

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

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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Mātri Vāni

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

If you ask the advice of this body you will be told to first of all stay in one place like a real good *sādhika* and fill your own vessel. It will overflow of itself when it is full and thereby your treasure will be distributed spontaneously. Whereas if you start serving and teaching right from the beginning, emptiness is bound to be the result and repentance will follow in its wake. If you want to attain to Fulfilment you must not proceed in this manner for it will create obstacles.

In order to overcome restlessness it is imperative to become completely single-minded. The more one abides in divine thoughts and aspirations which are the essence of sat-sang, the more perfectly will one's cherished desire be fulfilled and restlessness be pacified.

To don the robe does not make a *sannyāsi* - so long as

renunciation does not come. To take *sannyāsa* and to become a *sannyāsi* spontaneously is not at all the same.

* ॐ ॐ ॐ *

If anyone commits an offence he may inform this body of what has happened. For the purification of mind and heart it is fitting to accept some punishment in keeping with the offence and to be repentant. If the offender is not willing to undergo the punishment, this body may - if there is the *Akṛyāla* - take the punishment lovingly upon itself.

Even in the midst of all kinds of influences due to various surroundings one must not allow oneself to be carried away by any of them as if paralysed. To preserve his personality and prowess in man's duty. Drifting with the current is easy but to hold on to one's own line is difficult. He who can do it will be able to keep his head high and follow his own course without wavering and not be driven by the opinion of the many.

* * *

In the realm of worldly desire some people experience fright and darkness as you describe. The weaker the mind the

more will it be attacked by fear and similar emotions. The remembrance of God has to be sustained whether one feels inclined towards it or not. Very often the gravity of the situation is thereby lessened.

God is of so many shapes and forms. Whichever of His forms anyone loves and adores, God is with him in that very form. Become immersed in It through self-dedication and contemplation. At every moment be filled with faith, devotion, love and affection for this very Bhagavān.

Those who have dedicated their lives to the Supreme Quest (*Paramārtha*) must remain absorbed, nay intoxicated with this and this alone. No association with anyone. Mixing as little as possible with worldly people. Ever wedded to activity, to actions helpful to your japa, meditation, sādhana. The more constantly mind and heart cling to God's lotus feet, the greater the hope of the awakening of inner power (*śakti*). To the limit of your power stay pledged to practices aiming at God (*Bhagavat Kriyā*). Fix a spiritual programme for before and after the day's work and keep strictly bound to it.

Mātri 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 who 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—Compiled by Sister Uma).

Who is Ma ?

Question : Am I right to believe that you are God ?

Mataji : There is nothing save Him alone. Everyone and everything are but forms of God. In your person also He has come here now to give *darśana*.

Question : Then why are you in this world ?

Mataji : In this world ? I am not anywhere, I am myself reposing within myself.

Question : What is your work ?

Mataji : I have no work. For whom can I work since there is only One ?

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Here in this body lie all things in the universe – father, mother, son and daughter – all created beings. From this One, all have come into being. In the One all exist, persist and finally merge.

* * *

Question : Who are you ?

Mataji : *Pūrṇa Brahma Nārāyaṇa* !

* * *

Bhaiji : Mother, pray tell me what are you in reality !

Mataji : How could such childish queries arise in your heart ? The vision of gods and goddesses appears in accordance with one's *saṁskāras*. I am what I was and what I shall be; I am whatever you conceive, think or say, but it is a supreme fact that this body has not come into being to reap the fruits of past karma. Why don't you take it that this body is the material embodiment of all your aspirations and ideas. You all have wanted it and you have it now. So, play with this doll for some time. Further questions will be fruitless.

* * *

Happenings appear natural or unnatural, normal or super-normal according to your angle of vision. Here, of course karma and *vāsanā* (desire) do not even exist. Here all that can be said is : Whatever happens is equally welcome.

* * *

Bhaiji : When your body is physically asleep in *saṁādhi* do you find any divine presence appearing before your vision ?

Mataji : As I have no fixed aim, there is no need for it; this body does not act with any purpose. Your strong desire

to see this body in states of *samādhi*, causes its symptoms to manifest at times.

I don't do anything of my own will; you laugh and weep according to your impulses and your desires are fulfilled. For your life's work you have brought down this body.

I have no need of doing or saying anything; there never was any need, neither is there now, nor will there ever be in future. What you found manifested in me in the past, what you see now and what will be observed in the future is only for the good of you all. If you think that there is something peculiarly my own, I must tell you that the whole world is my own.

The *ātmā* of this body is indeed everyone's *ātmā*. It cannot be that anybody, anywhere, is not Ma's very own.

I know nothing. I say what you pour into my ears.

This body is but a toy doll; just as you desire to play with it, so it goes on playing.

Solely for you all is indeed everything that this body says or does—its actions, movements, its going hither and thither. Whatever is done for your sake through this body at any time, it is you who cause it to happen.

Your sorrow, your pain, your agony is indeed my sorrow. This body understands everything.

* * *

This body is always with you.

* * *

You may want to banish this body from your mind. But this body won't leave for a single day - it does not and never will leave your thought. Whoever has once been drawn to love this body will never succeed in wiping out its impression even despite hundreds of attempts. This body rests and shall remain in his memory for all times.

* * *

Just as at a flash of torch-light your faces gleam forth in their bold outlines, all your facial expressions appear in my mind when you meditate on me or talk about me or sit down to pray to me.

* * *

Although owing to the illusory attractions of the world, you often forget this little daughter of yours, you may rest assured that your worries and tribulations are ever before my eyes.

* * *

I am ever with each one of you, wherever you happen to be. But your vision is tied down to worldly matters and you have little time to direct your eyes to this body in all your thoughts and actions. What can I do? But know it for certain that whatever you do in thought and deed, whether you are near or in distant lands, never escapes my attention.

* * *

Even after so many years very few people realize what I wish. If they did, such thoughtless questions as: "What do you want? What is your wish?" would never be asked. One must sincerely try to understand me as much as lies within the range of one's capacity. And in order to grasp what I want, one must shake one's mind free from pride, from desire for fame and glory, from anger and sorrow, from self-conceit and finally from self-will which lead a man to feel that he is a free agent in all his actions.

* * *

My food is dedicated lives.

* * *

Have faith in this body. Your whole-hearted faith will open your eyes.

If your perception were subtle enough, you would be able to see that the Guru lives within you in the form of the mantra. If you confuse the Guru with his physical body, and think that if you are away from the physical body, you are away from the Guru you will not get very much from the Guru no matter how much love or affection you may show for the Guru. Whatever devotion you profess for the Guru, you fail as a disciple. The only disciple who is a true disciple is one who believes that the Guru is present within him, that he is very close, very intimate with him, that he is within him in the form of the mantra; and he worships him with devotion with this understanding.

Baba Muktananda

Matri Satsang

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

Samyam Saptaha in New Delhi

Sir Anandamayi Ashram

Chandraloka, New Delhi,

22 November 1957.

Question : What happens as a result of *seva* (service) ?

Mataji : When real service comes about God stands revealed.

Question : Suppose He whom I am serving is not revealed ?

Mataji : If genuine service is performed again and again with perseverance it cannot fail to lead to God-realisation. Solely by God's grace is true service possible.

Question : What comes first, grace or service ?

Mataji : Without divine grace, how can true service be done ?—Have I said anything wrong, Pitaji ?

Pandit Sunder Lal : No, you are quite right. But please continue further !

Mataji : This little girl never speaks of her own accord, neither does she deliver lectures. She only converses with her own (all these) mothers and fathers.

Question : Seth Birlaji (Sri J. K. Birla) has said, it is the human being that commits errors, while all that is good emanates from God.

Mataji : It is very right to attribute errors to oneself. In this manner the road that leads to God opens up.

Question : How can one know oneself ?

Mataji : By behaving exactly as your Guru has instructed you.

Question : You yourself are the Guru !

Mataji : How is one different from one's own Self ? Pray to God, saying "Oh Lord, I shall do exactly what you make me do, I have no authority of my own, I am a tool in God's hand. "If you act in this spirit, the road to realise God will be cleared. If you proceed by constantly thinking of yourself as an instrument wielded by the Lord, this will gradually become a fact. This is *perfectly* ture, this is certain.

Question : Can merely outwardly saying so achieve the result ?

Mataji : So long as 'inner' and 'outer' have not merged into one, one must at least outwardly continue to act in this manner. A human being has to start from the level on which he happens to find himself. When the inner and the outer have become one there will be Enlightenment. Thus, by continuously repeating "Hare Rama" outwardly, it will spontaneously come from within. Sometimes it may also happen that nothing is said outwardly, but it comes about from within.

Only today, while reading from the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, a story was mentioned: If one offers a light to the Lord during the full moon of the month of Kārtika (Oct-Nov) one attains to *Viṣṇuloka* on leaving the body. Once upon a time, during such a Kārtika fullmoon, a mouse crept towards a light lit with *ghī* in order to eat the remnants of the *ghī* which was nearly exhausted and the light was about to be extinguished. In the meantime whatever little *ghī* was left, on being spread

on the face of the mouse, was accidentally ignited by the dying flames so that the face of the mouse was burnt and it met its death on the spot, thereby earning the merit of donating a light on Kārtika full moon. As a result it ascended to *Vijaya-loka*. Do you see now how much can be achieved by the power of action? God and God alone exists everywhere. "Wherever the glance falls, Sri Kṛṣṇa shines forth"—this is what comes about. It depends on one's attitude of mind. Where and how the road to the Eternal will open up for any particular individual is not easy to understand.

Question : If I observe silence, will the mahātmas still explain my difficulties without my asking any questions?

Mataji : This body asserts from time to time that one must sit under a tree. What is the nature of a tree? It gives shade, it gives peace and it gives fruit to those who take shelter under it. To bestow fruit means to bestow one's own self. Similarly, if one sits at the feet of mahātmas, they give peace of mind and they even bestow themselves—that is to say *ātma jñāna* (knowledge of the one Self of all).

23 November 1957.

Question : The Guru Granth Sahib (religious scripture of the Sikhs) mentions Raja Ramachandra. Is he Rama, the son of Dasaratha, or is He the One whom we adore as Brahman or God?

Mataji : Has this not been made clear in the Guru Granth Sahib?

Question : It has, but I am unable to understand it.

Mataji : Have they said that Rama, the son of Dasa-

ratha, is Brahman ? About this you should enquire from Hari-babaji.

(Here a brother devotee left the satsang to speak with Sri Haribabaji)

Question : In the Mahāmantra (Hare Rāma Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma Hare Hare), the word Rāma is used. Does it refer to Rāma, the son of Dasaratha, or to some other Rāma ?

At His stage the devotee who had gone to question Hari Babaji returned and reported : Hari Babaji said, 'Rāma is God. He is without any attributes (*nirguna*) as well as possessed of all existing attributes (*saguna*). In the Supreme Being without attributes everything is contained, The son of Dasaratha also is Rāma. The Guru Granth Sahib describes Rāma as both *nirguna* and *saguna*.

