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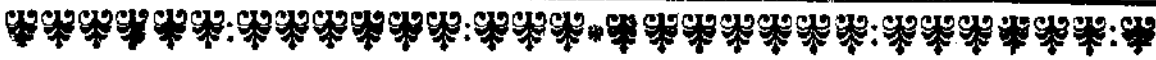
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*The One who is the Eternal, the Atman,
He Himself is the pilgrim on the path of Immortality,
He is all in all, He alone is.*

Mātri Vāni

Beyond the universe and within the universe there is but God's actionless action. Him alone must a human being remember at all times. The Guru's instructions are the mantra that will deliver the mind; they have to be remembered and reflected upon. Endeavour with all your might to tread the Supreme Path faultlessly--so that human life may become fulfilled.

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For how many ages has one not performed penance (*tapasyā*) by the oblation of enjoying and suffering the results of one's actions ! The yoga of the *sādhaka* should by the pursuance of the yogic current be converted into Mahāyoga.

* * *

What God does—whatsoever—is all for the best. This is difficult to understand for a human being and therefore he suffers when his desires remain unfulfilled. Quite often one encounters obstacles and disturbances even when attempting to carry out some beneficial, auspicious work; but it is well to keep in mind that I cannot know by what expedient He is attracting me to Himself. He is the fountain of mercy, of compassion, He ceaselessly showers His grace on me.

* * *

Gurupurnima, July 23rd, 1975.

On Gurupurnima day pilgrims on the path to God-realization should determine to remain ever wide awake on their pilgrimage towards the achievement of their sublime Goal.

* * *

In very truth, everything without exception is possible for God. The impossible becomes possible and the possible impossible.

* * *

Many tell Ma : "You are my Guru." And Ma always declares : " Whatever you may say is all right." Ma also says : " The ONE who is all-pervad-

ing, who is variously called Parabrahman, Paramātmā or God, He verily belongs to all."

* * *

In the morning, as soon as you wake up, pray : "Lord, accept as Thy service everything that I shall do today." At night again, before falling asleep, pray : "In self-surrender I bow to Thee placing my head at Thy holy Feet." Try to spend the whole day in this spirit.

* * *

Relinquish what seems bad to you. That you are vowed to the constant remembrance of God is a matter of great rejoicing. To the limit of your power pray to Him for His grace. Truth Itself will help a man who goes out in search of Truth. Full of inward beauty get going on the path of Truth and thus power will manifest through your spiritual practice.

* * *

God keeps milk ready in the mother's breast before the baby is born; in Him put your whole trust, seek refuge in Him alone.

— — —

Mātri Satsang in Vrindaban

(Translated from Hindi)

Samyam Mahavrata,

November 23rd, 1969, 10 p.m.

Question : In order to find God, is it necessary to inflict suffering on the body ?

Matāji : Under no circumstances is it justified to inflict suffering on the body. There is no need to make the body suffer.

Question : Can God be realized without suffering ? How ?

Matāji : To realize God is a different matter. One has no right to make the body suffer under any conditions. Why not ? There is a reason for this. To whom does the body belong ? HE whose body it is, who has created the body, who has manifested in that shape, has given it to you that you may do service. The body is God's dwelling-place. Keep your body clean, keep it pure, keep it undefiled. This is what you have to do. God resides in the body, it is His abode. Try to live in His presence, yearn for his revelation. You have no right to inflict suffering on the body. Why not ? Because everything belongs to God. God resides in the body. Regard the body as a temple of God. Everything is God's creation, nothing exists outside of Him. With form and without form all is God. However, seen from a certain position there is a veil of

ignorance, a screen that hides Him. In order to remove that screen, you have to scrub the temple clean, purify it. The practice (*kriyā*) which will cleanse the body, that is your duty.

But the person who is addicted to sense enjoyment (which is poison—slow poison and provides him with a 'return ticket'), so long as he is in that condition, it is like this : when he craves for the pleasures of the senses and does not get what he wants or the way he wants it so that he may remain engrossed in enjoying these experiences, he feels miserable. When someone yearns for the pleasures and comforts of this world and his desires are frustrated or not fulfilled in the manner he would have liked it, this is painful for him. What happens to the man who is bent on sense enjoyment? It acts as slow poison : step by step it takes him towards death and he leaves with a return ticket to come back to this world. Why? According to what he thinks at the time of death he is born again so as to fulfil his longings. Seen from this angle, indulgence in the pleasures of the senses may be likened to death by drinking poison : In small doses he has taken poison until he finally dies. Where death is, there the revelation of immortality is not; and consequently one has to be born again. One obtains a new body in order to fulfil one's desires for sense objects. One appears in a body, and thus embodied, what happens? God has made certain laws : so long as you go on pursuing the objects of the senses you can never be released from the wheel of birth and death.

But if you proceed in the other direction, if, having stilled with great patience and endurance the agitation of

the senses, you take to the path of: "Who am I? From where have I come?" so as to remove the veil of ignorance, then the realization of your immortality will dawn. The problem of birth and death will disappear and death will die. Do you understand?

Therefore, in order to reveal your immortality, to bring to light that you are the offspring of the Immortal, that you are deathless in essence, you are practising *sādhana* and are all taking part in the *Samyam Vratā*. Why *samyam* (self-restraint)? Without leading a life of self-restraint the road to God-realization does not open out. When do egoism, passion, desires, which are your enemies, show their face? When your desire is thwarted, when you are obstructed in what you want to do, then these enemies come to the forefront, assert themselves. Even against your better judgement and will, they make their appearance. When this happens you feel remorseful and unhappy. Through aversion and dislikes also these enemies make their appearance. All this is but natural in the life of man, it is the usual thing with everyone.

For this reason, if the understanding dawns on the aspirant that the practice he does for the sake of God is spoiled by giving way to the promptings of these enemies, and he conceives the desire to aspire after Supreme Knowledge (*Brahmavidyā*), what is his endeavour? To lead a restrained, disciplined life. When he abstains from self-indulgence, what happens? People come and participate in the *Samyam Vratā* who are used to cater to the appetites of their senses, to behave as they feel like, to say what they

please, to act according to their whims, to give full freedom to the ego. Their habit has been to eat what they fancy, to put on the clothes they feel like wearing, to behave according to their own sweet will. They have become accustomed to this kind of life. On no account are they prepared to forgo their worldly comforts. Driven as they are by desires for comforts and enjoyments rather than aspiring after yoga, it is but natural that they should experience back-ache, pain in their legs, a burning sensation in their body, great restlessness of the mind. This is what one hears. Many have told this body (Ma) about these things.

You lack in practice, you are not used to meditate. Consequently, when you are trying to practise yoga, to realise that you are eternally united to Reality, that you are a yogi, joined indissolubly to God, that you are a supremely great *sādhaka*, the offspring of a Rishi, that Rishihood is within you—when your mind turns in that direction and you are attempting to sit still, then the habit that you have formed of doing what you please, will pull you and make you feel ill at ease. Note this carefully, this is what you called suffering when you asked whether it is necessary to inflict suffering on the body in order to find God. You should remember that what seems painful to you is endured in order to find the Beloved.

Why do we experience pain and suffering, sorrow and trouble? Because we have not yet found the Beloved, Him who is the eternal fountain of all goodness and well-being, who is all-merciful and all-gracious. We are not experiencing Him as such. If those who are sitting here felt desper-

ately eager for the bliss of God-realization, they would not feel what you call suffering, the sensation of physical discomfort or pain. To inflict suffering on the body is not right. To sit down comfortably and indulge in easy, familiar talk will nourish one's personal desires, one's ego. Now discover for yourself where the suffering lies. If it were really irksome, you would never come and sit here. You come because you do aspire after God-realization, after the revelation of the one Supreme Self which is Ultimate Reality, of your own true Being, the bliss of the Self, the Lord (*Swayam Bhagavān*), Divine Love, Supreme Delight—each according to his own particular line of approach. You long for His revelation, His touch, His vision, this is why you have taken recourse to the *Samyam Vrata*. Now say, how is there suffering or hardship? And he who engages in *kriya yoga* tries to become established in the one Self by the practice of his *kriya*. Everyone aspires to God-realization along his own chosen path.

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Mataji (in reply to another question) :¹ Narayan Swami said the other day, "so many people are sitting here together for collective meditation, each one contemplating his own *Īshṭa*, proceeding along his own line of approach, pursuing his own aim." What he said was sensible and quite right from a certain point of view. You call the same person husband, son and father. He is one and the same person, not one thing more and the other less. The man

1. Narayan Swami had asked, "since the *Sāstras* say, *sādhana* should be practised by each person in solitude, why do we come here to practise together?"

who is a father is also a son, whether he be someone's husband (*pati*) at that time or not. The Supreme Lord (*Parama pati*) is certainly present within you, whether you call him Krishna or Balgopal. In every single form is God, everywhere is He alone. Where is He not? The "not" is also He, there is nothing that is not He. How marvellous is God's law! What has manifested in the shape of a question is also very lovely. That which occurs to the mind—Who is it that arises in the mind? There is none beside you. Whatever appears, in whatever form and to whom it appears you alone ARE. You are the Beloved, you appear as Bliss. How as Bliss? You do not give pain or trouble to anyone, You are calm and tranquillity, call it God, call it the Self—there is only One Self.

When you burn incense in the morning, its scent does not remain in one place, it spreads through the entire atmosphere, its perfume reaches everyone, it fills the whole vicinity. You take the incense all round and also to the centre and it permeates everything. Similarly, God is present in all alike. Men and women, following each their own method, are sitting together in meditation. There is only one God. He responds exactly according to the way He is appealed to by every single person. Because He is the ONE and the *only* ONE. Just as a mother of several children tries to satisfy each of them by giving them whatever they need individually.

To come back to Narayan Swami's question. *Svayam Bhagavān* (God) is one, He is everything. Who appears in so many different shapes and forms? Who is within and

without ? HE and no other. Why have you gathered here, why have you united ? It is God's play. He, playing with Himself, has manifested in this way. Just as it is said : Thou art mother, father, friend, master, son, everything art Thou. *Swami, Swayam*—The Self verily am I. In these words is also contained '*Sva-mayi*'—The Self is all-pervading'.

You are His child, the son of the Immortal, Immortality. He comes to each one in precisely the form, the way, that will take him to his ultimate good, that will open up his path. According to whatever method a person meditates, along what current or line, God will open the path to perfection for him along that very current or line. One word can have infinite meanings. As you play so you hear the sound. According to your question and according to the way you put it, you got the reply.

Question : By practising *sādhana* one cannot attain. Does it not depend on God's Will, on His Grace ? Please explain how we can attract God's Grace.

