

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

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

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In search of the inner Guru one seeks and accepts a spiritual guide. With single-minded devotion one must advance on the path. Whatever takes one nearer to God, no matter from what source it may come, should be adopted. A person who desires God as his one and only goal is bound to find a path. He Himself will reveal Himself.

—Sri Ma

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Question : *The body grows old ; but why does the mind not remain young and childlike ?*

Mataji : *Do not wish to be like the ordinary child of the world. Be a child who never grows up. The only reason why the childlike state does not last is desire.*

Question : *How to acquire the childlike state ;*

Mataji : *Seek the company of the pure and the god like and obey the Guru's instructions. This will lead to the spontaneous unfolding of the true childlike state.*



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)

ON GURU

The Guru actually emerges from within. When genuine search takes effect, his genuine manifestation is bound to occur; it cannot possibly be otherwise. The One, assuming Himself the shape of the Guru, of His own accord brings about His manifestation or becomes manifested.

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The one who manifests as the longing to find a Guru also manifests as the fulfilment of that longing. But it is necessary that this longing should be genuine. At every moment be aware of Him for the sake of His realization.

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Where a true *bhakta* is, the Sadguru will most certainly manifest in person. When there is need of a Guru, his appearance is but natural. So long as one has not been initiated by a Guru, the ordinary person's duty is to engage in the study of scriptures, in *japa*, meditation, the chanting of God's Name—any Name one likes best. In order to reach the state of a genuine *bhakta* one must constantly devote oneself to *satkriyā*, action which aims at the Eternal.

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Question : How can we find a real Guru and who can be the Guru ?

Mataji : God is the real Guru. God will do the work through the Guru already accepted and show the true way to the disciple. The real Guru is one's own *Ātmā*.

Question : Will that *Ātmā* give the mantra ?

Mataji : Certainly.

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Question : Everybody says that a Guru is an absolute necessity. But as for myself, I need neither a Guru nor parents. I want only God.

Mataji : The Guru is God Himself. The Guru makes one understand what the Divine essentially is. The Guru must not be regarded as a human being. Every time one has the Guru's *darśana* one should look upon him as God. There is a state where by awakening a certain power the whole world can be awakened. World means that which is moving. It is God who brings forth, maintains and again absorbs this world into Him-

self. So who can be its Guru? The real Guru is God alone. By having faith in God one comes to know about Him. The Guru of this whole universe is none but God Himself. Through the power of the Guru God can be realized. So long as one has not secured the Guru's help, it is very difficult to find God. How far can man's intelligence take him? You want to grasp God by your intelligence? How can this be done? To find God the first necessity is a Guru. It also should be understood that He Who is your Guru is everybody's Guru.

Question : Is the Guru *one* from the point of view of the world?

Mataji : Gurus are also of various kinds: Gurus who give spiritual instructions, Gurus who teach, Gurus who bestow initiation, Gurus who confer a mantra; and by touch also the Guru's power can be communicated. So long as there is no inner desire to take initiation and to seek refuge at the lotus-feet of the Guru, one should not go in for initiation. Always pray to God to grant you a Sadguru. Do not take initiation because someone has told you to. Otherwise you will repent of it later. Once you have accepted initiation from a Guru you have to live according to his behest. Once a marriage has been performed it cannot be undone anymore.

Question : Ma, I am studying at Allahabad. I have accepted Swami Ramatirtha as my Guru. When I was eleven years old I heard about him and ever since I have looked upon him as my Guru.

Mataji : You should understand that once you have found a Guru you must not accept any other Guru. Also adhere regularly to some practice. Every day pray to God to reveal Himself to you. Contemplate God. The teaching of Swami Ramatīrtha you have got anyway. Be careful to put his instructions into practice.

Question : Why can't one make God Himself one's Guru ? What need is there of an intermediary ?

Mataji : If you want to meet the Governor you must first apply for permission. Without this you will not be allowed to meet him. This is why to find God a Guru is necessary. In order to be blessed with a Guru meditate on God. By meditating regularly He will manifest. Do not worry ; just keep your mind on God. Be sure that if you need a Guru, God will provide one for you. You are eager to find only God. The keener your effort the sooner you will be able to realize Him.

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Question : We do not want unhappiness and yet it comes. We want real and lasting happiness and it does not come. Why ?

Mataji : Your desire for true happiness is not intense enough. Take the help of a Guru.

Question : Where to find the Guru ?

Mataji : Search within yourselves.

Question : How to search ?

Mataji : If your child is lost, how do you search for him ?

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Question : Which is the easiest way to the realization of God : kirtana, mantras, yoga or nāmajapa ?

Mataji : The way which the Guru points out for anyone is the easiest way for that particular person.

Question : Is it possible to practise *sādhana* without having recourse to a Guru ?

Mataji : Your question and the reply given show that you are a seeker resorting to a Guru.

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The real significance of the concept "Guru" is extraordinarily profound. The Guru should be regarded as God. The Guru can never be deserted. Where the Guru is given up one has to understand that the act by which the relationship of Guru and disciple is established has never taken place. Nothing wrong or improper can ever be committed by the Guru who is said to guide one life after life. His power and the devotion for him can never slacken. The Supreme Being who, in the search after Truth, is Truth Itself sees to the fulfilment of the disciple's aim.

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Question : Is it right and proper to sever one's connection with one's family Guru ?

Mataji : Ultimately all Gurus are one. He who can reveal the eternal Guru who dwells in the disciple, he alone is a true Guru. If a Guru is given up it must be understood that he has never really been accepted.

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Before taking on a Guru, one should judge

fully, from all angles. But once a Guru has been accepted, his instructions must be obeyed implicitly. When a young girl is to be married, we search for a suitable bridegroom all over the country. But when, after a thorough investigation, the wedding has been accomplished, the bride has thereafter to spend the rest of her life serving her husband. Once the wedding has been performed, can this bond ever be broken? Likewise, if after the Guru has initiated his disciple, the latter says, "It is true that I have received initiation but I have derived no benefit therefrom", then I will declare that true initiation has not taken place.

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Be very careful whom you accept as your Guru. Don't be in a hurry. Take your time over it and use your intelligence. But once you have accepted a Guru it is irrevocable and you must surrender completely. If you fail in this, I maintain you have not accepted him as your Guru.

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If truly established, the relationship between Guru and disciple is eternal. Where the Guru wields divine power, even if the disciple is temporarily assailed by doubts, these are likely to give way to faith by the Guru's power functioning within the disciple.

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Question : How can the knots of the ego be undone ?

Mataji : By carrying out the Guru's instructions without questioning. That is not the place to use one's knowledge and intelligence. Here

knowledge and intelligence will not do. They are useful up to a stage. They provide you with information. The *śāstras* have been read, studied and committed to memory. One has acquired knowledge along a particular range. This is but the knowledge of ignorance. When even this knowledge leaves one, then only can Realization come. Therefore follow the Guru's instructions without questioning. As long as the reason of the individual is in power, how can the knots be undone ?

Question : How does unquestioning faith in the Gure come ?

Mataji : By faith. At first one has no faith—although to a few faith does come at once—so what is one to do ? One has to think for oneself, use one's own discrimination. I have heard you people say that according to *tāntric* teaching one should observe and study one's Guru for one year. Then only one takes initiation. Examine and test your Guru to the limit of your capacity. How can a pupil test his teacher ? You cannot test him as the professors test their disciples. All the same, do as much as you can by questioning and watching. Once you have accepted the Guru as your guide—just as there is only one husband—once the bond has been forged it is for all times. You may go here and there, anywhere you please, stay in any place ; but you cannot leave him, provided he is a Sadguru. He teaches you by dealing you one blow after another. What he does is all for the best, for your ultimate good.

Sometimes a child does not study. By being slapped he is taught. There is a saying that a knock brings one to one's senses. A person who has no faith in his Guru will have to continue in this manner. However, a Sadguru will never lose hold of his disciple but will keep him in his grip. Once the relationship has been established, it is indissoluble. So long as faith has not come, read books of wisdom, repeat your mantra, be always engrossed in spiritual exercises. Try to remain pledged to such activity, whether you feel the inclination for it or not. To say, "I do not like it", or, "I don't find it congenial" is not helpful. To be swayed by likes and dislikes means to remain enmeshed in worldliness. If you have the desire to realize God, endeavour to live according to the Guru's bidding. Do not relax your efforts until you are able to do so fully. Sustained effort brings about a miracle. By trying again and again, by incessantly thinking of God, what happens? The path finally opens out of itself. There is hope that such a state may supervene.

Having succeeded in reaching a state of faith where one is able to accept the Guru's injunctions fully, what happens then? That state of faith manifests if the Guru is one's real Guru. Our relationship with the world is born of delusion; the relationship with the Guru is of the Self (*ātmic*). Thus, to start with, one did not obey the Guru's instructions. By persistent practice, by acquiring the habit of it, by striving to improve oneself, by the desire for God-realization, one comes to repent

of one's doubts and disobedience. Now the disciple cannot help carrying out the Guru's orders. Every word, every utterance of the Guru that comes to his notice—unless he puts it into practice he does not feel at ease. This is not the ease of the world. In such a situation he feels dejected, engulfed in a void, when he has been unable to put into practice the Guru's orders. A stage ensues where unless and until he has succeeded in carrying out the Guru's instructions he cannot be at peace. He feels completely blank ; it seems to him that there is nothing left for him until he has obeyed fully the Guru's bidding. He feels miserable for having failed to comply with the Guru's orders. And what does this misery bring about ? The karma of disobedience is consumed by his suffering. Now a state will result where the aspirant will act exactly according to his Guru's instructions, will carry out to the letter every hint, and thereby his own direct path will open out by itself. In this everything is contained.

(To be continued)

IN ASSOCIATION WITH SRI SRI MA ANANDAMAYI

Amulya Kumar Dutta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali)

Calcutta, Wednesday 19.10.38.

**“Conversation of Ma’s devotees behind
Dr. Panth’s back.”**

Yesterday we had heard that nobody would be allowed to see Ma this morning, but that She would meet the general public in the evening. So there was no particular urgency in going to visit Ma in the morning. After completing my shopping, I proceeded slowly towards the Deshbandhu Girls’ School. As the door of Ma’s chamber was still closed, I entered into a conversation with Sachi Babu and Bhupati Babu. At that time Sm. Bhramara came to tell us : “The doors to Ma’s room will soon be opened ; would the three of you please sit in front of the three doorways, and take care that nobody enters the room and touches Ma. Everybody can have Ma’s *darśana* from the hall, where kīrtan will be sung continually.” In response to Bhramara’s request, I went and sat in front of one of the doors, Bhupati Babu sat near the second, and before the third Charu Babu from Simla was already seated. Because of work in his office, Sachi Babu declined to act as a custodian, saying, “Once I sit near this enchantress, I shall never be able to depart.”

Shortly after, the doors of Ma's room were opened, and both men and women sang Ma's name in union. The kīrtan went on for about an hour with ever increasing fervour. At the end Ma said : "Dr. Panth has forbidden me to speak, but I have the *kheyāla* to talk. (Looking towards Charu Babu) Baba, will you say something. You can speak well. You may remember something of what you say when you recite the Bhāgavata. Do say something." So Charu Babu started talking. There was a continuous din in the hall. I was so far away from Charu Babu that none of his words were audible to me. I tried hard to understand what he was saying, without any success, and gave up my endeavour. I said to Khukuni Didi, "I just cannot hear anything." When Didi reported this to Ma, She made Atak Babu (Bhattacharya) exchange places with me. Now I was able to sit nearer to Ma, but then there was no more talk.

Some moments passed in silence. Then Ma said to Sri Ramtaran Chatterji : "Baba, will you now speak ?" Ramtaran Babu was full of humour. In a joking manner he asked : "Ma I am coming from Madhupur, when will I return there ?

Ma (smiling) : You are still in Madhupur (a pun on the word meaning a place full of sweetness. Everyone laughed.)

Ramtaran Babu : The tenure of my return ticket is not long—at the most five years. Whatever has to be done must be done now. If you want to accomplish anything thereafter, you may not find me.

Ma : It is said, "For Brahman one moment is equivalent to 60,000 years for humans." Is your life limited to the next five years ? Is there nothing before and after ?

Ramtaran Babu : If you reckon in this way, life could stretch to infinity.

Ramataran Babu's question was most personal ; in the guise of carrying on a conversation, he had in fact prayed for Ma's special grace. Possibly for this reason Ma did not pursue this topic any further. After remaining silent for some time, Ma again said, "Don't sit with your mouth empty. Keep something in your mouth" (i.e., Ma wanted Satsanga to be continued).

Ramtaran Babu : Do please get well very quickly. This Līlā of yours of playing the role of a patient is not at all pleasing to us.

Ma (smiling) : A daughter's ailment is due to lack of care on the part of her parents. If the parents fail to look after their children, or do so with insufficient care, it is only then that the children fall ill. It is due to lack of care on your part that this daughter is suffering. Occasionally one even hears that a mother has killed her baby by feeding it with insufficient precaution. She did it in such a way that the milk choked the child's throat. Of course, everything is preordained. The baby died because he was fated to die in this manner. Still, someone had to be the direct cause of it. My illness is similar.

A devotee : Ma, If everything is preordained, than what remains as one's duty ?

Ma : The notion that people can have no direct liability should be thoroughly understood. Once you realise this fact properly, everything else is clear. Whenever you say you have no duties, this is due to pure hearsay. It is only in this field (i.e. the field of religion—dharma) that you say you have no duty, while in other spheres you feel strongly liable ! (everybody laughs).

Devotee : Ma, I know nothing, please tell me which path to follow.

Ma : Pray to Him to show you the right path. Each day at least for a little while pray to Him thus : "Lord, please show me the way". If you call out to Him, He never forsakes you. How can He desert you ? There is no place where He is not. He does not even have room to turn round.

Ma continued to explain : "Don't you say Krishna means attraction ? He who attracts is Krishna. Look, everything in this world is attractive, because there is nothing apart from Him."

