He gave up all food;

became a skeleton and was thinking of suicide. We had to keep a watch on him. The *pūjarī* cried and prayed before Ma's photo. Suddenly, the disease took a turn for the better. Within a week, hair appeared on the body and the skin cleared. In a month's time my son was completely cured and joined duty to the surprise of all. Everybody said it was a miracle and I knew it was due to the grace of Ma who had appeared to the *pūjarī*.

4. One day, my wife after her usual evening walk was descending the wide steps of the bungalow at Chamba (H. P.). She stepped on a big snake which coiled round her legs. Her cousin sister on seeing this, nearly fainted. My wife stood still and prayed to Ma. The snake uncoiled and slid away. Next evening, when my wife visited the more than 100 years old saint Swami Ramananda, as was her custom, she was questioned about the previous evening's incident. "Who removed the snake?" asked Swamiji. "It left of itself," said my wife. "No, a lady in white, with flowing hair, waved it off, most likely Mataji, about whom you talk so much", said the saint who had never seen Ma. His place was far away from our house but he must have watched the whole incident in his *Samādhi*.

Later on, one of Swamiji's devotees, came to me and asked for Ma's photo. His son had become insane. He was advised by Swamiji to keep Ma's photo in his son's room. I gave him one and his son was cured.

Hari Baba and Ma : One day Sri Hari Babaji and myself were sitting with Ma in Her room. None else was there. Sri Hari Babaji related to Ma some of his earlier doings. He

told Her how he used to make a dead person rise. He further added that after he acquainted himself with the lives of great saints, he gave up such performances, as he was accountable for all these. Then Maharajji said : “But you, Ma, can do anything. You are not accountable to anyone !”

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I have noted just a few of my experinces. Many more could be added. In short, it is not possible for small people like me to know what Ma is. Only very high saints like Hari Baba, Khanna Baba, Swami Vishnuashram, Sitaram Omkarnathji, Sharananandaji, Akhandanandaji, Avadhutaji, Parmanandaji, Didi (Gurpriya Devi) and some others who have been with Ma and seen Her Lila or even really great saints who have never seen Ma in person, can say what She is. Ma at times puts all into a dilemma and makes them feel that She is just a woman. Just God-like as was done by Rama and Krishna.

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Mataji in South India

An Eye-witness

In January, 1972 Mataji travelled to South India for the fourth time. When she went there first in 1930 with Bholanath, Gurupriya Devi, Swami Akhandananda, Jogeshda, Kamlakanta, she was hardly known outside of Bengal. In winter 1952 she made an extensive tour in the company of Sri Haribabaji, Sri Avadhutaji and a few of her own ashramites, visiting all the famous South Indian temples as well as the Tiruvannamalai and Pondicherry Ashrams. In July 1961, the Chief Justice of the High Court Sri S. R. Das Gupta invited her to Bangalore where she stayed for a few days, halting at Madras for a couple of hours only. This time Mataji followed the invitation of the Elaya Raja and Rani of Travancore who urgently requested Mataji to visit Trivandrum and be present at the great festival of *Laksha Deepam* which is celebrated once every six years on January 14th, the day of *Makara Sankranti*.

Leaving Varanasi on January 4th with a party of about 50 ashramites, Mataji reached Delhi on the 5th and the same evening boarded the Grand Trunk Express for Madras where she alighted on January 7th morning. Sri T. Sadasivam and his wife Sm. M. S. Subbulakshmi, the Governor of Madras, Sri K. K. Shah, Mrs. Talyarkhan and others had come to welcome Mataji at the Central Ry. Station, from where the whole party was taken by cars to "Kalki Gardens", the palatial residence of Sri Sadasivam and Sm. Subbulakshmi. Even the

road was decorated with mango leaves and banana-plants. With due ceremonial, amidst the chanting of the priests, Mataji was escorted to the lovely wooden cottage which had been specially built in the picturesque surroundings of the garden for Mataji's brief stay. Outside, mats and carpets had been spread under a roof woven of palm leaves. Mataji's entire party was accommodated in rooms near Mataji's cottage.

