

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

ANANDA VĀRTĀ

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YOU ARE THAT

(Quotations from Mataji's sayings)

“Just as inside a flower are seeds, to be seen only when it blossoms forth, and inside the seed exists the tree, so also within you dwells Divinity. Through sādhanā comes the blossoming forth ; that is, on being able to destroy the veil, right then and there appears what is Self-effulgent. As the whole and complete tree is contained in the seed, just so the Divine in its Fullness enthroned is within you as You.”

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“This body Sri Ma always advises : Become an explorer of Eternity, not a drifter to mortality. Strike out along the path of Deathlessness. Bring to light—you are imperishable, immortal.”

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“In property and prosperity there is no peace. So, in what can peace be found ? I am the very embodiment of Peace, embodiment of Wisdom, I am Consciousness Itself. Until merged in this innermost sense of life, where is Peace ? In order to find your Self, you must focus light on yourself. How beautiful !”

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“The human being seems to be a manifestation of want. Contemplate only want, and what is obtained will be only want. Therefore, one's duty is to contemplate his real Fullness - otherwise emptiness, wrong action, frustration, misfortune, death. Within Itself reposes the Self. Whether in the garb of coming - going or as Self-being, One alone Is. In truth, I myself am Ātmārāma - but now, to be ensphered in all-Knowingness. Naught is but you, you, you alone. You everywhere, in everything. And beyond you is That Itself. In the infinite many solely One, He-She, solely I Myself.”



Matri Vani

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

When the desire for Reality has awakened God Himself will fulfill it. Such divine aspiration must ever and ever be kept aflame—this is indeed for one's real Good. Spiritual practice (*sat kriyā*) whether carried enthusiastically or reluctantly bears fruit. By engaging in practices and activities directed towards the Real good luck opens up and misfortune recedes.

* * *

To ask questions lies in the nature of the individual (*jīva*). Where "if" is, questions will arise. In every *jīva* there is Śiva. In order to bring this to light one must become a pilgrim in the world of individuals with its constant change and flux. When the pilgrimage has been accomplished there is Śiva-hood. In the individual world of constant movement, there sorrow and trouble do exist. Movement produces friction. In work such friction occurs naturally. Therefore, when on the path of the *sādhaka-yogi* the fire that has been lit by friction—when what can be burnt or dissolved has been reduced to ashes by the flame of Knowledge—then man's Śiva-hood stands revealed.

* * *

To the genuine devotee the Sadguru is bound to appear in person. When there is real need of a Guru it is but natural that one should meet Him. Until contact with the Guru has been established it is incumbent on the average person to read scriptures, perform japa and meditation, sing kirtana of any Name he prefers. In order to become firmly grounded in *bhakti* the devotee must remain pledged to *sat-kriyā* (action aiming at the Eternal).

* * *

Whose trouble is it? Who is the trouble? Who causes it to whom? Where? Oneself by oneself to oneself. When one's tooth bites the tongue, who takes notice of it? It is a part of oneself. Oneself reposing within oneself.

* * *

Human life is fruitful when one becomes a pilgrim to the revelation of one's True Being (*Svarupā prakāśa*). Time is fruitful when one is ever keenly intent on becoming Self-pervaded.*

* * *

The awakening of inner Knowledge is man's calling. Inner vision must open out.

* * *

Distraction and restlessness are produced in the mind by the talk and activity of the people all round

* A play upon words : *samaya* time, *svamaya* self-pervaded.

Samaya and *svamaya* sound alike in Bengali.

due to the clash of all kinds of vibrations. To mix with those who are not inward turned is itself a distraction. Just as when diving into the waves of the sea, one has to come up again, it is man's duty as a human being to cultivate a similar spirit in all situations. In order to avoid distraction one has been advised to eat pure (*sattvic*) food, to foster divine aspirations and gentle, benevolent conduct, and to study books of wisdom. Get into the current that leads to Him who has created you. From there you will derive the power to deal with all circumstances.

* * *

What has happened is often seen in dreams in ever new ways and variations. It is seen according to the attitude (*bhāva*), the movement and activity of the mind. Dreams are illusory, and the letter you have written, this also is within the dream of waking, the empire of the mind. All the same, very often the dream that is linked to the Supreme Quest gives direction to life's journey in the world. Therefore the form you love most was assumed by *Bhagavān*.

Within the world of individuals a human being must continuously advance on the pilgrimage to the supreme Goal in a beautiful manner for his real Good (*kalyāṇa*). Unless one reaches beyond the mind it is difficult to grasp, to understand everything. Questions arise only within the realm of the mind. The whole-hearted aspirant obtains light leading to his elevation. According to the state one has attained one receives.

—

Matri Satsang

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

(17) Saptarishi Ashram, Hardwar,
November 16th, 1956.

Question : If God is everywhere, how can the world be called illusory ?

Mataji : God does not come or go anywhere. Yet again he comes and goes as well. He Himself exists in the guise of illusion. There is nothing whatsoever apart from Him. When speaking of coming and going, this coming and going is indeed within God. Where everything is illusory (i. e. mistaking the rope for the snake), there the world too is an illusion. World (*jagat*) denotes continuous motion; thus what is ever changing is of course illusory. But God is eternal and real.

Question : Is man subservient to his karma or to God ?

Mataji : God alone is everything.

Question : Then why do I suffer punishment ?

Mataji : Punishment exists for the ignorant. It is God who appears both as sorrow and as the preventor of sorrow. On the level where pain and grief occur, one has to suffer them. But actually *Bhagavān* alone IS. "One Brahman

without a second." Two kinds of approach are possible. The first is through Vedanta and the second through *bhakti* (devotion); in other words: "Thou are the Lord and I am Thy servant." God causes everything to happen, He is present also as action. It is He who shows you which path to follow.

Question : If God is the doer and sole master why then should we have to experience pain and happiness ?

Mataji : Even this represents His play, His fancy. "Lord, Thou alone existeth in all forms and shapes. Thou and no other appeareth as sorrow and happiness." When you walk along your path it is He who helps and assists you. God pervades everywhere. Until and unless you become aware of this fact, there will be no end to your questions. God is self-effulgent just like the sun, but when it is hidden behind clouds one cannot see it. Similarly, while the intelligence is clouded by the covering of *māyā* one cannot obtain His vision.

Question : Do you believe in clouds ?

Mataji : Who appears as clouds ? It is Thou Thyself. So long as He who causes the work to be done and he who executes it have not fused into one, how can God who is self-effulgent become visible to you ? Where illusion abounds in the form of clouds, of transitoriness, there must of necessity be the veil of ignorance.

Question : If God is everything, from where have clouds originated ?

Mataji : It is He Himself who manifests in countless forms. From you people I have heard that He exists as

reflection, as illusion, as error. Until you become the Lord's servant, true Knowledge will not supervene. In order to realize Him, it is as equally effective to go on affirming, "He is, He is !" as to repeat : "Not this, not that !"

Question : If there is no falsity in God, how is it that we have learnt to tell lies ?

Mataji : In the realm of the ego falsehood arises. God is never untrue. He is Truth Itself, Knowledge Itself. You have no right even to state that God is false. Everywhere there is "One-Brahman-without-a-second"; "Wherever my glance falls there Sri Kṛṣṇa springs forth." So long as this has not been revealed to you, you have no right to talk about it. You must always speak the truth and nothing but the truth. You are merely repeating what you have heard, you have certainly not experienced this. Falsehood exists in "myself" and "yourself"—in the ego. Where ego is there is "mine" and "yours".

Question : Am I responsible for what I do, or is it God who makes me act ?

Mataji : Change "I" into "I am Thy tool". If you say it is God who makes you commit thefts, then you should also not feel sorry to believe it is God who sends you to jail and that He has the right to punish you. Walk in God's ways, God is ever true. Where Rāma is, there is *ārāma* (rest and ease); where Rāma is not, there is *be-ārāma* (restlessness and uneasiness). So long as you have not realised that there is only one MOTHER, one Supreme Being (*Bhagavān*), it is not right for you to declare that God is false. God is Truth.

You should maintain that everything takes place as God causes it to happen. Foster this spirit.

Question : The Lord has said in the *Gītā* that whenever sin predominates on earth, God takes birth as an *Avatāra*.

Mataji : In God duality does not exist. Where God is revealed there is no duality. God is eternally Self-revealed. Where Rāma is there is rest and ease, where Rāma is not—restlessness and uneasiness.

Question : How can the ego be destroyed ?

Mataji : It is for the destruction of the ego that this *Samyam Vrata* has been devised.

November 17th, 1956.

Questioner: Ma, will you please talk to us !

Mataji : You will hear the bell exactly as you ring it. Some people have said we should observe two *Samyam Saptahs* per year. You have now got into the habit of sitting down twice a day for meditation and *japa*. It is necessary to continue this practice. You know what is written about the yoga of practice (*abhyāsa yoga*), don't you ? Now, when you go back home you should observe this *samyam* weekly or fortnightly according to your capacity. He who is unrestrained is heading towards death; he will obtain a "return ticket", be born again and die again. The rules and regulations of the *Samyam Vrata* are helping you to transcend birth and death. It is in this way that *Bhagavān* who is self-effulgent becomes revealed. "There is one Brahman without a second." This statement is eternally true. Just as clay is the substance

while names and forms are ever-changing, so in earthly life God alone is true and the world illusory.

Now take another illustration : just as water and ice are essentially the same, so are the Formless and That-with-form. Fetters consist of name and form. If you let the mind move within the transitory, this will lead to death. Endeavour to bring about the realisation that you are indestructible.

Question : What does "maintaining stability in motion" mean ? Ma, please explain this !

Mataji : Sense objects are subject to constant change, continuous flux is the characteristic of the world. If your mind is occupied with the ever-changing, this will gradually lead you to death. While, if you proceed towards the supreme Goal you will obtain supreme Reality. You must use whatever will-power is vested in you for the service of God. Try to become established in Brahman, in Atman. Do you understand, father ?

Pandit Sundarlal : Yes, very much so.

Mataji : This body never speaks to "another", that is why it talks in such a topsy-turvy fashion.

Question : Do you never look upon anybody as "another" ?

Mataji : No—never at all.

Question : Then why this hesitation on your part ?

Mataji : It is due to your own diffidence. You are the father and I am your little girl. The father's qualities will be found in his daughter.

Question : Which day is suitable for the observance of *samyam* by all ?

Mataji : *Samyam* should be observed on the day that suits you best. Do not tie yourself down rigidly, but once you have made a rule, do not deviate from it without a very special reason.

Question : Suppose one is mourning for a close relative, what should one do ?

Mataji : God's name purifies any state however impure. Where there is grief, there is indeed impurity. Japa and meditation can be carried on in all conditions. Another consideration is that one should act according to the rules and regulations enjoined on householders.

Question : Ma, who are you ?

