

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

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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CONTENTS

- | | | |
|---|----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Mātri Vāni | ... | 201 |
| 2. Mātri Satsang | —Swami Bhagawatananda Giri | 204 |
| 3. The Advent of Sri Sri Sankaracharya
at Kankhal Ashram | —R. K. Banerjee | 217 |
| 4. A Water-Moon at Dawn in
the Void | —Brahmachari Ram | 229 |
| 5. Mātri Upadeshamrita | — | 231 |
| 6. Mother of Millions | —Anil Ganguli | 244 |
| 7. Sarmad, The Mystic Martyr | —Jainath Kaul | 256 |
| 8. Mother as Seen by Her Child | —Dr. Vikram Marya | 265 |
| 9. Mātri Līlā | — | 268 |
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YOU AND YOUR OWN

(*Quotations from Mataji's Sayings*)

All are indeed your own, your very Ātmā. Only the supreme path can be called a path, all others are non-paths leading nowhere. Bhagavān alone eternal-real, Bhagavān alone nowever.

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Ever since Bhagavān has existed—so has māyā. When was.....is Bhagavān not? Therefore, māyā is equally beginningless. And where is its end? So whose attraction? whose manifestation? To whom does māyā lure you? Reflect deeply!

Or, when all manifestation is accepted as one's own, then whose māyā? Endeavour to arrive at yourself—considering yourself either the Divine's servant or the all-containing Ātmā. You the immortal, blissful Ātm-Rāma. Then why suffer the vagaries of birth and death? Within yourself—the full and whole You.

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Where no possibility remains of form and formless, of beyond form and beyond qualities, nor even of a beyond-the-beyond..... That alone is worthy of human aspiration.

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You exist—You alone—You alone. In everything everywhere—You alone. And beyond—You are verily What Is in Itself. In the limitless profusion solely He, She, I alone.....I Am.

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Absolute Void [Mahāsūnya] is the Divine's true form and state. But where duality's void, where the world's emptiness prevails—all-inclusive Void cannot be known. What is and what is not? Then everything is and yet is not—and neither is it not, nor is it. However, here's what is needed: To find all by losing all.



Matri Vani

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

How many hundreds of different kinds of karma have been accumulated life after life is unknown and incomprehensible to man. Human birth is a great good fortune, the crown of evolution. By God's grace alone can a human body be had, such birth is the result of good and virtuous deeds. Human birth is difficult to obtain; this is why a human being must aim at the awakening of true humanity.

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Even if there is no inclination, endeavour to keep the mind centered in God : God-realization must be the purpose of life. There is no other companion, no friend, nothing at all — solely and exclusively what takes one in the direction of God, this and this alone.

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Becoming completely truthful, endeavour at every moment of your life to pursue your own path to Truth and Reality.

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Whatever order the Guru gives to anyone has to be carried out without reasoning. Regularly study

books of wisdom and remain in spiritual company. For the sake of the revelation of God who is Truth, sit perfectly still making the mind a blank. Yoga is practised solely for the revelation of THAT.

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Mataji said : Whatever form anyone loves most, in that very form God will appear to him and give what is needed. Endeavour to regard yourself as an instrument in His hands in all your actions and in inaction. In a sādhu's life, whatever spiritual practice (*kriyā*) presents itself spontaneously, is the one to be adopted.

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Disastrous accidents occur again and again in so many homes — one's loved ones plunged in deep sorrow. As a result of karma brought over from former lives this kind of happening in countless places. Heart and mind will not accept it. Unbearable torment, heart-rending pain — thought refuses to turn to religion at such times. All the same, birth, suffering, the fruit of one's actions, and all the rest, whatever happens is within the universal law of the world. The Supreme Creator, He alone is the One to be remembered at all times.

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Try to keep yourself engaged as much as possible in *japa* and meditation. Contemplate what you love most and read whatever scriptures you find interesting.

Select books on the life and teaching of saints and sages of East and West according to your predilection. You should have no likes and dislikes as far as worldly things are concerned — so you will not get upset or depressed or angry. Try to ignore those irrelevant matters.

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Wherever anyone may stay, there will be different types of outward - minded persons causing disturbances. As one does not bother about the endless waves of the sea and takes one's bath inspite of them, this should be the ideal before every human being. God is everywhere, in everyone; to realize this one should make it a point to practise *japa*, *dhyāna* and so forth as much as possible. The mind gets engrossed wherever it is led. So, if one tries to get absorbed in God again and again, there is hope that at long last the mind will get His touch.

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The One whose name you are repeating and whom you are contemplating takes you to fulfilment and will also show you the way.

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Matri Satsang

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

(21)

Ahmedabad, May 10th, 1957.

Question : Who is under the influence of *māyā* ?

Nataji : He who asks the question.

Question : Who is it that asks the question ?

Nataji : The person who lacks knowledge of Reality : the individual (*jīva*) whose vision is obscured by a curtain asks the question. The curtain is oneself, the questioner oneself, oneself playing with oneself — one's own pleasure. One cannot acknowledge the existence of God and also of the person who lacks Knowledge, the two cannot exist together. "Ekam Brahman dvitiya nāsti" : Where there is "only one Brahman and no second" who is the curtain ? In essence you are THAT which is beyond *māyā*, but today you believe yourself bound by *māyā* and it is this belief that constitutes the curtain. Try to realize your true Being. Only then will you be beyond *māyā*. "Wherever a *jīva* is, there is Śiva, and wherever a woman, there is Gouri." Solely the *Atmā* everywhere ! So long as the curtain is not lifted, questions will not cease to arise.

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* *Māyā* The Supreme Divine Power by which the One conceals Itself and appears as the many.

In course of conversation Mataji said ;

World means that which is in constant flux and thus illusory. This pandal in which you are sitting now will not remain here to-morrow — therefore it is transitory. Just as a tree did not exist earlier and will not be in existence much later, thus it is impermanent. Why do you not aspire towards Truth and Eternity ? According to the doctrine of *Vedānta* or *Advaita*, name and form are regarded as illusory. To think of name and form as separate from That which Is — this indeed is false. In the case of a living *vigraha* (Concrete External Presence as Form) there is no transitoriness. You are true, enlightened, the *Atmā* (Self), beyond all names. You are the *Atmā* Itself, free, Knowledge Itself. So long as God has existed, *māyā* is also in existence. But God is beyond *māyā* — just like the eternal relationship between water and ice. Exactly as ice is nothing but water, so *nirākāra*, the Formless, and *sākāra*, God-with-Form, are one and the same.

Evolution in nature means becoming, step by step. You dwell in the world of nature (*prākṛit jagat*) where one views everything according to the spectacles worn over one's eyes. So long as one lives in the realm of form and quality, one is bound to be subjected to the opposites of happiness and pain. In the world of nature there does exist this interplay between joy and sorrow. The Lord stages a play, Himself playing all the parts. The world is created by a mere stroke of God's imagination. In the Upanishads it is explained that the mouth does not eat, the feet do not walk — He alone exists. He transcends *māyā* and yet appears subjected to *māyā*. He is playing according to His will.

Try to become singleminded, mindless as it were. You can either take the path of *neti, neti*, "not this, not that," or the path of "Thou art this, Thou art that." He who takes care of everybody is the one and only Brahman. Rāma, Krishna, Kāli, all represent the same Being, everything is contained in each. If you look upon a tree as divine, God will be revealed even there. Where is God not? The One-With - Quality (*saguna*) becomes Himself the quality. For the sake of His play He assumes the guise of *māyā*.

Perfect vision denotes omniscience, while happiness that depends on anything is bound to change into sorrow. When a child is born, everybody rejoices, but when he dies, there is grief. If happiness is derived from wife, son, home or anything of the world, distress will follow without fail. Where complete independence of circumstances is, there alone can be perfect happiness. When the relationship of a servant to the Lord has been established, this indeed is happiness. *Vigraha* (Concrete External Presence as Form) means acceptance in a special form. Essentially Hari (God) and the *jīva* are not separate. Looked at from a certain angle, who is it that is born? There is in fact no birth. To acknowledge birth is to bow to ignorance. All worldly relationship, be it that of friend or foe, is based on one's attitude of mind.

Human birth is extremely difficult to obtain. If man so wills, he can get rid of the veil of ignorance in his lifetime and realize God. The desire to know God is the natural desire of a *jīva*. A human being does not want to remain ignorant because in reality he is the embodiment of Knowledge, of Peace. You do not relish falsehood, you crave for truth -

since you are in fact Truth in essence. Tread the path leading to God, His grace is pouring forth perpetually. The reason why you are not aware of it, is that you are holding your vessel it upside down and so His grace continually flows away. Keep your vessel the right side up and it will fill to overflowing.

This body, being a mere child, calls everybody father or mother. You have deigned to give her *darśana*. You must all try to realize your Self. This body does not exhort you to forsake your homes and families and live in the forest. Wherever you may reside is the abode of God. Do not consider yourself the master of your house, merely its manager. There is no knowing when the call may come for a manager. God is present within everybody. We are all His servants, the managers of His temples. By all means continue to do service in the householder's *āśrama*. Serve your son as Gopal, look upon your wife as an embodiment of the divine Mother. Ever keep the name of the Lord in your mind; anything else that you may do apart from this, will not give you complete peace. You must attend to the work of your *Atmā*.

At the request of a devotee, Mataji related the following story :

Once upon a time there was a great King. He was pondering over four questions : "Where does God reside ? What does He eat ? When does He laugh ? What does He do ?" The King broadcast all over his domain that anyone who could answer these questions would receive substantial reward. On hearing this, all the learned men of the country started exercising their brains in the hope of winning the reward, but none was able to satisfy the King, who became

extremely disappointed, wondering how his problem could be solved. All over the country there arose endless discussion concerning the answers of the King's questions. In the meantime word of these interminable arguments came to the ears of a very ordinary, simple and poor peasant. He was tilling his soil, but interrupted his work to ask passers - by what they were discussing so ardently. They laughed at him saying : "Of what possible use can this be to you ?" But finally, on noticing his earnest zeal, they told him the King's questions. At once the peasant started laughing : "This is no big task," he said, "come along, I shall provide the replies to these questions." The peasant regularly used to attend *satsang** and his knowledge was therefore quite extensive. The people were amazed at his remark. They suspected him to be crazy and said : "What sort of replies can you possibly give ? Where big scholars have failed, what hope is there for you ? Go and get on with your own work !" But responding to the peasant's persistence, the crowd at long last consented to take him along to the King.

Everybody felt highly amused when the very ordinary peasant, attired in his dirty clothes, appeared in the King's assembly. The King smiled at what seemed to be a joke. But he was just and intelligent. He called the peasant and bade him sit down. The crowded assembly of erudite pandits were watching this unique scene with rapt attention.

The King asked his questions and the peasant smilingly started to reply with great simplicity. In answer to the question : "Where is God ?" The peasant exclaimed : "Oh

* *Satsang* Religious meeting with discourses on spiritual topics.

King, first tell me where God is not ?” On hearing this the King began to ponder deeply and at once it became clear to him that actually God existed everywhere. In reply to the second question the peasant explained that God eats the ego. If He did not devour the ego, how could any spiritual practice ever be successful ? Just as the mother-cow licks clean the dirt on the body of its new-born calf, so does God consume the ego with its unclean attributes. In reply to the question : “When does God laugh ?” the peasant said that when the *jiva* is confined in his mother’s womb, he is subjected to dire suffering and remembers the misdeeds of his numerous earlier births. So he starts praying to God with a penitent heart, beseeching Him to extract him from his dreadful confinement, and he promises that he will from then on worship God with great zeal. But as soon as he emerges into the realm of *māyā* he forgets all this and once more gets enmeshed in its toils and keeps on dancing to the same tune. So, at the time the child comes out of the womb, God laughs because He knows that the human being will not be able to keep his lofty promises.