An old lady had been trying very hard to get a word in edgeways to Ma. Even though Ma was speaking to others, the former's tearful petitions were continuously being aimed at Ma. Since a rule had already been made that this morning no one should be allowed to approach Ma, She for some time seemed to ignore the lady's petition. But now She relented and went forward to sit down near the lady, saying, "Tell me, Ma, whatever you have to say."

The old lady : Ma, you had asked me to come to you at half past eight this morning. I had sent my grand-son to you.

but as he was late in returning, I have been unable to arrive in time.

Ma : Don't bother about that. Tell me what it is you want to say.

Lady : Ma, what a lot I have to tell you !

Ma : Is there ever an end to this sort of talk ? Just as the world is continuously being created, maintained, and destroyed, so is there no end to these topics. Repeat the Lord's name, thereby all your talks and tasks will meet fulfilment. Instead of talking at random, just follow this advice. At all times remember the Lord's name, thus all your troubles and tribulations will vanish.

Lady : I tried so hard to get my daughter married, but could not accomplish anything.

Ma : Let it be. If the girl's fate is to be married she will be, otherwise not. What is the use of worrying about it ? Instead, be always immersed in the repetition of the Lord's name.

Lady : What name shall I repeat ? May I take the name of Ma ?

Ma : You have already received a mantra—just practise japa of it. And if you want to repeat the name of Ma, there is no harm either. You will merely be repeating God's name.

The lady had been trying to touch Ma. But it had been decided that this morning nobody would be allowed to do so. So I had been keeping a strict watch to prevent the woman from touching Ma. But now Ma Herself extended Her hand, and placed it on the old woman's lap. Like a beggar

starved from birth, she pressed the hand and fondled it in various ways. Yet in spite of this she did not seem fully satisfied. Ma continued to smile and exhorted her in loving tones, "Keep on repeating the Name, will you remember this? You won't forget, will you"? Having consoled the woman in this way, Ma returned to Her *āsana*.

Ramtaran Babu resumed speaking: "I have heard that not all our prayers reach God. Only prayers that are truly genuine and ardent get to Him.

Ma: How true this is—as you say, certain human desires do not reach God—remember these were destined to die a natural death. How so? Just like pouring water on the earth. Not all water that is sprinkled on the earth's surface can reach the sea. Some may dry up. But often the current of the water is so strong that it cannot stop until it mingles with the waters of the ocean. The desires to carry out certain kinds of work are similar. There are desires that are fulfilled by performing certain actions; there are others for which human beings are compelled to return again and again to this earth.

Devotee: Will there be no results if someone takes the name of the Lord without being initiated?

Ma: Why shouldn't there be?

Devotee: I believe the *Śāstras* declare that unless one takes on a Guru, nothing much can be achieved.

Ma (smiling): The Guru resides in your own heart. But ordinary people are unable to rely firmly on their own Self. So they have to take refuge in an external Guru. But in actual fact the

Guru resides within one's own heart. It is He who prompts you to say you can succeed by repeating God's name even without taking recourse to a Guru. On the other hand when the time is ripe, it will be He who will make you say that without taking on a Guru nothing can be achieved. Then you will see how intense your longing for a Guru will become, so that you will run hither and thither searching for Him. The essential fact is that the Guru enthroned in your heart dictates to you what course to follow as and when the need arises. The main thing to do is to follow his advice.

Devotee : Since I am unable to sit in a meditative pose for long while doing japa, I do so sitting on a chair. Is this wrong ?

Ma : Why only sitting on a chair ? I would go so far as to say, even if you lie down straight, or repeat the holy Name in whatever other posture that is comfortable for you, it is all right. But you must concentrate on the Name, not on the comfort entailed. Consider how children have to memorise their lessons for examinations. Whether they do so while lying down, or running, or playing, they will certainly pass. It is not compulsory to memorise one's lessons remaining seated all the time. It is exactly similar with the repetition of the Lord's name. Whatever we do without remembering the Lord's name amounts to taking a return ticket. You will come back to where you started from, i.e., return time and again to perform the same task. That is why I always stress that no task must be left undone. It is said that you

cannot be sure of the next breath. What guarantee is there that you will be able to complete the job that you are postponing for tomorrow? If you are unable to do so, then the seed of desire that has been sown will force you to return for another birth. Therefore you must try to accomplish to the best of your ability whatever work happens to be allotted to you. Do not waste your time wondering whether or not it has been done perfectly well. You must keep in mind: "I have done my duty to the best of my ability, now let come what may."

As the clock was striking 11 a.m, Ma laughed and said: "You must now shut me up, so that when Dr. Panth comes he will see that I am resting obediently as he prescribed." Everybody laughed, greatly amused at Ma's words. A devotee cried out: "Ma. is this how you obey Dr. Panth's advice by cheating him"? Ma got up laughing, and we all departed after performing our *praṇāmas*.

**"We are foolish people, so please
do not hinder us".**

When I returned to Ma in the afternoon, She had not yet come out of Her room. After a while Ma was taken up to the roof on the 3rd floor. It was then past 5 p.m. Ma was seated in a corner of the roof, and arrangements were made to allow all present to file past Her singly and perform their *praṇāma*. Luckily I was able to sit not far from Ma's *āsana*. There seemed to be no opportunity at all of listening to Ma's words before such a

crowd, so I sat quietly scrutinizing the various expressions on the faces of the devotees. Different people performed their *pranāmas* in different modes. Some eyes were wet with tears; in the case of others tears were rolling down their cheeks. On some Ma fixed Her loving merciful glance. At other times it appeared as if She were not noticing anything at all, Her glance was aimless as if Her mind had escaped the confines of this earth to roam on some other planet.

A couple of old women came to perform their *pranāma* to Ma. They wore dirty and tattered clothes and appeared to belong to the lower poor class. When they wanted to touch Ma's feet Manoj Mukherjee prevented them. Thereupon one of the two old women exclaimed: "Baba, do not deter us, we are poor foolish folk."

At these words Ma broke out into loud laughter. She beckoned to me saying, Listen to what they are saying, "we are foolish people, so please do not prevent us"! With these words, Ma got up from Her *āsana*, embraced the two women with both Her arms, placing Her face close to theirs, and kept on exclaiming, "Ma, Ma, oh Ma" She appeared as if dissolved in mirth and merriment. On seeing Her laughing so hilariously, many others joined into the laughter. I was watching Ma's playfulness with wonder. It struck me that it was only by approaching Ma with true humility, as these women had done, that one could obtain Her grace to the fullest extent. The two women were overcome by Ma's love. Their sunken eyes filled with tears. They

were about to say some words to Ma out of the fulness of their hearts. By this time Ma had regained Her *āsana*. Manoj Babu laughingly said to the two women, "There is no more need for you to speak. You had better take your departure quickly. Beholding your exceedingly good fortune my heart is bursting with jealousy." On hearing Manoj Babu's words, we all broke out into loud laughter.

After a short while Ma was brought downstairs, and taken for a drive.

20.10.38.

In the morning I learned that Ma was going to Dakshineshwer. Khukuni Didi asked me to accompany them. At about 10 a. m. Ma started by car. I boarded a bus together with Bhupatinath Mitra. On arriving at Dakshineshwar by about 11-30, we saw that Ma had occupied a place in the house where Sri Sri Ramakrishna's wife used to live, and that Ma's *bhoga* was being prepared there. This was the best opportunity I had so far obtained of sitting near Ma and listening to Her discourse.

"Different stage of *sādhanā*"

I told Ma, "Sobha Ma, the disciple of Santadas Babaji*, maintains that there are seven levels in the practice of *sādhanā*". I now gave a brief description of the various stages, according to what I had heard, and then asked, "Do these seven stages

* A famous Guru of the Vaishnava sect, and the chief disciple of Sri Ramdas Kathia Babaji Maharaj.

refer to the practice of any particular sect, or are they valid for every *sādhaka*” ?

Ma (laughing) : Do you mean to say you hope to receive a comprehensive reply on this subject from me ?

I : No (everybody laughs). However, referring to these various stages of spiritual practice one hears of, are they different for different sects, or do they hold good universally ? If so, please tell us something about it.

Ma : You know very well that not at all places and not to all questions do answers issue from my lips. When it does come, then of course I speak. Anyway, you may discuss this subject, and I shall listen. The more this kind of thing is spoken about, the better.

I : Ma, you know that I never come to you to give a talk !

Ma (smiling) : Look, whatever one may hear about the different stages in *sādhanā* will always be somewhat in agreement with what the *Śāstras* have laid down. Perhaps not all these stages can be found but some at least are sure to be described there. And the funny part is that, whatever different people may assert, this body will always reconcile their conflicting views. But mind you, those who are *jñānis*, or those whom you look upon as being omniscient, do not usually have the inclination to reveal Truth. Even if they are willing to do so, and under certain circumstances such a situation does arise from time to time, they divulge to particular persons only as much as is necessary for them. Such an exposition is of course partial. Truth is not revealed in its entirety. This is why it is said

that Supreme Truth is never revealed. I have previously talked to you about the different stages of *sādhana**. You should understand that this also was partial.

**“Being possessed by a Sad-Guru—and
possession by a Spirit”**

I: Can a Sadguru reveal basic truth through a disciple ?

Ma: Indeed ! This is exactly what your *Sāstras* lay down ! Don't you often say that the Guru—or God—has given certain directions through a particular individual ? This is nothing new !

I: Well, when a Sadguru reveals some truth through a disciple, is the disciple then quite in his normal senses ? Is he not as if possessed by some spirit ?

Ma: Not necessarily.

I: I have read in books that the spirit of a dead person can sometimes take possession of a human being, and reveal secrets about material things through him. But he who is possessed is not conscious of what he is saying at the time. He lies unconscious while he is possessed by the spirit. When this is over he regains his normal self, and behaves like an ordinary person. When a Sadguru reveals Truth through his disciple, is there any change noticeable in the disciple ? Does he not lose his intelligence and does he remain normal ?

Ma: No. There *is* a definite difference in the disciple then. But this is very difficult to notice for ordinary people. Also, what you have said about the body being inert when possessed by a spirit, is not always true. There are various stages

* Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee Prasanga ; Vol II, p. 100.
by the Author in Bengalee.

when possessed by a spirit. Quite often the body is seen to droop down when so possessed. But at other times it is noticed that the body—in spite of drooping down—remains almost normal. There is another stage, which we look upon as becoming quite used to being possessed by a spirit, i.e., the body is not incapacitated in any way when possessed. But of course there is a distinct difference between possession by a spirit, and possession by a Sadguru. It is difficult, very difficult, for ordinary persons to grasp this.

Having spoken thus, Ma said to me, smiling gently, "Do not misunderstand me. I have not referred to any particular person or sect in whatever I have said."

"Can an individual (*jīva*) become omniscient?"

I: Ma, only a short while ago you asserted that he who is omniscient does not reveal supreme Truth. Well, can a *jīva* ever become omniscient?

Ma: If you call him "*jīva*", how can he be omniscient? Can a finite being become infinite?

I: When I refer to a *jīva*, I do not mean his state of existence as a finite being, I am referring to his body. The purport of my question is; Can a human being realise omniscience while in the body?

Ma: Yes, it may happen. But this cannot be perceived externally. This kind of omniscience is not intelligible to the average person. Do you not often say you cannot see something with your naked eyes but only when wearing spectacles? This is somewhat similar. Unless special vision

has been awakened you cannot notice this omniscience. Somebody may be omniscient but people look upon him as an ordinary embodied human being, although omniscience can exist even in a person with an ordinary body. This is a manifestation of the Infinite within the finite. Do you not hold that even in the tiniest particle of sand, the Brahman exists in Its fulness? This is similar.

I: What kind of omniscience is this? Is it perfect omniscience?

Ma: Yes—omniscience in its entirety.

I: All right. Can one who is omniscient, fabricate an engine?

Ma: When perfect knowledge is referred to, does this not contain everything?

I: So he who is omniscient can build an engine if he so desires.

Ma: This is where you are mistaken! He has no desire. Can there be omniscience where desire or longing is? Because you yourself are bound by limitations, you look at everything in terms of cause and effect. You distinguish between desire and non-desire in everything you come across, and so you cannot have any idea of what omniscience actually is.

At this juncture, Ma was taken from the veranda to Her room for *bhoga* and as Ma would rest afterwards, we all went downstairs.

(To be continued).

MĀTRI SATSANGA

Swami Bhagavatananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

New Delhi, 26 Nov. 1957

Question : I have heard Swami Sharanananda say in his speech today that learned persons can talk on small matters for two hours by elaborating on them, while persons with no learning can express within two minutes what could be discussed for two hours.

Mataji : This body is of course present but it does not necessarily occur to Her to listen to all that is being said. This little girl has not acquired any learning.

In course of conversation Ma said :

Some people have indicated that they achieved intense meditation this morning between 8 and 9 a.m.¹ Others have experienced deep joy during the same period. At that same time this body saw the figure of Hamumānje in the centre of *Nāma brahma Mandir*. He was tall and broad with a fair face, looking towards revered Haribabaji. In another direction I saw a very fair male with curly hair, standing and blessing some people by putting his hands on their heads. There was also a shepherd boy sitting down with a cap on his head. Then I perceived a very fair girl. Finally

1) This conversation took place during 'Samyam Vrata' when there is collective meditation daily between 8-9 a. m. & 3-4 p. m,

I saw another boy laughing and playing nearby. He said to Haribabaji : "You worship Rāma don't you ? Why don't you do *Rāmārchā* here ?" On hearing this, Haribabaji said : "I have indeed seen Mahābīraji here, but why is there not a single picture of Him in this hall ?"

This body had previously instructed Kamala (a devotee) to decorate with gold thread a *tulasī* leaf on which the mantra consisting of twelve syllables had been inscribed with sandal paste. She had gone to a shop to get this done and had spotted such a beautiful picture of Mahābīraji there that she felt inspired to buy it. This body had not spoken to her before in this connection. This is how Mahābīraji manifested Himself here of His own accord. There is a further point worth noting : From that day onwards Sri Haribabaji started singing in public the mantra written on the *tulasi* leaf "*om Namō Bhagavate Vāsudevāya.*"

Question : What was the very fair girl like that you beheld ?

