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Ānanda Vāritā



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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

So long as one dwells in the realm of creation, preservation and dissolution, the remembrance of God is to be sustained under all circumstances. As far as possible submit all aspirations, petitions and prayers of your heart and mind to Him. If one has a Guru, the Guru mantra must be practised as much as lies in one's power, and if there is no Guru then any of God's names. At all times pray for the Guru's mercy.

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Those who know who is their *Iṣṭa* may while doing japa, contemplate Him from His feet to the crown of His head. If one wants to engage in japa for a prolonged time, then one should concentrate on the word (*śabda*) while repeating it. God is present in the syllable (*aḥṣara*), God is present in the word (*śabda*).

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Pilgrims on the road towards God very often encounter obstacles and stumbling-blocks which are due to their own former actions. In such cases one should pray. "Lord, gird me with patience and the power of endurance that I may be able to continue undaunted my pilgrimage on the path that leads to Thee." Keep your spirits high by reflecting that those hindrances and difficulties are breaking up your bad karma. Bear in mind that God is thus cleansing and purifying you in order to take you unto Himself.

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God pervades the universe and is also beyond the universe. He is formless as well as with form. Of this very God you had a vision in the form in which you imagine Him at present. To make this clear, God took on the shape that is dearest to your heart and appeared before you. Because of your desire to find Truth this particular form manifested by God's grace. If you want to become one with God, the more intensely you engage in spiritual

practices (*Bhagavat Kriyā*) the swifter will be your progress.

* * *

No matter where you may be placed, from there itself must you take to the remembrance of God. All without exception belong to Him, be convinced of this. In order to kindle the love of God one has to endeavour to keep the mind constantly engrossed in japa, meditation or the reflection on spiritual topics. Man must be gripped by a keen desire to awaken to the love of God.

* * *

Endeavour to remain ever engulfed in the contemplation of the mantra received from your Guru. He has caught hold of your hand and will never let it go anymore. At all times keep your mind at His lotus feet. You are God's own scion; if your aspiration is genuine, He will never let you turn back.

* * *

Do not even look for results—persistently remain steeped in Him. Results are not always visible. When the time is ripe the Self (*Svarūpa*) will stand revealed. You are the offspring of the Immortal—therefore be ever concentrated on the Goal which is Immortality (*Amritatwa*).

Mātri Satsang in Solan

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Continued from the last issue)

(8)

Question : I have been told that after death the soul on leaving the body immediately enters another body ?

Mataji : The question of birth and death arises solely with regard to the body—there is repeated coming and going. Birth takes place in strict accordance with one's karma. A person derives a new body to reap the consequences of whatever actions he has performed in previous births. His future progress on the path of life depends on the way he has acted before. Action, arrival, departure, position and state of existence are determined by one's previous behaviour. However, here we are speaking about position and state in this world and the next. What is beyond the various worlds is not being considered just now—bear this in mind !

Question : What is a simple way of becoming *ānanda-mayi* (permeated by bliss) ?

Mataji : To take refuge in God : Total surrender is absolutely imperative. Resigning yourself to Him—is this not a mode that you can assume ? That the Self is indeed *ānanda*, that your own Self is *ānandamayi* (full of supreme joy)—this you must try to understand. It is your own *ātma*. There is only one Brahman without a second. Where

does one find *Brahmānanda* (the Bliss of the Eternal) ? Whose bliss ? It is you yourself as *Brahmānanda*. The straight, simple path is to follow strictly the instructions of one's Guru.

Question : The Veda Śāstras can be said to be the Guru of us all. He whose teaching can easily be assimilated by the mind and leads to further inspiration, is surely the true Guru. The scriptures say : a few minutes of satsang can free the sādḥaka from the sins committed in millions of his former births.

Mataji : How well said ! To engage in satsang is the straight, simple road.

Question : Can one attain Supreme Bliss through satsang ?

Mataji : Satsang opens the way that leads to Supreme Bliss.

Question : Only just opens the way ? Does it not accomplish the objective of bestowing Supreme Bliss ?

Mataji : (smiling) Oh well, first let the road be clear, only then can there be attainment !

Another devotee : Suppose there is an accident while walking on the road ?

Mataji : Mishaps are the result of distortion of the soundness of judgment. Where there is continuous awareness of God and satsang there can be no accident. But where worldliness has remained and God's name is also practised, where one desires God but is afraid of a ghost—there it is possible for accidents to take place. Have you understood the point ?

Question : How can this be ? This seems like keeping two swords in the same scabbard. Where the Lord resides, is there any scope for some other being ?

Mataji : When a devotee's thoughts deviate towards extraneous matters, when his feelings veer elsewhere, this constitutes an obstacle and then accidents do occur. Quite often even the attainment of supernormal powers can be a hindrance. The powers may be displayed. The mind becomes infatuated with this type of dung-heap. All this can be an impediment to one's progress towards attainment.

Question : Is the path on which supernormal powers are acquired a path at all ?

Mataji : It is a path—but not free from pitfalls. Whether the mind is concentrated or not—once you can reach a stage where unobstructed progress starts, then there is no question of further impediments.

Question : So, as long as obstacles are in the way, it seems one cannot attain the ultimate, supreme state ?

Mataji : That is so. The ultimate state is irrefutable. To have visions may mean various expressions of supernormal powers. For instance, on your way to Calcutta you get down from your carriage to get a better view of the city. Perhaps you may get ensnared there. So long as you are not single-minded you may be of two minds. In the course of your sādhana you may come across certain experiences that are full of joy. These are manifestations of the Lord's power. These manifestations can be of infinite variety. The process of your receiving them may also be infinitely varied. So long as the supreme Goal has not been attained,

there is danger of obstacles, danger of a fall. A *sadhaka* may reach as far as the *Brahmaloka* and still return to the earth.

Question : The *Sāstras* say : Work with your hands and keep Sri Rama enshrined in your heart.

Mataji : Work means service. Service to whom ? To God. Where is God ? God can be found within each being. During all your life's work you must retain the spirit of service to God—in other words, the constant remembrance of Sri Rama.

Question : Our *Sāstras* say that there are thirty-three crores of deities (*devata*). Do they live on this earth or in some other world ?

Mataji : The deities reside in the abode of the deities. You yourself are indeed a *devata*. The abode of the gods is not far from you. Very near you is the realm of the *devas*, of Brahma. There is a veil that hides it—this is why you cannot see them.

Question : When we worship these deities, do they accept our *pūjā* ?

Mataji : Yes, they certainly are aware of it and respond.

Question : Some people say : Bhakti is like a dutiful spouse, therefore the impact of worldly illusion does not effect true bhaktas. But this same illusion enshrouds seekers after Knowledge (*jñānis*).

Mataji : Well, well ! People speak of what they experience from their own viewpoint or of what they feel,

Everything is all right; but where there is unobstructed vision, the revelation of the Supreme, There, is there room for this kind of question ?

Question : There is a certain society, called "Deva Samaj". Its adherents do not believe in God but they believe in Truth and are engaged in constant service to needy individuals. Do they gain anything by this ?

Mataji : Most certainly ! In whatever manner it may be, do they not in fact take the Lord's name ?

God is Truth. Do you not say : "*Satyam jñānam Brāhman.*" (Brahman is Truth and Knowledge). It is said that if someone strictly speaks the truth for twelve years, he attains to *vāk siddhi*, in other words, whatever he utters becomes true. So, even if they do not believe in God, they do believe in Truth ! If one is consecrated to Truth, this is bound to be benedictory. Steadfast adherence to Truth can accomplish everything. By speaking only the truth, the inner *śakti* is likely to emerge. God is Truth Itself, the essence of Being.

"One seed has to be destroyed by sowing another seed, that is to say, by the constant repetition of the seed-mantra, the seed of karma will be destroyed and then no more new karma be created."

—Mata Anandamayi

Thoughts on Mataji

III

Jyotipriya (Lynn Dalton)

(Continued from the last issue)

Samyam Vrata has become the greatest event of my life; it feels like Christmas during childhood. Everything is sparkling and magical. One evening during Matri Satsang, even though watching Mother talk, I felt distant from Her. The hall seemed stuffy, so I went outside into the lovely autumn air. Radhapriya was standing there (another American girl on our trip); we seemed to naturally gravitate to Mother's apartments. No one was around. We knelt at Mother's seat and I briefly put my head on Her cushion. The breeze blew the little coloured lights on the balcony so they seemed to make a tinkling sound. I felt enraptured and suddenly very close to Mother. There was a wooden box just there for some reason and we each took a little corner of it and sat down, saying nothing for the longest time, completely taken up in the sound of the Ganges, the vision of Krishna' blue skin (the sky and the stars), and the wonderful symmetry of the Shiva temple nearby. Time stood still and all was fulfilment. No questions, no yearnings arose; there was no doubt : God lived here.

