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*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 Vāni

By doing japa and meditation of Krishna, by loving Him, His attraction should become so powerful that even suffering is cherished. Therefore, meditating on Him alone, dedicating all actions to Him, be an instrument in His hands. Keeping your body—His temple—clean and pure, immersed in the thought of Him, endeavour to let all your actions be permeated by Krishna. He is all that is experienced. The man who can be engrossed in Him, in joy and sorrow, in every one of his actions, in the midst of worldly life

that is ruled by the mind—that man will be victorious.

*

* ONLY HUMAN *
* ONLY HUMAN *

*

Bereavement and suffering, pleasure and pain are begotten by delusion (*moha*); whereas man's journey through life must be directed towards God. When

He is found all is found—contentment, peace, bliss!

Evil-mindedness is due to the idea that God is far away. So long as you do not see Him in everything,

make a supreme effort to be vowed to the uninterrupted thought of Him. He is present in all practices

and actions, He Himself manifests as action—try to

remain ever aware of this! Brooding over grief,

which is but the result of delusion, makes it spread

and increase like a creeper—bear this in mind!

To remember that God is in all action, in form as well as without form, and to pray for His grace is man's bounden duty as a human being. In order that Truth may be revealed, concentrate on the practice that brings about inner awakening.

If someone really thirsts for Light, it is impossible that God will not grant it to Him. Be as regular as

you can in your spiritual exercises. Perform japa and meditation, sustain the remembrance of Him, study sacred scriptures. So long as you are steeped in the thought of Him with the help of any of these, you are on your pilgrimage towards Light—be mindful of this ! Read the Bhagavad Gita daily and attempt again and again to grasp its inner meaning.

The search after Truth is man's special duty. Do your duty and strive to know your Self. Among all sentient beings, the human alone is endowed with the power to realize God. Therefore, to tread the spiritual path must be his great object in life.

A Brahmachari should never allow his religious practices, his acts of service, and so forth to be tainted by anger. For has he not chosen the path of God to attain to the love of Him. Travellers on the path are meek, humble and patient—God in His compassion has turned their minds in this direction. Suffering is to be looked upon as God's mercy to exhaust one's evil karma. "Even if Thou wouldst make me Thine own by punishing me, let Thy Will be done !"

Endeavour so remain steadfast and serene. Remembering His presence constantly, do service.

Until and unless you have definitely realized Him you must never abandon your spiritual practice. Be determined about this. He can be realized by japa and meditation. Try to sustain japa and meditation constantly. It cannot be that He will not respond when appealed to—though it may take time. When one's endeavours are very ardent and one forges ahead with great speed, there is hope of Enlightenment.

To invoke God sincerely without a result—this can never happen. He will surely cleanse and purify His own offspring. Pray to Him with heart and soul. To the limit of your power, using all the strength and capacity you possess, endeavour to live constantly in His presence. Surrender yourself at His Feet. He Himself gives His *kriyā* (spiritual practice)—training the aspirant to go beyond all *kriyā* in order to reach His Goal. Therefore try with all your might to concentrate with your whole being on that to which you can give yourself whole-heartedly and without reserve. Time is flying.

Mātri Satsang in Solan

Swami Bhagavananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

(5)

In continuation of the evening of
June 12th, 1955.

One of the devotees asks a question : "Can different types of prayers arise from the same person at different times ?"

Mataji : It does happen that at different stages on the path various kinds of prayers emanate from within. In a life of devotion (*bhakti*) one cannot bear to exist without the Supreme Beloved (*Iṣṭa*). "Beloved Lord, where, oh where are you ?" This kind of agitation or keen anguish is bound to be felt. It may become so acute that one forgets the need to wash or eat. Everything seems tasteless and without purpose. Even eating becomes a burden, sleep disappears. This too is a certain stage on the path : saturated with continuous divine thought, with divine intoxication—ycs, absolutely merged in it. To such a person the question of food and sleep becomes meaningless. Look, how wonderful ! The body does not feel any pain or suffering, why ? Because one is completely immersed in the thought of God. Do you know where sleep takes you ? To your own Self under cover of a shroud.

Didi : In deep sleep (*suṣupti*), does one remain in that condition ?

Mataji : As long as you do not fall into a deep slumber your brain cannot function as it should. Do you not say that your headquarters lie in the brain ? If there is trouble in the head-office, then there is trouble everywhere. You have to go daily to your own Self, like a touchstone. But if you do not sleep properly, how can you have this experience ? Uneasy sleep results in a heavy stomach. If you have not been able to sleep, why do you lie down exhausted ? This is why this body (Mataji) always asks you to be aware of the fact that you are ever within your Self. Everything is full of flavour only because of the divine sweetness. Action takes place because He is ever active. You are His tool, you cannot do without Him. You have to live as He wills you to. At least once in twenty-four hours you must go to your touch-stone, whether in deep slumber or in profound, dreamless sleep. That is why it is said, you are always close to your own Self.

When a fervent agitation for God arises, victory over sleep is a natural corollary. Why ? Because then there is constantly the one object in view : Meditation on the Supreme Beloved, absorption in the contemplation of one's own Self. The benefit, the touch you receive in sleep comes now easily and naturally. Worldliness which is due to ignorance leads to continuous births and deaths. Whereas in *that* type of restlessness or agitation of the mind ignorance disappears—the cur-

tains are raised one by one—there you gradually come to know how to obtain the touch of Unconcealed Divinity. When the dark veil covering true Knowledge is removed or shed or dissolved, then mastery over food and sleep becomes natural. Then the Supreme Beloved (*Iṣṭa*) alone exists, He who never causes any harm (*aniṣṭa*). The might of His power is felt more and more; He is omnipresent, but His revelation takes place gradually. As His power manifests, so does the mind resort to less and less sleep.

For example, you are sitting comfortably and you doze off. But if at that time you are watching a cinema show, sleep is far away. So, when you behold the Beloved, how can you possibly sleep? Then there is no need to sleep, for the Supreme Being Himself fulfils the need which sleep satisfies. He Himself meets your desire for enjoyment, He lets you drink a divine nectar. You do not deviate towards the path leading to carnal pleasures, which is the road to death. You fill yourself with divine intoxication. See, how beautifully God's kingdom is devised : In the enjoyment of mere earthly pleasures there is poison leading to death. On the other hand, *There* you obtain the nectar of immortal ambrosia by drinking which hunger and sleep disappear; the way is opened for a meeting of the Lord and His servant. You yourself are the Immortal. It is your own Self that appears as the Supreme Beloved. Even the tears streaming from your eyes represent none but your own Self, In the experiences of

absence or of presence, in joy and in sorrow, in whatever form it be, it is You alone that exist !

God's ways are infinite, His forms are infinite and His attributes, and infinite also are the roads leading to Union with Him. You must be determined to choose the path that will take you to the full and complete Revelation of Him. It is the bounden duty of every human being to await Union with Him with the most intense desire, coupled with deep trust, devotion and faith, to reach His Presence for His sake alone, to realize that everyone is eternally united with Him.

Question : How can such an intense desire arise ?

Mataji : By taking His name again and again, by worshipping Him, by repeatedly listening to the stories of His divine incarnations (*līlā katha*). He first of all appears in the guise of a void, of desperate longing; then He Himself provides instant proof that He is eternally present, through intuitive feeling and in action. That is why one must especially cultivate *satsang*.

Question : Can worldly desire also be fulfilled by prayer ?

Mataji : Dacoits pray to the Goddess Kali, they worship Her and depart after singing Her praises. They then commit dacoity and gain possession of booty. As a result they are jailed. Whatever anyone wants and prays for will be given to him. But the good, the wise, the saintly person says, "How do I know what to ask of Him ? Let Him do whatever He thinks best." Again,

others declare : "It is right to ask for what is good and beneficial for you." This body is of the opinion that you should take the path of not asking for any boon whatever. But if you cannot live without praying, then pray to Him for His own sake. So that when He is found, when He is realized, you will never have to ask anything more of anyone else. "Oh, Almighty God, deign of your own accord to become my own !" This kind of prayer to God for God's own sake is not a desire nor an ambition, this constitutes a certain stage in praying.

Question : Some devotees write letters, such as : "My son's examinations will start on such and such a date. Please ask Mataji to remember the occasion."

Didi : This also is a kind of prayer.

A devotee : A certain devotee falls seriously ill. A letter is written to Mataji, and later news arrives that he has recovered.

By way of a reply, the glimmer of a gentle smile appears on Mataji's face and She folds Her hands while uttering very softy and sweetly the words, "Hari, Hari."

The bell sounds for dinner. All of us bow down in *pranāma* and rise to go.

(To be continued)

Ma-Darshan on Sri Krishna's Birthday

Shunya (Peter Michael Hamel)

(Translated from German)

In summer 1972, I had the good luck of meeting in Berlin a young family who had spent several years in India where they had been fortunate to make contact with Sri Anandamayi Ma, the Mother of Eternal Bliss. They showed me a number of films and photos that impressed me deeply.

I already knew about Ma from the books of revered Paramahansa Yogananda and of Jean Gebser. Since then Her small photo was always on my altar at home and I carried it in my pocket on my concert tours.

In July 1973, when I landed in Delhi on my 26th birthday. I was seized, as it were, by a keen longing for Ma's *daršana*. However, when phoning to Her ashram in New Delhi, the response was not at all encouraging. Later I was given to understand that conservative Hindus (perhaps not without justification) instinctively mistrust western foreigners. The greater was my joy when a few weeks later I was received with sincere cordiality in Ma's ashram at Varanasi. It almost shocked me to hear that Ma was then in Delhi—just when I was planning to leave for Calcutta! The same day I received a delayed postcard from Atmananda, informing me that Ma would be in Delhi for Sri Krishna's birthday.—Now I shall quote from my diary :

August 21st, 1973.

Mother of Eternal Bliss, from my first day in India you have been calling me. I have scraped together every penny; today and tomorrow I shall be allowed to see you. But the aeroplane does not start..... For three long hours I have to wait, the only passenger at the deserted aerodrome. I am longing to behold you. The whole mechanism of impatience and expectation has to be destroyed. When at last the plane is ready to take off, a severe thunderstorm breaks out. I read your words : "To attain to Truth one has to endure all hardships, ever abiding in patience. It is the obstacles that give birth to patience. One must never lose hope....." I am apprehensive that I may miss you. At last we are starting. I have a sinking sensation in my stomach, my pulse is racing. Om Sri Ma, Om Sri Ma. I feel slightly giddy, benumbed. It is 1105 p. m. when we alight in Delhi. I throw myself into a taxi that cannot find the way and takes me here and there. I am almost senseless. Suddenly I feel perfectly calm and at ease. Inner certainty? I stop reflecting, self-scrutiny leaves me. In the open country outside of Delhi there are suddenly cars, a temple illumined by bright red light (that I had already sighted from the aeroplane), many pairs of shoes. An inner courtyard is festively lit up and decorated. About two hundred people, complete inner and outer silence. In the temple Brahman priests are at work, surrounded by carpets of magnificent flowers. Long grey beards and hair, bright orange robes, vigorous personalities. Scintillating lights everywhere, coloured canvas sheets, garlands, scents. Never before have I experienced anything of this kind.

Musicians are sitting motionless. I see cymbals, drums, a harmonium. But there is deep silence. Everything happens for me within a few seconds—eternity with the speed of lightning.

