

CONTENTS

1.	Matri Vani	...	...	...	173
2.	A Letter and Mataji's Reply	...	...	...	176
3.	Matri Satsang in Solan	—Swami Bhagawatananda Giri		...	177
4.	From the Life of Mataji	—Bithika Mukherji		...	183
5.	A Visit to Naimisharanya	—Subal Ganguly		..	193
6.	Holy Reminiscences	—Jainath Kaul		...	200
7.	Three Poems	—Monique Peace		...	206
8.	Inernal Voice of the 20th Century and the Universal Mother Divine Sri Anandamayi Ma				
			—Sri Dibyadarshi	...	207
9.	Contemporary Saints and Sages :				
			—Vijayanda	...	212
10.	Matri Lila	...	...	...	223



Ānanda Vārtā



V. XXII]

OCTOBER, 1975

[No. 4



*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

They are living in a locality where *tapasyā* is practised, in the foot-hills of the Himalayas, in the vicinity of a Siva temple. By the atmosphere of their *sādhana*, their *tapasyā* the place should become so filled with spiritual vibrations that even people coming from outside would be able to notice this distinctly. Ashram life must be made worthy of its name, must be blessed—this is as it should be. Eyes, face, the whole body will then radiate tranquillity, gentleness. All travellers on the supreme Path must be full of

devotion, ascetic, the very embodiments of love, great yogins. The pilgrimage is undertaken for the sake of self-forgetfulness, for the revelation of one's true Being, to experience the touch of Him.

*

*

*

Change your life completely, from its very root. Become a *sādhaka* and go ahead on the spiriual path with splendid vigour and energy. At every single moment He is with you as your helper – keep this in mind. The One to whose service you are devoting your life is Himself the Saviour. In order to experience this deep within, try with all your might to purify yourself. If for a whole year one strictly speaks the truth and adheres to truth scrupulously in every respect, a glimpse of Truth may possibly be caught as a result. Let there be not even a hint or suggestion of falsehood.

*

*

*

Keep a strict watch over everything you do – how you eat, sleep, move about and sit. Furthermore, the practice one has undertaken in order to be released from bondage must be performed with faith and love. No religious exercise should be done disrespectfully for it is He Himself who has come in the guise of the practice. By affliction He destroys sorrow. The suffering that has to be endured with patience, fortitude and forbearance is the Destroyer of Sorrow Himself who appears in this shape so as to conquer all suffering.

*

*

*

By chanting the Gayatri mantra, by performing fire sacrifice, by japa, meditation and similar practices one is cleansed and purified from the dross and the karma accumulated during countless former births and in the present. Thereby is aided the unveiled revelation of that blazing, glorious Reality which like a radiant light shines deep within oneself and which is the goal.

*

*

*

The endeavour to keep the mind constantly engaged in the contemplation of THAT is man's duty as a human being. Do not escape by saying: "I cannot". You will have to develop the capacity for it, you will have to do it. For a human being everything is possible. By God's grace you have been born in a human body as a Brahmin. If someone is knocked down, he surely does not remain lying on the ground. He rises, stands up and walks on again. The speed of one's advance must become swift. For those who are pilgrims it is necessary to forge ahead with great energy, vigour, vivacity and velocity. Do not proceed leisurely sitting comfortably in a hackney carriage.

*

*

*

In order to annihilate what is undesirable and harmful (*aniṣṭa*), the mind has to be steeped in the adoration of the Beloved (*Iṣṭa*). The notion that He is far away must be altogether given up. Thou art within and without, in every vein and artery, in

every leaf and blade of grass, in the world and beyond it. The awakening of the sense of want is to be welcomed, it opens the way. HE is there at every step to make the unfit expert. As the sense of want and emptiness Thou appearest and no other—Thou art ever close by. “Lord I take refuge in Thee, I take refuge in Thee !”

A letter and Mataji's Reply

Mother, are we friends ?
 Mother, do you love me ?
 Can you reach me here ?
 You have said you are near,
 So would you please appear ?
 Am I too impure ?
 Am I not sincere ?”

Mataji's reply :

“God is the supreme Father, Mother, Beloved, Friend, Companion. Of course He is a friend, He is indeed *the* friend. Everything that appears is the manifestation of the Supreme Lord, He is the true friend. All pain and sorrow are due to the sense of “I” and “mine” The world is God's creation. In God is everyone and everything. Where is He not ? This is how Ma is also always near although the body does not go everywhere. In the *Paramātmā* there is no possibility of impurity or insincerity at all.”

Matri Śatsang in Solan

Swami Bhagavananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

(9)

Question : “*Sarva bhuta hite ratah*” (“.....intent on the welfare of all beings.....”) says the Bhagavad Gita. Mataji, so long as our lives are not self-restrained it is difficult to put this and similar injunctions into practice.

Mataji : This body sometimes says that it is difficult for men and women living a family life to be self-restrained. This opens the door to a wonderful subject. Formerly there were four *āśramas* : 1) The *Brahmacharya Aśrama*, 2) the *Grihastha Aśrama* (householders Aśrama), 3) the *Vana-prāsthā Aśrama* (for men and women retiring into seclusion to practise *sādhanā*), the *Samnyāsa Aśrama*. Thus previously one's life would be moulded from the beginning during the time spent in the *Brahmacharya Aśrama*. Those who experienced an overwhelming desire to renounce the world used to advance straight away to the *Samnyāsa Aśrama*. While others followed the normal path of householders after the stipulated period as Brahmacharis. In the householder's *āśrama* there is also the road that leads to God. ‘*Aśrama*’ means a place where there is no *śrama* i. e. no strain resulting from one's efforts. That is why it is called an *āśrama*. Even while

adopting the householder's āśrama people used to live a life of self-restraint. Those who had observed the rules and regulations of the Brahmacharya Aśrama had already received their training in self-mastery. Therefore they would strictly practise the restraints, manners, customs and regulations laid down for the *Grihastha Aśramā*. The Rishis were such householders. They had children of their own. Nowadays there is no such thing as the *Brahmacharya Aśrama*. This is why licentiousness and lack of self-control have come about. For the same reasons the *Vanaprastha Aśrama* and the *Samnyāsa Aśrama* are not being followed correctly. If the prescribed conduct and regulations were observed in the life of the householder, then the correct conduct and rules of the life in secluded retirement would automatically be followed. Thereafter, for such persons, life as a *samnyāsi* would be simple and straight forward. But because there is no observance of the rules of the first āśrama therefore there is no self-control thereafter in the lives of men and women. Even so, by strictly following the instructions tendered by one's Guru, it may be possible to reach that elevated state of existence.

Question : Mataji, nowadays it is difficult to find a real Guru. The Maharaja of Baroda once arranged a conference of pandits. The subject for discussion was "*Ahimsa*" (Non-violence). Various pandits delivered long speeches. When at the end of his discourse, one of the speakers took a handkerchief from his pocket to wipe the perspiration from his face, an egg fell out of the handkerchief.

The Gurus of our days no longer wield any real influence. This is the saddest part of the picture. In my opinion a

religion can only be called real when it leads to respect for humanity, truth, forbearance and equal regard for all.

Mataji : Pitaji, listen. There is something else to be said in this connexion. There was a pandit who used to recite the Ramayana very beautifully. Everybody was charmed when listening to his recitals. Some felt as if Sri Ramachandra himself were relating his story. A certain boy took initiation from the pandit. Later his whole family followed suit. The boy became so devoted to his Guru that there seemed to be no room for anything else in his life. The pandit could keep spell-bound a gathering of a thousand people. But his character was not good. The boy however was obsessed by his Guruji. His parents told him, 'Why are you all the time after your Guru ? You must first complete your studies.' The boy became deeply pained at hearing his parents blame his Guru. He would cry himself to exhaustion. How wonderful to behold such a spectacle ! A sincere, artless boy—like a flower with its petals just blown open. The boy was absorbed in the thought : "I must find Rama." He felt, one must not stay anywhere where one's Guru is found fault with. Almighty Lord, what enchanting sights you hold up in front of us ! In reality it is God that pervades all forms. To see faults in others is itself a fault. It is due to duality. *Duniya* (world) means "based on duality". Because there are "two" one sees faults. Even in sinners and wicked beings God resides. He who is aware of this will indeed be victorious. If sins are overlooked then the evil tendencies of the sinner undergo a change for the better. This sort of thing has happened in front of this little girl. (Mataji points to Herself.) God has revealed Himself in this way as well.

The father told the boy : "I have heard that your Guru's character is not good." This body then remembered that the person who was that Guru's Guru had also misbehaved in a similar manner. People related this to me. But even so this body does not hold anyone in disrespect. It is not right to place an impediment on the path taken by anyone. The boy came to believe that his father was his enemy. But gradually, on growing up, he started reading religious books. Later, when he realized that his Guru's character was not good, he alienated himself of his own accord. How many men and women had become entangled there ! Subsequently some of them came and confided everything to this body. One of them said: "I do not feel like letting this defiled body live any longer. I replied: "You have no right to destroy your body. The very fact that you are now repenting is sufficient to atone for your past sins. Purify yourself. Nothing good would result from your death, on the contrary it would have evil consequences." That person was then saved by following the path that leads to God-realisation. All is God's play. Pitaji, as regards those who deliver brilliant speeches—well, this is just an art, a science. Consider the case of that *jagat guru* (world-teacher) who spoke so fascinatingly on non-violence and then produced an egg from his pocket ! Such a brilliant speech, but people were completely disillusioned on seeing what happened subsequently. God is present in every form and appearance. It is fitting to remember this at all times. It is difficult to realize and easy to reject. All manifestations are but expressions of Thee. In this creation good and evil exist side by side. You are *Atmarām*, the Bliss of the Self. You are fortu-

nate enough to be created in the image of God Himself. To rouse so much interest by mere words, to express beautiful sentiments so lucidly, all this is a matter of art—a skill. This art has nothing to do with the Supreme Being (Param-ātmā). That art has been developed by certain persons. There can be a skill in the art of singing which entrances people. But this proficiency has no affinity with truth, religion or character.

