

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

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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Mātri Vāni

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

Ma is in *Ātmik* relationship with one and all. She is always with you. Try to dwell in this consciousness. Spend most of your time in the spiritual quest. He who has brought you forth ever takes care of you—try to remember this. Endeavour to be all the time aware of your *Īṣṭa*, the Supreme Beloved. This will also help you to fix your mind in concentration.

* * *

How many ages have not been spent in futile living—coming and going ! By the inward pilgrimage the gap that separates one from one's own Self vanishes. Even if, having received a blow, one falls down, one must stand up again in that very place. Nobody falls down over and over again. Sustained effort is man's duty as a human being.

* * *

The pilgrimage to the Immortal will have to be undertaken. It is necessary to awaken the manliness that will trample under foot hundreds and hundreds of obstacles. Why lie idle as if paralyzed ?

* * *

A human being must never look back from the path to the Ultimate. Do not allow your mind to dwell anywhere except at His lotus feet. Then there is hope of being saved from all kinds of temptations. With the exception of the One Supreme Friend, my friend living in a foreign country must avoid getting entangled in the enjoyment of bonds of friendship.

* * *

An aspirant may pass through a state of desert-like dryness, when it becomes difficult to keep faith and devotion alive. But if completely singleminded and heedless of hardships, he remains firmly anchored in patience and truth, he will not give way to perplexity and wavering.

* * *

The awakening of a painful awareness of His absence must also be regarded as an expression of His Grace. So long as the result of one's spiritual practice (*kriyā*) cannot be perceived, it must be understood that it has not been carried out in exactly the right manner or spirit; still the wayfarer has progressed on his pilgrimage. However, in such a situation one will have to make one's faith very firm.

* * *

If someone spends all the twenty-four hours in *japa*, meditation, contemplation and similar exercises, he

thereby is constantly engaged in the service of Janardana (God in the shape of man). And if one finds it impossible to be ceaselessly plunged in *japa* and meditation, then one should use every spare moment to perform service to the divine Beloved Janardana who is equally present in all sentient beings - considering all as THAT. This practice also will purify the mind.

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Do not talk much. Always endeavour to speak the truth only. Don't talk about anything that is not related to the Eternal (*bhagavata kathā*). Thereby inner power will be awakened. To advance towards God-realization like an ascetic (*tapasvi*) is the purpose of a *sādhaka*.

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Inward *saṁnyāsa* is indeed real *saṁnyāsa*. To become a *saṁnyāsi* is a great good fortune—total renunciation ! *Samnyāsa* means destruction of everything—the idea of destruction also is destroyed. 'Taking 'saṁnyāsa' and *saṁnyāsa* coming about spontaneously' are by no means the same.

Mātri Sātsang

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

(14)

In the year 1956, our 6th *Samyam Mahavrata* was performed from November 12th to 18th at the Saptarishi Ashram on the banks of the Ganges beyond Hardwar, at the invitation of Goswami Sri Ganesh Dutji, who is the very personification of true renunciation. The Saptarishi Ashram is an ideal site for a gathering of this kind. In ancient times the seven Rishis Vasishta, Bharadvaj, Atri, Gautam, Vishvamitra, Kashyap, Jamadagni performed *tapasyā* at that very spot. By the grace of Mataji everyone present had the unique opportunity to practise *sāadhanā* and self-restraint in this hallowed place in Mataji's immediate presence.

The satsang commenced on November 12th. That evening Mataji sang some kirtana and then, in course of conversation mentioned an incident that had taken place the previous night between two and two Ma said : thirty a. m.- "Three persons in their subtle bodies appeared before this body. One was the Guru and the other two were his disciples. All three had attained the same spiritual height. It is said that it is possible for disciples to reach the same stage of spiritual evolution as the Guru. I said to them : 'Worship Govinda, worship Govinda, worship Govinda, oh deluded mind !' (*Bhaja Govinda mudamate*) Thereupon they attained to an elevated state (*urdhvagati*)."

On November 13th, somebody started : "In this *Samyam Vrata* of yours.....", when Mataji interrupted him, exclaiming : "What do you mean by 'this *Samyam Vrata* of yours' ?"

Questioner : Alright, my *Samyam Vrata*. How is it possible for God to be my father, mother, friend, beloved at the same time ?

Mataji : Yes, He is everything. You yourself are indeed everything.

Questioner : In the realm of Truth or Reality this is indeed so.

Mataji : Does anything exist outside of Reality ? Where there is one Brahman without a second, there you can become father, mother, friend - everything.

Questioner : But this is not so within the realm of *Līlā* (Divine Play). No body calls you father, they all refer to you as "Ma".

Mataji : Once at Gorakhpur somebody did address this body as "father." The father-in-law of Jyotishbabu's youngest brother referred to this body as "father". Everyone in their house was singing the name of "Mā" during *kirtana*, when he appeared and rebuked them : "Why are you crying like cats miaw, miaw, miaw ?" The devotees present then wanted him to have Mataji's *darśana*. So they arranged for Revati-babu to perform *kirtana* at their house and this body was also taken there. When Jyotish babu's brother's father-in-law saw this body from a distance, he exclaimed : "How can women ever become *sādhus* ?" Thereafter a strange thing

happened. He used to sleep with a pet cat by his side. Just imagine, this cat one day scratched him quite severely..... Later he talked to this body in private. On that occasion he declared : "Everybody calls you "Mā", but I shall henceforth call you "father".

Have you understood ? Has your question been answered ?

Questioner : There is a difference from the point of view of *līlā*. Nobody has ever addressed Krishna as father, or Radha as mother, or Śankara as companion. On the level of *līlā* the difference between father and mother must be maintained. From the viewpoint of Reality, father and mother mean of course one and the same. Hence a difficulty arises according to the theory of *līlā*.

Mataji : Where exactly does your difficulty arise ? I am indeed your little daughter, father and mother all in one.

Question : Are there any discussions on *līlā* during the *Samyam Vrata* ?

Mataji : For the revelation of Truth meditation, *japa* and similar practices are performed—whatever is most helpful to each person for realizing this objective.

Question : If there is no *līlā* how can there be meditation ?

Pandit Sundarlal : Everyone gazes at Ma fascinated. This itself is *līlā*.

Mataji : Your statement is correct and so is his. Whatever anyone may say is all right.

Pandit Sundarlal : Mataji is a very clever and experienced Guru ! (Everyone laughs).

Mataji : Whatever may be said by any person, it is He alone, He and no other.

Questioner : For the realization of the Self, the Brahman is widely discussed in Vedanta; but in the Srimad Bhāgavata, from the very first verse starting with “*Janmādhyasya*” all the various aspects of the Lord’s *līlā* are portrayed.

Mataji : What God has to do is *līlā*.

Pandit Sundarlal : One cannot play about with the absolute nature of the Brahman.

Questioner : Deva means mode of expression, in other words “play”. Where the essence of things is manifested, there is bound to be action, *līlā*.

Mataji : Whatever God does is indeed *līlā*.

Questioner : Mataji, from the viewpoint of active performance there is a difference between father and mother.

Mataji : The Lord Himself enters the play. In the shape of a father, mother or son—in every shape and form *Bhagavān* alone exists. In the One everything is contained; everything is within everything, and only because of the One everything or everybody exists. Make efforts to attain to the revelation of God. Realizing Him, you will obtain everything; thus all and everything are one. Well, *Pitāji*, is all this not true ?

Questioner : I do not understand.

Pandit Sundarlal : In the life of Chaitanya Maha-

prabhu it is mentioned that he once addressed a man as "mother", and at once milk started flowing from his breast.

Mataji : Whether Pitāji has understood or not, what I have said has actually come to pass. Because when proper understanding has been reached there are no more questions.

(Indeed there were no more questions and the satsang ended.)

November 14th.

Question : God embraces everything in Himself, so why, even after understanding this, do we commit errors ?

Mataji : Goswami Ganesh Duttji has attracted you to this place, the abode of the seven Rishis. Your path has indeed been already provided by God. Since you wish to get rid of your errors, ways and means to bring this about will be found during satsang. Listen to the immortal words which lead you to transcend death. By following the advice of these Mahātmās or of your Guru, the condition of your mind will make it easy for you to become free from errors.

Questioner : That we are mistaken we do not readily grasp and that sense objects generate poison is not realized either.

Mataji : Then why do you ask questions ?

Questioner : Because doubts arise in my mind.

Mataji : If doubts arise, doubts must be plaguing you, otherwise you would not ask questions. So associate closely with the Mahātmās and unhesitatingly obey the dictates of your Guru.

Question : There is the plaything and there is the player. Between God and the devotee, who is the player and who the plaything ?

Mataji : Very well, Baba, the actual fact is there exists nobody but you yourself. Player-plaything-play, so long as this triad has not been fused, Oneness is not realized.

Questioner : I have not asked my question from the viewpoint of Vedanta but entirely from the background of devotional faith.

Mataji : God Himself stages a play with Himself alone. If He were not, could there be a play ? *Bhagavān* Himself plays with His own Self.

Question : Is the devotee the plaything or is it You ?

Mataji : This little girl is the plaything.

Question : How should one meditate with deep concentration ?

Mataji : Meditate according to your Guru's instructions. To perform meditation (*dhyāna*) is one thing and *dhyāna* occurring spontaneously is quite another issue. One should proceed exactly as the Guru dictates. Real *dhyāna* comes about of itself. Use whatever willpower you possess to practise meditation.

Question : Every year a *Samyam Saptāha* takes place. Do you look upon this as an examination centre ? Please tell me.

Mataji : Here, (with Ma) there is no learning, so I speak in a higgledy-piggledy fashion, and you have to listen

to it. The professor who examines a pupil already knows full well how much knowledge his pupil has acquired. But the professor nevertheless conducts the examination so that the pupil may become aware of the extent of his knowledge and also realize where exactly he is deficient. Here the professor is this little girl. I am sitting here among my mothers and fathers. (Pointing towards all present). How wonderful is God's play ! The Rishis have attracted you to their abode. The sublimity of this spot is being manifested continuously and the influences exerted by them will certainly be revealed in time. Had you stayed at home, what would you have done during these seven days ? How many truths or untruths would you have uttered, how much discipline or indiscipline, what amount of right and wrong deeds would you have performed ? While here you are all trying to practise complete self-mastery. Thereby you will definitely be able to advance along the upward path. What is the significance of living a life of self-restraint ? Where does God reside in you ? What is the right thing to do to attain to His revelation ? "According to the food one eats, the mind will be fashioned." During the week of *samyam* you must neither sleep nor eat too much. See, how beautiful is God's dispensation ! At first you were alone in your home. By becoming two, ten came forth. First you studied, then after passing your examinations, you set about earning money. Everyone connected with you thrived on it. Similarly, what is the significance of *Brahmachārya Āśrama* (where youths live in strict self-restraint), *Grihasthāśrama* (the life of the householder and the housewife), *vānaprasthāśrama* (where retired people live like recluses) and *Samnyāśāśrama* (the stage of

the renunciate) ? The *Brahmachārya Āśrama* is the foundation for all the other *āśramas*. On a weak foundation no great edifice can be built. So, if the *Brahmachārya Āśrama* is not rigidly observed, life in the subsequent *āśramas* will have to face certain deficiencies.

