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Mātri Vāni

Every living being by its very nature longs for happiness. Only because this happiness lies hidden within him, is he able to long for it. If it were not already there, he would not desire it. Yet it is a fact that he cannot help desiring it. A deep yearning for peace and happiness can be observed in every living being without exception. Even insignificant creatures such as insects, spiders and the like try to avoid pain. They are after well-being, safety and peace. Animals, when exposed to the scorching rays of the sun, seek shade and cold water. Similarly, when man is afflicted by all kinds of suffering, he goes out in search of God, the haven of peace, the fountain of bliss. In order to be rescued from the three-fold suffering of the world, one has to take recourse to another type of suffering. By pain, pain has to be conquered. This is called *tapasyā*. To be able to bear hardships and troubles is called *tapasyā* by this body (Mātāji). Just as the suffering of the world is irksome,

so in the beginning one finds it difficult to concentrate on God's name. But although it may seem arduous, by this very exertion one will be liberated from all suffering. Thus, what is wanted is effort, sustained practice, action. Among animals and birds there is no desire to be liberated from suffering and to find God who is eternal Bliss, eternal Beauty; this aspiration is reserved exclusively for human beings. Although God has enveloped man by the veil of ignorance, He has also provided a door to Knowledge for him. By passing through that door man can attain to liberation. This is why he must be determined to realize the Supreme, to find God, to transcend ignorance as well as knowledge. So long as there are the opposites of knowledge and ignorance, in other words distinction and the idea of difference, the Brahman cannot be realized. By merging in the Brahman, all differences dissolve into IT and one is for ever established in one's true Being.

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At all times the repetition of God's name should be sustained. Through the practice of the Name enjoyment, liberation, peace—all of these will blossom forth. With firm faith, implicit confidence and devotion, casting away pride, adhere to the Name and you will see that all your work will be done, as it were, of itself. When this body was engaged in the play of *sādhana*, this kind of thing

used to happen and this is why so much stress is laid on it. Do not take anything lightly in order to test God, for by doing this you will not advance towards God-realization. Surrender your all to Him ! Your burden, the burden of the world is ever carried by Him, the One Who sustains the universe, remember this !

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You say, the mind will not concentrate on the Name; what do you gain by feeling upset when your mind wanders here and there ? Rather reflect in this manner : the mind does not obey me; very well, I shall not obey the mind either, I shall continue to repeat the Lord's name. Have you never watched children flying kites ? How very high the kites rise up, yet they are limited by the length of the string to which they are tied. The kite can be compared to the mind and the sense objects to the air. Keep the mind tied by the string of God's name ; some day or other it will become still.

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Such terrible calamities on all sides bring forth the black cloud of despair and darkness. It is natural that your mind should be terror stricken and harassed by all kinds of worries. What is to be done ? The only refuge of the helpless is God. Do not allow yourself to be broken. The very ground to which one has fallen,

receiving a blow, has to be used as a lever in the effort to rise up again. This is God's law. He whose tool you are, His indeed is everything. HE IS. You are in the arms of the Great Mother. As She keeps you, so you have to live. Keep mind and body healthy. Rather than allowing yourself unresistingly to be consumed by the fire of worry and anxiety, ever try to keep awake the conviction that everything happens according to His Will. Truly, the contemplation of Reality is the Path.

* * *

Knowing that one is but an actor on the stage of the world, one lives happily. Those who mistake the pantomime for reality, are of the world (*samsāri*) where there is constant movement and change, ceaseless going and coming, the oscillation between happiness and sorrow. Those who are dressed up in various disguises, must not forget their real nature. Verily, you are the offspring of the Immortal. Your real Being is Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

* * *

God's true Being cannot be described, for when speaking of 'being' there is the opposite of "non-being." When trying to express Him by language, He becomes imperfect. All the same, in order to use words, He is spoken of as *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* (Being-Consciousness-Bliss). Because HE IS, there is Being; and because He is Knowledge Itself, there is Consciousness; and to become conscious of that Being is indeed Bliss. To know the essence of Truth is Bliss; this is why He is called *Sat-Chit-Ānanda*—but in Reality He is beyond Bliss and non-bliss.

From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the last issue.)

(1935-1936.)

Mataji left Dacca after a short stay of seven days only. The devotees of the town and nearby places had hardly had time to assimilate the reality of her presence among them. She had all the time been surrounded by a huge crowd of men, women and children. Many of the women had not returned home at night but stayed on with Mataji at the Ashram. The small Ashram had not been able to contain the swelling crowds, so that Mataji had again and again come out to sit in the open fields of Ramnā.

From Dacca, Mataji accompanied by about sixty to seventy people went to Paruldia, the village home of Jogesh C. Ghosh.¹ Elaborate arrangements had been made for Mataji's reception. The devotees were in a happy and festive mood. But this mood was short-lived. On arrival at Calcutta, they were saddened to learn of the serious illness of Kshitish Chandra Guha, who with his two brothers and their families, was strongly attached to Mataji. Their house in Ballygunje served as a meeting place for the devotees of Calcutta.

1. The trustee of Shahbagh Gardens in Dacca, where Mataji and Bholanath had lived for four years.

The day before Mataji was to leave Calcutta, Kshitish Chandra passed away, plunging his own family and the bigger family of devotees in great sorrow. The calamity, however, was robbed of its poignant tragedy by Mataji's presence in town at the time.

From Calcutta, Mataji went back to Tarapeeth. As written earlier, Tarapeeth is famous for its cremation ground of great sanctity. Mataji stayed there for some time, while Bholanath went on a pilgrimage to Gangasagar. The sacred thread ceremony for Didi and Maroni was performed at Tarapeeth during that time.¹

On Bholanath's return, Maroni was married to Chinu and went away with him and his family to Calcutta. Although no special arrangements had been made for festivities, yet all rituals connected with Indian marriages were performed with considerable pomp and ceremony. This came about because the ladies who were visiting Tarapeeth at the time, enthusiastically participated in the function and made it a great success. Maroni was like a daughter to Bholanath. He was considerably saddened at the inevitable parting. Many of Bholanath's relations had arrived for the occasion. For a few days, the desolation of Tarapeeth was overcome by the atmosphere of auspicious ceremonies.

Mataji had become quite well known in Tarapeeth. The Hindu as well as Muslim villagers crowded round her, wherever she would be. An old Muslim peasant seemed specially close to her. Mataji used to address him as *baba* (father). Whenever she visited his hut he would call out his two wives, saying.,

1. January 1936, probably January 14th.

“Come out and receive my daughter.” The family with great satisfaction and pleasure would make arrangements for Mataji to sit with them for some time.

One Maulvi Sahib from Calcutta used to visit Mataji sometimes. Mataji called him “Prem Gopal”. Some of the Muslim population of Tarapeeth did not approve of the Maulvi Sahib’s devotion to a Hindu Mataji. On one of his visits to Tarapeeth, the Maulvi Sahib addressed a gathering of Muslims in the Masjid, explaining to them that no Islamic tenets were broken by listening to the words of Mataji and that she belonged to the peoples of all religions.

At Tarapeeth, Mataji would walk along the footpaths of the cultivated ground for long hours. Small shops came into existence overnight and began to flourish, catering to the unusual influx of visitors. The precincts of the temple came alive and did not appear to be as deserted and uncared for as they usually were.

In February, however, Mataji again left Tarapeeth to its silent contemplation of death and departed with her devotees in a convoy of fifteen to twenty bullock-carts, to the nearest railway station of Rampurhat. The slow journey through the moonlit night was made memorable by the melodious singing of Bhramara. Mataji herself joined in the *kirtan* at times. At Rampurhat Mataji and her companions boarded the train for Serampore.

