



Temple at Kheora, Bangladesh

ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ

*

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

Vol. XXVII * OCTOBER, 1980 * No. 4

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The indestructible seed-sounds (akṣara) through which liberation appears in the mind are known as mantra. These power-sounds are themselves fully conscious (cinmaya), are nothing but vibratory Brahma, the Absolute as Name Nāmabrahma). Persevere, convinced that Divinity is realized in the Name. The seed planted within me will unfailingly grow into a mighty tree—keep on, steadfast and faithful. Just as a seed once sown, should be watered and fertilized, so the mantra-seed must be made to sprout by the nourishing water and fertilizer of satsang.*

As you desire, so you find—in whatever form or without form the One Itself.

* *Word play : man mind, psyche ; trāṇ liberation ; mantra the sound units that free the mind.*

*

Chant the Name MA, meditate on MA, endeavour to see the one MA everywhere. Aspire to be ever more MA-possessed. MA-permeated (MA-maya).

*

You ask, who is Ānandamayī MA? But what indeed is ānandamaya (ever-blissful awareness)? It is eternally enthroned in each and everyone, at home in the very heart of all beings. Ycs, everywhere Its chosen dwelling. Seeing That, attaining That—everything is seen, everything attained. Then free of doubt, free of fear, free of conflict—immutable, imperishable.

*

The immutable Brahma (akṣara), the vibratory Brahma (śabda), the cosmic Symphony (praṇava) are one and the same as the power-sound MĀ—all essentially Ānanda. Isn't it said of Bhagavān : Thou true Mother, Father, Friend and Family, Svāmī—Knower of every Self? This All-in-One is called MA... maya (mother-potency...ever-present, all-effecting), who hands out in full measure exactly what each needs.

Herself of Herself to Herself.

Sri Ma
(Translated by Narayan)



MĀTRI VĀNĪ

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

Don't you understand that for a woman there is the fear of so many kinds of dangers and mishaps. To endeavour to get a taste of that for which you have given up worldly life is your duty. You have already in Ma's company visited so many places of pilgrimage and attended any number of functions and celebrations. Don't you think it is right for you to try now with great seriousness, calm, determination and patience to find Him, the ONE ?

* * *

It is said that Sacred Scriptures also transmit Divine Grace. There is no knowing at which auspicious moment His compassion will manifest. This is why a human being must at all times keep, as it were, the door wide open by constantly letting his mind face upwards, in His direction.

* * *

Even though you feel that your spiritual practice is mere tedious reiteration, it is this very practice that will for you, within you, clear the path. Anchored in patience, spiritual exercises have to be performed with great regularity so as to neutralize the effects of your evil karma. With singleminded devotion try to remain ever engaged in karmayoga.

* * *

Time glides away rapidly. Blessed with birth in a human body, which even the gods covet, man must be ever aware of His supreme goal. Do not nourish the tendency of being born again and again by letting your thoughts dwell on the ever-revolving world of birth and death.

* * *

Japasamarpaṇa (dedication of *japa* to one's *Iṣṭa*) is the rule for counted *japa* only. The *mūlbija* (seed mantra) should always be kept in mind while performing *japa*. Then there is no need for dedication of the *japa*. Even without washing one's mouth or changing one's clothes *japa* can be kept up—this rule also exists. In this way much more *japa* can be performed. God resides within and knows the mind. If you can invoke Him within, it will be successful.

* * *

Just as there is an injunction to bathe, to put on clean clothes and sit in one place when eating, so also the śāstric law decrees that *sandhyā*¹ has to be performed after bathing and putting on clean clothes, with a pure mind and as far as possible with great regularity, sitting in a yogic posture. Thereby the inherent inner purity will be awakened and when this has been achieved the question of purity and impurity ceases to exist. The One is all-pervading—in order to kindle this realization a little initial trouble will have to be taken.

1. *Sandhyā*—Specific spiritual practice performed daily as a duty at specific times, namely sunrise, midday, sunset.

By one pointed spiritual practice by clinging firmly to Truth the spiritual energy of those who tread the path to the ultimate Good develops. Truth itself is the light on the supreme path, it indicates the right course.

* * *

On the path to the Goal of human life the most formidable obstacles are indolence and greed. Intensity and eagerness constitute the very life of worship and adoration.

Service and the repetition of a mantra are the *sādhanā* suitable for the householder and the house wife.

The observance of silence is an important device. Ever keep in mind, whatever God does is for the ultimate Good.

* * *

A birthday message : "I order to go beyond birth and rebirth sustain the remembrance *of God.*"

MĀTRI SATSANGA

Swami Bhagavananda Giri

(Translated from Bengali)

New Delhi, 27th Nov 1957.

(Continued from the last issue)

Question : If even after prolonged spiritual practice the vision of God does not supervene, what is one to do ?

Mataji : One should carry on with faith and regularity the practices laid down by the Guru.

Question : Can you tell when god's vision will occur ?

Mataji : There is never a time when God is invisible. It is He alone who exists—there is nothing apart from Him. Why then do we not comprehend this ? Because there is a screen in between. Just as the sun is obscured when clouds gather in the sky, so God becomes revealed only when the covering screen is removed. The vision of God is not subject to any action. God is self-luminous, but in order to lift the veil *sādhanā* has to be engaged in.

As a small child you were ignorant. Then you studied and by and by passed M.A. and later became a professor. Who is in the guise of learning ? You had a latent desire to find God, this has now been awakened. Nobody wants to remain an ignoramus, he goes on asking questions and thereby becomes a knowledgeable person. You must perform *japa* of the mantra conferred by the Guru and implicitly obey His instructions. By doing so everything

will be achieved. Choose the company of travellers on the path, that is, associate with *Mahātmās*—seek *satsanga*.

During this *Samyama Saptāha* some have given up tea, others eating onions, yet others smoking. As far as practicable one should partake of pure food only. This will prove congenial in one's spiritual practices. Some people have suggested : "Ma, we should have *Samyama Vrata* twice a year !" First try to assimilate this *Vrata* once a year. It will be beneficial to observe this *Samyama* at home once or even twice a month for a day. It is not you who are enjoying tea, cigarettes and so on, rather tea or cigarettes are enjoying your body. Because if it were you who were enjoying them, you could give them up, but tea, cigarettes and so forth have you in their grip and so you cannot leave them. Thus a life of restraint is imperative.

Question : Some people have declared that throughout the *Samyama Vrata* no thought of tea ever entered their minds.

Mataji : This is due to the grace of the *Mahātmās*. The holy company of *Mahātmās* makes one forget tea. All such things are meant to fall away. What is transient is bound to disappear.

Question : Ma, please bless us so that we may be able to live a life of self-restraint in our homes.

Mataji : God is gracious and compassionate. Take refuge at the feet of *Mahātmās*. But you must be merciful to yourselves. You must labour to realize your chosen ideal. Instead you have taken to loving what is harmful—sense objects. That is why you continue in the round of birth and

death and time and again have to take a "return ticket." Being a scion of Immortality do not keep company with those who are out for death. Try to realize your true Self—be it by the path of Vedanta or by that of devotion.

Question : Is it possible to get ill from the food served during the *Samyama Saptāha* ?

Mataji : I have heard that not everybody could digest *dalia* (boiled crushed wheat). Someone vomited after eating a mere spoonful of it. Perhaps it would have been better to eat vegetables along with it. It is advisable during *Samyama Saptāha* to eat what suits one.

Last night there was midnight meditation from a quarter to twelve until a quarter past twelve. Thus midnight was exactly in the middle. This meditation was usually performed by *vratīs* wherever they may stay, but this being the last day of the *Samyama Vrata*, Ma has been gracious enough to sit in Her place on the dais for midnight meditation. The whole atmosphere was profoundly peaceful. I have heard from many people that the meditation was very successful. After the meditation there was again *satsanga*.

Question : Why do we meditate at midnight ?

Mataji : There is a special power during the moments of confluence of two opposite currents. In the 24 hours there are four such points where coming and going meet. If someone practises his *sādhanā* at *Brāhma muhūrta* (early morning before dawn) at midday and at sunset, he will become aware of this special power current.

The *Brāhma muhūrta* is known as *amrita belā* (nectar time) because divine nectar is showered at that time. Therefore one should not sleep during

the *Brāhma muhūrta* but practise one's *sādhana*. I am told that some people sleep till 7-30 or 8-30 a.m. Thus they miss the chance of experiencing the sanctity of that sacred time. Some aspirants perform their spiritual exercises at midnight. You know that Lord Krishna was born at midnight. The cult of Sakti worship is also practised in the night because special power is received then. Yogis sleep in the day and keep awake at night. While sitting in meditation at midnight some *yogis* are blessed with visions. It is a wonderful injunction to sit down in the stillness of midnight and try to concentrate. I have heard that great *mahātmās* then graciously come forward to help the *sādhaka*. Some people of course get frightened as the ordinary person is not ready for such experiences. If one can ward off fear and sit down to meditate, this special power will be felt.

Some get so immersed in meditation that they do not even notice if birds alight on their bodies. When the rays of the sun entered the hall during collective meditation in this very *Samyama Saptāha*, birds came and sat in the hall. Some *mahātmās* were so deeply absorbed in meditation that even when the birds released their excreta on their bodies, they never felt anything. How free from outer vibrations such a condition is !

Mahātmās spend all their time in *satsanga*, meditation, *japa* and the remembrance of God's name. Once the mind is devoted to God, self-mastery is automatically gained. One should try to lead a life of self-restraint in order to become

centred in God. It is necessary to regulate one's eating and sleeping. Some people lose their temper if they don't get their meals in time. But here tempers have been dispensed with for the present. Food should be such that the *sāttvik* qualities are developed. By continuously living in this way for a prolonged period you will gradually become revealed as the embodiment of Truth and Knowledge.

* * *

A devotee then sang the following song :

*"Harināma mahānāma, prāṇārāma, prāṇārāma
Je nāma hai pūrṇakāma, sei to Harināma."*

("The name of Hari is great, it is the Beloved of the heart, whatever name fulfils all aspirations this indeed is Harināma.")

Mataji : The name by the remembrance of which man fulfils his highest destiny is indeed the name of Hari.

* * *

A devotee : In a certain temple, after offering food to the deity, a dose of digestive powder is also offered.

Mataji : In Jagannātha Puri after the bathing festival Lord Jagannātha goes to bed with a cold, so a medicinal concoction is served to Him. People worship according to their understanding. One should not criticize them. Pitaji, you know this, little girl is crazy and speaks in a higgledy piggledy fashion. why, Pitaji, isn't this correct ?

Dr. Pannalal : Yes, Ma, quite right.

Mataji : This Pannalal Pitaji does not say "yes"

just out of politeness. He voices his own conviction. Pandits speak according to prescribed rules. Pitaji laughs heartily bringing into play everyone of his limbs. In this way heart and mind become relaxed.

whichever method is followed in worship is correct.

Pandit Sundarlal : (pointing to the entire assembly) It makes me truly happy to see all these people !

Mataji : Pitaji is voicing the thought of all.

A devotee : The reason why we rejoice in beholding all these men and women here is because they look at you with such deep reverence !

Mataji : All of you are so gracious to this body that you always keep an eye on this little girl. It is the child's nature to call its parents. Try to get close to God. Thou art Father, thou art Mother Thou art all in all ! when the child is playing the parents let it play but keep a watch on it. When the child shrieks loudly for its parents, when it cries disconsolately for some need to be fulfilled, the parents rush forward and clasp the child to their bosom however busy they may be. The child cries in order to draw attention to its needs.

From your birth onwards you were always bent on fulfilling your needs and wants. Who is your Father and Mother ? He Himself of course ! In order to obtain supreme bliss you must invoke God. The name of whatever deity or whatever mantra will keep your mind away from worldly enjoyment, on the lotus feet of that particular deity you should focus your attention. So long as you live in duality

the world will not leave you.¹ But if you become centred in the ONE you will attain to lasting peace.

Question : Why have I to call my mother ? Should she not forestall my needs ?

Mataji : When the child is asleep the mother wakes it up to feed it. Place your whole reliance on her ! The mother always pays full attention to her child.

Pt. Sundarlal : The mother will certainly be aware of her child's needs.

Mataji : When the child is small and starts learning to walk the mother takes care that it does not fall down. When the child grows bigger it does not need so much attention. You are the scion of Immortality, therefore some of you engage in Mother worship, others adore Śiva Śakti. Remember the Lord's name, read religious books, perform japa and meditation, prostrate yourself before all, regarding them as manifestations of THAT. when you get up in the morning do *praṇāma* touching the earth with your forehead and pray : "Oh Mother Earth, how enduring you are". Grant me strength to bear sorrow so that anger may not enter my heart and make me suffer." Then offer *praṇāma* to the Sun-god who lights the world. All this will induce faith in you.

