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## SRI SRI MA ANANDAMAYI'S JAYANTI CELEBRATIONS

We have the great pleasure to announce the happy news that revered Sri Sri Ma's 78th birthday will be celebrated from May, 14th to May 20th at the Kailash Ashram, Uttarkashi, at the kind invitation of the venerable Sri Sri 1008 Swami Vidyanandaji Maharaj, Mahamandaleshwar of Kailash Ashram, with the assistance of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha, It is hoped that Sri Sri Ma will grace Uttarkashi with Her presence during that week. All devotees and admirers of Sri Sri Ma are cordially invited to join these celebrations.

*Yours in Ma*

**DURGA SINGH**

*President*

**VARANASI,**

*March 30th, '73*

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Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha

*Tithi pūjā*. During the night between May 20th and 21st there will be special *pūjā*, *homa*, *ārati* followed by *puṣpānjali* (flower offering).

### Special Notice :

1. Uttarkashi is situated at a distance of 95 miles from Rishikesh in the Himalayas. This distance has to be covered by bus or taxi from Rishikesh. Please bring a certificate of vaccination for small pox.
2. It is difficult to arrange for suitable accomodation at Uttarkasai. Hence, those who wish to come and take part in the celebrations will kindly write not later than April 25th to the address stated below about date of their arrival together with an advance of Rs. 150/- for Swiss Cottage or Rs. 10/- for tented accn. Swiss Cottage containing tape cots will be available at the cost of Rs. 300/- and accn. in common tents at the cost of Rs. 20/- per person.
3. Please provide yourself with warm clothes, blankets, torch and other necessary things.
- 4- Letters, money orders etc. may kindly be addressed to :—

**Swami Paramananda**

**BAJORIA BHAWAN**

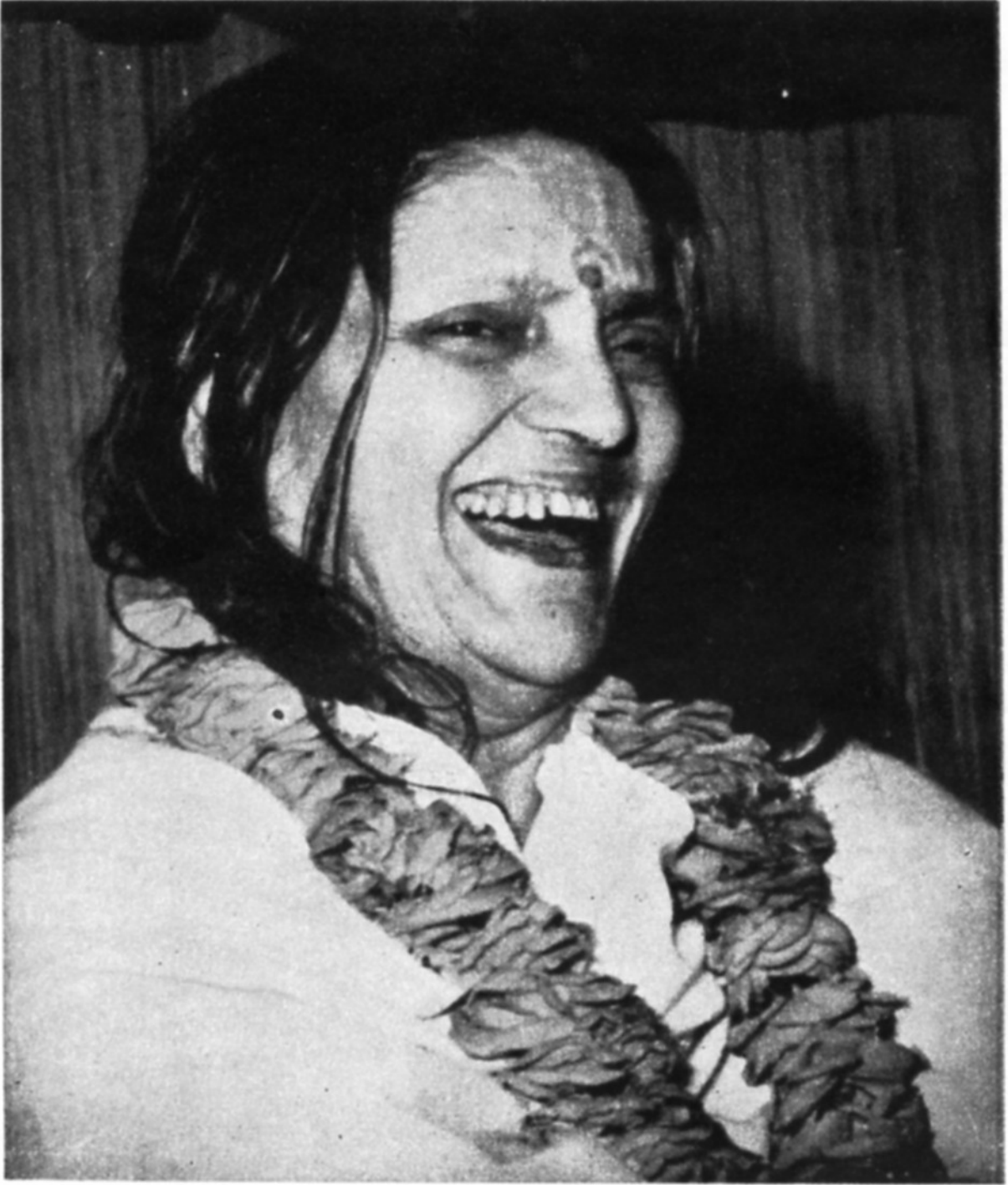
**UJELI**

**P.O. Uttarkashi (U.P.)**

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माँ आनन्द शतदल कमल ।

शान्त सरवर सहज विकसित, शुभ्र शाश्वत सरल,

ज्ञान, प्रेम-पराग वितरित मधुर मधुमय अमल ।

शान्ति - सीता, प्रेम-गीता, जान्हवी सी धवल,

राम, श्याम, 'ललाम' शोभा, नित्य नूतन नवल ।

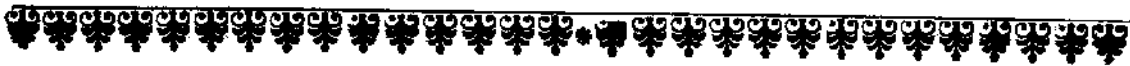
# Ananda Vārtā



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[ NO. 2



## Mātri Vāni

Every individual is bent on fulfilling his life—but it is God's Will that prevails. Regard what you are doing as God's service. Do not let the delusion of attachment overcome you (moha). Everything is His gift and should be offered again to Him. He has already taken it. He ever takes and will continue to take it. As the Self (*Ātmā*) He is eternally present in all. Try to abide in calm and patience.

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To have obtained human life is extreme good luck. It is God who creates, preserves and again absorbs into Himself. The desire to attain to the Realization of this must awaken in man. Therefore it is man's duty to be constantly engaged in

*japa*, meditation, the remembrance of God, worship, the perusal of Scriptures, prayer, singing the Lord's praises, attending religious gatherings, or doing service—in other words, to be pledged to practices and activities that will help to make his pilgrimage through life successful.

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When living and moving along the line of worldly attachment (*moha*), one's bondage in this sphere increases continuously. Whereas, when living and moving along the line of divine aspiration—even though all kinds of pain and trouble may at times arise as a result of one's past actions—yet, by being constantly tied to the string of spiritual exercises performed in the awareness of God's holy presence, the pilgrim will, by virtue of his association with the Divine, be led towards the Supreme Path.

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Invaluable time is gliding away. Men and women who have come to live in the Ashram must try to attain to the Ultimate Good by regulating their time in such a manner as to abide in the remembrance of the Divine Presence throughout the whole day. Nobody can tell at what moment he may experience God's revelation. Therefore, to keep his attention ever grafted in God is man's duty. Everyone in the Ashram must develop

serenity, love, friendliness, joy, truthfulness, tolerance and patience.

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In all forms and shapes and in the formless is only God and He alone. Service performed with the conviction that one is serving Him in everyone will purify the mind and lead to the highest Good. Patience is the foundation on which spiritual endeavour is based. The pilgrim on the path of the Supreme must be intent on becoming endurance personified.

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You have been vouchsafed the rare boon of human birth. Let your life be truly religious so that full Enlightenment may ensue.

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One should always keep oneself well protected by the unbroken string of spiritual practices and actions dedicated to God; no interruption must be allowed. God is whole—there is no break in Him. He bestows infinite Enlightenment.



# Matri Satsang in Solan

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

In summer 1955, Sri Anandamayi Ma paid one of her visits to Solan in the Simla Hills. It was there that I first recorded the golden words of wisdom falling from her lips. According to my diary it was the 9th of June, 1955. Although trying my utmost, I do not profess to have been able to write down all that Mataji said, neither can I claim to have reproduced the exact language used by her. Nevertheless, I attempted to note down Mataji's own words as far as lay in my power. Just as the life-saving, holy waters of the Ganga keep on flowing regardless of who stores away as much as he can, so have I tried to carefully preserve whatever words of eternal wisdom I could glean from Mataji's prolific sayings in my humble capacity. Today I rejoice to be able to share my notes with the readers of *Ananda Vārtā*, hoping that Mataji in her infinite Grace will condone any mistakes I may have committed unknowingly.

June 9th, 1955.

After the evening *kīrtana* Mataji is seated in the grounds outside of her room. One by one, everybody comes forward to do obeisance to her and then returns to his place. Mataji remains seated quietly in her own majesty. One of the devotees asks a question.

“Mataji, if man is one of the forms of God, is then service to man and service to God one and the same thing?”

*Mataji* : Service to human beings is to be performed on the

clear understanding that God exists within each being. Regard everyone as a manifestation of THAT. Unless service is done in this spirit, delusion (*moha*) may creep in. Therefore all service must be performed as a service to the Lord Himself. If one serves human beings with this attitude of mind, one may reap the fruits of service to God. Similarly, when serving birds, beasts, even trees and plants, regarding them as divine manifestations, the same benefits will be derived.

*Question* : Which deity should I contemplate during *Śivarātri* night? My *Iṣṭa Deva* (Divine beloved, happens to be Govinda. What should I do?

*Mataji* : He who is your husband is somebody else's son and again, he is the father of your child. He is thus three-in-one. Whichever image you may worship, you are contemplating God the Beloved. In whatever way you may invoke Him, it is God whom you are seeking. HE alone IS. Who appears as father, son and husband? HE, and no other. One-in-three and three-in-one.

*Question* : Never in my life have I seen God. How can I feel the urge to seek Him?

*Mataji* : It is He alone who exists. You have not seen 'Him', that is why the question forms in your mind. HE is your own. You have not seen Him, yet you are eager to know Him. Had you seen Him, how could you have this longing? You are not getting in touch with him even though He is your own, because He is hidden behind a curtain. That is why you are so anxious to contact Him,



*Question:* You say, "God is our own", but we cannot realize this fact.

*Mataji:* Then how does your question arise?

*Question:* Please let me feel the Presence of the Divine Being!

*Mataji:* You cannot be without God. In whatever form or manner He may appear, He always lets His presence be known. In this wide world there is no lack of material goods. Money is not scarce; houses, cars and the like can be acquired, but where is peace? In actual fact your true nature is Knowledge, is Peace itself—yet, unless you feel the presence of God, can you find peace? It is characteristic of the world to arouse want. Just as a fire is intensified by providing more fuel, so is the desire to have more, inflamed by increasing acquisition of wealth and property. To expect to obtain real peace by acquiring material goods in this world is a hopeless undertaking. For this purpose you must awaken your real being. You cannot remain in the realm of want and desire in which there is no peace. Each day a new desire arises. Sense objects are poison<sup>1</sup>—where is the chance of eternal peace there? That which ever comes and goes can never give peace. So long as you live in this misery, how can the sense of duality disappear? Strife and conflict arise because there are "two". Sorrow originates from want. Until you are established in your own true Self you cannot hope to find peace. It is everyone's duty to aspire after Truth, to

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(1) A play upon words: *Vishay* sense object, *vish* poison, *hai* is.

constantly endeavour to reach his own natural abode. To live with "others" in the house of "another" means asking for pain and struggle. Conflict is bound to come where there are "two". Only due to the sense of duality there is blindness, darkness—in other words, ignorance.

June 10th, 1955.

*Question* : Is everything pre-ordained in this world ?