Mataji : I have heard someone say (since this little girl is without any learning, she merely passes on what she has heard), I have been told that Mahāprabhu Sri Chaitanya Deva has made a change in the Mahāmantra. While "Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma" came first, he made it start with "Hare Kṛiṣṇa, Hare Kṛiṣṇa". The mahāmantra is more ancient than the times of Mahāprabhu. In however way you may describe the Lord, it is bound to be correct—whether you say He is without any attributes or possessed of all attributes.

Question : Why did Mahāprabhu turn the mantra round ?

Mataji : For your benefit Mahāprabhu has propagated the Name amongst you. He may have changed it round for the ultimate good of human beings. Not everyone has the power to alter a mantra.

Question : Was there any necessity to change the mantra ?

Mataji : Whatever He may have done was entirely for the supreme welfare of all beings.

Question : Is the Rāma of the mahamantra Raja Dasaratha's son Rāma ?

Mataji : What a fine topic ! There is no need to inquire into this. What the Lord is, will come to light of itself. The Guru will ascertain this. The Name Itself will reveal what It is in Reality. By continually reciting the Name you will come to realise that just as there is a perennial relationship between water and ice, so the Reality concealed behind the Name will become fully revealed. To repeat the Name by an effort of will and for the Name to come about effortlessly are two entirely different things. When the Name has manifested spontaneously, no further questions can arise. Whether you call Him *saguna* or *nirguna*, He is the one and only Supreme Being. One should take recourse to the Name for the revelation of Truth. If one practises, the result will be reaped.

Pandit Sundarlal : Dr. Pannalal understands all this, he merely asks questions to make you talk.

Mataji : This is your own interest, so you enjoy listening. When the child plays, the parents are pleased. Who is within the child ? The Self finding bliss within Itself. Panditji, please correct me if I am wrong. I am not a speaker. This little daughter is loved by all. I am just a doll belonging to everybody.

Pandit Sundarlal : All these people have come to your *Samyam Saptaha* and are sitting in front of you. The sole master and charmer of souls are you !

Mataji : Alas ! This little girl does not know anything. You yourself are responsible for everything.

Pt. Sundarlal : We are not here to quarrel with you. Please do now indicate to these people how they should live. Endow them with more strength (*śakti*). If you will give them even a particle of your power they will benefit greatly.

Question : Is Ma not giving us sufficient *śakti* ?

Pt. Sundarlal : Well, I am not aware of it. I am speaking of *sādhana*.

Mataji : Panditiji is talking for the sake of you all. Only God alone exists. For the realisation of Him, *samyam* (self-restraint) does certainly help.

Pt. Sundarlal : If you yourself were not present, I should like to see who would come for this week of self-restraint ! (Everybody laughs.)

Question : Those who do not believe in God also come here.

Mataji : Why should they come ?

Questions : Just out of curiosity, to see what is going on.

Mataji : How wonderful ! They come to see what all is happening and what do they find ? That satsang is going on and that mahātmās are present. Coming to see the fun they actually come into the presence of God. What is this play ? It is God's own play. If they did not enjoy it they would never come. In the guise of the play and of the manner in which it is enacted is God and no other. How merciful He is ! See how He attracts people unto Himself while they merely come to witness the fun ! "Wherever the eye falls, it is Sri Kṛṣṇa who appears." All names and forms and the

formless are God's. The joy of God, it is this delight they come to taste, whatever may be their excuse for arriving. All names and forms and the formless are God's. Nothing at all is apart from Him.

Merely eating and drinking and watching the cinema—sense enjoyment—all this leads to the path of death. The R̥sis and Munis have set an example of *samyam*. If you associate with travellers that proceeds towards death you will reap death. When the son is ill, the mother forgets to eat. Of course, in this there is attachment. One should eat and drink and contemplate only that which will be helpful to the knowledge of one's Self. To know one's Self is to realise God and to realise God is to know one's Self. *Samyam* is necessary for complete attainment to come about. By sustained spiritual practice, "Who am I, what is my real Being, what is the *Ātmā*?" will be revealed. This is why one should endeavour to live continuously, without a break, a life of self-restraint. According to what you do you will reap the fruit. It is God who bestows the fruit of action.

"A Guru is called He who, out of deep darkness, can reveal the hidden Truth."

SHRI ANANDAMAYI MA

Glimpses of Ma in Calcutta

Anil Ganguli

THE EARLY PHASE

For about four decades Calcutta has been one of the most important centres of Ma's *Lilā*—a prospect hardly foreseeable during Her first visit in 1926. In the late twenties and in the thirties She occasionally used Calcutta as a halting station for Her journeys onwards to other places. But the residents of this city, intensively pre-occupied with their own affairs, were mostly ignorant of, if not indifferent to Her benign and august presence in their midst. Her devotees and admirers in those days were, more or less, connected with Dacca, directly or indirectly. They found great joy in circulating among their friends and relatives information about the life and teaching of their Ma, variously known as the Ma of Shahbag, the Ma of Dacca and Ma Anandamayi. Reports also came from Northern India how different classes of people in Delhi, Simla and Dehradun had been attracted towards "the Mother of Bengal" who, in no time, became their Mataji too. Adored by only a small coterie in the early phase of Her *lilā* in Calcutta, Ma became well-known within a few years and, by the fifties Her name was a house-hold word. The story of the transition is interesting. Let us have glimpses into some of its phases.

The pioneer batch of Ma's devotees in Calcutta consisted primarily of ladies of middle class families and some officials

such as Surendra Nath Banerjee, Commissioner of Income-tax, Sachikanta Ghosh, his colleague, Binoy Kumar Sen, District Judge, and Major G. K. Mitra, (I. M. S.). Moreover, some educationists such as Ganga Charan Dasgupta, Girija Sankar Bhattacharya, Nalini Kanta Brahma, Triguna Banerjee and Mahendra Nath Sarkar, seem to have played a special role in explaining among intellectuals the ideals that Ma stood for and in directing Calcutta's minds towards Her.

By the forties Ma and Her teachings captured the imagination of hundreds of men and women belonging to different strata of the society of this city. In the early days Ma, while on tour, used to put up in some temple or *dharmasālā*. In Calcutta, Her camp was, among other places, the twin temple of Siva in South Calcutta or the residence of a devotee, Jatish Chandra Guha, Advocate. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that Ma does not nowadays enter the inner chambers of the residence of a householder.

One morning, on the occasion of *Holi*, a Spring festival commemorating a *lilā* of Lord Krishna, Ma was sitting in the small hall of the twin-temple of Siva mentioned above. A crowd gathered round Her to celebrate the festival. A large number of ladies pressed hard to occupy the front row close to Ma. She sat quietly, almost bundled up. The day's temperature was high and the atmosphere of the small hall became stuffy. The rush of the people towards Ma seemed to be too tense for any normal human being to stand. Many persons sitting round Ma were profusely perspiring while many more not so near, were trying to force their way ahead. Some over-enthusiastic devotees, carried away by exuberance of emotion,

literally mobbed Ma. Principal Ganga Charan Dasgupta, an eye witness, felt that the pressure must have been suffocating for Ma. He asked Her why She allowed those people to crowd round Her and enquired whether She did not find it highly oppressive and disgusting. "Perhaps this body", replied Ma, "draws them so close to it. It is a great pleasure to me to find them pressing close to me." Principal Dasgupta frankly confessed that if he were so pestered by such a crowd with so many tales of personal troubles and worries to relate he would have felt awfully bored. Wonderful though disconcerting was Ma's reply : "That's because you feel that your own body and theirs are distinctly separate. You do not feel the weight of your head, of hands and feet, of so many fingers and toes, of legs and thighs, to be a burden nor a heavy load upon yourself because you feel they are but vital parts of your own body; similarly, do I feel that these persons are all organic members of this body; so I don't feel their pressure nor find their worries weighing upon me. Their joys and sorrows, problems and their solutions, I feel to be vitally mine. I have no ego-sense nor conception of separateness.*

These words of Ma state the highest philosophy in the simplest language: *There is only ONE, and nothing but the ONE*. Ma explains how She is different from us - She realises that She *is* the ONE, and thus one with us whereas we do not. Ma confirms that She has no ego and proclaims that She is identified with us. She shares our joys and sorrows.

* *Mother as Seen by Her Devotees*—published by Sri Sri Anandamayi Sangha(2nd Ed.) p. 94

Principal Dasgupta was a profound thinker with a deeply religious background. A distinguished disciple of Swami Bholananda Giri, he was, for years Secretary of the Bholananda Board of Trustees. "Mother," he says, "works quietly and almost unnoticed among all classes of people. Like the life-forces of Nature, Her influence penetrates the supra-physical plane of existence, in the region of man's motives, purposes and principles. It transforms his being, all invisible like the cosmic radiations from above. She possesses the Supreme Power of healing all wounds, sorrows and bereavements; so She is called the 'Great Healer' of men's woes"*.

Another educationist, Dr. Nalini Kanta Brahma, Professor of philosophy of all-India repute, a disciple of Balananda Brahmachariji Maharaj, observes: "Wonderful solutions of difficult philosophical problems by an almost illiterate woman show that there is in Her the great Light that illumines everything. The motherly affection that is bestowed on all who come to Her and captivates the hearts of them all bears out that it must be Absolute Love that is working".**

Again, according to Girija Sankar Bhattacharya, Professor, Presidency College, "Mother's identity with the Supreme is whole and complete, and yet the human element in Her is not extinguished. She is thus Divinity encased in a human body".(*)

* *Mother as Seen by Her Devotees*—published by Sri Sri Anandamayi Sangha (2nd Ed.) p. 83, 93

** *Mother as Seen by Her Devotees* (2nd Ed.) p. 41

(*) *Mother as Seen by Her Devotees* (2nd Ed.) p. 107

Why Ma Had an Appeal for the People of Calcutta

Probably the intellectual approach of the learned scholars was not comprehensible to the vast majority of Ma's devotees in Calcutta and evidently the experience of the *sādhaka* scientist was not widely known. But whoever had Her darśana found in Her an embodiment of his conception of divine beauty. Her radiant complexion in those days was comparable to that of Lord Gouranga as described in the *Chaitanya Charitamrita* and Her figure and features were unparalleled in grace and beauty. Her beaming eyes radiated love and light and Her gracious smile carried a special message: Worldly pleasures are fleeting compared to the joy of communion with God.

The stories of Dacca about Her supernatural powers were current, but the people of Calcutta do not seem to have witnessed any miracle like the Siddheswari episode mentioned earlier. All the same, Ma was a standing miracle. She had certain marvellous qualities such as compassion, catholicity and patience not to be found in ordinary human beings. Naturally, there grew a genuine curiosity to know details about this mysterious Ma and Her message.

In many cases Ma's pull was irresistible and inevitable. To mention one instance, the family of Pran Kumar Bose, District Judge, one of the pioneer devotees in Calcutta, surrendered himself at the feet of Ma. Mrs. Bose became, in later life, a part and parcel of Sri Sri Anandamayi Ashram. Her daughter's daughter, Juthika Guha (also known as Buni), then aged 17 or 18, felt so much attracted to Ma that she renounced the world, surrendered herself at the feet of Ma and led the life of a

nun under Ma's direct guidance till she died in Sri Sri Anandamayī Ashram at Vrindaban in 1964.