Where is God not ? God alone resides everywhere. He is staging a play with Himself. Man is drunk with the enjoyment of material pleasures and luxuries. What is worldly enjoyment (*viśaya*) ? It is poison (*vis hai*). By taking actual poison one dies on the spot. But worldly pleasure is a type of poison that destroys gradually. It is "slow poison". Who is death ? You yourself are the form of death. Yet you have the right and capacity for *Brahma-vidyā* (Knowledge of Reality). Through the grace of your Guru try to attain to *Brahma-vidyā*. The player and the plaything are one and the same—He Himself. "I am immortal, I am capable of attaining to the realization of Truth"—of this you must now become convinced. If you get entangled in the coils of sense enjoyment, you will have to take a "return ticket." Who am I ? Whence have I come ? Where am I going ? Ponder over all this. And engage in action leading to your real welfare. Don't take the downward path that leads to misery. To think of God as being far away is foolishness and leads to disaster. Who is to be examined here ? The further ahead you progress the greater the benefit.

Questioner : If we commit mistakes in our prayer or worship, do please extend a helping hand.

Mataji : God will definitely come forward to help. Walk in His ways.

Question : If *dhyāna* does not come, what should I do ?

Mataji : So long as you cannot remain absorbed in *dhyāna*, do not relax your efforts.

Question : If someone has no Guru, what should he do ?

Mataji : He should invoke God by whatever Name that he likes best. Or if he does not feel drawn to any Name, then he should sit perfectly still in complete tranquillity.

—: * :—

“An ethical life purifies the mind. Even though one may have no faith in God, yet if one believes in some Superior Power or has a high ideal, this also will serve one’s purpose. By living an ethical life one progresses towards the realization of the Divine. If one believes in supermen can it be said that one does not believe in God ? To believe in God under a particular name is also a way.”

ANANDAMAYI MA

From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

[Continued from the July 1976 issue]

June 1939.

While still at Uttarkashi, Mataji directed Didi to go to Calcutta with detailed instructions regarding her way of life and *sāadhanā*. Didi, as everybody knows, had her heart set on only one *sāadhanā* and that was to serve and take care of Mataji. She never saw any point in practising *sāadhanā* away from Mataji, when there was so much she could do by staying near Her.

Mataji spoke gently : “I know that you are always thinking of my convenience and comfort; but I am sending you to do very important work. Remember that a sincere effort toward *sāadhanā* is more pleasing to me than any personal service.”

A few days after Didi left, Abhaya expressed the wish to visit his family in Calcutta. Mataji at once took up the suggestion and had prompt arrangements made for the trek down to Mussoorie, where he caught up with Didi. Abhaya said to Didi a little ruefully, “I should not have suggested to go in the first place. But even so, I don’t know why I came away. It is not that I always obey Ma, and I need not have heeded Her this time either. I was not at all thinking seriously about going to Calcutta. However, let me see how

long I can stay away. (Incidentally, this turned out to be not long at all.)

Mataji Herself, travelling by slow stages, came to the Ashram at Raipur in late June, 1939. At the insistent invitation of the devotees of Simla, She visited that hill-station on the occasion of the annual *Nāma-yajña* which took place on July 9th. Mataji was accompanied by Ruma Devi and Abhaya. From Simla She returned to Dehradun and then went to Hardwar.

In the beginning of August Mataji came to Calcutta after visiting Moradabad, Bareilly, Lucknow, Faizabad and Burdwan. Mataji Herself announced Her arrival in Calcutta by going from house to house. At one or two places, She stood at the door and sang a few lines of kirtan, in the time-honoured way of the wandering minstrels of Bengal. The devotees were overjoyed to find Mataji in this most unexpected fashion. All arrangements were quickly made for Her at the Birla Mandir. News of Her arrival spread to all concerned like wild-fire and within a short time, Birla's was teeming with a throng of happy men, women and children.

For long hours, Mataji sat and conversed with the visitors. Days and nights flowed into each other in a stream of joy. Many people appealed to Her to give them spiritual guidance. As usual, Mataji said, "I am your child. You have not even educated your child properly. What guidance can she give you now? However, you can always hear the tones that you yourself play on this 'bell'. You can listen to the words that you so much desire to hear from me. I will speak to you to-day about "*samyamvrata*" which I have

already repeated at many places. Once a week (or more frequently if possible) one should make a strong resolve to live only in the sphere of Truth. On that day one should eat temperately, watch one's speech and actions carefully to avoid the least incorrect utterance or unworthy behaviour; passions and emotions should be controlled. One should look upon the children as child-manifestations of the Divine; one's wife or husband as not only an object of love but reverence as well. One must render service to all the members of the family (including servants) in a spirit of humility. Even if there should be occasions for anger, or other provocations, one should respond with calmness and not be jolted out of a tranquil frame of mind. In spite of a few or even many failures in the beginning, one must persevere till the goal of perfect *samyam* in thought, speech and action is attained. If one member of a family practises this, then the whole family will feel the calming effects of that one day." Mataji paused for a moment and added amidst laughter, "May be, some naughty children will take advantage of you, but it will pass. When you feel confident of yourself then you may increase the number of days in a week. The aim would be for this to become a way of life rather than remain a special occasion. On those days some time should be allotted to the reading of scriptures, meditation and *Nāma-japa*. In short this will enable you to turn inward, to be in tune with the rhythm of your own life-breath which links you to the cosmic *prāna*. In this way you may hope to realize your own inner Self, because who knows at what auspicious moment one may get caught up in that universal rhythm."

After a few days the festivities came to an end. Mataji

accompanied by Ruma Devi and Abhaya, left for Nalhati. To the assembled crowd at the railway station, waiting forlornly on the platform, Mataji said in clear incisive tones, "If you work hard success is assured ! In the spiritual realm there is no scope for despair, despondency or failure." Someone asked, "Ma, will everyone of us succeed ?" "Why do you think at all of the possibility of failure ? Never give a thought to non-success. To doubt is to commit a sin. Focus the mind unwaveringly on success. 'It has to be, nay it shall crown my efforts' !"

Much cheered by Mataji's invigorating words, the devotees went home with what fortitude they could muster to wait again for the next chance of *daraśna*.

Mataji went to Ajeemganj and then to Bahrampur. In a day or two the temple where She had put up became the site for large gatherings. People came from nearby towns and also from Calcutta. Mataji spoke again about the *samyam-vrata*.

On August 19th, Mataji paid an all too short visit to Dacca. From Dacca She travelled to Kheora, the village where She was born nearly 43 years ago.

From far and wide the villagers arrived at the small āshram. They came with great curiosity to see how the little village girl had become the famous spiritual personage, May be they were a little disappointed. Their amazement was expressed by Mataji's childhood friend and namesake, who remarked, "You haven't changed at all !"

Mataji visited the houses of men and women who had

known Her before She left the village. Sri Mukunda Chowdhury, Sri Vaikuntha Das, Sri Mohim Das. Introducing Mohim Das' wife to Her companions, She said, "This lady taught me embroidery when I was a little girl—"

This visit was full of reminiscences for everyone and of absorbing interest to the devotees who were with Ma. They travelled in boats threading their way through rice fields and sometimes sought shelter from the afternoon sun under large trees. Proceeding in this leisurely fashion Mataji came to Vidyakut on September 10th. Vidyakut was a little different from the other villages. Mataji had spent many years there as a child. The people remembered Her as a winsome little girl and welcomed Her with affection, tenderness and love. Mataji responded to them as a dearly beloved daughter returning home after a long absence. She greeted them by the epithets of relationship, like, *chāchā*, *kākā*, *māshi*, *pishi*, *dādā* etc., as is customary in India. The elders addressed Her in second person familiar (*tui*) and then became self-conscious, not knowing if the throng of devotees would take offence. But the devotees were very conscious of the rights of these villagers because they had in a way had the first privilege of looking after and caring for Mataji.

In a couple of days, a change came over the people of Vidyakut. They were in a quandary. They could not quite keep up the tone of familiarity with Mataji although She did nothing to dissuade them. Actually She was speaking to them in the village dialect, reminiscing about many shared memories of earlier times. The people, however, gradually started to ask for Her guidance in spiritual matters. Even the elders requested Her to say something to them. Mataji

was quick to respond to the changed mood. She spoke to them about the *samyam vrata* and spent many hours listening to their problems and guiding them into new patterns of daily behaviour.

Mataji returned to Calcutta via Dacca by the middle of September. While She was crossing the river Padma on the ferry-steamer, a man came up to Her, made his obeisance and asked : “Ma, I am the warden of a prison. In the course of my duties, I am required to mete out punishments to the criminals. Am I committing any wrong in this way ?” Mataji replied, “If you are needlessly ruthless, then certainly you are committing a sin. You are permitted only what may be necessary in the discharge of your duty. You see, it goes without saying that one is affected by the company one keeps. Since you have to live in a way with criminals, you are likely to develop a harsh temperament. This is why I tell everyone to take refuge in *satsang*. (The company of saints and seekers after truth). Even if one does not have the opportunity to meet holy men and listen to spiritual discourses, one can always read good books and train one’s own mind to harbour good and elevating thoughts only. The company of good thoughts is also *satsang*.”

The gentleman went away in a thoughtful mood.

After a short visit to Jamshedpur, Mataji left this part of the country, and travelling right across the north of India, came to Solon. From there She soon started for the State of Suket via Baijnath. The Raja of Suket had been very pressing in his requests for Mataji to visit his State. He was one of those rulers who had the welfare of his people closest to his

heart. It was his conviction that Mataji's presence in his State would be beneficial and auspicious for it and for its people.

Mataji's companions had never before experienced such lavish arrangements and ceremonial receptions as they met with as soon as they crossed the border of the State of Suket, 150 miles from Pathankot. The Raja and his royal family could not do enough for Mataji and the few people who were with Her. Mataji's room had been decorated with as much care, concern and splendour, as if it were the room of the presiding deity of the palace. The Raja was a very devout man and everybody was thoroughly impressed by his utter simplicity of manner and goodness of heart. It was obvious that the people of Suket loved their ruler, and they were ready to give reverence to Mataji as the spiritual guide of their royal family.

Nevertheless, after a few days departure drew near. The Raja placed before Ma priceless ornaments, silken clothes and many other offerings suited to his exalted state. Mataji said to him gently, "These things that you have presented to me are now mine. So I should be free to bestow them on anybody I choose. I will entrust them to the best men and women who will take very good care of them on my behalf....." In this way, having forestalled any objections, She started giving the offerings away to the assembled people in the same manner in which She distributes garlands, flowers and fruits. The heap of costly gems, ornaments and clothes vanished. The Raja of Suket, extraordinary person that he was, remained totally obedient to Mataji's expressed *kheyāla* about his princely gifts, as about everything else. Mataji moved on, plunging the whole state into a sea of forlornness. Mataji came

to Baijnath to attend the installation ceremony of a new temple, which had been built by Swami Tārānanda. Tārānandaji had requested Mataji's presence for this festival of *Navarātri* in the 3rd week of September. Mataji had stayed in Baijnath before with Bhaiji. Many of the village women were known to Her. She now introduced them to Didi and Her other companions.

