

*The Eternal, the Atman—
Itself pilgrim and path of Immortality,
Self-contained—THAT is all in One.*

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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CONTENTS

1. Matri Vani 1
2. Mātri Satsang —Swami Bhagawananda Giri ... 5
3. My First Darsana of Ma Anandamayi
—Anil Ganguli ... 16
4. Shanti Niketan—Tagore's Exposition of the
Philosophy of Ancient India—Dr. Byomkesh Chakravorty, Ph.D. 27
5. Lord Siva Dances as the World Dissolves
—Ram Alexander ... 36
6. What is Sadhana-How can it be practised in the West
—Ma Surjananda Lakshmi ... 37
7. My Trip to Ma —Radhapriya Wood ... 47
8. Gopinath Kavirajji's Peerless Personality
—Prabhat Kumar Bandopadhyaya 59
9. Matri Prasada —Mounima ... 61
10. Mata Anandmayi in Patna —Subal Ganguly ... 65
11. Matri Lilā ... 69

Ananda Vārta

A quarterly presenting the divine life and teaching of SRI ANANDAMAYI MA and various aspects of Universal Dharma.

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Mātri Vāni

(Dictated by Sri MA as letters in response to devotees' requests for personal advice and guidance.)

God fulfils a Truth-seeker's desire. Appearing in the form that is longed for He does what is needed. It is He who kindles the mind's desire and He Himself fulfils it. It is incumbent on man to sustain the living remembrance of God, to keep the mind safely protected within the sphere of Reality by the regular performance of japa and meditation. In order to remain steadily in an atmosphere of spirituality and truth, endeavour to let the mind ever be wedded to Reality-directed activity.

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In his Cosmic Form (*viśvarūpa*) all forms (*sarvarūpa*) of God are contained. Tread the path to the revelation of the One Essential Form (*svarūpa*).

*

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*

Advance briskly in the direction from which the road to Self-revelation (*svarūpa prakāśa*) opens out. The seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling of the material world are not helpful on the pilgrimage of life. What can be had within this world you have

already seen in great detail to your cost. No more allow your mind to proceed in that direction.

In this chimerical realm of coming-going on and on, no one belongs to anyone—and yet you crave it on and on ?

* * *

The more one advances towards the Divine the less prominent the actions that cause anguish and distress—remember this ! Worldly undertakings do give temporary happiness—with agonizing sorrow sneaking behind like a shadow. Become a pilgrim on the path to Self-realization !

* * *

Perform service regarding everyone as God's manifestation—this becomes then service to the One. All are God's creatures—He accepts your service in this manner.

* * *

Even if you are unable to sit for very long practising japa or meditation, you should keep Him drawn to yourself by remaining day and night, throughout the twenty-four hours, filled to overflowing with the awareness of His presence, so as to be kept away from all worldly attractions.

* * *

Whatever is done by anyone from anywhere for the revelation of THAT which is beyond - transcending everything - aiming at the One, it all reaches There. It is in fact He who does it, who causes it to be done—He Himself is the mantra as well as the Goal. Just as the actor, the activator, the action and its aim are one indeed. This must come to light so that the triad (*triputi*)—actor-action-acting—may be obliterated.

* * *

The day that is gone never returns. Invaluable moments are gliding away. While there is yet time turn to the Timeless One (*Dīnanātha*). In old age with its infirmity and lassitude, *Hari Nāma* does not readily flow; such is the work of time. What can be done at that late hour ?

* * *

A mother may not display her affection outwardly, yet she is and will ever remain your real mother. Even though you may want to push God the Mother aside, She never goes away.

* * *

Whatever *sādhana* or worship the Guru prescribes for the removal of the mind's veil of ignorance, in that current a human being must at all times remain fully immersed.

* * *

Pervading the whole universe there is one Ātmā. To receive a touch of the revelation of this fact be a pilgrim on the Path.

* * * * *

Write to her : "This body is always with her. One should open one's heart to God and endeavour to take it far granted that whatever happens is for one's best—whether we understand or not."

* * * * *

If one is to find the way to *Paramartha* (the supreme object of life), one must never be tempted by worldly happiness. The path of dharma is difficult. The only thing to be done is to surrender yourself at the feet of the Lord. So long as the mind dwells on worldly happiness and comforts, one cannot feel even the slightest touch of God. As long as the heart is not weeping for God, how can one hope to get even a glimpse of an experience of Him? He who is truly yearning for God, the more time he can devote to the repetition of his mantra, to meditation, singing the praises of God, reading sacred books, the greater the possibility of receiving a touch of God and of progressing. One must always try and try again and not even give time to wonder where there are results or not.

Mātri Satsang

[14]

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

[Translated from Bengali]

Ardha Kumbha Melā

Triveni, Prayag (Allahabad)

From January 14th to February 19th, 1948, the late Dr. Pannalal, an eminent devotee of Mataji, had made excellent arrangements for *Mātri Satsang* at the *Ardha Kumbha* in Prayag, at the confluence of the three rivers Ganga, Jamuna, Saraswati. I am trying here to report on the satsang of the morning of January 14th. I have endeavoured to keep as far as possible to Mataji's own wording but I cannot guarantee that each and every word which emanated from Mataji's lips has been put down. Just as people store away the waters of the holy Ganga in accordance with their individual capacity, so have I tried to retain everything I possibly could of the immortal words flowing from Mataji's lips. I crave forgiveness at the lotus feet of the all-merciful Mataji for any mistakes that may have crept in.

Mataji is seated in the satsang tent. Her devotees are anxiously waiting to hear Her words of wisdom. Dr. Pannalal comes forward to introduce a judge of the Allahabad High Court to Mataji.

Dr. Pannalal : Mataji, this gentleman is a judge of the High Court here. He will be on pension in the near future.

Mataji : Try to obtain the real pension - the pension from God's own government.

Dr. Pannalal : Which government is this ?

Mataji : The Government of all "This". He by whom it is manifested is the real Governor.

Judge : First one must be in service. Then only can one receive a pension.

Mataji : Yes, of course, one has to be in service first in order to be entitled to a pension.

Judge : I have found a doctor. Narayan is my Guru.

Dr. P. : I have told him to obey the Guru's instructions blindly.

Mataji : Yes, try to follow your Guru's instructions without exercising your critical judgment. Before taking on a Guru, one should judge fully, from all angles. But once a Guru has been accepted, his instructions must be obeyed implicitly. When a young girl is to be married, we search for a suitable bridegroom all over the country. But when, after a thorough investigation, the wedding has been accomplished, the bride has thereafter to spend the rest of her life serving her husband. Once the wedding has been performed, can this bond ever be broken ? Likewise, if after the Guru has initiated his disciple, the latter says : "It is true that I have received initiation, but I have derived no benefit therefrom," then I will declare that true initiation has not taken place.

Dr. P. : If after taking on a Guru, there are no improvements, what then ?

Mataji : Then the real wedding has never been performed. Here 'wedding' means receiving the mantra from the Guru. The mantra did not prove as potent as it should have. Sometimes it even happens that after the wedding the bridegroom runs away !

Question : I have chosen a Guru after a great deal of deliberation but so far I do not seem to have progressed. I have not accomplished anything in spite of following the Guru's advice. Under these circumstances should I take on another Guru ?

Mataji : If you have come to the conclusion that another Guru is necessary then it must be clearly understood that you have not been properly initiated, that your marriage has not been executed rightly. Else why should thoughts concerning another marriage now arise ? Many people assert that the Guru has performed the initiation but no significant results have followed. In the course of your sādhanā a deep yearning for God or Truth is most important. If after initiation such a yearning arises this is a good sign. Just as when residing in a foreign country one does not feel at ease, this is a sign of anxious yearning (for one's real Home).

Question : My husband went abroad long ago. No news has been received from him. How many letters have I not written but no reply has come. Under these circumstances, should I not take on another spouse ?

Mataji : A certain mahātmā used to live on the banks of the Ganga. Some distance from the mahātmā's hut there was a small village. A woman lived there whose husband had been abroad for some years. The marriage had taken place when

the wife had been a little girl. Now she was fully grown up. There was no news of her husband, so she began to wonder whether she should not marry again. Gradually her mind became quite agitated. Finally she went to consult the mahātmā who came out of his hut which was a little distance from where the woman was standing. He held a drinking vessel which dropped from his hand and broke. The mahātmā looked pointedly towards the broken vessel. The woman approached the mahātmā and asked : "Maharāj, what is the trouble?" The mahātmā said : "My drinking vessel has broken to pieces." The woman : "Maharāj, shall I bring another one?" The mahātmā : "No, thereby I shall not recover the vessel which is broken." On hearing these words of deep import, the question agitating the woman's mind was immediately solved thus : "I have once for all received a husband; even if he does not come it is not right to take on another one." On reaching this conclusion the woman returned home and started performing spiritual exercises as enjoined by the mahātmā. So, whether the Guru comes or not, whether you attain to the vision of God or not, once you have received the Guru's instructions, you must regularly perform some spiritual practice or other. The Guru is indeed constantly with you in the form of the mantra he has bestowed on you. With its help you must continue your sādhana.

Question : When the husband has gone to another country, why does he not return even after many letters have been written to him?

Mataji : The worldly husband may not care for you, but God, the divine Husband, is constantly concerned with your welfare.

God's attention is ever and always focussed on you. He himself inspires you to behave as you do.

Question : In what way can complete self-surrender be achieved ? How can the ego be destroyed ?

Mataji : You ask how your ego can be annihilated ?

(Mataji keeps quiet for some moments, then questions the enquirer) :

Pitaji, you have studied the *Śāstras* (Hindu scriptures) and other books of wisdom thoroughly. Why don't you yourself reply ? This body does not know anything. I am only a little girl.

Questioner : Our knowledge is confined to what can be told, written down, or studied. What real knowledge is, we do not know.

Mataji : There is a kind of *sādhanā* in which everything is surrendered at the feet of the Lord. Simultaneously with such self-offering the destruction of egoism takes place, or vice versa, when egoism is uprooted then everything is automatically surrendered at the feet of the Lord.

Question : Is egoism annihilated first or does the act of self-dedication come first ?

Mataji : If the ego remains, then who will surrender ? A human being may try to surrender by his own effort. But it may also happen that no effort is required for this surrender; the act of self-dedication comes about of itself. When egoism is uprooted then surrender follows as a matter of course. Thus, self-dedication and the destruction of egoism occur simultaneously, don't they ?

Question : When discriminating between the effort to surrender and spontaneous surrender, surely effort is made by the ego. Cannot spontaneous self-surrender come about through Grace ?

Mataji : Spontaneous surrender is certainly the result of Grace itself. He who dedicates himself entirely can make swift progress in his sādhanā. Whatever one considers to be one's own, should be laid down at the feet of the Lord. At every moment of your life, in the execution of each duty, whenever your intelligence is exercised, so long as there is identification with the body, you should be imbued with the spirit of self-dedication in all your activities. Whichever path a man adopts in order to realize God, he should be engrossed in following this path throughout the twenty-four hours. This applies to any method he may choose, be it Self-enquiry according to Vedānta or the path of self-offering. Strict truthfulness is necessary on each and every path.

Take any particular road. If there is true love for it then detachment follows of itself. Detachment means the full awakening of discrimination. When the fire is lit, what happens ? One becomes completely detached even from detachment. Renunciation itself is renounced—that is, renunciation reveals itself. Renunciation by effort and spontaneous renunciation are two entirely different things. So long as renunciation does not come about of itself, do not relax your efforts at relinquishment. Whatever work you undertake, do it in a spirit of complete self-surrender or as a means to Self-knowledge. Do not stop striving so long as God is not realized, so long as Self-revelation does not occur. Forge ahead steadfastly and do not cease in your efforts until complete

Self-knowledge (*Atmājñāna*) is achieved. You should take the road that leads to unbroken (*akhaṇḍa*) God-realization. Can a hungry person be satisfied until he has had a proper meal? So also should you not rest until you have realized Him. To yearn intensely for Him is fitting. Unless the fire of divine agitation is ignited one cannot take to this path. You must be determined not to waver from the path until you have attained to the unbroken realization of Divinity. It is necessary to feed the body regularly with the correct food; food means whatever is absorbed into oneself. Sleep is also a kind of food; seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling constitute food for the sensory organs. The average *sādhaka* should advance while providing regulated and controlled intake of all necessities. The middle road is right for aspirants in general. The case of exceptional devotees is altogether different.

Question : Self-dedication is possible only so long as one remains in the realm of intelligence. But there comes a stage when intelligence ceases to function. What is to be done then?

Mataji : Does the intelligence become numb or inert (*jaḍa*)?

Question : No, it becomes extinct (*laya*).

Mataji : The intelligence can become extinct in various ways. I am not now speaking of a condition in which illumination takes place. So long as illumination does not supervene, the intelligence can only become extinct by sinking into inert oblivion. When there is no light and enlightenment has not occurred this is a sign of becoming buried in complete ignorance. Where there is no consciousness one is submerged in insensibility. For instance when waking up from sleep one

may experience great joy, but this joy is not the bliss of Brahman. Thus, this is also a kind of hunger.

