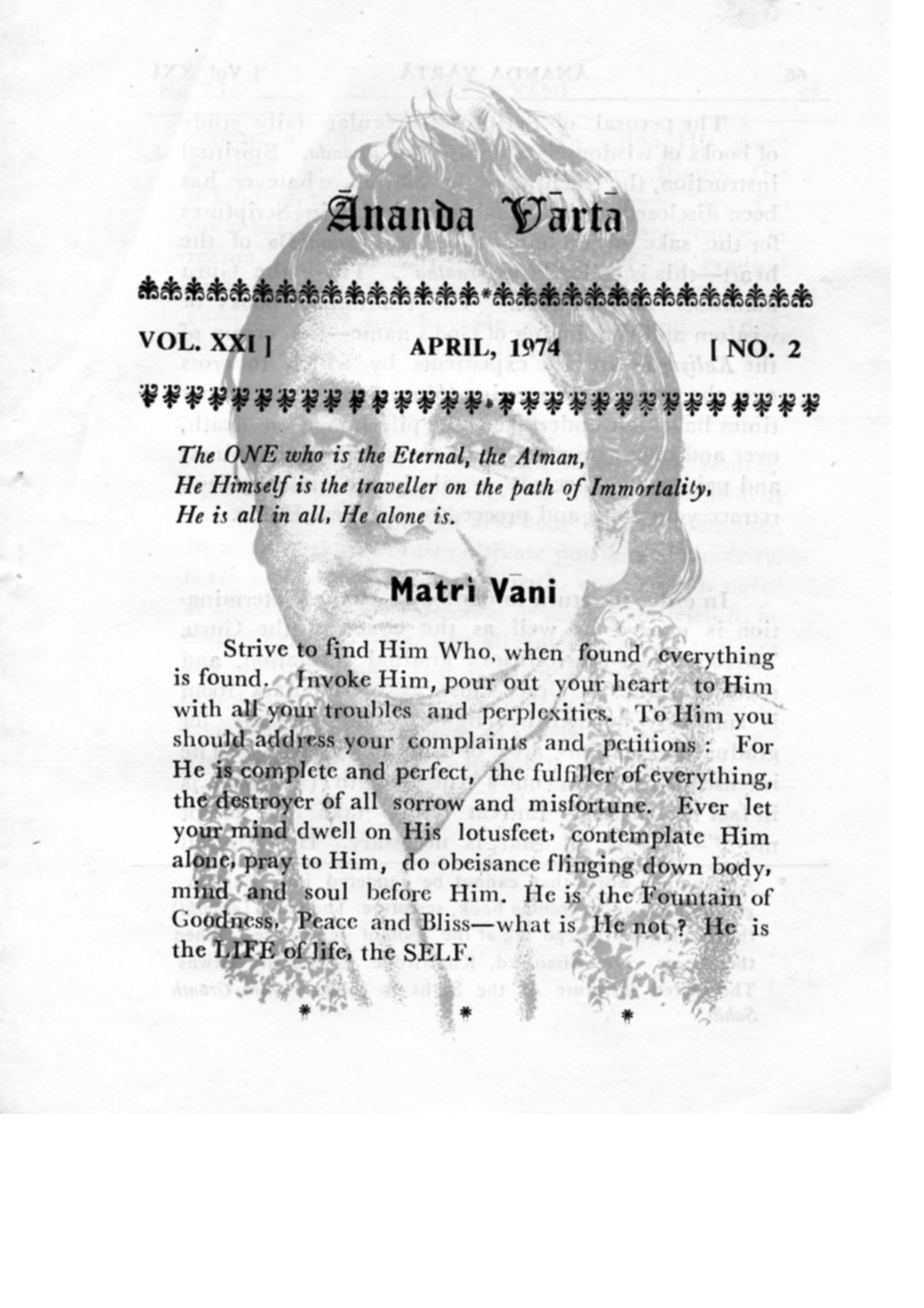


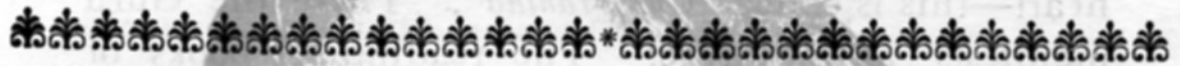
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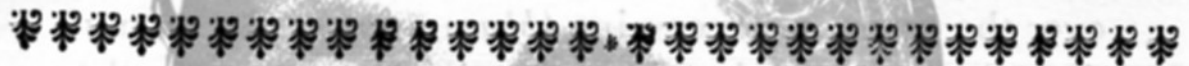
# Ānanda Vārtā



VOL. XXI ]

APRIL, 1974

[ NO. 2



*The ONE who is the Eternal, the Atman,  
He Himself is the traveller on the path of Immortality,  
He is all in all, He alone is.*

## Mātri Vani

Strive to find Him Who, when found everything is found. Invoke Him, pour out your heart to Him with all your troubles and perplexities. To Him you should address your complaints and petitions: For He is complete and perfect, the fulfiller of everything, the destroyer of all sorrow and misfortune. Ever let your mind dwell on His lotusfeet, contemplate Him alone, pray to Him, do obeisance flinging down body, mind and soul before Him. He is the Fountain of Goodness, Peace and Bliss—what is He not? He is the LIFE of life, the SELF.

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The perusal of Scriptures—regular daily study of books of wisdom is a matter of *ānanda*. Spiritual instruction, the teaching of the *Śāstras*, whatever has been disclosed of spiritual experience in Scriptures for the sake of undoing the knots (*granthi*)\* of the heart—this is called “*Gurugrantha*”. There the Guru manifests as Scripture. The reading of books of wisdom and the singing of God’s name—the cream of the *Kaliyuga*—are the expedients by which to cross over the ocean of becoming (*bhavasāgara*). So many times have you undertaken the pilgrimage to death, over and over again have you experienced happiness and pain. Now become a pilgrim to immortality: retrace your steps and proceed to your real Home.

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In order to return to one’s own Home determination is needed as well as the Grace of the Guru. There are two possibilities: gradual revelation, and revelation due to Grace, just as when a dark room is suddenly flooded by light. The *sādhana*s for gradual revelation are of infinite variety. The intense yearning for one’s true Wealth (*svadhana*) is in fact the *sādhana*. Entreat Him, “take me, accept me!”—this is all that is necessary. He Himself

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\* A play upon words that cannot be rendered into English: *granthi* knot and—*grantha* book, scripture. The knots (*granthi*) that constitute the ego are at the root of ignorance. When the knots are dissolved, Knowledge of Reality dawns. The sacred scripture of the Sikhs is called “*Guru Granth Sahib*.”

appears as infinite *sādhana*s. In action His grace manifests step by step : By continuous friction fire is kindled, the way to Enlightenment opens up. On the other hand there is Grace without any cause or reason. In this there is no method, no gradual development. That is why it is said, there is no knowing where and how He will be found. Thus, Grace is needed. Pray for His compassion !

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The purer the mind becomes by the remembrance of Him in everything, the more excellent will your work be. As action also none but He manifests. In one's work one must cultivate purity and sincerity. Having chosen the spiritual path, one should never at all covet anyone's affection or respect, or wish to be helped in one's tasks. At all times practise patience and self-discipline. Just as when a drop of acid falls into a large quantity of milk, all of it turns sour, so even if a little attachment or anger steals into one's work or service, it is very harmful—remember this !

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# From the Life of Mataji

**Bitika Mukerji**

Pilgrimage to Mount Kailash

( Continued from the last issue )

**Sunday, July 11th 1937 :**

We started on our way back at about 12.00 noon. The descent is always more difficult than the climb. It is not possible to remain on horseback. We stumbled down the snowy path as best as we could and were thankful to our guide Sendel Singh for pitching camp near a spring at 2.30 p. m. Everyone had been fasting. The exigencies of this journey do not allow the travellers to start or continue as they like. We had not been able to stop at Gaurikunda to break our fast. It was more necessary to negotiate the descent as quickly as possible and find a suitable place for the overnight camp. We partook of some light refreshments at the first camp and then covered a few more miles for the night's camp at Didipo.

We were amazed to see a strange phenomenon here : two men prostrating themselves on the path continuously. After lying prone on the ground they would gather themselves up to stand where the tips of their fingers had touched the ground. Then they would lie prone again. We were told that they were pilgrims who chose to perform the *parikraman* in this fashion. I was impressed by their zeal

and devotion. Some of us gave them money as we were given to understand that they need this kind of help from fellow pilgrims. Later on Sendel Singh informed us that these men were robbers and behaved in this fashion to gather information about parties of pilgrims : This truly was astounding news. It only shows that all manner of things are possible just about anywhere.

We are a bit concerned about Bhaiji. Father seems to have come through the ordeal quite well. It is a relief to know that the dandee will be available again tomorrow.

**Monday, July 12th :**

We collected our left-over luggage from Boond and camped at a place called Barkha. The wind is cold but the sun is hot. From here we had a clear view of the top of the holy mountain. The snow-covered peak shining in the sunlight looked beautiful.

**Tuesday, July 13th :**

We were happy to see a strong sun today. Everybody laid out clothes to get them thoroughly aired and dried. We purchased some fresh milk and butter from the villagers. The people store their butter in receptacles of lambs' skin. We travelled about five miles and pitched camp near the lake Rakshas Talao. After many days Ma once more could sit in the dandee. For the past few days Ma was riding on horseback persuading first father and then Bhaiji to use the dandee.

**Wednesday, July 14th :**

We have now descended to a more easily negotiable

terrain. We can still glimpse Mount Kailash from time to time. From one vantage point we had a clear view of the lake Manas.

It will be another couple of days before we reach Taklakote. The horses are showing signs of extreme fatigue. After travelling about ten miles we again camped at the shore of Rakshas Talao.

**Thursday, July 15th :**

Ma again had to come on horseback today. I suffered a sudden pain and could not sit up so was obliged to take Ma's dandee. We camped near the ridge called Mandhata. The legend is that King Mandhata retired to this remote region to perform austerities. We seem finally to have lost sight of the Holy Mountain or the Ravana Hrad.

**Friday, July 16th :**

At Ma's insistence I came in the dandee today also. Our stock of provisions is almost exhausted. Sometimes we hear the reverberating roar of mountain streams, adding to the impression of vast spaces and solitude.

**Saturday, July 17th :**

Making an early start we arrived in Taklakote at noon. Randra Devi's uncle was there and made us welcome. Taklakote is a trading post of some importance. Randra Devi's brother had brought letters for us from Garbyang. After a long time we again established contact with the world we seemed to have left behind. The local people, men, women and children watched our camping arrange-



ments with great interest. The temperature seemed mild to us. With sighs of relief we resumed our normal mode of dress discarding trousers and coats. The relief, however, was shortlived as we had to put them on again as soon as the sun went down.

In the evening Ma brought out her pair of *kartals*\* and invited the women and children clustering round her to sing to the beat of its melodious sound. The grooms obligingly translated for her. The women delightedly joined hands and formed a ring. They sang and danced for some time. At Ma's suggestion I distributed to them our stock of dry fruits, almonds, raisins, cashew nuts etc. They were very happy with these. The people of the mountains are very simple and not at all shy or self-conscious.

We had noticed that some of the grooms had brought away fish from the holy lake Manas. We were interested to know if they were carrying the dried fish home for food. They said that nobody would eat the fish from Manas Sarovar but it had another use for them. These shepherds are troubled by marauding wild animals who deplete their flocks. The smell of the burning dry fish has a paralysing effect on the attacking animal and then it can be killed easily. We don't know how far this is true but the faith of these people in the efficacy of the fish is implicit.

**Sunday, July 18th :**

At Parvati Devi's suggestion we went up the mountains a little to visit the caves of Buddhistic lamas. As the climb

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\* Cymbals.

was very steep we went on horseback to the very top. The caves are yellow and very spacious, the Governor's house is red. The public is under orders from the Government to provide food and sustenance for the lamas. We went up a rickety wooden staircase to visit the chief lama. We found him seated on a dais accompanied by a little dog. The cave was decorated with many holy symbols and a variety of ikons of Buddha and deities of the Buddhist pantheon. Bhaiji spoke to the lama on our behalf. He said, "Give us strength (to remain on the path to God)." This was translated by Parvati. The lama was very kind to us and gave us some *prasāda* and pieces of coloured cloth. We had taken with us offerings of some tea, dry fruit and money. Bhaiji became interested in some of the rolled up parchments in the caves. After much persuasion an old lama was prevailed upon to sell him one for a nominal price.

Leaving Taklakote at about 1 p. m., we encountered many groups of traders going up there. Trading is still done by barter in these regions. Sendel Singh pitched camp after six miles or so. Tomorrow we shall have the difficult job of crossing Lipu pass.