When satisfactory replies had been provided to three of his questions, the King became exceedingly pleased and asked the fourth question, “What does God do ?” The peasant said : “Oh King, the answer to this question cannot be given so easily, this is a very serious matter. Something special will have to be done first.”

The King was favourably disposed towards the peasant and therefore agreed. “I am ready to carry out whatever you demand.” Thereupon the peasant said : “Kindly leave your seat and occupy mine and I shall sit in yours !” The King

complied with this request. Thus he sat in the peasant's place while the latter ascended to the King's gorgeous golden throne beset with jewels and started singing in great ecstasy. Then he spent a long while in deep contemplation. This seemed a most peculiar spectacle to all present. At last the King exclaimed : "Now you must provide an answer to the fourth question !" The peasant : "But I have already done so !" The King failed to understand, so the peasant clarified. "See, this is what God does. He continually turns things upside down. He changes a King into a pauper and glorifies a beggar into a King. Just as you have now occupied the seat of a poor, humble peasant and I, the insignificant peasant dressed in torn and dirty clothes, am sitting on your exalted throne. This is what God does all along." With this reply the King was thoroughly satisfied and deeply pleased.

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Ahmedabad, May 11th, 1957.

Question : What is the difference between happiness caused by sense objects and happiness from within ?

Mataji : The answer is contained in the question. If you had found true happiness (*paramānanda*), would you inquire about it ? Śiva kept poison in his throat, he did not eject it. When pleasure is taken in worldly things, questions are bound to arise and one is gradually drawn towards death. *Paramānanda* is happiness not caused by anything extraneous (*parānanda*)*. *Paramānanda* bestows *Brahmānanda*, the bliss of Reality and nothing else.

* A play upon words ; *param* supreme, *par* other,

Question : By what expedient does one become God-like ?

Mataji : There is no expedient for achieving this. If it could be brought about by any process, one would have to admit that God is subservient to action, Just as the sun shines but is covered by clouds. The grace of the Guru is necessary to lift your veil of ignorance. Thus there is a means to achieve this and yet there is no means. All the power that is within you must be utilized for the realization of God. You yourself have to do this, nobody else can do it for you. If you eat, your hunger will be appeased but if someone else eats, your hunger will not be stilled. So long as there is a sense of distance (between man and God), you must yourself attend to your own work. Obey the commands of your Guru.

Question : Do those who live continuously near you receive more grace than others ?

Mataji : In God's grace there is no differentiation. Just as a mother looks upon all her children with equal affection and care. She gives food to the child who needs it. If anyone suggests that the mother shows partiality, this is not correct. A mother's attention is equal in all directions.

Do not ask God for anything. "Oh Lord, I want only Thee alone, I do not know what is beneficial or harmful for me, so do exactly as Thou deemest right."

He who is wise walks warily. Who is nearer than others to God ? The whole universe is God's own realm. Proximity merely refers to a state of the mind. If the body is engaged in God's service and the mind busy with worldly affairs - how can this be called proximity to God ? On the other hand, if

someone stays far away, yet keeps His mind concentrated on God, this constitutes true service. This is being akin to God.

Question : God showed partiality when He saved Prahlād and destroyed Hiranyakashipu.

Mataji : Everyone speaks according to his point of view. When the mind is prone to partiality it will be seen as you state.

Questioner : He saved Prahlād and killed Hiranyakashipu !

Mataji : But after destroying his body, where did He send him ? (Everyone laughs loudly.) Whatever God does is just and right.

In course of further conversation Mataji said ;

Is there any class or caste distinction in the *Ātmā* ? By God's grace the sage Valmiki attained such a high state of Realization; even though reciting "MARA MARA" (the reverse of RAMA) he realized Rama through the Lord's grace.

Question : But Valmiki had to work hard to become a Rishi !

Mataji : So will you have to work equally hard. (Everyone laughs.) Well, is this not true ?

Question : If Valmiki had not made such strenuous efforts, would he have obtained God's grace ?

Mataji : I make allowance for everybody's opinion.

Swami Madhava Tirtha : One must be fit to obtain God's grace.

Question : Please prove beyond doubt that Valmiki became a Rishi by God's grace !

Mataji : This body maintains that so much power is inherent in Rama that the feat was achieved.

Question : Why was his body later devoured by white ants ?

Mataji : It was Rama's will – God's pleasure.

Question : Then the question remains wide open for further clarification.

Mataji : You will have to accomplish your own work yourself because you have the power and capacity to act. In this world of humans it is the play of action that predominates. He who is bound is the *jīva* (individual) and that which is subject to continuous motion is the world. If you are after sense objects it lies in their nature to enslave you. But the nature of the Lord's name is to burn whatever has to be burnt and to melt what has to be melted. The fact that Valmiki could take God's name so fervently was entirely due to God's grace. You are *Ātmārāma*, a *Rishi*. The practice that will bring to light your Rishihood is potentially present within you. Tread the spiritual path, the path to God; by treading it Rishihood will gradually be attained. God resides within each person – in this there is no differentiation between man or woman, no caste distinction. Everything is already contained within you, but you will have to perform some spiritual practice. The inherent power that lies dormant within you must be awakened.

At this stage, someone entreated Mataji ; “Ma, do please let us listen to *Rāma Nāma*.” Everyone eagerly joined in this prayer. In response Mataji started singing the name of Rama. So sweet and beautiful was the kirtana, as if Rama Himself were present on the spot. All become welded into one, as it were, and sang in unison with Mataji.

Question : Without the worship of God with form (*sākāra*) and attributes (*saḡuṇa*), is it possible to obtain a glimpse of the One devoid of form and attributes (*nirākāra nirḡuṇa*) ?

Mataji : *Nirākāra* and *sākāra* are one; like water and ice – both are water, aren't they? Whatever path anyone may choose he will reach its goal, whether proceeding along the path of *dvaita* (duality) or *advaita* (non-duality).

Question : The Upanishads state on the one hand that God has created the world; elsewhere they also assert that the world was never created – all is *māyā*. What then is the truth?

Mataji : Where the world is perceived, there creation exists; but in the state in which it is not seen, there the question of creation does not arise.

Question : Who is responsible for committing sin, the *Ātmā* or the *jīva*?

Mataji : Is the *Ātmā* in bondage? Where "mine" and "yours" is, there indeed are ties. Your home is the same as mine – there simply is no other place to go to.

Question : Is the light (*prakāśa*) of the *Ātmā* like sunlight or like the light of wisdom?

Mataji : You mean different or identical? It is the same, but there are various methods of explaining this.

Question : What then is it in essence?

Mataji : In essence there is nothing at all. What is, is. Whatever you say, so it is. If you go by what is visible, then such a vision does exist. If you maintain there is nothing concrete in what you see, then this also is true. Thus, there is both "yes" and "no" – it is and it is not and neither is it nor is it not.

Swami Madhava Tirtha : He is said to be indescribable. The real truth is that He alone IS. From where will a "second" arise? "There" everything is possible.

Questioner : Then it is better not to ask any questions at all.

Mataji : But you will not be able to refrain from asking questions.

Question : Why has God created this world ?

Mataji : It is His pleasure. Merely by His imagination the universe has been created.

Question : What is the reason for being unable to desist from asking questions ?

Mataji : Where ignorance is, questions are bound to arise. He who has passed his exams has no further questions; similarly a fool who does not study has nothing to ask. Questions arise in those who try to assimilate knowledge. It lies in the nature of a human being to desire wisdom, peace, happiness. Thus it is natural for him or her to ask questions.

Question : Can the Self (*Ātmā*) be realized through the *sādhana* of devotional music ?

Mataji : If music reveals itself as the essential Being of the One (*Svayam Gītasvarūpa Prakāśa*) then this is certainly possible. But if music is resorted to merely to become famous, then this is quite a different matter. Whatever goal is pursued with constancy will be reached.

Question : What comes first, form or formlessness ?

Mataji : The form is you.

Swami Madhava : Form means Mukundbbai, and formlessness means you.

Question : How can one ignore form and proceed towards formlessness ?

Mataji : If you advance along the path of *Advaita* the covering screen will gradually vanish – the curtain will be torn asunder. The unveiled One is Self-revealed.

Question : Have you seen Sri Krishna ? What is His real form ?

Mataji : Leave this body out of it ! If you worship God-with-form, concentrate on the form, looking upon it as a manifestation of the One, so you may merge with your Beloved.

You cannot describe the loveliness of a flower, however much you may try. Similarly you cannot explain the exact taste of a delicious sweet because words cannot express it.

Question : First show me God, then I shall worship Him.

Mataji : So you will start doing *sāadhanā* only after God appears to you ? In order to find Him you must pray and serve Him. Never give up your worship and adoration until you realize Him. Proceed exactly as the Guru instructs you.

Question : The Guru utter such beautiful words; why does God not speak ?

Mataji : This is why you must take on a Guru. The instructions showing man the path of service to God have to be obeyed. If they are carried out to the full without reasoning, then God cannot help but become accessible to the seeker. God is ever Self-revealed. All these people are God's own *vigrahas*, God's concrete external Presence as Form.

Question : How can one avoid the distress caused by a calamity ?

Mataji : Listen to the advice of your Guru. By doing so, what is to be destroyed will be done away with and what can never be destroyed, namely God, Truth, THAT will be revealed to you.

The Advent of Sri Sri Adi Sankaracharya at Kankhal Ashram

R. K. Banerjee

Under Mataji's inspiration and guidance the Kankhal Ashram has in the last few years grown into an ideal place in salubrious surroundings. Air and water in this area are superior to those of many other towns, the scenery is very picturesque with the backdrop of the lower Himalayas, the winding Ganga and its various channels. Even the snows are visible from the terrace of the Guest House in clear weather.

The ashram contains the Holy of Holies, i. e. the Samādhi Mandir of Sri Sri Muktananda Giri Maharaj (our "Didima"). This sacred spot has now become a place of pilgrimage for her countless disciples and devotees. The ashram also comprises a fine Siva temple, a magnificent pillarless hall of imposing dimensions, a commodious guest - house, a spacious *yajña śālā*, a two storeyed building for sādhus, a fruit, vegetable and flower garden and a doctor's chamber under construction.

The only missing link could possibly have been a more direct connection with the immortal Being who had done more than any body else for the *samnyāsis* of India by dividing them into ten regular sects, codifying their conduct and establishing key-monasteries in the four corners of this country

to serve as seats of learning and inspire future aspirants with the lofty ideals and wisdom of our ancient Rīṣi-Gurus. This was Adi Sankaracharya who is believed by historians to have flourished for 32 years only spanning the end of the 8th and beginning of the 9th centuries.

He emerged at a critical time, when vedic learning had been dissipated and maligned by distorted forms of debased religious beliefs. Forgotten seemed the basic ideals of Truth and Divinity, which had been handed down scrupulously from Guru to disciple for thousands of years in the form of *Advaita Vedānta*.

So what more natural than that Mataji should have the *kheyāla* of filling this vacuum in our Sangha? News of the impending installation of Sri Adi Sankaracharya's statue in Kankhal Ashram on May 10th, 1978, holy *Akshay Tritiya* day, filtered through to Mataji's devotees all over India. What more auspicious moment could have been found for the function? It was on *Akshay Tritiya* that *Satya Yuga* had commenced and Badrinath temple is thrown open to the public on that day every spring after six months of hibernation.

Hardwar falls within the domain of Sri Sankaracharya of Jyotirmath, the northernmost of the four *maths* established by Adi Sankaracharya. The others are at Sringeri in the South, Dwarka in the West and Gowardhan (Puri) in East India. There is a fifth *Math* at Kanchi, where Adi Sankarji's private library is alleged to have been established.

Invitations were sent in good time to all Sankaracharyas and to well-known Mahātmās and Mahamandaleswaras to

grace the installation. The auspicious occasion of Adi Sankaracharyaji's *janam tithi* (birthday) fell on May 12th, so that the installation ceremonies could be spread over some days before and after May 10th, within the happy orbit of Mataji's birthday celebrations.