Question : Although not the supreme bliss of Brahman, yet it must surely be at least a reflection of it ?

Mataji : The joy derived from deep sleep is bliss under cover of ignorance. Suppose you sit in meditation. You reach maximum concentration and are not aware of external matters. When rising from such a meditation, you feel a sense of intense inner joy. But until and unless full Enlightenment has taken place, it is important to understand that nothing has been achieved.

Question : But I get totally drowned in such a state. Who is there to understand and what is to be understood ?

Mataji : It is very harmful to be in an unconscious state. You have been caught in inertia. To become immersed in insensibility is not desirable. How can you continue to live in a state where the mind cannot become enlightened ? Inertia has seized and reduced you to submission, This is why it is said in our scriptures that real skill leads to well-being (*kuśal*).

Questioner : (Quoting from the Gita), “Yoga is skill in action (*Yoga karma sukauśalam*)”.

Mataji : The yoga of skill in action, this is what works. You all know what is written in the *Śāstras*. If you allow your mind to be lost in torpor, this is tantamount to its being paralyzed.

Question : How can we be delivered from such a situation ?

Mataji : Think of a *saṁnyāsī* who after taking *saṁnyāsa*

discriminates between the real and the unreal and then sits down to meditate. Likewise those who practise mantra japa must have a clear knowledge of its meaning.

Ultimately one has to progress beyond the *śabda* (word, sound). In the meantime the “word” is your constant companion. What is *śabda* ? It is a form of light.

Question : Light ? Does it then lead to revelation ?

Mataji : What is a letter (*akṣara*) ? Light. Why ? You yourself are light. Who are you ? Can you exist without sound (*śabda*) ?

Even in the event of Enlightenment, sound is not absent. Whenever there is friction the display of light can be perceived. What is vibration ? Light Itself. *Akṣara* (what cannot be destroyed) is also Light Itself. Form is also light in essence. If there is *ātmājyoti* (the Light of the Self), why should there not be the light of sound (*śabdajyoti*) ?

Question : Does sound become extinct in *samādhi* ?

Mataji : Sound merges into *Mahājyoti* (Supreme Light). Try to go even beyond light. Where actually do light, bliss, dejection, extinction, agitation, exist ? The *Atmā* has been called “*Mahājyoti* (Great Light). What do your scriptures say ? (Everybody starts laughing.) This is why one should have recourse to the *Mahāvākyas**. These *mahāvākyas* are purely vibra-

* *Mahāvākya* “Great sentence” a supreme utterance fixing the nature of Self and Reality in a *sādhaka*'s awareness. “That art thou” “All this is Brahman”, etc. were revealed in vedic times and have been passed down through the ages as a means to awaken the disciple to the most universal Truth.

tion. In order to establish consciousness devotees take refuge in the *mahāvākas*. The *sādhaka* who aspires to Self-realization meditates on "I am Brahman." This awareness or inner recollection should be kept burning continuously like a fire. If it becomes extinct in unconsciousness then the door to inner light will be closed. This light is present within you. What is hidden inside has to be revealed. To reveal means to become manifest outside. If you become a prey to unconsciousness, the door leading to inspiration, to mantras, *mahāvākya*s and the like is shut for you. When there is torpor, dullness, insensibility, how can revelation come about? Recollection, awareness, remembrance of TRUTH which IS, must be constantly kept alive so as not to become submerged in insensibility. If one remains wide awake what will happen? Ah! What can be revealed? You yourself are indeed Revelation. When meditating your one and only purpose must be Self realization, Self-knowledge. Whatever you come to know through discrimination or discussion you should keep alive in your mind. This is the only means to drive away the dark clouds of ignorance.

No sooner had Mataji stopped talking than a certain gentleman said :

"Mataji, a rule has been made here to the effect that whoever uses Bengali as the medium of expression has to pay the penalty of distributing rasagollas.

Mataji : If I have to provide rasagollas, then I shall ask you, *Pitaji*, to bring them.

Once I was travelling by rail. I forbade those who were with me to buy a ticket for myself. So I boarded the train

without ticket. After a few stations the checker came. I said : "Pitaji, why don't you get me a ticket and then you can check it yourself." On hearing this the poor man let me travel without a ticket. Later he took me to his home to give me food and moreover presented me with clothes to wear.

In this vein discussion continued. In the course of it Sri Haribabaji Maharaj arrived with his devotees. With great care Mataji and Her people arranged for him to be seated. Thereupon he suggested that those who had experienced any miraculous incidents in connection with Ma should relate them. Since everyone remained silent, Sri Haribabaji asked Dr. Pannalal to speak. But Dr. P. hesitated, saying : "I have been trying to collect such articles but upto now only Kantibhai* has sent me one. So I suggest that he should speak." Dr. P. and Sri Haribabaji kept on insisting but Kantibhai felt very shy. In the meanwhile a sister devotee named Sm. Kamalabehn started relating her own experiences.

(*To be (continued)*)

* Kantibhai was the original name of Swami Bhagavatananda.

My First Darsana* of Anandamayi Ma

Anil Ganguli

It was one of the coldest nights in Northern India on January, 31st 1947. The Delhi-Calcutta Express was about to leave Delhi Junction. As I had no reservation, I was frantically rushing from one end of the platform to the other in search of accommodation. The porter led me to a vacant compartment and there was nothing to indicate that it had been reserved. So, I took the earliest opportunity of occupying one of its berths and lay on it, dead tired. It happened to be an upper berth—a fact which eventually proved to be of great significance.

Then some respectable ladies and gentlemen appeared on the scene. One of them told me that the compartment had been reserved for Ma Anandamayi and convinced me that the porter had misled me. I realized that I had landed myself in trouble. I had no doubt that law, equity, convention - everything was against me. I deserved to be turned out of the compartment as a trespasser. But I was not. I overheard the sweet voice of a Bengali lady: "Leave *Baba* (the poor child) alone; he is so tired." I could not see the lady, but was agreeably surprised and deeply touched by the sympathetic tone of her voice. The sense of the words uttered by her was comforting, the sound simply captivating. My first

* *Darśana* literally means sight or vision. One speaks of having *darśana* of a saint or deity which means "to be blessed by his sight and presence".

impulse was to be chivalrous and to leave the compartment. But expediency prompted me to pretend that I was sleeping, and I did fall asleep within a few minutes. I did not bother myself about my fellow passengers; nor did they bother about me.

My sleep was, from time to time, disturbed - not by any human agency, but by dreams. Again and again I saw visions of Puri. Incidentally, Puri is closely associated with my spiritual life. In 1928, a Mahātmā gave me *aikṣa* (initiation) in the temple of Lord Jagannatha at Puri. I was not a willing party to the ritual and it made no impression on my mind. At that time I belonged to that group of serious students of Presidency College who believed in living an ethically clean life of austerity, service and sacrifice, but were sincerely of the opinion that too much of religion had resulted in India's downfall. It was out of this conviction that I had, on principle, ignored my initiation into religious life, but faithfully stuck to my idealism.

Early next morning I awoke, refreshed. The glow in the eastern sky indicated that sunrise was near at hand. I was lying on my upper berth and the lower berth on the opposite side was occupied by a lady. We were lying diagonally opposite each other. This was a strange coincidence.

And what did I see at this first sight? An exquisitely beautiful and radiant face of a motherly lady with a pair of sparkling eyes; a cluster of black, silken hair overflowing her pillow and swinging in rhythm with the movement of the train; her body wrapped up to the neck in a spotlessly clean, white sheet. I felt that a pencil of rays linked, as it were, the

eyes of that motherly lady with mine. Her gracious gaze was focussed on me. That gaze seemed to penetrate into every fibre of my being. It was so loving, so soothing, so purifying ! Later I was told that she was Ma Anandamayi and that by such a gaze she often makes, as it were, an X-ray examination of a person's personality. Be that as it may, I seemed to read a mystic message in that gaze - a message of warm welcome from a mother, ready and willing to take charge of a forgetful child. I have no language to describe the ethereal charm of the motherly lady's face and its serenity. Within a few seconds I was almost unconsciously transported into a mood of adoration and worship. My eyes were automatically closed in silent salutation.

After some time I recovered from this almost bewildering effect of the first contact. I then opened my eyes, but found the Mother's face covered up. I was disappointed. I came down from my upper berth and wanted a seat on the lower berth just below mine. Part of it had been occupied by an old *samnyāsini*. She looked the very picture of peacefulness. As I came to know later, she was Didima, the mother of Ma Anandamayi. Evidently, Didima was then immersed in japa. She did not speak to me but made a kindly gesture, offering me a seat on her berth and sprinkling holy Ganga water on my head. I appreciated Didima's courtesy, but frankly speaking, I did not like the freezing temperature of the drops of water that moistened my forehead on that cold winter morning.

Soon I discovered to my dismay that my fellow passengers were all ladies and I was the only male in the compartment. I felt extremely embarrassed. Barring the sound of

the rolling stock, pin-drop silence prevailed in the compartment. Didima suddenly gave me a mild note of warning that her belongings were not to be touched. I was not quite conversant with the sanctions and inhibitions governing the orthodox Hindu way of life. I felt uneasy in the company of my fellow passengers, evidently conservative in their outlook. I concluded that discretion would be the better part of valour. So, I packed up my bedding and prepared myself for a change of compartment.

The Mother had in the meanwhile uncovered her face and was sitting on her berth, tenderly looking at me. The train stopped at a wayside station and I tried to leave the compartment. But the Mother would not let me go. She gently asked me, "where are you going?" Instead of replying to her question, I simply apologized to her for my "trespassing" into a ladies' compartment. She uttered two words in an East Bengal dialect "*Ashaw, bawshaw* (come, sit)", and offered me a seat just beside her. We sat fairly close to each other and my right arm accidentally came into direct contact with her left arm. My whole system thrilled with a peculiar sensation of joy and peace. I forgot, for the moment, that I was a grown-up male and a complete stranger. I was being transported, as it were, to a new sphere.

The Delhi Express moved on slowly. Sitting so close to the Mother, I had the delightful feeling that I was being caressed by my own mother. Her very presence inhibited speech. It was a unique experience indeed : For some time there was no exchange of words between us until she broke the silence. She asked me several questions of a personal

nature in the manner of an inquisitive stranger—my name, occupation and residence; also details about my family, the purpose of my visit to Delhi and so forth. I answered fully each and every question, naively assuming that I had thereby given her much information about myself. I could then hardly imagine that she knew more of me than I did myself. In fact, my knowledge was limited to my conscious mind whereas she could, as I have since convinced myself, read the sub-conscious too, and even more.

We talked on all kinds of subjects. Religion or spirituality did not figure prominently in the conversation. Occasionally, our talk was being enlivened by the intermittent intervention of a middle-aged lady with an impressive appearance and of an imposing personality. She was Sri Gurupriya Devi (popularly known as Didi, that is to say, elder sister), the great author of the invaluable literature published under the caption of “*Sri Sri Anandmayi Ma*”. I was not interested in her books. What really pleased me was her kindly offer of *Prasāda* (sacramental food) as I was very hungry. But there was a snag in the offer : Didi added that she was waiting for me to change my clothes before I took *prasāda*. I told her that I was not in the habit of changing in the morning. I added that I should be much obliged if I got some food from her, otherwise I would order breakfast elsewhere. My apathy to *prasāda* was bad enough. My attitude was worse still. Didi looked sullen. The Mother, however, seemed to be indulgent. She observed that the rules regarding changing of clothes were not for me. This one gesture from her was enough to make Didi all smiles and she gave me *prasāda*. I appreciated the Mother’s “liberal” outlook and enjoyed the delicacies received from Didi.

Our conversation, temporarily interrupted by the *prasāda* episode, was resumed by the Mother. Without any preamble she asked me to sing a song. Unhesitatingly I at once sang a song by Tagore. And then I had an unprecedented experience - she seemed to be pleased with my performance and asked me to sing more songs. For a normal listener one musical recital by me would be boring enough.

By that time I had become very free with the Mother and felt like addressing her as “*Ma*”. Incidentally, I told her that there was a pathetic story which spoilt my prospect of becoming a great musician. The Mother expressed her curiosity to hear the story, but Didi suddenly rushed in for a private interview with her. During the confidential conversation Didi’s “whispering” was loud enough to outvoice the noise of the running train and her points ranged from the sublime to the ridiculous. The Mother’s replies were terse and cryptic. But the dialogue, thanks to Didi, seemed to be never-ending. As the Mother’s destination was not far ahead, I was impatiently longing for an opportunity to talk to her. My wish was fulfilled quite unexpectedly. The Mother abruptly and unceremoniously cut short Didi’s private and turned to me for my “pathetic story”. I told her that a connoisseur of music who regularly used to listen to my voice-training practice, once wondered whether I thought that my song was in tune with my stringed instrument. Hearing my confident answer in the affirmative he remarked in despair, ‘well, if that is your assessment, I am afraid music is not your line’. Thereupon I bade good-bye to music.