It is extremely difficult to find a *Sad-guru*. * There was another great guru who had any number of disciples. He told one of them: "Accept bribes and send me the money." "In the end matters came to such a pass that the disciple had to sever his relationship with the guru. Truth Itself comes to the rescue of Truth. If you tell lies in the name of Truth, the lies will evaporate like camphor. God is omnipotent in His own Self. Ultimately He alone exists but He is a whimsical sovereign! "In each and every form, Oh Lord, Thou Thyself art present." One must regard everything and everyone as THAT. The plant which is full of thorns also produces roses. "Oh Lord! All forms and shapes are Thine alone!" This is most difficult to accept.

A book which contains wise counsel is called "*Guru Granth*." The book itself is an expression of the Guru. No falsehood can come from the study of Sacred Scriptures or from the repetition of God's holy Name. Let those who have not found a Guru as yet call out: "Oh Lord, Thou art the Guru of the whole universe. Deign to arrange whatever is necessary for my well-being!" Remain immersed in the perusal of sacred Scriptures and see in which particular

* *Sad guru* A guru who shows the way to Self realisation.

form He will reveal Himself to you. As long as He does not appear to you as *Sad guru*, so long should you persevere with your devotions. "All names, all forms, all qualities are Thine, oh Lord." Never cease to think about Him. The Name is *akṣarah*. (indestructible) it does not wane from day to day, therefore take refuge in His Name. By continuously clinging to Him who is the Supreme Being, you will be able to destroy your own negative qualities. Thereafter, how is it possible that He should not reveal Himself? It is your duty to keep your eyes constantly fixed on one goal. Of Him alone must be the spoken word, all else is but futility and pain. Become a pilgrim on the road to Immortality. You have so often in the past set out on journeys leading to death, now take the road to Immortality.

1. A play upon words: *Aksara* means "indestructible" as well as "syllable."

Boundlessness

Elwood Decker

The chains of circumstance that seem to bind
 Offer an Opportunity to Find
 Greater Freedom than we have ever known
 By wholly abiding in Love alone
 We easily improve our attitude
 With a good proportion of Gratitude
 And when we express it wholeheartedly
 We're Liberating our identity
 Fortunately the human mind is small
 And Love is the Essence of Virtues all
 When MA ANANDAMAYI Fills the mind
 There's no room left for anything to bind !

From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the last issue)

After Bholanath's death (1938).

Bholanath's passing away was an event of great moment in the lives of the devotees, firstly, because it was an irreparable personal loss for all those who knew him, and secondly, because nearly all of them had in some measure or other to reorient themselves in their understanding of Mataji.

In the beginning, as in other cases of bereavement, the local people hesitated to intrude upon Mataji; but they soon realized how ludicrous it was for them to think that Mataji would be found grieving over the death of Bholanath. Mataji's attitude towards Bholanath's death was the same as it had been, and was to be in future towards the deaths of others who were closely connected with Her way of living in the world, and who were totally dependent upon Her for their well-being. While they were alive She seemed entirely concerned with their welfare, but She did not mourn their deaths. She has said in this context, "What is the occasion for grief? Nobody is lost to me. Do you feel sad when you are obliged to go from one room to another?"

The ladies of Dehradun felt a little ashamed of themselves for attributing their own emotional reaction to Mataji,

which they acknowledged to Her very soon. The general opinion was voiced by someone who said, "It is due to our limitations that we see you go through changes of time, like growing up or growing old, or changes in marital or social status. You are always the same and just what you are in yourself. So please continue to do as may be your *kheyāla* now as always."

Thus, no drastic changes were brought about in the mode of Mataji's life. Didi, waiting anxiously in Banaras for news of Mataji, got reassuring tidings that everything was quite as usual in the Ashram at Kishenpur. The attitude on the part of the devotees in this context brings to light Mataji's unique way of 'playing' the roles that She adopts. Nobody could doubt Mataji's concern for Her people, yet in the beginning they had to learn by experience about Her total self-sufficiency. An understanding and a compassion which are compatible with extreme detachment are hard to comprehend, especially when the enigmatic personality herself has nothing to say in explanation of her own way of projecting this image.

Mataji remained quietly at Dehradun for some time, occasionally visiting Raipur. There were very few people at the Kishenpur Ashram. Ruma Devi cooked the simple meals for Mataji and looked to the comforts of visitors. Manmatha Nath Chatterji, who had retired from service, was living in the Ashram. Abhaya, a youth who had attached himself recently to Mataji was a constant companion. Abhaya had many aggravating qualities, such as monopolizing Mataji's time to the exclusion of others; answering on behalf of Mataji the questions put to Her by visitors; being insensi-

tive to the requirements of others to the point of rudeness. His sometimes very impertinent behaviour toward Mataji Herself would outrage the older devotees. All this was forgotten and forgiven again and again, because of his childlike devotion for Mataji on the one hand, and on the other his golden voice and marvellous repertoire of devotional songs, many of which he composed himself. Kirtan, before and since has never been the same, according to some people. Abhaya had the unique distinction of evoking a most indulgent compassion from Mataji which remains unrivalled so far. In himself he was a most charming and entertaining companion for all the younger members of the families visiting Mataji. Many young boys became his devoted followers in music; many others, with rather unfelicitious results tried to imitate him in his orientation toward Mataji without possessing his guileless spontaneity.

These events are demonstrative of Mataji's mode of affirmation or reformation of individuals strictly in their own rights. Cries of favouritism or partial behaviour can be heard amongst the people around Mataji. But a little reflection shows clearly that everyone evokes from Mataji the response that he merits. This is a fact which is hard to comprehend because it is not met within our ordinary everyday world. It can be experienced in the proximity of Mataji alone. Ordinarily, Mataji does not give definitive directions to people who come seeking Her guidance but only suggestions, which if they so wish, can be complied with. In other words, Mataji responds to the total personality of an individual, which She seems to perceive at a glance, and thus,

no two people will get the same treatment. The one common denominator is that She calls everyone to his best efforts toward the highest endeavour, and She shows limitless concern for those who try. For failures She has nothing but compassion, and so, having once taken refuge with Her, no one need ever be afraid again. This also accounts for the very motley nature of Mataji's entourage. People from all walks of life, all age groups, any or no religious persuasion, ascetics as well as householders, find the same quality of affirmation in Mataji and experience a sense of homecoming. The onus of understanding even a little of this entirely unparalleled personality, rests totally on the visitor. Nobody can explain things to everybody's satisfaction, because nobody has a clue to the mystery of Mataji's *kheyāla*.

Mataji's indifferent health at that time continued to cause anxiety to the devotees. Abhaya had the happy idea of writing and asking everyone who was willing to do so to engage in some *nāma-japa*, expressly for the purpose of praying for Mataji's health. He wrote to Didi also, who in turn conveyed the idea to others; in this way, probably for the first time, devotees distant from and unknown to each other, became united in a common resolve for prayers.

In the last week of July 1938, Mataji travelled to Solan and then on to Simla. This was Mataji's first visit to Simla after the death of Bholanath. The devotees of Simla largely consisted of Bengali officers of the Central Secretariat. Simla at that time used to be the summer headquarters of the Government. The periodic reassemblies had forged a common bond between such of the men and their families

as were interested in keeping alive the tradition of *nāma-sankirtana*, sanctified by Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu. This group of people had become very attached to Mataji and welcomed her joyfully in their midst. Not finding Didi with Mataji, they enquired about her. Didi had gone to Varanasi, Vindhyaçal, Calcutta and Dacca according to Mataji's suggestions. She had been in Dacca during the Birthday Celebrations. This was an especially poignant year for the devotees of Dacca because of Bholanath's death and also because the image of their beloved Kali had to be given its final internment inside its own little shrine.

Didi, although inconsolable at being separated from Mataji for so long, had realized how necessary her presence had been in Dacca at this time. Now she was happy to be recalled to join Mataji in Simla. Didi met Mataji for the first time since Bholanath's death and now eagerly listened to Her description of the events leading up to it. The devotees of Simla who had wanted to hear about it but had hesitated to broach the subject to Mataji, now had an opportunity to learn about these events. Mataji, in Her inimitable style related the whole incident in detail, recreating for Her audience the last hours of Bholanath's life.

Describing the last few hours which were characterised by Bholanath's serenity and calm acceptance of his imminent death in the face of which he said "ananda", Mataji asked Didi, "Did I not do well to send my mother away with you and Swamiji? Without a doubt She would but have

made this incident a matter of grief and lamentations. Whereas Bholanath's last minutes were so quiet and peaceful that not even the people in the room realized what had happened till I drew their attention to it by saying to the Kaviraj (ayurvedic doctor), "What do you say ? As far as your science goes, isn't everything over ?"

Then, with a half-smile Mataji added, "Some people are amazed to hear me talking like this about the death of Bholanath, and are a little shocked too." Many of the group of people sitting around Her protested that such thoughts had not occurred to them. Mataji turned and looked at an elderly lady and asked lightly, "What do you say, mother ? Isn't it shocking the way I talk so unconcernedly about the death of Bholanath ?"