Mataji : God's Grace is streaming down at all times like torrential rain. If you keep your vessel turned upside down, the grace will flow down the sides. Keep your vessel straight up and open and it will be filled. This is one aspect of the matter. And for those who proceed along the line of grace, how is it possible to be vouchsafed the vision of God without His grace ? You say, attainment does not come by effort. But the Lord is present right in front of you, you have only to look in His direction right from here, you have to advance towards Him. Truly, God (*Swayam Bhagavan*) is ever present. You come and go, but actually neither come

nor go. The veil of ignorance is cast over you but God is ever present. He has left only this little bit of distance for you to traverse—this is called *kriyā*. He is ever present right here and everywhere. His revelation cannot come by any *kriya* (practice). Why then have you taken to spiritual exercises? Lives and lives you have spent trying to gratify your desires and longings. If after wasting countless births in this manner, a person has the intelligence, (*sad buddhi*) the good idea (*subuddhi*) to decide: "Let me get out of this endless round of birth and rebirth, let me not be reborn again", what does he do? He takes to serious *sādhana*. While the person who does otherwise suffers misery life after life due to his cravings and longings, his desires and passions.

There is only God and nothing else. Not to aspire to Him—this is the veil of ignorance. You should engage in the practice (*kriyā*) that is appropriate at your stage, that is within your line of approach. Who is disguised as *kriyā*? Who am I who is practising the *kriyā* in order to realize God? So long as this is not revealed, so long as the knots (*granthi*) that constitute the ego are not cut asunder, it is but natural that questions should arise.

Question: How can the knots of the ego be undone?

Mataji: By carrying out the Guru's instructions without questioning. That is not the place to use one's knowledge and intelligence. Here knowledge and intelligence will not do. They are useful upto a stage. They provide you with information. The *Sāstras* have been read, studied and committed to memory. One has acquired knowledge along a particular range.

This is but the knowledge of ignorance. When even this knowledge leaves one, then only can Realization come. Therefore follow the Guru's instructions without questioning. As long as the reason of the individual is in power, how can the knots be undone ?

Question : How does unquestioning faith in the Guru come ?

Mataji : By faith. At first one has no faith, (although to a few faith does come at once) so what is one to do ? One has to think for oneself, use one's own discrimination. I have heard you people say that according to tantric teaching, one should observe and study one's Guru for one year. Then only one takes initiation. Examine and test your Guru to the limit of your capacity. How can a pupil test his teacher ? You cannot test him as the professors test their disciples. All the same, do as much as you can by questioning and watching. Once you have accepted the Guru as your guide, (just as there is only one husband) * once the bond has been forged it is for all times. You may go here and there, anywhere you please, stay in any place—but you cannot leave him—provided he is a Sadguru.² He teaches you by dealing you one blow after another. What he does is all for the best, for your ultimate Good. Sometimes a child does not

* Hindu marriage is indissoluble. Even if the husband dies the widow cannot marry again.

2. *Sadguru* The perfect Guru who shows the way to the knowledge of Reality.

study. By being slapped he is taught. There is a saying that a knock brings one to one's senses. A person who has no faith in his Guru will have to continue in this manner. However, a *Sadguru* will never lose hold of his disciple but keep him in his grip. Once the relationship has been established, it is indissoluble. So long as faith has not come, read books of wisdom, repeat your mantra, be always engrossed in spiritual exercises. Try to remain pledged to such activity, whether you feel the inclination for it or not. To say : "I do not like it" or "I don't find it congenial" is not helpful. To be swayed by likes and dislikes means to remain enmeshed in worldliness. If you have the desire to realize God, endeavour to live according to the Guru's bidding. Do not relax your efforts until you are able to do so fully. Sustained effort brings about a miracle. By trying again and again, by incessantly thinking of God, what happens ? The path finally opens out of itself. There is hope that such a state may supervene.

Having succeeded in reaching a state of faith where one is able to accept the Guru's injunctions fully, what happens then ? That state of faith manifests if the Guru is one's real Guru. Our relationship with the world is born of delusion, while the relationship with the Guru is of the Self (*ātmic*). Thus, to start with, one did not obey the Guru's instructions. By persistent practice, by acquiring the habit of it, by striving to improve oneself, by the desire for God-realization, one comes to repent of one's doubts and

disobedience. Now the disciple cannot help carrying out the Guru's orders. Every word, every utterance of the Guru that comes to his notice—unless he puts it into practice he does not feel at ease. This is not the ease of the world. In such a situation he feels dejected, engulfed in a void, when he has been unable to put into practice the Guru's orders. A stage ensues where unless and until he has succeeded in carrying out the Guru's instructions he cannot be at peace. He feels completely blank, it seems to him that there is nothing left for him until he has obeyed fully the Guru's bidding. He feels miserable for having failed to comply with the Guru's orders. And what does this misery bring about? The karma of disobedience is consumed by his suffering. Now a state will result where the aspirant will act exactly according to his Guru's instructions, will carry out to the letter every hint, and thereby his own direct path will open out by itself. In this everything is contained.

On the other hand there are certain states that do not let a man proceed or act in this direction. Due to *samskāras* (tendencies) accumulated and strengthened in many former lives he is made to suffer. He feels the impulse to remain in the world, to continue in the round of birth and rebirth. "What to do," he says, "I am unable to accept the Guru's advice. If I can't achieve in this life, what of it? Let it take another ten or twenty births." He is so deeply involved that he wants to continue with his worldly pursuits.

Here something has to be made clear: There is the one God but there is also *māyā* (delusion) which keeps man entangled so that he does not wish to leave it. "Let me be

born again!" He wants to remain in the world. For instance, people like to go on living with their families, it gives them extreme happiness. "If I am to marry next life, I want a husband exactly like my present husband, a son just like my present son." Several people have talked to this body in this strain.

But what happens by God's inexplicable grace? Their minds are weaned away from this kind of thing. Slowly and gradually God is brought to their memory—it is His nature to cause this. They start repeating His name, contemplating Him, doing japa, they seek satsang, read religious books—in fact become engrossed in spiritual pursuits. Just as when a tree is well watered a new shoot grows. Then the state that should come about, namely to aspire after the Supreme, is achieved. And from there the path to complete fulfilment opens up.

People's conditioning has become so powerful, it brings them nothing but sorrow. They have no energy left to tread the path that leads away from misery to final beatitude. Being without strength, what can they do? They say: "We are all right where we are!" This is what happens by the force of tendencies and habits piled up in former lives.

Yet man's duty is to go forward, to tread the spiritual path, to endeavour to find himself, to know himself. This is so at all times and for every man and woman. To be born in a human body is a great boon, difficult to obtain. Who can tell at what auspicious moment, due to the power

acquired in some past life, the time will be ripe for full revelation, when everything will become possible. By persistent digging, water is finally touched, by prolonged rubbing fire flares up. Having obtained a human body one must not kill the *Ātmā*. The path that leads to the Realization of the Self, which is free from all danger, must open out.

To expect peace from worldly life is in vain. Try to live exclusively in His presence and do all service from a sense of duty. The world is certainly not an abode of happiness. The sole hope of peace is to take refuge at the Feet of God.

Mata Anandamayi

Come My Beloved Come

(*An Invocation*)

J. N. Dhamija

I have wandered, since the days of my youth, to find my Beloved. I have been through many a vicissitude of life—seeking, searching, suffering.

This poem is an invocation to Her. It was inspired by one of Her numerous photographs none of which are alike. The poem was conceived and written in Her room in Almora Ashram. It was completed after midnight of the 20th August, 1975.

When I commenced writing this poem I was possessed by a rare spirit of Love and Beauty. I felt Her presence intensely. She was always with me and around me. She inspired and guided my pen.

While I sat writing, I watched the beautiful valley spread before me. Down below stood, in stillness, the white temple of Patal Devi - Goddess of the Nether World. On my right, high up on top of the far off pine forest hill, could be dimly seen the temple of Kasar Devi—Goddess of the Mountains. On my left grew a large peepal tree with one of its top branches softly swaying before my front window, giving a strange depth and beauty to the view before me.

Seated in Her open and airy room, I saw the valley in a naked blaze. I saw it in all its phases, moods and colors. Every day was a new day, a new dawn, a new glow in the valley, newer skies; the gathering monsoon clouds aflame, magic sunsets, strange and mysterious—an unearthly vision of supreme Beauty and Power.

I have seldom seen and experienced in my life such a blaze of Glory, such intensity and serenity, such beauty, bliss and power.

At the break of dawn, I would view the valley and feel the atmosphere which vibrated with Divine Presence. There was a strange Silence around me. I lived and breathed Silence. Silence spoke to me.

I would tenderly pluck the jasmine flowers and make an offering to Her and to the Lord Shiva in the Ashram temple.

The white jasmine and its perfume
The incense and its aroma
And Thy secret love in my heart—
Elusive but constant

Ever vibrating in my being
Like the perfume and aroma
In the white and pure freshness
Of the Himalayan air.

I was happy, intensely happy, during my three months' stay in Her ashram amidst the foothills of Himalaya. I would not have exchanged the supreme bliss with a king's domain.

I owe this poem to Her - the most Beautiful and the Purest One - at whose feet one cannot but fall down and worship. She possessed me and inspired me. In fact She possessed me the very day when I first saw Her. She awakened and infused a new love and beauty in my heart. She guided and transformed me.

The thoughts and ideas expressed in this poem have their sources in Upanishadas, Gita, Durgasaptasati, Ram Krishna, Vivekananda, Ram Tirtha, with which I was familiar since the days of my youth and which I relearnt and imbibed from Her living presence and the atmosphere around Her, during the past 23 years of my association with Her.

The merits of this poem are due to Her. The blemishes are all mine.

Come My Beloved, Come*

Goddess of Love and of Unending Bliss,
Of flowing tresses black — fair, thick and long,
Thou stirrest sweet desires and longings strange,
Eternal beats of an Immortal Song.

Queen of all the Gods, of world beyond world,
Presiding Deity of all that moves and stands,
Because of Thee the universe is sustained,
A fragment of Thy power and Thy splendour.

Thou art the Void and Thou art the Word,
Primordial, the source of streaming energy,
First Great Cause, All-pervading Consciousness,
**Satyam Jñānam Anantam Brahma.*

O Lady of Light, the Light of all lights,
Effulgence - blazing like the countless suns,
Thy glory filleth earth, space and heaven,
Diffusing, enlightening and sublimating.

With Thy spark the sun shines, the earth revolves,
The moon waxes and wanes, the oceans heave,
The stars are bright and reveal in Silence
The wondrous worlds of Heavens and Beyond.

Thou Splendour of the splendid things,
The hills and dales, the sea and sky,
The air and fire, earth and ether,
The surging waters, might and main.

*The copyright of this poem is with the author.

Editor.

