

*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.)

Life must become significant, its purpose fulfilled. In an atmosphere of truth (*satpariveśa*), by righteous actions (*sat kriya*), appropriate to one's particular *āśrama*¹ (stage of life), one should, like a bee search out carefully and try to adopt what will bring about awareness of God (*Bhagavat bhāva*) with every single breath.

* * *

Thoughts that are not conducive to the contemplation of Reality must be relinquished. Use your will-power to perform deeds directed to the Divine (*Bhagavat kārya*), this indeed is your wealth—the pilgrimage to your own real treasure. Wherever thoughts of the Eternal (*satchintā*) awaken, there one should stay.

* * *

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1. *Āśrama* According to the Hindu system, human life is divided into four successive stages or *āśramas* looked at from the viewpoint of the pilgrim on the spiritual path. These are *brahmachārya*, *grihastha*, *vānanrastha*, *samāsa*. Each *āśrama* has different duties to perform.

Ma said : Look, since you have come here to be sādhus, do not lend a hand to any vain, dishonest enterprise, unworthy of a sādhu. The whole universe is one Ātmā—for the sake of this realisation you have indeed chosen this path. Conduct must be in keeping with your sublime aim—friendliness towards all. The *ātmā* is one; endeavour to be ever engrossed in actions and in service that will help to foster the remembrance of this fact.

* * *

All without exception are wielded by Him as His instruments. Cover your ears with your hands and you will notice that the machine is working—the mechanism that has been set in motion in the mother's womb in the fifth month. Thus Ma always maintains : "Whatever anyone may do or say, it is the One alone who pervades everything, everywhere. Therefore the Supreme Father, Supreme Mother, Beloved, Lord, Friend is God Himself. He dwells within all and God Himself is manifested in everyting"

* * *

Do not utter any thing unbecoming, unseemly. As far as possible arrange that giving *darśana* to this beggar* (Ma) may proceed in an atmosphere of calm

* Ma sometimes refers to Her own person as "beggar". She never says that She gives *darśana* but rather that She has God's *darśana* in everyone who comes to Her.

and quiet. God in the guise of men, women and children - from what distances they all come, takings much trouble. At times discussions about divine things also create a spiritual atmosphere. Therefore patiently examine and listen to everything before taking action.

* * *

When those who are addicted to alcohol and to numerous other ugly and disgusting habits feel inclined to perform worship or similar practices in the manner of the Lord's devotees, must be understood to be doue to God's infinite, causeless grace, and consequently one endeavours to give them here the opportunity for this sort of beneficial activity. If by such worship or divine service their minds be transformed and they be enabled to lead lives of ideal householders with the ancient Ṛsis as their models—this is what ashramites should try to encourage.

* * *

To remain pledged constantly to the pilgrimage that has God-realisation as its goal is man's duty. In all work one has to dedicate oneself to the lotusfeet of the Lord.

—

Mother of Joy

Philotheos

Mother of joy,
Mother of pain,
Mother of deserts,
Mother of rain
Mother of forests
Mother of fire.
Mother of prayer.
My heart's true desire.
Mother of laughter,
Mother of birth,
Mother of dying
Mother of earth.
Mother of galaxies,
Stars, moon and sun.
Mother of rivers
This flow to the One.
Mother of weeping
And sorrowful tears.
Mother of sunshine
Dissolving my fears.
Mother of beauty
Constant and pure.
Mother of illness
Recovery and cure.

Mother of ages.
Mother of space
Mother of sighing
Mother of grace.
Mother despondent
With motherly love;
Mother resplendent
A white quiet dove.
Mother of bridges.
Mother of rocks.
Mother of roses.
Door without locks.
Mother of silver,
Mother of gold.
Mother of warmth
And mother of cold.
Mother of poverty.
Mother of wealth.
Mother of sickness
Mother of health.
Dear Mother
You've done the
impossible task.
You've melted my heart.
Take my life now, I ask.

Mātri Satsang

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

(19)

Ahemedabad May 5th, 1957.

Question : God has so many times taken birth in incarnations on this earth; how is it that we continue to remain ignorant ?

Mataji : You have listened to so much godly talk out of the Srimad Bhāgavata and still your questions remain unanswered ?

Questioner : We do not understand.

Avoice : You speak from too high a level.

Mataji : Play the instrument on a low level and then listen to it. You will hear exactly as you play. In fact you will hear your own self speaking.

Question : Why does God not take pity on us ?

Mataja : Continue to pray. Some time or other it will strike the right chord and draw a response.

Question : Suppose someone is bitten by a scorpion. Those who know how it is done can by the potency of their

mantras take away the pain within fifteen minutes. In three hours a complete cure is effected. But those who repeat the name of Rāma do not seem to be able to drive out evil or to do anything else.

Mataji : It can never be that the name of Rāma is repeated in *japa* and evil is not thereby counteracted.

Question : Those who cure the sting of a scorpion repeat their mantra only once a year for three hours while others cannot do anything effective in spite of performing *japa* of the name of Rāma throughout the year. What is the reason for this ?

Mataji : Here something has to be made clear. Mahāt-mās say, do not even give a thought to the result of your devotions. To engage in *japa* of the name of Rāma and at the same time to look for the benefit to be derived from it is not right. It just cannot be that Rāma will not remove your sorrow. The person who is able to cure scorpion bite cannot cure anything else, as for instance snake bite. There are different mantras for snake bite. All these mantras and tantras are contained within God. Siva and Visnu have to be invoked by separate mantras. The mantras originating from *Rṣis* have definite power. Just as when I exclaim "father", you will reply, "yes !" When called in anger you would respond in a different manner. By mantra *japa* the threefold suffering of the world is appeased. Just as snake poison is counteracted by certain special mantras, so it is possible to bring to a standstill the tortuous course of this poisonous world by the power of God's holy name. If you utter the name of Rāma

with your last breath you will conquer death itself. Keep on repeating "Rāma, Rāma" and do not even look for the results to be obtained. Actually, if you hanker after results it must be understood that you are not seeking immortality. As you sow, so exactly will you reap. The results of your evil ways are most certainly accumulating in the measure as you practise them. When there is a desire for the fruit of action, you are bound to reap it. Who is God? From where do you derive the capacity to utter "I"? God is the mechanic who runs the machine, it is He who is making everyone move. Keep on repeating "Rāma, Rāma." The more you do so the keener will your inner eagerness grow. The *sādhaka* thinks he is dying. "Rāma" means *ārāma*, rest and peace. *Ātmārāma*, the Rāma in your soul, will not let you die, on the contrary your eagerness to realise God will increase even more. Thereby your impure desires will be blotted out and the name of Rāma will never again forsake you. Oh Rāma, how comforting it is to utter Thy name !

May 6th, 1957.

Question : When I look at a deity in a temple, I do not feel I am seeing God.

Mataji : You may not see, but it can never be that God does not see you. Once a blind man went to Badrinārāyaṇ. People asked him : "You are blind; why do you take the trouble to go on this pilgrimage to Badrinath? What will you see there?" He replied : "Of course, I cannot see. But surely God will see me !" When real, genuine *darśana* supervenes, no further questions can arise. Where a living being (*jīva*) is, there is Siva. So long as God exists, the "I" exists as

well. God is self-effulgent. Father, you have spoken out of ignorance, from what you have read in books or heard from others. Or have you first-hand experience ?

Questioner : No, I have learnt from the *Śāstras* (Hindu Scriptures.)

Mataji : This body declares that you are ever and at all times in the presence of God. From the standpoint of the *ātmā*, there is one *ātmā* and nothing else. Or you can also look upon yourself as God's servant. Such is the knowledge of the wise. When was I not ? I am always in His closest proximity. In dissatisfaction God manifests. Try to realize God by following to the instructions of your Guru. You are shedding tears because you have not yet found Him. Such is the intense longing which leads to God - revelation. Separation from Him persists. First there is a meeting with God, then a parting, then again union. When God becomes revealed, He is glimpsed in ever new and different forms.

In course of further conversation, Mataji said : "Sons and daughters are born of fathers and mothers. This body asserts that you yourself are born in the guise of your son. Father, husband and son are all contained in you. Everything is indeed present in man and woman. You will find your son, daughter and wife within yourself. All are fathers and mothers, all are God's children. In very truth, it is you yourself who appear in all forms. To realize God is to realize your own Self. The Lord showed to Arjuna Himself as the glorious universe in minute details. Arjuna got frightened. Had Arjuna then realized himself, he would not have felt afraid. At first he was unable to bear the vision of the Lord, it was only when

the Lord bestowed divine sight on him that he could have darśana. God let him see that in Him was contained the entire universe, static, dynamic and beyond—all He Himself. Thus one's son is called "*ātmāja*" born of the Self. If anybody asked this body, "How many mothers and fathers have you?" Then this body would reply: "The one and only Father as well as an infinite number of fathers; the one and only Mother as well as an infinite number of mothers." Again, who is anyone's father or mother? *There* the question of father or mother cannot arise at all. Lord Almighty, all are indeed your own forms.

Try to realize your Self! Who are you? Ponder over this! *Sāghanā* means *svadhana* (own wealth) in other words, trying to recover one's own treasure. It is all the Lord's play; God residing in their innermost hearts, directs everybody. He has given you strength and capacity, apply it in the search of God.

You were spending your time attending to your own affairs. Who has given you the idea to arrange for this *Bhāgavata Saptāha*? (Mataji looks at Mukundbhai.) It is the Lord Himself who is responsible for this knowledge being revealed on your behalf. Genuine yearning has not come about even now, otherwise true Realisation would certainly have taken place. It does not take a minute, not even a second for God to reveal Himself.

May 7th, 1957

Question : What is real *ānanda* like ?