I had previously narrated this sad experience of mine to several persons. Every listener enjoyed the fun, laughed at

my cost for a few seconds and there the matter ended. But the Mother's reaction was simply amazing and almost terrifying. An insignificant event, or rather an adverse opinion, had spoilt the doubtful prospect of my becoming a great musician. This fact proved hilarious enough for the Mother to create a scene. She suddenly burst into loud laughter which continued until she was half exhausted. After a short pause, she started laughing again and would not stop until she was almost out of breath. This fit of laughter went on relapsing at short intervals. The Mother's face turned red, tears rolled down her cheeks and at times she seemed to be almost reaching the point of suffocation. All this was terrifying beyond measure. Didi sternly stared at me with a look of concerned consternation and I was made to feel that I was responsible for the mischief. I failed to realize how I was at all to blame. I never had the faintest idea that the simple narration of my discomfiture could possibly lead to such a serious climax. I had a mixed feeling of embarrassment and apprehension of an unforeseen calamity. I was disgusted with myself for my decision to continue travelling in the ladies' compartment. I learnt from practical experience that the Mother was absolutely unpredictable.

This time Didi came to my rescue. She gently suggested to me that the mischief could be remedied only by offering prayer to the Mother. I considered it worth while to experiment. With all the sincerity I could command I prayed to God (and not to the Mother as advised), that nothing untoward might happen to the strange lady. Instantaneously the Mother's alarming symptoms disappeared. She again became as charming as before—a gentle smile replaced her roaring

erratic laughter. A possible calamity was averted. Was it due to my prayer? I preferred to explain it as a coincidence.

The train stopped at an important station, Fatehpur, if I remember rightly. Several devotees forced their way into our compartment and prostrated themselves before the Mother. I then thought it was also my duty to do so. As the train left the station I bowed to the Mother in reverence and was about to touch her feet when Didi stopped me in a peremptory manner. Her firmness suggested that my conduct had been objectionable. I could not understand why. Incidentally, it is the time-honoured custom of Hindus to touch the feet of a superior person as a mark of respect for him or her. I did not know if there was any particular reason for not touching the Mother's feet. I imploringly looked at the Mother, expecting support from her. Had she not already saved me out of several awkward situations? But even the Mother let me down this time. In fact, she seemed to approve of Didi's objection. She would not permit me to touch her feet. I felt hurt. Have I not begun inwardly to regard her as my mother? What does she mean by depriving a child of its natural right and privilege to touch its mother's feet? Anyway, I quickly finished a formal salutation from a distance and immediately thereafter I left the Mother's berth and shifted to the berth on the opposite side.

Lest the unpleasant episode should leave any trace of bitterness in my mind, I turned to nature's beauty for solace. I looked at the extensive fields and the limitless sky for the "healing touch of nature". Nature, however, failed to assuage my aggrieved heart. The more I tried mentally to move away from the Mother, the closer I felt drawn towards her;

and this was so in spite of her apparent apathy. It was a mystery to me. I felt distressed by these conflicting emotions. But the cloud of my mind vanished and my heart leapt with joy when suddenly the voice of the Mother reached my ears—“Why not come to this bench?” I looked at her and noticed an apparently mischievous smile on her face. I came back to the Mother and she resumed talking to me, as if nothing had happened in the meantime. This was enough for me to forget my childish pique.

Now I found the Mother in a serious mood. She started with a question; “Do your people expect you to be back home tomorrow?” I replied, “No, Ma, they do not”. “That’s all right”, observed the Mother. I failed to understand the implication of such a remark. Her second question was; “Is anybody expected to receive you at the Railway Station?” I said, “No”. The Mother repeated her first remark: “That’s all right”. I was unpleasantly surprised because a repetition of the same remark seemed to confirm her apparently unsympathetic attitude. A mother who attracts and repels, alternatively, seemed an enigma to me. Indeed, her “That’s all right” remained a mystery to me for the time being. Within a few minutes, however, I discovered that it had a deep significance for my future life.

The train stopped at Allahabad, the Mother’s destination. I was about to bid her good-bye, when she said in East Bengal accent “*Lamo*” (get down). I was puzzled. I did not follow as to who was being addressed. The Mother smilingly looked at me and said, with a strong accent in East Bengal style, “*Laimya paro* (do get down)”. Didi explained to me that a lower berth from Allahabad to Calcutta had already been

reserved for me by the next convenient train and that I was to break my journey at Allahabad for a few hours. All this had been inspired by the Mother and arranged by Didi without my knowledge. I helplessly saw my luggage being carried to the platform by two bright-looking boys who had come to receive the Mother at the Railway Station. I got down, as desired. I had no option in the matter. The Mother asked me to get into her car. I did so and sat by her side. Our destination was the confluence of the Ganga and the Jamuna. *Ardha Kumbha Mela*, a periodical congregation of saints and sages, was going on there. The "Ma Anandamayi Camp" consisting of a large number of tents, had been set up for the occasion under the supervision of Dr. Pannalal, I. C. S., since deceased. The assembly of holy men in the sacred place on that auspicious occasion was a sight for the gods to see.

I stayed at Allahabad as the Mother's guest for about eight hours. She introduced me to Dr. Pannalal, who treated me with paternal care and accommodated me in his own tent. Then he told me in detail his rich experience of spiritual pursuits and read out portions of his book 'Ma Anandamayi'. Suddenly Dr. Pannalal stopped and took me to the dining place where we had *prasāda*. The food served there was more delicious than any I had ever tasted. What added to its charm was the fact that the Mother herself served one of the items and smilingly told me that I should not feel shy nor hesitate to ask for more if I wished. Her hospitality was unexcelled. It deeply touched my heart.

After *prasād* Dr. Pannalal again took me to his tent and enlightened me on certain points raised by me. He genuinely tried to be helpful to me. From his experience he warned me

against a strictly rationalistic approach and advised me that in the spiritual field there was no alternative to faith. Though not fully convinced by his argument, I was touched by the ring of sincerity in his words which seemed to carry conviction. His views were supported by some elderly devotees, benefited by their long association with the Mother. I was much impressed by the narration of the experience of these venerable persons as recipients of the Mother's grace. It set me thinking from a new point of view.

Commencing from my entry into a ladies' compartment, followed by my vision of Puri in dreams, a series of "coincidences" occurred, each preparing my mind for the climax yet to follow. The time for my departure was drawing nigh. The sun was sinking down to rest on Ganga-Jamuna's breast. Its mellowed rays were reflected on the Mother as She was proceeding from her tent to ours. Her face, as I had seen it at dawn, had been charming; what I saw at dusk was majestic.

The Mother came right up to me and blessed me by touching me. Then She uttered certain words which touched my soul. These words are too sacred to be repeated and too personal to be disclosed. They shook the foundation of my so-called rationalism. They showed me light and kindled in me a new type of spiritual aspiration. My initiation, treated under the cold shade of neglect since 1928, was revitalised. I became inspired to be true to the Mahātmā who had given me initiation. I realized, for the first time, that I should have at least made an honest experiment on the path shown by him instead of rejecting it straight away. The Mother's glance at me filled my heart with regret for opportunities lost in the past and with hope for a bright prospect in the future. Better late than never - this was the soul-stirring message I received from the Mother. And this was the beginning of a new chapter in my life.*

* This article is based on the writer's diary published in Bengali in Volume I of *Ananda Vartā* about twenty-five years ago.

Tagore's Exposition of the Philosophy of Ancient India

Dr. Byomkesh Chakravorty, Ph. D.

Rabindranath's '*Shantiniketan*' is a collection of essays, written in Bengali and numbering more than one hundred and fifty. Originally published in seventeen volumes, they were afterwards compiled and published in two volumes by Visva-bharati Publishing House, Calcutta. These essays can be counted among the gems of Bengali literature. Unfortunately, most of them have remained untranslated into any other language, so far as I know. In the simple and inimitable style of the poet, they give a beautifully lucid exposition of the philosophy of ancient India. In this article I shall make an attempt to give the substance of Tagore's two essays in Bengali, entitled *Visva Bodha* and *Karma Yoga*.

In his essay '*Visva Bodha*' (Universal Consciousness) Tagore writes :

Every nation has its own idea of human excellence. Physical strength, or intellectual brilliance, or moral purity have been recognised as the chief factors of greatness and all the efforts of each nation have been directed to produce the best men of its conception. Ancient India also had her own ideal of human greatness. Those who were regarded as the greatest men in Ancient India were the Rishis.

Who were the Rishis? Neither rich nor powerful, they had realised the Universal Self in their minds and hearts and visualised Him in the outside world of action. They had realised His presence everywhere. It is, therefore, clear that India considered the highest fulfilment of human life to be not the amassment of riches, the acquisition of power, but entering into close communion with the Universal Self and thus realising the identity of the individual and the universal.

Man is great not because he can plunder and destroy, nor because he can earn and hoard, nor even because he can invent and discover, but because he can make all his own. Man's knowledge is limited; his power is circumscribed; but the expansion of his Self knows no frontiers. The greatest men of the world have realised in their consciousness the unity of mankind. They have emphatically declared that all human beings, great or small, high or low, enemy or friend, are their kith and kin. They have realised universal consciousness and have reached the goal of human life.

Some of the modern philosophers of Europe think that the Brahman of Indian conception is merely an abstract being; that the Infinite is based on a complete negation of everything in the universe. In other words, He exists nowhere except in philosophical speculation. This is, however, not the true philosophy of India. Indeed, the philosophers of other countries have not dared to go as far as the Rishis of ancient India in emphasising the supreme need of realising the Infinite among all the objects of the universe.

The message of the Upanishad is :

Iśāvāsyamidam sarvam yat kiñcha

*jagatyām jagat.**

'Realise the pervasive presence of God everywhere in the universe'.

And again the Upanishad says :

Yo devo agnou yo apsu

Yo viśvam bhuvanamā viveśa |

Ya ośadhīsu yo vanapatiśu

*Tasmai devāya namo namaḥ |***

'He is there in fire and water and there is no conflict between the two in Him. He is there in cereal plants which grow, develop and die out in a short period of time and He is also there in the huge trees of the forest living for hundreds of years as symbols of eternity. Not only should we know that He is everywhere; we should make our obeisance to Him everywhere'.

What is the nature of Brahman ?

Jaśchayamsminnākāśe tejomayohmri tamayah

Puruṣa sarvānubhu |

Jaśchayamasminnātmani tejomayomritamayah

*Puruṣa sarvānubhu****

'That immortal glorious Being whose all-embracing consciousness pervades the sky and the Self is Brahman'.

This means that if we want to realise Brahman, we have to make our consciousness all-embracing. Indeed, the march of human civilisation is nothing else but the expansion

* Isha Upanishad, 1.

** Śvetāsvatar Upanishad II/17.

*** Brihadāranyakopanishad 2-5-10 & 14.

of man's consciousness. Expansion of consciousness means an extension of the feeling of identity with others. It denotes an ever-widening horizon of love and sympathy for fellow-creatures. India has always laid the greatest emphasis on the development of this Universal Consciousness. Our Gāyatrī mantram aims at the realisation of this consciousness through contemplation. It is for the evolution of this consciousness that the Upanishad tells us to realise the Self in all living beings and all living beings in the Self. And the teachings of the Lord Buddha also aim at the expansion of human consciousness till it becomes universal in its all-embracing love.

We have inherited this precious spiritual heritage from the past. We have to prove ourselves worthy of it. We must bridge our differences of caste, creed, religion and nationality and welcome all persons, great and small, friends and strangers, as our own. In all our relations with individuals and nations we must remember Him whose manifestations are varied but not antagonistic. Therefore we must see Him and feel His presence in our homes, our society, our country and in the whole world.

*Yastu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmanyevānupaśyati sarva bhuteṣu chātmānam tato na vijugupsate||**

'He who sees all living beings in the Self and the Self in all living beings does not hate anyone'.

Ancient India gave the message of unity, love and peace. The time has come for us to reinforce that message so as to solve the present problems of the world. The clash of conflic-

* Ishopanishad 6,

ting forces and aggressive nationalism have posed a serious problem to mankind. It shall be our *sādhana* to remove all difference between man and man. India must once more tell the civilised world that the highest end of life is to gain neither wealth nor power but to realise the immortality of the Self. And this can be achieved when we grow into universal consciousness and are united with the All.

II

In his essay entitled *Karmayoga* (Gospel of Action) Rabindranath says :

The divine invitation that we have received to attend the joyous festival of the universe has often been ignored by science which has discovered that all phenomena are controlled by Law. But this is no secret known only to scientists. The Rishis of ancient India had already declared that not only the winds blew and fire burned but even death strode upon the earth in obedience to the supreme Law of the Universe. If that is so, the question arises : What is the place of joy in the world of law ?