**Monday, July 19th :**

As written above, one has to climb to approximately 18,000 feet to cross Lipu. The ground on this side of the pass is, comparatively speaking, flat but on the other side there are hard and rocky inclines. The path is so rough and steep that even a little distance becomes most fatiguing. However we had to go through with it and prepared

ourselves for the journey carefully. Last time Keshav Singh had fainted due to dizziness. We made an early start without stopping for breakfast. At about 3.30 p. m. we could pitch camp for the night at Kalapani. After crossing Lipu we had halted briefly for some light refreshments. On our way to Kalapani, we had procured some potatoes that were half rotten and far from good but this vegetable seemed a delicacy to us now. We can still hear the rumbling sound of big waterfalls. All around us are rising ranges of snow-covered mountains. The moon riding a clear blue sky sheds a luminosity over the entire landscape.

**Tuesday, July 20th :**

We came to Garbyang some time in the afternoon after a most gruelling and terrifying journey. It is a source of constant marvel to me how the horses maintain foothold on a rocky and slippery incline. The slightest slip and rider and horse would fall down hundreds of feet to the river gorge. The grooms constantly stood by to help us negotiate the extra difficult stretches of this perilous path. Most of our people are from Garbyang and they were in a very good mood to be nearing home. Many of them broke out in songs and in spite of the difficult terrain there was a spirit of lightheartedness amongst them. We met groups of traders going up to Taklakote as this was the annual trading time. The sheep are laden with a vareity of merchandise. One piece of firewood is strapped to the load of every sheep because wood is not at all available beyond this point as we know to our cost. The narrow and difficult path was made quite hideous by our having to share it constantly with these

laden sheep. The only redeeming feature was some greenery which acted as balm to our eyes dazzled by the unrelieved whiteness of snow. The tall, green pine-trees were a welcome sight. We put up at the same school house we had stayed in on our way out. By Mataji's grace and with the help of Bholanath's undiminished enthusiasm we had indeed accomplished a most difficult pilgrimage.

Bhaiji went off to the post-office and fetched us a big bundle of mail. I tried to write as much I could to let people know about Ma's safe arrival at Garbyang.

Some Government officials are on their visit to Garbyang. There is great excitement and activity amongst the people. The officers came to visit us to have Mataji's *darśana*. The gentlemen kindly took upon themselves the task of making arrangements for the last lap of our journey. Our grooms bade farewell to us having accomplished their contract of the round trip from Garbyang. Word has to be sent to Dharchula from where the porters who will accompany us for the remaining journey, will come.

The weather being mild, we were relieved to be able to take off our tailored clothes and put on our own normal manner of dress.

**Wednesday, July 21st :**

We have decided to spend one day here for a much needed rest. Many people came to pay their respects to Ma, amongst them groups of pilgrims who were on their way to Mount Kailash. We were able to give them some information regarding the journey.

Thursday, July 22nd :

We made preparations for our trip and left Garbyang at about 11 o'clock in the morning. Partings are always sad and difficult. All those who had accompanied us on our pilgrimage and from whom we were now finally taking leave stood around with moist eyes. Bidding farewell to our friends and companions we climbed into the *dandees* and went once more on our way with a new set of porters and *dandeekulis*.

We travelled to the accompaniment of the incessant roar of the swiftly flowing Kaliganga. We were enthralled by the beauty of the turbulent river, cascading down thunderously sometimes near at hand, sometimes invisible but making its presence felt by the reverberating sound of water. The path is so narrow that it seems impossible that anyone can keep a foothold, let alone carry a *dandee* with passengers. At times I had to close my eyes, and I am sure the others also did the same, not to see the bottomless gorge yawning at almost every footstep. At places we were required to walk single file with the help of the porters. The porters were most kind and with great care they assisted us to negotiate the worst patches. The memory of the road we have taken today makes me shudder. Habit is indeed invaluable. The path which is so perilous for us is traversed easily by the local people.

Today we are camping at Malpa. It has started to rain a little. We are now quite used to these discomforts. It was not at all unusual for us to bundle ourselves in waterproof coats and prepare for a night's rest.

**Friday, July 23rd :**

We managed to start before sunrise. The sun is quite hot now. Much of today's journey had to be accomplished on foot. The scenic beauty is captivating but most of our energies are taken up by keeping steadily on the road and we cannot stop to enjoy the marvels of nature. We passed many mountain springs. The water pours down with such force that it raises a white screen around it. We got drenched a number of times from the sprays. At about 2 p. m. we arrived in Deepti and took shelter in a room in the village. There is a shop in this place. After a long time we could buy some green vegetables and fresh milk. Bholanath was tempted to try his hand at cooking some pulses. Everyone ate with great relish the *dal* and vegetables.

**Saturday, July 24th :**

To-day's journey was comparatively easier. It was a blessing that we were not caught in rain so far. It rained during nights only. Kaliganga has receded to a distance. Since yesterday we seem to have left the view of snow ranges behind. We did not stop at Sirkha this time but came on to a place called Shasha. On the way we were met by Ruma Devi. She greeted us with great pleasure and told us that she had been waiting for Ma for the last three days. She had been constantly on the road in an agony of suspense that somehow she might miss us. She had already cleaned a room for us at Shasha, where we took up residence for the night. Ruma Devi procured some beautiful wild flowers and offered them at Ma's feet. She said that there was much work for her to do at her ashram

where many people were waiting for her, but she had no mind to leave Ma again. With great simplicity she said to Ma, "I had decided to spend my life in the service of others. Now that I am old I see that there is no end to this kind of work. I had thought that I would dedicate my life to social service, but this does not appeal to me anymore. I wish to carry on my work in solitude now. I should like to stay with Ma for the remaining days of my life"; We were impressed very much by Ruma Devi's devotion and dedication to her chosen way of life. We were also charmed by her gentle manners, her smiling good nature and her helpful attitude. It was agreed that she would come with us to Almora.

Bhaiji is not too well. He is suffering from fever. We are concerned about him, otherwise all would be well now. The local inhabitants came in groups to pay their respects to Ma. Within a short while Ma's room became crowded and there was a heap of many coloured flowers in front of her. We again saw sweet smelling roses and jasmines and were reminded of the plains we were approaching now.

**Sunday, July 15th :**

We arrived in Khela a little before sundown. Bhaiji is not at all well. It was decided that we would stay here for a day so that he may recover. The fever is due to fatigue no doubt. The porters that we had engaged in Garbyang were under contract to come with us up to Khela. We engaged another group of porters here who would go down with us right up to Almora, which is approximately ten days journey from here.

With the help of the local people all arrangements for our stay and journey were concluded smoothly, but for Bhaiji's indisposition there would be no major difficulty now.

**Tuesday, July 27th :**

After a day's rest at Khela we travelled to Dharchula today and took up residence at the Dak Bungalow. We had stopped at the District Board Dispensary so that the doctor could examine Bhaiji. We bought the medicines prescribed by the young doctor. Dharchula is a bigish place and it will be easy to get food and other necessities. We are hoping that with medical care and rest Bhaiji will recover soon.

**Saturday, July 31 st :**

Bhaiji is considerably better. We are planning to leave tomorrow. The porters are very restive because of this unexpected delay but we could not possibly leave earlier. Due to incessant rain the bridge over Kali river has been washed away we are told. The inhabitants of the area sling a pully-like arrangement on such occasions and cross the swift flowing mountain stream in this precarious fashion. We were very hesitant to subject Bhaiji to this form of travel but it is not feasible to wait here indefinitely. We have no idea when the bridge will be repaired and in any case it will be much better to arrive as soon as possible in Almora.

**Sunday, August 1st :**

We came to Baluakote in the evening. We had to cross the river by rope, a fearful experience. A stout rope is



stretched across the not too wide river. One has to sit on a plank which is attached to the rope with sliding knots. From the other side this rough contraption can be swung across the river by pulling the rope attached to it. We had brought a tent from Dharchula. This was pitched now in an open flat ground. I cooked a light meal in the open and everybody enjoyed eating under the clear skies. Tomorrow we shall leave for Askote. We are again passing through forest regions.

**Monday, August 2nd :**

Travelling has become much easier. We arrived in Askote at about 2p. m. The sun is quite hot now and Bhaiji was very uncomfortable in the heat. We took up residence in the dharamśāla. The members of the Raja of Askote's family came to pay their respects to Ma. They brought all manner of foodstuff. Other people came too. Ma talked to them for a while. Since the last four or five days Ma has been taking just one very light meal a day. Excepting water she does not eat or drink anything else for the rest of the day.

**Tuesday, August 3rd :**

We made an early start today to avoid the heat of the day. A little way out of Askote one of the dandees broke down. Bholanath and father walked back to Askote to engage another dandee. Our progress was necessarily slow because we did not want Bhaiji to sustain more than a minimum of strain. We arrived at the school house of Didihat after travelling seven miles. The teacher and the

students came running and made Ma welcome. Showing great care and concern for her comfort they made arrangements for her stay in the school. Some people came for Ma's *darśana*. She talked to them for a while.

**Wednesday, August 4th :**

Camp at a place called Thal. We are again suffering from the peculiar nuisance of this part of the country, the wood-termites. They are minute enough to be invisible and the clothes become so infested that there is no respite from them day and night. It is difficult to get a night's rest.

**Thursday August 5th :**

It generally rains in the evenings, so we have been travelling in the mornings rather than after an early lunch. Today it started to rain in the morning so we changed our timetable and finished with the business of cooking and eating. Starting a little before noon we came to Berinag before evening. The teacher at the school let off his class and made the room available to us. He requested Ma to stay in Berinag as long as possible saying he would hold school in some other place.

The doctor was requested to visit Bhaiji and prescribe some medicine for his relief. I went into the village to procure a pillow for him.

**Friday, August 6th :**

We could not continue today because it started raining heavily in the morning. The porters do not like to wait so Tunu, Dasuda and the Brahmachariji went on with some

of the porters carrying baggage which we are not likely to require now.

**Saturday, August 7th :**

Bholanath and I rode today as we have dismissed our dandees. It rained very heavily and we were all drenched to the skin. With extreme care we managed to protect only Bhaiji's dandee from the rain. On arrival at Ganoi around 2.00 p. m. I went to a shop and purchased some shawls so that father and Ma could change into dry clothes. The porters carrying baggage always arrive much later so that our own clothes were not available immediately. Father did discard his soaked clothes and wrapped himself into dry sheets but Ma did not change. She has been rather unusually quiet these last two days or so. The natural radiance of her countenance has been dimmed a little. This is one of the Forest Bungalows. We are nearing our journey's end but because of Bhaiji's indisposition we are feeling very impatient with delays and sorry that we cannot move any faster.

**Sunday, August 8th :**

We travelled a distance of about twelve miles and came to a place called Kanera. Here also we took up residence at the Bungalow. Ma has been advising me all along about taking care of Bhaiji. She has helped me with the invalid diets and has personally seen to Bhaiji's comforts in a hundred different ways. When not called upon to do something she has sat quietly near his bedside. During our journey today father noticed that Ma had not spoken at all.

We realized with saddened hearts that Ma had become *mouna*. It is a long time since she has observed silence and it is doubtly difficult for me because now I have to decide for myself how best to look after Bhaiji. However, we must abide by Ma's *kheyāla*.

**Monday, August 9th :**

Only five miles to Dhavalcheena. We are to stay overnight so that we can go down to Almora tomorrow in one lap. Almora is thirteen miles from here.

**Tuesday, August 10th :**

With a great sense of relief we have arrived in Almora. A newly built couse has been prepared for Ma's occupation. Juthika and Manik have been waiting at Almora for us for the last seven days. The joy of a difficult journey accomplished and of meeting devotees and friends was tempered by Bhaiji's illness and Ma's *mounam*.

**Wednesday, August 11th :**

We have to remain in Almora till Bhaiji recovers. There is no difficulty about medical help how. The local devotees are more than ready to render all manner of assistance. They are doing what they can. Bhaiji is greatly loved by these people and they are sad to see him so ill.

**Thursday, August 12th :**

It seemed to me that Bhaiji's condition had taken a turn for the worse. We were startled to hear the sound of Ma's joyous laughter when we were sitting in a dejected group near Bhaiji. Ma's cot has been placed near Bhaiji's

bed. Most of the time she is sitting near him. While still laughing she wiped the perspiration from his forehead. The doctor was in attendance. The patient seemed to improve a little at night.

**Friday, August 13th :**

We are still struggling with the patient. Bhaiji's family has been informed about his illness. Bhaiji's wife had not liked the idea of his going on this pilgrimage. Ma had tried to dissuade Bhaiji on learning of his wife's objection but he had insisted, saying he would write to his wife and explain everything so that she would not mind. We don't know if she was reconciled to the idea or not.