*Satyam—Truth; Jñānam—Knowledge ;
Anantam—Infinitude.*

Thou art thunder, Thou art lightning,
Downpour of rain and the storm,
Thou art sunshine soft and mellow,
The changing hues of night and morn.

Thou art flower and its perfume,
The breath of air in sylvan grove,
The dewdrops on the morning grass,
Blush of beauty, the glow of love.

The mystic sunset and sunrise,
The blue morn and the even-tide,
The wandering moon, the morning star,
All cosmic stretches - near and far.

Thou art plunged in the bliss of play
Dancing in Joy and Ecstasy,
Thou art Bondage and Liberation,
Space and Time and the Wheel of Life.

O Mother ! madness is in Thine eyes,
The world trembles beneath Thy feet,
Terrible is Thy tongue of flame
And frightening Thy dance of Death.

On the wings of Time, on earth, in Heaven,
Dance, O Mother dance,
In the folds of Beauty, in rhythms of Joy,
Dance, O Mother dance.

On hills, in forests, in the shine and shade,
 On the shimmering skies, in the glowing stars,
 In the dawns and sunsets, in darkness, dusk,
 Dance, my Mother dance—the dance of Death and
 Life.

In sin and sorrow and hopes of morrow,
 In elation and commotion, in emotions tense,
 In peace and tumult, lightning, thunder,
 On the roaring seas, in the whirling wind,
 In death, destruction, devastation, with
 Looks of terror wild, dance, my Mother dance
 The dance of Death and Life.

Thy Dance Divine hath no ending, nor hath
 A beginning; I view the passing show
 Lost in thought, in a dream, a daze; upon
 The edge of Time and Space Eternity gapes.

Thou art Reality and its Negation,
 The One and the Many, Being and Non-being,
 The Creator, Preserver and Destroyer,
 The Beginning, the Middle and the End.

O *Mahāmāyā*, the Great Illusion
 A dim reflection on the Lake of Life,
 A strange world of dreams, of light and shadows,
 A song, a sigh, a veil of Nothingness.

Thou art Want, Desire, Hunger, Thirst,
 Pomp and Power, Grandeur, Glory,
 Pride and Passion, Pleasure, Pain,
 Hate and Rancour, Fear and Faith,

Beauty, Goodness, Wealth and Wisdom,
 Conscience, Justice, Prudence, Peace,
 Compassion, Charity and Forgiveness,
 Light of Knowledge, Truth and Freedom.

Thou art Sleep and the Awakening,
 Mind, Memory and Intelligence,
 Despair, Determination, Fearlessness,
 Courage, Hope, Success and Satisfaction.

Thou art Liberty and License,
 Tyranny, Revolt and Redress,
 Anarchy, Destruction and Discipline,
 The worlds of demons, gods and men.

Thou art the Good and the Evil
 The Soul and the world of senses,
 Foundation, Shelter and Abode,
 The Seed, Origin and Annihilation.

Thou art the Heaven and the Hell,
 The Cause and Effect, Grief and Mirth,
 Vocation and the wandering waif,
 The Path, Renunciation and Redemption.

Thou art Rule, Reason, Right and Wrong,
 Witness, Doubt, Distrust, Defeat,
 Fickleness, Firmness and Constancy,
 The Refuge of sinners and of saints.

Thou art Movement and Cessation,
 Speech, Silence, Solitude, Serenity,
 Duty, Devotion, Dispassion, Discrimination,
 Pure Consciousness, Awareness and Bliss.

Thou art Matter and the Spirit,
 Mistress and the seat of senses,
 Anger, Attachment, Lust, Greed and Pride;
 Harmony, Discord and Disruption,

Service, Sacrifice, Surrender and Strength,
 Ignorance, Sin and its atonement,
 Purity, Blessing and Benediction,
 Ocean of Mercy, Infinite Love.

Father, Mother, Friend, Relation, Lover and
 Loved,

Thou art the Self seated in all
 Knower and Known, Timeless, Eternal,
 Immense, Infinite, Immortal.

Truth Eternal, Beauty beyond compare,
 Immanent, Unperishing, Absolute,
 Immeasurable, All-knowing Intelligence,
 Cosmos and the Light of Logos

Omnipresent, Omnipotent Providence,
 Controller of our lives and destinies.
 Thy Will is Law, it reigns supreme
 Thou art One in All, all in all.

Hail to Thee O Mother Divine, all hail
 With numerous names and various hymns and
 chants
 The Gods and men invoke Thee and adore Thee
 Hail, hail to Thee, O Boundless One, all hail.

Bestow Thy boons on seeking, suffering souls
 **Tyāg* to those in distress, service to those
 In wealth and power; and thus released from
 Bonds of weal and woe they know Thy Essence.

* * *

Friendless I walk along the endless paths
 To search and seek the secret of this life;
 I know not world's winding ways, its tangles,
 Its guiles, its snares, its weaves of nothingness.

I have neither wealth nor will nor vigour
 Nor service nor sacrifice to outlast time,
 But just a dream, a song and a prayer,
 An urge Divine to know and to understand.

Cleanse my mind of ignoble thoughts
 Of desire, envy, hate and pride,
 Let me in sweet serenity dwell
 In Heaven's Light of Love and Bliss.

I seek not wealth nor name nor fame,
 Nor prestige, power, sway over realms,
 Thy Grace Divine is all I need
 To serve and comfort all mankind.

O Love and Light, my friend, my guide,
 Harbinger of the dawn of life
 Reign supreme in my heart's recess
 I am thine, be with me and bless.

**Tyāgā* Relinquishment; detachment; renunciation.

Thou art perfect, make me whole as Thou art
 O spinner and weaver of my dreams,
 Fulfil my destiny, complete my life,
 Compassion, Love, O overpowering Grace !

Come, teach me my Love how to serve and pray
 O guide, control, sustain and sublimate,
 Come, be with me, make me Thine own and merge
 Pulsate my being with Thy Cosmic rhythm.

Make me Thy instrument, O Will Supreme
 Thy lyre, Thy lute, infuse celestial strains
 Vibrate my heart and soul with stirring songs
 To help awaken Thy Love in one and all.

Intoxicated with the wine of Love I roam
 From door to door; from age to age I have
 Wandered so. Thou art here, there and everywhere
 And yet elusive; why this hide and seek ?

Come my Beloved come, Beloved of my dreams,
 The night is dark; I seek, I strive, I pray,
 With Queenly graces come my Beloved come
 On waves of liquid Love and Ecstasy.

Bestir my being, reveal Thyself to me
 And lead me on to the Shores Eternal
 Of Wisdom and of Bliss; From Darkness to Light,
 * From the Unreal to Real, from Death to Immortality.

* असतो	मा	सद्गमय
तमसो	मा	ज्योतिर्गमय ।
मृत्योर्माञ्जृतं		गमय
आविरावीर्मे		एधि ॥

Contemporary Saints and Sages

SWAMI RAMDAS

Vijayananda

The autumn of the year 1952 found me with Buddhists in Kalimpong.

Kalimpong is at the extreme eastern end of the Himalayas, near Darjeeling and was one of the rare spots in India where it was possible to meet authentic Tibetan lamas. On the heights of Tirpai stood a Tibetan monastery housing several hundred monks in a cheerful and pleasing atmosphere. Their superior, an old man with large luminous eyes, was said to pass all his nights in meditation. Sometimes I went to see him, or if we met in the streets of Kalimpong, he would embrace me warmly, calling me "Bhodisatva ! Bhodisatva !" Our conversation alas ! was minimal, for my knowledge of Tibetan was almost non-existent and my Hindi at that time was rudimentary, just sufficient to take me safely through the bazaar (the market); while the superior himself had only an elementary knowledge of the latter language.

Also on the heights of Tirpai, surrounded by a few monks, dwelt a Tibetan Rimpoche, a special envoy of the Dalai-Lama, a charming and cultivated gentleman.

I myself lived at the foot of the town with a European bikshu, who had been ordained as a Buddhist monk according to Burmese rites. He was a writer and a brilliant thinker,

Darjeeling and Mount Everest are very close to Kalimpong but I never had the courage to make the trip. Even the climb to Tirpai, my sole distraction, was a severe strain. For I had just been through one of those dark nights of the spirit which every *sādhaka* knows. All glory seemed to have passed away from the earth. Even the splendour of the Himalayas seemed dim and lustreless.

For some time I had wished to meet Swami Ramdas for I hoped that a stay in his ashram might have a beneficial effect on my depression. I had written to him and now he replied saying that I might come at the beginning of October. Kalimpong is in the extreme north-east of India and Kanhangad, near Mangalore, where Ramdas Anandashram is situated, is on the south-west coast. On the way I needed to spend a few days at Allahabad and Benares.

Good God ! What a trip that was !

To begin with it had been raining heavily and the road going down to the plains was blocked by a landslide. I managed, after transferring from one car to another on the way, to get as far as Siliguri. From there an interminable "Passenger" train jolted and bumped me mercilessly all the way to Allahabad. From Allahabad to Benares was just a step, and from Benares, the simplest move, in theory, would have been to take a train going west to Bombay; but unfortunately there was no railway line from Bombay to Mangalore, and the bus service most inadequate. I would have had to travel by merchant ship along the coast, a matter of several days. So that, in fact the simplest and fastest means of reaching my destination was to turn my

back squarely upon it and travel straight in the opposite direction to Madras on the east coast. From Madras a direct train to Mangalore stops off at Kanhangad.

And so, after this long and complicated journey I finally reached the village of Kanhangad on the Konkanese coast. Here, coconut palms replace the pines and cedars of the Himalayas, and it is still warm in October, though not quite as warm as in Madras.

The Anandashram is situated several kilometres out of the village in a place called Ramnagar and I set out on foot in the company of a porter who would also serve as a guide. I remembered that it would not do to visit a sage empty-handed, but there were neither flowers nor garlands in the little village shops, so I considered myself lucky to be able to buy two ripe coconuts. One of them I intended for Ramdas and the other for Krishnabai. The coconut is a very acceptable offering in India. As we neared the ashram, I saw it had been built in a delightful setting far from any human habitation. Close by there was a little hill from which one could see the grey-blue sea.

My porter and I passed in through the main gate of this "haven of peace". In the yard of the ashram an old man sat in an armchair surrounded by a number of children and grown-ups, a grand-father, one might have said, in the midst of his family circle. He was wearing a white dhoti. A permanent smile lit up his clean-shaven face breaking out from time to time into a frank burst of laughter which was so irresistibly contagious. Not the least sign of irony or condescension could be seen in his face, nothing

whatever of severity or of a superiority complex of any kind. Clearly there was no need for me to ask if this was Swami Ramdas. The fact was self-evident. Someone who had been massaging the Swami's feet moved aside to permit me to approach. Respectfully I made the customary salutations to the Master and laid one of the coconuts at his feet.