Mataji's inspiration of installing Adi Sankaracharya on a lofty marble pedestal within an enclosed temple open to view, with a graded marble base, covered by a bass canopy was put into admirable effect by the untiring efforts of two devotees : Sri P. L. Varma, the renowned architect of Chandigarh and builder of our Gopalji's temple at Varanasi and of Didima's Samādhi Mandir at Kankhal, and Brahmachari Panuda.

The upper temple-like structure had been pre-fabricated in Delhi, while the marble had been ordered from Makara, Rajasthan, months beforehand. But as so often, seemingly unsurmountable obstacles appeared from nowhere. By April it was realised that the trucks containing the stones were missing and so the order had to be duplicated at the last moment with stone dealers in Delhi who fortunately were able to supply the right quality and quantity.

Skilled stone-masons from Vrindaban were employed who had already proved their merit during the building of our temples at Vrindaban and Delhi, and the metal work was entrusted to the experienced staff at the I. I. T., Delhi. From the second half of April, the compound between the *Sādhu Kuthia* and the *Yajñasālā* became littered with marble stone-blocks, and masons were cutting, chipping, facing and polishing strictly according to specification.

On May 4th (19th Vaisakh), Mataji's birthday pūjā was solemnly performed from 3 a. m. to 5 a. m. Thereafter were initiated all the various measures observed by Bhaiji during birthday celebrations at Ramna Ashram, Dacca, and ever since, namely : (1) Installation of a seven-coloured flag at the highest point. (2) *Akhaṇḍa japa* in Didima's temple. (3) *Akhaṇḍa Mā Nāma Sankirtana*. (4) Daily recitation of *Durga Sapta Śati* in the Siva temple. (5) Daily *Savitri Yajña* with bel leaves. (6) Special *ārati* of Mataji every morning and evening. (7) Daily recitation of *Viṣṇu Sahasra Nāma* (1000 names of Viṣṇu). (8) Daily reading of *Hanumān Chalisā* for Mataji's health (a recent innovation).

From May 5th onwards Mataji's full *kheyāla* was directed towards speedy completion of all preliminary work for Adi Sankaracharya's temple. After conferring with Sri Varma and Panuda, the working hours were increased. How strenuously the labourers were united under expert guidance !

In this connection Mr. Varma related, in the privacy of his room, an extraordinary tale. One of the pieces of marble had been cut to a wrong size. Pondering how to eradicate the error, he suddenly had a vision of how this stone could be fitted in to get over a defect in the original design. Sure enough the stone in due course fitted in perfectly. Such was the *kheyāla* of the all-pervading Spirit presiding over the entire operation.

During *satsang* on the 5th, Mataji recalled that when She recently had attended the installation of Sri Lakshmi Narayana elsewhere, the base over which the deities were to be

placed was not prepared carefully, which caused delay during the installation ceremony, so that the auspicious time very nearly expired. Mataji remarked that apparently Providence had thus given Her a warning so that similar mistakes could be avoided during the forthcoming installation.

On the 6th, Mataji shifted to Her room close to the hall, so as to be near the scene of operations. With Her blessings all the persons concerned worked heroically, and by the 6th afternoon the beautiful, prefabricated canopy had been hoisted and dipped into its prepared foundations.

A description of the temple now seems appropriate. Its entire base, spread along most of the western wall of the hall, consists of five beautifully engraved scenes in sculptured white stone. The central one depicts Kalady in Kerala, the birth-place of Sri Adi Sankaracharyaji. On the extreme left is Saradapith at Dwarka, next to it Sringeri Math; on the other side Jyotir Math and Govardhan Math. Four *Mahavākyas* are inscribed on the four panels : on Dwarka Math "*Tat twam asi*" ("THAT thou art"). On Sringeri Math "*Aham Brahmasmi*" ("I am Brahman"); on Jyotir Math "*Ayam Atma Brahma*" ("The Self is Brahman"); on Gowardhan Math "*Prajñānam Brahma*" ("Supreme Knowledge is Brahman"). The central panel contains Adi Sankara's famous edict : "*Sarvam khalvidam Brahma*" ("All this is indeed Brahman").

The open lower marble platforms above the sculptured panels have been left empty. Possibly it may be Mataji's future *kheyāla* to immortalise the four achāryas, taught and installed by Adi Sankara himself, i. e. Padmapādāchārya at Dwarka

Trotakāchārya at Sringerī, Hastāmālakāchārya at Jyotir Math and Sureswarāchārya at Gowardhan. The central platform is higher, so that Adi Sankaracharya may tower over everything, supreme and majestic.

The shining ornamental brass canopy is supported by four brass pillars. The back and sides of the temple are of white marble, and there are low marble engraved screens along the front at various levels, so that a pleasing picture is presented from the front of the entire structure. A simple moving curtain between the two front pillars encloses the shrine at night.

Fourteen specially designed ornate brass oil lamps of South Indian style light up the temple. The effect during evening *ārati* is most entrancing.

The statue presents Adi Sankaracharya as a 16 years old ascetic, sitting cross - legged in meditation, the right hand in the pose of the Guru preaching. The expression is majestic, noble and inspiring; this is bound to increase a thousandfold as Sankaracharya continues to be worshipped under Mataji's *kheyāla* at Kankhal.

Mataji was so concentrated on the new temple that She used to rest at night on a cot in the hall in front of the temple. Throughout the daily *āratis* She would gaze straight at Sankaracharyaji.

On May 8th commenced preliminary ceremonies for the installation. From 8 a.m. to 12.30 midday a group of pandits (previously engaged in Didima's *Mahārudrābhisheka*) went

through the elaborate rituals of the main *sankalpa* (avowal of the purpose of the *pratiṣṭha*), consecration of the temple foundations, and invocation of various deities to be present and bless the installation. In the evening, immersion of Adi Sankarji's *murti* in rice was very reverently carried out by the same priests. A bag was tied round the statue and rice carefully poured into it until it was immersed upto its neck. Then the bag was tied at the top and the statue left thus overnight.

On the 9th morning, twenty-one brahmins fetched 108 pitchers of sacred water from the Ganges that was strained through muslin, for the ceremonial bathing of the statue. The filled vessels were placed neatly in rows in the hall and the statue, which had been cleaned of the rice bath and anointed with ghee, was moved to the south west corner of the hall where the holy water was poured over it to the chanting of mantras. Mataji was present and Swami Akhandananda Saraswati called to meet Ma and view the temple. By 11.30 a.m. the statue was wiped dry with soft muslin and clothed in saffron robes.

In the evening the pandits performed an impressive ceremony, putting the *murti* to bed before its strenuous programme the next day. This was called *śayana adhvāsa*.

A wooden skid platform of sturdy construction had been devised for easy transportation of the heavy statue during the initial ceremonies. This proved to be extremely useful right up to the moment when the statue had to be raised to its final place before cementing the foundation.

On the 9th evening Mataji distributed specially printed saffron coloured handkerchiefs to those who were to participate in the procession next morning.

At 5 a.m. on May 10th, the whole ashram was agog with excitement. The air resounded with the stirring tunes of a brass band and a bagpipe band, which accompanied the procession all the way to Brahmakunda and back.

By 6 a.m. Mataji Herself and everyone else were ready on the road side to receive His Holiness Jagatguru Sri Sri 1008 Swami Śantananda Saraswati of Jyotir Math, who was the chief guest. He arrived promptly at 6.10 by car and at once boarded the limousine car together with Mataji. The procession started at 6.15, led by the Ashram jeep, driven by Br. Sevananda. Followed the two bands. Next came Ashram Brahmacharis in rows of three, carrying tall flags. Thereafter two by two, ashramites and devotees including Dr. Triguna Sen, Sri Kania, Col. Shukla, Dr. Gopal Das Gupta, and others. Next came Adi Sankaracharya's statue on a high chariot drawn by devōtees, thereafter an open platform on wheels carrying Brahmacharinis singing kirtana, followed by the limousine with Mataji and the Sankaracharyaji of Jyotirmath, flanked by hefty pole bearers on either side. In the rear were private cars and a bus with senior lady devotees.

The procession halted for short intervals at strategic points where various *Akhāras*, householders and a girls' school run in Mataji's name, paid homage to Adi Sankaracharya's *murti*, to His Holiness Swami Śantanandaji, and to Mataji Herself. Just at 8 a.m. the Brahmakunda ghāt was reached where *ārati* and *abhisheṅha* were performed by the pandits.

Those who wished to bathe or perform *tarpana* were free to do so, but the main body of the procession returned via Mayapur past Bholagiri Ashram, to be back at Kankhal soon after 10 a. m.

By 10-30 the statue had been moved to the base of the temple and gradually raised to the top by man power and a series of platforms. Here occurred one of those unfathomable incidents worth relating. Commander Jyoti Banerji (Retd. I. N.), a massive devotee of long standing, was helping to raise the statue into position in its final stage, together with three skilled mistris. While he was worrying about how to release his hold on the baseplate before it was pushed slowly into its final place, he felt the *murti* sliding gently on its own to settle down gracefully in the prepared position, with practically no help of the four persons who had been making such strenuous and anxious attempts to accomplish this feat. When I repeated this story to Mataji later, She said : "Then this must have been a special perception on the part of Jyoti due to Sankaraji's compassion."

By 11 a. m. when the auspicious *muhurtam* (time) commenced, Swami Santanandaji was ready with a trowel to perform the ceremony of laying the foundation. He was followed in quick succession by Mahamandalelswaras, including his Gurubhai Swami Akhandananda Saraswati, Swami Prakashananda, Swami Vidyananda and others. The Mahātmās insisted on Mataji doing Her share, and everything was completed before 11³⁰ a. m. when the auspicious time was due to expire.

The first pūjā of Sri Adi Sankaracharya was celebrated with great fervour and then *homa* (fire sacrifice) continued till late hours.

At 5 p. m. this Holiness of Jyotirmath gave a fine discourse on Adi Sankaracharya's philosophy and early life before an enthralled audience, in the presence of Mataji and several mahātmās. He choose as his theme Adi Sankara's famous edict : "*Brahma satyam jaganmitha, jīva Brahma eva nāparam*" (Brahman is Truth, the world illusory, the human being is indeed Brahman and no other. "It was astounding that these very words were printed on the saffron handkerchiefs distributed by Mataji the previous evening, the order for which had been placed weeks earlier.

Mataji's amazing energies brooked no respite in the face of the crowded programme. She was present for Adi Sankaraji's evening *ārati*, with all the temple lights lit—a truly magnificent sight.

The next morning Svami Śantanandaji delivered another fine lecture in which he recalled his first meeting with Mataji almost 34 years ago at Vrindaban, in the late Oriya Babaji's Ashram, where the late Sri Hari Babaji Maharaj, Swami Akhandanandaji and other mahātmās used to gather to listen to the wisdom of the great vedantic saint before his untimely death.

It is obvious that His Holiness the Sankaracharyaji holds Mataji in great esteem and veneration. In spite of his own hectic programme he had readily agreed to take a prominent part in our festival. At 3 p. m. he was seen off by Mataji

personally and by the whole Ashram, to wish him God-speed at his departure.

In the morning of May 12th, Adi Sankaracharya's birthday, special chanting from the Vedas was performed by the pandits in front of the temple. While Adi Sankaracharya's pūjā was being celebrated, twelve Mahamandaleswaras had foregathered in their special seats in the hall. Erudite speeches were given by Swamis Prakashanandaji, Vidyanandaji, Hansa Prakashji, Shyamsunder Sastriji, Govindanandaji, etc. All of them praised Mataji's efforts to inculcate the worship of Adi Sankaracharya in our Ashram and expressed the hope that this would be followed by classes in Advaita Vedānta and participation in religious concourses in future.

