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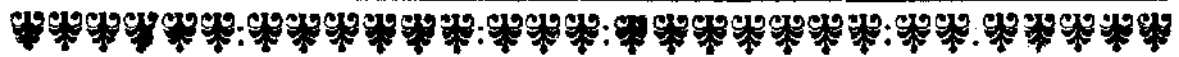
# Ānanda Vārtā



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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

Provide your mind with pure nourishment. If you let your mind dwell on God most of the time, there is hope that all the people around you will start thinking about God. When the screen of consciousness has become immaculate, God reveals Himself. Whatever one's state may have been at the last breath, in keeping with that very state one receives in the present.

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By effort attachment cannot be given up. Only by strengthening the longing to find Him, the yearning for other things will fade away. It is the nature of worldly things to pass off. Bliss and peace are the aim of everybody ; for these are in fact present deep within everyone and therefore can never be relinquished. Only that which in any case has to fall away can be given up.

\* \* \*

One has to become agitated with eagerness. Restless eagerness is our very nature ; the desperate eagerness to realize Him comes to us of itself. At the recovery of one's true wealth this restlessness will disappear.

\* \* \*

As long as one is able to hold on to anything, one must try to hold on to the One. It is imperative to become entirely single-minded, and one's duty to remain concentrated exclusively on the One. By adhering to one name, one contemplation, one thought—one-pointedness will be achieved.

\* \* \*

Firm faith is needed, yet it is sorely lacking. By performing action desire will not be brought to an end. If one goes on doing one thing after another, ever more desires will spring up endlessly. But by fostering one single desire, namely the desire to find God, other desires become extinct. Just as when, without paying attention to the twigs and branches, one waters the roots of a tree day after day, it will be seen that the old leaves fall off and new leaves start growing;

exactly in a similar manner, if without looking in any other direction, a person simply and exclusively practises the Name, he can be liberated from his old tendencies and inclinations and gain new life.

\* \* \*

The fruit of action directed towards God does not go to waste. The results of one's deeds in former births have to be enjoyed and suffered. As long as karmayoga in God is not practised so long will He not spare man from the experience of the consequences of his accumulated actions.

\* \* \*

The meaning of the "*Pranava*"<sup>1</sup> is "indestructible Brahman," also the letter or syllable expressing Brahman. It is contained in all other letters of the alphabet ; it is that which cannot be dissolved ; this is the *Śabda Brahman*<sup>2</sup>.

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1. The syllable "OM" is called "*Pranava*".

2. *Śabda Brahman*—The eternal sound that is the first manifestation of the Supreme Reality and lies at the root of all subsequent creation.

# **Matri Satsang**

**Swami Bhagavatananda Giri**

( Translated from Bengali )

*Question* : Mataji, would you please speak to us about Samyam Vrata.

*Mataji* : All the mahātmās have given so many wise counsels regarding Samyam Vrata. Have you not listened ?

*Questioner* : You can't get away with this kind of reply.

*Mataji* : First digest all that you have heard.

*Questioner* : It is difficult to digest the advice of the mahātmās. They talk about rather superior topics.

*Mataji* : The mahātmās represent the spirit of the Brahman and are akin to āchāryas. Just listen to their various precepts.

*Questioner* : Mataji, we are very ordinary folk. We cannot understand those high sounding discourses.

*Mataji* : You must try to assimilate what you have heard.

*Question* : How should one participate in a Samyam Vrata ?  
What harm is there in not taking part ?

*Mataji* : (Referring to Swami Swatantrananda) Swatantra has already covered these points.

*Swatantranandaji* : Ma, they want to hear it from you. Please tell them something about *samyam*.

*Jogesh Brahmachāri* : Look, Ma, all these people come here only to behold you. They don't even glance anywhere else.

*Mataji* : Yes, indeed. They look towards you. You have to speak. This body is such a little girl. Swatantra, do speak !

*Swatantranandaji* : This time is set apart for your conversation. How can I speak ?

*Mataji* : As you play the instrument so you will hear.

*Jogesh Brahmachari* : Ma, towards whom is your glance directed ?

*Mataji* : If I say that I am not looking at anybody, what then ?

*Jogesh Br.* In which direction do you cast your looks ?

*Mataji* : Ah, how well you have spoken ! Who looks at whom ? This question only arises if there are eyes. I do not go to anyone's house, I do not speak to anybody, nor eat anyone's food, nor do I look at anybody.

*Jogesh Brahmachari* : Indeed, you yourself speak through the mouths of all.

*Mataji* : How true ! You alone exist. There is nothing else. It is He alone who exists. Here the question of juggling with words does not arise. When playing with words the triangle (*triputi*)<sup>1</sup> remains.

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1. *Triputi* The triple manifestation of the supreme unity of the One in time, such as subject, object and the relation between the two; or knower, knowledge, knowing, etc.

*Questioner* : We are not conversant with Vedanta. We do not understand all this !

*Swatantranandaji* : Oh, why do you blame Vedanta ?

*Mataji* : What ? have I said anything wrong ?

*Swatantranandaji* : No, Ma, you have spoken from a high level.

*Mataji* : Some advocate that creation (birth) is illusory. Where creation itself is a myth, the question of what is or what is not does not arise. Whatever you may suggest, so it is. Argument can come into being only when there is difference and distinction.—This has been said by way of explanation.

*Questioner* : Mataji, would you please enlarge on this in accordance with the theory of dualism (*dvaita vāda*) !

*Mataji* : In dualism there are you and I—is not that so ? As long as I am, where is the “Thou” ? Where egotism is present, is there scope for the “Thou” ? In order to realize Him you must resort to some practice (*kriyā*). He who is eternally Self-revealed is also with form (*sākāra*), in other words, He Himself manifests through *kriyā* (action).

*Swatantranandaji* : Ma, would you please now enter the realm of *Advaita* (non-dualism).

*Mataji* : Ma Herself is always present in concrete form. Just as water and ice are eternally connected, even so the Supreme Being is without attributes and also with attributes (*nirguna* and *saguna*). In order to



realize Him try to follow the paths pointed out by your respective Gurus. What the Guru says is for your best (*Iṣṭa*); try to realize Him in whom there is no question of evil (*aniṣṭa*).

*Question* : What can we do, existing as we are on such low levels ?

*Mataji* : Seek the company of saints, cultivate satsang, engage in the service of sādhus.

*Question* : Although being our Mother, why do you sit inactive ? We can only do what you make us do. You have given us birth, so you must also be responsible for our efforts.

*Mataji* : You yourself are responsible for your birth, you yourself have taken birth.

*Jogesh Brahmachari* : You have given us birth.

*Mataji* : Your births are the results of your desires and longings.

*Jogesh Brahmachari* : The desires are also yours alone.

*Mataji* : If you put the entire responsibility on someone, you cannot tell that person "please, teach us !" It is you who provide the reason for your birth and you have taken birth, both these facts are inescapable.

*Question* : Can a child understand his Mother ?

*Mataji* : This body has heard that if a mother, other than his own, holds a child in her lap, the child is able to sense that she is not his own mother. The mind

is like a child, to be embraced closely. When a child cries, the mother, wherever she may be, comes and places him in her lap, and the child then becomes quiet. To lie in the Mother's lap, this indeed is *samādhi*. The mind is like a child, immersed in his own self. By one's own mother is meant the *Ātmā*. So long as the child does not get his mother's milk to drink, he cannot be quietened. Who is the mind? Who am I? Investigate this closely. Your mind is like a child that continually seeks *ānanda*. So long as uninterrupted bliss is not found, the search continues. By going after perishable and fleeting things the mind plays with itself. By pursuing perishable goods, peace of mind cannot be won, there can never be *samādhi*. If you really desire peace, then give your mind proper nourishment all the time. Man is incessantly in want. He is hungry; he lacks food, he lacks clothes. He is constantly engaged in satisfying all these wants. Who is the *jīva* (individual)? He who is held in bondage is the *jīva* and that which is in continual motion is the world (*jagat*). The relationship of the individual with the world constitutes the play of the mind. If you provide pure food for the mind, then your own natural path, your own real Being, you yourself poised in your Self will be revealed. Move in your own rhythm, that is to say, towards your own true nature\*. Being debarred from your true nature you suffer. You cannot get peace of mind by indulg-

\* Mataji says: "Man's true nature flows towards God alone."

See: "Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma."

ing in the pleasures of this world, by eating and drinking, by merely catering to your senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell and so forth. If you wish to calm your mind-child, then take recourse to satsang. The mahātmās provide you with counsel on how to realize your true Self. Go forward in the company of Him alone. Otherwise there cannot be peace. If you heed the advice of this little girl to the effect that running after worldly goods can never lead to peace, what should you do? Get into the rhythm of your True Nature. If you go on satisfying your wants, the sense of want will go on increasing. Suppose you want a car. It lies in the nature of a car to perish. The revelation of the Supreme Beloved ( *Parama Iṣṭa* ) can never result from chasing perishable commodities. If you proceed with your mind-child in the direction of God, you will become established in your True Nature. You will daily savour of new and different divine delights. When will you taste these? Only when you proceed along the correct course. Do not forge ahead slowly; you will benefit exactly according to the pace of your advance. To realise the Supreme Being is our Goal. His nature is to give with great abundance. At first He may allow His *darśana* by mere glimpses, later there may be the experience of His divine Presence. By these fragmentary visions He increases your longing for Him. You will reap exactly as you sow. In order to realize God you must engage in some *kriyā* ( spiritual practice ). You will advance precisely in the measure of your efforts. Endeavour

to obtain His complete, unveiled vision. With form and formless—He is one, just like water and ice. The Brahman is one without a second. To talk about *Samyam*, which means the mastery of the sensory urges—he whose mind-child has been controlled will proceed towards the realization, the revelation of His true Self.

*Question* : Is the mind a child or is it aged ?

*Mataji* : I call it a child because when a child is given something he does not judge whether it is ordinary or valuable. He has no power of discrimination.

*Question* : Yesterday, Avadhutaji declared during his discourse that the world is full of filth. But to us it does not seem so.

*Mataji* : Why don't you ask Avadhutaji himself ?

*Question* : You also emphasize that sense objects ( *viṣaya* ) are poison ( *viṣ* ) but how can we understand that worldliness is poison ?

*Mataji* : One gentleman exclaimed : "Ma, this sort of talk can never come to an end." (Everybody burst into laughter). He did well, suggesting to stop it. When you are ill, do you not consult a doctor and carry out his prescription ? Do likewise here.

*Question* : But I do not understand that I am ill.

*Mataji* : Have you any comprehension at all ?

*Questioner* : I have not.

*Mataji* : Then why do you ask questions ? Those who do not study have nothing to ask, and those who have passed their tests have no more questions. Since you have come here expecting an answer, what is the right course for you to take ? Seek the company of pilgrims on the Path.