The truth of the matter is that the universe has two aspects : the aspect of Law and the aspect of Joy. The Upanishad which says,

Bhīṣāsmādagnīśchendraśch mriturdhāvati panchamaiti
also says : *Ānandādhyen khalvimāni, bhūtāni jāyante.***

“All things have their source in joy. He who is blissfully free reveals Himself through the bonds of law.”

** Taitiriyepanishad 2/8/1 & 3/6.

The Upanishad also says :

*Anandam brahmano vidvān na bibheti kutaschana**

Those who have realised that universal joy expresses itself through universal law have no fear. They acknowledge the bondage of law but that is also the bondage of joy for them like the lover's clasp for the beloved. They feel the intensity of joy in the midst of bondage. In fact, where there is no law, there is chaos and suffering.

Just as law is supposed by some persons to be opposed to joy, action is also considered by some people as opposed to freedom. But we have to remember that the soul liberates itself through action even as joy reveals itself through law. As man performs his action, he realises the potentialities within him in the outside world and, in doing so, has a clearer and broader vision of his personality.

The Iśa Upanishad says :

*Kurvanneveha karmāni jijivišet śatam samāh***

'Desire to live a hundred years in the performance of action'.

Those who have realised the Self have never said that life is full of sorrow and action is bondage. Miseries and misfortunes cannot cow them down. They reveal the glory and dignity of the Self through joys and sorrows and, like victorious heroes, stride across the path of life. It is wrong to suggest that action must be given up before we can enter

* Taitiriyopanishad 2/4.

** Iśopanishad 2,

spiritual life. It can never do good to separate the spiritual life from the outside world of action.

The truth of the matter is that Brahman is to be realised in contemplation as well as in action. If we say that we shall realise Him only in our meditation banishing Him from the outside world, or if we say that we shall realise Him only in the world of action and not in contemplation, we shall upset the balance of life and pave the way for our downfall.

We find that the western mind is primarily concerned with the outside world. It thinks that endless development of power is the goal of life. There is reckless rivalry and competition in the west for gaining material wealth and power. In our country the danger comes from the opposite extreme. We emphasise the life of contemplation and ignore the life of action. We want to realise Brahman through meditation and not through the daily activities of the world. That is why we often find a kind of spiritual insanity among our religious aspirants. Our blind faith recognises no law, our imagination has no limitations, our customs and conventions owe no explanation to reason. Our emotions find an outlet in tears instead of translating the love of God into service to humanity. This has brought about our downfall and degeneration.

Truth has two aspects : the one is the bondage of law and the other is the freedom of joy. We can therefore realise the joy of freedom only when we accept the bondage of law. When the different strings of a musical instrument are closely tied up according to law, they can produce sweet and melodious tunes in perfect freedom. When the various activities of

our daily life are controlled by the law of truth, we realise the fulfilment of life in perfect freedom. It is through action, and not through inaction, that we can attain liberation.

It is not the renunciation of action but the performance of our daily activities in tune with the Infinite that must be the ideal of life.

Jatijāt karma prakuroitā tadbrahmani samarpayet

All our actions must be offerings to the Brahman. The individual self shall dedicate itself to the eternal Self through all its actions and therein lies its true freedom. When all our actions are performed with the spirit of surrender to the Divine, they lead us to the path of union with the Brahman. Man unfolds his personality through his actions. The sky-high temple of human glory and civilisation that has been built through centuries is the result of untiring efforts of men and women all over the world. Humanity has marched forward from age to age in its thundering chariot of action with triumphant flags fluttering in the sky. Do you suppose that this triumphant march of humanity from pre-historic times right up to the present age has no directing force to guide it towards a divine fulfilment? Do you think you can realise God by escaping from this world of humanity? That would be sheer cowardice. We must boldly declare that He is here in our midst. We must remove all falsehood, selfishness and impurity from our actions and then we shall be happy to realise His presence in our daily activities of life.

The poet reveals his joy in his poetry, the artist in his art, the brave in his power, the wise in his discovery of truth; but he who has realised the Brahman seeks to reveal the Infinite through beauty, truth, goodness and harmony in his

daily actions, great and small. The river finds its fulfilment in its flowing towards the sea, the fire in bursting out in flames, and the perfume in pervading the atmosphere. We realise our divine fulfilment when all our actions are directed towards the Infinite. Let us boldly accept this human life which has been granted to us. We should sing His glories in the fields of action. We shall worship God by offering all our actions at His feet. The miseries and misfortunes of the poor and the downtrodden, the joys of union, the hopes and aspirations of mankind are all beckoning us to share in the common festival of life. Let us purify our actions and offer them as sacrifices on the altar of humanity.

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"In the new year every *sādhaka* should make efforts for new realizations."

Sri Anandamayi Ma

Lord Siva Dances as the World Dissolves

Ram Alexander

Lord Siva dances as the world dissolves,
Into Nothingness all life evolves.
Surrounded by His ganas, goblins and freaks,
The immortal *pranava* is all He speaks.

With His trident, His drum and His skull
He roams about Mount Kailash upon His noble bull.
Snakes and rudraksha beads entwine His neck of blue,
In samādhi on His tiger skin He created me and you.

The crescent moon adorns His matted hair,
This form of Śiva is the truth found everywhere.
Lord Śiva dances as the world dissolves,
Into Nothingness all life evolves.

The fruits of action are pleasure and pain,
This creates samskāras which bring birth again and again.
There is no escape from this dreadful dream we live
Unless at Lord Siva's feet everything we give.

Through destruction of this illusory life of pain
Lord Siva brings us back into union with Him again,
Lord Siva dances as the world dissolves.
Into Nothingness all life evolves.

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What is Sadhana ? How can it be Practised in the West ?*

Ma Suryananda Lakshmi

(Continued from the last issue)

Let us now turn to the visions of truth that are not to be denied but have to be put into proper perspective like all things. There is a general rule to be remembered : God, the Absolute, Consciousness, *Saccidānanda* (Being which is Consciousness and Bliss), indivisible, is beyond all name and form. Therefore the less precise the apparitions the nearer are they to Truth, the less they lay out a particular pattern the more valuable and the closer are they to Supreme Reality which is God. One also should understand that it is very important to forget them as quickly as possible. Of course, when they are genuine one has to welcome them with faith and serenity and endeavour to understand their entire substance; but it is even more important not to depend on them and to forget them in order to find the purity of nothingness described by St. John of the Cross in his Mount Carmel. For the vision has nothing to do with the human being but rather with the Lord within him; and the ascent towards the happy union of everlasting repose, of that transcendental fusion of the Infinite with the finite, of the Eternal with the transient, this is the path where God increases and the individual diminishes and finally disappears into the Light which is all.

* Translated from a French talk published in "Panharmonie", Paris, Sept. and Nov. 1975.

Mystic forgetting is one of the most important elements of *sādhana*. Almost daily I receive letters in which people tell me that they have “seen” or experienced this, that and the other. This is all right, provided one sacrifices it immediately on the altar where the ego has to die. “Lord, Thou alone knowest, Thou art and Thou doest”. “I will not touch it.” There is another passage from the Gospels to which I should like to draw your attention. I am referring to the 20th chapter of the Gospel of St. John. It is Easter morning, Peter and John have been called by Mary and Magdalene. They find the stone removed and the tomb empty. They go back to inform the other disciples. Mary stays outside of the sepulchre, weeping and looking for her Lord. Then suddenly she hears a voice calling her. She turns round and recognises Jesus. She dashes forward, shouting ‘Rabboni’ which means ‘Master’. But Jesus stops her, saying : “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God” (St. John, 20 : 17.) It seems to me that many errors could have been avoided if one had dwelt upon that tiny sentence : “Touch me not !”

The intellect, dualistic by its very nature, the reason of human beings must not touch what they cannot understand without dying to themselves. One must not meddle with revelation because one perverts it, one attributes it to the dualistic life of individuality instead of offering it to the Lord who is the All, who is our infinite superconsciousness, our immortal being. Thus, first of all one has to learn not to interfere. If anything happens during the day that troubles or hurts us.....“Lord, Thou alone knowest, I will not touch it. Deign to dispose my heart to prayer, my mind to wisdom,

and my actions to peace." Suppose something else that occurs makes us happy : "Lord, I will not touch it, deign to accept it, for Thou alone knowest what is for my highest good, which is also the best for all." Look, it is so wonderful to be without ego, to strive for this no matter what may happen ! "Lord, Thou doest what is for the best," and I myself try only not to be the one who reaps the fruit of the action, the harvest. The Bhagavad Gitā, the divine song of Lord Krishna says : "You have a right to the action but not to the fruit thereof." Jesus says the same in different words : "The harvest belongs to the Master of the house," not like a tyrant who takes away the merits and the profits of the work, but because our true gain. Man's only real harvest is the knowledge of God; the only valuable fruit of our actions is the love of God which grows in us, the vision of His glory that is our transfiguration into saintliness.

In this manner we arrive at the heart of *sādhanā* which is the love of God. In India there is one Deity who is praised, loved and glorified, namely Viṣṇu, more especially His two incarnations as Rāma, the founder of family and society, and Kṛṣṇa, the incarnation of the Absolute, of perfect love. In India people go about singing : "Om, Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram," the tutelary and saving aspect of the Divine that accompanies man and awakens him to his original reality. Or else : "Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa !" and it is said that he who experiences the sweetness of Sri Kṛṣṇa's love in his heart is blessed indeed. We all are greatly in need of loving and of feeling ourselves loved. *Sādhanā* is the path of perfect love, a love that does not seek the satisfaction of the small human being which we are down here, but its perfection, its

divine beauty; a love where we gradually discover in ourselves the great Self that we are which is God and the All. The destiny of the world is brotherhood, nay identification, the merging of man with God and through Him and in Him with the universe and what it contains. For the fusion of man with all humanity in God is the great aspect of *sādhana*, its supreme realization, *viñāna*, of which Ramakrishna speaks, the union with the Divine that is beyond even merging into the Absolute; which descends again to earth and which is the Absolute down here. This is the aim, the ultimate goal of *sādhana*, not the exclusive state of *samādhi*, of ecstasy, where God and man are one, where the creature feasts on the Eternal—but beyond that beatitude, the return to humanity where everything henceforth is God. St. John of the Cross has also spoken of this. He explains that the saint who has tasted of the spiritual marriage with God, when opening his eyes again, sees nothing on earth but the Divine alone. The landscape has changed entirely. Here lies the proof that our inner experiences are valid, that we are not deceiving ourselves about those subtle and incorporeal contacts that we can have within ourselves with God. There is first of all a complete indifference to what may happen to us; then a deep peace regardless of the events that take place, and finally a love which nothing can change anymore. Roudha said: "One must live a truth that profits one and all and excludes nobody and nothing."

After Christ's death the disciples were mistaken; they thought that the Gospels were meant for the Jews only. The long preparation related in chapters 10 and 11 of the Acts of the Apostles was necessary to guide Peter to meet Cornelius the Italian and to speak to him of God, to understand that

“God is no respecter of persons : But in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.” (10 : 34-35). How can even a single child of the Creator be excluded from the life of his Father ? Everything belongs to God, everything comes from Him and returns to Him.

Now let us consider a conception in Hindu *sādhana* which is perhaps not always very clear to westerners : the Divine Mother. She is the Creative Power of Brahman, the Power of manifestation of the unexpressed Divine in creation. It is said of the Divine Mother that She penetrates creation not only through Her powers, Her *vibhūti*s, but Herself; the Divine Mother is the whole of Creation. If there is an element in the Christian revelation that may be compared to that conception of the Divine Mother in order to understand it well, it is that of Christ. He is the first-born of all creatures, the beginning of God’s creation, the first-born among the living and the first-born among the dead; this is what is said in the Bible in different passages. The following is a short passage from the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians, Chapter 1, verses 15-17. “He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation : For in him were all things created in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and in him all things exist.” Christ may be compared to the Divine Mother, He is similar to Her, He is She in all His glory expressed and unexpressed, the revealed Son of the Father; one with Him, as She is one with the Brahman. “I am,” She says to Rama-krishna, “the *Saguna* and the *Nirguna* Brahman of the Upanishads.” With this marvellous conception of the Mother

Divine I want to terminate my discourse, for She is one of the most beautiful revelations of *sādhana*.

There is only one Divine Mother for Indian thought as well as for Her secular worship; and all of them are but particular aspects of the Unique One who is one and the same within all that exists. Four aspects have been specially described by the sages and adored by the people : Maheshwari, the impartial Lord of creation; Mahakali, the effulgent Mother of the realisation powerfully activated in us; Mahasaraswati, the Word of Truth, the goddess of perfection; and Mahalakshmi affluence, spiritual fecundity in its inexhaustible abundance. These four Mothers, these four Mās are present at every stage of *sādhana*, at every moment of life, at every step on the way of which Jesus says : "I am the way," that path which is in us, made of all we are and of all we realize. The Divine Mother is God embodied where She is the perfection of His unalterable law; She is God in the love where She is the purity of intelligence and of action; She is God in dualistic thought where She is the image as well as its origin, in the faith of the soul that rises towards unity, God the Spirit, God the Absolute. Immutably, pure, immutably true, She can impregnate us at every step by Her grace, by Her affection, by Her peace, by Her light, in the details of the accomplishment of our *sādhana*; of the perfection that one searches for within oneself in order to find God, to find, more precisely, serenity, bliss - that which will, one day really fulfil us.