Mataji had arranged for the presentation of holy books and rosaries to the Mahātmās and *ārati* was performed in front of each one of them. Punctually at 11-30 all Mahātmās and Sādhus were entertained to a feast, since they had to participate in similar functions in various Akhāras in Hardwar on the occasion of Adi Sankaracharyaji's birthday.

Who knows what future is presaged by Mataji's kheyāla to instal the *gaddi* of Adi Sankaracharya in our Kankhal Ashram? Suffice it to say that however profound the esteem and veneration in which Mataji has hitherto been held by the topmost elite of the Sādhu Samāj of North India, from now on She is to receive the highest acclamation from these successors of the ancient Rīṣis. There is no known saint who, on meeting Her for the first time, has failed to recognise the divinity emanating from Mataji spontaneously as *Śakti* incarnate.

This universal recognition became even more apparent when Mataji was the guest of honour from May 19th to 26th in Sri Krishna Nivas Ashram of Sri 1008 Swami Purnananda Giri, Mahamandaleswara of Sri Panchayati Akhāra Mahānirvāni, during which several Mahamandaleswaras and Savants joined together to present a unique address to Mataji, invoking Her publicly in the most glowing terms, such as : “*Trividha tāpa pāpāpanodini*—Destroyer of all three types of sorrow and sin; *Trividha, Śakti Svarūpini*—Embodiment of all three forms of Śakti; Incarnation of Mahākālī, Mahālakshmi Mahāsarasvatī; *Sadāchāra pūtā parama pavitrātma tapasvini*—the ascetic who through pious deeds has attained absolute purity, *Jñāna pīṭhesvari patita pāvanī janasamājopakarini*—Goddess of Knowledge, saviour of the fallen, benefactor of human society; *Śreya preya ki pratimūrti*—Embodiment of all that is uplifting and delightful; *Samanvaya kārinī abheda jñāna prachārini udāra mātā*—liberal minded Mother who upholds the essential Oneness of Knowledge; *Viśvavandhyā Mātriśakti*—Divine Mother revered by the whole universe; etc.

The Mahātmās have gone even further : they have persuaded Mataji to open the Silver Jubilee of the “*All India Bharat Vedanta Mahāmelan*” in April 1979, to be held by Swami Purnānanda Giriji in Sri Krishna Nivas Ashram, Kankhal.

So it is obvious that Mataji’s *kheyāla* is now turned towards fostering the study and propagation of the main schools of philosophy propounded by the ancient Risis, Adi Sankaracharyaji having been the first to codify them with written commentaries and oral teachings that are still studied and treasured in the ancient orthodox ashrams such as Kailash Ashram at Rishikesh.

Jai Adi Sankaracharyaji—Jai Sri Sri Ma !

A Water-Moon at Dawn in the Void

Brahmachari Ram

"Where something is, there God is not". Mataji

1. The snow sets back
And black feathers start to fall
The old beaded cap-gun bangs in the shutters
As the hard brittle banner cracks against broken brick.
 2. Existence, intangible and unknown beckons all-pervadingly.
The river flows on mercilessly, forever
Oblivious of the illusion—the false idol—
Framed by time and space and characterised by pain
Which men worship as life.
 3. The One behind the many
Speaks without any mystery
To those who will listen.
 4. The sun, the moon, the stars and galaxies
All know their place
Man alone is lost in space—
 5. But then he is the star
Of God's divine, cosmic play.
He must be thoroughly lost
Before he'll search for the way.
 6. But if there is no God
There would be no "way".
Perhaps there is no man ?..... !
Those who know, don't say.
-

Matri Upadeshāmrita

I am only a child and do not know how to lecture or give discourses. Just as a child, when it finds something sweet and good takes it to its mother and father, so do I place before you what is sweet and good. You take whatever pleases you. Mine is only a child's prattle. In fact, it is you alone that question and you alone who answer. You beat the drum and you hear the sound.

—Mataji

(*Mātri Upadeshāmrita*, "The nectar of Mother's Teaching", comprises excerpts from various sources of Sri Ma's spiritual instruction on selected subjects).

On Satsang

(*Continued*)

The mind is its own friend or foe; the mind itself has to destroy its own ignorance. The easiest and most effective means for purging the mind is to associate with saints and seekers after Truth and to ceaselessly invoke the Name of God.

* * *

Question : How to acquire the childlike state ?

Mataji : Seek the company of the pure and the God-like and obey the Guru and elders. This will lead to the spontaneous unfolding of the childlike state.

* * *

Question : How shall we realise God ?

Mataji : Weep for Him and you will find Him.

Question : I cannot weep at all, tears simply won't come. What shall I do ?

Mataji : (laughing) : Seek the company of those who weep. Keep the company of pure and God-minded persons.

* * *

Question : What is the easiest way to God ?

Mataji : Profuse tears.

Question : And if tears do not come ?

Mataji : Then you should seek the company of those who shed tears; namely, seek *satsang*. This is the easiest way to God through love and devotion.

* * *

Question : The other day in Madras you said that if one has no tears to shed in the search for God, one should resort to *satsang*. I have had *satsang* for many years and yet I see no appreciable improvement in myself.

Mataji : Your being here now and your asking the question are tears. By tears is meant perseverance in the search with devotion. How can you say that you have not benefited by those years of *satsang* ? But for them, you might not have reached even so far.

* * *

Question : Why does Realization not come even though one spends all the twenty-four hours at the feet of saints and sages ?

Mataji : Out of the twenty-four hours, how much time do you give to God ? If someone stays day and night with saints, serving them, he will no doubt reap the fruit of it. If full Realization does not occur, it does mean that one has failed. The aspirant must be determined to accomplish his task at all costs, even unto death. This must be his attitude of mind. The spiritual path has to be pursued until complete Realization. So long as Rāma has not been found how can one be at rest (*arāma*) ? A man who yearns desperately for God is actually lying prostrate at His lotus feet. He has no other interest at all.

Question : Momentary glimpses of Light are experienced but they vanish. Why should this happen again and again ?

Mataji : Even though they vanish time after time, they will appear again.

Question : What is the simplest method to make them permanent ?

Mataji : If you cannot do anything else, at least seek *satsang*; or if you are unable to secure the company of real saints and sages, read scriptures, meditate, worship, contemplate God. In the measure as you exert yourself you will make progress on the spiritual path.

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On Grace

Nothing happens that is not an expression of God's grace. Verily, all is His grace.

* * *

God's mercy pours down everywhere and at all times. One becomes aware of this by making oneself receptive to it. To pray constantly for His grace is man's duty.

* * *

Question : What does *Guru kripā hi kevalam* signify ?

Mataji : That everything can be made possible by the Guru's grace.

* * *

Question : Where *sāadhanā* is concerned, does one's own strength count for more than the Guru's ?

Mataji : Everything is possible by the Guru's grace; whereas for the ego not everything is possible. Thus the Guru's grace has greater power. Three things are required : Guru, mantra, practice. To engage in *sāadhanā* means to have mercy upon oneself. Up to a certain level one needs one's own mercy—and later the Guru's grace.

* * *

The Guru's instructions should be carried out faithfully. Sometimes the Guru gives some *kriyā** to make the disciple fit to receive *dīkṣā*. So is it not better to follow his instructions faithfully and with infinite patience ? Who knows when the auspicious moment will arrive ! Try to remain patient under all circumstances. Think : "All is His creation. Let me see in what way He is pleased to lead me towards Him." Impatience, dejection and so forth should not be allowed to enter one's mind.

* Spiritual practice,

Try to keep body and mind in good health. With your gaze fixed on the Goal of human life, endeavour to lead a life of patience, peace and *ānanda*. Wait and see what God has kept in store for you. To be in touch with Him and experience His presence is the purpose of the present life. Do not relax your efforts until you have an experience. As you are His creature, try to make your aspiration perfect until you receive His response and become aware of His ever-flowing compassion and grace.

* * *

You are aware of the Guru's grace—what more do you want? By the Guru's grace every aspiration is fulfilled. Carry out his instructions to the minutest detail.

* * *

Question : How will Self-realization come about?

Mataji : By receiving and holding the power of the Guru. What is already within you becomes revealed. A person whose brain is not clear cannot be taught. In a similar way the inner power to know yourself is realized by engaging in *Sādhana*. It is like an electric connection. If it were not within you, you could never discover it. Just as some persons — but not all—possess the gift of writing poetry or of elocution and so on. If it be someone's fate the scales will fall from his eyes, the veil will drop away. It happens by itself, another cannot give Realization; one has to become possessed of one's inner Knowledge. Everyone is born with his innate tendencies and talents. Just as one can acquire worldly knowledge, so also is Reality known by becoming possessed of one's inner

power—and then there is awakening. The Guru's power is bestowed on his disciples, but one among millions can be found who is capable of holding it. The mantra has a power of its own and its repetition will not be in vain, but the Guru's power is not conferred upon all.

Question : What actually is the grace of the Guru ?

Mataji : When together with his instructions the Guru bestows the capacity to translate them into action, this is his grace. Grace is being poured out at all times. But it cannot enter because the receptacle is turned upside down. When one becomes receptive one is able to receive grace. The means to turn the receptacle the right way up is to obey the Guru's orders to the very letter. By virtue of the yoga of sustained practice the veil will be torn asunder and the Self stand revealed—one will advance towards one's real Home. So long as there is craving one will be born again and again; in other words, physical existence continues due to the sense of want. Through sustained spiritual practice one may be released from it. In order that the fact of man's eternal union with the One may be revealed, the commands of the Guru must be obeyed. Thereby one becomes worthy of his grace. The Guru in his mercy points out each one's own path, the path that leads to Self-realization. There are two kinds of grace: with and without cause or reason. The first is obtained as the result of one's actions; but when it is understood that one cannot get anywhere by one's own effort, then grace without cause or reason (*ahetuk kripā*) is received. From the state of utter helplessness He lifts one up.

Question : Who has the capacity to confer power and who to receive it ?

Mataji : He who can liberate one from the ceaseless round of birth and death, he indeed is a *Sadguru*; it is he who wields the authority to confer power. Just as a child cannot beget until he grows into a young man, likewise is there a stage when one becomes a receptacle and then, at the right moment, the Guru transmits power into it.

Question : Can the power be conferred no matter what be the nature of the receptacle ?

Mataji : He can mould the receptacle.

Mataji : Thus if the receptacle is not ready, does the Guru withhold power ?

Mataji : No, when a flood comes it carries everyone along with it !

* * *

The Guru's power is vested in the disciple who prays for the Guru's grace. All this is the manifestation, the Self-revelation of Him who shines resplendent within. The Guru's grace should be solicited without ceasing.

* * *

Question : Is it possible by the grace of the Guru to obliterate desire (*vāsanā kṣaya*) ?

Mataji : It is. The grace of the Guru always pours forth, but you must have mercy upon yourself and allow it to reach you. If your vessel is turned upside down the grace will merely run down the sides and you will be unable to receive it.

Question : I have taken refuge in the Mother. Why does She not take me into Her arms ?

Mataji : The sense of duality has remained; you are feeling apart from Her, this is why. To give a little is not enough; you must give yourself wholly—have mercy upon yourself.

* * *

Question : When one is attacked by inner enemies such as passion or greed, will they be put to flight by the invocation of the name "Ma" ?

Mataji : If you invoke Her sincerely, from the depth of your heart, then your desires will be burnt up as water is dried up by fire.

Question : Ma ! Have we to do everything ourselves or will Ma also do something for us ?

Mataji (laughing heartily) : In actual fact it is like this : If God did not make you act, would you be able to do anything ? It is the nature of the individual to think highly of his own capacity and might. Do not imagine that it is you who are doing everything. Unless God causes you to act, you are helpless. Make yourself a blank. Surrender yourself at the Guru's lotus feet. In the measure as you efface yourself you will be fulfilled.

