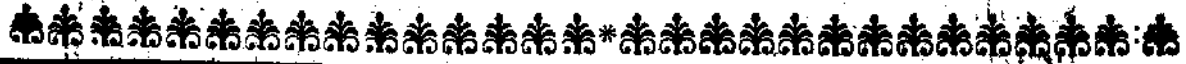


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*The One, who is the Eternal, the Atman,
He Himself is the pilgrim on the path of Immortality,
He is all in all, He alone is.*

Mātri Vāni

What God does—everything whatsoever—is for the best. Just as a physician cuts an abscess and removes the putrid matter, thereby freeing the patient from disease, even so by giving you sorrow God cleanses and purifies you and then takes you into His arms. God delivers man from all sins and blemishes, saying: "Offer all your impurity and depravity to me and in return receive the ambrosia of Immortality." He makes the devotee suffer pain and trouble in order to increase his eagerness, his yearning for the

Real. God accepts as a worship the agony, the flood of tears of the distressed.

* * *

Just as a plant in a flower-pot is firmly embedded in earth, no matter how much the pot may be moved from place to place—exactly in a similar way keep God steadily enthroned in your heart. Unless you reach a certain elevated state of consciousness, you cannot at all times sit still in one posture. Yet, although you may change your place, God ever remains enthroned in your heart.

* * *

What you have to do, do it well and with your might. By persisting you will gradually develop interest in it and come to love it.

* * *

On the journey through life it is natural that everyone should be subjected to heart-rending pain. Everything proceeds by the dispensation of Providence. Taking recourse to endurance and patience try to do your duty with calm and steadiness, with a God-centred attitude of mind (*sat-parivesh*). Unless he takes the path to the Supreme, man cannot find peace. Therefore the remembrance of God must be sustained under all conditions and circumstances.

* * *

In this world, is there any expedient for man save to be anchored in fortitude and forbearance ?

Consoling himself out of his own resources let him remain unperturbed. Everyone must try to fulfil his own duty in a spirit of dedication to God (*sat-anuṣṭān*). A human being should live in the contemplation of the Eternal.

* * *

For the *sādhaka* and the *sādhika* it is imperative to be constantly absorbed in the thought of the Supreme. No other thoughts of any kind are to be tolerated. The more time one devotes to meditation on the Highest the fewer worldly considerations will arise. For those who have dedicated themselves to this path unreservedly with heart and soul, even some negligence in the duty to their parents will not result in any obstacle or setback to their *sādhana*. If one's firm and undivided attention is given to the Supreme Path, God himself takes care of everything.

* * *

Without attaining to inner yoga one can certainly not become an instructor of yoga. When one who is in living touch with Him who is called the Supreme Lord of Yoga (*Yogeshwara*) teaches a yogic kriya, points out the path of yoga, no physical harm will come to the disciple by practising it. There is then hope that the path that will bring him in touch with the yogic current (*yogic dhāra*) may open out for him.

From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the April 1974 issue)

(Mataji's visit to Gujrat, Oct. 18-Dec. 9, 1937.)

The beginning of the idea of establishing educational institutions under the aegis of Mataji's *kheyāla* can be traced back to about this time. Before Mataji left Almora, Hari Ram Joshi and a few others broached the subject in Her presence. Mataji's words with regard to these projects were: "If you wish to undertake a work of this order, you are certainly free to go ahead with it. I have nothing to say in this matter. As you know I have no *kheyāla* for undertakings of this kind. Jyotish also had some thoughts regarding the establishment of an exemplary school where the teaching of the fundamentals of the tradition would be combined with instruction in all modern subjects. What I say is that any good work which is undertaken with a sense of commitment and service is worthwhile. I say this because all of you have a great desire to do this work of benevolence and merit. All good and selfless enterprises all over the world are services to the One God. All of you are as a rule engaged in work for your own selves, so it is desirable that you should become involved in altruistic work also. One must however, remember that unflagging endeavour is to be directed towards the realization of Truth. Any service to humanity or good work which may be conducive and helpful towards this end

should be undertaken. Similarly anything which is a distraction must be rejected. The enterprises which help toward God-realization are alone worthwhile. All work must be undertaken with a view to increasing and expanding the sphere of God-remembrance."

Hari Ram Joshi with the help of a few devoted friends of Bhaiji subsequently laid the foundation of an institution for boys situated in Almora in the Ashram which developed gradually into a big establishment from the simple beginnings of Bhaiji's *samādhi*.

Mataji stayed in Dehra Dun for less than two months. During that time the local people came into closer contact with Her and began to understand something of Her unique personality. They saw that Mataji was untouched by Bhaiji's demise although Her great concern and thoughtfulness on his behalf could not have been called into question at any time. The comparative strangers who were rendering service to Her at Dehra Dun gained in confidence in daily contacts with Her. It could be seen by them clearly that although Mataji took delight in all places and as heterogeneous a group of people as could be contrived by anyone, she retained her own way of doing things, which was extra-ordinary, or rather unique to Her only.

Mataji, at the invitation of Manmatha Nath Chatterji and others, attended the annual Durga Puja of the Bengali community of Dehra Dun, on Oct. 13, 1937.

After the Puja, She said to Her companions, "Now that we have come to the City, let us not return to our place but go on to Hardwar".

As usual in Mataji's presence, improbable things were accomplished with comparative ease. Mataji's retinue, quite considerable at all times, enthusiastically accepted the plan and travelled to Hardwar the same day with Her. At Hardwar She visited the Ashram of Mangal Giri Maharaj and also went to see Swami Ashimanandaji. She stayed in Hardwar for three days only. On Oct. 16, She reminded Swami Ashimananda that he had once offered to escort Her to the holy sites near the river Narmada in Gujrat. He expressed his readiness and eagerness to travel to Gujrat with Her any time. Mataji immediately said : "Let us start to-day, by the first available train."

Thus, proceeding via Delhi, Mataji, accompanied by a comparatively smaller party, came to Chandod, a small town on the river Narmada on Oct. 18, 1937. Swami Ashimananda was quite well known in this part of the country. He had made arrangement for their stay at the Vishnudas Temple.

The visitors found the local people very hospitable and courteous. The temple catered to people of all denominations and welcomed all travellers who were desirous of visiting the holy places near the shores of the Narmada.

Mataji's party included Sri Naresh Chakravarty, a professor from Calcutta and Shachi Babu, both very quiet and serious minded men. Didi, Swami Akhandananda and Bholanath were with Her at this time and also Mataji's father and mother.

On the way to Chandod, Mataji remarking on the grave demeanour of Shachi Babu, said, "You seem to have become

quite a *gambhīrnath-babaji*".¹ Mataji's use of the word "gambhīrnath" awakened memories in Shachi Babu's mind. He recalled with some surprise and a great deal of excitement that long ago he had read an account of Gambhīrnath Babaji, an ascetic of good renown. Gambhīrnathji had practised austerities on the shores of the Narmada and had experienced many remarkable events. After reading this book Shachi Baba had a longing to visit these places but in the press of a busy life had quite forgotten about this. He now suddenly realized that his wish was going to be fulfilled in a manner quite beyond his expectations.

The banks of the holy Narmada have long been favoured sites for *tṛpasyā* (the practice of intense *sādhanā*). The entire region is sprinkled with temples, shrines, ashramas and also less frequented huts and caves where one may spend years in absolute solitude. In one of those caves, Sri Balananda Brahmachariji of Deoghar had spent several years.

Mataji visited the Ashram of the Guru of Sri Balananda Brahmachariji and was made welcome by the present incumbent Sri Kailashanandaji. Mataji visited other places of interest, travelling by boat after sunset. This seemed to be the usual mode of procedure because the sun made the open boats very uncomfortable during the day. The local people could not speak Hindi and nobody in Mataji's party (excepting Ashimanandaji) knew any Gujrati. Conversations therefore were limited. This however did not prevent Mataji from exercising her ineffable attraction on men,

2. The word *gambhīr* means serious or profound, In other words Mataji said, "Why are you looking so serious?"

women and children. Slowly but steadily the number of visitors increased day by day. Mataji went to Ahmedabad and Baroda for a few days, then returned to Vyas and Karnali on the Narmada in the first week of November. She became known to people from all strata of society : business magnates in Ahmedabad, men and women belonging to such professions as law, medicine and teaching, along with the simple people living in the river-side villages. The towns-people could talk with Her a little in Hindi and She spent as much time with all those who came to seek Her advice as She always did wherever She might be.

One educated young lady asked Mataji, "Is there a need for Guru in one's life?"