Mataji spent a day in Amritsar and visited the Golden Temple. She also stayed for some time at Bareilly on Her way to and back from Almora. In Bareilly Mataji was known especially to a cross-section of society where the ladies took the leading role. This was mainly due to the influence of Maharatanji (Mrs. Jaspal) who had introduced her friends and the friends of their friends and so on to Mataji. Now Mrs. Dikshit, Mrs. Amba Prasad, Mrs. Beharilal, Mrs. Dwarka Prasad and others welcomed Mataji whenever She passed through Bareilly. Some of these ladies were driving their own cars, and were well educated and quite used to freedom and responsibilities outside their own homes. They were involved in community projects of various kinds. Now they celebrated the presence of Mataji in their midst with dance and music performed by a group of girls. Every town that Mataji visited had a character all its own. The inhabitants who were drawn to Her knew Her to be most partial to them. Nobody paused to wonder at the singular phenomenon of Mataji's rapprochement with people ranging from the unsophisticated villagers of Kheora to the far off inhabitants of the Hill-State Suket, to say nothing of the ladies of Bareilly and again the simple village women of Almora. These women,

called themselves *Sakhis* or *sahelis* (friends, pals) of Mataji, and were known thus to Mataji's companions.

At Almora, Mataji again spoke about the *samyam vrata* to people who assembled at the Ashram. One evening, in answer to a question Mataji said, "I tell you to make effort because you are used to striving for practical matters in life. You do not wait for things to happen. You go about doing something yourself. So you must strive in quest of knowledge too." One gentleman, objected: "Ma we strive in the world because we must provide food for our hunger. As regards spiritual life we feel no hunger at all! What are we to do?"

"This is very correct. But as a matter of fact such loss of appetite may be remedied."

"How?"

"By prescribed medicines and wholesome invalid diet. The medicine is to remember the name of God and to repeat it constantly (*nāma japa*) and the invalid diet is self-discipline. If you provide yourself with both, you will certainly begin to feel the pangs of hunger!"

After a few days, Mataji again passed through Bareilly, and came to Vindhyachal on November 4th for a brief stay. While She visited Varanasi a gentleman raised the subject of spiritual preceptors, that is, gurus. He and his wife were desirous of taking spiritual initiation but could not bring themselves to approach their family-preceptor (*kula-guru*) because they did not approve of him. Neither could they make up their minds to approach some renowned spiritual personality as this would be tantamount to showing disrespect to their own *kula-guru* and family tradition.

Mataji said, "Since you have a problem in this matter it is best to take initiation from your own preceptor. If need arises, the right person will appear at the proper time. As a matter of fact, the qualification '*sadguru*' (true preceptor) is unnecessary. Guru is always *sat* (true, worthy). The main thing is to make a beginning. The rest will follow in its own time."

On December 9th Mataji again left Vindychala, this time for Navadweep. At the request of the devotees of Allahabad, She stopped over for a day. Mataji was received at the Besant Hall and a very large crowd awaited Her there to listen to Her words. Mataji smiled gently and said, "What should I say? I have nothing to say." The big crowd had to be satisfied perforce by Her presence only. Later Didi remonstrated with Her for not saying even a few words to the gathering. Mataji replied, "What can I do? It is as it happens. You know yourself that I sometimes go on speaking, even if people are not disposed to listen or to heed me. But nothing came to my *kheyala* at Allahabad this time." Didi was very conscious of the fact that the assembly had gathered just to listen to what Mataji would have to say. Allahabad being a town of great literary activity, Mataji's programme was always adequately publicised and the press was present to take a report of Her message. But all to no purpose; Mataji did not have the *kheyala* to say anything at all, not even that one should strive for Enlightenment. Didi's and everyone's puzzlement remained unanswered.

(*To be continued.*)

Impressions

Amemarie Hocke

Back again from India! The sky is blue and our mountains welcome me. And there is Ma Anandamayi's photo. Shall I have to live on Her picture now for another year? The mind's eye is drawn backwards. For the fifth time I had gone to India to meet Mataji. I can only spend my summer holidays there—about four to five weeks—as I have to work in the educational line.

Never in my whole life had I been satisfied with my own church. I had even been an atheist, then an agnostic for a time, living in a void. Life's essential questions were left up in the air.

Just at the right time a wonderful book came into my hands. It was Melita Maschmann's about Ma Anandamayi.* This book was my constant companion for some years. Gradually it started to plough up the hard and stony earth of my soul. And finally I decided to go in search of this 'phenomenon Ma-Anandamayi' as I felt Her to be at that time.

And so I came to Poona and met Ma in summer 1972. She was in *mauna* then and all devotees felt Her powerful radiation. You were not able to describe what happened to you. Moreover the expression on people's faces told wonder-

* "Der Tiger Singt Kirtana"; Indienfahrt mit einer Rindu Heiligen.,
Published by Otto Wilhelm Barth Verlag, Weilheim, Oberbayern,
Germany.

ful stories about Mataji and Her ways. There was something mysterious in which the new-comer became involved. Into what? Words fail.

You were told most impressive stories at the end of which you could often hear words like : “Ma has revolutionized my life !”

The hall was full. Suddenly a young girl got up, lifted her hands and started dancing, her eyes closed. Her features had a painful expression, tears running down her cheeks. Ma saw this and quickly came to her, threading Her way with wonderfully elegant movements through the dense crowd. She showed the attitude of an experienced doctor who already has the remedy for his patient in his pocket. And there was radiating love and secret knowledge of the intrinsic nature of this girl. Ma touched the girl’s hand and gently fitted into the rhythm of her movements. Though her eyes remained closed, the dancer intuited who had touched her and a blissful smile brightened up her face. Ma helped to calm her down. This was one of my unforgettable impressions at Poona.

Not before long Ma gave me the grace of my first ‘private.’ As She was in *mauna* She drew the answers with Her finger on the couch. I told my story and put some simple questions—and that I had no idea and could not imagine what meditation was. She gave me the first instructions. To my greatest amazement—normally used to be self-controlled in all situations – I broke out into tears. Mataji lifted Her hands and said : “Shanti-Shanti-Shanti-”. Then She looked at me for a long time and poured and poured something into me I cannot explain. This was beyond all forms and classi-

fications in the fields of theology, psychology, philosophy and all possible analysis the western mentality is so quickly ready for. I felt the limits of the western intellect. This here came from an unknown field behind actuality as a gigantic power. I only knew it would continue to act within myself though I was not able to recognize which way the flood would surge.

Returning to Tonce to home Germany I tried every day to carry out Mataji's instructions. For about six months I noticed hardly any effect. Then some walls must have been broken down - Mother's power began to work perceptibly. Thus more and more questions arise each year and Mother gives of Her precious time to answer them not to speak of the letters which come in between in reply to the most urgent queries.—

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Krishna's birthday. The women's procession went round the circular altar. Ma was with us but as everybody gazed at Her the procession got a bit out of line. Ma wanted to correct it. So She took every woman who was not in line by the hands and put her right. As to me, She was behind me, and I felt Her right hand on my right shoulder and Her left hand on a certain bone of my spine. In this manner She directed me for some steps. She did not know who I was then, not to speak of knowing anything about my spine. Gradually it dawned on me that She had touched exactly the spots which had given me severe pain for years. I told this to my friend Melita Maschmann who smiled mysteriously : "Do you think that anything with Ma happens by coincidence ?" The poor newcomer could not make any sense of all this; now, four

years later, I can. Since Mother's touch all pain, all stiffness, all sorts of serious obstructions in the spine, shoulder and arm have completely gone !

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In summer 1973 Mother was at Ranchi. She visited an agricultural college. A small hall—a girl sang. Peace. Mysterious beauty on Ma's face. Time stood still. Was this Eternity ? Could Eternity be more blissful ? Why had we to go back to the routine of everyday life ?

During that visit I heard Mother's voice for the first time. I have a very sensitive ear but do not understand a word of Hindi or Bengali. And when She goes down to the deeper sounds, as everybody does at the end of a sentence, I feel myself sinking and sinking into dark red, soft velvet—a mysterious sound carries me away to a gate which slowly opens into blissful magic fields unknown and unexplored....

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The following year I met Ma in New Delhi. She took three of us to Modinagar for some days. Blue sky, few people only, precious advice in the spiritual line and then even some hints on health. Mother had seen what Her child needed though the child had not been aware of it and had not even asked. Needless to say I have always carefully followed Her instructions. They never fail to have their positive effects. So I accept anything and everything of Her words and Her actions, even if reason sometimes is unable to understand. As to my personal experiences I have seen that She has invariably been right. So I have learnt that our intellect is nothing compared to Mother's secret knowledge and wisdom. So

many knots have been unravelled since then, and more and more events and coincidences from outside miraculously fit into the pattern of my life, which is an enigma to the western intellect.

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1975—Gurupurnima at Kankhal. Then Shuktal - blessed days. Bath in the Ganga in the heat of the day. Friendly and hospitable people in the village, a remote and quiet place, a dream.

Mataji used to come out of Her room at about 7 p. m. and sit in the yard. The glance of Her eyes penetrated far into the colourful veils of the sinking twilight. She used to sit there for about three hours. Have the stars ever been so golden, so bright and brilliant? Have the little glow-worms ever had such luminous beauty? I am absorbing in silence. Nothing is separate from the other. Only a few people are present. Sometimes there is friendly, casual talk.

I was longing for initiation and a mantra. Could I ask for it? So I plucked up all my courage one night and came to the point. Mataji was not surprised, gave me some instructions and some days later fulfilled my need. The next morning I threw flowers into the Ganga and followed them with my eyes for a while to watch them slowly disappear.

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Summer 1976. Dehradun. I had read and heard so much about that place that I had wanted to see it. So my wish was fulfilled by coincidence right in the beginning of my holiday, after a night in the Lufthansa Jet, 7½ hours non-

stop Frankfurt-New Delhi, another night in the train & arrival at Dehradun in the morning. Mountains in the background, a dry river-bed down the slope, a little house—and my first *pranāma* of this year. Mother greeted me with some words connecting the experiences of last year which I understood. What a happy and unexpected welcome ! She must have seen the longing of Her child ! Dehradun-Kankhal-Delhi-Kankhal again. This time She has plunged me into an ocean of bliss-surprising, unexpected, never deserved. But I cannot disclose the details.

Once at Kankhal Mataji said : “Ma permeates all and is permeated by all.” And so I come back to my question stated in the beginning : “Must I live on Her picture up to next year ?” Though I am happy with Her pictures I have more to live upon – I have Herself, I have taken Her with me, permeated by Her to the last subtle nerve of my being. And from within I feel how She guides me. How was I able to live a long life without Her ? But She must have been there all the time right from the beginning though I did not know it. Catastrophe and crisis, good luck and happiness—how could all the events have worked together so beautifully which finally led me to Her country, 10,000 km away ? And so I add my tiny and modest little drop to the ocean of words devotees have spoken and written, and join in their chorus : “Ma has revolutionized my life !”

