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Ānanda Vārtā



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[No. 3



*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

God builds fate—He is not only the maker of fate, He Himself is also fate; keep this in mind. When one speaks of destiny, it is as He decrees—here rules and regulations do exist. World (*jagat*) means that which moves and individual (*jiva*) that which is in bondage. In this state fate and restraint, rules and regulations, activity, are in force. As ordained by the Great Mother, whatever is the result of any action that She will bestow without fail.

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Where a true bhakta (lover of God) is, the Sad-guru will most certainly manifest in person. When there is need of a Guru, his appearance is but natural. So long as one has not found one's Guru, the ordinary person's duty is to engage in the study of Scriptures, in japa, meditation, the chanting of God's name—any Name one likes best. In order to reach the state of a genuine bhakta one must constantly devote oneself to *satkriyā*, action which aims at the Eternal.

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It is Ma's *kheyāla* that you should live in the pursuance of the Supreme Object of life, constantly remain in this atmosphere—so that He Himself may stand revealed. Men and women of the most varied temperaments and conditioning gather round Ma. One lives in an Ashram to drive away the habit of considering others as distant from oneself which is foolishness. Mataji does not send anyone away. By prolonged residence in a *satsihān*, in other words, a place dedicated to God and the search after Truth, and by *satsang*, the company of saints and seekers after Truth, *sadbuddhi*, true understanding, will be awakened.

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This body (Mataji) does not call any ashrams into being. Where *shrama* (weariness) is not, there one can speak of an Ashrama. Beyond the universe and extending over the entire cosmos is only one single Ashrama—where there are lakes and oceans, where there is no such thing as one's own country

and foreign countries, which contains whatever anyone may ascribe to it.

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Ashramites must not pay attention to honour or insult, to praise, position and fame. Everything has to be surrendered at the feet of the Lord. Have you not chosen this life, renouncing everything! To be insulted (*apmān*) means to bear animosity willingly (*apa mene nowa*). In all shapes is He alone—be friendly and affectionate towards all.

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Like a hero, taking refuge in patience attend to your duties. Don't fall a prey to despair, don't be broken. One must remember that just as good times do not continue for ever, so God can also put an end to bad times. While repeating God's name mentally carry out whatever happens to be your duty.

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Father has written that he finds no joy (*rasa*) in the spiritual. So long as one has not crossed over the desert, dryness will not go. At present the One has taken on the guise of dryness, so there is hope that He may also let Himself be found as delight (*rasa*). For how many lives have you not been in the body to reap the fruits of your actions. Your longing for the taste of divine delight will make you a pilgrim from the realm of want to the realm of your true being. Body means want—want of completeness, fulfilment, perfection.

Mātri Satsang

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Hindi)

Ardha Kumbha Mela,
Triveni, Prayag.
February 6th, 1948.

A devotee : I like your teaching very much.

Mataji : This is very good. But you have to follow to the letter the instructions of your Gurudeva. With every breath, day and night, you should repeat the mantra received from your Guru. In the shape of the mantra your Gurudeva is always with you. Carry out his orders with great precision. Even if, since your receiving the mantra, your Guru has attained to *Nirvāna*, still the Guru-mantra will pave the way to Self-realisation.

Question : Should one have more than one Guru ?

Mataji : When you dig a well you have to dig in one place. Then only will you for all time be able to draw sweet, refreshing water. If you start digging a well today here and to-morrow somewhere else, how can you ever get water ? We are told that the great Guru Dattatreya had accepted twenty-four Gurus. But these were instructors who taught him. *Dikṣa* (initiation) must

be taken from one Guru only. The same path will not do for everyone. However, every person must specially bear in mind that the commands of one's Guru must be followed implicitly to the minutest detail. Whether one lives or dies, the Guru's orders must at all times be carried out with single-minded devotion. Without such dogged devotion, how can anything be achieved in God's empire? Wherever you may go, keep in mind that everything all around belongs to your Gurudeva. This attitude of a purified mind comes about of itself. One may certainly also profit from the teachings of other mahātmās, provided they be in tune with those of one's own Guru. But if a mahātmā tells you something that clashes with the commands of your own Guru, it is not right to follow it. You should not even go near such a mahātmā, because this may prove harmful (*aniṣṭa*) to you. Do you know what *aniṣṭa* means? That which can never be *aniṣṭa* (harmful), that verily is the *Iṣṭa*. When you have the good fortune of meeting great men and of listening to their words, you should understand that these wonderful opportunities have presented themselves by the grace of your Sadguru, because you have taken refuge in Him. Feel: "All this good luck is due to the mercy of my Gurudeva." One must try to see one's Guru and one's *Iṣṭa* in everything in the world. To obey the injunctions of one's Guru implicitly is the highest *dharma* (duty).

Question : If after having been initiated one's Guru attains Nirvana and is therefore liberated, will the Guru-

deva have to come back to get liberation for his disciple ?

Mataji : If you think that your Guru has attained final release, then also He will find ways and means of helping and guiding you although you may not be aware of it. Your Guru is your all. When by His grace you will have found God then you will come to know this. When you desperately yearn for the vision of the merciful, adorable Lord and invoke Him with a sincere heart full of intense devotion, He will surely listen to your call. Appearing to you exactly in the form in which you love Him most and desire to have his vision, He will give you complete satisfaction.

February 7th, 1948.

In the morning some reading of Scriptures is going on in the Satsang tent, Mataji is present and listens. When the reading is over, a devotee asks :

“Mataji, how can the mind be made one-pointed ?”

Mataji : Take good care of the mind which can be compared to a child. If you serve the mind well it will get into the habit of being calm.

Question : Should one then act according to the dictates of the mind ?

Mataji : Do you obey your children ? If you patiently explain to children again and again, this will have a result. Remember that in order to control their children, parents choose the best company for them,

that is to say, satsang. If children are given nourishing, wholesome food and are kept in the company of wise people, they gradually take a liking to their studies. Real sustenance for the mind is provided by satsang and the constant remembrance of God. Give more time to the thought of Him than to anything else. Japa, meditation, the company of saints and sages, worship, recitation of scriptures, chanting hymns in praise of God, the repetition of mantras—all these constitute the proper diet for the mind. By partaking of it the mind will gradually calm down and become one-pointed. Just as when a small child is given a toy, he will stop crying and start playing with the toy, forgetting everything else. Therefore keep your mind constantly engaged in some pure and holy work. The mind should ever be busy with some God-centered activity. The Iness with which you perform all your work must with all its intelligence and energy be consecrated to actions aiming at the Supreme One. Lay whatever you do at His holy feet. Thereby all your undesirable tendencies will be obliterated. This is the way to serve your child, the mind.

Question : I am full of anger; what am I to do? How can I get rid of it?

Mataji : Get absorbed in the worship of God and anger will take to its heels, your temper will cool down. A man who gets angry is out of his senses. He becomes red in the face. Firy sparks flash from his eyes. Just as when a single drop of poison falls into the best, sweet milk, the whole of it is spoiled, so anger creates

havoc in you. Someone related that a mother became very furious at the time of feeding her baby. As a result the infant died on the spot. Excessive anger had poisoned the mother's milk. Wrath means death—therefore never allow deadly anger to take possession of you. The evil tendencies of the person whom you condemn or with whom you become enraged will enter into you. What do you gain by this? Why do you want to have a share in sin? You should engage in good and godly actions that will blot out sin and evil tendencies. Never make common cause with anger.

Question : What is the expedient for getting rid of anger ?

Mataji : When a plant becomes dry, what do you do? You water its roots. Similarly when your body feels the lack of energy, what do you do? You have a substantial meal. The root cause of anger is foolishness (*durbuddhi*).

Question : How does one acquire the power to eradicate anger?

Mataji : How one acquires power? By doing exactly as one's Guru prescribes. Carry out the orders of your Guru who is the ocean of compassion and mercy. Seek the company of sādhus and mahātmās. Whenever anger arises call to mind that the road of anger is the road to death. Whereas you must tread the path to immortality. Therefore never lose your temper. Spend more and more of your time in the thought of God, practise japa, meditation or other spiritual exercises,

attend religious meetings and read sacred books. By thus watering the roots of your being you will acquire plenty of power.

Question : Mataji, you have said, one should divert one's desires and cravings to the attainment of God-realization. What does this mean ? Please explain !

Mataji : When a small child needs something, he cries and his mother takes him on her lap. Likewise you must just think constantly of your beloved God and He will grant you whatever you desire. You cannot remain divorced from God. In whatever shape a devotee wishes to see God, in that very shape He gives him *darśana*.

"If you place on one side of the scales all spiritual practices and efforts, and on the other silence, you will discover that silence outweighs the others.