What is the sun ? Make obeisance to the sun as a symbol of the sun of knowledge—whether you do it actually or mentally. Spend your whole day centred in God in this manner.

1. A play upon words : *dui* two and *duniya* world.

Some of you are in the habit of getting up at 8 a. m. but here, during the *Samyama Vrata*, you are of your own accord getting up much earlier without any difficulty. Hopefully you have taken to this habit now! Having slept peacefully all night, one should get up well before dawn. Thereby your satvic nature will be intensified. Just as a clock has to be wound so that it can run for twenty-four hours, similarly every morning and evening contemplate God, do *japa*, and all day long think of God, no matter what you may be doing. Perform all your work as a service to God. Become the manager of God's temple, not its proprietor!

Before going to sleep at night after having completed your *japa*, meditation and *praṇāma*, ask His forgiveness for any blunder you may have committed during the day. If you have wronged anybody beg his pardon in your heart. In this way your faith and devotion will develop. When going to sleep imagine that you are laying your head at the feet of the Lord. It is very beneficial to do all this.

Question : Ma, we look upon you as our Guru. Why don't you give us *dikṣā* ?

Mataji : (Keeps quite)

Question : Is it really necessary to take *dikṣā* ? Will it not be sufficient to adopt a Guru mentally ?

Mataji : If you feel certain that someone is your Guru, then the act of initiation should follow, whether mentally or by the bestowal of a mantra. The important thing is to receive Guru power, in whatever way it may be conferred. There are

many kinds of *dīkṣā*—by a glance, by touch or by the communication of a mantra. What really matters is to receive Guru power.

Question : What exactly is the mind ?

Mataji : That which accepts, that which believes is called the mind. If desires and longings remain unfulfilled the mind is restless. The act of obeying or accepting (*mānā*) is carried out by the mind. The mind has no definite form or shape. Joy and sorrow are experienced by the mind. The activity that goes on at all times which induces decisions and doubts (*sankalpa* and *vikalpa*) is the work of the mind.

Question : If the mind is destroyed how can any action be done ?

Mataji : When there is *manonāśa* (destruction or stilling of the mind) the question of action or non action does not arise.

Question : If the mind is purified by service, what need is there for *manonāśa* ?

Mataji : This body maintains that once you catch hold of the root of a tree, the whole tree becomes yours. A tree contains an infinite number of seeds and thus potentially also an infinite number of trees.

There are different methods of doing away with the mind. Some aspirants follow the path of *Advaita Vedanta* which is “*neti, neti*” (not this, not that); “There is only one Brahman without a second.” Others say : “Thou, Thou”; in other words by regarding everything and everyone as

manifestations of THAT, the veil of ignorance can also be destroyed. Just as when clouds recede the sun becomes visible, so also when the veil of ignorance is lifted, the sun of Knowledge which is self-effulgent shines forth. The screen of ignorance can be perceived by wise discrimination. Actually there is no such thing as the mind. Reflect deeply it is the mind that says, "this is happiness, that is pain." If you employ this very mind to concentrate in Self-inquiry, in other words to discover your true Being, what then does the mind become? This will come to light of itself. Whichever road leads to the discovery of the true Self is the road to be chosen. While in the grip of the ego you constantly are busy saying "I, I," but just think, who is that "I"? Where the *Ātmā* alone exists, there the question of thinking this or that does not arise.

If you proceed by devotion you should serve Hari and sing His praises with the consciousness that Hari is THAT. THERE nothing is separate. when someone asked Mahāvīrji : "Who are you?" Hanumānji, who was considered supreme among the wise, replied : "In the light of Truth He who is Rāma is myself. Rāma is complete, I am a small limb of His. Rāma is my master, I am his slave." To know the Master is to know the Self. That Rāma is none other than the one Self must become revealed.

Question : I always think, it is Ma who does every thing.

Mataji : So long as there is thinking it will be like this. But where there is ONE and no other,

He stages a play with Himself, no second exists. The *līlā* of Lord Krishna is all transcendental. When Krishna stole butter from the *gopis*, they shouted: "Why do you steal?" The Lord answered: "I alone exist in all forms. There is no second at all. So whose things can I steal?"

Question: If the nature of the mind is to roam about, how can it become still? What actually is the mind? Coal remains black under all circumstances—however carefully you may wash it, it never becomes transparent!

Mataji: The blackness of the coal will go only when coal is thrown into fire. Once engulfed in flames it turns into ashes and so becomes white.

This body keeps on repeating: "provide pure food for the mind, give it real nourishment." If the mind gets pure food, there is the chance of its becoming still. The mind is famished it needs to be fed. Worldly enjoyment will not fill its belly, it cannot thereby obtain peace. Enjoyment of sense objects does not satisfy the mind. But through genuine service dedication to the Lord will come about automatically. Self-realization means God-realization and God-realization is the same as finding one's Self. Whichever path the Guru indicates, exactly along that path should one proceed. By practising *sādhana* in this manner the mind will be purified. Why do we engage in *sādhana*? To arrive at a state which is mindless (*a-man*). We observe *mauna* (silence) so that there should be no expectation, no other place for the mind to go to, no alternative.

"Wherever the eyes fall there Sri Krishna

appears." Our vision should be such that every where it is God who is beheld, Bhagavān and no other. At first, when God's vision is obtained, it is through the mind. When progressing further it will be beyond the mind (*a-man*). When the mind is stilled the veil of ignorance vanishes.

By performing God's worship also the mind can be purified. Then the mind recognizes that there is nobody but "Thou." In such a state everything becomes clear—what one believes and what one does not believe. Here the seer, the action of seeing and the sight are merged into one. Here, just as a child looks for its mother, so the mind-child is engrossed in searching its own mother. Provide your mind with pure joy, supreme happiness, that is to say, let it be merged in the bliss of the Brahman, the bliss of the Ātman.

"See Krishna, think of Krishna, act for Krishna, and if you believe me, you will find Krishna with the utmost certainty though the world should crack and open up beneath your feet. This is the truth. All else but Him is nothing, absolutely nothing."

SRI KRISHNA PREM

THE MYSTERY OF SĀDHANĀ AS REVEALED IN MA

Anil Ganguli

According to the Sanskrit-English Dictionary of Sir Monier Monier-Williams “*sāadhanā*” means “leading straight to a goal”. In the present context the word signifies spiritual practice performed for the purpose of preparing oneself for God-realization or Self-realization. Such a goal is by no means easy to reach. It demands strenuous and prolonged effort—an arduous journey through a hazardous path, sharp as the razor’s edge.

The words “*sāadhanā*”, “*sādhyā*” and “*sādhakā*” go together. Normally, a *sādhaka*, that is to say, a spiritual aspirant who practises *sāadhanā*, has a *sādhyā*, the goal he aspires to—the Ultimate, Eternal Truth, the Supreme, whatever the name may be. Ma is an exception. For Her *sādhyā*, *sādhakā* and *sāadhanā* do not exist separately. The three are rolled into one—the ONE. She maintains that there is only ONE and nothing but the ONE.

The *sāadhanā* associated with Ma’s person is unique. In fact, it appears from the sayings that have from time to time emanated from Ma’s lips that she has not performed any spiritual practices ; only there have been different kinds of ‘play’ of *sāadhanā* in Her body—not on Ma’s own initiative. Various kinds of experience were, so to say, quite mysteriously imposed on Her and these played

their part inspite of Herself, She being merely a passive participant without any effort and without any aim on Her part.

One day Mahāmahopādhyāya Gopinath Kaviraj was having a conversation with Ma which turned to Ma's health. In this connection some illuminating utterances welled up from Ma the gist of which is given below :—

“Look, in the case of a *sādhaka* there is aspiration towards a goal. But here (meaning Herself), there is no question of goal or no goal, of aim or aimlessness. Every artery, vein and nerve, their functioning and vibration are clearly seen ; just as when somebody in a dark room holds a lamp in his hand and throws light on every object, one by one—exactly like this. But, for the *sādhaka* who is still on the path it is impossible to perceive in this manner. He has to advance by overcoming various kinds of obstacles. Baba, here, there is no question of this. Here—the artery is myself, the vein myself, the functioning myself and the observer myself. Of course, when saying ‘myself’ it is because some word has to be used.”*

After a short pause, Ma spoke again :

“Baba, here everything is perfectly open and unconditioned. But ordinarily the rhythm of the life-force depends on one thing in the field of *sādhanā* and on a different one in the field of worldly life. From the worldly point of view one thinks : ‘my home, my wife, my son, my enemy, my friend.’ Thus, the idea of the ‘I’ conditions the rhythm of the life force. Whereas in the field of *sādhanā* it is conditioned by the aspiration towards Realization. The *sādhaka* is ever concentrated on his goal and therefore, while advancing, he is not aware of the details of the path. If he could once reach the goal, he

* Pages from my diary by Gurupriya Debi

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would be in a position to explain the path, for then everything becomes illumined by the one Light. Baba, in reality there is only One Thing. The path, the aim—call it what you will—nothing whatsoever is apart from the Self.”*

On one occasion it was my good fortune to be at the feet of Ma when She happened to be in a communicative mood, describing one aspect of the play of *sādhana*, in Her body, namely *āsana* and *mudrā*. Normally, the performance of *āsanas* and *mudrās* is necessary in order to produce requisite changes in the mind or character of a *sādhaka*. It may be noted that yogic *āsanas* and *mudrās* constitute difficult and complicated processes, so that a *sādhaka* has to practise for a long time under very expert advice. There is the general warning that yogic practice should not be undertaken without guidance from a competent teacher; otherwise it may prove injurious to body and mind. In fact, self-taught yogic exercise is totally forbidden. Ma stands outside the scope of such an injunction. Though a novice in the ordinary estimation, She successfully performed each and every yogic posture with the skill of a master. It was nothing short of a miracle that Ma was an adept without instruction from anybody. Nor did She have any aid from any book or picture. I asked Ma: “How is it that you did the *āsanas* and *mudrās* correctly without guidance?” She corrected the framing of my question by taking exception to the word ‘did’ used by me. She emphatically pointed out that She *did* nothing and continued that She had no volition in the matter, nor did She deliberately put in the

* *Ānanda Vārtā* Vol. XI No. 1, p. 37

slightest effort. What was still more surprising—Ma said again that She had no object in view, no aspiration to achieve anything and no jubilation at the success achieved. She explained the phenomenon as *kheyāla* and added that She Herself did not know why She was passing through the phase of yogic *sāadhanā*. The *āsanas* and *mudrās*, She observed, had just visited Her as guests, as it were ; and played, in their own way, some games on Her body and then left. The whole thing, She concluded, occurred *automatically*.

Āsana and *mudrā* mentioned above, constitute parts of *haṭha yoga*, one of the methods of *sāadhanā* revealed to our ancient seers, consisting of physical exercises and breath control. The *sāadhanā* in Ma was not confined to *haṭha yoga*. It was all-comprehensive. It explored innumerable paths right up to the end. Here is the gist of an utterance of Ma as recorded by A. K. Datta Gupta :

“This body has not followed only one particular line of *sāadhanā* but has covered all the known lines. It has passed through all the different varieties of practices referred to by the sages of ancient times. In order to attain to a particular stage along one of these lines of *sāadhanā*, an ordinary individual may have to be born again and again, but in the case of this body, it was a matter of a few seconds..... Moreover, the different forms of *sāadhanā* that this body has been seen to practise, were not meant for this body, they were meant for you all. When you relate your spiritual experiences to me, I often say that this body has had those experiences and this is why it knows what they are. Not only that, if anyone discloses to this body a special line of *sāadhanā*, it can describe in minute details the various stages of that very line.”*

* *Ānanda Vārtā* Vol. VIII. No. 1, P. 21

No wonder Ma has been playing the role of unofficial Guru of seekers after Truth hailing from different parts of the world, professing different faiths and belonging to different schools of spiritual thought.