*Question* : By cultivating their company will I be able to understand ?

*Mataji* : Most certainly.

*Question* : Is there no other way ?

*Mataji* : Will you listen to what I shall tell you ? Go to the doctor and take his medicine. Then you will come to know that you are ill. Go to the doctor and obey him in whatever he says.

*Questioner* : You yourself are the doctor. This is why I have come to you. Why should I go to anyone else ?

\* \* \*

*Question* : I want to know what actually is Sri Nairatmya Devi ?

*Mataji* : First tell us what you know about her.

*Questioner* : There is mention of Nairatmya Devi in the Buddhist Scriptures to the effect that at the moment of His *mahānirvāna* the Lord Buddha merged into Nairatmya Devi.

*Swatantranandaji* : The Buddhists have their own philosophy. He wants to know what essentially is its substance.

*Mataji* : As regards *sūnya*—if you mean *Mahāsunya*<sup>1)</sup> (the Great Void), how can there be a reference to the existence of a Goddess ? Tell us what you know !

*Questioner* : They say the *ātmā* becomes absorbed. I do not know any further explanation.

*Mataji* : If you read Buddhist Scriptures, study them by all means. So far as the *ātmā* is concerned, there is no question of coming or going, of merging or being absorbed. If you talk about a Goddess then she also is part and parcel of the Supreme Power. She is not different from the *ātmā*, but one with it—He Himself. Here, there can be no description of an appearance. In the realm of form and its attributes, there it can be explained. What actually is Nairatmya Devi ? Why do you not ask scholars of the Buddhist Scriptures ?

*Question* : Is it true that the *ātmā* can vanish ?

*Mataji* : The *ātmā* and the *Paramātmā* can never vanish. He exists eternally for all time. There is no question of being absorbed or vanishing.

*Swatāntranandaji* : The Buddha preached. "*Sarvam sūnyam*", the whole universe dissolves into the void of the *ātmā*.

*Mataji* : The void is also not perfect in itself. A vacuum has a shape, it is a kind of manifestation or appearance. But when one speaks of *Mahāsunya* the Great Void (which is Absolute Consciousness) there, no action (*kriyā*) is possible. This is a different matter.

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1) *Mahasunya* Great Void means Absolute Consciousness characterized by the absence of all creation.

*Swatantranandaji* : Where the ātmā is there can be no attributes and no actions.

*Mataji* : Yes, where the Paramātmā is, there can be no qualities or actions. But where the *jivātmā* (human soul) is, there are of course qualities and actions.

*Question* : The mahātmā has just now mentioned in his discourse that when one takes part in satsang, something or other always sticks.

*Mataji* : Yes, these words of his have stuck. (Everyone laughs heartily.)

*Question* : Just as milch-cows should not be disturbed while grazing because there is no food more beneficial than cow's milk ; likewise why disturb a simple, guileless person who would like to go on eating ? Swatantranandaji pointed out in reply to this question : "Just as the milch cow, being simple and guileless, should not be disturbed while feeding, so when somebody goes to a shop and eats rasagullas, he should not be prevented from doing so."

*Mataji* : Nobody can snatch away somebody else's ego. If you go to eat in a shop you will only consume your own share. Behold, how beautiful is God's dispensation ! What a lovely peel has He not made for the orange ! Everywhere has He provided food for creatures. Nobody can take away anyone's bread, nor does it disappear of itself.

*Question* : Then why do we chase away a mosquito when it bites ?

*Mataji* : You do so because it has no share in your own blood. If it had any, you could not remove it.

*Swatantranandaji* : What then is our duty under the circumstances. ?

*Mataji* : Whatever takes place is your duty, what comes about is your duty. The road you take determines your duty; and if you do not proceed, then that is also as it should be. If I am driven along a certain course, where is the scope for any obligation ? I am His tool.

*Swantranandaji* : Suppose a man is stealing ; does God induce him to do so ?

*Mataji* : That also has to be done. It is necessary. What you induce yourself to perform becomes your duty.

*Swatantranandaji* : Nowadays people blame those who possess houses.

*Mataji* : To censure them is also a duty.

*Swatantranandaji* : This statement has stuck ! (Everybody laughs.)

*Mataji* : To reproach them was also necessary. Just as it is right to perform Samyam Vrata. Without observing Samyam Vrata you will never attain to supreme peace. Whatever God causes you to carry out is always right. He is responsible for whatever comes to pass. If He puts an impediment in your way, this also is as it should be; and if He grants you success, that again is proper. Look at everything as a manifestation of THAT. Thou alone art, in every form art



Thou and no other : in affirmation and in negation, in whatever you may say. What God induces you to perform is your duty.

*Question* : It is the opinion of some people that the Brahman constitutes the only truth and that the world is illusory. Yet others say that the world is real and the Brahman non-existent.

*Mataji* : If you want to know : There is one Brahman and no second, there is nobody and nothing else.

*Swatantranandaji* : Where have you read that the Brahman is illusory ?

*Questioner 1* According to Charvak's theory : "You can continue to enjoy the things of life even if you incur debts."

*Swatantranandaji* : Just because the world is false, it does not mean that the Brahman is false.

*Mataji* : This body speaks in its own peculiar way, without rhyme or reason ; you have not provided this body (Ma) with any education. If you consider the body to be real, then this view leads to continuous manifold wants and to non-fulfilment. HE is the supreme, ultimate Truth, while the world is ever changing.

*Question* : Ma, sometimes you appear to favour someone greatly and at other times you never even glance at a person.

*Mataji* : I do not behave in any way towards anyone. There is no question at all of behaviour.

*Question* : Then to whom are you talking ?

*Mataji* : I am not talking to anybody, to none at all. I do not go to anyone's house, I do not eat anyone's food. All names are Thine, all characteristics Thine.

*Question* : Mataji, God is always present with everybody. I acknowledge Him, yet why does He not prevent me from committing sins ?

*Mataji* : If the scope for prevention were not there, then why should you ask this question ? Since the question has arisen, you will also have to accept the reply. You must stop committing sins. You yourself are none but God. Everywhere it is God alone who exists in all shapes and forms, He Himself indeed. That your thoughts have turned toward seeking means and ways of stopping to sin is due to God's merey. Proceed along the path which your Guru indicates.

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Referring to the aforesaid, Mataji added : "If an ordinary person tells you to do something in a particular manner, you may not be able to achieve it, but if somebody with power and authority gives you an instruction you will be able to carry it out correctly by virtue of his inherent power. Without it you would not be able to perform the task. There is another possibility which lies in the power and strength of the *ātma*. So, one way is to use one's own

strength and capacity and the other is to be powerless. Both emanate from the same source, therefore use the power of your *ātmā* to fix the mind on God. You are reading the Bhagavad Gītā. We are merely instruments, as He wields us so we function. Use your inherent strength to realize that it is you alone and no other that exists.



*Just as a flower contains seeds that can be seen only when it opens, and in the seed again the tree is potentially present, so also He resides within you. By practising sadhana this may come to light—in other words, if the veil of ignorance can be removed, the one who is Self-effulgent will be realized. Just as the whole tree is potentially contained in the seed, in a similar manner, He in His fulness is enthroned within you*

*Mata Anandamayi*

## From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

( Continued from the October 1975 issue. )

September, 1938.

In Hardwar Mataji was taken ill with severe pain in the stomach. Dr. Panth persuaded Her to come to Pith-kuthi, his house on the bank of the Ganges. Mataji Herself remarked that the disease was likely to assume its severest form. Dr. Panth diagnosed some sort of ulceration and was very perturbed about Her condition. He said to Her, "Ma, this disease, if left to run its course, will assume terrible proportions. So, please, for our sakes, bring about your *kheyāla* for your own recovery".

It will be recalled that Mataji had been quite sick in Hardwar once before, when Dr. Panth had treated Her for ailment. Subsequently, he had had an argument with Hariram Joshi about the nature of Mataji's illnesses. Joshiji had maintained stoutly that medicines were futile in Her case and that Her own *kheyāla* for recovery was all important. The doctor, on the other hand, saw no reason for disregarding the efficacy of medicines in cases of maladies of the body ; but he was also well aware that the 'patient' in question was anything but an ordinary sick person. As he confessed later, he had all the time been experiencing a conflict with regard to this matter. Now that he knew Mataji a little better, he was a bit wary of glibly prescribing medicines,

and yet he did not quite see his way to ignoring the clear symptoms of disease apparent to his professional eye.

It may not be out of place here to point out that with Mataji there is no question of pretence to any mood or any type of behaviour. On occasions She is seen to relegate, as it were, Her usual state of radiant joyousness to the background ; as for example, when She is seen to mingle Her tears with those of some afflicted person. At such moments nobody could become nearer or dearer to the heart of the sorrowing. Further, those who have the privilege of being close to Her, know to their cost that Mataji at times becomes completely remote and unapproachable. It is not that a barrier is thrown up but She seems entirely withdrawn within Herself. A perfect image of aloofness that forestalls all language of familiarity ; ties of various relationships stand dissolved for the time being. On rare occasions a few people have experienced a flash of anger, comparable to a sudden streak of lightning. Yet at the same moment Mataji has smiled serenely at other people. It is very difficult to describe these aspects without giving rise to wrong impressions. It is difficult because the simultaneity of the normal and a variance is unique to Her. It can only be said that they are neither pretences nor are they real. The various responses are called forth, at times, if it be Her *kheyāla* by the exigency of the situation, created by time, people and events. Illnesses can also perhaps be understood as a variety of such responses, which are 'real' and yet unreal. No matter how severe the illness may be, bodily suffering never overpowers Mataji's personality. Those, who are familiar with Her ways, know therefore, that the disease (or any other varia-

tion) brought about by some 'cause', must be allowed to take its course, or, alternately, devotees may try to bring about Her *kheyāla* for Her own recovery.

It is possible that on this occasion, Mataji responded to Dr. Panth's sincere bewilderment. It so happened that the same night, Mataji's body was seen to undergo various yogic *kriyās*. As always, the actions did not appear to be performed wilfully, but the limbs seemed to arrange themselves in a variety of beautiful postures. Dr. Panth watched the *kriyās* enthralled. Mataji said smilingly, "How interesting : the whole body is as if righting itself in and out."

The yogic postures lasted for about an hour. All this while Mataji kept on speaking in Her usual manner. Later on, She stated that it had been Her *kheyāla* to do so, to preclude ideas of fits or seizures from the mind of the doctor. At the end of the *kriyās*, Mataji seemed transformed back to Her normal state of glowing vitality. Her radiant smile put new heart into the dejected people who had been so desperate with anxiety a short while ago. Dr. Panth realized that he had witnessed a manifestation of great yogic powers. He now admitted that up to that moment he had not been entirely convinced by Hariram Joshi but now all his doubts were laid at rest. He said, "Ma, I am sure, you have rid yourself of all vestiges of illness and are completely recovered."