Mataji : Whatsoever you think me to be, that I am.

Question : Suppose someone calls you Kṛṣṇa, then what ?

Mataji : What is wrong in being called Kṛṣṇa ? Let whoever wants coin a new name. Whatever anyone says is correct.

Question : Then are you not Kṛṣṇa ?

Mataji : Kṛṣṇa resides within everybody.

Questioner : They all say Kṛṣṇa is present within you.

Mataji : "Wherever the eye ranges Śrī Kṛṣṇa appears."

Questioner : If you are actually Kṛṣṇa, people wish to see the flute and the crown.

Mataji : If they cannot see any flute, let them not say that I am Kṛṣṇa. Whatever anyone may say is right. Kṛṣṇa resides within everyone.

Question : Why does sorrow come even if one treads the path to God ?

Mataji : Sorrow comes as a precursor of Supreme Happiness.

Here, at the request of Pandit Sundarlal, Mataji started singing :

*“Kṛṣṇa Kanhaiya bansi bajaiya, gaua charaiya, re, re, re.
Kṛṣṇa Kanhaiyā, mere neiyā, āo Kanhaiyā, Prāṇa Kanhaiyā.
Mere neiyā pār kareyā, mere neiya, āo Kanhaiya. Kṛṣṇa
Kanhaiyā, āo Kanhaiyā, mere neiyā.”*

*“He Bhagavan ! Ha Bhagavan ! Dhyeya Bhagavan !
Preya Bhagavān ! Śreya Bhagavān ! Jñeya Bhagavān.
Mangalamoy he Bhagavān ! Santimoy he Bhagavān.
(Kṛṣṇa beloved plays the flute tends the cows, re, re, re.
Kṛṣṇa Kanhaiyā, my ferry, come Kanhaiya, Beloved of my
heart. My ferry, take me across, my ferry, come Beloved.
Kṛṣṇa Kanhaiyā, come Beloved, my ferry.”*

Sapta Rishi Ashram, Hardwar,

Kārtik fullmoon, November 18th, 1956.

Question : Is it true that Hari is everywhere ?

Mataji : The One Hari alone exists. There is nothing except Hari. So long as you do not find Hari, try to live according to the precepts of your Guru.

Question : I have never even caught a glimpse of Hari.

Mataji : You have seen what he is not. The rules and practices by which Hari can be realised are called *samyam* (self-restraint). To observe *samyam* means to proceed towards God. Take recourse to the process by which Hari dwells fixed in your thoughts so that ultimately nothing remains except Hari. It is not proper for a sādhu to dress decoratively. For example, he should not oil his hair. It is not right to attract attention by his dress. A sādhu should never utter a lie. He should listen to and speak of divine subjects. This is his best ornament. Did Rṣis ever get the time or place to comb their hair, or the opportunity to look into a mirror ?

Question : Worldly people may not approve of such unkempt fellows.

Mataji : They certainly will. If this were not so, why should there be the path of a Rṣi ? All the seven Rṣis are present within you. Just let a path, an entrance be found, this is why these words are being spoken. Everything and everyone that exists is God and God alone. In the guise of father, son or wife is the One Person. From another viewpoint neither father nor son nor anyone exist—there is only one *Atmā*. Endeavour to realise your Self. If you know yourself, you will not be interested in dressing attractively. Who will approve of this ? Those who have cultivated satsang. In the world people madly go after sense enjoyment, but they do not even realize that they are insane. In the Ranchi lunatic asylum the madmen exclaim : “I am not mad, he is mad !”

Someone may question : “Merely because a sādhu oils his hair he will not attain God ?” How do the invisible

germs of disease enter the body? One is not aware of it. Microbes are very subtle and just as subtle as action aiming at Divinity. Who knows what qualities will be developed by the use of hair oil? "As one eats so the mind becomes." A human being craves for the type of food that corresponds to his nature. According to the sustenance provided for the mind, good or bad qualities will increase. If the mind becomes really concentrated on the Supreme Quest, this is indeed excellent.

Who is as unreal as the rope mistaken for the snake? You yourself. So long as it is not realised within oneself that God permeates everything, everywhere, where is Hari? When your dark (*tamasic*) qualities are reduced, you will also need less sleep. In the measure as heedlessness and sloth (*tamas*) decrease, harmonious (*sattvic*) qualities will develop. If you just eat, drink and make merry, what will you gain? A person perceives only what can be seen from where he stands. What will be the result of observing *samyam* or a strict code of discipline? It is self-restraint that opens up for you the road from death to Immortality.

In course of conversation Mataji said: "There are two types of *mouna* (keeping silence): one is called *kaṣṭha mouna* and the other *gao mouna*. In *kaṣṭha* it is forbidden to write or make any kind of signs or gestures; while in *gao mouna* signs may be permitted in cases of urgent necessity. Some people carry on their recitation of scriptures and their kirtana even when observing *mouna*. But here recitation, chanting and singing are not allowed during the time allotted for silence. But when *akṣhandā* (uninterrupted) *kirtana* is

performed, it continues also during the time set apart for silence.

Questioner : During the *Samyam Vrata* I do participate in the daily reading of the *Gītā*, *Caṇḍī*, *Upaniṣāds*, but I do not understand the meaning.

Mataji : But you have at least realised that you do not understand. It has occurred to you that you should understand. However, even if the meaning of the words that emanated from the lips of *Rṣis* is not grasped, some benefit is definitely derived from reading them.

Om Ma.

(To be continued)

A Prayer

M. P. Jain

Mother of Grace ! May we ever keep ourselves open to Thee for the fulfilment of Thy Will in us and through us. May we learn and realize that in Thy Love lie hidden all the secrets of life; the answers to all riddles.

May our love for Thee be unconditional, unreserved and entire so that we may make a complete offering to Thee of all that we consider belongs to us.

Mother ! Thy Grace flows in abundance perennially; make us worthy of it by teaching us to love and aspire.

Prelude to the Drama of a Mystical Life

Anil Ganguli

Anandamayi Ma at Ananda Kasi

It was the spring of 1960. Anandamayi Ma came to Ananda Kasi accompanied by Her mother Didima and a few others including myself. Ananda Kasi has been named after Her. Bosphored high among magic mountains, it looks like the abode of gods. A beautiful bungalow, perched on the shelf of a hill, overhangs the rushing torrents of the turbulent Ganga. It belongs to the Rajmata of Tehri Garhwal who had the privilege of being Anandamayi Ma's hostess at Ananda Kasi. The Ganga below the bungalow is vibrant and sonant. The hills encircling it are grave and still; they are steeped in primeval silence. The contrast is impressive.

There is also artistic contrast between the blue sky above and the panorama of fleecy clouds floating past. The sky is inane, static, serene, sublime and limitless —symbolizing the Infinite or Brahman, the clouds constantly in motion and changing their shapes and colours from time to time. Underneath the canopy of the sky stands Ananda Kasi bedecked with extensive terraced fields of charming flowers peeping out of a green belt of wilderness. The slopes of the surrounding hills display a riot of colours, but at the same time harbour dangerous thorns and deadly snakes. The scenery is at once magnificent and fearful. The solemn solitude of the place adds to its charm and majesty. The whole atmosphere is surcharged

with something sublime and mysterious, inspiring awe and wonder.

There is close resemblance between Nature at Ananda Kasi and what appears to be the mystical nature of Anandamayī Ma. Ananda Kasi is a manifestation of divine *ananda* (bliss); Anandamayī Ma is the fuller and more explicit revelation thereof—She is Bliss Incarnate. As in Nature, so extremes meet in Anandamayī Ma—saints and sinners sit at Her feet and equally find refuge in Her. She is magnetic in Her attraction and yet She can be frightening. Though ever the same Herself, She often appears different from moment to moment. Playful like the Ganga and colourful like the Himalayan flowers and clouds, She usually sparkles with delightful humour and excels in witty comments enlivened by charming irony. But She is unpredictable. She may, if so prompted, by *kheyala*, completely withdraw within Her inner Self and then She becomes inaccessible like the mountain peaks and aloof like the lofty sky. During a spell of such *kheyala** nobody dares to approach Her or speak to Her; not even Didima.

During our stay at Ananda Kasi one day I ventured to ask Didima : “Tell me, Didima, who really is this daughter of yours ? What is She ?” Didima looked vacant, paused for a while in a pensive mood and then told me in despair : “Well, what do I know of Nirmala ?” Thus, even Didima after the

* *Kheyāla* Ordinarily a sudden and unexpected psychic emergence, be it desire, will, attention, memory or knowledge. In Mataji's case it must be understood to denote a spontaneous upsurge of Will which is divine and therefore free.

closest association for over sixty-four years was unable to define her daughter's identity and interpret Her spiritual status.

The stories of the mystical life of Anandamayi Ma constitute an enigmatic drama, too deep for words to unfold and too subtle for ordinary comprehension. No wonder, She is the despair of Her biographers.

Bliss Abounding

An octogenarian of peerless charm and perfect poise, Ma Anandamayi fully justifies Her name—She is steeped in joy and radiates joy. She lives in an atmosphere of cosmic peace. Hers is not the peace of unconscious sleep nor of a self-satisfied inertia producing indifference to the world.

Anandamayi Ma is impervious to extraneous disturbances. In fact, for Her there is nothing extraneous and what is ordinarily termed "disturbance" is only a particular facet of *ananda* (bliss). Suffering and misery may be worldly realities which God calls into being to purge the impure, or for some reason or other over which philosophers wrangle. For Ma, however, suffering and misery are non-existent except as gentle ripples on the vast ocean of transcendental bliss and harmony. In terrifying lightning and thunder, in devastating storm and earthquake, She only beholds the benign hand of the great Architect of the destinies of mankind in whose scheme of creation there is only *ananda* and nothing but *ananda*. This *ananda* is not pleasure as distinguished from pain. It is Bliss which is above both, untainted by either. "Beatitude", says

Ma, "is the only Reality, all else is mirage." And Ma seems to be the embodiment of Beatitude.

The world today has been overtaken by a haunting sense of frustration—"Out of the day and night a joy hath taken flight". Civilized man has learnt how to live prosperously, but does not know the secret of living peacefully. Mankind is urgently in need of a World-Teacher with a message that the mission of human life is "not to destroy but to fulfil". The advent of Anandamayi Ma at this juncture may usher in a joyful era if mankind accepts whole-heartedly the message of Bliss, Peace and Love emanating from Her.

It may be that Her message is neither new nor novel but Her words have immeasurable potency behind them—they seem to acquire a dynamic force from Her 'life divine'. A strange peculiarity of Her words is that quite often they are not actually uttered and yet mysteriously communicated to those for whom they are meant. Even if not properly understood the message is invariably inspiring.