When different stages of *sādhana* were being manifested through Ma's body, She had a variety of experiences. A. K. Datta Gupta has given a summary of one of Her sayings in this connection as follows :—

“Sometimes I would hear distinctly ‘Repeat this mantra.’ When I got the mantra, a query rose in my mind ; ‘Whose mantra is this ?’ At once the reply came : ‘It is the mantra of Gaṇesh or Viṣṇu’. Again the query came from myself ‘How does he look ?’ A form was revealed to me in no time. Every question was met by a prompt reply and there was immediate dissolution of all doubts and misgivings.”*

Play of *sādhana* through *kīrtana* has been revealed in Ma from her childhood. Her father, a master musician, taught Her to sing songs in praise of Hari. “Who is Hari ?” asked little Nirmala. Her father told Her that Hari was the Lord of the Universe and that He was very big and great. “How big ? As big as this meadow ?” was Nirmala's innocent question. Presumably it was not possible for the embarrassed parent to explain in words how big Hari was. But whatever he may have said, that was the beginning of the child's taste for *kīrtana*. Thereafter Nirmala became a regular and faithful companion in Her father's *sādhana* of Hari through devotional songs.

* Mother as seen by Her devotees pp. 121-122

In Ma's later life *kīrtana* proved to be a wonderful play of Her Inner Being on the forum of Her body. Here is Bhaiji's vivid description of Ma during *kīrtana* on one occasion :—

“Suddenly Her (Ma's) body sank down flat to the ground and began to roll on it. Then She slowly rose and stood on Her two big toes. Both hands were raised straight up, Her head slightly tilted to one side and a little backwards, and Her radiant eyes stared with a steady gaze towards the far end of the sky. A little later She began to move in that posture. Her body appeared to be filled with a heavenly presence. She paid no heed to Her clothes hanging loosely on Her person. No one had the power or the inclination to stop Her. Her whole body danced on with measured beats in a most delicate way and reached the place where *kīrtana* was going on ; Her body then noiselessly melted down, as it were, upon the floor. Led by some mysterious power it rolled on like the dry leaves of a tree moved slowly by a gentle breeze. After some time, while still lying on the floor, very soft, sweet musical strains came from Her lips, “*Hare Murāre Madhukaitabhāre*”.....After some hours She recovered Her normal condition. Her glowing face, Her sweet ineffable looks, Her soft, tender voice brimming over with divine emotion, all reminded the assembled people of the image of Sri Chaitanya Deva, as described in his biographies. All the physical changes, observed long, long ago in Sri Chaitanya Deva (1485-1533) manifested themselves again in Her person on that occasion.”*

Ma's experience during *kīrtana* on one occasion was once described by Herself in Bengali, in words extremely difficult for even Bengalis to understand. Here is a free translation of Her saying :—

I became, as it were, identified with the *kīrtana*. If anybody has *bhāva* during *kīrtana* that would be of a different

* “*Mother as Revealed to Me*” by Bhaiji (4th Ed.) pp. 36-37.

type. The reason is this—such *bhāva* is mixed with action and so it is tinged with a trace of worldly emotion. But the *bhāva* experienced in this body had nothing to do with any action. The conclusion is that here the worldly side is completely closed. And the feeling of joy herein is, to some extent, something unique.”*

Thus, in *āsanās*, *mudras* and *kīrtana* Ma's Outer Manifestation forged its way ahead towards perfection without any assistance or guidance from outside. A fountain, originating in the Himalayan heights hardly needs a propellar to drive it forward to meet the sea. Fed by the melting of enternal snow, it gradually develops into a mighty river and winds its way to its ultimate goal. The behaviour of Ma's Outer Being bears some resemblance to such a fountain—it seems to have unfolded itself stage by stage. For Ma's Inner Being, however, the origin, the flow and the goal of the Fountain have ever been one and the same.

A wonderful—rather enigmatic—play of Ma's Inner Being, in collaboration with Her Outer Manifestation, was enacted in Ma's so-called *dīkṣā* (initiation). *Dīkṣā* is a sacred ritual requiring a Guru, a *śiṣya* (disciple), an *Iṣṭa* and a *Bīja mantra*. The words *Iṣṭa* and *Bīja mantra* call for an explanation. “*Iṣṭa*” literally means “beloved” or “adored” or “worshipped.” In the present context, it signifies the deity (being one of the manifestations of Supreme Truth) chosen by the Guru for being

* “*Sri Sri Anandamayi Ma Prasanga*” by Amulya Kumar Datta Gupta, *Ānanda Vārtā* Vol. I. No. 3, p. 88.

worshipped by his *śiṣya*. Normally, the disciple is in the dark about the deity who will be appropriate for him or her. The Guru with his inner vision, envisages the particular *Iṣṭa* of the disciple. He helps the disciple in establishing his communion with that particular deity. Such help comes through the medium of the *bīja mantra* (germinal sound-symbol) out of which sprouts the image of a particular deity. The Guru transmits the appropriate sound-symbol into the ears of the *śiṣya*, sheds light on his path and raises spiritual vibrations in his mind. The *bīja mantra* has immense potentiality—it is dynamic and creative. Constantly repeated with sincere devotion, it leads the *śiṣya* along the right path and enables him to realise Supreme Truth.

At no stage was Ma really in need of a Guru or initiation or a quest for Supreme Truth because Supreme Truth has ever been with Her. Still, Her Outer Manifestation submitted to the acceptance of the role of a seeker in the drama of Her mysterious initiation.

It was *Jhulan Pūrṇimā* (Full Moon, commemorating one of the most important religious functions associated with Lord Sri Krishna) on the 3rd of August, 1922. Ma finished Her usual household duties, and at night She entered Her bedroom-cum-domestic chapel and quietly took Her seat there. She witnessed Her fingers automatically drawing a *yantra* (mystic design) on the floor. Strangely enough, the *yantra*, thus drawn, conformed to the requirements prescribed by the Scriptures although

never before did Ma know what a *yantra* was nor how to draw one. This was mysterious. The next step was still more mysterious—there was a vibration of a *bīja mantra* within Herself; perhaps it welled up from Her Inner Being. It found visible expression in writing inscribed by the fingers of Her Outer Being inside the *yantra* mentioned above.

Ma acted the play of a disciple in quest of a *bīja mantra* from an outsider namely, the Guru. As a matter of fact, nothing was outside, everything was within Herself. She found not only the *śiṣya* but also the *Guru*, the *Iṣṭa* and the *bīja mantra*—all merged in the One which was She Herself. The whole thing is beyond our comprehension.

Samādhi, translated into English by some as “ecstatic trance”. is the culminating point of *sādhanā*. The condition of *samādhi* has been described by Jacoponeda Todi* (quoted in “*A mystic Sage, Ma Anandamayi*” by Shyamananda Banerjee) in the followig lines :—

“The activity of the mind is lulled to rest, rapt in God, it can no longer find itself.....Being so deeply engulfed in that ocean, now it can find no place to issue therefrom. Of itself, it cannot think, nor can it say what it is like : because transformed, it hath another vesture. All its perceptions have gone forth to gaze upon God, and contemplate that Beauty which has no likeness.”

Let us see how Ma has described Her experience of *Samādhi* :

“It is a state beyond all conscious and supra-conscious planes—a state of complete immobilization of all thoughts,

* Franciscan mystic—4228—4306.

emotions and activities, both physical and mental—a state that transcends all the phases of life here below. What you call *savikalpa samādhi*, is also but a means to reach that final objective, it is only a passing stage in your *sādhana*.”

“Deep concentration on any one of the five elementals of sense—sound, touch, smell, taste and sight—derived chiefly from air, earth, water etc., leads a man to merge his identity into it, and as concentration deepens, the body as it were, gradually freezes with it. Then that special object of sense pervades his whole being and his ego gradually dissolves in it and coalesces with one Universal Entity. When this condition settles down, the consciousness of One Universal Self too melts away, and what then remains is beyond words, expression or experience.”*

Ma explains *samādhi* as follows :

“The consummation of action and feeling may be called *samādhi*. It is a state where the question of knowledge and ignorance does not arise. A stage comes when the *sādhaka* realizes that he is one with his object of contemplation. From that plane he may again come back to the ordinary level of self-consciousness. This type of *samādhi* also must be transcended, The ultimate state, being unparalleled, cannot be explained or expressed in any language. It is solely a matter of direct experience.”**

A successful *sādhaka* acquires extraordinary powers as a matter of course. Ma once said :

“I had the *kheyāla* to be like a *sādhaka*, so it was but natural that the characteristics attending intense *sādhana* should occur spontaneously. The earnest *sādhaka* does not attach any importance to these powers which develop in him. He may not make any deliberate use of them. But all the same people

* “*Mother as Revealed to Me*” by *Bhaiji* (4th Ed.) p. 68.

** *From the Life of Sri Anandamayi Ma* by *Bithika Mukerji*, p. 63.

may derive great benefit from the abundance which overflows his conscious efforts.”*

Let us note a few more observations of Ma on *vibhūti* and *sādhana*. A Gujrati lady known as Mani Ben placed her queries before the Mother in words as follows :—

“Mother, you have referred to your visions of the past and future. How do you have them? Do you see them with your two physical eyes, or (pointing at the space between the eye-brows) do you see them with the third eye that is here?”

The Gujarati lady seems to have succeeded in playing the ‘musical instrument’ (that is, the Mother) very well and she received more than she had asked for.

“How do I see them?” answered Ma, “Why, the eyes are all over the body. Don’t you know that everything has in it (the essence of) all other things. Hands, legs, hair, in fact every part of the body can be made the instrument of sight. Of course, it is quite possible to see through the two eyes which all possess; and the existence of the third eye of which you speak is also true. People do possess such eyes. This may sound strange to you, but nonetheless it is true.”**

Ma once gave an illustration of Her extraordinary powers in the past :

“Once this body lived on three grains of rice daily for four or five months. Nobody can live for so long a time on such a meagre diet. It looks like a miracle. But it has been so with this body. It has been so, because it can be so. The reason for this is that what we eat is not all necessary for us. The body takes in only the quintessence of the food, the rest

* *From the Life of Sri Anandamayi Ma* by Bithika Mukerji, p. 67

** “*Mother as seen by Her Devotees,*” p. 117.

is thrown out. As a result of *sāadhanā*, the body becomes so constituted that though no food is taken physically, it can imbibe from the surroundings whatever is necessary for its subsistence.....Secondly, one can live on air alone. I have just said, "in everything there are all other things"; so that the properties of other things (edibles) are in the air in some measure. Therefore, by taking in air alone we get the essence of other things. Again, it may so happen that the body is not taking anything at all, yet it is being maintained unimpaired as in a state of *samādhi*. Thus you find that as a consequence of *sāadhanā* it is quite possible to live without what we call food. In a similar way *sāadhanā* can effect such transformation of the body that by virtue of it any part of it can discharge the function of the eye."*

Let us conclude this chapter with a gist of Ma's observations showing the inter-play between her Outer Manifestation and Inner Being.

"One day I distinctly got the command: 'From today you are not to bow down to anybody.' I asked my invisible monitor: 'Who are you?' The reply came 'Your *Śakti* (Power).' I thought that there was a distinct *śakti* residing in me and guiding me by issuing commands from time to time. Since all this happened at the stage of *sāadhanā*, *Jñāna* (Knowledge) was being revealed in a peacemeal fashion. The integral knowledge which this body was possessed of from the beginning was broken, as it were, into parts and there was something like a superimposition of ignorance. At that time I was in *mauna* (observing silence). This was also due to particular commands. The father of this body came to see me at that time. I could not make obeisance to him. Not that I refrained from doing it intentionally, but this body refused to do anything contrary to the commands received from time to time. When the father of this body saw that I was not doing my duty by him, he took it to heart. But as

* "Mother as Seen by Her Devotees." pp. 117-118.

I was *maunī* at that time I could not explain the situation. He came to regard me with suspicion. He argued that if my various moods and experiences had a spiritual origin, there was no reason why I should be disrespectful to those to whom respect was due. This led him to consult different persons regarding my condition.

After some time I again heard the voice within myself which told me : ‘Whom do you want to make obeisance to ? You are everything.’ At once I realised that the Universe was all my own manifestation. Partial Knowledge then gave place to integral, and I found myself face to face with the One that appears as many. It was then that I understood why I had been forbidden for so long to bow down to anybody.”

It has been my good fortune to hear from Ma invaluable accounts of the play of *sādhana* associated with Her body, including some of the sayings sketched above. My mother tongue is Bengali. But I frankly confess I have failed to understand what the words of Ma mean, or signify or suggest. The reason has been explained by Ma Herself.

“Verily you people are circumscribed by intellect, etc. It is difficult for you to understand the words that come from this body.”*

Failing intellect, what can come to our rescue ? Intuition ? Perhaps a fortunate few are born with intuition. Perhaps some acquire it by *sādhana*. But what about ordinary mortals ? *Kripā*, says, Ma, can work wonders.

* Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi by Sri Gurupriya Debi, Vol, VII. p. 348.