*Mataji* : Otherwise why is one born in a finite body ? You come and go because you have to experience happiness and sorrow. You take on a body in order to enjoy and suffer.

*Question* : Cannot one's fate be changed ?

*Mataji* : It is in God's hands. He may change it.

*Question* : Can we not change it ?

*Mataji* : You alone are. You indeed are the Self, God, everything. "Thou, thou" and "That, That, That !"

*Question* : I am unable to appreciate such a view point.

*Mataji* : You must do your own work; He will look after His.

*Question* : Does this mean that man has not got the right or capacity to do anything ?

*Mataji* : Of course he has.

*Question* : Then, how is our fate ordained ? What is fate ?  
Cannot man influence his fate through his deeds ?

*Mataji* : It cannot be changed merely by deeds. You have been born to enjoy and suffer. Your body has been given to you so that you may endure your fate. Possession of

a body leads to continuous want—because there are “two” (not one).

*Question* : Are man’s actions dependant on will ?

*Mataji* : They are and they are not. If they depend on will, God’s Will alone is real Will. Let your will by which you are enjoying the world be directed to the contemplation of God. Then the Supreme Desire will awaken in your mind. The desire that manifests in you is prompted by nature. You have to turn it by force towards God. Just as you are now working in an office as a result of having toiled hard to pass your examinations. You have to be possessed by the Supreme Desire which leads you to realms beyond desire and indifference. Why do you submit to a doctor’s injection though it is painful? The wish to seek God is good and beneficent. The desire that leads to divine desire in you is the true desire, this is the correct thing to choose, the right state in which to exist.

*Question* : Can one become God-like by doing one’s duty ?

*Mataji* : If you have acquired true merit by your previous actions you may indeed become so. You cannot sit still and do nothing : you are asking questions, listening to answers, trying to follow. All this is due to your *prārabdha*<sup>1</sup>.

*Question* : Is then nothing in my own hands ?

*Mataji* : Everything is in your own hands; but you must

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(1) *Prārabdha Karma* That portion of one’s past actions which is bound to fructify in the present life.

turn your mind towards God, otherwise you become a pilgrim on the road to death. Whichever line of procedure you adopt, your state of achievement will depend on this line, and you will get definite proof of this. But when you speak of changing your *prārabdha*, then you require Supreme Power. Nevertheless, when a flood-tide comes, then everything is liable to be swept away; there is indeed such a possibility. When a flood occurs, then the question of merit or non-merit, of capacity or incapacity exists no more—then the shores of the Ganga are the same as the shores of the Jamuna.

*Questioner* : Oh, I do hope a flood arises soon in my own case !

*Mataji* (laughing) : Then live on the banks of the Ganga or Jamuna !

*Questioner* : Surely, my *prārabdha* cannot be averted. Let me then wait for the flood-tide that will come and bear me away !

*Mataji* : Look at the great ascetic ! Fancy, waiting for the flood ! That means merely increasing your labours on this earth.

*Question* : Many come to Enlightened Sages. Some make progress, others go downwards. Is this due to their actions in previous lives ?

*Mataji* : If one approaches an Enlightened Sage, there is no such thing as 'going downwards'. Can you expect to go near fire and not be scorched even a little ?

*Question* : What does it mean to approach an Enlightened Being ?

*Mataji* : For a Sage "near" or "far" does not exist. If you think of distance you have not really approached him.

*Questioner* : Mataji speaks at a very high level.

*Mataji* : It is your own level at which this body is speaking. It is for you that this body utters these words in this manner. The world receives so little, only sorrow. There is this everlasting war between happiness and grief—the conflict of the opposites, of duality.

*Question* : So many people come to you from far off. Have they really approached you ?

*Mataji* : Ask Kohinoor (a judge sitting there) whether he has really come !

*Kohinoorda* : I have not.

*Question* : Others may have understood, but I have not.

*Mataji* : Where "I" and "mine" is prominent there is no understanding.

*Question* : If one comes to you even partially, does one not stand to gain ?

*Mataji* : If you come to your Self even partially you stand to gain. To come frequently to Enlightened Beings has for purpose deliverance from the round of births and deaths, release from coming and going. To really come signifies, not to go away anymore.

*Questioner* : I do not quite understand.

*Mataji* : What, can you not understand even such a small matter ?

*Question* : So many people come to see you, don't you have

the desire to do something for them ?

*Mataji* : It is your own desire. How can I make you understand ?

*Question* : Does coming to Mataji merely mean coming to this body of yours ?

*Mataji* : A body\* is something that perishes.

*Question* : Does our coming to you here mean nothing then ?

*Mataji* : Of course it does. It has always mattered, it matters now and will matter in future.

*A devotee* : I seem to have gained nothing.

*Mataji* : You say you have gained nothing. Have you then become capable of looking within yourself ? Why are you continuing to serve Didi if you feel you have not profited ?

*The devotee* : I like Didi, so I am here to serve her.

*Mataji* : You do not like your own home and family life. You like Didi and are serving her. At least there is some benefit to be derived from such work. To discover "I have gained nothing" is indeed fortunate.

*The devotee* : This seems to be just a "consolation prize".

*Mataji* : You are dissatisfied ! Very good ! When you tread this path and discontent awakens it is to be welcomed. This is the way to proceed. But you will have to go much further. This is only the first stage on the path to Self-discovery. The more distressed you feel, the better for you. You cannot do without Him. Without the

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\* A play upon words ; *Shorir* body, *shora* to go away.

ONE the whole world is dark. Material benefit does not attract you anymore. This does not mean that you have gained everything or that you have reached a safe anchorage. This awakening of keen desire or urge to find God is good for you. You have come to a stage where you begin to reflect : "I have not yet felt the presence of God, I do not seem to get any nearer, how will I spend the rest of my days ?" The mind is burning with renunciation. "I have not tasted the real thing—the delight of God's presence—how can I enjoy life ? The world is quite savourless to me. So far I do not seem to have got anywhere—everything seems distasteful."

*Question* : If one invokes the name of the Lord, does everything get solved ?

*Mataji* : Yes, His name is sufficient to reach you to His feet. Just as you can grow a tree if you have the seed, and again obtain the seed if you have a tree. Out of the seed the tree, and out of the tree the seed.

*Question* : Does God's Grace depend on the receiver or the Giver ?

*Mataji* : Divine Grace is pouring forth all the time. If you hold your vessel the correct way up, it will get filled. If you hold it upside down, Grace will flow away. All of you without exception invariably desire to receive something : you are in want. So try to keep your receiving vessel the right way up, with simplicity and sincerity. Just carry on with your *sādhana*,† and He Himself will, out of His Grace, do the rest—He always does. Wherever

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† *Sādhana* Spiritual practice.

there is man or woman there is God. When there is a question of receiving, there is also effort. Grace streams down in torrents like rain. When Grace is received in its fullness there is full Enlightenment. You receive in proportion to your effort. This is one thing. Then, when there is no more question of action or non-action, this is Grace without cause or reason : the realization that God's Grace is being showered on me, not because of any particular effort on my part. 'Without reason' means it does not depend on your or my personal effort or deed. When this realization comes, then there is hope of obtaining God's Grace without cause or reason.

*Question :* Does the manifestation of His Grace depend on the performance of any particular action or rite ?

*Mataji :* It does not.

*Question :* Is it then due to merit from a previous birth ?

*Mataji :* No, His Grace is without cause. You perform an action or a rite and you get a certain result; but when you talk of His Grace you must not look at it from this angle. Your effort is designed to tear down the veil of ignorance. God has given you intelligence, therefore you must carry on with your duties. But His Grace is without reason. The question may be raised, "why does His Grace not descend on all ?" That is precisely His divine dispensation. All creation is His very own—He is free to do as He pleases. Where there is the feeling, "I am responsible for my action, I am the doer," there is and will always be cause and effect.



What is the cause for realizing one's own Self? I alone. You yourself are the cause. So long as there is a cause, there will be the desire to receive, which produces the fruit of your action. I have toiled, so I have reaped. Whose fruit? The fruit of what? Who toiled? Your own deed and your own reward. But God is your own. He is the one Self of all. Because you do not realize this, you ask this type of question. In the state in which such queries arise it appears like this.

*Question :* When His Grace is unlimited in His boundless store, why is He so miserly in it out?

*Mataji :* He certainly keeps on bestowing His Grace, but man is not aware of it. There are some who do not even wish to approach this path. There are others who take to this path and then undergo acute suffering, crying out, "Oh, I have not felt His presence. I cannot see Him" and so forth. You must learn to be patient. Later there comes a stage where everything appears empty, pointless; sense objects do not appeal to you anymore, yet you do not perceive any light within yourself, you do not understand and are always in a discontented, restless state of mind. You must be careful not to be satisfied at any stage and so get stuck. Some may have visions and the like, others spiritual experiences or partial realizations. Some even enjoy bliss. They become immersed in this happiness; but you must not become stagnant even in such a state. For instance, take a beggar who prays to God for money. He gets it. He wants food and gets it; he asks for a house, a motor-car and so forth and gets them all, one by one. Then he lets out a portion of his house to a tenant—

the result is once again disputes, loss of peace, dissatisfaction. One stage follows another. Happiness is also a pitfall, it comes and goes. One must not get stuck at the manifestation of supernatural powers (*vibhuti*) until and unless the Supreme Light shines forth. To get stuck at any particular stage is detrimental.

The desire to obtain Grace, its fulfilment, a glimpse or touch of divine bliss, these are certainly manifestations of divine power (*vibhuti*). All manifestation is an expression of God's divine power. HE alone is revealed as divine power. He, the One-without-a-second, the Self. Again who appears in duality? He Himself. Nobody can remain on this path without experiencing some realization of this sort. To be turned in this direction means there must have been a prior involvement, there still is—this eagerness to attain to something. How can one continue on this path if one does not gain anything?

But evil thoughts then emerge. "There I was happy." Evil (*dushta*) means having two desirable objectives (*du Ista*). God must be the sole objective, the one Beloved. But the human mind is apt to forget this and falls in love with sense objects. The mind feels itself apart from God because God is pushed into a distance. This is what is called "evil-mindedness". To regard anyone or anything other than God as one's beloved, leads to excessive desire for that person or thing. You must dissect your mind, piece by piece. Suppose evil thoughts have come, how will they disappear and when? Cogitate on these things and pray to God. Pitaji, you must regularly, every day, devote a little time to these things. Review your whole day: What have I done today? For how long did I forget to think of God? Whether you are a man or a woman, whether you do

it lying down or sitting up, analyze your thoughts : how long did I spend in the remembrance of my divine Beloved (*Iṣṭa*) and how much time did I pass in thinking of other things, that is to say, did I advance on the road that leads to death ?” To have obtained human life is a great boon. Having been born as a human being, then, not to think of the Beloved means to tread the path that takes you to death—to experience again and again happiness, pain and affliction.

Your true friend is he who shows you the path that leads to your Supreme Friend. One who takes you along the road of certain death, of sense enjoyment, is not your friend or well-wisher—he is your enemy. He is showing you the way to suicide. Avoid his company. He who urges you to take the path to Immortality, to go out in search of the Supreme Friend, he is your true friend. This body is the friend of you all, do you not think so ?

*(To be continued)*

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## From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

( 1937 )

( Continued from the last issue )

Mataji left Navadweep in the first week of January 1937. She came to Dacca on January 7th and stayed at Ramna Ashram for a few days. As before, the people of Dacca surrounded her at all times, loth to leave the Ashram even for a few hours. One lady, referring to Mataji's short periods of stay and long absences, remarked sadly, "Ma, you do not love us anymore." Mataji laughed and said, "Whether *you* love me or not, I cannot do without you !"

The lady said again, "Ma, I have so many sufferings to endure."

"That is very good indeed !"

"Do you wish that this should be so ?"

"To be embodied means to endure the good as well as the bad. So whenever diseases, bereavements or ills come about you should remember that you are being cleansed of *samskāras*.† Suffering is inextricably mixed up with life. It is necessary to burn (\*) in order to be purified. When a thing is

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\* A pun on the word "*jwāla*" which means burning as well as pain.