Mataji : Just a very fair village girl full of joy and laughter.

Question : Ma, today is Tuesday !

Mataji : Yes, Mahābīraji manifested here on a Tuesday.

Question : You build ashrams, don't you ?

Mataji : This body never constructs ashrams, this little girl just visits them. On learning that a *Samyam Saptāha* would be held here, this body reached this place on the 20th together with the Mahātmās who have gathered here.

Question : I have heard that you yourself prepared the layout of this ashram.

Mataji : When kīrtan was performed in Simla this body was usually taken there. Once they requested me : 'Ma, we should have an ashram'. This body replied : 'It is you all who must deal with problems such as ashrams. Build a temple for God.' Since then twenty years have elapsed. 'Ashram' means : a place where there is no toil or strain (no *shrama*). The real ashram exists within each one (pointing to everybody).

Question : Is it correct for women to prostrate full length when doing *praṇāma* ?

Mataji : I have heard it said that mother earth cannot bear the weight of sacred lights, conch shells, the Srimad Bhāgavata and women's breasts. Prostrating full length is forbidden for women. So long as the ego predominates the head does not like to bow down. When a pitcher is put into the Ganges to be filled, there is a sound of water entering the vessel, but when it is full, the sound ceases. By performing *namaskāra* again and again dedicate yourself completely. What exactly does it mean to do *namaskāra* ? When we lower our heads in *praṇāma*, we gather power through our heads. Just as the whole tree becomes green if water is poured into its roots, so since the head is the root of the human body, when power is received through the head it permeates the whole body. Doctors assert that it is difficult to cure a patient if his brain is damaged ; whereas in spite of the amputation of arms and legs he can continue to

live. You must therefore keep your head in good condition, you all watch and you will see, when you think hard about some problem you scratch your head.

Question : What is the reason for this ?

Mataji : The head is the root of the body, it acts through every nerve. This is so also in the material world with those who delight in sense objects. Sense objects are of course poison. He who is held in bondage is called *jīva* (individual) and what is in constant flux is called the world. Every where there is only one all-pervading *Ātmā*. Whether you address God as Durgā or Rāma or Supreme Being or *Ātmā*, it is all the One. Some people believe in God's presence in images, others don't. So there is an infinite variety of paths. Every philosophy advocates a different system, every sage has his own method. The head is the root from which all desires, longings and activities originate. What one sees is according to one's ideas. People minds may get deranged by practising meditation in the wrong way, or they may even become insane. Everything is contained in the brain. Just as the leaves of a tree wither away if its roots are cut, so does the human body face destruction when the head is damaged. All this is God's manifold law. In one seed innumerable seeds are contained.

Today Madan Mohan declared that from the close proximity of all these Mahātmās he is deriving immense benefit. By merely saying that one has surrendered, surrender is not achieved. The com-

plete power of surrender lies in the root. Each branch of a tree contains seeds. The visible manifestation is according to the root. This whole universe is indeed the concrete external Presence of the Lord. Look, what actually is a shadow ? There is no substance to it. Shadows, *māyā* and endless coming-going : One must rise beyond all this. Dedication of one's all to the Guru is the right thing to do. Thereby a state of stability ensues. This body always advises everyone to sit under a tree. It will provide you with shade, peace, fruit and flowers—that is to say it bestows its very Self.

Pitāji had previously asked which was the simple, straight forward course to follow. He requested me to bestow something that would bring about what was needed. The power to act has already been bestowed, but you must proceed to act yourselves. You have acquired the habit of giving and receiving and so you act accordingly. If you did not possess this tendency there would be no need to give you something.

The law of God's empire is so wonderful, you having been born to a heritage of immortal bliss ; but you have entirely forgotten your true identity. You must take to a life of worship and devotion. Just think how many of you are used to sit comfortably in armchairs ; whereas here you sit on *āsanas* on the floor, practising self-control. Some are used to eat at table sitting on chairs, yet here you have to face the rigours of *samyam*. Even the food is strictly controlled. What you eat will influence your mind. It is necessary to practise strict-self-

restraint in sleeping, sitting, speaking and eating. Just as there is a particular method for a doctor to feel the pulse, or for an engineer to execute a project, so is there a definite rule for observing *Samyam Vrata*. In order to purify the mind one has to concentrate on the Supreme Quest (*Paramārtha*) and thus perform various spiritual exercises and rites. One must try to go beyond happiness and pain. All forms are manifestations of God, so surrender absolutely at His feet. It means dedicating oneself to one's Self. Who is there in the guise of the Guru? The one and only *Ātmā*—there is nothing apart. Bow down in *praṇāma* and get up fully charged with inner power—from your feet to your head and from the head down to the feet. Having absorbed this power fully, sit down. There is a saying. "Become God-like in order to worship God." If you adopt the correct course during your life as a householder, the next stage of *vānaprastha* will come about of itself. And once you have attained this state, *Samnyāsa* will follow automatically. I have heard that women as a rule are not entitled to pronounce the *praṇava* (OM). But if the Guru bestows it, there is no harm in pronouncing it.

Question : Gargi (the wife of a Rishi) had pronounced the *praṇava* herself.

Mataji : If a certain state is attained, the *praṇava* it uttered spontaneously—it just cannot be helped !

"LĪLĀ-KAIVALYAM"

("ONLY A PLAY")

Dr. Roma Chaudhuri, M.A., Ph. D. (Oxford)

The problem of Creation is, by far, one of the most difficult, most insoluble, most incomprehensible problems of Philosophy of all races, all countries, all faiths.

But what is the crux of the whole thing here ? It is as follows :

Creation is a free, voluntary act, and we know from our direct experiences very well that such a free, voluntary act springs from a "motive in the beginning ; runs towards an end at the end." What is that "motive" and what is that "end" ? That "motive" is naturally a feeling of want—here we have an unattained end or an unfulfilled desire and that naturally generates a feeling of want, a feeling of void, feeling of pain in us ; and this is the first spring of action. For, then, naturally, we want to get rid of that feeling of want, of void, of pain. Then, as naturally we think of choosing a possible object which will enable us to get rid of that feeling of want, of void, of pain, and that possible object which we think will enable us to get rid of that feeling of want, of void, of pain is called the "end." Then we think of or choose a means which we think will enable us to attain that "end". And finally, we proceed to act.

To take a very simple, ordinary, easily intelli-

ble example : we lack food in the stomach, so have a feeling of want, a feeling of void, a feeling of pain, namely pangs of hunger. Then, we naturally want to get rid of that painful feeling of want or void or pangs of hunger and think of or choose a possible object to allay these most painful feelings of pain due to pangs of hunger, viz., food. Then, finally, we think of or choose a means which we think will enable us to get rid of that painful feeling of want or void due to the pangs of hunger, so we go to a market, bring some foodstuffs, cook them at home and eat them and then we are satisfied by getting rid of those painful feelings due to pangs of hunger.

Well and good. We see, we have to admit that all voluntary actions are due to some "motive" or "want" and aim at getting something not got just now, that is, an unattained "end".

Well and good. We again say, well and good—this is possible, this is understandable, this is admissible. But alas! then, what about God's act of Creation—for, that, too, is a free voluntary act on His part. But what is His 'motive' here, what is His "end"? For, how can He ever be conceived to have any feeling of want, any feeling of void, any feeling of pain, due to lacking something, due to an unattained end, due to an unfulfilled desire? Impossible : Unthinkable : Absurd : For, He is, on all accounts, greatest, highest, fullest, purest, happiest BEING—*Nitya-Tripta, Nitya-Mukta, Nitya-Suddha, Nitya-Buddha, Nitya-Siddha* : Eternally satisfied, Eternally free, Eternally pure, Eternally

enlightened, Eternally fulfilled. So, He can never have any want, any unsatisfied desire, any unattained end—never. Then, why should He act like a mad man, like a fool, without any motive or end ?

This is correct. For, God, undoubtedly, has no wants, no unsatisfied desires, no unattained ends—yet He acts, He creates. But why ?

Here, the world famous Brahma-sūtras of the great saint and seer Bādarāyaṇa give a reply—a succinct, yet a sure and a supreme one.

“*Lokavattu Līlā Kaivalyam.*” (Brahma-sūtra, 2.1.33)

“As in the world only a play”.

What does this short and crisp statement mean ? All the Vedantists, in their *Bhāṣyas* or Commentaries have explained it beautifully as follows.

Ordinary, free, voluntary activities, of course, spring from a motive or a painful feeling of want and are directed towards an end or an unattained something. But there is a very special, very exhilarating, very exalting, very enchanting kind of activity which does not spring from a motive or a painful feeling of want and is not directed towards an “end” or an unattained object—just the contrary ; and this very special, very soothing, very serene kind of activity called “Līlā” or “play” is, undoubtedly, a free, voluntary kind of activity ; yet, it never springs from any painful feeling of want, just the contrary. For, when we have wants, we suffer and never feel like playing, just the contrary. But when we have no painful feeling

of wants, and so, when we feel very happy, very satisfied, then and then only we indulge in play.

As a matter of fact, every feeling has a natural tendency to express itself in suitable external expressions, gestures, acts, behaviour and the like, for example ; when we have the feeling of sorrow in us, we express it outwardly by expressions, gestures, acts, behaviour, like crying, striking our head and breast, rolling on the ground, tearing our hair and the like. But when we have the feeling of happiness in us, we show it outwardly by such expressions, gestures, acts, behaviour as smiling, laughing, jumping, clapping, singing, shouting ; and one of the most beautiful outer expressions of happiness is "playing". *As in the world*"—i.e. in the world, everywhere, such examples are found. For example, an all-conquering Supreme Monarch is very happy, very satisfied, very fulfilled ; he has no painful feelings of wants, no unfulfilled ends, no unsatisfied desires and the like. So, as a very appropriate outer expression of his inner feeling of happiness, he joyously starts playing various kinds of games. But alas ! What about his poor servant ? Does he ever play ? Never ! He is under his master, he has to work hard for him, he has to sacrifice everything to satisfy him, he is always distressed, depressed, downtrodden, down-cast. So, how can he feel like playing ?

Now, come to the case of God. God, according to all schools of thought, is eternally and supremely blissful Being—Bliss or Ānanda being the very self of His Self, the very nature of His

Nature, the very core of His Being, the very cream of His Existence, the very kernel of His Essence ; of course, He is "*Saccidānanda*"—*Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda* : Existence, Consciousness and Bliss in Nature—yet, just, as consciousness is higher than existence, so, bliss is higher than consciousness. Why ? For the simple reason that Existence may mean either unconscious (*jaḍa*, like matter) or conscious Existence (*a jaḍa* like a *jīva* or Soul) and undoubtedly, a conscious Existence is much higher than an unconscious one. Again, conscious Existence may be blissful (like Brahman) or not (like *jīva*) ; and here, too, blissful consciousness is much higher than a blissless one. Thus, mere Existence fructifies and fulfils into conscious Existence ; and a mere blissless consciousness fructifies and fulfils itself into a blissful consciousness. In this way, undoubtedly, Ānanda or Bliss is the greatest, highest, deepest, sweetest and loveliest Nature of God.

And God, too, expresses the same in outer activities like plays. So, in play, He creates the Universe of Souls and Matter out of Himself—the whole Universe of Souls and Matter is only a "Play" on His part,—or a beautiful outer manifestation of His Play with Himself.

In this way, Brahman creates the *jīvas* or individual soul as His companions and the material world as the venue of His Play.

What an exceedingly exhilarating conception—the whole Universe of Souls and Matter is only a Cosmic Play, a most wonderful expression of His infinite Ānanda or Divine Bliss.

How beautifully does the great Ānanda-Upanisad ; The Blissful Upanisad, express the same in that soul-stirring, heart-captivating, life-lifting mantra :

*“Ānandādhyeva khalvimāni bhūtāni jāyante ;
Ānandena jātāni jīvanti ;
Ānandam prayantya bhiviśantīti”.*

(Taittiriya Upanisad, e. 6.)

“All these beings arise from Bliss ; having so arisen, they are sustained in Bliss ; and they go back and enter into Bliss again.”

Thus, the Creation-Maintenance-Destruction of the whole Universe of Souls and Matter is due to Bliss or Ānanda alone or to Brahman Who is Bliss in nature, Bliss in essence, Bliss in existence.

What an absolutely superb Conception unparalleled in the whole world. Ordinarily, the world accepts the very realistic Buddhist maxim :

*“Sarvam dukham dukham
Sarvam kṣaṇikam kṣaṇikam
Sarvam śūnyam śūnyam.”*

“Everything is painful, only painful
Everything is momentary, only momentary
Everything is a void, only void.”

But we, Vedantists do not. For we know that that is simply impossible, simply absurd, simply unacceptable. For, if Brahman be Bliss, and if He again transforms himself into the Universe of Souls and Matter—then, the Cause and the Effect being identical in essence—(i.e., a lump of clay—the cause

—being transformed into a clay-jar both being “clay” in essence ; though having different forms).

Thus, according to our Indian views, all so-called sins and sorrows, pains and privations, distress and depression, faults and failings, are not actual realities but only due to our *Ajñāna-Avidyā* : ignorance-false notion, our own “*Aham-Mamabhāva*”, narrow egoity, our own *Svārthaparatā-Samkīrṇatā* : Selfishness and short-sightedness. But really, we all have full rights to *Ānanda* or Bliss—to *Divyānanda*, *Nityānanda*, *Pūrṇānanda*, *Mokṣānanda*, *Brahmānanda* : Bliss Divine, Bliss Eternal, Full, Bliss, Bliss of Salvation, Bliss of Brahman.

What more is wanted ?

And Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi, very graciously, very lovingly, very joyously has appeared in our midst as the Living, Loving, Lovely, Lovable Emblem of such five-fold Bliss.