Ma's inspiring appeal to Buni was, it seems, through the heart and not the brain. Dr. Debendra Nath Mukherjee, an eminent physician of Calcutta, combined in his character a scientific outlook with the emotion alearnestness of a *sādhaka*. He was at first a favourite and one of the foremost disciples of Swami Bholananda Giri, and in later life he himself became a Saṁnyāsi known as Swami Satchidananda Giri. Dr. Mukherjee's first visit to Ma was on a professional call for Her treatment. He found Her pulse beat abnormally rapid. A few minutes afterwards Ma asked him to feel this pulse again and "Just see, you will now find the pulse normal." Her statement was checked by the Doctor and found correct. Thereafter, Ma said in the same sitting, "Feel the pulse again, you will now find a condition of the pulse which is very serious according to you people." Dr. Mukherjee was puzzled by the erratic appearance and disappearance of certain disquieting symptoms in quick succession. Naturally he was struck by the perfect equanimity of his patient who seemed to have complete mastery over Her body. He realized that it was not a case of illness but the Mother's *lilā*. Ma's special *kriṣṇa* was bestowed on this *Sādhak-Doctor* who was enrolled into Her confidential circle with some secret not known even to Ma's close associates. "The fact of the matter", She said, "is that this body does not follow the usual rules of good health or bad health. Sometimes it happens that its activities slow down due to lack of *kheyāla*; at such times the intake of food merely acts as an impediment; this is why, at times, you see 'symp-

toms' of liver or stomach 'troubles'. The reason why these 'symptoms' disappear suddenly is that the body, in its own time, returns to its normal rhythm. This body does not suffer from 'diseases' which can be 'diagnosed' or 'cured' by the usual methods',* The *sādhaka* in this scientist at once saw the Divine Mother in Anandamayi Ma and paid reverential homage to Her. He became one of Her sincere admirers whose number was steadily on the increase.

The example set by the Professors, the members of the learned professions and the Government officials – all respectable men, some being disciples of one or other great contemporary saints—was emulated by some of their respective friends and admirers. Thus, through various sources people were drawn towards Ma by the thousand and the reason for this was not known even to themselves in most cases.

It is neither possible nor necessary to know why Ma had an appeal for the people of Calcutta. Apart from the inexplicable attractiveness inherent in Her, there were certain exterior factors—additional attractions—for which people flocked to this mysterious Mother. Thus, as in Dacca and Simla, *satsanga* was inspired by Ma in Calcutta and was conducted by Her local followers with earnestness. It proved a grand success. Ma's party, including some talented musicians with emotional fervour, used to sing songs which touched the hearts of the audience. Famous contemporaneous musicians of Calcutta such as Dinesh Thakur, Manmathanath Nath, Nibaran Samajpati and Brojen Ganguli, used to participate in

* Ananda Varta, XXIV/3/176; *Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Sri Sri Gurupriya Devi, VII 351

the *satsangas* which became the forum for demonstration of the best musical talent in the line of *kirtan* and *bhajan* in Calcutta. Eminent artistes considered it a great privilege to have a chance of singing before Ma. They kept the audience spell-bound and added to the popularity of the *satsanga*.

A specially important feature of the *satsanga* consisted of discourses by eminent and erudite scholars on religious and philosophical subjects which enhanced its prestige and importance as a medium of spreading culture and education.

Ma never gave any discourse but by rare comments She would invariably shed a flood of light on the subjects discussed, to the amazement of the admiring scholars present. Though almost unlettered, She knew the last word on the special subject of each expert. Again, Ma's songs had a magic effect. She had no schooling in music but She was a born musician with a sweet voice commanding mastery over tune and rhythmic timing at which even the master artistes were amazed. Besides, the sound emanating from Her used to stir one's soul, as it does even now. Above all, Ma's very presence purified the atmosphere and turned people's mind God-ward, as usual.

As an embodiment of divine beauty, as a standing miracle, as an artist *par excellence*, as a brilliant talker and as a spiritual guide, Ma became the object of wonder and admiration. She revealed Herself to Calcuttans, first and foremost, as the Mother.

The *lilā* of Ma Anandamayi in this world commencing from 1896, reminded the people of Calcutta of Thakur Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa whose *lilā* terminated in 1886.

There was a striking resemblance between the two in many respects. Both came of an unknown family of a humble village of undivided Bengal. Thakur lacked formal education but had the last word in wisdom. It is similar with Ma. Again, like Thakur, Ma has received homage from all sections of people and recognition from eminent contemporaries, including spiritual leaders. The sayings of both are simple and conclusive, illustrated by parables and emanate from the depths of an invisible source and directly appeal to one's heart.

Two Celebrities Meet Ma

A great son of Bengal, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, is known all the world over as the valiant fighter who rocked the very foundation of the mighty British Empire. Few know that he had also a genuine spiritual hunger. The following extracts from his letter dated August 8, 1927, written to the author from Dalhousie, reflect his impelling urge for communion with the Supreme and his struggle to "know our mind, a subtle thing which often deceives itself."

"My dear Anil,

I believe in God. I also believe in prayer though I do not do much of it myself. The mental (or you may say spiritual) exercise that I have been doing is of two kinds depending on my need at the time. One of these is practice of self-assertion, I sit down peacefully and think hard that I have overcome the passions, viz. lust, anger, greed fear. This practice gives me a lot of strength-and through it I overcome many weaknesses. The other practice is self-surrender. I sit down and think of a mighty stream of Divine Energy-some-

hing like Bergson's '*elan vital*' and try to merge my existence in it. I try to feel that as a result of this merging (or self-surrender) the Divine Energy flows through me and that I am but an instrument in the hands of the Divine. I never consciously pray for anything material. It is mean and sordid. On the contrary, I try to repeat to my mind—"Thy Will be done"—in a spirit of self-surrender.

Life is an eternal conflict—there is no peace until you overcome all the passions. But gradually one gets pleasure in fighting and when some desire (or passion) is overcome—there is a great satisfaction and a sense of self-confidence.

Very affly, yours,

P. S.

Subhas

There is one thing I forgot to tell you. I have also received much benefit from one kind of mental exercise viz. self-analysis. Whenever I have time, I sit down calmly and try to look into my mind and find out what weaknesses, if any, are there. In this way, I have detected many unworthy elements and nipped them in the bud. Detection always means half the victory. When I have detected something wrong or unworthy, then self-assertion becomes easier and you can crush the passions more easily. Most of the trouble that we have is due to the fact that we do not know our minds. The mind is such a subtle thing that it often deceives itself. Therefore, continued self-analysis is necessary as a daily mental exercise. The study of abnormal psychology and of psychopathology has helped me to analyse myself."

Having heard about Ma Anandamayi, Subhas Chandra

Bose expressed his desire for Her *darśana* and an interview was arranged at Dakshineswar on October 20, 1938.

In answer to a question put by Ma, he said that the reason why he had dedicated his life to the service of the country was that it made him happy. He was not in a position to answer Ma's further question as to whether such happiness was lasting and unqualified. Then Ma requested him to keep in mind "another kind of service along with what he had been already engaged in", and asked him to give a talk. "But I have not come here to talk", pleaded he, "I am here to listen". "In that case, will you listen to what this little girl of yours may say?" enquired Ma. "I shall try", promised the determined spiritual aspirant.

Ma : "Do not preoccupy yourself with the outside world only. You have so much capacity.

Keep in mind the inner life too."

Bose : "How shall I do that ? By what method ?"*

These two questions seeking Ma's guidance regarding the process to be followed by him show earnestness on the part of Subhas Chandra Bose to act according to his promise, "I shall try" to listen to what Ma would say. They are characteristic of this great man who simultaneously believed in *self-assertion*, *self-surrender* and *self-analysis* as stated with remarkable force and clarity in his letter quoted above.

Unfortunately, however, before any answer could come from Ma, there was a sudden influx of visitors which completely changed the atmosphere. Subhas Chandra Bose did

* Ananda Vārtā XXIII/2/95

pranāma to Ma and took leave of Her. This was his first and last *darśana*. Political circumstances prevented him from keeping in touch with Ma thereafter. Perhaps it was not Ma's *kheyāla* that Her answer, meant for a spiritual stalwart like Subhas Chandra Bose, should be heard, or overheard, by anybody else. Perhaps a genuine seeker of Truth like him need not wait for oral communication of any method the secret of which is destined to unfold itself in his mind in course of time automatically. "You have so much capacity"—a reminder like this from Ma may, perhaps, have been enough to awaken Subhas Chandra Bose's dormant spiritual Self.

The fact that Subhas Chandra Bose, the idol of the nation, had sought Ma's *darśana* and advice for achieving his spiritual aspiration was a source of inspiration to many. In the *Gita* Lord Krishna has said : "Whatsoever a great man does, the same is done by others as well. Whatever standard he sets, the world follows."

A glimpse of Ma's Inner Being was once revealed to a great Yogi—Paramahansa Yoganandaji, founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship, U. S. A. Yogada Satsang Society of India who observed in his Autobiography : "I had instantly seen that the saint (Ma) was in a high state of *samādhi*. Oblivious to her outward garb as woman, she knew herself as the changeless soul."*

Once the Paramahansa asked Ma to tell him something of Her life. Ma's answer was : a Father knows all about it, why repeat it ?" ' She evidently felt', continued the Yogi, "that the

* Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda (Jaico Publishing House, Bombay—1975 Ed, P. 443, 450.

factual history of one short incarnation was beneath notice. I laughed, gently repeating my request". Ma sometimes says about Her person : "This body is like a musical instrument; what you hear depends on how you play." This time the "Musical Instrument" was being "played" by a Master. His query, gently repeated and accompanied by a meaningful laughter, worked wonders; he heard priceless "music"—utterances welling up from Ma with the great message that She was a Self-realized Being. "My consciousness", She said, "has never associated itself with this temporary body. Before I came on this earth, Father, 'I was the same'. As a little girl 'I was the same'. I grew into womanhood, but still 'I was the same'. When the family in which I had been born made arrangements to have this body married, 'I was the same'. And, Father, in front of you now, 'I am the same'. Even afterwards, though the dance of creation change around me in the hall of eternity, 'I shall be the same'.*

Anandamayi Ma does not refer to Herself as "I". She uses humble circumlocutions like "this body" or "this little girl" or "your daughter". Nor does She refer to anyone as Her 'disciple'. With impersonal wisdom She bestows equally on all human beings the divine love of the Universal Mother".*

The *Autobiography* of the Paramahansa, translated into several languages, has a wide circulation in India and overseas. It has played a great part in drawing many a thirsty soul to the Universal Mother who has been a solace to them.

* *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda (Jaico Publishing House, Bombay—1975 ED.) P. 448, 450. Reprinted with permission of the copyright owner. Self Realization Fellowship.