† *Samskāras* Tendencies acquired in former births.

burnt through it becomes like the fire and then even that is changed into ashes. If you put ashes on your body they become one with the body, if you sprinkle them on water they mingle and become identified with water. There is no more tension or straining after incompatible things. Being one in spirit with the world one is at peace. Whatever comes about is acceptable with no violence in reactions. That is why I say, suffering is good." Mataji then looked at a young school-teacher‡ sitting nearby and asked, "How much money do you earn by working in the school? How much have you saved?" Then she looked around and said in a smiling explanation of these very personal questions: "I ask because she has to provide for me also."

Aruna said, "I don't understand what you mean."

"The knowledge and money that you are acquiring are only further increasing your sense of want. Of what use are such knowledge and money?"

"Shall I give up my job?"

"You are using time and energy for this job. You should spend some of it for your inner life too. The time you employ in repeating the name of the Lord will not be in vain. That wealth can also be accumulated. Since it is necessary to provide for bodily needs, the job serves a purpose. But I say to you that you must work for the healthy development of spiritual life also. The mind needs food too. You must labour for that as well. This is why I say that you have to provide for me!"

Very soon it was again time for Mataji to leave Dacca. She visited Vindhyaçal where Swami Akhandanandaji had

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‡ Aruna.

been constructing a room for performing *yajña*.† From Vindhyachal she went to Varanasi for a couple of days.\*

By now Mataji could converse in Hindi quite well and she answered many questions put to her by the people of Varanasi. One young student asked her : "Mataji, is it not true that Tulsidas was a great *bhakta* (devout person) as well as a *jñani* (wiseman) ?"

"Surely."

"It is related that when God appeared to him as Krishna, he said, 'I don't want to see you as Krishna, but as Rama !' What kind of wisdom is this ? Are the two not the same ?"

"Exactly. Tulsidas would not have said what he did had he thought otherwise. Moreover, as a devotee he expressed

\* The towns and places she visited at this time are listed below.

Bahrampur	January 10, 1937, Sunday
Calcutta	January 11, 1937, Monday
Vindhyachal	January 13, 1937, Wednesday
Varanasi	January 13-14, 1937. Wednesday and Thursday
Chandpur (Bangla Desh)	January 15, 1937, Saturday
Chattagram ( .. )	January 18, 1937, Monday
Seetakunda ( .. )	January 21, 1937, Thursday
Chattagram ( .. )	January 29, 1937, Friday
Cox's Bazar ( .. )	February 4, 1937, Thursday
Chattagram ( .. )	March 16, 1937, Tuesday
Chandpur ( .. )	March 21, 1937, Sunday
Calcutta	March 21, 1937, Sunday
Delhi	March 26, 1937, Friday
Bareilly	April 2, 1937, Friday
Nainital	April 10, 1937, Saturday

† *Yajña* Fire sacrifice.

\* The great poet-saint of North India who lived in Varanasi. The epic, *Rāmāyaṇa*, as rendered by him is called "*Rāmacaritamānasa*."

his yearning for the vision of the form which he adored. So you see he was both a *bhakta* and a *jñānī* !”

In Varanasi, Mataji met this time the late Dr. Gopal Dasgupta, who with his family subsequently became greatly devoted to her.

From Varanasi Mataji again returned to Bengal or rather, what is now Bangla Desh.

While travelling through Chandpur, Chattagram and nearby places, they came to know of the untimely, sad death of Bhaji's only daughter. Bhaji for the past month had been staying with Maharatanji at Bareilly ( U. P. ). He came to join Mataji's party now at Seetakund and also learnt of his daughter's death. To outward appearances he remained as calm and reserved as ever but it must have been a great shock to him.

Mataji became widely known in this part of the country. People from all strata of society flocked round her day and night. When the men and children had to go to their work or schools, it would be the turn of their wives and mothers. Many times Mataji would be sitting in one place for long hours ( once nearly 9 to 10 hours ), just because nobody realized that it was so. One set of people would be replaced by another. The new-comers would think that Mataji had just come out. Mataji never looked tired or fatigued; so nobody really could be blamed for being thoughtless. Many interesting conversations took place. Talking to a group of men, she said one day : “The money that you earn has a way of getting spent as well. That which remains forever inexhaustible is ‘wealth’. Therefore *sādhana* alone is true wealth.”

An eminent lawyer of the town said, "I think I have lost completely the secret of this 'wealth'."

"Feeling that you have lost it, is a proof that it is not so. That which is all-comprehensive cannot be 'lost'. The fact that we are not happy with partial truth shows that we yearn for complete Truth. You must put your trust in somebody and surrender yourself to this undertaking. There is not much time to lose."

"The ego is a great obstacle. I don't think I can surrender to anybody. I don't find anybody to whom I could surrender myself. What is to be done?"

"If God alone is the one true Reality then it matters not in whom you place your trust. It is given to God alone."

"There is no time for me now to render full account. It is too late". Mataji said forcefully, "Do not say, 'it is too late'. It never is. Why do you despair? Who knows at what moment in one's life one may encounter the Divine? Why do you say 'I cannot'? Why don't you say 'I shall do it; I take hold of this here and now'. Grasp something firmly and stay with it steadfastly. Nothing at all is impossible in God's creation. Take heart and start now!"

There was a school in the vicinity of Mataji's house in Cox's bazar. The children, whenever free (before or after school or during tiffin-break), would come running to Mataji. They would walk with her on the sea-shore and gather cowrie shells for her. Mataji, one day, said to them, "Let us play a game with these cowrie shells." So the game of '*Satcitānanda*' was formulated with great enthusiasm on the part of the players.



Mataji suggested the rules\* and sometimes grave controversies about them had to be settled! Everybody took part in this game.

Sometimes Bholanath and Mataji would be the two team leaders. Counts would be maintained very carefully to see who would win. As soon as the neighbours heard the sound of musical instruments and *kirtana* they would know that the children were playing '*satcitānanda*'.\*

One day a gentleman asked Mataji: "How is it that even the mantra received from the guru is quite ineffective? We seem to achieve nothing at all."

"It is like taking medicine and then eating food which counteracts the efficacy. How can a sick man get well unless he supplements the medicine with a proper diet? We are so much preoccupied with the affairs of the world that the effect of the mantra is not felt at all. All aspects of your life must be made to contribute to the work of the mantra."

Mataji stayed over a month at Cox's bazar. Then travelling through nearby places and via Calcutta, she came to Bareilly in the Uttar Pradesh. Mataji was quite well known there. The pattern of social life was a little different in the towns of the U.P. The ladies had clubs of their own, and some of them drove their own cars. They took Mataji to their gatherings and

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\* There would be two teams of equal numbers of players, sitting alternately in a circle. Each player was entitled to a throw of seven cowrie shells. The team which arrived at *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* in this order would win. If one gained *ānanda* before *sat* and *cit*, it would stand cancelled. The party to win would sing *kirtana*, and the loosing side had to sit and do *japa*.

these visits were great festivals for the whole community. Dressed in bright clothes and wearing flowers, they would sing and dance round Mataji. While Mataji remained in town, the men had to endure disorganized households because their wives were all the time with Mataji. They settled this problem by coming over to the *dharamśālā* in the evenings after office hours with the children ! So the people of Bareilly as of many other towns enjoyed the rare experience of having Mataji in their midst for a few days. Bareilly, situated near the mountains has a slightly lower temperature than other towns in the plains. Maharatanji, inspite of many protests, bought lots of woollens and some blankets for Mataji and her party. Mataji said after a few days : "Now that we have so many warm clothes, let us utilize them by going to Nainital\*."

Mataji had visited Nainital before and was quite well known there. Mataji generally stayed in a *dharamśālā* near the temple of Naina Devi. The visitors were introduced to the game of *sacitānanda* and it rapidly became very popular. Children as well as adults who had never known how to repeat the names of the Lord, learnt it now.

Devi Dutta, Krishna Panth, Mohini and others were always at the *dharamśālā* to arrange for the comforts of Mataji's party.

At Nainital Mataji had a visitor from the U. S. A., Mrs. Jennings. This lady had written for an interview and

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\* A town in the mountains nearby, approximately 7000 ft above sea-level.

had been asked to come to Nainital. Mrs. Jennings\* soon became quite attached to Mataji. Bhaiji interpreted for her and she had long conversations with Mataji about her spiritual life.

Mrs. Jennings planned to visit Almora and hired a bus for the purpose. Almora is by motor-road about 60 miles from Nainital. In the bus Mrs. Jennings sat next to Mataji and expressed her own great sense of satisfaction and happiness at getting the opportunity of being with Mataji. She remarked that she was 42 years old. On hearing that Mataji was 41, she said, "My mother is one year younger than I." She showed them a small fitted case for carrying lunch. Mataji said, "I shall steal this." Mrs. Jennings immediately put the case near Mataji, saying, "Allow me to give this to you. You need not steal it. I can give you anything you care to ask for." Mataji then said, "I want everything. Do you understand? *Everything!*" Mrs. Jennings bowed her head in acknowledgement that she had understood the implications of Mataji's words.

At Almora arrangement had been made for Mataji to stay at the temple of Nanda Devi. When she arrived there, a group of young girls came up to Mataji and introduced themselves as students. They had come to Almora to study from a far off village in the vicinity of the sacred mountain Kailash. They said they had seen a photograph of Mataji previously and had recognized her as the same person. In a few minutes they became great friends with Mataji and invited her to visit Kailash with them.

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\* Mrs. Jennings had come to attend the International Parliament of Religions, held under the auspices of the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Committee on March 1-8 1937 in Calcutta.

Now Bholanath had for a long time entertained a wish to go on this most hazardous of pilgrimages. He became very enthusiastic and was ready to leave the same night. However, this was not feasible because the roads remained unnegotiable before June. So it was decided to take up the matter again after the celebration of Mataji's birthday in May.

The group of girls doubled and redoubled in a few days. They became just as close and attached to Mataji as if they had known her always. They would sing and dance round her and stay with her for long hours. This was Mataji's second visit to Almora. The local people this time had the opportunity to get better acquainted with her. Mataji met some foreigners also who were practising *sādhana* in secluded *āshrams* a little distance from the town. Ram Swami from the Ramakrishna Mission visited her. A special relationship has developed and exists between the Ramakrishna Mission at Almora and Mataji.

On the return journey to Nainital, Mrs. Jennings asked Mataji in the bus : "Does the same spiritual force pervade the different levels of life, such as animals, birds, human beings?" "It is identical", said Mataji, "the same for the entire creation. Just as we all live and breathe in the same air. The air cannot be divided into separate sections. In a like manner everything is pervaded by the same spiritual entity. (*caitanya satta* ).

"Is the spiritual identity in man the same as in animals? Can animals also worship the Divine?"

"All are in Him. He alone is with Himself. That man is the culmination of creation is clear from the fact that he alone has the capacity to learn and know. Knowledge is not possible for

plants, trees or animals, etc. God is manifested in a special way in the human form. Although it is true that trees and animals cannot worship God as man is capable of doing, yet they also are naturally impelled towards a state of harmony rather than conflict."

"It is stated that from the One Syllable (*Aum*) all are created and it is also the repository of ultimate dissolution. How is this possible?"

"Why not? This is the same road by which we came to Almora and we are now returning to Nainital. The road is the same. The difference lies in the directions you travel."

On April 28th, Mataji proceeded to Bareilly. From there Mrs. Jennings left for her own country. Before her departure she tried to communicate her own thoughts to the other companions of Mataji.

"I am not able to talk to you about Ma. But it is my personal experience that Ma knows our innermost thoughts. If we can attain one-pointedness towards her in our hearts, then we are sure to feel her response. I am convinced of this because I have, as I say, experienced it. Whether I am in India, America or England, it matters little. I believe that I shall never be separated from Ma."

The barriers of language, culture and religion had not been unsurmountable. She had become identified with the motley group which was Mataji's family.

Mataji did not stay long in Bareilly this time. She left for Calcutta on May 2nd, on her way to Jamshedpur. Many of the towns people stayed awake the whole night at the *dharamśālā* to see her off at the station at dawn.