The news of Mataji's visit to Madras had appeared in the papers and the added attraction of Sm. Subbulakshmi's devotional music drew enormous crowds of over five thousand. *Satsang* started at 4-30 p. m. with *kirtana* by the teachers and girls of our *Kanyapith*. Soon the pandal was filled with men and women eager for Mataji's *darśana*. They fell into a queue and silently went up to Mataji one by one, and after doing obeisance with exemplary discipline returned to their places. It was a wonderful and rare spectacle to see such a huge crowd file past in a most orderly way and pay their respects to Mataji. After the *kirtana*, Sm. Subbulakshmi in her inimitable way regaled us with her songs, ably assisted by her daughters Radha and Vijaya and other musicians with their instruments. She began with a hymn to Lord Gajanan and then sang, so beautifully as only she can, eleven other songs one after another, keeping the vast congregation spell-bound. That evening everyone present felt that the inspired musician was not just singing, but doing Mataji's *pūjā* with her best offering—songs. The heart-stirring strains of the beautiful melodies, Ma's elevating presence, the peaceful atmosphere, the almost golden hued palms waving as if in delight at Ma's advent, the solitary crowd listening attentively, one felt lifted into a world above and beyond,

full of peace and joy and heavenly bliss. During the three days of Mataji's sojourn, *satsang* was held twice daily and streams of people would visit "Kalki Gardens."

A group of South Indian Brahmins would recite slokas from the Vedas and Upanishads. One evening there was *bhajana* by Pithukalli Murugdas and on the last day Srinivasa Iyer of Semmengudi sang for Ma. On two or three occasions Mataji herself led the *kirtana*, singing once "He Bhagavan" and another time "*Satyam jñānam Anantam Brahma.*"

The Governor's wife and children came to pay their respects to Mataji. Both daughters of Sri Rajagopalachari had Ma's *darśana*, one of them, the widow of Devdas Gandhi and her son came several times. Srimati Rukmini Arundale also was among the special visitors.

Our host and hostess and their family took no end of trouble to attend in person to the needs and comforts of Mataji and her large party. One night they took Ma round their whole property and showed her all the neat cottages. Their staff of over two hundred are treated as their children and in turn give them their affection and loyal service. Sri Sadasivam introduced all the members of his staff to Mataji and as they filed past, Mataji started singing "*Pran Gopal, Brahma Gopal*", and distributed fruit to each one. As others joined the queue they were all asked to sing "*Hari bol*", Mataji herself leading the *kirtana* for about an hour. The people were thrilled and overjoyed at this generous outpouring in spite of the fact that Ma had been surrounded by the crowd until late.

On the 9th morning, Sri Sadasivam and Sm. Subbulakshmi and members of their family performed a special *pūjā* with

profound reverence and the choicest offerings of piles of pink roses, garlands of fragrant white lilies, sandalpaste, gold sovereigns. It was a rare privilege to be present at such a *pūjā*. Both husband and wife were visibly moved. Mataji herself sat for a long time in deep quiet. Afterwards she gave *prasada* and garlands to the members of the family and staff.

On the 9th evening Mataji and her large party boarded the Cochin Mail. It was a tearful adieu as our charming hosts went to see off Mataji at the station.

At Angamali, the Elaya Raja of Travancore came himself to receive Mataji and drove her first to Kalady the birth place of Sri Sankaracharya and thence through the beautiful Kerala country to his palace at Trivandrum. At Kalady Mataji was put up at the Sankara Research Center. After a brief rest, the Elaya Raja took Mataji to the lovely temple. The priests received Mataji at the gate with due ceremonial and respect, reciting Sanskrit hymns, offering coco-nuts, kumkum and plantains. Special *pūjā* and *ārati* were performed at the exact spot where Sankara was born. There is a large image of Sankara in a silver *singhāsana* and lower down an image of his mother. Here also *pūjā* and *ārati* were celebrated. The learned *achārya* who teaches the four Vedas in the school was introduced to Mataji. A number of *sādhus* had gathered. Mataji was also shown round the cottage where the present Sankaracharya stays when visiting Kalady.

Down below the river Purna flows and many of us had a quick bath in the refreshing waters where Sankara himself must have bathed. The entire party was treated to refreshments served on green plantain leaves.