**Saturday, August 14th :**

There is a change in Ma's demeanour. All along I have had the reassurance of Ma's indications regarding the patient's diet and nursing. Since yesterday Ma has become absolutely still and uncommunicative. She is sitting or lying quietly on her cot but Bhaiji cannot see her. At the end of the day he enquired about her and was told that she was sitting near him. Maharatan and others who had not had the occasion to observe Ma in her various aspects were a little taken aback, saying wonderingly. "How can Ma be so indifferent to Bhaiji, she who has been more concerned about him than a mother about her son." We see oddity in her behaviour only because we ascribe our own feelings to her. It is our good fortune that she has the *kheyāla* to allow her actions to arise out of our needs for her guidance and help. Her great compassion for our many

weaknesses and limitations makes us forget this fact again and again. For our frail understanding this withdrawal is oppressive and darkens our horizon. I tried to evoke a response by reporting Bhaiji's condition but she did not seem to hear what I said. Hariram Joshi arrived from Dehra Dun to see Bhaiji. Harirambhai is greatly devoted to Bhaiji.

**Sunday, August 15th**

The doctors are struggling with illness. In the evening we were considerably relieved to see Ma again resuming her position near Bhaiji's bed.

**Monday, August 16th :**

We are loosing heart about Bhaiji's recovery. The doctors do not hold out any hope. Ma is as before sitting near him almost the entire time and giving suggestions and advice regarding nursing and diet. Bholanath was overcome by grief and sobbed like a child. None of us had dry eyes. Ma looking round at us again laughed. She also placed her hand on the patient's head for a while.

**Tuesday, August 17th :**

The whole day has been a struggle between life and death. Bhaiji is fully conscious and quite aware of his condition. He expressed his unwillingness to have any more injections. But the doctors naturally could not accede to his request and tried all measures at their command. At night Bhaiji looked at me and said clearly, "Khukuni; finish,"

**Wednesd, August 18th :**

The great soul departed from this world today at 3-30 p. m. leaving us with sense of irreparable loss.

The doctors had tried again in the morning to stem the tide of the ebbing energies but acknowledged themselves defeated. Our last resort was Ma. Harirambhai and I prayed to Ma to bring her *kheyāla* to Bhaiji's recovery. Ma made a negative gesture implying that she did not have any positive *kheyāla* at the time. We relinquished hope after that. Ma sat quietly near the bed of the patient wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

Bhaiji appeared to be quite in his normal consciousness. He began to repeat the names of the Lord and then continued to repeat "Ma, Ma !" After a little while he said, "How beautiful !" Then again in a tone of great conviction, "There is One only. There is nought else except the One."

Harirambhai in a tear-choked voice called, "Bhaiji?" He immediately answered, saying, "Remember always, friend, that all are One, there is only One.

"Ma and I are One, Baba (Bholanath) and I are One, all of us are One, there is nought else but the One."

After some time we heard him enunciate clearly the *sannyāsa-mantra*. A few minutes before the end Ma signalled all of us out of the room and recalled us after a minute. As we came back Bhaiji said to us, "Ma has asked me to go to sleep. I shall sleep now." In this serene and calm manner this great-hearted man left us to attain to a higher state in his quest for Truth.

( End of the narration from Gurupriya Devi's diary ).

After a while, Mataji breaking her silence of many days, spoke to the stunned group of people in a soft and indistinct voice. She said, "Arrangements will have to be made for a *samādhi* for him. He is to be regarded as an *avadhūta*. Since he has made the renunciation required for *sannyāsa*, he is to be given the same position as a *sannyāsi*". Mataji now related to them the incidents which had led up to Bhaiji's *sannyāsa*. She said, "You will remember that on our way to Manas Sarovar we were separated into groups. I asked Khukuni, Bholanath and Bhaiji to go ahead while I waited for Swamiji. When I arrived at the shore of the lake, I was met by Bholanath who told me in great agitation that Jyotish had already bathed and on coming out of the Lake had spoken to him saying :

"Baba, I have a great yearning to go away like an *avadhūta sannyāsi*. Please give me permission to do so, immediately, now !" Bholanath was perturbed by Jyotish's manner which manifested an urgency as if he could not brook any delay. Bholanath thus resorted to admonition, saying, 'What is all this you are saying ?...Get up and put on your clothes ! Your Ma is not here. What will everybody say ?' "Jyotish, recalled to a sense of his obligations, resumed his warm clothes and waited near the tent for the rest of the party.

"Do you recall that I, Swamiji and others arrived at the camp-site after almost two hours. Then some of us went along to the shores of the lake. A few became busy with their own methods of worship at this holy place and went about their several tasks according to their wishes,



“I was walking near the lake. Jyotish came with me. He repeated to me all that he had said to Bholanath and then exclaimed, ‘Ma, I have a great desire to spend the few days left me to live here in one of these caves or some such place. Please persuade Baba (Bholanath) to give me permission to wander off in any direction. Now ! At once ! Allow me to bid farewell to you.’

“I saw in him a manifestation of the spirit of complete and supreme non-attachment and he was strongly gripped by it. I saw that his whole attitude was under the influence of this pure spirit of renunciation. But what I said to him was, ‘For the time being you must stay with us.’

“Jyotish did not say anything more but followed me silently. After a little while he said, ‘I have one request. Please grant that I take a vow of silence from now on.’ I replied, ‘No, that will not be possible. It will be very inconvenient while we are on the move like this.’ He said no more.

“I was strolling at the lake side and as it had happened many times previously, *mantras* came spontaneously forth from my lips. Jyotish was walking behind me. He came forward and flung himself at my feet saying in an exultant voice, ‘Ma, this is the *sannyāsa* mantra which I have heard from you. My yearning is fulfilled.’ Overwhelmed by a strong emotion he sat down for a while, repeating the mantra; later he performed certain *kriyās* in the lake. Since that time he has constantly kept his mantra in remembrance. At one time I had said to him, since you have a *sannyāsa*

mantra and want to observe silence your name will be *Mounananda Parvat*.

“Jyotish had expressed the wish that all these events should not be disclosed to anyone, but I had told him if necessary I would make them known at the proper time.

“Jyotish knew that he did not have long to live. All of you will recall that after his serious illness some years ago there was some talk of whether he would be able to continue in service. At that time it just happened that I said to him that nothing untoward would occur for a few years. He had interpreted these words to mean that he would live for a few years. He had been quietly and unobtrusively settling his affairs and making final arrangements for his family.”

Mataji, after a while resumed, saying, “When Jyotish became ill he was upset to think that Khukuni would have to cope with the nursing and also cooking all on her own. So I told him not to worry and that I would do what I could and make others help too. This is why all of you have seen me unusually active in these matters during the last few days excepting the two days when the *kheyāla* left me. Since he died while in a state of complete withdrawal from the world, he should be buried as a *sannyāsi*.”

The listeners were deeply moved on hearing this account of the last days of Bhaij. Hariramji went away to look for a suitable site and see to the arrangements for the *samādhi*. A place called Patal Devi was chosen. It transpired that Bhaiji had wished to stay at a *dharamśālā* there when he

had last been in Almora. Now his body would be interred at his chosen place. To the inconsolably grieved Hari Ram, Mataji said, "All of you have loved him so well. The concurrence of events has been such that his body remains now in your part of the world." Mataji asked Swami Akhandanandaji to perform the last simple rites for Bhaiji.

In answer to the telegrams sent to Bhaiji's family in Dacca, his old personal servant Khagen arrived in Almora. To this grief-stricken man Mataji spoke at length again and again about the last days of Bhaiji. It may not be out of place here to refer to Bhaiji's own words regarding his wife and his attitude towards his family obligations. Bhaiji had been in the habit of writing a diary. During his stay in Solon he had written the following lines about his wife.

"My wife has given me great help in my chosen path of sādhana. She comes from a well established, highly cultured family and has always had a great sense of self-respect and dignity of deportment. Throughout the years, to this day, the memory of her upright behaviour and straightforwardness remains undimmed in my mind.

"When I met Mataji in 1924-25 we were both equally drawn in devotion for her. However, as I surrendered more and more at the feet of Ma, my wife withdrew herself from these contacts. She was unable to sympathize with my state of yearning for, I did not yet know, what. She would demonstrate with me saying, "It is not necessary to go anywhere in order to lead a life of devotion. You do not take care of your health, you have no time to pay sufficient attention to your son and daughter. This is not an ideal way of life."

“I tried to explain to her that any attempt to break the ordered rhythm of life would necessarily appear as irresponsible behaviour; yet how else was one to strive for something which would take him beyond settled values? But she was not in a mood to listen to me.

“One day she said with some impatience, “You are so indifferent that as far as we are concerned, it is all the same whether you stay at home or leave us and go away.” I made light of the remark saying with a smile, “If I go away as a *sānnyasi*, you won't mind?” In a hurt tone she answered, “Of course not!” My son and daughter were present also. I don't know why, but I made a note of this conversation. Quite often we had similar conversations. My friend Niranjan tried many times to plead with her and to explain to her my point of view but she was not receptive on this score.

“When I fell ill, she nursed me with a care and concern which is beyond human conception. Her devotion and untiring service were no doubt large factors in my recovery from that terrible disease.

“At about this time she lost her younger brother to whom she was deeply attached. Her grief further alienated her from Ma. She became a prey to dejection and in this mood grew increasingly antagonistic to my attitude of devotion for Mataji. Not only my wife but also my elder brother found fault with my way of life.

“I was helpless in the face of so much misapprehension and opposition. I myself did not know what was happening to me, how could I explain it to others? I had to bracket all talks about Ma. As a result the gap of misunderstanding

grew. My wife was wrongly advised into making many unworthy statements regarding me. I however was not displeased. I counted it a blessing in disguise. This gave me the opportunity to remove myself from the world of amusement and self-oblivion.

“It was never my aim to renounce the world as something unreal. Neither was I educated to take my responsibilities lightly. It was obvious to me, that while I was real to myself, everything else was equally authentic. However, to establish oneself in the pursuit of that Being which is the Ground of all and through and by which everything else assumes reality, requires a turning around to a certain degree. For bringing about a complete change, the medicine of meditation must be supplemented by the invalid diet of solitude.

“My people charge me saying ‘You have left us!’ How have I left anybody behind? I have removed only my body to a remote region. In every other way I remain where I was or so it seems to me.

“When I think of my wife, I realize that although she has outwardly severed all connections with Ma, in her inner life, because of her antagonistic thoughts, she is engaged in a formidable *sādhana* of deep concentration. She is a person of strong will-power, deep religiousity and purity of heart. It is quite possible that she with her greater powers of single-minded concentration will reach the feet of Ma much sooner than I can with my desultory efforts. So be it. Let Ma’s *kkeyāla* be fulfilled in every way in our lives.”

Bhaiji’s death was felt as the falling of a bulwark by

the devotees. There was nobody to take his place. An exemplary identification with Mataji's *kheyāla* was unique with him. Many had found his guidance invaluable and now felt deprived of a sustained source of encouragement and help. Bhaiji's life and the manner of his death will always remain a source of inspiration for those who are gripped by the question of the meaning of life. He was typical of the well-educated man occupying a responsible position in the world, well aware of the demands of modern times and yet firmly established in the traditional heritage of his own culture and background. He had not found easy solutions to all his questions. He had to do the work of a pioneer breaking new ground all along the line. His faith had been severely tested. Self-surrender is not only something which happens of itself but also a matter of constant lived effort.

In another context, referring to the incidents related above, Mataji has said the following words about Bhaiji: "I asked him once, 'how is it that you took such a radical decision without asking? Tears came to his eyes and he answered in a deepened voice, 'Have you allowed me to have a will of my own? Besides I know that you are never more pleased than when a person wants to follow the path of renunciation...and what is there to ask? The pity is we do not remember that this is the greatest service to render to you. I know that whatever I do I am just carrying out your will.. This mood came over me with such force that I was completely in its grip, I did not have the power to check it or control myself.' "Looking at him I saw that he was

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indeed relating facts. It was thus with him. He did experience a state of complete renunciation."

The *samādhi* ceremony of Bhaiji was performed with due care and circumspection.

After a few days the small group of grieved people left Almora for various destinations. Mataji, Bholanath, Didi and Hari Ram came to Dehradun.

*(To be continued)*

# **Ma Anandamayi**

**MELITA MASCHMANN**

Writing is certainly not exclusively but it is essentially a mental process. Writing about Ma is as paradoxical as analysing a peacock's feather or a song by Mirabai. Whether he likes it or not the author has to work on the mental level but every step leads him straight to its limit and points beyond it.

