

Ananda Vārtā

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

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Ānanda Vārtā welcomes contributions, especially reflections and experiences connected with Sri MA. Also articles on the life and teaching of saints and sages of all religions, ancient and modern, anthologies of words of wisdom, etc. Articles should, as far as possible, be typed with double spacing and on one side of the page.

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

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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Mātri Vāni

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

Speech, conduct and character should express man's inherent divinity*—at every moment let life's current flow in spotless purity. By observing to the very letter dharmic rules and regulations (as indicated in the sacred lore) *Śakti* is awakened. Only when fulfilling the purpose of his birth man becomes truly human. To reveal the real nature of the Self (*ātmā talva*)—this indeed must be the constant aim.

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Priceless moments are speeding away. Why waste time in letting thoughts wander here and there? The endeavour to accomplish one's pilgrimage is all-important. Without the search after Truth there is no expedient for a human being to destroy obstacles. Self-realisation, to go out in quest of one's Self — is not this the one thing to be attempted?

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* Mataji says : "*Sat katha, sat vyavahāra, sat charitra.*" In the Bhagavad Gita XVII, 26-27 it says. "*Sat* is used in the sense of reality and goodness, in the sense of a righteous deed. Steadfastness in sacrifice, austerity and gift is also called '*Sat*' and action for the sake of THAT is also named '*Sat*'."

Why should one be mad with worldly cares and considerations? Rather must one become mad on the contemplation of the supreme goal of human existence. A special current (of inspiration) cannot always be felt, nevertheless one must remain in the stream where it is natural for that current to surge in. Why be submerged in the perplexing agitating affairs of the world? On the contrary, one has to be carried away by the flood of the supreme quest !

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Action aiming at Reality (*satanusthān kriyā*) has to be performed for the purpose of the revelation of the intrinsic nature of action (*kriyā svarūpa*)—a revelation in which non-revelation is abrogated. One must endeavour to convert the body's outward-turned activities into activity directed inward. Try to keep the body ever engrossed in action dedicated to God (*Bhagavat kriyā*). The stream of thoughts and feelings that relegates God to a distance is the cause of the distressed condition of the mind. In order to be delivered from the agony of want and emptiness a human being must aspire to become established in his innate Fulness (*svabhāva*).

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In the ashram one does not serve anyone out of personal attachment. Rather, regarding everyone as a manifestation of the Supreme Being, all render loving service to the One in divine aspiration (*sadbhāva*). Those

who are travellers on the path to Divinity come to the ashram and stay there; seeing the worth of the ashram they select the best, trying to appreciate the merits and virtues of other inmates. So long as one is not established in Supreme Being (*parama sthiti*) it is best not to notice the faults of others. Shortcomings and defects are natural with human beings. To become free from imperfections, for this very purpose one takes to ashram life.

Song on a Light

Dr. Vikram Marya

Traversing all barriers
 And fulfilling all aspirations
 A Light has brightened our lives
 Since innumerable generations.

Life would have been dark
 And we would have felt helpless
 If in times of frustration and despair
 This Light from heaven had not blessed us.

Feel blessed everybody and rejoice
 For witnessing a miracle in this birth
 A Light from heaven like a "Mother"
 Has blessed us on this earth.

Mātri Satsang

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(*Translated from Bengali*)

(18)

From May 2nd to 17th, 1957 Mataji's birthday was celebrated in Ahmedabad at the invitation of late Sri Kantilal Munshaw and late Sri Mukundbhai Thakore. Every night Mātri Satsang was the last item and climax of the daily programme. The large congregation used to listen to Mataji's replies to questions with rapt attention. I have tried to reproduce Ma's words to the best of my ability.

May 3rd, 1957.

Question : What is the significance of *mouna* (observance of silence of speech) and how can it be achieved ?

Mataji : *Mouna* means to become mindless; in other words, there is no place for the mind to go to. It is through the mind that joy and sorrow are experienced. To transcend the mind with its fluctuations, to go beyond the mind is the significance of *mouna*. Speech, sound always create; So if you have to speak, talk of godly matters; this will be beneficial. If you speak of worldly affairs you will also reap the result of it. One cannot always speak of divine things, therefore as long as silence is observed at least worldly topics are avoided. After all this is a device to keep one's thought centred in God. When controlling speech one should let the mind dwell on God. Whether you practise japa or meditation, it is right to concentrate on the

Eternal. *Mouna* is observed in order to proceed beyond the wandering mind.

Question : How can this stage be reached ?

Mataji : Suppose you are digging a well. In the process of digging you arrive at a stage where water is struck. Thus, the result of digging a well is to find water. Likewise, the result of the prolonged observance of *mouna* is to become mindless (*a-mana*). It is the mind that causes all your actions, the mind keeps on wandering from one thing to another. *Mouna* is a state in which no words are produced. In order to keep the mind devoted to the Divine it is necessary to practise strict control of speech and language. There are two kinds of *mouna*—one is called *go* (cow) *mouna*, the other *kāṣṭha* (wood) *mōuna*. *Go-mouna* : Just as a cow indicates what she wants by signs, so a human being may express his needs by signs and gestures. *Kāṣṭha mouna* : as a piece of wood is inert, so no signs or gestures whatever are made.

Mataji continues : There are endless variations of observing *mouna*. The way *mouna* is practised will depend on one's particular state of achievement. In order to realise your Self you must invoke your Self. This body (*Ma*) is merely a small child, calling you 'father'. You are father, mother, friend—all in all. Questions arise so that one may be revealed to oneself. Divine Grace alone bestows immediate results. Control of speech is the starting point on the spiritual path. Start your lessons, that is, engage in *sādhana*. You know what is written in the sacred books. By studying them you will be able to understand.

There are two types of individuals to whom questions do

not occur : He who has passed his examinations has nothing to ask; on the other hand, the ignorant person also has no questions. He who studies is the one who has problems. The essential element in observing *mouna* is to become mindless, to make the ever wandering mind one-pointed and fix it in God. All without exception can practise *mouna*, regardless of the particular sect or creed to which they belong. But keeping silent after getting angry with members of one's family, this is not real *mouna*. The object of observing *mouna* is to open up the road to Self-realisation.

Action by its very nature generates a sequence of further actions. The sequence of actions that will lead beyond—a sequence leading to the supreme Object of human life—this is to be adopted.

Mataji stops for a short while and then continues :

Mataji : Where "something" is, there God is not. If Śiva's presence is felt, it cannot be a stone and if it is a stone, it cannot be Śiva. Likewise, if the Guru is perceived as what He really is, He is no longer a human being; but if looked upon as a person, he is no longer a Guru.

Question : What exactly is my essential Being (*Svarūpa*) ?

Mataji : The one *Ātmā*, Truth Itself.

Question : Then why do I not feel the impact of this Truth according to which I alone exist ?

Mataji : Due to the ego. This is why Truth is not intuited. Where God is and God alone, there is no room for further questions.

Question : From where does “something” emanate ?

Mataji : ‘Where the play of the ego is, there and there alone’ mine” and “yours” exist. Where everything is a manifestation of the Supreme Being, there, whatever you behold represents God Himself.

Question : Then do you mean to say that God is all in all ?

Mataji : Yes, everything is God. As you play so exactly will you hear. God’s law is so wonderful. He is everything you imagine Him to be. Avadhutaji tells the following story : There was a woman whose Guru gave her a mantra which contained her revered husband’s name. How could she utter her husband’s name ?* So she started doing japa by reciting : “Champa’s uncle is my refuge.” Nevertheless, God was quite pleased with this. The whole universe is indeed the Lord’s *vigraha* (concrete physical presence).

Question : How can this become first-hand knowledge ?

Mataji : By whom can it be known ? One’s own essential Being has to be realised.

Question : Mataji has now turned into a Vedantist !

Mataji : As I am questioned so I reply—in a higgledy-piggledy manner.

Question : Is God in a state beyond discrimination ?

Mataji : God alone exists. Where He is concerned, how can one speak of state or non-state ? The One alone exists. This is the exact Truth.

* This is prohibited in orthodox Hindu circles.

Question :--How can I get rid of the idea that I am a separate individual ?

Mataji : Obey the precepts of your Guru. Practise *sādhana* as your Guru directs and also take recourse to the society of Mahātmās.

Question : By engaging in the repetition of a sacred name or mantra and by regulating one's diet extraneous deficiencies can be overcome, but inner shortcomings tend to persist. What should one do ?

Mataji : Avadhutaji says, if you purify your diet your mind will also become pure.

Question : Even though I remain absorbed in God all day, unhealthy tendencies appear in dreams at night.

Mataji : So long as inner weaknesses have not been overcome, endeavour to partake of pure food, to seek the company of mahātmās, to read religious books, to spend your time in japa, meditation and worship. Further, when for example, you go to sleep think that you are lying in the Lord's lap. In this manner maintain purity in thought and feeling. Your spiritual practice has not yet matured, this is why there is a tendency to revert to worldliness. But do not be frightened; it is natural for God to cleanse His devotees of all impurities. Just as the mother cow licks off the dirt from the body of her calf, so does God consume all taints and blemishes of His *bhaktas*. Shed your fears and keep on treading the path to the supreme Goal of human existence.

May 4th, 1957

Question : Speech can be controlled but to discipline the mind is most difficult.

Mataji : Here something has to be explained. It lies in the nature of the mind to accept, to react in a particular way. Some events make the mind happy, others render it disconsolate. For instance, two people who have never known each other happen to meet, and when they get acquainted their minds get attuned. Thus when a boy and a girl meet out of the blue and get married, each shares the joys and sorrows of the other. All this is just the play of the mind.

(Mataji now gives a concrete example.) When the daughter of Didi's cousin was to be married, this body said : "Do not let this girl enter wedlock as there is a likelihood of her becoming a widow." But they did not listen and the girl's wedding was performed. The couple were together for only thirteen days, when the bride developed T. B. and gradually was nearing death. The young husband committed suicide and his widow passed away the same evening. From where did the boy originate and from where the girl ? They knew each other for such a short time only. All this is merely the play of the mind. As a rule the mind conceives physical attraction, true love does not exist between individuals. When a human being (*jīva*) is consumed by true love for Śiva (God) then his essential Being becomes revealed. The Self (*Ātmā*) alone exists. Just as a son is looked upon as having originated from one's Self, so also is a true disciple. This body (Mataji) says that the mind constantly roams about everywhere; therefore sit under a tree, in other words, at the feet of a Mahātmā. Just as you find shelter and peace when sitting under a tree and the tree gives of itself in the shape of the fruit, so when you take refuge at the feet of a Mahātmā he bestows on you peace of mind and the realisation of the Self. God is what you ima-

gine Him to be. What does mere physical attraction lead to from the worldly point of view ? To death. While if you fix your mind on God's lotus feet you become a conqueror of death, you receive the nectar of true love and God's living Presence will be revealed in its effulgence. What is death ? Merely the play of the mind. Are you not constantly dying innumerable deaths ? You were a child, then you became a youth, now you are an old man; this continuous change of atomic composition means death. As an infant you had no teeth, then your teeth grew and subsequently again fell out. You became toothless—“*bedānti*.”* That is to say: through the instrumentality of the mind the various joys and sorrows of worldly life are experienced. Why proceed on the sure road to death ? Become a pilgrim on the path of Immortality ! Each person should choose whatever line or method appeals to him most. You may follow the path of devotion or that of Advaita where there is but “One-Brahman-without-a-second.” Carry out the precepts of your Guru. Engage in *sādhanā* in order to attain Self-realisation. Your real Self, the essential nature of your Self, Supreme Knowledge will be revealed.