THE SHIELD OF LOVE

Yvonne Sterk

(Translated from French)

Neither theology nor philosophy are my domains, I experience life as a poet and poetry is my field of expression.*

Feeling that my life was not in harmony with my deepest aspirations, I embarked on freelance journalism in 1967. I wanted to help the depressed people. I had already started to fight racial hatred by articles and poems. Living in Egypt for eight months after the war between Israel and the Arabs in 1967 and for three months in Israel in 1968, I came to settle in Lebanon in 1972 and two years later became the private secretary of a Lebanese chief. It was this distinguished personage who introduced me into Vedanta and Advaita philosophy. A well-known sage of South-India had been his Guru. My employer frequently went to India with a young French lady who periodically suffered from fits of nervous depression. Both of them had met Ma Anandamayi in Her ashrams in Vrindaban and Varanasi, and the French lady held Ma in profound veneration. However, soon after I started my secretarial work, the French lady, after another journey to India, decided that the Sankaracharya

* Several collections of poems by Madame Yvonne Sterk have been published in French.

of Kanchipuram was her Guru and replaced the photos of Ma that embellished her room at Beirut by pictures of her Guru. I did not understand anything of all this. The only thing I could do was to study books like *Jñāna Yoga* by Vivekananda or *Spiritual Discourses* by Sri Krishna Menon. At the same time I devoted myself to my work which consisted mainly in giving a poetic touch to my boss' writings that were inspired by his devotion to his Guru. In 1974, the French lady, who had made friends with me as well, went to Kanchipuram all by herself. But after eight months there, she again succumbed to a severe attack of nervous depression and thus returned to Beirut. However, as soon as she arrived she longed to go back to India and asked me to accompany her. And here I now see the working of Ma's will. Thus her mother and I travelled to South-India with the sick lady. In spite of several visits to the sage, she remained in a state of acute restlessness and to divert her attention her mother decided to take her to Delhi and Agra for sight-seeing. I had no say in the matter and of course had not the faintest idea that a mysterious Will fashioned this programme. It was January 1975 and nobody could foresee that by April the most horrible civil war would break out in Labanon.

One day we motored from Delhi to Agra. On our way back the young lady suddenly expressed the wish to visit Vrindaban where, she said, Ma Anandamayi might perhaps be in Her ashram. It was evening when we arrived there, and Ma was

giving *darśana* in a crowded room on the ground floor of Her house. As soon as we entered everyone had to leave as the *darśana* was over. I hardly caught a glimpse of Ma and felt vaguely frustrated. My friend looked so terribly disappointed that I said to her : "If it is really important that you talk to Ma, ask someone to arrange for it." "This is very difficult", replied my friend, "almost impossible !" However, I felt certain that we would meet Ma and so I said : "If you are really keen to see Her, it will happen".

My friend and I were alone at the doorstep of the house. Her mother was waiting in the taxi, parked near the temple. One of Ma's girls came and asked us to leave. She refused to listen when I tried to explain the urgency of our visit. I consoled my friend : "Don't worry and don't move an inch ! I can assure you that you will see Ma." The same girl passed by again and said to us : "It is useless to wait here. Ma has retired to Her room. She is not well." I thought to myself : "What this girl says is quite irrelevant, it is Ma who decides", and told my friend : "All is well, we only have to wait." I cannot explain what prompted me to act as I did, but something within me directed. There was no logic in what I said and no obvious reason for my obstinacy. I had come to India only because of my friend and was trying my best to be of service to her. It never entered my mind that this journey could be for my own benefit. I then did not understand the inestimable value of the *darśana* of the Sankaracharya or of Ma Anandamayi.

After about half an hour, a sādhu in the ochre robe approached the house. It was Sri Bhaskaranda. I accosted him, explaining in a few words that my friend was ill and wanted to talk to Ma and that we had to return to Delhi the same evening and two days later to Paris. The Swami promised to inform Ma. Within ten minutes he returned and opened the door for us. We were taken upstairs. Ma was surrounded by a few devotees. We both knelt down and I gazed at Ma full of tranquillity and confidence. Ma smiled and looked at us with interest. A devotee said : "Tell Ma now what you have to say !" I turned to my friend. She looked pale and shrivelled. She stared at Ma with intensity, tears streaming down her cheeks, but was obviously unable to utter a word. So I spoke instead, explaining her condition. Ma listened and watched me with undefinable attention, and asked my name, nationality and whether I was married. I replied but added that I had not come for my own sake but for my friend's who was anxious to talk to Ma. Ma laughed pleasantly and said something to Her devotees. One of them translated : "Your friend keeps mum. Let her say what she wants to tell Ma." But my friend only shook her head. Nothing could be done. Ma glanced at her for a moment and then said : "Who is your Guru ?" Again my friend remained silent. Ma thus continued : "You have to approach your Guru, he alone can help you. If you can't go to see him, concentrate on his picture. This is all I can tell you." Our meeting was over. We had to leave and return to Delhi.

I did not try to analyze what had transpired at Vrindaban for I vaguely felt that my petty logic was unable to grasp the deep significance of Ma's attitude and Her words. My friend was plunged in a deep gloom and had to undergo psychiatric treatment on arriving in Paris. I returned to Beirut and resumed my post as literary secretary.

My friend had presented to me a small photo of Ma which I placed on top of a bookshelf. At my employer's I also saw a photo of Ma as well as pictures of other spiritual personages such as Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi, Vivekananda. Since my trip to India my outlook on things had begun to change continually and irreversibly but I was hardly aware of this transformation.

At Beirut the social and political atmosphere deteriorated rapidly and in April 1975 civil war broke out. The horrors of this period beggar all description. Violence reached its peak by the indiscriminate bombardment of the poor peoples' quarters. Amidst this mad rage of destruction I saw my employer preserve an exemplary calm. Every day he offered flowers, incense and lights in front of his Guru's picture. "We are defending spiritual values", he told me, "and must fearlessly risk our lives in this fight." For me this was a matter of course and I acted accordingly. But civil war is the worst type of war. It brings to light monstrosities and the lowest instincts of the men on both sides. There was a frenzy of violation, plunder and killing. I felt isolated in a world that had become incomprehensible. Once stones were

thrown at me. Then again a shell exploded at about four metres distance from me, breaking all window-panes. There was glass-dust in my eyes and I thought that splinters had penetrated my body but I was safe. Certainly I was protected, as if surrounded by a shield of Love. My cat, which sat on the table by my side, died after frightful suffering two days later. The blast of the explosion had destroyed its brain.

My flat was on the 9th storey of an estate and right in the zone where shells and rockets landed. At any moment the roof could have exploded as happened continuously to places all around. The bombardments caused great conflagrations in the city. The largest book depot was hit and many damaged books were sold at reduced rates in a shop where they had been dumped. It is here that I found amongst a large pile of books blackened by smoke a copy of "L'enseignement de Ma Anandamoyi", translated by J. Herbert.* Nothing happens by chance. That book was there for me and there was a reason for this. I at once purchased it. Only its back cover had been burnt. I started reading voraciously. It was about the mysterious Being I had met at Vrindaban. It was Ma Anandamayi Herself who spoke to me through this book. I devoured it wholesale without halting at passages beyond my understanding. All I understood was that the pure, clear voice of Love was

* "L'enseignement de Ma Ananda Moyi" by Jean & Josette Herbert appeared in 1975 as one of the series "Spiritualités Vivantes" published by Editions Albin Michel, Paris.

speaking to me amidst the tornado of hate that seemed to engulf everything. I was even more dumfounded by this voice of inner silence than by the pandemonium of the cannons. What was the significance of all this? I had read with great interest "*Jñāna Yoga*" by Vivekananda and I often went through passages of the teaching of the Lebanese leader's Guru. I could see how he loved his Guru who for him remained present in spite of having left his body several years earlier. I vaguely sensed that 'Happiness', that marvel eagerly sought since my childhood, was a reality for some beings whereas for me it remained a concept, an idea, a dream. "Truth never dreams", I often repeated to myself with Vivekananda, but I just voiced a beautiful phrase of which the real import escaped me. All the same, I persistently pronounced it again and again, just as I looked at the photo of Ma Anandamayi as if I expected Her to reply to me. For everything had become a question—as if everything were upside down and I became a stranger to myself. I became just a big Question. Did the whole of Creation depend on my reply? I looked at everything with different eyes: the people, the sea, the sky, the flowers. The people remained deaf and closed up but everything else seemed to smile, as it were, and I began to guess that Happiness existed where the play of the intellect could not enter. Perhaps the silence of Love spoke to us through the perfume of jasmine. One morning I actually beheld the formidable beauty of the crimson bougainvillia glittering in the sunlight.

And suddenly this seemed to me more real than my moral misery, than my great bodily fatigue and all the suffering into which Lebanon was steeped. Had my intellect been keener, I might perhaps have gone mad but my mediocre brain did not look for explanations beyond its comprehension. My condition could perhaps have been compared to that of the earth that receives sunlight, rain, wind or snow as they come—choicelessly! But this state did not last: the nightmare again resumed substance. It happened that Beirut was without water and electricity for lengthy periods. One day, while running I injured my knee. I could not get it treated, so I just tried it up. In this condition I had to climb up and down 180 steps to get to my roof-apartment and to leave it whenever the bombardment started, sometimes up to six times within 24 hours. In summer it was terribly hot and in winter I was shivering with cold because the heating did not function. I fell ill and was bed-ridden for ten days. I subsisted on dry dates which a welfare organization had distributed to the residents of our block. It was during this period, when I was totally forsaken, when nobody came to see me and I was in bed with fever, suffering the pangs of hunger, that I experienced moments of complete peace and a joy hitherto unknown. Later I came to understand that Love was at work, the gaze of Love that had enveloped me at Vrindaban unknown to myself...

“Love never sleeps nor slumbers”, is a pure and simple truth. Love, Life, Truth are one and have

no place in the dark little labyrinth of the brain. 'That' at times is called by the name of a man or a woman, be He born in Bethlehem or be She born in Bangladesh. This kind of reasoning has nothing in common with what great intellects call 'reason'. But how delightful to be devoid of ordinary logic !

Now, how to express what cannot be put into words ? The poor, exhausted creature that I had become after several months of civil war, without rest, subjected to constant nervous strain, slowly began to feel that death was preferable to this never ending agony. At Beirut cases of insanity became frequent and nervous breakdowns were the order of the day. In fact I found myself forced to choose between opening my eyes or continuing to grope in darkness, pretending to see clearly by candle light. How to make the choice in my ignorance ? But then, if there was any choice, had it not already been made ? Truth is a permanent urgency. It must spring to one's eyes some time or other.

One day I seemed to have reached the limit of my capacity for resistance. Long range cannons were pounding the city, the noise of rockets rent the air in a terrifying manner. I saw shells explode in neighbouring houses. I said to myself : "the end has come !" and my body started trembling with fear. My brain seemed paralyzed. The idea of death put me into a panic. *And suddenly, without any transition, I was completely at peace while I saw Ma smiling at me. I beheld Her radiant face and I heard Her ringing laughter as I had heard*

it a Vrindaban. I also started laughing and calmly sat down on the mattress in the corridor of my flat. Suddenly my horrible fear had given way to the conviction that death did not exist. This certitude and the luminous smiling face of Mataji were one and the same thing. Inexplicable but absolutely true! This truth came to me in a flash. A little later, when I tried to relive that strange moment, I remembered that I had thrown a frantic glance on the crucifix in the glass cupboard and Christ's tormented body seemed to me an image of death. I had turned round and it was then that I had seen the marvellous face of Ma. Nevertheless, I also was convinced that the Truth of Christ and the Truth of Ma were one and the same. Love, Joy and Peace are Truth and thus indivisible.

Very gradually Lebanon regained a relative calm and I resumed my work as literary secretary. My desire for Ma's *darśana* grew more and more intense. It happened that I would suddenly throw myself on the floor in front of Her picture with tears streaming from my eyes as if my heart were being emptied of all pain by the force of Joy. I suffered a lot from rheumatism and arthritis but I was not affected by these bodily troubles. What a change! Did I start living at the age of 56?

But an unexpected, most tragic event radically changed the course of my life: the murder of my employer. Had I accompanied him to his place of retreat I should without a doubt have perished together with him, as was the case with his driver and his bodyguard. But I did not want to leave

Beirut because my new cat could not be left without food for several days. My employer had gone away to complete some writing on Siva for a book he intended to publish. His death was a severe blow for many but it also cruelly affected me : I was suddenly left without work, without money and without shelter. I received temporary financial help from the wealthy French lady when she came to Beirut in April. She also invited me to accompany her to India in May. I was most delighted and at my request she promised to help me to find Mataji, wherever She might happen to be.