After a while we left driving through the beautiful South Indian country, the land of backwaters and canals on which small boats ply with their cargo of coir, matting and other local produce. The thick groves of coco nut-palms, the rich green rice fields, and just before Totapally the vast shimmering beaches, past the Cochin harbour across the two bridges. Passing the towns of Alwaya, Quilon, Ernakulam, one is struck by the number of well stocked shops. Kerala is said to have the highest percentage of literacy and is now quite industrialised.

At about 7-30 p. m. we arrive at the Pattom Palace, the residence of the Elaya Raja and Rani. The gate is specially decorated with the emblem of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. The long drive up to Mataji's newly built cottage, the tall banana plants with bunches of green bananas and clusters of coco-nuts as auspicious omens, and a scintillating chandelier at the gate of the pandal. Inside, the pandal is all in white with red borders, neatly decorated with paper flowers and garlands; on the ground are layers of white sand with Kerala mats spread over them.

Mataji is received by the Rani Sahiba with *ārati* to the accompaniment of Senhai music and chanting of the Vedas by pandits. Elaborate arrangements have been made for the ashramites and devotees who have come with Mataji. The main rooms of the Paltan Palace are also placed at their disposal, the Raja and Rani themselves seeing to their comforts.

On the 11th morning the Maharaja of Travancore, who is the elder brother of the Elaya Raja, together with his mother come to meet Mataji. He is a bachelor and lives in a separate palace, leading a secluded religious life. Sitting quietly before

Ma, he recalls the wonderful unforgettable moments he spent in meditation in Mataji's presence in 1952. In the afternoon Mataji and her entire party are shown round the famous Padmanabham Temple at a time when it is closed to the public. The Rani Sahiba herself escorts Mataji.

The main image of Sri Padmanabham in lying posture is made of black granite and is said to be composed of 12,000 saligrams. The daily worship is performed over a golden image profusely adorned with brilliant diamonds. There are four main entrances to the temple, each richly carved. The beautifully chiselled face of Sri Padmanabham with the snake hoods overhead is seen through one door; by the central entrance one has *darśana* of the navel, the lotus, and Brahma, and by the third door of the lotus feet of Sri Padmanabham. There is a deeply religious atmosphere in this vast ancient temple. The Rani herself takes Mataji up to Sri Padmanabham. After the *darśana* Ma descends gently and quietly and then goes to each door and lovingly touches it.

In the evening there is a special programme of the famous Kathakali dance in the pandal facing Mataji's cottage. The legend of Lord Krishna and Putana is enacted in mimic and gesture. This is followed by a drama depicting the story of Raja Ambarish and Rishi Durvasa. The colourful costumes and head-dresses, the special make-up with a local vegetable dye highlight the expressive gestures. The dance is accompanied by a group of musicians explaining its significance in song. After the performance the artists are introduced to Mataji, who smiles lovingly and distributes fruits.

Early next morning, Mataji's party is taken by a special bus to Kanya Kumari, about five miles away, where the

Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea meet. They visit the temple and Vivekananda Rock Memorial Building. Mataji, having been there twice before, does not go. At about 9 a. m. the Rani takes her again to Padmanabham temple which she now sees in greater detail. Later Mataji goes to the palace of the Raja. Before midday, the Governor's wife, Sm. Viswanathan and her parents come for Mataji's darśana. Her father, a profoundly religious man, spoke to Mataji about twenty years ago. He had a keen desire to see Mataji again but was unable to go North. Mataji giving him *darśana* after all these years moves him to the core. His face is beaming with a deep happiness. Mataji does not speak nowadays, but she lovingly says 'Baba, Baba !' to him to his intense joy.

Special *bhoga* of Sri Padmanabham is sent for Mataji by the Raja directly from the temple.

On the 12th night there is an interesting ritual in the enclosure facing the Elaya Raja's personal temple. Amidst the chanting of Sanskrit slokas by priests, holy *ghi* is poured from a silver vessel into coco-nuts, which after being ceremonially sealed, are sent to Sabrimalai by special messenger for the *abhisheka* on *Makar Sankranti*. The first coco-nut is offered to Mataji to fill. As the priest holds the silver vessel, Mataji lightly touches it. Only after Ma has poured the *ghi*, the Elaya Raja takes his place on a specially shaped wooden seat and fills a coco-nut. After him the Rani and other members of the family.

After Sankranti the papers reported that this year a record number of five lakhs came for *darśana* to Sabrimalai.