In those days Mataji did not have any special room or place for herself. Didi would spread out a blanket in one corner of the main room for her to sit on and talk to people. At night Mataji would lie down on this narrow bed-roll. She would nearly always be surrounded by other women who, unable to tear themselves away and go home, would improvise beds and lie down near Mataji for the night. The men followed a similar pattern, trying to sleep in other rooms or on the veranda. The atmosphere was festive, as if people were on a prolonged excursion. Very often Mataji would talk or go for walks during the night. In any case for her there was no clear-cut division of mornings, evenings, nights, etc. She was careful not to cause inconvenience to others but within this framework, her activity was quite unpredictable (\*) All the days were really one big adventure from beginning to end! From Jamshedpur Mataji again returned to Calcutta. Travelling through many towns and villages of Bengal, she arrived in Dacca on May 19th, 1937. As in other years a large number of guests had arrived in Dacca to participate in the celebrations for Mataji's birthday. Mataji sang the Hindi hymns that she had heard in Bareilly and Almora and many Bengali girls learnt to sing these songs now. (\*\*)

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\* I (the author of these articles) had the good fortune to meet Mataji during that period and I have recollections of the times being vastly enjoyable. We played *satcitānanda* with Mataji. I have a vivid memory of Bholanath as a dynamic personality, always ready to enter into the spirit of play with children, and I remember Bhaiji as a quiet, reserved person, always standing at a distance from the group.

\*\* Mataji has played not an inconsiderable role in bringing the languages together.

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Life in the Ashram of Dacca followed the usual hectic pattern of such short visits. The men were annoyed by the fact that women always so surrounded Mataji that they could neither approach her nor talk to her about serious matters. According to them, the women had nothing better to do than to waste Mataji's time by making her put on various garments and ornaments and sit still while they performed some sort of *pūjā* (ritualistic worship) in front of her. As it is not Mataji's way either to invite or to reject anything or anybody, there was one big disorganized confusion round her most of the time.

Some of the students from the University of Dacca one day took Mataji to visit one of the hostels. They had made arrangements for her to sit in Lytton Hall where everybody had assembled to see her and talk to her. Mataji was requested to say something to the boys. She smiled; "Nothing occurs to me. If you were to ask questions, perhaps?" Prafulla Chakravarty, a student, asked her :

"What necessity is there for religion? Why should we preoccupy ourselves with questions about *dharma* (religion)?"

"What do all of you want to do instead?"

"We want to study and gain knowledge, earn money, and try to work for the betterment of humanity."

"The education that you are acquiring is not real knowledge. Because from this education you will not learn the answers to fundamental questions about your own identity, the source of your being and the mystery of your destiny. This education may enable you to earn money but it does not prepare you for dealing with the as yet unknown but knowable. We don't know so many things. We are not sure what may happen

the next day or hour or even in a minute. There can be no knowledge divorced from *dharmā*. *Dharma* is what supports the entire world. Unless you gain insight into that, there is no knowledge. But it is also possible to gain knowledge from this world-oriented education provided we use it for that purpose. Education could be of immense value if this could be done.

“You say, you will work for the good of humanity. Have you ever considered how exactly you can do this? In most probability you will be so engrossed in your own affairs as not even to be able to think in those terms. Your first priority will be your family. When you begin to earn money, your first thought will be to save a little. I am talking about the general pattern of life. If you reflect a little you will realize that there is always a state of tension between will and Divine Dispensation ( *icchāśakti* and *mahāśakti* ). You so often cannot accomplish what you wish to do—things take place in spite of all your efforts to the contrary. You wish to work for others but in effect you may find yourself working for your own interests alone. That is why I say that unless you know God, unless you attune yourself to the Divine scheme of things, you cannot work for others.”

“Another point. All creatures from animals, birds and so on to man are looking for peace and happiness. Joy is the true nature of all beings and therefore they are ever in search of it. If this were not so, they would not look for it. Man is not satisfied with partial joys. He is forever yearning for a happiness which is without end. That is why things of the world cannot hold our attention permanently. They give short-lived pleasures but never are a permanent source of joy. Moreover, instead of satisfying they give



rise to a sense of greater and greater want. To find God is to be at peace. And why should we say "find"? Everything is in you. People cannot tolerate falsehood because Truth is within them. So with consciousness; a state of unconsciousness is not agreeable at all. If a man is unconscious, everyone tries to bring him round as quickly as possible. So with Bliss, because Bliss is within you, you look for it outside. Thus, finding actually means to realize that you are rich in the possession of Bliss, Knowledge and Peace."

"Well, alright, but what is the necessity for outward forms of religion?"

"At least now you have come down to forms of religion rather than religion itself", Mataji said smilingly. "There is need for religion, that is why you ask these questions—otherwise the questions would not arise."

"There is only One Religion in the world. But people try to gain knowledge of that religion in different ways. Some prefer the way of ritualistic worship, others like to follow the path of meditation; yet others get satisfaction out of singing the Names of the Lord. Individuals are differently constituted and have different aptitudes. There cannot be, therefore, a general universal pattern of religious practice. All that is required is that man's aim should be God-oriented. *Sādhana* is also one. But because of difference of personalities *sādhanas* appear to be different. Everything has its place in the general scheme of things, and everything (rituals, singing, meditation, yogic practices) is equally important.

"Many times parents complain to me that the younger generation is not interested in religion. They don't believe anymore in the patterns of worship which are our tradition and

heritage. I say to the parents that it is their own fault that the children have lost interest in religion. If children are made to think highly of worldly knowledge then they will neglect things which are in truth worthwhile. The parents take a lot of pain to make their children fit for the world but they don't at all inculcate in them an appreciation of other values. I say therefore that together with education all children should be taught about religion and its value in life".

"Can God be seen?"

Mataji smiled and then said impressively :

"Yes, He can be seen. Just as I see you and talk with you, in the same manner one can see God and talk with Him."

"What does God look like? Please describe to us how He looks?"

Mataji pointed to the assembled students and said, "Everyone, all of you, are forms of God. This is what He looks like."

The boys laughed at this and had to refrain from asking more questions as it was time for Mataji to leave.

Mataji looked at them and spoke again,

"I want you to grant me a request. Will you promise to do so?"

"We shall try our very best."

"I know that you will keep your word but still I want your promise. You are busy with so many things throughout the day. I request you for just ten minutes of your time each day. During these ten minutes you will think of God. No matter where you may be or what you are doing. When the time comes, say 7 o' clock, or whatever time is convenient for each one,

you will switch your mind off, as it were, and concentrate on God. If possible you should sit quietly for these ten minutes all by yourself. But this is not necessary as it may be difficult for you to do so. I make no condition as to suitable posture or place or methods. Only the regularity of time. I have begged these ten minutes from many people. But why should I say 'beg?' One does not beg from one's own people. This is my request. What do you say?"

The boys promised to do as she had said; to devote each day at the same time ten minutes to thinking about God.

Prafulla said, "You must come and visit us from time to time to keep up our flagging spirits!"

"I shall come whenever you bring me here."

"You are always so surrounded by women that we cannot approach you. And we have noticed that you love women more than you love us."

Mataji laughed: "You are right. But isn't everyone 'a female'? There is only One Man and that is God. He alone is self-sufficient. Everyone else is looking for the Lord. In this sense all of us are females and I do love the females!" Everybody laughed at this and reluctantly bade Mataji farewell.

After the birthday celebrations Mataji left for Calcutta on May 31st, 1937. It had been decided that Mataji, accompanied by a small party, would venture on the pilgrimage to Kailash. They had to return to Almora as the trek would start from there. The girls from Garbyang were waiting to go with them. Mataji arrived in Almora on June 10th, 1937.

(To be continued)

# **The Ocean of Love**

**Radhapriya**

**There, on the shore I was,  
Unable to decide,  
Lonely,  
Sad,  
Weak,  
Proud,  
Too proud to let my big ego  
Vanish into the Ocean of Love.  
The ocean of Love,  
That is You,  
My Ma !  
There before me, You,  
Spreading your foamy arms,  
Fast approaching,  
To embrace me in your *Self* !  
The ocean of Love  
That is You  
My Ma !  
Could I, so tiny a rivulet,  
Embrace You ?  
Is it possible ?  
I could only give my *self* up,  
To be embraced by You,  
The Eternal ocean of Love !**

**And the miser me,  
To be embraced,  
I will have to erase my big ego !  
To be able to drink in  
The Bliss  
Of complete Oneness  
With the ocean of Love  
That is You,  
My Ma !  
The whiteness of the waves,  
Approaching,  
Now appearing with form,  
Now disappearing  
Without form,  
Welcoming,  
Beckoning,  
Calling,  
And I, playing, unmindful  
In the muddy, dark sands  
The sands under my feet.  
Slipping,  
Reminded me,  
That I was playing.  
You awakened me**

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<b>Now,</b>	<b>To be embraced</b>
<b>I was drinking in the Beauty,</b>	<b>In those arms.</b>
<b>Of the foamy arms,</b>	<b>You had won !</b>
<b>The untiring arms,</b>	<b>Your fathomless arms</b>
<b>Welcoming arms,</b>	<b>Left me,</b>
<b>To embrace</b>	<b>Mesmerized,</b>
<b>Silently beckoning to me</b>	<b>Intoxicated.</b>
<b>Their Eternal message,</b>	<b>My ego lay</b>
<b>To lose my egoistic self</b>	<b>Crushed,</b>
<b>Into the Ocean of Bliss</b>	<b>The 'I' was running</b>
<b>That is You,</b>	<b>Running fast</b>
<b>My Ma !</b>	<b>On the sands of Life</b>
<b>Standing there,</b>	<b>To reach you,</b>
<b>I knew,</b>	<b>Before the 'Hour'</b>
<b>I was ready</b>	<b>Ends !</b>

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# Ma ! Your Grace-My Life

Recollections

**Shankar Pannewitz**

How many tales are told and how many remain concealed in the hearts of the devotees of the Divine Mother Sri Anandamayi! My most favourite literature has always been the stories of great Souls, their lives, sayings and doings. Spell-bound and immersed in happiness I read Sri Ramakrishna's biography and Gospel, and after having been guided to Ma by the Grace of the Divine Mother, I combed all the *Ananda Vārtās* I could lay my hands on, for articles which described personal experiences in connection with that mysterious Divine Being called Sri Anandamayi Ma, Blissful Mother.

Now, by Ma's Grace I have been allowed to experience for myself and have written down some of my observations, to lay them at Ma's feet, garlands of her Grace.

Through so many little incidents I have become aware that by the grace of Mataji anything becomes possible and that Ma truly is a wish-fulfilling tree, when it is a question of advancing on the Path.

When in 1971 I went to Vrindaban for the *Samyam Mahavrata*, I had a vague desire to give up my bad habit of smoking, since I reflected that I would have to go out of the Ashram grounds so many times in order to smoke and thus be obliged to run forwards and backwards just for that silly craving. With

these thoughts in my mind I entered the Ashram compound to enlist myself for the week of purification and *satsang*. I was standing alone, feeling rather depressed, as I had just arrived with my wife and child after a long, tiresome journey. I was giving way to all kinds of desolate thoughts that at times enter one's mind: "Why should Ma care about us?" I mused in my delusion. All of a sudden I was made to turn round by some sensation behind my back, and saw Ma looking at me attentively from a window. I felt ashamed at being caught in my train of dejected thoughts and fell to the ground in prostration. With graceful and at the same time resolute gestures, Ma motioned to me to come and see her at once. After our little family had completed our *pranāmas*, Ma asked us by signs to go and have our meal. How great was my astonishment when I realized that, not only that whole day but during the entire week, I had no more desire to smoke. My association with cigarettes seemed totally erased from my mind and I did not smoke for months after.

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Once, when Mataji was in Dehradun I boldly reasoned with myself that I was too impure for Ma's presence and promptly left for Mussoorie with my family, deciding to rent a house and to purify myself. I tried very hard, singing *kirtana* the whole day, but felt more and more miserable. So one fine morning, I jumped into a taxi and drove down to Kishenpur to see Ma. When I entered the Ashram, Ma who just happened to be out on the veranda for *darśana*, noticed me immediately and presented me with *prasāda*. I actually began to cry, realizing my silliness of wanting to be away from my Mother to purify myself when she was available and within reach. To be sure, Mataji did wash away a lot of impurity from me that day.