After Serampore, Mataji visited Navadweep, Bahrampur and Tatanagar. From Tatanagar, Mataji started for Vindhya-chal. They stopped for a few hours at Howrah Railway

Station. Calcutta was already notorious for its unmanageable crowds and now that Mataji was not staying in the city, everyone had come to the station. Only Jatish Guha¹ (the elder brother of Kshitish) was conspicuous by his absence although the rest of the family were there. His grief over the untimely death of his brother had alienated him a little from Mataji. Just before the train started he came up to Mataji and after doing *pranāma*, walked away in a very uncharacteristic grave and aloof manner. Mataji looked at him with great understanding and said gently, "Don't forget that Jyotish (Bhaiji) at least is your friend. Continue to write to him and give him news of yourself and your family."

Jatish Guha could not nurse his hurt after this and came and wept near Mataji like a child and thus perhaps was able to lighten the burden of his grief.

Before coming to Vindhyachal, Mataji spent a couple of days at Bethia, the village home of Dr. Girin Mitra. At Vindhyachal, she met a gentleman who had donned the robes of a sannyāsi. On enquiry Mataji elicited from him the fact that he had left home in anger and not because he had any religious aspirations. Mataji persuaded him to resume his former style of apparel, saying that the saffron clothes were sanctified and were not to be made use of for resolving one's own personal problems. However, with Mataji's permission, the gentleman stayed on in Vindhyachal for quite some time before returning to his home.

Mataji started on a course of ceaseless wanderings. On leaving Vindhyachal she visited Allahabad, Chitrakut, Agra,

1. Many devotees will know him better as Bunidi's father.

Mathura, Vrindaban and Delhi before coming to Dehra Dun. In Dehra Dun also she went from the city to Raipur and then again back to the Manohar temple. Occasionally she would leave her companions and accept the escort of one or two of the local people.

In the meantime an Ashram for Mataji was being constructed in Kishenpur, about five miles away from the city, by the devotees of that region. Hari Ram Joshi was the moving spirit of this enterprise, and was ably supported by the people of Dehra Dun. Mataji's birthday celebrations were performed with great enthusiasm in the new Ashram. Mataji and Bholanath were received at the Kishenpur Ashram in May, 1936 (25th Vaishakh, 1343) amidst a festival of great rejoicings. Manmatha Nath Chatterji, a very devout and respected resident of Dehra Dun performed the *tithi-puja* on the occasion.

The people of Dehra Dun had a taste of the experience of the devotees of Dacca, when Mataji announced her *kheyāla* to go to Solon, almost before they had time to congratulate themselves on the success of the function.

Raja Durga Singh of Solon, who exemplifies by his life, what we understand of the ideal of *rājarṣi*, received Mataji and made suitable arrangements for her. After a fortnight Mataji expressed her *kheyāla* to go on to Simla, a distance of about thirty-four miles from Solon.

This was Mataji's first visit to Simla, where subsequently she became so well known. Raja Durga Singh made arrangements for her to stay at the Kali-Bari¹ at Simla. Mataji

1. Temple of Kali. Generally all such temples have accommodation for pilgrims.

arrived at the beautiful hill-station of Simla in the evening, and went straight to the Kali-Bari. They were met by some unusual activities at the temple. Mataji was told that a sadhu, known as "Dayāl bābā", had just passed away. As a matter of fact, Dayāl bābā had enquired, only a short while back if Mataji had arrived. Mataji now went to the room of the sadhu and stood near his body for some time. Dayāl bābā was held in great esteem by the Bengali population of Simla. Groups of officers¹ came to pay their respects to the departed soul and thus learnt of Mataji's arrival at Kali-Bari. Some of them came to her room and told her about Dayāl bābā.

The next morning, Mataji went for a walk. Small groups of people came up to her and introduced themselves. More gathered in her room in the evening. One of them said, "Ma, we were greatly attached to Dayāl bābā. We should have been plunged in sorrow, but somehow, now that you are here, we are not suffering from a sense of bereavement."

Mataji behaved as if she were amidst people well known to her. Within a few days Mataji's small room began to overflow with visitors. Many of the new acquaintances came to the Kali-Bari straight from their offices. Much fun and enjoyment was occasioned by this because some of them would find their wives already with Mataji instead of awaiting them at home. Household routines were thrown overboard. Men, women and children began to crowd round Mataji. One lady, expressing the views of her companions said, "Ma, every day

1. Simla used to be the Summer Head Quarters of the Central Secretariat at New Delhi.

we impatiently wait for the office and school hour. No sooner are our husbands and children out of the house than we simply rush here.”

Mataji's companions were amazed that within a few days she had so endeared herself to the people that from morning till night she was the centre of an eager throng, talking to her, listening to her or sometimes just gazing at her with rapt attention.

One lady asked Mataji, “Ma, what sādhana can a housewife do ?”

Mataji : “*Sevā* and *japa*. All duties can be performed in a spirit of service and dedication. God Himself appears to you in the guise of your various obligations in the world. If you sustain the thought, ‘this also is one aspect of the Divine’, then there will be no conflict between what is worldly and what is called religious. More specifically, one should devote as much time as one can to *japa*.”

“Ma, on some days the mind is at peace and I can do *japa* but often the mind is so restless that nothing can be done. Why is this so ?”

“There are many influences operating on the mind. Your way of life, the food you eat, the people you mix with and many other things, perhaps unknown to you. But the remembrance of God will help you to overcome all this. Don't you see that in spring when new leaves begin to sprout, the old ones drop off by themselves ? They fall to the ground and are reabsorbed as manure and sustain the tree. Nothing is wasted in the Divine

scheme of things. Sustained effort is required of you. The rest will follow.”

Nama yajna at Simla Kali-Bari.

The Bengali officers of Simla were mostly members of the *Hari Sabha* or attached to it. Every summer they would perform a *nāma yajña*¹ at the Kali-Bari. This function was to take place on Tuesday, June 23rd. The new devotees of Simla requested Mataji to stay till then.

A big concourse of people assembled in the Kali-Bari on the eve of the *nāma yajña*. The temple, the room in which the *kirtana* was to be performed and the adjoining verandah were tastefully decorated with flowers, leaves and lights. Garlands were festooned round the altar in the middle of the room. The fragrance of sandalwood permeated the atmosphere. The participants, dressed in sparkling white clothes, assembled in front of the altar. Mataji with her companions sat on the verandah. Bholanath, always a great enthusiast for *kirtana*, was happily participating in the function.

The *kirtana* began with an invocation to Sri Gauranga and Sri Nityananda, who are believed to be the propagators of *nāma sankirtana* in this age. Other members of the Vaishnava pantheon were also invoked to bless the function. Then the men stood up carrying their musical instruments. They went round the altar singing the main lines of the *kirtana* for the morrow. With this the preliminaries of the function known as *adhivāsa* were concluded.

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1. An altar with pictures of deities, decorated with flowers and garlands is erected in the middle of a big room. While singing *kirtana* the participants go round this altar.

Early next morning everyone gathered for the *kirtana*. Those who were late-risers and had never been known to attend before noon, were also there.¹ From sunrise to sunset the same *mantra* in an unbroken melody would be kept up by relays of singers. Mataji again sat on the *varandah*. The *kirtana* right from the beginning created a remarkable atmosphere. Everyone felt transported to a different world beyond the everyday humdrum one. Mataji's companions could see that Mataji herself was being affected by the singing. For almost five years now they had not seen Mataji in a *bhāva*. They also noticed that Mataji apparently tried to control the *bhāva* which was influencing her body. She would talk desultorily with her companions. Once she went out for a walk away from the Kali-Bari. Then again she would retire to her room and lie down for some time. Bholanath, noticing Mataji's changed demeanour, came and told her to try and check it if possible. The function was a public one, and Bholanath was not happy at the idea that Mataji would become a topic of conversation amongst comparative strangers. Moreover, Mataji's *bhāva-samādhi* could last for any number of hours, even days, and none knew better than Bholanath, how difficult it was to call her back to her surroundings. A nameless dread of losing her made him attempt to keep her attention anchored to the ordinary things of the world, as it were. Hence his injunction to Mataji to try and withstand the effect of the *nāma kīrtana*.