Mataji replied, "Consider the fact that all one's life one is subject to the influences of people around one. To begin with the parents, then teachers, in fact there is no end to the number of people from whom we require to learn something or other. So a teacher is always necessary, a teacher who will direct one's effort in the right direction. You may look at it from another angle too. Supposing you want to undo a recalcitrant knot. You have to bring it under focus, and with patience and dexterity, unravel the chords. Similarly, in order to achieve freedom, one must bind oneself down, or in other words accept discipline."

Another young girl asked, "Mataji, I cannot meditate on any form of God. As a matter of fact I do not care for any symbol whatsoever. How can I get control over my mind?" Mataji said, "In that case, you may just sit still and concentrate on the natural process of breathing. If you

train yourself to do that, that itself will act as a symbol for you."

The questioner professed herself very satisfied with this answer.

One gentleman asked Mataji one day, "Is transmigration of souls a fact or not.?"

Mataji: "Yes, but only for those who have such a *samskāra*, those who are not determined by their belief in this matter, are not reincarnated in other bodies."

The gentleman then said, "In this case it would perhaps be better to be born as a Christian or Muslim, who do not believe in reincarnation and for them all is over in just one life time!"

Mataji smiled and said, "I did not mean the predilections engendered by one's religion. *Samskāra* may cut across religious faith. It all depends upon the status achieved by the individual soul. What is thought to be true is that all souls are not necessarily reincarnated."

One day Mataji out of Her own *kheyāla* explained at some length the Vrindavan-lila of Sri Krishna. She said, "The *mādhurya-bhāva* is self-authenticating. Unless the mind has attained a level of being in rapport with the Divine, one cannot hope to understand the lila of Krishna. In the state of union or *samādhi*, the senses are transcended and then only one may experience the bliss which is sublime. Some people, unable to grasp the nature of this spiritual experience, try to impose upon it their own understanding of such matters and thus reduce it to their own level. This is why we hear so often people voicing their reservations regarding

the lila of Krishna. The fact of the matter is that unless one transcends totally the mundane sphere one cannot step on to the divine ground of Vrindavan."

Naresh Babu, the professor from Calcutta, found himself very much at home with this type of discourse. One day he said with some satisfaction, "It is my conviction that the *achintyābhedābhedavāda* of Shri Chaitanya has touched the ultimate heights of human yearning for God. Whatever one may say, the Advaita Vedanta of Sankara leaves one with a feeling of dissatisfaction because the heart plays a very small role in it."

Mataji did not agree with this opinion and said rather forcefully: "Only those who do not have a proper understanding of these matters hold such opinions."

Naresh Babu was very pleased to think that he had elicited from Mataji Her definitive sympathy with the Advaita position of Vedanta but then he had to reconcile this with Mataji's positive and constructive renderings of all theistic positions also. He said a little ruefully, "I see that I am only beginning to get a glimmering of the scope and range of Mataji's understanding."

Ma said with a smile, "Do you know what *māyā* is? "*mai āyā*" (मैं आया*), that is, "I am". *Māyā* is coterminous with the experience "I am." If there is no "I" there is no *Māyā*."

Mataji, as always and with unflagging interest and deep understanding, listened to all those who related to Her their innermost thoughts about their spiritual life, their attain-

* In Hindi मैं आया sounds a little like *māyā* and means 'I have come'.

ments and disappointments. Mataji in general does not discourage anyone from his chosen path. If a person has embarked on a wrong and ruinous course then She gently guides him away from it. To one such person She said, "It is most difficult to circumscribe one's own wilfulness. It is very easy to mistake one's own will for Divine intervention or inspiration. One must always examine carefully all that comes as motivation. Divine inspiration is self-evident and will transform one's life. The most exalted of personal motivation must not be identified with Divine will. One must however always keep oneself open or in readiness for receiving Divine inspiration."

During this visit to Gujrat the foundations for future contacts were laid. Mataji moved amongst the people as if She had known them for a long time. She was at home in all these new places and the local people came to look upon Her as the personification of their most cherished object of worship. Their total acceptance of Her was matched by Mataji's attitude of complete familiarity with Her surroundings.

Mataji, accompanied by Her party, left Gujrat at the beginning of December and, travelling across the north of India, She came to Tarapeeth on December 9, 1937.

(To be continued)

Thoughts on Mataji

II

Jyotipriya (Lynn Dalton)

(Continued from the October issue)

Excerpts from my diary : November 8th, 1972.

At last, this very morning, I have met my own Mother. My thoughts are jumbled and my ego working overtime. I wish I could appreciate Her more. But I came these 12,000 miles for Her, for my salvation; now that I have seen Her I can die in peace; my heart is satisfied because She is the living God. I knew I had to come and see Her if only for one instant and then my life would be in Her hands; I felt I would die if I could not see Her.....truly that must be Her very own Grace.

We hope to see Her again today for evening darshan. We set out for the Kankhal ashram at 4.00 P. M. I had my first ride in a bicycle rickshaw ! What a ride ! I was hanging on for all I was worth ! It will take me a while to look graceful riding in one of those.

At the ashram, there was some lovely kirtan led by Pushpa, and a holy man spoke for some time. Mother appeared on the balcony but didn't come down. Many of us were resigned to leaving when we saw Her reappear on the balcony; we could see that She was giving privates up there. After a while our Swami Nirmalananda spoke to a Hindu Swami who arranged for us to go upstairs. Because

we are foreigners it is almost always harder to be in Mother's physical presence, often long delays.

Getting upstairs to see Her was surely worth the wait. The temple bells were ringing as we approached Her. She seemed to be swaying slightly to their music; no, She seemed one with their timeless sound. It is a moment I can never forget, the most incredibly magical, intense moment of my life. The emanation from Her is almost blinding; it is so utterly pure. I am looking at a Goddess.

For the first time I consciously experience Her peace and bliss; this is beyond words. No photograph, no films, no amount of talk, has prepared me for the impact of Her presence. She is the embodiment of graciousness. She smiled with such great sweetness as each of us went up to Her and pranāmed, looking down at each of us with such compassion, raising her folded hands in pranāma each time. She seemed to be saying, "Hello my children, at last you are here, I knew you would come."

When I went up to Her and did pranāma, I offered an orange; Mother made a motion to one of the girls nearby, who gave me a banana. I hastily stuck this into my bag. Later I saw that I had two other bananas in there, and not knowing which one was the prasād, I had to eat all three !

She arose from Her seat after we all had pranāmed. None of us could move. She came into the center of our group and seemed to go directly to Satya and make a motion with Her arm, as though to say, "Well, here I am, do as you will." Perhaps She was motioning for us to move aside, because we were standing in front of the door to Her

room without realizing it. But Satya fell to his knees, and leaning against him for support, I did too, and then did the rest of the group, forming a circle around Her. There was an intense silence all around. When we rose She paused at Her doorway and graciously gave us a final greeting.

Again and again, no words can describe Her perfection. I "knew" before I came that She is God incarnate...that alone is quite an admission; it took many years before I learned that such a being could and does exist and walk this wretched earth. But She is so much more than one could ever expect or hope for. To see a being like that is to be blessed beyond belief.

She emanates such youth, even though She never rests and we hear She has been ill. Her every motion is so graceful and natural, so completely at ease. Her very presence fulfills every desire and brings tears of joy. Ma is real ! I had to find this out.

She is utterly still and blissful; She is Bliss Itself. Jai Ma !

Before we went to the railway station to meet Her this morning I had a dream. I dreamt She was in samādhi; we were trying to carry Her to a comfortable spot. The whole group of westerners were there, but I didn't see their faces. Some Indians were standing around, apparently they weren't devotees of Mataji. We finally got Her onto a bed. Her eyes were closed but She was looking at me from behind the lids. They were the eyes of Narayana, they held me with their look of love and terrified me at the same time. I knelt beside the bed and just felt so happy to at last be in Her presence.

I was tempted to touch Her feet but She seemed to withdraw Herself from anything physical. Touching Her seems so gross, as if it would defile Her. Is She ill because we who touch Her are so full of filth? Yet you cannot help but adore and worship Her. She has a human form and this can deceive you; but She is so much more than human. In the dream Her eyes were saying, "I claim you. You belong to me." There was not a trace of pity or sentimentality in those eyes; only the purest love. That is what scared me.

There is much I like and love about India itself aside from Mother. The pace is slower than in the West; many things are done as they have been for centuries. Some people may think that is not good, but it gives this land a charm and timelessness that is unequalled anywhere. The people are so often poor, yet they have wonderful smiles, especially the children. Perhaps because the doctrine of reincarnation is so much a part of their lives, they bear their lot philosophically...perhaps too fatalistically at times. There is little emphasis put upon the material and they seem to accept all in such a childlike manner. One feels sorry for them, and yet envious at the same time, at the simplicity of their lives. In the West, so much importance is based upon the material that we are being gobbled up in it and that consciousness is smothering. Even out in the country it cannot be escaped.