We should love silence so that the world may die in our hearts."

St. Isaac of Syria

From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the January 1975 issue)

The Kumbh Mela and Bholanath's death in 1938.

1938 was the year of the *kumbha* at Haradwar. The *kumbhamela* (the festival of the *kumbha*), is a religious event of great moment for all Hindus. This festival is held in rotation of three years, at four places, viz, Prayag, Haradwar, Nasik and Ujjain, so that each town has a turn after twelve years. The festivals in Haradwar in April and in Prayag in January are considered specially important. Pilgrims from all corners of India foregather on the banks of the Ganges, to bathe in it on the auspicious days and at the indicated times. People put up in all kinds of impromptu shelters, such as tents, straw huts or any other type of temporary construction. The residents of the town meet such members of their family and friends, they have not seen for decades.

All pilgrims are expected to gather under the banner of their own *pandā* (the professional caretakers of pilgrims at holy places), for facilities of food and shelter. The fluttering of differently marked flags of the *pandās*, indicate their destinations to the pilgrims from afar. The riverside becomes alive with the voices of thousands of people. The highlight of the *mela* is the gathering of all the ascetic orders of the Hindu religion. This is one place and time when the lay

people get glimpses of all the *sannyāsa āśramas* (ascetic orders). In accordance with the tradition of the *kumbha*, the sadhus are shown the highest respect and given precedence over all other participants. The lay people go around visiting the camps of the renowned ascetics, monks or *sadhus*, listening to discourses on their favourite scriptures or attending other religious events, or simply joining in any *kirtan*. As a matter of fact, one may hear the strains of *kirtan* at some camp or another, from almost any corner of the vast camp-site. For one month or so, people live in the exhilarating atmosphere of a joyful festivity.

Mataji has called the *kumbha*, the *dhvajā* (sign, emblem, banner) of the Hindu dharma. Mataji's description seems singularly apt when we consider the various elements which combine to make possible such an extraordinary occurrence as the *kumbhamela*. Just as a banner is indicative of the place where people gather actuated by the same purpose, so perhaps is the *kumbha*, a place and time which discloses to the Hindu his religion as an option which is viable (*śreyas*) and is to be existentially experienced as such. The tradition brings together the ascetic as well as the householder in an experience of personal commitments (*sankalpa*) to the common goal. This again recreates the opportunity of a religious experience which is indicative of the dimension of freedom inherent in it.

Mataji, in general, accepts invitations and suggestions for attending the *kumbha* festivals, mostly because Her presence makes it possible for many people to take part in it. Hundreds of devotees have had occasion to become alive to Her kindness and thoughtfulness in bringing the *kumbha*

within the bounds of possibility for them. In 1938, Mataji already happened to be in Haradwar, having arrived there a few months before. She was staying at the house of Dr. Pitambar Panth on the bank of the Ganges. Dr. Panth had retired from service and had settled in Haradwar. He had met Mataji previously when She had been travelling around with Virajmohini Devi. While in Etawah, Mataji had suffered from some stomach upset. Dr. Panth, who was the civil surgeon of the town at the time, had brought some medicines for Her. Mataji had said to him that although it was not Her *kheyāla* to take any medicines at the time, if ever She did have the *kheyāla*, perhaps She would begin by placing Herself under his medical care. It so happened that Mataji was quite ill at the beginning of the year. She ran high temperatures and suffered from pain in Her arms. While in Dehradun, the doctors wanted to treat Her for the fever which became very alarming at times. Bholanath was put in a quandary over this matter because he knew only too well that the course of Mataji's *kheyāla* should not be interfered with. The new devotees of Dehradun, however, not knowing Mataji so well, began to demur at Bholanath's reluctance to put Her under medical treatment. At length, he gave way in the face of general opinion and agreed that Mataji should be treated by the much respected Dr. Some of Dehradun. When this question of medical treatment came up, Mataji recalled Her words spoken to Dr. Panth years ago. Somebody came up with the information that Dr. Panth had retired from service and was living in nearby Haradwar. Mataji thus had the *kheyāla* to go to Haradwar and contact Dr. Panth. He was overjoyed to see Her again

but very troubled to find Her ailing. He agreed to prescribe medicine for Her but he did this with great hesitation. He said to Her, "I can prescribe only for ordinary people. My medicine is not going to be effective unless you have the *kheyāla* to terminate this illness. Please, for our sake, get well now."

Mataji became seriously ill from the first day of Her taking the medicines. To Her alarmed companions She said smilingly, "Why do you have such distaste for the illnesses? I don't ask any of you to go away, do I? The illnesses want to be with me for some time. I am not 'ill'. But if I take medicines then naturally I have to be ill."

Acceding to Dr. Panth's request, Mataji came to his house on the Ganges in the last week of February. It was a spacious house and slowly began to fill up with visiting devotees. Mataji gradually began to walk about a little. Her illness and recovery, as always, followed a pattern of their own, not correlated with the intake of medicines. Throughout this time She continued to receive people as usual and talk to them. There was a constant flow of guests from Delhi, Dehradun, Bareilly and other places. Niraj Nath Mukerji came with his family from Etawah for a few days. Bholanath was very pleased with Niraj's young son, Bindu, whose singing was liked by everyone. Bindu learned to sing kirtan and accompanied Bholanath on his *nagar-kirtan*, sometimes hoisted on his shoulders, so that the boy's voice could be heard over the general din of the crowds.

Bindu's mother asked one day, "Is it necessary to perform the yogic disciplines of *āsana*, etc.?"

Mataji replied, "It is advisable always to discipline oneself. After all everybody is sitting or standing or lying in some posture or other. The bodily attitudes reveal the state of the mind. It can be easily seen that all feelings and emotions are related to a stance of the body. The mind can be controlled only when the body is adjusted appropriately. But one must not despair. The mind which appears to be singularly unamenable to discipline, is also to be appreciated as a great 'ascetic'. It is never satisfied with what is given here but is forever turning away to look for something beyond!"

Haradwar was becoming crowded with the rush of pilgrims for the coming *kumbha* on April 13th. Bholanath was always happy on such occasions of religious significance. Every morning, he would collect all available men and set out walking through the streets of the town, singing *kirtan* (*nagar-kirtan*). His tall and dignified personality commanded respect from all passers-by. Strangers came up and bowed to him and stayed to swell the throng of his *kirtan* party.

On April 13th, the final day of the festival, Bholanath accompanied by a great crowd of devotees went to *Brahma-kunda* for the ceremony of the bath. He was spontaneously acclaimed by the other ascetics gathered there for the same purpose. They did not know who he was but must have perceived in him an exalted personality commanding respect.

Unknown to others Bholanath, while bathing in the holy river, performed by himself the rituals of adopting formally a life of renunciation. This was in pursuance of some conversation he had had with Mataji, earlier.

At the conclusion of the kumbha, the pilgrims are always in a great hurry to leave the town, creating difficult travelling conditions. The devotees thought it better that Mataji should leave immediately by car for Dehradun. Bholanath stayed behind to escort all those who wished to go on to Dehradun. It was easier to find railway accommodation from Dehradun at this time rather than from Haradwar. At the conclusion of a function Mataji is always required to move first, sometimes at great inconvenience to Herself, because while She is there hardly anybody likes to leave, if he can spend a few more hours or days with Her. This becomes a problem for those who are in charge of providing food and shelter because with Mataji all arrangements have to be impromptu and temporary. So the easiest method of striking camp is for Mataji to leave for another place.

In Dehradun many people, who had been with Her in Haradwar, bade Her reluctant farewells. Jyotish Guha's daughter, Buni, cried so much that everyone's heart was touched. Mataji said to her, "Why do you cry for somebody who is smiling?" All those who have come close to Mataji will have experienced for themselves that this question is unanswerable.

On April 24th, Didi's father Swami Akhandananda and Bholanath returned again to Haradwar to attend the *samvāsa* ceremony of Akhandananda's brother, Kunja Mohan. Bholanath was feeling indisposed but did not regard it seriously. Mataji said to Didi, "Bholanath is going to be very seriously ill." Didi, alarmed at these words wished to persuade Bholanath not to undertake the trip, but Mataji said again, "You may try, but he will insist on going and the illness is also inevitable."

Bholanath returned from Hardwar with a high fever and complaining of pain in his stomach. The fever persisted and in a few days the doctors pronounced that he was suffering from chicken-pox.

Mataji said quietly to Her companions, "It does not appear to me to be chicken-pox. You see, the diseases reveal themselves to me just like persons. The personification seen by me is described as being much more fearful than chicken-pox. I do not know about symptoms, but I can tell you what I have seen."