* * *

Question : There is a hymn in which the World-Mother is praised as the bestower of both devotion and liberation. Does She grant both of them, or to whom does She grant devotion and to whom liberation ?

Mataji : The Mother can and does give everything. According to each person's capacity to receive, She measures out precisely to everyone, depending on his need and merit. This is why She is called Mother. Whatever anyone may desire, exactly that he will get—if not today then tomorrow. One who craves for worldly pleasures will find them, and the seeker after Truth who wants liberation will definitely some day attain to it.

Question : Why then have some people sought it in vain throughout their lives ?

Mataji : When He manifests as desire He will certainly reveal Himself also as its fulfilment. But the desire must grow intense. Half-heartedness will not do ! Why, the fulfilment is already there : You are indeed the self effulgent *Atmā*. The desire and its fulfilment, everything is in fact contained within you.

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Do you want deliverance from the bonds of the world ? Then, weeping profusely, you will have to cry out from the bottom of your heart : "Deliver me, Great Mother of the World, deliver me !" To obtain Her grace you will have to shed tears much more abundantly than when you desire things of the world. When by the flood of your tears the inner and the outer have fused into one, you will find Her whom you sought with such anguish, nearer than the nearest, the very breath of life, the very core of every heart.

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Question : In the *Candī* the Great Mother is sometimes described as benevolent and gracious, again at other times as wrathful. Is She then sometimes merciful and sometimes full of fury ?

Mataji : As the destroyer of evil forces, She appears wrathful and as the preserver of the good, full of grace. Her appearance is in keeping with the individual karma. Do not expect this body to comment on the *Śāstras*. There is a way to realize Her as benevolent; again, where greed, anger, delusion and so forth prevail, She is perceived as wrathful. In the world also, if a mother is unable to mould her son by loving-kindness, she resorts to slaps. There are mothers who fake anger to put fear into their children; others rule by love and affection. Whatever she may do, a mother behaves according to the needs of her child. Just as a mischievous boy has at times to be taught by punishments, similarly men of demonic nature have to be improved by making them afraid. A mother does exactly what is best for her children. The Great Mother manifests in all guises and appearances. She is both with attributes (*saguṇa*) and beyond (*nirguṇa*).

Question : When God is invoked as the Mother, why is there no response ?

Mataji : There surely is ! Great souls have shown this by their experiences. Invoke Her in any way that will make Her respond. When a child, absorbed in his play, weeps, the mother does not come to console him. But if the child cries disconsolately, she will certainly hasten to her darling's side. At times, even when the child does not cry but leaves his play and stands aside, the mother comes to him. By play is meant the play of life in the world (*saṁsāra*).

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Under God's dispensation now and again man has to suffer violent blows. Don't you realize that these blows are God's grace? Without them it would be impossible for the person concerned to experience a change of heart at this particular stage.

* * *

Questioner : When little ants fall into water, we pick them out. Won't God have compassion on us and lift us up?

Mataji : There are two ways in which God bestows His grace : by favour and also by disfavour. In the world there is both good and bad. Whatever path is right and proper for anyone, that God will choose. In the shape of disease, of *kriyā*, of work, in every shape God's grace can be perceived. At the end of sorrow it comes to light. There is yet another way of looking at it : By sending adversity God destroys adversity. By making you ill He purifies you. God alone is the true doctor who purifies you within and without. Now look at it from yet another angle of vision. Who hits whom? Who is ill? That you see sickness is an error. Only God alone is present everywhere. He and He and none but He !

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Question : God feels pleased when His Name is repeated, does He not? Therefore may one not call Him selfish?

Mataji : It is you who find happiness and bliss in repeating His Name. God is not a trader. It is you who say, "I am doing *japa*". God in His grace has shown you the path of the repetition of His Name so that you may realize Him.

Question : How much of His grace does He bestow in punishment and how much in compassion ?

Mataji : God does not calculate. Whatever is necessary for the real good of His children, that He does.

* * *

Question : Why does God not bestow His grace on all ?

Mataji : For God there are no others.

Question : But He is called *Dinadayāla*, one who bestows His grace on the humble !

Mataji : Yes, He is *Dīnadayāla*—for those who become humble before Him, *ie.*, those who surrender to Him !

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Question : Does liberation come about through active *sādhana* or is it due to grace ?

Mataji : Action is required first; endeavour calls forth grace.

Question : But I fail to understand the exact relation between effort and grace. We are required to make an earnest effort to come closer to God. Then where does grace come in ?

Mataji : The aspirant finally reaches a state where he realizes that there is nothing else except grace. This cannot happen while man thinks of himself as the doer. Therefore one must make an effort. Since one engages in all sorts of efforts for worldly things, should one not engage in *sādhana* for God ? It is true that grace comes of itself. But this has to be realized.

* * *

Yes, it is true that there is naught else but grace, but one has to bring oneself to the realization that this is so. In fact, one has no independent power to go counter to the flow of grace. What I say is that a little effort is required to reach the current, as it were. Supposing you are going to the river for a swim. First you will have to walk to the river. Secondly you will have to swim out to the current. Once there, you will find that the current is taking you up, that you have nothing further to do but to relax and float with it. It is also true that the initial effort that is required of you is possible only because of the gift of the will in you. It is only right that you should make proper use of this gift which you know as your will.

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There is no cause for anxiety at all. Because all of you exercise your will in worldly affairs, I ask you to make an effort towards Self-knowledge. You have a sense of obligation which prevents you from being negligent or unmindful of your duties; so, I enjoin on you not to be indifferent towards that which is of ultimate importance. However, it goes without saying that nothing is possible without God's grace. It is somewhat like, and yet unlike, applying for a job. You cannot hope to be considered unless you apply. But there is no certainty of getting the job either. One must make an application and then await results. The difference is that no effort is futile in the sphere of grace. Let me tell you, there is no cause for despair. Always remind yourself that success is assured. Never allow yourself to think to the contrary. Despondency and doubt are uncalled for. Pursue your goal with

the greatest optimism you can command. I tell you, it is as I say.

* * *

Light is gained by His grace alone. He is the One to be held in remembrance at all times. There is nothing else that you need feel concerned about, father. Contemplate Him and Him alone.

* * *

All the time you have the desire to find, the acute feeling of lacking something. Just persist in your *sādhana* and He will fulfill what is left undone. By the fullness of grace comes full illumination. In the measure as you exert yourself you will receive.

* * *

Often a little grace obtained through *japa* becomes the means for obtaining further grace. A little light will create greater light.

* * *

When you give everything, you get everything.

“Think you, ‘mid all this mighty sum
Of things forever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking ?”

Wordsworth

Mother of Millions

(Continued from the last issue)

Anil Ganguli

Raja Sahib of Solan called and chosen

It was a very chilly day at Dehradun some time even in the month of March 1934, because there had been heavy snow-fall on the Himalayan ranges the previous night. Most surprisingly Ma just then suddenly expressed Her *kheyāla* to immediately visit Solan of all places. The weather was inclement and the roads slippery and unsafe. Solan was an unknown place and arrangements even for Ma's temporary residence might have been difficult. But Ma's *kheyāla* never cares for convenience or inconvenience, nor does it brook delay in its fulfilment. Thus Ma entrained for Solan. On arrival there She took shelter not in the town itself but in a cave attached to the Salogra temple about four miles away. The then Ruling Chief of the State of Solan, Raja Durga Singh, heard from somebody about the advent of a saintly lady at Salogra. A pious man, His Highness naturally felt an urge for Her *darśana*. He called at Salogra and found Ma seated quite complacently inside the cave with rain water running all around Her. She asked the Raja to enter the cave and then She burst into hearty laughter. The effect on the Raja was more than magical. This strange but overwhelming experience acted like a sort of spiritual baptism for him and marked a starting point in his new career as a missi-

onary for preaching Ma's ideals. "I fully believe", he has observed, "that our Mother and the great Goddess at Dakshineswar to whom I offered obeisance as the one frequently invoked by Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, are one and the same. She has appeared in the present form for the salvation of all of us." *

Ma's first visit to Solan was for a short period. Subsequently the Raja's state was again and again graced by Her hallowed presence. Often Her stay extended over several weeks and on one occasion over two and a half months. Solan used to be flooded with joyous waves of religious ecstasy whenever Ma would come there. In particular, the following celebrations in Ma's presence are memorable landmarks of this episode: Durga Puja in 1946, Devi Bhagawata in September 1948, Ma's Birthday Anniversary in 1955 and Guru Pūrnimā in 1946 and 1955. The most remarkable feature of all these ceremonial functions in Solan was that the Raja, the members of his family, his subjects and others who attended these festivals felt that they were all bound by a common tie of human brotherhood and as "children" of Ma's Empire of Love.

Many have been called by Ma but few chosen; the Raja of Solan was called and chosen. A spiritual aspirant of a rare type, he earned from Ma the name of "Yogiraj" (King of Yogis) which speaks for itself; he was also known as "Yogibhai". Personally he preferred the epithet "Bhai" (brother) to *Raj* (king). Ever since his first *darśana* of Ma in

* *Mother as Seen by Her Devotees* published by Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha, (2nd Ed.) P. 129.

1934 till his death in 1977, Yogibhai lived the life of a Yogi devoted to Ma and spent like a Raja for institutions associated with Ma. His deep conviction that Ma was the Divine Mother, his wealth and resources dedicated to Ma's service and his influential connections, combined to make him like an apostle for preaching Ma's gospel.

He built an ashram in the grounds of his palace in Solan in 1946 and often extended his cordial hospitality to Ma, Didima, Bhairji, Didi and others. His house in Hardwar also has been placed at the disposal of Ma. Her birthday was celebrated there in 1953, Gurupurnima in 1957 and several other functions subsequently.

Yogibhai's manifold activities in the service of Ma were not confined only to Solan and Hardwar. He was also the guiding spirit behind certain initiatives calculated to have made Ma what She is today in the eye of the world. Thus he was one of the principal promoters, and the first President of *Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha*. The *Sangha* is an Association having for its main objects, first, the propagation of the message of Ma's teaching among the people of the world and secondly supervision over the management and development of ashrams and institutions inspired by Her and conducted by Her "children". The *Sangha* has rendered and is still rendering invaluable service by creating a sense of universal brotherhood and also by rousing spiritual consciousness among men. As the promoter and President of the *Sangha* the Raja of Solan rendered great service to the common people of British India.

In his private capacity, as an individual his contribution as an apostle consisted in the enlistment of native

Princes of India as "citizens" of Ma's Empire of Love. Their Highnesses of the British period of Indian history occupied a very important position of almost royal prestige. They were, practically speaking, all-powerful "kings" of their small "kingdoms" and wielded enormous influence in their own territories. The ruling Chiefs were a class apart in Indian society. Mostly educated on western lines, they were trained by the British Raj to develop western ways of life and to prefer material prosperity to spiritual progress. Raja Durga Singh of Solan was a man of saintly character and high principles based on the ideals of ancient India. His subjects looked upon him as a proto-type Lord Rama, as it were. He also commanded the respect of a large number of Ruling Princes who happened to be his relatives or friends. Thus his personal character and rich connections combined to make Raja Durga Singh an ideal missionary for preaching Ma's inspiring spiritual message among the Rajas and Maharajas during the last chapter of the British period of Indian history. Once they were brought to the feet of Ma Anandamayi many of them mysteriously received solution of their personal problems which they had so long sought in vain.

The Rajmata and the Maharaja and Maharani of Tchri-Garhwal, the Maharaja and Maharani of Mandi and the Raja and Rani of Suket belonged to the pioneer batch of Ma's devotees recruited from the princely order. Then followed many others such as the Rajmata of Baroda, the Ex-Rani of Mysore, the Ruling Chiefs of Bhavnagar, Karauli, Gwalior, Gondal, Amb, Kuchaman, Vizianagram, Nabha, Travancore, etc. To win the Princes to the path of spiritual enlightenment was indirectly to influence the lives of millions. They seem to have

had a taste of Bliss, Love and Peace that radiate from Ma's divine presence.

