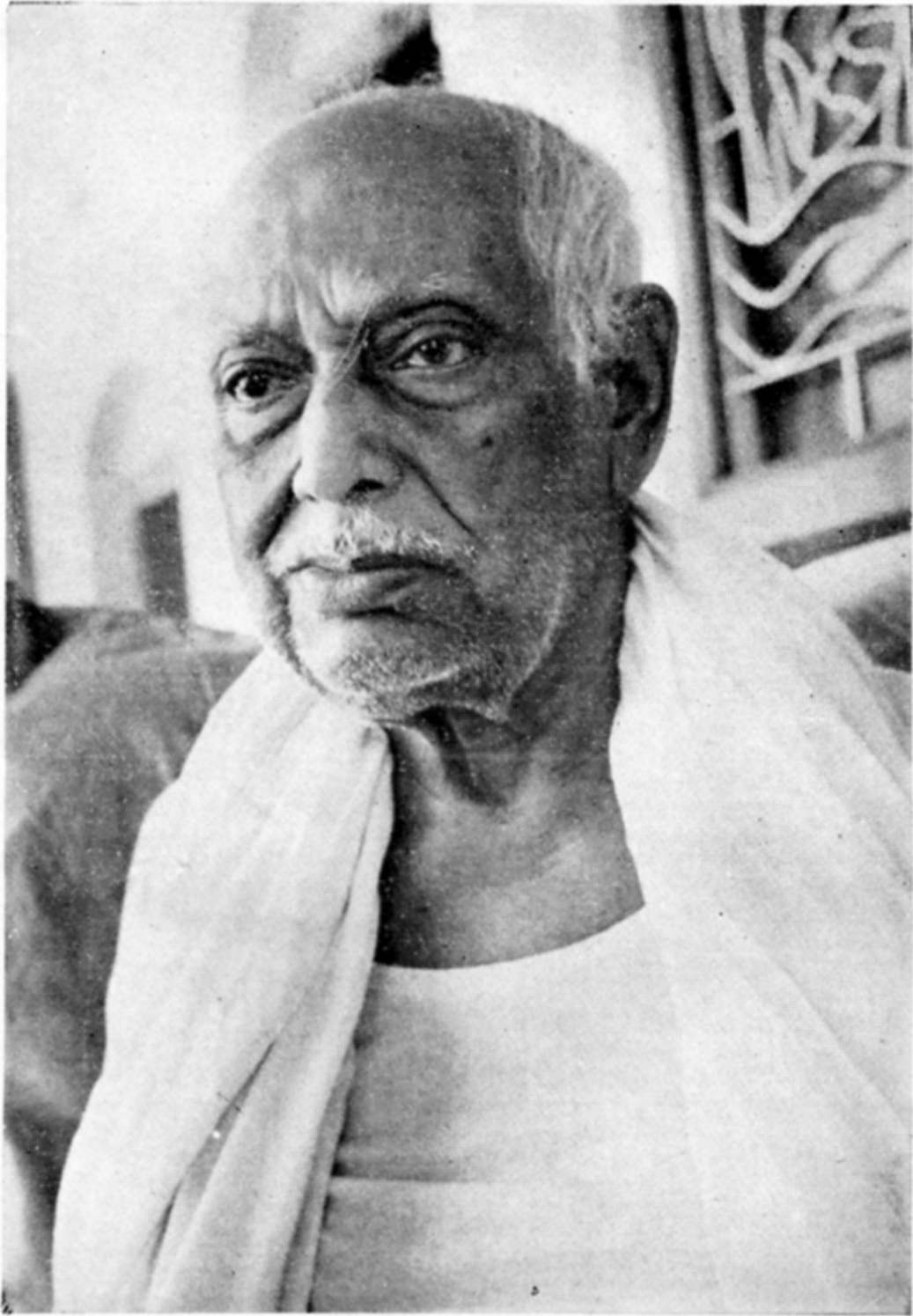


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Mahamahopadhyay Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj

In Memoriam

**Mahamahopadhyaya Sri Gopinath Kaviraj
M. A., D. Litt. Padma Vibhusana**

[September 7th, 1887—June 12th, 1976]

On June 12th, at 5³⁰ p. m., the world has lost one of the greatest men of our century. There have no doubt been remarkable saint-scholars in the past as well as in modern times, but the universality of Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj's vision and learning remains unique. It is no exaggeration to say that he was a living encyclopedia of all religions and philosophies, ancient and modern, eastern and western. One of the most eminent Sanskrit scholars, he was well versed not only in several Indian languages but also in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, which enabled him to make a thorough study of the literature of the world. His momentous interpretations of the Agamas, Tantras and Yogasutras have illumined the minds of earnest seekers all over the globe. To mention only a very few of his great books: "Bharatiya Sādhana and Sanskriti", "Tantra Sahitya", in Hindi and Bengali, "Memoirs" in English and Bengali.

With all this profound and prodigious learning he combined a childlike simplicity, all-embracing loving-kindness, incredible humility. His vision and personality were those of our ancient Rishis. His life, totally dedicated to sādhana and service, will remain a source of inspiration for generations to come.

Born on September 7th, 1887 in a village in Mymensingh, East Bengal he graduated from Dacca University and went for post-graduate studies to Jaipur. A brilliant student from the very start, he often surpassed his teachers. In 1914 he became the Librarian of the Varanasi "Saraswati Bhavan Library", a veritable treasure-trove of ancient Sanskrit manuscripts. In 1928 he was appointed Principal of the Govt. Sanskrit College, Varanasi, but resigned in 1937 in order to devote himself wholly to his spiritual pursuits. He chose Varanasi, the spiritual capital of India, for the venue of his sādhana and refused lucrative positions, offered to him by the Calcutta and Lucknow Universities. He also turned down a proposal to become the first Vice-Chancellor of the Varanasi Sanskrit University. He was a disciple of the famous Swami Vishuddhananda, known as "Gandha Baba." His house in Sigra, Varanasi where he lived for many years, became a place of pilgrimage for scholars and seekers after Truth hailing from all countries, for research students of philosophy, for persons in need of spiritual advice.

The highest degrees and distinctions were conferred upon him by the Government and by various Universities. In 1934 he received the title of "Mahamahopadhyaya." Later he became D. Litt, of the Varanasi and Allahabad Universities.

The Viswabharati University, Santiniketan honoured him by the highest distinction and the Government of India by "Padma Vibhusan" and a number of other awards.

In his domestic life he was subjected to severe blows of fate. His only son died young, leaving behind a widow and three children, his only daughter is a widow. His wife became blind a few years before she passed away in 1959. He bore all these trials and tribulations with faith and fortitude.

He had his first *daršana* of Mataji in 1928 at Varanasi and was at once indelibly impressed and irresistibly attracted. Subsequently he came in ever closer touch with Her. Whenever Mataji stayed in Varanasi, he used to visit Her regularly and had countless private and semiprivate sittings with Her for hours on end. On occasions he accompanied Her to other places such as Vinhyachal, Dunga, Dehradun, Almora. In 1961, Mataji Herself took him to Bombay and made the best possible arrangements when he underwent an operation for cancer of the rectum at the Tata Memorial Institute. She then took him to Poona to convalesce. After his next serious illness in 1968, for which he was treated at the hospital of the Benaras Hindu University, Mataji asked him

to stay in our Varanasi Ashram where he remained under Her special care for the rest of his days. He was kept under the constant medical supervision of Dr. U. N. Mathur of the Anandamayee Seva Hospital and lately also of the Medical Superintendent of this hospital, Commander Dr. Chatterji. During the last several months his health gradually deteriorated. Every possible device was employed to prolong his precious life. When, a few days before the end, he had to be transferred to our hospital, the best doctors of the city were also called for consultation. He was 89 years old when he breathed his last.

His body was taken in a decorated van in solemn procession first to his house at Sigra and then to '*Charan Pāduka*', a special part of the Manikarnika Ghat, which is reserved for very distinguished personalities only. It so came about that the cremation fire was lit exactly at midnight which had been the hour of his chief meditation (*Mahanisha* Dhyāna*) throughout his life.

After Bhaiji, it was Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj who took the initiative of acquainting the world with Mataji's divine life and teaching. The Forewords he wrote, in Bengali to Gurupriya Devi's "*Ma Anandamayi*" and in English to "*Matri Vani*," as well as his Introduction to '*Mother as Seen*

by Her Devotees" (a book compiled by him) bear witness to his profound understanding of Mataji's true being and to his boundless veneration for Her. He was indeed the dynamic force behind the publications of the Anandamayee Sangha. We owe him an immense debt of gratitude for the guidance and help he extended to us unstintingly for many years.

He may well be called the father of this journal. It was he who named it "Ānanda Vārtā." He actually was its Editor-in-Chief. He chose the conversations with Ma to be published and himself wrote elaborate commentaries on Mataji's sayings, calling them "Amar Vani" (Immortal Words). They subsequently appeared in book form together with his commentaries, in Bengali, Hindi and Gujerati.¹) As long as his health permitted he contributed an article in Bengali that was translated also into Hindi, to every single issue of the quarterly. For several years no article was included in "Ānanda Vārtā" in any of its three languages without his approval. If the English translation of Mataji's words does justice to the original, it is solely the merit of this great seer and savant. Not only did he check and correct every passage, he also for years took infinite trouble to train the

1. The English translation (without his commentaries) bears the title "Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma."

translator so effectively that the standard could be kept up when his help was not available anymore.

We find no words to express our profound grief over the departure of this wonderful and irreplaceable human being. The heritage of the illuminating writings he has left us and the example of his immaculate life of dedication to the Divine, will inspire seekers after Truth for ages to come.

— : o : —

“What is really needed is to feel that She (Ma Anandamayi) is Mother and we are Her children and that as mere children we cannot be expected to know Her as She is but only as She shows Herself to us in response to our crayings. It really becomes us to behave as infants crying out in the night and invoking Mother with an inarticulate language for Her actual descent and benediction.”

Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj



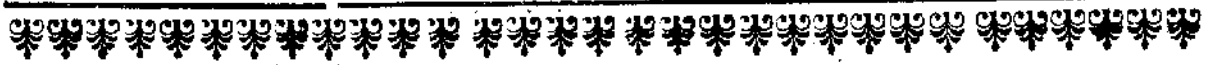
Ānanda Vārtā



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[No. 3



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

Mātri Vāni

Within the realm of birth and death (*samsāra*)—the world of individuals (*jivā-jagat*)—many human beings have indeed to undergo all kinds of suffering. Yet, all this is but God's dispensation—part of His play. Try to remember : "It is He Who has come in these various shapes and guises." Pray : "Grant me patience, endurance." If

the mind ever abides in the atmosphere of the Divine the path to Self-realization becomes easy. Work with your hands, do japa in your mind and speak only when necessary.

* * *

To the limit of your power try to keep your heart and mind plunged in japa and meditation. Body and mind should as much as ever possible be kept in an atmosphere of Reality (*satparivesh*), engrossed in actions directed towards Truth (*satkriyā*). A traveller must forge ahead with great velocity to accomplish his pilgrimage. Whether you feel inclined or not, constantly sustain japa or meditation or remembrance (of God).