Hardwar seems like a dream. Cars, horns honking, temple bells, shouts, laughter, chanting, the Ganges rolling by, the sweet sunshine on my balcony, holy men walking below my window—can this really be happening to me?

How can I really be here; I am afraid to pinch myself; yet.....was I ever not here? The whole panorama takes place within a breathless silence; all is birthed from the great body of Ma.

November 9th. "We saw Ma again at the ashram this morning at about 10:30. I was feeling so low; my chest hurts and cough wracks my whole body. Head completely clogged. But seeing Her was marvellous! I got right up close to Her and just soaked it in. Such waves emanate from Her!

We are all having our ego problems. I think these conflicts become more pronounced when we are near Her, because She is forcing us to face ourselves. How little we really love God! It is so easy to talk and become a spiritual egotist. But Mother is Kali, killer of falsehood. She is not easy to take. I laughed hilariously today when I overheard Swami Nirmalananda talking to some of our group, saying,....."if we could see Her true form, it would kill us.....it would be like sunlight on germs."

November 11th. Somehow I have managed to miss two nights now, when Mataji gave privates to members of our group. I left the ashram early both times, thinking that there would be no chance of getting in to see Her. Being with Ma is a waiting game. I am learning that if one is persistent, there is always a chance of seeing Her. We all crave Her personal attention; we have questions, or we want objects and gifts to be blessed. Mataji is teaching me, revealing much. She is Truth; in Her presence one cannot lie; it makes me squirm. I may have been uncon-

sciously afraid to be with Her alone. But now I am to see Her for sure tomorrow.

November 12th. I finally got some private time with Mataji today; it was extremely brief and rushed, and not really private. There are always so many people crowding around Her. But I have no need to engage Mataji in long personal discussions. I just came to verify my mantra, and to get a few things blessed by Her hand. This was done in short order; Mataji gave a very special, loving blessing to some beads. Her manner was almost playful. As I came up to Her, She seemed so natural that I almost forgot to do pranāma; as though sensing this, She said in English, "Sit down".....like, "Don't bother with all these formalities, we both know why you are here and what you are going to say." I felt like glass under Her gaze, utterly transparent; yet, it was not an uncomfortable feeling. I felt completely accepted. But I also felt a little silly; do I really have to bother Mataji with this nonsense? I had pictures of a couple of people for Her to look at and bless, and a loving message from Haripriya involving a problem she was having with her spiritual endeavours. Haripriya later told me that as soon as she received Ma's reply which I sent that evening, the problem vanished. When I told Ma, "Haripriya says she loves Mother", Mataji folded Her hands so sweetly. I wished I could have sincerely told Her, "I love you".....but She strips one of all facade and I could not tell Her without being phoney or dramatic. I only want things from Her.....can I truly give Her my unconditional love?

November 15th. Samyam Saptah has begun. This

is my first experience of such a function, and I am pretty much in a fog. My health is still very poor and this is a discouragement from attending all day. But once you leave, it is hard to know if your āsana will still be there when you return. Although we are not supposed to touch anyone, the Hindu ladies crowd in and press against us; sometimes I have to really use my elbows to push them away. At this point it is hard for me to appreciate the Samyam, as I understand so little of what is going on. But I have formed a pattern of attending the 8 to 9 A. M. and 3 to 4 P. M. meditations, because I know for certain that Mataji will be there. Silent meditation in Her holy presence is something I would not want to miss.

November 18th. I have really just begun to enjoy and appreciate Samyam. As I walked in the grounds today before the afternoon meditation, with a lovely kirtan lilting in the air (over the loudspeakers), I suddenly felt as though I were walking a little above the ground, floating. All at once I seemed to see just where I was and realized the great fortune of being here. I feel as though transported to some glowing astral heaven. I felt a kinship with all the souls that are attending. Most of all, it seemed today like some magical world which is only found in fondest dreams. Mother is magical, fulfilling all desires beyond our wildest hopes. But it can only really be that way when we have surrendered to Her.....only then can we really know that She alone is the doer; only when attuned to Her does anything really happen. The rest is our mess.

All through the Samyam week we have been told that no one is to follow Mother back to Her private apartments.

But each day I have noticed that more and more people do follow Her back there. Today I told myself I had a good excuse, because Kripa and Bhakti, two girls on the trip with us, are leaving immediately after Samyam, and have made an appointment to say good-bye to Mother and receive Her blessing.

I followed them back there to watch from a respectable distance, and to snap some pictures if possible, which I did. Many others were standing around, some waiting for privates, some just watching. As the girls were talking to Mataji, Chitra suddenly emerged from the building and thrust a pair of Mother's slippers (which I had asked for earlier) into my arms. My chest burned when I held them and tears of joy sprung to my eyes. They seemed the most precious of jewels to me. Even the little bit of cow-dung stuck to the sole of one slipper is holy to me.

Today may have been the greatest of days, perhaps as great as the very day I first met Mataji in the flesh. After Kripa and Bhakti left, I stayed around to look at Her while others came and went for their privates. When everyone had gone, with just a few of us standing around, one of the girls came with a container full of nuts. Mataji dipped into this and started handing out large handfuls of prasāda. I went up and had Her put mine into a blanket I had with me, later regretting that I didn't use my bare hands so as to feel Her skin against mine. But I felt impure and hadn't wanted Her to touch me.

Then everyone had their prasāda and no one else came up for an interview; Mataji sat there for a moment, as

though waiting for someone else to come up to Her. I stood leaning against a large pillar just in front of Her. I knew I should take the opportunity to bow at Her feet and show my love and gratitude, and receive Her infinite blessing. Mother suddenly looked somehow small and frail, almost a little vulnerable, alone somehow; as if, now that everyone had received what they wanted from Her, no one cared. Isn't it true that we treat God that way? He is always there when we want His love, but are we always there when He wants ours?

Something made me freeze and I could not move from the pillar, but could only stand and stare at Mataji. I wanted to bow to Her, but I guess I was afraid; my ego either could not bend, or I was afraid of rejection. Then Mother gave me **THE LOOK**. It was the look I came to India for. It was the look that told me that Mother knew me personally, my entire past and future, everything about me. It was such a powerful look that I blinked several times, as though a flash bulb had gone off in my face. Mataji seemed to wait another moment, as though to say, "Do you want to say anything to me?" but I still held back. Then She said something to the girls and got up and went into Her apartments.

I left then, feeling as light as air. Mother had looked at me in a way I had never dreamed possible, yet had always yearned for. I know beyond doubt now that She is the Sadguru. I went and sat by the banks of the holy Ganga, herself a celestial being, the river truly is Mother .. sitting near the Siva temple, listening to the bells and kirtans, with the mantra humming effortlessly all the while.

I was too intoxicated to move. I do not know how long I sat there, but when I became aware it was almost dark. I got up and went back to the Tourist Bungalow.

At this point, I wonder how much of the intoxication is Her, and how much is puffed-up pride. I sense that leaving Her physical presence will be a hard withdrawal; I anticipate this.

(To be continued)

“One can regard this eightfold universe as a manifestation of God; and whatever worship is performed to it is excellent as worship of God. The repetition aloud of His name is better than praise. Better still is faint murmur. But the best is repetition with the mind. Better than such broken meditation is its steady and continuous flow like the flow of oil or a perennial stream.”

—Shri Raman Maharshi

Holy Reminiscences

Jainath Kaul, M. Sc.

(Continued from the last issue)

2. My Second Darshan of Ma

After my first darshan of Ma in November 1955, I never thought of Her again, as in the light of my own clear experience described in the first article, Ma was a celestial being to whom a seeker like me with so many imperfections did not deserve any access. The Divine Mother, the '*patita pāvani*' (purifier of the fallen) had, however, decided otherwise. Seeing the miserable plight of Her child who was failing repeatedly in his struggles against his weaknesses, the *Kripamayī's karuna* (compassion) had been aroused, bringing me into the region of Her *kheyāla* and so I could not remain outside the circle of Her devotees, all of whom, as we understand, are chosen by Her.

Ma's Significant Visit to Delhi

How this happened throws also an interesting light on Her super-dynamic '*līlā*' (divine play). Mother is always on the move and everyone of Her incessant movements is full of significance. One of these brought Her one day to Delhi, some twenty-eight months after I had had Her first darshan.

Now, apparently unconnected with Her visit, a small worldly *līlā* was going on in our family circle. My father's

youngest brother and his wife had come to Delhi with their youngest son who had just passed the I.A.S. examination. A talk had been initiated for his engagement with a girl whose father I learnt later was an old and well-known devotee of Mataji and we were all booked for dinner at his place on Saturday, the 8th of March, 1958, the day on which Ma came to Delhi. So we went to his house that night and while we were chatting there, he announced casually that Ma Anandamayi had come to town that day and that he and his wife would like to take us all for Her darshan to Sri Anandamayi Ashram in Kalkaji the next morning.