"Is that so?" Mataji enquired, with a smile, "Well, you are an upright brahmin, living like an ascetic on the banks of the Ganges. If I recover, it will be because you have spoken so and your words cannot be in vain!"

Many devotees from near and far, alarmed by Didi's letters, came to Hardwar to see Mataji. They found Her quite Her normal self. Much to the amusement of the people around Her, Mataji said to Didi, "You will be made to look a fool now !" Didi was understood to say that she preferred being made to look a fool to the other alternative.

On September 25th, the foundation for the future Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee Kanyapeeth was laid at Peetkuthi. The first two inmates were Bhaktipriya and Shantipriya, two little girls from Dacca. The first sponsors were Swami Akhandananda and Sheo Prasad Sinha, a reputed lawyer from Allahabad. The latter had recently come to know Mataji and had experienced a radical transformation in his life. The aim of the institution was to found a place where young girls who wished to live a life of spiritual endeavour could find means of support, encouragement and an atmosphere congenial to their aspirations. The little girls would form a nucleus around whom such an institution could develop. Manmatha Nath Chatterjee performed the puja to commemorate the occasion.

Mataji left Hardwar after the Puja holidays and after visiting other places came to Allahabad on October 12th, at the invitation of Sheo Prasad Sinha. He was beside himself with joy and nothing that he could do was enough. The elite of the town, including High Court judges, eminent lawyers, University professors were invited by him to come and present themselves to Mataji, about whom he had been talking to them whenever he found an opportunity. Most probably this was the occasion when Dr. Pannalal met Mataji for the first time ; the beginning of a life of ever

deepening devotion for him and his family. She also graced by Her presence the grounds of 31, George Town, the home of Shaila Nath Mukerji ; the site which was hallowed by Her *kheyāla* of *kriṣa* in succeeding years.

From Allahabad Mataji proceeded to Calcutta. Dr. Panth was travelling with Her this time. He was trying his best to introduce some sort of order in Mataji's hectic programmes. Deferring to his wishes, Mataji retired to Her room every night at 10 p.m. Hours were set for visitors in the evenings ; times were fixed by him for meals too. This type of routine was quite unheard of in Mataji's vicinity, where time was reckoned neither by the clock nor the sun. People were trying hard to adjust themselves to the new order.

In Calcutta, this new order at once came to grief. Impatient crowds were not in the mood to abide by Dr. Panth's requests for short visiting hours. People waiting in anguished expectancy for a glimpse of Mataji and a few words perhaps, were made distracted by doors being closed to them. Many turned away deeply hurt. A few hardy souls worked their way past the harrassed door-keepers. Mataji, looking at their tearful countenances, said with a smile, 'Tears ! Let me also shed some tears !' Then in the same mood of fun She went on invoking the tears to come to Her. Within a few moments the entire atmosphere had changed. Mataji wept in the manner of the deeply afflicted. All those who were present now forgot their grievances and addressed themselves to the task of praying for Mataji's *kheyāla* for desisting from crying. After a while



Mataji smiled through Her tears, restoring the atmosphere to normal.

Devotees realized that they had been over-reacting to a new situation. They should have remembered that it was not Mataji's way to inhibit anybody from doing what he obviously thought was the very best thing to do. She, in general, waits with infinite patience till the person is ready for a re-evaluation or a turning around. Only once in a while She is seen to give definite orders to somebody; no doubt such persons have the very rare capacity of obedience, which distinguishes them from others. In this case Dr. Panth himself realized that he was trying to guard somebody whose freedom could not be curtailed by anybody or anything. Mataji gave Herself freely to the people, or rather as She Herself sometimes said, there were no 'others' for Her. She was always with Herself only. Dr. Panth understood this now and gradually lost the incentive for introducing order and system into Mataji's way of life.

On October 20, Subhas Chandra Bose came to see Mataji at Dakshineswar, where She was spending the day. A small group of people sat with them in the quiet precincts of the Pancavati. One of those present, Amulya Chandra Dattagupta, asked "Is it possible to attain to God by way of service to one's country?"

"Why not? A true spirit of service may lead one to the same goal." Mataji then turned to Subhas Babu and asked, "You have dedicated your life to the service of your country. Can you tell me why you have done so?" "Because it makes me happy to be able to do so," he answered

gravely. "Is this happiness lasting and unqualified or is it momentary?" "I am afraid I do not know the answer to this question."

"Pitaji, my request is, keep in mind 'another rendering of service' along with the service you are already engaged in. If one were to say, 'I am not doing this for myself but for the sake of others', I will still say that, anything anyone may do is done for his own sake only. Everyone is a pilgrim on the path to knowing his own Self, because everyone seeks that state of Bliss (ānanda) which is another aspect of self-fulfilment. And why should one seek it? Because we already have a taste of it in our lives. One may, however object to this by maintaining that this search is of no use to anybody else. But I will say, if there is true effort in this direction and a knowledge of Self is gained, then that itself becomes of great benefit to the world. Just as a learned man transforms the lives of so many unlettered pupils and makes them knowledgeable."

Mataji spoke to him again, "I am told that you speak in public. Will you not talk to us too?"

"But I have not come here to speak. I am here to listen."

"In that case, will you listen to what this little girl of yours may say?"

"I shall try."

"Do not preoccupy yourself with the outside world only. You have so much capacity. Keep in mind the inner life too."

“How should I do that ? By what method ?”

Unfortunately, a sudden influx of visitors at this moment put an end to the conversation and Mataji had no chance to talk to him again. Subhas Babu made his pranāmas and went away.

Two days later Mataji paid one of Her rare and short visits to Dacca. The devotees of Dacca had been painstakingly maintaining all the traditions which had come into being while Mataji had resided in their midst. All these festivities came to life with renewed vigour in Mataji's presence.

From Dacca Mataji again returned to Uttar Pradesh. She had no definite plans and allowed the circumstances themselves to direct Her movements. She stayed on houseboats on the Ganges in Allahabad and Varanasi. At Vindhya-chala, She spent many hours sitting under the tree in front of the small Ashram building. For Mataji's companions the natural stillness of the quiet hill top was a contrast to the hectic activity of Dacca and Calcutta. Mataji Herself is never troubled by crowds and so cannot be said to prefer solitude. Both circumstances are equally welcome to Her.

Mataji had the *kheyāla* to visit Deoghar and arrived there on November 17th. Pran Gopal Mukherji, getting news of Her arrival, persuaded Her to put up at the Ashram. He remonstrated with Her for not informing him beforehand so that he could have made proper arrangements for Her. Mataji disarmed him from being reproachful by saying, “I was with you at the inn too. You, who live in the Ashram

should not identify yourself with it. The inn is also an ashram. I do not visit different places, I am always at the same place, you know that, don't you ?”

However, it goes without saying that Pran Gopal Babu and Mohananandaji Maharaj preferred Her to stay at the Ashram. Mataji was well known in Deoghar and there was no dearth of visitors at Her residence.

Mataji spoke again about the life of spiritual endeavour. She would say, “Everyone has to walk along a particular path and so one should not hastily conclude that one's own path is the way for all. And why not ? Because while one is still in a state of endeavour one is naturally operating within the dimension of want and ignorance. This state of incompleteness should bring home to us the vastness of the area of the as yet unknown and unattained. Final resolution is not a matter of legislation, but an overflow of enlightenment which brings with it the light of total vision. Don't you see how a pot while being filled makes a great deal of noise ; when it is full, it becomes quiet, even the overflow spills over noiselessly in all directions. The right to speak and a state of overflowing plenitude are the same.

“Everyone is a wayfarer on the path to the knowledge of Self. The Self is one. All is one. It is an inadequacy to describe it thus, however, because, to say that there is one universal consciousness is not to state the One. Moreover, one may ask, ‘If the Self is one, how is it that the death of x does not bring about the death of y ? To this it may be replied that births and deaths are to the Self what a rising and falling of a breeze is to the air. We only feel the air when

there is movement in it. We are not aware of it when it does not manifest as currents of air. Births and deaths, manifestation and non-manifestation, indicate the presence of the One unchanging consciousness.

“The crux of the matter is, to know oneself. Actually, the enquiry into Self-knowledge comes naturally to us, because, everyone, in truth, loves himself only. Sometimes people say, ‘I put so and so, or such and such a thing above myself.’ That is not so. If one were to look closely enough one would discover the affinity which underlies such ties. If it so happens that some action has to be performed which is completely against our self-expression, or someone accommodated, who is totally an outsider, then such actions curtail our freedom to be ourselves.

‘Not only is Self-enquiry a natural thing for us to be engaged in, but we constantly participate in the play of the One and the Infinite. This single tree here is the middle of a series extending infinitely both before and after. Our bodies have a beginning, middle and end and yet from within this finiteness we get a glimpse of infinity. How? Because if I touch your hand you will say ‘It is I’, ‘if I touch your foot or head, you will still say, ‘It is I’. The ‘I’ would fain not identify itself with the body. The mind is yet more interesting. You cannot give a full account of your mental activity of even the last five minutes, let alone of months or years. This mind which is defeated by five minutes, yet dares to think that it understands the Infinite! So you see, an awareness of our own desire to know more is all that is required to begin with. It is like cutting one’s way out of a forest. The

bewilderment of being lost in a multitude of ways and means, is the natural state of the human being in the world. A sustained, uni-directional effort is required to work one's way out to a clearing to gain an unclouded vision. In other words, to attain to the stillness of perfect tranquillity, one must begin by focussing on the constantly wavering ebb and flow of one's own life-breath.

"The *sādhaka* knows that his aim is to know himself. He proceeds to harness his mind to a one-pointed attention towards this goal. The questions of Infinity, Oneness, and other such questions must remain unanswered till the goal is reached. It is right that this should be so, because, unless one experiences a state of burning enquiry, one cannot go beyond, to the region of certitude, which transcends speech as well as silence." \*)

Mataji would smile at the visitors and say, "How much more time will you spend at a wayside inn? Don't you want to go home? How exquisite it all is...One is, in his own Self, the wanderer, the exile, the home-coming and the home...oneself is all that there is...."

From Deoghar, Mataji returned again to Uttar Pradesh. This time She did not remain for long at any place. Passing through Uttar Pradesh She came to Gujrat, but did not stop at any of the usual places. Travelling through Baroda and Chandod, She, accompanied by Didi, Ruma Devi and Sāadhan Brahmachari, arrived at Vyāsātīrtha, a remote site on the banks of the holy Narmada, on November 29th.