Thus, my young friend, her mother and myself flew to Madras and from there went daily to Kanchi for Sri Sankaracharya's *darśana*. At the end of May we proceeded to Delhi. Ma was in Almora. On May 31st my friend hired a taxi for me and I left Delhi at 6 a. m. On reaching the Jamuna bridge we were stopped. The bridge was blocked by about 60,000 people who had come to bathe on new-moon day and moreover a sudden strike of truck drivers complicated matters even more. My driver said : "We have to return to Delhi" ! "Patience," I replied, "when one goes to Ma Anandamayi things arrange themselves." "I do not know that Saint", said the driver, "but I feel that you are right. Let us wait." We waited for five hours, surrounded by the teeming crowd, at a temperature of 45°C. in the shade. Suddenly the strike was over and the bridge became empty. At 7 p. m. we arrived at Almora.

I wanted to go first of all to the Ashram without looking for accommodation. We got there at night-fall and were told that Mataji was about to retire to Her room after the *darśana*. I hardly heard what I was told. I was in a state of love for Ma impossible to put into words. I felt nothing else. My body seemed to have no weight. I just wanted to fall at Ma's feet and was ready to spend the night on the Ashram floor waiting for Ma. Full of adoration I breathed the air that Ma breathed. Then I saw Her. She left the terrace and went to Her room accompanied by a few devotees. Just like two years earlier in Vrindaban the same girl asked me to leave. But this was simply impossible for me. An Indian gentleman asked me very kindly who I was and from where. I replied and added that I had come to thank Ma for saving me from death. The gentleman, a doctor from Calcutta, at once went to Ma. He came back and told me that Ma would see me and that I should come to the entrance of Her room. I thus knelt down at the place assigned to me. To my left a devotee called Krishnapriya sat down. I remained on my knees until 9 p. m. or longer, I don't remember. I felt neither hungry nor thirsty, and my knee, usually so painful, did not hurt at all! Ma bathed me in her glance and, smiling at me in the most marvellous manner, She asked me questions that were translated by the Calcutta doctor who also translated my replies. I had brought the French book of Ma's teaching that had been rescued from the fire in Beirut. Ma took it,

looked at it, and after listening to my explanations, returned it to me. Ma never stopped smiling at me. My happiness surpassed everything that has been said and that ever can be said about happiness. I was simply dissolved by Love. Ma's words, Her smile and Her glance filled me with Light.

When it was time for Ma to retire for the night, She told me to return at 9 o'clock the next morning and not to leave for Delhi until the day after. By Ma's grace the driver and myself found accommodation in the hotel where the doctor was staying with his wife and two sons. The next morning we reached the Ashram at the appointed hour. That 1st of June 1977 was a most wonderful day. Ma had not been well during the night, but nothing could be noticed of this. She was sitting on the terrace of Her simple cottage. The air was very pure, the temperature perfect. Two apricot-trees gave shade to the courtyard where about ten visitors were sitting. Off and on an apricot would fall down and Ma said it was *prasāda*. This special *darśana* continued from 9.30 a. m. to 1.30 p. m. With the help of the kind people from Calcutta who translated I could tell Ma about the tragic events in Lebanon. Ma looked at me with Her infinite glance and told me that this was the most peaceful and the simplest Ashram of all and that the spot had been selected for its natural beauty and simplicity. I replied that the place filled me with happiness and that I felt in harmony with it. She laughed, saying that this was the very reason why She had made me come there !

The friends from Calcutta told Her that I was writing poetry and that a commentary to my poems said that my poetry was made of leaves and water. "Nature lifts you up towards Supernature", remarked Ma. Then She related how the Ashram came into existence many years ago. It was meant to be a school for brahmachris. The saintly person who used to travel with Her over forty years ago was buried on the spot where he had sat down when he arrived there first and a small temple had been erected over his tomb. It was by God's grace that one could have his *darśana* in this pure and peaceful spot. That day Ma presented to me a towel to put over my shoulders during meditation and a small carpet on which Her feet had been resting. The afternoon and evening passed in similar enchantment. Ma asked me to come early next morning for a last *darśana* before leaving. When I arrived Ma was in Her room and I was taken to the back veranda to sit by the entrance to Her room. After a silent *darśana* Ma took a garland made of brightly coloured paper from a picture of Sri Krishna on the wall and put it round my neck. I was kneeling and had a great desire to touch Ma. She gazed at me with intensity, smiled at me and bending down caressed my head and shoulders. At that moment the thought that I had to leave became unbearable and tears rushed to my eyes. Ma was standing in front of me. I saw Her shut Her eyes. She looked marvellously beautiful and serene. My tears stopped and I was at peace. I walked

backwards when leaving, looking at Ma who smiled at me.

The journey to Delhi went off without a hitch. Ma had entrusted a young *samnyāsi* to us who had to return to the Delhi Ashram. On the way the driver said that the brakes of the taxi did not function and that he managed to brake with the motor at the downward slopes. "But I know that we are safe", he added, "because Mataji's blessings are with us. I have probably done a very meritorious deed in a former life to have earned the benediction of Mataji's *darśana*."

In September 1977, I had to leave Lebanon and to return to Belgium where I had been promised some work in the Ministry of Culture. But nothing came of it and for over two years I have been in a most precarious financial condition. Nevertheless, in spite of abject poverty I have never felt unhappy for a single moment. Ma had told me in Almora : "I am always with you, I shall never leave you" ! and this is the truth that sustains me in this difficult period of my life. In October 1977 I saw Ma again at Varanasi, but only briefly, when I came to India once more with the French lady. Who had another attack of nervous depression and I took her back to Paris and never met her since.

It seemed that I would never again be able to see Ma, for from where could the money come for the journey ? Nevertheless the keen desire for Her *darśana* never left me. However, I had first of all to devote myself to the service of my father, a widower aged 90. He died on August 31st 1979.

In the meantime money came to me from a most unexpected source, and this is how I was able to attend the *Samyama Mahāvrata* at Kurukshetra in October 1979 in the presence of Ma. Then I stayed at Vrindaban until the end of November and Ma gave *darśana* every day.

I had hoped to spend the rest of my life in one of Ma's Ashrams and to dedicate myself entirely to Her service or to any work She would assign to me. This was an unrealistic desire and so to convince me of the impossibility of ending my days in India, I had to fall ill. Already in Kurukshetra I had an attack of fever, followed by two other attacks in Vrindaban. All I could do was learn my lesson. Ma knows exactly the nature of everyone who comes to Her and Her love for every single person makes it possible for everyone to understand somehow or other what he should do or leave undone. As nothing happens by chance, the discomfort of bad health was compensated by the presence of a guardian angel called Melita whose friendship and care made the lesson bearable.

For a long time I hesitated to entrust this tale to "Ānanda Vārtā". It is certain that the darkness that speaks of Light cannot illumine. Words are but the negation of the Peace, the Love, the Bliss of which they tell, for THAT is Silence.

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SRI KRISHNA AND SRI MA

Jainath Kaul

Sri Krishna and Sri Ma are essentially one. In fact, according to the clear experience of one saint of high spiritual stature, Sri Ma is Sri Krishna. No doubt, as recorded in Srimad Bhagavad Gītā, Sri Krishna openly announced His divinity Himself, to the delight and benefit of seekers of every generation since his time. Sri Ma, on the other hand, has generally been reticent, like Sri Ram, in making a public declaration of it. All the same, in certain situations, an involuntary revelation of her divinity has taken place either through Herself, or as mentioned above, through the medium of another.

Some of the published material on this subject has been collected for a comparative study and is presented in this paper for the readers of *Ānanda Vārtā*, many of whom have had their own direct experiences of Ma's divinity.

Mother's Body : Centre of All Creation

In an illuminating article entitled 'Ma Anandamayī : A New Power on this Earth'¹, the late Sri Gangacharan Dasgupta—the well-known veteran devotee of Sri Ma—who passed away in 1970 at the age of 102 years,—gives the following very interesting dialogue of great significance that reveals clearly Sri Ma's incarnation through Her own words, which is rather unusual :

“A lady, with a baby in her arms, came to see Mother who sat talking to the many men and women assembled there. On entering, the lady asked, ‘Who is the Mother here?’ One of us pointed Her out. The following conversation ensued :

Question : People say you are Mother. Where are your sons and daughters ?

Mataji : Here (pointing to Her heart).

Question : Where is your husband ?

Mataji : Here (with the same gesture).

Question : Where are your parents ?

Mataji : (With a smile) Here within this heart.

Question : Your home ?

Mataji : (With a same gesture) Here.

The lady who was putting these questions looked completely puzzled, failing to comprehend what Mother said. Mother noticed it and in Her usual soothing, convincing manner said, ‘Here **IN THIS BODY** lie all things in the universe—all created beings. From this One all have come into being. In the One all exist, all persist and finally merge.’

This open declaration sounds very much like what Sri Krishna told Arjuna while giving him the vision of His cosmic form :

इहैकस्थं जगत्कुत्सनं पश्याद्य सचराचरम् ।

मम देहे गुडाकेश यन्नान्यद्द्रष्टुमिच्छसि ॥

“Here today, behold the whole universe, moving and unmoving and whatever else thou desirest to see, O Guḍākeśa (Arjuna) all unified **IN MY BODY** (Gītā 11 : 7).

On this Dr. S. Radhakrishnan comments : "It is the vision of all in the One. When we develop our full capacity of apprehension, we see that all (past, present and future) is present."²

My Own Mother in Ma's Body

Through Ma's grace, I had the rare good fortune, in April 1959, of seeing my own mother (who had passed away in 1927) in flesh and blood, in the person of Sri Ma, in broad daylight, right in front of me some five or six yards away³. This had happened at Ramanagar, Rishikesh, when the ninth *Samyama Mahāvratā* was held there. I had reported this matter to Sri Ma. She had not denied the experience, but had, of course, as usual, dismissed it with Her enchanting smile, saying that this happened whenever the devotee had a pure *bhāva* (inner disposition) towards Her.

Many other devotees too—some to my knowledge—have been blessed with similar experiences, which shows that all—past, present and future—is always present in the divine body which God creates as the vehicle for His manifestation and *līlā*.

Sri Ma is Sri Kṛṣṇa : A Saint's Experience

Didi Gurupriya Devi was an eye-witness of an episode which she has recorded in her book published in Bengali and Hindi⁴. This *Matri līlā*, which took place at Dacca on Sri Ma's return to this town in January 1937, has special relevance in the context of the theme of this paper, namely the identity of Sri Ma and Sri Kṛṣṇa. The following is the English version of the episode as translated by me :

Today one lady came and took Sri Ma to the ashram of one Mataji whose name was Sevadasi. This Sevadasi Mataji had herself come to Sri Ma yesterday and earnestly requested Her to visit this ashram. That is why Sri Ma got down at Baralghat today, accompanied by the lady sent by Sevadasi Mataji, to go to her ashram. There were also many other persons with Sri Ma. As soon as Sri Ma reached that ashram, She was received by Sevadasi Mataji, conducted by her to the temple of Govindaji inside the ashram and offered a seat on its verandah, where Sri Ma sat down. In the temple were *vigrahas* of Sri Rādhā and Sri Kṛṣṇa.

From the ladies present there, who used to visit Sevadasi Mataji regularly, it was learnt that for the last 22 or 23 years, this Mataji had not taken any food or drink. She had not been taking even *charaṇāmrita*, but only sprinkling it on her head. During all these years, she had passed neither any stool nor any urine. Also, now and then she had been going into trance and remaining lying down in that state for 2 or 3 days.

During her conversation with Sri Ma, she said, "Once Thākurji (Sri Kṛṣṇa) told me that He had closed my outer door and that He had taken over all my burdens. I too gave my entire burden to Him and am now marking time. All my eating and drinking stopped in one day. Also, I do not go out of this ashram without orders from Kṛṣṇaji. I had, of course, received information about your arrival in Dacca but did not visit you. The

day before yesterday Thākur ordered me as follows : 'The body in which I live has come (to Dacca). Go yourself and conduct that body with respect to this place'. Addressing Sri Ma, she said, "That is why I had gone to you last night. You are Sri Krishna Himself. All these days I have had your *darśana* in subtle form. Today Sri Govinda has come in flesh and blood. Now remain in your temple ; I will not let you go."