Mataji : Suppose someone is eating a sweet and somebody else asks him what it is like. The one who eats cannot explain to the questioner how exactly it tastes. Or, someone sees a lovely flower and is asked to describe its beauty. He cannot put into language what precisely he experiences. Similarly, when you ask what real bliss is like, this cannot be conveyed in words. It can only be realized.

Question : Faith awakens gradually. Why do some have little faith and others much ?

Mataji : You yourself exist in all forms. It is you who appear in your child. Mangoes grow on mango trees and jack-fruit on jack-fruit trees. Such is the gradual development of the tree, in this process its infinite variety is contained in its entirety. The crown is the root of the tree, as the Gītā says "*ūrdha mūlam adha śākha*" ("With roots above and branches below.") God is of infinite forms, His manifestation takes place in infinite ways, His power is infinite. A mother who has several children will let each one have precisely what he or she needs. To a child of twelve she gives rice to eat and to a one year old baby milk to drink. For each child she provides exactly what is necessary for his well-being. Just as you become learned by progressive study, so this may also come about without gradual procedure. "There", gradual procedure and immediate attainment—both are possible.

An Unknown Village Girl becomes the Mother of Millions

(*Continued from the last issue*)

Anil Ganguli

Nirmala Sundari becomes the "Mother of Shahbag"

In 1924 Bholanath got employment as the Manager of the estate of the Nawab of Dacca and started living in his quarters at Shahbag gardens on the outskirts of the city of Dacca. It was here that Ma's motherliness, which had so long been lying almost hidden and dormant within Her, suddenly sprouted and emerged into the light of day; it passed beyond the narrow bounds of Her home and suddenly made itself felt by outsiders, so that even strangers who saw Her for the first time were secretly impelled to call Her *Ma*. Very quickly She became known as the Ma of Shahbag.

In the beginning Ma's admirers at Dacca were confined to the middle class. Hiranbala Ghosh, a lady belonging to a respectable family, used to pay homage to Her every day. Her mother-in-law wondered why it should be necessary to go to Shahbag so often; even if Hiranbala was religious, religion could as well be practised at home. Hiranbala, the helpless daughter-in-law, could not exactly explain why she felt a mysterious pull towards Ma and so desperately wanted to meet Her every day. Recalling this past experience Hiranbala said later on : "I don't think I used to go there for religion.

I went there, because I had no peace if I failed to see this young lady even one day'. Hiranbala represented the emotional type among Ma's "children" in Dacca. There was also a group of intellectuals to which belonged Pran Gopal Mukherji, Deputy Post Master General, Dr. Sasanka Mohan Mukherji, Civil Surgeon, Jyotish Chandra Roy, later known as 'Bhaiji', (elder brother) who was an official of the Central Government posted in Dacca, and a group of professors such as Birendranath Mukherjee, Girija Shankar Bhattacharya, Amulya Datta Gupta, Atal Bihari Bhattacharya and Nani Gopal Bhattacharya. Besides, Ma's devotees included quite a few members of aristocratic families, such as Nawabzadi Pyari Banu, Jogesh Chandra Ghosh, a member of the Board of Trustees for the Nawab's estate, and Nisi Kanta Mitra, Zemindar of Shyamsiddhi.

A picture of the atmosphere in Shahbag centered on Ma has been given by the late Dr. Nalini Kanta Brahma, Professor of Philosophy, Presidency College, Calcutta as follows :—“It was a cold evening in December, 1924, when I was taken to Shahbag for a *darśana* of the Mother by Rai Bahadur Pran Gopal Mukherji. We were taken straight to the room where Mother was sitting alone deeply absorbed in meditation. A dim lamp was burning in front of Her and that was perhaps the only thing in the room. Mother's face was completely hidden from our view as in those days She used to veil it exactly like a newly married village girl. After we had waited there for about half an hour, suddenly the veil loosened itself and Mother's face became visible in all its brilliance and lustre. Hymns containing many seed mantras began to be recited by the Mother in uncommon accents, producing wonderful reso-

nance, which affected the whole surroundings. The stillness of the cold December night, the loneliness of the Shahbag gardens and above all the sublimity and serenity of the atmosphere in the Mother's room—all combined to produce a sense of holiness. As long as we were in the room, we felt an indescribable elevation of the spirit, a silence and a depth not previously experienced, a peace that passeth all understanding.*

Among the devotees who were instrumental in the shaping of the events that seem to have given Ma the position She occupies today in the eye of the public, four deserve special mention. Foremost amongst them is Bhaiji. His *Matri Darśana* (translated into English under the title "*Mother as Revealed to Me*") and "*Sad Vani*" are priceless expositions of Ma's teachings and the ideals She stands for. No less important is Bhaiji's contribution to the organisation of Ashrams and centres for the spread of knowledge about Ma. He was the guiding spirit behind the founding and maintenance of the *Anandamayi Ashram* at Dacca, and later on at Dehradun. Again, posterity is indebted to Bhaiji as the composer of the great hymn known as *Matri-Vandana* sung in Anandamayi Ashrams every evening. Lastly, in his *Twelve Precepts* Bhaiji has propounded, in the clearest terms, his conviction regarding the spiritual identity and status of Ma and has laid down guidelines for Her future "children" in their approach to Her. This epistle is a Bible to them.

Sri Gurupriya Devi (popularly known as Didi, that is, elder sister), daughter of Dr. Sasanka Mohan Mukherji

* "*Mother as Seen by Her Devotees*", p. 38.

mentioned above, is another great figure in the drama of Ma's mystical life. Born in a respected and well-to-do family, Didi had been given in marriage when she was quite young. But the worldly life of a householder had no charm for her. She was cut out for a career in the spiritual line. Didi lost no time to make up her mind and to dedicate herself to the service of Ma. The opportune moment came when Ma said to her : "God has sent you. This body is unable to do all kinds of work nowadays and so God has sent you as a help."* Ever since, Didi has been to Ma at once a daughter and a sister, a friend and an attendant, a counsellor and a private secretary. Bhaiji had the privilege of serving Ma for the short period of only thirteen years, terminated by his premature death. Didi has been Ma's constant companion (with only occasional breaks) in different capacities. For several decades she was also the administratrix of Ma's vast Empire of Love. In the midst of her multifarious activities in Ma's service, Didi always managed to snatch some time for writing elaborate notes in Bengali on Ma's day to day life and to take down Her inspired utterances. These notes have been published in the form of an encyclopaedic collection, *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi*, of which seventeen volumes have come out in Bengali and twenty in Hindi. This publication, constituting Ma's life and teaching, is a standing testimony to Didi's unparalleled contribution to the cause of information and publicity about Ma. Incidentally, Ma is personally completely indifferent to publicity. To Her there is no difference between eminence and oblivion.

Didi's father, Dr. Sasanka Mohan Mukherji, was a man

* *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Gurupriya Devi, Vol. I, p. 6

of commanding personality and aristocratic bearing. Formerly a Civil Surgeon, he was a leading citizen of Dacca, highly esteemed by everyone, in particular by persons connected with his Hospital and Medical School. Deeply influenced by Ma, he forgot his official and social position. Normally used to a high standard of living, he completely changed his habits and mode of life at an advanced age and ultimately renounced the world to become a *saṁnyāsi* under the name of Swami Akhandananda Giri. The magnitude of his spiritual attainment can be inferred from the fact that Ma entrusted to him the responsible task of giving initiation to some spiritual aspirants approaching Her for guidance.

Pran Gopal Mukherji, referred to above, also deserves special mention. He was a disciple of Sri Sri Balananda Brahmachariji Maharaj of Deoghar, a universally revered saint of an all-India stature. Pran Gopal had already been quite advanced in theoretical knowledge and practical *sādhana* when he had Ma's *darśana*. Himself a man of wisdom and spiritual realisation with a saintly character, he could easily recognize the amplitude and uniqueness of Ma's spiritual greatness. At the early stage of Ma's stay in Dacca people knew little about Her and She became the subject of conflicting speculation. To Pran Gopal belongs the credit of apprising the residents of Dacca about Ma's spiritual stature. Besides, he played an important part in giving publicity to Ma by introducing Her to his great Guru and his followers as we shall see later.

Manifestation of supernatural powers

Ma's advent at Shahbag, Dacca, was marked by manifestations of Her supernatural powers which created quite a

sensation in the city. Curiosity about Her was now accompanied by awe and wonder. People were struck by Her power of reading their minds – a power which proved embarrassing in some cases. Again, foretelling the future, healing ailments, and other miracles became common occurrences. Not that Ma did anything deliberately; the events, as She said later, just happened “automatically”. It was all *kheyāla*. Out of the numerous miracles that came about in Dacca let us mention only two which brought Ma into the limelight.

In Her early twenties while Ma was at Bajitpur, the image of a tree flashed before Her “mind’s eye” in a trance-like state and the sound of two words came floating, as it were, into Her ears - first “Siddheswari” (suggesting the name of a place) and secondly “tree.” A few years later She came to Dacca and enquired of Bholanath as to where Siddheswari was. Bholanath could not enlighten Her on the matter. One day most unexpectedly a friend of his volunteered to take Bholanath and Ma to a temple of Goddess Kali situated in a very lonely locality not far from Shahbag. This was the place known as Siddheswari. It had a tradition of sacred associations for centuries. Sankaracharya (788-820 A. D.), the great exponent of *Advaita* (non-dualism) is supposed to have spent some time there.* On reaching Siddheswari, Ma saw a fallen tree, and She at once recognized that it was the identical one that had flashed before Her “mind’s eye” at Bajitpur. She then touched it caressingly. Some time thereafter Ma and Bholanath spent a few days in the Siddheswari temple. On the eighth day occurred a chain of miracles. The gist of what Ma said later in this connection is given below** :—

* From the Life of Sri Anandamayi Ma, p. 46.