"Ma Anandamayi", observed Sri Aurobindo, the sage of Pondicherry, "remains in the state of *Saccidānanda*". Although plunged in a state of mysterious and spontaneous bhāva (ecstasy) She never betrays any sign of being remote nor aloof from Her "children" who seek Her. She raises no barricading rampart of stoical apathy in order to isolate Herself from the material world. For Her matter is spirit and spirit matter—different manifestations of the same Reality. "All one", She often declares.

Anandamayi Ma never assumes any patronizing or superior air. On the contrary, She says, in season and out of

season, that She has hardly had any schooling, nor does She claim any study of the scriptures. Instead of professing Herself to be the Universal Mother, She prefers the role of a "little child" and says to people, "This body is a crazy little daughter of yours". The expression "this body", is usually employed by Her when referring to Her person. It highlights the fact that the body is a transient shell and the Self far beyond its narrow confines.

Presage of Advent

Let us now say a few words about the fortunate couple to whom the world is indebted for the birth of Anandamayi Ma. Her father, Bipin Behari Bhattacharya belonged to a highly esteemed Brahmin family of village Vidyakut (now in Bangla Desh). A prominent trait of his character was a spirit of renunciation—a natural aversion to things worldly. Though married, he had no attachment for anything in his wedded life. He had temporarily left home and lived as an ascetic until he was found and brought back by his people. Even when living in the family circle, he dedicated himself to spiritual pursuits. The form of *sadhana* most congenial to him was to invoke the Godhead through devotional songs; and he was a master of vocal as well as instrumental music. An inspired singer, he could, it is stated, conjure up the presence of God by his songs as did Ramprasad, the famous God-intoxicated poet of Bengal.

Anandamayi Ma's mother, Mokskada Sundari Devi (popularly known as Didima, that is to say, Mother's mother), came of a well-to-do Brahmin family of eminent preceptors. Her father used to be held in the highest esteem for his learning,

character and good deeds. Born with a silver spoon in her mouth, Didima spent her early years in prosperous surroundings. The first tragedy in her life was the loss of her parents during her childhood. She was married to Bipin Behari at the tender age of twelve. This marked the beginning of a new chapter in her life—a chapter full of acute problems created by abject poverty and an indifferent husband. Then she suffered a series of bereavements in the loss of her first daughter and later of three sons in quick succession. Misfortune literally came to Didima 'in a battalion'. She endured all this smilingly, accepting even sorrow and misery as gifts of God. She gave her surviving children a good up-bringing and created a spiritual atmosphere in the household. Worship of the family Deity was her most sacred duty to which she had dedicated herself.

Mokshada Sundari lived the life of *Karma Yoga*, (the path of Realization through action) as taught in the *Gītā*; she worked without attachment and without desire for the fruit of action. She was endowed with the virtues of a *Sthitaprajña* (a person established in wisdom) as described in the *Gītā*. After having lived the life of a householder for nearly fifty years she took *samnyāsa* in 1938 and came to be known as Muktananda Giriji Maharaj. From that time till she gave up her mortal frame in 1970, Didima continuously kept the company of her illustrious daughter.

It is in the fitness of things that Anandamayi Ma, the embodiment of Bliss, should have chosen a noble couple like the Bhattacharyas for Her parents. Didima once told me that before the birth of Nirmala she had seen in her dreams gods

and goodessess giving indication of their coming to her cottage. This fact had filled her heart with *ānanda*.

Rising Sun

In the wake of such mysterious dreams, Didima, on April 30th, 1896 gave birth to an angelic daughter in a small thatched cottage in the hamlet of Kheora (now in the District of Comilla, Bangla Desh). It was seventy-two minutes before dawn. The night was dark – the fourth day of the New Moon. The month was a holy one—Vaisakh—in which had been born centuries ago Lord Buddha, the Light of Asia. This child of Didima originally named Nirmala Sundari (stainless beauty) later came to be universally known as Ma Anandamayī, Mother Bliss-Incarnate or Mataji (revered Mother) or, simply Ma (mother). The expression *Ma*, without any epithet or embellishment, conveys the deepest significance. The sound itself has a universal appeal in our country.

Didima's little baby illumined the cottage by the lustre of Her body. At the same time She cast a shadow of anxiety—the new-born child did not cry. Not that there was anything physically wrong, still She would not utter any sound. Naturally, this symptom caused alarm and apprehension. Thus, the first step in the journey of Ma's mysterious life was marked by a mixed feeling of joy and sorrow in Her near and dear-ones. Ma remained above both. She was not a normal new-born baby completely unaware of the world outside. On the contrary, She was quite alert and fully aware of what was happening around Her.

I had read in some book about Ma's strange behaviour at birth and was curious to know the details. In May 1975,

Ma was in Kankhal where I got the chance of approaching Her with a request for clarification of the mystery. Quite unexpectedly there was no festival or special programme in the Ashram at that time. The atmosphere was calm and quiet and Ma was free to relax and to give us company in homely surroundings. This emboldened me to ask Her: "How is it, Ma, that you did not cry at birth?" She smiled and said: "Well, well, why should I have cried?" This was really no answer to my question; it was just an evasive counter-question. But suddenly the answer spontaneously flashed into my mind. "In Anandamayi, Bliss-Incarnate, there could be no room for tears even at birth!" I was satisfied. Ma looked at me meaningfully and smiled at me approvingly.

With reference to my question, Ma added that She had been looking at a tree not far away from the place where She was born. She was thus responsive to objects of nature immediately after birth. And what a wonderful feat of memory on the part of Ma to have remembered all this. She also remembers other experiences of Her early infancy. Thus, She has a vivid recollection of the visit of one Nandan Chakravarti, a relative, on the thirteenth day after Her birth. Even Didima had forgotten all about it. Didima earnestly charged her memory and then confirmed that Ma was correct. Ma's memory is superhuman and it extends even beyond the limits of this life. Actually "memory" is not the word for it—it is something else. For Ma, there is no past, present or future. There is only Time, or rather Eternity – a continuous, flowing current. Time unrolls its scroll before Her vision and Ma easily reads all that happened in the so-called past, all that is now happening at present and all that will happen in the

future. It is not a question of "remembering" but one of transcendental knowing.

As time elapsed, Nirmala grew up to be an exceptionally beautiful and lovable girl, Her face radiant with the light of Divinity. Attractiveness was the most striking feature of Her personality, as it continues to be even after She has crossed eighty. She was the darling of the village, eagerly sought by all, Hindus and Moslems alike.

Among the prominent traits of Nirmala's character as a child were Her eagerness to be helpful and a keen sense of responsibility. She would with the greatest pleasure assist Didima in household work, particularly looking after Her younger brothers. Moreover, She was ever ready to run errands for anybody seeking Her assistance. Whatever was done by this little child would be done to perfection. She was a prodigy.

But curiously enough, She seemed to be lacking in common sense. Here is an anecdote. One day Didima asked Her to go to the pond and wash a cup. Didima noticed that She was holding the cup carelessly, almost negligently. So as to draw Her attention to it, Didima remarked in a pique : "You may as well break the cup into pieces and then bring it home". Nirmala could not appreciate the note of warning in Her mother's words spoken half in jest and half in earnest. She took Didima's words seriously and literally. How She behaved in this connection was later described by Ma Herself. She went to the pond with the cup and there became engaged in a conversation with a tree so that She did not notice when the cup fell from Her hand and was smashed to pieces. She brought back the broken bits, Didima asked Her what it was

that She had brought ? She replied, "Well, you asked me to bring back the broken cup. So, here it is; all the bits have been returned". At this explanation Didima did not know whether to be cross with Nirmala or to refrain from laughing at Her cost.

So Ma used to have conversations with trees even in Her childhood. But nobody knew about it at that time. Nor could anybody understand this mystery until it was disclosed by Ma years after the occurrence. What was noticed by all was Nirmala's absent-mindedness from time to time, apparently without rhyme or reason. Thus, in the midst of play, work and meals She would suddenly stop and remain motionless like a statue staring into space for an indefinite period.

Once when Nirmala was less than three years old, Didima took Her to listen to *kirtana* in the house of a neighbour, Chandranath Bhattacharya by name. Nirmala appeared sleepy and could not remain in a sitting posture. Didima rebuked Her, saying, "Why do you fall asleep ? Listen to the *kīrtana* !" Long afterwards Ma narrated this incident to Didima, giving every detail of the place where the *kirtana* had taken place. Gradually Didima did recollect the whole episode. Apparently it was too insignificant to be registered in Didima's mind. Its real importance was not realized until Ma said, many years after the incident, that "even at that stage *kīrtana* used to produce the same effect on this body (meaning Herself) as it does now". This revelation indicates that in the case of little Nirmala, the morning did show the day, but not to Her own people. The supernatural phenomena that occasionally became manifest in Her conduct and actions in childhood created

only a sense of concern and perplexity. Her relatives apprehended that She was affected by some mental malady. Didima herself had a poor opinion about Nirmala's intellectual capacity and gave Her darling nick-names such as *Tellay*, *Athela*, *Bedisha* etc., each coinage (derived from the East Bengal dialect) suggesting lack of intelligence. It was from Ma Herself that I got all this interesting information at Kankhal where I found Her in a light and communicative mood. Sushila Masima, one of Ma's cousins (a year older than Ma) who was present there, heartily participated in the merriment provided by Ma. Loving playmates as they had been in childhood, the two old ladies kept on exchanging notes of their recollections. It transpired that Sushila had enjoyed the reputation of having been the cleverer of the two girls and that Nirmala was supposed to be not quite upto the mark. Sushila Masima modestly disowned the compliments paid to Her by Ma in the presence of outsiders. Extremely embarrassed, she apologetically said that she was a pigmy compared to Nirmala. The more self-conscious she felt the more did Ma prolong the discussion emphasizing Sushila Masima's superior intellect. Everybody laughed to the embarrassment of the poor old lady. And Ma laughed the loudest. In despair, Sushila Masima at last covered her face with the fringe of her *sari*. No one can beat Ma in the art of innocent fun and delightfully witty teasing. Whatever is done by Her is done to perfection.

Whatever may be the present opinion of Sushila Masima about Ma's intellectual superiority, the fact remains that such opinion was not entertained by Her near and dear-ones at

home in Her childhood. But the records of Ma's school life tell quite a different story.

The period of Ma's role as a pupil at school is short but bright, lasting hardly a couple of years. And even this short spell could not be fully utilized for study. Lack of funds and pressure of household duties stood in Her way. Moreover, the school was at some distance and when no escort was available, Nirmala was forced to remain at home. Notwithstanding all these handicaps, Nirmala was considered by Her teachers to be one of the brightest students of Her class. In recognition of Her special proficiency She was promoted at once from the Nursery School to the Lower Primary School. Such recognition was certainly not based on any conscious effort on Nirmala's part. Referring to this phase of Her life, Ma laughingly said : "Somehow or other I invariably happened to look up at home the very questions the teacher would ask, and consequently he always found me well prepared even after long absences. The meaning of unknown words would occur to me spontaneously. Supposing I came across the word *hasti* I would ponder for a while and it would occur to me that it meant 'elephant'. My parents hardly ever found time to help me with my lessons. So, my formal education was extremely rudimentary."*

All this was mysterious. More mysterious still was Ma's unique behaviour on the occasion of bereavements in the family. When She was about ten years old, She lost three younger brothers in quick succession. To them She used to be an elder sister, a playmate, a nurse and almost a mother.