Vyāsa had been visited once before by Mataji when She had stayed there overnight. It was a forest retreat with

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\*) From Gurupriya Devi, *Sri Śri Ma Anandāmayi, Vol. VII Page 18*

only a few temples and ashrams nestling among the trees. The local people held the place in great veneration as the site where a great number of renowned ascetics had practised their *sādhanā*. Mataji was not known in this secluded corner, but it was not long before this matter remedied itself. Men and women living in retirement from the world were attracted to Mataji, although not many of them could speak Hindi. The inmates of the ashram of Swami Yogananda made room for Her and Her companions in their own building. Their care and attention to Mataji was not of the kind one extends to a stranger but to a well-beloved person.

Mataji stayed in Vyāsa for more than a month. Off and on people from Chandod, Baroda or other nearby places came to visit Her, otherwise She had local visitors only. Much of Her time She sat on the banks of the Narmada, under a big tamarind tree. Abhaya had joined Her and he would converse with Her occasionally about Her life in Dacca, Bajitpur and other places, but most of the time would be spent in meditative silence.

Mataji came to know an old lady living in a cottage by herself, in retirement from the world. This lady was much respected by the local people for her piety and her gravely dignified deportment. Mataji got into the habit of going to see her every now and then. Phalahari Ma, as the old lady came to be known by Mataji's companions was, in the beginning, obviously reluctant to allow even a slight variation to mar the routine of her daily programme. Then, of her own accord, she started coming to Mataji. In due course she became so attached to Her that she was visibly upset when Mataji went away, for the day, to the villages

on the other side of the river. Abhaya remonstrated with Mataji on this issue, saying, "Why do you distract this poor soul, who has chosen to live such a hard life of spiritual discipline? She will not know a moment's peace when you go away." Mataji smiled but kept quiet. Phalahari Ma revealed to Mataji, one day, the story of her life. Her only daughter, the joy of her life, had died at the age of twenty. After that Phalahari Ma had not been able to take any interest in the world and had retired to this far off place to carve out a different life for herself. She also confessed that Mataji, in some strange fashion reminded her of her daughter and perhaps this was the reason why she was so attracted to Her.

On Her next visit to the old lady, Mataji said to her, "Ma, you have said I am like your daughter, so you are my mother, right?"

"Yes, yes."

"Then you won't mind if I call you 'Ma'?"

"Of course not."

Mataji at once began to call out in the appealing tones of a child crying for his mother, "Ma, ma, ma, ma. . ."

Phalahari Ma became very agitated and her own eyes filled with slow unaccustomed tears. Mataji said to her in a gentle tone, "Ma, you have in your time shed bitter and profuse tears. I have today mingled mine with yours."

Abhaya again was very dissatisfied with Mataji's behaviour, remonstrating, "Why did you remind her of all that she is trying so hard to forget? You have now spoiled her peace of mind!"



Mataji said, "It is not right to bury your problems and sorrows and smooth them over. It is best to bring them out into the open so that they can be overcome and left behind."

Phalahari Ma did seem to become more approachable, and less prone to withdraw from any contact with the world and people. As time went on, she appeared more relaxed altogether. Who can say if one major reason for Mataji's visit to Vyasa had not arisen out of the mute and real need of this old lady, so bravely living a life of solitude.

Mataji left Vyasa during the second week of January 1939, for Dakore, a town renowned for its magnificent temple of Dwarakadisha.

( To be continued. )

*"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 is to take refuge at the feet of God."*

*Mata Anandamayi*

# Miracles Happen Even To-day

(Translated From Bengali)\*

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The following took place in the beginning of the year 1955, at the Sri Anandamayi Ashram on the top of Astabhujahill at Vindhyachal, District Mirzapur. Mataji had come to Vindhyachal for a short stay. At that time Sri Narsingh Prasad Chatterji, whose father, the late Sri Manmatha Nath Chatterji had been a marked devotee of Mataji, was the District Magistrate of Mirzapur.

On learning the welcome news of Ma's arrival, Narsingh Babu came to the Ashram in the evening. Mataji was then in Her room on the first floor. She seemed to have expected him and so, without any preamble, She took him to the veranda on the west side. From there She pointed to a spot down below which was about 20 ft. by 16 ft. She said ; "Look, below this ground a number of images of Gods and Goddesses are buried. They have come to me and told me. 'It is very irksome for us to remain down there. Please have us taken out'."

Mataji looked entreatingly at Narsingh Babu : "Can you not do something about it ?"

Narsingh Babu, having lost his own mother at an early age, had received Mataji's kindness on many occasions. Without any protest he gave his promise to do his utmost

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\* The Bengali original appeared in the "Souvenir" published in Calcutta in May, 1975.

in the matter. He very well knew that the task was extremely difficult, as the ground consisted of hard stones. Expert masons were needed and all kinds of tools and implements as well as experienced engineers.

By Mataji's grace everything was arranged. Soon, as per the District Magistrate's orders, work started in full swing. After the first day's strenuous digging by twenty labourers, stones were removed and a big hole measuring 20 ft. by 16 ft. with a depth of about 3 ft. had been dug, yet there was no sign of any statues. The workers, greatly discouraged, said, "There are only stones and nothing else."

On the second day, Mataji unhesitatingly directed them to go on digging. Narsingh Babu knew that Mataji's words could never be spoken in vain, so he encouraged his workmen, assuring them of success. They dug tirelessly throughout the second day. The pit became deeper, great big boulders were dug out, but not a single image was found. Mataji said : "Continue to search !"

The labourers had no experience of Ma but obeyed their Collector's orders. He, on the other hand, was determined to carry out Mataji's wishes. So the digging continued. The workers were gradually becoming disheartened. They lost all hope of success, failure seemed to stare at them nakedly.

Later, the Magistrate was working in his office, but his mind was in the Vindhychal Ashram. Suddenly the engineer rang him up excitedly :

"Sahib, many statues have been found, come immediately."

Narsingh Babu did not need a second request. He hurried to the Ashram premises and found that about two hundred images in good condition had been excavated, some of them, weighing about ten to twelve maunds, were pieces of exquisite art and beauty.

The news of the excavation spread in no time. The lonely Ashtabhujā Hill was swarming with people.

There was great excitement and enthusiasm, all kinds of opinions were voiced. Gradually, from far and near, archaeologists, historians, pressmen and the curious gathered at Vindyachal. Specialists from various countries also were attracted by the amazing discovery.

But She, who was the root-cause of all this upheaval, looked at the statues just once and then calmly walked away as if nothing special had occurred. Yet a miracle had happened.

It was in the year 1942. On Her way from Delhi to Varanasi Mataji halted for a couple of days at Kanpur with the family of Sri Harendra Nath Gupta. When Ma started from Kanpur for Varanasi, the late Bunidi remembered on the way to the station that one of Mataji's blouses that had been put to dry on the roof, had been left behind. As there was not much time left for the train to start, Bunidi said : "No need to send the car back for it, keep it carefully with you."

At the station devotees had collected round Mataji with sad hearts at Her departure. Haren Babu's little daughter was also among the crowd. Abruptly Ma said to her ; "Friend, how are you ? Are you well ?" The child felt shy at such prominence shown to her in front of so many people and replied coyly : "I am quite well." Mataji said : "Keep well !" Ma asked the same question twice again and on getting the child's reply, said every time : "Keep well !" Thus Ma repeated this three times. Nobody at that time understood the mystery underlying this simple conversation but later we realized that it was the prelude to a miracle. A letter received from Haren Babu made this clear. He wrote : "After Ma's departure I returned home with a heavy heart. That night we suddenly discovered that the child had high fever. The next morning the temperature rose to 104°, in the evening it went up to 106°. This extreme temperature continued for four days. No kind of treatment had any effect. The doctors were at a loss and almost gave up hope. We went on praying fervently to Ma to come to our rescue. The blouse which Bunidi had left behind we put under the child's head. On the fifth day the patient was in a deplorable state and became delirious. We sent a telegram to Mataji.

We were all doing japa when suddenly the room was filled with a sweet fragrance like what we get in Mataji's room. A friend of mine, Sri Shambhu Roy, entered the sick-room and immediately came out. He told me : "Harendra, I have seen an amazing thing. When I entered the room I could not see your daughter, but a lady—the lady of that photo (pointing to Ma's photo)—was lying in the

child's bed. Be prepared ! Something good or bad will happen to-day."

At midnight the fever started to subside and by the morning came down to normal. Later we learnt that our wire had been read out to Ma at Vindhyachal at precisely 12 o'clock at night. Mataji wired to us immediately, asking whether my daughter's health had improved.

The mystery of Mataji leaving Her blouse behind and repeating three times to my daughter to keep well, now became clear to us. It was to save her from the grip of death.

### 3.

Mataji has said : "At times a doubt comes into your minds : you feel, 'What we have not been able to get from Ma in twenty years, someone else gains in a moment.' Remember that your relationship with Ma is not of this birth only, it has continued for ages. Some, whom you consider to have come quite recently have been connected with Ma in so many previous lives and therefore appear to be old acquaintances."

A striking example of this are Sri Pinaki Ganguli and his wife, Mira Devi. They first had Mataji's *darśana* on the eve of *Dol Purnima* in 1968, when Sri Krishnananda Brahmachari (Shobhanda) was celebrating the installation of his *Gopal-vigraha* at Hijuligram of Ranaghat at his Krishna Kutir Ashram. Mataji's presence gave beauty and splendour

to the function. In the afternoon Ma proceeded to Calcutta, accompanied by Krishnanandaji with his Gopal.

Sri Pinaki's family was well known in Ranaghat. They had attended the function as guests. At the time of leaving, Mataji gave a garland of flowers to Mira Devi. Later it was seen that this garland acted as a talisman. By Mataji's grace and mercy the family of Sri Pinaki were miraculously saved from the jaws of death. Here is an extract from Pinaki Babu's diary :

"Mataji went to Calcutta with Shobhanda and his *vighra* of Gopal. After lunch we decided to visit Navadwip in our car. We were seven of us ; my mother, wife, sister, our two daughters, myself and the driver. On reaching Navadwip, we did obeisance to the deity and then came to Navadwip-ghat for our return journey to Calcutta. It was about 9 o'clock at night. Swarupganj-ghat was on the other bank. We planned to cross over and from there to proceed via Shantipur and Krishnanagar to Ranaghat on the way to Calcutta. The river Ganga was thirty-five to forty feet lower than the place where the car was parked. The descent was very steep. No ferry boat was visible, so the driver and I got down from the car and stood on the river bank to find out when a ferry would be available. No other traveller was there, only a lone bullock-cart waited along with us. After a while I turned towards the car and saw a most dreadful sight. The car had rolled half-way down the steep slope. I did not know what to do ! I ran and tried my utmost to stop the car but my efforts were all in vain. The car was sliding down and fast gaining momentum. Putting all my efforts to naught the car entered the

river with all of us. How things happened I did not know. There was neither time nor the capacity to think. Perhaps after rolling down into the water, the bonnet of the car became stuck in the mud and the car stopped. It was high tide time and all the members of the family were under water. I know how to swim. I felt my feet touching the glass panes at the back of the car. Whether my dear ones were still alive or dead or dying, I did not know. I was desperately trying to save them. Suddenly it was as if someone directed me to dive and try to open the door of the car. At first I did not succeed but after trying again and again the door at last opened. My wife Mira was seated at the back seat near the door. I carried her to the river bank. It was not possible to tell whether she was alive or dead. My mother, sister and one of my daughters were still in the car. All my strenuous efforts to rescue them failed. I felt quite desperate and thought, all my dear ones are gone, it would have been best if I also had died."