O Mother mine ! O Blissful Mother mine ! Bless me with only an atomic particle of Thy Benign Bliss and that will amply suffice to carry me across this deep and dangerous Ocean of Life.

Obeisance to Thee, million times.

OM ŚĀNTI

SAMYAMA VRATA : ITS OBSERVANCE IN CALCUTTA IN 1953 AND 1959

Anil Ganguli

Samyama means discipline, self-control. *Vrata* is a vow, a voluntary religious observance. The special *Samyama Vrata* inspired by Ma in 1952 and since then regularly observed by Her "children" year after year, has been warmly received by a section of the intelligentsia of India. Its exalted objects, coupled with its practical programme, make it admirably suitable both for men of meditation and men of action. This is why it attracts saints who have renounced the world as well as householders. Initiated by a small group of idealists at Varanasi, it has gradually gathered momentum. The *Vrata* has been earnestly taken up by spiritual aspirants hailing from different parts of India and by some foreigners. Every year in the month of November, they assemble for concentrated collective *sādhana*, at some place previously approved by Ma. The session lasts for one *saptāha* (week) and is, therefore, called *Samyama Saptāha*, week of discipline. So bold and ambitious a spiritual adventure on an all-India basis, inspired by such a great source of *Śakti* and so meticulously maintained by such a band of zealous idealists is unprecedented.

Let us say a few words about the genesis of this *Mahāvratā* and its objects. The word "*Samyama*"

in this context is not confined to discipline or self-restraint, in the sense of merely controlling one's unruly lower self. The *Samyama Vrata*, annually repeated, has a wider scope—it is intended to be utilised as a preliminary step to Self-realisation, also called God-realisation. For such realisation discipline is, of course, an aid but not enough by itself. Ma identifies *Samyama* with *Sādhanā* : “To engage in *sādhanā* means to observe *samyama*”. To start with, *Samyama* has to be practised with conscious effort, so that real *Samyama* may come about spontaneously. The idea is this : Sustained effort to be in a particular state ends in an effortless existence in that state. In other words, what has been attained by constant practice is finally transcended and then comes spontaneity.¹

Ma is often approached by many who protest that they lack the time and opportunity to think of God. In the storm-tossed sea of life the struggle for existence demands their whole time and energy. Overpowered by their cares, desires and incurable habits, they feel helpless and seek Ma's advice. She does not ask them to renounce the world or to neglect their worldly duties but takes a practical view of the situation and often says something like this :

“All right, if your time is taken up by your everyday occupations and thoughts, at least you can set apart certain days and dedicate them entirely to the Supreme Quest. If possible, let the members of a family co-operate and devise together the programme for those special days, which may

1 Ānanda Vārtā, Vol. VII/4/203

be observed once or twice a year, once or twice a month or better still once or twice a week. Decide that on those days at least you will speak the truth, avoid all gossip and unnecessary talk, keep *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), forgo your favourite foods and drinks and live on simple, moderate diet. Let the thought of God be with you all the time, read the *Gītā* or some other sacred text, seek the company of Mahātmās (saints and sages), execute your work as a service to God, be in harmony with all, do not quarrel with anyone. If on such a day you experience even a slight touch of Him Who is your Self, you will begin to hanker after His constant presence, the thought of God will be with you more and more along with your outer activities and gradually your life will be changed.”¹

Ma's precepts, briefly sketched above, inspired the Raja of Solan, popularly known as Yogibhai, to make an experiment. He proposed to Ma, then at Varanasi, that as many as were willing should together observe a week of *Samyama* at certain intervals. It was to be a week set apart for intense spiritual aspiration and rigorous self-discipline. Yogibhai expressed his desire that the proposed *Samyama Saptāha* should be observed in the presence of Ma and She blessed the idea and has since graced every session of the *Vrata* by Her august presence. Besides, She attracts great saints who add to the value of the celebrations. Their contribution towards its success is immeasurable. The objects of *Samyama Vrata* are :

“To know oneself, to realise oneself; to develop one's spiritual life by the observance of *Satya* (truth), *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), *Ahimsā* (non-violence) etc, and to assist the spiritual progress of the members of *Sri Sri Anandamayee Sangha* and all others”.

The last three words—"and all others"—give the *Vrata* a universal character. The *Vratīs* (participants) are required to go through a discipline of austerity in their diet and conduct which makes their body and mind fit for a journey along the spiritual path. The *Vrata* provides them with an atmosphere conducive to concentration and self-purification. The whole week is spent in individual *sādhana*, *satsanga* and collective meditation in Ma's presence. The crowded programme leaves no time nor does it permit any inclination for worldly thoughts or idle talks. Vedic hymns, devotional songs, periods of meditation and talks by Mahātmās give an inward exhilaration. Ma lays special emphasis on the last-named item as follows :—

"To frequent the company of saints, sages and seekers after truth is the bounden duty of man. Association of this kind will help to awaken his interest in that which is Real. The more consistently one seeks the fellowship of the spiritually minded, the greater will be the benefit."¹

Ma also said once :

"A patient suffering from some physical ailment goes to hospital for recovery. The *Saṁyama Vrata* is meant to cure one from *bhava roga* (the chronic disease of being born again and again and to suffer the sorrows and inflictions that such earthly existence entails). The *Vratīs* are the patients, the Mahātmās their doctors and the religious discourses the medicine. Instructions that help towards Self-realisation are the remedy that must be used to the full. A whole day's programme (of the *Saṁyama Mahā vrata*) is one dose of medicine. In order to gain strength for your search, you should listen to what the Mahātmās say. For your sake they have taken

1 *Mātri Vāṇī*, Vol. I/130

the trouble to come from great distances, Try to digest their teachings and put them into practice.”¹

The first session of *Samyama Vrata* held as an experiment at Varanasi in August, 1952, under the auspices of the *Sangha*, was a great success ; so also the second one, observed in the seclusion of Vindhyaçal. In 1953 it was the good fortune of Ma’s devotees in Calcutta to be entrusted with conducting the third *Samyama Mahāvratā* in the presence of Ma. But the local Ashram (appropriately nicknamed by Ma as “Govinda’s Tiffin Carrier”) was too small for the purpose and so arrangements were made in a pandal erected on a vacant plot of land at Ekdalia Place, with Ma’s temporary abode on the top of the garage of Justice S. R. Dasgupta’s residence, close by.

On the eve of the *Vrata* it was my good fortune to be with Ma at Vindhyaçal where I had the opportunity of submitting to Her that we, Ma’s “children” in Calcutta, had no experience in the line nor a favourable atmosphere in the locality and so we were feeling rather diffident. Ma was pleased to indicate the guidelines of the *Vrata* in detail, laying special emphasis on the importance of constant practice throughout life. The *Samyama Saptāha* proposed to be held annually was, She said, intended to set a model programme to be followed periodically at such intervals as might be practicable. “The aims and objects of the *Vrata*”, She said, “should be borne in mind three hundred and sixty-five days every year.” Incidentally, a sugges-

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tion came from Ma at Vindhyāchal that the *Vrata* should, in future, be known as *Samyama Saptāha Mahā* (great) *Vrata*. In course of conversation I mentioned to Ma that we were afraid of mischief from a group of misled local youngmen of Ballygunge, having anti-religious views, who were reported to have threatened to set fire to our pandal. After listening to me with patience, Ma remarked, "If you honestly do your best, you need not be afraid of anything. God will help you. He is there to fill up all gaps if you are true to yourselves." I came back to Calcutta with Ma's blessings. N. R. Dasgupta, Barrister at-Law, a leader of the Calcutta Bar, seemed to be very pessimistic about the future of the proposed *Samyama Vrata* at Ballygunge. According to him :—

"Calcutta, true to the tradition in which it was born and brought up during the British Rule, is really a nursery for all sorts of luxuries and sensuous enjoyments. There are cinemas, theatres, dancing halls, restaurants of various kinds and what not. Ballygunge reflects, more than any other locality in Calcutta, that real character of the city."

His views were shared by many others who predicted that those of us who were used to extravagant comforts and luxuries would not be able to stand the strain of austerity for one week. In this background, Ma's message in Vindhyāchal was a source of strength and inspiration to all of us and we started our preparations in right earnest.

I had been entrusted with the duty of arranging discourses by Mahātmās. I did not know any in Calcutta. I thought of some Professors noted for

their learning but wondered whether their scholarship and intellectual subtlety would not be out of place in this *Vrata* and so I did not approach them. I counted on Professor Tripurari Chakravarti, well-known for his popular talks on the Epics. At first he seemed unwilling to participate in a function associated with Ma Anandamayi, who was, according to hearsay evidence relied on by him, "the Mother of a rich few". Ultimately, he obliged me and gave wonderful talks on the *Mahābhārata* for seven days consecutively. I knew that Professor Tripurari Chakravarti alone would not be enough for a great *Vrata* which required a team of experts to talk on different aspects of religion and philosophy. I felt guilty that failure on my part to enlist the co-operation of such a team might make the Calcutta session of the *Vrata* a failure. I prayed to God for help but was in doubt about the result because I lacked faith. Most unexpectedly, my problem was solved by Ma Herself who came to Calcutta with Her party including Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj the great savant, Sri Krishnananda Avadhut, a specialist in Vedanta Philosophy and Sri Swatantrananda Swami, a powerful speaker on many subjects. Admittedly, there had been gaps in the discharge of duty on my part. But I had the best intention. God filled up the gaps.

Ma arrived in Calcutta on the 11th of November. The next day my ego was put to test under peculiar circumstances. Ma expressed Her *kheyāla* for display of suitable mottos inscribed on boards to

be hung up against the pillars and walls of the pandal. Everything had to be completed within a couple of days. An artist was needed for the purpose but none was available at such short notice. After diligent search I traced a part-time artist in a remote corner of Ballygunge. He readily obliged me with a tall promise. The next day, however he disappointed me by his non-performance, coupled with smooth excuses. His explanation was that he had too much work and too little time. I offered a solution by volunteering to do part of the job entrusted to him. He was pleased at my gesture and gladly lent me a brush and Chinese ink. But my contribution to the 'joint venture' was small in quantity and poor in quality. Besides, I was, to the dismay of the owner, mishandling the brush and lavishly wasting costly Chinese ink. The artist must have felt—'enough is enough'. But he had, by then, realised the importance and urgency of fulfilling Ma's *kheyāla*. He promised to complete the rest of the work unaided. This time he kept his word. I triumphantly marched into the pandal, ready with a bunch of boards, complete with mottos. I was fully conscious of my creditable performance. In the meantime, gossip, transmitted from mouth to mouth (and exaggerated in the process) reached Ma's ears, "Our Anil da has done the writing on the boards". Looking at the bunch Ma said, "Well, well. You have done all this writing?" I should have contradicted Her then and there. But I did not; on the contrary, I swallowed the compliment, observing strict silence.

(Incidentally, it was not the scheduled hour for silence at that time.) Ma noticed a beautiful sample of the board and asked me whether it had been written by me. I had to break my silence to say 'no'. It was not easy to find any of the few boards written by me. After some search one was traced. The writing on it was inartistic—clumsy, to be more accurate. And lo and behold! a spelling mistake had crept into it. My friends laughed at my cost. Possibly, I deserved the punishment. Anyway, my mission had been successful. God helped me because I had tried to help myself.

The worst enemy of *Samyama* is the restless mind. How can it be conquered? "By intense love of God", according to Ma. Why is the mind restless? Ma's answer is: "Your mind is so much absorbed in the world that it does not like to leave it. It has found rest there. If it becomes completely restless, it will realise the *Ātmā*:"¹ Somebody once asked Ma how to overcome restlessness of the mind. Ma prescribed a method in simple language: "By increasing restlessness it is overcome." This apparently paradoxical statement was clarified by Her as follows:—

"The restlessness of the world only enhances duality. When your mind is given its real nourishment, then only will it be at peace. When attaining the supreme wealth of God-realisation the mind will be perfectly still. There is only God everywhere. He alone Is. He alone and nothing else. Man's duty is to provide the mind with pure food. Do not put your mind into dirt. When defiled, it becomes agitated with yearning."

1 *Ānanda Vārtā*, Vol. VIII/3/150-151.

The root-cause of restlessness of the mind is desire for worldly things. Ma teaches us to sublimate such desire into desire for self-realization which is the same thing as God-realization.

“If you become attached to money, property and so forth.” She observed once, “your true nature will be covered by want. By doing actions pertaining to man’s true nature, he becomes established in his Self. Later the actions born of want are not attractive any longer. When you make efforts to realize your *Ātmā* (Self), you are desiring to find your true nature by its own momentum. The path of want is full of sorrow and the path of your true nature gives happiness—God-realization. All power is God’s. It is He who gives you the power of reason, the power to act. Just as you provide food and other necessities by your own exertion, so must you use your capacity and your talents to find God. He who does not advance towards God, is on the road to death. The path of God-realisation is full of ambrosia, it is the path of Immortality. In whatever form you desire God—be it as the Lord, whom you serve, be it as your own Self—on realising Him, everything will become as it should be. If you move along the current of want, you will remain wanting. Endeavour to find the Supreme and you will attain Supreme Bliss which is immortal. But death is lurking in worldly enjoyment.”¹

In their search for Self-realization the *Vratīs* were materially assisted by a Manual prepared by Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj with instructions about *Āsana*, *Japa* and *Dhyāna*. The austerity consisted in abstaining from smoking, tea, coffee, betel-nut, from eating between meals, and in living on simple, light, vegetarian diet. *Vratīs* belonging to Class A kept fasts on Ganges water

1 *Ananda Vārtā*, Vol. XVII/1/9,10

on the first and the last days and had, on the remaining days, only one meal of one dish, at noon. In Class B were relegated *Vratīs* like myself, having a lot of outdoor work as volunteers and some others who could not (or thought they could not) stand the strain of A-class diet, according to them "bordering on starvation". The B-class *Vratīs* were exempted from complete fasting. They had a simple meal at noon and a large cup of milk every evening. With these austerities we felt fitter and stronger than usual and got internal *Śakti* never experienced before, both for action and meditation. According to the Manual mentioned above each of us was required to do *Japa* at least 5000 per day. This was in addition to the congregational meditation in the pandal. The *Samyama Saptāha Mahāvrata* began on the 14th November. Some time before dawn the beating of a gong—vibrant and sonorous—announced the commencement of *Prabhāt Kīrtan*, a daily ritual of the Anandamayi Ashram, which purified the atmosphere of the locality. The regular morning session of the *Samyama Mahāvrata* was due to start at 7-30 a.m. Meanwhile we got a respite for getting ready for the day. With the *Prabhāt Kīrtan* still ringing in our ears, our hearts were filled with joy at the prospect of an ambitious experiment inspired by Ma. Pandit Agniswatta Shastri of Varanasi (popularly known as Batu Da) started the day's programme by chanting Vedic hymns, with his perfect diction and appropriate gestures. His deep voice, magnified by a loud-speaker, reverberated

in the surroundings. Not used to hear such exalted music in Ballygunge, we felt as if we had been transported to some *Tapovan* of ancient India.