* * *

Do what the Lord makes you do. At an auspicious moment He will surely shower His grace on you. With single-minded devotion remain pledged to your spiritual practice. Often the Guru prescribes some *kriyā* (spiritual exercise) to make the disciple competent. Vigilantly look out for the auspicious moment. To receive the touch that will direct you Godward is obviously your aim. So long as no response is felt, continue your own efforts so as to become worthy and to receive a response.

* * *

Those who are intent on real and lasting intoxication do not require artificial intoxicants. Indulging in false things will only increase falsity for everything is indeed in-

finite. Those who desire the truly genuine Thing proceed of themselves with great intensity so as to advance in their sādhana.

* * *

The Ātmā of this body (Mā) is everybody's Ātmā—that somebody is not Ma's very own is impossible.

* * *

In order that the lives of aspirants who are here (in the Ashram) for the realization of God or Truth, may become well regulated and ideal ; if anyone wishes to present them with clothes, money or other goods, they should straight-away tell him : "We are forbidden to accept anything in this manner, the aim of our lives being to receive solely God's *prasāda* and nothing else."

* * *

Karma, accumulated for ages and ages, sins and desires, are wiped out by God's sacred name. Just as lighting a lamp illumines a cave that has been in darkness for centuries, even so the gloom of numberless births is annihilated by the power of a divine name.

—

Mātri Satsang

(II)

(Translated from Bengali)

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

New Delhi, November 26th, 1955.

In course of conversation Mataji pointed towards all present and said : "Everyone who has come here is my father or mother. Sometimes this little girl asks you to try and practise *Samyam* (self-restraint) for eight days or at least for one day a month. The idea of observing such a week of collective *Samyam Vrata* first occurred to Jogibhai (Sri Durga Singh, Raja of Solan, M. P.). He felt that once a year at least a *Samyam Saptah* should be held. Since then the *Samyam Mahavrata* has become a regular yearly function."

Question : One of the Mahātmās said that it is not necessary to restrain the mind in order to achieve *dhyāna*, *dhāraṇa* and *samādhi*.¹ Others declare that the mind should be restrained. Which is correct ?

Mataji : *Bābā*² has said it is not necessary to restrain the mind. Thou alone art manifest in every shape

1. Retention of the object of contemplation before the mind's eye is called *dhāraṇa*, when the stream of attention is broken up (like drops of water). When the stream is constant (like the flowing of oil), it is called *dhyāna*. When the distinction between the meditator and the object of meditation ceases to exist, it is called *samādhi*.

2. *Bābā* Father.

and appearance. Each person has a different path. What *Bābā* has said is correct. A mother gives to each child what he is able to digest. (Mataji laughs while saying :) Have I made myself clear? The mother says to the child: "Whatever you are capable of assimilating that exactly I have given you." The mind is like a child. Give it pure food, i.e. *satsang*. This is why *Bābā* has said: "Do not restrain the mind-child."

Swatantranandaji: Just as a child crawls to his mother and does not listen even if he is forbidden to do so.

Mataji: Where does he go? Watch attentively. Does your statement hold good? The mother doles out food in accordance with the child's capacity for digestion.

Question: Śivāji burnt *Madan*¹⁾ to ashes, while Sri Krishna vanquished him by bringing him under his control. Which is the correct method?

Mataji: Both methods are correct. After all, they are merely methods; so you have yourself stated. There are as many paths as there are sages. Every sect advocates a different path. All this I have heard from your lips. The path indicated by one's own Guru is the straight and simple road.

Question: Why do we come here for the *Samyam Saptah*?

Mataji: Each of you have come of your own accord. Nobody has dragged you here on a halter. Each one is

1) *Madan* Cupid.

himself sitting on his own seat in his own place. Why? Because full revelation has not yet occurred; for this reason he is sitting here so that complete revelation may come about. One way is faithfully serving one's own Lord and another way, to be poised in one's own Self, that is to say, in the *Ātmā*. Therefore endeavour to realize the *ānanda* (bliss) which is your very nature. Be immersed in your own play. You are not satisfied with His manifestation as name and form*, this is why you have come here. This body always repeats: "Oh Lord, all these men and women are expressions of Thy own presence. All are Thy own *vigrahas*. ** Exert yourselves to discover your own Self."

At this juncture a devotee exclaimed: "I come here only to see Mataji!" On hearing this, everybody burst out laughing. But Mataji said: "There is only one Brahman, no other. The *Ātmā* is whole and complete in itself. As long as this perfection is not realized, so long will a sense of want persist. Behold the nature of His *vigraha*, all the time one wishes that this *ānanda* should continue for ever. Why? Is it not your very own? It pervades the whole universe. It is God Himself. He Himself is staging a play with Himself alone. You may speak of *darsana*, whatever you may say, it is all the same.

* The world is His manifestation as name and form.

** *Vigraha* Concrete External Presence as Form.

Question : What is the aim ?

Mataji : Full, integral Knowledge is the goal. Just as it lies in the nature of the individual to desire to be very rich. You have come here to become established in your real, essential Nature. You listen, join in satsang and choose your own path. Why do all these pilgrims on the road of Immortality come here ? To give *darśana*. To whom ? They themselves to their own selves.

Question : What exactly is *samyam* ? If the palate craves for *rasagollas**, should we satisfy it ?

Mataji : This kind of attitude will not help you at all.

Swatantranandaji : It is written in Yoga Vaśiṣṭha....

But at once Mataji interrupted, saying : "It lies in the nature of this body not to comment at all times on what mahātmās have said. I am referring to your own words : if you do not adopt this line you will be incomplete. Until and unless there is a comprehensive knowledge of all lines of approach, wholeness cannot be achieved.

Question : Does Mataji cause us to speak ?

Mataji : I grant your point. How wonderful is God's kingdom ! Just as "infinite" means "in-(not) finite", so the Brahman is one without a second. One single seed contains innumerable trees, infinite in variety, in growth, in appearance. Everything is contained in everything. Bābā has stated that this kind of thinking

* *Rasagolla* A famous Bengali sweetmeat.

also points to a path. How should one control the sensory organs? Who has created them? For instance—the idea not to restrain the mind is derived from the interplay of the senses. One way is to strictly restrain the mind. A certain *krtyā* exists to stop the mind. Another way is not to interfere with its simple, natural movement. If you continue to watch the mind as an impartial spectator it will not stop but become concentrated; just as seeds can emanate from the root of a tree as well as from any of its parts. Make the mind one-pointed. Watch where your mind goes. If you continue to do this, just as Bābā has said, your mind will become concentrated and will not indulge in frivolous thoughts. Keep an eye on the mind-child. This does not mean just paying cursory attention. If you observe your mind with full concentration, then there is hope that this will eventually lead you towards your ultimate Goal.

Question : When I sit down to meditate, all the jumbled concoction of thoughts inside me comes to the surface. What am I to do ?

Mataji : You sit down with the jumbled concoction in your thoughts, don't you? If you sit and keep on watching as an impartial spectator, then it is the natural tendency to become calm. If you do not attain to this stillness, you remain within the cycle of birth and death, of coming and going. Continue to watch as a silent witness.

Swatantranandaji : A lunatic killed a man. The magistrate who was dealing with the case, asked : "Who committed the murder ? Who witnessed it ?" The insane man burst out : "When I was myself being attacked, how could I see what others were doing ?"

Mataji : Here something has to be pointed out : Different persons view things differently depending on what they have experienced.

Questioner : If you take sides with Yoga Vaśiṣṭha or the Mahātmā who has just spoken, then this is another matter.

Mataji : Why do you raise this point ? Something else may also be said : Suppose your mind is getting depressed. You may watch where your mind is leading you. Just as you have acknowledged the possibility of letting the mind have its own way a little and of restraining it a little, so you should also accept that the mind may be completely controlled. Once Gopal Thakur spoke to this effect and this body also said the same.

Father, if you permit, I shall tell you a story. If you say 'no', I shall not do so.

When this body was in Bajitpur, one day a severe cyclone broke out. Bholanath had taken his family (Ma) there. However, there was no family life because the play of *sādhana* started. But I am now going to tell you quite an ordinary story. In the courtyard there were weeds which when removed would grow again. Until

the cyclone occurred, the courtyard adjoining the house was walled in by thick mats. These were all blown down by the storm and remained lying over the open yard for a number of days. When after some time this body took up the mats, not a single weed was to be seen. On noticing this, this body spread all the old mats over the ground and so the weeds were automatically destroyed ; no need to use any spade. All the neighbours thereupon raised a hue and cry. "How is it that her yard has become so clean ?" It was simply because the yard was covered. Thereafter all of them followed suit. By hiding and suppressing your desires and passions continuously, they also die at some stage.

Thus there are two ways : one is not to restrain the mind and the other, to control it. Both are correct. One is not better than the other, whichever method appeals to one may be adopted. Whatever anyone affirms from his own level is correct for him. On reaching the ultimate state all roads are seen to be equal. I alone exist. The path is also you yourself. This holds good when speaking of different paths. For instance, somebody was doing Gopal Puja and another image of Gopalji belonging to a *sannyāsi* happened to be nearby. Once the householder's Gopal said to him : "The *sannyāsi*'s Gopal has touched me, so I could not take my food." Do you understand ? They were worshipping with a sense of separateness. He did not look upon the other Gopal as his own and this created a boundary. What is required is an all-

comprehensive path. Everyone should proceed along the road indicated by his Guru. All names, all attributes are Thine. At the same time Thou art without name and form, just like water and ice. There is nothing but water in ice. Similarly, He who is formless also assumes various forms.

November 27th, 1955.

Question : Is God attained by His mercy or by man's own efforts (*Puruṣārtha**) ?

Mataji : What do you yourself believe ?

Questioner : Is He then realized by His mercy ?

Mataji : Effort directed towards the realization of the Supreme Being alone may be called *Puruṣārtha**.

Question : Nobody desires sorrow--so why does it arise ?

Mataji : Listen, father! If you are in a state in which sorrow arises, it is natural for it to come. In God's creation all kinds of things happen. From the sense of duality originates sorrow as well as conflict (*dvandva*) which is due to blindness (*andha*). You have got something which I do not possess. "You" and "I"--from this separation arises conflict and blindness (ignorance) and in blindness there is always the danger of stumbling and coming to grief.

Question : Who has created this duality ? Has He Himself become divided into two ?

Mataji : If He was one--why--even now there exists only the one single Being. But you perceive duality by

* *Puruṣārtha* Object of human pursuit, also self-exertion.

remaining in a state where sorrow arises. If there are not "two", how can there be sorrow? The ego is the real cause of suffering.

Question : From where has egotism come? How can misery be relieved by searching for Him?

Mataji : Now you have touched upon the root of the problem. Once you get to know Him, there can be no more suffering. He Himself is, He and no other.

Question : Suppose someone strikes us with a stick, should we consider that it is God who is belabouring us?