Here again I should like to quote an important passage from the Bible when Jesus goes to John the Baptist to be baptized by him with the waters of the Jordan, at the moment

of his immersion. ".....and lo the heavens were opened unto him.....and lo a voice out of the heavens, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' " (S, Matthew 3/17). He is the fulness of divine realization, the perfect truth of his incarnation. Yet, he must, in everyone of us, become the path to be trodden and known in its entirety, the joy of accomplishment in the peace of its unalterable origin. *Sādhanā* has but one purpose : inner transformation so that we may be filled with a positive reality that will never disappoint us anymore : God and God alone, in all things and through all things; an outer transformation that gives birth to beatitude and saintliness.

And now a few little practical examples. When we have the impression that we have done wrong, that we have retrogressed instead of advancing, that we have in one way or another been unfaithful to our most precious ideal, it is good to become aware of this but bad to retain it in one's memory. One must forget it, lay it on the altar on which everything that belongs to individual life has to be immolated. One day someone told me : "Mā, I often lose my temper and this gives me pain. I should like to be free from anger and yet I always fall a prey to it. How to get rid of it ? I meditate, I pray to the Lord, but nothing helps." I replied : "Give your anger to me !" After some time that person wrote to me. "I should very much like to give you my anger but I don't know how to do this." I replied : "First of all, do not be afraid of your anger, this means giving it away. Then if it arises all the same, forget about it immediately. Offer it to God and do not think about it anymore. Leave the judgment of it to God." Since then the outbreaks of anger

have become less frequent. To give our difficulties to God means first of all not to be afraid of them; and then, if the trouble recurs, if we are unable to avoid, to overcome it, if we are trapped again and again, if we do what we should like so much not to do anymore, let us simply and sincerely say ; “Lord, I offer this to you. I have nothing else to offer, accept it. Make something good out of it, according to Thy Will.” I have surely not discovered anything new. This is a very ancient remedy. The Mohammedans regard as the basis, as the first step in the spiritual life this sincerity which consists of becoming conscious of our faults, of recognizing them and then forgetting them. One becomes what one thinks, what one believes in, what one feels, what one contemplates. This is *sādhana* ! If we reflect on the evil in us and in our surroundings, we enhance it. If we keep on remembering our faults, our shortcomings, we shall never get rid of them. One should become aware of them, take stock of them honestly only to forget them – in other words give them to the Lord, to that supreme Consciousness in us which judges them from the pedestal of Eternity and transfigures them in His glory. Does not Sri Kṛṣṇa say ? “I take on myself my creation and also my imperfection.” What a wonderful thing to say ! The Divine Mother - for it is She who incarnates as Kṛṣṇa, as Rāma – the Divine Mother carries Her creation and the apparent imperfection of that creation in the form and the name which limits Her down here. It is therefore unnecessary to catalogue our errors, our mistakes, our disloyalties. Rather let us contemplate everywhere as much as we possibly can, beauty, goodness, truth in ourselves and in our surroundings.

And now a very simple, practical advice : in the morn-

ing when you have woken up from sleep, washed and dressed, before taking your breakfast, you may, if you wish, take a small, clean bowl which you set apart for this purpose and rinse every time before filling it with fresh water. Place it in a corner known to you alone and let this chalice be your offering of the entire day. "Lord, may my soul be like this clear water that reflects Thy day." Every morning, this little ceremony, this tiny prayer that dedicates our day to the Divine—this is *sādhana*. And some time during the morning one has to call to memory that bowl of clear water that watches for us, that helps us to remain transparent ourselves. At midday reserve a moment, no matter where you may be (it happens to me that I do so in the train, at the post-office, in a shop, in the street); close your eyes, withdraw your attention from the world and think of the bowl, of God who is in us, where Eternity can be contemplated. And at night before finishing your day, before lying down to sleep, see in your heart the water of life that has remained untainted. Our soul also remains immaculate if we know how to offer it constantly to the heaven of our Lord. To love God means to love oneself in the best possible manner, to forget at every step insignificant appearance and to remind oneself that behind every one of our limited enterprises is God in His cosmic, universal, eternal proceeding; behind every beat of our heart there is that boundless love which never changes; behind our obvious or obscure afflictions there is that great light ever shining in perfect whiteness. "Let your thoughts be pure, let your actions be pure," said the Buddha. To know that God always walks with us, completely and totally. There is no part in us that is impure or has to be rejected. God walks with us step by step, with

our entire being. We have to be reborn to the consciousness of the Divine in all things. The consciousness of unity is the realization of absolute consciousness down here.

Meditation :

Behold my hands, O Lord, they are Thy work.

Behold my steps, O Lord, they are Thy path.

Behold my thoughts, O Lord, they are Thy
intelligence.

Behold my heart, O Lord, it is Thy love.

Behold my soul, O Lord, it is Thy joy.

Everything is within; the world is Thine enterprise in
eternity.

* * *

“The soul will be most perfect when it is thrown into the desert of Godhead, where both activity and forms are no more, so that it is sunk and lost in this desert where its identity is destroyed and it has no more to do with things than before it existed. Then it is dead to self and alive to God. What is dead to self is buried in the Godhead - desert.”

Meister Eckhart

My Trip to Ma

Radhapriya Wood

We are flying into Delhi now. I am so excited, all attempts to contain myself have been tossed to the winds. I am going to set foot on sacred ground in a few minutes, my heart is soaring. We land, and down the stairs we go, first one foot touches the ground, then the other. I am really here ! My Guru Paramahansa Yogananda's beloved India, I am here ! My whole being is thrilled by the holy vibrations, my soul a distinct blissful reality. I am going to meet my Divine Mother.

We taxi to our hotel, a truly wild ride through the busy streets, horns honking, bullock-carts jerking to get out of the way, camel-carts, more taxis and buses going in all directions, and the people, some in western dress, some in rags, and most of them in the traditional Hindu garb. All seems perfectly natural to me, a feeling of deep bliss overwhelms me...yes... this is the land where God has chosen to incarnate in the form of Anandamayi Ma; a power deeper even than my own soul is pulling me to Her feet.

We arrive at the hotel. My husband and myself had travelled with our dear friends Jyotipriya and her friends Shraddha and Satya, and their friends Kripa and Bhakti, Mahesh, Gopalapriya and her mother Lakshmi. Deep friendships were forming between us.

We have dinner that night with Indian friends of Shraddha and Satya. It is quite an experience for an American to see how the middle class Indian lives. They are incredibly sweet people, I enjoyed that night very much. They fed us royally and especially liked my husband because he ate the spicy Indian dishes with relish. Hindu families treat the guest as God, ever endeavouring to please.

They performed worship of Lakshmi-Narayan with natural devotion. I had never seen anything like that before and was thrilled to the depth of my being. Although they were Brahmins they had no caste prejudices, they knew we had come to see Anandamayi Ma, their own Divine Mother, and they treated us as Her children.

After a day or two of rest we hired taxis to take us to Hardwar where we would meet Mother. A lovely drive through the countryside. We stoppad at Modinagar Temple, led by the American Swami Nirmalananda, a friend of Shraddha and Satya, who had met us in Delhi. Swami told us that all the images in that huge temple had been blessed by Mother on the day of the consecration. There was Lakshmi-Narayan, bigger than life. We did obeisance. After seeing all the images in the main temple, Swamiji led us into a special temple of Hanuman. I went down on my knees.....here was a God in the form of a monkey, I was humbled. Hanuman gave me a special blessing I will never forget, He is very dear to me. Tears came to my eyes. I looked at Shraddha, and she at me, there were tears in her eyes too. Later Mother told me in a dream, "Love God bravely", I remembered Hanuman, the bravest of all devotees, an example for us to follow.

Ever since I had started making preparations for the trip, I had been afraid and also had felt Mother's bliss. I felt unworthy, yet I knew I could not live without seeing Her. Just before leaving the States I received a letter from Mother in which She said, "Ma belongs to you also", I cried my heart out in joy over Ma's grace. I came to realize that the fear is the ego-resistance to God's light, a natural reaction which is diminishing by Mother's grace as time goes by. But this fear grew as the day came closer in which I was to meet Mother, and my soul-bliss of Mother's presence increased also, I felt like a volcano ready to erupt in all directions.

We arrive at the Tourist Bungalow in Hardwar. Ma has indeed rolled out a red carpet for us. The bungalow is right on the Ganga, and the Himalayan mountains can be seen in the distance. The vibrations of the city are so holy, a truly pure spot. Right next door are the enshrined ashes of my Parama-Parama Guru, Lahiri Mahasaya, a great surprise. We are all happy with our rooms.

We find that Mother will be arriving in Hardwar in two days. I bathe in the Ganga the night before we go to meet Ma. What bliss, this is a sacred place, all of India is sacred. This experience is beyond my wildest dreams. The dream of India is the dawn of reality.

Early morning, we go to meet Ma at the railway station. I am cold, excited, blissful, yet afraid. I notice that everyone of us is surrounded by an aura which speaks of each one's personal relationship with Ma. I feel I am waiting in a twilight between life and death, my fate soon to be revealed.

I was concentrated on Ma...this was the train coming

now. The windows whizzed by...flash...Ma...I saw Ma!, Ma's bliss power shot into me in less than a second. Shraddha and I started running to be there when Ma alighted. Everyone followed. Mother stepped out...oh, She is so beautiful, so beautiful! I was awe-struck, absolutely awe-struck. Mother stood still as we all gathered around Her dropping to our knees. There I was on the ground looking right at Mother's feet, that is all I was aware of...Mother's feet, but I was unable to touch them, something held me back. We got up and offered our garlands to Mother, putting them around Her neck. She seemed so tiny, I felt uncomfortable for a moment because She had always appeared so huge to me in my mind. Then Mother started walking to the car that would take Her to the Ashram. She turned and looked right at me, right into my soul. Time stopped, Her eyes burning through me, uncovering every sham within me, I knew She was my Sadguru, my God. Somone later mentioned Ma was wearing sun-glasses, but all I remember are those two blazing cycs full of Bliss, Love, and Truth; complete Power.

Mother had stolen my heart. We followed in our taxis to Mother's Ashram. She sat outside in front of the Siva temple on a pillow and bolster for quite a little while. Her beauty in movement and talking is totally free. I was thrilled just to watch Her. All of us went up to Her and did obeisance. Then She went upstairs to rest. Some of my happiest moments with Mother were spent in simply gazing at Her perfect beauty. We were all leaving and someone noticed Ma was looking at us from the balcony. We turned round and stood in the driveway, She folded Her hands to us and we pranāmed to Her, everything was completely natural. She looked at

all of us so intently for at least fifteen minutes. Then She retired.

We drove back to the bungalow to freshen up and have some dinner. We would return that evening.

When we arrived Mother greeted us from the balcony, and went to Her room. Someone said She was not well. We sat outside and listened to the heavenly chanting of the bramacharinis. The Ashram was permeated with Ma's presence, it was all so incredibly wonderful. I felt I was in heaven, and I guess I was! Someone said "Ma!", we all turned round, Ma was on the veranda and beckoned to us and then went back to Her room. Swami Nirmalananda went to arrange for us to go upstairs and see Ma.

We all went up to the balcony outside Her room. There was Ma, sitting on a little couch in the porch. She was looking so marvellous, Her vibration of pure sweet love. Each one of us went up to Ma and pranāmed, She responded, looking into our eyes, smiling so beautifully, so intimately, so compassionately. I remember that gaze clearly, Her total Mother love, I felt completely secure. She smiled at me sweetly, I was happy. Ma is Sweetness, Purity, Love incarnate.

We all sailed home on wings of Bliss that night.

We spent a few wonderful days going to the ashram twice a day. Sometimes I would just be content to sit and watch Her and listen to the girls' chanting. Sometimes I would go up and bow down, sometimes Mother would look at me, sometimes She would ignore me. The ashram life is so pristine, so divine. We were arranging with dear Atmananda (Mother's interpreter) to have "private" with

Ma. We were finally told to come that afternoon. We went upstairs to Mother's porch. Ah, I was delighted to be near Ma again. There She was, so radiant, talking to someone. We all got in line to wait our turn. I got nervous and felt I was going to forget everything I had to ask. I went up to Ma and pranāmed, She may have ignored me at first, I don't remember. Mother went to lunch right after I came near Her. Oh well, at least I got to sit right by Her seat for the time She was gone ! Ma came back and called Atmananda, who asked me what I wanted to ask Ma. I said, Jyotipriya had given me the name of 'Radha', should I keep it ? Ma said : "Jyotipriya, Radhapriya".....so Ma approved and added 'priya' to 'Radha'. I was very pleased about this. Then I asked if I had heard correctly the mantra Ma had given me in a dream. Ma started talking in Hindi. She told Atmananda and my husband to leave, as no one should know another's mantra. There I was alone with Ma (everyone else was several feet away). Mother was talking to me, in Hindi I guess, I couldn't understand a word. I asked Ma if I could say "Ma" with the mantra She had given me. Ma said "no". I had such a strong desire to repeat "Ma" for or with my mantra that I asked Ma again. Ma again said "no" while continuing to speak to me in Hindi. I repeated to Ma the mantra She had given me in my dream. She corrected part of it. Our wonderful conversation was over. Atmananda and my husband returned. He asked Ma for a mantra. Ma asked him what name he liked, at that moment everything went black for him and his mantra appeared written in astral splendour before his spiritual eye. Ma confirmed his vision and also gave him the name "Krishnadas".