Congregational silence is an important feature of this *Mahāvratā*. It was observed four times every day—8-9 a.m., 3-4 p.m., 8-45—9 p.m. and 11-45 p.m. to 12-15 a.m. Once a questioner asked Ma “What is the fruit of remaining silent?” Ma’s reply was : “It controls speech and preserves your energy. If the mind also becomes silent at that time, Truth shines forth.”¹ Once an elderly gentleman lodged a complaint before Ma against silence. He claimed that during the whole day his mind behaved all right and his grievance was that the period of daily ^{silence} converted his mind into a repository, as it were, of unclean thoughts, for the time being. He therefore suggested that he should stop observing the daily silence for half an hour as it made his mind so ugly. Ma pointed out that silence did not *make* his mind ugly ; it only *showed* that his mind was ugly. His mind, She added, effectively beguiled itself during the whole day and appeared in its true colours only for the half hour under enforced silence. By way of comment on his ultimatum that he would stop observance of his daily silence, Ma’s conclusive answer came in the shape of a simple but embarrassing question : “Would you desist from X-Ray examination lest your disease be detected ?”

Coming back to the daily programme of the *Mahāvratā*, in between the scheduled periods of

1 *Ānanda Vārtā*, Vol VIII/3/154

congregational silence, there were various items such as kīrtan, recitation of the Gītā and Chāṇḍī in chorus and discourses on religious subjects by experts. Professor Tripurari Chakravarti's talks on the Mahābhārata, coupled with copious quotations from other sources, Indian and Western, had a special appeal for the cultural society of Ballygunge, so far indifferent to the activities of Ekdālia Road Ashram ("Govinda's Tiffin Carrier"). Dr. Nalini Kanta Brahma's explanation of the teachings of the Gītā, combining philosophical depth with lucidity of expression, was highly appreciated by listeners with spiritual aspiration. Swami Swatantrananda's talks on the Upanishads and Yoga Darśan, based on thorough study and practical experience of Ashram life, kept the audience spell-bound. Sri Krishnananda Avadhutji started as an uncompromising Vedantist and ended in devotion to Sri Krishna with tears in his eyes, which moved the audience. Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj did not give regular talks but occasionally answered specific questions referred to him by Ma. He invariably threw some light which benefited all, including the experts present. It was my privilege to have him as my guest. Close association with him enabled me to see how great he was in a class by himself. Almost a living encyclopaedia, he was a master of many subjects, including religion, philosophy, history, literature and in particular, yoga and tantra. His visit to Calcutta in connection with the *Samyama Mahāvratā* was a great boon to the scholars of this city.

His presence converted my house into a living centre of learning for the time being. Professors seeking guidance in their respective fields of study and research, as also persons interested in the practical aspects of yoga and tantra approached him and received advice and assistance.

It was a matter of great satisfaction for us that Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj was full of praise for the quality of the speeches delivered in the pandal and the earnestness with which the *Vratīs* participated in the *Vrata*. Another event was specially gratifying to us—the change of heart of the misled youngmen who had threatened to set our pandal on fire. During the *Vrata* they one day visited the pandal, had *darśana* of Ma and were blessed with conversation with Her. They had come to destroy but stayed to pray. Thereafter they presented Ma with a poem in praise of Her, composed by one of them. Furthermore, Professor Tripurari Chakravarti who had been previously misinformed that Ma was “the mother of a rich few”, eventually came to a different conclusion as will appear from his observations as follows :

“To Her (Ma) have bowed men and women hailing from countries all the world over. Among Her admirers are philosophers and savants, saints, sages and Mahamandaleshwaras of religious institutions of All-India status, besides common people by the million.....To Her poverty and prosperity make no deference. Ma Anandamayi is the Mother of all—not only of a rich few”.¹

1 Ānanda Vārtā, Vol. XXVI/2/115.

And N. R. Dasgupta, who had at the beginning been very pessimistic about the success of the *Vrata* in Calcutta, particularly Ballygunge, as stated above, later on expressed his feelings in words as follows ;—

“*Samyama Vrata* in Calcutta was, to my mind, to say the least, a wonder....Undoubtedly, this was something unique in the history of Calcutta”.¹

The common experience of the participants was that in the course of the week of discipline they had gained something memorable, a new strength in their spiritual pursuit, a greater certainty of purpose and a stronger will to succeed. In the words of Ganga Charan Dasgupta :

“We had to slam the door on our daily routine of soulless drudgery and direct our attention to a course of self-discipline with Ma as the central symbol, moulding our aspirations for higher life.... We had a unique opportunity to turn our eyes inward and to find out that there were many dusty corners in the chamber of our soul which required vigorous cleaning. We felt the great need of a constant repair-job to be done in the daily scheme of our lives”.²

Apart from the regular *Vratīs*, there were part-time participants who flocked to the pandal by the thousand and derived immense benefit. Indeed, the *Mahāvratā* created spiritual history in Calcutta. The benign influence of the centre-symbol—Ma Anandamayi—could be felt but could not be described in words. We realised that Her presence worked wonders out of the most unpromising

1 Ananda Vārtā, Vol. I/5/307.

2 Ananda Vārtā, Vol. II/1/85.

material. The residents of Calcutta still treasure in their minds the sacred memories of the seven days of the *Samyama Vrata* when they were blessed with daily *darśana* of Ma for hours together and enjoyed the benefit of Ma's presence for 24 hours every day. The events of those days proved the truth of Ma's assurance that if there are honest efforts, the gaps are filled up by God. We appreciated, from experience, the force of the saying of Sri Krishnananda Avadhut :—

“Whilst it is difficult for the *Sādhaka* to live upto his resolve when left to himself, literally nothing is impossible in the presence of Mother. Have firm faith in Mother's Grace.”

The next *Samyama Mahāvratā* to be observed in Calcutta in Ma's presence was fixed for the second week of November, 1959 at the newly founded Ashram at Agarpara. By that time this annual ritual had gained all-India recognition and celebrity. The regular *Vratīs* hailing from different parts of this sub-continent had ceased to be mere beginners in the practice of austerity and meditation ; they could be regarded as veterans in this spiritual discipline. There were also additional recruits from year to year. Our guests included a large number of men of light and leading who were enthusiastic supporters of the *Vrata* and sincere devotees of Ma. Besides, there were some great Mahātmās who added to the value of the function by their presence and by their eloquent discourses.

Ma arrived in Calcutta on the 5th of November, 1959 and straightway started supervising the arrange-

ments made for the occasion. Not a single item of importance escaped Her attention—the pandal, the dais, the space to be reserved for different classes of participants, the pictures and the placards with mottoes to be hung on the walls, accommodation for guests, arrangements for the preparation and distribution of *prasād* and even for the availability of the waters of holy Ganga.

A spacious pandal had been erected on the extensive lawn of the Ashram, overlooking the Ganga, the sacred river being visible from every seat assigned to the *Vratīs*. The decoration, in Santiniketan style, was simple, graceful and dignified, the atmosphere serene and congenial to meditation.

The usual programme of the *Vrata* was strictly followed day after day. Swami Vishnu Ashramji, a well-known *Mahātmā* of Northern India, delivered a series of lectures on the meaning and effect of *Samyama Vrata*. Swami Sharanandaji of Vrindaban, a blind *Mahātmā*, who had accepted his physical handicap as a gift of God, talked with conviction on the supreme value of self-surrender and unshakable faith in God. Dr. Nalini Kanta Brahma made a deep impression on the audience by his piteous appeal to the Divine Mother on behalf of the suffering millions of India heading towards a catastrophic end. It was time, he said, that the demons, out to crush righteousness, should be subdued. There was a ring of sincerity in his invocation which brought tears to the eyes of many of the listeners. Then Professor Tripurari Chakravarti spoke of the lofty ideals of the *Mahā-*

bhārata, Dr. Roma Chowdhury on the message of *Ananda*, as explained in the Upanishads and Professor Gauri Nath Sastri on Sri Krishna's *līlā* and on the *Bhāgawata*. Sri Jogesh Brahmachari, a senior Mahātmā, who has been in close touch with Ma since the twenties of this century, narrated interesting episodes of Her early life and extracted from Ma witty answers in reply to his challenging questions. Professor Arun Prakash Banerjee, a worthy disciple of Rabindra Nath Tagore, asserted with confidence that he did not believe in book learning and that the Mother cult was the most suitable *sāadhanā* for man to pursue. And then, there was Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. Gopinath Kaviraj, a giant in the field of scholarship and spirituality who spoke little and proved Carlyle's observation: "Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves." Thus, the *vrata* provided a forum for speakers representing different schools of thought. It was a grand success from intellectual, cultural, religious and spiritual points of view. Each speaker made his contribution in his own way, and with consummate skill. Ma was, as it were, the limitless ocean into which flowed from different directions so many rivers originating from different sources and carrying messages from different angles of vision. Ma, the common object of adoration for all, was available in the pandal practically throughout the week.

We had the good fortune of having Ma's *darśana* during the periods of silence every day. "The present state of the world and the whole of life",

observed Soren Kierkegaard, "is diseased. If I were a doctor and were asked for my advice, I should reply: Create silence" (N.Y. Times Magazine, April 6, 1954). Indeed, silence is more eloquent than words. The profoundest item of the *vrata* was the period of silence observed in Ma's presence four times daily. Many of the *vratis* who practised meditation with closed eyes felt that they got more out of this silence than from all the other items of the programme combined. Some specialised in making the best of the unique opportunity for Ma's *darśana* during the whole period and the communion thus established was more valuable to them than anything else. One devotee tried both—*darśana* with his open eyes and *japa* with closed eyes. His experience was that each was better than the other and it was difficult to choose between the two.

The foregoing pages give some idea of the wonderful *Vratas* observed in Calcutta in 1953 and 1959. Let me now place before the reader the gist of certain memorable utterances that emanated from Ma in certain sessions elsewhere.

At Naimiṣāraṇya I ventured to ask Ma whether the seclusion of one's *pūjā* room at home was not more helpful for concentration than the uncertain surroundings of a crowded pandal. From practical experience, I knew of two potential sources of distraction in congregational *dhyāna*: *Vratis* with bad throats, trying in vain to suppress frequent fits of cough and secondly, those with aching joints, pressing (or pushing) neighbours on either side for

extra space in addition to what is enough for an owner of a pair of normal knees. Ma said, in reply to my question, that much depended on the mental state of every individual *sādhaka*, adding that, as a general rule :

“By meditating in a group, especially in the presence of Mahātmās, the less advanced are helped by those who reach greater depths in their meditation since the *prāṇa* (life force) is the same in all beings.”

The seventh *Samyama Vrata*, observed in New Delhi, was one of the most wonderful and harmonious gatherings. On the last day Ma made certain observations somewhat to the following effect :—

“While *Samyama* (self-discipline) does not actually bring about Self-realisation, since He is Self-effulgent and no effort can take us to Him, yet for the purification of body and mind, self-restraint, *satsanga* and the activities practised during *Samyama Varta* are imperative. All these combine to harmonize a human being so as to attune him to the Divine. If you are observant you will notice that everyone here looks different from what he looked a week ago and you will also find that every *Samyama Varta* seems easier than the one before and takes you a step further. The restricted diet and sleep, the life that you lead during these gatherings are an aid to meditation and self-discovery”.¹

In 1973, I had the good fortune of participating in the *Samyama Mahāvratā* observed in Vrindaban. This sacred place is wonderful. It has a tradition of complete self-surrender. Its sacred temples, holy men and drooping trees seem to invite the visitor to accompany them to the Lord. In its

1 *Ānanda Vārtā*, Vol. V/4/296.

serene atmosphere one breathes, as it were, vibrations of self-less love for God. The Anandamayi Āshram at Vrindaban has, over the years, acquired a special sanctity with its images of Gouranga and Nityananda, of Chhalia Krishna and Ananda Radha and of another pair of Radha-Krishna, besides six Siva Linga. In course of the few years preceeding 1973, this Ashram had been graced by Ma's august presence off and on, sometimes for long sojourns. She had inspired so many *Satsangas* in the hall of the Ashram, including a record number of *Samyama Mahāvratas* (1964, 1966, 1967, 1969, 1971 and 1973).