The Swami spoke perfect English. The tone of his voice was simple and natural, as welcoming as his smile. The questions he asked me were those one normally asks a newcomer, but his tone, and the general familiarity of his attitude made me feel that I was already included in the circle of his friends. His familiarity—if I may dare to use the term—suggested that of a father towards his children, a father who is at the same time a friend. His intimates and disciples addressed him affectionately as "Papa". Certainly it was the name most suited to him and perhaps the one which more than any other went directly to his heart.

Ramdas had once been a *sannyāsi* and used to wear the saffron robe.

"I had a beard and long hair like you", he told me one day.

But now he dressed simply in a white dhoti "like everybody else", for he had transcended the monastic state and become an *atīvarnāshramī* (one who has risen above social castes and stages of existence.¹)

1. The four stages of existence of traditional Hindu society are :—

1. That of Brahmacharya—the student.
2. That of Grihastha—the head of a family.
3. That of Vanaprastha—the hermit who retires to the seclusion of the forest.
4. That of Sannyāsi—the monk who has renounced the world.

His completely bald crown, his clean-shaven face, his mouth quite unadorned by teeth (he did not even wear dentures) all contributed to the impression of utter simplicity that he radiated. Is not the *Sahaja-Avastha*, the state of the completely natural, also the last word in perfection ?

Swami Ramdas, name, before he renounced the worldly life, had been Vitthal Rao. He was a brahmin of the clan of Saraswat remarkable for its brilliance of intellect and enterprising spirit. He had been married and had an only daughter. Vitthal Rao, immersed in western culture had tried his hand at various ways of earning a living, the last of these being a position in a textile mill.

He would often repeat the divine name of Ram, and hearing him one day, his father communicated to him the complete mantra of Ram.

Ramdas' Guru said to him, "My son, repeat this mantra constantly : "Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram", and you will achieve eternal happiness".

The effect of this initiation seems to have been most extraordinary for Vitthal Rao, who now assumed the name of Ramdas (the servant of Ram), abandoned his wife and only daughter and set out, like any other itinerant monk to wander along the roads of India, repeating the mantra uninterruptedly day and night. Had not his Guru told him to repeat it *constantly* ?

("God Experience" by Ramdas, p. 168)

What had he said ? (his father) "Repeat the Name constantly." Ramdas thought that "constantly" meant throughout the twenty-four hours of the day. That is why he had to give up all work*.

The repetition of the sacred formula filled him with ineffable joy. He was afraid, he told me one day, that if he interrupted the repetition this joy would be lost to him.

In his book "In Quest of God" Ramdas gives a humorous and zestful account of his adventures during that period of his life. In the course of his peregrinations he paid a visit to the great sage of Arunachala, Ramana Maharshi. He recounts that he entreated the sage to bless him and that the Maharshi did so with his eyes. Then Ramdas went away to meditate on the hill of Arunachala and it was there that for the first time he experienced *samādhi*. After this illumination he continued to live the life of a wanderer but it was another man, now, who tramped the roads of India. This second part of his life he described in a voluminous work in English, entitled "In the Vision of God". The number of Swami Ramdas, disciples in India is very large, the greater majority of them come from the Hindus in the south and west.

One cannot but be struck by the strange contrast between the personality of Swami Ramdas and his teaching. As I have already remarked, he was well-versed in western culture and spoke excellent English. In addition he symp-

(*"God Experience" p. 168)

* Ramdas always referred to himself in the third person.

athised openly with modern trends in India—the abolition of caste privileges, the rehabilitation of the untouchables, education for women and so on. Yet, despite this, his method may be summed up in a single word: “*Japam*”, a word which for the modern Hindu evokes the old traditionalism of pious grandmothers, the naive faith of the simple people, the credulity of the ignorant masses. *Japam* is quite simply the repetition of a divine name or a mantra as often as possible and in all the circumstances of daily life, even, as Ramdas himself did, without interruption. Ramdas asserted categorically that the fervent repetition of the *Nāma* (Name) was in itself sufficient to lift a man up to the heights of spiritual realisation. His own life and the discipline he underwent provide living proof of this. This is what Ramdas said on the subject in “God Experience” p. 20.

“When Ramdas told certain people that he had attained the end by following this path (*Japam*) that God had ordained, they did not believe him. They said: ‘We too repeat the Name but we do not obtain the result you have obtained’. The effect of the repetition of the “Divine Name”, without doubt differs from person to person.

The mind will not agree to accept the “Name” as the sole means of realising God, if this practice is not supported by an adequate *vairāgya* (desirelessness). A distracted mind cannot savour the joy of the “Name”. *Vairāgya* is the result of intense and concentrated aspiration towards one end alone - the realisation of God. Then the “Name” will act marvellously.”

Among the methods of *sādhana*, the *jāpam* is considered by many people as the "poor relation". There is a tendency to believe that this path, seemingly so childish, does not produce results. But in the form in which it is suggested for beginners the *jāpam* is only a first step, a first step so simple and so easy that anyone with the least grain of goodwill can take it. It is in this that the enormous advantage of the method lies. It opens before all a gate into the roadway leading to the Divine. The repetition of the mantra, even if performed mechanically to begin with, sooner or later succeeds in inducing a mental attitude which is in keeping with its meaning. Thus there soon forms in the mind a concentration which slows down the stream of consciousness and makes the observation of it easier. Gradually, if the *sādhaka* repeats his mantra constantly, he will arrive at a state of almost constant mental concentration favourable to the arousing of the inner power. Once aroused, this Power will infallibly lead the disciple to the desired goal.

"The mind becomes concentrated. Thus you liberate the secret divine power which controls thought and directs action". ("God Experience" p, 239)

Many Hindu sages attach enormous importance to the "*Nāma*" the name of the Divine. The Puranas and popular legends often speak of the miraculous effectiveness of *Hari-Nāma* (the name of Vishnu). Some even go so far as to claim that even a single repetition is sufficient to enable a man to break out of the cycle of rebirth. These hyperbolic eulogies of the "Name" are obviously aimed at strengthening the faith of the *sādhaka* in his mantra, for the effectiveness of the *jāpam* will be in direct proportion to the disciple's faith

in it. There are, indeed, some who believe that faith can imbue any common formula with power. All that is needed is that the man pronouncing it should believe it to be a mantra.

The mantra transmitted by Swami Ramdas was that which had been given to him by his father. Breaking with the ancient Indian tradition, he granted his initiations in public to all who asked for them. No longer was the mantra jealously guarded as a secret to be communicated only in the strictest confidence to those who had proved themselves capable of undergoing spiritual discipline.

In reality, however, like all true Gurus, Ramdas employed more complicated methods as well and adapted them to the requirements of each particular case. For it is in the details of our daily living that our real problems lie and the knots which bind us are there. Spiritual techniques are only aids to help us to break free of these.

I had brought two coconuts from the village; the first had been offered to Swami Ramdas, the second was intended for Krishnabai. Krishnabai is a disciple of Ramdas, but, in fact, she is much more. She is the "Mother" of the ashram. Ramdas often said that she had attained the same plane of spiritual realisation as he had. One day he told me the story of this extraordinary woman and how he had been "compelled" to give her *samādhi*.

Nobody could be more discreet or self-effacing than this saint of a woman who concerns herself with even the minutest details in the running of the ashram. Everything

about her—her expression, her gestures—bespeaks a gentleness, a tenderness and a devotion to all living things. I don't know why, but whenever I think of her I identify her almost automatically with the Sita of the Ramayana, the ideal woman. She speaks no English and her Hindi is not very fluent. As for me I was just beginning at the time to feel my way in the official language of India.

I was provided with a very comfortable room and became, temporarily, a member of the ashram. The name "Anandashram" means the Ashram of Happiness. It is a name that is certainly deserved, for though I have visited many ashrams in India and stayed in some, I have found none that approached so closely as this to the definition of an ashram as "a haven of peace and joy".

Partly this is the influence of the natural setting, which, though it does not have the splendour of the Himalayan landscapes, is cheerful and restful to the eye. What counts more than anything else is the way the Master and Krishna-bai put themselves out to make a visitor's stay as pleasant as possible. There are rarely many visitors and they never come in noisy hordes; nor is there any of that buzz and hum so common in the atmosphere of sacred places in India. In theory the maximum stay permitted to visitors is one month. It is mainly a matter of helping them to renew their spiritual energies or of putting the crippled again upon their feet. "We recharge your batteries", Ramdas would say. After that they have to continue their efforts on their own in a solitary retreat.

But what can I say about the food! The meals were taken in common in a little dining-hall that was kept scru-

pulously clean. Everybody sat together, Brahmin or Sudra, European or Hindu. There were no distinctions whatever. The caste complex, so difficult for the average Hindu to overcome, seemed entirely absent here. "I am militant against castes rules", said Ramdas one day, and in fact, he employed Harijans (untouchables) to work in the kitchens and to wait at table. One has only to imagine the horror which this would rouse in an orthodox Hindu in order to understand the love and veneration with which the disciples regarded "Papa" for they accepted this state of affairs without a murmur.

In any case the kitchen was supervised by Krishnabai, and her radiant purity would be more than sufficient to eliminate any possible traces of impurity in the food.—In most ashrams there is generally an afternoon meal and a light snack in the evening, but here visitors were served four meals a day : breakfast in the morning, the afternoon meal, a snack at tea-time, and another meal in the evening. The food corresponded in all points to the definition of food as *sattvika*¹, clean, appetising, varied, attractively served, of high nutritional value and plentiful. It was of course, strictly vegetarian : rice, vegetables and dairy products. Coconut oil was generously used.

The workers in the dining - room put themselves out to see that you lacked nothing, and needed only the slightest hint to refill your empty plate. In the morning they asked if you wanted coffee, milk or tea and in addition there were unlimited helpings of idli and dosa².

1. Sattvika : see Bhagavad Gita (xvii - 8).

2. Idli and dosa : South Indian dishes made on a base of rice flour.

But even more generous and appetising than the food for the body was the nourishment provided for the spirit. Every evening in the great hall of the ashram the members and the visitors met for kirtans—religious songs. The public sat on matting on the ground and Ramdas on a raised platform. "Papa's" face as he looked around him on such occasions seemed to radiate an atmosphere of calm and reassuring love bringing peace and comfort. The songs, the instrumental music, the attitude of those present, all reflected the same ambience. The ambience in which a sage moves is always more expressive of the path he points out than is his verbal teaching. That which bathed Ramdas as in an aura of light was certainly the ambience of *bhakti* (the path of love) and as such drew upon religious feeling. But the range of feeling was very different from that which one encounters, for example, in Bengal. The Bengali kirtan often strikes notes of acute emotion and occasionally induces nervous tensions that find expression in outbursts of tears and even, in less balanced subjects, in uncontrolled behaviour such as dancing, excited shouts, and weeping.