And now there will be duty ahead of me for another year until I do hope to meet Ma again — the duty of work and the duty to make sustained effort for spiritual progress. Let me finish with the wonderful counsel of the great Indian poet Tagore. Someone gave it to me to be hung on the wall when

I was fifteen years old. It became the motto of my life. How often have I written it into students' books :

"I slept and dreamt— life was beauty.

I awoke and saw —life was duty.

I acted and found —duty was beauty." Tagore

Tagore was a Bengali—Mother is a Bengali.

Friends, do you think all this is a mere coincidence ?

Jai Ma !

"If you think of God all the time and look on everyone as a form of Him all your work will be done excellently and satisfy everyone. When a man is intent on accumulating wealth he hides what little he has, and even when his treasure grows, it has to be carefully concealed. Similarly, foster in your heart what little inner wealth you have gained and outwardly occupy yourself with the service of the family. There is no need to make a show of the little you have acquired. But when you really become immersed in the One, so that it is impossible for you to attend to your work, then nobody will find fault with you. On the contrary, people will feel the divine Presence in you and be only too eager to serve you."

—MA ANANDAMAYI

Messages from Ma

Patricia Clark

I am a Westerner, a teacher, and have lived most of my life in the academic world either going to school or teaching at school. Words, and the intellectual processes involved in their use have always been very important to me. I studied, read hundreds of books, listened to hundreds of lectures, and took thousands of pages of notes, thinking that I must be getting closer and closer to Truth. But it seemed that the harder I pursued Truth the more elusive it became. In fact, the truth which I sought so desperately seemed always to recede and elude my grasp.

Living became more and more meaningless. Everywhere I turned there was nothing to be found but emptiness and desolation. All social, economic, and even religious pursuits seemed utterly pointless. Nowhere could I find anything that made life seem worthwhile. The thought of years and years of going through meaningless activities filled me with horror and dread. I felt that I would rather die than continue such an existence.

It was then that Ma came into my life. I saw Her pictures, listened to people speaking of Her, read about Her. Gradually the urge to go to India, to see Her, to ask Her for a way to go on living became so strong that it could no longer be ignored. Not counting the cost in any way, I went.

It has been a year since my return to my own country. My life is much changed; not outwardly, but in the inward

aspects, now every moment is full of meaning and there is much joy.

It is about one of these changes that I should like to tell you. But you will have to bear with me, for words give me much difficulty. Having written scores of papers, now I find just this little article a great struggle.

I should like to show you how my entire orientation toward knowledge and communication has been changed by Ma, how She broke through the barrier of words that I had erected between myself and true knowledge, and how She has gradually established with me a form of communication that is absolutely without words and beyond the need of words.

Being a Westerner called to Ma's feet is most difficult. First there is the long and exhausting journey, then the strangeness of environment, the disorientation caused by a multitude of stimuli that cannot be properly interpreted. The list of difficulties is long and varied. But the thing that most upset and frustrated me was to be in Her presence, to hear Her voice, and still not to be able to understand a word. How I longed to understand Her language! And, God forgive me, how I envied those who could speak with Her directly, those who could laugh with Her and ask Her questions, those who could enter into that spontaneous verbal communication which seemed so free and so beautiful. Because of my great attachment to verbal communication, the seemingly unsurmountable barrier of language caused me great anguish.

It was in Uttarkashi that the first intimation of another kind of communication came to me. It was rather late at

night, the crowd was large although Ma had not come out. My body, unused as it was to the demands being placed upon it, was tired, cold, and not very well. The mind was bewildered, the emotions were isolated and forlorn, quite close to despair. Suddenly and without warning a new sensation descended upon me, so vivid and so all-encompassing that for a moment I could not understand. And then words came, words of reassurance and comfort and love. Just one little sentence which lifted me to a state of joy I had never known before. The internal experience was electric, vibrant, and transforming—so completely joyful that I could have danced and sung, anything to express the wonderful feeling.

Later, in Kanpur for Samyam Saptaha, during the daily hour of silence and meditation, when I was trying with most intense effort to do and be something that I had been told but did not understand, the second message came. It was in the form of a command, not to me, but to whatever it was in me that was causing such great tension. Again the feeling came before the words, a feeling of delightful release like a dip into cool water on an unbearably hot day. And then the words, a few simple words, followed by sweet, calm, cool peace.

Being entirely without experience of such events, I might well have let them slip into forgetfulness, not recognizing their significance. But this was not allowed to happen. The words and the feeling accompanying them returned repeatedly with such vividness and impact that they were not to be ignored. Gradually I began to realize that these experiences were messages from Ma delivered directly to the center of my being, that this was a form of communication

new to me, and that it would be wise to pay close attention to it.

How difficult it is to describe these experiences ! There is such forcefulness and clarity, but it is utterly beyond words. The knowing is very strong, but it is not the mind that knows. The poor mind must fumble around for a while before it can build a verbal structure for the experience. Perhaps that is why the feeling always comes first, then the words. There were a number of similar experiences during that time, each with its peculiar vividness and pertinence, and each requiring time before the mind could build its verbal structure.

Now I must try to describe an experience which was so far beyond words that failure is inevitable. It was in Kankhal a day or two before my departure. Ma was giving darshan on the upstairs porch. The mood was one of hushed stillness and reverence. I straightened from my *pranāma* to find Ma looking directly into my eyes with a lovely, tender, little smile. Tears streamed down my face. Quite happily I could have remained in that moment forever, so immensely beautiful and joyous it was. That is all I can say about it, except that it seems now to be full of a significance which is utterly beyond my comprehension, and to live, most vivid and complete within my heart.

About two months after my return from India the realization came that I was hearing Ma's voice saying one word over and over again, and that I had been hearing that voice for quite some time but had chosen to ignore it. It was a word that I had heard directly from Her during an interview, one of the very few words that had been understood without

the aid of an interpreter. It was an instruction which I had rejected and ignored. But Ma would not let me do that. Half around the world Her voice came, haunting me until I surrendered my will in the matter and accepted Hers.

JAI MA !

More recently, it seems that the messages from Ma come in mental pictures so vivid and in such detail and with an impact so intense that there is no way to confuse them with the ordinary mental activity. There is a special feeling about them that cannot be described, nor denied nor forgotten. Ma does not speak to me directly very often, but when She does there is no shadow of doubt that it is Ma speaking. It seems that She waits until the difficulties appear insurmountable and my own efforts entirely defeated, until I begin to doubt just a little, thinking, "Oh, She has forgotten me." Then She gives me a beautiful, powerful moment which lifts me over the difficulties and changes despair to incredible joy.

Direct, internal messages from Ma are shattering in their intensity, astonishing in their transforming power. But She also has other less direct and much more subtle ways of communication, ways which can be easily ignored as coincidences until the coincidences mount up to incredible dimensions and then one must admit that the message is there in the midst of the coincidence.

For instance, one night during satsang in Kanpur, a friend happened to have brought her tape recorder, and happened to turn it on at a particular moment, and happened to get an excellent recording of Ma's response to a question (which, of course, I should not understand). Later that evening we happened to meet an Indian woman who invited

us to visit her. In course of conversation this kind woman offered to translate the recording for us. She happened to be quite fluent in English. The words Ma spoke happened to be exactly what was needed to set my feet upon the path intended for me, although the realization of the significance of Her words did not dawn on me until much later.

To me, that series of "happened to" is just too overwhelming to be passed over as a mere coincidence! Series of "coincidences" like this occur often enough to convince me that it could not be just happenstance. It is Ma delivering Her messages, guiding me.

Sometimes Ma speaks to me through the voices of the people around me. Not too long ago my employer was gently scolding me, while behind his words and unknown to him was Ma's voice, showing me exactly where I had been in the wrong. On another occasion the casual words of an acquaintance suddenly rang in my ears with the power and impact of Ma's voice. Four insignificant words, spoken on impulse, but they changed my life. They opened a door in my mind and showed me the way. I have no doubt whatsoever that these are messages from Ma.

Living is now a joyful experience for me. It is a joy that has grown from a tiny, tentative feeling into a powerful flood, almost too much to be contained in one human heart. Life is a joyous adventure.

Just now, as I look back over these pages, I see the magnificent simplicity of Ma's gift to me. The question I took to Her in my heart was : "How can I go on living in this world"? Oh, just look at the answer She has given me!

I bow at Her holy feet, in awe and humility, in thanksgiving and deep reverence.

Jai Ma, Om Ma.

Sri Ma's Songs

(Translated from Bengali)

(On occasions Mataji has sung original Bengali songs that have come to Her spontaneously. These have been noted down by Her attendants. The following is a selection of these songs published in "*Kirtana Rasa Swarūpa*".)

1.

February 1936, Vindhyachal.

(*Kirtana Rasa Swarūpa*: Bengali p. 15; Hindi p. 17)

Without dispassion human kind cannot reach
the Ultimate,
Thus you must discriminate and renounce,
all desire forsake.
Set to work and you will see what depth your
renunciation
And in which direction your mind drags you ceaselessly.
Relinquishing all karma, practise human dharma,
Eternal, changeless Brahman contemplate and meditate.
From outer things withdraw the mind, in your heart
keep it confined,
Choose Brahman as your raft to cross the sea of life.
Once the ego's gone, end there is to strife;
Established in the Self, highest Truth is known.

2.

(1939, Dehradun.)

(*Kirtan Rasa Swarupa*: Bengali p. 15; Hindi p. 18.)

Who's there now whom I should fear ?
 On and on my raft I steer.
 Let come any storm or gale,
 Let it overwhelm my sail —
 His the pilgrim, His the raft,
 My trust in Him alone I graft.

Who's there now whom I should fear ?
 He's the pilgrim, He's the boat,
 He's again the fierce cyclone,
 Sinks the boat and makes it float,
 He Himself directs the boat,
 My trust I put in Him alone.

3.

(October 1939.)

(*Kirtan Rasa Swarupa*: Bengali p. 16; Hindi p. 18.)

Treasure Thou of human life
 Thou art calm, enlightened, free,
 Immaculate eternally—Thou art Siva-Nārāyan.
 The world of pain and agony is only māyā's play;
 No more now break and fabricate, oh crazy mind,
 I pray !

4.

(*Kirtana Rasa Swarupa*: Bengali p. 18; Hindi p. 21.)

Without you I am desolate,
 Oh Mother, do appear !
 You're my own, my only one,
 Without you life cannot go on.

Come, oh come, my Mother,
 Dwell in the lotus of my heart,
 Without you days and nights are dark.
 Enslaved by others, filled with cares,
 My mind's enmeshed in endless snares,
 To you I do not turn.

Oh Mother, grant me pure devotion,
 Let there be love for you alone,
 May I seek none but you, my only one.
 My heart is full of self,
 Desiring friends and wealth—
 To you I do not turn.
 Have pity, Mother do not spurn,
 No longer stay away from me !

(Mataji sang a line from a song composed by someone else. She was then requested to add to it. Laughing heartily, She on the spot composed this song.)

5.

(*Kirtana Rasa Swariupa*: Bengali; p. 19 Hindi, p. 22.)