In this world everything depends on how one looks at it. For instance, after Mahātma Gandhi's death, Seth Birla took us to the spot where Gandhiji met his end. He showed us everything : how the first attack took place, how the shot was fired, and even pointed out the exact spot where the words “*He Ran*” were inscribed. He also explained that there were two parties. Gandhiji's death caused extreme anguish to one party. It was even heard that some people died of heart

* A play upon Words : “*be-danti*” means toothless and “*Vedanti*” a student of Vedanta philosophy.

failure on hearing the sad news. The other party was overjoyed. Thus, although there was one single event, its effect was twofold. What is the reason for this? All depends on how the mind interprets the incident. Some considered him their friend, others their enemy. Let this very mind cling to the Eternal and your mind will be stilled—you will become mindless. You will have no further questions. Then there will be no place for the mind to go to. Just as the same person is father, son and husband, so all God's names and forms are one, and at the same time He is also without name and form. When the mind is stilled your true Self will shine forth.

Question : At times a devotee is moved to tears by his deep devotion for God. Some people say, this is a weakness of the mind. Is this correct?

Mataji : In this world, grief-stricken people do have a tendency to weep. But if someone cries for God then you should understand that he is fortunate indeed. To shed tears because the Supreme Being has not yet been realised is certainly beneficial.

Question : The restlessness of the mind is very troublesome. What should I do?

Mataji : Genuine restlessness has yet to come. If you restlessly yearn for God-realisation, then peace will ensue. Remember, there are many hurdles on the path of devotion for God. When the mind is fickle and thoughts keep on arising you should understand : "God is pointing out to me where exactly my mind is fettered." If you cannot free yourself from this bondage, how can you possibly realise God?

It is good to proceed towards Him. Pray that you may be liberated from your shackles. Sit daily in contemplation of the One. He is the Life of your life, the Heart of your heart. To realise God means to realise your Self and to realise your Self is the same as to realise God. One must become entirely engrossed in *sādhana*. If you really yearn for God restlessly your yearning will be fulfilled. Try your utmost to find Him. The actual truth is, if you cry out to Him in earnest this prayer will be fruitful. The entire universe is in continuous flux - *māyā* (illusion). World (*jagat*) means something in motion - transitory. And that which is in bondage is the *jīva* (individual). Thus where *jagat* and *jīva* are, there the results of action will certainly be reaped. God will definitely bestow precisely what is the fruit of every single action.

Question : Is it good to perform selfless service, that is, without hope for any gain ?

Mataji : Yes, to perform selfless service is very good indeed.

From The Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

(*Continued from the last issue.*)

Mataji spent the last month of 1941 in Varanasi. Sometimes She would stay on a boat on the Ganges or in one of the temples on the ghats of the river. She remained for a length of time at Nirmal Chatterji's house in Ramapura. The house had an extensive garden. In its center was a small hut with a thatched roof. Nirmal Babu was in the habit of using it for his *sādhana*. This little mud hut had the distinction of housing Mataji for many days. The devotees of Varanasi would assemble in the evenings and gradually a pattern took shape regulating the proceedings of these impromptu gatherings. After a period of silence, some prayers in Sanskrit would be recited. The main participants were the four brothers from Chaukhamba who came to be known in the Ashram as Ajitda, Habulda, Patalda and Neruda. After this, there would be general conversation on various topics. Mataji answered questions put to Her by the visitors. During these weeks, Mahendra Nath Sirkar came regularly, engaging Mataji in many philosophical discussions. At the beginning of January 1942, Mataji left for Vindhyachala; the very rewarding quiet evenings for the people of Varanasi came to an end.

From Vindhyachala Mataji returned to Varanasi on Her way to Allahabad. This was the year of *pūrṇa-kumbha* at Prayag; Mataji acceding to the requests of many, visited the

site of the confluence of the holy rivers but remained in the car while Her companions went to bathe at the sangam.

Mataji next went to Pundari, a village near Mainpuri, the home of the daughter of Sher Singh of Doonga. Sher Singh's son-in-law, Nauratan Singh was performing the consecration ceremony of a temple built in his village. He had made very elaborate arrangements for the celebrations and for Mataji's reception. Some of the people were waiting at Etawah and escorted Mataji to Pundari. Mataji and Her party started off in two cars to cover a distance of about 36 miles. After an hour, when they had travelled about halfway, the car came to a stop. The driver on investigation was staggered to find that the petrol tank was empty. This was an unlooked for predicament. The other car with Swami Paramanandaji had gone ahead and was nowhere to be seen. There was no hope of immediate help because the road was quite unfrequented and devoid of any kind of traffic. Mataji descended from the car and cheerfully remarked to Didi and Abhaya, Her two companions, "Never mind, what has happened is all to the good. Let us walk. We are sure to come across a village, where we can ask for food and shelter if necessary."

Perforce Didi and Abhaya started walking with Mataji along a road which did not seem to be close to any human habitations whatsoever. The driver abandoned the car and trudged along with them, hoping to find a cycle somewhere so that he could send a message to Pundari. After a mile or so they came to the village of Kimni. There was no bicycle in the village but the travellers were informed that at a brahmin's cottage, sadhus could get food and shelter for the asking. On

being approached, the kind villager provided them with some simple refreshments. Thereafter they rested in the shade of a tree by the roadside. The month being January, the cold was severe and it was raining now and then. Mataji seemed to be enjoying the contretemps but Didi could not help thinking of the preparations underway for Mataji at Pundari and the concern which must be consuming the hosts at Her delay. Didi, however, was soon relieved to see a car approaching them. Paramanandaji's car, also short of petrol, had just reached the outskirts of the village from where a message had fetched the greatly mortified host. Nauratanji hastened to the rescue in another car and was prostrate with self-condemnation at being the cause of Mataji's discomfort, no matter how little She made of it. Mataji arrived at the village before the commencement of the festivities and all was again happiness and rejoicing.

In the evening Mataji sat surrounded by a throng of people, conversing with them and answering their questions;

“Mataji, are you an orthodox Hindu or an Aryasamāji?”

“What do you think I am?”

“If you countenance the installation of images in temples then you must be called orthodox.”

“Whatever you say, Pitaji, and also anybody else, *that* is what I am.”

“Mataji, there are so many creeds, it is bewildering when everybody starts preaching his own faith and decrying those of others.”

“To denounce another man's way of worship is quite uncalled for and profitless. Imagine a man on a pilgrimage. If he

repeatedly interrupts his journey to enter into disputes regarding the value of it, the inevitable result will be great delay in achieving his own goal. It is best to advance with steadfastness in one direction."

Mataji delighted the family of Sher Singh by remaining with them for about a fortnight. The villagers who had come to regard Her with great love and reverence within this short period of time, stood with folded hands and tearful eyes around Her car when She was about to leave. Mataji took a smiling farewell from Her saddened hosts and came to Lucknow at the beginning of February, 1942. For a few days the devotees of Lucknow experienced the unspeakable joy of Mataji's presence amongst them. Dr. Pannalal was in Lucknow at that time. He, Seetalprasadji, Hari Ram Joshi and others hoped that Mataji would remain in their midst for some time, but on February 10, Mataji expressed the *kkeyāla* to leave the same day. On enquiry it was ascertained that the last train started for Jhansi at 10 p. m. Mataji did not specify Her destination so tickets were purchased for Kanpur. At the station, while waiting for the train to start, they came to know about the sudden death of Jammalal Bajaj that very afternoon at Wardha. His son Kamalnayan was travelling by the same train to Jhansi. He thought it was providential that Mataji was already on the train and tried to persuade Her to accompany him to Wardha so that his father's last great wish could be fulfilled. But Mataji, gently dissuaded him from insisting upon it at that time. It will be recalled that Bajajji had repeatedly requested Her to visit Wardha and had his invitation endorsed by Mahatma Gandhi as well, but so far all this had been to no purpose. Didi and others who had

come to love and respect Bajajji as a brother, were grieved at the news of his death and were not a little hurt at Mataji's aloofness. Mataji said later, "Why are you so sad at this event? Has he gone away somewhere out of reach? To me he is not lost at all, so I see no occasion for sorrow." Hari Ram Joshi, Didi and others, however, could not share Mataji's equanimity and continued to regret the fact that Mataji had not gone to Wardha while he was alive.

At Kanpur, at Mataji's *kheyāla* Hari Ramji extended their tickets upto Jhansi. After a few days there, Mataji at last gave Her consent for proceeding to Wardha. Hari Ram Joshi came from Lucknow to escort Her. They arrived at the station on February 16, almost a week after Bajajji's death.

On reaching Wardha, Mataji had the *kheyāla* to go quietly to Gopuri and stay there for a while without making any public announcement of Her visit. She disclosed the fact that at their last meeting Bajaj had told Her about some of his future projects. On that occasion She had said to him that nobody knew how long he would be permitted to live in this world. It may be six months or it may be six years. The future is ever uncertain and it is best not to plan too far ahead. Bajaj had evidently understood Mataji to mean that he had not very much longer to live because on his return to Wardha, he had shifted to Gopuri, where he stayed alone in a small hut following such instructions as Mataji may have given him. In a letter written to Hari Ram he had expressed the wish that Mataji should occupy this hut when She visited Wardha. So Mataji now proceeded to Gopuri with Kamal-

nayan who had come to receive Her at the station. At Gopuri, Kamalnayan's mother was waiting for Mataji with tears of sorrow, inconsolably recalling her husband's repeated requests for Mataji's visit. She said, "Had you come even a week earlier, he would have been here to welcome you." Mataji in Her own inimitable way assuaged the pangs of bereavement of the sorrowing family. She said, "Even now I have come to visit him. Do you think he is not here?" She said again, "Now is the right moment for my visit. Whatever comes to pass is the best thing to happen. If you can live with this thought then there will be no occasion for grief."

Mataji spent many hours talking to Janakiben, Kamalayan and their friends about Bajaji. Mataji said, "Death is just another state of existence. Do not be anguished at the thought that he is parted from you forever. If you do not stop grieving he cannot proceed on his way upwards. It behoves all his people to render assistance to his journey by doing as he would have you do, had he been alive." Janakiben said, "Mataji, I do understand what you are saying and asking us to do, but it is so difficult to overcome this dreadful wrenching of the heart." Mataji again spoke gently to her saying : "It is but natural to be grief-stricken because we are so attached to people dear to our hearts."