Mataji : Who strikes whom? The stick only falls on the ego—in order to reduce it. God is merciful, very merciful. He has to be revealed and the ego has to cease. He alone IS.—I AM, I and no other. If you can keep up the contemplation : "I alone AM", then the ego may cease to exist. He is, He and no other. "Neti, neti, not this, not this", is also a spiritual practice. Who am I? To realize this is the only purpose worthy of human exertion, the supreme object of life. Call out : "Thou, Thou only, oh Lord!" and surrender everything at His feet, die, that is to say, let what is mortal die—namely the senses and passions. Or sink the "Thou" in the "I". There is yet another approach : birthless BEING, that is to say, birth (creation) has not occurred at all. Who causes suffering to whom? There is only one Brahman without a second. Here there is no question of any activity. He alone IS, the One Ātmā. Burn away your desires and passions

by the fire of discrimination and renunciation (*vairāgya*) or melt them by the flood of your devotion. In order to accomplish this melting process, seek the company of other pilgrims. You have not taught me any learning, so I speak in this higgledy-piggledy fashion. Resort to satsang, take refuge in mahātmās, that is to say, sit under a tree. Who is a tree? What does a tree do? The tree never invites anybody neither does it chase anyone away. It is its nature to give shelter and shade. Thereafter it gives its own self away, i. e. it bestows its fruit. Go and seek the shelter of mahātmās.

Question : How will I know what kind of mahātmās they are ?

Mataji : If someone is a real mahātmā this will be discernible just like a lamp which is lit. If the mahātmā does not allow himself to be recognized, then nobody can discover him. Where there is fire there is bound to be a display of fire. If he is a true mahātmā it just cannot happen that this does not become apparent. By the clemency of the mahātmā he is recognized. If we keenly desire to have *darśana* of a mahātmā then such a desire will also lead to its fulfilment.

Question : It is said that mahātmās roam about appearing childlike, witless or impish. How will I recognize them ?

Mataji : You have yourself answered your question !

Question : Then who is a true mahātmā ?

Mataji : He who is great (*mahān*) in all respects is a mahātmā.

Question : Why then do they remain hidden ?

Mataji : It is their nature to shine forth at all times. They do not hide themselves. But you lie hidden, hence this is how it appears to you. Incidentally, why does God hide Himself ? He conceals Himself so that you may search and discover Him. If gradually you study about Him, if you reflect on Him more and more—just as it is the inherent quality of fire to burn and of ice to cool, so does the constant contemplation of God ultimately lead to His revelation. Cultivate satsang, read sacred books; whether you engage in worship or study, continue to spend all your time wrapped up in Him. By doing so, you will reach a stage in which His presence will no longer remain secret. If you seek God in all sincerity, He cannot but reveal Himself to you.

Question : Sometimes one is overcome by despair.

Mataji : You must always keep your hopes alive ; never give up seeking. Feel : “Krishna, Durga, Ma—they are all my very own and I am theirs.” It is man’s essential nature that he cannot desist from searching, he cannot help wanting to discover his own real Self. If he realizes that it is his *own* Self he is looking for, then his search will become spontaneous. It is natural that delight and bliss should be experienced in the process. It is a feature of God’s play that when something has been lost one tries to recover it and

eventually it is found again. If you know that something belongs to you then the desire to possess it is bound to arise. The sense of want is nothing but the desire to search for one's own Self and to realize it. This body does not deliver lectures but converses with its fathers, mothers and friends. Father, smallness begets suffering. Why smallness? You are THAT itself; or from a different point of view "The Lord is mine and I am His serf"...just as Mahabir * said: "Seen from one angle Ram and I are one from another, Ram is the whole and I am a part of Him; from a third angle, Ram is my Master and I am His servant." First one learns to be a true server (*dās bhāva*) then, when the *ātma* stands revealed, infinitude is realized. As long as there is no enlightenment on this line, keep on searching. To be a seeker, to aspire to Self-realization is man's fundamental nature.

What is the object of acquiring wealth? To enjoy it. You study in order to be able to accumulate wealth, you gain it and feel happy. To fulfil his want is man's nature—therefore, he must realize his Self. The desire to remain in the realm of birth and rebirth is the certain road to death. Why don't you move towards Immortality? Man is constantly in a state of want. So long as you keep on wanting, you will never escape from the cycle of birth and death. Do not be a traveller on this road. "Now I shall become a pilgrim on the path of Immortality;" let this be your firm resolve. To observe *Samyam* means pursu-

* Hanumān in the Rāmāyaṇa.

ing the path of Immortality in order to realize one's own Self. Why are you so absorbed in the world, in eating and drinking and experiencing pleasure and pain? In this realm there is nothing but sorrow and misery; supreme bliss can never be attained. Why should you deny God and embrace death? This body constantly reminds you: "Become a traveller towards Immortality." If you wish to avoid taking a "return ticket," take the road of Immortality.

Questioner : I have one question.

Mataji : Do you mean to say all your questions have been solved and only one now remains?

Questioner : I feel that attending to my duty towards my family is an impediment to worshipping God and similarly to sustain devotion to God creates obstacles in performing one's work for the family.

Mataji : Well, this body always speaks in a higgledy-piggledy manner. The *mahātmās* are advising you again and again that, wherever you may be, try to regard everyone and everything as manifestations of the Supreme Being. Thus, who is your little son? Think of him as an incarnation of Gopal. "In every form it is Thou, oh Lord, that dost appear! In every person and in the impersonal art Thou alone." Become His servitor, become the manager in the house of the Lord. Do all your work as before, only do it in a spirit of service. You earn and you may enjoy the fruit of your labours. In the Supreme State, which is in-

comparable, there is no question of duality, there is ONE. In inaction and activity, in death and in life, in motion and stability, it is He alone that exists. To realise Him means to become one with Him. This body says: "Think of THAT in everyone." Serve your sons as the child Krishna, your daughters as *Kumari** and your husband as the Supreme Lord. If you serve THAT in everyone then THAT will by its nature become revealed. Talking about Him is the only topic worth the while, all the rest is futile and painful: Where Rama is there is rest and ease; where Rama is not—discomfort and disease.

—

* *Kumāri* The eternal immaaculate Virgin, divine by nature. *Kumari* is the Mother of the entire creation.

From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the last issue.)

(January-May 1939.)

Mataji had very few companions with Her, while travelling in Gujrat: Ruma Devi and Abhaya, and at times Sadhan Brahmachari. But, as was only to be expected, it took just a short while for people to come to know that She was in town and to gather at whatever place She would stay. She put up at the Rambagh Dharmaśāla in Dakore. Didi was sent away by Mataji to see to the affairs of the Kanya Ashram, since it was not proper to neglect a project after initiating it. Mataji knew that Didi's naive faith in all people doing their utmost to carry out any work which was started in Mataji's name, was not justified. Didi was obedient to Mataji's suggestions regarding her own responsibilities for the institution she had started, but could not be convinced by Ma or by anybody else that she (Didi) could serve any good purpose anywhere, away from Mataji. However, with a heavy heart, she left, in order to be with the girls for a little while at Allahabad where Kanya Ashram had been accommodated in a garden-house near Daryaganj.

Mataji passed through Baroda and Ratlam and came to Mathura. The people who were most concerned about Her whereabouts and welfare lost contact with Her

after Mathura. Sadhanda and Abhaya had both been sent away and they wrote to the dismayed devotees that Mataji had expressed Her wish to remain incognito for some time. There was nothing for them to do but to abide in patience till Mataji should have the *kheyāla* to return into their midst again.

Mataji, it transpired later, had travelled right across North India and visited Navadweep, accompanied by Ruma Devi only. For about thirteen days they lived on a boat on the Ganges, belonging to a man called Ramraj. He was at first a little wary of his unusual passengers. Unobtrusively he would keep watch over their activities. Soon word travelled regarding the presence of a striking lady and her companion, on a boat on the Ganges. The local Police Station sent a constable to make enquiries about these strange visitors. Ramraj had a long talk with the constable. He said that, as far as he could see, Mataji was no ordinary human being but surely a devi. The constable himself was likewise impressed, and enjoining on the boatman to look after his passengers carefully, went away.

During the day the boat was rowed away from the crowded shore and during the night it was brought back again to the riverside. Ramraj and his fellow boatmen became self-constituted guards and care-takers of Mataji. This was not at all unusual for Her. It can be seen very easily that wherever She goes, She evokes this response of care and concern in people. It is not necessary for Her to speak. As a matter of fact not many people could understand Hindi in Gujrat, where She had travelled extensively.

No matter where She goes, people are irresistibly drawn to Her as if She were the most cherished person and they feel impelled to do their best for Her. And so it was with the simple men who plied boats on the Ganges for a living.

Abhaya managed to find his way back to Mataji and obtained Her permission to inform other devotees about Her whereabouts. Within a day or two a crowd collected at Navadweep. The grateful devotees felicitated Ramraj on his good fortune and the latter received so many gifts as would be beyond his wildest imagination.

By the end of February Mataji left Navadweep to go to Puri. From there She proceeded to Deoghar via Calcutta and then, on March 5th to Banaras, where She stayed at Hari's Dharmaśāla this time, but only for a day. On March 6th She arrived at Vindiyachal. Didi, who was all this while waiting impatiently for permission to join Mataji again was able to do so now.

Didi was troubled by practical matters concerning the arrangements to be made at the various ashrams. The inmates eagerly awaited some definitive instructions from Mataji regarding their daily life. They were not prepared psychologically to obey any other authority. Didi was always put in a quandary over this matter because nobody had relegated any authority to any one person and everyone was, more or less, free to do as he or she liked. In general this worked quite well but at times some readjustments had to be made. Didi worked on the principle that everything should be brought to the notice of Mataji in order that Her kheyāla may be evoked. In this connection, it will be

recalled that Bhaiji had a totally different approach. He had never thought of troubling Mataji with details of practical matters. Didi, on the other hand, could not imagine any issue to be too trivial for Mataji. In this instance, to Didi's appeals for some mandatory advice, Mataji answered, "I have only one thing to say : All of you together, in conformity with each other, should strive for your spiritual well-being. You, who are looking for that great Unity, can you not be united in your search for it ?"

At Vindhyachal, visitors came from Banaras, Allahabad, and the nearest town Mirzapur. Sitting among a group of visitors one day, Mataji said : "Strive for Immortality."

Somebody remarked, "It is difficult to know which is the true path." Mataji rejoined : "If you sit with all doors and windows closed, how can you see the path ? Open the door and step out, the path will become visible. Once you set out, you will meet other wayfarers, who will advise and guide you as to the path. Your job is to muster whatever strength you have to get underway—thereafter help is assured." Another person raised the question of will and grace.

Mataji said, "Yes, it is true that there is naught else but grace, but one has to bring oneself to the realization that this is so. In fact, one has no independent power to go counter to the flow of grace. What I say is that a little effort is required to reach the current, as it were. Supposing you are going to the river for a swim. First you will have to walk to the river. Secondly you will have to swim

out to the current. Once there, you will find that the current is taking you up that you have nothing further to do but to relax and float with it. It is also true that the initial effort that is required of you is possible only because of the gift of the will in you. It is only right that you should make proper use of this gift which you know as your will."

One day a group of women came to see Mataji. Mataji greeted them in the manner of old friends renewing acquaintance. They did not immediately perceive Mataji's intention and said that they had not seen Her before and that this was their first visit to the ashram. Mataji expressed great surprise, "How is this : You have forgotten me! Forgetfulness creates difficulties, you know. When you are in possession of something and forget about it, much hardship is caused in looking around for it when the need for it arises."

The women then caught the trend of Mataji's talk and in answer to Her further question : "What family do you have? One of them answered, "We have nobody but you."

"Then you should never go away and leave me."

