

Ananda Varta

A quarterly journal dealing mainly with the divine life and teaching of MATA ANANDAMAYEE and with other religio-philosophical topics

BOARD OF EDITORS

Mahamahopadhyaya Sri Gopinath Kaviraj, M.A., M. Litt.

Padma Vibhushan

Dr. Gourinath Shastri, M.A., P.R.S., D. Litt.

Dr. Vivek Ranjan Bhattacharya, M.A., Ph. D.

Brahmacharini Atmananda

Brahmachari Shivananda

Editor—Brahmachari Nirmalananda, M. A., Shastri

★ ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION ★

India— (Postage free) Rs. 7/- only

Foreign— (By Sea Mail) Rs. 10/50 or 15 shillings or \$ 2.00

“ (By Airmail) Rs. 25/- or £ 1-10-0 (Europe etc.)

“ —Rs. 35/- or \$ 5.50 (North & South America.)

C O N T E N T S

1. Matri Vani	1
2. From the Life of Mataji	...Bithika Mukerjee	...	4
3. Matri Satsang	...Swami Bhagavatananda Giri	...	17
4. Old Stories retold	...Sraddha — A. M. Gupta	...	25
5. Sri Sri Shyamacharan Lahiri	...Bhupendra Nath Sarkar	...	30
6. Grace as the Religious Dimension of Moral Life	...Roma Ghosh	...	46
7. Mahadevi	...Suradhuni	...	53
8. Matri Lila	55





Ma during Durga Puja at Hardwar. October '73

Ananda Vārtā



VOL. XXI]

JANUARY, 1974

[NO. 1



*“Of Him alone must be the spoken word,
All else is but futility and pain.”*

Mātri Vāni

Whenever you possibly can, sustain the flow of God's Name. To repeat His Name is to be in His presence. Just as a human friend opens his heart to you and tells you all about himself when you come to him, so, if you associate with the Supreme Friend He will reveal His true Being to you.

Do you refrain from bathing when faced with the waves of the sea? Surely, you plunge right into the midst of the waves and take your bath. Similarly, in the very thick of the tempests and difficulties of worldly life endeavour to maintain the remembrance of God, the repetition of His Name.



On the path of *sādhana* one should not allow anything bad or inauspicious to remain hidden in one's mind. The purer the mind is kept, the more it will help one to progress. When anger arises in your heart try to cast it away.

* * * *

Just as the mother cow cleans her little calf by licking up and absorbing into herself all the dirt, even so God draws unto Himself all the sins and shortcomings of His children and purifies and cleanses them. Regarding everyone as a manifestation of the One, do selfless service.

* * * *

Everything is pervaded by the Self. He Himself has permeated and is permeating the all. If you cry out for Him with genuine longing and desperate eagerness, He will be with you at that very instant. A mother knows exactly whether her child is weeping with real anguish and when she hears such sobbing she drops all her work and hastens to her dear one.

* * * *

The day that is gone returns not. To be a human being means to be Self-aware. Do not squander invaluable time. Beware of becoming a "Self-murderer"; realize that you are none other than the Immortal Self.

* * * *

Everyone without exception will have to put in strenuous effort. Men and women are equally endowed with the capacity to realize God. It is the duty of a human being to make human birth, which is such a rare boon, successful. Otherwise he has to continue in the round of births and deaths.

*

*

*

*

Just as the same person is father, son and husband— and none of them any less than the other, so the paths of knowledge, devotion and action all lead to the One. All names are God's names and yet He is nameless and formless. Discover Him in any particular form and you will finally come to see that all forms are expressions of the One.

Form the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji
Pilgrimage to Mount Kailash

(Continued from the last issue)

Wednesday, June 30st, 1937.

Our camp was set up at a place called Kalapani. We have travelled a distance of about eight miles only. The guide Sendel Singh says that although tomorrow's lap of journey will not be more than five miles, the road being extremely bad, it will be advisable to start after breakfast as the business of cooking, washing up, etc. will become increasingly difficult from now on.

Thursday, July 1st.

We started at 11 a.m. in a down pour. There is practically no road to be made out now. Only the locals seem to have a general sense of direction. We are given to understand that sometimes even the shepherds get lost. When lost in these trackless vast mountain regions the men allow their herds to lead. The sheep unerringly find their way back to their villages.

A lonely trek. We picked our way with great difficulty over the rough and rocky ground. The only people we met were some traders camping with their herds on their way down to trading posts. We were drenched and numb with cold. At about 1.30 p.m. the guide announced camp at a place where we

saw a few huts made of rough stones stuck one on top of another. These shelters were for sheep. The floor was caked with the dung of animals. Notwithstanding all this it was a haven of comfort from the chilling cold. Parvati had brought some firewood. She now managed to get a small fire going in one of the huts. Some of us crouched over this fire most of the time. The dirt and lack of ventilation did not weigh with us at all. We somehow managed to prepare a meal and eat it. The cold was really paralyzing. It seemed to penetrate through all the blankets we could use. The name of this place is Dobra.

Friday, July 2nd.

We were ready to start but it continued to rain quite heavily. The grooms brought the horses down from the hills where they had been let off to graze yesterday. But the guide decided not to travel today. The road would be too dangerous, he said.

Father and Bhaiji are not too well. The air is so rarefied that all of us are suffering from varying degrees of breathlessness. Tomorrow we are to cross Lipu. We shall climb up to a height of 18,000 ft. and again descend to 16,000 ft. We have to reach Taklakote tomorrow. Under Ma's direction I made out separate portions of the antidotes for dizziness and breathlessness. Everyone was to carry his own share of the antidotes. With amazing forethought Ma had made me bring all kinds of stuff which we now were so glad to have. She like others had no previous experience of climbing to this height. It was a constant source of surprise to me, how she had anticipated our needs under these novel and strange conditions. She

herself appeared to be her usual self, always the same, very much at home in these new surroundings and among strange people.

It is so cold that I cannot write properly. My fingers are so stiff that I can grip the pen only with the greatest difficulty.

Saturday, July 3rd.

We started in a drizzle and climbed steadily. The path that we traversed was too fearful to contemplate. We gradually came to snow-covered regions. It seemed to me that we were going over a narrow bridge through an ocean of snow. The horses picked their way stumblingly and precariously. There was nothing but snow all around. After negotiating Lipu Pass we started on a descent. We got off the horses and walked as the incline was too steep. There was many a stumble in the snow but nobody was hurt. Bholanath with undiminished enthusiasm kept track of the entire party, moving up and down the line to see if everyone was able to negotiate the path. When we arrived in Taklakote at sundown, he clapped us on the shoulders and congratulated us on our achievement.

The guide had gone ahead and had our tents pitched by the time we staggered in. The local people came and stood around silently watching our arrangements for the camp. They did not seem to welcome us as at other places.

Later we were informed by our men that they were robbers and dacoits, a constant source of threat and danger to pilgrims. The Government does nothing to suppress them and they are a very powerful community. Some of the men of our group and Sendel Singh were carrying firearms because they have

to be prepared for attacks by robbers when travelling through these regions.

On our way to Taklakote we had seen many caves. The guide told us that at one time they were inhabited by ascetics. Nearer to the town we saw temples and also some stone terraces. We could see cultivated land as well and were given to understand that there are a few shops here too. The road that we have traversed today seems like a dream. The beauty of the changing colours of the bare mountains can hardly be described. It is no wonder to me now that pilgrims attempt this journey year after year. The grandeur and beauty of the surroundings make nothing of the discomfort of this mode of travel.

In this remote place Ma had visitors. Two women disciples of the lamas came and stayed for some time.

Sunday, July 4.

After a hurried meal we resumed our journey at about 11 a.m. At sundown we arrived in a village called Rantung, approximately ten miles from our last camp. This is a village of ordinary friendly people. It is a very interesting to watch the villagers find their way to Ma as somebody special. May be they sense this from our attitudes but this does not explain why they stay around her the whole time. Sometimes a few would come close to her dandee and touch her feet. Ma would smile and hold their fingers lightly in her hand. We could not talk to them at all as their language is quite different from any that we know.

We saw many temples. Some letters and words were uniformly carved on stone walls. One particular letter seemed

to be repeated again and again. One of the grooms said that it was the syllable "Om." All housetops were flying small pieces of coloured cloth like strings of bunting. Today's road was not too bad. We were made to keep close together all the time by the guide as a precaution against attacks from robbers. There were no trees or shrubs but we saw small stretches of cultivated land. We rode across innumerable mountains. I do not know how Sendel Singh plans the trek. To us it seems that we ride over unchartered land. A small group in the middle of sometimes a vast silent valley of snow, sometimes towering mountains on all sides. The unmarked road seems to stretch endlessly. At an appropriate time the guide declares camp at the wayside, following some sense of location which is quite incomprehensible to us. For one night this becomes home. Then it is time again to strike camp and move on through the same silent scene of beautiful mountains. There is an overwhelming impression of solitude and stillness on this journey.

Monday, July 5th.

Father suffered a little from breathlessness. Ma persuaded him to sit in her dandee today while she rode his horse. We started at 10-30 a. m. after our usual very business-like main meal for the day. At 2 p. m. Sendel Singh called halt at a place called Gouripahar. He chose this place because there was feed and water for the horses. We were glad of a longer period of rest and welcomed the early camp.

Tuesday, July 6th.

We started comparatively earlier today. We carried hot

tea in flasks. Ma was on horseback today also as father was still suffering badly from shortness of breath.

We had been meeting odd-looking riders as we travelled this lonely trek. These, we were told, were the robbers who are a menace to the pilgrims. This morning we saw two riders who came close and rode alongside. They were armed. We were surprised to see that their right hands were uncovered even in this icy cold. Later on, Sendel Singh told us that they keep them that way so that they can use firearms quickly in case of need. After some time we saw two more men on top of a hill watching our approach. The first two raised their hands and signalled with their fingers in a peculiar manner. The other two then came down to the roadside and were joined by their friends. They were collected at a spot which we would pass following our path. Sendel Singh galloped ahead and joined this group. He talked to them while we slowly rode by one by one. After we had gone a little distance, he again cantered on and caught up with us.