Mother is watching all the time, but this isn't obvious to us. It is so ironic to come all the way to India to see Her, only to discover you can't handle Her Truth. She

reveals how little we really love God; it is revealed in our attitudes towards Her. But we must see the false before the True can come into being. We must see what IS without personal judgment and accept it completely (whether this happens through bhakti or jñāna) before it can change; falsehood evaporates when consciously faced.

Radhapriya, her husband Krishnadas, and myself spend a lot of time together, kind of like the three musketeers. We have waited and hoped just about every evening for privates with Ma, or chances to have our things blessed. Samyam Vrata is over now, Mother is back at the Kankhal ashram; things are more hectic than when She first arrived (before Samyam), but still less hectic than while Samyam Vrata was going on. We happily feel Mother's nearness again; the courtyard has an intimacy and familiarity, and it is good just to be waiting around to catch a glimpse of Mother or to hear someone say, "Shh, Mother is resting."

It is easy to give up waiting and to go back to the bungalow thinking there is no way to see Ma; but a little patience and determination go a long way. One evening we were told we could not see Her. We sat waiting around. I watched and noticed that many, many people were going up to see Her; throwing caution to the winds, I went up the stairs. No one tried to stop me or acted like I shouldn't be there. Mother was sitting on Her platform and I waited in a line to see Her. When my turn came, I praṇāmed and She smiled very sweetly. I handed Her my japa mala, and She held it and looked at me quizzically; one of the girls nearby said, "Are you doing japa with this mala?" I said

"yes", and Mother, saying "Achchha" pressed the beads close to Her heart and then to Her forehead. I left then, but wish now I had stayed for more darshan.

Tonight is Wednesday, Nov. 22, 1972. Radhapriya, Krishnadas, and myself leave Hardwar for Delhi on Friday morning, to catch the jet from Delhi the same night. This may be one of our last chances to get close to Mataji, ask a few questions, and get our things blessed. We wait until just about everyone has had their turn, and finally we are able to go up. There is no one around but just a few of the ashram girls.

Mother has had a fever for the last few days and every time I get near Her, I feel terribly hot, as if I were the one with the fever. Don't know why this should happen. I cannot remember who interpreted for us that night; but I did get in a couple of questions and received Mataji's advice. Even though Her answers seem "standard" sometimes, they are deceptively simple; it feels very personal to me. This feeling has been borne out with the passage of time. Since seeing Ma, I have begun to learn a little about Her ways. One thing I have seen is that what Mataji says to us personally is invaluable as a form of definite instruction. We only need to put into practice.....just a little.....what She has said, and we will find everything changing. We will feel Her blessing almost immediately, in no uncertain terms. In fact, we have only to *remember* Her instruction not even to practise it, to feel the blessing. If the instruction seems short or somehow not personal, we are mistaken; faith in Her will remove all barriers.

Even with the fever, She was very kind and gracious. She said "Narayan" when She touched my film. There was no time to really get our things touched as we had hoped, but we were grateful for the time given us. As She got up and walked to Her room, the three of us stood looking at Her; suddenly.....unexpectedly.....She turned at Her doorway, folded Her hands and said, "Narayan, Narayan, Narayan, Narayan, Narayan," tilting Her head each time, almost like in a song. I can never forget Her eyes as She looked at us at that moment. They were like coals burning into my soul; their power was so great that I was literally knocked against the wall; I fell back. We looked at each other incredulously. Then, She was gone. What can one say after looking into the eyes of God? Having met the Shakti of the Universe and felt that power coursing through my blood, what else has life to offer? Only more Ma, I hoped. Needless to say, the three of us coasted home as though walking on air.

Mataji teaches you that when you give up easily, you only hurt yourself and cater to the ego. Sometimes it is a lot of work trying to get near Her physical form, just as it is to contact Her from within. You can only learn this lesson by actually experiencing this "giving up"; so it is a valuable lesson. She also wears you from Her physical form by making life near Her so punishing; and by coming to you in unexpected moments, in your heart, when Her body is only a few feet, yards, or miles away ... perhaps you had just seen that body a few moments before without really feeling Her great presence. Many see Mother and many even put on a good show of devotion; but few and far between really

love Her.....love God, which is your very own true Self. To really love Her means to find Her within; but only She can reveal that to you. She walks this earth in that body for our sake, so that we can talk to Her, see God in the physical, and thereby know what may be possible for each one of us; yet there should be no pride in having been near Her, for this will stand between Her and us. I believe She proves this to us by sometimes appearing, in the flesh, to be human; and a moment later manifesting all Her divinity through a picture or a mental flash. We should get over this idea that Mataji has anything to do with time and distance; how can that which created you be apart from you; and who knows you better and more intimately than God? That does not mean we can't ask Her the most mundane questions; it is just a matter of attitude; whatever our first consideration is, verily, we shall have our reward. If we want Her and love Her, She will come, and we will know She has come.

Nov. 23. Our last night here in Kankhal. Tomorrow Mother goes on to Benares, and some of our original party, including Swami Nirmalananda, Shraddha and Satya, will be following along. But for Radhapriya, Krishnadas, and myself, the trip has come to an end. I have a sense of sadness, yet I am satisfied. My desperate need to see Mataji has been fulfilled; after this, if I ever see Her again, it will be like the added "cherry on top." I will hope for it, even crave it, but not feel cheated if I don't get it.

As has been the pattern since arriving in Kankhal, Mataji has not come down for evening darshan. Since it is

Her last night here, the ashram people must have time for their privates. A lot of people are waiting around for final good-byes.

Swami Nirmalanāda borrows the ashram harmonium and many of us settle into Didima's temple for a kirtan; this is a wonderful moment and I am wondering why we didn't do this every night. Mother is resting, isolated, upstairs. But after a while, word filters down that She has had Her window opened to hear the kirtan and that She has said, "Keep singing." I feel thrilled to the core, almost as if I were singing to Her all by myself. I know that She will allow us to come up if we only sing to Her long and sincerely enough, because I know that God cannot resist our love and devotion, even when we resist Hers.

After having kirtan in the temple for a while, we are all transferred out to the courtyard where mats have been laid down. Swami, leading the group, began to sing, "Oh Lord of the Universe, let me see You." As we were singing this, Chitra came to the window and from above called, "Ma says to come up now". I was taping the kirtan and to this day laugh and cry all at once when hearing the whoop of joy that went up among our group. We were beside ourselves with happiness. We even continued singing "Narayan Om" on the way up the stairs.

Inside it is cramped, with everyone wanting a little private time; but somehow I get up close to Ma, with Chitra's encouragement. Again I feel hot and flushed being near Her, as Her fever is bad tonight. Three different times Mataji looks over at Swamiji and grins, saying "Beautiful

kirtan" and "wonderful kirtan"; this was a great thrill for me to see.....concrete evidence of God's response to love. Later I read in an Ānanda Vārtā that Mother seems to thrive best when kirtan is going on.

Many people are getting their things blessed and asking their questions. Finally my turn comes. Then I lean my head up near Her pillow and She gives a little laugh and taps the top of my head. A tingling sensation. Now I have touched Mother's feet, and She has touched my head; life is complete.

On the way back to Her room, Chitra points in my direction as Mother walks past me, just inches away; Mother folds Her hands and says "Achcha, achchha"; and Shraddha says, "we just lost Jyotipriya again!" Everyone is laughing and happy. No one has been forgotten or left out. On the way home this mood is infectious and even the bicycle rickshaw men are chanting "Hari Om" as they peddle.

Nov. 24. Our last morning. The driver who is taking us to Delhi has arrived on time at 8:00 A. M. We drive directly to the Kankhal ashram. Chitra says Mataji was up until 2:00 A. M. giving privates. But she asks us to wait and that perhaps we shall get the chance to see Ma. We feel determined to wait all morning if need be, I give the driver some extra money for waiting. But it is only about ten minutes.....or it seems.....before Chitra calls.

We race up the stairs and there is Mother sitting on Her bed, just sitting up; the girls are just opening the shutters in Her room; it is dark in there and yet I seem to see Mother by Her very glow; She is radiant and looks incredibly young

and childlike, and is smiling at us without a trace of self-consciousness.

We kneel at the doorway and offer our fruit, which one of the girls takes and sets next to Ma; in turn, Ma has her give us pieces of fruit. Tears spring to my eyes, not because I am leaving, but because She looks so beautiful; somehow, I do not feel I am leaving Her. I saw later that this was Her blessing to me, so that I would not feel the pangs of separation.....I probably could not have stood that and the hardships of the trip too. I did not know that when I fell and injured my foot before leaving for India, that I had also grievously injured my spine, and that my physical condition was steadily regressing.

We ask Mataji for Her blessing for our return trip, which She gives, and then says, "Write us upon your safe return". This made me very happy and I have written Her several times in the two years since my return, often for advice and instruction, and just to tell Her that I love Her... I say "love" within the tiny, petty circumference of my capacity to love. Whatever love I have, only Mataji has given me.