After hearing all this, Sri Ma spoke to her like a child, smiling all the time, "Today I have heard from you that Govinda lives in this body. Well, since when has Govinda come into this body ?" Sevadasi Mataji replied, "Since birth. Today Govinda has come and now I will not let him go." Saying this, she put her arms around Sri Ma in a tight embrace. The ladies present there sang *bhajans* and later *kīrtana* was started in which all of us also joined. Soon *Nāma-Kīrtana* became quite loud. Sevadasi Mataji had caught hold of Sri Ma in such a manner that it was difficult to disengage her.

Kīrtana continued for a long while. Gradually, Sevadasi Mataji was separated and she laid herself down. Sri Ma got up and every part of Her body began to dance to the tune of *Kīrtana*. All felt spell-bound. It was indeed an extraordinary sight. Sri Ma directed every one to lift up their hands and do *Kīrtana* while dancing. Encouraged by Sri Ma, the devotees began to dance with *ānanda* and without the least hesitation. The *kīrtana* continued without a break for quite a long time. Only when Sri Ma got ready to return, was it stopped.

Sevadasi Mataji, however, was, on no account, prepared to let Sri Ma go away. When Sri Ma made her understand by telling her, "I will not be going away from you ; only let this body go ; you know everything," her composure was restored. She then released her hold on Sri Ma, and taking Mother with us, we came out.

What Sri Krishna and Sri Ma Say about Themselves.

It is interesting to compare some of Sri Ma's utterances about Herself with parallel expressions of Sri Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā. Let us begin with the following two verses :

मत्तः परतरं नान्यत्किञ्चिदस्ति धनंजय ।

मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ॥

"There is nothing whatever that is higher than I, O Winner of wealth (Arjuna). All that is here is strung on me as rows of gems on a string" (Gītā 7 : 7) and

अहमात्मा गुडाकेश ! सर्वभूताशयस्थितः ।

अहमादिश्च मध्यं च भूतानामन्त एव च ॥

"I, O' Gudakesa (Arjuna), am the Self seated in the hearts of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle and the very end of beings (Gītā 10 : 20).

And this is what Sri Ma says about Herself⁵ :

(a) "Who is Anandamayi Ma ? Who indeed is ānandamayi (bliss-permeated) ? He is in all shapes and forms, eternally enthroned in the

hearts of all beings. Truly, He dwells everywhere. Having seen That, attained to That, everything is seen, everything attained. This means to become fearless, certain, free from conflict, immutable, imperishable"—

(b) "At all times and under all circumstances, in inspiration and dryness, Ma is, remains and ever will remain with every one," and

(c) "The Ātmā of this body is everyone's Ātmā. It cannot be that anybody, anywhere, is not Ma's very own."

Again, on being once asked by Bhaiji⁶, "Mother, pray tell me what you are in reality," She replied categorically, "I am what you conceive, think or say." Now, who can talk like that? The answer is most revealing. It is like handing over a signed blank cheque. Only a person with limitless wealth can do it. The reply certainly does not exclude the conception, the thought or the statement that Sri Ma and Sri Kṛṣṇa are one.

The Truth and its Application

It would be helpful to conclude with vivid statements of the Truth regarding this universe and the practical instructions on how to live to realize this Truth. That the one imperishable, unmanifested, infinite Reality alone is ever manifesting through perishable, finite bits of apparently unconnected and variegated multiplicity of names, forms, colours, etc. in numberless variety is the Truth. To remember this at all times in order to attain to a permanent awareness of it one day as

the supreme fact of existence is its application in daily life.

Sri Kṛṣṇa defines this Truth in one verse as follows :

समं सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन्तं परमेश्वरम् ।

विनश्यत्स्वविनश्यन्तं यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥

“He who sees the Supreme Lord abiding equally in all beings, never perishing when they perish, he verily sees.” (Gītā 13 : 27)

After its application in daily life of average persons like us living in this matter-of-fact world, the priceless direction of Sri Ma, our own divine Master is as under⁷ :

“All is His, all is He. Whatever work you do in your home, always carry it out as a service to Him. In every shape and form is He alone and, therefore everything can be done as His service. *The important thing is to be ever aware of Him, to think of Him in everything one does.*”

References :

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4. Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi : Gurupriya Devi, Vol. 3 (Bengali) pp. 826-827, (Hindi) pp. 125-126.
5. Mātri Vāñī, Vol 2 : Translated by Atmananda, compiled by Sister Uma, pp 268, 288, 289.
6. Mother as Revealed to me : Bhaiji (Translated by G. C. Dasgupta) 1952, pp 6, 7.
7. Ānanda Vārtā, Vol 12, No. 1, May 1964, P. 8.

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE MOTHER

SAMYAMA SAPTAHA IN KURUKṢETRA—OCTOBER 1979.

Caroline Rosso Cicogna (Italy)

For the Lord's devotees, Kurukṣetra is a name charged with the presence of the Divine. Here, in a small town with more temples and shrines than public buildings, the Srimad Bhagavad Gītā was given by Lord Kṛṣṇa to his favourite disciple, Arjuna, in the midst of a fierce battle which took place on these very grounds. At the very spot where Kṛṣṇa's words were heard, a temple has been erected and in its courtyard, there is an old banyan tree, symbol of the eternal quality of the divine message. Here, Kṛṣṇa is said to have given these precious words of wisdom to the one who had fully surrendered to Him for guidance. Indeed, Arjuna, the warrior, was to wage an impending battle when he was suddenly caught by doubt and confusion about the purpose and righteousness of his action. In utter despair, he turned to the Lord, his charioteer, who in His infinite compassion, uttered the words which are still chanted today all over India and which are read, all over the world, by those who earnestly endeavour to tread the spiritual Path whilst continuing to fight the small battles of daily existence.

To whom else better than us would this message be addressed? To us who were fortunate enough to gather around Sri Anandamayi Ma and, with Her blessings, to attend the Samyama week in October last and who are now preparing ourselves

for the next Samyama week in Rishikesh in November.

But, what is, in essence, the message of the Gītā ? It proclaims that amongst all human beings, the one dearest to the Lord is he who dedicates his mind and power of understanding as well as his heart and soul to the discovery of the Self. He alone who has set his entire being on that path and who is totally devoted to the Lord will reach the highest goal of human existence, Self-Realization. Now, in all His love and compassion for all human beings, Lord Kṛṣṇa gave the means to reach the goal to his dearest devotee, Arjuna, because the latter was ready to hear His sacred words having surrendered heart and soul to His Lord. In a moment of utter helplessness, the touch of Grace descended upon Arjuna, entrusting him with the Gospel of True Action.

The path to be followed is a gradual one and the guide along the way is the spirit of self-sacrifice. This golden way is always open to anyone, whatever state of life he may have reached, whatever form of yoga he has adopted, whatever situation he is placed in. This, indeed, is the indissoluble bond between the Divine and ourselves. So, whatever a man's disposition, whatever his knowledge, whatever his situation in life, the first step on the path is to develop this spirit of self-sacrifice which is the moving force behind the entire cosmos. And this is why, at the end of the Gītā, in what might seem a paradox to the ignorant mind but is Supreme Truth for those who meditate on the One Reality,

Kṛṣṇa orders Arjuna to fight while keeping his whole being concentrated on the Lord.

Kurukṣetra

Could a better place than this holy spot have been chosen by revered Anandamayi Ma to hold the samyama saptāha? It was given to us to see that She and only She could be the living example of the message of the Gītā, provided we could imbue ourselves with the true spirit of samyama, with this real purification which consists in forgetting one's limited self to let the Divine Mother shine in all Her radiance and glory.

To the observant eye, She would in turn be the Perfect Meditator, the All-embracing Knower and Bliss Supreme. For ever set in the Self, She assumes forms for us to see and through these to pierce the mystery of Her ever-existing Reality. The mere fixing of a glance on Her Divine Self is enough to make one's mind and senses come to a halt and let the soul speak in us. Even a simple "visual" contact with the Mother enables us to feel that it evokes profound inner awareness.

This is the true "*darśana*" of Ma; not a simple look at Her, feeling Her so different and so far above and beyond, but a communion of our souls with the Oversoul through the "Form" Divine of the Mother.

During the whole week, She was our inspiration for a total mastery of the senses and the mind. She would be present in the meditation-hall early in the morning to attend the chanting of the Vedas when

half the room was still empty. During the lectures, She would calmly sit through the discourse and She would only leave when the first lecturer would make a movement to go. At every possible moment, She would sit in Self-offering for throngs of people to kneel in front of Her, to bow to Her, offer Her flowers, gifts and even throw coins at Her as if She were a well-wishing statue. On the last day, She attended the function until the small hours of the morning, offering *prasāda* to all who had gathered around Her : sublime and simple gesture of the loving Mother who never abandons Her children. How could anyone resist the radiance and beauty of Her face, the charm of Her slow gestures, the delight of Her innocent smile and the melody of Her soul-stirring voice ? It is the Divine fusing from everywhere, covering us with His Grace, surrounding us and supporting us with Her all-embracing power.

She is Supreme Knowledge incarnate

In the evenings during "Mātri-satsanga", She would answer in an innocent child-like manner the most intricate metaphysical questions put to Her by the scholars who attended the function. Sometimes, She laughed at her own replies or God's replies ?— Nothing is there of the mind, of the ego. Her whole Being is a totally spontaneous expression of the Divine. It is Supreme Knowledge flowing from Her lips that reaches us and inspires us to bow down humbly at Her feet and to be thankful for the grace of being in Her presence.

She is the Supreme emdodiment of Truth

In everyone without any distinction, She sees the Divine, and the Divine only. He alone exists, in us, around us and above us, and Mother is the most powerful catalyst of His Divine Power. What a sight, what a revelation it was to see Her, resplendent, enveloped in Her white garments, eternal, universal, Supreme Mother. She is the Power in us all, our Inspiration, the Bliss for us to enjoy. But who truly can surrender totally to Her? Who sincerely can kneel down to the ground in Her presence? Who earnestly can abandon all acquired knowledge to let himself be filled by the Supreme Knowledge flowing from Her? To him only would Mother be revealed and through Her would the mystery of the Absolute be uncovered.

She is immersed in Ananda

When Divine Inspiration manifests through Her voice, the most inspiring melodies are heard. It is the Divine, Bhagavān, charming Himself through Her. And, She is enthralled in such a deep communion with Him that sometimes the words get choked in Her throat. It is not simply a voice, it is not merely a song, it is a sonorous touch of the Divine. And when the Inspiration fades away, She gently rests Her head on Her shoulders and goes into deep meditative silence. It is then for each one of us to hear the Melody continuing in the deepest and innermost part of our being. Jai Ma.

PRAYER : ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND VARIETIES

Acharya Satish Chandra Mukhopadhyaya

Letter No. 3.

(Third letter dated 24th October 1940 addressed by S. C. M.
to S. K. Jha of Sodepur)

Subject : Child-Mother Divine Relationship further
discussed and its implications.

What has been said in the previous letter¹ can give us but an inkling into the kind of Divine relationship that subsists between the Divine Mother and the Divine Child. It follows that a *jiva* who is tied down to his *achit* (material) body, whose gratification is the first charge in all his personal efforts and activities, is not a person who can cultivate the Divine Relationship to which I have referred. Of course it is open to the fettered *jiva* to make a beginning by way of cultivating faith in the Lord and in His Omnipotence ; and as the faith grows, the greater would be his nearness to the Lord. And this nearness of his would progressively take effect through his progressively lessening dependence on all external *achit* props and supports and crutches, until at last he is able to reach a stage when he will go on voyaging on the sea of life with the Lord as his sole Guide and Protector. This is the stage at which the Divine

1 See Ānanda Vārtā, July 1980 & January 1980.

child emerges as lying in the lap of the Divine Mother.

But your position is wholly different. You do not think of the fettered ego converted into a Divine Child. Your thesis is that the *jīva*, even if he be dominated by *achit* worldly hankerings and so addicted to *achit* life and activities, has only to invoke the Lord's aid with a whole heart for *achit* help for the Lord to respond and provide him with *achit* supports. It is clear beyond a shadow of doubt that there is a yawning gulf between the two positions. In order to elucidate the position I have taken up, it would be necessary for me to give you a rationale of the spiritual scheme of things bearing on the subject. Let me begin by saying that the one thing that the Lord desires in the interest of the spiritual welfare of the *jīva* is that the latter must learn to give up his partiality for *achit* life and seek the *Chit* Company of His bhaktas and devotees. If that should be so the Lord must see to it that the *jīva* should be advancing step by step towards Him. That granted, the Lord will be quite willing and anxious to give the *jīva* all the necessary *achit* aids that he may need just to enable him to liquidate the karmic debts with which his present birth is burdened. But if the *jīva's* heart and goal of life in his present existence be far away from Him, and if as a necessary result he should be getting more and more addicted to *achit* life, getting more and more attached to the life of matter and so daily more and more floundering in the mire of *achit* existence, enjoying and

suffering, suffering and enjoying, etc,—it does not stand to reason that the Lord should go on adding to the *jīva's* worldly attachments by providing him with additional *achit* equipments. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and everything else will be added unto you." Why? Because when your thoughts and desires and feelings are directed towards the Kingdom of God, there could be no objection to *achit* equipment of life being provided for you. For if the *jīva* seeks in the first instance the Kingdom of God, then the less his thoughts and energies are frittered away to provide himself with the needed earthly material equipments, the better would it be for his spiritual growth. For then he should be enabled to pursue the higher upward path of spiritual life.