We asked a few more questions, thoroughly enjoying these precious moments with Mother. Krishnadas and Radhapriya returned to the tourist bungalow, the winds of heaven blowing between them.

The Samyam Saptah was to begin soon and Ma would stay in the grounds where the function was to be held. Many more people would be coming to join the function. Our intimate time with Ma was coming to a close for the present but we had one more private moment with Ma before the Samyam Saptah started. Krishnadas and I had presents to give to Her. When we arrived at the ashram some of the ashram girls wanted to see what was in the rather large bundle I was carrying. My offering was a lamp with Siva inside, When it was lit it revealed Siva sitting in the Himalayan mountains, His light radiating the peaks. It was lovely and I was happy that Swami Nirmalananda had helped me to buy it. The girls liked it very much. I went upstairs and offered Ma the lamp. Ma asked the girls to sprinkle Ganges water on it and put it into the room next door. Later I found it was a pūjā room of some kind and had needed a light. I was happy my gift was useful. Krishnadas had bought Mother some gold-plated bracelets. When he offered them She was pleased and asked him where he had got them. I greatly enjoyed that moment. Ma knows everything, yet She satisfies our desire for loving human closeness in conversation. How sweet She is, the true model of perfection in humanity.

In the meantime I have bought the beads Mother instructed me to have for wearing and for japa. I take them to the Samyam grounds hoping to find Mother and have them blessed. Seeing Her walk across the grass with a few of the ashramites, I dash up to Her. She looks right at me sweetly,

tolerantly, and says in English, "Not now, later" holding Her hand up (Rama-like) to restrain me. I was a bit flustered but so happy that Ma had spoken to me. She was off to lunch I believe. I felt very fortunate to have had even a brief moment with my Mother.

Later looking across the ground, I saw a table set up with photos of Ma for sale. My favorite photo of Ma, one I had wanted for a long time, was looking right at me ! Mother was blessing me just as strongly through that photo as She did in person. I bought it, holding it to my heart thanking Ma and feeling delighted.

The Samyam Saptah was in full swing. In the morning and evening we would go for meditation because Mother would always be there. We could sit and watch Her. Oh, the inner blessings we received just sitting in Her presence ! But being westerners, a few of us, including myself, did not understand the importance of being there even when Mother wasn't, and there were times when Mother would show up unexpectedly and we were back at the bungalow missing Her. One night, someone told us, Ma had asked where Jyotipriya and Radhapriya were, we were supposed to attend the Gita readings every morning. I remember how happy we were that Mother had mentioned our names, we went every remaining day for Gita ! The first time we attended, Mother asked all westerners to come up to Her. We got in line and one by one doing pranāma at our Mothers Feet, She lovingly gave us each a Gita in English. How sweetly She corrected us. Needless to say, I cherish that Gita, it has become my dearest friend, a saving grace in Mother's physical absence.

Another day at Samyam Saptah. There were so many people present, I longed to be close to Ma again. The devotees were chanting "Jay, jay Ma." Mother got up to leave and winding Her way through the crowd brushed right by me. I was so thrilled, I was in heaven. I felt the Gods were singing to Mother as She left, offering Her a carpet of soul devotion to walk upon. The feeling that seems common to all around Mother is the aura of the miraculous, the feeling that near Ma anything is possible. It is so within and without faith, the miracle of the ages, makes the "possible impossible and the impossible possible." Faith is the gift that Mother imparts to all who come to Her, by that power She draws us to Her.

Later as Mother was coming back to Samyam I had the opportunity to give Her my beads to bless. She held them and then gave them back to me, I knelt down to touch Her feet, they looked so sweet, She let me just gaze at them for a moment and then I touched them. Can words describe the fulfilment I experienced at that moment? Later when Mother tapped me on the head I felt the circuit was complete, somehow my destiny was assured. All the outer actions of Ma have deep significance for me.

One day I was waiting for Ma to come out for satsang. Unconsciously I was feeling quite self-satisfied in thoughts of my own worth. I mentioned to Jyotipriya that I guessed Ma approved of my work because She had said "See what God does' with a look I mistook for approval, (we see what we want to see). At that moment Ma came out, I bowed down and when I looked up Ma spat on the ground.....no coinci-

dence. Now I understood. I learned a powerful lesson, one which still requires much surrender.

There were times when I was frightened to go up to Mother even though I had the opportunity. I felt unworthy and afraid of censure. By a look Ma could correct a fault hidden even from yourself. Swami Nirmalananda described my feelings aptly when He said we were like germs before the radiant sunlight. I regret now not spending more time with Mother. The dark habits I cherished did not like to face destruction. Under Her radiant gaze I could have left many "germs" to their ultimate destiny! But Mother is making up for that now. Those who have been to Mother know the cleansing one gets after seeing Her. We are blind until we are allowed to see. All is Grace.

After the Samyam we had the opportunity to be with Mother again at the ashram. It was lovely there. One day Jyotipriya and I had to go to a bank to change our money. We enjoyed a lovely ride in the countryside by rickshaw, feeling Mother's presence and talking about how we would love to move to India. We had fallen in love with India, the land of our deepest dream's fulfilment. We arrived late for Mother's darshan. We sat at the back that day. As we did *pranāma* to Mother, She looked right at us as though we were old friends and greeted us. Indescribable divine friendship.

We had some fun shopping in the bazaar. Krishnadas and I bought a drum and cymbals to take home with us. I wanted to take them to Mother for Her blessing. That night just at sunset, Swami Nirmalananda arranged a kirtan. We sang in Didima's Samadhi Temple. Mother was upstairs

in Her room. We were singing to Mother in Her presence ! I was sure She would respond. We moved outside and kept on singing. Swami led beautifully and finally we sang : "O Lord of the Universe, let me see you." Mother came to the window and called us to come up. We were all so thrilled, we shouted for joy, clapping our hands and laughing loudly. We were going upstairs to see our Mother, the Lord of the Universe. Mother was distributing pictures of deities. By the time I realized She was giving them to whoever wanted them, it was too late, I didn't get one. But I did have in my satchel a large bundle of pictures of all the Gods. I went up to Ma and She tapped the roll of my pictures three times, sweetly blessing them for me. They are wonderful, She brought them to life. Now that I'am back in the States I have my own little India with all my pictures of the Gods. I also had special framed pictures of Radha-Krishna, and Hanuman and Durga. Mother held them and said, "beautiful, beautiful !" This was our last night in Hardwar; the next morning some of us were to leave for Delhi to catch our plane home. We arrived at the bungalow late that night. Everyone had gone to their rooms. Ascending the staircase alone, I broke into tears, the sorrow of leaving my beloved Mother and India could not be contained. I wept and wept. Later I reflected on all that Mother had given me in a short month in Her presense... my name, my mantra, my Ishta, Her supreme blessings — everything I needed to follow the path of my heart's desire. I was to discover that there is no separation from Mother; when we think of Her we feel Her presence. She is always with us.

I had a strong desire to have a pair of Mother's slippers and a towel that She had used. The next morning Jyotipriya,

Krishnadas and myself drove to the ashram to bid our final good-byes to Mother. She was in bed, so we waited. After a little while Chitra (Mother's personal attendant) came and told us we could come up. Chitra handed me a pair of Mother's slippers and two towels that she had used to wash Mother's feet! I was overwhelmed. Chitra led us up to Mother's room, no one else was around. We went up and knelt at the door. Ma was sitting up in bed, a glorious gentle light surrounding Her, total peace. We offered our fruit to Mother and She blessed each and returned them to us. She asked us through Chitra to write to Her upon our safe return. We did pranāma and took leave, our hearts full of Mother, the beauty of that moment forever engraved in our hearts.

We boarded our plane, leaving India and Mother, to find both within our hearts whenever we remember Her.

Om Ma

—: 0 :—

"The way of the Sufi is to experience life and yet to remain above it; to live in the world and not let the world own him."

Hazrat Inayat Khan

Gopinath Kaviraj-ji's Peerless Personality

Prabhat Kumar Bandopadhyay

The great are never born to die. Their hopes, their teachings, their characters make them immortal. Dust returns to dust. Death cannot lay its cruel hand on the soul. The inspiring influence of a Master-spirit does not cease with the shuffling off of his mortal coil.

Death does not level or equalise all. Men having no personality go the way of all shams. Kaviraj-ji's peerless personality is something to be reckoned with. His deep erudition in all branches of spirituality, his matchless knowledge derived from attunement with "Parawāk", the absolute Divine, his Master-spirit reflecting the vicissitudes of the soul for oneness with the Transcendent, his faultless "Adhār" in his human body permitting the "Vaikhāri" to vibrate in unison with the deepest and ultimate unknowable coming down by way of "Pashyanti" and "Madhyama" in waves which in turn found unique expression through his inimitable language, made him a perfect man and a rare personality, the like of which is difficult to find.

It is as it were the *Akhaṇḍa* Mother by Her unqualified mercy, made Gopinath Kaviraj in Her own likeness and She expressed "Herself time and again through him till he passed away."

His existence in his closing years was like an unparalleled

spiritual bridge created by the distinctive Grace of the *Akhaṇḍa* Mother connecting the time-bound mortal world with the timeless immortal ultimate—a boon to seekers of Truth for finding access to the hitherto unknown vistas of final attunement. He was thus an unrivalled *Achāryyā* (master) and a rare *Mahajan* (superman).

Mother's Universal Will was his sheet anchor and he could foresee the final emancipation of all souls—all at a time—through a peculiar process of revolutionary change (transformation) in the spiritual life of man on earth — nayin all created beings of the Universe.

But alas, this was not fulfilled in his life time. Let Thy Will be done.

—: 0 :—

“So much of disharmony and opposition in the world today, engendering bitterness and strife, is due to our lack of sympathy and sense of oneness. The root cause is the lack of Self-knowledge. There is but one Self which is Love and Wisdom eternal and we shall share it if we but know it in a proper way. Discord and hatred are bound to disappear like mists before the light of the sun. It will herald the advent of a New Life in the world when the central principle of Unity and Love will reign and dominate all its thoughts and activities. May Mother hasten that glorious day and shower Her blessings on humanity,”

Gopinath Kaviraj

Mātri Prasāda

Mounima

(Translated by Dr. S. C. Bhattacharya)

Mounima was one of those very exceptional devotees who attained first-hand knowledge of Reality in her life time. Born in a village in East Bengal in 1890, she was a thoughtful child from the very start. When she grew up she got married to a lawyer and had two children. At the death of her younger brother she became possessed of a spirit of intense *vairāgya* and of a deep yearning for God and for liberation from worldly delusion. In 1930 she had her first *darśana* of Mataji in Dacca. Two or three years later she left her family with the consent of her husband and went to Varanasi where she embarked on a life of the most rigorous *tapasyā*. She took *dikṣā* from Siddhima. Sri Mangala Giri of Hardwar conferred *saṁnyāsa* on her and called her 'Krishnananda'. Mataji used to call her 'Krishnamā.' After much desperate search she at last had *darśana* of Sri Krishna, her *Iṣṭa*. In 1934 *mouna* came to her spontaneously. This state of silence lasted for six years. Thus she became known as "Mounima". In the course of her *sādhanā* she was blessed with countless visions of Sri Krishna, Narayan and other Deities. A small portion of her spiritual experiences and realizations she described in poetic language in two books, "*Konika Mālā*" and "*Mātri Prasāda*". The latter is now being reprinted serially in the original Bengali and in Hindi and English translations. The later part of her life, dedicated totally to God and Truth, she spent in our ashrams and travelling with Mataji. She had told her son Rakhai long ago that although Mataji travelled constantly, She would be present at the time of Mounima's leaving her mortal coil and give her final liberation. And lo, her words were prophetic. Mataji was by her

side when Mounima passed away in 1969 in our ashram at Varanasi, gazing at Ma before she closed her eyes for ever.

1

What glorious dream I had oh brother
 And waking from it I could see no other,
 No servitude, no cherished god—
 Poised in the Self abides the self-forgetful.
 'To stay in Cosmic Play or be released
 Is of no consequence;
 Breaking all ties brought me true rest.
 Worldly life and sādhak's quest
 Both are only dreams at best.
 Where there is no outer seeing
 There I found my real Being,

2

What garden I espied oh brother,
 Full of blossoms, buds and flowers
 But the gardener was not there—
 The gardener was a connoisseur:
 In the process of the blossoming
 Remained one sole delight.
 Strict renouncer had I been for long,
 Guru's wisdom lit up nescience maze,
 Truly wonderful is Guru's grace !