I never witnessed anything of such a nature in the presence of Ramdas. Here the *bhāvas* (religious emotions) were beneficent, soothing to the mind and inducing it to lose itself in this haven of peace and joy.

Like most great sages Ramdas gave no formal instruction such as a schoolmaster or university professor might offer. What a Hindu or any other spiritual seeker goes to a sage for, is, above all, the *sat-sanga*. The literal meaning of this term is "the company of Truth". To the average Hindu

this is a familiar concept and he knows perfectly well the nature of the blessing to be derived from *satsang*. But for most western people, accustomed to a teaching that is transmitted through speech or through books, the term calls for explanation. Simply to live in the company of a great teacher, even without receiving oral instruction, can result in considerable spiritual progress. Despite the fact that there is no active intervention on the part of the sage, some kind of osmosis of spiritual power seems spontaneously to take place. Even ordinary people when they have been living together for some time, or have had no more than a fairly extended conversation find that there has been some exchange of ideas, of mental outlook, of qualities and failings in a degree that varies from individual to individual. This is no theory but a fact based on observation. Married couples too who have lived together harmoniously over a long period come to share similar tastes and ideas and sometimes this can be reflected in a similarity of appearance as though some kind of osmosis had come about.

A sage who has attained perfection sees in all beings the perfection that is their essence and the look of love which he casts upon those who approach him makes them divine. We are constantly being influenced by mental suggestions, good or bad, from our surroundings. In the presence of those who think poorly of us we contract and shrivel up, even if they may speak to us quite civilly. By contrast, in the company of those who respect and love us, we expand and feel at ease. Now the suggestions of divinisation from a sage emanate from a powerful and concentrated mind and must necessarily make themselves felt. In addition to playing this

passively beneficent role, the "Great Beings" sometimes intervene deliberately and actively. This is what one calls the *shakti-dāna*, the conferring of spiritual power and it may come about in very different degrees. Most frequently it is no more than a momentary recharging of physical and mental energy which results in an intensification of all one's faculties. Consequently the ardour of religious feeling, the yearning for the divine, good resolutions and other similar feelings are all strengthened considerably for it is in a religious state of mind that one goes to see a sage. This feeling of increased intensity of experience does not generally last very long but if the *sādhaka* knows how to exploit it, it may serve him as a springboard to considerable spiritual advance.

In other and more rare cases the *shakti-dāna* takes the form of a veritable initiation by putting the machine into gear, as it were, and awakening the inner power. In such cases the result is a "second birth", for the behaviour of the individual undergoes a total change and a new life begins for him.

Finally the sage may confront a person with a whole chain of circumstances that will enable him finally to cure a vice or some serious problem. I knew a confirmed smoker who after visiting a sage was cured overnight.

The majority of the great sages, however, except those who observe absolute silence, do also provide oral instruction and their words are precious because they are the expression—conveyed to us on an intellectual level—of a direct experience of Truth.

During the three weeks I passed in the company of Ramdas I was specially favoured in this particularly. Almost

every afternoon I had half-an-hour, an hour and sometimes even more, of private conversation with the great Master. I had the opportunity of asking any question that came to my mind : we talked about my personal difficulties and general problems and Ramdas recounted some of his own experiences in his characteristic spicy, humorous style. What a pity that I neglected to make daily notes of these conversations, for most of the precious verbal teaching of the sage has slipped out of my mind.

He spoke in the simplest, most natural manner and answered every question, no matter what it was, with the openness and frankness of a child. Whatever the subject under discussion there was never the slightest hint of esotericism or mystery and the tone of the conversation was that of a friendly exchange without anything of an "ex-cathedra" attitude.

1. One day I asked him point-blank :

"Since you are Ram, (by Ram, Ramdas understood the omnipresent Divine power and not the historical figure) can you give me the experience of *samādhi* ?"

He replied :

"You yourself are Ram. How can Ram give something to himself ?"

I : "That may be true from the point of view of the Absolute. But I don't know it. I suffer."

Ramdas :

"No ! No ! Ram does not suffer. It is only a game with him (his *līlā*)."

I : "Very well. Let us say I am Ram and I am playing the game of suffering and of ignorance. But, within this game itself, can you give me the experience of *samādhi* ?"

Ramdas :

"Yes, I could give it to you. But you would miss the joy of victory."

I might have pushed the argument further and said, "So much the worse for the joy of victory. Give me the experience of Truth anyway." But as far as I remember, our conversation was interrupted at this point for some reason, perhaps by the appearance of a visitor.

2. At this period I had become very deeply attached to Anandamayi Mataji and to dwell far from Her physical presence even for a short time was extremely painful. I thought that this was a good sign and spoke about it to Ramdas believing that he would approve. But his reply disconcerted me somewhat, and it was only later that I came to understand how right he was :

"People who gather around a great sage", he told me, "fall into two categories. The first comprises those who are constantly in his company. They are like bugs. They make the sage suffer themselves.

"The second kind are like calves. The calf comes to his mother for milk and then goes off to gambol freely in the meadows. In the same way a real *sādhaka* stays with his Guru for a while to recharge his powers and then goes into a solitary retreat to devote himself to intensive *sādhana*."

“Be like the calf”, he told me, “and not like the bug.”

Among the stories of his experiences while he was living the life of a wanderer, he told me about a visit to Hardwar during the Khumbha-Mela. The story is recounted in full in his book “In the Vision of God”. But in telling it to me he added an interesting detail which is not mentioned in the book.

The Khumbha-Mela is an enormous religious “fair” held every twelve years at Hardwar, and at Allahabad, Nasik and Ujain as well, though at different dates. On that particular occasion an impressive number of sadhus and millions of people were gathered together in this relatively small town and at the auspicious hour of the ritual bath they were all massed at the Brahma-Kunda on the Ganges. All minds and nerves were keyed up to the effort to take this fabulous bath, the fruit of which would be nothing less than liberation from the cycle of rebirth.

In such a heaving ocean of humanity the individual is almost powerless. Police cordons stationed at the Brahma-Kunda and at other places as well do their best to control and direct this human tidal-wave. If they lose control of the situation even for only a few minutes - and this happens occasionally - the result can be catastrophic. It is not rare for numbers of people to be suffocated or trampled to death. And here was Ramdas with one of his friends caught up in the heaving, human sea. Naturally, like everybody else he was completely powerless to decide his own movements and was impelled by the fluctuating waves of humanity around him. He himself had no intention of participating in the ritual

bath. He had come simply as a spectator, "to see the fun", as he put it, but an odd thing happened : after, having time and again, barely escaped being trampled on and suffocated, he found himself exactly at the Brahma-Kunda, precisely at the auspicious hour indicated by the stars. For the ordinary Hindu a bath in the Brahma-Kunda, at Hardwar during the Khumba-Mela, and precisely at the hour indicated, is a fabulous thing, promising him the most elevated of destinies after death. But, with this marvellous gift already within his grasp, Ramdas coolly let it go. He did not immerse himself in the river.

"I don't want liberation so cheap", he said. "I want to win it by my own struggle and endeavour."

One day a number of Ramdas' lay disciples from Bombay or some other great city came to visit the Master in the Anandashram. We all sat with Ramdas in the meeting hall. One of the disciples, in the guise of an offering, had presented the Master with two kurtas (shirts) of pure silk. Ramdas put them on and then immediately took them off again. He had stopped wearing silk, he told us, ever since a visit, one day, to a silk mill in Kashmir. He had been deeply disturbed by the unfeeling treatment of the poor silkworms and he felt perhaps that to wear natural silk would be to become an accomplice in an act of *himsa* (violence to a living creature). At the time, I myself was in the habit of wearing in the Punjabi style with a pyjama (trousers in thin linen), a kurta, and a chader (shawl).

At the sight of these splendid kurtas being rejected by Ramdas, the first idea to pass through my mind was that

I could do very well with them myself. The mind is a strange animal and mine, on this occasion, manifested a covetousness hardly worthy of a *sādhū*. It was no more than a passing thought but I was clearly conscious of it.

A few days later I gave one of my kurtas to the ashram servants to be washed; for, among the many kindnesses we owed to her, Krishnabai also arranged laundry service for our clothes. This time, however, it happened that my shirt was lost. It was inconvenient because I had brought only two shirts with me, but I did not trouble myself too much about the matter. Ramdas, however, came to hear of it and made me a gift of the two famous silk shirts which I accepted as the *prasāda* of the Master. The next day the kurta I had sent for laundering was found and returned to me; and so, in addition to my own shirts, I was the proud possessor of two more that I had mentally coveted.

A coincidence ? Perhaps

But coincidences of this kind are frequent in the circles surrounding great sages.

4. During my stay at the ashram a sad thing happened. Ramdas received a telegram informing him that his only daughter had just died. I heard about it from one of the ashram members and I watched the sage closely that day and on the following days. Not the least trace of sadness or distress clouded his countenance. Always there was the same

smile, the expression of self-contained beatitude independent of external factors.

We have all read :

“The sage afflicts himself neither for the living nor for the dead”

“Eternal, Immutable, the Ancient of Days : That does not die when the body dies.....”

“As a man casts off his old garments to put on new ones so That casts off used bodies in order to take on new”

(Bhagavad Gita II, 20 and 22)

But who, other than a perfect sage like Ramdas, is capable of actually living this teaching ?

All things in this world must come to an end and finally the day which had been fixed for my departure arrived. I was going to Madras where I hoped to meet Mataji.

Krishnabai brought me a gift of sweetmeats and of food for the journey and just before leaving the ashram I bade farewell to Ramdas, prostrating myself before him and touching my forehead to his feet according to the Indian custom. He seemed to make an effort to appear indifferent but this impression may have been simply a reflection of my own state of mind Then, in energetic tones the great sage told me: “I wish to see you again !” His wish, however, was not realised. A few years ago he departed from his physical body, and though I had wanted to have his darshan again, a

favourable occasion, the "*Sanyoga*" as it is referred to in India, had not offered.

True Hindus assure us that a wish expressed by a perfect sage will inevitably be realised.

But who knows? A perfect sage can take on any form whatever, subtle or material, visible or invisible; and then he sees things from the level of the Cosmic Consciousness and all forms are his own.

A Momentous Year in the Life of Sri Yogesh Brahmachari*

R. Rattan Singh.

“Seek and Ye Shall Find” (St. Mathew 7 : 7,
St. Luke 11 : 9.)

Yogeshda's experience is truly a great example of these words of Jesus Christ. Yogeshda was in search of someone who could show him the Path and his desire to 'seek' led him to Mataji.