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1. Some of the leaders of this functions were Haran Banerji, Charu Banerji, Durgadas Banerji, Deben Chatterji, Manoj Lal Chatterji, Sudhir Sarkar and many others. At present the sons and daughters of these men carry on the tradition of *nāma yajña*.

Mataji, may be anticipating his reaction, was already doing it. The whole day she was restless. It appeared as if she were trying to check a terrific force which would otherwise engulf her body. In the words of a companion : "Mataji's ordinary talk and behaviour was shot through as it were, by flashes of lightning. Her face was flushed and luminous. The eyes tended to become fixed in a beautiful unfocussed gaze."

Evening drew near. Mataji once again came away from the *kīrtana* to her room. Here her body was seen to roll uncontrollably with the rhythm of the music. Then in the same *bhāva*, swaying to the tune of the melody, Mataji moved out of her room and entered the *kīrtana* hall.¹ The men of Simla had never seen such a sight. But nearly all of them were highly educated and also well versed in Vaishnava literature. They realized that they were witnessing the manifestations of *māhabhāva* which they had read, were possible in the divine body of Lord Gauranga only. The melody of the *kīrtana* reached sublime heights.

After some time Mataji sat on the floor. As before in Dacca, she uttered *mantras* in a beautiful language which sounded like Sanskrit. Then she became utterly still and motionless.

The *kīrtana* was over. The congregation bowed at her feet. Some of the men hurried home to fetch other members

1. A description of Mataji's *bhāva* will not be attempted here. It has been recorded earlier. Moreover, however detailed, a description can never touch the dimension of the experience. Didi has used the following words in describing Mataji in *bhāva* : "Like a wind-blown cloth . . . like a dry leaf blown along by gusts of wind."

of their families. Mataji's matchless smile and the inimitable unfocussed wide gaze struck awe and wonder in the hearts of the people. They reverently bowed their heads as if in the presence of the personification of their adored ideal.

Next day, some of the men remarked, "We have been performing *kīrtana* for many years. Our invocations have been answered. Blessed indeed are we, the people of Simla."

After a few days Mataji returned to Solon. Before leaving Simla, Mataji encouraged the ladies to organise themselves into a *kīrtana*-party on the lines of the parties already existing in Dacca and Calcutta. The men were a little sceptical about the programme in the beginning. They thought it would be beyond the physical strength of women to stand and sing for a few hours at a time. These fears were seen to be quite unfounded when the women successfully concluded a long session of *kīrtana*. Mataji smilingly told the men, "Do not keep your women-folk away from this sphere of your lives. Allow them to join their efforts with yours, otherwise you will face unnecessary obstacles!"

The new devotees of Simla accompanied Mataji to Solon on a Saturday, spent the whole night in singing *kīrtana* and went back to Simla the next day. Mataji had now come into contact with an entire new cross-section of society. At Solon, Raja Durga Singh's great courtesy and hospitality, captivated the hearts of the officers. They promised to perform *nāma yajña* in Solon as well, every year.

Mataji returned to Dehra Dun where Bhaiji had stayed all this time, undergoing treatment for an indisposition. Mataji

had no *kheyāla* to settle down anywhere. She again left for Simla and then Solon, this time, accompanied by Bhaiji also.

It was apparent from her manner that it was a matter of days only before she would again set out on a course of wanderings. One day she asked Bholanath, "Where shall we go?" He had no suggestions to make, so she said, "In that case, I shall do according to this body's *kheyāla*." Then she asked Bhaiji, "Where would you like to stay?" Bhaiji was more concerned to know that apparently he would not be accompanying her on her travels. To the great joy of Yogibhai,¹ Mataji asked Bhaiji to stay on in Solon until further instructions.

Mataji with her depleted party arrived in Vindhyachal. More drastic changes were made by her. She sent Swami Akhandanandaji to stay in the new Ashram at Kishenpur, while Didi was asked to remain in Vindhyachal. This was a severe trial for Didi. Since leaving home she had never stayed alone and independently. She always had had the guardianship of her father when not actually travelling with Mataji. Mataji now said to her : "You must learn to travel without escorts. You have chosen this way of life, so you must get used to independence." Mataji however, arranged that a reliable family-servant would stay at hand, in case Didi were obliged to undertake a journey later on.

Mataji and Bholanath left for Calcutta in the last week of July, 1936. From Calcutta, Mataji paid a short visit to

1, Raja Durga Singh of Solon. Mataji used to call him "Yogiraj", so the devotees are in the habit of referring to him as Jogibhai. This name will be used in these accounts rather than "Raja Durga Singh."

Rajshahi. Bholanath had been suffering from a pain in the stomach for some time. Mataji prevailed upon him to stay at his sister's place and get himself examined and treated properly by the doctors in Calcutta.

Mataji, then went to Serampore, accompanied by a crowd of people, but asked everyone to return to Calcutta the same evening. Only Kamal (Atal Bihari Bhattacharya's nephew from Rajshahi) and Virajmohini¹ remained with her. Kamal was a new-comer. Virajmohini had been travelling around with Mataji's party for some time. She was a woman of good sense and dignity of manner. Her ready appreciation of the unusual must have stood her in good stead because now Mataji left for an unknown destination. After a few days, Mataji sent back Kamal. Accompanied by Virajmohini only, she travelled to many distant places. Bholanath wrote to the devotees from Calcutta, saying that Mataji had expressed her kheyāla of moving about by herself and that nobody should try to find out where she was or go and join her in case he learnt of her whereabouts accidentally, and that she would come back to them in her own time. Mataji left Serampore on August 3, 1936.


(*To be continued*)

1. Many people will know her better as Brahmacharini Vishuddha's grandmother.

Oh Anandamayi Ma !

M. Rama Rao

Thou art the Mother of the Universe all,
From the biggest of the big to the smallest of the small.
Thou art the source of Truth and Love,
Thou art Space, below and above,
Nay, Thou art beyond Time and Space.
Thou dost shower kindness and grace.
Thine is the spark that emitteth Light,
Thine is the Spirit that burneth bright.
Thou art hidden and manifest too,
Thy Powers are known to only a few.
Thou dost lead the millions to the Goal,
To Eternal Salvation, to the Supreme Soul.
Thou dost give perennial Peace,
Thou dost shower Joy and Bliss.
Thine are ways unknown, Divine,
Withereth the ego of 'mine' and 'thine'.
Thou art the Heaven of Holiness Supreme,
Thou art the essence of *Anand*—its cream.
Surrendered am I at Thy glorious Feet
Of Solace Sublime which are a seat.
I crave for nothing but blessings from Thee.
How to be in communion, oh do tell me !



The Sprit of Renunciation

Swami Sivananda Saraswati

The word “*Sannyāsa*” means perfect abandoning or setting aside. *Sam* means “perfect”, and *nyāsa* means “abandoning or setting aside.” Though traditionally it is the fourth stage in the life of the Hindu, ever since ancient times there have been bright examples of young renunciates, full of *viveka* (discrimination) and *vairāgya* (dispassion), for whom the fulfilment of the first three stages of life, or particularly the *grihasta* (householder) *vānaprastha* (forest-dweller) stages, which are meant to be preparatory, were totally unnecessary.

In a society which regulated life with strict discipline and traditional observance of moral injunction, when the inroads of external influence into the cultural fabric of the Hindu religion were almost insignificant, when life was infinitely less complex than it is today, it would have been appropriate for a man to enter the order of *sannyāsa* after having attained the requisite maturity of mind and character through training in the *gurukula* (school) and fulfilment of household responsibilities. It should not, however, be supposed that even in ancient times all people observed the fourth *āśrama* (stage of life) : *sannyāsa*. Most did not, simply because people, as always, generally lacked *vairāgya* and strength of will.

In the context of the state of affairs in the society of today, it is not necessary and even by far less practicable to strictly

apply this convention, but it is important that people at large should rightly understand what constituted the true spirit of renunciation or the ideal of *sannyāsa*. This need is also particularly evident among the legions of *sannyāsins* themselves.