Within a short while nobody was left in doubt about Bholanath's illness which turned out to be the dreaded small-pox. Bholanath was given the best medical treatment available in the town and the very loving care of the devotees but the terrible nature of the disease made him suffer excruciatingly. Mataji visited his room at frequent intervals and made such suggestions for his care and comfort as She alone knew how to.

Bholanath's condition deteriorated rapidly. Everyone was in despair at this sudden calamity. At this crucial time Mataji unexpectedly asked Didi and Swami Akhandananda to leave Dehradun immediately and to take Didima with them. Although Mataji had spoken quietly in Her usual manner, Didi knew that this was one of those occasions when Mataji's *kheyāla* was not to be gainsaid. To forestall any pleadings, Mataji further said, "It must be either all of you or I. If you do not leave, I shall." This was not to be thought of, so Didi with great misgivings in her heart, and in utter dejection of spirit at being obliged to leave Mataji under such difficult conditions, set about making

arrangements for their immediate departure. Swami Akhandananda expressed his bewilderment by saying, "Ma, why are you sending us away when we require as many as we can have here to look after Bholanath?"

Mataji said gently, "You are a *samnyāsi*. You are not required to render Bholanath any physical service. The only way you can be of help to him is to engage steadfastly in your own undertaking of the contemplative life."

To inconsolable Didima, She said, "Is it not agonizing for you to watch Bholanath's suffering? At this time he does not require your physical presence. You can help him by your prayers and healing thoughts. Do that for him now." To Didi, to whom nothing at all makes any sense apart from Mataji, She could only enjoin patience and fortitude.

Didi and others left for Varanasi on May 4th. Mataji spent most of Her time in Bholanath's room. Bholanath had been calling out to Her 'Ma' like a child in distress and Mataji responded to his call naturally and spontaneously. Death had dissolved the unauthentic barriers to a disclosure of this relationship. Bholanath now was not self-conscious anymore in showing his total surrender, publicly. On the last day of his life Mataji sat by his bedside and asked him, "Are you in great pain?" Bholanath replied that he was but that he could not quite locate where the pain was. His whole body was under the influence of the dread disease on his side and his suffering could be imagined easily. He was lying on his side and Mataji was seen to pass Her hand over his entire body, from head to toe and seemed to have

done some *kriyā* over it. After some time, in answer to a question, Bholanath replied that he did not have any pain and he was completely relaxed. Since the beginning of the illness, this was the first time, he was at peace. He murmured "Ānanda."

At one time he said, "I am going." Mataji responded by saying, "Why do you think so? There are no goings or comings, but a presence only where there is no room for such things." Bholanath seemed to agree, saying, "Yes, so you have said always." Mataji's hand was on Bholanath's head when he breathed his last on the night of May 7th, 1938. His death was calm and peaceful. For the people who were keeping vigil at his bedside this created in the face of the most mysterious event of life an atmosphere of reverence.

The man who had so joyfully and so completely given of himself in the service of Mataji and who was like a beloved parent to the devotees was no more.

(*To be continued*)

Mataji and Puran Purush at Naimisharanya

R. K. Banerjee

This is not only the story of how an exquisitely beautiful golden-coloured *astadhātu* (eight metals) image of Puran Purush arrived at Naimisharanya at 10-30 P. M. on the 8th of Jan., 1975 from Calcutta, but also the story of Mataji's infinite mercy and compassion in fulfilling the innermost thoughts of all who happened to be fortunate enough to be in Her vicinity during the ensuing seven days. The holy site of Naimish Kshetra has been hallowed from time immemorial by the Lila of gods and goddesses, and 60,000 wise and learned Rishis continually meditating on God, as related in our ancient scriptures. In fact, there is not a single Purāna or Epic, wherein mention of Naimisharanya does not find a prominent place.

On this occasion Mataji extolled the virtues of the site of our Ashram with Her own lips by stating that the place had been rendered sacred in each of the preceding Yugas. In the Satya Yuga, Manu himself and his wife Satarupa, who had no issue, prayed devoutly to God on the banks of the Gomati, near the present temple of Manu at Vyas Gaddi, seeking God's favour in earnest ; so much so, that when He finally appeared to the praying couple and graciously told them to ask for any boon, they unswervingly prayed to be granted a son very like the Lord Himself.

In reply the Lord said that it was not possible for anybody to be "like Him", so He would Himself be born to them in each Yuga. Thus in the Treta Yuga, He came as Sri Rama, and in Dwapar Yuga, as Sri Krishna.

To satisfy certain of those present with modern scientifically inclined minds, Mataji went on to describe how three distinctly separate and successive layers of civilisation had been discovered recently while digging two deep tube wells within our Ashram compound. Geologically it can be imagined how the Gomati, in successive generations of flooding, had deposited newer and higher layers of silt on the surrounding areas, possibly resulting in the formation of a mound called Hanuman Tila, next to which our Ashram has been built on a high level locally termed as the "camp of the Pandavas". At the peak of Hanumam Tila exists a very ancient Hanuman temple, built like a fort, containing a deep cave inside the temple which is said to have access to the Gomati.

This brings us to the latest known heavy flood that was witnessed during the late monsoon of 1960, after which Mataji was present in Naimisharanya for a wonderful Samyam Saptaha, followed by a magnificent reading of 108 Bhagavatas simultaneously for a week.

This date, so far as is known to devotees, can be said to be the origin of how our Naimisharanya Ashram came into being. During a subsequent phase, in Nov-Dec. 1968, Swami Sri Akhandananda Saraswati held his famous *Bhagavata Parāyana Paksha* at our Naimisharanya Ashram, and it was then that the germ of an idea was formed in his

mind (possibly through the *kheyāla* of Mataji) to request Her to instal an image of Puran Purush to be worshipped in our Ashram. The statues of Sukdevji and Vyasdevji had then just been erected alongside our library which contains all the Purānas, and a site to the north of the Puran Mandir was earmarked for a Puran Purush Temple.

It will be appreciated that in the secular part of his life Swami Akhandananda had worked as secretary of the Gita Press at Gorakhpur, and had then come across an ancient picture of Puran Purush as depicted by an old artist in a copy of our scriptures. He had later used this picture as a cover page of certain subsequent editions of his religious quarterly "*Chintamani*."

The Puran Purush, i. e., the heart and soul of all Puranas, or Narayana himself, is pictured as a Brahmin with the aquiline nose of a parrot, seated in *padmāsana* pose on an elaborate solid *āsana*, resting his back on a bolster, with a suitable canopy as a backdrop. The left hand is raised in *abhaya mudrā*—in benediction—and the right hand is placed near the right knee, counting beads. It must be emphasized here that such an image will be unique throughout the length and breadth of India.

With just a copy of this cover picture of Puran Purush we in Calcutta were allotted the task of preparing a two feet high clay model so as to satisfy Mataji's first inspection.

After certain initial fruitless attempts on a small scale, our efforts to fabricate a full-size clay model commenced in earnest in July 1973, and by September a photograph of the model was sent to Swami Paramananda for Mataji's

comments. These were promptly received and the model rectified accordingly, so that the more difficult work of casting the image under the expert guidance of the late Nitai Pal's chief assistant commenced in November 1973.

In the morning of March 6th, 1974, while motoring to Ranaghat from Jodhpur Park, Mataji inspected the freshly cast image of Puran Purush by the roadside from Her car, and expressed Her general approval. So the work of casting the three other pieces, namely the *āsana*, the back-rest pillow, and the background was then taken up with renewed vigour.

Meanwhile Swami Akhandananda had been keeping indifferent health. So, although the whole image was completed, polished and packed by June 1974, efforts at despatching the three crates concerned were abandoned thereafter until the cold weather of 74-75.

Eventually in December 1974, we received the all clear from Swami Paramananda, and the image was taken out of its packing, repolished and repacked for despatch to Naimisharanya by rail, for possible installation between the 8th and 15th Jan. 1975.

But here again there was a hitch. After his strenuous Kanpur tour, Swami Akhandananda expressed his unwillingness to proceed straightway with the arduous work of installing Puran Purush in the coldest time of the year. So, although the next auspicious date was fixed for Akshay Tritiya on the 14th May 1975, we were instructed to bring the three crates with us by the Amritsar Mail leaving Calcutta on Jan. 7th.

To collect 200 Kg of net metal packed in crates from a narrow lane in Kumartuli in North Calcutta, and then load them on a particular day in a particular train was too cumbersome, an operation except when entrusted to a specialist firm, but in due course, with Swami Swarupananda and myself in a coupé, the ladies of the party including my wife, as well as the two craftsmen responsible for the image in a sleeper, and the crates in the luggage van, the Amritsar Mail steamed out of Howrah on Friday, January 7th.