When we left after Holi 1972, to go back to our native country, we saw Ma for the last time in the Kishenpur Ashram and I became obsessed with the desire to obtain her sandals. So, whenever we had Ma's *darśana*, I had eyes only for her footwear which became for me the symbol of everything that Ma represented and I therefore kept on praying: "Ma, by your grace, let me have those precious jewels!" I was blind to everything else. Yet by the time we said good-bye to Ma, I still had not obtained the object of my desire and, receiving Ma's blessing and *prasāda*, we sadly went to pack our belongings and started moving towards Delhi in a taxi. We were almost out of Dehradun, when, prompted by a sudden impulse, I told the puzzled driver to turn round and drive to Mataji's Ashram. After much arguing we actually went back there. On arriving, I breathlessly rushed upstairs towards Ma's room which happened to be open and Ma was inside! Nobody else was to be seen. As I entered, I saw her sandals lying right next to me. I easily feel overwhelmed by signs of Ma's grace but this proved almost too much. As we were alone, I in my breathlessness wildly pointed at the sandals, asking by signs for Ma's permission to take them. But she just smiled and gave me more *prasāda*. Reluctantly I finally had to leave. What else could I do, not being able to communicate in language? I felt at my wit's end and so finally approached one of Mataji's attending girls, voicing my trouble. "Oh my," she said with a sort of knowing smile, "nowadays lots of people come here with that request, but how can we give them? There are not that many sandals. I do not think it is possible, but let me ask." I was on the point of crying as the taxi-driver downstairs was very impatient to leave. However I sat down, prepared to wait for a long time. But



the girl was right back, holding the sandals of Ma's lotus feet in her hands ! Smiling broadly all over her face, she gave them to me. On our way to Delhi my wife and I by turns clasped the precious gift to our hearts, feeling convinced that no evil could befall us as long as we took good care of Ma's sandals.

We had returned to Berlin in March, not knowing when we would be able to go back to India. Lo and behold, our good luck brought us again to Ma a few months later when she was at Poona for a long stay. My wife and I had made a film of Ma which we actually showed in her various Ashrams. But it is strange and significant that so far, Ma has never allowed us to film her in any of her intimate moods, unforgettable and unique. It always happened that in thrilling moments the camera did not work or was missing or left at home or some such thing. It invariably caught Ma looking representative or relatively impersonal, sitting, standing or walking.

For instance in Poona, our camera was not handy, when Ma was singing and dancing, taking all those dignified ladies by their hands and swinging them round in her unique way, so that the ladies in their joy and ecstasy started jumping up and down like children forgetting all social decorum. The air was filled with incredible electricity, light and joy. It was on the occasion of *Nandotsava*, the day after *Jamnastami*, the birthday of Lord Krishna. In remembrance of Gopal's liking for breaking earthen pots full of curds and gobbling up their contents, Ma put her hand into a bucket full of curds, throwing a handful of it into the mouth of each devotee crowding round her, not failing inevitably to splatter it all over their Sunday saris and suits. Of course, I also got my share, but it is interesting to note

that Ma did not throw anything on my clothes, as if to show respect to my being a foreigner, new to the unusual game. Everybody was full of joy and laughter and some even tried to get their share twice. Ma was in an incredibly jovial and jolly mood. The atmosphere seemed charged with bliss in which all social distinctions were uprooted and we all became veritable children of the Divine Mother trying to be as close to her as possible.

Later one could see everyone crowding round the few taps to get the curds off their faces and clothes amidst lots of laughter and giggling. Ma also was seen washing her hands, and the way she did it made me laugh. At a flash she looked at me and I stopped, awed, my mind revolving: my laughter, the laughter in her eyes, but it's me, me, standing there, but I am here? What is? ETERNITY, Silence. Gone. Like so often, Ma had caught me unawares, for an instant forgetting my mind, my tensions, to swim in bliss, untainted, unalloyed Bliss—my Bliss, her Bliss—Bliss. ONE-ONE-ONENESS.

When Ma moved into the meditation hall, the atmosphere was light and suffused with joy. We crowded round her. Ma's girls started singing *kirtana* and all of a sudden a woman got up, and with raised arms, as one can see on pictures of Sri Chaitanya Deva, she started to weave round to the rhythm of the music, totally forgetful of her surroundings. It looked beautiful and graceful, and a shiver ran down my spine at this unexpected scene. It appeared as if some power or force was ruling her body. We looked at Ma, wondering. Stretching out her hands towards that enraptured woman who was still dancing so wonderfully, Ma said with a voice charged with

authority and supremacy : "*Bhagavan*", meaning no doubt I felt, that God had taken possession of the woman and was acting through her. Then Ma stood up, walked gently towards her, took one of her hands—and at that moment the lady's face lit up with a heavenly radiant smile that seemed to indicate that she was at the height of her experience. Mataji swung her round once and then moved her ever so gently towards the altar of Sri Krishna, laying her down in front of it with great care. The lady remained inert, motionless, exhausted, as if all her strength had been wiped away by a violent storm sweeping through her body. It was very fascinating, and even more so as Mataji usually discourages strange behaviour around her.

Once, in Mataji's Ashram at Kankhal, I witnessed a French lady who boldly declared that sometimes divine *mudras* were revealed to her spontaneously. As soon as she was sitting with others in front of Ma, she started swaying her body in sitting posture, and moving her arms and hands in strange patterns. After a short while Ma glanced at her once or twice totally unconcerned; and then came her voice, coldly, like an ice crystal : "Stop ! Stop !" twice. The lady did not stop but very soon left all of a sudden. It was interesting to observe our Indian friends, taking the whole thing with an amused smile. "Beware," I told myself, "of illusion and delusion."

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Once, when Ma was staying in Poona, I half unconsciously conceived the desire to accompany her on her occasional afternoon stroll in the surrounding hills, where she usually went in the car of a devotee. So one afternoon, as I was watching Ma getting into the car, I was invited by an old devotee to follow her in his car, and away we went. After a short drive, Ma got out of the car and started walking in the hills, followed by, may

be six or seven of us, being happy to have such an opportunity. I was walking about a meter behind her and observed myself going through the strongest transformations, and I felt, as Ma was walking in front of me, waves of bliss hitting my being. I felt like crying and laughing at the same time and my subtle body went through the strongest twists and shakings. I felt like a sand-castle, being eaten up slowly by an incredible silent, roaring wave, uprooting the towers of the ego and making it dissolve into nothingness. It was quite painful and intense, but I would not have missed it for anything.

After some time, we got into the cars again. Suddenly the gentleman who drove our car exclaimed, searching in all his pockets : "I have lost my glasses, I usually keep them in these pockets, but I cannot find them." So we suggested to him to drive back and look for them where we had walked. We thus turned round to search, but failed to find the glasses. So we gave up and tried to follow Ma's car which had disappeared out of sight by this time. But what did our disbelieving eyes see coming towards us ? Ma's car ! She had turned back to look for her lost children. We were thrilled and talking about her wonderful grace and compassion, when the gentleman who had lost his spectacles told us in surprise that he had found them in the very same pocket in which he had missed them before !

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Many times, when Ma's girls or devotees were distributing *prasāda* to the assembled people, I reflected sadly that, being a foreigner, I would probably never have the chance to do such wonderful service. Once, in Bombay, when Ma was about to leave Mr. B. K. Shah's place, there was a large crowd

pushing and jostling round Ma. Being quite tall, I stood at the back, trying with all my concentration to get a last glance of Ma, when a plate with prasāda was almost floating towards me and landed in my hands quite unexpectedly. Almost without wanting to, I found myself giving *prasāda* to everyone, my face flushed in embarrassment, taken by surprise. My thoughts had again been caught by the all-knowing and loving Divine Mother.

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I must say that the experience of Ma at railway stations is most impressive and unforgettable. In September 1972, Ma was leaving Hardwar for Varanasi. It was evening time and we went in advance to wait for Ma at the station, looking at the noisy, bustling scene with kulis, beggars and waiting passengers, when Ma arrived bringing an aura of intense silence with her. We found out that the train was late by half an hour. ‘What will Ma do in the meanwhile?’ I asked myself curiously, when one of the devotees put a chair into the middle of the platform, placed a cushion on it, and Ma sat down. Not in one of the waiting-rooms, first or second class, shielded and guarded by the devotees, no, right in the centre of the dirt and dust and noise of the station! Ma just sat there, looking into a far distant corner of the sky. But how she sat. She had never looked so beautiful and like a mother to me as there. In her indescribable subtleness and fragility she was at the same time majestic beyond words. The chaos and squalor of the station seemed to evoke her utmost bliss and presence. A silent semi-circle formed around her and even here, as custom demands, shoes were taken off, so as not to offend the presence of bliss—which is THAT. I was standing about three meters away from Ma. Her powerful

radiation almost stopped my breath, I dared not move a toe. One could hear passers-by whisper: "Who is that?" "Anandamayī", "Oh !" People on the platform, travellers, kulis, vendors, looked confused, trying to decipher and decode that wave of compassion that had invaded the station. I almost heard no more sounds, so captivated was I by Ma. She looked amused, unconcerned, occasionally glancing at a person who would pass across her field of vision. She had drawn the towel on her head over her mouth and nose to guard against the dust and smell.

Time bowed its head in reverence. I was surprised to hear the train coming so quickly. Ma got up and walked towards her compartment with almost drunken steps. With astonishment I observed that she found it difficult to get up the three high steps into the train. We are so full of adoration for her and her mysterious Being, but sometimes she shows us her physical nature also and that her body is not always up to the mark. But then again, instead of going inside the bogey, she stood at the open door, looking at all of us spellbound people for a long time, moving aside sometimes to let devotees pass with countless little pieces of luggage to be stacked in one corner. Finally she disappeared from the open door and re-appeared, sitting in her compartment, her hands folded in *pranāma*, her face saturated with measureless bliss—bliss that penetrated your being slowly deep inside, passing through all the walls of the ego, meeting with bliss.....

# A Portable Paradise

Kamakhya Prasad Roy

( Continued from the last issue )

We shall now furnish a few illustrations of Ma's simple yet unforgettable ways of ministration, that will presently give the reader an idea of the rare grace and sweetness with which She treats Her countless children, offering them each a ready solution for their immediate problems, while letting them hold fast to one goal of life, their birth-right—Realization of Self."

Here is an account of an interesting episode reproduced from "Diary Leaves" by Atmananda:\*

"An elderly lady with a western education asked for an interview with Mataji. She was well-to-do and childless, but had adopted a couple of young children, whom she was looking after to the best of her ability. Religiously inclined from her childhood, she had given much thought to spiritual matters and met quite a number of saints and sages.

"Mataji, I want Self-realization", she said, "and quickly too ! For so long I have been after it and now I am getting on in years !"

'Self-realization is not in time', replied Mātāji, 'why do you want to bind it to time ?'

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\* Ananda Varta—Nov. 1954, Vol. II/3, Page : 277/78.

‘Anyway before I die I must attain’, insisted the lady, “I really mean it. Please tell me how to get Self-realization !”

‘You must keep still as much as possible and meditate in solitude’, was Mātāji’s advice. ‘But since you are so keen on Self-realization, why have you taken on yourself the care of these children ? This obliges you to pay far too much attention to worldly matters’.

‘But I do not want to withdraw from the world. Why can’t I realize here and now, in the midst of my worldly activities ?’

Mātāji shook Her head, “It cannot be done. Look at it in this way”, she added with a smile, “when you want to write a letter you don’t do it in public. You take your pen and paper and sit by yourself. Once it is written you can read it out to everyone.”

“Once the Self is realized the question whether to live in the world or in seclusion does not arise. But while you are striving for it you must be by yourself.”

Again, it was an occasion at Solan ( Himachal Pradesh ), September 11th in the year 1948.†

In response to queries from Mr. Mehta, the Chief Commissioner, Himachal Pradesh, who had for the first time come to Mā, we have the following illuminating words from Her :

“The light of the world comes and goes, it is unstable. The Light that is eternal can never be extinguished. By this

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† “Words of Sri Ānandamayī Mā”—Page : 12.



Light you behold the outer light and everything in the universe; it is only because it shines ever within you, that you can perceive the outer light. Whatever appears to you in the universe is due solely to that great Light within you, and only because the Supreme Knowledge of the essence of things lies hidden in the depths of your being is it possible for you to acquire knowledge of any kind."

Citing another illustration, we reproduce below the relevant portions of Mataji's words in reply to a question on the occasion of her visit to Etawah (U. P.) in September 1950, mentioned in an article "Mother—A Symbol of Higher Life for Man", by the late Ganga Charan Das Gupta :\*

*You are not asked to retire to the forest.* Mother says : "Ananda is the very essence of your life; you are by nature immortal and pure; intelligence (*Jñānāchit*) is the sole basis of your being." She again exhorts us in the following words to take to the right course always: "You are not asked to retire to the forest, or to become inert, unresponsive like a stone to what goes on about you."