Sannyāsa springs from the renunciation of desires, a very long drawn-out process, and could be sustained in its pristine purity only through burning *viveka* and *vairāgya*. Its primary condition is the fire of *viveka*, before which no impurity could stand, no desire for mundane objects could fail to wither.

Sannyāsa and worldliness can never go together. One cannot be a *sannyāsin* within and yet exhibit worldly inclinations without. It is a great folly and downright deception to suppose that one could be mentally detached and yet submit to one's weaknesses for material objects and piously indulge in sensual craving. It is better for such a person to be an honest *grihastha*.

Circumstantial factors leading to *sannyāsa*, through the morass of frustration or expediency, can only succeed in putting up a hollow mask of piety and renunciation, a little probing of which is sufficient to prove how brittle its fibre is.

True, earthly disillusionment, leading to renunciation of the world, has resulted in the enblossoming of some of the great *sannyāsins*, but such cases have indeed been very rare, and have always been marked by a sincere aspiration for spiritual unfoldment, aided by a strenuous effort at self-discipline.

Knowledge is the primary factor which forms the backbone of *sannyāsa*—a knowledge that does not cease with learning through books, a knowledge that is not intended for parading before the gullible public in order to impress them for personal ends, but it

is a knowledge that is bound up with one's life itself, deeply touching the heart of the individual and guiding the course of one's action, evaluation, perspective and evolution.

It is this knowledge that gives birth to *vairāgya* and lends grandeur to it. *Vairāgya* without knowledge is a crude form of self-denial, the end of which is only self-defeating. *Vairāgya* does not cease with the denial of physical necessities but means a state of evaporation of desires through right understanding. *Vairāgya* indicates moderation and abstemiousness, guided by dispassion.

Therefore it is said that no genuine renunciate is devoid of a spontaneous glow of inner happiness, and if there is dejection or a shadow of frustration or the look of a hardboiled, hungry falcon in the individual's countenance, it simply means that renunciation in this case has only been a circumstantial impasse.

Viveka, *vairāgya* and self-discipline are complementary. One cannot exist without the others. The *vairāgi* may deny his body but his mind may rule over himself; his impulses of hatred and detestation might run amuck when he is jilted out of his pet course of infatuation, when his ego has been hurt, when his dogmas assaulted.

True *vairāgya*, on the contrary, should enable in the moulding of a perfectly disciplined individual, with a broad outlook, a deep understanding of the realities of life, sympathy for fellow-beings, great tolerance and a charitable heart. True *vairāgya* needs no advertisement just as *sannyāsa* requires no proclamation or parading or comparison such as : 'my *sannyāsa* is better than yours since it has been sanctified by traditional rites'.

These days, unfortunately, wearing the ochre robe has become quite fashionable. It is not like joining a glorified club, as some of the irresponsible members of the order might suppose, but entails on oneself the heavy responsibilities of a worthy monk. The life of a *sannyāsin* should indeed be like a burning flame which no mundane desire should be able to flicker. The life of a *sannyāsin* should be purity itself.

It is lamentable that some do accept *sannyāsa* as an opportunity to escape the normal consequences of life in the world but only to find a chance to live a worldly life under the cloak of pious deception or blase' hypocrisy. A *sannyāsin* with desire for money, personal comfort and weakness for the companionship of women is an anathema to the ideal of *sannyāsa* and a disgrace to the order.

It would however be a great blunder to jump to the conclusion that all *sannyāsin*s are such misanthropes in different degrees. There are countless bright examples of true renunciation, whom one could easily spot by observing the life of desirelessness and dispassion they invariably lead.

On the other hand, the householder who says that it is enough to be a mental *sannyāsin* and that one could live like a lotus leaf in a lake, as it were, is only exhibiting this weakness for worldly objects, however much he might deny it. It is only a very few great renunciates who could do so, and it would be foolishness to compare the common people with them.

Just as there are desirable and undesirable individuals among the people at large, one should be prepared to meet their counterparts among those who are supposed to be renun-

ciates. It is deplorable and irresponsible if the entire order of *sannyāsa* is denounced just because one finds a cross-section of characters in it. It is not the fault of *sannyāsa*, which does not discriminate human beings, but the society which encourages, causes the influx and perpetuates irresponsible elements in the holy order.

These days there is so much talk that the *sannyāsins* are parasites, that they must work. The protagonists of the 'you must work' slogan would do well in providing work for an unemployed householder who could then support a few dependants, rather than to a *sannyāsin* who has only to feed himself. He gives knowledge to the people and they look after his very modest sustenance. There is nothing wrong in it. The heavens are not going to fall down because of it. It is not given to a worldly-minded individual, who may have done nothing to promote the spiritual welfare of his country and who might himself be a slave of a hundred passions, to denounce the *sannyāsins*, when he himself has no power of discrimination.

There would always be the need for *sannyāsins* who engage themselves in spreading the knowledge of Yoga-Vedanta, in preserving the spiritual values through the ages. One should not forget that it is the *sannyāsins* who have kept the flame of *Sanātana Dharma* burning throughout, even through the stormy phases of history. It should also be taken notice of that there are many *sannyāsins* in many ashrams who engage themselves as busily and as effectively as anybody else, in public service.

The fundamental difference between the outlook of a worldly man and a *sannyāsin* is that the former works for himself and his family, with intense selfish attachment, and the latter

sruoꝿaedne to engage himself in some form of service for a common good, with detachment and non-expectation of reward. If the world is to cure itself from all the ills it suffers from, the idea associated with *sannyāsa* must seep into the perspective of the people at large, at least in a certain measure.

It is this ideal of renunciation, rightly understood and sincerely practised, which could solve many of the problems of mankind today. It is wrongly supposed that renunciation means irresponsibility and abandoning action. As the *Gita* says : 'The sages understand *sannyāsa* to be the renunciation of action prompted by desire, and the wise declare the abandonment of the fruits of action as renunciation.'

No one could be totally inactive. Even while sitting still, if the mind is restless, one is said to be active. It is not so easy to renounce action. Even a movement of mind towards an object of enjoyment is an incipient action. Abandoning attachment to any action and to the personal, selfish motivation related hereto is what the *Gita* indicates, in the eighteenth chapter of which a very clear exposition of the import of renunciation is given.

Renunciation is not something negative. On the contrary, it is positive idealism which lends sanity to life. The world is enveloped in an overwhelming shadow of selfishness and aggressive infatuation for material objects. Life is ruled by greed. In his blind quest for mundane interests, in searching after the little nervous titillation of the senses through fair or foul means, in his inordinate desire to possess and amass, man forgets his true being. He is blind to the interests of others. He is blind to the feelings of even those whom he swears to love

and care for just because, in reality, above everything else he is very much in love with himself and is primarily concerned with his own interests, in his heart of hearts, though he might assert that it is not so.

It is here that the spirit of renunciation comes to help—the spirit of detachment leading a mellow touch on man's infatuation, self-denial on his greed and self-love, self-effacement on self-assertion and possessiveness, dispassion on animal lust, the feeling of 'yours' and 'for you' on 'mine' and 'for myself alone.'

It is the spirit of selflessness that enables one to soften the sharp edges of primitive egotism and vituperative self-justification. Such is the ideal of renunciation, which every human being must espouse as best one can, within the framework of the circumstances one is placed in.

Sannyāsa or 'perfect abandoning, setting aside' does not merely mean abandoning family ties. Very often it so happens that after one has abandoned one's family ties, the force of desire and delusion leads one to acquire new 'family ties' with strangers, vitiated by exclusive possessiveness, even though inside the order of *sannyāsa*. The process of renunciation begins with a gradual weaning of the mind from selfish attachment to material objects and mundane desires, in moulding a correct attitude into the nature of things and values related to the ennobling of life, in merging the individual ego in the Cosmic Will through selfless service, prayer, self-discipline, reflection and meditation.