Come, oh Mother, come, precious jewel bright,
 Far from you how can I bear day and night ?
 By your loving-kindness Mother, lift me up.
 You alone are my own—this is all I know.

Everything is lost, my heart is full of fear,
 Where to go I do not know, directionless I roam.
 Grant me hope, may there be faith—
 You alone are my own, this is all I know.

(In this song Mataji gave expression to the feelings of someone who was with Her at the time.)

6.

(*Kirtana Rasa Swarupa*: Bengali p.20; Hindi, p. 23)

Call out Hari, call out Guru, oh my mind !
 Prostrate lie at His feet if the Goal you want to find.
 Birds and beasts wake up every watch of night
 But you my mind are sleeping tight, steeped in fleeting
 pleasure—

Call out Hari, call out Guru, oh my mind !

Full of mischief is the mind of Manmohan
 And simple childlike nature there is none,
 Him code and conduct do not bind—
 Call out Hari, call out Guru, oh my mind !

(Ma had heard a little bit of this. Then the whole song
 occurred to Her.)

7.

(*Kirtana Rasa Swarupa*: Bengali P. 21; Hindi p. 23.)

With what shall I worship Thee, Spirit All-pervading ?
 Nowhere do I see anything that could be
 apart from Thee.
 What offering to choose when in the whole universe
 Nothing is there besides Thee.
 From the tiniest atom onwards, everywhere and always
 Thou art what I meet.
 Thou pervadest every substance,
 I exist only in Thee.

(On hearing the first line or two Mataji composed this song.)

At the Feet of Ma Anandamayi

Anil Ganguli

It is a unique experience to sit at the feet of Ma Anandamayi and bathe in the sunshine of Her grace and compassion. Subtle vibrations emanating from Her create in one's mind a sense of peace and beatitude. It is not the peace of mere quiescence but a peace pulsating with life and surcharged with love. Ma does not look for anything in return for the love showered by Her. If She asks (or rather "begs", as She puts it) for anything at all, it is that we should think of God and chant His name. "Bear in mind", She says, "that God's name is He Himself in one form; let It be your inseparable companion. Try your utmost never to remain without Him. The more intense and continuous your efforts to dwell in His Presence, the greater the likelihood of your growing joyful and serene. When your mind becomes vacant, endeavour to fill it with the awareness of God and His contemplation."*

Ma awakens aspiration for God-realization which She equates with Self-realization. "God alone", She says, "is Truth, Happiness, Bliss. Do not set your hopes on anything except Supreme Beatitude, the Bliss of the Self. Naught else exists. What seems to exist outside of it, is mere illusion. Try to find your Self."* 'God is ever showering His Grace',

* "Mātri Vāni", Vol I, p. 117.

* Mātri Vāni, Vol I, p. 143.

She adds, "but how can you receive it if you hold your vessel turned upside down ?"

Let us have a glimpse into a typical *satsang* (religious congregation) with Ma as the centre of gravity, surrounded by hundreds of Her "children". *Satsang* forms part of life in Sri Sri Anandamayi Ashram, which has branches all over India. Its usual programme starts with the chanting of hymns (*stotras*) and reading of scriptures such as the *Gita* and the *Chandi*. It includes talks by recognized authorities on various religious subjects. Besides, there is inspiring *Kirtana* sung by the inmates of the Ashram and sometimes by artistes of all-India repute.

The supreme artiste of artistes is Ma Anandamayi Herself. She has never had any technical training in music, but eminent singers unequivocally concede that Her melody is matchless and Her rhythm perfect. Lay listeners feel that Her singing not only pleases the ears but also infuses something unique into their inner self. Ma sings spontaneously. The verve and vigour and the cadence of Her music are thrilling and ecstatic. The modulations of Her voice are inimitable. They vibrate in the heart of the listener and purify the mind. She gives to almost each of Her words a different inflection and each inflection has a special significance. The emphasis put on a particular word or syllable acts as a key to the understanding of its inner meaning. With Her eyes half closed and Her tiny palms gracefully folded, Ma keeps on singing; then a wave of *ānanda* sweeps over the Ashram and floods the sky above. Its message lingers even after the sound of the music has faded away.

An important feature of the *satsang* is *mauna* (observance of silence) for a specified period. In *mauna* one has to sit still in one posture with mind and heart concentrated on the goal. This discipline, known as *dhyāna*, is an extremely difficult exercise. The presence of Ma, however, makes it easier for those who make an honest effort.

By far the most soul-animating item of the gathering is called *Mātri Satsang*, when Ma Herself replies to questions. *Mātri Satsang* gives Ma's "children" the much coveted opportunity for informal conversation with Her. It is free from the usual restraint inspired by Her imposing Presence as also from the rigid conventions of rituals that precede. Ma is a fantastic conversationalist. If She is in a mood to be serious, She keeps the audience spell-bound and there is pin-drop silence. If, however, She chooses to be in a lighter vein, She can raise an uproar of laughter from the entire congregation in response to Her keen wit and exquisite humour. During *Mātri-Satsang* Ma is usually very patient and indulgent and more motherly than any human mother can possibly be. She then gives Her "children" almost unrestrained liberty and sympathetically attends to questions ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Learned scholars place before Ma intricate points of philosophy and metaphysics, out of sheer academic bravado. Followers of different faiths and sects seek Her guidance from a practical point of view. Pretenders propound empty topics with an air of importance. Common householders consult Ma for a solution of their domestic problems. Unsophisticated teenagers ventilate their grievances, including

stiff questions in examinations. Frustrated young men condemn God, Government and "the haves" and expect Ma to answer for the conduct of those they complain against. Cynics, claiming to have been disillusioned, demand an explanation for "obvious inequalities" in the scheme of creation. Thus, the questions cover a large canvas and are of varying interest and value. Ma patiently listens to all, however silly or arrogant a question may be.

Ma's answers are as varied as the questions. They are enlivening, scintillating and inspiring. The wonder of wonders is that every question, however difficult, is disposed of without a moment's reflection. Ma's answers are generally terse but conclusive. They have a completeness within the smallest possible compass, as if rubbed and polished down to perfection. This perfection, however, is not the result of conscious effort, it is natural and spontaneous.

Every questioner gets the answer he deserves. Every answer is on the mental level of the particular enquirer, has reference to his peculiar point of view and responds to his own power of understanding. Obviously most of those who ask receive answers to their satisfaction. This seems to be one of the reasons why they long for *darśana* again and again.

No person with a genuine problem has ever returned disappointed. Even if somebody is hesitant or too shy to speak out, his query is solved in a mysterious manner. Thus, to his surprise, Ma of Her own accord sometimes broaches the particular subject and incidentally clarifies the point raised. Again, it has been the good fortune of many to find

that somebody else has asked the very question that had been worrying him. Thereupon, Ma gives a reply which, incidentally, solves his own particular problem. Then follows Ma's penetrating gaze at him and a significant smile on Her face. Is this just coincidence? But then such coincidences are quite frequent.

A person bent on showing off, is generally disposed of with evasive answers. Though usually tolerated, he or she is sometimes asked embarrassing questions, and then although he may be quite unaware, his hollowness gets exposed through his own statements. During *Mātri Satsang* questions relating to worldly affairs are not encouraged and those on politics and personalities nipped in the bud; while queries on spiritual subjects are warmly received and discussed at length. Sometimes Ma requests some Mahātmā or scholar who may be present to consider the matter in the light of the scriptures. The latter does his best but in the end implores Ma to give the last word on the subject and clinch further argument.

If and when Ma is pleased to express Herself, She usually begins with a preamble that Her sayings are not based on any study of the scriptures. It is true that She has hardly had any schooling. Her knowledge is not acquired at second-hand--it wells up from the ocean of Reality. Whatever is uttered by Her is prompted from within. At the same time it is invariably consistent with the scriptures and touches one's soul.

Ma compares Herself to a musical instrument and smilingly says : "What you hear depends on how you play."

Thus, a violin gives out notes not of its own initiative but in response to shocks or vibrations received from outside and the music that is heard depends on how the instrument is played. Similarly, every questioner strikes the musical instrument that is Ma Anandamayi in his own way. And what he hears from Ma depends on how he plays.

It may be remembered, however, that in a large gathering where a question is put by one person and the listeners are so many, Ma's replies are general. It is only in a private interview that one can expect answers that would meet a person's specific requirements. On many occasions it has been my privilege to act as an interpreter in private interviews and my experience as such has been amazing. I have seen how Ma knows exactly where a questioner stands, what is prompting his question and what is hindering his understanding. She is not supposed to know English but She has always pulled me up whenever my translation has failed to be up to the mark. Quite apart from communication through words, a rapport is established between Ma and the questioner. She tells the latter exactly what he needs to know even if the question is imperfectly formulated or inappropriately translated. The poor interpreter then realizes that he is almost superfluous except for the purpose of translating Ma's answers to the enquirer. So far as the questions are concerned, Ma knows them better than the interpreter, nay even better than the person who poses them. This is not a matter of mere thought-reading. Perhaps it is a mysterious kind of "seeing" a person's motive even before it has crystallized into thought. A questioner, gifted with the power of introspection can, at best, analyze his conscious mind. Ma knows even

the sub-conscious, that is, the birth-place of the seeds of thoughts-to-be.

As an interpreter I have witnessed questioners passing through various psychological phases. Some are elated, some surprised, some embarrassed and some horrified; but ultimately all seem to be satisfied. Many an inquirer enters Ma's room with misgivings writ large on his face and comes out dazed, his eyes brimming with tears. Again, I have seen many a heavy-laden and grief-stricken questioner taking leave of Ma, his face lit up with a smile of hopefulness and his eyes glowing with a strong inner feeling of devotion and gratitude.

A private interview often enables one to catch a glimpse of the unfathomable motherliness of Ma Anandamayi. Naturally, people long for one. But there are exceptions. The Delhi *Ashram* occasionally witnesses interesting scenes like, for example, the sudden influx of a body of strangers not in the least interested in any private interview for themselves but vitally connected with a person closeted with Ma for the time being. Some of them are in uniform and some in plain dress. With their advent the Ashram is hushed into unusual silence, broken only by whispering speculation as to what may be the matter. Eventually it transpires that a world figure is in Ma's room and that the strangers are persons charged with the duty of looking after his security. They cannot even think of any private interview for themselves.

Coming back to *Mātri Satsang*, it is remarkable that one and the same answer from Ma may kindle different ideas in different persons, the response depending on one's depth of understanding, individual complexes and bent of mind.

Not infrequently one sees during *Mātri Satsanga* different kinds of reaction to a particular utterance of Ma. Some people are in tears and full of remorse, while others are all smiles and full of hope. Of two men looking out through the same bars one may see the mud and the other the stars. The reason is known to each of the persons concerned. In Ma's hallowed company everybody gets an opportunity of seeing a reflection of himself. This marks the beginning of introspection which may lead to Self-knowledge.