In a more serious mood, Mataji said, "Look, will you do something for me? Every day take some leave from your housework and devote it to acquiring peace. Even the Government gives one day's holiday a week from work. Break the routine of housework daily for a little while to remember His name. This will be my sustenance too."

Mataji left Vindychal soon enough and passing through Banaras again, reached Delhi on March 25th. The devotees received Her at the Railway Station and escorted Her to the new Ashram in the city.

This visit was of specially great moment to the people of Delhi, because Mataji had not been there since the purchase of a building, which was to be the Ashram for the time being.

Crowds began to assemble. The women left their household duties to come to the Ashram. The men came from their offices as soon as they could. Delhi, like Dacca had a great tradition of kirtan, because the nucleus of the party of devotees, in general, belonged to the *Harisābha*. This was the time for *Vasanti Pūjā* as well. Elaborate arrangements for puja, kirtan and other festivities were made. Mataji's presense enhanced the joyous atmosphere a thousandfold.

On invitation, Mataji visited the Birla Temple and also the Valmiki Temple to participate in kirtan with the Harijans. One day, Dr. J. K. Sen, one of the elders of the group of devotees took Her to visit a friend, who was a renowned kaviraj, (an authority on Indian medicine). After a little conversation, the Kaviraj asked Mataji. "What proof is there that God is?"

"What proof is there that you are?"

"Simple. I perceive that I am."

"Who is this 'I'?"

“Ma, I do not wish to engage in a philosophical discussion. I want to know from *you* plainly and simply if God is a reality.”

Mataji, entering into the spirit of the question, answered emphatically, “God is a reality just as you are to yourself.”

The Kaviraj professed himself happy and satisfied with this answer.

Mataji’s visit to Delhi drew to a close. In Her own inimitable fashion She gently opposed the countless pleas for staying longer. The people of Delhi bade Her sad farewells even while the devotees of Dehra Dun were preparing to welcome Her in their midst. This was the inevitable pattern of Mataji’s ceaseless movements. The various towns had come to experience the thrill of delight at the prospect of Her visit and also the dejection which followed Her departure.

Mataji arrived in Dehra Dun on April 9th. An important event took place on April 18th. Didima was initiated into the order of *sannyāsa* by Sri Mangal Giri Maharaj of Kankhal in Hardwar.

For long Didima had expressed her sole desire to be allowed to accompany Mataji on Her travels. She had no other wish but to be with Mataji. Although, her youngest son Makhan had been married recently, she could not be persuaded to take up residence with him and his wife so that she could be comfortable and looked after properly. Since her husband’s death, she considered herself as having

discharged fully her obligations to her family and ready to take up the life of an ascetic. Not that she thought out the matter in this way or that her whole life had not been one of self-sacrifice, discipline and fortitude. The actual fact was, that she wanted to be with Mataji and did not count the cost of the hardships of incessant travel. On one occasion Mataji had mentioned that in general Her constant companions were renunciates; Didima found no difficulty at all in accepting this as a prerequisite for this privilege. All those who have known Didima will readily understand that the ritualistic transformation was a formal recognition of her whole way of life. She always had been the very personification of other-worldliness. It can be said that in her own characteristic gentle way, she brought grace and dignity to the order of asceticism.

For a woman to take *samnyāsa*, however, is not at all usual. An opportunity presented itself for this rather rare event when the very much revered and renowned Mangala Giri Maharaj of Sri Bhola Giri Ashram agreed to initiate Didima into *samnyāsa*. The holy man was, in general, a recluse and did not encourage random visitors to his Ashram. Mataji, however, had always been a privileged and welcome guest. It may be said that Mangala Giri Maharaj had the distinction of according due recognition and honour to Mataji at a time when She was yet to be known in ascetic circles.

A crowd assembled in Kankhal at Giriji's Ashram for the ceremony. In the early hours of the morning, after a night's vigil, Didima was initiated into the ascetic order

and given the ochre robes of the *sannyāsi*. Her new name was Sri Muktananda Giri.

Mataji said, "You always say that I never give you any advice, as I do to others regarding spiritual well-being. Have I not spoken to you now in asking this of you? It is indeed a great good fortune for anyone to attain freedom to devote himself wholly to Self-realization."

After a few days, Mataji, accompanied by a small party, started for Uttarkashi on May 3rd. The mountain-path was long and arduous, being used only by pilgrims and ascetics. Covering the distance in slow marches they arrived at Uttarkashi on May 7th. In addition to Didi and Akhandanandaji there were Ruma Devi, Abhaya, Keshava Bhai (as he is known now), Kanu, Sisir, and Kamalakanta. This being the time of Mataji's birthday, they managed somehow to celebrate the auspicious occasion. The simplicity of the pūjā performed by Didi was more than made up by the grandeur of the Himalayan scenery.

In Uttarkashi Mataji acquired a following of a bunch of school children. They spent their free time with Her, a few venturing to engage in conversations, the rest just smiling coyly. Mataji asked if they would have Her as their friend. This being eagerly accepted, they were asked if they would do what their friend might ask of them. This also being granted, Mataji told them about Her five-point programme for children :

(i) To remember God every morning and then pray to him to make one a good boy or girl; (ii) to obey one's parents, (iii) to be truthful; (iv) to study well, (v) in case

the above four were carried out, to feel free to play and to be a little naughty if one were so inclined.

The children laughed with Her and promised to remember Her words.

Abhaya asked Didi one day, whether She had ever seen Mataji doze off at any time? Didi, not uncharacteristically, had never given this matter a thought, and answered with growing amazement: You know, Abhaya, I never have—for the matter of that, nobody has ever seen Ma overcome by sleep. Even when She would be sitting for more than twelve hours at a stretch, as so frequently happened in Dacca, we never saw Her dozing or even fatigued. This was the main reason why the fact that Ma was sitting for such long hours, went unnoticed. On the other hand, I must say that whenever I happen to doze off while sitting in a satsang, I wake up with a jerk to find Ma's eyes on me! This happens without exception. When I am quite alert and listening to kirtan or discourses, I hope that Ma may notice what an intelligent interest I am taking in the proceedings; but no, as soon as my eyes begin to close, I find Her gazing at me steadily!"

Mataji joined in the general laughter and said, "You see, her thoughts are always directed here (towards Ma); no matter what she is doing or to whom she is talking, her thoughts remain one-pointed; but when she doses off this thread is broken and my *kheyāla* is drawn to her."

After a few days it was decided to attempt the hard climb to Gangotri (10,000 ft), the visible source of the holy

river Ganges. Starting on May 12th and ascending slowly the hazardous mountain path, they arrived at Gangotri in the evening of May 16th. Here they were pleased to find Swami Paramanandaji, who had met Mataji previously, and who now was happy to be able to be of considerable service to the party. Paramanandaji had been living in Gangotri for the past few years and was familiar with local conditions. He dissuaded Abhay and others from attempting the further climb to Gomukh, the site of the cave out of which the Ganges is seen to emerge. Gomukh is considered to be the end of the journey because nobody can penetrate any further into the cave. It seemed that the usually difficult climb had been made even harder by frequent avalanches. The project was therefore abandoned.

By order of the Maharaja of Tehri-Garhwal, no householders were allowed to stay in Gangotri. The few log-huts were occupied by ascetics and pilgrims. During the winter, the hard core of inhabitants had to descend to Uttarkashi. This is how Paramanandaji spent 6/7 years of his life in these places.

Mataji and Her companions stayed at Gangotri for three days in the dharamśāla for pilgrims and then returned to Uttarkashi on May 23rd.

Everyone was in need of rest, so they welcomed the respite from mountaineering and the prospect of enjoying for a few days the wonderful scenic beauty of the Himalayas.

Mataji had a visitor even in this remote place. Bankey Bihari, a lawyer from Allahabad, came to Uttarkashi in the

hope of spending a few days with Her. He said one day, "One of my European friends, who makes a practice of visiting mahātmās, was saying to me, 'Everyone that I have come across seems to have something characteristically his own to say. But Mataji's very special characteristic seems just Her radiant smile.'"

On another occasion, but somewhat in the same context, Abhaya said to Mataji in a mood of dissatisfaction, "It would have been much better if you were an individual (*jīvā*) like us. Then you would be able to understand our misery, and not be amused at our predicament. Sri Paramhamsadeva and Sri Chaitanyadeva were much better than you: They commiserated with the sorrows of men."

Mataji entered into the spirit of Abhay's disgruntled accusation, saying, "You can't expect everyone to be the same! There are infinite manifestations of the infinite, there has to be better and worse!"

Abhaya persisted, "If we cannot receive anything from you, in what way should you be called higher than us?"

"Who says I am higher? Just because you make me sit on a cot while you are sitting on the floor? I am just like one of you."

Abhaya was silenced for the time being. Mataji, however, in effect answered his question a little later by saying, "There is no cause for anxiety at all. Because all of you exercise your will in worldly affairs, I ask you to make an effort toward Self-knowledge. You have a sense

of obligation which prevents you from being negligent or unmindful of your duties; so I enjoin on you not to be indifferent towards that which is of ultimate importance. However, it goes without saying that nothing is possible without God's grace. It is somewhat like, and yet unlike, applying for a job. You cannot hope to be considered unless you apply. But there is no certainty of getting the job either. One must make an application and then await results. The difference is that no effort is futile in the sphere of grace. Let me tell you there is no cause for despair. Always remind yourself that success is assured. Never allow yourself to think to the contrary. Despondency and doubt are uncalled for. Pursue your goal with the greatest optimism you can command. I tell you, it is as I say."

These words of reassurance were most welcome to the listeners.

(*To be continued*)

Corrigenda.

We wish to apologize for two printing errors that occurred in the last issue, which pervert the meaning.

The footnote on p. 126 should read : "Mataji never gives instructions on the line of *Vāma Marga*." (not *Nāma Marge* !). P. 127, line 4 should be :

"The sādḥaka is not required to mould himself....."
The word "not" was left out.

Sri Anandamayi Ma, my Guru

By

Srimoni (Monique Peace)

A warm Sunday afternoon in July, 1969. I burst out : "I shall go to India !" The family gathered under the trees, paid little attention to this solemn declaration. A few simply laughed. They had a right to. A penniless yoga teacher was I. It seemed that I would remain so forever.

Three years of intensive training in Raja, Karma and Bhakti Yoga with Swami Vishnudevananda had pulled the trigger on the gun of my awareness and now the bullet that was travelling fast had suddenly hit the target : MA ANANDAMAYI, as described by Arnaud Desjardins in his book, "Ashrams".

I was enquiring from everyone coming back from India : "Have you met Anandamayi Ma, the great yogini ?" always expecting an extraordinary reaction to my question. I usually received the reply, "Well, we visited Varanasi, the Taj Mahal, Ajanta; but no, we did not meet that lady." Some other times, the answer would be, "Yes". Then my eyes would widen to the size of full moons : "How is She ?, Does She talk ? Does She laugh ?, What did She say to you ?" They were bombarded with questions and would reply, "I saw her for just a little while; we sat at her feet and she was silent. They say she is a great saint." That was

not what I wanted to hear ! But still, I would stare at that person and think, "Her eyes have beheld Ma."