The last preceding paragraph gives you in a nutshell the working out of the Divine will in relation to fettered *Jīvas*. Now as I have already said even if the *Jīva* has not succeeded in reaching to the heights of the Divine Relationship that subsists between the Divine Child and His Divine Mother, he must make every effort to cultivate a greater and greater faith and a greater and greater dependence on the Lord, preceded by a greater and greater spirit of obedience of the Lord's will and Dispensations. I have also stated that the greater the faith, the greater the obedience, the greater his nearness to the Lord. Now I have further to state that as you go on progressing in your faith and obedience to the Lord, your demands for your elementary *achit* needs of existence would not be

motivated by your desire to live the *achit* life of the world. And when your *achit* demands are thus prompted by the higher life of attainment to the Lord, He would place you under His special Protection. Even if you have evil *prārabdhas*, which under the ordinary karmic Law you will have to liquidate in your present life through suffering begotten of worldly material wants—even in such a case the Lord will see to it that your worldly life be made easy, even without your praying for it. In such a case your *achit* wants will be met, for the Lord wants to help forward the spiritual and *chit* progress of the *Jīva*, and not to hinder it. Because He would not desire that instead of spending more and more time on Him, the *Jīva* should fritter away his energies to earn a living, or to work out His karmic life brought over from the past. I am not stating this at haphazard, but have the authority of the scriptures (*Vide* Gītā IX-22 and certain Bhāgavat verses).

You can also look up the teachings of Rāmakṛṣṇa Deva on this very point, specially p. 218 of Vol. III Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta ; also *Ibid* Vol. III pp. 27, 225, 181, 293, 108, 68 ; also *Ibid* Vol. II pp. 103 and 168. It must be clear therefore that the fettered *Jīva* is not left by the Lord to grope his way to Him in the dark, subject only to the karmic Laws of which the Lord is also the Law-Giver. In other words, the fettered *Jīva* in the course of his upward progress in faith, in obedience to, and dependence on the Lord, i.e. as I have already hinted, placed under the Lord's special

Protection and Dispensation, other than the karmic dispensation. To sum up, it must be clearly recognized that there is a special law operating in the case of a fettered *Jīva* who has not yet attained to the status of a Divine Child, whereby the more he grows in his faith, obedience and consequent dependence on the power of the Lord, the more easily would his *achit* needs and wants be met as a matter of special dispensation, and at times by the cancellation of his *prārabdhas*.

* * * *

“Those who know do not talk.
 Those who talk do not know.
 Keep your mouth closed.
 Guard your senses.
 Temper your sharpness.
 Simplify your problems.
 Mask your brightness.
 Be at one with the dust of the earth.
 This is the primal union.
 He who has achieved this state
 Is unconcerned with friends and enemies,
 With good and harm, with honour and disgrace.
 This therefore is the highest state of man”

Lao Tsu

* * * *

A VEDIC HYMN OF SELF-REALIZATION

Rig Veda, Maṇḍala 5, Sūkta 47

David Frawley

The Rig Veda is the original book of revelation of the Indian spiritual tradition, the māntric record of the ancient God-realized Seers at the hoary beginnings of this cycle of civilization many thousands of years ago. The Rig Veda is thus really an Upanishad, a book of spiritual knowledge setting forth the highest truth of Self-realization. Indeed it is the original Upanishad of pure mantra, of which the Upanishads themselves are a simplification and rationalization according to a later more rational mentality, and of which the great philosophical system of Advaita Vedanta is just the final and ultimate simplification and rationalization. This knowledge of the Self in the Rig Veda is presented in pure symbolic mantras that require a special intuitive approach to understand. It is not presented logically and systematically according to a later refinement but in the raw intuitive energy of the original revelation. The following short hymn is one of the most subtle, intricate, free and ecstatic of the mystic utterances which constitute the Rig Veda. It has an almost Zenlike character which puts the entire ritualistic interpretation of the Veda to shame. It is typical of the hymns to the Universal Gods, *Viśve Devā*, which express the intricate glory of the all-in-one Self, which from the summit of pure inspiration reach the Heavens from every point on Earth.

1. 'As the Goddess Dawn, the daughter of Heaven, the Great Mother comes, giving enlightenment, urging to the work of unification, proclaiming the truth. The young Goddess of Intuition comes longingly unto the Fathers, deeply calling to her dwelling in truth.'

The Great Mother, *Mahī Mātā*, in the Veda is Aditi, the Infinite or Indivisible Mother. who is infinite, undivided Consciousness-Force (*Cit-Śakti*). Being in her own nature transcendent she comes in the form of the Dawn Goddess, *Uṣas*, who is the basic spiritual aspiration which unfolds as awakening and enlightenment. Hence she is giving enlightenment, *Bodhayantī*, or causing awakening. This Divine light of aspiration is the real essence of our higher intuitive mind (*manīṣā* or *dhī*, later called *buddhi*), whose true nature is to yearn for the Divine. The Dawn is therefore the Goddess of Intuition or Intelligence, Devi Manīṣā. The Fathers are the Seers, those who perceive the all-seeing Self, who dwell within each of us as our innate potential to become a Seer. The awakening of intuition activates them within us and takes us along the paths they have charted to the Self, which is also the way back to Aditi, the Infinite Mother, who is the Divine aspiration for it Self, which is its basic Consciousness.

2. 'Swift in their movement, yearning in their labor, they ascend to the central point of Immortality. On every side around Heaven and Earth go-forth ever infinite vast paths.'

The Fathers, the Seer powers awakened within

us, by the intensity of aspiration and the labor for knowledge, in the succession of the Dawns of spiritual awakening, take us into the Self, here called the central point of Immortality, *Amṛtasy Nābhim*, which is the Sun, the light of lights. the all-radiant light of pure Consciousness. The Self is the center of all, wherein all paths of truth converge into the Oneness, from the standpoint of which all creation is just an infinite expansion of the One into Itself. This central Self is omnipresent upon reaching which we attain everything from every side, in the view of which all things are infinite, all goings forth an eternal return.

3. 'The Bull, the Sea, the Radiant Bird has pervaded the abode of the Primeval Father. In the middle of Heaven is concealed a myriad colored stone. It moves widely and guards the two ends of the region.'

The Bull, *Ukṣā* or *Vṛṣabha*, is the prime Vedic animal symbol for the Spirit (*Puruṣa*, *Śiva*), representing pure will-power. Earth, Air and Heaven are the three worlds. The Sea is the celestial ocean above Heaven, also called Great Heaven, which is the realm of Brahman, the waters of immortality. The Bull, *Ukṣā*, also means etymologically 'he who rains', ie. who contains within himself the cosmic waters. The Radiant Bird, *Aruṣa Suparna*, is the Sun Bird, the Solar Self of the light of pure knowledge, of which the Yajur Veda says, 'which Spirit is in yonder Sun, He am I.' The Sun is also the abode of the cosmic waters which are the waters of light. The abode of the

Primeval Father, *Pūrvasya yonim Pitur*, is the supreme abode of Brahman. The meaning of this verse is that the Divine Son (who is also the Divine Sun), who is the manifest Brahman, the Self manifested in creation through Self-realization, is one with the Divine Father, the unmanifest Brahman beyond all. This Divine Father is, of course, the same as the Divine Mother, Aditi, mentioned earlier. This is a Vedic māntric version of Self-realization. The myriad colored stone is the enlightened mind which comprehends all things. It is Indra's thunderbolt, the *vajra*, with which he guards all the worlds by the Self, subduing all the demons of destruction, death and negativity.

4. 'Four bear him and bring him to rest. Ten nourish the child for travel. His rays of light, most supreme, of threefold nature, move instantly around the ends of Heaven.'

He is the Self, the One Divine Child born in all the worlds, who in his very birth fills all the worlds. The four who bear him and bring him to rest are the four states of waking, dream, deep sleep and Turiya, the fourth, the ever-waking, ever-sleeping supreme state of the Self. They are the four feet of the Cosmic Cow Unslayable, who again is *Aditi*, the Divine Mother, as *Vāk*, the Goddess of the Divine Word, *Om*. The ten who nourish the child for travel are the five sense-organs (*jñānendriyas*) and five organs of action (*karmendriyas*), which are sometimes called the ten fingers of the god. They are also his ten sisters. As such they are the ten Dawns which are awakening to the light of the

Self in the ten sensory fields, whereby the Self becomes manifested in action. His rays of light or cows, *gāvah*, of threefold nature are his intuitive powers whereby he comprehends the threefold law of manifestation in the cosmos. The third is the One which is the unity of the two. He is the Divine Son who is born in all things, between all dualities, beyond all opposition.

5. 'Wonderful oh man is the inner knowledge, that while the waters stand the rivers are flowing ; that two bear him other than his Mother. Here the twins of common nature are born.'

The inner knowledge or inner language, *nivacanam*, is that knowledge which sees the Self in all, speaking of the Self in all and through all. It is the language of the Seers which is the human expression of the vibrations of the Divine word. The waters which stand are the transcendent Brahman beyond the worlds. The rivers which flow are the creative Brahman which is all the worlds. The great mystery and magic is that each includes the other. The totally quiescent is also absolute motion. The Uncreate is itself total Creation. When the Self manifests even the born is Unborn and the Unborn is born. The Mother of the Divine Child is again the transcendent infinite. The two other than his Mother who also bear him are Heaven and Earth, standing for all the worlds of creation. The Divine Child is free both in Creation and in Transcendence, which are the two forms of his Mother, on whose bosom he ever plays. The twins of common nature are Heaven and Earth

again, for to the Vedic vision everything earthly is just an image of something heavenly and all the worlds are pervaded with the light of Heaven. The mystery is even greater, for not only do these two who are not his real Mother bear him, but they are also born through him, for the birth of the Self in creation is also the rebirth and regeneration of all the worlds, their exaltation into pure light.

6. 'For him they extend their insights and their actions. The mothers weave garments for their son. Delighting in the Bull's invigorating contact his wives come to him by the paths of Heaven.'

Seekers of the Godhead in their yearning for and receptivity towards the Spirit take on the role and the powers of the Goddesses, whose nature it is to offer themselves to the God. To attain the God we must ourselves become the Goddess. We must awaken within ourselves the Goddess powers whose inherent movement of transformation is to merge themselves into the God. The Rig Veda constantly gives this identification of the human aspirant with the Goddess powers of aspiration, often talking of both at the same time. It is the work of the Goddess that brings about our realization of the Godhead. It is not the result of our personal striving but of the labor of the Goddess within us towards the infinite birth which is the birth of the Infinite. The Rig Veda contains very few hymns directly to the Goddess not because it does not recognize the power of the Goddess, but because the Goddess is not so much the object to which the hymn proceeds as she is the power where from and whereby the

hymn proceeds. The Vedic hymns are more the hymns of the Goddess to the God than the hymns of men towards the Divine.

The mothers of the Divine Child are also his wives. The Mother is the intuitive mind which gives birth to the pure Self-awareness, which then functions as its integral power of manifestation whereby it perfects its lower creation by the means of its transcendent presence.

7. 'Let That be, Mitrā-Varuṇā and Agni. Let this teaching be peace and happiness within us. May we attain the firm-standing and well-established. Adorations to Infinite Heaven, the true dwelling !'

That, *Tat*, is another secret name for the transcendent Brahman which is the thatness and beingness of all things, the homogeneous substantiality of pure Consciousness. Mitra is the Divine as the friend. Varuṇa is the Divine as lord and judge. In the Veda these two always go together, as the Divine is both truth and love. Agni is the basic flame of awareness and aspiration, the fire of consciousness through whom this whole Āryan ritual of the transformation of consciousness proceeds. The firm-standing and well-established is Infinite Heaven, *Bṛhat Diva*, which is Brahman.