On white cushions embroidered with gold, on a throne between the temple and the meditating men and women, SHE is seated, clad in spotless white, Her eyes closed, Sri Anandamayi Ma. Breathless I remain standing at the back. Throwing myself on my knees, I am losing space, time and eternity too. My eyes are fixed on Her aura. Her stillness descends on me, the greatest ecstatic stillness I have ever known. Then I am back again. Turned practical like a sleep-walker, I find a place for my belongings, I fetch my red Tibetan blanket, a yellow-orange flower-garland hangs round my neck. I feel my way through the throng of silent men. So much quiescence does Ma impart.

Now I am sitting right in front. Ordinarily I would of course not have gone to the very front.....nobody stops me, it just happens : SHE makes it happen. I am gazing at Her. Her hair, which on photos often loosely streams over Her shoulders, is tied up high into a knot; narrow, frame-eye-glasses. She is dressed all in white. Ma sways slightly forwards and back-wards, almost imperceptibly, floating, buoyed up by the Self. She is beyond all being. Her hands are gracefully resting on Her lap, Her head is slightly bent forward. Gradually I am experiencing Oneness with Her. I am sitting lightly in the lotus.....

In the temple, the paradise of flowers, colours, sweets, fruit, incense and decorated statues (Sri Krishna), many

ceremonial gestures are performed in great silence. At first I see nothing but Ma. She returns, or rather, She “pays us a visit”: Her eyes open, a movement surges through the crowd. One of the sisters dressed in ochre approaches Her. Ma has woken up. My heart is throbbing. Her picture that has been with me for so long is crushed in my hands. My hands are folded in front of my chest. My spine feels hot—everything has been awakened. *Kundalini* is rising, *Anāhata* quivers. For some time soft tears are running down my cheeks. As if I had reached home, returning from a long journey. At last, at last, the jubilation of stillness—this is why I was born, exactly for today. The Eternal Now.

Calmly, without expression, Ma looks at Her devotees and disciples. By and by She smiles. Silence. Her quick glance just touches me in passing, it shoots right through me. Kindness and strength. Now I start crying in right earnest, not even making an attempt to suppress it; quite softly I am running out, irresistibly. A similar condition I have known for seconds only on my few L. S. D. trips before getting unconscious. But here everything occurs within the actuality of my five senses. One of my Indian neighbours has just twitched. What I feel, is common to *all* !

Now begins something never before experienced, yet well known deep within from ancient times: Perfumes, lights, colours and chiefly the Divine Presence lead us to the light of *Sunyata**. Ma simply dissolves if one gazes at Her with concentration (*Trātaka Yoga*). Now She is being led to the small temple—about five steps away. She is sitting

* *Sunyata* Void.

in a way that makes Her look in my direction. She is being dressed up most fantastically : ornaments, a crown, garlands; the statue of Sri Krishna is in Her hands. I have seen Her like this on photos in Berlin. Now also cameras are clicking.

Gradually, the people round me are relaxing from their breathless tension, everyone is singing *kirtana* in unison. Infinitely simple tunes that penetrate deep down into the unconscious if sung long enough. I remain in the most concentrated state I have ever known. Ma remains inwardly present, is simultaneously here and "beyond". Only a fragment of Her being seems to follow the ceremony. She repeatedly looks in my direction, now and then a little sarcastically, and like a child. Now She has to put up with much botheration : various special garments are put round Her. She has to submit to certain rites. She always tries to get rid as quickly as possible of the ornaments put on Her head. The singing transports people into a state of devotional trance. Never before have I witnessed devotional ecstasy in a gathering of so many people. There are cymbals, drums, two or three singers with a harmonium, even a mike has been installed. Suddenly Ma beckons—in fact She does not speak at all, yet everything seems to proceed according to Her wishes. To me Her gestures are unforgettable, how She supervises ceremonies, how She causes people to sit in their places, how She makes room with arms and hands. A mere gesture and at once a microphone stands in front of Her. SHE SINGS. "Gopal, Gopal"—one of those *kirtana* songs; litanies of mantras vibrations from the Divine Primeval Ground of Being. I am feeling so very happy now. And the great calm.....

On a higher level of consciousness Ma has an intense personal relationship with every single being simultaneously (also with me a little). She knows the essence of energy of a being, probably She does not see so much the specific individual personality as the level of vibrations on which the soul is centred. Although She very occasionally mentions happenings of the future - one also speaks of miraculous cures, of illnesses but these things are of minor importance to Her.

By acting and reacting in a state of Oneness that actually always exists in Reality and is intensely Her own, She transmits this state of consciousness to those of Her followers who are ready to share and live it. Very likely there may be many others who, full of eagerness for sacred objects and sensations and filled with greedy impatience, pull everything down to the lower stages of divine worship, similar to us Catholics.

The perfumes, the illumination, the timelessness, and also all the circumstances until I could find Ma, create hallucinations, visions.....

Now *prasāda* begins, that is to say, dishes of food, fruit, sweets, also sacred books—everything that has been offered in the temple—is now being distributed by Ma. A quite unceremonial, almost childish crowding and pushing ensues. Each one wants to receive something from Ma's own hands. But Ma's girls, vigorous women in whom kindness and severity blend, manage to maintain a fair amount of order. In this rush for devotional objects I first of all feel a stranger, more a Buddhist than a Hindu.....

The crowd gradually subsides, I am still sitting in

the same position; now I stand up, almost in a trance, and then suddenly, I do not know how it has come about, I am right in front of Ma. I feel quite embarrassed, not knowing how to take it, I simply say "Ma". A few people round me are smiling. She looks at me. SHE LOOKS AT ME—outwardly I am completely helpless. SHE LOOKS AT ME for all eternity, I become senseless, stunned. Ma throws an apple to me which I catch clumsily. The apple hits me right on the chest—into the heart centre. It is too powerful. I feel myself accepted, returned home. ANANDA ANANDA OM SRI MA.

Now I am holding an apple in my hand. My ears are burning. An energetic, affectionate sister presents me with a few nuts. I simply remain standing near Ma. Now She is tired and wants to retire. The last fruits are given to the policeman. Reflecting that Ma's body is not far from eighty and it is now 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning—condensed Cosmic Energy.

Now tiny sandals are put on Her feet. All kneel down and do *pranāma*. I walk behind Her until I am stopped. Then I sit down, almost below Her room, as it were. On the bare stone floor—it does not matter. It is drizzling—nothing matters. A great tranquillity enters into me, desirelessness such as I have never known before. Peace, boundless peace.

22/8/73.

In the morning a bell rouses me. Just in front of me a temple is opened. No change of condition, waking, sleep, dream, meditation—spaceless, timeless. Now singing starts.

I go and have a wash and then sit down in a circular temple. I know nothing about the programme, have no idea of what is to take place. As a rule I always plan everything carefully.—I meet Melita Maschmann who tells me many things. Now something completely unimaginable starts for me. A festival the like of which is quite unknown to Europeans. Ecstasy, childlike joy, rhythm. Costumes, Krishna mythology—and Ma enters, organizes everything, rouses lazy fellows in dark corners, so that all join in and there is no audience. It is getting more and more lively, in spite of the rain, in spite of the throng of people. Ma “distributes” curds. She hits me—dag!—right into my face. I am splashed all over. Never before have I experienced anything like this. Ma dances, rushes about. Everything just happens. She is so affectionate with a child. All are dancing and singing in unequalled ecstasy. These are serious Brahmin families, not hippies.....

Finally Ma disappears in Her rooms, the ageless saint of eighty. Hundreds are shouting. “Anandamayi Ma—ki jai!”—I am smeared all over with curds and some yellow stuff, entirely beyond the limits of my experience up to now. The pilgrimage of life. It is about midday now. Just twelve hours since my arrival.

A kind family takes me to the aerodrome. How infinitely worth while this flight has been !!! I have received more than I could ever expect.

SHE IS THAT—just lives IT; does not merely talk or evoke *siddhis*. The divine experience of Her personal Presence becomes the vehicle for flights to highest regions.

Yogananda wanted to take Mataji to the U. S. A. But Her devotees would not let Her go. What a pity.....

The Hindu festival was the greatest benediction for me. Many travel through India without finding any of this—or perhaps they simply do not notice it. Profound thanks be to Thee, Supreme Lord, that I was allowed to behold IT through HER !

No doubt it is possible to become dependent on Ma if one does not realize that Enlightened Wisdom lies in the Self which Ma “only” redeems. Many recognize Her divinity advancing a single step without themselves. Although the fascination over Ma’s divinity can induce a very important step : namely, the removal of egocentricity, in other words, bhakti. Images, rites, ceremonies, even Enlightened Beings—how quickly are they robbed of their origin if viewed as the purpose instead of the means. Ma would be so very important for countless westerners who are given to brooding, doubting and speculating. *She opens the heart* and makes the clouds of separating duality disappear, at least for the time of Her *darśana* and for longer. She shows the illusion of the three-dimensional, of matter and materialism. Ma is the *Iṣṭa*. It is irrelevant whether the *Iṣṭa* incarnates as a saintly human being or as an *avātāra* or is only a projection in meditation in a certain state of consciousness. An old woman was all the time sitting in front of Ma’s picture although Ma Herself sat outside. The old woman had understood that Ma was in her heart, just like Christ, Mohammed, Buddha, St. Francis, Yogananda and Ramana Maharshi for others.

For me Ma is *Maha, Mahashunya, Mahashunyānanda,*

Amitabha Buddha—one with me in the core of Truth. “And the Oord became flesh and dwelt among us.”

Because Ma is eternal Oneness, the cosmic experience of this radiates into everyone of us. Her glance hits you directly. For me, Ma is beyond all religions. Yesterday She was in *Mahashunyu*, today She affirms and sanctifies the joy of living. Thus in Her the dualism that discriminates between withdrawal from active life and standing right in the midst of it is dissolved. I see in Mataji the manifestation of the unfathomable red light, of the primeval Ground of visionary Knowledge. Aparna sang one of Ma's songs to me, out of which an orchestral composition for the west was produced. While working at it I was aware of Ma's presence in a most wonderful way. More and more men and women from the west are finding Mataji. This is very beautiful.

Let us be with Her !

Om Shanti

The Wisdom of the Ganga Das'ehra Festival

Swami Sharadananda

Ganga Dae'sehra is a religious festival celebrating the birthday of Goddess Ganga Deviji. The birthday of the Goddess should not be understood in a worldly sense, because according to Hindu scriptures the river Ganges is Goddess Ganga. Her birthday is the day when the river first descended from heaven to earth, namely *Jyeshth Śukla Daśamī* which fell on June 10th this year and was celebrated all over India among people devoted to Mother Ganga.

The holy river descended on earth in response to the prayers of Her devotee, Raja Bhagiratha. For ten thousand years Bhagīratha prayed to Ganga Devi, who was flowing in heaven, to come down on earth to wash away the sins of his ancestors who had been burnt to death by their own misdeeds and were lying in a heap of ashes without salvation. The river Ganga has the Divine power to give salvation by washing away all sins and also to cure human ailments. This truth was revealed to Hansuman, the grandson of King Sāgara, when he prayed to Kapil Devaji for the horse which the King had released to perform the (*Aśvamedha Yajña.*)

In those days, a king who wished to become an emperor had to perform the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice. It was a recognized ceremony in which the king who performed it

declared his supremacy over other rulers within his jurisdiction. For that purpose the king had to let loose a special white horse that had some rare signs on its body. A gold plate was fastened to its forehead on which was written that king so and so wanted to become an emperor and all the other kings should bow and pay homage to him. Whoever was against that declaration had to fight, defeating the army assigned to protect and guard the horse against such challengers. If the horse could go round successfully and return safely, the king who had started the *Asvamedha Yajña* would complete it and become an emperor.