Like Ulysses, the only way to prevent my answering the call of the siren, would have been to tie me very strongly to the ship of life. But in this case, the siren was divine, and no ties would be strong enough to bind Her child. Let's go back to that afternoon in July when I sat on my bed pondering; "I could work as a secretary five days a week, be a sales girl in a department store, work nights and weekends for a period of six months. Mid February would be the date of my departure."

Only once had I been out of Canada and that was to New York with Swami Vishnudevananda and another teacher to give a lecture on yoga and a demonstration. We had travelled by car and stayed there for five days. That was the extent of my travels. Nowadays going to India is very common. Back in 1966 it was not so, as yoga and meditation were just beginning to spread in America.

Inside of me it was like a tornado. It is said, "When the disciple is ready, the master appears." But now, all this seemed so unreal; I felt very much alone and the whole venture so far away."

There is a huge snow storm in Canada, the streets are very icy, the wind blowing ferociously, and I am hurrying down town to the Airline office. I have exactly \$1,200 in my hands. "A return ticket to New Delhi, India, please." I can still re-live that moment. I was thrilled beyond any possible description. It is January and days on the calendar

are crossed out with pencil marks. The injections for yellow fever, typhus, etc. cause a big stress and high fever.

At lunch time my mother always played the *bhajan* record and we meditated for half an hour before my going back to the office. My mother is also a yoga teacher, sharing the same aspirations. Her understanding and encouragement are an immense source of strength. My father has an aura of kindness which attracts all who come in contact with him. "One is reborn in a house of yogis if serious *sādhana* has been performed in a previous life." A hopeful thought.

It is getting very close to the date of departure, and really, so many different opinions have I heard, that I don't know exactly what to expect in India. Rishikesh, the Himalayas, Benares, Ramdas, Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo; those magic words read and dreamed about for years will now become a reality. To visit the ashrams mentioned in Desjardins' book is more or less my itinerary. Anandamayi Ma seems more like a figment of the imagination than a reality. Having read Yogananda's description of Ma has increased the mystery surrounding Her. All the others, yes, I agree they are great saints and yogis, but Ma..... She is so entirely unique.

February 13th, 1967, 6 a. m. The plane is over New Delhi. All is dark and the few passengers left are sleeping. Feeling a little scared and looking down over the stretch of lights where we shall land in ten minutes, I ask the stewardess, "Is this the city?" She has a good look at me and exclaims, "You look very scared; we are not

barbarians, you know! Are you alone?" "Yes", "Don't worry, there will be a ground stewardess to take care of you at the airport." A relative of a friend was to meet me but the confirmation had not been received before my departure. I was in the dark as to where to go. My finances were limited! Would he be there?

He was there. He dumped me at somebody's house and asked them to keep me, then disappeared. I soon found out that it was a surprise for all, as they hardly knew the fellow. To avoid further embarrassment, I moved in the afternoon to the Y. W. C. A. Curiously, being all alone in that little room I did not feel afraid to go out and get food, clothes. Most of all, I enjoyed mixing with the crowd. It seemed as if I had always lived here. I felt completely at home. India was my land, Indians, my people. The music, the languages, the packed trains and buses, people actually living out in the streets, the beautiful smile on their faces. The feeling of loneliness in the midst of a crowd did not exist here.

"I'll never go back, everything I have wanted, consciously or unconsciously, is here."

The commotion now over, the family where I had first landed asked me to stay with them, especially since Swami Vidyananda of Sivananda Ashram was their guest.

At 4 a. m. every morning, Swamiji would start playing the tamboura and sing mantras. At 5 a. m. we were admitted to his room, where we all sang bhajans for a few hours, while Swamiji played the veena. In the afternoon, at 4 p. m. there was one hour of kirtan. Every night a

satsang was held at different houses where Swamiji was invited to conduct the meeting. A puja was the climax of the evening with *prasāda* consisting of sweets. Sometimes a full meal was served on banana leaves. What more can one expect as an initiation to India ?

Later in that week, a ceremony was taking place at the local University. There I met for the first time, revered and most beloved Swami Chidananda, President of the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh. More than once, friends of mine have witnessed displays of affection from Anandamayī Ma when meeting Swamiji. I realized that evening that I was in India, the land of the unexpected. As I sat on the ground among the guests awaiting the arrival of Swami Chidananda who was the guest of honour, a man wearing nothing but a loincloth and carrying musical instruments in his hands passed in front of me. He seemed unperturbed, and I looked around for the reaction from the formally dressed assembly; but there was none. The "man" took his place in the front and sat down on the ground next to where Swamiji would sit. His face was serene; soft blue eyes and a fair complexion revealed that he was not Indian. His hair was styled in the fashion of the ancient Rishis. When Swami Chidananda walked in, the "man" started singing *stotras*.

I was introduced to Swamiji, who garlanded my neck with beautiful flowers, and returning to my place, I could not understand why some people were motioning and pointing at my neck. It was a little puzzling to see everybody remove their garland as soon as it was put around

their neck. "Those people are really very shy", I thought. The reader will understand by now that one has to remove the flowers as a mark of humility. That wonderful yogi, chanting the stotras, was Swami Karunananda of Sivananda Ashram, with whom I would later spend many hours discussing yoga.

Hardwar; the train pulls into the station. "Mumphali", yells the peanut boy, "Chae Memsahib?" asks the tea man. Looking left and right through the windows of the taxi taking me to Rishikesh, I feel immense peace. I've made it.

At Sivananda Ashram I become deeply involved in their activities. Early morning meditation and satsang, afternoons spent in learning kirtans, and evenings in the Meditation Hall for lectures and Satsang. Not caring for food, which is in any case a problem for a foreigner, I skipped most of the meals. The inevitable happened. I remember one night coming back to my room after satsang and being so hungry that I felt like eating the big blue box of soap on my table. Instead I swallowed three green bananas and drank a coke. A bad indigestion made a few lady Swamis come to my help, suggesting how to equip myself in order to eat properly.

The headquarters of our Yoga Ashram in Canada is Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh, and we all plan to visit it and live there during our training. Our Raja yoga teacher, Swami Vishnudevananda, is a disciple of Swami Sivananda Maharaj.

"Ma is in Dehra Dun." My legs were failing, and I murmured, "Am I really going to meet Her at last, is She

really there?" My thoughts were running wild. "You have to condition yourself this morning, we are going to meet a great saint", said Malou, a resident of Sivananda Ashram. "Empty yourself and become a sponge to absorb all the vibrations."

There is complete silence in the car; we are four on our way to Dehradun. A samnyāsini, looking forward to the *darśana*, Malou, smiling at me now and then, a lady from South America, who took *samnyāsa* in 1974; and I.

"Ma is not feeling well, there will be no *darśana* today." We stayed, and waited. flowers in one hand, fruits in the other. Still no one was talking. To me it seemed as if I would never meet Her anyway, She had always seemed so unreal. Then, "The Sivananda Ashram party, please come upstairs." We were led up winding stairs and then to a room. The Samnyāsini lost her control; "Ma, Ma, there She is."

My eyes are fixed on Her. There is a void in time. It is only She and I. Nobody else seems to be in the room. Shaking violently from head to toes, tears rolling down my cheeks, I try to do namaskāra but my hands have no co-ordination. It is a state never experienced before.

For a few minutes there is awareness of the presence of others when the brahmacharinis of the Ashram perform *ārati* in front of Ma. She sits on a bed, immutable. *Ārati* I had witnessed many times before, but in front of God's picture. At this instant Her Divinity is revealed to me.

Anandamayi Ma, my guru, I met for the first time in this life. Radiant with supernatural beauty, Anandamayi Ma was smiling tenderly at Her children. The presence of Divinity was predominantly felt and seen. One cannot forget Her eyes. Bathing in infinity, they are the mirrors of Her heavenly abode. Dark and penetrating at times, one can also detect a velvety softness enveloping Her glance. Mataji imparts a sense of mystical loveliness. Her hair falling loosely over Her shoulders is black, and renders the task of guessing Her age impossible. Dressed all in white, She sits on the side of a large bed, flowers enveloping Her Feet on the floor. She remains almost motionless for long periods of time.

A Christian would describe the scene as "an apparition of the Madonna." I remember showing pictures of Mataji to a priest in Canada, and he pondered, "Could She be the Virgin Mary?" "Ma has said: I am whoever you think me to be."

A celestial fragrance permeates Ma's surroundings, this has been testified more than once by Her entourage.

During the darśana, an unexpected event took place. Visibly out of his mind with sorrow, an elderly man suddenly ran forward and threw himself into Her arms, crying out loudly "Ma, Ma." Laughing heartily, She patted his back with Her tiny hand, saying, "Baba, Baba". Mataji was in *mouna* (silence) and could not console him with words. After a few minutes, he bowed down low and went away quietly. Mataji had laughed. Her happiness is contagious. Her laughter may be likened to a crystal clear

spring, rushing forth and winding its way through a meadow, bestowing life, beauty and joy to an otherwise sterile land.

“Ma wants you all to stay and have dinner.” The Sivananda party was served food but unfortunately I could neither eat nor talk nor do anything. I kept staring in front of me, immersed in Divine Bliss.

The car took four speechless *sādhakas* back to Rishikesh. With difficulty I uttered to a friend awaiting my arrival, “I have seen God”. In the middle of the night, I seemed to regain composure and felt like drinking tea. Turning the light on, I raised my head. There was a picture of Mataji on the wall. I was thrust back into the same state immediately. After 36 hours of not talking, eating, gradually the effect started to subside. It was like waking up from a long heavenly dream, but every time I would look at Ma’s picture, it came again for a little while, only for thirty minutes or so.

Wanting to remain in India for ever and to take Samnyāsa, I made plans to sell my return ticket. But MA knew that I was not ripe for that gigantic step. In the disguise of illness She sent Her chela across the ocean, back to Canada.

In 1971 my ego felt it was ready for the big jump and I left Montreal, Canada, bound for India with no return ticket. Eager for Mataji’s *darśana* I arrived at Varanasi just in time. Ma was coming my way, walking down a narrow street with light footsteps and the general

appearance of a young girl. She was smiling and laughing, touching lightly the heads of some devotees. I basked in Her vision.

During the following weeks there were many *darśanas* in Dehra Dun and Hardwar. Being within Her sight was sufficient to bring maturity to my *sādhana*. The initial displays of emotion did not occur anymore. A more subtle and lasting experience was felt in Her presence. The highlight of my sojourn in Dehra Dun was Durga Puja which I spent at Her side, witnessing the ancient Vedic rituals.

One particular *darśana* is worth relating, as it brings to light something of Mataji's *siddhis*.

It was in Hardwar and only a handful of people were sitting in front of Ma. Somehow I did not feel as "high", as exhilarated as before and wondered why: "I shall have a good look at Ma instead of closing my eyes and trying to meditate like the others." Instantly, Mataji turned round and Her eyes stopped on mine. This lasted for an eternity. I melted like a piece of ice in the sun. Being unable to bear Her gaze, I looked down. Trying once more to look at Her, I failed. She was still gazing at me. There was no ice left, now it was all water; spiritually, mentally, physically.

In the silence of the room, all one could hear were my sobs. Suddenly there were sweet voices; angels were singing. "Why can't life become that moment?" The Ashramites were engaged in kirtana. We were sitting on the terrace around Ma and the sun was setting. Bells rang

for puja from a temple nearby and while Her hair was softly brushed by the wind, Sri Ma Anandamayi was looking far away, towards the firmament, a dimension to which we have no access.