If the sannyasin does not possess this primary qualification, he is a worldly man indeed and, on the other hand, if a person, though engaged in the performance of normal duties that fate has bequeathed on him, is gifted with this idealism and is able to effect it in practical life, he is surely a worthy *sannyāsin*, even if the world does not know him to be so.

May the spirit of renunciation glow in the hearts of all.

—: * :—

“Feel convinced that, no matter what the state or condition you may be in, out of that very state Enlightenment may come. Never harbour the idea that you are involved in sin and evil deeds and can therefore not get anywhere. At all times and under all circumstances you must keep yourself in readiness to tread the path to the Supreme.”

—Anandamayi Ma

On Meditation

Ruth Knowlton

How many words have been written on the subject of philosophy and religion, and how many words have been expounded!

Lao Tzu says :

Existence is beyond the power of words to define. Terms may be used, but none of them are absolute. In the beginning of heaven and earth there were no words.

Words came out of the womb of matter. And whether a man dispassionately sees to the core of life, or passionately sees the surface, the core and the surface are essentially the same. Words making them seem different only to express appearance.

If name were needed, wonder names them both. From wonder into wonder, existence opens. At a certain stage of our spiritual quest we read everything we can lay our hands on and attend every kind of lecture. Like sponges, we hope to absorb Truth in this manner—through words.

But the time comes when we must set aside the books and the mere talking about Truth and go within to find the Great Silence, to seek union with God. For each one of us has to prove in our own lives the validity of what the saints and seers have written. Their experience alone does not suffice. We must make it our own.

That is why meditation is recommended as the highest means for achieving our goal. But as we begin to seek the inner silence through the practice of meditation, in shutting out all the distractions of the world, we may find, to our great dismay that it is more noisy inside our heads than on the outside ! We come face to face with ourselves, the little self with its prejudices, opinions, complexes, fears and conflicts.

The Great Ones tell us to empty the mind. Yet, the mind can be compared to a glass of milk. When we empty the glass, the residuo of the milk clings to the glass. Similarly, thought impressions cling tenaciously to the mind.

That is why it is recommended to repeat the name of God, to use a mantram during meditation. It pulls the mind away from these distracting thoughts and helps to focus it. Then we fill it with lofty thoughts of the Divine.

Yet we cannot push down or repress the weeds of anger, jealousy, pettiness, which choke out the flowering spirit within which is struggling for survival. As the undesirable thoughts float to the surface, we need to gradually weed them out. Not until they have been removed can we really begin to meditate. Learning to purify the mind and make it silent is not something we should attempt to do only at the hour of meditation. We must discipline the mind constantly, during all the waking hours, being ever vigilant, not allowing it to entertain itself with destructive, petty thoughts. The daily discipline of the mind is an unfailing aid at the time when we sit for meditation. By making it a regular practice, to empty the mind of unwanted thoughts and reactions, we will find it bear fruit. The unruly mind will learn to be still when we wish it to.

All the great teachers stress the value of going into silence from time to time. Silence is a great healer. We derive strength from it. We dissipate our energies by too much needless, frivolous talking.

As the stomach needs time to digest the food we give it after a meal, so also the mind should have periods of rest in which to assimilate all that has been fed into it.

Zen Buddhism speaks of the "fasting mind". This is a very apt description of the meditative mind. We are so very careful about what we put in our stomachs. Many people go on fasts occasionally in order to remove the impurities of the body. But how many of us go on a mental fast? What better way to rid the mind of its impurities than to starve it occasionally, by not giving in to the temptation to listen to a bit of gossip, or the reading of frivolous books which pull the mind down to a lower level of consciousness. "As a man thinketh, so is he".

In this world of mass media and instant communication through radio, television, newspapers, the telephone, we are constantly bombarded with what is happening all over the globe. And at the present time it is all pretty grim. Unless we live as hermits, it is not possible to escape the voices of the world. We are all aware of the impact a bit of unpleasant news can have on our peace of mind.

No matter how happy or tranquil we may have been before, bad news immediately brings disturbance to the mind, causing us to worry, to even lose a night's sleep. Yet the irony of it is that we are usually powerless to change things or to do

anything about it, anyway. Yet regardless of this fact the mind writhes in agony. And this is the *māyā* the scriptures speak of. We get caught in it, and though we may know intellectually that it is unreal, a problem can seem very real when it is *our* problem !

I can remember as a child pulling a magnet through mud and upon picking it up, it was covered with little bits of iron fragments. Our minds are like that magnet, constantly accumulating information, good, bad and indifferent. That is why we must constantly be on guard as to what we allow to gain entry into our minds. For it is the same mind, gathering all these data, which becomes the temple into which we enter at the time of meditation.

This is the value of meditation. When all the world around you seems to be falling in, collapsing around your ears, you can retreat within yourself. You discover then that this inner communion, the ability to enter the Silence, is the only meaningful thing in existence. This is the Real.

However, the spiritual aspirant does not wait to go within until his world is collapsing. By habitual and regular practice, he learns to live constantly in that state of awareness. Then when some calamity strikes—for no one is exempt from trials—he is prepared. He has learnt how to find his source, his Center, his God. That is why the Holy Men are invulnerable and fearless. They have learnt to go beyond the pairs of opposites and are unaffected by the problems of the world. Not through indifference, because they are the most compassionate of beings. But they see it for what it is—the Lord's

līlā, the play. Each one of us can, through perseverance and one-pointedness, create a living center of peace within our own being. And through our inner unfoldment we can carry this into the world and become a beacon light for other seeking souls — not through our words, but by what emanates from our being, in Silence.

—: * :—

What is life ? God's being is my life, but if it is so, then what is God's must be mine and what is mine God's. God's is-ness is my is-ness, and neither more nor less. They just live eternally with God, on a par with God, neither deeper nor higher. All their work is done by God and God's by them.

— Meister Eckhardt

Saint-Singer, Bhakta Theagaraja Swami

T. Krishnaji

Music is an aid and an accomplishment in devotional life. *Kirtans* (singing the sacred Name of God and lyrics on Him) is one of the nine modes of *bhakti*. *Nāda-yoga* is an independent devotional path and Narada Maharishi is its representative and exponent. The origin of music is divine manifestation. The origin of the letters of the alphabet, *Akshara*, is attributed to Lord Śiva, who performed the cosmic dance in the *Chit-Sabha* at Chidambaram in the presence of all Devas, when Goddess Saraswati played the *vina*, Brahma kept tune, Vishnu played the drum, Indra the flute, Lakshmi and Saraswati sang. The hand drum, called *Uduka* in the right hand of God Siva as Nataraja, struck fourteen times. Each time a group of sound vibrations issued and those vibrations formed the alphabets. Culture and civilization began with the alphabets and the long and short vibrations developed into the science of music. Saints and devotees sang their devotion conforming to the art of music. *Bhakta* Theagaraja was not only a great saint but also an excellent musician.

The ancient Alvars (Vaishnava Saints) and the Nayanmars (Śaiva Saints), sang their devotion in the Tamil language. The Maharashtra mystics, Namdeva, Tukaram and others sang in the Marathi language. They developed community singing called *bhajan*. Narasi Mehta sang ecstatically in Gujarati; Mira Bai, Tulsidas, Surdas and many others sang in Hindi;

Bhakta Jayadeva and Narayana Tirtha sang Krishna Lila in Sanskrit. Bhadrachala Ramdas sang his devotion to Sri Rama in Telugu. Bhakta Purandhardas (1484-1564 A.D.) sang in Canarese. He was a pioneer of the Haridasa movement in the Carnatak country and an exquisite composer of songs on God in tune with the art of music. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu stirred the devotional life of the masses through ecstatic group-*Sankirtana* going round towns and villages. All those saint-singers inspired the religious life of subsequent times.