"My youngest daughter had got out of the car and came to join us before the accident occurred. Probably the gear got loosened somehow and so the car had started rolling. My little girl screamed piteously when she saw what was happening. Vasant Rai, the contractor of the boat service and his men were nearby. On hearing the child's cries, he came with his men and tried to open the door opposite to the one from which I had tried in vain to rescue my mother. They failed and eventually broke the glass panes at the back and saved everyone. I was in a dazed condition and knew nothing of all this when my little daughter came and said: "All are saved!" Overwhelmed with gratitude I



asked Vasant Rai how the impossible had become possible." He replied : "I cannot explain, brother, I only know that *Yamrai* had written the names of your family in his book of death but later had to delete them all."

"It was then about half past ten or eleven in the night. Some two thousand people had collected on the river bank. By God's grace my mother, wife, sister and daughter got a new lease of life, but their condition was alarming. They had lost their voices and their bodies were covered with black bruises. This condition continued for three or four days."

"The next day I went to see the car and found it completely submerged in water. With the help of a number of mechanics the car was taken out of the river and repaired. Then, after performing our pūjā of gratitude in the temple, we informed the police and started for Calcutta."

"Later we heard something most amazing. In the night of the accident, Sri Anandamayi Ma had told Shobhanda : 'Now they are saved from death. Go back to-night.'"

"This, of course, I heard but what I saw and experienced was the most incredible miracle. We all returned from the jaws of death. The thought of what might have happened makes me shiver even to-day. One after another so many unbelievable things occurred. If the bonnet of the rolling car had not struck ground, the calamity could not have been avoided. Also if the car had rolled further down, none could have been saved from the deep waters. Further so many volunteers appeared within a second on the hitherto

lonely ghat. Even tools for breaking open were available in time before the victims were suffocated to death. How they did not suffocate is beyond human intelligence. To break the windows of the car and extricate three people takes time. What superpower saved them so miraculously? The reply to Pinaki Babu's question "What superpower?" was given six years later.

In 1970, Kali Puja was celebrated in Delhi in Mataji's presence. Sri Pinaki and Mira Devi happened to be in Delhi for some work of their own. On learning that Mataji was in Delhi they went to the Ashram. The hall was crammed with people. Pinaki Babu and his wife were newcomers and did not know anyone. So they quietly sat down in a corner and enjoyed Mataji's *darśana* from a distance. What happened then has been described in Mira Devi's diary :

"Suddenly Ma said to me, 'You are the girl from Ranaghat, aren't you, who told her mother-in-law when the car was falling into the Ganga': 'Ma's garland is in our hands, nothing will happen to us, nothing can possibly happen to us.'"

It was a fact that when at Navadvip ghat the car was rolling down, Mira Devi had spoken these very words to Pinaki Babu's mother. Then she lost consciousness. No one, not even Pinaki Babu knew of this. Mira Devi was stunned with amazement to hear Ma repeat those words after six years. She wrote in her diary. "I was thunderstruck to hear Ma say these words which only my mother-in-law knew. I thought She must be omniscient. Who knows

what Ma is in reality? A regular tempest began to brew in my mind. Ma said: 'Relate all about the incident of drowning in the Ganga. You may speak in Bengali, Tripurari Baba will translate into English for the many foreigners who are here!'

"I related everything and Mataji Herself translated into Hindi. Then She told me: "This body has to talk to you, go upstairs and wait."

After Mira Devi had placed her story before Ma, which She Herself repeated in Hindi, Mataji talked to her in private. What Mira Devi received then, some others have not had the good fortune of getting even after being close to Ma for many years. It is too precious to be disclosed.

#### 4.

Now I shall relate a unique incident that shows how, hidden from the public eye, Sri Ma Anandamayi, the destroyer of sorrow, showers Her grace on a so-called unknown person.

In 1942, Professor Haridas Pakrashi and his wife, Punyamayi Devi were plunged into an ocean of grief by the untimely death of their only child, their sixteen-year old daughter, Dhira. The light seemed to have gone out of their lives. At that time they had not had Mataji's *darśana* nor even heard Her name. Neither were they particularly interested in religious matters or *sādhus*. Hitherto they had

led a tranquil and happy life, until this bolt out of the blue marred and shattered their peaceful existence. The Professor engrossed himself in his profession and his studies. But the mother's heart was broken. All her thoughts were with her beloved daughter whom she would never meet again. Somehow she carried on her daily routine, then sat far into the night near the empty bed of Dhira, spending her time in painful memory. She had had no religious education or chance of satsang and therefore lacked support to steady her. In the loneliness of the silent night she sat grieving for her daughter. She felt quite forlorn and helpless. But soon Ma opened her eyes and showed her that she was not alone and could take refuge in Mataji. Here is an extract from a letter written by Punyamayi Devi.

“One night I saw Dhira sitting on her bed. She was looking bright and radiant and was dressed in a white sari. She had told me that when she would go to college she would wear white saris. I could not see her face clearly but her abundant black hair was tied in a knot on top of her head. Next night again I had the same vision, disappearing after about half an hour. The light was not switched on in the room, but the room was fairly well lit up from outside so I could see quite well. The face was blurred, not exactly like Dhira's, but I felt it was she. For three months she continued to appear before me at a specific time and gradually disappeared after half an hour. My heart was filled with happiness to be able to see Dhira, although she seemed different from what she had been.

Subsequently I related this to a lady of my neighbourhood. She said: “From your description I think she may be Mā Anandamayī of Daṅga.”

Who was she? And why should she come and visit me? It was beyond my understanding, but I became very eager to meet her. After quite some time I came to know that Anandamayi Ma had come to Lucknow. Just then I was very busy with the marriage of my brother-in-law and had no time to spare. Yet I felt a powerful attraction towards Ma Anandamayi which compelled me to go and see Her.

I knew no one at the place where Ma was staying but I ventured forth into that unknown house to see Her. I found a large hall packed with devotees. Ma's seat was arranged in the centre. She had not yet come. I sat down at a distance, near the door, and waited. Suddenly I saw a lady enter the hall. She was fair and had raven black hair tied in a knot on top of her head and wore a white sari. She came in through the door near me, passed me, and sat down on the dais. I gazed at Her dumbfounded: it was She whom I used to see in those nights, not in a dream but wide awake—night after night, for three months! I had no doubt that it was She. It was Ma, whom I had previously mistaken for Dhira.

Ma was watching me and beckoned to me to come close to Her. When She saw me hesitate, She asked Didi (at that time I did not know who Didi was) to take me by the hand and lead me to Her. At last I was with Ma.

After my child left me I had always remained reserved when I met people and never wept in front of anyone. But now I could not control myself before Ma and tears streamed down my cheeks, my handkerchief became drenched.

Mataji caressed me with Her hands and calmed me. I remained sitting at Her feet without uttering a single word. Ma held my hand in Her soft ones while She conversed with the devotees. An hour passed, the heaviness of my heart was gone and I felt at peace. After a while I did *pranāma* and asked leave to go. Mataji said; "Come to-morrow morning at 5 o'clock and sing to me." I said: "I can sing no more." She said: "Mother will sing and daughter will listen and daughter will also sing for mother."

"It was not easy for me to go to Mataji the next morning because of the marriage in my house, yet I went. After ages I sang again. Ma sang "He Bhagavan" for me. At last there was peace in my heart. Since then I am not crying for Dhira as I used to. Ma has filled my empty heart. I never wanted Her but She has drawn me to Herself. I have no more worries."

# What Mataji Is Not\*

Vijayananda

What Mataji is in reality is a perplexing question that has been voiced frequently and to which to this day nobody has been able to find a satisfactory reply ; for the simple reason, it seems to me, that no adequate answer to this enigma exists. The full solution of the mystery can come only after complete spiritual Realization.

In this article, however, I intend to deal with a problem which is not quite so far beyond my limited possibilities. Among certain people false ideas are prevalent concerning Mataji and Her teaching. These ideas are held by persons who have either met Mataji only casually, or else have merely heard or read about Her. Such wrong notions are to a certain extent excusable for it is difficult to find out along what line Mataji actually teaches. A Vedantist, for example, when talking to Mataji for the first time, will feel convinced that She is a pure *Advaita Vedantin* ; a *Śaktā* may very likely say that She is an incarnation of the Divine Mother, advocating the cult of *Śakti* ; while a *Vaiṣṇava* will see in Her a great *bhakta*, and so on. It is only after having known Her fairly closely and for a long time that one becomes aware of Her innumerable facets and of Her extraordinary universality. But let us examine one by one the incorrect or partly incorrect views about Mataji that I have come across.

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\* Reprinted from "Ānanda Vārtā, Vol. VIII-1, May, 1960.

### Is Mataji a Tantrik Guru ?

( I shall refer to the word 'tantrik' not in its etymological and true meaning, but in the way it is commonly understood especially by western people, namely, as the path of sādhana that makes use of sexuality in its practices. )

When I first came to India, I was told by a young westerner that he had been warned against Mataji, as She was supposed to be a yogini dealing with *śaktis*. This opinion can, of course, be held only by one who has never seen Mataji and probably not even talked to any of Her devotees ; who is completely ignorant of the fact that strict *brahmacharya* (chastity) is one of the main requisites for admission into Mataji's ashrams ; that people leading married life cannot join the ashram at all, and that moreover not only physical abstinence is necessary, but absolute purity of thought and emotion is aimed at.

Says Mataji :

"It is the pure undefiled flower that finds a place at the feet of the Lord and nowhere else. Take great care to spend your life in spotless purity, worthy to be dedicated in worship to the Lord." <sup>1</sup>

As to Mataji's own person it is needless to say that the name given to Her by Her parents, namely, *Nirmala* (immaculate), is more than justified. Such absolute, flawless purity cannot be found in any earthly or even heavenly being.