* From the *Life of Sri Anandamayi Ma* by Bithika Mukerji, p. 7.

Each of them was deeply attached to Her. When I had the opportunity for informal talk with Ma at Kankhal, I pointed out to Her that She had lost Her brothers when She was about ten years old and was thus mature enough to understand that death meant separation for ever. Then I asked Her point blank whether or not She had felt the pang of separation from Her dear brothers. "No pang of separation" said She rather emphatically with a smile. I followed up the point and said that it was on record that after the death of Her brothers Ma sometimes did cry and then I asked Her why She cried at all if She did not feel any pang of separation. The gist of what Ma said in reply is this : Nirmala had accepted the loss of Her brothers as a matter of course and there was no question of mourning, so far as She was concerned. If She cried, it was not from a sense of loss of the brothers but from a sense of duty to Her lamenting mother. Whenever Didima wailed, little Nirmala would play the role of a mourner. Her heart-rending sobs would naturally touch Didima and induce her to console and quieten the "grieved" child. Hardly could Didima understand that there was no sorrow at the root of Nirmala's tears and that there was really no need to console Her. Absolutely unperturbed Herself, Ma thus played Her role to perfection.

Ma's behaviour as a "mourner-pacifier" cannot be taken exception to by any standard. But Her conduct in a different sphere stands on a separate footing. The venue in this case was the shrine-room in which the family Deity was installed and the party involved was the Image itself. Quite often Didima used to send Nirmala to the pūjā room for certain minor jobs, with a warning that, in any event, the

Image should not be touched by Her. According to scriptures and time-honoured custom, it is very wrong for anyone except certain privileged persons, to touch a Deity. Nirmala was not at that time one of such privileged persons and this is why Didima took special care that Nirmala should not commit an act of sacrilege by touching the Image. Though Nirmala was normally very obedient and submissive, in this case She acted against Didima's instruction. Often the Image happened to be touched by Her inspite of Herself. About these incidents Ma said long afterwards : "Mother (Didima) used to caution me that the Image should not be touched. But strangely enough, I don't know how, the touching of the Image did take place. This body does not do anything on its own initiative. Particularly in this case there was my mother's prohibition. It would occur to me then and there—what is all this ? Immediately after a solution would strike me : this was not done by me deliberately. As I would come out of the shrine-room after finishing my work there, the fact of having touched the Deity would leave no impression on my mind. I would completely forget all about it. So, there was no question of my narrating the incident to anybody."*

In an orthodox Hindu family such an act of grave sacrilege has far-reaching consequences. It involves performance of expensive and complicated ritual. To Ma, however, it did not evidently mean much. She had no qualms of conscience. Perhaps Her relationship with the Deity stood on a special footing justifying Her unconventional conduct.

* *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Sri Gurupriya Devi (2nd ed), 860.

Once Didima sent Nirmala to the pūjā room with instructions to pray to the Deity for Her own well-being. Though properly briefed, Nirmala did not address the *Thakur* (Deity) according to instruction; She did it in Her own ingenious way. And what did She say? "Oh Thakur, do what gives you *ānanda*." Such was the spontaneous prayer of the simple little child. Could any prayer be more befitting for one destined to be Ma Anandamayi? Was this an indication of the morning promising the wonderful days to follow?

Ma

Elwood Decker

Words, no matter how sweet
 At best lead to Thy Feet
 Where Thy Merciful Bliss
 Fills up our consciousness
 Setting us Ever Free
 In Thy Eternity.

From the Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the last issue.)

Summer 1941.

During these early years of Mataji's ceaseless and totally unplanned peregrinations all over India, Her birthday celebrations were observed in a comparatively simpler way. Mataji Herself never allowed Her movements to be restricted on this account. Pūjā had to be performed wherever She happened to be on the particular day. Later, She was obliged more and more to remain in one place during the celebrations because Mahātmās came to attend the function and Mataji would never subject them to the least inconvenience. Thus, gradually the pattern of this festival grew to be more structured and well organised.

The birthday celebrations in 1941 were held in Dehradun. Mataji sometimes would move from Raipur to Kishenpur. A few days before the festival She was in Kishenpur. Late one night, after retiring to Her room, Mataji's body underwent a change and She was seen to assume various yogic postures. This phenomenon had become rather uncommon of late and surprised Abhaya who was the sole observer. Mataji had asked everyone to retire, but obedience was never Abhayas strong point. He now ran outside to fetch Prajñānānanda Brahmachari who was staying in the Ashram at the time. Didi soon joined them.

Mataji's entire body seemed activated by a spontaneous rhythm in obedience to which Her limbs were assuming

beautiful postures. It did not appear that She was deliberately adopting yogic *āsanas*. Her hands expressed numerous *mudrās*, all marvellous to behold. She uttered various mantras in a clear, soft tone to the accompaniment of these attitudes. There was a bright look on Her face. An exalted atmosphere prevailed. The small impromptu audience watched in reverent silence.

After a while Mataji became still and then spoke in a soft voice, "I asked Abhaya to go to bed; not only did he not listen to me but now has disturbed the sleep of Pitaji (Brahmachariji) too." Prajñānānanda denied any sense of inconvenience. On the contrary, he considered himself fortunate to be vouchsafed this rare opportunity. He said : "I had the good luck to witness a similar phenomenon once before at the residence of Kunja Mohan Babu in Varanasi. At that time Mataji's body had lain on the floor for a long time in a state of *samādhi*. Today's transformation is specially remarkable to me because Mataji was sitting up and seemed somehow quite normal and yet transported to a region which we have only read or heard about but never seen and which remains dubious to us. It is indispensable for faith to be given the opportunity to actually see what the books write about."

Mataji replied : "These transformations are also normal. Just as I talk and laugh and walk around, so these postures which seem so extraordinary to you are equally natural."

* *Mudrā* Particular pose representing the expression of a particular *deva śakti* (higher natural force).

The Brahmachari asked if She felt any fatigue afterwards, to which Mataji replied : "None at all. I am not straining after anything so there is no question of exertion. These *kriyās* take place of their own accord. I remain as I am."

The truth of this statement was evident to the Brahmachari and he again and again marvelled at his good luck of being vouchsafed the opportunity of seeing Mataji's yogic *kriyās*.

The birthday celebrations took place in Raipur; the *pūjā* was performed by Manmatha Nath Chatterji. On its completion the concourse of devotees went to Mataji's room to offer their *praṇāmas*.

On this auspicious day in May 1941, the foundation of the Vidyapeeth was laid at the Kishenpur Ashram. It will be recalled that Bhaiji had expressed a desire to establish an educational institution for boys where they would be taught according to the traditional Indian way. They would be under a religious regime and at the same time trained to take their place in the world on completion of their education. Bhaiji's desire was concretized by his loyal devotee, Raja Durga Singh of Solan. He was helped in this enterprise by Sri Sachikanta Das who had decided to stay in the Ashram after retirement.

Responding to the insistent entreaties of the devotees of Meerut, Mataji went there for a short while. The rest of the summer She spent between Kishenpur and Raipur. Visitors to Raipur had to cross four river-beds. Sometimes a sharp shower would make the mountain streams unfordable within minutes of the rainfall. In spite of these hazards

Mataji remained surrounded by a surprisingly large number of devotees of all ages from far and near. The open terrace would see a motley gathering activated by the same inspiration and somehow achieving a homogeneity which was fulfilling and rewarding. At night Mataji's cot would be placed into the centre of the terrace and those who were staying for the night spread out their simple bed-rolls all around Mataji's cot, men on one side and women on the other. No problem arose with the elderly. But the young people, in trying to gain positions as close to Mataji as possible got embroiled in arguments. Often She Herself had to settle disputes arranging the positions of the would-be contenders all around Her. Abhaya was most unruly, refusing to allow anyone to occupy his privileged place at the foot of Mataji's bed. Bindu, a slim boy at that time, solved his own problem by choosing to lie *under* Mataji's cot. Although unable to see Her from there, He would be closest to Her.* Late at night the young people would be thrilled to wake up and find Mataji talking in soft tones to someone close to Her. They would gather round and listen enthralled. Those who have experienced this magic companionship of Mataji will understand the enchantment of those summer nights spent in the open under starry skies.

At the close of the summer vacation, the late Professor Shyama Charan from Agra paid a visit to the Ashram. He was a quiet and reserved man. For a long time he had been

* Incidentally this remained his privileged position till he outgrew it, subsequently given to his younger brother on one occasion by **Ma Herself**

travelling the road of intellectual despair contemplating the the meaninglessness of life. He had attempted to study Scriptures and had met many holy men but had not been able to find redress for his cynicism. At Agra he had come in contact with Niraj Nath Mukerji, one of Mataji's devotees. They had many long conversations and Prof. Shyama Charan was with great difficulty prevailed upon to meet yet another 'holy person'.

This meeting proved to be the turning-point of his life. Mataji, in one of Her very rare moods of recalling Her early years, spoke at length to the small group of people about Her childhood, Her play of *sādhana* at Bajitpur and Her life in Dacca. In reply to Shyama Charan's questions, She expanded on Her statement regarding Her *sādhana* : "Is there anything except the One ? How wonderful everything is ! Some people were highly displeased and critical of my mode of life at that time, but to me, those who spoke ill of me, the ill they spoke - everything was within the One. Where is the scope for 'unhappiness' ? This is however not a matter of rational assessment, it is *seen* as self-evidently true. For this body there is no obstacle to understanding in any direction. Everything is complete in itself and everything is really and truly the One. Just as one may be a father, brother, son or friend fully to the person concerned and yet remain in oneself one self-sufficient person."

It was clear to Shyama Charan that he was in the presence of one who was the living justification of the words uttered by Her. His quest for a meaning of human questionings was over. Many scriptural texts that only had roused

scepticism in him, now became profoundly revealing. He received a new lease of life which however proved not to be of this world for he passed away soon after meeting Mataji.

At the end of the summer Mataji left Dehradun for Solan. From there She was requested to go to Simla for the *nāma yajña* at the Kali Bari. This was a regular feature there, performed by the Hari Sabha. During the summer the Central Secretariat used to be in Simla in those days and so many of the Delhi devotees were in Simla at that time. Mataji stopped in Solan for a few days and proceeded to Hardwar in July 1941.