There was a general devotional awakening throughout India between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. The classical work "Bhagavannāma Kaumide" by Lakshmidhara inspired ascetics and Advaita scholars also to devotional ways. Bodhendra Saraswati, Ayyaval, Sadguru Swami and many others spread *Bhagavān Nāma Mahimā* and devotion in South India. Theagaraja Swami belongs to the line of those saints. He spread *Rāma bhakti* through songs and music.

The ancestors of Theagaraja were reputed scholars. About 1600 A.D. Panchanada Brahman left his village Kakarla in Andhra Pradesh and settled in the village of Thiruvaroor or Sripuram in Tanjore District of Tamil Nadu. He and his descendants were patronized by the zamindars and Tanjore kings. On 27-5-1767, his grandson Rama Brahman was blessed with a son named Theagaraja after the local diety of Thiruvaroor.

The eighteenth century marks a period of efflorescence in Carnatic music. Shyama Sastri (1763-1827 A.D.) a *Srīvidyā Upāsaka* sang in Telugu his devotion to Goddess Kamakshi. Muthuswami Dikshitar (1775-1837 A.D.) composed Sanskrit

kīrtanas. Theagaraja (1767-1847) sang his devotion to Sri Rama in Telugu. All these three, called 'Musical Trinity', were born in the village of Thiruvārūr.

Theagaraja's mother Sitamma was deeply religious and sang to her child compositions by Jayadeva and Narayana Tirtha, Durandhardas and Bhadrachala Ramadas. This exercised profound influence on Theagaraja. His father, Rama Brahman, was devout and daily worshipped Rama panchayatana at home. Theagaraja, a born devotee, was inspired by the religious life of his parents. Rama Brahman gave Theagaraja initiation into Rama Mantra. Rama Brahman left Thiruvārūr with his family and settled in Thiruvayyar on the Kaveri river. Theagaraja attended the Sanskrit school of that village. He also learnt astrology and mathematics. Bommera Pothana (1400-1475), a great saint, had written *Bhagavatam* in Telugu and Theagaraja copied and read it daily. The influence of that Bhagavata on Theagaraja was immense. Theagaraja wrote some devotional songs and the learned musicians appreciated them and noted the rising genius of a musician and composer in him.

Theagaraja was accepted as a disciple by Sonti Ramanayya, a scholar of music of the Tanjore Durbar. Theagaraja learnt the art of music and studied many musical treatises. But his doubts on many points of notation remained, unsolved. Narada came in disguise and gave him a musical work called 'Swararnava' and its study removed his doubts. Swami Rama Krishnananda, an ascetic, met him and gave him initiation in *Rāma Shadākshari Mantra* and told him that if he recited it ninety six crores of times, Sri Rama would bless him with His Vision,

Though Theagaraja was married at the age of eighteen, he earnestly pursued *Rāma japa* and completed the required number in his thirty-eighth year. He was blessed with the Divine Vision of Sri Rama and Lakshmana following Sage Viswamitra, and Theagaraja sang his devotion inspired by Divine Vision. When his wife Parvathi died in 1790, he married her sister Kamalamba. In about 1792 his father died and Theagaraja had to eke out his livelihood. There were differences between him and his elder brother Japyesa and the brothers separated, each taking half of the house left by their father. Theagaraja inherited the family worship of *Rāma panchayatana* and conscientiously performed it. Singing his devotion as a mendicant he collected alms. His fame as a great devotee-musician and poet spread and many people from far off places came to hear him. He had many disciples studying music under him. Often the disciples joined him in collecting alms. Rama's festivals and *Ekadasi Bhajans* were performed in his house. He created a divine and religious atmosphere in the village. The Tanjore kings and many rich landlords invited him but he never cared for riches or patronage. He sang, "Is wealth happiness? or to be in Rama's presence is happiness? Oh mind, speak". When he spurned the royal invitation from Tanjore, his brother Japyesa felt very upset. The images of Sri Rama, Sita and other deities were removed and secreted in the river-bed. Theagaraja deeply felt the loss of his deities and sang many plaintive songs at the separation. He would sing, "Oh Rama where are you hidden? Where shall I seek Thee?" In a dream Sri Rama revealed to him the spot where the images were secreted and after due search, he recovered them to his unbounded delight. He expressed his devotion and rapture in songs.

Theagaraja was a *Haridāsa* and a *Nāda yogi*. Being always in Rama-consciousness, his compositions were charged with divine fervour. The available compositions, about 700, are so many fragrant flowers with which Theagaraja offered his devotion and worship to Sri Rama. In homely Telugu language he painted in words scenes from the Ramayana with Upanishadic truths. The language of his compositions is simple and has a direct appeal to the heart of the listener. In quality and number of compositions, he stands foremost among the saint-singers of South India. He communed with the deity of Sri Rama and his lyrics are marked with divine inspiration.

Upanishad Brahmendra Yogi of Kanchi, a friend of Rama Brahman, desired to meet Theagaraja and accordingly, Theagaraja went to Kanchi, Thirupathi, Kovvur, Madras and other places. At Kovvur, Sundaresa Mudaliar without Theagaraja's knowledge, left one thousand gold mohurs in his palanquin for Rama's worship. On the way robbers attacked the party but were kept at bay by two young warriors with bows and arrows. The robbers were charmed at their sight. At dawn the robbers came, fell at the feet of Theagaraja, narrating their experience, and requested Theagaraja to show them those two young men. Theagaraja realized that it was Sri Rama who had taken the trouble to save him. He complimented the robbers on their luck and sang his devotion to Sri Rama.

In 1845, his wife Kamalamma died. Though he was a *Grihasta* he lived an ascetic life of dispassion and devotion. He was nearing eighty years. He was aware of his impending departure from worldly life and took *Sannyāsa* on *Pushya*

Suddha Ekadasi, 6-1-1847. There was *bhajan* in his house. At the close of the *bhajan*, he told his disciple, to reassemble on *Bahula Panchami* for *bhajan*. That day he joined the *bhajan* and sang his identity with Rama, "Oh Rama, Thou and I are not different, take me into Thee". He told the audience to chant the *Rāma Tāraka Mantra*. A flash of light emanated from his forehead and merged in the image of Sri Rama. His body was given a burial on the bank of the river Kaveri and a shrine erected over it. That day has become an annual *Arādhana* event, a festival of rich music celebrated by all the scholars of South India year after year until now.

Theagaraja was one of those saint-singers to whom the Divine Vision of Sri Rama was vouchsafed. His *Kirtis* are the most popular in Andhradesh and Tamil Nadu. There is no home in Andhra or Tamil Nadu where his songs are not sung by the women. Theagaraja Swami held aloft the torch of devotion for Sri Rama. He inspired and influenced the devotional life of millions in South India through his exemplary and radiant personality and his heart-stirring music. As long as Telugu language is spoken and culture and scientific music is valued and cherished, Theagaraja Swami's name and his sweet songs will enlighten the lives of the people.

Purna Ma

Narayana

These poems which were inspired by Sri Sri Anandamayi
Ma during her Jayanti celebrations in New Delhi
in 1972, are this little boy's homage to Her
splendour which is far beyond words.

Om Ma

With tenderness,
with the longing of the blazing day
for the cool, infinite night,
with the humility of the earth
opened to the rains.
With pleasure and pain as altar,
and the accumulation of past actions
good or bad, conscious or unconscious—
as ghi to be poured in the sacred fire.
With passion as the flames
and the mysterious unfathomable mind
as the wind that feeds the flames.
With the whole of life
the throb, the pulsating energy,
the wonderful diversity of forms and beings,
the toil, the contradictions, the battles,
as the sacrificial field.

With Time as priest
and Death as witness.
I adore you.
I exalt you
I fall at your all-pervading feet.

With fear of losing what is left of my old self,
and yet desperate to melt that ugliness
in your light.

With fear of dying definitely
to the torturing egotism that limits love
and shuts me from your beauty,
and yet desperate to see with your eyes.

With fear of never being able
to purify wholly what obscures virtue,
and yet certain that without virtue
there can be no joy.