"*You are to start your life from where God has placed you*"—this is the rational appeal to all and sundry that comes from Her lips. Yet, this message, further carried to the point of our ultimate goal as human beings—the final realization of the '*Atmā*' (Self), as crystallised in Her words that day, in answer to a gentleman's question, if a vision of God was a possibility even at the present day, is of great importance to arrive at a correct appraisal of Mother's teaching concerning this vital issue. Having obviously replied in the affirmative Mother uttered the following inspiring words :

\* Ananda Varta—Nov. 1953, Vol. I/3.

“Let the little attachment you have developed to people about you continue within its minimum limit. When the call comes for your final exit, all the ties of life will have to be snapped up and you won’t have a moment’s delay. Judge it yourself, this world is a *‘dharmaśālā’* (traveller’s inn). We meet people there who are on the way. The goal of your final reunion is the *‘Ātmā’* or Self. Forgetting this you look upon your body as your own self and that is the root of all bondage, of all miseries of life. “You desire to be free, to throw off your chains. Try to enquire from where you have come.” She again continues in the same strain, saying, “Just as there is a veil of ignorance over you all, there is also a door of escape. Gird up your loins and say—“I must try my best to find a way out!” This will-to-be-free is your sheet-anchor. *‘God is and I must find him’* should be the motto of your life.”

Well, Mother was that day seemingly in a communicative mood—we should better say it was Her *‘kheyāla’* (a spontaneous urge to do or speak without the act of volition or will of the ego) to prolong Her interesting dialogue to an unusual extent.

Like all great religious teachers, she immediately holds before us the lofty spiritual God-concept thus : “*Hari bhajana’* or worship of God is choosing one line of action, one way that would lead you to His presence.” Immediately after, to make Her point clear beyond any doubt, She adds : “It does not mean that there is only one way. *You can go to the station from every house in the locality.* What is important is to stick fast to one way and march. Let truth be your refuge. *For God is Truth.\** Abide by truth in all ways of life and God will stand

\* Cf with J. Christ’s words “God is a Spirit : and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” John IV/24.

revealed. He is Truth, Intelligence and Beauty.....He is One, Indivisible, Perfect<sup>1</sup>—the one goal of all men.’

We shall now endeavour to present before the reader an idea of Mother’s completely depersonalized ( or should we say decentralized† ) personality by citing two interesting episodes below :‡

1. On December 15th, 1956, the day before Mataji left Banaras for Vindhyaachal, a very aged gentleman who loves to discuss with Mataji asked, “How is it that so many people, old and young, are attracted to you ?”

*Mātāji* ( laughing ) : “This child is so very small and does not belong to anyone in particular, so all come to her. It is also like this : one who owns nothing and nobody in this world finds that all are his own.”

*The old man* : “Now you say you belong to nobody whereas usually you call everyone your father and mother.”

*Mātāji* : “This also is true. All are my mothers and fathers and this is why they come to see their little daughter.”

*The old man* : “That is what you say. But we cannot look upon you as our little child.”

*Mataji* : “Well, then you come because you are so merciful, so compassionate; you just take pity on this tiny child.”

† “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”—J. Christ : Math. V/48.

‡ There is a definition of God in such cryptic words as : God is a circle whose centre is everywhere, but circumference nowhere.

1. Reproduced from Ātmānanda’s “Diary Leaves”—of Ānanda Vārtā, May 1956—Vol IV/1, Page-99 :

“No”, vigorously contradicted the old gentleman, “certainly not, I am neither merciful nor compassionate; under no circumstances will I accept this kind of explanation.”

But Mātāji cannot be cornered. “All right”, she said, “Look, is it not natural to come to one’s own Self, does it require a reason or an explanation? The most natural thing for everyone is to come to his own Self.”

2. The second episode narrated hereafter, is taken from “Mother as Seen by Her Devotees” (‘A Call from Above’, by the late G. C. Das Gupta—Page, 94/95.

“It was the occasion of a Holi festival in Calcutta, while Mother was present to celebrate the ceremony with her children there. As the city had not yet an Āshrama, the twin temples of the Lord Shiva near the lakes of South Calcutta were chosen as the venue for the festival :

“One morning, as Mother was sitting in a corner of the temple hall, a fairly large number of devotees were found pressing near Her from all around, every one of them with a frantic zeal to reach as close to Mā as possible. And, as a result, she was almost ‘bundled up’ as it were in a corner of the none too spacious hall. Mother’s predicament at that time in the midst of the sweltering heat of the city can better be imagined than described.”

The circumstances recorded above were the occasion of the following dialogue between Mother and one of Her devotees there, who took it to his heart that Mother should not be subjected to such indisciplined behaviour.

The devotee asked, “Mother, why, do you allow these people to crowd round your body?” Mother replied, “Perhaps

this body draws them so close to it. It is not their fault.”

Q. : “Don’t you find it highly oppressive and disgusting, Mother ?”

A. : “No. It is a great pleasure to me to find them pressing so close to me.

Q. : ‘Mā, we feel it awfully boring to have such a crowd pestering us with tales of their domestic troubles and worries.

A. : ‘Because you feel that your own body and theirs are distinctly separate. As you do not feel the weight of your head, of hands and feet, of so many fingers and toes, of legs and thighs, to be a burden nor a heavy load upon yourself, because you feel they are but vital parts of your own body, so do I feel that these persons are all organic members of this body; so I don’t feel their pressure nor find their worries weighing upon me.’

“Their joys and sorrows, problems and their solutions, I feel to be vitally mine. Their acts and awards, too, are essentially mine. I have no ego-sense nor conception of separateness. *Each one of you have the height and depth of eternity in me equally.*”

From the concluding words of Mā in the above two illustrations, we not only obtain the immediate proof of Dr. M. H. Syed’s words that “She sees the indwelling Self in all,” but as well get an opportunity to catch a glimpse of the idea that there is a sweet and inviting tenderness in Mother’s gracious words spoken to all Her children to remind and

reawaken them to their supreme relation that exists between Her and all others. And we are sure that the awareness of this exalted Soul-relation of ours is the very beginning or preparation for establishing the happy partnership with God, rather a precondition—as we have seen earlier quoting from Tagore's works—to assume the role of the creator life, in which capacity alone, as distinct from that of the creature life, we are able to “meet God where He creates”, in other words to allow “God's love to fully act upon (our) Soul through the medium of freedom.”

Herein lies then the new testament of the growing consciousness of man that in Freedom and Love should he outgrow his creature life one day in order to find true fulfilment of his heart's cravings including those of his intellect's ever-shifting area of interest, in the fruition of his dormant creative faculty.

Now, if we have understood how the supreme adventure of life, from the individual to the universal, from the isolated to the One *Ātmā* concept slowly but unerringly develops in the very presence of Mā, we have probably been able to lay the foundation on which Her grace may act freely upon us.

Finally we quote below a journalist's impression, received about Mā and Her surroundings after attending Mother's Diamond Jubilee Celebration at Varanasi in May, 1956.\*

“What struck me most”, he records, “was the atmosphere which reigned everywhere, surcharged with placid serenity. As the door was wide open to all, people of all walks of life

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\* *Ānanda Vārtā*—Aug. 1956, Vol. IV/2, Page : 157/58

Extracts from “Journalist's Impression” By B. C. Biswas,

Rep. the Pioneer, *Ananda B. Patrika* and the H. Standard.

brushed shoulders with one another in the vast assemblage of people that gathered there every day. A large number of men professing faiths other than Hinduism, also took part regularly. Yet there was no discord. All appeared to be charged with an inexplicable awareness of equality and kinship that obtains among sons and daughters of a common mother."

And out of this awareness of equality and kinship discovered in the mere presence of Mā, working as an alchemy, this gentleman ventures to formulate Mother's silent message, working in the recess of every soul, in the following words :

"This message of humanity—a message of equality, kinship and brotherliness—is, I suppose the message of the 'Mother' .....the Ashram in those days was a veritable continent, all living together in an indistinguishable whole, like different flowers bunched together in a bouquet."

".....This 'human message' ", the chronicler of this report concludes, "that has cast an indelible impression upon my mind, this is I suppose the message of the Mother to the world torn asunder with strifes and conflicts."

The foregoing impressions of the open mind of a veteran journalist, in our opinion, deserve due consideration by those desiring to take a plunge in the fathomless mysteries of Mā's wonder working.

And, we know it for certain that each individual visitor or observer who has ever attended a single occasion graced by the hallowed presence of Mā cannot but bear testimony to the glaring fact that She truly gives the impression of a "*Portable Paradise*" to all those who constantly experience a nostalgic feeling, having lost the rights and privileges of that cherished abode, which they strongly feel, was once their own birth-right.

# **Bhagavata Saptah at Kashi**

A Delightful Experience.

**Kumari Premlata Srivastava**

Ma's divine presence, a *Bhāgavata Saptāh* at the Kashi Ashram, *satsang*, *nāma sankirtana*—all these together, with the spiritual nectar that flowed continuously, and how I was the blessed-one to take part in such a sacred celebration and to receive the special grace of Ma, will ever be a living memory to me. I feel elated when narrating my blissful experiences on this holy occasion.

Ma gave her benediction : "*Bhagavān jo kare*" ( "God's will be done" ) when I first expressed my cherished desire to hold a *Bhāgavata Saptāh* in Ma's presence at the Kashi Ashram. It was only during the *Samyam Mahāvratā* at Kankhal that the dates were finally fixed.

Mataji reached Varanasi on November 28th, 1972, night. Due to certain unavoidable circumstances I was away from Kashi and returned only on December 4th. When I came to the Ashram, it was a pleasant surprise to find that preparations for the *Bhāgavata Saptāh* were already in full swing under Mataji's personal guidance. Swami Paramanandaji, after purchasing the necessary items for the worship, etc. had gone to Naimisharanya, leaving the rest of the work to Brahmachari Nirmalananda who gave his help willingly. Other Ashramites also contributed their mite individually on this



occasion, especially Maitreyidi who arranged the *pūja* items daily and always assisted me.

I had been told that the famous Sri Lalit Krishna Goswami from Allahabad had been invited and had agreed to officiate at the *Bhāgavata Saptah* from December 4th onwards. Goswamiji reached the Ashram on the 5th evening.

The hall of the Gopal Mandir had been tastefully decorated. The wooden couch on which the *Srimad Bhāgavata* was to be placed and the *Vyāsa Āsana* were covered with beautiful yellow silk cloth ( Lakshmiiji had done all this sewing at a very short notice ). Strings of mango leaves were suspended above and over them hung large marigold flower garlands. It all presented a colourful, attractive picture. Festoons of mango leaves were also put across the main gates of the hall and at the entrance to the underground structure (*gufa*) of the Gopal Mandir. At all these entrances embellished flowerpots with big plantain branches had been placed and by their side the usual earthen vessels with a coco-nut on the top of each, draped with a marigold garland. Thus the decorations were charming and alluring.

On December 6th evening when all the final preparations for the *Saptah* were in progress, I went to Ma at about 8-45 p.m. for her *darśana* in private. I was moved from the depth of my heart as Ma's compssionate glance (*karuṇa dṛṣṭi*) rested on me. Her sweet words, her divine touch and her gracious look are beyond description. With her gentle voice Mataji explained to me the details of what I had to do during the next seven days and also the particulars of the *pūjā* on the following morning. She put her hand on my head and back—a rare privilege—and then asked me to go and rest.

The next morning, when my mother and I came to Mataji, we were shocked to see that Ma's face and upper lip were swollen on the right side. Mataji said, "See, I am not well. Should I come?" Naturally I requested Ma to take rest. Before the function started we did Ma's *pūjā* and prayed for her *kheyāla*. With Ma's permission I then went to the cave of Gopal Mandir to perform the *pūjā* of the deities.

Here, there was a large copper pitcher filled with Ganges water, over which was placed a silver *siṅghāsana* (throne) with a gold plaque bearing the figures of Lakshmi-Narayana. Bholada, the priest, helped me with the performance of the elaborate worship of the deities. After finishing the *pūjā* I went upstairs to the Gopal Mandir hall and was overwhelmed with joy to find Mataji there. She called me and took me inside the temple. On a small decorated table the *Śrimad Bhāgavata* was kept in a yellow silk cover. Ma asked Goswamiji to put the sacred volume on my head and I carried it thus, while Pushpadi and others were singing "Sri Krishna Govinda Hare Murāre, Hṛī Nātha Nārāyana Vasudeva" and the *Bhāgavata* was finally installed on the *Vyāsapīṭha*. After I had performed *pūjā* of the *Bhāgavata* and *ārati*, Ma herself arranged the *āsanas* (seats) for us and also a carpet for *sādhus*. The *dhāraka*, Sri Manmathda, who had to keep a check on the reading, sat to the right. Sri Goswamiji recited the introductory *Mahātmya* on the first day and gave its Hindi exposition in the afternoon. Between the morning and afternoon sessions, *kirtana* was sung throughout the eight days.