It had been Didi's long-cherished desire to establish a *Kanyapeeth* (girls' school) on the lines of the *Vidyapeeth* (boys' school). Now this wish could be fulfilled since a Punjabi lady donated for this purpose a house on the Ganges. Nine days after *Jhulan Pūrṇimā* (August full moon) the *Kanyapeeth* was inaugurated with appropriate ceremonies.

Mataji again returned to Kishenpur and Raipur. Jawaharlal Nehru was in jail in Dehradun at that time and Seth Jammalal Bajaj had come from Mahatma Gandhi in the beginning of August to visit Jawaharlal and also his daughter Indira who was in Mussoorie. Jammalal came to see Ma. From the very first encounter Bajaj appeared to be overwhelmed by Mataji's influence on his spiritual yearnings which he had been obliged to keep under restraint because of Gandhiji's insistence on active participation in the political activities of the time. Bajaj could not tear himself away from Mataji's presence. He wired to Wardha for Gandhiji's permission to stay on in Dehradun. His childlike devotion

for Mataji and his appropriation of Her companions as his family captivated the hearts of the devotees. They got to know him well and addressed him as "Bhaiyaji".

One day, while conversing with Mataji, he began by saying, "Once, when I was in jail" Mataji interrupted : "You are still in jail ! Are you under the impression that you have gained freedom ?" She continued in a more serious vein : "One must strive for real freedom. A little time, just a little time of every day has to be set apart for God by everyone. If one looks upon one's activities as His work which He is getting done in His own way, then one avoids the coils of bondage. Otherwise action cannot lead to freedom."

These words, spoken as they were, to a man of action who was devoting his life to the service of his country and his people, are of great significance because here Mataji reiterates once again what She always says to ordinary people.

The inevitable day of parting arrived. Mataji left Dehradun for Hardwar and Delhi. From Delhi Mataji took a longer journey to Vindhyachal. Bajaj who had been travelling with Her, now bade a sad farewell and went back to Wardha. He had requested Mataji to allow him to stay with Her, being confident that he would get permission from Gandhiji. But Mataji would not hear of this and explained to him that he had to return to Wardha.* Disappointed in this, he tried to persuade Her to come to Wardha to visit Gandhiji. However,

* One must remember this also in conjunction with Mataji's words to him. There is no contradiction here but a nice point of the fitness of things which is never set aside by Mataji.

Mataji had no *kheyāla* to do so at that time. It would appear that he had set his heart on this meeting for he subsequently asked Hariram Joshi, who was his friend, to come to Wardha and join in the work of service at that ashram. He conjectured that if such a staunch devotee as Hariram were to stay in Wardha, Mataji would sooner or later be persuaded to come there. When She did indeed visit Wardha in February 1942, Jamnalal Bajaj was no more. His keen desire was fulfilled only after his death.

August-September 1941.

At that time, Mataji stayed in Varanasi in a houseboat on the Ganges. Only Nepalda (now Narayana Swami) knew about Her presence in the city. After a few days one or two others came to know and arrived on the boat. Mataji in the meantime became a little indisposed. Didi and others persuaded Her to stay in one of the temples at Trilochana Ghāt. However, Mataji returned to the houseboat after a few days. Gradually many more people began to assemble there in the evenings. The Bose brothers, Patal, Neru, Ajit from the old and prestigious house of the Mitras at Choukhamba became regular visitors. One day Patalda remarked that they were facing a particular type of problem. All their friends were asking : "Now that with such diligence you keep on visiting Mataji day after day what do you get out of it ?"

Mataji laughed loudly and said : "That nothing at all is to be had, *this* is what I get--is what you should reply. That which is found will be lost again."

Mataji would sit on the small roof-terrace of the boat with the visitors all around Her. The boat was anchored sometimes near Assighat or at other times on the side of Ramnagar. The calm and quiet evenings on the Ganges spent in the proximity of Mataji were an experience sufficient in itself. The participants of such and similar experiences are ever at a loss to explain its utility to those who are strangers to it. (To be continued)

If Only I Could Fly

J. N. Dhamija

We are body bound. This flesh and blood
Is the make up of man's heart and mind
From which all actions flow—
We are prisoners of ourselves, our beings
Wrapped in thoughts of want and comfort.
We suffer heat and cold,
Pain and sorrow dog our foot-steps,
Our life – an unending struggle
For our never ending needs
Ever eluding Peace.

Man's mind is sun and shade,
Fog and cloud, wind and rain
With streaks of silver and of gold;
Rooted in the Blue Above
Serene and motionless, the everlasting
Realm of Bliss and Tranquillity.

To be bodiless is to be free
And freedom is our heritage.
Beyond the pale of death
Beyond the bounds of thought

Beyond the Seventh Heaven

Life glows--radiant and pure

Life flows in rhythms

In cadence of unearthly song.

If only I could fly and soar above

The whims of want, of gain and loss,

Desires like rivers flowing into ocean calm.

If only I could fly and soar into the Blue

Above the snow-capped peaks

And breathe its freshness to my heart's content,

If only I could fly and glide

Spreading my wings over regions rare and vast

Brooding like the Spirit of God

In all its silent Majesty.

Mataji's Reply to Messages for Gurupurnima 1977

“By Sri Sri Guru's grace alone the goal of Ātmā, the pilgrimage, the kriyā for the sake of God-realization will be led towards fulfilment in human life.”

O Soul !

M. P. Jain

- O Soul : Be free, be free and break all the knots
that keep you bound to this earth,
yours is a much higher berth.
Love is waiting eagerly
to take you along the path
just respond to the call
to enjoy Love's game
to give this life a meaning and an aim
to remove all the strain
your consent is main.
- O Soul : Be free, be free to enjoy the grace
flowing in abundance perennially,
let the intellect be the motive force
for this vehicle of flesh and bones
to take you to the high altitude,
the vast expanse of bliss and beatitude.
- O Soul : Make a total offering of yourself
at the altar of Love
to fulfil the aim
of your advent on this earth.
- O Soul : Be free, be free and break all knots
that keep you bound to this earth,
yours is a much higher berth.

The Doctrine of Bhakti

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The Concept of *Bhakti*

We propose to discuss in this brief discourse the nature of *Bhakti*, i. e., its various implications as used since the age of final compilation of the Purāṇas, esp., the Viṣṇu Purāṇa and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa towards the close of the 4th century AD. and onwards, when the *Bhakti* cult had already been thriving and the various types of *bhaktas* or votaries of the cult of *bhakti* devoted to God came to be distinguished. The English term for the concept of *bhakti* may be construed as devotion to God as usually held in academic parlance, although the Indian concept, which is comparatively much older has a chequered history of its own and has undergone modifications of meaning in course of the evolution of religious and philosophical thought, specially more in respect of the theistic and pantheistic schools which flourished in different forms in India since the purānic age. Before we analyse the meanings of this concept, it would be quite relevant to elucidate very briefly what is generally signified by the term 'devotion'. It may be defined as the yearning and solicitous attitude of the human soul towards the Divine or the Sacred/Holy. It is not, however, synonymous with worship (*pūjā*). It is distinguished from the latter in the sense that it is the inner, intimate and essential core of worship, apart from its characteristic forms;

and it symbolizes the attitude of the worshipper out of the inner depths of the soul towards the Deity or GOD; and more comprehensively viewed, it signifies self-dedication (*ātmani-vedanam*) to God best illustrated in the Bhagavad Gītā. The attitude of devotion suffuses all genuine religion and finds expression in some forms of worship directed towards an object or objects regarded as highly sanctified and conceived as symbolic form of the Divine Being or God. In all religions, whether theistic, pantheistic or otherwise, which create and foster the devotional spirit or attitude, the human soul intensely, sincerely and longingly desires and acts in faith, reverence and purity of devotion towards the Deity: and the saintly soul dedicates himself to Him and yearns for communion with Him. For this purpose there are in every religion distinctive exercises and practices of devotion to purify and ennoble the soul in its holy pilgrimage towards the Divine. They are, so to say, infinite in variety, and primacy is given to prayer which is likewise varied in form and quality; but every kind of prayer involves the humble, sincere tribute of homage which the yearning human soul renders to the Divine. Here we are concerned with the various forms of the cult of devotion which have evolved and prevailed in India and which possess distinctive characteristics of their own. They are explicable in the sense that great devotees of India practised them and their holy pilgrimages leading to God was not enigmatic although symbolic in forms.

During the vedic age there prevailed certain forms of adoration of the vedic deities who were conceived as different forms of manifestation of one Divinity termed 'Sat' (i. e.,

ultimate Reality), and any invocation to a 'deva', 'devas' or
(१) एकं सच्चिप्रा बहुधा वथन्न्यस्ति यमं मातरिष्वानमाहुः ।

(R. V. 1. 164.64)

all-deities (*viśva-devāh*) signified invocation to the Supreme Being who is one and unique whom *vipras* (the inspired sages) used to describe in various terms, such as Indra, Varuna Mitra, Agni, Yama or Mātariśvan. The supreme Divinity of the devas is one. (R. V. III. 55.14). During the following age of the Upaniṣads the nature of the vedic deities (*devas*) usually reckoned as thirty-three is represented as one Vital Life (*Prāṇa* or *Prāṇasya prāṇah*) which is equated with the first and Supreme Principle, i. e., Brahman (Br. A. Up. III. 9.9). The nature of God or the Supreme Being and his manifestations to whom obeisance is rendered by the vedic seers is briefly discussed later in the suitable context. The forms of adoration, out of which the various types of the cult of '*bhakti*' (devotion) developed at later stages symbolize some kind of worship (*upāsanam*) aiming at communion with the Divine. He was conceived as *Hiranyagarbha* (the golden-germed deity) who only prevailed at first and who was the Lord of all creation and who sustained earth and heaven (R. V. x.121.1). The Rṣis sought to realize the nature of the Deity to whom they would offer their oblation. (कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेय) (*ibid*). Although many of the vedic seers longed for communion with the Divine,¹ they generally invoked the 'devas' for grant of

1. A Rṣi states in a vedic hymn that he moves in communion with the Rudras, Vasus Adityas, Viśvadeva, etc. 'I sustain Mitra and Varuna, Indra, Agni and Asvins.

अहं रुद्रेभिर्यसुभिष्वराम्यहमादिभ्यैरुत विश्वदेवै ।

अहं मित्रावरुणोभा विभर्म्यहमिन्द्रापी अहमश्विनोभा ॥

(R. V. X. 125.1)

their prayers; and common people used to perform sacrifices (*yaññas*) for the same purpose. The cult of *bhakti* did not seem to have prevailed during the vedic age but evolved at a later age; and it is the most fundamental tenet of the *Bhagavata dharma*, the early form of Vaisnavism which must have been the most predominant faith during the purānic age according to the evidence which can be gleaned from the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas, esp, the Viṣṇu and Bhāgavata Purāṇas. Here the concept of *bhakti* is elucidated in the light of theistic thought and speculations as testified in the Purāṇas; but before we proceed further, we would very briefly refer to certain vedic hymns and indicate early applications out of which the cult of *bhakti* has evolved in the Upaniṣads (mostly minor Upaniṣads) and the Bhagavad Gītā and attained culmination and at later ages by assimilating, to a considerable extent, non-vedic thought, esp. of *Ālvars* in the south, which had been prevailing since early ages.