I go for Ma's Second Darshan

Naturally, when I heard the name of Mataji, I was completely taken aback. Apart from the fact that the girl's father suddenly went up in my estimation as some sort of an angel because he seemed to be so familiar with Mataji, and his family a blessed family which enjoyed the protection of a sage of that order, the prospect of a second divine darshan brought back a vivid recollection of my past experience. While considering myself as not deserving of the rare privilege, I still welcomed the opportunity as God-sent and began looking forward to the moments I would be spending in Her blessed Presence.

When we arrived at the Ashram the next morning, Ma was giving darshan in the central hall. As the girl's father had requested permission to do Ma's puja in Her own room, we were escorted there and before long found Ma in our midst. As soon as She entered the room, my subconscious mind recalled the soul-stirring experience of my first darshan at Kali Bari in Nov., 1955 and I was over-

come with such an emotional upheaval within me that I could neither look straight into Ma's face nor register any details of what was happening in the room during Her presence there. I lost my composure completely and all I was able to roughly recollect later was that the girl's mother had done the puja and Ma had said "*Hari katha hi katha aur sab vritha vyatha*" (Real talk is only about God; all else is useless and painful.)

The Divine Compassion

As far as I remember, Ma did not say or do anything else at that time and left the room after a few minutes when the puja was over. Afterwards, when we had all come out of Ma's room, I found to my dumb-founded amazement, my uncle addressing me with the words, "Ma was looking at you all the time; it did not seem to make any difference whether the rest of us were in the room or not."

This remark and comment shook me to my roots. I could not have imagined even in a dream that a Divine Being could possibly take interest in such a small person as myself. For the first time that day I realized that Ma was not only the topmost living sage in India and a super-human being but also an embodiment of *karuṇā* (compassion). The thought that She had taken so much notice of me was so overwhelming in its effect that I had to retire at once to a secluded corner outside the Ashram compound and allow the torrent of tears of gratitude and joy at my good fortune to flow unhampered till I felt relieved of the unbearable emotional tension.

A Parallel from the Life of Christ

For long I could not understand why Mother had shown this interest in my case. Then, years later, I came across the following passage in the Bible, Matthew 9 (10-13).

“10. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

“11. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners ?

“12. But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, *They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

“13. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice : for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

So this is what the Incarnations do. And I got a fully satisfactory answer to my earnest query, “Why had Ma taken notice of me ?” Because I needed help. I was sick and helpless and very unhappy with my repeated failures in the fight against my imperfections and Her mission was to heal the sick.

To conclude : my first darshan of Ma had ended in my firm conviction that She was a celestial dweller of the high Heavens with whom a crawling insect like myself could have no relationship. But after my second darshan that day, which I felt completely sure She had Herself arranged by coming to Delhi for just one day, and that

particular day—She left on the night of March 9th*—an invisible but unbreakable link was firmly established between this child and his divine Mother. From then onwards, I who had not thought of Ma for over two years after the first darshan, began thinking of Her frequently with love and a feeling of personal relationship, collecting Her pictures, reading avidly about Her and attending with joy and enthusiasm almost every function whenever and wherever it was held in Her presence.

* See Ananda Vārtā, Vol VI, No. 1, p. 72.

Some Utterances of Swami Ramdas

(Collected by M. M. V.)

Question : What is the quickest way to attain the goal ?

Swami Ramdas : There are two ways. One is to expand your ego to infinity, and the other is to reduce it to nothing; the former by knowledge, and the other by devotion. The *Jñāni* says, "I am God—the Universal Truth." The devotee says, "I am nothing, O God, you are everything." In both cases the ego-sense disappears. The safer and surer way is to take refuge in God and be ever under His grace and protection.

Question : Is God personal or impersonal ?

Swami Ramdas : God is at once personal and impersonal. You can behold Him as everything and in everything in the universe. At the same time you maintain a close relationship with Him in His personal aspect. He becomes your constant companion.

Question : What is the most important thing on the God-ward path ?

Swami Ramdas : Ramdas shall tell you about the path that leads the soul to God. The first thing necessary is grace. It is grace that makes us long for God. Longing for God develops into a constant remembrance of Him and the constant remembrance of Him gives us the vision of Him, the experience of Him. This experience brings us the

whole-hearted love for Him—our Beloved—everywhere, inside and out.

This is the final stage wherein the soul reaches the goal and finds complete peace, bliss and freedom.

Grace—Grace is pouring on all of us alike. Some people open the windows of their hearts to receive grace, while some others keep them closed and they don't get it.

Satsang and Satnāma—Company of saints and God's name constitute sādhana.

Question : Can daily work be integrated with spiritual life ?

Swami Ramdas : Provided the work is done selflessly and in a spirit of dedication to God.

Go to God as a Child

Our dependence on God must be absolute. It is not that we must purify ourselves first and then go to Him. He must purify us. We must go to Him like a child. A child goes in a dirty condition to the mother. The mother does not reject it, or ask it to come clean. She takes the child, washes and dresses it with clean clothes. God is more loving than an earthly mother.

The Joy of Japa

Japa must be done with intense love and devotion for the object of your worship, that is, God. The japa becomes spontaneous and gives you bubbling joy in your heart as you go on doing it.

You should not do it as a discipline imposed upon you by somebody else...When you have love for God, japa

must give you great joy. Therefore mystics say that repetition of God's name gives them ecstasy, a sweetness and joy which is indescribable. This shows that it is not mere mechanical repetition that helps us, but a spontaneous outflow of our love towards God along with the repetition of His name.

Surrender

Many people do not know what surrender actually means. Verbal surrender will not do. Surrender must be of every part of your being—a total, integral, complete surrender. Your heart, mind, senses, body—all should be offered up to the Divine. Then you are guided by Him from within and you act as He wills. You are happy whatever the circumstances in which you are placed, ... when you surrender yourself to God, your ego will die and the desires will disappear. When the tree is cut down, the birds on the tree fly away.

Guru

The meaning of the word "Guru" is "dispeller of darkness" or "giver of light." Guru is the embodiment of God on earth to liberate souls from darkness and bring them light. Guru is an awakener and a saviour.

Sri Krishna as Peacemaker

Professor Tripurari Chakravarti

The central theme of the great Indian epic *Mahābhārata*, is the tragedy of a total and terrible war of annihilation waged in ancient times for the throne of Hastinapura, the grand old capital of India. This war was between the unrighteous Kauravas on the one hand, and the righteous Pandavas, aided by Śri Kṛṣṇa, on the other. The *Mahābhārata*, as the poem itself tells us, arose out of the following question, which Janamejaya addressed to the venerable sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipayana Vyasa on the occasion of the great snake sacrifice at Takshasila :

“How did the quarrel arise among those men of unblemished deeds ? How did that great war occur which was the cause of the destruction of so many beings ?”

It seems at first sight exceedingly strange that the answer to so simple and straightforward a question should run into one hundred thousand *slokas*, or verses—a bulk which is eight times as great as that of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* put together or that of the entire *Bible*.

This is the *prima facie* view of the *Mahābhārata*, the story of the great epic viewed on the mundane or material plane. But if we look deeper into the work, we realize that it would be a mistake to place all the emphasis on the material aspect. Throughout the great epic, there is an

audible undertone which tells of very different matters. Among other things, it constantly speaks of the vast eternal background against which wars are lost or won, and kingdoms perish or survive. As we enter deep into the subject, we begin to perceive the underlying significance of the entire poem. We feel that there is a high ethical purpose underlying the whole theme, and we become aware of a new and important perspective on the ethical or moral plane.

This realization is the result of the fact that the war on the mundane plane has been deepened into a cosmic war between the *devas* and the *asuras*. The scene is one of constant opposition between good and evil, between justice and injustice, between *dharma* and *adharmā*. The conflict, essentially, is that which is referred to in the sixteenth chapter of the *Bhāgavad-Gītā*, and which is the opposition between the *daivi sampat* (divine estate) and *asuri sampat* (demoniac estate). Viewed from this standpoint, the story of the Bharata war comes to have universal significance and universal validity. The perpetually recurrent situations of life, with which the *Mahābhārata* deals, are, in fact, as real and as true today as they were over five thousand years ago. Like a true epic, the *Mahābhārata* takes us into a region in which nothing happens which is not deeply significant. The entire epic rotates round the fixed axis of *dharma*, justice and rectitude in human conduct. On this plane, the epic seems to impress upon the reader or the listener the paramountcy of enduring moral values. A careful study of the book makes us feel that the *Mahābhārata* war has, in reality, never ended. It seems to us as if it is going on even now at the present moment, and that it will go on thus for

ages. The *Mahābhārata* war thus becomes the type or the archetype of all wars or conflicts, past, present and future.