We were met at Varanasi Station the next morning by Swami Paramananda himself, who supervised the loading of sacrificial *yajña* fires and *akhaṇḍa jyoti* from Varanasi Ashram into our coupé in charge of a Brahmachari. This had all been planned in advance, but we did not plan to arrive at Lucknow more than three hours behind schedule, so that it was 10-30 P. M. by the time the van carrying the Puran Purush crates, our luggage, unloading workmen, Dasuda (who had met us at Lucknow) and myself reached Naimisharanya Ashram gates on January 8th.

But Mataji had been up expecting us for hours, and the blowing of conch shells from the hall entrance welcomed the arrival of the future presiding deity into His Ashram abode.

The next morning Mataji was up early, supervising the unloading and opening of the crates. She personally superintended the operations of carefully fitting the pieces together, and of placing the image temporarily on a pedestal to the east of the old temple housing the sacred books. Thereafter She Herself first performed the full rituals of *varan* (i. e. ritualistic welcome) as is done on the 6th day of

Navaratri before the Goddess Durga, and then instructed three other senior Ashram Brahmacharinis to perform the same rituals, including *ārati*, before the image. Subsequently She asked all of us, including the Sadhus of the Ashram, to bow down in *praṇāma* before the deity, who looked simply splendid, shining in his new surroundings.

Thereafter She had the image wrapped carefully in layers of fine new white cloth, surmounted by new blue tapestry cloth, the whole encased in a strong rope net barrier, to prevent possible damage during the waiting period upto May next.

The reason became apparent on the 10th and 11th January, the days of *amāvāsyā*, when lakhs of pilgrims thronged into Naimisharanya village, of which a considerable portion found time to visit our Puran Mandir to see the Puran Purush—even though swathed in bandages !

Mataji's frequent visits of late to the Naimisharanya Ashram have encompassed the place with a halo of holiness.

While the Ashram was in the process of being developed, Mataji often moved for quiet and rest into one of the *five kuthias* existing right on the banks of the Gomati below Hanuman Tila, belonging to Her close devotee and Naimisharanya host, Sri Prayag Narain Saigal. During one of Her brief stays there, two miracles had taken place in connection with trees adjoining Her hut.

The first concerned an *amlakhi*-tree, which had possibly been struck in the distant past by lightning, and all that remained was a five feet high withered and rotten

stump. Immediately after Mataji's visit a new green sprout appeared to grow out of the top of the stump, and this has now blossomed out into a huge new *amlakhi*-tree, bearing flowers and fruits although the original withered stump remains unchanged as a mute testimony to the miracle. (vide the story of the hollow bakul-tree at Puri where Haridas, the saint, lived and died in the sixteenth century, in the presence of Mahaprabhu Sri Krishna Chaitanya).

The second miracle concerns a neem-tree adjacent to which Mataji's temporary bathroom was erected during Her stay. And now in Mataji's own words :

"Pitaji, one night as I was lying in the hut, I saw two *murtis* come down from the neem-tree and bend low, as if to have a drink. The next morning the neem-tree fell down for no apparent reason, but you can go and see the remains above ground even today, to testify that there was once a tree there."

Who can tell who were the imprisoned souls that were liberated by the holy touch of Mataji's presence that day, more or less as the child Sri Krishna liberated the twin Jamal-Arjuna trees in Vrindaban in *Dwapara Yuga* ?

During this visit Mataji, in a lavish mood of benediction, continued to bestow Her boundless Grace on all who asked for it.

Someone wanted to play the mridangam in Her presence, so as to be blessed by Her in this ambition, and promptly She created such a situation that at the frequent kirtans that followed, somehow there would be nobody else present to accompany the singing except the person concer-

ned, although there were other more accomplished players in residence among the ashramites. The highlight took place on the 14th morning, when Mataji sang Her favourite hymn "Hey Bhagavan" to celebrate the first *yajña* in the newly inaugurated *yajña-shala* in front of a large congregation, and when the devotee in question was privileged to accompany Her on the mridanga for the first time in his life.

A devotee wished to have *darśana* of renowned sages, and take part in intimate satsang with them. So, while he was walking along the heights of Hanuman Tila on the 10th of Jan, he espied a venerable and resplendent saint in saffron, surrounded by his disciples, giving a fascinating discourse on Sri Rama and singing Sri Rama's name in great veneration, on the banks of the Gomati. This Mahatma was none other than Swami Sri Sri Shivadeva Ashram of Varanasi, passing through Naimisharanya for a day or two over *amāvāsya*. The Mahatma was gracious enough to think nothing of breaking off his discourse to give ten minutes of wise counsel to the devotee in question in answer to the latter's unspoken queries.

The same devotee later had a similar experience while visiting Swami Sri Naradananda Saraswati, the long standing and well-known saint of the Gurukul Vidyalaya in Naimisharanya, who has now handed over charge to his able successor Swami Vivekananda, and who has lived for over 40 years in a grass hut inside his 100 bigha Ashram, exactly like the Rishis of old, while his subordinates have to occupy pucca buildings.

Both Swami Naradananda and Swami Vivekananda visited our Ashram subsequently at Mataji's invitation, on

Jan, 14th and gave very interesting talks, the former on Shankara's Vedanta, and the latter on Tulsidasa's Rāmāyana.

When the devotee in question went to perform his obeisance at the feet of Swami Naradananda on arrival at the Ashram, the Mahatma, with a wonderfully sweet smile, placed around the devotee's neck the garland he had just received from Mataji.

The two master craftsmen, father and son, from Calcutta, primarily responsible for casting the image of Puran Purush, were amply rewarded by Mataji's *darśana* and wise counsel and enjoyed a free trip to Lucknow for a day or two on the way back home on request.

A devotee wished to spend an appreciable time in solitude doing japa under the famous peepul-tree in Vyas Gaddi under which past sages of Naimisharanya are said to have delivered their learned discourses. In spite of the heavy influx of visitors over *amāvasyā*, his wishes were amply fulfilled to his heart's content.

Another devotee arrived in the evening of Jan. 14th without notice, out of the blue, straight from London, by pure chance. He had no difficulty in finding accommodation in the *dharmasālā* for his family and himself, and was duly initiated by Mataji on the 15th morning before departing for Dehradun.

Yet another devotee, a heavily engaged businessman, had arrived by air without adequate bedding etc. in the intense cold, and Mataji arranged his room in the *dharmasālā* next to ours, and provided him and his wife with Her own

spare bedding which She conjured up from somewhere within the Ashram premises at a moment's notice.

The same devotee wished to perform his own private *yajña* on the 14th during the time the new *yajña shala* was being inaugurated with *vastu homa* and *Savitri yajña*. His wife had also had a prior dream, and wished to offer special *pūjā* to the seven Rishis (Saptarshis) of the Yuga on the same day. Both their wishes were completely fulfilled by the Grace of Mataji.

A devotee had an intense desire to be present in front of Mataji inside the *yajña-shala* at the sacred moment of *ṣurnāhuti* (the final *havan*), but he found himself mixed up with the multitudinous throng that had gathered outside the *Yajña-shala* during satsang with Swami Vivekananda. Soon after, Mataji suddenly entered the *Yajña-shala*, and the main doors closed behind Her.

The devotee in question prayed silently for succour, and immediately Mataji personally opened the small closed side-gate near which the devotee was quietly standing outside, and She at once sped away like lightning to Her legitimate place in front of the sacrificial fire. It was then a simple operation for the devotee to slip inside, lock the side-gate behind him, and enjoy the holy moment of *ṣurnāhuti* in peace in the presence of Mataji, exactly as he had longed for all that morning.

Another strong and active devotee wished to perform manual labour by filling the lower levels of the compound with earth and by felling and clearing unwanted trees from the lower levels of the Ashram garden, with his gang of

labourers and a lorry. Mataji let him have this pleasure to his heart's content throughout Her stay.

Yet another devotee, living in Lucknow, had been unable to find suitable transport to, and accommodation in Naimisharanya to meet his requirements, but the Governor himself offered to bring him and his wife to Mataji in his car, and invited them to stay as his guests in the dak bungalow at Naimisharanya. At the conclusion of Mataji's stay, he also transported them back to Lucknow.

Finally His Excellency, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Dr. Chinna Reddy, wished to celebrate his birthday on Jan. 13th, in Mataji's presence. So he arrived at Naimisharanya on the 12th evening and left on the 15th morning, having had continuous *daršana* of Mataji throughout his stay, and having enjoyed the frequent kirtans performed by the Ashram girls at Mataji's request, since he was known to be exceptionally fond of devotional music.