** *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Sri Gurupriya Devi, Vol. I, p. 44.

“On the eighth day there was a heavy downpour early in the morning. I beckoned to Bholanath to follow me and then we stepped out of the temple. I had no idea whether there was a path and where. We proceeded direct to the north and at last this body came to a halt at a certain spot. I circumambulated a plot of ground thrice (in the manner of the ritual of *pradskshina*, that is to say, walking round a temple or deity three times). Facing south, I drew a mystic circle and sat down on the ground where I had been standing. Thereafter something like Sanskrit hymns started welling spontaneously out of me. After sitting down I placed my palm on the level ground in front and pressed it. It was surprising indeed that layer after layer of earth commenced sliding away, and down went my hand till my entire arm sank deep into the earth, unimpeded, right up to my shoulderjoint. Then Bholanath caught hold of my arm and pulled it out. At the same time warm reddish water spouted forth from the hole thus made. I then asked Bholanath to dip his hand into the hole but he would not agree to do so. I said : “There is no cause for fear; it is necessary for you to insert your hand; do it.” Thereupon Bholanath also inserted his arm and said : “The ground seems to be hollow and it is warm.” As soon as Bholanath withdrew his arm, warm reddish water started oozing out of the hole. We stood there for some time and watched the water trickling down on the ground. Ultimately we sealed the mouth of the hole with clay and came away.”

It has since been disclosed by Ma that Bholanath practised *sādhana* at Siddheswari in one of his previous births. Perhaps this is why Ma had insisted on Bholanath dipping his hand into the mysterious hole.

The discovery of Siddheswari was a great event. It was astounding. It arrested the attention of the residents of Dacca, big and small, and became the talk of the town. It raised a number of questions not answerable by logic as we understand it. How could Ma in Bajitpur have had a vision of the very same tree that later on was seen by Her in Siddheswari? And how could the name "Siddheswari" occur to Her—a name never before heard by Her, not even by Bholanath? Again, what was really the occasion for Her to brave the elements early in the morning? Besides, out of four directions why was the north, in particular, chosen by Her for an 'aimless' adventure? And what made Her stop at a particular point, instead of proceeding further north or in any other direction? Then how was it that the earth spontaneously slid away under Her palm, without the aid of a shovel and without digging? All these questions are pertinent. It was perfectly clear from Ma's utterances that not a single act done by Her had sprung from any will of Her own, but each step was prompted by what She calls *kheyāla*. After discovery of the *kunda* (spring) in mysterious circumstances as stated above Siddheswari acquired a special sanctity. Under Ma's inspiration it became a sacred centre of regular *kirtana* and *satsang*.

Here is another amazing illustration of a miracle. Ma was once photographed by one Sashi Bhusan Dasgupta, who used eighteen plates out of which the first seventeen were totally blank. Only the last one could be developed into a good portrait of Ma, with a ball of light on Her forehead which could not be accounted for. What was still more strange, the figure of Bhajji appeared behind Ma's. The photographer was simply amazed, because at the relevant time Bhajji was

far beyond the range of the camera so that there was absolutely no chance of his being impressed on the plate. In this connection Bhaiji has observed :—

“When the photograph was received, people suspected some trick of the photographer in developing it. But when Mother was approached about the matter, She expressed Herself thus : ‘When this body lay in a dark room in an almost frozen condition, the whole room was flooded with light. When you brought this body out into the sunshine, the radiance was there, but it gradually shrank into a ball of light on the forehead. There was a *kheyāla* that at that time Jyotish (Bhaiji) was standing behind me. Now it is for you to judge what made the photo come out as it did.’* In the photograph Bhaiji’s figure appeared behind Ma’s—this is a fact which can be seen. Bhaiji was nowhere near the range of the camera: this is a statement made by the photographer and confirmed by Bhaiji. The whole thing is mysterious. The mystery has been attributed by Ma to Her *kheyāla*.

Instances of miracles of the astounding nature narrated above are rare in the drama of Ma’s mystical life. Indeed, show of supernatural powers is not in Her line. What Ma stands for is not miracles, but *ānandam*. Let us relate the genesis of Her name Anandamayī.

The Mother of Shahbag aureoled with the name of Anandamayī

The Mother of Shahbag was also known as the Mother of Dacca; but neither of these names were a measure of Her

* *Mother as revealed to me* by Bhaiji (4th Ed.) p. 115.

plenitude. Destined to be the Universal Mother She could not, in the fitness of things, be identified with reference to a small locality, or a single town, however large. The dictionary meaning of the word "*dhaka*" (as Dacca is spelt and pronounced in Bengali) is "covered". "*Dhaka*" was, really, a misnomer in Ma's case. As we have already seen, it was at Dacca that Her universal motherliness started opening up. Awakened like a sprouting bud, as it were, it suddenly blossomed into a colourful flower with a delicious perfume that spread far and wide. Moreover, Ma is self-luminous - how could Her lustre remain screened (*dhaka*) within the bounds of Dacca town ? Indeed, within a year of Her advent at Dacca She outgrew both Her names : Mother of Shahbag and Mother of Dacca.

No wonder, in the fulness of time Ma came to be aureoled with a name pre-eminently worthy of Her—'*Ānandamayī*.' The transition was sudden—it happened to be the culmination of an interesting episode with a profound significance. One day, a few months after his first *darśana* of Ma, J. C. Roy (Bhaiji) was busy at his desk, waiting for the Chief of his Department, Director of Agriculture, to take over charge of office on the expiry of long leave. Suddenly came a message from Ma that She wanted Bhaiji immediately at Shahbag. This must have been embarrassing for him at the moment. The messenger added that he had informed Ma of Bhaiji's urgent commitments at office that day, but Her reply was : "You are to carry the message to Jyotish (Bhaiji); let him do what he thinks proper." This was really a crucial moment for Bhaiji; but he instinctively rose to the occasion, and prompt was his decision. Was Ma putting her most devoted "child" to an acute test of faith and loyalty ? of absolute surrender ?

Let us have the rest of the story in the words of Bhaiji *himself : "Without a moment's hesitation I left all the papers spread out on my desk, and without informing anybody in the office, started for Shahbag. When I arrived there, Mother said : 'Let us go to Siddheswari Ashram.' I accompanied Mother and Pitaji (Bholanath)."

Bhaiji was destined to play at Siddheswari an important role in the drama of Ma's mystical life. No wonder some unseen force prompted him to walk out of the office most unceremoniously, oblivious of his official responsibilities. The day became memorable for what most unexpectedly happened at Siddheswari thereafter. "There was", Bhaiji continues, "a small hollow. Mother sat inside the hollow and Her face was beaming with a smile, breathing radiant joy. I exclaimed to Pitaji : 'From today we shall call Mother by the name of Ānandamayi'. He at once said : 'Yes, be it so'. She glanced at me with a fixed gaze without saying a word."

The deep significance of the incident narrated above has to be read in the light of the conversation between Ma and Bhaiji that followed : "When we were about to return", continues Bhaiji, "She enquired, 'You were all along so full of joy, how is it that you now look so pale?' I replied that the thought of going home had made me think of the unfinished work at the office. She said, 'You need not worry about it'. Next day when I went to office, the Director said nothing about my absence on the previous day. I asked Mother why She had called me so unexpectedly. She said : 'To test how far you have gone ahead during these few months'. She added

* Mother as Revealed to Me, p. 14.

with a genial laugh, 'If you had not come, who else would have given a name to this body.'**

This is how the Mother of Shahbag came to be aureoled with the name of *Ānandamayī*—a hallowed name which welled out of the mouth of Bhaiji in a flash of inspiration on the holy ground of Siddheswari. Undoubtedly, it was under the spell of Ma's *kheyāla* that Bhaiji had been induced to neglect his work at office and to take the plunge—an undue risk, without any forethought of the possible consequences.

Ānandam is a Sanskrit word variously translated into English as joy, bliss, delight, happiness, felicity and beatitude. But *ānandam*, as revealed to the seers of India, conveys a deeper meaning—it is the Bliss of the Divine Being, the Impersonal, Eternal, Self-conscious One. In fact *ānandam* is *Brahman*. "Beings are born of *ānandam*; when born, they live by *ānandam*; and into *ānandam*, when departing, they enter."**

This subject of *ānandam* has been touched by Ma in several letters dictated by Her in Bengali in reply to supplications from Her "children"—persons suffering from one or the other of the necessary evils incidental to ordinary human existence on earth, such as bereavements, disillusionments, feeling of frustration in life, attacks of hostile forces within, waning of faith, vagaries of an uncurbed and erratic mind and protracted physical ailments. In every case Ma has suggested practically the same sovereign remedy : sincere search within for God, the ultimate source of *ānandam*. It is worthwhile to quote some extracts from these letters (translated into English

* "Mother as Revealed to me." by Bhaiji (4th Ed.) p. 14-15.

** *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 6/1.

by Atmananda and published in two books entitled *Matri Vani* Vol. I and II), remarkable for their freshness and naive simplicity.

“God alone is Truth, Happiness, Bliss. Do not set your hopes on anything except Supreme Beatitude, the Bliss of the Self. Naught else exists. What seems to exist outside of it is merely illusion. Try to find your Self.”

× × ×

“On the journey through life in this world nobody remains happy. The pilgrimage to the Goal of human life is the only path to supreme happiness. Try to tread that path which is your very own, where there is no question of pleasure and pain, the path that leads to freedom from egotism and to the highest Bliss.”

× × ×

“Joys and sorrows are time-born and obviously cannot last; therefore do not be swayed by them. Keep in mind that they must pass in time. Aiming at the Highest, hold your course and attend to your work, totally unconcerned with the results.”

× × ×

“It is desire that causes sorrow; but the will to realise God is itself felicity. Be certain that He will cleanse and comfort you and take you into His arms.”