Meaning of Bhakti

Now, what is meant by devotion (*bhakti*) to God? The root (*V bhaj*) out of which the highly significant term *bhakti* has evolved had different meanings during the Vedic age¹. This theme is very briefly elucidated

3. The use of the root V bhaj is noticeable for the purpose in the following illustrative cases : (Rg veda)

Bhaj—1.27.5, 43/8; 81/6, 104/6, 121/15; VII. 27.1, VII. 46.4; 1x.45; X. 45.10, 85. 29; X 1/2.10

Bhajatana—VII. 56.21

Bhajati IV. 54.1; V. 34.5, 7

Bhajatam X. 1.6, 9

Bhajate 1. 123.4; III. 30.7; v. 44.12; IX. 86.12

Bhajanta 1.68.3; v. 79.7; VIII. 4.21; X. 15.3; X. 1088

ted below. We refer to this aspect of our theme by way of background and perspective. The verbal applications in the vedic hymns as indicative of the meanings attaching to them signify desires of Rṣis and their experiences regarding attainment of goals in response to their prayers to the vedic deities; and it appears that the *bhakti* cult had not evolved at the time, as already indicated. Etymologically the word signifies *Upasanam*, the original meaning of which was not presumably worship, although so held by Pāṇini (c 5th c. BC.) (IV. 3.95), but possibly a feeling of deification (lit., presence of the adorer near the deity). It is, however, clear that this word came to connote this significance of worship during Pāṇini's time.

An adorer addresses Agni, the shining deity and feels that by life-long adoration the adorer attains true immortality,

मडान्त विश्वे देवन्व नाम ऋतं ससन्तो अमृतमेवैः ॥

(R. V. 1.68.4)

Another Rṣi asks Panegyrists to recite the name of Viṣṇu, the all-pervading Deity. "May we, the adorers attain intelligence (or worship you, the shining Ones (the latter interpretation according to Sāyana).

Bhajanti X 114.10

Bhajante 1. 125.6; X. 107.2

Bhajasva—IV. 32,21; X. 84.2

Bhajati —II 26.1

Bhajāni —X. 27.10

Bhajama —X 108.9

Bhajāmi —X. 48.1

Bhajemahi VII 32.7.8.40.6

आस्य जानन्तो नाम चिद्विवक्तन महस्ते विष्णो सुमनि भजामहे ॥
(R. V. 1. 156.3)

The same sacrificer,
Rṣi desires to be placed as Lord
in the sphere of truth

.....आर्यमृतस्य माने यज्ञमानमाभजत्”
(R. V. 1.156.5)

One hymn proclaims “O mighty warrior, wage warfare and enjoy victory over enemies”.

रणं कृधि रणकृतसत्वशुष्माभक्त 'राये अस्मान् ॥'
(R. V. x. 112.10)

In the following cases the application of the root (*bhaj*) is indicative of distribution and enjoyment of favours by petitioners.

(i) Give up the physical dirt and distribute wealth to devout persons (O Brahma).

(परा देहि शामुक्थं ब्रह्मन्वो वि भजा वसु ।)
(R. V. x. 85.26)

(ii) Givers of gold, enjoy immortality. O (gentle) Soma sacrificer, givers of clothes attain and enjoy longevity

(हिरण्यदा अमृतत्वं भजन्ते वासोदा-सोम प्राणस्त आयुः ।)
(R. V. x. 107.2)

(iii) The Paṇi chief says to Saramā :

I will make thee sister, donot turn back.

We will have cattle, blessed one.

(स्वेंसारं त्वा कृण्वे मा पुनरिप अप ते गवां सुभने भजाम् ।
(R. V. x. 108.9)

(iv) The deites will distribute to them panacea for labour when the controller (Sūrya, according to Sāyaṇa) is installed in his mansion (chariot, according to Sāyaṇa).

(श्रमस्यदार्यं वि भजन्त्येषो यदा यम भवति हर्म्यं हितः ।)

(R. V. x. 114.10)

(v) I, Indra distribute food to sacrificers.

भजन्त्येषो अहं दाशुषे वि भजामि भोजनम् ।

(iv) O R̥sis (seers) receive admirable cattle and horses.

(तां भजन्त मेहनाश्वं भजन्त मेहना)

(R. V. VIII. 4.21)

(viii) Make us participate in the sacrifice longed for by creatures. Do protect us with blessings evermore.

(आ नो भज बर्हिषि जीवशंसे यूयं पान स्वस्तिमिः सदा नः ।)

(R. V. VII. 46.4).

Some more important parallel cases in hymns cited below may be referred to for determining the original meaning of the root *bhaj* and those of its derivatives.

R. V. 1.43.8, 1.68.3-4, 1.81.6, 1.108.6, 1.121.15, 1.123.4,
1.125.6, 1.127.5, 1.156.35, 1.157.2 11.26.1
IV. 32.21, IV. 54.1, V. 34.5, 7, V. 44.12, V. 79.7
VII. 27.1, VII. 46.4, VII. 32.7, VII. 56.21,
VIII. 4.21, VIII. 40.6, IX. 4.5, IX. 86.2,
X. 15.3, X. 27.10, X. 45.10, 10.48.1,
X. 85.20, X. 107.2, X. 108.8-9, X. 114.10

In all these cases Sāyaṇa, the great commentator has elucidated the meanings in the sense of petition or prayer for gifts to be *distributed for enjoyment*, which survive in classical Sanskrit in this sense of '*bhajana*' and its causation '*bhajana*'. Incidentally the term '*bhajana*' came to signify worship, the meaning being presumably derived from the prayerful attitude of the petitioner. In the succeeding age the root (*bhaj*) acquired the significance of the action, movement, etc. by means of which the adorer may attain his goal and the abstract noun, i. e., *bhakti* derived from this root symbolized his attitude while making the prayer. (To be continued)

Mātri Prasād

(First Part)

Mauni Ma

(*Translated from Bengali*)

(10)

At first the Guru leads by hand
Afterwards letting it go
Removes both the props and makes one free
To walk in solitude.
Alone—trudges the self-forgetful,
Alone-speaks only to herself,
No other being there, speaks only to herself.

(11)

Rent asunder are the bonds of love
Alone I tread dispassion's path.
In the world, the gods entangled me with ties of love--
Yet all were shattered.
In the Ātmā gods arise, in the Ātmā they converse,
Into Ātmā they subside.
No error at the root full of nectar—
The mystic reposes in the heart's core
All is but He--no less no more.

The Call of the Heart

Swami Jnanananda Giri

(Swami Jñānānanda Giri is a disciple of Swami Atmananda in the line of Lahiri Mahasaya. Originally from Switzerland, he has lived as a model sādhu for the last twenty-five years in India. He has come for Sri MA'S darśana on numerous occasions.)

I am passing my days waiting for Thee
Keeping alight the lamp of my love
This love is Thy Presence, invisibly real
Strength of my life and heart's inner seal.

Oftimes methinks a glimpse of Thy Being
Enchants my ever-searching eyes.
A trace of Thy Greatness, Beauty and Glory
When nature reveals her secret story

As I move in forests, along brooks of the hill
With a heart that almost is standing still
In wonder and adoration of Thy silent coming
I feel the depth of my Soul's inmost longing.

* * * *

Be steadfast with your daily meditation and know what inner Silence is. This will gradually destroy the illusion of worldly life and draw you nearer to God. Plunge deep within into the very Source of your Love, to be lost and melt in the "I am" promptings of Soul-Consciousness which are self-seeking !

When that inmost Being awakens in a blessed awareness of Its most ancient relationship with the Divine, then you will realize how all intuitive inspirations are blissful revelations of the Eternal One, who plays through the purified medium of inner feelings in true devotees.

With utmost perseverance continue in your attempt to reach the Great Beyond ! Ah! Could you but feel how your tender heart is burning in the scorching heat of the forest-fire of *māyā* ! How can you thus be really happy ? True, you may be happy with your desires, but you are not happy in your Soul ! How small is that worldly happiness which passes away so swiftly like the flowing water in the river.

Beware ! Save yourself from this mundane *samsāra*. Be not deluded by the outward noises of the sensation-demanding worldly few who ever seek the attention of the world : but rather feel the silent unheard prayers of the many who suffer patiently ! Listen to the Call of the Heart in the depth of your soul. Stay there alone and know that there you were, are now, and ever shall be in rapture with your inner Self !

“True devotees are beyond the bondage of all karma. They pass their time waiting for the Lord, and they keep alight the lamp of their love.”

Be like unto them ! Then your life shall be blessed and you will actually be engaged in promoting the welfare of all beings. Everyone radiates the full force of his character. Whether you are conscious of it or not, the magnetism of your spiritual entity is vibrating unceasingly into the minds

and hearts of all those with whom you are destined to come in contact.

Thus continue aspiring for the Eternal ! Highest Perfection must be the goal of your supreme quest. Any ideal less than that would lead you only farther into bondage. With such sublime aspirations you will certainly meet a true Guru, who will be your most intimate friend and spiritual guide ! The Guru is ever Soul-conscious, and he works secretly, more often from within, than from without, in order to uplift you in Illumination and Intuition unto Self-realization and Divine Independence.

The Guru is an eternal source of holy inspiration ! Personal loving contact with him, either on the physical, mental, or better, on the spiritual levels of existence will keep you tremendously magnetised and give you pure hunger for God. In constant fellowship with the wise, such desire for the Divine will increase and ultimately produce genuine longing in the heart. There should be no premature satisfaction of that spiritual hunger, and it is not given to the spiritual guide to satisfy it. The master's presence serves to awaken your Divine Hunger, and to guide you in the direction of God so that your aspiration becomes intense. As for that final satisfaction, Divine Grace is there to accomplish what is ordained by God !

Aum

The Lesson of the Sphinx

Sunya Baba

In Egypt Sri Wuji * was fascinated by *daršana* of the Gizah Sphinx. It told him, not in word-symbols or concepts but by being, what it is, reposing there since 4000 B. C. or earlier. Did you ever see the fantastic and symbolic man-animal on its granite pedestal facing the Lybian mountains? It witnessed the waves sparkling on the sea beneath, where only drifting desert sands now cover earth and rocks. The Nile delta had not yet formed.