The pivotal figure in the epic is Śri Kṛṣṇa (*mūlān* *Kṛṣṇah*). That is the great pronouncement of the writer of the *Mahābhārata*. Sri Kṛṣṇa is *persona sine qua non*, without whom nothing can happen in the great drama. In the drama itself, he moves as a human politician *par excellence*, keeping his superhuman personality somewhat in the background. The great Bharata war, in which he plays the most important or decisive role, ends in almost total annihilation of the combatants on both sides. Of the eighteen *akshauhinis* of armies which met and fought on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, there survived, we are told, only ten souls—the five Pandavas with Sri Kṛṣṇa and Satyaki on one side, and on the other, only three warriors. Kṛpācāryā, Asvatthama, and Kṛtavarma—a terrible lesson which humanity must learn afresh at the end of every great war.

At the conclusion of the war, Sanjaya reported to Dhrtarastra :

‘Only women survive, the earth is desolate, forsaken, forlorn.’ The picture thus painted is undoubtedly a dismal picture—one of utter desolation.

Śri Kṛṣṇa, however, had no regrets for what had happened. Throughout his life, as depicted in the pages of the *Mahābhārata*, he was engaged in the fulfilment of a high and exalted mission. This was the establishment of a *dharma rājya*, a kingdom of justice and righteousness on the basis of the political unification of India. Early in life, he undertook the important task of removing or liquidating all impediments that stood in his way in the political field.

Kaṁsa of Mathura, Jarasandha of Magadha, and Sishupala, the king of the Chedi country, were eliminated one by one. He conquered the Gandharas in the north-west, the Kalingas and the Kingdom of Pragjyotisa (Assam) in the east, the Vidarbha and the Pandya kingdoms in the south. Thus the reconstitution of India, politically unified, seemed to be within the bounds of possibility. After the killing of Jarasandha, Kṛṣṇa liberated more than one hundred princes of eastern India from the prison of the Magadha King. Before the assembled princes he delivered an important speech in which he pointedly referred to the necessity of establishing *Dharma Rājya* in India, and asked for their united and unstinted support.

Yudhistira was Kṛṣṇa's instrument in the establishment and consolidation of this proposed empire, and he asked for the support of the Indian princes in the fulfilment of this *Yajña* or holy mission. The successful performance of the *Rājasuya Yajña* at Indraprastha was an attempt to erect a strong central royal power in the country. But the *Yajña* had its critics and enemies. Duryodhana, the haughty and arrogant Kuru prince, advised by Karna and Sakuni, contemplated measures of revenge. The Pandavas were invited to a game of dice at Hastinapur and, losing, were deprived of their kingdom and all their earthly belongings. They had to go to the forest, exiled for thirteen years. Kṛṣṇa, who was not present at the game of dice, thus saw his life's work being undone by the forces of evil. He visited the Pandavas on at least three occasions during the thirteen years, and gave them a solemn assurance of his support in the future contest with the Kauravas.

After thirteen years, a conference met at *Upaplavya* in the Matsya kingdom, with which the Pandavas were now united by a marriage alliance. Various viewpoints regarding the future course of action were naturally put forward in this assembly. Baladeva, Sri Kṛṣṇa's elder brother, was for the outlawing of war. He was in favour of peace at any price. He said : 'Let Yudhistir approach Duryodhana, fall prostrate before him and ask for terms.' This advice for an abject surrender did not commend itself to Śri Kṛṣṇa, who said : 'Yudhistir, who is the embodiment of Dharma, does not want to renounce everything by unconditional surrender, as recommended by Baladeva.'

An envoy was sent from Upaplavya to the Kuru Court at Hastinapur. The old king, Dhritarashtra sent back the envoy, saying that Sanjaya on behalf of the Kauravas would go to Upaplavya immediately and state their terms. Sanjaya went, but in the meeting at Upaplavya he eloquently urged the necessity of putting a ban on war. He advised the Pandavas to give up everything and retire to the kingdom of the Andhakas and the Brishris, in western India. Strangely enough, Sanjaya recommended that the Pandavas should live on alms, and not go to war under any circumstances.

This advice for pacifism was not, however, endorsed by the Upaplavya assembly. But Yudhistir, as the leader of the Pandavas, put forward alternative modest and reasonable proposals for avoiding war as an instrument of policy. He asked for five villages, as an irreducible minimum, for the five brothers instead of their legitimate share of half of the entire Kingdom.

Kṛṣṇa had, in the meantime, joined the Pandava party after handing over his soldiers and war munitions to Duryodhana. He made it a condition precedent to his participation in the impending conflict that he would not wield any weapon in the war, but would act only as the charioteer of Arjuna. His emphasis was on: "I shall be alone with you by renouncing all arms." The support that was thus assured was moral support and not a military assistance. It was to be the support of a wise, gifted, and enlightened person.

The whole of India was now divided into two armed camps. Duryodhana of course, had the predominance in armed might. He had eleven *akshauhinis* of soldiers, and the majority of the Indian princes gathered under his banner. The Pandavas had only seven *akshauhinis*, but they had the advice and guidance of Sri Kṛṣṇa, which was of inestimable value. A great and significant drama was going to be unfolded on the battle-field of Kurukshetra, different nationalities from every corner of India congregating for a mighty clash of arms. The conflict seemed to be between Śrī Kṛṣṇa, standing for justice and *dharma*, on one side, and a great array of warriors representing evil on the other. The issue was, as it has been put pregnantly by the author of the *Mahābhārata* :

"Where there is Kṛṣṇa, there is *dharma*; where there is *dharma*, there is victory."

The *Mahābhārata* is called the great history of victory. This victory is not merely a victory on the mundane plane; it is victory on the ethical and moral plane also.

A little before the commencement of the Kurukshetra war, Kṛṣṇa proposed that he should go personally to the Kuru court on an errand of peace.

“I shall try to accomplish this difficult task by going to the Kuru court and I shall strive for peace without sacrificing your interests.”

But he had his misgivings. He said that war seemed to be inevitable and all signs pointed in that direction :

“I am apprehending war in every respect. But still I must face the Kuru assembly at Hastinapur in order to put our case before the entire world.”

A most surprising and extraordinary development in the situation occurred when, without previous notice, Bhima in the Upaplavya conference suddenly proposed an abject and unconditional surrender to Duryodhana. Bhima was now in favour of peace at any price. He said :

‘We shall all fall prostrate before Duryodhana and try to re-establish brotherly relations among us all. Let Duryodhana be pacified. I know this is the opinion of Arjuna also, because he is a very kind-hearted person.’

Bhima went a step further and tried to fortify his arguments by referring to the view of Yudhistira.

‘I am not alone in saying this,’ he said. ‘This has the approval of the king Yudhistira.’

This somersault of Bhima was unprecedented and inexplicable. It is difficult to say how far he was right in quoting the opinions of the king and Arjuna; for the speeches that were made subsequently by Yudhistira and Arjuna do not seem to bear out Bhima’s contention. Both Yudhistira

and Arjuna depended entirely on Kṛṣṇa's wisdom in this crisis. A thorough and careful study of all the speeches that were made by Kṛṣṇa in the Upaplavya conference unmistakably shows that the peace that he truly sought was not a peace in negation or in some mechanical adjustment of life, liberty, and property. There was no evidence of any change of heart on the part of Duryodhana who proclaimed again and again that he would not part with even an inch of territory without war.

Therefore Kṛṣṇa was in favour of the total mobilization of men and munitions for the impending conflict. He sternly rebuked Bhima for his nervousness verging on cowardice, and exhorted him to strengthen his weak hands and feeble knees. He said that his malady caused Bhima to advocate a weak-kneed policy.

The atmosphere of gloom and depression over Upaplavya was, however, strikingly enlivened by the speeches of Sahadeva and Draupadi. Sahadeva raised a voice for open and uncompromising war, and Draupadi went a step further, saying that there could be no question of peace, compromise, and compassion under the existing circumstances. She demanded *danda*, or even *Mahādanda* punishment, or even the extreme penalty for the crimes of the Kauravas.

Draupadi was constantly afflicted by the recollection of the personal wrongs and insults she had suffered when Dushshasana in the open Kuru Court got hold of her dishevelled hair and tried to denude her.

Draupadi demanded that Dushshasana's hands be cut off and flung in the dust.

She openly declared that Bhima and Arjuna were fainthearted and lacking in courage. If they persisted in advocating a policy of dishonourable peace, then her old father Drupada and her five sons under the leadership of Abhimanyu would wage relentless war against the Kauravas. Her emotional excitement was intense and the tears rolling down her cheeks made her garments wet.