After having met Ma, many educated Indians and many western people are carried away in a whirl of mental perplexities. Even if we meet with a new surprising phenomenon our reaction usually works like a record: For twenty or forty years our ways of thinking have circulated around the same centre, unable to escape our individual set of preformed thought-patterns. But when we see Ma our thinking is suddenly pushed in a direction quite opposite to its usual ways. The more attentively we watch ourselves in this, the more quickly we recognise that here each mental speculation leads automatically to the dissolution of thoughts.

At Poona recently when I was talking to a South-Indian academician who suffered severely from his mental blockages, Ma caught my eye with a glance whose loving ironical charm showed me how amusing she found the situation. Unfortunately this made me laugh, for no reason that the young man could see. He must have thought that I found his intellectual pains amusing, and indeed I did find them rather funny. Though, actually, I was sorry for him.



I said ; "You have no idea how much more relaxed I feel since I gave up searching for the secret of holiness with a dissecting knife."

It is more than ten years since the day when I met Ma first; up to now it has been the most important day in my life. I owed it only to my Guru's grace not to my own understanding that I recognised the importance at once. For quite some time this knowledge of the first moment was like seeing a roof hovering unsupported in midair, an irritating sight. The house beneath had to be built only slowly and with many interruptions. Its bricks are made from innumerable experiences in detail. If we are ready to concede that our mental apparatus can deal only with relative knowledge, the sublime growth of what may be called our organ of absolute knowledge can begin. At first this is scarcely perceptible, but after some time one feels it working in particular parts of one's body. Specially in Ma's presence it invigorates intensively. Something opens in our body which, however, is not made out of a demonstrable substance as the cells of our physical organs. It opens like a hibiscus bud in the morning, and it has also the blissfulness of the blossom turning its face towards the first sunbeam. In soft waves it sends *ānanda* through our body.

One day, after having been with Ma for about a month, I said to her: "Ma, I did not come here to love you but to learn to love God better through you." At that time I was so fascinated by her, that it tortured me to part from her at night to go to my *dharmasāla*. For anyone in the middle forties such an experience is most confusing. But I have

watched it since in many newcomers of all ages and both sexes from East and West.

It takes some time to understand that Ma's irresistible power of attraction has only one purpose: to draw towards God those whose life has but one centre of gravitation: their own petty, fearful and ignorant self. One day a friend said to me after having had his first involuntary *darśana*. "You are all like fish that struggle on her line!" That was no friendly comment but it is true in a certain sense, though an old and worn comparison. I have often felt that Ma has thrown a kind of hook into my heart. If I try to get away from her, it tears painful wounds, if I follow its pull it draws me nearer to her. Suddenly the point is reached when the external senses indeed recognize Ma unchanged but the Inner Sense perceives only the presence of God.

She is an expert in the art of alluring hearts to Him. I do not believe that anyone can resist her if she has thrown out the line. However, she does not always throw out the line, even when it seems to me, that a sincere seeker has come to her. Among all the innumerable parts she is playing, there is also that of the friendly old woman in whom there does not seem to be anything extraordinary.

Sometimes I saw people coming out of Ma's room reeling after their first *darśana*. Some of them stand there as if lost for a long time. They suddenly seem to be unable to recognize the world in which they have lived since their childhood. Some of them cry for several days, some become silent. Others throw themselves to the ground or jump about and shout with joy in the middle of the street, like children.

At first I surmised that they were people with an unstable balance of mind. But this is not true. In the course of the years I have seen too many normal people (Indians and non-Indians) reacting in this striking way. Though it is natural that Ma has a strong attraction for psychically unbalanced people, too. They feel the support they can get from her.

Perhaps one could say: She awakens and purifies the ability to love in people's hearts, with the purpose to turn them to Him. It may sound amazing but I remember that I felt this turning caused by her as a sort of liberation. Fascination freed me from its compulsion. To love Ma became a source of inner peace, of joy and of a hope that is free from fear.

I do not know how many hundreds of hours I have spent looking at Ma, (*darśana*) in spite of my typical western consciousness of time: never waste a minute!

After the above mentioned release from the state of emotional subjection, too, I have never grown tired of simply gazing at her. Sometimes this gazing flows into a sort of mystical perception. In those moments it is unimportant whether the eyes are closed or open. One sees Ma only as the medium through which one looks into the mysterious Reality, into which she wants to draw us. These are precious and rare moments, but the "ordinary looking" is a wonderful adventure too. Though it is not always a pure pleasure. Sometimes I feel as if I were blind when I look at her. Sometimes I catch myself making a movement as if I wanted to draw away a veil from my eyes and often I clean

my glasses though they are not dirty at all. That is foolish because it is not the external organ of perception which is weak but the inner one. This pain never quite ceases, but hidden in it lies the hope that one day we shall be able to see, be it in this life or in a future one.

The proverb says: Love makes blind. That is true, but it is also true that love enables us to see. The experiences of our usual human relationships have their parallel in our relationship with Ma. I find her so beautiful that I think it is presumptuous to try a description. At one time I risked it but then I did not see the true rank of her beauty. She is so beautiful because her body is transparent for the divine light which is the source of all beauty. Years ago I said to Ma in a private talk: "I am such an extrovert, that I cannot find God within myself, but sometimes I see Him in your face." That night I made a note in my diary: "During the evening-*darśana* Ma glanced at me. Suddenly her face, which had looked tired and somewhat uneasy, became beautiful beyond all description, irradiated by inner light. For an hour she sat on her couch; silent and without moving, no one dared talk. Each cell of her body seemed to vibrate in the joy of a mysterious presence....."

Is it allowed to try and interpret such a situation? I believe that I have watched things like that in Ma's relation to other people, too: Perhaps when she glanced at me she remembered my remark that morning: "Sometimes I see God in your face!" And there He was! Called by my longing to see Him!

I think grace has infinite different ways of working. One could consist in permitting us to draw it into Ma's heart,

alone by our passionate desire to see it flourishing there. (However it would be already the effect of grace to long for it as sincerely as that. We need mercy for our dealings with mercy.)

It must be highest bliss for Ma to distribute God like bread to those who are hungry for Him. Whenever she gives us *prasāda* this spiritual process reflects in the physical one. In moments like these she is so revealing and identical with her true Self (*Atman*) that even people like me are able to perceive the Divine within her, though I do not feel inclined to call her Krishna or Durga or whatsoever. Some Christians see Christ in her.

If it is true that our hunger for God fills her hands with living bread, this does not mean that her capacity to distribute grace depends on our hunger. Sometimes she offers bread to us when we have forgotten that we are hungry. Then it has a bitter taste, and yet it never tastes sweeter. In this process of spending and receiving there is a special element of co-operation. I can only hint at what I mean and am likely to be misunderstood. At certain moments—perhaps during *darśana*—I feel with physical distinctness that Ma works within me (though she never looks at me when doing so).

I do not know what is happening then, but something within me watches this process with the calm attention of a witness. Could it be my true Self which was kept hidden in the cave of my heart before Ma made me conscious of it? Perhaps she digs an exit for it out of the cave so that it can

move right in front, if the ego very slowly begins to withdraw. Often this silent witness is not to be found, but it is there, and sometimes I feel that glancing through my eyes it meets the Self that looks at me out of Ma's eyes. Her Self and my Self greet each other like companions who need no explanation to realize their true oneness. At times I think literally (the childishness of such a statement may be forgiven) they laugh together. I mean to feel that they are happy. They must be conscious of the divine mercy each moment. It is the origin of every happiness.

What distinguishes Ma most outstandingly from all of us is her permanent readiness to be at His disposal. For this there is only one explanation: She has no longer an ego which blocks God's way. It is a very exciting paradox: The more man gets rid of his ego and the deeper he penetrates into the Divine the more essentially he becomes himself. All varieties of men exist throughout all cultures in innumerable copies, only the Saint is unique, only the Self-realized man, he who has realized the full identity with his divine Self. The image of the drop sinking into the ocean as the soul into the Divine and thereby losing its identity is not convincing. You need only watch Ma: She lives entirely in God but this in itself makes her the most sparkling and interesting personality I ever met. Because she surrenders only to one authority, to her *kheyāla*, she lives from moment to moment, completely docile to His will, that means absolutely spontaneous. This spontaneity is the secret of her permanent creativeness.

I have seen Ma playing innumerable parts (*līlā*) sometimes with a breath-taking speed of change. In each she expe-

esses her very own Self. Some weeks ago at the end of Krishna's birthday in Poona,—when she threw hand-fulls of curds into our gaping mouths, laughing like a mischievous boy and sometimes watching carefully not to hit her target too well—what a sight it was ! It could have made a stone laugh.

A minute later when a young woman started dancing in a state of trance, Ma gently put her arm on her shoulder joining in the graceful movements till they slowed down and there was no longer any danger for the young ecstatic to hurt herself. All along Ma had watched her, attentively smiling with the unforgettable sensitive expression of a love which is knowledge. Nothing in the girl's body or soul was hidden to her.

The same day some two or three hundred guests had been invited to take Ma's *prasāda*. Within one hour I saw her changing a dozen times the part of our adored Guruji into that of an experienced housewife. Between two pujas she discussed with the cook how much rice he had to boil into ten liters of milk: "The khir should not be as liquid as it was when we had our last *bhandāra* !"

And what an organizer Ma is ! When I entered her room at night, her staff was gathered round her, everyone with a notebook and a pen. The next day 350 to 400 people were supposed to arrive for a week of fasting and meditation. Ma allotted the individual duties, going into the smallest details. "I saw a stain on one of the yellow silk cushions for the Mahatmas. It must be perfectly clean tomorrow. B, write down: first point: cleaning the cushion ! "Next morning people wonder why Ma, passing along the platform,

quickly bends down and looks at the back of one of the yellow cushions.

Or during Durga Puja : one minute ago Ma was still the instructor of the priests, attentively watching every detail of the most elaborate ritual, suddenly the Goddess herself gives us *darśana*, incarnated in this fragile human body, which is so dear to us. We hardly dare breathe. Like the *murtis* at the hour of the *ārati*, Durga—Ma—is covered with garlands of lotuses and roses, enveloped in a cocoon of silence and inaccessibility, mysteriously one with the divine secret. But before you know where you are she might have stepped down again to our human level, smiling motherly to comfort the boy who has just dropped a basket full of oranges. A little later, when she comes out of the shrine to distribute *prasāda* she is the queen whose graceful dignity makes worldly kings seem like philistine *nouveau-riches*. But of course, in a sudden change of *bhāva* she may show the wantonness of a boy who throws the sugar candy at his friends, heads, excellent in his hits. It happens now and then that she is in Chhelia mood teasing her friends and frightening them out of their wits. Sometimes she draws us into a tremendous laughter. But we can argue with her too. He who lives in direct contact with a soul of her rare order has at times the experience that the bottom of his own soul turns to the top. During a stormy private talk, one day, she hit the centre of my childish rage: "Whatever you may say, in you, too, I adore the Divine Presence ! " With that she clasped her hands together and laughed loudly. Her face was radiant with a mysterious inner fire, which made her alluringly beautiful and intimidating. It perplexed me deeply to see a reflection



of something unimaginably glorious in her eyes, which could only have its origin in me. I trembled. What I felt was only my agonizing weakness. Suddenly it seemed as if she withdrew herself from the grip of a profound trance. She smiled with the sweet irony in the corner of her eyes which makes her so familiar to me and said three times gently :  
"Jo hoy jay, jo hoy jay jo hoy jai !" (Whatever happens—His will is welcome to me!) Later on her eyes were searching for me in the crowd and when she had traced me, she made fanning movements over her head like a ventilator, smiling cunningly. One of her girls whispered to me : "Ma means you should always keep your head cool !"

There is no end to the parts she plays, as there is no end to the change of situations, only one thing never changes : her dynamic intensity. Some people admire Ma specially in her talks with philosophical experts. Others love her most when she is the little girl as the one she often projects herself, half a frolicsome child, half shy. But suddenly she is no more the child, she has become a young woman, who, tender and lovely, absorbed in her dreams listens to the voice of the Beloved in her own heart.

All of us know the expression of cool objectivity with which Ma observes us absolutely untouched in those painful periods when we feel ourselves like her neglected and destitute children. The teacher knows that his pupil must try to stand on his own legs. But who has not felt the overwhelming tenderness of her love which hastens to spoil us, if we have made even a little progress by our own effort.

If I am far away from her and in trouble, it helps me

most to remember her holy beauty in the *karuṇa-bhāva*. Every atom of her being is filled with powerfully vibrating compassion : “I suffer with you, beloved friends, but do believe me, what you can’t yet see yourself : all your pains are transitory like shadows, unreal in the face of His Reality which is nothing but *ānanda*.”

In her compassion there is not the slightest trace of sentimentalism. I remember the sobriety with which she reacted to my tears when the typhoon had killed a million of people in East-Bengal. “Stop crying ! With that you help nobody. *Bhāgavad smaran karo !*” (Concentrate your thoughts on God !)