### Is Mataji a Magician or Hypnotiser ?

It has come to my ears that there are those who believe that Mataji attracts people through magic or hypnotism.

1. Matri Vani; No. 118



with no other motive than to play with them. Someone from Europe who came to see me, related to me, he had been given to understand that there was a French doctor ( the writer of this article ) staying in Sri Anandamayi Ma's ashram, whom She was keeping under the spell of Her hypnotic powers. Someone had even been advised to try and rescue me.

To such deluded people we can only say that Mataji is indeed a great divine magician, attracting to Herself innumerable men and women who are under the spell of the terrible and powerful magician called *māyā* and hypnotized by the countless ties of mundane life. By the charm of Her divine love Mataji hypnotizes them away from worldliness and with Her infinite patience gradually leads them "*From the unreal to the Real, from ignorance to the Light of Wisdom, from death to Immortality.*"

### Is Mataji a Śakta ?

I have read an article about Mataji, in which the writer referred to Her as 'a child of the Divine Mother.' The author had obviously the best intentions and felt deep reverence for Mataji but he evidently failed to recognize Her true greatness. Mataji does not worship any aspect of God, being Herself the embodiment of THAT, from which all gods and goddesses emanate. It is, of course, true that Mataji often speaks of Herself as a little child and calls all married people Her fathers and mothers. But so far as I can understand, She is the kind of child to whom Sri Aurobindo refers when he writes that the Lord is an eternal child, playing an eternal play in an eternal garden. <sup>1</sup>

1. The book by Sri Aurobindo is not with me and the quotation is therefore not verbal,

### Is Mataji Śakti Herself ?

In *Śakti* worship devotion is directed towards the Divine in Its dynamic aspect, putting less stress on the static, transcendental, consciousness (Śiva). The personifications of *Śakti* as Durga, Kāli, Śrī, correspond to different methods of awakening *kundalini*, the creative power slumbering in man. These deities possess a relative reality. They represent certain aspects of the Divine condensed into name and form. Mataji says it is like water in ice. But what manifests through Mataji's physical frame is THAT in which all deities have their source. To say that Mataji is an embodiment of Durga, Kali or any other deity may be true; but is only fragmentary truth.

Says Mataji :

"The visions of gods and goddesses occur in accordance with one's inherited dispositions (*samskāras*). I am what I ever was and shall be. I am whatever you conceive, think or say." <sup>1</sup>

and : "...Thou art the embodiment of all gods and much more. Thou hast come out of me and I am the epitome of the created world... ." <sup>2</sup>

### Is Mataji Recommending the Cult of Śakti ?

The first nucleus of devotees that gathered around Mataji were Bengalis of the upper classes who in their great majority are *śaktas*. At present also there are quite a number of *śaktas* among Mataji's bhaktas. It is easy to understand why the worshippers of the Divine Mother are attracted to Mataji.

1. "Mother As Revealed to Me," P. 6,

2. Ibid.P., 46,



Her followers often greet one another by exclaiming : "Jai Mā !" and are fond of uttering the word 'Mā' in connexion with the *praṇava*.

These are mantras used by *Śaktas*. When kirtan is sung in the ashrams, the word "Mā" can be frequently heard and also hymns to the Divine Mother. This is why people who are not well acquainted with Mataji and Her ways may get the impression that Her teaching is based on the cult of *Śakti*. But those who have had the chance of becoming more intimately acquainted with Mataji and Her surroundings know that among Her followers are not only a great many *Vaiṣṇavas* but also Vedantists, Sikhs, Jains, Christians, Jews and Mohammedans. The kirtans held in the ashram are of Rāma, Krishna, Śiva as well as of Devi or simply 'Bhagavan' and some are purely *advaitic* consisting of mantras from the Upaniṣads. The recitation of portions from the Bhagavad Gītā, the Durga Sapta Śati, the Upaniṣads and the Bhāgavata Purāna forms part of the daily routine of the ashrams.

### Is Mataji a Great Bhakta ?

I have seen it in writing by an authoritative hand that Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma is a great bhakta. Before coming to India, I myself was under the impression that Mataji was advocating *bhakti marga* (the path of devotion) and probably many people abroad as well as in India still hold this view. My wrong idea about Mataji was based on the following facts :

1. The *bhāvas*.

I had heard and read that in Her early days a great variety of extraordinary raptures and divine ecstasies had been observed in Mataji, especially when She listened to devotional music. But nowadays things have evidently changed. For the last nine years I have been with Mataji, yet have never once witnessed any state of this kind. Those who live near Mataji cannot help marvelling at Her wonderful poise and balance, which is quite unshakable. Behind the superficial emotions that are but a momentary identification with the people who happen to approach Her, She is ever in a state of undisturbed, profound joy and peace, far beyond emotion. Sometimes while singing kirtan Her features seem to express deep religious feeling ; but no sooner has She stopped singing, in the twinkling of an eye, She resumes Her calm and serene countenance. Evidently She has merely played with the religious emotion, perhaps to give an example to devotional people.

As regards the *bhāvas* of Her early life, I suppose they occurred in response to the expectations and desires of the devotees of those days and were nothing more than a play on the surface. Mataji can often be heard to say that She has ever been the same since Her infancy, notwithstanding all the apparent outer changes. As the pure crystal takes on the colour and reflects the object placed before it without actually undergoing any change itself, so Mataji appears to be different according to Her surroundings.

## 2. The Kirtans.

Mataji greatly encourages the singing of devotional music. Kirtan before sunrise, and after sunset forms part of

the daily programme of the ashrams. Wherever Mataji happens to be kirtan is performed as a rule. She Herself sings off and on, even during public gatherings.

But at the same time Mataji also encourages other spiritual exercises, such as *japa*, *dhyāna*, *vicāra* (self-inquiry) etc. in the case of those who are able and willing to engage in those practices. For many people kirtan is a simple and effective method of turning the mind from worldliness to divine things through the medium of music.

### 3. The devotees.

Quite a lot of the people close to Mataji are of the devotional type. *Bhakti marga*, being the easiest path, is followed by the majority of aspirants. But among Mataji's devotees all other types of *sādhakas* are also to be found, namely, those whose approach is by karma, yoga or *jnāna marga*, etc.

### **Is Mataji a Vedantist or is She extolling any other school of thought ?**

Without a doubt Mataji teaches the highest truth as found in the Upanisads.

“This body presents the matter from the standpoint of the Risis and Munis, from the line of approach that they chose.”<sup>1</sup>

But Mataji does not belong to any sect, creed or school

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1) “Words of Sri Anandamayi”, P. 155.

of thought. The Real which She embodies and teaches is THAT from which all things emerge and in which they are rooted, but THAT Itself is beyond caste and creed, beyond religion and philosophy. It cannot be described in words, nor measured by the mind in terms of name and form. However, for the *sādhaka*, the individual on the path, a line of approach through the channel of the mind is necessary.

Says Mataji :

“In fact, seekers after Truth are moulded each in a unique way, different from others as well as from one another, but they all will have to pass through the gate of Truth.”<sup>1</sup>

“When discussing creeds and paths, remember : it is only while on the path that one speaks of paths...”

“But where there is no question of any doctrine nor of controversy, there is He at the root—He who is present in all these innumerable forms.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Mataji's Universality**

The seers, saints and yogis who have attained to Self-realization have almost all followed a definite line of approach. After becoming spiritual preceptors they lead their disciples along the path they have themselves trodden, although it is true that some of them are able to guide aspirants by a few other lines of *sādhana* as well. But most of them prescribe a definite method by which truth will be

1. “Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma,” P. 154.

2. “Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma,” P. 156.

apprehended, as for example, self-enquiry or *japa* or self-surrender and so on. The consequence of adhering to one particular line of approach in preference to all others is that only aspirants of a special type are able to get the benefit of such a Guru's guidance. But the divine Power that manifests through Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi is characterized by an extraordinary integrality and versatility as regards the knowledge of spiritual practices. It seems quite unfathomable that a being should exist to whom no path of *sādhana* is unknown.

In Her early life, during a period of about six years, Mataji played the role of a *sādhika*. It was nothing more than a play, for Mataji had never been in ignorance or bondage.

Says Mataji :

“Let me tell you that what I am I have been from my infancy. But when the different stages of *sādhana* were being manifested through this body there was something like a superimposition of *ajñana*.<sup>1</sup> But what sort of *ajñana* was that ? It was really *jñana*<sup>2</sup> masquerading as *ajñana*.”<sup>3</sup>

As a rule it takes a whole life or sometimes several lives to master one line of *sādhana*. But Mataji in the short span of six years traversed untold spiritual paths with all their stages and states up to perfection. Every avenue leading to Truth has been explored and mastered by Her. Some of those *sādhana*s are extremely difficult and perilous. Only

1. Ignorance of the true nature of the Self.
2. Knowledge of the Self.
3. “Mother as Seen by Her Devotees.”



exceptionally gifted and bold aspirants are able to use them. The few who succeed, reach only after long and strenuous efforts and after a great many ups and downs, whereas Mataji accomplished all those practices without the least strain or exertion, just as a matter of play and in an incredibly short spell of time.

The following utterances of Mataji about this topic are quoted from Sri Amulya K. Datta Gupta's diary, translated by himself from the Bengali original.

"I may tell you that this body has not followed only one particular line of *sādhana* but has covered all the known lines. It has passed through all the different varieties of practices referred to by the sages of ancient times. This body has successfully gone through *nāma sādhana*, *hatha* yoga with its various *āsanas*, and through diverse other yogas, one after another. In order to attain to a particular stage along one of those lines of *sādhana*, an ordinary individual may have to be born again and again ; but in the case of this body it was a matter of a few seconds....."

"Moreover the different forms of *sādhana* that this body has been seen to practise were not meant for this body, they were meant for you all...."

"When you relate your spiritual experiences to me, I often say that this body has had those experiences and this is why it knows what they are. Not only that ; if anyone discloses to this body a special line of *sādhana*, it can describe in minute details the various stages of that line."

We may conclude that Mataji is able to guide every type of *sādhaka*, no matter what his avenue of approach or his level of attainment.\*

\* Mataji never gives instructions on the line of *Nāma marga*, (Editor.)

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This is why in Mataji's ashrams there is an astonishing diversity of seekers after Truth. Those who follow *jnāna marga* live side by side with those who practise bhakti or karma or hatha yoga, etc. The *sādhaka* is required to mould himself according to the pattern given to him by his Guru. Mataji guides him along the line he is already following and indicates the one that is best suited to his temperament and conditioning. She bestows on him knowledge and power, a knowledge and a power that are not imposed from outside, but come by bringing to the surface the *sattvic* mind, the higher Self which will in due course lead to the revelation of the Real Self, the ONE.