One evening, during satsang with Mataji in the Governor's presence, Mataji turned round and said to His Excellency, "Pitaji, all classes of people come to visit this body, some may be Governors, like you, others may be senior executives of big companies (pointing to a devotee) and yet others may be busy businessmen (looking towards another devotee), and so on."

The Governor may have wished to let Mataji use his car as often as possible. So, much to our astonishment and to the consternation of those senior Ashramites whose duty it is to guard Her person zealously, She decided to go to Lucknow Station in the evening of the 15th of January from

the house of Sri Rameshwar Sahai all by Herself, solely with the Governor and his A. D. C.s, unaccompanied by any Brahmacharis or Brahmacharinis.

In this context, a fascinating facet of Mataji's unusual and all-embracing activities cannot be omitted.

On the morning of January 15th, at our Ashram, after having undergone all the previous heavy programme, and after initiating that very morning between 7-30 and 9 A.M. at least three people to my knowledge inside the Puran Mandir, She spent two solid hours between 9 A. M. and 11 A. M. sitting on an unkempt seat in an unswept kitchen, sorting out with Brahmacharini Ganga the stores that would be required by Ashram inmates remaining behind after Her departure for the next few months.

When devotees are engaged wholeheartedly in the service of Mataji, it is well-known that minor miracles take place almost continually, whenever hitches of any sort are encountered.

We were a large party, and our bookings from Calcutta had been finalised well in advance through a specialist agency. But we were worried about our return rail bookings, particularly as three extra Ashramites, Visuddha, Pushpa and Pushpa's uncle were told to accompany us.

Here the Sahais of Lucknow proved to be a tower of strength, and did all that was necessary and even more. But as our return rail bookings could only be made some time after our arrival, I was anxious to send word to my son at home about a definite date on which to meet us at Howrah with transport. Miraculously, a very kind P. W. D. official

visiting the site opposite our Ashram one morning soon after our arrival, offered to send a telegram on my behalf to Calcutta from Lucknow, after verifying from the Sahais the exact date of our booking.

The most difficult part of the return journey was getting out of Naimisharanya. All our immature plans for the morning of Jan. 15th went astray, but no sooner had we finished our midday meal at the Ashram, than a second taxi, over and above Panuda's requirements, suddenly turned up from nowhere, seemingly predestined to take our party together with all our luggage to Sitapur, from where we easily managed to get seats in a luxury bus to Lucknow.

However, I was still anxious about our heavy transport arrangements to Lucknow Station on the morning of January 16th, but thanks to Mataji's grace, an old colleague whom I had not met since retiring ten years ago, and who had—unknown to me—settled down in Lucknow, turned up at the Sahais' residence on the 15th evening to greet Mataji. I was overjoyed to see him, and he was mainly instrumental in transporting all our heavy luggage to the station on the 16th, in addition to driving us there in his car. But for his help, I could not have loaded all that huge amount of luggage into our sleeper, or found our allotted seats, or settled down comfortably, within the comparatively short space of time the down Amritsar Mail stops at Lucknow.

Meanwhile the Varanasi Ashram knew we were travelling on the 6 down train through Varanasi Station on the 16th evening, but they could not be informed in time that Pushpa was with us, destined to get down at Varanasi, and

I was reluctant to leave her alone on the platform without any escort. But luckily, through Mataji's *kheyāla*, a friend from Varanasi had taken the trouble of ascertaining from the Ashram the exact date and hour of our passing through, and met us at the Station, so that it was simple to arrange for him to escort Pushpa to the Ashram on his way home.

Finally, as far as our Naimisharanya Ashram is concerned, all eyes are looking forward to the week from 9th to 16th of May, 1975, during which Puran Purushji is going to be installed in the beautiful new temple already completed to the north of the Puran Mandir.

It will be difficult for Calcutta devotees, preparing feverishly for Mataji's Birthday Celebrations at Agarpara, to be present at Naimisharanya immediately before. But let us see what Puran Purushji and Mataji hold in store for us, for it is only by their special grace that we are destined to witness any of these special ceremonies, anywhere, at any time.

Jai Puran Purushji

Jai Ma

Pujya Swami Sharananandaji

M.M.V.

I have been asked to write an article about Sri Swami Sharananandaji, who has departed from our midst on December 25th last. As the Editor wrote in the January issue of *Ānanda Vārtā*, for an egoless being of his stature it makes no difference whether he is in the body or not, but for us his departure is a very heavy loss.

Very little is known of the early life of Swamiji, except that he had lost his eyesight at the age of 11 or 12; so that he was not at all 'learned'. He attained enlightenment by sheer depth of his thought and discrimination (*viveka*.) Further, he is known to have practised a good deal of *tapasya* in his adolescence, mostly on the banks of the Ganges, including Uttarakhanda.

He was a most loving and compassionate Mahatma, ever intent on mitigating the suffering of all who approached him, never sparing himself. Who will not share the hope that the seeds of light and love he has sown over so many years will grow and go on bearing fruit for evermore ?

The above is but too true. Even after his first heart attack as long back as in 1959, when doctors advised him to take rest, he continued to give his discourses and to travel about as before, paying no heed to the body. And during his last prolonged illness, in spite of the intense suffering caused thereby, he was constantly thinking of others. He

preached all his life that the highest content of a man's life was that the body be spent in the service of the world, the 'I' be egoless, and the heart be saturated with love. This was visible during his own last days. Due to repeated heart attacks in quick succession, doctors prohibited him to meet people, to speak to those collecting from far and near to see him. But Swamiji's injunction was not to prevent anyone from coming to see him or to solicit his advice regarding *sādhana*. The body is to go, he observed, let it be spent for the benefit of others.

Below are culled some of his utterances over those days of heart attack and suffering :—

“I am not the body.

“With the shedding of the body, I will live in peace and bliss, being free from the limitations of the body.

“There will be no *condolence* meetings on my leaving the body. Instead, there will be *satsang* gatherings.

“No token will be kept of my body, and no statue (*samādhi*) will be erected over my remains.

“Whoever loves me, will love God, for the love of God is my life.

“Whoever wishes to serve me, will serve the *Manav Seva Sangh*: a symbol of *seva*, *tyāga* and *prema* (service, renunciation and love).

“There is nothing but God—nothing, nothing.”

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A good number of books have been published by the *Manav Seva Sangh*, Vrindaban, consisting of the Swami's

teachings. A common feature of them all is that by the transparent sincerity and compelling simplicity of his dissertation he makes the most abstruse spiritual verities intelligible to the unsophisticated rational mind. Acknowledging the book *Sant Samāgam* (first Hindi collection of Swamiji's teachings), Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then President of India, observed : "I have had the privilege of meeting Swamiji on one or two occasions, and I was very deeply impressed by the way in which he dealt with the most complicated problems in a simple, intelligible way."

He probes into the three natural propensities of man—doing, feeling and thinking—and shows how these have only to be carried to their logical conclusion to be transformed into the truest action, love and knowledge—*karma*, *bhakti* and *jñāna* respectively—ultimately fusing into one. The crisis of man—individual as well as social—he declared, can only be solved by his realising his spiritual potential and his true aim of life, which would spontaneously result in non-injury, non-appropriation, desirelessness, freedom from fear, selfless service and love of God.

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Let me conclude with some characteristic aphorisms of the Swami relating to *sādhana* in general from his teachings during the past many years :

"Renunciation of wrong action spontaneously leads to right action.

"Do to others as you should like others to do to you.
Do not do to others what you should not like others to do to you.

- “In the renunciation of one’s rights and the protection of the rights of others lies the essence of *dharma*.
- “One who desires nothing for himself is desired by all. A fundamental test of one’s progress on the spiritual path is the measure of one’s desirelessness.
- “Exercising the mind on what others should do makes us forget what we should do.
- “Right use of things consists in utilising them in the service of others.
- “All wealth and power is a trust of the poor and the weak.
- “The feeling of compassion is the root of service.
- “Forget your virtues and others’ vices.
- “Not to repeat an evil is the best atonement.
- “In the renunciation of *a-sādhana* is the emergence of *sādhana*.
- “All impurities of the mind are rooted in the craving for pleasures of the senses.
- “It is impossible to be detached from the world while one is attached to one’s body.
- “To imbibe the lesson of sorrow—which is *tyāga*—is the greatest *tapa*.
- “Above pain and pleasure is life. Pain and pleasure do not constitute life; they are but tools of *sādhana*.
- “Love is the nature of the Beloved and the life of the lover. Love is light, life and eternity. There is

nothing else to achieve but love, in love consists the perfection of life.

“In the ending of desire is the dawn of Love.

“Let the devotee who begs God for favours beg for the Bestower of favours Himself, so that he will not have to beg again and again.