Govinda's Tiffin Carrier and the Sophisticated Society of Ballygunge

As years rolled by, Ma's devotees keenly felt the need of an Ashram in Calcutta and in 1945 they succeeded in founding one at No. 4/4, Ekdalia Road, Ballygunge. It was a modest beginning with an unpretentious house in a narrow lane. A disproportionately tall building on a small covered area, it was aptly called by Ma "Govinda's tiffin carrier". It did resemble a tiffin carrier not only in its structure of height without length and breadth but also in its function of storing and distributing food—*prasāda* ministering to the needs of body and mind. This *Ashram* was built with the humble contribution of a few earnest devotees, led by Manoranjan Sarkar, out of money earned by the sweat of their brow. These devotees sincerely believed that it was more blessed to give than to receive. They gave Govinda their cherished "dish of herbs" through the medium of this sacred "tiffin carrier". Their most valued reward was the opportunity for occasional *Matrisanga*, daily *Pūjā* in a temple, meditation in seclusion in a tiny room and congregational worship in a small hall.

To start with, this new organisation did not come floating on the wave of popular enthusiasm in Ballygunge and, for some time, it remained more or less confined to a group already devoted to Ma. Outsiders mostly maintained a neutral attitude. Generally speaking, the Ashram seemed to be a thing apart in the social and cultural life of the locality.

Let us have a picture of Ballygunge, until recently a wilderness haunted by poisonous snakes and prowling jackals, used by free-hooters as a hide-out and by pleasure-seekers as a

placae for picnic. It has since developed into a prosperous modern town, an ideal residential locality, with the *Rabindra Sarobar*, its lungs, in the south. The residents of Ballygunge of today represent a cross-section of undivided Bengal, including a portion of the cream of the Bengali society. Educated and cultured, they have a sense of ethical values. Few of them bother themselves about metaphysics—the absolute *Brahman* or the inscrutable *māyā*. And fewer still those that are votaries of ritualism. As regards theology, they generally have an open mind. Believing, disbelieving or non-believing in God is, according to them, purely their personal affair with which neither *Guru* nor *Ashram* should have anything to do. Almost every house is furnished with an official *Thakur Ghar* (domestic shrine room), mostly monopolised by the women folk. Congregational worship is popular on solitary occasions such as *Durga Pūjā* and *Saraswati Pūjā*, the spiritual aspect thereof is more often than not overshadowed by display of lights and loud speakers.

In their private lives the people belonging to this sophisticated society have a modern and scientific outlook, leaning towards agnosticism, bordering on atheism. The modern age, intoxicated by the triumphs of science, is obsessed with a mad race for material prosperity. There is a tendency all the world over to repudiate the existence of God since God cannot be proved by a verified method, to condemn religion as escapism and to ridicule ritualism as superstition.

'Govinda's Tiffin Carrier', an avowedly religious institution located in the heart of Ballygunge, came with an elaborate programme of ritualism and congregational worship of Ma

Anandamayi as the Divine Mother. The Mother's admirers were absorbed in singing Her praises. But what did She seem to be to the sophisticated people, at the initial stage A rustic woman reported to be without any formal schooling or experience of any advanced country and, as such, hardly worthy of attention. In course of time, however, many of those who had avoided Her, revised their opinion. Anyone who has the good fortune of coming in close contact with Her cannot but appreciate that Ma has come not to destroy but to fulfil. She preaches and practises-not rejection but acceptance, not merely tolerance of other people's point of view but appreciation of the truth underlying every point of view. Everybody, in his own way, derives immense benefit out of his association with Her-be he a Hindu, Moslem or Christian, be he a follower of any other faith or of no faith at all, be he a believer in God, an agnostic or atheist. This aspect of Ma will be discussed at the appropriate place under the sub-title "Selections from Ma's message to mankind".

Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction of "Govinda's Tiffin Carrier"

Although the sophisticated section of the population of Ballygunge was slow to recognise Ma, simple naive people of the locality, tormented by their struggle for existence in the storm-tossed sea of life, flocked to Govinda's Tiffin Carrier; as also visitors from distant places of North Calcutta and the suburbs. They all found in Ma an "Anchor that holds". After partition of India in 1947, a large number of Ma's old admirers and devotees of East Bengal (now known as Bangla-Desh) migrated to Calcutta. Thereafter, Her followers residing in

this city went on multiplying in geometrical progression and eventually became limitless.

For fourteen years "Govinda's Tiffin Carrier" remained Ma's headquarters in Calcutta, supplying spiritual food to persons of all classes—from K. N. Katju, Governor of West Bengal, to the common street beggar. When Ma would be in Calcutta, the *Ashram* proved too small for big functions which necessarily called for special arrangements elsewhere. Thus, Durga Puja was celebrated in 1948 on a plot of land across Ekdalia Road, in 1955 in the Thakur Ghar of Binaya Banerjee of Entally and in 1956 in a pandal erected in front of the house of Ashutosh Banerjee, off Jatin Das Road. And Ma's Birthday anniversary was celebrated in 1950 in the house (then under construction) of Justice S. R. Das Gupta in Ekdalia Place and *Samyam Saptaha* in 1953/in a pandal erected on a maidan in front of the Ashram.

Lack of space in "Govinda's Tiffin Carrier" became a serious problem. Although it was a matter of supreme indifference to Ma, Her devotees felt that during Her short stay in in Calcutta from time to time, some arrangement should be made for Her comfortable lodging. Some of them constructed within the compound of their residence a room set apart exclusively for Ma's use. To mention only a few names : Ganga Charan Dasgupta (44, Hazra Road), M. L. Ghose (955 Block E. New Alipore), Ranjit Kumar Banerjee (29 A, Ballygunge Circular Road), S.R. Das Gupta (7, Ekdalia Place), Kanak Banerjee (Lake Gardens), Dwijendra Kumar Nag (128 Rash Behari Avenue) and Nirmaleswar Chakravarti (P. 558/2 Panditiya Road Extension). Some of these places became centres of peri-

odical *stasanga*—unofficial branches of the *Ashram* “at Govindas Tiffin Carrier” the exercise of its extra-territorial jurisdiction to use legal parlance.

Of the many abodes of Ma in Calcutta, the one at 44 Hazra Road deserves special mention as the original seat of *Mauna Milani* founded under inspiration from Ma, by late Ganga Charan Dasgupta and late Binaya Kumar Sen of revered memory.

Some time in 1952 Binay Kumar Sen had the good fortune of enjoying *Matrisanga* in Puri along with my wife and myself. On coming back to Calcutta we narrated to Ganga Charan Dasgupta our wonderful experience at Puri. Sri Sen regretfully added, with a heavy sigh, that life in Calcutta had become miserable in the absence of the holy company of Ma. Ganga Charan Dasgupta commented that *Satsanga* was an alternative which might most effectively remind the participants that Ma was always with them. Within a few minutes it was decided that a *Satsanga*, to be named *Mauna Milani*, would be held at 44, Hazra Road every Thursday, being Ma’s birthday. On coming home I was going to give my brother, Bimal Chandra Ganguli, the happy news about the proposed *Mauna Milani* when he forestalled me by saying, the previous night he had seen Ma in a dream, expressing Her *kheyāla* that a *Satsanga* should be arranged in Calcutta. He had told Ma (in the dream) that he preferred Sunday but Ma insisted on Thursday. The next Thursday *Mauna Milani* started with Ma’s blessings and eventually became part and parcel of the life of its founders and many others. Since 1976, the weekly sessions of *Mauna Milani* are being held at *Matri Mandir* in the compound of Prativa Kumar Kundu at 432/4, Prince Anwar Shah Road in Jodhpur Park.

Ma's *kheyāla* on *Mauna Milani* has been felt in various ways on different occasions. To give one instance. One particular Thursday, Ma happened to be in Dakshineswar, off Calcutta. Almost all of us chose to enjoy *darsana* of Ma there, in preference to Her "lifeless" photograph hung on the wall of the hall of *Mauna Milani*. But what did we see at the *satsanga* in Dakshineswar during the period of silence from 8-45 to 9 p. m. ? It seemed as if Ma were not with us. Her body looked lifeless like a statue. This impression of mine was independently confirmed by two other eye-witnesses, both regular members of *Mauna Milani*. The next morning I met Srimati Ganga Charan Dasgupta, a sincere member of *Mauna Milani*, who had kept the lamp burning in the absence of most of the other members - truants like myself. The lady accompanied me to Dum Dum where Ma was then staying. She told me, on the way, that she had seen Ma in the *Mauna Milani* the previous evening. I thought it was a case of auto-suggestion. On arriving at Dum Dum we did *pranāma* to Ma and She asked Sm. Dasgupta what was the first item in the programme of the *Mauna Milani*. After listening to the reply Ma went on asking one question after another about the meeting when Srimati Dasgupta suddenly exclaimed; "Well, Ma ! you had been to *Mauna Milani* yesterday !" Ma's reply consisted in ringing laughter, continuing for a length of time.

It is the experience of some members of *Mauna Milani* that Ma's photograph, duly worshipped with devotion, is not lifeless; on the contrary, it is a living source of inspiration. Much depends on the person who looks at it.

Two Bhajans

Narayan (U. S. A.)

In the various western cultures since medieval times the traditions of poetry and music have diverged. Much poetry became so complicated as to be unsingable, and most music so complicated that composing was an occupation by itself. A poem was intended only to be read, silently or sometimes out loud. On the other hand, a composer seeking a suitable text for a song would choose from here and there, quite often from works of a poet he had never met. However, a yearning for the ancient unity of music and word-meaning is growing in contemporary western cultures. The most dynamic manifestation of such unity is Sanskrit. The most encouraging examples of such experience are the poet-musician saints of the Indian kirtan-bhajan traditions. They demonstrate the interplay of Name, music, speech, purification and Self-recognition.

These two bhajan-texts are adapted from poems written in the 1930's in America by Paramahansa Yogananda : "Divine, Love-Sorrows" and "God, God God." He worked as a preceptor, poet and bhajan-singer to introduce an Indian-derived style of non-church devotional singing in English into sādhanā in his adopted land. Only by singing the poem does the meaning penetrate the subconscious and help guide the sādhanā's life. Since we can't print the musical notation, you will have to make up the melody-rhythm for yourself.'

Pain of Love

*Text adapted from Paramahansa Yogananda's
"Divine Love Sorrows"*

*Set to Fritz Kreisler's piano-violin
composition "Liebesleid" (1910)*

I have been roaming, roaming,
Alone, forsaken by Thee - -
 Watching, seen me groping,
 Hardly ever answering.
I shall be roaming, roaming,
Bursting all boundaries apart—
 Pausing not, moving toward Thee,
 To Thy vast unthrobbing Heart.
Come Thou to me, O Lord !
 Come, Come at last to me !
Centuries and centuries
 I have waited now for Thee.
Thru countless incarnations
 I cried out for Thy Name,
Searching by many streamlets
 Flowing astray—my passing dreams.
I' m told that Thou must come indeed
 To steal the flowers of my heart.
In sorrow thrills i pipe my love,
 I sing my song,
 I sing my song to Thee.
Yet now I know my love must reach Thee;
 Afire am i at sound of Name.
On mountain peaks of high devotion
 I sing my song, my song
 my song to Thee.