## What Sri Sri Anandamayi Mataji means to me.

R. Rattan Singh

It is beyond my capacity to define the Divine Personality of Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma. I can only narrate some of my experiences and tell of the profound influence She has on me. One meeting with Her changed my whole attitude to life.

When I first went for Mataji's *darśana*, I had gone to pay my humble respects to a holy person and I found myself in a presence so familiar, so comforting: it was like a mother's warm embrace—perhaps because of the soul-stirring smile with which She welcomed me that at once made me feel at ease. The spell was cast. Since then, every visit, every *darśana*, draws me closer to Her.

Very often, not being satisfied with the general blessing of Her presence, I hover around Her whenever I have the chance, to catch one glance, one look, one touch, one tangible sign of a special blessing that one craves for from holy persons.

Then at unexpected moments, without undue emphasis, most casually, almost imperceptibly, Mataji responds to my desire. Kindness, love, compassion, understanding, general benevolent qualities, are in Mataji so exalted that

they envelope my whole being and leave me spellbound. There surely is some Divine Power in them. Kindness from Her, a moment's attention, one soothing word, Her very touch with the prasāda given, reveals Her Divine Presence and the effect is instantaneous. I have also seen some of Her various moods, even apparent anger. But I am contented with that also because it is only the coating of the pill of love.

In Her presence a silent power encompasses every mood, thought and action, and like a charm, a feeling of calmness is cast over everyone. I have experienced it. I cannot ever forget the tranquillity I felt once during an evening *darśana*. Mataji chose not to speak but sat quietly exuding Her Divine Grace. Time seemed to stop. All was still. Even the wind in the trees seemed to rest and the birds tarried a while in the branches, after Mataji momentarily cast Her glance in that direction. All others present must have felt the same, for peace seemed to descend on all, no one shuffled, no one sniffed, no one whispered.

Too soon Mataji folded Her hands in *pranāma* and rose to leave. A bird twittered and fluttering its wings, flew away; a gentle breeze rustled in the leaves as the twilight glistening on them faded into evening shadows. The door closed on the receding aura of calm. The contrasting buzz of voices and shuffling about erupted garishly.

What is this power? It is hard to give any explanation. It is revealed to each one according to his understanding, thoughts and needs. There could be no greater respect for individuality. Perhaps this is what draws people

of all castes, creeds and climes, to Her. This is what makes Her the Universal Mother. Her motherly arms are wide open for all who come to Her, rich or poor, the much-applauded and the much-criticised, the good and the bad. All find solace in this Haven of Love.

Like a child scrambling in the crowd for a prized object, I am lucky to be in the pushing-and-pulling, in the hope of catching the 'object'. I am lucky, I say, because there is Mataji to 'referee' the play. In the game of life, with all its vicissitudes, joys and sorrows, losses and gains that are inevitable in human existence, the supporting hand of Mataji helps me to bear the pains of grief and also to contain the worldly joys, and all everything is levelled in humble acceptance of God's Will.

This is no easy task. We all know how shattering are the travails of struggling human beings. It is for the alleviation of this strife and suffering that great Incarnations come amidst men. Blessed are they who can benefit. A few years ago, Mataji was present at the Durga Puja celebrations at Mr. Khaitan's house on Rajpur Road, Dehradun. I brought my humble offering of fruit and coconut. I had heard that a coconut is offered as a token of self, because it resembles the head of man. I wanted to offer my whole being at Mataji's feet. There was a big crowd, as usual on such occasions. When my turn came for *pranāma*, I placed my gift near Mataji. At once Mataji gently beckoned to Didi to take the coconut to the Puja pandal, but the fruit was added to the pile near Her seat for distribution as *prasāda*. My whole being trembled with surprise and joy. Mataji had understood my thoughts,

Dreams are generally regarded as of no consequence because they are said to be merely the passing thoughts of the subconscious mind. But how does one explain an unusual association of a dream to reality ?

I dreamt of Mataji telling me, "Will you make me a hot *chapati* ! I ate one not properly baked and my stomach has been upset." I also saw Ma sitting near a smoking '*chula*' (kitchen fire). I thought about it all day. Why has Mataji asked a *chapati* from me ? All kinds of thoughts passed through my mind and I felt worried and restless. Such a Divine Person asking me for something must have a hidden meaning. Many days passed. I was at a loss whom to consult as I did not, then, know anyone in the Ashram.

One day I spoke of my dream to a friend (reluctantly because of the curious feeling of losing its sanctity) and asked what I should do about it, as I did not wish to fail in any duty, as such a dream might imply something.

The friend related my dream to Didi. Didi was wonderstruck, "Ah," she said, "this is exactly what happened." Mataji was in some place, and for some reason most of the girls had gone away and the one who usually prepares the meals had not arrived. One girl who did not know cooking had to bake the chapaties. The firewood was soggy and the chapaties turned out indigestible. After eating them Mataji said Her stomach was upset, and it remained so for many days.

When Mataji came to our town, I told Her about the dream on Didi's advice. Mataji listened to me intently and asked me to give away a handful of *âtā* (flour) to someone

in the name of Mother. I begged Mataji to accept the day's meal from me and I made the necessary arrangements. She did not say a word. But later while going into the room for *bhoga* (meal), Mataji stopped near me and said, "I am going to eat your chapati". I was overjoyed and waited for the *prasāda* after the *bhoga*.

On another occasion we had gone in a party to Kankhal for *Didimā's Utsava*. We intended to return soon after lunch but were delayed. When Mataji came downstairs after Her rest and saw us, She said. "Why have you not yet left? It is getting late." And when we went to do *pranāma*, Mataji said to the friend who was to drive, "Drive carefully." I at once felt strange. The fact that Mataji had noted our delay and warned us, portended something.

On the way a tyre burst. It took a long time to change the wheel. The stepneg also did not have enough air. The distance was long and Roorkee was the nearest place where repairs could be done. However, driving slowly we managed to reach Roorkee. Further ahead, on the Mohand Pass, we were again delayed because of undue interrogations at the checking post. We reached home safely but rather late.

These and many such personal incidents may be quite unimportant as compared to the general rung of events in the lives of notable devotees. But to me they are big milestones on the path of my life. In them I see Mataji's Divine Hand.

Mataji Herself tells us that we are all tools in God's hands, that everything is His *Lilā*. Recently She related two incidents to show us what She means.

It was a memorable meeting at Kankhal on October 28th, 1975, before She left for Uttarakashi for Divali. Some venerable Mahatmas had come and there was a gathering of a few devotees, all sitting in the small area of the veranda of the ashram. Mataji was in a good mood. She asked a Mahatma to speak and when he was hesitant and also uncertain of the topic, Mataji said, "Speak on anything, even a few words from a Mahatma have great value." And so he spoke on the need of always remembering God and death and of living our lives as laid down in the Vedas.

Then Mataji talked animatedly about two incidents. It was during the last Durga Puja preparations. She said, "This is how Bhagavati reveals Herself in all Her powerful ways." When Mataji was travelling by train to Varanasi, the craftsmen who were to sculpture the *murtis* for the Puja, got out at Lucknow. They said the atmosphere was too damp due to untimely heavy rains and they would not be able to model the images. Mataji was left in the lurch while only a few days were left for Puja. But lo and behold ! someone brought the news that there was an image available at Calcutta which had been made for another place, but for some reason had not been sent there. It was strong enough to bear the jolts of the journey. So it was brought and Durga Puja was performed.

On another occasion, Mataji told us, the image had cracked a few days before Puja. Out of nowhere, someone came and informed Mataji that there was a small *murti*



somewhere nearby. When it was brought, surprisingly it had the very expression and face that Mataji wanted.

“Thus,” said Mataji, “Mother revealed and enacted Her Lila in this way.”

When we take our problems and questions to Mataji, She always directs us to depend on Nārāyana and to remember it is Mother's Lila in all the phenomena we see. And, by Her Grace, transformations do take place.

It is with a single word, a small sentence or an incident that the all-knowing, omnipresent nature of Mataji takes us by surprise. She lets Her Divine Power unravel naturally in the day-to-day happenings of Her devotees. To each one She gives of Her personality according to his need... some to soothe and heal, others to encourage and to calm, but all with that Divine Love, so sincere, and so peaceful, that each one who receives it feels its profound depth.

When I listen to Mataji's discourses, I always feel as if Mataji were talking to me personally. She answers my doubts and gives me advice. I come away relieved and encouraged and with a fresh resolve to face life. All this power flows as an undercurrent because very often Mataji does not obviously 'show' any recognition.

Amidst all the multitudes of people that Mataji blesses daily and in various parts of the country, I feel a sense of solace that Mataji has a place for me also in Her thoughts. How eloquent is the following incident. Mataji was distributing handkerchiefs to Her devotees. I also put out my greedy hand. She said, “You have received one before”.

I was not disappointed at the denial, but overjoyed that Mataji had Her child in mind. On all the past occasions, thousands must have received the handkerchiefs blessed by Her, yet She remembered one insignificant person.

I feel that to justify one's protection under the canopy of Mataji's Grace, is to portray in our actions something of Her beneficence. It is to live a life of humility, simplicity, kindness and love towards all we associate with. This is possible only when we keep Him in mind in all our thoughts and actions. To put these virtues into practice, in however small a degree, is to follow the path that Mataji leads. If one stumbles and falls, "go on trying again and again" Mataji encourages. How fast I rise, when I trip and stagger (with Mataji's Grace) ! The longest journey, says a Chinese proverb, starts with but one step.

Thus must one proceed ; elevate the mind to the spiritual plane and reflect the progress in our daily actions. This is the goal of Life, this is the great Path that brings us within the grasp of the sublime object of human life, a life above mere existence.

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## Mātri Līlā

( January 22nd—April 10th, 1976 )

Mataji left Kankhal on January 21st by the night train for an undisclosed destination. Actually She travelled to Naimisharanya where She alighted the next morning. For a few days She rested in the solitude of this sacred place. On January 28th She suddenly started for Modinagar where She spent a couple of hours with the bereaved family of Sri G. M. Modi, on January 29th. From there She motored to New Delhi and had Her midday meal and afternoon rest in Her room in the house of Sri G. S. Pathak in Nitibagh, leaving the same evening. On the 30th She was back at Naimisharanya. On February 1st, She took the train to Varanasi, reaching there on the 2nd. On February 5th, *Vasant Panchami* day, Saraswati Puja was celebrated very solemnly in Mataji's presence. This time, the sacred threaded Brahmacharini, Acharya Gita Banerji of the Kanyapeeth officiated as the priest assisted by Swami Narayanananda Tirtha. On that auspicious day *abhiśeka* and *prāna prathishta* was performed of the new deities of our Calcutta Ashram. Further, four Bengali boys received their sacred threads in Mataji's presence. Mataji was to leave the next day, but probably mostly because of Sri Gurupriya Devi's ill-health She postponed Her departure until February 12th, when She proceeded to Deoghar where She put up at the Ashram of Sri Narendra Brahmachariji Maharaj. The disciples of

Sri Balananda Ashram and many other local people as well as devotees from Calcutta flocked for Mataji's *darśana*, which was held in the Ashram hall. Once every year Sri Narendra Nath Brahmachariji arranges in his Ashram for a fortnight of *tapasyā* (somewhat similar to our *Samyam Vrata*), ending on *Śivarātri* day. The participants refrain from talking during the whole of that period and there is an elaborate time-table of daily *japa*, meditation, recitation of scriptures, fire sacrifice, religious discourses and so forth. This time the *tapasya* started on February 15th in Mataji's presence.