Samyama Mahāvrata is usually unique everywhere. The 24th session, observed at Vrindaban in 1973, seems to have excelled all others. On the last day of the *Vrata* this time, we had the rare fortune of a special *darśana* of Ma who then seemed to be "God-in-man one with man-in-God". The inter-play between Ma's Outer Manifestation and Inner Being seemed to have reached the acme of perfect synthesis. The former was in the role of a loving human Guru giving Her helpless 'children' theoretical lessons, accompanied by practical demonstration; the latter, ever in unison with the One, was apparently oblivious of our separate existence. Strangely enough, the spiritual guide in Ma declared that She was a beggar woman and asked the *Vratīs* for alms: "Fix a definite time every day for praying to God and let that period be dedicated to Him for the rest of your life". This saying combined in itself the humility of a 'beggar',

the assertiveness of a Guru and the affection of a mother. And what was the prayer to God to be like? Ma set a model for our benefit:—"Lord, I am Thine. Thou art my refuge. Have mercy upon me and show me the path to Thee". This is the English translation (as far as a translation of Ma's sayings in practicable) of the text of the wonderful prayer we heard from Ma Anandamayi—a prayer from Ma to Ma. There was a deep meaning underlying it. And the sound emanating from Ma had a message deeper than the sense conveyed by the three sentences uttered by Her. It travelled beyond the boundaries of words—its appeal was not to the brain but to the core of one's being. Ma, as revealed that midnight in the background of the *Samyama Vrata*, was a sight for Gods—Her face, aglow, Her eyes half-closed, Her body still as a statue, Her hands folded. Ma seemed to be completely merged in Herself, taking no notice of the presence of anyone of us and yet residing in all. Each of us felt Her presence within ourselves according to our own lights.

**Sessions of the *Samyama Vrata* subsequent
to 1953**

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 18.11.54—24.11.54 | Bombay |
| 22.11.55—28.11.55 | New Delhi, Kali Bari |
| 12.11.56—18.11.56 | Sapta Rishi Ashram, Hardwar |
| 22.11.57—28.11.57 | New Delhi, Kalkaji Ashram |
| 13.11.58—19.11.58 | Kanpur |
| 15. 4.59—22. 4.59 | Ramnagar, Hrishikesh |
| 8.11.59—14.11.59 | Calcutta (Agarpara) |

21.10.60—27.10.60	Naimiṣāraṇya
9.11.61—15.11.61	Suktal
5.11.62—11.11.62	Pilani
14.11.63—23.11.63	Ahmedabad
12.11.64—18.11.64	Vrindaban
1.11.65— 7.11.65	Suriya (Hazaribagh)
20.11.66—26.11.66	Vrindaban
9.11.67—15.11.67	Vrindaban
29.10.68— 4.11.68	Dehradun
17.11.69—23.11.69	Vrindaban
4.11.70—10.11.70	Suktal
26.10.71— 1.11.71	Vrindaban
13.11.72—19.11.72	Kankhal
3.11.73—10.11.73	Vrindaban
22.11.74—28.11.74	Rajpur, Dehradun (Rama Tirtha Ashram)
10.11.75—17.11.75	Kanpur
30.10.76— 6.11.76	Gondal, Gujerat
18.11.77—25.11.77	Chandod (Badrika Ashram), Gujerat
8.11.78—14.11.78	Nadiad (Sourastra)
28. 9.79— 4.10.79	Kurukṣetra

MA'S TRUTH

Elwood Decker

No matter what the problem
 MOTHER Gives The Solution
 She is Infallibly Fair
 With Her Supreme Love to Share
 Acting on Her Suggestion
 There's no longer a question
 Eternally Here Art Thou
 Beyond all illusion Now.

TO GAIN IMMORTALITY

A passage from Śhrimad Bhāgavata.

The glorious Lord said :

“O Uddhava, I shall tell you the most auspicious courses of conduct pleasing to Me, following which with reverence a mortal conquers death, which, as you know, is so difficult to conquer.

“With mind and intellect dedicated to Me and his mind and soul finding delight in the courses of conduct pleasing to Me, a man should gradually learn to perform all actions for My sake, remembering Me all the while. He should take up his abode in holy lands inhabited by pious men devoted to Me and follow the conduct of my devotees among the gods, demons and human beings.

“Pure of mind, he should behold Me alone, the Supreme Self, as pervading within as well as without and unconditioned as the sky in all created beings as also in his own self.

“He who is considered wise, embracing thus the point of view of Self-knowledge alone, regards all created beings as identical with Me and honours them as such, nay, who looks with an equal eye upon a high-born and a low-born individual, a thief and a devotee, the sun and a spark, a tender-hearted and a cruel man.

“The spirit of rivalry with equal, fault-finding with one's superiors and contempt for one's inferiors coupled with self-concirt surely disappear before long from the mind of a man incessantly engaged in looking upon men and women as no other than Myself.

“Ignoring his own people even if they laugh at

him and giving up the body-consciousness, as a result of which one comes to regard oneself as superior and the lowborn and animals etc, as inferior to one's own self, and casting to winds all sense of shame, he should bow low to all down to a dog, a pariah, a cow and a donkey, falling flat on the ground like a log of wood.

"Until the conviction that all created beings are identical with Myself gets rooted in him, he should worship Me in the aforesaid manner through his speech, mind and body.

"Everything is reduced to Brahman, the absolute in his eyes. And seeing Brahman and Brahman alone everywhere by virtue of knowledge raised to the level of realization gained by looking upon everything as Brahman, and freed from all doubts, he should cease from all activity.

"Looking upon all created beings as Myself, through the active agency of mind, speech and body—this, indeed, is considered by Me to be the best of all disciplines conducive to My realization. Worshipping Me like this is the safest and sure sādhanā, Oh ! dear Uddhava, because it is free from all craving and since it has been deliberately determined by Me, unaffected as it is by the three Gunas

"The aforesaid teaching covers the entire range of Vedanta which has been taught by Me to you and which is very difficult to grasp even for the gods.

"Repeatedly has this knowledge of Truth been expounded by Me in a very lucid and reasoned way. Having grasped it fully a man will have all his doubts dispelled and he becomes fit to get liberated."

TWO WORDS

Thakur Sitaram Das Onkarnath¹
(Translated from Bengali)

1st Wave.

Hari : Look brother, you have studied the *Śāstras*² thoroughly. Tell me, have you come across anything from which everyone without exception can derive real benefit ?

Rāma : From what little I have had the good fortune of studying the *Śāstras*, I have found that there are two words which can be very beneficial for all devotees—sādhus and householders alike—belonging to any sect whatever. If you take refuge in the first, the meaning of the second will be revealed to you.

Hari : What is it brother, is it the name of Rāma or Krishna ?

Rāma : Indeed, there is nothing to compare with the names of Rāma and Krishna. However, even these pertain to special sects and sādhanās of which they are the very life. But there is a simple word which is for one and all, whether child, aged, youth or girl, there is no one who has not uttered this name at the very start of his life. All languages are in fact derived from that single word.

1 Sri Thakur Sitaram Das Onkarnath is one of the foremost saints of Bengal who has thousands of disciples all over North India.

2 *Śāstras*—Hindu Scriptures.

Hari : What is that word ?

Rāma : "Mā." This word full of divine nectar is uttered, first. How much sweetness the Creator has poured into this word when He first coined it all by Himself ! Mā, Mā, Mā—the more you speak this word the more does it fill your heart and soul. While pronouncing the word 'Mā' the mind becomes transformed, its restlessness is stilled for a moment while the mind plays with the name 'Mā.' This name is the first to be uttered by the infant, boys and girls learn first to say 'Mā.' No other syllables come from their lips, only Mā, Mā, Mā. The baby cries 'Mā, Mā', it laughs 'Mā, Mā', its only resource is the name of Mā, Calling Mā the child feels content. The very name of Mā teaches it to recognize who Mā is. So the infant calls out 'Mā', it cries 'Mā'. He who can rely solely on the name of Mā will not have to worry about anything else ; the very name of Mā will lead him to his mother. Oh brother, one can never get tired of calling 'Mā'. The more I repeat it, the more I long to continue to do so. Kāli, Durgā, Jagaddhātri, Annapūrṇā, Vāṇī, Kamalā, Kuṇḍalīnī and other Devis are all different appearances of Mā with different names. If you call Kāli, Kāli alone will respond, but if you call out 'Mā', all the goddesses combined will be invoked. The heart gets permeated with the name of Mā, divine joy floods the soul, the very utterance of the name purifies the mind. From the lowest illiterate castes to the vedic Brahmins, from the most ignorant fool to the most learned

pandit, everybody can derive bliss by pronouncing Mā's name. Nobody is ever deceived by Mā's name.

Hari : Yes, brother, all you say about Mā's name is very true. No other name can be compared to the name of Mā. Everybody has the right and capacity to resort to it, all can soothe their burning agony by calling or crying out 'Mā'. But exactly whose name is 'Mā' ?

Rāma : The dictionary contains the names Indirā, Lokamātā, (mother of the world) Romā the daughter of the oceans—These are various names for the goddess Lakṣmī. In an other dictionary the goddess Lakṣmī is called 'Mā'. This name denoting Lakṣmī, the goddess of the universe, the Mother that produced all of us, is a constant source of joy to all human beings. I do not know any body whose heart does not thrill with joy on hearing the name of Mā. This name is not meant for men only, it is meant for all, men and women. The English call her 'Mother', the Muslims call her 'Āmmā'. Within the hearts of everybody the universal Mother is manifested by the name of Mā. If any one can cling steadfastly to this name, he will never lose himself in the labyrinth of worldly paths. By adhering firmly to the name of Mā he will reach the root-cause of everything, The name of Mā leads the person uttering it constantly to the Supreme Being, to the ONE with name and nameless, to the ONE with form and formless. The river of human life merges completely with this Divine ocean of Ambrosia.

Just as the waters of a river cannot be separated from those of the ocean once they have mingled, so is the man who repeats the name of Mā drawn to the all-conscious, eternally blissful Supreme Being and entirely merges therein. Then there is no more separation.

I cannot find any other name in the *Śāstras* as potent as Mā's name. People of all classes and conditions, from the highest to the lowest, boys and girls, young and old, all may use this mantra. Even calves cry "Hāmmā, Hāmmā", kids bleat "Mā, Mā", the young deer call "Mā, Mā". Among worldly obstacles in the way of mankind trying to realize God, woman and wealth constitute the most serious, and of these two woman is the most formidable. It is no exaggeration to say that there is practically no man who is indifferent to a woman's glances. Sādhus and non-sādhus alike are liable to become agitated by passion. The unfailing weapon with which to defeat this enemy is the wonderful name of Mā. There is not the slightest doubt that he who seeks freedom from attacks of passion can be victorious by crying out to Mā, by repeating Mā's name day and night. Whether your mighty enemy be passion, anger or greed, the easy and simple device to defeat him is to call Mā's name loudly. Never must the repetition of Mā's name be given up so long as the enemy is not driven away. How many lascivious persons have conquered their passions by repeating Mā's name constantly and have thus successfully crossed over the ocean of *samsāra* (round of

birth and rebirth). There is no other name of 'Mā'.

Jai Mā, Jai Mā, Jai Mā, Jai,
Jai Mā, Jai Mā, Jai Mā, Jai.

Oh brother, Mā's name is replete with satisfaction, joy and love. Whosoever calls Mā, Mā, Mā from wherever he may be, is bound to get an answer. By thus constantly invoking Mā, one gets a clear response from within, so that one's hair stands on end, the heart is filled with delight, and the mind dances in ecstasy to the tune of Mā-Mā-Mā.

This is why I exhort everybody : Oh ye sinners, sufferers, poor and destitute, oh ye sick, sorrowing, vilest of the vile, oh ye who are despised by every one as outcasts ! All of you, just cry out Mā-Mā-Mā. Even if everyone hates you, Mā will never treat you with contempt, She will clasp you to Her bosom. A very safe place is Her bosom, brimful with tranquillity, joy, ambrosia and heavenly bliss. Quietly whisper into Her ear : "Mā, Mā, Mā ! and all your pangs will vanish. Fall asleep on Her bosom and all your grief will be ended.

I have not been so fortunate as to master the *Sāstras*, but what little I have gleaned by trying to understand them, has firmly convinced me that human beings can obtain fulfilment merely by relying solely on Mā's name. Even should I forget Her from time to time, Mā never forgets me ; She is calling me incessantly, day and night. Such is the Mother, who is the *kula-kunḍalinī*, who is the *Omkāra*, who is the *Ātmā*, who is the source of *nāda*,

the divine sound that is constantly ringing throughout the universe—Mā is all in all.

“Sarva svarupe sarveṣe sarvaśakti samanvi te !

Bhayebhyastrāhi no devi Durge-devi namostute !”

“Oh Goddess who art the basic cause behind all things, who art endowed with every power and might, Deliver us from fear, O Devi ; Durgā Devi salutations to Thee.”

The world is filled with Mā, has been moulded out of Mā. He who can look upon the name of Mā as his supreme refuge and constantly invokes Her, is able to cross over the ocean of becoming with ease and to enter the Kingdom of Bliss, the Kingdom of the ONE, the Kingdom of Eternity—Mā, Mā, Mā.

Hari : Brother, I am charmed by your modesty. All your life has been spent in pouring over the *Śāstras* and in *sādhanā*. Whether anyone else is aware of this or not, I am certain that your close study has been successful. Truly, you have churned the ocean of the *Śāstras* and discovered real nectar. It is very true that the name of Mā is like ambrosia, it is the sole solace of fallen, downtrodden, sinning, sorrowing, helpless human beings. Everybody has the right and capacity to utter Mā's name, be he a child, old, young, learned or ignorant, aborigine or Vedic Brahman. All without exception, in any condition, whether clean or unclean, without restraint may sing Mā's name. There is no impediment in this, there are no restrictions. Oh, what a wonderful jewel you have extracted from the vast ocean of the *Śāstras*, how sweet is the name of Mā.

Do not revel in it all by yourself, do not taste the bliss of Mā's name alone, but do bestow this great mantra of Ma's name on all, so that everyone's sorrow, sickness, grief, pain and agony may come to an end. Let all unite and learn to invoke Mā like children. The first word we learnt to say was 'Mā'. How often I have uttered Mā's name all my life, but today, brother, on your advice, I seem to have found everything I could wish for in Mā's name. It appears that I have discovered in it my lost Self. Even though vague and shadowy, I have found new life in the name Mā, Mā, Mā. I feel eager to call out Mā, Mā, Mā, again and again and weep tears of joy when repeating Mā's name. Let me shout Mā's name, let me continuously call out Mā, Mā, Mā.