Stream of Om Ma

**Text patterned on Paramahansa Yogananda's
"God, God, God"**

- (1) From deep deep in slumber as i ascend
the spiral stairway to waking day,
I will whisper unheard by anyone—
AUM MA AUM...
- (2) Now recalling true food i break my nightly fast
of seeming separation from Name ;
I will taste ambrosia, mantra-symphony—
AUM MA AUM..
- (3) No matter where i go spotlight of my mind
must non-stop keep shining on Name;
So in battle din of activity my sole warcry will be—
AUM MA AUM...
- (4) Let adversity wi' tornado-fury shriek,
a pack of worry-wolves howl at me;
I will drown out all uproar loudly chanting—
AUM MA AUM...
- (5) Watch my fantasy weave schemes dreams,
with yarn of hopes memories;
Into that chimera-cloth will I be sewing—
AUM MA AUM...
- (6) Nights i slip beyond physical astral causal state
where unthought-of calm vibrates Joy ! Joy ! Joy !
Each body-cell will join prāṇa's celebration—
AUM MA AUM.....
- (7) Waking, dreaming, sleeping, walking, talking,
serving, loving, chanting, meditating,
My whole being hums, making all places Home—
AUM MA AUM...

Our Dadamasai— Sri Bipin Behari Bhattacharya

R. K. Banerjee

A fair amount of information and literature exist concerning Ma's mother, Sri Muktananda Giri Maharaj, our Didima,¹ who enjoyed a much longer life than Dadamasai, spanning over a period of many years when Ma became universally recognised. By contrast very little is known about the other important person to whom we owe the advent of Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma that is, Her father.

Sri Bipin Bihari Bhattacharya certainly never looked for publicity, on the contrary he shunned all worldly affairs. According to Ma Herself, he was constantly in communion (yoga) with the Divine through his love for religious music and his general conduct based on intense renunciation.

He was born in 1866 and passed away at the age of seventy-one on the 1st of the month of *Paus* (mid-December) 1937. His family hailed from the village Vidyakut in the district of Tripura, now in Bangla Desh.

His lineage was descended from a noble Gurukul dynasty of Brahmans, springing originally from the Saga Kasyapa who is frequently mentioned in the Vedās, Purānas and other

* *Dadamasai* Maternal grandfather.

* *Didimā* Maternal grandmother.

scriptures. For generations the family had been steeped in godliness, and continuously oriented towards attaining the ultimate goal of human life. His ancestry thus handed down the role of Guru from father to son as was the custom of devout Rīṣis in ancient days. It was common knowledge that there had been Enlightened Beings (*Siddhapuruṣa*) among his ancestors, several of whom had renounced worldly life at a young age. The same applied to Didima's ancestors sprung from an equally famous sage, the Rīṣi Bharadwaja. As in the case of Didima's ancestors of the gentler sex, Bipin Bihari's great-grandmother was known to have of her own free will followed her husband when he departed from this world, by self-immolation on his funeral pyre. Dadamaśai's ancestors included famous pandits, such as Kalidas Visharad.

Bipin Bihari's father, Trilochan Bhattacharya, lost his wife at an early age, leaving behind young children who needed looking after. He therefore married again a girl named Tripura Sundari of Kheora village. The only son of this couple was Bipin Bihari. It is a curious coincidence that, as if to underline the non-attachment that was to be the keynote of his future life, the infant Bipin Bihari often was deprived of the opportunity of feeding at his mother's breast owing to her heavy preoccupation with multitudinous household duties.

Unfortunately his father died when Bipin Bihari was comparatively young. The boy led a simple, innocent life, having as little as possible to do with worldly affairs. He early developed a great love for devotional music, which came naturally to him. Immersed in his *kirtanas* and *bhajanas* he often remained absent from home for long spells. He was a good

natural singer and also well versed in several musical instruments, such as the ektāra, veena, violin, sarode, sitar. He showed no inclination whatever to use his natural talents for pecuniary gain, and was never concerned with material wants.

Not being fond of household chores, he did not attend to the tilling of the fields he had inherited, and often absented himself in the houses of relations or friends, where he was gladly allowed to use their homes as his own.

As long his father was alive, the family was comparatively affluent and various festivals such as Durgā Pūjā, Dol Purnima and others were regularly celebrated at their home with pomp and ceremony. However, all this had to be dispensed with about two years before Bipin Bihari's marriage.

In 1889, a few years after his father's death, when Bipin Bihari had already donned saffron robes during one of his long spells of absence from home, he was forcibly brought back, made to discard his saffron robes, and married to Mokshada Sundari Devi, our Didima, aged twelve and a half years, the daughter of Sri Rama Kanta Bhattacharya, a Rīṣi-like devout Brahman of Bharadwaja gotra, hailing from village Sultanpur.

Even his marriage did not succeed in keeping Bipin Bihari tied to his home. He again left his family, put on saffron robes and increased his wanderings from village to village all over the country side. But he was eventually brought back to resume his home life, although his spirit of innate renunciation never waned, but rather waxed with maturity. Sri Anandamayi Ma has been known to emphasise that his deep renunciation was

already firmly established before the advent of Ma on this earth.

Bipin Bihari, being his mother's only son, inherited the maternal property in her native village Kheora. So, after about two years of his marriage, he went to live there with Mokshada Sundari. In due course a daughter was born to them, but Bipin Behari once again left home soon after. Even the news of his only child's pre-mature death failed to induce him to return at once. However, after about three years he was finally persuaded to resume his duties as a householder. Eventually on the 30th of April 1896, a second daughter, was born to this wonderful couple, Nirmala Sundari who was destined to be known all over the globe as Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi.

Subsequently three sons were born only to live out their fate and die in quick succession in their childhood, When the second son died at the age of four, a royal mark (Rajtilak) appeared on his forehead and Dadamaśai, having an intuition of the past, exclaimed, "Did he thus draw our attention to his previous birth, only to leave us for good this time?"

Thereafter two more daughters were born only to be lost as the years went by. Finally the youngest son Jadunath was born to survive and carry on the noble lineage and family tradition. He is now better known among us as "Māmu", our universal uncle.

Bipin Bihari did not observe any regular fixed time for kirtana at home. He used to go to *Akhāras* and *Hari Sabhas* or other people's homes to sing, irrespective of caste, creed or sect. Whether his companions were Muslims, Hindus or Chri-

stians made no difference to him in pursuing his chosen line. His natural singing voice and aptitude did not need any intricate study of the theory of *rāga*, *tāla* or *laya*. He was quick to grasp and master any tune within a short time. He would sing equally well the praises of all deities, whether Krishna, Siva or Durga. He could put across the meaning of devotional songs to his audience remarkably well, and frequently came out with his spontaneous self-coined embellishments while developing a particular tune in a song.

Thus he almost invariably succeeded in inspiring his audiences with his own enthusiasm, and in making them as God-intoxicated as he was himself. The well-known East-Bengal singer Gul Mahmud Aftabuddin Sahib was a personal friend and well-wisher of Bipin Bihari.

His vocational exuberances usually went on until late at night, so that he was in the habit of partaking of a simple cold meal at 2.30 or 3 a. m., before retiring for a brief rest. He never slept in the daytime, in fact he slept very little in the night as well, since he was often up at 4 a. m. to practise his music in a secluded part of the house, usually an outhouse, so as not to disturb the rest of the family. Once Didima actually found him in such an outhouse during a severe storm when the force of the cyclone had torn away most of the flimsy thatched roof, while Bipin Bihari was still singing, steeped in ecstasy, huddled in a corner, with rain pouring through the holes in the roof elsewhere.

His nature remained equally sweet and generous in childhood, youth and during his advanced age. Although he had

lived in prosperity in his father's house he never let monetary considerations affect his behaviour when life was much harder. There were times when he and his family had to exist on simple, bare country diet. Nevertheless he never hankered after the comforts or worldly possessions of his neighbours or richer relations. Neither would he take a loan from others.

Here is a true story that illustrates his attitude of impeccable honesty in adversity. When Ma was a mere child he was once offered and had accepted the post of tehsildar in the zemindari of one of his nephews. He was greatly respected by his nephew because of his flawless, just and upright conduct. But there was an occasion when the nephew listened to another unscrupulous and jealous employee whom he believed in preference of his uncle. Bipin Bihari at once relinquished his post without any regret and returned to his home three years after he had left it, to see his son's face for the first time. Later he did write to his nephew pointing out the latter's error and was proved right in due course. The nephew was then thoroughly ashamed and repentant, but Bipin Bihari never returned to his previous post.

Vocational pursuits never had the chance to interfere with his innate Brahminical culture. Without fail he would perform his *sandhyā pūjā** three times a day and went about his daily worship with great devotion. The family deity was a wonderfully potent *śaligram śilā*** named Raj-Rajeshwar

* *Sandhya* Spiritual practice performed at sunrise and sunset.

** *Śaligram śilā* A special kind of small black stone representing Lord Nārāyana.

(King of Kings) who was worshipped daily with great reverence in the house. This family deity, which had been left behind at Vidyakut, was after partition rescued by Mataji and is now being worshipped wherever and by whomever Mataji decrees.

Although Bipin Bihari was quite unconcerned with his earthly well-being and his appearance, his bearing was always marked by high dignity. He wore his old clothes neatly and cleanly and invariably looked very respectable. His eyes were large and bright, his eyebrows, his mouth and his limbs shapely and well-formed. His body was tall and very slender and he had rather long, slim hands. The colour of his skin was neither dark nor very fair. In later years, when he took to growing a beard, Bipin Bihari presented the true appearance of a veritable Rishi.

His action and speech were based on a strict moral code from which he never deviated. Chastity, truthfulness, honesty, devotion and implicit faith in the Divine, were the cornerstones of his existence. He was a secret yogi in his sādhana through sacred music and thus by his constant devotional practices attained in due course to a state of sublimity.

(*To be continued*)

Ripples of Mātri-Līlā Revealed to Professor Tripurari Chakravarti*

Tripurari Chakravarti, well-known among Mataji's devotees as one of Her "fathers", breathed his last on January 23rd, 1979, at the age of 83. Eminent as a Professor of Modern History in the University of Calcutta, he distinguished himself as a member of the West Bengal Legislative Council and established valuable cultural contacts with foreign countries as a member of the Good Will Mission to China and Japan and as a delegate to the World Congress of Religions.

In 1923, he attracted Mataji's special attention by delivering a series of lectures on the occasion of *Sanyam Mahāvratā* in Calcutta. Gifted with a phenomenal memory, he knew by heart the entire texts of the *Ramāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. Mataji conferred on him the title of "Moving Mahābhārata".