After spending seven months in India, once again illness came to visit me and the only valid prescription was : Canada.

Nine years have passed since I had my first *darśana* of Anandamayi Ma. Only now do I find myself surrendering completely at Her Holy Feet.

Although a severe emotional reaction set in upon meeting Ma, I firmly believe that it was of secondary importance. The inner mutation which occurs slowly, silently, along the years after She has revealed Herself, is where Sri Ma Anandamayi plays a major role. "I AM THAT I AM" She says. Therefore, Ma incites Her chela to dive within, in order to unite with Her. "The happiest day in the life of the Guru is when He loses his disciple to God."*

Hari Om Ma

* The writer means to say : When the disciple loses all attachment to the physical form of the Guru.

Hindu Temples and Worship

Vijayananda

Westerners are frequently puzzled by the multiplicity of Hindu gods and the apparent complexity of worship in the temples. Some of those who begin to understand the underlying unity behind that multiplicity and that the seemingly inextricable maze of the worship is but a sophisticated ritual, the fruit of thousands of years of experience, in which religious emotions are harnessed and disciplined, would greatly like to participate in the worship and to gain recognition from orthodox Hindus as genuine admirers, nay devotees of their religion. But when they are rejected, forbidden entrance into the temples or given to understand that their presence in a place of worship would amount to defilement, they feel deeply disappointed, and go back to their country with resentment.

In the book "On the Steps of the Yogi", (not yet published) the author, himself a westerner, expresses his feelings when he came across these problems. The following are a few excerpts in which this matter is dealt with.

At first glance the average Westerner might conclude that Indian sects form an inextricably confused tangle.

In the West we like to have everything clearly classified, set out in order, lucid symmetric. Our religions have their well-established dogmas, their leaders and their clergy organised in a patterned hierachy.

Hinduism is completely different and that is because the Hindu and the Western minds are in many ways utterly dissimilar. The average Hindu is much closer to natural springs than is his cultured western counterpart.

If we watch Nature in her operations, the growth of a tree, for instance, we see that the process is slow, unhurried, tentative almost. The branches spread out in no symmetrical pattern, and leaves and flowers appear in apparent disorder. Geometrical shapes, even if they are suggested, are always imperfect. The final effect, however, is of the majestic beauty of a mighty tree.

Like one of these great banyan trees Hinduism has grown in a seemingly anarchical fashion so that, at first sight, it might appear to be disconcertingly baffling. But a thorough study makes it clear that, despite their often extreme diversities, all Hindu sects are parts of one unified whole and that Hinduism is one religion, single and complete.

One may well ask what possible connection can exist between the dualism of Madhavacharya and the absolute monism of Shankaracharya, or between the Naga who does not even possess a garment to cover his nakedness, and the religions layman who lays out a fortune in a *Mahāyajña*.¹

But it all becomes clear when one recalls the principle of the *adhikāri bheda*, so often repeated by the wise men of

¹ *Mahāyajña* : literally great sacrifice. Fire offerings made in public with great ceremony over a fairly long period of time, occasionally several years. The purpose of the sacrifice is to obtain some favour, material, spiritual or religious (such as assurance of paradise after death).

India. It is difficult to translate the term literally. It indicates the distinction between the man who is ready and the man who is not. The differences between individuals on intellectual and moral levels of achievement cannot be denied. The same principles, the same dogmas, the same religious objectives are not equally valid for all men. Hinduism takes these differences into account, and makes room within its framework for every human type. From the illiterate peasant to the most highly evolved intellectual, all men will find within it, the rites and the teachings most suited to their needs. The man who is ready, the *adhikāri*, can devote himself directly to the quest for the *Brahma-Jñāna*, the knowledge of the Self. For others there are intermediate stages from which they may begin to advance towards perfection each according to his own capacity. No one, after all, would require a child at kindergarten to understand the philosophy of Spinoza; he would have to begin by learning to read and write and would then move up the school from form to form until he finally reached the stage when he would be able to undertake the study of the philosopher's works.

Western religions hold that truth is one and absolute and that to teach otherwise is a very serious fault, "an intellectual crime". And if this is indeed so, why do the wise men of India teach or tolerate imperfect doctrines?

But, as the unhappily celebrated Roman asked, "what is Truth"? Absolute Truth transcends mental categories; it can neither be explained nor taught. But it is possible to "realise", through direct perception, that there is only one

great sea of "Existence-Consciousness". The world as it appears to us, is an illusion, a "prismatic chimera" which assumes its various forms only because it is refracted upon the screen of our mental structures. The mind may be said to be a magician who brings the phenomenal world into being and conceals the Real, and it is only by reducing the mind to complete silence that Truth may be apprehended. It follows therefore, that everything that can be understood within the framework of thoughts and words is, by definition, false.

The wise men of India hold that the purpose of religious teaching is not to expound the Truth, for the Truth in any case cannot be grasped by the mind. The purpose of religious teaching, in their view, is to make the illusory personality receptive to an attitude which will make possible its annihilation in confrontation with the Real that transcends thought and word. And the shell within which this illusory personality is enclosed, the ego, may be broken open in innumerable different ways, depending on the mental organisation of each individual.

That is why Indian sects should not be regarded as separate religious factions opposed to one another. It is quite unjustified, for instance, to make a parallel between Śivaism and *Vaiṣṇavism* on the one hand and Catholicism and Protestantism on the other.

It is true that at different periods and in different parts of India some hostile rivalry seems to have existed between religious factions. This is proved by certain historical events, such as the battles between sects at the Kum-

bha-Mela in Hardwar, or by the well-known account of the famous twelfth-century Vaiṣṇava reformer Ramanuja. At the outset of his career this saint lived and preached in Sri Rangam in South India. The ruling monarch Kerikala Chola of the Chola dynasty, was a fanatical Śivaist who decreed that all his subjects should practise the cult of Śiva. Ramanuja refused and the king gave orders to have him arrested. Ramanuja fled towards Mysore, and one of his disciples, attempting to cover his flight by appearing before the king, had his eyes put out by the cruel monarch.

Reaching Mysore, Ramanuja was hospitably received by the Raja of the State, Vitala Deva, who, at the time, was a Jain by religion. Ramanuja won the confidence of the king by curing his daughter who was believed to be possessed by a *Brahma-Rākshasa* (a very powerful evil spirit). Raja Vitala Deva then became a convert to *Vāiṣṇavism* and assumed the name of Vishnu Vardhana.

Twelve years later, having heard of the death of his persecutor, King Chola, Ramanuja returned to Sri Rangam.

To-day, however, religious intolerance seems to have disappeared completely in India.

In cultured circles it is not infrequent for devotees to render homage to Siva as well as to Krishna, to Rama and also to Kali.

In many temples—if, for instance, the temple is consecrated to Siva—the central lingam may be surrounded by images of other deities. In kirtans (the community singing of religious hymns) the names of the gods of other

sects are glorified impartially. Certainly there are bigots, jealous in the worship of one particular god, but even their particularism rests content with the occasional launching of an ironic shaft in the direction of rival sects.

The great teachers of India have made formidable achievements in reconciling different sects to each other. From Śankaracharya down to Ramkrishna and his disciple Vivekananda in more modern times, they have always taught that all deities are merely different aspects of the Divine which is one and unique.

It happens in many families, that each individual, if he is sincerely religious, generally chooses as *Iṣṭa-Deva* (his tutelary deity), the form which most completely satisfies his own aspirations. It may well be, for instance, that the husband prays to Śiva, his wife to Krishna, and one of the children, perhaps, to Durga or Kali, without this becoming a cause of family friction or embarrassment. In fact, it may be said of the various sects today, not only that they dwell in a state of peaceful co-existence, but that they are all interpenetrated by each other within the framework of the *Sanātana Dharma* ("the eternal religion", one of the names of Hinduism).

I must say that I have consistently refrained from entering the Hindu temples or even from visiting them. This is not due to any aversion or hostility on my part towards the gods of India and their rituals. Far from it. I have considerable admiration for the quasi-scientific manner in which the Hindus have elaborated their cult of deities. Nor is it due to fear that I may find myself in a situation

analogous to that of the devil who fell into a font of holy water. True, the sacred precincts of most temples are forbidden to the non-Hindu, but compromises with Heaven are always possible and in my sādhu's robe I could easily gain admittance if I so wished. Moreover, the law in modern India compels most temples to permit free entry. The reason for my restraint is quite otherwise. The fact is that the orthodox Hindu, even if he is not quite conscious of this, feels that his sanctuary is polluted by the penetration of a westerner; and to violate religious feeling of any kind whatever is something of which I strongly disapprove.

It may be remarked, too, that Brahmins are not entirely mistaken in their belief that the presence of a stranger creates a disturbance of some sort in the atmosphere of their temples. Like so many other mental attitudes of the Hindu this is difficult for a westerner to understand, for such understanding requires knowledge of a psychological texture fundamentally different from our own.

As I have already pointed out, the Hindu is much closer to natural beginnings than we are. The "umbilical cord" connecting his thought to the Collective Unconscious has not been cut as it has in the case of most western minds.

The western mind is centred in a powerful intellect, a clear, logical consciousness bent on shaping the world around it in its own image. By contrast, primitive man in a traditional civilisation, does not seek to dominate nature or to wrest her secrets from her. For him the highest art

lies in making his own life vibrate in harmony with the whole complex of the cosmic life, like the movement of a wave fitting organically into the great undulatory movement of the ocean. On the lower levels such an attitude produces herd-men, "dumb driven cattle". But on the higher rungs of development the wave becomes a centre of consciousness open to cosmic forces and to intuitive perceptions which transcend logical thinking. When the ordinary Hindu goes into a temple, he "feels" something as a direct perception which he cannot formulate in words because the discursive aspect of his mind is not very highly developed. This "something" is a combination of inner peace, and of the joy of the harmony which is experienced (in degrees varying with the individual) when contact is made, even if only for a split second, with the cosmic life. The mechanism through which this contact is achieved is complex. The believing Hindu comes to his temple in a receptive state of mind. This is spontaneous and demands no conscious effort, for ever since childhood, his mind has been steeped in ideas and beliefs about the deity before which he has come to prostrate himself. The temple too is generally very old, or has been constructed on an ancient site and is generally surrounded by an aura of legend and miracle. This atmosphere of sanctity which goes back to the time of its construction is kept alive by the daily pūjā (religious service) which in most cases has been performed uninterruptedly over centuries. The puja is an act of ceremonial magic which must be performed by a qualified brahmin. Then again the religious fervour of numerous worshippers serves to increase even further the sense of sanctity so that

it is hardly surprising that in certain temples the powerful religious atmosphere is almost palpable. The Hindu who comes to visit adds his own little drop to this sea of religious feeling, for the temple is part of an entire natural pattern into which he integrates harmoniously. The westerner, however, even though he may have strong sympathies for Hinduism, will automatically bring a note of discord into this pattern. Everything he hears and sees will rouse within him associations and ideas very different from those of the Hindu. Thus, for instance, the deafening clang of the gongs and cymbals of the *ārati* (the conclusion of the religious service) which, for the Hindu, marks the climactic moment of religious fervour will, to the westerner, be only an aggravating din. The sight of the idol will rouse ideas which, very often, will be irrelevant to what the image is supposed to represent. And there will be many other disturbing factors too, stemming from the confrontation between two basically different cultures.