This lady then joined her palms together and said humbly, "Yes, Ma, I must confess that such was exactly my reaction to your narration. However, I see that this is due to my lack of understading of what you are. We are unable to disassociate ourselves from human relationships and therefore automatically ascribe them to you. I am now taken aback at my own folly in thinking that you should be bound by such ties as we experience. Forgive us and bear with us." Mataji laughed away her apology and said that such thoughts were quite natural after all. The slight constraint which the people of Simla had created for themselves vanished and they gave themselves over to the joyous experience of having Mataji amidst them for a few days.

A woman asked Her one day, "Ma, I am quite unable to calm my mind and am in despair how to control its perpetual restlessness." Mataji smiled and said, "What I would say is that your mind is by no means 'restless'. If you experience the restlessness of ardent yearning for God then at once you will be on the way to tranquillity. Learn to be really 'restless' ! "The woman was very delighted with this answer to her question.

On August 2nd Mataji expressed Her *kheyāla* to leave Simla. The residents at once raised strong objections. They were not at all willing to let Mataji leave them after such a short visit. They were then obliged to take note as it were, of another of the unique facets of Mataji's personality. In spite of Her gentle demeanour and Her unfailing consideration for others, Her *kheyāla* was not to be gainsaid. It was not that She sought in any way to impose Her decisions on anybody, in fact it was quite to the contrary; but it always so happened that things arranged themselves in such a manner that Her *kheyāla* was borne out. Didi and other close companions had long since given up the idea that they were dogged by series of coincidences and had learnt to abide by Mataji's *kheyāla* to the extent to which they understood what it was that was required of them. The people of Simla were obliged to bid Mataji a sorrowful farewell for the time being.

Mataji went to Solan, about 2000 ft down and 30 miles away from Simla on the same mountain range, the home of Jogibhai and his wife the Rani Saheba of Baghat State, a princess of great ability and remarkable generosity, who always made people feel welcome and at home in Solan.

All officers of the princely household became involved in eager and willing service to Mataji and to all those who happened to be with Her.

Mataji stayed in Her usual place which was known as Shogibaba's temple in Solan. During the week-end the devotees of Simla came down and performed their beloved ritual of the *nāmayajña*, under the aegis of the Raja Sahib of Solan. Nothing gave these men greater pleasure than to be able to celebrate this function in the presence of Mataji.

From Solan Mataji went to Dehradun and stayed at the Ashram for a few days. On August 18th, Mataji went to Mussoorie accompanied by quite a large group of people. The local inhabitants quickly became attached to Mataji and as always and everywhere is the case with Mataji, the crowd of visitors kept on swelling continuously. One day, the entire party went on an expedition to see the view from the highest point of the mountain-town. Two dandies were hired to go along with them. While they were resting near a church, the coolies who carried the dandies started talking to Mataji. One of them said, "Look Mataji, (all women are addressed as such in India), this is called a church. The foreigners worship God here just as we worship Him in temples. After all, what difference is there amongst people of different religions ? We are like brothers born by the same mother, are we not ?" Mataji concurred and then She went on to say, "God alone is real, all else is illusion and a source of our forgetfulness of our real Self. But alas, we are such weak mortals that it is difficult for us to turn away from indulgence."

Mataji's companions were thoroughly enjoying this interlude. She Herself was in Her own inimitable fashion totally involved with Her newly found teachers. She said, "Is that so Pitaji ? Then I must begin to carry out the lessons you are teaching me. I shall give up the comfortable way of travelling and walk the rest of the way." With a mischievous look She left the coolies behind and started walking down the steep mountain path. The coolies were alarmed at this prompt obedience on the part of their student and ran after Her to persuade Her to sit in the dandi again. Mataji went on with Her dialogue with the coolies, and ended up by saying that in remembrance of their conversation they should promise to devote a few minutes of every day to spiritual endeavour. They agreed readily and assured Mataji that they would never forget Her.

Mataji stopped in front of a sweets shop. Didi, interpreting this rightly, purchased lots of sweets which were distributed to all the coolies.

In the second week of September Mataji returned to Dehradun and almost immediately went to Hardwar.

(To be continued)

HYMN

J. N. Dhamija

O give me strength enough to break the chains
 Of bondage we call life, I pray, Most High.
 We sleep, awake and sleep again to dream,
 We save and spend and thus our life doth end;
 Pride and passions, Joys and pains, death, decay,
 Our hopes and fears-shadows chasing shades.
 Not knowing whence we came and where we go,
 While Life's eternal stream in silence flows.
 Open the portals wide, come flooding Light,
 And let me see Thy Vision O Most High.
 I seek Thy Grace, grant me my simple prayer,
 Abide with me my Lord for ever abide.

Notice to Foreign Subscribers

Our Quarterly Journal has been struggling to make both ends meet in spite of unprecedented rise in the cost of paper, printing and postage. We greatly regret to inconvenience our subscribers but we are now forced to increase the annual subscription rates as stated below with effect from January 1976.

Annual Subscription

Foreign—(By Sea Mail) 12/50, or £ 1-0-0 or \$ 3-00

(By Air Mail) Rs. 30/- or £ 2-15-0 (Europe etc.)

(By Air Mail) Rs. 40/- or \$ 6.50 (North & South America)

A Visit to Naimisharanya

Subal Ganguly

"*Nimsar āgayā, Nimsar āgayā*" would shout the robust conductor of a rickety bus after it had jerked to a halt at a small wayside station somewhere on the way to Hardoi from Lucknow. Yes, this is Naimisharanya which in local parlance is known as Nimsar, situated at a distance of nearly 80 miles from Lucknow, in the district of Sitapur. Naimisharanya can be reached by rail as well as by bus. Today Nimsar has emerged into a new light with the blessings of Ma Anandamayi.

Naimisharanya is said to be the place where all the eighteen Puranas were composed by Vyasadeva and his son Sukdeva. Hailed in our scriptures as the most sacred place, Naimisharanya was visited by the Pandavas in the course of their pilgrimage (*Tirthayātra*). Sri Rama had come to this place to perform the "*Astamedha Yajña*" after slaying Ravana. Here, at this place, on the bank of the Gomati river, Sita is said to have gone underground for ever. Lava and Kusha recited the Ramayana in the company of Rishi Viswamitra before Rama at this sacred spot. Lord Krishna and Balrama came to Naimisharanya on their pilgrimage. Prahlada, the great devotee, worshipped and meditated at this centre and Urvasi the famous beauty of heaven came to this spot with king Pururava. The *Matsya Purana* says: "*Tirthantu Naimisha nāma sarva tirthaphalapradam*". (Naimisharanya, the centre of pilgrimage, bestows the benefits

gained by visiting all other places of pilgrimage.) Similarly Tulsidas has written :

*“Tiratha vara Naimish vikhyātā
Ati punita sādḥaka siddhidātā
Basahi jahān muni samājā
Tah hiya harasi chale’ manu rājā ॥*

“Outstandingly meritorious, conferring fulfilment on the seeker after Truth is the pilgrimage to the famous and most sacred Naimisharanya, the abode of the company of sages to which Raja Manu hastened with great rejoicing in his heart.”

For centuries, however, Naimisharanya lay in obscurity until about fifteen years ago it was restored to its pristine glory by Mata Anandamayi. After a devastating flood Mataji visited the Swami Naradananda Ashram in Naimish on the occasion of a “Samyam Mahavrata” held there by the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha at the invitation of Swami Naradananda. Everyone was fascinated by the sylvan beauty and the spiritual atmosphere of the place. During those gatherings that are held in different places once a year, one of the Puranas is discussed every time. It was then discovered that not even one complete set of the eighteen Puranas was to be found in Naimisharanya, the place of their origin. It seemed fitting that the Puranas should be preserved at Naimish and also a portion of the Puranas read every day in rotation. The Puranas were procured, a pandit was engaged and the daily recitation started in Mataji’s presence. Some devotees then decided to acquire a plot of land at the highest spot of Naimisharanya, namely at Hanuman Tila, in the name of

the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha, where the foundation of a *Puran Mandir* was laid in Mataji's presence on 30-1-67. The temple was constructed by the Lotus Trust of Bombay under the leadership of Sri Manubhai Bhimani, a business magnate of Bombay. The temple was formally inaugurated on 11-12-67. It contains marble statues of Vyasadeva and Sukdeva in niches and a casket of sandalwood and glass in the centre in which copies of all the eighteen Mahapuranas are being preserved. The Puranas are read daily in rotation. Since the opening of the temple Mataji used to frequent this place. Gradually an ashram grew up. When in 1968 Swami Akhandananda Saraswati held a *Bhagavata Paksha* in the Ashram, he suggested that a *vighraha* of *Puran Purusha*, the presiding deity of the Puranas should be installed. Another temple was then built and the statue of Puran Purusha was consecrated on *Akshaya Tritiya*, which fell on May 14th, 1975.

This was the occasion which took me to Naimish in a party of thirty-one men and women, led by our Gurudeva, well known as Bholababa. An invitation from Mataji had been sent to our Gurudeva and I also did not miss the opportunity to squeeze with my family into the group which consisted of devotees from Calcutta, Patna and Dinapur, led by our Gurudeva.

On May 11th, burning in the oppressive heat and "loo" (hot wind), we reached Naimish at midday by a chartered bus from Lucknow. A number of tents had been pitched in the vicinity of the Puran Mandir and we were allotted three of them. Cots were brought and carpets spread within an hour and after that a decent camp-life followed.

The surroundings of Nainisharanya are unique. The River Gomati, with chest-deep water flowed close by and all of us would have refreshing baths every morning and evening. Sand-dunes and undulating land could be seen on all sides. A number of tall, majestic-looking trees and a few ashramas lay in the vicinity of our tents that had been pitched on elevated land. Very recently a cave with a wall-figure of Hanumanji was discovered underground. A little behind our tents was "Pancha Pandava Mandir". It is said that the Pandavas spent a few years in disguise at this spot.