With fear of smallness, limitation, guilt,
self-created prisons
that have to be burnt
by the fire of your transcendental inspiration.

With fear of myself
I offer myself in sacrifice,

Om Hrim

Self effulgent wisdom,
Power of compassion,
Infinite eyed consciousness
expanding from its central stillness

faster than light,
 creating, maintaining and destroying
 planetary systems and celestial spheres,
 realms of pure sound and pure colour
 where chaste beings live in joy.

Maha Kundalini,
 essential power of consciousness
 active in all energies,
 Perfection indwelling in the heart of imperfection.
 Perfection moulding matter into life,
 and life into the freedom of Eternity.
 Power of being,
 life in death and death in life.
 Source of humanities striving toward Self-knowledge.
 Source of beings evolving everywhere in the infinite Cosmos.
 Source and goal of all illumination.
 I adore You.
 I exalt You.
 I place this flower at Your sacred feet.

Om Srim

Your face contains all the sweetness
 of the heavens and the earth,
 the singing birds,
 the ecstatic stillness at sunset,
 the immaculate beauty of the stars,
 the fast flowing waters,
 the sublime force of the snow-capped peaks.
 Body of love,

fulness of love,
 secret vitality of love
 that upholds life,
 protects, inspires and fulfills life,
 that reveals life as divine,
 as the infinite temple
 where man and woman
 can evolve through love
 and unite with pure action
 the ties of time with timeless splendour.

Mother,

You are desire and its satisfaction,
 the harmonious body,
 the sacred affection that binds the lover and the beloved,
 You are attraction and repulsion,
 You are the generating force,
 the innocence of children,
 Intelligence, good health, beauty
 and creative moral law.

You are the perennial light,
 the nucleus of truth
 that through the ages incarnates in perfect human forms
 that shine with the radiant knowledge of spirit
 and bring to the unconscious world
 the liberating purity of Eternity—
 You are One in your unknowable, formless
 all joyful Self,
 and One in your offspring.
 You pervade all.

You are the common life indwelling in peace,
the substratum : OM.

Om Aim

Only sound,
the music of the spheres,
the perfect rhythm
that harmonizes energy
and articulates creation,
Only music,
the song of life and the song of death
singing your completeness,
because you are the song
and you are the witness.

The immensity of the Void
and in that space
a light,
and within that light
The WORD that gives birth to all words.
The logos
contained as timeless silence
in the stillness of the Absolute
and expressing the Absolute
in time,
as seed vibrations
that spell multiplicity,
pleasure and pain,
action and ecstasy.

The One truth
 becoming relative
 and yet One in every part.
 The One sound
 becoming atoms, forms, universes,
 an infinite depth of Being
 divided and playing with itself,
 the perfectly free intelligence
 crystalized as thoughts,
 as self-centered awareness,
 as memory attached to forms
 And karma feeding on contradiction.

But in the rock bottom nadir of suffering,
 in the culmination of heroic mental strife
 in the zenith of introspection,
 in that moment of supreme aloneness,
 in which only death is,
 silence is born
 and the immeasurable blessing of peace
 that unites again
 the born and the unborn,
 the child and the Mother,
 the many thoughts dissolved in joy...

Matrix of revelations,
 pure river of Eternal Wisdom
 that feeds mankind
 showing the ways to liberation
 according to the needs of evolution,

You are the purest art,
the sublime poetry of the seers,
the quintessence of religions,
the underlying goodness
beyond relative good and bad.
...And you are also confusion,
language used to lie,
thought used to divide,
strength used to exploit.
You create myriad illusory wants
that death defeats,
to teach us by forcing us to overcome suffering
and search for immortality,
that You are all in all
and that which is beyond...

Om Krim

Death is the central fact of life,
nothing resists time,
empires, technologies, world systems,
all—from the flower to the sun—
are bound to decay.
Duality is the cause of time,
and time the cause of death,
and death the central cause of fear.
But love melts time in ecstasy.
Love,
 deep deep love

all embracing love
contains life as well as death,
time as well as the supramental stillness of the Void.

Being and not being are of time
but love prevades all,
love unites the seemingly diverse levels,
the apparently contradictory poles
in a living, ever young radiation.
Love unites the seen and the unseen,
in compassion
the fearsome hells and the indescribable heavens
are contained
and are found to spring from the same source.

Mother,
You dance ecstatically
within the One's abysmal body,
You dance ecstatically
in the depth of infinite space,
You dance ecstatically
within and beyond time
because You are the jaws of death
and the death of death.
You dance ecstatically
as the central light of consciousness.
You dance ecstatically
as the common light in all souls.

Anandamayi
pure, unalloyed joy enjoying itself,

all enlightening divine energy
healing, reviving, maturing,
dispelling ignorance with love,
killing the dead past,
killing separativeness,
killing what obstructs your beauty,
Your ecstatic, absolute freedom.
Your hidden purpose,
the inundation of your grace.
Anandamayi, nearer than our blood
and laughing beyond the beyond.....

Mātri Līlā

(April 15th—July 15th, 1972)

Mataji stayed at Varanasi from April 16th to 27th. On the 28th early morning she left for Allahabad where she visited the Ashram of late Sri Gopal Thakur at Allenganj. At night she boarded the train to Delhi. From April 29th until June 3rd she remained in our Ashram at Kalkaji, New Delhi. A charming new house had been built for Mataji in the Ashram grounds with Mataji's room in the centre surrounded by verandahs on all sides, a porch on top and another set of rooms in the basement which is naturally air-conditioned in the hot season. This new structure was ceremonially opened on May 2nd morning. The silver image of Sri Padmanabham, which had been presented to Mataji by the Elaya Raja of Travancore and which nowadays mostly travels with Mataji, was carried in procession from the Panchavati all round the Ashram and then worshipped in Mataji's room together with a Narayan Shilā. Mataji and all the sādhus present joined the procession. That night Mataji's first birthday pūjā was celebrated. Mataji remained in Her new room, while the pūjā was done outside. The daily recitation of the Durga Saptahshati by pandits and *akhanda japa* (the uninterrupted repetition of God's Name) which continued until the *tithipūjā* on May 31st, were also started that day. Mataji stayed in her new house for three nights and was then expected to go to Kankhal and Dehradun for several days and return to

Delhi shortly before the birthday celebrations started on May 23rd.

However, Mataji's health was not good and at the last moment she changed her programme and remained in New Delhi in spite of the heat wave. We are happy to report that Mataji's health improved gradually and she was extremely active and in a very good and expansive mood during the birthday celebrations, seeing to everything herself and being present in the pandal for several hours daily. Mataji returned to her old room in the main Ashram building on May 5th, but occupied her new cottage again on May 15th, when Akshaya Tritiya was observed by the customary *pūjā* performed by a number of people in the Ashram hall. That day a grand *Mahārudra Yajña* commenced in a special structure (*yajña śāla*) erected according to the rules prescribed in the *śāstras* for such functions. For the next fifteen days, sixteen Brahmins performed this fire sacrifice daily for several hours. Some of them had been summoned from Hardwar. A Ramlīlā party had arrived and started their daily performances. Unfortunately the father of one of the main actors died a few days later and so the party had to leave but was replaced by the Rasalīlā party from Vrindaban.

Professor Tripurari Chakravarti had arrived from Calcutta and delivered his daily lecture in Mataji's presence. Sri Kapindraji, the famous expounder of the Ramayana also talked every night and to everyone's delight succeeded without fail in persuading Mataji to sing *Rāma Nāma* as the climax of his talk and as the climax of every single day. Mataji does not speak nowadays and so the 'questions and answers' meetings, called '*Mātri Satsang*' cannot be held, but Mataji's singing

beggars all description. Every evening she improvised new words and new tunes. Everything has been preserved by tape-recordings.