Sabrimalai is said to be the place where Sri Rama gave *moksha* to Sabri.

On the 13th night the Rani herself plays the veena for Mataji and on the 14th morning, at the special request of the Rani, Mataji sings "He Bhagavan" and "Krishna Kanheya." The strains echo for a long time.

Water from the confluence of the three oceans has been brought from Kanya Kumari for Mataji and she sprinkles it on all present.

On the 14th night, *Makara Sankranti*, the *Laksha Deepam** festival is celebrated. A bus takes Mataji's party to the temple. An immense crowd is seen waiting as we approach. The huge temple, both inside and outside, as well as the compound are lit up with thousands of oil lights in little earthen cups. The Gopuram and the roof are decorated with multicoloured lights. We are taken to the royal entrance. A separate portion of the temple has been reserved for Mataji and her devotees. Mataji herself arrives a little later with the Rani. There is a sense of expectation until the Raja finally enters.

Where Mataji is seated, four female figures intricately carved, holding stone devas, and the glittering lights enhance the beauty of the occasion.

Decorated palanquins with red and gold canopies and heavy flower garlands are held on the shoulders of temple priests, the other priests and chief guests almost in single file on either side. The Raja enters quietly, barefoot and clad in a white dhoti, on his head a special black cap in the shape of the

* *Laksha Deepam* literally means "hundred thousand lights."

feet of Sri Padmanabham. A sword in a red and gold scabbard and a shield are carried before the Raja in the procession. It is said that the first Raja of the state, after conquering many kingdoms, repented for the lives destroyed and surrendered his sword and shield to Lord Padmanabham, placing himself as the Lord's servant. The Elaya Raja heads the file on the right. They proceed towards the deity. *Āratī* is performed in the traditional way along with five burning torches. After the Raja does *praṇāma*, the procession turns facing Mataji. They stop a while before her. The Raja bows to Ma, Ma stands up. All turn to gaze at Ma as if transfixed. Mataji turns to the right and the procession moves on to the playing of sahnais and cymbals.

On the second round there are three palanquins : the golden-diamond, laden Padmanabham, the silver image of Narsingh Bhagavan and Rajagopal Krishna with a conch in his hand. The drums beat louder, the sahnais play. The ladies follow with lighted *āratis* on silver plates.

Each time the procession reaches Mataji, it stops. The Raja bows and eyes turn towards Ma standing in the center. After the third round the Raja does *sāṣṭāng praṇāma** to the deity and after a while leaves bare-headed, folding his hands and bowing to Mataji. The party leaves shortly after and Mataji a little later.

The same night there is a special *pūja* in the Elaya Raja's personal shrine. He offers 108 red lotuses at Mataji's feet as the priests recite verses and the Kanyapith girls chant from the

* Obeisance by full prostration.

Devi Sukta in melodious tones. The Raja and Rani offer flowers, fruit and other items. The Raja does *arati*, placing his silver Padmanabham in Ma's hands. The Rani says haltingly : "How shall I live to-morrow ?"

Early on the 15th Mataji is leaving for Poona via Madras. The Raja personally sees to the arrangements for transport and luggage. The Raja and Rani accompany Ma to the station.

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Throughout this short but eventful trip to South India Mataji was in a great mood, looking ten years younger than usual and keeping good health. The fortunate ones who were able to be with Ma will ever cherish the memory of those wonderful days.

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The Madras papers published photos of Mataji and articles. In an article called : "For a Time Let Religion Be Our Only Politics", Sri C. Rajagopalachari wrote in "*Swarajya*" of Jan. 22nd, 1972 : "Ma Anandamayi was in Madras the other day with her devotees and it was wonderful to note how deeply she impressed men and women who went for her *darshan*."

The following is quoted from an article that appeared in the same issue of "*Swarajya*" along with a number of beautiful photos of Ma and of the concourse of visitors.

Mother's visit.

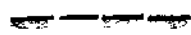
"Holy Mother Sri Anandamayi, the great saint of holy Kashi, conferred infinite benediction on the *Kalki-Swarajya* family by her stay in Kalki Gardens, for three days, from January 7th

to 9th. During her divine presence in Kalki Gardens, all the 60 hours, the atmosphere was surcharged with unalloyed bliss, love, peace and divine thoughts. Many a thousand, tormented by many a worry, drank deep of the eternal springs of the Holy Mother's compassion, which was almost palpable.