Sri Goswamiji's morning reading of the Sanskrit text was very fast and often difficult to follow. It would finish by 11 or 11-30 A.M. His Hindi exposition in the afternoon usually

continued up to 6-15 P. M. or so and was of absorbing interest, attracting large crowds of eager listeners.

Mataji attended the morning session on the first day, also on the day on which Sri Krishna's birth was described, and on the last day, thus giving me all the privileges of the occasion. In spite of her indifferent health, she would come to the hall daily about an hour before the conclusion of the Hindi exposition. It was a pleasure to perform *āratī* at the end of the day in Mataji's divine presence. Only on December 13th evening Mataji could not come due to ill-health, but sent a message through Udasji.

The most impressive part of the programme was the narration of Sri Krishna's birth, which fell on the fifth day ( 11th December ). It was celebrated like *janamastami*. The evening before, all decorations had been renewed with fresh flower garlands. Ma called me and told me to bring the next morning my *vighra* of Gopalji, beautifully adorned. It was about 11-30 A. M. when the birth of Sri Krishna was described in Sanskrit. Mataji appeared with a festively decorated image of Sri Krishna. Rose petals were showered on it and amidst the blowing of conch shells, *bhoga* of butter and sugar candy (*misri*) was offered, followed by *āratī*. The function terminated with joyful, melodious singing that continued until the afternoon session.

It was obvious that Ma was in a special *bhāva* that day. She was very busy embellishing the image of Sri Gopalji inside the temple and asked Brahmachari Nirvananandaji to perform *pujā* before the doors were opened for *bhoga āratī*. But to everyone's surprise Gopalji was not wearing anything

except a woollen shawl. Ma said : "See a *jāgrat* ( living ) Gopal. Today is his birthday and he is presenting himself naked." Ma remained occupied throughout the afternoon, arranging the big baskets of fruits and sweets around the image of Gopalji, decorating with her own hands with large, beautiful wreaths of marigolds, about twenty in number. At Ma's request these garlands were after the *ārati* distributed to all the *sanyāsis* present. It was wonderful and quite unforgettable to see Ma so active and in a special *bhāva*. When the afternoon session started, she went for a short rest and came again by 5-30 P. M. when Sri Krishna's birth was celebrated with great enthusiasm, enhanced by the thundering sounds of conches, throwing of rose petals and subsequently by *ārati*. Ma called me and said, "See, Gopalji has arranged for more than fifty-six kinds of *bhoga* for Himself, and look, today being His birthday, He is presenting Himself naked." I was looking at Ma fascinated, observing her *bhāva*. What I felt is impossible to put into words. It was only by Ma's *kheyāla* that such a marvellous celebration could take place. I was given a large plate of *prasāda* and the rest was distributed to all present.

The next day *Nandotsava* was observed by *ārati* and throwing of fruits to the accompaniment of joyous, melodious singing by Pushpadi, Maladi and others. Mataji was present throughout.

On the last day Ma again came to the hall before the Sanskrit recitation was completed. She remained till *ārati*. In the evening also Ma arrived a little earlier than usual and stayed till the end. As soon as the function was over the huge crowd started advancing towards the dais where Goswamiji

was sitting, as all present wanted to make offerings to him and to the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*. Fortunately the *Gīta Jayantī* had started in the Ashram on the 14th morning.

On December 15th that function was continued in the Gopal Mandir hall. Mataji sang "*Sri Guru śaranam mama; namo namah, Jagat Guru śaranam mama; namo namah*". After the starting of the *Gītā Jayantī*, Ma very kindly came to the basement of Gopal Mandir where arrangements for Ma's *pujā* were ready. Brahmachari Nirvananandaji took much trouble helping me to perform this worship. Ma remained there for about an hour. It was the day of the completion (*purāhuti*) of the *Saptāh*. A *yajña* was performed and Ma was present until the final oblations to the sacrificial fire were made. After this a feast was given to all. Ma saw to everything and supervised the feeding of the Brahmins. She distributed sweets with her own hands to everyone present.

Finally, the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* with a piece of gold plaque beneath it was given into the hands of Goswamiji who put it on my head to be carried upstairs and placed into the room of Goswamiji, while Pushpadi and others sang, "*Sri Krishna Govinda Hare Morāre etc.*"

It was Ma herself who did this *Bhāgavata Saptah* for me and all of us. Every moment spent in this function was indescribably blissful. It is certain that Ma specially graced me with her blessings during this sacred gathering. Whenever the happy thought of my association with Ma comes to my mind, I remain in a stupor of spiritual happiness by her unlimited grace. Tears flow and I feel in communion with Ma. What is one to say of our Mataji, who is the Divine Mother

of the Universe in person, who knows all, who does all, who gives all, and who is All. In adoration I bow again and again at her lotus feet. Jai Ma, jai Ma, jai Guru, jai Ma !

“Oh my blessed teacher,  
The origin of my desires,  
Thou alone canst solve my puzzle,  
Reveal this paradox so mysterious,  
Give me succor for this riddle to  
Cross the ocean of life.  
My preceptor, my divine Guru,  
My Ma ! Save thy child.  
Give me strength to overcome my  
bondage of Karma.”

## Mātri Līlā

( January-March 1973 )

In the last issue of *Ānanda Vārtā* we reported about Mataji's sojourn in Kanpur from December 21st, 1972 to January 8th, 1973, in the Ashram built by Sir Padampad Singhania near the Radha Krishna Mandir. On January 9th morning Mataji arrived in New Delhi. She came at the urgent request of Sri Haribabaji's devotees who were holding a public *satsang* in Gandhi Maidan. Mataji attended the afternoon sessions of the *satsang* on January 9th and 10th. The same night she left for Naimisharanya, alighting there on the 11th morning. On January 14th, Sankranti day, Brahma-charinis Udas and Chandan started in Mataji's presence a spiritual practice known as *Gāyatri Purashcharan*, which takes two or three years to complete.

Sri Gurupriya Devi had fallen ill in Delhi and since her condition was deteriorating day by day, Mataji rushed back to Delhi on the 16th. We are happy to state that, thanks to Mataji's visit and her arrangements for Didi's treatment and nursing, the patient's condition speedily improved. Didi later went to Bombay and then to our Poona Ashram to convalesce. Mataji left Delhi for Varanasi the same night, but had to halt at Kanpur on the 17th morning as the train service was suspended. After spending a few hours at Sir Singhania's Ashram, she left by car, reaching Varanasi on the 17th evening. Mataji's health was not very good. On January 23rd she went

with a very few companions to Rajgir where she enjoyed three days of much needed rest and quiet, returning to Varanasi on the 27th. On January 30th she was again in the train to Naimisharanya, where on February 4th, the installation of the Vedas, reverently called *Veda Bhagavan* took place in our *Purāṇa Mandir* with appropriate ceremony and solemnity.

Sri Swami Gangeshwaranandaji Maharaj of *Udasini Math*, who is 92 years old and completely blind, has dedicated his life to reviving and spreading the wisdom of the Vedas. He has spent an enormous amount of labour and money on getting some two hundred and fifty copies of the four Vedas printed in one giant volume (20" × 15") weighing over forty lbs, and is installing this sacred Scripture in various ashrams and religious centres all over India. Elaborate preparations had been made under Mataji's guidance to receive '*Veda Bhagavan*' with due reverence. The Ashram was festively decorated. On February 3rd Mataji herself took all the brahmacharinis to *Chakra Tirtha* where they all cut off a few inches of their hair and then had a bath in that sacred pond. All the Brahmacharis shaved completely for the occasion. Mataji also visited Lalitha Devi Mandir. Swami Gangeshwaranandaji arrived that day. The next morning '*Veda Bhagavan*' was first taken to *Vyasa Gaddi*, quite a distance from our Ashram. The Sage Vyasa is said to have expounded the Purānas there. From that ancient abode of great sanctity *Veda Bhagavan* was carried in solemn procession by car to our *Purāṇa Mandir*. Mataji and the Swamiji sat in the car, while our Ashramites, the Brahmacharis of Narada Ashram, many pandits of Naimisharanya and devotees from Sitapur and other places walked with the car in procession. On the way Mataji sang '*Jai Vedmātā*', everyone



repeating in chorus, and then Swami Gangeshwaranandaji sang in praise of the Vedas. In the *Purāna Mandir* an elevated altar had been kept ready on the right side for *Veda Bhagavan*. Brahmachari Nirvanananda worshipped *Veda Bhagavan* with sixteen offerings. Some pandits recited from the Vedas and *Arati* was performed. Then the very learned Swamiji gave an interesting talk on the Vedas. The function terminated with the distribution of *prasāda*.

On February 5th, Mataji motored to Lucknow, reaching Sri Rameshwar Sahai's residence at about 5 P. M. On February 6th and 7th Mataji gave *darśana* twice daily. The first morning she talked for quite a long time in reply to questions. We were reminded of the discussions Dr. Pannalal used to have with Mataji. (Our hosts at Lucknow were Dr. Panalal's eldest daughter and son-in-law.) The next day Mataji sang. On both afternoons she went to the houses of a few devotees and once to *Kali Bari*. Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachari came to see Ma on the 7th and she entertained him to a meal in her own room. On the 8th morning *Saraswati Pujā* was celebrated in a lovely grass hut protected by a tin roof. A pandal was provided for the congregation. Two images were worshipped side by side by Brahmacharis Nirvanananda and Nirmalananda: one, a beautiful clay statue that was the next day immersed in the *Gomati* river, and the other a delicately chiselled silver *vighraha* of *Saraswati Devi* belonging to Vice-President Sri G.S. Pathak, who came with his family to attend the function. Throughout the *pūja*, for about three hours, the Ashram girls, led by Pushpa, sang beautiful Sanskrit hymns and songs to Devi. All available space was tightly packed and many stood outside. Everything proceeded in great joy and harmony. In the evening Sri Daya

Mata, the President of the *Self Realization Fellowship* with two *sannyāsīnis* and a Swami of her order paid a visit to Mataji.

On February 9th early morning, Mataji and her large party boarded the Jhansi Mail for Bombay, alighting on the 10th afternoon at Sri B. K. Shah's house where Mataji gave *darśana*. The same evening she motored to Poona. There Sri Jairambhai Kotecha, a Gujrati devotee who had recently changed his residence from South Africa to Poona, was holding a *Bhāgavata Saptah* in Gujrati style in our Ashram from February 11th to 18th. Sri Kotecha made excellent arrangements for every detail so that the Ashramites had no work and could listen to the *Bhāgavata* at leisure. Every afternoon Pandit Nalini Bhatta expounded the *Bhāgavata* in Gujrati to a large audience who filled the hall and the pandal that had been joined to it. From February 14th onwards, Sri Swami Akhandanandaji also talked for an hour every evening. Then Mataji would sometimes go for a drive and a walk. On the 10th night, as soon as she arrived in Poona, Mataji enjoined on all the Brahmacharinis of the Ashram to observe complete silence without signs and gestures for the next seven days and to take only milk and fruit at mid-day and a simple cooked meal in the evening. When the period was over, Mataji herself started singing God's names and the girls joined in, thus breaking their silence in this manner.

During Mataji's sojourn two new rooms were inaugurated in the guest-house in her presence. One day some Sindhi devotees performed beautiful *kirtana* and Mataji sang.