Every individual at the feet of Ma Anandamayi has a locus standi peculiar to himself in relation to Her. Many of Her "children" have voluntarily disclosed to me their experiences at the first *darśana* and thereafter. They hail from different parts of the world, profess different faiths, have different backgrounds, speak different languages and belong to different levels of culture. In the midst of so much diversity there are certain features common to the experiences of all who confided their secrets to me. I was deeply interested in making a comparative study of the facts thus revealed and came to certain conclusions borne out by the testimony of all the witnesses. Thus, the first *darśana* invariably leaves an impression in the mind of every newcomer that far from being treated as a stranger, he or she is warmly received by Ma as if previously well-known to Her. Then follows an irresistible and inexplicable attraction for the physical presence of the Being known as Ma Anandamayi. In some cases this attraction is immediate and complete, in others gradual and progressive. The experience of such attraction was the first of its kind in the life of each of my witnesses and it led to a thirst for facts about Ma's life and

teachings, but books available were not enough to quench the thirst. Personal contact with Ma convinced all of them, without exception, that She was different from ordinary human beings---She was unfathomable. Most of them had a feeling : "Well, am I worthy of the grace showered on me by Ma, unasked for?" This query inspired a genuine desire to live up to the expected standard. An awakening of conscience followed almost as a matter of course and marked the beginning of a journey along the spiritual path shown by Ma. The process, of course, varied from traveller to traveller; so also the progress achieved. One experience, however, was common to all : Ma was found to be a constant source of peace and joy, a spring of boundless love.

Many of the persons approached by me in connection with my enquiry admitted that their first visit to Ma was prompted by mere curiosity but not one of them could resist the almost subconscious urge to come to Her again and again. Imperceptibly drawn towards Ma, they did not actually know what they would gain by going to Her. Or, perhaps, they did not care to know. But not a single one has any doubt left that he has immensely profitted by associating with Ma.

The evidence collected by me reveals beyond doubt that Ma's grace invariably helps a genuine seeker to come closer to his Divine Beloved (*Iṣṭa*). Examples of *Iṣṭa* are Lord Krishna, Lord Rama, Lord Siva, Lord Jesus Christ, Goddess Durga, Goddess Kali and so on. Some of my witnesses found in Ma an object of adoration more beloved than their Divine Beloved and with Her advent on their

mental horizon, their respective *Iṣṭā* completely disappeared. Naturally, they felt somewhat upset. Those who consulted Ma were asked by Her : “What is the difference between *Iṣṭā* and *Ma* ?” Ma’s question, accompanied by a smile, suggested the answer : there is *no* difference between *Iṣṭā* and Mother. Their problem solved, these “children” became totally absorbed in Ma and came to be at peace with themselves.

The very *darśana* of Ma usually infuses something indescribable into the inner being of a person who has spiritual aspiration. Her words act as seeds sown in the soil of the human mind. Properly nourished, these seeds sprout and grow into trees, yielding flowers and fruit. Ma’s words are often accompanied by significant gestures and a sweet smile, more eloquent than speech. Above all, Her gracious eyes cast an illuminating glance, conveying a message which goes beyond the boundary of words. Seldom does Ma give any order or make a request. Yet, the chastening influence of Her silent message becomes irresistible once a devotee chooses to surrender himself at Her feet. He then feels an undercurrent of bliss, love and peace permeating the innermost core of his being.

Purna Kumbha at Prayag

R. K. Banerjee

News had been circulating well in advance that this year's *kumbha yoga* (constellation) at Prayag Rājīrtha at Allahabad was going to be most auspicious, and that Mataji with Her entourage was expected to stay in the Allahabad area from January 7th to 25th. But I did not plan any trip out of Calcutta. Bhavani, my wife, was of course very keen to visit this Mela as the three planets concerned were said to be in their most auspicious juxtapositions by January 19th—once in every 144 years—the occasion of *Mauni Amāvasyā* (new moon).

Actually the Mela had commenced on January 5th (*Paush Pūrṇimā*) and was to conclude with a final bath on February 4th. In between there were the holy bathing days of January 14th (*Uttarāyana Sankranti*), January 19th (*Mauni Amāvasyā*) and January 24th, when *Saraswati Puja* was to be performed in Mataji's presence in camp.

On January 11th, we received a peremptory summons from Mataji to visit Allahabad. For three days I debated the problem in my mind. How could we at this late stage succeed in obtaining berths either way? All our friends had already left for Allahabad or booked in advance, and going did not seem worthwhile if we were to miss the most auspicious bathing on the 19th.

On the 13th night I reached certain conclusions and on the 14th, armed with an introduction from a senior retired railway official, I sat in the office of the Chief Commercial Superintendent of Eastern Rly. for three hours, after which I queued up for an hour or so to secure berths on the 'Kumbh Special' leaving Howrah on the 16th morning. This train eventually ran like clockwork and we arrived at Allahabad on the 17th, before 5.30 a. m.

After having Mataji's *darśana* on reaching the camp at about 10 a. m., I requested Swami Paramananda to help me to obtain return bookings. Swamiji said : "Perhaps the gentleman behind you can assist." I turned round quickly, and behold, there was my old friend from Sealdah Rly. Station ! He was temporarily attached to the Mela Camp Rail booking office. Just after 9.30 p. m. the same day, this friend entered the tent I was sharing with nine or ten others. He appeared almost frozen and was shivering with cold and fatigue (the temperature was 3°C that night), but he had secured accommodation for us on the Delhi Express, leaving Allahabad on the 21st. We eventually boarded the train without much difficulty and reached Calcutta the next morning, ten minutes before time.

As to the Kumbh Mela arrangements, the authorities seemed to have left no stone unturned to build an ideal township for the millions of pilgrims to be accommodated for over a month. Wide, well-lit roads had been laid out, each *akhāra* (community of sadhus) had been allotted adequate space. Water and electricity were supplied throughout the twenty-four hours. Loudspeakers frequently broadcast regulations and programmes at strategic points. Police and

volunteers seemed to be everywhere to look after the pilgrims' interests. Strictly regulated shops for edibles and other necessities were placed at important spots, supplying wholesome food, etc. at controlled rates. Not a single fly, mosquito or other insect was to be seen anywhere, although these abounded in town.

Our own camp site was not very large, but Swami Swarupananda had made the most of it. Our entrance gate was high and bedecked with distinguishing flags, to be spotted from a long distance. This was most important, as it was easy to get lost in the dense human jungle even in daylight, let alone after dark. There was even a public telephone booth just inside our compound. The kitchen was the only building with a corrugated iron roof and sufficient yard space to seat about 50 people. Five or six sittings were necessary for the main midday meal. Bathroom facilities were just about adequate. Two public open-air taps were a great asset. During our stay, there was only a single lighting failure one evening for about an hour.

No incense or kerosene stoves were permitted to be lit inside our camp area for risk of fires. But we readily got hot water from the friendly kitchen whenever required.

Our camp was very well sited, less than one and a half miles from the Sangam, at the corner of the main road leading there, and another inside road leading off at right angles. Our neighbours were the Bharat Seva Ashram, with whom our relations were most cordial. In fact, Mataji spent half an hour there on the 18th evening. From within our fence we had an excellent view of the endless stream of pilgrims proceeding along the main road at all hours, day and night.

Mataji had arrived in triumphant procession from George Town, Allahabad on January 7th. She was in such great demand by one and all that She never left camp until it was abandoned on the 25th !

She was Her serene, majestic, merciful Self wherever She made Her appearance. Between 10 a. m. and midday She would sit in the pandal, which contained a cordoned space for Rāma Pūjā and Rāmāyaṇa recitation. She would give *darśana* and receive obeisance from the thousands of admirers, pilgrims, devotees, ascetics, Mahātmās, sight-seers, hippies..... who entered our gate to have a glimpse of Sri Anandamayi Ma, to exchange perhaps a word or two with Her, to obtain Her compassionate glance or merely to sit down in silence and contemplate Her never-ending *līlā*.

From 4 to 6 p. m. She would again be seated on a raised dais just outside Her own room, when thousands once more would queue past Her dais, securely cordoned off. We, sitting below Her in the second pandal, would marvel and watch with growing wonder and humility the immense patience shown and the hardships borne by the multitude hour after hour, day after day, to catch a brief glimpse of Mataji. Sometimes they would have the misfortune to be denied even this solace, at other times some lucky person would be able to ask a question and obtain an immediate reply. A mere glance from the divinely radiant eyes would transport someone into raptures or impassioned prayer. To witness this never-ending miracle left a profound and lasting impression on the mind.

Later in the evening we would join Kumari Chhabi Banerjee for the daily Ashram Kirtana, while Mataji would

wander between Her room and the dais, never wasting a single moment in Her mission of mercy of fulfilling the needs of each one seeking Her blessing, touch or advice.

On the 18th, Mataji arranged for *Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa* recitation in the first pandal. The continuous stream of visitors to our camp included beggars, Governors, Officers, Rajas, merchants, Central & State Government Ministers, their families, and so on.

Mataji and our camp were fully featured on the radio and television screens, including the processions on the 7th and 14th, and a special feature was prepared of the Prime Minister's visit to our camp on the 22nd.

The sacred day of *Mauni Amāvasya* or the complete eclipse of the moon was scheduled to start at 9.25 p. m. on the 18th and terminate at 7.54 p. m. on the 19th. Punctually rain started falling at about 8.30 p. m. on the 18th, and continued in drizzles or sharp showers upto about 7 p. m. on the 19th.

Was this just mere coincidence or was it yet another manifestation of the infinite powers of the Creator, who has not only conjured up the universe but also every facet of the so-called science that appears to guide the destinies of the planets, winds, tides, snow, rain and sunshine ?

In any case the pandits hailed the rain as extremely auspicious. Old residents of Allahabad declared that it had always rained on similar occasions. In fact everybody welcomed the rain as a blessing from on High.

Be this as it may, the rain allayed all the fine dust that had been permeating our throats and nostrils, and definitely

raised the temperature during day and night. From this viewpoint it was most welcome. However, everything became waterlogged. The top two feet thick layer of soil in the Mela area consists of alluvial clay. It hardly lets water percolate to the sandy layers below, with the result that our feet cut in the open were embedded in water and the surface of our compound and the roads outside became very slippery.

Notwithstanding all these odds, we assembled at 5.30 a. m. clad in our warmest clothing, with a distinctive yellow scarf as the emblem of our akhāra, and proceeded on foot in procession with kirtana accompaniment to the *Niranjani Ākhāra*, a couple of furlongs from our camp, on the way to the Sangam.

Mataji was taken there by car and remained seated in the car, while the various *Mahāmandaleswaras* together with their deities were assembled for procession in long established strict order of priority. The procession was headed by Kartikeya, the bachelor God of Strength, belonging to the *Niranjani Akhāra*, followed by their *Mahāmandaleswara* and sādhus. Thereafter came our own deities, Padmanabhan and Nārāyan Śilā, then Mataji in a high silver chariot that was fitted unto our jeep top, followed by ourselves, our kirtana party and so on.

It was nearly 6.30 a. m. when the huge procession finally started for the Sangam in pouring rain along a slithery road. Every foothold was precarious and dozens of sandals were soon lost, becoming firmly embedded in the sticky clay.