Probably all guides are known to the dacoits or at least some of them are. A little further on we saw a few men sitting at a small camp of two tents. Sendel Singh again went ahead, dismounted and sat talking to them while we passed by. Then, grinning broadly he rejoined us on the road once more.

We had been feeling quite apprehensive since leaving Taklakote. The sudden appearance of these unfriendly looking armed men in this unbroken solitude was very disconcerting.

However all this was forgotten when we suddenly came up to a point from where we could see the great lake Manas Sarovar. The huge sheet of water was the colour of the blue sky overhead.

The two blues merged together at the horizon. It was a truly magnificent sight.

Father's dandee was slow in coming. Ma was still obliged to ride. All of us were concerned that she should be subjected to this discomfort. But Ma herself was her usual serene self.

Bholanath, Ma, Bhaiji and I were riding ahead of the others in the party. The coolies and Sendel Singh had gone ahead to pitch camp at a suitable spot. On our way to this camp, Ma suddenly dismounted from her horse and said she would wait for father. She asked the three of us to ride on to the camp. We were very reluctant to leave Ma quite unattended in such a lonely place but her *kheyāla* was not to be gainsaid. Tunu and Dasudada had also not arrived. So our party was split into different groups. Bholanath and Bhaiji walked off towards the lake. I came to the camp and decided to write in my journal while I waited for the rest of the party to assemble.

The big blue lake rippling in sunlight, surrounded by many-hued mountains was an enchanting sight. I saw swans of various colours. The sun was very welcome but the cold sharp wind did not allow it to be too effective.

Mount Kailash is three days' journey from here. The top of the mountain which is just visible shines like a silver dome in the sunlight. The rest of the party, as they came up gave a great shout of joy, saying "jai Kailashpati !"

Bholanath, Bhaiji and Ma were still away. We started preparing a meal. There has been no firewood for the last few days. The grooms procure for me some kind of thorny

little bushes and dry dung from places where herds of animals have taken shelter. The wind is so strong that it is not possible to use oil stoves but the guide says that this wind is mild compared to the usual gale that blows here.

We bathed in the lake. Bholanath called Ma aside and talked to her for some time. Ma then went for a stroll attended by Bhaji only. Parvati received initiation from Bholanath. It was no doubt a high point of fulfilment in her life. This young girl has impressed all of us by her piety and her devotion to Ma and Bholanath.

Cooking has become a strenuous task. The weak flame has to be guarded against gusty winds. More often than not the flames would be blowing anywhere but under the cooking pot. However, we somehow accomplished the business of cooking, eating and cleaning as best as we could and retired to bed at about 10 p. m. Ma had spent most of the time near the shore of the lake. There is a second big lake near the Manas which is called Rakshas Talao. The legend is that Ravana the king of the demons, had practised austerities at this spot for propitiating his adored deity, the Lord Siva, Kailashpati.

Wednesday, July 7th.

The wind usually subsides a little in the morning. We started at about 11 a. m. Although we are now used to the routine, yet it takes all this while to make our preparations for the day's journey. The path skirted the lake and we rode slowly along, marvelling at the beauty of the scene. We saw many species of birds after a long time.

We were informed that some pilgrims go round the lakes which means another week or so as the circumference is approximately sixty miles. We did not want to attempt this, so continued our journey to Kailash. On the way we were taken to visit a cave dedicated to the worship of Lord Buddha. We had seen many caves and Buddhist Temples from time to time. This cave was quite big, clean and well maintained. Lamps were burning in front of the images. The stacks of Buddhist Scriptures looked well preserved and well cared for. We were informed that lamas are deputed to these cave shrines for a period of three years each. The lama hands over charge to his successor at the time of his transfer. We saw many musical instruments too. Our camp for the night is at a place called Ju-gompha. We could not get anything with which to light a fire. The hurricane lamps had been out of order since a long time. So we just decided to make a scrap meal of *sattu* (roasted gram flour which is edible without cooking). Much later it was discovered that Ma had been given raw wheat flour instead of *sattu*. We were so paralysed with cold that we were not even able to distinguish the one from the other. Ma, realizing our condition, did not say anything but suffered this discomfort in her usual manner of acceptance of such odd services that we more often than not render to her.

We had planned to make an early start but the cold defeated us. It began to drizzle. The coolies also are feeling the effects of this deadening cold. They are in the habit of drinking alcohol to keep warm, but even this is now ineffective it seems.

We could start a little before noon. The flowers in this remote region are a fantastic sight. The mountainous plateau that

we traverse looks like the cultivated garden of a connoisseur. Small thorny bushes are smothered in tiny flowers of all hues. They do not look wild or unkempt but as if they had been arranged and planted with a view to colours. The numbing cold distracts the mind from enjoying the marvellous beauty of this mountainside.

At about six in the evening we pitched camp at the foot of Mount Kailash. This is a big field of snow. The white dome of Kailash glittered like silver in the last rays of the sun. The name of this location is Boond.

Friday, July 9th.

Today we start on the *parikrama*. This entails going around on three sides of the holy mountain and then the *parikrama* is terminated by bathing in the holy lake called Gourikunda. This also concludes the pilgrimage.

We wanted to start early but it was almost noon before we were ready. We travelled a very short distance and passed a village called Dhanken. This is quite a big place and is probably under the jurisdiction of the King of Bhutan. After a long time we could buy some fresh milk and butter. We pitched our camp in another field of snow at 4. p. m. Everyone is suffering from shortness of breath. The cold is too overpowering.

I think I have so far not written about a very strange phenomenon. From Taklakote a black dog has joined our party, so to say. The odd thing is that he invariably trots behind Ma's horse or dandee. He takes no notice of anybody else. When we pitch camp the dog sits near Ma. He doesn't move till she is ready to start, and then goes along with her. One day

Ma put her hand on his head and stroked him. The dog doesn't look like the shaggy mountain dogs, yet he seems to be managing well in this cold climate.

We rode through a few snowfalls. It is snowing quite often now. This region is not as desolate or bare of human habitations as the tracts of lands beyond Taklakote. We often come across the camps of traders who are taking herds of sheep or yaks to trading posts. When they see us they come out of their tents and stare curiously at us. We see many different kinds of dresses, e. g. Bhutani, Nepali, Tibetan, and other types too. The coolies can talk to some of these groups because they speak the same language. There are beggars as well. They raise their thumbs which is supposed to be a gesture of supplication. It is customary to give them some food stuff.

We camped at a place called Sarsho.

Saturday, July 10 th.

We started at noon. For the last two or three days the journey has taken us through huge fields of snow, broken by steep climbs and also descents. We camped at 4 p. m. We had seen the Holy Mountain from three sides. We could hear the sound of a heavy rush of water near us. From a cave nearby Parvati brought us some incense and *vibhuti*. This *vibhuti* is from the *yajña* performed to Mount Kailash.

Tomorrow will be the hardest day of the journey. We must climb up to 22,000 ft to Gaurikunda. This will conclude the *parikrama*. And it also means the fulfilment of the object of the pilgrimage. The road by all accounts is difficult and we cannot take the dandee. This means that father also must go on horseback. He is suffering very badly from shortness of

breath. Someone suggested that he should not attempt the climb and that he and I could stay behind till the rest of the party come back. Bholanath, however would not hear of it and he put new vigour and courage in those who were feeling slightly shaken by the rigours of the journey.

Ma suggested that we each pack a ration of dry fruits, camphor and other necessities for tomorrow's journey. We would have to do without a meal. Ma herself has asked me to bring lots of camphor on this journey. We now found it to be indispensable as a measure of relief from having to struggle for breath. We made our preparations as if for a battle for the morrow and then tried to get some sleep as best as we could.

Sunday, July 11 th.

Nobody was able to sleep last night because of the cold. We made some tea to take with us and started as early as possible. Everyone wanted to keep a fast till we arrived at our destination so there was no delay due to cooking and eating.

The wind was not as fierce as it sometimes can be. The horses stumbled over the rocky path slowly. We went up in a steady incline for about three miles and were rewarded with the glimpse of our goal. Gaurikunda is simply a lake of ice. There are no temples or shrines. The pilgrims bathe in the lake and this concludes the ritual of the *parikrama* of the Holy Mountain.

We dismounted near the lake. A little is visible near the shore. The pilgrims have to break the ice and make a space to bathe in. Bholanath, Dasudada and Brahmachari Bharati bathed in the lake. The rest of us contented ourselves by touching the waters and sprinkling it on ourselves. Ma had asked

me to bring bundles of joss sticks. After the *ārati* of camphor and incense sticks we found the warmth from these tiny fires most welcome against the benumbing cold.

It is a tradition that companions should be treated to a meal on completion of the main objective. We distributed dry fruits and *halua* to all the people with us. There was nothing else that we could give them.

Mother's grace and Bholanath's great enthusiasm had enabled us to accomplish this arduous trek through the mountains. In the afternoon we started on the return journey from Gaurikunda.

(*To be continued*)

A Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light.

And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
seek to be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love;

For it is in giving that we receive—

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Matri Satsang in Solan

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

(Continued from the last issue.)

(4)

Monday, June 20th, 1955, 9 p. m.

For some days now we have been waiting with joyful anticipation for this particular time. When the evening *kirtana* and the 15 minutes of silence are over, we shall be allowed to listen to the precious words of wisdom emanating from Mataji's blessed lips. Our minds will be purified, our hearts stilled by a deep, abiding peace and our eyes feasted by the sight of Mataji's ever radiant countenance.

Mataji arrives and sits down in her usual place, winning everybody's heart by her sweet and gentle smile. For a little while there is pindrop silence. The eye cannot savour sufficiently of her appearance. We are spell-bound. No question occurs to us. We feel as if all our problems had already been solved, as if we had gone beyond the level of questions and answers, as if we had learnt what can be learnt and seen what there is to see. But have we really? Can a child ever know his mother? No, no, how can he? Let us then ask Mataji herself.

Question : Mataji, can a child ever know the true nature (*svarūpa*) of his mother?

Mataji : Why don't you reply yourselves?

Question : I have read in books that a child cannot know the true nature of his mother, nor recognize her.