✓ All this, the average Hindu understands instinctively. Moreover, the Indian, no matter how uncultured he may be, accepts it as a self-evident truth that the surface level of our mind is not what counts, that we are in fact worth what our *samskāras* are worth. The *samskāras* are the impressions of experiences, actions, beliefs and so on that lie latent in our Unconscious like innumerable seeds ready to germinate and bear fruit immediately if favourable circumstances offer. These impressions derive not only from our lives since birth but also from the numerous previous lives which we have lived,

“You do not have the *samskāras* which would enable you to harmonize with Hindu ritual.” This is the single explanation which would be given by a cultivated Hindu.

The average westerner believes in the possibility of an individual changing his religion, becoming a convert. But in India, where religion is a living thing, any talk of conversion to Hinduism is met only with a smile; for religion is believed to be an organic part of the individual's being, like his race and the caste into which he has been born.

However this may be, “religious feeling”, “religious fervour”, “the love of the divine”, all these are archetypes common to the entire human race. It is only the ritual details, the names and forms which set up the barriers, “the iron curtain” but most human beings find these useful for they act as sign-posts along the road which leads to the realization of the Infinite.

Time and again while walking along the streets of Benares or Hardwar or Vrindaban, or while joining in a kirtan, a Durgā-pūjā or a Siva-rātri (night of Siva) an important festival, I have felt the intense religious fervour as an almost palpable thing; but at the same time I have understood how absurd it would be to attempt to integrate myself or to participate even if only in thought, in the details of the ritual.

And yet, how I have longed to hold out hand to my brothers on the other side of the iron curtain.

Mother's Grace

Haripriya Capy

It was fourteen years ago that I first met Mother Anandamayi. Over the years, since that first most important time, much has transpired. My karma, with its mixture of pain and pleasure, has continued its course. Because my body still lives in a very materialistic society, and many of my outer trappings are naturally western, I have often pondered : *How much has my prārabdha karma been affected or altered, since coming into contact with Mother?* Because the change in my life has been a slow, subtle one, I have not been able to "see the forest for the trees". And I finally concluded, (at least intellectually) that little change, if any, had taken place in my physical karma. Everything is destined, and I am simply fulfilling it right on schedule. At least, that was my first conclusion.

Then one day, out of the blue, the answer came to me in a flash. Just a few seconds it took, but that moment's revelation has given me months of inspiration to contemplate that continues to this day. Had I written about it when it happened, the words would have tumbled out by the hundreds like a free flowing water-fall; but as time has softened the effects, I am now struggling to put into language the answer to my question.

Sri Krishna says in the Gita that as a man's faith is, so is he. The revelation that came in answer to my ponder-

ing, has given me deeper faith and surrender to THAT ONE alone whose Grace it is that makes the cripple walk, and the dumb eloquent. It is, in fact, His grace which is the key and answer to everything. Without His grace there is no question; without His grace there is no answer. Without the Lord's grace there can be no faith; without faith life is meaningless.

To put my revelation into words is not a simple task. It has its foundation in unshakable faith in Mother, who is to me the Supreme Lord in that lovely motherly form. In this respect I suppose it is personal, yet I believe it is universal as well and will be understood by those who have also come to this realization of Her grace in their lives.

Mother has almost totally transformed my life. I am amazed at the fact that I was too blind to see it long ago, but time also brings in its train retrospect; and retrospect clears the vision. I see now how She has taken my karma and given me several new lives already in this one body. She has changed my consciousness into one of the spirit, centered around Her and my Gopal (who are One). Every little bit of suffering She gives me is but a homoeopathic dosage of what karma I truly deserve to reap, had Mother not taken my life into Her hands. By Her infinite loving mercy She is saving me lifetimes of misery and affliction in this fiery ocean of *samsāra*. And, out of Her causeless mercy, She has come to crucify.....the ego. She is destroying this wicked thing that hides my soul. Everyone who comes into my life is but another form of Her. She comes in whichever form that will best accomplish Her purpose,

and in ignorance the ego fights Her in those forms. It is the *Caṇḍī* relived. Or the battle of Rāma and Rāvana with the thousand heads. The ego dies hard, but each arrow of God's name kills off one more dark head of sin.....and *prārabdha* karma.

The cycle of lives which keeps us bound to this endless misery continues until the Sadguru decides to pluck us out of this place of torment. There seems to be no cause behind His mercy. It is pure grace. And no matter what stage in time and space one is occupying, no matter which *guṇa* is predominant; no matter of what colour the body, or which country one lives in—when the Divine Mother comes into one's life, She brings Glory, Peace and Victory! It is the beginning of the end for Rāvana.

And so, my own little battle of Kurukshetra takes place in the U. S. A. But Mother is my charioteer, and victory is in sight. This is a duel between ego and soul... to the death. There is no compromise. Yet, here I am in the land of materialism instead of in India which one would presume to be the most natural place to find God. This is the miracle !!! By Her grace, my mind often dwells in the consciousness of that holy land. Only my body lives here to fulfil some *prārabdha* karma I cannot escape. Each day when I do *pūjā* (another miracle) and blow the conch, I know She hears it, and She and I rejoice as did Sri Krishna and Arjuna when another skirmish was won and the battle cry resounded victory! JAI MA! Each day I offer up my heart's gratitude to Mother for having saved me from the endless round of pain and dulness. I bow in

humility marvelling at my great good fortune that death can no longer touch me, for I belong to Mother. I beg Her to let me always cling to Her lotus feet. Mother, hold me tight! Mother, never let me go! Mother keep on cleaning the dross from my heart until only pure love for Thee streams forth, showering Thee with the tears of my soul.

Sri Krishna says in the Gita that He gives memory and also takes it away. I am thinking of "remembrance" of God and His holy name. I have heard that someone asked Mother if they would remember Her when they were far away. Mother answered: "If I have the *kheyāla*." Only if She bestows Her grace upon us, shall we be blessed by remembrance of Her. This one statement alone proves to me that all is Her grace! I don't mean to imply that after one meets Mother suffering ends. On the contrary, it often seems that this is when intense suffering begins. But, because Mother is there to give us support in our agony, our suffering takes on a completely new texture and hue. If this very suffering makes us think of Her, does it not stand to reason that the ordeal is Her grace. By our very thought of Her, She is suffering with us, for She is infinite compassion personified. She is taking our tribulation upon Herself, She is devouring our sins and karma, and saving us from future lives of ignorance and pain. Oh, Mother, our refuge in this storm-tossed sea!

The change in my karma has been one of a dead man coming to life. A sinner becoming clean. A materialist turned Brahmin. A deaf, dumb, blind, and insane person waking up and dancing in paradise. She has done it so

skilfully, with such subtlety, that even to this day I have to pinch myself to make sure I am not dreaming. My prayer continues—"Mother, let me have pure love for Thee." I care not for Oneness, for I know not what it means. Liberation has no appeal. But, if by Her grace I can just love Her with all my heart and soul I shall be fulfilled. And She is that wish-fulfilling tree. She is our life, our hope, and our victory!

JAI MA!

Resurrection

J. N. Dhamija

Escape, where to escape ?
A void, an empty black.....

In this enchanting world I have no peace
The burdens and the cares, anguish and pain
Dark delusions, doubts and fears
Life without colour and taste
Its fire burnt out, ambers turned to ashes
It is a desert, dark and desolate.....

What a horrid dream ?
When will it pass ?
Where to escape ?
In Eternal sleep, deep and dreamless ? Death ?
Where is the way ? Oh where ?

O Living Soul
Thy glory and Thy grandeur
Worlds beyond worlds
Life without end
Gracious God
Pervading all pervade my being

Let Thy touch transform
Merge me with Thee
Heart beat of Eternal Rhythm.

There is no death
There is no doubt
There is no fear
Knowledge Absolute
Eternal Bliss and Peace.

— —

Mātri Līlā

(April 10th–June 25th, 1976)

In the last issue we have already stated that Mataji remained in Kankhal from February 24th without a break. We have also reported about the magnificent Annapurna Puja, performed from April 7th to 9th (during *Navarātri*) by Sri Narendranath Brahmachariji of Deoghar and over hundred and fifty of his disciples collectively. We are extremely grieved to hear that the Brahmachariji left his body on June 6th.

Revered Narendranath Brahmachariji was the founder of "Debsangha Math" of Deoghar and had a large number of disciples. His Guru had been Sri Brahmarsi Satyadev Thakur who was also the Guru of Sri Gopal Thakur of Allahabad. Sri Narendranath Brahmachariji held Mataji in great veneration and love, and Mataji, for the last five years, visited his Ashram at Deoghar once every year. Only last February Mataji stayed for five days in Babaji's new house "Kaivalyadhām". He breathed his last in that very building.

It is hard to believe that Babaji is no more amongst us. When he came to Kankhal on April 6th, we could see that his health was failing. Yet in spite of this he conducted the pūjā from start to finish for three days. Brahmachariji's voice, his chanting of Vedic mantras, still

rings in our ears and it will re-echo for many more years in our hearts.

For Babaji it must be a relief to be free from his ailing body but for all who had the good fortune to know this great soul his departure is an irreparable loss.

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From April 12th to 19th a *Bhāgavata Saptah* was observed very solemnly, with Pandit Srinath Sastri giving the Hindi exposition in his well-known lucid and lively way, every day from 8-10³⁰ a. m. and from 3-5³⁰ p. m. This was followed daily by the inspiring talks of Swami Sri Akhandanandaji, the celebrated authority on the *Bhāgavata Purāna*. The enormous hall was on the last few days packed to capacity while some sat outside listening spell-bound with the help of powerful loudspeakers. Mataji was present twice daily and always attended Sri Akhandanandaji's talks. Sri Swami Chidanandaji, the Head of the Divine Life Society, as well as some Mahamandaleshwaras and other dignitaries came several times to grace the function.

On April 13th, Didima's *Sannyāsa Utsava* was commemorated by an elaborate pūja in her Samādhi Mandir. Mahamandaleshwara Sri Vidyanandaji, Swami Akhandanandaji and Swami Govind Prakashji talked very beautifully on Didima.

The Saptah ended on the 19th with *havan* and the recitation of the entire Bhagavad Gītā. In the evening and the following day, Mahamandaleshwara Sri Prakashananda regaled us with his spirited and aminated talks.

On April 20th, Mataji received a most interesting visitor: Father Enomiya-Lasalle who had stopped in India on his way from Japan to Europe for the sole purpose of meeting Mataji. Originally a German Jesuit father, he has lived in Japan for forty-six years and is teaching Zen Buddhist meditation there as well as in various countries in Europe. Besides he is Professor of Comparative Religion in Tokyo University. After having miraculously survived the atom bomb disaster in Hiroshima, he had felt inspired to build a 'Cathedral for World Peace' there, to which people from all over the globe contributed. After his second *darśana* and talk with Mataji he exclaimed: "Ma is doing more for world peace than all the politicians and peace workers put together." On both days he sat in silent meditation at Ma's feet for a long time before having interviews with Her. He was obviously very deeply impressed and expressed the hope to come again.