Death is inevitable, but Mataji's presence in Gopuri no doubt took away some of the shock of this traumatic experience suffered by Bajaji's wife, son and his friends. Since Bajaji had surrendered so completely to Mataji, She took upon Herself the task of guiding his dear ones out of their overwhelming grief at their irreparable loss. From this point of view, even

he might perhaps have preferred Mataji to come to Wardha at this time and not when he had been there to welcome Her.

Later in the day, Janakiben and Kamalnayan related to Mataji that since his *darśana* of Her, Bajajji had changed considerably. He had discharged all his duties in a new mood of quiet happiness which seemed to have become a part of his simplified way of life.

Mahatma Gandhi, at this time was away in Calcutta where he had gone to meet Chiang-kai-Shck. He returned to Wardha on the 18th. On February 19th a meeting had been arranged at Sevagram in order to relegate the considerable responsibilities which Bajajji had been shouldering alone so far. Gandhiji sent a messenger, specially inviting Mataji to attend this meeting. Mataji replied, "This little girl does not await invitations for going to meet her Pitaji. If I have the *kheyāla* then I shall drop in myself without waiting to be asked!" So perforce, Janakiben, Kamalnayan and others went without Her to Sevagram. In the meantime Mataji asked Didi and Joshiji to make arrangements for Her departure from Wardha if it could be contrived without causing too much commotion.

On their return from Sevagram, Janakiben and Kamalnayan were taken aback to hear that Mataji wanted to leave so soon. They started to raise as many objections as possible, saying that they had assured Gandhiji of Mataji's continued presence at Gopuri for a few days at least; that he would be disappointed and annoyed with them for having misled him as to Her programme. Mataji smilingly told them not to be distressed about Her plans for departure; as for Gandhiji, She was ever with him, and they did not need to be anxious regard-

ing a specific meeting at this time. Kamalnayan surmising however that Gandhiji would not endorse this sentiment, prepared to fetch him from Sevagram knowing this to be what he would wish to do inspite of his indifferent health and busy schedule. Luckily for them, it was found that train services were cancelled for civilians for that evening due to troop movements. So Mataji's departure was postponed to next morning by an early train.

In the evening a few people came to visit Mataji before going to the prayer meeting. Acharya Vinoba Bhave remonstrated with Her for going away so soon and incidentally gave out the information that Gandhiji would be coming to meet Her.

When everybody had gone to the prayer meeting, Mataji walked out of the cottage and after a while sent for Kamalnayan. On his approach She said, "Let us go to Sevagram." The delighted Kamalnayan hurried off to get the car in which he was about to go and fetch Gandhiji.

When they arrived at Sevagram, Gandhiji was sitting in his room surrounded by many people. As Mataji mounted the steps of the hut, he welcomed Her by extending both arms and treating Her like a little child. Mataji, responding suitably, took Her seat near him in the manner of a little girl sitting with a beloved elder. Mahatmaji spoke first : "Do you know who sent Jamnalal to you? It was I. He told me frankly that the inner peace I had not been able to give him during our long association of thirty years, he had obtained from you." Gandhiji continued saying, "Do you know who told me about you? It was Kamala Nehru." Looking around

at the other people he said, "Kamala used to regard Mataji as Her Guru."

Mataji immediately interrupted, saying, "Pitaji, I am nobody's Guru. How can I be, because I am everybody's little girl. Gandhiji accepted this statement with great enjoyment, saying, "Yes, yes, you are my little girl; I had mistakenly called you Mataji in the beginning."

(To be continued)

HEAVENLY PAVEMENT

Elwood Decker

The roads of hell and Heaven
Are paved with good intention

Roads of hell are uneven
Intentions have been broken

Avoid painful bumps of hell
Stay in Heaven and keep well

Good intentions unbroken
Will make you glad I've spoken

Heaven is not paved with gold
As we have often been told



An Unknown Village-Girl Becomes the Mother of Millions

Anil Ganguli

Ma Anandamayi, a Wonder

As we have already seen, Ma hails from a humble hamlet in Bengal (now in Bangla Desh). She has neither any exalted official position nor political eminence, nor has She had any formal schooling; and She has never been overseas. She needs nothing and aspires after nothing. She has no pretensions and is singularly oblivious of ostentation. Moreover, She has made it perfectly clear that She claims to have no mission nor any plan or programme. Yet the name of Ma Anandamayī has become a household word in India to be uttered with the profoundest veneration and She has for several decades been occupying a unique position of adoration in the spiritual world.

Ma Anandamayī seems to me a Phenomenon with a two-fold Personality—Her “Outer Manifestation”, the visible tip of an iceberg, as it were, and Her “Inner Being” immersed to an immeasurable depth in the ocean of Eternity. We have had a glimpse of the village-girl Nirmala Sundari—a spark of joy. In 1909 there happened an important event in the drama of Her mystic life—Her “Outer Manifestation” had to go through the ritual of a traditional Hindu sacramental marriage with Ramani Mohan Chakravarti (later known as

Bholanath, also as *Pitaji*, (father) of village Atpara (now in Bangla Desh). Her "Inner Being", however, was and ever remained totally unaffected by this customary ritualistic performance. The relation between Ma and Bholanath was unique; their union was purely spiritual. Ma is an eternal virgin; and it was when She came to live with Bholanath that the interplay between Her "Inner Being" and "Outer Manifestation" seems to have reached the acme of a perfect synthesis. She in Her "Outer Manifestation" was then an ideal companion and a housewife to perfection. The relationship between Ma and Bholanath was poised on a spiritual plane beyond the comprehension of ordinary humanity.

A Hindu housewife, hedged in by rigid rules of *pardah* (seclusion of women), Ma was not free to appear before or talk to outsiders. Until 1925, when She was twenty-nine years old, Her activities were mainly confined to the precincts of Her household, and Her life seemed almost uneventful so far as the world outside was concerned. By 1950, however, She emerged as the unofficial Sovereign of an Empire of Love—a Sovereign crowned with a halo of spiritual glory—a Sovereign who neither rules nor reigns, but remains enthroned in the hearts of millions of Her devoted "children" all the world over. She is the Universal Mother.

The secret behind this remarkable but unostentatious transition that just happened without a flare is shrouded in mystery. It is not the ultimate result of any previously planned programme systematically worked out, nor of any conscious effort on the part of Ma to achieve something. It has just come about naturally and inevitably.

Ma's outlook on life and reality finds expression in the words '*Jā hoye jāy*', often repeated by Her. Literally it means: events take their own course. It may also be construed to mean : come what may; it happens as destined; or, whatever happens is equally welcome. The expression reflects the attitude of absolute surrender to God's dispensation, that is, it implies an unconditional acceptance of the Divine Will which shapes the course of events. Ma's attitude is one of spontaneous and conscious compliance with Divine Dispensation.

How has Nirmala Sundari become what She is today ?

How has an unknown and unschooled village-girl become the Universal Mother of today ? This is a question too subtle for comprehension and too baffling for expression. The exact concatenation of events in Her life is not known and even events that are known admit of more than one interpretation as to their significance. Ma is the despair of Her biographers. A biographer's business is mainly to narrate the facts and events of a person's life which are definitely known or are at least ascertainable and which spring from such a person's will. He is also expected to throw light on the significance of the facts and events in the growth and development of the personality he is describing. Thus success in the art of biography is not easily attainable. It is specially difficult in the case of a mystic life like that of Ma. The life of a worldly person, however eminent, is more or less lived on the surface, and hence discernible. But Ma's life, as lived before the world's eye, is often only just an insignificant particle of it; the real life being absolutely of the spirit is altogether of a different plane. Her "Inner Being", unseen

and indiscernible even to the closest companion or the most ardent devotee, baffles interpretation by the most skilful writer. How little of Ma's "Inner Being" is revealed to Her biographer ?

Ma is a Phenomenon without any individual will and entirely moved by what She calls *kheyāla*. But what is *kheyāla* ?

"It is difficult", observes Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, "to render correctly and in terms intelligible to the average reader the exact significance of the expression *kheyāla* used often by Mother in Her discourses. Ordinarily it means a sudden and unexpected psychic emergence, be it desire, will, attention, memory or even knowledge without any adequate causal antecedent behind to account for its origin. There is thus an element of spontaneity in the act. It might thus be analogous to the playful vagaries of an eccentric and non-purposive mentality. The word is in popular use. Mother has borrowed it and used it in Her own sense, enriching it with Her own associations."

"Why One becomes many, why the primal Unity, Being and Power, divides Itself into infinite varieties in creation, why the subject itself becomes the object of its own action, or why the Ineffable splits Itself up into subject and object is a mystery which no man can dare to unravel. All that we can say is that it is due to an act of the Ultimate One which is named *kheyāla* by Mother and is variously named by various thinkers. By some it is called the Lord's *svabhāva*, for the One Being free from desires cannot have any desire. By others it is called *kṛīḍā* or *līlā* (play). By others still it is called *ichhā* (Will)

emanating from the overflow of *ānanda* (Bliss) on the white screen of *chit* (Eternal Consciousness) and followed by *kriyā* (creative action). It is called the Divine Word or Logos. It is in fact the Will-to-become where in reality there is neither any will nor any becoming. It is called by different names in different systems of thought. The expression *kheyāla* as used by Mother covers all these senses.”

“What Mother calls *kheyāla* is really an upsurge of Will in a particular direction which is undoubtedly free and not indicated in the plan of things—it is usually connected with the domain of special Will rather than general Will. No law governs this region and there is no interruption in its freedom of activity. Even pre-destination which takes into consideration the triple flow of time-current is not an appropriate word for an urge which knows nothing but the Eternal Present..... It is also difficult to say whether it is intellectual or volitional. It has all the freshness of a playful and apparently unpurposive act holding within itself incomprehensible possibilities”.*

Kheyāla in the abstract is too abstruse for expression through the medium of words and I do not propose to venture beyond my depths. I have been assured by competent persons that the passage quoted above throws a flood of light for the benefit of those who have discernment. I have read it over and over again. To be candid, every time I revise it, the significance of the words appears to be too profound for me and the mystery only deepens. Let me now approach the subject of Ma's *kheyāla*, as I understand it, purely from an ordi-

* *Mother as Seen by Her Devotees*, published by Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha (2nd Ed.) p. XX.

nary or I may say non-technical point of view. Ma frequently says that what appears to be done or spoken by Her is prompted by *kheyāla*; and as She says this, She generally raises Her hand with Her palm turned upwards. This posture, invariably accompanied by a serene smile and a sublime glance, has thrown a flood of light for my benefit, although I do not claim to have discernment. Does it not suggest that the source of *kheyāla* is high above, or that *kheyāla* emanates spontaneously from a Power high above, that is, God Almighty? But it may be argued that this is so in the case of everybody. The individual will of each of us is also subject to the Universal Will. Who can do or say anything independent of God's Will? The obvious answer is—"none." Then, what is the difference between Ma's *kheyāla* and an ordinary man's will? Well, the latter is ego-centric and conditioned. The common man believes himself to be the doer of his actions, independently of any divine urge or initiative; therefore, he is affected by the consequences of such actions in the form of pleasure or pain, and of further actions. If and when he attains Knowledge, he realizes that he has no power of his own and that even his 'will' itself has no freedom of action; it is guided and directed by the Divine Will and Law. He then recognises the working of a Supreme or Universal Will behind all phenomena in man and nature. Ma, it appears to me, is the embodiment of this Knowledge Infinite or this Wisdom Eternal; and in Her case the individual will is entirely merged in the Universal Will—one is completely indistinguishable from the other. Ma Anandamayi appears to have no separate individuality—She is totally identified with the Infinite, She is absorbed in It. In the ordinary world what distinguishes an individual-with-

personality from others is the former's strong will-power, together with a pronounced consciousness of his self-hood. But will-power is by no means the spring of Ma's actions. As we have already seen, all Her activities are really impromptu and spontaneous, that is, not prompted by any will or desire of Her own. God's Will is Her will. What She does and says is an expression, or manifestation, of the Divine Will for which She has coined a peculiar name—*kheyāla*. Her self-hood is immersed in God. Ma's personality is absolutely impersonal. The Infinite Im-Personality, it may be said, is embodied as Ma Anandamayi.