We see therefore in this hymn the vastness of the Vedic vision in which Self-realization and the transformation of Consciousness is presented in its myriad facets through a few concise mantras capable of many levels of interpretation.

MĀTRI LĪLĀ

April—June 1980

R. K. Banerji

Installation of Sri Sri Muktananda Giriji's Statue at Ranchi

Over a year ago I went to a studio in Calcutta to inspect the fashioning of the image of Goddess Kali to be installed in the Delhi Ashram on *Akṣya Tritīyā*, April 29th, 1979. To my surprise I discovered there a half-finished marble statue of Didima almost the exact replica of the one at Kankhal. It was meant for our Ranchi Ashram, to be installed on April 17th 1980, *Akṣya Tritīyā*, the first auspicious day of the holy month of Vaiśākha.

Ma reached Ranchi from Vindhyaçal on April 11th, Unfortunately my son and I could not leave Calcutta before April 14th night and thus missed Giriji's *Sannyāsa Utsava* held in Ranchi in great style in Mataji's presence.

The local President of the Sangha, Raja Sahib of Chhota Nagpur, had placed at Ma's disposal a newly built, commodious, two storeyed guest-house at Ratu, situated in healthy surroundings on the top of a plateau, about eleven miles from the Ashram. Here Mataji took up residence from 11th to 19th April, accompanied by Swami Paramananda and several brahmacharis and brahmacharinis. Early morning She would daily motor to the Ashram and return in the evening.

The ceremonies connected with the installation of Gīrijī's statue were spread over three days. On the 15th, after preliminary pūjā, the statue was immersed in rice like Adī Shankarachary's two years ago in Kankhal. Several pandits officiated and Didima's only surviving son acted as the *Yajman*. Mahantaji Sri Girdhar Narayan Puri of Kankhal came with Mataji and was the first to cement the foundation of the statue.

Ma entered the Mandap at about 11-30 a.m. Her dais was placed in front of the Kali Mandir entrance and the Mahantaji's to the right of Mataji. For some time a stream of devotees were allowed to file past Her dais and offer *Praṇāma*, garlands, etc. to the accompaniment of kīrtana led by Sri Siddheshwar Mukherji of Calcutta aided by his son and daughter, Km. Chhabi Banerjee was also present that day. After about an hour, Ma sweetly bade farewell to the kīrtan party before leaving. This was Her daily ritual which afforded us a brief but inspiring glimpse of Her full face.

Sāndhya kīrtana was every evening performed with great eclat by Calcutta devotees and local enthusiasts.

On the 16th Ciriji's statue was anointed with *ghi* and bathed in water. At 4 p.m, Ma left for Ratu. The 17th was a cloudy day and even a few drops of rain fell, so that *Nagar kīrtana* in the morning and the general exodus to the house of a devotee nearby where food was served twice daily throughout Ma's sojourn, were rendered more comfortable. Between 9-45 and 10-45 a.m. a host

of male and female devotees, headed by Giriji's portrait carried by a brahmachari, with Br. Tanmayananda leading the kīrtana, went round the streets on four sides of the Ashram and returned to continue kīrtana before the temple up to 11-15 a.m., when Ma entered the mandap. At 11-20 a.m. Giriji's statue was pushed in a mobile wooden skid round the temple before entering the sanctum sanctorum and then placed on a pedestal to the left of Goddess Kali, the presiding deity of Ranchi Ashram. At the time of the actual installation kīrtan was stopped under Mataji's instructions as silence had to be observed. At 11-25 a.m. Ma and the Mahantaji entered the temple which was now closed on all sides. Possibly due to Ma's *kheyāla* electricity failed so that the ceremony was performed in the closed temple by the light of a single candle. At 11-40 the side door was opened and a few fortunate devotees had a delightful view of Mataji gently caressing Giriji's face, garlanding her and performing the various ceremonies customary during "*Varaṇa*" of the Goddess after Durgā Pūjā. Then Ma came out to sit briefly on the dais. Meanwhile *Havan* (fire sacrifice) was being performed on the 1st floor.

Kumārī and *Batuka Pūjā* had been arranged on the spacious verandah of Sri Devabrata Mukherji's house where a pandal had been provided to seat 350 persons at mealtimes every day. After 1 p.m. Mataji arrived for the completion of *Kumārī Pūjā* and was present for the feeding of devotees. She appeared radiant and gracious.

On April 18th, Mataji did not venture out of Ratu at all as She was supposed to rest. So five of us set off in a hired scooter to have Ma's *darśana* on a farewell visit as we had to leave for Calcutta the same evening. We were in high spirits and providence guided us inexorably and gently into Mataji's presence. As we entered the gates of Ma's residence, someone came out and warned us that Mataji was resting after a very busy morning. We however proceeded to the house and found in an inner room a number of initiates being put through their paces by Bhola pandit and others. Apparently even on Ma's day of rest, *dīkṣā* had been given. We knew that She would allow the new initiates to perform their *praṇāmas* and so we decided to wait patiently. At last we were ushered into Ma's presence. Each of us had a word with Ma who looked at us benevolently. With folded hands I said : 'Ma, the reports of your serious illness had filled us with dread and it is heaven to see you now almost back to your old Self. Will you graciously grant us a boon ? Will you please personally take each and everyone of us across the thresh old of life before even thinking of making any final plans for yourself ?'

We returned to Ranci filled with joy and gratitude. Mataji went Sri R. P. Roys' house on the 19th morning to be present at the foundation stone laying for a small building, before visiting the Ashram en route to the station to catch the train to Varanasi where Mataji spent two nights and then proceeded to Kankhal.

Birthday celebrations at Kankhal

Mataji's birthday was celebrated at the Kankhal Ashram at the invitation of Sri and Srimati Ram and Santosh Panjwani. Sri Ma alighted at Kankhal on April 23rd morning. To everyone's great delight She had obviously regained Her health. Although somewhat slimmer than when She had left Kankhal last October, Ma looked bright and lively and Her voice had its usual vigour. From the very first day She gave *darśana* morning and evening, usually in the hall, as the attendance was too large for Her cottage. Mataji's birthday fell on May 2nd and Tithi Puja already on the next night, so various functions took place earlier as well. Daily recitation by pandits of 100 *Durgā Mahātmyas* started from April 27th, 108 *Hanuman Chalisas* were sung daily throughout Ma's sojourn ; further *Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa*, recitation of the entire *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*, also *Padmānābha Pūjā* took place before the birthday. On April 30th, *Buddha Pūrṇimā*, ladies kīrtana was performed all night. Various Mahātmas gave talks on several days. Hara Gobinda's party from Vrindaban enacted *Rāsa Līlā* on May 1st and 2nd morning and 3rd night. Mataji graced the lectures and also daily for a while *Rāsa Līlā*. On May 2nd night the first *pūjā* was performed before Sri Ma's life size photo, while *āratī* and *praṇāma* were done early morning in Her room. As usual *sādhu* feeding and *kumārī pūjā* and *bhojan* formed part of the celebrations.

May 3rd had a very full programme which included *Gangā Pūjā* at Harki Pauri in Ma's presence after sunset.

All local Mahāmaṇḍaleswaras, namely Swamis Pūrṇānanda, Vidyānanda, Prakashānanda, Satchidānanda of Bholagiri Ashram, Swami Mitrānanda of Samanvaya Kutir, Swami Dharmānanda, Swami Vareshānanda of R. K. Mission, the five Mahantajis of Niranjani Akhara, Mahantaji Girdhar Narayan of Nirvani Akhara and others came to pay their respects to Sri Ma. Each gave a short talk and all took their *biksha* in our Ashram in Mataji's presence. *Ārati* was performed to them by our brahmacharis.

Before 3 a.m. on May 4th, Ma was carried in a gorgeous palanquin to the exquisitely decorated hall for the very solemn Tithi pūjā to the accompaniment of sweet, melodious kīrtana. Silence was observed for half an hour at the actual time of birth. Sri Swami Nārādānanda of Naimiṣāraṇya, Swami Chidānanda, Swami Vishnuāshram and Sri Mahanta Girdhar Narayan attended the pūjā. Arrangements were excellent in every respect. Everything proceeded in undisturbed harmony notwithstanding the enormous attendance of devotees from every corner of India as well as from abroad and local ones. Towards the end of the worship a spectacular fire sacrifice was performed right in front of Mataji's conch.

Already at about 9 a.m. Sri Ma could be carried to Her room and even before midday She received people who were leaving. At midday there was

Daridra Nārāyaṇa bhojan (poor feeding) and in the evening Mataji sat in the hall for about two hours for *adivāsa kīrtana* which always precedes *Nāma yajña*. After 10 p.m. when the girls started to sing and walk round the circular alter, Mataji joined them and did one round in their midst before retiring for the night. Km. Chhabi and our kīrtan party of Delhi were present in full force, the men leading from early morning until sunset on May 5th. Ma came to the hall after midday for a long time and again for the conclusion in the evening. It was a most inspiring and joyous culmination of the very successful celebrations. Mataji was extremely active and alert throughout the festivities. She attended to every single person and forgot nobody. Everyone received not only a hanky with prasād, but also from Ma's own hands some cloth, be it a scarf, a towel, a dhoti or a sari.

After most guests had left, Mataji relaxed for a few days, giving only short *darśanas* mostly from the verandah of Her cottage. Another *Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa* took place before She left for Dehradun on May 14th by car.

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Ati Rudra Mahayajna at Rajpur, Dehradun (May 16th—29th)

Mr. & Mrs. M. L. Khaitan had arranged for a great *yajña* in their compound to be held for a fortnight and had earnestly requested Ma to be present and to stay on afterwards as long as possible for a rest.

The devotees of Dehradun were greatly delighted

to have Ma in their midst for a lengthy sojourn after an interval of a few years. Before proceeding to Her lovely, secluded cottage at Panchavati in Mr. & Mrs. Khaitan's compound, which commands a magnificent view of the surrounding hills, Mataji got down at the Kishenpur Ashram and for a short while sat in the hall where many devotees were eagerly waiting to welcome Her. She also stopped at Kalyanvan for a few minutes.

At the far end of the lawn in front of Mataji's cottage, a temporary building for the fire sacrifice as prescribed in the *Śāstras*, with five large fire pits, had been erected and fifty-six pandits headed by the well-known Acharya Ranganath Tripathi of Varanasi had been summoned from Varanasi and elsewhere. On May 16th the building was ceremoniously inaugurated in Sri Ma's presence and an elaborate pūjā performed. The actual *yajña* started on May 17th at about 8 a.m. Eleven pandits sat round each fire pit and offered oblations. A powerful loudspeaker made the whole vicinity vibrant with the sanctifying sound of the sonorous mantras chanted in chorus by the pandits for eight hours every day. Acharya Tripathi commenced the programme daily at 6-30 a.m. with a whole hour's lecture, giving various instructions and information concerning the *yajña*. At about 10 every morning Ma visited the *yajñasālā* for half an hour or so. People were asked to walk as often as possible round the building with folded hands, in measured steps, silently repeating a Śiva mantra. Many men and women availed themselves of this unique

opportunity. Mahantaji Girdhar Narayan came from Kankhal and most of the inmates of Kankhal Ashram arrived by turns. In the evening of May 29th the *Pūrṇāhuti* (completion) of the *yajña* was celebrated with great ceremony in Mataji's presence with a spectacular attendance and *prasāda* distributed to all.

From June 4th to 7th, Mataji paid a visit to Her Kishenpur Ashram. On the 5th and 6th *Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa* was recited in the hall followed by *Daridra-Nārāyaṇa* feeding on a large scale, both for the good of the soul of the gardener of Kalyanvan who after many years of service passed away a few months ago. That evening Sri Sivabala Yogi paid a visit to Ma, the next evening a party from the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, headed by Swami Mādhavananda.

Before returning to Her cottage at Panchavati in the early afternoon of June 7th, Mataji sat in the packed hall for 1½ hours. There was exquisite *kīrtan* for about three hours, mostly led by Km. Chhabi. Then everyone was entertained to a feast.

Throughout Her sojourn at Dehradun Ma gave *darśana* every evening from 6-30 to 7 p.m. on the open terrace of Her cottage. After the completion of the *Yajña*, Swami Sacchidananda would daily expound from *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha Rāmāyaṇa* for half an hour at *darśana* time. Mataji occasionally made some comments or told a story or replied to questions.

Durgā Pūjā is to be celebrated at Sri B. K. Shah's Vile Parle, Bombay from 15th to 19th October ; *Kālī Pūjā* at Delhi on November 7th and *Samyama Mahāvratā* at Kailash Ashram, Rishikesh from Nov. 15th to 22nd.