The Sphinx is the earliest object that Egypt has created by the Red Race and it has become her centuries' most important symbol and emblem. It is created by the ancient wisdom-religion as a picture of the seemingly calm and co-ordinated Nature, its paradoxes and its dangerous secret: A bull-torso with a human head, lion-feet and eagle wings. In this unity of the four parts are hidden the four elements, water, earth, air and fire, which are the ground of occult science. Before Oedipus, Solon and Socrates the Red Race knew that the riddle of the Sphinx is MAN: Man, know thy Self in conscious awareness, in intuitive fulness and grace. The Red Race has left no other proof of its existence than the Sphinx of Gizah, but has in it proved that the great problem had been stated and in a way solved.

Each religion by itself is narrow and falsified. It is true only as part of a whole, though the real, mature Mystics, Sufis,

* Wuji refers to the author's higher Self.

Sages and Rishis awared and experienced the God-head that is beyond all gods. The Light that never was on land or sea and which enlightens and guides every ego-soul that enters this world-play, is usually awared only as part of a whole. It shone 5000 years B. C. from Rama, from Krishna, and from the Self-enlightened and intuitively aware Buddha. It shone in Iran and in Greece. In Egypt it became Aman Res, the Thebean Sungod's Law : Osiris the Spiritual Lord, Phaeroh, the crowned Initiate. No thought can comprehend the Self and no language can express it. The Eternal cannot be expressed to or by time-bound ego-souls. It is the Silence beyond ego and duality-consciousness. Truth, grace or God-awareness cannot be given. It is awared intuitively in your Self, if you mature and purify your tools to reflect purely.

“Man's greatest and most valuable gift is Intuition” (Pythagoras). Sri Ramana Maharshi said unto us : “Trust your intuition”. This may have been uttered to a particular fellow wayfarer in consciousness, but the advice would pertain to all who are mature enough to have trained, cultivated and practised in the intuitive light of awareness. “To thine own Self be true”. Intuition is this Self-radiance of the Pūrṇa and the integral essence. It is a light, or a faculty, which we all have or Are, but rarely focus, train or consciously use. It is still tabooed by the clever intellectuals and the perenial philosophers in what Ramana Maharshi called ‘learned ignorance’. We are hardly aware of it and so, do not discipline and clarify to live consciously aware in it—and by it, yet we live in its graceful radiance. It is the inner light, that leads and guides every human ego-soul on its homeward journey. It reveals the Way, the non-dual experiencing. As the Quakers say and the

mature mystics in general, we need but to be stilled in depth awareness, depth-consciousness, Vijnana Alaya, to be inwardly calm; sincere and concept-free, to be aware in and to live by the intuitive Light-radiance unswervingly. Our Swadarshan is very partial and it varies widely in mature steadiness and integral clarity. Therefore our often blinkered, conflicting, subjective truths and prejudices clash and we are apt to fuss and squabble over names and term-symbols. Few psyches know things Yath-a-bhutan, the thing in its Self, essentially, integrally and in harmonious self-interdependence. "To the pure everything is pure". If thy intuitive eye be open, single and purely reflecting, thy whole body, aye the entire cosmic body, is brimful of light also to thee. The intuitive light is ever there and here, within and beyond. If we awaken to Be It, consciously and integrally aware, then there is nothing to dispute, argue or fuss about. Therefore Ramana Maharshi's oft repeated and essential advice : "Be Still, be inwardly Still". Let the mind and other good tools, harmonize so that you can Be whole and free in them, free to reflect purely. Be Still, but do not try to be the Stillness, the Silence, the integrality and the Self-radiance that you ever Are.

"Reason was the helper. Reason is the bar". It is said that "Reason's extremity is Intuition's opportunity", but intuition can manifest in the consciousness of the 'pure fool' and is an intelligence beyond intellect and reason. It is direct perception, immediate apprehension, media-free and choice-free awareness, when mind and desires are stilled. We read of sudden solutions of problems, vivid flashes of insight and Satori-enlightenment in gleams of intuition, as in the case

of Einstein, Newton and many a genius, but genius is often a disease. Much art is a frantic, hectic flowering, and not the joyous ease of integrality or the serene fulfilment in natural, intuitive spirituality. The light flickers, the glow burns and the Essence-awareness is uneven and unquiet.

Intuition is more akin to feeling than to thinking and it is stated that women are more intuitive than men, less caught in mental blinkers and in the coils of reason and mere understanding. But "feminine intuition" can be more fluctuating and unreliable than in a mature man, says Wuji. The mother-complex, the hectare-urge, the craving for possessive love, and emotional instability in Shakti-business often blur the intuitive light. Yet there is always the rare woman with Yin and Yang in harmonious balance. Actually in maturity, sex and other divisions do not matter, and, in intuitive adwaita-light, they do not even persist. Intuition is the Prajna-Light of inherent wisdom. Integrality and Mahakaruna are invisible to egoist. It is an authentic experiencing. You are the Intuition. As Sir Ramana says : You are the Awareness, the Silence, the Grace, the Self, when you, as ego, are not. Intuition reveals that we are more than human, mental, mortal egojis and that bondage is delusive. A Sufi, Sage, Rishi and mature Mystic may, like Blake, intuitively aware "the world in a grain of sand, heaven in a flower". He may consciously "hold Infinity in the palm of a hand, and be Eternity in an hour". Kabir awared the sea in the dew-drop, the Whole in the partplay and Eternity in time. It is the Swadarshan, the experiencing in Self-identity. It is the mature, intuitive and authentic experiencing in and beyond darkness and death and duality.

“Do not want to remain in Samādhi.” You may pray for your need, but not for wants, lusty whims or predilections”, says Wuji. Want is duality of the future. Don’t want. Just Be. Let go of desire and of ego-antics. Let go and let God worry and arrange. Your prarabdha karma is arranged, so you may drop your wilful and blinkered conceit of doership. Intuitive Yoga is effort-free and mindfree, the ability to live naturally, spontaneously without thinking of it. Be thought-free, mind-free and ego-free in Self-controlled spontaniety. The Word is word-free. The boat of intuition carries you across the choppy ocean of duality, to the source of All. The sea of Saṁsārā is awared as the ocean of graceful Ānanda, not mere happiness, fluctuating joys. Always *build from within*, not from without; from intuition, not from instinct.

Intuition comes from a cosmic Source. It is the spontaneous action fount of man. Knowledge is of the ego-world. Intuitive wisdom is of the Self, the whole, integral Being-Awareness. Intelligence suffuses the intuitive psyche, not intellect, not instinct. With the closing of the intuitive eye the mind has become a mass of facets and mere facts. Intuition focuses the needs of body and psyche, the essence and the integral whole, not ego-wants or lusts. If you had awared and ‘developed’ your intuition as much as you have ‘developed’ your mind, you would have awared and experienced your Self. In developing your mind you have made your effortful desires a temporary success, but at what cost: you have sacrificed intuition to your wants. The Sphinx does otherwise.

Rakhalda

(1909-1977)

It is with deep sorrow that we record the death of Sisir Kumar Datta, M. A., B. Ed., former secretary and teacher of the Kanyapeeth, lovingly called 'Rakhalda' by all. He had been suffering from high blood pressure for a long time, but was quite active until he was in the middle of March admitted to Mata Anandamayee Hospital with a dilated heart. After his discharge from there in the first week of April he moved under Mataji's direction to the Kanyapeeth for convalescence. He was well on the way to recovery when he had a stroke in the early morning of July 22nd, 1977. The end came peacefully shortly afterwards.

Rakhalda, the only son of his father, the Personal Assistant to the Commissioner, Dacca Division, was born in 1909 in Dacca where he had his early education. While still in his teens he was drawn into revolutionary politics, much against his natural inclinations. But once in it, he never looked back nor swerved from the path that lay ahead. That chapter of his life had all the thrills and perils of a daunting adventure. It came to an end with his arrest some years later, when he was a student of the Medical College in Calcutta.

Then followed a spell of brutal torture with occasional allurements thrown in. But neither the lure of the one nor the terror of the other could break or even bend his spirit.

His life in prisons and internment camps covered a period of a decade during which he graduated and passed his M. A. examination at the Calcutta University.

When at long last freedom came to him in the wake of Independence, he was faced with the spectre of unemployment and he turned his hand to anything that came his way. Deepening financial crisis drove him to Dacca with his aged father, where he made a living as a teacher for some years. It was a period of hard struggle - indeed a grim battle for survival, fraught with grave hazards to his life, but he never gave in. Only after his father's death he left Dacca in 1952. On his return to Varanasi, he served for a while as a teacher in the Anglo-Bengali Intermediate College.

Success came to him rather late in life when, by Mataji's grace, he was offered a responsible position by Sri B. K. Shah in 1953 in the New India Insurance Company from which he eventually opted for the L. I. C. After retirement he took shelter in Ma who, in Her infinite mercy, had come to his rescue during many a crisis in life. He never tired of recalling with deep gratitude the unfailing kindness he received from Mataji and from Didi (Gurupriya Devi) who also had a great love for him. It was at Mataji's desire that he joined the Kanyapeeth in 1972 where he served as secretary for some years and as a teacher to his last day.

His domestic life was not one of unclouded happiness. The unruffled serenity with which he went through it was the measure of his character. He is survived by his widow, two sons and three daughters.

From his mother "Mouni-Ma", a saintly woman of high spiritual attainment, held in great regard by Ma Anandamayi and Her devotees, Rakhaldā inherited an unimpeachable moral character and integrity. A man of simple habits, he had an almost philosophic unconcern about appearances. His cool reserve concealed a warm and sincere heart which endeared him to all who came in close contact with him. Quiet and gentle by nature, he never hurt anybody, but bore with stoic calm and detachment the hurts inflicted on him.

The interests of the Kanyapeeth were very close to his heart and he served it with rare zeal and dedication. To the girls he was a loving father, ministering to their needs and defending their interests at all costs. The school, without a doubt, is very much poorer for his death.

It was in the fitness of things that he should breathe his last in the premises of the Kanyapeeth which he loved so dearly. The grief-stricken inmates of the school bade him a tearful farewell and paid their final homage to him in a spirit of deep reverence which was as spontaneous as it was touching.

May his soul rest in peace at the feet of the Lord.