For more than eight decades this Infinite Im-Personality known at various stages as Nirmala Sundari, the Mother of Shahbag, Anandamayi Ma, Mataji, or simply as Ma has been playing Its part on the stage of life in various roles. But there has been at least one common feature at all times—the people around have been irresistibly attracted towards Her. A venerable old gentleman of Varanasi once asked Ma what was the secret behind this fact. The gist of the conversation he had with Ma when I was present is noted below.

Question : “How is it that so many people, old and young, are attracted to you ?”

Mataji : “This child is very small and she does not belong to any one in particular; so all come to her. It is also like this : one who owns nothing and claims none in this world as his own finds that all are his own.”

Question : “Now you say that you belong to nobody, whereas usually you call everybody your father and mother.”

Mataji: "This is also true. All are my fathers and mothers, and this is why they come to see their little daughter."

Question: "That is what you say. But we cannot look upon you as our little child."

Mataji: "Well, then you come because you are so merciful, so compassionate; you just take pity on this tiny child."

Question: "No, certainly not. I am neither merciful nor compassionate. Under no circumstances shall I accept this kind of explanation."

The venerable old man was desperate—he was determined to have a straightforward answer to his direct question. He had played on the 'violin' that is Ma. As he had played so he heard the instrument in words as follows:—

Mataji: "All right, look here, is it not natural to come to one's own Self? Does it require any reason or explanation? The most natural thing for everyone is to come to his own Self."

If Ma can indiscriminately love all, it is because She can see God in everyone. In fact, She has repeatedly confirmed that She does see the One in all. As She puts it in Her broken English in a sweet and simple manner, native to Her. "All ONE, All ONE".

Here is an episode which throws a flood of light on the question as to why Ma has an appeal for all. One morning Ma was sitting in a small hall of a Siva Temple in South Calcutta. A crowd assembled there to celebrate the *Holi*

festival with Ma. A large number of ladies pressed hard round Her body to have Her *darśana* from a close quarter. Ma was almost bundled up. It was a sultry day and the rush of people seemed to be too tense for Her. Ganga Charan Das Gupta, formerly Principal, David Hare Training College, Calcutta, was present there. He felt that the pressure of people had become almost oppressive and suffocating. His questions in this connection and Ma's answers there-to are illuminating.

Question : "Mother ! Why do you allow these people to crowd round your body ?"

Mataji : "Perhaps this body draws them so close to it. It is not their fault."

Question : "Don't you find it highly oppressive and disgusting, Mother ?"

Mataji : "No. It is a great pleasure to me to find them pressing so close to me."

Question : "Ma, we feel it awfully boring to have such a crowd pestering us with tales of their domestic troubles and worries."

Mataji : "Because you feel that your own body and theirs are distinctly separate. As you do not feel the weight of your head, of hands and feet, of so many fingers and toes, of legs and thighs to be a burden, nor a heavy load upon yourself because you feel they are but vital parts of your own body, so do I feel that these persons are all organic members of THIS BODY; so I don't feel their pressure nor find their worries weighing upon me. Their joys and sorrows, problems

and their solutions, I feel to be vitally mine. Their acts and awards too are essentially mine. I have no ego-sense nor any conception of separateness. Each one of you have the "height and depth of eternity" in me equally." *

The present writer's apologia

I do not exactly know how Nirmala Sundari has become what She is today. All that I propose to do in these pages is merely to have a bird's eye view of, or mere glimpses into a few events centered in Ma during the second quarter of this century—events which appear to me to have been associated with the unfolding of an inscrutable *kheyāla*, and events which, according to my estimation, have ultimately led to Her emergence as the Universal Mother by about 1950. Each of these events is like a stray star twinkling in its own glory, as it were, in the limitless sky that is the life of Ma Anandamayi. The story as narrated here may not be compared, by a change of metaphors, to a garland of flowers, because the connecting thread is missing; it is really a collection of disconnected flowers, each beautiful in its own way. It remains a cluster of separate stars. Moreover, I propose to notice in passing, a number of select persons supposed to have played some role in the drama of Ma's majestic and mystical life. This list of such persons is not exhaustive but illustrative. It would be simply absurd to rush to the conclusion that names not mentioned here are not worth mentioning or that the persons selected are necessarily superior to others. If some well-known persons have, here and there, been selected to the exclusion of

*Article by Ganga Charan Dasgupta in "*Mother as Seen by Her Devotees*" published by Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha (2nd Ed.), p.94.

less known ones, it is because the former class is easily identifiable by many readers; also because some of them are accepted as representative men in their respective spheres. To Ma's "Inner Being" there is no difference between one individual and another — each is no other than a manifestation of the ONE. Ma's motherliness is universal and all-embracing. It seems to have been so ever since Her birth. It does not rest on the number or eminence or quality of Her "children". In fact, sometimes it works wonders out of the most unpromising material. Ma is a living illustration of the Buddhist saying: "When an Enlightened-one touches a dry twig, it begins to blossom". It has indeed been seen that the influence of Ma's holy touch has purged and transmuted, at least temporarily — often permanently — the polluted hearts of millions.

The hidden Mother in Nirmala Sundari.

Bholanath's niece, little Labanya, was deeply touched by the spontaneous motherliness of her *Kakimā* (aunt). She expressed her desire to address the latter as *Mā* (mother). Such desire on the part of Labanya, however, may be explained away as being quite natural — a *Kakimā* has the status of *locō parentis* and it is not absolutely unusual for a niece to call her *Mā*. But the case of Ma's younger brother, Kali-Prasanna, is totally different. He was also prompted by a similar desire at the time of his death at the age of seven. His last words uttered to Nirmala — his sister older than him by only three years — were: "Ma! I am, however, dying" which he repeated thrice. Though Didima was there, one wonders why the dying child addressed those words to his sister Nirmala in preference to his own mother. Is it because the little child saw in Nirmala

just the budding Universal Mother destined to blossom as Ma Anandamayi? Were not these two children unconsciously anticipating a great truth of the future? Little Kali Prasanna addressed his sister as *Mā*. This was anomalous. Still more anomalous was Bholanath himself calling Her *Mā*, as we shall see later.

When Ma was at Astagram, at the age of about eighteen, the future Universal Mother in Her was revealed to a gentleman, Harakumar Roy, who was not related to Her in any way. Though educated and well-placed in life, he was suspected to be lacking in a sense of proportion and was regarded as an eccentric person. But I have had it from Ma that his so-called eccentricity was due to religious fervour. Ma became the object of Harakumar's adoration. He expressed his feeling in such an exaggerated manner that he was supposed to be not in his proper senses. Yet his sincerity of purpose was beyond question. He made frantic efforts to come into close contact with Ma, although it was not easy for him to approach Her. He was a rank outsider, and She a Hindu housewife, then in Her teens. He studied Ma's requirements with scrupulous care and would go out of his way to be of some little assistance to Her. Thus he would collect vegetables and dry fuel for Her use as he knew that these things were not within Her easy reach. But humble services of this kind, rendered with the best of intention, failed to alter what seemed to be Ma's attitude of indifference to him. True to the tradition of Her conservative family and quite consistent with the prevailing social convention, Ma did not respond; She would not even talk to Harakumar whose zeal to oblige Her came

in for unfriendly comments in the village. But Harakumar persisted in his adoration of Ma, with his worshipful attitude unchanged. He boldly went on defying social convention. If he could do so, it was because he had not the slightest doubt in his mind that Ma was the Divine Mother. He insisted on bowing down to Her in deep obeisance. Ma could not stop him. He went further still — he begged for Ma's *prasāda* (a small portion of the left-over food partaken of by Ma) every day. Now, this was too much. To Ma's "Outward Manifestation" such a request from a person like Harakumar was extremely embarrassing, and She was unable to oblige him. But it was Harakumar's conviction that Ma's *prasāda* was not ordinary material food but sacramental food; thus it was a direct medium for transmitting *śakti* (power) from Ma to Her worshipper. Presumably Ma's "Inner Being" was aware of this truth, though outwardly She was not then prepared to disregard prevailing social customs. She continued to remain cold and taciturn notwithstanding Harakumar's persistent entreaties. Disheartened by Ma's apparently apathetic attitude, Harakumar appealed to Bholanath for his kind intervention in the matter. Bholanath, a never-failing friend and patron of sincere devotees, persuaded Ma to give Harakumar some food from Her plate. Thus was Harakumar's long-cherished wish fulfilled at last. Once in his exuberance of joy, Harakumar very confidently said, "I have been calling you *Mā*. You will see, a time will come when the world will call you so." How prophetic Harakumar's assertion proved !

Again, in Bajitpur, the wife of Bholanath's friend, Janaki Babu, Usha by name, became a great admirer of Nirmala Sundari. The former's mother-in-law did not like her to be

very friendly with Ma, who was then suspected of being possessed by some spirit. But Usha could not resist the temptation of meeting Ma secretly. Ma used to call her 'Usha Didi' (elder sister). The latter, however, was not content with being treated as an "elder sister". One day she insisted on calling Nirmala Sundari "*Mā.*" Ma was then falling into a state of trance. But She listened to Usha's proposal, stopped for a moment and said : "Why you alone ? . A day will come when innumerable people in this world will call "this body" *Ma.*" The truth of this prophesy has since been firmly established.

* *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Gurupriya Devi Vol. 1, P. 229.

Bhagavata Saptaha at Kankhal

R. K. Banerjee

Returning from Almora on June 18th, 1977 in very weak health, Mataji spent the next three and a half months in the vastly improved, newly enlarged Kankhal Ashram. Alarming reports of Her seeming condition reached us in Calcutta from time to time. But soon news of one festival after another (mostly Bhagavata Saptahas) started to percolate through.

My wife Bhavani had gone to Mataji at Kankhal for Guru Pūrnimā. So when I received a direct invitation from Sm. Kamala Pandya for the Bhagavata Saptaha to be observed from September 19th onwards by the entire Pandya family for the ultimate peace and solace of the soul of the late Jagadish Pandya, the erstwhile head of the family, I was happy to take this opportunity of performing my obeisances to Mataji, and of paying homage to my friend's memory.