Yogibhai will be specially remembered for his brilliant idea of starting the *Samyam Saptaha Mahavrata*. It is now a function of great importance. For one week every year in the month of November several hundreds of Ma's devotees come from all parts of India and from abroad to participate in it. During this sacred week of austerity and rigid discipline there is a fixed programme of spiritual activities. Eminent saints who are venerated all over India and who are known for their profound knowledge of holy texts regularly give discourses. The unfailing presence of Ma during this week invariably serves as a powerful source of inspiration. The *Mahavrata*, observed from year to year at different places, has helped to spread Ma's soul-enkindling influence all over India. Under Ma's guiding inspiration this week of concentrated *sādhana* was started by Yogibhai as early as in 1952 and has continued ever since. He did not miss a single session so long as he was alive.

Bliss wells out of Simla and overflows Solan*

Once during Her stay at Solan, in June 1936, Ma proposed to visit nearby Simla, then the summer seat of the Central Government. The question of proper accommodation for Ma was raised, because none of those accompanying Her had any acquaintance in Simla. "So what!" said Ma in apparent amazement but with equanimity, "some suitable shelter will be forthcoming once we are there." Without wasting

* *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Gurupriya Devi, Vol. II, pages 30-36.

further time She started for Simla, accompanied by Didi, in a car lent by the Raja Sahib of Solan whose agent easily fixed them up comfortably in the Simla Kali Bari.

On the very day of Ma's arrival three or four Bengali gentlemen came to pay their respects to Her in the evening. The number of visitors was a little larger the next day and went on increasing steadily. It was very surprising that Ma talked to all these strangers in such a familiar manner as to suggest that they had been known to Her for a long time. Naturally, visitors were deeply touched by Ma's cordial and affectionate reception, absolutely free from any trace of stiffness or formality. They were simply charmed—indeed overwhelmed—by Ma's divine aura and magnetic attraction. Local people, who had never before heard about Her, flocked to the Kali Bari. Persons who had to attend office would come to pay their respects to Her early in the morning, ladies mostly at noon and a mixed crowd in the evening. The room assigned to Ma was too small for the gathering. The overflow would patiently wait outside for an opportunity for Ma's *darśana*, as She was always surrounded by admirers and devotees.

Even before the advent of Ma, Simla had developed a tradition of spiritual culture. A number of religious-minded Central Government officials, on duty at Simla during the summer, had started what was popularly known as *Hari Sabha* for regular *kirtan* some years earlier. They used to perform *Nāma Yajña* (continuous singing of the name of God for twelve hours, accompanied by certain rituals) in the Kali Bari once every summer. In the year 1936 the presence of Ma was a source of inspiration and kindled further religious

enthusiasm. In Her they found a loving and sympathetic Mother who became the object of their adoration within an unbelievably short period.

The annual function of *Nāma Yajña* was fixed for the 23rd of June, 1936 from 6 A. M. to 6 P. M. The day was about to dawn. The dense darkness of the night sky which hung like a canopy over the mountainous region was being gradually dispelled by the first rays of the rising sun. The singers and musicians turned up on time : Haran Banerji, Durgadas Banerji, Charu Banerji and others, all properly attired in garments befitting the sacred occasion. In profound reverence they bowed at the feet of Ma, the very picture of bliss, love and peace. As She blessed them, one by one, Her benign smile and gracious glance seemed to deepen the sanctity and solemnity of the function and acted as the proper prelude to it. Then commenced the daylong *kirtan* as usual. Bholanath participated in it, thus administering to the great delight of the choir of singers. They could not imagine what an enthralling scene of divine ecstasy they were destined to witness in course of the day ! No, not even Bholanath himself had any idea of that experience which turned out to be aweinspiring ! Some of the singers were consummate artists in their own way and thoroughly acquainted with the ritualistic details of *Nāma Yajña*, which were being punctiliously observed, because to them there was nothing new or novel in these. But this time they experienced something unexpected - something that lifted them up to a higher level of religious enthusiasm. Batch after batch went on singing in chorus and singing in heavenly frenzy, the well-known couplet :

Sri Krishna Chaitanya Prabhu Nityananda, Hare Krishna Hare Rama Sri Radhe Govinda".

They continued repeating these rhythmic and hymnic phrases, and faithfully stuck to their usual practice in *kirtan*, circumambulating round and round the *mancha* throughout the day. Incidentally, a *mancha* is a circular altar, improvised for the occasion of *Nāma Yajña*, with pictures of Radha-Krishna, Sri Chaitanya and other deities tastefully decorated with flowers and leaves. A special sanctity attaches to the *mancha* as the centre round which the troupe of participants in the *kirtan* are in constant movement. They play on their musical instruments, loudly singing and chanting in chorus the two rhyming lines in which holiest names are strung together. The present celebration was an exact prototype; a wonderful atmosphere of deeply-felt religious emotion was easily created.

The names of God, sonorously repeated for hours by a band of sincere devotees and enthusiasts in the sacred Kali Bari precincts had a cumulative effect of creating an environment of otherworldliness. This was, of course, expected. What was beyond calculation was an unusual phenomenon, a strange reaction on Ma's person. She seemed to be seized by a divine spirit not to be easily controlled. Her beautiful face assumed an ethereal and indescribable glow; She abruptly left the hall, entered Her room and lay prostrate on Her bed; a shivering ran through Her whole body. But this did not last long; Ma came back to the hall, Her movements unsteady, Her body rhythmically swaying right and left. She then rushed towards a lady, (the wife of Charu Babu) who was

seated in the hall, and most unceremoniously sat down on her lap. Absolutely dumbfounded but thrilled, the lady clasped Ma in her arms. Ma continued to remain in that posture, like a child, listlessly absorbed in the *kirtan* which was going on in full swing uninterruptedly. Tears were streaming down Ma's face that appeared aglow with a halo. She seemed to be totally lost in Herself, apparently attuned to the *kirtan* music, but completely oblivious of everything else.

Encouraged beyond measure, the singers went on singing the name of God at the top of their voices. The *kirtan* reached a crescendo; and there was a mysterious feeling that Ma was radiating Bliss, Love and Peace, which made the whole atmosphere pure and holy. Gradually Ma's body tended to go out of Her control. Bholanath felt alarmed. He asked Ma to keep away from the *kirtan* hall. But Ma was indeed helpless when it was a play of *kheyāla*; Her movements were dominated by an unscen Power beyond Her control.

After an interval Ma rushed back into Her room, dropped down on the bed and started rolling. Again, She suddenly emerged from Her room and proceeded towards the hall with Her hair dishevelled and the fringe of Her *sari* hanging loosely in a manner not strictly in accordance with decorum in polite society. Ma stood on tip-toe and Her body kept on briskly rotating about itself; every moment seemed to be fraught with the danger of Her falling down to the ground. It was about 7.30 P. M. Ma was sometimes standing still and sometimes in a dancing pose, Her movements strictly in harmony with the rhythm of the music. Then suddenly She actually fell down and started rolling on the floor at an unus-

ually rapid speed. Strangely enough, Her body seemed to be without bones like an elastic doll made of rubber; like a piece of silken cloth, blown off by a strong gust of wind, now getting up, now falling down, now rotating about itself and the next moment rolling again on the floor.

After some time Ma returned, as it were, to Her normal self, and sat up on the floor, cool and composed - a perfect picture of serenity - as if nothing had happened. Then followed a new scene in this drama : wonderful recitation of hymns which were spontaneously and automatically welling out of Ma's mouth. It was awe-inspiring, it was superb. The language of these hymns was not exactly modern Sanskrit, but something resembling it. Ma's pronunciation was distinct and clear, Her intonation perfect and Her voice as melodious and sweet as could be. This involuntary flow of the recitation went on till Ma's right hand was automatically lifted up and touched the point between Her eye-brows. And at once the recitation came to an abrupt end. Volition played no part in the entire process. It was all *kheyāla*, independent of any conscious effort on Her side.

When all this was over, Ma lay prostrate on the floor, completely relaxed. All the while the hall was packed to capacity. The singers and all the listeners, overwhelmed by their wonderful and rapturous experience, addressed Ma in the following words : "Our *kirtan* celebrations, continuous for years, have at last achieved their crowning glory : Ma has been graciously pleased to sanctify Simla by Her visit and grant us Her blessed *darśana*." Even a day's *mātri-sanga* (Ma's holy company) made Simla experience an unearthly joy.

During Her stay at Simla Ma told some local gentlemen that the ladies of Dacca had, at Ma's suggestion, started performing *kirtan* and had successfully kept up that practice. This sounded rather strange and unheard of, as *kirtan* by ladies was not in vogue anywhere in those days. The members of the *Simla Hari Sabha* therefore kept quiet and appeared rather surprised. Thereupon Ma remarked :

“Look here, don't you leave out your womenfolk in similar functions ! If you do, you will be hampered in your progress. Encourage them also to arrange for similar functions, and thereby you too will gain in strength.”

The ladies of Simla received great encouragement from Ma's remarks and were inspired to follow Her suggestion in right earnest without delay. At 12 noon on Thursday the 24th of June, 1936, (the very day following the *Nāma Yajña*), they started *kirtan* in the hall of the Kali Bari in Ma's presence. They were inexperienced; and naturally their performance was not up to the mark in the beginning. But soon it became enlivened when Ma stood up and gave a lead to the chorus, Herself singing and moving round and round the *mancha*. The ladies participating in the *kirtan* were so deeply engrossed in it that they were completely forgetful of the passage of time till it was nearly 4 o'clock in the afternoon, high time for the housewives to be suddenly reminded of their household duties, which had so long been banished from their minds.

Thus, a wave of joy swept over Simla. Those who had witnessed the manifestation of Ma's *līlā* in the *Nāma Yajñā*, especially those who had participated in the *kirtan*, longed for a continuation of Ma's presence among them. But they got a

rude shock of disappointment when they learnt that Ma would leave Simla for Solan the following day.

Nobody was prepared for this distressing news. The *kirtan* singers implored Ma to cancel Her proposed visit to Solan, but in vain. Having failed to persuade Her, they prayed for Ma's permission to accompany Her to Solan in a body, so that they might have the opportunity of continuing *kirtan* there in Ma's presence. Bholanath, pleased to plead on their behalf, was successful. The devotees felt exceedingly happy. Ma's departure was put off by one day to suit the convenience of the Government employees.

At 3. P. M. on June 26th, 1936, Ma left Simla, accompanied by about thirty devotees and reached Solan before dusk. It was a memorable event for the Simla party, also for the Raja of Solan, the members of his family and his staff. The Raja, in particular, was greatly delighted by the prospect of *kirtan* being celebrated at the palace that very night; to him it appeared like a god-sent, least expected. Proper arrangements were made with the utmost alacrity. And then commenced the *kirtan* in Ma's presence and continued the whole night. It was an experience for which life seemed worth living. Members of the *kirtan* party of Simla were complete strangers to those of Solan. There was nothing in common between the two groups except devotion to Ma. Until recently neither group had even heard of Her. But ever since Her *darśana* She became the common object of adoration of each. Bliss that originated at Simla only a few hours ago most unexpectedly overflowed Solan.

(to be continued)

Sarmad, The Mystic Martyr

Jainath Kaul, M. Sc.

Many years ago, a Mahātmā who had close contact with the late revered Sri Hanuman Prasad Poddar of Gita Press, Gorakhpur, while passing in front of Delhi's Juma Masjid (the famous huge mosque built by Emperor Shah Jehan in the seventeenth century) suddenly felt his mind drawn inwards. Thinking that he might be close to some specially holy spot, he made enquiries and learnt that only a few yards away from the great mosque was the place where the mystic Sarmad had lived, met a martyr's death and was buried. The discovery of the modest memorial created a strong desire in the Mahātmā to know more about the life of the fearless martyr and so one of the Mahātmā's devotees was entrusted with the task of collecting as much information as possible and to try and publish the material thus collected in the form of a book for the benefit of spiritual aspirants. Since then, in particular, have earnest seekers become increasingly interested in this spiritual giant.