King Sāgara was very powerful. He had sixty thousand sons, each of them as powerful as he himself. So he decided to become an emperor and released a *panchakalyani* white horse with a gold plate hung on its forehead as prescribed. To protect that horse he deputed a large army under the command of his sons. Of course there was none on earth to challenge the sovereignty of King Sāgara; but Indra, the king of the Devatas became jealous, fearing that after becoming the emperor of the earth, Sāgara might try to conquer *Devaloka* as well. So he stole the *Yajña* horse and quietly tied it in a corner of Kapilashrām which was in *patāla* (the netherworld). He thought that Sāgara's sons would not be able to find the horse and without it King Sāgara could not complete the sacrifice nor become an emperor. Thus Indra went away to his *loka* happily, thinking that his mischief would remain undetected.

King Sāgara's sons and the army had followed the *yajña* paṣu (horse) and guarded it. Although there was none on earth to challenge the supremacy of Sāgara, yet the procedure

had to be followed strictly and honestly. Accordingly the horse was allowed to wander freely. The princes were camping and let the horse graze in the forest nearby. After some time the horse disappeared. In spite of all efforts they could not find it anywhere on earth. They thereupon started digging to search below the earth and finally discovered the horse in the Kapilashram. Rishi Kapila Deva was sitting in a state of *Nirvikalpa Samādhī*, completely oblivious of what was happening around him. He was thus not aware of the princes' arrival in his ashram. Sāgara's sons, *kshatriyas* by birth were proud by nature. They were also tired out by their long search and very hungry. Moreover they felt slighted as nobody had greeted them on entering the ashram and nobody had inquired about their needs. All these factors made them lose their discriminative power. They suspected Kapila Deva of being the culprit who had stolen the horse. Infuriated, they wanted to kill the Rishi and advanced towards him with drawn swords. Kapila Deva was not an ordinary saint, he was an *avatāra* of God Himself and his ashram a centre of holiness and purity. So the anger of Sāgara's sons turned into a fire in their own bodies, burning all of them to ashes.

In the meanwhile the king had become worried since neither his horse nor his sons returned and there was no news of them either. He therefore requested his grandson Hansuman to go in search of them. Tracing his uncles' footsteps, Hansuman at last reached Kapilashram and saw Kapila Deva sit in a state of deep *samādhī*. Though a *kshatriya* prince, Hansuman was a pious man and a yogi. He did not wish to remove the horse without the Rishi's

permission. So he prayed to the Rishi with great love, devotion and humility. Sri Kapila Deva opened his eyes, blessed the young prince and told him that Indra out of jealousy had stolen the horse and hidden it in his ashram without Kapila Deva's knowledge. Hansuman might now take the horse back. He also informed the prince that his uncles who had come in search of the horse were all burnt to ashes by their own anger. However by sprinkling *Gangajal* (water) over their remains their sins could be washed away and they could attain salvation. After saying this much, the Rishi again resumed his *samādhi*. Hansuman returned to his kingdom, handed over the horse to his grand-father and conveyed the sad news of what had happened to his uncles. King Sāgara completed the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice and became the emperor. Hansuman retired into the Himalayas to do *tapasyā* in order to persuade the holy river Ganga to descend to earth, but he died before succeeding. After many years Raja Bhagiratha of the same dynasty became the emperor. When he heard about the sad fate of his ancestors and that no one had so far been able to sprinkle Ganges water over their remains to give them salvation, he retired to the Himalayas and did *tapasyā*. After countless years of strenuous austerities he succeeded in bringing Gangaji down to the earth. The rock at Gangotri on which he used to sit and meditate is still known as "*Bhagiratha Śhilā*". Ganga Devi was pleased with Bhagiratha's love, devotion and *tapasyā*. She descended from heaven at Gangotri on *Jyēṣṭh Sukla Daśami* day. According to the Hindu Almanac, the Rishis have declared that day to be the sacred river Ganga's birthday on earth.

Wanting future generations also to love Ganga Devi with faith and devotion, and to celebrate Her birthday in a fitting manner to obtain Her blessings to wash away their sins and get salvation, they named Her birthday *Ganga Daśehra* and declared it to be an important festival. Even now Ganga's devotees assemble on that day on the banks of the Ganges to take a bath, perform Ganga Devi's *pujā*, worship *Kumaris* in the form of Ganga Devi and do charity. Some read *Ganga Sahasra Nāma*, standing in the river, and Ganga Devi also fulfils the cherished desires of Her devotees. Ancient Rishis built a Ganga temple on *Bhagiratha Śila* and even now thousands of pilgrims have darśana of the image of Ganga Devi in that temple and do *pujā* in Gangotri for about six months in the year, namely from *Akshaya Tritiya* to *Diwali* which is roughly from the end of April to the beginning of November. So Gangotri became one of the four most sacred places of pilgrimage in the Himalayas, the other three being Jamnotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath. So far I have explained the significance of the *Ganga Daśehra* festival, now I shall write about the spiritual significance and my practical experience of the holy river Ganga.

I consider Ganga Devi my Divine Mother and myself Her spiritual child. With this attitude of mind and heart I have been living here in Gangotri on the banks of the Ganges, meditating for the last sixteen years, to know Her divine powers of cleansing men from their sins, curing diseases, giving mental poise and bliss and how modern city dwellers may derive the maximum benefit from Her divinity for their own peace and happiness.

In the Kedar Khanda of Skanda Purana it is said that Raja Bhagiratha prayed to Ganga to come down to earth so that Her holy waters could be sprinkled over the remains of his ancestors. After Ganga Devi's descent at Gangotri, Raja Bhagiratha requested Her to follow him. So She flowed behind him up to Ganga Sāgara, flooding the remains of his ancestors. The moment the divine and sacred river Ganga touched the burnt bodies, their sins were obliterated. They all took on divine bodies and ascended to *Swargaloka* (heaven), praising Bhagiratha for his meritorious deed. Ever since then the holy river has been flowing on earth delivering people from their sins, curing diseases, giving mental peace and happiness to all devotees who approach Her with love, devotion and faith. May you all develop love, devotion and faith for Ganga Mata and receive Her blessings for your peace and happiness as long as you live on this earth and for eternal bliss in heaven after death.

Now I shall explain how to develop love, devotion and faith towards divine Ganga Mata. We human beings commit sins due to selfishness, hatred and greed. These animal qualities are tamasic by nature. Their opposites are the divine qualities of love, kindness and generosity, and Mother Ganga is the personification of them. The Gangotri glacier represents Her Love from which Her kindness flows out as the holy river Ganga from Gomukh, Her source, to Ganga Sāgara where She joins the sea at the Bay of Bengal. Her generosity is boundless. Everyone can use Her waters as much as he wishes, be he poor or rich, bad or good, low or high, a sinner or a saint. The essence of this Divine

Mother Ganga is in every one of us in a subtle form. Our body is that glacier of love, so we love our body more than anything else. From this body kindness flows out as one, one's speech and generosity as one's action. Those who have understood this subtle divine wisdom will always love all human beings, speak kindly, act generously and thus enjoy peace and happiness. But most of us have forgotten or ignored those divine qualities in ourselves and lead animals' lives of selfishness, hatred and greed, thus accumulating sins. To avoid sin, we have to get over our animal propensities and acquire the divine qualities mentioned above. But this is impossible as long as we are slaves of our minds. We have to become the masters of our minds. We must have sharp intellects that will develop our will-power to conquer the mind with determination. The mind is the master of selfishness, hatred and greed. When the master is sacked these qualities disappear and their places are filled by love, kindness and generosity. This process is a part of spiritual *sādhana*. Spirituality is a vast ocean, so there are many different ways of achieving the above mentioned results. Now I shall tell you how the holy river Gangaji helps in this spiritual *sādhana* of getting over the animal nature and achieving divine qualities. One should live near the Ganges as much as possible and bathe in its waters at least once a day with faith, love and devotion. It is more than a quarter of a century that I have been living on the banks of the Ganga in the Himalayas, out of that for the last sixteen years in Gangotri itself. So I shall explain my experiences in this holy place supporting the Divinity behind this sacred river and its influence on the human mind.

Just as a non-conductor medium cannot absorb electricity, similarly a human mind with a tamasic covering of selfishness, hatred and greed cannot be influenced by the Divinity emanating from the holy river Ganga. Though it flows from Gomukh, its source, to Ganga Sāgara where it joins the sea, its Divine Power is comparatively greater in the Himalayas, especially between Gomukh and Gangotri a length of about twenty kilometers. If a man leading a divine life lives in this area and daily bathes in the holy waters with faith, love and devotion, he is sure to be imbued with the divine quality of Universal Love, sooner here than at any other place on the Ganges. This is my feeling. When I expressed my desire to live on the banks of the Ganges in the Himalayas like our ancient Rishis and Munis, I was questioned by my well-wishers: "Is God not in other places? Then why not practise spiritual *sādhana* in the plains?" At that time I had no reply of my own. Referring to the scriptures I pleaded that our Rishis and Munis had lived in the Himalayas on the banks of the Ganges. I was determined to know and experience for myself the subtle divine powers pervading those mountains especially in sacred places like Gangotri. This I have done and experienced their influence on the mind to conquer the animal nature and to acquire divine qualities. However, it is not possible for all to live here or anywhere near the Ganges. For such people sacred festivals like *Ganga Dasehra* and other religious festivals provide an opportunity to develop Universal Love by taking a dip in the waters of the sacred river on those occasions. But Mother Ganga has to be approached with genuine faith, love and devotion by leading a Divine Life wherever they may be. According to

the Rishis, great realized souls, and the scriptures, the definition of Divine Life is to possess Divine qualities such as love, kindness and generosity in thought, speech and action. This can be achieved by following the spiritual injunctions : "Serve, love, give, meditate and realize". How to observe these ideals has been explained by my Gurudeva, Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj as follows :

"Serve. Serve. Serve. Serve humanity. Serve the poor. Serve the sick. Feed the sick. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, educate the illiterate. Serve the Guru whole-heartedly. Give your hand to work. Love. Love. Love. Love the entire humanity. Love thy neighbour. Spread the message of love. Love to share. Love to give. Love ever gives. Give. Give. Give. Giving is the secret of abundance. By giving you never lose. Serve, love, give. Do charity. Share what you have with others. Disseminate spiritual knowledge to one and all. Regard material wealth, knowledge, spiritual wisdom that you possess as a divine gift entrusted to you by God to be distributed among His children. In whatever you give be liberal. Have a large heart. Do not be stingy. Take delight in the joys of other people, making them your own. Charity is a sister virtue of generosity. It is the fulfilment of magnanimity and nobility. Gifts should be given with faith, in plenty, with modesty and sympathy. *Da. Da. Da. Da* means *dama* (self-control). *Dā* means *dāya* (compassion). *Da* means *dana* (gift). Share with all. Share with others what you have, physically, mentally, morally and spiritually. Do not hoard wealth. Do not covet the wealth of others. In sharing there is joy and peace. Sharing generates Cosmic Love and destroys greed, sharing

removes selfishness and creates selflessness. Sharing purifies the heart. Sharing develops Oneness. Charity is Universal Love. The deeds of charity you have done will stay for ever with you. Give one tenth of your income. Give cheerfully, quickly and without hesitation. Give one tenth of your income. Give cheerfully, quickly and without hesitation. Charity covers a multitude of sins. Charity is a great purifier of heart, charity is love in action. Share everything with all. Practise spontaneous charity. Be liberal. Your heart will expand, you will begin to realize unity or oneness.