3

Tied am I not to form and quality,
Remain I free.
In the inner palace do I dwell,
Indifferent to my place.
Where I am, there I stay—
There's no chink through which to slip away—
Self-forgetful do I stay.

4

Lo, there is a place
Where tears stream forth in heavenly bliss,
Words and mind reel back—it is ineffable !
No desire haunts the heart
Except to tread th' ascetic path.
The soul had no companion
The Path was all she loved.
Ma captured her
While I was unaware.
Had I the weapon of non-attraction
Who could stop me from cutting through ?
Not knowing "who am I ?"
Ceaseless' did I cry,
So much I cried in woe and weal
That Ma's ear caught it—
And Ma taught me a great deal.

The sādhak's soil was fertile
Blooming flowers filled the garden,
Who will pick them, can you tell ?
Now the keeper's not on the spot
Resting in his abode.
Roams the forgetful one all alone
Immersed in beatitude,
Talks to herself and hoists her sail
Deeply rapt in self-oblivion—
No need to row her boat.



“When knowledge of God blazes forth within, there arises such great love for God that the soul can yearn for nothing else. It is only when man turns to God that he finds fulness of heart. As a fish taken out of water, so too will man perish without God.”

Saint Jean Vianney

Mata Vnandamayi in Patna

Subal Ganguly

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

Thus goes a poem framed in glass hung on the wall of the Ashram of Mata Anandamayi at Naimisharanya, situated 80 miles away from Lucknow, which I happened to visit last year. Poet-scholar Padmaśri Dr. Vishnukant Jha writes in ecstasy about the Mother :—

“Yogaksemaparāyana, stutapada, bhakteka banraksita,
Puja Anandamayi sada vijayate Mātā jagatwa-śrutā.”

Ma is identified with Goddess Durga by many devotees. Others say Ma is not to be limited to any form.

A spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings was witnessed in Patna during Mata Anandamayi's visit from 26th November to 4th December. The house of Hathwa Rāj to the south of Gandhi Maidan, where Mataji stayed, became a place of pilgrimage for thousands of devotees who thronged the Rāj palace day and night to have a glimpse of Mataji and to hear the learned discourses on the Bhagavata Purāna delivered by Pt. Braj Kishore Shastri and Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati. Such mighty waves of enthusiasm and ecstasy had never before been witnessed in Patna. The

rich and the poor, the good and the bad, rubbed shoulders to have *darśana* of the Divine Mother.

During the Bhagavata Saptah, the recitation of slokas, interpretation and reading of the Purāna started from early morning and continued upto the night and were patiently listened to by the huge crowds. The discourses on the Bhagavata, interspersed with devotional music sung by a band of disciples of the Mother, 'ārati' performed daily by the Maharani of Hathwa with dignity and devotion, created a heavenly atmosphere. Men and women from all walks of life waited from early morning with offerings of fruit and flowers to have 'darśana' of the Mother; Sri Jaya Prakash Narayan, Bihar Chief Minister Dr. Jagannath Misra, almost all his cabinet colleagues, Assembly speaker Sri Hari Nath Misra, Chief Justice K. B. N. Singh, Lokayukta Dr. S. V. Sohani and many, many other dignitaries paid visits to Hathwa Kothi to receive blessings from Mata Anandamayi.

MA AND BHOLA BABA

Clad in white, with gold-rimmed spectacles, Mata Anandamayi would sit on the dais every morning and evening, listening to the discourses on holy scriptures. She would also give answers to numerous questions put by eager devotees. The divinity of the atmosphere was further heightened by the gracious presence of Bhola Baba (Sri Bholanath Mukherjee of Serampore) who had been specially invited by the Mother. The great man worshipped the Mother in profound ecstasy and Ma was all attention to him, making anxious enquiries about his welfare and the devotees

of Baba. As soon as Bhola Baba would come, Ma would beam with joy and affectionately receive him with flowers and fruits. It was a heavenly sight in the courtyard of Hathwa Palace where Ma and Bhola Baba would sit side by side. Bhola Baba, who is an ocean of love and kindness like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, treats his devotees as his own children and the slightest pain of any of them hurts him. Ma eulogised Bhola Baba in many ways and one day remarked "Baba is kindness personified. He is an embodiment of *Prema* (love). Baba has inundated everyone with the flood of *prema*. "Such words from Ma Anandamayi were highly significant. Another day, sitting on the dais, Ma said : "Baba, I am your small daughter, do bestow your affection and kindness on me." It was indeed impossible to grasp the significance of the conversations between Ma and Bhola Baba and they alone know what spiritual communication passed between them.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Of the many answers given by Ma, a few struck me as significant. To a question whether *sākāra* or *nirākāra* should be worshipped, Ma said, there was no real difference. Just as water becomes ice and vice versa, so *Sākāra* and *nirākāra* are essentially one and the same. A devotee enquired : "In what form should I worship God ?" Ma replied "*Parameswara* lives in your heart. The images of Kali, Durga, Viṣṇu are the external manifestations of *Parameswara* living in the human heart. Cultivate your true Self and there, in the real Self, no difference exists between one form and another." Another devotee asked, "Why is there so much suffering nowadays ? If God is impartial, then why are some rolling

in wealth and others suffering ?” Ma : “In no age has there not been suffering and the rich and poor have always existed. In kaliyuga, the constant utterance of the name of God is the way out of bondage. The rays of the sun are falling on everyone high or low, without discrimination. Much depends on whether you are willing to invoke the sunlight into your life.” One observer said : “What is the difference between ‘*Kṛṣṇatva*’ and ‘*Kalitva* ?” Mataji replied : “They are like the two fruits of the same tree. When seeds of two fruits of the same tree are sown, they bear a variety of fruits, but the origin is the one tree. So are Kṛṣṇa and Kali, the essence is one and the same.”

Ma Anandamayi left for Ranchi on December 4th night. With Her went away all the illumination, pomp and grandeur that had adorned Hathwa Palace for more than a week. Everyone will miss the divine presence of Ma and the smiling face of Panu Da, who was the live wire of Ma’s party. The Maharani of Hathwa deserves the unstinted praise of the citizens of Patna for providing the opportunity to have *darśana* of Mother and for organising a Bhagavata Saptah. Mr. B. P. Shahi, brother of the late Maharaja, was equally courteous and nice in his dealings. In spite of restrictions on entry into the palace, nobody felt disappointed through the grace of Ma Anandamayi who gave blessings and ‘*darśana*’ to one and all.

Mātri Līlā

(September 22nd – Dec. 31st 1976)

MĀTRI LĪLĀ IN DELHI

(From a Correspondent)

Ma came to the Delhi Ashram from Kankhal on the morning of September, 22nd 1976. Immediately She held a short session of satsang on the verandah of the Siva temple and then went on a round of inspection to see that everything was ship-shape. The image of Durga (to become the symbol of the Divine Mother from the moment of consecration), then nearing completion, engaged Ma's special attention. It turned out to be a superb piece of art, produced by an artist of Calcutta; eventually the divine touch of Ma made it life-like.

The main Durga Puja starts from *Sasthi* (the sixth day after New Moon). However, in our Ashram, Durga Puja starts from the day following the New Moon. Two special *ghats* were set up in two different places of the Ashram for nine days. One of these *ghats* was for invoking Ma's *kheyāla* for the well-being of Her body. Moreover, there was *kumārī puja*, *batuk puja*, and *daridra Narayan sewa* (poor feeding) on a grand scale.

The pandal, set up for the occasion, covered a large area including the courtyard, one of the terraces, an extensive portion of the garden and the paths. It was well-planned

and beautifully decorated. The design of its ceiling and walls was simple and elegant and the choice of a sober colour added to the dignity of the *mandap*.

During the entire period of the Pūjā the Ashram reverberated with the sound of devotional songs sung by the ashramites and, occasionally by eminent artists such as Srimati Subhalakshmi Devi, Srimati Purnima Pal and Srimati Janaki Subramaniam. Simultaneously with the sweet strains of music there was the ennobling resonance of mantras chanted by the priest and of the texts of the Chandi and the Devi Bhāgavata recited by readers chosen by Mā. During stated periods the sonorous *dhāk*, (kettle-drum) was played by experts brought from Varanasi, carrying on a tradition of centuries.

The evening programme of *Nava rātri* included Professor Tripurari Chakravarti's discourses on *Śakti Pūjā*, with special stress on the need of prayer and the significance of suffering in human life. Occasionally Professor Chakravarti enlivened the satsang by requesting Ma to say something and Ma invariably obliged him.

One day a certain gentleman asked Ma : "Rāma, Krishna, Kāli, Shankar—what's the difference ?" Prompt came the reply from Ma without a moment's reflection and with a winsome smile on Her face : "You are son, father and husband—what's the difference ?" The answer seemed to have the same message as the dictum "All one" so often uttered by Ma.

One day Sri Gopal Swarup Pathak gave, at Ma's request, a short but illuminating talk on the principles underlying the *Upanishads*. Another day Pandit Kapindraji discoursed on the Ramayana. The cultural programme included daily

bhajans and kirtans. One evening there was the dance of *Durgā Līlā* (*Durgatīnaśini*) by Srimati Uma Sharma and her party.

As usual, the impressive congregation consisted of hundreds of devotees from different parts of India and thousands of local visitors, besides a number of foreigners. The guests were accommodated in a few houses not far from the Ashram and in a commodious school building at some distance. The assemblage at the Ashram consisted of men, women and children from different walks of life, including venerable mahātmās, common persons, traders, members of the legal and medical professions, political leaders and Government servants of all ranks, besides Rājas and industrial magnates. Among the mahātmās who graced the occasion may be mentioned Sri 108 Girdhari Narayan Puriji of Kankhal, Sri 108 Sitaram Sharandasji.

Durgā Pūjā is a happy combination of solemn rituals and gay festivities. One of its lively features is *pushpanjali* (congregational flower-offering to the Image), accompanied by the chanting of mantras in chorus. It takes place at the end of the morning pūjā. This year the timing for it was very convenient as the *puja* had to be finished early, according to the *Gupta Press Panjika* which is followed in our Ashram.

On the *Mahāstami* day at about 11 in the morning, suddenly one could see a frail figure in a loin cloth, with overflowing matted hair and sparkling eyes, limping towards Ma's abode. He was no less a personage than Sri 108 Sitaramdas Omkarnathji who has thousands of followers all over India.

He remained in the company of Ma for some fifteen minutes. Then, the two came down together and sat on the verandah of the Śiva temple. The jostling crowd did not disturb the silent communion between them. Sri Sitaramadas Omkarnathji then came to the *Durgā Pujā Mandap*. The curtain in front of the image which had been dropped temporarily was pulled as a special honour to him so that he could have *darśana* of the Image. This was one of the highlights of the nine-day celebrations.

The auspicious period of *Sandhi Pujā* (transition from the 8th day of the Navaratri to the 9th) was chosen by Srimati Indira Gandhi for offering Pūjā. Clad in a simple sārī befitting a Hindu lady on such an occasion, she quietly entered the pandal, unaccompanied by any retinue. At the instance of Ma she occupied a seat just below the *puja mandap* and visibly tried to follow the directions of the Gitā regarding the correct posture for meditation :—“Let him firmly hold his body, head and neck erect and still”. This posture was maintained by her, more or less for over three quarters of an hour. Thereafter, she had a “private” in Ma’s room for a few minutes and came out, all smiles.

After *Sandhi Pujā*, the last phase of *Durgā Pūjā* and the traditional *havana* were performed in Ma’s presence on the *Maha Navami* (9th day). All the rituals of *Durgā Pujā*, from beginning to end, were observed strictly in accordance with the *Śāstras*, under Mā’s supervision. As usual, there was distribution of *prasāda* on an elaborate scale on *Saptami*, *Astami* and *Navami* (the 7th, 8th and 9th day).

The Image was immersed in the Jamuna on October 3rd

Then followed the traditional *Vijaya* ceremony. The number of aspirants for *pranama* to Ma from a close quarter was formidable and Ma's health was not at par. Fortunately, the crowd willingly co-operated with the organisers in maintaining discipline. A well-conceived plan had been made to prevent chaos and it was adhered to by all concerned. Seated on a raised platform in the courtyard of the Siva Temple, Mā was visible from the farthest end of the pandal but not easily accessible. The aspirants for *pranāma* were directed to line up in two rows, one for ladies and the other for gentlemen. The orderly and dignified manner in which they spontaneously behaved was admirable. Each and every individual got an opportunity for doing *pranāma* and enjoyed the privilege of receiving *prasāda* from Mā's hand. There was no attempt on the part of anybody to touch Ma's feet – a "misadventure" which sometimes disturbs the harmony of satsang.