On February 19th, Mataji and the entire party motored to Mahabaleshwar (a hill station near Poona) for three nights as

the guests of Śri Ratilal Nanavati who is Srimati B. K. Shah's brother. Mataji occupied a new house in his compound. The whole place is of extraordinary natural beauty and of a rare quiet. There were no crowds and Mataji could rest and relax. She was in a wonderful mood, daily relating about her childhood her play of *sādhana* at Bajitpur, about Bholanathji and so forth. The few fortunate ones who were present had a thrilling time. At Mahabaleshwar there is a *Iyotir Linga* near the source of five rivers. The day of Mataji's arrival happened to be a Monday.† So she and everyone visited that *Linga*. Some had kept a fast since the morning so as to be able to offer *pujā*. There is a famous old *Bhavani Mandir* on a hill at Pratapgarh about fifteen miles from Mahabaleshwar. King Shivaji used to go and offer obeisance to Bhavani Devi before giving battle and conquered by the grace of the Goddess. Hundred and fifty steps lead up to the temple and Mataji was carried in a palanquin. The priest was just then performing an elaborate worship of the deity which took more than an hour. Mataji and her companions watched. When the *Pujā* was completed, the priest offered his own seat to Ma, which she accepted. Mataji then went and touched the *linga* and Bhavani Devi with great *bhāva* as is done during *prāna pratistha*. Before leaving the temple she presented her own *āsana* to her priest.

On February 22nd Mataji returned to Poona for about two hours to see Didi, who was well on the way to recovery from her recent illness. From there Mataji drove to Bombay and went straight to the new house of Dr. Dave, eye specialist, at Vile Parle; which was waiting to be ceremonially opened in

† Monday is sacred to Śiva.

Mataji's presence. Mataji stayed for two nights in a room specially built for her use which will be permanently reserved for her. Dr. Dave had made careful and well thoughtout arrangements for Mataji and every body. Satsang was held regularly in a pandal.

On February 24th Mataji moved to her pagoda at Sri B. K. Shah's residence. Before proceeding there she visited the Ashram of Sri Chinmayananda Maharaj near Pawai Lake, about forty miles out of Bombay. The Swamiji had come in person to take Mataji to his Ashram. Mataji was received with extreme veneration and warmth by all the inmates assembled in the hall. Swami Chinmayanandaji gave a talk in which he said that he had requested Mataji to visit the Ashram in order to bless his sanskrit students. He then asked Mataji to address his brahmacharis. Mataji just said, "*Bhagavad katha hi katha...*"\* Then she sang for a while. The Swamiji then followed Mataji to Santa Cruz where they attended the Sindhi Kirtana of Sri Motwani who for the last forty years has kept up regular *satsang*. Swami Chinmayananda returned to his Ashram only after taking Mataji to Sri B. K. Shah's place where Mataji spent one night and the next day, leaving for Ahmedabad by the night train on February 25th early next morning a large throng of people received Mataji at Ahmedabad station as Mataji's arrival had been announced in the papers. The Governor sent his secretary and a large car which remained at Mataji's disposal during her stay at Ahmedabad and Bhavana-gar. Straight from the station Mataji proceeded to the studio of Sri Kantibhai Patel, a young artist who has created the over-life-size statues of Gandhiji and Vallabbhai Patel that adorn

\* "All talk must be of God alone, all the rest is futile and painful."

Ahmedabad. When he had Mataji's *darśana* during her visit to his town last September, he expressed the keen desire that Mataji should grace his studio by her presence. Someone told him that the most effective means to achieve his purpose would be to model Didima's statue. He at once procured Didima's photos and set out on his task. Within half a year his desire has now been fulfilled. Mataji pointed out some alterations to him and returned to his studio again on the 28th before boarding the train to Delhi. On the 26th Mataji went to the house of the Munshaw family from the studio. A large crowd had assembled, eager for Mataji's *darśana*. Mataji replied to questions for some time. The Governor of Gujerat came and had a private interview with Ma. At 3 P. M. Mataji drove to Bhavanagar where a devotee, Sri Jayantibhai, had built a house over a year ago, waiting for Mataji to come and hallow it by her presence. Mataji remained there for two nights and a day. A pandal had been erected for satsang. Mataji talked and sang very generously. On the 28th morning she returned to Ahmedabad for a few hours. The Governor's wife, Sm. Madalsabehn had been with Mataji at Bhavanagar and had just opened a new branch of the *Shishu Mangal Kalyan* (child welfare centre) there. She returned to Ahmedabad with Mataji. The same night Mataji and her entire party boarded the train to Delhi where they changed for Hardwar. At all stations up to Mount Abu and again at Jaipur and Delhi a great multitude of people had Mataji's *darśana*.

On March 2nd early morning Mataji alighted at Kankhal. On arriving at the Ashram after that long and tedious journey of over 36 hours, Mataji sat on the veranda of the Siva Mandir for one and a half hours, talking animatedly to the delight of

the few who had assembled to welcome her. *Sivarātri* was celebrated on the 3rd night. All the available space within the small Ashram courtyard had been roofed with a gaily coloured canvas and, as usual during that holy night, devotees who had kept a strict fast all day, sat in circles round *Siva Linga* doing *pūjā*. Every inch of the available space was ingeniously made use of. The atmosphere was exquisite. Brahmachari Nirvananda sat on the veranda in front of the Siva Mandir, directing the *pūjā* with the help of a loudspeaker. In the intervals there was very beautiful music. Three different seats had been arranged for Mataji in which she sat alternately. She was present from the beginning of the function just after sunset until 10-15 P. M. Before going upstairs to her room she sang for a short while. At 2 A. M. she returned. A few people had dozed off. Mataji started singing loudly and animatedly invoking Lord Siva with new words and new modulations. Clapping her hands in rhythm to the music she walked around, instantaneously waking up the sleepers. Mataji remained until the end of the function at about 4-30 A. M., when all were allowed to do *praṇāma* to her and she distributed *prasāda*. Several foreign devotees sat up all night wide awake, watching the proceedings with unwavering interest. Later in the morning a large group of students of the "Sri Anandamayi Seva Sadan" Girls school and college at Hardwar came with their Principal and some teachers and sang to Ma. *Sivarātri prasāda* was distributed to them. Every day of Mataji's stay at Kankhal, many came from Dehradun and Rishikesh for Mataji's *darśana*.

On the 5th night Mataji boarded the Howrah Express. Nobody knew where Mataji was going. It had been kept completely secret. Even the few who were allowed to accompany

her were ignorant of their destination. Only just before leaving, Mataji disclosed that she was going to Deoghar in Behar. On the 6th Morning, trains had to be changed at Lucknow and in the interval Mataji spent a couple of hours at Sri R. Sahai's residence. On March 7th at about midday Mataji alighted at Deoghar at the Ashram of Sri Narendranath Brahmachariji, a disciple of the late Sri Gopal Thakur, who had repeatedly requested Mataji to grace his Ashram with her presence. A few years ago Sri Narendranath Brahmachari came to Vrindaban with a large group of disciples and performed a most impressive *Katyayani Pujā* after our *Samyam Vrate*.

Mataji was given a very hearty welcome and made comfortable at the beautiful, peaceful Ashram, which has three temples: in the centre *Katyayani Devi* and to the right and left *Partha Sarathy* and *Annapurna*. The next day Mataji offered special *bhoga* to the deities. One day Mataji visited the Ashram of Sri Mohanananda Brahmachari, who was in retreat in a solitary place and returned to welcome Mataji and have her *darśana*. He is the successor of Sri Balananda Brahmachari who had a very deep veneration for Mataji. She was first taken to Deoghar from Dacca in 1926 by Sri Rai Bahadur Pran Gopal Mukerji. His son Gour Gopal was very ill when Mataji come to Deogher this time and she went to see him.

On March 11th morning Mataji reached Calcutta. On her way from the station to the Agarpara Ashram she gave a delightful surprise to several devotees by halting at their houses. In the evening a huge crowd collected at Agarpara, desperately eager for Mataji's *darśana*. Ma had not been to Calcutta for years and many had in the meanwhile been through sore trials and tribulations, some losing their near and dear-ones. A few

complained to Mataji that they were at their wit's end, and did not know how to manage their lives. Mataji said: "This body tells of one sovereign remedy for all ills: *God*. Trust in Him, depend on Him, accept whatever happens as His dispensation, regard what you do as His service, keep *satsang*, think of God with every breath, live in His presence. Leave all your burdens on His hands and He will see to everything, there will be no more problems."

The next morning Mataji went to Krishnanagar, about 60 miles away, where an artist is modelling another statue of Didima. From there Mataji proceeded to Yadhavpur in South Calcutta, where the new T. B. hospital "*Niramoy*" was waiting to be opened in her presence since last August. Only now Mataji was able to go there and stay for two nights. Dr. Gunendra Roy had beseeched Mataji to stay for a whole week but this was impossible. A special room had been built upstairs for Mataji and the best possible arrangements were made at extremely short notice. Yet the impetuous throng of people who clamoured for Mataji's *darśana* were quite unmanageable. Even the police failed to cope with the situation. Mataji sat in the hall which can seat five hundred persons comfortably while three to four thousand made an attempt to invade the hall, each one trying his utmost to get as near to Ma as possible. It was only due to Mataji's *kheyāla* that nobody was trodden on or hurt in any way inspite of the terrific rush. On the 14th night Mataji somehow succeeded in getting into the car that took her to the station from where she boarded the train to Gaziabad. The Holi festival was celebrated there at the invitation of the Jaipuria family, who owns some new factories in that town in the vicinity of Delhi.



One morning the great singer Sm. M. S. Subbulakshmi came from Madras with her husband Sri T. Sadasivam and her daughter and sang to Mataji for about half an hour at the Niramoy Hospital. One evening Prof. Tripurari Chakravarti gave a fine lecture. The Indian ambassador to Bangla Desh, Sri Subimal Dutt, flew from Dacca to Calcutta for Ma's *darśana*, Mataji went to see Sm. Aparna Devi Roy, an old devotee, who is very ill. She is the daughter of the late Sri C.R. Das and the mother of Sri Siddharta Roy, the Chief Minister of West Bengal.

While Mataji's trip to Deoghar and Calcutta had been kept secret until the last moment, Mataji's sojourn at Gaziabad from 15th to 20th March had been announced at Kankhal and everyone was invited to join. Mataji called quite a number of devotees even from Calcutta. The Jaipurias had arranged for *Nama yajña* on a gigantic scale. A Navadweep Kirtana party of hundred and thirty men from Ranaghat and Kharda in West Bengal had been specially summoned for the occasion. A beautifully decorated pandal of imposing size was ready for the function. Lord Gouranga as well as Sri Haribabaji had been born on *Holi* day ( *dol purnima* ). On the 17th morning their birthday was celebrated by a very special *puja* of Sri Krishna. Sri Haribabaji's life size photo was placed on a swing in the main pandal, between *vigrahas* of Radha Krishna and Nitai-Gouranga. On the 19th, a group of fifty disciples of Sri Haribabaji, headed by Sri Rajaram, advocate of Hoshiarpur, came from Bundh for Mataji's *darśana*. *Prsāda* was distributed to them.

On the 17th evening *adhivāsa* was performed for about two hours in Mataji's presence by the Navadwip kirtana party. They had built and adorned the traditional circular altar in the centre of the pandal, with pictures of Lord Gouranga, Nityananda,

Sri Krishna, Radha and so forth. The main picture was one of Shyama Sundara, a replica of the *vighraha* of the Shyama Sundara temple at Kharda that had been blessed by Nityananda in person and is to this day worshipped by the descendants of his family. After completing the *adhivāsa*, the men started moving round the altar with their drums and cymbals, singing the *mahāmantra*. Mataji joined them for a while and about 11 P. M. the women devotees, led by Chhabi Banerji took up the *kirtana* with great enthusiasm and continued for the whole night. Mataji sang for some time and then went to her room to rest. At 5 A. M. on march 18th, the men resumed the *kirtana* for the whole day and the following and even on the 19th morning. They had 112 *mridangas* (drums) and at intervals all played and sang together. It is impossible to imagine the spectacular effect of this *kirtana* done with so much sincere devotion and fervour. It was as if Nitai and Gouranga, the great *Vaiṣṇava* apostles themselves had returned to this earth again. All who had the rare good fortune to witness this wonderful festival in Mataji's holy presence, deemed themselves thrice-blessed. At the end there was *nagar kirtana* (the singers moving round the whole of the factory area) and then Mataji sang, "Dhara lao" and "Hari bol" for a long time.

On March 20th Mataji motored to Kalkaji, where she remained for two days. A number of V. I. Ps. came to see her and Mataji also went to the houses of a few devotees. On March 22nd Mataji left for Varanasi.

Didima's *Sannyasa Utsava* will be celebrated in our Kankhal Ashram on April 13th. Mataji is expected to be there for a few days.

Mataji's birthday celebrations will this year take place at Uttarkashi from 14th to 20th May.