“From the moment the Holy Mother was received with *Pūrna Kumbham* by Sri T. Sadasivam till her leave-taking, devotees continued to pour in and offer prostrations at the Mother's feet. There was Vedic chanting by scholars and *bhajan* by Srimati M. S. Subbulakshmi. These soul-stirring experiences were made soul-abiding by the Mother herself leading the choral singing at times.

“While the public at large basked in the balmy sun-shine of Sri Ma Anandamayi's boundless *anugraha*, the employees of Kalki Swarajya felt an additional quantum of her blessings, when she visited of her own accord the premises where the new colour offset Rotary Press is erected, and later distributed *prasada* to each and every one of the workers.

“Words fail to express in entirety the Peace that was the core of the Mother's being, and the Love that she radiated outside throughout her stay. Those peaceful eyes and compassionate smile will ever remain verdant in our memories. We tender our *praṇamas* at her lotus feet.”



Mātri Līlā

[January 15th—April 15th, 1972.]

Mataji reached Poona on January 17th from Trivandrum via Madras. In Poona as in South India Mataji was in excellent form. Many devotees from Bombay and other places came and some also from South India. The Elaya Raja and Rani of Travancore were present for a day or two.

On January 18th the newly built Ashram Hall, a spacious rectangular structure, was inaugurated with due ceremony. On the 21st a beautiful *vighraha* of Gopal, which had been kept in the Kishenpur Ashram for some time, was installed in a new temple adjoining the hall. It was the day of *Vasant Panchami* and Saraswati Puja was therefore celebrated the same morning with *kirtana*, discourses and *prasāda*, followed by a *yajña* (fire sacrifice). In Gopal's new temple there are also images of Ganesh and a small Radha-Krishna. Thus for three consecutive days *abhisheka* (ceremonial bathing and anointing) was performed on the three *vighrahas*, one by one. From January 22nd to 29th a *Bhagavata Saptaha* was held in memory of Srimati Amrita Vasudeva, a devotee of many years standing, who passed away a couple of years ago with the sacred mantra on her lips. The renowned Vaisnava teacher of Vrindaban, Sri Atul Krishna Goswami, very lucidly expounded the *Bhagavata* in Hindi every morning and afternoon. His rendering of the Līlā of Sri Krishna was specially inspiring. The Sanskrit recitation was performed

every morning in one of the rooms of the guest-house by Sri Bhola Pandit of Kashi. It was Mataji's *kheyāla* that the worship of a different deity, such as Lakshmi, Nārāyana, Satyanārāyana, Guru etc., should be performed every morning in the new temple, while the Bhāgavata was being recited in the hall. On January 29th, a tiny Siva shrine, adjoining Gopal Mandir was consecrated and the *linga* named "Anandeshwara." The same day *havan* (fire sacrifice) and *Pūrnahuti* of the *Bhagavata Saptah* took place.

Kirtan parties of Maharashtra and South India came to sing for Mataji at Poona and she herself sang several times very beautifully, adopting the style of those musicians. Almost every morning Mataji would go for a drive along the calm and picturesque hilly roads on the outskirts of Poona. Sometimes she took an early morning walk round the Ashram. One day Mataji followed an invitation to the residence of some Parsi devotees. There she sang for quite a while. On the last day of her sojourn she visited a hospital of wounded soldiers and distributed oranges, saying "Nārāyana" to each patient.

On January 31st Mataji left for Bombay, where she spent three days in her pagoda at Sri B. K. Shah's place, Vile Parle. A large number of devotees from all parts of the city came every morning and evening to pay their respects to Mataji.

On February 3rd night Mataji entrained for Jaipur halting at Sawai Madhopur, M. P., for several hours. She had been there once before many years ago and a devotee had requested her repeatedly to come again. This time Mataji went there without any previous notice. On the 5th early morning Mataji reached Jaipur. Dr. S. L. Purohit, who last November had

arranged for Mataji's accommodation in a devotee's newly built house, had in the meantime constructed a lovely thatched cottage for Mataji in his own compound. As on her last visit, Mataji went to Jaipur this time also mainly to see that Didima's statue would be executed to perfection. She spent daily two or three hours in the studio of the artist handling herself the clay, in spite of the icy cold weather. It was a great joy for the few present to see Ma in the role of a sculptor trying to give the final touches to Didima's image. On February 8th the clay model at last seemed a perfect likeness and Mataji left the same night for New Delhi, reaching there the next morning.