Early Years

Sarmad was born in a wealthy Jewish home in Iran some four hundred years ago, when Akbar was the Emperor of India. Receiving excellent education in the Persian and Arabic languages, the boy had, from his early age, developed a strong taste for religious literature. Always a serious student, he had imbibed the truths discovered and made them a part

of his day-to-day life. And when he had read all the major books of his own religion and the Bible of the Christians, he took to the study of Islamic literature and the teachings of Sufi saints. Deeply impressed with the lives of the contemporary Muslim sages, fakirs and scholars, he gave up his ancestral religion and adopted their faith.

Arrival in India

Sarmad came to India for the first time in 1611 and landed at Karachi in connection with a business assignment. He was a sincere devotee of God and a seeker of the highest order. Therefore, after arriving in this holy land, he was so charmed with the environment and the people that he became its domiciled resident for ever.

Being a renowned scholar of Persian and a front rank poet of Sufi thought, he was warmly welcomed in Muslim religious circles and poetic symposiums in the Persian language. This was the age when Persian had been made the court language in India just as the British had introduced English as the official language during their rule. Therefore, in those days, every well-educated Indian, whether a Hindu or a Muslim, knew the Persian language well.

Abhey Chand, The Hindu Disciple

Sarmad had been endowed with the rare heart of an unparalleled lover of God. That is why his mental and emotional vision was totally free from narrow religious prejudices and fanatic bigotry. He saw his beloved God in everyone and was particularly attracted towards innocence

and purity. Coming across a transparent and devout Hindu youth, Abhey Chand, Sarmad forgot all religious differences and conferring his blessings on this blessed pupil he began treating him as his own son. Abhey Chand was also equally charmed with the purity and great learning of the master. The two came closer and closer to each other every day till Abhey Chand openly began to live all the twenty-four hours with his Guru.

In the context of the times, it was natural that this development should meet with strong disapproval in Abhey Chand's family. They approached the administrative head at Karachi, Mirza Mohammad Beg Bakshi, for help and at his suggestion, hid Abhey Chand somewhere. However, it soon became clear that without Sarmad, Abhey Chand's life was impossible. Seeing this, his relatives gave up their narrow-mindedness and he again went to live with the Saint as before. Finding the youth a deserving, ideal disciple, Sarmad took very special interest in him and Abhey soon became a devout poet full of spiritual wisdom. When during poetic symposiums Abhey Chand would recite the Guru's rare compositions in his sweet, high-pitched voice of pure devotion, Sarmad himself would go into ecstasy listening to his own Sufi writings.

Travels in India

Pursuing his goal with single-minded devotion, Sarmad quickly touched a very high spiritual level and also received gifts of divine favour bestowing on him the capacity to perform miracles. When this stage was reached, it was natural that worldly people started flocking to his doors in order to get their

worldly desires fulfilled. Exasperated at this development, and in an attempt to keep them away, Sarmad threw away his clothes and remained stark naked. When the people did not give up chasing him even in spite of this, he left Karachi and went to Lahore. There he lived for eleven years. In 1624, he left Lahore and proceeding via Agra, arrived at Hyderabad in South India. After staying there for a short while, he returned again to Agra and finally settled down in Delhi.

Miracles Performed

Soon after his arrival in the Capital, Sarmad's fame spread throughout the city and stories about his miracles reached the ears of Emperor Shah Jehan. The ruler appointed Kotwal Inayat Khan to make enquiries within a specified period to determine the level of Sarmad's spiritual attainments. The Kotwal tried to meet the saint several times, but failed to find him anywhere. However, after the time which had been allotted to him for completing the enquiry was over and the Kotwal had gone back, Sarmad was seen again at his old residence as before.

Once Sarmad was taken to a mosque by a zealous group of young religious fanatics and compelled to offer 'Namaz' (Muslim prayers). His naked body was covered with a blanket and he was made to stand in a row along with others in the mosque. However, soon after the group prayer led by the Imam (chief Muslim priest) of the mosque had begun, Sarmad walked out of the gathering and sat down somewhere near the prayer meeting within the mosque. When questioned as to why he had acted in that manner, he replied: "If during prayer the mind is not in it, it is not a prayer but a

travesty of it." Sarmad declared that the Imam's mind was too full of the thought how he could procure sufficient money to get his daughters married. "Tell the Imam", Sarmad said, "that there is a treasure lying buried at the spot where I am sitting and that the Imam may utilize it." On digging at the place, a considerable quantity of hidden wealth was actually found.

A Palace in Heaven for the Princess

One day, accompanied by her attendants, Princess Zebunnisa, the daughter of Emperor Aurangzeb, happened to pass by a traffic centre where Sarmad, sitting naked as usual, was playing with mud and making small houses of it like children. Strongly desirous of having the saint's *darśana*, the Princess alighted from her carriage and went up to him. The questions and answers that followed, subsequent to the normal salutation, were :

Princess : What are you doing ?

Sarmad : Building palaces of heaven.

Princess : Are you building them for sale ?

Sarmad : Yes.

Princess : At what price will you sell one of them ?

Sarmad : One packet of tobacco.

Thereupon, the princess at once arranged for the supply of tobacco and Sarmad, drawing a circle with his forefinger around one of the toy mud-houses, wrote that he had sold that palace in heaven to Princess Zebunnisa for one packet of tobacco.

The same night Aurangzeb found himself in a dream in front of a beautiful palace in heaven which carried a placard that the building had been purchased by Zebunnisa. The Emperor tried to go inside to see the palace but was not permitted to do so. On waking up, he at once sent for his daughter and hearing the whole story was so deeply moved that he lost no time in visiting Sarmad and begging him for a similar palace for himself. Sarmad smiled and said in reply "Alamgir, (another name of the Emperor) such buying and selling does not take place every day."

An Encounter with Aurangzeb

One Friday, Aurangzeb was going to the Juma Masjid to join the weekly prayer meeting. On the way, near a thoroughfare, he found Sarmad sitting naked as ever, with a blanket lying nearby. The Emperor went up to him and pleaded that he should not sit naked on a public highway. Pointing towards the blanket, Aurangzeb suggested that Sarmad could easily cover himself with it since it was already there. Sarmad turned towards Aurangzeb and giving him a stern look remarked, "Alright, pick it up yourself and cover me." As soon as the Emperor lifted one corner of the blanket, he saw under it freshly cut human heads with blood dripping from them. Among them he recognized the faces of his three nephews and their companions. The sight gave him a shudder and the blanket dropped out of his hands. Addressing Aurangzeb, Sarmad then said, "Now tell me whether I should hide your sins or hide my body".

Events Leading to Martyrdom

The extraordinarily fantastic life of this great mystic saint of the seventeenth century began to draw to a close, ending in a martyrdom comparable only with the lives of such stalwarts as Socrates. Sarmad was, of course, always living and moving about without clothes. But in addition, as the years sped by, he had begun to recite only the first half of the Muslim "*Kalama*" (highest truth preached by Islam in Arabic). The first half means: "There is no other except Allah" and the second half: "Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah".

Sarmad had touched the pinnacle of spiritual heights. He had first-hand experience of "*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*" (All this is indeed Brahma (Ultimate Reality). To declare this truth forcefully he persisted in reciting only the first half of the blessed *Kalama*. The ignorant masses and their fanatic religious leaders failed to understand that the unconventional behaviour of the saint was the result of his rare, rich first-hand experience of Truth and not an insult to the great Prophet of Islam who had given the *Kalama*, which for the common man was only a dogma. Instead of holding Sarmad in the highest esteem as the living embodiment of Reality and a direct proof of the Truth preached by Islam, the bigoted religious leaders—the Mullahs and Kazis—started a virulent campaign against the saint, creating a widespread stir and hatred among the poor, ignorant Muslim masses. Although Aurangzeb was himself a zealous Sunni Muslim, he at first avoided taking drastic action against Sarmad. But as time passed, the pressure of

the fanatic elements among the top Muslim divines became too powerful and since Aurangzeb depended very much on the orthodox section for the stability of his rule and support for his religious policy, he could not oppose the persistent demands to punish the saint for his defiance of Muslim religious injunctions. And so, eventually, after considerable hesitation, Aurangzeb issued orders for Sarmad's execution.

The last few Days

When this news became public, several of the foremost devotees of Sarmad approached him in a body and earnestly beseeched him to give up his insistence on remaining naked and reciting only the first half of the *Kalama*. They pleaded that even if he did not care whether he lived or died, his life was most precious to his devotees and so for their sake he should graciously relent and stop being so adamant in these minor matters.

It is said that on hearing this earnest appeal of his beloved followers, Sarmad smiled and said, "The time has now come when I should stop speaking. My utterances have filled the entire environment and will continue to resound for ever." And then the great mystic poet recited the following famous couplet in Persian after composing it then and there :

उमरीस्त किं धावाजए मन्सूर कोहन शुद ।
मन अज सरे नौ जलवा देइम दारो रसन रा ॥

"It is now a long time since the fame of Mansoor (the famous Muslim saint who had been beheaded for declaring 'I am

God') has faded. I shall again give the people *darśana* of the instruments of capital punishment (to revive that memory)."

And so, in 1660, a little over three hundred years ago, this great Mystic Saint, upholding the cause of truth, fearlessly sacrificed his life, proving thereby that he was indeed a true mystic, ever one with the Creator and totally beyond all creation including his own body.

"Visions, etc. are no signs of progress. Mere performance of tapas is its progress also. Steadiness is what is required. Moreover they must entrust themselves to their mantra or their God and wait for its grace. They don't do so. Japa even once uttered has its good effect whether the individual is aware of it or not."

Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi

Mother as Seen by Her Child

Dr. Vikram Marya

To write about a natural feeling or a natural happening requires no great labour, but the mere thought of writing with the utmost sincerity about a living miracle requires a great deal of imagination and enforces upon the mind a sense of awe and speculation.

And so, having freed myself with all possible sincerity from these inhibitions of labour, speculation, and imagination, I have thought of writing something about Ma Anandamayi, as one of Her many common followers.

I am using the word 'common' because I am Her follower in the simplest of terms – not a brahamachārī or a saṁnyāsi or for that matter not even a very strict disciplinarian as far as my regular prayers are concerned. I am one of those followers who just believe in Her divinity and Her possessing that unseen 'power' which God Almighty Himself wields.

My pūjā and my devotion for Ma Anandamayi are limited to a sincere belief in Her presence amongst us as a guiding Light which has often shown innumerable people the correct path they must take in their lives.

As a small infant, when I hardly knew anything about the world around me beyond the four walls of my home, I can recall amongst very faint impressions of the memories of those days, a certain brightness, a certain joyousness which I

presume must have been the time when I was first taken by my parents to have darśana of Ma. The exact moment having been innocently forgotten by me, but the very idea of its pleasant impact remaining in my mind all these years shows how, when one is blessed by Ma Anandamayi even once, he is blessed for his whole life !

With the passage of time my visits to Ma's ashram with my parents, though infrequent, became a part and parcel of the duties I had to perform in my childhood. I found that as a student, seeking Ma's blessings to give me strength to do well in my studies became a source of constant inspiration. I felt that She was always with me like a mother, guiding me and showing me the right path to be followed in this world. In Her absence I found Her present in my mother and in Her presence I found my mother present in Her !

During my college days, when my childhood desire to become a doctor had grown into an irrepressible ambition, I sought the blessings of Ma Anandamayi so that I might achieve my most cherished dream of joining the medical college. And I did. At the time of my entrance into the college, and finally during my graduation as a qualified doctor, I could literally feel that Ma was with me, giving me the necessary strength to achieve these objectives.