Mataji : According to one's state of progress one may or may not recognize one's mother. Whatever anyone says from his own standpoint is right for him.

Question : Is "Being" (*Sat*) multiple or one ?

Mataji : Being (*Sat*) is one and one only. What you see from your point of view is different from what others perceive from their standpoints. Yet, Being is one but appears to be diverse according to different viewpoints.

Question : Why should this be so ? Why cannot everybody regard the One Thing in the same manner ?

Mataji : There is an infinite diversity of forms, of states of existence. Whatever anyone perceives at a particular state holds good for that state, for in what he sees he is not mistaken. But "There" (beyond forms and states)—there is true Sight, Realization, Enlightenment.

Question : Then, what one perceives from a position of ignorance will be rendered invalid in the state of Knowledge ?

Mataji : How beautifully expressed ! 'What an apt statement !'. (Mataji claps her hands and laughs.) Why did you omit the words : "according to his stage ?" This is a very profound matter, a very deep subject. Where there is no question of state or no state—how can this be expressed in language ?

Question : What can a child do for his mother ? He can merely call out : "Mother, oh mother !" from time to time, that's all !

Mataji : He can do as his mother bids him to do.

Question : If he does, what will happen ?

Mataji : "Nothing" will happen ! (*Mataji* laughs and everybody joins in)—or rather, one will arrive where the question of what happens or does not happen is not of the slightest importance.

Question : Can prayer absolve one from one's *prārabdhā* ?*

Mataji : To attain to such heights of prayer is difficult. Through prayer, *sādhana*, *japa* and so forth it may be possible to achieve this but it takes time. To destroy *prārabdha* by any kind of effort or practice is not easy.

Question : Those who have attained to Supreme Knowledge, who are liberated, have they also to undergo their *prārabdha* ?

Mataji : Not everything is understood by everyone. Questions pertain to various stages and levels. Some do not believe that anything can annihilate one's *prārabdha* without the experience of the destined suffering or happiness. As an electric fan goes on revolving for a while by the impetus gained by its movement even after the switch has been turned off, so the liberated man undergoes his fate. Yet, it is also said that the fire of Supreme Knowledge can consume everything. The question of suffering or enjoyment arises only when one's consciousness is centred in the body. Is the sage, the liberated man identified with his body ? He is established in the realization of the

* *Prārabdha karma* That portion of one's past actions which is bound to fructify in the present life and cannot be averted.

Ātmā, the one Self. Whether the body of the *Jivanmukta*† remains alive or not is quite immaterial to him. As far as he is concerned, there is no body. Therefore, where is the question of experiencing pleasure or pain? Now you may try to understand this !

Questioner : The *prārabdha* is not destroyed, only the body is destroyed.

Mataji : The real truth is that the existence of the body is not a hindrance. To grasp or understand this from outside is difficult. Everyone sees according to the spectacles worn over his eyes. But keep on praying ! So long as true knowledge of the Self does not supervene, how can the question of destroying one's *prārabdha* arise at all ?

Question : A doctor can surely prescribe medicine for curing diseases or advise methods for alleviating pain ?

Mataji : Manoj Babu had cancer. Drugs were used to dull his nerves. He did not feel any pain. Medicine was administered and he was thus spared from bearing pain. But was there no mental suffering ? Was his body not subjected to any other discomfort ? If one is bitten by an ant it hurts only slightly; while scorpion bite induces excruciating pain. Intense pain is unbearable. However, whether pain is severe or negligible depends on the state of one's mind. Some peoples, minds are so stable and firm that, just as the earth does not feel hurt or sore when struck, so do they experience no hardship even when

† *Jivanmukta* One who has attained to Liberation while living in the physical world.

their body is subjected to a severe blow. Prayer, the repetition of God's name, worship, the study of scriptures, all these have for purpose the realization of the Self, the revelation of the light of the Self (*ātmā jyoti*). One must strive for That which burns or melts everything—for the ultimate Goal—not for the annihilation of the *prārabdha*. When the sun rises, darkness disappears of its own accord, one does not have to try, strive or practise specially for this.

Question : A sage (*jñāni*) also falls ill. Does it not trouble him ?

Mataji : He who is bound to die is the one who sees death constantly approaching. One who is born has of necessity to die. But is there birth and death for the Enlightened-one ? For him there is neither coming nor going. Where can he go and whither can he come ? He ever remains immersed in his own Self.

Question : But people see that he is ill, that he is suffering.

Mataji : Let people see what they see. Where suffering is experienced one cannot speak of that sublime state.

Question : Do we not call *prārabdha* that portion of one's accumulated karma which, by the dispensation of the Almighty, has to be enjoyed and suffered by a person in his present body ?

Mataji : All this obviously refers to those who move within the cycle of birth and death. From their viewpoint there is the body, accumulated karma, the experience of happiness and sorrow, and all the rest. Whereas from where this

body (Mataji) speaks, there—who is it that is born?
Whose body can it be? Whose *prārabdha*?

Question: From which viewpoint does an Enlightened Being undergo his *prārabdha*?

Mataji: Is there a viewpoint or a view for an Enlightened-one? But if you must talk about a viewpoint at all then he perceives Himself within His Self, the one Self poised within Itself.

Question: When ultimate Knowledge has been attained, is there still the experience of *prārabdha* from any point of view?

Mataji: When ultimate Knowledge is attained there is no question of any view or of outer reality as such. For the Enlightened one the “two” do not exist, duality has disappeared. He is reposing within his own Self. He is free, his “connection” has been cut off. “The fan has been switched off” means, the afflictions and sorrows of the world are cut off. When the switch is on, it inevitably means undergoing sorrow or enjoyment. The Self is itself the *prārabdha*. He Himself manifests as enjoyment and suffering. He alone exists, there are no others. This is why he is called liberated (*mukta*). Where duality is, how can there be liberation (*mukti*)?

Question: Please clarify this with the help of a simile or parable!

Mataji: A simile is never all-comprehensive. The “connection is shut off” means there is only one Self reposing within Itself. Who is it that appears as enjoyment and suffer-

ing? The One Himself in that guise. Again, who exists beyond the realm of sorrow? HE Himself. Otherwise how can one call him a *jivanmukta*? Here action does not follow as a corollary to a previous action. He Himself is the deed, He Himself its consequence and thus no new karma is created. Those who work in the world reap the fruit of their actions. If the deed is good the result is happy and if it is bad the result is unhappy. From here arises the kind of question that was asked about the individual experiencing according to his *prārabdha*. But in the state of *jivanmukti*, where I myself am the action, there enjoyment and suffering do not occur as with ordinary human beings. In *Jivanmukti* creation, preservation and destruction do not exist. There suffering, the duality of the experience and the one who experiences is absent. Some philosophers are of the opinion that if the flame of Supreme Knowledge can consume everything, will it not destroy the *prārabdha* as well? Is there no difference between the state of Self-realisation and the state where the fruit of one's actions is experienced?

Yogibhai (the Raja of Solan) : According to Shanker Bharatji, Mataji says that *prārabdha* is destroyed (when Enlightenment occurs).

Swami Shaswatananda : The great Shankaracharya stated in his book *Viveka Chudāmaṇi* : "From where comes the imagination of *prārabdha*?"

Mataji : *Prārābdhā* means "*pārū lābdhā*"; i. e. from elsewhere (former births) obtained. The work that you have already

done, you now reap its benefit. But "there" (in *jivanmukti*) this does not hold good.

Yogibhai : Yes, *there*, there is complete independence, one is not dependent on anything at all.

Mataji : Quite so, *there* the question of anything expected or connected does not arise. There is a very great difference between a fan moving when connected with the current and a fan running after the switch has been turned off.

Question : A "connected fan" inevitably leads to death, does it not ?

Matnji : The body of the *Jivānmuktā* is no impediment. Can that which consumes everything not consume a part thereof ?

Didi (quoting a Sanskrit text) : "The fire of Knowledge can burn to ashes the results of all deeds."

Swami Shaswatananda : Here the word "*sarvokarmāni*" is in the plural, meaning that the consequences of all actions without exception can be destroyed.

Mataji : This body (*Mataji*) does not enter into any controversial discussion or argument. Where *prārābdhā* is accepted as a fact, there one has also to admit the existence of enjoyment and suffering. But, that the Sage is subject to enjoyment and suffering—have any of you ever told this body such a thing ? (*Mataji* laughs.)

(To be continued)

Sraddha

(Faith in God and Self-confidence)

A. M. Gupta, M. A.

Desiring eternal felicity in heaven, a rich man named Uddālaka, son of Vajāsṛavā undertook to perform a ritual sacrifice (*Viswajit Yajña*), which demanded a very high price, namely the gift (*Dakṣiṇā*) of everything one could call one's own.

Although this son of Vajāsṛavā desired the greatest reward in heaven, he was giving away the smallest of things: Kine that had drunk their last water, eaten their last grass, yielded their last milk, worn out their limbs—things which were of no further use to him.

Now this son of Vajāsṛavā himself had a son, young Nachiketā, who had a tranquil mind, was sincere to the backbone, and well versed in the scriptures.

As the gifts of the sacrifice (*Viswajit Yajña*) were being paraded towards the recipients, *śraddhā* entered into the pure heart of Nachiketā who clearly saw that his father was not closely following the injunctions concerning gifts. Not knowing what to say to his father, whom he revered as a living God, Nachiketā fell in line with the cows and other gifts.

At an opportune moment he asked his father: "Me to whom wilt thou give?"

The perplexed father could not understand this silly talk about a father giving away his son !

Nachiketā, however, repeated the question for the second time and for the third time.

The irate father then blurted out : "I shall give thee to Yama (the god of Death)."

"Yama-Yama"—this was a shining idea on which Nachiketā could concentrate. "Yama" means one who has attained self-mastery, one who holds in check, restrains and controls. Nachiketā felt that he was equal to any task and said : "Among many I walk first, among many I walk midmost : something Yama meaneth to do which today, by me, he will accomplish."

Now the story has it that Nachiketā went straight to the abode of Yama.

Yama, however, was not at home and Nachiketā had to wait for three nights.

On the fourth day Yama arrived and received Nachiketā with the following words : "O Brahmana, for three nights thou hast been waiting in my house fasting. Thou art a guest worthy of reverence. Salutation to thee and welfare to me."