Performance of virtuous actions is the beginning of spiritual life. Purify. Purify. Purify. Purify the intellect and heart through charitable acts which take you to the realm of meditation. Meditate, meditate, meditate. Give your mind to God. Serve, study and meditate. Realize. Realize. Realize.

This is Divine Life. If one lives a Divine Life, one's animal nature will melt. He will have love, faith and devotion for Divinity. In that condition, if he gets an opportunity to take a dip in the holy Ganges on sacred days like Gānga Daśehra and others, the mind becomes purified quickly and sins are also washed away. Love, kindness and generosity will pervade the thought, speech and action of that person. He will soon achieve Cosmic Love which will give him eternal peace and happiness. This is how the holy Gangajī removes sins and cures mental and physical diseases. But nowadays people mostly approach Gangajī without love or faith and with a doubtful mind and yet expect some miracle to happen. Such people should under-

stand that Divinity is not under the mercy of humanity to please them as they wish, like some commercial agency. It is we, the human beings, who are at the mercy of Divinity for our peace and happiness. So if one really wants *shanti* let him approach the divine Mother Ganga Devi with sincere love, reverence, faith and devotion. Then his cherished longings will also be fulfilled.

I, as the Divine Mother's spiritual child, stand guarantee that my Divine Mother in the form of the holy river Ganga will fulfill all Her devotees, aspirations if they approach Her with love, faith and devotion. May Ganga Mayya bless you all with peace and happiness.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

“An hour's meditation is better than ten years of study. Meditation or worship is a great necessity of life. It is spiritual food for the mind and the soul. Meditation lends wings to thy soul to rise up to the realm of eternal bliss.”

Swami Shardananda

The Sufi Way of Life*

Dr. K. M. F. Mohamed Cassim, Ph. D.

On the esoteric path of Sufism Self-realization is the only reality to which one's attention is directed because according to the esoteric path our spiritual malady has one basis, and there is only one treatment for it. Its cause is the illusory self, and the treatment consists in realizing that the illusory self does not exist. However, mere intellectual recognition of this fact is not enough. After all the "me" is our own creation, it is not imposed upon us from without. It is created by our reactions to everything that happens to us. We only exist in the eternal present and we do not exist as a continuity. We ourselves are not an illusory part of Reality, rather we are REALITY itself.

To a Sufi true love is incorruptible because the effective realization of reality is perhaps more the result of meditation than intelligence alone. The Sufi does not wander in search of wealth and sensual gratification as he is one with Reality. We are in the habit of wanting to detach ourselves from such a person, from such a thought or from such an object but the Sufi who has discovered Divinity is not detached from someone or from something, he is in a state of self-contemplation and is no longer in a psychological position to react as his ego is dissolved.

* Reprinted from "Dharma", Quarterly of the Pure Life Society, Selangor.

The Sufi, endowed with complete Enlightenment, sees through the eye of wisdom the entire universe as his own-Self, and regards everything as the Self and nothing else. The Sufi does not look at anything external and to him the tangible universe is verily God; nothing whatsoever exists that is other than Allah. A Sufi is he who is liberated in life after crossing the ocean of delusion, passion and aversion. He becomes a centre of unity with perfect peace and dwells in the divine bliss derived from the discovery of Truth. He is completely merged in Allah and yet he has normal consciousness. Therefore, he is free from all the illusions of duality and he is quite capable of looking after the affairs of the world. He is a source of great spiritual radiance. The state of a Sufi has no longer the avidities of the "I" process as a motive, but emerges directly from an independent centre which is free from all conditioning. We cannot judge the greatness of a Self-realized Sufi who has transcended mental limitation because the Sufi plane of liberation is completely new and unique which could not be compared with the relative plane on which we live. The realization of the Sufi cannot be defined by words, as that state of Reality is to be lived silently rather than trying to verbalise it. The highest perception of spiritual exaltation when analysed in terms of ordinary language or explained logically will lead to a paradox.

On the mystical path of Sufism the seeker and the life sought are one, because in the inner actual communion with the Infinite, the consciousness of the seeker has transformed itself into the substance of the Self. In meditation the distinction between the onlooker and the thing looked upon dis-

appears. The state of *Fana* (nothingness) in meditation, is a zero full of infinite possibilities because it is a void of inexhaustible contents. *BAQA* retains its original purity and freedom always and is never darkened by anything else ; it is bliss-imparting and free from defilement. In *BAQA* each moment has to be grasped and realised as endless Eternity. In *BAQA* there is no time, no space and no becoming as the *BAQA* is not on the plane of relativity.

Ishq (Divine Love) is really a pure state in which the mind is silent. When the mind is calm and quiet then there are the blessings of *Ishq*, the beauty of divine radiation. *Ishq* is not the reaction of the mind nor the creation of the mind. It is something of a higher enlightened experience which elevates the mind to the state of divine-unification. Miseries and worries are products of mental reactions of the mind and therefore, the mind cannot seek *Ishq* as the very activities of the mind bring confusion and complications. The mind cannot approach *Ishq* because divine love is not a sensation that can be caught by the mind. *Ishq* comes naturally, spontaneously and sweetly when the mind is absolutely calm, and this *Ishq* is an internal experience and gives the divine guidance for the realization of *Haq* Reality.

Ishq indicates an experience in which the mind is completely absorbed while one is in deep meditation. This exalted state of absolute calmness, quiet Self-contemplation, cannot be gauged by the mind.

To a Sufi meditation implies the state of mystical experience in which the mind is not distracted by the psychological impacts, because in the profound stillness one feels only the bliss of a witness-like state which cannot be

attributed as void or emptiness. Meditation is not to get attached to the mind. Meditation means not to have any thought stirred up by outside conditions of life, good and bad. Meditation is an act of one instant and each moment is eternal, free and sufficient unto itself. Meditation is a divine science one has to practise by examining closely the working of one's mind constantly in the mirror of daily relationship, and this cannot be demonstrated, but one has to discover it in the depth of ones *Qalb* (heart). If one can wipe out all ideas from one's mind, give up all desires and discard all mental impressions, then one will experience the state of meditation, and this state is spiritual illumination.

According to Sufism the practical method of uplifting humanity is to transform ourselves first by the process of spiritual magnetism, so that the realization of Divinity within us will manifest and vitalise the atmosphere as well as our interpersonal relationships. We must have the capacity to feel and study the situation unemotionally which eliminates the disturbing factors of distractions. The outward distractions cannot disturb us if we adopt the method of Self-contemplation. The fundamental aspect of Sufism is to establish meditation in the midst of attraction and repulsion. Series of thoughts are crossing our subconscious minds and disturb us because we do not pay full and complete attention to them. If we observe our thoughts dispassionately, then there is the possibility of transcending them, to contact the Supreme Power which brings harmony, peace and happiness.

Impermanence and Immortality*

Lama Anagarika Govinda

Why is there such a difference between the knowledge that has been acquired through life and the knowledge that has been transmitted to us through others? Why is it that those who have been educated in the thoughts of great thinkers, are very often still far from being wise?

It is because experience means participation of our whole being, and this is more than a merely objective and unconcerned observation. The contemplation of food does not still our hunger,—only the incorporation of food. Similarly, every real experience means an incorporation, an assimilation of something essential.

The indifferent one, the unfeeling, untouched one, who does not allow either things or living beings to enter his heart, is as little capable of real experience as he who allows everything to take possession of him and who is merely the slave of the outer world.

The first one excludes himself, the second one loses himself. The first one is comparable to a person who dies of thirst at the bank of a river, because he refuses to drink from it; the second one is like a man who throws himself into the river and is drowned.

Life means giving, and taking :—exchange, transformation. It is breathing in and breathing out. It is not the taking

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possession of anything, but a taking part in everything that comes in touch with us—which is neither a state of possession nor of being possessed, neither a clinging to the objects of our experience nor a state of indifference, but the middle way between both, the way of transformation.

We are transformed by what we accept: we transform what we have accepted by assimilating it. We are transformed by the act of giving, and we contribute to the transformation of others by what we are giving.

He who opposes this process of transformation will die the slow death of rigidity; he will be expelled and rejected from all that lives, like dead matter from a living organism. Death is a deficiency of the faculty of transformation.

This faculty is fundamentally different from decay or mere transiency, i. e., unqualified change. Decay is the dissolution of that which has ceased to be an organic unity, a system of harmonious relations within its own limits or with regard to a greater unit or the world as a whole.

Transformation, however, is not arbitrary change, or change governed by chance, but change governed by law, according to the inherent nature of the object in question. There are many categories of law: from the most universal to the most individual, from the general laws of inorganic matter to the particular (and more intricate) laws of organic life and individual self-expression; from the realm of necessity to the realm of liberty; because liberty is not lawlessness, but the possibility of self-expression or self-realisation within the framework of universal laws. Self-realisation, however, can never consist in egocentricity, exclusivity or individual

limitation, but only in a higher degree of responsiveness and creative activity, in a dynamic exchange of vital and spiritual forces.

“Our self to live must go through a continual change and growth of form, which may be termed a continual death and a continual life going on at the same time. It is really courting death when we refuse to accept death; when we wish to give the form of the self some fixed changelessness; when the self feels no impulse which urges it to grow out of itself; when it treats its limits as final and acts accordingly.”
(Rabindranath Tagore, “Sadhana”)

Thus, transformation contains both; change and stability, plurality and unity, movement and constancy. It has the characteristic of life, namely, to connect organically the polar opposites, the stumbling blocks of logic, and to unite them in an all-embracing rhythm.

Rhythm and direction represent the stability of movement, a movement which never follows a straight line (which exists only in mathematics, i. e., in abstract thought, but not in life). Therefore the logic of the brain is different from the logic of life.

It we want to have stability, we can only find it within ourselves, namely, as the stability of our inner direction (towards the centre, towards Enlightenment). This is not the stability of inertia, but the stability of a dynamic movement (therefore the Buddhist symbol of the “stream” which one enters as soon as one has found that inner direction, and the designation of “stream-winner” or “Sotapan” for one who has entered the path of liberation) whether this movement

comes to a standstill when the centre is reached, or whether it is transformed into another, higher kind of movement, is of no importance, because the individual limitations, the cause of all our problems, would have ceased to exist. At any rate, the inner stability and integrity of one who has found his inner centre, is infinitely greater than that of a world experienced by unenlightened and mentally undirected individuals.

It is for this reason that Hinduism and Buddhism look upon this world as something which has to be overcome, or as certain schools put it, as illusion, This is not a negation of nature or of any thought of objective reality, but the negation of distortion and of wrong values derived from or applied to a distorted reality. Values can only be produced by the determination or attitude of a conscious mind. There are no self-existent values, but only values in relationship to other things and to somebody who discerns or makes use of them. It is, therefore, impossible to ascribe values to nature or to the world 'as such'. The world as such is neither good nor bad; it produces criminals as well as saints, ignorance as well as wisdom, fools as well as Enlightened-ones. One may say that the number of the former is out of proportion with regard to the latter ones, but this would mean that one mistakes quantity for quality. The human body is built up by millions and millions of living cells and is inhabited by further millions of minute living organisms; and yet, there is only one human mind to justify this immense organisation. Likewise the existence of one enlightened consciousness cannot be out weighted by millions of unenlightened individuals. One wise man means more than a thousand fools.