× × ×

“Relative happiness, which is happiness depending on anything, must end in grief,”

x

x

x

“Whatever you may desire that is of this changing world will bring you sorrow.”

x

x

x

“Perfect resignation gives the deepest joy of all. Accept it as your sole resource. Whatever God does at any time is wholly benign. If you can bear this in mind you will be at peace.”

x

x

x

“To dwell in the joy that springs from the mind’s constant occupation with things divine is man’s duty. Thinking of anything other than God is what creates sorrow. Be it *japa*, be it meditation, worship, the perusal of sacred texts, the simple awareness of God or a like device, be it *kirtan* or religious music--all these are different modes of being in the Divine Presence. One should always remain engaged in one of them.”

x

x

x

“The Supreme is Joy itself. This is why the goal of life for all sentient beings is Joy (*ānanda*). At all times give and receive happiness, hear and see the delightful; thus you will be able to live blissfully. Gloom is the token of death, no one in the entire universe welcomes it. If dejection does steal into your heart, drive it away by force. Say to yourself: ‘Why should I, who am a scion of Joy-Supreme, feel downcast?’”

Ma Anandamāyī is absorbed in *ānandam*. She is the embodiment of *ānandam*.

Admired or idolized by householders and venerated by saints

Ma Anandamāyī had the gift of prepossessing beauty resembling that of a goddess. Her physical beauty was a reflection of Beauty Divine. Ma's attraction was magnetic and Her sanctifying company created among the elite of Dacca a new kind of enthusiasm for *kīrtana* and *satsang* not hitherto experienced. They set an inspiring example which was emulated by others. People belonging to different sections of society and professing different faiths flocked to Her. "Hindus, Muslims and all other communities in the world are one. They all worship one Supreme Being and call for His mercy. *Kīrtana* and *Nemaz* are one and the same." This is Ma's message to Her "children".* Her catholicity brought both Hindus and Moslems close to Her. Her *kīrtana* was superb. On occasions She also chanted verses from the *Koran*. Once a Mohammedan youth who heard Her chanting "*Allah, Alla-ho-Akbar*" observed: "The ease and distinctness with which Mother called out the name of Allah was beyond our best efforts."*

Admired by all who came in contact with Her, Ma appeared to many to be the embodiment of Divinity as conceived by them according to their lights. Naturally they idolized Her.

Ma's admirers were not confined to householders; saints also paid their homage to Her already in Her early thirties. To mention only two: Sri Sri Ram Thakur and Sri Sri Bala-

* *Mother as revealed to me* by Bhaiji, p. 103.

nanda Brahmachariji Maharaj. The former was a renowned spiritual personality, regarded as a man of God in East Bengal (now Bangladesh). He was once brought to Ma by one of his disciples. This universally revered saint, considerably senior to Ma in age, showed his respect for Her by offering *pranāma* (i. e. making obeisance) by lying prostrate. It was well-known that he was not in the habit of showing such profound reverence to anybody. Ma seemed to gracefully accept the great saint's *pranāma* and remained standing with folded hands. One of Ram Thakur's disciples, surprised at this unusually reverential approach of his Guru, asked him point blank why he lay prostrate in obeisance before Ma Anandamayi who was like a daughter to him. Sri Ram Thakur said in answer : "I offered *pranāma* to one who deserved it from me." Moreover, he advised many to go to Dacca and have *darśana* of Ma. "She is", he added, "the Divine Mother incarnate".* Ma's attitude in this connection is also worth noting. Some disciples of Sri Ram Thakur raised a point as to why Ma did not return their Guru's obeisance. On hearing this from one Pran Kumar, Ma said in reply, "Tell them that the feet of the saint are always on my head." Ma's words implied that She had the highest reverence for the saint, and the saint also knew it.

In 1926, Pran Gopal Mukherji took Ma to the ashram of his Guru Sri Sri Balananda Brahmachari at Deoghar (in Bihar) where She stayed for about a week. About one hundred years old at that time, the great saint recalled that once in the past he had seen Ma on an ethereal plane, and now he most reverentially welcomed Her second visit to him, this time

* *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Gurupriya Devi, Vol. II, p. 341,

in the physical world.** He used to hold Ma in the highest veneration and once told Dr. Sasanka Mohan Mukherji : "Ma is not an ordinary spiritual aspirant; She is a realized soul. Beings like Her require no efforts in the line of spiritual pursuits.'***

Dr. Nalini Kanta Brahma, a disciple of Sri Sri Balananda Brahmachariji Maharaj, was present in Deoghar during Ma's visit. He has observed : "Sri Sri Balananda Brahmachari Maharaj used to have conversations on spiritual topics with the Mother for long hours both morning and evening. *Nāma Kirtana* was held in the *Ashram* and Mother went into states of deep *samādhi*. One evening after the *samādhi*, Mother was almost dancing with joy whilst singing "Hari Om". She sang in such a sweet and melodious voice that it seemed to all present that She could not be a human being but must be a Goddess in human form. Sri Sri Brahmachariji Maharaj himself remarked that he had carefully observed that Her feet did not touch the ground and this was to him conclusive proof that She was the Divine Mother Incarnate."*

Recognition by Sri Sri Balanandaji Maharaj in the manner described above had a profound effect on his disciples, including Sri Mohanananda Maharaj, now himself the Guru of thousands of disciples in India and abroad, and Bijan Kumar Mukherji, then an advocate who later rose to be the Chief Justice of India.

** *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Gurupriya Debi, Vol. I, p. 95

*** *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Gurupriya Debi, Vol. I, p. 199.

* *Mother as seen by Her devotees* published by Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha (2nd Ed.) p. 39.

On Her way from Dacca to Deoghar Ma had paid Her first visit to Calcutta. By that time She had outlived the stage of secluded life and had taken one step forward towards emerging as the Universal Mother. She was then little known in Calcutta. But even so, strangers who may or may not have heard Her name before were mysteriously drawn towards Her to pay their spontaneous homage. With Ma as the centre, a spiritual atmosphere of *kīrtan* and *satsang* was created within a short time as if by magic. In Calcutta She was warmly received by a small group of admirers to start with. Some well-known men joined the group and thus was formed in that mammoth metropolis a nucleus of devotees which, in course of a few years, acquired enormous proportions. At a later stage some residents of Calcutta started calling Ma "*Manush Kali*" (Goddess Kali in human form).*

Some time after Her departure from Calcutta Ma visited Her paternal home at the village Vidyakut (now in Bangla Desh). Some friends of Her childhood days, mightily pleased to see Her after the lapse of a long period, gossiped among themselves that their dear old Nirmala was being considered by some people to be "*Manush Kali*." Hearing this Ma remarked in a light vein : "Well, well, how could I be Kali ? There might have been some point in the remark had my complexion been dark."**

The events that happened in a gigantic city like Calcutta as stated above are inexplicable. So also what happened

* *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Gurupriya Debi, Vol. II, p. 244.

** *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Gurupriya Devi, Vol. VII p. 247.

The complexion of the Goddess Kali is dark whereas Ma's complexion in those days was very fair.

some time later in Tarapeeth, an insignificant village in West Bengal far away from Dacca, famous as a place of pilgrimage. Ma remained in Tarapeeth only for a few days and used to move about all alone in the neighbouring places. The local people had never seen Her before nor heard Her name. Yet somehow or other many of them, particularly the women, got intensely attracted towards Her and would feed Her with simple and cheap items of food such as *moori* (puffed rice) and *chira* (flattened rice). Ma used to accept their humble offerings which were, as it were, "dishes of herb were love is." On the day of Her departure Tarapeeth witnessed a pathetic scene. The local ladies, mostly belonging to the families of the priests, expressed their deep sorrow on the eve of their losing Her company. As the sound of the horn of the car was heard, one of them gave expression to their pangs of separation comparing them with those of the *Gopis* (milk-maids) of Vrindaban when Akrur came to take away Sri Krishna to Mathura. Ma consoled them by making light of Herself, telling them that She was just an ordinary person like them and thanked them for their kindness. The ladies objected to Ma's statement that She was an ordinary person and asserted that She was no other than "*Ma Bhāgavati*" (a manifestation of the Divine Mother). Even now the elder generation of Tarapeeth refers to Ma Anandamayi as '*Ma Bhagavati*'.

It is surely remarkable that saints like Sri Sri Ram Thakur and Sri Sri Bālananda Brahmachari, unsophisticated rustic women of Tarapeeth, and some householders of the metropolis of Calcutta all agreed on one point, namely, that Ma was an incarnation of the Divine Mother.

Recognised by great savants of Varanasi

In 1928 Ma went to Varanasi and stopped at the house of Kunja Mohan Mukherji, brother of Dr. Sasanka Mohan Mukherji of Dacca. Her visit created a sensation in that ancient city with a sacred tradition of centuries. One of its highly esteemed residents, Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanabha Vidya Vinode, a recognised intellectual giant of those days, was also known for his fastidious and caustic criticism of men and matters. He would spare none from his disparagement. Such was his yardstick for measuring the values he cherished that it would indeed be a rare instance, if somebody could elicit a word of praise or admiration from him. Even a critic like Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanabha Vidya Vinode had to concede that Ma seemed to be "a *Yogi* of the highest order.* He advised another intellectual giant of Varanasi, Mahamahopadyaya Gopinath Kaviraj, to meet Her, adding that "the sight of Mother, absorbed in *samādhi*" was "really an ennobling one".** His commendation carried great weight. And Gopinath Kaviraj, who was not only a scholar but also a spiritual aspirant, took the earliest opportunity to pay homage to Ma. The latter's impression has been recorded in words as follows :—

"I can only say that what I actually saw with my own eyes far exceeded anything of a like nature I had ever seen before; it was a dream, as it were, realized in life. During the few days that Mother was at Banaras, Kunja Babu's house

* Article by Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj in Shree Shree Muktananda Giri Birth Centenary, p. 7.