Jagadish and I had been closely associated in our official capacities since 1938, and even after our respective retirements we had continued to work together under the auspices of both the Sangha and the then newly founded Charitable Society.

Bhavani unfortunately could not accompany me on my departure from Calcutta on September 16th, but two other devotees were booked with me on the same train.

Kankhal is the place where, according to mythology Sati (Siva's consort prior to Her birth as Parvati) gave up Her body in mortification because of the deliberate insult of

Her husband during the official fire sacrifice (*Yajña*) performed by Her Father, Daksha Prajāpati. Later Daksha worshipped Siva in atonement at the spot now marked by the Daksheshwara Siva temple next to our Ashram. Sati's skeleton is supposed to have been found at a place some furlongs beyond the Ashram now marked by a very old Sati temple and Sati Kunda.

Be this as it may, Mataji is now spending more and more time at Kankhal, where the new Ashram hall is spacious enough to seat the large crowds that throng for Mataji's festivals, and where living accommodation is available in and outside of the Ashram without too much difficulty.

On arrival at the Ashram before 6 a. m. on September 18th, I was very glad to learn that Swami Paramanandaji had gone out for his morning walk, thus denoting his return to health. We were soon able to meet him and settle down in our respective quarters.

The hardworking and harassed Swami Chaitanyananda, in charge of guarding the gateway to Mataji's precincts on the first floor of the Guest-House, informed us that the official hours for Mataji's *darśana* were confined to 11-11³⁰ a. m. and 6³⁰ - 7 p. m.

However, undaunted and fresh from our ablutions, we again presented ourselves hopefully in front of the closed gates by 9 a. m., yearning to catch a glimpse of Mataji even if from a distance, so as to start our sojourn at Kankhal auspiciously.

Lo and behold! Mataji must have sensed the eager longing in the hearts of the new arrivals, for very soon She

appeared outside Her room at the far end of the long veranda and with Her incomparable natural grace She walked unaided and quite normally along the whole length of the veranda and came out of the gateway to sit in our midst at the top of the staircase, entirely at ease and without any constraint whatever. Thus She rewarded the aspirations of each and every devotee present before Her during those joyful moments.

On that day threefold *pūjās* were in progress throughout the old and new Ashram premises. As it was a Sunday, Didima's special *Rudrabhisheka*, *Pūjā*, *Āratī*, *Samnyāsi* and *Daridra Nārāyaṇ bhojan* (feeding of the poor); further the recitation of the holy *Chandi* one hundred times was being performed, spread over several days in the Daksheshwara Śiva temple with the aid of several well qualified priests under the surveillance of Mataji's own brother. A ritual worship of Sri Rāma, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman together with a recitation in chorus of the *Hanuman Chalisa* had been arranged by Sm. Alaka Roy in the main hall for twenty-one days. Every morning before the congregational reading of the Gita, Chandi, Upanishad and Bhagavata, the Hanuman Chalisa was being sung by a group of at least eighteen people six times (i. e. hundred and eight times in all). The object was the continual good health of Mataji.

On September 19th, the twenty-first day of this function, Hanuman Pūjā and Chalisa ended triumphantly in Mataji's presence at 9.30 a. m. with worship offered to Mahabirji* in the main hall as well as in the Hanuman Temple situated in the premises of Daksheshwar Mandir. It must be noted here

* Mahabir An epithet of Hanuman, denoting "grea thero".

that in these pūjās and recitations of the Chalisa for twenty-one days, Sm. Rama Saxena, her sister Sm. Kamala Mohanlal and on week-ends Ramadi's son Vir, were a tower of strength without whom these functions could not have been performed so smoothly and successfully.

There was to be no rest for us on the 19th morning. No sooner had the Mahabir Pūjās ended than it was time for the sacred volumes of the Srimad Bhagavata to be brought in ceremonial procession from our Siva temple across the road (where they had been worshipped) on the heads of the *Jajmans** to the accompaniment of kirtana sung to the glory of Lord Narayana.

The two devoted son's of my friend Jagadish Pandya were the main *jajmans* on behalf of their father; Sm. Kamala Pandya, in addition to being in overall charge, was also a *jajman* in memory of her deceased parents. Another *jajman* was the young widow of the son of one of J. P. Pandya's sisters. He had died suddenly in the prime of his life, leaving behind his wife and a three years old daughter as well as his sorrowing parents. The young widow, clad in spotless white, was in attendance throughout the Hindi rendering of the Bhagavata for six hours daily. Yet another *jajman* was Sm. Pushpa Pandit, our Ex-Vice President Sri G. S. Pathak's eldest daughter in the sacred memory of her parents-in-law.

Swami Sri Vishnuashram was in charge of expounding the whole of the Bhāgavata in Hindi, while the original Sanskrit texts had to be read by five pandits for five departed souls. At 3³⁰ p. m. Sri Vishnuashramji inaugurated the rendering of

* *Jajman* The main householder responsible for the reading of the Bhagavata.

the Bhāgavata Purāṇa by briefly summarizing the *Mahātmya* in two hours at this preliminary session. His main talks took place from 7.30 to 10.30 a. m. and from 4 to 6 p. m. from the 20th to the 26th September.

The well-known vocal musician from Calcutta, Sri Siddheswar Mukerjee had arrived and each evening Brahmacharis Tanmayananda and Brahmananda, Siddheswarda and myself took part in stirring *sandhyā kirtana* from 8 to 8.45 p. m. followed by the observance of *mouna* (silent contemplation) in the hall for fifteen minutes.

A tragedy took place that day at Delhi. Sri Swami Govind Prakash, Mahamandaleshwara of the Rama Tirtha Ashram at Rajpur, breathed his last. He had been the host of Mataji and her devotees during Her birthday celebrations in early May this year. Only a few days ago he had paid a visit to Ma on his way to Delhi for a check-up after a heart attack. When the sad news of his passing reached us by phone, the whole Ashram was plunged into gloom.

September 20th was *Rādhāshṭami* (the birthday of Sri Rādhā). Promptly at 7 a. m. the Bhagavata Saptaha started with Vedic chanting after which the *Mūla Pātha* (the main reading in Sanskrit) commenced in the room behind the hall and in another room on the groundfloor of the guest-house. Sri Vishnuashramji started his memorable discourses at 7.30 a. m. in the hall. Mataji confined Herself to Her room but through Her infinite grace I was granted the opportunity to worship Her on the occasion of *Rādhāshṭami*, which is observed annually as a most holy festival by Bhavani and myself in our home.

Sri Govind Prakashji's body had been brought to his Ashram at Jwālapur that morning and was carried in solemn procession past our Ashram for Mataji's *darśana* at about 2.30 p. m., before being immersed in the holy waters of Nildhara in the main stream of the Ganges. Escorted by Swami Paramananda, Mataji came down to the roadside where She stood in front of the main hall entrance, looking steadfastly towards the face of the departed saint. Brahmananda and Tanmayananda were singing the holy name, when Mataji suddenly told Sri Pandya's son Kishu to perform *ārati* with incense and then quickly turned to me to ask me to wave the *chāmar*.¹ We thus had the blessed privilege of representing the Ashram in paying the last tribute to a revered saint, known for his adoration of Mataji. Mataji had instructed some of our senior samnyāsis to accompany the body on its last journey.

The saint's Guru who had retired some years earlier from Rajpur to reside at their Hardwar centre, is still alive and was present during the last rites performed for Sri Govind Prakashji.

Since the time for Sri Vishnuashramji to start his afternoon talk was drawing near, Mataji entered the hall and graced the learned exposition of the Bhāgavata for about half an hour before going upstairs to rest.

With regret we learnt later that Sri Vishnuashramji had caught a severe cold and developed a temperature. Mataji promptly gave instructions for Sri Hanuman Chalisa to be performed daily during the Saptāha to safeguard his health.

1. *Chāmar* Fan made of the bushy tail of a yak, used in worship.

By dint of implicit obedience to Mataji and with their strong will-power the same devotees mentioned earlier managed to do their admirable chanting of the Chalisa between 7 and 8 p. m. before the daily evening kirtana throughout the Bhāgavata Saptāha. We all felt extremely happy to learn that Sri Vishnuashramji began to feel better from the 21st morning, and certainly his lectures were inspiring right up to the end.

Two passages in his talks particularly stand out in my memory, dealing with human birth and death respectively. After describing the episode when the child Dhruva was struck dumb by the Lord's first appearance as a reward for Dhruva's intense *tapasya*, and had to be lightly touched on his lips by Lord Narayana's conchshell before he could utter his famous prayer, Sri Vishnuashram marvelled how people could still doubt the existence of the Supreme Divine Power when similar miracles were being wrought every second throughout the world. For example how is it that each infant learns to speak its mother tongue so quickly? Similarly, how is it that at each second death claims as its victims different human beings in different parts of the world according to some pre-ordained destiny, instead of simultaneously or at long intervals?

After the morning session of the Bhāgavata on the 22nd morning, Sm. Lakshmi Gupta, who had arranged for the recitation of one hundred Chandis at Daksheshwar Temple, performed a special *pūjā* of Mataji on the 1st floor veranda of the guest house. After the *pūjā*, I had the good fortune of being present in Mataji's room, when She placed a sandal-wood rosary around a small dark object against the white surface

of Her bed cover. Wrapped in my contemplation of Her and Her *līlā* I had ignored this object until Mataji deliberately drew my attention to it by pointing to a black ant in the center of the sandalwood rosary. She asked whether it was still alive, and I found that it was, but only just so. The ant was upside down on its four feet, as if in a well-known yogic posture, with its eyes fixed intently on Mataji's face. It was hardly capable of moving at all but was still alive. When an attendant well-meaningly tried to invert it to its normal posture, Mataji hastily prevented her from doing so. She told us that for the last three or four days this same ant had never left the close proximity of Mataji in the bedroom, even following Her to the bathroom. Whenever Mataji sat or reclined on Her bed, the ant would slowly perambulate round the bed as if in *parikramā*,¹ and had now perched itself on top of the bed in this strange posture. Instinct prompted me to start singing "Hare Krishna" softly and Mataji seemed to give Her silent approval. At this juncture Tanmayananda arrived to perform his *pranāms* to Mataji at the end of the morning satsang and She asked him to spread loose flowers round the rosary. She Herself placed a few flowers to show him how exactly She wanted it done. Unfortunately the luncheon gong put an end to these moments of sheer bliss for me.

Later I learnt that Mataji had instructed two brahma-
charis to perform kirtan and *ārati* before the ant, which gave
up the ghost after 5 p. m. Finally, Mataji arranged for its body
to be immersed in the Ganges. Subsequently, during the brief
moments we snatched while performing our obedience to Mata-
ji in a queue between 6.30 and 7 p.m., I asked Her point blank

1. *Parikramā* Circumambulation of a holy place or object of worship.

why She had not permitted the ant to live on for the remaining few days of the Saptāha. Mataji said sweetly : “But it did arrive and depart in the days during which the Bhāgavata was read, did it not ?” This reply quelled the last remaining doubts in my mind as to the identity of the departed soul most interested in the present Bhāgavata Saptāha, who had been favoured to appear in some form or other to fulfil his yearning, to once again be near the person of the beloved Guru of his life time.