On the 11th started the consecration ceremonies of two new temples in the Ashram grounds : one *Panchayatan Mandir* with three Siva *linga* in the centre and images of Ganesh, Narayana, Surya and Parvati in two corners; the other one a very small shrine for Hanuman. The installations were completed on the 13th with elaborate rites, pandits having arrived from Hardwar for the occasion. During the whole night *Sivaratri* was observed in the customary manner. It goes without saying that the attendance was enormous. The very spacious hall, the Panchavati, the new temple, in fact every available space was occupied by devotees who took part in the all-night *pūjā*; Mataji being here, there and everywhere and taking note of the minutest details. Srimati S. M. Subbulakshmi who had also come and joined the festival, delighted everyone by her songs during the intervals between the *pūjās*.

On the 14th, *Nāma yajña* (uninterrupted *kīrtana* of *Mahāmantra*) started and was kept up for 24 hours.

On the 15th night Mataji travelled to Dehradun where

she alighted on the 16th morning. On the 17th, thirteen students of our Vidyapith and two other young men received their sacred threads in Mataji's presence in *Amar Kutir, Kalyanvan*. The new brahmacharis have to remain closetted for three days after the ceremony and are kept busy learning to perform *sandhya* (morning and evening prayers) and their other duties. They keep a fast on rice boiled in milk without sugar at midday and milk and bananas in the morning and evening. Mataji went to see the boys every day and supervised all arrangements.

From February 18th to 26th a *Bhagavata Saptaha* was held in the Ashram hall with Sri Srinath Sastri of Vrindaban reciting the Sanskrit text in the morning and expounding in Hindi very brilliantly every afternoon. The hall and the verandas were packed to capacity with men and women listening in pindrop silence. On two days Mataji did not come downstairs as her health was indifferent. But she was present on the first and last days as well as for the narration of Sri Krishna's birth which was, as usual, specially celebrated. After the *havan* on the 26th, so many people had come unexpectedly to partake of the feast, that more food had to be cooked at the last moment. Mataji sat in the courtyard with the waiting crowd and started to sing *Sri Ram, jai Ram, jai, jai Ram'*. While everyone was kept busy repeating in chorus, Mataji had fruit collected from every nook and corner of the Ashram, which was cut into pieces and placed on everyone's empty leaf plates. In this way we could enjoy a most charming improvised *darśana* of Mataji for an extra hour and a half.

That very afternoon Mataji motored to Raipur where *Akhanda Rāmāyana* started the next morning. Soon after its

completion on the 28th, Mataji returned to Kishenpur. On the 29th the *Holi* festival was celebrated by a grand fire sacrifice at Kalyanvan and uninterrupted *kirtan* in the Ashram. Mataji came to Kalyanvan four times that morning and blessed everyone by throwing coloured powder all over them, while the *kirtan* was shifted to Kalyanvan for a couple of hours. This was the first time that *Holi* was observed in Ma's presence in Dehradun. The bus service being suspended on *Holi* day, not too many people could come, which made the celebration all the more intimate and enjoyable. A few foreigners from various countries also participated and filmed the proceedings.

On March 2nd, Mataji took the train to Varanasi. On March 7th, she suddenly left for Vindhyachal for three days' rest, taking only two or three companions with her. The following day some devotees from Germany arrived at Varanasi and seized the rare opportunity of having Mataji's *darśana* in the delightful solitude of Vindhyachal on two successive days. Mataji returned to Varanasi on the 10th, looking rested and refreshed.