Holy Reminiscences

Jainath Kaul, M. Sc.

(Continued from the last issue)

3. First 'Private' and a Darshan of Grace

After my second darshan of Ma on March 9th, 1958, an account of which appeared in the last issue of this journal, I began to long for opportunities to have more darshans. With this end in view, I started keeping myself well-posted with details of Ma's movements and was delighted to learn that She was again expected in New Delhi on March 20th when She would be spending the night in the new house of a devotee in Kailash Colony.* Quite a big crowd had naturally gathered there that evening and I was one of them. With me had also come a good *sādhaka*, my friend Sri Harbanslal, now Deputy Director General, Indian Standards Institution, New Delhi. This was his first darshan of Ma, and after that he began looking upon Ma as his Guru and since then has been receiving from Her guidance in his *sādhana*.

My First 'Private' with Ma.

It was on Friday the 21st of March 1958, the New Year's Day of Vikram Samvat 2015, when Ma had shifted to the New Delhi Ashram, that I had my first private meeting with Ma in Her room. I had gone very early to the Ashram

* See *Ānanda Vārtā*, Vol, VI, No. 1, P, 73.

to seek such a meeting and was blessed with an opportunity for it in the morning itself. The few points on which I had sought Ma's guidance and Her replies, as I recollect them, were as follows :

I : What is the aim of life ?

Ma : *Ātmā-lābha* (Self-realization).

I : How to go about it, Ma ?

Ma : Do you do any japa ?

I : Yes, Ma.

Ma : Then do it all the time : while sitting, walking, or doing anything, and everywhere. Secondly, look upon every happening as the will of the Lord and therefore conducive to your spiritual betterment. Thirdly, read the Rāmāyana every day and when the first reading is over, start a second reading. Do this ten times without a break.

This was in 1958 and Ma's first two directives have continued to guide me all these years through the many trials and tribulations I have had to go through in life. As for the third directive, I began reading Tulsidas Rāmāyana regularly from Sunday the 23rd of March—two days after my 'private' and completed the ten readings on April 21st, 1964.

Karunamayi's Kripa for a Devotee

When the 'private' was nearly over, Swamiji (Swami Paramanandaji Maharaj) brought Sri S. N. Aga, an old and well-known devotee of Ma, the father of the girl who was to be engaged to my cousin Jitendranath and who had

also been responsible for my second darshan of Ma.* That day (March 21st, 1958) known as 'Nauroz' (literally 'New Day') among the Kashmiri Pandit Community, is considered a most auspicious day by us and so it had been arranged that the boy's horoscope would be given to Sri Aga on that day.

Now Ma was due to leave for Dehradun the same day and Sri Aga had come to the Ashram to request Ma to grace his residence with Her Presence so that he might place the horoscope, which he would be receiving soon, at Her lotus feet. "You need not even get out of the car Ma, but please do come for a while on your way to Dehradun", he had pleaded. Swamiji pointed out that Sri Aga's residence (Pachkuin Road in Connaught Place) was not on the way from the Ashram to Dehradun, but Bhagwan cannot say 'No' to a bhakta's entreaties, and so Ma agreed to the detour and visited his place as desired by him. But Her immediate reply was a directive to Sri Aga that he should go to Calcutta during Her birthday celebrations, due to be held there some seven weeks later from May 2nd onwards, and also to bring along his would-be son-in-law to get blessings from Sri Hari Babaji and other great Mahatmas who would be assembling there on that occasion. Thereupon Sri Aga commented, while pointing towards me, that taking Jitendraji to Calcutta was in my hands. On this Ma remarked, "He is of course listening".

Ma's 'Kheyala' sends me to Calcutta

Mother's every expressed *kheyāla* (divine impulse) is

* See Ānanda Vārtā, Vol. XXII, No. 1, P. 23.

a command for me, and so I interpreted Her remark to mean that I should make certain that Jitendraji went to Calcutta for the celebrations. Also, an implied intention in the *kheyāla* was, that I too should go there. Accordingly, I applied for leave for a couple of weeks and first went to Alwar. Jitendraji was still working there as a lecturer in English, as that year's I. A. S. batch had not till then been called for training. However, I failed to persuade him to go to Calcutta to comply with Ma's directive. I was naturally greatly disappointed and began to waver a bit even about my own trip to Calcutta. Just then two most unexpected developments took place which show once again that nothing can come in the way of the course of events projected by Ma's *kheyāla*.

First of all, on my return to Delhi, I was told by my office (Indian Standards Institution, ISI), where I was working as the Chief Editor, that I had to proceed to Calcutta to take over the temporary charge of our Calcutta Branch Office, as the Officer-in-Charge, Sri S. K. Sen, the present Director General, ISI, had fallen ill. Secondly, I was inspired to write a letter to Jitendraji, and, among other points, I wrote to the effect that I failed to understand how anyone could be so unfortunate and so pitifully thoughtless as to refuse to respond to the call of Divinity Itself. And lo and behold ! this sentence worked a miracle and he decided to abide by Ma's wishes and went to Calcutta.

As for me, I had to go even some ten days or so before the celebrations began and returned only after they were over. After I had taken charge of the Branch Office, I

visited the Ashram that had then been newly acquired at Agarpara and where the birthday function was due to take place. I met Swamiji there and learnt from him that Ma was staying at the residence of Sri Nirmal Chakravarty in Ballygunge where a Bhagavata Saptah was being held.*

Since he was also to go there soon, I waited for some time and then accompanied him to Ballygunge where I got the reward of a wonderful darshan of Ma in Her own room.

I Take Flowers for Ma

The next day I contacted my nephew who is a horticulturist and he arranged to let me have a few lovely sweet-smelling flowers with long stems. I was delighted and went to Ballygunge to present them to Ma and have Her darshan. It was evening time and Ma was in a park full of people attending a function. I was, therefore, unable to reach Her unaided, and being a new devotee, I did not know people who could take me to Ma.

However, after some time, I noticed that Ma had got up and was leaving the park for the multi-storeyed building across the road where She was staying. I tried to meet Her to offer the flowers, but found it impossible to cross the usual wall of emotional devotees on both sides of the route She was taking. After Ma had gone upstairs to Her room, I began loitering hither and thither terribly disappointed and frustrated, but thinking of Ma all the time. The whole place was full of people—the staircase and the entire area between the building and the park.

After a few minutes, just when I was wondering what

* See *Ānanda Vārtā*, Vol. VI, No. 2, P. 153.

should be my next step, I found devotees leaving the building. Those who had been crowding the staircase were seen descending hurriedly and I heard voices to the effect that Ma was coming down.

While all this commotion was on and the movement of people had become uni-directional, I found myself being gently but firmly drawn in the opposite direction. So obeying an unconscious impulse, I proceeded, first, towards the bottom of the staircase and then towards its top.

Ma Gives Darshan of Grace

- As I went up step by step, no one else did the same. This was certainly most remarkable. So, alone I ascended, and when I was nearing the first turn on the staircase, I noticed a tall, slim person in gerua coming down. I believe it was Swami Chaitanyanandaji whom I did not know then. Seeing me, he stepped aside, wanting me, I believe, to do the same and also perhaps said or made a sign to show that Ma was coming. Preoccupied with my thoughts of Ma, I was then unable to follow what he was saying, and as I was going up not with any deliberate will of my own, but more or less mechanically and in silent obedience to the pull of an invisible power, I could not take much notice of him. He too did not stop me, perhaps because he saw flowers in my hand.

The result of all this was that I went past him, and as I turned the corner and before I could see Ma I found a garland round my neck and Ma near me. I was flabbergasted and did not know what to do. So I just stood there speechless and transfixed, and kept on looking at Ma dren-

ching me with an incomprehensible and indescribably sweet smile, the like of which I have not been blessed with again during the last seventeen years.

The one-pointed longing of the child to present a few flowers had found a graciously loving response in the heart of the Divine Mother, and Her infinite *karuna* (compassion) had arranged, in that impossible situation, a 'private' in the middle of a staircase with no previous appointment. Even today, the memory of the quality of that darshan, *which was GRACE in visible form*, makes me forget everything else and my mind longs for a similar darshan again.

I remember that it was not before I had stood there for perhaps half a minute or more, lost in the bewitching Divine Presence, that I thought of the flowers in my hand, and then too, was able to offer them only slowly and timidly. Ma took them and moved away, leaving me with an inexhaustible *prasāda* of a rare darshan to be treasured for ever as a divine souvenir of Her eternal GRACE.

"Try to become a pilgrim on the path to the Ultimate; then there will be no misfortunes, no anxieties, no straying into by-paths."

—Mata Anandamayi

From my Kumbh Mela Diary

Melita Maschmann

(Translated from German by Willi Barton)

Kankhal, April 1974.