I have had the good fortune of being an eye-witness to many phases of the vast ocean of the *līlā* of Ma Anandamayi, a subject which may some day be chosen for a second *Mahābhārata* by some future Veda Vyāsa. I do not venture to compose such an epic. I propose to describe in these pages only some ripples of *Mātri Līlā*, revealed to me, which are primarily of a personal nature. Let me begin with a few words

* This note, prepared by Sri A. C. Ganguli on the basis of what he has heard from my father, is a correct gist of the statements made by the latter, repeated by him, word for word, in our family circle during the period when he was in full possession of his intellectual powers.

D. P. Chakravarti (I. O. F. S.)

about my relation with this Universal Mother before I saw Her.

I have been hearing the name of Ma Anandamayi ever since my youth. But I never felt any impelling urge for meeting Her; on the contrary, I was repelled by Her reputation as the mother of a rich few. The Goddess of Learning and the Goddess of Wealth, it is well-known, seldom have a common favourite. For generations members of my family have been votaries of the Goddess of Learning. Accordingly, I accepted a lowly paid lectureship in the University of Calcutta in preference to a career at the Bar. Thus was sealed the chance of a big bank balance for me. Yet I was at peace with myself because I know "the price one has to pay for monecy is paid in liberty". Another kind of freedom I valued was freedom from any spiritual guide other than the light of the scriptures.

Some time in November, 1953, my old pupil, Anil Chandra Ganguli, Barrister-at-law, called at my place and invited me to talk on the *Mahābhārata* in the presence of Ma Anandamayi. I immensely liked his visit; but not his request. As a matter of principle, I would not talk on the "*Mahābhārata*" except before a disciplined and reverential audience. I was told, very emphatically, that the occasion was *Samyam Saptaha*—a week of strict discipline—and that the very presence of the Mother invariably inspired silence and reverence. I accepted the statement and agreed to talk. This was the beginning of my destined journey in the kingdom of *Ananda*, unofficially presided over by Ma Anandamayi.

I was much impressed by the atmosphere of the pandal, artistically decorated and packed to the full, with the Mother seated on the dais along with Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj and some saints. The audience, a picture of dignified silence, seemed to be practising a discipline in suspended animation. "Silence" observed Carlyle, "is the element in which great things fashion themselves".

After listening to my talks the Mother conferred on me the title of "Moving Mahābhārata." I felt overwhelmed. Then followed homely conversation for some time in course of which She said that She was a young daughter to me. I replied that I had ten daughters and there was ample room in my heart for one more to be welcome. On that auspicious evening of November, 1953, I became the Mother's "father" and She my eleventh "daughter" — *Ekādash*. This relationship came to stay. So far as I remember, once She said *Ekā* meant 'by herself alone'; and *dasha* 'ten others combined'. The upshot, as I gathered it, was ten combined in one, that is to say, the eleventh covered all the other ten.

My *Ekādash* "daughter" has cordially extended to me a standing invitation to stay with Her anywhere She may happen to be for the time being and frequently sends special invitations on occasions such as *Samyam Saptaha* and *Durga Puja*. Thus, I have, at Her instance, given discourses in different places of India such as Agarpāra (Calcutta), Ahmedabad, Almora, Benāres, Dehradun, Delhi, Hardwar, Kankhal, Naimisaranya, Pilani, Raipur, Ranchi, Uttarkasi, Vindhyachal and Vrindaban. My commitments in Calcutta have sometimes prevented me from responding to the Mother's call. So, I have missed many opportunities that unasked for came my

way. It was, however, nice to be told, later on, that I was missed by the Universal Mother every time I failed to turn up.

As the old "father" of my *Ekādash*, I have always enjoyed certain special immunities and privileges. Thus I am exempted from observance of certain practices - almost compulsory among Ma's followers - such as fasting at certain times, fifteen minutes' silence at a fixed time of the day without fail, throughout life. Among my special privileges are the right to direct *Ekādash* to sing a song or talk in the *Satsanga* even when everybody else is afraid of approaching Her with any request; also the rare privilege of saying "no" when She says "yes." On the occasion of Her Birthday Anniversary the Mother usually goes into a state of *samādhi*. One year the situation became alarming—She lying almost lifeless like a statue. Hour after hour rolled by without Her showing any sign of consciousness. There was a look of consternation among all the devotees, including Gurupriya Devi and the Raja of Solon. They felt helpless and sent for me. When I arrived on the spot, Gurupriya Devi told me: "Ma is looking for you. You better look after your daughter." At my approach, to the surprise of all concerned, my *Ekādash* daughter opened Her eyes and addressed a few words to me.

A well-wisher once told me that Ma calls everybody Her "father", but usually nobody takes Her seriously in this connection - after all it is a term of endearment equally applicable to every child. Another well-wisher seriously enlightened me with the precious information that all the erstwhile "fathers" have chosen to forgo the prestige of sticking to the dizzy height of their paternal status and have thereby been gainers

in the long run because a child's claim on its mother's attention and affection outweighs that of its "maternal grandfather." To me, however, the ripple of the *līlā* of the Mother, as my "little daughter", seemed to be above all these considerations of personal gain. I felt that She too would not suffer me to change my position. In fact, She has repeatedly confirmed that it was in the fitness of things that the relation should not be disturbed. Therefore, it has remained as it is; but on a few occasions, there has been a deviation when I have been flooded with ripples of other types of *līlā*. A few instances are noted below.

In 1955, I went to Ranchi at Her invitation on the occasion of the installation of the image of Goddess Kali in the local Ashram. I found the atmosphere sublime and Ma in a superb mood. Simultaneously with the recital of the mantras in the temple by the priest, there were going on, in the pandal continuous songs sung by eminent experts accompanied by a symphony of musical instruments. The Mother, seated motionless like a statue near the image, was looking unusually bright, particularly at the time of *Prāna Pratistha*. This is a ritual through which an image (made of some material substance such as clay, stone, wood or metal), becomes a *vighraha* that is to say, a living focus through which the Power of the Divine can function. The ceremony made a deep impression on my mind. It enabled me to see my *Ekādash* from a new angle of vision. I quietly looked at Her and occasionally exchanged glances with Her. Her eyes conveyed to me a silent message in the light of which the ritual of *Prāna Pratistha* became, for the first time in my life, something living to me.

The image of Kali had a golden necklace with a locket. A strange thing is reported to have happened during *Prāna Pratistha*. I learnt that it was clearly seen by some that the locket vibrated as if the statue were breathing. I was sitting at a distance and so this vibration was not visible to me. From an account of the event recorded by a European*, it appears that the Mother had drawn the attention of the priests to this extraordinary phenomenon. After the ceremony, the Westerner adds, one of the priests who felt rather nonplussed, carefully examined the statue to make sure whether the vibration had not perhaps been due to some exterior cause and was satisfied that far from this being so, on the contrary, the necklace had got stuck in the paint that was not yet quite dry.

The hectic programme of the evening, including *Kālī-pūjā*, *kīrtan*, discourses and *puṣpānjali*, went on till the early hours of the morning when the crowd dispersed, leaving the pandal to silence and to me. Some people are afraid of silence and solitude because they give glimpses of life's nothingness. But do they not also carry the message: if nothingness comes, can fullness be far behind?"

Dawn of the following day was not far ahead. I was silently meditating on what I had witnessed that night. Suddenly I was sent for by the Mother for a private interview and met with a warm welcome in Her room. Then I had a unique experience, again the first of its kind as in the case of *Prāna Pratistha*. I forgot, for the time being, that the Mother was my *Ekādash*. I saw from close quarters Her glowing face

* Ananda Vārta, Vol. III No. 4 p. 318

and penetrating eyes, inspiring awe and wonder. I was inwardly profoundly shaken. I heard certain words welling out of the Inner Being of the Universal Mother - words too strong to be suppressed but too deep to be expressed. Immediately thereafter the Mother became Her former self. The next morning the Mother behaved in a manner as if nothing had happened. The *Ekādash līlā* was resumed and our normal relationship duly restored.

In October 1963, I saw another aspect of the Mother in the Ashram at Varanasi where I had a serious attack of diarrhoea. This time the old "father's" little *Ekādash* appeared as an elderly matron tenderly looking after Her ailing "child". She entrusted an Ashram girl with my nursing, personally supervised my diet, prescribed a recipe for my beverage and kept a watchful eye on my progress every now and then. Towards the evening I came round and felt I was all right. Left to myself, I would have taken my usual dinner with relish. The Ashram girls also were too eager to oblige me by serving me my favourite dishes. But the Mother peremptorily stood in the way. She knew my standing weakness for delicacies as also the temporary weakness in my power of digestion. I had to remain content with a sick diet at the instance of a vigilant and dominating mother. Thereafter, I came to Her at the scheduled time, ready for my usual lecture and eager to prove my fitness notwithstanding the "starvation diet". But she would not allow me to overstrain myself. She was then in the role of a relentless disciplinarian. I had to yield to the firmness of my *Ekādash*, usually so indulgent to me.

One day in January 1964, I called on the Mother at the

Agarpara Ashram on the eve of Her departure from Calcutta for an indefinite period. After a pretty long private interview in Her room on the first floor, I took leave of Her, came downstairs and was about to start for my home when I felt a desire to exchange a few more words with my *Ekādash*. Such a desire on the part of the pampered "father" was hardly fair to the hundreds of Her "children" waiting for hours on the veranda or in the garden, for the off-chance of a glimpse of their Mother from a distance. But my desire was genuine and intense and would not brook delay. The way back to the mother's room was, however, blocked by an impenetrable crowd. So, I resisted the temptation of going upstairs and decided to wait at the main gate of the Ashram in the hope of attracting the attention of *Ekādash* on Her way out. I was confident that my hope would be fulfilled. But it was not. The Mother's bodyguards callous to the feelings of the hundreds of exasperated aspirants for *darśana*, avoided the main gate and led Her car out of the Ashram premises through a side door. I was disappointed. I had to wait at the main gate for some time before the crowd of pedestrians made room for my car to move. With a heavy heart I left the Ashram and drove along Barrackpore Trunk Road, from where I noticed the Mother's car parked under the shade of a tree. I alighted from my car and was greeted by *Ekādash* with the sweet words that She was waiting for Her "father". Experience has thought me that a call, if sincere, reaches Ma Anandamayi from anywhere and is readily responded to.

An altogether different kind of *līlā* was revealed to me on the occasion of the death of my wife. My study of the *Gītā*

and the *Upaniṣads* helped me bear the brunt of the blow up to a certain point. Then I completely broke down, mourning the loss of that gentle woman who had nobly planned to serve me all her life. I still recall with gratitude how she used to look after my affairs, thereby enabling me to enjoy the blessings of *Matrisang* frequently and for indeterminate periods, away from my home. I thought of her and became overwhelmed with grief. At this juncture came letters from the Mother, one after another, containing messages, more soul-stirring than all the texts of the scriptures put together. These letters revealed that my "little daughter" was at once my friend, philosopher and guide and, above all, my mother.