On the 16th She had to leave again for Varanasi where She arrived on the 17th morning. On February 19th the prize distribution ceremony of the Kanyapeeth was held in great style in the hall of Gopal Mandir in Mataji's holy presence. Dr. Chenna Reddy, the Governor of U. P. was the chief guest and his wife Srimati Savitri Reddy gave away the prizes. Many distinguished personalities and the elite of the city were present throughout the function which consisted of songs and recitations in Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali and English, short skits and speeches. Dr. Karunapati Tripathi, the Vice-Chancellor of the Sanskrit University and Dr. Reddy addressed the gathering. *Prasāda* was distributed to all at the close of the function and Dr. Reddy with his family and his entire party had dinner at the Ashram.

On the 20th afternoon, Mataji left for Naimisharanya, this time not for a rest but to grace a function at Naradananda Ashram at the invitation of Swami Sri Naradanandaji. A *yajna* was held there for a fortnight and a *Bhagavata*

Saptah. Mataji was accompanied by a few of our Brahmacharis and Brahmacharinis.

On February 23rd Mataji travelled to Kankhal where Sivarātri was celebrated on the 28th. In former years the all-night puja had to be performed in the small Ashram courtyard under canvas and there had always been acute scarcity of space. This time at last the worship was held in the very spacious new hall. Arrangements were excellent. About a fourth of the hall has been partitioned off by a low wall (to which a railing was added later) and the collective puja was performed within that enclosure, people sitting in circles round Siva Linga. Brahmachari Nirmalananda was stationed at one end, conducting the proceedings with the help of a loudspeaker. Mataji's couch and another one for Sri Girdhar Narayanji, the Mahant of Nirvani Akhara, were placed in the centre of the hall, and there was ample space for onlookers to watch the pūjā. Two dozen foreigners were among the audience. Four American devotees who had expressed their great eagerness to join in the all-night worship were, for the first time, allowed to do so as there was enough space at our disposal. A separate place outside of the enclosure was allotted to them and they had their own Siva Linga and all the necessary paraphernalia. One Indian devotee was stationed on an elevated seat between them and the announcer, and translated the instructions whenever necessary. Mataji was in the hall before 6 P. M. and remained until 10-30, distributing fruit to onlookers and to those who were doing only the first puja, before she left for a short rest. She returned again to attend a talk on Siva and Sivaratri delivered by Br. Nirmalananda.

between the second and third pūjās for about  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour. At about 2-15 a.m. Mataji appeared again and also sang for a short while, remaining present until 5 a.m. when the all-night function came to a joyful end with kirtan and fruits from Mataji's own hand.

On March 3rd, one hundred *Daridra Nārāyanas* ( the Lord in the guise of the poor ) were given food and dhotis. Mataji's couch was placed in the middle of the courtyard. The poor, men and women, entered by the back gate and in single file bowed to Mataji while flower petals were showered over their heads and a dhoti blessed by Mataji's touch was handed to each one. When they passed the door of the kitchen on their way to the front gate of the Ashram a large leaf-bowl containing a sumptuous meal was presented to them. Kirtan was sung by the onlookers throughout the function.

As soon as the distribution was over and Mataji was about to leave Her seat, a group of about 20-25 young teachers of transcendental meditation, who were attending a refresher course at the Ashram of Sri Mahesh Yogi in Rishikesh, arrived for Mataji's darshan.

The next morning, *griha pravesh* ( house inauguration ) of a cottage behind the sadhus' building, ( shaded by a large banyan tree ), which two American brahmacharis had been allowed to build for themselves, was held with elaborate Vedic rites and *havan* ( fire-sacrifice ), followed by *Kumari puja* of twelve Hindu *kumārīs* and one American, the six year old daughter of a devotee from the U. S. A. Mataji sat on an elevated seat amidst the *kumārīs*, something that

She rarely does. At the end, a feast was served to the *kumaris* as well as to *sādhus* and brahmins and later to all present. Mataji was about from 7 a. m. to 1 p. m. and attended to everyone and everything with full attention.

That night Sri Swami Chidanandaji, the head of Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, paid a visit to Mataji with a small party on his way to Hardwar station from where he was to board the train to Delhi. Mataji received them in Her room on the ground floor of the guest house. At Her request Swami Chidanandaji chanted stotras and sang kirtana.

Mataji had been expected to leave the next day for a few days of retreat, but instead She merely shifted to Her set of rooms on the top floor of the *sādhus'* building. There She remained for a whole week giving *darśana* only at 5 p. m. for about half an hour on the roof of the house. As women are not allowed to enter that building they would stand on the road below and look up to Mataji from there. However, three times during that week, Mataji came downstairs for some work for a few hours and stayed in Her room on the ground floor or in the main Ashram.

On March 12th She returned to Her usual abode at the Ashram. One day Sri Swami Madhavanandaji of Sivananda Ashram came with a party and held a short discourse. Holi was celebrated very mildly this year and only a few devotees arrived from Dehradun and Delhi to pay homage to Ma on that auspicious occasion. In the third week of March Sri Gurupriya Devi, whose health has fortunately improved considerably, arrived from Varanasi to remain in Kankhal for the functions in April and May.

Mataji has not left Kankhal at all since February 24th and is most probably going to remain there until April 20th and return again in May for Her birthday celebrations to be held from 10th to 17th May. Mataji has been tremendously busy throughout Her lengthy stay, supervising building work, repairs, various new installations, white-washing, painting, polishing, decorations and various other preparations for the functions in April. An enormous amount of work was accomplished, thanks to Her inspiration.

*Navarātri* started on March 31st and with it the recitation of Tulsidas' Rāmāyana every afternoon for an hour by women devotees, on the veranda on the first floor of the guest house. Everyday from 5-6 p. m. Mataji gave *darśana*, for 15 minutes silent meditation was observed. More and more devotees kept on arriving daily from far and near. On April 4th, Prof. Tripurari Chakravorti came from Calcutta and at once started his daily discourses for half an hour.

On April 6th early morning Sri Narendranath Brahmachariji arrived from Deoghar with over a hundred and fifty disciples, men and women. Mataji received them in the festively decorated hall at 6<sup>30</sup> a. m. Already at 8 a. m. they all assembled again for the collective chanting of the *Durga Sapt Sati* which Mataji attended for a while. On April 7th at about 7 p. m. *adhivāsa* pūjā of Goddess Annapurna was celebrated jointly by all the 150 disciples led by their Guru. It was succeeded on the 8th morning by a grand and most impressive worship which continued till midday, followed by *bhoga* and *havan*. Annapurna, the Goddess of plenty ( physically and spiritually ) was offered



any number of food preparations which were distributed to all for hours afterward. At about 3 p.m. Mataji sat down on a chair in front of the hall in the open, with a bucket full of kheer by Her side and, as a living Annapurna, gave a spoonful to every single person who approached Her, be they devotees, beggars, street children or passers-by, with never ending patience, a picture of grace and benevolence.

On the 9th morning another shorter pūja was performed and, at about 5 p. m. the beautiful images of Siva and Annapurna were taken with due ceremony to the Ganges for immersion. At night followed a conclusive function ending with the sprinkling of *santi jal* and the distribution of fruits and sweets to all present. On the first day Mataji had presented yellow wrappers with *Jai Ma Annapurna* printed on them to all our guests from Deoghar and on the last day She gave yellow handkerchiefs and wore one Herself.

From April 12th to 19th a Bhagavata Saptah will be held with Sri Srinath Sastri of Vrindaban officiating. Sri Swami Akhandanadaji had agreed to give daily discourses. On April 13th Didima's *Sannyāsa Utsava* will be celebrated.

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1. *Kheer*—Rice boiled in thickened milk with date sugar.

## Obituary

With deep regret we note the demise of two great devotees of many years standing. Rai Bahadur Sri G. M. Modi, the famous industrialist and philanthropist, who built up the manifold industries of Modinagar in one lifetime with the skill and capacity of a genius, died after a short but serious illness in a hospital in Bombay on January 22nd. On January 17th Mataji specially came to Delhi to see him but as fate would have it, he had already been flown to Bombay before Mataji arrived. Rai Bahadur Modi was a disciple of the great saint Sri Krishnashram of Gangotri and deeply religious. He had a beautiful, large temple built in Modinagar and both Mataji and Sri Krishnashramji as well as a number of Mahatmas followed his invitation for the consecration in 1963, when he arranged for satsang on a large scale for a number of days. Sri Modi was extremely generous and ever ready to help sadhus and sādhakas. He was a life member of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha. Whenever possible he used to come to Mataji and attend several of our Samyam Vratas and other functions. His widow, Srimati Dayavati Modi, reveres Mataji as her Guru. We tend our heartfelt sympathy to his bereaved family. May he rest in peace and bliss in God.

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Sri J. P. Pandya passed away in Varanasi on February 18th at the age of 62. He had met Mataji first in Allahabad

in 1948. He and his entire family became sincerely devoted to Mataji. After retiring from professional work in 1968, he would travel with Mataji whenever he could and was always eager to render service to Her and Her people. In 1973 he was appointed Additional General Secretary of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society and as such had to live in Varanasi where he occupied a set of rooms in our hospital grounds, which are situated within the *Mukti Kshetra* (locality at Varanasi where every dying person is said to attain to liberation). He had once expressed before Mataji his wish to die in Varanasi. His wish was not only fulfilled but Mataji was present in the Ashram when he left his body. On February 12th he drove Her to the station in his car when Ma left for Deoghar. On returning to his flat he felt ill and the next morning had a heart attack. Mataji was informed by trunk call and he improved. However he succumbed to a second heart attack on February 18th night. Mataji had returned to Varanasi the previous day. Sri Pandya's wife and children and other relatives were present when he suddenly breathed his last. Mataji Herself put garlands and tulsi leaves on the body before it was taken to Manikarnika Ghat.

His departure is an irreparable loss to our institution and we shall ever remember his services with gratitude.

May he rest in peace and bliss at the feet of the Lord.