This morning, as Ma was coming from the ashram to go into the pandal, an old man prostrated himself at Her feet. He was laughing and crying at the same time. Obviously he could scarcely take it in that he—he alone among all the enormous crowds of people—had the privilege of being face to face with the famous saint. As he rose to his feet he beckoned with both arms to a group of women who had not dared to approach any nearer. They likewise prostrated themselves in the dust before Ma. Ma bowed and then said, inviting them towards the tent, "*Ao, pitaji, prem-daršana!*"! As the people followed Her, She repeated again and again, with a pleasant smile, "*Prem-daršana !*". Darshan of love, given and received by Her and the pilgrims, in an exchange of roles.

The morning satsang is peaceful and—in a relaxing way—intensive. We are in an interval between the high lights of the Kumbh-Mela. The number of pilgrims passing through the pandal is relatively small. Almost all come from the villages. Day in, day out, they go from camp to camp, hoping for a view of the famous mahatmas. Our ashram is situated right at the edge of the vast mela-complex. The elderly people are tired when they reach our tent, but



as soon as they catch sight of Ma it is as if an invigorating current passes through them. Ma calls them close to Her and speaks with them in the language of their simple lives, encouragingly and sympathetically.

Unfortunately I do not yet know enough Hindi to be able to understand the talks of the Swamis but I am happy that I can see Ma and I love to look through the tent entrance at the peepal tree on the other side of the road. Its leaves are bright green and tender. Light and shadow play in its foliage. Occasionally a shepherd drives his water-buffaloes past clumsily, leaving shadows against the green-carpeted background. A beggar plays on his flute. A bird answers from the bushes on the river bank. Then an elephant, surrounded by excited, jumping children, lumbers past. For a moment he turns his head toward the tent; his forehead bears the ritual markings of the Saktas in gleaming red and white.

Next to me in the pandal sits E., a newcomer, the wife of a Protestant pastor from Central Europe. During the morning satsang she reads her Bible. Occasionally she interrupts her reading to look at Ma, peaceful and contemplative. Two worlds? No, one world, whose differing aspects help the seeker to find his own way. Yesterday she said, "I feel as if I've been transported back into the community of the early Christians!" Many from the West have a similar experience here: Christ becomes more alive, more actual for them when they have met Ma: *Prem-darsana!*

Devotees from Delhi today brought a professional photographer. They apologized to Ma: "We would so much like to have some good photographs of you taken with our whole

family." Ma's patience as far as cameras are concerned is boundless (some years ago it was another matter, She hardly ever allowed Herself to be photographed). She knows that photographs of Her are a priceless treasure for us. Out of sheer love She does what almost no one else can afford to do without appearing ludicrous : She "strikes a pose." In a split second Her bearing and Her face express exactly what one imagines a picture of a spiritual master ought to : cheerfulness, composure, contemplation, peace. Can this be done on command ? With Ma it can—easily, convincingly and naturally. But it is not "put on", not a facade; it comes and it is absolutely genuine. She can do what is not given to us to do : in a moment She can plumb depths from which all this, all this peace and whatever we love to see in Her, rises to the surface, strong and real, and flows into every cell of Her body. That is why these photographs have a life of their own. For the one who can feel them, they emanate vibrations which remain mysteriously linked to their source in Ma. There are people far away in other continents whose lives have been radically changed through such a photograph. For Ma, contact with the everyday world is not severed when She suddenly assumes Her "saintly" posture. The dividing line is paper-thin. When the photographer indulges in some professional acrobatic—almost flat on his stomach—in order to catch a particular shot of Ma, the expression of contemplation on Her face disappears, swept aside by infectious, hearty laughter to be replaced in a split second by the serenity of the liberated soul. The transitions are breathtakingly fast.

As a part of the festivities in honour of Didima, sadhus of associate ashrams are invited on three occasions to

bandhāras. Ma supervises every detail of the preparations. At dawn She is on Her feet, a model housewife and hostess, for hours mobilising more than a dozen assistants into busy activity. Then by the time the guests stream into the pandal everything has been meticulously arranged. Ma sits relaxed and serene on Her couch, carefree and again quite given over to the spontaneity of the moment. The splendour and variety of the sadhus' appearance is quite fantastic. Among them are men with bold mounds of hair, with countless stiff ringlets, wild manes and also shorn skulls. Some are almost naked, some wear brilliant sashes over gay caftans. Many look more like warriors from mediaeval paintings than like monks; they bear old rusty swords or spears, the Shivaite trident, or musical instruments which cannot be seen in any of the world's museums. The swamis soberly dressed in saffron are in a minority. This lack of uniformity is rather refreshing.

While the tent is slowly filling, three young sadhus bring in the "*āsanas*" (sitting-mats) of the superiors of their ashrams and place them on the prepared places of honour. Each of them takes up his stance before the seat of his guru; each bears the insignia of the Mahamandaleshwara on his shoulder—the heavy silver staff, thick as a man's arm, its rich, artistic ornamentation betraying its great age. The aura of semi-military discipline which surrounds the deportment of these young sadhus suddenly vanishes when their lords and masters appear: three dignitaries! The word forces itself upon me as a rare verbal revelation, as if I were seeing for the first time in my life the embodiment of its meaning in flesh and blood. But what is this "dignity"?

The exact opposite of an assumed solemn deportment. Who here is the bearer of dignity, and who is borne by dignity? Three old men in saffron robes cross the tent with almost undignified haste to the place where Ma awaits them. When they are within a few yards of Her, Ma suddenly turns and bends down low. There is a fold in the carpet: Her guests could trip and fall! This movement of bending and straightening up again imprinted itself indelibly on my visual memory—and there is also an inner connection with the hasty tread of the Mahamandaleshwaras. The movement was not only beautiful, or graceful, but of astonishing almost childlike spontaneity, an expression of concern for the welfare of Her guests: In the lightness, elegance and harmony of this transitory movement something indescribable found expression—that eternal youth which an almost 80 years old body is capable of when it houses the spirit of God. One can hardly guess what it means to live in such a body, in freedom and loving strength, in a gentle, sublime flexibility which far surpasses our conceptions. There was something of this also in the movements of the three “dignitaries”; perhaps that is why it struck me so forcefully.

I do not remember ever having seen anything in Europe like the greeting between Ma and the three men—or rather, between Ma and the eldest of the three dignitaries, a man with sparkling eyes, a fresh youthful complexion and thick, silver-grey hair. He had a fine face. Perhaps I should say, his face was intelligent, fine-featured, as well as being strong and noble, exuding goodwill. His beard reached to the middle of his chest. He had never before met Ma, yet he greeted Her like an intimate friend or

brother—joyfully, radiantly, relaxed and free, without the slightest trace of formal etiquette. Ma had gone towards him with palms joined in greeting. When he reached for Her hands She bowed low before him and laid Her face on his hands, while he also bowed low before Her. They remained for a few moments in this attitude of respect as if fully to enjoy the supra-personal tenderness of the encounter. Then they stood upright and smiled into each other's eyes, each reading the life of the other—right to the most secret wellsprings. But that may be merely our interpretation, our way of dualistic thinking. Perhaps I ought rather to say: each reading his own life in the eyes of the other, the ONE life. (In my diary is written at this point: "This is how the redeemed greet each other.")

Yesterday afternoon Ma met me between the ashram and the pandal. The road was unusually empty and only one of Her girls was following Her at such a distance that it seems to me in retrospect that Ma was quite alone when She met me. I had intended to go for a walk and had suddenly turned back. Thus it was, with this change in direction, that Ma unexpectedly appeared in front of me as if out of nowhere. Her face was almost completely hidden behind a yellow towel. As She reached me She suddenly drew the cloth aside as if uncovering a wound. Her face was disfigured and so swollen that one eye had completely disappeared and Her lips were gaping thick and feverish. Tears sprang to my eyes and I heard myself saying something in my mother-tongue which I would rather not repeat here. A long, questioning look from Ma's good eye met me. Then She covered Her face again with the towel and

walked on. Naturally I was wondering why She uncovered Her face to me. Perhaps She knows that the question has often bothered me : do the Enlightened still suffer ? In conversations with friends I often think that this possibility is all too easily ruled out. It must be an essential part of Hindu teaching to assume that beings like Ma are beyond all suffering, otherwise it would not be stated so frequently. (For the evidence of one's eyes does not support this assertion !). That they are beyond suffering can only mean that they are no longer in danger of being overwhelmed by it, as we are ! That is it ! A few years ago Ma said to me on one occasion, "When you all are happy and devoted to God, then this body of mine is completely healthy." And another time : "I am so closely linked to you all that you are like parts of my own body !" What a responsibility for each one of us ! But who is prepared and who has the strength to take on this responsibility as a deliberate, conscious act ? If only we would at least be shocked to the depths of our being, in face of Her suffering and our responsibility, our guilt. (But our psychological defence-mechanisms are speedily and precisely at work !).