Now a tremendously busy fortnight followed. Everyone was kept breathless by a regular avalanche of functions, ceremonies, feasts, visits of V. I. P.s and foreigners in large numbers. About 150 devotees arrived from Calcutta, Bombay, Ahmedabad and other places to be present at *Vasanti Durga Pūjā* that was celebrated in the *Chandi Mandap* from March 21st to 24th. On March 12th a religious group of 55 French men and women came for Mataji's *darśana*. They specially asked for 15 minutes silent meditation with Mataji which was granted in the Gopal Mandir hall. After the meditation Mataji distributed *prasāda*

to all of them. The French doctor who permanently lives in our Ashram happened to be present and told them about Mataji and her teaching in their own language. They left greatly impressed and satisfied by their visit.

On March 15th the recitation of *Sahasra Chandi patha* (1000 *Durga Sapta Shatis*) by 50 pandits for ten days started in the cave-hall below Gopal Mandir and was completed on the 25th by an elaborate fire sacrifice performed by over 20 pandits. This was followed by *kumari* and *batuk pūja* in Ma's presence.

On March 17th a new Siva temple with five *linga*, three white and two black, was consecrated with due ceremony. The *linga* had been entrusted to our Ashram by someone who had to shift to Calcutta and dreamt that the *linga* did not want to leave Varanasi.

On the 19th, Sri Narendra Brahmachari of Deogarh came to see Mataji. She invited him and his party of fifty for *Saptami Pūja* and *prasāda* on the 21st. The next day, after attending *Ashtami Puja* in our Ashram very early in the morning, Mataji followed Sri Narendra Brahmachari's invitation to Motijhil where he was celebrating Annapurna Pūjā. In our own Annapurna temple also special pūjā and bhoga was performed that day and Mataji went straight there on returning to the Ashram about midday. On the 23rd, *Rama Navmi* was observed in the beautiful traditional way. A saligram was placed into an orange which was opened at midday to symbolize the birth of Sri Ramachandra. That day, Sri Swami Cidananda, the head of Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh came to see Mataji and spent about half an hour with her. The next day, *Dusehra*, marked the completion of Durga Puja. Ma sang with great

inspiration before the image was taken to the Ganga for immersion.

On the 26th, Sri G. S. Pathak, Vice-President of India, accompanied by Sri B. Gopala Reddy, the Governor of the U. P. and a number of high officials came to meet Mataji and had lunch at the Ashram. Late at night Mataji quite unexpectedly left for Calcutta, mainly to see a teacher of the Kanyapith who was lying seriously ill in a hospital of the Rama-Krishna Mission. She had to have an operation a few days later. Mataji stayed in the hospital for over an hour, comforting the patient. She also went to the homes of two other sick devotees and gave *darśana* to the widow of Sri G. C. Das Gupta who is about 95 years old. Mataji spent only some 15 minutes in our Ashram at Agarpara and then motored to Burdwan, but just missed the train and had to return to Varanasi by another train without reservations. In the morning of the 28th the Ashram car that had been sent to receive Mataji at Varanasi Station, returned empty, while Mataji came later by taxi. After a few hours of private interviews and settling various matters, Mataji returned to the Railway Station and left for Delhi, accompanied by Sri Gourinath Sastri and others. Mataji thus spent three successive nights in the train. On arrival at Delhi, Mataji first of all went to the new Siva Mandir and then saw to arrangements for her guest before going to her own room. Very soon Ex-minister G. L. Nanda came to finalize Mataji's trip to Kurukshetra. Large posters with Mataji's picture had been placed at various places in Delhi, Chandigarh and Kurukshetra.

Kurukshetra, the famous ancient battle-field of the Mahā-

bhārata, where Sri Krishna taught Arjuna what is known as "Bhagavad Gita", while the Kurus and Pandavas were facing each other arrayed for battle, is even now a place of pilgrimage where lakhs of people come to bathe in a large old pond, whenever there is a solar eclipse. This place is now being developed into a centre of Sanskrit learning and Hindu culture. Sri G. L. Nanda had requested Mataji some time ago to grace Kurukshetra on March 31st for two days and bless the place by her presence.

On the 30th evening a large number of foreigners, most of them disciples of Master Subramuniya and some also of Sri Satya Sai Baba and Sri Neem Karauli Baba came for Mataji's *darśana* and sang to her on the terrace facing the Siva temple. Sandalpaste and garlands were distributed to them and sweets from the temple. On the 31st at about 5-30 a. m. Mataji and her party left for Kurukshetra in a fleet of cars. Even at that early hour a number of westerners were waiting to have Mataji's *darśana*. During the drive Mataji for a long time sang "Sri Krishna śaranam mama" ("Sri Krishna is my refuge") while everyone repeated in chorus. At the entrance to Kurukshetra, Mataji was received by Sri G. L. Nanda and a vast crowd with a shower of flower petals and taken to Birla *Dharmasala* where she and her party were put up. After a while the Mahant of Nirvani Akhara of Kankhal and the Vice-Chancellor of the newly opened Kurukshetra University came to welcome her.