This incident reminds one of the appearance of a small white snake in Mataji’s bed when She was staying several years ago in the Ashram bungalow of the late Mr. Sood at Jakhan, Dehradun, during the performance of *Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyana* for the good of the soul of his deceased wife.

On September 23rd the birth of Lord Krishna was related and celebrated towards the close of the afternoon session. Mataji entered the hall promptly at 5 p. m., simultaneously with two Mahātmās—Swami Bhumananda Maharaj of Paramartha Niketan and Sri Girdhar Narayan Puri, Mahant of Nirvani Akhara. The latter used to be daily in Mataji’s presence during the evening *darśana*.

Just before 6 p. m. Sri Vishnuashramji reached the point where the Lord decided to appear before Vasudeva and Devika in Kansa’s jail. The blowing of conches, *ārati* and chanting of hymns (*stotrās*) marked the advent of the central figure of the Srimad Bhāgavata. The Pandya family had arranged for sumptuous distribution of *prasāda*, fruits and sweets after the session ended.

September 24th marked the completion of the *Sata Chandi* festival at the Daksheshwar Temple. Elaborate *kumārī* and *batuka pūjā* were performed in Mataji's presence on the first floor veranda, followed by poor-feeding in a pandal erected on open land opposite the guest-house. Sm. Lakshmi Gupta worshipped every single *Daridra Narayana* while they were seated for their meal. In the evening Sri Mahesh Yogi was to come to see Mataji but a group of his people arrived instead and apologized for his inability to keep the appointment.

On September 25th, the retiring Governor of the U. P., Dr. Chenna Reddy arrived with a party of relatives, friends and officials for a late lunch, stayed overnight in Hardwar and came again the next morning with most of his entourage. He had private *darśana* of Mataji and attended Sri Vishnuashramji's talks briefly on the 25th evening and 26th morning.

Meetings of the Executive and the Governing Body of the Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha and Charitable Society had been fixed for the 25th and 26th, so senior members such as Sri B. K. Shah, the Sangha President, Dr. Gunen Roy, the Society President, Sri D. I. Kania and others were present in the Ashram from the 24th onwards.

Sri Vishnuashramji had unfortunately not fully shaken off the after-effects of his cold and fever, therefore after expounding the tenth *skanda* (chapter) in great detail, he made rather short work of the eleventh and twelfth *skandas*, completing his inspiring discourses by 4.30 p. m. on the 26th.

That evening, two well-known Mahātmās, Sri Prabhu-datt Brahmachari and Mahamandaleswara Swami Prakasha-nanda paid brief visits to Mataji, welcoming Her back to

health. The former was well-known to the Pandya family as J. P. Pandya had been one of his admirers and used to visit him often at his Jhusi Ashram near the confluence of Jamuna and Ganga at Allahabad.

On September 27th, *purnima* (full-moon) was due to end shortly after midday. Sri Vishnuashramji was keen to start his return journey well within *shukla paksha* (the fortnight between new moon and full moon), consequently the *havan* (fire sacrifice) which marked the completion of the Saptāha ended at 10.30 a. m.

In the meanwhile a party had arrived from Dehradun and the recitation of the whole of the Rāmāyana commenced in the hall that very morning and ended the next day.

On the 27th, the late Sri Pandya's daughter Aruna, who lives at the Ashram as a Brahmacharini, arranged to offer *bhoga* to Mataji on the 2nd floor of the guest-house and thereafter all devotees present were regaled with abundant *prasāda*.*

Mataji was scheduled to leave by car for an unknown destination on the 28th afternoon. Her movements over Durga, Lakshmi and Kali Pūjās were as yet uncertain. But it was definitely stated that She would be arriving on the banks of the Narmada in time for the Samyam Mahavrata to be held from November 18th to 25th.

Accompanied by five other devotees I started for Calcutta on the 27th night. All the way back I felt how infinitely worthwhile it had been to spend a few days close to our inimitable Mataji and to see with my own eyes that Her movements, speech and unmistakable gestures were entirely normal, after

the scare through which we all in distant places had passed over Her recent illness. However, it was still apparent that She needed complete rest for a few hours after any public appearance of some duration. So it is only proper from our point of view that She should continue to have the benefit of taking frequent rest and of keeping aloof from active participation in strenuous festivities. Nevertheless, Mataji is *svatantra* and *svādhīna* (completely free, Her own master, and absolutely independent). It would therefore not be surprising if She were found once more plunging into the thick of the Ashram functions that are observed from time to time.

Whatever may come to pass, it is quite clear that Divine Mercy emanates from Mataji towards Her children constantly. It is entirely up to us to keep ourselves alert and in the right attitude so as to reap full benefit of Her abundant compassion.

It seemed to me that no better tribute could be paid in my humble capacity to my friend Jagadish Pandya's memory than by relating the above events intimately connected with the Bhāgavata Saptāha celebrated in his honour by the entire Pandya family, by whom he was held in such high esteem for so many years; not only as its noble head but also because he and his wife had been chiefly instrumental in bringing each and every member into the holy orbit of Mataji's benign influence.

So I ruminated on the long journey home with five other devotees, with our spiritual batteries recharged, blessed as we had been by Mataji's sight, touch, *prasāda*, benediction and inspiring words.

Jai Ma !

You

M. P. Jain

(1)

You hear all
You see all
You know all
Since You are all.

(2)

You are the cause
You are the source
Yet aren't involved
And are ever alone.

(3)

You are the 'Word'
You are the light
You are the silence
You are the might.

(4)

You permeate all
Atoms and molecules
It's because of You
That electrons move.

(5)

You are in the grace
In love and ruth,
You are in beauty
You are the Truth.

(6)

This universe is a verse
It's indeed a song
Of harmony and love
Of Your glory, Lord !

(7)

And all are in One
One is in all
Is verily the burden
Of this sweet song.



A Tribute to Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj

**Dr. H. H. Sri Ananda Mohan Sur, Kt., M. A.,
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President & Superintendent of Kashi Dharma Peetha,
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A spiritual and intellectual giant who dominated the intellectual and spiritual life of the holy city of Varanasi for a great many years was M. M. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj. An outstanding scholar of Sanskrit literature and the Vedas, he was both master of Vedanta philosophy and at the same time a practical yogi. By his passing away Kashi has become sunless. He freely gave of his profound learning to thousands of students and never cared for name, fame or money. He refused to become the Vice-Chancellor of Sri Sampurnanand University or to accept any post of honour. He never held public meetings or platform lectures but distributed his jewels of learning and wisdom from his own home. His students were great scholars such as Dr. Jai Deo Singh, Dr. Ram Adhikari, Dr. Puspavati Devi, Sri Kshetresha Chandra Chattopadhyaya, Prof. Batuk Sharma, and thousands of others, alive and deceased. He was a disciple of the renowned saint and yogi Swami Vishuddhananda of Bengal. Tantra was his special subject but he was never a *Vāma Mārgi*. He never touched the five "*Makāras*" and never attended any private tantric circle. He

practised *Pūrṇa Yoga Sādhana* of Sri Aurobindo and every year sent messages of good wishes on the birthdays of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to the Sri Aurobindo Society and to Sri Chandi Prasad Sen, Advocate, Secretary of the Sri Aurobindo Temple.

M. M. Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj had great veneration for Sri Anandmayi Ma who came to Varanasi for the first time in 1927, putting up at the residence of S. Kunja Mohan Mukerjee. She again visited Kashi in autumn 1928, when Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj met Her for the first time. He was then Principal of the Government Sanskrit College. Sri Kavirajji became a great devotee of Ma Anandamayi and received grace and inspiration from Her. She was so much impressed by Kavirajji's spirituality that She arranged for his residence in Her Ashram. Up to the end of his life he remained there and in Sri Anandamayi Charitable Hospital and breathed his last there.

He was one who realised the Infinite, a *Jivan Mukta*. Such mahātmās and yogis keep aflame the torch of religion and culture for the benefit of humanity.

“Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And departing leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.”



A Brief Estimation of Samkhya Thought

Dr. Anima Sen Gupta

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If we think of the realistic position of the Samkhya school, we sincerely feel that non-dualistic *ātmavāda* cannot be the keynote of this philosophical system. Samkhya admits real differences in the pleasures and pains of different *jīvas*. Difference is an experience felt and hence it must be admitted as real. The difference between spirit and matter, the difference between one material object and another, and the difference between one individual soul and another are all real facts. Hence these real facts must exist on all levels of experience. The advaita vedanta believes in the falsity of difference and so all sorts of differences vanish in the air in the advaita state of *mukti*.

Now if we make an attempt to interpret the samkhya with advaita inclinations, then we are bound to meet with logical contradiction and irregularity at every step. For advaita, *jīvātma* produced by *buddhi*, *ahankāra* etc. is false. It is purely imaginary while the only reality is the undivided consciousness or Brahman. According to samkhya, however, *buddhi*, *ahankāra* etc. are not false. They are as real as consciousness. What is false is the relation of all these with *puruṣa*. Since *buddhi*, *ahankāra*, *vāsanā saṁskāra* etc. are all real, the differences created by all these causes in the empirical lives of the different individual souls are also real. Differences which are noticed in

the different reflections of different *buddhi* are all real. Since the images or *pratibimbās* are different, the *bimbās* also must be different. Real distinction in effects can be produced by really distinct causes. In the empirical sphere, we find real difference among individuals and this difference must, therefore, exist in the transcendental sphere as well. There are different *buddhis*, different *pratibimbās* or reflections and different *bimbās* or *puruṣas*. When a *puruṣa* is finally liberated, the reflection is destroyed and so *puruṣa* becomes fully dissociated from its *buddhi* which then gets merged in *prakṛti*. Diversity and multiplicity in creation are real and these can be satisfactorily explained by assuming the existence of the different *avivekās* of the different *puruṣas*. Created objects are many and the selves that reveal these objects in different ways are also many. If we hold that consciousness is one and it falsely appears as many due to unreal investments (*upādhis*), then we shall not be able to do justice to the essentially realistic and dualistic position of the samkhya. Real difference in the *upādhyā* can never be caused by mere difference in the limiting adjuncts. A man may put on different dresses at different times, but this difference in his clothes will not cause any real difference in him. In the opinion of the samkhya, difference in all its forms is eternal. So, if difference is created by the non-eternal *upādhi*, then with the destruction of the *upādhi*, difference too will vanish : and if difference is destroyed, the realistic and dualistic position of the samkhya cannot be maintained.

It is a mistake to think that according to samkhya, *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* are absolutely separate and independent and as such they can never come into contact : hence there can be no evolution. In fact, according to samkhya, the relation which

is suitable for creation exists between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* from beginningless time. Just as Brahman is related to *māyā* from beginningless time, in the same manner, there is *anāda sṛiṣṭi opayogi sambandha* (beginningless relation suitable for creation) between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. No question regarding the why, how or when of this relation can be raised legitimately.