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On April 22nd Mataji left for Naimisharanya where She rested for a few days. On May 2nd, *Akṣaya Tṛtīya* day, the first anniversary of the consecration of *Sri Puran Purush Mandir* was very solemnly celebrated. The same day Ma's birthday celebrations commenced. However, Mataji remained in Her room during the night-pūjā which was performed in front of Her picture. A feast was given to 200-300 guests, notwithstanding the fierce dust-storm that failed to disturb the festivities. Sri Prayag Narain Saigal with a group of devotees of Sitapur performed "*Rāmāyaṇa Goshti*" during Ma's sojourn.

Mataji was expected to return to Kankhal on May 5th, but when news came of the failing health of Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, Mataji hastened to Varanasi on the 4th, disregarding the gruelling heat and the tedious journey. This turned out to be the last darśana She gave to the ailing sage. Only after making the best possible arrangements for him, Mataji left two days later, reaching Kankhal on the 7th morning.

On May 9th, the famous scholar, Dr. Roma Choudhury, Vice-Chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University paid a visit to Ma with a small party, who entranced the audience by staging in Sanskrit scenes from the life of Sri Ramakrishna that very evening. After the dramatic performance, the famous Baul singer Sri Purnadas who has given recitals in many foreign countries, delighted everyone with his beautiful songs. He had come with Dr. Choudhury specially from Chandigarh to sing to Ma.

On May 10th, the official celebrations of Mataji's birthday started. Mataji was born on April 30th, 1896 and has now completed Her 80th year. This is so from our angle of vision. Actually She is ageless and still amazingly active; when it is Her *kheyāla* She looks young and radiant and talks or sings with great vigour and animation. During the festivities which continued until May 18th, Mataji gave darśana indefatigably and attended to every one of the numerous guests. Devotees gathered from all over India, among them a good number of former rulers, including the Elaya Raja and Rani of Travancore. Two or three dozen devotees and admirers from foreign countries also joined in the celebrations.

The daily programme started at 7³⁰ a. m. with *Rāsa Līla* performed until about 10 a. m. by the famous party of Har Govind who had been specially summoned from Vrindaban. This is an important item of the yearly festivities. With astonishing artistic skill scenes from the lives of Sri Krishna and Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu were represented before the enthralled audience. This was followed by lectures of the various Mahamandaleshwaras of Kankhal for about an hour. At 5 p. m. the discourses were resumed again. Apart from the local Mahatmas, Mahamandaleshwar Sri Vidyanandaji of Uttarkasi, Sri Swami Vishnuashram of Sukhtal, Sri Swami Govind Prakash, Head of Ramatirtha Ashram and Swami Ananda enlightened us with their interesting talks. During the interval between 11 a. m. and 4 p. m. kirtan was sung without interruption by groups of devotees taking turns. One day a few American sādhus of the Krishna Consciousness Society led the kirtan with great proficiency and enthusiasm for quite a long time. Mataji came to the hall to listen. The climax of every day was *Mātri Satsang* after 9 p. m. when Mataji charmed us all by Her terse and witty replies to questions. One evening She sang.

On the 11th evening Ma was specially invited to grace the Ganga *Pūjā* and *ārati* at Har-ki-Pauri. She went there accompanied by a large party of ashramites and devotees. A vast concourse of people had gathered on both sides of the Ganges. The Governor of the Punjab as well as Sri Mahantji of the Nirvani Akhara were present. In spite of the enormous attendance the organization proved excellent

and everything proceeded in perfect order. Mataji was seated on a wooden platform a few feet above Mata Ganga while local priests performed elaborate *pūjā* and *ārati* of the holy river to the chanting of Veda mantras. Ma Herself offered fruits and a gorgeous sari to Ganga Devi. The whole function was extremely moving, in fact quite unforgettable.

On the 11th midday ten Mahamandaleshwaras and many sādhus were entertained to a feast. Ārati was performed and they were offered garlands and sandalpaste. That day there was also *Daridra Narayan Seva* (feeding of the Lord in the guise of the poor). The next day 108 *kumārīs* were worshipped and served food.

On the 13th, full-moon day, special *pūjā* was offered in all local temples. Mataji and Mahantji of Nirvani Akhāra attended at Daksheshwar Mandir. Afterwards a large gathering of Mahātmās was held in our hall. Among those who addressed the congregation was the blind Mahantji of Udasini Akhara who spoke with great feeling. All night kirtan was led by Kumari Chhabi Banerji as always on "*Buddha Purnima*." Part of the night there was a lunar eclipse during which Mataji remained present.

On the 15th, *Mahārāsa* was performed very charmingly by the party from Vrindaban from 9³⁰ p. m. to 1³⁰ a. m. Ma sat on Her couch throughout, surrounded by the women of the Ashram and devotees from all over India besides the people from Hardwar who had flocked in large numbers.

On the 16th morning the Governor of the U. P. Dr. Chena Reddy arrived with his family and remained for the

night pūjā. During the evening satsang he spoke for about an hour with great vigour. The Governor of Punjab also came to pay his respects on that auspicious day.

After the evening programme the hall was closed and re-arranged and at 1 a. m. everyone occupied their seats. The hall was tightly packed and could hardly hold the enormous crowd of devotees that were anxious to witness the final *tithi pūjā*. Artists from Calcutta had improvised a beautiful shrine on pillars that almost looked like marble, in which Mataji's exquisitely decorated couch was placed. Flowers, garlands, fruits and multi-coloured sweets had been brought by devotees from Calcutta, Varanasi and other places. The solemn pūjā from 3 to 5 a. m. was, as every year, accompanied by beautiful songs and chanting in Sanskrit, with half an hour's silent meditation in the middle. In the morning everyone lined up to do *pranāma* at Mataji's feet while *Ushā Kīrtana* was sung by the Ashram girls. Mataji's lay motionless for almost 12 hours until 3 p. m. and then was taken to Her room near the hall. Those who had to leave Hardwar were allowed to offer *pranāma*, but Mataji remained in silence (*mauna*) for several days, even after She had left Kankhal.

On the 17th evening *Nāma Yajña* started at about 9³⁰ p. m. A beautiful circular altar had been erected for the occasion. Mataji appeared at about 9 p. m. and stayed until after midnight. When '*adivāsa*' was completed, the women continued to sing all night, the men taking over at dawn. The kirtan ended after sunset on the 18th in Mataji's presence. Mataji was obviously still in *bhāva* and

looked unearthly beautiful and awe-inspiring. Although She uttered not a word, She paid loving attention to everyone and everything. Her signs and gestures expressed more than speech could have done.

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On May 20th, Ma left for an undisclosed destination with only a handful of companions. She later disclosed that She had taken rest for eight days in a quiet house right on the bank of the Ganges, "Ganga Lahari." For the first three days Mataji had fever. Gradually She recovered from the strain of the preceding few weeks. On May 28th She returned to Kankhal, only to leave the next afternoon for Dehradun, where She alighted in the Kishenpur Ashram at about 6³⁰ p. m. She had come at the invitation of Swami Sri Govind Prakashji to bless the yearly week of satsang at the Ramatirtha Ashram. At 8¹⁵ p. m. She was taken to their spacious hall in town, returning to Kishenpur two hours later. The next morning She again attended the satsang for a short while and then motored to Ramatirtha Ashram above Rajpur, where She stayed for an hour, surrounded by a small group of *sādhakas*. She then proceeded to Her cottage at Panchavati next to Kalyanvan for a rest and left for Kankhal at about 3³⁰ p. m. On Her way She halted at the Kachhi Ashram near Saptasarovar where a Bhagavata Saptah was being held. The next two days She also visited the Saptah for some time each day.

On June 2nd Mataji left by car for Uttarkashi at the invitation of Mahamandaleshwara Sri Swami Vidyananda of Kailashashram. The first three days Mataji stayed in

our "Kali Mandir" and for the next three days in a brand new house at Sri Vidyanandaji's Ashram. The Mahamandaleshwara was holding for eighteen days a special satsang in which the Upanishads were being expounded and Mataji attended during the last three days. On June 7th, the day of *Ganga Dasehra*, which is said to be the birthday of Ganga Devi, a new *ghāt** was opened with great ceremony from 8³⁰—11 a. m. in Mataji's presence. Right on the bank of the holy river a large pandal had been erected which was filled with sādhus as well as the elite of the town. There was most impressive chanting of Ganga Lahari Patha. Several mahātmās delivered speeches on the significance of *Ganga Dasehra*. One of them compared the place to the Triveni* of Prayag, the three sacred rivers being Ganga Devi, the nectar of the Upanishads and Brahmaswarupini Ma. Mataji was requested to bless all who would come to bathe at the new *ghat* so that they might attain liberation.

Mataji sang "*Satyam Jnānam Anantam Brahma*" and Pushpa recited śtotras (Sanskrit hymns).

That day special pūjā was offered to Kali Devi in our mandir. Mataji also visited the Sanskrit Mahāvidyālaya for two hours where sādhus had assembled to sing Rām Nām.

On June 8th morning Mataji motored back to Kankhal. On Her way She halted at Tehri where She visited the

* *Ghāt* Bathing place on the bank of a river.

** *Triveni* Confluence of three rivers.

temples of Badrinath, Keddarnath, Sri Ranganathan, Siddheshwari, Svayambhu and others.

She further stopped at Narendra Nagar for three hours and rested for some time. Following an urgent invitation, She then spent about an hour at Sri Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, where She was accorded a wonderful reception. At Muni-ki-reti a kirtan party was waiting who took Ma's car in procession; at some distance Sri Swami Chidanandaji, the Head of the Divine Life Society, received Her and paid homage to Her, and then again Swami Madhavanandaji. Mataji was first taken to the Samadhi of Swami Sivanandaji. She was profusely garlanded and in the hall of the Ashram a function with exquisite music was held in Her honour. Ma sang "He Bhagavan." She reached Kankhal long after nightfall. Many had waited for Mataji for hours. She sat in silence on the veranda of Siva Mandir while everyone did obeisance. Mataji looked divinely radiant in spite of the extremely strenuous day She had passed.

Mataji was to leave on the 12th evening for an undisclosed destination. However, on the 10th, news came by trunkcall that Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj's condition had become critical and that he had been transferred from our Ashram to the Anandamayee Seva Hospital. Mataji at once sent Panuda to Varanasi and the next morning Brahmacharis Virajananda and Nirmalananda. They all reached in time to find the patient still alive. Another Brahmachari left on the 11th for Varanasi.

On the 11th morning Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnath paid a visit to Ma. On the 12th morning the Governor of

Hariyana came. When the sad news of the demise of Dr. G. Kaviraj was received on the 12th evening, Mataji cancelled Her departure. She merely moved to Her secluded room on the topmost storey of the sādhus' building of our Ashram and waited for the return of those whom She had sent to Varanasi.

On June 21st Mataji left for Dehradun where She is expected to remain in Her cottage at *panchavati* until after Gurupurnima which falls on July 11th. On June 23rd—24th, Akhanda Ramayana was held in Ram Mandir, Kalyanvan. The evening darshan took place there on the 23rd and Mataji graced the *puṇnāhuti* (completion) on the 24th. Mataji gives *darśana* every evening from 6-7 in the hall of the house of Mr. and Mrs. Khaitan.

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