Some years ago I was watching Ma attentively during an hour of meditation. At that time She was very ill. Everybody else would have remained in bed and consulted the doctor in a similar condition of high fever and constant cough. Though Ma's body was obviously in a frail and tortured condition and though Her face was that of an old and sick woman, there was no expression of suffering, but peace and inwardness. Only for the duration of one split second this changed completely. One of the girls interrupted

Ma's *dhyāna* with a whispered question : At this very moment the peace on Her face suddenly seemed as if broken into hundred fragments and there was pain, naked, almost unbearable physical suffering, the full, unveiled expression of what we feel, when we are very ill. Hardly had I realized this change, when it was reciprocated and again there was nothing but serenity and a peace far above all physical reaction.

I may be wrong but at that moment it struck me : Ma lives in a constant identification with Her Atman. Just now Her illness and the disturbance of her *dhyāna* caused a sudden interruption of Her natural condition, and for a split second She appeared to experience what is natural to us : an identification with our body and its suffering. But in the same second She cut herself off from this "wrong" identification and came back to what is natural to Her : the supernatural peace.

This sounds reasonable, but let us not assume that we are able to penetrate the secret, which is hidden in the relation between the Enlightened ones and the mystery of suffering. The little we can say, can only be expressed through paradox : There is suffering in non-suffering and non-suffering in suffering.

In the text of the Holy Communion we read, "Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace." That is exactly it—the sacrificial lamb suffers because he takes upon himself our imperfections in order thereby to redeem us from them. There is no other peace for us than that which they purchase with their patient suffering.

Yesterday when we gathered for the third procession, Ma's face—which in the early morning had again been dreadfully swollen—was somewhat improved; when we came home seven hours later, it was almost normal. The procession began at 11 o'clock in the scorching May sun. For seven hours Ma sat on the uncomfortable sedan-chair, continuously bestowing Her blessing with hands raised in greeting on the thousands of pilgrims who streamed along the way. Her body is almost 78 years old, fragile and at times frail. But how inexhaustible is the power of the soul over its weakness! For seven hours, without a drop of water, in the burning sun, often shrouded for long periods in a cloud of dust which extends like heavy mist over the river-valley. Every little movement, the repeated clumsy halts of those pulling the sedan, must transmit itself as multiplied pain into that highly sensitive body. A landscape of thousands of human bodies spreads out on either side of the road. Faces, hair and clothing are covered with a thick layer of dust. Long before daybreak they have come with all their needs and sins, to await the darshan of the Mahatmas, the great ones, which promises salvation.

In our procession there is singing and at times dancing. But I see as well old folk stumbling barefoot along the stony road, feet streaming with blood, dripping sweat, exhausted, half-parched. Ma sees more than these suffering bodies. She sees the exhausted, bleeding souls and the desperate thirst for salvation. Never before have I seen the glow of the *Karunaōhāva* (compassion) on Her face for such long, simply endlessly long hours on end. With Her glance She encompasses everyone and everything. Later I hear Her say,

“Everything was God, He was riding in procession on the road and on the right and left of the road He was waiting for Himself.”

Our procession reaches the ashram between 6 and 7 in the evening. The commencement of the nightly *akhand-kirtana* for ladies had been scheduled for 8 o'clock. But we are all tired and need a few hours' rest. So the beginning is postponed. At 9 o'clock I come from my dharmasala to the ashram, refreshed. My first glance is upward to Ma's window. It is in darkness. “Thank goodness, She is having a little rest then, “I think Her girls had told me that She had rested but little the previous night. An hour later I suddenly see Ma entering the courtyard from the road. She has not allowed Herself even a moment's rest, but has been busy tidying up in the new guest-house. During the night kirtan I had plenty of opportunity to observe Ma. She didn't go to Her room once. Till 3 a.m. She was holding private conversations in Didima's *samadhi mandir*, summoning one person after another. At 3 o'clock finally the light went out. At 5-30 She was up again to bid farewell to followers from Bombay and then began the routine of one of Her occasional 24-hour “working days.” I have never seen anyone work so joyfully and with such absolute selflessness as She does. Her work is to impart to those who crowd in upon Her in an unending stream the certainty that they are loved by God.

When the men had ended the *akhand-kirtana* at 7 p.m. Ma was sitting in front of Her mother's *samadhi*. For the many who had bathed today in the Ganges, the Kumbh-mela had ended; but they all wanted Ma's personal blessing

before setting out on their homeward journey. At times the pressure was so severe that a few strong men had to come to Ma's protection. For hours She sits completely motionless in the turmoil and shouting of the crushing mob, Her soul withdrawn. One has the feeling that only Her body is sitting there and it must be indescribably weary. But we do not spare Her : She has to sing. That alone is the conclusion of the Kumbh expected by everyone. It takes a long time, but finally consciousness has been summoned back into Her body and She sings, "*Dhāro lao, dhāro lao...*". I am sitting quite near Her, yet I can hardly hear Her voice, it is so soft, like a breath from another world. It is painful to hear Her singing so soundlessly, completely exhausted—or completely withdrawn, or both ?

Suddenly the electricity fails. Still Ma sits for hours in Her place before the samadhi, in order to put *prasāda* into the hands which reach out to Her from the darkness.

Unity of Prophets and Saints*

Baron H. P. Van Tuyll Van Serroskerken

It is not easy for a westerner to write in remembrance of the privilege he has enjoyed of coming a little in contact with Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma. She is wonderful, but that often misused word does not really convey much and in any case you people of India, know far better than we do how wonderful Mother is. We westerners have not the same right to write about saintliness as easterners have, who are much more at home in it. Moreover the talk of a pupil cannot be compared with the Voice of the Master. On the other hand it is almost a duty to say a word in thankfulness for all one has received.

I am a Sufi-pupil of Murshid Inayat Khan who was born at Baroda in 1882, who went to the west to preach the old and still new point of view of Sufism, who left there many pupils and who died at Delhi on Febr. 5th, 1927. In the beginning of 1950, I was in Banaras where Mother Anandamayi at that time held a reunion at Her Ashram and She received my wife and me very kindly. We had the privilege to be introduced to Her kirtanas and of having a talk with Her.

Being Sufis it was not strange for us to sit at the feet of a Hindu saint, since we regard all saints and sages as a

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The author of this article passed away a few ye ars ago.

door through which to enter the dwelling of God. But then there are so many who call themselves saint or guru or murshid without really being so. How can we ever be sure of recognizing one? In the first place it must be said that if we err it is our own fault. False saints also have their tasks to fulfil in life, they give guidance to those who are not ready to receive the blessing of a real saint. And then there is a lesson which our Murshid taught us that we cannot recognize a saint by what he says or does but only by his atmosphere. "If you make yourself very meek and very mild, very still and quiet, free from any activity of the mind and you feel the presence of the Saint coming into your soul through your heart, a ray of the presence of God, a bliss, then you may be sure that he is a real one, a true Master." Moreover those who claim to be are never the real ones. I have met many of them in India and since Murshid Inayat Khan was in the west there have been false claimants there also in great numbers.

But I have the conviction that at different times in my life I have met three real, great Saints, all from India of course, namely: Sri Ramana Maharshi, who died in 1950 at Tiruvannamalai; then Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan who went to America and Europe to preach what he called the Sufi-message, a new branch of an old tree; and thirdly Mother Sri Anandamayī.

This is my personal conviction. There is never a proof. But there is something that comes very near a proof, when one takes to heart the words of the prophets, instead of, as most people do, only taking those parts to heart which suit their own ideas.

Let me first state that I have known Ramana Maharshi only through his books, but they appealed to me very much and I have always felt a real contact with him. This may be imaginary, yet for me it has always been real.

Of Murshid Inayat Khan I was a pupil and for some time travelled with him as his secretary. Sri Anandamayi Ma I met at Banaras in 1950.

The remarkable proof now is that though they come from quite different spiritual traditions, these saints, all three of them, give—originally and independantly of one another—the one old Message in the same renewed outward garb. That shows that what they say together, all three of them, is the Message of God for this time. This is very remarkable.

If one compares the Message of the Lord Manu with that of Sri Rama or of Sri Krishna or of the Lord Buddha as to their outward form—which is always the answer to the needs of the time—there is an evolution to be noticed in them. A similar evolution is to be found in the Messages of the Jewish Prophets from Abraham to Jesus Christ and with the Moslem Prophets from Abraham to Mohammed. It is caused by the progress of time. Will these messages of God stop coming on earth? No, God's messengers will always keep coming on earth from time to time, as long as mankind is living in darkness. As it is said in the Bhagavad Gita :

“Whensoever and wheresoever virtue wanes and vice waxes, then and there do I create myself.”*

* Commentary of Sri Ramanujacharya.

The Teacher always comes with the one and only task to lead humanity nearer to God.