These *līlās* are confined primarily to my enjoyment and enlightenment: There is another side of Ma Anandamayi : Her dynamic personality to which I am an eye witness. To Her have bowed men and women hailing from countries all the world over. Amongst Her admirers are philosophers and savants, saints, sages and Mahamandaleswaras of religious institutions of all-India status, besides common people by the million. In Her early life Ma Anandamayi of the future had seen poverty depriving Her of all luxuries and even of many necessities of life. In Her thirties She had experienced self-imposed mendicancy in Raipur where She lived on indiscriminate private charity for lack of the basic means of subsistence. But She is, and has ever been' rich beyond the dreams of avarice. She needs no money and has no desire. But Her *kheyāla*, if any, never remains unfulfilled; purse-strings from unforeseeable sources are always at Her service. Workers, dedicated to a cause inspired by Her *kheyāla*, do not have to

wait for a budget ; they spend in anticipation of realization of the requisite funds and there is invariably a surplus budget. The abundance of the presents offered to Her, in cash and kind, is amazing. But She does not take any notice of the gifts nor of the persons providing them. To Her, poverty and prosperity make no difference. Ma Anandamayi is the Mother of all, not only of a rich few. To me my Ekadesh still continues to be my little daughter". At the same time, She is my mother, too. I also bow down to Her as my spiritual guide who has given me more light than all the scriptures.

"It is difficult for the householder always to find opportunities to sit down in his shrine-room for his prayers and meditations. It is difficult to cultivate the company of saints and sages at all times or to attend religious gatherings frequently. But it is easy and always possible to keep company with God in the shape of His Name or a mantra received by the Guru. One cannot constantly have an image or a picture of a deity in front of one's eyes but the living presence (*vigraha*) of God as *akṣata* (name or mantra) can be one's constant companion under all circumstances."

SHRI ANANDAMAYI MA

Recognizing My Mother

Jim McMichael*

If my memory is correct, it was just after the Kumbha Mela-in February of 1977-that I had a most remarkable experience in the presence of Srī Anandamayī Mā.

Two friends, sādhakas from Rishikesh, Pierre, a black artist from Trinidad educated in London, and Kamal, a Lebanese artist educated in New York, were on a limited sojourn in holy Kashi and I was showing them around. Two other friends, students from Banaras Hindu University, Dancy, an Indian from Trinidad studying Hinduism, and Nancy, a Canadian art historian studying Vedānta and Yoga, were also accompanying us. What brought us from various parts of the world to Varanasi and particularly to Mā ? Perhaps the common denominator was age; we were all between twenty-six and twenty-eight years old; we were the generation involved in the politico-spiritual movement of the late 1960s; we had become dissatisfied (if not disgusted) with the material values cherished by our countrymen, and so had come to India seeking spiritual shelter.

Pierre and Kamal were anxious to have darśana of Mā. They informed us, residents of Kashi, that Mā was in town. I had almost no knowledge of Mā, except an awareness that millions considered Her a saint. I had gone to see Her once

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before, about a year earlier, but I had remained reserved keeping a safe distance away while devotees prostrated before Her in the courtyard of the Ashram. At that time, I was very spiritually immature; my obstinate ego would not allow Her to enter into and transform my life.

Walking through the narrow, dirty lanes of Kashi, we reached the Ashram, on the bank of the Ganges, at about sunset. We were not sure of exactly where Mā would be, but some children selling mālās (i. e. garlands) said She was in the temple, the Gopāl Mandir. There were many shoes at the entrance, but we found no one inside the modern sanctuary with the smooth, cool marble floor. In the sanctum was a small, black mūrti (i. e. idol) of the young Kṛṣṇa with a silver flute in His hands. We stood for a moment of silent prayer. Then we started climbing a winding staircase to see if the evening darśana of Mā was upstairs. My heart pounded faster and faster as I ascended the steps. I had mixed feelings of fear and bliss from the awareness of an imminent confrontation with my self. With each step, the shock of the Sakti flowing out of the room above seemed to remove more of my coverings.

Upon entering the room, I sensed an intense spiritual atmosphere. Mataji was seated on a divan facing north. She was radiant ! The room of about forty by twenty feet was crowded with devotees; some sat on the floor, others stood against the walls. Glass doors on the east side of the room, leading to a veranda, were closed to keep out the cold this winter evening. A small aisle led to where Mā was seated, and

devotees went forward to do their pranāmas (i. e. prostration). Pierre, Kamal, and Danny immediately went to bow before Mataji. They were accustomed to the adoration of holy persons. I was reluctant to bow, and would certainly not do so simply because my friends had done it. How could i bowdown to another human being? Though, in fact, i had bowed once, only after a month of extremely rewarding discussions (in October' 1976) with a *jñāni* in Rishikesh, to Swami Krishnananda Maharāj.

I felt self-conscious in Her presence. That is, a consciousness dawned of the littleness of my self (*jīva*) in the face of the Self (*Ātman*). Though i sought refuge up against the rear wall of the room, i could not escape the ubiquitous Energy manifest through this body in front of me. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, the faces of devotees standing near me glowed with the reflection of the rays of Bliss shining from Mataji.

I realized that this was no mere human being in front of me. Rather, like a television set receiving high frequency waves from a far and projecting them, She was completely in tune with the Divine broadcasting station, and the program was coming clearly through Her body.

As i stood there, entranced by Her loving, blissful expression, i felt myself melting, dissolving - the walls of my ego, that I had been hiding behind, were collapsing. I (*jīva*) was drowning in the Ocean of Bliss. Instead of lacking breath, i was lacking the ordinary empirical consciousness which can be so reassuring, so comforting.

The Sakti (i. e. Energy) coming from (or should i say through) Mā was so intense that i was overwhelmed. I felt a spontaneous, irrepressible urge to fall at Her feet. My time had come. As i walked up the aisle closer and closer to Mā, i felt more and more of the Sakti radiating from this body called Sri Anandamayī Mā. It was like getting closer and closer to a fire and feeling hotter and hotter. When the man in front of me bent down to bow, i was all alone in front of Mā. Although physically speaking i was standing above Her, i felt so small that i could hardly look at Her. Yet, i definitely could not look away. I was captivated. Then i did my *pranāma*. As my head touched the floor, i seemed to "hear" AUM from within me. I wanted to stay there forever. Then i looked up and saw Her beautiful, blissful smile. I could hardly stand up, my legs felt very weak. Nevertheless, somehow i managed to walk back to where my friends were standing. We stood gazing at Mataji. I felt wonderful - Mā' s Grace had been showered on me. My ego had been broken down enough to allow me to prostrate, to admit my littleness in front of this Spiritual Giant, and to receive Her Blessing.

After a few minutes, Nancy informed me that she was leaving. Probably, her ego was uncomfortable; it could not stand the strain—the confrontation between her self and the Self must have frightened her. I had been her last source of security and now I had abandoned her by bowing. Nancy rushed out of the room to preclude the possibility of surrender. Unfortunately for her she did not endure the experience. It reminded me of my first encounter with Mā about a year earlier—God had given me a second chance and i prayed the same for Nancy,

I stood there staring at Mā : in one sense so transcendent—seemingly so unconcerned—the laconic saint giving no advice or instruction, but in another sense so immanent—an instrument of Divine Love and Joy in this world. In fact, i had nothing to ask Mā—i was receiving a Message beyond words. I understood Sri Ānandamayī Mā is my true Spiritual Mother with a Love greater than that of millions of parents.

This extraordinary experience kindled my faith; it confirmed for me the possibility of Self - realization (or God-realization) in this life; it made me decide to dedicate myself to serious sādhanā (i.e. spiritual practice) to strive for the Goal that Mā has attained.

For the reader, my account of my experience may be meaningless, but for me, what happend that evening was an experience more Real than my experience of the mere appearance that the vast majority of people in this world call "reality".

One friend asked, "Have you felt the same upon having subsequent darśanas of Mataji?"

I replied, "No, not the same, but it has always been wonderful." Once, the mere hearing of Her say "OM NĀRAYAN" was enough to send me into a state of ecstasy. Another time, in Hardwar, i almost felt like crying. Another time, after having darśana of Mā upon Her arrival in Kashi, i went into a very deep meditation on the bank of the Ganges. When i came back to normal consciousness, i realized a friend (who had been considerate enough not to disturb me) was sitting there. He asked if i had had darśana of Mā, and i started

laughing like a madman and could not control my laughter as i tried to talk. Another time when i went for darśana with two Indian students of philosophy, my friends started an intellectual discussion as we waited to see Mā, but i had no interest in that, realizing it was all just words, and became completely absorbed in watching tiny sparrows eating garlands of flowers on a Siva linga - so lovely in the morning light. In fact, i did not even feel the necessity of seeing Her body, the spiritual atmosphere of the whole Ashram had been charged simply by Her presence. God willing, some day i may even be able to feel Her presence in Her Ashrams (or better still in my own home) when She is not physically present.

All i can do is thank God that in this make, believe dream we call life, Reality sometimes shines through.

“There is only one real life, namely the one dedicated to God, only one real death which is the death of death. After that there is no more birth and death.”

SHRI ANANDAMAYI MA

Mātri Līlā

(October–December 1978.)

We have already reported that Mataji came to Delhi from Vrindaban on September 26th and boarded the night train to Rajkot. Many came for Her *darśana* at Mehsana Railway station on the 27th night. On reaching Rajkot on the 28th morning, She was taken to Gondal by car by the Maharaja himself. A new cottage had been built for Mataji at Hava Mahal (the name of the palace) and She was welcomed with great veneration amidst the chanting of Vedic mantras. Mataji had come to Gondal for Durga Puja at the invitation of Maharaja Sri Jotindra Singhji. On *Pratipada* (Sept. 30th) She went to inspect the images. The artist, Sri Kena Pal had come from Calcutta to give the finishing touches to the *murtīs* of the deities which were exceptionally large and beautiful.

On October 4th, Sri Mahantaji Swami Giridhar Narayan Puri arrived from Kankhal and Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati came on the 6th. That night he was to give a talk but it was washed out by heavy rain. Ma and Akhandanandaji got very wet. The shower was a great blessing because there had been a lengthy draught. When the 26th *Samyam Mahavrata* had been held in Gondal in November 1976, there had also been terrible water shortage due to lack of rain. At that time it rained on the last day of our function. So this time the whole country side was impatiently waiting for Mataji's arrival, hoping that they might be blessed with rain. And they were not disappoint-

ted. Heavy downpours occurred on October 2nd and 7th luckily before the main celebrations began so that the pūjā was not disturbed. The people of the city were in a joyous mood.

On *Sasti* (the sixth day after new-moon), October 7th, the images were unveiled and *sasti pūjā* was performed. The next day *prāna pratiṣṭa* (consecration of the images and invitation to the Deities to inhabit them in a special way) took place as well as *saptami puja*. In olden days the Maharajas of Gujerat used to celebrate Durga Puja. However, the Divine Mother was not worshipped through an image. Instead a pitcher of water was consecrated and worshipped. Image worship of Goddess Durga had not been practised much there up to the present. This was perhaps the first time in recent history that *elaborate pūjā* of a clay image of Durga was performed in such a grand style. The Maharaja and Maharani took immense trouble to collect all necessary items and to provide for the *puja* in minute detail. They did *pūja* before Ma every morning in the pandal, as well as evening *arati* wherever Mataji happened to be at the time. Brahmachari Nirvanananda acted as the priest. Garbha dances (traditional folk dances executed by ladies) were performed in the pandal and in the streets. *Caṇḍi pātha* (recitation of *Devi Mahātmyam* in sanskrit) was also a daily function. Swami Akhandanandaji every day delivered a very interesting lecture on the *Devi Mahatymam* (an ancient story of Mother Durga who conquers all evil forces.)