At last we reached the Sangam waters. After a while Mataji quietly walked to the shoreline, sprinkled water on the

fortunate ones in Her vicinity and soon started back to the *Niranjani Akhāra*.

Meanwhile, the ladies of our party had a quick dip inside their own enclosure in the river and started back with Mataji in their wet clothes. But I, perforce, took somewhat longer, having a proper bath and filling a large vessel with the sacred waters for relatives and friends in Calcutta. As a result I was denied return passage along the straight route which was then declared one-way for successive *akhāras* coming to bathe. So I had to walk along a rectangular diversion of three extra miles in the continuous drizzle. At 8-45 a. m. I was back in camp sitting down to a cup of hot tea. Mataji returned even half an hour later by car from the *Niranjani Akhāra*, where She had been delayed by further proceedings.

A lady devotee from Calcutta who had arrived late on the 18th night after a strenuous journey, had fainted at the *Niranaajani Akhāra* during the long wait at the start and had been sent back to our camp by Mataji in Her own car. Mataji now went and sprinkled her with the holy water of the Sangam and then also other fortunate camp inmates, before She retired to rest.

The continuous wet weather failed to dampen our soaring spirits, although all sessions inside the soaking pandal had to be abandoned and the pathways in our camp as well as the inside of many tents presented a sorry spectacle.

But Mataji's dais was safe enough and Her *darśana* recommenced from the 20th morning in bright sunshine.

I was astounded to learn from Sri Swarup, the Government Commandant in charge of the whole Mela area, that one

crore and thirty lakhs of pilgrims were estimated to have bathed at the Sangam on January 19th, 1977 !

During these few days we had obtained *darśana*, among others, of three of the five Sankaracharyas, including Swami Shantananda Saraswati of Joshi Math, a Gurubhai of Swami Akhandananda Saraswati; also of three Sakti Matas, namely Ma Yogasakti, Ma Nigama Mai and a holy Mataji from Delhi.

With our hearts overflowing with gratitude and cherished memories, we bid a sad farewell to Mataji at Her feet before our last meal in camp on the 20th. Swamiji most kindly let us and two other families share the camp jeep plus trailer and we spent a restful night with friends in Georgetown, Allahabad so as to catch the Delhi Express next morning, reaching our home on the 22nd before 7-30 a. m.

So, in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, we had, entirely through Mataji's benevolent *kheyāla*, without any previous planning, accomplished a stay of three nights and four days of *Kalpavāsa* at Prayag Tirtha, including bathing on holy *Mauni Amāvasyā*, without suffering any setbacks. This could never have been possible without Mataji's continuous and infallible benediction.

Jai Guru - Jai Ma !

Matri-Prasad

(First Part)

Mauni Ma

(Translated by Dr. S. C. Bhattacharya)

(6)

My birth is of Learning

By name "Vidyadharee",

Abodeless am I—a reservoir of joy.

Though burning, yet alive. Smoke-like

Is my state without fathom.

A sojourner of this earth for a while.

Sufferings abound in a foreign land

Which is not one's own,

But all is sweet in one's home.

Though burning, yet alive. My place is unattached.

'There's none as 'I'

Albeit we utter 'I', 'I'.

Saraswati is great in wisdom,

Shiva in oblivion, Saraswati in wit—

The Image of Lakshmi.

How is the unshaped region—

Where neither the Moon nor the Sun shines,

But only dazzles the empyreal Light ?

That is my dwelling place.
 Without break of to and fro—
 That is my dwelling place.
 Finished all my prayers to God.

Limitless is Mother's Grace.

Tests withstood, rebirth annihilated, immortality gained.
 Thou must die to live in the midst of Sādhanā;
 None is immortal but through the doors of death.

(7)

Mind's strength is in its possessions
 Which thou shouldst lose for Sādhanā.
 New life came to me, the body being dead,
 And in my own home I was ushered.
 Gain or loss has no hold on me,
 Salvation no meaning when immersed in Bliss.
 "All is through the Mother's Grace"—

Cries the one in self-forgetfulness.

The thing happend, life transformed.

Being blessed by the Mother
 The new man is born of the old one.

(8)

Happy with little, reserved in speech—

That holds on to Truth—

Is ever victorious in Sādhanā.

Detachment, outcome of sorrow and suffering
 Which lasts a while—is not the goal.

Non-attachment is the prize of ceaseless effort.
 There is such a place,
 Begotten neither by memory nor oblivion,
 And having the sole existence.

(9)

Honour and Pride-harbingers of sorrow
 Are the Spoilers of Sādhanā.

Beware of them,

And ever keep awake in Yoga.
 Start with 'God', 'you' and 'I',
 But end being unable to identify.

(To be continued)

CORRIGENDA

In January, 1977 Issue—

- Read* : "a Wandering mind" instead of
 "a Wandering man.", on back of "Contents".
- Read* : "Daksheshwar" instead of
 "Waksheshwar", on p. 82, line 1.

Matri Lila

(January-April 12th, 1977)

On January 6th, Mataji left Varanasi by car for Allahabad where She spent one night in Her cottage in the compound of the family of late Sri Monoj Mukerji, at 31, George Town. Within half an hour of Her arrival, Dr. Chenna Reddy, Governor of U. P., came from Lucknow for Her *darśana*. On the 7th Mataji was taken to the Kumbha Mela in solemn procession, arranged by the Nirvani Akhāra. It was headed by all the Mahamandaleswaras followed by a kirtan party, then our *Nārāyana Silā* on a silver throne carried in a palanquin, then Ma who was seated on a silver throne fixed on top of a wheeled cart drawn by porters, and last Mahamandaleswara Gita Bharati. The procession covered four miles before entering the Mela gate and ended in *Nirvāni Akhāra*. Later Ma went to Her own camp.

On the 10th and 11th, 108 sādhus were entertained to a meal and presented with blankets. In the evening twelve Mahāmandaleswaras graced the satsang in our pandal and delivered lectures. Then *Ārati* was performed to them and they were given a feast. Mataji took part in the other processions on the 14th, 19th and 24th, the main bathing days. Mataji's mode of bathing was to enter the Ganga ankle-deep and then to bend down and sprinkle water on Her head and all over Herself. Those who were near got a few drops.

On the 19th, the chief bathing day, when it never stopped raining, Mataji smilingly remarked that, since in our

times *tapasya* was not in vogue, Bhagavān in His boundless grace and compassion made everyone without distinction—rich and poor, sādhus and householders alike—go through hardships on this most auspicious day. One and all had to traverse barefooted the slushy, slippery roads, wading in mud, and before being able to dip into the holy waters of the Triveni, were being purified by the downpour from the Ganga of heaven (*Akāśa Gangā*). Mataji ever and ever repeats : “Whatever happens is for the best” and She always discovers the bright side of things.

Mataji was in excellent form throughout Her stay at the Kumbh and quite indefatigable. Her health was better than usual perhaps because of the intense vibration generated by the many saints, sages and the aspiration of millions of pilgrims. All present felt uplifted by the power of such mass faith and fervour. The various *akhāras* vied with one another, in inviting Mataji to their camps. She visited each one of them, also that of Sri Mahesh Yogi who had written to Her from Switzerland requesting Her to bless his devotees and disciples in his absence.*

On January 25th Mataji left for Modinagar where a Bhāgavata Saptah was being held for the late Rai Bahadur G. S. Modi. The brilliant exposition in Hindi was given by Sri Swami Vishnuashram of Suktal. Mataji reached there on January 26th, accompanied by a small group including a few devotees from abroad, and attended the talks twice daily.

On January 31st She was again at Varanasi. On February 4th the annual prize distribution to the pupils of the

* See also p. 132

Kanyapeeth took place in Mataji's presence in Gopal Mandir hall. Dr. Chenna Reddy came for the function and Srimati Reddy gave away the prizes. The girls had arranged for a programme of debates, recitations and speeches, mostly in Sanskrit. Sri Karunapati Tripathi, Vice-Chancellor of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, said that the University considered it an honour that the Kanyapeeth was affiliated to it. Dr. Reddy called the school an "ideal Gurukul," a place of pilgrimage for visitors. The next day Mataji talked to the girls, enjoining on them to live up to these praises by setting an example of how ideal brahmacharinis should live.

From February 6th to 13th, Mataji spent a restful week at Naimishāranya, where She attended to correspondence and similar work. From there She travelled to Delhi en route to Kurukshetra where *Sivarātri* was celebrated on February 16th at the invitation of Ex-minister Sri G. L. Nanda. Mataji reached there on the 14th by car from Delhi. Shri Nanda had made elaborate arrangements at his own place, called "*Gopālan Kendra*" (Centre for the care of cows). He vacated his own little house for Mataji's use while most of Her party were put up in two cottages and a number of tents. Other visitors were accommodated in the guest-houses of the University and a few at Birla Mandir. On the 15th there was a procession through the town and on the 16th a Narmadeswar Sivalinga was installed, which Nanadji had brought from our Ashram at Varanasi. There were also a few other functions in Mataji's presence. Sri Nanda is planning to open a "*Sāadhanāshram*" at his place. The all-night collective *Śivarātri pūjā* was celebrated in a large hall ideal for the purpose situated on the ghat of "*Brahmasarovar*", a half-mile

long lake in which Sri Krishna is said to have bathed on the morning after the battle of Kurukshetra. When Mataji had visited Kurukshetra a few years ago, the lake was abounding in weeds and the water was slimy and dirty. Due to Nandaji's efforts it is now filled with crystal clear water and surrounded by clean, stone ghats. The lakhs of pilgrims that come to bathe during every sun-eclipse now find a lovely setting and all facilities. Except for two short intervals when Mataji went to rest, She was present throughout. Singing "Siva, Siva Mahadev" and various names, Ma led the kirtana twice. In the early morning She distributed prasada with Her own hands to all present and talked animatedly to various visitors.

Later in the morning of February 17th, Mataji and Her party were taken in seven cars to some famous sights, such as *Sangameswara Śiva Temple* and the spot where Sri Krishna is supposed to have instructed Arjuna. There is a peepul tree with a circular platform around which pilgrims circumambulate. In a glass case there is a small chariot with the images of Sri Krishna and Arjuna, "*Māmekam śaranam braja*", (Take refuge in Me alone) is engraved on it.

The same evening Mataji motored to New Delhi and boarded the train to Ahmedabad on the 18th morning, arriving there on the 19th. Mataji had been urgently invited by Sri Gita Bharati, the *Mahāmandaleswara* of Sri Harihar Ashram, Kankhal, to grace with Her presence the consecration of a temple with five deities. It had taken Sri Gita Bharati nine years to achieve this project and she had travelled all over the world to collect money for it. All those years she had refrained from all food except *phalāhāra* (fruit and milk

preparations). Mataji was present for every detail of the consecration rituals and was ever ready to assist actively. There was a miniature Kumbh Mela on the banks of the Sabarmati river with thousands of pilgrims and a procession of Mahamandaleswaras. Mataji was put up in a quiet and secluded room of Sri Gita Bharati's Ashram where She could rest undisturbed between the various functions.