Rāma : Yes, call Mā as much as you can, call Mā who is the saviour of the fallen, the purifier of sinners, the pathfinder for all who have lost their way !

(*To be continued*)

MA'S GIFT OF HERSELF

Elwood Decker

I've found a Door everywhere
 Opening Wide when we *Care*
 To Vast TREASURE Free to Spend
 Now, Forever without end !
 MA's LOVE It Is and ours too
 LOVE we can think, feel and *Do-*
 Thus we may Learn How to Spend
 Inspiration with no end

"THE HOLY MOTHER ANANDAMAYI AS I HAVE KNOWN HER"

Prof. Bireshwar Gangoli, M. A.¹

I met the Holy Mother Anandamayi for the first time at Patna on the 17th of February, 1951. She was sitting in the midst of devotees who were singing devotional songs. She appeared to be in a meditative mood. I have since come to know that for Her there are no changing moods ; She always abides in a state which is beyond all changes. I went there because a colleague of mine, who had introduced me to Sri Aurobindo's works, had informed me of the Holy Mother's stay at Patna. It was pure disinterested curiosity which had led me there. I did not expect much from an almost illiterate woman, who laid so much stress on "Kīrtan", i.e, devotional music in chorus. Though She had been staying at Patna for about a week, I had because of my intellectual vanity, not cared to go and ask Her any questions on philosophy. I was convinced that nothing more than what could be found in books could be said by or learnt from anybody. I was however eager to find, if possible, the ideal non-attached man spoken of by Aldous Huxley. It seemed to tally with the concept of '*Sthita-Prajña*' of the Gītā. The lives

1 Reprinted from *Ānanda Vārtā*, Vol. II/4, Feb, 1955

of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramana Maharshi had convinced me that a non-attached *Brahmajñānī* was possible even in these days of industrial civilisation, nay, in fact the salvation of our industrial civilisation which according to Dr. Joad ; has lost the values of life, lay in the leadership of society by such non-attached ideal human beings. I have not had the good fortune to meet Sri Aurobindo or Sri Ramana Maharshi. Could it be, I thought, that fate had at last moved to retrieve my fortune and I was going to have Darshan of a *Brahmajñānī*, an event at which, all unknown to me, my whole life-impulse had been aiming.

The uproarious Kīrtan, however, disappointed me, as I was of the opinion that such terrible noise must be a positive hindrance to meditation, which is considered the best method of communication with God. After an hour's severe trial, which was relieved only by the Divine Grace of the beautiful face of the Holy Mother, just as I was on the point of leaving, I fell into a sort of trance—almost the first of its kind in my life, and experienced a state of ecstasy, which was broken at about 10 p.m. by a sweet call from the Holy Mother. I felt a sense of great relief and perfect repose when I woke up, and looking at the face of the Holy Mother I found a touch of the Beyond in Her. By that time I had returned to my senses and thought that I might have been under a hypnotic spell. I pulled myself together and got back my critical mood. However before I could put any questions

to Her, She asked me to narrate my experience. By that time everybody had left Her room and so without any hesitation I related to Her my strange physical, intellectual, emotional and possibly spiritual experience. What astonished me was the way She made definite and explicit what I had groped for in my narration. Ultimately She wound up the whole description by saying that She also had had similar experiences in Her childhood—such is Mother's way to encourage a child. I was naturally anxious to know from Her the correct interpretation of such experiences.

What followed was a masterly discourse on Yoga. It seemed to me that Her knowledge far excelled that of Patanjali's "Yoga Sūtra" in matters of detail, or of Blavatsky's "The Voice of Silence" in sense of realism. I bowed down to Her in love and respect and came away a changed man. Out of the ashes of my philosophical knowledge full of doubts and difficulties was born a devotion that knows no doubt, no break. Her very presence, aglow with a sublime radiance, was sufficient proof that there was a divine Mother, upholding and protecting the Universe. The presence of Mother in the midst of a Kīrtan now assumed a completely new meaning to me, namely of a Being, standing beyond the 'Kīrtan' and yet presiding over it. The necessity of seeking inferential proofs for such feelings was gone and it seemed to me as though I had an intuitive glimpse of the Lord of the Gītā.

Since then I have paid many visits to Her

Ashrams at Banaras and Vindhyaçal, and it would take one long chapter to write down every single event or idea that has struck me as something full of spiritual significance. Apart from the indescribable devotional atmosphere of the 'gnostic collectivity' around Her, reminding one of the Divine atmosphere created by Devarṣi Nārada of the Purāṇas or Lord Chaitanya of Bengal wherever they went, the most pleasing and astonishing thing about Her personality is that it offers a wonderful reconciliation of all religious and philosophical views and theories. She does not only resolve conflicts theoretically, but can actually satisfy the contending parties that they are all perfectly correct from their relative angles of vision. I have attended several conferences of philosophers and religious men in India, and always found them unsatisfactory and disappointing. On several occasions when I had the misfortune of offending somebody holding the view of Vedānta of a school other than that of Shankaracharya, the Holy Mother intervened and like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva of Dakshineswar proved to the entire satisfaction of everybody present that there are as many ways of understanding Truth as there are accepted theories. At the outset I used to think that She reconciled those views in order to please all Her children who are growing in the dark. But no, Her cosmic consciousness enables Her to identify Herself with everyone and thus realize as well as explain the truth according to the particular view held.

Mother often speaks in the terminology of pure monistic Vedanta. It seemed a little strange to me that one who appeared to be immersed in *bhakti* and dedicated to this cult based on pure dualism, should repeatedly speak in terms of the Upanishad such as "only Brahman is true," "the world is an illusion", or "Thou art That", etc—concepts which form the very corner stone of Absolute Monism. The theory of three levels of consciousness hinted at by Sir J. Woodroffe and P. N. Mukhopādhyāya in their 'The World as Power' seemed to suggest a solution. The three levels correspond to three stages, the state of the *Brahmajñānī* who sees one in the many, the state of the ordinary man who sees nothing but the many and mid-way between those two levels of consciousness lies the intermediary plane of consciousness through which a Yogi has to pass. The conflicting statements of many Realized souls who got glimpses of the timeless, spaceless, absolute Brahman and yet had occasion to speak in terms of pluralism can probably be explained by the hypothesis, viz. that they—the Realised Souls, so to say, come to other planes to meet the needs of men.

And yet doubt assails when one proceeds to apply this theory to MOTHER, from whom Truth flows as from its source. In Her case the criterion of Truth as propounded above does not exist.

Mother Anandamayi reminds us of the summum bonum of human existence and re-enforces the truth of all the scriptures that we are greater than ourselves, that we are purer than we seem to be, that

we are by nature Divine, and that we must realize the Divine in this very life. This body is the temple of the Divine Mother, let it not be made into the devil's workshop. By surrendering to the Mother we keep our shrine ready for the expression of the Divine within. The divine pervades all existence, material as well as spiritual. Hence it is the sacred duty of physical-vital-mental man to evolve into a gnostic being, who also functions on the intuitive plane and on the plane of unconditioned joy. Sit near Mother Anandamayi and Her joy will touch you, invade you and you will forget, at least for the time being, that there are things like cares and anxieties in life. Such a temporary infusion of joy may make you ultimately mad for Joy Absolute and a life of *sādhana* may begin.

Put an abstruse metaphysical question to the Holy Mother, and see how spontaneously, without any effort, without the use of inferential processes, She convinces you. Once I had serious difference of opinion with a qualified monist and after spending a whole night arguing with him I approached Mother in the morning and She asked me, "By accepting which of the different schools of Vedanta can you accommodate the other schools most conveniently?" I replied "Advaita Vedanta." She said, "Oh then his qualified monism can also be reconciled to your pure monism. Why did you then quarrel with him all night long? My son, you have as yet only intellectually approached the truth of pure monism. Had you actually realised the Truth, you would also have realised the relative

truth of Mr. X from the angle of vision of Mr. X. Mr. X may not have had the vision of the One, but if you have come to It, you should accomodate the many in the One which contains the many.”

The Holy Mother does not like a philosopher of one school to try and coerce others into submission. Rather does She encourage him to support the viewpoint of other seekers, when he is in their company. A devotee, having blind faith should stick to his blind faith. But a philosopher or a teacher, who knows the different theories of different schools of thought, should make an attempt to explain in the most logical way any particular view, held dear by a particular group of devotees. Once I had to suffer for my dogmatism in this connection. During the last *Dol Pūrṇimā* Day (the full moon day of the Bengali month of Falgun, in which Lord Chaitanya was born), the Holy Mother was present, when at a religious conference at Vrindaban, I delivered a speech on the message of Sri Chaitanya. It was well received. When I was requested to give another discourse the next day at the same conference, I began to explain the fundamentals of the “Synthesis of Yoga” by Sri Aurobindo, which lays special stress on work without attachment as sacrifice to the Lord, in view of the fact that free India needed Divine workers more than hermits living in seclusion or in Ashrams. The source of the thesis of Karmayoga as developed by Sri Aurobindo and as explained by me on that occasion, is what Lord Krishna preached to Arjuna in the Gītā. And

though everyone present in the audience was a devotee of Lord Krishna, most of them disliked my speech, because of the exuberance of my words. There was such a violent reaction that some learned pandits complained to the Holy Mother about my speech. I of course tried to justify myself, but ultimately became convinced that my talk had been an inopportune one. I was simply amazed to find in Mother a first class logician with a wonderful sense of realism. She convinced me that not only the philosophical basis of life at Vrindaban was quite different from that of other places, but also that an attempt at Divine work by ordinary *sādhakas*, who have not attained to a certain stage, would lead not to "Karma-Yoga", but to "Karma-bhoga", that is to say, the *sādhaka* at initial stages may just rationalise his ordinary actions, which have been dictated by his lower nature. Hence some *sādhakas*, at some periods of their *sādhanā* may require exclusive recourse to devotion after abandoning works of life. I was reminded of a reference to that effect by Sri Aurobindo himself in his "The Synthesis of Yoga". I came home and after self-scrutiny I discovered that there is much unnecessary compromise with work in my life; there is a huge gap, a make-believe, a sort of rationalisation of work that I cannot help doing. There has on many occasions been a slow imperceptible replacement of the Lord of Sacrifice by the magnified ego, and I believe it is the Grace of Mother alone, which will help me to annihilate the ego completely and

enthroned Vāsudeva, the Divine, in its place, so that ultimately all my work of life, work of love and work of knowledge may be offered to the Lord of Sacrifice, to the Absolute, and not to Prakriti, the lower nature. It is in order to kill such great illusion that we require conscious efforts at surrendering to the will of the Mother, who by Her Grace can surely show us the Light.

He and He Alone

Tell you all is phantom unless He be seen who is the only Real. See Him and all is His garment ; see Him not and all is the merest phantom. 'What is māyā' ? you ask. To see anything whatsoever apart from Him : that is the Illusion—the source of sorrow. There are no 'emanations', no 'creations'—no things at all apart from Him. All those are so many words which describe deluded ways of seeing. See them and you do not see Him. See Him and you see that all is Him—nothing has vanished, nothing is lost, nothing is rejected : seeing Him you see that all is Him and He is all.

"What we call the beauty of the sky, the great spaces of air, the life-giving flow of water, the bright power of fire—all these are Him. See them as separate and you find yourself in the arid desert of scientific nonsense. See Him and they are seen to be ever-living Gods who form His limbs, eternal as He is eternal."

—Sri Krishna Prem

SRI SRI MA ANANDAMAYI SAINT AND WOMAN

Savitri Debi¹

Ours is the land of Sages and Saints. From time immemorial, men have given up home and family to seek the Truth and Unity of God, and, having attained liberation from their personalities and freedom from all desires, they in turn attract men and teach them the way. Such were the great Rishis of old, such was the Gautama Buddha and in modern times, such was Sri Ramana Maharshi of Arunachala. All these were men. but it is rare in our country to find a woman saint of similar stature. We read of very few in olden times ; Mirabai, the poetess saint, lived in mediaeval times ; last century, a great woman jñāni, Thakurani Ma, taught in Bengal, and now, in India, we have another such great soul in Anandamayi Ma, also from Bengal.

Sage and Saint, full of Wisdom as of Love, Anandamayi Ma is a true woman, teaching by precept and example humility, abnegation, respect for all and sundry no matter what their character or calling, and above all giving peace and quietude of mind and Joy. She is the very embodiment of womanhood, a loving Mother caring for Her children, laughing with them and at them, caressing

1 This article was written on the occasion of Sri Ma's visit to South India in 1952.

them with Her loving eyes, spoiling them with gifts, but also able to rebuke them wisely when necessary and to leave them sometimes to gain their own experience through failure.

Not only is such a Saint and woman in our country, but doubly lucky are we that She should be coming to us here in the south, that we may have the grace of Her darshan.

It is difficult to write of such souls as Anandamayi Ma, so far beyond us in consciousness ; we cannot generalize and say that they are this or the other, nor why they do this or that ; we can only see them subjectively, each of us in our own way and insofar as we have understanding. Anything that I say about Mataji, therefore, must be from personal experience and according to my limitations.

It was in Her little ashram at Almora, up in the Himalayas, in 1942 that I saw Mataji. On the ashram verandah was seated a beautiful, small Indian woman swathed in folds of pure white cotton cloth. Her features were delicate, Her eyes half closed, long black hair flowing in a cascade down Her back, on Her lips a smile and in that smile a radiance of love that I had felt in but one other being, Sri Ramana Maharshi.

It was this radiance that attracted me to Mataji, but, after a couple of meetings in Almora, I did not see Her again for several years. By this time, Her ashram on the banks of the Ganges in Banaras had grown to great importance and the number of Her followers increased a thousand-fold, seekers coming

to Her from all over the world. Although I was a follower of Sri Ramana Maharshi and lived at his ashram during the last years of his life in the body, I was still influenced by bodily presences, and being in Banaras, I was drawn one evening to visit again the presence of this other Saint whose radiance I still vividly remembered.