On *Aṣṭami* day (October 9th), *Ashapura Devi Puja* was held, and also *Kuṇḍrī Pūjā* (worship of the Divine Mother in a little girl) of 108 *Kumārīs* (virgin girls). They were dress-

ed in colourful red gowns, garlanded with flowers, decorated with sandal paste, and entertained to a sumptuous meal. In Gujerat *Kumāri Pujā* is traditional on this day. After Navami Pujā, on October 10th, a *havan* (fire sacrifice in which offerings are made to the Gods with clarified butter and sacred mantras) completed the celebrations. On *Vijaya Daśami* day (Oct. 11th) visarjan (submersion) of the images took place. Three trucks were required to carry the huge images to a nearby lake. Mataji had said that nobody should enter the water. When Ganesh was immersed a living rat came. This was considered auspicious since a rat is the *vahan* (vehicle) of Ganesh. In the evening Mataji, as usual, distributed sweets to everyone while Km. Chhabi Banerji sang.

Among the distinguished visitors to the Durga Puja celebrations was Srimati Sharda Mukerji, the Governor of Gujerat.

On *Ekādasi* (Oct. 12th) Mataji shifted to Mahamahāl, the palace of Raja Sivaraj Singhji and Rani Lakhmi Devi, also at Gondal and remained there over Lakshmi Pūjā. The Maharani runs a co-educational school in which prayer and meditation are part of the schedule. Some of the students are disciples of Sri Aurobindo. Kumar Maharani has a residential school for girls. Mataji visited both schools as well as the jinning factory of the Raja's younger son. In the girls school garbha dances were performed for Mataji. *Nāma yojna* (uninterrupted kirtana) took place from the evening of Oct. 13th to 14th evening, with ladies singing all night and men all day. On fullmoon night, Oct 16th, Lakshmi Puja and Satyanarayan Puja were celebrated very beautifully.

The next day Mataji left Gondal, entraining at a small station to avoid a crowd, and reached Ahmedabad in the 18th morning with a very few companions. She visited the residence of Nanubhai and also went to a hospital to see a devotee who had sustained a fracture in a bus accident. Later Sri Madhukar Munshaw took Mataji by car to Baroda from where She boarded the train to Delhi, reaching there secretly on October 19th. The same night She and Her very small party took the Kalka Mail to Vindhyachal. It was not disclosed where Mataji had gone as She badly needed rest after the hectic weeks in Gujerat.

In the quiet atmosphere of Vindhyachal Mataji was able to relax in solitude *for a few days*. On Oct. 26th Mataji said to Udas; "Why is Lilā weeping? Tell her that Bhaiya is all right." Bhaiya is Sri B. K Shah, now the President of Shree Shree Anandamayee Sangha, and Lilā is his wife.) About two hours later a message was received that Sri B. K-Shah had a severe heart attack in Bombay and that the doctors thought there was little chance of his surviving. Fervent prayers were addressed to Mataji to save his life. Her message was then communicated to Srimati Lilabehn in Bombay. Mataji had in Vindhyachal watched her rubbing *bhasma* (ashes) over her husband's body in Bombay, weeping, as all medical help had failed. The ashes had been given to Lilabehn by Udas to keep and use in emergency as they had been blessed by Mataji. After Lilabehn had applied the *bhasma* for about 30 minutes Bhaiya awoke and said. "What happened to me? Why are you weeping?" Later he related that he had retained some consciousness, although his body did not function, and he had felt serene, being aware of Mataji presence tangibly.

Mataji left Vindhyaçal on October 28th and arrived in Calcutta the next day for a very short visit, just over Divali. Her stay in Calcutta has been described in detail in a separate article.* From Calcutta She proceeded to Delhi, where She alighted on November 2nd. She gave *darśana* in our Ashram at Kalkaji on the 3rd morning and left the same evening by the Deluxe for Baroda from where She was on the 4th morning taken by car to Nadiad for the 28th *Samyam Mahavrata*. She had come there at the invitation of Sri Narayandasji Maharaj, the 7th Mahant of Sri Sant Ram Samadhi Mandir. After hearing about Mataji from Damarubhai, one of her devotees, Narayandasji had urgently requested Mataji to hold the *Samyam Saptaha* at Sri Sant Ram Samadhi Mandir. Although the *Saptaha* had previously been planned for Kankhal, his invitation was accepted and the function shifted to his ashram. Mataji was received at Sri Sant Ram Mandir amidst kirtana of 'Sri Ram, Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram.' After the reception She retired to Her room to rest.

About 150 years ago, a wandering sādhu named Sant Ram came to that area. He asked a farmer to lend him a vessel and a rope in order to draw water from a nearby well. The farmer refused saying that sadhus would take these kinds of things and not bother to return them. There upon the sādhu thrust his own pot into the ground and water gushed forth from the earth. He drank from the water and then took his bath with it. And he told the farmer not to look down on sādhus. The farmer, a zamindar with a lot of property, became a devotee of Sant Ramji. Later he requested Sant Ram to found an ashram there. Sant Ram asked for

(1) See p. 48 of the January 1979 issue.

uninhabited farm land and the zamindar gave him all the land in sight. Some time later the sādhu sent word to the farmer that he wanted to leave his body on *Kartika Pūrṇimā* which was the next fullmoon. The farmer begged of Sant Ram to postpone his departure by fifteen days as it was his harvesting time. It so happened that fifteen days later fell during a part of the year when, according to Hindu belief, if one leaves a place one will have to return to it. Therefore he told the farmer that he would wait for two months more and depart from this world on *Māgha Pūrṇimā*. On that day he descended into a cave and had it sealed from the top. When Sri Sant Ram left his body a light emerged from the cave and lit two *ghee* lamps which he had previously asked the devotees to place above the cave. The cave has remained sealed and the lights have been kept burning to the present day. A shrine has been established there and a very large ashram consisting of many houses has been built all around it. Today Sri Sant Ram Samadhi Mandir is in the middle of Nadiad and is the center of the socio-religious activity of the town and the surrounding area, because of the spiritual presence of Sri Sant Ram still pervading the place. His successors, as Mahants of the Mandir, are not allowed to leave the premises or to ask for gifts. They are also forbidden to give lectures and they sleep only for about three and a half hours every night (11 p. m.-2-30a. m.) No paid workers or servants are employed in the ashram. All work is done as a service and many help, even towns people who do not live in the ashram. Mataji was highly pleased and praised the arrangements and the spirit of dedication of the people.

On Oct. 5th, Mataji visited Sri Sant Ram Samadhi

Mandir. There is a seat above the cave, the two lights are burning behind the seat. There is no image. A verse is engraved in the temple : "Sant Ram satya che, Sant Ram jyoti che" ("Sant Ram is truth, Sant Ram is light"). After visiting the shrine, Mataji sat in a corner of the courtyard and related that during the previous night She had seen Sri Sant Ram sitting in the cave as he was leaving his mortal body. She described his physical characteristics and said that his eyes were turned upwards and his body was illumined. Laughingly Mataji told all this. Narayan Dasji Maharaj started weeping with joy and said : "O Ma, you have seen my Guru please give me your blessing !" The atmosphere was hushed and surcharged with sanctity.

The *Samyam Mahavrata* commenced on Nov. 7th and ended on the 14th with the traditional *havan* (fire sacrifice). It can well be imagined that in this very special atmosphere our yearly week of concentrated collective *sāadhanā* was an outstanding and unforgettable experience for every participant. Everything proceeded on a much larger scale than in former years. A record number of about 900 regular *vratis* took part and perhaps two thousand others attended, not only the talks but also the meditations, in pindrop silence. The order and discipline in every respect observed by one and all was simply exemplary. Thousands of people can be accommodated in the Ashram for stasang and meals. The *vratis* were put up comfortably in various spacious ashram buildings. The pandal was enormous. Even more Mahātmās and Mahāmandaleswaras than who usually grace this yearly function had come from Kankhal, Hardwar, Rishikesh, Vrindaban, Bombay and other places far and near and delivered inspiring discourses. Sri Sankaracharya

the head of Shardapith at Dwarka was our honoured guest. Suffice it to say that so many wise and brilliant speakers were present that the time available for their talks proved too short. Mataji was in an excellent mood and in good health, sat on the dais for long hours daily and delighted everyone by Her replies to questions during "Mātri Satsang". She sang beautiful kirtan on five occasions, the most enthusiastic and enthralling on the last night during a heavy rainstorm in which the tent fell in. By Ma's grace nobody was hurt. The *ārati* of Mataji and the Mahātmās that was the only item to follow, was set forward and then the pandal was not needed again.

The last three *Samyam Saptahas* were held in Gujerat. The 29th *Samyam Mahāvrata* is to be observed in November 1979 at Kurukshetra at the kind invitation of Ex-minister Sri G. L. Nanda.

On October 15th, Mataji left Nadiad by car for Bhimpura. Bhimpura is a small village near Chandod and our ashram situated in a quiet, picturesque place by the holy Narmada river. There Mataji could have some rest, although a few devotees followed Her and put up in other ashrams in the vicinity. Mataji gave short *darśanas* once daily as a rule. The children from the surrounding area love to sing God's names and Dasu led them in orderly and enthusiastic kirtan every evening and did Hanumān pūjā distributing *prasāda* to them. A new cottage for Mataji was inaugurated in the ashram.

On December 4th Mataji travelled via Baroda and Rajkot to Morvi where a *Bhagavata Sapaha* was held. It proved a great success. Mataji attended for some time every morning and evening. *Gita Jayanti* was also celebrated there. On

December 17th Mataji motored to Ahmedabad where She visited the Virāt Mandir. From there She proceeded to Bombay, reaching on Dec. 18th. The same evening She went to Poona. It was thought that she would remain there for at least one or two weeks. However, at about 5.45 a.m. on the 22nd, Mataji started quite unexpectedly for Bombay and that very evening departed with a very few companions for an undisclosed destination. Mataji left Her large party at Poona where She is expected to return some time in January for an installation of a deity in the ashram temple. The date is not yet known.

By and by several people found out that Mataji was hiding again at Bhimpura, and a few went there to see Mataji. However the Ashram is so small that no guests can be accommodated and there is no staff to cook and serve food. Sometimes devotees come from Baroda, which is the nearest large town. All the same Mataji gives *darśana* only in the evening for a short while, usually from Her room, and there are no crowds. Mataji is resting and attending to correspondance that has accumulated in large numbers and to other work.

It is expected that Mataji will be in Kankhal for *Mahā śivarātri* (Feb. 25th). She has not been to Kankhal since July 10th and may be there also off and on in March and April. Her birthday celebrations will be held in May in Bangalore (South India).

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