From early morning the plaintive calls of peacocks would resound in the air. Free, unfettered peacocks moving from one tree to another were a heavenly sight. As the day lengthened, the heat became unbearable and after midday we would toss on our camp-beds with soaked towels on our heads which would dry up very soon and the heat would burn us inside out. The evenings under the shady banyan trees would bring some relief.

We had a *dars'ana* of Ma Anandamayi soon after our arrival. Clad in white, wearing gold-rimmed spectacles, Mata Anandamayi beamed with joy as She received us. A photograph of Mataji that hung on the wall of the Ashram, carried the following poem :

Like moonlight Her refulgent soothing smile,
Chases away the looming shadows of the mind,
While captivating sweetness of Her illuminating speech,
Fills with sustaining bliss the entire universe."

How true this is of Mata Anandamayi who radiates divine Love and Joy! During the few days that I saw Mother,

I was simply overwhelmed. In spite of Her eighty years of age. Ma showed tremendous dynamism. From early morning, She had no rest, moving all over, from kitchen to temple, paying attention to all details, attending prayer meetings, bestowing blessings on hundreds of devotees, looking after guests. Whether it was the Governor of U. P. Dr Channa Reddy, or Sri Gulzarilal Nanda or a commoner, Ma had Her kind eyes on everybody.

*

A personality who impressed me with his erudition was Brahmachari Nirmalananda, the Secretary of Mataji's Delhi Ashram. An M. A. in Sanskrit of the Delhi University he explained many difficult aspects of the Puranas in lucid English. Quoting from scriptures he pointed out that the Puranas denote eternal truths in ever new form. Puranas also signify intuitive knowledge through which our ancient life breathes. He emphasised that all religions were basically one and built on the essence, *Satchidananda*.

I was equally impressed by a few other ashramites. The devotion and knowledge of some of them were simply admirable. There was perfect order and discipline in Mataji's Ashram. The kitchen was run by a band of devoted men and women. The variety of delicious food left an unforgettable taste in our mouths. I shall always remember the ever smiling persons who attended to the guests in a truly dedicated spirit of service.

I happened to hear about one of the numerous miracles of Ma from Sri Manubhai Bhimani, who had come with the aid of a nurse and a doctor. Sri Bhimani, who was behind the construction of the Puran Mandir, told me that he had

a serious car accident in Bombay some fifteen months ago. There was no hope of his surviving. Trunk-calls were put through to Mataji who was then at Calcutta. She replied : "Give best treatment. Trust in God". For sixteen days Manubhai lay as if without life. Then, consciousness returned miraculously. "What I am today is all due to Ma", declared humble Manubhai with tears in his eyes.

I met a few young American men who had assembled in the Ashram. Two of them, fresh from the Universities, would daily bathe in the river Gomati, meditate, read Scriptures and pray. I found them to be jolly good companions. An American girl who would turn her beads all the time with her eyes closed, told me that she had been drawn to India by reading books on Tibetan Buddhism. One American, influenced by Swami Yogananda, had come to India to see Ma.

Our life in the tents was of unalloyed joy. We would wake up daily to the tunes of devotional and classical songs played on the tape recorder of one of our neighbours. After our morning ablutions we would hurry to the Pandal where the Srimad Bhagavata would be expounded daily by Pandit Srinath Shastri. His exposition of the Bhagavata Purana commenced on May 9th and continued up to the 16th. Then and also in the evenings Swami Akhandananda Saraswati would explain the Puranas in a captivating manner. In between the *lilting* devotional songs of Chhabi Bandopadhyaya would reverberate in the sky and in our hearts.

May 14th will go down as the most memorable day as the statue of 'Puran Purush' was installed. A colourful

procession with festoons, buntings and multi-coloured flags was taken out in the small town. For a short while Mataji walked in the hot sunshine with a wet towel on Her head, followed on foot by Dr. Channa Reddy, the Governor of the U.P. and many other dignitaries. Then everyone got into cars. The songs of Chhabi Bandopadhyaya echoed and re-echoed in the streets. After the *Nagar Parikramā* (circumambulation round the town) the image was installed at 11-30 a. m. with floral offerings amidst the chanting of hymns and prayers.

The night of May 14th was equally remarkable as *ārati* with more than one lakh of wicks was performed by the priests under the canopy of the clear, moon-lit sky. Devotional songs in Sanskrit, Bengali and Hindi mingled in the air as Mataji sat motionless on the stairs of the temple and watched. It was indeed a heavenly sight for the gods to see men and women in ecstasy prostrating before Ma and She declared with a voice quivering with emotion that it was the united efforts of all the assembled devotees that had made successful the consecration of the temple of Puran Purush. She invited all to come again and again to this holy place.

With tears in our eyes we bade good-bye to Naimisharanya on the morning of the 15th of May after four sweetest days that we shall cherish for ever.

Holy Reminiscences

Jainath Kaul

(Continued from the last issue)

5. At Allahabad During Durga Puja

In 1958 *Durga Puja* was celebrated in the presence of Ma, at the residence of the late Sri Baleshwar Prasad, Advocate of the High Court of Allahabad, from the 18th to the 22nd October. Ma had gone from Varanasi to Allahabad on the 14th, but two days earlier, on Her way to Varanasi from Hoshiarpur, She had halted in Delhi for a day. The following morning I had gone to the railway station to see Her off, and when the train had just started moving, She graciously asked me to come to Allahabad for the *Puja* celebration.

So I had gone there, accompanied by my second son Ajay, then only fourteen, his three younger sisters and their mother. On arrival we had found a fairly spacious room reserved for our use in one of the houses nearby. Ma had just shifted from the Ashram of the late Sri Gopal Thakur, after spending three days there, to the residence of the late Sri N. N. Mukerji, where, in the midst of his beautiful garden, a separate small bungalow had been newly constructed for Her use. When we went there for Ma's Darshan after settling down in our new temporary home, She generously enquired about our lodging, showing thereby Her compassionate solicitude for the comfort of those, in particular, for whom She may, at any time, have the *kheyāla* to ask them to come.

The *Pandal* (large tent) and its main entrance at Sri Baleshwar Prasad's residence had been artistically decorated,

the general arrangements were also very good and by Ma's grace the entire function turned out to be a great success.

Caught and Brought

One day, during the celebrations, when hundreds of devotees had gathered in the *pandal* for Ma's *darśana* and *sangha*, an exchange of ideas on our spiritual future had taken place among those in whose midst I happened to be seated. When many had seemed to agree that only a few among the thousands who come to Ma could hope to attain to spiritual heights, an old and well-known devotee, Sri S. N. Aga, from our group, suddenly addressed Ma loudly thus : "Ma, so many of us come to you. Are all of us going to pass, or will some fail also ?" And Ma replied back immediately, "Do you come by your own free will ? You are caught and brought here."

Mother's gracious Responses

Another day, when we had gone in the morning for Ma's *darśana*, Ma was sitting beside the *Durga Pratima* (Image), which had been installed on a raised flooring at one end of the *pandal*. To prevent unauthorized persons from entering this sanctified area (*puja mandap*), a one-foot-or-so high latticed barricade had been put up above and along the lengthwise edge of the *mandap*, with proportionate pillars rising a few inches higher at intervals in between.

In this situation, since the devotees in general could not go very near Ma, they came up to the barricade, did *pranāma* (obeisance) and such of them as had garlands to offer, hung them on the pillar nearest to Ma. Accordingly,

when we came, we did the same except my eldest daughter Vijay Lakshmi, then just twelve years old, who, to our horror, threw her garland at Ma before we could prevent her from doing so. But, to our sheer amazement, as the garland reached Ma, She burst out laughing. Disapproving of Vijay Lakshmi's action, I reprimanded her, but started smiling myself when I heard her say, with her characteristic innocence: "Everyone was garlanding the pillar as if it was for worshipping the pillar that they had brought their garlands. But I had brought mine for offering it to Ma and not to the pillar." Evidently, Ma's gracious response was due to Her having been aware instantly of this delightful reasoning, while ignoring, with divine mercy, the child's consequent impulsive action.

The following small incident provides a glorious example of how Mother encourages struggling beginners like me. One day Ma was sitting in the *pandal* at a place where devotees could approach Her without any restriction. A couple of yards away I was standing behind Ma at an angle from where I could see Her but She could not see me. As usual, the devotees were coming to Her with fruit, sweets, flowers, etc., and were doing *pranāma*, one after another. As I was watching them my attention was drawn towards a girl of about ten years or so. She had come to Ma and offered Her a flower, with a remarkably graceful poise and affection. In return, I noticed Mother giving her a richly-deserved full measure of gracious love and blessings. The sight thrilled me, fusing my entire mental and emotional being into oneness with the inspiring rare veneration of an innocent *bhakta* and the divine grace of *Bhagavan*. But just when I was thus

lost in witnessing this purifying *līlā*, Ma suddenly turned round and threw a garland at me.

In relating this holy reminiscence, I am reminded of what happened on another occasion at Delhi Railway Station a few years back. Ma had alighted from the train and was proceeding towards the main exit, accompanied by a large number of devotees. I happened to be just behind Ma, and after we had covered about half the way to the exit, the thought suddenly came to me that there had been a time when Rama lived on this earth and those with a rare good fortune moved about with Him. And now Ma was here in our midst like Ram and we in this group were today as fortunate as they had been in the past. I remember clearly that as this thought crossed my mind, Ma turned Her head back and glanced at me without stopping. I am sure this was not done just to tell me that She knew my thoughts, but, more important, to provide me with yet another gracious *līlā*, by recalling which I could remember Her over and over again.