In the following narrative of Yogeshda's early experiences, Mataji's Grace manifests itself. In every doubt, in every quest Her loving hand is extended imperceptibly to hold the seeker's hand and gently lead him on the Path without much difficulty.

It was about the year 1925-26. Yogeshda was working as an assistant in the Health Laboratory in Dacca on a salary of Rs 60/- per month. Since his early days, he had been inclined towards a life of a sadhu, He had taken part in the Freedom Struggle and believed in the Swadeshi Movement. Because of this he had undergone a prison term.

News went round that a lady had come to Dacca, who lived with her husband in an orchard grove of a Muslim Nawab at Shahbag. The lady observed purdah as was the custom, and performed her normal household duties, but

* Sri Yogesh Rai, one of the oldest devotees of Mataji, known as "Yogeshda."

was becoming known for her extraordinary attraction and her mystic powers.

A Government servant who was a disciple of Sri Aurobindo periodically came on administrative duties. He, too, related to Yogeshda the happenings in the grove. There was a large hall where the Nawabs had formerly held *mahfils* with the accompanying dancing and singing. Twice a week Mataji came to the hall and sang bhajans with the few people that happened to come there. In those days no one did *pranāma* to Her. She touched no one and no one touched Her.

Yogeshda went for Mataji's *darśana*. At first he could only see Her feet because Her face was completely covered. On one occasion he happened to see Her throw something out of the house and he noticed the swift movements of Her bangled wrists and hands.

Mataji would come to the meeting with Bholanath and clap Her hands in rhythm with the singing and recite kirtan. Once Mataji requested Bholanath to ask Yogeshda to sing a bhajan. He did so. Thereafter this became a regular performance, twice a week. By then Mataji had Her face uncovered during kirtan. Yogeshda was struck by the radiance of Her inner beauty.

He was fascinated by the sight of Her face and the light that shone on it.

At every meeting some strange things happened. Mataji would get into a trance very often. Whenever Mataji entered the hall, She would bend Her head and touch the ground in

pranāma and then sometimes roll in a most supple and swift manner. It looked as if She had no neck and no bones. Tears would flow from Her eyes during kirtan.

At one meeting Mataji walked around as usual, singing bhajans. Suddenly She came towards Yogeshda who was sitting cross-legged on the floor. She put one foot against his back and holding the finger of Bholanath, got onto Yogeshda's shoulders and stood there. The next moment She was flat on the ground in *pranāma*. Yogeshda was wonderstruck. When someone asked him afterwards how much weight he had felt, Yogeshda said, "Hardly any at all". There had been no pressure on him.

At the fifth meeting a few people gathered as usual. Yogeshda sat in great awe, as always, waiting for some guidance from Mataji for his Spiritual life. Mataji came holding a garland of flowers in Her hand which She gave to Bholanath. Then clapping Her hands in tune with the music She walked around trying to do kirtan. Suddenly, She uttered, "Hari Om" and fell into a trance. Later She asked for the garland, broke the string, pulled the flowers apart and threw them to the people sitting around. One flower struck Yogeshda on the forehead and fell away from him. Mataji then said, those who had received flowers could come and do *pranāma*.

Yogeshda did not go to do obeisance as he felt he had not received the flower since it had fallen away from him. All others *pranāmed*. Yogeshda went home but could not help crying all the time. He did not cook his meal and lay down on his scanty bedding.

The next meeting he did not attend. A messenger came to call him later. When he arrived at Shahbagh, Mataji asked him what he was doing, if he was married, where his parents were, what was his pay, and similar questions. She enquired if he could get leave and for how long at a time, and how soon he could arrange for it in case of necessity. He made enquiries at his office and came back to tell Mataji that he could get leave for three months at a stretch. She asked him to go and apply for long leave and then return to Ma.

He did as he was bidden. When he came back to Mataji, She indicated to Bholanath to ask everyone to leave the room and to close the door as She had something to say in private to Yogeshda. This was the first "private" Mataji granted to anyone. After this the practice of giving private interviews started.

When they were alone, Mataji said to Yogeshda that She was going to ask him to do some difficult work, but only for a little while. He should take long leave and adopt the life of an ascetic, subsisting on begged alms for one whole year only. He was not to tell this to anyone nor disclose what Mataji had told him nor show that he recognised Mataji and Her party if, by chance, he happened to meet them anywhere. From the first of *Phalgun* * of that year he should live by begging and take his first alms from his brother.

About that time, Dacca was recovering from its first Hindu -- Muslim riots. Life was very unsafe as there was

* *Phalgun* -- February-March.

frequent killing. Yogeshda would rather stay with friends than go home late at night.

When Yogeshda took long leave, Mataji told him that his salary would be kept at Shahbagh and only enough would be given to him to go and visit his mother. He was to stay there for only three days.

When he went home and knocked at the door, it was midnight. All were surprised to see him and wondered why he had come at that hour. He told them that he felt like seeing them as he had taken holidays to go to the Kumbh Mela*. (Mataji was also going to Hardwar to attend the Kumbh). His brother was not at home. He had gone away on some work and had left Rs.10/- with his wife.

On taking leave of his mother, Yogeshda touched her feet and asked for some money for the fare. At once his sister-in-law put the Rs.10/- into his hand. Thus he received his first alms from his brother as Mataji had directed. Mataji's imperceptible hand had made this possible even though the brother was absent. This is how Mataji's all-knowing ways exert their influence in all matters concerning Her devotees.

With some salted dry food stuffs, a blanket and a lota (a round goblet-like vessel with a narrow mouth) Yogeshda left home. In obedience to Mataji's instructions,

* The Kumbh Mela is celebrated once every twelve years. It takes place in the month of Magh (Jan. Feb), when the sun entering Capricorn coincides with the appearance of Jupiter in Aquarius. Kumbh bathing in the Ganges is regarded most meritorious by all devout Hindus.

he shaved his head and beard at a place where no one could see him. Then he was not to shave again for a whole year. After buying the ticket for Hardwar, he had a few rupees left.

The train journey passed without discomfort. He had enough food with him and did not have to beg from any passenger. He felt awkward at the thought of having to beg. He was a stranger in strange company, going on a strange mission to strange places. How would he beg? It was the hardest thing to do. Yet he knew he could not put it off for long. He had to prepare for it mentally.

At Hardwar, he felt bitterly cold. After the warm climate of Bangla Desh such cold was a painful surprise. He did not have enough clothes. The night in the train he sat cuddled up in his blanket. As he came out onto the platform there was a drizzle which made him feel even colder. Another sādhu joined him and together they made their way to the holy bathing place. A panda followed them with the usual purpose of extracting some money from them. After a while, he realised that he could get nothing and so left them.

Seeing them just arrive, a boy came up and told them to go to "Hari" or "Brahma Kundh." It was raining by now. Covering himself with his blanket, Yogeshda walked to the sacred spot to have a bath in the holy Ganges. So cold was the water that after just two dips he was trembling and shivering. It had never occurred to him that it could be so cold anywhere in the world. He tried to get warm by walking about on the pavement. The rain had stopped. There were

some empty seats with large umbrellas fixed to the ground. He sat under one of them. A panda came and asked him to move away as it was his place. It again drizzled, so he went to the next seat. That also he was asked to vacate by another person. He was shivering and was wondering where to go when someone came up to him and suggested Bhola Giri Ashram.

On reaching there, Yogeshda found the venerable sādhu in meditation. He had many followers in Dacca. One rich man named Yogesh Das had built a temple in Bolagiri's name in Dacca. When the Mahatma was ready to give *darśana*, many people did *pranāma* to him. For the first time Yogeshda saw devotees prostrate in *Sāstāng pranāma* (lying flat on the ground, face downwards, with folded hands stretched above the head in humble supplication). When he gave his name as Yogeshda, the Mahatma thought that he was the person who had built the temple. But when he found that this was not so, he again closed his eyes in meditation. Thereafter, Yogeshda left.

Again he was wondering where to go. A young boy accosted him and directed him across the Ganga where he would find many places to stay. He said the ferry-man nearby would ferry him across free of charge. The place was near the Lakshman Jhula. Due to the rush because of the Kumbh Mela, the place was dotted all over with people. Most of the *kutirs* (small huts) were occupied. On searching he found some shelter—just a roof and walls with a mud flooring, but no door fixed to the entrance. He decided to stay there. That night he huddled up in a corner, feeling miserably cold

without the warmth of a meal besides insufficient clothing. Next day he gathered some branches and twigs to make a door for protection from the strong gales. But when the leaves dried, there were gaps through which the icy wind rushed in with piercing fury. Yogeshda got hold of bits of cloth and covered the gaps. This was of course only a poor protection.

Here he spent some days. The discomforts were richly compensated by the grandeur of nature's beauty. He was overjoyed at the sight of the high mountains, so close to him. They seemed to dip their feet into the holy waters of the river that flowed majestically in the centre of the valley enriching every part of the land. Such scenery was not to be found in his home country.

Physical inconveniences he was learning to brave, but begging was most difficult. Often he would go without a meal. Sometimes he would follow the other sādhus when the bell rang at the '*kshatar*' (a place where food is distributed, particularly to members of a religious sect). Then he would have a good meal. Often he would be given a heap of chappaties (unleavened bread). But he was not used to eating those as his staple food had been rice. So he would sit on a rock near the Ganga and throw bits of chappaties into the river. Soon large fishes came, and it was fun seeing them scramble for the food.

Some sadhus told him he could go to Badrinath by just paying Rs.10/- to an organisation that provided all necessities for the trip.

One day a boy showed him a *kutir* that had fallen vacant. He shifted into it. Here there was a raised stone with a depression on the top at one end. He cleaned it and found it most suitable to spread his food to eat with convenience. It was better than fumbling in the *lota* for morsels.

Time was drawing near for the Kumbh day. He knew Mataji would be coming. He said to himself, "If Mataji comes let Her find me out". The very next day, as he was sitting on a rock, he saw Mataji and Her party approaching. But he was not to show any recognition. Yet he was very eager for Mataji to see him. So he thought he would go into the *kutir* and sing a *bhajan* loudly to attract Mataji's attention. He tried to raise his voice and sing. Alas, much to his chagrin, no sound would come. His throat felt locked. He struggled in vain to sing and felt exasperated.

This was Mataji's way of recognising him.

As the party wended their way down the path, Yogeshda rushed out to see their backs just turn the corner of the ridge. Bholanath saw him and said, "Hey Yogesh", and smilingly passed out of sight. A little later he returned, put Rs.10/- into his hands and disappeared. Yogeshda was lost in amazement at this strange incident and this gesture of providing for the money he needed for the Badrinath trip.

Such are the countless ways in which Mataji manifests Herself, and the mysterious actions in which She shows Her benevolence and love. Lucky and blessed are they who can come within even a shadow of Her Grace.