** *Mother as seen by Her devotees* published by Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha (2nd Ed.) p. 160.

presented a spectacle of festive jubilation where an unending stream of visitors continued to flow in every day from before sunrise till after midnight. The doors of the house were kept open all the time and everybody was always welcome. High officials, pandits, University students, shop-keepers, sādhus, priests, lay men and women in the street—all flocked in numbers, each at his own convenient hour, to have a glimpse of Her *darśana*, to pay their respects to Her and if possible, to exchange with Her a few words. People of both sexes, of all ages and all ranks, were to be found in the crowd. Some came to have Her *darśana* only, a few to have their doubts solved, while others still were there out of mere curiosity. The beauty of it was that all felt a sort of magnetic charm in Mother's personality, so that those who had come once out of curiosity could not resist the temptation of coming back again, no longer out of curiosity which had been satisfied but owing to some mysterious attraction. The fact is that all felt that they were like children in the presence of their own mother. The bleakness of cold formalities was replaced by the warmth of familiarity and intimacy. Mother behaved with them as if they were Her own children—dear, affectionate and very familiar. There was not the least reserve in Her look nor any note of constraint in Her expression. The whole atmosphere was one of a friendly gathering imbued with vivacity and joyousness."

At the very first *darśana* Gopinath spontaneously enlisted himself as a "child" of the Mother, and thus he remained to his last breath. Ma also at once recognised his worth, accepted him as a "father" and called Herself his little child.

A few words about Gopinath Kaviraj will not be out of place in this connection because he seems to have played a

most important part in the process of Ma's emergence as the Universal Mother.

An eminent educationist, scholar, linguist and writer, Gopinath Kaviraj was a living encyclopaedia of Śāstras (scriptures) and a master of different branches of learning, such as Philosophy, Religion, History and Literature. He was the Principal of the Government Sanskrit College and associated with almost all Universities in India as an assessor of research work. Many honorary degrees were awarded to him by different Universities. The Government of India conferred on him the title of Mahamahopadhyaya in 1934 and Padmavibhusana in 1964. After his retirement from Government service in 1937, several Universities offered him the office of Vice-Chancellorship. He declined to accept any such offer, because he was absorbed in the pursuit of universal knowledge and practical *sādhana*.

This great "child" of Ma continued for several decades to be the unrivalled preceptor of other "children" of Hers at Sri Sri Anandamayi Ashram in Varanasi. An institution by himself, Gopinath Kaviraj was one of the best exponents of the ideals which Ma stands for. He has written volumes on Ma and subjects in relation to Her. His interpretation of *Āgamas*, *Tantras* and *Yoga Sutras* have illumined the minds of earnest seekers all over the globe. To mention only a few of his great books : *Bhāratīya Sādhana O Sanskriti*, *Tantra Sahitya*, *Memoirs*.

For twenty-four years he was the Editor-in-chief of *Ananda Vārtā*. Besides, he was the dynamic force behind all publications of *Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha*. From 1968

till his death in 1976 he remained in the Sri Anandamayee Ashram at Varanasi under Ma's special care. The heritage of his illuminating writings and the example of his immaculate life of dedication to the Divine will inspire seekers after Truth for ages to come.

**Philosophers struck by Ma's "intuitive"
knowledge of higher truths**

A number of eminent philosophers, including some of international repute, visited Dacca in 1929 in connection with a session of the Indian Philosophical Congress. Some delegates availed themselves of the opportunity of meeting Ma Anandamayī whose name they had heard. They assembled at Ma's house at the appointed time and held a discussion with Her lasting for about three hours. A Professor of Wilson College raised a barrage of questions. Dr. Mahendra Nath Sarkar (formerly Professor of Philosophy, Presidency College Calcutta) has observed : "All sorts of questions were put, mostly philosophical, and Mataji was ready with answers, spontaneously and immediately. There was no hesitation, not the least conscious thinking, nor the least sign of nervousness in Her. Her answers hit directly the point, free from metaphysical technique."* He added that all present were impressed by the 'profundity of Her wisdom, the fluency of Her expression and the luminosity of the smile on Her face.'

Once Dr. Sarkar asked Ma whether She had read Philosophy; Ma wondered why such a question was being put. The Professor said : "The answers that you give to our

* From the Life of Sri Anandamayī Ma by Bithika Mukerji, p. 175.

questions invariably correspond to what books on our Philosophy say. Now, how is this possible ?” “There is”, replied Ma, “a great book of life. To one who has dived deep into it, all truths of your Science, Philosophy and allied subjects never remain unexplored.”* This reply from Ma set the scholar athinking.

A similar observation was once made by Ma in a different context. Once Swami Akhandananda said : “Well, Ma, ‘You can speak in any language, I suppose !’ The gist of what Ma replied is as follows :—

“It is immaterial whether I can or not. But there is a plane which, once attained, enables one to speak in any language one likes. Look here ! Hymns and prayers in Sanskrit spontaneously emanate from ‘this body’; quite similar is the case of bursting out into Hindi or English speeches.”**

The recognition by the members of the Philosophical Congress naturally and inevitably advanced Ma’s way to eminence. The people at large had reasons to believe that the expert opinion of these men of erudition could not be based on blind superstition, nor could it be mere impulsive sentiment or superficial praise. Full of genuine admiration, they carried to distant places the message of Ma’s easy and conclusive answers to many knotty problems often posed in books but seldom satisfactorily solved.

Jaen Herbert has described the nature of Ma’s wisdom in his Preface to the French Edition of *Sad Vani* (*Sayings of*

* *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi Asititama Avirbhāva Tithi Smaranika* published by Swami Swarupananda Giri, p. 12.

** *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Gurupriya Devi, Vol. III, p. 662.

Ma compiled by J. C. Roy) published in the series, "*Les Grands Maitres Spirituels*", dans "*L' Inde Contemporaine*," 1943. An English translation of his observation is as follows :-

"The Wisdom of Ma Anandamayi is not the knowledge found in books, always incomplete and hesitant, which all the time discovers yet unexplored regions, stumbles over contradictions, destroys its hypotheses in order to set up new ones and is not concerned whether its achievements lead to benefit or to cataclysm. Nor is it ethereal vision, born out of ecstasy, which has no connection with the world in which human beings live and struggle. It is Wisdom which at the same time embraces the most arduous metaphysical subjects, the most agonizing problems of morality as well as the smallest details of daily life; which sees everything in its place and in its right relation because it knows the Reality of which our world is an appearance and of which all beings, all facts, all becoming, are but partial and changing manifestations, distorted by our senses and thoughts, and to these also She has the key. This Wisdom has a clear and intimate knowledge of all that is, because it is firmly based on Joy which overcomes all conflict and on Love which realizes all unity."*

**"In very truth the Guru dwells within, and unless
you discover the inner Guru nothing can be achieved."**

SRI ANANDAMAYI MA

* Mother as Seen by Her Devotees, p. 50.

From The Life of Mataji

Bithika Mukerji

(Continued from the last issue)

(February–October 1942)

Mahatma Gandhi seemed very pleased with Mataji. He said to Her, "I am told that you want to leave tomorrow? This cannot be. You cannot go away so soon. You must stay here for a few more days." It was obvious from his confident tone, that Gandhiji had no fear of being disobeyed by his little daughter. Mataji, however, rejoined, "Pitaji, you must know that this small child is a little crazy. She cannot always mind the words of elders. And after all why should this not be so? This child has acquired the nature of her father in this respect."

Everybody in the room burst out laughing, but Gandhiji made another attempt, saying, "If you disregard my wish, everybody will make fun of me. They will say, 'he could not persuade a crazy child, how will he influence Chiang Kai Shek?' I shall be made to look utterly ridiculous." Mataji laughed and said, "As if Pitaji cares about what people might say; besides, what is the harm if people enjoy themselves a little at Pitaji's cost?"

It became clear to everyone including Mahatmaji that Mataji did not have the *kheyāla* to change Her programme. He then made enquiries regarding arrangements for Her trans-

port to the railway station early next morning. Mataji and Janakiben spent the night in Gandhiji's cottage. Once during the night, Mataji suddenly addressed the five or six persons who were attending on Gandhiji in some capacity or other, saying, "What will you do if I take Mahatmaji away from all of you?" They responded by declaring that they would all go with him. Mataji smiled but did not seem to pay attention to the answer. She softly spoke directly to Gandhiji, "I shall fetch you at the right moment. What do you say, Pitaji?" Perhaps Gandhiji understood Mataji's intended meaning because he replied in the affirmative in the same tone of voice, quietly and gravely. Didi and Hariramji, who were present, exchanged a quick glance of surprised apprehension; was it possible that Gandhiji would not be with them for long?

Next morning, Mataji left Wardha. At the time of parting, She said to Gandhiji, "I know Pitaji will not be displeased with this little girl for disobeying him."

"As if you greatly care about my displeasure."

"Pitaji, if I have the *kheyāla*, you will find me entering your hut without any previous notice and without waiting for an invitation." "Yes, thieves and dacoits enter silently by stealth, without the knowledge of the householder."

"Fine! Pitaji has called me a thief! I shall steal everything belonging to you. May I?"

Gandhiji smilingly nodded assent, murmuring softly, "Such a thief is rare indeed."

At Wardha railway station, Mataji again reverted to the topic of the previous night. She said to Janakiben, "Tell

Mahatmaji to be prepared. After all the time for going home is drawing near." Mataji travelled to Saugor via Nagpur, where they had to stay at the station the whole day. Since She did not have any fixed plans this place was as good as any other. On the train, Hariramji recalled that it had been Bajajji's ardent wish that Bapuji should come into close contact with Mataji. The entire nation's hopes of achieving freedom lay with Gandhiji; it was only right that he should have Mataji's blessings for this momentous task. Joshiji knew that Bhaiji also had hoped for a meeting between Mahatmaji and Mataji. But the best of devotees somehow had reckoned without Mataji's *kheyāla*. Hariram Joshi now gently remonstrated with Mataji for not making Herself 'known' to Gandhiji. If She had stayed in Wardha for a few more days, everybody would have had a better opportunity of coming closer to Her. Mataji laughed at Her companion's dissatisfaction. She said that whatever had happened, was the best that could have happened. In answer to Joshiji's persistent questions regarding the patriotic duties of man, Mataji made some general observations which were quite in keeping with the usual trend of Her sayings : "Man's one supreme duty is to strive for Self-realization. Unless the real nature of things is revealed, how can one know the best course to pursue under given circumstances? All actions, performed without full knowledge, are necessarily ambivalent because they produce both good and bad results. Action, however, has to be engaged in; what one does is one's best, according to one's ability and judgement; but this does not mean that the absolute best has been done. How should it, when one's vision is clouded by so many factors? It is also easy to deceive oneself as being guided. Whatever is happening,

however, is a manifestation of God's will. The best must always remain with God."