Darśana of Joyous Surprise

Because of the four children in our party we took breakfast at our lodging before having Ma's *darśana* at the *puja* site. One night, after dinner, I announced that I would not eat anything the next morning before having Ma's *darśana*. So, next day, when Vijay Lakshmi and I went out to buy something for breakfast, we purchased, among other items, just five pieces of a sweet, one each for the children and their mother. On our return trip, after we had passed by Anand Bhawan, the ancestral residence of the Nehrus, I thought of pointing out the building to Vijay Lakshmi, and so turned

round in the rickshaw to do so. But when I did this, I noticed in the distance a car coming in our direction with a person in *gerua* sitting near the driver. Thinking that perhaps Ma might be in the car, I asked the rickshaw-man to pull the rickshaw aside to allow us to get down. He did that and we had an excellent *darśana* of Ma.

Afterwards, when we returned to our lodging this news was given to everyone. All the same, I failed to appreciate that Ma had graciously fulfilled my self-imposed condition for eating in the morning. For, in my mind the thought had been firmly planted that since Ma's *darśana* could be had only in the *pandal* in the morning, the question of eating could not arise before going there. And so I asked all others to go ahead and have breakfast without me. However, someone—perhaps my youngest daughter Jai Lakshmi—protested at once, saying “But Papa, you have had Ma's *darśana* already”, and it was only then that I realized what Ma had done and so joined them with joyous remembrance of the welcome unexpected *darśana*. What was still more remarkable about this incident was that among the food articles bought we found six pieces instead of five of the particular sweet mentioned above—one extra for me—a moving token of loving omnipotence !

Nature's Fury Controlled

On *Ashtami* (eighth day of *Durga Puja*) there was such a sudden and heavy downpour in the evening that almost the entire *pandal* was thoroughly soaked with water. A canopy of tarpaulin had no doubt been fixed to protect the *Pratima* when it had been installed a couple of days earlier. But the torrential rain produced a dangerous sag in the tarpaulin.

The *Brahmacharis* responsible for the *Puja* brought bamboos and tried to push up the sagging part in an attempt to empty it of the accumulated water. But the moment Ma saw this, She asked them to stop that at once and directed them instead to "Pray to the Devi" (Goddess).

I was watching all this and when I heard Ma's directive, I felt quite sure that the rain would not continue and that no harm would come to the *Pratima*. Firmly convinced of this I even told my son Ajay, when we had returned to our lodging, that the rain would soon stop that night. And that was exactly what happened. Ajay asked me next morning, "How did you know that the rain would not continue, Papa?" And I replied, "Durga Puja in the presence of Ma is not an ordinary affair. If the rain had continued, the canopy would have collapsed and the *Pratima*, when exposed to rain, would have been ruined. This, I was sure, could never happen when Ma had directed us to pray and not to rely on our feeble efforts to save it."

And so, on the *Navmi* (Ninth day), *puja* and *ārati* were performed freely and the final function on *Dashmi* (Tenth day) was also celebrated as if nothing of any consequence had taken place at all—a miracle indeed of Ma!

Our memorable visit to Allahabad ended on the 22nd of October. We returned to Delhi having thoroughly enjoyed our participation in the *Puja* celebration, in obedience to Mother's command. Of course, the happiest in our group was naturally my second daughter, Ajay Lakshmi who had been included in the group of blessed girls chosen for *Kumari Puja* and had thereby become a recipient of some presents and special attention of Ma.

THREE POEMS :

Monique Peace

The Search

Time is fleeting, and nowhere is He.
How I long for His eternal embrace.
When I listen to the wind,
He speaks to me.
When I listen to the birds,
He sings to me.
When I smell the flowers,
He looks at me.
But where shall I find Him ?
When shall we be united forever ?

Gopi

How I hear your call,
Always *You* dwell in my thoughts,
You can play on your flute,
You can sing and dance,
But *You* cannot hide the stillness
of your mind,
You cannot escape this Gopi,
I know, because we are *One*.

The Offering

I sat by the pond and plucked
a bouquet of wild flowers.
They are for you, reader,
For they possess the freshness of the spring,
The serenity of the fields,
And the reflexion of Heaven.

Eternal Voices of the 20th Century and the Universal

Mother Divine, Sri Anandamayi Ma.

Sri Dibyadarshi *

(Institute of Culture & Prayer, Chandernagar)

True spirituality helps mankind to tide over all economic travails. The quest of the soul brings in the brotherhood of men under the fatherhood of God.

It is fortunate that the eternal voices of the twentieth century are deeply conscious of the complexity of the modern world. Still, they inspire us with the lofty ideal of life. Rabindranath Tagore in his inimitable way has said about the spiritual longing of man that it is a yearning for the Infinite, not to be compared with desires for earthly pleasures or with material cravings. The great poet exclaims :

‘It is only known to me,
He who has heard the Eternal voice,
Rushes into trials and tribulations,
Forsakes everything for the great cause,
Torments he takes on his breast,
Hears the rumblings of death as music,
Fire burns him,
Pierces him the spear,
Severs him the axe.

* Based on a lecture delivered by the writer on the occasion of Mataji's birthday in May, 1975, at the Institute of Chandernagar, Bengal.

Kindles he the Sacrificial Fire
 With all that is dear and beloved
 As fuel to ignite the Spark."

Tolstoy who had burning love for mankind and who, in the face of the oppression of the people by the Czars of Russia with the approval of the churches, declared that he believed in the religion of Christ but not in the religion of the churches, had as a result to undergo severe trials at the hands of the church fathers. Tolstoy, who was regarded as a spiritual preceptor in Europe, uttered in his great book "My Confessions" : "Spiritual causes lie at the root of man's life and development and they are the ideals which govern him. These ideals find expression in religion, in science and art and in the forms of government, and rise higher from one stage to another till man at last reaches his highest good. I am myself a man and therefore called upon to assist in making the ideals of humanity known and accepted."

How much the Indian seekers after Truth get enthused on hearing the voice of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation. Gandhiji says : "I feel that India's mission is different from that of others. India is fitted for the religious supremacy of the world. There is no parallel in the world for the process of purification that this country has voluntarily undergone. Other nations have been votaries of brute force. India can win all by soul force." ("Nonviolent Way to World Peace" by M. K. Gandhi).

Is it not inspiring for men in quest of God in the twentieth century to hear T. S. Eliot, the great English poet, who says :

“We build in vain unless the Lord builds with us,
Oh, weariness of man who turns from God.”

And then his remarks on modern civilization :

“There is no water, but rock,
Where there is no temple there is no house,
Man without God is seed upon the wind,
Driven this way and that way,
Finding no place of lodgement and germination.”

Above all, the clarion call of Swami Vivekananda will guide the men and women of this age on the path divine with force and vigour. It was he who said there could be no religion until and unless everyone in this country could get sufficient food and shelter and enjoy health. It was he who dreamt of ushering in Vedantic socialism and humanism and it was Swami Vivekananda who uttered the immortal words :

“Hear ye children of immortality ! We are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, wholly perfect. Come up, o lions, shake off the delusion that you are sheep. You are souls immortal, spirits free, blessed, eternal. You are not bodies. Matter is your servant and not you the servant of matter.”

The great seer and yogi Sri Aurobindo in his “Life Divine” throws out a challenge to all materialistic thinkers when he tells us : “The ascent to the divine life is the only real human journey, the work of works. This alone is man’s real business in the world and the justification of his existence without which he would be only an insect or a speck of surface—mud and water which has managed to form itself

amid the appalling immensity of the physical world."

Can materialism stifle the voices of these sublime great thinkers dedicated to the cause of spiritual enlightenment for mankind in the twentieth century?

All these great personalities are revered men of the age; they preached their message and published books of supreme importance to humanity.

But lo and behold the miracle of the twentieth century in the spiritual firmament, the Universal Mother Divine, Sri Anandamayi Ma. She has not written any books. She does not quote Scriptures but She is Herself the embodiment of the Scriptures. She stands as illustration of what the sacred books try to convey. She only knows how to dedicate all to God. She is the Goddess incarnate, drowned in illumination. She says: "I know nothing;" but thousands of men and women, some of vast erudition and scholarship, knowing everything from earth to heaven, fall at Her feet to seek divine mercy. She sings like a child. People hear Her in rapture and feel inspired, She moves about, She talks and people jostle and cluster around Her. Divine sparks spread everywhere. She is ambrosial bliss. She is the culmination of human evolution for centuries. There are no magic, no tricks, no spiritual circus-manship about Her. No machinery for propaganda of false supernatural happenings. No vain-glorious self-glorification for the preservation of superstitions and dead creeds and customs in the name of religion. She is all Light and Illumination, open like wind and air. She is the sublime manifestation of Divinity. There is nothing but God in Her.

Come, oh men and women of the twentieth century, have Her *darśana*, get divine intoxication. You have not seen Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. You have had no opportunity to be face to face with Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, come hither, come hither ! See in Her the molten bliss of heaven, the Absolute of the Vedanta moving on earth to give you all bliss.

In conclusion we pray: "Oh, Universal Mother Divine, accept our thousands of salutations and bless us at this auspicious moment. In ecstasy we offer our humble oblations at Thy lotus feet. Thou art for all, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the saints and the sinners. No temples and churches confine Thee, wherever devotees shed tears, there Thou art. Let us bow our heads in devotion and wonder at Thy blessed feet, oh Miracle of the Ages."

"It is man's bounden duty to choose and gather about him that which helps the remembrance of God."

Matiji

Contemporary Saints and Sages

NIMKAROLI BABA

Vijayananda

It was April 13th, 1957, Chaitra Sankranti, the day when the sun enters the sign of his Ram, an important festival day in India.