So it all depends on what we make out of the material

which we call the world or our surroundings. Out of the same clay beautiful and ugly, useful and useless things can be made. It depends on the potter and not on the clay. And similarly it is not because there is something wrong with the world that we suffer, but there is something wrong with us. We do not suffer for instance because everything is impermanent but because we cling to the things. If we would not cling to them, we would not mind their impermanence. On the contrary, their changing forms heighten our delight. We admire the fleeting and fragile beauty of a flower, and we appreciate it all the more because of its uniqueness, its momentariness, its unrepeatable individuality. It is precious because it is a unique expression of life, based on all that has been, and thus incorporating in its individual form the immensity of the universe. That is why the Buddha's last gesture in holding up a flower, when asked by Subhuti to reveal the quintessence of his teaching, was the most profound sermon he ever preached without uttering one word.

It needs a high degree of culture and insight to experience the eternal in transient forms, to see the timeless harmony in the momentariness of phenomena, to feel the infinite rhythm that pervades even the most insignificant expression of life.

It is the deadly sameness of machine-made things and of a life governed by machines that perverts the mind and kills the spirit. Infinite variety is the hall-mark of the creative genius, sameness the hall-mark of mediocrity and decadence. The symbol of the machine is the wheel. The machine-wheel is the symbol of *Sansara*, of ever recurring birth

and death, of the inescapable law of existence (no wheel was known in Tibet, and the people were happy, even in the face of hardships. Now the wheel has come to Tibet and with it slavery for those who have fallen under its sway.)

But there is another wheel, an invisible one, which does not revolve but radiates and pervades every form of life. It is the *Dharma-Chakra*, and he who realizes his universality and the infinite relationship of all things and forms of appearance, without denying their relative existence and value.

We live in a world of impermanence and instability, because we are blinded by tiny fragments, to which we cling under the influence of unreasonable desires; and thus blinded we lose the great connections and inner relations which give meaning and harmony to the flux of life. If we could see the whole picture, the totality and completeness of relations, we would be able to see things and beings in their proper perspective, and the change or movement, which until then could only be conceived as "impermanence" (under its negative aspect of destruction) would reveal a consistency of rhythm, a stability of direction, and a continuity of organic development, which could restore to our world and life a higher order of permanence or value than ever conceived by means of intellectual abstractions and speculations.

We accept the unity of a thing in space, though it extends in various dimensions with various aspects and properties. But we doubt a similar unity, if it is extended in time (which is merely another dimension), where it

likewise shows various aspects and properties, developing according to its inherent nature. "Our intellect grasps this ultimate truth about things slowly, laboriously and piecemeal. It sees but one thing (and one aspect of it) at a time, and so always brings a feeling of incompleteness and limitation. But we have occasional moments of insight when something presented to our sense or imagination will from its own character or from some exalted mood of our own, seem like a perfect and perfectly comprehended universe in miniature. (Carrit.)

This is what the great mystics of all times and the greatest of artists have experienced. But while the latter could only achieve it in their most creative moments, the former ones, due to their complete inner detachment and their fundamentally changed spiritual outlook, were able to dwell more or less permanently in this state. For them the impermanent world of ordinary mortals has disappeared, though they may live with them and extend to them their loving kindness, because they have found the central harmony and never can lose the conception of totality in that of the individual. They are the *siddhas* who have achieved the magic power that transforms *samsāra* into *nirvāna*, the saints and sages who attained Enlightenment.

MĀ

Radhapriya

**At Her Lotus Feet
I sing to my Mother.
The whole world disappears
Into Her Love for me,**

**My Mother is Compassion,
My Mother is the Mother of all,
Her Love knows no bounds.**

**My Ma loves me dearly,
My Ma loves me tenderly,
My Ma loves me completely,
I love my Mother eternally.**

**Her love is like a shawl
Surrounding me, keeping
me warm. Her shawl melts
my little heart with love
For Her, my Mother Divine.**



Srimad Bhagavata Saptaha Parayana Maha Yajña in Calcutta

R. K. Banerjee

Since the Durga Puja celebrations held in the Agarpara Ashram in 1965, Mataji had not been present to observe any festival in this city of ours, and had not stayed continuously for any length of time, beyond lightning visits, sometimes for a few hours, sometimes one night, and never more than two nights at a time.

So the devotees of Calcutta had been seriously concerned for a long time how to persuade Mataji to stay over a prolonged period in the city, chiefly for the benefit, not of those who had the means to visit Her from time to time in Ashrams outside Calcutta, but for those more unfortunate beings who were not in a position to leave their abodes here, and who had for long not had the chance of spending a few minutes in private in Her holy presence to assuage the pent-up longing of their souls. More than once, in Varanasi and elsewhere, Mataji had hinted that She would not hesitate to stay in Calcutta if we could hold continuous *satsang* over a week or a fortnight, associated with a *Bhagavata Saptaha* or some such festival, which did not depend for timing on officially allotted functions like *Janam-Utsava*, *Samyam Vrata*, *Durga Puja* etc, for which She was normally booked up a year in advance.

Swami Paramananda had been paying occasional visits to Calcutta throughout 1973, with regard to the construction of Didima's images, and Mataji had also paid two lightning visits to Calcutta, chiefly to visit really ill and aged devotees,

notably Sm. Aparna Devi, then lying on her death-bed, who later passed away peacefully after having had *darśana* of her *Iṣṭ*.

During one of Swamij's visits to Calcutta, it fell to the lot of Sri Sasadhar Bhattacharya, and Sri Pratibha Kumar Kundu, both inhabitants of Jodhpur Park, to point out to Swamiji the unique advantages of a certain open maidan space in Jodhpur Park, opposite Sri Kundu's residence, where a large enough congregation to satisfy Mataji's thousands of Calcutta admirers could be safely accommodated.

Pratibha Kumar and his wife Padma duly spent a memorable period of their lives at Ranchi with Mataji during Jhulan from 9th to 14th Aug, '73, when they were both initiated through *dīkṣa*. Swamiji then suggested that Mataji might stay in their premises in Calcutta, provided a new cottage could be got ready, untenanted by previous inhabitants. And so, by the grace of Mataji, the site of Mataji's residence and the site of the *Bhagavata Saptaha* celebrations were there and then automatically decided.

Meanwhile Sasadharda arrived at Hardwar for the Durga Puja celebrations later in October, and the general layout of a pandal to accommodate upto 5000 persons was thrashed out between him and Swamiji at Kharkhari, where I was also present.

After the rains, Pratibha Kumar and Padma went ahead full speed with the construction of a delightful two-storied one-roomed cottage for Mataji in the south-west corner of their garden, to be completed before the cold weather, within which we fondly expected Mataji, without then being aware of any definite dates.

On the 18th of November, Swamiji wrote separately to Sasadharda and myself, giving us the exact official dates within which a *Bhaavata Saptaha* could be held.

From the very beginning it was considered most advisable to spread the responsibility of arranging for Mataji's prolonged visit to Calcutta, after such a long lapse of time, among as great a cross-section of responsible Calcutta devotees as possible, and consequently a general meeting was called for the first time on Dec 2nd, '73 which was fairly well attended, and at which a committee was chosen, later to be called the '*Bhagavata Saptaha Committee*', with its registered office in Sasadharda's house.

Subsequent controversy about the main preliminary arrangements were set at rest by Swamiji's second detailed letter of Dec. 30th, received on Jan 5th, '74. This specifically mentioned that the *Bhagavata Saptaha* would commence on Feb. 25th and end on March 5th. It appeared that Mataji had promised Sri Tushar Kanti Ghosh and Sri Tarun Kanti Ghosh that in the face of their acute disappointment in 1973, Mataji would definitely be present for their Holi festival celebrations in Calcutta on March 5th, 1974.

The Agarpara Ashram was simultaneously informed that Mataji would be present there to observe revered Sri Hari Baba's birthday celebrations on the 7th/8th of March.

So we calculated that we would be fortunate enough to have Mataji at long last for at least a fortnight in our midst in the Greater Calcutta area.

Swamiji's second letter went on to fix the choice of those responsible for reading the original text in Sanskrit, and for

translating this into Bengali, as well as the main daily periods during which *satsang* should take place in the pandal, and which Mataji was expected to attend in person.

Meanwhile, the question of raising sufficient finance by public subscription had been agitating our minds considerably, so a strong finance sub-committee was formed, under the astute guidance of Dr. A. P. Gupta, a veteran campaigner, with Sri Sailen Ghosh as a very active secretary, to approach not only known devotees and followers of Mataji, but also other nobly disposed individuals, of donate to our worthy cause. A complete list of Ashram members and devotees living in the Greater Calcutta area was carefully compiled, and typed lists were given to members of the finance sub-committee. A hurried appeal for funds was quickly printed in postcard form in English and Bengali, bearing Jan. 1st as the date, and distributed freely to field workers who were furnished with serially numbered subscription booklets, each containing 10 pages in duplicate. The brunt of all this office work automatically fell on Sasardharda, elected, as the Hon. Secretary of the Committee. A separate book account was opened in Jodhpur Park in the name of the *Bhagavata Saptaha Committee* and Partibha Kumar was elected the Hon. Treasurer.

It will by now be appreciated that the sum total of the expenditure connected with such a vast project spread over so many incalculable days could not be expected to be borne by any single individual or a few individuals, but had to be spread over the community as a whole; at the same time, it will also be realised that a significant portion of these expenses were in fact gladly borne by Mataji's hosts, Pratibha

Kumar and Padma, and the original sponsor of the whole idea, Sri Sasadhar Bhattacharya.

The work of fund collection started in earnest early in January, and only after sufficient funds appeared to be in sight did we seriously start work on the most expensive item, the huge pandal.

Here again another strong "pandal sub-committee" was formed, under the able chairmanship of Sri Makhan Lal Ghosh, an experienced devotee of long standing, and the Secretary, Treasurer and Chairman of the finance sub-committee were automatically included.

Quotations were called for and preference was given to Sett & Co., with sufficient resources and experience of our requirements to cope with a pandal of the size, quality and decorative excellence desired.

Volunteers were enrolled for work both within and outside of the pandal, those inside being exclusively composed of known devotees, and those outside including local youth leaders, whose playing fields we had occupied, and without whose whole-hearted co-operation, peace and harmony could never have been ensured in the locality over ten continuous days. And how our faith in them was later justified ! Full credit for this success in leadership goes to Mataji's host Pratibha Kumar whose intimate knowledge of local conditions was our asset. The difficult role of "Incharge of volunteers" was entrusted to an experienced devotee, Major Banerji, retired from the army.

Meanwhile initial snags had raised their ugly head over the temporary acquisition of the pandal site, which belonged to the local C. I. T. who had their own forward

plans of improving roadways and busways in the locality and wished to reserve the land in question for other purposes. All these impediments were overcome by Pratibha Kumar with his local contacts and his offer to pay full fees; so the main approach road to the site from Gariahata Road through Jadavpur along Prince Anwar Shah Road was widened and repaired for the heavy traffic imposed by our ten days' session only just in time, by mid-February.