Expressing regret for the lapse on his part, not having attended to a respected guest, Yama offered to make amends. Said he : "Three boons choose thou from me, one for each night."

Nachiketā said : "Let thy first boon be that my father's wrath against me may subside and his mind become tranquil as

before. Let him recognize me as his son when thou lettest me go."

"So be it !" said Yama.

Now for the second boon, Nachiketā requested Yama to expound to him the secret of the sacrifice which takes people to heaven. This also Yama was very pleased to grant. He expounded in detail the number of bricks to be obtained, the manner in which to light the sacrificial fire and all the rest. He ordained besides, that this sacrifice should henceforth be named after Nachiketā. He also rewarded Nachiketā with a variegated, jingling, jewelled necklace.

Yama then asked Nachiketā to choose the third boon.

Nachiketā said : "There is this debate : When a man dies, some say he yet is; and others say he is not. Instructed by thee I desire to understand this secret about his existence or non-existence, for I am full of *Śraddha*. Let the third boon be this, O Yama."

Yama was reluctant to answer this question and asked Nachiketā to give it up. "This is not easy to understand. Even the gods in ancient times were puzzled on this point and very subtle is the law of it", he said.

But Nachiketā was steadfast in his quest. "True," he said, "even the gods debated on this point and, as you say, O Death, this is not an easy question. But I cannot get another exponent like thee, nor is there any other boon that can match it.

Yama then said : "Nachiketā, choose sons and grandsons who will each live a hundred years; choose cattle, elephants,

horses and gold, choose a mighty empire on the earth and termless life. I shall make thee the enjoyer of all desires. Ask for all things which are hard to be obtained by mortals. Lo ! these glorious maidens with chariots and music—their like is not to be obtained by human beings ! Let these, which I give unto thee, serve thee. But question me not about death.”

Nachiketā said : “These are merely things of a day and surely they cloy the senses. The longest life is but for a short span. Let these chariots and the dancing maidens stay with thee. Man cannot remain satisfied with riches. Shall I retain my wealth when I meet with thee ? And I shall live only so long as thou desirest. Only the boon which I have asked will I choose and no other.”

Yama was very pleased with Nachiketā and said : “*Perfection* is one thing and *enjoyment* quite another. And these two different goals bind a man to action. Of these, he that taketh the path of *perfection* becomes pure. He that chooseth *enjoyment* cometh to ruin. The steadfast man examineth both and distinguisheth one from the other, he chooseth *perfection*, as being superior to *enjoyment*.

“But the foolish man chooseth enjoyment for his getting and his having. O Nachiketā, having looked closely at things which are desirable or apparently so, thou hast abandoned them. Thou hast not taken the path of riches which ruins many men. Truly thou art steadfast in thy quest. Even such a student as thou, may I meet with always ! Having had in thy very possession things of enjoyment, endless power, surest security, great riches and wide scope, strong in self-mastery hast thou cast them away from thee.”

Yama then proceeded to teach Nachiketā *Brahma-Vidya*, (Supreme Knowledge). Those beautiful teachings (by Yama) are embodied in the Katha Upaniṣad.

Thus did Nachiketā, possessed of the great quality of *sraddha*, with Death for his teacher, win Supreme Knowledge. He likewise learnt the whole ordinance of yoga. Thereafter he attained to Brahman and became void of stain and death. So shall another be who cometh likewise to the science of the Soul.

“In very truth, the Eternal’s offspring must center their thoughts on Him. Divorced from God there cannot be even a prospect of peace—never, never, never. By abiding in God man will find peace, the veil will be rent and the dispeiler of sorrow stand revealed. He alone is the conqueror of evil, He is yours, the sole treasure of the human heart.”

Sri Anandamayī Ma

Sri Sri Shyamacharan Lahiri

The Founder of a School of Yoga at Varanasi

Bhupendra Nath Sarkar

This is a unique honour and a privilege to pay a tribute to Sri Sri Shyama Charan Lahiri Mahashaya, the founder of a School of Yoga at Banaras, the holiest of holy places in India. Shyama Charan's greatness lies in the fact that, although a householder belonging to the middle-class, he rose to eminence as a yogi, a worthy disciple of Babaji Maharaj, the immortal sage of the Himalayas. It was ordained that the great sage would meet Lahiri at Ranikhet at the foot of the Himalayas. Lahiri's call from him was full of significance. With the help of his disciple Yukteswar Giri and grand-disciple Paramhansa Yogananda, he spread the message of Rishi Patanjali, simplified into *Kriya-Yoga* throughout India and beyond her shores, especially in California in the U. S. A. From Lahiri Mahashaya sprang some pillars of spiritualism who have immortalised themselves and their Master by their attainments. The world seems to be the better for their advent.

I acknowledge my indebtedness to Paramhansa Yogananda and Swami Satyananda Giri for materials.

*

*

*

The hoary-headed Ind' is rich in her treasures, more spiritual than material. The Vedas, the Upanishads, the six systems of Hindu Philosophy, the Bhagavad Gita and the like show the climax to which the Indo-Aryans had risen in the domain of philosophy and religion. Of these the yoga system of Patanjali lays bare to mankind a process by which body and mind can be harnessed to bring about a transformation of the human being into divinity. The yoga practices can work out this miracle by a scientific process, step by step. To quote the words of Yukteswar Giri, a learned disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya, "Yoga is India's deathless contribution to the world's treasury of knowledge."

Shyama Charan Lahiri was born to redeem society with the help of yoga from the clogmire it was in. On the 11th Aswin, 1235 B. S. (1828 A. D.) he was born of a Brahmin family of Ghurni, a suburb of Krishnanagar in West Bengal, India. They had their ancestral residence on the banks of the Jalangee. Their residence was eaten up by the erosion of the river.

When the boy Shyama Charan was five years old, his parents had to leave, bag and baggage, their homestead in Nadia, associated with Chaitanya Deva, the Prophet of Love. They took up their residence in Banaras, the holiest of holy places in India where her heart throbbed. The journey was troublesome in that it would take two months by a country boat to reach Banaras in the U. P. from Krishnanagar in West Bengal.

It is said that their family deity, Shivalingam, got submerged in the water of the river. Some devotees took it

out of the river-bed and placed it in a newlybuilt temple for daily worship. The temple, though badly in need of repairs, still stands, reminiscent of Lahiri Mahasaya's association with the place. It is popularly known as Shivatola.

Shyama Charan had his schooling at Banaras : he began with Hindi and Urdu and later learnt Sanskrit, Persian and English in Jay Narayan Ghosal's School and the Government Sanskrit College. He read up to the Junior Scholarship Standard during the pre-University days. He acquainted himself with the Vedas and with philosophy. He sat at the feet of Brahmins well versed in the Vedas. It is evident that he was brought up in a religious atmosphere and submerged in religious lore.

He had a good physique, was very simple in his habits, shunned luxury and was mindful of his duties.

In his youth he was united in wed-lock with the eighteen years old Kashimani Devi, daughter of Pandit Dev Narayan Sanyal. In time, she was initiated into yoga by her husband. At the age of ninety-four this faithful holy lady passed away. Two sons, Tincouri and Ducouri, were born to them. They followed in the foot-steps of their illustrious father.

In 1851 Sri Shyamacharan was appointed a clerk in the Military Department. For the exigencies of his Department he had to be transferred from one place to another in the U. P. When he was about two years and a half old, his father had died. He had to bear the responsibilities of his family. In 1863 he began to live in a rented house for a short period and then bought a house in Gorureswar Mohalla at Banaras. His two sons were born after his initiation. Though engrossed in meditation, he led a simple life, doing his household duties. As a religious preceptor he came to be venerated. Admirers and disciples

made obeisance to him; he made a return to them as so many *Nārāyanas* and did not allow them to touch his feet.

He was not oblivious of his social duties and took an active part in building up institutions like Bengalitola High School. He thus held up before householders an ideal of adjustment between the spiritual and the material plane. There can be a balance between *tyaga* and *bhoga*, as his disciple, Srimat Bhupendra Nath Sanyal later told the present writer.

Initiation

In 1861 Sri Lahiri was transferred to Ranikhet near Nainital. There were no Railways then, and he had to undertake a troublesome journey with his servant to reach there. He lived in a tent at the foot of the Himalayas.

He learnt from his servant that *sadhus* had their abode there. One day, while walking up the mountains, he heard, to his astonishment someone calling him by his name. He followed the sound and advanced. The sun was about to set; the shades of evening began to fall. He got frightened, yet he went on till he got to a cave where, lo and behold, he saw a sage, tall and beautiful, with a divine fervour around him. The *sadhu* beckoned to him to sit down and take rest. He patted him, smiling all the while. This was his long-expected preceptor. He was reminded of his former life when he had sat at the feet of the self-same Guru. He was consoled by the sage and came to know that Gurudeva's transcendental powers had made his transfer to Ranikhet possible.

In spite of his unwillingness to return to his work, he came back to his office but availed himself of every opportunity

to keep company with his Guru. He recouped his health with herbs and diet catered to him by his preceptor. He was initiated into *Kriya Yoga*, a simplified form of *Raja Yoga* or *Raj-gujha Yoga* of Rishi Patanjali. This had so long been hidden in the Himalayan caves. Babaji, that immortal sage, made Lahiri Mahashaya his instrument for illuminating the human mind. But propagation, in the ordinary sense of the term, was not his way.

Inspired by the sage, he practised yoga along with worldly duties. Ordinary mortals had misgivings about yoga. Lahiri Mahashaya made it easier for the house-holder, and his Gurudeva permitted him to initiate all who were earnest, irrespective of caste or creed. Only a paltry sum Rs. 5.00 was to be paid by the disciple and sent to the āsrama at Banaras. This was to signify a turning of his mind to the right path—to the path of illumination.