A stage finally came when I wanted to know more and more about the importance or significance of my devotion to my Guru. By Ma's blessings I had developed the power of reasoning and the urge to know more about Her became very strong in me. What is Ma Anandamayi ? How can I become

fully devoted to Her ? These questions often came into my mind.

An incident worth recollecting is when I saw Ma when She came to Dehra Dun this year. Ma's visit was most unexpected and when I learnt about it, an unknown force, never felt before, made me hurry to the ashram in Kishenpur. I felt that I was being drawn towards Her by an unseen power and that I must seek Her *darśana*.

And when finally I knelt before Her I was absolutely dumbfounded ! Yes ! I could distinctly feel the presence of a mighty power, a confident and divine personality which made me visit Her. I was absolutely helpless—just like a child that feels helpless and spreads out his arms spontaneously at the mere sight of his mother !

The way Ma talked and the practical matter of-fact answers She gave to Her devotees made me feel that She really is the Mother of all of us ! She seemed greatly attached to each one of Her devotees present there, yet She was very detached too !

When She finally left us after barely ten minutes of Her *darśana*. Her children were craving to spend a few more moments with our Mother—while She departed, smiling with total detachment !

There was a lesson in stone for us in this. She left us, smiling with complete aloofness, thereby telling us without words that in order to find peace in this world, one must first of all detach oneself from everything, and concentrate only on one's Goal !

And today; when I review the years which I have spent in my own way of devotion to 'Ma' Anandamayi, I realise that She has not only offered me mental support whenever needed but She, like a mother, has always been by my side whenever I wanted guidance, inspiration, and confidence the most.

Mātrī Līlā

(July—September, 1978)

Mataji reached our Ashram in New Delhi from Kankhal in the morning of July 11th by train and left the same afternoon by car for Vrindaban where Gurupurnima was celebrated on July 20th. At Vrindaban Mataji gave long darśana every evening on the roof terrace of Her house. Sri Prabhudatt Brahmachari came to see Her and also Goswami Indra Bhushan, the famous expounder of the Rāmāyaṇa. The visit of the Bengali saṁnyāsini Swami Krishnananda was of special interest. Her outstanding courage and determination have made her well-known. In 1964 she built herself a hut at Gangotri between two arms of the Ganga. In spite of the place being rather inaccessible, many pilgrims would visit her. Neither the local sādhus nor the officials were in favour of a woman staying there all by herself. She later built another hut for herself near Gomukh, an even more solitary abode. To the objections of the officials, she replied : "Ganga-Ma is flowing down there; is she a man?" She told us that, although she had not met Ma before retiring to the Himalayas, She had heard of Her and all difficulties were overcome due to Ma's grace. "Śrāvana was as good as darśana", she said. "Depend on Ma !"

One evening Mataji related an incident that had occurred many years ago. An aged saṁnyāsi who used to take active part in all discussions as a rule, fell asleep one

evening during satsang as he sat leaning against the wall and was snoring with his mouth open. Ma asked someone to drop a *rasagula* (the famous, juicy Bengali sweet) into his mouth. As soon as the sweet syrup began to trickle down his throat, he woke up to the amusement of everybody. Mataji commented : “When an aspirant does *sādhana*, it is only when *Bhagavat rasa*, the nectar of the Divine, is instilled in him and penetrates deep within, that he awakens from his existence of slumber to Reality.”

A large number of devotees from far and near assembled for Gurupurnima. The Maharaja of Bhavanagar had requested Ma to be the guest of his state on that auspicious occasion. But Ma asked him to come to Vrindaban where he arranged for the main Pūjā. Ma was indefatigable and in great form, radiating joy, energy, love and blessings. From 5-30 a. m. devotees offered their gifts and worship, one by one, till about 2 p. m. Ma was busy the whole day except for two hours in the afternoon. In the evening She gave darśana again for nearly three hours. Br. Virajananda spoke on Gurutatwa in Her presence.

On July 23rd, Sri Swami Vishnuashram gave a talk in our hall which Ma attended. The next morning Mataji motored to Delhi, from where She entrained the same night for Naimisharanya, alighting there on the 25th.

Sri Prayag Narayan Saigal of Sitapur had arranged for the daily narration of the Srimad Bhagavata for two months, starting from Guru Pūrnimā, for the uplift of the soul of his deceased wife. The highly interesting and spirited discourses were held daily from 7-30—9-30 a. m and 4-30—6-30 p. m. in our hall by

a samnyāsi, followed by half an hour's silent meditation on our lawn in the evening. The attendance was very large. Mataji appeared only for short spells as Her health was indifferent. Swami Naradananda and Vivekananda came with students of Narad Ashram School. The hall could not hold the audience and carpets had to be spread on the lawn. Sadhu Sri Pathikji of Lucknow also gave very fine discourses. On Sundays a party from Sitapur would recite the Ramayana from 10—12 midday.

The Purana Research Institute has started working, with three research students who are putting up in our ashram, as the students' hostel has not yet been built.

On August 7th Mataji left for Kanpur where She first of all paid a visit in the hospital to Sri Manthuram Jaipuria who was very ill. She then proceeded to the Ashram near Radhakrishna Mandir which was built for Her some years ago by Sir Padampat Singhania who also was not at all well. After three days, on August 10th, Mataji travelled to Rajgir where She remained in *agyāta vāsa* (incognito) with a very few companions until August 23rd. The Jhulan festival (14th-18th) and *Rākhi Pūrnimā* were observed only very slightly. Ma's sojourn was kept strictly secret. Only during the last few days a few devotees came who had somehow found out where Ma was hiding. Fortunately Mataji's health improved much in those quiet and congenial surroundings.

On August 23rd, Mataji motored to Bhaktiarpur from where She boarded the train to Calcutta, arriving the next morning quite unexpectedly. Only two devotees who had managed to find out, received Her at Howrah Station from

where She went straight to our Ashram at Agarpara. Just about 20-24 people, mostly ashramites and close neighbours, assembled there to greet Her. Before climbing slowly up the stairs to Her rooms on the terrace of the Nat Mandir, She inspected briefly the newly constructed large kitchen which was waiting to be inaugurated by Mataji. Her own accommodation had also been enlarged through the generous services of Sri Gopal Mitra, by a spacious enclosed veranda to enable Her to retire out of sight of the public and yet give *darśana* from the veranda windows to the crowd below whenever necessary.

The first day was fairly quiet. By the 25th, word had gone round of Ma's arrival and large throngs continuously invaded the Ashram morning, noon and night.

Janmastami (Sri Krishna's birthday) was observed on the 26th. Mataji was in and out of the temples uninterruptedly from 10 p. m. to 2 a. m. The evening programme was enlivened by the inspired singing of well-known artists such as Sri Sukhendu Goswami, Sri Siddheshwar Mukherji, Sri Purna Das Baul and of course Kumari Chhabi Banerji. The three temples and their deities were fully decorated and the spacious Nat Mandir was not large enough for the multitude that surged through it.

The next morning, Sunday, a wonderful Līlā was performed by Mataji between 10 and 11 a. m. on the raised dais in front of the temples during *Nandotsava*. Dasu had dressed up as usual and a *mancha* (circular altar) was erected inside a cordoned off enclosure below the dais. Round the *mancha* danced male devotees from Bhadreshwar, dressed as

gopas (cowherds) celebrating the birth of Nanda Nandana. Honoured guests like Sri Subimal Dutt and Sri B. K. Shah also participated in the fun. At the appropriate moment, ladies from Bhadreswar, dressed as typical Vrindabani *gopis* arrived on the scene and Mataji seemed to enter into *bhāva* at sight of them. She rose and danced majestically with the *gopis* and Ashram ladies, looking like Balaramji performing *Rāsa Nritya* with *gopis*. Later She sat down and, still in ecstasy, started singing loudly "Gopal, Gopal" with unforgettable authority. Mataji concluded the festival by flinging pot-loads of curds into the mouths of all devotees nearby. Then, to avoid a stampede, She entered the temple, ascending from there to the roof terrace, and continued to throw handfuls of curds down to the assembly in the courtyard for well over 45 minutes, not sparing anyone with Her unerring accuracy.

It was difficult to persuade the surging masses to do obeisance to Mataji from a distance in an orderly manner. At one stage the queue extended from the bottom of the 1st staircase to well beyond the edge of the guest-house. Ma was confined to Her room for over two hours giving *darśana* through the windows, while everyone did *praṇāma*.

On August 28th, Mataji came downstairs after 5 p.m. to open the beautiful, small, three roomed cottage, on the site of the old iron staircase leading down to the Ganga, built by Dr. Gunen Roy in memory of his mother, Sm Jahnvi Devi, and so appropriately called 'Jahnvi' (a name of Ganga). Br. Puspa recited Ganga Stotras inside the cottage and *Ārati*

was performed before Ma. That evening Mataji visited an old, ailing lady ashramite and then motored towards Calcutta and beyond to see other sick and needy devotees of long standing. Returning at 9 p.m., just at the conclusion of evening kirtan and mouna, Ma gave *darśana* to a large gathering until 10.30 p. m.

On the 29th, Mataji left the Ashram promptly at 9.15 a. m., visiting one or two devotees en route before entraining at Sealdah Station for Dhanbad, where Chhabi Banerji's newly constructed house was inaugurated in Her presence on August 29th/30th. There was a beautiful function and ladies, kirtan all night. Mataji left on the 30th by the De Luxe train for Delhi via Mogal Sarai where all Varanasi ashramites and many devotees had assembled on the station platform for Her *darśana*.

Mataji reached Delhi on the 31st morning and left the same afternoon for Vrindaban, where a Bhagavata Saptaha was held from September 7th to 14th, with Sri Swami Vishnu-ashramji as the speaker. Mataji was present for short spells several times and stayed for a longer time during the narration of Sri Krishna's birthday. On Rādha Ashtami day She attended the pūjā in the mandir from 4-6 a. m.

Mataji was expected to go to Kankhal for a short visit on September 15th and then to Chandod for a week's rest, but due to devastating floods trains did not run and car roads were unsafe. So Mataji remained quietly in Vrindaban. Hardly any visitors came from outside since travelling was extremely

hazardous. On September 26th morning Mataji left by car for Delhi from where She boarded the night train to Rajkot the same evening and from there proceeded to Gondal, where at the kind invitation of Maharaja Sri Jyotindra Singhji, Durga Puja is to be celebrated from 3rd to 11th October.

The 28th Samyam Mahavrata is to be observed from November 7th to 14th at Sri Santa Ram Ashram, Nadiad, District Kheda, Gujarat, at the cordial invitation of Sri 108 Mahant Narayan Dasji Maharaj.

**“This body tells of one sovereign remedy for all ills :
God. Trust in Him, depend on Him, accept whatever
happens as His dispensation, regard what you do as His
service, keep satsang, think of God with every breath,
live in His presence. Leave all your burdens on His
hands and He will see to everything, there will be no more
problems.”**

MA ANANDAMAYI

CLOSURE

OF MATA ANANDAMAYEE HOSPITAL, at SHIVALA

On account of mounting indiscipline, violence, goondaism, obstruction to the discharge of duties by medical staff, assault of superiors, misappropriation of funds etc., the central management of Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society has decided to close down the above hospital with effect from 4-9-78 after issuing proper notification under Sec. 25 FFF of Industrial Dispute Act read with Sec. 6-N of U. P. Industrial Act. Payment of compensation to the eligible workers as per the above Act has already been provided.

Further information in respect of the hospital will be announced on opportune time as necessary.

Gunendra Narayan Roy,
PRESIDENT,
Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society

A new Gujrati book has been published Sri Sri Ma Anandamayee -Na-Sannidhyama Vol. 3 by Swami Bhagavatananda Giri and edited by Sri Chaitanyaben J. Divatia Pages 242, Price Rs. 10/-. It has been beautifully printed at world famous Navjivan Press in Ahmedabad, Gujrat.