The inner part of the Message "man becoming actually united to God," which is an inner creation brought about on earth by God's Prophets, is wrought in silence, without words. The outward part of the Message is the expression in words that the mind can understand. In the outward garb of the message progress is noticeable, keeping pace with the capacity of understanding that people have in different ages. Therefore, religions are essentially one although outwardly differently expressed. For this reason also it is a virtue if people accept the teaching of a new Prophet without mixing it up so much with habits and beliefs accumulated round the teachings of former Prophets. Holding fast to a former Message for too long, makes man lose his virtue of keeping to the one message of God which is outwardly renewed every time. Keeping pace with the outward successive expressions of the Message is a great virtue. This is easily done by following what is called mysticism, because mysticism, the inner part of the Message, is always one and the same, be it Hindu, Moslem or Christian, be it in the line of the yogis or of the Sufis. The difference is in the outward side, the religious side. In their depths all religions are one; in their outward expression they show the difference of the ages in which they appeared. The time has come for inner understanding to become the property of the whole of humanity. Peace, not based on this inner understanding can never develop into a real brotherhood, a real democracy. Peace means peace in God and peace with mankind at the

same time. It is the dharma of this age to create real brotherhood on earth.

The Arians from the west and the Arians from the east are one race which came, via the Kaukasus, from Egypt. They departed from there in two directions, one going to the west, the other to the east. They received from God two different ideals or tasks or dharmas : India to cultivate the heart and to seek God, and the west to develop organization and brotherhood. Now the time has come for them to blend and become one. Worshipping God and serving mankind are two sides of one and the same ideal. If only this were understood. The west should look to India in order to learn the realizations of God; and the east should take over from the west its organization which is the realization of brotherhood. Such a pity that those in India who at the moment try to follow the west are often inclined to let go the great virtue of India, the seeking of the realization of God. They often want to become even more western than the west. This exaggeration is understandable but it is to be hoped that it will not take them too long to find their balance. In the west, too, the balance is still far to seek. the conception of the realization of God, the inner side of religion or mystic life, has not been very much understood in the west.

Still, the evolution of mankind goes on and the ideal of the present time is for the east and the west to unite, to develop what Inayat Khan used to express in the words : "To make the whole of humanity as one single Brotherhood in the Fatherhood of God."

In the first ages at the beginning of manifestation there

was no religion on earth, there was no need for it, because all mankind was naturally concentrated on God. All people had religious perfection (Mahabhārata, Vana Parva, Section 148). That was the first yuga. Afterwards, when man became more selfish and materialistic, he lost that natural union with God. That was the time when the Prophets; the Messengers, the Avatāras started to appear on earth. In the next yuga the first Prophets reflected in their teaching more or less the olden times. The Prophets were the Prophets of Brahma, like Rama or Abram or Abraham. Later came the Prophets of Siva who were ascetics, they taught yoga. At the beginning of the last and darkest age, the Kali Yuga, those who came to help the world were Prophets of Viṣṇu. It was Sri Krishna who inaugurated that new age. He brought to India the path of devotion, Bhakti Yoga. From that time onwards appeared in India saints and sages of the bhakti line, worshipping Sri Krishna.

Amongst the Jewish Prophets this new age was inaugurated by Christ and among the Arabs the followers of Abraham Ishmael by the Prophet Mohammed. Among yogis and Sufis the understanding and following of the path of devotion has since then been predominant as a new development of what still is, always has been and will be the inner life, the seeking of Truth. No wonder that Sufism and bhakti yoga are so much alike. The keynote of both is the love of God.

Prophets are one in being, all religions are one in their essence, mysticism in one all over the world. So their followers and exponents, the saints, are also one. Though they may have different methods of training their disciples,

their goal and inner teaching are one and the same. What Hinduism calls the different gods and goddesses, Islam calls the different names of God. Well understood, there is no difference. However about things which are different outer expressions of what inwardly is one and the same truth, people fight and hate each other because it is their nature to fight like the animals.

When peoples say, "Your people have in the past done this and that to my people, have cruelly fought my people, therefore we have to go on hating and fighting each other," they show how little they are evolved spiritually. This attitude does not belong to the future age, to the Message of our time.

Brotherhood did not play its part, not because it was not preached, but because it was not accepted. In Vana Parva, Section 179, to the question, "Does not the distinction of caste become futile as long as conduct does not come into play," Yudhishthira answers, "In human society it is difficult to ascertain one's caste. Whosoever conforms to the rules of pure and virtuous conduct, him have I designated a Brahmana." Also the Lord Buddha declared himself at different occasions against the caste system. More than a thousand years later there came to India a race with a living ideal of brotherhood; and this was what, among other things, they were meant to bring. Perhaps they did not bring it in the most friendly way, but oppression is always a warning from God. When not taken to heart, a more severe oppression or punishment may follow even in these present times. The destiny of history is prepared by ourselves and let loose by God as a serious warning. Not before 1900 was

God's word (already expressed in the Mahābhārata) not to keep the caste system as rigidly as was done before, beginning to be understood. The caste system was splendid in the age of Manu, becoming later less fitting, to become obsolete in our days. Of course Mahatma Gandhi did a great work for his native country but it should go on and not fall back again.

The Message of these days is harmony between castes and nations, between creeds and religions. Enemies of the past should forgive each other and join hands in building a new ideal. To forgive each other, because God Himself is always willing to forgive, brings a great blessing in life. And as for looking at the past, it is always wiser to consider what should be forgiven us than what we have to forgive others.

People nowadays judge God because of what we human beings cruelly did to each other, not seeing that our destiny was caused by ourselves. To obey God's Word and to listen to the prophets and saints is the greatest virtue and the safest way for mankind to take. Only if man wants to listen to God's Messengers and to understand that all saints and prophets are a unity and have together one Voice, he will be on a safe path.

Now let me show you how the three above mentioned saints, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Murshid Inayat Khan and Sri Anandamayi Ma, bring the same Message by which they inaugurate a new age. Therefore they are more than saints, they are prophets.

In the most inspiring booklet "Maharshi's Gospel" we find the question : "What is the highest goal?" and

Sri Ramana's reply : "Self-realization." Later the question : "Who then is God ?" is answered with : "The Self is God, 'I am' is God." This is not the typical yoga point of view from before the days of Sri Krishna, which one still so often finds in India, but it is turning towards bhakti yoga of which, if universally looked at, Sufism is the latest exponent. The yogi's ideal is to reach God-realization through Self-realization and Sufism, just as bhakti yoga has as its ideal to attain to Self-realization through God-realization. This also forms part of the prophetic message of this age.

The central theme of Sri Anandamayi Ma's teaching is to be found in Her words : "All names are His Names, all forms His Forms, all qualities His Qualities, and the nameless and the formless are also He alone."

"Ascending and descending are one and the same thing, He who ascends is He who descends, and the acts of ascending and descending are also He."

"The intense desire for God-realization is itself the way to it."

"Without loving God you will not get anywhere. Remember this at all times."

"Pray to Him that you may continue to remain at His feet all the twenty-four hours of the day."

Compare herewith the answer Murshid Inayat Khan gave to the question : "Will you explain that the traveller on the path, the source and the goal is the I, the soul itself ?" "Not only the soul itself, but even God itself."

Murshid Inayat Khan's replies to the following questions also illustrate this point :

“Who is the Beloved of the Sufi ?” “God.”

“Who is the God of the Sufi” “His very Being.”

“What is the ideal of the Sufi ?” “Man.”

Still more remarkable from the point of view of the identity of the Messages of the three saints is what we read in “Maharshi’s Gospel” : “There is really no reincarnation at all, either now or before.” And again : “But the individuality of the person with *samskāras* is not lost.”

This is for a Hindu teacher a very extreme point of view to take, though it must be said that the teaching about reincarnation in the Gita is not as rigid as it is believed to be. And does not the Chandogya Upanishad say : “Truly, one’s fellowmen, departed once, do not get back to look at here.”

Non-reincarnation has been the belief of the Islamic and Christian religions. But what does the Sufi teacher Inayat Khan say about it ?

“Non-reincarnation and reincarnation are both theories, the one as good and as false as the other. This concerns only a difference of words. It is not possible to express the Truth in words. Both theories are true to a certain degree.” The soul does not reincarnate, the soul going from here returns to God; but it is the personality which reincarnates with a new soul coming from God. And later returning from her to God without touching the earth a second time again.” “Every person is unique in his way, in this lies the secret of the oneness of God.” Inayat Khan explained this very often. It is to be found among other things in his two books : “The Soul Whence and Wither” and to “The Mind-

World." It seems to me that Sri Ramana's and Inayat Khan's teaching on reincarnation are exactly the same.

"Soul is the life, and the light itself is God's own being." It is the personality that comes back. Every soul is God's eternal being, dressed when on earth in an old, a reincarnating personality. The more man realizes his soul, the more will he understand that he belongs to Eternity, and that his personality on earth is his garb, lent only for his life on earth. Man erroneously thinks that he is a soul, but in their deeper Self all beings are one and the same soul, the SOUL. All is God and God is all, "Reincarnation is a fact but not a truth," are words we have often heard the Murshid say.