I was living at the time in our ashram at Varanasi. I had just been through a period of intensive spiritual exercises, and, as frequently happens in such cases, the reaction came in the form of an attack of mental depression. Feeling that some form of activity would do me good, I had asked the administration of the ashram to assign me some kind of task that would be useful but not very demanding; and so I had been asked to water the flowers and bushes in a part of the ashram garden. In April the heat in Varanasi is intense, a desiccating heat that dries up both human beings and plants; people need to drink a great deal and the flowers too need water.

It was early in the afternoon—my free hour—and with a *gamcha* (Hindu napkin) knotted about my waist to serve as apron I was conscientiously setting about my new task.

Visitors to the ashram were not rare and generally I paid very little attention to them. One now passed very close by me. He was "a great strapping fellow" with a long moustache and dressed quite ordinarily in a white dhoti. His head was clean shaven leaving only a lock of hair on the crown

in the custom of orthodox upper caste Hindus. He appeared to be a brahmin such as one frequently encounters in the streets of Varanasi. A young man, similarly dressed, accompanied him. The "great fellow" glanced sideways at me, not without sympathy, and I heard him murmur to his companion, "*Ingrezi*" (an Englishman). This is a generic term used by Hindus for anyone from the west. Then he disappeared into one of the ashram buildings.

A few minutes later one of the sadhus in the ashram came up to me and asked: "Do you know that Nimkaroli Baba is here?"

I had never met Nimkaroli Baba, the yogi whose name radiated an aura of mystery and miracle and I had long wished to have his *darsana*.

"Where is he?" was my immediate reaction.

"He is sitting on the terrace of the Annapurna Mandir" (a temple dedicated to that aspect of the Divine Mother, in which she provides physical as well as spiritual nourishment).

Before my interlocutor had completed his answer I was already untying my *gamcha* and racing at full speed up the stairway leading to the temple terrace.

Nimkaroli Baba was sitting on an *āsana* surrounded by a few eminent members of the ashram. It was my "great strapping fellow" of a short while ago. Respectfully I made a *pranāma*, the customary salutation offered to a sage, and he invited me to sit beside him. Then he put a few questions to me in Hindi, my name and so on. He seemed, I cannot say why, to feel a sudden surge of sympathy for me. He was offered refreshments, a glass of buttermilk, but insisted

that I should be offered some as well and did not drink until another glass had been fetched.

Various members of the ashram came up, one by one, to pay their respects. To each he spoke a few words of appreciation, occasionally adding some remark prophetic of the future. Of a few, including myself, he commented, "*Sant hai*" ("He is a saint"). He looked intently at me with eyes that seemed to plumb the future and said: "Varanasi suits you well for the moment but *pahār jaigā, pahār jaigā* (you will be going to live in the mountains)."

At the time I was deeply attached to Varanasi and felt that I should pass all my life in that town. I had neither the desire, nor any intention whatever of going to live in the mountains. Two years later, however, I changed my mind and spent the summer of 1959 at Almora in the Himalayas, returning to Varanasi for the winter. Then, in the beginning of 1960, I went back to Almora to stay, and since then I have lived permanently in the Himalayas, going down to the plains for brief spells only, in mid-winter. Thus the prophecy of Nimkaroli Baba has come to pass.

The sage arose. He had an invitation to a private house in the neighbourhood. I accompanied him to the ashram gate and while we walked he kept repeating my name, ceaselessly, like a litany: "Vijayananda, Vijayananda...".

Nimkaroli Baba was a great yogi in the old tradition of Matsyendranath, Gorakshanath and others. In theory his headquarters were at Lucknow in the north of India; but in actual fact nobody ever knew where exactly he was at any moment or where he was about to go. He would turn up

unexpectedly at the house of a disciple, then disappear mysteriously. He had no possessions and carried no luggage, not even the traditional water pot. When he happened to be at a disciple's house he changed the dhoti he was wearing for another that was freshly washed. All sorts of miraculous tales are told about him. Here are a few which I have heard and which I have every reason to believe to be authentic :

(1) A *samnyāsi* of our ashram whom I have known intimately over many years was present one day at the kumbha Mela in Allahabad. In the course of a discussion with some other sadhus the conversation turned upon the subject of Nimkaroli Baba. The *samnyāsi* declared that if indeed Nimkaroli Baba was an authentic yogi he should appear before them if invoked; and at once — perhaps simply as a joke—he began to repeat aloud the name of Nimkaroli. Almost immediately the sage appeared.

(2) Around the middle of November in 1962, the situation in India was critical. The Chinese had invaded the country in October, were advancing victoriously on all fronts, and now threatened Assam. India seemed to be on the verge of collapse.

An important political figure whose name I do not wish to mention and who was a disciple of Nimkaroli Baba was then in Delhi. He considered leaving the capital and phoned his Master for advice. Nimkaroli Baba told him to make no move and assured him that the very next day the situation would be normal again. It seemed impossible that matters should be settled within such a short time and the politician pressed for explanations, but his Master only

insisted that all would be well.

The next day came the announcement of the decision by the Chinese to put an end to hostilities and return to their original positions—a decision which was quite unpredictable and came as an entire surprise.

(3) The most extraordinary story of all is the following : At the outset of his career Nimkaroli Baba had been an itinerant monk wandering up and down the length and breadth of India. He often travelled by train, and in the way of so many sadhus even today did not trouble to purchase a ticket. One day a ticket inspector came into his compartment. Inspectors generally turn a blind eye where sadhus are concerned, but this particular one was pitiless. As soon as the train reached the next stop he made Nimkaroli Baba get off, threatening severe punishment if he got on again. It was a little wayside station and the train was due to leave in a few minutes. The guard waved the green flag, the station-master blew his whistle and the driver started the engine but.....the train refused to budge. The driver checked the engine carefully but there was nothing wrong. Carriage after carriage was examined in order to discover what was causing the delay. Everything, it seemed, was in order, but still the train refused to move.

All this while Nimkaroli Baba had remained on the platform, a slightly mocking smile perhaps playing over his countenance. As the station staff all bustled about trying to solve the mystery, someone suggested that perhaps the Mahatma was a great yogi and it was his magic power that was holding up the train.

Hindus, especially the village-folk remain very credulous. They believe that by the power of their austerities certain yogis can work miracles of any kind whatever.

One of the station employees approached Nimkaroli Baba and begged him to get on the train again. The sage did so, returned to his compartment, took his seat.....and the train immediately moved off.

Westerners, generally, are sceptical about miracles. Even the miracles mentioned in the Bible are treated as "legends" or "fables" or, at best, as "symbolic stories" conveying hidden teachings, and many believers can be at peace with themselves only by looking for scientific explanations. The miraculous cures at Lourdes, and instances of levitation by Christian mystics are certainly accepted by religious people but, as it were, despite themselves. The average intellectual in the west would be ashamed to declare publicly that he believed a miracle to be anything more than a daydream or a Christmas story.

But what precisely is a miracle? A fact, an incident that startles the mind by its disruption of natural laws? Something which was believed to be impossible and which nevertheless comes about? Certainly, there are miracles of this nature. But the true miracle is the transference of the object of our desires and dreams out of the realm of imagination where it exists, into that of concrete tangible reality so that it becomes the fact we have wished it to be. The transference itself may be supernatural or may be simply an apparently trivial fact.

Actually it is in the subjective aspect that the mechanism of a miracle must be studied, for the levers of magic

operate in the psychological sphere, and the explanation of the miraculous fact can be psychological only, never scientific.

To begin with, one must accept the hypothesis that 'it is mind which creates matter', that thought, if it is sufficiently powerful and concentrated, may crystallize itself into a visible form or into a series of events.

In principle a yogi who has achieved perfect control of his mind, not only on the conscious level but also down to the deepest level of the unconscious—that is to say, to the instinct of self-preservation, has the power, potentially, to work any miracle whatever.

This is only the theory, however; in practice, the whole matter is far more complex. First of all a perfect yogi is one with the "Origin of things" and by virtue of this fact his desires and aspirations have all been achieved. But the production of a miracle calls for will and desire, both factors that do not exist in the perfect Being.

Secondly, there is no such thing as an autonomous individual mind. The individual is no more than a wave, a slip stream in the ocean of the universal mind. In the mental realm, as in the physical, there is a ceaseless interaction between individual elements, a continual exchange of thought. It follows that the miracle worker does not exist in isolation. He exists only as a function of the man who is watching him, and a miracle can occur only when the two synchronise their actions as a couple of dancers do, for instance. The man upon whom the miracle is being worked must be sufficiently receptive, his mind must have been

“permeabilised” to begin with. In a word he must *believe*, even if only in the deepest depths of his unconscious, in the possibility of the supernatural fact. Indeed in most cases he must himself call the miracle into being by a desire or an expectation formulated in the present or in the past. Confronted by the insurmountable wall of incredulity raised by most western minds, the miracle worker would be powerless. For scepticism is an inverted faith, often far more powerful than faith itself.

At the end of the last century, when the English attacked Tibet, the lama magicians of that country assured their soldiers that they had nothing to fear, for the power of their magic rites would turn the bullets of the Englishmen back upon themselves. In actual fact, however, it was the soldiers of the Dalai Lama who were killed by the English bullets. At first sight, this might seem to prove that the Tibetan magicians cherished fond illusions about their own powers; but it is not impossible that they did, in fact, possess such powers; only that the powers were rendered ineffective by the total incredulity of the English soldiers ?