In time, Yogiraj Shyamacharan came back to Banaras with his divine message for mankind. In the course of his dealings with men he would talk of sages and the spiritual path. Some could not see eye to eye with him. In order to remove their suspicion, Shyamacharan once told his visitors to wait outside a room. He alone entered it. After a while he came out and the callers, to their immense surprise, found in the room Babaji Maharaj in addition to Shyamacharan. They were non-plussed. This was, no doubt, a miracle. Babaji, however, admonished his disciple not to show miracles in future. That would degrade the soul. Shyamacharan apologised, falling at the feet of his Gurudeva.

As he was kind enough to appear in person, Shyamacharan

besought his Gurudeva to let others have a *daršana* of his divine being. Babaji Maharaj consented. The door was opened. To the surprise of all, they found a different being in the room. This might be a mental or visual delusion. *Halua*, a preparation of suji, ghee (clarified butter) and sugar, was prepared. Guroji partook of it. This removed their misgivings. It was positive proof that the man was not a phantom. Babaji left and Shyama Charan was found alone in the room. Babaji's parting message was: "Whenever you feel my presence necessary, I shall make my appearance, to be sure."

We have it on the evidence of Srimat Yukteswar Giri that he met Babaji thrice in his life-time. Babaji was aware of the influence of western culture and felt the necessity of the propagation of the spiritual heritage of the Indo-Aryans in the west.

On the occasion of the *Kumbha Mela* at Allahabad, Babaji called him from a distance "Swamiji". Yukteswar thought he could not be a 'Swami'. He was reticent. Babaji, knowing the former's mind, replied that this was what the monks of their order were called. Yukteswar came to know that it was Babaji, his Paramguru. He lay prostrate before the Superman.

Yukteswar was then editing the Bhagavad Gita at the instance of his Guru, Lahiri Mahashaya. Babaji Maharaj told him to do something at his behest: "Try to find out some similarity between Indian and Western culture". Yukteswar objected "I am a humble mortal. How can I deal with such a subject?" Babaji laughed and said. O my child, why do you make light of your abilities? My wish will be fulfilled as it is the Almighty's wish."

Coming back to his own *ashrama* at Serampore in West Bengal, Yukteswar Giriji set about thinking of writing the book, as prescribed by Babaji. At bed time while it was all quiet, he meditated on the plan. He culled the essence of the Bible and Hindu Philosophy. He found out certain similarities between the two, and wrote the "Holy Science", with a view to ushering in a new age. Babaji Maharaja's wish was fulfilled.

On finishing the book Yukteswar went to the Hooghly for his daily morning bath. As soon as he got up to the banks he, to his agreeable surprise, found Babaji standing beneath a banyan tree. He made his obeisance and tried his best to take him to his residence. Babaji was adamant; he said it was forbidden for *sannyasins* to go to a house-holder's abode, and disappeared.

Swami Pranavananda Giri, one of Yogiraj's disciples, while sitting by the side of his preceptor, Lahiri Mahashaya, saw that someone was entering the Guru's room. On seeing him, Lahiri Mahashaya lost no time in lying prostrate before the caller. Yogiraj beckoned, and Yukteswar made his obeisance. The latter came to know that the visitor was none other than Babaji Maharaj.

Yukeswar was then in holy company. They took their lunch together. On enquiry he came to know that Babaji was then five hundred years old. This was indeed astounding, so much so as to be unbelievable. This could be made possible by certain yogic parctices, said Babaji. He added that he would have to put on his mortal coil for a few years more to finish his duties. The sage left, blessing them: "You have taken to the right path; go on meditating; your aim will be fulfilled."

One day, Sankari Mataji, a disciple of Trailanga Swami, sat by Lahiri Mahashaya. A man came up to them with a loin cloth on and a stick in his hand. At once Lahiri could recognise him as Babaji. Thus, off and on this sage appeared before his disciples. How gracious he was!

Sadhaka Ram Gopal Babu once narrated his uncommon experience to Paramhansa Yogananda, a grand-disciple of Lahiri Mahashaya: once during the small hours of the night, he was commanded to come to Dashaswamedh Ghat at Banaras. He waited there while meditating, and saw the vision of a lady gradually turning into the hallowed figure of Lahiri Mahashaya. In the divine halo he was taken aback on seeing the figure of Babaji Maharaj. This was a wonder of wonders—a union between the divine guide and his disciple. The movements of the sage were mysterious, as the man seemed to be a mystery. Those who were in communion with him were singularly fortunate.

Lahiri Mahashaya and His Worldly Duties

In obedience to official orders Lahiri Mahashaya had to come down to the plains near Danapore. People round about him did not know what a tremendous change had come upon him. In the midst of his worldly duties at home and at office he developed an air of indifference. This did not escape the eyes of his colleagues. Even his boss, an Englishman, began to call him by the appellation "*Pagla Babu*"

An incident is worth recording here. Lahiri Mahashaya one day found his boss downcast. He inquired of the cause. The Englishman replied that his wife was lying seriously ill

in England; for some time past he had had no news of her. Lahiri Mahashaya assured him that he would relieve him of his anxiety. He sat in meditation for some time, and let his boss know that she had taken a turu for the better. Wonder of wonders ! he let him know in advance the contents of the letter that she had written to him. The *Sahib* could not believe this fully. He had some misgivings. When he received the letter in question, he was amazed to find that the very same letter of which '*Pagla Babu*' had spoken had come from his ailing wife.

After some time the Mem Sahib came to India. Seeing the '*Pagla Babu*' in the office of her husband, she exclaimed, "I met this very man by my bed-side in England. My ailment was off. What a remarkable personality he was." She took her husband to task for engaging as a clerk such an extraordinary man with mystic powers. Lahiri Mahashaya came to the rescue of his boss. He said that his master had done no wrong. He was no escapist: he liked to do his worldly duties along with meditation.

Days wore on. People came to know of his spiritual powers. He initiated some whom he considered fit, i. e., those who had the real hankering. He was attracted by Krishnanagar and Bankura in West Bengal first of all. One may recollect that Krishnanagar was his birth-place. Srimat Brajalal Adhikary who lived a quiet life at the town, doing teaching work and practising Kriya-Yoga, was an early disciple of Lahiri Mahashaya. (The present writer, then in his teens, came into touch with Adhikary Mahashaya). In Bihar, Monghyr and Bhagalpore were fortunate enough to receive his blessings.

Some of his disciples advanced on the righteous path by leaps and bounds. Shyama Charan was averse to propoganda, His disciples scattered the seeds of *Kriya-Yoga* pell-mell, and that silently, hidden from the public gaze.

His occult powers sometimes became manifest to his followers in various forms. A mother once prayed to him for a child who would not leave her. The sage said, "Your desire will be fulfilled." She conceived and the master cautioned her: "In the lying-in room the lamp must not be put out. Keep a watch on it." Lo and behold ! the door of the room was thrown open; and Lahiri Mahashaya was seen standing, pointing to the lamp. The lamp was set right. The divine being went out of sight. To the delight of all, the child was saved and had a long lease of life. We need not multiply instances, as miracles do not count much with those who have realised the Supreme Being.

While in service and after retirement Lahiri Mahashaya initiated all who keenly desired spiritual illumination, irrespective of their position, age, sex, caste or creed; gardener, office-peon, Maharaja, brahmachari, ascetic, house-holder, the down-trodden, Sahibs, Muslims and so forth. It is remarkable that a peon named Brinda Bhakat was spiritually so advanced that Lahiri Mahashaya once told of him that Brinda had attained *Sat-chit-ananda*—he was full of divine ambrosia. His disciple Abdul Gafar Khan made a remarkable advance in *Kriya-Yoga*.

Among his disciples some stand out prominently: Swami Yukteswar Giri (the preceptor of Paramhansa Yogananda), Pranavananda Giri, Srimat Keshavananda Brahmachari, Kevananda Maharaj, Acharya Panchanan Bhattacharya, Acharya

Brijalal Adhikary, Yogacharya Bhupendra Nath Sanyal, Pandit Ramdayal Majumdar and others have left a spiritual legacy which will inspire men and women for all time to come.

Though occult powers have nothing to do with one's spiritual advancement, people are attracted to a *yogi* or an ascetic by a demonstration. This is a human weakness.

Lahiri Mahashaya had an aversion for photography. On the authority of Kali Kumar Roy, an advanced yogi, we come to know that once he took a group photo, in which Kashi Baba stood; when the plate was washed, the participants found to their surprise that Baba was not there; his seat was vacant. The devotees besought the sage to sit for the camera alone, so that when he left his mortal coil, they might look at his picture. He consented. Mr. Roy had the good fortune of keeping company with the sage. He observed that the latter did not sleep at night; he sometimes sat up for a while, shutting his eyes. That might be in a trance.

Trailanga Swami was an ascetic who, in a state of nudity, lay floating on the surface of the Ganga evidently with the help of *kumbhaka*. On the banks of the river, he met Lahiri Mahashaya and made obeisance. People round about him took him to task for showing such respect to a house-holder. Swamiji replied that the gentleman had reached a stage in spiritual advancement for which he had left all worldly paraphernalia and put on a loin cloth. Like attracts like.

Lahiri Mahashaya demonstrated once for all that for salvation one need not give up the world: that one can combine material life and spirituality.

A recluse's life was not the ideal with him, though among his disciples some were eminent renunciates. We were fortunate enough to come into contact with two of his disciples who were householders and with Yogananda, a renunciate. He had the blessings of Babaji Maharaj and Yuktéswar Giriiji who sent him to the U. S. A. to fulfil his mission of propagating to the westerners. *Kriya Yoga*, India's deathless contribution to the treasure of world knowledge.

It cannot be gainsaid that the stage had been set for him by the illustrious saint of India, Swami Vivekananda, who electrified the American audience by his Chicago lecture. He made a spiritual conquest. Later on, Yoganandaji, whom I dubbed a messenger of the East to the West, made a tremendous impression on his audience in America, which later developed into his second home. Thousands of Americans, men and women, became his followers. Los Angeles became his centre of activities. Hermitages, "hives of divine honey to which human bees flock", were set up one after another, the Golden Lotus Temple being the most prominent. His message spread to other parts of the world.

He was God's man. He realised the Supreme Being in himself. It was my singular good fortune that I had a *daršana* of such a personality. He said that on the beach of California he sometimes went into a trance, *Samādhi*, and gave a vivid idea of this in his book : "Whispers from Eternity".