On May 23rd started the official birthday celebrations with a full programme of lectures, music and dramatic performances from early morning until late at night. An exquisitely beautiful pandal had been designed and put up by an expert from Calcutta. It was a real piece of art, fitted in so naturally between the various Ashram buildings and trees that it looked an integral part of the landscape. It had a lofty blue dome-like ceiling and was tastefully decorated with pictures and lamps and equipped with many fans and five coolers, which effectively counteracted the gruelling heat of May. The large, raised platform in front of the temples served as a dais for Mataji and the Mahātmās, and as a stage for the dramatic performances. All arrangements were excellent in spite of the enormous attendance and the inclemency of the season.

A good number of Mahātmās and Mahāmandaleshwaras arrived and graced the occasion with their brilliant and enlightening talks. Among them were Sri Brahmanand, head of Maheshwarananda Ashram, Sri Vidyananda, head of Kailash Ashram of Rishikesh, Sri Chidananda, head of Sivanandashram, Sri Govinda Prakash, head of Ramatirtha Ashram, Sri Sharanananda, head of Manav Seva Sangh. Every morning, punctually at 7-30 a. m., Mataji would attend the talk of Sri Vishnuashram, who preferred to stay in the solitude of Modinagar and to drive to Kalkaji at dawn and to return to his residence before the heat of the day. The next item was usually ‘*Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu Līlā*’ performed by the party from Vrindaban, who would

also enact *Rāsa līlā* every evening in the spacious hall of Pant College in the immediate neighbourhood. Pant College also gave shelter to most of our guests who had flocked from all over India. Mataji was present for some time every day during the *Mahā-prabhu Lila* and for most lectures in the afternoon and evening.

The Prime Minister was unable to attend the inauguration of the functions but she did come the next day and taking her place on the dais among the Mahatmās, gave a short but beautiful and pithy address, soliciting Mataji's blessing for our country in the difficult situation of the present.

The famous singer from Calcutta Sri Dhananjaya Bhattacharya and other musicians regaled us with their songs. A special feature was the dramatic representation of the life of Lord Gouranga in Bengali by the renowned "Nader Nimai" party of Howrah Samaj on two successive nights until 2 or 3 a.m. Mataji did not budge from her seat and at the end did *sāṣṭanga pranāma* on the stage. She was in a special *bhāva*. On some other nights films of Mataji and Didima were shown as the last item.

It goes without saying that there was *Kumārī Pūjā* and a feast given to 108 little girls in the Ashram, Mataji herself putting flowers on their heads and asking one of the *komārīs* to feed her.

The *Tithi Pūjā* in the night of May 31st proceeded with the utmost solemnity and in great harmony, although, not only was the pandal packed to capacity but rows of people stood all round it for hours in awe and silence. The atmosphere was of an extraordinary sweetness. We were lifted into a stillness and radiance in which the fatigue of the all-night vigil was simply

non-existent. During the *pūjā* there was beautiful music sung by our best Ashram singers with half an hour's meditation in pindrop silence in between. The *Pūjā* was performed at a distance from Mataji, as she had been allergic to flowers, scents etc. for sometime. Beautiful fresh flowers in perfect condition had arrived from Madras sent by the night plane by Sri T. Sadasivam and Sm. M. S. Subbulakshmi.

Many high Government officials, headed by the Vice-President Shri G. S. Pathak and his family, were present, besides a good number of other V. I. Ps, Rajas and Ranis.

Mataji this time rose already before 11 a.m. from her *samādhi* and was able to walk up the steps to her house.

The Pandal was converted into a huge dining-hall for the feast given to all who cared to partake in honour of Mataji's birthday and was then dismantled.

On June 2nd *Nāma yajña* was performed all day and on the 3rd night Mataji entrained for Kankhal, alighting there in the early morning of the 4th. On the 5th evening Mataji arrived at Kishenpur by car, leaving Dehradun for Delhi on the 8th by the night train and from there proceeded on the 9th evening to Bombay. In Dehradun also Mataji was very active and gave *darśana* twice daily and more. On the last day Sri Sitaram Omkarnath paid her a visit: Mataji came downstairs into the hall. It was a very charming meeting, although Mataji would say nothing more than "*Bābā, Bābā,*" but she expressed everything by gestures. Sri Sitaram Omkarnath never misses an opportunity of seeing Mataji.

After a few days in Bombay, Mataji proceeded to Poona for a long stay. In the beginning, Mataji's health was indifferent

and she gave *darśana* only in the evening for about an hour, after going for a drive almost daily. On June 24th, she called Didi and indicated to her that her illness had left her and that she was now quite well.

On July 12th there was a big function. A new image of Radha Krishna was installed in the temple and the other images that had been temporarily removed while alterations were carried out in the Mandir, were reinstalled. A Bhagavata Saptah was held from 10th to 16th with Srinath Sāstri officiating and Swami Akhandanandaji giving an hour's talk every evening. The Rāsālilā party arrived from Vrindaban and performed daily. On July 20th our Delhi Kirtan party celebrated *Nāma yajña*.

Mataji is expected to stay in Poona for Gurupurnima on July 26th and thereafter she is expected to proceed to Calcutta for a short visit.

Mataji is expected to be in Kankhal for the 2nd anniversary of Didima's *mahāsamādhi* which is to be celebrated on August 15th.

Durgā Pūjā is to be held in Naimisharanya from 14th to 17th Oct. and *Kālī Pūjā* in the same place in Diwali night, 5th November.

The Twenty-second *Samyam Mahāvratā* will be observed at Hardwar from 13th to 20th November.

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It is perhaps well to remember that what we see Mataji do is only a small fragment of her *līlā*. She literally is wherever and whenever she is thought of by anyone, anywhere. The number of Mataji devotees outside of India is increasing by leaps

and bounds. Many come to India to have her darśana and others are praying that she may grace their countries with her presence. When someone asks Mataji to visit his or her country, Mataji usually replies : “I *am* there ! just as you see me here so I *am* there.” She also says again and again : “This little child is always with you.” Many letters arrive in which people claim to feel Mataji’s presence and her influence tangibly. Some who have never even met Mataji physically have dreams and visions of Mataji which leave a lasting impression.

The following is a letter from a devotee who lives thousands of miles away.

“April 14, 1972

My Beloved, my very own Mother,

I know as I write these words that You are here with me, that you are indeed the writer, the words and thoughts themselves, and She who is beyond all form of expression. Yet the awareness of Your presence is not always with me for I *am* poor in wisdom and realization. And so it is I yearn and long for you to come. So it is that I roam through the forests and meadows of this beautiful ashram and cry for You to come. And so it is that I write to my dear Mother about a dream I experienced many, many months ago.

Dear Mother, your little girl dreamed of herself in a large room with many people. As these people were not engaged in talk about God, your little girl was very lonely and went away from the people. To console her she thought : “I will just think about Ma. That will make me happy.” No sooner

had I thought this, than You appeared before me very real, full of light, with your arms stretched out to me. You walked to me and I to you, but just as we were about to embrace, You walked into this body and disappeared. How I cried! So much I wanted to embrace you, but you had disappeared at my very touch.

Well, I thought, perhaps I can recall the experience. I will just think of Ma again. And again You appeared, just as the first time. You looked at me as though I was your very own child, walked to me and then walked again into this body.

I had, then, the understanding that You are here within me, and very often I live in this realization. At times I perceive you just behind my eyes, looking through them. Or I hear you singing in my own voice. But then I forget Mother, and think at times that you are far away in India and that I shall never see you.

Oh, Mother, dear Mother, please let me come to you in Mother India. The longing is great now—the yearning for God and for my Mother. Please, Mother, let me come to you—let me receive sannyas initiation and stay with you for some time.

Dear friends are returning this week to our ashram. I prayed, Mother, that you would send them back here to us some day. Yet, I am certain that their arrival will only increase my longing for you. They will bring pictures and stories and songs that they sang for you, and I shall cry and cry. If I am to cry so, please let me come and cry at your feet.

Bless us, Mother, that we may know God.

Your child"