“The last offering on the altar of love is the surrender of ‘I’ and ‘mine’. With the disintegrating of the atom of ‘I’ the *sādhaka* becomes one with yoga, *jñāna* and love,

“Inherent in one’s own reform is the reform of all.

“Actions, beliefs and relationships opposed to discrimination (*viveka*) are to be rejected.

“The right use of sorrow is renunciation; the right use of happiness is sharing it with others.

“By adopting any one *sādhana* in its fulness, all *sādhana*s are carried out of themselves.

“Men generally consider *sādhana* as part of their life. The thoughtful aspirant, however, treats life itself as *sādhana*.

“The discharge of every *pravritti* for the good of all is the path of action.

“To detach oneself from all objects, circumstances and states of mind through discrimination (*viveka*) is the path of thought.

“Faith in the Lord and surrender to Him is the path of devotion.

“*Bhajan*—Not to rest in peace without realizing God is true *bhajan*.

“*Dharma*—*Dharma* is the captain of the soul in *pravritti*. It leads one by righteous *pravritti* to *nivritti*.

“We are but actors on the stage. Acting the part allotted to him is not the true being of man. Acting is only a game we are playing. One has only to step out of the stage to realize his true being.

“Suffering borne willingly and cheerfully without resentment is transformed into *tapa*.

“Even as the body takes food and water, so is *satsang* the food of the soul.

“*Mook satsang*—Silent Communion with Truth—is the hidden base as well as the hidden apex of all *sādhana*s. The Voice of the Silence can only be heard in true *mouna*—*mook satsang*.”

“In God is everyone and everything. Where is God not? This is why Ma is also ever near though the body does not go everywhere.”

—*Mata Anandamayi*

Holy Reminiscences

Jainath Kaul, M.Sc.

4. Mother's Birthday Celebrations, 1958.

(Continued from the last issue)

Soon after the 'Darshan of Grace', Ma's birthday celebrations began at the newly acquired Ashram at Agarpara. Now, I was in Calcutta on official duty to relieve Sri S. R. Sen, the officer-in-charge of the Calcutta Branch Office of the Indian Standards Institution (ISI), who had suddenly fallen ill. Since the Branch Office was near Esplanade, not very far from Ballygunge where Ma had been staying prior to the celebrations, I was able to go there for Ma's darshan and satsang in the evening after office hours. But Agarpara was a long way off, and if Ma had not wrought another miracle, it would have been impossible for me to participate fully in the birthday function.

Participation with Ma's Grace.

Since it was Ma's kheyal* which had brought me to Calcutta, I could not be deprived of such participation. But for that I had to live at Agarpara, which, in turn, could be possible only if Sri Sen were to relieve me of official work immediately and that was exactly what happened. He became fit enough to resume duty just in time for me to hand over charge and shift to Agarpara Ashram on Friday, May 2nd, 1958 the very day on which the celebrations began. But that was not all. Since ISI works for 5

* See Ānanda Vārtā : Holy Reminiscences, Vol. 22, No. 2

days in a week, the following two days, being Saturday and Sunday were available to me without leave. Further, the leave rules of Central Government by which ISI is governed, permit that officers on tour can take casual leave up to one week before returning to headquarters. And since the celebrations were to end on Friday, the 9th May, before the week would be over, I was able to participate fully in the auspicious function for all the eight days and still go back to the headquarters at Delhi, performing the return journey as part of the official tour with all its concomitant privileges.

Ma tears Flower, Petal by Petal.

The celebrations went off as brightly as ever, with the usual *kirtan*, *bhajans* and discourses by leading *Mahātmās*, feasting and the life-giving *Matri Satsang* (question-answer hour with Ma). Then, after a couple of days, one morning, as I was seated in the front row along with other devotees in the *pandal* (large tent) I found Ma removing slowly but steadily one petal after another from a flower in Her hand. She did this till all the petals had been removed and the bare stalk remained. But what was remarkable about this incident was that my attention was so pin-pointedly drawn to what She was doing that it made a permanent impression on my mind. Although I did feel at that time that this small *līlā* (divine play) must definitely have some significance, I yet failed to appreciate it then. However, when later on, I read the following passage in Bhaiji's book* everything became clear.

* See 'Mother as Revealed to Me', Chapter : To Distant Lands

“One day Mother took a flower in the Ashram and was tearing away all the petals thereof. She said to me ‘Many of your *samskāras* have dropped away and many more will fall away like the petals of this flower till I shall remain as your main prop, just like the only stalk of this flower; do you understand?’ Saying this She began to laugh. I enquired ‘Ma, how can I reach that state?’ She replied, ‘Every day try to live with this idea, you need not do anything else.’”

Later, towards the end of the celebrations, on the day previous to the one on which *Kumārī Pūjā* was held and after a long session of *Kīrtan*, Ma distributed *prasāda* with Her own hands to a large number of devotees near the *pandal*. It was a wonderful sight—the divine motherliness in action, revealed through the description-defying tenderness in Ma’s eyes and lips and the loving grace which accompanied the *prasāda* as it was further sanctified by Mother’s holy touch. After receiving my share, I had stood near by, watching the divine *līlā* with a heart full of deep gratitude for the privilege of its darshan. When the distribution was over, someone quickly brought a jug of water and Ma washed Her hands. But in the hurry, the towel was missing and I was seized with a strong desire to wipe Ma’s wet hands with my handkerchief. But this could not be done as my handkerchief that day was not an unused one. However, as this thought crossed my mind, a lady devotee standing by availed herself of the golden opportunity and purified her sari by using it as a towel for Ma.

Ma fulfils My Wish

The next day was *Kumārī Pūjā*. After the function was over, Ma came out and repeated the *līlā* of the previous

day, though in another part of the Ashram, namely, the open sloping ground at the back, facing the Ganges. And, after the *prasāda* had been distributed and Ma had washed Her hands, there was again no towel around. This time also I was nearby and, in addition, had a handkerchief that could be offered to Ma. Overjoyed at the situation, I lost no time in taking Ma's supremely blessed hands in my own and wiping them dry. Mother, too, not only permitted me to do this, but even significantly left Her hands freely in mine, as if telling me graciously thereby "Well, you wanted this, so fulfil your wish to your heart's content." In this connection, I recall an assignment which Ma had once given to brother S. N. Sopory of Bombay, an old and very valued devotee of Ma. Once, on having darshan of Ma's lotus feet in Her room, Sri Sopory had a strong desire to touch them. And soon enough, the *Karunamayī* (Compassionate one) graciously asked him to feel Her feet to find out if there was a thorn in them anywhere !

While wiping Ma's hands, I had noticed that they were practically boneless and as soft as butter. Years later, I heard from the lips of revered Rehana Tyabji, the famous Krishna bhakta and author of the celebrated booklet 'The Heart of a Gopi', that Ma's body is very different and not a mere combination of *guṇas* (the three attributes of matter) like ours.

Ma's Body and the Universe

Regarding Ma's body, it will be relevant to quote from

* See Ananda Varta Vol. 18, No. 1, P. 27

Sri Ganga Charan Das Gupta's article which appeared in *Ānanda Vārtā* four years ago.

"On 3rd August, 1944, the *Jhulan Purnima* was celebrated at Navadvip. On receiving the news that Ma was very unwell, Sri Das Gupta had gone there to see Her. But entering Her room at 11 p. m. on that night, he had found "Mother seated smiling, beaming with joy. Her whole body shone like a ball of dazzling light, making the electric bulb look almost pale and red. Such wonderful radiance from a human figure was beyond all our conceptions. Her body shone with such an intensely soothing light that the whole room appeared to be filled with some divine ethereal presence." When subsequently asked as to what made Her body look so bright that night in spite of Her serious physical illness, Mother had said with Her characteristic smile : "Didn't you see how the many gods and goddesses in the temple of Navadvip were nicely dressed and illumined for the *Jhulan Purnimā* celebrations ? Don't you think it proper that this body, too, should put forth some lustre and grace."

Further, in the same article, Sri Das Gupta has recorded Mother's own highly significant words about Her body while answering questions as follows :

Question : People say you are Mother. Where are your sons and daughters ?

Mataji : Here (pointing to Her breast).

Question : Where is your husband ?

Mataji : Here (with the same gesture).

Question : Where are your parents ?

Mataji : (With a smile) Here, within this heart.

Question : Your home ?

Mataji : (With the same gesture) Here.

The lady who was putting these questions looked completely puzzled, failing to comprehend what Mother had said. Mother noticed it and in Her usual soothing, convincing manner said, "Here in this body lie all things in the universe—father, mother, son and daughter—all created beings. From this One, all have come into being. In the One all exist, all persist and finally merge."