Occasionally Ma goes into long periods of silence ( For a year she has scarcely spoken ). For five or six months she answered all questions with one gesture only : The upward directed glance and the uplifted hands. While her hands sank slowly, in a gesture of self-giving and open to receive the Divine, she called Him whose name at that time was all her vocabulary : “*Bhagavān, Bhagavān !*”

## **The Home Coming**

**Kamakhya Prasad Roy**

“Abide by your dury”, is a commandment from Mother, which further exhorts, “To live in the home that he has created for himself is surely fitting for a householder. Do not, however, neglect the search for your real home. Only when this is found has one truly come home.”

[ Mātri Vāni, p. 28 ]

Here is a second commandment demanding a similar attitude of the pilgrim on the way to the Goal of human aspiration :

“When one resides in a country not one’s own, how can one possibly evade the hardships that are a foreigner’s lot? Your Motherland is where there is no question of distress and sorrow, of violence and hatred, of estrangement, neither of the opposites of light and darkness. The endeavour to find Himself in his real home, in his true nature, is man’s sole duty.”

[ Mātri Vāni, p. 72 ]

In the year 1936, some time in the month of May or June, Mother was at Simla, immediately after the inauguration of the Kishenpur Ashram at Dehradun, and the performance of Ma’s birthday celebrations of that year on the newly constructed premises there. The ladies at Simla generally gathered around Mother in the afternoon when

they were free from their household duties; and the male devotees, most of them being office-goers, found it convenient to collect for "Mātri Satsang" in the evening. In the course of conversation or sometimes when a devotee just begged leave of Mā to go home, She was found to enquire amusingly, "well, where is your home?" And as one replied to give the location of his or her house in the usual manner, lo! there came quickly a rap from Mother in the form of a retort: "I know, I know, but that only is one for you to breathe in and breathe out. But what after that? Do you ever search for your real home?" In fact, Mother is seen to avail Herself of every opportunity to direct the attention of Her children "home-wards". How sweetly, yet with a finger pointing at our erring habit of ignoring the dictates of the soul, She ceaselessly directs us to seek for our native land, our true home, where one finds the abiding peace of the Self.

We reproduce below a very interesting dialogue that once took place between Mataji and certain foreigners, ladies and gentlemen who had come to pay their respects to Her:

"What is right for me", asked one of them, "to lead an active life in the world or a contemplative life in seclusion?" Mataji replied, "To whichever of the two you can give your heart and soul that is right for you."

"Have you anything to say to me?" questioned a young woman who had travelled all the way to India to study Buddhism.

*Mataji*: "Live the teaching that you profess."

And the third of them enquired, "How can I avoid saying the wrong thing at the wrong time?"

*Mataji* : "By waiting before you speak. If you pause for a little while you may think better of it and never say it at all".

And these westerners, while taking leave, said, "We feel greatly honoured to have had the privilege of meeting *Mataji*."

Promptly came a rejoinder from *Mataji* :

"Honoured? When you meet another you may feel honoured, but when you come to your own Self there is only joy and happiness."<sup>1</sup>

That this search for our real home, as so often figuratively alluded to by Mother, is but the quest for one's lost kingdom of the soul, is quite evident from Her words quoted above. The truth underlying them, we believe, is being further revealed and spread out through another episode we quote below :

"When the *satsang* was over, an old man was taking leave. 'It is getting late', he said, 'I must be going home'. And, 'Late indeed', agreed *Mataji*, 'there you are right; but go to your real home, not to the *dharmasāla*.'<sup>2</sup> The gentleman had no inkling of what *Mataji* was driving at. "I am not staying in any *dharmasāla*. I have my own house here,"

1. The entire dialogue is reproduced from Atmananda's 'Diary Leaves'—A. V. Vol. III/1, P. 33/34. These last words of *Mataji*, full of meaning and import as they are, we trust, will shed ample light on the subject of our present inquiry. We shall have to again refer to the same as we sum up our observations of the present study.

2. A rest house for travellers and pilgrims.

he said, but Mataji shook Her head and smiled : 'Do you call this home ?' You won't be able to stay there for ever. Your days are counted, and when your time is over you have to leave. I call it *dharmasāla*. There are rules and regulations, you may remain for a while and then you have to quit. But this body tells you to find your real home from which nobody can drive you out, which is not of this world. Dive deep and unearth your real wealth, find your real home in God who is your own Self."<sup>2</sup>

Here is another incident, offering us probably a better opportunity to have a clear idea of the secret behind this untiring charge from Mother that we should never slacken our efforts for the quest of our 'Real Home' :

In the year 1966, some time in the month of June, while Mother was at the Kishenpur Ashram at Dehra Dun, one day in the course of the usual *satsang* discourses, an old gentleman wanted to know from Mataji, "What, have you achieved by your *sādhana* ?" To which she replied, "Here the question of achievement or *sādhana* does not arise. I am what I have always been."

"What is your message to the world", was the gentleman's, second query and as Mataji replied in a similar tenor; "what message can one give who has not achieved or learnt anything", the gentleman, somewhat crestfallen, finally submitted, "Mā, I have travelled a long distance to see you, when I go back, my friends will ask, 'what is she like ? What did she say ?' and then what am I to tell them ? I want to understand your message !" This sincere

2. From Atmananda's 'Diary Leaves'—A. V. Vol. II/4, P. 382/83,

solicitation succeeded in calling out the following response from Mataji : "Very well, tell them, 'I have a small daughter; she prattles of whatever occurs to her.' You said, 'when others ask', therefore I said, 'I am your child', but actually you and I are one, aren't we? There is only one, all-pervading *Ātmā*, naught else except the ONE. You yourself are a barrier unto yourself in the form of *samskaras*. The destiny of every human being is to destroy the veil that hides his own Self. To realize this Self means to realize God and to realize God is to realize one's Self."<sup>1</sup>

Mother says : *Find your real home in God who is your own Self, and again : To realize the Self means to realize God and to realize God is to realize one's Self.* Thus we know the definite import of the search for our Real Home to which our unflinching attention is drawn by Mother on all occasions.

We shall now direct our search to the more subtle points of "the Home Coming" with a view also to arrive at an appraisal of our true relationship with Mataji, as far as our limited understanding permits.

Let us hold our tongue for a while and listen to what people from all around the globe feel and say after their meeting and association with Mother :

(A) Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, Padma Vibhusan, gives an account of his own impression after having seen Mataji for the first time at Banaras in September, 1928 :

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1. From Dr. B. Mukerji's article "About Sri Anandamayi Ma"—  
A. V. Vol. XVI/3, P. 105-6.

“People of both sexes, of all ages and of all ranks were to be found in the crowd. Some came to have Her *darsana* only, a few to have their doubts solved, while others still were there out of mere curiosity. The beauty of it was that all felt a sort of magnetic charm in Mother's personality, so that those who had come once out of curiosity could not resist the temptation of coming back again, no longer out of curiosity which had been satisfied, but owing to some mysterious attraction. The fact is that all felt that they were like little children in the presence of their own mother. The bleakness of cold formalities was replaced by the warmth of familiarity and intimacy. Mother behaved with them as if they were Her own children—dear, affectionate and very familiar. There was not the least reserve in Her look or any note of constraint in Her expression. The whole atmosphere was one of a friendly gathering imbued with vivacity and joyousness.”<sup>1</sup>

(B) On the love of Mā, Monsieur Arnaud Desjardins, in his article “Mother as Seen by a Westerner”, writes beautifully :

“Of the love of Anandamayi Mā everyone receives his share and all possess the whole of it.”<sup>2</sup>

This one sentence probably speaks a volume on the issue of the Love of Mā.

(C) Miss Melita Maschmann, a German authoress of considerable literary talent, who has been shadowing Mother

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1. From the Book “Mother As Seen By Her Devotees”—P., 160-61.
  2. From the Book “Mother As Seen By Her Devotees”—Page 71.



for more than ten years now, gives her unobtrusive opinion in such inspiring words as :

“It may sound presumptuous, but, I should like to say it in all humility : In Mataji, God allowed me to see Him with the closeness of intimacy.” And she proceeds further, “Ever clearer I felt, what distinguishes me from Her is nothing essential, it lies where the brightness of a candle is distinguished from that of the sun. This was of course a tremendous discovery.”<sup>1</sup>

This, in fact, is the story of every soul coming within the proximity of Mataji’s spiritual aura, as a result of which one is sure to find himself growing better and yet better from day to day—an unmistakable sign of the divine presence working its creative wonder.

(D) A devout follower of Mataji, the late Prof. Girija Shankar Bhattacharya, who had known Mā from the early days of Her *lilā* at Shahbagh and at the Siddheswari temple in Dacca, says in his article, “Mother—as I have known Her” :

“She to me, seems to be a shutterless window, wide open, through which you can have a glimpse of the Infinite. From all Her limbs, nay from every pore of Her skin, as it were, shines forth the effulgence of the Divine, softened however, for our mortal eyes by the utter sweetness, utter kindness of Her personality. *She calls forth the Divine in us, lying hidden by untruths, inspiring the utmost faith in our mind that*

1. From *Ibid*, P. 78/79.

*it nevertheless is whole and complete, unaffected by our weakness and failings".<sup>1</sup>*

(E) Sri N. R. Das Gupta, an eminent advoate of Calcutta, eager to understand the unbelievable sway Mother holds amongst those round Her without the least conscious effort or affectation on Her part, had once begged of Mataji straight away to enlighten him as to the secret of this mysterious attraction. And his persuasions promptly evinced a very sweet and deeply significant reply from Mother. We quote below the relevant portion from his article, "The Divine Mother". :

"I have seen many young boys and girls, coming in contact with Mother only for a short while, weeping bitterly at the mere idea of separation ... I remember an occasion when a young girl ... who had been with Mother only for four or five days started weeping in the evening merely at the prospect of leaving Mother the next day, though she was going back to her own mother and family. What is the secret of this mysterious attraction? I once asked Mother, the question straight : She laughed and said, "*I am the nearest and dearest to you all though you may not know it.*"<sup>2</sup>

(F) Sri A. K. Dutta Gupta, Kaviratna, in his article on Mā, "God As Love", writing on this aspect of Her universal appeal—Her power of attracting people, very much resembling that of Lord Krishna—holds that it is Love 'that makes the whole world Her kin.' "Now look at

1. From Ibid, Page 105.

2. From the Book "Mother As Seen By Her Devotees" Page 113-114.

Anandamayī Mā", Sri Dutta Gupta contends, "All roads lead to the spot where She stops even for a day or two in the course of Her unplanned ramblings, and men and women as soon as they come to know of it flock with eagerness to have a *darśana*. It makes no difference whether they understand Her words or not, as it often happens in parts of Gujarat, Baroda, Rajasthan, Madras, Bombay, etc., where common people do not understand Hindi, not to speak of Bengali. She was once taken to Rameswaram and certain other places of pilgrimage in South India. We are told by Khukuni Didi [Khukuni' is a nickname of Gurupriya Devi] that at one place boys and girls—no beggars—surrounded Her, singing and dancing in great delight though not knowing who or what She was or understanding a single word falling from Her lips and though there was nothing in Her attire to show that she was not a Bengali woman of the common run. *This is how love makes the whole world kin.*"<sup>1</sup>

From the above narrative we have understood that it is the abiding all-embracing Love of Mataji, which has made the entire world Her own, and it is no wonder therefore that each and everyone feels drawn towards Her for the mere fact of this rare alchemy that has the unique capacity to convert all baser metals into gold.

(G) We have yet another very interesting account from Dr. Adolphe Weintrob, tracing the course of events through which Mataji 'had donned him the wings of love,'

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1. Ibid, Page 32.

as he says. Here is the story behind the wonderful change wrought in the life of an earnest seeker from abroad :

Dr. Weintrob, who is now popularly known as Vijayanda, came to see Mother for the first time in February 1951. From his own writing we know, he had come to India in quest of spiritual guidance, leaving behind him a temporary substitute in charge of his medical practice at his own place in France. After he had been here for some time in his fruitless search, disappointed, at last he had reserved a berth for his return journey on board of the 'Marsailleise', which was to sail from Colombo on the 21st February 1951. But, as Providence ordained, Dr. Weintrob found himself in Mother's presence at the Banaras Ashram on the 2nd of February, 1951. His request for a private interview being granted, he saw Mother for the second time the same evening at 10 o'clock—the interview lasting for about 20 minutes. He had, within those 20 minutes neither asked nor spoken anything in the presence of Mataji. "I had nothing to ask", he says "I simply desired to make a spiritual contact. She seemed to divine thought. It was She who put the questions, clear, precise, going straight to the heart of things, raising exactly the points which interested me."