The travellers arrived in Saugar in the afternoon. As Joshiji was known to the royal family of Nepal, he contacted some of its members who were living in retirement in the town. The Rani, a very venerable and devout lady, was only too eager to welcome Mataji as an honoured guest in her own palace but evidently Mataji had the *kheyāla* to move further away from the town. The Rani offered to escort Her to a *dharmśālā* on the banks of the river Vyasa a few miles out in the country, subject to Mataji's approval of the place. Mataji replied that there could be no disapproval of any human habitation and that She would be comfortable anywhere. The Rani Saheba thereupon drove with Mataji's party to the remote *dharamśālā* situated on the river bank. The house was small but very attractive with a huge banyan tree nearby. After Mataji, Didi and Abhaya had settled in, Paramananda and Hariram left for Raipur. The Rani departed, renewing her offers of any kind of help that might be needed.

The depleted party spent a quiet fortnight in this secluded place, far away from any kind of other human habitation. This sojourn was made memorable by the repeated recurrence of the phenomenon of spontaneous mantras uttered by Mataji. Almost every day a beautiful melody of sounds would flow from Her lips. Abhaya made an attempt to note them down but his record remained defective in the extreme, because he had to write his own understanding of the words that were pronounced. Didi took this opportunity of comparative soli-

tude to dispose of a bundle of letters which had assumed considerable proportions. Ordinarily, letters addressed to Mataji are kept in a bag till such time as She is free to listen to them and dictate answers. It is not unknown for letters to await disposal for six months or more and the bag of letters remains the one indispensable item of baggage with Mataji.

After about fifteen days Mataji with Her companions went by bus to a village called Dharamghat. Travelling sixty-five miles they reached the place where the Rani of Nepal had her principal residence. All these villages, situated on the Narmada and Vyasa rivers, were well-known as spots of great sanctity. Pilgrims came from far and near to visit the temples and bathe in the rivers. Many ascetics of renown had practised *sādhana* in this region. The Rani Saheba's driver constituted himself Mataji's caretaker and guide. As Mataji had the *kheyāla* to live in seclusion, he drove them to a Siva temple situated in the heart of the forest. The last lap of the journey had to be made on foot. The driver, Gauri Shankar, carried their luggage to the little inn adjoining the temple. The trek through the deep forest ended in a clearing containing the temple and a small *dharamśālā*. It was found that the main part of the building was under occupation. The inmate introduced himself as *sādhu* Jwaladutt, who was living in seclusion in order to practise *sādhana*. He was not too pleased at the intrusion of unexpected guests. However, he indicated a small sideroom for them. Gauri Shankar managed to clean the room and make it habitable with the help of two villagers whom he fetched seemingly from the interior of the forest. He was not content with this but wished to carry word of

Mataji's arrival to the village elders who would surely ask the sādhu to make the living rooms available to Her. Mataji, however would not countenance this and in a day or two left the village of Ramghat for another temple-inn across the river, saying She did not want to disturb anyone who was engaged in *sādhanā*. The sādhu evidently did realize that he was being remiss in not showing cordiality to the unexpected guests and invited them to a meal but Mataji in Her own gentle way dissuaded him from this effort. A question arose in the minds of Mataji's companions as to whether even solitude does not become a limitation.

After spending a night or so on the other side of the Narmada on the open terrace of Deepak temple, Mataji returned to the *dharamsālā* on the river Vyasa where She had stayed previously for a fortnight. They spent another week in this quiet place, where they were joined by Kantibhai Vyas. He had come to Mataji previously wishing to take up life as a brahmachari. Mataji had told him to give some time to visiting other religious places and acquainting himself with the thoughts of spiritual preceptors. Kantibhai now related to Her that he had travelled extensively and met many holy men. He was satisfied that he would like to be guided by Mataji in his spiritual endeavour. Didi and Abhaya, listened with great interest to the story of his search for Mataji and of ultimately finding Her in the remote forest-dwelling in Saugor.

Mataji left Gujrat towards the end of March and came via Lucknow to Varanasi where She stayed in a hut in the grounds of late Nirmal Chandra Chatterji's residence. At Varanasi the sacred thread ceremony for seven boys was

performed in Mataji's presence. The group consisted of three students of the Vidyapeeth (Navakumar, Tapan, Dasu), two sons of Hemi Masima, Hariramji's son Hari Mohan and Niraj Nath's son Bindu. After the ceremony Mataji removed to the Ganges to stay in a houseboat. Three days later She went to Vindhya-chala and from there to Dehradun, making a short halt at Delhi.

For the next few months Mataji remained in Dehradun. She would sometimes go to Raipur or Doonga or come into the city at the invitation of devotees but She did not travel to any distant place till October. The *Janmotsava* and *Durga Puja* were performed in Dehradun. In August the country experienced an upheaval when the leaders of the nation were arrested following the civil disobedience movement announced by Gandhiji. The war had also come closer to India at this time. In answer to a letter from a devotee who had expressed his distress at the turn of events, Mataji said : "There is no occasion for faintness of heart. Nothing is achieved by being nervous of what might happen or being afraid of events which come to pass. Whatever is happening is what has to happen. One must bear the present with fortitude and face the future bravely."

(*To be continued*)

"Since everything belongs to Him, there is no other means but to lie prostrate at His feet. If there is to be anxiety it must be solely for Him."

SRI ANANDAMAYI MA

Mataji's Amara Vani*

(Translated from Bengali)

Question : May I ask a question, Ma? But you will have to give a reply that I am able to understand!

Mataji : Very well, if it comes!

Question : When Supreme Knowledge (*Jñāna*) has dawned, does the memory remain of the fact that one was in ignorance?

Mataji : When Supreme Knowledge comes about, by the very fact of its coming about, Eternity stands revealed. How can one say : "There is darkness below the Light." One dwells indeed in Light. What is darkness? Who? From which standpoint is this said? But to think that because of light there is no darkness and because of darkness no light—this is not correct.

Put from one angle it is like this : One feels : "Really, when was I in ignorance?" It is quite clear that to say "I was" or "I became" is an error. IT IS—this is the Truth. The indestructible has never been destroyed nor will it ever be destroyed.

Very well, your condition before you learnt the alphabet has remained in your memory, has it not? That is to say, while preparing for the I. A. or B. A. exams, can one recall one's state of mind when one was studying for the Matric? All these stages are not separate, all are He. HE is Self-

* Reprinted from "Ananda Varta", Vol. VII/3, p/23.

luminous. Understand this now ! But to say, "ignorance exists and knowledge also exists", this is not correct.

A moment comes when there is Light, just as darkness vanishes at sunrise. When Supreme Knowledge supervenes one sees : "I have for ever and ever been THAT which IS." Since the Whole has been realised one understands that one has never been in ignorance. When does Creation occur, when Preservation when Dissolution ? The question of division no longer exists.

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After the discussion, all sat in silence for some time. Then Bhupen asked : "Ma, shall I sing *kirtāna* ?"

Mataji : Yes, it is better to do something than to sit idle.

Someone from the audience : Surely the mind cannot stay idle !

Mataji : Unless it is engaged in conversation about Him or contemplation of Him, the mind may be said to be idle and this state is futile and painful; for the mind cannot remain entirely inactive, it will naturally be occupied with something or other. To be occupied with worthless things serves no purpose. Therefore do not indulge in vain talk.

The mind must of necessity be anchored somewhere, it is bound to be in the grip of something or other. This is why one should fix it on Him who is the Support of the supportless--He, the Self is the sheet-anchor one should firmly hold to. He is indeed in every one and in every thing.*

* A play upon words that cannot be rendered into English : *Sakal*=all, *Sa*=He, *kal*=device, machine.

Thus in the guise of a device is also none but He. In other words, He is present in the practices that have for purpose Self-realisation, such as japa, meditation, kirtana and so on.

The mind roams and rambles without finding peace. It flits here and there like a small child. When here, there and everywhere become the One, then only will there be an end to its wandering. It turns to this and that side in search of food but does not find any. If the mind receives the right sustenance which will keep it in one place, if you give it such nourishment, a full and perfect meal, it will itself become fulfilled—a perfect child resting in his mother's lap. Whether you say reposing with his Mother or in the Self—call it by any name—they are undivided although each separate and though separate yet one and indivisible. That is to say, when one is wholly absorbed in meditation or in *samādhi*, one is immersed in THAT which is the essence (*svarūpa*) of delight, happiness bliss—call it what you will : One is merged in the Essence of Reality (*svarūpa*), in the Self.

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Question : Ma, please tell us something !

Mataji : Father, don't you know, here (with Mataji), if it comes, it comes ?

The Inquirer : Then I shall put a question. Well : Unless there is the realisation of *advaita* (non-duality) it cannot be proved, yet it is beyond knowledge. In view of this fact, how is it possible to attain to the truth of *advaita* ? For otherwise it is nothing but imagination.

Mataji : The difficulty is that you have brought the instructor to your own level.

The Inquirer : How ?

Someone else : May I say something, please ? So long as it is possible to use language, one is still in the realm of changing conditions—happiness, pain or whatever they may be. But when this happiness is transformed into a happiness that does not depend on anything at all, what is it called then ? Love.