A ladies sub-committee was formed to utilise the active and willing services of our capable ladies, most of whom stayed throughout in the vicinity or were crowded into the hosts' house at considerable personal sacrifice, to take care of the day to day requirements of Mataji's party and the *Bhagavata Saptaha* celebrations.

After the conclusion of Mataji's Delhi visit in February, we were also most fortunate in securing the services of Sri Amal Sen with his commodious house almost opposite the pandal, which was miraculously emptied of all tenants just before Mataji's visit. He was promptly put in charge of all feeding arrangements, as well as securing accommodation for our visiting *Sādhus* and up-country guests.

After serious discussion it had been decided to entrust the problem of arranging for midday and evening meals to a local caterer, who was provided with kitchen and other facilities on the roof of Amalda's house. In addition a canteen was run on the ground opposite the pandal under local volunteers, to look after the almost hourly requirements of tea, cold drinks and snacks throughout the day from 7 A. M. to 10 P. M., not only for devotees participating in the functions, but also for daily visitors to the pandal and working staff.

Most important of all, a fully equipped office was provided in a separate enclosure opposite the pandal and the carefully planned layout included sufficient space to cope with three tables, sofas and chairs, a telephone, and a large enough enclosure screened off at the back where Mataji could give private *darśana* to whomsoever She wished, at short notice, whenever She could spare the time.

Separate covered stalls were provided on the road-side for the selling of books, photographs, pictures etc. not necessarily, but mostly, confined to Mataji's activities, for the selling of flowers and garlands and for keeping shoes. Dasuda had his own book stall and did roaring business while stocks lasted.

Special mention must be made here of the handsome contribution of 750 large-size beautiful pictures of Mataji by Dr. Gunen Roy, which were sold off in record time for the give-away price of Re 1/- each, within the first few days of the *Bhagavata Saptaha*. All these amenities were made possible only because the pandal site selected was bounded by roads on three sides, the east (facing the Kundus' house across the street) the south (along Prince Anwar Shah Road, a bus route) and the west (along a quiet residential approach). Consequently the 4' high dais at the back of the pandal facing east was so laid out that Mataji could be conveyed by car from Her residence straight to the back of of the dais, so as to enter the pandal through Her specially reserved entrance, opening into the quiet residential lane.

Last, but not least, provision was made for spacious pucca sanitary arrangements, separately for ladies and gentlemen, well outside the pandal proper, to the north, where water was supplied to overhead drums from morning till night.

One of the most difficult problems we had to contend with was the frequent load-shedding in South Calcutta without notice throughout the *Bhagavata Saptaha*. Arrangements were therefore made to equip the pandal, as well as Mataji's residential compound, with oil engine-driven field generators. To save costs the engines for the pandal had initially been located in the south-west corner of the pandal itself, but this was soon found to be too noisy, and the generators were removed to a distant road-corner at short notice with controls still inside the pandal in sight of the dais. As an additional insurance, batteries were kept ready constantly to operate mikes whenever power supply was interrupted without notice during a session, to cut out the inevitable delay in switching over to the generators.

The mornings in Calcutta in February were still cool enough not to warrant the use of fans or lights, so battery-operated mikes were found to be far more satisfactory when supply failed. Generators however, were essential for the afternoon fans and evening lights not only in the pandal, but also in the office, on the road side, and in residential areas. But all our initial planning and arrangements needed the benevolent sanction of Swamiji, and as a result of our frantic calls, he was persuaded, at great sacrifice to his time and Mataji's demands on his services, to spend a few hours with us on the site on the 9th of Feb. during a hurried visit to Calcutta from Kankhal and back. There and then we finalised details of the layout of the pandal on its actual site, the full day's programme, and numerous other minutia necessary for a scrupulously orthodox reading of the *Bhagavata* in the original in the mornings, together with its appropriate Bengali rendering in the afternoons.

The hurried letter of appeal, dated 1st Jan. did not seem suitable to serve as a proper invitation for the more orthodox or particular minded Calcutta public, so with Dr. Gopal Dasgupta's kind assistance a more elaborate and formal Bengali invitation letter based on Sangha publications, and printed on more expensive hand-made paper, together with a simple English counterpart, were prepared as quickly as possible by Feb. 12th and distributed at once by those diligent volunteers still collecting donations with our official receipt books.

In the first fortnight, the response from the public had been beyond expectation, but thereafter it slowed down agonizingly. Nevertheless, we were optimistic enough, when preparing a budget for our expenditure, to earmark a sum of Rs. 5000/- for the Agarpara Ashram, where Mataji was likely to spend at least two, if not three, nights during Her forthcoming visit, and where a considerable amount of preparatory work had to be taken in hand at once.

To our delight, Mataji subsequently arrived as early as the morning of Feb. 23rd with a party of about 45 from Kankhal, and another 20 or so from Varanasi. The pandal had only just been got ready for Her visit, as we fully intended to use it for holding Satsang in Her presence from the very first evening onwards.

The office was split into two sections, one to deal with financial transactions under the capable administration of Sri Amal Sen and Sri Kantimoy Sur, a trained Accountant, and another to deal with the registration of devotees' demands, under Sri Gora Mitra. The latter job proved to be most

arduous, and poor Gorada, a confirmed bachelor, was frequently found surrounded and besieged by crowds of ladies for hours on end with their unending demands. We started by registering all requests for private meetings with Mataji, as well as requests for diksa. In spite of Her continuous preoccupation Mataji would spare an hour or so at the conclusion of each morning session in the pandal, to give audience to registered individuals in the enclosure at the back of the office. But after the first 5 or 6 days, this system was found to be too cumbersome and was replaced by the demands of devotees wishing to be initiated. We registered over 650 names for *dikṣa* but it was just not possible to deal with all of them at Jodhpur Park and Mataji carried on Her merciful mission both at Agarpara on the 7th and 8th of March, as well as in Makhanda's house on March 9th. Our transport demands were heavy, commencing at Howrah station on the morning of Mataji's arrival, and throughout the next two days or so, until the demands of all upcountry and local guests had been fully met. With the commencement of the official programme on the 25th of Feb, the various guest-speakers had to be transported to the site and back, over and above the demands of the organisers of the *Bhagavata Saptaha* celebrations. The general exodus from Jodhpur Park on the 5th and 6th of March also made heavy demands on our transport facilities. Finally there was the return of Mataji and Her party from Agarpara to the city on March 8th and Her subsequent departure on March 9th en masse. But all these intricate movements were very capably handled by Sri Haren Gupta, a most experienced devotee, who com-

bined private and public cars, buses, lorries, Minibuses and taxis judiciously to the best advantage possible.

All ashramites and *suddhāchāries* were housed by the Kundus themselves, most of the *sādhus* were put up by Sri Amal Sen and Sri Sasadhar Bhāttacharya, and we also had at our disposal other local accommodation, either freely lent by friends, or, as in one particular case, hired specially for the purpose. And so we were able to provide not only for all our outstation guests, but also for distant local residents without transport who wished to be near Mataji throughout Her stay at Jodhpur Park.

During Swamiji's visit on Feb. 9th we had finalised the site of the actual reading of the original Sanskrit text according to full religious rites, and therefore, a small temple was built by the decorator inside the Kundus' compound away from the main gate, attached to the eastern wing of the main house but outside its roof, so that there was no objection to Mataji using the temple as and when She required. Here Pandit Sri Chitta Mukherjee (Chittada) together with his 5 assistants (*pathaka, Japaka, dharaka, Jajaka. etc*) performed the ritual pujas and read the original text each morning from Feb. 25th to March 4th inclusive. The final *yajña* and *havan* was performed in yet another open pandal in the Kundus' private garden next to Mataji's abode, on the morning of March 5th.

In view of their manifold duties commencing with the break of dawn, Chittada and the associate pandits were put up conveniently in a neighbouring house, and their place of work was the *Bhāgavata* temple. Inside the temple a beautiful

Vyasāsana had been adorned with the help of a trunk full of decorative material brought by Swamiji on Feb. 9th from Kashi, and the whole temple was kept in an immaculately holy condition by Maitreyiji under Mataji's strict supervision.

And now to the pandal proper which enclosed an area of 190' x 104' (19, 800 sq. ft). A 4' high raised dais 30' x 20' commanded a full view of the whole pandal and was sited along the middle of the western wall. All the boundary walls of the pandal were composed of 6' high corrugated iron sheets, and the gates were covered with sliding steel shutters.

Another *Vyasāsana*, arranged in our typical orthodox but artistic style by Visuddha and the Kanyapith girls was placed near the south-east of the dais for the use of Sri Narain Goswami the exponent of the *Bhagavata* in Bengali. Mataji's raised and tastefully covered *āsana* was at the centre of the dais, a few feet from the edge and another raised and decorated seat was placed to the north-east of the dais for the use of illustrious guest-speakers, such as Prof. Tripurari Chakravarti, Sri Mahanāmvrata Brahmachari and others.

The huge pandal was exquisitely decorated by Sett & Co. under the able guidance of Gopalda, who placed selected devotional pictures at conspicuous points and displayed numerous excellently printed placards tastefully round the central aisle, bearing the immortal words of Mataji's *Sat Vani*.

A saffron flag was hoisted on top of the pandal and another on top of Mataji's private balcony attached to Her residence. The entrance of the pandal carried a beautifully

embroidered signboard mentioning in clear the words *Bhagavata Saptaha Parayana Maha Yajña Mandap*. The wall at the back of the dais was covered with a most artistically designed embroidered motif in white, which only the highest skilled decorators in this part of India are capable of. Later, at the conclusion of the reading of the *Bhagavata* and before the commencement of the *Nāma yajña* the rear walls were covered with embroidery carrying the two Mahāmantra slokas normally used in our *Nāma Yajñas*, ever since they were started by Mataji in Simla in 1936.

All the pillars supporting the very high waterproved roof were beautifully embellished and the whole ground was covered with tarpaulin on which satranchies were spread. This was brushed daily. To spread the sound of the microphones equably over such a vast expanse of open area was not easy and in spite of our best efforts there were one or two pockets where sound reproduction was not as good as it should have been. Nevertheless, on the whole, reception during the morning, afternoon and evening sessions, in spite of continuous power failure was tolerably satisfactory, and the huge congregation went away daily and thronged again the next day all the more eager to obtain *darśana* of Mataji and hear the words of wisdom spoken by renowned scholars well-known for their erudition.

The centre line of the dais was deliberately shifted about 12' south of the centre of the pandal, to allow more space for ladies in the north, with an emergency exit out of the pandal through its northern wall towards the conservancy services. But in spite of this the ladies' section overflowed to the south in the evenings, particularly over the

week-end. The entrances to the steps leading up to the dais on the north and south were strictly guarded throughout the meetings by Sri Makhan Ghosh on the ladies' side and Sri Guru Prasad Brahma on the gentlemen's side, a thankless task performed most dutifully throughout the eight days.

A token police force was stationed at all main entrances and at strategic points throughout the celebrations, not with any idea of intimidation, but merely as an insurance against possible unruly elements. This proved to be a wise precaution, although the necessity to use the police actively hardly ever arose, entirely due to the benign influence wielded by Mataji miraculously over all and sundry during Her stay at Jodhpur Park.

The eminent speakers such as Prof. Tripurari Chakravarti, Dr. Mahanamvrata *Brahmachari*, a Sri Narain Goswami, Dr. Govinda Gopal Mukherjee, and Dr. Gourinath Shastri were individually and personally approached in advance by Sasardharda and myself, and all without exception instantly and readily agreed to meet our requests. In fact, Dr. Mahanamvrata *Brahmachari* went so far as to move his headquarters from his Ashram in North Calcutta to the house of a disciple on the fringe of Jadavpur, so that our transport problems, on his behalf at least, could be correspondingly eased.