"He who has been initiated by a Guru must under his direction try to keep his mind every minute of his life engaged in worship, japa, meditation, the perusal of sacred texts, in singing the praises of God, in satsang (sitting in the presence of the Guru or of a saint)," are Anandamayi Ma's words. This description would perfectly well do for the Sufi training. Inayat Khan described the training under a Murshid as consisting of unlearning and learning, of moral training, of meditation and prayer and of seeking the presence of the Teacher often and of keeping silence with him.

Some saints give more teaching, others keep more silence. But all do both, each at its own time. It all depends on conditions. The deeper side, however, of the Message is not in words but comes to life in silence in the Saint's presence. Light and illumination pass in this way from Master to pupil, from the Saint to his devotee. As

Inayat Khan says, "The Saint's, the Murshid's, the Guru's work is to make himself the globe through which the light is directed. And it is the pupil's work to respond, to keep his mind free from all other thoughts and feelings. The force is always working but its effect depends on the response."

There is not one atom of difference between the Message of God given in our age by these three saints, two coming from the yogi-line and one from the Sufi-line. And this is a very remarkable fact.

It is very remarkable indeed how Sri Ramana, Hazrat Inayat Khan and Sri Anandamayi Ma all were or are giving the same Message, bringing all the former Messages together as a unity. Because to realize God is one thing, but to bring a Message of God to the masses is a greater service to humanity.

The Message of God is always old and always new. To-day it becomes clearer than ever that God expects the whole world to understand His one and eternal Message in the same way, based on a deeper understanding of God, on love and harmony. What a blessing it would be for man to understand this and to forget all the fights and misunderstandings of the past. God is always willing to forgive, man would be blessed if he could practise this ideal himself.

The question which people are apt to ask, "Who is the greatest of these three saints?" is altogether wrong. The Message of God is His Message, and to know this is enough for us. Saints and Prophets are one in the service of God. These three saints with a Universal Message, coming from different spiritual traditions, different aspects of the past, are one. Blessed is India where they were born and which, so to say, has given them to the world. ★

Mātri Līlā

(January 15th–April 15th, 1975.)

Mataji arrived in Vrindaban from Naimisharanya on January 16th. On Her way She halted in Lucknow for a couple of hours at the residence of Sri Rameshwar Sahai. The Governor of the U.P., Dr. Chenna Reddy came there for Her darśana and took Mataji to the Ry. Station in his own car.

On January 17th several boys received their sacred threads in Ma's presence. From January 18th to 25th two Bhagavata Saptahas were held simultaneously. The devotees at whose requests the Saptahas took place were Dr. Premlata Srivastava of Varanasi and Sm. Shubhadra Ben Pabary of Nairobi. Every afternoon the explanations of the Bhagavata in Hindi were given by Pt. Srinath Sastri in his lucid and vivacious manner. Sri Swami Vishnu-ashram of Suktal came and stayed at our Ashram for two days during that time. On January 25th one of the Brahma-charinis of our Ashram received her sacred thread. Mataji was expected to leave Vrindaban in the last days of January but She had the *kheyāla* that another Bhagavata Saptaha should be celebrated for which Dr. Saroj Paliwal, the Principal of the R. C. A. Girls' Degree College, Mathura, had been longing for years. She was sent for and the Saptaha was observed from January 27th to February 3rd.

Sri Nityananda Bhat of Vrindaban recited the Sanskrit text every morning and also gave the commentary in Hindi in the afternoons. On February 3rd evening Sri Swami Govinda Prakashji, the head of the Rama Thirtha Ashram, arrived to the great delight of everyone present.

A number of foreign devotees had come to spend some time with Mataji at Vrindaban. Among them was a young American couple with their baby daughter whom they had named Nirmala Sundari.

Mataji left Vrindaban by car for Delhi in the afternoon of February 6th. For full three weeks Mataji had blessed Vrindaban with Her holy presence. Now followed seven weeks of incessant, extensive peregrinations, north, east and west. Even the account of these quick movements is breathtaking. With the single exception of Ahmedabad where a Bhagavata Saptaha was held, Mataji never stayed in one place for more than three nights, often less.

Remaining in our Ashram at Kalkaji for merely three hours, Mataji left Delhi for Hardwar by the night train, alighting in Kankhal on February 7th, morning. On the 10th She motored to Dehradun and went straight to Her cottage at Panchavati, next to Kalyanvan where She remained until the 13th evening. Every evening Mataji came to the Kishenpur Ashram to give darśana and a few private interviews. On the 12th morning *Akṣaṇḍa Rāmāyana* was started at the Rama Mandir in Kalyanvan, ending on the 13th at midday. Mataji came there once on the 12th and again for *Pūrnāhuti* (completion) on the 13th. At night Mataji boarded the train to Delhi.

There also She did not stay at the Ashram but went from the Railway Station directly to the new house of Sri G. S. Pathak at Nitibagh, where the upper floor has been specially built and reserved for Mataji's use. It comprises a small hall and a large veranda besides Mataji's set of rooms. Mataji called it an Ashram. There no crowd could collect. Every evening Mataji would go to the Kalkaji Ashram for a couple of hours and give darśana. On February 16th, Vasant Panchami day, Saraswati Puja was solemnly celebrated first at Nitibagh from 8-10 a.m. Sri Pathak has a permanent *vighraha* of the goddess. Chhobi Banerji had come from Calcutta and sang beautifully during the puja. Mataji also sang for some time. After the worship, the grandson of Mataji's brother was given his first lesson in reading and writing on this auspicious day which is dedicated to the goddess of learning, art and *Brahmavidyā*.

As soon as the function was completed, Mataji proceeded to the Ashram where the goddess was worshipped from 11 a. m. to 1 p. m. Naturally an immense crowd of devotees had assembled. There also Chhobi Banerji and others sang during the ceremony. After the pūjā, Mataji sat in front of the Siva Mandir and hundreds, who had formed a queue, filed past Her doing praṇāma, offering garlands, fruits etc. and some doing pūjā. The process, however, proved time consuming and when the pressure of people became intolerable Mataji got up and stood on the staircase leading to Her cottage, receiving offerings there. Hundreds could have Her darsana from below and catch garlands and fruits which Mataji kept on throwing down to them to their

great delight. Brahmachari Nirmalananda had made excellent arrangements for prasāda of which most visitors partook. Mataji left the Ashram at about 2 p. m. In the evening She and Her party followed an invitation to the residence of Sri Sitaram Jaipuria and his family. The next morning Mataji again came to the Ashram for some time.

The same afternoon She boarded the train to Calcutta with a few companions, reaching Howrah at 5-30 p. m. on February 18th. Even those who travelled with Ma did not know where She would stay. She went to Bhasa village near Behala on the Diamond Harbour Road, about 15 miles from Howrah Station. There She and Her small party were accommodated in the garden house of Sri Bibhuti Chakravarti, who had been instrumental in calling Mataji to Calcutta. The first evening was completely quiet. Nobody could guess Mataji's address. The next day She gave permission to let people know. Gradually the number of visitors eager for Ma's darśana increased. But being quite far from the city, it was less crowded than at Agarpara. On February 21st Mataji went to Calcutta proper for the inauguration of Sri B. Chakravarti's new flat in Camac Street. That day She also visited the houses of a few devotees. On the 22nd She came to our Ashram at Agarpara and stayed overnight. An impetuous crowd collected for Her darśana. On the 23rd She returned to the garden house.

An interesting incident must be mentioned here. The garden house is situated in the midst of extensive grounds, comprising five ponds. Mataji was shown round and a little pet deer was brought to Her to which our host and his

wife were greatly attached. However, the deer was quite ill. It gazed at Ma intently and Mataji also looked at it full of compassion. Someone remarked : "Now the deer will get well." Ma said : 'See, what happens !' The following night the pet died. Mataji said it had been a *Mahāpurusa* and should be given proper samādhi. A pit was dug and filled with salt and the body of the deer was put into it. Ārati was performed. A small toy deer was later placed over the cemented cover in memory. The *Mahāpurusa* had obviously waited for Ma's darśana to be released from his animal body. One can only marvel at Mataji's līlā. Who is able to guess for whose sake Mataji goes where ?