Mataji : Why does one speak of karma* ? Because it goes on creating more action. But when one feels so ardently attracted to one that action no longer brings forth new action, this is called Love. Why is it said to be Love ? Because after it has been kindled there can be no more question of Creation, Preservation or sorrow. Desire (*kāma*) perpetuates the created world and therefore it is delusion (*moha*). Thus, inversely it is said, to feel drawn towards God is Love (*prema*) while worldly attraction is desire, passion (*kāma*). Where no 'other' is and the 'after' has ceased to exist—this is called Love, this is called true Knowledge, here the movement of time has come to a standstill.

When Love has awakened, Self-revelation (*Sva-prakāśa*) will come, the Knowledge which is one's Essential Being (*Svarūpa*). If you proceed by the line of love and devotion—what will be revealed ? Your own Essential Being (*Svarūpa*). Here questions can no longer arise. But you will perhaps say : "How can I, at my stage, speak of Him who is Self-luminous ? How can the truth of Oneness (*advaita*) be realised ?

* The word 'karma' denotes 'action' as well as its inherent results, that is the chain of cause and effect.

Very well. You have attained to the status of a professor. Do you say this from any particular level or stage? Can you for instance disclose everything that an M. A. knows?

The Inquirer : Everything can of course not be told but some part of it I am able to divulge.

Mataji : You cannot bring to light the whole. When you read a book, you read the whole of it, but to speak about it is a different matter; you cannot communicate the whole of it to those to whom you are talking. Yet there are hints by which they can get an inkling of your knowledge. In Him who has realised the Brahman you will find no imagination. It must be understood that He is Self-revealed. Intelligence can throw no light on this, nor can words express it. There are however indications of this state; you may not understand everything you hear Him say but you can detect the signs of His Realisation.

That which is the natural realisation pertaining to any particular state, that only will come to light. Therefore something has to be pointed out : how can one who is not a professor understand the level from which a professor speaks? Suppose a person who has returned from Europe narrates his experiences; his listeners will be able to grasp something of what they hear, but until and unless they themselves go to Europe it will be difficult for them to understand what precisely it is like. Understanding and not understanding are of this world. But where THAT is—by what means can it be grasped?

Question : How can then spiritual instruction be given?

Mataji : Whatever one is able to comprehend that much can be passed on; information can be given only about the path. When something is placed on the surface of water, it sinks. But what happens underneath? The person who watches will say : "it has been submerged." Just as when someone is really absorbed in meditation, one can by just looking at him assert that he is far removed from worldly cares. For the signs of meditation are quite definite, this is why you can tell. The contemplative may be questioned about worldly matters yet his replies will distinctly point to the inner world. You may be able to discover evidences of his state, you may also succeed in understanding his words, but you cannot find out what he has attained unless you yourself have had similar experience. He will disclose whatever little can be expressed in language—as much as can be put into words. But He who has been immersed does not speak. Nothing (separate) in fact exists for Him, so what is He to tell? If something had remained which had not been absorbed, then he would say something.

Question : But surely, He will speak of the path at least.

Mataji : Then you will say that he who explains is on the way. While actually, father, He does not speak at all. He is WHAT IS. Therefore when He talks He does not talk as you do. It appears to you that He speaks, but in fact He does not say anything. Because of your preconceived ideas you see something. But He does not enter anyone's house, neither does He eat, nor walk, nor talk. This is the truth. What is, is HE. Although becoming He does not become, although acting He does not act. Those who maintain that

He eats, speaks, sees and listens, let them say what they please. Since there is nothing (separate) how can He do something ?

Question : To know the Brahman means to become the Brahman. Then nothing remains to be known or learnt. So what actually does one know ?

Mataji : This is not a topic that can be expressed in language. The fact is, father, to know is to know one's Self. You are at present aware of being in ignorance. But "*There*"—there is no question of knowing or not knowing. "I know" cannot be said. Real Knowledge means : *What is*—IS - Self-revelation. To say "I know" implies that there is a second apart from me. But Revelation ever *is*, no such thing as non-revelation exists—only the clouds have to be dispelled. Even though the veil has not been torn asunder, the light continues to shine. He who lives on the plane where knowledge and ignorance exists, for him there is knowing and not knowing. The person who believes in the reality of sense perception (*dṛṣṭi sṛṣṭi*) for him there is going and coming (death and rebirth). But He is THAT which IS.

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"There are two kinds of faith, namely blind faith and real faith. Real faith that is aroused by the touch of an Omniscient Being does not depend on anything. One who has awakened to Pure consciousness makes you conscious. But blind faith, the faith of the mind is unripe and can be shattered. All the same, real and genuine faith quite often develops gradually out of blind faith,"

SRI ANANDAMAYI MA

Mental Sin

B. L. Gadkari

In Matri Satsang, at the 28th Samyam Mahavrata, held at Badarikashram in November 1977 on the banks of the holy river Narmada, a devotee asked Mataji what would happen if a man committed a mental sin. Ma replied without a second's hesitation that he would have to suffer the consequences thereof. The questioner and other devotees felt satisfied by the prompt reply but one of the learned Mahātmās expressed surprise and asked Ma how it was that She had said something which was not in accordance with *Śāstras*. In Her usual manner of respect and humility before Mahātmās, Ma pleaded that She was ignorant and illiterate, and asked what the mistake was. Another Mahātmā told Ma that in Srimad Bhāgavata it was stated that in Kaliyuga man would get the fruit of mental *punya* (merit) but not of mental sin. Only a sinful action would result in one's suffering the consequences thereof. Ma then explained that as a result of a mental sin a man's tendency and desire to commit a sinful act would be so intensified that even unknowingly he would actually commit a sinful act and then would reap its fruit. The Mahātmā pointed out that this would be the direct result of the immediately preceding sinful act and not of the mental sin. Thereafter the matter was not pursued further.

I am afraid Mataji's reluctance to enter into any public controversy to the prejudice of any Mahātmā created a rather

embarrassing situation. Many devotees felt that Mataji's original and prompt answer should not have been criticised. Whatever She says is '*Śāstra*' and therefore it would not be correct to remark that Her answer was contrary to *Śāstras*. Our '*Śāstras*' are so voluminous that a research student will find authority in them for any proposition. There are many interpolations in original Sanskrit texts which it is impossible to weed out. Again the number of missing texts is so large that what is available cannot be said to be the whole of our *Śāstras*. This is one of the reasons why Ma's devotees need Her own replies for She is *Śāstras* personified, or it may be said that She is the Mother of *Śāstras*.

There is also another aspect to Mataji's satsang which, in spite of Her repeated admonitions, is lost sight of. She always has the whole mental and spiritual make up of Her questioner before Her mind's eye when She replies to a question. Therefore Her answer is meant primarily to suit the needs of the person who poses it. It is not unlikely that the particular devotee who put the question was under a wrong impression that a particular act of his was not an act but only a mental sin; and Mataji may have intended to correct him. For example, a man casting a lustful glance at a woman may be under the wrong impression that as he did nothing else it was merely a mental sin, whereas his eyes were actually guilty of an action.

Secondly Mataji's answer followed the Bhagavad Gita in which in Chapter II—62-63 the precipitate fall of man from a mere mental contemplation is described by the word "प्रणश्यति". Again in Chapter III, Sloka 6 a, mere suppression or control

of कर्मेन्द्रियाणि is described as मिथ्याचार. Thus one of our greatest scriptures shows that a mental sin may lead to total destruction or ruin. It therefore cannot be said that Mataji's answer was contrary to *Śāstras*.

Thirdly, as Swami Paramanandaji pointed out to this writer, one gets good dreams or bad dreams while asleep, according to one's thoughts. A man actually feels happy or miserable in a dream depending on its nature. A sinful thought is bound to be reflected in a bad dream giving the result of being temporarily unhappy. Men are known to actually perspire on account of fright in a dream and some even shout or groan in sleep when they have a bad dream. This is also suffering the fruit of mental sin.

I therefore submit that Mataji's answer was beyond any criticism.

“The many creeds and sects serve the purpose that He may bestow Himself on Himself along various channels—each has its own beauty—and that He may be discovered as immanent, revealing Himself in countless ways, in all shapes and in the formless. As the Path, He attracts each person to a particular line, in harmony with his inner dispositions and tendencies. The One is present in each sect, even though in some cases there appears to be conflict among them, due to the limitations of the ego. This body, however, does not exclude anything.”

SRI ANANDAMAYI MA

Mātrī Prasād

Mauni Ma

(Translated from Bengali)

15

Into Her orbit pulled me Mā
Transformed the current of my sādhanā
As if Mā had come into Her own abode
Cast into a new mould.
Ent'ring this new empire, brother,
Alone am I, there is no other.
Although in the midst of many
Yet not in the midst of any.
These are not mere words
It's the actual fact
Vice and virtue there are none,
Merit and demerit gone
In a place like this
Dwells the self-oblivious one,
Not even supernormal powers—
It's just talking to one's Self.

16

That which used to be my home
 Shakes and trembles in its root.
 Friends are gasping in surprise--
 Beyond Brahmā could a mortal rise ?
 Startled are the very gods,
 Saying : "What a strange affair !"
 First Sri Kṛṣṇa was adored
 Now there is one Ātmā only.
 Kṛṣṇa's worship brought such joy
 Now the Self's the sole delight.
 Listening to the gods, the self-oblivious said :
 Everything is possible by Mother's grace :
 Supreme awakening from the slumber of delusion
 And the holding of enormous strength.

"By sustained practice man can master anything. What-
 ever is done for God, that indeed is called yoga. No
 matter what is done and in what way, the fruit will be
 reaped accordingly. The mahāyogi, the mahāsādhaka
 are within you by your very nature. Try to bring them
 to light by suitable practice. However small your power
 and capacity may be, use it for this purpose. So long as
 the One has not been fully revealed, you should spend
 your life in practice, effort and self-restraint."