Draupadi's obvious mental agony and sorrow had a decisive effect on the mind of Sri Kṛṣṇa who at once replied, trying to console Draupadi, "Draupadi, eventually you will see the women of the Kuru family shedding tears like you."

"I give you this pledge, this solemn undertaking, that there will be total extinction of the fortunes and the lives of the Kauravas. The mountain Himalaya may be dislodged, the earth may be torn asunder, even the heavens with the stars may fall, but my promise shall not remain unfulfilled. I say all this in solemn earnestness. Let your fears be allayed. You will see the enemy prostrate and the Pandavas installed in power and splendour."

Next morning, in the month of Kartick at the end of the autumnal season, Sri Kṛṣṇa started from Upaplavya towards Hastinapur on his fateful mission. Reaching Hastinapur, he visited the house of Vidura where Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, was staying. It was necessary for Kṛṣṇa to receive Kunti's instructions regarding his mission. Kunti, just like a Kshatriya mother and a Queen, gave her exhortation against the policy of compromise. She could under no circumstances forget the insults and ignominy heaped upon her sons and even more upon her daughter-in-law, Draupadi. Kṛṣṇa in his turn gave his assurance to

Kunti that he would always bear her words in mind in his negotiations at the Kuru Court.

At the house of Vidura, there was an important discussion between Vidura and Kṛṣṇa regarding the possibilities of peace. Vidura doubted the wisdom of Kṛṣṇa in coming to Hastinapur with peace proposals, because Vidura had no faith in the good intentions or sincerity of Duryodhana. Kṛṣṇa replied at once by saying that it was his sacred duty to explore all possible avenues of peace and try to save the Kauravas and the Pandavas from inevitable annihilation in war.

He enunciated an important code of conduct, and laid down an important dictum to be followed by states and individuals in moments of crisis. When neighbours quarrel and no understanding emerges out of the dispute, it is the duty of friends to intercede, even without any request from either side, and try to settle the dispute. Kṛṣṇa wanted to keep his record clean. He wanted to justify his action before the bar of public opinion. He greatly desired that no person in India should hold him responsible for the calamity that was going to take place. He, therefore, assured Vidura that he came to Hastinapur actuated by a desire to promote the real well-being of both sides. He would do his best, try his utmost for peace, so that nobody could accuse him of dereliction of duty.

The next morning, Kṛṣṇa appeared before the full Kuru assembly and, in the presence of the sages, saints, warriors, statesmen, princes and other members, he delivered his historic speech on the paramount need for peace and conciliation. The first sentence of the utterance was that

he was a supplicant for peace without resorting to war for the settlement of the outstanding disputes.

Like a clever diplomat, he spoke in eulogistic terms of the sterling qualities in the character and conduct of the Kuru family .

He now implored Dhritarashtra again and again to control the conduct and activities of his sons with Duryodhana at their head. Kṛṣṇa gave a solemn undertaking that he would be responsible for the conduct of the Pāṇdavas.

He pointed out that war would lead to a great disaster.

His appeal to Dhritarashtra was also based on humanistic considerations ; he was apprehensive of an Armageddon, ending in the total annihilation of all human beings.

The Pāṇdavas, he said, were also his own children ; they became orphans at a very early age and were brought up with care by Dhritarashtra. Kṛṣṇa eloquently communicated the earnest and sincere appeal of the Pāṇdavas to Dhritarashtra, saying that the Pāṇdavas were largely looking forward to paternal behaviour from Dhritarashtra.

Kṛṣṇa's able advocacy of the cause of peace was fully supported by the great saints of India who were present at the Kuru court on that occasion. But Duryodhana was adamant ; he was unrepentant. He contemptuously turned down these peace offers of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and threatened to arrest and detain him as a hostage.

Finding that the members of the Kuru assembly were silent and did not utter a single word of protest or disapproval against the proposed action of Duryodhana, Kṛṣṇa sternly

rebuked them for their failure to rise to the occasion and perform their proper duties. He warned them against the danger of unquestioning obedience and enunciated the important and fundamental doctrine that an unjust act should evoke a spirit of protest from those who happened to witness it. Before the very eyes of the assembled members, gross injustice was being perpetrated. A manifest wrong was being committed by a haughty and arrogant king. The silence of the members of the assembly and the absence of the spirit of protest was nothing short of a crime. The members were guilty of criminal negligence of duty on account of their timidity and inaction. Their silence virtually amounted to acquiescence, and the failure to protest against the injustice was a grave social wrong.

Kṛṣṇa had no hesitation in declaring that the conduct of the Kuru elders constituted a grave dereliction of duty and he predicted a great disaster. He also pointed out that it was essential, in the interests of social well-being, that a manifest wrong or injury to a good cause should not be allowed to happen before the eyes of an honest individual or in an open assembly. Indifference to or connivance at the perpetration of a wrong is tantamount to suicide on the part of those who look on and do not strive their utmost to prevent it. Kṛṣṇa had no love or respect for a 'fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed' that did not come out into the open to meet its adversary. Such virtue, he said, always resulted in decay and destruction, just as a torrential river carried away by its strong current the trees and houses on its banks.

Duryodhana's plan for the arrest and preventive detention of Kṛṣṇa miscarried. At the critical moment Duryodhana's courage failed, and Kṛṣṇa boldly marched out of the Kuru court with Vidura, Satyaki, and the saints and wise men, uttering a threat of irretrievable disaster. The supernatural or superhuman powers that he displayed on this occasion have been vividly described by the author of the *Mahābhārata*, and they will ever remain a source of perennial inspiration to the followers and admirers and worshippers of Sri Kṛṣṇa. His mind was now made up and he became sternly resolved to pursue a policy of relentless war.

Kṛṣṇa had relied on facts in arguing his case; he had made salutary recommendations; and finally he had emphasised the importance of a course of action which would be beneficial to both sides. But the self-willed and obstinate Duryodhana would not listen to any advice. War in such circumstances became inevitable.

Leaving the Kuru court in anger and disgust, Kṛṣṇa requested Karna to accompany him in his chariot up to a certain distance. This was his final attempt at peace-making. He knew that Duryodhana without the support of Karna would not have the courage to launch war. Kṛṣṇa therefore tried to win over Karna to the Pāṇḍava side by offering him sufficiently attractive terms. He held up before Karna the prospect of the imperial crown of Bharata-varsha and the absolute and unconditional obedience of the Pāṇḍavas to his orders. Kṛṣṇa even said that he would personally pour the sacred waters over Karna's head at the holy consecration ceremony.

This was undoubtedly an eleventh hour effort to avoid war. But Karna remained unconvinced and unmoved. Karna said that even for the mastery of the whole world and for the possession of the world's total wealth, he would not be guilty of such unworthy conduct as the desertion of his master Duryodhana and gross treachery to the Kaurava cause.

The curtain was now lifted and the stage was definitely set for the Kurukshetra war.

Kṛṣṇa had striven hard for peace, conciliation, and consent. He had been prepared to pay the utmost price for an honourable settlement. But he certainly did not want peace at any price. He did not seek peace by abject surrender or by standing before the Kauravas with a begging bowl in hand. Such an attitude would be utterly inconsistent with Kṛṣṇa's conception of *Dharma*, the moral order of the universe. Kṛṣṇa had a dynamic view of Dharma which he regarded as the power that sustained the entire universe. He was never tired of repeating 'Dharma or moral law is the greatest discovery of man, and it upholds the whole of creation.' Manners change, opinions alter, creeds rise and fall, but moral law is written on the tablets of eternity. It can no more be trifled with than gravitation. Kṛṣṇa, throughout his career, recognized the sanctity of Dharma, and he stoutly resisted any violence against the moral law. For the establishment of a moral order he was prepared to go to war—a *Dharma yuddha*. He told Arjuna on the battle-field of Kurukshetra :

'A *kshatriya* must always be prepared to wage war for upholding Dharma.'

Kṛṣṇa in the *Mahābhārata* stands for this dynamic conception of Dharma. He did not believe in a peace of negation or in some haphazard, patched-up, and mechanical arrangement of life, liberty, and property. His was a mission to go forward with the banner of Dharma uplifted. The celebrated author of the *Mahābhārata*, Krishna Dwaipayana, another Krishna in the history of India, has accepted this *Dharma* as the keynote of this great book. I want to conclude by quoting the luminous message of this seer of unfathomable wisdom, whose words echo and re-echo down the corridors of time :

‘Dharma should not be forsaken for the sake of any desire, gain, or profit; it should not be bartered away out of fear, nor even for the sake of protecting one’s earthly existence. Dharma is eternal; pleasures and pains are but momentary. Life is real; the worldly ways and means of life are but transitory.’