It is a well-known fact that faith alone is sufficient to work miracles, but what is needed is the faith that the evangelist speaks of, the faith that can move mountains. This faith is, in fact, the very basis of our mental processes. First come the random impressions received by our senses. The mind gathers these together, sorts them out, ties them up into an interpretation drawn from memory, and compares them with other similar experiences. Then whatever it is that lies at the centre of our thought-mechanism sets

the rubber-stamp on the group of perceptions: "that's a man, it's not a tree"; "this exists, that doesn't exist"; "this is good, that is bad", and so on. When we see a tree, for instance, we have no doubt whatever about the reality of what we see. Our faith in the existence of the object is absolute and unshakable. Despite this, a careful analysis of the physiological mechanism of our perceptions and their psychological interpretation must inevitably lead to the conclusion that the objective existence of the object, far from being scientifically demonstrated, is actually no more than a hypothesis. Similarly, when dreaming, we have the same absolute faith in the reality of our dream phenomena; it is only when we wake up that we say, "It was only a dream". In the final count it is our belief, our faith in their existence which imparts to objects their empiric reality. But to return to *actual facts*. What then are the conditions under which a miracle can come about ?

(1) A perfect sage, one who possesses all powers in potential, will use them only in exceptional circumstances; for as I have already said, he is completely free from even the slightest trace of desire or will. The supernatural event, may however, come to pass with him playing the role of an unconscious intermediary. When this happens, he is serving simply as a channel for the cosmic will. Most miracles attributed to saints fall into this category. In other circumstances a sage may momentarily identify himself with the desire or aspiration of a disciple or a suppliant and so realise them.

(2) The great yogi miracle workers generally fall slightly short of absolute perfection and their their miracles

have as their object the welfare of the world or the spiritual progress of one or more of their disciples.

(3) As for those who work miracles for their own personal ends taking it for granted that they are not just common conjurers, their power is very limited indeed. For the power of the yogi is in inverse proportion to that of the ego. The annihilation of the ego leads to perfection, its assertion increasingly limits it. Besides, a magician who uses a power for personal ends will sooner or later lose it and expose himself to serious consequences.

Most "professional miracle-workers", if I may dare to use the term, do not make direct use of their own will or powers of concentration in order to realise the supernatural. Such a "personal" effort would have the effect of stimulating the ego and this would automatically induce a weakening nay, even a total loss, of the yogic power. The true yogi uses, as a lever, the "Power of the Other". This "Other" is most frequently God and the simplest means of winning His favour is a fervent and sincere prayer.

But soetimes, too, the miracle-worker may make an appeal to a cosmic power, a deva, a "dragon" or a "spirit". Whether such powers have a real or an imaginary existence, whether their life is merely a temporary and ephemeral one breathed into them by the yogi—all these are quite unimportant questions. What is true is that this relatively simple and effective method has been used by magicians in all ages and in all countries.

"But if miracles do indeed take place", the western intellectual will insist, "it should be possible to verify them and to study them by modern methods".

And so he sets out in the track of the yogis, equipped with ultrasensitive cameras, and electronic machines, with electro-cardiographs and electro-encephalographs and heaven knows what else.

But a miracle—a true miracle—is not acted out in public like a scene on the stage. If it is, then one may rest almost assured that it is an illusion and that the magician is, in fact, no more than a very clever conjuror.

A real miracle is a living thing which surges into being when contact has been established with the immense cosmic power underlying the world of our perceptions. For the spectators it has a deep and precise significance more important than the supernatural fact itself. Very often it marks a turning point in their psychological life, a new orientation in their thinking and their behaviour. I myself have been on more than one occasion the witness or the instrument of a miracle—a flower opening out spontaneously in one's hand, for instance, rain falling exactly at the time requested, not just once but again and again, the rapid movement of an apparently incurable illness in the direction of cure without any medicine having been administered.

And in each case there was a deep meaningfulness, enormously more vast, more moving and more convincing than the miracle itself. Thus a scientific enquiry by modern techniques would be both out of place and futile.

The miracles performed by the great yogis never have it as their object to "bowl" the public "over". Their purpose is always to teach a lesson and sometimes, to act in the nature of shock therapy, and produce a spiritual awakening. And in all probability this was true of the miracles of Nimkaroli Baba.

Mātri Līlā

July 15th—October 1st, 1975

Mataji reached Kankhal from Naimisharanya on July 16th. On the 17th (*Sankranti* day) *Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyana* was held in the Ashram hall, ending on the 18th morning in Mataji's presence. On July 23rd Gurupurnima was celebrated. People had arrived gradually from the day Mataji had come. Mataji would give *darśana* usually twice daily. On the 23rd many more came for the day from Dehradun and other places. This year the rain was not felt to be a disturbance since Mataji could sit comfortably in the spacious hall and every single person had the chance to approach Ma individually and offer *pranāma* with their gift or doing puja, receiving Ma's blessing and *prasada* from Her hands. Mataji would alternately sit in the hall, then attend Gurupuja in Didima's Samadhi Mandir and also spend some time in the Siva Temple. When She returned to the hall, more devotees had arrived, eager to pay homage to Her. Satsang was held, followed by the customary feast given to all present. On July 28th a special Puja was performed for Nagpanchami day in Ma's presence in Didima's Mandir. At midday there was *Daridra Narāyaṇa Bhojan* (feeding of Lord Narayana in the guise of the poor and destitue). Mataji together with Sri Girdhari Narayan Puri, the Mahant of Nirvani Akhara sat on a wooden couch at the wide open back-gate of the Ashram, while the food was distributed in the lane outside, to the men and women who came in single

file and with the food received Mataji's blessing. The girls stood behind Ma's seat, singing kirtan all the while.

On July 29th, Mataji left by car at about 1 p.m. for an undisclosed destination with only a handful of people. She was to leave between 9 and 10 a.m. but for various reasons Her departure was delayed until after 1 p.m. to the delight of everyone present, since Mataji remained downstairs for over three hours and one could have Her *darśana* most of the time. Amongst the few present there were quite a number of foreigners. Several had come for Gurupurnima and a few more had arrived from France a couple of days after the festival.

When Mataji came to Dehradun on August 9th, She related that She had spent the ten days in between in Suktal, a holy place near Muzaffarnagar, in the Ashram of Sri Swami Vishnuashram, where She was able to have a good rest, free from crowds. Consequently Mataji's state of health seemed visibly improved. Suktal was quite hot and Ma would remain in Her room all day long, attending to correspondence and other work for which She gets no leisure when there is one function after another. In the cool of the evening She would spend about three hours in the open air, in quiet and solitude, with only just half a dozen of people enjoying Her *darśana*.

As soon as Mataji had arrived at Kankhal in July, a devotee came from Dehradun who was very anxious to arrange for an "*Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa*" in Mataji's presence in the Kishenpur Ashram. She requested Mataji to fix Herself the date that would suit Her best. Only from Suktal Mataji sent word that She would reach Kishenpur on August 9th

and that the recitation of the Ramayana should be started that morning. Mataji alighted at about 5 p.m. and went straight to the hall where she gave *darśana* for about 45 minutes. Upstairs also She talked to small groups. Mataji had come to Dehradun after a long interval and was leaving for Kankhal the next afternoon. So many devotees had been waiting for an opportunity to talk to Her. Mataji, therefore, gave innumerable "privates" till quite late. On the 10th morning after the completion of the Ramayana in Mataji's presence, everybody was served prasāda in batches as it was pouring with rain and the platform in the open could not be used. At about 1-30 p.m. Mataji got into the car and drove to Kankhal. On the way She halted at Baghat House, Har-dwar for a short while.

On the 11th morning another *Nāg Pujā* was celebrated in the outer room of the Samādhi Mandir. At midday the grandson of Mataji's only brother had his first feeding of solid food (*Annaprāsana* ceremony) in Mataji's presence. The whole family had come from Delhi for the occasion.

On August 13th, the 5th anniversary of Didima's *Mahāsamādhi* was celebrated. It started at 4 a.m. with Nagar Kirtan round the Ashram area in spite of the rain. Kirtan was then kept up in the Ashram while Didima's son, Sri Makhan Bhattacharya, performed an elaborate puja in the Samādhi Mandir. Satsang was held in the hall from about 10 a.m., when Dr. Gourinath Shastri, Mahamandaleshwara Sri Prakashananda of Kankhal and Sri Swami Madhavananda of Sivananda Ashram delivered short talks in Mataji presence. This was followed by a feast given to a large number of Sannyāsis upstairs and to all present downstairs.

At about 1 p.m., the time when Didima had left Her body, this was commemorated by half an hour's silent meditation in front of the Samādhi Mandir. Only Ashramites and a few guests staying in the Ashram buildings or near about attended. Mataji remained upstairs on Her veranda which is almost adjoining.

On the 14th morning a *Bhagavata Saptah* started. On the 9th evening at Kishenpur, the widow of Sri Omprakash Madhoram had come to request Mataji to fix the date and place for a Bhagavata Saptaha for her deceased husband. When Mataji has the *kheyāla*, things can be arranged at very short notice with amazing swiftness and everything dovetails. That very evening a messenger was sent to Vrindaban in search of pandits who could officiate in the Bhagavata Saptah and do the Sanskrit recitation as well as the Hindi discourses. The members of the Madhoram family who reside in Delhi were summoned by trunk call. Lo and behold—everything was accomplished within three days. On the 13th everyone arrived and the necessary preparations were complete.

Purānāchārya Sri Brij Mohan Shastri of Vrindaban proved an excellent speaker who kept his audience spell-bound every afternoon for three hours and at times moved them to tears, notwithstanding the fact that he was suffering from cold and fever for several days. This was the first time that he expounded the Bhagavata in our Ashram. Before leaving Kankhal he confided to Mataji that it had since long been his desire to be able to do so in Her presence. At last his wish had been fulfilled and he felt greatly blessed. Mataji attended his talks daily for some time towards the

end and for a longer time on the day on which Sri Krishna's birthday was narrated and hailed and sweets were distributed to all present.