The Beyond

J. N. Dhamija

Drop is the Ocean
 Moment Eternity
 Thy Grace abounds
 For all to seek, to know and feel.
 Ageless, Eternal
 All pervading Life;
 Countless aeons past—
 Countless aeons to come—
 O Spirit Supreme,
 Be Thou with me;
 Transform, transcending Heavens,
 Thy spark a blaze of glory,
 The Moment becoming Eternity.

Mātri Līla

(April 15th—July 15th, 1975.)

Mataji reached Naimisharanya from Kankhal on April 17th. Followed a period of feverish activity for all present in preparation of the consecration of the Purān Pūrūsh Mandir and the Bhagavata Saptah to be held from 9th to 16th May. Mataji, as usual, directed and supervised everything to the minutest detail and so, needless to say, the functions proceeded with a splendour and magnitude difficult to express in words. Naimisharanya, this most sacred place, which is supposed to remain untouched by the Kali Yuga, where thousands of Rishis are said to have lived and practised austerities, where all the Purānas have been composed, and which no doubt was a centre of great culture and profound learning in ancient times, seems to have been practically asleep for the last so many years. Almost untouched by modern civilization, even the most primitive commodities have to be procured from outside. Yet, everybody had been invited by Mataji Herself and by printed invitations to participate in the festivities. Several hundreds flocked from far and near: among them great mahātmās, some prominent well-known personalities, high Government officials headed by the Governor of the U. P., Dr. Chenna Reddy and his wife, Rajas and Ranis of various states. Even the Maharaja of Travancore, who had never before visited the North, graced the occasion together with his

brother, the Elaya Raja. Five American devotees were also present throughout. Unable to understand a single word of the discourses that were all in Hindi, they were happy to be able to meditate in Ma's presence in that holy atmosphere and to join the Kirtans.

Notwithstanding the gruelling heat of May, with hot winds blowing mercilessly, everyone was in high spirits and all guests were accommodated as near and as comfortably as possible and were fed sumptuously day after day, including the band and the police force. Enormous tanks had been built in our Ashram that supplied water in great abundance throughout the twenty-four hours, a necessity in the hot season. In front of a solid structure of bricks and cement with a pucca roof to seat Mataji and the Mahātmās on a raised dais, and an adjoining room where the Sanskrit Bhagavata was recited by pandits, a spacious pandal had been erected, equipped with tube-lights, fans and loudspeakers. The daily satsang started at 7.30 a. m. and continued till about midday, then again from 4.30 p. m. till 8 or 9 p. m., with kirtan in the interval. Pandit Srinath Shastri gave a very lucid exposition of the Bhagavata until 10.30 a.m. and from 4.30 to 6 p.m. This was followed both times by most interesting talks of Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati on the Purānas. He pointed out that while the Vedas laid down the main principles, the Purānas elaborated on the details that could be applied in all conditions and circumstances of life by every type of human temperament. Together with the Mahantji of Nirvani Akhara, Kankhal, Mahamandaleshwara Swami Prakashanandaji was present throughout the function and

used to give one or two very fine discourses daily. Then Mahamandaleshwara Swami Vidyananda, Sri Swami Vishnuashram of Suktal, Sri Swami Govind Prakash of Ramathirta Ashram came for shorter spells, contributing to the success of the festival by their presence and their spirited lectures. Mataji came daily for some time during the Bhagavata and as a rule attended all the talks of the Mahātmās.

On May 11th was celebrated the completion of Purashcharan of Gayatri Mantra of Brahmacharini Udas, which she had started in Mataji's presence on January 14th, 1973. Over and above the daily satsang, *Nāma Yajña* of Mahamantra was performed for 24 hours under canvas round a tree near the *Yajña-shala*, at a fair distance from the pandal. Some devotees from Delhi with others kept up the kirtan on the 10th evening and all next day, while the students of the Jullundur Girls' School run in Ma's name, and some devotees from Hathras, assisted by a few other ladies, sang all night. Mataji was of course present for the beginning and the completion of the kirtana at sunset. Later a special *ārati* was performed with one thousand lights, placed in tiny earthen vessels. Everyone present was given a light and participated actively in the worship. Then *prasāda* was distributed.

May 14th, *Akshaya Tritiya*, was the auspicious day chosen for the consecration of Purān Purush Mandir. Preliminary ceremonies had already been performed on the preceding two days. In the morning of the 14th, very elaborate *abhisheka* of the statue of Purān Purush took place in the open. Then the *vighraha* was carried in solemn

procession round Naimisharanya for about an hour to the accompaniment of uninterrupted kirtana, halting specially at the famous "*Vyāsagaddi*" where the sage *Vyāsa* is said to have written all the Purānas. A fleet of cars and jeeps followed the deity, Mataji and Swami Akhandanandaji and other Mahatmas occupying the first cars. The bulk of devotees followed on foot, their heads covered with bright yellow handkerchiefs which Ma had distributed to all present together with a picture of Purān Purush and a booklet in Hindi and Sanskrit, entitled "*Purān Swarūp.*" After the procession Sri Purān Purush was installed with great ceremony in his exquisitely beautiful little temple, adjoining the one in which the Purānas are kept. At night *ārati* with 125,000 lights was performed from the veranda. The lights were kept in five large earthen vessels, each containing five bundles of five thousand thread-like wicks. Later they were placed outside, in front of the mandir, and Mataji asked everyone to circumambulate round them and "take *ārati*" while She sat on an elevated seat, watching. The lights soared up high in blazing flames, burning for a long time—a really inspiring sight.

It seems appropriate to say here a few words about the history of the Purān Purush Mandir. The father of Manamahopadhyaya Sri Rajeshwar Shastri of Varanasi, one of the most learned men of our time, possessed a picture of Purān Purush which he used to worship daily. It was there that Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati saw the picture and later published it in his magazine "*Chintamani.*" When he held a *Bhagavata Paksha* in Naimisharanya in 1968, he saw our Purān Mandir that had been established a year

earlier. He then suggested to Mataji to instal a *vigraha* of Purān Purush. Mataji at once took up the idea and so the temple was built.

The pictures of Purān Purush that were distributed do not give even a faint idea of the beauty and power of the *vigraha*, which is extraordinarily alive and impressive, completely unique and different from the deities in other Hindu temples. No other mandir of Purān Purush exists anywhere in the world. Sri Purān Purush, as far as we understand, is the presiding deity, the spirit of the Purānas. A very great scholar* has defined the word "*vigraha*" as "Concrete External Presence as Form." He then explains: "An image consecrated through mantras or through the devotion and adoration of the worshipper becomes the Deity Itself." All over the globe, not only the new generation but also a minority of men and women of all age-groups are growing ever more weary of materialism and are eagerly searching for deeper values that will give significance to their empty lives. Who can tell whether this bringing down of the Concrete External Presence of Purān Purush--the Spirit of the Purānas--is not symbolic of the beginning of a new era in which the ancient wisdom of the Rishis may be resuscitated and made available not only to scholars but to the Indian people as a whole and to all humanity, so as to become a living force that will mould and transform human lives ?

On May 16th morning the Bhagavata Saptah was

* Mahamahopadyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj. See Glossary of "Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma", p. 221.

completed and the Scripture carried in procession to its permanent abode in the Purān Mandir. The birthday of the great Adiguru Shankaracharya happened to fall on that day. A large, decorated picture of the Adiguru with offerings of flowers and fruits was put up in the raised place of the Bhagavata and several mahātmās delivered short but inspiring speeches on Sri Sankaracharya, his life and teaching. This marked a very beautiful and significant ending of a unique function that will go on living in the memory of all who were present.

On the 18th morning a party from Sitapur for a few hours recited the Ramayana in the Ashram hall and Mataji was present throughout. The same party had already performed on May 3rd, the actual beginning of Mataji's birthday celebrations, when Puja was performed in the night. On the 19th morning Mataji motored to Hardoi where She boarded the Punjab Mail for Calcutta. Two large parties had already left for the same destination on the 17th and 18th.

Mataji alighted in our Ashram at Agarpara on May 20th. Braced by the singular success of their function at Jodhpur Park in Mataji's presence in February 1974*, the devotees of Calcutta full of enthusiasm took it upon themselves to arrange an even more gigantic festival in our Ashram at Agarpara, where Mataji's birthday was celebrated from May 22nd to 30th. Mataji completed Her 79th year entering Her 80th. For this auspicious occasion a Souvenir was produced, the best and most voluminous we have had

* See A. V. Vol. 21/2, p. 136 & Vol. 21/3, pp. 188-208.

so far. It contains five very beautiful, large photos, 132 pages of articles by devotees, and excerpts from Mataji's teaching, 86 pages in Bengali and 46 in English.