The Chief Minister, Sri Siddhartha Shankar Roy with his family, and other well-known personalities, e. g. Sri Jogesh *Brahmachari* etc. also gladly accepted our invitation.

Ritualistic observance of a *Bhagavata Saptaha* demands

as its official objective a premediated "*Sankalpa*, or avowal of purpose, but in our case we had arranged with Chittada in advance to dedicate the *Bhagavata Parayan Mahayajña* entirely to the glorification of Bhagavan Vasudeva's (or Mataji's) pleasure.

Again it was entirely befitting that Mataji should choose Sasadhara as the official *yajman* of the *Māhayajña*, and his duties included, in addition to observance of strict *Samyam*, sitting motionless next to Sri Narain Goswami on the dais facing north throughout the eight days of the celebrations.

The pandal programme proper commenced on Feb. 25th at 8-50 AM. with kirtan by Brahmachari Tanmayananda. At 9 A.M. each morning the opening discourse was delivered by Prof. Tripurari Chakravarty on the Upanishads. It was an inspiring experience to start the day by hearing his lucid explanations regarding the various attributes of the Brahman. At 9-45 every morning Dr. Mahanamvrata Brahmachari, one the most inspired exponents of the *Bhagavata*, in E. India, spoke brilliantly on some episode or other of the *Bhagavata*, mostly dealing with Sri Krishna *Lila*, but always expounding a deep philosophical truth underlying his theme. His lectures continued to be more and more popular as the days progressed, and Mataji was heard to remark one day, "Pitaji speaks as he sees with his own eyes!" With Dr. Mahanāmvratas' lecture the morning programme usually ended at about 11 A.M. or so, followed by kirtan and *pranāms* to Mataji by the vast congregation, ladies and gentlemen in separate queues. But Mataji would usually be away by

12-15 to visit the office enclosure where She gave private *darśana* to registered devotees, or the ground floor of Her residence, where She met those about to be initiated. Lunch on the roof of Sri Amal Sen's house was controlled by a system of coupons issued for the day from the office, free to our outstation guests, and those initiated, but at a subsidised rate to such local devotees as expressed their need.

From 2-50 P.M. the afternoon session commenced with the inspiring kirtan of Tanmayanandaji, and then from 3 P. M. Sri Narain Goswami expounded the *Bhagavata* in Bengali for three hours at a stretch till 6 P. M.

An introduction concerning this eminent speaker will not be out of place here. He is a member of the Shringar-Bala Goswamis of Vrindaban, who claim descent from Sri Nityananda Prabhu, is an orthodox Brahmachari, and professor of philosophy and Sanskrit in the Calcutta University. He has twice before expounded the *Bhagavata* in Mataji's presence, once at Agarpara, and again at Sri Binoy Banerji's residence.

Sri Narain Goswami kept scrupulously to the orthodox and classic system of expounding the *Bhagavata* as laid down in the *Sāstras*, spread over seven days (the 1st day is normally devoted to the glorification of the *Bhagavata* and the first four slokas), which is itself based on Sri Sukhdev Goswami's original rendering before Maharaja Parikshit.

Suffice it so say that it was no mean matter to cover this vast subject within the prescribed time, without omitting any essential items, or boring the audience, during eight successive sittings lasting over three hours each.

At the conclusion of his oration each day, during the usual *ārati* and *kīrtan*, there was a rush in an orderly manner to perform *pranāma* at Mataji's feet on the dais, which sometimes lasted up to one hour.

Thereafter Mataji daily visited sick and aged devotees in their houses before returning to the pandal after 9 P. M. Then followed a public *Satsang* with Mataji, which for many constituted the best part of the day's programme. Questions by individual devotees were carefully registered in the office and put to Mataji opportunely by Brahmachari Nirmalananda in the hushed silence of the vast concourse eagerly waiting to hear Mataji's immortal words. This used to go on till 10 P. M. or later, and although most of us then retired for the night, Mataji was known to be active in Her room until the small hours of the morning with those demanding her private *darśana*.

It had been our original intention to fill in the time from 6-30 P. M. to 9 P. M. with high class spiritual music, both vocal and instrumental, but Swamiji cancelled this during his preliminary visit to Calcutta on Feb. 9th as he wished to give Mataji the opportunity to be away from the pandal during that period. Little did we then realize that Mataji would utilize this not for personal rest, but for fulfilling the long cherished wishes of sick and ailing devotees by visiting them in their houses.

Towards the end of the afternoon session on February 28th, the holy birth of Sri Krishna was heralded amidst the sounding of gongs and the blowing of conch shells, followed by *ārati* and *kīrtan*, and the whole atmosphere became surcharged

in accordance with Mataji's *kheyāla*. On the evening of Saturday, March 2nd, and Sunday, March 3rd, Dr. Govinda Gopal Mukherjee spoke brilliantly on the *Bhagavata* from 6-30 to 7-30 P. M. On the second day his wife Sm. Madhuri Devi sang bhajans to supplement her husband's discourse. On those two evenings the huge pandal was filled to overflowing, a fact which had to be seen to be believed, but the crowds were orderly and no untoward incidents occurred.

In the afternoon of March 4th, extra time was allowed to Sri Narain Goswami to complete his vast subject by 6-30 p. m. After the usual *pranāms* to Mataji that evening, Dr. Gourinath Shastri and Dr. Roma Choudhury gave delightful talks as a fitting climax to conclude the *Bhagavata Saptaha* discourses.

Later in the evening, between 7-30 and 9 P. M. *adhivās kirtana* was conducted by Virenda as a prelude to twenty-four hours of *Nama yajña*. For the first time Mataji was present on the floor of the pandal, reclining on her seat near the *mancha*, surrounded by Kanyapeeth girls.

She only left the hall well after the ladies had started the *Akhanda Nāma Kirtana* for the whole night. Early next morning the menfolk took over singing the Holy Name, and proceeded with it throughout the day while havan with *Purnahuti* was performed by Chittada within the Kundus' residential compound round about midday. In the afternoon there was *Daridra Narayan Seva** within the pandal, at which about 1500 meals were served by local volunteers in complete harmony and discipline.

* Feasting of Narayan (the Lord) in the guise of poor people.

As a fitting conclusion to crown their efforts, the forty-five or so local volunteers were each presented with gifts by Mataji personally, and they left the hall joyfully acclaiming Mataji's *Jai*, overwhelmed with emotion. Meanwhile the *Namayajña* was being continued throughout the day non-stop upto 6-30 p. m., when a short *Nagar Kirtana* was taken out round the roads outside the pandal. Eventually Virenda concluded the *Nāma Yajña* with time-honoured ritual between 7-30 and 8 P. M. Mataji, although present on top of the dais, did not this time descend to the *kirtan mancha*. Nevertheless the end of the *Nama Yajna* was climaxed with the usual fervent and enthusiastic singing of *Hari Bol* and 'Dhara Loo', followed by the *pranāma* mantras.

After hurried preparations Mataji left with Her party soon after 9 P. M. for the New Alipore residence of Sri Makhan Ghosh who had built an entirely new wing for Mataji attached to his house, and had been waiting for Mataji to occupy it for some years.

After a night's halt there, Mataji left the next morning, March 6th, before 8 P.M. for Ranaghat, but en route, Swamiji persuaded Her to inspect Didima's marble statue, then in its finishing stages at the Kumartuli studios of Sri Siddheshwar Pal, and thereafter the nearly completed *astadhātu** image of *Purāna Purush* destined for Naimisharanya, being cast at a nearby workshop by Sri Haripada Ghosh, chief assistant of the late well-known sculptor Nitai Pal. Although Mataji went straight from there to Ranaghat at the earnest request of Swami Krishnanada (Sobhanda) who

* *Astadhātu* an alloy of eight metals, including gold and silver.

runs a small Ashram there with his beautiful Gopalji as its presiding deity. Swamiji, Mamu, Chinmayda, Panuda and myself went on to Krishnanagar to have a look at the second marble statue of Didima, practically completed already by Sri Kartick Pal.

We rejoined Mataji's party at Ranaghat for a late meal, and all of us left for Agarpara after 4 P. M. arriving at the Ashram between 9 and 9-30 P.M.

On the 7th, Mataji observed Sri Haribabaji's birthday celebrations at Agarpara with great pomp and ceremony. On March, 8th with Charuda's generosity Sri Krishna's *Dol-Lila* was duly celebrated at the permanent *Dol-Mancha* next to the Ashram pond amidst the singing of kirtan in Mataji's presence. Later, Mataji was escorted by Sri Tushar Kanti and Sri Tarun Kanti Ghosh in an open car specially decorated like a *māyurpankhi* (peacock feather) from the Ashram to their *Dol Lila* celebrations being held at Deshapriya Park in South Calcutta. From there Mataji proceeded on a grand procession, accompanied on foot by Ashram girls and boys and others, singing Kirtan, through the public streets of South Calcutta, before returning to the park where a reception was held from 6-30 P.M. onwards by leading Vaishnavites. Thakur Sri Sitaramji Omkarnath also graced the occasion by his presence.

Mataji left the park at about 8-30 P.M. for New Alipore, where most of her party were put up and entertained in royal style by Makhanda and Shantidi in their residence for the night, and upto 5 P. M. the next day, March 9th.

In Makhanda's house Mataji was completely relaxed

and permitted sufficient time for all requests put to Her for satsang, private interviews or *dikṣas*. Her stay was marked by a magnificent *bhāṇḍāra* (feast) on the 9th and Makhanda with his entire family were all attention to their numerous guests from sunrise until the time of Mataji's departure by road at about 5 P. M.

Mataji was taken by car to Chandernagar, about 25 miles from Calcutta, where elaborate arrangements had been made for Her reception and entertainment by the local devotees, who have founded an Anandamayee Centre there. She subsequently caught the Mithila Express from Bandel after 10 P. m. the same night en route to Deoghar, where Sri Narendra Brahmachariji Maharaj had invited Her to go, for the purpose of taking complete rest after Her hectic Calcutta tour.

Thus ended one of the most lengthy, enjoyable and delightful visits of Mataji during the past several years to Calcutta. To the residents of the entire Jodhpur Park, young or old, the whole area has been permanently sanctified by Mataji's stay and the performance of the *Bhagavata Saptaha*, and has become a place of pilgrimage.

To the entire Kundu family, the 23rd of the month is sacred, inasmuch as it was on the 23rd of Jan 74 that Mataji's newly built room was inaugurated by the Calcutta devotees with a special kirtan programme, and it was on the 23rd of the following month that Mataji set foot on it for the first time. Thenceforth the Kundus observe the 23rd of each month scrupulously by conducting a *Satsang* in Mataji's room from 6-30 to 8-30 p. m.

We in Calcutta will no longer believe that Mataji can stay away from our city for long intervals anymore, and we all look forward to entertain Her again in our midst, wherever She may wish to reside, in the not too distant future, and to worship Her in Her bountiful mood of bestowing peace, benediction and mercy to one and all.

"Aum Nama Bhagavate Vāsudevaya."

"Jai Ma."

"Whoso has three things is beloved of God. The first is riddance of goods; the second of friends, and the third is riddance of self."

Meister Eakhart



Ma during installation ceremony of Didima's Statue at Varanasi.