According to samkhya, *vivekagraha* of spirit and matter is beginningless just as in the advaita vedanta, *māyā* or *avidyā* is beginningless. In the *jivanmukta* state, too, the relation between *buddhi* and *puruṣa* is not destroyed. *Buddhi* remains in that state as a *tattva* : but the Self in the state of *jivanmukti* has realised its distinction from the intellect and so it becomes non-attached to *buddhi*. *Vivekagraha* is the real creative force of *prakṛti*. The mere relation between two all-pervading *tattvas* (*puruṣa* and *prakṛti*) is not the real moving force behind creation. Since *vivekagraha* is beginningless, creation, too, is beginningless. Hence, there is no difficulty in understanding the emergence of the world from Nature even in the absence of a third uniting principle in the form of God. The unconscious nature of *prakṛti* too does not create any fresh difficulty. According to advaita vedanta also, *māyā* is unconscious. Even then *māyā* is capable of producing a meaningful world.

Puruṣa and *prakṛti*, being all-pervading, are always related. *Prakṛti* which is the cause of the world is a *cetanavista prakṛti* (*prakṛti* permeated with consciousness). *Cetanavista prakṛti* is a mixed category in which *aviveka* is working as a creative force. Hence, there can be teleological evolution from *prakṛti*. ●

The Plenum-Void

Sunya Baba

In Buddhism the highest or fullest Reality is called Sunyata (the plenum-void, empty of ego and of real divisions), which is neither being non-being, and is so ineffable, that the way to realisation or experience of the Ultimate involves the strict denial of one's own and every other form of existence. Sunyata is the full, solid, concrete No-thing-ness.

The highest peaks in Himalayan Consciousness are said to be *Mahā-Karuna* and *Mahā-Prajñāna* (ego-free Empathy and intuitive, integral wisdom) transcending the duality of love and mere knowledge. In Sunya-Silence there is no conceit of agency, but the awareness of guidance, of rightness and of innerstanding the details, the part-play and the Allness. "They were silent, all these : the host, the guest and the white chrysanthemum".

The more we learn of the world the more we have to forget in "the Cloud of unknowing". "I now know that I know nothing." Sunyata is this nothingness. All that happens, happens rightly. All is right that seems most wrong. "If there is pain let it be; it is also the Self and the Self is perfect", said, and lived Ramana Maharshi. It is the *Titiksa* mode of acceptance and of awareness :-Endure, Enjoy and Let Be in positive passivity, negative capability and effort-free, choice-free receptivity. Let go of the sense of possessions and of

power, of pity and of doership. Let go of egoji. Drop it, or let it drop. "Let go and let God !".

There is no reality but the absolute, non-dual, ultimate and ineffable Reality. It is, however, very important to realise that the 'via negative' or "neti, neti" is not making a negation of Reality, about the real-something or no-thing-ness, which is the basis of everyday experience. Eliminate the obstacles, and there is always the flow from the cosmic Source.

In paradoxes and poetry we get nearest to the truth of word-free Silence or Sunya-radiance. The seeming negation would imply all-acceptance. The seeming denial pertains strictly to the ideas, concepts, theories and fixed categories of thought, whereby egojis try to understand and grasp what is experienced. The non-dual experiencing is ineffable and cannot be understood by egojis. We innerstand effort-freely and at joyous ease. "We are always aware, Sunya". Aye, we are the Awareness, the Experiencing, when we as egojis are not.

The metaphysical doctrines of the Orient are saying that you (egoji) cannot grasp or comprehend reality in any fixed form of thought and feeling. You cannot nail it down or possess it. Mere belief, pre-conceptions and pre-convictions are hindrances to the ānandaful, ineffable experiencing. We try to possess, to become and to understand, because we as egojis are lonely and insecure without the intuitive light of serene Aloneness in the unity of all-Oneness and Self-security. We have identified our consciousness with a seemingly fixed form, a structure of memories called I, but we discover that structures are impermanent and we are therefore afraid. Egojis dare not the existential leap into the Sunya

nothingness, and, therefore, they cling all the more tenaciously to ego-life, and yoga becomes bhoga- (enjoyment) and involvement in a vicious circle of clinging to what is called samsāra, the round of existence. To 'know' Brahman is to Be Brahman. To "see God", or to experience the Self, is to be the Experiencing, the undefined, infinite, time-free and ego-free state, without trying to capture and hold it in fixed forms of conventional words and ideas, concepts and gospel truths. When St. Augustine was asked what time was, he replied: "I know, but when you ask me, I don't". Likewise it is with the truth of Reality.

"Once God and I knew the meaning of Life, now only God knows, or perhaps even He or She does not know," says Wuji. We all experience the eternal time, but when we begin to think about it, It vanishes. If an egoji enters Sunya-realm, the ego-consciousness blurs the whole, the integral Self-awareness. In it we live and move and have our Being, whether we merely know or not. "So just awaken into integral, conscious and abiding Self-awareness", says Wuji. "Renounce egoji, its values and its duality-fuss, and, so, Be Self-aware. Be the Awareness, aware that you Are the non-dual Self-Experiencing".

It is said in Zen Mysticism : If you want to "see" into It, aware it directly in intuitive empathy or immediate perception. When you begin to think about It, It is altogether missed. For this reason Kena Upanishad says : "He who thinks that Brahman is not comprehended, by him Brahman is comprehended, but he who thinks that Brahman is comprehended knows it not. Brahman (Self, Godhead, Source,

Essence, Sunya or Wholeness) is unknown to those who know. It is known to those who do not know It at all". Knowledge and understanding are not intuitive Karuna-Wisdom. The Chinese sage stated, "He who knows speaks not. He who speaks knows not". So silence is best.

In gospel-truth the word-symbol 'knowing' is much nearer Experiencing. Knowledge has become mental, intellectual, analytical and scientific; while intuitive wisdom is wholly from the Cosmic. It is in and beyond all knowing, thinking and seeing, all analysing, reasoning and asserting. "Oh, for the luxury of not having to express or to explain," sighs Sri Wuji, who awarely innerstands and so easily goes out of his mind and other tools, or is free and at joyous ease in them and in the ānandaful and graceful interplay. Sunya can be awared in intuitive light. It is the integral state, the non-dual experiencing, thought-free, mind-free and ego-free.

"There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so," quotes Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. So bounce beyond thought and time, or let thoughts come and pass by, and aware the unitive Self in and beyond. Be free in thoughts and tools and things.

The Self plays freely in all and is also the witness. It innerstands and comprehends. Just awaken to be consciously aware and consciously free in the Māyā-Līlā Self-interplay. Bondage is delusive and egoji is illusory, not very real. Yet the Real innerstands and is Self-radiating—'Soham,' 'Tat twam asi'. Take refuge in the intuitive insight into the natural, spritual realm spread out within and before us in Nature and in Advaita Vedanta. Mysticism is empirical, experiencable.

Ritual is a personal act of recollection and ego-dedication. Dogmas are hypothetically accepted truths. Mere beliefs, preconceptions and preconvictions are hindrances to the mystical, nondual Self-experiencing. Intuition is charged from the cosmic; it comes from cosmic thought. After the opening of the third eye, the intuitive-Shiva eye, the mind functions in co-operation with intuition. "If thy intuitive eye be single and whole, thy whole body, aye, all bodies will be awared as brimful of Self-radiant light, the White Light that shineth in darkness and leadeth every soul that cometh into this world of Maya-Lila Self-interplay," to paraphrase Matthew's Gospel. Be simple, be natural and ego-free, and you are spiritual, says Wuji. Henri Bergson stated : "Mysticism, is the true form of religion, the intuitive elan vital. Live intuitively and you are religious. Be artists in integral living. Sri Wuji quotes Buddha as saying, "Do not complain or cry or pray, but open your intuitive eye and know the Beauty that is all around you and within. It is radiant, so wonderful, and more marvellous than anything you have ever imagined, dreamt of or prayed for and it Is for ever and ever". "Flower in the crannied wall". "It is you, it is your estranged faces, that miss the many splendoured thing".

Mātri Prasād

Mouni Ma

(*Translated from Bengali*)

12


As it comes so it's written, but there is no "I" that writes.
Take the warning lest ye be enticed
By the splendour found in sādhanā
And forget the goal to be reached.
In sādhanā ye need to be on guard.
But Guru's strength is a great support
That will take you right across to the other shore,
So you need not be in fear.

13

No difference between ye and me
Only above all Guru is to be.
If in Guru's strength ye be strong
Hills can in no time be overcome.
Guru is the Self dwelling in all forms
And speaks many things from all platforms.
Brahma is all, Brahma is all,
Nothing else exists.

14

Guru is your own Self, keep this in mind,
"One-without-a-second" He wants you to find.
Guru cuts through rocks clearing the path,
Proceed along it, dancing full of bliss.



Mātri Līlā

(October, 1977—January 15th, 1978)

Having spent over three months at Kankhal, (from June 18th onwards) Mataji left by car for an undisclosed destination on September 28th. As was learnt later, She stayed in the farm of Sri Ram Panjwani near Hardwar in retreat for a complete rest, free from crowds. On October 6th She returned to Kankhal refreshed, and proceeded to Narendra Nagar, the capital of Tehri Garhwal, a hill state not far from Rishikesh, on the 12th morning. For several years it had been the keen desire of the Maharaja and Maharani of Tehri to arrange for the recitation of the Devi Bhāgavata (which takes nine days) in Ma's august presence. The people of Tripura in Bengal had requested Mataji to grace the celebration of Durga Puja there this time but for various reasons this proved impossible. Only at the last moment it was disclosed that Mataji would spend *Navarātri* in Narendra Nagar. Most devotees got the news too late to attend. This was necessary as accommodation was extremely limited. The Raja and Rani of Tehri had taken no end of trouble to make all necessary preparations as perfectly as possible and Ma spent delightful ten days in the midst of a comparatively small group of devotees. Quite a few came daily by turns from Hardwar, Kankhal and Dehradun enjoying Mataji's *darśana* in picturesque, mountaineous surroundings. The recitation of the Devi Bhagavata started on October 13th. Pandit Ranganath Tripathi, Head of Sanskrit at the Birla College, Varanasi and

Acharya in four different subjects, recited the Sanskrit original daily from 8 a. m. to 3 p. m. and gave Hindi explanations for 1½ hours only in the evening. After the *arati*, Brahmachari Nirmalananda would give a short talk. Mataji attended only the first session of the Sanskrit reading. She remarked that very rarely this was performed with similar sincerity, The Pandit as well as the Raja and Rani kept a fast without water for those nine days and partook of a single meal every evening only after the functions were over.

Every morning at 7 a. m. the sacred scripture was taken to Mataji by the Raja and Rani who did *pūjā* before sitting down in the large hall below the terrace of the guest-house for the reading. There was no provision for Durga Pūjā this year. Mataji said : "For so many years you have performed *murti puja* ; now meditate on the goddess within you." At the last moment it was decided that Br. Nirmalananda who has a permanent Durga *yantra* (small chrystal, symbol of the deity) would perform *yantra puja* on *saptami*, *ashtami*, *naomi* (the main days) in the new cottage specially built for Mataji. Mataji had been in Narendra Nagar twenty-seven years ago just after the tragic death in a car accident of Maharaja Narendra Shah, the father of the present Raja. On that occasion She had come with only a handful of companions and stayed in a tent.