The lectures on the Bhagavata were held on the large veranda of the so-called guest house with very effective loud-speakers, while the Sanskrit reading was done in one of the rooms. In the meanwhile the hall was being decorated and got ready for the Jhulan festival which started on August 17th, *Ekadasi* day.* That day being *Sankranti*, the whole of the Ramayana was also recited in another portion of the very spacious hall, with *Purnāhuti* (completion) on the 18th morning in Mataji's presence.

A large swing had been suspended in the middle of the long side of the hall and was decorated differently every night with colourful hangings, leaves and flowers and on the last day with lots of fruits suspended on branches full of green foliage that had been fastened to the ropes that held the swing. Several pictures of Sri Krishna were placed on the swing and the first night only a tiny little statue of Gopal occupied the centre. Every evening *Puja* & *ārati* to the accompaniment of songs started at 7-30 p.m. At the end of the worship, Mataji was always the first to pull the rope of the swing and after Her many had their turn. The first evening Mataji Herself sat on the swing for a short while. She also led the kirtan for some time, singing a swing song. The next evening a very beautiful larger *vighraha* of Radha-Krishna that had arrived with an ashramite from Dehradun, could be seen in the centre. By and by more images came and the decorations also became ever more gorgeous until the climax

* *Ekadasi* The eleventh day of each phase of the moon.

on Jhulan Purnima, August 21st. The number of visitors increased daily both during the Bhagavata & Jhulan. Sri Mahantji was also present for the swing festival once or twice and another day Sri Mahamandaleswara attended. On Jhulan Purnima, midnight meditation was observed solemnly every year in Mataji's presence, preceded and followed by *bhajans* (religious songs). That day was also *Raksha-bandhan* and everyone tied a *rakhi* round Mataji's wrist and She usually gave one in return, but this year She did not tie them with Her own hands, as She had done in former years.

Mataji was to leave Kankhal soon after this festival but to the great joy of all present, Sri Mahantaji Girdhari Narayana persuaded Her to remain over *Janmastami* (Sri Krishna's birthday) which fell on August 29th. Even in the interval of seven days Mataji did not leave the Ashram premises. She merely shifted to a room on the upper storey of the guest-house for a few days and gave *darśana* on the veranda in front of Her room there. One day two men from the Delhi Radio Station came with a tape recorder and asked Mataji to give a message. Mataji talked to them for some time but for taping She only said Her usual: "*Hari katha hi kotha our sab vritha, vyatha*" and "*Jahān Rām vahān arām, jahān Rām nahin vahan vyāram.*"*

As a part of the Janmastami celebrations, scenes from Sri Krishna's early life were represented in one portion of the hall with little cardboard houses, clay dolls and trees, etc. Some devotees had worked indefatigably for several days

* "Talk must be of Him alone, all the rest is futile and painful."
 "Where Ram is, there is rest and ease, where Ram is not there is discomfort and uneasiness."

and it all was very charming to look at. There was the prison in which Sri Krishna was born, Gokul, Vrindaban, Kalia, Putna, Mount Govardhan, etc. etc. all lit up brightly with tiny electric bulbs.

In the early evening Mataji came to the hall for a short time and inspected the preparations for the midnight Puja. Then She went to Nirvani Akhara for a little while to see the decorations there. At 10 p.m. kirtan started. Soon after, Ma came and sat alternately in the two places that had been prepared for Her so that everyone could see Her from near for some time. A number of devotees did puja and put brightly coloured saris of various hues round Her, crowns on Her head and some also a flute into Her hands. Then an elaborate puja of Sri Krishna was performed while kirtan was sung. Round midnight, Brahmachari Bhaskarananda read out in Sanskrit the description of Sri Krishna's birth from the Bhagavata. This was followed by more music. At the end Mataji distributed prasada with full hands. Only at about 3-30 a.m. She lay down to rest.

On the 30th morning, *Nandotsava* (the joy of the cowherds over the birth of Sri Krishna.) was celebrated in the courtyard of the guest-house. A circular altar was improvised in the centre, with a small clay shrine on pillars on the top, in which a tiny image of Devaki holding Baby Gopal in her arms could be seen. Some devotees, dressed up as *gopas* (cowherds), started dancing round the altar, singing merrily to the accompaniment of cymbals and drums. Gradually other men, young and old, joined them. Standing shyly in a corner, there were four *gopis* (milk-maids) with earthen

vessels on their heads that were half filled with curds. The gopis were dressed up very colourfully and wore long *dense* veils over their faces. It was impossible to make out their identity. Gradually Mataji appeared and joined the fun. She took the *gopis* and all other women present, who formed a larger outer circle, to circumambulate round the altar singing in unison with the men with ever-increasing enthusiasm. Mataji caught hold of each gopi by turns and swung round for a second. The chief gopa (a devotee from Delhi who is present every year for this occasion) carried on his shoulders a yoke with two earthen pots full of curds mixed with saffron. In obedience to tradition he stumbled and fell down, the vessels smashed to pieces with the yellow curds splashing all over. This marked the end of the dance and the climax of the festival. Everyone's forehead was marked with those curds. Then Mataji snatched one vessel after another from the *gopis'* heads and threw curds into the mouths and all over the faces of the throng that formed round Her. Sri Mahantji and a few other *sādhus* had come and been offered seats on the veranda from where they watched with obvious enjoyment. Mataji went and administered a share of curds to them also. Everyone was in high spirits. A number of devotees had come specially from Dehradun to be present for the solemn midnight worship and the hilarious festival the next morning. After a feast given to all at midday most visitors dispersed. Mataji remained in Kankhal until September 2nd. One day, foundation stones were laid in Mataji's presence for a small house that two brahmacharis are building for their own use and

for a room with accesories upstairs near the hall for two brahmacharinis.

When Mataji left, She said She was going to Delhi for a day and a night and would from there motor to Vrindaban on September 4th. Soon after reaching our Delhi Ashram on the 3rd morning, a trunk-call was received from Poona to say that Sri Gurupriya Didi's health was not at all satisfactory. Mataji sent Her party to Vrindaban and left with only two or three companions for Poona the same evening alighting there by car from Bombay on the 4th night. After a stay of three days, She took Didi with Her, first to Bombay and then to Delhi for treatment, reaching there on the 9th morning. The next morning Mataji drove to Vrindaban.

From September 13th to 20th a Bhagavata Saptaha was held by the Raja and Rani of Achroll. The Sanskrit recitations were done separately by two pandits in the Gita Bhavan of our Ashram, while the Hindi discourses were delivered by Swami Sri Visnuashramji in the hall, every day from 8 to 11 a.m. and from 3 to 6 p.m. Swami Visnuashramji is not only well-known for his wonderful way of talking and explaining; his great wisdom and knowledge are quite outstanding. The first two days Mataji remained present throughout his talks and on the following days listened while lying on Her couch in the corridor (*parikrami*) that goes round Chheliya Mandir. There itself She also slept every night. Towards the end of each discourse Mataji used to come and occupy Her seat near Swami Vishnuashram for some time.

In the evening Mataji would give *darshan* on the roof of Her house and sometimes talk very animatedly to small

groups coming from Vrindaban, Mathura and other places to meet Her.

On September 15th, *Ekadāsi* day, Sri Lakshmi Narayan one of the Ashram cooks who often travelled with Mataji, passed away in the Ramakrishna Mission hospital opposite our Ashram after a short but serious illness. Mataji had gone to see him in the hospital and attended to him with much concern. His body was brought first to the Ashram and from there taken to the burning-ghat. He had been an enthusiastic Vaisnava and it was, therefore, most auspicious for him to leave his body in Vrindaban, during a Bhagavata Saptah and most of all under Mataji's care and in Her presence. We tend our condolence to his bereaved family. May he rest in the Lord !

The Bhagavata Saptaha ended on full-moon day when Ram-Archa was performed in Ram Bhavan. On September 22nd morning, Mataji proceeded by car to our New Delhi Ashram. The same night She boarded the train to Luknow enroute to Naimisharanya. Only very few were allowed to accompany Ma as She needed a rest very badly.

Durga Puja was to be held at Uttarkashi this year, although Mataji actually had no *kheyāla* to go there. Already while Ma was at Kankhal the hill-road was damaged by heavy rains and closed for traffic at intervals. In September the situation worsened due to incessant rains and storms, and the persons who were to go there and see to all preparations had to turn back half way. There was no alternative but to shift the function to another place. This was the first occasion in the history of the Anandamayee Sangha when

the programme had to be altered after the invitations had been sent out. Kashi was chosen instead of Uttarkashi. Mataji reached Varanasi from Naimisharanya early morning on October 4th, the day of *Mahalaya*. Chandipath was to be held during *Navaratri* and the usual daily preliminary worship until *Sasti*, October 10th, when the actual puja of the images begins. Mataji is expected to be present in Varanasi also for Lakshmi Puja, on fullmoon night, October 19th. Kali Puja is to be celebrated in our Kali Mandir at Uttarkashi in Mataji's presence on November 2nd and *Annakut* on November 4th also there.

The 26th *Samyam Mahavrata* is scheduled to take place from November 10th to 17th at the invitation of the Jaipuria family at Swadeshi House, Civil Lines, Kanpur.

Notice to Foreign Subscribers

Due to increase in the cost of paper, printing and allied charges, we have been compelled to increase the annual subscription of 'Ananda Varta' from January 1976 as shown below :

By Sea Mail — Rs. 12/50 or £ 1-0-0 or \$ 3.00.

By Air Mail — Rs. 30/ or £ 2-15-0 (Europe etc.)

— Rs. 40/ or \$ 6. 50 (North & South America)