On February 24th, Ma started for Varanasi, arriving there quite unexpectedly on the 25th morning. Mataji was to leave for Allahabad the next day, but as Swami Paramananda suddenly got ill, She prolonged Her sojourn until March 1st and took Swamiji with Her to Bombay for treatment. The day Mataji reached Varanasi was full moon day (*Māghi Pūrnimā*). So Satyanarayana Puja was performed in the evening in Gopal Mandir in great style. Kirtana was kept up during the pūjā and prasāda distributed to the huge crowd that had assembled. The next morning the reputed sitar player Sri Ravi Shanker came for Ma's darśana and spent some time with Her. In the evening the annual prize distribution ceremony of the Kanyapeeth was observed in Mataji's holy presence. Dr. K. L. Srimali, the Vice-Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University presided over the function. Many of the elite of the city and some high officials including the Vice-Chancellor of the Varanasi Sanskrit University, Dr. Karunapati Tripathi graced the

occasion. They all witnessed the delightful programme gone through by the girls of the Kanyapeeth for about two hours. Mataji remained present throughout and gave Her blessings to each and every recipient of prizes. She seemed visibly pleased with the progress of the girls. She remarked more than once that the demeanour of the students, in fact every detail about them, conjured up the memory of the *Rishi kanyas* of ancient India.

In the morning of February 27th, Mataji accepted an invitation to the house of Dr. Srimali at the B. H. U. campus. She was seated on a tastefully decorated dais while *bhajanas* and kirtana were performed by the staff and students of the Music College.

On March 1st, Mataji drove to Allahabad and spent one night at the Satyagopal Ashram, leaving for Bombay on March 2nd. There also She remained for one night and a day only, proceeding to Ahmedabad on the 4th night. There She halted on March 5th at the residence of Sri M. K. Munshaw, travelling to Gondal at night, partly by car and and then by train, reaching on the 6th morning. A charming reception had been prepared for Mataji by the uncle and aunt of the Raja of Gondal who had requested Mataji to celebrate Sivaratri in their state. A procession was waiting for Mataji at the palace gate and escorted Her car to the pandal. It was headed by a music band, then 108 *kumārīs* (little girls) dressed in the colourful costume of Saurashtra, balancing on their heads small, daintily decorated vessels. A Gujarati Kirtana party followed with the Ashram Kirtana party at the rear. Mataji sat in the pandal for some time while pandits chanted from the Vedas and āratī was performed.

The same afternoon Mataji went on to Ranavav, a village near Porbander, where devotees had built a special house for Mataji's use a couple of years ago, but She had been unable to go there in person so far. Now at last Mataji graced Ranavav with Her presence for two days. Excellent, carefully thought out arrangements had been made. There was satsang [all day long in a huge pandal that had been provided for the occasion. Mahatmas delivered discourses, with *bhajana*, kirtana and recitation of Scriptures in between. The climax of every day was "Mātri Satsang" at night when Ma replied to questions very generously and also sang kirtana. The news of Mataji's visit and the programme of satsang had been announced in the papers and so an enormous congregation gathered on both days from neighbouring towns and villages.

On March 7th, Mataji went to Porbander for a few hours. She visited Mahatma Gandhi's birth-place, a number of temples and the Gurukul, an institution with one thousand students. A reception was given to Mataji in the school-hall. The students chanted prayers very beautifully, Mataji then sang and finally spoke to the children. In the morning of March 8th, Ma Yogasakti came to see Ma and spent a few hours with Her. The same evening Mataji returned to Gondal.

On March 9th and 10th, Mataji visited a famous temple of Bhuvaneshvari at Gondal, an institution for women and a Girls 'School. There songs and Garbha dances were displayed before Mataji and She Herself sang for a short while. Mataji also followed an invitation of H. H. the Raja of Gondal to his palace gardens.

The pandal at Gondal was of imposing size and thousands flocked from everywhere in Gujerat and Saurashtra for Mataji's darśana. At night Mātri Satsang was held there also.

On the 11th, Sivaratri Puja took place all night. So far Sivaratri had been celebrated in Ma's presence every year in one of Her ashrams. This was the first time that it took place in Gujerat and at someone's invitation. Many of the two hundred *vratīs* who came to participate in the all night worship after a complete fast throughout the preceding day, had not even witnessed the festival ever before. The collective pūja had been arranged on the spacious veranda of the palace, while Mataji took up Her seat in the porch just outside, surrounded by a few who watched. Exquisite kirtana was sung in the intervals between the four pūjās. Several first class singers had come, headed by Chhobi Banerji. Mataji was present most of the night and as usual on this occasion sang in the small hours, when people are in danger of dozing off.

On March 12th, Mataji left by car for Ahmedabad alighting there the same night. On the way She visited two places and a temple at Rajkot. In the temple area an enormous pandal had been specially erected, although Mataji remained there only for about twenty minutes. Here also thousands paid their homage to Her.

On the 13th morning a Bhagavata Saptah started in a spacious pandal at the residence of the niece of the late Sri Kantilal Munshaw, Sm Sneha Vina Shah at Shahibagh, Ahmedabad for the spiritual uplift of her deceased husband.

A thatched hut had been built for Mataji's personal use. The explanations in Gujarati were given twice daily for several hours and Mataji attended each session for a short time. In the evening She would sometimes visit the houses of devotees, At night "Mātri Satsang" was held and on some days Ma replied to questions.

On March 21st, Mataji boarded the night train to Bombay, reaching there the next morning. A very large crowd collected for Her darśana at Vila Parle. Mataji left on the 23rd night for Delhi where She spent just one night at our Kalkaji Ashram on the 24th, leaving for Moradabad by car the next morning.

At Moradabad Sri Hari Babaji's devotees had made elaborate arrangements for the celebration of the 91st birthday of the Mahātmā who took Mahāsamādhi in 1970 in Ma's presence. The celebrations continued from March 22nd to 27th. Mataji followed the urgent invitation of the devotees and arrived there on the 25th afternoon. There was uninterrupted chanting of Mahamantra throughout the six days and nights in a devotee's house. A large pandal had been provided for daily performances of Rāsalīlā by Sri Hari-babaji's favourite Rāsa party from Vrindaban and for the daily afternoon and evening programme of discourses by Mahātmās. On the 25th evening the pandal was completely smashed by a severe hailstorm. Fortunately not a single person was hurt. Another pandal was improvised in a different place the next morning. Mataji watched the Rāsalīlā for a short while and gave darśana in the afternoon during a few lectures. On the 27th a very charming little temple

with a surprisingly life-like statue of Sri Haribabaji in the centre and beautiful *vigrahas* of Radha-Krishna and Nitai-Gouranga to his right and left, was consecrated in Mataji's presence. The temple is in the courtyard of the house of a devotee who was largely responsible for the arrangement of the festivities. The 27th was the climax of the celebrations being Holi and also Sri Haribabaji's birthday. Mataji does not play Holi anymore as She used to in former years. However, Her people were allowed to offer flowers and coloured powder at Her feet and Mataji put dry-red powder on everyone's forehead.

On the 28th midday, Mataji left for Naimisharanya for a much needed rest. From there She arrived in Kankhal on April 8th for the *sannyāsa utsava* of Didima and the first anniversary of the consecration of her Samādhi Mandir on April 14th.

At Kankhal Mataji is usually in very good form and keeps good health. Her *kheyāla* these days is chiefly on Kankhal and Naimisharanya. The daughter of the renowned south Indian singer Sm. Shubhalakshmi, Sm. Radha, herself an accomplished musician, was present until the 12th and on two or three evenings delighted us with her sweet songs. Mahamandaleshwara Sri Prakashanandaji of Jagadguru Ashram would come daily and give short, but inspiring talks during the evening satsang in the Ashram courtyard. On the 11th Mataji went to his Ashram to grace the completion of a Bhagavata Saptaha. There also Sm. Radha regaled the large audience with her lovely songs and Mataji Herself sang for a short while.

On the 14th, the new, very large hall of our Ashram was opened with elaborate ceremonies. *Nagar kirtana* round the Ashram area started at 4 a. m. and at about 6³⁰ a. m. several deities namely, Sri Narayana, Sri Padmanabh, Sri Radhakrishna and others were carried in procession from the Siva temple to the hall where pūjā and later havan were celebrated until about 1 p. m. in one part of the hall. Simultaneously satsang was held in the other part of the hall. First kirtana, then recitation of the Gita, Chandī, Upanishad, Bhagavata, followed by discourses of various Mahatmas between 10 a. m. and 12 p. m. Mataji was present from early morning in the hall, except while pūjā was performed in Didima's Samādhi Mandir between 8 and 10 a. m. The functions were followed by a feast given to sanyāsis and to all present. On April 15th Mataji followed an invitation to Bhagavad Dhāma, Hardwar where a large gathering was held. Mataji was asked to talk but She sang instead.

On April 16th night, Mataji travelled to Naimisharanya where the consecration of Puran Purusa Mandir is scheduled for May 14th and a Bhagavata Saptah from 9th to 16th. Soon after, Mataji is expected to go to Calcutta where Her birthday will be celebrated from May 22nd to 30th. Mataji was born in 1896 and is completing Her 79th year. From the depths of our hearts we all unite in the fervent prayer that Mataji may graciously remain in our midst in perfect health and vigour for many, many years and bless this sorrow-stricken world by Her holy presence.