His book "Autobiography of a Yogi" is perhaps the best seller. In our opinion, no better scientific explanation of yoga (*Raja yoga*, *Raja guijha yoga* or *Kriya yoga*) is to be found elsewhere. He was a cosmopolitan; one may find appreciative

accounts of many a sage and saint in this book. His magnetic personality and the short-cut that he had made in the yoga practices contributed to the popularity of his teaching.

He was great, while he was alive and also when he left his mortal coil. Many in America know that his body remained intact for about three weeks, as recorded by the Forest Lawn Mortuary personnel.

In his last speech at Washington, he wanted the Americans to raise spiritual sky-scrapers, which might result in blending matter with spirit.

This re-adjustment between the spiritual and the material plane is a dire necessity of the world. He wrote in his book about the superiority of spirit over matter. Sri Aurobindo, the prophet of modern India, has also hinted at this.

We should bear in mind that this was the ultimate end of Lahiri Mahashaya's *sādhana* which his grand-disciple has put before mankind.

The world is in a sad plight. O tempora, O mores !
Will humanity turn to the beacon light shown by our Masters ?

To quote Yukteswar Giriġi : "Babaji has foretold at the Kumbha Mela that the householder incarnation of Lahiri Mahashaya was drawing to a close. During the summer of 1895 his stalwart body developed a small boil on the back. He protested against lancing; he was working out in his own flesh the evil karma of some of his disciples. Finally a few disciples became very insistent. The master said : "The body has to find a cause to go; I shall be agreeable to whatever you want to do".

A short time later the venerable guru gave up his body in Banaras. Though his disciple missed him in his parlour, he found every day of his life blessed by his omnipresent guidance.

Many wonderful facts were narrated by Swami Keshavananda, an advanced disciple, about the passing away of Lahiri Mahashaya. He says, 'A few days before my guru relinquished his body, he materialised himself before me as I sat in my hermitage in Hardwar. 'Come at once to Banaras'. With these words Lahiri Mahashaya vanished.

Keshavanandaji says: 'I lost no time and went to Banaras. I found many followers assembled. For hours that day the master expounded the Gita. Then he addressed us simply, 'I am going home'. Tears were irresistible. He said: 'Be comforted; I shall rise again'. After this utterance Lahiri Mahashaya rose from his seat, thrice turned his body around in a circle, assumed the lotus posture while facing the north, and gloriously entered the final *Mahāsamādhi*. On September 26th, 1895, Lahiri Mahashaya left his mortal coil,

His body was cremated at Monikarnika Ghat by the Ganga.

Keshavanandaji continued: 'The following day at ten o'clock in the morning, my room at Banaras was illumined with a light. Lo! before me stood the flesh and blood form of Gurudeva. It looked exactly like his old body; rather it appeared younger and more radiant'. He said, 'Keshavananda, it is I. From the disintegrated atoms of my cremated body I have resurrected a remodelled form. My householder work is done; but I do not leave the earth entirely. Henceforth, I shall spend some time with Babaji in the Himalayas, and with him in the cosmos.'

Giving his blessings, the master vanished.

Another advanced disciple of his, Srimat Panchanan Bhattacharya said; "Here in Calcutta in the morning that followed his cremation, Lahiri Mahashaya appeared before me in living glory".

Swami Pranavananda once told Paramhansa Yogananda at his Ranchi *ashrama* : "A few days before Lahiri Mahashaya passed away I received from him a letter requesting me to come immediately to Banaras. I was overwhelmed with joy to see in my room the shining figure of my guru". "Why hurry to Banaras? You shall find me there no longer". I thought that I was seeing him only in a vision. He said, "Touch my flesh. I am living as ever. Do not lament; am I not with you for ever?" This proves the immortality of a soul emancipated.

An event associated with Jadunath Pal, the prince of clay-modellers of Krishnanagar, who had a soft heart for the present writer, is worth mentioning. He made a beautiful plaster of Paris statue of Lahiri Mahashaya and presented this to Sri Ananda Mohan Lahiri (a grandson of the Master). Sri Pal said that in a vision he had been directed to model the statue and present it to Sri Ananda. It may be noted in passing that Lahiri Mahashaya's birth-place was very near to Sri Pal's.

Lahiri Mahashaya laid stress on the study of the Bhagavad Gita and on meditation. His close associates formed an association called "Gita Sabha". In one sitting, taking up the baby of his disciples, the parents of Mukunda (Paramhansaji's childhood name) in his lap, he uttered the prophecy : "this baby is not an ordinary one; he will be an engine". His prophecy came true.

Mukunda became Yogananda. It was through his instrumentality that his Guru's and Paramguru's teachings reached the shores of the Atlantic and regions far and wide, to the benefit of mankind. We must not forget that India's religions, her spiritual heritage, does not consist in polemic discussion; it lies in doing and not speaking. The science of yoga pre-eminently advocates doing *kriya*—a scientific control of the mind along the spinal cord. The control of the mind will ultimately lead to the realisation of the Supreme Being by the individual soul. That is the *summum bonum* of one's life on Earth. Eliot Elisofon in his book : "The Temple of Konarak" writes explicitly on this :

"To try to understand Vedanta without doing yoga in one or more of its many forms is as absurd as trying to experience the Himalayas simply by reading travel books. The *Yogasutra* defines yoga as *citta vritti nirodha* which means approximately "being aware without thinking", for yoga is initially the temporary suspension of the habit of talking to oneself, of the compulsive cluttering of naked experience with words and ideas about it. Yoga is not blank-mindedness or unconsciousness; it is simply silence of the mind."

Grace as the Religious Dimension of Moral life

Rama Ghose, M. A.

The concept of religion with reference to Grace and that of morality demands a clear understanding of the contents of both religion and morality with all their implications.

Nobody will deny that nearly all religions have a moral aspect. This means that moral principles are linked in some intimate way with religious belief. They are almost common and the religious teachers teach some moral concepts as a part of their respective religion. There may be differences in their application but not in essence. One therefore arrives at the conclusion that morality and religion are closely linked, so much so that the adherent of a religion must accept and act according to some moral precepts.¹

This, however, does not assert that a moralist must be religious. On the contrary, he may shun all religious institutions and even remain indifferent about God.

For a religious man morality is not attained by any effort of his but it naturally grows in him because he is religious.

-
1. If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world".

—Basil Mitchell; Faith and Logic, P. 180.

Intellect plays a prominent part in the building up of a moral code and it requires an effort to put it into practice in life.

Religious attitude hardly admits of any intellectual controversy. It is an awakening with spontaneous response, a sprouting from within, comprising man's entire existence. He becomes too emotional to pay any heed to reasons. A moralist, on the other hand, rejects all sentiment and strictly adheres to his ideal. Self-exertion are dominant features of morality while in religion, the spirit of surrender and self-abnegation predominates.¹

Self-consciousness and an awareness of self-determination are the distinguishing features of spiritual being marking it off from the non-spiritual. In the course of evolution self-consciousness emerged and opened the way for the self to lead a spiritual life and break out of its bondage. Man, the self-conscious being, is fully aware of the opposition between himself and the world, between his actual empirical values and his ideal possibilities as a universal spirit. His own awareness prompts him from

1. "Piety has also a passive side. While morality always shows itself as manipulating, as self-controlling, piety appears as a surrender, a submission to be moved by the whole that stands over against man. Morality depends, therefore, entirely on the consciousness of freedom, within the sphere of which all that it produces falls. Piety, on the contrary, is not at all found to this side of life. In the opposite sphere of necessity, where there is no properly individual action, it is quite as active, therefore the two are different. Piety does, indeed, linger with Satisfaction on every action that is from God and yet it is not itself this activity".

—Schleiermacher. "On Religion". P. 37.

within to lead a life equal to it i. e. at par with his spiritual existence. The possibility of moral life lies in the fact that there is in him a universal nature as spirit, a self which transcends its empirical experiences. The animal nature does not contain the universal element.

The mere animal therefore 'lives' without even a suspicion of its universal nature and therefore, without the possibility of moral life. The animal knows no moral conflicts as it is ignorant of the distinction between its actual empirical existence and an 'ideal'. The animal, in short, is not self-conscious.

Man's distinctiveness as spirit is revealed in his self-consciousness. In it lies the secret of his awareness of a tension between his actual lower nature and the ideal 'higher nature'. This tension induces him to make an effort in search of his true being that goes to constitute his moral, cultural and religious life. In a broad sense man's spiritual destiny comprises morality, culture and religion. All these three alike are functions or orientations of spirit involving the total man. What is called morality in man's centred self aims at actualisation. Morality, culture and religion are the three aspects of one spirit but having separate functions.

Morality, in the centred person (ego-dominating), aims at the actualisation of his potential nature; culture witnesses the creative power of the human spirit; and religion aspires at knowing the source, meaning and fulfilment of life.¹

1. "Morality is the constitution of the bearer of the spirit, the centred person; culture points to the creativity of the spirit and also to the totality of its creations; and religion is the self-transcendence of the spirit toward what is ultimate and unconditioned in being and meaning".

--Tillich, P., *Morality and Beyond*. PP. 17, 18.

In order to reconcile the problem of 'graceful' religious life with the ego claiming moral behaviour, the following four questions should be dealt with thoroughly.

- I. The content and scope of moral behaviour.
- II. Nature and characteristics of religious life.
- III. Bearing of morality and its relation with religion.
- IV. Grace as the revelatory and distinguishing element of religious life.

I

The sublimity of moral life reveals itself in various ways in different types of men namely the religious, martyrs, statesmen, scientists, etc. Not to take one or the other means for an end or even how far the end justifies the efforts are puzzling questions that tax the brain of man. At last he accepts the popular view 'the highest good of the greatest number.' To a moralist the highest achievement is doing the greatest good to society. He is interested in creating a society in which all are happy and in which there is political, social and economic justice everywhere.

Absence of disparity and a spirit of equality in every walk of life are aimed at by the moralist. Freedom of all is his ideal and he works to that end. He concentrates on the lot of men in this world and ignores the life beyond. Religion on the other hand is concerned with the destiny of man and thinks of the life beyond this life.