On October 22nd evening Mataji returned to Kankhal for two days only. She related in great detail about Her stay at Narendra Nagar and was full of praises of the excellent arrangements in spite of considerable difficulties in such a remote place. On October 24th night She boarded the train

to Varanasi. It was Her first journey by rail since June 18th when She had arrived from Almora in indifferent health. It was a great joy to see Mataji once again looking young, beautiful and steeped in *ānanda* after Her sickness.

Lakshmi Pūjā was performed by Br. Nirmalananda at our Varanasi Ashram on October 26th. On Oct. 28 Mataji left with a small group for an undisclosed destination which turned out to be Rajgir, where She had a few quiet days, giving *darśana* only in the evenings. On November 8th She was back at Varanasi. Sri Vibhuti Chakravarti had requested Mataji to be present for Divali and Kalipuja at his residence near Calcutta, but he readily agreed to arrange for Kalipuja at our Varanasi Ashram to save Mataji the strain of going to Calcutta. Many devotees came from there. Br. Nirvanananda celebrated a solemn Kālī pūjā in the night of Nov. 10th. After the worship, at about 2 a. m., Sri Narayan Swami delivered a talk on the significance of Goddess Kālī. On the 11th, *Annakut*, 108 food preparations were offered to Annapurna, the goddess of physical and spiritual plenty; a large number of guests were entertained to a feast. In the evening Didi performed the annual ceremony of *Bhayaduj*, offering a flower, a sweet and a sandalwood mark on the forehead to all her spiritual brothers and sisters present.

On Nov. 13th, Mataji entrained for Delhi enroute to Baroda. She remained in Delhi for a few hours only between two trains. It had been arranged that She would rest in a tent at the residence of Sri Virendra Saxena quite incognito. She however quite unexpectedly paid a short visit to our ashram at Kalkaji as well and graced with Her presence the

nearby new office of a Calcutta devotee for a short while. The same afternoon Mataji proceeded to Baroda from where She was taken by car to Badrika Ashram, Chandod, where the 28th *Samyam Mahavrata* was observed from Nov. 18th to 25th.

Mahamandaleswara Sri Brahmananda, Head of Samnyāsa Ashram, Vile Parle, Bombay and of Surat Giri Bungalow, Kankhal, had already three years ago offered to hold our *Samyam Saptaha* at his Badrika Ashram on the sacred river Narmada. But since the following two years had already been reserved, his invitation could be followed only now. Badrika Ashram is called the Badri Narayan of Gujarat. Narmada is a most holy river sanctified by the austerities of innumerable saints and sages throughout the ages. All Siva lingas come out of that river. The saying goes that every stone there is divine. Mataji Herself had the *kheyāla* that this *Samyam vrata* should be held on the banks of holy Narmada. The very sight of the river purifies. The atmosphere is calm and peaceful, far removed from the next town, with not a single shop in the vicinity. The climate was equally pleasant so that everyone kept good health. Needless to say the whole function proved a full success. A large number of tents and a pandal to seat over a thousand, which was filled to capacity even during the hours of collective meditation, had been erected right on the bank of the sacred river. A number of mahātmās graced the gathering and delivered inspiring discourses. Among them were Mahamandaleswaras Brahmananda, our host, Sri Vidyananda of Kailashashram, Sri Prakashananda of Jagatguru Ashram, Kankhal, Sri Kashikananda of Bombay, Sri Amarmuniji and Swami Hamsa Prakash of Ramatirtha Ashram,

Swami Vishnuashram of Suktal, Swami Swatantrananda and others. Kumaris Chhabi Banerji and Pushpa regaled all with excellent music. Mataji was in a wonderful mood. She attended not only all the collective meditations but also part of the morning and evening satsang and gave very interesting replies to questions during Mātri Satsang at night. One day images of Siva and Durga were installed in the temple of Badrika Ashram in Her presence.

On November 26th Mataji shifted to our Ashram at Bhimpura near Chandod, situated on a slight elevation near the Narmada. Mataji visited this Ashram after thirteen years. It is very small but there are other Ashrams within walking distance and quite a few devotees coming from great distances such as Calcutta and even foreign countries were given shelter there, enjoying Mataji's *darsana* in intimate surroundings for a few days. On December 5th Mataji went to Baroda for a few hours. Sri Divetia had made very efficient arrangements for Mataji's rest and *bhoga* as well as for satsang in the afternoon. The same night Mataji took the train to Bombay reaching there the next morning. After two days in Her pagoda in Vile Parle, at the residence of Sri B. K. Shah, Mataji left by car for Poona on the 8th afternoon.

Originally Ma was to go to Poona in August for *Jhulan* and *Janmastami*, but due to Her poor health Her visit had been postponed. She was anxious to go to Poona mainly for the sake of the blind Swami Sri Gangeshwarananda, who is 95 years old but still hale and hearty and very active. He has made it the task of his life to revive and spread the knowledge of the Vedas. A *Veda parayana* had been arranged at our

Poona Ashram by Sri Nagpal for seven days and every evening the venerable Swami delivered highly interesting talks for an hour in Ma's presence. The Swami became blind as a young boy, but he possesses the rare gift of remembering whatever he has heard once and thus he is very learned. His veneration for Mataji is of extreme depth. He regards Her as his *Ista*. He has visited foreign countries several times and there also went about his task of spreading Vedic wisdom.

From Dec. 18th to 22nd Gītā Jayanti was celebrated. On the last day Ma sang with great bhāva for about half an hour invoking Gopal, Krishna, Kanhaya etc with remarkable vigour. She was in an excellent mood and good health throughout Her sojourn at Poona where the people had much consideration for Mataji. Her daily *darśanas* were greatly enjoyed by one and all.

After Poona Mataji spent two days in Bombay. On December 25th She travelled to Bhopal where the late Sir Datar Singh had several years ago built a small Ashram for Her on his farm at Bairagarh in the midst of charming natural surroundings. Mataji's visit was carefully planned by Lady Datar Singh and her daughter who is an ashramite. Ma got plenty of rest during the day and replied to questions for an hour every evening in a pandal. On Dec. 30th Ma sang "Hari bol" and "He Bhagavan" during the satsang.

On Dec. 31st Mataji motored to Pachmarhi, a hill-station, 3500 ft. high in Madya Pradesh. Sri N. N. Shah, Retd. Chief Engineer of Madya Pradesh had already four years ago built a special cottage for Ma's use in which he and his family spent several hours daily in meditation ever since. At

long last Mataji was able to follow his invitation. The whole family being sincere sādhakas, Ma felt inspired to talk in detail about meditation and spiritual practice in general. In the morning She replied to Her hosts' questions on these subjects and in the evenings to those of the general public.

A strange incident happened on the first day. While motoring to Pachmarhi Mataji mentioned to Swami Paramananda that She had had a vision of a dead body the day before. But She did not give any details. On arrival at Pachmarhi, a maid-servant travelling with Ma's party went to sleep in a small room without any ventilation. Feeling very cold she kept a charcoal fire in her room. At about midnight one of the ashram girls heard her groaning. The room was bolted from inside. On being forced open the maid-servant was found almost dead, poisoned by the fumes. No doctor or medicine being available, she was with great difficulty brought back to life by various methods. When she went to do *pranama* the next morning Mataji disclosed that hers was the dead body She had "seen". Ma said : "On New Year's day you have got new life."

During Mataji's stay at Pachmarhi, the sad news was received by phone that Sriman Narayan, Ex-Governor of Gujarat, the son-in-law of Sri Jamnalal Bajaj, had succumbed to heart-failure at Gwalior on his journey to Wardha. A few years ago Mataji had been his guest at Ahmedabad for a memorable few days. His whole family is greatly devoted to Ma. In fact his son and daughter-in-law were with Ma at Pachmarhi. Ma sent brahmacharis Nirvanananda and Bhaskarananda with them to Delhi to attend the funeral rites.

On January 4th, Ma left for Varanasi where She spent two very crowded days. On the 7th She proceeded to Kankhal alighting there in the early morning of January 8th. That very afternoon Sriman Narayan's family arrived from Delhi. Ma talked to them at length. On Jan. 10th and 11th Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa was recited in our hall for the good of the deceased. Mataji attended for an hour at the completion of the function.

During the night in which the Rāmāyaṇa had been chanted, a very old devotee and ashramite Sri Kalachandda passed away at the Ramakrishna Hospital at the age of 82. Mataji had given him a long *darśana* before he was taken to the hospital two days earlier. His body was brought to our Ashram in the morning and from there taken to Neeldhara for immersion in the Ganges. About a year ago Sri Kalachandda had been seriously ill while Mataji was at Kankhal. At Mataji's request, Sri Girdhar Narayan Puri, Mahant of Nirvani Akhara conferred *Atur* (invalid) *saṁnyāsa* on the patient without delay. He received the name of Swami Kala Giri. His health improved visibly and he lived for another year. Mataji disclosed that She was in the hospital in front of him when he breathed his last at 11.15 p. m.

Sri Kalachandda had been a renowned political worker during the 1930-ies and was in jail for eighteen years under the British rule. After his release he joined the Ashram and remained there permanently.

With deep regret we have to report also about the demise of the priest of Gopal Mandir of our Varanasi Ashram, Sri Manish Chakravarti, after a serious heart attack on Dec. 14th at the age of fifty-three. He met Mataji for the first time in

Dacca as a small boy. Later he joined the military and then our Ashram. It was his good luck to leave his body in our hospital which is situated in "*Mukti Kshetra.*"

On January 12th morning the first function took place in connection with the sacred fire that was finally installed with great ceremony on the 14th in a *yajñasālā* especially erected for this purpose between the Ashram hall and a large banyantree. This fire had been lit in a supernatural way in November 1926 on the occasion of *Kālīpūjā* performed in Mataji's presence at Dacca. Usually fire is extinguished after the completion of a fire sacrifice. On that occasion however Mataji suggested that the fire should be preserved "With this fire a *Mahāyajña* will be lit," She remarked. This actually happened in Varanasi twenty years later when a *mahāyajña* of the grandeur of Vedic times was performed in our Varanasi Ashram for three whole years, starting and ending on January 14th. At the time of the partition, the fire had been transferred to Vindhyachal from Dacca and later also to Varanasi and Calcutta. It was subsequently removed from Vindhyachal and Calcutta and shifted to Kalyanvan (Dehradun) and Naimisharanya. Now it has been shifted to Kankhal from Dehradun. *Sat Chandi* was performed in the Ashram hall by several pandits the next few days and Mataji left Kankhal for Delhi on January 18th. Mataji is expected to leave Delhi on the 21st for an undisclosed destination. It is not yet known where Saraswati Pūjā and Sivaratri will be observed. Mataji is expected to be in Kankhal again for Didima's Utsava in April and also for the celebrations of Her birthday in May.