I found Her on the terrace of the ashram, walking up and down, talking to first this person and then that, as each solicited a few words of wisdom or help. I stood near her with folded hands as She passed, She turned her head and, inspite of the thousands of faces She sees daily, She not only recognized me after all those years, but knew exactly where She had seen me and enquired when I had come down from Almora. This is nothing unusual for Her ; Her memory is indeed phenomenal, She never forgets a face nor who the person is however short a time She has seen them or how long it was ago. After a few words to me, She continued her walk and conversation with Her companions of the moment.

Another thing that has often struck me is Her power of picking out this person or that in the huge crowds and bringing them close to Her. She will turn Her eyes upon them and gaze fixedly at them as if Her eyes were uncovering their innermost being ; She will, as it were, communicate with them through Her gaze. I have taken strangers to have darshan of Her of whom, the moment they approached the edge of the crowd, She became aware, turned Her head towards them and gazed

intently at them, may be sending one of Her disciples to bring them to Her.

So, at odd times, have I seen Her, always loving, always ready to answer questions, sometimes serious, wrapped within Her being, often gay, laughing like the little child to which She likens Herself.

Twice recently have I been able to travel with Her, watch Her dealings with people and events, see Her more closely, and the impression that remains is one of a child-like, infinitely pure, wise essence, without trace of desire, responding immediately to all the calls upon Her love, Her loving care and respect for others however unworthy they may appear to us to be, Her gentle humility and patience, yet when needed Her firm rebukes. All these are so many lessons for us to take. But, above all it is peace to know Her, and many are the troubled and weary whom She consoles and rests.

May our Mother Anandamayi give us of Her Grace to enable us to become as She is, little egoless children alone fit to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

**“How sad to think
that you go from forest to forest
in search of THAT
which is within you”**

—KABIR

MATAJI CONFERS A BOON

Mahāmahopādhyāya Pt. Mathura Prasad Dikshit

I had heard quite a lot about Sri Anandamayī Ma : that She wielded Divine Power, that Her devotees hailed from all classes and professions, that She attracted renowned scholars of Sanskrit and English, Rājās and Mahārājās, sādhus and saṁnyāsīs, men and women of every religion and sect, rich and poor alike. So I naturally developed a keen desire to have Her *darśana* inspite of my sceptic attitude of mind. However, as She was far away, I found no opportunity to satisfy my curiosity.

At last, in the year 1934, Sri Mataji came to Solan and one day I accompanied Mahārājā Durga Sing of Solan when he went to have Her *darśana*. She did not give any instruction on yoga, only some good advice. There was no indication of Her divine powers from all this. During the next few days, scholars, officials, judges, advocates, etc started coming in good numbers from neighbouring as well as distant places. But I wanted a proof of Her supernormal powers. How to obtain it ?

I used to have Her *darśana* very often with Mahārājā Solan. One day it came to my mind that if She could know the thoughts and feelings of people, let Her give me some fruit or sweets today. Visitors were not given *prasāda* as a rule, but when we were leaving sweets were offered to

the Mahārājā and to myself. Even then I was doubtful and argued that this might have been a coincidence. The next day the thought occurred to me that if She gave *prasāda* to me alone and not to the Mahārājā or anyone else then only would I be convinced of Her power of reading people's minds. Lo and behold, when we took our leave, sweets and fruits were given to me only and to no one else. Now I felt assured and developed some regard for Sri Mataji.

One day, I was told by Mataji's disciples that, at times, when She was in *bhāva samādhi*, *stotras* (hymns) would emanate from Her lips. Some verses uttered by Her thus a few years ago had been noted down by them but so far had not been understood. They gave me the words which comprised eight *ślokas* (verses) and asked me to explain their meaning in Sanskrit or Hindi. However, in spite of my best efforts I was unable to do so and frankly admitted this fact.

They again appealed to me through Mahārājā Solan who declared that if these *ślokas* could not be explained by me then they would not be explained at all. I pondered over the matter. Mataji did not know Sanskrit. Those verses had been uttered by Her in a state of *samādhi* and definitely appeared to me *more* valuable than the *Veda Vākyas*. The *Veda Vākyas* emanated from the Rishis after deep concentration and they knew what they were saying, while the words which emerged from Mataji's lips were unpremeditated and spontaneous. However, in spite of all this

profound regard for the *ślakas* I was unable to explain them satisfactorily notwithstanding my most strenuous efforts, I kept those verses with me and hoped and prayed to be able to realize their significance after getting the title of Mahāmahopādhyāya.

In the month of July of that same year, I found my name on the list of title holders ; I had become a Mahāmahopādhyāya. Again I tried hard to penetrate to the meaning of those words. Mataji also came to Solan shortly after that and I confessed to Her my difficulties in understanding the *ślokas*. Mataji only smiled and said : "Try it now." It was just like conferring of a boon : Suddenly the significance of the *ślokas* seemed to me crystal clear and I discovered that they very well fitted into the different systems of philosophy. Thus the relevant explanations of all the *ślokas* occurred to me in great detail and I wrote about each verse in ten to twelve different ways according to the different systems of philosophy. The eight verses were elaborated on in a booklet of 150 pages which was published by Mahārājā Solan. At the time of the *Pūrṇāhuti* (final offering) of the *Śrī Sāvitrī Mahāyajña* celebrations at Bhadaini, Varāṇasī a big meeting of pandits was arranged there and each one of them was presented with a copy of the book. All the scholars appreciated the commentary I had written.

After this incident my faith in Mataji became very firm and my veneration profound. Once I asked some of Her devotees : "What superhuman

qualities do you find in Mataji ?" They unhesitatingly replied that in Her presence they experienced great peace of mind and a deep joy. This exactly was the feeling in the ashrams of Avatāras or supreme yogis, Through the purifying and elevating vibrations of those great beings everyone in their proximity felt transported to a state of tranquillity, serenity and bliss.

* * *

Whether or not the results of meditation are obtained is of no importance. The essential is to arrive at stability ; it is the most precious thing that one can gain. In any case one must trust with confidence in the Divinity and await His grace without impatience. The same rule applies to japa ; japa pronounced even once is a benefit, whether one is aware of it or not.

—RAMANA MAHARSHI

MĀTRI LĪLĀ

(December 1979—March 1980)

On December 5th Mataji arrived in Her New Delhi Ashram in a state of exhaustion. After strictly resting for six days without giving any public *darśana*, Her condition had improved to some extent so that She was able to undertake the long journey to Baroda. Her car was taken right on the platform of Delhi Station and She was carried in a wheel-chair the short distance to Her compartment where She lay down. An enormous crowd had collected. An eye-witness writes :
“Suddenly Ma rose up like a white iceberg emerging and *pranāmed* to us. Her face was other worldly—sleped in *samādhi* (similar to Her birthday-samādhi face) and She sank back. Her hands folded, then held apart in blessing. And finally all was covered again except a little bit of Her face... .. The crowd grasped in awe..... The train pulled away leaving behind many sad and tearful faces”

A newcomer who had Ma's darśana for the first time wrote to a friend : “I have just returned from bidding farewell to Ma at the station. She looked so small and frail—yet so loving and strong, with a strength that is not of the body. I am deeply moved.”

Whatever the condition of Ma's health, Her ministration continues uninterruptedly. Whether She is actively moving about and talking vivaciously

or just lies in silence, Her Presence is the all important thing.

From Baroda station Mataji was taken by car straight to Her peaceful Ashram at Bhimpura on the banks of holy Narmada where She could rest undisturbed in salubrious surroundings. Everyone knew that there would be no *darśana* for at least a month. All the same over a dozen devotees from foreign countries followed Ma to Bhimpura just to in Mataji's vicinity, mindful of the fact that "*darśana* is not with the eyes."

Very slowly Mataji's health recouped. Dr. Seth came from Bombay, Dr. Vijayananda arrived from Kankhal, a local Vaidya also visited Ma, but She had no *kheyāla* to follow medical advice. On Christmas day for the first time Mataji gave *darśana* to one and all. The foreign guests who had been waiting patiently for twelve days, sitting downstairs under the tree, putting up at various places in Bhimpura and Chandod, could go up on the terrace and do *pranāma* to Ma who was next to the window in Her room. From that day onwards Ma's health took a definite turn for the better.

While no one could enter Ma's room upstairs, *satsang* was held regularly, throughout Ma's sojourn, in the hall downstairs, including 108 Hanuman Chalisas, chanted every morning. Km. Chhabi Banerji came from Calcutta for ten days and arranged for *Nāma yajña*¹ on 30th and 31st December. French and American devotees also took part in the singing. In January Mataji often

1. Uninterrupted kīrtana.

gave short *darśanas* through the window. Her companions were wondering whether Ma would be strong enough to attend Saraswati Pūjā in Ahmedabad on January 22nd, and it was suggested to celebrate it in Bhimpura. But Mataji insisted on keeping Her word. She and Her attendants left for Nadiad on January 19th and stayed there overnight to the great joy of Sri Narayan Dasji, the Mahanta of Sri Sant Ram Ashram. On the 20th evening Mataji reached Ahmedabad by car and put up at Sri Nanubhai's residence, where Saraswati Pūjā was celebrated in great style on the 22nd morning. The majority of Ma's party were accommodated in Sri Madhukar Munshaw's house. During the pūjā Mataji sat for two and a half hours near the *vigraha* of Goddess Saraswati, looking as radiant as She always does on festive days, in spite of the weakness of the body. On January 23rd. Sri Nanubhai performed Gaṇesh Pūjā and Ma sat next to him for that also.

On the 24th morning Mataji arrived in Bombay where She put up in Vile Parle in Her pagoda in the compound of Sri B. K. Shah's residence. Every evening from 5-30—6 p.m. Mataji gave *darśana* but private interviews or visits at other times were not allowed.

On January 27th Mataji motored to Poona. Ma still needed a lot of rest although Her health had improved considerably. She used to give *darśana* twice daily for a short while, in the morning to ashramites and in the evening to all. On February 14th Śivarātri was celebrated by all-night worship.

170 men and women took part in the pūjā, sitting in circles round Śiva Liṅga in the hall and on the verandah. Brahmachari Nirvanananda directed the ceremonies with the help of a loud speaker. Km. Chhabi Banerji delighted everyone by her inspiring singing during the intervals between the four pūjās. For the first time within our memory Mataji was not present bodily during that holy night. In the morning everyone was allowed to go to Ma do make obeisance. On February 16th, during the solar eclipse, Km. Chhabi Banerji once again led the kirtan from 2—5 p. m. but Ma did not come to the hall. Purifying water, touched by Mataji, was sprinkled on all by Brahmachari Nirvanananda after the eclipse.

On February 20th Mataji left Poona, arriving in Vrindaban on the 21st for the Holi Festival. She had been earnestly requested to unveil on February 29th Sri Haribabaji's life-size standing statue in the newly built mandir in the beautiful Ashram of the followers of the great saint. Sri Haribabaji's Ashram has a fine hall in which hundreds of people had crowded and on the dais were many Mahātmās. The Mandir opens out into the hall. Mataji was taken by wheel-chair across the hall. She touched the statue and sat in the mandir for half an hour with Sri Swami Akhandananda Saraswati and a few of Sri Haribābāji's disciples.

The same evening *akhaṇḍa kīrtana* was started in our Ashram which continued throughout the next day. Km. chhabi Banerji and our Delhi Kīrtana party took the lead. On March 1st morning (Holi)

Mataji came to the hall and visited Sri Gauranga-Nitai Mandir where special Pūjā was performed by Brahmachari Nirvanananda, Holi being the birthday of Sri Chaitanya Mahāprabhu. Mataji also graced the two other temples of our Ashram and then took Her seat in the corridor by the side of Ananda Chhalia Mandir, where everybody could offer *praṇāma*, garlands etc. Ma gave *ābīr tika* to all and everyone received *prasāda*, but no one was permitted to put *ābīr* (red powder) on Mataji's feet as Her body is still frail.

At the end of the *Nāma yajña* Ma gave quite a long *darśana* sitting on the steps leading to Her house. A large number of Sri Hari babaji's devotees had come. On the 2nd morning some young men and women from Sri Haribabaji's village Bandh celebrated Holi in front of Ma's cottage, singing, dancing and throwing colour. Mataji sent large quantities of *prasāda* downstairs and at the urgent entreaties of the Holi players finally gave *darśana* from the window of Her room upstairs. On March 3rd everyone was given the chance to bid farewell to Mataji in small groups, which took about two hours and on the 4th morning Mataji left by car for Delhi where She entrained for Varanasi.

It goes without saying that the devotees of Varanasi were overjoyed to have Ma in their midst after a lengthy interval. On March 8th She proceeded by car to Vindhyachal where She could enjoy solitude for two weeks. Vindhyachal is well-known for its air and water, both curative.

On March 22nd Mataji was back at Varanasi. Her health seemed much improved and She walked short distances. *Vāsanti pūjā* started at 6-30 that very evening. For the next three days Ma came to the Chaṇḍī Maṇḍap and sat in the pūjā for 2½—3 hours in the morning and one to one and a half hours in the evening. After the pūjā Mataji would sit outside so that all present were able to approach Her and do *praṇāma*. The attendance was naturally very large, especially in the evenings. On March 26th the mūrti of Durgā and the other Deities was taken to the Ganga for immersion. Fifteen minutes later Mataji sat in the car that took Her back to Vindhyachal with a very few companions.

Mataji is expected to reach Ranchi before April 13th, Didima's *Sannyāsa Utsava*. Didima's statue is to be installed in the Ranchi Ashram Mandir on Akṣaya Tritīyā, April 17th Mataji is due to arrive in Kankhal about the 25th of April and remain there over Her birthday to be celebrated on May 2nd—3rd.

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 “*Devi prapannārtihare prasīda,*
Prasīda Mātarjagato'khillasya.
Prasīda Viśweśwari pāhi Viśvam,
Tvamiśwarī Devi carācarasya.”
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