Mātri Līlā

(April 17th—July 6th, 1974)

Mataji reached Varanasi on April 17th. The very next morning the famous singer Sm. M. S. Subbulakshmi gave a marvellous recital for about an hour and a half in the hall of Gopal Mandir in Mataji's presence. She had come from Madras with her family who assisted her with a veritable orchestra of cymbals and drums while her daughter sang with her. It was altogether superb. Mataji had just had an extra busy period at the Kumbh Mela at Hardwar and everyone expected that She would retire to Her tiny room on the 2nd floor of the Kanyapith and take complete rest for at least a few days. Far from it! Mataji continued to be as active as ever also giving long *darśanas* twice daily in Gopal Mandir. On April 25th, *Akshaya Tritiya* day, another statue of Didima (Sri Muktananda Giriji) was consecrated with great ceremony in the new Siva temple where a large photo of Didima had been kept so far. The preliminary rites started three days earlier in the Chandi Mandap. On the 25th Didima's photo was carried in procession through the streets round the Ashram buildings. Everyone present joined. The traditional *Akshaya Tritiya Pujā* was of course performed that morning and as customary a number of Brahmins were presented with earthen vessels, towels, fans, sweets, fruits etc.

Srimati Asrukana Mitra, the wife of Dr. G. Mitra

(who is in-charge of our Puri Ashram) passed away during Mataji's sojourn at Varanasi. A devotee of many years' standing, she had spent the *Vānaprastha* period of her life on the banks of the Ganges in holy Kashi. It was her desire to die while Mataji was at Varanasi. One evening she came to Ma, saying : "Ma, I have lived long enough, now I am ready to go." The very next morning after completing her daily prayers, she felt indisposed and lay down on the floor, doing Japa. Within a few minutes she was gone. The body was taken to the Ashram and Mataji blessed and touched it while the girls were singing kirtana. Ma watched the body being taken down to the Ganges for cremation. What more auspicious end can anyone wish for? May her soul rest in peace and bliss at the feet of the Lord !

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On April 27th Mataji left for Bombay with a large party arriving there the next day. This time Mataji stayed at the residence of Sri P. M. Vissanji at Andheri where Her birth-day celebrations took place from May 3rd to 10th. Sri Vissanji had recently built in his compound a Lakshmi Nārāyaṇa temple that was duly consecrated with elaborate rites in the morning of May 3rd in Mataji's presence. At the end of the function, *havan* (fire sacrifice) was performed. During following night Mataji's first pūjā was celebrated in the Nātmandir of Lakshmi Narayana temple in front of Mataji's picture, while She Herself remained in Her room which was situated in the same building. A large and beautiful pandal for *satsang* had been erected in the spacious, well-kept grounds of Sri Vissanji's residence. There was

also a small hall in front of the temple where Mataji could give *darśana* to small groups. Most guests were accommodated in a college founded by Sri Vissanji in the close vicinity. All arrangements were excellent and everyone was made comfortable while our hosts tactfully remained in the background.

From May 3rd to 10th, *Rāsallā* was enacted in the mornings, and every evening there were high class lectures by various mahātmās, such as Sri Swamis Akhandanandaji and Vishnuashramaji, Mahamandaleshwaras Sri Prakshanandaji and Sri Sadanandaji, Swami Chinmayanandaji talked brilliantly in English which was greatly appreciated by all foreign guests and those who did not know Hindi; while Swami Krishnanandaji amused the congregation by short interludes of kirtana in his unique way. The last item and climax of the daily programme was "Mātri Satsang," Mataji's very interesting replies to questions. As usual the *Durga Sapta Sati* (*Chandi*) was recited daily and at the completion *Kumāri Pujā* of nine *Kumāris* and one *batuk* (boy) was performed. Ma sang : "*Jai Kumāri Mā, jai batuk bhayya.*" One day 108 *Kumaris* were entertained to a feast and one night there was ladies' kirtana.

The final *Tithi Pujā* in the night of May 9th was celebrated in the pandal. Mataji was lying in a kind of bower, made of strings of sweet smelling jasmins. The attendance was extremely large that night. On other days there was no over-crowding, due to train and bus-strikes. Still, quite a number of devotees arrived from far-off places by plane and some of the local population came daily by car. After the

Tithi Puja Mataji remained in *Samādhi* until midday on May 10th when She was taken to Her room.

On May 11th Mataji motored to Poona for a long stay, accompanied by a very large party. Since no trains were running at that time, even more bhaktas than would have joined Ma otherwise, stayed on. Mataji was in an excellent mood and very communicative throughout Her sojourn at Poona, and fortunately mostly kept good health. Sri Narendra Brahmachariji Maharaj of Deoghar stayed with us at Poona for practically the whole time and Mahamandaleswara Sri Prakashanandji for a few weeks. Mataji gave both of them much of Her time and attention. They had long discussions with Mataji every day for hours on end, by which a number of others also greatly profited. The Mahamandaleswara every evening delivered beautiful talks which were highly appreciated by all listeners. In the late afternoons Mataji would go for a drive. On May 22nd Sri Swami Akhandanandaji started a course of morning lectures on the Bhāgavata that continued for nearly a fortnight to the delight of everyone. From May 28th to June 4th a *Bhāgavata Saptah* was held, arranged jointly by some Gujerati devotees. The pandit refused to conclude the daily function unless Mataji sang, so we had the good luck to be able to listen daily to Mataji's sweet songs.

Sri Dilip Kumar Roy came several times and regaled us with his beautiful music, while Srimati Indira came daily for Mataji's *darśana*. Sri Dattobal who has his own Ashram at Kohlapur came a few times and discussed with Ma. Some of Sri Satya Saibaba's and Acharya Rajnesh's disciples

frequently sought Mataji's *darsana*. Once a group of 15 western disciples of the Acharya meditated in Mataji's presence for fifteen minutes. Another day a Maharashtrian Guru with his disciples were allowed forty minutes of silent meditation with Ma, with no one else present.

Nuns belonging to the Order of the Sacred Heart of Christ have for the last hundred years been running an Ashram in Poona, called "*Christa Prema Seva Ashram*." The present Mother Superior was originally a Parsee. That Ashram cultivates contacts with Hindu religion. The nuns visited Ma in small groups and asked questions. One young nun asked Ma for Her blessing as she was about to start a new Ashram. At the repeated urgent invitations of these nuns, Mataji agreed to grace their Ashram. Fourteen of Her devotees accompanied Ma. The nuns sang and also recited Sanskrit slokas (verses). Pushpa and our people also sang and finally Ma Herself led the kirtan, singing "*He Bhagavan*" and all present repeated in chorus. The nuns performed a lovely *ārati* and at its completion did *pranama* to the cross, while our forty *pranamed* to Ma, who seemed in an excellent mood and stayed for nearly two hours. The Mother Superior was visibly delighted and expressed her joy to have been able to pray together with Hindus.

Later in June, that Christian Ashram held a seminary on Indian spirituality. One Sunday about forty nuns and two priests came to see Ma and asked many questions. Ma received them in Her own room and was very gracious, talking to them at length. She also called Ghabhi Banerji to sing *bhejans* to them. At the end of nearly two hours Mataji

distributed fruits and garlands to one and all of her visitors.

On June 4th, the day of the *snāna yātrā* at Puri, Sri Narendra Brahmachariji performed a very long and elaborate Jagannath Puja. On June 29nd, the day of the car-festival (*Ratha Yātrā*) at Puri, when the deities of Jagannath Puri Mandir are taken in a chariot round the city in procession, the devotees at Poona wished to celebrate the festival. So they profusely decorated a car, and the images of Krishna belonging to various bhaktas were placed in the car and Mataji was requested to join them. After much persuasion, Mataji finally reluctantly sat in the car and the devotees had great fun in dragging and pushing the vehicle round the temple themselves, once in the morning and again in the evening.

On June 23rd, Mataji drove to Bombay. This time she spent three days and nights in Her Pagoda at the residence of Sri B. K. Shah, then one day and night at Sri Vissanji's at Andheri and three days in the house of the eye-specialist Dr. D. H. Dave at Vile Parle where a set of rooms has permanently been set apart for the sole use of Mataji. At Bombay there was no function, only the usual daily satsang and Mataji had a fairly restful time. One day Mataji followed an invitation to Sannyāsa Ashram, Vile Parle, where a *Vedanta Sammelan* was being held. She also went to see two or three sick devotees in the hospital.

On June 30th Mataji left for Ahmedabad by the night train, alighting the next morning at the house of the Murishaw family for a few hours, and then visited the studio

of the young artist who is sculpturing another statue of Didima. The same evening Mataji entrained for Baroda and from there for Delhi, where She spent two hours at the railway station on July 2nd and then boarded the Mussoorie Express for Hardwar. A large crowd of devotees came to the station at Delhi to have Mataji's *dar'sana*. Mahamandaleswara Sri Prakashanandaji also was present and a few other dignitaries. After three nights in the train, Mataji arrived at Kankhal on the 3rd of July and straightaway sat down on the veranda of the Siva temple as if She had a good night's rest. She attended to every single person who had arrived as well as to the preliminary arrangements for Guru Purnima that was to be celebrated the next day. After an hour and a half She at last went to Her room. Soon after midday She came downstairs again to supervise further arrangements, which took about two hours. At 5 p.m. She again sat in the satsang on the veranda of the new guest-house. A number of people kept on arriving, although until the last moment it had not been sure where Mataji would be on Guru Purnima day. In the Kankhal Ashram an image of the ten *Avatāras* of Viṣṇu, painted on wood, is kept that had been presented to Mataji by the Mahārāja of Travancore. The image has to be worshipped once a year only, namely on Guru Purnima. This ceremony as well as the pūjā of Lord Padmanabh was performed on July 4th early morning by Brahmachari Bhaskarananda in the main building of the Ashram, while Siva Puja was celebrated in the Siva Mandir by Brahmachari Achyutananda. Later in the morning Brahmachari Nirvanananda did Didima's and Ma's *Pujā* in Didima's Samādhi Mandir. Mataji was here, there and

everywhere from the early hours of the morning and everyone had the chance to pay homage and offer gifts to Mataji on this auspicious day. A heavy storm during the previous night had cooled the atmosphere, besides flooding the courtyard. However, the rain stopped in time so that all functions could be enjoyed without further disturbance by all present. At about 2 p.m. everyone partook of the usual feast. Kirtan was kept up uninterruptedly from dawn to dusk. In the late afternoon Sri Swami Vishnuashramji came to see Ma and at Her request delivered a short but delightful talk on Rāma Nāma in the open courtyard. Then Mataji drove to Jaipuria House, Ramaghat, Hardwar, where Didima had taken *Mahāsamādhi* on August 9th, 1970. Late in the evening Vice-president Sri G. S. Pathak arrived from Delhi with his family. Mataji received them in hall of Didima's Mandir. They had dinner in the Ashram and came to see Mataji again twice daily the following two days. Their entire staff was entertained in the Ashram.

On July 6th, late at night, Mataji boarded the Howrah Express without disclosing Her destination.

The anniversary of Didima's *Mahāsamādhi* falls on July 25th this year and it is hoped that Mataji will grace the occasion by Her presence in Kankhal.

Durga Pūjā is to take place at Kankhal from October 21st to 25th and the *Sanyam Mahavrata* at the Ramathirta Ashram, Rajpur, Dehradun from November 23rd to 29th.