After the Kumbh, Yogeshda decided to proceed ahead on his travels. He had heard of Rishikesh, but did not know how to go there. Again a small boy looking very much like a sadhu came up to him and said it was 13 miles distance on the road, indicating across the river.

Yogeshda walked for some time till there was habitation around. There some sādhus directed him to a place where other sādhus lived. But it was very crowded. He was not a member of the sect. He was given food but where to spend the night? The only place he found was under the tin projection of the house. There he settled for the night. His small bundle of a few odds he placed under his head. At dusk he felt someone tugging at it. He discovered a large monkey trying to pull out the bundle. He got up and spent the night sitting huddled up to prevent another attack.

The next day he continued his walk to Rishikesh. Someone warned him not to go too far as the area was all jungle and wild animals prowled about. After halting for the night at some place, he reached Rishikesh.

Again a small boy directed him to go to the Kali Kamli Math. It was meal distribution time. There were many sādhus going to get their food and he was asked to join them. Sādhus usually had a piece of cloth tied around their necks, the ends of which were held out, spread wide, to hold the alms. Yogeshda had no such cloth, nor did he have a begging bowl for dal. He had to put everything into his lota, and it was hard to dish out the food through the narrow opening. However he managed somehow. His manners and ways were so unlike those of sādhus. | One person, while serving him,

asked how long he had been a sādhu. He felt shy and embarrassed, it was too obvious that he was a beginner. He could not accept uncooked food as he had nothing to cook it in, nor a place to stay. In order to live at the *Kshatar* he had to become a member of the sect. This he could not do.

He was unable to go to Badrinath as the trip did not materialise.

He remembered that he had a friend who worked at the Forest Department at Dehradun. He sent a note to him and the next day he got a reply. His friend, Rameshwar Banerji, would be happy to see him.

Jogeshda was awed by the sight of the tall, tall trees and the thickness of the jungle growth. Never in his life had he known fear, but these sky reaching trees that seemed to engulf him on all sides frightened him.

Soon he found himself at Doiwala with government servants saluting all officers and also him. Later he went to Dehradun with his friend. This was his first visit to the Doon valley, where some years later he was to spend many years.

His friend was going on leave to Kashmir. He invited Yogeshda to join him. But Yogeshda had to go on foot, so they planned to meet at Srinagar. It took a month for him to reach there.

As he trekked on the road to Srinagar, cars would pass by. When they hooted driving up the meandering path he could judge the direction of the route and he often took short-cuts to the point from where the horn sounded. In this way the journey was considerably shortened. An English man

seeing him trudge along, asked where he was going. "Srinagar", was the reply and he was asked to jump into the car. At Srinagar Yogeshda thanked his kind host and proceeded on his way.

A kuli rushed up and asked where he wished to go. He said "Ashram". He was led to a wooden building. Naga sādhus lived there. A few were busy mixing bhang in a large utensil. He was permitted to stay but was directed to the other part of the ashram for meals. He was given dry ingredients and was asked to cook for himself. This he could not do. So the task allotted to him was to distribute food to the sādhus. About eight or ten would come to eat at every meal.

One day he distributed the rice as usual. He did not know that the head sādhu would be coming. When he came, there was not enough rice for him. The other sādhus all put the blame on Yogeshda, accusing him of having eaten the food himself as he was in charge of it. After this Yogeshda left the place.

He proceeded to Pahalgam. From the bus stop, kulis took him to another ashram. At night the sādhus would come to eat at this *kshatar*. Among them was a Bengali sādhu, who recognised him as one from his homeland. They would go for long walks together and sing bhajans. Impressed by his melodious voice, the sādhu went and told one Swami Sivanda about Yogeshda. He was invited to the Swami's ashram garden where other sādhus also lived and was asked to sing a bhajan. He sang a verse by Swami Vivekanda in praise of Lord Siva. The sweet voice and the

moving melody expressed the deep devotional feeling of the singer. The Swami was charmed beyond words. The pleasant meetings were then often repeated.

As Babaji Yogeshda narrated this event to me, I sat spell-bound. When remembering each incident, each moment, all the feelings of a past long thrust into the back of his mind, were revived. When he sang the verse again, his cracking voice was suddenly soft and melodious and his face brightened as perhaps past memories emerged. His eyes sparkled with a fervour of devotion, strong and vigorous inspite of old age, and he gazed with a firm and unshaken gleam of faith that often removes the doubt of disbelievers. I looked at his face, listening intently and trying to discern the meaning of some spluttering words. He would stop and repeat those words and explain their meaning. He was visibly moved.

Yogeshda stayed a few days at Pahalgam, when plans were made to go to the fair at Kheer Bhawani, at the holy lake site, visited annually by many devotees. It was a few days journey by ponies and all arrangements were made for food, conveyance and their stay there. Just as they were leaving, a messenger from his friend the forest officer came running, "Ah, we have found you at last". They had looked for him in all the ashrams but could not find him. His friend was waiting for him, but Yogeshda could not go to him as he had committed himself to visit Kheer Bhawani, and did not like to change his mind.

After attending the fair he joined his friend and together they went to the Amarnath cave. *Darsana* is usually

during *SravanPurnimā* * day. But they had to make the trip a month ahead as his friend's leave was expiring.

The climb was in three stages. The third stop was a tent pitched in a cave covered with snow. Above 10,000 ft. there were no trees, only some scraggy growth and snow. Higher up there was just snow. In the tent they cooked their '*kitchuri*' (rice and dal boiled in one dish) and went to have a bath. On returning, the *kitchuri* had become a solid block and had to be heated again. Yogeshda was surprised to see water trickling down into a stream near the tent. It was the Panch Tarni, one of the five rivers of this region. Curious to find out the source of the water in a snow-bound area, he traced the flow to a flat ground behind the cave. It was a frozen lake. The surface was ice, but underneath there was water that flowed out.

At another spot while trekking up the mountains, there was a large protuding rock, almost overhanging the path. It was the only bare piece amidst a snow-covered region. They posed for a snap. Just as the camera was focussed, two wild snow ponies came and stood on the rock above and got snapped with them.

The guides were pandas. Yogeshda was keen to go to the cave before anyone could reach there, just to make sure that no one was tampering with the Linga. One could often hear the people say that pandas usually went ahead and formed the Linga. When Yogeshda entered the cave, he saw the well-formed snow Linga, beautifully carved as it

* Full moon of August.

were, in a most perfect shape. After *darsana* they had to return immediately to their camp. One cannot stay long enough in the cave as it is too cold and there is no place to camp nearby.

They then returned to Pahalgam and from there to Srinagar. The forest officer left for Dehradun, while Yogeshda decided to stay on for a few days longer.

The trip back to Jammu took him a month, it was about 202 miles. His whole sojourn in Kashmir had lasted for about three months.

At Jammu railway station, Yogeshda found that he had fever. He lay down on the platform. The train came and the passengers left. He heard someone call him. He looked up and was told that the guard who was sitting in a tea stall, was calling him. He asked Yogeshda from where he had come and where he wished to go. He gave him some tablets for fever and ordered milk to be given to him every day, all paid by the guard in advance. After two days he returned and inquired how Yogeshda was. By then the patient had developed diarrhoea. He took only a few of the tablets that were given to him and threw the rest away. The guard let him travel in the train as far as he was on duty on the route. After that he got him a ticket to Saharanpur.

There a kuli ran up to him and took him to a waiting bus bound for Dehradun. When the passengers were complete, the bus started. On the way there was a puncture. It was repaired; but a little later there was another puncture in a lonely place where no help was available. The driver got some grass to fill the tyre. With great difficulty he managed

to take the vehicle up to the ghats. There again another puncture occurred and the bus could go no further. The passengers were asked to walk. This was hard for Yogeshda as he was weak and tired. Someone accompanied him carrying his belongings. At the Dehradun bus stand he had a lemonade and felt refreshed.

He traced his way to a friend's house in Karanpur. He was examined by a doctor who diagnosed his illness as malaria and gave a few quinine tablets which Yogeshda did not take. A few days later he was quite well.

The year was coming to an end and he soon had to be in Shahbagh to see Mataji as directed by Her. His friend told him to visit Rajshahi town and meet Atal Bhattacharjee. Yogeshda did not know that Atal was the person who had been asked to keep his salary in his absence. Yogeshda asked for a loan. Atal realised that Yogeshda was the man of whose money he was the custodian. Yogeshda took the rail fare and returned to Shahbagh.

When he arrived, Bholanath at once recognised him. Mataji was in a trance and so did not see him. He was directed to have his hair cut. His first dish after returning from his pilgrimage was to be *choru*. It is rice and milk with a little ghee, cooked over *havan* fire. Then he resumed his official duty.

Soon after, Mataji decided to go on a tour and Yogeshda went to meet his friends and relatives.

Just then, the government had taken over all the property of the Nawab. Shahbagh was the personal

property of the Begum Pyari Banu. As she had then to stay there, everyone was asked to vacate the place. The Kali Murti and the belongings of Bholanath were removed and kept in a friend's house. There was no temple then, only the Murti was kept and Puja performed regularly.

And so ended the one year of the Bikshu period of Yogeshda. A most spectacular beginning of a lifelong devotion to the Holy Mother, yet only a peep into the thoughts and feelings of a man who has spent over fifty years with Mataji. What may be the depth of the inner revelations of Mataji to him only Yogeshda knows.



Mātri Līlā

(October 1975—January 21st, 1976)

Mataji alighted in Varanasi from Naimisharanya on October 4th, early morning and immediately got busy going round the Ashram and giving instructions about various arrangements to be made for Durga Puja which was to be held at Varanasi in Mataji's presence after an interval of twelve years. Mataji arrived on the day of *Mahālāya*, *Navarātri* began the next day. The actual Durga Puja was celebrated from October 10th to 14th in the *Chandi Mandap* of our Ashram. Several hundreds of devotees had assembled from far and near and there was scarcity of space. Quite a number had arrived also from foreign countries. Sri Giridhari Narayan Puri, the Mahant of the Nirvani Akhara of Kankhal remained throughout the Puja days. Mataji used to give *darsana* every evening in the terrace of Gopal Mandir. Professor Tripurari Chakravarti of Calcutta would address the audience daily either in the afternoon or at night after the *ārati*; Mataji's old devotee Abhaya, whose sweet voice we had not heard for years due to his ill-health, has at last recovered and sang on this auspicious occasion.