The most remarkable feature of the *Vijaya* ceremony was that everybody was all smiles and nobody had any occasion for being disappointed. In fact, from the beginning of the Durga Puja till the end a feeling of joy and a spirit of mutual good-will prevailed in the Ashram among all concerned. If the function proved an all-round success, it was because everybody was imbued with the idea that it was a privilege to serve a great cause in the name of Ma. Several Public Bodies and private individuals did their best to contribute to the success of the celebrations. Sri Radha Raman, Chief Executive Councillor, Delhi Metropolitan Council and Sri B. R. Tamta, Commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, visited the Ashram and officially helped the organisers in various ways. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi

provided accommodation for guests in one of its school buildings, liberally supplied drinking water and arranged for trucks and sweepers who kept the Ashram and its vicinity neat and clean. The Delhi Development Authority at short notice thoroughly repaired the road leading to the Ashram. The Delhi Electric Supply Undertaking made special arrangements for adequate street lighting and for supply of electric current from two independent sources. The Police took full charge of traffic control and maintained law and order during the festival. The Postal Authorities provided a mobile Post Office and the Railway Authorities a mobile Railway Booking Office. The Malaria Institute of India took steps for malaria control. And a team of doctors voluntarily placed their services at the disposal of ailing guests day and night. Besides, there was arrangement for free distribution of medicines as far as practicable.

The presence of Ma was a source of inspiration to all. The effect of Mother's grace could be felt but could not be expressed.

Thus ended, happily, Durgā Pujā, the *Aswamedh Yajña* of the *Kali Yuga*.

Vijaya Dasami was followed by a short respite till October 7th when Lakshmi Pujā was celebrated with great eclat. On October 8th Mā left for Naimisharanya for relaxation.

A handful of devotees were allowed to accompany Her, among them Professor Tripurari Chakravarti who gave a talk every evening. Mataji spent several hours daily dictating replies to letters that had accumulated by the hundreds.

One day, two American missionaries a man and a woman, arrived asking for an interview with Mataji. The woman had a vision of Ma which made her think that she was meant to save Ma's soul. They spent almost two hours with Mataji who was extremely kind and patient with Her narrow-minded visitors who no doubts benefitted greatly although they may not be aware of this as yet. It does seem remarkable that a dogmatic Christian missionary should be blessed with a vision of Mataji in America and find her way to Naimisharanya.

Mataji came back to Delhi on October 21st for Kāli Pujā, fixed for the 22nd. The Ashram again started pulsating with life and Kāli Pujā turned out to be a grand success. Two Sanskrit dramas—*Amaramiram* and *Yogajivanam*—composed by the late Jatindra Bimal Chowdhuri, were enacted with success by the members of *Prachya Vani* under the leadership of Dr. Rama Chowdhuri.

The 24th of October started with *Brahma Bindu Utsava* the annual function of the Ashram in which Didi, the universal elder sister, applied sandal wood paste to the foreheads of her younger brothers and sisters.

II

Then followed *Anna kūt*. The 'kūt' (hillock in miniature) of rice, the piles of fruits and sweets and the elaborate items of *prasada*—all combined to present a picture of ponderous plenty. The affluence was really befitting Ma Anandamayi, the Raj Rajeswari as visualised by Bhaiji in his immortal poem *Matri Vandana*.

On the evening of October 24th Ma left for Gondal. When Her car started, echoes of 'Jai Ma' 'Jai Ma' followed Her on Her way. The eternal message of Her parting glance was 'parting' is a word not to be found in Her dictionary and so pang of separation is out of the question. She is. She is Bliss-Incarnate.

The train took Mataji and Her large party to Rajkot where a car and a luxury bus were waiting to take them to Gondal. Mataji was welcomed with great love and veneration by the whole family of the former Raja and was accomodated in an annexe of Hawa Mahal, equipped with all comforts.

From October 30th to November 6th, the 26th Samyam Mahavarta was observed in a large, beautiful pandal near the palace. The Mahatmas who usually grace this yearly function were all present throughout, enlightening the vratis with their spirited daily discourses. Among them were Mahamandaleshwaras Sri Swamis Brahmananda, Vidyananda, Prakashananda, Govind Prakash. Swami Chidananda talked every day in English to the delight of the numerous participants from abroad and many others. Swami Swatantrananda came after a long interval. Sri Yogiraj Janak Chandji from Delhi delivered highly interesting lectures on scientific meditation. The satsang was altogether superb and of a very high standard. The collective meditations, specially in the morning were more powerful than ever. Mataji was in excellent form. 'Matri Satsang', the end and climax of every day was as usual greatly cherished by one and all. Swami Swatantrananda asked witty and original questions to which Mataji responded in Her unique and inimitable way.

Gondal is situated not far from the famous *Jyoti Linga* of Somnath. Many of the three hundred *vratis* took the opportunity to visit this place of pilgrimage. The *samyam mahavrata* is always a great success and unforgettable. For those who faithfully observe the rules it marks a definite step forward on their path to perfection.

Mataji and all participants left Gondal on November 7th. Mataji reached Ranavav the same night by car. She had visited Ranavav a few years ago. It is the birth place of Dr. Samani of Bombay, a devotee of many years' standing. He built a small ashram at Ranavav, consisting of two cottages, one for Mataji and one for sādhus. On November 8th, a Rama-Sita Mandir was consecrated there in Mataji's holy presence. The same night she left for Bhavnagar, arriving there on the 9th morning. There She spent the day at the residence of Sri Jayantia and visited the eye-hospital of Sri Jayantia's daughter who wishes to build a new eye-hospital. The foundation stone was laid in Mataji's presence. In the evening Mataji went to the Raja's palace remaining on the lawn for some time. At night She boarded the train to Ahmedabad, reaching there on the 10th morning. As usual Ma was put up in a special cottage in the compound of the Munshaw family. She gave *darsana* on the lawn morning and evening to a large gathering of devotees and admirers and also visited the houses of several old devotees. The same night She left for Bombay arriving there at 8 a. m on November 11th. She thus spent three successive nights in the train. She had only a few short hours in Her pagoda at the residence of Sri B. K. Shah at Vile Parle. Very few people came as Ma's passing through Bombay had been kept secret.

During Her short halt she found time to pay a visit at the house of Sri P. M. Vissanji at Andheri and left at 1 p. m. for Poona by car. Mataji came to Poona after an interval of two and a half years for barely three days. She gave darśana every evening in the Ashram hall. On the 12th morning special pūjā was offered to all deities in the mandir and everyone was entertained to a feast of *prasāda*. In Poona we had a welcome relief from the scorching heat of Gujerat throughout Mataji's travels. Many devotees came from Bombay to spend a couple of days with Ma. She sent word to Sri Dilip Kumar Roy but he was unfortunately too ill to come. On November 14th Mataji motored to Bombay arriving there at midday. Here also she stayed for three days and visited the houses of a few devotees.

On November 16th She took the train to Gangapur City and from there Raja Karauli's car brought Her to his guest-house situated 20 miles from Karauli proper. Mataji had been in Karauli once before with Haribabaji and a large party from March 16th to 23rd, 1963. On that occasion satsang and *rasalila* had been held daily. This time a film taken during Mataji's visit in 1963 was shown. Near the guest house, where Mataji and Her small party were made extremely comfortable this time, there is a Kailadevi (Mahalakshmi) temple where one hundred *Chandis* were recited from November 17th to 21st and a *yajña* was performed. Ma attended every day for some time. She also visited the famous Madan Mohan Temple. Its *vighraha* is said to be a *jagrat murti* (living deity). At Karauli careful arrangements had been made so that Mataji was able to rest after the extremely strenuous travelling of the preceding days.

On November 21st Mataji left for Delhi where she alighted on the 22nd morning. During Mataji's stay in Delhi for Kali Puja, Sri Rai Bahadur Narayan Das had been seriously ill with little hope of recovery. Mataji had paid him a visit that time. We are happy to note that he got well and was able to come to Mataji this time. Mataji remained in the Ashram for barely a few hours but sat in the warm sun to grace a long line of devotees eager to offer a mala or fruit or ask a quick question. The same afternoon, she boarded a train which arrived in Patna the very next morning, November 23rd.

Mataji went to Hathwa Raj Palace at Gandhi Maidan. A new building had been constructed in which Mataji and Sri Swami Akhandanandji were accomodated. At night Mataji was again in the train and got down at Jamshedpur. Many devotees came to the Railway station for Mataji's *darsana*. Mataji continued Her journey to Chakulia by car. Mataji had been urgently requested to grace with Her presence a function that is being celebrated at Chakulia for a whole year to commemorate the 400th birthday of Tulsidas' Ramayana. It commenced last March on *Ram Navomi* (Sri Ramachandra's birthday) and will be completed on the day of the same festival in 1977. Many *sādhus* and *mahātmās* had been invited, including Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati who remained for a fortnight. Mataji however was able to spare just one day and one night on November 24th and had to leave again on the 25th at midday. *Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa*, *Viṣṇu yajña* and other religious functions were in full swing. We learnt that it took Tulsidas two years, seven months and twenty-six days to complete the *Rāmāyaṇa*. He started

writing on Sri Rama's birthday and finished his great work on Rama's wedding day.

* From November 26th to December 4th Mataji remained in Patna. The former Rani of Hathwa and her son and daughter arranged a *Bhagavata Saptah* for the good of the soul of the Raja who had passed away about fifteen years ago. Pandit Brij Kishore Shastri expounded the Srimad Bhāgavata in Hindi and Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati talked daily from 10-30 – 11-30 a. m. and 5 – 6 p. m. Mataji was present every day for some time for the Bhāgavata and for the talks of Swami Akhandananda. An enormous pandal seating about a thousand had been erected in front of Hathwa Palace. Every day the crowds grew more dense. Every evening 8-9 p. m. Mataji replied to question in public. Kumari Chhabi Banerji came for three days and regaled the spell-bound congregation with her sweet songs. On the last evening Mataji Herself sang "*Dharo lao*" and "*Sri Guru Sharanam*". Any number of high officials and other V. I. Ps. came to see Mataji. On Her way to the station on December 4th, Mataji halted at the houses of several devotees and also at a new *Kali Bari* which has yet to be ceremonially opened.

Mataji reached Ranchi on December 5th morning. She remained in our Ashram until the 8th when She shifted to Ratu Palace, sixteen miles off Patna. There She remained until December 12th, giving *darśana* every evening. However since it was far off it was difficult for many to go there. During Ma's sojourn at the Ranchi Ashram hundred *Chandis* were recited ceremonially.

* See also "Mata Anrṇdamayi in Patna, p. 65.

On December 12th Mataji proceeded to Kanpur with a very small retinue. There a week of satsang on an intimate scale was held from 14th to 22nd December in the hall of the Ashram near Radhakrishna Mandir, arranged by Sri Padampad Singhania and his family. Swami Akhandanandaji talked every day for one hour in the morning and for one hour in the evening or replied to questions. Mataji was present throughout his talks but only rarely said a few words herself. That week was enjoyed greatly by everyone.

On December 23rd morning Mataji alighted at Kankhal remaining over Christmas. She was most of the time busy with preparations for the forthcoming Kumbh Mela at the Triveni near Allahabad. Last year western devotees had celebrated the birth of Christ in Mataji's presence by performing *Pūjā* to Ma at midnight in front of a Xmas tree. This year Mataji said, those who wished should meditate in their own rooms and Ma would be present. Two American devotees after doing so declared that they had felt Ma's presence more powerfully in their room than they had experienced in Her physical proximity during months of traveling with Mataji. On X'mas morning devotees from Christian countries, brought presents for Ma and she distributed fruits and chocolates to all.

During the night of December 27th, Sri Kala Chand, a very old and aged devotee who stays in the sādhus' building of our Ashram got very sick. Ma went to see him at 5 a. m. on the 28th. She then went in person to Sri Girdhar Narayan, the Mahant of Nirvani Akhara who came and gave *Athar Saninyāsa* to the ailing old man in Mataji's presence. Immediately after, a beautiful Siva Pūjā was performed by

Brahmachari Nirvanananda in the famous nearby Waksheshwar Mandir. Mataji and the Mahantaji sat by his side and Ma Herself took part in the *abhisheka* and offered garlands and a gorgeous sari to the Image. After saying good-bye to the new Swami Kala Chand Giri, Mataji drove to the railway station at 10 p. m. and boarded the train to Varanasi where she reached on the 29th afternoon.

Soon after Her arrival Sri Sitaram Omkarnath Thakur came to meet Her. He was taken upstairs in an invalid's Chair and spent about an hour with Ma. All who had assembled for Ma's *daršana* were allowed to listen to the humourous and interesting dialogue between the great saint and Sri Ma,

Mataji is arrived at the Kumbh on January 6th and took part in the procession on the 14th, 19th and 24th. She may go to Vindhychal for a few days rest and then return to the Kumbh, where Saraswati Puja will be celebrated on January 24th, *Vasant Panchami day*.