Morality contains mainly four characteristics. Firstly, it holds that men is not content only with the satisfaction of

his natural desires and passions. Second, there is in him an ever-increasing aspiration for a good, prosperous and ideal life. Thirdly, to attain to the realisation of that ideal, the intelligence of man chalks out a plan and moves accordingly. It also points out what ought not to be done. For this we use the term 'moral code.' Lastly, there are some inherent motives that induce one to choose the moral code. The popular or unreflected morality lays more emphasis on rules than on ideals.

The universal nature of man, his intelligence and self-consciousness are manifestations of an Infinite that does not allow him to lead a mechanical life, rather always urges him to aspire for a better life. The imperative for the highest kind of morality is not and cannot be a mechanical one.

II

Now, about the nature of religion. Most thinkers agree that religion is the link between man and something higher and greater than himself, something which inspires man to seek.¹ A religious man feels that he is bound and that he, of his own efforts, cannot attain release. He believes in the supreme power of God which alone can grant him liberation. Release from bondage and ultimate unity with God are the aims of religion. A truly religious man trifles away empirical gains and is indifferent to material loss. In the course of his search for a higher and nobler existence, man's entire being undergoes a

1. "The fundamental concept of religion is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, by an infinite interest, by something one takes unconditionally serious."

—Tillich, P ; Morality and Beyond. Op. Cit. P. 30

change, he becomes a visionary and a religious man.² It creates a whole personality to which a non-religious person can never attain nor can ever think of and hence the anomaly. This wholeness which is a gift of religion, is born of the knowledge of oneness with the ultimate whole beyond which there is nothing. This is the actualisation of the potential which results in harmony and connotes the significance and success of individual life.

Religion is the bridge between the individual self at the bottom and the Absolute at the top, connecting the two in inseparable relation.³

The key conception of 'other' plays a unique role in religion. It is difficult to conceive the otherness of 'other' and its all-inclusive wholeness at the same breath. But religious consciousness, somehow, asserts this paradox 'Other' is not an object of our thinking or a vague ideal for our striving, a merely imaginary one but it is the active presence, the actual realisation of the all-inclusive whole which is the ground of all experience and hence claims our dependence on it. It is not a painful, self-contained helplessness, rather a blissful, ego-abolishing, voluntary self-surrender, a feeling of utter dependence on the Almighty involving awe, love, trust and hence worship instead of fear, horror and shuddering. Infinite as He is, He has expressed Himself in infinite ways.

2. "Religion is concerned not with some special aspect or manifestation of life but with the whole of life or with life as a whole. For religion it is always a case of all or nothing."

—Paton, *The Modern Predicament*. P. 60.

3. *Ibid.* P. 63.

Religious experiences are therefore varied. Although there are different religions there are certain common features which link them all. At the back of all religious consciousness, there exists a supernatural power which is in no case changeable. Secondly, in all of them prevails a mystic element and a spirit of dedication, and the attainment of peace in life and bliss at the end. Thirdly, every religion advocates prayer, ritual and adherence to a particular discipline for the purification of the body and mind and the realization of bliss. Fourthly, a general outlook on the universe and the place of man therein is a common topic in all the religions, and an attempt is made to explain the significance and purpose of human life. Fifthly, every religious teacher lays down certain rules which according to him are favourable for the attainment of liberation. He is also keen to avoid what would displease God and as such he attaches particular characteristics to the particular form of God whom he and his followers worship.

(To be concluded)

MAHA DEVI

Suradhuni

These two truths ever seer my soul: that I am totally dependent on the will of Divine Mother, who can toss me and turn me and dash me to the ground in a moment; and that that Divine Mother, who holds all my being and doing in her palm, loves me more than does anyone else in the world. Between these two poles of humility and faith I must ever struggle. If She plunges me into darkness, it is the descent into Her womb, from which I will be born again. If She shakes me with agitation, it is to stir and arouse my soul. If She leads me to distractions, it is so that from a greater distance I may gain greater momentum in leaping back to Her.

Whatever I am, or do, or have, is by Her will. And whatever others are not, or fail, or lack, is by Her will. And Her will could reverse at any moment, as when the tide changes, leaving the mightiest ship stranded in the mud.

The moment I think that I am superior to others, Divine Mother spreads Her fingers, and I plunge a thousand feet. The moment I feel that I have earned Her grace, She shows me Her back, my other earning. The moment I nail the sign, "Private" on the gate to Mother's garden, I turn and find the garden choked by weeds and slithering with snakes.

Judas was not the least loved, and Rome was not dearer than Israel. The sign of Mother's favour is not victory, but visitation.

If She stands with the weak and the wretched, how dim is the splendor of the strong ! All men are but moons, reflected lights. They Shine not according to their size, but according to their nearness to the sun. And sometimes the greatest burst of brilliance is but the quick radiance of self-explosion.

So we bow to Thee, Mother of the Universe. You dance Your dance of joy, and the breeze of Your swirling hair is our breath, and Your tears of ecstasy are our blood. You kick up Your foot, and we are raised to glory, then You stamp it down, and we are dashed underneath. But the dance is a love-dance, a rite of betrothal, and its whirling does not crush, but conjures up, as the child is conceived in the throes of love. As conjugal violence breeds the babe, as the fury of flames throws warmth, as thunder harbingers the thirst-quenching rain, so the tossing and twirling of Your dance churns the nectar of our souls.

Mātri Līlā

(Oct. 25th 1973-Jan. 25th 1974)

Mataji reached Vrindaban from Naimisharanya on October 22nd. On October 25th, *Divali* night, *Kālī Pūjā* was celebrated in the usual manner, followed by *Annakūt* the next day. Several American devotees who had come mainly for the *Samyam Vrata* attended the *pūjā*. *Bhayadūj* was this time celebrated in the morning instead of the evening.

Gradually devotees from all over India as well as from abroad began to gather for the 24th *Samyam Mahāvratā* that was observed from November 3rd to 10th. Twenty-four is a special number and we were urged to make a special effort this time. The attendance was larger than ever before, about five hundred *vratis* had flocked for the occasion. Fortunately our Ashram hall is very spacious and there is no dearth of accommodation in Vrindaban. Mataji, always tireless during functions, had to work overtime to meet all demands for individual attention over and above the long hours of *satsang*. As usual the *mahātmās* delighted and enlightened the audience by their excellent speeches. Swami Akhandananda Saraswati delivered the Upanishad lecture in the morning for the first few days. Then he unfortunately fell ill and Swami Brahmanandaji of the Mahoshwarananda Ashram took over. Swami Vishnuashramji of Sukhtal, Swami Vidyanandaji of the Kailash Ashram, Swami Sharananandaji of *Manav Seva Sangh*, Swami

Anandaji and Sri Jogesh Brahmachariji were among the speakers. Swami Chidanandaji, the head of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, talked in English. One of the many beautiful things he said that are worth keeping in mind, was : “*Samyam Vrata* signifies in essence a strong pull towards the Divine, a powerful movement from the many to the ONE.” On the last evening Swami Nirmalananda Giri, a young American *Sannyāsi* who is running a “Sri Anandamayi Monastery” in Oklahoma, U. S. A. gave a short talk. He had come with about ten brahmacharis to take part in the *Samyam Vrata*. It goes without saying that “*Mātri Satsang*”, the last item of the daily programme, was the climax of every single day. Mataji gave truly wonderful replies to questions, perhaps more so than ever before. On the last evening there was a longer session, followed by collective midnight meditation. After replying to questions for a long time, Mataji sang : “*Sri Guru śaraṇam mama, namo, namo*” and ‘*Hari bol*’ and finally she asked the whole congregation for “*biksha*” (alms). That is to say, She begged of all *vratīs* to fix a definite time of the day or night, and at that particular moment for the rest of their lives to bow to God, saying mentally : “*Lord, I am Thine, Thou art my refuge. Have mercy upon me and show me path to Thee.*” This was the invaluable *prasādam* that every *vratī* took with him from the 24th *Samyam Mahāvratā*; the dedication of oneself to the One Reality and the remembrance of this fact daily at a particular hour for the rest of his life. What more precious gift could we have taken with us from the 24th *Mahāvratā*? The man or woman who can say from his heart : “*Lord, I am Thine !*” has no more cares or worries. His life belongs to the Lord, his family, his possessions are the Lord’s. What-

ever is done, is done for the sake of the Lord, as His willing instrument. Happen what may, it is the Lord's dispensation. All we have to do is to pray for His mercy so that He may reveal Himself to us.

*

*

*

After an incredibly hectic time, Mataji left with a small group in the late afternoon of November 11th. She asked for two cars to be kept ready for Her departure, but nobody knew where Mataji would go. Much later we heard that Mataji had gone to Govardhan. In rural surroundings, far removed from modern civilization and the surging crowd, Mataji can relax and feel at ease. But She hardly ever actually rests. There are any number of things that She attends to even in solitude. Mataji got up early the next morning and started walking at great speed. Finally She stopped somewhere in the open country. In Govardhan every stone is supposed to be sacred and can be worshipped as Krishna. Someone had done *pūjā* of a stone with so much true feeling, putting his heart and soul into his adoration that Mataji was attracted to the spot. By the intensity of the worship the stone had become a vehicle for the Divine Presence. Mataji called the stone "*Hari*" and asked one of the brahmacharis to take it and keep it with him permanently. Mataji had special *pūjā* performed in the temple of Govardhan and also visited Radhakund. After this short but delightful excursion, Mataji returned to Vrindaban on the 13th for one night. The Ashram was now quiet and solitary as all visitors had left. On the 14th Mataji motored to Delhi, where She spent a few hours only. She went to the hospital to see Brahmachari Brahmananda (Vibhu) who was quite ill

and for the first time had been unable to take part in the *Samyam Mahāvratā*. We missed him very much. There are certain passages to be chanted after the meditation that so far he alone had been allowed to intone. This time Pushpa had been entrusted with the task and it must be said that she did really excellently.

From Delhi Mataji boarded the train the same night and after halting in Vindhyaçal for one night, proceeded to Varanasi, where She remained until November 18th. She then visited Allahabad where She spent a couple of days at the Satyagopal Ashram at Allengunj and then went to Kanpur, alighting there on November 23rd.