Sri Anandamayi Ma

Ananda Granth

“The Path” by Swami Kriyananda

An Appreciation by Sister Umā

**The Guru’s power is vested in the disciple who prays
for the Guru’s grace.** —Mataji

“There are times when a human being, though perhaps not remarkable in himself, encounters some extraordinary person or event that infuses his life with great meaning.”

With these words Swami Kriyananda begins what will itself no doubt prove to be such a transforming experience for many souls who will be touched by this, his extraordinary book, *The Path, Autobiography of a Western Yogi*. It must, in any case, give fresh impetus to the sādhanā of everyone to whom it finds its way.

Once, some years ago, I wrote a letter to Lama Anagarika Govinda whose book, *The Way of the White Clouds, A Buddhist Pilgrim in Tibet*, also an autobiography of a western sādhu, was like this one, a real inspiration to my own sādhanā at the time. In reply he wrote the following :

“Though it is not possible for me to enter into correspondence with the many readers of my books, who write to me and whom I should like to thank for their kind words of appreciation—I feel that I have to make an exception because I realize that you are a sincere sādhaika of Mā Ānandamayī, whose Ashram in Benares I visited many years ago and for

whom I have great respect. Your letter gave me real joy because it showed me that my book had been able to convey my Guru's message to somebody who is striving for that ultimate aim in which all great Gurus are united—however different their paths may be. Books always know how to find those for whom they are meant. In the spiritual realm nothing is accidental.....”.

It is not only a message that is conveyed by such books : Reading Kriyananda's book I was again moved not so much by the teachings expounded as by the astonishing awareness that the *śakti* and grace of the Gurus of mankind can be conveyed through the *written word* of their disciples ! We have, of course, experienced this powerfully in Bhajji's *Matri Darshan*; but that great Gurus who are no longer physically present can so bless us through the expression of those who follow them, on a path not necessarily our own, cannot but give nourishment to our faith and foster a hope that one day man's spiritual awareness will be such that he will not find it necessary to put down the faith of another in order to sustain his own.

The impact of *The Path* on me personally was the more astonishing because, suspicious of his power, I have long harbored some lingering prejudice against Paramahansa Yogananda who is, of course, that “extraordinary person or event” in Kriyananda's life giving it meaning and direction and revealing as well the meaning and direction of all that went before his momentous encounter with his Guru.

In this work, however, Kriyananda has not only been a channel for the transcendant blessings of his line of Gurus, but

he has also given us a friend on our own path. One feels somehow so close to him because he has so freely shared himself with us—his whole life, its intellectual and spiritual doubts and emerging dynamic faith; its struggles and triumphs, and greatest of all, perhaps what he most intended—in spite of difficulties and disappointments with oneself—the sheer joy of the spiritual ascent.

The little fault that might be found with this book is perhaps unavoidable, for it is probably not possible for one whose goal is Knowledge to present his childhood and youth as they were experienced, sans the insights of later life.

A most moving aspect of these pages is the constant genuine love and respect with which Kriyananda speaks of his *gurubhais* and his Ashram from which he was in time to be separated. The details of this break we are not told, but knowing human nature, and seeing as one often does the results of other kinds of human separation, and having myself also had the excruciatingly painful experience, on coming to Mataji, of having had to leave the organization in which my own spiritual life had been given birth and nurtured for many years, I know that there must have been in his experience some occasion for bitterness and some justification for expressing it. But there is none of that here, only the genuine affection that comes from detachment and the awareness of God's will in one's own life and, therefore, in that of everyone else as well.

As John W. White had said in his preface, "...*The Path* is not only spiritual—it is spiritual *literature*." It is, indeed, exquisite literature, the subtle turning of a phrase now and

again startlingly brilliant - the unselfconscious, conscious art of a master of his craft as well as of himself.

*The Path, Autobiography of a Western Yogi** is a book whose spirit reminds one constantly, and can help one to remember constantly, the injunction of the Upanishad : "All this, whatsoever exists in the universe, should be covered by the Lord." It is a work which will undoubtedly offer to all those spiritual aspirants of whatever path, to whom it finds its unerring way, the incomparable gift of inspiration to proceed—and a very real joy !

"You are eternally free, because action is ever free; it cannot remain bound, Do you not know that the rope with which you tie anything in this world must rot or wear out ? And though you use iron chains or even golden, whatever binds will one day break or be shattered. Do any worldly fetters exist that can never be broken, never destroyed ? It is solely the cry of lament over temporary ties that alone fashions the bondage of the mind—the mind that cannot be confined to any place. Like a restless child, unconcerned with good or bad, it seeks Supreme Bliss—never satisfied with momentary happiness and therefore ever wandering. But how can it possibly be at rest until it has discovered a way to Supreme Reality, until it has become wholly absorbed in its source, reposing in its own Self ?"

Sri Anandamayi Ma

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Mātri Līlā

(Jan. 15th-April 10th)

Mataji arrived in Delhi from Kankhal on January 19th early morning. She came for two days only to be present at some ceremonies for two temples that are being constructed in the Kalkaji Ashram, one a Kali Temple and one for Didima. On January 21st Mataji left for Naimisharanya where She had not been for quite some time. On Jan. 24th She was back in Delhi in transit for Baroda where She alighted in the morning of Jan. 25th. She then proceeded by car to our Ashram at Bhimpura near Chandod. Mataji had spent a week there immediately after the Samyam Mahavrata at the end of November. She had visited this place after an interval of thirteen years and found its atmosphere very congenial. This time Her visit to Bhimpura was a closely guarded secret. However, She was spotted by reporters on Her arrival at Baroda station and Her presence became public knowledge when the midday edition of the local newspaper hit the streets. By 2 p. m. the same day a few devotees from Baroda already came to the Chandod Ashram. All the same, Mataji's *darśanas* were strictly regulated and restricted to Sundays only, for people outside of the immediate area of Chandod-Bhimpura. To local devotees Mataji daily gave a brief *darśana* from Her window. On the whole, She had an excellent rest, the best She had enjoyed in years and kept good health throughout Her stay in the Ashram, which is located on the banks of the

Narmada and is accessible primarily by a short trip by boat from Chandod. The whole area is considered to have been specially sanctified by the tapasya of countless ascetics in ancient and modern times.

On February 12th, *Vasant Panchami* day, Saraswati Puja was celebrated for the first time in this Ashram. Over five hundred people attended and were fed, including two hundred-fifty local poor from the village of Bhimpura. The anniversary of the holy Narmada on earth was also celebrated by special pūjā and feedings of local sādhus. During the *Brahma muhurta*, long before dawn that very morning, Mataji out of Her *kheyala* sang uninterruptedly for about one and a half hours. The original and spontaneous *bhajan* that flowed from Her lips was tape-recorded by Brahmachari Bhaskarananda. The words Mataji sang were : “अन्तर नाम विकासीकारी अन्तर दीपकारी अन्तर प्रकाशितकारी अन्तर दीपकारी” (*Antara nama vikasitakari, antara dipakari antara prakasitakari antara dipakari*)”

On March 3rd Mataji left for Baroda where She stayed for a few hours at the residence of a devotee and gave *darśana* to a large assembly which included the Rajmata of Baroda. From Baroda Mataji took the train, reaching Vrindaban in the morning of March 4th.

Mataji visited Vrindaban this time primarily to attend the installation of a statue of the late Sri Haribabaji Maharaj in the hall of a newly built Ashram of his devotees, near Sri Uriababa Ashram. As soon as Mataji alighted in our Ashram, She sat down in the hall for a short while and then retired to the upstairs room of Her house where She remained mostly all through Her sojourn. The damp and cold weather of

Vrindaban did not agree with Her as well as the climate of Chandod. However, Mataji was in a very good mood. Mataji gave long and beautiful *darśanas* on the open terrace outside of Her room. A good number of people collected daily including fifteen to twenty devotees from foreign countries. Sivaratri was celebrated as usual by collective pūjā all through the night in the spacious hall of our Ashram on March 7th. Mataji came downstairs for this special occasion and sat in the hall for the 1st pūjā from 6.30 p. m. to 9.30 p. m. when She retired for the night.

Between Sivarātri and Holi two Bhagavata Saptahas were held at the request of devotees. Pandit Mulbehari was in charge of the Hindi exposition. On March 24th, Holi was celebrated. By a happy coincidence, Sri Swami Gangeshwarananda (for whose sake Mataji had gone to Poona in December), Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati and several other Mahatmas were present in Vrindaban for Holi along with Mataji. Many devotees came from far and near, quite a number from Calcutta and Rajasthan.

On March 29th Mataji motored to Delhi and visited our Kalkaji Ashram for a few hours to inspect the construction of the two Mandirs that are being erected there (as mentioned already when reporting on Mataji's stay in Delhi in January). The same night She boarded the train for Hardwar and alighted in Kankhal on the 30th morning. The train was three hours late. On March 31st Mataji paid a surprise visit to our Kishenpur Ashram at Dehradun, where She remained for 2½ hours only, returning to Kankhal the same evening. Mataji is now staying upstairs in the old portion of the Ashram and

giving short *darsanās* daily. On April 14th, Didima's *samīyatsā utsava* will be solemnly celebrated. This will be the end and climax of Didima's centenary celebrations that were held for a whole year. A Bhagavata Saptah will start immediately after in Mataji's presence.

Mataji is expected to be in Kankhal in May for the installation of a statue of Adi Guru Sankaracharya in our Ashram on May 10th, Askshaya Tritiya. Mataji's birthday celebrations will be held from May 19th to 25th in Sri Krishna Nivāsa Ashram at the kind invitation of Mahamandaleswara Sri Sri 1008 Swami Pūrnanandaji Maharaj. The Tithi puja will be performed at 3 a. m. on May 26th.