“Giving up the false self is the true renunciation”

—Sri Ramana Maharshi

Mātri Satsang in Solan

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali
Sequel to (7) in the last issue)

June 12th, 1955.

Mataji was replying to questions about charity and hospitality which were published in the October, 1974 issue. In the course of this conversation, Mataji said: "A *kheyala* has arisen to tell you a story. Will you listen to it?"

Everybody present most gladly entreats Mataji to let them hear the story. Mataji relates:

"There was a brahmin whose daily duty it was to have his midday meal only after feeding the Lord in the shape of a guest. So long as Narayana was not thus served he would fast and await His arrival in the guise of a visitor. Occasionally he had to wait until the evening. But somehow every day some guest or other used to turn up invariably to be served at the brahmin's house.

"Then came a time when the brahmin's death drew near. He called his eldest son and spoke to him thus: 'My son, the time has come for me to depart. But you must always carry on the service of Narayana in the shape of a guest. Do not ever fail to do so.'

"The dutiful son obeyed his father's instructions. At the arrival of the daily guest, he used to wash the latter's feet, serve food to him with great care and only thereafter

would he partake of the prasāda. In this manner his service to guests continued for quite some time.

“Then, one day, a friend came and said to the young brahmin? ‘For how much longer can you daily cook food and serve your guest as a personification of Narayana? Why dont you get married? When you have a wife at home, all this service will become much easier for you.’

“On hearing his friend’s advice, the brahmin said: ‘I am willing to marry, but on one condition: If my wife ever disobeys me I shall cut off her head.’

“The friend was amused and thought: ‘How can anyone cut off the head of his own wife!’

“In due course the marriage was solemnized according to these terms. The wife was under strict orders to cook daily, feed the guest and only thereafter to call her husband for his meal.

“Under these circumstances the young brahmin could spend his days very happily, being mostly engaged in either the repetition of God’s name or in deep meditation of the Divine. Every day he used to eat only after his guest had been duly fed. The wife also was entirely obedient. She used to serve the guest exactly as if he were Narayana Himself.

“Then, one day, evening approached, and still there was no sign of any guest. The young woman became extremely hungry. At the same time she was afraid of committing any misdemeanour. For how could she eat without first serving food to her guest and her husband?

“She was thus overwhelmed by dejection, when

suddenly a very uncommon guest came along. He carried a thick stick over his shoulder, at the end of which was dangling a freshly severed head of a cow from which blood was still trickling down drop by drop. Never before had such a strange guest put in an appearance. The young wife started trembling with trepidation. She just could not think of what to do. If she did not attend to the guest, her husband would cut off her head, and if she did serve the guest, in what manner was she to do so?

“Was there a solution? She pondered for a while and then gently came forward to wash the strange guest’s feet and to invite him to sit on his *āsana*. With folded hands she addressed him: ‘O Lord in the guise of a guest, your food is ready; deign to be seated so as to partake of it.’ But the guest replied: ‘First cut the cow’s head into small pieces and cook it. Only then will I sit down to a meal.’

“In abject fear the brahmin girl obeyed the guest’s request, cut up the cow’s head, cooked it and then served it to him in a dish, saying: ‘Lord, I have prepared your meal according to your instructions. Would you now be good enough to partake of it?’

“The guest then came forward to sit on his *āsana* but immediately ordered the brahmin lady, ‘you must first yourself eat of the cow’s flesh!’ At this the young woman became petrified with terror. But what could she do? As soon as she got ready to eat in accordance with the guest’s orders, he suddenly exclaimed: ‘Wait a bit! Do not eat now—first call your husband.’

“When the brahmin learnt that his guest had not yet

had his meal, but was asking for his presence, he became very angry with his wife, saying: 'You must be guilty of some serious offence, otherwise why is the guest still unfed in my house?'

"Thereupon husband and wife approached the guest, only to behold that he had disappeared, but in his place they saw Sri Radha Krishna in wonderously beautiful dual form before them! Their joy knew no bounds; husband and wife felt themselves greatly blessed at the vision of their beloved *Iṣṭadeva*."

Mataji then asked: "Well, have you enjoyed the story?" Everyone called out in great joy: "What a beautiful story! We have liked it very much."

Mataji went on to say: "Serve the Lord Narayana and you will become free from sin and sorrow. When donating anything, donate it to Lord Narayana. If you bestow a gift in this spirit, you will surely benefit. Your own *Iṣṭa* is before you in the shape of a guest. This is the attitude of mind you must try to cultivate."

'When the object of life is attained the subject disappears.'

Ramakrishna

Mātri Līlā

(September 15th, 1974–January 15th, 1975.)

Mataji reached Vrindaban on September 16th from Hardwar. A Bhagavata Saptah was held there from September 23rd (Radha Ashtami) to September 30th.

On October 2nd Mataji was back at Kankhal and remained in Hardwar for the whole of that month. Preparations for the forthcoming Durga Puja were already being carried out very vigorously, but there were few guests from outside to begin with. On October 5th, night, Mataji motored to Jaipuria Bhawan at Ramghat, Hardwar without disclosing where She was going and remained there over the weekend. However, several devotees from Dehradun arrived in Kankhal the next morning (Sunday). Sorely disappointed by Mataji's absence they went in search of Her and soon discovered where Mataji was and had Mataji's darsana there. On the 7th Mataji returned to Kankhal but for the next four or five days She spent every night at Ramghat, returning to Kankhal every morning at about 10 a.m. On October 9th, Swami Chidanandaji came from Rishikesh to see Mataji. Satsang was held in the open space in front of Didima's Mandir and he was requested to speak. But he said he had come to listen to Ma. Finally he sang some beautiful stotras to Devi as well as kirtana. Daily some visitors from other towns would turn up at Kankhal.

On October 16th Navaratri started. From that day onwards puja was performed in the structure that had been erected specially to house the deities during the festival. It was adjoining the hall in which the audience sat. For the first five days a profusely decorated earthen pitcher filled with *Ganga jal* (Ganges water) which symbolizes the goddess, was worshipped, while the images of Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati, etc. were hidden behind a curtain until the 6th day of Navaratri (October 21st), when the main pūjās began. We have last year reported at length about the Durga Pujas held at Baghat House Kharkhari, Hardwar in a magnificent style. This year the celebrations were probably even more magnificent as we were not so short of space as at Kharkhari. The very large new hall, although as yet incomplete, has now a proper cement roof and was equipped with lights, loudspeakers, etc. Thus a very large congregation could be seated very comfortably and watch the proceedings. It goes without saying that, as every year, *Shata Chandi Patha* was recited in a special room by pandits for nine days and the Devi Bhagavata as well as the Ramayana were also read and completed. There was Kumari Puja and feeding of large numbers of Kumaris daily from 21st to 25th of October. Besides more intimate functions were going on in the Siva Mandir and in Didima's Mandir. Mataji seemed to be everywhere at once and attended to everything in person.

Sri Gurupriya Devi had been quite ill at Vrindaban and had therefore to convalesce in Delhi, arriving at Kankhal only just in time for the main pujas. Swami Paramanandaji also had had a set-back in health during

Mataji's stay at Ranchi and was forced to take treatment at Calcutta until the last moment. It is difficult to replace these two main helpers and organisers of all activities round Mataji. However, younger people stepped into the gaps and everything was accomplished in great beauty and harmony.

The attendance was enormous. Devotees had flocked from all over the country and even from abroad and were accommodated in dharmasalas and ashrams as near as possible. Many would also come for short visits from Rishikesh and Dehradun. On *Dasami* day, October 25th, the beautiful image was taken to the Ganges for immersion after Mataji had sung exquisitely, as She usually does on that occasion. On October 28th night Lakshmi Puja was performed in the same place. On the 30th Mataji entrained for Naimisharanya where She was in retreat until November 9th.

On the 10th, She alighted in New Delhi where Kali Puja was celebrated in our Ashram on the 13th Divali night, in great and elaborate style. Early that morning Mataji had paid a visit at the house of Sri G. S. Pathak where a special room upstairs with a separate staircase is permanently reserved for Mataji's use.

Annakut was observed the next day on a gigantic scale. A great variety of dishes were offered to Sri Krishna, Padmanabh and Ma and more than 1500 people partook of the sumptuous prasāda. On both days Mataji sang for a long time very animatedly. One day Mataji accepted an invitation to a Girls' School. She also went to inaugurate some new houses which devotees had built at Kalkaji.

