

## **CONTENTS**

1. Matri Vani	...	...	...	...	59
2. Matri Satsang in Solan		—Swami Bhagawatananda Giri...			62
3. Thoughts on Mataji (III)		—Jyotipriya		...	67
4. Holy Reminiscences		—Jainath Kaul		...	75
5. From My Kumbh-Mela Diary		—Melita Maschmann		...	82
6. Unity of Prophets and Saints		—Baron H. P. Van Tuyall Van Serroskerken...			95
7. Matri Lila	...	...	...	...	106

---



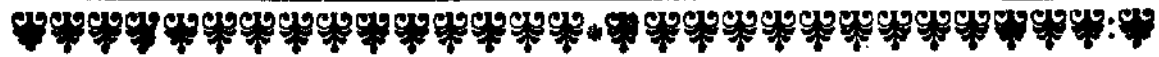
# Ānanda Vāritā



Vol. XXII ]

APRIL, 1975

[ No. 2



*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.

\*

\*

\*

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 (*akṣara*), God is present in the word (*śabda*).

\*

\*

\*

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.

\*

\*

\*

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

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*).

\*

\*

\*

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.

\*

\*

\*

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-darśana!*”! As the people followed Her, She repeated again and again, with a pleasant smile, *Prem-darśana !*”. 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-daršana!*

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"?