On February 23rd, Mataji entrained for Bombay where She spent only one day, leaving for Delhi on the 24th night. At Delhi she waited for two hours at the railway station and then took the train to Hardwar, alighting at Kankhal on the 26th early morning. Thus, as so often, She spent three successive nights in the train. At Kankhal, Mataji related details about the functions at Ahmedabad to the few devotees present, highly praising the excellent arrangements.

On March 2nd Mataji took the night train to Varanasi. There She immediately started enquiring about arrangements for the Holi celebrations on March 5th. Since Mataji had not been in Varanasi during this festival for several years many devotees had gathered from far and near. On the 4th evening, Nārāyana puja was performed in the open courtyard, with *havan* and *ārati* as its climax. The next morning another pūja in the same place from 5-30-8 a. m. Then the scene shifted to the lower hall of Gopal Mandir. Sri Gopalji was taken down from His throne (*singhāsana*) and placed on a large silver *thāli* (tray). Ma sprinkled first dry red powder on the *vighraha* and then coloured water with a silver syringe. Then everyone was allowed to offer red powder to Gopalji while Ma sat by His side guarding Him. Nobody was allowed

to touch the deity. This was followed by *abhisheka*, *pūjā*, *bhoga* and *ārati*. Then Mataji put coloured powder on each person's forehead and distributed fruit. Later She squirted plenty of coloured water on everyone without distinction. All the functions were accompanied by exquisite *kirtana* and *bhajana* performed mostly by the students of our Kanyapeeth. Mataji was in great *bhāva* and ecstasy. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the Holi play. That morning also an *annaprāsana* ceremony (first feeding of solid food of a baby) and an older child was given his first lesson in reading and writing in Mataji's presence. In the evening *Satya Nārāyana Pūja* was celebrated and sumptuous *prasāda* distributed. Later, when the crowd had dispersed, Mataji sat in the open courtyard and, in reply to various questions, talked on many subjects to the delight of the fortunate few present. Only after midnight She retired to rest.

On March 6th afternoon, Mataji motored to Allahabad where She spent two nights in the Ashram of the late Sri Gopal Thakur : On the 8th at about 10 a. m. Mataji and Sri Swami Akhandanandji arrived at Chitrakut on the river Mandakini on the border of U. P. Sri Manthuram Jaipuria had requested Swami Akhandananda Saraswatiji to expound Valmiki's Ramayana for eight days in Sri Ma's presence, which he did daily from 9-10 a. m. and 5-6 p. m. Mataji attended every single talk. The *satsang* was held in the courtyard of Jaipurias new *dharmaśālā*. There was no large crowd. Chitrakut is still a village quiet and beautiful, congenial for *sādhana*, where the inhabitants cheerfully greet each other with "Sita-Ram, Sita-Ram." There are still jungles haunted by tigers and wild elephants. Caves and

unique rock mountains distinguish the area. Sri Rāmachandra with Sita and Lakshman spent ten years of their exile in this spot and it was here that King Bharat came to meet his elder brother. One day, Mataji and Her entire party went round the hill singing "Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram" all the way. Mataji was carried in a palanquin, everyone else walked the three miles.

On March 17th, Ma motored to Naini where She halted for Her midday meal at the guesthouse of the Jaipuria factory. She had spent a few days of retreat there a few years ago. From there She proceeded to Varanasi together with Swami Akhandanandaji. On the 18th afternoon Swamiji spoke on the Srimad Bhāgavata in the packed Gopal Mandir hall. At 6.30 p. m., Mataji, Swami Akhandanandaji and their parties left for Deoghar and alighted in the Ashram of late Narendranath Brahmachariji the next morning.

Last year the Brahmachariji had celebrated a grand Annapurna Puja in our Kankhal Ashram. He had been keen on arranging for a similar gathering in the presence of great Mahātmās and scholars in his own Ashram. Unfortunately, this was not possible as he left his mortal coil on June 6th, 1976. His disciples, therefore, earnestly requested Mataji to grace their satsang during Navaratri in spring and also invited Swami Ahkandananda Saraswati, Swami Satyananda of Calcutta, Dr. Gourinath Shastri, Professor Tripurari Chakraborty (who unfortunately was ill) and other personages. All arrangements were excellent. Swami Akhandanandaji talked on the Upanishads in the mornings and on the Bhāgavata in the evenings. There were a number of other interesting lectures

as well. On March 28th an elaborate Annapurna Puja was performed to the accompaniment of Km. Chhabi Banerji's exquisite songs.

The *Samādhi* of Sri Narendranath Brahmachariji had been built on the model of Gandhiji's *samādhi* at Rajghat, Delhi last year. Recently, it had been covered with marble and was now solemnly re-inaugurated during this festival. The disciples continue the service of their Guru in the Brahmachariji's room as if he was alive, in a beautiful and devoted manner and his presence is tangible. Ma said it was "*ādarśa Gurusevā* (ideal service of Guru). The entire Ashram has a quiet and peaceful atmosphere. The devotees were delighted to have Mataji in their midst during their festival. They felt as if their Guru had returned to them in Mataji's form.

On March 29th, Mataji left for Varanasi reaching there on the 30th morning, which was *Vijayā Daśami* day. She at once participated in the concluding function and after the immersion of the image of Durga in the evening distributed sweets and fruits to all present. On the 31st morning, the renowned singers of Madras, Sm. Subbulakshmi and her daughter Radha, regaled all present with their entrancing music.

On April 3rd, Mataji left for Naimisharanya where She alighted on the 4th. On April 8th She reached Kankhal where Didima's birth-centenary is going to be celebrated for a month, commencing on April 14th. On the 9th morning Sri Mahesh Yogi came to pay his respects to Ma. The same afternoon She followed an invitation to the Ramakrishna



Sri Durga Singhji (Yogibhai) Raja of Baghat, Solon

Mission where the Platinum Jubilee of their Kankhal charitable Hospital was being celebrated for several days. Mataji sat in their pandal for about an hour, listening to the interesting talks of several Mahātmās. When She got up to leave, She was requested to say a few words at least. She uttered Her well-known : "*Hari kathā hi kathā aur sab vrithā vyāthā*" and "*jāhān Ram vahān ārām, jāhān Ram nahin vahān be-ārām*".

On the 10th morning, Swami Chidanandaji, the Head of Sivananda Ashram, paid a short visit to Ma and sang *kirtana* for a while. On the 11th there was distribution of food to *Daridra Nārāyana* in Ma's presence and on the 12th evening Mataji attended *satsang* at Surat Giri Bungalow. Later Sri Swami Vishnuashramji of Suktal arrived.

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"Yogibhai"

Raja Durga Singhji of Baghat State

(September 15th, 1901—March 30th, 1977.)

On March 30th, Mataji came to Varanasi specially to be present at the completion of *Bāsanti Pujā* (Durgā Pujā in spring) on *Vijayā Daśami* day. In the evening, the most unwelcome news of Yogibhai's departure from this world was received. His name was Durga Singh. He was a worshipper of Goddess Durga and he left his mortal coil at 4:30 p. m., the exact time when the *vighraha* of Durga at our Varanasi Ashram was taken for immersion. *Vijayā Daśami* is the day of victory of Light over darkness.* Could a more auspicious moment be found for him to depart

* When Sri Ramachandra had conquered Ravana he celebrated Durga Puja in thanksgiving.

for his real Home? Yet for us the loss is severe. We owe this irreplaceable devotee an immense debt of gratitude.

Similar to king Janaka he was "Rājarsi", Rājā and Risi all in one. Mataji named him "Yogirāj" but in his great humility he preferred to be called "Yogibhāi". A character of such integrity is very, very rare. He was indeed the great brother of all. Even though a ruling Rājā, he led a life of *tapasyā* and devotion. His whole morning was spent in prayer, meditation and worship and he partook of his first meal only after midday. The rest of his time was mostly dedicated to the welfare of his state. Extremely generous, ever ready to help the needy and suffering, he had neither time nor taste for personal honour or fame, nor for worldly enjoyment.

His first darśana of Mahe had in winter of 1934 when She stayed with Bhaiji in a cave at Salogra, about three miles from Solan, just below the road to Simla. Raja Durga Singh at first sight felt intuitively that he was face to face with the embodiment of Mother Divine. To his last breath he never wavered in his outstanding devotion and active service to Her. It was mainly with his help and support that the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha was started in 1950 and he was its President and also its Life-Trustee for more than twenty years. When Bhaiji wanted to start a boys' school in Mataji's name, Yogibhai at once volunteered to provide the necessary funds. Single-handed he bore the expenses of the Vidyapeeth for many years. Having no children of his own, he educated all the pupils of our Boys' School. His wife, the Rani of Solan died young, March 30th 1947, exactly thirty years

before him. Yogibhai refused to marry a second time. His life was dedicated to the spiritual quest.

Again and again, Mataji accepted his invitations to Solan and remained there in the hot season together with Sri Haribabaji and his party and Her large entourage for long and short spells, Yogibhai looked upon all of Mataji's children as his own brothers and sisters and made arrangements in this spirit. Mataji felt at ease at Solan and many priceless pearls of wisdom fell from Her lips there and precious old memories were disclosed. Mataji's birthday, *Guru Purnimā*, a *Devi Bhāgavata* etc. were held there. In 1946 Yogibhai built a beautiful Ashram for Ma, Didima and their attendants in his palace grounds and Durgā Pūjā was celebrated in Ma's presence on the tennis-court in front of the Ashram.

At Raja Durga Singh's suggestion the *Samyam Vrata* was started over twenty-five years ago. Several hundreds of men and women from India and abroad have participated enthusiastically in this yearly week of collective *tapasyā* in Mataji's presence and have benefited lastingly. Yogibhai made it a point to take part in every single *Samyam Mahā vrata*, Ma's birthday celebration and Durga Puja.

After losing his State due to the unification of India, he built a Siva Temple and a *dharmasālā* near the burning *ghāt* at Hardwar in memory of his father. The central portion of the building, including a Satsang Hall, is reserved exclusively for Mataji and Her party. There also Her birthday, *Durga Puja*, *Sivarātri*, *Bhāgavata Saptāhs* etc. were performed in Mataji's presence.

When his wealth and income were taken away, he was completely unconcerned; it meant nothing to him. He continued his simple, frugal, dedicated life. He used to spend summers in Solan and winters in Hardwar.

Lately he had been suffering from sciatica as well as bleeding piles. When Mataji was at Kankhal in the last days of February, he came to see Her daily in spite of his weakness. Mataji gave long *darśanas* and replied to many questions. A few days later he left for Solan for treatment, which however could not restore his health. His attendants cried when he got weaker and weaker. But he said: "Why do you cry? There is nothing to worry about." At the end, with Mataji's photo in front of him, he uttered clearly three times "Ma, Ma, Ma" and quietly left the body. Ma later remarked: "Just like Bhaiji!"

In accordance with his wish, the body was cremated at the burning-ghāt near Baghat House, Kharkhari, Hardwar. It was taken there by car in procession from Solan, clad in full royal dress, with the golden crown on his head.

Yogibhai played a very prominent part in Sri Ma's *lila*. It can never be forgotten. A pilgrim on the path of Immortality, for him there is no death and no rebirth.