We have here on record the nature of his personal experience that he had gone through soon after this interview with Mother :

"I was in a strange state" he says, "...my heart swelled in jubilation, with joyful exaltation—the state of one who has just found what he has always yearned for

in the most secret recess of his heart ... As by a strange alchemy my entire potentiality for affection, all that one can love and admire in the world, had been transferred to Her. But at the same time this love became so pure, so sublimated, that it merged into and greatly intensified the call for the Absolute that I had always felt." And, as a result, he admits, "All worldly attachment lost its attraction, and the spiritual ascent became easier, since *she donned me the wings of love.*" Of the love again Dr. Weintrob says, "I thought that this love would disappear or at least dwindle with time. The very contrary has happened. It has only grown in intensity. For it is like with those ancient cities buried underground : as one delves deeper, ever more new marvels are brought to light." At this stage, he questioned within himself : What made him decide to leave everything—family, friends, country, profession, wealth—to follow Her ? The answer for this may be found in his specific reference to Mataji's silent working in the heart of one who opens himself to receive Her Grace : "She is like the Ganges — Her very touch purifies. In Her presence one feels oneself getting better all the time. Not by the supression of one's faults; the very fault is sublimated and becomes an aid in the search for the Divine. She does not seem to notice or does not want to notice the dark side of the individual. She only sees our luminous aspects, enhanced considerably by Her Divine Mercy."<sup>1</sup>

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1. "My First Impression" By Vijayananda, See "Mother As Seen By Her Devotees", Page-43/47.

(H) We shall now go through the intimate and interesting story of an English gentleman, Dr. Collin Turnbull, later known as "Premananda."

Commenting on the nature of the peculiar vacuum that mankind, particularly those of the western hemisphere, were experiencing since after the second World War, due to the total crash of all human values, Dr. Turnbull writes, "Everywhere there is disunity, unhappiness and emptiness in our innermost lives", so that, "There was a spiritual emptiness, and although many were too engrossed in their whirl of activity", yet, "There were some of us who felt only a great loneliness, and a longing for something deep and lasting on which to build our shattered lives", and since, "Our eyes had been opened and we could no longer remain satisfied with a way of life which not only ignored the world outside our own small society, but ignored the very deepest meaning and purpose of life itself." And he had left his home and come to India "for the sole purpose of discovering what it was that was missing in my life, and of filling that spiritual emptiness which made life seem so pointless."

Dr. Collin Turnbull, who was at first putting up with a Hindu family as their guest at Baroda, eventually came to Banaras and settled down at the B. H. U. for a serious study of Indian philosophy. It was during those days that he came across a book on Mother, which actually was the precursor to bring him to Her one day at the Ashram at Bhadaini, Varanasi.

Let us hear his own version of the reaction produced by this eventful meeting with Mataji :

“The first sight of Her unsettled me, and made me feel as though the precarious hold I did have on life was being swept away.....It was, I suppose, the natural reaction of the impact of two worlds. I had been on the border between East and West, still holding grimly on to the West because it was all I knew, but now I had been plunged into the unknown by the mere sight of a woman.” And continuing in this autobiographical strain this learned doctor of philosophy writes, “It was not long afterwards that Anandamayi become ‘Mataji’ and I became ‘Premananda’, and from then onwards there was never any question of doubt. Mataji filled exactly that emptiness I had felt in the western world, and through Her I learnt how to lead a whole life, how to carry the Spirit into the everyday world, how to lead an everyday life that is at the same time a dedicated life, and intensely spiritual.”

Thus far as regards his indebtedness to Mother, for what he really owes to Her—the word indebtedness, of course, we know is a very wrong one in the context of the abiding loving relation of the child with its mother, yet we use this word for want of a more suitable one. We could, on the other hand say that, this was what Mother taught him, but then we know Mataji would never let us circumscribe Her like that. For she has come neither as a Guru nor as a preceptor but verily as a mother unto everybody. The child has nevertheless taken the liberty of expressing his own conviction thus, “the combination of spirituality and practicality is one of the most valuable gifts that the East has to offer to the West, and Mataji taught me accordingly.”

Next we come to that portion of Dr. Turnbull's account which will of its own merit speak eloquently in favour of our theme. People from any corner of the world, of whatever faith, calling or attainment, in the very presence of Mataji, are sure to share the rare privilege and joy of the "home coming" with its corresponding nostalgic feeling when one has to stay apart from Her physically. Here is that conspicuous account given by one of Mothers countless children coming from thousands of miles away: "In her Ashrams I felt the bond of brotherhood which will eventually unite the world, and in the mutual love and consideration which pervaded all those gathered around Mataji, I found a way of life which is yet but a dream among the majority of peoples of the western world. There was no question of rich or poor, good or bad, high or low, there was perfect brotherhood among all. I think that perhaps the greatest things I learnt were a love for Truth and a love for all my fellow-beings. Truth can be a hard master, but there are none better, for Truth is one of the ways in which the Spirit is revealed. Those around Mataji could not help but be impregnated with this wonderful ideal, and at the same time feel all the petty differences and distinctions which normally surround us, disappearing. Here was life as it should be led, life for the One Self, not for the little individual self, a life in which all of us could join equally, no matter how feeble or weak we were."<sup>1</sup>

As we attempt in retrospect a summing up of all the

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1. From "Mataji" by Collin Turnbull M. A., Ph. D.,  
"Mother As Seen By Her Devotees", P. 52-55.



experiences enumerated above, we have a picture in our mind of the mighty fore-runner of the Heavenly Kingdom standing at the cross-road of a decaying and puerile civilisation, offering humanity peace and rest under His outstretched arms with such promise as :

*"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest"*.

*"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;.....and ye shall find rest unto your souls."*<sup>1</sup>

This, rightly speaking is the call of the Divine Spirit possessing every soul, and man's bounden duty is to live truly and faithfully according to its dictates, constantly reminding us to turn each of our steps 'home-ward'.

Now we shall try to understand how this silent working of the soul from within corresponds with that of Mother's 'teaching without words' in the light of a serious observation by a French devotee, of whom we have already made a reference earlier. M. Arnaud Desjardins, a Television Director of Paris, came to Mā in September, 1959 for the first time, and since then on several other occasions with his wife and children. And we have also on record, in one of

1. St. Mathew XI/28-29 [ The three relevant verses of this Gospel quoting Christ's words are :
  28. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
  29. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
  30. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. ]

his articles on Mother. "Teaching Without Words"—delightfully charming presentation of personal reminiscences—that, "with the exception of about an hour in all of conversations with her that I was granted with the help of interpreters, I have thus never understood what she said or replied to questions. And yet have I for her sake undertaken four journeys to India and spent eight months close to her sometimes under rather difficult conditions. This proves the power of her influence even over one to whom the Hindu tradition in which she is rooted is foreign."<sup>1</sup>

This gentleman looks upon Mother as his spiritual guide and yet the devout Christian does not cease to be a Christian, rather his understanding of Christ deepens and also his faith increases as he gets his silent teachings<sup>1</sup> at the feet of Mother. That we do not labour under any false pretence will be borne out by M. Desjardin's own words :

"What.....appears to be most amazing is the function of a Master, of a spiritual preceptor that Mā has taken on towards a French visitor who has been and truly remains Her pupil. Above all I should say She has gradually made me understand the meaning of the Gospels and of the message of Christ. Thanks to Mā, the words of Jesus have now for me become a word of Life."<sup>2</sup>

1. About Mother's 'silent teachings' referred to above, it is interesting to relate in the author's own words in the same context "Nevertheless I can bear witness to the fact that the teaching of Ma, even though it has been communicated without words, has completely transformed my life in Paris", A. V. Vol. XIII/1, Page-5.
2. M. Arnaud Desjardins article, "Teaching Without Words", see A. V. Vol. XIII/1, Page-3/4.

Again, alluding to the almost unbelievable result of the impact of this silent teaching on contemporary society and the people, he continues, "One may be flabbergasted at the social phenomenon which the glory of a woman represents who does nothing else but teach us to seek God. But the shock of her gaze and the meaning of the slightest of her gestures is a personal experience. Those who have seen have believed. And those who have understood the words of Life Eternal have taken to the Path."<sup>1</sup>

And that these are not mere frothy words of temporary fits of emotion as we often come across in the case of weak and sentimental persons, will be proved beyond doubt from the following statement recorded by Monsieur Desjardins in an intimate autobiographical strain :

"Never before have I been so divinely happy as in the presence of Mā Anandamayī. Yet also have I never before been so ill at ease and so utterly shattered. I knew that a painful transformation had to be wrought within me : I had come for that purpose, and I knew that this transformation had to be accomplished with my consent and active co-operation. It is not enough to remain passive in the presence of a sage : one has to lend, to deliver oneself voluntarily to his influence."<sup>2</sup>

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1. From "Teaching Without Words" By M. A. Desjardins, See A. V. Vol. XIII/1, Page 5.

2. Ibid, See A. V. Vol. XIII/1, page 6.

Of the power of Mother's irresistible influence that the author experiences, we have here a faithful record :

"Her face is so powerful that, week after week, lost in the crowd, I was unable to detach myself from it. So irresistible was the impression of intensity and fulness that I felt with my whole being. In the presence of Mā, at last something actually was happening in my life. And I have gained the certainty that everything is possible for her."<sup>1</sup>

This, in fact, is the miracle of the creative ferment that starts working within, surely yet imperceptibly, as soon as we willingly submit ourselves to the saving power of the Divine Grace working through a Christ or an Anandamayi Ma.

The conviction and sincerity with which the recipient of such grace speaks is truly a testimony of the profundity of the occasion, such as we have in this instance from M. Desjardins :

"Near Her I have found the Life that is beyond all created things, yet is also in all of them, and against which no power in the world, no difficulty, no tribulation or anxiety can prevail. Since my first visit to Mā at Varanasi, I have discovered the life in myself. I can understand that certain people negate the existence of God or of the *Ātmā*. But Life? Who can object to opening himself to Life and letting himself be transformed by it?"

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1. Ibid, See A. V. Vol. XIII/1, page 7.

The Christ said: 'I am Life. I shall give Life to all who come to me.' I know that Ma is Life and that she gives Life to all who come to Her. Why then should it be difficult to call Her 'Mother', to call Her 'Mā'? For not only does a mother protect and guide, scold and comfort, a mother is first and foremost she who gives birth, who brings you to life."

And finally, this gentleman confesses in the plainest assertive way, "What I have received from this woman Saint is myself, I was dead and I have come back to Life. I was born of the flesh and I am born of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup>

This coming back to Life, is in fact, no other than our "Home Coming", meaning coming to our own SELF, our *Ātmā*, which again has in God and Mā its true taintless synonyms.

We shall probably now better understand the deeper and wider significance of Mā's words, "....when you meet another you may feel honoured, but when you come to your own Self there is only joy and happiness."

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I. From "Teaching Without Words" By M. A. Desjardins, See A. V. Vol. XIII/1, Page 7/8.

# From the Diary of a New Devotee

Dhanraj

21-12-73

Dear S.,

In response to your question "What did you gain from Ma's *Samyam Saptah*?" I copy below what I wrote in my diary, dated 12-11-73.

"Mataji is indeed a *sant-shiromani*, one of the greatest living saints of God. The more I see of her, the more I grow in love and admiration of her. Again and again I think of Ma who shines among mahātmās as shines a full-moon amidst stars. She is *unique*.

"I saw her distributing fruits and flowers to devotees for over an hour but these very hands which would not be tired distributing to others would not move to bathe, to clothe or to feed her own body. I saw her going about seeing how the devotees were fed, how they were housed, I saw her receiving poor and rich and blessing them. I saw her answering questions of devotees. 'I am a tuned musical instrument', she said. 'Whatever notes you touch, you will hear the music accordingly'. To the same question asked by different persons, the answers were accordingly different, responding to the respective need. Twice a day for one hour each time she would bless the devotees, sitting with them in *dhyāna*. How with love and respect She listened to the *upadeshas* of mahātmās who came to give discourses at the *Samyam Mahāvratā*, as if she were one of the

*sādhakas*. How great and how so very humble. She sleeps little, she eats little and she attends to the needs of all like a real Mother. She sees her *Narayan* in all—she bows before all. She calls herself a child (*bachchi*).

“It is strange, in her company there are so many young girls and young men, yet there is an atmosphere of perfect purity and discipline. Herself practically illiterate, she has attracted to herself highly qualified and learned devotees who have dedicated their lives to her. She receives wealth in abundance and freely gives to the needy. Some of the richest people flock for her blessings. Politicians come to her for advice; industrialists seek her blessing for starting new ventures.

“She never asks for anything, she always gives. Brahman is complete, therefore, IT needs nothing. Whatever we may take away from it, Brahman remains *pūrāṇā* ( full ).