For the last few winters, Sir Padampad Singhanīa had arranged for a fortnight's *satsang* on a large scale in Mataji's presence and with Swami Akhandanandaji as the speaker. This year also a similar gathering had been planned and a giant pandal near the Radha Krishna temple, a smaller pandal in the Ashram compound and all other preparation were ready. Swami Akhandananda had agreed to hold daily discourses on the Srimad Bhagavata and the Bhagavad Gita. To everyone's sincere regret his health did not allow him to go to Kanpur and he had to be taken to Bombay for treatment instead.

Mataji and her party as well as many visitors had gathered. A Bengali *sādhu*, Swami Bhagavatananda, the author of an elaborate commentary on the Gitā in several volumes, happened to be in Kanpur. Mataji had the *kheyāla* to call him and sent someone to him on November 24th. He came and disclosed to Mataji that he had since long had the desire to talk about the Gitā in Mataji's presence, as he had

made such a profound study of it for many years. It was thus arranged that the Swami would deliver discourses on the Gita twice daily for an hour each time from November 26th to December 1st. His talks were in fluent Hindi and extremely interesting so that the congregation that assembled in spectacular numbers in the large pandal listened spell-bound and with rapt attention. The whole function proved great success.

From December 2nd to 6th a *Gītā Jayanti* was celebrated. For three days six chapters of the Gītā were chanted collectively every morning by all ashramites and by whoever of the congregation wished to join, and twice daily Brahmachari Nirmalananda gave talks on the Gītā. He also spoke very well indeed. On the fourth day the whole of the Gita was recited and on the fifth day the Bhagavad Gītā was worshipped by an elaborate *pujā*. Eighteen *thālis** with eighteen different kinds of fruits and eighteen different kinds of sweets and flowers and eighteen bowls with *kheer*** , all beautifully arranged, were offered. Mataji Herself supervised every detail. Five conches were blown. His Holiness, the Shankaracharya of Kanchi, graced this *pujā*. He had already once before come and delivered a lecture. Mataji accepted an invitation to his place where She went with Her entire party. A special Siva *pujā* was celebrated in Her honour.

No sooner had the *Gītā Jayanti* been accomplished than *Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa* was started in the smaller pandal in the Ashram compound. A party from Rae Bareilly who had on some former occasions recited the Ramayana in our Ashrams,

* Metal plate.

** Milk pudding.

was responsible for the function. They have their own way of singing the whole of the epic in beautiful, ever changing tunes at great leisure and it therefore takes them two days and two nights to complete the recitation. Immediately after, a delightful ceremony was performed, called *Rām darbār* and *Rāmraj Tilak*. It represents the welcome of Sri Rama and Sita when they returned to Ayodhya after their exile of fourteen years. A large picture of Sri Rama and Sita was placed on a profusely decorated throne and all the details as described in the Ramayana were enacted.

On December 9th and 10th *Nama Yajña* was held by our Delhi Kirtan party who had been specially called for the end and climax of Mataji's visit to Kanpur. Their performance is always exquisite and Mataji accordingly takes great active interest and often goes into *bhāva* on those occasions.

In December 11th everyone dispersed. Mataji sent all ashramites to their respective Ashrams and left with a few companions for Bithur, without disclosing Her destination beforehand. Bithur is a place of pilgrimage on the bank of the Ganges, not far from Kanpur. On the opposite bank of the Ganges is supposed to have been the Valmiki Ashram where Sita was sent by Rama shortly after their return to Ayodhya. The famous saint, Sri Sitaram Das Omkarnathji has an Ashram at Bithur. Mataji went to one or two temples and dharmasālas and then selected the Ganga Vihara Dharmasālā for Her stay. She visited *Dharma Tila* before returning to Kanpur on December 13th. Mataji first paid a visit to Swadeshi House, the residence of the Jaipuria family and then went to Sir Singhania's Ashram. From there She left by the Delhi Mail

for Varanasi, reaching the same night. At Varanasi Ma did not keep good health. She stayed in Her tiny room on the roof of the Kanyapith and never came downstairs at all. Only twice She gave *darśana* on the roof, for the rest people were allowed to do *praṇāma* outside of Her room. Mataji was to leave on the 16th but postponed Her departure by two days. On the 18th at about 10-30 a. m. She and a few companions left by two cars and a jeep for an undisclosed destination. After passing Vindhyachal, Mataji declared that She was going to the Jaipuria Mill at Naini (near Allahabad). There everyone was put up at the guest-house. Arrangements were excellent. Sri Manturam, the head of the Jaipuria family came and remained all through Mataji's sojourn. His son, Sri Rajaram, also came. At Naini Mataji could enjoy such solitude as She had not known for years. Nobody could guess where She was and so there were no visitors at all. However Mataji was very active, attending to heaps of correspondence and to other work. Mataji remained at Naini until December 26th. The night before She left for Vindhyachal, a devotee at Allahabad dreamt that Mataji was staying seven miles off Allahabad. She guessed it might be Naini and lost no time, going in search of Mataji with another devotee. To their great joy they found Mataji and had Her *darśana* just before She left. Mataji reached Vindhyachal at about 4 p. m. on December 26th and remained there for one night only. On the 27th morning She proceeded to Varanasi. On the 29th a feast was served to *sadhus* at our Ashram. On the 30th Mataji entrained for Lucknow and the next morning went on to Naimisharanya, where She again had a quiet stay.

On January 13th morning Mataji alighted at Kankhal. At about mid-day She attended a religious function in a large

pandal at Hardwar, arranged by Sri Ram Panjwani in preparation for his daughter's wedding that was to take place two days later. In the pandal the *Srimad Bhagavata*, the *Ramayana* and *Guru Granth Sahib* went on simultaneously. Pushpa sang for a while and before leaving Mataji sang Herself for a few minutes. The next day was *Makar Sankranti* (the winter solstice). Various *pujās* were performed in our Ashram at Kankhal and a few rooms on the groundfloor of the new guest-house that is being constructed were ceremoniously opened by the Mahant of Nirvani Akhara in Mataji's presence. There was *kirtana* and *pujā* the whole morning, followed by a feast given to all present. The next morning very early, notwithstanding the severe cold, Mataji motored to Dehradun. A little after 9 a. m. she alighted at Kalyanvan. After a short while she went to the Kishenpur Ashram and from there to "Sadhan Ashram" Jakhan, where *Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyana* was started in memory of Sri R. C. Sood who to our deep regret had suddenly died of heart failure on October 30th, 1973 at the age of seventy. Engineer R. C. Sood had been a devotee for a good many years. On retiring from service he had built himself a large house in the midst of a beautiful garden in calm and peaceful surroundings at about half a mile's distance from the Kishenpur Ashram. About twelve years ago he donated the whole of his property to the Shree Shree Anandamayee Saugha and henceforth lived there as a *Vanaprasthi* and the caretaker of "Sadhan Ashram". He built a set of rooms for Mataji's personal use on the roof. Mataji has stayed there on several occasions. The spacious roof commands a glorious view over the valley and the surrounding mountains and is an ideal place for *satsang*, weather permitting.

Mataji returned to Kishenpur before midday and again stopped at Sadhan Ashram for a short while on Her way back to Kankhal at about 3 p. m. The next night Mataji boarded the Howrah Express from Hardwar. She did not tell where she was going. She got down at Lucknow and without previous notice went by taxi to the home of Sri R. Sahai where She usually halts. Only a servant happened to be in the house. Mataji then proceeded by taxi to Kanpur and went to the residence of the Jaipuria family. They had been informed of Mataji's arrival only an hour earlier. Mataji was received by Sri Manturam's grandson Ashok and his wife. Only on January 20th Sri Sitaram and Sri Rajaram arrived from Calcutta. Mataji had a few quiet days, leaving on the 21st night.

* * *

Saraswati Puja will be held on *Vasant Panchami* day (January 28th) in our Delhi Ashram. From January 30th a *Bhagavata Saptah* is to start there. Sri Swami Vishnuashramji of Sukhtal has agreed to expound in Hindi daily for 5 hours. Sivaratri is to be held at Kankhal on February 20th and Holi at Calcutta. On April 13th, the Samadhi Mandir of Didima, Swami Muktananda Giriji, is to be consecrated. Mataji's birthday is to be celebrated from 2nd to 8th May in Andheri, Bombay at the invitation of Sri P. M. Vissanji.

* * *

We have already announced the sad news of the demise of Sri R. C. Sood. It is with deep regret that we report here about the passing away of three other great devotees during the last quarter.

Srimati Manturam Jaipura departed from this world during Durga Puja.

Sri Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta, M. A. B. L., one of the oldest bhaktas, who already knew Mataji in Dacca, died in Varanasi on November 29 at the age of 81. He had been the Principal of the Law College in Dacca. After the partition he and his family took up residence in Varanasi in a hired house near our Ashram. Sri Amulyada used to spend several hours of every day at our Ashram, whether Mataji was present or not. He kept a very valuable diary of incidents connected with Mataji and of discussions with Her and called it "*Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi Prasang*". Several volumes of it have already been published by instalments in '*Ananda Varta*' both in Bengali and Hindi. He also contributed a very interesting article to the book, "Mother as Seen by Her Devotees". His whole family is devoted to Mataji and one of his daughters was a teacher at the Kanyapith for several years.

Another great devotee of a good many years standing was Sri Mukund Madhav Thakore, B.A., LL.B., who left his mortal coil on November 15th, 1973, at the age of 71. For 25 years he had been the Principal of the Law College of Ahmedabad. In an article in the book "Mother as Seen by Her Devotees" he gave a very brilliant description of His first *darśana* of Mataji in Gujarat and of several other interesting incidents. He was on the Governing Body of the Sangha for years. A very special service was rendered by him on the occasion of the great *Savitri Mahayajña* that was performed at Varanasi from 1947 to 1950. He kept a dairy farm with high milk yielding cows for this purpose and throughout those three years supplied pure cow's ghee by aeroplane for the sacrifice.

We sorely miss those four friends who have left us and tend our heart felt condolences to their bereaved families. By Mataji's grace may they remain in peace and bliss for ever at the feet of the Lord.