Matri Lila

(July-September 1977)

For the last 45 years, since Mataji started Her ceaseless peregrinations throughout the length and breadth of India, it has happened only very rarely indeed that She remained in one place for three months at a time. Shortly after arriving in Kankhal from Almora on June 18th, 1977, Mataji appeared to be quite ill. Mataji's illnesses can neither be diagnosed nor cured by medical science and it is by now well-known that any kind of medicine only aggravates the disease in the case of Mataji. Nobody therefore dares to prescribe any medicament. However, all doctors were agreed that Mataji needed rest and requested Her not to travel for at least three months. Mataji agreed to follow this medical advice and to take much more rest than She usually does. This is how Mataji remained in Kankhal for over three months, namely from June 18th to September 28th. We are happy to state that Her health seems much improved

We have already reported in the July issue that the celebrations of Didima's centenary will continue at Kankhal for a whole year. This includes special pūjā in Didima's Samādhi Mandir and sadhu feeding every Sunday, Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa twice a month, etc. etc. Over and above these, any number of religious functions were held in the Kankhal Ashram during the three months of Mataji's sojourn, such as *Rudrabhisheka* ceremonial recitation of one hundred *Durga Sapta Satis* and

so on. But first and foremost four *Bhagavata Saptahas* were observed. In the July Ānanda Vārtā we have already mentioned the first *Bhagavata Saptaha* that took place towards the end of June. The next one was celebrated from July 21st to 28th with Swami Sri Viṣṇuashram of Suktal as the speaker. Mataji came to the hall for the preliminary pūjā on the first day and remained present for two and a half hours. Again She descended to the hall to be present for the narration of Sri Kṛṣṇa's birth on the fourth day. This is always an occasion of great rejoicing and sweets are distributed to all in abundance. One day a group of ladies from Kachhi Ashram, Hardwar, came to see her and performed a *garbha** dance in the hall during the interval between the discourses on the *Bhāgavata* in the early afternoon. Mataji sat on Her veranda upstairs and watched through the ventilator. At the end the ladies were allowed to go upstairs and bow to Mataji who distributed to them flowers and sweets.

A few days later, Mahamandaleswara, Sri Prakashanandaji came to see Ma during the evening *darsana*. Mataji received him on the spacious veranda and asked him to address the large congregation that had gathered. He jokingly rebuked Ma for not keeping good health and insisted that She should determine to keep Her body perfectly well. But Mataji said : "Pitāji, why do you want to put me into duality ? As it is, so it is all right. There is only "One-Brahman-Without-a-Second." The question of good and bad does not arise at all. Here all conditions are THAT and THAT alone. Whatever happens is equally welcome." Mataji spoke with great force, with a power-

* *Garbha*. Gujrati folk-dance.

ful voice that could be heard clearly at the furthest corner of the long veranda.

On July 30th, Gurupūrṇimā was celebrated. Any number of devotees had arrived from far and near. Mataji came downstairs at 7.30 a.m. to be present at the elaborate puja that was completed at about 10 a. m. Only for about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour She retired to her room on the ground floor. Then She sat in the central portion of the hall and everyone queued up to offer their *pranāmas* and gifts. A barrier of benches was arranged on which people could place their gifts at a fair distance from Ma who was radiant and extremely vivacious and active, taking notice of every single person, addressing them individually and throwing with swift and smart gestures garlands, fruits, dhotis, saris, etc to everyone who paid his respects. Only at about 1.30 p.m. Mataji went to Her room to rest. Governor Dr. Chenna Reddy had with his family been present during part of the morning pūjā and came again in the afternoon to see Ma. *Nāma yajna* started in the late evening, but Ma remained upstairs near the ventilator. There was ladies kirtana all night with Kumari Chhabi Banerji leading. Many guests had come from Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Dehradun etc and so the kirtana was really superb and full of inspiration. Early morning, when the men took over for the day, the women went upstairs to Mataji's veranda and She Herself distributed sweets to all. At sunset the *Nāma yajña* was completed. Mataji did not come to the hall. The Governor had again come to pay a visit to Ma who sat on the open Terrace near her room looking down and folding Her hands in blessing to the huge assembly of devotees who stood on the road below, visibly moved. Many left that very evening,

Another *Bhāgavata Saptaha* with Sri Srinath Shastri of Vrindaban delivering the Hindi discourses was celebrated from August 15th to 23rd. On August 21st fell the anniversary of Didima's *Mahāsamadhi* that had taken place on August 9th, 1970. Then also Sri Srinath Shastri had expounded the *Srimad Bhagavata* at Jaipuria House, Ramghat, Hardwar. In the night after the narration of Sri Kṛṣṇa's birth, Didima had left Her body at the age of 93. This time the constellation was similar. Already of few days before the anniversary Mataji had shifted to Her room opposite Didima's Samādhi Mandir. She looked down while Didima's pūjā was celebrated in the night and devotees sat in the courtyard between the two buildings for solemn meditation.

The previous day Mataji had climbed down the steps to be present in the hall for the discourse about Sri Kṛṣṇa's birth. She remained downstairs until the evening and then climbed up to Her room. From August 24th to 28th the swing festival (Jhūlan) was celebrated in the hall every night for about an hour. The *vigrahas* of Kṛṣṇa and Rādha were taken to Ma every evening before being placed on the beautifully decorated swing, but Ma came to the hall only on the last day, which is full moon day and also the *Raksha bandhan* festival. That whole day Mataji was extremely busy, first upstairs on the veranda, where various visitors came to pay Her homage, then in the afternoon in Her room on the level of the hall, where the Governor of Mysore, Sri Govind Narayan came with his family to pay his respects to Mataji. Mataji attended the pūjā in the late evening, then walked to the swing and pulled it for a couple of minutes and then sat

down in the centre of the hall where everyone could approach Her to offer *rakhis* and receive *prasada*. At about 9.30 p. m. Mataji went to Her downstairs room where She received a few more visitors. However, after that hectic day She felt too tired to attend the midnight meditation and walked upstairs to Her room in the old building where She spent the next few days, giving *darśana* twice daily from the open window of the veranda while everyone looked up from the courtyard. Throughout Mataji's sojourn at Kankhal She gave *darśana* mostly twice daily for about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour or at least once a day without any break in spite of indifferent health.

On September 5th, Janmastami Puja was celebrated very beautifully and solemnly in Mataji's presence round midnight. Mataji sat in the hall until about 2 a. m. Sri Kṛṣṇa's life with all its well-known incidents and places was represented in one part of the hall by some ashramites very artistically and with rare skill and taste, using all kinds of claydolls and animals, cardboard houses, real plants, a river made of mirrors and so forth, the whole scene lit up with coloured lights.

Mataji had again moved to Her room upstairs in the large building. From the veranda She watched and directed on September 6th morning *Nandotsava* (the festival expressing the hilarious joy of the cowherds over the advent of Sri Kṛṣṇa). A circular alter was, as customary, erected in the centre of the courtyard. Kanu, the devotee from Delhi who acts every year on that day dressed up as a cowherd, carrying on his shoulders a yoke with large vessels full of curds suspended on it, performed the dance assisted by all men present who joined in the dance singing joyful songs to

the accompaniment of cymbals and drums. After a while Mataji signalled from upstairs and the men stood back while the women circled round. Two elderly ladies were dressed up as gopis, heavily veiled. Having danced downstairs, they went up to Mataji who rose from Her seat, swinging round once with each one of them and also with a very bulky old lady while everyone watched from down below highly amused. Mataji then had the curds distributed by a male devotee to the men and by an elderly lady devotee to the women. Afterwards everyone was allowed to go upstairs to offer *pranamas* to Ma. For the first time Mataji had not distributed curds with Her own hands, but as She was present, directing every detail, everyone felt happy and fulfilled.

For twenty-one days there was ceremonial singing of 108 *Hanuman Chalisas* every morning by a group of ashramites and other devotees, ending on September 19th. It was preceded by daily Hanuman Pūjā and *Ārati* performed in the evening. Mataji was present in the hall for the completion which was followed immediately by the preliminary pūja of another *Bhagavata Saptah*. Mataji then went to the courtyard to inspect the new structure that is in the process of being built. It is to hold the sacred fire that was lit in Dacca in 1926 and has ever since been kept burning day and night in a few of our Ashrams. It is to be brought to Kankhal in January 1978, to be inaugurated on *Sankranti* day, January 14th, the festival of the winter solstice on which the great *Mahāyojna* was started in Varanasi in 1947 and completed in 1950. Only at about 11:30 Mataji was carried upstairs to Her room in a chair.

Actually five *Bhāgavata Saptahs* were held simultaneously from 19th to 26th September with five pandits engaged in the ceremonial chanting of the *Bhagavata* in Sanskrit, while the Hindi narration was accomplished by Sri Swami Visnuasramaji daily for three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon in his lucid and inspiring way.

On the 19th afternoon the most unwelcome message was received by phone that Sri Swami Govind Prakash, the Head of Ramatirtha Ashram had left his body at the age of 52 in Delhi where he had gone for a medical check up. The sad news cast a profound gloom over all present. Only four or five days earlier the great Swami, who had held Mataji in profound veneration and was well-known to all Her devotees, had come to pay a visit to Ma and to have Ganga *daršana* at Hardwar on his way to Delhi, as he knew that he was to depart from this earth very soon. On September 20th afternoon his body was carried in procession from his Ashram in Jwalapur to Neeldhara to be given *Jal samadhi* (immersed in the Ganges). The procession came to our Ashram and halted in front of the hall at about 2 30 p. m. Mataji came outside to pay homage to the Swami for the last time and had huge garlands placed over his body. Mataji then sat in the hall for a little while attending the beginning of the Hindi discourse, before ascending to Her room.

On September 22nd a strange little incidence was brought to our attention. An ant of medium size had been crawling about for five days on the couch on which Mataji spends most of the 24 hours. Whenever She went to the bathroom the little insect followed Her and crawled on the wash basin. Several times Mataji's attendants had brushed it away but it

always managed to crawl back near Mataji. However it never crawled over Her body. At last on the 22nd its legs had been hurt and it could not move about anymore. Mataji placed a *chandan mala* (rosary of sandalwood beads) around it for its protection. Someone brought flowers & tulsileaves which were placed near it with *Gangajal*. It remained alive until the *arati* at the end of the Bhagavata discourse when it finally became quite still. It was then placed on a piece of cloth and carried to the Ganges for immersion by a Brahmacharini to the accompaniment of kirtana. Who can understand the significance of this and similar mysterious incidents that are part of Mataji's amazing *lila* ?

On September 23rd Mataji came to the hall for the narration of Sri Kṛṣṇa's birth. Sri Girdhari Narain Puri and another prominent Mahatma were also present. On the following day Kumari Pūjā was celebrated after the morning discourse. The next day a Sunday, Didima's special pūjā was succeeded by not only sadhu feeding but also a feast for *Daridra Narayan* the Lord in the guise of the poor. Mataji looked down and gave Her blessing from the terrace.

On September 27th, even before the traditional fire sacrifice the last function of the Bhagavata Saptaha had been completed, the chanting of the whole of the Ramayana started in the hall, to continue uninterruptedly until the 28th morning.

That very day Mataji left by car for an undisclosed destination.

Durga Puja will be celebrated in our Ranchi Ashram but Mataji will not be present. It is however expected that She will be available to all again for Lakshmi Pūjā on October 26th. The venue of the Pūjā will be announced later. Mataji is also expected to be present for the *Samyam Mahavrata* to be observed from November 18th to 24th at Badrika Ashram, Chandod, Gujrat. ●