“The *kirtana* of *Rāma Nāme* that flowed from Ma's blessed lips was indeed very uplifting, the sweetness and melody of which I can never forget. Remembering it again and again I feel so purified and blessed. May God give Ma a very long life for the welfare of humanity”.

My dear S., I must thank you very much for having asked me to attend the ‘*Samyam Mahāorata*’ at Vrindaban from 3-11-73 to 9-11-73. The above notes from my diary will give you an idea of what I have gained by attending it. You are very safe and secure in the hands of Ma who like the “Good Shepherd” takes good care of her flock.

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## Matri Satsang in Solan

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

(Continued from the last issue)

( 5 )

Solan, June 12th, 1955.

Today the sky is overcast since the morning. In this mountaineous district the rains usually commence in the second week of June. In the afternoon there has been a spell of torrential rain. Thereafter the air has turned chilly. Mataji does not put in an appearance on the large veranda outside of her room where the daily *satsang* normally takes place. So, after the period of *mauna* (silent meditation) all of us go and sit down quietly inside Mataji's room after bowing at her feet quickly to perform our *pranamas*. Someone has wrapped a beautiful white Kashmir shawl round Mataji's shoulders. Her jet black hair is no longer coiled round her head like a crest but is falling loosely over her back. Mataji's room is quite spacious, yet the atmosphere is absolutely homely. A local girl starts singing a melodious folksong of the hills, unaccompanied, and although the words are not quite intelligible, the song sounds sweet in these peaceful surroundings.

Mataji calls the girl to her and asks her name and



other particulars. Then she says of her own accord : "Do you repeat the Lord's name daily ? Do you pray to Him ?"

"Yes, I do, regularly," replies the girl, "My mother is dead, my elder brother works in Simla. My old father is ill. I have to look after him and my younger sister. I daily pray to God for my father, but why does God not make him well ? Do, please, cure my father's illness !"

On hearing this, Mataji says : "You must never stop praying. God will surely listen to your prayers. He heeds everybody's prayers. Why merely say 'He heeds ?' He constantly and at all times is heeding them. But just because the results are not always according to one's own wishes, one must not conclude that the action of praying has been fruitless. Prayer (*prārthanā*) means "*pararthanā*" for no other object," i. e., what is extraneous, what does not belong to one's own Self—that which arises one after another, only to disappear—all this one should not pray for. One's prayers must be solely to realize Him who is your very own Self, who is the Supreme Father, Mother, Friend, Beloved and Lord.

Well, have you understood my words ?"

The young girl nods to confirm that she will pray daily to God in keeping with Mataji's advice.

Following this line of thought, a devotee puts another question :

"If we pray to God for the fulfilment of any particular desire, do we obtain it ?"

*Mataji* : The results will be according to the nature of the

desire and the potency of the prayer. As you pray so you shall benefit. Suppose a person prays for the saving of someone's life, but it so happens that the patient dies. Nevertheless, the prayer will most certainly have a result. Even though the patient dies, through this incident his connection with God has definitely been established. Thus the prayer has not been in vain. Suppose a child asks his parents for a particular choice dish, but his mother realizes that this item would be harmful to his health. So what does she do? She keeps the child amused by giving him something else. Now ponder carefully on how God responds to your prayers.

*Gurupriya Didi*: God knows what is beneficial for any particular person.

*Mataji*: The Mother does what she considers best.

*Question*: Is it good to pray for worldly things?

*Mataji*: Prayers are always beneficial.

*Swami Shashwatananda*: At the Kishenpur Ashram, Mataji once received a letter in which a request was made for the fulfilment of four different wishes.

*Mataji*: The letter read: "Mataji, please give me wealth. Please, let me win my case in court. Preserve my honour and cure my illness".

In times of distress it is natural that such prayers should arise. It is always good to remember God: Prayers are fruitful in accordance with the sincerity and timeliness in which they are offered.

*Question* : God will most certainly promote one's ultimate Good, so what need is there for prayer ?

*Mataji* : There comes a stage in praying where one just cannot exist without it. An ordinary person prays : "God, please give me this—give me that". Again, someone in a high spiritual state prays thus : "Oh my Lord, I cannot remain without you any longer. When will you reveal yourself to me ?" Here the mind is always crying out for God, a perpetual, never ending agitation, a thirst for reunion with the absent Beloved. There is a kind of prayer filled with vain egotism and there is another kind which is entirely free from this factor. In the former one says : "Oh God, give me this or that" or "give this or that to such and such a person", i. e. associated with the seeking after worldly possessions or pleasures. While prayers devoid of egoism are as follows : "Oh God, I am a poor and lonely person; I do not know how to worship. How can I realize you ? Please take pity and reveal yourself to me !" This desperate yearning of the heart seeks only Him for His own sake. Thus there certainly is a place and a state for praying. Then there is yet another stage where one says : "God Almighty, do whatever Thou pleasest. Let Thy will be fulfilled in my life !" This means praying for strength to bear happiness or sorrow wherever and whenever they come and praying for His Mercy to be granted the power to realize His true Being.

*Didi* : Does one attain a state of absolute surrender to God by praying ?

*Mataji* : Yes, in a state of true prayer one does not wish or ask for anything. One's wishes are merged with His wishes. "I am Thy tool. Do what Thou likest with it. Drive it wherever Thou wilt. Whatever I can do or may achieve depends entirely on Thy will. It is up to Thee to grant me any boon or receive my offerings."

*Didi* : (Quoting from a well-known poet-philosopher) :  
"Let your wishes be fulfilled within my life !"

*Mataji* : The person who talks of "my this—my that", does he really know what is good or bad for him ? Suppose someone prays for employment. He gets a job but falls ill. A man acquires wealth and then meets death at the hands of robbers. He marries and begets children but is in disharmony with the family. So if he does not even know what is good or bad for him, for what should he pray ? Hence it is best to say : "Lord, let Thy Will be done !" Some attain to this insight predominantly by the power of knowledge, others through the strength of their devotion and yet others through the zeal of their active work. Ultimately the mind comes to realize : "Lord, Thou art ever all-bountiful and all-beneficent. Thou art constantly planning for my welfare, for my benefit. Of what use is my prayer alone. Let Thy infinite Goodness be revealed in me !"

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## Mātri Līlā

( Jan. 20th-April 20th, 1974 )

On January 21st Mataji left Kanpur for Delhi where she alighted on the 22nd morning. She had come mainly to make sure whether all the necessary preparations for the forthcoming *Saraswati Puja* and for the *Bhagavata Saptah* that was to commence on January 30th were satisfactory. Sri Swami Vishnuashramji had also come on a short preliminary visit. Mataji left for Modinagar on the 23rd, returning to Delhi on the 25th. On the 29th Mataji again went away for the day. On *Vasant Panchami* day, which fell on January 28th, Saraswati Puja was celebrated in great style in our Ashram at Kalkaji. The Vice-President of India, Sri G. S. Pathak and his family graced the occasion as they do every year and some other V. I. Ps., were in attendance. We have on several former occasions reported about this *pūja* in detail. That evening Mataji paid a visit to the Prime Minister who was not feeling well and could not come to see Mataji.

From January 30th to February 6th, Sri Vishnuashramji of Suktal expounded the Srimad Bhagavata daily from 9-11 a. m. and from 2-5 p. m. Mataji was present throughout his inspiring discourses, never missing a single hour. The spacious hall was packed to capacity and everybody listened with great interest and in pindrop silence.

Sri Vishnuashram remarked how well the audience had responded. On the 7th there was *havan* (fire sacrifice) and a feast given to all. The whole *Saptah* proceeded in great beauty and harmony and to everyone's satisfaction.

Mataji had an extremely busy time throughout Her stay in Delhi with any number of visitors and private interviews. One day Mataji went to attend the birthday celebrations of the late Sri Ram Thakur, a famous saint of East Bengal who had been known to Her personally.

Among the many visitors from foreign countries, we should like to mention specially Prof. Dr. Graf Karlheim von Durkheim, a venerable gentleman of Mataji's age, who for the last twenty-five years has been running a spiritual centre in the Black Forest, West-Germany. Before he started giving spiritual instruction, he had spent about ten years in Japan where he was trained by Zen masters. Many in Europe and even in America regard him as one of the foremost spiritual teachers of the West and seek his guidance. He came three times for Mataji's *daršana* and twice sat before Her in silent meditation. He expressed his great happiness to have found Mataji and said he would from now on advise his disciples to seek Mataji's contact. Mataji was very gracious and treated him with great regard and attention.

On February 8th Mataji went to the houses of a few devotees; the last one was the home of the Raja of Nabha, a few miles out of Delhi. From there She suddenly motored to Kankhal to the surprise of the Ashramites there who had expected Her only on the 10th. Arriving at 10 p. m., She left again after about 10 minutes and spent the whole night

on the draughty veranda of Jaipuria House, Ramghat, Hardwar, that is directly on the Ganges. At 5 a. m. the next morning She was back at Kankhal. The 'advance party' who had come from Delhi by the night train were amazed to find Mataji already in the Ashram.

On February 11th the first procession of sādhus and mahātmās of the Kumbh Mela was taken out. It started at about noon from Jwalapur and terminated at nearly 7 p. m. with a meeting at the Mela Camp of the Nirvani Akhara, near the Ramakrishna Mission, Kankhal. During the procession Mataji was seated on a beautiful gold and silver throne with a silken baldachin. The throne placed high up on a colourfully decorated cart with a cross bar in front. Groups of devotees, both men and women took turns in pulling the cart. Amongst them was the Civil Surgeon of Hardwar and some American brahmacharis. Two brahmacharis wearing turbans and holding silver staffs over their shoulders stood on each side of Mataji's throne and Swami Parmananda sat in a kind of box behind Mataji. Two men carrying bright red silk flags on long sticks walked ahead. Our kirtan singers from Delhi and Dehradun walked in front of Mataji's cart holding drums and cymbals and with great enthusiasm and perseverance sang kirtan uninterruptedly throughout the seven hours. In front of the kirtan singers, an image of Padmanabh was carried on a palanquin under a beautiful umbrella. In front of this there was a cart for the girl's, kirtan party with a harmonium and a loud-speaker. The girls also sang non-stop. Mataji had distributed bright yellow handkerchiefs to all her people, men and women, which everyone tied round their heads. This not

only served as a protection from the sunrays but also looked very bright and cheerful. Besides, the Ashram party could easily be spotted from a great distance. Mataji and Her people were almost at the rear of the whole procession followed only by one woman saint Sri Gita Bharati with her disciples the head of a large Ashram at Hardwar. A fleet of cars and rikshaws followed with those who were unable to walk.

Mataji looked radiant and young and was in excellent form. The best of it was that on returning after having sat enthroned for seven hours in one position, giving *darśana* and smiling graciously at the eager crowds who hailed Her everywhere, Mataji declared that She did not feel at all tired and had no pain anywhere in Her body. The atmosphere at the procession had been overwhelming. Mataji was in a most animated mood, talking for a long time to Her people on the Ashram veranda.

For the next few days Mataji went every evening at about 8 p. m. to Baghat House, Kharkhari, where She would spend the night, returning to Kankhal some time in the morning. On the 18th She motored to Dehradun, dividing the few hours She was able to spend there between the three Ashrams on Rajpur Road, namely Kalyanvan, Kishenpur and Sadhan Ashram, Jakhan. A Siva Linga was installed at Sadhan Ashram in Mataji's presence and a feast given to all at Kishenpur. Before leaving in the late afternoon, Mataji again visited Sadhan Ashram.

Many devotees arrived from far and near for Sivaratri that fell on February 20th. That day there was another procession which this time started at the Nirvani Akhara



Mela grounds and went to Harki Pauri and back. It was real *tapasyā* to walk in the sun while fasting without water for those who wished to join the Sivaratri Puja at night. The worship started somewhat later than in former years as part of the preparations had to be completed after returning from the procession. Like last year the courtyard had been given a canvas roof and the worshippers sat in circles round Siva Linga occupying every inch of the limited space. Brahmachari Nirvanananda, sitting on the veranda of the Siva Mandir, gave directions for the procedure of the puja with the help of a loudspeaker. Mataji was present throughout the first *pūjā*, which is the longest and most elaborate, and came again at about 2·30 a. m., singing loudly as She does every year to rouse the worshippers who are in danger of dozing off by that time. This year the great majority of people broke their fast after the first *pūjā* at about 10 p. m., tired out by the long walk during the day. Fifteen guests hailing from various foreign countries sat in the porch watching and listening with great interest. A few had brought their own images and were doing puja in their own way. Some had kept a complete fast and Mataji Herself saw to it that they were served a hearty meal of *prasāda* in the morning. Mataji never went to Her room until 8 a. m. As soon as four Sivaratri pujas were completed, everybody was allowed to approach Mataji's seat and do *praṇāma* and Mataji distributed fruit.