On November 16th morning, Mataji alighted in Dehradun. Mataji's health was far from satisfactory and She was badly in need of rest. From the railway station She came directly to Kalyanvan for a few minutes and then proceeded to the Kishenpur Ashram where She remained for one night only. The next day She shifted to Her cottage of "Panchavati" in the compound of Mr. & Mrs. M. L. Kaithan next to Kalyanvan. On the 18th midday She motored to Hardwar, where She also visited Baghat House, returning to Kishenpur on the 19th afternoon. On the 21st Mataji moved to the Ramatirtha Ashram where our 25th *Samyam Mahavrata* was observed from November 22nd to 28th.

Nestling in the midst of hills in picturesque surroundings, miles away from the town of Dehradun, yet very spacious, comprising a considerable number of big and small buildings and cottages, the Ramtirtha Ashram presented an ideal site for such a large and concentrated gathering. Acharya Sri Swami Govind Prakashji Maharaj, the head of the Ashram who had invited us, had made careful and well thought out preparations long in advance. He put the entire Ashram at the disposal of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. All available accommodation in the neighbourhood had also been booked. Besides quite a number of vratis stayed in "Swiss Cottages" (double-ply tents) in the compound itself. Arrangements were excellent to the minutest detail and in all respects. A beautiful pandal had been erected for the satsang in the centre of the compound. It allowed ample space for the vratis to sit very comfortably without disturbing one another. There was a

remarkable hush during the hours of collective meditation; hardly any coughing or sneezing could be noticed. Mataji specially commented on this at the end. An impressive number of Mahamandaleshwaras and other dignitaries graced the occasion and daily delivered highly interesting and enlightening talks. Among them were our host, Sri Swami Govind Prakashji; Sri Swami Vidyanandaji of Kailash Ashram, Rishikesh; Sri Swami Brahmanandaji of Surat Giri Ashram, Kankhal; Sri Swami Frakashanandaji of Jagadguru Ashram, Kankhal; Sri Swami Vishnuashramji of Suktal; Sri Swami Vedantanandaji of Pavanadham, Hardwar; Sri Swami Amaramuniji of Gangeshwardham, Delhi; Sri Swami Hansaprakashji of Ramtirtha Ashram; Sri Yogiraj Nanak Chandji of Allahabad and others.

Quite a number of devotees from Dehradun availed themselves of this rare opportunity of the choicest satsang in the most enchanting surroundings. Some came regularly in their cars and others by special buses that brought them early morning and took them back late at night.

Mataji's health did not allow Her to sit in the satsang for as many hours as She used to in the past. However, She was invariably present for the collective meditation for at least one or two lectures daily, while She missed "Matri Satsang" only once: For five days She replied to questions for half an hour as the last item of the programme. After the morning session Mataji and Swami Govind Prakashji would sit on the platform by the Samādhi of Swami Hari Om Prakashji Maharaj (the former head of the Ashram) and the *vratīs* could do *pranama* individually and offer garlands etc if they wished. The last night Mataji sat in the

pandal for the whole evening until after the midnight meditation and sang divinely for a long time and then told stories. Although She was suffering from a severe cough and cold, this trouble was in abeyance for those few hours. Not a single cough or the slightest trace of hoarseness disturbed Her singing. Her voice was clear and powerful. That evening marked the climax of an unforgettable week.

On November 29th morning the customary *yajna* (fire sacrifice) took place in front of the pandal and then two long queues lined up for final *pranamas* and offerings of garlands, fruits, etc and Mataji distributed fruit first to those who had fasted on Gangajal for the last 48 hours (class A) and then to all the other vratis. After a feast at midday, everyone descended to Dehradun by a fleet of cars and buses and from there to their various destinations with sincere regrets that the blissful gathering had come to an end. Mataji halted at three or four houses of devotees on Her way to Kishenpur where She spent one night only. Uninterrupted kirtan was performed in the Ashram hall for several hours that evening as there was an eclipse of the moon. Mataji remained in Her room but came downstairs towards the end and then sprinkled Ganges water on everyone present. She also talked for a little while to the ashramites, in the course of which She said: "To find fault with others paves the way for a fall."

Early next morning Mataji motored to Delhi from where She boarded the train to Kanpur the same night, arriving on December 1st morning. The Jaipuria family had arranged for the recitation of the whole of the Valmiki Ramayana for nine days and for excellent, very lucid expla-

nations in Hindi by Pandit Atul Krishna Goswami for several hours twice daily in an enormous pandal in the grounds of their residence, "Swadeshi House." Mataji attended every session for the last hour. Mataji had not brought many people with Her, but the inhabitants of Kanpur flocked in large numbers. Sri Mangthuram, Sri Sitaram Jaipuria, Sri Rajaram, as well as other members of the family, made sure that the gathering was a great success and nothing at all remained to be desired during Mataji's visit by Her or by their other guests.

On December 10th, Mataji and Her party shifted to the Ashram of Sir Padampat Singhania at Radha Krishna Mandir, where satsang is being held every year in December in a very spacious pandal. Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati talked every morning and afternoon for an hour each time in the pandal and in the evening replied to questions in a more intimate gathering in the Ashram hall until December 21st. Every day he spoke about *bhakti* and *shraddha* and every day he said something new. Sometimes he elucidated particular passages from the Gita or Bhagavata. He would deal with his subject from all possible angles, and what he said was intensely practical and applicable in the life of every seeker. Mataji was present at every meeting. Sometimes She gave *darśana* for a short while in a small pandal in the Ashram compound after returning from the satsang. Here also arrangements were quite perfect in every respect.

One day the saint Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnathji paid a visit to Mataji. Towards the end of Her stay Mataji went to the residences of a few devotees. As every year on the

last day of Mataji's sojourn, our Delhi Kirtan party performed *Nāma Jajña* (this time a few came specially from Calcutta to join), which started on December 21st evening with *adivāsa* and went on the next day from sunrise to sunset. Mataji joined several times during the day. The kirtan was, as always, very wonderful and inspiring.

On December 23rd morning, Mataji drove to Lucknow where She halted for nearly three hours at Government House. A large crowd of devotees came for Her *darśana*. Accompanied by the Governor, Dr. M. Chenna Reddy, Mataji went to Naimisharanya by car the same afternoon. Dr. Reddy stayed on for a couple of days. Gita Jayanti was observed on the 25th.

Originally the consecration of *Purana Purusha* Mandir had been scheduled for January 14th, but shortly before Mataji left Kanpur it was decided to postpone it to May 13th, the day of *Akshay Tṛitiya*. However, Mataji remained at Naimisharanya until January 15th. During the daily morning-satsang, a Sikh devotee recited from Guru Granth Sahib after the reading from the Bhagavata. A *yajña kunda* was erected and the sacred fire that has been kept alive and worshipped in various Ashrams since the memorable Kali Puja in 1926, was brought to Naimisharanya and finally installed there ceremonially on January 14th. The function began already on the 10th. Dr. Reddy came again to celebrate his birthday on January 13th and was present at the festival on the 14th.

On the 15th afternoon Mataji left by car for Lucknow, where She spent an hour at the house of Sri Rameshwar Sahai and family and then boarded the train to Vrindavan.

A sacred thread ceremony was performed there on the 17th and from 18th to 25th a Bhagavata Saptah was held.

Saraswati Puja is to be celebrated in New Delhi on February 16th.

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With the most profound regret we learn that Sri Swami Sharanandaji took Mahasamādhi on December 25th after a prolonged illness. Already at the recent Samyam Vrata we missed his joyful presence, while he was suffering from heart trouble at Vrindaban. For an egoless being of his stature it surely makes no difference whatever, whether he is in the body or not. But for us his departure is a very heavy loss.

Swami Sharanandaji had a deep veneration and love for Mataji. He had said of Her : "Just as the earth provides for each plant the nourishment necessary for its growth, so does Mataji guides every sādhaika according to his particular need." For the last so many years he used to grace all our big gatherings, such as Mataji's birthday celebrations and Samyam Vratas, and gladden our hearts and enlighten our minds by his discourses that came from the heart and went straight to the heart. He occupied a unique position. Having lost his eyesight in his adolescence, his talks had no background of learning. What he said was either from his own personal experience, or thought out by his own intelligence. He was the most loving and compassionate Mahātma, ever intent on mitigating the suffering of all who approached him, never sparing himself.

Though he never allowed anything to be published in his name, yet his utterances were noted down by his devotees and published without his name in a good number of volumes by the Manav Seva Sangh, Vrindaban, in Hindi and at least two books in English translation. His body is no more, but the seeds of light and love that he has sown in so many hearts and minds will grow and go on bearing fruit for evermore.

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We are extremely sorry to report about the demise of Sri Raghubans Bahadur, a staunch devotee of several years standing, who passed away suddenly in New Delhi on January 2nd, 1975. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to his bereaved family. May he rest in peace and bliss at the feet of the Lord !