In front of the guesthouse of the Ashram a pandal of truly enormous size, seating several thousands, had been erected and decorated with ingenuity, thoughtfulness and taste. Satsang was held there from early morning till late at night : Rāsālilā enacted by Har Govind's party of Vrindaban, followed by brilliant discourses in Bengali and Hindi by mahātmās and scholars such as Sri Swami Vishnuashram of Suktal, Mahamandaleshwara Swami Prakashananda, Sri Narayan Goswami who talked on the Bhagavata, Sri Jogesh Brahmachari, Prof. Tripurari Chakravarti, Prof. Roma Choudhury and others. The afternoon lecture was followed every evening by exquisite music by the most famous artists of Bengal, including Baul singers. The tightly packed congregation listened spell-bound to their wonderful songs. One evening the Ramayana was enacted very artistically by the well-known C.L. T., an organization for children who specialize in this. Another evening there was a high class performance of the lila of Sri Rama Krishna Paramhansa. Then the climax of each day : "Matri Satsang" when Mataji replied to questions or sang. Mataji gave *darśana* for hours daily during the satsang.

One night at about 10 p. m., when most of the crowd had left, Mataji began to sing and went on for hours, one kirtana after another. Mataji remained in the pandal until 2 a. m. She never went upstairs to Her room that night but lay down on the dais for some time. The kirtana was taken up by Brahmachari Tanmayananda and later

transferred to the hall where the chanting of the Mahamantra continued day and night until the end of the celebrations.

A Vishnu Yajña performed by pandits in the Yajnashala near the Ashram temples was another item of the festival. One day 108 kumāris were worshipped and entertained to a feast in the Ashram hall.

On May 27th, a remarkable incident took place. The relative of a bhakta came for Ma's *darśana* for the first time in his life. Mataji was in Her room. He somehow managed to reach Mataji's terrace upstairs and was waiting with others for Mataji to emerge. When She passed from one room to another, he caught a glimpse of Ma and Her glance also fell on him. He fell down as if unconscious. Ma was informed and came outside at once and attended to the lucky man who breathed his last in this auspicious manner in Ma's presence, the day before Her birthday *Tithi*. As was found out later he had already had two heart attacks and this may possibly have been his third one. A few days later, before Mataji left for Assam, She visited his bereaved family.

At about 3 a. m. on the 29th, Mataji was taken to the pandal by Mahant Sri Girdhari Narayan Puri of the Nirvani Akhara at Kankhal, and Tithi Puja was performed in great style to the accompaniment of the sweet songs of Chhabi Banerji and Pushpa. After the Puja everyone queued up to do *praṇāma* to Ma who was lying deeply absorbed in *samādhi*. The same evening *adhivāsa* of Namayajña of Mahamantra started and Mataji came at night when the women took over. The kirtan was completed on the 30th after sunset.

On the 31st morning Mataji and Her large party bid good-bye to the Ashram and proceeded first of all to Kashipur, a village near Calcutta where Mataji stayed for a few hours in the garden-house of devotees who had built a Matri Mandir in their grounds. From there Ma went to New Alipore and spent three nights in the home of Sri Makhan Ghosh, a family of bhaktas of many years' standing. A room on the 4th floor is permanently reserved for Mataji's exclusive use. The roof had been covered with canvas and very large crowds collected for Ma's *darśana* morning and evening. After leaving Alipore on June 3rd, accompanied by Her entire retinue who followed Her everywhere in a number of cars, Mataji halted at several houses of devotees. At midday She was offered *bhoga* in Chhabi Banerji's shrine-room where She spent a few hours. From there She proceeded to Sri Gopal Mitra's residence, called *Vaikuntha Dhāma*, on the 12th storey of a sky-scraper. Mataji and everyone else ascended by lift. Sri Gopal Mitra, a disciple of Sri Thakur Sitaram Das Omkarnath, had invited his Guru together with Mataji. He also stayed overnight and both He and Ma were present in the large hall adjoining Ma's room, while satsang was held. Mataji talked and sang. On June 4th evening Mataji graced the house of Sri Amal Chatterji. There also a large pandal had been provided and Mataji replied to questions and sang. On June 5th, She left for Covindpur where She remained for one night in the gardenhouse of Sri Pratibha Kumar Kundu, Here comparatively fewer people assembled and Mataji could walk about at leisure in the beautiful garden. On June 6th, on Her way to Bhasagram on the Diamond

Harbour Rd, Mataji visited the house of Sri Mahabir Sen, a disciple of late Brahmajna Ma. At Bhasagram Mataji spent four nights in the gardenhouse of Sri Bibhuti Chakravarti. She had stayed there for the first time last February for a few days. Here also satsang was held in a large pandal, attended by a huge congregation. One day *Nāma Yajña* was performed for twenty-four hours. Another day, Prof. Tripurari Chakravarti delivered a lecture, then again Sri Govind Gopal Mukerji came with his wife and everyone listened to their beautiful songs. Mataji went to see the samādhi of the deer that had died there during Her visit in February.*

The initiative and the devoted labour of the Calcutta devotees for many months in preparation for Mataji's visit has surely had its rich reward. During Mataji's sojourn in the Ashram for eleven days and Her visits to so many different localities in and near Calcutta for another ten days, thousands and thousands were given the opportunity of Mataji's *darśana* to their heart's content and many were blessed by making closer contact with Her. Countless men, women and children have no doubt benefited greatly and lastingly.

On June 10th, Mataji and Her large party boarded the train to Assam. At Bangaigaon station cars were waiting that took everyone to Gauhati, a distance of 150 miles. Reaching there on the 11th evening, Mataji remained one night in Rama Mandir. Satsang was held in the temple hall. The next morning Mataji and the whole party visited Kamakhya, the famous temple and place of pilgrimage of

* See A. V., Vol. XXII/2, p. 108-109.

Kamakshi Devi. On June 12th night, everyone went on to Dibrugarh, reaching there on the 13th.

A disciple of Sri Ram Thakur, a famous Bengali Guru, who left his body long ago, had started a small Ashram for Mataji which was inaugurated some time ago by Brahmachari Virajananda since Mataji could not come in person. At Dibrugarh railway station, a great multitude of people received Ma and took Her car in procession round the city for about an hour with kirtan all along. A spectacular number joined the procession. The devotees of Dibrugarh took immense trouble to make the best possible arrangements for Mataji and Her companions. Satsang was observed regularly in a pandal. Hosts of people came daily for Ma's *darśana*, in fact the pandal could not hold them. In spite of the scarcity of space, everything proceeded in great order as the congregation was very well disciplined and obedient and did not trouble Mataji in any way. Mataji was in an excellent mood throughout Her sojourn in Assam. She talked at length and sang in response to requests. One day, Dr. Lalith, the son of the late Shirish a *dharmaputra* (spiritual son) of Didima after She had lost three sons in quick succession, came to see Ma. This reminded Her of olden times and She related many interesting incidents from Her youth. One evening satsang was held in the Kali Bari which contains a vighraha of the goddess Kali of a rare beauty. Another evening Mataji attended satsang at a Marwari organization. In both places Mataji very generously talked and sang. She also visited the Sharda Math of the Ramakrishna Mission as well as several other maths. One day Mataji went for a walk on the bank of the Brahmaputra

which is enormously broad, giving the impression of a sea. A day or two before Mataji left Assam, *prasāda* was arranged for one and all. The food (puris, vegetables etc) was put into large leafcups. Everybody lined up in a never ending queue and received his share. The distribution went on for hours and hours. Several thousands partook of the feast.

On June 18th, Mataji motored to Tinsukia from where She caught the train to Bangaigaon. Even at Tinsukia a pandal had been erected, although Mataji could give *darśanā* only for about half an hour on Her way to the station. At Bangaigaon the connecting train was nine hours late and Ma spent the whole night on the platform, reaching Varanasi on the 21st morning instead of the 20th night. At Varanasi Mataji had high fever for one day. Fortunately She got much better soon. Ma stayed in Her room above Gopal Mandir and nobody was allowed to disturb Her there. People could have *darśana* from the terrace above Annapurna temple across the narrow lane, when Mataji came out on the terrace near Her room. On June 29th Mataji left for Naimisharanya. There She at long last was able to rest and relax after the very strenuous programme of almost two months. From Naimisharanya Mataji proceeded to Kankhal where Gurupurnima was celebrated on July 23rd.

Durga Puja will most likely be performed in Ma's presence at Uttarkashi from October 10th to 14th. The Samyam Mahavrata is to be held at Swadeshi House, Kanpur, at the invitation of the Jaipuria family from 11th to 18th November.