On the 21st night Mataji boarded the train for Calcutta. She was incredibly busy that whole day and had "privates" even at the railway station while waiting for the train. When Mataji passed through Varanasi on the 22nd, most

ashramites and other devotees of that city enjoyed almost an hour's *darśana* at the station.

On the 23rd morning Mataji alighted in Calcutta. For years She had not been to Calcutta except for sudden, very short visits that had not been announced beforehand. This time, at last, She had been persuaded to spend full fifteen days there. Arrangements were excellent beyond all expectations. It was proved that it is after all possible to effectively control even Bengali crowds who go into regular raptures at the sight of Mataji and are so eager to get near Her that they forget all reason. Mataji and Her large retinue were put up at Jodhpur Park. A new house had been built for Mataji by Sri Pratibha Kundu who accommodated everybody else in his own and in neighbouring houses. Mataji's room upstairs was surrounded by an open terrace from where Mataji could give *darśana* undisturbed to a good number of people standing in the garden below. Garlands could easily be thrown up and returned with Mataji's touch and blessings. A pandal seating ten thousand people had been erected in the vicinity for Mataji's visit, with a band of volunteers maintaining perfect order. A Bhagavata Saptah was held there from February 25th to March 4th. Sri Narayan Goswami, a Professor of Calcutta University who is an offspring of the family of Sri Nityananda, the famous companion of Lord Gouranga Mahaprabhu Himself, delivered the daily discourses that were of a rare quality, it goes without saying. Besides Professor Tripurari Chakravarti for a few days lectured on the Bhagavata from 9-10 a. m., followed by talks by Brahmachari Mahanāmavrata for the next hour. Sri Govinda

Gopal, the son of Sri Pran Gopal Mukerji (one of the earliest devotees of Ma at Daccā) held discourses in the evening.

Mataji was brimming over with energy and benevolence, giving to all who approached Her, with full hands from early morning until late at night. The Calcutta devotees had made a supreme effort to arrange for every detail throughout Mataji's visit in a flawless manner and Mataji responded as generously as only She can. Thousands benefited greatly and lastingly by Mataji's presence in their midst.\*

On March 5th, Mataji went to stay for one night at the residence of Sri Mukund Lal Ghosh who also took a great deal of trouble to arrange adequately for Mataji's visit and erected a large pandal. On the 6th, Mataji graced the temple of Brahmachari Krishnananda at Ranaghat with Her presence and the same night came to stay at our Ashram at Agarpara. On March 7th Sri Haribabaji's birthday was celebrated there with *kirtana*, *Siva puja*, a feast at midday and a huge quantity of laddus distributed to all. The next day, *Dol Purnima*, the birthday of Sri Chaitanya Deva was observed. Mataji was requested to join the yearly procession of the *Vaiṣṇavas*. Mataji sat in an open 'tempo' car for the procession. At Deshapriya Park, South Calcutta, the famous saint, Sri Sitaram Das Omkarnathji came to see Mataji. That day Mataji sang 'Hari bol' and some other Bengali songs which were relayed by the All India Radio. On March 9th Mataji went to Chandar Nagar. There also She talked animatedly and sang.

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\* In the next issue of *Ānanda Vārtā* we hope to publish an article giving full details of Mataji's sojourn at Calcutta.

The same night She drove by car to Bandel station from where She boarded the train to Deoghar. Sri Narendra Nath Brahmachariji had most thoughtfully and carefully arranged for Mataji's comforts and rest at His ashram so that Mataji could relax after the hectic days of Calcutta. There was *satsang* every day from 9-11 a. m. and 4-7 p. m. but for the rest of the time nobody was allowed to encroach on Mataji's solitude. Mataji very generously replied to questions and talked a great deal about olden times, remembering Her early visits to Deoghar from Dacca with Bholanath. One day Mataji went to the Ashram of Mohanananda Brahmachariji and also paid a visit to the ailing Gour Gopal, son of Rai Bahadur Pran Gopal Mukerji who had been instrumental in taking Mataji to the Ashram of his Guru Sri Balananda Brahmachari at Deoghar in 1926 from Dacca.

In the early morning of March 14th, Mataji motored to Gaya. There She went straight to *Viṣṇu Pada* the famous temple with the footprints of Viṣṇu. Mataji did *saṣṭāṅga Praṇāma*. She then spent two hours on the lawn of Dahnia House where She had Her midday meal and then left for Varanasi. On March 16th She proceeded from there to Naimisharanya and on the 20th early morning alighted at Karkhal.

On the 23rd there was another bathing day and Mataji was once more taken in procession to Harki Pauri, where She went down to the Ganges and just touched the water. Mataji was present when all the sadhus entered the Ganga collectively. A number of ashramites were able to bathe in Mataji's presence. On returning to the ashram, She sprinkled Gangajal over everyone.

Nowadays Mataji very rarely remains in one place for any length of time. On this occasion however Mataji stayed on in Kankhal until the 16th of April. Devotees from all over India as well as abroad were arriving daily. The new three-storeyed house was soon packed to capacity. A good number of tents were also put up in the open space adjoining the Ashram and the new kitchen started functioning during the last days of the Mela. The building of the hall had only recently been taken up. It was fitted with canvas walls and a canvas roof and carpets were spread over a padding of straw on the as yet bare ground. This provided a very spacious and comfortable pandal in which *satsang* was held twice or three times daily and where visiting mahātmās delivered talks whenever possible. Once Swami Naradananda of Naimisharanya came, another time Sant Kripal Singh, then again Swami Sharananandaji and Sri Govind Narayanji of the Ramatirtha Ashram. From the beginning of April preliminary functions in connection with the consecration of Didima's (Sti Muktananda Giri Maharajji's) Samadhi Mandir began. There was sādhu feeding on a large scale several times on the verandas of the new building. On three evenings all the Mahāmandaleshwaras of Hardwar were invited by turns. The first two functions took place in the courtyard of the Ashram and the last one in the pandal. All the dignitaries sat on raised cushioned seats. *Arāti* was performed to each one of them simultaneously by a number of our brahmacharies and baskets with fruit, cloth etc. were presented to them to the accompaniment of exquisite music sung by the girls of our Ashram, led by Pushpa. Mataji's seat faced those of the Mahamandaleswaras. She got up and

went round in person to welcome them. The whole place was decorated with great beauty and dignity and everything proceeded with ceremonial precision. It was really a rare privilege to witness those meetings.

From April 11th various ceremonies started in preparation for the installation of Giriji's statue and the final consecration of the Mandir. There was also a *havan* (fire sacrifice) in the courtyard. The final *prāṇa pratiṣṭha* took place on the 14th morning in the presence of several mahātmās, such as Swami Chidanandaji the head of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh and others and also of secular dignitaries such as the Vice-president of India and his family and the Chief Secretary of Defence. It was really quite miraculous how everything proceeded with such order and without any disturbance in the very limited space in front of the Mandir, and that on Chaitra Sankranti, the main bathing day of the *Purna Kumbha*. The atmosphere of this function was truly sublime and will remain a precious memory for all who had the good fortune to attend.

For the last two years attempts had been made in vain to procure a good statue of Sri Muktananda Giriji and to have it installed. The consecration was evidently meant to take place during this rare and most auspicious constellation. Moreover the 14th of April also happened to be Easter Sunday this year as well as the culmination of the Jewish Passover.\* Could a more favourable moment be

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\* Easter is the festival of Christ's resurrection and the Jewish Passover commemorates the liberation the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.

found than this date of universal religions rejoicing all over the globe ?

Mataji had taken immense trouble and been busy day and night planning every detail of Didima's festival and making sure that everything was carried out to perfection. It is amazing how lifelike Didima's statue is. Didima seems to be sitting there herself. Her sweet presence is indeed tangible and when doing *pranāma* one seems to feel the delicate touch of her loving hand on one's head.

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Immediately after the completion of this function, people took a hurried meal and got ready for the last and biggest procession of the Kumbh that started from Nirvani Akhara at about 10-30 a. m.. Many had spent the best part of the preceding night at Harki Pauri waiting in a queue for hours until they could dip into the purifying waters of the Ganga on this most auspicious day. What extraordinary faith gave them the strength to walk and stand again in the procession for many hours in the glaring sun, protected only by Mataji's blessing that had taken visible shape in the yellow handkerchiefs ! This time the crowd watching all along the road was dense. No stone, no earth, no grass was visible anywhere, only a vast ocean of human beings, men, women and children, sitting or standing tightly packed, waiting patiently for long hours to have *daršana* of the mahātmās. Only in India such a feat is possible.

It must be said that a special new feature of this Kumbh was the spectacular number of foreigners from all over the world. In ever larger numbers people from the

west flock to India in search of new values, of the meaning of life, tired of their own materialistic civilization with its bodily comforts and luxuries.

An interesting incident may be mentioned here. The wife of a clergyman of a foreign country spent a fortnight with us, attending our *satsang* and joining enthusiastically in our *kirtana*. After returning from the procession on the last day, she said : "I am so happy to have celebrated Easter Sunday in this beautiful manner. I feel this was a real resurrection of Christ !" A few hours later she as a matter of course joined in the all night ladies' *kirtana*, which was part of the *Nāma Yojna* that started with 'adhivas' at about 10 p. m. and ended after sunset on April 15th.

On the 16th afternoon Mataji left by car for Dehradun from where She and most of Her party boarded the train to Varanasi. She spent only a few minutes each at Kalyanvan and Kishenpur.

At our Varanasi Ashram another statue of Swami Muktananda Giriji was installed on April 25th, *Akshaya Tritiya*, the anniversary of the consecration of Gopal Mandir. We shall say more about this in the next issue.

From Varanasi Mataji proceeded to Bombay on April 27th. Her birthday celebrations will take place at Andheri, a suburb of Bombay from May 3rd to 10th. Mataji is expected to go to Poona soon after, where a *Bhagavata Saptah* is to be held.

The next Durga Puja is to take place at Kankhal from 21st to 25th October. The next Samyam Mahavrata at the Ramathirta Ashram, Rajpur, Dehradun from 23rd to 29th November. ★



## **Mata Anandamayee Hospital**

Once in a divine mood, Shree Shree Mata Anandamayee delivered Her message "Rogiroopi Jana Janardan Seva Yajna" to Her devotees. These words coming from the depth of Her illumined consciousness revealed to them the way of attaining Divinity and spiritual self-realisation through dedicated services to Daridra Narayans.

Some of the ardent followers of Mataji, inspired by Her utterance resolved to give a practical shape to Mother's vision of dedicated service to the ailing humanity. They made a humble start in 1964 in the shape of a modest health service centre in a small tin-shed. This is the origin of Mata Anandamayee Hospital—the nucleus around which has grown an institution representing a noble cause, and embodying Mother's idea of worship through service.

By the grace of Mother, it has been nursed since its inception by a band of selfless devotees and sustained by financial assistance from benevolent philanthropists, Provincial and Central Governments and Varanasi Nagar Mahapalika. The tiny tinshed has been replaced by double-storied buildings of modern design, standing in a quiet and peaceful atmosphere. The Hospital has, besides its well-equipped Pathological and the most modern and upto-date Radiological Departments, facilities provided by instruments, appliances and machines under supervision of a galaxy of highly qualified and experienced medical men who are engaged in rendering aid to the ailing humanity without any distinction of caste, creed or colour.

In the out-patient section of the Hospital, patients are treated free in Medical, Surgical, Gynaecological, Cardiological, Ophthalmic, Dental and E. N. T. departments by specialists in medicine and surgery.

In the In-door Section of the Hospital, there are two modern Major Operation Tables fitted with upto-date anaesthetic apparatus in air-conditioned rooms, where qualified Surgeons are in attendance throughout the year.

The Labour and child welfare ward of the Hospital is fast becoming popular. Expert Obstetricians are there to guide and help new mothers and welcome and nurse the new-born. "Eye welfare weeks" were observed in the Hospital from 21st December to 15th January, 1974 and hundreds of Cataract operations were performed free of all charges on the aged people of the city.

Free food and diet are served to all Indoor patients from the kitchen of the Hospital. (Non-vegetable items of food or diet are not served in this Hospital).

Microscopic operations of Ear-Drum are going to be introduced soon in this Hospital, and this Hospital will perhaps be the only Institution of its kind in the northern part of India.

The Homoeopathic wing of the Hospital, its oldest section, is very popular and hundreds of poor patients are treated daily in the Hospital by our old and highly experienced Homoeopaths.

The immaculate neatness and cleanliness of the Hospital is a great attraction and everyone who visits the Hospital speaks highly of it.

May Shree Ma's grace be bestowed on this Hospital and may Her blessings inspire us with a spirit of selfless dedication to the service of suffering humanity so that it may grow into an ideal service unit as visualised by Her.

*Secretary*

**Mata Anandamayee Hospital**