On October 8th, Thakur Sri Sitaram Omkarnath paid a visit to Mataji and was with Her for about an hour. The next day, Srimati Girija Devi, a singer of great repute of all-India fame, kept the audience spell-bound by her exquisite *bhajans*. On the three main days of the Durga

Puja, Kumari Puja was performed of 108 little girls who were given presents and fed sumptuously. One day Mataji graced with Her presence the Durga Puja held in the residence of the Basu family at Chaukhamba. On *Dasera* day Mataji sang, as She usually does on similar occasions. That day Mataji also visited the local *Niroani Akhara*. In the evening, after the image had been taken on a large boat and immersed in the Ganges, Mataji distributed with Her own hands sweets to each and everyone present.

On October 16th Pandit Kamalapati Tripathi, the Union Railway Minister, accompanied by his illustrious brother Dr. Karunapati Tripathi, the Vice-Chancellor of the Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, came to meet Mataji.

On October 19th, full moon night, Lakshmi Puja was celebrated. The sky had been overcast since the morning. In the evening when the Puja began, it started to drizzle and the rain continued throughout the ceremony. Just after *arati* the weather cleared up and Mataji was able to sit in the open courtyard, distributing fruits and sweets to all present.

That day a renowned writer and novelist of West-Bengal, Srimati Ashapura Devi, came to see Ma. She was much impressed and overjoyed at her first *darśana* and talk with Mataji.

On October 22nd, Mataji left for Kankhal, reaching there on the 23rd early morning. Mataji had been extremely active all along at Varanasi and now looked tired and was in need of rest. During the few days that followed, Mataji

gave only short *darsans* and sometimes stood with folded hands on Her veranda upstairs while visitors looked up to Her from the courtyard. In the evening of Her arrival, the Governor of U. P., Dr. Chenna Reddy, came to see Ma with his wife and a large retinue. All of them as well as the whole staff were served dinner at our Ashram.

On October 28th morning Mataji left by car for Uttarkashe with a fairly large party, including three taxis full of Europeans and Americans. Everyone enjoyed the entrancing scenery on the way. The Ashram at Uttarkashi has recently been rebuilt and an upper storey added. It fits beautifully into the rural landscape. As soon as Mataji arrived it was solemnly inaugurated. However, Mataji nowadays does not sleep in any room and therefore spent every night on the veranda of Kali Mandir. Most of the ashramites stayed at "Yoga Niketan" which is close by. The general kitchen was accommodated in "Punjab Kshetra." To everyone's surprise the weather was extremely pleasant, sunny and bright during the day and crisp at night. A pandal had been erected over the courtyard for satsang. Visitors had flocked from Calcutta, Dehli, Dehradun and other places. Many local Mahātmās and inhabitants of Uttarkashi and surroundings came for Mataji's *darsana*. Ma was in an excellent mood throughout Her stay. One day She paid a visit to Sri Ramananda Babaji, another day She visited a school. On November 2nd, Kali Puja was celebrated the best part of the night and on the 4th Annakut. A large variety of dishes were offered to goddess Annapurna and a feast given to five hundred sadhus. The money for

this had been donated by a devotee from a foreign country. Mataji Herself distributed yellow handkerchief to each and every sadhu.

One day some of the sacred fire that has been kept burning in several of our ashrams since 1926 was brought specially from Kalyanvan, Dehradun. Mataji supervised in person the construction of a receptacle for fire. Havan was started and continued for two months by Brahmacharini Udas who stayed back at Uttarkashi to do *tapasyā* in the cave in which Sri Bholanathji had sat for meditation for a few years in the 1930s. In the beginning of January Udas joined Mataji at Naimisharanya.

On November 5th evening Mataji returned by car to Kankhal. A busfull of 24 American pilgrims, disciples of Paramahansa Yogananda, Swami Kriyananda and Sri Satya Sai Baba, had been patiently waiting for Mataji for four hours; in fact they had arrived in Hardwar already on the 3rd in the hope of meeting Mataji. Although Mataji must have been very tired after that long drive of six or seven hours, She gave them *darsana* in the courtyard immediately and replied to their questions. Some of them were visibly moved.

On November 6th, Mataji took the night train to Delhi to see Didi whose health was then precarious. A very large crowd assembled for Mataji's *darsana*. The reputed singer from Madras Srimati Subbulakshmi happened to be in Delhi and of course came to see Mataji. The Prime Minister, in spite of her numerous engagements, did not miss this opportunity of having a talk with Mataji.

The same night Mataji left for Kanpur where She reached in the morning of November 8th. From 10th to 17th November the 26th *Samyam Mahavrata* was held in a Pandal in the compound of Swadeshi House, the residence of the Jaipuria family.

Every one is unanimous on the fact that all arrangements were superb. The Jaipuria family with the assistance of their highly efficient staff had obviously made a supreme effort to provide the most perfect conditions possible. The pandal was beautifully decorated and looked more like a palace than like a tent. It was equipped with chandeliers. There was also a lovely little *darsan mandir* made of cloth for Mataji outside in the garden. The bushes were studded with tiny blue electric bulbs which made the compound look like fairy-land after sunset. In his short talk at the close of the function, Sri Yogibhai (the Raja of Solan) remarked specially on the rare spirit of service not only of all the members of the Jaipuria family but also of their staff down to the lowest servant. The attendance was very large and everybody was accommodated with considerable forethought. Those who had to stay at a distance were fetched and taken back by cars. About twenty foreign devotees hailing from various countries in Europe and North & South America took part and felt greatly benefitted by the function. Dr. Chenna Reddy, the Governor of the U.P. came from Lucknow on four days and stayed for as many hours as he could spare, joining the meditations and listening to the discourses. Among the Mahātmās who graced the occasion with their presence and their interesting, enlightening talks

were Mahamandaleshwaras Sri Brahmanandaji of Bombay, Kankhal and Sri Lokeshwarananda Giriji of Kanpur, Sri Vishnuashramji of Suktal, Sri Govinda Prakashji, the Head of Ramathirta Ashram, Sri Naradanandaji of Naimisharanya, Sri Giridhari Puriji Maharaj, the Mahant of Nirvani Akhara, Kankhal, and Swami Ananda. Mataji sang on three occasions and very generously replied to questions during "Mātri Satsang." Once She related about the origin of the *Samyam Mahārata* and remarked on the great silence that prevailed this time during the hours of collective meditation, while in former years there had been disturbances through coughing, sneering and even occasional snoring. The efforts of so many years have at last borne fruit. After the usual havan and feast on November 17th, Mataji left for Delhi mainly to see Didi Gurupriya who was quite ill. On November 21st Mataji was back at Kanpur, following the invitation of the Singhania family. Sri Padampad Singhania's health being indifferent, no public satsang as in former years had been arranged this time. However, Swami Sri Akhandananda Saraswati held satsang twice daily in the Ashram hall and Mataji was always present. Apart from this She gave *darsana* frequently in Her tent in the garden and there also attended to quite a lot of correspondence. That week proved an intimate gathering treasured by all present.

On November 28th, Mataji left for Kankhal alighting there early next morning. Throughout Her sojourn there She was kept busy supervising preparations for the big functions that are planned in Kankhal in April and May. There will first be Vasanti Puja, then Didima's Utsava on April

14th, followed by a Bhagavata Paksha (fortnight) to be held by Sri Swami Akhanandandaji. Early in May Mataji will complete Her eightieth year and elaborate celebrations are to take place on the occasion. During Ma's stay at Kankhal, Akhanda Rāmāyana was recited and Mataji attended the beginning, as well as the completion. She also gave *darśana* frequently to small groups.

On December 9th Mataji boarded the train to Varanasi, where Gita Jayanti was celebrated in the Gopal Mandir hall from December 10th to 14th by the students of the Kanyapith, who recited in chorus six chapters of the Bhagavad Gita every morning. Mataji was present every day for those two hours. In the evening lectures on the Gita were delivered by Dr. Padma Misra and other professors of the B. H. U. and by the teachers and senior students of the Kanyapith. The climax on the 4th day, consisted of an elaborate Puja and Havan, performed by Acharya Jaya Bhattacharya. Sri Narayan Swami, Swami Satcidananda and Abhaya talked on the Gita.

On December 18th, Mataji left for an undisclosed destination. As became known on Her return, She had stayed at the house of Sri Harish Banerji at Varanasi itself where a special room is permanently reserved for Ma. Nobody disturbed Her rest and she came back to the Ashram refreshed on December 22nd morning. Already at Kankhal some foreign devotees had expressed their keen desire to spend Christmas with Mataji. As that time She had said that She was not yet sure where She would be. On December 24th, Christmas Eve was observed very solemnly from 11-15 p. m.

to 12:30 a. m. in Mataji's holy presence, probably for the first time in our Ashram. Some devotees from Christian countries tastefully decorated the hall of Gopal Mandir and arranged for a Xmas tree. They offered Puja to Ma, adorning Her with ornaments made of flowers and putting a gorgeous sari round Her to the accompaniment of Christmas Carols and hymns. *Arati* was performed and Mataji distributed prasada. Everybody greatly enjoyed this festival. On Christmas day Mataji visited the house of a devotee and remained there for about an hour. For the feast given at our Ashram Sri Gurupriya Devi prepared a few choice dishes with her own hands. She had been ill quite some time and cooked after a long interval. We are happy to state that her health has improved.

Mataji left Varanasi on December 27th morning for an unknown destination. She probably was in Allahabad and Naini for a few days rest. On January 4th She was again in Varanasi, leaving for Naimisharnya on the 6th night, arriving there on the 7th morning. Mataji at once visited both temples and there sat in the sun giving a long *darsana*. The next two days She remained upstairs in Her room and veranda. On the 9th She again went all over the Ashram and was outside for many hours, giving *darsana* and talking to the few devotees who were with Her.

On January 12th Sri Puran Purus was installed on his new *singhāsana*. On the 14th the anniversary of the installation of the sacred fire was celebrated by an elaborate Puja. Dr. Reddy, the Governor of the U. P. had come with his family and a large party to spend his birthday on

January 13th in Mataji's presence and remained for two days.

On January 16th evening Mataji left for Delhi, reaching there on the 17th early morning and proceeding to Kankhal on the 18th night. At Delhi Mataji was besieged by a huge crowd, especially on the 2nd day which was a Sunday. Kirtan of Mahamantra was performed in the hall for twelve hours, Mataji came only towards the end for about half an hour. Immediately after the Prime Minister paid Her a visit and shortly before Mataji had to leave, Sri Swami Satcidananda who has a large Ashram in the U. S. A. arrived with about 40 American disciples for Ma's *darsana*. While waiting for Her they sang beautiful Kirtan of Siva Mantra, but Ma came only for a few minutes and then got into the car.

Mataji reached Kankhal in the early morning of January 19th. She was not too well and in need of rest. All the same She attended to everyone who came. On the 21st evening She left for an undisclosed destination.

Mataji is expected to be in Kankhal for the Sivaratri festival, which falls on February 28th.