Satsang, with various well-known Mahatmas giving discourses, was held in a pandal near the lake amidst ancient mango trees with tender leaves and fragrant blossoms. A new, much larger lake is under construction. Mataji was then taken

to *Sthaneshwar*, the Siva temple where Sri Krishna is said to have celebrated *pūjā* before the battle started. A low wooden seat and various items for the worship had been kept ready for Mataji, who sat on the stool and motioned to Br. Bhaskarananda to perform the *puja*, but then herself sprinkled water, offered sandalpaste and bilva leaves and finally placed her head very gently and lovingly on the ancient linga. Mataji was in a very special *bhāva*. None of us have ever before seen Ma perform *pūjā*. Everyone present felt deeply moved. After visiting the Durga and Bhadrakali temples, Mataji was taken to *Jyotishwar* which is supposed to be the actual spot where Sri Krishna taught Arjuna. It is said that the great Sankaracharya corroborated this fact. Every day the whole Bhagavad Gita is being recited there. The next day Mataji was shown round the lake. A large hall for lectures is planned there and an ashram "*Sadhana farm*." Mataji again sang : "*Sri Krishna saranam mama*." Many were speechless with emotion. The foundation stone of the Centre for Cow Protection was then laid in Ma's presence with a vast concourse of people attending. The bricks were handed to Mataji and she touched them before G. L. Nanda placed them into the ground. Mataji was also driven through the very large campus of the University. Before leaving in the late afternoon, Mataji visited the Gita Mandir where the whole of the Gita is inscribed on the walls.

Mataji proceeded by car to Ghaziabad at the earnest request of the Jaipuria family. Mataji was accommodated in a new house and received with Sanskrit chanting and *ārati*. At 10 p. m. *Nama Yajñā*, performed by our Delhi Kirtan party round a beautifully decorated circular altar, started in Mataji's

presence in a huge new factory building. Before retiring to her room at about midnight, Mataji went round with the kirtan singers for a little while and the next evening sang very beautifully the charming “*dharo lao*” at the end of the function and then gracefully and swiftly distributed *prasāda* to all present.

Mataji was to go to Vrindaban, but instead, at very short notice, motored to the Raipur Ashram at Dehradun on April 4th, alighting there in the afternoon. The next day she spent several hours in the Kishenpur Ashram and in Kalyanvan and then returned to Raipur for a few days of much needed rest. She however gave *darśana* every evening on the terrace overlooking the valley with its watercourse and the surrounding mountains. On the 8th *Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyana* was started in the Raipur Ashram hall and after its completion on the 9th, Mataji visited the residence of a devotee at the Raipur factory, reaching Kishenpur at 6 p. m., from where she left for Kankhal on the 10th afternoon. Late at night on the 9th, the Prime Minister and her Italian daughter-in-law spent nearly an hour with Mataji in her room upstairs.

At Kankhal, Didima's *Sannyāsa Utsava* was commemorated on April 13th by solemn *pūjā* performed on her *samādhi* in the beautiful new *mandir* and by a feast given to 100 *sadhus* at the Nirvani Akhara. Three newly built rooms were opened that morning in Ma's presence with Narayana and Padmanabham *pūjā*. Many devotees from various places gathered for the occasion. Satsang was held in front of Didima's *Mandir*. A number of well-known Mahātmās who are excellent speakers graced the occasion with their talks on Didima and on the significance of *Sannyāsa*. Among them were Sri Swami Govind

Prakash, head of Ramathirta Ashram and Sri Swami Brahma-
nanda, head of Sri Maheshwarananda Ashram.

On the 15th night Mataji took the train to Varanasi,
where she may remain until April 27th.

Mataji's birthday celebrations will be held in our Ashram
at Chandralok, Kalkaji, New Delhi from 23rd to 31st May.

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